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The Tar Pit

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The Tar Pit

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

George Douglas Morgan

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOME OF JENNIFER MENDEZ - TO ESTABLISH - NIGHT

An upscale home in Brentwood, California.

INT. HOME OF JENNIFER MENDEZ - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DR. JENNIFER MENDEZ -- brunette in her late thirties --
dressed for an important event. She is talking with CARLEY,
an old college friend.

JENNIFER
She'll probably sleep through the
night, but if she doesn't she
likes to be read to. Everything
you might need is...

CARLEY
Jen -- we've been over this how
many times? We'll be fine. Go to
your meeting.

Jennifer and Carley hug.

JENNIFER
I have to say good-bye.

KATIE'S BEDROOM

Well appointed -- a young girl's dream room. Katie - seven
years old - is asleep.

Jennifer and Carley stand in the doorway.

CARLEY
We'll be fine.

EXT. HOME OF JENNIFER MENDEZ - MOMENTS LATER

The electric garage door rises, revealing a black Mercedes
550. The car backs into the street, and drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Cars come and go on the busy street. CAMERA FINDS, then PANS TO FOLLOW, a black Mercedes 550. The assumption is it's Jennifer's car, until --

INT. MERCEDES 550 - NIGHT

At the wheel is DR. DEBRA LEARY - forty-something, and wearing an elegant evening gown and $500 hair-do.

As Debra tries to remove the last cigarette from a pack, she is distracted and doesn't see the car ahead of her breaking. Debra slams her brakes and comes to a SCREECHING stop.

DEBRA
Idiot.

THROUGH HER WINDSHIELD can be seen the silhouette of the car's driver.

INT. JENNIFER'S MERCEDES - SAME MOMENT

Jennifer looks in her rear view mirror. All she can see is a silhouette of the driver who almost rear-ended her.

INT. DEBRA'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

As traffic moves forward, Debra manages to remove the last cig, crumples the empty pack, and tosses it onto the passenger seat.

Debra pulls the lighter from its cavity, fires up the cig, then firmly replaces the lighter.

She takes a drag.

EXT. BUSY INTERSECTION IN LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer turns right, Debra moves straight ahead.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

The five-star hotel rises into the Los Angeles skyline. Debra’s Mercedes pulls into the valet parking area.
The Mercedes approaches CAMERA – stopping a few feet away. The California vanity license plate reads “PILL DOC”.

A red-vested valet opens the driver’s door. Debra steps out and glances at the valet’s name tag.

INSERT NAME TAG. His name is “TONY”.

RESUME

DEBRA
Tony – take good care of my baby.
Don’t rev the engine, keep it under forty. Watch the leather.

TONY
Yes, ma’am.

As she high-heels her way toward the hotel entrance, Tony drives off with her car.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL – LOBBY – CONTINUOUS

A sign reads “GENADYNE – HALL A”. An arrow points to the left.

Debra steps up to the check-in table. She is recognized immediately.

CHECK-IN PERSON
Dr. Leary -- they’re ready for you.

She hands Debra an id badge attached to a lanyard. Debra heads off for Hall A.

Jennifer arrives at the check-in table.

CHECK-IN PERSON (CONT’D)
Name?

JENNIFER
Jennifer Mendez.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL – HALL A – CONTINUOUS

A gala black tie dinner for five hundred people. Genadyne CEO ROY TAYLOR is speaking at the podium.
ROY
...and while our competitors continue to struggle with their bottom lines, Genadyne’s recent product approvals from the FDA are making all of us stinking rich.

As the crowd laughs, Debra enters. She seats herself at a table near the stage with six other gowns and tuxedos. One of the women at the table is sixty-something BEVERLY DEWITT.

BEVERLY
Cutting it a little close, aren’t we?

DEBRA
This is early by my standards.

Jennifer enters and sits at a TABLE NEAR THE BACK.

LADY NEXT TO JENNIFER
He’s still going. Our keynote speaker is late.

JENNIFER
I guess we have something in common.

WIDER

ROY
And now I would like to introduce our keynote speaker for this evening. As the inventor of Alacor, the world’s first successful drug to treat Alzheimer’s disease, this Harvard educated researcher has made our company the envy of the industry. A round of applause for the woman who has single-handedly doubled your stock value; Doctor Debra Leary!

A roar of applause as Debra stands up and heads for the stage. All eyes are on her. As she nears the stage, the audience leaps to their feet.

Debra arrives at the podium and waits for the audience to quiet down.
DEBRA
Well, thank you for that most enthusiastic welcome. Now if only I could get my husband to do that when I come home at night.

More audience laughter.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
My father, as you know, was one of this country’s preeminent research biologists. Whenever he was working on a project there was a saying he liked to repeat. He would tell us, “Study the problem – work the problem – solve the problem.” At Genadyne, solving problems is what we do. Alacor is just the first of a long line of drugs we will be bringing to market over the coming years, each designed to take advantage of our new understanding of the human genome. These drugs will help rid the world once and for all of many genetic maladies that have caused so much pain and suffering. At Genadyne, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL – BAR – LATER THAT NIGHT

Jennifer and a mostly empty glass of wine are sitting with two colleagues at a corner table. Jennifer is texting.

COLLEAGUE 1
I should have bought more Genadyne stock when I had the chance.

COLLEAGUE 2
I should have held on to mine.

COLLEAGUE 1
You sold it?

COLLEAGUE 2
Most of it.
Jennifer's sent message reads 'HOW IS SHE?' The received reply reads 'SLEEPING. WE'RE FINE.'

RESUME

COLLEAGUE 1
There she is.

WIDER

Debra enters the room and sits at the bar with two stockholders -- BEVERLY and ROGER.

DEBRA
Martini.

BEVERLY
Would have been nice to see Allen here.

DEBRA
He has his own career.

BEVERLY
I know - and what a career it is.

ROGER
Is he still in Zaire?

DEBRA
At least two more months. If things work out, it’ll make Alacor look like chump change.

BEVERLY
How unfortunate that he works for our competitor.

The bartender delivers Debra's drink.

BEVERLY (CONT’D)
There are rumors that Allen’s new project may actually be a cure.

This is insider information. Debra doesn’t answer.
ROGER
We’ve been hearing quite a few things via the African grapevine.

BEVERLY
We were hoping you could enlighten us.

DEBRA
Trading on insider information is still contrary to SEC rules, I believe.

ROGER
Well. Technically.

AT THE CORNER TABLE

COLLEAGUE 1
I hear she's on the short list for the Nobel in Medicine this year.

COLLEAGUE 2
I don't think there's anyone else even on the list.

COLLEAGUE 1
You should go talk to her.

JENNIFER
I don't know...

Colleague 1 leaves cash on the bill.

COLLEAGUE 1
We'll see you at the convention.

The two colleagues leave.

AT THE BAR

DEBRA
(to bartender)
I'd like another please.

He takes her glass.
BEVERLY
Unless you've come up with a drug
that cancels the effect of
alcohol, young lady, you better...

DEBRA
I'm okay. Just one more.

Beverly and Roger exchange a look.

ROGER
I could give you a lift.

DEBRA
And leave my 550 in L.A.!? No
thanks.

The bartender arrives with her drink. Beverly changes the
subject.

BEVERLY
So -- we were talking about Allen.

DEBRA
I can't speak on behalf of my
husband's company, but I do know
this: Allen just bought another
five thousand shares of their
stock.

That answer seems to mollify them.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
And I bought ten.

Now they're happy. Roger gets off his bar stool.

ROGER
Well, I'm off.

Debra and Beverly wish him good night as he leaves.

BEVERLY
Congratulations, again, Debra.
The world is a better place
because of you.

DEBRA
And I'm just getting started.
BEVERLY
Sure you’ll be okay?
(they kiss cheeks)
Drive safe. Remember – you’re not just anybody. Some people are more valuable than others.

Beverly leaves – and Debra orders another drink.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL – VALET PARKING AREA – NIGHT

Debra exits the hotel and meets a valet – MANNY.

DEBRA
Where’s Tony?

MANNY
Parkin’ a car.

DEBRA
(hands him her ticket)
Black Mercedes 550.

MANNY
The 550 – know just where it is.

He snags a Mercedes logo key from the board and runs off.

Several well-dressed people walk by and wave to Debra. One of them is Roy Taylor. He approaches Debra.

ROY
Was all of that extemporaneous?

DEBRA
I’ve given that speech so many times.

ROY
I think you made the right impression, tonight. And you made it with...

DEBRA
...the right people
TROY
...the right people.

Roy starts to walk away, then turns for a last comment.
ROY (CONT’D)
See you Monday?

DEBRA
Dedication; it’s my vice.

He smiles, then rejoins his friends.

She waves good-bye - and in so doing she almost loses her balance. A second valet catches her.

SECOND VALET
You okay?

DEBRA
Yeah. Fine. I just need my car.

SECOND VALET
Coming right up, ma’am.

The black Mercedes 550 arrives. Manny gets out - holding the door for her.

DEBRA
Do you know where I can buy some cigarettes?

MANNY
7-11; 3 blocks down - turn right, then two more blocks.

She fails to tip him - gets into her car - and drives off.

SECOND VALET
I don’t think she should be driving.

MANNY
This is L.A.: nobody tells Mercedes people what they can do.

EXT. STREETS OF LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

The Mercedes drives through an intersection just as the light turns from yellow to red. Another car HONKS in protest.
EXT. STREETS OF LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

The Mercedes drives through a quiet residential area.

INT. MERCEDES 550 - CONTINUOUS

Debra makes another turn - then sees a 7-11 not far ahead.

INT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Debra enters and walks to the front counter.

DEBRA
Pack of Menthols.

The clerk hands her the cigarettes, takes her money, and gives her change. Debra walks out.

INT. MERCEDES 550 - MOMENTS LATER

The car is parked. Debra is sitting in the drivers seat. She rips open the cigarette pack, then removes a cigarette. She reaches for the lighter.

ON DASHBOARD

But the lighter cavity is mysteriously empty. Her hand hovers over the empty lighter cavity. Debra knows she put the lighter back.

RESUME

DEBRA
What...?

She starts to notice other things. The crushed cigarette pack from earlier is missing from the front seat. She looks around the car, then glances into the back seat.

The rear seat has an empty child’s safety seat.

She realizes the valet has given her the wrong car.

Debra STARTS THE ENGINE, backs up a little too fast, then drives away.
Trash and recycle containers are set up along the street for collection the next morning.

An old HOMELESS MAN is looking through one of the containers. He finds several aluminum cans and puts them in a large plastic sack.

He has a small dog on a leash - a dirty-haired terrier.

HOMELESS MAN
Come on, Bobo.

They move on to another house and another trash can.

The Mercedes 550 approaches a four-way-stop intersection, then rolls quickly through without even slowing down.

Debra is lost, anxious, confused. Someone else may be driving her precious 550 - and that’s not acceptable.

She makes several wrong turns - increasing her anxiety.

DEBRA
Shit.

THROUGH A WINDOW she sees what looks like the hotel building a few blocks away, looming over the private homes.

Bobo and his master notice a recycle container across the street bulging with treasure.

HOMELESS MAN
Look at that one!

He pulls on the leash as he is about to cross the street.
INT. MERCEDES 550 - SAME MOMENT

Debra is distracted as she tries to find her way. She decides to go high-tech.

CLOSE ON DASHBOARD. She pushes a button marked “GPS”. A digital map of the neighborhood appears in a video screen.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Where would you like to go?

RESUME

DEBRA
Four Seasons Hotel - Beverly Hills.

All of this has distracted her. She looks up just in time to see a man directly in front of her car.

She slams the brakes with a SCREECH, but too late - BOOM!

The car comes to a stop. Debra is disoriented and confused. A few quiet beats - then the GPS mechanically responds.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Proceed to the next intersection.

Debra slowly opens her door. She hears a DOG BARKING.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

Debra carefully gets out of the car. The street is lonely, dark, deserted. DOG BARKS continue.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Proceed to the next intersection.

Debra walks to the front of the car - and in its headlights she sees the homeless man sprawled on the pavement. His terrier - dragging its leash - runs back and forth BARKING.

Empty aluminum cans litter the street.

Debra takes a closer look at the man - and notices his foot is wedged against one of her front tires, and part of one hand is caught in the grill.

The man is bleeding, and not moving.
DEBRA
Oh my god. Oh my god.

She leans over the body and looks at his bloody face. His dead eyes leave no doubt about his condition.

Her hands start to shake; panic is setting in. Her breathing is rapid. She attempts to calm herself down.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Study the problem. Work the problem.

But the incessantly BARKING DOG won’t let her concentrate.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Sh - quiet. Quiet!

