

**FALLING INTO PLACE**

FADE IN:

BG: A haunting Native American FLUTE SOLO plays.

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN CLIFF - DAY

An attractive fair-haired WOMAN (39) takes a deep breath and steps off a 50' cliff. In SLOW MOTION she falls through the air, gracefully, like diving into a warm pool. The desert floor, which loomed far beneath her, now slowly approaches.

BG: Music suddenly stops.

Six inches from impact her body jerks back, face down, as if reaching the end of a string. She BLINKS several times, and grits her teeth, willing her body to the ground. No luck.

BLACKOUT

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

CHRIS DELANCEY, the woman from the cliff, travels down a scorched desert highway. She has the look of a hip soccer Mom, but her demeanor is anything but playful. She is guarded, on edge, and running on empty in every way.

The landscape she passes is barren and lifeless. Large cactus, red dirt. Like an oasis, a CONVENIENCE STORE appears in the distance. Chris spots it and slowly comes out of her daze, pulling off the road and into the gray lot.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Chris walks out with a pack of cigarettes and a small brown bag under her arm. She awkwardly opens the cigarettes, lights one up, takes a puff, and immediately begins to cough. She continues in spite of her lungs as she drives away.

INT. /EXT. CHRIS' S CAR

Chris continues down the highway, smoking a cigarette.

An AMBULANCE SIREN screams in the distance. She grimaces.

FLASHBACK TO:

## INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOLROOM - MORNING

Hand-written signs announce today is "Parent/Teacher Day". Chris is on the floor surrounded by 2ND GRADERS, and a few PARENTS. She points to a picture in a book and smiles. The principal, PAUL SHARPE (55), a usually jovial man, appears.

PRINCIPAL SHARPE

(with great seriousness)

Chris, can I see you for a moment?

CHRIS

Sure, Mr. Sharpe.

BACK TO PRESENT:

## INT. /EXT. CHRIS' S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Chris stares numbly at the road until she sees what she has been looking for - a sign pointing toward SEDONA, ARIZONA. She's on auto-pilot now, and makes the turn.

## EXT. SEDONA MAIN STREET - EARLY EVENING

The car speeds by the infamous red rock formations: SNOOPY ROCK, COFFEE POT ROCK, BEAR MOUNTAIN. Red monoliths seem to leap out of the Earth toward a perfect blue sky. Small shops offering crystals and red rock souvenirs nestle in the nooks and crannies of the majestic mountains. She doesn't notice.

## EXT. CHRIS' S SEDONA HOME - LATER

The sun is setting as Chris pulls into KOKOPELLI VILLAGE, a condominium complex. She pulls into her driveway, presses the remote, and the garage door opens. She parks the car, then notices a pair of KIDS' BICYCLES.

She stares at the bikes intently, then takes one at a time and throws them into a DUMPSTER across the street. She walks across the front porch and enters her Sedona home.

## INT. CHRIS' S SEDONA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Chris quickly begins to remove the WHITE SHEETS covering the furniture. When she gets to a small desk, she stops for a millisecond, then uses the covers to remove PHOTO FRAMES.

Keeping the pictures from her sight, she wads them up in the sheets and places the entire bundle in a corner of the kitchen.

Suddenly she has trouble breathing. She labors momentarily, then starts to pound her chest, giving her heart a jump-start. She takes a few deep breaths, and begins to relax.

The PHONE RINGS. Chris look at the caller ID and sighs.

CHRIS  
Hello, Mother.

INT. MOTHER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chris's mother (64), a slender, well-groomed woman, sits in the living room of Chris's childhood home. The room is nicely furnished, neat and orderly, decorated in colors that are cool and uninviting.

Pictures of a happy family are mounted proudly on the wall: Chris with a handsome man and two all-American children; the kids playing on a beach; the little boy graduating from kindergarten; the little girl in a Chinese costume.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED

MOTHER (O. C.)  
Chris, is that you?

CHRIS  
Yes, Mother.

MOTHER (O. C.)  
Your voice sounds funny. Hoarse.  
Are you smoking again?

She lights another CIGARETTE.

CHRIS  
No, Mom. Just tired. What's up?

MOTHER (O. C.)  
I was waiting to hear if you got there OK. I tried your cell phone but you didn't answer.

Chris fishes her CELL PHONE out of her bag.

CHRIS  
I must have dropped it somewhere.

She drops the phone into the garbage, then takes the bourbon bottle out of the bag. She takes a healthy swig.

