

# **Liz-At-Law**

A One Hour Drama Pilot

**LIZ-AT-LAW**

**FADE IN:**

The unflinching, relentless glare of LIZ HUBLEY.

36, petite, blonde bobbed hair, fitted suit and tailored blouse. She's someone to be taken seriously. A tattoo on her wrist is the only mark of youthful rebellion.

Her righteousness is at a boiling point, but with gears turning, she keeps it cool--

LIZ  
So let me get this straight...

**Reveal:**

INT. OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL BONNER - EASTVIEW ELEMENTARY - DAY

Liz is seated at the desk of PRINCIPAL SHANI BONNER, 50, no-nonsense, pretending to be pleasant.

LIZ  
You're saying even though there's no disruptions in class and Miss Moreno neither ignores other students or spends extra time on one-on-ones, and further, with no history of poor academic performance -- in fact, with much evidence to the contrary -- you're saying despite all this, enrolling at Townsend school is what's best?

BONNER  
That's the recommendation in the IEP.

LIZ  
Yours or the teacher's?

BONNER  
The social worker assigned to the case.

LIZ  
Who spent how much time in class?

BONNER  
I'm not second-guessing how she handles a case.

LIZ  
This feels like an excuse.

A MAN'S HAND reaches Liz's arm gently. A silent caution.

BONNER

An excuse for what?

LIZ

We both know the budget's in trouble. Teachers. Janitors. Assistants who shadow special needs kids so the district can tout its mainstreaming program. It's all on the cutting block.

BONNER

That's not the case here.

LIZ

How convenient Eastview is re-purposing a teaching aide at the same time a recommendation lands on your desk to transfer a special needs student to Townsend.

BONNER

Mrs. Hubley--

LIZ

The truth is, I bet, if Eastview becomes known for its extra attention to special needs, it just might get a reputation it doesn't want. What happens if folks start moving into the neighborhood with those kinds of kids?

BONNER

My only goal is what's best-

LIZ

For the child, of course. Only Townsend is not what's best for this child.

JOE

Liz--

Now we see whose hand is on Liz's arm: it's JOSEPH HUBLEY, Liz's husband in his best suit -- 30's, handsome, African-American, worried Liz might become unglued.

JOE (CONT'D)

We can request another IEP.

LIZ

And cross our fingers Townsend isn't some kind of Shawshank?

(to Bonner)

You know what I think?

BONNER

My guess is I won't wait long for that.

LIZ

This school is prized not just for its high test scores and yummy bake sales. It's a diverse place. Kids accept each others differences.

BONNER

It's what we preach.

LIZ

But it'd mean nothing if there weren't any differences. Sending kids to Townsend dooms them not just to a second rate education, but a second-class life.

BONNER

Townsend is staffed with specialized, committed teachers--

LIZ

Max has great teachers. He needs to be around kids who see him as one of them. Or is preaching "inclusion" just lip service so it sounds as pretty as the brochure?  
(beat)

If you're not committed to seeing him succeed like the other students at Eastview, then I'll take my case to someone who is.

MAX (O.S.)

Mommy?

Liz turns to nine-year-old MAX sitting quietly next to Joe, a Lego toy in hand. He's Liz and Joe's son.

MAX (CONT'D)

Are we done? Can we go?

Liz smiles for Max, casts a side-eye at Bonner.

LIZ

Yes, Sweetie, I think that's all you and I should put up with today.

Liz wraps Max's hand and exits with him, her Jimmy Choo's click-clacking on the tiled floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - OUTSIDE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Liz storms to her Honda, Max barely keeping up. She lights up a cigarette as Joe catches up to her.

LIZ  
I know, I know. Bonner's the only  
one who can override the IEP.

JOE  
Your little show didn't help.

LIZ  
Her little show pissed me off.

Joe holds out a hand, palm up. Max nudges Liz. Doesn't look her in the eye (he doesn't look anybody in the eye, really).

MAX  
You're not supposed to smoke.

LIZ  
Honestly, who is?

JOE  
Deal's a deal.

Liz takes a quick drag, then, like a criminal turning herself in, gives up the cigarettes and lighter to Joe.

LIZ  
I'm late for court.

MAX  
Do I still go to school here?

LIZ  
(leaning in to Max)  
Until Mommy and Daddy tell you  
otherwise, yes. You go to school  
here. With your friends.

She hugs Max, who doesn't hug back. Not because he doesn't want to. It's the best he can do. Joe takes Max's hand.

JOE  
Don't be late tonight. We've got a  
date with a syringe.

LIZ  
Sure know how to woo a lady.

Liz jumps into the Honda, burning rubber out of the lot--

CUT TO:

INT. PHILADELPHIA COUNTY DISTRICT COURT - DAY

A restless crew of petty criminals await hearings. MARQELLE, a buff bailiff, hands a file to JUDGE ART CORTEZ, a dough-y, kindly man with thick glasses.

MARQELLE  
People v. Watts. Approach.

ELDEN WATTS, 30's, African-American, is at defendant's table.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
One count grand larceny, two counts  
trafficking stolen property, and,  
to top it off, public intoxication.

ELDEN  
I wasn't drunk, Judge. I was high.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Not there yet, sir. People are  
offering a deal, Mister...?

ADA BAILEY COOK, barely out of law school, speaks up--

COOK  
Bailey Cook from the D.A.'s office.  
No deal for Mr. Watts, Judge. He  
has lengthy rap sheet.

ELDEN  
I did my time. What they putting  
on me now is bunk.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Legal aide can argue that for you.

ELDEN  
She's ghost. Ain't surprised.  
It's the system. They entrap a  
brother, then they depriving me of  
my right to counsel.

COOK  
Defendant was passed out in the  
stolen Toyota with the victim's  
wallet.

ELDEN  
I didn't steal no car. I was just  
resting in it.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Mr. Watts, where's your lawyer?

LIZ (O.S.)  
Here, Judge.

Liz races into the courtroom, all jumbled nerves and flop sweat from a parking lot dash. She smooths herself.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Ah, Miss Hubley. Have you and your client discussed a plea?

LIZ  
Yes, Judge.

ELDEN  
No, Judge.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
A moment, Judge.

Cortez waves - 'go ahead.' Liz turns to Elden. She leans in quietly, conspiratorially, and the two whisper.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Your medication. The one I arranged for the jail's doctor to give you. Are you taking it?

ELDEN  
That ain't my main problem right now, knowwhatImean?

LIZ  
You have it with you?  
(Elden nods yes)  
Then roll with me on this and stop talking. To the judge, the prosecutor, anybody in a five mile radius. We're cool?

ELDEN  
Aw-ight. I get the trickeration.

Liz turns to Judge Cortez, brightly--

LIZ  
Permission to approach, Judge?

Cortez waves her forward. Cook approaches with Liz. Cortez shuffles papers and looks up -- Liz is gone. Disappeared.

He leans over to find Liz splayed on the floor. She picks herself up, one shoe in hand - the heel has broken off.

MARQELLE  
Girl, those are Jimmy Choo's.

LIZ  
I know, right?

JUDGE CORTEZ  
(eyeing the shoes)  
Whoever sold you those should be arrested.

LIZ  
I've worn them, like, five times.

MARQUELLE  
For that kind of dough, I go Prada.  
All the way.

COOK  
Ummm, Judge...

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Right. Miss Hubley, what're we  
doing here?

LIZ  
The D.A.'s over-reaching big time.

COOK  
Give me a break. Your client  
practically confessed to the theft.  
My witness says he sold her the  
pickup for seven hundred bucks.

LIZ  
This isn't theft. My client was  
incapacitated.

COOK  
Are you serious? He was high.

LIZ  
The state denied Mr. Watt's medical  
benefits. He was unable to get a  
prescription for his degenerative  
hip condition. Medical marijuana  
was his only option.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
Lots of people get high, Liz. They  
don't all steal cars.

LIZ  
My client was unprepared for the  
effects of the medicinal treatment.  
Thought he was borrowing a cousin's  
car. Same make, model, and color.

COOK  
'Unprepared' for weed? That guy?

LIZ  
Fortunately, Mr. Watts is back on  
his regular medication.

Liz glances at Elden, who jiggles a bottle of pills.



LIZ (CONT'D)  
 Judge, nobody's served by such aggressive prosecutions. Let's talk about dismissing in lieu of treatment and get him back home with his sick mother.

