LAUGHS UNLIMITED

HBO pilot script

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MONTAGE. STREETS OF SACRAMENTO - DAY

-- SIRENS AND LIGHTS; PATROL UNIT IN PURSUIT of a beater pick-up truck down the cruddy one way streets of the Alkali Flats neighborhood.

BILLIE (V.O.)
I've had it with all these fucking cliches. Ask me something original.

-- BILLIE CROWN, 26, blonde, pretty, tough, rides shotgun in a Sacramento Police cruiser. SGT. GIGI GREENE, 36, butch and African-American, is driving.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
Do you always curse this much?

BILLIE (V.O.)
Fuck yeah. Trying to cut back since I got home though.

THROUGHOUT THE MONTAGE WE CONTINUE HEARING FRAGMENTS OF BILLIE CROWN AND DR. TESSA GAITHER'S THERAPY SESSION.

-- The beater truck hits a lamppost. Guns drawn, Billie and GiGi run to the cab and remove TWO METHED-OUT REDNECKS. They throw them to the ground. Remove bags of drugs from their pockets.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
What are you thinking right now?

BILLIE (V.O.)
Just-- how does *fuck* even qualify as a curse word any more?

-- Billie and GiGi on the corner in Alklai Flats, arresting a PROSTITUTE. DR. GAITHER CLEARS HER THROAT.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
Have you been sleeping?

BILLIE (V.O.)
Like a princess. Like a log. Like the dead.

-- Billie in a crappy apartment looking at a FAT MAN suicide in a bath tub, slit wrists, bloody pool. A THIN WOMAN is crying in the background.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
Are you drinking excessively or using drugs?

BILLIE (V.O.)
Drinking, sure. Why not? Drugs? Are you fucking kidding me? I don't think so.

CONTINUED:

-- Billie and GiGi down on the street watching TWO PETITE FEMALE CORONER TECHS try to wrestle the FAT MAN BODYBAG down the steps. They lose their grip and the massive BODYBAG tumbles down the steps and into the street.

DR. GAITNER (V.O.)
How's your sex life?

BILLIE (V.O.)
(laughing)
I don't know you well enough.

DR. GAITNER (V.O.)
Okay. So what do you want to talk about?

-- Billie dragging a black-eyed WOMAN out of a house as she screams and CHILDREN watch on.

BILLIE (V.O.)
Yesterday I heard this grandmother call her four-year old grandson a "little fucking fuck." She said, 'Fuck you, you little fucking fuck." Looked like she was going to whoop him bad.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
You deal with people *in extremis*.

BILLIE (V.O.)
In what? This was off-duty at Raley's, in the ice cream aisle.

--The black & white cruising down the raw Sacto street. A land that time's forgetting.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
What did you do?

-- Billie wrestling a HUGE MALE PERPETRATOR to the ground, a seriously physical fight, her against this hopped up lunatic with GiGi trying to break in and help.

BILLIE (V.O.)
I called my dad and asked him what he'd do back in the day. I had my badge and gun on me.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
And?

BILLIE (V.O.)
He said he'd go to the Pine Cove for a beer.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
Is that why you got into law enforcement?

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLIE (V.O.)
Beers at the Cove?

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
Your dad.

BILLIE (V.O.)
What do you think?

-- The squad car pulls into a park. Billie and GiGi jump out and hurry toward a huddled GROUP OF KIDS.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
You know what therapists say about treating cops?

BILLIE (V.O.)
That their checks bounce?

-- The park Kids spread out and a path opens up for Billie and GiGi, leading them to:

A BLEEDING MAN with a bullet hole in the forehead, sitting upright on a park bench, blinking his last blinks.

DR. GAITHER (V.O.)
No. Expect to get fired three times before you make any progress.

-- Billie stops in her tracks. Takes in the dying man's face, serene and horrifying.

BILLIE (V.O.)
I fucking wish I could fire you.

EXT. ALLEY. ALKALI FLATS - AFTERNOON

Billie is on foot pursuit of TWO TEENAGED BOYS, one LATINO one CAUCASIAN.

The teens dump garbage cans behind them as they flee.

She's keeping up, breathing hard, adrenaline pumping, hurtling garbage and cans out of the way. But then they pull away, too fast for her.

She stops in the middle of the alley amid the garbage, leans over to catch her breath.

BILLIE
Cocksuckers.

EXT. STREET CORNER. ALKALI FLATS - AFTERNOON

Fish and Chips joint and liquor store. VATOS AND HOMEYS hanging out, talking shit, riding lowrider bikes in circles.

BOOMBOXES BLAST BITCHIN' BEANER HOP & BOP.

CONTINUED:

GiGi is leaning against her squad car yukking it up with THE CHIEF, 6’6” Native American homeless man who is drinking from a brown paper bag. The Chief is wearing jeans and cowboy boots and a soiled brown suede shirt with tassels.

Billie walks up to the car, still breathing heavily.

GIGI
You like that workout?

BILLIE
Cardio is the worst. Thanks for your help, Par’ner.

GIGI
I’m not your *par’ner*. Or your partner. I’m your retraining officer. It is my job to observe you and report.

BILLIE
What did you just observe?

GIGI
A born-again rookie in useless pursuit of two idiots who stole ten bucks worth of Gatorade.

BILLIE
Will it be useless when they steal your Grandma’s car out of her driveway?

GIGI
They already did. Now she takes the bus.

Chief holds out his brown bag drink, offering it to Billie. She turns away. GiGi laughs.

Billie gets in the car. She watches GiGi and her street pal shoot the shit.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER TITLE: **THREE WEEKS EARLIER**

INT. LAVATORY - DAY

Billie Crown studies her reflection in the mirror. Reapplies her lipstick. We see only her face. She’s excited.

INT. MAIN CABIN. CHARTER AIRPLANE IN FLIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Billie exits the lavatory to a ROWDY GROUP OF SOLDIERS. She’s in full Battle Dress Uniform. She is one of them. Medic patch.

CONTINUED:

She fist-bumps a MALE SERGEANT and takes her seat. Puts in earbuds, searches for a song and presses play on her mini iPod.

"(GHOST) RIDERS IN THE SKY" STARTS PLAYING IN HER EAR. She smiles to herself. We switch to her point of view, with the SONG NOW PLAYING LOUDLY.

Billie watches the FLIGHT ATTENDANT taking the microphone.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (INTO MIC)
Please take your seats for landing.

A HUGE CHEER RISES IN THE CABIN. Billie beams.

A SCRAGGLY-LOOKING PFC grabs the microphone from the Flight Attendant.

SCRAGGLY-LOOKING PFC (INTO MIC)
Welcome home, motherfuckers!

Billie takes her ear buds out. She's suddenly overcome with emotion.

EXT. TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE. FAIRFIELD, CA - DAY

Carrying a duffle bag, Billie picks up her pace down the tarmac as OTHER SOLDIERS around her run toward a cordoned-off hangar where FAMILIES reunite.

INT. HANGAR. TRAVIS AIRFORCE BASE - DAY

Billie searches through the CROWDS, passing ecstatic scenes of CHILDREN and SPOUSES rushing their returned GIs, PEOPLE falling into each others arms; kisses, tears, jumping for joy.

She can't find whoever she's looking for.

She surveys the hangar, until her gaze falls on:

STEVEN BAKER, 32, her husband, dockers and oxford shirt, cheap tie loosened, with their daughter PENNY BAKER, 5, in a new yellow dress.

BILLIE
(yelling)
Steven!

She bee-lines to them as Steven scoops Penny up into his arms and they group hug. He's in tears. Penny starts crying.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(to Penny)
Oh, baby. Don't cry.

But Penny turns away from her mom and hangs onto Steven, wrapping her arms around his neck.

CONTINUED:

STEVEN
(to Billie)
Sorry. She woke up real early.
Hardly slept last night.

Billie suddenly notices:

CHARLIE CROWN, her father, and CAROLINE BAKER, her mother-in-law. Both middle-aged. Standing close by, giving the family a moment.

BILLIE
(excited)
Hey!

She hugs her dad. He fights his tears. Then Caroline. Tears galore.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I didn't know you were coming.

CAROLINE BAKER
Surprise!

CHARLIE CROWN
(voice cracking)
Welcome home, sweetie.

Billie laughs through the tears. Kisses her husband. Puts her hand on Penny's back, still turned to her.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Penny, mommy's back.

Penny doesn't react. Just hugs her father's neck tighter.

STEVEN
Honey. You're choking daddy.

CAROLINE BAKER
Billie, give her time.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I've waited fifteen months for this.

Billie meets Charlie's emotional stare. ALL AROUND THEM, SCENES OF FAMILY REUNION JOY PLAY OUT.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I just--

Billie kisses the back of Penny's head.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Baby, don't you want to give mommy a hug?

Penny recoils. Billie's overwhelmed. Steven shrugs apologetically.

STEVEN
(to Billie)
It's going to be okay, baby.
Welcome home.

CONTINUED: (2)

Charlie grabs Billie's forearm, moves her sleeve up, and exposes a crude R.I.P. tattoo on her wrist. He stares back and forth from the tattoo to Billie's face. No words. Worry on Charlie's face. She smiles at him.

BILLIE
What did you expect? P.T.A.?

INT. BUS. MOVING. TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

Bus is full of the same UNIFORMED MEN AND WOMEN from the plane, on their way to re-entry protocol. Mood is cheerful. Billie sits in the back alone, self absorbed, in her earbuds we hear: "(GHOST) RIDERS IN THE SKY".

INT. BASE GYM - DAY

The gym is full of conference tables with banners attached - DENTAL, SHOTS, HEARING, FAMILY WELFARE, MENTAL HEALTH, CAREER ADVANCEMENT, and more.

RETURNING SOLDIERS file in and line up.

A LIEUTENANT holds a microphone and prepares to address the gathered troops.

Billie heads straight for him and before he can switch the microphone on:

BILLIE
Sir, Sir, I gotta go home. Now. I can't wait.

