CAST LIST

MADELINE MARTHA MACKENZIE
CELESTE WRIGHT
JANE CHAPMAN
PERRY WRIGHT
ED MACKENZIE
NATHAN CARLSON
BONNIE CARLSON

Renata Klein
Gordon Klein

Ziggy Chapman (minor)
Chloe Mackenzie (minor)
Amabella Klein (minor)
Max Wright (minor)
Josh Wright (minor)
Abigail Carlson (minor)

Skye Carlson (minor)
Joseph Bachman

Detective Adrienne Quinlan
Detective Walt Gibson

Principal Warren Nippal
Ms. Emily Barnes
Di Chapman

Lori
Tom
Juliette

Gabrielle
Harper Stimson
Jackie
Bernard
Oren
Matt
Samantha
Stu
Thea Cunningham
Dr. Leo Chang
SETS LIST

INTERIORS:

MADELINE’S HOUSE
  - DINING ROOM – SUNSET
  - HALLWAY OUTSIDE ABIGAIL’S ROOM – NIGHT
  - ABIGAIL’S ROOM – NIGHT
  - FAMILY ROOM – NIGHT

CELESTE’S HOUSE – SUNSET
  - DEN – NIGHT
  - HALLWAY – NIGHT
  - LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

JANE’S TOWNHOUSE – NIGHT
  - ZIGGY’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

BONNIE’S STUDIO – DAY

JANE’S PRIUS – MORNING *

MADELINE’S SUV – MORNING

BLUE BLUES CAFÉ – DAY

EXTERIORS:

OTTER BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – MORNING
  - SCHOOL TERRACE – MORNING & MID-DAY
  - PARKING LOT – AFTERNOON

MADELINE’S HOUSE, BACKYARD BEACH – SUNSET

CELESTE’S HOUSE
  - PATIO – DAY
  - DECK – SUNSET

JANE’S TOWNHOUSE – NIGHT

RENATA’S HOUSE – SUNSET
  - DECK – SUNSET

FISHERMAN’S WHARF
  - PARKING LOT – DAY
  - BOARDWALK – DAY
EXTERIORS: (CONT’D)

MONTEREY – BIXBY BRIDGE – MORNING
ROAD BY THE OCEAN – MORNING
BEACH – NIGHT

SONG LIST:

“BRIGHT LIGHTS” – GARY CLARK JR.
“VICTIM OF LOVE” – CHARLES BRADLEY
“KING KONG” – BABE RUTH
“CALL ON ME” – JANIS JOPLIN

* PIANO MUSIC – TBD (CHLOE & MADELINE PLAY)
“SEPTEMBER SONG” – AGNES OBEL
“WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A B.A. IN ENGLISH?” – Avenue Q (Madeline)
BIG LITTLE LIES

"Somebody's Dead"

OVER BLACK WE HEAR THE SOUND OF SOMEONE BREATHING OVER DISTANT, SPORADIC POLICE RADIO CLIPS; IT CONTINUES AS WE FADE IN ON BLURRY FLURRIES OF FLASHING LIGHTS AND AS WE INTRODUCE GLIMPSES OF DIFFERENT MALE AND FEMALE FACES DAZZLED BY THE LIGHTS. WE DO NOT SETTLE ON THESE PEOPLE, THEIR IMAGES ARE FAST, FLEETING, BUT WE DO HAVE TIME TO NOTICE SOMETHING: THE MEN ALL LOOK LIKE ELVIS PRESLEY; THE WOMEN LIKE AUDREY HEPBURN.

AS WE HEAR A CAR DOOR BEING SHUT...

EXT. SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

WE WHIP PAN ON A POLICE CAR WHERE DETECTIVE ADRIENNE QUINLAN, forties, IS MET BY PARTNER/COLLEAGUE DETECTIVE WALT GIBSON, also forties. THEY WALK PAST A FIRE TRUCK, AN AMBULANCE, THROUGH A CRIME SCENE.

    GIBSON
    In the back.

    QUINLAN
    (re: all the people)
    What is all this?

    GIBSON
    Some Costume night, or something.
    School fundraiser.

AS QUINLAN SURVEYS THE SURROUNDINGS, WE GET OUR FIRST GOOD LOOK: DIFFERENT WHIP PANS REVEAL THE YARD LITTERED WITH ELVIS PRESLEYS RANGING FROM LATE TWENTIES TO MID-FORTIES; A BUNCH OF AUDREY HEPBURNS AS WELL, SAME AGE-RANGE, ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. A FORTUITOUS COSTUME FOR SOME OF THE WOMEN; LESS SO FOR OTHERS.

    GIBSON (O.S.) (CONT’D)
    Victim's on the back terrace.

AND WE WHIP PAN BACK TO THE DETECTIVES. We get it now. This is the POV of someone watching them. And we can still hear his or her breathing.

    QUINLAN
    Witnesses?

    DET. GIBSON
    Plenty. Though not a lot of clarity.

(CONTINUED)
QUINLAN  
(no nonsense)  
How contaminated is this scene?  

GIBSON  
They did a pretty good job of it.  

They arrive on top of a staircase and stop, stare down at what we can only surmise is a dead body. EMT’S AT WORK BUT THERE’S NO PENDING EMERGENCY. WHAT’S DONE IS DONE.  

GIBSON (CONT’D)  
Already dead when we arrived.  

Quinlan stares at the ground, shakes her head.  

QUINLAN  
My god.  

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE  
late thirties, in what appears to be a police interrogation room. Note: all free-standing close-ons are in this setting.  

GABRIELLE  
It wasn't just the mothers. It was the dads, too.  

CLOSE ON STU, fortyish  

STU  
The thing about fundraisers. They're vicious.  

CLOSE ON samantha, forty  

SAMANTHA  
Everybody wants to prove who's the richest.  

CLOSE ON STU  

STU  
Add alcohol to the mix... and the fact that... women don't let things go. They're like the Olympic athletes of grudges.  

CLOSE ON THEA, forties  

THEA  
It’s sexist how the women always get blamed.  

(continued)
CLOSE ON HARPER, fortyish

HARPER
I’m telling you. It all goes back to the incident on Orientation Day.

AN ELECTRIC GUITAR STARTS TO PLAY THE FIRST NOTES OF “BRIGHT LIGHTS” FROM GARY CLARK JUNIOR AS WE CUT TO:

EXT. MONTEREY - BIXBY BRIDGE - MORNING

AN SUV CROSSES A BRIDGE BY THE OCEAN WITH A SPECTACULAR VIEW.

HARPER (V.O.)
And at the root of it was Madeline...

INT. MADELINE’S SUV - MORNING

A TIGHT SHOT OF MADELINE MARTHA MACKENZIE, DRIVING.

HARPER (V.O.)
... the Herculean talker.

forty, a whirlwind of a human being, quakes with good intentions, bright, bossy. The contrast between Clark’s sexy, rock n roll track and Madeline’s face is interesting, not an obvious match, but quite an intro. There is nothing apparently rock n roll about her, but sexy...

MADELINE
There's really nothing to be afraid of. Your sister had a great time and so shall you. No need to be nervous.

She speaks rapid-fire, perfect enunciation. NOW, SEEN FROM BEHIND, FROM HER SIX-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER’S PERSPECTIVE:

MADELINE (CONT’D)
You should be excited, you know why?

MEET CHLOE, seated in the back of the SUV, moving her head to the MUSIC AS THE BEAT EXPLODES. Glittery, bossy, just like her mother; precocious beyond her years, with a rock star quality. WE'RE ON A WELL-TRAVELED ROAD IN MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, NEXT TO THE OCEAN, BLUE SKY, BRIGHT SUN. CHLOE MOUTHS THE FOLLOWING:

MADELINE (CONT’D)
This is the very first day of the rest of your life.

(CONTINUED)
CHLOE
(some eye-roll)
Okay, woman.

MADELINE
Not a hundred percent sure about that tone.
(then)
Would you, please?

