

CORN BREAD DRESSING

by

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EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MORNING

RENE, 70, is driving down the street of a quaint, California seaside community. She whips around a corner discovering there are no parking places in front of JAKE'S house.

RENE

Damn people. They don't know how to park anymore. Oh well.

Rene whips the steering wheel to one side and the car hops the curb, coming to a halt on Jake's front lawn.

Gathering all of her FOOD ITEMS and PACKAGES, Rene exits car. She is greeted by a large OVERSIZED CAT on porch.

RENE (CONT'D)

Well Buster, how come you're outside?

Rene pulls a treat out of her pocket

RENE (CONT'D)

Here ya go. You need a diet. Next thing you know I'll be taking care of you too. Start exercising.

BUSTER plops down and rolls.

RENE (CONT'D)

Oh, it's no use.

Rene opens the door and enters.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE

Rene walks through the living room to the kitchen.

JAKE, 55, is at the table drinking coffee, reading a magazine. His WALKER AND OXYGEN TANK next to the table.

RENE

Don't get up. I can handle it.

JAKE

Hadn't planned on it.

Rene kisses Jake on the forehead.

RENE

Didn't think so. I have a little surprise for all my boys today.

JAKE

You mean I'm not your only?

RENE

Jake, you could not handle me all by yourself.

JAKE

Rene, just the thought of seeing your bulbous female parts in that way is close to giving me a full on coronary. Besides, the parts just ain't right.

RENE

At your age? Do you still remember the difference?

JAKE

Of course. I have the internet. I can see any parts I want and many that no one wants to see.

RENE

Really? Jake, you're a pervert.

JAKE

Until my dying breath. Okay, what's the surprise?

Rene places bowl in front of Jake.

RENE

Corn bread dressing. Still hot.

JAKE

I don't know how you do it.

RENE

Do what?

JAKE

Run the store, make all of your house runs and still finding time to cook all this good stuff.

RENE

What else have I got to do in life?
Ain't like I'm dating lately.

JAKE

At your age? Do you still remember
anything about it?

RENE

In ways you could never conceive.

JAKE

Oooo, save me the details.

Rene opens bag on counter.

RENE

Is this all my tupperware?

JAKE

Actually no. I sold the rest on e-
bay.

RENE

You could probably get a lot for
it. It's all antiques. I got them
at the first party ever held.

JAKE

Was that before television?

RENE

Sweetheart, it was before
electricity. We had to be careful
that the candles and gas lighting
didn't melt the plastic. Has Letty
been over this week?

JAKE

Nope. But she sent her nephew. Not
only can he clean like a whiz but
he is easy on the eyes.

RENE

Jake, you're a pervert. I'm going
before it spreads.

Rene crosses to doorway.

JAKE

And sweetheart, replace the divots
when you leave.

Rene waves him off, then exits.

EXT JAKE'S HOUSE

Rene exits house. Walking to her car she picks up a clump of grass.

Rene enters car and begins to back off the lawn. She stops, tossing the clump of grass towards her tire marks.

RENE

Eahh, close enough.

Rene backs off lawn and drives off.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN

Through back kitchen door at parking lot Rene pulls into parking area. Her spot is blocked by a LARGE DELIVERY TRUCK.

Rene parks her car in front of the truck and heads into the kitchen.

TODD, 25, the hot sexy truck driver and WESTON, 35, Rene's kitchen manager, are going over the delivery inventory.

RENE

Todd your big thing is in my way again. Can you park me when your done?

Rene tosses Todd her keys.

TODD

Anytime Rene.

RENE

Oh, and last weeks produce sucked. You shorted the order on onions and the short ribs.

WESTON

We didn't get the extra brown sugar and cake flour either.

RENE

Right. You know Todd, you're beginning to disappoint me.

TODD

Don't shoot the messenger. The warehouse messed that up.

RENE

It's more fun to blame you.

As Rene walks out of kitchen into cafe/bookstore.

RENE (CONT'D)

Tell them next time the messenger dies.

TODD

Thanks Rene.

RENE

Anytime Todd.

Rene stops at front counter/register.

RENE (CONT'D)

Morning Jilian.

JILIAN

Good morning Rene.

JILIAN, 30, looks up revealing a black eye and jaw.

RENE

Oh my god. What happened? Don't tell me. I knew Bill had a trigger.

JILIAN

It isn't Bill. I'm learning to roller skate and I didn't make the turn. Right into Bill's SUV.

RENE

Oh, that's an old one and I bet....

JILIAN

Here's your mail and the postings for last night.

RENE

Thank you.

RENE walks to her office, going through the mail.

Weston enters, handing her keys.

WESTON

I had to make an executive decision.

RENE

And that is?

WESTON

Todd tempted me.

RENE

Weston, a man that looks like that in tight shorts could tempt a corpse out of a grave. You are nothing special. What is it?

Weston reveals a bowl of fresh berries.

WESTON

The seasons finest first batch of blueberries, marionberries and blackberries.

RENE

Oh my god. Look at those.
(tasting them)
Oh, oh...sooo good. Sometimes I could kiss you on the lips.

WESTON

I don't think Ruben would understand.

RENE

Are you still with him?

WESTON

It's either him or you. I had to make a hard choice.

RENE

Well, this way you can have both of us.
(pops blueberry in her mouth)
Oohh, fresh blueberry muffins.

WESTON

And I thought raspberry chutney and marionberry glazed tea cakes.

RENE

Crank up the ovens. I'll be right in.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN - HOURS LATER

Weston and Rene are ROLLING DOUGH, and BEATING BATTER with FLOURED PANS STACKED.

Rene pulls a large pan of muffins from the oven.

RENE

Make sure you take some of these to Ruben.

WESTON

He loves your muffins.

RENE

Well, maybe they will put some weight on him.

WESTON

The grass you got him has helped. Up three pounds this month.

RENE

Fantastic. I don't know how you remained negative for so long.

WESTON

I read that there is three percent of the population that remains negative.

RENE

Really?

WESTON

Yep. The three percent that are still virgins.

RENE

Hah! That ain't you.

WESTON

Thank you Jesus. But I do play safe.

Rene clutches his face with flour covered hands.

RENE

That's my boy.

Jilian enters.

JILIAN

Rene, Lieutenant Morrison from the sheriffs department is on line two.

RENE

Kevin, for me? It's been forever.

Rene washes hands and crosses to wall phone.

RENE (CONT'D)

Kevin, you stranger.

(to Weston)

Watch that chutney. Don't want it to boil to hard. It'll burn. Sorry Kevin. We're in a cooking frenzy today. We got fresh blueberry muffins, marionberry glazed tea cakes and soon raspberry chutney.

(to Weston)

Add the last of the sugar to the chutney and put it down to low. Kevin, it's been forever. Where have you been?.....you what?....who? When?....well, I....yes of course. I'll be down as soon as I can.

Rene hangs up phone.

WESTON

What's wrong?

RENE

I have to go down to the station. It seems my daughter has reappeared.

WESTON

Your what!?

RENE

You heard me.

WESTON

Since when did you have kids?

RENE

I can't remember that far back. It was not the best period of my life.

WESTON

The great Rene has secrets?

RENE

Not secrets. More like reincarnations coming back to haunt me.

WESTON

Relax, you ain't no Shirley MacLaine.

RENE

Thank you Jesus. Too many issues there.

INT. SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT

Kevin leads Rene through squad room to small interview room, she sits at a table.

KEVIN

Earlier this morning we stopped a beat up old ford van that was driving erratically coming into town. The driver was under the influence.

RENE

I suppose that was Marla.

KEVIN

Oh yah, that was Marla. It wasn't pretty. She took a swing at the arresting officer.

RENE

Oh god.

KEVIN

Don't worry. The officer handled it well. She only gave him a bloody nose.

RENE

Oh god. What will....

KEVIN

Wait, there's more.

RENE

Oh god.

KEVIN

She wasn't alone in the car.

RENE

Oh god. She didn't bring a boyfriend with her?

KEVIN

Not quite.

Kevin points towards CLIFFORD, 16. Rene follows his finger.

RENE

Well who the hell is that? He's a little young, isn't he?

KEVIN

His name is Clifford Douglas. He's sixteen and says he's her son.

RENE

Her what?

KEVIN

I know this is a lot to handle.

RENE

No shit. Yah think?

KEVIN

Well the most immediate problem is that we have to find somewhere to put him. He said they were coming to see his grandmother.

RENE

First I've heard of him or any of this.

KEVIN

Look, Rene. We're required to contact children services if he doesn't have a place to stay. They'll place him in a temporary foster home until, well, for however long it takes. That is unless, well....

RENE

Unless I take him. Right?

KEVIN

Yep.

RENE

Oh god. At my age do I look like I'm ready to start another family?

KEVIN

Well at least you don't have to go through nine months of carrying him.

RENE

Don't be a smart ass. That would be the easy part.

(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)

Except for the hemorrhoids. Oh god.
What about his mother? What do we
do there?

KEVIN

That's a little different. We can't
arraign her until she sobers up.
They'll set her up with an attorney
and decide what to do from there.

RENE

Okay, okay. Now let's go meet
Clifford.

INT. SQUAD ROOM

Rene and Kevin approach Clifford.

KEVIN

Cliff....

CLIFFORD

Clifford. I don't use Cliff.

RENE

Oh, you're a jewel.

CLIFFORD

Who's the old bitch? Social
services or something?

KEVIN

Watch the mouth.

RENE

Kevin, allow the old bitch to
handle this one. Let's be clear on
one thing. This old bitch don't put
up with shit from the likes of you.
Even if your are my grandson.

CLIFFORD

You're Rene?

RENE

You got it.

CLIFFORD

Where's my mom?

KEVIN

She's drying out.

CLIFFORD
I'll wait for her.

KEVIN
Can't do that Clifford. She won't
be arraigned until some time
tomorrow.

CLIFFORD
I can wait.

RENE
It appears that you can't. It's
either social services and the
possibility of never seeing your
mother again and being stuck in
foster care, not necessarily a bad
thing, or coming home with me. Take
your choice. It won't be offered
again.

EXT. RENE'S CAR

Rene is whipping through the streets with a cocky, but
holding on for dear life, Clifford sitting next to her.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND RENE'S

Rene's car sweeps into the lot and into her parking space.

Rene and Clifford are in the front seat of car.

CLIFFORD
I would have been safer waiting for
my mom.

RENE
Are you hurt?

CLIFFORD
No.

RENE
Are you bleeding somewhere I can't
see?

CLIFFORD
No.

RENE
Then you're safe enough.

CLIFFORD

What's this? I thought we were heading to your place?

RENE

This is my place. My shop anyway. I have things to do here before anything else happens.