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Proceed to the next intersection.

INT. MERCEDES 550 - CONTINUOUS

She gets back in - and grabs her cell phone. She dials 9. Dials 1. Then stops.

A new plan starts to form. Debra glances at the empty child seat. She grabs her purse and the cigarettes, then gets out of the car.

EXT. MERCEDES 550 - CONTINUOUS

At the front of the car - Debra examines the damage; some blood and dents in the grill and hood. The California license plate reads “1KLD672”.

The dog has stopped barking momentarily. Debra’s prior panic is being replaced by method and planning.

Debra pulls on the man’s arm, trying to free his hand from the grill. One finger is wedged tight and refuses to budge.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Proceed to the next intersection.

ON HER SHOES
Debra’s proximity to the body has caused her $800 Kate Spade high heels to be stained by the ever-enlarging blood pool.

RESUME

Rummaging through her purse, she finds a pair of scissors.

The man’s half-empty plastic grocery sack lays on the ground. She grabs it, pouring out the remaining cans.

A beat or two to build up the courage – followed by a couple of glances to make sure no one is watching.

The dog resumes BARKING.

    COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
    Proceed to the next intersection.

Debra uses the scissors to cut the man’s finger off. It’s gory and unpleasant, but she succeeds – and the four-and-a-half-finger hand PLOPS to the bloody pavement.

The dog’s BARKING is getting attention. A door to a nearby house opens. A NEIGHBOR stands in the light of the doorway.

    NEIGHBOR
    What’s going on!?

Debra hides next to the half-open car door. She stuffs the scissors into the plastic grocery sack.

She slides herself into the drivers seat. She is about to lift her feet and legs into the car when she notices the blood on her shoes.

She removes the shoes and places them in the plastic sack, then sets her feet inside the car.

The man at the doorway takes several steps toward the street.

    NEIGHBOR (CONT’D)
    Hey you...!

NEIGHBOR’S POV

The Mercedes ENGINE STARTS. The car backs up – then drives forward and around the body. It moves quickly down the street – leaving the cans, BARKING DOG, and body behind.
RESUME

The neighbor enters the street and watches the Mercedes drive away. The license plate is too small to read. He gets down on one knee to examine the body.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREETS IN LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

The Mercedes is driving erratically, and far too fast. It turns a corner and almost sideswipes a parked car. It keeps on going, and turns at the next block.

INT. MERCEDES 550 - CONTINUOUS

Debra keeps checking her mirrors - worried that someone may be following her. Her desperation shows in her driving.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Continue straight.

DEBRA
Where is it!?

As if it understood her, the GPS computer responds.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
Turn left at the next intersection.

Debra arrives at an intersection. The light is green - she turns left. She sees the hotel a block away.

On her left she sees a parking lot approaching - with a hotel valet walking away from a car.

She slows down - and sees her car parked in that lot.

EXT. VALET PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Mercedes 550 pulls into the parking lot, and parks in an empty stall.

Debra opens the car door - and stows the bag with the shoes in a dark cranny near a block wall.

With only her nylon stockings for protection, she begins the walk toward the hotel.
INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - BAR - SAME MOMENT

Jennifer puts her business card back in her purse. She gets up from her table and goes to the bar. She leaves her check and some cash, then heads for the exit.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - VALET AREA - A MINUTE LATER

Debra arrives, and hides behind a large support pillar.

It’s late, and things have slowed down. A single valet - JAIME RODRIGUEZ - stands on duty. A car pulls up and Jaime opens the door for its driver.

Debra sees an opportunity - and steps into the open. She is about to switch car keys when - in a startling moment - she BUMPS into Jennifer Mendez.

DEBRA
Oh - sorry.

JENNIFER
Doctor Leary!

DEBRA
Yes?

JENNIFER
Jennifer Mendez - Octagon Research Group.

DEBRA
Oh - hello.

JENNIFER
I enjoyed your remarks this evening. Very exciting.

DEBRA
Thank you.

JENNIFER
Our European division is working on some things that might be helpful to your research. Maybe we could meet up for coffee some time.
DEBRA
That would be fine.

JENNIFER
Here’s my card.

Debra seizes the opportunity by intentionally failing to grab the card - and it falls to the ground.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
I’m sorry.

As Jennifer stoops to pick up the card, Debra switches keys on the board.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Call me.

DEBRA
I will.

Debra is about to leave when she is stopped by -

JENNIFER
What happened to your shoes?

DEBRA
Broke one of the heels.

Debra turns, and walks away.

The valet is done with the Jaguar owner and approaches Jennifer. She hands him her ticket.

JENNIFER
Black Mercedes. 550.

The valet takes the ticket, grabs the key, and heads off.

EXT. SIDEWALK NEAR FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Debra is walking briskly toward where her car is parked. She sees someone approaching from the opposite direction.

As they get closer, she realizes it is Tony.

Debra lowers her gaze as they pass - but Tony recognizes her.
EXT. VALET PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Debra approaches her car - BEEPS it unlocked - grabs the hidden bag with the shoes - gets in the car - and STARTS THE ENGINE.

The Mercedes backs out of the parking slot, then moves onto the street, melding into traffic.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - MINUTES LATER

Debra’s Mercedes pulls alongside a dumpster. Her hand reaches out and throws the bag with the shoes into the trash.

The driver’s window closes as the Mercedes drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CITY MORGUE - NEXT MORNING

The body of the homeless man lays on a stainless steel table. A CORONER examines the body. Two detectives - GRADY and MORRIS - watch closely.

CORONER

GRADY
Which injury killed him?

CORONER
The ER physician listed cause of death as head trauma. I see no reason to disagree.

(more examining)
The injuries are consistent with impact from an automobile.

GRADY
The witness said he thought it was a Lexus.

CORONER
Your witness is wrong.
MORRIS
How can you tell?

The coroner lifts the corpse’s arm, revealing its side.

CLOSE ON SIDE – a circular bruise can be seen, surrounded by grill marks.

CORONER (O.S.)
I do believe that’s a Mercedes logo.

RESUME

MORRIS
Judging by the grill design it’s probably a 450 or 550 – no more than eight years old.

He notices their quizzical expression.

MORRIS (CONT’D)
That’s when Mercedes stopped using hood ornaments in favor of grill logos.

CORONER
Find the car – find the killer.

They turn to go.

CORONER (CONT’D)
One last thing.

Grady and Morris return their attention.

CORONER (CONT’D)
You’re looking for a very special Mercedes.

He holds up the man’s wrist, indicating the missing finger.

CORONER (CONT’D)
The victim left behind a souvenir.

The detectives turn and leave.
EXT. BENNY’S BODY SHOP – DAY

Jennifer is showing an ADJUSTER the front of her car. *

JENNIFER
I don’t know where it happened – maybe in a parking lot.

ADJUSTER
It’ll take about a week. If you want to leave it now, I’ll order a rental.

JENNIFER
Okay.

ADJUSTER
You can wait in the office.

As Jennifer heads for the office, the adjuster takes a closer look at the grill.

INT. LAPD STATION – DAY

Grady and Morris are at their desks, pouring over files.

GRADY
You went to the game?

MORRIS
Dodgers won.

GRADY
They beat Arizona?

MORRIS
Seven-zip.

GRADY
That’s gonna cost me.

Their CAPTAIN walks up – holding a folder.

CAPTAIN
That John Doe on Dunagan Street – the hit and run.

GRADY
Yeah?
CAPTAIN
Name’s Francis Keller.
(hands them a file)
Turns out he was a Medal of Honor winner. Vietnam hero. Took a grenade - shrapnel to the head. Been in and out of institutions ever since.

Morris opens the file.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Anyway - we found the driver.
Take a black and white. Bring the bitch in.

The Captain walks away.

DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Debra is cutting the homeless man’s finger from the Mercedes grill with a pair of scissors. Blood spurts everywhere.

The homeless man - devoid of pain or emotion - opens his eyes. Debra keeps cutting.

HOMELESS MAN
The metacarpal joint is the best place to cut.

Suddenly POUNDING is heard. Scared, Debra looks around to see where the sound is coming from. More POUNDING.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. LEARY HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Debra - in bed - awakes. POUNDING is heard from somewhere downstairs. She does not move. More POUNDING - insistent.

She claws her way out of bed. A drained bottle of Scotch sits on the end table.
INT. LEARY HOME - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Debra - hung over and wearing a bath robe - arrives at the bottom of the stairs. Unopened mail covers the floor.

Glass window panels on either side of the front door show the forms of at least two visitors. She peers outside - and sees a parked police car.

More POUNDING at the door - which startles her. Debra unlocks the door, then opens it a few inches.

Two uniformed POLICEMEN peer at her.

DEBRA
Can I help you?

POLICEMAN #1
Are you Mrs. Leary?

DEBRA
Yes.

POLICEMAN #2
Doctor Debra Leary?

DEBRA
That’s right.

POLICEMAN #1
Ma’am - your husband has been trying to call you. He’s worried; he asked us to stop by and check on you.

DEBRA
I’ve been sick.

POLICEMAN #2
Do you need medical attention?

DEBRA
No. Thank you.

POLICEMAN #1
You should give your husband a call; let him know you’re okay.

DEBRA
I will. Thank you.
The policemen leave. She closes the door.

INT. LEARY HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Debra dials a number on her cell.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION with ROBERT - Debra’s attorney.

Robert - late fifties - is on the golf course.

    ROBERT
    Good morning, Debbie.

    DEBRA

    ROBERT
    What’s happened?

    DEBRA
    Nothing. This is just a hypothetical.

    ROBERT
    Attorneys don’t believe in hypotheticals.

    DEBRA
    If I were involved in another DUI accident, and somebody was killed - what would I be looking at?

    ROBERT
    In California? With your record? Prison time for sure.

    DEBRA
    How much?

    ROBERT
    Five years - maybe more. Depends on the details. Is there something we need to talk about?

She BEEPS him off.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. OUR SAVIOR CHRISTIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Jennifer’s rental car - a bronze Lexus 350 - pulls into a parking slot. Jennifer gets out and steps to a four-foot high chain link fence, beyond which is a playground.

Mother and daughter spot each other, and KATIE - age seven - runs over. She has long auburn hair.

KATIE
Mommy!

As Jennifer signs out her daughter, Katie hugs her mother. Lots of love here.

JENNIFER
I’ve got a surprise for you.

KATIE
What is it?

JENNIFER
That field trip you weren’t able to go on last month - I’m taking you.

This makes Katie happy. They walk toward the Lexus.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS MUSEUM - DAY

Jennifer and Katie walk through the well-manicured grounds of the La Brea Tar Pits. They arrive at a saber tooth tiger statue.

KATIE
What is it?

JENNIFER
A saber tooth tiger.

KATIE
Do they live around here?

JENNIFER
At one time. They’re all gone now.
KATIE
What happened?

Jennifer motions toward the tar pits.

JENNIFER
Some of them died right here. They thought this was water - a pond.

KATIE
It looks like water.

JENNIFER
Things are not always what they look like. It’s really tar. When the animals went in to drink, they got stuck.

KATIE
Like glue?

JENNIFER
Yes - kind of like that.

KATIE
Why didn’t they try harder - to get free?

JENNIFER
Sometimes it doesn’t matter how hard you try.

KATIE
If I had been a saber tooth tiger, I would’ve tried harder. I would’ve done anything to be free.

JENNIFER
I’ll bet you would.

Katie walks up to a sidewalk kiosk that sells souvenirs. She picks a small plastic saber tooth tiger.

KATIE
Please.

JENNIFER
Sure.
Jennifer pays for the toy, and they walk away together.

EXT. HOME OF JENNIFER MENDEZ - DAY

Grady and Morris sit in an unmarked police car – staking out Jennifer’s home. Grady sips coffee from a Styrofoam cup.

A black and white police car pulls up and parks behind them. Cops and detectives wave at each other.

INT. GRADY’S CAR – CONTINUOUS

MORRIS
What’s that song that goes: da da - da da daaa.

GRADY
There’s no song like that.

MORRIS
Sure there is. Da da da -

GRADY
There’s no song like that.

MORRIS
Da da daaaa...

INT. JENNIFER’S LEXUS RENTAL – SAME MOMENT

Mommy and daughter are singing a song together.

JENNIFER AND KATIE
The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round. The wheel’s on the bus...

INT. GRADY’S CAR – CONTINUOUS

MORRIS
Then the chorus goes: da da daaa - da dee da.
GRADY
Bronze Lexus. There it is.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD can be seen the approaching Lexus.

MORRIS
Let’s go.

They both move to do that, then –

GRADY
Wait...

