

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN

Pilot Episode
"Appointment in Samara"

by
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Based on God's Gift: 14 Days

By
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REVISED



A WOMAN'S HAND

opens a children's book. We note a black lace cuff, a white gold ring set with a rose diamond, and then the hand moves away from the page, revealing a BEAUTIFUL OLD-FASHIONED ILLUSTRATION: a tiny cabin, a mother drowsing with her child in her arms.

WOMAN'S VOICE

While the mother was asleep, the
Shadow of Night took her child away.

In simple expressive animation a shadow passes with a frightening whoosh and the mother awakes in horror to find that her infant has vanished. As the mother races through bare dark woods, her dim lantern barely lighting her way:

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

The mother looked madly for her
child in the dark. In a voice as
ancient as the wind, the Goddess of
the Forest spoke to her.

The mother comes to a tall figure in a crown of leaves.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

"Do you want to find your little
girl? Give me your lovely hair..."

The Goddess's tresses wrap themselves around the mother like tentacles, and when they withdraw the mother's beautiful long hair has been cropped short.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

"...and I will tell you where the
Shadow of Night has gone."

The mother rushes through the woods again, the sky now blood red. A bush of black brambles blocks her way.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Now a spiky bush blocked the
mother's path. In a voice as sharp
as thorns the bush said 'Do you want
to find your little girl? Then
embrace me tightly with your warm
body..."

The mother embraces the needle-sharp branches with her bare arms. Crimson drops of blood appear on the mother's arms and her face is a mask of panic and sorrow.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

"...and I will tell you where the
Shadow of Night has gone."

The Shadow of Night recedes into icy fog, across a black lake.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 Finally she saw the Shadow of Night
 with her child in the distance.

A skull-faced spirit appears beneath the water of the lake.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 "Do you want to find your little
 girl?" asked the Water Spirit, in a
 voice as sad as rain. "Give me your
 pure and deep eyes. Then I will let
 you cross this lake."

The desperate mother's hands go to her eyes.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 Without hesitation, the mother
 pulled out her eyes and flung them
 in the lake.

The mother tosses her eyes into the water and the glowing orbs
 sink down down down to the rocky bottom. Now the CHILD to whom
 the story is being read pipes up.

CHILD'S VOICE
 So did she find her child? Did she
 make the Shadow give her back?

As we PAN from the eyes, DISSOLVE to a real lake bottom, where
 on a carpet of rocks and broken glass there rests a RED CHILD'S
 SNEAKER. For the moment that's the only answer to the question
 we're going to get. Off the drowned muddy sneaker,

CUT TO BLACK

A moment of stillness and silence, then:

CLOSE ON THE SAME RED SNEAKER,

now dry and bright, a girl's hands tying the laces. TILT UP to
 SERENA PRICE, 8, big-hearted and untameable, as:

LAURA (O.S.)
 Serena, where is it?

SERENA
 (busted!)
 Where is what?

INT. PRICE LOFT - DAY

Luxe two-level space in a renovated San Francisco factory.

LAURA PRICE -- high-wire balance of on-the-run news producer, upscale urban hipster and fiercely loving mom -- holds Serena's backpack, emblazoned with images of soulful popstar Devin Blake, trademark angel's wings tattooed on his shoulder.

LAURA

The apology you swore to me you would write by this morning.

SERENA

No fair looking in my backpack.

LAURA

Who said anything about mothers being fair?

(takes out a pencil)

Five hundred words, like the principal said.

SERENA

I'm not sorry I let the rabbits out. How would you like to be locked up all day in a cage so small you couldn't even scratch your nose?

LAURA

What if they'd gotten out of the building, and went in the street, and got hurt?

Serena thinks hard for a moment, then has the solution:

SERENA

I know what the bunnies need. A lawyer! I'll hire daddy to make the school put them on a farm.

TOM (O.S.)

And he'll take the case. Pro bono.

There stands TOM PRICE -- athlete, attorney, alpha male -- Italian racing bike on his shoulder, killer pecs glowing with good clean sweat from his morning ride.

TOM (CONT'D)

We should be proud of this girl, Laura. Eight years old and already a crusader for justice.

LAURA

Justice won't get her back into school without the apology. Do you think Redwood Prep is going to accept somebody who's been

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

suspended?

(grips Serena's shoulders)

You're so smart --

(kisses her)

and so kind --

(another kiss)

and so -- so -- YOU -- I want you to have all the choices in the world. How about five hundred words on why you're sorry for the trouble the janitor had to go to?

Serena looks questioningly to her father.

TOM

Does prosecution agree to speak with school administration about relocating captive livestock to a rural setting?

LAURA

Prosecution so stipulates.

TOM

Does defendant have any further conditions?

SERENA

Yes. Daddy pancakes.

TOM

Oh, there's a fee for that.

He puts out his arms and Serena jumps into them, and pulls Laura into the family hug, which gives Laura the opportunity to whisper sotto, to Tom:

LAURA

I will die before I let her go through the chaos I went through.

TOM

Serena is not you, and you are not your mother.

LAURA

Say that often enough and someday I'll believe it.

She kisses him, and for a moment there is only love and contentment in the loft, then BEEP. Text for Tom: **CNN NOW!!** Tom grabs the remote, turns on the TV, flips quickly to CNN.

NEWSCASTER

...California, where newly installed
Governor DeKeyser wasted no time
shaking up the political landscape.

GOVERNOR PRESTON DEKEYSER, youthful 50's, addresses the press.

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER ON TV

I am seeking -- and I am confident
that I will get -- Assembly and
Senate support to end the moratorium
on executions...

TOM

Looks like a rain check on those
pancakes, monkey girl.

LAURA

Press? Appeals? Cases ripped open?

TOM

For starters.

Serena's kid-vision picks up the unease in her father's eyes.

SERENA

What's wrong, daddy?

TOM

Nothing, angel. Everything's fine.

But his eyes, which say otherwise, stay riveted on

THE TV

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER

...with two women just this week
found slaughtered in San Francisco,
how can we not strike back with the
most powerful deterrent we have?

Reveal that we're now watching this on the small TV in

INT. ALMA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Rent-controlled holdout in the gentrified Mission. ALMA SANTIAGO
-- 50's, weathered by loss, accent heavy decades after
immigrating from Guatemala -- stands by the stove with a spatula
in her hand, frozen in horror at the Governor's declaration.

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER

I am hopeful that the wheels of
justice will be turning by the end
of this month.

Alma drops the spatula and grabs the back of a chair for support, as the TV coverage switches to a NEWSCASTER.

NEWSCASTER

It's likely that nowhere is this bombshell going off louder than on San Quentin's death row. Let's look at a few of the seven hundred men in the crosshairs of the new policy.

As convict mug shots flash on the screen, ETHAN -- 15, at the point on the autism spectrum where passionate enthusiasm for minutia and a gleeful loving nature meet comprehension far below his age -- bursts in.

ETHAN

Grandma. Grandma. Guess how many stars there are in the universe.

ALMA

(covering her dismay)
I don't know, *amorcito*. A million?

ETHAN

No no no. There's a hundred million stars just in the GALAXY, and there's a TRILLION GALAXIES, and you know what that makes? A septillion! Which is one comma zero zero zero zero zero zero zero zero zero --

He breaks off, stunned by a face that has come on the screen: deer-in-the-headlights mug shot of DANNY SANTIAGO. Alma moves quickly to grab the remote and switch it off -- too late.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Why is my dad on TV?

ALMA

That wasn't your dad, it just--

ETHAN

Yes it was. It was my dad.

He grabs the remote, switches it back on.

NEWSCASTER

-- brutally murdered three young women in Richmond ten years ago. The case made a stir because Santiago's own brother was the D.A.'s star witness.

As understanding dawns, Ethan panics.

ETHAN

Are they going to kill my dad?

ALMA

No, sweetheart--

ETHAN

You promised they were never going to. You promised a thousand times.

She pulls him into an iron embrace. With unsettling ferocity:

ALMA

I swear to you, *amorcito*, on my own life. I will never ever ever let them hurt my baby.

Over Ethan's shoulder, she watches the TV. The faces of the damned flying by. REVEAL that we're now watching this in

INT. SAN QUENTIN - DEATH ROW CELL - DAY

DANNY SANTIAGO -- 30's, the same child-like, deer-in-the-headlights expression we saw in his mug shot -- watches the news on his small TV. From cells all around, a CLAMOR of reactions: raging, hooting, howling.

Danny curls onto his cot, away from the TV, to the wall, where he has taped two photos: one of himself holding 5-year-old Ethan, one of Alma in happier days with her husband and two grinning boys. Danny runs his fingers over the photo, and--

EXT. SOUTH OF MARKET DISTRICT - DAY

Alma races madly through the crowd. Stops when she sees Tom, Laura and Serena coming out the gate of The Tannery, brick factory converted to lofts. Fashion-forward manny BARRY, waiting, dramatically covers his eyes at the sight of Serena.

BARRY

Blinded by beauty! Where are my Ray-Bans?

LAURA

She has math tutoring at 4:30 so make sure there's a snack ready for her at home.

SERENA

No more math tutoring. It makes my head hurt. Pleeeeease.

ALMA (O.S.)

Mr. Price!

The family turns to see Alma running across the street, scarily oblivious to the honking, skidding traffic. Tom, stunned at the sight of her, is slammed into a memory of

INT. COURTROOM - TEN YEARS AGO - DAY

Danny, in his 20'S, frightened, lost, quakes at the defense table as D.A. Tom addresses the jury. Alma barely hangs on.

