

"EXALTED QUEST"

Screenplay by

Tania Meneguzzi & Kindred Light

Based on the novel by Kindred Light

Contact: Marie Hardy
Phone: 916 500 1581
Email: KindredLight@ExaltedQuest.com
WGA Reg: 2182578

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"There is no magic pill for truth."*

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT (1984)

ESTABLISHING. OVER the Delaware River, featuring the epic Benjamin Franklin Bridge and forest of skyscrapers beyond.

The song "FLASHDANCE... WHAT A FEELING" CARRIES OVER:

INT. CAREY'S MERCEDES BENZ - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON CAREY (26) driving over the bridge, eyes sparkling, singing along to the song on the radio. Sweet and neat -- a thinker, the type that's easy to underestimate. And as Carey joyfully butchers the high note in the chorus, we move to...

EXT. CAREY & SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey's sedan pulls into the driveway from the tree-lined street. The newlyweds-sized house is cookie cutter. Carey hops out dressed in a suit and holding a briefcase. And as she smiles at the sight of two other cars, we --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The same smile. But this one belongs to Carey's mom ELIZABETH (50s), a sympathetic Erma Bombeck-type, and just as amusing.

ELIZABETH

I hope that accounting firm pays
for all your overtime, Carey.

Carey finds her perched at the kitchen table.

CAREY

It's an accrual world.

Another sight for sore eyes rounds the counter to kiss his wife. SAM (28) is Carey's husband. The kind, reliable-type.

SAM

Speaking of work... It's tax
season. Ciao.

He exits as Carey affectionately squeezes Elizabeth's hand.

CAREY

What a surprise. How are you feeling, mom?

ELIZABETH

Perfectly fine. It was just a minor surgery, dear. And not real cancer.

CAREY

Skin cancer is very real. And malignant melanoma is the worst.

ELIZABETH

Was the worst. It's all gone now.

Her conviction puts Carey at ease.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Dad says hi.

Off Carey's weary look.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

We're looking forward to Easter.

The strewn shopping bags nearby catch Carey's eye.

CAREY

I see. It's just that Sam's family--

ELIZABETH

The more the merrier.

A beat passes as Carey finds the strength to say this.

CAREY

Mom... Things have been stressful at work and I don't think I can take another holiday where dad lists each person's faults and failures when they exit the room.

ELIZABETH

He loves you in his own way, you know that.

Now she squeezes Carey's hand.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're utterly divine.

She's convincing but Carey shifts in her seat.

CAREY
 Besides, I promised Sam I would
 make new versions of the Grand
 Marnier Soufflé and Plum Galette.

ELIZABETH
 One for each type of diabetes?

Off Carey's look.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Why not run it by your husband?

Now it's a standoff. Finally, Carey leaves the kitchen...

INT. HOME OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam looks up from his desk to find Carey in the doorway.

SAM
 The answer is yes.

Off her surprised look.

SAM (CONT'D)
 She loves you more than anything
 and I'm sure that my parents will
 be fine with a visit the next day.

CAREY
 My mom asked you already?

SAM
 She might have mentioned Easter a
 few times, or maybe seventeen...

CAREY
 I was trying to get a message
 through to my dad. Now what?

SAM
 Life doesn't come with a manual. It
 comes with a mother.

Then, the sound of CRASHING GLASS and THUMPING resounds down
 the hall. As Carey and Sam alarmingly rush out, we move to...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carey and Sam continue panicking in single file.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey and Sam find Elizabeth convulsing on the tiles in the final throws of a grand mal seizure. Blood, vomit and broken pieces of the wine glass. Sam bolts to the wall phone while Carey tearfully holds Elizabeth as she loses consciousness.

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL - DAY

Carey stands with a DOCTOR (50s) outside a closed door.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, Carey. The test results indicate that the cancer has spread to your mother's brain and lungs.

CAREY

There must be specialists that you can recommend, right? I mean, we can fight this... She's strong.

DOCTOR

No argument there. And of course I'll expedite any referrals. Experimental treatments do exist.

Off her hopeful look.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I must warn you that the side effects could cause your mother's quality of life to deteriorate. It isn't the same for everyone but--

CAREY

May I see her now?

He nods with a sympathetic smile and leaves... Now she wipes away the tears that sting her eyes. A deep breath. Then, she pulls it together as she opens the door and enters the room.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth is sitting upright in bed. She looks peaceful and graceful. Like always. Carey hugs her and sits on the bed. A beat. Elizabeth smiles at Carey who tries not to cry.

ELIZABETH

Thank goodness it wasn't the Waterford that I obliterated.

Carey musters a chuckle - deftly, for her mother's benefit.

CAREY
Where's dad?

ELIZABETH
I told him there was no need to
skip work today. Nor should you.
The doctor said I can go home at
the end of the day. I'm fine.

CAREY
Great. I'll start making
appointments with specialists.

She's holding her look, intense. So Elizabeth just nods. We
leave them, momentarily suppressing fear in favor of hope.

INT. SAM'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Sam drives, Carey beside him. She rolls down her window...

SAM
Are you okay?

Carey leans over to let the breeze hit her face. A beat.

CAREY
You're okay with me quitting my job
to take care of mom while my dad is
at work, right?

SAM
Of course.

Carey opens her eyes, looks right at him.

CAREY
I already did a ton of research.
(grows emotional)
There's a doctor here in Philly who
specializes in cutting edge
treatments for malignant melanoma.

Now we HOLD ON Sam, driving them over the bridge, not looking
hopeful about how this journey could turn out.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY & SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey fills a wine glass. Wedding photos on the mantel catch
her eye. Sees... ELIZABETH IN A PURPLE DRESS BESIDE CAREY

SAM (O.C.)
Are you coming upstairs?

Carey turns to find Sam looking at her sympathetically.

SAM (CONT'D)
She's going to be alright.

CAREY
I'll be right there.

Sam's about to say something else, but changes his mind. He hovers, seeing her polish off the glass.

EXT. ELIZABETH & HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey's car pulls up in the driveway of a lovely farm house on acreage. A pond, swans, sheep enclosed by a split rail fence. The front door opens...

INT. CAREY'S MERCEDES BENZ - CONTINUOUS

Carey looks anxious as HENRY (50s) approaches her window. He is her stern father, dressed in his auto parts store uniform.

HENRY
You're late.

Off Carey's look.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I'll see you later.

He's off to work before she can reply.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's à la Norman Rockwell. Elizabeth's gracious demeanor is reflected in the cozy ambience. Carey puts down her things...

ELIZABETH (O.C.)
In the kitchen, honey.

Carey shakes her head and makes her way into...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey immediately spots baby bottles and formula packages on the counter. Elizabeth looks up from her newspaper.

ELIZABETH
There was a baby lamb and the
mother died.
(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
He wanted to keep it in our
bedroom, but I insisted on the
basement. She is the sweetest,
little thing; I hope she makes it.

CAREY
He sure loves those animals and his
garden more than anything...

Elizabeth notes Carey's bittersweet look unpacking groceries.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Ready for breakfast?

ELIZABETH
Not just yet if that's alright.

She smiles and returns to her newspaper.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I'm noting the best book reviews.

CAREY
Sure. Just let me know which ones
you want me to pick up for you.

Carey looks over at her mother, seeing her smile vanish,
trying to hide that she's feeling unwell.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Carey helps Elizabeth into the bed. She's changed into her
nightgown, moving slowly. Then, Carey perches on the edge.

CAREY
I'll come a little earlier tomorrow
morning to take us to the new
specialist. She's downtown...

Elizabeth musters an appreciative smile.

ELIZABETH
I'll be here.

Carey smiles back and takes some pills out of a bottle on the
nightstand and pours her a glass of water.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Thank you, dear. For everything.

Now tears sting Carey's eyes. Elizabeth takes the medication
and returns the glass to Carey, putting her hand on her knee.

CAREY
You'll be in my heart forever.

ELIZABETH
I love you so much, infinity,
infinity, infinity.

And as Elizabeth kisses the top of Carey's hand, proudly,
offering her another comforting smile, we move to...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Where Carey starts weeping the moment she leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey wipes away tears. A beat. Then, robotically, she takes
out some pots, opens food packets, starts chopping... Henry
returns home from work and peers through the doorway.

HENRY
Are you staying for dinner?

CAREY
No, I'm going home to make dinner
for Sam. I'll see you tomorrow.

As Henry shrugs, continuing down the hallway, we move to...

INT. KITCHEN, CAREY & SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey prepares another dinner for her husband. There's a
glass of wine on hand as she chops the veggies.

CAREY
Mom is loving and accepting all the
time. Not like my dad who keeps
score of our crimes and our debts...

She's talking to Sam who is nearby helping out.

CAREY (CONT'D)
You should have seen him when mom
used all her inheritance from Aunt
Karen to pay my college expenses
instead of buying his farm... he got
it anyway. He's never satisfied.

Sam watches her have a generous gulp of wine.

SAM

I'm sure that he appreciates
everything that you're doing. This
must be really tough on him too.

Not what Carey wants to hear.

CAREY

Your opinion is not part of the
recipe.

He's stunned. A beat as they both stand there, the tension palpable. Then, she slams down the utensils and storms out.

EXT. STREET, NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The SUN FLARES through the clouds onto the tree-lined street where Carey's car pulls out of Elizabeth's driveway.

INT. CAREY'S MERCEDES BENZ - CONTINUOUS

Carey behind the wheel, Elizabeth beside her. We note time has passed as evidenced by her head scarf and weight loss.

ELIZABETH

How about some music?

Carey grins and turns up the radio. It's "The Impossible Dream" much to Elizabeth's delight. And as she sings along to her fave, we see Carey mentally note why she's tone-deaf.

INT. TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

Elizabeth sits among other female patients undergoing chemotherapy by infusion, watching a game-show on the TV.

HOST (V.O.)

How many teeth does an adult have?

Carey looks from the TV to her mom for her answer. She looks foggy as she darts her eyes toward her ancient male neighbor.

ELIZABETH

I guess it depends how adult.

They exchange an amused grin. Another patient calls out:

PATIENT

Thirty-two!

CONTESTANT (V.O.)

Thirty-two.

The BUZZER on the show resounds and we see the TV again.

HOST (V.O.)

Correct!

The patient feigns lifting a trophy and gets a laugh. Then, Carey's brother ALEX (31) approaches in his scrubs and kisses Elizabeth's cheek. He's a kind, hard-working family man type.

ALEX

Hey, mom.

And hugs Carey.

CAREY

Will we see you for dinner?

ALEX

(shakes his head)

CT scans in overdrive today.

He squeezes Elizabeth's shoulder. She and Carey proudly watch Alex as he continues purposefully down the hallway.

INT. CAREY'S MERCEDES BENZ - TRAVELING - DAY

Carey drives, Elizabeth beside her. This time, her exhausted and nauseous mother is resting her head against the window.

CAREY

I admire how strong you are, mom.

ELIZABETH

Divinity is where we came from, and it's where we return. We decide how long we will tarry.

Off Elizabeth's hopeful smile.

INT. HALLWAY, ELIZABETH & HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey walks down the hallway with a breakfast tray.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

She's happy to see Henry on the bed with Elizabeth. Her mother looks alright, resting her hand atop Henry's hand.

ELIZABETH

Can we open the curtains? It's not a funeral for Pete's sake.

Carey happily obeys, pulling open the curtains. And as the SUNLIGHT illuminates the interior glowing bright, we --

WHITE OUT.

SUPERIMPOSE: "One year later."

EXT. CAREY & SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

STILL ON A WHITE LIGHT. We reveal it's Carey's headlights in the driveway. She's in her car staring at the house. Back in a sharp suit with a new haircut, but has lost the alacrity in her eyes. As she exits, holding her briefcase, we move to...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A PREGNANCY TEST in Carey's hand. She's waiting, and waiting, and then suddenly her face shows utter devastation.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam's in bed reading a book. The ensuite door opens and he looks up to find Carey just standing there. The look on her face, the way her hands are shaking, say something is very wrong. He wants to speak, help, but instead she says --

CAREY

I can't do this anymore.

SAM

Do what, honey?

CAREY

All of it.

Off his shocked look.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I don't blame you. You're a good man. But I can no longer envision a happily-ever-after with you.

Carey sits on the edge of the bed. Sam shifts, his eyes narrowing in confusion. And throughout this, we hear Carey's WORDS, but mostly piecemeal from Sam's hazy perspective.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I'm so bored at my job... I've been accepted at Stanford's MBA program... I found an apartment... A new start in sunny California...

The perspective returns to normal as Carey looks at Sam.

SAM
Okay... When?

Carey rises from the bed.

CAREY
Now.

And as she heads to the closet, trance-like --

CAREY (CONT'D)
I'll just pack a few cases for now
and see what happens.

EXT. CAREY & SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens... Carey appears with two suitcases and puts them in her car. We STAY ON SAM in the doorway, reeling...

INT. CAREY'S MERCEDES BENZ - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Carey's reflection in the mirror -- pained, angry. She's clutching the wheel, whirling by cast iron lampposts. There's NO SOUND but she's crying, screaming and letting it all out.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

AERIAL VIEW OVER the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. As we SWEEP along following Carey's car, seeing it LEAVE THE CITY --

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"There is no journey back to youth."*

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA - DAY (1990)

AERIAL VIEW OVER the Golden Gate Bridge. We FIND a TOWN CAR with tinted windows blaring music, driving INTO THE CITY --

EXT. CONCOURSE EXHIBITION CENTER - NIGHT

New Year's Eve Exotic Erotic Ball. The driver opens the door for Carey (32), who's followed by shirtless DON STEIN (44).

Both stunning in black tuxedo jackets, hot-pink cummerbunds, bow ties, black silk teddy and boxers, and top hats. The couple relish being a photo fave on their way into the event.

INT. VENUE - NIGHT

They dirty-dance and celebrate the first moments of 1990, a new decade. As they LIFT THEIR GLASSES to ring in the year --

DON
Cheers to our scientific... And
expensive matchmakers. If they only
knew all my impure thoughts.

Carey grins, clinking his glass. Then, they share a kiss.

INT. SUITE, LUXURY HOTEL - DAY

The Golden Gate bridge through the open curtains. Don and Carey, draped over one another in bed, gaze out the floor-to-ceiling glass windows. His crystal-blue eyes are mesmerizing.

DON
I really think you are the one.

Off Carey's touched look.

DON (CONT'D)
I haven't felt inclined to play any
games with you, unlike the other
women I have dated.

Now she's mildly confused but there's a KNOCK...

DON (CONT'D)
Ah. Our champagne.

He disappears and we stay with Carey. She watches as he throws on a robe and grabs tip money from desk.

DON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Thanks, buddy. I got it from here.

Don returns humorously pushing the room service cart.

DON (CONT'D)
Breakfast in bed, madame?

Carey nods eagerly. Don lifts the silver lid to reveal a perfect mini-buffet platter. As he opens the champagne --

DON (CONT'D)
I think you should move in with me.

She pauses mid-way with a strawberry to her lips.

CAREY
It's just too soon, Don. We don't
know each other very well.

He returns to bed, handing her the champagne.

DON
Don't we?

As he's kissing her neck --

CAREY
You could be an ax murderer.

They share a laugh. Then, Carey gently pulls back, looking
him straight in the eye. She's sincere, genuine, concerned.

CAREY (CONT'D)
It's one thing for two adults to
move quickly in and out of
relationships, but your son has
already experienced enough loss.

DON
We have a family therapist to help
Mark over the divorce turmoil.

Off her impressed look.

DON (CONT'D)
You're welcome to attend a few
sessions if you like?

CAREY
Sure... But I don't want to move in
only to move out and hurt him
again. We both have to be sure.

DON
We have all the time in the world.

As they exchange a glorious kiss...

EXT. WINERY, NAPA VALLEY - DAY (1992)

An amazing garden wedding overlooking the valley. Elegantly
dressed guests enjoy the food and champagne.