EXT. HOME OF JENNIFER MENDEZ – CONTINUOUS

The automatic garage door opens, and the Lexus pulls into the garage.

Jennifer gets out, opens the car’s rear door, and leans in. Jennifer helps Katie out of the car.

INT. GRADY’S CAR – CONTINUOUS

GRADY
She’s got a kid. We have to call Social Services.

Morris picks up the radio mic.

INT. JENNIFER’S HOME – TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Mom and daughter have settled in – watching a TV show.

KATIE
Mom – I’m hungry.

JENNIFER
Should we order pizza?

Katie smiles and nods.

KATIE
I’ve got a boyfriend now.

JENNIFER
You do?
KATIE
His name’s Ricky.

JENNIFER
Is he in your school?

She pulls a small flower from a pocket.

KATIE
He gave me a flower.

JENNIFER
Did he. Can I see?

Katie hands her the flower.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Well that’s just beautiful.

The DOORBELL is heard. Not expecting visitors, Jennifer has a quizzical look. She goes to the front door and opens it.

Grady and Morris stand there.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
May I help you?

GRADY
Jennifer Mendez?

JENNIFER
Yes.

GRADY
Detective Grady - my partner
Detective Morris. We’re with the LAPD. Could we come in?

Jennifer opens the door wider, and the detectives enter. She notices two uniformed officers coming up the walkway.

MORRIS
Your Mercedes was involved in an accident recently.

JENNIFER
Yes. Thank god - did you find who did it?
GRADY
That’s what we would like to
discuss with you.

Jennifer is about to close the door when she sees a marked
L.A. County Social Services car pull up to the curb.

JENNIFER
What’s going on?

GRADY
Did you attend an awards dinner at
the Four Seasons Hotel last
Saturday evening?

JENNIFER
Yes.

MORRIS
The Mercedes you left at the body
shop earlier – did you drive that
car to the hotel?

JENNIFER
Yes.

MORRIS
Was there anyone else with you who
might have driven the car at some
point – perhaps a designated
driver?

JENNIFER
Designated...No!

A SOCIAL SERVICE WORKER approaches the front door.

GRADY
Did you have any drinks that
evening?

JENNIFER
One. Some wine. I don’t see...

GRADY
Are there any other children
living here besides your daughter?

JENNIFER
No. Why?
KATIE
Mommy - what’s going on?

JENNIFER
I don’t know, sweetie.

Jennifer puts her arm around Katie and holds her close.

Grady motions to the social worker, who approaches Katie.

SOCIAL WORKER
Young lady, I’m going to need you to come with me.

JENNIFER
WHOA! Stop right there! What the hell...

GRADY
Jennifer Mendez - you’re under arrest for vehicular manslaughter in the death of Francis Keller.

JENNIFER
What!?

KATIE
Mommy?

GRADY
Your daughter is being taken into protective custody by...

JENNIFER
Take your hands off her! Are you people insane!?

A scuffle erupts, which morphs into a major fight. Screaming, pulling, punching.

Mom and daughter are physically torn apart. At that moment of separation, Katie’s long auburn hair falls off her head - a wig. She is bald.

Time stands still.

MORRIS
Oh shit.

Jennifer seizes the moment and goes to her daughter.
JENNIFER
Katie has A-L-L.

She notices their clueless reaction.

JENNIFER (CONT‘D)
Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia. Her treatment is ongoing — very complex and rigorous. I cannot be away from her for more than a few hours.

SOCIAL WORKER
I’l1 need you to hand over all her medications along with a list of her physicians and...

KATIE
Mommy - what’s going on?

Jennifer picks up the wig, places it back on her daughter’s head, then lovingly adjusts it.

GRADY
We’ll make sure she is well cared for. But you will have to come with us.

Jennifer and Katie hug and cry.

KATIE
Don’t leave me, mommy!

Katie is pulled from her mother’s arms and led outdoors. Jennifer and the officers follow.

KATIE (CONT‘D)
MOMMY!

INT. GENADYNE - GENERAL OFFICES - DAY

Debra enters the large room. About fifty employees work in cubicles. The executive offices line the walls.

About a dozen kiss-ass lower level employees “Hello Dr. Leary” her as she makes a beeline for Roy’s office.
INT. GENADYNE – ROY TAYLOR’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

The door is open – Debra enters.

ROY TAYLOR
Debra – great speech the other night.

DEBRA
The abstract?

Roy hands her a booklet.

ROY TAYLOR
You have forty-two minutes.

As Debra turns to leave –

ROY TAYLOR (CONT’D)
Debra. I assume you know – this is two billion dollar deal.

She gives him a wink, then leaves.

INT. GENADYNE – DEBRA’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Debra enters and sits at a very large granite-top desk. Just as she gets comfortable, Nadine pokes in.

NADINE
Allen is Skyping you.

Nadine leaves, and Debra clicks a link on her computer.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

ALLEN LEARY – is facing off to one side, unaware his wife has tuned in. He is wearing hot weather bush clothing – and a small monkey on one shoulder.

He turns to his monitor and notices Debra has arrived.

ALLEN
Oh. Hi, dear.

DEBRA
I can’t believe you had the police out looking for me.
ALLEN
Well - I must have called you a dozen times.

DEBRA
I had the stockholders meeting. And now I have to...

ALLEN
Wait.
(types on keyboard)
I’m sending you some stuff. It’s encrypted, of course. We found...

An African man - ULO - sticks his head into view.

ULO
Hello Mrs. Leary.

A toothy grin - then he’s gone.

ALLEN
We found a way to synthesize the extract. We’ve got some data that’s gonna blow your socks off.

DEBRA
I’ll look at it after my meeting.

The monkey suddenly SCREECHES and jumps off Allen’s shoulder toward his monitor - which causes the signal to interrupt. The screen goes blank.

Debra picks up the booklet Roy had given her and opens it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAPD INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT
It’s typical - small table, two chairs. Jennifer is alone.

JENNIFER
Hello? Anybody? I’ve been here for hours. Somebody want to tell me what’s going on?

A few beats, then detectives Grady and Morris enter.
GRADY
Sorry to keep you waiting.

JENNIFER
Sorry to keep me waiting? What are you - some kind of idiot? You take my seriously ill daughter away to god-knows-where, arrest me on a phony charge...

GRADY
Your daughter is being well taken care of.

JENNIFER
How would you know - is oncology your second job? I’m the only one trained to administer her medication and treatment.

GRADY
Social Services has arranged for her care. You’ll be happy to know she will be staying with your brother.

JENNIFER
CJ!? Oh my god. News item: He’s not a responsible person.

MORRIS
If you want to be reunited with your daughter, the best thing you can do is cooperate.

GRADY
Manslaughter is a very serious charge, Mrs. Mendez.

JENNIFER
Ms.
Manslaughter. Okay, I give up. Who am I supposed to have manslaughtered.

Morris hands her an 8x10 glossy of the Francis Keller’s battered body.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Who is this?
GRADY
Francis Keller - no current address.

MORRIS
That’s cop-speak for “homeless”.

GRADY
Is this your car?

An 8x10 showing the damaged Mercedes.

JENNIFER
Yeah. Somebody hit me in a parking lot. They didn’t leave a note.

MORRIS
Did you attend the Genadyne shareholders meeting last week?

JENNIFER
I already told you - yes.

GRADY
Why?

JENNIFER
I’m a shareholder.

MORRIS
Did you have anything to drink after the meeting?

Jennifer chooses to be honest.

JENNIFER
Half a glass of wine.

Next: her motor vehicle report.

GRADY
We ran your MVR - you have a DUI on your record.

JENNIFER
This is California - everyone has a DUI on their record!
MORRIS
You had a drink, you left the hotel, a man crosses the street in front of you - it’s dark, you’re disoriented from the alcohol - you hit him.

GRADY
And kill him.

JENNIFER
What makes you think it was me?

MORRIS
The body shop guy pulled this from your grill.

And now the plastic bag with the cut-off finger.

No one speaks for several seconds. Jennifer is smart, and she quickly develops an alternate theory.

JENNIFER
Well I can tell you right away who did this.

MORRIS
Who?

JENNIFER
One of the valet kids. They drove my car twice that night. Have you talked to them?

GRADY
We have.

JENNIFER
And?

GRADY
There’s a witness, Mrs...Ms. Mendez.

JENNIFER
A witness.
MORRIS
A neighbor saw a well-dressed
brunette woman at the scene drive
away in the car.

GRADY
Suffice to say his description
does not match any of the valets.

A few beats as the weight of the world lies upon her.

MORRIS
Now - you wanna tell us what
really happened?

The door opens and KURT SAMUELSON - Jennifer’s attorney -
enters like a hurricane.

SAMUELSON
Everyone shut up.
(to Jennifer)
Do me a solid - don’t ever talk to
the police about anything anywhere
at any time for any reason.
(to the cops)
You two - get the fuck out.

The detectives gather their evidence and leave.

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
I’ve going to request bond, but
let me make one thing very clear:
you are in a shitload of trouble.

JENNIFER
I didn’t hit that man. Somebody
else must have been driving my
car.

SAMUELSON
Who?

JENNIFER
I don’t know - don’t they have
video surveillance at the hotel?

SAMUELSON
Apparently not in the valet area.
JENNIFER
I need to be with Katie. She needs me. I have to make bail.

SAMUELSON
Yeah, well, ya see – here’s the problem. That guy’s finger didn’t just break off. According to the coroner, somebody cut it off with a pair of scissors.

JENNIFER
Will I make bail?

SAMUELSON
This is more than just a hit and run. And there’s your prior DUI...

JENNIFER
Will I make bail?

SAMUELSON
And we have to deal with this war-hero-Medal-of-Honor thing...

JENNIFER
Can you get me out or not!?

SAMUELSON
Probably not.

Dissolve to:

INT. CHOWCHILLA PRISON - CELL HALLWAY - DAY

Thirty or so cells line the hallway. Minimum security, so the doors are open. Orange is the new black.

Accompanied by STEVIE - a female prison guard - Jennifer walks past each cell carrying a sheet, blanket, and towel.

TENEESHA JOHNSON - a black inmate - stands with her two friends - LOLANDA and JACKIE - watching Jennifer’s approach.

TENEESHA
Lookit this.
LOLANDA
Snow White has entered the
building.

JACKIE
See that haircut?

TENEESHA
Oh yeah. We gots us a rich white
bitch.

Jennifer and the guard pass their position. The guard stops
Jennifer at a cell two cells down from Teneesha’s.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
Stevie – ya know we doan allow no
white bitches on this floor.

STEVIE
Shut up, Johnson.
(to Jennifer)
Make your bed. Next meal is at
six.

As the guard leaves, Teneesha blows Stevie a kiss.

INT. PRISON – JENNIFER’S CELL – MOMENTS LATER

Jennifer is sitting on her cot. Teneesha appears at her
door – Lolanda and Jackie right behind her.

TENEESHA
(friendly)
Hello there.

JENNIFER
Hi.

TENEESHA
What did you do?

JENNIFER
Do?

TENEESHA
Yo’ crime, girl. Why’d they put
yo’ ass in here?
JENNIFER
Oh, I didn’t do anything. I’m
innocent.

Teneesha exchanges a look with her two friends.

TENEESHA
Yo’ innocent.

JENNIFER
That’s right. Completely
innocent.

TENEESHA
Well, ‘round here we have what we
call the “innocence tax”.

Teneesha grabs Jennifer’s towel and hands it to Jackie.

JENNIFER
What are you doing?

Teneesha hands the bed sheet to Lolanda.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
What are you doing!?

Teneesha takes the blanket for herself.

TENEESHA
Gets real cold here at night.

JENNIFER
Why did you take my bedding?

LOLANDA
She called it ‘bedding’.

Teneesha and her two friends leave.

Jennifer gets off the cot and stands in her doorway.

INT. PRISON - CELL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer eyeballs Teneesha.

TENEESHA
Maybe you could call the concierge
and order more “bedding”.

41
Conversation over - Teneesha enters her cell.

Jennifer looks around the prison interior. No pity, no empathy. She tears up, re-enters her cell, sits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEARY HOME - STUDY - NIGHT

Debra sits at a computer watching encrypted data scroll up the monitor. She types a few commands - then the scrolling stops and the encrypted data turns into readable text.

She slowly pages through the information Allen has sent her. She is intent - this information is impressive.

Her cell phone RINGS - she answers.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DEBRA
Yeah.

ROY TAYLOR
Debra.

She talks to her CEO, but keeps her eyes on the monitor.

DEBRA
What’s up, Roy?

ROY TAYLOR
“What’s up” the woman says. A two billion dollar deal with Eli Lilly - that’s what’s up. Really good work today.

DEBRA
Mm hmm.