TOM

The defense has made much of Mr. Santiago's limited intellectual capacity. And yet he had the intelligence to lie in wait for Carina Finch... to put on the gloves with which he strangled the life out of Janice Kim... to--

Alma leaps up and throws herself at Tom, howling.

ALMA

Stop stop stop stop stop!

Bailiff rushes to tear her off of Tom, Danny CRIES OUT, judge bangs his gavel. From the height of the madness HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TANNERY - DAY

Tom instinctively moves between Alma and his family.

TOM

You shouldn't be here, Mrs. Santiago.

ALMA

Where should I be? Watching my baby die?

LAURA

Tom --

He gestures reassuringly: I'm handling it.

TOM

If you're not happy with the attorneys handling Danny's appeal--

ALMA

I know my Danny. He could never hurt anybody. Please. Call the judge and say maybe you were wrong. That's all my Danny needs. A little bit of maybe. That's all. Please.

TOM
Mrs. Santiago--

ALMA
What if it was your little girl?
What if you had to watch them stick
her with needles and fill her body
with poison for a crime she never--

As Laura pulls Serena close, shielding her from this --

TOM
I will not have you frightening my
daughter.
(scribbles on his card)
This is the best legal aid firm in
California. Tell them I said for you
to call. Will you do that?

She nods, unappeased, unconsolated. He presses the card into her hand. When he turns away she wipes her hand off, as if his touch were poison. Watches him kiss Serena good-bye, squeezing her so close she squeals in delight. At this painful sight a thought comes to her that makes her tremble.

The Prices leave. Alma turns, looks at the Tannery. Guard booth. High fence. Impenetrable. Moment of despair, then: she sees the bulletin board on the guard booth. Items for sale. Condo meeting. 306 needs a housekeeper, with phone number on tear-off tabs. Alma stares at the notice. Hesitating. Finally crosses herself, tears off a tab, and--

CLOSE ON NICO,

30's, asleep -- correction, passed out -- face crushed into a rumpled pillow, none of which does anything to conceal his innate Latin hotness. Dangerously charming, eternally laughing to himself at the secret punch line to the grand joke of life -- but as with all great fools and jesters, the devilish smile may be the armor which hides unspoken sorrow. There's a KNOCK. Through a closed door--

JENNY (O.S.)
Nico! Are you in there?

Nico's eyes shoot open, and --

INT. NICO'S STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY

Three desks, computers in a tangle of wire. Reformed call girl JENNY, 20's, has a face and figure which could still bring in the cash if she didn't have too fiery a spirit for the clientele. Techno-trickster TREY has been in a wheel chair for

so much of his life that the wheels have become an extension not just of his body but of his very self. Calling through the door--

TREY

The client texted the address, we gotta move it.

INT. NICO'S BACK ROOM - DAY

Makeshift bed on an old leather couch, hotplate, stacks of filing boxes, one fish in a burbling tank. As Nico stumbles to his feet, spoons instant coffee into a mug, fills it with hot water from the tap--

NICO

Takes nerve to sashay in at 11:06 and tell your lord and master to move it.

He downs his caffeine, grabs the shirt he tossed aside last night. Sees lipstick marks on the chest. WTF? No recollection. He tosses it aside, grabs a clean one.

INT. NICO'S STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY

Trey and Jenny are race-snorting parallel lines of coke as Nico emerges from the back room, dressed and together.

NICO

If you degenerates are good to go?

TREY

I get combat pay for today, right?

NICO

You get one less smack upside the head. *Ándale, ándale!*

INT. GUARD BOOTH/EXT. TANNERY - DAY

Security guard/superintendent HECTOR, clicking through CCTV cameras, doesn't see the white van pull up across the street, or Nico, Jenny and Trey issuing forth. But as he looks up he sees Trey speeding his way. He watches in horror as the wheelchair hits a curb and GOES GRACEFULLY AIRBORNE, executes an insane flip and lands on its side. Rushing to Trey --

HECTOR

Dios mio! Are you all right?

TREY

Like you care. Like anybody cares about the disabled in this screwed-up world.

While Hector struggles to get the chair upright, Jenny and Nico slip unseen into the compound. When Hector gets Trey vertical--

TREY (CONT'D)

Would there be a bathroom inside
where I can scrape off the grime?

CRIME SCENE PHOTOS

Dried blood spattered on rough pavement. Torn bloody blouse in a dumpster. Half a shoe print in the dirt of an alleyway. We're in

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Laura in the control booth of PUBLIC WITNESS, popular crime-stopper news show she produces. On the screens: telegenic host TED JAMES, bank of phone operators, pair of WEeping PARENTS.

TED JAMES

For the second time this week, a
young woman with no enemies. No sign
of sexual assault. Nothing stolen.
And what do the police have?

LAURA

Go to the tape.

Image cuts to grainy CCTV of a figure leaving the dumpster. CALL-IN NUMBER scrolls along the bottom of the screen.

TED JAMES

A blurry video. A footprint. We
can't rely on the Governor's tough
talk about executions to frighten
this killer out of killing again. If
the man in the video rings a bell --
if you walked by that alley last
night and saw *anything* --

The phone banks are silent. Laura's assistant MARA is 26, smart, a knockout.

MARA

Laura, look at the mom. Should we go
close?

Laura nods: do it. Image cuts close on the mom, praying silently, tears on her cheeks. Still no phones ringing.

LAURA

Closer. Show us the picture.

Camera zooms in on photo of smiling young woman clutched in the mom's hand. As a phone line lights up, CO-PRODUCER taps Laura's

shoulder, points to a monitor running a feed from another program: Tom outside his downtown office, fielding hostile press. On the crawl: **A.D.A. THOMAS PRICE.**

REPORTER ON TV

No regrets, counselor? If the governor gets what he wants, you have total faith that you won't be sending innocent people to their death?

TOM ON TV

I have total faith in the gifted defense attorneys who've given everything they've got to proving me wrong.

Off Laura, impressed by the sincerity and elegance of her husband's response --

INT. THE TANNERY - ELEVATOR - DAY

Barry rides up with Serena. Door opens.

BARRY

I'm running for your mom's dry cleaning. Don't party too hard.

SERENA

Don't worry. I'll only have a hundred friends over.

He holds the door until she goes into the loft, waits for the nice safe sound of the lock clicking shut, lets the door close.

INT. LOFT - VESTIBULE - DAY

Serena hears voices. Intrigued, not scared, she steps into the great room, where Trey and Jenny are pouring themselves drinks at the bar. Stunned, she backs away, only to bump into Nico, who looks down at her in his eternally amused way.

NICO

What's up, Tiger Lily?

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Laura, getting into her electric BMW i3, gets a call: SERENA.

LAURA

Hi Angel.

NICO'S VOICE

You think you can just not pay?

LAURA

Who is this?

NICO'S VOICE

You better get home quick, with the whole sixty K. Serena's waiting for her mother. And, uh -- cops? Not a great idea.

CLICK. Laura, living her darkest nightmare, punches 911 -- then cancels it, jumps in her car, tears away.

INT./EXT. LAURA'S CAR - DAY

Laura cuts madly through apocalyptic traffic, blasting her horn.

INT. TANNERY CORRIDOR - DAY

Laura flies out of the elevator, into the loft. Party time! Devin video blasts on TV, Serena and Nico -- done up as Devin, angel's wings drawn on his bared shoulder -- jump up and down on the couch and sing at the top of their lungs, candles as mics.

NICO

Get ready to modulate --

SERENA

Aye aye Captain Nico.

NICO

And -- up to the sky!

They go up a note, belting even louder. Jenny sees Laura reacting in horror and quickly turns off the TV. Nico is so carried away with the brilliance of his Devin act that he keeps belting until he suddenly notices the silence. Then he sees Laura, the picture of maternal wrath, and breaks off, just as Barry comes in behind her, sweating, out of breath, horrified.

SERENA

Mommy, Nico says if you borrow money it's bad not to pay it back.

Off Laura, ablaze--

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Laura, Serena at her side, glowers as jumpy, boyish DETECTIVE GLENN "CUPCAKE" KUPOWITZ books Nico, Jenny and Trey. Pouring on the full wattage of his charm--

NICO

Miss, believe me, if it was my kid I'd do the same thing, but truly truly it was an honest mistake.

LAURA

Detective Kupowitz, will you acquaint this man with the concept of wasted breath?

NICO

I'm a licensed investigator legally collecting a debt from a Mr. Joseph DellaGrazia. How is it my fault nobody told my client the guy moved?

LAURA

The only relevant fact here is that he broke into my loft and terrified my eight year old daughter.

SERENA

I wasn't scared for one second. We were having the best time ever.

Laura, granite, takes Serena's hand, pulls her away -- but not before Serena surreptitiously takes Cupcake's card from the rack on his desk and slips it into her pocket.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Captain, I'll save you!

The second they're gone Nico wheels around to the detective.

NICO

Stop thinking with your head, Cupcake. Think with that big bleeding heart. Think what this would do to Jenny's parole.

CUPCAKE

Don't do this, Nico. Not right after they finally coughed up my shield.

NICO

You think you'd have that shield if I hadn't covered your sorry ignorant ass a million times? One teeny tiny tap on "delete", and this never happened.

Cupcake, eternal omega to Nico's alpha, is about to cave, his finger heading for the delete key, when --

ADAM (O.S.)
 What does the guy say in Casablanca?