CLIFFORD

I'll wait here.

RENE

Wrong. We'll be a while and you're coming with me.

CLIFFORD

I can wait here.

RENE

Look, this has been a bit of a day, if you know what I mean. It's not every morning I get a call that a daughter I have not seen or heard from in over twenty years suddenly appears in a local jail cell with, to an even bigger surprise, a sixteen year old son that I didn't even know existed. This old woman needs to focus on a few other things to enable her to, well, pick up the pieces and function.

CLIFFORD

What about me?

RENE

I know your name is Cliff, sorry, Clifford and that you are sixteen. Oh, and that I'm your grandmother. I think that might be enough to start but I'm not sure. This is all new territory for me. I'm sure it is for you too.

CLIFFORD

Not really. I'm used to moving around with new people. It's kept us alive.

RENE

Are you in school or have you even been to school?

CLIFFORD
Yah, school sucks.

RENE
Really? How so?

CLIFFORD
It just sucks.

RENE
Welcome to the real world. Let's
go.

Rene and Clifford exit the car.

Clifford pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

RENE (CONT'D)
Heah! You're in California now.
This is a no smoking state.

CLIFFORD
Like I'm going to stop smoking
because some screwed up voters
don't like what I do on the street?

RENE
Wrong. Just in public buildings and
my restaurant. Put it out. Besides,
you don't need lung cancer or
emphysema at the age of sixteen.

Clifford drops cigarette on ground, following RENE into back
door of the kitchen.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN

Rene enters kitchen followed by Clifford.

Weston is pulling muffins out of the oven.

RENE
(to CLIFFORD)
Have you eaten anything today?

CLIFFORD
Yah! Of course.

RENE
What?

CLIFFORD

I had a red bull and a big mac this morning.

RENE

For breakfast? God, you'll get cancer and heart disease by the age of twenty. Probably an ulcer too. Weston, be a love a whip up something hot and tasty for Clifford.

Weston is checking out Clifford.

WESTON

Hot and tasty is my specialty.

RENE

Hands off. He's only sixteen and my grandson. I'm gonna tell Ruben on you.

WESTON

Only sixteen? Jesus save me. Since when did you get a grandson? Don't you have to have children to do that?

RENE

Got one of them too but she's in the drunk tank at the sheriff's station.

WESTON

The what?

RENE

Later.

(to Clifford)

Don't worry, Weston's harmless. Sit over there and he'll get you something to eat while I handle a few other things around here.

Rene goes to her office.

WESTON

You remind me of someone.

CLIFFORD

We'll, I ain't from around here so it ain't me.

WESTON
Suppose not, but still.

INT. RENE'S SMALL COTTAGE - LATER THAT EVENING

Rene enters front door.

RENE
Well, come on. This is it.

Clifford enters.

RENE (CONT'D)
It ain't big but it's warm. You can use the spare room, second door on the left. Well, go on. You're suppose to be a big boy. Go put you stuff in there. I'll make us a snack.

CLIFFORD
I'm fine.

Clifford walks to room, closing door behind him.

RENE
Oh, just a piece of cake that one.

Rene walks into the kitchen and begins making a pot of tea.

Rifling through drawers for things she opens a "junk" drawer discovering and pulling out a package of OLD PHOTOS.

Photos of her daughter when Marla was a child and carefree.

Rene focuses on one SMILING PHOTO OF A TEN YEAR OLD MARLA AND HER LATE FATHER, LARRY AT THE BEACH.

THE PHOTO ANIMATES.

EXT. LOCAL BEACH - AFTERNOON - 26 YEARS PRIOR

A montage of quick shots of LARRY and 10 year old MARLA playing at the beach, running in and out of the water.

The scenes are of a normal happy child.

LARRY
You're slowing down.

YOUNG MARLA
I can't run in the sand, daddy.

LARRY
Then I'm gonna get you.

Larry swings Young Marla over his shoulder then runs into the water.

YOUNG MARLA
(laughing)
Don't drop me.

LARRY
I'll hold on forever.

Larry swings her into the waves as they laugh.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. COURTROOM HOLDING CELL - PRESENT - MORNING

MARLA, 34 seated in the courtroom holding cell.

Marla is disheveled, hung out to dry and coming down from a bad high.

BAILIFF enters.

BAILIFF
Okay, you're up next.

MARLA
What?

BAILIFF
You're next. Get a move on. The judge don't like being kept waiting.

Marla stands.

The Bailiff escorts Marla into the courtroom.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM

Rene and Clifford enter the courtroom from the hallway, finding seats in the front row.

JUDGE HARMON is at the bench going through files.

JUDGE HARMON

Douglas, Marla Douglas. Let's see, alcohol, marijuana and positive for amphetamines. You must not feel too good this morning. Oh, and wait, you had your minor child in the car with you.

Clifford stands.

CLIFFORD

I ain't a minor child.

Rene pulls at him.

RENE

Sit, sit.

JUDGE HARMON

Ah, this must be the minor child we spoke off. Young man you are in a courtroom, my courtroom, and I do not deal well with unsolicited outbursts.

CLIFFORD

(to Rene)

What's that?

RENE

What you did. Sorry your honor. It won't happen again.

JUDGE HARMON

Rene? Rene Wynn? What on earth brings you into my courtroom? I haven't had a chance to get down to Rene's for my morning muffin lately.

RENE

Fresh blueberries came in yesterday. First crop of the year.

JUDGE HARMON

Don't tempt my waistline. Are you with the young man who so eagerly spoke earlier?

RENE

No your honor. He's with me.

JUDGE HARMON

And I suppose you know the defendant, Marla Douglas?

RENE

No your honor. I don't really know her.

JUDGE HARMON

Really? Then why are you here?

RENE

She's my daughter your honor.

JUDGE HARMON

I catch your drift. Does the prosecutor have any objections to continuing this hearing to a later date?

IVY WATSON, 55, a large, masculine, African dressed woman is conversing with the bailiff.

PROSECUTOR

Not at all, your honor.

JUDGE HARMON

Does she have the means to hire an attorney to represent her?

RENE

No your honor. I expect we'll have to find one.

Judge Harmon notices Ivy at side bar.

JUDGE HARMON

Let me help you with that. Ms. Watson, I am pleased that you graced our chambers this morning.

IVY

Oh, thank you Judge Harmon but my current case load can't possibly accommodate further....

JUDGE HARMON

I see that you have a heavy schedule before my court this week.

IVY

I always have a heavy schedule your honor.

JUDGE HARMON

I am familiar with your outstanding reputation, so today the court will avail your services on a pro bono case that has presented itself.

IVY

Your honor, my schedule won't permit any more cases. I already have two trials beginning this week. Besides, Ms. Wynn has more than means to acquire adequate counsel for her defendant daughter.

JUDGE HARMON

Now I am worried. We have a pillar of our community, who attends to those within the community that need help the most, now in need herself and I see an esteemed member of the bar turning their skills away in her time of need.

RENE

Your Honor, if she is too busy I'll be glad to...

JUDGE HARMON

I guarantee you Ms. Wynn that Ms. Watson is not too busy. At least not from this moment on. Bailiff, please reschedule Ms. Watson's two trial hearings to, let's say, ninety days from next Monday.

IVY

Your Honor, I beg your understanding on this matter. I am sure Ms. Wynn would fair better with other counsel.

JUDGE HARMON

On that I agree with you Ms. Watson.

IVY

Thank you, your Honor.

JUDGE HARMON

But as you can see, you are the only counsel within earshot.

IVY

Yes your honor.

JUDGE HARMON
Now lets address bail, Ms. Watson.

RENE
Can I say something here?

JUDGE HARMON
By all means.

RENE
If it's okay with you, she and her son, Clifford, you've met Clifford, are okay to stay with me. If it's okay with you?

JUDGE HARMON
Does the prosecution have any problems with that?

PROSECUTOR
None your honor as long as there is some sort of guarantee in lieu of bail by Ms. Wynn that Ms. Douglas will appear at the next hearing date.

JUDGE HARMON
Ms. Watson, I assume this meets with your approval?

IVY
Yes your honor.

JUDGE HARMON
Then so be it. Ms. Wynn I have your guarantee Ms. Douglas will appear on, say the seventeenth, at nine a.m.?

RENE
Ah, maybe in the afternoon? I do have a restaurant to run and home deliveries to make in the morning. If it's okay with you?

JUDGE HARMON
One p.m. it is then. Ms. Douglas is free to go on her own recognizance with Ms. Wynn's guarantee to appear.

RENE
Thank you your honor.

JUDGE HARMON

You're welcome Rene and do you have any of those tea cakes that Weston makes?

RENE

With marionberry glaze.

JUDGE HARMON

Excellent. Next case.

The Bailiff leads Marla out the way she came in from the holding cell.

Ivy crosses to Rene.

RENE

I thought she could leave.

IVY

They have to process her first. They'll let her out in about an hour or so and you can meet her at the station.

RENE

Thank you for taking the case.

Ivy is glancing at Marla's CASE FILE.

IVY

Not my choice, remember? Besides, I think you handled most of it. I'll call you at home and we'll talk about what kind of deal we can cut.

CLIFFORD

No deals. Get her off.

IVY

That isn't going to happen without a miracle. Her blood levels were sky high, way above the legal limits on alcohol alone. Take in the grass and the speed and we're talking a good chance she could do some serious time.

RENE

We'll see what happens. One step at a time.

Clifford stomps off.

IVY

You're going to have your hands full. Maybe you can get some of your house boys to help you. It's not so pretty on the other side is it?

Ivy walks off.

RENE

What in the hell have I gotten into?

EXT. SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT

Rene and Clifford are waiting next to her car as the door opens and Kevin comes out with Marla.

In the distance we can see a DARK TOWN CAR parked across the parking lot.

A UNIFORMED OFFICER walks up to a partially opened window of the town car, speaking to the driver, referring to Rene and Kevin as they speak.

KEVIN

I heard you were really something in the courtroom today.

RENE

You know me Kevin, gotta do what I gotta do.
(to Marla)
How are you feeling? You don't look so good.

Marla vomits next to the car.

Clifford quickly assists Marla into the car's back seat and gets in next to her.

KEVIN

She's starting to detox and it won't be pretty for a couple of days.

RENE

Apparently. Thank you Kevin.

KEVIN

No problem. I'll be down for some of those muffins you told Judge Harmon about.

RENE

It's a deal.

Rene gets into her car and drives off.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN - TWO DAYS LATER

Clifford is seated at the table.

Rene is at the stove making a light breakfast.

Rene serves him food.

RENE

All right, you have some choices to make. Overall, I'm going to have you go on my runs with me.

