

EXT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUBURB, MAIN DRAG - DAY

Palms sway... the sun washes everything in yellow ... cars motor down either side of the landscaped median ... the calls of mockingbirds mingle with the BLIP BLIP of car alarms.

ON THE SIDEWALK, a SKATEBOARD CA-LUNKS down the sidewalk, past the foot traffic of Southern Californians: flip-flops, Doc Marten's, Rollerblades, Nikes ... then, in the middle of this pedestrian normalcy, a pair of IMPOSSIBLY HIGH SPIKE-HEELED PUMPS struts out of a shop. So high it hurts to look at them. As the shoes leave frame, we TILT UP and see they're leaving a 99-cent store.

As the Pumps turn and head the up the street, we see they are connected to a pair of IMPOSSIBLY LONG, SHAPELY LEGS. Eveready legs -- they just keep going and going.

They saunter past two BUSINESSMEN on a lunch break. The men pause and glance as men often do when confronted with a beautiful woman.

In fact, everyone this woman passes lets their eyes rest on her a microsecond longer than usual.

- Two SKATEBOARDERS note the STRETCHY MICRO-MINI skimming the tops of her thighs.

- A MAILMAN spots the BIG, DARK SUNGLASSES tucked into a MOUNTAIN OF BIG, BLOND HAIR.

- A PRE-TEEN GIRL glimpses the RED TUBE TOP wrapped around the GRAVITY-DEFYING BOSOM.

It isn't until she rounds the corner at the end of the block that we see her entire figure and appreciate why everyone is so goggle-eyed. Eye-catching is an understatement. All those folks who say Barbie's proportions are unrealistic have obviously never met ERIN BROCKOVICH.

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

A side street. No pedestrians, just parked cars. A PARKING TICKET flaps under the wiper of an old Hyundai.

ERIN

Fuck.

Even when she talks dirty, there's a heartland goodness to her voice. Like Kansas corn fields swaying in the breeze.

As she grabs the ticket from the windshield, her sunglasses accidentally CLATTER to the ground.

ERIN

Shit.

When she picks them up, a fingernail snags on the pavement.

ERIN

God damn it.

She tends to the nail as she opens her car door and gets in.

WIDER ON THE STREET

The Hyundai starts it up, signals. Then, just as it pulls slowly out into the street, a JAGUAR barrels around the corner, accelerating out of the turn, and rams into the side of Erin's car, sending it CAREENING into the median. It SMASHES into a foot-thick lightpost. And stops.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE - DAY

A boring building on a boring block in the Valley, surrounded by strip malls. Definitely not where the power lawyers work.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Morning, Mr. Masry. How you doing today?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, RECEPTION - DAY

Generic. Cottage cheese ceilings, motel art. ED MASRY, senior partner, slumps by ROSALIND, his chipper receptionist, with a cup of coffee in his hand. He's in his mid-50's, compact and -- even though it's only 9 AM -- already rumped.

ED

Don't ask that on Mondays, Rosalind.

Whatever passion he once had for the personal injury law that is his career has long since dissipated. He trundles off toward his office.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed's secretary BRENDA -- 50's, jaded, hates her job, but what can you do? -- is on the phone when Ed rounds the corner.

BRENDA

Hang on, let me see if I can track him down.

She puts the call on hold, turns to Ed.

BRENDA

Tony Marvin.

ED

Oh, Christ. Who's responsible for his pain
and suffering this time?

BRENDA

His dry cleaners. You want him?

ED

What do you think? What's this?

He grabs a gift-wrapped bottle off of Brenda's desk, reads
the card.

BRENDA

Tequila. From your drug dealer friend.

ED

Carlos isn't a friend; he's a client.

He heads into his office. Brenda gets back on the line.

BRENDA

I can't find him, Tony. We'll have to call
you back.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Not an office that exudes authority. Stacks of papers are
everywhere. As Ed heads to his desk, he trips on a box of
files plunked in the middle of his floor. Coffee sloshes up
out of his cup, onto his shirt.

ED

Damn it!

(calling out)

Brenda!

She pops her head in.

BRENDA

Yuh-huh?

He grabs a tissue, swabs his shirt, then kicks at the box.

ED

What's the hell is this doing here?

BRENDA

You asked for it. It's the docs on that pro
bono real estate thing.

ED

I didn't mean leave them in the middle of my
office. Jesus. Look at me. What do I have
this afternoon?

BRENDA

Nothing you can't show up for with a stain.

INT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COURTROOM - DAY

Not in session yet. CLERKS wander in front of the bench. A COURT TYPIST settles into her seat. We FIND Ed is sitting at the plaintiff's table, trying to lay his tie over the stain that's darkened on his shirt.

The doors open and Erin rushes into the courtroom in the most conservative thing she owns: a red, form-fitting mini dress. When she walks, everything shimmies gloriously. Everything except her neck, which is secured by a padded neck brace.

She sits next to Ed and tries to catch her breath.

ERIN

Damn, Mr. Masry, I'm real sorry -- it was my car. Again. The fucking thing hasn't been right since that shithead hit me.

Erin looks over at the defendant's table, where a doctor sits nobly in surgical scrubs. His wife and two beautiful kids are sitting behind him. A frigging Norman Rockwell painting.

Erin smooths her dress, checks her reflection in a compact.

ERIN

Open and shut, right?

ED

Open and shut.

She puts away her compact and tries to calm down.

ERIN

I've never won anything, Mr. Masry. Never in my life. I've never been lucky.

ED

Trust me. Getting hit by this guy was the luckiest thing that ever happened to you.

INT. COURTROOM, WITNESS STAND - DAY

Erin's on the stand. Ed is questioning her.

ERIN

I was pulling out real slow, and out of nowhere, his Jaguar comes racing around the corner ...

LATER IN HER TESTIMONY:

ERIN

They took some bone from my hip, and put it in my neck. I didn't have insurance, so I'm about seventeen thousand in debt right now.

STILL LATER:

ERIN

... couldn't take painkillers cause they made me too groggy to take care of my kids ...

STILL LATER:

ERIN

Matthew's six, Katie's four, and Beth's just nine months.

STILL LATER:

ERIN

... just wanna be a good mom, a nice person, a decent citizen. Just wanna take good care of my kids. You know?

ED

(oh so moved)

Yeah. I know.

CUT TO:

Erin is still on the stand. But now the doctor's lawyer is questioning her.

DEFENDING LAWYER

Seventeen thousand in debt. Whew. Is your ex-husband helping out?

ERIN

Which one?

DEFENDING LAWYER

(feigning shock)

There's more than one?

ERIN

Yeah. There's two. Why?

Erin looks over at the jury. The personification of conservative family values. Oh, shit.

LATER IN HER TESTIMONY:

ERIN
 (getting defensive).
 ...not like a career, cause I had my babies.
 But I woulda worked, for sure, if I didn't
 have this neck thing.

Erin sees a juror staring judgmentally at her short hem.
 Erin gives it a tug, pulling it down a stitch.

DEFENDING LAWYER
 (sarcastic)
 Right. No doubt.

A few jurors share dubious glances.

STILL LATER:

DEFENDING LAWYER
 So. Here you are -- you got a pretty
 disappointing collection of ex-husbands,
 none of whom wants to help you out; you
 don't seem to be able to help yourself ...
 you must've been feeling pretty desperate
 that afternoon.

Erin's starting to hate this guy.

ERIN
 (pointed)
 Yeah? So? What's your point?

Ed shakes his head slightly to her -- don't get mad.

DEFENDING LAWYER
 Broke, three kids, no job. A doctor in a
 Jaguar must've looked like a pretty good
 meal ticket.

Erin sees jurors nodding almost imperceptibly in agreement.

ERIN
 What? Hey -- he hit me.

DEFENDING LAWYER
 So you say.

ERIN
 He came tearing around the corner, out of
 control --

DEFENDING LAWYER
 An ER doctor who spends his days saving
 lives was the one out of control --

ERIN
 (erupting)
 That asshole smashed in my fucking neck!

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

The door to the courtroom flies open and Erin comes out, furious. Ed follows her as she heads for the elevator.

ERIN
 Open and shut? Open and fucking shut? God damn, he made me look like some cheap --

ED
 I told you the questions might get a little personal --

ERIN
 Bullshit. You told me I'd get half a million bucks. You told me I'd be set.

Ed notices her ranting is starting to draw attention.

ED
 Okay -- let's try and settle down here.

She looks at him, aghast, furious.

ERIN
Settle down? I got 74 bucks to my name, Mr. Masry! I can't afford to settle down!

Beat.

ED
 I'm sorry, Erin.

ERIN
 Yeah? Well fuck you. Sorry doesn't feed my kids.

Erin turns away from him and heads for the stairway.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

A shitty little house in a shitty part of Northridge. The Hyundai with a bashed-in side pulls up to the curb.

Erin gets out, takes the mail from her mailbox, then heads over to the equally grim house next door and rings the bell.

A Hispanic woman in her 60's opens the door, holding a white baby. This is MRS. MORALES.

MRS. MORALES

Hi, Erin! You're back so soon. How was it?

She hands Erin the baby. It's BETH, Erin's 9-month old.
Erin avoids the question by focusing on her baby.

ERIN

Hi, sweetie. Were you a good girl? Where
are Matt and Katie?

MRS. MORALES

Outside with the sprinkler. So it's good?

The truth is too depressing to share.

ERIN

It'll be fine, yeah.

MRS. MORALES

Ai, bueno. Because I didn't want to tell
you before, with your worries --

ERIN

What?

MRS. MORALES

My daughter, she's bought a big house with a
room for me. I'm going to move in with her.

ERIN

You're moving away? When?

MRS. MORALES

Next week.

ERIN

(stunned)

Wow, that's soon --

MRS. MORALES

I know. But it's good for me. Now I can
help my daughter take care of my grandkids.
And it's good for you, too. Now you have
money, you can find a good babysitter, huh?
Not the old lady next door.

Oh, God. In Erin's arms, Beth starts to COUGH.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin carries Beth up to her house. As she nears her door,
she steps on a GIANT WATER BUG. It crunches under her sole.

ERIN

Ugh.

Insult added to injury. She heads up to the house, dragging her shoe, wiping off the bug guts.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN LIVING/DINING SPACE - DAY

Just as dull inside. Salvation Army furniture. A lot of beige. Erin's two older kids, MATTHEW (7) and KATIE (5) are at the table. Beth is in a baby seat. Erin spoons some Mac & Cheese onto their plates, trying to hide her worry.

MATTHEW

I don't like this part, it's all crusty.

KATIE

I like the crust.

Erin switches the plates.

ERIN

Put your napkins in your laps and eat up.

KATIE

How come you're not eating?

Cause there isn't enough food.

ERIN

Mamma's gonna eat later.

From her baby seat on the table, Beth COUGHS some more. Thick, sick-sounding coughs. Erin looks at her.

ERIN

Oh, baby, don't go getting sick on me.
'kay?

INT. ERIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower and sink are both on full-volume, filling the room with STEAM. Erin is sitting on the closed-lid toilet with a COUGHING, CRYING Beth on her lap, trying to steam the illness out of her. Beth looks miserable. Erin holds her tight.

ERIN

It's gonna be okay, sweetheart. I promise.

But her face doesn't look like she believes it.

EXT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Matt and Katie are messing around with a gumball machine.

INT. DRUGSTORE, AISLE - DAY

Erin is holding Beth, wandering the aisles. She stops at the medicines, thinks for a long moment, then, hating herself, glances to make sure no one's looking, and picks up a bottle.

INT. DRUGSTORE, AT THE REGISTER - DAY

As a CUSTOMER steps away from the register, Erin steps up with the bottle in her hand and smiles at the CHECK-OUT LADY.

ERIN

Hi, remember me? I was in yesterday. Bought a whole mess of stuff? Round about five?

CHECK-OUT LADY

Honey, it's a zoo here at five. I'm lucky if I even see a face, much less remember it.

ERIN

Oh, shoot, yeah, I guess that'd be tough. Well, listen, I meant to buy my baby here some medicine, and by the time I got home, I realized I'd bought this adult stuff by mistake. And now, wouldn't you know, I can't find the receipt. I was wondering -- could I maybe exchange it anyway ...

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Erin feeds Beth her medicine, feeling miserable about it. Beyond her, Matt and Katie are playing in the living room.

ERIN

(to Beth)

Just remember, baby. No matter what your Mamma does, lying and stealing is real, real bad. I don't ever wanna hear you doing something like that...

On the table beside her sit the classifieds. Row after row of want ads circled, then X-'d out in red. A WATER BUG crawls across the edge of the paper.

ERIN

... Cause there's no excuse for it, you hear me? No excuse at all.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is sitting with a CLIENT, a 40-year-old man in a cheap suit with a few days' growth of beard.

ED

Okay, so, that said, all we need to do is
get you to sign a retainer and we'll be --

He looks up and, through his glass window, he sees

ERIN, standing in the middle of the secretaries' area, in a miniskirt and leather bustier, talking to MARIO, the firm's mentally challenged office boy. Mario heads away from her.

ED

(to the client)

Would you excuse me a second?

He gets up and waves Mario over.

ED

Hey -- Mario -- what's she doing here?

MARIO

She works here.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The support staff -- mostly middle-aged women -- are all stealing glances at Erin. Ed comes up to her, all friendly.

ED

Erin! How's it going?

Up close, the wear and tear of worry show on her face.

ERIN

You never called me back. I left messages.

ED

You did? Wow, sorry about that.

(beat)

Listen, Mario's a little not so bright. He seems to think that you said --

ERIN

There's two things I can't stand, Mr. Masry. Being ignored, and being lied to. You did both.

Glances skitter between the secretaries -- get a load of this. Ed lowers his voice.

ED

I never lied. I may have miscalculated -- that happens sometimes, but --

ERIN

You said things would be fine, and they're not.

ED

I'm sorry about that. Really. But --

ERIN

I don't need pity. I need a paycheck. And I've looked, but when you've spent the last six years raising babies, it's real hard to convince someone to give you a job that pays worth a damn. So I figure, since you're the one who said I was gonna be okay, you should be the one to hire me.

Ed sees the Client peering out at him, listening.

ED

I'd love to help, Erin, but I'm sorry, I have a full staff right now, so --

He starts trying to escort her out, but she stays put.

ERIN

Bullshit. If you had a full staff, you'd have time to return your damn phone calls.

She's backing him into a corner here. He shifts gears.

ED

Okay, look. If you really want to apply for a job here, you can do it the way everyone else does. Send in a résumé, make an --

ERIN

I'm not everyone else, Mr. Masry. I'm someone you made promises to that you didn't deliver on. I trusted you. With my kids' well-being.

That stops him for a moment. She softens up a little.

ERIN

Now, I'm smart, and I'm hard-working, and I'll do anything. But if you think I'm leaving here without a job, you got another thing coming.

Ed glances around the room, sees everyone watching him. Not a whole lot of options here. He looks back at Erin.

ED

No benefits.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - DAY

A tight office lined with file cabinets and shelves. ANNA, the humorless officemate, is showing her around.

ANNA

We coordinate and record the traffic of files throughout the firm, so that at any time, we can determine the status of a case. We file 'em here, alphabetically --

ERIN

Uh-oh.

(beat)

I'm dyslexic.

ANNA

That's a joke, right?

Erin shakes her head, no. Anna gives Erin's body a visual sweep. Great.

ANNA

(bitter)

Well, then -- who better for the job.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Anna is giving Erin a tour of the rest of the office. They pass JANE, the bitter office manager, and Brenda, at the coffee machine. Brenda and Jane eye her critically.

JANE

Just last week, he told my sister we weren't hiring.

BRENDA

What's your sister look like?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

End of the day. Ed is packing up his office. Erin sticks her head in.

ERIN

Mr. Masry?

He turns, sees her.

ED

Yeah?

ERIN

I was wondering -- could you tell me who I'd
(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

talk to about maybe getting an advance on my paycheck? Just -- for the weekend.

ED

Jane's the office manager. She handles payroll and petty cash. But she leaves early on Fridays.

ERIN

Oh. Okay. That's okay.

Ed looks at her a moment, sees that it's far from okay.

ED

Oh, for Christ's sake ...

He takes out his wallet, looks in.

ED

All I have is hundreds.

ERIN

I don't wanna take your money, Mr. Masry.

ED

Bullshit, you don't.

He slaps a hundred in her hand and leaves her. When he's gone, she looks at the hundred -- her life raft -- and gives it a great, big kiss.

EXT. BABYSITTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Hyundai is out front. Erin is at the door, taking Beth from the BABYSITTER, a woman in her 50's. Katie and Matt pull on their backpacks and troop out of the sitter's house.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Erin is leaving the store, carrying Beth in one arm and a bag of groceries in the other. Katie and Matt are each carrying a bag of groceries as well. They are all singing and moving with the jaunty step of the newly carefree. Katie spots a flower display outside the store.

KATIE

Mommy, can I get a flower?

ERIN

Katie, baby, you can get a whole big bunch.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATT AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A small room with Salvation Army furniture. A BUNCH OF DAISIES is propped in a Ragu jar on Katie's bedside table. Matt and Katie are in bed. Erin kisses them good night.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, DINING AREA - NIGHT

The table is littered with the dregs of hearty dinner: a picked-apart chicken, and licked-clean plates.

As Erin starts cleaning, she hears the DEAFENING ROAR of a MOTORCYCLE. It sounds as if it's gonna drive right through her house. Jesus. It REVS, loudly. Over and over and over.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin steps out onto her front stoop and looks over at the house next door. A few MOTORCYCLES are parked on the lawn; about SIX BIKERS are drinking beer on their stoop; and one asshole is sitting on his bike, REVVING HIS ENGINE.

ERIN

Hey!

But of course he can't hear her. She walks over to him, stands right in his line of vision.

ERIN

HEY!

He shuts off the engine when he sees her. Everything about GEORGE HALABY is tough -- his denim, his leather, his bike, his long hair. Everything except his eyes, which twinkle like Santa's. Especially when they see a beautiful woman.

GEORGE

Well, hello to you, darlin'.

ERIN

What the hell do you think you're doing, making all that Goddamn noise?

GEORGE

Just introducing myself to the neighbors.

ERIN

Well, I'm the neighbors. There. Now we're introduced, so you can shut the fuck up.

The guys on the porch chuckle. Erin turns and starts back to her house. George hops off his bike and follows her.

GEORGE

Ooh, now, see, if I'da known there was a beautiful woman next door, I'da done this different. Let's start over. My name's George. What's yours?

ERIN

Just think of me as the person next door who likes it quiet, and we'll get along fine.

GEORGE

Now, don't be like that. Tell you what. How about if I take you out on a date to apologize for my rudeness?

Erin shakes her head in disbelief as she keeps walking.