Cupcake freezes. Cool, guarded LT. ADAM SARNO stands at the door. From the look he exchanges with Nico it's clear there's bad history here.

ADAM (CONT'D)
 'All the precincts on all the hills
 of San Francisco, and you have to
 get hauled into mine?' Something
 like that?
 (to Cupcake)
 What's the illustrious former
 detective being charged with?

CUPCAKE
 Unlawful entry, sir.

Adam shakes his head, then turns to Cupcake: I'm watching you. With a regretful glance to Nico, Cupcake keeps typing, leaving Nico and his friends conclusively screwed.

EXT. THE TANNERY - DAY

Through balcony grating and glass wall we see Alma, broom in hand, talking with new employer MRS. KLEIN: she is inside the castle. As Mrs. Klein magnetizes a list to the refrigerator and leaves, Alma dashes onto the balcony. Two floors down, Ethan does his homework outside the fence, in WONDERPLACE jacket, rusted vintage Leica on a strap around his neck.

ALMA
Amorcito! I have to work late. You
 should go home, it's getting cold.

ETHAN
 It's too quiet at home.

Mrs. Klein CALLS HER NAME from inside. Alma blows Ethan a kiss. As she hurries in, Ethan hears Devin Blake blaring from the BMW pulling up to the gate.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
 Devin!

Laura stops to wait for the gate to slide open. Ethan comes to the passenger window.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
 Is that the live Seattle concert
 version with the alternate lyrics in
 the second verse?

SERENA

Yes! "Right from the start"--

ETHAN

--instead of "With all of my heart."
Ohmygod where did you get the
backpack from the 2014 South
American tour?

SERENA

It came when I got my Gold Level
ticket to Devin In The Park.

ETHAN

You're going to that!?

It's been a tough day, and now Serena is bonding with a teenage
boy who clearly has mental issues: last straw.

LAURA

Excuse me, could you--?

He backs away from the car. As they drive through the gate--

LAURA (CONT'D)

Serena, I'm sure that boy is very
nice, but he's -- he's --

SERENA

He's what?

Alas no 8-year-old-friendly way to voice her concerns.

LAURA

It's beautiful that you're such a
loving, trusting person, but you
need to be more careful around
strangers, okay?

Serena looks back and waves. Ethan "takes a picture" with the
Leica, with a smile that goes straight to Serena's heart.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Big moon over the twinkling skyline.

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walls covered with Serena's ebullient drawings of the people in
her life. Serena can't sleep. She gets up, looks out the window.
Yes: Ethan is still by the gate, cold in his thin jacket.

INT. TANNERY - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As Alma leaves work, buttoning her jacket, she sees Serena walking toward the stairs, carrying her Devin Blake backpack. She stops, afraid of her own thoughts, then follows.

EXT. TANNERY - NIGHT

Alma comes out. Silently follows Serena toward the high fence. She hesitates, as if stopped by an invisible hand. Bitterly, angrily, she addresses God as if he were hovering over her head.

ALMA

Don't you tell me what to do. You gave your son, but I would die for mine.

She keeps going. Closer. Closer. But then: she sees Ethan greet Serena excitedly, and stops. Serena takes a blanket out of her Devin Blake backpack and passes it through the high fence. When she gives him the backpack too he's out-of-his-mind happy. As Alma gets close enough to hear them, Serena hands Ethan a key.

SERENA

In case it gets cold, and you want to come inside and warm up.

Alma can't watch any more. Stepping out of the shadows --

ALMA

I told you not to wait for me.

She goes out, grabs Ethan's hand, leads him away. Ethan tosses a folded-up flyer to Serena. As she catches it Alma looks back. Something in her eyes makes Serena back away from the fence, spooked. When Alma and Ethan have disappeared into the dark, Serena opens the flyer: invitation to a carnival at The Wonderplace School. MUSIC! RIDES! PRIZES! Big smile of happy anticipation, and--

INT. PRICE LOFT - DAY

Laura comes upstairs, carrying cheese and crackers on a tray, to see a sign on Serena's door: **STUDYING. DO NOT DISTURB.** Laura smiles -- that's the spirit! -- and knocks.

LAURA

Snack time, angel. Hardworking brains need protein.

No answer. Another knock. Silence. Laura opens the door and steps into Serena's room -- to find it empty. A moment of anger, then panic, then her eyes fall on the carnival invitation Ethan gave Serena, open on the desk. Off Laura, beside herself --

EXT. WONDERPLACE - DUSK

With an EXPLOSIVE BURST, a bus door opens and Ethan and Serena jump out, into a carnival at a warm-hearted school for kids with developmental disabilities -- student crafts, kid rides, a student band. Running up to HASKELL DEBRAY, kindly, 40's--

ETHAN

Mr. Debray, this is Serena who I told you about! Serena, this is my favorite teacher Mr. DeBray and he always says call me Haskell but nobody ever does they just call him Mr. DeBray.

DEBRAY

We're glad you're here, Serena.

Serena embraces him, which gives him a chance to whisper:

DEBRAY (CONT'D)

Thank you for being Ethan's friend.

Serena beams. The band starts up a song she loves.

SERENA

Dance time!

ETHAN

I don't know how to dance.

SERENA

Don't worry, I know how for both of us. Just do what I do.

They dance, Ethan copying her moves, getting crazy. Time of their lives -- until:

LAURA (O.S.)

Serena!

They turn to see Laura run up, seething. As the fun dies --

LAURA (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea how frightened I was?

(to Ethan)

It would be better if you didn't see Serena again. Do you understand?

Laura pulls Serena away. Ethan follows.

ETHAN

I'm sorry. Please don't leave.

He reaches out, puts a hand on Serena's shoulder.

LAURA

Do NOT grab my daughter! She's eight, and you're what, fifteen? If I see you with her again you will be in serious trouble. DO YOU HEAR ME?

He cowers backward, stumbles over a rock, falls to the ground. The Leica goes flying, lens breaking off from the body. Haskell DeBray, seeing the commotion, rushes toward them.

SERENA

Now look what you did. It was his father's. It's the most important thing in the world to him.

LAURA

I'm sorry it's broken. I'll get it fixed and bring it to the school.

Serena starts to cry. Laura picks up the camera and Serena and takes her sobbing toward the car. Helping Ethan to his feet --

DEBRAY

I'm right here, Ethan. I'm right here.

INT. LAURA'S CAR - DUSK

As Laura drives --

LAURA

Don't ever, ever, do this again.

SERENA

You can talk all you want but I'm not listening.

LAURA

Serena, you're eight years old, the city is a very dangerous--

Suddenly: BANG! A tire blows out, the car skids, Laura jerks the wheel hard to the right and the car screeches to stop at the curb. Impulsively, Laura grabs Serena and hold her close.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

SERENA

I'm fine. That was cool. But don't try it again, okay?

Laura laughs, holding her close.

LAURA

I'm sorry I got so mad. I worry about you, because I love you to smithereens. Do you know that?

Serena nods: she knows it. Laura squeezes her one more time, fiercely, then gets out, sees the shredded tire. She takes out her phone: NO SERVICE. Auugh! Now what? She looks around for a place to make a call. Just as she looks toward a cafe all its lights go on. A glow of welcome in the twilight.

INT. CAFE - DUSK

Candle-lit. Serene. Distant music of a flute. MARJORIE -- lovely ageless 50, aura of sadness about her -- at the counter. Serena drinks steaming cocoa. Laura comes in from the street.

LAURA

They'll have the tire changed in two minutes. Good hot chocolate?

Serena nods. While Laura pays, Serena sees a framed photograph on the counter of Marjorie with a smiling teenage girl.

SERENA

She's beautiful. Is she your daughter?

MARJORIE

Yes.

SERENA

Where is she?

Laura sees a flash of pain in Marjorie's eyes and jumps in.

LAURA

It's such a lovely store. I don't know why I never noticed it before.

MARJORIE

We just opened this week. To celebrate, we're offering everybody a free old-fashioned photograph.

She takes out a vintage Polaroid. Laura puts her arm lovingly around Serena. Serena grins, making a V with her fingers.

SERENA

Peace!

Marjorie snaps the picture, takes it out of the camera. While Laura and Serena watch the image magically appear:

MARJORIE
Would you like to hear a story?

SERENA
I love stories.

MARJORIE
(to Laura)
Is it all right?

LAURA
Of course.

MARJORIE
One morning the servant of a wealthy merchant was in the marketplace in Baghdad when he saw Death looking at him in a threatening way.

LAURA
Excuse me, I'm not sure this is--

SERENA
Mom, it's okay, I'm not five.

Laura looks at Serena, and at sweet lovely Marjorie, and, against her better judgment, nods to Marjorie: go on.

MARJORIE
The servant ran to his master and begged for his fastest horse so he could ride to Samara, where Death wouldn't find him. The master said 'It shall be done!' and away the servant rode, like the wind. Later that day the merchant saw Death in the marketplace and asked why he had given his servant a threatening glance. 'That wasn't a threat,' said Death. 'That was surprise that he was in Baghdad, because I have an appointment with him this evening in Samara.'

Serena is a little stunned, and Laura is done.

LAURA
We'd better get home for dinner.

She turns to go. Marjorie seizes her wrist -- with a hand that bears a black lace cuff and a gold ring set with a rose diamond:

this is the woman we heard reading the tale about the Shadow of Night and the mother's desperate hunt for her child.