MOTHER (O. C.)

I got so worried I almost called the police. But then I called that neighbor woman, Sheila, and she told me she saw your car in the driveway. So I-

CHRIS

I told you, Mom. I'm fine.

MOTHER (O. C.)

When do you think you're coming home? There's that teacher's planning day coming up. And your principal's been calling me.

CHRIS

I don't know. I have to get this place ready and that could take a couple of weeks.

MOTHER (O. C.)

I just wish you didn't have to sell it. Your father wanted to keep it in the family.

CHRIS

Can't be helped.

MOTHER

You know, Chris, this will all get better. In time. You just haven't given it enough time.

CHRIS

How long, Mom? I just want to know how long I should hold my breath.

She takes another drink.

CHRIS (CONT' D)

Wait, there's someone at the door.

There is no one at the door.

CHRIS (CONT' D)

Gotta go. Talk to you later.

Chris hangs up and studies the room. The furnishings are large and comfortable. A NATIVE AMERICAN RUG hangs on the wall. An old WAGON WHEEL rests in the corner.

She then starts to push, pull, or carry all the furniture into a corner of the room, covering the mound with the white sheets until it resembles a SNOW COVERED MOUNTAIN. Only the easy chair and the television console remain in place.

Exhausted, Chris sits in the chair, takes another drink from the bottle, and lights another cigarette. After settling in, she clicks on the TV.

The TV flashes on with a smile - a promo for NICK AT NITE.

CHRIS (CONT' D)  
Hey, Nick. What's new with you?

INT. CHRIS'S SEDONA HOME - LATER

Chris is passed out in the easy chair with her legs swung over the arm, cradling the half-empty bottle of bourbon. The TV plays a rerun of FAMILY TIES, when the PHONE RINGS.

Chris slowly comes to, then awkwardly climbs over the mound of furniture to dig out the phone. She remains half-asleep.

CHRIS  
Hello?

FRANCES BARNES (80's) speaks O.C. in an officious voice.

MRS. BARNES (O.C.)  
Is this Mrs. Delancey?

CHRIS  
It is.

MRS. BARNES (O.C.)  
Mrs. Delancey, you left your garage door open.

CHRIS  
What?

MRS. BARNES (O.C.)  
It's supposed to be closed.

Chris starts to wake up.

CHRIS  
Wait. What is this, a joke?

MRS. BARNES (O. C.)  
It's a new rule. All garage doors are to remain closed after dark. I live right across the street and I can see your garage door is open.

CHRIS  
Who is this?

MRS. BARNES (O. C.)  
I'm the new President of the Association, Frances Barnes. I sent the notice to your address in Albuquerque. Maybe your husband saw it?

CHRIS  
(suddenly alert)  
My husband?

MRS. BARNES (O. C.)  
Yes, why don't you ask him.

A slow eruption begins.

CHRIS  
Don't you call me again.

MRS. BARNES (O. C.)  
What?

CHRIS  
I mean it. Don't you ever call me again or I will take the fucking garage door and slam it down on your fucking head.

Chris throws down the phone, grabs the garage door remote from the table and exits to the front of the house.

EXT. CHRIS'S FRONT DECK - CONTINUOUS

She glares at the group of duplexes across the street, aims the remote at her garage door and shoots. The garage door closes with a bang.

CHRIS  
(screaming)  
Wait! There! OK? There you go.

She points the remote again, pressing the button over and over, as the garage door clangs open and closed.

CHRIS (CONT' D)  
 (sarcastically)  
 Oh, no, wait, I think it's broken!  
 Aw, too bad. What a shame!

Chris throws the remote on the deck and it shatters into pieces.

CHRIS (CONT' D)  
 Asshole! Fucking asshole!

She heads back inside, slamming the door behind her and leaving the garage door open.

INT. CHRIS'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Chris kicks and pounds her fists on the back of the door. After several seconds she is done, sinking into the floor. She curls up into the fetal position and drifts into a fog.

EXT. CHRIS'S FRONT DOOR - EARLY MORNING

SHEILA FISHMAN is knocking on the door. Sheila could be 50, 60, or 70. Under all the make-up it's hard to tell. Her blue eye shadow is a perfect match to her colorful caftan, and she is accompanied by a feisty terrier she calls POODLE.

SHEILA  
 Chris? Chris! It's Sheila, from next door.

No answer. Poodle BARKS ferociously.

SHEILA (CONT' D)  
 Poodle! Poodle, hush.