Don's son MARK (13) watches his dad and Carey (34) dance a choreographed routine to Elvis's "I can't help falling in love with you."

EXT. VINEYARD - SUNSET

Carey and her mom walk between the trees under the glowing sun. Elizabeth's dress is purple and Carey's has a floral imprint. They're both holding their sandals by the straps.

CAREY

I hope I'm doing the right thing. I love this life and all of the fun.

ELIZABETH

And all over the world.

CAREY

(grins)

He is generous with travel. I guess we're healing together since he was very unhappy in his marriage. He's obviously a great dad since they share custody and he wants more...

Carey looks to Elizabeth with a buoyant smile.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Since I'm about to move into Don's house I want to know the secret to being married to dad for so long?

ELIZABETH

Do we have the time?

Carey laughs and shakes her head. A beat as Elizabeth thinks.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I think we played to our strengths and compensated for each other's weaknesses. Think more "a teammate recovering a fumble than a calculus professor correcting a mistake."

As Carey looks thoughtful and determined, we move to...

EXT. GREEK ISLANDS - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS -- HONEYMOON

-- Carey and Don on a sailboat navigated by a captain.

-- A donkey carrying their luggage up a cobblestone street.
 -- The chalet on a hilltop sprinkled with cobalt-blue domes.
 -- Lunching at a waterfront restaurant with amazing views.
 -- Don carrying Carey laughing up the cobblestone street.
 -- Carey and Don watching the sunset in each other's arms.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREET, NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (1 YEAR LATER)

Carey's car cruises down the tree-lined street. Mostly two-story homes, or bigger, but all with lawns the color of cash.

EXT. CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

An expansive and upscale contemporary spec home. The garden is also a wonderland. Carey's car pulls into the driveway and she steps out... Always beautifully dressed, clad in jewelry.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey enters and walks past a huge beautiful saltwater aquarium. She glances through the glass terrace doors and waves at Mark who's happily messing around in the pool.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

An elaborate study where Don sits in a throne-like leather chair behind a huge desk reading a magazine: "Sunset." He looks up at the sound of heels CLICK-CLACKING into the room.

CAREY
 Welcome back.

She walks around his desk and he stands to greet her, wrapping their arms around each other. It's a lovely kiss.

DON
 And what a warm welcome.

He returns to his seat and she perches on the desk.

CAREY
 Audrey invited us to dinner this weekend?

DON

No, it's too far away. And her husband is too young. I don't have anything in common with him.

CAREY

Okay. Well, let's do something with someone else. How about your friend Joe and his wife? Or a movie?

DON

I don't want to invite them. Why do you always need to stir up shit?

She's taken aback by his now blazing eyes.

CAREY

Sorry. You've been traveling a lot for work and I want us to enjoy the weekend. What would you like to do?

DON

I won't be bullied into anything with your friends whom I don't even like. Evan says I need to stop you from putting your needs above mine.

Carey looks like her heart dropped into her stomach.

CAREY

Your psychiatrist said that?

DON

It's always you and your friends; you don't even care what I want.

CAREY

What? We haven't had *anyone* over for a while. I don't care whose friends we invite over. I just want to do something fun this weekend.

Don's face contorts in disgust.

DON

You always need to get your way.
(audibly under his breath)
That's really weird.

Carey's contorts in rage.

CAREY

You are the one being weird. You are the one being selfish.

(MORE)

CAREY (CONT'D)
I am trying to make plans with you,
and you are acting like a jerk.

Now she's shaking, frustrated, and confused. With a composed smirk, he sits back on his "throne" looking victorious.

DON
There is really something wrong
with you.

He watches as Carey rushes out. Then, Don reaches for the Scotch. And as he pours himself a drink, we move to...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey has flopped onto the bed, staring at the ceiling. We're above slowly PUSHING IN, seeing her face change from angry to confused to guilty to remorseful... She blinks and stands up.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Carey sheepishly hovers in the doorway. Don looks up, stoic.

CAREY
*I'm sorry. I didn't mean what I
said. Let's start over?*

She looks at Don. A beat. Now he's going to make her pay.

DON
I don't want to do anything with
you. You are crazy and selfish.

And resumes reading... Carey exits with a look of self-pity.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Carey's in bed awake, looking uneasy. Don stirs and sees the clock: "8:00 a.m." She brushes her hand against his back and snuggles closer. But he pushes her away and gets out of bed.

INT. ENSUITE - DAY

We're in an ice-filled sink where Carey's face plunges into the water. Her eyes blink and bubbles escape her nose.

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - DAY

Carey flicks through the hangers wearing hair rollers.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Carey descends in a dress that's more "mistress" than wife.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey picks up the wall phone and speed dials a number. She anxiously waits, then sighs as it goes to voicemail --

CAREY
It's me. I just feel awful about
upsetting you.... I want to take
you to lunch. Call me back. *Please.*

She hangs up. Just sits there, staring at the dazzling, perfectly colorless 1.2 carats on her ring finger.

INT. DON'S CITY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Don's playing Carey's voicemail on speaker at his desk.

CAREY (V.O.)
Call me back. *Please.*

He coldly glares at the phone. A beat. Then, he swivels his chair and remains staring out the window at the city view.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Carey is dropping Mark off at practice. She hands him a bottle of frozen water and a protein bar.

MARK
Thanks.

CAREY
Should I pick you up?

MARK
I'll get a ride. See you later.

He's off. Carey kills the rap music on the radio station.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey pulls up outside a dream house set behind manicured hedges. She knocks on the carved door. A beat. Then, we meet Latina LINDA (40). Attractive PTA/ Soccer Mom/ Stepford Wife.

LINDA

Honey.

Off Carey's distraught look.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Come in.

Carey saunters into the house.

EXT. TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

Carey and Linda are seated at the table in the yard that features a swimming pool and guest house. Some wine...

CAREY

He didn't reply. I thought, I have a lot to be grateful for. I should stop complaining and give more.

Now Linda looks confused.

LINDA

You don't deserve this kind of silent treatment from a grown man.

CAREY

I'm sure he just got caught up in a meeting or something. He's so busy with work and usually does call--

Linda's older husband BEN (50s) pokes his head out.

BEN

Carey... Don's on the phone, he said he's trying to reach you.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey hurriedly reaches for the phone and takes a breath.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DON'S OFFICE, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - SAME

Don has a drink in one hand and the phone in the other.

DON

Are you heading back soon? I would like to spend the evening with you.

Carey looks surprised. Then, she smiles --

CAREY
I'm on my way.

DON
Good. And, Carey...?

CAREY
Yes?

A beat.

DON
Everything will work out.

He finishes his drink in one fell swoop.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Don's in bed awake, looking satisfied. Carey's asleep with her head on his chest. She stirs when he caresses her hair.

DON
Good morning, my love.

She sidles closer savoring the moment without words.

DON (CONT'D)
I have a morning meeting.

CAREY
Boo.

DON
Meet me for lunch?

CAREY
Sure. I'd love that...

DON
Then we can swing by my attorney's office. He needs some signatures.

Carey's too sleepy to comprehend anything more than "lunch."

DON (CONT'D)
I'll see you at noon.

Don kisses her head, leaving her to sleep.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Carey and Don walk down the sidewalk holding hands. He looks good in his suit and she looks chic and happy in her dress.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Don steals a kiss from Carey as the doors close.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The secretary ushers Carey and Don inside... The ATTORNEY stands and shakes Don's hand. He nods and smiles at Carey.

DON
David, this is my wife, Carey.

ATTORNEY
It's a pleasure.

CAREY
Likewise.

Carey's eyes dart around eyeing the expensive furniture.

ATTORNEY
I'll just need your signature.

He looks at Carey. She peruses the papers he hands over...

CAREY
A quit claim for the house?

DON
The title was a mess when Ann left.
You know, I need to protect Mark's
interest, so nothing happens.

She looks to Don and he looks to the attorney.

CAREY
(dejected, submissive)
Of course.

Don looks back to Carey. A beat. She signs the quit claim.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - DAY

An Eden-style paradise. Carey (36) sits at a table that holds Marianne Williamson's books: "Return to Love" and "A Woman's Worth." In her hands, is the book: "A Course in Miracles."

INSERT - A PARTICULAR LINE, WHICH READS:

"Fear is a stranger to the ways of love. Identify with fear, and you will be a stranger to yourself."

Off Carey's moved look, tears now streaming, we move to...

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - DAY

Elizabeth (in her signature purple) walks with Carey on a path in the paradise continuing beyond the garden. A sensory feast, a jungle of trees, birds, flowers, and vibrant sounds.

CAREY

The palace door shut tight after me
when the honeymoon ended, and I
feel like I'm trapped in a dungeon.

Elizabeth's just listening...

CAREY (CONT'D)

No trips, friends, or parties. Not
even a movie night. At first, I
complained, but the emotional
repercussions are too severe. There
is a dragon inside that man that I
do not want to unleash... I've
watched him stall for four years to
start a family. But I will leave if
he doesn't live up to his promise
to have kids with me.

ELIZABETH

No one is born... or dies... without
divine consent and according to
divine timing. Simple as that.

Off Carey's determined look, we --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Don's car SKIDS to a halt. He leaps out to open the passenger door. A very PREGNANT Carey (37) clutches the seat SCREAMING!

DON

You're digging your nails into the
leather!

CAREY
I'm practicing for when I dig your
grave! GET THIS OUT OF ME!

INT. CORRIDOR, HOSPITAL - ON THE MOVE

Don gawks at the NURSE bouncing alongside Carey's gurney.

NURSE
Looks like it's a big one.

Carey once again SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER.

INT. MATERNITY WARD - LATER

QUIET. Two beaming nurses put TWO GIRLS in each of Carey's arms. Don looks happy as he marvels at the trio on the bed.

DON
You did it, honey. They're just
beautiful and perfect. Like you.

Carey looks up at him, teary-eyed, but just as happy.

EXT. CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - DAY

It's dawn. Birds are CHIRPING under a perfect sky. Then --
BABIES WHALING LOUDLY PIERCES THE SERENITY

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Carey's opted for Pottery Barn Kids periwinkle and pink and girly vibes. Carey is overwhelmed by both girls crying.

CAREY
Don, help!

No reply. Carey SIGHS and leaves the babies...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Don calmly adjusts his tie in the mirror despite the LOUD CRYING coming from the nursery. Carey enters in a state.

CAREY
They are both crying. I need help.

Don curtly speaks to her reflection without turning around.

DON

You need to be able to handle both
yourself. I won't always be around.

Off Carey's stunned look.

DON (CONT'D)

What? You wanted this. What is
wrong with you?

INT. NURSERY - DAY

The twins have settled in the crib. They're marveling at the
hanging moon and star garland. Carey looks into their eyes
and smiles wide. Then, something shifts in Carey's eyes...

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Carey sits at the table set in the Eden-style paradise with a
pile of PARENTING BOOKS. As she's fervently reading one --

LINDA (O.C.)

Your part-time nurse is amazing.

Carey turns to see Linda approaching...and she's PREGNANT.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Do you think I can hire her next?

They do air kisses since Linda's belly is in the way. But the
rest of her remains well maintained without added weight.

CAREY

Sure. Christine and Nicole are easy
babies, I don't think I'll need her
much longer. How are you feeling?

LINDA

To pee, or not to pee, that is
never the question.

They share a laugh as Linda takes a seat.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I peeked in the nursery. They're
just tiny angels... Imagine when
ya'll dress them alike. Too cute!

CAREY

They aren't bookends.

Linda jokingly rolls her eyes. Then, takes an ultrasound image from her purse and holds it up -- IT SHOWS TWINS.

CAREY (CONT'D)

No way?!

Carey's eyes are bug wide with excitement. Linda clasps her hands together, barely able to contain her joyous energy.

LINDA

This is going to be epic.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"There is no one to save your soul."*

EXT. BEACH - DAY (1999)

Carey (40), Linda, and another mom KATH (30s), prep each of their twins (3) for an adorable panoramic photo on the sand.

LINDA

I see Christine has followed
Nicole's tomboy trend. Too cute!

CAREY

Those Laura Ashley velvet dresses
put them into anaphylactic shock.

They laugh at her topless kids in plain bikini bottoms while the others wear suits covered in butterflies and polka dots.

KATH

Look at our six-pack!

Carey takes the photo just in time before chaos erupts...

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Kath waves to Linda and Carey as she drives away. The friends chat while packing the beach bags into their parallel cars.

LINDA

Honey, is everything alright?

CAREY

Just watch what you say to me on
the phone, it might be bugged.

(MORE)

CAREY (CONT'D)
I know Don keeps recordings of our
arguments as evidence of my
"badness" for some imaginary trial.

Linda isn't sure what to say. So, she just nods.

INT. FAMILY ROOM, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It resembles a jumbled preschool, with wall-to-wall toys,
toddler paraphernalia, and two of almost everything. Nicole
snatches a toy from Christine and she totally FREAKS OUT.

CHRISTINE
Give my doll back. It's mine!

Carey turns in time to see Christine tug at Nicole's hair.

CAREY
Christine, no. Either you can have
this other doll or take turns, ok?

Obviously it's not okay as Christine tugs even harder.

NICOLE
Mommy!

Don looks up from his magazine to critique Carey.

CAREY
There are two of those dolls,
lovebug. You can both play.

CHRISTINE
No! I was playing with her first.

Carey separates them by kneeling between the drama.

CAREY
The doll is getting a time-out.

DON
Absurd. If Christine got it first
then she gets to play with it.

Carey looks at Don in disbelief. As she does, Christine
lunges at Nicole and bites her arm. She starts SCREAMING!

CAREY
Christine!

Carey picks her up and takes her into the other room.

CHRISTINE
MOMMY!!!!

Nicole continues crying until Carey returns and shoots Don a look. Then, Don rises and leaves the room...

CAREY
Honey, show me your arm.

Nicole complies -- ouch. Then, through the terrace doors, Carey sees... DON WALKING WITH CHRISTINE HOLDING HER HAND

Carey shakes her head, incredulous. But sadly Nicole also sees her dad coddling her offender. Off Nicole's sad look.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carey pours a generous glass of wine... Don enters to fetch the newspaper off the table, judging her from head to toe.

CAREY
I thought we agreed to enforce a
time-out if Christine bites Nicole.

He just holds her look, his face betraying nothing.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Instead, you get VIP daddy time?

DON
It doesn't matter what I think, you
just do whatever you want anyway.

Carey is totally dumbfounded as Don picks up the paper and exits. And as Carey has her first sip of wine, a surge of relief washing over her, we move to...

INT. DON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Where Don's doing exactly the same but with Scotch.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Carey (40) shops for herself and the kids. At the checkout --

CASHIER
That card didn't go through, ma'am;
would you like to try another one?

CAREY
Oh, yes, of course. Sorry. Here.

CASHIER
Sorry. That didn't work either.

CAREY
(now alarmed)
Wait, I have cash.

Carey digs in her purse, holding back tears.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Don sits in his chair reading Wine Spectator magazine. He reacts to the FRONT DOOR slamming. Then, Carey appears --

CAREY
Both my cards were declined today.

He barely looks up.

CAREY (CONT'D)
I guess you forgot to transfer
funds into our joint bank account
and renew my expired credit card?

DON
I didn't forget. I think you spend
too much and need to cut back.

CAREY
Well, suggest a budget. But don't
cut off all my access for God's
sake. What if you were in the
hospital or out of town and I
couldn't buy food for the kids.

DON
There's no need for the rigmarole
to add you to my accounts. Here...
I'll write a check for \$10,000 in
your name... And we can keep it in
here for such an emergency.

Don places it in his drawer and looks up with a smile.

DON (CONT'D)
After all, I don't want you to pull
the plug if I end up in a coma...
just to get the insurance money.

Carey storms out.

EXT. TERRACE, LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey's twins play with Linda's twins supervised by her live-in housekeeper. Carey and Linda are seated at the table.