LIEUTENANT
You and everybody else.

BILLIE
My daughter needs me. You don't understand.

Lieutenant puts a hand on her shoulder.

LIEUTENANT
Hey Sergeant, I think I do. But we've all got to go through this ninety-six hour hold. Play the game.

Billie makes her way to the back of the line where a PRIVATE hands her a checklist.

LIEUTENAT (INTO MIC)
Okay soldiers. Before you can get all the way home, you've got to hit these stations of the cross. This won't be fun. But it will be good for you. And Uncle Sam's picking up the tab! You're welcome.

INT. BASE DENTAL CLINIC - DAY

Billie is in a dentist's chair. A MILITARY DENTIST, (35 Puerto Rican, balding, gentle) hovers over her with a drill in his hand.

MILITARY DENTIST
(Puerto Rican accent)
Are you sure about this?

BILLIE
My dad taught me how to think through the pain when I was a kid. I'd rather take three minutes of drilling than chew on my numb cheek for four hours.

MILITARY DENTIST
It's a pretty deep cavity.

BILLIE
Fifteen months in Afghanistan - doesn't get any deeper than that. I hate Novocaine.

MILITARY DENTIST
(impressed)
Okay. Have it your way.

Billie closes her eyes and opens her mouth.

The Military Dentist places the suction tube in her mouth. Turns the HIGH SPEED DRILL ON.

THE HIGH-PITCHED WHIR ALONG WITH THE SUCTION AIR spell instant tension.

The Dentist goes in with the drill and commences DRILLING. Billie clutches the armrests.

The steel and carbide tip of the drill penetrates the tooth NOISILY!

Billie is writhing in pain.

The Military Dentist stops drilling.

MILITARY DENTIST (CONT'D)
Keep going?

She nods, her eyes closed. He turns the drill back on. THE WHIZZING, WET SOUND OF TORTURE RESUMES.

His fingers enter her mouth; he continues DRILLING.

Billie lets out a SCREAM and the Dentist recoils.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Fuck this! Give me the Novocaine.
Give me gas. Jesus-- I'm sorry.
Give me anything.

She squints her eyes and shakes her head as if to dispose of the pain.

MILITARY DENTIST
(almost apologizing)
It is a pretty deep cavity.

INT. BASE SHOTS CLINIC - DAY

A NURSE with a pneumatic gun is dosing SOLDIERS.

Billie is number three in line. We watch the SOLDIERS get their shots and wince.

Billie gets hers, no reaction. As the ASSISTANT marks her checklist, a SLIGHT-BUILD SOLDIER behind Billie gets his shot and faints, face first onto the deck.

Billie turns to look. Soldier down! Makes her smile.

INT. BASE EYE CLINIC - DAY

Billie's face is behind the Phoropter, a vision instrument with lenses placed on dials in a scuba mask-shaped unit. Only her mouth is visible.

The MILITARY OPTOMETRIST slides a lens into the viewing unit.

BILLIE
Worse.

He slides in a new lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
Now?

BILLIE
A little better.

New lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
Now?

BILLIE
Worse.

Slides a new lens in.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
Now?

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Much worse.

New lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
How about now?

BILLIE
I'm not sure.

Old lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
This?

She doesn't say anything. He slides in a new lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST (CONT'D)
Or that?

BILLIE
The first.

Slides back in the old lens.

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
Now?

BILLIE
Worse. No, better. Can I see the other one again?

MILITARY OPTOMETRIST
Which one?

INT. BASE THEATER - DAY

The theater is packed with RETURNING SOLDIERS. Billie is fighting sleep while a COLONEL'S WIFE, 44, African-American, is doing a Power-Point presentation on stage. She flips the slide to: "TIME MANAGEMENT, shopping".

COLONEL'S WIFE
Okay. Now this is important. When you're in line at the Wal Mart, you just got to breathe easy. Things move slower back home. The urgency of the war zone is gone. So, when the cashier has to do a price check for organic strawberries, which she will, because nobody ever bought organic strawberries before you, you'll have to find patience.

HECKLER
Just go at four in the morning. No line!

CONTINUED:

CHUCKLES IN THE AUDIENCE. Billie is fast asleep. We hear: RING TONE. Then:

STEVEN (OVER, ON PHONE)
Hey.

EXT. BASE MESS HALL - AFTERNOON

Billie is pacing, talking on her cell phone.

BILLIE
Hey. What's going on?

INT. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT. SACRAMENTO - AT THE SAME TIME

A CAT is looking straight at us.

STEVEN (OVER)
Not much. Finished her bath. You?

The cat saunters across the screen to reveal a children's show on TV. Coloring books are strewn about at its base.

BILLIE (OVER, ON PHONE)
I can't believe I'm so close and so far.

Penny, wearing pajamas is playing with her dolls and doll house on the living room floor while Steven, sitting behind her, is drying and combing her hair and talking on his cell phone.

STEVEN (TO PHONE)
Just a few more hours.

WE CUT BETWEEN THE APARTMENT AND OUTSIDE THE MESS HALL

BILLIE
How's she doing?

STEVEN
Fine. She calmed down in the car.

BILLIE
Did she say anything?

STEVEN
No.

BILLIE
Well, didn't you ask her?

STEVEN
Honey--!

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
I know. I'm sorry. This. Just. She was never shy.

STEVEN
She still isn't. She was freaked out. All those people.

BILLIE
Can you put her on the phone?

STEVEN
(to Penny)
Can you talk with mommy?

PENNY
Yeah.

She takes the phone from her father. Keeps playing while talking.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Hi Mommy.

Billie's eyes fill with tears.

BILLIE
Hey, doll. How are you feeling?

PENNY
Okay. How are you, mommy?

BILLIE
I'm good. Now that we're talking.

PENNY STEVEN
Ouch! Sorry.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
What happened?

PENNY
Knot in my hair. Daddy said sorry. I miss you mommy.

Billie beams.

BILLIE
Really? I miss you too. It's just-- How come you didn't want to hug me at the air base?

PENNY
That wasn't my mommy. You're my mommy.

BILLIE
No. That was me, Money Penny. I came back.

CONTINUED: (2)

PENNY
If you came back, then how come you're still on the phone?

BILLIE
It's just-- I'll be home Friday.

PENNY
You'll call on Friday?

BILLIE
No. I'll be home. You'll see me. I'll comb your hair.

PENNY
You can't do that.

BILLIE
Why not?

PENNY
You're on the phone.

BILLIE
(upset)
Can you put daddy on?

PENNY
Okay. Bye, mommy. Love you.

BILLIE
Bye, I love you.

Penny gives Steven the phone.

STEVEN
Hey. So that was good.

BILLIE
She thinks I'm the phone.

STEVEN
What?

BILLIE
She thinks your phone is her mommy.

STEVEN
What kind of crazy talk is that?

BILLIE
Did you talk to her about me coming back?

STEVEN
Of course I did.

BILLIE
Well, she doesn't make the fucking connection.

STEVEN
She will when you're home.

BILLIE
Baby, please, please, please explain it to her. She thinks I only exist on the phone.

CONTINUED: (3)

STEVEN
I'll explain. Calm down.

BILLIE
I am calm.

A TRUMPET SUDDENLY BLOWS "RETREAT" on base (4.30PM, end of military duty day). Everything and EVERYONE around Billie turn toward the flag, freeze and salute.

STEVEN
What's that noise?

BILLIE
Retreat.

A CIVILIAN COOK smoking nearby smiles to himself as Billie drops her phone accidentally. She snaps to attention and salutes the flag as it is lowered and the TRUMPET BLOWS ON.

STEVEN (THROUGH PHONE ON GROUND)
Retreat from what? Hello? Hello, Billie?

INT. FEMALE COMMUNAL BARRACKS - NIGHT

Lights out. ALL'S QUIET on the female front. Billie's on the top bunk, wide awake, staring at the ceiling.

Below her a FEMALE SOLDIER is reading a book with a flashlight.

Across from them ANOTHER FEMALE SOLDIER is WHISPERING into a cell phone.

In the bunk above her, TWO FEMALE SOLDIERS are watching a movie on a laptop.

Beyond them, ANOTHER FEMALE SOLDIER is crying into her pillow.

As we pull further back, we see there is almost no female soldier asleep in the barracks. Jetlag, tension and emotion running high.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION. DOWNTOWN SACRAMENTO - DAY

Harsh florescent light. TOUGH CHARACTERS ABOUND: PAROLEES; THE UNLUCKY IN LOVE AND MONEY; ADDICTS FROM EVERY SPECTRUM OF THE DISEASE.

Through door number 8, Billie pops into the station. She's in fatigues and carrying her desert camouflage seabag on her back.

She negotiates her way through the various stages of human decay, oblivious and in good cheer, she's home.

CONTINUED:

A white BARELY CLOTHED HOMELESS GUY using a cane approaches her.

BARELY CLOTHED HOMELESS GUY
Hey soldier, help out a veteran?

BILLIE
Where'd you serve?

BARELY CLOTHED HOMELESS GUY
Africa.

BILLIE
Africa, where?

BARELY DRESSED HOMELESS GUY
Africa. The country. You know, Blackhawk Down! Africa.

BILLIE
Africa is a continent, asshole.

Billie makes her way to the sidewalk and the bright and blinding Sacramento light. She looks toward the sun and lets it warm her. She walks toward the cab stand. Thinks again, and walks the other way. It's not so far.

This is a concrete and steel office building wasteland, two miles from downtown. We see the few SACRAMENTO SKYSCRAPERS in the distance.

She keeps trudging through the warm afternoon. A PASSING MOTORIST in a big pickup truck honks his horn, pumps a fist out the window at the sight of her uniform.

Billie sheepishly waves a thank you his way.

She's sweating now. The bag is heavy.

A FEW MORE HONKS OF CARS PASSING BY. She trudges on. A WOLF WHISTLE. She's getting annoyed.

