

"ERIN BROCKOVICH"

A True Story

by

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INT. DR. JAFFE'S OFFICE - DAY

A successful-looking doctor sits behind a desk in a well-appointed office. He's looking at someone off-camera.

DR. JAFFE

Uh, but you have no actual medical training?

ERIN

(off)

No. I have kids. Learned a lot right there. I've seen nurses give my son a throat culture. I mean what is it – you stick a giant Q-tip down their throat and wait. Or a urine analysis, with that dipstick that tells you whether or not the white count is high...

DR. JAFFE

Yes, I understand.

ERIN

(off)

And, I mean, I'm great with people. Of course, you'd have to observe me to know for sure, but trust me on that one. I'm extremely fast learner. I mean, you show me what to do in a lab once, and I've got it down.

He nods. Now we see who he is talking to: ERIN BROCKOVICH.

How to describe her? A beauty queen would come to mind – which, in fact, she was. Tall in a mini skirt, legs crossed, tight top, beautiful – but clearly from a social class and geographic orientation whose standards for displaying beauty are not based on subtlety.

ERIN

...for instance, at one point I wanted to be an engineer, so I was working at Fleuer Engineers and Constructors in Irvine. I fell madly in love with geology.

DR. JAFFE

Geology?

ERIN

I learned how to read maps. I love maps. Did you know our present system for map-making dates back to the ancient Greeks in like the third century B.C.?

DR. JAFFE

No.

ERIN

Anyway, I was at the company and – this is interesting, actually – I helped Ramish Ginatra design, as an assistant, part of the Alaskan pipeline...

DR. JAFFE

Uh-huh.

ERIN

...But I lost that job because my son came down with the Chicken Pox and 104 temperature and my ex-husband was useless, so... ya know... But what I want to tell you is I, uh...

I had always wanted to go to medical school. That was my first interest really... but then I, you know, got married... had a kid too young and... that kind of blew it for me...

Jaffe stares at her.

DR. JAFFE

Uh-huh.

ERIN

(beat, looks around)

This is a really nice office.

Jaffe looks down at her resume, trying to figure a polite route.

DR. JAFFE

Thanks.

(looks up at her)

Look...

Beat. By Erin's expression, she knows what's coming.

EXT. DR. JAFFE'S OFFICE / SO. CALIFORNIA SUBURB - MAIN DRAG - DAY

A side street. No pedestrians, just parked cars.

Erin is finishing a cigarette. Her face has fallen – the enthusiasm and spirit she showed in the interview are now replaced by a desperate type of concern. She takes a final puff, puts the cigarette out and walks to her car.

A PARKING TICKET flaps under the wiper of an old Hyundai.

ERIN

Fuck.

Even when she talks dirty, there's a heartland goodness to her voice. Like Kansas corn fields swaying in the breeze.

As she grabs the ticket from the windshield, her sunglasses accidentally CLATTER to the ground.

ERIN

Shit.

When she picks them up, a fingernail snags on the pavement.

ERIN

God damn it.

She tends to the nail as she opens her car door and gets in.

WIDER ON THE STREET

The Hyundai starts it up, signals. Then, just as it pulls slowly out into the street, a JAGUAR barrels around the corner, accelerating out of the turn, and SLAMS into the side of Erin's car, sending it CAREENING into the median. It SMASHES into a foot-thick lightpost. And stops.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE - DAY

A respectable building in the valley.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Morning, Mr. Masry. How you doing today?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - RECEPTION - DAY

A sign over the reception desk reads: MASRY & VITITOE, ATTORNEYS AT LAW.

ED MASRY, senior partner in the firm, enters the office and approaches his secretary's desk. His avuncular presence masks a savvy legal mind, and his somewhat rumpled appearance indicates a disinterest in pretense.

ED

Fine. You?

ROSALIND

Did you watch it last night?

ED

No, I was out. I taped it. Don't

tell me what happens.

ROSALIND

(overlapping him,
excitedly)

It's sooo great...

(as he walks to office)

Your nine o'clock's already in there.

Ed peers into his office. It's a mess – papers everywhere, unopened mail. Standing in the middle of the room is Erin, in a teensy, leopard-print mini-dress. As she jiggles a spike-heeled foot, everything about her shimmies gloriously.

Except her head, which is held in place by a neck brace.

ED

Remind me.

BRENDA

Erin Brockovich. Car accident. Not
her fault, she says.

(beat. They exchange
looks)

She was referred.

He nods.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Not an office that necessarily exudes authority, and ED's blustery entrance only adds to the sense of chaos.

ED

Erin – hi. Sorry you had to wait.

Here, sit down, sit down.

He clears a stack of papers off a chair, places down a mug of coffee.

ERIN

Thanks a lot.

(as she sits)

I tell you, I never thought just
standing would take it out of me,

but ever since that shithead hit me,
it feels like my whole body's put
together wrong.

Ed gives her a look of pro-forma sympathy.

ED

(sits)

Jesus, you poor thing. Did anyone
ask if you want some coffee?

ERIN

Yeah. I'm fine.

ED

Great. Well, listen... whoever did
this to you made one hell of a
mistake, and you and me, we're gonna
make him pay for it.

He sips coffee like it's a healing potion, takes out a pad
and paper, gets ready to write.

ED

Why don't you tell me what happened?

CUT TO:

INT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COURTROOM - DAY

Erin is on the stand, wearing the most conservative thing
she owns: a red, form-fitting mini dress, telling her story
to Ed, who's questioning her.

ERIN

I was pulling out real slow, and out
of nowhere, his Jaguar comes racing
around the corner like a bat outta
hell...

She glances at the defendant's table, where a DOCTOR sits
nobly. His WIFE and two beautiful KIDS are behind him. A
frigging Norman Rockwell painting.

LATER IN HER TESTIMONY

ERIN

They took some bone from my hip and put it in my neck. I didn't have insurance, so I'm about seventeen thousand in debt right now.

STILL LATER

ERIN

...couldn't take painkillers 'cause they made me too groggy to take care of my kids.

STILL LATER

ERIN

...Matthew's six, Katie's four, and Beth's just nine months.

STILL LATER

ERIN

..just wanna be a good mom, a nice person, a decent citizen. Just wanna take good care of my kids. You know?

ED

(oh so moved)
Yeah. I know.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Erin is still on the stand. But now the doctor's lawyer is questioning her.

DEFENDING LAWYER

Seventeen thousand in debt. Whew. Is your ex-husband helping out?

ERIN

Which one?

DEFENDING LAWYER

(feigning shock)

There's more than one?

ERIN

Yeah. There's two. Why?

Erin looks over at the jury. The personification of conservative family values. Oh, shit.

LATER IN HER TESTIMONY

ERIN

(getting defensive)

...not like a career, 'cause I had my babies. But I woulda worked, for sure, if I didn't have this neck thing.

Erin sees a juror staring in judgment at her short hem. Erin gives it a tug, pulling it down a stitch.

DEFENDING LAWYER

(sarcastic)

Right. No doubt.

Erin sees a few jurors share dubious glances. Great.

STILL LATER

The defendant's lawyer is on the offensive. Erin's starting to feel the case slipping away.

DEFENDING LAWYER

So. You must've been feeling pretty desperate that afternoon.

ERIN

(pointed)

What's your point?

Ed shakes his head slightly to her – don't get mad.

DEFENDING LAWYER

Broke, three kids, no job. A doctor in a Jaguar must've looked like a pretty good meal ticket.

Erin sees jurors nodding almost imperceptibly in agreement.

She's on a sinking ship.

ERIN

What? Hey – he hit me.

DEFENDING LAWYER

So you say.

ERIN

He came tearing around the corner,
out of control –

DEFENDING LAWYER

An ER doctor who spends his days
saving lives was the one out of
control –

ERIN

(erupting)

That asshole smashed in my fucking
neck!

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Erin barrels toward the elevator. Ed trails.

ERIN

...Open and shut? Open and fucking
shut?

ED

Which is exactly the kind of language
that lost the case.

ERIN

Oh, please, it was long over by then.
God damn, he made me look like some
cheap –

ED

I told you the questions might get a
little persona –

ERIN

Bullshit. You told me I'd get half a million dollars. You told me I'd be set.

ED notices her ranting is starting to draw attention.

ED

Okay – let's try and settle down here. You want something to eat?

ERIN

You want to feed my kids too!? Fuck settle down! I got seventy-four dollars to my name! I can't afford to settle down!

Beat.

ED

I'm sorry, Erin.

ERIN

Do they actually teach lawyers how to apologize – because you all suck at it.

Erin turns away from him and heads for the stairway.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

A shitty little house in a shitty part of Northbridge. The Hyundai with a bashed-in side pulls up to the curb.

Erin gets out, takes the mail from her mailbox, then heads over to the equally grim house next door and rings the bell.

A Hispanic woman in her 60's opens the door, holding a white baby. This is MRS. MORALES.

MRS. MORALES

Hi, Erin! You're back so soon.

She hands Erin the baby. It's BETH, Erin's 9-month old.

Erin avoids the question by focusing on her baby.

ERIN

Hi, sweetie. Were you a good girl?
Where are Matt and Katie?

MRS. MORALES

Outside with the sprinkler. So it's
good?

The truth is too depressing to share. They walk towards Erin's house as they talk...

ERIN

It'll be fine, yeah.
(BETH COUGHS in her
arms)
Oh honey...

MRS. MORALES

She's got a little cough. I sat with
her in the steam to loosen it up.
But...

ERIN

I've got enough medicine, I think..

MRS. MORALES

Ai, bueno. Listen, I didn't want to
tell you before, with your worries –

ERIN

What?

MRS. MORALES

My daughter, she's bought a big house
with a room for me. I'm going to
move in with her.

ERIN

You're moving away? When?

MRS. MORALES

Next week.

ERIN
(stunned)
Next week?

MRS. MORALES
I know. But it's good for me. Now I can help my daughter take care of my grandkids. And it's good for you, too. Now you have money, you can find a good baby-sitter, huh? Not the old lady next door.

Oh, God. Beth COUGHS.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin carries Beth up to her house. As she nears her door, she steps on a GIANT WATER BUG. It crunches under her sole.

ERIN
Ugh.

Insult added to injury. She heads up to the house, dragging her shoe, wiping off the bug guts.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Hand held camera follows Erin as she puts down her bag and looks through cabinets to see what she can make for dinner, all the while holding Beth who coughs on and off.

ERIN
Oh sweetie... that doesn't sound so good, huh?... my baby... let me just start dinner...

Erin finds nothing but boxes of macaroni and cheese and some canned peaches and vegetables. She pulls out a box of macaroni and cheese and a can of peas. She bends down and grabs a pot, placing it under the faucet. She grabs another pot and places it on the stove. She searches for a can opener to open the peas. She moves back to the sink, shuts the faucet and sees:

Another waterbug crawling up the side of the pot from the drain.

ERIN

Ugh! Goddamn it!

She bangs the pot onto the bug spilling the water and upsetting Beth.

ERIN

It's all right honey. Mommy's sorry.
It's all right.

As she rocks Beth, who coughs in between tears, Erin looks around – at her meager dinner and bug infested kitchen – and is fed up with the whole day! She dumps her bag out, gets her wallet, opens it up and sees what little money she has.

Camera follows her out the kitchen, into the main room where she heads for a window, opens it and shouts to Matthew and Kate in the yard:

ERIN

Matthew! Katie! Dry off. Put your shoes on – we're going out to eat.

They shout their excitement as Erin (and camera) continue through the house, through the bedroom and into a bathroom.

ERIN

Don't go getting sick on me, baby.
Okay?

But Beth's cough is getting worse. Erin opens the medicine cabinet but finds nothing appropriate.

EXT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Matt and Katie are messing around with a gumball machine.

INT. DRUGSTORE - AISLE - DAY

Erin is holding Beth, wandering the aisles. She stops at the medicines, thinks for a long moment, then, hating herself,

glances to make sure no one's looking, and picks up a bottle.

INT. DRUGSTORE - AT THE REGISTER - DAY

As a CUSTOMER steps away from the register, Erin steps up with the bottle in her hand and smiles at the CHECK-OUT LADY.

ERIN

Hi, remember me? I was in yesterday.
Bought a whole mess of stuff. Round
about five?

CHECK-OUT LADY

Honey, it's a zoo here at five. I'm
lucky if I even see a face, much
less remember it.

ERIN

Oh, shoot, yeah, I guess that'd be
tough. Well, listen, I meant to buy
my baby here some medicine, and by
the time I got home, I realized I'd
bought this adult stuff by mistake.
And now, wouldn't you know, I can't
find the receipt. I was wondering –
could I maybe exchange it anyway...

INT. CHEAP DINER - TWILIGHT

Beth is feeling better on Erin's lap. A drugstore bag sits on the table with the cough medicine. The two other kids sit opposite in the booth. Erin is helping the kids read the menu as the Waitress arrives.

WAITRESS

Everybody ready?

KATIE

(proudly)

My mommy reads backwards.

ERIN

One of my many talents. Go ahead
kids.

MATTHEW
Cheeseburger deluxe and a coke.

KATIE
(whispers across table)
Mommy can I get the cheeseburger
deluxe with no cheese and no bread.

ERIN
(to Waitress)
You get that?
(Waitress nods and
smiles)
This one here'll have just a cup of
that chicken broth and some crackers.

WAITRESS
And for you?

ERIN
Cup of coffee.

Waitress takes away menus and exits as Matthew asks:

MATTHEW
You're not eating mom?

ERIN
No, honey – my lawyer took me out
to a big fancy lunch to celebrate
and I'm stuffed!
(to Beth)
You feeling better baby.
(feels her head with
her cheek)
Cool as a cucumber.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The kids are asleep. A starved Erin is sitting at the kitchen
table, eating canned fruit cocktail.

O.C. Beth coughs. Coughs again. Erin looks up. Hopes it
doesn't turn into a coughing fit...

Beat.

A waterbug crawls across the table. Erin stares at it. Calmly, comically, she reaches off camera and grabs a can of bug spray. She aims and sprays the bug with a consistent, focused force until the damn thing slides off the table in a river of bug repellent.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Midday. Ed enters with a cup of coffee in his hand. As he heads to his desk, he trips on a box of files. Coffee sloshes up out of his cup and on to his shirt.

ED
Damn it!
(calling out)
Brenda!

She pops her head in.

BRENDA
Yeah?

He grabs a tissue, swabs his shirt, then kicks at the box.

ED
What the hell is this doing here?

BRENDA
It's those files you asked for.

ED
I didn't mean for you to leave them
in the middle of the floor. Jesus.
Look at me.

As Ed checks his reflection in the glass wall of his office, he notices, on the other side:

ERIN, standing in the middle of the secretaries' area, talking to DONALD, the office boy. Donald heads away from her.

ED
What's she doing here?

BRENDA
Who?

Ed goes to his office door and waves Donald over.

ED
Hey, Donald, what's she doing here?

DONALD
She works here.

Ed looks back out at her – what the hell?

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The support staff – mostly middle-aged women – are all stealing glances at Erin. Ed approaches her, friendly.

ED
Erin! How's it going?

Up close, the wear and tear of worry show on her face.

ERIN
You never called me back. I left messages.

ED
You did? Wow, sorry about that.
(beat)
Listen, Donald seems to think that you said –

ERIN
There's two things that aggravate me, Mr. Masry. Being ignored, and being lied to. You did both.

Glances skitter between the secretaries – get a load of this. Ed lowers his voice.

ED
I never lied, Erin.

ERIN

You said things would be fine, and they're not. I trusted you.

ED

I'm sorry about that. Really. But –

ERIN

I don't need pity. I need a paycheck. And I've looked, but when you've spent the last six years raising babies, it's real hard to convince someone to give you a job that pays worth a damn.

(referring to Brenda's
staring)

You getting every word of this down, honey, or am I talking too fast for you!?

Brenda jumps. Ed sees everyone watching him, listening.

ED

I'd love to help, Erin, but I'm sorry, I have a full staff right now, so –

He starts to escort her out, but she stays put.

ERIN

Bullshit. If you had a full staff, this office would return a client's damn phone calls.

She's backing him into a corner here. The secretaries exchange knowing glances.

ERIN

Now, I'm smart, I'm hard-working, and I'll do anything, and I'm not leaving here without a job.

C.U. on Erin as she steps in close to Ed and speaks in a low voice that combines fierceness with desperation:

ERIN

Don't make me beg. If it doesn't work out, fire me... But don't make me beg.

Ed looks at her for a long moment. Then:

ED
No benefits.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - FILE ROOM - DAY

A tight office lined with file cabinets and shelves. ANNA, the humorless file clerk, is showing Erin around.

ANNA
...what we do in here is keep track of all the case files. That way, at any time, we can find out a case's status – where it is in the office, stuff like that. We file 'em all here, alphabetically –

ERIN
Simple enough.

As Anna continues to show Erin around the office, they pass JANE, the bitter office manager, and Brenda, at the coffee area.

JANE
Just last week, he told my sister we weren't hiring.

BRENDA
What's your sister look like?

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ed is packing up his office. Erin sticks her head in.

ERIN
Mr. Masry?

He turns, sees her.

ED
Yeah?

ERIN
I was wondering – could you tell me who I'd talk to about maybe getting an advance on my paycheck? Just – for the weekend.

ED
Jane's the office manager. She handles payroll and petty cash. But she leaves early on Fridays.

ERIN
Oh. Okay. That's okay.

Ed looks at her a moment, sees that it's far from okay.

ED
Oh, for Christ's sake...

He takes out his wallet, looks in.

ED
All I have is hundreds.

ERIN
I don't wanna take your money, Mr. Masry.

ED
Where do think your paycheck comes from?

He slaps a hundred in her hand and leaves. When he's gone, she looks at the bill – her life raft.

EXT. BABY-SITTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin is at the door, taking Beth from the BABY-SITTER, a shabby, unkempt-looking woman in her 40's. Katie and Matt pull on their backpacks and troop out of the sitter's house.