COOK  
 (to Judge Cortez)  
 You're not seriously entertaining this?

Judge Cortez looks to Cook, then to Liz. She offers a smile.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE COURTROOM - DAY

Liz blasts out of the courtroom carrying shoes and briefcase, Elden at her side. He's quite pleased with himself. Cook catches up to her at the elevator. He's pissed.

COOK  
 I suppose you think you played me.

ELDEN  
 No supposing, my brother. You been served.

The elevator doors open and Liz turns to Cook, unfazed.

COOK  
 You bleeding hearts in legal aide.

LIZ  
 That sounds like a compliment.

COOK  
 There's zero doubt I see his ass in court again. Can't wait to wipe that smug look off his face.

Liz holds the closing elevator door.

LIZ  
 You've been in the D.A.'s office, what, two weeks? Since you still have cellophane on your face, I'll give you some pointers. First, pick your battles. You want to put crooks away, find some real crooks.

ELDEN  
 True dat.

LIZ

Second, when you've been around a little, you learn what works and what doesn't. Being a hard-ass ADA for a judge with a Tuesday afternoon jazz practice won't work. Being a flexible P.D. offering a deal to close a case will.

The door DINGS. A BLUE-COLLAR DUDE on the elevator pipes up--

DUDE

Lady, I got 30 minutes for lunch.

LIZ

I'm not finished.

(to Cook)

Third and finally, I won today because I'm smart, I work hard, and I know people. Or at least I make the effort. You may not see Mr. Watts again, but you'll see me. And when you do, bring something better than that lame-ass game because I come to play. So, you can wipe that smug look off your face and show some respect.

As Liz lets the doors close, Elden signals to Cook:

ELDEN

Peace.

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Brick and mortar municipal splendor. Liz arrives, bare-footed. She slows, observing:

Empty chairs. Deserted cubicles. Nobody's here, except -- CARA TAMARGO, 40's, pictures of her kids littered all over her desk. She runs the office.

LIZ

It's Tuesday.

CARA

Everybody's in the new chief's office.

LIZ

And I'm late.

CARA (CONT'D)

And you're late.

There's a wrapped gift basket with goodies sitting on a desk.

CARA (CONT'D)  
It's for Donny Vance. One of his clients. He's on vacation, though.

LIZ  
Muffins. Try to track down Donny. Be a shame if those poppy-seed goodies go to waste.  
(re: meeting)  
Did you meet her?

CARA  
Yes.

LIZ  
And?

Cara shrugs -- 'not impressed.'

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Good to know.

Liz moves towards a group huddled in a corner office.

INT. OFFICE OF CHIEF OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS - CONTINUOUS

A mixed group of 15 attorneys crammed into this airless office listening to BARBRA TINKER, 45, straight-laced from her sensible pantsuit to the Mom-On-The-Go haircut.

TINKER  
Because of the hiring freeze, we're having to stretch, including loan-outs to different departments.

Tinker spots Liz in the office doorway.

TINKER (CONT'D)  
You're Liz Hubley?

LIZ  
Welcome to the Funhouse.

TINKER  
I made sure everybody had my meeting calendared. You're late.

LIZ  
I was in court.

TINKER  
Next time, just call ahead, okay?

An Ice Age climate chills the room. Tinker resumes--

TINKER (CONT'D)

All of you pick a time for our one-on-ones that works for your schedules. I want to get up to speed on your cases. And get to know each of you personally.

(beat)

For now my title says 'interim,' but I'm happy to be your new chief.

Tinker manufactures a smile. Meeting over.

THUNK!!! A stack of files is plopped on a desk. We're in:

INT. LIZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Tiny but neat. Letters and pictures from thankful clients cover her wall. A vintage computer begs for an upgrade.

Liz thumbs the stack of files grimly. Cara looks stricken.

LIZ

They're all juvenile court.

LEO, her roly-poly office-mate, 33, Latino, speaks up--

LEO

Witchey-Poo knows your close rate. She wants those cases cleared so she can take interim off her title.

LIZ

Great. Hormonal teenagers, family squabbles, endless paperwork.

LEO

And follow-up with DCFS.

LIZ

Ten times the work. Ten times the stress. It's totally a demotion.

CARA

There's another stack...

LIZ

You're joking.

Leo points to the stack on his desk.

LEO

We're all having a good laugh.

A KNOCK - Tinker sticks her head in the open doorway.

TINKER

Liz -- slot a time for our one-on-one, okay?

LIZ

It's Barbara, right?  
(Tinker nods)  
These cases are all juvey.

TINKER

They're short-staffed. They need folks to cut through the back-log.

LIZ

Can't you re-assign Felix or Ava or one of the newer attorneys?

TINKER

I need a pro to clear those cases. Looking forward to our one-on-one.

With that, Tinker disappears. Leo eyes Liz - "told you so." Liz sits. Opens the top file -- then jumps up, furious.

LIZ

You gotta' be fucking kidding me.

CUT TO:

INT. LIZ DRIVING - EXPRESSWAY - DAY

Liz speaking into her ear bud--

LIZ

I'm going to be late, Joe.

INTERCUT WITH JOE at home in the kitchen.

JOE

What's up?

LIZ

That new witch just dumped every juvey referral in the county on me.

JOE

You'll get to them eventually.

LIZ

There's a kid in lock-up. Sixteen, some trumped up armed robbery felony. Arraignment's tomorrow.

JOE

Let me guess. You're on your way--

LIZ  
I'm on my way to lock-up now. If that kid goes before a judge on his own, he'll be crucified.

JOE  
Liz.

LIZ  
I know - injections on time, every night. Like a Swiss clock.  
(beat)  
Okay, here's the plan. I get the kid's story, prep him, and split. In and out. Home by seven.

JOE  
Not a minute later.

LIZ  
Seven for sure. How's Max?

JOE  
Wondering why Daddy has a needle in the refrigerator.

LIZ  
Tell him we're playing doctor.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - COUNTY JAIL - DAY

An Officer stands outside the cell. Liz faces CARMELO SANTI - 16, trying to put on a brave front. But the orange jump-suit and prison bars scare him. He's quiet.

CARMELO  
You really my lawyer?

LIZ  
That a problem?

CARMELO  
Just that, I'm in a lot of trouble.

LIZ  
( 'no shit' )  
Police arrested you at the 7-11. With the gun. Owner says you were threatening him. That true?

CARMELO  
Maybe.

LIZ  
Carmelo, listen to me. You can  
macho your way to a conviction or  
you can let the lady with the law  
degree help you avoid prison.  
'Maybe' ain't gonna' cut it, okay?  
(re: file)  
Police traced the gun to Leonard  
Blount. That's your step-dad?

CARMELO  
They know, don't they? The cops...

LIZ  
Know what?

CARMELO  
That...he's dead. That I shot him.

LIZ  
You killed your step-father?  
(Carmelo nods)  
The cops don't know. Nobody knows.  
(rising)  
Carmelo, I need a minute, okay?

Liz stands, shaken, feeling the full weight of his admission.

She knocks on the cell door. The Officer opens it and Liz  
enters a hallway, already on her iPhone--

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Joe, about tonight. We're going to  
need a new plan...

As Liz tries to keep herself together--

**END ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO****FADE IN:**

Coffee cups sit atop a stack of files on a desk. We're in--

INT. DESERTED ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Liz huddles with two police detectives: LT. ROBERT KIM, 52; and LT. CHERYL MACON, 35, both grumpy about working overtime.

LIZ

I came to discuss the robbery and  
only the robbery.

LT. MACON

C'mon, Liz.

LIZ

Whatever's not in Santi's filing,  
it's a separate legal matter.

LT. MACON

You're his counselor.

LIZ

On loan to juvey. I'm just pinch-  
hitting here.

LT. KIM

My team did a routine follow up at  
his stepfather's home and found him  
in a pool of blood. We want to  
know what Santi told you.

Liz goes quiet. Her iPhone buzzes silently.

LT. MACON

I'm betting forensics will match  
the twenty-two Santi had with the  
slug Blount caught. Can we cut to  
the chase here, Liz?

LIZ

Sure. When Santi has an attorney.

LT. KIM

He's sitting in a cell. Maybe  
we'll just talk to him.

LIZ

He's still a minor. Blount was his  
only guardian. No attorney, no  
guardian, no interview.

(feels the glares)

I don't make the rules, guys.