GEORGE

Come on. Gimme your number, I'll call you up proper and ask you out and everything.

She stops at her porch, turns to him.

ERIN

You want my number?

GEORGE

I do.

ERIN

Which number do you want, George?

GEORGE

You got more than one?

ERIN

Shit, yeah. I got numbers coming out of my ears. Like, for instance, ten.

GEORGE

Ten?

ERIN

Sure. That's one of my numbers. It's how many months old my little girl is.

GEORGE

You got a little girl?

ERIN

Yeah. Sexy, huh? And here's another: five. That's how old my other daughter is. Seven is my son's age. Two is how many times I been married and divorced. You getting all this? 16 is the number of dollars in my bank account. 454-3943 is my phone number. And with all the other numbers I gave you, I'm guessing zero is the number of times you're gonna call it.

She turns and heads inside. He calls out after her:

GEORGE

How the hell do you know your bank balance
right off the top of your head like that?
See, that impresses me.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Morning. Erin walks in, wearing her usual garb. She passes the coffee area, where Jane, Brenda, and Anna are milling. Brenda sees her, gives Anna a nudge. They both check out her short hem. Anna nudges Jane, who looks as well. Erin glances over just in time to see all three of them staring at her judgmentally. She stops in her tracks and stares back.

ERIN

Y'all got something you wanna discuss?

The women go back to stirring their coffees. Erin walks on.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is walking into his office with a coffee cup in his hand when he trips over the same box of files again.

ED

Damn it!

(calling out)

Brenda!

(no answer)

BRENDA!

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - DAY

Erin is alone, filing as she talks on the phone.

ERIN

How long's she been crying like that? ...
Yeah? Well, she's got that tooth coming in,
maybe that's it.

Ed appears in the door, carrying the box of files.

ERIN

Stick a wet washcloth in the fridge for a
bit then give it to her to suck on -- see if
that calms her down.

(sees Ed)

Um, look, I gotta go, but, do that --
there's a clean washcloth in that bag -- and
I'll check back in a little bit. Okay, bye.

(hangs up)

Sorry.

ED
Where's Anna?

ERIN
Out to lunch with the girls.

ED
Oh. Huh.
(beat)
You know what you're doing around here?

ERIN
Yeah.

He plunks the box on her desk.

ED
Good. This is a file I need valued. Real estate thing. Lady lives near some PG&E plant out in Hinkley. PG&E wants to buy the house. I need to know what to ask for it.

ERIN
Okay.

He pauses before leaving.

ED
You're a girl.

ERIN
Excuse me?

ED
How come you're not at lunch with the girls?
You're a girl.

ERIN
I guess I'm not the right kind.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Anna packs her purse and heads out, past Erin, who's at her desk, with the files from the box Ed gave her spread across her desktop. She's staring at them, a little bewildered.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katie and Matt are running up to the house. Erin follows, toting Beth under one arm and the box of documents under the other. She steps on another water bug.

ERIN
Ugh.

As she wipes the bug guts off the bottom of her shoe:

GEORGE (O.S.)

Hey, neighbor, wanna beer?

She spots George on his stoop, with a six-pack beside him.

ERIN

No.

GEORGE

C'mon. I bought 'em for you, to make up for the other night.

ERIN

Return 'em. Maybe you'll get your money back.

He gets up and follows her to her house.

GEORGE

Now, why're you giving me such a hard time? I'm just trying to be a good neighbor.

Erin turns to him. The kids are waiting at the door.

ERIN

I had a good neighbor, George. She was 60 and Mexican and she watched my kids for free. Something tells me you're not gonna be able to measure up to that.

GEORGE

You need help with your kids? I could probably do that.

George reaches out and grabs the box from under her arm.

ERIN

I'm not gonna leave my kids with you.

GEORGE

Why not?

ERIN

Cause I don't even know you.

GEORGE

Yeah, and whose fault is that?

He's got a point there. After a beat:

GEORGE

What, you got so many friends in this world, you don't have use for one more?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George is on the floor with Matt and Katie, playing War. Katie points to the Harley emblem on his leather jacket.

KATIE

What's that stand for?

GEORGE

That's for Harley Davidson. The best damn motorcycle ever made.

Erin comes in from the kitchen.

ERIN

And if I catch either of you anywhere near one, I'll knock you silly. Go on to bed, now -- I'll come tuck you in in a minute.

They get up ...

GEORGE

Night.

KATIE/MATT

Night.

... and head into bed. George starts cleaning up the cards.

GEORGE

Great kids.

Erin bends down to help him.

ERIN

Yeah. I'm probably ruining them.

GEORGE

How?

ERIN

Oh, you know -- I'm never here. I gotta leave 'em with this creepy sitter all afternoon who costs a fortune and smells like chicken fat.

GEORGE

I was serious before, you know. If you need someone to keep an eye on them -- you know, after school or something -- I'm out of work now, so I'm around in the afternoons.

ERIN

(suspicious)

What are you, one of those kiddy-porn sickos or something?

GEORGE
No. I just like kids.

ERIN
Right.

GEORGE
I do. Really.

He waits a beat. Then pulls out his wallet and opens it up.

GEORGE
I got one of my own. A daughter.

He shows Erin her picture. A pretty little girl.

GEORGE
But her mom took her back East a few years ago, so ...

He trails off. A painful subject. He looks up at her.

GEORGE
Anyway. I like kids. And I like you. I like the way you're always so damn pissed off.

Erin looks him over. Thinks about the offer.

ERIN
This isn't gonna get you laid, you know.

GEORGE
(with a laugh)
Yeah, we'll just see about that, won't we?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The wee hours. Erin's in a t-shirt, sitting on her mattress on the floor. The paperwork from the box is now spread all over the floor around her. She's reading a letter.

CLOSE ON THE LETTER

It's from PG&E, to Donna and Peter Irving. We see the phrases, "purchase your house ...", "fair market value..."

CLOSE ON ANOTHER DOCUMENT

It's a list of comparable house sales in the area. Owner, cost; owner, cost. Every house is in the \$65,000 range.

From another room, she hears the sound of BETH CRYING. Still reading the file, Erin gets up and goes into:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Still reading, Erin gets Beth out of her crib. Beth quiets.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin lies down on the mattress and rests Beth on her chest. She sets down the file she was reading and picks up another.

CLOSE ON THE FILE

It contains a letter from a Dr. Howard Reeves. The first paragraph contains the phrase "... medical examination of Donna and Peter Irving ..."

Toward the end of the letter, there are two columns. One is headed: "IN RANGE". The other: "OUT OF RANGE". Under that head appear the following: "lymphocytes, T-lymphocytes, natural killer cells, T Helpers, T8 suppresser cells".

Erin stares at it, confused.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - DAY

Erin is trying to show Anna the confusing file.

ERIN

It was in this file I'm working on for Mr. Masry, and I'm a little confused about why.

ANNA

You've been here almost two months, Erin. If you don't know your job by now, that's your problem.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

Erin's holding the confusing file, talking to Brenda.

ERIN

... I know they're the medical records from the people selling the house, but I just can't figure out what they're doing there.

BRENDA

You want me to tell Mr. Masry you're having trouble with it?

The PHONE RINGS.

ERIN

No! No, I just thought maybe you could --

Brenda picks up the phone, turning away from Erin.

BRENDA

Ed Masry's office, can I help you?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Erin's trying again, this time with Jane, who's barely listening.

ERIN

... and it's got lists of things like lymphocytes and T8 suppressers. And -- I mean, it's not a problem or anything, but -- I'm just a little unclear on what those things are. I thought maybe you'd know.

JANE

What do I look like, Erin? A library?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is alone in the office, at her desk, trying to figure out what to do here. She thinks a bit, then closes the file.

EXT. UCLA MAIN LIBRARY - DAY

Large. Looming. Very establishment. Through the windows, we see Erin at the desk, talking to a LIBRARIAN. She has the file in her hands. Over this:

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Masry & Vititoe, can I help you?

ERIN (O.S.)

Hi, Rosalind, this is Erin. Brockovich. From the file room? I was wondering if you could tell Mr. Masry that I'm following up on that real estate thing out of the office.

The librarian gives her directions to somewhere else.

EXT. UCLA MEDICAL LIBRARY - DAY

Smaller, but still establishment. Erin's Hyundai pulls into the parking lot.

INT. UCLA MEDICAL LIBRARY - DAY

Erin is at the reference desk, eating a candy bar while she talks to the LIBRARIAN. He checks something on the computer. A couple of WHITE-COATED MEDICAL STUDENTS pass her, double-taking. They don't see many like her around here.

INT. UCLA SCIENCE BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

A long, academic hallway lit by fluorescents. Erin gets off an elevator and heads down the hall. She finds a door with a nameplate that reads "Jim Paulsen, Epidemiology" and KNOCKS.

The door opens and DR. JIM PAULSEN appears. He's a classic scientist: unruly hair, thick glasses. Not a ladies' man.

ERIN

Dr. Paulsen?

PAULSEN

Yes?

ERIN

Hi, I'm Erin Brockovich. I was just over in the library there, asking a mess of questions about -- I guess they call it epidemiology? -- and the fella there told me to find you, cause you know all about it. Could I maybe ask you a couple questions?

INT. PAULSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Orderly chaos. Piles and stacks everywhere. Dr. Paulsen has Erin's file in his hands. Erin is sitting across from him.

PAULSEN

Well, look, there isn't a ton of information here, but from what there is, I'd say that these two people here -- what are their names? Shanna and Ashley?

ERIN

Right, I guess those are the kids --

PAULSEN

They've both got some immune system problem. Can't say what from, whether it's viral or genetic or what, but something's wrong. And these guys -- Donna and Peter --

ERIN

Their parents, I'm pretty sure.

PAULSEN

Well, from what this stuff says, I'd say they both have some form of cancer.

Wow. That's more serious than Erin was expecting.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON THE FILE on the kitchen counter. The Irvings' phone number is written on the front. A PHONE IS RINGING.

ERIN (O.S.)

Whoa, whoa! Easy, easy, easy --

WIDEN to see Erin, phone to her ear, grabbing a carton of juice from Matt and Katie, who are fighting over it at the table. Just as she takes it from them, the phone picks up.

DONNA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hi! You've reached the Irvings. Leave a message and we'll get back to you just as soon as we can. Bye-bye.

BEEP. Erin thinks a moment, then hangs up and looks at the file. She opens it up. Inside, there's a label with Irvings' address, in Hinkley, California.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAY - DAY

The beat-up old Hyundai heads east out of L.A. DISCO MUSIC blares from its speakers.

EXT. HINKLEY, CA - DAY

This is a dry, desolate part of California. No downtown, no community. Just tract after tract of arid farmland, with small, bland, unprotected ranch homes cropping up out of the landscape like occasional tombstones.

A beat-up old sign on the road reads: "HINKLEY, CA. POP: " but the corner where the number would be has broken off.

As a gust of wind lifts dust from the fields, Erin turns onto Community Boulevard, the main road that cuts through Hinkley.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin looks around. The house she's passing has been razed. A heap of lumber and wires in the middle of the property.

She checks the piece of paper with the Irvings' address on it. Looks back out the window.

EXT. PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION - DAY

Set way back is a MASSIVE COMPRESSOR STATION, six stories high, with all sizes of pipes criss-crossing the outside and FOUR GIANT COOLING TOWERS sticking up out of it. Far more massive than anything else in town, it looms over the flat landscape like the Capitol in D.C. or St. Peter's in Rome.

Erin's Hyundai drives by, kicking up a wake of dust.

EXT. DONNA IRVING'S HOUSE - DAY

A generic ranch home standing all alone in the middle of nothing. There's a pool out back, and a chain link fence hugging the property. No landscaping. Dull, but clean. A few BOTTLES OF SPRING WATER wait by the door.

The Hyundai pulls into the driveway and stops. Erin gets out. As she heads up to the door, her spike heels sink into the dirt. She rings the bell. It has a melody chime.

DONNA IRVING opens the door. She's 35, petite, with a scrappy, high-strung manner. She's wearing tight jeans, and her dark curls are piled on top of her head.

ERIN

Hi. Donna Irving?

INT. THE IRVINGS' HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is furnished with little money, but lots of care. Erin's on a plaid couch, in a sea of needlepoint pillows. Out back, two GIRLS, ages 9 and 11, are playing in a pool.

ERIN

This is a real nice place you got here.

DONNA (O.S.)

Well it oughta be, with all the work I put into it.

She comes out from the kitchen with a tray of iced tea.

DONNA

I added air conditioning, put in the pool, made all those pillows by hand ...

ERIN

Yeah? I should learn to do stuff like that. They make the place feel real homey.

Donna corrects the positioning on a couple of pillows.

DONNA

Thank you. I think so too. That's why I'm being such a stickler on this house price thing. I don't mean to be a pain in PG&E's backside, especially after all they've done for us up here, but I look around here and I think, if they want this place, they're gonna have to pay for it. And I don't just mean pay for the house; I'd like them to pay me for the trouble of starting over.

ERIN

Right.

DONNA

Cause first you gotta move, then there's decorating, and if the windows aren't the same size, you know -- you're making all new curtains. Honest to God, I don't know if I have the energy. You know, I've been sick. Me and Pete both have.

ERIN

Yeah, I'm real glad you brought that up. I was going through your file here, and I ran into these medical records. They kinda surprised me --

Some people are shy with their private tragedies. Donna is not one of them. She's off and running.

DONNA

I know. They're more than a bit unusual. See, two years ago, Pete got Hodgkin's disease. That's a kind of cancer --

ERIN

Yeah, I'm real sorry to hear that.

DONNA

Thank you. It's in remission now, thank the Lord, but you never know. And then while that's going on, I end up having to have a hysterectomy. Plus a whole mess of lumps removed from my breasts. All benign so far, but still -- an operation's an operation.

ERIN

I'll say. Holy moley.

DONNA

So the whole idea of selling the house -- don't get me wrong, I'd be glad to move off this scrap of dirt, but if they aren't gonna pay us properly, I don't see the point.

ERIN

Yeah, I can see that.

(beat)

I guess the only thing that confused me is -
- not that your medical problems aren't important, but -- how come the files about them are in with all the real estate stuff?

Donna tops off their iced teas.

DONNA

Are you kidding? With how our lives are, if I start subdividing files, I'll be sunk. I just kept all PG&E correspondence in one place.

ERIN

Right, but -- I'm sorry, I don't see why you were corresponding with PG&E about it in the first place.

DONNA

Well, they paid for the doctor's visit.

ERIN

They what?

DONNA

They paid for a check-up for the whole family. And not like with insurance where you pay, then you wait a year to be reimbursed, either. They just took care of it. Just like that. We never even saw a bill.

ERIN

Wow. Why would they do that?

DONNA

Cause of the chromium.

ERIN

The what?

DONNA

The chromium. Well, that's what kicked this whole thing off.

INT. IRVING HOUSE, GARAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON A BOX, with "CHROM INFO" scrawled on it.

DONNA (O.S.)

PG&E came around a few years ago, told us they put chromium in our well by mistake. And since we shouldn't have to drink it if we don't want to, they gave us free spring water and offered to buy our house.

WIDEN to see Donna pulling the box down into the room.

ERIN

What's chromium?

DONNA

It's a chemical they used over at that compressor station up the road there.

ERIN

Well, hell, maybe that's why you all have been so sick --

DONNA

I thought the same thing, right off the bat. That's why we went to see the doctor. But hunh-uh. Turns out one's got nothing to do with the other.

She rifles through the box.

DONNA

This is all the info they gave us. You'll see if you look through it -- chromium's good for you. They charge an arm and a leg for it at health-food stores.

She hands Erin a printed fact sheet. Erin scans it.

ERIN

Seems like an awful big coincidence -- your water being messed with and you being so sick.

DONNA

Not around here, it isn't. This is a rough part of the world. Hard times, not a lot of money, not a lot of luck.

(beat)

It's a challenge, staying healthy in a town like this. Heck, even our dogs up and die.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin's driving. As she passes under the street lamps, they illuminate the inside of her car, throwing light on Donna's box of chromium documents sitting on the passenger seat.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Matt and Katie are helping George attach bars to Erin's windows when Erin's Hyundai pulls up. She gets out of the car with the box, walks up to him.

ERIN

What're you doing?

GEORGE

Better safe than sorry.

He takes the box from her and carries it into the house.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin enters, followed by George, carrying the box, and the kids.

GEORGE

You should put a dead bolt on this door, too. This isn't exactly the safest best neighborhood in the world, you know.

He puts down the box.

ERIN

Yeah, well -- you get what you pay for.

GEORGE

At least it makes me feel better about being out of work. This whole area's full of unemployed losers, out on their stoops, drinking forties for lunch.

ERIN

You think it could make you sick, living in a place like this?

GEORGE

What do you mean?

ERIN

I was talking to this lady today. She and her husband both got cancer, and she thinks it's cause they live in a bad neighborhood. You think that's possible? That living in a bad place can make you sick?

GEORGE

Man, I hope not. You and me both got enough problems.

But Erin's still mulling it over.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE, ERIN'S BLOCK - DAY

Erin clips down the block in short-shorts and high-heeled boots. Up ahead a few of DOWN-ON-THEIR-LUCK MEN are out on a stoop, drinking their breakfast. Erin approaches them.

ERIN

Hi, y'all -- how you doing today?

MAN 1

Hangin' in, baby. How about yourself?

ERIN
I'm okay, I'm just fine. I was just wondering -- could I maybe ask you a couple questions?

She settles down on the stoop with them for a chat.

INT. PAULSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Paulsen and Erin are sitting, talking.

ERIN
... and when I realized our area's just as bad as Hinkley, I thought maybe my neighbors are all sick too. So I went and asked.

PAULSEN
(surprised)
You did?

Erin digs a pad of paper out of her bag.

ERIN
Uh-huh. Spent the last few days knocking on doors. And you know what? They're not.
(reads from the pad)
I mean, they got problems, but none of this cancer stuff. And their pets are fine. So I don't know -- I just can't shake the feeling that it wasn't no multivitamin they put in the water.

PAULSEN
Well, if you're talking about contamination, you're getting out of my area of expertise. Let me give you the name of a toxicologist friend of mine over at USC.

Paulsen reaches for a notepad, scrawls on it.

EXT. USC CAMPUS - DAY

Erin towers over DAVID FRANKEL as she walks across campus with him. He's the earthier variety of scientist: Patagonia, Birkenstocks, bushy beard.

FRANKEL
What kind of chromium is it?

ERIN
There's more than one kind?

FRANKEL
Yup. You got chrom 3, which is fairly
(MORE)

FRANKEL (CONT'D)

benign, and then there's chrom 6, hexavalent chromium, which, depending on the amounts, can be pretty bad news.