Chloe immediately LOWERS THE VOLUME OF THE MUSIC from her iPod that is connected to the car radio when suddenly Madeline jams on the brake, LEANS ON THE HORN.

REVEAL IN FRONT OF HER, A BLUE MITSUBISHI, TEEMING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, TEENAGERS, slowly moving behind other cars towards a stop sign at an intersection.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Mother--

CHLOE
Fucker!

MADELINE
Chloe Adeline Mackenzie!

CHLOE
You were thinking it.

MADELINE
Only 'cause that scared me. You want to see how teenagers die, this is how, that girl in front of me is driving her car and texting at the same time.

MADELINE LEANS ON THE HORN, YELLING OUT THE WINDOW:

MADELINE (CONT'D)
You are going to die!!

THE DRIVER SPIES MADELINE IN HER REAR-VIEW MIRROR, AS MADELINE JAMS HER FINGER INTO HER PALM, SIMULATING TEXTING.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
It's illegal! It's against the law!!

THE DRIVER, A TEENAGE GIRL, COOLLY EXTENDS THE FINGER: "UP YOURS," with the poise of a veteran bird-flipper.

(CONTINUED)
MADELINE THROWS THE CAR INTO PARK, JAMS ON THE EMERGENCY BRAKE, AND IS OUT OF THE VEHICLE IN A FLASH. CHLOE SIMPLY TURNS UP THE MUSIC. She’s seen this before.

EXT. ROAD BY THE OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

MADELINE STORMS UP TO THE OFFENDING CAR, BANGS ON THE WINDOW. THE DRIVER, LORI, SEVENTEEN-ISH, WHITE SKIN, SPARKLY NOSE-RING, CLUMPY MASCARA, SLIDES DOWN THE WINDOW.

LORI
What is your problem?

MADELINE
You put down that phone. You could kill yourself and your-- Abigail?

A stunned beat.

MADELINE (CONT’D)
What have I told you about riding with texters, young lady?!

On the back seat, a SIXTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL drops her head into her hands.

ABIGAIL
Mom!

MADELINE
It's worse than drinking!

MADELINE SNATCHES THE PHONE, THEN WINGS IT ONTO THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF THE GAPE-JAWED PASSENGER.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
You must stop it.

Lori looks back at this alien. As Madeline turns and heads back, she HEARS THE EXPLOSION OF LAUGHTER FROM WITHIN THE MITSUBISHI. Upon which, MADELINE NOTICES ANOTHER CAR, STOPPED BEHIND HERS; SHE THROWS OUT AN APOLOGETIC WAVE, BEGINS TO TROT BACK TO HER CAR, PROMPTLY FALLS. SPLAT.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE
It's possible that had she not fallen, nobody would've gotten killed.
INT. JANE’S PRIUS - MORNING

JANE CHAPMAN, twenty-four, behind the wheel, her tired old Prius idling behind the parked SUV. There's a palpable fragility to Jane. No makeup, no effort made to draw attention to herself. A hint of anxiety on her face; through it all she oozes a fundamental kindness.

JANE
Ouch.

STRAPPED INTO THE BACK SEAT, HER SIX-YEAR-OLD SON, ZIGGY. Big eyes, the image of innocence and gentility. He could pass for a puppet.

ZIGGY
Did you hurt yourself?

JANE
No. The lady tripped, she fell down.

THE MITSUBISHI ZOOMS OFF after doing its stop at the intersection. JANE PUTS ON HER SIGNAL, BEGINS TO NAVIGATE PAST THE PARKED SUV.

ZIGGY
Where are we going?

JANE
We don't want to be late for Orientation.

ZIGGY
But shouldn't we make sure the lady's okay?

JANE
Well...
(then)
You're right, we should.

JANE PULLS THE PRIUS OVER, DEBOARDS, under--

EXT. ROAD BY THE OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

JANE
(calling to Madeline)
Are you okay?

As Jane helps her up--

(CONTINUED)
MADELINE
I'm fine. I just rolled my ankle a little.

JANE
You should probably get ice on it.

MADELINE
I've got to get to school. My daughter's first day, they have a thing about tardiness.

JANE
At Otter Bay? That's where I'm going, my son, Ziggy, is starting there.

MADELINE
Ziggy? Like Ziggy Stardust? What a great name.
(indicating)
That's my little Chloe, shrinking from embarrassment right there. Are you new to Monterey?

JANE
Just moved here. Two weeks ago.

MADELINE
I'm Madeline, by the way, Madeline Martha Mackenzie. I only go by Madeline, but for some reason I always mention the Martha.

JANE

MADELINE
I already like you, Jane-no-middle-Chapman. You're an intrinsically nice person, I have a nose for this sort of thing.

CLOSE ON BERNARD, forties.

BERNARD
What Madeline had was a nose for everybody else's business.

CLOSE ON OREN, also forties.

(CONTINUED)
OREN
(times ten)
Oh my god.

INT. JANE’S PRIUS - MORNING

Jane drives, Madeline rides, her injured foot elevated above the dashboard. Chloe sits in the back, next to Ziggy.

MADELINE
I’m a stay-at-home myself so I’m glad to welcome another full time mother into the ranks. It can be us against them sometimes, the career moms in this town, they put more into their various board meetings than they do parenting, trust me.

CHLOE
My Mom’s an active talker.

JANE
I actually have a part-time job.

MADELINE
So do I, but it doesn’t really count, the over-under in this town is a hundred and fifty thousand. I work in the community theater twenty hours a week, so I’m an “under,” what do you do?

JANE
Bookkeeping. So I guess I’m an “under” too.

CHLOE
(to Ziggy)
When I grow up, I’m going to run a massive Label. Do you have plans?

ZIGGY BLINKS HARD, TWICE: A NERVOUS TIC HE HAS WHEN THINGS JUST DO NOT COMPUTE.

CHLOE (CONT’D)
I'm effervescent, which makes for a good leader. Do you have an adjective you like to go by?

ZIGGY
No.

(CONTINUED)
CHLOE
What kind of music do you listen to?
I'm into soul. And rock n roll.

Ziggy blinks again.

JANE
He's a bit nervous.

CHLOE
There's nothing to be scared about.
There aren't even that many rules to follow. We have to wash our hands before going into the classroom. And we're allowed only one paper towel.

AS ZIGGY BLINKS TWICE--

CHLOE (CONT'D)
No peanut butter allowed, 'cos some kids are allergic. You can't even have it in your lunch box. I got Janis on mine. Joplin, of course. My sister made it. Who's on yours? Don't tell me Bowie?

Jane takes a deep breath of anxiety.

JANE
Will he be teased if he brings his lunch in a bag?

MADELINE
Okay, darling, you need to relax. Ziggy will be walking in with Chloe, that's like arriving with the golden ticket.

The golden ticket smiles as she shows her iPOD to Ziggy, and presses play.

AN EXTREME CLOSE UP OF A FEMALE FINGER

GENTLY HITTING THE HEAD OF A MICROPHONE THREE TIMES. THE INSTRUMENTAL BEGINNING OF A CHARLES BRADLEY SONG STARTS TO PLAY. Good old soul sound.

CLOSE ON HARPER

QUINLAN (V.O.)
An autopsy is still being conducted...

(CONTINUED)
CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

QUINLAN (V.O.)
... to ascertain the exact cause of death...

CLOSE ON SAMANTHA

QUINLAN (V.O.)
... but at this point we can confirm that the victim...

CLOSE ON THEA

QUINLAN (V.O.)
... suffered a broken pelvis...

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN


QUINLAN
... and a fracture at the base of the skull.

SMASH CUT TO:

GLIMPSES OF HARPER, GABRIELLE, SAMANTHA AND THEA, all looking like Audrey Hepburn, only now, they are not dazzled by FLASHING POLICE LIGHTS but by camera flashes, and they all have huge smiles on their faces. Then another Audrey Hepburn appears, one that we haven’t seen yet, as we’re startled by the voice of Charles Bradley who screams his heart out: I’M A VICTIM OF LOVIN YOU! Meet CELESTE WRIGHT.