EXT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin and her kids are putting away bags of groceries. Beth watches from a baby seat. The kids are trying to tell her a story. They fight over details. Erin loves listening.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - MATT AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A small room with Salvation Army furniture. A BUNCH OF DAISIES is propped in a Ragu jar on Katie's bedside table.

Matt and Katie are asleep in bed. Erin looks down at them, smiles, then kisses them good night.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Erin comes out of the bedroom and softly closes the door.

But just as the handle clicks into place, the house is filled with the DEAFENING ROAR of a MOTORCYCLE, REVVING and REVVING.

It sounds as if it's gonna drive through the wall.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin steps out onto her front stoop and looks over at what used to be Mrs. Morales's house. A few MOTORCYCLES are parked on the lawn; A FEW BIKERS are drinking beer on the stoop; and one asshole is on his bike, REVVING HIS ENGINE.

ERIN

Hey!

But of course he can't hear her. She walks over to him, stands right in his line of vision.

ERIN

HEY!

He sees her and kills the engine. Everything about GEORGE HALABY is tough – his denim, his leather, his bike, his long hair. Everything but his eyes, which twinkle like Santa's.

GEORGE

Well, hello to you, darlin'.

ERIN

What the hell do you think you're doing, making all that goddamn noise?

GEORGE

Just introducing myself to the neighbors.

ERIN

Well, I'm the neighbors. There, now we're introduced, so you can shut the fuck up.

The guys on the porch chuckle. Erin turns and starts back to her house. George hops off his bike and follows her.

GEORGE

Ooh, now, see, if I'da known there was a beautiful woman next door, I'da done this different. Let's start over. My name's George. What's yours?

ERIN

Just think of me as the person next door who likes it quiet.

GEORGE

Now, don't be like that. Tell you what. How about if I take you out on a date to apologize for my rudeness?

Erin shakes her head in disbelief and keeps walking.

GEORGE

Come on. Gimme your number, I'll call you up proper and ask you out and everything.

She stops at her porch, turns to him.

ERIN

You want my number?

GEORGE

I do.

ERIN

Which number do you want, George?

GEORGE

You got more than one?

ERIN

Shit, yeah. I got numbers coming out of my ears. Like, for instance, ten.

GEORGE

Ten?

ERIN

Sure. That's one of my numbers. It's how many months old my little girl is.

GEORGE

You got a little girl?

ERIN

Yeah. Sexy, huh? And here's another: five. That's how old my other daughter is. Seven is my son's age. Two is how many times I been married and divorced. You getting all this? 16 is the number of dollars in my bank account. 454-3943 is my phone number. And with all the numbers I gave you, I'm guessing zero is the number of times you're gonna call it.

She turns and heads inside. He calls out after her:

GEORGE

How the hell do you know your bank balance right off the top of your head like that? See, that impresses me.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Morning. Erin walks in, wearing her usual garb. She passes the coffee area, where Jane, Brenda, and Anna are milling.

Brenda sees her, gives Anna a nudge. They both check out her short hem. Anna nudges Jane, who looks as well. Erin glances over just in time to see all three of them staring at her judgementally. She stops in her tracks and stares back.

ERIN

Y'all got something you wanna discuss?

The women go back to stirring their coffees. Erin walks on.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is walking into his office with a coffee cup in his hand when he trips over the same box of files again.

ED

Damn it!

(calling out)

Brenda!

(no answer)

BRENDA!

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - FILE ROOM - DAY

Erin is alone, filing as she talks on the phone.

ERIN

How long's she been crying like that?... Well, she's got that tooth coming in –

Ed appears in the door, carrying the box of files.

ERIN

Give her a cold washcloth to suck on –
(sees Ed)

I gotta go – there's a clean one in that bag – I'll check back in a bit.

(hangs up)

Sorry. My kid –

ED
Where's Anna?

ERIN
Out to lunch with the girls.

ED
Oh. Huh.
(beat)
Well, look, I have to open a file.
Real estate thing. Pro-bono.

He plunks the box of papers & files on her desk. She stares at it, with no idea of how to go about that.

ERIN
Oh. Okay.

He sees her staring at the box.

ED
You do know how to do that, don't you?

ERIN
Yeah. I got it. No problem.

ED
Good.

Ed heads out, but pauses before leaving.

ED
You're a girl.

ERIN
Excuse me?

ED
How come you're not at lunch with the girls? You're a girl.

ERIN
I guess I'm not the right kind.

Erin goes back to work. Ed starts out then stops.

ED

Look, you may want to – I mean, now that you're working here – you may want to rethink your... wardrobe a little.

ERIN

Why is that?

ED

Well... I think maybe... some of the girls are a little uncomfortable because of what you wear.

ERIN

Is that so? Well, it just so happens, I think I look nice. And as long as I have one ass instead of two, like most of the "girls" you have working here, I'm gonna wear what I like if that's alright with you?

Ed hides a smile. He nods. As he exits, Erin returns to work and remarks, without looking up...

ERIN

You may want to re-think those ties you wear..

Suddenly self-conscious, Ed looks down to his chest...

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is at her desk, staring bewildered at the files from the box Ed gave her, which are now spread across her desktop.

She sees Anna packing up her things to leave.

ERIN

Anna? With this real-estate stuff – could you remind me, cause I'm a little confused about how exactly we do that. Why are there medical records

and blood samples in real estate files?

ANNA

(exasperated)

Erin, you've been here long enough. If you don't know how to do your job by now, I am not about to do it for you.

EXT. BABY-SITTER'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Erin arrives to pick up her children from the unkempt baby-sitter. She knocks. No answer. She knocks and calls out. No answer. She looks through window. It appears no one is there.

She panics.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Erin runs into her house calling her children's names. No answer. She is almost near tears with panic, rushing through each room. She grabs the phone to call the police when she hears –

The sound of her children laughing, outside.

ERIN

Matthew! Katie!

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

She runs outside, trying to locate the voices. She follows the sounds of her children laughing and talking, towards the back of her yard, which sits across from:

EXT. GEORGE'S BACKYARD - EARLY EVENING

Katie and Matthew are sitting at a picnic table, eating hamburgers and hot dogs, barbecued by George, who sits opposite them with little Beth on his lap. They all seem right at home. Erin is confused.

ERIN

What the hell happened?

MATTHEW/KATIE

Hi mom...

GEORGE

Hey. You hungry?

ERIN

What are they doing here? I went to pick them up –

GEORGE

She came by about an hour ago. Said something came up and she had to drop the kids off.

ERIN

Something came up! Why didn't she call me at work?

GEORGE

(Erin is fearsome)

I don't know. She... I... she... I don't know.

ERIN

THAT FUCKING BITCH!

MATTHEW

MOM!

ERIN

Sorry!! I can't believe she just dumps my kids off when nobody's home!!

GEORGE

I was home.

(Erin realizes this)

They're fine.

The kids are being fed a full meal with clean plates and napkins and glasses of milk. Beth acts like she's known George all her life.

Erin doesn't know what to say. George just smiles.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George is on the floor with Matt and Katie, playing war.

Katie points to the Harley emblem on his leather jacket. Both kids are dressed for bed. Erin watches them interact with George. She notices how good he is with them. How comfortable they are with him.

KATIE

What's that stand for?

GEORGE

That's for Harley Davidson. The best damn motorcycle ever made.

ERIN

And if I catch either of you anywhere near one, I'll knock you silly. Go on to bed, now – I'll come tuck you in, in a minute.

They get up...

GEORGE

'Night.

KATIE AND MATT

'Night.

...and head into bed. George starts cleaning up the cards.

GEORGE

Great kids.

Erin bends down to help him.

ERIN

Yeah, well... I'm sure I'll fuck them up eventually.

GEORGE

Why?

ERIN

I'm never here. I'm obviously not a good judge of character or I would have never left them with that idiot who cost a fortune and smelled like chicken fat. After I find her and kill her, I don't know what I'm going to do.

GEORGE

If you need help with them, I could do that.

ERIN

I'm not gonna leave my kids with you.

GEORGE

Why not?

ERIN

'Cause I don't even know you.

GEORGE

What do you want to know? Ask me.

ERIN

Look, thanks for today but –

GEORGE

You're welcome.

Erin doesn't know what to say.

GEORGE

What's the matter, you got so many friends in this world, you can't use one more? I'm serious. If you need someone to keep an eye on them – after school or something – I don't have a job now, so I'm around in the afternoons.

ERIN

Oh, that's a great recommendation.

You're unemployed?

GEORGE

By choice. I work when I need to.

ERIN

Yeah? And what do you do the rest of the time, live off your trust fund?

GEORGE

I do construction, which pays real good. And I make it last by living cheap.

ERIN

(with a little laugh)

I hope that's not supposed to impress me.

GEORGE

Are you this hard on everyone who tries to help you?

ERIN

It's been a while. I'm out of practice.

GEORGE

Then lemme remind you, the polite thing is to say, thank you, it's a real nice offer, I don't mind taking you up on it.

ERIN

Why in the hell would you want to watch my kids?

GEORGE

Cause I like kids. I like hanging out with them.

ERIN

Right.

She starts cleaning up the cards.

GEORGE

I do. I like how they keep it all simple, you know? They don't get all complicated, like grown-ups do. A bicycle and an ice cream cone – boom, done, they're happy.

Erin thinks about the offer.

ERIN

You're around every afternoon?

GEORGE

Yup. Usually working on my bike.

She's tempted.

GEORGE

No big deal. If it doesn't work out, you can send 'em back to the chicken lady.

Tempting. Erin looks him over, then, as she exits:

ERIN

This isn't gonna get you laid, you know.

George laughs.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The wee hours. Erin's in a T-shirt, sitting on her mattress on the floor. The paperwork from the box is now spread all over the floor around her. She's reading a letter.

CLOSE ON THE LETTER

It's from PG&E, to Donna Peter Irving. We see the phrases, "purchase your house...," "fair market value..."

CLOSE ON ANOTHER DOCUMENT

It's a list of comparable house sales in the area. Owner,

cost; owner, cost. Every house is in the \$65,000 range.

From another room, she hears the sound of BETH CRYING. Still reading the file, Erin gets up and goes into:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Still reading, Erin gets Beth out of her crib. Beth quiets.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin lies down on the mattress and rests Beth on her chest. She sets down the file she was reading and picks up another.

CLOSE ON THE FILE

It contains a letter from a Dr. Howard Reeves. The first paragraph contains the phrase "...medical examination of Donna and Peter Irving..."

Toward the end of the letter there are two columns. One is headed: "IN RANGE". The other: "OUT OF RANGE". Under that head appear the following: "lymphocytes, T-lymphocytes, natural killer cells, T Helpers, T8 suppressor cells"...

Erin stares at it, confused.

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed sits at his desk, working. There's a knock.

ED

Yeah.

Erin enters, holding a file.

ERIN

Hi. Sorry. Would you mind if I investigated this a little further?

ED

Investigated what?

ERIN

This real estate thing with the

Irvings. The pro bono case...

ED
(overlap)
Oh yeah, yeah, yeah..

ERIN
(overlap)
See, yeah... I just want to make sure I'm understanding what I'm reading. So you do mind?

ED
No, go ahead.

ERIN
Great. Thanks.

Erin exits. Ed returns to his work.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAY - DAY

The beat-up old Hyundai heads east out of L.A.

EXT. HINKLEY, CA - DAY

This is a dry, desolate part of California. No downtown, no community. Just tract after tract of arid farmland, with small, bland, unprotected ranch home cropping up out of landscape like occasional tombstones.

A beat-up old sign on the road reads: "HINKLEY, CA. POP:" but the corner where the number would be has broken off.

As a gust of wind lifts dust from the fields, Erin turns onto Community Boulevard, the main road that cuts through Hinkley.

In doing so, she passes a nearby UTILITY PLANT. Its criss-crossing PIPES and large COOLING TOWERS stand out clearly against the flat, dry fields. Erin doesn't notice.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin cruises through the neighborhood, looking at a piece of

paper with the Irvings' address on it. This area has seen better days – many of the houses have been razed, leaving heaps of lumber and wire behind.

EXT. DONNA IRVING'S HOUSE - DAY

A generic ranch home standing all alone in the middle of nothing. There's a pool out back and a chain link fence hugging the property. No landscaping. Dull, but clean. A few BOTTLES OF SPRING WATER wait by the door.

The Hyundai pulls into the driveway and stops. Erin gets out. As she heads up to the door, her spike heels sink into the dirt. She rings the bell. It has a melody chime.

DONNA IRVING opens the door. She's 35, petite, with a scrappy, high-strung manner. She's wearing tight jeans, and her dark curls are piled on top of her head.

ERIN

Hi. Donna Irving?

DONNA

Yes?

ERIN

I'm Erin Brockovich, from Masry & Vititoe?

DONNA

(a little surprised)

You're a lawyer?

ERIN

Hell, no. I hate lawyers. I just work for them. You got a minute?

INT. THE IRVINGS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is furnished with little money, but lots of care.

Erin's on a plaid couch, in a sea of needle point pillows.

Out back, two GIRLS, ages 9 and 11, are playing in a pool.

ERIN

This is a real nice place you got here.

DONNA (O.S.)

Well it oughta be, with all the work I put into it.

She comes out from the kitchen with a tray of iced tea.

DONNA

I added air conditioning, put in the pool, made all those pillows by hand...

ERIN

Yeah? I should learn to do stuff like that. They make the place feel real homey.

Donna corrects the positioning on a couple of pillows.

DONNA

Thank you. I think so too. That's why I'm being such a stickler on this house price thing. I don't mean to be a pain in PG&E's backside, especially after all they've done for Hinkley, but I look around here and I think, if they want this place, they're gonna have to pay for it. And I don't just mean pay for the house; I'd like them to pay me for the trouble of starting over.

ERIN

So you didn't have the house up for sale – they just came to you and wanted buy it?

DONNA

Yeah. I don't want move. Uproot the kids. And besides the moving, there's decorating a new place, and if the windows aren't the same size, you

know – you're making all new curtains. Honest to God, I don't know if I have the energy. You know, I've been sick. Me and Pete both have.

ERIN

Yeah, I'm real glad you brought that up. I was going through your file here, and I ran into these medical records. They kinda surprised me –

This would be the perfect opportunity for many to get self-pitying. But not Donna. Life's handed her a shitload of lemons, and darned if she hasn't made a shitload of lemonade.

DONNA

I know. They're more than a bit unusual. See, two years ago, Pete got Hodgkin's disease. That's a kind of cancer –

ERIN

Yeah, I'm real sorry to hear that.

DONNA

Thank you. It's in remission now, thank the Lord, but you never know. And then while that's going on, I end up having to have a hysterectomy. Plus a whole mess of lumps removed from my breasts. All benign so far, but still, no matter how positive you stay, an operation can still take it out of you.

(Erin nods)

So the whole idea of selling the house – if they aren't gonna pay us properly, I just don't see the point.

ERIN

Yeah, I can see that.

(beat)

I guess the only thing that confused me is – not that your medical

problems aren't important, but –
how come the files about them are in
with all the real estate stuff?

Donna tops off their iced teas.

DONNA

There's so much correspondence, I
just keep it all in one place.

ERIN

Right, but – I'm sorry, I don't see
why you were corresponding with PG&E
about it in the first place.

DONNA

Well, they paid for the doctor's
visit.

ERIN

They did?

DONNA

You bet. Paid for a check-up for the
whole family. And not like with
insurance where you pay, then wait a
year to be reimbursed, either. They
just took care of it. Just like that.
We never even saw a bill.

ERIN

Wow. Why would they do that?

DONNA

'Cause of the chromium.

ERIN

The what?

DONNA

The chromium. Well, that's what kicked
this whole thing off.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - DAY

As Erin leaves Hinkley, she stops the car and takes a look at the power plant she passed so obliviously on her way into town.

Maybe it's the angle, or maybe it's what Donna's been telling her, but somehow the plant seems more threatening now. Like it's bearing down on the town.

EXT. UCLA MAIN LIBRARY - DAY

Large. Looming. Very establishment. Through the windows, we see Erin at the desk, talking to a LIBRARIAN. She has the file in her hands.

The librarian gives her directions to somewhere else.

INT. UCLA SCIENCE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

A long, academic hallway lit by fluorescents. Erin gets off an elevator and heads down the hall. She finds a door with a nameplate that reads "Brian Frankel, Toxicology" and KNOCKS.

The door opens and DR. FRANKEL appears, looking as though he's getting ready to leave. Nothing like Erin has ever shown up at his door. He reels at the sight of her.

ERIN
Doctor Frankel?

FRANKEL
Yes?

ERIN
Hi, I'm Erin Brockovich. I was just over in the library there, asking a mess of questions about – I guess they call it toxicology? – and the fella there told me to find you, 'cause you know all about it.

FRANKEL
(suspicious)
Is this a joke? Did Baxter put you up to this?

ERIN
Who's Baxter?

FRANKEL
He did, didn't he? Baxter!

BAXTER, another scientist, leans out of a door down the hall.

BAXTER
Yeah?

Baxter and Erin look at each other. No recognition, of course. Frankel is immediately embarrassed.

FRANKEL
Oh. Oh.

ERIN
No one put me up to anything. I was just hoping I could ask you a couple questions.

FRANKEL
(mortified)
Of course! Oh, Gosh, of course –

INT. BUILDING CORRIDOR - DAY

Erin follows Frankel down the hall.

FRANKEL
What kind of chromium is it?

ERIN
There's more than one kind?

FRANKEL
Yes. There's straight-up chromium – does all kinds of good things for the body. There's chrom 3, which is fairly benign, and then there's chrom 6, hexavalent chromium, which, depending on the amounts, can be very harmful.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS - DAY

Erin and Dr. Frankel continue walking.

ERIN

Harmful, like – how? What would you get?

FRANKEL

With repeated exposure to toxic levels – God, anything, really – from chronic headaches and nosebleeds to respiratory disease, liver failure, heart failure, reproductive failure, bone or organ deterioration – plus, of course, any type of cancer.

He rattles it off coolly. Just facts. Erin's stunned.