A LANDSCAPING TRUCK towing three RIDING LAWN MOWERS DRIVES BY, TWO exhausted MEXICAN-AMERICAN MEN peering down from the bed of the truck.

WE HEAR SHOUTING THROUGH A BULLHORN IN SPANISH.

EXT. STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Billie comes upon a CROWD gathered outside the capitol building. Banners. BULLHORNED CHANTS. MINIMAL POLICE PRESENCE: A FEW COPS ON HORSES.

IT'S A ROWDY PRO-IMMIGRATION DEMONSTRATION, SQUARED AGAINST A SMALLER ANTI-IMMIGRATION CROWD.

No choice, she steps into the throngs and disappears.

CONTINUED:

We see Billie in and out of the mixed-race, mixed-gender, mixed-everything CROWD, trying to make her way through a sea of angry humanity. She's struggling to get through. This is what she fought for.

EXT. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Billie walks up to an Old Victorian, once a grand home, now broken into six apartments, shabby but not dilapidated. Home.

She runs up the outdoor stairwell toward the top floor apartment.

MONTAGE. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

--A sign on the apartment front door, crayoned letters on construction paper: "WELCOME HOME, MOMMY".

--Billie, still in her uniform, drops her seabag and looks around the apartment. It's clean and well kept. She's surprised and pleased.

--She calls the cat over, but it keeps away from her. *Et tu, brute?*

--There are fresh flowers on the coffee table in the living room. She smells them. Lovely.

--All toys, dolls, books, paints and coloring books are neatly arranged in Penny's room. The closet arrangement borders on professional. Billie feels the fabric of the new yellow dress Penny wore at the airbase. Sighs.

--The bedroom is a drill sergeant's wet dream. Comforter stretched to perfection on the bed. Billie has tears in her eyes. She sits on the bed. The BED SPRINGS SQUEAK LOUDLY. She laughs through the tears; not all's perfect.

INT. KITCHEN. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Billie walks in and stops cold at the kitchen entrance.

BILLIE
Jesus Christ!

Spotless. New-ish pots and pans on the stove top. A spice rack. She checks out a spice bottle.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(reading label)
Ground Smoked Paprika.
(impressed)
Fuck me.

She opens the fridge door: Beer bottles lined up like soldiers. Tupperware neatly sealed. All the usual products in all the familiar colors.

CONTINUED:

She notices cookbooks piled up on the counter microwave. Grabs one off the top: “Recipes Every Man Should Know” by Susan Russo and Brett Cohen.

She opens the book and leafs through the drawings, recipes and instructions. Shocked and amused.

PRISONER 1 (OVER)
Turn up the AC, boss.

INT. CELL BLOCK. FOLSOM PRISON - DAY

Steven walks down the corridor, occupied solitary confinement cells on either side of him, ROWDY PRISONERS YELLING OBSCENITIES. A MAINTENANCE WORKER carrying a tool box and a GUARD follow Steven.

His TWO-WAY RADIO BUZZES:

VOICE (ON TWO WAY RADIO)
Baker, you got a call.

INT. ENGINEERING AND MAINTENANCE OFFICE. FOLSOM PRISON - DAY

Steven walks in, picks up the phone.

STEVEN (TO PHONE)
Hello.

BILLIE (ON PHONE)
Steven?

STEVEN (TO PHONE)
Yeah.

INT. KITCHEN. BILLIE AND STEVEN’S APARTMENT - AT THE SAME TIME

Billie smiles, still browsing the cook book.

BILLIE (TO PHONE)
Who are you? This is fucking awesome.

INT. BEDROOM. BILLIE AND STEVE’S APARTMENT - LATER

A man in a military camouflage uniform, JACKSON, is fighting to get Billie’s jeans off on the bed, forcing himself on her.

She scratches his face, punches back hard, hits him, screams. He pins her down, the SPRINGS SQUEALING under the struggle. He tries to kiss her. She bites his lip.

He pulls back, his lip is bleeding, she kicks him off of her. He rolls to the floor. Gets up in pain.

CONTINUED:

He wipes his lips, spits.

JACKSON
You're funny.

She's breathing hard on the bed, terrified.

BILLIE
Just leave.

JACKSON
Who's gonna take care of you, Billie?

Billie throws a shoe at him. He follows it with his eyes as it misses him by a mile.

BILLIE
Get out!

JACKSON
I won't hurt you. I know how you girls like it.

BILLIE
I'm reporting you, Jackson.

JACKSON
Go ahead. I'm first in chain of command. What would you like to report? I'm listening.

BILLIE
Please. Go.

JACKSON
Next time I'll bring a buddy, see if you can fight off the two of us.

Jackson walks to the window. Looks out to the neighborhood.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
You're lucky. Must be nice to be alive.

To Billie's horror, he jumps out.

She runs to the window. Stares down four flights in disbelief.

EXT. SACRAMENTO STREET - DAY

Billie is frozen in place, her mind elsewhere. *Was Jackson a dream? A memory? A fugue state?*

Across the street, PARENTS are picking up CHILDREN from a colorful preschool building - RAINBOW.

Billie pulls herself together and crosses over.

INT. RAINBOW PRESCHOOL - DAY

Billie walks in. The KIDS are playing in the yard beyond a glass wall. She sees Penny and ANOTHER GIRL riding on a plastic pig.

Before Billie approaches the door a TEACHER is in her face.

TEACHER
Excuse me? Can I help you?

BILLIE
I'm here to pick up my daughter.

Billie points out toward the playground. Waves at nothing.

TEACHER
I'm sorry. I've never seen you before. Who are you picking up?

BILLIE
Penny Baker. I'm her mother.

TEACHER
Oh. Right. Welcome home. I'm Nina.

BILLIE
(annoyed)
Thanks, Nina.

The Teacher is obviously putting her body between Billie and the door to the playground.

TEACHER
It's just. I'm really-- There's a list. We have a protocol.

ANOTHER MOTHER breezes by Billie and the teacher and casually smiles at Billie; her SON yelps and runs into her arms.

BILLIE
I'm her mother. Isn't that protocol enough?

Billie pulls out her driver's license.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
See! Didn't Penny mention--?

TEACHER
It's not that. I know who you are. I believe you. Of course. Gosh. It's just-- There were only two other names added to the pickup list since she started. Your father and Steven's mother.

BILLIE
Well that's fu-- That's ridiculous. Go ask Penny. I mean. I'll just go get her.

CONTINUED:

Billie makes a move toward the glass door and the Teacher now puts her hands on Billie's shoulders.

TEACHER
Mrs. Baker. We can straighten this out. Just give me a minute. I'm really so sorry.

BILLIE
You're sorry? Seriously? That's all you got?

TEACHER
I could lose my job if someone not on the pickup list leaves the building with a child.

Billie locks eyes with the Teacher, more sympathetic to her than she'd like to be.

BILLIE
So what do we do now, Ni-Na?

EXT. SACRAMENTO STREET - LATER

Penny is draped all over Steven as they walk with Billie away from the Rainbow pre-school. She's not looking at her mom, shy, withdrawn, maybe even scared.

BILLIE
(emotional)
I thought you talked with her.

STEVEN
It takes time.

BILLIE
(to Penny)
Let's have carrot cake, honey?

PENNY
(sheepish)
Okay.

STEVEN
Cake before dinner?

BILLIE
Are you fucking kidding me? Cake every meal if I want it that way.

STEVEN
Watch the f-bombs, soldier.

BILLIE
Wife. Call me wife. Call me a mother. Call me F'n Billie.

EDDIE COCHRAN'S ROCKABILLY HIT "SUMMERTIME BLUES" STARTS PLAYING.

INT. RICK'S DESSERT DINER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A pleasantly neon-lighted diner, playing whimsically with the faux Fifties vibe, turntables on the wall, mini jukebox at every table. "SUMMERTIME BLUES" plays in one booth where:

Penny is deep into her carrot cake, her face a yummy mess.

She sneaks looks at Billie, sitting across from her, smiling adoringly. She's drinking coffee, her dessert plate wiped clean.

BILLIE
Take your time, sweetie. Mommy is not leaving anymore.

PENNY
(averting her eyes)
Never?

BILLIE
Never ever forever.

Penny smiles to herself and concentrates on what's left of the sweet mud on her plate.

Steven walks up, wiping his hands on his pants.

STEVEN
You'd think this place could afford paper towels.

Billie scoots over and Steven slides in. He puts his arms around his wife and pulls her in for a looooong kiss. When they break, they notice Penny watching them curiously. Billie wipes her lips, as if she's been hurt, not kissed. Steven notices. Gives her a strange look. *What's that about?*

BILLIE
(to Steven)
So, what's up with the cooking? You couldn't boil an egg when I left.

STEVEN
I don't know. I just got into it. I can cook casoulet tonight. Bouillabaisse. Meat loaf. Onion rings. Whatever you want, babe.

BILLIE
What the fuck is bouillabaisse?

STEVEN
Language!

BILLIE
(to Penny)
Sorry.

Penny laughs quietly.

CONTINUED:

STEVEN
(smiling)
Not funny!

INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

All three of the family are sitting on Penny's bed. There are children's books all around them. They've read a few.

STEVEN
Okay, grown up time!

PENNY
More books.

STEVEN
I think it's enough for one night.

BILLIE
One more. I'll read it.

She picks up MONSTERS DON'T EAT BROCCOLI. Steven looks alarmed, tries to push the book out of Penny's sight line.

STEVEN
(to Billie)
That's a before dinner book. It makes her, you know--

BILLIE
What?

STEVEN
(whispering)
Nightmares.

PENNY
Cookie dough!

STEVEN
No, different book.

BILLIE
What's that?

STEVEN
"Who Ate All The Cookie Dough?"

BILLIE (CONT'D)
OK, I'll read that one.

PENNY
"Who Ate All The Cookie Dough?"

STEVEN
No more books.
(to Penny)
Go to sleep.

PENNY
Sing daddy.