ERIN

How do I find out which is up in Hinkley?

FRANKEL

Have you been to the water board?

ERIN

Hunh-uh. What's that?

FRANKEL

Every county has one. They keep records of anything water-related within their jurisdiction. You should be able to find something there.

ERIN

County water board. All righty, thanks.

FRANKEL

Good luck.

(beat)

Oh, another thing -- I wouldn't advertise what you're looking for if I were you. Incriminating records have a way of disappearing when people smell trouble.

ERIN

I'll be discreet.

FRANKEL

(with a smile)

That I'd like to see.

EXT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin's Hyundai pulls up and stops in a cloud of dust. Erin hops out, checks her reflection in the side-view mirror, then heads into the building.

INT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL COUNTY WATER BOARD - DAY

Drab, government-issue. ROSS, the clerk is at the desk, reading a magazine. Erin pulls the huge door open.

ERIN

Whew! Goddamn, that's a heavy door.

Ross goes to help her with it.

ROSS

Lemme give you a hand there.

ERIN
Thank you very much. Aren't you a gentleman? Mr. ...

ROSS
Ross.

ERIN
Ross. Real pleased to meet you. I'm Erin.
A ray of golden sunshine into his dull world.

ROSS
What can I do for you, Erin?

ERIN
Well, believe it or not, I am on the prowl for some water records.

ROSS
(with a laugh)
You come to the right place.

ERIN
(laughing along)
I guess I did.

ROSS
You just tell me what you want to look at and I'll be glad to dig 'em out for you.

ERIN
I wish I knew. It's for my boss. He's fighting his water bill, and he wants me to find all manner of bills from all kinds of places. The easiest thing would probably be if I just squeezed back there with you and poked around myself. Would that be okay?

ROSS
Heck, yeah. Come on back. Just gonna need you to sign in here --

He hands her a pen. She signs in. He reads it.

ROSS
Pattee? That's your middle name?

ERIN
Maiden.

ROSS
You're married?

ERIN

Not anymore.

She winks, goes around the counter with him and looks at the stacks and stacks of files.

ERIN

Well. Here goes nothing.

She heads down an aisle, reading the spines of the files. They're all town names -- Barstow, Victorville, Oro Grande, Helendale -- in no particular order. Finally, Erin spots one that says Hinkley. She pulls it down.

IN THE FILE

are pages and pages of Xeroxed memoranda, letters, charts, graphs, handwritten notes. All shoved in willy-nilly.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

George is watching a football game on TV. He's just put TV dinners on the floor in front of the Matt and Katie.

MATT

Our mom gives us sandwiches on Fridays.

GEORGE

That's a sandwich.

KATIE

No, it's not!

GEORGE

Sure it is. Here, I'll show you.

He picks up the chicken from Matt's plate ...

GEORGE

Most people think a sandwich's gotta have bread on the outside. Not true. Chicken is a perfectly good outside for a sandwich.

... and rips it in two and shoves the broccoli between the halves.

GEORGE

See?

Katie and Matthew look at each other, unsure.

EXT. WATER BOARD - NIGHT

It's gotten dark. Erin's Hyundai's still there.

INT. WATER BOARD - NIGHT

Erin is on the floor, her legs stretched out in front of her. She has a bunch of files open and spread across the floor. The one in her hand has caught her attention.

INSERT ON THE PAPER

It's a memo titled "CLEAN-UP AND ABATEMENT ORDER" from the water board to PG&E. Erin is concentrating hard on it, reading laboriously to herself.

ERIN (O.S.)

... On December 7, 1987, the discharger notified the regional board and the San Bernardino County Environmental Health Services of the discovery of 0.58 ppm of hexavalent chromium in an on-site ground water monitoring well..."

(beat)

... hexavalent ...

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, FILE ROOM - DAY

Morning. Anna's at her desk, filing away, when Erin comes in to find her desk cleared off.

ERIN

Where's my stuff?

Anna looks up.

ANNA

Where've you been?

ERIN

What the fuck did you do with my stuff?

ANNA

Don't use language with me --

But Erin's out the door before Anna can finish her sentence.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

JANE is at her desk. Erin barrels in.

ERIN

Someone stole my stuff.

JANE

Nice to see you, Erin. We've missed you.

ERIN

I had photos of my kids, plus a mug --

Jane reaches under her desk for a box, tallies up the other items as she pulls it out.

JANE

-- toothbrush, toothpaste, and a pair of hose. Here.

ERIN

What's going on?

JANE

There may be jobs where you can disappear for days at a time, but this isn't one of them. Here, if you don't do the work, you don't get to stay.

She hands her the box. Erin doesn't take it.

ERIN

I've been working. Shit, that's all I've been doing. Ask Mr. Masry. He knows.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed's at his desk, dialing the phone when Erin barrels in.

ERIN

You said to fire me?

He sets down the receiver.

ED

Erin, you've been gone for a week.

ERIN

I left a message. I said I was dealing with that Irving house thing.

Jane follows her in, still carrying the box of stuff.

ED

Erin. You don't just leave a message and take off.

ERIN

I came back as soon as I could. What am I supposed to do, check in every two seconds?

JANE

Yeah, see, that's how jobs work. You check in. You're accountable.

ERIN
I am not talking to you, bitch.

JANE
Excuse me?

ED
Okay, enough --
(beat)
Now, look, Erin -- this incident aside, I don't think this is the right place for you. So what I'm gonna do is make a few calls on your behalf. Find you something else, okay?

ERIN
Don't bother.

She turns to Jane, takes her box, and heads out.

ED
Come on, I've got lots of friends in hiring positions. I'm trying to help here.

ERIN
Bullshit. You're trying to feel less guilty about firing someone with three kids to feed. Fuck if I'll help you do that.

And she leaves. Jane shakes her head, stunned.

JANE
Honest to God, I think she's crazy.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - DAY

All eyes are on Erin as she heads for the door with her box of belongings. Satisfied glances fly from secretary to secretary. Erin reaches the door, but can't open it with her arms full. She turns to the room.

ERIN
I don't suppose any one of you cunts could open the fucking door for me.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin's Hyundai pulls up.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - DAY

Erin shoves open the creaky, reluctant door, grabs her box of stuff, and gets out, furious.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

As Erin walks around the car and toward the house, she runs into the MAILMAN. He hands her a packet of mail.

MAILMAN

Here ya go, Miz Brockovich.

Erin looks at the top of the stack. It's the electric bill.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Erin enters, puts down the box and stares at the mail. Bills, bills, and more bills. She throws them on the table.

GEORGE (O.S.)

What are you doing home?

George comes out of the kitchen.

ERIN

What are you doing in my house in the middle of the day?

GEORGE

Fixing a leak under your sink.

She heads into the kitchen, in a lather.

ERIN

I didn't ask you to do that. Damn it, George, I don't ask you to go doing things like that.

GEORGE

I thought I was doing a nice thing. My mistake.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Erin enters, sees all the cleaning stuff from under the sink is spread around the kitchen floor. A tool box lies open.

ERIN

Great. My kitchen's a fucking disaster area.

GEORGE

I'm gonna clean it up, Erin.

Erin gets down on her knees and starts putting things away.

GEORGE

Relax, Erin, I'll do it -- I'm not --

Erin SCREAMS. She brushes a huge WATER BUG off her hand.

ERIN

Ugh -- Jesus --

GEORGE

Yeah -- you had a whole family of those things hanging out back there.

Erin takes off her shoe and smashes the water bug with it.

ERIN

Where? Where were they --

GEORGE

Just -- back --

He points. She goes after them with her shoe, smacking wildly at the floor and counter.

ERIN

Disgusting fucking --

GEORGE

Erin --

ERIN

I'm gonna kill those little --
 (slamming her shoe
 with each syllable)
Get the fuck out of my house!

GEORGE

Whoa, Erin, take it easy -- it's okay --

Erin keeps after the bugs with single-minded intensity. Thwacking them when she sees them. Sometimes when she doesn't.

ERIN

No it's not! It's fucking disgusting is what it is! What kind of person lets her kids run around in a house crawling with bugs the size of fucking housecats?

GEORGE

It's a simple thing. We'll call an exterminator.

ERIN

I can't call an exterminator, okay? I can't afford one! I can't even afford my damn phone! I can't afford anything --

She sees another water bug, crushes it under her shoe.

ERIN

Mother fucker!

She looks around for another bug to kill, shoe at the ready:

ERIN

This is not how it was supposed to end up for me, you know. Piece of shit house, diseased bugs crawling everywhere. I was supposed to have a life. A great fucking life. I was Miss Wichita, for Christ's sakes. Did I tell you that? You live next door to a God damn beauty queen. I still got the tiara -- I could show you it. I hung onto it cause I thought it meant something. I thought it meant I was gonna grow up to be someone --

GEORGE

You are someone, Erin.

ERIN

No I'm not. Look at me. I'm not.

GEORGE

You're someone to me.

ERIN

Big fucking deal.

Whoa. George reels a little.

GEORGE

Man, you sure can be one mean-ass bitch sometimes, you know that?

And he heads out. She immediately regrets saying it.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

George is putting on his jacket when Erin comes in after him.

ERIN

George, wait. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

GEORGE

Right.

ERIN

No, really. I say things I don't mean sometimes. I didn't mean it. I didn't. It's just, I got fired today.

GEORGE

I'm not feeling very sympathetic right now, Erin.

ERIN

I know, I'm not looking for ...

(beat)

Look. My life sucks. I'm a lousy mother. I'm so fucking broke it makes me sick. I'm tired and frustrated every God damn minute of every God damn day. But -- when I come home at the end of a shitty day, and I find you here, with my kids, and I see you being nice to them, nicer than I am to them ...

(beat)

... and then, you're nice to me, too -- it's the only thing I look forward to these days, George. It's practically the only good thing I got.

George hears a vulnerability in her voice. They stand there a moment, looking at each other. Then he takes a step toward her and pulls her toward him.

ERIN

I'm bad at this, George. I make people miserable.

But he kisses her anyway.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Erin and George are in bed, naked, curled around each other.

ERIN

Know what I really want?

GEORGE

Hm?

ERIN

A bed. I'm so tired of sleeping on the floor. Makes me feel like garbage.

George kisses her.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is at his desk. The PHONE RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

ED.

Brenda!

(no answer)

BRENDA!

Still nothing. He glances out at her desk. Empty. Finally picks up the phone.

ED

Yeah, Ed Masry here ... No, sorry, she doesn't work here anymore. Who's this?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON THE TABLE. Bills with "PAST DUE" and "PLEASE REMIT" on them are piled up in a depressing heap. Next to them lie the CLASSIFIEDS, with circles and X's all over it.

ERIN (O.S.)

I just worked at this firm called Masry & Vititoe, and -- ... Um, just ... two weeks.

WIDEN to see Erin pacing nervously back and forth, talking on the phone. Beth is playing with measuring cups on the floor.

ERIN

But I was real busy and productive all --
(she's cut off)

Huh. And there's no exceptions whatsoever to that? ... Is there someone else I can --
(beat, then bitterly)

Right. Well, listen thanks a heap for all your help.

(hangs up)

Bitch.

She goes back to the newspaper, draws another X through an ad. Her DOORBELL rings.

ERIN

Come on, baby. Maybe that's Ed McMahon.

She scoops Beth up and carries her out into:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

She carries Beth over to the front door, spies through the peephole, and sees Ed standing there. She opens the door.

ERIN

What are you doing here?

ED

I got an interesting call this afternoon. It was from Dr. Frankel.

ERIN

Oh, yeah?

ED

He wanted you to know the legal limit for the stuff you asked about, the hexavalent chromium, is .05 parts per million. And that at the rate you mentioned, .58, it could be responsible for the cancers in that family you asked about. The Irvings.

ERIN

Well, that was nice of him. Isn't it funny how some people go out of their way to help people and others just give 'em the ax?

ED

Look, I'm sorry. You were gone. I just assumed you were off having fun.

ERIN

Now, why in the hell would you assume that?

ED

I don't know. Maybe cause you look like someone who has a lot of fun.

ERIN

Boy, are you ever a shitty judge of people.

Ed takes a beat, copping to the charge.

ED

So what's the story on this thing? This cancer stuff?

ERIN

Figure it out for yourself. I don't work for you anymore, remember?

ED

Come on, Erin --

ERIN

You wanna know, you gotta hire me back. I got a lot of bills to pay.

He glares at her. Weighs his options.

ED

Fine.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

She's let him in. They're sitting on the couch.

ED

But she says PG&E told her about the chromium?

ERIN

They told her something, but it can't have been too specific, cause I talked to her, and she sure didn't think her water was bad.

ED

So what made you think it was?

ERIN

It doesn't take a genius to look at those medical records and think something's wrong.

ED

What medical records?

ERIN

The ones in the box of files.

(off Ed's blank look)

The box of files? The one from your office?

ED

I didn't see any medical records in there.

ERIN

Boy, you musta really fine-tooth-combed it, then, huh?

(to herself)

And you fired me. Jesus.

Ed thinks for a moment.

ED

That document you found, the one that says it was the bad chromium -- you didn't happen to make a copy did you?

ERIN

Course I did.

ED

Lemme see it, will you?

Before getting it for him, she looks at him, weighs her odds.

ERIN

I could use a raise. And benefits. Including dental.

He levels his gaze at her, resenting her control here.

ED
 Look, Erin, this is not the way I do
 business, this extortion nonsense.

Erin shrugs. No skin off her teeth.

ERIN
 Fine.

She settles back into her seat, not getting anything for
 anyone. Ed has no choice.

ED
 Fine. A 5¢ raise, and benefits. But that's
 it. I'm drawing the line.

She goes to her box of stuff from the office and digs out the
 document for him. He scans it.

ED
 This is the only thing you found?

ERIN
 So far. But that place is a mess -- I
 wouldn't be surprised if there's more.

ED
 Find out.

EXT. 10 FREEWAY - DAY

Erin's Hyundai zips along the freeway. "Funky Town" is
 blaring from the tinny stereo. Over it:

MATTHEW (O.S.)
 I hate this music.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin's driving. Matthew's in the front seat. Katie and Beth
 (in a car seat) are in the back.

ERIN
 There's no way a son of mine hates Funky
 Town. It's impossible.

MATTHEW
 Well I hate it.

KATIE
 I hate it too. I hate this trip.

MATTHEW
 How come we couldn't stay home with George?

ERIN

Cause believe it or not, George has a life. Now come on, where's your sense of adventure? We're going someplace you never been before.

KATIE

I'm gonna hate it.

MATTHEW

Me too.

She glances at them, frowns a little.

ERIN

You know what I'm realizing for the first time? You kids are a couple of downers. I mean, you are the real thing -- a couple of honest-to-God depresso-types.

(small smile)

Who in the heck raised you, anyway? Some kind of moron?

Katie smiles a little. She likes this side of her mom.

KATIE

Yeah. A real moron.

ERIN

Some kind of half-wit, no-good, big-haired, bimbo, I bet.

MATTHEW

(also smiling)

Yeah.

ERIN

Well, thank God we got you away from her, huh?

By now they're all smiling. Funky Town plays on.

EXT. PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION - DAY

The Hyundai is parked by the entrance to the station, by a row of dead trees. Erin is standing beside a sign that says "Private Property. No Trespassing", taking pictures of the massive structure in the distance. Matthew, Katie, and Beth are drawing in the dirt with sticks.

ERIN

Stay out of the road. I'll be right back.

She wanders up the drive, onto PG&E property, moving around the plant, taking pictures of it from every possible angle.

As she wanders over a big, flat, dry field to the side of the plant, she glances over her shoulder to check on her kids and notices the trail she made in the dirt has a greenish hue. She looks at the dirt right her feet. Kicks the ground.

Below the surface, the dirt turns from brown to green. Erin notes this, then looks back at her kids playing in the dirt. Worry comes over her face. She heads back to them.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - DAY

The kids are waiting at the car. Erin comes out of the store with a bottle of water and uses it to rinse off their hands.

EXT. WATER BOARD - DAY

The sound of a BABY CRYING. The Hyundai's parked in front.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

I'm hungry.

INT. WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin is at the Xerox machine, copying a file while she tries to calm Beth. There's a stack of files on the nearby table. Matthew and Katie are flopping around on the floor.

ERIN

We'll get something in a minute. Now settle down.

Whining, fussing. Ross goes over to her.

ROSS

You know what, Erin? I got nothing but time here. Why don't you let me do that for you, and you can get your kids some dinner.

ERIN

Ross -- you are an absolute angel.

She hands Ross a stack of documents.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

Ed comes in in the morning, and without pausing, hands Brenda a copy of the stack of documents, with a Post-it on the top.

ED

Fax these to this number, okay?

BRENDA

All of 'em?

ED

All of them.

He continues into his office and closes the door.

CLOSE ON THE FAX MACHINE LED

Brenda types in the number. The recipient's I.D. comes up on the LED: PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

INT. IRVING HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Another copy of those documents, now in Donna's hands. She's on her couch with Erin, reading them. Outside, Donna's two daughters are playing in the pool. She reads the last page and looks up at Erin, bewildered.

DONNA

An on-site monitoring well? That means --

ERIN

It was right up on the PG&E property over there.

DONNA

And you say this stuff, this hexavalent chromium -- it's poisonous?

ERIN

Yeah.

DONNA

Well -- then it's gotta be a different than what's in our water, cause ours is okay. The guys from PG&E told me. They sat right in the kitchen and said it was fine.

ERIN

I know. But the toxicologist I been talking to? He gave me a list of problems that can come from hexavalent chromium exposure. And everything you all have is on that list.

Donna resists this idea hard.

DONNA

No. Hunh-uh, see, that's not what the doctor said. He said one's got absolutely nothing to do with the other.

ERIN

Right, but -- didn't you say he was paid by PG&E?

They sit in silence while Donna tries to make sense of this. The only sound is the LAUGHING and SPLASHING from the pool out back. Then, gradually, Donna realizes what it is she's hearing -- her kids playing in toxic water. She jumps up...

DONNA

ASHLEY! SHANNA!

... and runs out to the pool. Erin follows her.

EXT. DONNA'S HOUSE - DAY

From the door, Erin watches Donna run to the edge of the pool in a frantic response to this news.

DONNA

OUT OF THE POOL! BOTH OF YOU, OUT OF THE POOL, RIGHT NOW!

SHANNA

How come?

DONNA

CAUSE I SAID SO, THAT'S WHY, NOW GET OUT!
OUT! NOW!!!

Erin watches compassionately as Donna flails to get her kids out of the contaminated water.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Erin enters, about to drop the armful of books and documents she's carrying. She calls out into the house.