ERIN

So that stuff – it kills people.

FRANKEL

Oh, yeah. Definitely. Highly toxic, highly carcinogenic. Bad, bad stuff.

ERIN

What's it used for?

FRANKEL

A rust inhibitor. See, the utility plants run these piston engines to compress the gas, the engines get hot, you gotta run water through them – chromium's in the water to prevent corrosion...

ERIN

Well, how do I find out what kind of chromium they use in Hinkley?

FRANKEL

Have you been to their water board?

ERIN

Hunh-uh. What's that?

FRANKEL

Every county has one. They keep records of anything water-related within their jurisdiction. You should be able to find something there.

ERIN

County water board. All righty, thanks.

FRANKEL

Good luck.

(beat)

Oh – I wouldn't advertise what you're looking for if I were you...
incriminating records have a way of disappearing when people smell trouble.

EXT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL WATER BOARD - DAY

A small building on a small street baking under the desert sun. Anybody with any sense is inside, out of the heat.

Erin's Hyundai pulls up and stops in a cloud of dust. Erin hops out, checks her reflection in the side-view mirror, then heads into the building.

INT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL WATER BOARD - DAY

Drab, government-issue. ROSS, the bored desk clerk is thumbing his way through ROAD & TRACK. Just as he stops to stare at a motor oil ad in which a buxom blonde is straddling the hood of a car, the huge door opens and Erin enters.

ERIN

Whew! Goddamn, that's a heavy door.

Ross looks up. It's like the girl from the ad walked right off the page. He jumps up, to help her with the door.

ROSS

Oh, hey – lemme give you a hand

there.

ERIN

Thank you very much. Aren't you a gentleman? Mr...

ROSS

Ross.

ERIN

Ross. Real pleased to meet you. I'm Erin.

She smiles. He can't believe his luck.

ROSS

Erin. Cool. What can I do for you, Erin?

ERIN

Well, believe it or not, I am on the prowl for some water records.

ROSS

(with a laugh)

You come to the right place.

ERIN

(laughing along)

I guess I did.

ROSS

You just tell me what you want to look at and I'll be glad to dig 'em out for you.

ERIN

I wish I knew. It's for my boss. He's fighting his water bill, and he wants me to find all manner of bills from all kinds of places. The easiest thing would probably be if I just squeezed back there with you and poked around myself. Would that be okay?

ROSS

Heck, yeah. Come on back. Just gonna need you to sign in here –

He hands her a pen. He reads over her shoulder as she signs her name – Erin Pattee Brockovich.

ROSS

Pattee? That your middle name?

ERIN

Nope. Maiden.

ROSS

(disappointed)
You're married.

ERIN

Not anymore.

She smiles and winks at him, then goes around the counter with him and looks at the stacks and stacks of files.

ERIN

Well. Here goes nothing.

She heads down an aisle, reading the spines of the files.

They're all town names – Barstow, Victorville, Oro Grande, Helendale – in no particular order. Finally, Erin spots one that says Hinkley. She pulls it down.

IN THE FILE

are pages and pages of Xeroxed memoranda, letters, charts, graphs, handwritten notes. All shoved in willy-nilly.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

George is watching a football game on TV. He's just put TV dinners on the floor in front of the Matt and Katie.

MATT

Our mom gives us sandwiches on

Fridays.

GEORGE
That's a sandwich.

KATIE
No, it's not!

GEORGE
Sure it is. Here, I'll show you.

He picks up Matt's chicken, tears it in two...

GEORGE
Most people think a sandwich's gotta
have bread on the outside. Not true.
Chicken is a perfectly good outside
for a sandwich.

...then places the broccoli neatly between the halves.

GEORGE
See?

Katie and Matthew look at it, then up at George, and smile.

They eat quietly – not watching the TV. George gets the feeling they're not into the game. He grabs the remote and turns on a Nickelodeon-type show. They perk up, recognizing it. He likes pleasing them. He looks over to Beth –

George likes how this feels.

EXT. WATER BOARD - NIGHT

It's gotten dark. Erin's Hyundai's still there.

INT. WATER BOARD - NIGHT

Erin is on the floor, her legs stretched out in front of her. She has a bunch of files open and spread across the floor. The one in her hand has caught her attention.

INSERT ON THE PAPER

It's a memo titled: "CLEAN-UP AND ABATEMENT ORDER" from the water board to PG&E. Erin is concentrating hard on it, reading laboriously to herself.

ERIN (O.S.)

"...On December 7, 1987, the discharger notified the regional board and the San Bernardino County Environmental Health Services of the discovery of 0.58 ppm of hex-a-... hex-a-valent chromium in an on-site ground water monitoring well..."

(beat)

...hexavalent...

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - RECEPTION - DAY

CLOSE ON A XEROX OF THE ABATEMENT ORDER. WIDEN to see it is on top of a stack of papers that Erin is carrying as she enters the office. She has an efficient air about her – a sense of purpose.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - FILE ROOM - DAY

Erin swoops in, ready to work, only to find her desk cleared off. She turns to Anna, who's already hard at work.

ERIN

Where's my stuff?

Anna looks up.

ANNA

Where've you been?

ERIN

What the fuck did you do with my stuff?

ANNA

Don't use language with me –

But Erin's out the door before Anna can finish her sentence.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

JANE is at her desk. Erin barrels in.

ERIN

Someone stole my stuff.

JANE

Nice to see you, Erin. We've missed you.

ERIN

I had photos of my kids, plus a mug –

Jane reaches under her desk for a box, looks through it.

JANE

– toothbrush, toothpaste, and a pair of hose. Here.

ERIN

What's going on?

JANE

There may be jobs where you can disappear for days at a time, but this isn't one of them. Here, if you don't do the work, you don't get to stay.

She hands her the box. Erin doesn't take it.

ERIN

I've been working. Shit, that's all I've been doing. Ask Mr. Masry. He knows.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed's at his desk, dialing the phone when Erin barrels in.

ERIN

You said to fire me?

He sets down the receiver.

ED

Erin, you've been gone for a week.

ERIN

I left a message. I've been dealing with that real estate thing. I was gonna write up a whole damn report and –

ED

That's not how we work here. You don't just leave a message and take off.

Jane follows her in, still carrying the box of stuff.

ERIN

What am I supposed to do, check in every two seconds?

JANE

Yes. It's called accountability.

ERIN

I am not talking to you, bitch.

JANE

Excuse me?

ED

Okay, enough –
(beat)

Now, look Erin – this incident aside, I don't think this is the right place for you. So what I'm gonna do is make a few calls on your behalf. Find you something else, okay?

ERIN

Don't bother.

She turns to Jane, takes her box, and heads out.

ED

Come on, I'm trying to help here.

ERIN

Bullshit. You're trying to feel less guilty about firing someone with three kids to feed. Fuck if I'll help you do that.

And she leaves.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - DAY

As Erin heads for the door, pleased glances fly from secretary to secretary. Erin reaches the door, but can't open it with the box in her arms. She turns to the room.

ERIN

I don't suppose any one of you cunts could open the door for me.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Erin enters, puts down the box and stares at the mail.

Bills, bills, and more bills. As she throws them on the table, she sees George coming out of the kitchen.

ERIN

What are you doing here?

GEORGE

Fixing a leak under your sink.

She heads into the kitchen, weary and irritated.

ERIN

I didn't ask you to do that. Damn it, George, I don't ask you to do things like that.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Erin enters, sees all the cleaning stuff from under the sink is spread around the kitchen floor. A tool box lies open.

ERIN

Great.

GEORGE
I'm gonna clean it up.

Erin gets down on her knees and starts putting things away.

GEORGE
Relax, Erin, I'll do it – I'm not –

Before he can finish, a huge WATER BUG runs onto Erin's hand.

ERIN
Ugh – Jesus –

She jumps and brushes it off.

GEORGE
Yeah – you had a whole family of
those things hanging out back there.

She takes off her shoe and smacks at the bug, missing it.

ERIN
Damn it –

The bug skitters away from her, along the floorboard. Erin chases it, smacking at it repeatedly, missing it every time.

GEORGE
Don't worry about it, I'll get it
later.

But Erin keeps after it, corralling all her frustrations into killing that one bug.

ERIN
Come here, you little motherfucker –

The bug crawls up onto the table, zipping behind the salt, the paper, the napkin holder. Erin keeps after it, BANGING the table harder and harder with each SMACK of her shoe.

GEORGE
Hey, whoa – relax –

The salt and pepper skid off the table. The napkins fly from their holder. Just as Erin's about to nail the bug, it slips into a crack in the wall and disappears. Erin hurls her shoe at the crack. It SMASHES into the wall.

ERIN
GOD DAMN IT!

As Erin stands there staring at the wall, her breath starts to come heavily – those deep breaths that precede tears. She slowly slides down into a chair, defeat overcoming her.

ERIN
(almost a whisper)
...God damn it.

She looks around at her for-shit kitchen and starts to cry.

ERIN
What kind of person lives like this?
Huh? What kind of person lets her
kids run around in a house crawling
with bugs the size of housecats?

GEORGE
It's a simple thing. Everybody gets
them. All we gotta do is call an
exterminator.

ERIN
I can't call an exterminator. I can't
afford one. God, I can't even afford
my phone.
(beat)
I got fired.

GEORGE
What? But you been working so hard –

ERIN
Doesn't matter. Doesn't make one
fucking bit of difference.

She exits. After a beat, George follows.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Erin sits on the bed, drying her eyes. George enters. Erin looks up at herself in the mirror above her bureau.

ERIN

I don't know what happened to me...

George listens by the door.

ERIN

I mean I was Miss Wichita, for Christ sakes. Did I tell you that? Did ya know you were living next door to a real live beauty queen.

(wipes her nose)

I still got the tiara. I thought it meant I was gonna do something important with my life, that I was gonna be someone.

GEORGE

You are someone.

ERIN

No I'm not. Look at me.

GEORGE

You're someone to me.

He takes a step toward her and kneels in front of her, very close. He takes her shoe from her hand and puts it back on her foot. Then he takes her hands in his and kisses them.

ERIN

Are you going to be something else I have to survive? Cause I'll tell you the truth, I'm not up to it.

But he kisses her anyway. And for the first time in so long, she feels like something other than a failure. He pulls her into him, and she lets herself be pulled.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Erin and George are in bed, naked, curled around each other.

As Erin recites her beauty queen speech, they are both laughing at the naive, impossible goals of her youth.

ERIN

"...and I will devote my entire reign as Miss Wichita to bringing an end to world hunger... and to the creation of a peaceful earth for every man, woman and child..."

GEORGE

How long were you going to be Miss Wichita?

ERIN

One year!

(George laughs)

Of course by the time I got through opening new supermarkets. I had just a few weeks left for hunger and world peace, so... Ha, ha, ha... damn... I don't know what the hell I was thinking.

GEORGE

I wanted to run my own antique shop.

Erin looks at him. Beat. She bursts into laughter.

GEORGE

(laughing)

Oh that's nice... that's very nice!

He starts tickling her. She screams then covers her mouth so as not to wake the kids... They roll over each other.

ERIN

I'm sorry... I'm sorry...

GEORGE

My parents rented antiques on the side. I'm not just some grease monkey,

you know.

ERIN

Oh, I know. You're one of those Zen gods of motorcycle maintenance, aren't you?

GEORGE

(smiles)

Maybe. Maybe there's a reason I found that place next door. A reason I revved my bike that night and you came out tearing my head off.

ERIN

Yeah, we just did the reason.

She says this as she is about to get up but George holds her back, suddenly dead serious...

GEORGE

Don't do that to yourself. If that's all I wanted, I don't need to go next door to a woman with three kids...

Erin suddenly grows uncomfortable at the implied intimacy.

GEORGE

(laughs)

All I'm saying is, I can't believe whatever kind of God there is, put you here – looking the way you look, with the brains and balls you got – just to trip you up and watch you fall. Can't be.

He kisses one of her earlobes. Erin likes the sound of this but it also makes her apprehensive. She leans in to kiss him, but before she does:

ERIN

Don't be too nice to me, okay? It makes me nervous.

George looks almost hurt, but empathetic. Erin kisses him long and hard as they begin to make love again.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is at his desk. The PHONE RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

ED
Brenda!
(no answer)
BRENDA!

Nothing. Ed growls in frustration, then gets the phone.

ED
Yeah, Ed Masry here... She doesn't work here anymore. Who's this?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON THE TABLE, where Beth is bobbling in her baby chair. On one side of her is a heap of bills with "PAST DUE" and "PLEASE REMIT" stamped on them. On the other, the well-thumbed CLASSIFIED SECTION, with circles and X's all over it.

The DOORBELL rings. Erin swoops in and picks up Beth.

ERIN
Come on, baby. Maybe that's Ed McMahan.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Erin carries Beth over to the front door, spies through the peephole, and sees Ed standing there. She opens the door.

ERIN
Wrong Ed.
(Ed looks confused)
What are you doing here?

ED
I got an interesting call this afternoon. It was from a Doctor

Frankel from UCLA.

ERIN

Oh, yeah?

ED

He wanted you to know the legal limit for hexavalent chromium, is .05 parts per million. And that at the rate you mentioned, .58, it could be responsible for the cancers in that family you asked about. The Irvings.

ERIN

Well, that was nice of him. Isn't it funny how some people go out of their way to help people and others just fire 'em.

ED

Look, I'm sorry. You were gone. I just assumed you were off having fun.

ERIN

Now, why in the hell would you assume that?

ED

I don't know. Maybe 'cause you look like someone who has a lot of fun.

ERIN

OH! So by that standard I should assume you never get laid.

Ed takes a beat, copping to the charge. He admits:

ED

I'm married.

(Erin suppresses a smile)

So what's the story on this thing?
This cancer stuff?

ERIN

You wanna know, you gotta hire me back. I got a lot of bills to pay.

He glares at her. Realizes he has no choice.

ED

Fine.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Erin has let Ed in. They're sitting.

ERIN

...so Donna had just put in these new cabinets – real nice, stained the wood and all – when she gets this call from somebody at PG&E saying that a freeway's gonna be built and they want to buy her house so they can make an off ramp for the plant... Meanwhile, the husband's sick with Hodgkins and she's in and out of the hospital with tumors – believing one thing has anything to do with the other.

ED

Because PG&E told her about the chromium.

ERIN

Get this – they held a seminar. They invited about two hundred residents from the area. They had it at the plant in this warehouse. They set up legal booths to tell them what their legal rights were. They had medical booths to tell them what their medical rights were....

Ed is listening with more and more interest.

ERIN

...telling them all about Chromium 3

and how it was good for you, when
all the time they were using Chromium
6.

ED
(impressed)
You got all this from her?

ERIN
(beat. shrugs)
She made coffee. Cupcakes. She's
real nice.

Beat.

ED
That document you found at the Water
Board, the one that says it was the
bad chromium – you didn't happen to
make a copy did you?

ERIN
'Course I did.

ED
Lemme see it, will you?

Before getting it for him, she looks at him.

ERIN
I want a raise. And benefits.
Including dental.

ED
Look, Erin, this is not the way I do
business.

ERIN
What way is that?

ED
Extortion.

Erin doesn't budge.

ED

Okay. A five percent raise, and –

ERIN

Ten.

(off his look)

There's a lot other places I could work. I could even take everything I know to another law firm.

ED

A ten percent raise and benefits.
But that's it. I'm drawing the line.

She goes to her box of stuff from the office and digs out the document for him. He scans it.

ED

This is the only thing you found?

ERIN

So far. But that place is a pig sty. I wouldn't be surprised if there's more.

ED

I know how those places are run. They're a mess. What makes you think you can just walk in there and find what we need?

ERIN

They're called boobs, Ed.

Shaking his head, Ed rises to leave as he says;

ED

I can't believe you just said that...

EXT. 10 FREEWAY - DAY

Erin's Hyundai zips along the freeway.

Erin's driving. Matthew's in the front seat. Katie and Beth (in a car seat) are in the back;

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Improvisational... I.e. Matthew keeps trying to tell a joke he heard. Katie keeps trying to guess, like it's a riddle, frustrating Matthew and cracking up Erin...

EXT. PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION - DAY

The Hyundai is parked at the entrance to the station, by a row of dead trees. Erin is standing beside a sign that says "Private Property. No Trespassing," taking pictures of the massive structure in the distance. Matthew, Katie, and Beth are drawing in the dirt with sticks.

ERIN

Stay out of the road. I'll be right back.

She wanders up the drive, onto PG&E property, moving around the plant, taking pictures of it from every possible angle.

As she wanders over a big, flat, dry field to the side of the plant, she glances over her shoulder to check on her kids and notices the trail she made in the dirt has a greenish hue.

She looks at the dirt right her feet. Kicks the ground.

Below the surface, the dirt turns from brown to green. Erin notes this, then looks back at her kids playing in the dirt.

Worry comes over her face. She heads back to them.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - DAY

The kids are waiting at the car. Erin comes out of the store with a bottle of water and uses it to rinse off their hands.

EXT. WATER BOARD - DAY

The sound of a BABY CRYING. The Hyundai's parked in front.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

I'm hungry.

INT. WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin is at the Xerox machine, copying a file while she tries to calm Beth. There's a stack of files on the nearby table.

Matthew and Katie are flopping around on the floor.

ERIN

We'll go eat in a minute. Settle down.

Ross is on the phone with someone – we don't know who – but the look on his face is one of anxiety. His eyes keep shifting between the call and Erin. He nods as if he understands and hangs up... He crosses to her.

ROSS

(real friendly)
So, how we doin'?

ERIN

We're doing great?

ROSS

(off the cuff)
Good... Well, you've got quite a lot done already... so uhh... I'm sorry but uh... we... we have to have those records back now. OK?

Erin stops... looks at him... and quickly knows how to respond;

ERIN

No.

ROSS

What?

ERIN

These papers are a matter of public record. I'm not leaving til they're copied.

Erin returns to copying. Ross is stymied.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

Ed comes in in the morning, and without pausing, hands Brenda a copy of the STACK OF DOCUMENTS, with a Post-It on the top.

