

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

Original Screenplay

by

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MONTAGE AS CREDITS ROLL

1) A BLONDE CURLY HAIREd BOY(4yrs)is learning to skateboard by letting go of his mother's hand at the top of a driveway.

2) BLONDE BOY(11ish) SURFING AT SUNSET. The lights of a SUV facing the ocean signal him to come in. He rides a wave into shore.

MADDY, his mother, an athletically built woman in English riding jodphers (early 30s), barefoot and wearing a tank top, hands him a plastic jug of water and a large towel. He wraps the towel around his hips, pulls off his wetsuit underneath it, pulls on shorts. Pours fresh water from the jug over his head, surfboard and wet-suit, drinks the last of the water. They both get back in a SUV and leave.

FADE IN:

EXT. SURFING CONTEST - CALIFORNIA COAST - DAY

TRAVIS, (17), blonde hair and blue eyed, is riding the face of a huge wave about six feet away from a competitor doing the same thing - trying to get in those last moves before the horn signals the heat is over. The competitor loses his balance and falls into the wave, his board flipping high as he is sucked under, his leash pulling the board after him like a kite at an angle towards Travis.

TRAVIS'S KNEE is T-boned by the side of the board, knocking him into the water. He YELLS OUT in pain.

UNDERWATER his leg is jerked and twisted even more, entangled by the leash.

His mother, MADDY screams and runs towards the water's edge as lifeguards on jet-skies race in to assist Travis.

His father, MAX, (blonde hair and blue eyes like his son), a cocky man in the middle of mid-life crisis, hasn't noticed because he is too busy flirting with gals in bikinis.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR is talking while holding up an X-RAY. Max and Maddy look at the X-RAY with him.

DOCTOR

Looks like a medial collateral ligament tear which often occurs as a result of a direct blow to the outside of the knee that pushes the knee sideways.

(to Travis)

Because there's considerable looseness in the knee, I'm going to ask for an MRI to see just how serious the tear is. Hopefully it is not completely torn.

MAX

What then?

DOCTOR

Depending on how much of a tear, I'll advise you as to what kind of surgery will be the best.

TRAVIS

How long will it take to heal?
Until I can surf?

DOCTOR

(to Travis)

Ah, I wouldn't recommend surfing at all for at least a year, son. Way too much pressure on the knee and ligaments. Ligaments and tendons just don't heal as fast as bone or muscle. They take a much longer time.

TRAVIS

(to Maddy)

Mom! I've got to be able to go to Australia! I'm rep'd with Quick Silver now! I've got to go!!

MADDY

I'm so sorry, hon.

MAX

Hey, they ain't going to drop you just 'cause you got hurt.

TRAVIS

Yeah, they are, Dad. Shit! Fuck!

MADDY

Don't cuss. Chin up. This is just one of those setbacks in life you're gonna have to learn to deal with. Gotta stay focused on the future. Concentrate on healing, then rehab, then you'll be back good as new before you know it.

MAX

Jesus. She think's you're one of her damn horses.

MADDY

(to Max)

You're free to go at any time. Don't you have a date waiting or something?

Max waves her off, gives his son a thumb's up, leaves.

INT. TRAVIS'S BEDROOM - DAY

There's shelves of surfing and soccer trophies. Surfing posters.

SOCCKER TEAM photo of boys holding up trophies. Travis stands out due to his surfer hair and deep tan.

Photo of Travis, wearing the winner's lei, shaking hands with a rep from Quicksilver. The other hand holds a National Championship trophy.

A disheveled Travis sits in a chair, his heavily bandaged and braced leg out in front of him. He's bored as hell, flipping through TV channels. Opens a pill bottle and pops a few in his mouth.

Maddy enters with a tray of food.

MADDY

Come on, let me take you somewhere. You need to get out of the house.

She notices the pill bottle.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Hope you aren't taking too many of those.

TRAVIS

I can't do a fucking thing. Might as well get stoned just sitting here.

MADDY

Don't cuss. You could be doing a lot of things. Like finishing up your school work so you can graduate.

TRAVIS

Just leave me alone, alright?

Maddy picks up the pill bottle and looks at how many are left in it.

MADDY

Well, I'm telling the doctor no more of these.

TRAVIS

What gives you the right? It's my knee, my pain.

MADDY

Because you're my son and I don't like seeing you like this.

TRAVIS

Can't help it that I'm now stuck with a fucked-up life.

MADDY

Stop cussing. You're life is not fucked up.

TRAVIS

Oh, really? The whole world knows my dad is horny son-of-a-bitch and you can't afford being on your own and I can't go to Australia and win decent money. Hell, I can't even surf. Or walk. I didn't even get to finish up on the soccer team, so there goes that scholarship. So yeah, I'd say I'm fucked. I'd say my life is genuinely fucked.

MADDY

That's it. I'm keeping these.

She leaves with the pill bottle.

INT. KITCHEN, MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a 1920's bungalow kitchen with modern appliances.

Travis limps in on crutches wearing a shirt and shorts, and one flip-flop, hair combed.

Maddy is taking food out of the oven, gives him a questioning look.

TRAVIS

Taking your advice. Jim's going to take me to go play pool. Mom... I'm gonna need some pain med before I go.

MADDY

Glad to see you up and moving. Sit and eat something first, then I'll give you one pill.

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Travis is leaning against a wall, pool cue in hand, with a zoned look.

TRIXIE, (mid 20's) comes over and leans against the wall beside him. She sports tatoos and a nose ring. A sultry hardcore punk, not ugly, but not pretty either. A prominent nipple ring pokes through a low cut tank top.

TRIXIE

Hey.

TRAVIS

Hey.

TRIXIE

You look kinda stoned.

TRAVIS

Hmmp.

TRIXIE

What'd you do to your leg?

TRAVIS

Fucked up my knee.

TRIXIE

That sucks. So what're you on? Oxycodone?

TRAVIS

Could be.

TRIXIE

Got any extra?

TRAVIS

Nope.

TRIXIE

Come on. Docs always give you tons extra like a two-three month supply.

TRAVIS

Well, I'm out.

TRIXIE

You need some more, just let me know. Or I can get you something even better than oxy. For just ten bucks a hit.

He leaves her to take his pool shot. She shrugs, leaves the pool room, looking back over her shoulder at him. He glances at her, then back at his shot.

JIM, his friend, also a surfer, indicates Travis's pool cue.

JIM

I'd keep that pole between you and that gal. She's trouble, dude. Dope dealer in with a bunch of bikers.

Travis doesn't seem to care one way or the other.

LATER

AS Jim and Travis leave the pool hall, Trixie bumps up against him, sticks something in shirt pocket, walks on.

INT. TRAVIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Travis drops his crutches, flops in his chair, turns on a lamp, reaches in his pocket. He pulls out a card with only a number on it. And a joint. A little grin. Opens his bedroom window, smokes the joint with deep inhales to sabotage his pain.

INT. KITCHEN , MADDY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Travis is frantically going through drawers and cabinets.

Maddy enters.

MADDY

Can I help you find something?

TRAVIS

Yeah! My fucking pills! I couldn't sleep at all last night. Mom, I need my fucking pills!

MADDY

Quit cussing.

She studies him, doesn't like what she sees.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I'm going to call your doctor.

TRAVIS

Just give me my fucking pills!

MADDY

No, I'm not going to do that, Travis. You can take some Ibuprofen but no more of those narcotic ones.

In a rage Travis pushes her, screams in her face.

TRAVIS

FUCK YOU! WHERE'D YOU PUT MY PILLS?

MADDY

Go back to your room. Now.

She's shocked, but tries her best not to show it. He stares at her, wild eyed, then limps off, uses his crutches to knock things over, until we hear the BANGING SHUT OF the front DOOR.

Maddy gets on her cell phone, then decides to go after him.

But is too late. He's picked up by a black van that cruises up in front of the house, side door open, so he can jump in on his butt before being pulled inside and the door slid shut. Trixie's in the passenger seat.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MADDY'S HOUSE - DAY

A MONTH LATER

Santa Barbara 1920'S bungalow house on a narrow street.

TRAVIS' curly blonde hair is so filthy its almost dreads. He's bare chested and burnt-tanned from being out in the elements too long. His shorts are faded and stained with a ripped pocket. He's barefoot, leaning on one crutch.

His eyes are drug-glazed. His agonized ranting is so loud NEIGHBORS have stepped out on their porches, cell phones to their ears, reporting the scene.

TRAVIS

What kind of fucking mother are you?!! Let me in! I'm your fucking son!

When there is no answer he picks up a landscape rock and throws it, hitting a window.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

FUUUCK YOU!!

Tears well in his eyes.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Mom! I'm fucking starving! Let me in! Give me some fucking food, some fucking money!

The front door opens and Maddy emerges with a plastic bag tied at the top. She has been crying. She tosses it out on the strip of lawn, not leaving the front porch.

The bag splits opens when it hits the ground. A loaf of bread and jars of peanut butter and jelly roll out.

When Travis starts to move towards her, she holds up a palm to stop him.

MADDY

You need to leave now and turn yourself in to the Salvation Army.

He pleads through tears.

TRAVIS

Mom...

MADDY

Please, Travis. They can help you.
They can help you get clean. I
can't.

LOW WHOOP of approaching patrol car.

INT. MAX'S CONDO - MORNING

Its the bachelor pad of a man obsessed with working out. A bike-machine and weight bench are in front of large plate glass windows.

There's triathlete magazines laying around and crumpled posters about meets.

Max, blue eyed, muscled, is busy in the kitchen in a sweat stained body shirt. Can of protein powder on the kitchen counter next to a messy blender and his cell phone. The phone rings. He picks it up, all cocky.

MAX

Say you're sorry and that you miss
me...

The person calling is not who he thinks it is. His face changes from being surprised to being back in control.

He listens for a bit.

MAX (CONT'D)

So what you're telling me is you
want me to baby-sit him until he
goes to court? Humph. Yeah, yeah I
know you have a restraining order.
Not exactly a motherly thing to
do, now is it?

He lights a burner and moves a frying pan over the flame.

MAX (CONT'D)

The way I see it, he's your
fucking mess. If he had lived with
me, he'd of never gotten into
drugs and fried his brain.

He cracks and fries eggs in the pan.

MAX (CONT'D)

So when're they releasing him?

INT. MAX'S CONDO - DAY

Max is working out on a stationary bike looking out over Santa Barbara's tile roofs.

Travis limps into the kitchen using just one crutch and opens the refrigerator. His knee is in a brace, his hair is washed and he's wearing clean shorts. He pulls out a jug of orange juice.

MAX

Help yourself.

Travis looks at his father, says nothing, returns to his room.

DOORBELL BUZZES

Max opens the door and faces TRIXIE.

Their eyes hold for a beat.

MAX (CONT'D)

What the hell? Why're you here?

TRIXIE

Fuck. I didn't know you lived you here.

Max raises his chin, frowns.

MAX

You need to leave.

TRIXIE

Dang, world's full of surprises ain't it? Is he okay?

MAX

Who?

TRIXIE

Come on. Travis.

MAX

How'd you know he was here?

TRIXIE

Address on the bond-out papers. Look, I need to talk to him.

MAX

Why?

TRIXIE

Because I do. Its important.

MAX

He's got court on Friday. Last thing he needs is someone like you coming around.

TRIXIE

(daring smile)

So search me.

Max eyeballs her, head to foot.

MAX

Take off the jacket, boots and belt. Leave them all out here. Turn your pants pockets inside out.

She does as directed. When she bends over to pull off her heavy biker boots, he eyes a tatoos disappearing down her butt crack along with a thong strap. She straightens and looks him in the eye.

TRIXIE

Anything else?

Max notices the nipple ring.

MAX

That new?

TRIXIE

Nope.

INT. CONDO - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Max opens the bedroom door.

MAX

Hey, son, you know a gal named Trixie?

Trixie enters the room barefoot, jacketless and beltless. Track marks visible on her arms.

TRIXIE

Hey.

Travis stares at her, stoned faced. Max notices.

MAX
Everything alright?

Travis barely nods. As Max goes to close the door;

TRAVIS
Leave it open.

Max scratches the back of his neck.

MAX
Okay.

He leaves the door open, walks down the hall.

TRAVIS
(to Trixie)
What the hell you want?

TRIXIE
You baby. I wanted to make sure
you were okay.

TRAVIS
How'd you know where I was?

TRIXIE
I always make it a point to know
where you are. You're my baby.

She starts approaching him.

TRAVIS
Stay the fuck away from me.

Trixie walks moodily around the room, touching stuff.

TRIXIE
I got some "E" up my twat.

TRAVIS
Get the hell outta here.

TRIXIE
What? You're clean for a week and
you're already too good for me?

She seductively crawls across the bed towards him.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)
Come on. I really miss you, baby.
Come on. Come to mamma.

She starts to reach down inside the front of her pants. Travis pushes her away so hard she falls backwards off the bed.

She scrambles to her feet and points a finger at him.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Fuck you, you little prick. Don't you realize I'm all you got? Even your mother doesn't want you around.

Travis stares at her, poker-faced.

Trixie rubs her stomach and gives him a sly smile.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Hey... Guess what? I think I got somethin' cooking in here.

Travis blinks, but doesn't move.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Think its a little surfer.

TRAVIS

Bull-shit.

Max has been listening a few feet down the hall. He moves in.

MAX

Okay, little lady. Time to leave.

TRIXIE

Ah, fuck-off. Both you pricks.

She heads down the hall.

Max follows her.

MUFFLED YELLING (O.S.)

FRONT DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

Max returns to the bedroom. Travis is looking out the window.

MAX

You actually fucked that HIV petri dish?

Travis stares at his father.

TRAVIS

Did you?

Max swells up, ready for a fight.

MAX

You fucking watch your mouth, boy.

TRAVIS

Wouldn't surprise me. She told me you buy 'roids from her.

MAX

She's a lying little bitch!

He leaves, SLAMMING the bedroom door. The FRONT DOOR SLAMS. Silence.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

Maddy and her two best friends, ANKA and SARAH, are jogging down the beach.

ANKA, is a professional bicyclist with a German accent. SARAH who is a bit chubby, panting and sweating, working hard to keep up. Sarah works at the same real estate company as Maddy. Maddy jogs in the middle.

SARAH

Any chance its just mid-life crisis? That you and Max might get back together? Then Travis...

Anka and Maddy stare at her like she's totally stupid and should shut up.

INT. JUVENILE COURTROOM HALLWAY - DAY

Travis sits on a bench a good distance away from his parents. He has on a knee brace and his crutch is beside him.

Max and Maddy are standing awkwardly outside the courtroom doors. Max is cocky.

MAX

(with a smirk)
So he never told you about Trixie.

MADDY

No.

MAX

Oh, wait 'til you meet her. She's
say, five-six years older
than'im. All tatted up. Got a
nipple ring. Doesn't that hurt?

Maddy ignores him.

Max nods towards Travis with a devilish smile.

MAX (CONT'D)

Think your baby boy's gettin' one
hell've a sex education.