CAREY

I got a credit card in my maiden name. That solves the short-term problem but no the bigger issue--

She stops when Ben appears just home from work.

BEN

(kisses Carey)

Hey, Carey. Is Don here? I thought he was joining us for dinner.

CAREY

(shrugs)

No, he didn't come.

Ben awkwardly continues to the yard to greet the kids.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Don mentioned that he's in the process of refinancing the house. I requested to be added to the title.

LINDA

Good. What was his response?

CAREY

He said he would...

Linda raises her crossed fingers.

CAREY (CONT'D)

The prenup made sense to me before we had children, but not anymore; this is a last shred of hope--

The twins run over to show off their drawings... It lifts Carey's spirits and she smiles and hugs them tightly. They love her back before rushing away again for another round.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I thought I could love him and my kids enough to make everyone happy. I love being a stay-at-home mom. I have this fantasy it would all work out... if Don would just cooperate! The concept of a job and being a single parent seems impossible.

LINDA

Sometimes we have to do things we don't like. Is it better to live with Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, never knowing which one will come home?

EXT. CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey's car pulls into the driveway. But she just stares at the house. We've seen this look before during the 'Sam era.'

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

The twins rush ahead as Carey ascends the steps past framed photographs along the wall. As she's taking them in we see:

- Don and Carey in a romantic open air hut in Bora Bora.
- At the five-star former castle Schlosshotel in Germany.
- Cutting their three tier wedding cake in lush Napa.
- In a tree house at the Hana Iti resort in Tahiti.
- On a boat in New Zealand seeing dolphins play.
- Holding the baby twins in a professional portrait.

Carey smiles at their perfect life, eyes full of promise at making things right again. Then, she makes her way into...

INT. DON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carey finds Don drinking a glass of wine, talking on the phone. She also notes there's half a beer and sake bottle.

DON

They just walked in... Would you like to talk to the twins?

Don gestures to Nicole to take the phone.

DON (CONT'D)

It's grandad.

They light up as they hold it between both their ears.

NICOLE

Grandpa!

CHRISTINE

Grandpa!

They chat in the background as Carey sees papers on the desk.

CAREY

Is that the refinance paperwork?

Don nods as Carey picks them up to look them over.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I appreciate you putting my name on the house. If anything were to happen to you, the children and I would not want a legal nightmare.

Carey looks confused as she flips to the last page.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Where do I sign?

She looks up to find Don looking right at her, taking another sip of wine. He puts it down and leans back in his chair.

DON

I wasn't able to put your name on the title because your credit is bad, and the mortgage company wouldn't agree to the refinance.

CAREY

What? My credit is the credit we have together, which should be exactly the same *since we've been married seven years*. There must be some mistake. I'll call tomorrow.

She takes the broker's card and walks out.

INT. TWINS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carey tucks the girls into bed and kisses them goodnight.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Henry leans against the fence looking out over sheep and peacocks. He wearily answers his RINGING CELL --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CAREY'S CAR - TRAVELING - SAME

Carey starts the call calmly even though she's perturbed.

CAREY

Hi dad, I'm glad you got to talk to the kids last night.

HENRY

Don said you're just as difficult and selfish as ever.

CAREY

You don't talk to me for a year and suddenly you are willing to listen to anything he has to say? He's really a bad guy, dad. I need help.

HENRY

I don't believe a word of your crap. When your mother was really sick that year, where were you?

Carey's jaw drops -- *is he serious?*

HENRY (CONT'D)

Then, I gave you \$1,000 down payment for a car, and you never paid me back. I know all about you.

CAREY

That's how you remember that? Do you want money? I'll send it now.

HENRY

Don said you spend so much money that he can't keep up. And you refuse to get a job to help out.

CAREY

Dad, he's very wealthy. I take care of the kids. You DON'T KNOW HIM.

HENRY

But I know how lazy you are.

Carey is stunned, infuriated, hurt. She HANGS UP!

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Don kneels on the floor retrieving some pill bottles from his safe. Carey appears in the doorway. She's angry and confused.

CAREY

The broker said she never ran my credit because she didn't know about me. You said you live alone.

Off Don's indifferent look.

CAREY (CONT'D)
We agreed to put my name on the
mortgage for the kids's benefit.

Don just stares at the pills.

CAREY (CONT'D)
And my dad is angry at me. How
could you destroy our fragile
détente? He's a jerk but I want the
kids to know their grandpa. I could
just kill you I'm so fucking angry.

DON
I'm such a bad person, I should
take this whole bottle.

Carey is speechless as he exits the walk-in closet.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Don calmly gets into the bed as Carey slowly approaches...

CAREY
What is going on with you?

Don opens the nightstand drawer and takes out a pistol.

DON
I wish I could die and join my dad.

Carey's frozen. Then, he holds it up.

CAREY
(disassociating)
Stop.

She takes it from his hand and vanishes into the closet. Don just sits there oddly staring at the carpet... Carey emerges holding the pistol and now the pill bottles. She looks terrified and confused as she hurriedly exits the bedroom.

CAREY (CONT'D)
I'm going to bed.

Off Don's numb look.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carey is trembling as she navigates her way into...

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey shuts the door. She quickly hides the gun and the pills under the mattress. Then, she sits down, and starts sobbing.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Don is asleep. Carey stands in the doorway checking on him...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey quietly grabs a bottle of wine, corkscrew and glass.

INT. LIVING ROOM, LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey stands at the window watching her twins run around the yard with Linda's twins and the nanny. Linda enters with tea.

LINDA

This is much, much worse than I
thought. This is nine alarm crazy.

Linda shakes her head as she fills their cups.

CAREY

What am I going to do? I have no
money, no place to go.

LINDA

We'll figure something out.

Carey wipes away a tear.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Are the suicide threats real?

CAREY

No idea. Part of me is concerned
that he's serious and part of me
wishes he was. Am I a bad person?

Carey turns back to check on the twins.

CAREY (CONT'D)

He is my kid's dad. I need to take
this seriously.

Christine catches Carey's eye from behind a tree playing hide and seek. She puts her index finger to her lips and smiles.

Carey wells up, smiling right back.

INT. WAITING ROOM, COUNSELOR'S CLINIC - DAY

Carey anxiously paces in the empty lounge. Then, the office door opens to reveal Don's curt male COUNSELOR (50).

COUNSELOR
(to a patient)
See you next week.

The miserable looking man nods and enters the elevator.

CAREY
Thanks for agreeing to see me.

The counselor motions for Carey to step into the office.

INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They awkwardly remain standing by the closed door.

COUNSELOR
Don was just here and he said that he was fine. Please tell me why you are here.

CAREY
As I mentioned in my voicemail, he made suicide threats last night.

COUNSELOR
He said you threatened to kill him.

CAREY
What? I was being facetious. I was angry that he secretly spoke with my dad and got him all riled up.

COUNSELOR
I see, you have several people who are worried about you.

CAREY
I'm worried about Don. Maybe he quit the antidepressants too quickly after grieving his dad's death? Why would he have a gun in the nightstand?

COUNSELOR
We both know that's not what happened, Carey. I think it would be best if you take a break from each other for a little while.

CAREY
(stunned)
Well, we agree on that.

COUNSELOR
In the interim, please remove any
pills and weapons from the house.

He motions for Carey to exit the office.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Carey sees the counselor vanish as the doors close.

CAREY
Idiot.

And as she presses "G" a little too hard, we move to...

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey finds other pills in the safe: sleeping pills, pain pills, anti-anxiety pills. Then, she uncovers audio and video tapes with her name on the labels. And as she freezes, we slowly push in ON HER FACE -- a memory hauled to the present.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (**QUICK FLASHBACK**)

Don and Carey mid-argument. She spots a video recorder on the counter and goes to turn it off. He wrestles her for it but she won't let go... Carey bites Don's arm to escape his grip.

EXT. CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey tosses the pills and tapes into her trunk. Also adds a pistol, rifle, and a pellet gun. Then, she SLAMS IT SHUT!

EXT. PRESCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Carey walks with Nicole and Christine toward her car. The TEACHER stands by the gate, noticing Carey looks stressed.

INT. GARAGE, LINDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Linda looks shocked when Carey opens the trunk of her car to reveal Don's assortment of prescription pills and guns.

CAREY

Don only sees PhD counselors
because it's not enough of a
challenge to mind fuck mere mortals
with masters degrees.

Linda locks everything in a cabinet.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Don's counselor thinks that I am
the crazy one. He doesn't see that
Don projects all his demons onto me
and then tries to destroy me to
kill them. Am I the crazy one?!

LINDA

Only if you don't get an attorney.

Off Carey's look.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Carey kisses the twins goodnight and hugs them tightly.

NICOLE

Love you, mommy.

CHRISTINE

Sweet dreams.

CAREY

I love you both so much, infinity,
infinity, infinity.

Carey blows them a kiss and turns out the light.

INT. LAW OFFICES - DAY

Carey sits opposite her ATTORNEY (40s) in a contemporary
office. She's smartly dressed, matter-of-fact, and all ears.

CAREY

I didn't flinch when Don asked me
to sign a prenup that my attorney
suggested was "mean-spirited."

Off the attorney's look -- yikes.

CAREY (CONT'D)

He had been hurt by his first wife,
and I wanted him to feel safe. It
wasn't about money. I had excellent
earning potential if we split up.

ATTORNEY

You mean before you quit your job
to look after Mark, then your kids?

Off Carey's look -- *right*.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

That \$10,000 emergency check is
made out to you, correct?

Carey nods, anxiety rising high.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

You need to open a new account, and
deposit it. And you need to leave
asap, so you'll need that money. It
usually takes three days to clear.

CAREY

I'm afraid to be in that house with
him. What do I do in the meantime?

ATTORNEY

Married couples can take a vacation
from each other, and it won't
influence the custody arrangements.

Off Carey's relieved look.

INT. ENTRY HALL, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey enters and trepidatiously looks to see if Don's home.

INT. DON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carey retrieves the check. Sees... It's \$100,000 not \$10,000.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - LATER

Carey sits at the table with Elizabeth. She's wearing a smart
skirt and blouse (in a light shade of purple). Birds CHIRP...

CAREY

My whole plan is contingent on the
funds from that check I deposited.
Linda gave me a deposit and
cosigned a lease for a nearby town
house starting next week. She and
Kath gave me spare furniture and I
already reserved the movers.

ELIZABETH

It can be difficult to break this bond, so you must find the strength to keep going until it is finally broken, and you have grown and healed. Your stubbornness will serve you well... eventually.

CAREY

It will be hard to stay here tonight but I'm flooded with relief at the thought I'll soon be free.

ELIZABETH

You'll be in my thoughts.

INT. DINING ROOM, CAREY & DON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey nervously distracts herself with the twins. Don is in a pleasant mood when he enters holding a framed comic strip.

DON

Look what I just came across organizing my office upstairs.

THE STRIP OF PHOTOS: Don and the babies smiling - Don bottle feeding Nicole - Don bottle feeding Christine - Don wincing at both babies screaming - Four beer bottles and three baby bottles - Don exhausted holding both sleeping babies.

He looks right at Carey. She manages a chuckle --

CAREY

Oh, yes. Many bottles ago.

Don surprisingly laughs and takes a seat.

DON

Shame you didn't get Christine projectile vomiting in my slipper.

Then, he smiles right at her.

DON (CONT'D)

Great father's day gift, Carey.

Carey smiles back, shuddering on the inside.

INT. BANK - DAY

Carey anxiously approaches the TELLER at the window.

CAREY

I deposited a check the other day
and want to know if it has cleared.

Hands over her account book. The teller taps away....

TELLER

There was a stop payment yesterday.

Carey just laughs and walks away.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Linda and her twins prepare Halloween decorations with her
nanny and Carey's twins. Carey pulls up feigning a big smile.

CAREY

Hello, lovebugs.

She exits her car and hugs the twins... Over their heads she
catches Linda's eye and shakes her head. Off Linda's wince.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Carey and Linda sit by the fireplace comforted by wine.

CAREY

Don had known all along and didn't
say a word about it over dinner.

LINDA

The cat and mouse game continues...

CAREY

And I'm the mouse again. Ugh.

LINDA

You should just stay at the beach
house. It's only five days until
moving day into your own place.

Carey nods, squeezing Linda's hand.

LINDA (CONT'D)

It's all going to turn out better
than you expected.

CAREY

I don't need an inspirational
quote, Linda. I need more wine.

As Linda looks at her concernedly, we move to...

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Carey calls Don so she and the twins can leave a voicemail.

CAREY

The kids and I are going to Santa Cruz with Linda for a few days. We just need a little time. Don't worry, everything is fine and we'll be home soon. Here are the girls...

She hands the phone to Nicole.

NICOLE

Hi, daddy! We made smores!

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

A flower delivery van parked outside. The man rings the DOOR BELL... Carey answers and is surprised to see a rose bouquet.

DELIVERY MAN

Delivery for Carey Stein.

He leaves and she reads the note: "Don't do this. Don."

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"There is no trick to make you whole."*

EXT. PRESCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Carey and the teacher approach her car with the twins. She stops because other mother's are staring at them. Follows their gaze. Sees... Don is with Mark and a police officer.

DON

Here is an ex parte order for me to have sole custody of the children.

The twins look at Carey as she stands there dumbfounded. She catches Mark's eye but he sheepishly looks down at his shoes.

DON (CONT'D)

This police officer is here to ensure that I take them home. I also have a restraining order that you must always stay 100 feet away.

CAREY

What kind of lies did you have to
tell to make this happen?

Don smirks, hands her the documents.

DON

The court date is in two weeks.

He leaves with Mark, the twins, and the officer. The teacher sympathetically puts her hand on Carey's shoulder.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S NEW TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Carey walks around the furnished space she's prepared and peers into the twins empty bedroom. She bursts into tears.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carey is trying to hold it together on the phone. There's a half empty wine bottle on the table and a glass.

CAREY

Yes, mommy will see you soon... I
love you, too, infinity, infinity,
infinity... Sweet dreams.

Carey hangs up. Now she just sits there, utterly distraught.

EXT. CAREY'S NEW TOWN HOUSE - LATER

Linda stands there KNOCKING... No reply. She glances at Carey's car in the driveway. Then, she turns the door handle.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The door opens and Linda enters with grocery bags.

LINDA

Hello? It's moi.

No reply. She makes her way into...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Linda enters and sees the back of Carey at the table.

LINDA

Carey? Are you alright?

She stops as she now sees Carey's eyes are red and puffy.

CAREY

My girls are crying for me, and he doesn't care. This is so insane. I have hardly seen them all week and they can't be with me unsupervised.

Linda spots the empty wine bottle. A beat. Then, she opens another and pours herself a drink. Also tops up Carey...

CAREY (CONT'D)

Their teacher said that they were late today. Christine didn't even have any shoes! He doesn't know what they eat, or how to dress them. How the fuck did this happen?

LINDA

You must be strong.

CAREY

I'm not strong. I'm terrified.

Off Linda's look.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Carey sits with the same female attorney from earlier.

ATTORNEY

As you know, Don obtained the sole custody order on the basis of an allegation that you had \$100,000 and were a flight risk. He claimed that your whereabouts was unknown while visiting Linda's beach house.

Carey rolls her eyes. The attorney presents some papers --

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Now, we have the evidence of his stop payment, dated before his sworn statement. And the receipt for the flowers and voicemail recordings left by the children that proves he knew where you were and that they were not in danger.

Carey looks more optimistic with each fact.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Furthermore, we have Don's suicide threats and inventory of narcotics and weapons. And lastly, evidence of your fully furnished town house, which reflects your commitment to live nearby and co-parent with Don.

CAREY

How can I lose?

Off the attorney's confident look.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Carey's attorney is addressing the judge. Don is seated beside his two attorneys, avoiding eye contact with Carey.