CLIFFORD

I don't run.

RENE

Well, it seems you two have been on the run for some time but, it's not the same. There have been many very ill patients that have moved to our community to, well, live out their days. To enjoy what they have left. I still have my health and the ability to help others so I make deliveries, to many of them, of things I make at the shop.

CLIFFORD

But if they're already dying why bother?

RENE

Because someday we all reach that same point in life. Someday we all need help from someone. Because someday we all have to learn not to be such arrogant assholes in life. Because someday we are just lucky not to get the shit slapped out of us for saying stupid things. Do you catch my drift?

CLIFFORD

I only asked.

RENE

Well you asked wrong. Didn't your mother ever teach you anything about manners and how to act around other humans?

CLIFFORD

We lived in New York for a while. Humans never came up.

RENE

Where else did you live? Where were you born? And when?

CLIFFORD

August 14 somewhere in Illinois. Near Chicago.

RENE

My my, that's in a couple of weeks. What about school?

CLIFFORD

School sucks.

RENE

True but it's a requirement. Without it you don't go anywhere.

CLIFFORD

We did good.

RENE

How? How did you pay rent or eat? Get clothes on your back?

CLIFFORD

It don't matter. We did what we had to and we did okay.

RENE

If you did so okay, why were you coming here to California?

CLIFFORD

Change of scenery.

Rene rises to stove, dishing up from a large pan.

RENE

Try some of this. This will put meat on your bones.

CLIFFORD
What the hell is it?

RENE
That, my boy, is the best corn
bread dressing you will ever taste.
It's good for what ever ails you.

CLIFFORD
If you say so.

INT. MARLA'S ROOM

Marla is still crashed.

Rene enters room, putting small tray on table next to bed,
opens blinds to let in light.

RENE
Okay, times wasting.

Rene sits on chair near bed.

RENE (CONT'D)
Is anyone there, by any chance?

Marla moves, opening one eye.

MARLA
Oh my god. Has the world come to an
end?

RENE
More like, you've arrived at the
end of the world.

MARLA
My head hurts.

RENE
Considering you haven't moved in
almost two days, you're detoxing,
let alone you haven't eaten
anything. I would say you're lucky
just to have a headache.

MARLA
And a dead rat in my mouth.

RENE
Well that's one thing in your life
you can't blame me for. Here's some
chicken broth. It might help.

Marla sips broth.

MARLA
Hot, ooh hot.

RENE
Supposed to be.

Silence.

RENE (CONT'D)
You might have mentioned you were coming. Although you never mentioned you were leaving.

MARLA
I didn't know.

RENE
You didn't know where you where going?

MARLA
I was just going.

RENE
Anywhere special?

MARLA
No.

RENE
So, Clifford tells me he was born somewhere in Illinois.

They look at each other.

Rene prompts an answer with a hand gesture.

MARLA
Elmhurst. Elmhurst, Illinois. It's outside of Chicago.

RENE
And do we know who the father is?

MARLA
Yes. It was the fuck I was married to for a while. Eight months to be exact before he took off. That should please you. Another failed attempt for me to have a life.

RENE
Are we still a little sour?

MARLA
And why not?

RENE
You tell me. I haven't moved from this house in some twenty years. You've been out of it, in more ways than one, for what, eighteen of those years? You couldn't even let me know I was a grandmother, not that I'm old enough.

MARLA
Mother, you were old enough before I ever left.

RENE
I'm going to take Clifford with me to do my runs. Someone needs to show him some stability.

Rene exits.

MARLA
Hah, fat chance from you.

EXT. TOMMY FRANKLIN'S HOUSE

Rene's car pulls into the driveway.

Rene gets out, pulls her FOOD BAGS from the back seat and heads for the front door.

RENE
No free ride. Come on. Grab the bag of muffins and follow me....today.

Clifford grabs bag, exits car and follows Rene.

Rene enters house.

INT. TOMMY FRANKLIN'S HOUSE

A DVD OF THE BROADWAY CAST OF CATS is playing in the rear bedroom.

Rene walks through house to rear bedroom, followed by Clifford.

TOMMY (O.C.)
Is that my Grizabella Glamour Cat?

RENE
Coming to see Mungojerrie.

CLIFFORD
Who?

RENE
Later.

They enter a bedroom that is set up as a full hospital care room.

INT. TOMMY FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

TOMMY FRANKLIN, 60, is an AIDS patient in the worst of times. He has Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions visible as purple spots and lying in an upraised hospital bed.

TOMMY
No Mungojerrie here today. Only Old Deuteronomy and his aching paws and crumpled fur.

RENE
Hate to tell you this but you haven't had fur up there since you began your chemo.

Rene rubs his bald head.

CLIFFORD
Who beat you up?

RENE
Clifford!

Tommy lays his hand on Rene's arm.

TOMMY
Oh honey. You should have seen the one that got away. He looked a lot worse than this. They actually had to drag him out in an ambulance. Messy situation.
(to RENE)
And as for you Ms. Grizabella did you bring my stash?

RENE
I sure did. And some extra too.

Rene pulls out tub from bag.

TOMMY

Oohh, how wonderful. Gus would be so proud of you.

RENE

I prefer Rum Tum Tugger. Something in the name.

TOMMY

Marvelous.

(to CLIFFORD)

This stuff keeps me alive.

CLIFFORD

What is it?

TOMMY

What is it? Haven't you given this boy any of your homemade corn bread dressing yet?

RENE

Yes I have. He wasn't impressed.

Tommy points at television.

TOMMY

Oh wait. I love this part. It took me forever to learn that step. But I did it and have the video to prove it.

CLIFFORD

What?

RENE picks up the remote, rewinding DVD and pushes play.

RENE

That's him. Skimblehanks.

Tommy strikes pose.

TOMMY

The Railway Cat.

CLIFFORD

The what?

TOMMY

My God. You mean you brought a CATS virgin into my house.

RENE

Believe me, I had no idea.

TOMMY

Who is he anyway?

RENE

Tommy, this is Clifford. My grandson.

TOMMY

Your....I didn't think you were old enough.

RENE

I'm not, but no one seems to get that.

CLIFFORD

So I guess he ain't dancing anymore.

RENE

Yah think? Actually he quit dancing in his fifth year of CATS. He tore his achilles tendon after having someone repair a broken dance shoe he had. Turned out they didn't really know what they were doing and during one of the performances he leaped like a cat and came down like Humpty Dumpty.

Clifford is watching television with subdued interest.

A small pill timer goes off.

TOMMY

Ah, must be lunch time.

Rene is already getting a stash of pills for him from his bottles.

RENE

Where's your Kaletra? Did you run out again? Tommy, I told you that I would pick up your scripts on the way over if you need them.

TOMMY

Nope, built up a resistance to it. Doctor took me off because it wasn't doing any good.

RENE

That's the third one.

TOMMY

Actually the fourth but with KS it doesn't much matter.

Rene lays out many pills on the bed table then pours him a large glass of juice.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Hey, at least I can have grapefruit juice again.

CLIFFORD

Whoa, those are some heavy scripts.

RENE

Really? You know about these?

CLIFFORD

Yah. Well, not all of them but, the blue one with the "v" cut out of the middle is valium, 10 milligrams. The whitish one with the "W" on it is Demerol, 100 milligrams but the injectable usually works better.

TOMMY

Is this kid a pharmacy tech in disguise?

RENE

You don't even want to go there.

INT. RENE'S SMALL COTTAGE BATHROOM

Marla is rummaging through everything looking for any drug she could take.

Finding none, Marla heads for the kitchen, stopping off in the dining area to go through cabinets.

In the kitchen she goes through the cupboards finding a bottle of cooking wine. Downing the remains in the bottle, she replaces the empty and continues looking through cabinets.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN - LATER THAT EVENING

Rene enters dressed for bed. Making a pot of tea, she pulls out an array of tea bags. She pulls out the empty wine bottle.

RENE

Oh god. I didn't think.

Rene goes to the cabinet above the refrigerator and finds her other bottle of wine empty.

Rene walks to Marla's door and puts ear to it.

Marla is talking to Clifford.

MARLA (O.S.)

Oh you baby doll. Just what I need.

Rene knocks as she pushes door open.

INT. MARLA'S ROOM

Marla has just finished popping a pill and is drinking water.

Clifford is seated next to Marla.

RENE

I see you're still up.

MARLA

I've had a headache. My baby just got me something for it.

RENE

Really? Clifford would you mind if your mother and I have a little chat?

MARLA

It's okay. He's big enough to stay.

RENE

I think not. Clifford, would you please go to your room? Please!?

Clifford gets up and walks to the door, turning.

MARLA

It's okay baby.

Clifford exits.

Rene paces.

RENE

Look, if this is going to be a functional effort there is going to be some changes. I need to impose some restrictions.

MARLA

Okay, here we go. Back to high school.

RENE

Well if you'd stayed in high school it might have helped the situation.

MARLA

Helped who? It sure wasn't working for me.

RENE

Did you give it a chance? No! Because you didn't like the rules. You, at sixteen, were too god damn big for your britches and thought you knew it all. Nobody but Marla could tell Marla what to do.

MARLA

Ah, fuck it!! Ma, what do you want from me? I don't have a lot here.

RENE

I'll be damned if you think you're gonna have another free ride.

MARLA

Another free ride? When was the first? I was sixteen when I left.

RENE

That's not what I meant.

MARLA

You have never been one for mincing words. You said exactly what you meant.

RENE

You know, it's never about Marla.

Marla throws glass to floor.

MARLA

Well maybe if Marla had others around when Marla was needing it, it wouldn't be just about Marla.

RENE

Well pardon me for living.

MARLA

Sometimes I do.

Rene slaps Marla.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Oh, that was good.

Marla storms into living room.

Rene follows, grabbing Marla's arm.

INT. LIVING ROOM

RENE

Obviously it was never good enough. You felt the need to wallow in drugs and alcohol.

Marla spins, raising her arm to swing, knocking over a VASE WITH FLOWERS.

RENE (CONT'D)

Oh, that was good.

MARLA

Like mother like daughter. I lived through as much as I could stomach.

RENE

Welcome to the real world. You think it was a piece of cake raising the child of the devil?

Marla picks up Rene's wedding photo

MARLA

Did I have a choice in the parents bestowed on me? You had the choice to have a kid. Don't lay blame on anyone but yourself for what you got.

Rene takes photo.

RENE

Those choices aren't the same.

MARLA

You're right. You got the better end of the deal.

Furious, Rene hurls the photo at Marla, then starts picking up pieces.

RENE

Ah shit. Nobody made you become a derelict. You did that all on your own.

Rene cuts finger.