ERIN

Hey! Somebody gimme a hand here --

Nobody shows. She drops the stuff. Papers spill everywhere.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin enters to see Matt and Katie jumping on a brand new bed. Beth is nestled in the pillows. George is wadding up the plastic it came wrapped in.

ERIN

Whoa! Where'd this come from?

KATIE

George got it!

ERIN

You can't afford this. What'd you do, steal it?

GEORGE
Yeah, I shoplifted a bed. C'mon, try it out.

ERIN
I'm not touching that thing till I know where it came from.

GEORGE
I did a little financial restructuring, that's all. Come on --

ERIN
What? What do you have that's worth --
(realizing)
Oh, no way -- George --

GEORGE
It's okay. I had to. I haven't found a job yet, and I'm out of money.
(beat)
This was just -- you know -- a way to make losing the bike not so bad.

She looks at him, stunned by his generosity.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - LATER

George and Erin are in bed, wrapped around each other. Hushed voices.

GEORGE
Feel less like garbage?

ERIN
You kidding? Floating way up here, I feel like an angel or something.

GEORGE
Good. You should.

He kisses her. She takes a beat, suddenly uncomfortable.

ERIN
Don't be too nice to me, okay? It makes me nervous.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Morning. Brenda comes in and heads for her desk.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

When Brenda gets to her desk, she meets Jane, delivering paychecks. Jane tips her head toward Ed's office, as if to

EXT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUBURB, MAIN DRAG - DAY

Palms sway... the sun washes everything in yellow ... cars motor down either side of the landscaped median ... the calls of mockingbirds mingle with the BLIP BLIP of car alarms.

ON THE SIDEWALK, a SKATEBOARD CA-LUNKS down the sidewalk, past the foot traffic of Southern Californians: flip-flops, Doc Marten's, Rollerblades, Nikes ... then, in the middle of this pedestrian normalcy, a pair of IMPOSSIBLY HIGH SPIKE-HEELED PUMPS struts out of a shop. So high it hurts to look at them. As the shoes leave frame, we TILT UP and see they're leaving a 99-cent store.

As the Pumps turn and head the up the street, we see they are connected to a pair of IMPOSSIBLY LONG, SHAPELY LEGS. Eveready legs -- they just keep going and going.

They saunter past two BUSINESSMEN on a lunch break. The men pause and glance as men often do when confronted with a beautiful woman.

In fact, everyone this woman passes lets their eyes rest on her a microsecond longer than usual.

- Two SKATEBOARDERS note the STRETCHY MICRO-MINI skimming the tops of her thighs.

- A MAILMAN spots the BIG, DARK SUNGLASSES tucked into a MOUNTAIN OF BIG, BLOND HAIR.

- A PRE-TEEN GIRL glimpses the RED TUBE TOP wrapped around the GRAVITY-DEFYING BOSOM.

It isn't until she rounds the corner at the end of the block that we see her entire figure and appreciate why everyone is so goggle-eyed. Eye-catching is an understatement. All those folks who say Barbie's proportions are unrealistic have obviously never met ERIN BROCKOVICH.

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

A side street. No pedestrians, just parked cars. A PARKING TICKET flaps under the wiper of an old Hyundai.

ERIN

Fuck.

Even when she talks dirty, there's a heartland goodness to her voice. Like Kansas corn fields swaying in the breeze.

As she grabs the ticket from the windshield, her sunglasses accidentally CLATTER to the ground.

say, check it out. Brenda peers in and sees Erin on Ed's couch, high-heeled legs stretched out in front of her.

BRENDA

What's she doing here?

JANE

He hired her back. With a raise.

BRENDA

What?? Why?

JANE

Well, let's see. It's not cause she's smart, and it's not cause she's professional. That leaves ...

Brenda's stunned. Takes a beat. Makes assumptions.

BRENDA

And dumb old me thought working hard and being loyal was the way to get ahead.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is checking the lie of his tie in his window. Erin has her own stack of documents in her lap.

ED

I'm telling you, the minute Brenda sent the fax -- I'm talking the second she pressed that send button -- PG&E claims department is on the phone to me, scheduling a meeting.

ERIN

So you think we got 'em scared?

ED

It sure as hell sounded like they were sitting up and taking notice.

Brenda pops her head in, ignores Erin.

BRENDA

David Baum from PG&E is at reception.

Erin feels the chill Brenda's sending her way.

ERIN

Nice to see you again, too, Brenda.

Brenda leaves without acknowledging Erin. Ed straightens his tie and gathers up his stuff.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ed and Erin come out and see DAVID BAUM waiting at reception. Forget law school, this kid looks like he's just out of twelfth grade. Not a hair on his chin. His suit and shoes look brand new.

ERIN

Not to question your judgment or anything, Mr. Masry, but -- that doesn't exactly look like sitting up and taking notice to me.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Baum doesn't talk; he squeaks. But he's one of those geeks who think a Harvard degree cancels out all other flaws.

BAUM

... in the interest of putting this whole ridiculous thing to rest, PG&E is willing to offer the Irvings 250,000 dollars.

Ed laughs a little in disbelief.

ED

250,000? You gotta be kidding me.

BAUM

In terms of land value out there, Mr. Masry, this is more than fair for their property.

ED

And it won't begin to cover the medical costs the family's gonna incur in the years to come, all thanks to PG&E.

BAUM

Look, I understand they've had a bad run of luck, and they have my sympathies, but there's no proof that PG&E is responsible.

ED

Everything they've had is a documented reaction to exposure to hexavalent chromium. They've had ...

He stalls a moment. Erin jumps in.

ERIN

-- breast cancer, uterine cancer, Hodgkin's disease, immune deficiencies, asthma, chronic nosebleeds.

BAUM

A million things could have caused those problems. Poor diet, bad genes, irresponsible lifestyle. Our offer is more than fair.

ED

(he stands, to leave)

I sincerely doubt my clients will agree.

As Ed starts out:

BAUM

Mr. Masry, before you go off on some crusade, I might remind you to think about who it is you're dealing with here.

Ed looks at Erin. Get this prick. He pauses at the door, then smiles at Baum, all friendly.

ED

Gee, thanks, Mr. Baum. I'll sure do that.

(beat)

You heading back to San Francisco this afternoon?

BAUM

Yeah, my plane leaves Burbank in forty-five.

ED

Why don't you let the firm's driver take you?

ERIN

The firm has a driver?

ED

Go on over to reception, tell them Mr. Masry said Mario should take you to the airport.

BAUM

That'll be great. Thanks.

Ed heads out of the conference room.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Erin follows Ed out of the conference room.

ERIN

Mario gets lost going to the bathroom. They'll be driving around the valley for hours.

ED

I know. I fucking hate little pricks like that.

She watches him go into his office, impressed.

ERIN

Well I'll be God damned.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

End of the day. Most everyone has left. Erin is at her temporary work space -- just a chair and a small table. She's making her way through a fat file of documents. ROSALIND, the receptionist, wanders by with her coat on.

ROSALIND

You've been reading for hours.

ERIN

I'm a slow reader, on account of the fact that I look at the word "dog" and see "god".

ROSALIND

Hey, just so long as you see Him.

She turns on the desk lamp on Erin's table and heads out.

Outside the big glass office doors, Rosalind stops to talk to a lost-looking COUPLE IN THEIR MID-30's. These are MANDY and TOM BROWN. He's a security guard uniform, with an envelope under his arm. Rosalind points to Erin. The Browns enter the office and approach her.

MANDY

Excuse me, are you Erin Brockovich?

ERIN

Yeah. Who are you?

TOM

I'm Tom Brown. This is my wife Mandy. We used to live across the street from the Irvings. PG&E bought our house last year.

INT. ERIN'S DESK - LATER

CLOSE ON photos of chickens, each with a twisted, limp neck.

TOM

It's called wry neck. It's when they're born without any muscles in the neck.

PULL OUT to see Erin looking at them with Tom and Mandy.

ERIN
Wow. How many were born like this?

TOM
Twelve, maybe thirteen.

MANDY
When Donna told us about you, and what you told her about the chromium, we figured that might have something to do with this, too.

ERIN
It sure could, yeah. Thanks a lot.
She tucks them into a file, as if that's it.

MANDY
There's a couple other things too.

ERIN
What?

TOM
Well. I grew up in Hinkley. So'd my brother Paul. And Paul died of a brain tumor two years ago. He wasn't but twenty-nine.

(beat)
And Mandy here's had seven miscarriages.

ERIN
Are you kidding? My God --

MANDY
I know. It's an awful lot.

ERIN
I'm surprised Donna didn't say anything.

TOM
She doesn't know. No one does. It's not something you want to talk about, you know?

MANDY
I figured it musta been something I did, like when I smoked marijuana, maybe. Or took birth control pills. But then Donna told me you thought this chromium might be to blame for her problems, so I figured ...

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATT AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matt and Katie are in bed, with the light off. Erin comes in, quietly, in clothes from work.

ERIN
Hey. You guys still awake?

CLOSE ON MATT AND KATIE'S FACES. They're awake, all right. But they're pissed.

ERIN
Now, I know you are. George told me he just shut out the light a couple seconds ago.

They still don't answer. She comes in and sits on a bed.

ERIN
Look. I don't like me not being here for dinner any more than you do. But the way this job is, it's gonna happen sometimes.

KATIE
It happens all the time.

ERIN
That's not true; we had dinner together just last night.

MATT
You were reading the whole time.

He's got a point there. Erin feels like shit.

ERIN
I'm sorry, pumpkins. I'll try a whole lot harder to be around, okay? I promise.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Erin enters and flops down onto the bed, exhausted. George is lying on the bed next to her.

GEORGE
If it's any consolation -- I love you.

EXT. ROUTE 10, INLAND EMPIRE - DAY

Dry, flat California. Ed's big old Mercedes is toodling down the freeway, at an overly safe, almost-geriatric speed.

INT. ED'S MERCEDES - DAY

Frank Sinatra is playing on the stereo. Ed is swaying in time. This is his kind of music. He smiles, looks at her.

ED
It's Sinatra's world, we just live in it.

Whatever. Erin glances at the speedometer. Oy. So slow. His car phone rings. He picks it up.

ED

Hello? ...

(his voice softens)

Hi, babys. Baby's fine. Yes, I did. I did, too, you just didn't feel it.

He starts swerving across the lane markers. THWACK THWACK THWACK. Ed doesn't notice. Erin's getting nervous.

ED

You think I could leave without kissing my babys? Okay, here you go.

He kisses into the phone. Swerves. A car barely misses them. Erin's eyes widen. Not fun at all.

ED

Bye-bye ... bye-bye ... no, you. Okay, together. Bye-bye.

He finally hangs up, seemingly unaware that anything he did was unusual. Erin clears her throat.

ERIN

Um -- you mind pulling over?

ED

Huh? Why?

ERIN

Just -- for a second.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Mercedes pulls to a stop on the shoulder. Erin gets out, walks around to the driver's side. Opens the door.

ERIN

First of all, don't talk baby talk to your wife in front of me. It really undermines your authority. And second, I know you're my boss and all, but you are the worst fucking driver I've ever seen. Move over or I quit.

He moves over. She gets in, turns off the Sinatra. They pull back out onto the freeway in silence.

EXT. MANDY BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Mercedes and a truck are parked out front.

ED (O.S.)

The combination of what you were told, and what Erin has found out so far make it pretty clear that you were at least misled, if not out-and-out lied to.

INT. DONNA IRVING'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is seated with Donna and Pete Irving, and Mandy and Roy Brown. All are sipping iced tea and reading retainer agreements. Ed is standing apart from them, a little stiff.

ED

She's going to keep on trying to find out exactly what the story is with your water. In the meantime, the more information you can give us about yourselves, your health, etcetera, the better chance we have of getting you a decent settlement.

ERIN

And be sure to read that packet I put together, cause there might be things you forgot about that are from chrom-six.

Roy looks up from his retainer agreement.

ROY

It doesn't say here how much this whole thing's gonna cost us.

ERIN

Oh, boy -- here it comes.

Ed gives her a look -- whose side are you on here?

ED

My fee's forty percent of whatever you get awarded.

They all look up at him, more than a little surprised.

ED

It's the standard attorney's fee.

They look around at each other, stunned by the figure.

ERIN

Boy, do I ever know how you feel. First time I heard that number, I said you got to be kidding me. Forty God damn percent?

ED

Erin --

ERIN

I mean -- really. Here, I'm the one who's injured, and this joker who sits behind a desk all day is gonna walk away with almost half my reward? I said no way, no how --

ED

Erin --

Erin's enjoying Ed's discomfort almost too much to stop. But just almost. She shifts gears.

ERIN

Then I asked him how much he makes if I didn't get anything.

They look at Ed. Well?

ED

Then I don't get anything either.

ERIN

And I realized, he's taking a chance too.

They soften at this, realizing he's in it with them.

INT. DONNA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ed is putting the signed retainer agreements in his briefcase. Erin walks by him with a tray of glasses.

ED

Let's hit the road.

She pauses, disappointed in him.

ERIN

Mr. Masry, if you don't mind my saying, you got a lot to learn about being friendly.

She looks at Pete and Roy standing together across the room.

ERIN

Now they just hired you as their lawyer. The least you could do is make a little pleasant conversation.

And she heads off toward:

INT. DONNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Erin enters to find Mandy, with reading glasses on, scanning the chromium pamphlet Erin gave her.

MANDY

You know that thing it says in here about rashes?

ERIN

Uh-huh?

MANDY

Well, this old neighbor of mine, Bob Linwood -- he ran the dairy on Community -- seemed like someone in his family always had a rash somewhere or other. I just figured it was something in the genes. And you know how it is -- you don't like to ask about things like that ...

Erin listens, interested.

EXT. LINWOOD DAIRY, BARN - DAY

Another day. BOB LINWOOD, 40's and gruff, is in the barn, tossing hay around.

ERIN (O.S.)

Excuse me. Are you Mr. Linwood?

He sees Erin picking her way toward him in her high-heels.

LINWOOD

Yeah?

ERIN

I'm Erin Brockovich. I work at the law firm that represents your former neighbors the Browns. They suggested I give you a call.

She steps in a cow patty. Laughs at herself good-naturedly.

ERIN

Boy howdy, did I ever wear the wrong shoes.

EXT. THE LANDERS'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON A SIGN that reads: THE DESOTOS, hanging on the side of a small, paint-chipped house. Erin is at the door talking to MARY DESOTO, 65, who's wearing a big cross at her breast.

ERIN

... and Mr. Linwood seemed to think that your husband had been sick as well.

MARY

Yes, Mr. DeSoto has lung cancer. Never smoked a day in his life, neither.

INT. RITA AND TED DANIELS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin is talking to TED AND RITA DANIELS. Their daughter ANNABELLE, 10, is sitting on the couch, wrapped in a blanket.

ERIN

... then Mrs. DeSoto remembered seeing you folks at the hospital from time to time too, so I thought I'd just stop by.

(to Annabelle)

You must be Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Uh-huh.

ERIN

Whew, are you ever a beauty. I mean, you must drive those boys crazy.

Annabelle smiles a little.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Late night. George rolls over -- Erin's side of the bed is empty. He checks the clock, then gets up and heads into

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

He peers around and spots her, sitting in the little kid's chair in Matthew and Katie's room.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, MATTHEW AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is holding Beth against her chest, watching Matt and Katie sleep. Erin hears the floor creak as George steps into the doorway behind her.

ERIN

Tell me something, George. What kind of God lets a beautiful little 10-year-old girl get brain cancer? Isn't He supposed to be in charge of stuff like that? Make sure it doesn't happen?

(beat)

I swear, any other job, He'd be fired.

EXT. VALLEY SIDEWALK - DAY

Ed and Erin are walking down the street, take-out coffee cups in their hands. Coffee break.

ED

No, Erin. Hunh-uh. Absolutely not.

ERIN

Mr. Masry, this woman's husband is gonna die, any day now. And she's got no income, no savings, no --

ED

I said no.

ERIN

How come? That's crazy.

ED

Because. We're not looking for more plaintiffs. All we're doing is a quiet little real estate dispute. We're using this toxic information to get a better deal. Period.

ERIN

What about the Browns?

ED

"P.S., these are their neighbors. You bought their house, throw a little something their way too." Low-key. The kind of thing PG&E can settle, and move on. We start adding plaintiffs, and suddenly we're in the middle of a toxic tort case against a 28-billion dollar utility. No, thank you.

They go into their office building.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Erin and Ed are riding up.

ERIN

Okay, so here's what I'll do. I'll go on up to Ted and Rita Daniels -- two of the nicest people you'd ever hope to meet, who spend every single day watching their little girl fight like a dog against this cancer that's eating her up -- I'll go tell them you're not gonna help them cause you just don't feel like working that hard.

ED

It's not about working hard --

ERIN

Bullshit.

ED

-- It's about being realistic. I don't
(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

stand a chance against PG&E. They're a huge corporation, and I'm just a guy with a shitty little personal injury firm.

ERIN

-- who happens to know that they poisoned people and lied about it.

The doors open. They get off.

INT. MASRY LAW OFFICE BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Erin's dogging Ed down the hall, to the office.

ERIN

And this shit is bad news, Mr. Masry. I been reading up on it. Not only does it attack every organ of the body, it fucks with your DNA, too. That means these people's genes, and the genes of their kids, and the genes of their grandkids --

ED

I know how DNA works, Erin --

He gets to the Masry & Vititoe doors. Opens them.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - DAY

Erin tails Ed back to his office.

ERIN

And we got the goods on these people. With a little time and effort, I think we can nail their asses to the wall.

ED

Oh, you do? With all your legal expertise, you believe that?

ERIN

Okay, fine. I don't know shit about shit. But I know the difference --

He shuts his office door on her.

ERIN

-- BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG!

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed goes over to his desk, sits down. He sees a stack of messages there, starts flipping through them. Then he stops.

ED

Damn it.

He shoves the messages aside and puts his head in his hands, thinking.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - NIGHT

The office is half-dark. Erin's heading out for the night. As she heads by the empty reception desk:

ED (O.S.)

How many families we talking about here?

She sees him leaning against a wall.

ERIN

Four. Eleven more people. So far.

ED

You think there's more?

ERIN

Well -- I found one document at the water board that had a toxic test well reading from 1967. A hell of a lot of people have lived on that land since then.

Ed pauses, groans. Realizing what decision he's making.

ED

Ever heard about David and Goliath, Erin?

ERIN

Yeah.

ED

Well, this is David and Goliath's whole fucking family.

She smiles victoriously, knows she's got him.

ERIN

So if it's so damn big, I'll probably be working a lot harder, huh? Taking on more responsibilities ...

He gives her a look. Knows what's coming.

ED

What now?

ERIN

Another raise wouldn't hurt. And with all
(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

the time I'm gonna be spending on the road, I'll probably be needing my own cel phone, won't I?