CAREY'S ATTORNEY

Your honor, based upon the parties meeting with the custody mediator, it has been recommended that my client receive primary custody, while Mr. Stein has Wednesday night dinners and every other weekend.

DON'S ATTORNEY

Your honor, my client currently has sole custody. It would be disruptive to the children to have such a dramatic shift in custody so quickly. They have a nanny that is the primary caregiver who can go back and forth with the children.

Carey is utterly astonished.

JUDGE

I see your point. The court orders 50-50 custody, alternating weeks, for the next few months pending the results of a Section 730 custody evaluation.

The judge bangs the gavel.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carey looks devastated as she walks with her attorney.

CAREY

First, the nanny only comes six hours per week so I can go grocery shopping and exercise. That was a lie. A \$5,000 custody evaluation?!

ATTORNEY

I'm just as shocked.

CAREY

As scared as I am of Don, I'm much more afraid to leave the girls alone with him 50 percent of the time. There is absolutely no way I am going to let that happen.

As Carey peels off before she can reply, we move to...

INT. CAREY'S BEDROOM, TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Clothes fly into a suitcase on the bed... Pull back to reveal it's Carey packing while Linda sits on the edge with wine.

CAREY

I know you think I am crazy but I have to go back for the kids. I'll get a job and then I can leave.

LINDA

I can't imagine a worse Christmas.

CAREY

Nor can I, but part of my agreement to return to Don's house involves me keeping this town house and some cash in case I change my mind. My brother and his family are coming from Philly to stay here. It will be a welcome distraction.

LINDA

I'm pleased to hear that Don agreed to call a truce so the kids can enjoy a holiday. We'll make it fun.

Off Carey's hopeful look.

EXT. CAREY'S TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Christmas lights and decorations adorn the front yard. The sound of CAROLS and LAUGHTER from inside CARRIES OVER:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey and the twins finish supper with her brother Alex. His wife HELEN (40s) keeps him calm when the kids make him crazy.

ALEX
I'm stuffed. That was amazing.

CAREY
Thanks to Helen...

HELEN
There's still dessert!

Alex's boys (4 & 7) clap excitedly along with the twins.

CAREY
The best is yet to come.

The PHONE RINGS... Alex and Carey exchange a worried look.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Carey puts down the phone as Alex appears in the doorway.

ALEX
Don, again?

She nods, looking concerned.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Is he intoxicated?

CAREY
More and more each time. Except now
he's finally stopped asking when
we're coming back and said it'll be
better if I just stay here tonight.

ALEX
For Pete's sake.

Carey shrugs and motions to the desserts on the counter.

CAREY
Is there anything she can't do?

Alex smiles, shaking his head. Then, he goes over to help...

ALEX
It looked like a storybook ending
for you. And, I always wanted that
since you're away from our family.

CAREY
I thought I could love him enough
so that he would love me back, like
Dad never did.

Off Alex's sympathetic look.

EXT. CAREY'S TOWN HOUSE - LATER

The interior lights are off and it's quiet. Then, Don's car clumsily parks outside. He drunkenly BANGS on Carey's door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carey hurriedly appears in her PJs at the same time as Alex.

DON (O.C.)
(barely coherent)
I'm here with the police. You
better open this door, Carey.

Alex extends his arm to stop her opening the door. He looks through the door viewer. Sees... Don is alone and WASTED.

ALEX
(quietly to Carey)
It's just him. I'm going to call
the police. Don't open the door.

Carey just nods, wincing from the BANGING... Then, the rest of the household trepidatiously appears in the hallway.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A FACILITATOR sits with an AA group. Don is among them.

FACILITATOR (O.S.)
Who'd like to share a day count?

DAVID (O.S.)
Hey, I'm David, I'm an alcoholic.

GROUP
Hey, David. / Welcome, David.

DAVID (O.S.)
I've got thirty-eight days back.

The group applauds warmly.

FACILITATOR (O.S.)
Anyone else?

Don reluctantly raises his hand. He stands.

DON
I'm Don, and...

GROUP
Welcome, Don.

DON
This is day one. I'm here because I
don't want to lose my kids...

Don sits down. On HIS FACE as the facilitator moves on...

EXT. BACKYARD, LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Linda and Carey sip champagne on the daybeds by the pool.

CAREY
I've even failed at ending my
marriage.

Carey raises her glass. Linda frowns.

LINDA
But the kids seem happy... Don's
still sober?

CAREY
That only lasted a few months. He
has bought a business two hours
away from the house, and spends
most of his time away. I could
easily get custody at this point...

Off Linda's expectant look.

CAREY (CONT'D)
But I've decided it would be better
to move near his new office. One
last try, and if it doesn't work,
we'll be in a more affordable place
to raise kids as single parents.

And as they exchange a hopeful smile, we start --

A MONTAGE

-- Carey and Don outside a nice house with a realtor.

- Carey directing delivery men with new furniture.
- Carey with the girls and other moms at kindergarten.
- Don arriving home with his briefcase and a NEW PUPPY.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DON & CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Don exits in a suit and gets into his car. The twins wave from the doorway with Carey as the puppy pees on the mat...

CAREY

Great.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carey's straightening up while chatting on the phone.

CAREY

You can't imagine the chaos over choosing a name. We finally settled on Sierra... she's just too cute.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NAIL SALON - SAME

Linda's getting a pedicure while talking on her phone.

LINDA

Are you ready for our six-pack beach trip. I'm already packed!

Carey opens a cabinet to put bills in a holder by the printer. Then, something catches her eye. Sees... A TAURUS-LEO LOVE REPORT ON THE PRINTER TRAY. Carey's face drops.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Hello? Are you there, darling?

CAREY

I just found a Taurus-Leo love report on the printer tray.

Linda smiles as she takes a sip of her champagne.

LINDA

Ooooh... Things really are taking a turn for the better with this move.

CAREY
Honey. Don is a Taurus; I am a
Sagittarius.

Linda tries to think fast --

LINDA
OH. Well, if he leaves you for
someone else, surely he will free
you more easily and advantageously.

CAREY
Have you met Don?

Linda tilts her head. Thinks even faster --

LINDA
Okay, but- guilt, if he feels any,
could be good for your cause.

Off Carey's look.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"The way to peace is not through him."*

EXT. DON & BARB'S HOUSE - DAY

It's big with manicured gardens. Two luxury cars in the
driveway. Carey (45) arrives in her car with the girls (8).

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BARB (32) reacts to the BELL... She's trailer trash Barbie, a
gold digger. Don (57) looks up at her from his magazine.

DON
Let's keep this brief.

Barb nods, disappearing momentarily. Then, the twins enter
and dump their bags on the floor. Christine has continued the
tomboy look while Nicole is back to 'girly.' Carey enters...

NICOLE
Hey, dad.

Christine offers Don a hug as Carey awkwardly turns to Barb.

CAREY
Thanks again, I appreciate it.

Barb and Don barely nod. Carey scoops the girls in her arms.

CAREY (CONT'D)
I love you... See you next week.

NICOLE / CHRISTINE
Love you, mommy. Miss you already.

EXT. TURKS AND CAICOS, CARIBBEAN - DAY

ARIAL OVER the turquoise waters of the Caribbean and white beaches until we finally reach the five-star adult resort.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Carey sinks her toes in the wet sand, smiling at the cleansing waves. She looks completely free of her troubles.

EXT. RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

Dolled up Carey enjoys a drink under the stars. She glances to her right to find NICK (40s) smiling right at her. He's fit and good-looking. She half-smiles back, and turns away.

INT. BEACHFRONT SUITE - DAY

The mesmerizing ocean through the open terrace doors. Nick and Carey, draped over one another in bed, gaze out the open terrace doors. He has an ego with the goods to back it up.

NICK
(inhaling the breeze)
Ah. Smells like freshly signed
divorce papers.

Off her amused look.

NICK (CONT'D)
I'm having a great time with you.

CAREY
Likewise.

NICK
But we agree on the terms, right?

Carey rolls her eyes. He backpedals a bit --

NICK (CONT'D)
It's just that I'm done raising
kids, you know what I mean...

CAREY
I sure do. What happens in Turks
stays in Turks?

NICK
Come on, it's more than that?

CAREY
Is it, Nick?

There's a KNOCK at the door.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Saved by the Bolli.

He laughs and dissapears as we stay with Carey. And as she
looks out at the waves, inhaling deeply, we --

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Carey and the twins (6) have a blast in the funky venue.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey looks miserable as she emails a presentation from her
laptop. The heading: "Business Proposal." The phone rings --

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BACKYARD, LINDA'S HOUSE - SAME

Linda sips champagne on the daybed by the pool.

LINDA
It's happy hour at the ranch.

CAREY
Ugh. I wish... Since I couldn't
imagine being employable I invested
in a website development franchise.

LINDA
A what?

CAREY

I've met many prospective clients
but I don't think the tear-stained
proposals project the right vibe.

LINDA

Well, pour a glass of wine and try
to make it fun. I'm proud of you.

As Carey laughs with false bravado, we move to...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The fridge door opens... Carey retrieves a wine bottle.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carey looks tipsy and sadder than ever as she checks for
replies to her business proposal: "NO MAIL." Then, the PHONE
RINGS... Carey pulls her shit together and answers the call.

CAREY

Hello?

Off her sudden school-girl smile, we start --

A MONTAGE

- Carey on Nick's motorcycle exploring Big Sur
- Scuba-diving in Cozumel, Key Largo, and Belize
- Lunching on the cliffs overlooking crashing waves
- Holding hands flying first class to Honduras
- Enjoying a spa weekend in Santa Cruz.
- Dining in a little black dress and sparkling jewelry.

END MONTAGE

INT. SUITE, LUXURY HOTEL - NIGHT

Carey and Nick in bed looking out at the mesmerizing sunset.

NICK

You know I have so much love for
you.

CAREY

I know... But there's no future for us because of my children. I heard you the first time. I'm not a fan of the idea of them having a reluctant stepparent either.

Nick looks relieved. Carey fights to stay in the moment.

NICK

How about you put on those heels and miniskirt I chose and we hit the town before you head home?

Carey musters a smile, masking devastation.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The twins snuggled up on the puffy sofa watching TV. We pull back to see Carey between them staring blankly drinking wine.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carey looks at the wall clock: "12:00." She opens the fridge and retrieves a bottle of wine. Pours a full glass...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey checks her email on her laptop. No replies to the job proposal... Refills her wine glass and picks up the phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NICK'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Nick stands in front of a window on his phone.

NICK

Hey, you.

At the sound of his voice Carey closes her eyes.

CAREY

I miss you. I miss us.

Nick hears the DOOR OPEN and panics at something OFF SCREEN.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Baby, are you here?

CAREY
Who's that?

A young woman tosses her keys in the tray by the door.

NICK
I... I meant to tell you.

Carey hangs up. Off her stung look, we move to...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

An empty wine bottle on the nightstand. Carey's drunk and looks like she's been whaling. She picks up the phone --

DON (V.O.)
Please leave a message...

CAREY
Oh, of course you're not answering
because you're so fucking busy
ruining my life. You are such a bad
person, Don. You're just the worst--

The BEEP cuts her off and she immediately hits "redial."

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Carey keeps her trembling hand under the desk at a temp job.

INT. CAREY'S BEDROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The clock on the nightstand: "3:30 a.m." As Carey tosses and turns, unable to sleep, we see her thoughts in --

A MONTAGE

-- Henry glaring at Carey (teen) holding her REPORT CARD.

HENRY
What, no A+s?

-- Don looking disgusted over his desk at cowering Carey.

DON
You're a bully, just like my ex.

-- Jeweler examining Carey's diamond necklace and earrings.

JEWELER
I'm afraid I can only offer \$800.

-- Property Manager standing next to a sign: "FOR RENT."

MANAGER

Sorry, you have too much debt.

-- Business Man handing Carey back her BUSINESS PROPOSAL.

BUSINESS MAN

We decided to go with someone else.

-- Headhunter sitting across from Carey in her office.

HEADHUNTER

It only pays half your usual rate.

-- Christine and Nicole alone with drunk Carey.

CHRISTINE

Dad wouldn't let Nicole call you.

Carey looks at Nicole. Then, stops in her tracks. Sees...

NICOLE'S PHONE SCREENSAVER IS A PICTURE OF BARB

The twins cower as Carey freaks out and throws the phone.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Carey's getting in her car when Linda calls her phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SUITE, SANTA ROSA HOTEL - SAME

Linda stands by the window clutching the phone.

LINDA

Honey. I've been trying to call.

CAREY

Sorry, Linda. It's been so busy with the kids and the new temp job.

LINDA

I'm in your neck of the woods at the Santa Rosa Hotel prepping for the charity event. I have a suite.

Carey hesitates for a beat. Then --

CAREY

Sure. I'll see you there.

Linda anxiously hangs up the phone.

INT. SUITE, BELMONT HOTEL - DAY

Linda opens the door and Carey enters... She suddenly stops when she sees Alex (brother), Ben, Kath, and a woman from AA.

CAREY

Fuck, Linda. How could you?

Carey swivels on her feet and rushes out.

EXT. DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey's car pulls up. She frantically exits just as Alex pulls up in his rental car. He leaps out and blocks her way.

ALEX

I flew here because I love you and want you to get better. We hired that woman from AA and she said if you quit drinking without going to rehab, you will have seizures. My flight leaves in two hours. So?

CAREY

I was just having a tough time getting over Don's affair.

Now he's looking right through her.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I'm leaving now.

ALEX

Please come back to the hotel.

CAREY

I can and will quit drinking for thirty days. I promise. And I appreciate you making the trip.

She robotically steps closer and they awkwardly embrace.

ALEX

Don meant well today, Carey.

Carey flashes with fury over his shoulder but replies calmly.

CAREY
Of course, I know.

They break apart. Carey watches him get into his car.

ALEX
Don't let your kids down.

Off Carey nodding in agreement.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey pours a glass of wine. The PHONE RINGS... She looks down at her cell: "LINDA CALLING..." Carey declines the call.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The twins (9) enter the house back from school. They see empty wine bottles, strewn cushions, wine on the carpet.

CHRISTINE
Mom?

No reply. They exchange a worried look. Then --

CAREY
Hey, lovebugs. What time is it?

She's a mess. Still in her robe. Sees the wall clock... Then, Carey ashamedly carries the bottles into the kitchen.

CAREY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
How was school today? Who dropped you home? I'm so sorry.

The twins watch as she reappears in a frenzy.

NICOLE
It was okay. We walked home.

CAREY
Are you hungry?

As the twins just nod, exchanging another look...

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Carey's car pulls up. The twins exit and wave goodbye.

CAREY
I love you. See you next week.

CHRISTINE
Oh. Can we have a Christmas tree?

An obvious PANG. But Carey smiles, nodding affirmatively.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS -- THE RABBIT HOLE

- Carey opens a wine bottle
- Puts on a record and dances
- Polishes off a glass in one swoop
- Sleeps on the sofa
- Opens another bottle
- Throws a wine glass at the wall

INT. GARAGE - LATER

The interior door opens and Carey unsteadily makes her way to the car. It's dimly lit and the roller garage door is closed.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Carey gets behind the wheel, inebriated. She turns on the ignition and opens the windows... As the carbon monoxide rises, she wearily opens the glove compartment and retrieves a frame.

Her blurry vision sharpens to the same WEDDING PHOTO we saw of Elizabeth in a purple dress standing proudly beside her and Sam.

Carey averts her eyes from the photo, repressing an inner hurt. Then, she leans her head against the seat, clutching the frame to her chest. As she's breathing in the air, we --

FLASHBACK

INT. HALLWAY, ELIZABETH & ED'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey (26) walks down the hallway with a breakfast tray.

It's the same scene from earlier except now we see her mom's "recovery" differently to Carey's professed memory --

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The curtains are drawn and it's dim. Carey sees Henry on Elizabeth's bed. She's hauntingly pale, unconscious. His hand rests on her hand. Carey stares in disbelief, realizing...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Elizabeth looks serene lying in the coffin wearing the purple dress from Carey's wedding photo. Carey sits between Sam and Henry with a eulogy in her trembling hands. On the other side of her dad is her brother Alex who we've seen over the years.