MARJORIE

Soon you will lose something more precious to you than anything in the world. Water will take it away. That's your fate, written in stone a million years before you were born.

LAURA

It's getting late, we need to--

MARJORIE

Fate is your enemy. You can't run from her. You can only fight her head on, and you can't win until the price is paid. For one to live, one has to die.

SERENA

Who has to die?

Laura can see how unnerved she is. Taking her hand--

LAURA

We're going now.

Laura quickly ushers Serena out to

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Tow truck leaving. As they get in the car Marjorie comes out.

MARJORIE

Nothing is a coincidence. *Everything -- everyone -- is connected.*

LAURA

Serena, get in the car.

They get in. Laura shuts the door. Hits the gas. We're behind Marjorie, craning up on the car speeding away, as we come to the

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

As Cupcake releases ruffled Nico & Friends from their stay in a holding cell Jenny gives him the kind of hug men kill for.

JENNY

You beautiful genius.

CUPCAKE

Don't thank me, thank the plaintiff's daughter. Look what came in this morning.

He opens a card with **FREE NICO!!!** written on it in bright red marker, haloed with glitter, above an exuberant multi-colored drawing of Nico and Serena dancing on the couch, all ringed in a flowery garland of **PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE**.

TREY

That's some little girl.

CUPCAKE

What are you gonna say to something like that? I got on my knees with the lieutenant and--

Nico holds up a hand, stopping him.

NICO

We can fill in the rest.

CUPCAKE

Screw yourself. But first clear out before somebody changes their mind.

TREY

Before the scent goes cold on Dellagrazia.

JENNY

Write that one off. We gotta get pictures for the other client. Rich wife plus husband problems equals this month's rent.

(gives Cupcake a kiss)

You're a beautiful genius no matter what.

She and Trey head out. Cupcake holds Nico back.

CUPCAKE

Husband problems? Muscling for loan sharks? From you?

NICO

If Tiger Woods took up miniature golf, think what a king he'd be.

CUPCAKE

A king should be in his castle. It's bleak around here without you. Nobody knows up from sideways. Time's gone by, maybe--

NICO

(taking Serena's card)

If you hear from Serena, tell her I owe her one, okay?

He kisses his fingers, touches them to Cupcake's cheek, and--

INT. PRICE LOFT - DAY

Laura comes downstairs in a state of happy anticipation. When she sees nobody around, a beat of disappointment, then: Serena and Tom march in with a pink-frosted cake, singing HAPPY BIRTHDAY at full volume. Laura, beaming, blows out the candles.

SERENA

Make a wish before you say anything or it won't come true.

LAURA

It already has.

SERENA

You say that every year.

LAURA

What else do I say every year?

SERENA

(flawless Laura imitation)

Proper breakfast before one bite of cake young lady.

Laura laughs, struck by a wave of love for her spirited daughter -- and then by a MEMORY of

INT. CAFE - DUSK

MARJORIE

*Soon you will lose something more
precious to you than anything in the
world.*

BACK IN THE LOFT

Laura banishes the ridiculous thought. As she gets Serena's breakfast from the open kitchen Tom turns on the news. COPS INCLUDING ADAM SWARM AROUND A DUMPSTER on Nob Hill where the bloody body of an expensively dressed woman has been found.

LAURA

No...

As she quickly dials on her cell --

TOM

You catch him, I'll put him away.
Deal?

She gives him a thumbs up -- deal -- as:

LAURA

Al, it's me. I want a full hour on
Wednesday... I don't care if there's
no precedent, we'll set one... I'm
not going to argue with you now,
I'll see you when I get in.

As she hangs up, Tom puts his arms around her from behind, kisses her neck.

TOM

Genetics R Us. Crusading mother,
crusading daughter.

LAURA

Speaking of which.

They exchange a smile, and Laura gets a brochure out of her purse, which Tom hands to Serena.

TOM

Does this place look good to you?

Serena opens a glossy brochure for RABBIT RESCUE RANCHO, a bucolic sanctuary in Marin County, and gasps in delight.

SERENA

Ohmygod. You are the best mom and
dad in the world.

LAURA

It's easy to be the best parents
when you have the best daughter.

SERENA

Today gets five gold stars.

She rummages in her book bag, can't find what she's looking for.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Have you seen my journal?

TOM

Next to the TV and I swear on all
the tulips in Holland I didn't peek.

Serena runs to get it, trips and goes flying, knocking a vase off a table. The vase shatters and Serena falls onto broken glass. Laura and Tom rush to her side. Blood drips from her hand onto the wet floor. Tom checks the wound.

TOM (CONT'D)

No glass. I'll get a Band-aid.

Laura, spooked, watches blood dripping into the water.

LAURA

You know what I want to do? Drive
you to school myself. I'm allowed to
be late to work on my birthday.

Off a swirl of blood spreading through water and broken glass--

EXT. TENDERLOIN - DAY

The old skid row has miraculously hung on to its tawdry appeal. Nico, heading home, sees Alma coming. For some reason this is a painful sight, and he ducks into his doorway. But then:

ETHAN

Uncle Nico Uncle Nico Uncle Nico!

He turns back to see Ethan loping up behind Alma.

NICO

Hey Ethan. Hi mom.

So closes the circle, landing our first proof that Marjorie spoke the truth: *everything is connected*. Ethan throws his arms around his uncle. Alma holds up a foil-wrapped pot.

ALMA

We were thinking about how you never
eat right, so we made you *cocido*.

NICO

(gives Ethan some bills)
 You want to run across the street
 and get your grandma a coffee, and
 an agua fresca for yourself?

ETHAN

On the double. On the double.

As he races toward the cafe across the street --

NICO

Yes I heard what the governor said.
 If you came here to --

ALMA

Please Nico. Call the judge. Tell
 him it was dark that night, you're
 not sure what you saw.

NICO

How many times in our lives are we
 going to have this conversation?

ALMA

It's different now. They're going to
 kill him.

NICO

The governor's trying. That doesn't
 mean he's going to win.

ALMA

Do you want to take that chance?
 Tell the judge you aren't sure.
 Please. You know Danny. He loved
 Susanna like you did -- and the
 other women -- he could never --

NICO

(for the thousandth time)
 The blood on the clothes under his
 bed. The knife. The confessions. You
 have to find a way to live with the
 truth. You're killing yourself.

ALMA

(breaking)
 My two sons -- I love you both --

NICO

Then why -- my whole life -- why do
 you act like you've only got one?

ALMA

Could you at least -- visit him --
once -- before --

This request is more painful to Nico than the first. Before he has to answer, Ethan comes bounding back with Alma's coffee.

NICO

I gotta go, E-boy. It's always good
to see you.

He kisses the top of Ethan's head and goes into

INT. NICO'S STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY

As he heads to the back, in agony, he's slammed into a MEMORY of

EXT. RICHMOND SHORE - TEN YEARS AGO - DAY

10-years-younger Nico and impossibly beautiful Susanna chase butterflies in tall grass, goofing around. Susanna tackles Nico, pins him, refuses to let him up until he kisses her. Before their lips can meet we're back in

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Nico goes into the back room and slams the door, pressing his back against it, trying to block out the ghosts. No luck: he's back in

EXT. RICHMOND - 10 YEARS AGO - NIGHT

Nico walks through dim moonlit woods. Sees a dark figure carrying Susanna's limp body.

NICO

Susanna!

A beam of moonlight reveals her blank staring eyes and the blood on her face and neck. He races toward her. The dark figure turns. It's Danny. In a madness--

NICO (CONT'D)

What did you do?

DANNY

(sobbing)

I'm sorry, Nico. I'm sorry. I killed
her. I killed her. I killed her.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Nico slides to the floor, shattered. But the memories aren't done with him yet.

FLASHBACK - INT. COURTROOM - 10 YEARS AGO - DAY

Nico on the stand at Danny's trial, being questioned by Tom.

TOM

When you saw your brother carrying
the dead body of your fiance, what
did he tell you? Who did he say was
responsible for Susanna's death?

Nico sees Alma looking at him in anguish and horror. He sees
Danny at the defense table, eyes filled with love and sorrow.

TOM (CONT'D)

Mr. Santiago, what did your brother
say when he you saw him carrying the
body?

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Nico wrenches himself out of the memory: beyond that point he
can't go. Off Nico, demolished --

INT. LAURA'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Serena plays around with the apps on the dashboard screen, finds
pop music, cranks it up, drums happily on the door.

LAURA

I think I just hit my Top 40 limit.
How about some quiet time?

Serena turns it off, is upset for a moment, then --

SERENA

Omygod I almost forgot your present!

She takes a pen with a ribbon around it out of her bookbag.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Looks like a regular normal pen,
right? Wrong! Press the button, and
it's a laser death ray.

She flashes a light on the pen, making death ray sound effects.
Laura is delighted. Suddenly Serena CRIES OUT and Laura looks
forward just in time to HIT THE BRAKES, inches from hitting a
GIRL ON A SKATEBOARD.

The girl falls. Papers fly from the visor onto Serena's lap.
Laura leaps out, runs to the girl. Serena picks up the papers,
sees the Polaroid from the café: making the peace sign, Laura's
arm around her. Makes her smile. The girl skates away, unhurt.

Laura gets back in the car. Shakily starts driving. Serena puts music on: jangling upbeat pop. Laura switches to the news.

NEWSCASTER'S VOICE

Governor DeKeyser rushed from Sacramento to the scene of this latest brutal slaying, where he repeated his commitment to --

Laura switches it off. Takes a breath, trying to calm her shattered nerves.