EXT. CELESTE’S HOUSE, PATIO – DAY

A tall, statuesque beauty, mid-forties; she’s stunning, even without her Audrey Hepburn look. We enjoy watching her as BRADLEY KEEPS SINGING OUT LOUD his broken heart. Her eyes closed, it looks like she’s listening to the music and appreciating it. Perhaps retreating into it. This time, the match between sound and face seems perfect until something bounces off her forehead. She opens her eyes and clearly doesn’t have the look of someone who is appreciating the moment.

CELESTE’S POV: her SIX-YEAR-OLD TWINS, JOSH AND MAX, scamper about the patio, firing Nerf missiles at each other.
CELESTE
C'mon, guys, put down the weapons, we're going to be late.
(kneeling before Josh)
Let's get your jacket zipped, c'mon.

THUMP: A NERF MISSILE BOUNCES OFF HER FOREHEAD. SHE CLOSES HER EYES AGAIN AND SHAKES HER HEAD.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Perry!!

JOSH
He's my POW.

CELESTE
Put down the gun, and grab your jacket. We need to go.

Josh fires again, as PERRY, forties, suit and tie, Hollywood good looks, enters with a suitcase. THE MISSILE HITS CELESTE IN THE EAR.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Dammit.

PERRY
(to the Twins)
Hey, hey, hey! What did we say about shooting Mom before noon?

As Max beams--

CELESTE
(slightly amused)
Can you help me out a little?

PERRY
(pointing an imaginary pistol at his boys)
Bang bang!

The TWINS DROP LIKE FLIES, PLAYING DEAD.

Thank you.

PERRY
(to the Twins)
First one to the car gets a dollar.

And THE BOYS POP UP; IN A FLASH THEY'RE OUT THE DOOR.

(CONTINUED)
PERRY (CONT’D)

(charming)
Just takes money.

CELESTE
(with a smile)
You’re bad.

PERRY
I thought you liked me bad.
(tenderly; covertly)
We make a “bad” team.

A smile. A kiss. A loving look. These two are clearly very much in love.

PERRY (CONT’D)
I wish I didn't have to go.

CELESTE
Do you really have to?

A look. Another kiss. This one a little hungrier... his hand slides to her buttocks, this could lead to the table, seems like it has before.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
There should be like a five-year limit on how long couples get to be gooey.
(adding)
My opinion.

EXT. OTTER BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

MORNING RECEPTION IN PROGRESS. THE TERRACE AND YARD ARE BUBBLING WITH ENERGETIC FIRST GRADERS AND THEIR PROUD PARENTS. A bright building, manicured landscaping, the DISTANT SOUND OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN: public school meets a bit of paradise.

JANE
Gosh. It's all just so beautiful.

MADELINE
Right?

JANE
I mean, it’s so spectacular.

(CONTINUED)
As Gabrielle passes--

GABRIELLE
Madeline, hello, hi.

MADELINE
Hi, Gabby. Good summer?

GABRIELLE
Fantastic, you look wonderful.
(covertly, re: Madeline's face)
Did you..?

MADELINE
I didn't, but you're sweet to think so.

GABRIELLE
Well, you just look fabulous.

MADELINE
You are so nice.

As Gabrielle heads off--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
(to Jane; re: Gabrielle)
A gossip, we don't like her.

As Bernard and Oren play through, both distracted.

BERNARD
Hey Maddie, have you seen Justin?

MADELINE
(pointing)
Just ran by me, whoosh.

BERNARD
(to Oren)
That way.

As Bernard and Oren depart --

JANE
Where's Ziggy? I've lost him.

MADELINE
He's fine, Chloe's got him.

As RENATA, forty-eight, appears. Beautiful, sophisticated, affluent, with a finely-tuned self-awareness of all of it.
A crisp, symmetrical haircut, stylish glasses, Prada Pacific blue pantsuit; a woman of power.

MADELINE (CONT’D)
(warmly)
Renata, hello.

RENATA
(big smile)
Madeline!

So friendly, they can only hate each other.

MADELINE
(claiming dominion)
Please meet my friend, Jane Chapman, she's new here.

JANE
(to Renata)
Hello.

RENATA
Renata Klein. A pleasure, and welcome.
(to Madeline)
How was your summer?

MADELINE
Flew by, how 'bout yours?

RENATA
The same. Joined the Board at PayPal, don’t ask me why.

AS HER CELL PHONE GOES OFF--

RENATA (CONT’D)
Hold on. My “Hamilton” tickets.

MADELINE
(spotting Celeste)
Celestee!

THEIR POV

CELESTE IS AIMING HER SMARTPHONE, HAVING THE BOYS POSE FOR A PICTURE.

MADELINE (CONT’D)
(to Jane)
Come meet my best friend.

(CONTINUED)
Madeline takes Jane by the hand.

(MADELINE (CONT’D)

(hello!))

Oh my god.

CELESTE

Madeline!

MADELINE

When did you get back?

CELESTE

Last night.

They embrace, then--

MADELINE

You total bitch, you got even more beautiful.

CELESTE

So did you. Is that the dress I bought you?

MADELINE

Damn straight, got my new dress, new shoes, new friend. Meet Jane Chapman, we already love her.

CELESTE

Hi, Jane.

MADELINE

She came to my rescue after I fell, trying to save young lives. Her son is Ziggy, he’s the one with Chloe, so cute.

CELESTE

Can you believe they’re in first grade?

Upon which, NATHAN CARLSON, forties, and his wife, BONNIE, twenty-seven, arrive. Nathan wears his customary light blue shirt: “Carlson Premium Landscaping” embroidered over the left pocket. Bonnie is cheerful, pretty, physically fit, a beautiful, sensitive soul... makes Madeline ill.

NATHAN

Hey, Maddie.

(CONTINUED)
MADELINE
Nathan, Bonnie, meet Jane.
(to Bonnie)
That dress is so gorgeous, oh my god.

BONNIE
Thank you, I made it.

MADELINE
Of course you did.

BONNIE
(to Madeline; eagerly)
Listen, I'd love to arrange a play-date for Chloe and Skye.
Madeline puts an over-my-dead-body-face on, covering with the brightest of smiles.

BONNIE (CONT’D)
They're not just classmates, but basically half-sisters, y'know.

MADELINE
Are they, now, am I missing the math?

NATHAN recognizes Madeline's undercurrent of hostility.

BONNIE
Well, Skye is Abigail's half-sister, and Abby is Chloe's half-sister, so... y'know.

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER
We were all concerned about Bonnie and Madeline both having their girls in first grade together.

CLOSE ON JACKIE

JACKIE
What it would do to the classroom dynamic.

RESUME

Nathan pulls Madeline aside.

NATHAN
Listen, are you okay to swap weekends? Let Abby come with us Friday?

Why?

NATHAN
We're going to see Bonnie's mother in Camarillo and Abby hates missing out. She and Bonnie's mom have kind of a special connection.

Madeline feels a twinge of vomit burn on her esophagus.

MADELINE
No problem.

(CONTINUED)
NATHAN

You sure?

MADELINE

(forced sweet)
Do I not look and sound sure?

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN

QUINLAN

We're looking at all angles. Nobody has been ruled out.

CLOSE ON SAMANTHA

SAMANTHA

So we're like seriously using the word... "murder"?

EXT. FISHERMAN’S WHARF – PARKING LOT – DAY

We’re inside a car watching the ocean, the hue, the waves, the mood... unpredictable, powerful, frightening, beautiful... the ultimate intoxicant: fear and beauty. That is Celeste’s POV as she sits still being the wheel, just watching. We hear a CAR DOOR being shut. Celeste turns to look at...

Jane and Madeline in the distance, getting out of Jane’s Prius as they walk away, but we can’t hear them, they’re too far. Of course, Madeline is speaking non-stop.

That puts a smile on Celeste’s face. She stares back at the ocean for a moment. The sadness comes back. She washes it away and gets out.