Liz's iPhone buzzes again.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
One sec.

Liz answers, taking the call to a corner of the room.

INTERCUT with Joe driving.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Where are you?

JOE  
Turning into parking. I dropped  
Max at your sister's.

LIZ  
Meet me on Level 5. You prep the  
shot, I'll bring the ass.

JOE  
Love it when you talk dirty.

Liz disconnects. Turns to Kim and Macon.

LIZ  
So, Detectives, I need a minute.  
Husband's making a drop-off.

LT. MACON  
At county jail? Now?

LT. KIM  
Go ahead, but we're not done here.

Liz scoots out of the room.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - JOE'S LANDCRUISER - NIGHT

Inside the SUV's cab. Liz grips the front seats, her bare rear-end exposed for Joe in back, syringe at the ready.

LIZ  
I'm hating seven o'clock.

JOE  
Doc says those ovaries aren't  
activated.

LIZ  
I didn't sign up for the mood  
swings, bloating, headaches. It's  
a pain in the--  
(feels the prick)  
(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

Ow! You haven't gotten any better with that thing.

JOE

Think big picture.

LIZ

Right. Healthy newborn.

JOE

Healthy mom. Proud dad. Happy brother.

LIZ

Labor pains, easy-peasy. Midnight feedings, no problem. Puffy ache-y blahs from head-to-toe, I got this.

JOE

Done.

Liz sits up, leans on Joe's shoulder. It's nice and quiet.

JOE (CONT'D)

Taking your temperature?

LIZ

Every hour. Ovulating big time, so my vagina's open for business.

JOE

Sure know how to woo a guy.

LIZ

I'll wrap up here, be home in about an hour.

Liz's iPhone buzzes. She scans the display, crestfallen.

LIZ (CONT'D)

(to Joe)

It's her.

(into phone)

Hello, Barbara...yes, I'm still at county...of course, I'll wait with the cops...see you in a few.

Liz disconnects. Rubs the instant migraine from her temples.

LIZ (CONT'D)

The Witch is heading here now.

JOE

She wants you on this case?

LIZ

No way I'm taking this shit-storm.

JOE  
So tell her and hustle home. We  
need to get busy.

LIZ  
She'll grill me 'til my eyes bleed.  
Just 'cuz she can. It'll be hours.

JOE  
So...

LIZ  
So we keep doing the shots.

It gets quiet. Nothing anyone can do. Liz is thinking.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Or...

JOE  
Or what?

LIZ  
Remember that time after the Lions  
won the title? We pulled off the  
freeway, parked behind--

JOE  
The tile store. Yeah, I remember.  
(beat)  
Liz, that was college.

LIZ  
She'll be here in fifteen minutes.

JOE  
We're in a police lot next to  
county jail, not a strip club.

Liz starts singing the Nittany Lions fight song, groping Joe.

LIZ  
Hail to the Lion, Loyal and True--

JOE  
Liz...

LIZ  
Hail Alma Mater, with your white  
and blue...

No fight here. Liz is on Joe, kissing, tearing off clothes.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - A LITTLE LATER

A uniformed COP lumbers to his patrol car. Spots something -- subtle, rhythmic rocking of a Landcruiser nearby.

The Cop takes out his flashlight and...

KNOCK, KNOCK -- raps the Landcruiser's door. It opens--

LIZ and JOE, half-dressed, scrambling to detangle themselves.

LIZ  
Officer, I can explain -- I'm an attorney here to see a client.

COP  
Pretty late for clients.

JOE  
Not me. We're married.

COP  
To each other?

Liz stumbles out of the Landcruiser, hastily dressed.

LIZ  
I was just saying goodbye. To my lovely husband. And returning to my client interview, like, now.

Liz kisses Joe and starts walking. Joe whistles, she turns. He has Liz's bra. She politely takes it.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
You have a good night, Officer.

The Cop smirks as Liz marches off.

CUT TO:

INT. ADMIN OFFICES - COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Barbara Tinker scans a file in a tense silence. Liz watches her, as does Lt. Kim and Lt. Macon. It's getting late.

TINKER  
It's a difficult situation, Detectives.

LT. MACON  
In my opinion, she's what's making it difficult.

TINKER  
Until we can speak to Santi--

LT. KIM  
She's spoken to him.

TINKER  
Technically, yes, about the  
attempted felony robbery.  
(beat)  
It's possible Blount's murder may  
have other leads.

LT. MACON  
Yeah, well, where there's smoke...

TINKER  
Can I have a minute?

Lt. Macon throws her hands up -- 'whatever.' Tinker leads  
Liz out the door to--

HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Where Tinker rolls up a window, takes out a cigarette and  
lights up. Liz watches her, surprised. And tempted.

TINKER (CONT'D)  
Santi knows something.

LIZ  
I'm not here to do the cops job.

TINKER  
You could've assumed privilege. If  
Santi confessed--

LIZ  
That wasn't my call to make.

Tinker notices Liz noticing her cigarette.

TINKER  
You want one?

LIZ  
I don't smoke.

TINKER  
It's probably best you backed off.

LIZ  
Why's that?

TINKER  
This case'd be too much for you.

LIZ  
I've been a P.D. for ten years.

TINKER

Something made you blink.

(beat)

I need fighters, Liz. People with bullet-proof armor. I've got to know you can handle what's thrown at you. I've got to trust you.

(beat)

I didn't come up in the department, so I'm an unknown. But what you need to know is my bullshit detector is state of the art.

Tinker flicks her cigarette out the window. Tosses the pack of cigarettes to Liz. And the lighter.

TINKER (CONT'D)

I'm taking you off Santi.

(eyes Liz's blouse)

You missed a button.

Tinker goes. Flustered, Liz discovers her blouse is open. She fixes the button, stares ahead, fuming.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - HUBLEY HOME - LATE NIGHT

Liz alone, cigarette in hand, staring at the darkness through an open window. She blows smoke, waving it outside. Then stops, extinguishing the butt -- it's an act of will.

There's footsteps in the hallway. Liz waves remaining smoke outside, shutting the window quickly.

Joe enters, half-asleep. Stops. Holds out his hand. Liz grudgingly tosses him the cigarette pack. Nabbed again.

LIZ

A speed bump. My body's going to be a baby-making temple. Really.

JOE

I'm too tired to wag my finger.

Joe gets water, fills a cup for Liz.

JOE (CONT'D)

The new chief. How bad was it?

LIZ

I'm off the case.

(beat)

Apart from her torpedo-ing my career, we're BFF's.

JOE  
Aren't you up for review?

LIZ  
Scheduled for a bump at the  
beginning of the year.

JOE  
Your new BFF have anything to say  
about that?

LIZ  
She better not touch my raise.

JOE  
We're scraping by as it is.

LIZ  
You'll get the restaurant off the  
ground.

JOE  
Investors are gun-shy. Sammy'll  
put in ten, but after that...  
(beat)  
If we have a baby--

LIZ  
When we have a baby.

JOE  
I'll have to go back to bartending.

LIZ  
I'm doing my best here.

JOE  
And if they send Max to Townsend,  
who knows what costs there'll be.  
(off Liz's blank stare)  
Did you get my text?

LIZ  
Shit. I didn't check.

JOE  
Max's history presentation  
tomorrow.

LIZ  
Genghis Khan?

JOE  
Principal Bonner will be there.  
And a social worker evaluating Max.

LIZ  
We didn't request a second IEP.

JOE  
Bonner did.

LIZ  
That bitch won't give up.

Liz moves to the hallway, peeking into Max's room where he's quietly asleep in bed.

JOE  
He's terrified of presenting in front of the class. Took an hour to get him to sleep.

LIZ  
I don't know what to do for him.

JOE  
Sometimes you can't.

Liz watches Max, worried. Joe kisses her and trudges to bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTVIEW ELEMENTARY - DAY

Liz and Joe walk with Max to the school's entrance. From Max's dour expression, you'd think it was a funeral march.

MAX  
I feel sick.

LIZ  
You're not sick, Max.

MAX  
I don't want to go to school.

JOE  
Sorry, pal. You have to.

MAX  
But...I'm scared.

Liz stops, crouches, faces Max. His eyes look away.

LIZ  
Every kid presenting today feels exactly the same way. I'm not going to lie. It is scary.

MAX  
So why do they make us do it?



LIZ  
 Because you need to know how to be  
 brave. You need to know what  
 that's like.