MADDY

You're sick.

A COURT CLERK opens the doors and announces they can come
in.

INT. JUVENILE HALL VISITATION AREA - DAY

Several sets of parents and delinquents are sitting at
tables facing each other. Guards stand against the walls
observing.

Maddy is studying Travis across a table. His crutch is
visible.

MADDY

So, how are you doing in here?

TRAVIS

It sucks, but I feel better. Don't
know how I got so strung out.

MADDY

Well, according to your father,
hanging out with a drug dealer
sure didn't help.

Travis shakes his head and shrugs.

TRAVIS

I quit seeing her.

MADDY

How's the counseling going?

TRAVIS

Okay. She says I got hit with too
much at one time.

MADDY

How's that?

TRAVIS

Uh, I don't know. Dad and the divorce. Not being able to go to Australia. *I* should have gone, Mom, not Shawn!! And then not being able to play soccer in the State Finals.

MADDY

Still, Quick Silver signed you and you still might be able to get a soccer scholarship.

TRAVIS

Mom, I wanted to go to Australia!

Maddy nods, regretfully agreeing. Then her eyes change. She's thinking about something deep, lays sad eyes on her son.

MADDY

I'm sorry I wasn't there for you more - during the divorce. It's just...

TRAVIS

Its okay, Mom. I understand.

She avoids his eyes.

MADDY

Guess we both got blind-sided.

TRAVIS

So how are you doing? You still going to counseling?

MADDY

Yes. Yes, I am.

TRAVIS

What's your shrink say?

MADDY

That your dad's narcissistic. That he's scared to death of getting old. She thinks he might be taking steroids too, which would explain his behavior lately.

TRAVIS

Well, I kinda figured that.

She looks her son in the eye.

MADDY

And she thinks he's jealous of you.

TRAVIS

What??

MADDY

He's never won a first place trophy - ever. Even after all the stuff he's competed in. And he's never gotten all the attention you get - especially from girls.

TRAVIS

That's twisted. Fucking ridiculous.

MADDY

No, I've seen him watching girls talk to you.

TRAVIS

That's fucked up.

MADDY

Quit cussing. Yeah, it is.

A guard signals its time for her to leave. As she's leaving, Travis timidly touches her hand.

TRAVIS

Thanks for coming, Mom.

MADDY

I'll make you a deal. You stay clean for a year after you get out, and I'll take you to Australia.

He nods and smiles. He loves her.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

There is an "OPEN HOUSE" sign with a hand-painted extra line. "EVERYTHING INSIDE FOR SALE". The front door is wide open. People are carrying out chairs, dishes, wall art, lamps.

INT. MADDY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah is looking around an empty living room. Anka is counting cash on a kitchen counter. The kitchen cabinets are open exposing empty shelves.

Maddy sits on the floor with her back against the wall drinking a glass of wine.

SARAH

This is SO crazy.

ANKA

It's called getting rid of old baggage. Starting new. I think its great.

SARAH

So when do the renters move in?

MADDY

Monday. Thank God. I thought for sure I was going to loose this place.

ANKA

You couldn't just sell it?

MADDY

Not until the market picks up. Until this recession is over.

SARAH

Well I like your new place.

MADDY

Actually I do too. Thank God for Farley arranging it.

EXT. EMPLOYEE CABIN ON A HIGH-END HORSE FARM - SANTA BARBARA FOOTHILLS - EVENING

Wood cabin with a front porch nestled among eucalyptus trees.

Sara, Anka and Maddy are sitting on the steps sipping wine and watching horses romp in padlocks below.

SARAH

(checking her wine
glass)

You always have these glasses?
Their nice.

Sara nods.

ANKA

Still thinking about that European stable tour?

MADDY

Yes! Now that the mortgage's covered, I can get my credit cards paid off. Then I go.

ANKA

Well, you more than deserve a break. I have a bike race in France in June and another one in Italy in July. Maybe we can meet up.

MADDY

That would be great.

SARAH

What about Travis? When does he get out?

MADDY

I've talked to his parole officer. He'll be 18 when he is released so it doesn't matter if I'm gone or not. Then he has to stay in a half-way rehab house for another six months or go to the Salvation Army rehab program. He leaves either place, he goes to jail - as an adult.

ANKA

Its all such a damn shame. He was such a cool kid.

MADDY

He still is.

SARAH

At least you'll be able to relax a bit now.

MADDY

Yeah. There's something to be said for knowing your kid has three hots and a cot.

She stands to leave.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Look, I got to go. I have an Alanon meeting in an hour.

SARAH

What exactly are those?

MADDY

It's to help people who have to deal with people who use and abuse.

ANKA

Did they tell you its okay to bitch-slap the little sucker when he back-talks and cusses?

MADDY

(chuckles)

No, they focus more on me not going insane trying to fix him.

SARAH

That must be hard.

MADDY

It is. You have no idea how hard it is to watch your own kid literally destroy himself and not be able to do anything. Your natural instinct is to rescue him, but you can't, 'cause it'll only makes matters worse 'cause they'll just keep on continuing to use. Gotta let them hit bottom.

SARAH

I don't want ever to be a mother. Not in these days and times.

MADDY

It's just nice being around other people who know what its like to deal with drug drama. Its so damn draining. Anyway, I gotta go.

SARAH

What're you doing tomorrow?

MADDY

Working around here after I get off work.

EXT. RANCH CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Maddy pulls up in front of her cabin in her SUV with Mc Cloud Real Estate logo signs on the doors. She enters the cabin wearing a business skirt and heels. She comes out in Levis and boots with her hair pulled back.

She heads for a large barn and picks up a mucking rake as she enters.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Upon entering the barn, a wiry fellow smiles at her. He wears a plaid golf hat and has wise eyes and an English accent. This is FARLEY, the total opposite of Max. He's rubbing down a horse in a stall.

MADDY

Hey, Farley.

FARLEY

Hey, Maddy.

As Maddy rakes straw and manure in the adjoining empty stall.

MADDY

Thanks again for helping me get this place and job.

FARLEY

Sure enough. Damsels in distress are my forte.

MADDY

Getting that house off my back was a huge relief.

FARLEY

How's your boy doing?

MADDY

Whole lot better.

(smiles)

Can't do much harm in juvenile hall.

Farley smiles at her through stall bars.

Maddy pauses, looks at Farley. She's about to say something, but resumes raking.

FARLEY

All I can say is when a yearling goes rogue, it takes a lot of patience to bring him back around. But it can be done.

They work in silence for a beat.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

The Wiley's got you just mucking for rent or they gonna let you ride for them?

MADDY

This Saturday I'm supposed to show them what I can do. Then they want to talk to me about teaching classes.

FARLEY

Great. Just don't ride Earth Angle or Buckeye. All the rest are pretty decent.

MADDY

Thanks.

She rolls a wheelbarrow of manure out of the stall.

INT. JUVENILE HALL - DAY

When Maddy enters the room she notices MRS. PRESTON, a heavy-set woman whose blouse buttons strain under an ill-fitting suit jacket. Mrs. Preston tries her best to come across as being professional, but there's an inherent element of low self-esteem which causes inadequacy. Mrs. Preston sits across from Travis. Travis looks ill.

Maddy hurries to their table.

MADDY

What's wrong?

Mrs. Preston indicates for her take a seat and holds out a hand.

MRS. PRESTON

Hi, I'm Mrs. Preston with C-P-S.

MADDY

CPS?

They shake hands. Maddy sits.

MRS. PRESTON
 Child Protective Services. It
 seems your son has been named a
 potential father.

MADDY
 (stares at Travis)
What?

TRAVIS
 Mom, she's a lying, manipulating,
 bitch. There's no way!

MRS. PRESTON
 Excuse me?

TRAVIS
 (to social worker)
 Not you. Trixie.

MADDY
 Who is Trixie?

AGENT
 Her real name is Tina Medina.

Maddy now remembers the name.

MADDY
 Oh, my God.

TRAVIS
 Look, Mom. She's lying. There's no
 way! She mostly gave me blow jobs.
 I mean, I fucked her only a couple
 times. I was too afraid of getting
 AIDS from that skank.

Maddy takes an embarrassed breath, looks away. The social
 worker shrugs.

MRS. PRESTON
 You just admitted you had sex.

Travis rubs his forehead.

TRAVIS
 Shit! I can't believe this is
 happening. Fuck!

He hits the table. The Social Worker waves off a
 responding guard.

MADDY

When is the baby due?

MRS. PRESTON

In about six months. Once its here, we'll do DNA tests.

MADDY

Test"s"? Like in plural?

MRS. PRESTON

There are two other men. One is black, the other Hispanic.

MADDY

Travis's only seventeen. Isn't that statutory rape? Isn't she a lot older? How old is she?

TRAVIS

(interrupts)

Jesus, Mom.

MRS. PRESTON

Legally, yes, it would be statutory rape. She's twenty five. But...

MADDY

So we file charges against her.

MRS. PRESTON

You could. But you'd only be adding to a very long list of outstanding charges that young woman has.

TRAVIS

I told you. She's a liar, a thief and a druggie. You can't believe anything Trixie says. Nothing!

MRS. PRESTON

So I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

Visitation time is up. A guard escorts Travis out.

MADDY

Now what?

Mrs. Preston leans over the table.

MRS. PRESTON

If the baby is born with drugs in its system, which my guess will be the case, then Child Protection Services will immediately remove the child from the mother and the mother loses her maternal rights. That makes the child a Ward of the State. At that point, the baby will be put into foster care and later be put up for adoption if the mother cannot get clean and get a job.

Maddy is stunned.

MONTAGE of SIX MONTHS PASSING

- 1) HORSE ARENA. Maddy is jumping a horse while MR. AND MRS. WILEY, wealthy socialites, along with several other high-end people, watch from a grandstand. They nod to each other, liking what they see.
- 2) JUVENILE HALL VISITATION AREA: Maddy is showing Travis pictures of her jumping. They smile as they talk.
- 3) HORSE RANCH MAILBOX: Maddy hops around excitedly when she finds her passport in the mailbox. She rushes to show Farley.
- 4) JUVENILE HALL. Maddy hands Travis a stack of surfing magazines. He skims the covers, then stops on one. His face contorts. He angrily throws it across the room which prompts a guard to lead him out of the visitation area. Maddy picks up the magazine. CLOSE ON surfer riding a big wave with the title SANTA BARBARA's Shawn McKenie wins the World Title.
- 5) RANCH CABIN - CHRISTMAS: Maddy, Sarah, Anka and Farley are drinking hot toddies around the pot-belly stove in Maddy's cabin. There's a miniature CHRISTMAS TREE on a table behind them. Farley and Maddy are sitting together on the couch, interacting like close, but still platonic friends.
- 6) JUVENILE HALL VISITATION AREA: Maddy hands Travis an obviously pre-screened and opened Christmas present. Its a shoe box and inside is an IOU Surf Trip to Australia. They hug.
- 8) BEACH. Maddy, Anka and Sarah are jogging in wet sand at sunset. Maddy stops to watch the silhouette of a young surfer catching a wave. Her eyes tear. Anka puts an arm around her shoulder.

EXT. PIER RESTURANT, SANTA BARBARA - DAY

The girls are out on a deck eating salads and drinking white wine. They're wearing running clothes.

ANKA

Uh-oh.

They all turn. Max approaches holding the hand of a much too young sexy DATE.

MAX

What's this. The dike-jogger table?

MADDY

What the hell is wrong with you?

MAX

Absolutely nothing. Life is good.
In fact, life is fabulous.

He grins like a salesman showing off his latest model.

The young lady is leery of his antics. She starts to pull away, but he tightens his grip, rubs an itchy nose.

MAX (CONT'D)

(to date)

Dear, may I present to you my ex-wife, Madeline or Maddy.

(whispers in date's ear)

She prefers horses to men.

(smiles at Anka)

And this is Anka.

(whispers and winks)

She prefers bicycle seats.

(smiles at Sarah)

And this is Sarah.

(whispers)

She prefers, hell? What is it you prefer, Sarah?

SARAH

For you to get the hell outta here.

Max bows. With a sarcastic smile;

MAX

Gladly.
(indicates their
food)
Enjoy.

He strolls off with his date, who glances over her
shoulder back at the women.

SARAH

Jesus.

ANKA

(frowning)
He's doing coke.

MADDY

What?

ANKA

He's doing coke. Cocaine.

SARAH

Oh, my God.

MADDY

How can you tell?

ANKA

Believe me, I can tell. He's a
bonafide player in the Santa
Barbara singles game now.

MADDY

He never even asked about Travis.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Maddy is rubbing down a horse, lost in thought, jaws
clenching.

FARLEY (O.S.)

What's wrong?

She flinches, which makes the horse shy a bit.

MADDY

I didn't see you.

FARLEY

I noticed. So what's happened?

MADDY

Some twenty-five year old druggy biker bitch named "Trixie" thinks Travis is the father of her baby.

FARLEY

(guffs)

Shit!

(more serious)

What's he think?

MADDY

I don't know. He says no. Plus there's two other guys. A black guy and a Mexican.

FARLEY

Well, Miss Trixie's definitely not prejudice.

MADDY

Travis says that's because she turns tricks for drug money. Hinch her name.

FARLEY

I didn't think Travis had any money.

MADDY

He doesn't. That's what worries me. I wonder if its Travis she wants and the only way to keep him around is to keep him hooked.

FARLEY

Travis is a long way from being a boy-toy.

Maddy quits grooming. She looks over the horse's back at Farley.

MADDY

I hear she's a bad one, Farley. Like in *really, really* bad.

Farley thinks while chewing on a strand of straw.

FARLEY

Damn, girl. Sure hope you don't try to clean up this mess for him.

MADDY

Farley, stop.

FARLEY

Sorry. I probably should'a kept my mouth shut.

He heads for the barn exit, stops and calls back.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

Maddy girl, what you need is to look forward to something good coming your way for a change. When you leaving for Europe?

MADDY

I'm waiting on an escrow to close.

FARLEY

Great. Promise me your ass is going to be on a plane as soon as that deal closes.

MADDY

I promise.

INT. HOSPITAL - NEONATAL ICU - DAY

Maddy is staring into a glassed-in room where a tiny BABY is hooked up to all sorts of tubes in an incubator. Monitors blink and beep.

A NURSE comes up beside Maddy. They both keep their eyes on the baby.

NURSE

You the grandmother?

MADDY

I don't know. Is she Mexican or black.

NURSE

White. I take it you're not Trixie's mother.

MADDY

For God's sake, no.

NURSE

Lucky you. They really ought to have a law for gals like her. I say if they've got more'an one kid out of wedlock and don't have a job, snip. And if they're a drug user, snip for sure.

MADDY

You know her? This Trixie?

NURSE

Afraid so. This is her third or fourth kid, and each time they're worse off. Believe me, we've thought about doing some accidental-on-purpose things to stop this from happening again.

Maddy indicates the baby.

MADDY

Does she have a name?

NURSE

Justine.

MADDY

Is she going to make it? What's wrong with her?