INT. TOYS 'R' US - DAY

CLOSE ON A CEL PHONE

as Erin tries to stick the battery on the back. WIDEN to see she is entering Toys 'R' Us with George, Matthew, Katie and Beth (in her other arm).

ERIN

You each can pick out three things. But nothing huge. Look at the price. Nothing crazy.

Matthew and Katie fan out into the store. Erin keeps messing with the phone.

GEORGE

You can buy 'em all the toys you want, but come Monday, when you split again, they're still gonna be pissed.

Erin looks over at him, weary.

ERIN

George, I am just trying to do something nice for my kids on my one day off. Could you please not give me a hard time about it?

GEORGE

One toy per kid is doing something nice. Three is ... something else.

ERIN

Well, hell, I guess that's it, then, huh? They're scarred for life. They're gonna start holding up 7-11's any day now.

GEORGE

I'm just saying --

ERIN

(with intensity)

I know what you're saying, and I don't wanna hear it. I am doing the best I can.

And she walks away from him.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a hot night. The fan is fluttering the Toys 'R' Us bags that litter the living room. George is on the floor with Matthew and Katie, helping them assemble their new toys.

Erin is behind them on the couch, pulling stuff out of a Staples bag: three three-ring binders, pens, labels, inserts.

She writes out a label: PLAINTIFFS. Sticks it on the spine of a binder. Then writes out another: WATER BOARD, sticks it on another spine. Then: TOXICOLOGY, sticks it on the third.

The phone RINGS. Erin picks it up.

ERIN

Hello?

The RINGING continues. Erin realizes:

ERIN

Ooh -- my cel phone!

She hops up, runs to her purse, grabs it. Excited.

ERIN

Hel-lo?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Erin Pattee Brockovich?

His voice is flat, creepy. Not friendly.

ERIN

Yes. Who is this?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Keep your nose out of our business, and we'll keep ours out of yours.

CLICK. Erin stands there a moment, freaked. Then hangs up.

GEORGE

Who was it?

ERIN

No one. Wrong number.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON Erin's three spiral notebooks, labeled and lined up on her desk, which has been set up right next to Brenda's. Brenda is casting resentful glances over at Erin while grumpily rearranging her newly-cramped workspace.

Over at her desk, Erin picks up the phone and dials.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

Frankel here.

ERIN

Howdy, Dr. Frankel, it's your old friend
Erin Brockovich. How the hell you been?

Brenda shoots her a look. That doesn't sound like
professional language to her.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

Erin! Right. Chromium. How's that coming
along?

Erin kicks her long legs up on the edge of the desk.

ERIN

That's what I'm calling you about. Tell me
something: if you wanted to find as much hex
chrom contamination evidence as you possibly
could, what would you do?

The conversation continues over:

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE, DAY

The street is asleep; the homeless guys are crashed on a
bench. Erin's Hyundai refuses to turn over. Rev, rev, rev.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

Well, what you gotta remember is, if you've
got hex chrom in the water, you've got it in
anything that lived off the water.

Finally, it engages. She pulls out into the street.

EXT. HINKLEY, SIDE OF ROAD - DAY

Erin and Donna clips off leaves from a sick-looking tree and
stick them in a Ziploc baggies. Donna labels them.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

... if I were you, I'd start a collection.
Anything that existed in water, on water,
under water ...

EXT. HINKLEY, AN OPEN FIELD - DAY

Another day. Erin scoops dirt into sample cups, labels them.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

... anything that had water flow over or
under it...

EXT. HINKLEY, THE POOL BEHIND AN ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Another day. The deep end of the pool has a couple of inches

of old water in it. In her spike heels, Erin minces down to it, then scoops up a Ziploc full of water and seals it.

FRANKEL (O.S.)
... anything that drank water ...

She tosses it up to Donna, who labels it with a Sharpie.

FRANKEL (O.S.)
... that sat in water...

Erin spots a few dead frogs in the water. She picks one up by the leg, tosses it up to Donna as well. Donna jumps away from it, then scoops it up in a baggie and labels it too.

EXT. ANOTHER HOUSE - DAY

Erin and Donna scale a fence, marked "Private Property" (Erin in heels and miniskirt) and head over to an abandoned house.

FRANKEL (O.S.)
... that had water pass through it ...

BEHIND THE HOUSE

Erin and Donna unscrew the swamp coolers from the house's air conditioning system and lug them around to Erin's car.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN'S DESK - DAY

Erin's at her desk, bending over her notebook in a miniskirt, adding reports to the TOXICOLOGY binder.

FRANKEL (O.S.)
... collect 'em, label 'em, then bring 'em to me. I'll analyze 'em, see what we got.

ON THE REPORTS: We catch a few words: "water sample A...", "soil sample D...", "frog sample A...", "...traces of hexavalent..."

Brenda looks at Erin and sees her hem rising in the back.

BRENDA
For God's sake, Erin, I can see your panties.

Erin turns to Brenda, relishing the chance to irritate her.

ERIN
Liar. I'm not wearing any.

Ed, in his office, hears that and reacts. Yowza.

INT. WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin is reaching up to a high shelf for a dusty old box of files. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees Ross passing.

ERIN

Hey, Ross. Tell me something. Does PG&E pay you to cover their ass, or do you just do it out of the kindness of your heart?

ROSS

What?

ERIN

I'm just curious -- when you ignore incriminating documents that come in, or when you tell them who's been looking up what in here, if you get a little something extra for that service?

ROSS

(a bad liar)

I don't know what you're talking about.

ERIN

The fuck you don't. No one calls me Pattee. That heavy-breathing sicko that called the other night could only have found out about me from you.

(beat)

People are dying, Ross. You got document after document here, right under your nose, that says why, and you haven't said word one about it. I wanna know how the hell you sleep at night.

She drags the box to the floor and starts rifling through it.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN AND BRENDA'S AREA - DAY

CLOSE ON MORE FILES as Erin hands them to Ed. As he takes them from her, he notices a crematory urn on Erin's desk.

ED

Is that what I think it is?

ERIN

She lived on the plume. You never know.

Ed laughs and hands the documents to Brenda without looking at her. She grumpily takes them over to the fax machine.

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED as Brenda types in the number. The recipient's name comes up again: PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

EXT. HINKLEY BARBECUE - DAY

Open pits, pony rides, watermelon. George is watching Katie and Matt being led around on ponies, an activity that stopped being fun hours ago. Now they're just hot and tired.

ELSEWHERE, Erin, holding Beth, is looking at pictures of a swimming pool with FIVE OTHER WOMEN. The water is green.

ERIN

This was the PG&E pool?

WOMAN 1

Yeah. They built it for us. Our kids would swim there all summer long.

WOMAN 2

The whole time, we thought it was algae that made it so green.

LATER ...

Erin's trunk is open. She's clipping a new cluster of retainer agreements into the "PLAINTIFFS" binder.

LATER STILL ...

Erin is passing out informational pamphlets. She sticks one in a hand before noticing that it's George's.

GEORGE

I'm bored, and so are the kids.

ERIN

Just a few more minutes, then we can go.

(as he heads off)

Oh, can you take her?

George drops the pamphlet and takes Beth from Erin. He heads over to Matt and Katie, sitting glumly on a log.

As he steps away, a leathery hand reaches down and grabs the flier he dropped. It belongs to a MAN IN A BLACK JACKET. He's in his 50's, strong and sinewy. Military-style dark glasses obscure his eyes. He scans the pamphlet, then watches Erin working the crowd. Watches her carefully. He slides the pamphlet into his inside pocket, and heads back to a DIRTY OLD TRUCK that's parked nearby.

LATER STILL ...

Erin is packing up her bag of documents, to leave, when Donna comes up to her, with A MIDDLE-AGED MAN in tow.

DONNA

Erin, this here's Frank Melendez. He works over at the station --

Erin is very interested in talking to him.

LATER STILL ...

Erin and Frank are on a picnic bench, talking. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees her Hyundai pull away from the barbecue. George's hand sticks out the driver's side and flips her the bird.

INT. PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION - DAY

A LOUD, industrial plant. Erin and Frank Melendez walk through, him in coveralls, her in a teensy sun dress. Both in hard-hats. He points out various stations, explaining what goes on where.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE STREET - DAY

George, in his leather and denim, is walking down the sidewalk. As we WIDEN, we see he's pushing a PINK STROLLER. He stops at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to change.

In the stroller, Beth starts to whine. George reaches in his pocket, finds her pacifier. As he's leaning down to give it to her, he hears a RUMBLE coming down the street behind him. The roar grows. He stands, looks. A GROUP OF ABOUT TEN BIKERS has pulled up next to him. He looks at them. They look at him, then at the stroller. George feels ridiculous.

When the light changes, the bikers REV LOUDLY and pull out. George just stands there and watches them go.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - NIGHT

His office is all about Hinkley. A map of the plume area and a diagram of the plant cover one wall; photos of the plant cover the credenza; piles of documents litter every surface;

Erin is up at the map, eating Chinese food.

ERIN

They used the hex chrom here, in these cooling tanks, as an anti-corrosive. Then they dumped it here, in these six ponds.

ED

I don't remember seeing any ponds up there.

She bites into a forkful of food, keeps talking.

ERIN

That's cause they covered 'em over. And not too carefully either, cause you dig one inch under the surface, and the dirt is green as a fucking shamrock.

ED

And that's what caused the contamination?

ERIN

It didn't help, but no. The real problem's on the bottom. They were supposed to line the ponds so this shit couldn't seep into the ground. But guess what --

ED

They skipped that step.

ERIN

I guess it was a little too inconvenient and expensive for them. So for fourteen years, poison flowed free as you please into these people's --

Suddenly, her eyes pop out of her head --

ERIN

Whoa! Shit! Hot! Hot! Hot!

Tears spring to her eyes. She starts fanning furiously at her mouth. Ed finds the tequila the client gave him and hands it to her. She takes a big swig. There's a nanosecond of relief ... until the tequila hits. Her eyes redden and spew. She gasps. When she can finally talk:

ERIN

You ... asshole ...

Ed chuckles.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - LATER

The tequila's been dipped into. Ed and Erin are each lying on a couch, staring at documents. Late-night working.

ERIN

What I don't get is, here's PG&E -- they know they fucked up. Why say anything at all? Why not just stay shut up about it?

ED

Because. In a case like this, there's a one-year statute of limitations. PG&E probably figured, this thing's a time bomb
(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

anyway, let's let the cat outta the bag real quiet. If we can ride out the year with no one suing, we're in the clear forever.

Erin sits up, alarmed.

ERIN

But wait -- it's been more than a year since they told these people about the chromium --

ED

I know. So we have to prove that PG&E lied.

ERIN

Oh, they lied to them all right.

ED

I said we have to prove it.

ERIN

Fine. If we have to prove it, we'll prove it. Cause I'm sorry -- you don't poison a whole aquifer -- you don't build a pool for folks to swim in, then fill it with contaminated water -- and get away with it. It's just not right.

Ed smiles to himself.

ED

I like this case.

ERIN

Really? It makes me sick.

ED

Me too. That's why I like it. It's been a long time since I had a case I cared about.

ERIN

You didn't care about my case?

ED

I would now.

She nods, gets up. He watches her as she moves across the room, starts throwing away food cartons.

ED

Hey. I like working with you.

ERIN

(as she yawns)

Well, I tell you, Ed, that's lucky, cause you're stuck with me.

After a beat:

ED
When'd you start calling me Ed?

INT. AMBROSINOS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin is talking to LAURA and MIKE AMBROSINO. Laura has a scarf covering her hair loss from chemotherapy. She and Mike are reading a retainer agreement.

MIKE
Thing is, Erin -- PG&E's a big company out here. How do I know they're not gonna come after us if we sign this?

Hm. Good question.

ERIN
Um, you know what? I got something in the car that'll probably -- I'll be right back.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is at his desk, working. Brenda leans in from her desk.

BRENDA
That's Erin.

ED
(answering phone)
Hey. What's going on?

INT. ERIN'S CAR - DAY

Erin is in her car, on her car phone.

ERIN
Help me out. I got a plaintiff here who's worried PG&E's gonna come after his family if he signs. I don't know what to tell him.

ED (O.S.)
Tell him ... hm. Tell him, in your opinion, they're actually safer if they sign ...

INT. AMBROSINOS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin is back with Mike and Laura, repeating what Ed told her.

ERIN
... cause once you do, you and your family are part of the legal record. PG&E'll start looking real bad if they mess with people who are on record in a dispute with them.

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Another day. Ed's working. Brenda calls from her desk.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Erin again.

EXT. ANOTHER PLAINTIFF'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin's car is out front. She's on her cel phone again.

ERIN

How can they be sure you're not gonna bill 'em if we lose?

EXT. YET ANOTHER PLAINTIFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Another day. Erin's in her car, on her cel phone again.

ERIN

Can they make their kids part of the suit but not be part of it themselves?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

Brenda is at her desk, on the phone, putting a call on hold. Jane is nearby and overhears Brenda calling into Ed.

BRENDA

Erin again.

JANE

Boy, she calls more than his wife.

BRENDA

Yeah. Only difference is, he never puts Erin on hold.

INT. TROY ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

Another day. Erin is sitting with TROY ROSE, a plaintiff in his early 40's. He's looking at the retainer agreement.

TROY

Say I was exposed to chrom six. How would I act?

ERIN

Sorry?

TROY

Well, I mean -- If I been exposed, right? If this stuff's in my system -- how'm I supposed to act? How'm I supposed to feel?

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is on the phone to her, concerned.

ED

Wait -- he asked that? He phrased it that way, "how'm I'm supposed to feel?"

INTERCUT with Erin in her car, on her cel phone.

ERIN

Yeah.

ED

Get out of there. The guy stinks. He's a plant for PG&E.

ERIN

No, he's not. He lives right on the plume, his wife is sick.

ED

Then why does he need you to tell him how hex chrom exposure feels? I'm telling you, that guy gets on a stand and says you told him how to say he feels, our entire case is shot. Put the key in the ignition and leave. Now.

EXT. PLAINTIFF'S HOUSE - DAY

As Erin's beat-up old Hyundai pulls away from the house, the curtains part, and the Troy watches her go.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

George is in bed, staring at the ceiling when Erin comes in.

ERIN

Hey, I figured you'd be asleep.

He hands her a stack of messages.

GEORGE

You got some calls.

ERIN

(flipping through them)

New plaintiff, new plaintiff, new plaintiff ... Jesus, can you believe this thing?

GEORGE

You might not want to return 'em from here. Your phone's tapped.

ERIN

What? It is not.

GEORGE

Fine. I ordered pizza for your kids, it sounded like I was talking to Russia, but fine.

She picks up the phone, listens.

ERIN

Son of a bitch. It's clicking. My phone is tapped. They tapped my fucking phone!

But George got used to that news hours ago. He's got other things on his mind.

GEORGE

You were out late. I was getting worried.

ERIN

Yeah, you can't believe how complicated this whole thing is getting. We worked right through dinner.

GEORGE

You and Ed.

ERIN

Yeah, me and Ed.

GEORGE

(bitter)

Well, good. As long as Ed's there, I guess I don't need to worry.

She stands there a moment, frustrated. Then looks at all the messages in her hand and leaves the room.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, DAY

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED

as documents are faxed once again to the PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

THEN AGAIN, on another day.

AND AGAIN, on another day.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is once again checking the tie of his tie in a window. Erin is assembling her data on his coffee table.

ERIN

If they've sent that little shmuck Baum again, I'm gonna be real pissed off.

ED

From their tone of voice on the phone, I'd say they're taking us more seriously.

ERIN

Yeah, I heard that one before.

Brenda leans her head in.

BRENDA

Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Webster, Mr. Buda, and Ms. Cooper, from PG&E are here.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Talk about moving up the food chain. MR. SANCHEZ, MR. WEBSTER, MR. BUDA, and MS. COOPER mill slowly about the reception area like sharks. They all ooze importance.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Erin, Ed and Brenda are staring out at them.

ERIN

Jesus. They look like the secret service or something.

ED

They're trying to intimidate us.

He thinks for a moment. Then turns to Brenda.

ED

Tell them to wait in the conference room.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sanchez, Webster, Buda, and Cooper are seated.

The door opens and Ed enters, legal pad under his arm. Followed by Erin, legal pad under her arm. Followed by Anna (looking professional in Brenda's suit coat), legal pad under her arm. Followed by Mario (in a suit produced from who knows where), legal pad under his arm. If you didn't know better, you'd assume it was a team of lawyers as well.

ED

Counselors --

MR. SANCHEZ

Counselors.

Ed and Erin sit down and get to work. Mario and Anna, clearly told to just follow along, sit down a moment later.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

Jane walks up to Brenda's desk with some bills in her hand.

JANE

He doesn't actually expect the firm to pay these, does he?

BRENDA

Yup. The firm covers all her phone bills.

JANE

But these are higher than his. They're higher than anyone's. Who the hell talks this much?

BRENDA

I guess she's got a lot to say.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Mario and Anna are sitting mutely in their seats beside Ed and Erin, firing blank looks across the table.

SANCHEZ

Let's be honest, here. A million dollars is more money than these people have ever dreamed of.

ERIN

Oh, now see? That pisses me off.

Mario and Anna exchange a look. This is getting interesting.

ERIN

These people don't dream about being rich. They dream about being healthy and being able to watch their kids swim in their pool without worrying they'll have to have a hysterectomy at age 20, like Rosa Diaz -- a client of ours -- or have their spine deteriorate like Stan Bloom. Another client of ours.

(beat)

In fact, now that I'm thinking of it -- Donna and Pete Irving put a lot of money into that pool of theirs. I think, while you're off coming up with a decent offer,

(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

you should fill it with spring water so they can use it. I think that's the very least you could do.

EXT. DONNA IRVING'S HOUSE - DAY

Two ARROWHEAD SPRING WATER TRUCKS are parked out in front. DELIVERY MEN are carrying huge bottles around to the back. Erin's increasingly beat-up Hyundai trundles by.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin's on her car phone, talking over the loud engine noise, looking at the trucks in her rear view mirror.

ERIN

Yeah, they're there all right.

INTERCUT with Ed, on his car phone, driving through the streets of Los Angeles.

ED

What do they have, a big tank?

ERIN

Nope, bottles. They're filling that whole pool by hand with five-gallon bottles.

(laughs to herself)

I guess my speech made an impression on those stuffed shirts.

ED

Speech, shmeech. I saw how you were leaning in to the men while you were talking.

ERIN

You know what, Ed? I am really not in the mood.

ED

I'm just pointing out that you use your assets to your advantage. Nothing wrong with that.

ERIN

Why do you do this? Why do you insist on pissing me off like this?

ED

Just admit it. You get guys to do what you want cause they want to get in your pants.