EXT. FISHERMAN’S WHARF – BOARDWALK – DAY

Madeline and Jane walk on the boardwalk. Hobbled a bit by the turned ankle, Madeline walks, arm locked with Jane. Already intimate friends, it seems.

MADELINE

(to Jane)
I actually like Nathan.

(then)
Okay, “like” might be a strong word, but I admit he’s a decent person. I just wasn’t prepared to see him there, he certainly wasn’t for Abigail’s first day.

(continuing)
JANE
And Bonnie’s the new wife?

MADELINE
Yes, and she’s wonderful. In fact, she’s so nice and pretty and perfect and sweet I could just, y’know...
JANE
Punch her in the face.

That startles Madeline; she stops, and spots Celeste in the distance, approaching.

MADELINE
(shouting, to Celeste)
We love her!

INT. BLUE BLUES CAFE - DAY

Funky, charming, a bit distressed... a great little gem of a salty beach cafe. TOM, thirties, proprietor-barista extraordinaire, is there as the three girls arrive.

TOM
Madeline! What's happened to you?

MADELINE
I am gravely injured, Tom. Turned my ankle.

TOM
(with a wink to Jane)
Oh, calamity.

MADELINE
This is my friend, Jane. She's my knight in shining armor, rescued me like a wounded dog, and you know what else, she's funny.

TOM
Nice to meet you, funny Jane.

MADELINE
She's just moved here, I'm guessing for your special coffee, could you bring us some, and throw in something chocolate that won't make my ass fat.

TOM
You got it.
MADELINE
Everybody comes here for the schools, you're not alone, private school education at a public school price. Anyway, you're going to love it here. Do you surf? What about your husband -- or partner, I should say, or boyfriend, girlfriend -- I'm open to all possibilities.

JANE
No husband or partner. Just me.

MADELINE
So... Ziggy's dad..?

CELESTE
(to Madeline)
Easy, girl.

JANE
It’s okay.
(then)
He's not in the picture.
(then)
He was actually never in the picture, we weren't... together.

MADELINE
(fascinated)
Really?

CELESTE
(sensing Jane’s discomfort)
Where'd you move here from?

JANE
Santa Cruz. Lived with my parents there.

MADELINE
She's a part time bookkeeper, isn't that great?
(to Jane)
We actually hire freelance accountants at the theater when we go into production, I'll see if we have anything for you.
JANE
Wow.
(a beat, a bit overwhelmed)
You’re so... nice.

MADELINE
This is Monterey, we pound people
with “nice.”

CELESTE
Not to death.

Madeline and Celeste seem to have some sort of complicity.

JANE
You guys are long-time friends?

Madeline and Celeste look at each other.

MADELINE
We met what... four years ago?

CELESTE
(to Jane)
She saved one of the twins from
drowning.

MADELINE
Oh, please, he was in a swimming
class.

CELESTE
Madeline. You jumped into a pool to
save my child.

MADELINE
And I’d do it all over again.
(to Jane)
She bought me a new outfit after.

CELESTE
(to Jane)
You could say we’re lifetime friends.

Jane is just staring back at Celeste. She then diverts her
stare. An awkward beat.

CELESTE (CONT’D)
(to Jane)
Are you alright?

(continued)
Jane nods. Madeline and Celeste exchange a look.

MADELINE
Tell us, honey.

JANE
It’ll sound stupid.

They just stare at her; they’ll wait for it.

JANE (CONT’D)
Sometimes when I go to new places... beautiful and lovely places... I get this sensation, if only I were here.

A beat. How odd.

MADELINE
But you are here.

JANE
I know, it’s so weird. I feel like I’m on the outside looking in. At this other life, I guess. One that doesn’t really belong to me.

ANGLE CELESTE
She knows exactly what Jane is saying. In fact, the words almost pierce her. This stranger with her raw, naked face – suddenly, Celeste feels like she’s known her forever.

RESUME

JANE (CONT’D)
(to Celeste)
And when I look at you... I’m sorry, I don’t mean to embarrass you, but you are so beautiful it makes me feel almost ashamed.

MADELINE
Ashamed?

JANE
You both seem so exactly... right. Which makes me feel, I don’t know... wrong, I guess.

The honest vulnerability of that is stunning to both Madeline and Celeste; they can only stare back.

(CONTINUED)
We suddenly SEE them from outside, THROUGH A WINDOW, from a WALKING POV, JOSEPH BACHMAN’S, late thirties, as he arrives at the cafe. When he spots them, he stops.

JOSEPH’S POV

JANE (CONT’D)
(muted through the glass)
You probably think I’m crazy now.

MADELINE
(muted)
Of course not, but if you are, you’ll be right at home in this town.

Some laughter.

ANGLE JOSEPH

Who turns... and leaves.

INT. BONNIE’S STUDIO - DAY

Bonnie is getting ready to leave, gathering her purse and jacket as Nathan waits in the doorway. He’s bristling.

BONNIE
Honey. It’s fine. Go back to work, I’ll pick up Skye.

NATHAN
It’s not fine. She can be hostile to me. But not you. I’m coming.

BONNIE
(Zen)
And should she bottle up her emotions inside, what would that serve?

NATHAN
Can’t she see? You didn’t do anything to her.

BONNIE
None of us really see things as they are. We see things as we are.

(CONTINUED)
NATHAN
With Skye and Chloe in the same
class, it’s only a matter of time
before Madeline really gets to know
you. Once she figures out you’re
smart, the shit’s gonna hit the fan.

BONNIE
The shit’s gonna hit the fan... if I
don’t tell her about the petition.

NATHAN
You’re not gonna do that?

No answer. She’s gone. He exits.

NATHAN (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Suicide. This is suicide.

EXT. OTTER BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TERRACE - MID-DAY

THE KIDS ARE EMERGING; FIND ZIGGY, CHARGING TOWARD JANE,
STILL WITH MADELINE. THE PARENTS HAVE ALL REGATHERED.

ZIGGY
Mommy!

JANE
Hey, baby. How was it?

ZIGGY
Fun. I made friends.

JANE
(hugging him tightly)
That's so wonderful.

MADELINE
He's beyond adorable, you do know
that.

(then)
Where's the Chloe?

(then; spotting)
Ah, there, look at her, totally
networking.

RENATA
(arriving)
Jane. Renata, hello, we met earlier.

JANE
Hello.

(Continued)
With Renata is a YOUNG WOMAN, twenty.

RENATA
I wanted to introduce you to
Juliette, my Amabella's nanny.

JULIETTE
(French accent)
Pleased to meet you.

RENATA
She's French. I always think it's
nice for the nannies to get to know
each other. A little support group,
shall we say.

MADELINE
Jane's not a nanny, Renata, she's a
mother, only young. Like you used to
be.

RENATA
Oh. I didn't mean...

TWO SIX-YEAR-OLD BLOND BOMBERS CHARGE BY, HEADING FOR
CELESTE WHO BENDS DOWN TO HUG THEM BOTH, as Bonnie arrives--

BONNIE
Madeline. Hi.
(pulls her aside)
I just found out you're working at
the community theater, which is
great.
(then; delicately)
There's a petition going round...

Bonnie spots Nathan who is watching from a distance,
shaking his head endlessly.

MADELINE
What do you mean, a petition?

BONNIE
About the play. There's some concern
about whether it's appropriate, I
know, it's ridiculous.

MADELINE
There's a petition to stop the
production?
CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
That play was kind of a life-line to Madeline. Like it tethered her to a purpose.

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER
She grew up wanting to be Betty Grable.
(fighting a snicker)
Ended up Betty Crocker.

RESUME

BONNIE
I signed it.

MADELINE
You signed it?

Nathan bites his lip, hoping the bomb won’t explode.

BONNIE
Not because it’s inappropriate, I just didn’t think it was any --
(catching herself)
I had no idea that you were involved.

MS. BARNES (O.S.)
Excuse me.