SERENA

It's okay, mommy. Nobody got hurt.

LAURA

Thank you, angel.

A WOMAN'S HANDS

flip through MOTEL CANDIDS of a beefy Bengali guy getting steamy with a dyed Bengali blonde in too much mascara.

INT. TENDER TRAP - DAY

Tenderloin dive bar/hipster hang. Nico, in a brooding mood, nurses iced coffee as ANYA -- Bengali, same dye as motel girl, less mascara, 10 years older -- finishes looking at the pics.

ANYA

My husband always was a passionate man. A bastard, and a criminal, but passionate.

She gives Nico an envelope of cash. That would be the end of it, but Anya isn't ready to go. To the bartender --

ANYA (CONT'D)

Two double cosmos.

NICO

I better stick with iced coffee. When I go any harder things have a way of getting... unpredictable.

ANYA

Maybe I'm in the mood for unpredictable.

NICO

That's revenge talking.

ANYA
 (puts a hand on his chest)
 You underestimate yourself.

NICO
 A sin I've never been accused of.

The cosmos arrive. Off Nico, better judgment fading fast --

CLOSE ON NICO

waking up in full sunlight. As he cringes from the assault of brightness, reveal that he's in A PSYCHEDELICALLY ORNATE BOUDOIR, naked Anya asleep beside him. He sits up, freaked out: he has no idea where he is. Anya stirs, reaches for him.

ANYA
 Sing me the song again. About the umbrellas.

NICO
 Song. Umbrellas.

ANYA
 (pulls away, hurt)
 You don't remember.

Nico hears footsteps. Male Bengali voice. With a smile--

ANYA (CONT'D)
 Don't worry, it's just my soon-to-be-ex-husband.

This woman is insane. Footsteps approach. Nico grabs his clothes and shoes, leaps to

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

He vaults the railing, lands in the garden with an expert roll, hears BENGALIS SCREAMING AT EACH OTHER as he races away. Then: BULLETS, pinging off brick, shattering a lantern! Nico vaults the eight foot wall, and --

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Laura works, watching NEWS FOOTAGE of a WITNESS.

WITNESS
 I know it was her, I remember thinking bitchin' skull on that shirt, in, like, diamonds -- in this club in the Mission, I don't remember which one, I was pretty
 (MORE)

WITNESS (CONT'D)
wasted, but it began with a P -- I
was there from ten to like eleven --

Laura's phone rings. ID: TOM. Answering --

LAURA
Hey.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Tom walks quickly through downtown. INTERCUT.

TOM
Don't hold dinner. Motions to re-
open are now cresting sixty two.

LAURA
Oh honey. How late do you--

There's a BEEP. Laura checks the ID.

LAURA (CONT'D)
It's school. I'll call you right
back.
(clicks over)
Hello?... This is she.

As she listens, her face darkens.

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Serena drawing at her desk. Laura steps in.

LAURA
Where were you when Mrs. Scanlon was
giving the math test today?

SERENA
I told her. I was in the library
reading and I forgot it was time for
class.

LAURA
And I'm supposed to believe there's
no clock in the library, and you
didn't once look at your phone.

SERENA
I couldn't take the test. I was
afraid I'd get an F and you'd be mad
at me.

LAURA
I'm not mad. I'm disappointed.

Serena moans in dismay: there's nothing more painful than a mother's disappointment. Laura sees her sorrow, but knows she has to stay firm.

LAURA (CONT'D)

There's no excuse for skipping class, and not telling the truth. I'm grounding you for a week. You'll come to the studio after school, and I can help you with your homework.

SERENA

A week? But--

Her eyes go to the calendar. The glitter-circled ticket.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Please mommy. Please please please.

LAURA

(taking the ticket)

I'm sorry, Serena. This is something you need to learn.

SERENA

Noooo! You can't take the concert away! Pleeeeeeeease!

LAURA

You have a lifetime of concerts to go to.

SERENA

You're not the best mom, you're the worst! I can't see Ethan and I can't go to the concert and you didn't even fix the camera yet and I HATE YOU!

She throws herself on the bed, sobbing. Off Laura, in a mother's anguish, praying she's doing the right thing --

EXT. CAMERA STORE/INT. LAURA'S CAR - DAY

Through the window we see Laura talking to the OWNER. She comes out, gets in the car with sullen Serena. As they drive --

LAURA

It'll be ready in two days. I'm sorry I didn't bring it in sooner.

Serena puts on headphones, turns up the volume on her iPod. Laura, upset, drives on. But the road is blocked: flashing lights, swarm of cops. She jumps out, flashes her press badge.

LAURA (CONT'D)
What's going on?

COP
Call girl. If it's not the same
killer, somebody's copying.

Stretcher passes. Glimpse of pink wig, fake fur jacket, blood.
Laura glances quickly to make sure Serena didn't see, and --

INT. STUDIO - DAY

NEWS DIRECTOR at his desk. Laura strides in, on the warpath. He
opens his mouth to speak but before any sound comes out --

LAURA
I need the full hour to land this,
Al. So there's only one question
here: how you're going to feel when
body number five turns up and you
didn't do everything you could to
keep it from happening.

Off the look in his eyes -- she's got him -- launch into a

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE NEXT THREE DAYS

Laura and Mara pore through gruesome photos, Serena doing
homework at her side, headphones on... At San Quentin Ethan and
Danny grip each others' hands, Alma weeps... Laura and a tech
blow up a grainy tape of the killer leaving a dumpster in the
rain... Nico, coming home, looks quickly around to make sure
nobody's watching before he goes inside... Laura tries to read
Serena a bedtime story, but she turns angrily away. End in:

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

A few minutes before broadcast. Madhouse, Laura doing ten things
at once plus supervising Serena's homework. To a P.A.--

LAURA
--do NOT let the witnesses talk to
each other --
(to Serena)
--watch out for the decimal point --
(to wardrobe)
--put a black tie on Ted, he looks
like a Christmas tree--

SERENA
Mom.

LAURA
What, angel?

SERENA

Please can I go to the concert?

LAURA

I'm sorry, you can't. You'll go to the next one.

Phone rings: Barry. She quickly answers.

BARRY (O.S.)

It's me, I'm in front.

LAURA

I'll send Serena down with Mara.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mara, on the phone, in tears.

MARA

I went to the clinic. It's taken care of. So don't worry, nothing's going to trouble your perfect life. Is that enough? Are you happy now?

Laura bursts in, Mara spins around, quickly hanging up and trying to wipe away the tears.

LAURA

Mara, what's wrong?

MARA

Nothing. I'm just a little stressed. Is Barry here for Serena?

LAURA

Don't even think about that. I'll have somebody else take her down.

MARA

No, I want to. Anything to get out of my head.

Through the glass, Co-Producer signals: on in 30.

LAURA

We'll talk after the show.

They hurry back to Serena.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Good-bye, sweetheart. I'll be home late, but I'll come in and kiss you.

Serena holds up her homework, tears it in half.

SERENA

I never want you to kiss me again.

She stalks away, with Mara behind her. Laura is desperate to follow but Ted is in front of the cameras.

CO-PRODUCER

Five -- four -- three --

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Mara comes out with Serena. Barry waits in his Mini, reading a magazine. Serena smiles, runs toward him. Mara gets a call.

MARA

(heading back inside)

What do you want from me? You've sucked me dry, there's nothing left.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

On the screens, Adam stands at Ted's side. Computer sketch fills the screen behind them.

TED JAMES

(straight to camera)

Look hard at the sketch. Square chin. Small eyes. Hair straight across the forehead. Captain Adam Sarno of the SPD is here to follow up on every lead you give us.

LAURA

Tighter on the sketch.

At the bank of on-screen operators, calls start to come in. Laura's phone vibrates: Barry.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Yes?

BARRY ON PHONE

I thought you were sending her down.

One of the operators, alarmed, is saying something to Ted, off-mike. A huddle of alarm quickly grows around them.

LAURA

I did. With Mara. Ten minutes ago.

BARRY ON PHONE

She never showed.

Before Laura can get upset at Serena, she sees that the huddle around Ted and the operator has grown into a frantic hubbub.

LAURA
Hook us in. Line eight.

A MECHANICALLY DISGUISED VOICE booms out in the studio.

MECHANICAL VOICE
You think you can catch me with that pathetic portrait? I only wish I was that good looking.

TED JAMES
30% of our calls are pranks. How do we know you're who you say you are?

MECHANICAL VOICE
The news didn't mention the sapphire ring I took from the second girl.

Ted looks to Adam, who nods in confirmation.

MECHANICAL VOICE (CONT'D)
I called to say I got bored with young women. Or maybe they weren't young enough. Either way, I'm on to something new. Talk. Go on. Talk!

A moment of silence, then, in a voice full of fear:

SERENA'S VOICE
Mom... mom...

Laura freezes in horror. The phone drops from her hand. As she races out of the control booth and bursts into the studio --

MECHANICAL VOICE
So much for the death penalty as a deterrent, Mr. Governor. Ready to have a child's blood on your hands?

Laura, on camera now, runs to the phones, grabs the receiver on line eight.

LAURA
Serena!

CLICK. Silence. The killer has hung up.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. STUDIO - SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

Tom, Laura, Adam, Mara, Barry. Police comb security footage on multiple screens. Laura and Tom in a state of terror beyond imagining. Mara and Barry in pieces.