ERIN

What about the women? I get just as many of them to sign up. You saying they're after my body too?

ED

Nope. They're after mine. They're just using you to get to me.

ERIN

(laughing)

In your dreams, pal. Oh, hey, I see a nice bunch of girls for you up here. Real sweethearts, just your type. Say hi to Ed, girls.

She whizzes by a LARGE FLOCK OF SHEEP. Sticks her phone out the window, to catch their "BAAAA"'s.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - NIGHT

Erin's Hyundai is parked in front. A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS comes down the road, slows, then does a U-turn and comes to rest with its headlights illuminating Erin's car.

When the headlights go off, we recognize the car: it's the BEAT-UP OLD TRUCK from the barbecue.

INT. HINKLEY MART - NIGHT

Erin, looking exhausted, paying the CHECK-OUT WOMAN for the extra-large cup of coffee in her hand.

CHECK-OUT WOMAN

Cup of coffee like that's gonna keep you up all night.

ERIN

That's the plan.

She takes her change and heads for the door.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - NIGHT

As Erin comes out of the Mart, she spills coffee on her hand.

ERIN

Aw, fuck --

She heads over to a trash can. As she starts cleaning herself off, the door of the truck opens slowly. Quietly.

The MAN IN THE DARK GLASSES gets out moves toward her. When he's ten paces away, the Check-Out Woman comes out of the Mart and calls to Erin.

CHECK-OUT WOMAN

Oh, ma'am? Ma'am.
(heads toward Erin)
You forgot your keys.

The Man in the Dark Glasses backs away, unseen by either woman. The Check-Out Woman hands Erin the keys.

ERIN

Now you see why I need all this coffee --

Erin opens her car door, gets in and starts it up. The Check-Out Woman gives her a little wave as she pulls out.

The Man in the Dark Glasses watches her drive away.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - NIGHT

The empty coffee cup is on the floor. Erin's driving, exhausted. She yawns as she dials her phone.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Hello?

INTERCUT between Erin in her car, and George in bed.

ERIN

I'm so tired I'm about to drive off the road. Keep me awake, willya?

GEORGE

What do you want, a joke?

ERIN

No, no jokes, I gotta pee. Just tell me about your day. What went on back there?

GEORGE

Well, come to think of it, we did have a kinda big event around here.

ERIN

What was that?

GEORGE

Beth started talking.

Erin is completely broadsided by this.

ERIN

What?

(beat)

Beth? My Beth?

GEORGE

Yeah. We were sitting around at lunchtime and she pointed right at a ball and said, "ball."

Erin says nothing, just stares out at the empty highway, feeling all hollowed-out.

GEORGE

I'd never seen that before -- someone's first word. Pretty intense.

Erin just nods. Keeps staring straight ahead as a tear rolls down her cheek.

INT. MEDICAL LAB - DAY

CLOSE ON A SLIDE being pulled out of a microscope. The TECHNICIAN'S HANDS fill out an accompanying biopsy slip. They pass it to ANOTHER SET OF HANDS.

Those hands carry it down a hall, through a door, and hand it to a THIRD PERSON.

As we TILT UP, we see he's a DOCTOR, sitting in his office. He looks at the biopsy report for a beat -- clearly bad news -- then picks up his phone and dials.

DOCTOR

Hi, Donna. It's Dr. Ryan calling.

INT. IRVINGS' HOUSE, DONNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Donna's sitting in bed, quietly, in among her needlepoint pillows. Pete is standing in the doorway, at a remove. And Erin is sitting at the edge of the bed.

DONNA

I'd got so used to having 'em come up benign, I guess I just didn't expect it.

She looks down her shirt front.

DONNA

Sure wish I had longer to get used to the idea.

(beat)

You think if you got no uterus, and no breasts, you're still technically a woman?

ERIN

Sure you are. You're just a happier woman, cause you don't have to deal with underwire.

Donna smiles a little. Then her face crumbles a little.

DONNA

We're gonna get them, aren't we, Erin? You gotta tell me we're gonna get them.

EXT. PG&E PLANT - NIGHT

Late, late at night. Inside the gates. Pete Irving stands alone in front of the looming plant, staring up at it.

After a beat, he reaches down, picks up a rock and throws it at the plant. It misses. Not that it would do anything if it hit. Overwhelmed by his impotence, he lets out a TERRIFYING YELL. Then, alone in the night, he grabs rock after rock and hurls them at the gigantic plant.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - NIGHT

The Christmas party. The office is transformed. Someone is dressed as Santa. A tree on a desk, ornaments everywhere. About 25 EMPLOYEES and DATES mingle, drinks in hands.

Erin and George enter, dressed up.

GEORGE

I'm just saying -- we have one night to ourselves, why do we have to spend it here?

ERIN

Cause it's my office party, George. If you had an office, I'd go to your party without complaining.

George considers acknowledging the zing. Decides against it and heads to the bar.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, HALLWAY - LATER

Erin's giving George a tour. As they head down the hall, every desk is decorated and has a present on it.

ERIN

Looks like someone did the place up for the holidays. Looks pretty cool, huh?

He doesn't answer. Takes a drag off his beer.

INT. MASRY OFFICES, ERIN AND BRENDA'S DESKS - DAY

It's dark. The door to Erin's area opens.

ERIN

And here, ta-daa, is my desk.

She flicks on the lights. Brenda's desk is decorated and has a present waiting. Erin's is completely bare.

GEORGE

Which one?

Erin stares at it. The empty, unloved one.

GEORGE

Maybe they didn't think you were coming.

Erin shakes her head. She's surprised by how hurt she is.

ERIN

(quietly)

God damn.

George looks over at her, sees her eyes glisten a little. He goes over to her, wraps his arms around her.

GEORGE

Hey. Fuck 'em. Who needs 'em, huh?

He kisses her. She leans into him a little. He kisses her some more.

GEORGE

(quietly)

See? All we need is each other.

She kisses back -- she's gonna let him take care of her, cheer her up. Some more kisses, heating up. He grabs her ass and slides her up onto her empty desk.

GEORGE

(with a laugh)

Good thing there isn't a present there, huh?
That mighta hurt.

She laughs along with him. He slides his hands up her skirt, kisses her some more. She pulls him into her, tugging his shirt out of his pants. The mean outside world starts to fade.

INT. MASRY OFFICES, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ed is coming down the hall with his wife, JOEY. Joey is much younger than Ed, and very pretty.

ED

I wanna show you what they did back here --

INT. ERIN'S DESK - NIGHT

Erin and George, in a rapidly-heating-up clinch on her desk, hear the voices. Erin pulls away.

ERIN

That's Ed.

GEORGE

Lock the door.

ERIN

I want you to meet him.

He pulls her back into him, not wanting to move.

GEORGE

I'll meet him later. Lock it.

But Erin pulls away ...

ERIN

Come on, George, it's a party.

He watches her straighten her dress and take a step away from him. It's just one step, but it feels a hell a lot farther.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - LATER

Erin and Ed are laughing together by the reception desk. NEARBY, Joey and George are standing together, awkwardly.

JOEY

Your wife's real pretty.

GEORGE

She's not my wife.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATT AND KATIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew and Katie lie in their beds, with their backs to each other, both wide awake.

GEORGE (O.S.)

I'm just saying it wouldn't kill you to talk about something other than yourself and your own fucking job once in a while --

ERIN (O.S.)

What do you want to talk about instead? Your day? That's a fascinating subject.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Shut up.

ERIN (O.S.)

I'm serious. You wanna stimulating conversation, be stimulating. You mope around like a bored housewife --

GEORGE (O.S.)

Fuck you.

The fight is interrupted by the sound of BETH CRYING.

ERIN (O.S.)

Great. Excellent. Thank you very much.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beth is wailing in her crib. Erin comes in in her nightshirt and lifts Beth out. Then, more to herself than to Beth:

ERIN

It's okay, baby. It'll be okay.

As she runs her hand over Beth's little head, trying to calm her, she slides down the wall and crumples onto the floor.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN'S DESK - DAY

The desk space has become completely overwhelmed by documents and files. Erin is on the phone, tired and depressed.

ERIN

Me and Ed are gonna be up there on Thursday, I'll pick it up ... Right, bye.

She hangs up. Ed leans out from his office:

ED

A new plaintiff called. I told him you'd be out there on Thursday.

ERIN

D'you get his name?

(no answer)

Course not. Jesus, Ed --

ED

He said he'd meet you at the gas station at six.

ERIN

Boy, this job takes me to some of the best damn places, huh?

EXT. HINKLEY GAS STATION - SUNSET

Erin is sitting out front, drinking bottled water. She checks her watch: 6:30. The GAS STATION ATTENDANT comes out, locks up, and turns out the lights.

ERIN

Hey, this is the only station in town, right?

ATTENDANT

Yup.

He gets in his car and drives off. Erin sits down again. Looks down the road in both directions, for a car.

Then she notices, behind some bushes across the street, what looks like chrome. She shields her eyes against the sunset and it becomes clear: the BEAT-UP TRUCK is parked behind some shrubbery, hiding. It's just sitting there.

Erin looks around, realizes she's alone, then looks back at the truck. As she peers at it, the ORANGE ASH of a cigarette brightens. She suddenly realizes she's being watched. Fuck. The driver's door opens.

She bolts for her car, scrambling to find her keys. She jumps in, locks her doors, and tries to start her car, but it won't turn over. Panic. The Man in the Dark Glasses has gotten out and is heading toward her car. Erin looks around again. Not a soul. She tries the engine again. And again.

Just as the Man gets to her car, the engine engages. Erin peels out of the gas station.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin drives down the road, breathing hard, coughing, trying to focus on the road. She looks in the rear-view -- nothing.

She gets to the train tracks and has to stop while a train passes. As she's waiting, the glint of headlights bounce off her rear view mirror. Truck lights, coming her way. Fuck. She looks at the train -- still some cars coming. Looks back at the headlights -- they're getting closer. The train, the headlights, the train, the headlights ...

Finally, as the headlights are coming right up behind her, the last train car zips by. Erin peels out, bounding her car over the tracks. The truck follows.

EXT. HINKLEY ROAD - NIGHT

The Hyundai zips down the road. And behind it, the truck.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

She looks out at the landscape around her. It's black. No other cars on the road. She starts to panic, accelerates.

EXT. HINKLEY ROAD - NIGHT

The Hyundai going faster. The truck still following.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

Erin comes up on a stop sign. She runs it. So does the truck. A little later, she makes a turn and sees THE LOST CAUSE SALOON. In the parking lot, like a lifeboat, sits Ed's Mercedes. She pulls into the drive and jumps out of her car.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Ed is eating ribs when Erin bursts through the door. She rushes over to him, near tears with fear and exhaustion.

ERIN

Someone's following me.

ED

What? Who?

ERIN

Some guy in a truck -- he waited till I was alone, then he followed me, like, two miles. Jesus, look at me, I'm shaking. Get me a beer.

Ed gets up and heads toward the door.

ED

(to the counter guy)

Beer, please.

He opens the door, looks out.

ED

What kind of truck?

ERIN

I don't know. Big. Dark.

ED

He's gone.

(back to the table)

Did you get a license plate? Or a make?

ERIN

No, Ed -- what with me running for my life, I didn't have time to check those things --

ED

Hey, that's okay -- I was just asking. Are you all right?

ERIN

Yeah. Yeah, I'm ... fine.

Ed looks at her. She looks shaky, tired, drawn.

ED

When was the last time you had a decent night's sleep?

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Crappy and pink. Ed's Mercedes pulls into the parking lot. Erin's Hyundai follows. Ed stops, gets out.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

Ed swings by Erin's open car window.

ED

Don't worry. I'm getting two rooms.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Erin and Ed amble down the porch that all the rooms face out on, checking door numbers. Each rattling a key. They find their rooms -- right next door to each other, and stop.

ED

Lock the door every which way you can. And if there's anything -- funny sound, whatever -- just pound on the wall. I'll come right over.

ERIN

Okay.

She starts in. Then stops and turns back to him.

ERIN

I just think you should know -- there's very few people in the world who don't piss me off 90 percent of the time.

(beat)

You're one of 'em.

It's as tender as she gets, and he's moved by it. They look at each other. Maybe even considering. But after a long beat, she reaches for her door again. Moment over.

ED

I'm triple locking my door, so don't even think of trying to take advantage.

She smiles, goes inside. He watches her close her door behind her before going inside himself.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE, FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

George is sitting alone on the stoop, drinking a beer. Music is coming from his house next door. He stares out into the street with a lot on his mind.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Katie and Matt are making a mess of breakfast. Beth is on the floor, grinding cereal into the linoleum.

ERIN (O.S.)

Hello?

Erin comes into the kitchen and sees the mayhem. Horrified.

ERIN

What are you doing? Where's George?

KATIE

I don't know.

ERIN

George!

She heads out.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

George is sitting on the bed, with his jacket on. Erin comes in, sees him.

ERIN

Jesus, George, they're turning the kitchen into a hellhole. You know you can't leave them alone like that.

He doesn't answer. Doesn't move. She notices this.

ERIN

What's going on? What are you doing?

GEORGE

Just thinking about my Harley.

ERIN

What?

He looks at her. He's eerily calm.

GEORGE

That bike was my favorite thing I ever owned. Killed me to give it up. But I knew things would be a lot better with us if I

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

had a little money, so I did. I gave up something that mattered to me. Cause you mattered more.

ERIN

I know.

GEORGE

You know what I think all day long, Erin? All day, every day, I think, what the hell am I doing here? I'm living in a dump, spending all day taking care of kids that aren't even mine. And I got no idea for what.

ERIN

For us?

GEORGE

What us?

He's got her there. They look at each other a moment.

GEORGE

I think you oughta either find a different job or a different boyfriend. Cause there may be men who don't mind being the nanny and getting nothing in return, but I'm sure as shit not one of 'em.

ERIN

I can't leave this job, George.

GEORGE

Yeah, you can. You could just quit. People do it all the time.

ERIN

No, I can't. I got people counting on me up there.

George laughs a little at the irony.

GEORGE

What about here?

ERIN

It's different.

GEORGE

All I'm asking is for you to do what I did. Give up something you love, for us. For me.

ERIN

This job isn't like your bike, George. It
(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

isn't some thing I own. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. For the first time ever, I got people respecting me. Up in Hinkley, I walk into a room and everyone shuts up just to hear what I got to say. I never had that. Ever. Please don't ask me to give it up. I need it.

GEORGE

More than you need me.

ERIN

I need it.

He nods, then stands, to leave.

GEORGE

Maybe you didn't like who you were before, Erin, but I did. That's who I fell in love with.

Only then does she see the packed duffel bag in the corner.

ERIN

You already packed up your stuff?

GEORGE

I pretty much knew what your answer was gonna be.

And he picks it up and walks out the door.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin is at her window, looking out at the street below, where a cab is idling. George comes out of his house and tosses a few duffel bags into the trunk of the cab, then gets in, and the cab pulls away.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin is driving. Her kids are in the car. She looks like hell. Matthew and Katie have their school bags with them.

Matthew turns on the radio. Erin reaches over and turns it off. Matthew turns it back on. Erin glares at him, turns it off. On/off/on/off. A test of wills. Finally, when Matthew turns it on one more time, Erin turns it off, yanks the knob off the stereo and throws it out the window.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE PARKING LOT - DAY

The Hyundai pulls into the lot.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin unclips her seat belt.

ERIN

Wait here.

She gets out.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Business as usual. Erin comes in, goes straight to her desk.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN'S DESK - DAY

Erin looks in her "in" box. Flips through the accumulated memos, looking for something in particular. Doesn't find it. Grrr. She heads off to

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane is at her desk when Erin comes in.

ERIN

Where's my paycheck?

JANE

Have you been logging on?

ERIN

What?

JANE

I moved payroll onto the computer. It only knows to process paychecks for employees who log on in the morning and off at night.

Erin seethes.

ERIN

How the fuck am I supposed to do that when I'm not in here most mornings and nights?

JANE

You're a clever girl. I'm sure you'll think of something.

Erin glares at her.

ERIN

Oh man -- did you ever pick the wrong day to fuck with me.

And she leaves.

EXT. HINKLEY FIELD - DAY

Erin's in the middle of the field, taking soil samples, labeling them. Her car is pulled onto the field, doors open. Beth's in the car seat. Katie's on the hood, playing with a doll. Matthew's wandering toward a spigot sticking up at the side of the road. He gets to it, turns it on.

From the middle of the field, Erin sees this.

ERIN

Matthew! Matthew, I said don't touch that.
Now, turn it off!

He looks at her with a glare, then turns it on harder. She runs over, turns the spigot off, and grabs his arm, hard.

ERIN

I told you not to touch that. Ever.

As Matthew tries to pull away, her CAR PHONE RINGS. She drags him over to the car and gets the phone.

ERIN

What?

ED(O.S.)

(pissed off)

You mind telling me why I just got a call from the Labor Board saying you called in a complaint about me?

INTERCUT WITH Ed in his office, standing at his desk, furious, yelling into his speakerphone.

ERIN

I didn't complain about you. I complained about that fat-ass cow who works for you who won't give me my money.

ED

Jesus, Erin, use your brain. This is my firm. I'm responsible here. When you go crying to the fucking Labor Board, they don't come down on Jane, or anyone else. They come down on me.

ERIN

Well, fine. Maybe they should.

ED

What's that supposed to mean?

ERIN

It means, if you're so damn responsible, where the Hell have you been? You see the way I'm treated -- but have you ever stood up for me? Have you ever mentioned to everyone what good work I'm doing? Have you ever bothered saying, hey, Erin doesn't get paid the most cause she has the best tits; she gets paid the most cause she's the best God damn employee I've ever had?

ED

Is that what you want?

ERIN

I want my money. I earned it; I deserve it; and I shouldn't have to beg for it. Cause I bust my ass for you. I watch everything else in my life go straight in the toilet, for you. The very least you owe me is my paycheck, on time.

ED

If I messenger it to your house today, will you turn off this labor board thing?

ERIN

Yes. But you might want to think real hard about the amount. I had to bring my kids with me on the job today, cause I still don't make enough to afford good child care. Makes me think about looking around for a job where I'm appreciated, for shit's sake.

She hangs up.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's late. Erin and the kids come in, all exhausted. Erin is carrying Beth. Matthew throws his coat on the floor.

ERIN

Matthew --

But he just huffs off to his room. As she bends to pick it up, she spots a packet pushed through the mail slot. She rips it open. A CHECK and a SET OF KEYS fall out. She looks at the check. It's made out for \$5,000. A note attached reads "HIRE A NANNY. AND LOOK OUTSIDE. - E."