NURSE

Trixie's white blood cell count was sky high when she went into labor due to an infected injection site. So she was put on antibiotics and Dr. Leo, the pediatrician, tested Justine right away and found the baby has bacterial spinal meningitis. She'll be in here for at least two weeks, maybe a month. We'll be switching out antibiotics and watching her closely.

MADDY

That is so wrong. So - damn - wrong. Can't somebody force her to use birth control or get her tubes tied?

NURSE

Nope. She's got her human rights and she'd have to get a prescription to get birth control - addicts don't like doctor appointments outside of trying to get pain meds. It's too hard for them to find transportation or remember their appointment times plus their Medicaid cards are usually outdated.

The nurse looks at Maddy with tired eyes.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Besides, girls like Trixie,
they're usually too loaded to
remember to take their birth
control pills or even use a
condom. Never enters their wasted
brains.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Trixie is in a hospital bed with an IV stuck in her arm. An arm restraint keeps her arm straight and strapped to the side rail of the bed. She's sweating and looks like hell.

Maddy enters.

TRIXIE
What the fuck you looking at lady?

MADDY
You.

TRIXIE
Get the hell outta here. I don't
know you.

MADDY
No, you don't. And quite frankly I
wish I didn't have to meet you.

TRIXIE
You some shrink? No, I know what
you are. You're one of those
fucking social workers wanting to
steal my baby.

MADDY
And you're one of those pathetic
excuses for a human being who
doesn't give a goddamn about what
she does to her babies. They're
just collateral damage, right? You
don't really give a fuck about
them, do you?

Tears flood Trixie's eyes.

TRIXIE
I do care about her. I didn't do
smack or nothin' heavy with her.
(MORE)

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Please don't take her. I want a family with her daddy. We'll make a good family. Her daddy's a really nice guy. The best guy I've ever met. You've gotta believe me.

MADDY

This wonderful 'daddy' have a name?

TRIXIE

His name's Travis. He's different. He's a surfer.

Maddy stares hard at the tattooed mess.

MADDY

Really? How do you know its not Mr. Rodriguez or maybe Mr. James or Mr. Madison? Or maybe there's some others you were too fucked up to remember?

TRIXIE

(smiles)

Oh, no, it's Travis 'cause Justine's white and bald like blonde babies are. She's gonna be beautiful, just like her daddy, a beautiful blonde with blue eyes.

Maddy just stares at Trixie, livid. She leans over the girl and with eyes and voice of steel;

MADDY

You *stay* away from my son - or I'll make sure you get prosecuted for every goddamn thing you've got pending. Including statutory rape, aiding the delinquency of a minor, selling drugs to a minor, etcetera. Then I'll be coming after you for child neglect and cruelty regarding my granddaughter ending up in the nick-you.

TRIXIE

You don't scare me, bitch.

MADDY

Well, you don't scare me either, *bitch*.

Maddy gives Trixie a lethal look before leaving.

SARAH

Okay. Sorry. I'll swing out by your place tomorrow. I'll bring a couple bottles of wine.

Maddy nods, stoned faced. Sarah steers her bike away.

INT. JUVENILE HALL - DAY

Mother and son are staring at each other across a table.

MADDY

How'd you meet her?

There's a beat of silence.

TRAVIS

At the pool hall.

She waits for him to expound, but he doesn't.

MADDY

When you stayed at your dad's, did you ever think he might be doing coke?

TRAVIS

What? Steroids, yeah, cause he likes being all buffed out, but coke? I dunno.

MADDY

Anka thinks so.

TRAVIS

Well, coke and 'roids go together if you like fuc. . .

He checks himself.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Sorry.

MADDY

Its okay.

TRAVIS

So? She had the baby yet?

Maddy stares at her son, her eyes revealing the truth before her mouth does.

MADDY

Its a she and her name is Justine.

TRAVIS

You've seen her?!

Maddy nods.

MADDY

Sort-of. She's in the nick-you.
Neonatal ICU.

TRAVIS

What's that?

MADDY

Intensive care unit for babies.

TRAVIS

Fuck that bitch. (beat) Do you
think she could be mine?

MADDY

Don't cuss. Could be.

Travis's face is a slide show of emotion; Shock, anger, and then he becomes suddenly paternally protective. He pleads.

TRAVIS

Mom, you've got to keep Trixie
away from her. I've seen how she
treats kids.

(hushed voice)

Trixie's legs are covered in
cigarette burns from her mother.
Now she's like that. She hates her
kids.

Maddy closes her eyes at the horror of the image, then stares silently at her man/child, wondering how the hell he was so stupid to get caught up in such a mess.

MADDY

A social worker's on it.

INT. MADDY'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

There's a RAP on Maddy's office entrance. Maddy looks up. Its Mrs. Preston. Maddy indicates for her to sit.

Mrs. Preston pulls out a file and lays it on the desk.

MRS. PRESTON
I'm here to give you an update.

MADDY
Okay?

MRS. PRESTON
The State can't take custody of
the baby. Of Justine.

MADDY
Why not? I thought you said...

SOCIAL WORKER
(interrupts)
Because Trixie was running a fever
when she came in, and they
discovered sepsis from a dirty
needle, she was given medications
right away so no drug test was
done. And, consequently the baby
also received antibiotics and
fluids so no drug test was done on
her either.

MADDY
What the hell? But you - they -
know damn well Trixie is an
addict! Just look at her arms!!

Mrs. Preston shrugs.

MADDY (CONT'D)
So now what?

SOCIAL WORKER
Once the baby is released from the
hospital, she goes home with her
mother.

MADDY
*You - have got - to be - kidding
me! That is so damn wrong. How
stupid are you?!*

Mrs. Preston's body language indicates there is nothing
she can do.

MADDY (CONT'D)
What about the DNA test?

MRS. PRESTON

We're waiting. That department is always backed up. Sometimes it can take weeks.

Maddy closes her eyes, shakes her head, taps her pencil on the desk. When she opens her eyes, she hisses through clenched jaws.

MADDY

How can you possibly let that child go home with Trixie? I think you better leave.

Mrs. Preston picks up the file and leaves.

INT. JUVENILE HALL VISITATION AREA - DAY

Travis is limp-pacing on his crutch. Maddy is sitting across the table watching him.

TRAVIS

I gotta get out of here. My daughter cannot go home with that bitch!

MADDY

Stop it!

(calmer)

There's nothing you or I can do until that DNA test comes back, until we can prove she is your child. Now you stay cool and you stay calm. I'll let you know everything that happens.

(points a finger)

You've only got two more weeks. Don't blow it, Travis. Don't blow it!

INT. NEONATAL ICU - DAY

Maddy is looking forlornly through the glass.

The incubator is EMPTY.

INT. HORSE BARN - MORNING

FARLEY

Hey.

Maddy, lying in an empty stall, opens her eyes. She's been sleeping with a BORDER COLLIE. There's empty wine bottles around her. She's hung over.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

Aren't you a little old for this?
Come on, get up. You'll be fired
in a second if anybody sees that
glass in here.

Maddy crawls to her knees and starts picking up bottles. She makes her way past Farley to a trash can.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

Don't put 'em in there. Take 'em
up to your place. And take a
shower while you're at it.

EXT. TRAINING RINK - DAY

Farley is lunging a horse. He sees Maddy watching him from the fence. She's changed clothes and has a mug of coffee. He releases the horse and joins her.

Farley's elbows drape over the fence from inside the arena, while Maddy's drape over from the outside. He waits for her to speak.

MADDY

I'm so freaking tired of all this
ugly shit happening. I can't
handle it anymore.

FARLEY

Then get away. Go. Leave.

MADDY

I can't.

FARLEY

Yes, you can.

Tears roll down Maddy's cheeks as she tries to sip coffee.

MADDY

I can't. It wouldn't be the right
thing to do.

FARLEY

"All good deeds never go
unpunished."

MADDY

She's just a little tiny baby. I can't leave knowing...

FARLEY

You don't know anything for sure.
Now go on, take a month off. Get the hell outta here. Deal with it all when you come back.

He touches her shoulder.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

You need a break, Maddy. That boy of yours has worn you out.

Farley walks down to the gate, passes through it, re-locks it and comes around to Maddy's side.

He holds her by the shoulders and looks her in the eye.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

Leave. Go check out de Ruiter's. See what the Netherlands are like. It'll blow your mind.

MADDY

(weak smile)

I forgot you've been there.

FARLEY

Damn right. I spent four years over there.

MADDY

You're right. I do need a break. I'll tell Travis tomorrow that I'm leaving for awhile.

She hugs him. He hugs her back. He slaps her lightly on the butt.

FARLEY

Now go on, get.

EXT. JUVENILE HALL - DAY

Maddy takes a deep breath outside the front doors, then enters.

INT. JUVENILE HALL

Once inside the visitation area, Maddy stops dead in her tracks.

MADDY

Oh, no. No, no!

Trixie is smiling and talking to Travis.

Travis is holding the baby in his arms, a very proud father.

Maddy tries to compose herself before approaching the table.

MADDY (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing here?

TRIXIE

I think that's pretty obvious.

MADDY

Get the hell out of here!

Maddy points at the door.

A MALE JUVENILE DELINQUENT at another table makes noises and laughs out loud while pointing.

JUVENILE DELINQUENT

Cat fight. Cat fight.

GUARDS approach. Trixie smirks.

TRIXIE

Sorry lady, but your darling son has a right to see his own kid.

Travis looks at them both, holding the baby close.

TRAVIS

Mom, its alright.

Maddy looks at him like she can't believe it, then leaves furious.

INT. SANTA BARBARA AIRPORT - DAY

Maddy is sitting in the upstairs restaurant with views of the tarmac. There's a HORSE MAGAZINE on the table beside her, but she has no interest in it. Her eyes are on BABIES traveling with loving parents.

CELL PHONE RINGS. At first she doesn't realize its hers, then hurriedly digs it out of her purse.

MADDY

Mc Cloud Real Estate, this is Madeline. How may I help you?

The loud speaker ANNOUNCES GATES and FLIGHTS. Maddy has a hard time hearing.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I can't hear you.

She hurriedly leaves the table, rushes down the stairs and out the front doors.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. Now what?

Maddy strains to hear as a plane flies in overhead.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I didn't get all that. She was in a car wreck?! Oh my God. Is she okay? Where is she? Which hospital? Okay. Okay. I'm on my way. Don't let *anybody* take her. I'll be right there...

She rushes back up the stairs and grabs her purse.

On the way out the doors past the reservation counters, she calls over her shoulder to the Delta attendant.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I'm Madeline Singleton. Cancel my flight and hold my luggage. I'll be back for it. My granddaughter was just in a car accident.

COUNTER ATTENDANT acknowledges she heard her.

FOLLOW

Maddy running across the parking lot.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM WAITING AREA - DAY

Maddy is coming down a hall carrying the baby. Next to her, carrying the carrier, is the nurse from NICU.

EXT. RANCH CABIN - NIGHT

Parked outside is Anka's four-wheel drive SUV with her racing bike mounted on top, Maddy's SUV with its real estate logo and Sarah's sedan with the same real estate logo magnetized to its doors. FEMALE LAUGHTER and the warm lights of home filter through the front screen door.

INT. RANCH CABIN - NIGHT

The women are sitting around a very tiny Justine who is sleeping in a towel padded dresser drawer that's been placed in the middle of the room. They are holding up baby items for all to see as they pull them out of a WalMart bag.

Sara holds up a cute outfit.

SARAH

I thought this was adorable.

ANKA

It looks way too small.

Sarah checks the tag.

SARAH

It says Newbie.

ANKA

Well it looks like a premie.

Maddy stacks cans of formula and opens a pack of bottles.

MADDY

How can they really make fake breast milk?

ANKA

Don't ask me.

SARAH

Did you breast feed Travis?

MADDY

Yes. Yes, I did.

Baby Justine starts fidgeting. Maddy jumps up with the can of formula and one of the bottles. Goes to the kitchen.

The baby starts CRYING. Sarah picks up Justine and walks around the room trying to sooth her, but its not working.

She tries bouncing her a bit while patting her on the back.

Anka is amused and shakes her head.

SARAH

Well then, here, you try.

ANKA

No way. She might bite my very expensive boobs and make'em leak.

Maddy comes to the rescue with a full bottle.

MADDY

Well thank you guys for all this. First thing tomorrow I'll get a car seat for her carrier and I guess a bassinet or something.

CONTINUOUS TO EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Maddy carries baby Justine out on the porch where there's a rocking chair. With the baby in the crook of her arm, Maddy coos while rocking and feeding her. The look on Maddy's face is pure maternal adoration under the porch light.

Night breezes rustle the eucalyptus leaves.

Sarah and Anka, with full wine glasses, come out and sit on steps near her.

ANKA

So what's next, Maddy?

MADDY

I don't know.

ANKA

You know, you're too old to be raising a baby.

SARAH

Maybe they'll let you choose the parents you want her to have. Give you the final vote.

MADDY

I don't know, I just want her to be loved and safe.

SARAH

Well at least Social Services can -
for sure this time - take away
Trixie's rights. I mean she took
out a chain-link fence at nine in
the morning, for Christsake.

ANKA

Are you going to tell Travis you
have the baby?

MADDY

Yeah, I'll tell him.

ANKA

Ah, Maddy. I wouldn't get too
attached or make any promises -
you and I both know adoption is
the best thing in this situation.

Anka looks around the farm while figuring out the best
way to say this:

ANKA (CONT'D)

If you interfere, Trixie and
Travis are both gonna make your
life miserable. Totally miserable.
Forever. I can promise you that.

SARAH

(to Maddy)

You think Travis will get back
with that druggie?

MADDY

(rocking)

I hope not.

(looking at the baby)

I just want her to be safe and
loved.

Maddy kisses the baby's cheek.

EXT. RANCH CABIN - MORNING

Maddy is dressed for real estate work, coming out the
door with the baby in the carrier when she HEARS
MOTORCYCLES.

Down the hill, six-to-eight choppers roll onto the ranch,
coming up the main entrance under a line of pepper trees.
The RUMBLE of their engines spooks the horses in the
padlocks.

FOLLOW

Maddy rushes back into the cabin and sets the baby behind her bed on the floor against a far wall.

She re-emerges empty-handed on the porch except for her purse, cell phone in her right hand, keys in the other.

The bikes roll up around her car. One of the bikes has a side-car with a baby seat in it. The men kill their engines. UNCLE ACE, an older biker, gets off his bike (ORANGE FLAMES on gas tank) and walks around her car, peering in the windows while tapping a piece of iron pipe he carries against his thigh.

MADDY

Who are you? And what the hell do you want?

UNCLE ACE

My niece's baby.

MADDY

What? Why would I have her baby? If she's missing, go ask Social Services.

UNCLE ACE

Trixie says you took the kid.

Maddy gives Uncle Ace one of her steely looks, shakes her head like he is crazy.

The other men just stare at her, poker faced. Pit bulls ready to attack.

Maddy raises her hands like she gives up.