Max squirms a bit. Finally, he looks Liz in the eye.

MAX  
 I guess brave's a good thing.

LIZ  
 Just like Genghis.

MAX  
 Okay. I'll try to be Genghis.

JOE  
 Without the killing and pillaging.

MAX  
 They won't let us do that at  
 school.

LIZ  
 Can't wait to hear all about the  
 Mongolian Empire.

Liz smiles for Max, hugs him, and they all enter the school.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - EASTVIEW ELEMENTARY - DAY

A YOUNG GIRL finishes delivering her history presentation.

YOUNG GIRL  
 So without Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
 there'd be no women's rights and no  
 women's movement at all.

Polite applause from the class of 4th graders. In the back  
 of the class, there's a ring of parents here for the big day.

Liz and Joe are in the crowd. Nearby is Principal Bonner and  
 a Young Man with eyeglasses making notes. Liz locks eyes  
 with Bonner. A friendly nod.

Down in front, the teacher, MRS. KATZ, speaks:

MRS. KATZ  
 Thank you, Caitlin, for introducing  
 us to Elizabeth Cady Stanton.  
 (eyeing a note)  
 Next, we have Max Hubley who will  
 present Ghenghis Khan. Max?

Liz finds Max seated among the students. He looks back, terrified. Liz and Joe give him a reassuring thumbs-up. Max slowly stands, moving up front like a wounded animal.

He faces students and parents, eyes cast downward, paper in hand, a display stand revealing a meticulous presentation.

After an agonizing few seconds, Liz eyes Bonner and the Guy with Glasses, who's making notes. It's still quiet.

MRS. KATZ (CONT'D)  
Max? Are you ready?

Max nods. Finally looks up from his paper. Everybody's staring. He freezes. Tears stream down his face.

Liz moves towards Max, but Joe stops her. This is Max's struggle. Mrs. Katz goes to Max, kneeling beside him.

MRS. KATZ (CONT'D)  
Max, it looks like you did a lot of work on Genghis Khan.  
(Max nods)  
Maybe you can tell me about why he was important.

Max starts speaking, but it's little more than a whisper. Liz spots Eyeglasses jotting notes quickly.

Joe and Liz trade glances. They're both helpless here.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - EASTIVEW ELEMENTARY - DAY

Liz bursts in, quaking with emotion. She crashes through a stall door, collapsing on a toilet seat.

She HEARS women enter the bathroom. Pulls herself together, listening to what they're saying.

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)  
I thought that was never going to end.

WOMAN #2 (O.S.)  
Poor thing. He looked so helpless standing up there.

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)  
It's just too much for him.

WOMAN #2 (O.S.)  
Maybe Mrs. Katz should've thought twice before letting him present.

Liz has had enough. She throws open the stall door.

The two women turn to Liz. Ashen-faced statues.

WOMAN #1

Liz, I...

LIZ

Don't even try. It's better if you just stand there and stew in it.

(beat)

And while you're stewing, let me set you straight -- Max stumbled today. There's not a kid in that class who hasn't. He spent hours preparing that presentation and has his shit down cold. He's a smart kid, but has trouble showing it like your little geniuses. So while I appreciate your understanding, right now you can take your fake sympathy and shove it up your privileged asses.

Liz pivots and goes as the women sink into the tile floor.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM - EASTVIEW ELEMENTARY

Liz bulldozes past Joe, waiting outside the bathroom. Her nerves are on fire.

JOE

Something happen in there?

LIZ

Yeah.

JOE

You okay?

LIZ

I think we can cancel going to Parent Night this year.

As Liz and Joe exit the school--

**END ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

**FADE IN:**

INT. BREAK ROOM - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Office Admin Cara stares into an open refrigerator. Leo ambles by, stops. Another public defender, AMIR HASSAN, (30, bow-tied, a committed crusader for injustice) enters, slows to see what they're looking at.

LEO  
What're we waiting for?

CARA  
Donny Vance to call back.

Inside the refrigerator: the gift basket full of goodies.

AMIR  
I say open it and be done with it.

CARA  
But it's from a client.

AMIR  
A Patroni's gift basket? I don't have clients who can afford that.

LEO  
Maybe Donny did some pro bono work.

Others gather around the refrigerator. Liz enters, putting down her briefcase and bag. Pushing through to the front--

LIZ  
How about we make a group decision.

LEO  
I decide you make the decision.

LIZ  
Fine. If we don't hear from Donny by tomorrow, we all blow off our diets and pop this bitch.

There's no dissent.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
That poppy-seed's mine.

Cara shuts the refrigerator and everybody disperses. Liz walks with Leo out of the break room into--

INT. BULLPEN - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

LIZ  
Santi case is off my plate.

LEO  
I know. Whole thing blew up today.

Leo nods towards Barbara Tinker's office. Liz spots Tinker inside with TWO MEN - both in cheap suits and worse haircuts. Got to be Cops. The two abruptly exit Tinker's office.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Gary Kaminski was in this morning.

LIZ  
She assigned that douche to Santi?

LEO  
(Re: Cops)  
Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum are  
FBI. Word is step-dad was an  
undercover cop.

LIZ  
This just got radioactive.

LEO  
Tinker'll want to bury this fast.  
(beat)  
Your kid is cooked.

Liz has a far away look. Leo's seen this look before.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Liz, what are you doing?

LIZ  
Thinking.

LEO  
About?

LIZ  
About how I need to be brave.

Liz hands her bags to Leo and goes to Tinker's office.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA TINKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Liz barges in, no knock. Tinker isn't happy to see her.

LIZ  
Gary Kaminski?

TINKER

If the door's closed, I'm busy.

LIZ

What're you doing dumping Santi's case on a bar panel lawyer, and a shitty one at that?

TINKER

Allocating resources appropriately.

LIZ

He's a 16 year old kid.

TINKER

Who'll likely be tried as an adult. Which is why I called Kaminski.

LIZ

So he could plead this loser and get it off your docket. Who are we really helping here?

TINKER

We? It's not your case now, Liz.

LIZ

The meatheads visiting you. Cops? FBI? Were they pressuring you?

TINKER

The only pressure I'm feeling now is right between my temples.

(beat)

Are you finished?

LIZ

I'll take the case back.

TINKER

I've already assigned Kaminski.

LIZ

So unassign him.

TINKER

I can't.

LIZ

You'd save the office Kaminski's fee. The hiring panel will love that.

TINKER

(waivering)

You still carry a full load.

LIZ  
Santi deserves better.

Tinker thinks it over. She waves her hands - "take it."

TINKER  
Tell me, Liz - yesterday, you wanted nothing to do with this kid. Now you're all in. Why? Trying to prove something?

LIZ  
Just crossing my fingers and hoping you'll trust me. Bullet-proof armor and all that.

TINKER  
You're on a short leash.

Off Liz, now worried she's bitten off too much.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Carmelo, jittery and nervous, faces Liz in prison overalls.

CARMELO  
Leonard was an asshole. I shot him. End of story.

Liz drops a file in front of Carmelo.

CARMELO (CONT'D)  
What's that?

LIZ  
The slug pulled from Leonard does not match your gun.

CARMELO  
So...I used another gun.

LIZ  
Always happen to carry a bunch of firearms on you?

CARMELO  
Leonard has gats around the house.

LIZ  
You shot your step-father using one of his guns? And then what?

CARMELO  
I don't know. Figured I'd lose the piece. And try to get out of town.

LIZ  
Rob a 7-11. Make a getaway.

CARMELO  
Something like that.

Liz leans over the table, levels a glare at Carmelo.

LIZ  
I'm calling bullshit.

CARMELO  
I'm telling you the truth.

LIZ  
*Chale! No me jodas.* You want any  
chance of a life outside this cell,  
be straight with me.  
(beat)  
Why'd you shoot your step-father?

Carmelo stiffens. Doesn't want to touch this question.

CARMELO  
For what he was doing. To me. And  
my brother. What he did to my mom.

LIZ  
What did he do?

CARMELO  
That *perro* got off easy.

LIZ  
What did he do?

CARMELO  
He beat me. My brother, too. Mom  
got the worst. Cancer was better  
than what he put her through.

LIZ  
Before you shot him, did Blount  
make threats to harm you?

CARMELO  
He was six-five, two-forty, an ex-  
Marine and worked the streets  
undercover. Did he need to?  
(beat)  
I thought you quit being my lawyer.