ED

Fax these to this number, okay?

BRENDA

All of 'em?

ED

All of them.

He continues into his office and closes the door.

CLOSE ON THE FAX MACHINE LED

Brenda types in the number. The recipient's ID comes up on the LED: PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

INT. IRVING HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Donna has made lunch for Erin. The remnants are on the coffee table. A copy of those DOCUMENTS are in Donna's hands. She's on her couch with Erin, reading them. Outside, Donna's two daughters are playing in the pool. She reads the last page and looks up at Erin, bewildered.

DONNA

An on-site monitoring well? That means –

ERIN

It was right up on the PG&E property over there.

DONNA

And you say this stuff, this hexavalent chromium – it's poisonous?

ERIN

Yeah.

DONNA

Well – then it's gotta be different than what's in our water, 'cause ours is okay. The guys from PG&E told me. They sat right in the kitchen and said it was fine.

ERIN

I know. But the toxicologist I been talking to? He gave me a list of problems that can come from hexavalent chromium exposure. And everything you all have is on that list.

Donna resists this idea hard.

DONNA

No. Hunh-uh, see, that's not what the doctor said. He said one's got absolutely nothing to do with the other.

ERIN

Right, but – didn't you say the doctor was paid by PG&E?

Donna sits quietly, trying to make sense of this. The only sound is the LAUGHING and SPLASHING from the pool out back.

Then, gradually, Donna realizes what it is she's hearing – her kids playing in toxic water. She jumps up...

DONNA

ASHLEY! SHANNA!

...and runs out to the pool. Erin follows her.

EXT. DONNA'S HOUSE - DAY

From the door, Erin watches Donna run to the edge of the pool in a frantic response to this news.

DONNA

OUT OF THE POOL! BOTH OF YOU, OUT OF

THE POOL, RIGHT NOW!

SHANNA

How come?

DONNA

'CAUSE I SAID SO, THAT'S WHY, NOW
GET OUT! OUT! NOW!!!

Erin watches compassionately as Donna flails to get her kids out of the contaminated water.

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed is attempting to tie his tie in a mirror, as Erin looks on. He's very excited as he fumbles the knot...

ED

I'm telling you, the minute Brenda sent the fax – I'm talking the second she pressed that send button – PG&E claims department is on the phone to me, scheduling a meeting.

ERIN

So you think we... let me do this, you're driving me nuts...

She makes him face her as she ties his tie....

ED

It's the material.

ERIN

(looks at label)

Armani?

(Ed shrugs)

You think we scared'em, don't you?

ED

Well, they're taking the time to send someone. It sure as hell sounds like they're sitting up and taking notice. Now do me a favor, and let me handle this. Lawyers have a way

of talking to each other.

ERIN
(humoring him)
Oh, I know.

Brenda pops her head in, ignores Erin – though clearly takes notice of her tying Ed's tie.

BRENDA
David Baum from PG&E is at reception.

Erin feels the chill Brenda's sending her way. Erin decides to tease her by speaking to Ed in a sultry voice:

ERIN
Oh Mr. Masry, we better learn how to dress faster. People can come in so suddenly...
(giggles)

Brenda leaves without acknowledging Erin. Ed grimaces;

ED
Is that... necessary? Brenda's gonna open her mouth all over the offi –

ERIN
Oh come on. I'm teasing. Who gives a shit...

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - BRENDA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

Jane is delivering paychecks, spots Brenda exiting Ed's office and whispers:

JANE
What's she doing here?

BRENDA
He hired her back. With a raise.

JANE
What?? Why?

BRENDA

He's a man... She's a woman.

JANE

What are we – office supplies?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ed and Erin come out and see DAVID BAUM waiting at reception.

Forget law school, this kid looks like he's just out of twelfth grade. Not a hair on his chin. His suit and shoes look brand new.

Ed stops suddenly, before being seen. Erin stops too.

ERIN

What?

Ed's expression upon seeing the "young" representative tells us he's none too happy.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ed and Erin are seated across the table from Baum. To say this kid lacks authority is a gross understatement. He doesn't talk; he squeaks.

BAUM

...in the interest of putting this whole thing to rest, PG&E is willing to offer the Irvings 250,000 dollars for their home.

Ed laughs a little in disbelief.

ED

250,000?

BAUM

In terms of land value out in Hinkley, Mr. Masry, we feel it's more than fair price.

ED

What about in terms of medical expenses? 250,000 doesn't come close to what this family's gonna have to spend on doctors.

BAUM

I understand they've had a bad run of luck, health-wise, and they have my sympathies. But that's not PG&E's fault.

ED

You're kidding, right?

Baum doesn't answer.

ED

Look at these readings for Christ's sake. Pg&E's own technicians documented toxic levels of hexavalent chromium in those test wells on numerous occasions.

Ed shoves them across the table. Baum doesn't look at them.

ED

Everything the Irvings have had is proven reaction to exposure to hexavalent chromium. They've had...

He stalls a moment. Erin jumps in.

ERIN

– breast cysts, uterine cancer, Hodgkin's disease, immune deficiencies, asthma, chronic nosebleeds.

Despite their persuasiveness, Baum parrots what is obviously the party line:

BAUM

A million things could have caused those problems. Poor diet, bad genes,

irresponsible lifestyle. Our offer is final and more than fair.

ED

Wait a minute – I thought we were negotiating here.

BAUM

250,000 is all I'm authorized to offer.

Ed looks across at this pissant little kid. Then stands.

ED

I will present your offer to my clients. I doubt they'll accept it.

As Ed starts out, Baum tries to take a stand;

BAUM

Mr. Masry, before you go off on some crusade, you might want to remember who it is you're dealing with here. PG&E is a twenty-eight-billion-dollar corporation.

ED

(smiles, acting excited/greedy)

Twenty-eight billion dollars! I didn't know it was THAT much! WOW!

Baum suddenly realizes he's made a mistake admitting the company's wealth. Ed leaves the conference room. Erin follows him out.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Erin follows Ed as he stomps back to his office.

ERIN

At least they made an offer.

ED

(undoing his tie)

That wasn't an offer. A million would've been an offer. When they send the god damn mail clerk down to jerk me off, waste my time, it's a fuck you.

Ed throws the tie off.

ERIN

I don't get why they'd do that.

ED

Because they can. You heard that kid – they have twenty-eight billion dollars at their disposal. They can afford to waste all the time in the world!

ERIN

And you can't?

ED

What, you think I'm made of money?!

ERIN

What are you yelling at me for?

ED

Because I'm fucking pissed off!

ERIN

(yells back)

Good!

ED

FUCK YOU!

Erin starts to smile. Ed cracks a smile then starts to laugh.

ED

I really hate you sometimes, ya know that.

ERIN

You love me.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

At the end of her day, Rosalind enters to fix herself up before going home. She walks in on:

Erin, splashing cold water on her face... and dabbing her eyes with cool, wet paper towels... They do not speak as Rosalind steps beside her to face the mirrors above the sink. After a beat or two, Erin exits.

Alone, Rosalind has her lipstick and is about to apply when she looks at herself in the mirror... She tries lowering her neckline... then, loosening up her hair... as if secretly showing herself what an Erin-makeover would do for her.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - OUTSIDE ED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

End of the day. Most everyone has left. Erin is at her new work space near Ed's office. She's poring over a fat file of documents. Rosalind wanders by with her coat on.

ROSALIND

You've been reading for hours.

ERIN

I'm a slow reader.

Whatever she thinks of her, Rosalind can't help but see Erin's hard at work. She turns on Erin's desk lamp and heads out – it's the first helpful hand Erin has received from one of the women.

Erin turns back to her work when her attention is then drawn to the big glass office doors; on the other side, Rosalind is talking to a lost-looking COUPLE IN THEIR MID-30's. These are MANDY and TOM BROWN. He's in a security guard uniform, with an envelope under his arm. Rosalind points to Erin.

The Browns enter the office and approach her.

MANDY

Excuse me, are you Erin Brockovich?

ERIN

Yeah. Who are you?

TOM

I'm Tom Brown. This is my wife Mandy.
We used to live across the street
from the Irvings. Pg&E bought our
house last year.

INT. ERIN'S DESK - LATER

CLOSE ON PHOTOS OF CHICKENS, each with a twisted, limp neck.

TOM

It's called wry neck. It's when
they're born without any muscles in
the neck.

WIDEN to see Erin looking at them with Tom and Mandy.

ERIN

Wow. How many were born like this?

TOM

Twelve, maybe thirteen.

MANDY

When Donna told us about you, and
what you told her about the chromium,
we figured that might have something
to do with this, too.

ERIN

It sure could, yeah. Thanks a lot.

She tucks them into a file, as if that's it.

MANDY

There's something else, too.

ERIN

What?

TOM

Well. Mandy here's had nine
miscarriages.

ERIN

Are you kidding? My God –

MANDY

I know. It's an awful lot.

ERIN

I'm surprised Donna didn't say anything.

TOM

She doesn't know. No one does. It's not something you want to talk about, you know?

MANDY

I figured it musta been something I did, like when I smoked marijuana, maybe. Or took birth control pills. But then Donna told me you thought this chromium might be to blame for her problems, so I figured...

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin enters, exhausted. She collapses on a chair.

George is on his hands and knees, apparently searching for a lost toy. Erin talks to him with her eyes closed.

ERIN

I got to take a bath.

GEORGE

You should go in.

ERIN

They're not asleep?

GEORGE

Katie and Beth are.

They exchange a look. Erin knows Matt's upset.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - MATT AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matt and Katie are in bed, with the light off. Erin comes in, quietly, in clothes from work.

ERIN

Hey.

CLOSE ON MATT. He's awake and pissed. She sits on his bed.

She knows he's mad at her – she speaks softly, caringly;

ERIN

How was school?

MATTHEW

Fine.

ERIN

Did you do your homework?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

ERIN

Any problems?

He doesn't answer. She comes in and sits on the bed.

ERIN

Look, I know you're upset. But the way this job is, things come up at the last minute, real important things, and I gotta deal with –

Matt turns around in his bed and pulls up the covers, cutting her off –

MATTHEW

Fine.

ERIN

Please don't be mad at me. I'm... I'm doing this for us... I know it's hard for you to understand but... I mean, don't you want mommy to be

good at her job?

(no answer)

And it's not like I miss dinner all the time. We all ate together last night.

MATTHEW

(from under the covers)

You were reading the whole time.

He's got a point there. Erin feels like shit.

ERIN

O.K... O.K. I'm sorry. I'll try a whole lot harder to be around, okay? I promise.

She lays her hand on his body. Without turning towards her, his little hand rises out from the covers and touches hers.

EXT. ROUTE 10, INLAND EMPIRE - DAY

Ed's big old Mercedes is toodling down the freeway at a rate well below the speed limit.

INT. ED'S MERCEDES - DAY

Frank Sinatra on the stereo, the "Songs for Swingin' Lovers" album. Ed looks over at Erin and smiles. Erin just stares at him, then looks over at the speedometer. 50 mph. Ugh.

Ed's car phone rings. He picks it up.

ED

Ed Masry.

(his voice softens)

Hi, baby. Yes, I did. I did, really.

He laughs, and the car starts drifting across the lane markers.

THWACK THWACK THWACK. Ed doesn't notice. Erin's getting nervous.

ED

Of course I do. Of course I do. Okay.

He makes a kissing noise into the phone. He's practically driving off the road.

ED

Bye-bye... bye-bye... no, you. Okay,
together: Bye-bye.

He hangs up, smiling to himself. Erin clears her throat.

ERIN

Um, you mind pulling over? Just for
a second?

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Mercedes pulls to a stop on the shoulder. Erin gets out, walks around to the driver's side, and opens the door.

ERIN

First of all, don't talk baby talk
to your wife in front of me. It really
undermines your authority. Second, I
know you're my boss and all, but you
are the worst fucking driver I've
ever seen. Move over or I quit.

He moves over. She gets in, turns off the Sinatra, and they pull back out onto the freeway in silence.

EXT. IRVING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Mercedes and a truck are parked out front.

PETE (O.S.)

There's something about this whole
thing I don't quite understand, Mr.
Masry.

INT. DONNA IRVING'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donna and Pete Irving, and Mandy and Roy Brown are all seated, sipping iced tea. While they talk, Erin hands them all information packets on chromium. Ed is standing in front of

them, a little stiff.

PETE

If PG&E messed with our water, why would they bother saying anything about it to us? Why not just keep quiet about it?

ED

To establish a statute of limitations. See, in a case like this, you only have a year from the time you first learn about the problem to file suit. So PG&E figures, we'll let the cat out of the bag – tell the people the water's not perfect; if we can ride out the year with no one suing, we'll be in the clear forever.

PETE

But they're not like that. I mean, remember Donna, they sent us bottled water. We didn't ask for it. They just did it.

ED

But then they stopped.

Ed looks to Donna. She nods.

ED

As soon as the statute of limitations ended, they stopped.

DONNA

But it was more than a year ago that they told us –

ED

It's okay. We're not suing.

ERIN

Not yet.

ED

(annoyed at that remark)
All we're doing is using this information to get you a real nice purchase price on your house, and get you two –

(to the Browns)
– a comparable retroactive bonus added to your sale price. This way, and PG&E can still look good to their shareholders, 'cause they're not involved in an ugly lawsuit; all they're doing is buying a little property.

Roy looks up from his retainer agreement.

ROY

It doesn't say here how much this whole thing's gonna cost us.

ED

My fee's forty percent of whatever you get awarded.

Erin watches them look around at each other, stunned by the figure.

ERIN

Boy, do I know how you feel. First time I heard that number, I said you got to be kidding me. Forty goddamn percent?

ED

Erin –

ERIN

I'm the one who's injured, and this joker who sits at a desk all day is gonna walk away with almost half my reward?

ED

Erin –

Erin's enjoying Ed's discomfort almost too much to stop. But just almost. She shifts gears.

ERIN

Then I asked him how much he makes if I didn't get anything.

They look at Ed. Well?

ED

Then I don't get anything either.

ERIN

And I realized, he's taking a chance too.

When they hear this, and realize he's in it with them, they all reach for their pens and sign. They hand the agreements over to Erin, who takes them across the room to Ed. He stuffs them in his briefcase and closes it up. That's that.

ED

All right, then.

DONNA

I made a bundt cake. I'll put on some coffee. Who wants coffee and cake?

ED

Thank you, but we have to be getting back.

Boy. Cold as ice. Erin stares at him, stunned by his brusque manner, then leans into him, close.

ERIN

(whispering)

Have a fucking cup of coffee, Ed.

She gives him a stern look, then turns toward the women.

ERIN

Donna, let me help you clean all this up.

She picks up a tray of iced tea and cookies and heads to the kitchen. Donna and Mandy follow, leaving Ed alone with Pete and Roy. He stands there, awkwardly.

INT. DONNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Erin and Donna are putting away the cleaned glasses. Mandy is scanning the chromium pamphlet Erin gave her.

MANDY

You know that thing it says in here about rashes?

ERIN

Uh-huh?

MANDY

Well, this old neighbor of mine, Bob Linwood – he ran the dairy on Community – seemed like someone in his family always had a rash somewhere or other. I just figured it was something in the genes. And you know how it is – you don't like to ask about things like that...

Erin listens, interested.

EXT. LINWOOD DAIRY - BARN - DAY

Another day. BOB LINWOOD, 40's and gruff, is in the barn, tossing hay around.

ERIN (O.S.)

Excuse me. Are you Mr. Linwood?

He sees Erin picking her way toward him in her high-heels.

LINWOOD

Yeah?

ERIN

I'm Erin Brockovich. I work at the law firm that represents your former

neighbors the Browns. They suggested
I give you a call.

She steps in a cow patty. Laughs at herself good-naturedly.

ERIN

Boy howdy, did I ever wear the wrong
shoes.

EXT. THE DESOTOS' HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON A SIGN that reads: THE DESOTOS, hanging on the side
of a small, paint-chipped house. Erin is at the door talking
to MARY DESOTO, 65, who's wearing a big cross at her breast.

ERIN

...and Mr. Linwood seemed to think
that your husband had been sick as
well.

MARY

Yes, Mr. DeSoto has lung cancer.
Never smoked a day in his life,
neither.

INT. LAURA AND MIKE AMBROSINO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin is talking to MIKE and LAURA AMBROSINO – 30's. Solid,
family folks. But Laura's left brow and cheekbone look swollen
and misshapen, and she's trying to hide the fact that she's
in a lot of pain.

ERIN

Mrs. DeSoto said she wasn't sure
exactly what it was that you had –

MIKE AMBROSINO

She's not alone on that one.

LAURA

Well, they know what it is – it's
called fibrous dysplasia –

MIKE

The bones start growing again. Gives

her headaches like you wouldn't believe.

LAURA

– they just don't know what caused it.

EXT. PAMELA DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin stands at the front door and rings the bell. After a moment; PAMELA DUNCAN opens the door, a cup of coffee in her hand. By her distant, cautious attitude, we immediately sense a difference between her and the other Hinkley residents.

ERIN

Hi. My name is Erin Brocko –

PAMELA

I know who you are. Donna called me.

ERIN

Oh... May I come in?

PAMELA

I told Donna we're not interested in getting involved.

Beat.

ERIN

Can I ask you why?

PAMELA

What's the point?

ERIN

Donna told me you've been sick. Your kids were sick...

Pamela gets angry at the mention of her kids.

PAMELA

You people don't give a shit, do you? Anything to get what you want!

Slams the door in her face.

INT. RITA AND TED DANIELS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin is talking to TED AND RITA DANIELS. Their daughter ANNABELLE, 10, is sitting on the couch, wrapped in a blanket.

ERIN

...then Mike Ambrosino remembered seeing you folks at the hospital from time to time too, so I thought I'd just stop by.

(to Annabelle)

You must be Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Uh-huh.

ERIN

Whew, are you ever a beauty. I mean, you must drive those boys crazy.

