

BABY GIRL
by Edith Freni
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Elise is damaged goods. The brand new mother of a six-week old baby girl, she is simply trying to survive in the small, blue-collar Long Island town where she has spent her entire short life. When Richie, the baby's biological father, arrives back in town with a plan to make some quick cash, Elise is at the end of her rope, jobless and living out of her car. Whatever it is he's about to propose, she believes, might be her way back into the heart and home of Patrick, the only person on the Island who actually loves her. But Richie's plan is devious and his motives less than pure, so Elise must make a choice: rely on old bad habits or do the right thing for once.

BABY GIRL is a fast-paced, heartbreaking story of love, family and redemption. The dream-like action moves through various locations in Queens and Long Island, charting Elise's desperate journey over the course of one day to save herself and her baby as various enemies, old and new, appear to thwart her efforts.

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FROM ACT I, sc ii

Lights rise on an empty, beachside parking lot.
ELISE stands with RICHIE.)

ELISE

Not exactly beach weather, Richie.

RICHIE

I like it in the winter. Nobody's here.

ELISE

I coulda' come to your mother's, you know.

RICHIE

I ain't staying there. No room at the inn now Jason's
commandeered the whole fucking second floor.

ELISE

Yeah I heard Sarah decided she don't like being smacked
around no more. Fancy that.

RICHIE

And she calls herself a real woman.

ELISE

We coulda' met in town, gotten a bite.

RICHIE

What's wrong, you don't want to be alone with me?

ELISE

I just thought we were discussing business.

RICHIE

We can have a legitimate business discussion at the beach.

ELISE

If it's fucking Herbal Life again, you can kiss my ass.

RICHIE

It ain't.

ELISE

Fine then I'll run weed and maybe X but nothing harder.

RICHIE

I'm not into that shit anymore.

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ELISE

OK well look I would love nothing more than to stand around and catch up with you but I don't have the time today so if you got a plan, let me know now.

RICHIE

You didn't bring the kid?

ELISE

(beat)

No. (beat) I'm not bringing the baby out here. I don't know where the day might take us.

RICHIE

Maybe I wanted to see her. Ever think of that? Ever think maybe I wanna see if she looks like me.

ELISE

She does. She's got your little devil eyes.

RICHIE

You know, you could have at least *called*. So I didn't have to hear this shit from my mother who now thinks I'm some kind of deadbeat thank you very much.

ELISE

I didn't call cuz I didn't think we had anything to say to each other.

RICHIE

Come on, we can make a baby together. Making conversation shouldn't be such a task.

ELISE

Making it ain't the hard part though.

RICHIE

Fuck if it ain't. Why the hell you think I made you turn around?

ELISE

You said you didn't want anything to do with it.

RICHIE

Funny cuz you said the same thing.

ELISE

I never said that.

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RICHIE

Come on, Elise, tiger doesn't change its stripes.

ELISE

I did. I'm a totally different animal these days.

RICHIE

Put things outta your mind until it was too late?

ELISE

No. I made a choice.

RICHIE

To have a kid you don't want?

ELISE

You don't know anything OK, you haven't been around, so don't say shit to me.

RICHIE

I know she don't have no name yet. At two months.

ELISE

Well...I haven't figured it out. Hasn't come to me. Takes time. Kid's got to show her personality and shit.

RICHIE

So you what? You call her what? Baby? Baby girl Gallo?

ELISE

Higgins.

RICHIE

Excuse me?!?

ELISE

You're her father, why shouldn't she have your name?

RICHIE

Cuz we ain't family. You and me.

ELISE

I know that, you think I don't know that?

RICHIE

She's not a Higgins.

ELISE

Fine. I'll get it changed. Satisfied?

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RICHIE

Not quite. I want an apology. I don't like being lied to.

ELISE

I didn't lie about shit.

RICHIE

You weren't exactly up front.

ELISE

(blowing it off)

Fine. I'm sorry I wasn't up front.

RICHIE

Say it LIKE YOU MEAN IT!

ELISE

I'm sorry...I'm sorry I didn't tell you I was keeping her.

RICHIE

Thank you. That's all I wanted. Now we can get down to business. I got us a solution.

ELISE

To what problem?

RICHIE

Baby Girl Gallo.

(Pause.)

ELISE

I'm sorry, what do you mean exactly?

RICHIE

I mean exactly what I just said. She poses a problem. For both of us, but as far as *I'm* concerned, I don't really want her coming to look for me eighteen years from now.

ELISE

I told you I'd change the name.

RICHIE

Yeah see but that's not good enough.

ELISE

I can't exactly put her back, Rich.

RICHIE

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That's not what I'm suggesting at all. You had the kid. OK.
I see no reason why we shouldn't make the most of it.

ELISE

That's what I'm doing. I'm loving her, I'm giving her a
good home--

RICHIE

(laughing)

-- we not glamorize the situation, please? You are an
emotionally unstable, unemployed high school drop out.

ELISE

Who said I was unemployed?

RICHIE

Your boss at the home, genius.

ELISE

I want you to stay the fuck out of my personal affairs.