BILLIE
I'll sing.

CONTINUED:

PENNY
You don't know it. Only daddy knows.

BILLIE
What is it? I'm sure I know it.

STEVEN
"Who Knew".

BILLIE
Don't you know?

STEVEN
That's the song. "Who knew".

PENNY
Pink.

BILLIE
Who knew pink? That's the song?

STEVEN
"Who Knew" BY Pink. The singer. Pink.

BILLIE
Oh. That's not a children's song.

STEVEN
(shrugging)
Everything's a children's song these days.

BILLIE
Don't you like "Twinkle Twinkle" anymore, Penny?

PENNY
Pink! Pink!

BILLIE
I don't know that one, Penny.
(heartbroken)
Daddy will sing.

Billie plants a kiss on Penny's forehead. She walks out of the room.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Who fucking knew?

INT. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S BEDROOM -LATER

Steven sits in an armchair in the corner of the room half glancing at his Ipad, half looking at his nightgowned wife from behind as she brushes her hair at the vanity. This is grown up time.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Feels like the first real shower of my life. I like that goat's milk shampoo.

STEVEN
Inmate friend of mine recommended it.

BILLIE
Intimate?

STEVEN
IN-MATE.

BILLIE
Ha.

STEVEN
It was real cheap too. Bulk at Costco.

BILLIE
You joined fucking Costco?

STEVEN
Your mom put me on her membership.

Billie stands by the bed. Hesitates. Finally lies down on the comforter. Steven crosses to her.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Shouldn't we go under the comforter?

She smiles. Right. Wiggles her way under the cover. He takes her in.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
God, I missed you.

BILLIE
Finally!

STEVEN
What?

BILLIE
Those words.

STEVEN
I said I missed you on every call. Every Email.

BILLIE
I know. It's just. Not since I'm back. I had so much to miss. You just had me.

He sits next to her. They kiss.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVEN
Are we doing this?

She nods nervously. He lies next to her. She's under the covers, he's on top. He plays with her hair. She seems far away all of a sudden.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Hey. Billie. Come back.

She smiles, as if awakened, as if seeing him for the first time.

BILLIE
You don't sleep naked any more?

STEVEN
Penny started coming into bed at midnight, every night on the dot.

BILLIE
Right. Will she come in tonight?

STEVEN
I asked her not to. So probably.

BILLIE
God, that would be great.

STEVEN
I'll unlock the door. After--

Steven goes in for a slow kiss. She removes Steven's T-shirt, smooths him down, buries her face in his chest.

BILLIE
I especially missed this chest.

Steven runs his hands from her buttocks to her neck, back and forth. He kisses her neck tenderly.

STEVEN
I missed all of this.

BILLIE
It was always yours.

Steven's rips the comforter off the bed and spreads Billie's legs. He goes down on her and she closes her eyes. Pleasure. Release. Pain? She moans, a quiet build.

A few beats in this sexual moment. Then:

Steven moves up her body.

STEVEN
God, you taste good.

BILLIE
Thanks. Goat's milk.

CONTINUED: (3)

He laughs. She laughs in return. But they're both nervous.

STEVEN
Are you ready?

BILLIE
Please.

STEVEN
Yes?

BILLIE
Yes. Please.

We see the lovers make a start. She guides him in, he enters her.

STEVEN
I love you.

BILLIE
Say my name. Say my fucking name.

STEVEN
(smiling)
Billie.

BILLIE
Say-- Billie I love you.

STEVEN
Billie I love you.

He drops heavily onto her body, his gyrations getting faster. Billie winces. Pulls her body away from him, deeper into the mattress. THE SPRINGS SQUEAK.

BILLIE
I'm sorry.

STEVEN
Slower?

She gets out from under him.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
(breathing hard)
Slower. Faster. What?

BILLIE
I don't know. It hurts. I'm not wet enough. I'm sorry.

STEVEN
Okay. Okay. It's new again. I get it. It's just-- It's been. I've been jerking off for so long. Maybe I'm no good at it.

CONTINUED: (4)

BILLIE
No. It's me. I was re-virginized somewhere outside Kabul. In a cave. A dark cave.

STEVEN
What?

BILLIE
I don't know what I'm saying. I'm failing Penny. Failing you.

STEVEN
Baby, there are no grades here.

INT. BAKER APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Billie wakes up curled up on the couch, covered in a desert camouflage blanket. THE HUSHED NOISES OF A FAMILY SATURDAY MORNING filter into her consciousness and ours: CARTOONS ON TV, COFFEE PERCOLATING, BACON SIZZLING.

STEVEN (O.S.)
Morning. How did you end up on the sofa?

She looks up. He's hovering, wiping his hands in a kitchen towel.

BILLIE
I have no idea.

He laughs, but it betrays a certain worry.

"CARDBOARD IN MY SHOES" by Johnny Hartman STARTS PLAYING.

EXT. BACKYARD. CHARLIE CROWN'S HOUSE. LAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A hand-made banner reads: WELCOME HOME BILLIE. "CARDBOARD IN MY SHOES" IS PLAYING on the outdoor speakers. GUESTS MILL ABOUT the backyard, OLD TIMERS and FRESH FACES, eating, drinking. Beer, Coke and water are packed in ice inside an aluminum horse trough, with more piled up on the back deck, an endless supply. LAUGHTER AND CHATTER IN THE HOUSE AND OUT.

JOEY, 7, a skinny kid, jumps into the pool, splashing Penny.

MARK CROWN (O.S.)
Easy there, Joey, watch your cousin!

JOEY
Sorry dad.

But Penny is laughing and she runs off into her grandmother's arms: Caroline, we met her at the airfield.

CONTINUED:

SMOKE drifts into frame and we follow it to a BBQ grill manned by Joey's father, MARK CROWN, 32, Billie's brother, a still-in-shape former athlete, presently chugging his fourth beer and talking with Billie.

MARK CROWN
I had another tryout with the River Rats. But they had this Cuban kid, 19, throwing ninety-five mph heat.

BILLIE
That's fast, right?

MARK CROWN
Jesus, B. Clemens threw that fast once, maybe twice.

Mark flips a few burgers and drinks down half of his beer.

MARK CROWN (CONT'D)
And now Tina is talking about giving up her place. Joey has really taken to her. But, between you and me, I don't think she's long term material.

BILLIE
She's nice. And she's hot.

Billie motions toward TINA, 30, in the pool with Joey.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
And the Jammer obviously likes her.

MARK CROWN
She's not-- complicated.

BILLIE
And you are?

MARK CROWN
I can be. Oh, shit.

BILLIE
What?

He points.

MARK CROWN
Mom's here.

Billie shifts her gaze to see: CLAIRE SHEPARD, their biological mom and Charlie's ex-wife walking through the house toward the yard. She's in her early 50s, had some work done, re-married up and then some. She's wearing high end golf wear and she has only one thing on her mind:

CLAIRE
(loudly)
Where is she?

CONTINUED: (2)

Billie waves.

BILLIE
Hey mom, Say hello to Mark.

CLAIRE
Don’t you start with me.

She gives Billie a hug. Then a kiss to Mark.

MARK CROWN
I’m sorry mom.

CLAIRE
What for?

MARK CROWN
I didn’t get any veggie burgers. Didn’t think you’d make it.

She slaps him playfully.

CLAIRE
You are so cruel. What kind of a monster do you think I am?
(to Billie)
Samantha wanted to come, but her tutor was sick the last couple of weeks, so today was the only day that worked out. And John apologizes. Work, of course, what else? They send their love.
(looks around)
Where’s your father?

BILLIE
(cynical)
I’m fine. Thanks. It was a really good war for me.

CLAIRE
Of course you’re fine, you’re here. Let’s not get into the depressing stuff. You look perfect.

Steven approaches.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
Well, hello there, stranger.

He smiles. She kisses him on the cheek.

STEVEN
How are you, Claire?

CLAIRE
I’m fine. Now that all my babies are home.

CONTINUED: (3)

STEVEN
(pointing at Penny and Caroline)
Penny's over there with my mom.

CLAIRE
My, how she's grown.

Claire looks around the yard.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
So many old familiar faces.

EXT. BACKYARD. CHARLIE CROWN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

GAIL LANE, 22, slightly overweight, sadly scarred face, but cute and open, enters the party fray, timid; we can tell she's a stranger here. She has a slight limp. Holding her hand and trailing behind is JAMES MILLER, 25, tense young man.

Billie breaks away from an OLD COUPLE she's talking to.

BILLIE
Gail! Gail! Oh my god!

The women embrace tightly. James backs away. It's a long, warm embrace. Almost long and warm enough to make the others nearby uncomfortable.

Billie grips Gail's shoulders firmly, looks at her from an arm's length.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You look fucking great!

GAIL
Thanks, Crown. You too. Wow, what a party, what a welcome.

BILLIE
I want you to meet my daughter.

Billie turns frantically around. Penny is playing Marco Polo in the pool.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Penny! Penny!

PENNY
Marco!

JOEY
Polo!

BILLIE
Game's over, kids! Penny, come here. I need you to meet someone very special to mommy.

CONTINUED:

Penny is not paying attention.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Penny, now!

Everyone freezes, the yell was too loud to be ignored. Billie recovers.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Never mind! Forget it. Keep playing.

GAIL
She's adorable.

BILLIE
She can be a brat.

GAIL
Then she's lucky.

ANNETTE, Charlie Crown's wife of ten years, comes over.

ANNETTE
Hey, Billie. Who's your friend?

BILLIE
Annette. This is Gail, sometimes known as "Gorilla."

Annette frowns but the women laugh, loud, crazy, old laughter.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Gorilla, this is my mom. Annette. Well, not my real mom. My father's wife. Pretty much raised me since I was a kid.

Annette and Gail shake hands and exchange pleasantries.

Billie looks around for James. He's at the BBQ talking to Mark.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Who is the dude?

GAIL
Tenth Mountain guy I met at the VA hospital. Good in bed. Smart as a Tenth Mountain guy.