Erin looks out the window and sees A BRAND-NEW CHEVY BLAZER. She looks at the keys in her hand. Chevy keys. Whoa.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin drives up in the Blazer, DISCO pouring out the windows.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, LAW LIBRARY - DAY

It's dark. Ed's seated at a table, alone. Erin pokes her head in.

ERIN

What are you doing in here, holding a seance in here or something?

ED

I just came in here to think.

ERIN

What about?

ED

About the meeting I had with PG&E today. And about the offer they made.

(beat)

20 million, plus attorney's fees . Take it or leave it.

ERIN

Whoa. No shit.

ED

It's about 50 thousand per plaintiff.

ERIN

Pretty nice number.

(beat)

And 40 percent of 20 million's a really nice number.

ED

(in awe)

Eight million dollars.

ERIN

So what are you thinking?

ED

I'm thinking ... I wish someone else had to make this decision.

(beat)

50 thousand bucks is more than any other California toxic plaintiff has gotten. Ever. But ...

ERIN

... but it won't cover Annabelle Daniels's medical bills.

ED

And it's less than pocket change for PG&E.

ERIN

So don't take it. If you think we can do better for these folks by going to trial, then we should go to trial.

ED

Thing is, trials are risky. They take a long time. Plus, we got the statute problem to worry about, and nowhere near the manpower we need. Taking this deal would just be so much easier.

ERIN

Ed -- I've given up a hell of a lot to do the right thing here. If you start getting all chicken-shitty on me now, and making decisions cause of what's easiest, I'm gonna be real disappointed.

He sits with that for a moment.

ED

It's gonna be hard.

ERIN

What isn't?

ED

We're gonna need help.

ERIN

So we'll get it.

He nods to himself, and looks up at her, his mind made up.

ED

I knew I put up with your bullshit for a reason.

He gets up, to leave. Before he goes:

ERIN

(sincerely)

Hey, thanks. For the car.

ED

You're welcome.

ERIN
You know what everyone's gonna think.

ED
(with a smile)
Nah. They know how choosy I am.

And he leaves.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHENETTE - NIGHT

Erin is giving TANIA, the 20-ish Eastern European nanny, a rushed tour of the house. Erin holds Beth in her arms. Katie's tailing them.

ERIN
So that's the laundry situation. We keep
the detergent in here --

She opens a cupboard. It's full of dishes, not detergent.

KATIE
George moved it to the hall, by the door.

ERIN
We keep the detergent in the hall, by the
door.

She heads out into the main room. Tania and Katie follow.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

They come in to find Matthew watching ESPN on TV. Beth starts fussing.

MATTHEW
Can I play roller hockey this winter?

ERIN
We'll see.

MATTHEW
When?

ERIN
Later.

Erin opens the closet by the door. There's the detergent. Right next to a huge stack of toilet paper.

ERIN
What's that doing here?

KATIE

George said it made it easy to check if he needed to buy any.

Erin starts pulling down toilet-paper rolls, handing them to Tania.

ERIN

These go in the bathroom.

MATTHEW

Randy's mom said yes right away.

The PHONE RINGS. Erin heads for it.

ERIN

Well, Randy's mom doesn't work eighteen-hour days. And Randy's dad didn't leave her. So figuring out who's gonna take who where is a little easier over at Randy's house.

(answers phone)

Hello? ... Oh, yeah, hi. Hang on, lemme get this in the other room --

Erin sets the phone down and hands Beth to Tania, who has to drop the toilet paper to take her.

ERIN

Sorry. It's important.

Erin goes into her bedroom. Katie hangs up the phone.

KATIE

She's always on the phone.

(beat)

It's always important.

INT. ERIN'S NEW CAR - DAY

It's raining. They're driving through Century City. Ed points to the biggest building. Definitely a power center.

ED

That's it. The big one. They've got the top two floors.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, RECEPTION - DAY

It feels more like the lobby of a five-star hotel than an office. Erin and Ed step off the elevator. Erin gawks.

ERIN

Holy shit. Who do they represent, God?

ED

Don't joke. They might. So do me a favor
and behave yourself for once.

(to receptionist)

Ed Masry to see Kurt Potter.

Erin stands there a moment, stunned.

ERIN

Behave myself? What the fuck is that
supposed to mean?

ED

It means, we need these people more than
they need us. It wouldn't be the end of the
world if you made a good impression.

ERIN

Oh, well, gee, Ed, since you obviously think
that's a real stretch for me, maybe you
oughta find a way to make it worth my while.

ED

No. No more extortion. You got the nanny,
that's it. Period. End of discussion.

ERIN

Fine.

As they wait, a YOUNG LAWYER comes through the reception
area. Erin watches him pass, then calls out to him.

ERIN

Scuse me, sir, you got a real nice ass, you
know that?

The lawyer double-takes on her, then retreats into the
office. Erin turns to Ed, smiles. His face says she's won.

ED

What do you want?

ERIN

I got a Amex bill coming that's a hair over
my budget.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD RECEPTION AREA - DAY

THERESA DELLAVALLE, 38, junior partner, comes out into the
reception area. She is everything Erin is not: conservative,
professional, restrained.

THERESA

Ed. Good to see you again.

ED
Theresa, how are you? This is Erin
Brockovich.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD HALLWAY - DAY

Theresa leads Ed and Erin down a long hall of teak desks,
indicates the 35-th floor vista.

THERESA
(to Erin)
Bet you've never seen a view quite like
that, have you?

Erin gives Ed a look -- patronizing bitch. Ed gives her a
look of warning.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD, KURT POTTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Potter is sitting behind his giant desk when Theresa leads Ed
and Erin in.

THERESA
Kurt, Ed Masry's here. And this is Erin
Brockovich, Ed's assistant. Erin, this is
Kurt Potter.

POTTER
(with a sick smile)
Well. Now I know what Ed meant when he
called you his secret weapon.

Erin gives Ed another look. What the fuck? Ed gives her a
firm look back. Behave.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Potter, Ed, Erin, and Theresa and a few other LAWYERS and
PARALEGALS are sitting around the table. Potter is
completely ignoring Erin.

POTTER
When'd they file the demur?

ED
Yesterday.

ERIN
What's a demur?

ED
It's PG&E saying to the judge that we don't
have a case. Their lawyers go --

POTTER

How many counts?

ED

Sixty-nine. We've got good answers to all of 'em.

ERIN

Counts?

ED

Reasons PG&E thinks it shouldn't go to --

POTTER

Who's the judge?

ED

Corey.

POTTER

Good.

ERIN

Why good?

ED

He's got a reputation for doing all his --

POTTER

How long's he gonna take?

Erin's starting to steam at Potter. Theresa sees it brewing, tries to intercede.

THERESA

You know what? Why don't I take Erin down the hall, so we can start in on this stuff?

Erin notices all her files in stacks against the wall.

ERIN

Hey -- those are my files --

THERESA

Yeah, we had them couriered over. And listen, good work. They're a great start. We're just going to have to spend a little time filling in the holes in your research.

Okay, these people are starting to piss her off.

ERIN

Excuse me -- Theresa, was it? There are no holes in my research.

THERESA

Oh, no offense, Erin. There's just some things we're gonna need that you probably didn't know to ask.

ERIN

Don't talk to me like I'm an idiot. I may not have a law degree, but I've spent 18 months on this case, and I know more about those plaintiffs than you ever will.

THERESA

Erin. You don't even have phone numbers for some of them.

ERIN

Whose number do you need?

THERESA

Everyone's. This is a lawsuit. We need to be able to contact the plaintiffs.

ERIN

I said, who's number do you need?

THERESA

You don't know six hundreds plaintiffs' numbers by heart.

Erin just stares at her. Theresa sighs, reluctantly glances down at a file.

THERESA

Annabelle Daniels.

ERIN

Annabelle Daniels. 714-454-9346.

As Theresa starts to write it down:

ERIN

10 years old, 11 in May. Lived on the plume since birth. Wanted to be a synchronized swimmer, so she spent every minute she could in the PG&E pool. She had a tumor in her brain stem detected last November, had an operation on Thanksgiving, shrunk it with radiation after that. Her parents are Rita and Ted. Ted's got Chron's disease, and Rita has chronic headaches and nausea and underwent a hysterectomy last fall. Ted grew up in Hinkley. His brother Robbie and his wife May and their five kids Robbie, Jr., Martha, Ed, Rose, and Peter lived on

(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)
 the plume too. Their number's 454-9445.
 You want their diseases?

Beat. Erin glares at Theresa, indignant.

THERESA
 Okay, look -- I think we got off on the
 wrong foot here --

ERIN
 That's all you got, lady. Two wrong feet.
 In fucking ugly shoes.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

It's still raining. Erin is following Ed to the car. He's
 furious.

ERIN
 She insulted me!

ED
 Bullshit. It was a misunderstanding. But
 instead of handling it politely, instead of
 treating her with respect --

ERIN
 Why the fuck should I respect her?

Ed stops in his tracks, furious. He glares at her.

ED
 Because that's how people treat each other!

ERIN
 Not in my world.

ED
 Gee, I wonder why.
 (opens his car door)
 You can pay your own goddamn American
 Express bill.

On that, he gets in his car, slams the door, and drives off.

ERIN
 Hey! You're my ride!

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, HALLWAY - DAY

Potter and Ed are walking down the hallway, mid-conversation.
 A FEW PARALEGALS follow them with files.

POTTER
 I've also been thinking about the team.
 (MORE)

POTTER (CONT'D)
Responsibilities, who should cover what --

ED

Right.

POTTER

I think we should makes some changes.

EXT. LINWOOD'S DAIRY - DAY

Bob Linwood is in his barn, mucking it out. Theresa is at the edge of the property, trying unsuccessfully to get his attention by yelling and waving her arms. In her expensive shoes, she's stopped short of the cow patty minefield.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A CLIENT FILE as a hand fills in a phone number.

WIDEN TO SEE Erin seated with ANDREW, another lawyer. As she rattles off the information in her memory, he copies it down into the file.

EXT. LINWOOD DAIRY - DAY

Theresa still hasn't gotten Linwood's attention. Finally, rather than ruin her shoes, she picks up a stone and tosses it at the barn. It hits the window and BREAKS IT.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN AND BRENDA'S DESKS - DAY

Erin's desk is empty: no Erin, no files, nothing. Ed comes out of his office and hands Brenda a STACK OF DOCUMENTS.

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED

Brenda types in the number. The recipient's I.D. comes up again, only this time it says: POTTER, ROSEWOOD, HUGHES.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, HALLWAY - DAY

A PARALEGAL carries the documents to Potter's office. On the way, she passes THE CONFERENCE ROOM. Inside, Erin and the LAWYER are about halfway through the stack of files. It's another day. She's still talking; he's still writing.

INT. DANIELS' HOUSE - DAY

Theresa is talking to Rita and Ted Daniels. Annabelle is curled up on the sofa, wrapped up in a blanket. Rita and Ted notice that Theresa doesn't even look at Annabelle.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin is on the phone while she scoops dinner onto her kids' plates. Beth has graduated to high chair and food-throwing.

ERIN

Look, Ted, I know she isn't real warm, but they say she's a real good lawyer ...

INTERCUT WITH

INT. DANIELS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Ted Daniels is on the phone. Rita is next to him.

TED

That may be. But I gotta say, I don't want her coming to the house again. She's kinda stuck-up, and she upsets Annabelle. Now, I hate to be like this, but when she left today, Rita turned to me and asked if we should get a new lawyer.

ERIN

Ted, no -- you don't need to do that. If you don't like Theresa, you don't have to work with her. Ed and I are still here for you.

TED

I called Ed two days ago, Erin, and he still hasn't called me back.

ERIN

Okay, look -- I'll talk to him tomorrow. Don't worry. He listens to me.

On the stove, a pot starts boiling over.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

A regular work day. Erin comes in.

ERIN

(on the move)

Hey, Ros, is Ed in his office?

ROSALIND

No, hunh-uh, he's right there in the conference room.

Erin looks through the conference room's glass wall. There's Ed, sitting on the side of the table facing her, flanked by Potter and Theresa. On the other side of the table, Erin can only see SUITED BACKS.

ERIN

What's he doing in there?

ROSALIND
Some meeting. With PG&E people.

ERIN
PG& -- Are you sure?

ROSALIND
Yup. They must be important, too, cause they came on a special plane.

Erin feels this like a sock in the gut. She stares at the meeting, stunned.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

This band of PG&E lawyers is the oldest and most impressive of all. Ed, Potter, and Theresa are listening to the most senior PG&E lawyer, MR. CORBIN, talk.

CORBIN
... we would enter into binding arbitration -- judge, no jury -- with a settlement to be between 100 and 400 million dollars.

Ed and Potter hear this and think about it.

POTTER
Any preconditions on the settlements?

CORBIN
The plaintiffs have to agree to it unanimously. And they're barred from ever discussing the case with anyone.

ED
100-400 million dollars isn't a whole hell of a lot of money for your company, Mr. Corbin.

HEAD COUNSEL
100-400 million dollars is a great deal of money for your plaintiffs, Mr. Masry.

As Ed mulls this, he sees, beyond Mr. Corbin,

ERIN

staring at him from the other side of the glass wall, her face cold with hurt and anger.

ED
Could I -- just take a brief break here for a moment? I'll be right back.

He gets up and goes out into:

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ed comes out to talk to her. She's so angry she can barely breathe.

ERIN

If you tell me to relax, I'm gonna kick your fucking head off --

ED

Look -- it's just a meeting.

ERIN

No, it is not. You know it's not. That is my work in there. My labor. My plaintiffs.

(reeling)

Jesus, Ed, how could you keep me out of that?

ED

You were still being debriefed, and Kurt thought, maybe if it was just lawyers ...

ERIN

Kurt thought? What about you, Ed? Do you think anymore?

ED

Erin, it's a serious meeting -- they're talking serious money --

ERIN

And what, I'm not serious?

ED

You're emotional. You're erratic. You say whatever comes into your head. And that can be great. That can be a lot of fun, but --

ERIN

Fun? I kill myself for a year, hand you the best case of your life on a God damn silver platter, remind you why you became a lawyer in the first place, and you come up with "fun"? That's my thanks? That's what I get? Well, fuck you.

By now the entire office is watching. As are the lawyers in the conference room.

ED

Don't give me that. Don't get self-pitying
(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

on me. You've gotten plenty for your work. You've been well-paid; you've gotten lots of perks ...

ERIN

Perks? Jesus -- perks?

Erin reaches into her bag, pulls out her cel phone.

ERIN

Ed, If this piece of shit is supposed to take the place of your respect, you can take it and shove it up your ass.

And she throws it at him and storms away. The phone hits the glass wall behind him, CRACKING it. Ed just stands there, watching her go, while the lawyers behind him stare at him through the splintered glass wall.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin storms toward her car, furious. As she opens the door, the ALARM SOUNDS. She fumbles with her keychain, trying to turn it off, but she's too discombobulated and upset to figure it out. With the siren still blaring, she kicks at the car in rage.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin's driving home. As she turns onto her street, her headlights wash across the sidewalk and illuminate a small boy, wearing a backpack, walking the other way. Erin does a double-take.

ERIN

Holy shit --.

She looks over her shoulder, but the sidewalk is too dark. She pulls a U-turn in the middle of the street. A CAR HONKS.

Erin scans the sidewalk, finally sees him again. Holy shit, is right. It's Matthew, wandering the streets at night.

ERIN

Matthew --

She pulls ahead of Matthew and bumps up onto the sidewalk, blocking his path. When he sees her car, he turns and runs the other way. Erin leaps out and follows him.

ERIN

Matthew! Matthew!

She catches up and collars him.

ERIN

God damn it, Matthew. What the hell are you doing out here?

MATTHEW

I'm gonna go live with George.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC is playing. TANIA is on the phone. The receiver is yanked from her hand. She turns to see Erin hovering over her, barely containing herself.

ERIN

If you leave here real fast, I might not kill you.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATTHEW AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matthew's in his bed, facing the wall. Erin sitting on the foot of his bed, near tears. Katie's watching from her bed.

ERIN

We'll work out the roller hockey thing, okay? Whatever you want, we'll work it out. I promise.

MATTHEW

You always say that. Then you go to work and forget you promised.

ERIN

I never forget, honey. I try, real hard. It's just, for some reason, I don't seem to be able to organize things right and -- when it comes to you guys, I end up falling short.

MATTHEW

You never fall short for the work people. I guess maybe you just love them more.

ERIN

Oh, God, sweetheart, no. There's nothing on Earth I love more than you. Nothing.

(beat)

I promise.

She lays her hand on his shoulder, but he shrugs it off and inches away from her.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin is lying in her empty bed, in the lonely, weightless no-man's-land of 2 AM. She sits up, unable to sleep. As she

does, her hand grazes the bedpost. The bed George gave her. She looks at it, then runs her hand along it, feeling completely alone.

She starts to cry. And once she starts, she can't stop.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, DINING AREA - DAY

Erin is at the table, in a bathrobe, drinking coffee, feeling hollowed-out. Across the room, a WATER BUG crawls along the floor. She does nothing about it. The DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

Erin opens it to find Ed there.

ERIN

What, did you come by to gloat?

ED

I came to bring you this.

He holds out her cel phone, now with masking tape holding it together. They stand there a moment.

ED

Is that coffee?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, DINING AREA - DAY

They're sitting at the table, coffee cups in front of them. Ed still hasn't taken off his coat.

ED

I still want you at the office -- I mean, you have a job, don't worry about that.

ERIN

Right. Just not on the case.

It's a big blow. Ed knows it, tries to explain.

ED

If you hadn't lost your temper, I'd've been able to stick up for you.

ERIN

Yeah. But you wouldn't have.

ED

That's not true.

ERIN

It's okay, Ed. I understand. I'm not real easy to be with. For anyone.

EXT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lights stream from within. The dirt parking lot is filling with of cars and trucks; headlights criss-cross each other as people pull in from all directions.

INT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON HANDS. As people stream in, they are each handed a release form with a space for a signature on the bottom.

INT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - LATER

It's sweltering. The room, packed with plaintiffs, hums with horse flies and tension. People are fanning themselves with the release forms. Potter's addressing them from a raised platform. Ed, Theresa, and Andrew are seated behind him.

POTTER

Now, binding arbitration isn't all that different from a trial. It's overseen by a judge. Evidence is presented in much the same way, though much faster.

PLAINTIFF

And who makes the decisions, a jury?

POTTER

No, sorry, I should have mentioned that. There's no jury in binding arbitration. No jury, and no appeal.

Suddenly, adding to the heat is a palpable air of mistrust and unrest that pervades the plaintiffs.

BOB LINWOOD

No appeal? So what happens if we don't like the result?

POTTER

Well -- nothing. But I don't anticipate that as a problem.

TOM BROWN

You don't even know what it's gonna be; how do you know we're gonna like it?