MARA

I should have waited till I saw her
with Barry.

BARRY

How could you know? There she is,
running to me, with that smile of
hers.

On one screen, Serena runs happily away from Mara. On the screen to the right, Barry reads his magazine. Once Serena disappears on the left she never appears on the right. The left rewinds, replays Serena running toward Barry.

LAURA

Stop. Hold there.

The image freeze-frames on Serena about to leave frame. Laura touches the screen, weeping at this last sight of her daughter before she vanished into the night.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Nico slouches out of a bar. Sees a giant public screen flashing images of missing Serena, weeping Laura. He stops, swept with sadness. It's too painful. He starts to leave, but freezes: Headed his way is ANYA'S HUSBAND RASHED, even less appealing in the flesh than in the candid, with a pair of cigarette-smoking Bengali criminals, ASHIK and ZAHIR. Nico deftly ducks away, melting into the crowd, and--

INT. PRICE LOFT - DAY

Cops, Adam, Laura, the phones wired for recording, everybody on edge, waiting. The phones dead silent. Laura and Tom grip hands, hanging onto each other for their lives.

INT. ALMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan channels his fear into intently cutting a photograph of Serena out of the newspaper and pasting it on a board, with other pictures of her printed from the internet. He cuts out the headline: **ZERO LEADS IN ABDUCTION.**

INT. PRICE LOFT - NIGHT

Cops man the silent phones. Laura and Tom haven't eaten or slept in 24 hours. PHONE RINGS. Cop grabs it. Laura gasps in a breath of air.

WOMAN'S VOICE ON SPEAKER
 Congratulations! You've been
 selected to win a free holiday in --

The cop hangs up. Laura can't take another second. She races up the stairs. Tom goes after her.

INT. SERENA'S ROOM - DAY

Laura hunts frantically through drawers.

TOM
 What are you looking for?

She's too determined to answer. She tries to open the treasure box on Serena's desk but it's padlocked and she can't pull the lock open.

LAURA
 He's never going to call. It's not
 about money.

She clears mess off the bulletin board and there it is: a photo of Tom and Laura embracing Serena between them. A radiant moment of pure family happiness.

LAURA (CONT'D)
 Take me to the studio.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

A FLOODLIGHT SWITCHES ON, revealing Laura in the center of an empty dark stage, blow-up of the family photo behind her. In the control booth: Tom, News Director, Co-Producer, police. A signal to Laura that she's on the air. Long, painful pause as she gathers her courage, then, straight to camera--

LAURA
 I don't know why you took my Serena.
 Maybe you wanted to prove how
 foolish and arrogant I was for
 thinking I could catch you. And I
 was. I know that now. I was. I'm
 talking to you tonight because
 you're somebody's son, and maybe
 somebody's father. Because maybe
 there's somebody who loves you and
 somebody you love.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Crowd gathers below a giant screen in Union Square.

LAURA ON SCREEN

Our Serena doesn't always do what's best for her, but she's a good child. A good person. Whenever she sees anybody who's lonely or sad or hungry she reaches out to them. She tries to help. If you're with her you know how loving and kind she is. She's a beautiful soul. She's our baby.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

In the catwalks, tough grips and electricians are moved by the raw emotion of Laura's plea.

LAURA

Please don't turn the lights off when she goes to sleep. She's afraid of the dark. And please don't hit her or hurt her.

In the control booth Tom weeps helplessly.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I've been hard on her, and scolded her, and I'm sorry now for every time I've done it, because she was only being her beautiful self. She's never been hurt. She's only known love.

(breaking)

Please have mercy on her, and send her back safe and alive. And if you can't -- if you can't let go of your anger -- take me, and do whatever you want with me. My little girl did nothing wrong except be born to a foolish and arrogant mother. Take me instead.

(sinking to her knees)

Take me, and send Serena home to her father, who loves her. Please. Please. Please.

She's crouching on the ground now, her face in her hands, sobbing uncontrollably. In the booth, Co-Producer and News Director exchange an uneasy glance -- going too far? Then: technician next to the News Director reacts in shock to a feed coming in on another screen. Others notice it, too, also. Some

glance at Tom, who hasn't yet seen it. He senses something, turns, grabs the wall for support.

In the studio, Laura looks up, trying to collect herself, notices people in the control booth looking at another screen. Catches a glimpse of what they're seeing: the edge of a jacket. Her blood freezes. She sees panic in Tom's eyes.

LAURA (CONT'D)
What's on that screen?

News Director shakes his head urgently to Co-Producer: don't!

LAURA (CONT'D)
Tell me what you're looking at!

The grips, the crowd in Union Square, the technicians in the control both -- everybody is watching. They can't refuse her. The Co-Producer signals, and a screen in the studio switches to the incoming feed. A Newscaster stands in a park.

NEWSCASTER
...the possibility that the jacket,
book bag and single red tennis shoe
found in Golden Gate Park are the
items Serena was wearing when she
was abducted, and that the stains
found on the jacket are human blood.

Laura goes to pieces. It's wrenching. Raw. Intolerable. The News Director makes an urgent throat cutting gesture: enough!

CO-PRODUCER
Prep the preview for the 8 o'clock
feed. We're cutting.

The team goes into action, they're about to make the switch, when New Director holds out his hand: wait! Laura has risen to her feet, tears drying, eyes blazing. Straight to camera, with growing strength, her voice a blade of cold steel:

LAURA
Listen carefully to what I'm going
to say. If you harm one hair on my
daughter's head, I will follow you
to the end of hell. I will rip your
eyes out of your head. I will drink
your blood from your skull and it
will be sweet wine to me. So if you
want to live, Serena had better come
home alive.

Off this searing intensity, a hard jarring CUT TO:

INT. THE TENDER TRAP - NIGHT

Pounding music, a happening night. At the bar with an iced coffee Nico strains to hear the Governor on TV.

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER

The killer announced his crime as a personal challenge to me, and I vow, as a father, that I will stand with this anguished mother and rise to that challenge. I will make certain that this monster and all who take the lives of innocents pay the highest price.

As Nico reels at what that means for his brother, a ROWDY DRUNK pushes a whiskey toward him.

ROWDY DRUNK #1

Join us, friend. We're toasting the hangman.

ROWDY DRUNK #2

May he be up to his noble task.

Nico's hand is so tight on his glass that we're afraid it will shatter in his hand, but a smile stays rigid on his face.

NICO

Thanks so much, I think I'll pass.

Then: the news replays the peak of Laura's breakdown.

LAURA

...who loves her more than anything in the world. Please. Please...

The rowdy drunks crack up, mimicking Laura's weeping face.

NICO

Help me out here. I'm trying to find the right word for something and I'm a little stumped. Are you guys lowlifes, or assholes?

ROWDY DRUNK #3

Bitch's fault for not keeping a better eye on her kid.

The drunks high five and that's it for Nico. He downs the whiskey he just refused and lunges at the nearest guy -- who turns out to have not two but FIVE pals. They grab Nico and carry him out to

EXT. ALLEWAY - NIGHT

Nico struggles away from them and attacks in full Muay Thai kick-boxing glory, a better fighter than any of them. Off the kicking whirling blur of a brilliant one-against-six stand-off --

INT. PRICE LOFT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Laura lie side by side, clothed, a million miles from sleep, in fear beyond imagining.

CLOSE ON NICO

passed out on his couch, bloody, cut up. We're in

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

He comes to, nauseated. To the lone fish in his fish tank --

NICO

I told you not to let me drink.

Suddenly sick, he rushes to the bathroom to puke. No such relief. First he notices that his socks and the bottoms of his pants are soaking wet. Then he sees blood on the cuff of his shirt. What the hell? There's a banging on the door. As he staggers to open it--

TREY (O.S.)

We tracked down DellaGrazia. Mr. Sixty Grand. He's got a flight in an hour, we gotta--

Nico opens the door. Jenny GASPS at the sight of him, and --

THE SAME - A MINUTE LATER

Nico propped on pillows, Jenny daubing at his cuts, in a manner which tells us she feels more for Nico than she'd want him to know.

JENNY

After you went berserk on the lowlifes, nothing?

NICO

Upside of being a black-out drunk: less to regret.

TREY

After one shot? You're losing your touch, bro.

NICO

I must have gone back in the club
for a victory round.

(looks at the blood on his
shirt)

Or first aid.

JENNY

At least you always manage to find
your way home, no matter what.
You're a miracle of nature.

TREY

Freak of nature. Play doctor later.
We blow this again, the client takes
out a hit on us.

NICO

Second that.

Nico pushes Jenny away, rolls over to get his shoes, CRIES OUT
at a pain on his rear end.

TREY

Literally got his ass kicked.

NICO

No, there's something sharp --

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a hair clip -- hand-
painted pink smiling face with rhinestone eyes. WTF?

TREY

Come on, you can put your shoes on
in the car!

Nico grabs shoes and tosses the hairclip into the aquarium. As
it sinks past the indifferent fish, MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

A FISHERMAN'S LURE

drops through the dark water of San Francisco Bay, down down
down to where ONE RED SNEAKER rests on the muddy bottom. The
hook catches on the shoe.

EXT. NORTH BAY - DAWN

A lonely FISHERMAN, excited to have a bite, reels in fast. When
he sees his catch he tosses the shoe into his boat, dejected.
Then: there's a bubbling sound and a small body floats to the
surface of the water.