MADDY

(exasperated with no fear)

Come on guys, leave. Before Mr. Wiley or his staff sics the cops on you for trespassing.

Maddy moves down the front steps, keys poised to unlock her car door.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Tell Trixie she needs to talk to Mrs. Preston in Child Protection Services. If anybody took her, it would be them.

Maddy gets in her car. She hits the lock button, then partially rolls down her window.

MADDY (CONT'D)

(to Uncle Ace)

Do you mind? I gotta be at work in fifteen minutes.

Ace nods to the boys behind her.

She starts backing her car. The bikes behind her roll out of the way. She drives down the hill and out the front gates.

The bikes follow. They roar past her on the straight-away.

Once they are out-of-sight, she slams on the brakes and makes a U-turn.

INT. RANCH CABIN - DAY

Maddy runs through the cabin into the bedroom. She flops over the bed to retrieve the baby. She's not there!

She notices the window is half-opened.

Maddy panics. She runs out onto the porch and looks around.

Farley's WHISTLE (O.C.)

EXT. BARN - DAY

Farley is holding up the baby carrier with the baby in it at the rear entrance of the barn.

EXT. RANCH CABIN - DAY

Maddy lets out a sigh of relief and acknowledges him right before her eyes dart to the left.

Mr. Wiley is hurriedly walking towards the cabin with his second-in-command. Neither look happy.

In b.g. Farley disappears into the barn with the baby.

When Mr. Wiley is a few feet away, he booms;

MR. WILEY

May I ask what that was all about?

MADDY
Just a mix-up, sir.

MR. WILEY
May I ask what kind of mix-up?

MADDY
They thought somebody else was staying here, sir.

MR. WILEY
Really, Ms. Singleton? I've never had motorcycles on my property before. Not ever. And quite frankly I don't wish to ever see them here again. Therefore, I am asking you to leave. I'll give you until next weekend. Is that understood?

MADDY
Mr. Wiley, sir...

MR. WILEY
(interrupts)
Is that understood?

Maddy closes her eyes in disbelief.

MADDY
Yes, sir, but...

MR. WILEY
I hadn't reckoned on a woman your age having dealings with hoodlums like that.

MADDY
I don't, sir.

She bites her lower lip.

MADDY (CONT'D)
Will I still be riding for you, sir?

MR. WILEY
I'll have to think on that. I can't afford any of my staff even remotely having contact with people associated with crime.

MADDY

Mr. Wiley, you have got to believe me. I do not know any of those men. I really don't.

Mr. Wiley waves her to be quiet as he turns and walks away.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Farley hands over the baby. His eyes reveal how displeased he is with her. He shakes his head and walks away.

INT. MADDY'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

While bottle feeding the baby, Maddy is trying to talk on the phone.

MADDY

Yes, Mrs. Wilson, I know you have a year lease, but I really need to move back in. Look, I'll give you back both first and last month rent, okay?

While still listening to the upset woman on the phone, she lifts the baby into a burp position on her shoulder and pats its back.

MADDY (CONT'D)

How about this? I'll throw in an extra five hundred bucks. . . Great. Deal then? Alright, Mrs. Wilson, and I am really sorry. I never, ever, thought I'd need to be moving back so soon.

INT. MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maddy and the baby are lying on blankets in the middle of an empty living room. There are a few cardboard boxes sitting next to them along with a stack of business clothes on hangers. A cell phone, lying next to them with the flashlight feature on, is their only source of light.

Maddy is playing with the baby, tickling her feet, nosing her, and smiling.

MADDY

Don't you worry, little girl, I got you.

EXT. SANTA BARBARA RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Anka is cruising on her bicycle down a narrow street when she passes a yard sale. She suddenly brakes and turns around. She pulls into the yard, unclips her feet from the pedals, dismounts, and takes off her sunglasses.

ANKA

Maddy!

Maddy is walking around with the baby in a front sling while inspecting a baby crib and other miscellaneous baby items.

MADDY

Hi.

ANKA

What the hell are you doing?

MADDY

Trying to find some cheap baby stuff.

ANKA

Are you nuts?! Stop it. Jesus, Maddy.

MADDY

I gotta get the basics, Anka.

Anka removes her bike helmet and wipes her forehead, trying to figure out what to say.

ANKA

Dammit, you've got enough on your plate. Don't do this. That baby is not your responsibility.

MADDY

Anka, I realize you don't have a clue about maternal instinct, but this baby didn't get to choose her parents. And right now she is not in a safe place and doesn't have anybody. Nobody. Nobody at all.

Anka puts back on her helmet and sunglasses, takes a swig of water from her water-bottle and mounts the bike.

ANKA
Whatever, Maddy. Whatever.

She rides off.

INT. MADDY'S HOUSE - DAY

BABY ROOM. There's nothing in it save a crib, cheap stroller and a baby swing. Maddy is putting a sheet on the crib mattress. Justine is in the music swing watching an attached mobile turn.

DOORBELL RINGS

Maddy frowns. She wasn't expecting any one. She lifts the baby out of the swing.

FOLLOW as she and walks through the empty house to the front door.

She opens an old fashion peek door and looks through a small grate.

Mrs. Preston and TWO OFFICERS are standing outside.

Maddy opens the door.

MRS. PRESTON
May we come in?

MADDY
Sure.

Maddy opens the door. Upon entering the empty living room and glancing around, Mrs. Preston frowns and gestures.

MRS. PRESTON
You going somewhere?

MADDY
Oh, ah, no. Actually I'm in the process of moving back in.

MRS. PRESTON
Oh. Well before you do that, we need to talk.

She looks around. There's no table or chairs.

MADDY

Sorry.
(eyeing the two
officers)
What's this about?

MRS. PRESTON

You had no right to remove the
baby from the hospital.

MADDY

I didn't? They called me to come
get her.

MRS. PRESTON

The hospital should have called us
first. Legally, you are not
related at this time. And
secondly,
(takes a deep breath)
We have to return the baby.

MADDY

*What?! Are you insane? You can't
do that. For God's sake, that
woman almost killed Justine.*

MRS. PRESTON

The report states it was an
accident due to a flat tire.
That's why Miss Medina was unable
to properly navigate the turn.
Secondly, the baby was in a proper
carrier and was properly secured.

MADDY

Yeah? And what about "Miss
Medina's" blood test? What'd that
say?

MRS. PRESTON

She hadn't been drinking.

MADDY

I didn't ask about a breath test,
I asked about a BLOOD test.

MRS. PRESTON

There was no blood test done.

MADDY

You aren't really going to return
this baby to that woman?

MRS. PRESTON
I'm afraid I have to. Now,
please, you need to hand me the
baby.

Maddy coldly eyes the woman.

MADDY
No.

MRS. PRESTON
Then you face arrest and
kidnapping charges.

There is a standoff between the women.

MRS. PRESTON (CONT'D)
(to the officers)
Place her under arrest.

The two officers step to either side of Maddy. Maddy will not release the baby. The officers grab her arms while Mrs. Preston tries to take the baby. There is a struggle, but with the help of the officers, Mrs. Preston is able to free the baby. Madeline is now yelling, the baby CRYING.

MADDY
No! No! You can't take her.
This is so damn wrong!

Mrs. Preston with the baby and the officers hurry back to their cars. Maddy screams after them:

MADDY (CONT'D)
If anything happens to her,
anything, I will personally sue
you and the whole Goddamn
department! I'll fucking sue you!!

Tears stream.

EXT. UPSCALE HORSE RANCH - DAY

A horse show is in progress, the stands filled with spectators, and the surrounding grounds are packed with horse trailers.

Maddy is maneuvering a thoroughbred over a series of very high jumps. She's wearing formal show gear. Her face is set. She's totally concentrating. The horse clears every jump. It's a clean ride.

Polite CLAPPING.

As Maddy leaves the arena, Farley takes hold of her reins and leads the horse to the barn.

He looks up over his shoulder at her.

FARLEY

Bloody fine ride my, dear. Think you're in the lead.

Maddy gives him a tired smile.

MADELINE

Hope so. I gotta keep this job.

EXT. SANTA BARBARA STREET - DAY

Maddy is driving her real estate car along a downtown street when she notices Trixie leaving a WIC office with a cardboard box full of baby formula and diapers.

Maddy turns around and follows her.

EXT. MIGRANT WORKERS' TRAILER PARK - DAY

Trixie pulls in, honks her horn, then sets the cans of formula on the hood of her car. Soon she is selling them to Mexican mothers along with the diapers.

Maddy takes cell phone pictures from a distance then follows Trixie out of the trailer park.

EXT. TRAVELLING - SANTA BARBARA STREETS - DAY

Trixie notices Maddy in her rearview mirror so hooks a left during a red light into a strip mall parking lot and quickly hooks a U to confront Maddy if she were to enter.

Maddy enters after the light changes.

Trixie honks loudly and appears she is going to ram Maddy, but swerves at the last minute, giving Maddy the finger as she speeds past her back into traffic.

EXT. JUVENILE HALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Travis and Maddy exit the front doors of Juvenile Hall. Travis glances around the parking lot.

TRAVIS
Dad's not here?

MADDY
I called him.

TRAVIS
What an asshole.

MADDY
(reprimanding)
Hey.

INT. MADDY'S SUV - DAY

Maddy and Travis sit in silence for a beat. She gives him back his cell phone.

MADDY
Here.

TRAVIS
Thanks.

MADDY
Where do you want to go to eat?

TRAVIS
I'm not going to any rehab while that bitch has my kid.

MADDY
I've been talking with CPS. I'll get Justine back.

TRAVIS
You'll get her back? She's my kid.
I'll get her.

MADDY
You're name isn't on the birth certificate.

TRAVIS
What the fuck's that mean? Your's isn't either.

MADDY
Would you quit cussing? You can't go get her anymore than I can. There's no legal proof we're related - we have no rights. Not yet, anyway.

TRAVIS

Oh, yeah? Watch me.

He gets out of the car and slams the door. Starts limping away.

MADDY

Get back in the car Travis! You're still on probation.

Maddy gets out and calls over the roof of the car.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Please. Travis!

He keeps limping away.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Travis!!

Tears well in Maddy's eyes. She knows she can't save or stop him.

EXT. HORSE RANCH - DAY

Maddy is coaching two women jumping thoroughbreds.

She keeps checking her cell phone for messages.

Farley is watching her, doesn't approve, not while she is working in the arena. He shoots her a warning glance. She puts the phone in her back pocket.

INT. BEDROOM, MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maddy is lying on a mattress on the floor. There's a table lamp on the floor beside her and piles of books and papers.

She tentatively picks up her cell phone and makes a call, taking off her glasses. She has to wait awhile for someone to answer.

MADDY

Hey, Travis. It's me. Where are you? Please call me.

No answer. She hangs up.

FOLLOW through the empty house to an empty kitchen. She opens the refrigerator and takes out health drink.

CELL PHONE RINGS

She runs back to her room and answers it.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Yes?

Maddy starts pacing, listening, not liking what she is hearing.

MADDY (CONT'D)

You're staying at her place?!

Maddy appears very worried over his answer. There's a change in her voice.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Hey, look, I've got a crib. I could bring it over...

She waits for a beat then scrambles to find a pen. She hurriedly jots down the address.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Okay, tomorrow. Say around ten?

EXT. HUD HOUSING - DAY

Maddy is slowly cruising down a street in a bad neighborhood of government housing, looking for an address. She finally finds it.

The yard is full of motorcycles, including Uncle Ace's bike with its ORANGE FLAME gas tank.

She parks, pulls herself together. She's wearing Levis and boots with her hair pulled back. She heads for the front door with a box of diapers and knocks on the door.

It's opened by a SKANKY WOMAN.

SKANKY WOMAN

Yeah? What'da you want?

MADDY

I'm Travis' mother. I've bought some things for the baby.

SKANKY WOMAN

(over her shoulder)

Hey, tell Travis his mother's here.

She won't let Maddy in and keeps the door almost closed. Travis comes up behind the woman and moves her out of the way. He opens the door.

TRAVIS IS STONED. He's bare chested and bare footed in surfer shorts.

In b.g a burly biker is nodding out on a sofa. Uncle Ace and his friend BUDDY, are smoking joints and laughing. A FEMALE lies unconscious on the floor in front of them.

TRAVIS
(loaded smile)
Hey, Mom.

With a gracious wave of his hand;

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Come on in.

MADDY
Jesus. You're stoned. Where's Justine?

TRAVIS
(rubs his nose)
Down the hall. Where's the crib?

MADDY
In the back of the car.

Travis moves past her out to the car. Maddy cautiously enters the duplex.

INT. HUD APARTMENT - DAY

It's filthy. Maddy eyes Uncle Ace and Buddy who seem to ignore her as she cautiously moves down the hall, cell phone in hand.

There's an **outside bolt lock** on the first door. *This is not good.* She takes a photo of it with her phone then unbolts it and slowly opens the door.

Inside the room are THREE SKINNY CHILDREN sitting on the floor playing with dirty Barbies and trucks. MIKEY is three, SARAH is six and COLLEEN is eight. They all look up at her like deer caught in headlights. She snaps a cell phone picture.

Empty plastic jugs of cheap fruit juice lay around, plus crumpled bags of chips and boxes of cereal.

There's a plastic toddler training toilet that reeks according to Maddy's expression. A half empty roll of toilet paper lays beside it.

MADDY

Where's Justine? Where's the baby?

Sarah points.

Justine is stuffed in a bean bag chair with a baby bottle filled with fruit punch propped on a stuffed animal so the nipple is dripping sticky juice down her cheek, missing her mouth.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Oh, my God.

Maddy rushes over, knocks the bottle away and picks up the baby. The infant is filthy with sticky crusted red punch on her face and down the front of her bare chest. She starts CRYING as soon as Maddy moves her. Maddy lays her on the floor and tries to get her attention by cooing while pulling off a fully loaded diaper.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Its okay baby, its okay. I got you.

Maddy looks around. To the kids;

MADDY (CONT'D)

Where's her wipies? Where's her diapers?

The children just shrug. Maddy picks up the baby and holds the feces and juice covered CRYING infant at arms length heading for a bathroom.

Jake blocks her in the hall carrying crib sides.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I thought you came here to PROTECT her!! Look at her! What the hell Travis?! When's the last time she was changed? What the hell Travis!!

TRAVIS

Mom, I was gonna...

Trixie comes charging out of a door down the hall. She's wearing thong underwear exposing a body covered in tattoos. Dark circles ring her eyes.

She jumps on Maddy from behind, grabbing her in a choke hold. Maddy can't defend herself with the baby. She holds Justine out to Travis.

Travis drops the crib rails and takes the baby.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Trixie! Let go of my mom!

TRIXIE

Bitch thinks she's gonna steal my baby!

Baby CRYING.

Maddy does a backwards head butt and kicks backwards with her boot, gouging Trixie's shin and comes down hard on the top of Trixie's foot. Then she brings up the back of her fist into Trixie's nose.

Trixie hollers in pain, nose bleeding, and lets go of Maddy.

Maddy grabs the screaming baby back from Travis and pushes past him, bolting for the front door.