INSERT MONITOR

A line of text reads: ALL SEVEN SPECIMENS IN REMISSION.

RESUME

ROY TAYLOR
I think you’ll be more excited when you see your bonus check.
Debra is barely paying attention to him.

INSERT MONITOR

The last line of the text: STILL CAN’T RESOLVE TOXICITY. COULD USE YOUR HELP!!

RESUME

DEBRA
Roy; I’m going to need to take some vacation time.

ROY TAYLOR
Vacation time. Debra Leary never takes vacation time. How much?

She BEEPS off.

INT. PRISON - FAMILY VISITING AREA - LATER

Katie, CJ, and Kurt Samuelson sit at a round table waiting for Jennifer. Other prisoners and their families sit nearby.

A door opens and Jennifer enters.

Mother and daughter run to each other and embrace.

GUARD
No touching!

Jennifer does not want to risk ending the visit before it’s started, and she complies.

JENNIFER
They have very strict rules here, honey.
(to CJ)
Thanks for bringing her.

KATIE
Mommy - when are you going to come home?

JENNIFER
Not for a little while, sweetie. How is school?
KATIE
Not good.

JENNIFER
Not good?

KATIE
The kids make fun of me.

JENNIFER
For what?

KATIE
They say bad things about you. And they make fun of me ‘cause of it.

JENNIFER
(tearing up)
Don’t you let them, sweetie. You talk to your teacher. Don’t let them make fun of you.

Katie hands a small object to her mother.

INSERT TOY

It is the toy saber tooth tiger from the museum.

GUARD (O.S.)
Stop!

RESUME

The guard steps up to the table and takes the toy.

CJ
I didn’t know she was going to do that.

JENNIFER
Please – she doesn’t understand the rules.

The guard examines the toy. When she is confident it is not hiding drugs or contraband, she hands it back to Katie.

SAMUELSON
You’re not allowed to give anything to the prisoners.
KATIE
I’m sorry.

The guard walks off to watch other prisoners.

CJ
Jenny – we need some money.

JENNIFER
How much?

CJ
Twenty thousand dollars.

JENNIFER
Twenty thousand!? What for?

CJ
Tammy wants to enroll her in a private school. There’s tuition, uniforms, books...

JENNIFER
Don’t you think you should talk to me before changing her school?

CJ
County says we can enroll her wherever we want.

Jennifer looks to her attorney for verification. He nods.

JENNIFER
Fine.

CJ slides a pen and an 8 x 10 form across the table.

CJ
Need your signature.

The guard nods her approval, and Jennifer signs. CJ takes the pen and paper.

He gets up and takes Katie by the hand.

JENNIFER
Where are you going?
CJ
The Steelers game: don’t wanna
miss the kickoff.

JENNIFER
But you just got here!

As CJ leads Katie away, Katie checks to make sure the guard
is not watching. She breaks free and returns to her mother –
pushing the toy tiger into Jennifer’s hands.

SAMUELSON
Katie...

KATIE
(whisper)
Remember the tar pits.

She returns to CJ and they leave the room.

JENNIFER
What is happening to me?

SAMUELSON
Listen – the judge turned down our
appeal on the bond request.

JENNIFER
How much longer do I have to be in
here?

SAMUELSON
If they don’t allow a release on
bond, you’ll be incarcerated until
the start of the trial.

JENNIFER
When is the trial.

SAMUELSON
Right now it’s scheduled for July.

JENNIFER
What!? That’s four months away.

SAMUELSON
And it could get postponed.
Jennifer stares off into space.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REMOTE VILLAGE IN ZAIRE - TO ESTABLISH - DUSK

Numerous thatched roof, open-air dwellings are scattered about. Poverty, dung fires, naked children.

The largest building is a makeshift thatched-roof clinic.

INT. REMOTE VILLAGE IN ZAIRE - CLINIC - DUSK

Dr. Allen Leary is at a table working with Ulo - a young medical assistant.

Microscopes and various medical devices are scattered about. Allen’s pet monkey runs playfully around their work area.

A dozen cages holding a dozen rhesus monkeys line one wall.

Allen is making notes on a legal pad. Ulo is looking through a microscope. It’s getting dark, so he pauses in his work to light a Coleman lantern.

Both men have an air of frustration.

ALLEN
So whatta we got?

ULO
Just like the others. We can cure the disease, but the toxicity destroys the liver.

ALLEN
So the cure is worse than the disease.

ULO
Unless we can fix the toxicity problem.

Allen rubs his eyes.

ALLEN
What are we doing wrong?
The headlights of an approaching Ranger Rover wash over the building.

ULO
She’s here.

Allen returns to his microscope.

ULO (CONT’D)
You should pretend you’re happy to see her.

ALLEN
I am happy to see her.

ULO
Right.

ALLEN
We need her.

Allen notices Ulo is concerned about something.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
What is it?

ULO
She works for Genadyne. What if...

ALLEN
Debra works for Debra.

The Range Rover pulls up to the clinic. Allen walks up to meet it. Debra gets out, hefting a small duffel bag.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
Hi, dear.

They peck a kiss.

DEBRA
How’s your project?

ALLEN
Making progress.
DEBRA  
That bad. Okay - starting  
tomorrow we study the problem,  
work the problem...  

ALLEN AND DEBRA  
...solve the problem.  

DEBRA  
Where's your hut?  

ALLEN  
Right there.  

DEBRA  
Make sure they don't get any mud  
on my gear.  

She walks across the muddy road to a hut, and enters.  

Ulo and the driver begin unloading her gear. Ulo  
“accidently” drops a duffel bag into the mud.  

ULO  
Oops.  

Allen and Ulo stifle a laugh, then Allen pitches in to help.  

DISSOLVE TO:  

INT. PRISON - CAFETERIA - DAY  

Teneesha, Lolanda, and Jackie are at a table having lunch.  
They see Jennifer approaching with a tray of food, looking  
for a table.  

At just the right moment Teneesha sticks her foot out and  
trips Jennifer - who goes sprawling.  

Jennifer looks up to see the three women laughing. Other  
inmates are laughing and cheering.  

TENEESHA  
Ya gotta be mo’ careful, bitch.  

A guard approaches.  

GUARD  
Mendez – pick up your shit.
Jennifer puts her lunch back on her tray and stands up. She faces Teneesha.

JENNIFER
(so everyone can hear)
By the way - bitch. When you need more bedding, you call the front desk, not the concierge.

As Jennifer turns to go, Teneesha’s smug smile vanishes.

TENEESHA
Hey!

When Jennifer turns around, Teneesha SMASHES her food tray across Jennifer’s face. She collapses.

The inmates turn into a shouting mob. Jennifer gets up and starts to brawl with Teneesha.

Two guards run up and tear them apart.

Jennifer is bleeding from the forehead. A third guard tosses Jennifer a hand towel.

GUARD
Get to the infirmary.

INT. PRISON - JENNIFER’S CELL - THAT NIGHT

Jennifer lies on her bunk - a large gauze bandage across her forehead. Somewhere in the prison a cell door BANGS closed.

A loud BUZZ is heard. Then the main LIGHTS GO OUT.

Jennifer tries to keep control, but fails. She tears up. She turns on her side and attempts to find sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REMOTE VILLAGE IN ZAIRE - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Drinks in hand - Allen, Ulo, and the two lab techs sit in folding chairs around a campfire.
ALLEN
You’re not happy.
(no response)
What is it.

ULO
We’ve spent three years doing all the heavy lifting - all the hard work. And now...

ALLEN
...now you’re afraid she’ll take all the credit.

ULO
It’s happened before.

ALLEN
We needed her. No one else could have solved that problem so quickly.

They are interrupted by the arrival of Debra. She sits in the one remaining chair.

Allen sees Debra’s glass is almost empty. He picks up a wine bottle and refills it. There is a celebratory atmosphere.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
You’re a genius dear.

DEBRA
I am.

ULO
So - what happens next?

DEBRA
We write the journal article - get it peer reviewed - publish it...

ALLEN
Muddle through seven years of FDA trials.

DEBRA
Unless we get it fast-tracked.
You still have that friend in Washington?
He smiles - it’s affirmative.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
I can’t over emphasize how important secrecy is from this point on.

They CLINK glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LEARY HOME - MORNING

A limousine-for-hire pulls into the driveway and stops. The driver gets out and opens the door for Debra.

Debra and her new African tan step out and walk toward the front door.

INT. LEARY HOME - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. Debra enters and almost trips over the pile of mail on the floor.

INSERT cell phone.

Roy is calling.

RESUME

Debra BEEPS the phone - refusing the call. She picks up the mail and dumps it on a table.

She leaves the door open for the driver to bring in her gear, then moves to the -

KITCHEN

As Debra begins making coffee, her cell RINGS again. This time she answers.

DEBRA
Yeah.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION with her attorney.

ROBERT
Are you back?
DEBRA
Yeah.

ROBERT
Just checking to make sure you’ll be there Friday.

DEBRA
Be there?

ROBERT
The court appearance. I assume you received at least one of my three-hundred e-mails.

DEBRA
There’s no internet cell phone service in the African bush, Roy. At least not yet.

ROBERT
Listen. You’ve been subpoenaed to appear at a trial. Do you know someone named Jennifer Mendez?

DEBRA
No.

ROBERT
Well she knows you. Miss Mendez has been charged with vehicular manslaughter. Apparently she ran over some homeless guy and the D.A. has added driving-under-the-influence to the charges. Mendez claims she met you outside of some meeting that night and that you can testify that she was alert and sober. Is that true?

Debra realizes what has happened.

ROBERT (CONT’D)
Debra?

DEBRA
Yes. Right. What time?
ROBERT
This Friday, Courtroom 40, eight-thirty. Don’t miss it – don’t be late.

DEBRA
Of course. Oh, and Robert, would you please make arrangements for me at Genadyne. I’m putting in my notice.

ROBERT
You’re quitting?

DEBRA
Allen and I are setting up our own company. Make sure I get everything that’s due me.

ROBERT
No problem. And Debra – check your e-mail.

Debra resumes making coffee.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT BUILDING - COURTROOM 40 - DAY

Not the trial of the century – the gallery is almost empty.

A JUDGE sits at the bench. The court reporter types quietly. The jury is in place.

Two PROSECUTORS sit at one table.

Jennifer Mendez sits at the defendant’s table with a young female assistant attorney. Jennifer’s brother – CJ – sits behind Jennifer with Katie and his wife Laura.

Standing beside Jennifer is her attorney, Kurt Samuelson, who is questioning Tony – the valet.

SAMUELSON
You were on duty at the Four Seasons Hotel on the night Francis Keller was killed – is that correct?

TONY
Yes sir.
SAMUELSON
Did you see or talk to my client, that night?

TONY
No sir. We were very busy.

SAMUELSON
Yes - let’s talk about that. We’ve heard testimony from one other witness that there have been at least two cases in which the valets delivered to a customer the wrong vehicle. Is that true?

TONY
I’ve heard of it - but it’s rare.

SAMUELSON
But it does happen.
(Tony nods)
Could it have happened that night?

TONY
Not that I know of.

SAMUELSON
My customer owns a very nice car. Is it possible one of the valets may have been joyriding with it that night?

TONY
Not that I know of.

SAMUELSON
But it’s possible...

PROSECUTOR
Possible schmossible. Maybe aliens took the car. Without any evidence...

JUDGE
Yes yes. Mr. Samuelson?

Samuelson turns to look at the gallery. Debra is still a no-show, but he’s out of questions.
SAMUELSON
That’s all I have.

He sits down as the prosecutor stands up.

PROSECUTOR
Your honor – we have no questions for this witness.

As Tony steps down and heads for the door, Samuelson confers with his client.

SAMUELSON
If she doesn’t show up, we’ll have to beg for a continuance – and this judge doesn’t like granting them.

JENNIFER
Maybe she’s still out of the country.

SAMUELSON
No. Her attorney told me she’d be here.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT BUILDING - HALLWAY - SAME MOMENT

Tony exits Courtroom 40 and heads down the corridor. Debra – in no hurry – is approaching from the opposite direction. They pass each other – exchanging imperfect recognition.

Tony keeps walking, then turns his head for one more look.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT BUILDING - COURTROOM 40 - SAME MOMENT

JUDGE
Mr. Samuelson. We need a witness.

SAMUELSON
If it please the court, I’m certain she will be here. If we could have a recess...

Jennifer hears something. She turns around and sees Debra enter the courtroom. Jennifer smiles – happy and relieved.
She puts her hand on Samuelson’s arm to notify him. He turns and sees Debra sit in the gallery.

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
Your honor - my witness has arrived. The defense would like to call Dr. Debra Leary to the stand.