RENE (CONT'D)

Oh damn. Look what you made me do.

MARLA

Nobody made you become a violent, picture flinging bitch. You did that all on your own.

Rene plops on the floor crying.

RENE

I just can't do this anymore.

MARLA

Well, that's about the best god damn news I've heard in the last sixteen years.

Marla storms out front door.

EXT. LOCAL STREET - NIGHT

Marla is walking along the street, crying.

Lt Kevin Morrison see's her and pulls his squad car up next to her.

MARLA

Oh shit. Now what.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN

Rene is throwing away the broken glass from the picture frame.

Clifford enters, standing in doorway.

CLIFFORD
I heard you two.

Rene begins to make a pot of tea.

RENE
Well, I'm sorry. You shouldn't have had to hear that.

CLIFFORD
How come you keep saying "I'm sorry?" You don't owe me nothing.

RENE
Well, I'm....you're right. I do that a lot when it comes to your mother.

Rene pulls a tub of corn bread dressing out of the refrigerator and begins to heat it in the microwave.

CLIFFORD
Have you ever said I'm sorry to mom?

RENE
What on earth have I got to say I'm sorry for? She ran away. Not me.

CLIFFORD
Beats me. Just seems like you both are real pissed off at each other.

RENE
Watch your language young man.

Clifford picks up wedding photo.

CLIFFORD
Is this your old man?

RENE
Actually, that was Larry, my husband.

CLIFFORD
Did he split too?

RENE
I guess you could call it that. He died many years ago. 1984.

CLIFFORD

What from?

Rene is getting place settings.

RENE

He died from, well....it's complicated. Technically he had a massive heart attack while he was in the hospital for tumors.

CLIFFORD

Tumors?

RENE

Once he developed the KS he started showing signs of other organ problems, like the heart. They eventually found six in the liver, four in the brain and a dozen or so around his heart.

CLIFFORD

KS? Isn't that what....

RENE

Yes. That's what Tommy has. Tommy is your grandfathers ex.

EXT. KEVIN'S SQUAD CAR

Kevin and Marla are in the front seat of his squad car parked next to an all night donut shop with COFFEE and DONUTS.

MARLA

I thought I was dead meat when you stopped me.

KEVIN

Why? What did you do?

MARLA

We sort of got into a big fight.

KEVIN

Is that why the side of your face is red?

MARLA

You got it. But you should see her. I mean, I didn't hurt her or anything.

(MORE)

MARLA (CONT'D)

She cut her hand on the broken picture frame she threw at me....

KEVIN

Calm down. She's still alive ain't she?

MARLA

And then some. Damn it.

KEVIN

Well then, Rene can take care of herself. You have to be careful though, you are out on bail under her bond.

MARLA

When I get around my mother I go completely blind to anything else. If you knew Rene, you'd understand.

KEVIN

Three weeks before my tenth birthday she caught me stealing a blueberry muffin from a tray at the cafe. I ended up washing so many dishes I swear my skin was peeling off. But, she didn't tell my folks. They would have killed me on the spot and cancelled my birthday all together.

MARLA

Over a damn muffin?

KEVIN

Yep. And to this day she never let's me forget about the muffin ordeal.

MARLA

That's typical of her, excessive.

KEVIN

I thought so at the time. Hey, I was nine and in a shit load of trouble. But now, she's the reason I'm in this outfit. It taught me one hell of a lesson.

MARLA

It's not the same shit I got.

KEVIN

Don't be so hard on her. She ain't perfect. Neither are you and I. She's done a lot around here.

MARLA

Yeah, I've heard how perfect she's gotten.

KEVIN

What do you mean, you've heard?

MARLA

Ivy Watson is not one of her fans.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN

Rene and Clifford are seated at the counter with plates of corn bread dressing.

CLIFFORD

So you married a queer but still had my mom. That's twisted.

RENE

(explodes)

Don't ever use that word! Queer is equivalent to calling someone a nigger and I won't stand for it.

CLIFFORD

Why? They use it on tv all the time; Queer as Folk, Queer Eye For The....

RENE

Doesn't make it right. Just because a few television producers and writers think it's cool and they use it for shock value, doesn't mean it's right. It's disgusting.

Clifford picks up photo.

CLIFFORD

He didn't look que....gay.

RENE

That he did not. I don't think he really knew he was gay until he met Tommy.

CLIFFORD

And you let him?

RENE

Hah, hah. Not much I could do about it, you know. Different plumbing and all. When they met, he changed. Literally. It was as though someone switched on a light in his eyes.

CLIFFORD

Didn't that piss you off?

Rene points fork at Clifford.

RENE

Mouth! How can you argue with that? It wasn't my fault or his. It's all in how you deal with it.

CLIFFORD looking sarcastically at her.

RENE (CONT'D)

What? Okay. I admit. For the first six months I wanted to cut his balls off. But that was not viable.

CLIFFORD

And you talk about my mouth.

RENE

That's different. I'm too old not to talk like that and you're too young to even think about it.

CLIFFORD

Bet I've seen more of that than you have.

RENE

I bet you have. Where have you and your mother been living?

CLIFFORD

Here and there. Mostly with her boyfriends.

RENE

Boyfriends? Plural?

CLIFFORD

You mean more than one at once? No, not usually.

RENE

Not usually? You mean she took you to live within an orgy? Oh my God.

CLIFFORD

Sometimes. Like in New York. There'd be like eight or nine people living together. It was kinda cool.

RENE

Oh, I see. A modern day commune.

CLIFFORD

Yeah, till she pissed someone off and we had to leave.

RENE

(pointing)
Mouth.

CLIFFORD

It was always over her stash. Someone was always digging into it. She caught the last guy red handed. Almost killed him over it.

RENE

That must have been pleasant.

CLIFFORD

Naw. Atlanta was worse. She stabbed the bitch there.

RENE

(pointing)
Mouth. What the bitch do?

CLIFFORD

Pulled a knife on me. She never saw mom come up behind her. It was so cool.

RENE

Did you ever go to school or did the two of you just go around the country stoned, stabbing?

CLIFFORD

I never touched anything. I couldn't. Had to make sure someone was awake to keep watch.

RENE

Keep watch?

CLIFFORD

You know. Make sure no one messed with our stuff or mom.

RENE

Did they mess with your mom much?

CLIFFORD

Mostly when she was down for a while.

RENE

Want some more?

CLIFFORD

Naw. What is it with you and this stuff? Do you put something in it or something?

RENE

Hah, hah. I put everything I can into it.

CLIFFORD

How come?

RENE

Well, Clifford, this recipe was handed down by my mother. It had originally come from her great, great grandmother on her side of the family.

CLIFFORD

Okay, so it's old.

RENE

Not just old but "cured."

CLIFFORD

What was wrong with it?

RENE

Not sick cured but aged with love and warmth. Just like in my family when my mother would make it. It was special. Special because she put her whole heart and soul into making sure it was just right. It says family in so many ways.

CLIFFORD

It's only corn bread.

RENE

It's not the ingredients that count. It's the heart and soul that dishes it up. They know it's Rene saying "just for you." I can't give them their health back but I can try to make it a little more bearable.

EXT. KEVIN'S SQUAD CAR

KEVIN

Are you sure that's what she said?

MARLA

Like a heart attack. Seems like mama screwed her over too and she holds a grudge. Next thing you know I get stuck with her as an attorney.

KEVIN

Well who's fault was that? You were driving.

MARLA

It just sorta happened. I left New York. Next thing I knew, I was in a jail cell in Podunk, California with Rene having tea with the fucking judge.

KEVIN

But the tea got you out of jail and a free attorney.

MARLA

Don't remind me. I need to walk.

Marla starts to get out of the car.

KEVIN

Okay, okay. Look....

Kevin pulls out business card.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

If you need something, my cell number is on the back.

MARLA

I don't think you have what I need.

KEVIN

You never know. Take it.

Marla takes the card and exits car.

Marla starts walking away, cradling a bottle of pills in her fist in her pocket. She looks back, worried Kevin will follow her.

Kevin pulls squad car around corner and drives off.

Marla quickly pulls out the bottle and pops two pills in her mouth, washing them down with the coke she is carrying. She keeps walking.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Weston is pulling TRAYS OF MUFFINS from the ovens and filling CARE PACKAGES for delivery.

Rene enters from parking area.

RENE

Can you take the deliveries out to Clifford and load the car?

WESTON

Right away. How's it going with him?

RENE

Weston, you're too old for him. At least for the next fifty years.

WESTON

That's not what I meant. There's just something....I don't know.

RENE

I know. I'm starting to rub off on you. I'll give you compassion yet.

Jilian enters from front of store, seeing Rene's BRUISED FACE.

JILIAN

You've been hanging around me too much.

RENE

I had a heart to heart with my daughter.

JILIAN

Heart to hearts never work. They tend to break easily. Oh, by the way. Did that guy get a hold of you?

RENE

What guy? Do we have a name?

JILIAN

Not really. He called looking for Marla. I told him she was staying with you.

RENE

Did they say what they wanted?

JILIAN

Nope. Just wanted to know if she was here.

Jilian exits.

Rene goes to door.

RENE

Clifford, do you want something for the road?

CLIFFORD

Bourbon and coke with a lime.

RENE

(to herself, turning)
Yah, like that'll happen.

Rene opens a BAG, throws in some MUFFINS, a couple of COLAS and starts to leave, then stops.

RENE (CONT'D)

Oops, forgot his lime.

Rene picks up two whole LIMES and tosses them into the bag, then exits.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - SHORT TIME LATER

Rene is followed by Clifford entering house. They walk to kitchen.

Buster is sitting on the counter staring at Jake.

Jake is sitting at table.

Rene begins unloading bags.

RENE
Don't get up. I can handle it.

Buster meows.

CLIFFORD
Rene!

RENE
It's okay. Old buster doesn't bite.

CLIFFORD
Rene!

Rene turns to Clifford.

RENE
Can you help me with this?

Jake, sitting at table, is in obvious distress and not moving, eyes bulging.

Rene drops what's in her hand, rushing to Jake's side.

RENE (CONT'D)
Jake! Jake! Can you hear me?

Jake falls into Rene, then to the floor, Rene with him.

RENE (CONT'D)
Jake! Oh my God!

Rene checks the oxygen tank.

RENE (CONT'D)
Clifford! Don't just stand there!
Call 911!

CLIFFORD
Where's the phone?

RENE
I don't know. There's one in my
bag.

Clifford rummages through her bag, finding the cell phone, tries to dial.

CLIFFORD
Rene, when was the last time you
charged the battery?

RENE
Charged what battery?

CLIFFORD
The cell phone is dead.