RICHIE

You got no cash, you got no place to live--

ELISE

--you don't know what I got--

RICHIE

--and your white knight fancy food faggot up and left you
just like all the others who came before him present
company included. And now that he's gone, it's gonna be you
El. Alone. With a baby. Cuz history repeats. You wanna end
up like your mother? Tumor ridden? Yellow? Bankrupt?
Begging for death at the ripe old age of 52? You wanna
raise another version of *yourself*? Not very fair to that
baby is it?

(beat)

And it's not very fair to you either. Or me. Cuz see, I
wanna make something of myself. Experience the American
dream like I'm entitled. Why all these towel-heads get to
come over here and live the high life and meanwhile I'm
stuck in the fucking mud? Doesn't sound fair to me, does
that sound fair to you? Uh uh. No. You know what you need,
if you want those things? Money. You know what that kid
ain't going to make you? Money. You know what you're going
to spend on her for the next two decades? You guessed it,
MONEY. Money you don't have. Money you'll never have.

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ELISE

You got a point to all this or can I tell you now to go fuck yourself?

RICHIE

I know a guy. He deals in children. Assuming ours got the best of both sets of genes, he says we can get a lot of cash for her. Now I'm willing to make a split. Not straight down the middle mind you but I'll be fair so long as you cooperate.

ELISE

Go fuck yourself.

RICHIE

Don't cooperate, I'll do it without you and then you get nothing.

ELISE

I'll go to the cops.

RICHIE

OK. Make sure you tell my cousin, my uncle, my best friend from high school and all three of my brothers I say hello.

ELISE

You can't just show up here after being gone for seven months and start acting like you got a claim on this kid.

RICHIE

Sure I can. I'm the father. Right? (beat) I am the father, Elise.

ELISE

Yes you are but—

RICHIE

--YOU GOT NOTHING. I GOT NOTHING. This conversation is over.

ELISE

You think you're scaring me but you're not. You're not a scary person. I know you. Remember how well I know you.

RICHIE

Remember how well you KNEW me. And then do your best to forget it. Or you're in for a rude awakening. (beat) I'm at

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the Breezy. Drop by tonight and we'll get it all sorted.
Quick. And painless.

(he gets in her face.)

I don't hear from you, you can bet your sweet ass you'll be
hearing from me.

(Black out. It starts to pour rain.)

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From ACT I, sc v

Afternoon light on a BACK ALLEY. NASSAU COUNTY.
Brick wall, metal door. PATRICK smokes. Elise
stands in the corner. He keeps a safe distance.

ELISE

You can't decide to hate me over twenty-minutes.

PATRICK

Forty-five, Elise. You're God damned lucky I got a phone
girl downstairs likes babies.

ELISE

I got hung up with shit. I'm sorry.

PATRICK

I'm slammed. Goodbye.

ELISE

You think they'd hire me here? To hostess, answer phones?

PATRICK

What happened to your opportunity?

ELISE

Fell through.

PATRICK

I'll bet.

ELISE

You could put me to work in the kitchen.

PATRICK

Due respect, but you burn water.

ELISE

I can learn. I'm a good cake decorator. I like those icing
tubes. They're fun. I bet I could help that pastry girl--

PATRICK

--Leslie doesn't need any help right now. So it looks like
you're stuck where you are.

ELISE

I don't wanna do that anymore.

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PATRICK

So do something else.

ELISE

That's what I'm proposing but you're not open to it.

PATRICK

Fuck me. It's your life. You're decision.

ELISE

Well I wanna work here.

PATRICK

Well I don't want you to!

ELISE

I can't go back to the home.

PATRICK

Why not?

ELISE

Somebody did something and she blamed me for it.

PATRICK

What?

ELISE

Bullshit nonsense.

PATRICK

What bullshit nonsense?

ELISE

Stealing.

PATRICK

Stealing what?

ELISE

Pills.

PATRICK

Did you do it?

ELISE

I don't touch that shit anymore.

PATRICK

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That's not what I asked.

ELISE

I told them I'd take a piss test but they didn't want to know the truth cuz they'd rather have me out. They were just looking for an excuse. Nobody makes a monkey outta me.

PATRICK

Wait a minute, did they fire you? Did you get fired?

ELISE

...it was...more of a mutual parting of ways.

PATRICK

Can you tell the truth for ONE SECOND OF THE DAY?

ELISE

Did she ever say the words "YOU ARE FIRED?" No. But she was gonna call the cops. So I walked out.

PATRICK

Did you steal the pills?

ELISE

I told you no.

PATRICK

You told me you didn't take them.

ELISE

Why would I steal them and not take them?

PATRICK

Baby sitters. Diapers. Doctor visits. Shit adds up.

ELISE

You're damned right shit adds up. Nobody threw me no baby showers. I didn't get nothing for free.

PATRICK

Don't change the subject.

ELISE

I'm supposed to get by making eight bucks an hour?

PATRICK

No. You're supposed to accept help when it's offered to you.

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ELISE

Who offered me help?

PATRICK

I did. (beat) Once upon a time.

ELISE

(beat/she moves in on him)

Paddy—

PATRICK

--Whoa! That's close enough. You keep a safe distance.

ELISE

(still moving in)

I didn't steal 'em.