AND THEN, A RISING WAVE OF COMMOTION: MADELINE SEES A SOBBING, CURLY-HAIRED LITTLE GIRL, SHOULDERS Hunched, CLUTCHING HER NECK. EMILY BARNES, twenty-four, known to all as Ms. Barnes, stands alongside her.

MS. BARNES (CONT’D)
Could I have everybody's attention for a moment?

Renata rushes to the distraught curly-haired child. Juliette follows, but hardly in a rush.

MS. BARNES (CONT’D)
Both children and parents please.

MADELINE
(to Jane)
Uh oh, teacher voice.

(CONTINUED)
MS. BARNES
(teacher voice)
We've had such a lovely morning, but we need to have a little chat about something. And it's a little bit serious.

WE HEAR SOME MUTTERING, WHISPERS: "What's going on?" etc.

MS. BARNES (CONT'D)
Someone just hurt Annabella. Excuse me, Amabella. And I'd like whoever it was to please come over and apologize because we don't hurt our friends at school, do we? And if we do, we always say sorry, because that's what first grade children do.

SILENCE. SOME KIDS STARE BACK. SOME STARE AT THE GROUND. SOME BURY THEIR FACES INTO THEIR MOTHERS' SKIRTS. There are no apologists forthcoming. Finally--

RENATA
Who was it, Amabella? Who hurt you, baby?

The child mutters something inaudible.

MS. BARNES
(steering the witness)
Was it an accident, maybe?

RENATA
It wasn't an accident, for God's sake, look at her neck, it has marks.

ANGLE ON BERNARD AND OREN, watching the others.

BERNARD
(whispering)
I bet it's Timmy Collins.

OREN
Way too much screen time.

Ms. Barnes kneels to talk to the little girl, whispers in her ear. The room is frozen, rapt.

JANE
(to Ziggy)
Did you see what happened, honey?

Ziggy shakes his head no. With vigor.
MS. BARNES
Apparently one of the boys... um, well... my problem is that the children don't know one another's names yet. Amabella... she can't tell me which little boy...

RENATA
We're not going to let this go.

HARPER
(backing Renata)
Absolutely not.

MS. BARNES
(over her head)
Well...

ZIGGY
(taking Jane's hand)
I'm ready to go home now, Mom.

JANE
It's okay.

MAX, ONE OF CELESTE'S TWINS, RUNS A MATCHBOX CAR OVER THE HEAD OF HIS BROTHER, JOSH, WHO SWATS IT AWAY LIKE A FLY.

ANGLE BONNIE AND NATHAN, WITH SKYE

BONNIE
(to Skye)
Did you see anything, honey?

SKYE
No.

MS. BARNES
Amabella, honey, can you point to the boy who hurt you?

MADELINE
C'mon, really?

JACKIE
Shhh.

Amabella points at a little gangster standing next to Ziggy.

MS. BARNES
(re: the gangster)
This boy?

(continues)
AMABELLA
No.
(re: Ziggy)
Him.

Jane's entire body clenches, as Ms. Barnes puts her hand on little Ziggy's head.

MS. BARNES
This boy?

ZIGGY BLINKS HARD, TWICE.

AMABELLA
Yes. He tried to choke me.

ZIGGY
It wasn't me!

AMABELLA
Yes it was.

TWO MORE HARD BLINKS from Ziggy; and we WHIP PAN ON JANE; she feels her chest tightening.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
There was something not quite right about that Ziggy. Something about his eyes.

CLOSE ON MATT

forties; blue-collar

MATT
They were spread kind of far apart.

CLOSE ON HARPER

HARPER
He picked the wrong little girl to strangle.

RESUME - ON ZIGGY, as Jane comes to the rescue.

ZIGGY
I didn't do anything.

MS. BARNES
Ziggy, sweetie, we just need you to say "Sorry," to Amabella, that's all.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
(to Amabella)
Are you sure it was this boy?

RENATA
(nice, but firm; to Ziggy)
Could you say sorry to Amabella, please? You hurt her quite badly.

ZIGGY
It wasn't me.

ANGLE CELESTE WITH MADELINE

CELESTE
(sotto)
Could she have got it wrong?

RESUME

RENATA
(to Ziggy)
Please don't lie. All you need to do is say you're sorry.

JANE          MADELINE
Ziggy doesn't lie.          Alright.

RENATA
Well, I can assure you Amabella is telling the truth.

HARPER
Absolutely.

The entire gathering is becoming tense.

JANE
If my son says he didn't do it, I believe him.

MS. BARNES
Okay. This may not be the best way to handle this --


RENATA
The child needs to take responsibility for his actions.

(MORE)
He needs to see there are consequences, that he cannot go around choking other children, that he can't pretend he didn't do it.

AMABELLA
(to Renata)
It doesn't matter, Mom.

RENATA
It does matter,
(to Jane)
please make your son apologize.

MADELINE
Renata...

HARPER
(to Madeline)
Stay out of it.

As Bonnie takes a step to mediate; Nathan stops her.

JANE
I can't make him apologize for something he didn't do.

MS. BARNES
(way over her head)
Alright--

AMABELLA
I want to go home now.

ZIGGY
Me too.

RENATA
This is unacceptable.

MS. BARNES
Everybody--

RENATA
(to Ziggy)
If you ever touch my little girl again like that, you will be in big trouble.

Jane stiffens: Wait a minute!

(continuation from previous page)
MADELINE
(to Renata)
Now you need to apologize.

MAX
(thrilled; to his twin)
The grownups are fighting.

RENATA
Madeline--

MADELINE
Renata--

CLOSE ON BERNARD

BERNARD
The battle lines were drawn right there.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
Team Renata. Versus Team Madeline.

CLOSE ON PRINCIPAL WARREN NIPPAL

NIPPAL
(taking offense)
We have never had a Trivia Night end up in bloodshed before.

OMITTED

EXT. OTTER BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - LATER

Madeline, Jane, and Celeste on a brisk walk; Madeline's ankle has been healed by adrenaline; KIDS IN TOW, they speak in hushed but urgent tones.

MADELINE
Aren't there laws in effect now, like a Students' Bill of Rights?
(to Jane)
Celeste used to be a lawyer. And a good one.
(back to Celeste)
Even first-graders are entitled to due process, am I wrong?

(CONTINUED)
CELESTE
He's not being punished.

MADELINE
But he could be stigmatized as a bully, which is worse.

JANE
I don't really want to make a big deal of this.

HARPER (O.S.)
Madeline.

REVEAL HARPER
Approaching

HARPER (CONT'D)
(to Jane)
Hey. Harper Stimson, hello, and welcome to Otter Bay. Hi, Celeste. How’s Perry?

An imperceptible eye roll from Madeline, under --

CELESTE
He’s great, thank you.

Harper immediately pulls Madeline to the side, but not out of earshot.

HARPER
If it'll help --

MADELINE
You didn’t ask me about Ed.

HARPER
I’m sorry. Listen, Renata happens to be one of my best friends. So if there's any way I can play the role of peace maker in all this--

MADELINE
(smiling through her teeth)
Thank you so much, Harper. I’ll let you know. And I’ll be sure to let everyone know that Renata’s your best friend.

As Harper’s face falls--

(CONTINUED)
HARPER
I'm only trying to help.

MADELINE
I'm sure you are.

And off Harper goes.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
This could get ugly.

CELESTE
(a hint)
It doesn’t have to.

JANE
I think we should just let it blow over.

CLOSE ON THEA

THEA
Things never blow over once Madeline gets involved. They blow up. Boom!

INT. MADELINE’S HOUSE – DINING ROOM – SUNSET

LOUD ROCK N ROLL MUSIC EXPLODES as Chloe’s finger hits the play button on her iPOD’s Sonos application.

ED, forties, Madeline, Chloe and Abigail set the table on Babe Ruth’s dark, upbeat, psychedelic song, KING KONG. Nobody comments, nobody talks, everyone seems to accept the DJ’s choice, quite a pick for a six year old. There is something dramatic about that track that totally suits the MALE VOICE that we start to hear...