RENE
Then find his phone. Look in the
bedroom. God damn it Jake! Come on!
Stay there!

Clifford runs out of kitchen.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM

Clifford runs in searching for the phone, finally finding it
on the bed in the blankets.

CLIFFORD
Hello! Hello! We need some help!

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN

Clifford re-enters kitchen.

CLIFFORD
They're coming.

RENE
GOD DAMN IT JAKE, DON'T YOU DIE ON
ME!

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - HOURS LATER

Rene and Clifford are seated on the steps of the porch.

Lt Kevin Morrison exits from house.

KEVIN
They took him over to the hospital
morgue. They'll notify next of kin.

RENE
He didn't have many. Just a
brother, I think. Somewhere in
Arizona, maybe.

KEVIN
They'll find him. You sure you're
okay?

RENE
Go Kevin. Get back to work.

KEVIN
Okay. Call if you need anything.

Kevin walks back to his squad car and drives off.

Buster nudges Rene's arm.

RENE
Well baby. Guess you're coming with
us.
(to Clifford)
Ready to finish our runs?

CLIFFORD
It's a little late ain't it?

RENE
My boys always wait for me.

Rene picks up Buster.

RENE (CONT'D)
Oh god. Major diet.

Rene walks to car, putting Buster in through the open window.

RENE (CONT'D)
No! That ain't for you! Get out of
there! Buster!

INT. RENE'S SMALL COTTAGE - ONE WEEK LATER

Marla's purse lying on the floor, the front door in
background.

Buster is digging through the purse.

Rene enters front door. She places her keys on the table near
the door.

Buster meows.

Rene sees purse and walks over to pick it up.

RENE

You know buster, you seem to get into everything you shouldn't.

Buster meows.

Rene picks up purse and things fall out. As she puts them back in she sees the bottle of pills and pulls them out.

Pill label reads "Tommy Franklin" his doctors name, prescription number and "demerol 100mg, #90.

RENE (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned. How the hell...

INT. RENE'S OFFICE AT CAFE - NEXT DAY

Rene is seated at her desk.

Lt Kevin Morrison appears in doorway.

KEVIN

You wouldn't happen to have a spare muffin for an old friend maybe?

RENE

Oh, Kevin. I didn't hear you come in.

KEVIN

Obviously. You were in another city.

RENE

I've had a bit on my mind lately.

KEVIN

I know. Sorry about Jake.

RENE

Oh, I'll miss that old pervert.

KEVIN

Did you just say pervert?

RENE

Well, he was.

KEVIN

You would know.

RENE

Yah, well. I'll miss him. I miss each one that goes.

KEVIN

You're suppose to. It makes what you do worth it.

RENE

I know. I keep telling myself that.

Long beat.

KEVIN

Marla?

RENE

Yeah. Marla. Marla and Clifford.

KEVIN

Clifford?

RENE

It seems he's Marla's source.

KEVIN

Really? How?

Rene pulls out pill bottle.

RENE

These were in her purse. It was full when I picked them up from the pharmacy three days ago and took them over to Tommy's.

KEVIN

Oh.

RENE

Yeah, oh. I made the mistake of having Clifford help me do my runs.

KEVIN

Oh I don't think that was the mistake. The mistake was taking your eyes off of a sixteen year old kid that's been raised in a drug environment. He's probably been pocketing any kind of drug he can get his eyes onto.

RENE
Got that right. I was with him
every time and never saw anything
funny.

KEVIN
Were you looking?

RENE
I see everything.

Kevin holds up the bottle, wiggling it at her.

RENE (CONT'D)
Well....

Rene waves her hand.

KEVIN
It ain't on you.

RENE
Oh, I know but...

KEVIN
No buts. This ain't on you.

RENE
Isn't. Where'd you learn English?

KEVIN
At Rene's Cafe over a plate of corn
bread dressing.

RENE
(laughs)
Can't blame me for that.

KEVIN
I'll talk to her.

RENE
You'll talk to Marla? Do you know
what you're getting into here?

KEVIN
Do you?

EXT. DONUT SHOP - THAT NIGHT

Kevin and Marla exit donut shop with COFFEE in hand, walking
towards his squad car.

MARLA

I've been in so many cities I just don't know which is best.

KEVIN

Which do you remember the most?

MARLA

Atlanta. But what I remember ain't so nice.

Marla begins to dig in her purse.

KEVIN

Lose something?

MARLA

No. I need some aspirin. Got a head ache.

Marla searches her bag for her pills.

Kevin pulls bottle from his pocket.

KEVIN

Would this be what you lost?

MARLA

What? No. No. I just need some aspirin.

KEVIN

Look, Rene found these in your bag, I know they're your stash. I also know that you've been using Clifford to get them.

MARLA

Bullshit. Oh, I see what you're doing. She's settin' me up for a fall.

KEVIN

Fall for what?

MARLA

She'll do anything to make herself better than me. Figures you'd take her side.

KEVIN

Whoa, I never even knew you existed until you swung into town on the wrong side of the road.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I only know your mother has a side and you have a side. Somewhere in the middle is the truth.

MARLA

The truth is she's evil.

KEVIN

If she was so evil she would have turned both you and your son in for lifting Tommy's meds. Your bail would have been revoked and your pretty little ass would be behind bars and Clifford in a juvie center in another county. What were you thinking? Do you want to be in prison?

Beat.

MARLA

You don't understand.

KEVIN

Then tell me. What is it I don't understand?

MARLA

(tearing)

I need it.

KEVIN

Put it together, Marla. You left the label on. The name alone....

MARLA

Okay, okay. I didn't know he did it until I got it.

KEVIN

But you knew he would if he could, didn't you? This isn't the first time.

MARLA

What do you want me to say? He's a big boy now.

KEVIN

Yeah, well that sums it up doesn't it? He's big and still a boy.

INT. TOMMY FRANKLIN'S HOUSE

Tommy is lying in his bed.

Rene enters with plate of corn bread dressing.

TOMMY
Hey pussycat. For me?

RENE
Just for you.

TOMMY
Thanks for picking up my meds. I
could have sworn I had my demerol.

Rene sits.

RENE
Well, sweetpea, you did. Seems my
grandson got a little lite in the
fingers.

TOMMY
I knew he was gay.

RENE
Lite fingers, Tommy. Not loafers.

TOMMY
Same difference. And technically,
he is my grandson in-law. He looks
like me too.

RENE
Let's hope he grows up a little
more than you have. And plays a
little safer.

TOMMY
That's a low blow Rene. Even for
you.

RENE
I'm sorry. It's just....

TOMMY
Are you afraid that Marla has AIDS?

RENE
It's a possibility. God knows where
she's been sleeping and who with.
(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)

She could be carrying absolutely anything from AIDS to hepatitis A, B, C or whatever letter they're up to now.

TOMMY

Not much you can do about it now. You can only live with it if she does and hold her up if she gets sick.

RENE

Only if she's around.

TOMMY

Why? What do you intend to do? Throw her out again?

RENE

I didn't throw her out the first time. She went on her own.

TOMMY

True. But did you even know why?

RENE

No. How could I?

TOMMY

You could have asked.

RENE

Easy for you to say. I had my hands full with Larry's revelations on life style.

TOMMY

You can still ask.

EXT. DONUT SHOP

Kevin and Marla are seated at a small outside table.

MARLA

Growing up under Rene was a bitch under a bitch.

KEVIN

What does that say about you?

MARLA

It says she was a bitch. And where do you get off playing mister bad ass cop?

Kevin gestures to his uniform and squad car.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Fuck you and your attitude! No matter what I say you'll take her side.

KEVIN

Bullshit. You're just pissed off and apparently you're pissed off all of the time.

MARLA

Damn right I am.

KEVIN

I never had a chance to know what it was like to have a mother or a father around. I watched them being killed by a drunk driver while we were on the way to Disneyland for my tenth birthday. So take your fucking pity party and blow it out your ass.

MARLA

Ooohh, mister one up.

KEVIN

Yah know. Rene should have left your ass in jail. If she's lucky the judge will slam your ass.

MARLA

Maybe she should have. Then there wouldn't be any strings attached and I could disappear.

KEVIN

There are more strings in prison than you'll never know.

MARLA

Been there, done that! I gotta go somewhere. Can I have them back?

Kevin shakes his head "no."

Marla starts to leave, Kevin tries to stop her.

THEY ARE BEING WATCHED FROM DARK TOWNCAR AT A DISTANCE.

Marla leaves.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Rene and Weston are standing at a counter going over invoices.

There is a loud ruckus in the cafe between Jilian and IVY.

REVEREND DAVIS, 30, attractive African American, dressed in collar, is with Ivy.

JILIAN (O.S.)
I don't think so!

IVY (O.S.)
And twice on Sunday, sister.

RENE
Ah oh. Ivy's here. Now that's a recipe for disaster.

Rene goes into the cafe area.

INT. RENE'S CAFE MAIN DINING ROOM

Outside the main window the dark town car is parked.

IVY
And you think I'm gonna pay for that? You got another thought coming, sister Snow White.

RENE
Ivy, Ivy, Ivy. How are you dear? And Reverend Davis. It's been ages since you've been by.

REVEREND DAVIS
Why Miss Rene. What a pleasure.

RENE
Is Jilian here giving you a hard time?

IVY

Well, I'll tell you. It's sometimes hard for the younger white girls to understand the tastes of the African American culture and their appetite for fresh baked goods.

RENE

I understand exactly what you mean.

JILIAN

You do?

Rene holds up hand to still Jilian.

RENE

Sometimes certain people do not fully comprehend the relevant cultural heritage of an upstanding woman.

IVY

I am so glad to hear you say that. This young girl could not possibly understand what I am feeling.

RENE

Oh but she could. Jilian was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa. Both her maternal and paternal heritages are descendants of African parenting.

IVY

Really?

Rene bagging TWO MUFFINS, handing them to Ivy.

RENE

Really. It is such a pleasure to see you again. These are fresh blueberry muffins. Still warm from the oven. Do enjoy them. On me.

IVY

Why, thank you. And you have a good day.

RENE

I will.

Ivy and Reverend Davis exit.

JILIAN
Johannesburg?

RENE
It worked didn't it? What set her
off this time?

Jilian holds up plate with torn up muffin on it.

JILIAN
This. She said the bananas in these
were old and crunchy.

RENE
Bananas get gooey and soft when
they get old. Those are walnuts.

JILIAN
That's what I said.

RENE
But you just could never comprehend
fresh baked goods.

The both laugh.

CASEY, 40, a well dressed, attractive man, is standing a few
feet away.

STEVE, 29, a very large, attractive body builder is at his
side, next in line.

CASEY
Two of the blueberry please.