A MAN'S FINGERS

flip through pictures on an iPad: a child's drawings scrawled on the rough wall of an abandoned shack. We're in

INT. POLICE CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Tom and Laura, shell-shocked, look at the pictures Adam somberly shows them, chalk drawings on the rough walls of a shack. Cupcake drives, fighting tears and almost losing

ADAM

Forensics is telling us she was held in the shack for at least a few hours, a hundred yards from where she drowned.

LAURA

(in desperate denial)
If it's her. We don't know it's her.

ADAM

Do these look like her drawings?

LAURA

Not at all. She's never drawn anything like that.

ADAM

Are these her things?

He flips to pictures of bagged evidence: single piece from a jigsaw puzzle, a bright yellow transformer toy.

TOM

No. That's not her toy. And she was never much for puzzles.

LAURA

Never. She hates puzzles. It's not her. It's a different girl.

ADAM

If it is her, would you have any idea why her fingertips would be stained red? It's not blood.

LAURA

No. There's no reason at all. Why are you making us identify a body that obviously isn't Serena?

Adam and Cupcake exchange an agonized glance: they know the body they're going to see is Serena. The car stops. They're at

EXT. RICHMOND SHORE - DAY

Laura is first out of the car, in a rush to prove that it's all a mistake. Mob of reporters, cops, onlookers. Inside a cordon of yellow tape, EMT's carry a stretcher on which a sheet covers a small figure. As Laura approaches, one pale hand falls clear of the sheet, fingers stained a pale red.

Laura would know her daughter's hand from all the hands in the world. She runs to the stretcher, seizes the sheet-wrapped body from the EMT's and falls to her knees, cradling her child, with a shriek of anguish we hope never to hear again in our lives. Tom kneels beside her, his agony equal to hers. Off the demolished family--

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

Governor DeKeyser, WIFE at his side, somberly faces the press.

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER

It is tragic that it took the death of Serena Price to end the foot-dragging in Sacramento.

EXT. ALMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Alma on her knees in front of the TV, rocking and moaning.

GOVERNOR DEKEYSER ON TV

But I am grateful that the legislature has acted at last. In accord with their historic vote, I instructing the Department of Corrections to recommence executions, effective immediately.

EXT. THE TANNRY - DAY

Hector watches Ethan standing at the fence, looking up at Serena's balcony.

HECTOR

The little girl went to heaven. You won't find her here anymore.

ETHAN

There's no such place as heaven. The Hubble telescope has seen all the way to a galaxy of blue stars which is thirteen point two billion light years away but it never saw heaven so she can't be there. Which means she's here. She's right here. She's right here.

He stands gripping the bars. Looking up. Waiting.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. SERENA'S ROOM - DAY

Laura, at the farthest reaches of grief, picks clothes for Serena to be buried in. As she lays a dress on the bed the treasure chest on the desk catches her eye, lock now hanging open. Puzzled, she opens the box, picks through keepsakes. Finds Serena's journal, opens, leafs through, comes to the final entry. As she reads--

SERENA'S VOICE

My mother's right. I mess everything up. I'm disappointing.

The pain of this is literally more than Laura can bear.

LAURA

I'm sorry, angel... I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TANNERY - DAY

Time has passed. A rainstorm lashes the building.

INT. SERENA'S ROOM - DAY

Rain beats hard on the windows. Laura sleeps in her clothes on Serena's bed, pale, haggard. Noise startles her awake: Tom -- a different man, the light gone out of his eyes -- packing Serena's clothes and toys into a box.

LAURA

What you are doing?

TOM

I can't see them every day.

LAURA

Then don't come in here.

TOM

They should go to children who can use them.

LAURA

You have no right to make that decision on your own.

He packs the last things, picks up the box, stands.

TOM

I can't do this the way you're doing it.

LAURA

Your way is better? Three months and grieving time is up, time to act like she never existed?

TOM

Is that what you think I'm doing?

He turns to go. Laura lunges, tears the box out of his arms. The contents fly everywhere. She attacks him, swinging, punching wildly, and finally pushes him out the door, falls to her knees and desperately gathers Serena's things together.

INT. TOM'S CAR - DAY

Tom drives in the storm. Steady. Collected. Then suddenly lets out an ANIMAL SOUND OF RAGE AND GRIEF that goes on and on.

INT. SERENA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. Laura, in the same spot we left her, rocks in the darkness, catatonic. Phone rings. INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tom sits in his dark office, alone, listening to Laura's phone ring and ring. He's about to hang up when he hears Laura pick up. She's too numbed and lost to speak, but he can hear her breathing. After a beat --

TOM

I'm staying at the office until I find my own place. I know this isn't fair. But every time I look at you I think: she sent Serena downstairs with her assistant when she knew there was a killer in the city. A killer her show was going after.

LAURA

Every time I look at myself I think the same thing.

TOM

I'm sorry you have to feel that pain. I'm sorry for both of us. We need to find our own paths to whatever our lives are going to be.

Laura, lost in her agony, seems barely to have heard him.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Nico sleeps, half clothed, in a tangle of sheets. PHONE rings: ALMA. He turns away, bleary, hung over. Phone keeps ringing. He answers, barely awake.

NICO

Mom.

All he hears is sobbing. Alert now --

NICO (CONT'D)

Is Ethan all right?

INT. ALMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan rocks, in his own world. Alma is sobbing so convulsively that all she can get out are incoherent sounds. INTERCUT.

NICO

Mom, mom, I can't understand what you're saying.

ALMA

Today -- today --

NICO

Today what?

ALMA

They said no -- the appeal --
they're killing him -- today --
please come -- for Ethan -- please --

The thought is agony, but:

NICO

What time?

ALMA

Seven -- seven o'clock --

NICO

There's no time for me to pick you up. I'll meet you there.

ALMA

Thank you. Bless you. Bless you.

NICO

I need to get dressed. I'll see you.

He hangs up. Alma embraces Ethan, rocks him.

ALMA

Uncle Nico's coming. He's coming.
He's coming. He's coming.

INT. NICO'S STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY

Nico, shoes on, is about to leave when the door flies open and in strides Anya's husband Rashed, followed by Ashik and Zahir.

ASHIK

You're a hard man to find. It's a good thing we love the thrill of the chase.

RASHED

It wasn't enough for you to destroy my marriage? To stain my family name? You had to screw the bitch?

ZAHIR

(approaching)

I envy you, my friend. Today you will cross the veil and discover the answer to the Great Mystery.

NICO

Actually there's somewhere on this side of the veil I have to be, so--

Without flexing a muscle in warning he goes into action, using every move he knows to battle his way out and keep his promise to his mother, but these guys are skilled killers, and soon they're dragging him kicking and twisting out the door.

INT. SAN QUENTIN - VISITING ROOM - DAY

Alma's and Ethan's last moments with Danny, Alma gripping their hands. Ethan, overwhelmed by emotions he can't begin to handle, takes refuge in a land where he feels safe.

ETHAN

Did you know that if you put the planet Saturn which is seventy two thousand three hundred sixty seven point four miles in diameter in water it would float?

DANNY

No I didn't know that. Thank you for telling me Ethan.

(to Alma)

When is Nico going to be here? You said he was coming.

ALMA

He's on his way, *amorcito*.

ETHAN

And did you know that the rings of Saturn are two hundred and fifty thousand miles across but only thirty feet thick, which makes them the flattest structures known to science?

DANNY

Thirty feet. Wow.

Off Alma, her lips moving in silent desperate prayer --

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sad, sunken, Tom walks in, drops into his chair. Moment of silent desolation, then: he notices an envelope on his desk, his name handwritten on it. He opens it and takes out photos which we don't see. Whatever they show, Tom is shocked to the core.

EXT. RICHMOND SHORE - DAY

Laura, in a trance, drives up to the shack where Serena spent her last hours. Chained, padlocked, ringed with yellow police tape. The phone rings on the seat beside her: TOM. She's in such a lost and distant place that she either doesn't hear it or doesn't have the will to answer. She gets out and walks toward the shack.

INT. TOM'S CAR - DRIVING

Tom, gripping the wheel so hard his hands shake, leaves a message for Laura.

TOM

I know who murdered Serena. I'm on my way to kill him myself.

INT. SAN QUENTIN - CORRIDOR - DAY

Ethan, alone on a bench, arms gripping his knees, prison staff walking by, rocks and rocks and rocks.

INT. SAN QUENTIN - DEATH CHAMBER - DAY

Alma and the FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS have gathered to watch the execution of Danny Santiago. Through the glass they see Danny rolled in. It is more than any mother can bear. She looks wildly around for Nico. Where is he?

EXT. RICHMOND SHORE - DAY

Tattered police tape across the door of the shack. Laura rips it away, goes into

INT. SHACK - DAY

She finds where Serena drew two pictures on the wall: one of a bird with a many-feathered tail, one of barbed flames twisting around the letter N. As Laura touches her fingers to the fading chalk, she is haunted by a devastating memory: *Serena ripping her homework in half, her last sight of her alive...*

EXT. RICHMOND SHORE - DAY

Ashik and Zahir haul Nico, wildly struggling, toward a dock. As they tie concrete blocks to his ankles --

ASHIK

Would you like to feel better?

Nico writhes and kicks, never giving up.

ZAHIR

Yes? Then I will tell you the true reason why Rashed hunted you down: When Anya divorced him she saw fit to compare his sexual performance unfavorably with yours.

ASHIK

So be happy, my friend -- you will die today, but you will die a stud.

EXT. BLUFF - DAY

Laura climbs to the top. Looks down into the deep black water.