Annabelle smiles a little.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Late night. George rolls over – Erin's side of the bed is empty. He checks the clock, then gets up and heads into:

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

He peers around and spots her, sitting in the little kid's chair in Matthew and Katie's room.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - MATTHEW AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is holding Beth, watching Matt and Katie sleep. The experience of seeing Annabelle has left her shaky – as if she was afraid to take her eyes off them for fear something might happen... She hears the floor creak as George steps into the doorway.

GEORGE

What are you doing, hon?

Erin looks at him – on the edge of tears.

ERIN

I just wanted to make sure they were all right.

Sympathetic, George kneels beside her.

GEORGE

They're fine... Come back to bed.

ERIN

I don't know what I think I'm going to do for these people. No matter what I do, it won't be enough.

GEORGE

You're doing everything you can. But if it's gonna eat you up like this, maybe you better stop.

Erin looks up at him and George knows immediately he has said the wrong thing. Erin rises and passes by him, to put Beth to bed. George is tired... and doesn't know how to help her.

EXT. VALLEY SIDEWALK - DAY

Ed and Erin are walking down the street, take-out coffee cups in their hands. Ed is sipping his, but Erin is in too much of a lather to drink hers.

ED

Hunh-uh. Absolutely not.

ERIN

That's crazy – why not?

ED

Because I said no. Look – the only reason PG&E's even talking to us is 'cause this is a quiet little real estate dispute. We add plaintiffs, and suddenly we're in the middle of a toxic tort – with a statute problem –

against a massive utility. No, thank you.

They go into their office building.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Erin and Ed are riding up.

ERIN

Okay, so here's what I'll do. I'll go on up to Ted and Rita Daniels – two of the nicest people you'd ever hope to meet, who spend every single day watching their little girl fight like a dog against this cancer – I'll tell them we can't help them cause you don't feel like working that hard.

ED

(turns on her)

Working hard!!? Why you little... Let me tell you something – I've worked all my life. I built a firm and kept it alive through lawsuits, injunctions, and evictions. I have survived a quadruple bypass, cancer, being born with one kidney and having diabetes...

Erin's genuinely impressed as Erin continues;

ED

...I have personally managed to save a few million dollars over more than thirty years of getting some clients ten times that. Don't tell me I haven't worked hard enough! Don't tell me I don't have the right to stop... to take a fucking breath and enjoy my life.

Erin is smart enough to know when to listen. So she does. And she waits...

ED

– And what the hell do you know about any of this anyway!? Something like this, Erin – it could take forever. They're a huge corporation. They could bury us in paperwork for the next fifteen years. I'm just one guy with a private firm.

She makes her move –

ERIN

– who happens to know they poisoned people and lied about it.

The doors open. Ed gets off. Erin follows.

INT. MASRY LAW OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Erin's dodging Ed down the hall, to the office.

ERIN

And this shit is bad news. Look, my dad could build one of these plants blindfolded. I talked him through the files. I said how much Chrom 6 in the groundwater are we talking about over the years and he said, "Oh, by now, probably about three football fields long... four miles deep! Think about it..."

ED

(overlap)

Erin –

ERIN

(overlap)

..And not only does this shit attack every organ of the body, it fucks with your DNA, too. I mean these people's genes, and the genes of their kids, and the genes of their grandkids –

ED

I know how DNA works, Erin –

He gets to the Masry & Vititoe doors. Opens them.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - DAY

Erin tails Ed back to his office.

ERIN

We can get these people. With a little effort, I really think we can nail their asses to the wall.

ED

Oh, you do? With all your legal expertise, you believe that?

ERIN

Don't you ever just know?

Erin speaks with such calm sincerity, it stops Ed for a moment. She thinks she's getting to him.

ED

Do you also "just know" where the money's going to come from? I've already spent most of my own savings this case.

ERIN

We'll figure it out. Look, I admit I don't know shit about shit. But I know the difference –

He moves away and shuts his office door on her.

ERIN

– BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG!

INT. ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ed goes over to his desk, sits down. He sees a stack of messages there, starts flipping through them. Then he stops.

ED
Damn it.

He shoves the messages aside and puts his head in his hands.

He sits like that for a moment.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - DAY

Erin remains outside of Ed's office door, as Brenda passes by without stopping or saying hello:

ERIN
Looking good Brenda. Have another bag of Doritos!

Ed opens the door, surprised to find her still there.

ED
How many families we talking about here?

ERIN
Four more. Eleven people. So far.

ED
You think there's more?

ERIN
Well – I found one document at the water board that had a toxic test well reading from 1967. A hell of a lot of people have lived on that land since then.

Ed pauses, groans again, realizing what decision he's making.

ED
This is a whole different ball game, Erin. A much bigger deal.

ERIN
Kinda like David and what's-his-name?

ED

Kinda like David and what's-his-name's whole fucking family.

(heavy sigh)

Okay, here's the deal – if, and only if, you find me the evidence to back all this up – I'll do it.

I'll take it on.

She smiles victoriously.

ERIN

You're doing the right thing, Mr. Masry.

ED

Yeah, yeah. Remind me of that when I'm filing for bankruptcy.

ERIN

'Course, gathering evidence – now, that's a big job. A hell of a lot bigger than just filing. I'm gonna be working a lot harder now, taking on a lot more responsibility...

He gives her a look. Knows what's coming.

ED

(overlaps, to himself)

I don't fucking believe this –

ERIN

(overlapping)

Another raise wouldn't hurt. And with all the time I'm gonna be spending on the road, I'll probably be needing my own cell phone, won't I?

Ed closes the door on her. Erin smiles. As she crosses back to her desk.

INT. TOYS 'R' US - DAY

Erin enters Toys 'R' Us with George, Matthew, Katie and Beth.

ERIN

You each can pick out four things.
But nothing huge. Look at the price.
Nothing crazy.

Matthew and Katie fan out into the store.

GEORGE

You can buy 'em all the toys you
want, but come Monday, when you split
again, they're still gonna be pissed.

Erin looks over at him, weary.

ERIN

George, I am just trying to do
something nice for my kids on my one
day off. Could you please not give
me a hard time about it?

GEORGE

One toy per kid is doing something
nice. Four is... something else.

ERIN

Well, hell, I guess that's it, then,
huh? They're scarred for life. They're
gonna start holding up 7-Elevens any
day now.

GEORGE

I'm just saying –

ERIN

(with intensity)

I know what you're saying, and I
don't wanna hear it. I am doing the
best I can.

And she walks away from him.

EXT. HINKLEY - ROADSIDE DITCH - DAY

Erin is straddling a ditch, scooping clumps of gunky moss from the ditch into plastic containers.

As Erin labels the containers, she slides down the side of the ditch, and she lands smack in it, knee-deep in gunk.

EXT. HINKLEY - COMMUNITY BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Erin, now completely dirty, is climbing over a fence marked "No Trespassing". Her arms are full of more containers.

She adds them to a growing collection of containers in the trunk of her car.

EXT. HINKLEY - THE POOL BEHIND AN ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Another day. This time it's RAINING. Erin minces her way down to the deep end of the pool.

She gets to the deep end and scoops up a Ziploc full of rancid pool water and seals it.

Erin spots a few dead frogs in the water. She picks one up by the leg, and seals it in a plastic bag as well.

EXT. WELL - DAY

With a sample cup held in her teeth, Erin hauls herself up over the well's concrete wall, then, with her back against one side of the well and her feet against the other, starts shimmying down the well.

INSIDE THE WELL

She winces at the algae and gook that's clinging to her as she descends to the water level. When she's low enough, she takes the sample cup from her teeth and scoops up the water.

EXT. WELL - DAY

ERIN RAISES HERSELF UP TO SEE:

TWO GUARDS heading straight for her.

She scampers to her feet and runs. The Guards pursue –

chasing her off the property...

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ERIN'S DESK - DAY

Erin's at her desk, bending over her notebook in a miniskirt, adding reports to the TOXICOLOGY binder.

ON THE REPORTS: We catch a few words: "water sample A...", "soil sample D...", "frog sample A...", "...traces of hexavalent..."

Brenda looks at Erin and sees her hem rising in the back.

BRENDA

For God's sake, Erin, I can see your
panties.

Erin turns to Brenda, relishing the chance to irritate her.

ERIN

Liar. I'm not wearing any.

Ed, in his office, laughs. He's starting to like this gal.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a hot night. George is playing on the floor with the kids. Erin is behind them on the couch, laboriously reading a book labeled, simply, CHROMIUM. The phone RINGS. Erin picks it up.

ERIN

Hello?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Is this the Erin Pattee Brockovich
that's been snooping around the water
board?

His voice is flat, creepy. Not friendly.

ERIN

Yes. Who's this?

MALE VOICE

You should watch your step. A young lady like yourself with three young children.

ERIN
(overlapping)
Who is this?

MALE VOICE
Do you understand what I'm saying?

CLICK. Erin stares at the phone, freaked.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

George watches Erin double-checking the locks on the door.

ERIN
I'm not gonna quit 'cause of one creepy phone call, George.

GEORGE
Come on, Erin. A job's supposed to pay your bills, not put you in danger.

ERIN
I'm not in danger. I mean, the phones might be tapped –

GEORGE
(overlaps)
What?

ERIN
(overlaps)
...but that's usual. And we have a dead bolt. It's not a big deal.

She goes to the living room, double-checks the window locks in there. George follows.

GEORGE
Look, don't you think you might be out of your league here?

ERIN

No, see – that's exactly what those arrogant PG&E fucks want me to think – But you know what? They're wrong.

She heads into the bedrooms.

GEORGE

It doesn't have to be this complicated, Erin. There's a lot of jobs out there.

ERIN

(off-hand)

How would you know?

George reacts, a little stung. He follows her into:

INT. MATT AND KATIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matt and Katie are asleep. Erin is checking their windows.

George comes in. They whisper.

GEORGE

You mind telling me what that's supposed to mean?

ERIN

Nothing. I'm sorry.

GEORGE

If you got a problem with me taking care of your kids instead of getting some job, just say so.

ERIN

I didn't say that.

GEORGE

'Cause I can get a job. I will. And you can start leaving the kids with the chicken fat lady again. Would that make you happy?

ERIN

Keep your voice down. I said I'm sorry.

GEORGE

I know what they can sleep through, Erin. I probably know it better than you.

She gives him a glare, then leaves the room.

INT. WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin is reaching up to a high shelf for a dusty old box of files. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees Ross passing.

ERIN

Hey, Ross. Tell me something. Does PG&E pay you to cover their ass, or do you just do it out of the kindness of your heart?

ROSS

I don't know what you're talking about.

ERIN

The fuck you don't. No one calls me Pattee. That heavy-breathing sicko that called the other night could've only found out about me from you.

(beat)

People are dying, Ross. You've got document after document here, right under your nose, that says why, and you haven't said word one about it. I wanna know how the hell you sleep at night.

Ross is speechless. He just stands there. Erin drags the box to the floor and goes to work.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - NIGHT

A pile of documents is strapped into the passenger seat. An

empty coffee cup rolls around the floor. Erin's driving, exhausted. She yawns as she dials her phone.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Hello?

INTERCUT between Erin in her car, and George in bed.

ERIN

I'm so tired I'm about to drive off the road. Keep me awake, willya?

GEORGE

What do you want, a joke?

ERIN

No... Just tell me about your day. What went on back there?

GEORGE

Well, come to think of it, we did have a big event around here. Beth started talking.

ERIN

What?
(beat)
Beth? My Beth?

GEORGE

Yeah. We were sitting around at lunch and she pointed at a ball and said, "ball."

Erin says nothing, just stares out at the empty highway, feeling all hollowed-out.

GEORGE

I'd never seen that before – someone's first word. Pretty intense.

Erin just nods. Keeps staring straight ahead as a tear rolls down her cheek.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - ERIN AND BRENDA'S AREA - DAY

CLOSE ON SOME FILES as Erin hands them to Ed. As he takes them from her, he notices a crematory urn on Erin's desk.

ED

Is that what I think it is?

ERIN

She lived on the plume. You never know.

Ed laughs and hands the documents to Brenda without looking at her. She grumpily takes them over to the fax machine.

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED as Brenda types in the number. The recipient's name comes up again: Pg&E CLAIMS DEPT.

EXT. HINKLEY BARBECUE - DAY

Open pits, pony rides, watermelon. George is watching Katie and Matt being led around on ponies, an activity that stopped being fun hours ago. Now they're just hot and tired.

BY THE BARBECUE, Ed is talking to an OLDER COUPLE as they sign retainer agreements.

ELSEWHERE, Erin, holding Beth, is looking at pictures of a swimming pool with FIVE OTHER WOMEN. The water is green.

ERIN

This was the community pool?

WOMAN 1

Yeah, that PG&E built. The whole time, we thought it was algae that made it so green.

LATER...

Erin's trunk is open. She and Ed are clipping new clusters of retainer agreements into the "PLAINTIFFS" binder.

Erin looks over to see Pamela Duncan and her husband, standing by their car, separated from the rest... not getting involved. Erin watches them get in their car and leave.

LATER STILL...

Erin and Ed are passing out informational pamphlets.

A MAN (we later come to know as CHARLES EMBRY) takes a pamphlet and flirtatiously says;

CHARLES

This got your phone number on it?

Erin blows him off with a laugh, barely registering his face.

She sticks one in another hand before noticing that it's George's.

GEORGE

I'm bored, and so are the kids.

ERIN

Just a few more minutes, then we can go.

(as he heads off)

Take her, will you?

George drops the pamphlet and takes Beth from Erin. He heads over to Matt and Katie, sitting glumly on a log.

LATER STILL...

Erin is heading over to George and the kids, ready to leave, when Donna comes up to her, with A MIDDLE-AGED MAN in tow.

DONNA

Erin, this here's Frank Melendez.
He works over at the compressor station –

Erin stops in her tracks, very interested. But she can see, out of the corner of her eye, that George and the kids are getting impatient with her. She excuses herself for a moment and runs over to them.

ERIN

Look, take the kids home and I'll

catch a ride with Ed.

MATTHEW

No ma!

ERIN

No, no, no... mommy has to stay. Be good.

She gives each child a quick peck on the cheek, including George. She runs back to Donna and the Middle Aged Man.

George is fuming. The kids are clearly disappointed.

GEORGE

Come on kids... let's go get some ice-cream.

In the stroller, Beth starts to whine. George reaches in his pocket, finds her. As he's leaning down to give it to her, he hears a RUMBLE coming down the street beyond the barbecue area. The roar grows. He stands, looks.

A GROUP OF ABOUT TEN BIKERS ride by like thunder. He looks at them, then at the stroller. George suddenly feels ridiculous... and then guilty for feeling that way about the kids...

Especially when Matthew reaches for his hand, squeezes it and says, as if worried George will leave too:

MATTHEW

Come on, George.

The bikers REV LOUDLY as they ride by... then, fade away.

George just stands there and watches them go.

LATER STILL...

Erin and Frank are on a bench, talking. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees her car drive off. George's hand sticks out the driver's side and flips her the bird. She watches him disappear, then, hiding her rage, turns back to Frank.

ERIN
I'm sorry. What were you saying?

INT. ED'S CAR - DAY

Ed is driving. He glances over at Erin, fuming in the passenger seat. After a beat:

ED
You wanna talk about –

ERIN
No.

Another beat. Then Erin's cell phone rings. She digs into her bag, pulling it out as fast as she can. Answers.

ERIN
Yeah?

There's a pause. Then Mike Ambrosino's voice comes over the line, very strained:

MIKE AMBROSINO (O.S.)
Um, Erin? This is Mike. Ambrosino.

EXT. AMBROSINOS' HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The curtains are drawn; everything is dark. Ed and Erin are at the door, talking to Mike, who looks drawn and tired.

MIKE
She was about to take a handful of these –

He shows them a bottle of prescription pills.

MIKE
It's a morphine thing – for pain –

Erin nods, then leaves Ed with Mike and heads toward:

INT. AMBROSINOS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Erin opens the door. Very dark, very quiet. Laura is lying

in bed. Erin goes over to her. They speak in whispers.

LAURA

I'm embarrassed.

ERIN

That's okay. I understand.

LAURA

It's just – the pain. It's only getting worse. I can't be a good wife. I can't be a good mother.

ERIN

I'm real sorry, Laura.

Erin sits down on the chair next to the bed. Takes a beat.

LAURA

Know what I always thought I wanted outta life, Erin? A Jaguar.

ERIN

Jaguar's a darn pretty car.

LAURA

I thought if I could spend that kinda money on a car, it'd mean everything else was fine.

(beat)

I don't even know how much they cost.

ERIN

A lot. But you hang in there, maybe you'll get one.

Laura shakes her head.

LAURA

Wouldn't mean the same thing.

Erin watches her sadly.

INT. ED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ed is driving. Erin is asleep in the front seat. Ed casually glances over to her and notices her nose is bleeding.

ED
Erin... Erin!

She wakes up.

ED
You have a nosebleed.

Erin checks the mirror. Not making the connection, she reacts very casually.

ERIN
Shit. You have a tissue.

He motions to the glove compartment. She gets one.

INT. PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION - DAY

A LOUD, industrial plant. Erin and Frank Melendez walk through, him in coveralls, her in a teensy sun dress. Both in hard-hats. He's giving her a tour.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - NIGHT

His office is all about Hinkley. A map of the plume area and a diagram of the plant cover one wall; photos of the plant cover the credenza; piles of documents litter every surface.

Erin is up at the map, eating Chinese food.

ERIN
They used the hex chrom here, in these cooling tanks, as an anti-corrosive. Then they dumped the excess water here, in these six ponds.

ED
I don't remember seeing any ponds up there.

She bites into a forkful of food, keeps talking.

ERIN

They covered 'em over. And not too carefully either, 'cause you dig one inch under the surface, and the dirt is green as a fucking shamrock.

ED

And that's what caused the contamination?

ERIN

It didn't help, but no. The real problem's on the bottom.

She reaches for a document, reads from it.