Uncle Ace and Buddy block her. Uncle Ace has the iron pipe in his hand.

Baby Justine is CRYING incessantly.

MADDY

Move.

He shakes his head.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I've already called 911, now move.

They don't move. The baby's CRIES are more intense.

TRAVIS comes up behind his mother.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Tell them to let me pass.

Maddy keeps her eyes on the bikers.

Travis is having a hard time thinking. He rubs his forehead and does the coke-nose-rub.

MADDY (CONT'D)

She won't survive, Travis. Let me get her out of here.

Trixie comes around in front of Maddy, nose bleeding. She cocks her head and does the crazy-eye thing in Maddy's face.

TRIXIE

Give me my kid, bitch! Or *I* call the cops and get you arrested for kidnaping.

MADDY

Go right ahead.

TRAVIS

(to Trixie)
Hey, let her take Justine.

Trixie grabs the pipe from Uncle Ace and clouts Maddy across the head. Maddy falls. Trixie furiously starts kicking her. Travis pulls Trixie off his mother.

The naked baby, covered in sticky red juice and feces continues to WAIL loudly on the floor next to a knocked-out, bleeding Maddy. Somebody picks up the baby.

LATER

Maddy comes to, blood still dripping from her head. She rolls to her knees, looks around to get her bearing. There's nobody there. She crawls out the front door to her SUV.

EXT. STREET - HUD HOUSING

In her SUV, she locks the doors and calls 911.

LATER

SQUAD CARS are parked around her. The lead cop gives the signal and they enter the apartment, guns drawn.

INT. HUD APARTMENT - DAY

Cops move through the torn-up house. It's empty. The back kitchen door hangs open.

EXT. HUD APARTMENT - DAY

AN AMBULANCE is parked in the driveway while a cop talks to Maddy who is sitting in it, her head wrapped.

Mrs. Preston arrives. She has a note pad out, pen ready.

Maddy pushes her out of the ambulance.

MADDY

Come with me!. Come see what you
let happen!

INT. HUD APARTMENT - DAY

Mrs. Preston enters the house with Maddy. Maddy points out where the *outer bolt to the kid's room was - its now missing*, but the screw holes are evident. Mrs. Preston opens the door.

The toddler toilet is still there along with filthy toys, plastic jugs, chip bags etc. and a filthy twin mattress on the floor plus the bean bag chair. But no kids.

KITCHEN

Maddy points to the holes punched in the kitchen walls and cabinet doors, plus a pile of dirty dishes. Mrs. Preston opens the refrigerator door. There are two cans of powder formula and a jug of milk, plus cases of beer.

MRS. PRESTON

Well, she had baby food.

Maddy opens the milk and smells it. It's sour. She hands it to Mrs. Preston. Maddy pulls the plastic lid off the formula can. There is no powder in it. She hands it to Mrs. Preston. Then Maddy picks up one of the apples in the refrigerator, feels it then throws it. It's plastic.

She turns on Mrs. Preston.

MADDY

Don't you ever check on these
people?!!

BATHROOM

They open the bathroom cabinets. There isn't one item in the cabinets, all has been swept clean. The trash cans are also empty.

FOLLOW - BEDROOM

They enter Trixie's bedroom. All the drawers are open and have been emptied. The bedside table has been swept clean of all paraphernalia.

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

Maddy, in sweats with a bandaged head, is running down the beach with Anka beside her. Their pace is fast. Finally they both have to stop and bend over to catch their breath.

ANKA

Talk. Dammit. I don't think you should be running with your head.

MADDY

(breathing hard)

It was awful, Anka. God, it was really awful.

She straightens up to fill her lungs then leans back down, hands braced on her knees.

MADDY (CONT'D)

They skipped out. Cleared out everything, even the trash.

(looks over into
Anka's eyes)

There were three other kids, Anka. Locked in a room with a reeking baby toilet.

ANKA

Jesus.

EXT. BANYAN TREE PARK - SANTA BARBARA - DAY

Maddy, in real estate dress clothes, is driving slowly past the Banyan Tree Park which is near the beach. She's looking for an address. She finds it and pulls over to a curb to confirm the listing in her MLS book. As she lays the book back down on the front seat, she glances out the passenger window at the park across the street which is occupied by HOMELESS PEOPLE. They are mulling around a picnic table under the shade of a huge banyon tree with its three-four foot high root walls.

Maddy's eyes lock on A BABY STROLLER BETWEEN THE GIANT ROOTS.

A GROUP OF BIKERS, INCLUDING TATTOOED TRIXIE ARE SITTING AT the PICNIC TABLE.

Ace's ORANGE FLAME motorcycle is parked nearby.

Maddy shrinks down in her seat and makes a call.

MADDY

This is Maddy Singleton. I need to talk to Mrs. Preston immediately. I've spotted Trixie Medina in Banyan Park. And Justine is there too - in a baby stroller between the banyon roots.

She keeps watching the group as she waits for Mrs. Preston to come to the phone.

MADDY (CONT'D)

No, I won't do anything until you get here. Just hurry, okay?!

Maddy gets out of her car. She's in business attire with heels and approaches the banyon tree at an angle, wearing sunglasses.

Once the banyon tree is between her and the bikers at the picnic table, she takes off her heels and runs into the space between the roots and peeks inside the stroller.

The stroller is empty.

Maddy keeps hidden between the roots while scanning the surrounding area.

Trixie's kids, Sarah and Colleen are at a nearby playground. Sarah is at the top of a slide holding BABY JUSTINE like she going to let her go. And she does. The baby, in a one piece sleeper with hood, slides down and is caught by Colleen. The girls are laughing. It is like they are playing with a rag doll, which is not far from the truth since the baby appears limp and is not making a sound.

Maddy sprints as fast as she can. She snatches the baby out of Colleen's arms and keeps on running.

Shocked PARENTS on a bench look at each other.

PARENT

Did that lady just steal their doll?

FOLLOW Maddy into:

INT. SEVEN ELEVEN BATHROOM - DAY

She locks the door and fearfully unzips the sleeper and pulls it off. She puts an ear on the Justine's chest, tears running. Her eyes tell us Justine is alive.

MADDY

Hang in there sweetheart. Hang in there. I got you.

She breathes into the babies mouth a few times, then furiously punches keys on her cell phone.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOVING - DAY

The tiny baby is on a gurney, hooked to an IV. Maddy is right beside her, tenderly touching her little face with the back of a finger.

Mrs. Preston is also sitting in the ambulance fastidiously doing paperwork. She looks up.

MRS. PRESTON

You weren't supposed to do anything until we got there. You could still be charged with...

Maddy gives the woman a steely stare.

MADDY

So charge me.

(kisses the baby)

I'm sure the Judge'll be real interested in what I have to say about you and your goddamn department. I took pictures with my phone.

INT. NEONATAL ICU - DAY

Baby Justine is back in the incubator in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Next to her, Maddy sleeps in a rocker. NURSE glances at them as she passes by on the other side of the glass windows.

DR. LEO enters in his lab coat. Maddy opens tired eyes.

Dr. Leo is looking at the monitors and listening to the baby's heart.

MADDY

So how is she?

DR. LEO

A little better. She was severely dehydrated and starving.

He stands up and re-drapes the stethoscope around his neck.

DR. LEO (CONT'D)
Plus she has a bad case of diaper rash.

MADDY
(sarcastic)
Please tell me this is enough to keep her away from Trixie.

DR. LEO
Yes. Yes it is. Especially since...

His eyes settle on Maddy.

DR. LEO (CONT'D)
There were barbiturates in her system.

MADDY
What?!

DR. LEO
They were giving her barbiturates. Probably to stop her from crying.

Maddy closes her eyes and shakes her head, tears running.

MADDY
That is so wrong. So - damn-wrong. What's the matter with those people?! My God.

INT. BEDROOM, MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maddy's on the floor mattress feeding the baby a bottle while SINGING an old Irish lullaby. Her eyes study the newborn as she sucks.

Justine pushes the bottle nipple out with her tongue and smiles. Maddy smiles back and kisses the baby. There is a definite bond forming between these two.

EXT. KITCHEN, MADDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Maddy is looking out her front kitchen window with a coffee mug in her hand. Her face is stoic.

INTERCUT:

In the middle of the yard is standing Travis, cleaned up, in a button down shirt and Docker pants. Travis is sober and looks dismally sorry, weighted by guilt. When he sees Maddy in the window he calls out.

TRAVIS

Can I come in, Mom? I'm clean.
That guy can vouch for me.

He indicates a plain-clothes man standing by a car parked in front of Maddy's house. Maddy cranks open the window.

MADDY

No.

TRAVIS

How is she?

MADDY

Okay.

TRAVIS

Good.

MADDY

She almost died, Travis. In fact the doctor thinks its a miracle she lived.

Travis's face wrenches in shame and guilt.

TRAVIS

Fuck, I'm sorry.

MADDY

That won't work anymore, Travis.

TRAVIS

Mom, I'm clean. Really. Can I please see her?

MADDY

No. No, you can't.

TRAVIS

But she's my daughter. And I'm clean.

MADDY

Leave, Travis. I'm still way too pissed off at you.

TRAVIS
You love her more than me?

MADDY
What?

TRAVIS
Do you love her more than me?

MADDY
I'm not going there.

TRAVIS
Mom, I want to stay here, with the
both of you.

MADDY
Well you can't.

TRAVIS
Mom, I've been at the Salvation
Army. I've been doing good.
Really, I have. I can't believe
what happened to you. After that,
I...

MADDY
I can't believe you allowed any of
it to happen.

TRAVIS
You can't keep me from seeing my
own daughter.

MADDY
Yes, I can. And you won't see her
until you bring me an NA chit for
six months clean. However long
that takes is up to you.

Travis stares at the tree tops, his heart aching. Then he
turns and leaves with the man.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Maddy is sitting across the desk from a LAWYER. He's
tapping his pencil as he speaks.

LAWYER
Since YOU removed the baby, not
CPS all you can do at this point
in time is ask for an immediate
guardianship - Ex Parte.
(MORE)

LAWYER (CONT'D)

Its for cases when a person needs immediate care and protection.

Maddy nods that would be okay.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

But - after one month - Trixie or Travis can, at any given point, go before the judge with proof they have a job and a place to live, and get her back. And of course prove they are clean.

MADDY

What if I adopt her through Foster Care?

LAWYER

You can't because she is not *in* Foster Care.

Maddy frowns. She doesn't understand.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

In order to be in Foster Care, Child Protective Services, CPS, must be the one who removes the child and who files a report as to why the child was removed. That is the only way any child's parents can loose their rights and the child declared a Ward of the State, and thus put into Foster Care.

Maddy is having a hard time thinking this through.

MADDY

So, what you are saying is that I would have to put her back in harms way and hope and pray CPS will actually do something? Sorry. There's no way.

The lawyer nods.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Okay then, I'll just adopt her outside of Child Protective Services and Foster Care.

LAWYER

Then *both* parents would have to give written consent.

The lawyer leans back in his chair and crosses his arms.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

In either case, the court is definitely going to require a DNA test. You need to get that first.

Maddy stares out the office window in silence.

MADDY

Why is it taking so long? Can't you do something about that?

LAWYER

That department is always backed up. So what would you like for me to do?

MADDY

Get me that "ex-parte".

LAWYER

Remember, it is only good for one month. Then you'll have to come back to court and ask for permanent guardianship.

MADDY

I will.

The lawyer leans forward.

LAWYER

And at that time Trixie could show up and protest the guardianship.

MADDY

I know. You already said that. I'll take my chances. As wasted as she is, I seriously doubt she'll show up in a courthouse.

LAWYER

Okay then. I just want to warn you.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Sarah and Anka are getting out of their cars with casseroles and wine. Maddy is waiting to greet them on her front porch.

BIKES RUMBLING. Uncle Ace and Buddy cruise by. Uncle Ace gives Maddy an intimidating glare. Maddy straightens up and gives him back her steely eye.

Maddy holds open the front door as her friends enter with dinner.

SARA

I don't think its safe for you to stay here.

MADDY

I can't afford to move.

Anka enters behind Sarah. Maddy closes and locks the door after them.

Sarah and Anka head for the empty kitchen with dinner.

SARAH

I'd let you stay with us, but Jeff says no because of your son.

MADDY

Smart man.

Anka passes behind them on the way to the refrigerator.

ANKA

You can stay with me.

MADDY

Two women and a baby ain't gonna fit it in your loft, Anka, but thanks anyway.

SARAH

Really, its too dangerous for you to stay here. I sure wish you would move back with your mother.

MADDY

Well I can't. I've got two jobs here.

SARAH

I think she'd love to have you.

MADDY

"Hey, Mom, I'm home and guess what I got?"

SARAH

But at least you'd be six hundred miles away from here.

ANKA

What about moving into a women's shelter?

MADDY

(sarcastically)

I doubt I'd meet "all the requirements."

INT. TACK ROOM, HORSE BARN - DAY

Maddy is oiling down tack with Justine in a backpack carrier propped beside her. She's talking to the baby.

MADDY

Now this part is called a stirrup.

Farley enters. He squats down and lets the baby's tiny fingers close around one of his fingers.

FARLEY

Dang. She's gotten big.

MADDY

Thank God. For awhile there I thought she'd never gain a pound.

Farley lifts Justine out of the carrier and holds her against his chest like a natural father.

FARLEY

Runts are my favorite. You riding in the Del Monte?

MADDY

Yeah.

(looks up at Farley)

Farley, do you think I'm too old for this?

FARLEY

What? Jumping horses or raising a kid.

MADDY

Jumping. Sometimes I feel like Grandma Moses out there.

FARLEY

I doubt anybody realizes how old you are. You're still strong as any twenty year old and you ride beautifully.

MADDY

Thank you. But I sure as hell don't bounce like I used to.

FARLEY

(smiles)
Then don't fall off.
(to baby)
You've got one tough old bird for a granny, you know that?

MADDY

Oh, my God, did you just call me a "granny"?

Farley settles Justine back in the carrier and ruffs the top of her head.

FARLEY

So what'da want to be called?
Grandma? Meme? Nona?

MADDY

Hey. That's enough already.

They smile at each other with voiceless thoughts.

INT. MADDY'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Maddy's boss, MIKE, is standing in front of her desk, glancing over at Justine asleep in the music swing.

BOSS

Look, Madeline, you can't keep bringing that baby to work with you.

MADDY

I know it. It's just for another week. I've still gotta make sure she eats every four hours.

BOSS

Then what?

MADDY

Then I'll find a baby sitter.
Don't worry, Mike, Sarah's
covering for me in the field. It's
just for one more week.

BOSS

One more week. That's it. By the
way, she seems a good baby. You're
doing a fine job.

MADDY

(smiles at the baby)
Yes, she is a very good baby.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Maddy is nervous and keeps looking over her shoulder.
Baby Justine is beside her on the bench in a carrier.

A JUDGE is flipping through her files. Judge nods to his
CLERK. Clerk nods to BAILIFF.