EXT. THE DOCK

Fifty yards down the shore. Nico twists, trying to kick his way out of Ashik's and Zahir's grip. He doesn't see the woman on the bluff reaching down and putting stones in the pocket of her jacket.

INT. SAN QUENTIN - DEATH CHAMBER - DAY

The doctors put a port into a vein in Danny's arm. He strains to see his family but the wall is a mirror. Alma, respectful of the grieving families around her, prays almost inaudibly.

ALMA

Dear God have mercy on the people
who are killing my son. Forgive
them. Forgive us all.

EXT. BLUFF - DAY

Laura stands at the edge, looking down.

LAURA

Mommy's here, angel. You don't have
to be alone and cold anymore.
Mommy's here.

She puts down her purse, takes off her shoes.

ON THE DOCK,

As one thug grabs Nico under the shoulders and the other takes
his ankles --

NICO

I've screwed up everything I've ever
touched. My life is worthless. But
if you kill me my mother loses two
sons today. You'll be killing her.
Do you want to kill somebody's
mother?

ZAHIR

Everybody has a mother. And
everybody dies.

IN RAPID INTERCUTS,

four things happen simultaneously:

Laura closes her eyes and drops into the water.

Ashik and Zahir swing Nico into the air and he lands, thrashing,
and sinks instantly.

The chemicals flow through the tube into Danny's veins. Alma
falls to her knees.

Tom walks down a San Francisco street.

Danny cries out, jerks hard against the restraints and falls
back onto the table.

Nico kicks wildly as he sinks, trying to free his ankles from
the concrete block.

Laura surrenders to death, sinking deeper and deeper into the dark water.

Tom reaches a doorway and with icy determination slips his hand into the pocket of his coat and knocks on the door.

AT THE TOP OF THE CLIFF

Laura's shoes stand neatly side by side, empty.

BENEATH THE WATERS OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY,

Nico, kicking wildly, sinks fast.

Laura, body limp, drifts downward.

Nico lands hard on the rocky bottom.

Laura, eyes staring blankly upward, falls to the bottom, lifeless.

Nico, hands bound behind him, blindly grabs at shards of glass. He grabs one, drops it, gropes wildly for it again.

In the rays that shine through the cloudy water, glowing specks of light drift downward toward Laura. Are they bits of seaweed and debris catching the sunlight rays, or are they magic particles? They fall around Laura as lightly as snowflakes, bathing her in a phosphorescent radiance.

Nico's fingers, groping, reaching, finally close on a shard of glass. The sharp edges slice into his palm, sending tendrils of blood swirling through the water. But he doesn't let go.

As we MOVE IN ON LAURA'S face, washed in the eerie glow, what remains of her fading consciousness is flooded with a dam-burst of broken images, in reverse:

Laura's shoes go back onto her feet on the bluff --

Laura runs backward away from Serena's sheet-covered body --

Serena runs backward to Mara in the parking lot --

The pieces of Ethan's broken camera fly together --

The candles on Laura's birthday cake burst back into flame--

End on SERENA SMILING LOVINGLY DOWN AT HER MOTHER through the rays of light that pierce the cloudy water, and then the rays of light grow brighter and brighter until with a powerful WHOOSH the SCREEN GOES WHITE and then a HARD CUT TO:

CLOSE ON LAURA

lying on THE SHORE, coughing up water. For a moment she's disoriented, and then, as she realizes what has happened, dejected: she can't even kill herself properly. She looks at the water, but the will is gone. She's stuck in this earthly hell.

She trudges uphill, gets her shoes and purse, sees that the police tape is gone from the shack. She looks at her watch -- how long was she out? -- but water has clouded the crystal. What now? She trudges hopelessly back toward the road.

INT. THE TANNERY - DAY

Laura, coat still damp, unlocks her door, steps into the loft. Empty and quiet. She sinks down onto a sofa. Lost. And then:

Serena and Tom march happily out of the kitchen, Serena holding up a pink-frosted birthday cake with blazing candles on it, SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY at full volume.

When Serena sees the expression on her mother's face -- somewhere between stunned and horrified -- she trails off.

TOM

Looks like we really surprised her.

SERENA

Don't say anything until you blow the candles out or the wish won't come true.

Laura is beyond the ability to speak. Hand trembling, her mind trying to make sense of the impossible, she reaches out and touches Serena's face. Her fingers feel solid flesh. This is happening. Serena is here.

LAURA

Is it really you?

SERENA

Who else would it be?

Laura seizes Serena and crushes her fiercely in her arms. Off Laura, staggered--

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. THE LOFT - DAY

Serena wriggles in Laura's grip.

SERENA

Mommy, let go, you're hurting me.

She lets go. But she can't stop touching Serena. Stroking her hair. Dumbfounded, awestruck, terrified. Tom is alarmed.

TOM

Go get ready for school, honey.

SERENA

Isn't mommy going to blow out the candles?

TOM

She'll blow them out when you come down.

Mystified -- grown-ups really are the strangest things -- Serena heads upstairs. As soon as she's out of earshot:

TOM (CONT'D)

What's going on with you? Where did you go so early in the morning?
(touches her damp jacket)
You smell like seaweed. How did your clothes get wet?

LAURA

It's impossible. She died.

TOM

Who died?

LAURA

Serena. She drowned. We buried her. On the 17th. Seven days after my birthday.

TOM

Did you have a nightmare?

LAURA

I don't know --

She suddenly races

UPSTAIRS

and looks into Serena's room, where Serena sings happily as she laces her red sneakers. Was it all a dream? Laura reaches into her pockets, takes out one of the stones she weighed herself down with, still wet from the bay.

This was no dream. This happened. Suddenly overcome, her legs go weak and she sinks to her knees, finally allowing herself to be flooded with joy.

LAURA

Whoever you are, whatever you are,
thank for giving my Serena back to
me. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

She looks back in Serena's room, checking one more time. Yes: she's real. She's here.

DOWNSTAIRS

Tom is putting breakfast on the table as Laura comes down. He's still concerned, but tries to make light of it.

TOM

You're looking a little less like
you put your finger in a light
socket. You want to tell me about
your swim?

Before Laura has to answer, Serena comes barrelling down the stairs.

SERENA

Mom, where's my journal?

TOM

It's on the TV and I swear on all
the tulips in Holland I didn't peek.

Serena goes running for it. Laura FLASHES BACK, in the DE-SATURATED TONES which will always signal Laura's recall of her first journey through the timeline, to:

INT. LOFT - ORIGINAL TIMELINE - DAY

TOM

*I swear on all the tulips in Holland
I didn't peek.*

Serena races toward the TV, trips on the cord, falls in broken glass.

IN THE PRESENT

LAURA

Stop!

Too late: Serena trips over the cord and falls in broken glass, cutting her hand. Tom rushes to her, makes sure she's all right.

TOM

No glass. I'll get a Band-aid.

Tom gets band-aids from the kitchen counter. Laura watches Serena run to her dad and hold out her hand to be bandaged. Life in all its normalness. Surreal. Inconceivable.

INT. LAURA'S CAR - DAY

Laura drives Serena to school. Just like before, Serena plays with the apps, puts Devin Blake on, then suddenly looks at her mom, expecting disapproval.

SERENA

You probably want some quiet time, right?

Laura takes in her daughter's sad face and sees, for the first time, how accustomed she is to having her enthusiasm quashed.

LAURA

No. It's fine. If it makes you happy, I want to hear it.

Serena's eyes go wide at this earthshaking change -- but then she suddenly turns off the music anyway.

SERENA

I almost forgot your present!

Serena excitedly shows her the ribbon-wrapped pen.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Looks like a regular normal pen, right?

BACK TO THE PRESENT

SERENA

Wrong!

ORIGINAL TIMELINE

SERENA

Press the button --

BACK TO THE PRESENT

SERENA

-- and it's a laser death ray.

As Serena makes gleeful death ray sound effects, Laura suddenly FLASHES to

ORIGINAL TIMELINE - DAY

The car almost hits the girl on the skateboard.

BACK IN THE PRESENT,

Laura hits the brakes, putting out her arm to brace Serena. The papers go flying from the visor into Serena's lap again but this time Laura has stopped well short of the girl, who rolls past without even noticing Laura's car.

LAURA

It's happening again. Everything is the same.

SERENA

What are you talking about?

With a stab of panic Laura remembers the next thing that happened. Quickly turns on the radio.

NEWSCASTER'S VOICE

...rushed from Sacramento to the scene of this latest brutal slaying, where he repeated his commitment to countering the murder of innocents with the strongest possible --

The clock has turned back, Serena is alive, but the killer is out there, doing exactly what he did before. Laura, horror growing, FLASHES to

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

MARJORIE

Fate is your enemy... written in stone a million years before you were born...

BACK IN THE PRESENT,

as Laura tries to process this, something catches her eye: in Serena's lap is

THE POLAROID FROM THE CAFÉ,

but now only Laura smiles at the camera, and the space beside her is empty: Serena is gone from the image.

LAURA

gasps and pulls the photo quickly away so Serena won't see it. Serena is now seriously unsettled.

SERENA

Why are you acting so weird today?

Laura pulls her into her arms. With blazing determination --

LAURA

I won't let anybody hurt you this time. I swear to you on my life.

(a feverish chant)

Nobody is going to hurt you. Nobody is going to hurt you. Nobody is going to hurt you.

Off Laura's sacred oath--

END OF HOUR ONE