BILLIE
Looks like a stone cold killer.

GAIL
I'm softening him.

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLIE
You need to find a nice boy. At college.

GAIL
A boy who will love a girl with legs made of titanium?

Billie shakes her head. That's not what she meant.

GAIL (CONT'D)
I was doing okay for awhile out in Palo Alto. Poly-trauma and TBI clinic. They say my brain is unscrambled, so that's not nothing, right? The new normal. We're living in Tahoe. James wants to be a professional snowboarder. Reno VA is a pretty good hospital. How are you holding up?

BILLIE
I have no idea.

They see Mark pouring shots of tequila for James, Tina and himself. MORE PEOPLE JOIN. Shots all around. Billie and Gail exchange knowing looks. Then--

GAIL
Hold up, bartender. I know two ladies who want to join y'all.

Gail and Billie join the group. Everyone downs their shots.

MARK CROWN
That is the good shit!

JAMES
Ta-kill-ya make-a me caaaraazy!

GAIL
That's no joke. Warrants in three counties in Washington State.

JAMES
Don't forget Siskiyou County and Bakersfield!

GAIL
I wasn't going to mention the California warrants.

MARK CROWN
Where do you get these friends, B?

GAIL
Dark caves.

BILLIE
We find each other. It's in the eyes.

CONTINUED: (3)

Another round of shots for everyone. Charlie approaches.

CHARLIE CROWN
Hey gang. It's kind of early for shots, yeah?

James looks at his watch.

JAMES
It's four AM in Kandahar. I always drank at four AM in Kandahar. I was drinking with Bales the night he went out and whacked sixteen civilians. Gruesome stuff.

CHARLIE CROWN
There are kids here, that's all. Let's keep it cool.

JAMES
Okay, chief. Whatever you say.

Charlie gives him a *do-I-know-you?* look and stomps away.

BILLIE
(laughing)
That was my old man.

Steven joins them.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
And this-- This... Gorilla, this is my father.
(laughing)
I mean husband.

GAIL
Yeah, we met once before deployment.

Neither bothers to offer a handshake.

STEVEN
Sorry. I'm horrible with faces.

Realizes what he's said. (Her face is so scarred)...

STEVEN (CONT'D)
No. Sorry. I mean--

GAIL
I get it. No worries. You're horrible with faces, my face is horrible with everyone.

STEVEN
I really didn't mean--

CONTINUED: (4)

MARK CROWN
Okay, fellas. Time to reverse this house boat and return to the beer train.

JAMES
That's a mixed metaphor, man. Makes no sense, house boat and beer train. Can't mix them like that.

MARK CROWN
What the hell are you talking about?

Billie sighs.

MONTAGE. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

We cut through a series of shots of PARTY GUESTS talking to camera, while addressing Billie.

--BRUCE, 32, Steven's brother, and his girlfriend, MASHA, 30.

MASHA
Come out to the farm. The strawberries are amazing this time of year. And we grow zucchini now. Fennel. Kale. Radishes. Tomatoes, of course.

BRUCE
Still got those other crops, too, if you're out of the woods, weed-wise.

Masha laughs.

--OLD GEEZER neighbor.

OLD GEEZER
I didn't stop thinking on you. I watched FOX all night, fell asleep in my chair, hoped to hell I never hear about a dead girl Army medic. I known you since you were born.

--JOHN SPENCE, 55, retired cop buddy of Charlie Crown.

JOHN SPENCE
I told your pop it was good for you. Character builder. Vietnam ruined character. You guys got the character war.

--VICTORIA, 48, neighbor, very fit, personal trainer.

VICTORIA
I've got a boot camp work out I run down at the river every morning. Mostly stay-at-home moms.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
I wear a drill instructor hat. Yell through a bullhorn. I have them bench press their strollers with the babies inside. They'd love it if you came by for a week, throw some real war zone workouts into the mix.

Victoria exits screen. A beat. Victoria returns.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
And oh, sorry, welcome home!

--CYNTHIA, 24, pregnant, Victoria's daughter.

CYNTHIA
He bought the Early Pregnancy Test down at Walgreen's. Didn't even wait around for the results. God, Penny is beautiful. Remember us at that age? We were gorgeous. I don't know how you did it. Leave her like that. I would fall apart.

--PHILLIP, 60, another retired cop buddy of Charlie Crown.

PHILLIP
Sit back in the easy chair. Screw it, Recline. Drink a long drink of freedom. Look around. You did it. Your husband didn't. Your brother didn't. I didn't. You had the balls. You fought. You watched men die. You are the salt of the earth. Now, glide.

Suddenly, there's YELLING IN THE BACK YARD.

--Billie's brother, Mark, and Gail's boyfriend, James, are huffing and puffing, wrestling each other to the ground in a drunken fight, throwing in the occasional errant fist.

MEN rush from every direction to break it up.

--ANNETTE, Charlie's wife of ten years approaches. Speaks to camera.

ANNETTE
Honey, are you okay? You look pale. Maybe come inside. The bedroom has the air on. All this-- It's a lot. Come lie down. You just got back. It's a lot. Billie? Billie? Are you listening. Honey. Say something!

INT. SECOND FLOOR. CHARLIE CROWN'S HOUSE - LATER

A portrait of Charlie and Annette on their wedding day (ten years ago) hangs above the bed. We hear KIDS SPLASHING IN THE POOL OUTSIDE THE WINDOW.

CONTINUED:

Billie sits in a a recliner next to the bed. She's still, as if in a trance, her mind elsewhere, her heart heavy.

SHANNON (O.S.)
You're not gonna make it, girl. Not like this.

An African-American young woman, 19, SHANNON, dressed in Army fatigues, is pacing the room, addressing Billie. She's clearly a figment of Billie's imagination. A fugue state. Just for us to see.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
Pull back. Smile a lot. You gotta lie to these people. They'll never get you. Never say what you mean, never mean what you say, and never make it sound mean.

BILLIE
I'm sorry.

SHANNON
What for? I'm still here. You did what you could for me. I liked dying in your arms anyway. We're friends forever. But you got to put us out of your mind. All of us. From now on you lie. You lie every time someone asks how you're doing. You are doing fine. No, fuck that. You are doing great. Peaches and fucking cream. You did what you could.

The door opens, snapping Billie out of her state. Annette walks in. SHE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR SHANNON.

ANNETTE
Knock, knock. How are we feeling?

SHANNON
Peaches and cream.

BILLIE
Is everyone still down there?

ANNETTE (CONT'D)
Most everyone has left.

INT. LIVING ROOM. CHARLIE CROWN'S HOUSE - LATER

Steven, Charlie, and Billie are holding drinks, standing around the sectional couch.

CHARLIE CROWN
(to Billie)
Steven and I have been talking.

BILLIE
Oh, god.

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE CROWN
Please hear me out.

CHARLIE CROWN
We think you need to postpone your return to patrol.

STEVEN
Us.

BILLIE
What? That's fucking--

STEVEN
I was going to bring this up with you earlier, but I figured your dad and I are in agreement so--

BILLIE
Why not gang up on me?

CHARLIE CROWN
Just listen.

STEVEN
GiGi says it won't be a problem. They've done it for other vets. Re-entry period. You go in Monday, fill out your back-to-work paperwork, and then they put you on light duty.

BILLIE
Light duty? No fucking way. That's like a suspension.

CHARLIE CROWN
It's a smooth transition is what it is.

BILLIE
I am smooth! This is smooth. Peaches and fucking cream smooth.

She motions around at the party.

CHARLIE CROWN
We're looking out for you, honey. Why go from fire to fire? It's thirty days.

STEVEN
I found a great seven day yoga retreat for you in Sonoma.

BILLIE
Seriously? You guys are-- Jesus. You are such fucking men. Yoga in Sonoma? Are you fucking kidding me? What is this? Protect the damaged girl? Is that it?

CHARLIE CROWN
No one used the word damaged.

STEVEN
Do you feel damaged, Billie?

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLIE
I feel like punching something.

Billie storms off. We hear LAUGHTER followed by HANDCLAPPING.

EXT. BACKYARD. CHARLIE CROWN'S HOUSE - LATER

Billie walks out of the house, past a drunk Mark, sleeping on the ground, and over to Joey who's demonstrating the wonders of his toy sound effects box for Penny and a COUPLE OF OTHER KIDS.

He presses a button and LAUGHTER is heard. The kids crack up. Billie smiles. Joey presses more buttons: CLAPPING, HOWLING, FARTING effects. Penny looks at her Mom happily.

BILLIE
That's really cool.

JOEY
They make it in China.

EXT. CHARLIE CROWN'S DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Billie puts a box full of soda cans and left-over party snacks in the trunk of an old sedan and slams the lid closed.

Charlie is leaning against the driver side door. Annette is leaning warmly against him. Steven watches from the front door.

CHARLIE CROWN
Reverse is a little tricky, otherwise she's a feline.

BILLIE
I only plan on going forward.

CHARLIE CROWN
Ha. That's my girl. Registration and insurance are in the glove box.

He brings her in for a hug.

STEVEN
We can pick it up some other day, Billie.

BILLIE
I'll need it for work.

CHARLIE CROWN
I could drive it over.

BILLIE
I'm fine. I hardly drank. And anyway, no one's going to pull me over driving your old car.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(to Steven)
Can Penny ride with me?

STEVEN
(hesitant)
That’s her choice.

BILLIE
Aren’t we the parents?

STEVEN
What if she doesn’t want to?

BILLIE
(yelling)
Penny, come out. You’re riding in mommy’s car.

STEVEN
Billie--

Charlie takes Billie’s arm and walks her a few steps away from everyone.

CHARLIE CROWN
I slept in a closet my first week back from Lebanon. Sweating. Weeping like a schoolgirl.

BILLIE
Different war, Daddy. Different schoolgirl.

CHARLIE CROWN
Wars don’t change.

BILLIE
I have my family.