Debra walks to the stand. An L.A. SHERIFF swears her in.

SHERIFF
Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth in all matters relating to this court?

DEBRA
I do.

SHERIFF
Be seated.

As she sits, Samuelson stands.

SAMUELSON
Dr. Leary - could you please tell us a bit about your educational background.

DEBRA
Certainly. I have a BS degree in biology from Princeton, a Masters in microbiology from Harvard, and a Doctorate in neurological disease - also from Harvard.

SAMUELSON
And your current employment?

DEBRA
I’m President of the Advanced Research Division of Genadyne.

SAMUELSON
And what do they do?
DEBRA
We specialize in using genome technology for finding cures for neurological and genetic-based disease.

SAMUELSON
And you are the inventor of Alacor - is that correct?

DEBRA
Well, Alacor was a team effort...

SAMUELSON
But the principle breakthrough, as I understand from medical journals, is attributed solely to you.

DEBRA
It is.

SAMUELSON
Congratulations. The world is a better place because of you.

Throughout this testimony Jennifer looks happy - finally the truth is coming out.

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
Now I’d like to turn your attention to an event that happened almost three months ago. You gave the keynote speech at Genadyne’s annual shareholders meeting here in Los Angeles - is that correct?

DEBRA
Yes.

SAMUELSON
And after that meeting you were waiting outside of the hotel near the valet parking area.

DEBRA
Yes.
SAMUELSON
And while you were waiting you had a conversation with my client, Jennifer Mendez.

DEBRA
I did.

SAMUELSON
How long did that conversation last?

DEBRA
About a minute.

SAMUELSON
Thank you. And could you elaborate on that conversation? What was Jennifer’s state of mind – was she alert? Was she lucid? How would you describe her?

For the first time, Debra is reluctant to answer.

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
Dr. Leary?

DEBRA
I feel terrible.

SAMUELSON
What do you mean?

DEBRA
I feel ashamed I didn’t speak up at the time.

JUDGE
Just answer the best you can.

DEBRA
She had obviously been drinking. You could smell it on her breath, and she had trouble standing.

Jennifer’s confident smile morphs into shock.

The attorney is caught off guard. But he is smart enough to know the questions have to stop.
SAMUELSON
No further quest...

DEBRA
If I had only said something - if I had taken the keys out of her hand - that poor man would be alive...

SAMUELSON
No further questions.

DEBRA
Honestly - I blame myself.

SAMUELSON
That’s all! Your honor?

JUDGE
I don’t suppose the prosecution would like to cross.

One of the prosecutors stands.

PROSECUTOR
With pleasure.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT BUILDING - HALLWAY - HALF HOUR LATER

Awaiting the jury’s verdict, Jennifer sits on a hallway bench holding Katie. Samuelson sits beside them. CJ and Laura stand nearby, whispering.

SAMUELSON
You want to tell me why we put that woman on the stand?

JENNIFER
She lied.

SAMUELSON
Okay - but why? Why would she lie?

Clueless, she just shakes her head.

JENNIFER
How long do you think the jury will take?
SAMUELSON
My guess is it’ll be quick.

The sheriff enters the hallway. He doesn’t have to say it: the jury is back.

Jennifer’s adrenaline kicks in - she holds Katie by her shoulders.

JENNIFER
Listen to me. You’re going to be living with your uncle a while longer.

KATIE
(teary-eyed)
I want to stay with you.

JENNIFER
I know, honey. Remember how we talked about being brave? This is it - this is one of those times.

KATIE
I’m not going to leave you.

JENNIFER
You must be brave.

Mother and daughter cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEARY HOME - STUDY - DAY

Debra is wearing reading glasses as she types on a laptop. A few moments - then Allen enters with a large envelope.

ALLEN
The last peer review is in.

DEBRA
Whose.

ALLEN
Emile Gaston.

DEBRA
Johns Hopkins. And?
ALLEN
Knocked it out of the park.
   (hands her a letter)
And - Oncology Today has agreed to publish.

DEBRA
Of course - how could they not.
   (stops typing)
I should have it ready by tonight.

There’s a sense he has more to say, but all he manages is -

ALLEN
You did good.

He walks toward the door and is stopped by -

DEBRA
We’re going to be rich, Allen.

ALLEN
We’re already rich.

DEBRA
I mean ultra-rich - as in: we’ll-buy-the-South-of-France rich.

ALLEN
We don’t really need any more money. Maybe we could start a foundation or something.

DEBRA
You’re kidding - right?

Allen turns and leaves the room. Debra resumes typing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DEBRA’S NEW LAB - TO ESTABLISH - NIGHT

A two story brick building on a quiet street. Nondescript and nothing special. Moving vans are parked outside.
INT. DEBRA’S NEW LAB - DAY

A large loft with windows. Delivery people carry in and set up various tables and equipment and medical gear.

DEBRA
Those tables will go in the far corner...careful - that’s fragile...those boxes: put against the wall for now.

Her CELL PHONE RINGS.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Hi dear.

ALLEN
You got our new lab set up?

DEBRA
Working on it. Were you able to get a flight?

ALLEN
Yes. Tomorrow at nine.
You ready to change the world?

DEBRA
Again?

ALLEN
See you soon.

She BEEPS off.

DEBRA
No no - over there.

As the men move more stuff, Debra turns and gazes out the large windows onto the street below. She sees something.

DEBRA’S POV

Tony - the valet - stands on the sidewalk watching her.
EXT. DEBRA’S NEW LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Debra exits the building and casually crosses the street.

    TONY
    I put two and two together.

    DEBRA
    I know you.

Tony seems nervous.

    TONY
    I put two and two together -
    that’s what I did.

    DEBRA
    You are...

    TONY
    Picture me in a red vest.

    DEBRA
    Oh yeah - Tony. The valet.

    TONY
    That’s me.

    DEBRA
    What are you doing here, Tony?

    TONY
    Been trying to find you.

    DEBRA
    Did I forget to tip you or
    something?

    TONY
    As a matter of fact.

    DEBRA
    Well here - let me take care of
    that.

She hands him a $5 bill. He slaps it away.

    TONY
    We have business. You and me.
DEBRA
You want to park my car again?

TONY
I know it was you. You killed that homeless guy.

DEBRA
Perhaps you’re unaware – a woman named Jennifer Mendez was convicted of that heinous crime.

TONY
You came back to the hotel – you were barefoot. Jaime brought that other lady’s car in and I saw the damage. I put two and two together.

Debra stays quiet.

TONY (CONT’D)
You got the wrong car – it happens. When things get busy. I want a hundred thousand dollars.

DEBRA
If you contact me again I’ll file a complaint.

She walks away.

TONY
The time is all wrong – that’s how I figured it out.

She keeps walking.

TONY (CONT’D)
Sal always leaves at eleven. He was gone by the time Mendez got her car.

Debra stops and turns around.

DEBRA
Sal?
TONY
Jaime takes over for Sal at eleven. But the 9-1-1 call was at ten-fifty.

DEBRA
If you think you have something on me, why aren’t you talking to the police?

Tony averts her gaze. She walks back toward him.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
You’re not legal, are you, Tony.

Tony says nothing.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
What do you have – a counterfeit green card?

TONY
I want a hundred thousand dollars.

DEBRA
(laughs)
For what?

TONY
For this.

He pulls a card from his pocket.

TONY (CONT’D)
Jaime’s time card. Shows he clocked in at eleven. How could he get Mendez’s car when the accident happened ten minutes before he got to work?

Debra realizes his logic is irrefutable.

DEBRA
All right.

TONY
All right? Just like that?

DEBRA
Just like that.
TONY
How long will it take?

DEBRA
To get a hundred thousand cash? A day. Where do you want to meet?

TONY
Some place safe.

Debra laughs.

DEBRA
Some place safe? Tony - what happened to that man was an accident. I’m not a killer. Come by tomorrow night at seven and we’ll do the trade.

TONY
After this you’ll only have one loose end to deal with.

He can see she doesn’t get it.

TONY (CONT’D)
Mendez. Eventually she’s going to figure out what happened.

Tony turns and walks up the dark street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

A hot day. About twenty Chowchilla prisoners are hoeing weeds beside a rural two-lane road. One of them is Jennifer. Teneesha and her two friends are also present.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT DAY

The prisoners are shackled together in pairs as they are loaded onto a bus to head back to the prison.
INT. PRISON BUS - CONTINUOUS

A guard stands in the center aisle.

GUARD

Fasten your safety belts.

Jennifer is the only inmate to do as she is told, and fastens her seat-belt.

The guard sits next to the driver, who starts the engine.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The bus moves on down the highway.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON - JENNIFER’S CELL - DAY

Jennifer is lying in her bunk reading CELL - a microbiology magazine. Her head bandage is gone.

An argument erupts nearby - several prisoners shouting.

Jennifer stands up and sees Teneesha and her friends are pummeling another INMATE - a young woman.

One last blow from Teneesha - and the inmate falls to the floor next to Jennifer’s cell.

Teneesha shouts to the entire prison.

TENEESHA

Ya steal from me - this what ya get!

Teneesha and her friends flee as the guards come running.

As blood pools, Jennifer and the victim stare at each other.

A woman in a business suit casually walks up - WARDEN GALE RICHARDS.

WARDEN RICHARDS (shouting)

Can we get some help for this inmate!?
She turns to see Jennifer.

WARDEN RICHARDS (CONT’D)
Ms. Mendez.
(sees the magazine)
Rather interesting choice of reading material.

JENNIFER
Have to keep up on the latest advancements.

WARDEN RICHARDS
You had a little altercation a few weeks ago.

JENNIFER
I don’t think Teneesha wants to be my friend.

The warden smiles as two guards arrive and carry the bleeding inmate away.

The warden sees the blood is pooling close to her feet. She removes her shoes as a precaution.

WARDEN RICHARDS
You’re not like the rest of these animals. Keep your nose clean, Mendez, and I’ll get you time off for good behavior. Get you reunited with your daughter before some high school hunk knocks her up - ya know?

JENNIFER
She won’t live long enough for that to happen.

WARDEN RICHARDS
I’m aware of your medical background. The prison infirmary could use someone like you. Starting Monday you’ll be working the day shift.

The warden walks away, carrying her shoes.

WARDEN RICHARDS (CONT’D)
Somebody clean that up!
Jennifer stands at the open cell door and watches the barefoot warden walk away.

On Jennifer’s face: A new understanding.

FLASHBACK

**EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - VALET PARKING - NIGHT**

**JENNIFER**
Maybe we could meet up for coffee some time.

**DEBRA**
That would be fine.

**JENNIFER**
Here’s my card.

Jennifer hands Debra the card - but Debra fails to grab it. Jennifer picks it up.

**JENNIFER (CONT’D)**
What happened to your shoes?

**DEBRA**
Broke one of the heels.

Barefoot, Debra turns and walks away.

END FLASHBACK

Jennifer has figured it out.

**INT. CHOWCHILLA PRISON - PUBLIC PHONES - DAY**

An INMATE is talking on the phone. Jennifer awaits her turn.

A guard taps the inmate on the shoulder.

**INMATE**

She hangs up. Jennifer grabs the receiver, dials a number.
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH KURT SAMUELSON

SAMUELSON
Jennifer?

JENNIFER
Yeah - Listen...

SAMUELSON
I’m sorry about Katie.

JENNIFER
I only have a minute. I need you to look into how much I can get if I sell my portfolio - stocks, 401K, everything...

SAMUELSON
The house?

JENNIFER
Yes. Then I need you to find out if Debra Leary owns a black Mercedes - maybe a 550 model. Black Mercedes - 550 or similar. Get me a picture if you can.

SAMUELSON
Why do you...?

She hangs up and walks away.

INT. DEBRA’S LAB - NIGHT

The downstairs DOOR IS BUZZING. Debra makes her way downstairs. The DOOR BUZZES again.

She partially opens the door to REVEAL Tony.

TONY
I’m here.

DEBRA
The time card?
He pulls part of it from his coat pocket. She opens the door wider, he walks in. She closes the door and bolts it. She walks up the stairs, and Tony follows.

TONY
Did you get the money?

DEBRA
Every last dollar.

At the top of the stairs Debra stops, allowing Tony to step ahead of her.

TONY
Nice place.

Without skipping a beat, Debra pulls a hypodermic needle from her lab coat and buries it deep into Tony’s neck.

He stumbles around, knocks over a few beakers, then pulls the hypo from his neck.

TONY (CONT’D)
What is this!?

DEBRA
Compound four-thirty-four.

TONY
What did you do!? What did you give me!?

DEBRA
Do you know the biggest problem with curing cancer, Tony?