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
There was a four-by-three stellate, full thickness, scalp laceration, located on the superior occipital scalp.

CLOSE ON DR. LEO CHANG

fifties, to whom the voice belongs; some sort of press conference.

(CONTINUED)
We also found full thickness scalp contusion and associated gall and subgaleal hemorrhages. Putrefied and liquefied brain.

RESUME ON MADELINE AND HER FAMILY now all seated at the dinner table.

MADELINE
(to Chloe)
Would you please?

Chloe LOWERS THE VOLUME OF THE BABE RUTH TRACK that is still playing.

MADELINE (CONT’D)
The teacher couldn’t possibly have handled it worse, “can you point at the suspect, Amabella?” Come on.

ED
I take it this Jane is kind of damaged.

MADELINE
Why would you say that?

ED
You’re drawn to damaged people.

MADELINE
I am not.

ED
Even Celeste, there’s something wounded about her, if you ask me.

MADELINE
I didn’t ask, and I am not drawn to damaged people. Do I bother to help people in need, last time I checked, that was not a personality flaw.

Abigail bites her lip. Fights a smile.

MADELINE (CONT’D)
I see that, do you not think I see that?

As they eat in silence--
MADELINE (CONT’D)
On his very first day of school, to be accused like that. Can you imagine anything worse?

ABIGAIL
Being choked maybe?

MADELINE
Bruises heal, stigmas can last a lifetime.

ABIGAIL
You don't think assault victims bear lifetime emotional injuries?

MADELINE
I didn't say that, but it seems you read some recent study which you'd like to share.

ED
Alright.

MADELINE
Alright, what?

ED
Nothing.

MADELINE
Clearly it was something, Ed, you said, 'alright,' there was either meaning attached, or it was just a nervous tic. Which was it?

CHLOE
Guys, Mom had a day.

MADELINE
(to Chloe)
And never you mind.

CHLOE
I'm on your side, woman.

ABIGAIL
I think his 'alright' meant let's not fight at the dinner table.

MADELINE
Were we fighting?

(CONTINUED)
ABIGAIL
We were about to. You said I probably read some "study," on women assault victims. I would've responded "no, I learned it at my 'Self-Defense and Wellness' class, which happens to be taught by Bonnie, who just the mention of her name can make your eyes twitch, so Ed said 'alright' to head it off.

A forced smile comes across Madeline's face, perhaps she's trying not to twitch. Then--

MADELINE
I see. While on the subject of Bonnie, you know what she did today? She actually signed a petition trying to stop our production of "Avenue Q".

ABIGAIL
This is the play where puppets drop F-Bombs?

CHLOE
Cool!

MADELINE
It is not only not about that but it would actually be a good thing for you to see, since it captures the struggle of young adults being disillusioned with life, feeling demoralized and defrauded by the false promises of tomorrow.

ABIGAIL
I can get all that here.

And Madeline whacks the table. Rises. Exits.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
What'd I say?

INT./EXT. CELESTE'S HOUSE - DECK - SUNSET

The backyard offers a striking view of the ocean, its waves crashing below magnificent cliffs as...

Celeste and the boys are on the deck. Her phone in hand, she’s making them pose for photos. But we can’t hear them. Or hardly. We’re inside looking out through a window.
CELESTE
Okay. To your right, guys, and closer together.

Now we hear them. Or hardly, because of the sound of the waves that crash on the cliffs.

As the boys lean closer--

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Perfect, except for the faces, can we maybe smile a little?

SOMEBODY’S POV... watching the above.

REVEAL PERRY

On the deck... watching his family. As much as he wants to rush over and hold them, kiss them... he has to just stop and absorb how incredibly blessed he is. That’s his wife over there. His two beautiful boys, in this incredible home. He’s hit the lottery in life.

RESUME

JOSH
(making a muscle)
I have bigger muscles.

MAX
(making a muscle)
No you don’t... Mine are bigger.

JOSH
Dad!!

And now WE SEE WHAT JOSH SEES: PERRY is sneaking up behind Celeste; he's holding a finger up to his lips: "Ssshhh."

CELESTE
Okay, show me muscles, and smiles as big as the muscles.

Perry gently lowers behind Celeste.

JOSH
Hey, Mom. Wanna play "Angry Beaver"?

CELESTE
In a minute.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
I think the angry beaver is gonna get you, Mom.

CELESTE
(clicking away)
Oh my, I hope not, that'd be so awful.

And suddenly, PERRY ROARS AND GRABS HER. CELESTE LETS OUT A SCREAM OF HORROR; AS THE BOYS SQUEAL WITH DELIGHT, she turns to SEE PERRY. She's stunned.

PERRY
Okay, so I'm a happy beaver.

CELESTE
You're not going to Vienna?

PERRY
No, I still have to go. But I can get a flight out tomorrow.

A look between them.

PERRY (CONT’D)
Tomorrow’s their first day of school. Didn’t wanna miss.

Celeste, moved, grateful, goes to him, hugs him tightly. And they kiss. The kids are watching with huge smiles as Perry points the imaginary pistol at them. Bang bang.

The boys play dead, as the parents keep kissing passionately.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE
I kind of agree with Thea, enough is enough.

CLOSE ON JACKIE

JACKIE
People over forty shouldn't be gushy.
WE FIND RENATA ON THE DECK, sipping a Tanqueray and tonic. Staring, glaring into the distant ocean. HUSBAND GORDON KLEIN, fifty, EMERGES, sits, glass of wine in hand.

Silence. Until--

RENATA
What is our princess doing?

GORDON
She’s on her computer. She seems okay.

No response. She's been quiet all evening. Dangerous territory for Gordon. He's doomed either for inquiring, or failing to. Finally--

GORDON (CONT’D)
You okay?

RENATA
Fine.

"Fine" means "beyond fucked" in Renata-speak. But he's on record for asking at least, maybe he can tip-toe out of the minefield. More silence. Until--

RENATA (CONT'D)
(simply)
I'm not liked.

GORDON
What?

She fixes a look on him.

RENATA
I said I'm not liked.

GORDON
(a weak attempt)
That simply isn't true, honey.

Renata holds a look: "You know it's true." And then she looks back to the ocean.

RENATA
It's one thing to be demonized for having the temerity to have a career.

She sips.

(CONTINUED)
RENATA (CONT'D)
I mean, what kind of person would choose to work? Certainly not a "mother" by any acceptable definition.
(sips)
If you could have seen the looks I got today. The morning I decide not to go to the office but rather to accompany my child to her Orientation... to defend her after she is physically assaulted, to react humanly, as any mother would... I was met with utter contempt.

Okay. He has a job to do here. Certainly if he's hoping for sex this calendar year.

GORDON
(carefully)
I'm sure there are those, especially women, who might resent you. You're beautiful, hugely successful, financially independent, on the School Committee, the Board at the aquarium...
(nudging it even further)
...and to make matters worse, you're beyond sexy.

She stares. Straight ahead. Loves what she hears. Looks at him. Smiles. He smiles back. And she stares at the waves again. She’s not going to cry.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Women. You all want to be the envy of your friends, but god forbid you garner too much of it.

Her head slowly turns; levying a punishing look on him. He fucked up. Knows it.

INT./EXT. MADELINE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD BEACH - SUNSET

Another POV through a window: Chloe’s. She’s looking at her mother who stands still, alone, on the beach, staring into the horizon. The backyard and its view on the ocean are not as impressive as Renata’s or Celeste’s but still. Ed emerges from the house...
... and approaches Madeline. A look between them...

ED
You want to talk about it?

MADELINE
No. Talking is not a problem for me, when I want to talk, I talk.

Ed knows to wait it out; her default mode is "vent." He goes to the picnic table. Sits. She paces about, and then, finally--

MADELINE (CONT'D)
I'm losing her. Abigail.

ED
Of course you're not losing her.