The dog continues to bark.

SHEILA (CONT' D)  
 Sit, Poodle, sit.

The dog doesn't sit. Sheila peeks in the window and looks around the yard. She hears the TV, but doesn't spot Chris, so she pounds on the door insistently as the dog barks.

SHEILA (CONT' D)  
 Oh, all right, let's go, Poodle.

She struts away with Poodle close behind.

## INT. CHRIS' S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Chris stirs from where she has been sleeping: on the cold, tile floor right behind the door.

A small puddle of brown liquid glistens from the tile and the empty bourbon bottle lies next to her. There are cigarette butts on the carpet, and a half-eaten Twinkie.

The TV is still on, now playing a rerun of THREE' S COMPANY. She stares at the screen as the TV characters CHRISSY, JACK and JANET share a group hug.

Slowly her face changes from vague interest to despair. The window above the TV frames an incredible view of COFFEE POT ROCK - and the 50 foot cliff. She studies the rock, then pulls herself up and awkwardly grabs her car keys.

## INT. /EXT. CHRIS' S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Chris drives up the street toward the cliff. In the distance she sees a VERY OLD MAN (99) on the side of the road trying to wave down a car. He simultaneously curses and jabs his cane into the air. No one stops.

## EXT. MOUNTAIN CLIFF - LATER

Chris is unsteadily perched on the cliff of COFFEE POT ROCK. She looks out at the view - peaks and valleys of green interspersed with red dirt, cactus, and trails. Hikers make their way along the paths.

She opens and closes her eyes and clenches her fists. As she looks below, the desert floor blurs and seems to rush toward her. She swallows hard and bites her lip.

Her breath becomes shallow and a hint of sweat appears on her upper lip. She moves closer to the edge. Her breathing becomes more intense. Suddenly--

LITTLE BOY (O. C.)

Mama!!

She turns abruptly toward the sound, simultaneously scrambling back a few feet from the edge. A young family - MOTHER, FATHER, and SON - appear from the side of a hill. The son, CONNOR (9) runs to the edge where Chris stands.

CONNOR

Mama, look!

CONNOR' S MOTHER  
 Careful, Connor, don't get too  
 close.

The child looks up at Chris and smiles.

CONNOR  
 Hi .

The father runs up and grabs his son away from the edge.

CONNOR' S FATHER  
 (smiling, to Chris)  
 Wow. Be careful. I hear people  
 fall off here all the time.

She hurries away, as the father watches after her curiously.

INT. /EXT. CHRIS' S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Chris sits in her car at the trailhead, numbly staring  
 straight ahead. Another HAPPY FAMILY appears in the parking  
 lot and piles into a car, laughing and talking. She glares  
 at them momentarily, then starts her car and drives away.

EXT. CHRIS' S SEDONA HOME

Chris unloads bags from her car when Sheila surprises her.

SHEILA  
 Well, hello there.

CHRIS  
 Oh... hi, Sheila.

SHEILA  
 I saw you come in the other night  
 but I haven't gotten to say hello  
 yet. How are you?

CHRIS  
 Fine, just trying to get these into  
 the house.

Chris tries to squeeze past her.

SHEILA  
 Here, let me help you.

CHRIS  
 No, I've got...

SHEILA  
I don't mind.

CHRIS  
Really, it's...

They play tug-of-war with the bag until a MICHELOB BOTTLE falls and breaks, spewing beer over the drive.

CHRIS (CONT' D)  
Why did you do that?

FLASHBACK TO:

BG: Sound of a GLASS BREAKING

INT. CHRIS' S ALBUQUERQUE KITCHEN - MORNING

In a French country kitchen Chris leans over the sink. Her husband DAVID (40), a handsome man in a gray suit stands motionless as a BROKEN GLASS rolls to a stop in the sink.

CHRIS  
Why? Why would you do that?

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. CHRIS' S SEDONA HOME

Chris glares at Sheila, then picks up the broken bottle and stomps off toward her front door. Sheila stays frozen for a bit, then picks up the last bit of broken glass and walks back toward her home.

INT. CHRIS' S KITCHEN

Chris starts to put the groceries away - mostly junk food and booze. She opens a beer and takes a drink. There is a KNOCK on the door.

CHRIS  
Oh, for Christ's sake.

INT. /EXT. CHRIS' S FRONT DOOR

Chris throws open the door, ready for a fight. Sheila stands there, looking guilty and presenting Chris with a plastic container. Before Chris can speak...

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