Agreeing MURMURS ripple through the crowd.

POTTER

As I said before, it will definitely be somewhere between 100 and 400 million dollars.

MANDY BROWN

Which? There's a big difference there.

POTTER

With the evidence we have? I'd estimate we'll fall somewhere in the middle.

MANDY BROWN

And then, what, that's divided up at the whim of some judge --

POTTER

Judges don't make decisions based on whim, ma'am. They make them based on precedent and evidence.

The GRUMBLE of discontent has overtaken the room. Potter feels he's losing them.

POTTER

Look. Everyone. Is this a big decision? Absolutely. But I do believe that if you put a little faith in the system, you'll be quite pleased with the outcome.

Ted Daniels gets up from his seat.

TED DANIELS

Mr. Potter, if you knew me from Adam, you'd know that being pleased is not an option for me anymore. Now don't take this personally, sir, but I've never seen you before in my life. I'm not about to put my faith in anything just cause you tell me to.

He drops his agreement form, unsigned, then takes Rita's hand and heads for the door.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Meeting's over. The plaintiffs stream out of the firehouse. Cars start up, headlights flick on. People pull away.

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

The floor is littered with rejected, unsigned release forms.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed and Erin are sitting there. He's told her about the meeting.

ERIN

So what's gonna happen? They're still gonna do okay at the trial, right?

ED

Sure. This just would've been a hell of a lot faster.

ERIN

Why? How long's the trial gonna take?

ED

Five years, maybe, for the trial. Double that for the appeal.

Erin double-takes.

ERIN

Ten -- Jesus, Ed -- ten years?

ED

Yeah. Like I said, trials are long --

ERIN

A year is long, two years is long. But ten years. That's --

ED

It's not that bad, in legal terms.

ERIN

Fuck legal terms. We're talking about human beings here. Sick people. A whole bunch of them are gonna be dead in ten years. They need their money now!

(reeling)

My God, you shoulda -- is that binding arbitration offer still good?

ED

Sure, but -- it doesn't matter. We're moving on.

ERIN

No -- why?

ED

Because it's not valid unless they all sign, and I'm telling you, they hated the idea. Hated it. They didn't even give Kurt the chance to explain --

ERIN

Wait a minute. You had Potter talk to them?

ED

Yeah.

ERIN

Oh, for Christ's sake, of course they hated it. You put that corpse up in front of those people and all they see is another corporate dickhead looking to screw them over.

ED

'Now, look, Kurt's very smart --

ERIN

Yeah, and rich, and famous, and slick. And that's exactly why they hated him. You give me those forms, I guarantee I'll get 'em signed.

ED

I can't, Erin. You know that.

ERIN

Why, cause Potter doesn't want me on the case? Well, I got news for you, Ed. Potter isn't the guy who looked those people in the eye and told them to trust him; you are. This is your case, and you got just one chance to get it right. I promise you, if you fuck it up -- if you don't do right by these people -- you will never, ever forgive yourself.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, POTTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Potter and Theresa are working. His SECRETARY sticks her head in.

SECRETARY

Mr. Masry's office just called. He's not coming in tomorrow. No explanation.

Potter and Theresa share a look.

POTTER

Amateurs.

EXT. CRAPPY APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Erin's Chevy pulls up stops. She gets out, checks the address, then goes to the door.

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Erin goes down the hall, finds the door she's looking for. Rings the doorbell. George answers.

INT. CRAPPY APARTMENT - NIGHT

George hasn't unpacked anything. Erin is standing in the middle of the room. George is very apart from her, arms folded across his chest.

ERIN

I know I got no right to ask, but you're the only one I trust them with.

GEORGE

No.

ERIN

Oh, for Christ's sake, George, is this really better. Are you happier here?

(beat)

Cause I'm not happier. I'm a lot less happy, without you. I miss you. And I know it was a mess -- we screwed it all up. But we should fix it. We should. Don't you think?

He does.

ERIN

I'd start today if I could. But these people are gonna die broke, in pain, with no comfort, unless I do this.

(beat)

I know you, George. If you were in my shoes, you'd do the same thing.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Very early morning. Matthew sleepily dawdles down the hall to the bathroom. Until he hears NOISES from the kitchen.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Matthew peeks his head in, all squinty-eyed, and sees George is at the stove, cooking.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, COPY ROOM - DAY

Erin enters, slips a piece of paper onto the copier, then taps in the number of copies: 635. Presses "START." The machine whirs to life.

EXT. ERIN'S CHEVY - NIGHT

Erin opens the back of the truck and plunks a BIG BOX OF PAPERS inside.

CLOSE ON THE PAPERS. They're the release forms.

EXT. 10 FREEWAY - DAY

Erin's Chevy is bombing down the freeway, DISCO BLARING from her open windows.

ERIN (O.S.)

Okay, so here's what we're gonna do. You're gonna let me do all the --

(stops)

Hey, where the hell are you?

REVEAL Ed's Mercedes toodling along slowly, way behind her.

ED (O.S.)

Behind the truck.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She's on her phone, looking in her rear-view mirror.

ERIN

Well, get in front of it, God damn it. I wanna be able to see you when I'm talking to you.

(beat)

And turn off that old people's music before it puts you in a coma.

EXT. DONNA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Donna's out front, putting in some flowers when Erin's Chevy and Ed's Mercedes pull into the driveway. Erin and Ed both get out. Erin goes to the back of the truck, gets two of the release forms, then heads up to the door.

INT. DONNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin and Ed are sitting in the same sea of needlepoint pillows, talking to Pete and Donna.

PETE

I don't know, Erin. After all we been through -- no jury, no appeal. It just makes me nervous.

ERIN

I understand that. And I'm not gonna force you into anything. If you don't want to sign it, that's fine. But why don't we talk it over a little, cause I'd sure hate for you to turn this down for the wrong reasons.

EXT. DONNA'S HOUSE - DAY

The door opens. Erin and Ed emerge. He's holding two signed agreements. Donna is letting her out.

ERIN

You wouldn't happen to have a little time right now, would you, Donna?

DONNA

For what?

ERIN

Well, I was gonna head over to the Linwoods now. I was thinking -- Mandy Brown really values your opinion. Maybe you could go on over to her place with Ed here, have a chat with her about this.

EXT. DONNA'S NEW HOUSE, - DAY

Ed is getting in his car. Erin is giving him some blank release forms.

ERIN

See if you can get her to go with you to see the other Helendale plaintiffs. And when you're talking to them -- just do like I did. Take your time. Don't push.

Donna comes out of her house in her coat, heads for the car.

ED

Hey, I'm not some shit-for-brains, you know.

ERIN

And don't cuss. A lot of these folks are Christians.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed, Donna, Mandy, and Tom are seated on the sofas. Mandy signs an agreement. Hands the pen to Tom, who also signs.

EXT. LINWOODS' HOUSE - DAY

From outside, we see Erin at the kitchen table with Bob and Ruth Linwood, who are listening intently.

INT. LANDERS' HOUSE - DAY

Ed and Donna are leaving, saying good-bye to Mary Landers. Ed has a signed release form in his hand.

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S CAR - DAY

Two boxes. One has blank forms in it. The other has signed ones. Erin drops a few in -- the top one has Bob Linwood's signature.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - DAY

Erin and Ed are finishing lunch, going over the list of plaintiffs, divvying up the next batch.

ERIN

Remember, Mr. Reddy is deaf in his left ear, so sit on his right.

ED

He is? I never knew that.

ED

(hands him blank forms)

Surprise, surprise. Go.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - EVENING

People are going about their shopping. Rita Daniels is stopped, talking with A FEW MORE PLAINTIFFS.

RITA

I thought so, too, but Erin says a trial could take decades ...

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The signed stack has grown; the unsigned stack has shrunk. Erin drops Mrs. Landers's agreement into the "signed" box.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Erin enters. George is asleep on the sofa. Erin pulls his blanket up around his shoulders before going off to bed.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wee morning light. George is in the exact same position. Erin emerges from the bedroom, dressed for a new day. She's dragging a very sleepy Matthew through the room by the hand.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

Morning. A GROUP OF MEN are arriving at work. Erin's truck pulls up. She and Matthew both climb out. She grabs some release forms from the truck and wanders up to the men.

ERIN

Hey, y'all. How you all doing today?

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

She tosses five more agreements in the signed stack. Beyond her, we can see a FIRETRUCK pulling out of the station.

EXT. FIRETRUCK - DAY

The firemen are driving it, slowly. Matthew is in the front seat. A fireman points something out to him. He presses it. The SIREN goes. Erin smiles. Waves at him. He waves back.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - NIGHT

Matthew is on the hood of the truck, licking an ice-cream cone, while Erin and Ed divide up plaintiffs for the next day.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - DAY

Another day. Erin has set up shop here and is at a table with about FIVE PLAINTIFFS, all reading agreements. MIKE AMBROSINO enters. Erin spots him.

ERIN

Mike! I been looking all over for you.
Come here, I wanna talk to you.

INT. BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The signed stack is getting bigger.

INT. ED'S TRUNK - NIGHT

His signed stack is getting bigger.

INT. BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

Still bigger.

INT. ED'S TRUNK - DAY

Still bigger.

EXT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

CLOSE ON ERIN'S TRUNK. A bunch more forms get thrown onto the signed stack, which is now much higher than the unsigned.

ERIN (O.S.)

Ed's off to Victorville. I'm gonna try to make it out to Barstow and talk to the people out there tonight.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Erin sitting on her bumper, talking on her taped-together cel phone.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Promise you'll stop driving if you get tired. Stay in a motel or something.

ERIN

All right. Bye.

She hangs up. As she turns to get into her car, she finds herself face-to-face with the Man in the Dark Glasses.

ERIN

Jesus!

He's just standing there, a foot away, blocking her exit. Not saying anything. Erin, panicked, glances around. Empty for miles. Her voice comes out in short, frightened bursts.

ERIN

Okay, look -- whatever you're thinking -- it's too late. This thing's gonna happen, and PG&E is gonna lose. So don't go making a huge mistake for no reason.

He still just stares at her. Long and hard. Finally:

DARK GLASSES

If PG&E made someone destroy a whole lot of documents -- would that matter to you?

ERIN

(confused)

Well ... I guess that depends on, uh -- what the documents were.

He's got something heavy on his mind. Erin realizes she can actually control this situation. She regroups.

ERIN

I'm sorry, sir, I didn't get your name.

DARK GLASSES

Charles. Embry.

ERIN

Huh. Well, you know what, Mr. Embry? I was just about to grab myself a bite. Can I buy you something to eat or drink?

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Erin and Embry are the only patrons. Erin's eating a burger. Embry has a beer. He's talking quietly, not looking at her.

EMBRY

I was working in the compressor, and out of nowhere the supervisor calls me up to the office and says, we're gonna give you a shredder machine, and send you on down to the warehouse. We want you to get rid of all the documents stored out there.

ERIN

Did he say why?

EMBRY

Nope. And I didn't ask.

ERIN

Did you get a look at the stuff you destroyed?

EMBRY

Well, it's kinda dull work, you gotta find some way to entertain your mind. So yeah, I took a look.

ERIN

And ...?

EMBRY

There was a lot of dull stuff -- vacation schedules, like that.

ERIN

Uh-huh --

EMBRY

But then there were a few memos about the holding ponds. The water in them. They had readings from test wells, stuff like that.

Erin tries to hide her excitement at this information.

ERIN

And you were told to destroy those?

EMBRY

That's right.

ERIN

When was this?

EMBRY

December 1987.

ERIN

After they told everyone there might be a problem with the water.

EMBRY

That's right.

Destruction of evidence. Pretty big deal. Erin plays it down. Wipes her mouth with her napkin, takes a sip of beer.

EMBRY

Course as it turns out, I'm not a very good employee.

ERIN

What do you mean?

EMBRY

Well. There were a few documents that I somehow didn't get around to shredding.

(beat)

That I kept instead.

Erin stops, mid-bite.

INT. EMBRY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

He's dug out an inch-high stack of documents. Erin looks them over, stunned. Embry is standing apart from her, hands shoved deep in his pockets.

EMBRY

Think it might make a difference in your case?

ERIN

I do, Mr. Embry.

EMBRY

Good. I hope it does. I really do.

There's a desperation in his voice. Erin looks up at him, trying to figure him out.

ERIN

How come you didn't say anything when you found these things?

EMBRY

At the time, I thought, I got six kids, some of 'em want to go to college. I can't afford to lose my job. I told myself I was being honorable.

(beat)

But I wasn't. There's nothing honorable in what I did.

(beat)

Maybe that's why they picked me for the job. Maybe they knew what kind of man I was.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, LOBBY

Erin and Ed step off the elevator. Ed's holding a box. Erin heads for the offices.

ED

Hang on.

She stops. He hands her the box.

ED

This is all yours.

INT. POTTER, ROSEWOOD & HUGHES, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The table is covered with boxes of documents: the anticipated slew of paper that PG&E is sending them. Kurt, Theresa, Andrew and ABOUT FIVE PARALEGALS are sifting through them.

Erin breezes in like sunshine.

ERIN

You know what, Mr. Potter? I completely forgot your birthday this year. And seeing as how you've been so good to me, I think that is a terrible oversight. So what I been doing over the last few days is I've been putting together a present for you.

She plunks the box down on the table. Beyond her, Ed appears in the doorway, to watch.

ERIN

Open it.

Potter opens the top of the box. Looks in.

ERIN

635. They all signed. Every single one.

Theresa moves close to the box, stunned.

ERIN

Oh, and -- I know we've had our differences, Theresa, but I got a little something for you, too.

Erin hands her a manila envelope. Theresa opens it.

ERIN

Internal PG&E documents, all about the hex chrom contamination. The one I really like says, and I'm paraphrasing here, but it says yes, the water's poisonous, but it would be
(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)
 better for all involved if this matter
 wasn't discussed with the neighbors. It's
 dated March, 1966.

Potter and Theresa reel.

POTTER
 Where did -- how did you do this?

ERIN
 Well, you know, what with me not having any
 brains or legal expertise, I just went on up
 there and performed sexual favors. 635 blow
 jobs in five days. Whew, am I ever tired.

And she leaves the room, strutting right past Ed, who smiles
 proudly as Potter and Theresa listen to the CLIP CLIP CLIP of
 Erin's high heels carrying her away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PCH - DAY

One of those days when the bay sparkles like a glitter ball.
 Erin's Chevy moves up the PCH. DISCO music emanates from it.

INT. ERIN'S CHEVY - DAY

Erin's at the wheel. Time has passed -- her hair's a little
 different. She's singing along with "Funky Town."

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin gets out of her new truck, looks, sees the Irvings in a
 little cluster. Donna's under an umbrella. Pete is
 slathering on sunscreen. The two girls zip out toward the
 water. Erin waves. Pete and Donna spot her, wave back.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Donna is standing at the edge of the water, watching her
 girls boogie board in. Erin comes up behind her.

ERIN
 How you feeling today?

Donna turns, sees her. Smiles.

DONNA
 It's a good day. I feel good.

ERIN
 Well, then -- if you're feeling up to it,
 maybe we should talk shop.

Erin sits down on a rock.

ERIN

The judge came up with a number.

DONNA

A number for the whole group, or a number for us?

ERIN

Both.

Donna sits down next to her.

ERIN

He's making them pay the maximum.

Tears of vindication spring to Donna's eyes.

DONNA

Oh, my God.

Erin puts an arm around her.

ERIN

And he's making them give five million of it to you all.

DONNA

Five million dollars?

ERIN

Five million dollars.

She reels. After a breathless beat:

DONNA

I don't even know how much money that is.

ERIN

It's enough. For whatever you need, for whatever your girls need, for whatever your girls' girls need -- it'll be enough.

Donna wipes the tears off her face, then watches the light flickering off her girls playing in the surf.

DONNA

I could put them in a good school.

ERIN

Whatever school you want.

DONNA

And maybe get someone to help with dinner?

ERIN

All three meals, if you like.

DONNA

Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Donna is overwhelmed. Erin pulls her close.

DONNA

Oh, my God.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Now this is where the hot lawyers work. A gleaming testament to power.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Boxes everywhere. They just moved in. Everyone is unpacking at his or her desk. Rosalind is manning the new phones.

ROSALIND

Masry & Vititoe, can I -- shoot!

She lost them. Her reaction indicates this isn't the first time. The front doors open and Erin enters.

ERIN

Hey, Ros. Nice view, huh?

ROSALIND

Yeah, I'm gonna start sleeping here.

(into phone)

Masry & Vititoe, can I -- damn it.

(calling out)

Does anyone know anything about these phones?

Erin heads on down a hall to:

INT. ED'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

A beautiful corner office. Ed is unpacking when Erin enters.

ERIN

Careful you don't spit from here; you could kill someone.

ED

You see your office?

ERIN
Yeah. Yours is nicer.

ED
Oh, okay. Here it comes.

ERIN
Here what comes?

ED
The extortion, the threats ...

ERIN
I wasn't gonna --

He reaches into his breast pocket.

ED
"I can always find someplace else to work.
Someplace that'll pay me a fortune and give
me a view of the French Riviera ..."

ERIN
Ed, I swear, I'm not --

ED
Okay, fine. Fine. You backed me into a
corner again. You're holding me hostage ...

He pulls out a check. Hands it to her.

ERIN
What is that?

ED
Take it.

Erin does. Looks at it. Her eyes bug out.

ERIN
Two million dollars?

ED
The firm took in sixty. That's three
percent. Seemed like a fair bonus to me.
(she's speechless)

Oh, now I suppose you're gonna say it's not
enough. Well, tough, Erin. Too goddamn
bad. Cause this is absolutely, positively
where I draw the line.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin and George are on the stoop. She has a beer in one hand and the check in another. Katie, Matt, and Beth are playing in a sprinkler on the little patch of grass in front of them.

ERIN

I could rent a new house.

GEORGE

Hell, you could buy a new house.

ERIN

With a room for everyone. And a real kitchen. And maybe a pool.

GEORGE

Yeah. And a jacuzzi.

ERIN

Jesus. You think I could get a jacuzzi?

GEORGE

Sure, babe. Whatever you want.

Erin shakes her head in amazement, then looks out at her kids hopping back and forth over the spray of water, happily, healthily, in front of her. Watches them a bit.

ERIN

You know what, George? The truth of it is, I got what I want. Right here. The three of them, healthy. You. That's all I want. Really.

GEORGE

Yeah.

They watch the kids for a long beat. Matt picks up the sprinkler and starts chasing Katie with it. Beth watches, her soggy diapers drooping around her knees.

GEORGE

But you're still gonna buy a totally bitchin' house, aren't you?

Erin smiles big.

ERIN

Fuck, yeah.

FADE OUT.

THE END