He stares at her, wide-eyed.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
The biggest problem with curing cancer is causing cancer. I know - it seems counter-intuitive. But when we test cancer drugs on rhesus monkeys, for example, we have to find rhesus monkeys that have cancer. Otherwise, how do you experiment? Do you have the slightest idea how hard it is to find rhesus monkeys with cancer?

(MORE)
DEBRA (CONT’D)
So what we do instead is administer them drugs designed to initiate and promote cancers. Then we have something to experiment with. Understand?

Tony grabs his abdomen – doubling over with pain.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
You should sit down. This is going to be painful.

As he sits, she lights up a Bunsen burner.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Compound four-thirty-four is one of the products I engineered at Genadyne. It’s amazing stuff: causes cancer in minutes instead of weeks or months like the old days. Liver cancer, to be precise.

Debra reaches into Tony’s coat pocket and removes the time card. She holds it over the Bunsen burner and destroys it.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Four-thirty-four is highly controlled by many layers of government security. Do you know why, Tony?

His pain is getting worse.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Because it’s the perfect killer. Soon your liver will be exploding with cancer cells. When they conduct your autopsy it will show you died of natural causes.

Tony vomits onto the floor.

TONY
You said you weren’t a killer.

DEBRA
I didn’t used to be.
TONY
Why are you doing this?

DEBRA
I put two and two together and got zero. That’s you, Tony – you’re a zero.

Tony gets out of the chair and stumbles toward the door. He doesn’t make it – crumbling in a heap.

He is in tremendous pain.

TONY
Please help me...

DEBRA
Sorry, but it’s like a friend of mine once said: some people are more valuable than others.

Tony collapses. Debra shuts off the Bunsen burner.

TONY
Please...I have a family...I have a little boy...

As Tony steadily expires, Debra pages through a magazine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DEBRA’S LAB - LATER THAT NIGHT

The door to the lab opens and Debra pushes out a wheelchair – on which is the body of Tony. The passenger door to his bronze Toyota Camry is open.

EXT. LOS ANGELES SKID ROW - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Debra parks the Toyota on a street, locks it, walks away.

AROUND THE NEXT CORNER is a public parking lot. Her Mercedes is waiting. She BEEPS it open, gets in, drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Same twenty inmates on weed abatement duty. Two inmates whisper to each other.

GUARD
No talking!

The two inmates move off a ways, and when the guard’s back is turned they whisper some more.

Teneesha starts watching them out of the corner of her eye.

A second guard takes a five gallon container of water and sets it on a table.

GUARD 2
Water break!

The inmates line up for water.

Teneesha fills a cup with water and drinks. She steps over to one of the guards and talks to them in a low voice.

Jennifer sees her do this.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATE THAT AFTERNOON

This time when the guards shackle the inmates, a guard puts Teneesha and Jennifer together.

JENNIFER
Why are you putting her with me?

The guard says nothing, then walks away.

TENEESHA
Rich bitch; stay cool.

The inmates are herded back on the bus.

INT. PRISON BUS - CONTINUOUS.

GUARD
Fasten your safety belts!
As the guard sits in front, no one fastens their seat-belt.

TENEESHA
What happened to “safety first”?

JENNIFER
I’m never going to see my daughter ever again.

TENEESHA
Oh yeah -- you’re losing it.

The bus drives forward and moves onto the highway.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
Look: I need to talk to you. We hear you’ve been assigned to the infirmary starting Monday.

JENNIFER
Oh god – what is it. Drugs? You expect me to get you drugs?

TENEESHA
Look – just a few things.

JENNIFER
You’re insane, aren’t you.

A few moments of quiet, then an audible CLICK.

Teneesha turns around and looks down the aisle. One of the whisper girls has fastened her seat belt. The second one CLICKS as well.

Teneesha makes eye contact, which the two whisper girls avoid. Teneesha turns back around.

TENEESHA
Oh shit.

Teneesha fastens her seat belt, and Jennifer notices.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
You may want to change your mind.

Teneesha looks back down the aisle. The two inmates are looking at something off in the distance. Teneesha follows their gaze to see --
THROUGH SIDE WINDOW

-- a large panel truck parked all alone near an intersection not far ahead.

RESUME

Teneesha sees the two inmates have assumed a duck-and-cover position.

    TENEESSHA (CONT'D)
    Fasten your seat belt. Do it now.

There’s something in the tone of her voice that convinces Jennifer to comply.

    TENEESSHA (CONT'D)
    Hold on.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the inmate bus reaches the intersection, the panel truck backs up -- BROADSIDING the prison bus. The bus swerves, rolls onto its side, and slides a ways before stopping.

Two men - JONAS and TREY - jump out of the panel truck and run to the bus.

INT. PRISON BUS - CONTINUOUS

Chaos. Screaming. The two whisper-inmates unbuckle themselves. One of them kicks out a window and starts climbing out.

    INMATE 1
    Jonas! Over here!

Jonas pulls her out, then her friend.

EXT. PRISON BUS - CONTINUOUS

The two inmates run with Jonas and Trey to the panel truck. They get in and drive away.

The bus catches fire.
INT. PRISON BUS - CONTINUOUS

The driver appears dead. The guard is okay, but trapped by a pushed-in door. Smoke starts to fill the bus.

Jennifer is bleeding from a head wound. She and Teneesha unbuckle themselves.

Jennifer kicks out a window, then climbs out.

    JENNIFER
    Come on!

Since they are shackled, Jennifer must pull Teneesha with her in order to escape the bus.

Teneesha gets out. Then the two of them start pulling other inmates out. Some of the inmates take off running, others stick around.

    GUARD
    Help! Please!

Once all the inmates are out --

    TENEESHA
    Let’s go.

    JENNIFER
    We have to get him out.

Teneesha decides arguing is not worth the effort, and she helps pull the guard to safety.

Teneesha grabs the shotgun, then points it at the guard.

    JENNIFER (CONT’D)
    What are you doing!?

    TENEESHA
    Give me the key!

The guard shakes his head.

    TENEESHA (CONT’D)
    Motherfucker -- we just saved your life! Give me the key!

He removes the key ring from his belt, then throws it far away - where it disappears in a field of tall grass.
Come on.

Teneesha starts running - pulling Jennifer with her.

We can’t leave! We’ll be fugitives!

Teneesha stops.

If you don’t run, I’ll blow your hand off.

They both take off running.

Teneesha and Jennifer arrive at a bridge that spans a river.

Stop! I need to rest.

Jennifer stops - but she’s not happy.

Jennifer grabs the shot gun and throws it off the bridge into the river.

Motherfucking bitch.

She punches Jennifer, and Jennifer punches back. The fight gets more and more brutal until suddenly they both fall over the railing and into the river.

The current is fast. Shackled together, swimming is difficult. They dodge boulders and logs and come close to drowning several times.

Eventually they pull themselves to shore. A forested area - plenty of places to hide.

Teneesha coughs up mouthfuls of water. They both rest.
TENEESHA
Why did you throw away the shotgun?

JENNIFER
I didn’t want you to kill somebody.

TENEESHA
Oh my god you are so dumb. That gun coulda gotten us five hundred dollars.

JENNIFER
Five hundred dollars – for what?

TENEESHA
We need money. We’re on the run.

JENNIFER
No – you’re on the run.

They catch their breath for a few moments.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
They’ll send out an army to look for us.

TENEESHA
Of course.

JENNIFER
They’ll find us.

TENEESHA
Almost certain.

JENNIFER
Then why?

A CLAP OF THUNDER. They look up. It starts raining.

TENEESHA
Come on.

JENNIFER
We have to give ourselves up!
Teneesha starts running along the shore, pulling a reluctant Jennifer with her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Allen pulls a large suitcase behind him as he exits a terminal building. He looks around for his ride.

A shiny red BMW M-3 convertible pulls up to the curb. Debra is driving.

ALLEN
Where’s your Merc?

DEBRA
I needed a change.

Allen throws his suitcase into the back, gets in, and they drive away.

INT. DEBRA’S BMW - CONTINUOUS

DEBRA
So what did they say?

He acts coy - not giving up the news.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Come on.

ALLEN
They’ve approved our fast-track request. Clinical trials will start in March.

Debra squeals with delight, then steps on the gas; good news calls for breaking the speed limit.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - DUSK

CLOSE ON a pack of cigarettes and lighter resting on a bannister.
A hand reaches in from O.S. and grabs them.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - NIGHT

Forest. A small campfire. Teneesha and Jennifer’s wet prison jumpsuits hang on the chain that connects their wrists. Both women are naked - backsides to the fire.

TENEESHA
Tomorrow we’ll find a way to cut this chain - then you can turn yo’self in.

No response.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
No use giving me that silent treatment shit. You gots no one else ‘talk to.

No response.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
You head back to prison - I’ll hitch a ride back to Alabama and rejoin my home girls.

JENNIFER
You don’t have any home girls, and you’ve never lived in Alabama.

TENEESHA
Say what?

JENNIFER
You can stop with the street cred. It’s not working.

A long silence, then -

TENEESHA
What gave me away?

JENNIFER
Your pronunciation of ‘concierge’ - just a little too perfect. You’re fluent - aren’t you?
TENEESHA
(in French)
I could sure use an appetizer from the Caffe’ dei Cioppi right now.

JENNIFER
(in French)
Then we could accessorize with a stop at ZaZoubara.

Both women laugh.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Why the phony persona?

No response.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
What are you hiding?

TENEESHA
I don’t know you well enough for this kind of pillow talk.

JENNIFER
(street)
Ya gots no one else to talk to.

Teneesha chuckles. She weighs the risk, then –

TENEESHA
I’m pretty sure the other inmates would have been very unhappy to find out I was in law enforcement.

JENNIFER
You were a cop?

TENEESHA
Prosecuting attorney. Department of Justice.

JENNIFER
What the hell were you...

TENEESHA
I had what you might call a “man problem”.
Both laugh. Then Teneesha starts to tear up.

TENEESHA
He took everything - my pride, my principles...

JENNIFER
Your money.

TENEESHA
Oh he took that. Even emptied my daughter’s college fund.

JENNIFER
How old is she?

TENEESHA
Seventeen. She’s graduating next week. All she’s ever talked about is being a doctor. That’s over now.

JENNIFER
All my daughter talks about is living to see her tenth birthday.

TENEESHA
Cancer?

Jennifer’s silence speaks volumes.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
Shit.

JENNIFER
There’s no justice in this world. I suppose you would know that better than me.

TENEESHA
Justice: it’s a fucking bitch.

Jennifer surveys the ground around them.
JENNIFER
Never thought I’d find a place to sleep even more uncomfortable than my cell.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A FEATURELESS WHITE WORLD - DAY *

There is nothing in this world but white nothingness. Then a young girl walks into frame - Katie. She is looking down at CAMERA’S POV.

KATIE
Mommy. Remember the tar pits.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Jennifer awakes. She is wearing her now-dry jumpsuit and is lying on the ground beside a dying fire. Teneesha is asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - MORNING

The chain that connects Teneesha and Jennifer is stretched across a boulder. Teneesha HITS it again and again with a large rock - to no affect.

The sound of a HELICOPTER. They look up to see it fly overhead.

TENEESHA
Soon as I cut this, we can go our separate ways. You to Chowchilla, me to wherever.

JENNIFER
What if I told you I didn’t want to go back.

Teneesha SLAMS the rock two more times.

TENEESHA
Having second thoughts?

Teneesha SLAMS the rock one more time.
TENEESHA (CONT’D)
Prison not all what you thought it
would be?

JENNIFER
Let’s just say, I have unfinished
business.

TENEESHA
We need a bolt cutter.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEARY HOME - BREAKFAST NOOK - MORNING

Debra and Allen are having breakfast. Allen is reading the
newspaper.

ALLEN
Huh.

DEBRA
What.

ALLEN
Were you involved in some court
case recently?

DEBRA
Why?

ALLEN
Your name is in the paper. You
testified against someone named
Jennifer Mendez.

DEBRA
A while back. She’s in prison.

ALLEN
Not anymore.

This gets Debra’s attention.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
Apparently she has escaped.

Debra reaches over and takes the newspaper without looking
as anxious as she feels.
ALLEN (CONT’D)

(joking)
Careful – she might come after you.

Allen stands and takes one last sip of coffee. He pecks Debra on the cheek.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
See you at the lab.

Allen leaves the room. O.S. a DOOR CLOSES.

A few quiet beats, then Debra stands up and looks out the window – up and down the street.

She goes to the front door – and locks it. She takes one more look out the window, then closes the blinds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAPD STATION - DAY

Detective Grady sits at his desk. His partner – Morris – walks up wearing sunglasses and a Hawaiian shirt.