MINISTER

Now we'll hear from the family.

Carey starts to rise but Henry stops her with his hand, shaking his head. Off Carey's look, far too broken to insist.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Carey alone at Elizabeth's grave on another day.

CAREY

Mom, I just want to lay with you,
for a little while, or... forever.

She looks like she might try to claw her way underground.

END FLASHBACKS

Back to the garage where Carey jerks forward and her eyes snap open -- *she can't let her girls lose their mother.*

INT. LIVING ROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The twins enter and stop in their tracks. There's a CHRISTMAS TREE. They dump their school bags and rush over to marvel.

CHRISTINE

Wow, mom! Love that it's decorated
in ornaments that we made together.

Now Carey is happy drunk, trying to keep it together.

CAREY

They sure held up over the years...

NICOLE

Except the ones we made out of that special cookie cutter dough.

CHRISTINE

(laughs)

Yeah. We ate half of them and the other half got moldy.

CAREY

I got Model Magic so we can make a more permanent version this year... hopefully, you won't eat them too!

Off the girls exchanging a bittersweet look.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The girls lie beside Carey in her bed. She has her final sip of wine and shakily places the glass on the nightstand.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

The girls enter dressed for school as Carey tries to get up.

CAREY

I'll make your breakfast right now.

NICOLE

It's ok, mom. We already ate. We're ready to walk to school. Love you.

CHRISTINE

See you later, love you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carey's drinking and listening to music. She's struggling to wrap some presents on the table when the PHONE RINGS...

CAREY

Hello?

She listens for a moment, then looks annoyed.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Sure I can leave for a last-minute viewing, not inconvenient at all.

Carey hangs up and gulps the full glass of wine.

EXT. DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey kicks over the "FOR SALE" sign. She gets into her car and swerves down the street... Then, we hear WHOOP WHOOP!

INT. HOLDING CELL, COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

A guard opens the door and throws down four paper bags. Carey awakens on the floor to see three women inhaling a sandwich, milk carton, and an apple. Carey only drinks her milk and slides the food to RACHEL (40), a chill 'Spiritual Gangster.'

RACHEL

Thanks. Let me guess... DUI?

Off Carey's look.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I can smell the booze from here.

CAREY

I really fucked up. They're going to take my kids from me... forever.

Carey lays back down and sobs inconsolably.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, JAIL - DAY

Carey and her PUBLIC DEFENDER sit across from one another.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Three DUIs in the last two years doesn't help us fight your cause.

CAREY

I was dealing with a bad marriage and even worse divorce. I'm not an alcoholic. Do we say that the breathalyzer wasn't calibrated?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your blood alcohol was 2.5 times the limit and the officer stated that you were slurring. I'm afraid you're looking at months in jail.

Off Carey's incredulous look.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)

You could be released early with good behavior to an alcohol rehab center.

(MORE)

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)
I don't have to tell you how
important this is if you want to
get out and be with your kids?

She's holding her look, intense. So Carey just nods.

INT. ROOM, JAIL - DAY

Carey is stripped of her clothes, jewelry, and phone. She's given a jailhouse uniform and a 'welcome bag' of toiletries.

INT. CAREY'S CELL, JAIL - DAY

An 8x10 concrete block with a tiny, frosted window, two desks with metal seats, a toilet, and metal bunk beds. Carey is hysterical, partly due to alcohol withdrawal. Her bunkmate happens to be Rachel and they're fast jailbird friends.

RACHEL
He sounds like a nightmare. I'm
sorry. You have a long fight ahead.

A BELL RINGS and the steel cell door clicks open.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Don't EVER forget to bring your
spoon and cup to lunch.

Carey follows her gaze to see the utensils on the desk.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
If you don't, some guards won't
give you a new one. Power trip.

Off Carey's overwhelmed look.

INT. DINING HALL, JAIL - DAY

Carey stands in line with a tray. She feels the stares but keeps lo-pro. Rachel beckons her over to her table. BETH (30s) looks like a mob wife while KAREN (40s) was once a beauty before meth rotted her teeth and left her disheveled.

CAREY
Hi...

Karen and Beth look at her strangely, then exchange a WTF look as Carey sits down. They talk as if she's not there.

KAREN
Have you heard anything?

BETH

Well, they have seized the jet
skis, the SUV, the Caddy, Bob's
Harley, and cash... like, \$150 grand.

Rachel looks to Carey but her head is down.

BETH (CONT'D)

Feds don't have anything on me but
my lawyer says they'll hold me here
until I give up something on Bob.

KAREN

Fuck them. They just want trumped
up charges and they'll lie anyway.

Beth shrugs, resigned. Then, Karen looks at Carey's tray.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Hey, Stepford. Trade you my canned
beans for your cookie and kool-aid?

It takes Carey a second to realize she means her... The
surrounding inmates chuckle. Carey slides both right over.

INT. LIBRARY, JAIL - DAY

Carey gets books on recovery, codependence, and forgiveness.

EXT. COURTYARD, JAIL - DAY

It's overcast and gloomy in the cemented area. Carey reads
alone in a corner... Rachel sits next to her on the bench.

RACHEL

Not in the mood to make friends?

Off Carey's look -- a *hard no*.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

(motions to Karen)

Karen came in with two morphine
patches and high on meth. Her uncle
first gave it to her when she was
13 and then molested her for years.

Carey "clutches her pearls." Then, Rachel motions to SUE
(30), a gentle looking woman walking alone in the yard.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Sue was a nanny. The baby she cared for choked and she's accused of shaken baby murder. She has kids herself. I hear her pray all night.

The BELL RINGS and inmates express discontent. Karen looks suspiciously at Carey who is now alone packing up her books.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The inmates are lined up to use the row of phones on the wall. A few are entertained watching Carey's conversation.

CAREY

You believe that crazy bastard?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LIVING ROOM, ALEX'S HOUSE - SAME

Alex holds the phone while Helen stands nearby. She looks sympathetic, but he looks exhausted and simply fed up.

ALEX

Don said you're going to prison for two years because it's your third, a hit and run, for God's sake?

CAREY

It was not a hit and run, Alex. I'm not going to prison and I'm only sentenced for a few months. Can you please cosign my bail? I am terrified for the kids.

ALEX

I'm sorry, Carey. We're just not in a position to take a chance with \$20,000. You don't have a great track record for keeping promises.

CAREY

I can't believe this! Don gets away with everything and has this great life, my life, that he stole from me. The court ordered him to pay me \$75,000 advance on our divorce settlement and he refused. How does he get to just refuse an order?

Alex's boys enter the room. Carey hears the SQUEALS --

ALEX

I don't know the facts. I'm sorry.

Carey hangs up and storms down the hallway in tears.

INT. COMMON AREA OF JAIL - DAY

Inmates braid each other's hair. Carey and others write letters and create puzzles for their kids using KOOL AID packets. A male guard just swipes everything off the table.

GUARD

You know you can't take kool-aid out of the dining room. Clean this mess up or I'll take away your commissary privileges this week.

Off the women's disgruntled look.

INT. CAREY'S CELL, JAIL - DAY

Carey pins pics of the twins and a letter to the board above the desk. A guard delivers an envelope and she opens it --

CAREY

He's requesting sole custody and a restraining order, AGAIN. And he refused to get my car from impound so they're selling it for the fees.

Rachel looks down at Carey from the top bunk.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I have to get out of here, but no one will cosign my bail. Don't they understand? I can't run, I'm not leaving my kids. I just need help.

Carey flops onto the bottom bunk.

RACHEL

You're not the only one in pain. Or who's been hurt. It may seem as if all your friends in Stepford have perfect lives and yours is the only train wreck but it isn't so, honey.

Something in Carey's eyes shifts.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Many of these women never had a chance to create a good life.

CAREY

There's no justice. It's all a
farse. All these perpetrators are
free while us victims are in jail.

RACHEL

Oh, yeah? You only drove drunk
three times?

Crickets. Rachel smiles -- *Stepford needed a reality check.*

CAREY

Don is the real alcoholic, and he
abuses pills... and abuses me.

RACHEL

I thought he moved out a year ago.

CAREY

Yeah... well... not out of my head. I
still hear his disgusted voice.

RACHEL

Sounds like a personal problem.

CAREY

I've lost EVERYTHING! My home, my
car, my divorce settlement, custody
of my kids, my credit rating, and
my pride... I've become everything he
accused me of, everything I feared.

Carey sighs and buries her head in the pillow.

INT. LIBRARY, JAIL - DAY

Carey returns the self-help books and selects new ones.

CAREY

I thought I could handle the Mr.
Hyde side of Don. It seemed worth
it to have an amazing lifestyle
with Dr. Jekyll. I guess I drank to
avoid facing any of my problems.

She's talking to Rachel in the aisle.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I think my body got addicted when I
started drinking in the middle of
the night. It was the only way I
could sleep. And, then any hour had
the potential to be happy hour.

(MORE)

CAREY (CONT'D)
I neglected my kids. I gave him the
ammunition he needs to destroy me.

RACHEL
Hurt people, hurt people.

Off Carey's look.

INT. HALLWAY, COURTHOUSE - DAY

Carey's led to court in prison garb, handcuffs, and shackles.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Carey sits alone while Don's attorney addresses the judge.

DON'S ATTORNEY
My client requests that the
children are prohibited from
visiting the jail and the
rehabilitation center thereafter.

JUDGE
Agreed. The court will, however,
permit Carey to call her children
twice a week. Don is awarded sole
custody and the restraining order.

Off Carey's astonished look.

INT. COURTYARD, JAIL - DAY

Methhead Karen spots Carey reading a book on the bench in the
far corner. She exchanges a look with Beth and wanders over.

KAREN
Hmm... A Course in Miracles. How's
that working out for you, Stepford?

Carey tries to keep cool as Karen sits too close.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Today might be your lucky day.

Off Carey's equally curious and terrified look.

EXT. DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

The "FOR SALE" sign is upright again. A dodgy looking van
with tinted windows pulls into the driveway. Just sits there.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey sits at the table staring at an unopened bottle of wine. There's a glass and a corkscrew. Wheels turning in her head. Finally, the sound of KNOCKING makes her startle.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Carey looks through the door viewer. Sees... Methhead Karen and her tattooed boyfriend. She reluctantly opens the door.

KAREN
Hey, Stepford.

Karen's eyes look like flying saucers.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You gonna invite us in, or what?

Carey feels his eyes on her, also high AF. She steps back and motions for them to enter and shuts the door.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Happy to be out of Crowbar hotel?

Carey laughs nervously as their eyes scans the room.

CAREY
Thanks to you, of course.

The boyfriend speaks in Karen's ear. She stands at attention.

KAREN
Right. So, since I cosigned your bail for you to see your kids, we think it's only fair that we hold some of your jewelry as collateral.

Now they're both glaring at Carey, adamant.

CAREY
Of course.

Carey takes the bracelet and watch from her wrist and removes one ring. Looks up to find Karen smiling at the wine bottle.

KAREN
Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

She pats Carey's shoulder and they're gone.

SMASH CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS -- THE LAST HOORAH

- The cork ejects from the bottle.
- The needle descends on a record: "THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE."
- The empty glass.
- The toilet flushing vomit away.
- The cork from another bottle.
- Another record.
- Another flush of the toilet.
- Limbs splayed on the tiles.
- A hand knocking at the front door.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Carey stirs. Her eyes open enough for two slits. It's hazy now -- we are looking around from her blurred vision. And throughout this, we hear Alex's WORDS, but only piecemeal.

ALEX (O.C.)
"...here... help... ...sale...
house... ...sobriety..."

Now he comes into focus. Carey realizes she's lying on her bed with vomit on her clothes. She starts crying --

CAREY
Don made sure I can't see the girls
for the two weeks I'm home before
serving the rest of my jail time.

Off Alex's sympathetic look.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

A rental car pulls up. Alex watches as Carey gets out and approaches the twins and teacher at the gate. From afar, without hearing them, we see them embrace each other tightly.

INT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Alex drives, Carey beside him. She wipes away tears.

CAREY
Thank you, Alex. I'm so sorry.

ALEX
We got this.

Off Carey's comforted look.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Packed boxes everywhere. Alex is helping Carey pack up her belongings. She comes across her mom's photo frame on the mantel. Alex watches as she smiles and puts it into her bag.

EXT. DON & CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey stands by the driver's side window of Alex's car.

ALEX
This will help you until you get
out of rehab.

He hands her an envelope. Carey takes it, grateful.

CAREY
Just two weeks of jail first.

ALEX
You know what they say- when you're
going through hell, don't stop.

He winks. And as Carey musters a smile, we move to...

INT. CAREY'S CELL, JAIL - DAY

Rachel's on the top bunk conversing with Carey down below.

CAREY
She said she'd return the jewelry
upon settlement of the bail.

Off Rachel's look -- *hello?*

CAREY (CONT'D)
I bet she sold it for drugs. I've
already incurred \$50,000 in debt
for this custody battle with Don. I
had to sell my wedding ring.

RACHEL
How do you feel?

CAREY
1.2 carats lighter.

They share a grim laugh.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Now I see that the value in those
stones lay in what they could be
exchanged for - a divorce attorney.

RACHEL
Keep your eye on your girls and
that will keep your heart open and
your motivation strong. You'll be
out of rehab before you know it.

CAREY
I don't believe that alcohol caused
all my problems, but I hope so. I
can NEVER drink again if I want to
get them back. That monster cannot
beat me. And, I will make Don pay.

As we HOLD ON Carey's determined look, we move to...

INT. MEETING ROOM, JAIL - DAY

Carey sits with her attorney signing some papers.

ATTORNEY
I'll let you know how it goes with
the children's attorney regarding
visits during your stay in rehab.

CAREY
Thank you. For everything.

Off the attorney's gracious nod.

INT. CAREY'S CELL, JAIL - DAY

The guard opens the door and remains in the doorway.

GUARD
I'll wait while you pack your
things. The van leaves in five.

Carey enters and stops in her tracks. Sees...

RACHEL'S DESK IS CLEARED AND HER BUNK HAS BEEN STRIPPED

Carey suddenly looks concerned and pivots to the guard.

CAREY
What happened to Rachel?

GUARD
Who?

CAREY
My bunkmate.

He looks at her like she's BATSHIT. Then, Carey turns to her cork board with photos of the twins and letters. Something catches her eye -- IT'S A NOTE. She steps closer. Sees...

"Your higher self has not gone anywhere. It is with you all the time, when your heart is open."

Off Carey's look.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"It's not through her, not through them."*

EXT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

A large home in the countryside next to a horse ranch.

INT. COORDINATOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carey completes the last form of many on a clipboard. She hands it to SUE (50s), a reformed hard-ass heroin addict.

SUE
You said that you have never missed work due to your drinking.

Off Carey's befuddled look.

SUE (CONT'D)
Aren't you missing work now?

CAREY
Well, I lost my temp job when I got arrested. So, kinda, yeah.

SUE
And you checked that you have never been institutionalized due to your drinking. You just came from jail and now you're in a rehab. These are both institutions.

CAREY

Well, I thought it meant a mental institution. I guess you are right.

SUE

I give this questionnaire to determine the level of denial in my patients. You scored quite high.

CAREY

Always the overachiever.

SUE

And this other form - it asks which emotions you had used alcohol to deal with or enhance. You checked all fifty. You drink for each one?

CAREY

The good, the bad, and the ugly.

SUE

We'll get you settled in your room and then you will join us for group at 2:00. Here's the daily schedule.

Carey sheepishly takes it into her hands.

INT. GROUP ROOM - DAY

Six women are seated on the sofa and chairs. All are mothers, and several have kids living here. Sue starts the meeting.

SUE

Our assignment was twofold. First, "a time I felt powerless was..." and secondly, "I could reclaim my power by..." Who would like to start?