Tina exits the house. A NEIGHBOR a few houses down starts MOWING his lawn. Billie jumps. Then quickly recovers.

BILLIE (CONT’D)
(yelling)
Penny let’s go.

TINA
(to Billie)
Maybe we can take Penny and Joey to Fairytale Town this week. Or Funderland?

BILLIE
Yeah. Maybe. Nice to meet you, Tina. Take good care of that brother of mine.

Suddenly, Joey comes ripping out of the house at high speed, BANGING the screen door open.

JOEY
(panicked)
My sound machine! I can’t find my sound machine! It’s gone!

INT. BILLIE'S SEDAN. MOVING - LATER

Billie is driving through Land Park. She's manic. Penny is sitting in the back, strapped in a booster seat and unhappy, her eyes red, tears drying.

BILLIE
(to rear view mirror)
See, this isn't so bad.

Penny nods.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Hey, Penny. Look.

They pass Fairytale Town, a small amusement park, closed for the night; a giant replica of The Old Woman's Shoe at the entrance; Humpty Dumpty sits on the gate.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
We are definitely going this week. Just you and me.

PENNY
Is daddy coming?

BILLIE
(annoyed)
Who?

PENNY
Daddy.

BILLIE
Never heard of him. Who is that? Friend of yours? I don't know him.

Penny stares at Billie, confused.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Just kidding, honey. Of course he can come. If he's not too busy keeping criminals and rapists properly air-conditioned.

Penny's baffled. Uncomfortable.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Hey. Check it out:

We hear SHATTERED GLASS. Then see:

Joey's red toy sound box in Billie's hand. Stolen. She depresses buttons -- INCOMING ARTILLERY ROUNDS. GONG. A WOMAN SCREAMING. FARTING.

Penny's eyes light up.

PENNY
Hey. Like Joey's.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Yeah. Like Jammer's.

She tosses the box over to Penny, who starts playing with it. Billie shifts lanes and drives furiously down the darkening freeway. Pinkish sun is setting to her left. Tunnel vision, no fear, she's totally in control of her vehicle. Penny providing the SOUND EFFECTS AND KID'S LAUGHTER.

EXT. SURFACE STREETS. DOWNTOWN SACRAMENTO - LATER

The car gets off the freeway and crosses the Sacramento River to hit the worn out edge of downtown. Loaves and Fishes homeless shelter. FOLKS who won't get in for the night pushing carts or on their bikes. Billie couldn't care less.

INT. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Billie parks the car across the street from the apartment building.

BILLIE
The sound box stays in the car, sweetie. It's just for us. Our little secret.

INT. BEDROOM. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Moonlight in the window. Billie and Steven in bed, not sleeping, not having sex, not talking, Penny lying between them, head on her dad, legs on mom.

INT. BEDROOM. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sunlight floods the room. Billie wakes up on the floor by the bed. Foggy. No idea how she got here. Penny is lying on the bed, watching her. Billie smiles. Penny bursts out laughing. Jumps off the bed and runs out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ON TV: Oakland A's at bat versus The Twins: The pitch. Line drive.

Pull back to see Steve and A FRIEND (ROBERT) watching the game, drinking beer.

Behind them, in Penny's room, we see Billie sitting on the floor, talking to someone off screen.

INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BILLIE
Mommy's always hungry.

CONTINUED:

Penny is at a toy kitchen, cooking up a storm.

PENNY
Steak and potatoes.

BILLIE
Perfect.

PENNY
Twenty minutes. You have to wait.

BILLIE
I'm not going anywhere.

She looks at her child adoringly. This is the happiest moment of her return, by far. Even the cat sidles up to her in a rare display of "warmth". But then:

PENNY
(singing)
When I was just a baby, my momma told me son, always be a good boy, don't ever play with guns... But I shot a man in Reno--

BILLIE
Jesus, did daddy teach you that?

PENNY
Daddy teaches me all kinds of songs.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

BILLIE
(calling out)
Door!

No movement in the other room. The DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. Followed by LOUD KNOCKING.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Steve. Door!

Nada. She gets up angry, trudges out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Billie walks by Steven and Robert.

BILLIE
You guys deaf?

STEVEN
It's for you, baby. Trust me.

She moves to open the door.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
I can't believe you sing FOLSOM PRISON BLUES to a five year old child.

Robert laughs.

ROBERT
Great song.

STEVEN
It's like the National Anthem for us.

Billie yanks open the door, and her jaw drops.

FEMALE VOICES (O.S.)
(giggly)
Surprise!

Six women spill into the apartment. Lead by GiGi, followed by MERCEDES, Latino, JESS, APRIL, MARGIE, and SUE, white, age range late 20's to early 30's.

They surround Billie and excitedly take turns hugging her, clearly a tipsy group. EVERYONE TALKS AT THE SAME TIME, OVERLAPPING:

GIGI
Put some drinking clothes on girl, we're taking you out.

JESS
Welcome back.

BILLIE
I can't go out. I'm cooking tonight.

JESS
We missed you.

MERCEDES
Come on, we're doing Laughs Unlimited. It's Sunday.

BILLIE
Laughs? Is that still around?

SUE
I don't mind if we stay in if you have something to drink.

MARGIE
(to Steven and his friend)
Boys, share some beer?

SUE
Stevie! It's been awhile. Who's your friend?

Penny comes to her door to check out the COMMOTION.

STEVEN
He's off limits, Claire.

BILLIE
You guys are welcome to stay for dinner.

ROBERT
I'm Robert.

GIGI
That's not an option, Billie. Already cleared it with the big man.

SUE
Robert, can I call you Bobby?

STEVEN
We're watching the game, Sue.

GiGi waves to Steven to get his attention, he salutes her.

CONTINUED: (2)

GIGI
A little help, here, Steve.

STEVEN
Go, Billie. Have fun.

BILLIE
I have nothing to wear.

JESS
Good, wear nothing, we'll get in for free. Cab's waiting.

GiGi notices Penny watching.

GIGI
Money Penny!

PENNY
Gee-Gee!

GiGi kneels down and pulls Penny in for a big hug. Billie watches this, pleased.

GIGI
Hey little girlfriend! We're gonna take your mommy out of the house for a few hours, okay?

PENNY
I'm making steaks and potatoes.
(to Billie)
Are you coming back?

BILLIE
Of course.
(to GiGi)
I should stay.

GIGI
Couple of hours. That's all.

GiGi deposits Penny in Steven's lap and the women drag Billie back to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM. BILLIE AND STEVE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Margie sits in the open window. She lights a cigarette. Puffs the smoke out.

April sits on the bed. Bounces up and down to check out the SPRINGS.

APRIL
How's the sex, Billie?

BILLIE
Amazing. Haven't slept since I got back.

APRIL
Wow!

GiGi is ripping through Billie's closet.

CONTINUED:

GIGI
Jesus, I thought MY clothes were out of date.

BILLIE
Thanks.

Mercedes pushes GiGi aside. Grabs items, holds them triumphantly above her head.

MERCEDES
Short skirt. Revealing blouse. High heels. All woman. Done.

EXT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB. OLD TOWN SACRAMENTO - NIGHT

The sidewalk by the club is mostly empty. SMOKERS loitering outside of bars. The neighborhood is like a hoaky Old West/Gold Rush movie set tailor made for TOURISTS (a few mill about).

VARGAS (OVER)
Now, I like white people, but you guys make me nervous.

INT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The AUDIENCE in the midsize comedy club laughs uneasily. The stage is set like a high school production of STREETCAR or OUR TOWN or both. DENNIS VARGAS, Hispanic, bald, bespectacled comedian, is mid-set.

VARGAS
You might think I just don't know any white people, that's not even it - I happen to be fond of white people. I did a show last week where there was nothing but white people in the audience, there were so many white people it looked like a neighborhood watch meeting. But see, it was weird, because all the comedians in there were Latinos. And it was funny, the way they had us coming up to the stage, one after another. By the time they got to me, I was confused. See, I didn't know if I was part of a comedy show or a criminal lineup.

The PACKED HOUSE, a mix of races, middle class and working class, warms up to his vibe, laughing along, last show of the week.

Billie makes her way to the bar counter that takes up the length of the rear of the room. She glances at the glossy photos of comedians behind the bar:

CONTINUED:

GILBERT GOTTFRIED. ROB RIGGLE. LOUIS CK. And a SLEW OF STAND-UPPERS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN, MOSTLY MEN, MANY OF COLOR.

GIGI
Billie, give me a hand.

Bille snaps out of eyeing the portraits and helps GiGi carry drinks to the table where the gang is sitting.

VARGAS
Yeah, see, that's why I wear these glasses, because I like to confuse white people as well. Yeah, white people look at me and think, well, I dunno, maybe this guy goes to community college. But see if I take my glasses off--
(takes glasses off)
--now I'm just a defendant. See if I put em back on--
(puts glasses on)
--Well, see, now I have my GED. Maybe from American Career College. But see if I take 'em off again--
(takes glasses off)
--well screw it, dawg I'm on parole.

Mercedes giggles and puts her arm casually around GiGi. They're a couple.

Billie watches Vargas while drinking, not a hint of a smile.

The rest of their gang are cracking up, the AUDIENCE going with the flow.

VARGAS (CONT'D)
But every now and then I really like to throw white people for a loop, 'cause I do one of these--
(places glasses on forehead)
--And now I'm just... thinking.

INT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Show's over, half the room has cleared out, it's just a bar now. LOS TEXMANIACS'S "AMOR BONITO" PLAYS ON THE SPEAKERS.

Billie pulls a pair of pink silk slippers and matching sleep blindfold out of a gift box. GiGi, Mercedes, Jess, April, Margie and Sue all drunk and getting drunker, CLAP and CHEER.

BILLIE
Gee. Thanks.

Billie places the blindfold on the table amid the rest of the opened gifts: a Dior makeup set, gift certificate to a day spa and a bottle of sparkling wine.