GRADY
You’re back.

MORRIS
Ah-looooooh-ha!

GRADY
Ya look good.

MORRIS
Spent my whole life in California – had to go to Hawaii to learn how to surf. Kinda ironic – huh?

GRADY
Ready to get back on the horse?

MORRIS
Not really.

GRADY
Had an interesting development while you were gone.

(MORE)
GRADY (CONT'D)
Remember that homeless hit-and-run from last year?

MORRIS
The bio-tech lady...

GRADY
Mendez.

MORRIS
Right. She’s up in Chowchilla.

GRADY
Not any more.
(hands him a file)
Mendez is on the run.

MORRIS
An escapee? No way.

GRADY
(stands up)
You can read as we go.

MORRIS
Where?

GRADY
They’ve set up a task force a mile from the prison. We’re on it.

As they move out - DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMAND POST - DAY
A beehive of activity - trucks, cars, law enforcement, a helicopter.

Grady and Morris’ car arrives and parks near a large tent.

INT. LARGE COMMAND POST TENT - DAY
Warden Richards stands beside a table covered with maps.
Various law enforcement personnel come and go.

GRADY
Warden Richards?
WARDEN RICHARDS
That’s me.

GRADY
I’m Grady – we talked on the phone.

WARDEN RICHARDS
You were the arresting officer for Mendez?

GRADY
We both were. How many rabbits are you hunting?

WARDEN RICHARDS
We had nine – now we’re down to three, including Mendez...

ASSISTANT 1
...who is shackled to another convicted murderer: Teneesha Johnson.

WARDEN RICHARDS
A real wacko. She’s been diagnosed with Multiple Personality Disorder. She has alternately claimed to be an airline pilot...

ASSISTANT 1
...a tuna boat captain, a nurse from the Iraq War...

WARDEN RICHARDS
At her trial she claimed to be a prosecuting attorney for the Justice Department.

ASSISTANT 1
She killed her whole family, several others.

WARDEN RICHARDS
We need to know everything about Mendez. Family, friends, anyone she might contact.
MORRIS
She has a terminally ill daughter.

WARDEN RICHARDS
Let’s start there.

GRADY
We’ll do everything we can to help Mendez finish out her sentence.

As Grady and Morris turn to go -

WARDEN RICHARDS
Wait - you don’t understand. We’re not concerned about Mendez finishing her sentence. We’re worried about her safety.

ASSISTANT 1
Johnson will kill her as soon as they get unshackled.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL FARMHOUSE AND BARN - DAY

Jennifer and Teneesha hide behind a derelict tractor beside a barn. There’s a section where boards have rotted away - a spot just big enough for both to squeeze through.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Hanging on the walls: tools everywhere. No bolt cutters, but a pair of heavy duty metal shears that would do the job. Teneesha grabs them

TENEESHA
Pull tight.

They stretch the chain tight between them as Teneesha moves to cut the chain with the shears.

Teneesha notices a large axe hanging nearby. Perfect for what comes next.

TENEESHA (CONT’D)
Here we go.
She actuates the shears, and the chain cuts like butter.

JENNIFER
Well that was easy enough.

Teneesha puts the shears back, then grabs the axe. Teneesha approaches Jennifer from behind. She lifts the axe to strike.

A search HELICOPTER chooses that moment to pass low overhead. Jennifer turns in the direction of the sound - and sees Teneesha holding up the axe.

Jennifer dodges the first strike.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
What are you doing!?

A fight ensues using the tools and equipment of the barn. Jennifer ends up with the axe and kills Teneesha with it.

The barn door opens. A FARMER stands there.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
I need clothes, a car, and a cell phone.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE – KITCHEN – MINUTES LATER

THROUGH A WINDOW can be seen a Chevy pick-up driving away.

Jennifer walks into FRAME, wearing street clothes and watching the truck. She makes a cell phone call.

INT. FBI SAFE HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – SAME MOMENT

Grady, Morris, and an FBI AGENT are present.

CJ
How long do we have to stay here?

FBI AGENT
Until your sister is recaptured.

CJ’s cell phone RINGS. The FBI agent puts it on SPEAKER.
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

CJ
Hello?

JENNIFER
CJ. It’s me.

CJ
Jen. Where are you?

JENNIFER
Put Katie on the line – hurry.

The FBI agent nods his head, and CJ gives her the news.

CJ
Jen. Katie passed away two days ago.

Jennifer is frozen.

CJ (CONT’D)
The funeral is Saturday at Forest Lawn. Eleven a.m.

Jennifer collapses to her knees – shaking.

CJ (CONT’D)
Jen – the cops don’t know about it. You’d be safe. I hope you come.

(Jennifer BEEPS off)

Jen?

END TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

FBI AGENT
How certain are you she’ll show up?

CJ
Is the pope shit in the woods?

They are confused by his answer.

CJ (CONT’D)
I’m certain. Okay?
A sleepy Katie, still in pajamas, walks into the room and sees the three men.

KATIE
Uncle CJ. What’s going on?

CJ
Go make your breakfast.

Grady’s cell phone RINGS.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

The farmer stands near Warden Richards.

WARDEN RICHARDS
Looks like we can stop worrying about Mendez’s safety. We just got a reliable report. She killed Johnson.

Grady listens some more, then BEEPS off.

END TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

GRADY
Your sister just killed one of the inmates she escaped with.

CJ
Jennifer?

GRADY
Cleaved her skull with an axe.

FBI AGENT
Call us if she contacts you again.

As the three men move to go –

CJ
Wait! My sister’s a killer, man! I don’t want my skull cleaved with an axe!

FBI AGENT
You’ll be safe here. Just keep the door locked.
CJ
Shoudn’t I have some protection?

GRADY
Ya want protection - use a condom.

The three men leave the house.

CJ
Katie!

KATIE (O.S.)
Yeah?

CJ
What does “cleave” mean?

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Jennifer’s attorney - Kurt Samuelson - is golfing with TWO ATTORNEYS. Kurt tees off, and watches his ball go sailing.

The men get into a golf cart and drive down the fairway.

They stop at the first ball and two of the men get out. Samuelson - in the cart - sees someone standing in the shadow of the treeline.

Jennifer.

SAMUELSON
I’ll be right back.

Samuelson drives the cart toward her.

AT THE TREELINE

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
There’s an army of people looking for you.

JENNIFER
What about Leary’s car.
SAMUELSON
I ran that check you suggested. Debra Leary owns a red BMW convertible...

JENNIFER
Her husband?

SAMUELSON
White corvette – but listen. I called the BMW dealer. Guess what car she traded in.

JENNIFER
A black Mercedes 550.

SAMUELSON
Now we know why she lied.

He removes a small day-pack from the back of the cart and hands it to her. She unzips the top, revealing neatly banded piles of cash.

SAMUELSON (CONT’D)
There’s something else. Remember that valet we wanted for the appeal – Tony? He died recently.

JENNIFER
An accident?

SAMUELSON
No. Natural causes.

JENNIFER
I have to go.

She shoulders the pack, takes a step or two, then turns back.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
When you say “natural causes”...

SAMUELSON
Advanced liver cancer. He was only twenty-two.

JENNIFER
Get me a copy of the autopsy.
Jennifer disappears into the trees.

    SAMUELSON
    (to himself)
    Your attorney advises you to turn yourself in.

He returns to his friends.

INT. TATTOO PARLOUR - DAY
Debra is getting a tattoo on her shoulder.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL - NIGHT
Jennifer is cutting her hair short.

MINUTES LATER - Jennifer is dying her hair blonde.

MINUTES LATER - Jennifer sits on the bed removing her shoulder bandage. The tattoo is not yet revealed.

MINUTES LATER - Jennifer is taking a shower.

MINUTES LATER - Jennifer is dressed. Gaudy plastic bling. She examines her tattoo in the mirror - the snarling head of a saber tooth tiger.

She puts on her sunglasses. Hard girl - pure Hollywood Blvd.

    DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEBRA’S LAB - NIGHT
Debra and an assistant are working late in the loft/lab. She holds up a cigarette and lighter for the assistant to see - break time.

Debra goes downstairs.

EXT. DEBRA’S LAB - CONTINUOUS
Debra walks up the lonely sidewalk. She stops and lights her cigarette - takes a puff.
DEBRA’S POV

Across the street - a woman, seen mostly in shadow, lights a cigarette and takes a puff.

Debra gives a slight hello wave. The shadow woman does the same.

Debra walks some more up the sidewalk. She notices the shadow woman does the same.

Debra stops - the woman stops. The woman takes a drag on the cigarette, and the light is enough to identify her - Jennifer.

Debra drops her cigarette and runs back to the lab. She opens the door and enters.

INT. DEBRA’S LAB - CONTINUOUS

She locks the door - then planning replaces panic: she unlocks the door and runs upstairs. She pulls a large handgun from a desk drawer and points it at the stairs.

A few beats. Debra breathes.

The SOUND OF THE DOOR OPENING, followed by FOOTSTEPS. The FOOTSTEPS get closer. Debra readies her aim.

A DARK FIGURE reaches the top of the stairs. Debra is about to pull the trigger when - Allen’s face enters the light.

    ALLEN
    Whoa - I give up.

Debra lowers the gun, then goes to the windows. She looks up and down the street.

    DEBRA
    She was here.

    ALLEN
    Who was here?

    DEBRA
    Mendez.
ALLEN
Don’t get all paranoid on me.
When I said she might come after
you, I was kidding. And since
when do you own a gun?

EXT. DEBRA’S LAB - AN HOUR LATER

Several police cars along with Grady’s car and an unmarked
FBI car fill the street. Police officers mill around.

Grady and Morris are talking to Allen and Debra.

GRADY
You’re absolutely certain it was
her.

DEBRA
No question.

MORRIS
Did you see which direction she
went?

DEBRA
(sass)
I’m guessing either up the street
or down the street.

GRADY
Why do you think Mendez would come
here?

ALLEN
My wife testified against her.
She probably wants revenge.

Morris notices Allen’s white corvette and saunters over for
a better look.

GRADY
I wouldn’t worry – escaped
convicts never stay escaped very
long. Just to be safe, we’ll post
an officer out here for the next
few days.
Thank you.  
(to Allen)  
I’ve got work to do.

She enters the lab.  Grady heads for his car.

Morris smiles, then follows after Grady.

ALLEN (CONT’D)  
I think I’m ready to get a 550 like my wife.

This stops Morris cold.  He turns around.

MORRIS  
She owns a 550?

ALLEN  
Yeah.

MORRIS  
A black Mercedes 550.

ALLEN  
Right.  Well, not anymore.  She traded it for a Beamer.

Morris nods and keeps walking.  Allen goes to his car and BEEPS it open.

INT. ALLEN’S CORVETTE - MOMENTS LATER

Allen starts the ENGINE - then someone TAP-TAPS on his window.  He rolls it down - to reveal Morris.

MORRIS  
How long ago did she trade it in?
EXT. FOREST LAWN CEMETERY - DAY

A handful of mourners wait by the grave-side.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

Grady, Morris and other officers disguised as groundskeepers and mourners. Others wait in cars parked nearby.

RESUME

A hearse approaches from a hundred yards away.

SCOPE POV

The hearse and mourners are being watched through a telescope.

EXT. FIRE ROAD AT THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN - DAY

Jennifer peers through the lens of a very large telescope.

SCOPE POV

The image of Grady sitting in his car is clearly visible.

The scope is rotated – focusing on the casket being removed from the hearse and wheeled to the open grave.

The scope moves again – focusing on a groundskeeper speaking into a walkie talkie.

RESUME

Still under the belief her daughter has died, Jennifer wipes a few tears.

She puts the telescope into the back of the pickup, sits behind the wheel, then starts the ENGINE. She drives back down the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHEAP MOTEL - NIGHT

Jennifer enters with a bag of groceries. Paperwork is strewn everywhere – bed, small desk, floor. End table.
She removes cereal and a quart of milk from the bag and makes her dinner.

She grabs a thick folder from the bed.

INSERT FOLDER

The front of the folder reads COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF CORONER. Below that it reads DECEDENT: ANTONIO VASQUEZ GALVAN.

RESUME

She opens the folder and begins reading.

INSERT PASSAGES

CAMERA FOCUSES on several parts of the autopsy report including HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA and NO PRIOR MEDICAL HISTORY and NO VISIBLE JAUNDICE and TC-1 LEVEL: 598.

RESUME

Jennifer opens a small cell phone and dials a number.

INT. HOME OF CARLEY - SAME MOMENT

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Carley (Est. Pg. 1) picks up her ringing PHONE.

           CARLEY
Hello.

           JENNIFER
Carley.