LIZ  
I did.

CARMELO  
Why'd you come back?



LIZ  
I don't give up easy. Do you?

Liz settles in her seat. She's in for the long haul.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Liz, Leo, Cara, and Amir pick over brown-bag lunches. It's their mid-week brainstorming session/therapy group.

LEO  
So the kid's not the shooter?

LIZ  
He spent evenings at the library to avoid being around Blount. There's nothing street about him.

AMIR  
The abuse could be a defense.

LIZ  
No way Santi did this. Cops found guns all over the place, but not the one used on Blount.

LEO  
No eyewitnesses, no forensics, nothing tying Santi to this?

LIZ  
No.

CARA  
Except Santi himself.  
(beat)  
If he's not the shooter, who is?

AMIR  
Confessing to a murder he didn't commit? Kid's terrified something worse is waiting for him.

LEO  
Or somebody.

CARA  
He's got a brother, right?

LIZ  
Currently on parole for burglary.

LEO  
Mom's dead, Step-Dad was an abuser, brother's a convict...

LIZ  
No one's in this kid's corner.

LEO  
 You were in Santi's mess, wouldn't  
your brother know what's up?

Liz doesn't have to think too hard on this.

LIZ  
 I know his parole officer.

LEO  
 Get to stepping, girl.  
 (beat)  
 But if you're still out by end of  
 the day tomorrow...

LIZ  
 Give away my muffin and there will  
 be hell to pay.

Leo grins. No promises here.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - HUBLEY HOME - NIGHT

Liz grips the dresser. Joe is behind her, syringe in hand.

LIZ  
 You think Max was that bad?

JOE  
 I'm not the one doing the IEP.

LIZ  
 Who's this guy anyway? He doesn't  
 know Max.

JOE  
 He's been in class "observing" for  
 a week.

LIZ  
 And how can Bonner just order  
 another IEP? Who the hell--Owww!

Joe's stuck her with the needle.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
 Again? Really?

JOE  
 Give me another eight months. I'll  
 get the hang of it.

Liz rubs where the needle stuck her ass.

LIZ  
You don't have to enjoy it so much.

JOE  
I'm just here to help.

LIZ  
You want to help, take off your  
clothes and kill the lights.

Liz kisses Joe. They fall on the bed, half-tired, half-  
turned on. Joe comes up for air.

JOE  
Got an interview at Bee's Tavern.

LIZ  
But--

JOE  
Restaurant will have to wait.  
(beat)  
There's too much up in the air.

LIZ  
It'll be temporary.

JOE  
Sure. Temporary.

LIZ  
Does this kill the mood?

JOE  
Let me check.  
(Joe looks down)  
I'm good to go.

MAX (O.S.)  
Mommy?

Liz and Joe pop up - Max is standing there in his pajamas.

LIZ  
Baby, what's wrong? Can't sleep?

MAX  
I had a bad day.

Liz cradles him, sitting on the bed. Joe moves close.

LIZ  
I'm sorry, Max.

JOE  
Mrs. Katz saw how much you prepared.

MAX  
But I couldn't, y'know, talk. I tried to be Genghis, but...  
(beat)  
I don't want to go to school.

JOE  
Max, you know you have to.

MAX  
I mean, not there. Not at Eastview. Not any more.

LIZ  
Why, honey?

MAX  
Kids were laughing when I was, y'know, trying to talk.  
(beat)  
Everything's so hard.

JOE  
It is. But as you get older, you get better. You get braver.

MAX  
For real in real life?

JOE  
Mostly. Mom's pretty brave.

MAX  
Because she helps people in trouble?

JOE  
Yeah. And you and me.

Liz heaves Max over her shoulder.

LIZ  
Super-Mom needs to put you to bed.

JOE  
Super-Mom needs to hurry back.

Liz takes a giggling Max out of the bedroom, winking at Joe.

CUT TO:

INT. LANGER AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR - DAY

Legs under a jacked-up Chevy. A BOOT kicks them--

HORATIO SANTI, 20, slides from underneath the Chevy. Scruffy, rugged, dirty overalls -- doesn't matter. He's still a pretty boy. The FAT SLOB who kicked him grumbles.

FAT SLOB  
Lady here to see you.

LIZ (O.S.)  
Horatio Santi?

It's Liz in a spiffy court outfit. Horatio sparkles for her.

HORATIO  
If I say yes, what do I get?

LIZ  
A chat with a civil servant and her shiny badge.

Liz displays her public defender credentials.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Wanna' help me save your brother?

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Liz huddles in a corner with Horatio -- the laid-back ladies charmer has disappeared. He keeps an eye on the entrance.

LIZ  
You're not easy to find.

HORATIO  
I'll try to post on Facebook more often.

LIZ  
Your P.O. says this is the third job you've had in five months.

HORATIO  
You here to give me career advice?

LIZ  
I want to know about Leonard Blount.

HORATIO  
He was a bad dude. In every way. So I split my Mom's place.

LIZ  
What about your mother? Carmelo?

HORATIO  
Mom made her choice. And then she passed.  
(beat)  
Told Carmelo he could stay with me.

LIZ  
That's being a big brother. Why didn't he?

HORATIO  
I guess being in and out of County ain't so big brother of me.  
(beat)  
You saw Carmelo. He's a good kid. Plays the trumpet. Has a shot at getting into college.

LIZ  
And now?

HORATIO  
Look...

LIZ  
You don't need to draw me a picture. Carmelo didn't do this. But he's covering for whoever did. I want to know why.

Liz notices Horatio keeping watch on the front door.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Expecting company?

HORATIO  
No.

LIZ  
Then why're you staking out the front door?

HORATIO  
Habit. Ain't used to being in sit-down places like this.

Horatio hesitates, thinking things over, then--

HORATIO (CONT'D)  
Leonard pissed people off. He made sure everybody knew he was a cop.

LIZ  
Pretty stupid if you're working  
undercover.

HORATIO  
I never said he was good at it.

LIZ  
What are you saying?

HORATIO  
Leonard bitched about the animals  
who lived on his block. I seen him  
get into fights on the street.

LIZ  
So who should the cops talk to?  
The entire five counties?

HORATIO  
Plenty of people wanted him dead.

LIZ  
Tomorrow, LAPD's interviewing your  
brother. Unless I have a good  
story and a name, he'll tell them  
what he told me. You know how hard  
it is to walk back a confession?  
(beat)  
Give me something.

HORATIO  
You want names, ask the people  
Blount worked with.

Horatio doesn't blink. This is all Liz will get from him.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Liz waits in an entry-way leading to a warren of desks where  
detectives busy themselves with casework. Her cell rings.

LIZ  
(answering)  
Joe, I'm heading to an interview.

INTERCUT with Joe outside the school. Max is with him.

JOE  
The district transferred Max.

LIZ  
How can they? We haven't seen the  
new IEP.

JOE  
They have. Transfer's approved.  
 Max starts Townsend today.

LIZ  
 We'll fight it.

JOE  
 In the meantime, what do I do with  
 Max? He doesn't want to go to  
 Eastview or Townsend.

Two CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS lead a handcuffed Carmelo inside.

LIZ  
 For now, we don't have a choice.

JOE  
 This is the brave part, right?

LIZ  
 Give Max a hug for me. We'll talk  
 when I get home.  
 (hangs up; to Officers)  
 A moment with my client?

The Officers step away as Liz huddles with Carmelo.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
 I spoke to your brother.  
 (Carmelo's silent)  
Let me help you. Tell me who  
 you're covering for? We both know  
 this shooting isn't you.

CARMELO  
 Let's get this over with, okay?

Carmelo nods to the Officers, who lead him to--

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Detectives Kim and Macon wait behind a desk with a camera set  
 up to record the questioning. Carmelo and Liz sit.

LT. KIM  
 I'm Lieutenant Kim. This is  
 Lieutenant Macon. We're LAPD.  
 Please state your name and age.

CARMELO  
 Carmelo Santi. I'm sixteen.

LT. MACON  
 Carmelo, we're going to ask you  
 questions about Leonard Blount's  
 murder. This will be recorded.



Carmelo looks to Liz. She senses where this is going.

CARMELO  
I want to say something.

LIZ  
Carmelo...

There's NOISE coming from outside the room. It's SHOUTING. Carmelo and Liz turn. Through the window, they see--

Horatio being held by Detectives and Cops, who put him in cuffs. Horatio looks directly into the mirrored window.