ERIN

See, according to this, they were supposed to line the ponds so this shit couldn't seep into the ground. But guess what –

ED

They skipped that step.

ERIN

So for fourteen years, this stuff flowed into the groundwater.

ED

Jesus... And this guy just offered all this information?

ERIN

Frank cares what was in those ponds 'cause he used to spend half his day wading around them. That was his job.

ED

No shit.

(then)

You've done great work, Erin.

Erin is taken by surprise by the compliment.

ED

Great work. I don't think three researchers could have done what you've done.

Erin is at a loss. She responds with a joke.

ERIN

Well... stick with me... I'll have you swimming in Armani.

Ed smiles but not enough. Erin notices.

ERIN

What's the matter?

Ed looks at her with an uncharacteristic vulnerability.

ED

I don't know if we can pull this off.

Erin knows how difficult that was for him to say... and she's touched he felt he could say it to her.

ED

This is a monster case. I have devoted all our time and manpower to it and money going's out and nothing's coming in. I'm going to have take a second mortgage on the house.

ERIN

Will that be so bad?

ED

No. If you explain to my wife while I leave the country.

(beat)

Look, I have to tell you, I've been making inquiries with other firms. Bigger firms to share some of the cost. They all said no. They say we don't have it.

ERIN

Bullshit! We've got those PG&E fuckers by the balls here.

ED

We've got the PG&E fuckers in Hinkley by the balls. But nobody's getting rich unless we can pin this on the corporate PG&E fuckers in San Francisco.

ERIN

What do you mean?

ED

PG&E corporate is claiming they had no way of knowing what was going on in Hinkley.

ERIN

Oh, they knew. They had to know.

ED

Show me the document that proves it.

She doesn't have one.

ED

Then they didn't know. And if they didn't know, we can't hit 'em for punitive damages. And with punitive damages, we're talking about the kind of money that could actually have an effect on these people's lives...

ERIN

(frustrated)

Jesus Christ...

She shoves her food away, knocking it over. Beat.

ERIN

So what do we do?

ED

We could smoke 'em out. If they offer a settlement. If they just throw more paper at us.

He sits and faces her, outlining what is to come;

ED

We file a complaint. We take our four hundred or so plaintiffs and everything you dug up and we file a cause of action and present it to a judge.

ERIN

Then what?

ED

Then PG&E will submit a demur – a list of reasons attacking each complaint, claiming there is no cause of action for a lawsuit. And then it goes before a judge.

ERIN

So then it's all up to what this one judge decides?

ED

Basically, yeah.

They look at each other: Let's hope we get lucky.

EXT. PG&E STATION - NIGHT

Late, late at night. The plant is silent. The property seems empty, until we notice Pete Irving standing alone inside the gates, staring up at the station.

After a beat, he picks up a rock and hurls it at the plant.

It misses. Not that it would do anything if it hit. He reaches for another, throws it. Then another, and another.

He hurls rock after rock at the gigantic plant. Then, overwhelmed by his impotence, he lets out a TERRIFYING YELL.

INT. IRVINGS' HOUSE - DONNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Donna's sitting quietly in bed. Erin is sitting on the edge of the bed.

DONNA

I'd got so used to having 'em come up benign, I guess I just didn't expect it.

She looks down her shirt front.

DONNA

Sure wish I had longer to get used to the idea.

(beat)

You think if you got no uterus, and no breasts, you're still technically a woman?

ERIN

Sure you are. You're just a happier woman, 'cause you don't have to deal with maxi-pads and underwire.

Donna smiles a little. Then her face crumbles.

DONNA

We're gonna get them, aren't we, Erin? You gotta promise me we're gonna get them.

INT. BARSTOW COURTROOM - DAY

Erin is sitting beside Ed on one side of the courtroom.

The PG&E representatives are sitting on the other side. These are the best lawyers money can buy, and their demeanor says that winning isn't a goal, it's a forgone conclusion. You'd much rather have them working for you than against you.

JUDGE SIMMONS is at the bench, reviewing one last time, his

decision and the documents. Finally, he looks up;

JUDGE SIMMONS

All right.

Everyone pays attention.

JUDGE SIMMONS

I have before me a cause of action on behalf of the residents of Hinkley California who wish to file a lawsuit against Pacific Gas and Electric for damages, medical expenses, personal trauma due to the contamination of the groundwater in their area by said defendant. And I have here, a list of 84 demurs, submitted by the representatives of Pacific Gas and Electric, each one attacking and thereby rejecting the validity of these complaints. I have reviewed all the information carefully. I am ready to give my decision. Before I do, is there anything anyone wants to say?

Ed grabs Erin's hand under the table, preventing her from making a move. Erin submits.

ED

No, your honor.

PG&E LAWYER

No, your honor.

JUDGE SIMMONS

Very well... In the case of the claimants of Hinkley California vs. Pacific Gas and Electric, it is the judgement of this court that each of the 84 demurs submitted by Pacific Gas and Electric be dismissed and the cause of action against Pacific Gas and Electric be upheld...

Erin can hardly maintain her excitement. Ed squeezes her hand harder. The PG&E people look sick.

JUDGE SIMMONS

...On a more personal note, as a resident here in Barstow, which is not far from Hinkley, I am... appalled that, not only was Hexavalent Chromium used, but your clients actually sent these residents pamphlets telling them it was good for them.

PG&E remain silent. The Judge stares at them, ending simply;

JUDGE SIMMONS

Tell your clients they're going to trial.

Erin whispers to Ed;

ERIN

Think we'll hear from them now?

ED

Oh, I believe so...

The PG&E reps slam the briefcases shut and exit.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Talk about moving up the food chain. MS. SANCHEZ, MR. WEBSTER, MR. BUDA, and MR. COOPER mill slowly about the reception area like sharks. They all ooze importance.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - OUTSIDE OF ED'S OFFICE - DAY

Erin, Ed and Brenda are staring out at them.

ERIN

Jesus. They look like the Secret Service.

ED

Intimidation. Let the games begin.
(then, to Brenda)

Tell them to wait in the conference room.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sanchez, Webster, Buda, and Cooper are seated.

The door opens and Ed enters, legal pad under his arm. Followed by Erin, legal pad under her arm. Followed by Anna (looking professional in Brenda's suit coat), legal pad under her arm. Followed by Donald (in a suit produced from who knows where), legal pad under his arm. If you didn't know better, you'd assume it was a team of lawyers as well.

ED
Counselors –

MS. SANCHEZ
Counselors.

Ed and Erin sit down and get to work. Mario and Anna, clearly told to just follow along, sit down a moment later.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Mario and Anna are sitting mutely in their seats beside Ed and Erin, firing blank looks across the table.

SANCHEZ
...Let's be honest here. Twenty million dollars is more money than these people have ever dreamed of.

Erin has no patience for this today.

ERIN
Oh, see, now that pisses me off. First of all – since the demur, we now have more than four hundred plaintiffs... and
(mocking her)
"let's be honest", we all know there's more out there. Now, they may not be the most sophisticated people, but they do know how to divide, and twenty

million dollars isn't shit when it's split between them.

Donald and Anna exchange a look. This is getting interesting.

ED

Erin –

But there's no stopping her.

ERIN

And second of all – these people don't dream about being rich. They dream about being able to watch their kids swim in a pool without worrying they'll have to have a hysterectomy at age 20, like Rosa Diaz – a client of ours – or have their spine deteriorate like Stan Bloom. Another client of ours.

Ed sits now with a light smile, content to let Erin continue.

ERIN

So before you come back here with another lame-ass offer, I want you to think real hard about what your spine is worth, Mr. Buda – or what you'd expect someone to pay you for your uterus, Miss Sanchez – then you take out your calculator and multiply that number by a hundred. Anything less than that is a waste of our time.

Sanchez, throughout her speech, has been reacting in a patronizing manner – as if Erin's words were of no import. By the end of Erin's speech, Sanchez has picked up a glass of water in front of her and is about to drink, when Erin says:

ERIN

Oh, and by the way, we had that water brought in especially for you.

Sanchez pauses with the glass to her lips... and sets it back down on the table.

SANCHEZ

I think this meeting is over.

ERIN

Damn right it is.

Erin gets up and storms out first. We see on Anna's face, the first signs of respect for Erin.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

George is sitting alone on the stoop, drinking a beer. Music is coming from his house next door. He stares out into the street with a lot on his mind.

He sees Erin's car driving down the street, on her way home.

He rises and enters the house.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

George is sitting on the bed when Erin enters.

ERIN

Jesus, George, the kitchen's a hellhole. What, did you let the kids make dinner themselves?

He doesn't answer. Doesn't move. She notices this.

ERIN

What's going on? What are you doing?

GEORGE

Thinking.

ERIN

About what?

He's very calm. He holds out a small jewelry box.

GEORGE

About this.

ERIN
What's that?

GEORGE
It's a pair of earrings. I saw 'em
in the mall one day, and I thought
damn, those would look good on those
beautiful ears. So I bought 'em. And
I said to myself, next time Erin
says something nice, does something
nice, I'll surprise her with 'em.
(beat)
Know how long ago that was? Six
months.

ERIN
I'm sorry. I'm just working so hard –

GEORGE
(stands)
And what I'm thinking is, you oughta
either find a different job or a
different boyfriend. 'Cause there
may be men who don't mind being the
maid and getting nothing in return,
but I'm sure as shit ain't one of
'em.

ERIN
I can't leave my job, George.

GEORGE
Yeah, you can. You could just quit.
People do it all the time.

ERIN
How can you ask me to do that? This
job – For the first time in my life,
I got people respecting me. Up in
Hinkley, I walk into a room and
everyone shuts up just to hear what
I got to say. I never had that. Ever.
Don't ask me to give it up.

GEORGE

And what about what your kids are giving up?

ERIN

Look, I'm doing a lot better for those kids than I did living with my parents. One day they'll understand that

GEORGE

And what about me?

ERIN

What about you? You think either one of the men who gave me those children asked what I wanted before they walked away?! All I've ever done is bend my life around what men decide they need! Well not now. I'm sorry. I won't do it.

GEORGE

I'm not them. What more do I have to do to prove that?

For a moment, Erin is stymied... then, softly;

ERIN

Stay.

He lowers his head, then stands, to leave. He too speaks gently;

GEORGE

What for? You got a raise. You can afford day care... You don't need me.

Erin feels caught between two truths – what she feels for George... and what she feels for her new life.

George walks to her, kisses her on the cheek and holds her hands... Then exits...

Erin looks in her hands – where George has placed the velvet jewelry box of earrings...

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin is at her window, looking out at the street below.

George is carrying a duffel bag of his things to his house next door. She watches as he opens his front door, enters and closes it behind him.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin is driving, looking weary. Her kids are in the car, no one is speaking. An angry Matthew sits sullenly looking out the window. Beth is asleep. Matthew suddenly shuts off the radio.

Erin drives, bothered by his actions but consumed with her own thoughts... The family feels divided... each own their own world.

EXT. PAMELA DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Pamela, smoking a cigarette, opens the front door to find Erin there, with her kids, holding a box of cake. Pamela raises her eyebrow.

INT. PAMELA DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The kids are seen through the window, playing outside – Matthew, reluctantly.

Pamela and Erin are finishing coffee, cake, stories...

ERIN

..oh, he was a piece of work...

PAMELA

Him too?

ERIN

I don't know, there's something about losers with great asses... I don't

know –

(Pamela laughs)

I had to have him thrown in jail six times for no child support. When he had the kids, he used to tell them to call me Erin Brockshit...

PAMELA

(Pamela laughs)

You sure can pick'em. I've been lucky in that area, at least. Ken is... he's good man.

ERIN

(smiles, sips coffee)

Well, that's half the battle, right there.

PAMELA

Yeah. Yeah, it is...

(beat)

I... I know what you want and I appreciate your –

ERIN

We can get them, Pamela. We can.

PAMELA

I wish I believed that. But this has been going on for so long. Maybe in the beginning, when I was angry. When I first found out. But then, ya know, ya have find a way to live everyday, to get up, to take care of what you have to take care of so you... you find a way to push it down, make it go away, ya know. I don't want to feel it all over again and then... not have it come out right. I don't know if I could handle that. Put my kids through that.

ERIN

You're still angry, Pamela.

(Pamela listens)

And you don't think your kids know that. They know more than you think, believe me. See, the thing is... it doesn't matter if you win lose or draw here. You were lied to. You're sick, your kids are sick because of those lies. If for no other reason, you all have to come together to stand up in a courtroom and say that – to be heard – and you will. To stand up and say, this wasn't right. There's no way anybody can twist this into something right. And it can't happen again.

Pamela listens but Erin doesn't know whether she's getting through to her. Pamela exits, saying;

PAMELA

I'll get some more coffee.

Erin sinks. She thinks she's not getting through. When Pamela re-enters, she's carrying a coffee pot and A TAPE. Erin is confused. Pamela puts the pot down and crosses to the television. She pops in the tape and turns it on.

ON THE MONITOR, is a home video of a house being burned.

PAMELA

That was the Torriyo's house. It was across the street.

ERIN

It burned?

PAMELA

They burned it.

ERIN

Who?

PAMELA

The Fire Department. They said it was a practise run. They said the Torriyo's had sold to PG&E and since

it vacant they were told they could
burn it.

ERIN

Who had told them that?

PAMELA

They never said.

Erin watches the tape, then looks to Pamela, watching the
tape as she must have a hundred times before.

PAMELA

I'd bring the kids into the hospital
with towels soaked from their
nosebleeds. Ya know the hospital
did? They called county services
because they assumed the kids were
being abused.

Erin has her.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE PARKING LOT - DAY

The Hyundai pulls into the lot. We hear voices from within
the car, arguing;

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin is with her kids. She and Matthew are fighting;

MATTHEW

ERIN

...why everything has to be such a big deal. All I want to do is play roller hockey. Other moms give permission.

...all I'm saying is, we'll see. I can't talk about this now. I don't care what other moms do –

MATTHEW

(annoyed)

...So when!? When can I get a friggin
answer!?

ERIN

Don't talk to me like that!

MATTHEW

Randy's mom said yes right away!!

ERIN

(snapping)

Well, goddamn it, Matthew – Randy's mom doesn't work and Randy's dad didn't leave her, so figuring out who's gonna drive who to roller hockey every other week is a little easier over at Randy's house. Now get out of the car!

She exits, then gets the baby.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Erin carries Beth, followed by Matthew and Katie. She sits the two older children down.

ERIN

Wait here. Watch your sisters.

Matthew ignores her...

ERIN

Matthew...

MATTHEW

(snaps at her)

ALRIGHT! FINE!

The receptionist looks up. Erin decides not to respond. She enters the main room.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Business as usual. Erin comes in, goes straight to her desk.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ERIN'S DESK - DAY

Erin flips through her "in" box, looking for something in particular. Doesn't find it. Grrr. She heads off to:

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane is at her desk when Erin comes in.

ERIN

Where's my paycheck?

JANE

Have you been logging on?

ERIN

What?

JANE

I moved payroll onto the computer. It only knows to process paychecks for employees who log on in the morning and off at night.

ERIN

(seething)

Now how'm I supposed to do that when I'm not in here most mornings and nights? I still haven't found a new baby-sitter –

JANE

You're clever. I'm sure you'll think of something.

Erin glares at her... She leans in, but speaks so other can hear.

ERIN

Ya know... Jane... My grandmother used to have a saying about people who were beautiful and people who were ugly. And it had nothing to do with how they looked. She used to say "People get the faces they deserve!"

She then turns and storms out of Jane's office.

As she passes by the CONFERENCE ROOM, she sees; Ed shaking

hands and taking a check from a snazzy lawyer type.
Suspicious, she enters;

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ed sees Erin and makes introductions;

ED

Erin! I was just talking about you.
I want you to meet our new partner.
Kurt Potter. He'll be handling Hinkley
now.

ERIN

What?

POTTER

(to Ed)

Now I know what you meant by a secret
weapon.

(to Erin)

Nice to meet you. Great work.

(to Ed)

See you tomorrow.

He blows out of the room. Erin glares at Ed.

ED

What?

ERIN

Our new partner? You fuck! When was
I gonna find out – in the monthly
newsletter?

ED

Hey... just listen. Did I ever tell
you about the airline case I had?

ERIN

Airline case!? What the fuck are you
talking about?

ED

(patient)

A few years back I was trying this airline case and I got my ass kicked by this guy – he just smothered me in paper. Brutal. This guy was the toughest motherfucker I'd ever been up against. And it was Kurt Potter. When we got the PG&E decision from the judge, I called him and asked him to partner. He didn't hesitate.

ERIN

Well of course NOW he wouldn't hesitate. We did all the fucking work. Where was he before?

ED

Doesn't matter... Erin, listen to me – it doesn't matter. You want to win this?

(hands her the check.)

He just gave me that. It covers all our expenses to date. The whole thing. He's got more toxic tort experience than anyone in the state. This is good news.

Erin rises, still not happy about it – feeling like she's being pushed out. She drops the check on the table and exits, stopping by the door to say, as if without any importance;

ERIN

By the way... I got Pamela Duncan.

She exits before Ed can say "Great – good work!"...

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin is standing at the sink, visibly exhausted, trying to do the dinner dishes with one arm and comfort Beth, who's CRYING, with the other. Matthew comes in and runs into his room, slamming the door.

Erin hears a motorcycle revving up. She walks to the front door and looks out to see:

GEORGE riding away. At the same time, A MESSENGER is walking up her front walk. Erin opens the door as he approaches;

MESSENGER
Erin Brockovich?

ERIN
Yeah?

MESSENGER
Package from Masry & Vititoe.

He hands her a manila envelope. She signs for the package, then tears into it as the Messenger heads away.

A CHECK and a SET OF KEYS fall out. She looks at the check.

It's made out for \$5,000. A note attached reads "HIRE A NANNY. LOOK OUTSIDE. AND CHEER THE FUCK UP! – ED."

Erin looks up and sees A BRAND NEW CHEVY BLAZER parked on the curb. She looks at the keys in her hand. Chevy keys.