MADELINE
It's Bonnie this, Bonnie that. Last week, she came home all excited about peeling potatoes at a homeless shelter, said it was such a beautiful experience to be able to contribute. She'll whine if I ask her to set the table, but peel one fucking potato with Bonnie...

ED
Bonnie's a positive influence. You'd rather Abby be out with friends smoking pot?

(off Madeline)
That wasn't helpful, was it?

MADELINE
(off Ed; softening)
I can feel her pulling away.

(then)
And Chloe will be right behind her, you should have seen her march right into school this morning like a woman/child, never looking back: "I'm on my own now, Mom. See ya."

(a beat)
They'll all be grown and gone one day and then we'll be left to move on to other chapters in life and I don't have any other chapters. This is it. I'm a mother.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
MADELINE (CONT'D)
That's my entire universe which is in total melt-down at the moment because my oldest daughter prefers to hang with her fucking step-thing.

ED
Hey. You will never lose them. And you know that.

Both of them are suddenly distracted by a NEW SONG THAT IS PLAYING FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE...

ED
(fighting against her emotion)
I um... I always thought that Nathan would get his due. That Abby wouldn't love him as much as me. But he hasn't paid the slightest price. He's got Bonnie, who's nicer and younger and prettier and probably gives him mint-flavored organic blow-jobs. And he gets to be buddies with Abigail. He got away with it all. He won.

Ed absorbs that.

ED
(voice of calm)
Okay. Speaking as the consolation prize, we're going to have a pretty big fight about what you just said. But not tonight.

MADELINE
I didn't mean... you are the best thing that ever happened to me, don't you think for one second that you're not.

(a beat)
It's just possible for me to love you with all my heart, and nevertheless...

ED
Hurt over your ex.

He gets her. God, is she grateful for that. He pulls her into a deep embrace. Love is love. And Janis Joplin seems to agree: "When times are bad, just call on me darling." They look at the house, moved by the attention of the DJ who has vanished.
EXT. JANE’S TOWNHOUSE – NIGHT

A small, unloved building, some decay on the shingles. But nothing looks too shabby when bathed in a full Monterey moon. Jane’s on her cell, seated on the stairs of the porch, smoking, speaking with DI, her mother.

JANE
He was a little shaken up at first, said he never wanted to go back to school. But he's okay now.

DI (O.S.)
Why would she accuse Ziggy?

JANE
I don't know. She could have been confused, there were a lot of new faces... the thing is, she seemed truthful, it wasn't like she was a brat. The mother was a little awful, but the girl seemed okay.

DI (O.S.)
Well, you can't possibly think Ziggy tried to choke her.

JANE
Of course not.

DI (O.S.)
So what's going to happen?

JANE
Well, the principal decided it's best to let it go, move forward, so that's what we're going to do.

DI (O.S.)
I still don't understand why you chose to move there... all alone.

JANE
I'm not. I've already made friends, Mom. Most of the people are really friendly.

DI (O.S.)
People need family in their lives, you know? I really think you should come back here.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Jesus, Mom! Can we not get into that again?!
(deep breath to calm herself)
I'm gonna go check on Zig.

Jane clicks off, takes a hit of... what is it, a joint... throws it away in the street, and walks inside...

INT. JANE’S TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

... into the living room where she stops in her tracks, looks around: a few boxes unpacked, nothing on the walls, furniture at its strict minimum, used, old, and a sink that leaks. One drop at a time. She takes her cell and dials.

DI (O.S.)
Hello?

A long beat.

JANE
I’m sorry. I love you, Mom.

DI (O.S.)
I love you too, hon...

She doesn’t let her mom finish, hangs up again. Seems to feel better now. We do love this girl. She walks to the couch, pulls out a hide-a-bed. Sits on it a while, then rises, and disappears into the only bedroom of the house.

INT. ZIGGY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ZIGGY LIES THERE ASLEEP as Jane stares at him.

Even though it’s dark, we can’t help being touched by what we see: the colors, the posters on the walls, the toys, the brand new furniture, a six year old boy’s dream room. Now we really love this girl.

There’s a certain magic to Ziggy while he sleeps. All his innocence comes to the fore. It hurts to think that this tender, sensitive boy will one day grow into a whiskered, broad-chested man thing. Jane gently climbs onto the bed, lies next to him. Studies that little face, counting the freckles. And she can’t help but wonder a bit. Could he have done it? Does anybody truly know their child? After all... she then shakes the idea out of her head: "don't think about that." Almost on cue, Ziggy's eyes open and he's staring at her. Into her.

(CONTINUED)
JANE
Hey. Did I wake you?

He says nothing. Jane stares.

JANE (CONT'D)
Zig.

ZIGGY
Am I in trouble?

JANE
No, baby.

But she has to ask. She has to.

JANE (CONT'D)
Ziggy. Did you touch that little girl? You can tell me.

He just stares.

JANE (CONT'D)
Did you, honey?

ZIGGY
No.

She studies his face. He just stares back. Then--

ZIGGY (CONT'D)
Why did she say I did it?

JANE
I don't know, baby. Maybe she just got it wrong.

A beat.

ZIGGY
Am I going to have any friends?

JANE
Of course you are, baby. It's all going to be great, I promise you.

A beat. His little eyes close again. She then pulls him tight to her. Holds him close, as if trying to corral his youth. If only he could stay small, insulated from the pains and hardship that tomorrow promises. As she cradles him tightly, a myriad of emotions trickles: joy, fear, love, worry... whatever the cocktail, it results in tears.
Through a cracked door, we see ABIGAIL laying in bed, over her laptop, probably on FACEBOOK. A KNOCK. Madeline pokes in. Abigail immediately shuts her screen off.

MADELINE
Can we talk about the SAT tutor?

ABIGAIL
Mom.

MADELINE
Honey, if you don’t get your boards up...

ABIGAIL
Y’know, Mom, the whole college thing, it’s kind of a racket. Especially liberal arts, people go off to study Homer for four years, they graduate with a ton of debt and no job prospects.

MADELINE
You are going to college, young lady.

ABIGAIL
Ed didn’t go, he’s doing alright--

MADELINE
He took computer engineering--

ABIGAIL
And Dad, he never went, and he seems perfectly happy in life. (off Madeline)

Career-wise.

MADELINE
Go ahead, finish the analogy, let’s not leave Bonnie out. Her little cup of happiness just runneth over, doesn’t it, with no college degree.

ABIGAIL
I’m sorry that you hate Bonnie. And that I’m unable to.

MADELINE
This is not about Bonnie. Not about your dad, or Ed, or even me. It’s about you. And your future.

(CONTINUED)
ABIGAIL
And what I’m saying is... The metric of success is not always monetary or career related. It can be much more of a holistic equation.

Okay. That actually makes Madeline’s eye twitch.

MADELINE
I will not pretend to know as much as others about the holistic wonder of life. What I do know... in the end, if you’re not independent, if you’re not self-sufficient... all that it-takes-a-village crap, it’s only true to a point. Even the best-laid plans can go poof, in which case you need to be educated, strong, independent, strong.

ABIGAIL
You said ‘strong’ twice.
(then)
You kind of remind me of a space-alien right now, you do know that.

Madeline smiles, tries to brush a piece of hair off Abigail’s face but the daughter moves back, annoyed.

ABIGAIL (CONT’D)
(pointing to her laptop)
Can I?

They hold a look. The mother gets it, as it should be, and exits in silence.

INT. CELESTE’S HOUSE, HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We see Perry laying on the couch, the boys draped over him as he reads from “The Gashleycrumb Tinies” by Edward Gorey. This is Celeste’s POV as she watches from the hallway. Her man. Her boys. A contrast to the previous scene.

PERRY
E is for Ernest who choked on a peach.

Perry pretends to be choked, and holds back a small BURP.

PERRY (CONT’D)
F is for Fanny sucked dry by a leech.

(Continued)
Perry makes the sound of sucking something.

PERRY (CONT’D)
That’s what you’ll get if you go down to the beach without me or your Mom. Strictly forbidden. Too many leeches.