           CARLEY
Jen? Oh my god...I heard about Katie. I cannot imagine what you’re going through.

           JENNIFER
Please just listen - we only have a few seconds. In an autopsy report - what does an elevated TC-1 level mean?
CARLEY
How elevated?

JENNIFER
598.

CARLEY
598? That’s impossible.

JENNIFER
I’m looking at the report right now. TC-1: 598.

CARLEY
Shit. I don’t know. Never heard of a reading that high.

JENNIFER
Well I...

CARLEY
Oh wait. Any chance they were exposed to 434?

JENNIFER
What’s that?

CARLEY
Compound 434. It’s a very powerful cancer generator. We use it on monkeys to give them liver cancer.

JENNIFER
Really.

CARLEY
It was invented by that same doctor who gave the speech at that meeting you went to last year.

JENNIFER
Debra Leary.

CARLEY
Yeah – that’s her. Any TC-1 level over a hundred and 434 would be my prime suspect.
JENNIFER
There’s nothing in the autopsy about it.

CARLEY
434 is never used on humans, so your average pathologist would not know what to look for.

A beat or two as each of them ponders what’s next.

CARLEY (CONT’D)
I don’t believe what they’re saying about you on the news. I know you, Jen. You’re no killer.

JENNIFER
I didn’t used to be.

Jennifer closes her cell phone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAPD STATION - MORRIS’ DESK - DAY

Morris is working at his desk when a FINGER PRINT EXPERT walks up.

FINGER PRINT EXPERT
You Detective Morris?

MORRIS
Yeah.

FINGER PRINT EXPERT
You ordered a fingerprint analysis for a ’91 Toyota Camry once the property of Antonio Galvan.

MORRIS
Right.
FINGER PRINT EXPERT
You got lucky my friend. The car was still in our impound lot - the guy’s widow was never able to raise the money to get it released, and it was such a piece of shit the lot could never sell it.

MORRIS
Any results?

FINGER PRINT EXPERT
The car had obviously been wiped down, but here’s the thing - when people wipe a car down they always forget the underside of the center console parking brake. Every time. You have to put all four fingers underneath it to...

MORRIS
I’m kind of in a hurry.

FINGER PRINT EXPERT
Right. Anyway, we got good prints - four fingertips belonging to the name you gave us.

He hands Morris a sheet of paper. Morris reads it for a couple of beats, then jumps up and runs out of the office.

FINGER PRINT EXPERT (CONT’D)
You’re welcome, jerk off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHEAP MOTEL - NIGHT

Jennifer - in tears - is on her phone listening to her home phone’s recorded greeting. A few RINGS, then -

KATIE
(recorded)
Hi - you have reached the home of Jennifer and Katie. We’d love to talk, but we’re out doing something fun. Leave a message at the beep.
A BEEP. Jennifer re-dials and listens to her daughter’s voice again. After the second time, she closes the phone, lies down on her bed, and closes her red, puffy eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEBRA’S LAB - DAY

Debra and Allen are dressed in lab coats as they work.

Debra’s cell phone rings.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH HER ATTORNEY

DEBRA

Robert?

ROBERT

Ya know why you pay me the big bucks? Because I’m the best. I have an inside tip for you: you’re about to be arrested.

DEBRA

For what.

ROBERT

The cops have some evidence that shows you were the one driving the car that killed that homeless guy, not Mendez.

DEBRA

What kind of evidence?

ROBERT

I don’t know yet.

The sound of SCREECHING TIRES is heard.

ROBERT (CONT’D)

Any idea what they’re talking about?

More SCREECHING TIRES and CAR DOORS CLOSING.

Allen goes to the large loft windows.

ALLEN’S POV
Four floors below, three police cars have pulled up. Another car arrives. Police officers pour out of the cars and into their building.

ALLEN
Honey - I think somebody’s being raided.

DEBRA
What do you mean?

ALLEN
There’s a whole bunch of police cars just pulled up and...

Debra steps quickly to the window. A brief look, then she tosses the cell phone and moves with purpose to the computer.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
What are you doing?

DEBRA
Working the problem. Lock the door.

Allen goes to the door as Debra types on the keyboard.

INSERT MONITOR
The monitor reads “Permanently delete all 467 files? Y/N”.

Debra hits a key, and a progress bar appears along with the words, “Deletion in progress”.

RESUME
Allen finishes locking the door and approaches.

ALLEN
I wonder which unit they’re going to.

Allen returns to the window to watch the action below.

Debra takes three flash drives, places them on a lab table, grabs a hammer, and starts SMASHING them.

ALLEN (CONT’D)
Debra...?
From the stairwell: the sound of POUNDING BOOTS.

Allen turns to the window and watches the police cars. All is quiet for a few beats, then -

DEBRA (O.S.)

Allen?

Allen turns around.

WIDER

Debra is pointing a gun at Allen.

ALLEN

What are you doing?

DEBRA

Solving the problem.

She FIRES the gun several times. Allen falls backward - SMASHES through the window - and falls to the street.

The police BREAK DOWN the door.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Put it down!

Debra drops the gun and raises her hands. Two officers push her against the lab table and handcuff her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAPD INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Present: Grady, his captain, Debra, and her attorney Robert.

Debra’s handgun sits in a plastic evidence bag atop the table. There is a nervous quiet. Then -

GRADY

You’re serious about this.

ROBERT

Absolutely.

CAPTAIN

What you’re asking has never been done.
ROBERT
What we’re offering has never been available.

MORRIS
The only reason she can even propose this deal is because she fucking offed her co-inventor – her husband, no less!

ROBERT
For which she will receive a full pardon.

MORRIS
This is insane.

Robert pushes a thin file across the desk. Grady opens it.

ROBERT
It’s very simple. The President of the United States agrees to provide my client a full pardon for all crimes, known or unknown, proven or unproven. In return she reveals her discovery: a universal cure for cancer, and saves fifty million lives a year. It’ll be the greatest policy decision a president has ever made.

CAPTAIN
Let’s assume this complete bastardization of our country’s justice system gets approved; how do we know she can do it?

DEBRA
There’s a clause that says if I fail to deliver, the deal is void and you can prosecute to the full extent.

MORRIS
(to the captain)
We’re gonna say no to this - right?
ROBERT
Why don't you ask the President.
Last I checked the First Lady had lung cancer.

The door opens. It’s the DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
(to the captain)
Got a second?

The captain leaves the room.

EXT. LAPD STATION – AN HOUR LATER

Debra’s attorney escorts her down the steps and into a waiting limo. Grady and Morris can only watch.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEBRA’S NEW LAB – NIGHT

Debra is working at a long table. TWO ASSISTANTS gather their things.

ASSISTANT 1
Goodnight, Dr. Leary.

ASSISTANT 2
See you in the morning.

They descend the stairs. The sound of the downstairs metal door OPENING and CLOSING is heard.

It’s quiet. Too quiet. Debra looks around - but everything seems fine.

She decides to chase the quiet away - and turns on the TV. She channel surfs until she finds what she’s looking for - an interview starring her.

INSERT TV

A talk show with Debra and Robert.
TALK SHOW HOST
Do you think it was right for the President to grant you a full pardon?

DEBRA
Yes I do.

TALK SHOW HOST
What about justice?

DEBRA
What about justice for the millions of men and women and children all over the world who suffer and die every year from the scourge of cancer? That scourge is now over.

TALK SHOW HOST
But why should you or anyone be treated so differently?

ROBERT
You’ll have to ask the founding fathers. The constitution allows the President to pardon anyone he chooses. He doesn’t even have to have a reason. Here he has fifty million reasons.

TALK SHOW HOST
So this new drug...

DEBRA
Melaxin.

TALK SHOW HOST
When will it be available?

DEBRA
We’re in negotiations with the FDA and several drug companies. Hopefully, within a year.

RESUME
Debra hears a tiny SOUND – and mutes the TV. She turns around – to see a shadow standing at the top of the stairs.
The dark figure walks into the light: Jennifer. Almost a ninja: black clothing, gloves, wool cap. She is pointing a large handgun at Debra.

JENNIFER
You killed my daughter.

DEBRA
Get out of here - now!

JENNIFER
You took me away from her. She might still be alive if I had been there.

DEBRA
For how long? A few weeks? A month?

JENNIFER
Yes.

DEBRA
Society has to make sacrifices for the greater good. Once Melaxin becomes available, no one will die of cancer ever again. Think of all the other millions of Katies out there.

JENNIFER
Good. Try to talk me out of it.

DEBRA
If you kill me, you kill fifty million people a year.

Jennifer takes a step closer.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
I’m putting chemotherapy and surgery and all the ugly, painful so-called cancer cures out of business forever. It’s nothing less than the greatest discovery in history. But I’m the only one who knows the formula. Without me...
JENNIFER
Without you there are at least four people who would still be alive.

DEBRA
It doesn’t matter! That’s what I’m trying to explain to you!

Jennifer steps closer.

DEBRA (CONT’D)
Kill me, and the formula dies with me - and you’ll go to prison for life.

JENNIFER
(sarcastic)
Well - that’s the way it’s supposed to work.

Jennifer takes another step.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
Don’t worry. I’m not going to kill you.

As Jennifer lowers the gun, another shadow appears at the stairs - MARIA - holding a large knife.

DEBRA
Who’s this?

MARIA
La esposa de Antonio.

JENNIFER
Tony’s wife.

Jennifer turns and walks toward the stairs.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
And I have a feeling she doesn’t give a shit about presidential pardons.

STAIRWELL
As Jennifer descends the stairs toward the door, the SOUND OF CHAOS, BREAKING GLASS, AND FIGHTING is heard above her.
EXT. DEBRA’S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer walks up the lonely sidewalk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAPD OFFICE - NIGHT

Jennifer enters and walks up to the Officer on Watch.

JENNIFER
My name is Jennifer Mendez. I’m an escaped felon. I would like to turn myself in.

The Officer on Watch types into his computer.

OFFICER ON WATCH
Social.

JENNIFER
548-69-5584.

He types some more keys. Then -

OFFICER ON WATCH
I show the warrant for your arrest has been vacated.

JENNIFER
What?

KATIE (O.S.)
Mommy!

Shocked, Jennifer turns to her right and sees Katie running toward her - Morris right behind.

Mother and daughter have a tearful reunion.

MORRIS
Don’t blame your brother. The FBI told him to pretend she had died - part of their bullshit plan to draw you out.

JENNIFER
Look at you. You’ve gained weight.
KATIE
Uncle CJ likes junk food.  
(indicating Morris)
He’s a nice man - you two should
go on a date.

MORRIS
You’re free to go.

JENNIFER
How...?

MORRIS
Leary’s fingerprints were found in
Galvan’s vehicle. Wasn’t hard to
put two and two together.

Jennifer hugs her daughter again.

JENNIFER
I thought I had lost you.

MORRIS
The prosecutor is working with
your attorney to get your
conviction reversed. Good luck,
Ms. Mendez.

Morris turns and walks away.

KATIE
(whisper)
Ask him if he wants to go out for
coffee.

Jennifer shakes her head, thinks about it, then -

JENNIFER
Hey - you wanna get coffee? Some
time?

He stops and smiles.

MORRIS
Sure. Sometime.

He keeps on walking.

On Jennifer’s face we read a new realization.
JENNIFER
Honey - come on. I have to make a call.

EXT. LAPD STATION - CONTINUOUS
As Jennifer and Katie walk along the sidewalk -

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

CARLEY
Jen!

JENNIFER
When you file paperwork with the FDA for a new drug, do all the researchers still have to be listed?

CARLEY
Of course.

JENNIFER
How do I get a copy of that list?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TO ESTABLISH - DAY
A jumbo jet ROARS IN for a landing.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY
Jennifer and Katie stand at the bottom of a down escalator. Katie holds a sign that reads “ULO”.

Wearing a daypack, Ulo comes into view, descending on the escalator. He sees the sign.

KATIE
Are you Mr. Ulo?

ULO
Just Ulo.

He and Katie shake hands.
JENNIFER
Thank you for coming.

The three of them walk through the busy terminal.

JENNIFER (CONT’D)
I have a lab all set up – all the equipment you asked for.

ULO
It’s like I mentioned on the phone – synthesizing the extract is not so difficult. The problem is taming the toxicity.

JENNIFER
Starting tomorrow we study the problem, work the problem...

ULO
Please don’t say that.

They laugh.

KATIE
My mom says you’re a very smart man.

ULO
Oh, so-so.

They walk in silence a few beats, then -

KATIE
(to Ulo)
Am I going to live?

ULO
You bet your ass.

Jennifer puts her arm around their daughter as they exit the terminal.

FADE TO BLACK