INT. ERIN'S NEW CAR - DAY

It's raining. They're driving through the tall buildings of Century City. Ed is full of nervous excitement.

ED
(points to a building)
That's it. The big one. They've got the top three floors.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - RECEPTION - DAY

It feels more like the lobby of a five-star hotel than an office. Erin and Ed step off the elevator. Erin gawks.

ERIN
Holy shit. Who do they represent, God?

ED
It's probably their only pro-bono client. Look, do me a favor Erin...

behave yourself. All right?

Erin shrugs "sure". Ed crosses to the receptionist.

ERIN

Ed Masry to see Kurt Potter.

Erin's miffed Ed didn't announce her as well... so, as Ed turns to check his reflection, a YOUNG LAWYER comes through the reception area. Erin watches him pass, then, calls out to him.

ERIN

'Scuse me, sir, you got a real nice ass, you know that?

The lawyer double-takes on her, then retreats into the office. Erin turns to Ed, smiles.

ERIN

Oh, I'm sorry. Was that not what you meant by behaving myself?

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - RECEPTION - DAY

THERESA DELLAVALLE, 38, junior partner, comes out to greet them. She's everything Erin isn't: conservative, restrained, unemotional. And about as sexy as a station wagon.

THERESA

Ed. Good to see you again.

ED

Theresa, hey – this is Erin Brockovich.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - HALLWAY - DAY

Theresa leads Ed and Erin down a long hall of teak desks.

The sound of their footfalls is swallowed up by the plush carpeting. Occasional ATTORNEYS and PARALEGALS glance at Erin. She feels their stares.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Potter, Ed, Erin, Theresa and a few PARALEGALS are sitting around the table. As the conversation ping-pongs between Ed and Potter, Potter completely ignores Erin.

POTTER

...PG&E have requested we go to binding arbitration...

ERIN

What's that?

Everyone is surprised by her honest lack of knowledge. She doesn't give a shit.

POTTER

PG&E have proposed that they are liable from anywhere between fifty million and four hundred million... Now, to determine exactly what amount they will give, we go before a judge... not a jury. They call it a test trial. You have... how many plaintiffs now?

ED

634.

POTTER

Well, they won't try that many at once so we get them in groups of twenty to thirty, the worst cases – the ones who are clearly the sickest, most life threatened – in the first group and so on... and each gets go before the judge to determine damages. If we went to trial, PG&E could stretch this over ten years, with appeal aft...

ERIN

So it's not like a real trial?

ED

Yes, it is... It's –

ERIN

But these people are expecting a trial. That's what we told them. They won't understand this.

POTTER

I promise you, we'll be very sensitive in proposing this. We'll make sure they understand it's the only way to go forward now. But we have a lot of work to do before we even broach the subject.

Theresa sees impatience brewing, tries to intercede.

THERESA

You know what? Why don't I take Erin down the hall, so we can start on this stuff and I'll fill her in on the rest...

ERIN

Hey – those are my files –

THERESA

Yeah, we had them couriered over. And listen, good work. They're a great start. We're just going to have to spend a little time filling in the holes in your research.

Okay, these people are starting to piss her off.

ERIN

Excuse me – Theresa, was it? There are no holes in my research.

THERESA

No offense. There are just some things we need that you probably didn't know to ask.

ERIN

Don't talk to me like I'm an idiot,

okay? I may not have a law degree, but I've spent 18 months on this case, and I know more about those plaintiffs than you ever will.

THERESA

Erin. You don't even have phone numbers for some of them.

ERIN

Whose number do you need?

THERESA

Everyone's. This is a lawsuit. We need to be able to contact the plaintiffs.

ERIN

I said, whose number do you need?

THERESA

You don't know six hundreds plaintiffs' numbers by heart.

Erin just stares at her. Theresa sighs, reluctantly glances down at a file.

THERESA

Annabelle Daniels.

ERIN

Annabelle Daniels. 714-454-9346.

As Theresa starts to write it down?

ERIN

10 years old, 11 in May. Lived on the plume since birth. Wanted to be a synchronized swimmer, so she spent every minute she could in the PG&E pool. She had a tumor in her brain stem detected last November, had an operation on Thanksgiving, shrunk it with radiation after that. Her parents are Rita and Ted. Ted's got Chron's

disease, and Rita has chronic headaches and nausea and underwent a hysterectomy last fall. Ted grew up in Hinkley. His brother Robbie and his wife May and their five kids, Robbie, Jr., Martha, Ed, Rose, and Peter lived on the plume too. Their number's 454-9445. You want their diseases?

Beat. Erin glares at Theresa, indignant.

THERESA

Okay, look – I think we got off on the wrong foot here –

ERIN

That's all you got, lady. Two wrong feet. In fucking ugly shoes.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

It's still raining. Erin is following Ed to the car. He's furious.

ERIN

She insulted me!

ED

Bullshit. It was a misunderstanding. But instead of handling it politely, instead of treating her with respect –

ERIN

Why the fuck should I respect her?

Ed stops in his tracks, furious. He glares at her.

ED

Look! Just because she's not supporting three kids with no husband and no education, doesn't make her an idiot! Just because she dresses like a lawyer, doesn't mean she didn't work her ass off in law school and

shit positions to earn her way.

ERIN

Well excuse me for not going to law school.

ED

Law school! At this point, I'd settle for fucking charm school!

On that, he gets in his car, slams the door, and drives off, leaving her standing alone in the pouring rain.

ERIN

HEY! You're my ride!!

EXT. LINWOOD'S DAIRY - DAY

Bob Linwood is in his barn, mucking it out. Theresa is at the edge of the property, trying unsuccessfully to get his attention by yelling and waving her arms. In her expensive shoes, she's stopped short of the cow patty minefield.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A CLIENT FILE as a hand fills in a phone number.

WIDEN TO SEE Erin seated with a PARALEGAL, rattling off facts and numbers from memory. She's seized by a COUGHING FIT.

EXT. LINWOOD DAIRY - DAY

Theresa still hasn't gotten Linwood's attention. Finally, rather than ruin her shoes, she picks up a stone and tosses it at the barn. It hits the window and BREAKS IT.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - ERIN AND BRENDA'S DESKS - DAY

Erin's desk is empty: no Erin, no files, nothing. Ed comes out of his office and hands Brenda a STACK OF DOCUMENTS.

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED

Brenda types in the number. The recipient's I.D. comes up again, only this time it says: POTTER, HUGHES, ROSEWOOD.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES, ROSEWOOD, HALLWAY - ANOTHER DAY

A SECRETARY carries the documents to Potter's office. On the way, she passes THE CONFERENCE ROOM. Inside, Erin is still dictating to the PARALEGAL. She's shivery with fever now. The floor around her is littered with tissues.

INT. DANIELS' HOUSE - DAY

Theresa is talking to Rita and Ted Daniels. Annabelle is curled up on the sofa, wrapped up in a blanket. Rita and Ted notice that Theresa doesn't even look at Annabelle.

INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Erin is lying in bed, home sick, talking on the phone. She's talking over the noise of TANIA, her 20-something Eastern European nanny, vacuuming the hall.

ERIN

I know she isn't real warm, but they say she's a real good lawyer...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DANIELS' HOUSE - DAY

Ted Daniels is on the phone. Rita is next to him.

TED

She asking the same questions you asked. We already told you everything. I don't want her coming to the house again. She's kinda stuck-up, and she upsets Annabelle.

ERIN

If you don't like Theresa, you don't have to work with her. Me and Ed are still here for you.

TED

I called Ed two days ago, Erin, and he still hasn't called me back. Now,

I hate to say this, but everyone's pretty upset about that arbitration thing...

ERIN
(stunned)
WHAT?

TED
I mean, Pamela's written a letter in the Hinkley news telling everybody to get new lawyers... that we've been lied to.

Erin is breathless with rage.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - BRENDA'S DESK - DAY

The phone rings. Brenda picks up.

BRENDA
Ed Masry's office... Sorry, he can't be interrupted.

INTERCUT WITH Erin at home, still in bed, so irritated.

ERIN
Don't be a pain in my ass today Brenda or I'll put my fucking fist through the phone! Just put him on.

BRENDA
(with finality)
I said, he can't be interrupted.

Erin hangs up. Then, with a groan, she pulls her weary body out of bed.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - RECEPTION - DAY

Erin drags herself into the office.

ROSALIND
Hey, Erin, I thought you were taking a sick day.

ERIN
So did I.

She heads toward Ed's office, but stops when she sees a meeting in progress in the conference room. Ed is on the side of the table facing her, flanked by Potter and Theresa.

ERIN
What's going on in there?

ROSALIND
Meeting about the PG&E thing.

ERIN
PG& – Are you sure?

ROSALIND
Yup. You look awful. You want some tea?

Erin feels this like a sock in the gut. She stares at the meeting, stunned.

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ed and Theresa are listening to Potter;

CORBIN
...I'm not saying it's not a strong case. Certainly having every demur dismissed is a good sign. What I am saying is that, if we could get hold of any PG&E documentation prior to 1987, officially acknowledging that they know "something" might be wrong with the water, I'd feel a lot better about this statute of limi-

Ed looks beyond Potter to see...

Erin staring at him from the other side of the glass wall, her face cold with hurt and anger.

ED

Could I – just take a brief break here for a moment? I'll be right back.

HE GETS UP AND GOES OUT INTO:

INT. MASRY & VITTOE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ed comes out. Erin's so angry she can barely breathe.

ERIN

If you tell me to relax, I'm gonna choke you with that fucking tie...

ED

Erin, it's just a meeting. Look, you said you weren't feeling great. I thought you should rest.

ERIN

Bullshit. You'd drag me off my deathbed if it suited you.

(weakened)

How dare you take this away from me.

ED

No one's taking anything, will you let me –

ERIN

Bullshit. You stuck me in Siberia dictating to some goddamn steno clerk so you could finish this thing without me.

ED

Erin, they fucked up!

(Erin shuts-up)

Do I have your attention now? They fucked up and they admit it.

Beat.

ERIN

The arbitration lette-...

ED

They sent a fucking letter to these people explaining something they wouldn't be able to explain in person with diagrams and a floor show.

ERIN

I know. I spoke to Ted. Pamela wouldn't even come to the phone.

ED

Pamela's got them all seeing red with that letter she wrote to the press. She called us thieves. This is about to all fall apart Erin.

ERIN

Why?

ED

Because in order to even go to arbitration – we have to get the plaintiffs to agree...

ERIN

How many?

ED

Usually you can only manage to get about 70 percent. PG&E are demanding we get ninety. In other words, everybody. This is serious now Erin. Do you understand?

ERIN

And, what Ed, I'm not serious?

ED

You're emotional. You're erratic. You say any goddamn thing that comes into your head. You make this personal, and it isn't –

ERIN

Not personal? That's my work in there. My sweat, my time... If that's not personal, I don't know what is.

She starts to COUGH and CRUMBLE, but fights it.

ED

Now go home. Get well. Because you're no good to me sick.

(then, admits)

I need you. All right? This case needs you.

Beat. Then Erin asks him, referring to Potter and Theresa:

ERIN

Did you tell them that?

Clearly, Ed has not. Erin smiles, shakes her head as she reaches into her bag.

ERIN

Ya know Ed... after busting my ass, if you think that this

(pulls out cell phone)

and that car is all I'm looking for, is all the respect somebody like me needs to be shown, like a bone you throw somebody who doesn't know the difference –

(she can't even finish)

How can people with every degree on every wall be so fucking stupid.

She puts the cell phone down, then stares through the glass wall of the conference room at Potter and Theresa, who are witnessing the scene from inside the room. She doesn't bother to admonish them – she's feeling too shitty. She goes home.

ED

Erin... Erin... I'll-...

Erin ignores him as she exits. Ed looks angry as well. He doesn't like the scenes she creates. He returns to the conference room.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin gets to her car. As she opens the door, the ALARM SOUNDS. She fumbles with her keychain, trying to turn it off, but she's too sick and upset to figure it out. With the siren still blaring, she kicks at the car in rage.

A wave of dizziness comes over her. She holds her head. Her breathing grows heavy. She grabs hold of the car for balance... as she slowly loses consciousness and passes out.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A busy Southland ER. George bursts through the doors with Katie, Matthew and Beth in tow. He goes up to the desk.

GEORGE

I'm looking for Erin Brockovich.

INT. ER WAITING AREA - DAY

The kids are waiting. George is talking to a DOCTOR.

GEORGE

Meningitis? What the hell is meningitis?

DOCTOR

It's an inflammation of the spinal cord and part of the brain.

GEORGE

Jesus.

DOCTOR

It's a pretty advanced case. I'd say she's been walking around with it for a few weeks now.

GEORGE

How does someone get meningitis?

DOCTOR

Usually, in adults, it's from exposure

to bacteria or a virus or...

During Doctor's lines, George knows how she got it.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ERIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Matt and Katie sit on the cheap plastic chairs outside the room. Katie is holding Beth, who's sleeping.

INT. ERIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Erin's in bed, hooked up to an IV, looking exhausted. All untouched food tray is beside her bed. George is standing across the room from her, arms crossed tight across his chest, keeping his distance.

ERIN

...I swear, if I wasn't feeling so shitty, I would driven that fucking car right into their offices.

GEORGE

That would have helped their opinion of you.

ERIN

Who gives shit about their opinion? They would have sold out every plaintiff for the first offer if I wasn't there. They don't care about them.

GEORGE

Do you?

ERIN

What? Do I care?! What the hell have I been-

GEORGE

You think acting that way, with these lawyers - you think that's going help any of these families? I mean, when you get so pissed off with Ed or these other suits - what are you

really upset about? The families? Or what everybody thinks of you?

Erin has no reply. George's anger with her personally, makes him the most honest person in the room right now...

ERIN

They said I can leave tomorrow. They just wanna keep an eye on me another night.

GEORGE

Fine. The kids can stay at my place till you go home. I'll drop 'em off tomorrow afternoon.

A moment of thick silence.

ERIN

Thank you.

GEORGE

(giving nothing)

Mm-hm.

As she watches him reach for his motorcycle helmet, to leave, she's hit with a wave of regret.

ERIN

George...

He pauses but she is interrupted by a KNOCK at the door as Ed enters. George looks at him. The moment's lost.

GEORGE

I'll drop 'em by tomorrow.

And Erin watches George leave the room, then turns to Ed.

ERIN

If you're here to fire me, your timing's lousy.

ED

I'm not gonna fire you.

(beat)

I wanted to. But then you got sick,
and that woulda made me look like a
shit.

(serious)

You have to stop embarrassing me in
front of Potter and everyone else
who aggravates you, Erin.

ERIN

I know. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Do I get to hear what happened anyway?

INT. ERIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Ed has taken off his coat and pulled a chair up next to Erin's
bed. He's eating the pudding off her tray.

ED

...Kurt thinks that with nothing
linking it to the corporate offices
yet, we'll probably end up on the
lower end of that fifty-to-400 million
dollar offer. It's still a lot of
money.

ERIN

It's not enough. Not for over six
hundred people... What I don't
understand is, if we can't connect
the corporate offices to it, why
would PG&E offer even that much?

ED

Because, they know the evidence we
do have. They know they're gonna
lose a jury trial. Maybe they wouldn't
lose 400 million bucks, but once you
factor in –

ERIN

Wait a minute – Are you saying, you
want to settle for the low end?

ED
(admits)

Kurt suggested it. He doesn't think we're going to be able to get more than thirty percent of these people to agree to arbitration...

ERIN
And of course, Kurt knows "these people" so well...

ED
(continues)
...Which means the low end is the best they're going to get, Erin.

Erin is deeply disturbed by this.

ED
We're going try and get as many of them together – sort of a town meeting, to explai-...

ERIN
I'm coming.

ED
Erin, please –

ERIN
I'm coming – and you better tell Kurtie and St. Theresa to stay the fuck away or we're going to be defending some of "these people" for murder.

Ed considers her insight as closer to the truth than he'd like to admit.

EXT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

The lot is filling with more cars and trucks; headlights criss-cross each other as people pull in from all directions.

It is stifling hot evening.

INT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON HANDS. As people stream in, they are each handed a release form with a space for a signature on the bottom.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Erin's Chevy pulls up to the firehouse. The kids are in the car asleep. She gets out, leaving the door open.

She only goes as far as the firehouse front door. She steps in. Ed is waiting by the door, before he goes up to make his speech. He acknowledges Erin.

ED

How do you feel?

ERIN

Fine. It's hot as hell in here.

ED

That'll make this a lot easier.

ERIN

Nervous?

ED

It's anyone's guess.

Erin looks around at room, as the Hinkley residents take their seats. Everyone's waving papers at themselves to cool off... then looking around as if for something in particular.

ERIN

Be friendly. Cause they don't want to be here.

ED

Why do you say that?

ERIN

They didn't bring any food.

She motions to long fold out tables against the wall – empty.

DONNA
(passing by)
Erin?

ERIN
Donna, hi... how are you?

DONNA
I heard you were in the hospital.

ERIN
I'm fine.

DONNA
This is crazy, huh. What's going to happen?

ERIN
Let Ed explain it. It's gonna be OK.
Is Pamela coming?

Donna shakes her head NO. Erin and Ed know that's not a good sign.

INT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - LATER

It's sweltering. The room, packed with plaintiffs, hums with horse flies and tension. People are fanning themselves with the release forms. Ed's addressing them from a raised platform.

ED
...Binding arbitration isn't all that different from a trial. It's overseen by a judge. Evidence is presented in much the same way....

PLAINTIFF
And then a jury decides?

ED
No, sorry, I should have mentioned that. There's no jury in binding arbitration. No jury, and no appeal.

BOB LINWOOD

No appeal? So what are our options if we don't like the result?

ED

Well – you have none. The judge's decision is final. But we really don't anticipate that being a problem.

Unhappy murmuring in the crowd. Now, in addition to the stifling heat, the large room is thick with mistrust. People are shifting in their seats, whispering to each other.