JUDGE

You may approach the bench, Mrs.
Singleton.

Maddy nervously goes to the podium. The bailiff adjust
the microphone for her.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Please state your name and
address.

MADDY

Madeline Singleton, 105 Mercer
Street, Santa Barbara.

JUDGE

Thank you. Now, Ms. Singleton, I
must commend you on your
deposition here, it was well
written. And for the photos.

(holds up papers)

And I will certainly be talking to
Mrs. Preston. But for right now,
can you tell me where you are
employed?

MADDY

Mc Cloud Realty and I ride for Mr.
Wiley who owns Farrington Farms.

JUDGE

Really? You ride horses?

MADDY

Well, I jump them, sir. And I teach riding.

JUDGE

And between these two jobs you think you can take care of a baby?

MADDY

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

How's that?

MADDY

Well right now I'm taking her to work with me. But next month I'll put her in day-care or a friend of mine said she could help baby-sit.

JUDGE

I see here you're divorced and what, 36 years old? Have you considered putting the baby up for adoption?

MADDY

(chin up)

I was told that couldn't happen even if I found a young couple to take her because both parents would have to agree to give up their parental rights and I doubt that is ever going to happen.

The Judge nods, agreeing with her statement.

JUDGE

True. Okay then, I am going to grant you temporary ex parte guardianship.

(signs paperwork)

And, again, I want to thank you for coming forward on this child's behalf, but do think long and hard about what you are getting yourself into before coming back here next month for a review. Once I sign permanent guardianship you will be one hundred percent responsible for the child.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

That means medical insurance and everything else.

MADDY

Yes, sir, thank you sir.

Maddy smiles with relief.

INT. BEDROOM, MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maddy is sleeping on the floor mattress with Justine beside her. Curtains are pulled back from the window. A FULL MOON cast shadows around the room.

Maddy's eyes fly open at the RUMBLE of approaching motorcycles. The bike engines go silent.

TRIXIE (O.S.)

Hey, bitch, give me my baby!

Maddy jumps up to peek out the window.

Trixie is in the front yard staggering around with a gun in her hand. Uncle Ace and Buddy are sitting on their motorcycles in the street, arms crossed. Maddy frantically calls 911.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Come'on bitch. Give me back my damn baby! Fuck you! She's MY kid, not yours. Now you bring her out here, right now! One ---- Two---- Three----!

Maddy dives for the mattress and covers Justine as a SHOT rings out and the glass in the window shatters. Another SHOT hits the wall above her.

Maddy crawls with the baby into the hallway grabbing the baby backpack as she passes it. Another SHOT rings out.

In the hall she quickly puts the now CRYING BABY in the backpack and lifts it on. Once the straps are buckled, she starts running out the back of the house.

SOUND OF FRONT DOOR BEING KICKED-IN

FOLLOW to BACKYARD

Maddy runs out the back door across the backyard as Buddy gives chase through a side gate.

Trixie, with a gun in her hand, and Uncle AC with his iron pipe come out the back door after her.

Maddy clamors over the back fence, BABY CRYING in the backpack and drops to the ground on the other side. She runs to the neighbor's back porch door and bangs on it. LIGHTS GO ON in the house. The door opens and Maddy rushes in.

Buddy watches from over the top of fence. He signals to Uncle Ace and Trixie that its over.

POLICE SIRENS.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - DAY

PAN across 'FOR SALE' SIGNS in the front yards of Maddy's neighbors on the right and left. The real estate agent's logo on these signs *is not* the same as the FOR SALE sign Maddy is pounding in her front yard.

In b.g. REPAIR MEN replace her front door and the shot-out window.

A disgruntled NEIGHBOR intently watches her.

EXT. FARLEY'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY

It's a long and narrow mud-brick ranch house with a ground level concrete front porch.

Maddy knocks on the front door with the baby in a carrier. She's wearing Levis and boots.

Farley answers the door.

FARLEY

Hey.

MADDY

Hey. Look, I'm sorry to disturb you on your day off, but I wanted to come by and tell you - well, I'm leaving. I just gave the Wiley's notice.

Farley indicates for her to come in.

Maddy has never been inside his place and takes her time looking around.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Nice place.

FARLEY

Thanks. Here, sit. Why? What brought this on? Where're you going?

He indicates a sofa covered in Navajo blankets.

Maddy carefully sets the baby down so as not to wake the sleeping little girl.

She sits on the sofa, a bit uncomfortable. Travis sits in a worn leather chair facing her.

MADDY

Oregon.

FARLEY

Oregon? What happened to Europe?

MADDY

My mom's still running our family farm up there.

FARLEY

Really? What kind of farm?

Maddy smiles.

MADDY

What do you think? A horse farm. She raises Arabians.

Farley frowns.

FARLEY

Really? Those puney things?

Maddy laughs.

MADDY

They have a hell'of a lot more stamina than your thoroughbreds.

FARLEY

I don't know about that. But why now? Why are you leaving now?

Maddy bites her lip.

MADDY

Trixie shot up my house last night. Busted in my front door.

FARLEY

Jesus Christ! You call the cops?

MADDY

Yes.

Farley leans forward, elbow on his knees, chin in hands.

FARLEY

You sure have got yourself into a messy, dangerous situation, haven't you?

MADDY

Yep. That's why I gotta go.

Farley looks at her like he's about to admit something personal, but doesn't.

FARLEY

I'll miss you.

MADDY

I'll miss you too. You've been the best friend I've had since the divorce.

Their eyes meet. Neither will reveal the love that's been slowly growing between them.

Maddy flips the pages in a horse magazine on his coffee table.

MADDY (CONT'D)

You're welcome to come visit.

FARLEY

I just might do that. Here, leave me your address, okay?

Farley goes to a desk and gets a piece of paper and pencil. He hands them to her. She writes down the address and hands the paper back to him.

MADDY

Its just outside of Portland.

He takes it, folds it and puts it in a drawer.

FARLEY

What about Travis?

MADDY

He's turned himself into rehab.

FARLEY

Good. Good for him. Does he know you are leaving?

MADDY

No.

Maddy stands.

FARLEY

Then don't tell him.

MADDY

I'm not going to. Well, I gotta go.

FARLEY

Here, let me help you with that.

He helps lift the baby-backpack on.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

She sure is a cutie.

She looks at him. He looks at her. He takes her face in his hands and gives her a kiss on the forehead, then pats her shoulder.

She acknowledges his touch, and leaves.

EXT. OREGON HORSE COUNTRY - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

Maddy drives past horse ranch after horse ranch, then turns down a long driveway along horse pastures to a fine old Victorian house with gingerbread trim.

EXT. GRANDMA'S FARM, OREGON - DAY

As she pulls up in front of a Victorian farm house, GRANDMA, a level headed woman (70's) comes down the front steps to greet her. Once out of the car, they hug.

GRANDMA

Well come on, let me see her.

Maddy opens a passenger door and lifts the sleeping baby out of the car seat.

Grandma takes the child in her arms.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Oh, she's beautiful. She looks just like Travis.

INT. KITCHEN, VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Maddy and her mother are sitting at the kitchen table, eating lunch. (Fried chicken and ice tea)

MADDY

So what do you think, Mom?

GRANDMA

You did the right thing.

MADDY

Really?

GRANDMA

Yes. Nobody should allow harm to come to a child. You did what needed being done.

MADDY

Thank you, Mom. You're the only one who seems to think so.

GRANDMA

But I do think you need to think long and hard about raising her.

MADDY

What?

GRANDMA

I'm not worried about your abilities as a mother, dear. I just think about how all the fouls from Nightwind are nothing but trouble and the ones sired by Apache hate being shooed. We got to reckon this baby girl is going to have some inherited problems. Like Travis's hot temper, which he got from his daddy, and so on. Plus, Lord only knows what she got from her mother.

(MORE)

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Justine might be a sweet little kitten for the first couple years, but she'll most likely turn into a real hellcat when she reaches her teens. Do you *really* want to deal with all that again?

Maddy plays with her food while her heart and mind have one hell've debate. She knows her mother is right. She leaves the table.

EXT. OREGON HORSE FARM - DAY

Maddy is walking alone through an open field with her mother's BORDER COLLIE trotting beside her.

LATER

Maddy and the dog are sitting on a sandy beach beside a running river watching the crystal clear water flow by. What her mother said weighs heavy on her mind.

INT. BEDROOM, VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

This used to be Maddy's room as a child. One wall is covered in show ribbons and trophies plus and there's pictures of her riding. There's also a shelf of collectable plastic Briar Horses.

Justine is sleeping soundly in a Pack and Play by Maddy's old twin bed.

Maddy is on the phone at a small desk.

MADDY

Thanks for taking my call, Dr. Leo. Ah, no Justine's fine, its just I was wondering if you might answer a couple questions.

Maddy takes a deep breath.

MADDY (CONT'D)

What's your opinion on Justine's chances of, well, having learning problems? Or becoming an addict?

She listens for beat.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Why? Because, because of her having spinal meningitis, and then her mother's drug use and hell, her - well I don't know that much about Trixie, but I'd bet she's got some kinda mental illness druggies usually have like depression, being bi-polar or whatever.

Maddy listens for a beat or two.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Is there anyway of testing for that stuff now? - No? So what do I do? - My son? Well he's got some anger management issues, that's for sure, same as his father. And they're both on the hyperactive side. People have told me he could be ADD.

Maddy nods like she is agreeing with what she is hearing while taking notes.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Thank you, Dr. Leo. Thank you very much. And thanks for the referrals too.

Maddy hangs up and studies the sleeping child.

MADDY (CONT'D)

Well, little girl, maybe someone will invent a DNA repair kit by the time you're a teen.

Maddy looks at herself across the room in a mirror above a small dresser.

She's having second thoughts.

INT. KITCHEN, VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Maddy is holding a small rolling suitcase handle. Grandma is feeding a bottle to Justine.

MADDY

I'll be back Wednesday unless Sarah has found a buyer for my house.

GRANDMA

So what are you going to do if
Trixie or Travis shows up in
court?

MADDY

Mom, Trixie has a warrant out for
her arrest and Travis is in rehab.
It'll be okay.

GRANDMA

Be careful, dear. And I mean that.

Maddy kisses her mom's forehead and then the baby's.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Maddy is standing at the podium with expectant eyes.

JUDGE

I certainly understand your need
to flee, but still, you should not
have taken a minor out-of-state
without court approval to transfer
the guardianship. Plus you needed
to get permission from an Oregon
court to accept your guardianship
before you went.

MADDY

I didn't know that, Your Honor.

JUDGE

So before I can grant you
permanent guardianship, you'll
need to get a lawyer and go down
to the clerk's office and get the
forms for an Out-of-State Transfer
of Guardianship, fill them out and
bring them back up for me to sign.
You'll also need a faxed consent
from an Oregon court to accept the
transfer.

MADDY

I will, sir. Thank you.

INT. COUTROOM HALLWAY - DAY

Maddy passes Mrs. Preston. Mrs. Preston avoids her eyes.

INT. PIER RESTURANT, SANTA BARBARA - DAY

REFLECTION in a mirror above a bar of Maddy, Anka and Sarah having lunch out in the sun.

Max is sitting at the bar alone with a drink watching them in the mirror. He looks haggard with inflamed eyes and blotchy skin. He's wearing a leather jacket.

SARAH

(to Maddy)

I know a para-legal. She could help you. Here, I'll call her.

She makes the call.

FOLLOW Max out to the patio dining area.

MAX

Well if isn't the dike-joggers again.

The three woman avoid looking at him.

MAX (CONT'D)

(to Maddy)

I hear we're grandparents.

Maddy removes her sunglasses.

MADDY

How you'd hear since you've never gotten around to visiting your son.

Max fidgets, twitches a bit.

MAX

Oh, I don't know. Word gets around.

(cocks his head)

I heard too his girlfriend tried to shoot you. That true?

Maddy nods.

MAX (CONT'D)

Cops after her?

MADDY

Of course.

MAX
(holds up his empty
glass)
Well, you be careful. I hear she's
one crazy bitch.

Awkward moment.

MADDY
Would you mind leaving? We're
having a business meeting here.

Max shrugs, leaves. Throws his glass over the railing
into the ocean.

SARAH
Jesus, he looks awful.

MADDY
Yeah, he does.

ANKA
I think he's doing heroine.
Otherwise why would he be wearing
a jacket, hot as it is.

Maddy glances back at her ex.

ANKA (CONT'D)
You're staying with me tonight,
right?

MADDY
Yes, if that's okay?

ANKA
Sure it is. I won't be home until
around seven, so the key is under
the gnome on the porch. Leave me a
note if you go for a run on the
beach and I'll join you.

MADDY
Alright. Gnome? That the little
bearded elf?

Anka nods, smiling.

INT. COURT LIBRARY - DAY

Maddy and the PARA-LEGAL are filling out forms, making
calls.

EXT. LOFT CONDO - NIGHT

Maddy finds the key under the gnome. Glances up at a FULL MOON then enters a Danish minimalist loft.

INT. LOFT CONDO - NIGHT

Maddy pours a wine and goes out on a narrow balcony. NIGHT WINDS RATTLE palms. The ocean air smells good and ruffles her hair. She leans far over the balcony and can see the ocean a couple blocks away, silver in the moonlight.

Her PHONE RINGS.

INSERT phone caller ID: Santa Barbara Police Department.

MADDY

(cautiously)

Yes?... Yes, this is Ms. Singleton... *Oh, my God!*... Where, where did you find him?... How did he, how did he...?

Tears are welling. She's shaking.

MADDY (CONT'D)

I. I ah. I don't know. We're divorced. I don't know. I'll have to figure that out. I'll call his brother. He's got a brother in San Diego. Do I give him your number, this number? Jesus. You're sure it was heroine? Okay... Goodbye.

She grabs her stomach and cries hard.

EXT. SANTA BARBARA BEACH - NIGHT

Maddy is jogging along the beach in the moonlight. She has a pen light in one hand and her cell phone in the pocket of a light jacket.

When she approaches the lighted area around the Santa Barbara Pier, she slows down and stops to survey the scene ahead.

TOURIST STROLL on the pier. NIGHT FISHERMEN lean over the pier with their rods. A GROUP of SURFERS in hooded Serapes huddle talking, sipping beer. TWO HOMELESS people walk around hitting people up for change. There's a couple MOTORCYCLES parked up along the main road.

Maddy's EYES squint, trying to make out the bikes. She can't tell due to the distance and dark if they belong to Trixie's gang or not. She decides to turn around and head back.

A MAN YELLS out as if in pain. She halts. It's coming from the dark under the pier.

Maddy shines her pen light under the pier. The small intense beam of light travels over the back of a motorcycle jacket, then over the face of Ace as he looks over his shoulder at her. The flashlight beam drops to the familiar iron pipe in his hand.

Maddy tries to blind him with her light as she backs away and turns to run while pulling out her cell phone.

She's tackled from behind by Trixie, knocking her face down in the sand.

Straddling Maddy, Trixie snaps Maddy's head back by her hair and holds a blade against her neck. By now Ace is there.