A lady that looks like a smoker stands. This is DEB (30s).

DEB

A time I felt powerless was when my boyfriend accused me of stealing money. He held me down, demanding that I give it back. I started crying and that made him madder. He gave me a black eye and stormed out. I could reclaim my power by realizing he's crazy, and that I could have left. Or, I could have given him my money from my purse.

SUE
Establishing a boundary. Great
progress, Deb. Okay, who's next?

Carey raises her hand. Then, she meets the audience's eyes.

CAREY
I felt powerless every time my dad
would say, "Because I said so." It
was like my needs and wants didn't
matter. But when he died, I got
even. He wrote my brother out of
his will, so I paid him his share
from my inheritance. I'm sure
that's what my mom would have
wanted. Then, I used some to go to
a Club Med.... Because I said so!

SUE
Good work, Carey. Who's next?

On Carey's relieved face as somebody else stands.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, REHAB CENTER - DAY

Carey walks through the tall grass towards the horses.

FLASHBACK

EXT. UNIVERSITY AVE, PALO ALTO - DAY

Carey (32) sits outside a cafe. Don (44) approaches with a
rose wrapped up in newspaper. He hands it to her, shyly.

CAREY
I'm so glad you called. I was
hoping I would see you again. What
a beautiful rose, smells divine.

DON
It's a Mr. Lincoln. They are known
for their fragrance.

She inhales the scent once again. Then, she notices the text
on the newspaper wrapping -- it lists Christmas tree farms.

CAREY
Are you inviting me on a tree hunt?

Off Don's charming grin.

END FLASHBACK

We're back with Carey remembering and she looks twisted.

CAREY (CONT'D)

When Don isn't here to judge or
belittle me, I do it to myself. How
will I deal with these memories
without drinking?

Now we see Elizabeth beside her looking at the horses.

ELIZABETH

Memories can't hurt you now. You
are the only one who can let go
through compassion and forgiveness.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Don, Carey, their respective attorneys, and the children's
attorney are present. It becomes clear that he's not neutral.

JUDGE

At our last hearing, I ordered
supervised visits with Carey and
the children. Have those occurred?

CAREY'S ATTORNEY

No. We request that the director of
Carey's rehab monitor the visits.

JUDGE

I order that two visits commence
THIS week.

DON'S ATTORNEY

We object. We have reason to
believe that she is not impartial
and would allow inappropriate
conversations and behaviors.

JUDGE

Is there another supervisor that
can start the visits immediately?

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY

I'll look into that.

JUDGE

Fine. And please come up with a
visitation and reunification plan
by our hearing next month. I would
also like to see you negotiate a
financial settlement proposal.

Carey shudders at the sudden THUMP of the gavel.

INT. COMMUNAL ROOM, REHAB CENTER - DAY

Carey enters and is surprised to see Don sitting with Sue.

DON

We got an offer on the house. Even though you're not on the mortgage, you need to release any claims.

He slides some papers over.

DON (CONT'D)

I need your signature to complete the sale. It's just legal jargon.

CAREY

First, how are the kids? I've been here two months and the judge ordered visits. What's the problem?

DON

It's up to the kid's attorney to arrange. You should talk to him.

CAREY

I've called a dozen times and he never calls back. Can you call?

DON

OK, sign these papers and I will try to get in touch with him.

CAREY

And the money that the court ordered you pay me? How will I get a place to live when I'm done here if I don't have a job or any money?

DON

Uh, I don't know. I'll have to ask my attorney. For God's sake, just sign this so I can get out of here.

CAREY

How did you become so cruel?

He just holds her look. His face betraying nothing.

CAREY (CONT'D)

You better arrange a visit for their birthday, for God's sake.

Carey signs the papers and angrily slides them back.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

It's pouring with rain. Sue waits behind the wheel of a junky van. Carey appears excitedly through the rehab doors with a bag and "10TH BIRTHDAY" cake. She starts loading the van --

SUE

Do you have everything?

CAREY

The cake, check! Lemonade, and
Harry Potter video games, check!

As Carey hops into the front seat a voice rings out.

STAFF MEMBER (O.C.)

Carey, you have a phone call.

Carey and Sue turn to see a staff member at the door.

STAFF MEMBER (CONT'D)

It's Don.

Off Carey's fearful look.

INT. COMMUNAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sue hovers near the doors while Carey picks up the phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DON'S CAR - SAME

Don sits in the stationary car while speaking to Carey on speaker phone. He's parked in the driveway of his house.

DON

I'm not bringing the kids to the
bowling alley. I can't get in touch
with their attorney for approval.

CAREY

He approved via email. The
supervisor is meeting us there.

DON

You need to call the children and
tell them the party is cancelled.

Sue sees Carey recoil from the CLICK!

SUE

I am so sorry. I've never seen anything like this. Are you OK?

CAREY

I probably won't see those kids again until hell freezes over.

The housemates look on in astonishment as she rushes out.

INT. CAREY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carey grabs a FRAME OF THE TWINS from the dresser. She opens the back to retrieve the note from her HIGHER SELF, then turns the frame around to share her thoughts with the twins.

CAREY

There are so many things I can't say to you because everything is twisted and can be recorded. I am doing everything I can to heal and get better. I'm so sorry for how my drinking problem affected you. I promise we will get to the other side of this mess and be reunited.

And as we HOLD ON THE FRAME of the twins smiling...

HIGHER SELF (O.C.)

You will be surprised what I can do now that you've stopped ignoring me.

Carey looks up to see herself (as radiant as her former self but in the near future) seated on the armchair.

CAREY

I won't give up on my kids. Don doesn't know who he's dealing with.

HIGHER SELF

When your heart is closed, you're on your own. How's that worked out?

Off Carey's look -- *you got jokes.*

HIGHER SELF (CONT'D)

You need to choose between fixing the problem or fixing the blame.

CAREY

All those books that I read agreed
that forgiveness is good and right,
but none of them told me *how*...

HIGHER SELF

I've got one word for us.

CAREY

Die?

HIGHER SELF

Surrender.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Carey has the belated birthday gifts, crafts projects, and
treats from the dollar store. The twins hug her tightly.

CAREY

I am so happy to see you both. I
love you and miss you so much.

CHRISTINE

I love you, you're the best
infinity, infinity, infinity.

NICOLE

Sierra really misses you, mom. I
hope you will be home soon.

CAREY

It's not long now. I promise.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The same judge reviews documents. Carey is present with her
divorce attorney and Don is there with his attorneys.

CAREY'S ATTORNEY

The twice weekly visits are going
very well. My client is thriving in
rehab and will leave in two weeks.

JUDGE

Her affidavit states that she has
no money or home when she leaves
the center. I see that the house
has sold. Where are the proceeds?

DON'S ATTORNEY

I am holding the proceeds in escrow pending the final distribution.

JUDGE

I don't think it is in the best interest of the children for their mother to be homeless, do you?

Don's attorney blanches.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I am ordering you to advance \$20,000 for her to establish a home.

DON'S ATTORNEY

Your honor, we believe she may use these funds to feed her addiction.

CAREY'S ATTORNEY

Your honor, my client is willing to have regular drug tests. And, if I may address another matter?

The judge looks to her expectantly.

CAREY'S ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

I have expected to be compensated from the house proceeds as well.

JUDGE

I order a \$10,000 advance to Carey and \$10,000 for your services. The court is adjourned for the day.

Carey and her attorney make their way out.

CAREY

I'm sorry, I know I owe you more and I appreciate your help, but I can't afford your services anymore.

CAREY'S ATTORNEY

I'm sorry that I couldn't be more help. The children's attorney should be on their side, not Don's.

And as they shake hands, parting ways, we move to...

INT. STUDY LAB, REHAB CENTER - DAY

Sue supervises the women using the computers. Something catches her eye. Sees... Carey looking mad over an email.

SUE
What is it?

CAREY
An email from my job recruiter.
(recites the email)
"I have spoken with your sister who
divulged your multiple felony
charges. Our policy will not allow
me to represent you, no matter how
impressive the qualifications."

SUE
Your charge is a misdemeanor DUI. I
didn't know you have a sister?

CAREY
You and me both.

Off Sue's puzzled look.

CAREY (CONT'D)
It must have been Don's wife. Who
else had access to my answering
machine? I'll offer to provide the
court documents with all the facts.

Carey starts typing... Sue squeezes her shoulder and returns
to her desk. Then, Carey looks right and left, seeing the
women busy on computers. She googles a website: "CARS.COM."

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, REHAB CENTER - DAY

The sunrise creates horse silhouettes in the field.

INT. COORDINATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Carey appears in the doorway with newfound drive in her eyes.

CAREY
I've got a job interview tomorrow
and appointments to see rental
houses. A friend can drive me...

SUE
Ah-mazing! I'll write a day pass...

CAREY
Thank you, Sue. For everything.

As Carey turns on her heels in the doorway --

SUE

You will have to submit to a drug
test when you return, alright?

Carey turns back and nods -- *no problem.*

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Carey cautiously drives out of the lot in an old Volvo.

EXT. PARKING LOT, OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Carey parks in a space and steps out in a suit. She anxiously
looks up at the building, honing all her strength.

NIKO (PRE-LAP)

I am very impressed with your
resume and think you would be a
great fit for this position.

INT. OFFICE, NON-PROFIT ORG - DAY

NIKO (40) is the manager beaming over Carey's CV. A Japanese,
Buddhist, black belt kinda guy. Carey looks elated. Until --

NIKO

Would you be able to start on
Monday if offered the position?

Carey shifts nervously in her seat.

CAREY

I had understood next Monday.

Niko tilts his head. Carey searches for words. Then --

CAREY (CONT'D)

Yes, of course.

EXT. STREET, NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Carey drives looking out the window at people walking their
dogs, kids playing in their yards, and picket fences. She
smiles as she stops at a house. We see the sign: "FOR RENT."

EXT. CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Don pulls up in the driveway. The twins (11) jump out with
Sierra and run to the front door as Carey swings it open...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey has opted for uncluttered zen vibes over extravagance.

CAREY

I am soooo happy to see you.

The twins embrace Carey and she fights tears.

CHRISTINE

Yay, I love it!

NICOLE

You're so close to our school!

The stone-faced SUPERVISOR sits staring at the interaction.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

When can we stay over?

Carey looks at Don, who avoids her gaze.

CAREY

Daddy and I must work out a few things. I bet it will be very soon.

She leads the twins into the hallway as Don glances around the lounge... surprised to see it fully furnished and lovely.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Don's with his attorneys while Carey now represents herself.

JUDGE

I see that you are making good progress on your recovery and have a new job and home, correct?

CAREY

Yes, your honor. I am committed to my sobriety and the reunification.

Don and his attorney share a snide look.

DON'S ATTORNEY

Your honor, Nicole's teacher said that she has been spending recess in the library. We are concerned that the children are distressed and aren't ready to be reunited with their mother unsupervised.

Carey is confused. She tries to interject, but--

JUDGE

I see. This is unusual behavior. We will continue this matter for another month so we can review the results of the supervised visits.

INT. HALLWAY, COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Carey sees Don enter the elevator. She looks like she's about to follow him, but remains standing there. Takes a breath.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

The supervisor observes as Carey converses with the twins.

CAREY

Nicole, have you been spending recess in the library?

NICOLE

Yeah? It's air conditioned. The playground is like 100 degrees.

Carey catches the supervisor's eye but she looks indifferent.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I'm reading Percy Jackson.

Off Carey's interested look.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Percy's a 14-year-old demigod who goes on a dangerous quest with his friends to rescue Annabeth Chase and the Greek goddess Artemis, who have been kidnapped by the titans.

CAREY

Do they succeed?

Christine covers her ears and hollers aloud.

CHRISTINE

Don't tell me! I want to read it!

Nicole whispers into Carey's ear. Off the supervisor's look.

INT. PROBATION OFFICE - DAY

The PROBATION OFFICER checks the breathalyzer: "ZERO." Carey is filling out forms when he extends it to her to try again.

CAREY
Third time's a charm?

He isn't amused. Once again, Carey's reading is "ZERO."

PROBATION OFFICER
How did you get here? Your license
is suspended for two more months.

CAREY
A friend. She's at the store.

He just raises his brow and suspiciously watches her exit.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Carey rounds the corner and approaches her parked car.

INT. CAREY'S NEW CAR - CONTINUOUS

Carey puts the car into gear when there's a KNOCK AT HER WINDOW. Carey startles at seeing the smug probation officer.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Carey's sitting on the bench. An unhappy voice rings out --

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
You're supposed to follow the law.

Carey looks over to see her higher self.

CAREY
Everybody in my DUI class drives on
a suspended. How else are we
supposed to get to our job,
recovery meetings, counselor, court
dates, urine tests... and probation
interviews?

HIGHER SELF
There is great power in having the
highest integrity in everything
that you do.

An OFFICER appears on the other side of the bars.

OFFICER
Your bail came through.

Off Carey's surprised look.

EXT. BUS STOP, STREET - DAY

A bus pulls up and the doors open... Carey exits in a suit.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Carey and the PUBLIC DEFENDER are waiting for the judge.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
A first offense usually just
results in community service.

CAREY
Great, one more thing to get to
without a car--

She stops. Sees... Barb slinking into the back row.

CAREY (CONT'D)
What is Don's wife doing here?

The judge enters and sits at his podium. All rise...

PROSECUTOR
Your honor, we ask for 60 days in
custody. Ms. Stein has flagrantly
disregarded her suspension and
drives with her children in the car
and her ex-husband witnessed this.

JUDGE
Remand her.

Carey's shocked. The public defender turns to Carey.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
He's angry now. This isn't good.

CAREY
It's not even possible since I only
have supervised visits.

The public defender averts her eyes toward Don's wife.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
Now you know why she's here.

As Carey is escorted out by the guard, we move to...

INT. JAIL - DAY

Carey's on the phone ahead of the disgruntled inmates.

CAREY

I'm really sorry. This hearing went sideways. My entire life comes crashing down if I lose this job.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE, NON-PROFIT ORG - SAME

Niko looks at a loss. He takes a deep breath --

NIKO

I know what kind of person you are and I value your contributions. Our not for profit believes in second chances. We'll be here.

CAREY

Thanks so much. I appreciate you.

NIKO

What happens next?

CAREY

The children's attorney assigned a psychologist to me. I hope she will help me to establish my recovery and suitability for reunification.

NIKO

Me too. Wishing you the best.

Carey hangs up, touched. And as mob wife Beth picks up another phone, giving her old pal a wave, we move to...

INT. PROBATION OFFICE, JAIL COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Carey's still in her suit when she finds her officer.

CAREY

I am reporting in since I was released from jail today after my arrest last Friday.

PROBATION OFFICER

I know you got out because the sheriff is on your employer's board of directors with your boss. Next time, you'll serve the whole 60.

Carey's taken aback. He shoots her a look as she leaves...

INT. KITCHEN, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Carey's eating breakfast when there's a KNOCK on the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey's probation officer and five more wearing Kevlar bullet proof vests charge into the house. Before Carey can speak--

PROBATION OFFICER

We have a report that you have violated your probation and are drinking alcohol and continuing to drive on your suspended license.

CAREY

No, sir. I have been in recovery for seven months now. I can show you my bus pass and you can call the taxi company that I use.

Another officers rolls his eyes to the others.

PROBATION OFFICER

Do I believe you or my source?

Carey grows nervous as they upturn the couch cushions.

PROBATION OFFICER (CONT'D)

Bedrooms next, officers.

Then, he sternly walks over and administers the breathalyzer on Carey. It shows: "ZERO." Makes her do it again. Carey watches him as he notes: "ZERO." The officers reappear --

OFFICER #2

All clear.

Carey quietly exhales.

PROBATION OFFICER

I'll be keeping an eye on you.