RENE
Certainly.

Rene bags muffins.

RENE (CONT'D)
Jilian will ring you up at the
register.

CASEY
Thank you so much.

RENE
You're new to town.

CASEY
Yes, we are. We're just passing
through.

RENE

Well, I hope you enjoy your stay.

CASEY

Thank you, but it's mostly a quick business trip.

JILIAN

That'll be two fifty.

Casey pays Jilian.

Casey and Steve exit.

RENE

Looks like they're out house shopping to me.

JILIAN

Really?

RENE

Those two are definitely an item.

JILIAN

You would know.

INT. RENE'S OFFICE AT CAFE - AFTER CLOSING

Rene is concentrating on writing checks.

Weston enters, leaning against door frame.

RENE

You're here awful late.

WESTON

I was just, well. I really need to show you something.

RENE

Okay, okay. I'm game.

Weston hands her sheets of paper.

WESTON

That's okay, but this really isn't a game anymore.

RENE

What are you so serious about?

WESTON

The first time I saw Clifford I thought I had seen him before. It took me a little while but I finally remembered where from. There are six different web sites there.

RENE

Six of them? Oh my god. Oh Jesus.

WESTON

That's what I thought.

RENE

But he's only sixteen. How can they do this?

WESTON

It's a hard world on the internet.

RENE

I see.

WESTON

That's not what I meant.

RENE

I know. I know. Let me think about how to handle this.

WESTON

Let me know if you need anything. I'm sorry about....

RENE

It's okay. I'll handle this one.

Weston exits.

Rene continues to look through the photos, over and over and begins to weep.

Rene lays the photos down on her desk.

The INTERNET ADS FOR "GOLDEN ROD - MIRACLE BOY STUD, JUST FOR YOU. \$200.00 PER HOUR," Clifford's nude photos are included.

A tear drops on the photo.

EXT. COFFEE BEAN AND TEA LEAF AND THE BEACH - NEXT DAY

Rene is standing by the railing.

Ivy Watson approaches, handing Rene a drink.

IVY
Earl Grey no sugar.

RENE
Thanks.

IVY
Don't thank me. I'm staying in
grace with Judge Harmon at this
point.

RENE
Look, there's more to Marla and
Clifford than meets the eye.

IVY
Really? No surprise there.

RENE
It seems, well here.

Rene hands Ivy the internet photos.

IVY
Seems like you have a bigger
problem than you thought.

RENE
Look this isn't about me.

IVY
But it will be. Think of what the
court will say when they see these
photos.

RENE
I came to you for help and you are
making this personal. Why? What in
the hell is up your butt so deep
that you would jeopardize Marla's
case to get at me?

IVY
Look Wynn, you have been miss goody
two shoes around here for too long.
There is no love loss here.

RENE
Do you care to explain or just
bitch?

IVY

Didn't you ever think I would find out about the Wadson grant?

RENE

That was four years ago.

IVY

Very good. And you were the one who got the Black Minority Conference removed from the running. That was twenty-five thousand dollars we lost.

RENE

Yes, it was. But your director, Reverend Davis, was told to put in the same application to the Stevenson Educational Grant committee. You were guaranteed sixty thousand. I arranged the entire thing because the Stevenson grant was more tailored to your needs for the kids. Reverend Davis missed the deadline.

IVY

What?

RENE

He could have still applied for the last three years and didn't. You need to hold confession with the Reverend.

IVY

He only mentioned the part about you getting us removed.

RENE

I had everything to do with that.

IVY

Doesn't make things any better.

RENE

You mean for you looking like an ass for four years?

IVY

You are a crass woman Rene Wynn.

RENE

Yes, I am. Now, can we get down to business?

IVY

For now and only because it involves my case.

RENE

You are an unforgiving, bitter woman Ivy Watson.

IVY

Yes I am.

EXT. OUTSIDE LIQUOR STORE - LATER THAT EVENING

Inside we see Marla making purchases. She pays and exits with bag in hand.

Marla crosses the street and quick steps to the park, all the way trying to open the contents of the bag.

EXT. PICNIC AREA IN PARK - ONE HOUR LATER

Marla is sitting in the picnic area at one of the tables.

There are SEVERAL EMPTY BEER CANS and a FEW CANDY WRAPPERS NEXT TO A PINT OF TEQUILA.

Marla takes swig from bottle.

CASEY (O.C.)

You know, that stuff will kill you almost quicker than I will.

Marla looks up.

CASEY (CONT'D)

But I will make it hurt much more. Did you really think you could run?

MARLA

Casey. How the fuck did you find me?

CASEY

Oh, that was easy. My, my. DUI with a minor in the car. Not your smartest move.

MARLA
How the hell...

CASEY
I have fingers everywhere. It was
only a matter of time. You have
something that belongs to me.

MARLA
There ain't nothin' I got that
belongs to you.

Steven grabs her.

CASEY
I want my package. You have cost me
a lot of wasted time and money.

MARLA
You ain't getting shit!

CASEY
Oh, such a temper. I wouldn't want
that sweet little old grandmother
to get, how would you say, involved
in this and possibly injured.

MARLA
You fucking cock sucker! You
wouldn't dare!

CASEY
Cock sucker I am. Steve here can
vouch. But I don't forgive too
easily. I want my sweet little
package and I am going to get it
back.

Marla rears up, kicking Steven in the crotch.

Steven lets go of her in surprise.

Marla runs.

Casey drops his cigarette butt.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Steven, don't bother. We know
exactly where she is staying. She
won't go far.

EXT. EDGE OF PARK

Marla is running out of the park.

Kevin's squad car pulls up.

Kevin exits car and stops Marla.

KEVIN
What the hell is going on?

MARLA
Ah, nothing.

Kevin sniffs her breath.

KEVIN
Oh, I see.

MARLA
No you don't!

KEVIN
Then, fill me in!

MARLA
I, I ran into someone I know.

KEVIN
And?

MARLA
And it isn't someone I like. He
made some threats.

KEVIN
How much have you had to drink?

MARLA
This ain't about drinking.

KEVIN
Where'd this happen?

Marla points towards the picnic area.

EXT. PICNIC AREA IN PARK

Kevin leads Marla back to her drinking spot.

The table is clean. There are no empty cans, etc.

MARLA
What the?

KEVIN
Well?

MARLA
Well what? They were both here five minutes ago.

KEVIN
Then where are they now?

MARLA
How the fuck should I know?

Marla runs off, crying.

Kevin rubs his face then, looking down, he bends down to pick up the cigarette butt still smoldering on the ground.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN - LATER THAT EVENING

Marla enters, shaking, she goes to wine cabinet but finds it empty.

Clifford enters in just boxers from his room.

CLIFFORD
You okay mom?

MARLA
No, no, yah, I'm cool.

CLIFFORD
How come you're shaking so much?

MARLA
I...um...ran out of my pills. You know how I get.

CLIFFORD
I'll get some more when we go on the runs tomorrow.

MARLA
Might be a problem. Rene found them in my purse.

Buster jumps up on the counter.

CLIFFORD
I'll figure something. Don't worry.

MARLA

I know. I know. Look, we might need to head out to, I don't know, Alaska or something.

CLIFFORD

Why? What's up? I was sort of getting use to this place. It ain't half bad.

MARLA

Go to bed. We'll talk in the morning.

CLIFFORD

But...

MARLA

I have to think!

Clifford slowly goes back to his room, looking back at Marla.

Marla runs her hands through her hair then leans her face in her hands on the counter.

Marla hears a noise coming from the front door and panics.

Searching through drawers, she finds a LARGE KNIFE and slowly heads towards the front door.

Rene enters the door and sees Marla holding the knife.

RENE

What in the world?

MARLA

I heard the noise and came to check it out.

RENE

With a knife? Although that is your weapon of choice I hear. Am I next?

MARLA

I was making a sandwich.

Rene goes into the kitchen finding counter tops are empty.

Rene starts pulling out sandwich fixings.

RENE

It helps to use bread and other things.

Marla sets the knife on the counter.

RENE (CONT'D)
Salami or bologna?

MARLA
What?

RENE
Salami or bologna. On the sandwich
you were going to make?

MARLA
Both.

Rene is making sandwiches.

RENE
Sit. We need to talk.

MARLA
I can't do this again.

RENE
Then we won't. We'll talk. No
accusations, no yelling. Deal?

MARLA
I guess so.

RENE
You don't look so good. Like you've
seen a ghost.

MARLA
I wish it were that easy.

RENE
Okay, no punches.

Buster leaps on counter.

MARLA
Yah, sure. I know you found my
pills.

RENE
You mean Tommy's pills. Actually it
was Buster. He knocked over your
bag and they fell out. Wasn't cool.

MARLA
I know. Yah do what yah have to
when you need to.

RENE

That's not what I meant. I was referring to Clifford. How could you get him to steal a dying patient's meds? That's low.

MARLA

I didn't. I never looked at the label. He just handed them to me.

RENE

How long have you been using?

MARLA

I can't remember that far back. Probably early high school.

RENE

High school? I never caught that.

MARLA

That's the point. You were never around to see. I could do whatever.

RENE

But I don't get why. Why drugs?

MARLA

It gave me something to do. I could forget. God, when dad came out you flaked.

RENE

And I thought I handled it so well.

MARLA

Not. How could you not know to begin with? Even I knew in high school he was gay.

Rene pulls out a TUB OF CORN BREAD DRESSING and puts some in the microwave.

RENE

Love is blind. Besides, you weren't sleeping with him. It puts a different light on things.

MARLA

Dah, neither were you. I was old enough that I heard all of your arguments that you thought you were being so cool to hide. All of them.

(MORE)

MARLA (CONT'D)

From then on nothing mattered but the cafe'. Then you started getting into the homeless thing.

RENE

They're not homeless. They're house bound. They don't have anyone else.

MARLA

Well neither did I. I had a mother that was copping out by running a restaurant and a father who just didn't care. You weren't even there the night...

RENE

What night?

Marla begins to tear up.

MARLA

Bon fire night of homecoming. I went with Jerimy Watson.

RENE

Ivy Watson's nephew?

MARLA

Yah. I thought it would be fun. It wasn't.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - LATE NIGHT - 20 YEARS AGO

Students are all reveling around a large bon fire.

MARLA, 16 wearing a cheerleaders outfit.

JERIMY WATSON, 18 is with her.

MARLA

The fire is so cool.

JERIMY

We can see it better from the announcers booth at the top of the bleachers.

MARLA

I bet I can get some great pictures for the yearbook.

JERIMY

I bet you could. Come on.

Jeremy grabs Marla's hand and they run to the bleachers, then up to the top.