PATRICK

I said SAFE distance!

ELISE

You have to believe me.

PATRICK

I do. I do believe you.

ELISE

Then why you keep backing away?

PARICK

Because I don't want you to touch me.

ELISE

(getting closer)

Paddy, baby—

PATRICK

--You got one baby. I'm not it. Not no more.

ELISE

Just kiss me.

PATRICK

What? NO!

ELISE

Come on.

PATRICK

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I told you to leave me alone.

ELISE

Yeah but you didn't mean it.

PATRICK

Why would I say it if I didn't mean it?

ELISE

You've said it before.

PATRICK

I'm aware.

ELISE

And you never meant it.

PATRICK

Now I do--You keep moving forward. I keep asking you to stay where you are and you KEEP MOVING TOWARDS ME.

ELISE

I need a hug.

PATRICK

Get it from someone else.

ELISE

I'm freaked out.

PATRICK

About what? No, fuck that. Don't answer.

ELISE

Richie.

PATRICK

I SAID I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.

ELISE

FINE I won't say anything but would you just give me a hug please. And then I'll leave you alone. I promise. One last hug...and maybe a kiss. That's it. That's all I want.

(Pause. He shakes his head, really fucking angry.
Trying desperately not to cave.)

PATRICK

And then you'll go.

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ELISE

I swear.

PATRICK

Forever, Elise. I'm talking don't call me, don't come down here no more. You leave me alone forever.

ELISE

If that's the way you want it.

PATRICK

(sighs)

Do you understand why I have to have it that way?

ELISE

YES. You want to get over me and you can't do it if I keep coming around.

PATRICK

Can you appreciate that?

ELISE

I'm only asking for one hug! Jeess Louise. It's a nice thing. It's a nice thing that I want.

(She begins to move in on him again. This time he doesn't push her away. She puts her hands on his waist and presses her forehead against his chest. She wraps her arms around him.)

ELISE

Put your arms around me.

(He does.)

Tighter.

(He complies.)

You feel so good. (beat) I think about you every night you know.

PATRICK

Stop it.

ELISE

It's true. Every night when she's crying and I'm holding her and I'm wondering what it is that she wants so badly.

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PATRICK

I'm warning you.

(She starts kissing his neck.)

ELISE

Wondering if it's the same thing that I want: you there.
She misses what it felt like when it felt like a family...you
said you wanted to have a family with me.

PATRICK

I did.

ELISE

You don't anymore.

PATRICK

I just...

(finally exploding)

FUCK YOU! You can't do this to me. GO HOME.

ELISE

What home? I got no home to go home to.

PATRICK

Wherever it is you been staying.

ELISE

My car.

PATRICK

WHAT?!?

ELISE

I can't afford to plunk down sixty bucks a night on a hotel
room.

PATRICK

You told me you were gonna stay with Jen.

ELISE

Fucking cunt wouldn't take me.

PATRICK

Tell me you're lying. Tell me baby girl hasn't been
sleeping in her car seat for the last two weeks.

ELISE

What the hell are my options?!?

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PATRICK

Here. Cash.

(He removes his wallet from his back pocket and starts throwing bills at her.)

Take it. It's like a hundred bucks.

ELISE

I don't want your money. I just want to come home.

PATRICK

But you can't.

ELISE

Why not?

PATRICK

Because you're CRAZY! Because YOU fucked up. Because you lie, you steal, you cheat.

ELISE

Once! Once I cheated.

PATRICK

You brought a married couple home and fucked them in my bed.

ELISE

But you can't count that as two times though!

PATRICK

The whole apartment still stinks like you. You're in every room. It's hard enough just getting your memory outta that place.

ELISE

So it's the apartment. It's tainted. So let's get the fuck outta New York. Tonight. I'll be a different person somewhere else.

PATRICK

It's called baggage, Elise, because you take it with you.

ELISE

So maybe tonight's too soon. You're working. Can't fuck your bosses over. We'll leave tomorrow. I'll pick you up after your shift, we'll talk it over in the car.

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PATRICK

No.

ELISE

Why not? Why take the train when you can have a ride?

PATRICK

I'm not going home tonight. I'm going out to drink with my staff.

ELISE

I'll come with you.

PATRICK

No you won't. You are NOT MY GIRLFRIEND ANYMORE.

ELISE

Just give me one more chance. I won't fuck up again.

PATRICK

I can't.

ELISE

You still love me.

PATRICK

No I don't.

ELISE

You're lying.

PATRICK

Not this time.

ELISE

I'm drowning, Paddy. I'm gonna die.

PATRICK

Don't say that shit to me.

ELISE

It's the truth.

PATRICK

Then die. Only sure fire way to get you outta my life for good.

ELISE

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I am coming back here tonight. You know I am. Just like I know that when I do, you're gonna be happy to see me.

PATRICK

Don't. Come. Back here.

ELISE

Just save me the fucking headache, would you? Be nice to me now. You know you'll take me back so let's just cut the shit.

(He opens the door. Beat. Exits into the kitchen.)

ELISE

YOU CAN'T SAY NO TO ME. PADDY! You can never say NO!

(THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Thunder.)