She's shaking when they leave. Then, Carey turns to survey the room, afraid that Don had the officers plant something.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Don is with his two attorneys while Carey sits alone. Also present, is the CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY, a lackadaisical jerk.

JUDGE

(to Carey)

I must congratulate you on your progress. Suitable housing, a recovery program, regular negative drug tests, a glowing letter from your psychologist, three raises from your employer, and no issues with the supervised visitation.

(to children's attorney)

It looks like we are ready to proceed with reunification.

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY

I am awaiting a recommendation from the twins counselor to ensure they are ready for unsupervised visits.

Off Carey's exasperated look.

INT. CAREY'S CAR, PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Carey gets in and SCREAMS. Then, she bursts into tears.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The CHILDREN'S COUNSELOR answers the intercom on her desk.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Carey Stein is on line two. She said it's urgent that you speak.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - SAME

Carey clenches the phone and her teeth.

CAREY

Thanks for taking my call. I just left the custody hearing. Everyone is waiting for your letter to the court confirming that the children are ready to be reunited with me.

COUNSELOR

I'm sorry, Carey. I made it clear to the attorneys that I will not write any such letter. It violates the children's trust in me.

(MORE)

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

They need to know that anything they say will not end up in the courtroom.

CAREY

So, the court is waiting for a letter that you are never going to write? I have spent over \$10,000 on supervised visits and nobody reads the 100s of pages of notes that document the amazing relationship I have with my kids. Surely you can say something that will satisfy the court without breaking the trust of the children. I need your help.

COUNSELOR

I'm sorry. I wish I could help you more. I need to go. Goodbye.

Carey recoils at the DIAL TONE.

EXT. BALL PARK - DAY

Carey watches the twins play well in a softball game. She looks over at Don, spotting him slyly drinking alcohol.

EXT. CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Carey waves at the kids as they climb into Don's car and they blow kisses. As the supervisor is closing her notebook --

SUPERVISOR

See you next week.

CAREY

Wait.

The supervisor turns to Carey with an attitude.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Why do you always say "alcohol and drugs" when I was only an alcoholic? It confuses the kids.

SUPERVISOR

Come on, Carey, I know you tested positive for meth amphetamine.

The supervisor just holds her look. Carey shakes her head and heads inside, leaving her there. As Carey shuts the door --

INT. COORDINATOR'S OFFICE, REHAB CENTER - DAY

-- Sue shuts her door for privacy. She's holding the phone, wincing at Carey's enraged voice over the receiver.

CAREY (V.O.)
I should have asked her to show me
this false test but I was thrown!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - SAME

Carey paces while almost screaming on the phone.

CAREY
Then I realized no matter what I
said she was going to think it was
a drug addict's denial.

SUE
What positive test could she have?!

CAREY
There is no positive test, just a
whisper of doubt that terrifies
these counselors. It's so easy for
Don to manipulate them because they
assume I am guilty of ALL the worst
things that EVERY alcoholic in the
history of the universe has done--

The sound of the PHONE ALARM interrupts Carey.

CAREY (CONT'D)
Ugh! I have to get to my shrink!

Off Sue's look.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Usual clan -- Don, his attorneys, Carey, children's attorney.

JUDGE
(to Carey)
I commend you on your continued
progress in your recovery.

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY
Your honor, I understand that Ms.
Stein has changed therapists.

Both the judge and Carey look to him puzzled.

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

That is usually a sign that an addict is unwilling to take responsibility for their recovery.

CAREY

(producing papers)

No, your honor. My phone records show that I called the recommended counselor but she has not called me back. So, I found another.

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY

This therapist is not a PhD and we believe Ms. Stein will manipulate a new party with lies and deceit.

JUDGE

You have not produced any evidence of a relapse or reason why visits with her children need to be supervised. Ms. Light says she can no longer afford \$1,200 per month for counseling and supervision. Therefore, I am ordering a section 730 custody evaluation to examine the mental health and parenting practices of both parties to arrive at a long-term reunification plan.

Off Carey's somewhat relieved look.

INT. OFFICE, NON-PROFIT ORG - DAY

Niko looks up warmly as Carey hesitantly enters the room.

CAREY

Hi, you wanted to see me?

NIKO

Hey... Are you alright?

CAREY

It's really tough.

NIKO

You're doing great.

Carey does a head tilt -- *what's that now?*

NIKO (CONT'D)

We're promoting you to manage a project that will require cross-departmental cooperation. It will all kick off after the holidays.

CAREY

I don't know what to say.

NIKO

Thanks, Niko, and Merry Christmas?

As Carey looks down, humbled, we move to...

EXT. PATIO, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey's under a blanket on a lounge with Sierra. We see the CHRISTMAS TREE through the glass doors. Another holiday solo.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"The love you seek is not in a house."*

INT. JUST OUTSIDE COURTROOM - DAY

Carey jots notes as she converses with Don and his attorney.

CAREY

So, you agree to the unsupervised visits on Wednesdays and weekends?

DON

Yes, you can get them after school.

She can't believe her ears. Then --

DON'S ATTORNEY

Also... We are in a position to ask you to pay child support. We have--

CAREY

(walking away)

Thanks, Don.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

The judge looks weary in his seat.

JUDGE

Has joint custody been re-established yet per the recommendations from the Section 730 evaluation?

CAREY

I wrote down things that Don and I agreed to in the hallway just now.

DON'S ATTORNEY

My client will testify under oath, that he did not agree to anything.

JUDGE

(sighs, irritated)

We have had 18 monthly hearings with no progress on this case.

Carey shoots Don's attorney a look.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I am now ordering you to implement joint custody under the supervision of a child custody therapist.

As they start to walk out...

CHILDREN'S ATTORNEY

I'll find someone suitable and will get back to you when I have.

Off Carey's seething look.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Carey's car halts outside. Through the window we see she's distraught as she stares at the store. Then, she takes off.

EXT. PORCH, REHAB CENTER - DAY

Carey paces while speaking to Sue. Almost screaming...

CAREY

The children's attorney's true motivations are so obviously NOT the welfare of the children.

SUE

You spent a fortune on the custody evaluation. How do they get away with ignoring the recommendations?

CAREY

Don makes up just enough bullshit
to cloud the courtroom and it casts
a spell on the idiot attorneys and
judges who can't smell the truth.

SUE

I swear murderers have more access
to see their kids. Oh what I could
do to him if I was using again.

CAREY

That's what he wants...me to relapse.
I'll end up back in jail or too
broke to keep fighting... or dead.

A staff member pops her head outside to beckon Sue.

SUE

I've got group. Go visit your old
pals, might make you feel better.

Off Carey's nod.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, REHAB CENTER - DAY

Carey leans on the fence looking out at the horses.

CAREY

Don doesn't know who he's dealing
with. I will never prove him right.

Now we see that she is beside her higher self.

HIGHER SELF

Even if you think your bullets are
righteous, do the twins see it that
way? Or do they just feel trapped
in the middle of a war zone?

A beat as she takes this in.

HIGHER SELF (CONT'D)

You must forgive him. That is the
only way that you will heal. That
is the only way the kids will heal
and choose you when the time comes.

CAREY

It is the only way that I can stay
sober. I'm going to need a miracle.

HIGHER SELF
Everything is a miracle.

Carey looks doubtful.

HIGHER SELF (CONT'D)
Each moment, you have free will,
you have a choice between love and
fear. Love takes you toward the
divine and fear brings you to
intolerance. When your heart is
open, I can help you accept those
who pick the lower path while you
choose the higher for yourself.

Off Carey looking out to the horizon.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

The sign: "RADICAL FORGIVENESS WORKSHOP." We REVEAL ten
participants waiting to hit a pillow with a tennis racket and
SCREAM about what's making them angry. Right now it's Carey.

CAREY
And he took the kids! And, no
matter what I do, I can't get them
back. And, I have a custody
evaluation that says I should have
them back. Still, the judge ignores
it and listens to him. He is the
sick one. He is the active
alcoholic. He is the abusive one.

One last swing and she's done. Carey turns around, out of
breath, to find the participants taken aback by her strength.

COLIN
Who's next?

It's COLIN TIPPING (40s), the coach leading the course. He
gives Carey an encouraging nod as she hands over the racket.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

The group meditates with Colin. He demonstrates a mudra (hand
gesture). We find Carey taking a breath. As her eyes close --

COLIN
It's a choice to allow love and
wisdom to prevail over the ego.

FLASHBACK

EXT. BACKYARD, LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Linda and Carey sip champagne on the daybeds by the pool.

CAREY

He just had a bad day, bad ex-wife,
bad burrito, whatever.

Linda frowns.

CAREY (CONT'D)

His comments seem nasty, but they
are to help me grow and improve.

Off Linda's incredulous look -- *Carey is oblivious.*

END FLASHBACK

Carey's eyes open in realization -- *that's not forgiveness.*

COLIN (PRE-LAP)

Today, we will talk about how
things can affect us emotionally.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Colin is interacting with Carey among the delicate group.

CAREY

I feel so much fear for my kid's
emotional health. I feel so much
hatred for him and what he's doing
to me. I feel so betrayed... by my
own husband. I feel vengeful.

COLIN

Are you willing to let go of those
feelings?

CAREY

Yes, they're hurting me at custody
hearings. I think the judge and the
counselors can feel my anger.

COLIN

Great, we will understand that we
agreed to have this experience so
that we would learn lessons and
grow. Each of us will write down
how we can reframe our situation
and read it to the group tomorrow.

We HOLD ON Carey we see that she's DETERMINED...

EXT. COURTHOUSE BUILDING - DAY

Carey ascends the steps confidently and less angry.

INT. MEDIATOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carey and Don sit on either side of a gracious MEDIATOR.

MEDIATOR

The custody order for Carey to have unsupervised visits is dated three months ago. What is the delay, Don?

The mediator looks to Carey and then to Don.

DON

My wife and I are being very cautious to ensure they are emotionally safe. I am concerned that Carey will say inappropriate things to the children about us.

MEDIATOR

Actually, it says in this report that your wife said moderately inappropriate things during the evaluator's visit. Is it more important for them to have perfect parents, or both their parents?

Don isn't convinced. Carey turns to Don, calm and sincere, while under the table her left hand does the 'mudra pose.'

CAREY

I am very sorry for the turmoil I have caused in our family. I broke trust and I broke relationships. I am committed to my recovery, and I would like to make things right. I can't thank you enough for all you have done while I was not well.

The mediator is moved by her apology. Carey and Don stare at each other, and surprisingly, Don is suddenly less prickly.

DON

It was a lot to deal with and I hope you mean what you say. As long as you maintain your counseling, I agree to the joint custody.

MEDIATOR

I am happily surprised. This was a high conflict case, and I'm pleased to see you resolve this so quickly.

Off Carey's look, shoulders now lighter...

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Carey has the same look as we hear CLAPPING and CHEERING around her. We pull back to reveal she's holding her 'reframing assignment' that she read to Colin and the group.

COLIN

Excellent, Carey. It's especially hard to forgive someone while the "crime" is still in progress. But the circumstances always change when your energy changes...

EXT. GARDENS, COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

The group stand in a circle for a Native American ritual.

COLIN

If you have ever been emotionally or physically violated, walk the circle.

A few people walk across the circle, remembering, and hugging someone else, acknowledging his or her fellow victims.

GROUP MEMBER

I am sorry that happened to you.

Colin sees them receive support in a mutual exchange. Then --

COLIN

If you have ever emotionally or physically violated anyone, walk the circle.

We FIND Carey, guilt washing over her. As she walks...

QUICK FLASHBACKS

- Frustratingly putting toddler Christine in time-out.
- Biting Don's arm as he wrestles for the video camera.
- Throwing Nicole's phone when Barb was her screensaver.

- Being drunk/hungover when 7-year-old twins came to visit.

END FLASHBACKS

Carey walks the circle with tears streaming down her face.

GROUP MEMBER

I am sorry that happened to you.

She exchanges a compassionate hug with the group member.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey stands by the beautifully set dining table with open arms. The twins hug her and Sierra and marvel at her efforts.

NICOLE

So, is it really just us?

We pull back to see there's no morbid supervisor.

CAREY

Yes, honey. Just us. Always.

And as Christine wipes away tears, we start --

A MONTAGE

- Everyone snuggling Sierra tucked up in Carey's bed.
- Carey and the twins walking on the beach in Hawaii.
- The twins getting certified for scuba diving.
- On a boat seeing spinner dolphins in turquoise waters.
- Jumping into the water together in snorkel gear.
- Chattering and playing with Sierra in a park.
- Rocking out in the car being picked up from school.
- All fast asleep cuddled together in front of the TV.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"The calling you feel isn't to roam until you find your earthly home."*

INT. KITCHEN, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Carey (54) puts breakfast on the table. She pours coffee when Christine (17) hurries past looking miserable --

CHRISTINE
See you later.

Carey hears the sound of the DOOR before she can reply. She walks to the doorway and calls out.

CAREY
Nicole, honey! Breakfast is ready.

Carey takes a seat and a bite of breakfast. There's no sign of Nicole or footsteps on their way. A sip of coffee and another bite. Then, off Carey's concerned look, we move to...

INT. NICOLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey pokes her head through the open doorway. Nicole (17) is still in her pajamas looking sluggish and depressed.

NICOLE
I feel nauseous again. I haven't done any of my homework. I can't do it. I can't focus. I can't eat.

CAREY
I'm sorry you still feel crappy. I will make an appointment with the pediatric neurologist at Stanford..

NICOLE
We've already seen two of those. The doctor just needs to fine tune my meds. Then, I'll be fine.

CAREY
Every time he gives you new meds, you become more of a zombie. The pills aren't working, obviously.

NICOLE
(rolls eyes)
Forget it, you're no help. The only thing I can eat is the chicken sandwich from Nugget Market. Will you get it for me?

CAREY
(exasperated)
Yes, I'll get it.
(MORE)

CAREY (CONT'D)

I'll also have to meet with your school guidance counselor. She said if you can't fix these Fs, either they will go on your permanent record or you will need to withdraw and transfer to independence school.

NICOLE

There's no way. That's where pregnant girls and drug addicts go.

CAREY

And people with mysterious health issues. It is up to you.

Nicole just vanishes under the covers.

INT. CAREY'S OFFICE, NON-PROFIT ORG - DAY

Carey picks up her RINGING phone and swivels her chair around to face the window, a city view beyond. It's "DON CALLING..."

CAREY

Hi. Is everything okay?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DON'S CAR - TRAVELING - SAME

Don doesn't look like he's okay. Over speaker phone --

DON

Did you know Christine is cutting?

CAREY

No, I didn't. But I know from my recovery meetings that it's about releasing emotional pain through physical pain. What could it be?

DON

I don't know. Can you talk to her?

CAREY

Sure. Thanks for letting me know.

Carey hangs up and swivels back to find her higher self.

CAREY (CONT'D)

I didn't see this coming. Did you?

Off her look -- *of course I did.*

CAREY (CONT'D)

Right.

HIGHER SELF

When she looks at you, she needs to
see your faith in her, not your fear.

A phone BEEPS on her desk. Sees... "TEXT FROM CHRIS." As
Carey looks at her higher self on the chair, we move to...

INT. CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM, CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey enters to find Christine hidden under the covers.

CAREY

I came as soon as I saw your text.

Carey gently shifts the cover to better see her...

CAREY (CONT'D)

Is it trouble with your girlfriend?

CHRISTINE

No. I don't want to live anymore.

Carey shudders inside from her daughter's words and the
multiple cuts. Her left hand subtly does the 'mudra pose.'

CAREY

That must be really painful. But,
everything is fixable. Do you want
to talk about it?

CHRISTINE

Not this. Nothing can be done.

CAREY

I'll just sit here with you. Is
there anything I can do to help?

Christine just shakes her head. Carey hugs and kisses her as
a tear rolls down her cheek. A long beat in silence. Then --

CHRISTINE

I am so miserable, and I can't feel
my legs and my stomach is churning.

CAREY

Did you eat or drink something to
hurt yourself?