CONTINUED:

Then, chuckling, she kicks off her shoes and puts on the pink slippers, sits back and puts her feet up on the table. Everyone laughs. April gets up.

APRIL
I really have to go, Todd's going to kill me. He's been with the kids since lunch.

JESS
Wait!

Jess raises her glass.

JESS (CONT'D)
One more toast.

They all follow, Billie's a step behind.

JESS (CONT'D)
To pink slippers.

GIGI
Fuck that! To coming home. In pink slippers.

They click their glasses.

BILLIE
Anybody know the words to that Pink song "Who Knew"?

SUE
Google it.

BILLIE
Thanks a lot. And thanks for dragging me out of the house, guys. This is exactly what I didn't need.

They all crack up. Billie smiles.

APRIL
Now I really have to go. Todd and the kids.

Jess gets up.

JESS
Speaking of kids. I'm outta here too.

INT. HALLWAY. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB - LATER

Billie and GiGi head toward the bathroom at the back of the club. It's a tight corridor and a group of TWO MEN and a WOMAN squeeze past.

CONTINUED:

As they pass, Billie turns on MEN 1, grabs him by the throat, and shoves him against the wall.

BILLIE
You think it's funny you grab my ass?

MEN 1
(gagging)
I didn't touch you, lady.

MEN 2
What the fuck are you doing?

GIGI
(whispering in Billie's ear.)
Put the man down, Billie Crown.

Billie's staring straight through the guy she's choking.

BILLIE
Listen to me you wretched excuse for a human. If you ever grab another woman's ass--

MAN 1
(Struggling to breathe, drooling)
You're nuts, I didn't touch you!

WOMAN
(crying)
What kind of comedy club is this?

GIGI
Two drink minimum.

GiGi gently pries Billie's hands from her victim's neck.

WOMAN
I'm calling the manager.

GIGI
Tom left already. Better call the cops. We'll be at the bar.

The group leaves.

BILLIE
I got to go home.

GIGI
Stay. Penny's asleep already. I'm getting you drunk.

BILLIE
I start work tomorrow.

GIGI
Exactly. And I'll be riding your ass all day long.

BILLY IDOL'S "EYES WITHOUT A FACE" BEGINS PLAYING.

INT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB - LATER

"EYES WITHOUT A FACE" ECHOES OFF THE IPOD hooked to the sound system. The place is all but empty.

Glassy-eyed, Billie has her arms crossed on the bar, her head resting on them. She's watching GiGi, the OVERWEIGHT BARTENDER (CHUCK) and a BEER-BELLIED STRANGER drink and talk.

CHUCK
I've lost a lot of things in my life. I lost my mom. I lost my dog. I lost two watches three weeks apart. Lost an iPhone at the beach. I get lost driving every day. I can't believe I'm losing my Kings now.

GIGI
Come on, man, don't be a drama queen, they haven't made the playoffs since you were in high school.

BEER-BELLIED STRANGER
I was there at the first game in '85 against the Clippers.

CHUCK
They lost, right?

BEER-BELLIED STRANGER
Yup. I never went back. Saved me a lot of heartache.

GIGI
It's not over yet. They may stay.

Chuck shakes his head, pessimistic. Billie smiles at the Beer-Bellied Stranger; she likes him, he's got that Humpty Dumpty look. He smiles back. Moves closer. Spots the wedding ring. Stops.

BILLIE
(falling asleep)
I wasn't alive in '85.

INT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

GiGi puts her head on Billie's shoulder and SINGS ALONG to the MIA song "BOYZ" which is BLARING ON THE SPEAKERS. Bille wakes up.

BILLIE
Fuck! What time is it?

GIGI
Chuck is giving us a ride.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Did the cops show up?

GIGI
Ha. Funny.

BILLIE
Who’s Chuck?

Chuck smiles, opens his arms wide.

CHUCK
Your friendly bartender.

BILLIE
Fucking Chuck. Chucking fuck.

CHUCK
She’s awake. And she’s a poet.

Chuck pours a last round of Tequila shots. They drink them down.

He punches a button on the Ipod, kills “BOYZ”. SILENCE. Flicks a few light switches behind the bar, DARKNESS.

EXT. LAUGHS UNLIMITED COMEDY CLUB. OLD TOWN SACRAMENTO - NIGHT

The touristy street outside the club. Deserted.

The overweight Bartender, Chuck is locking up the club. Billie is leaning on a lime green Pinto across the street. She’s very drunk. GiGi props her up, holding the bag of Billie’s gifts in her other hand.

Chuck opens the passenger side door and GiGi tries to help her in. She shakes her off.

BILLIE
I can do this.

She stumbles into the passenger seat. Starts throwing fast food garbage from the floorboard out the window.

CHUCK
Hey, don’t do that.

Billie laughs. GiGi gets in the back. Billie keeps throwing car garbage out the window.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Is she going to throw up?

GIGI
Probably. Drop me off first.

They drive off.

EXT./INT. BILLIE AND STEVEN BUILDING/GREEN PINTO - NIGHT

Billie and Chuck are sitting in his lime green Pinto outside her building.

CHUCK
Can you get up there all right?

BILLIE
Watch me.

She opens the door.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Thanks for taking me home in your beautiful car. What's your name?

CHUCK
Chuck. Thanks for cleaning my car.

BILLIE
Anyone ever call you Chuckles?

She spills out of the car. He follows. She steps toward the building, her world is spinning.

CHUCK
You got the keys?

BILLIE
What?

CHUCK
Keys. To your apartment door.

BILLIE
What door? I don't live here. I live in a tent. Where'd you take me?

CHUCK
You gave me this address. What the fuck is going on?

EXT. BILLIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Billie slowly climbs up the exterior staircase.

Chuck watches her from the street. Billie stops by her door, leans over and stares at him intently.

BILLIE
I'm married.

CHUCK
I know.

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, she turns her head and vomits off the balcony onto the green Pinto parked below. Chuck manages to jump and avoid the projectile.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Jesus.

She wipes her mouth.

BILLIE
Aren't you a bartender? I bet you see people puke all the time. You probably like it.

INT. BATHROOM. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billie is in the shower, sobering up. Doesn't hear the KNOCKING ON THE DOOR until she turns off the water. Ignores it. Grabs a towel. Hears the KNOCKING again.

STEVEN (O.S.)
Billie!

BILLIE
(slurring words)
Who is it? Go away.

STEVEN (O.S.)
It's me. What's going on?

She looks at herself in the mirror. A wet mess.

BILLIE
Nothing. Just taking a shower.

STEVEN (O.S.)
Why'd you lock the door?

BILLIE
Did I?

STEVEN (O.S.)
Can I come in?

BILLIE
I'm not dressed.

STEVEN (O.S.)
Are you serious?

BILLIE
Yeah. Go to bed. I'll be right there.

She dries herself. Starts to put on her nighttime T-shirt. Then stops.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Are you still there?

CONTINUED:

No response. Then:

STEVEN (O.S.)
I'm worried about you.

BILLIE
Jesus. Why are you not in bed?

STEVEN (O.S.)
Why aren't you? Why can't I come in?

BILLIE
I just got my period.
(laughing to herself)
It's a blood bath in here.
I'll be there soon.

STEVEN (O.S.)
Okay.

She finishes getting dressed. Starts BLOW DRYING her hair. Then rethinks it, kills the dryer.

BILLIE
Please tell me you're in bed.

Pause. No answer. She sighs in relief. But--

STEVEN (O.S.)
I just wanted to make sure that you're okay. It's the middle of the night. You're making all this racket.

BILLIE
I'm okay, you're okay. Seriously Steve, do I need to ask you to vacate the premises?

STEVEN (O.S.)
You left your clothes in the living room. They smell like vomit.

BILLIE
Just keeping up with the girls.

Billie returns to BLOW DRYING her hair. Then she points the blow dryer at herself in the mirror, like a gun.

EXT. SACRAMENTO STREET - DAY

Three Armored Personnel Carriers idle on the street. A command post is running underneath a canopy. TWENTY COPS IN TACTICAL GEAR, Billie and GiGi among them, are getting the mission order.

INT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - LATER

TWENTY COPS IN TACTICAL GEAR BREAK THROUGH THE DOOR INTO A WORLD OF CHAOS.

ADDICTS who are not passed out on trashed couches and on the floor, run for their lives. Knocking over drugs to SNORT, SWALLOW, SMOKE, AND SHOOT and paraphernalia everywhere.

Cops move with guns drawn, putting PEOPLE on the floor. LOUD SHOUTING, smoke, confusion, resistance, violence, bedlam.

A YOUNG ADDICT, AFTON WILSON, tries to sneak his way to the window when Billie grabs him and takes him down with ANOTHER COP joining in.

BILLIE
On your face, shitbird.

AFTON
(laughing while struggling)
Shitbird? What is this, the Army?

Billie subdues him with the help of Another Cop. Afton's arms are covered in military tattoos.

BILLIE
Welcome home, killer.

AFTON
What's yours? Falujah? Kabul?

She doesn't answer. Cuffs him. Tight. Knee in his back deep and hard. He sees her crude jail style "RIP" WRIST TATTOO.

AFTON (CONT'D)
Rest in peace? Nice. Give it a year, soldier. I'll see you right back here with me.

BILLIE
Shut up, shitbird!

She looks around. ANOTHER MILITARY VETERAN TYPE on the floor across the room.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Jesus.

AFTON (O.S.)
One year, you're here!

She takes in the faces of the DRUG HOUSE DENIZENS getting arrested: OLD, YOUNG, CAUCASIAN, HISPANIC, BLACK, MALE, FEMALE all broken humans with no future lives, pleading innocence. Afton's getting to her.

AFTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
One year, soldier!

CONTINUED:

She kicks him in the ribs as Another Cop, surprised, not unpleasantly, by her burst of violence, gets Afton to his feet.

INT. POLICE CAR. MOVING - DAY

GiGi drives, Billie scans a newspaper.