ED

...As I said before, it will definitely be somewhere between 50 and 400 million dollars...

MANDY BROWN

Which? There's a big difference there.

ED

I wouldn't want to speculate at this point.

MANDY BROWN

So then, what, that mystery number's divided up at the whim of some judge –

More whispering, more movement.

MANDY BROWN

How does it get divided?

PLAINTIFF

Yeah, who gets what? My medical bills started two years before some other people here.

MANDY BROWN

But my kid's been in and out of the hospital a lot more than his. It shouldn't matter when it started.

ED

Wait a minute, that's not –

The crowd erupts. The GRUMBLE of discontent has overtaken the room. Erin watches the meeting fall apart. It's driving her crazy. She notices CHARLES EMBRY, the flirty guy from the picnic, watching her from the rear of the room. His smile is hard to interpret...

ED

...People listen, please... the point we want to address tonight is getting everyone to agree that going binding arbitration is preferable to a trial that could go on for ten years before you see any money.

PLAINTIFF

Well, maybe some of us want to go ten years.

OTHER PLAINTIFFS

(overlaps)

I don't... YEAH!... Speak for yourself!... This is bullshit!...
Let him talk, for Christ sake...!!

ED

(overlaps)

We have to agree or no one has a chance...

Some people are getting up to leave.

ED

(emphatic)

...For those of you about to leave, I'd like you to keep this date in mind: 1976. That's the year of the Three Mile Island disaster, and the people of Love Canal are still waiting for their money. Think about where you'll be when the year 2018 rolls around.

The people that were leaving stop.

ED

Look. Everyone. is this a big decision? Absolutely. But I do not believe – and I wouldn't say this otherwise – I do not believe this is a sell-out. With over six hundred clients, the most you can try is twenty a year, so it's like a roulette wheel. You have somebody that's real sick and he's the six-hundredth guy, he's not gonna make it. And that is exactly what the PG&E lawyers want – they keep making their fees, dragging out the case, waiting for people to drop by the wayside.

(beat)

This is the best shot at getting everyone some money now. You and I both know that some people in this room can't afford to wait, to take that chance. Are you going to make them wait?

The crowd is listening now.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIREHOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The last car drives away. The clock reads 12:35 PM. Erin and Ed are counting the agreements signed by those who wish to continue with the arbitration – talking, counting;

ED

...So how many all together...

ERIN

We got about half of them.

ED

Shit.

ERIN

We're gonna have to go door-to-door
Ed. It's the only way.

He nods. Erin looks at him.

ERIN
You did good, Ed.

ED
We'll see.

EXT. HINKLEY MOTEL - NIGHT

Erin's Chevy pulls into the parking lot.

MATTHEW (O.S.)
I don't want to stay here. It smells.

INT. HINKLEY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Erin is entering the crappy motel room with her kids.

ERIN
We got no choice. I'm not gonna make
it home tonight. Now go wash up and
climb into bed.

As the kids wander toward the bathroom, Erin picks up the
phone and dials. RING, RING.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Hello?

ERIN
Hi. It's me.
(silence)
I've got one more favor to ask you...
It'll be the last one... I promise.

EXT. HINKLEY MOTEL - DAY

Very early. Erin is visible in the motel office, talking to
the clerk, when George's motorcycle pulls into the lot.

EXT. ERIN'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Erin comes up to him, hands him a key.

ERIN

I got you your own room.

He takes it, glances toward the motel room.

ERIN

(awkward beat)

Look, don't take any of 'em on your bike, okay? Call a cab if you wanna go somewhere.

She hands him a wad of cash. he hands it back.

GEORGE

I have money... How long's this whole thing gonna take?

ERIN

I don't know. Few days.

(beat)

Thanks for helping me. I appreciate it.

He nods. It's an awkward moment. George starts moving his bike to a parking space... as Erin speaks;

ERIN

Seems like all I do lately is apologize to everybody...

George is engaged in an action throughout Erin's speech – locking up his bike, getting his stuff – never looking at her.

ERIN

But, I am really sorry, George... I feel like a shit about how I treated you and I'm... I'm sorry.

(beat. no reaction)

I'm also scared to death... Scared I'm gonna lose my kids. Scared I'm gonna wind up nowhere... with no

one... And I'm in that hospital bed
George, I swear, thinking –
(nervously laughs)
'Fuck... it can't get much worse
than this'... And the only person I
can think of to make it better is
you... I've never been with a man
who made anything better. Don't give
up on me yet.

George doesn't act like he has listened, but we & Erin know
he has. He gives a look that doesn't give her much.

GEORGE
Have the kids eaten?

Erin nods. Beat. George turns and walks into the motel. Erin
gets into the truck and pulls out.

EXT. HINKLEY - COMMUNITY BOULEVARD - DAY

Erin's Chevy is bombing down the road.

EXT. PAMELA DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin is on her doorstep once more. Pamela opens the door,
cautiously.

INT. PAMELA DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Pamela and Erin sit at the kitchen table.

PAMELA
...and then this... this letter with
these names of people I never heard
of... people with no faces... I tell
you, it was just like all the crap
we used to get in the mail from PG&E –
like there was no one real, no...
real person behind any of this...
suddenly telling us something entirely
different from what you said...

ERIN
I know. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for

what I didn't know. For what I didn't even understand... and I'm sorry you found out about it like that. It was a shitty way to explain it to you but... you got to separate that from what they're proposing. You're gonna have enough money to take real care of your kids and yourself... Isn't that the most important thing?

Beat.

PAMELA

And who's going to be accountable for what happened? Who can I point to?

ERIN

(honestly)

No one... They won't even show up at the arbitration.

This stings Pamela. But she looks at her kids in the yard.

PAMELA

Why are you all doing this?

Erin thinks for a moment.

ERIN

Because it would be easier not to.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - BACK SEAT - DAY

There are two boxes there – one full of unsigned release forms, the other empty.

INT. THE DANIELS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erin, Ed and Pamela are sitting with Ted and Rita.

INT. MANDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erin, Ed, Mandy, and Tom are seated on the sofas. Mandy signs an agreement. Hands the pen to Tom, who also signs.

INT. LINWOODS' HOUSE - DAY

From outside, we see Erin at the kitchen table with Ed and Bob and Ruth Linwood, who are laughing at Ed's story.

ED

...so she drops the entire bag of Doritos in my lap and while I'm driving, she's feeling me up because she has to eat all the time, this one... constantly...

ERIN

(overlapping)

Oh shut-up! I was not! He's such a liar.

RUTH

Oh Lord!

INT. ERIN'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

In the wee hours. While her kids sleep, Erin sits at the cheap motel room table, going through her forms, organizing, alphabetizing.

INT. ERIN'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON ERIN, fast asleep at the table, her face pressed against the linoleum. There's some NOISE in the room, WHISPERING. Erin stirs and looks around to see George behind her, diapering Beth, while Matt and Katie put their shoes on.

ERIN

What time is it?

GEORGE

Real early. We're just gonna take your car to get some breakfast.

Erin forces herself awake.

ERIN

No, I need my car –

GEORGE

We'll just be a minute. Get a little more sleep.

He picks up Beth, takes Katie's hand, and calls across the room to Matthew.

GEORGE

C'mon, pal. Leave that alone, we gotta go.

Erin turns to see Matthew holding one of her release forms.

ERIN

Oh, baby, please don't play with that, okay? I got 'em all organized. Just put it back.

But he's reading it. And something has caught his attention.

He looks up at Erin.

MATTHEW

This girl's the same age as me.

Erin gently takes the form away from Matthew, wanting to shield him from the harsh realities of this case.

ERIN

That's right, sweetheart.

She replaces the form on top of the stack.

MATTHEW

She's one of the sick people?

ERIN

Yeah. She is.

(beat)

But you know what? That's why I'm helping her. So she can get some medicine to make her feel better.

Matthew mulls this over a bit more.

MATTHEW

How come her own mom isn't helping her?

ERIN

'Cause her own mom's real sick, too.

Matthew thinks real hard about this, then heads over to the door, where George, Beth, and Katie are waiting for him.

Before he leaves, though, he turns back to Erin.

MATTHEW

Maybe we'll bring you back some breakfast. You want eggs?

She looks at Matthew and her eyes fill with tears. She's so proud of her son in this moment. As if his understanding is what she needed all along.

ERIN

Eggs'd be great, baby. Eggs'd be perfect.

INT. DESOTOS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin is leaving, saying good-bye to Mary DeSoto. Erin has a signed release form in her hand.

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The signed stack has grown; the unsigned stack has shrunk.

Erin drops five more agreements into the "signed" box.

EXT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Erin's truck drives into the parking lot.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

An exhausted Erin has come in for a drink, a private moment for herself... having a beer and a cigarette.

A MAN (CHARLES EMBRY) comes over and sits opposite.

CHARLES
Hey. Don't I know you?

Erin winces...

ERIN
(to herself)
Oh no...
(to him)
Uh... no... I... I don't think so –

CHARLES
Sure. Sure... I saw you at that
barbecue in Hinkley. And the
firehouse.

ERIN
Oh.
(disinterested)
Were you there?

CHARLES
Sure. Sure... I watched you. I had
my eye on you... ha, ha...

ERIN
Oh... how nice...
(swigs beer)

CHARLES
I saw ya... saw ya talking to
everybody... writing stuff down...
ha, ha... I said to myself...
something about her... I really like
that girl... Can I buy you a drink?

ERIN
I'm actually on my way out..

CHARLES
I feel like I can talk to you too.
Like you're a person I can say

anything to..

ERIN

You know, I'm really not.

CHARLES

Listen...

He leans in. Erin leans back. She thinks he's going to make an indecent proposal...

CHARLES

Would it be important to you if I told you that when I worked at the Hinkley plant, I destroyed records?

Erin stares blankly. She forgets to breathe. Her mind races.

ERIN

Uh... I don't know uh...
(doesn't know his name)

CHARLES

Charles.

ERIN

Charles... Maybe. Would you..would you excuse me a moment – I just have to go to the bathroom.

CHARLES

Sure babe.

ERIN

Don't go away...

She calmly exits OS.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Erin runs her ass off to her truck... opens the door, searches for her cell phone...

INT. ED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ed's working. The phone rings.

ED

Yeah?... What? Kid, slow down...
Who?

INTERCUT ERIN:

ERIN

This guy! Charles! He tells me he
destroyed records. He worked at
Hinkley..

Ed rises out of his chair as he listens...

ERIN

I thought he was picking me up. I
mean maybe he is. But why would he
say that?

ED

Calm down, calm down... Shit... Look,
go back and see if he'll make a
declaration.

ERIN

A declaration...

ED

But be careful. Don't care him off.

ERIN

Right...

ED

And if you have to sleep with him,
that's all right too..

ERIN

OK OK... I'll call you back...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

A deliberately calm Erin talks to Charles;

ERIN

So... Chuck... can I call you Chuck?

CHARLES

Sure. Sure.

ERIN

Would you like another drink?

CHARLES

I'm good.

ERIN

So what happened here – you were telling me about records...?

CHARLES

Yeah. Those fuckers...

(sips beer)

I was with that plant for thirty five years. They made me sick and when I retired I get a fucking watch...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - LATER THAT NIGHT

Erin and Charles are the only patrons. Erin's eating a burger. Charles has a beer.

CHARLES

I was working in the compressor, and out of nowhere the supervisor calls me up to the office and says, we're gonna give you a shredder machine, and send you on down to the warehouse. We want you to get rid of all the documents stored out there.

ERIN

Did he say why?

CHARLES

Nope. And I didn't ask.

ERIN

Did you get a look at the stuff you destroyed?

CHARLES

There was a lot of dull stuff – vacation schedules, the like.

(beat)

But then there were a few memos about the holding ponds. The water in them. They had readings from test wells, stuff like that.

ERIN

And you were told to destroy those?

CHARLES

That's right.

Erin plays it down, takes a sip of beer.

CHARLES

Course as it turns out, I'm not a very good employee.

ERIN

What do you mean?

CHARLES

Well. There were a few documents that I somehow didn't get around to shredding.

(beat)

That I kept instead.

Erin stops, mid-bite of burger. She looks at him.

CHARLES

At the time, I thought, I got six

kids, some of 'em want to go to college. I can't afford to lose my job. I told myself I was being honorable.

(beat)

But there's nothing honorable in what I did.

(beat)

Maybe that's why they picked me for the job. Maybe they knew what kind of man I was.

Pause.

ERIN

Charles. Will make a declaration stating all the things you've told me?

He looks at her.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - RECEPTION - DAY

Erin and Ed enter, with boxes in their arms and a whole lot of attitude.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The table is covered with boxes of documents: the anticipated slew of paper that PG&E is sending them. Kurt, Theresa, Andrew and ABOUT FIVE PARALEGALS are sifting through them.

Erin and Ed breeze in like sunshine.

ERIN

Morning!

POTTER

Erin? Ed... what are you –

ERIN

(to Ed)

May I?

ED

Oh yes. Please do.

ERIN

You know what, Mr. Potter? We completely forgot your birthday this year. And seeing as how you've been so good to me, I thought it was a terrible oversight. So what Ed and I been doing over the last few days is putting together a present for you.

She plunks the box down on the table. Potter opens the top of the box. Looks in.

ERIN

634. They all signed. Every single one.

Potter, Theresa, et al... are stunned.

THERESA

Ho – ly – shit.

ERIN

Oh, now don't get all jealous, Theresa. We got a little something for you, too.

Erin hands Theresa a manila envelope. She opens it.

ERIN

Internal PG&E documents, all about the contamination. The one I like best says, and I'm paraphrasing here, but it says yes, the water's poisonous, but it'd be better for all involved if this matter wasn't discussed with the neighbors. It's to the Hinkley station, from PG&E Headquarters. Stamped received, March, 1966.

Potter and Theresa reel. Potter shakes his head in disbelief.

POTTER

Where did – how did you do this?

ERIN

Well, what with me not having any brains or legal expertise, and Ed starting to lose his faith in the system and all... am I right?...

ED

(overlaps)

Oh yes... completely... No faith...

ERIN

(overlaps)

I just went on up there and performed sexual favors. 634 blow jobs in five days. Boy, am I ever tired.

Ed's head falls to his chest – he didn't know that was coming. But Erin just smiles... digesting her canary.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

One of those days when the bay sparkles like a glitter ball.

Erin's Chevy moves up the PCH. George's at the wheel. Erin by his side. The kids in the back. Time has passed – Erin's hair's a little different.

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin gets out of her new truck, looks, sees the Irvings in a little cluster.

Donna's under an umbrella. Pete is slathering on sunscreen.

The two girls zip out toward the water. Erin waves. Pete and Donna spot her, wave back. The kids run out toward the beach to play with the Irving's kids... Erin holds Beth calling out to them;

ERIN

Find a spot near the shore!

George is hauling out a cooler.

ERIN

Let me give you a hand.

GEORGE

No I got it. I'll take Beth and set up while you take care of your business.

ERIN

No... I want you to come with me...
(smiles)

I want you to see what you've helped to do.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Donna is sitting on a blanket beneath an umbrella watching her kids in the water – joined by Erin's kids... Erin comes up behind her. George carries Beth.

ERIN

Hi... This is George... George this is Donna.

GEORGE

Nice to meet you.

DONNA

Hi! And who's this little precious.

ERIN

This is Beth... Say hi... Hi... How you you feeling today?

George and Erin sit before her.

DONNA

It's a good day. I feel good.

ERIN

Well, then – if you're feeling up to it, maybe we should talk shop.

The judge came up with a number.

DONNA

A number for the whole group, or for us?

ERIN

Both.

Donna sits down next to her.

ERIN

He's making them pay the maximum.

Tears of vindication spring to Donna's eyes.

DONNA

Oh, my God.

ERIN

And he's making them give five million of it to you all.

DONNA

Five million dollars?

ERIN

Five million dollars.

She reels. After a breathless beat:

DONNA

I don't even know how much money that is.

ERIN

It's enough – for whatever you need, for whatever your girls need, for whatever your girls' girls need. It'll be enough.

Donna wipes the tears off her face, then watches the light flickering off her girls playing in the surf.

DONNA

I can put them in a good school.

ERIN

Any school you want.

DONNA

And get someone to help around the house.

ERIN

Yup.

DONNA

Oh my God. Oh my God.

Donna is overwhelmed. Erin pulls her close.

DONNA

Oh, my God.

George holds Beth close. He looks at Erin with love and pride, and finally, complete understanding of what she's been moving towards from the beginning. Erin looks at him over Donna's shoulder, and smiles with tears in her eyes.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE'S NEW OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Now this is where the hot lawyers work. A gleaming testament to power.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Boxes everywhere. They just moved in. Everyone is unpacking at his or her desk. Rosalind is manning the new phones.

ROSALIND

Masry & Vititoe, can I – shoot!

(she lost them)

Masry & Vititoe, can I – damn it.

(calling out)

Does anyone know anything about these phones?

INT. ED'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Ed is in his new office when a LEGAL ASSISTANT enters carrying an ENVELOPE and hands it to Ed.

ED
Thanks.

She exits as Ed opens the envelope to reveal: A BONUS CHECK MADE OUT TO ERIN FOR TWO MILLION DOLLARS. Ed smiles.

INT. ERIN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Ed enters Erin's beautiful, private office to give her the bonus – only to find that she is not there. He walks over to her desk and lays the envelope down next to some framed photos of Erin's children. He exits, closing the door behind him as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME IN ANOTHER BARREN CA. AREA - DAY

Doorbell rings. A HOUSEWIFE opens the door.

HOUSEWIFE
Can I help you?

ERIN
Hi. My name is Erin Brockovich. I'm been talking to some of the families in the neighborhood about a problem you've been having with the water supply... Jane Whittman told me to contact you...

HOUSEWIFE
Oh yeah, Jane, sure...

BLACKOUT.

END CRAWL:

The settlement awarded to the plaintiffs in Hinkley v. PG&E was the largest in a direct-action lawsuit in United States history.

Erin and Ed have three other cases pending, including one against PG&E.

THE END