Christine nods. Carey's face is turning ashen...

CHRISTINE
I took those, all of them.

She gestures toward the nightstand... AN EMPTY PILL BOTTLE.

CAREY
I bet you don't feel well. You know
we need to go to the hospital, right?

Off Christine's regretful nod.

INT. CAREY'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Carey's white-knuckled at the wheel. Christine's drifting against the passenger window. The light TURNS RED. Carey looks around...there's no cars. She drives through the red.

The song "THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM" CARRIES OVER:

EXT. ER, HOSPITAL - DAY

Carey's car SCREECHES to a halt. She exits and runs around to the passenger door, frantically calling out to the MEDICS --

CAREY
Please, help! My daughter has been
unconscious for twenty minutes.

The MEDICS rush to the car and do their thing... Carey stands back fighting tears as she watches them lift her onto a stretcher and rush her through the double doors into the ER.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, HOSPITAL - LATER

Christine stirs in bed. Carey sits beside her holding a plastic cup. She's calm and collected. A NURSE enters --

NURSE
The charcoal will absorb the drugs.

Christine manages to swallow it but makes a face.

CAREY
We have a bag of charcoal at home;
I think it's mesquite flavored.
Didn't realize it was edible...

CHRISTINE
(to nurse)
Can I get a side of barbecue sauce?

They share a laugh as the DOCTOR enters the room.

DOCTOR
Lab work is good. You'll be OK.

Carey is relieved. Then, he looks Christine right in the eye.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Many people take pills because they
want to die and instead, they end
up with brain damage. We really
don't want that to happen to you.

Off Christine's remorseful look.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
The counselor will see you after
you have had more time to rest.

Carey squeezes her hand as she drifts back to sleep...

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL - DAY

Carey and the doctor stand outside the closed door.

DOCTOR
I saw cuts on her arms and legs;
how long has that been going on?

CAREY
A few months. She went to a
counselor but didn't stick with it.

DOCTOR
Well, her life depends on it.

Off Carey's fearful look.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Carey has snacks and magazines. Christine's silent, so she
follows suit... Then, Christine looks up from the page.

CHRISTINE
Thanks, mom.

Carey smiles warmly, casually returning to her article so as
not to cry. Off Christine looking comforted and at peace.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nicole is slumped on the sofa watching the Discovery Channel when Carey arrives home. She walks over with a take-out bag.

CAREY

Here's your sandwich, hon. Let me
know if you need it warmed up.

Nicole barely looks up as she takes the bag. Then, MONKEYS SQUAWKING on the TV catches Carey's eye. It's a documentary about nature and the British host speaks over exotic images.

EXPLORER (V.O.)

The fact that monkeys fight with
each other might seem disturbing
and the sound most irritating...

We see the monkeys SCREECHING and fighting with each other.

EXPLORER (V.O.)

...but it's their mating ritual. So
if they didn't squawk...

CGI simulation in high-speed depicts an entire chain of events -- local monkeys stop squawking -- all monkeys stop fighting -- no monkeys are mating -- no monkeys at all.

EXPLORER (V.O.)

...monkeys would be extinct. The
rhythms of nature evolve when left
to play out under divine guidance.

NICOLE (O.C.)

Mom!

Carey turns from the TV to find Nicole disgruntled. She grabs the take-out bag and stomps into the hallway toward her room.

INT. NICOLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

School books are stacked on the desk with dirty dishes. Carey enters and witnesses Nicole ranting in the walk-in closet.

NICOLE (O.C.)

I'm so fucked! Will you call my
teacher and tell him I'm sick?!

She emerges with her PJs and looks right at Carey.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I'll never get into a good college,
much less Stanford.

She changes into her PJs as Carey perches on the bed.

CAREY

Did you see the chiropractor today?

Nicole shakes her head and plonks onto the bed in a tizzy.

CAREY (CONT'D)

Or, let's try acupuncture?

NICOLE

These doctors don't know what they are doing! I need to be president of a club or make the varsity lacrosse team. What will I put on my college applications, that I laid in bed for my junior year?

CAREY

(patience waning)

What about some volunteer work? It would feel good and certainly help your college applications.

NICOLE

Are you crazy? I'm not going to make another commitment so I will fail again. I feel bad enough about myself now. You're not helping.

Carey's voice gets louder with disdain.

CAREY

I'm trying. You need to do something. Anything.

Nicole bursts into tears as Carey storms out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey leans against the door and squeezes her eyes shut.

HIGHER SELF (O.C.)

You're letting yourself get triggered and overwhelmed.

She opens her eyes to see her higher self.

HIGHER SELF (CONT'D)

You must stand on the edge of her mud puddle, not jump in... Just offer your hand to get her out.

CAREY

Were you not there? I offered everything short of eating her sandwich and doing her homework.

HIGHER SELF

You made the monkeys extinct.

Off Carey's stunned look, we move to...

INT. HALLWAY, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey walks past Nicole's darkened room in her PJs.

NICOLE (O.C.)

Mom?

INT. NICOLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carey enters the room and stands beside Nicole's bed.

NICOLE

I'm falling apart.

Carey sits on the bed and speaks compassionately. Resting by her side, out of sight, her left hand does the 'mudra pose.'

CAREY

I'm sorry you are having a rough time. Let's let it be okay to not be ok. What's really bothering you?

Despite Nicole's catastrophizing, Carey is patient.

NICOLE

I have no chance of getting into medical school, and I will NOT go to junior college.

CAREY

I will do anything I can to help.

NICOLE

I would like to sign up for an online AP course, but I hate to ask for the money since I'm afraid I won't be able to complete it.

CAREY

I'm happy to pay and I understand that it might not work out for you.

A beat as Nicole takes in her offer. Then --

NICOLE
And, I really want curly fries.

CAREY
I'm glad to help in any way, even
if it's just curly fries.

Nicole smiles and hugs Carey. Off her smiling to herself...

EXT. JACK'S DRIVE-THRU - NIGHT

Carey's car halts at the pick-up window. No one's there.

INT. CAREY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Carey's in the driver's seat, awaiting her order.

CAREY
Is this codependence? I am enabling
her. Shouldn't I be telling her to
get up and get her shit together?

She looks to her higher self in the passenger seat.

HIGHER SELF
Codependence is about attachment to
results. An unconscious deal. Are
these acts of service to make her
do homework? Are you keeping score?

CAREY
I am doing what needs to be done.

The baffled employee appears only seeing Carey in the car.

JACK'S EMPLOYEE
Here's your fries.

Carey's too flustered to be mortified looking like a whackjob
in her PJs at a drive-thru. As she continues to the exit --

HIGHER SELF
An enabler does things with the
expectation that the perpetrator
will behave better... you might
recall our past behavior with Don.

CAREY
(laughs)
Sure.
(MORE)

CAREY (CONT'D)

But no matter how servicefull you are to a teenager, an eye roll is the best you'll get in return.

HIGHER SELF

See even her most broken and weak parts and offer only love. This teaches her that there is no part of her that is unacceptable to you. This shows her that there is nowhere she can run where your love does not reach her. After all, isn't that the point of all our plans? To experience unconditional love and acceptance?

INT. NICOLE'S ROOM, CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nicole rolls her eyes at the sight of the fries.

NICOLE

They're not curly.

Carey vanishes into her ensuite for a moment... She returns with a curling iron and pretends to wrap it around one fry.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Ewww. At least disinfect it first.

They share a laugh and a hug.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I love you, mom.

CAREY

Love you too, infinity, infinity, infinity.

EXT. DON'S HOUSE - DAY

Don's on the porch reading beside Barb when Carey's car pulls up. They exchange a nervous look. He walks to Carey's window.

CAREY

(using the mudra)

I want to thank you again for all of your help when I couldn't take care of the kids. You are a good dad and Barb is a good stepmom.

DON

Yes, you did a lot of damage while we had a business to run. I still wonder if you're drinking. You should be paying me child support and I might have my lawyer write up a request.

CAREY

I know I messed up. I am committed to healing everything that happened. I can see you are too.

Off his expectant look -- *why are you here?*

CAREY (CONT'D)

I lost my job from taking time off to care for the kids. I can't afford their car insurance.

DON

I have spent so much money on--

CAREY

If you can afford it, you can pay online or explain to the children why they can't drive. Up to you.

And now she waits for him to answer. But Don just stares right back. It's a stand off. Finally he answers.

DON

Send me the info.

CAREY

Thanks, I'm sure they really appreciate everything you do and I'm glad you're willing to help.

Don heads back as Carey and Barb exchange a forced wave.

CAREY (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

That's right. Bullet proof, baby.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Carey's car drives along the tree-line street. The sun is shining and MUSIC is playing while a breeze hits her face.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CAREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Carey enters and places her bag on the sideboard. The vibe is significantly different with the twins being depressed. She spots Nicole lying on the sofa and Christine at the table.

CAREY

Hi...

They both mumble from their respective locations.

CHRISTINE

Hey, mom.

NICOLE

Hey.

Off Carey's look -- *better than nothing*.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Carey carries a half full laundry basket.

INT. CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christine sits at the vanity dresser cutting her arm with a razor. Carey opens the door and Christine tosses it and pulls her sleeve down, swiveling on the chair to face Carey.

CHRISTINE

Don't you knock?!

CAREY

I thought you were downstairs.

Carey walks past holding the basket, seeing the razor on the dresser in the mirror. A beat. She continues to the closet --

CAREY (CONT'D)

The laundry won't do itself.

And half-smiles over her shoulder.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carey's pacing -- mind racing -- and she's angry.

CAREY

I can't take this. It must stop. I will die if she... Do I lock up the pills? The sharps? What do I do?

She looks to the chair -- NO ONE'S THERE. Then, Carey looks at the mirror, seeing HERSELF. Another shift in her eyes...

EXT. PATIO, CAREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carey is on the lounge contemplating the cosmos. Something makes her turn to the patio screen door. Sees... Christine just standing there in tears, her pain raw and exposed.

CHRISTINE
Can I sit with you?

Carey tries not to panic and pats her hand on the lounge.

CAREY
Always.

Christine slumps beside her.

CHRISTINE
I just want to die.

Carey kisses her tears, her heart breaking.

CAREY
I love you, infinity, infinity,
infinity.

Christine's head hangs low. Carey looks up to find her mom on the chair. They exchange a powerful, knowing look as they just sit there for a long beat in silent prayer. Then --

CHRISTINE
Will you come and lie down with me
until I fall asleep?

CAREY
Yes, I would love that.

Off Christine's tearful but comforted smile.

FADE OUT.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, REHAB CENTER - DAY

A glorious day. Carey leans on the fence looking out at the horses. Sue approaches with a new hairdo and warm smile.

SUE
Do you want your old room back?

Off Carey's look -- *shut up*.

SUE (CONT'D)
How are they?

CAREY

Christine loves dorm life. She's getting her EMT license this summer. And Nicole's thriving in her pre-med surgery program.

SUE

Who would have thought both would get into their top choice college!

Off Carey's look -- *bitch*.

SUE (CONT'D)

Empty nest syndrome has you so serious. I'm just playing...

CAREY

I can see why you were surprised that Nicole graduated with honors given how things were... Same for Christine. But, somehow, I always knew that they would get to the other side and spread their wings and fly. I am not even afraid.

SUE

Love really does win. Thank God.
(beat)
What will you do now?

CAREY

Put the POST in PTSD.

Carey and Sue exchange a victorious grin.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

OVER the grounds in summer, the courtyard surrounded by manicured lawns. An army of STUDENTS coming and going. Young. Energetic. You can practically feel the brains and ambition.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

Gender and sexuality are only concepts in the material world.

We FIND Christine (18) looking butch walking her bicycle.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

LGBTQ people are a sign of evolution of the human species expanding human consciousness.

INT. COLLEGE CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Christine among the group listening to the PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR
They have balanced male and female
energies for a higher consciousness
and more harmonious society.

The professor looks around to meet his students' eyes.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
Which brings me to the question...

He picks up a MARKER and writes on the board, the students
all watching. He turns back as he reads the question aloud...

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
How do you know who you are?

The students sit forward in their seats.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
To elaborate... How do you set
aside cultural, familial, and other
stereotypes to understand yourself?

STUDENT #1
Travel. I always learn new things.

STUDENT #2
My hobbies help me explore my
interests and passions.

CHRISTINE
You find out who you are when you
go through the dark place.

PROFESSOR
This, coming from the person who
has an "Outrageously Happy" tattoo?

She looks at her arm and smirks. The class shares a laugh.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAY

We're back with Carey similarly to how we met her 33 years
ago, eyes sparkling, butchering the song on the radio...

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A waiter delivers lunch to Christine (20) and Carey's table.

CHRISTINE

I have an appointment to begin
hormone replacement therapy.

Carey's fork stops mid-way to her lips as she takes in
Christine's words. She's shocked, but manages to stay calm.

CAREY

That's going to be an interesting
journey. Tell me about it.

CHRISTINE

Would you like to join me?

CAREY

Yes, I'll do whatever I can to
help. You are the most courageous
person I know, what an inspiration.

Christine smiles -- *that was easy.*

CAREY (CONT'D)

Are you okay with not having kids?

CHRISTINE

It doesn't mean no kids, but I'm
not passing on these faulty genes.

They share a laugh.

CAREY

I see that you know what you want,
and you are going to get it. Would
you like me to talk to Dad?

CHRISTINE

No, I'll talk to him. But I would
like you to do one thing...

Off Carey's expectant look.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Call me Chris?

CAREY

(laughs)
OK, dude.

CHRIS

Mom. No.

Chris squeezes her hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I'm proud of you.

He holds his look. Carey's surprised and overwhelmed. And as we leave them there, closer than ever, we --

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"The undeniable urge inside, isn't meant to be run from, you're not meant to hide."*

INT. AUDITORIUM, COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Students in graduation regalia lined up on stage. Proud parents applaud from their seats. Nicole (22) steps up to the podium, confident, relieved. Looks out at the crowd. Sees...

Carey, dressed impeccably, crying into her hand. Don sits smiling to her right, and Chris (now confidently transitioned as a male with a light beard and muscles) whistles on her left along with Mark. Carey leans over to speak to Don --

CAREY
We did it. They made it. This is a great moment. Thanks for everything.

DON
It's a miracle. I don't understand what happened when they hibernated at your house. I thought you caused their problems. Then, I felt guilty that maybe I caused their problems.

We pull back to REVEAL they are the higher self versions of Don and Carey, who are seated on either side. The earthly versions exchange a polite smile. They watch the ceremony as Don's HS continues speaking with Carey's HS.

DON'S HIGHER SELF
Then, I realized there was a miracle. I think the miracle came through you. I finally understand you are love more than anything else, more than a drunk, and more than a mom, and more than a pain in my ass. You are love. And, it healed our family. And, I thank you. We fulfilled our mission.

CAREY'S HIGHER SELF

Thank you. You were strong when I
was weak. I stayed sober because
you were behind me and I couldn't
fall and let the darkness win.

EXT. PATIO, CAREY'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Christine and Nicole visit for Mother's day. Opened presents
are on the table and the remains of a beautifully cooked
dinner. Nicole gives her mom a letter printed on parchment.

NICOLE

A list of fifty-one reasons why
you're the greatest mother to us.

Nicole and Christine exchange a warm look. Carey starts
reading, eyes tearing up. Then, we see the last reasons...

INSERT - The sentence, which reads:

"You have faith in me. You show me everything will be all
right in the end. You love us unconditionally."

Carey looks up to find them standing on either side of her,
ready to embrace. She looks at them, fully forgiven.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Over BLACK SCREEN: *"The Love that's been calling you, gently,
persistently, doesn't feed ego, it doesn't move swiftly. It
whispers, it gives, never dies, always lives. It believes in
your worthiness, knowing it Is. Where is this beautiful place
you can thrive? The Sacred Center within, you've arrived."*
Engel Rose.

FADE TO BLACK.