Jeremy opens the door and Marla goes in first.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Jeremy enters, closes door.

Marla stands looking out the front at the bon fire, taking photos.

JERIMY

I told you you would like it up here.

Jeremy moves in behind her and reaches around and begins feeling her breasts.

Marla tries to pull away.

MARLA

Jeremy, I told you I'm going to wait.

JERIMY

Come on. You want me.

MARLA

No, I don't.

JERIMY

Well I do!

Jeremy pushes Marla against the wall.

JERIMY (CONT'D)

You've been a tease all year and it's about time you put out.

Jeremy rips at her clothes.

Marla fights back until she can't move and goes limp, crying.

Jeremy finishes the rape, gets up, straightens his clothing and exits.

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Jeremy comes out of the booth and there are FOUR GUYS waiting outside.

JERIMY
She's all yours.

The guys all go into the booth.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN - PRESENT

Marla is weeping.

RENE
I don't...

MARLA
Stop. I vowed to myself never to
tell anyone about that night.

RENE
How could you not?

MARLA
Easy. There was never anyone
interested enough in me to tell.

RENE
Oh my god. That was my fault.

MARLA
Yes. No. Well, a lot.

RENE
I can't change what happened. I can
only grieve over it and move on.

MARLA
That's comforting.

RENE
It's a grief I may never get over,
it may not seem logical but I lost
out too. I lost out on a beautiful
young girl going to her first
dance. I lost out in helping her
pick her first formal for her prom.
I lost out in watching you become a
woman. And I lost out on watching
my grandson grow up.

MARLA
I think we both missed out on that.

RENE

We missed out on each other. I think sometimes I am just too old to change.

MARLA

Maybe it's not about changing. Maybe it's about just being there.

RENE

But you'll have to be here to be there.

Microwave buzzer goes off.

Rene dishes it up on two plates.

Marla stares at the corn bread dressing on the plate. She begins to tear up.

MARLA

Perfect. How perfect.

RENE

What?

MARLA

The last time I saw daddy was thanksgiving.

RENE

You disappeared two days later.

MARLA

I can't believe you still make this stuff.

RENE

Well, I thought it would help. It was a sign of stability in my family when I was growing up. It was all I could think of to glue my life back together.

MARLA

It didn't work.

RENE

No, it didn't. And it took me a long time to understand that his being gay was nothing I could stop, let alone change. It was who he was and who he would always be.

(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)

Once I got through that and he dealt with the guilt involved we became closer than when we were married. He carried the guilt of losing you to his grave.

MARLA

Not my fault.

RENE

Didn't say it was. You weren't there and at your age then, well, how could you know how to react.

MARLA

I had no one there to teach me.

RENE

And look what that got you.

MARLA

Again, not my fault.

RENE

But you are old enough now to know better. If not for your own sake, for Clifford's. He's worth it.

MARLA

Don't you think I know that?

Beat.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Look, I've done a lot of things that I regret but Clifford is not one of them. He's my savior.

RENE

That's the problem. You're his mother. You have to be his savior. He's not equipped at sixteen to care for himself let alone you too.

MARLA

(sobbing)

I know. I know. I'm trying. That's why I headed here. I thought he would be safe here.

RENE

What do you mean safe? You knew about the internet?

MARLA

How did....

RENE

Weston, at the cafe'. He ran across the ads.

MARLA

Thank you to the internet. Some time ago he got involved with some people that, well, led him into some things. I found out a couple of weeks ago when they came at me for taking him out of Atlanta and going to New York.

RENE

Is that the Atlanta where the woman got stabbed.

MARLA

Oh, you heard.

RENE

Clifford told me. He seemed pretty proud that his mother stood up for herself.

MARLA

It wasn't me. It was about Clifford. They were going to take him from me and had sent one of their cronies after me.

RENE

Jesus.

MARLA

She jumped me but I was a little faster. Not much, but enough. They found us in New York about four months later. That's when I thought it would be better to head out here and hide. I never thought they would find me again but....

RENE

But? But what? When did they find you?

MARLA

About two hours ago. I was in the park picnic area having a beer and they showed up.

(MORE)

MARLA (CONT'D)

I got away but I think they know where we are staying.

RENE

Who are they? Give me names.

MARLA

Casey and his guy, Steven. I don't know last names. Casey runs a male prostitute cover.

RENE

Are they the ones who posted the ads?

MARLA

Yah.

Rene thinks, then picks up her telephone.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Who are you calling?

RENE

Kevin. He'll know what to do.

MARLA

He didn't believe me.

RENE

He knows?

MARLA

Yah.

RENE

Why that little son-of-a-bitch.

MARLA

Oh no. He just found out tonight. After the scene at the picnic area I was running out of the park and ran into him again. We went over to the picnic area and everything was cleaned up. Even the beer cans I had left there were gone. I told Clifford that we'll have to leave tomorrow.

RENE

And go where? I don't think so. Look, we'll handle this. I'll get Kevin involved.

MARLA
You can't stop these guys.

RENE
Watch me. Come on. Let's get some
rest and decide in the morning.

Rene and Marla walk to bedrooms.

Moaning and something being knocked over.

Marla and Rene stop near Clifford's room.

Rene reaches for the doorknob.

Marla stops her hand and shakes her head no, telling Rene to wait.

Marla runs to the kitchen, getting a KNIFE.

Rene refers to the door?

RENE (CONT'D)
What?

MARLA holds up knife.

MARLA
Them.

Rene gets a terrified look on her face then it changes to pissed off.

RENE goes to her bedroom

INT. RENE'S BEDROOM

Rene pulls a HAND GUN out of her bedside table then returns to the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY

Rene holds up gun.

RENE
Better.

Marla swings open the door.

INT. CLIFFORD'S BEDROOM

Clifford is laying on the bed, masturbating.

RENE
Oh shit.

CLIFFORD
MOM!! Doesn't anyone bother to
knock?

RENE
We're sorry. We heard....oh God.

Rene pulls Marla out of the room, closing the door.

INT. HALLWAY

Rene falls against the wall, laughing.

MARLA
You have a gun?

RENE
You never know.

Marla and Rene sit on the floor next to each other.

MARLA
That's a first.

RENE
Me too. I had a girl. Remember?

MARLA
Yah, vaguely.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Rene enters from the cafe.

RENE
Weston, have you seen Clifford? He
should have been here an hour ago.

WESTON
It's only eleven thirty.

RENE
Only? We should have been almost
done by now. Where is Clifford?

Weston hands Rene the phone.

RENE (CONT'D)

Oh, how 'bout I call and see where
he is?

WESTON

Good idea.

Rene dials the phone.

VOICE ON PHONE

I'm sorry, the number you have
dialed is temporarily not in
service.

Rene re-dials the phone getting the same recorded message.

RENE

Something's not right. The phone is
out. Weston, I'll be back.

Rene runs out the back door.

Weston dials the phone.

EXT. RENE'S SMALL COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

Rene's car pulls up and Rene jumps and goes to the front
door.

The door is ajar with a BROKEN LOCK.

Rene pushes door open and slowly enters.

INT. RENE'S SMALL COTTAGE

Rene hears voices from rear bedrooms.

Rene slowly walks down the hallway to Clifford's room where
the door is cracked.

Rene peers into cracked door.

We can see Clifford, bound, nude on the bed.

Steven is on top of Clifford, raping him.

CASEY

I told you I would get my package.

Marla falls into view on the floor after being punched by Casey.

Casey picks her up, slamming her against the wall.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You have cost me much too much in time and money. You are gone. You will not interfere again.

Rene runs into her bedroom

INT. RENE'S BEDROOM

Rene gets her gun from the bed side table. The gun is not there.

CASEY

Looking for this.

Rene turns to see Casey holding a beaten up Marla, standing in the doorway.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Do you think I was dumb enough to leave it in the drawer. It was way to convenient for you to leave it for me. All I needed was to let Marla here lead me to it.

Casey gestures with gun.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I have something you may not want to see but it is a fact of life. Now move.

Casey forces Rene and Marla into Clifford's room.

INT. CLIFFORD'S BEDROOM

Clifford is still nude and bound on the bed with Steven kneeling behind him holding Clifford's head up.

CASEY

What you see is my property. This boy belongs to me.

RENE

No one belongs to anyone. Especially a sixteen year old.

CASEY

Wrong.

Casey forces Rene to sit in the chair while kicking Marla onto the floor, bleeding.

RENE

Stop it.

CASEY

I have just begun. She sold me this little piece of boy flesh for just about a weeks worth of blow, which took her about three days to go through, in Atlanta. Then she stabs my sister. Doesn't make me a happy camper.

RENE

Well get over it.

CASEY

Don't even get attitude grandma.

Casey crosses to Clifford.

CASEY (CONT'D)

This was my top cash cow until Red here ran. Thank you god for her getting arrested on the way in to town. Made her easy to find and eliminate. Steven, please drop what you're doing and help me get rid of these two.

Steven walks over to Marla and roughly picks her up.

Casey points the gun at Marla.

Rene jumps in front of Marla.

RENE

NO!

Casey shoots, hitting Rene.

Rene falls to the floor.

The window shatters.

Steven takes a bullet to the forehead, sliding down the wall.

Casey turns to shattered window.

LT. Kevin Morrison, holding a rifle pointed at the window, is outside.

KEVIN

Drop it.

Casey runs out of the bedroom towards the kitchen.

INT. RENE'S HOME KITCHEN

Opening the back door Casey gets a rifle in his face from RICHARD, 25, another officer.

RICHARD

Freeze. Drop the weapon. Get down on the floor. NOW!

Casey does what Richard says.

INT. RENE'S LIVING ROOM

Kevin enters the front door, running towards the bedroom.

Kevin grabs Rene from the floor and sees all the blood.

KEVIN

Oh shit! Oh SHIT!!

TWO OFFICERS appear outside at broken window.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

GET E.M.S. IN HERE!!

Kevin begins to cry.

INT. MARLA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - TWO DAYS LATER

Marla's face is bruised and stitched.

Lt Kevin Morrison sitting next to Marla's hospital bed.

Marla slowly wakes up and begins to pull at her I.V. LINES, groggily.

KEVIN

Whoa, whoa. You don't want to do that.

MARLA

What happened? Ow. That hurts.

KEVIN

That's not all that's gonna hurt if you pull them out.

MARLA

I can't stay here. Where's Clifford? We have to go. Today.

KEVIN

You aren't going anywhere and Clifford is fine. He's staying with Weston until you two get out of here.

MARLA

Two?

KEVIN

Rene was shot when she jumped in between you and the guy who was taking aim on shooting you.

Marla begins to cry.

MARLA

What? Shot. Oh Jesus fucking Christ.