TRIXIE

You yell, I slice. Now lets move.

Ace helps pulls Maddy to her feet, twist her arm behind her back. He takes the knife from Trixie, keeping it against Maddy's neck. He pushes Maddy into the deep darkness under the pier.

CRASHING WAVES thunder through the pier posts. People up top are not going to be able to hear what's going on down here.

In contrast to the flood lights on the ocean and sand, it is very dark under the pier.

Trixie points the pen light beam into one of Maddy's eyeballs, the end of the light almost touching the iris. Ace has Maddy's arm behind her back.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Well, if it ain't Miss Uppity Righteous Moma.

Maddy blinks, blinded.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

Where're you got my kid? Huh?

MADDY

I don't have her.

Trixie punches Maddy in the stomach.

TRIXIE
Don't lie to me, bitch.

MADDY
What's wrong with you?

TRIXIE
What? You think you're better than me?

Trixie punches her again.

Trixie (CONT'D)
She ain't yours. She's MINE. And nobody takes what's mine.

MADDY
She's a a human being - not a fucking dog.

Trixie grab's Uncle Ace's pipe and whacks Maddy aside the head.

TRIXIE
She don't need nothing from people like you.

The victim of the drug-deal-gone-bad speaks up.

VICTIM
Hey stop!

Trixie turns around and lets him have it with the pipe, taking her fury out on him instead.

The victim falls backwards, his face covered in blood.

TRIXIE
Shut the fuck up, you old yuppie prick.

Trixie turns back on Maddy.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)
Jesus, you fucking rich people don't have a clue about using. Bunch of stupid pricks.

Uncle Ace grabs back his pipe, letting Maddy to drop to the sand.

UNCLE ACE

Calm down! Think you killed that
dude.

TRIXIE

Yeah? Well I'm gonna kill her too
unless she tells me where my
fucking kid is!

She kicks Maddy in the face hard several times, then in
the gut.

TRIXIE (CONT'D)

So where is she? Where the fuck is
she?

Maddy's eyes tell her to go to hell. Ace grabs Trixie by
the back of her pants and pulls her off Maddy.

BUDDY

Stop, somebody's coming!

Its Anka jogging towards them, unaware of what's going on
under the pier.

Through swollen eyes Maddy recognizes her friend's
silhouette and yells as best she can with busted mouth
and face;

MADDY

Anka, STOP!! RUN!! Call the cops!

Anka stops. She presses the keys on her cell phone,
leaning forward, trying to see under the pier.

ANKA

Maddy, that you?

Uncle Ace, Buddy and Trixie come running out of the
darkness at Anka.

ANKA (CONT'D)

SHIT!

She sprints away from them, holding up her phone.

ANKA (CONT'D)

I called! I already called the
cops!

The three bikers veer off and run up towards their bikes
on the street. Engines roaring, they disappear.

Anka runs back under the pier. She cautiously enters the darkness using her phone flash to look around.

ANKA (CONT'D)

Maddy? Maddy?

Anka's phone light comes across the dead drug buyer.

ANKA (CONT'D)

Oh, my God!

Maddy groans.

Anka turns and sees her.

ANKA (CONT'D)

Oh my God, baby. Oh, my God!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Maddy's face is severely swollen and bruised. Her head is bandaged as are her ribs and one arm.

Anka and Sarah are sitting on either side of her. A POLICE OFFICER stands inside the door. Farley stands by the window.

Maddy opens her eyes. Sarah takes hold of her hand.

Maddy looks around. Her gaze stops on Anka.

MADDY

Max is dead.

Anka glances over at the policeman, then back at Maddy, then down.

ANKA

Yeah, we heard.

Maddy closes her eyes.

Maddy's eyelids suddenly fly open. She tries to sit up. Her friends stop her.

MADDY

Mom! Justine!

FARLEY

Oregon police have been notified. They've sent officers out to your mother's place, so don't worry. Relax. They're safe.

Maddy falls back on her pillow, her eyes on Farley.

Farley is staring at her, his eyes full of anger, grief and worry but says nothing. She turns her eyes away from him.

MADDY

(to Sarah)

Call CPS. Get Mrs. Preston in here. Like now.

SARAH

Why?

MADDY

Just do it!

LATER

Mrs. Preston is sitting by the bed. She has a pile of papers in her lap.

MADDY (CONT'D)

So can you do that? Finish up for me?

MRS. PRESTON

I'll try.

Mrs. Preston stands to leave.

MRS. PRESTON (CONT'D)

(rattled)

I'll see what I can do.

INT. SALVATION ARMY REHABILITATION CENTER, SANTA BARBARA - DAY

Travis, in khaki Docker slacks and a plaid button down shirt is sorting donated items. He looks like a totally different kid. An AID approaches him and whispers something. Travis follows the Aid.

INT. REHAB. VISITATION AREA - DAY

Mrs. Preston is waiting for him. After Travis sits, she slides over a piece of paper and a pen.

TRAVIS

What's this?

MRS. PRESTON

Good afternoon Travis. Its a notice the judge has awarded your mother permanent legal guardianship of Justine and that she has requested to move out-of-state with the baby. I need your signature, here, stating you have been informed and agree.

TRAVIS

Out-of-state? Why? And what's with this permanent guardianship stuff?

MRS. PRESTON

Because she feels she and the baby are not safe here.

Travis is reading her body language.

TRAVIS

What's happened? What's going on?

Mrs. Preston avoids his look.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

She going to her mom's?

Mrs. Preston shrugs indifferently.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I'll still be able to see my daughter, right?

MRS. PRESTON

(reads from her
paperwork)

Yes, if you abide by the Judge's order to stay clean and sober for at six months.

Mrs. Preston taps the paper on the table.

MRS. PRESTON (CONT'D)

Now, please sign here.

Travis signs the paper and shoves it back towards her.

TRAVIS

Why didn't Mom bring this?

Mrs. Preston gathers her things and stands to leave.

MRS. PRESTON
She ah, she couldn't come.

TRAVIS
Why not?

Mrs. Preston freezes.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
What? What, what the hell's
happened?

Mrs. Preston is totally flustered.

MRS. PRESTON
You, um, your um, um . . .

TRAVIS
What?!

MRS. PRESTON
(takes a deep breath)
I shouldn't be the one talking to
you about this. The police should.

TRAVIS
The police?! *What the fuck
happened?*

MRS. PRESTON
I'll get an officer to come talk
to you.

TRAVIS
What the fuck happened!?

MRS. PRESTON
Uh, uh.

TRAVIS
What?! Tell me!!

MRS. PRESTON
Okay, first off, you're father is
dead.

Travis is stunned.

TRAVIS
My Dad?!

MRS. PRESTON
Uh huh.

Travis stares in shock.

TRAVIS

How? Why? Does Mom know?

MRS. PRESTON

Yes, she knows.

TRAVIS

What the hell happened to him?

MRS. PRESTON

He OD'd.

Travis leans back in his chair, stunned.

TRAVIS

My dad?

She nods.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

On what?

MRS. PRESTON

Heroin.

TRAVIS

My dad? On heroin? I need to talk to Mom. Give me your phone.

MRS. PRESTON

No. Aah, she doesn't have a phone right now and, uh...

TRAVIS

What happened to her phone? WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?! Where is she?!

MRS. PRESTON

She's in the hospital.

TRAVIS

In the *hospital*? Did he hurt her?! Did my dad hurt Mom?

MRS. PRESTON

No... uh, no, he didn't.

TRAVIS

Then why's she in the hospital?

MRS. PRESTON
 Trixie and her uncle, they ah,
 they...

TRAVIS
 Trixie?! Jesus. Is Mom okay?

MRS. PRESTON
 Not really.

TRAVIS
 Not really? What do you mean? What
 about Justine?

MRS. PRESTON
 The baby's fine. Look, Travis, if
 Trixie comes around, you've got to
 call the police right away. She
 tried shooting your mother last
 month and last night she beat her
 half-to-death.

TRAVIS
*FUCK!! Why didn't anybody tell
 me?! Why didn't you fucking tell
 me!!? I'm leaving. I'm outta here!
 Goddammit!*

Mrs. Preston uncharacteristically leans into in his face.
 She is pissed.

MRS. PRESTON
 TRAVIS! STOP IT! You need six
 months clean before you can see
 your mother or the baby. Leaving
 here now will only put you back in
 jail. And YES, they both need you.
 And the only way you can do that
 is to STAY RIGHT HERE - YOU STAY
 RIGHT HERE AND GET YOUR MIND AND
 HEART STRAIGHT FOR THE BOTH OF
 THEM!

Red faced, she'S banging the table top with her fist.

MRS. PRESTON (CONT'D)
 (calmer)
 You stay right here if you really
 want to help them. That's the
 best thing you can do for the both
 of them. You stay right here!

Travis covers his face, then looks around shaking his
 head with tears running down his cheeks.

TRAVIS

Oh, my God! Jesus, she hurt mom?

Mrs. Preston is on her feet, puffed up like a blow fish.

MRS. PRESTON

So no more drugs! You hear me? NO MORE DRUGS! Look what its caused your family for Christsake!

Tears run down Travis' face.

TRAVIS

Jesus, its all my fault.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Maddy opens her eyes to find Travis asleep in a chair beside her. Her loving eyes comb over him. She reaches over and touches his hand. He opens his eyes and looks at her, then leans forward and lays his head on her stomach.

TRAVIS

Oh, God, Mom, I'm so sorry this happened to you. Please forgive me. Please.

He takes her hand in both of his and holds it to his forehead. Tears streaming, he mumbles.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

It's all my fault. I fucked up. I really fucked up.

(looks at her)

If it weren't for me this would have never happened.

Maddy barely smiles.

MADDY

I'm not going to deny you getting mixed up with Trixie didn't put a ringer in my life. But what is, well, it's what it is. We just gotta do our best and move on.

TRAVIS

I swear to God I'll stay clean and help raise Justine, Mom. And I'll protect you. You should have never gotten hurt. I am so fucking sorry.

The homicide investigator, BEN, and a POLICEMAN enter.

BEN

Hey son, how about some food in
the cafeteria? Maybe a coffee and
donut?

His facial expressions indicate he doesn't want to talk
in front of Maddy. Travis nods.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Across from the teen wearing the heavy cloak of guilt
sits the policeman and Ben who are drinking coffee and
eating donuts. Travis looks up at them, shakes his head.

BEN

What?

TRAVIS

You guys really eat donuts.

The investigator shrugs and smiles.

BEN

They're my favorite. Buttermilk.
So lets see what you got?

Travis scoots him a pad he has been writing on. The
investigator skims the list and slides it over to the
policeman.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to policeman)

Send some units out to these
places. Remind them these
characters are armed and dangerous
and probably fucked-up on drugs.
The boys need to be extra careful.

The policeman nods, takes the sheet and leaves.

Travis buries his face in the crook of his folded arms on
the table.

He turns his head just enough so one teary eye looks up
at the investigator.

TRAVIS

Shoot her, okay? She doesn't
deserve to live. Not after what
she did to my family.

BEN

Son, you know better than that.

Travis turns his face back into the darkness of his arms. The investigator studies the boy. He lays a hand on the his shoulder.

BEN (CONT'D)

You gonna stay clean now? Help your mom?

TRAVIS

(tearfully)

Yes, sir. Jesus, I can't believe how bad I fucked up.

Travis' shoulders move with sobs. The investigator pats his back.

BEN

Son, we all make mistakes. You're just lucky you made yours while you're still young.

Travis mumbles from within his arms.

TRAVIS

I had a baby with a meth-head. That's never, ever gonna change. Mom's never gonna forgive me for that.

BEN

Mom's have a strange way of forgiving. They don't forget, but they do forgive. All you got to do is prove to her you're a decent young man from now on. And show her you can be responsible.

TRAVIS

And my Dad. God! That bitch got us both strung out.

BEN

You had nothing to do with that, son.

There is beat of silence, then Travis suddenly sits up.

TRAVIS

I know where they could be.

Ben stops eating, picks up the pen, ready to take notes.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

And I've got an idea how to get them all.

EXT. CANYONS BEHIND SANTA BARBARA - DAY

An off-road SUV, two vans, a SWAT Humvee and a Forest Service Sheriff truck are following a switch-back sandy road through rugged, arid mountain canyons. They are moving in silence, no sirens.

INT. BEN'S PATROL SUV - DAY

Ben is turned towards the back seat where Travis sits wearing nothing but ratty surf shorts. His hair has been mussed and he looks dirty.

BEN

You sure you want to do this?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

BEN

Okay. We'll rig a WiFi up here so we won't lose you. Just make sure your phone is on. If you need us, hit 0.

Travis nods. The convoy stops. Travis gets out, dusts his face and hair with more dirt, then starts walking barefoot up a sandy narrow canyon.

EXT. CANYON STRONGHOLD - DAY

Bikers are sitting around in cheap lawn chairs with either handguns or rifles laying ready in their laps. They're drinking beer, talking, smoking weed and listening to music on an old boombox. There's a smoldering fire pit in the middle of the clearing with a crudely built shack under the shade of a mesquite tree. Steep slopes covered in sage and ironwood ring them. A creek runs to one side.

BIKER #1

(surprised)

Well shit, my phone just got service!

BIKER #2

Must be a new tower around here
somewhere.

(calls out)

Hey, Ace. We finally got service
up here. Swe-eet. Now we can take
orders on the spot.

Uncle Ace sticks his head out of the hut. He's wearing a
gas mask and plastic apron. He gives the thumbs up at the
news, then disappears back inside.

FOLLOW INSIDE THE SHACK

Uncle Ace and Trixie are cooking meth on a Coleman stove
in the hut. She's wearing a gas mask as well.

BACK OUTSIDE

Biker #1 points up to the ridge above them.

BIKER #1

Hey! Casper's signaling somebody's
coming.

Everyone in camp moves into battle positions, guns
pointed at the entrance of their dead-end canyon.

Travis walks in, looking strung out.

BIKER #2

Shit, its Trixie's surfer boy. How
the fuck he'd get way back here?

Uncle Ace and Trixie come out of the hut and remove their
meth-cooking gear. They both carefully eye Travis. Upon
seeing he is barefoot and bare chested, and covered in
dirt dust, they quit worrying he might be wired.

TRIXIE

Well, hell. Look what the cat
dragged in.

Travis stops, swaying as if stoned.

TRAVIS

(to Trixie)

Hey, I found you! Nobody'll answer
my calls. Not even my mom. I can't
find anybody!! But I found you.

(waves his arm)

Come on. We got to go. We got to
go find our baby.

UNCLE ACE

Jesus-H-Christ. Somebody shut him up. Trixie, get back in here. We got to finish this batch.

Trixie sashays over and takes Travis's arm. She leads him under the shade of the mesquite tree beside the hut, pushes him down in a lawn chair.

TRIXIE

How about a beer?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

She gets him a beer from an oversized cooler. He pops it open and guzzles it, much of which runs off his chin.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I am so fucked. I am so fucked. Where the hell you been? Everybody hates me. Nobody'll talk to me. I can't even find even one person, not even my mom.