HORATIO  
Have I got your attention now?  
Because I want you all to know that  
Leonard Blount was an asshole.

From behind the window, Carmelo rises. The Officers put a grip on him. Liz watches the scene unfold, helpless.

CARMELO  
Horatio...

HORATIO  
'Cuz of what he done to mom. And  
what he done to Carmelo. And what  
he done to me. I killed that  
perro. I'm the one shot him. Let  
my brother go. You hear me? Let  
him go.

As tears stream down Carmelo's face--

**END ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR****FADE IN:**

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Liz, Leo, Amir, and the other legal aide attorneys are crammed together with Tinker leading a weekly update.

TINKER

Consultants or expert witness fees need my approval. Email me with the form. We have to think of budgets, folks.

(beat)

That's about it. Anything else?

LEO

I've got a juvenile case. Seventeen year old girl with attitude. Threw me out before first interview even started.

TINKER

She say why?

LEO

Apart from the cursing, no. I'd like to bring in a female p.d. and see if we can dive a little deeper.

TINKER

Liz?

LIZ

I'm hip deep with the Santi case.

LEO

Just a prelim interview.

LIZ

(giving in)

For you, Leo, anything.

Tinker folds her thick notebook, concluding the meeting.

TINKER

We're done for now...Liz, I need a minute with you.

The room clears. Liz shuts the door, sits facing Tinker.

TINKER (CONT'D)

I'll be defending Horatio Santi.

LIZ

Thanks for the heads up.

TINKER

There's too many conflicts of interest in the office. I'm new and free of conflict.

LIZ

Apart from a career spent defending cops in Bucks county.

TINKER

Some might say that's an advantage.

LIZ

Well, you're the boss, right?

TINKER

This case is high-profile. And complicated, notwithstanding Horatio's outburst yesterday. Both brothers need good representation.

LIZ

So you know, in court, you're just another lawyer to me.

TINKER

We're here to serve our clients.

LIZ

Did you speak to Horatio?

TINKER

At length.

LIZ

Do you believe him?

Tinker is mute. She's not giving anything away.

TINKER

We'll see how that confession holds up.

Liz gathers her things and goes--

INT. BULLPEN - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

--meeting Leo outside Tinker's office. They walk and talk.

LIZ

She's taking on Horatio Santi.

LEO

I knew it.

LIZ

I don't believe either brother.

LEO  
On the other hand, now there's two  
suspects willing to confess.

LIZ  
I need to know if she's angling to  
make deal for Horatio.

LEO  
How would you go about tracking  
down that juicy bit of intel?

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM - PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

Liz and Leo stare into the refrigerator at the gift basket.

LIZ  
Any deal needs Judge Cortez's  
signoff.

LEO  
A gift basket won't get you much.

LIZ  
Not for Cortez, but his clerk. I  
just need to know if the D.A. has  
filed anything pre-emptively.

LEO  
Isn't there any another way?

LIZ  
We're all taking the hit here, Leo.  
(beat)  
I'll have Cara deliver it.

Leo sighs. Liz closes the refrigerator door.

CUT TO:

THE GIFT BASKET

in Cara's hands, carried down the halls of the courthouse to--

INT. JUDGE CORTEZ'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Cara enters, smiles for the CLERK.

CLERK  
You can leave it there. Thanks.

Cara sets the basket on a desk and leaves. Moments later,  
Judge Cortez walks in. Sees the basket. Glances at the  
card.

JUDGE CORTEZ  
From Legal Aide?

CLERK  
It's Patroni's.

Judge Cortez happily snags a muffin for himself.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNSEND SCHOOL - ADMIN OFFICE - DAY

Joe and Liz are looking through a glass window. With them is the eyeglass-wearing social worker who observed Max -- DANNY KOBLENZ. They are observing a scene below:

Max in a classroom with kids. An adult AIDE is leading the kids in a group game, but Max sits on the side, watching.

LIZ  
It's Danny, right?

KOBLENZ  
Yes.

LIZ  
Full disclosure -- we haven't committed to this place.

JOE  
We read the IEP.

KOBLENZ  
Max's learning delays are substantial and need intervention.

LIZ  
Which were being addressed at Eastview.

KOBLENZ  
Townsend is a better environment to address Max's specific challenges.

LIZ  
Will you be at home with us for the crying and screaming? The near catatonic fits when he won't even leave his room?

JOE  
Liz.

KOBLENZ  
Townsend is designed to let students grow at their own pace.

LIZ

Do you know what it's like to feel  
lost with your own child? To not  
know how to even begin to help him?

(beat)

This is bullshit. Max doesn't want  
to be here. We don't want him  
here.

JOE

Liz--

LIZ

We're fighting this. All the way.

JOE

It's Max.

Liz looks down - Max is participating with the other kids.  
He spots Liz and Joe, waving. Liz turns away, pale, shaking.

LIZ

I'm going to be sick.

KOBLENZ

Mrs. Hubley, you should meet the  
staff before making judgments.

LIZ

No. Really. I'm sick...

Liz rushes to a waste-bin and throws up in it.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

Liz on an exam table in a napkin gown. Joe paces.

LIZ

Calm down. I'm not dying.

JOE

Pumping you with all those  
hormones, who knows what else...

LIZ

I feel better now.

JOE

I will when we get out of here.  
You know how I am with doctors.

LIZ

I know how you are with syringes.

DR. LACY QUO, 30's, Chinese, enters with a chart.



AMIR

We can finally bust that open?

CARA

We gave it to Judge Cortez's clerk.

(Amir is baffled)

Don't ask. Problem is, the client is a gang-banger and Donny lost the case. The family sent the basket to show their "appreciation."

AMIR

That thing could be poisoned or worse...Cortez.

And they're off--

CARA AND AMIR racing down hallways, into stairwells, pushing past people, running out the front doors--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JUDGE CORTEZ'S CHAMBERS

Cara and Amir blast into the room, sweaty, panicked. Clerk jumps from his seat. Cara spots the open gift basket.

CLERK

Can I help you?

AMIR

Is Judge Cortez...?

CLERK

In chambers.

Amir and Cara don't wait for an invitation. They rush into--

JUDGE CORTEZ'S OFFICE

--where he sits behind his desk, finishing the last bite of a muffin, licking his fingertips.

JUDGE CORTEZ

Did we have an appointment?

AMIR

Not really...feeling good, Judge?

JUDGE CORTEZ

Just dandy.

CARA

Those muffins--



JUDGE CORTEZ

Are delicious. You're the only one who remembered it's been fifteen years since I started on the bench.

CARA

Well, it's a big deal, Judge.

JUDGE CORTEZ

Patroni's is my favorite. Thank you for the basket.

AMIR

Our pleasure. Really.

Amir and Cara back out of the office, eyeing Judge Cortez, making sure he doesn't drop dead.

Heading to the door, Cara whips out her cellphone.

CARA

(into phone)

So, Liz, about that gift basket--

Amir snags a muffin from the open basket as they leave.

CUT TO:

INT. PHILADELPHIA JUVENILE CENTER - OUTSIDE INTERVIEW ROOM

Leo fidgets in a chair - we see into the room behind: an obese White Girl, TONI, 17, littered with tattoos. Liz approaches Leo, clicking off her cellphone.

LEO

That the office?

LIZ

Turns out, Donny's client is a stand-up gang-banger. Basket crisis averted.

LEO

Great. Now this crisis.

LIZ

Bring it on. I'm in a good mood.

Liz eyes Toni through the window, who gives a death-stare.

LEO

Toni Kline. Broke her history teacher's jaw. Apparently, he confiscated her cellphone.

LIZ

Adorable.

We hear Toni through the glass window:

TONI  
I see you talking 'bout me!

Liz and Leo trade looks. Neither wants to enter the room.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Leo faces Toni Kline, Liz to the side, playing second fiddle. Toni's street-smart, knows Liz is here to soften her up.

TONI  
What're you doing to get me off?

LEO  
Who says I can do that?

TONI  
Ain't you a lawyer?

LEO  
There's fifteen witnesses who saw you assault Mr. Seijo.

TONI  
That gook took my Samsung. He was asking for it.

LEO  
You wonder why I can't get you off?

TONI  
I ain't going to no jail.

LIZ  
It's not jail. It's detention.