KEVIN

Hey. Take a breath. It turns out she's meaner than you thought. The bullet went clean through her right shoulder. She lost a lot of blood but she'll be okay.

MARLA

Oh fuck! This would have never happened if I hadn't come back. I should never have come back.

KEVIN

You came back because you subconsciously knew this was your only place to go and be safe. You really didn't have a choice.

MARLA

Choices aren't my best.

KEVIN

That's the good thing about choices. You can always change them.

NURSE enters carrying a medicine tray.

NURSE

Well, I see you're doing better.
You had us scared there for a
while.

Nurse pulls out a needle from the tray.

MARLA

What's that?

NURSE

Oh just a little something for the
pain.

Marla locks eyes with Kevin.

MARLA

You know, I don't think I need
that. I think I can deal with a
little pain for now.

NURSE

Are you sure?

MARLA

Yeah, this time I'm sure.

NURSE

Okay, but if you need this little
lady just push the call button.

MARLA

Thank you.

NURSE

You are quite welcome. You know,
you should hold on to that one.
He's cute and he's been sitting
there ever since they brought you
in.

Nurse exits.

MARLA

You have? Why?

KEVIN

It was a choice I had to make.

MARLA

You can always change it.

KEVIN

Don't think I want to. Least not
right now.

INT. RENE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Rene is sitting in her bed watching television.

Clifford and Weston enter.

RENE

(to Weston)

I'm watching you. He's too young.

CLIFFORD

Don't worry. He's not my type.

WESTON

Excuse me?

RENE

(to Clifford)

You. Sit. I need to talk to you.

WESTON

Uh oh. I've seen that look.

RENE

You, go get coffee.

CLIFFORD

It's cool. Weston knows everything.

RENE

Oh, that I'm sure of. He told me. I
think there are some things we need
to get straight.

(to Weston)

No pun intended.

(back to Clifford)

You need to make a few changes.

CLIFFORD

Please, don't be such a
grandmother. I'm okay....now. You
saw to that. You made sure my mom
was okay.

Rene starts to tear up.

RENE

Grandmother? Well, grandson. What
else am I suppose to be?

CLIFFORD

Not much.

RENE

Oh give your old grandmother a hug.
Oh ow, ow.

Rene searches for the call button and pushes it frantically.

NURSE (O.C.)

Yes, can I help you?

RENE

Pain. I need my shot.

NURSE (O.C.)

Right away. She should be there any moment.

RENE

I don't think I read this in the grandmother hand book.

WESTON

Maybe you read the wrong one.

CLIFFORD

Not many would have to take a bullet.

RENE

You know, you do what you gotta do.

CLIFFORD

Oh, I almost forgot.

Clifford pulls out a TUPPERWARE TUB of CORN BREAD DRESSING.

WESTON

I had nothing to do with that.

RENE

With what.

CLIFFORD

With this. Corn Bread Dressing.

RENE

You had nothing to do with this?

WESTON

Not a thing.

CLIFFORD

Well I thought, because you're gonna be here a while, you needed a piece of home.

Rene sniffs the tub and begins to taste it.

RENE

Thank god I'm in the hospital already. Needs salt. Just like my mothers.

INT. JUDGE HARMON'S COURTROOM - WEEK LATER

Ivy is entering courtroom, late.

Marla is seated at defendant table.

Rene and Clifford are seated behind the rail behind Marla.

Rene is still wearing a sling.

JUDGE HARMON

Ah, I see Ms. Watson has decided to grace us with her presence after all.

IVY

Sorry your Honor. I had an emergency filing this morning.

JUDGE HARMON

Emergency filing? And the nature of this emergency filing was?

TWO SHERIFF DEPUTIES lead Reverend Davis in from the holding cell in handcuffs and a "hot pink" prison jumpsuit.

Ivy cuts a look at Rene.

IVY

Well your Honor, it was regarding a church matter.

JUDGE HARMON

Ah, religious sanctity.

IVY

Yes and no, your Honor. Mostly religious embezzlement and the misappropriation of educational grants to the tune of two hundred and forty thousand dollars.

RENE

Oh my god. You mean he filed the application after all?

IVY

Yep. And if you hadn't have mentioned it I would not have known to trace the application.

RENE

No. No. You mentioned it to me, remember?

IVY

True, but that was only because I was still mad at you for cutting us out of the original grant.

RENE

Oh my god. And he would have gotten away with it.

IVY

And thanks to you he won't. Thank you. Thank you.

Ivy and Rene hug.

JUDGE HARMON

Ladies, I think I'm going to be sick watching this grandiose display of affection spilling all over my courtroom. But what does all this have to do with the case at hand?

RENE

Oh, nothing your honor.

IVY

No, nothing.

REVEREND DAVIS

No. Nothing.

JUDGE HARMON

I'm a tad confused. Of whom are we referencing when referring to embezzlement of grant funds?

RENE

Oh, I'm sorry Judge. We're talking about the educational grant that Ivy's children's group got denied....

IVY

Not denied but got withdrawn. But you actually had arranged for a different educational grant that was for more money...

RENE

Sixty thousand instead of twenty five thousand.

REVEREND DAVIS

Your Honor. Can I speak?

RENE/IVY/JUDGE HARMON

No!

IVY

Exactly. But Reverend Davis failed to file the application. Then once I began to trace the paper I found out that he actually has applied for the grant for the last four years.

RENE

Oh my god, you're kidding?

IVY

No I'm not.

RENE

What was he doing with the money?

Rene and Ivy simultaneously point at each other.

IVY AND RENE

The beach house.

IVY

The sucker remodeled the whole place, including a spa, steam room and built in theatre room.

RENE

Did you get copies of any contracts or invoicing?

IVY

Do I look like a stupid attorney?
Sure did. Seems like he pissed off
the contractor sticking him with
some custom counter tops. He's
talking like a myna bird. Gave me
copies of everything including
three bank accounts we didn't know
about.

REVEREND DAVIS

He ain't saying nothing. He's my
cousin.

IVY

Bet me fool.

JUDGE HARMON

Bailiff, remove the illustrious
Reverend Davis from my court. Bail
denied.

REVEREND DAVIS

This ain't right. You ain't heard
my case.

JUDGE HARMON

I do believe we have heard it all.
When you get an attorney, we'll try
again. Unless Ms. Watson would like
to take on another case this week.

IVY

Not even if hell was to freeze. If
the court understands, your Honor,
Judge Harmon, please.

JUDGE HARMON

The court wouldn't think of it.

The Sheriffs remove Reverend Davis from the room.

RENE

Oh my god.

IVY

And it's all because of you.

Ivy and Rene hug again.

JUDGE HARMON

Ladies, if you would like to spend some alone time together I will be glad to hold over the hearing on Ms. Douglas until you get over this cuddly thing.

RENE

Oh, no your Honor. Please continue.

JUDGE HARMON

Thank you Ms. Wynn. Now, Ms. Watson are you also ready?

IVY

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE HARMON

Anymore hugging and I'll clear the courtroom. Ms. Douglas I understand you have entered into an out-patient drug program after an episode involving you and your mother being injured in a shooting.

MARLA

Yes your Honor. I've been clean for four weeks.

JUDGE HARMON

I'm glad to hear that Ms. Douglas but you have to understand that your actions involving your arrest, especially when you endangered the safety of your sixteen year old son, have consequences.

Rene stands.

RENE

Your Honor, may I say something?

JUDGE HARMON

No, you may not. This is my turn and by all means I do not want to get you started again.

Rene sits.

JUDGE HARMON (CONT'D)

Ms. Douglas you will continue your out-patient drug program, monitored by this court, for a minimum of six months.

(MORE)

JUDGE HARMON (CONT'D)

I also think it would be fitting to assess a minimum of two hundred hours of community service...

IVY

Your Honor. Two hundred hours seems harsh for a first offense.

JUDGE HARMON

Two hundred community services hours, for a first offense in my court, to be monitored by a respectable non-profit organization servicing this community. Ms. Wynn I hereby assign Ms. Douglas to your home care foundation for the entirety of those two hundred hours. Do I make myself totally clear ladies? And counselor?

IVY

Yes your Honor.

RENE

Yes your Honor.

Rene, Clifford, Ivy and Marla all start hugging.

JUDGE HARMON

This court is really adjourned.

Judge Harmon exits the bench, looking back with a restrained smile.

INT. RENE'S CAFE KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Rene and Kevin enter the rear door of the kitchen.

Rene has a sling on.

Weston is behind the baking counter with Marla.

WESTON

Well look what the wind blew in.

RENE

What on earth is going on here?

MARLA

Weston has been teaching me to make muffins. It's really easy.

Rene rolls her eyes.

Clifford enters carrying a hand full of invoices.

CLIFFORD

Weston, are you missing the chocolate chips as well as the four bags of cake flour?

RENE

What on earth?

KEVIN

Things have changed a little in your absence.

RENE

No kidding.

CLIFFORD

Somebody had to pick up the slack while you were sloughing.

RENE

And this is gratitude? I thought we agreed that you were going to get some school completed?

CLIFFORD

I've already enrolled in a GED class that meets at night. I can still help here during the day doing home runs and office stuff.

KEVIN

He's turned out to be quite the accountant. He's been doing all of the paperwork and invoicing.

RENE

Well I'll be. I'm being moved out of my own shop.

KEVIN

Not at all. It's just becoming a family run place. Come with me.

Kevin leads Rene into the main cafe'.

INT. RENE'S CAFE MAIN DINING ROOM

Sitting in a wheel chair is Tommy, I V pole and all. At least a DOZEN MORE WHEEL CHAIR BOUND PEOPLE are seated around the room.

Jilian is serving them all refreshments.

They all applaud.

RENE

Oh my god. How the hell did you all get here?

TOMMY

Clifford drove us.

RENE

Clifford? But how?

CLIFFORD

I rented an access van from the hospital. I got the idea when I was visiting you and saw them bringing in wheelchair patients for doctors appointments.

MARLA

Yah, smart kid. The hospital liked the idea so much that they are willing to let us use the van every two weeks for a little get together at Rene's. It's going to be part of the Rene Wynn Home Services Program. They've gotten enough donations from the police league that they are funding it.

RENE

Oh Kevin. How can I thank you?

KEVIN

You don't have to. You have a lot of influence in this city. Judge Harmon said it has something to do with muffins and corn bread dressing being a staple of life.

RENE

Well of course it does. And there needs to be a lot more muffins out here. Weston, let's get another tray out here.

WESTON

Yes boss.

RENE

That's more like it.

Rene, Jilian, Kevin and Marla start serving the guests.

POV: CAMERA PULLS BACK SLOWLY.