TRIXIE

Well, you found me.
(kisses him)
How the hell you get here?

With a crazy smile;

TRAVIS

I flew. I flew like a bird.

He frowns and pouts.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I couldn't find you. Why'd you leave me?

TRIXIE

How'd you get up here?

TRAVIS

Some hippie picked me up on the road. In a fucking VW van. Dropped me off down by the bridge. I been walkin' and walkin'...

Trixie touches his cheek.

TRIXIE

Where you been? You kind of disappeared too.

TRAVIS

I've been with the bell-ringers. I h've been with the do-gooder bell-ringers. And you know what? They keep praying for me. They keep tellin' me Jesus will save me. Their still praying for me. But you know what? I fooled 'em. Cause know what? I had this all along.

He reaches deep in a front pant pocket and brings out a cellophane baggy of white powder. He grins proudly.

TRIXIE

What's that?

TRAVIS

The best. Its from Mex-E-co and its pure, one-hundred percent shit.

TRIXIE

(enticed)

Really? How'd you get it?

TRAVIS

I ain't telling.

Looks around, paranoid.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Ain't any Narcs 'round, is there? I don't wanna ever come down from this shit. Come on, try it.

Trixie taps him on the end of his nose.

TRIXIE

Be right back.

She disappears in the shack and comes back with appropriate paraphernalia.

Trixie kneels between his legs and places a small purse mirror on his stomach. He hands her the baggy, from which she taps out a little powder. She licks a finger and touches the powder then wipes it on her gums. It passes initial inspection.

Over her shoulder she calls out;

TRIXIE (CONT'D)
Hey, Ace, come check this shit
out.

Uncle Ace emerges from the hut and removes his gas mask. He wipes sweat from his forehead while walking over. He licks a finger and sticks it into the baggy then wipes his gums with it. After a second, he smiles.

Travis throws his head back and yells out.

TRAVIS
Fuckin' ye-ah!!

The backward thrust of his chest and head causes the chair to fall backwards into the dirt. The mirror of powder flips over on his stomach.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Ah, fuck!

Trixie starts licking it with her tongue which makes Travis laugh like a little boy.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Stop it. Stop it.

TRIXIE
Be still.

UNCLE ACE
Go tie the little shit up
somewhere. He's too damn wasted.
We got to finish this batch.

She continues to lick his stomach.

Travis pretends to wipe his gums with finger load after finger load of the powder. Then he rolls his head back and forth, before passes out.

Trixie rolls onto her back facing the sky with glazed eyes.

Uncle Ace bends over and removes the baggy from Travis's fingers. Eyes Trixie for a beat, holds the baggy up while walking over to join the men around the smoldering fire.

The men grin and gather around.

LATER

Travis opens his eyes and listens. All is quiet except for a crow.

He backrolls out of the toppled lawn chair and surveys the scene. Everyone is passed out. He stands and starts to text on his cell phone.

Trixie's eyes open. She sees what he is doing and gets on her knees.

TRIXIE

What the fuck you doing?

She attempts to come at him on all fours. He grabs her, pulls her to her feet and slams her against the hut. The poorly constructed building moves with the blow.

TRAVIS

What kinda fucking crap you give my dad, huh?

Trixie smiles seductively, slurs.

TRIXIE

He was a fuckin' yuppie prick.

(slurs)

Didn't know the difference between real smack and shit laced with it. Guess he got a bag of the real shit by mistake.

Travis slams her hard against the hut again, which causes:

INT. METH HUT - DAY

A pot falls off a Coleman camp stove. Fluid spreads across the hut's floor.

EXT. CANYON STRONGHOLD - DAY

TRAVIS

Why my Mom?! Why'd you hurt mom like that?!

He slams her hard again against the hut.

INT. METH HUT - DAY

The Coleman camp stove, on thin legs, topples over, with two burners still on.

EXT. CANYON STRONGHOLD - DAY

Trixie's face screws up in bitterness.

TRIXIE

She thinks she's better than me.
Well, she's not. She's NOT better
than me. Justine's MY kid, not
hers!

Travis slams her against the shed again.

TRAVIS

You almost KILLED her!!

Trixie starts laughing.

TRIXIE

You're nothing but a fuckin'
momma's boy.

Travis backhands her, which sends her wheeling through
the open door of the hut.

FOLLOW INSIDE HUT:

Trixie's body knocks the propane tank loose from the
stove and the line pulls out. The burning fluid flames
come in contact with the gas.

Travis turns and runs.

EXPLOSION. Travis dives as pieces of the hut fly through
the air and bombard him. He hits the ground and covers
his head as a second EXPLOSION (other propane tanks)
disintegrates what is left of the hut.

LATER

The place is swarming with FEDS, SWAT team and Forest
Service Sheriff. They are handcuffing and lifting
unconscious bikers into paddy-wagon vans.

Travis sits on a large rock while a MEDIC treats his back
where pieces of flying debris hit him.

His eyes keep going to and away from the LOWER PART OF
TRIXIE'S LEG, STILL IN A BOOT laying a few yards away.

Ben approaches, looks down at Travis.

TRAVIS
 (keeping his eyes
 down)
 Can you move that?

Indicates the boot with a tilt of his head.

BEN
 (to a cop)
 Hey, bag that leg and get it outta
 here.

An officer does as told.

Ben watches the last doped biker being loaded into a van.

TRAVIS
 Told you it would work.

BEN
 Well it sure ain't protocol but it
 sure as hell worked. Serves those
 pukes right to wake up from a date
 rape drug behind bars. And no
 shots fired. Can't beat that.
 (squints at Travis)
 So how'd the kitchen blow with her
 in it?

Travis takes a deep, shaky breath.

TRAVIS
 It was an accident. Honest. She
 came 'round and came at me right
 when I was texting you. I pinned
 her against the hut. Somehow stuff
 must've spilled over inside.
 (looks down)
 When I saw the flames, I ran.

Inspector Ben stares into Travis's eyes for a long beat,
 trying to decide if he is lying or not.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE wheels Maddy out of the hospital in a wheelchair.
 Her face is still swollen and badly bruised. Her ribs and
 one arm still bandaged. Travis helps his mother out of
 the wheelchair and into the passenger seat of her car.
 Farley is behind the wheel.

INT. FARLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Maddy is lying on his Navajo blanketed sofa. Farley sits in his favorite worn leather chair and Travis sits backwards in a ladder-back chair facing them both.

FARLEY

(to Travis)

Look son, I need to know you can stay clean.

TRAVIS

I know I can now. I'm over the worst part.

FARLEY

Good. 'Cause things could get real nasty when word gets out about what happened up in that canyon.

TRAVIS

Yes, sir, I know.

FARLEY

So we need to get you and your mother up to Oregon ASAP.

They both look at Maddy. She nods.

MADDY

(to Farley)

Come with us?

FARLEY

(smiling)

Can you beat Wiley's pay?

MADDY

Not by a long shot. But you'd be boss. You could take care of the horses and I'd give riding lessons. Plus it'd be a free place to stay. And its green up there, not all dusty and dry like around here.

FARLEY

(to Travis)

What about you, son?

TRAVIS

I'll help out until I can save up enough to get Justine and me a place of our own.

FARLEY

(points a finger at
him)

I don't want to be hearing you bad-
mouthing your mother. Or cussing.
Not once - 'cause I'm warning you
outright, I'm pretty damn good
with a bull whip.

Farley's eyes don't blink as he drills them into Travis.

TRAVIS

I won't, sir. Promise.

INT. KITCHEN, VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

Grandma is busy making sandwiches. Maddy is helping her,
her face still discolored and her right arm in a sling
but she can use her fingers to help with the sandwiches.

In b.g Travis is on the floor in the living room playing
with Justine.

Farley comes in the kitchen door looking gritty from
working outside. He goes straight for the pitcher of iced
tea on the table.

Maddy serves the plates and takes a seat. There is a
pile of mail beside her plate. She starts sorting through
it while biting into a sandwich.

She pauses and frowns while reading the return address on
one of the envelopes. Hesitantly she opens the letter and
pulls out a formally stamped document.

Shock spreads across her face. Her hand starts trembling.

GRANDMA

What is it? Maddy, dear, hand it
to me.

Maddy hands the letter over, acting like she's having a
panic attack.

Grandma reads it, then looks at Maddy, in as much shock
as her daughter.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

I don't believe this!

FARLEY

What? What's going on?

Grandma hands Farley the document.

CLOSE ON HEADING: PATERNITY TEST

Farley reads it, sets it down, rubs his chin.

FARLEY (CONT'D)

God damn.

Travis enters the kitchen with Justine in his arms. He lays her in a music swing next to his chair. He notices the strange looks around the table. As he takes his seat;

TRAVIS

What?

The adults exchange looks.

Maddy takes a deep breath, looking at Farley and then Grandma.

GRANDMA

Truth is always the best policy.

Maddy looks at Travis. She can't find the right words.

TRAVIS

What?!

MADDY

Travis, you are *not* Justine's father.

Farley hands him the test result.

TRAVIS

What?!

Travis reads it. There is a long silence. Travis is now in shock. He looks down at Justine who is smiling up at him.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Then who is?

MADDY

The report says you were not a complete match. Although the father would be a close relative of yours.

There is another long silence as each look at each other, all coming to the same conclusion.

TRAVIS

Dad?!

Maddy lets out a sound of disgust, pushes back her chair and leaves.

GRANDMA

We'll get another DNA test done.

Farley reaches out to stop Maddy.

FARLEY

(to Maddy)

That means Justine is not related to you at all.

Maddy's face is hard.

GRANDMA

My God, after all you've been through on her behalf.

Maddy pushes Farley's hand away and walks out the kitchen door.

EXT. OREGON RANCH - DAY

Maddy is walking across an open field. She keeps shaking her head, talking to herself. The border collie walks beside her.

Farley, on a horse, trots up. He doesn't say anything, just walks his horse alongside Maddy who keeps staring straight ahead.

MADDY

It's all so damn wrong. So - damn - wrong!.

FARLEY

Well it sucks. That's for sure.

INT. BEDROOM, VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Travis has just laid a sleeping Justine down in her crib. She looks so innocent. He looks distraught and turns away.

INT. KITCHEN, VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Grandma is feeling around in the back of a cabinet. She finds a bottle of whiskey and pours herself a glass.

FOLLOW

onto the back porch, where she sits in a rocking chair and sips the drink while looking up at the stars.

GRANDMA

Lordy, Lordy, Charles. You need to get your tail back down here and come help me with this one.

INT. DINING ROOM, VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The adults are sitting around a a half-eaten dinner. They aren't talking, just sitting in silence.

GRANDMA

Okay, all of you. We need to discuss this matter right here and now - and then we need to take a vote on what to do.

She looks at Travis.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Travis, you go first.

TRAVIS

I still love her. I mean its weird that she's my sister, but still, I owe it to her to take care of her. She's got nobody else.

(deep breath)

But, shit,...

Travis looks down and shakes his head.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I killed her mother.

FARLEY

You didn't kill her, son.

TRAVIS

Technically, I did.

FARLEY

Technically, you didn't.

GRANDMA

What about you, Maddy?

MADDY

Who her parents are isn't her fault. No child is allowed to chose their parents. And it shouldn't matter, but in this case, it does. It really does matter.

GRANDMA

Why's that?

MADDY

(to Grandma)

Like you said Mom, bloodlines. That little girl is half Max and half Trixie. They're both the worst. The very worst.

(glances at Travis)

I just don't know.

FARLEY

But its also a proven fact that environment plays a big part.

MADDY

I know that. And I know early intervention can help too, but I'm scared you guys. I am *so scared* of what she will become.

TRAVIS

My counselor calls that "projecting your fears" and you shouldn't do that, Mom.

MADDY

(tearing up)

I know that! I know that! But I can't help it. *None of you were attacked by that woman!*

Maddy starts crying. Farley comes over and holds her.

FARLEY

Honey, it's nothing to feel bad about. You've got every right.

Maddy sobs harder.

MADDY

But I love Justine! God, I don't know what to do.

Farley comforts her.

TRAVIS

Mom, we all know you love her more than anything. You risked your life for her. Look, Trixie was messed up because her mother was so messed up. But you aren't. You aren't messed up at all. So Justine is not going to be messed up.

MADDY

I'm your mother and look what happened to you.

TRAVIS

I think Dad had more to do with that than you. And I doubt I would have ever become a druggie if I'd hadn't taken so much oxycodone. Or met Trixie.

GRANDMA

(interrupts)

What about you Farley? How about an outside opinion?

FARLEY

Well, I've seen some serious behavior problems pass down through horses. Still, a foal can be trained out of it if taught early enough. It just takes patience. I think we all outta give the little girl a chance. There's four of us. I think between us all, we can keep the devil outta her.

Maddy pulls back from Farley's shoulder and smiles at him. The she looks over at her mother.

MADDY

What about you, Mom?

GRANDMA

I think we should put her up for adoption.

Chin up, Grandma looks around the table. Everyone is caught off guard.

MADDY

Really, Mom?

TRAVIS

I'll adopt her then.

Grandma's eyes travel over to Maddy, eyebrows raised, waiting for her response.

MADDY

God, Mom. You really think that?

(to Travis)

Travis, you can't adopt her with your record.

(beat)

No, no, I can't give her away now. There's no way.

Grandma smiles.

GRANDMA

(to Maddy)

Don't worry, dear, I just wanted to make sure you really wanted to keep her is all.

Everyone responds with relief.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Only one thing. I think it best if we keep the "father" listed as "unknown" on her birth certificate. So as far as anyone's concerned, off the record, she's Travis' baby. But we stay honest in regards to her mother, that she was an addict and died in a police raid on a meth lab. Hopefully that'll be a good enough deterrent to keep her clean.

Travis nods after a beat. Farley's not so sure, then agrees. Finally Maddy nods.

INT. BEDROOM, VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

They all stand around the crib looking down at Justine sleeping. Grandma indicates for everyone to hold hands and they all bow their heads in prayer.

Maddy's eyes tear up. Travis smiles at her. Farley is looking lovingly at Maddy. Grandma looks up and mouths a "thank you" to God and Charley.

DISSOLVE TO:

RESOLUTION MONTAGE with End Titles

- 1) TRAVIS is letting go of a cute LITTLE BLONDE GIRL's hand as she starts rolling down a hill on a skateboard.
- 2) Maddy is coaching a PRETEEN JUSTINE how to jump a horse.
- 3) Maddy and Farley are walking, hand-in-hand, through the Lippizaner Stallion's stable in Vienna.
- 3) AUSTRALIAN SURF CONTEST: Surfers and bystanders are watching two female contestants. A HORN BLAST indicating the end of the heat. A tanned TEEN JUSTINE, blue-eyed blonde, in a bikini and rash guard trots out of the ocean with a surfboard. She smiles as she runs by TRAVIS (30's) who stands on the beach beside his own surfboard. He gives her the thumbs-up. Afterwards he throws warning looks at the boys checking her out.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

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