TONI  
Aw, snap, Cupcake talks. I ain't doing detention neither, bitch.

Liz rises, a five-foot-two rage, leaning in close to Toni.

LIZ  
'Bitch' will never work with me, understood? Understood?  
(Toni nods)  
Now, how about you sit up, quit mouthing off, and tell us why you're buggin' before I spank you.

Toni isn't quick to respond.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Speak up. We've got plenty other kids who are worse off than you.

TONI  
I can't go to no jail or detention  
'cuz I'm pregnant.

LIZ  
You're sure?

TONI  
I know the birds and bees. I'm,  
like, four months.

LEO  
Why are we learning about this now?

TONI  
'Cuz I'm telling you about it now.  
(beat)  
I ain't having no baby, 'specially  
if my ass is in jail or detention.  
(beat)  
Yeah, that's right. Nobody can  
make me have no baby.

LIZ  
Have you been using? Drinking?

TONI  
I stopped...once I found out...

LIZ  
What made you stop?  
(Toni goes quiet)  
You'll agree to whatever deal Leo  
makes. You'll get a medical check-  
up -- in detention. And you'll  
have the baby. That's what the law  
says. That's the best we can do.

TONI  
Fuck you. I ain't down with that.

Liz gathers her things and turns to go, eyeing Leo.

LIZ  
See you at the office.

TONI  
I ain't having this baby. I ain't  
letting this thing ruin my life.  
Don't walk away from me! Princess  
with your perfect life! What do  
you know about babies...?

Liz exits. She keeps a brave front, but can hear Toni  
wailing at her after closing the door. She keeps moving...

**END ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE****FADE IN:**

INT. HUBLEY HOME - LIZ AND JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liz in bed, wide awake. Thinking. Throws off covers and--

Passing Max's bedroom: a quick peek. He's blissfully asleep. The picture a Mom likes to see. She keeps going--

INT. KITCHEN - HUBLEY HOME

Liz rummages in cabinets and drawers, finding cigarettes in hidden places. Joe enters, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

JOE  
What are you doing?

LIZ  
Getting rid of my stashes.

JOE  
Right now?

LIZ  
There's a box in our closet.  
Behind the shoe-rack.

JOE  
Already took care of that.

LIZ  
Normally, I'd be pissed, but now,  
see, I'm good with it. Thank you.

JOE  
Can we get back to bed?

LIZ  
After scrubbing the bathroom and  
disinfecting the sinks. We've got  
to be germ-free. Then, it'll be  
time for that sunrise yoga class I  
wanted to take.

JOE  
Liz.

LIZ  
I know, it's a little over the top.

JOE  
More than a little over the top.

LIZ  
I'm not risking it, it's important.

JOE  
So is sleep.  
(beat)  
We've been through worse. You and  
I are solid. We got this.

LIZ  
Thanks. I feel better.

JOE  
So, we're good then?

Liz grabs a bucket and scrubber from under the sink.

LIZ  
All good. You do the bathroom,  
I'll take the kitchen.

Joe takes the bucket. A forced smile and off he goes.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - PRE-TRIAL HEARING - DAY

Liz with Carmelo at Defendant's table. Barbara Tinker  
arrives with Horatio, seating themselves at a table adjacent.

On the prosecution side, it's Bailey Cook in a starchy white  
shirt, itching to get back at Liz. JUDGE ALANA CANTOR, 60,  
peers over her reading glasses.

JUDGE CANTOR  
Looks like everybody's here.

LIZ  
Approach, Judge?

JUDGE CANTOR  
Thought you'd never ask.

Liz, Tinker, and Bailey Cook congregate around the Judge.

LIZ  
A little housekeeping first.

JUDGE CANTOR  
I'm all ears, Liz.

LIZ  
Prosecution seeks to join cases--

COOK  
I cited McKim v. California.

LIZ  
Nobody's grading your homework.

COOK

Police have an apparent confession from one defendant and considerable evidence against the other.

LIZ

The fact is, my client is a minor.

COOK

This was decided at the waiver hearing.

LIZ

The waiver was for the armed robbery. This is homicide. The D.A. can't decide who is and isn't an adult when it suits him.

TINKER

I signed off on joining the cases.

LIZ

Setting aside your obvious conflict of interest, I didn't agree to the joinder. Nor did my client. Honestly, it's not your decision.

TINKER

Judge--

JUDGE CANTOR

She's right.

LIZ

And the waiver is flawed. Carmelo was not 16 when he was charged. He turned 16 only two weeks ago.

COOK

She's splitting hairs, Judge.

JUDGE CANTOR

That's what lawyers do.

COOK

You've got to be kidding.

JUDGE CANTOR

Step away, Mr. Cook.

As they return to their tables, Tinker whispers to Liz:

TINKER

Is this a game to you?

LIZ

Don't hate the player.

TINKER

I can't wait for our one-on-one.

LIZ

Consider this our one-on-one.

The assembled face Judge Cantor.

JUDGE CANTOR

I'm severing the cases. Carmelo Santi will be transferred back to juvenile court for re-filing. Case against Horatio Santi may proceed.

Judge Cantor gavels. Horatio is taken by officers. Exiting, Tinker gives Liz a death stare. Carmelo looks to Liz--

CARMELO

They putting this all on Horatio?

LIZ

I'm not letting you two fight over who's more guilty.

CARMELO

They can't do that to him.

LIZ

Depends.

CARMELO

On what?

LIZ

On who's willing to tell the truth.  
(leaning in)  
You really want to help Horatio?  
Give me something.

Court Officers come for Carmelo. Now's the time to speak up.

CARMELO

Grillz. Horatio ran with a dealer named Grillz outta' Cypress Park.

LIZ

They're moving you to juvey. I'll stop by in the morning.

Liz watches as Carmelo is taken away. A VOICE pre-laps:

GAIL (V.O.)

Such a beautiful boy!

CUT TO:

INT. COVERED DECK - BOB & GAIL HASTING'S HOME - NIGHT

The end of a barbecue. Family are gathered around a fire-pit. Liz's mother, GAIL, 57, lively, is tickling Max. He doesn't like it, but doesn't want her to stop.

LIZ  
Mom.

GAIL  
Well, he is!

LIZ  
Mom.

GAIL  
Oh, I know. He'll get in one of his moods. But he needs to know Grandma loves him.

Liz's father, BOB, 58, trim, easy-going, holds out two fists.

BOB  
Which one?

Max considers which hand to pick. He chooses--

MAX  
That one!

Bob opens the picked hand. Nothing. He opens the other hand - nothing, either. Everybody starts laughing.

BOB  
I didn't say I had anything.

Groans from everybody. Liz watches Max laugh. He's careful to keep distance from Bob and Gail, but he's clearly content.

Max approaches Liz, head down, sheepishly--

MAX  
Is it time for ice cream?

Liz smiles, nods and Max lets out a cheer, dancing with joy.

CUT TO:

INT. HUBLEY HOME - NIGHT

Joe carries a sleeping Max to his bedroom, Liz right behind. She enters their bedroom, changes, goes to master bathroom to brush her teeth. Joe appears, lingering in the doorway.

LIZ  
He was really good tonight.



JOE  
Not so much this morning.

LIZ  
What do you mean?

JOE  
Max had one of his meltdowns at  
Townsend. I had to calm him down.

LIZ  
You didn't call me?

JOE  
In the middle of your trial...

LIZ  
I'm still his mom.

JOE  
He had the school call me.

Uneasy, Liz sits with this a moment.

LIZ  
We have to get him out of there.

JOE  
No. He's is staying put.

LIZ  
We talked about--

JOE  
We can't yo-yo him back and forth.  
He needs routine. I don't want to  
admit it, but Townsend might be the  
best thing for Max.

LIZ  
This is not a good idea.

JOE  
We're out of options, Liz.  
(beat)  
We request another IEP, Max could  
end up in a worse place. He's  
going to need help and it'll cost.

LIZ  
So we just give up?

JOE  
No, we dig in. I'm picking up  
shifts at Bee's Tavern. Nights and  
weekends. Some lunches, too.

(beat)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

And that pay bump you're expecting?  
I don't want to hear how you're  
sticking it to your new Boss 'cuz  
she pisses you off. Suck it up.

LIZ

I'm the best they've got.

JOE

Well, now's the time to show it.

