Scene Three

(MALE DOCTOR’s office. MRS. SWANSON and MALE DOCTOR. MRS. SWANSON is very pregnant. MALE DOCTOR, though entirely compassionate, is also very busy, and he speaks quickly. He is periodically writing, filling out forms, and referring to notes throughout this scene.)

MALE DOCTOR. There’s a problem – no, sorry, there’s no problem. That’s “Swanson.” You’re Swanson. Sorry. Now, we did some more tests on your little man. Everything looks very good. His Babinski Reflex, for example.

MRS. SWANSON. Is that where you –

MALE DOCTOR. (interrupting. nodding) Right – that’s where we stroked the foot to see if the toes curl. We do this with sound and tiny beams of light. We can do almost all these tests prior to the actual birth, now. It’s incredible. In a few more years, people won’t even have to be born. Anyway, he was magnificent. The first expressive gesture. From that little curl of the toes to all of the world’s bibles and languages, it’s just a matter of time. Everybody watched on the monitor. You probably heard a cheer go up from the other room. It’s like a space launch. Long way away, but, he could be a tiny little Beethoven, your boy. Get him a fun little drum or a bell. Now, will the father be in the room with you?

MRS. SWANSON. He said he would, yes.

MALE DOCTOR. Good. It’s good to have someone. This is literally going to be the first day of the rest of your baby’s life. Linguistically, you’ll want to start him out small. Simple words like hi and juice and tree and bye-bye. Say whatever you feel. Most of it happens on a vibrational level, anyway.

(A brief staticky buzz. A voice comes over the office intercom.)

INTERCOM. I’m sorry, Doctor – I have Mrs. Swenson on the line.

MALE DOCTOR. (Brief pause. To INTERCOM:) Tell her I’m very sorry. I’ll have to call her right back. (to MRS. SWANSON:) Excuse me. That’s a sad story. But, back to you. We’ll generate a birth certificate, of course. That’ll start up the paper trail. Do you have a name?

MRS. SWANSON. We’re thinking possibly “John.”

MALE DOCTOR. “John” is perfect. Biblical, one syllable, no complicated backstory, just “John.” “John Swanson.” It’s like a little poem. (very brief pause) What else?

MRS. SWANSON. Can I ask you… sorry, this is so general, but… I mean, what should I do? How should I be?

MALE DOCTOR. Those are great questions. And here’s my answer. Love is all. It sounds so simple, I know, but, give him love. Without it, he’ll just go around the world saying different things and seeing this and that and none of it’ll make any difference. You’ve seen the type. Out in the rain, just kind of rattling around in their bodies. But, it’s easy. This is the time for smiles and simple rhymes. Let’s see you smile.

(MRS. SWANSON smiles. He barely smiles.)

Great. Wow. Did you see? You made me smile, too. Let’s be honest, part of the whole great March of Humanity is just swinging your arms and walking, just smiling and moving forward. One other thing is: you never know. So be forgiving, of yourself, of him, of nature, everything. Nature is so insane, it’s so rough, and we’re just humans, just these chatty mammals with different names and colorful clothing. So, forgiveness, forgiveness and love, and you’re all set. Now, I’m speaking quickly, and I’m sure there’s a lot of huge gaps in my thinking. Apologies, I’m sorry, I make this speech a lot.

MRS. SWANSON. No, no, it’s great, it sounds completely unprepared. Thank you. I’m grateful for anything. It’s good to hear these things. (She rubs her eye.)