GIGI
Recruits? You're lucky you're here. The mayor laid off 30% of the department in March. Academy cancelled indefinitely. If they didn't have to hire you back by law because you're a reservist you'd be a mall cop just like all the other newbies. What did you squeeze in, two months of probation?

BILLIE
Something like that.

GIGI
I'll tell our pal Dave Cooper. He had four years in and now he's night security at the Chevy lot at Florin and Franklin.

BILLIE
I thought that was a Cadillac dealer.

GIGI
It was.

BILLIE
Jesus. Coop's a car dealer rent-a-cop?

GIGI
You've got a hundred and fifteen days of probation left. If you keep shooting like a medic, the way you did at the range that first day, you'll join him when it all shakes out. So put that paper down. Now.

EXT. NINTH PRECINCT STATION - DAY

GiGi pulls their squad car into a car wash bay.

BILLIE
Why are you pulling in here?

GIGI
Workin' in the car wash. City can't afford the deatailers.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
Seriously?

GIGI
You scrub the tires, I'll get the rest.

She gets out of the car and walks away.

EXT. NINTH PRECINCT STATION - LATER

Alone, no way GiGi is helping her, Billie uses the pressure gun to wash the entire patrol car clean.

EXT. NINTH PRECINCT STATION - LATER

Billie scrubs the tires with soap water.

EXT./INT. NINTH PRECINCT STATION/PATROL CAR - LATER

Billie VACUUMS the floor inside the car. She seems happy, losing herself in the simple task of making something new and shiny.

Then she starts crying. Quickly losing it. Hyperventilating. Total collapse.

INT. PATROL CAR - LATER

Billie is sitting in the back of the car, like a perp. Her eyes are red from crying.

She stares ahead, then folds her arms behind her back, as if handcuffed.

A HAND KNOCKS ON THE SIDE WINDOW and she jumps. GiGi is all smiles.

GIGI
Nice job, partner. I got tied up with some paperwork.

INT. PET STORE. LAVENDER HEIGHTS - AFTERNOON

Billie, Steven and Penny are walking along a wall of dog cages.

Billie puts her fingers into one cage and is licked by a gaggle of PIT BULLS. Penny looks on shocked.

STEVEN
(to Penny)
Don't be afraid, baby. Look!

CONTINUED:

He puts his finger into the cage, unnoticed by the dogs.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
We always had dogs growing up. My dad said cats were filthy.

BILLIE
Didn't he have it backwards?

STEVEN
That man had life backwards.

We see GiGi's girlfriend, Mercedes, behind the cash register. We recognize her from the Laughs Unlimited club scene. It's her shop. She's doing paperwork.

BILLIE
(to Mercedes)
I need three pounds of organic, free range, pesticide free, locally sourced cat nip.

MERCEDES
That'll cost you, doll.

BILLIE
Then just give me mouse poison.

Mercedes and Billie hug, then Steven and Mercedes.

MERCEDES
Hey Penny.
(to Billie)
How's my girlfriend treating you?

BILLIE
Tearing me a new one.

MERCEDES
Welcome to the club.

The PHONE RINGS and Mercedes picks it up, shrugs apologetically and exits to the storeroom.

Penny turns her attention to the aquariums.

Billie stares at a bank of REPTILES: IGUANAS, SALAMANDERS, SNAKES.

STEVEN
Nasty critters. No wonder they're in solitary.

BILLIE
GiGi loves them. Merci told her they're earth's original inhabitants. That they hold the ancient secrets of living and dying. Or dying and living.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE
They're the weirdest couple. A hardass cop and a stardust hippie.

Enter Mercedes. Penny comes over.

MERCEDES
Did someone call for a Starbucks hippie?

BILLIE
Tell him about the reptiles, Merci.

MERCEDES
You need one. They are the original life force.

STEVEN
No, thanks.

MERCEDES
(quoting Shakespeare to Penny)
"Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble - fillet of fennel, snake, toad, adder's fork, lizard's leg..."

Penny laughs. Steven looks at Billie, puzzled. Billie shrugs and rolls her eyes.

BILLIE
I know. English major. Weird.

EXT. BILLIE AND STEVEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Chuck, the bartender, is sitting on the external steps of Billie's building. He's eating pretzels and drinking beer, the bag of Billie's gifts from the club night at his feet.

Billie, Penny and Steven walk up. Steven's carrying a fish tank with a SIREN in it (a salamander with front legs, a picture of nature's ugliness).

Chuck stands. Waves awkwardly to Billie. They all stop.

CHUCK
(to Billie)
Hey. You forgot this. In the car.

He hands her the bag of gifts.

BILLIE
Oh. Thanks.

She shows it to Steven.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE (CONT'D)
(to Steven)
From GiGi and the gals. Sunday.

STEVEN
(to Chuck)
Who are you?

CHUCK
Me? Chuck. I-- I work at Laughs Unlimited.

STEVEN
(to Billie)
How do you know each other?

BILLIE
We don't.

Chuck stares at Penny. She's not sure what's going on. No one is. Awkwardness stretched to the limit, before Chuck looks at the Siren aghast.

CHUCK
(pointing)
What's that?

BILLIE
The original life force, or something like that. They hold the ancient secret to something or other.

CHUCK
(still on Siren)
Jesus, that thing alive?

BILLIE
Yes. And he feeds on intruders. What do you want?

He's not sure. Offers pretzels to Penny. She takes the bag.

CHUCK
Want some? They're gluten free.

PENNY
What's that?

CHUCK
Gluten sensitivity. Can't eat rye or wheat. Barley. Stuff like that.

BILLIE
What about the beer? All the malted crap.

He shows her the can.

CHUCK
See? Gluten Free.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVEN
Billie, what the fuck is this? who is this guy?

CHUCK
I'm Chuck. I work at--

STEVEN
I got you, dude. Billie--

BILLIE
He gave GiGi and me a ride after the show. That's all. Bye, Chuck. Thanks again.

CHUCK
Oh. Okay.

He takes his pretzels back from Penny and leaves. Steven watches him go. The Siren awakes in the tank and starts moving about frantically.

EXT. SACRAMENTO STREET - DAY

Standing in the front yard of a trashed duplex Billie and GiGi talk to a SHIRTLESS MAN, ORLEANS, 35, a recently fresh stab wound healing on his chest. Next to them, at a picnic bench, are EIGHT TEN YEAR OLD'S of various races and genders wearing cone-shaped party hats. Some of them are blowing bubbles and noise makers. They're LOUD, but they look worried rather than happy.

GIGI
Has she broken the order?

ORLEANS
I mean, like, maybe once -

BILLIE
When you drunk-fucked her late at night?

ORLEANS
Hey, hey, what's with the potty mouth?

GIGI
Tell me what game you've been running on her.

ORLEANS
Three or four times, sure. As long as I put the knives and booze away, it's all good.

GIGI
How many of these kids are yours?

ORLEANS
Three.

CONTINUED:

BILLIE
And hers?

ORLEANS
Just one. Junior. Birthday boy.

He points at a SCRAWNY, FRIGHTENED KID, staring at an untouched cake.

BILLIE
When did she last drive by?

ORLEANS
Five, ten minutes max.

GIGI
What's she driving?

ORLEANS
Eighty-seven Cutlass. Black, chrome spoke wheels. Sick ass car.

GIGI
She say anything?

ORLEANS
Just driving like crazy, man, and yelling profanity, in front of the kids.

BILLIE
You are a fucking angel, right?

THE SOUND OF CAR WHEELS SCREECHING AND A MOTOR REVVING HIGH AND STRONG.

ORLEANS
That's her!

We see a black Cutlass hauling ass down the block toward the party. The DRIVER is not slowing down. She's pointing her automotive missile directly at Billie, GiGi, Orleans, and the table of children.

Moving FASTER, LOUDER, the missile is barrelling down.

GiGi and Billie draw their service pistols.

GIGI
Shoot the tires! Tires!

Two houses away, the Cutlass JUMPS THE CURB AND RIDES THE SIDEWALK TOWARD THE GROUP.

GiGi rips off multiple rounds, missing the tires.

Cutlass missile incoming --

Billie fires three shots at the Driver. Three hits.

CONTINUED: (2)

The car careens just past the table of children and into the side of the bungalow, wrecking the corner of the house.

Orleans herds the kids toward the house next door.

Billie, weapon still drawn, zeroes in on the writhing FEMALE in the driver's seat, GiGi backing her up.

FEMALE
You shot me in the fucking neck.

BILLIE
Do not move!

The Female tries to extract herself from the car. In a fluid motion Billie opens the door, rips the woman by her hair out of the car, throws her to the ground, drops to her knee, heavy on the woman's chest.

A PRIMAL SCREAM emits from the Female.

GIGI
(to Billie)
I said wheels. Fucking wheels!

The bloody woman begins fighting Billie.

BILLIE
Can I get a hand here?

GIGI
You don't need my hand. You need your union rep.

FEMALE
You shot me in the fucking neck you fucking piece of shit fucking pig whore. I'm gonna get your fucking cocksucking pig whore fat-assed --

BILLIE
(to GiGi)
Hold her down!

GiGi holds her down while Billie kicks into medic mode and starts treating the wounds.

ORLEANS (O.S.)
You shot my old lady in the neck!

BILLIE
I shot her in the neck, shoulder, and elbow. Three for three.

Billie works to stop the bleeding, focused, as in a war zone, but there are tears in her eyes.

ORLEANS
Oh, my baby. Jesus, my baby's gonna die.

CONTINUED: (3)

SOUNDS OF SIRENS APPROACHING. Billie and GiGi exchange looks.

GIGI
I said “tires”.

CUT TO BLACK:

END EPISODE

CONCRETE BLONDE’S VERSION OF “(GHOST) RIDERS IN THE SKY” PLAYS OVER END CREDITS - gorgeous, female, tough... *“Yippie yi Ohhhhh, Yippie yi Yaaaaay, ghost riders in the sky”...”*