Liz searches for a comeback, but she knows he's right.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARROWGATE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Abandoned cars, boarded up buildings. Nobody stops on this corner. Except Liz, who pulls up in her Honda next to a crew of young men, mostly LatinX. They laugh when she walks up.

LIZ

Which one of you is Grillz?

A white dude with a mouth full of metal (GRILLZ) smiles.

GRILLZ

Always happy to please a lady.

LIZ

Chances of that are zero.

(beat)

Tell me how you know Horatio Santi.

GRILLZ

Whoa now, you roll up, harsh my  
mellow, and no foreplay. That  
ain't cool. You a cop?

LIZ

From the Public Defender's office.

Grillz holds out both hands, pretending to await handcuffs.

GRILLZ

Why didn't you just say so?

LIZ

I'm defending Carmelo Santi.

GRILLZ

Word is he shot Daddy. Sad.

LIZ

Word is Horatio ran smack for your  
crew. I think something went down  
and Horatio skipped out on you.

GRILLZ  
 (gets in her face)  
 You fittin' to accuse me of  
 something, you best have backup.

LIZ  
 Horatio stealing product? You sent  
 a message by killing Blount?

GRILLZ  
 I look stupid enough to plug a cop?

LIZ  
 You look plenty stupid.

GRILLZ  
 I guess it don't make no nevermind  
 to cap a lady lawyer then.

Liz doesn't back down.

LIZ  
 Didn't know he was a cop, did you?  
 But Horatio wasn't going to say  
 anything. It was a gift to him.  
 (beat)  
 You get back whatever Horatio took?

GRILLZ  
 I'm done clowning with you.

Grillz whistles and, strutting, leaves with his crew.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - COUNTY JAILHOUSE - DAY

Horatio sits with Barbara Tinker. It's an uncomfortable  
 silence. Liz enters, followed by Carmelo.

CARMELO  
 Horatio!

Correction Officers steer Carmelo to a chair and lock him to  
 the table between he and Horatio. Tinker eyes Liz.

TINKER  
 Thought you wanted us severed.

LIZ  
 What I want is honesty.  
 (to Horatio)  
 Saw your old friend Grillz. You  
 took something from him.

HORATIO  
 That what he told you?

LIZ  
He didn't have to.

HORATIO  
Talking to Grillz wasn't smart,  
lady. You coulda' gotten hurt.

LIZ  
Dude is scary. That why you were  
out of sight for weeks?

TINKER  
What's this about, Liz?

LIZ  
It's about *cajones*.

CARMELO  
Did Grillz kill him, Horatio?

HORATIO  
Don't let her get inside your head.

LIZ  
Answer his question.

HORATIO  
I did it. I told you. Can we do a  
deal and end this?

LIZ  
Jail's better for you than being on  
the streets, isn't it?

TINKER  
Liz, if you've got something, you  
need to let me know.

Liz stands, motions to Officers that they're finished.

LIZ  
Seems the D.A. is happy to pursue  
convictions for both of you.  
Carmelo's trial begins tomorrow.  
Look me in the face and tell me  
you're doing what's best for him.

HORATIO  
Blount's dead. That's what's best.

CARMELO  
Horatio--

Officers take Carmelo away. Liz turns, wavering a bit. She  
grabs the table, catches her breath, then regroups and goes.

CUT TO:

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM - COUNTY JAILHOUSE - DAY

Liz stops at a mirror. Pale. Sweating. She splashes water on her face and, turning to go, drops her keys.

Picking up her keys, she notices blood dripping down her leg.

INSIDE A BATHROOM STALL - MOMENTS LATER

Liz is visibly shaken. Holds her cellphone to her ear.

LIZ  
 Joe...meet me at the hospital...  
 Yes, something's wrong...I can get  
 there myself, but after that...

She stops talking, shaking with dread, stumbling away.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Liz lies in bed in a hospital gown. Joe sits next to her, holding her hand. A dark mood suffocates the room.

JOE  
 We don't have to talk now, but when  
 the time comes, we can try again.

LIZ  
 I don't know. Losing this baby...

JOE  
 The doctor says you're healthy.  
 That's what's important.

LIZ  
 All the shots, the waiting...

JOE  
 It'd be worth it, if--

LIZ  
 That's an expensive if.

JOE  
 Let's keep our options open, okay?  
 (beat)  
 We have a beautiful boy, Liz.

LIZ  
 We do.

JOE  
 The doctor recommends you stay put.

LIZ  
 No. I'm going home.  
 (beat)  
 And I'll be in court tomorrow.

JOE  
 Liz--

LIZ  
 I'll be okay. But if I'm not  
 there, Carmelo Santi may not be.

JOE  
 You need to take it easy.

LIZ  
 I'm getting dressed.  
 (Joe doesn't move)  
 I can't sit here and have a break-  
 down. Not now. Let's go.

Joe gets up as Liz throws off the covers--

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE COURT - TRIAL PART 52 - DAY

Liz and Carmelo at defense table. Bailey Cook on prosecution  
 side. Liz stares ahead, lost in thought. A VOICE calls--

CANTOR  
 Ms. Hubley, you may call a witness.

LIZ  
 Sure. Horatio Santi, Judge.

Judge Cantor motions to the Bailiff, who fetches a handcuffed  
 Horatio from a side room and escorts him to the stand.

CANTOR  
 State your name for the record.

HORATIO  
 Horatio Santi. I'm Carmelo's  
 brother.

LIZ  
 What was your relationship to  
 Leonard Blount?

HORATIO  
 He married my mother. And beat  
 her. And me and Carmelo.

LIZ  
 Did Carmelo ever fight back?

HORATIO  
He's just a kid. I fought back.

LIZ  
You hated Blount. That right?

HORATIO  
Every second he was around, yes.

LIZ  
Did you kill Leonard Blunt?

Barbara Tinker speaks up from the sidelines.

TINKER  
Judge, my client does not have to answer that.

LIZ  
Myself and a room full of cops heard Mr. Santi confess to Blount's murder. I'm offering him a chance to set the record straight.

CANTOR  
Witness may respond.

HORATIO  
Leonard put my mom into an early grave.

LIZ  
So you took matters into your own hands?

Horatio stews. He looks to Carmelo.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Do you know a Clarence Gibney, otherwise known as Grillz?

HORATIO  
From around the neighborhood.

LIZ  
Grillz is a notable drug dealer with multiple narcotic arrests.

HORATIO  
I've gotten into enough trouble running with his crew.

LIZ  
Did you get into trouble with Grillz recently? Did he make threats to harm you?

HORATIO

Yes.

LIZ

Why?

HORATIO

'Cuz I stole cash from him. So I could help Carmelo. Leonard stopped paying for his music. He was kicking him out the house.

LIZ

Grillz came after you?

HORATIO

Said he'd kill whoever had his cash.

LIZ

What did you tell him?

(beat)

Horatio, what did you tell him?

HORATIO

I told him Leonard took it.

Carmelo starts to cry. Horatio can barely speak.

LIZ

What did Grillz do?

HORATIO

Asked me where I could find Leonard. I told him where to go.

LIZ

Did you kill Leonard, Horatio?

HORATIO

No.

(to Carmelo)

He ain't gonna' hurt us no more.

Carmelo covers his face, sobbing. Silence grips the room.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF CHIEF OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS - DAY

A KNOCK - Liz enters, finding Barbara Tinker at her desk.

TINKER

Thanks for knocking.

LIZ

You wanted to see me?



Tinker hands Liz an envelope.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
What's this?

TINKER  
Your promotion package. I moved  
your bump up by three months.

LIZ  
What about our one-on-one?

TINKER  
Consider this our one-on-one.  
(beat)  
Good work today.

LIZ  
What about Grillz?

TINKER  
Police have him in custody. I can  
get minimal time for Horatio.  
(beat)  
You okay, Liz?

LIZ  
I'm going to need the afternoon.

Tinker nods her approval. Liz exits as--

CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION - DAY

Tattooed Toni sits alone. Liz watches her through a window.  
She takes a breath and enters.

LIZ  
Toni. I'm taking over your case  
from Leo. I'm Liz.

TONI  
Cupcake wanna' be helping me? Why?  
(beat)  
I'm a lost cause. Why you wanna'  
help me?

LIZ  
I figured if you take a chance on  
me, I'll take a chance on you.

Liz sits, takes out Toni's file, her pen hovering over a  
legal pad. Ready to go.

**THE END**