MAX
There wasn’t any last time we went.

PERRY
Of course not, I was there. They’re scared of me.

JOSH
Pfff!

PERRY
Didn’t you notice? Every time we go down there, I scare them away.

JOSH
How?

PERRY
With my...
(and he BURPS)
...burping superpower!

ANGLE CELESTE
Fighting a giggle.

PERRY (CONT’D)
Once you master it, ciao, bye leeches.

And he BURPS again. A big one. The kids laugh.

PERRY (CONT’D)
You guys want to know a secret? I mean... top secret.

They nod. Of course, they want to know.

PERRY (CONT’D)
My superpower?
(looks around)
I get it from Mom.

MAX/JOSH
No?

(CONTINUED)
What did we have tonight at dinner with the steak?

Mom’s spinach salad?

Top secret.

And he BURPS again. The boys laugh out loud.

CLOSE ON A COMPUTER, ON CELESTE’S Facebook page with different photos of Perry and the twins. It's a collage of bliss; Celeste organizes and re-organizes the page; there’s a certain art to story-telling. She works away. Then, as a hand touches her on the shoulder, she flinches.

REVEAL Perry.

You startled me.

Sorry. The boys mentioned a little girl getting hurt today.

(distracted)

Oh. Renata Klein's daughter. I don't think she was really injured...

Do they look cute there, or what?

I love this one, too. Look at Maxie’s little face.

These two look like real suckers for their children.

So what exactly happened? With the daughter.

A boy tried to choke her.

(Continued)
PERRY
Seriously?

CELESTE
Seems nobody witnessed it, but she was pretty distraught. And there was a mark on her neck.

PERRY
Which boy, do you know?

CELESTE
His name’s Ziggy, he’s new, and truth be told, he seems very sweet. I met his mother, who couldn’t be nicer.

PERRY
Well, to be safe, let’s tell Josh and Max to keep their distance from him.

CELESTE
I don’t think that’s necessary.

PERRY
Honey. If the kid is violent--

CELESTE
He’s not violent.

PERRY
You know this, how, because he seemed sweet?

CELESTE
First off, he may be completely innocent--

PERRY
Or guilty, and the last thing we need is for the boys to be getting mixed up with the wrong crowd.

CELESTE
They’re six.

PERRY
They’re not to associate with him.

As she goes to pass him--

CELESTE
You’re being ridiculous.

(Continued)
And he grabs her arm, hard.

PERRY
(suddenly icy)
The boys are to stay away from that kid.

CELESTE
(in pain)
Take your hand off me.

PERRY
If I can't be here to look out for them all the time, I'll at least make sure that you do.

CELESTE
I asked you. To remove. Your fucking hand.

This is scary now. Could it actually get violent? Finally, he releases. She holds a dagger-glare, then exits the room. OVER PERRY, WE HEAR THE TINKLING OF SOME PIANO MUSIC.

INT. MADELINE’S HOUSE, FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

MADELINE sits at the piano, playing imperfectly, singing softly to herself and only herself.

MADELINE
What is my life gonna be? Four years of college/ And plenty of knowledge...

AS SHE HITS A WRONG NOTE, SHE STOPS PLAYING. SHE GETS IT BACK INTO GEAR AND STOPS AGAIN WHEN SHE SEES ABIGAIL IN THE DOORWAY, STARING AT HER.

ABIGAIL
That's a song from your puppet show, right?

MADELINE
It's really more than a puppet show.

A beat. Abigail goes in, sits next to her mother. They hold a look, Madeline suddenly gets ambushed.

ABIGAIL
This play is important to you, isn't it?

(then)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
I'll tell Bonnie to start a new petition. In favor of.

That gets Madeline to smile. She spots the same piece of hair that she wanted to brush off Abigail's face earlier. She wonders if she should try again. She does. This time, it works; it's a gentle and loving gesture.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Mom, are you okay? You're not like dying or anything, are you?

MADELINE
Dying, of course not. Why would you say such a thing?

ABIGAIL
Well, you seem a little wobbly. Are you having one of your massive periods?

MADELINE
No, I just... What people don't tell you is that you lose your children as they grow. As beautiful and wonderful as you've become, that little girl whose curly hair I'd have to de-tangle... the one who -- every time she had a bad dream -- would crawl into my bed, she's gone. I think that's what's going on now with me a little, maybe compounded by Chloe going into first grade... I'm losing my babies.
(deflecting)
Which, by the way, has been clinically compared to a massive period.

ABIGAIL
I'll always be your baby.

And that almost undoes Madeline. She fights mightily, perhaps futilely to hold in her emotion. She dare not say anything, fearing tears could actually gush out of her mouth. She nods instead.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Bonnie's like a friend. Maybe even a best friend sometimes. But you're my mother. I'm your daughter.

The tears flow now. Madeline goes to hug Abigail.

(CONTINUED)
ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
(watch the shirt)
Silk.

And Madeline pulls back. No tears on silk.

MADELINE
I can still call you 'baby-cakes,' right?

ABIGAIL
Forever.
(then)
Not in public.

Madeline smiles but soon stops when she spots Chloe behind the door, peeping on them.

MADELINE
Jesus! Go back to bed, young lady! Now!

Instead of running away, Chloe runs to them with a million dollar smile on her face. Impossible to resist. She sits between her mom and her sister andbegins to play on the piano; a pleasant song; a simple melody; like a child song. Soon, Madeline joins in from her side, on another octave. They have done this duet before. It shows. Abigail watches in silence, enjoying every single note. The music continues as we cut to:

A walking point of view, at dawn, as we follow footsteps on the beach from a single person, apparently a man, since the imprints in the sand are from male shoes. They haven’t been washed away yet by the waves that are coming in and out of frame, almost touching the footsteps. The person was walking very close to the water. Not too long ago. We stop when suddenly we notice that there are no more footsteps ahead, nor to the right towards the ocean; nor to the left, as if the person had vanished.

QUINLAN (O.S.)
We are treating the matter as a homicide. We have no suspects as of yet.

CLOSE ON DETECTIVE QUINLAN

QUINLAN (CONT’D)
I will say that we do believe we have probably already spoken to the person or persons involved.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSE ON RENATA

steely-eyed... in her backyard, staring straight ahead, standing somewhat rigidly, a nightcap in her hand. Alone. In front of...

violent waves that are hitting the cliffs but we don’t hear them. All we hear is the SOFT PIANO THAT KEEPS ON PLAYING and soon transforms into something more complex, classical, modern, repetitive. We’re now listening to Agnes Obel’s instrumental track, SEPTEMBER SONG. As we pull back, we realize that we’re looking through a window...

CELESTE’S WINDOW

ON CELESTE

eyes open, IN BED. It shakes a little. She turns to look at PERRY, on the other side, facing the opposite direction. Sleep came to him. She turns back, no desire to sleep in her eyes, but the reflection of the crashing waves.

CLOSE ON JANE

As she returns from Ziggy’s room and sits on the hide-a-bed. Stares at the drawer of her end table. Opens it. With a key. Looks inside for a long time. We want to see what she’s looking at... but she closes the drawer.

CLOSE ON MADELINE

AS THE PIANO CONTINUES

She’s seated at her vanity in a nightgown, looking at herself in the mirror, and then at Ed’s reflection, already in bed, sleeping like a baby.

THE PIANO MUSIC ENDS as Madeline TURNS OFF THE LIGHT. THEN--

BLURRY FLURRIES OF LIGHTS, CAMERA FLASHES AND GLIMPSES OF different Elvis Presleys and Audrey Hepburns. A LOUD, CRYING HARMONICA STARTLES US WHEN WE SEE FLASHES OF NAKED FLESH: BODY PARTS OF A MAN AND A WOMAN, HARD TO TELL IF THEY ARE HAVING SEX, OR TRYING TO KILL EACH OTHER.

END CREDITS over the mystery and sexy vibe of “THE RAINBOW” from Talk Talk that sets the tone for what’s coming and...

TO BE CONTINUED