

ERIN BROCKOVICH  
A True Story

by

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EXT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUBURB, MAIN DRAG - DAY

Palms sway ... the sun washes everything in yellow ... cars motor down either side of the landscaped median ... the calls of mockingbirds mingle with the BLIP BLIP of car alarms.

ON THE SIDEWALK, a SKATEBOARD CA-LUNKS down the sidewalk, past the foot traffic of Southern Californians: flip-flops, Doc Marten's, Rollerblades, Nikes ... then, in the middle of this pedestrian normalcy, a pair of IMPOSSIBLY HIGH SPIKE-HEELED PUMPS struts out of a shop. So high it hurts to look at them. As the shoes leave frame, we TILT UP and see they're leaving a 99-cent store.

As the Pumps turn and head up the street, we see they are connected to a pair of IMPOSSIBLY LONG, SHAPELY LEGS. Eveready legs -- they just keep going and going.

They saunter past two BUSINESSMEN on a lunch break. The men pause and glance as men tend to when they see a beautiful woman. In fact, everyone this woman passes lets their eyes rest on her a microsecond longer than usual.

- Two SKATEBOARDERS note the STRETCHY MICRO-MINI skimming the tops of her thighs.

- A MAILMAN spots the BIG, DARK SUNGLASSES tucked into a MOUNTAIN OF BIG, BLOND HAIR.

- A PRE-TEEN GIRL glimpses the PLUNGING NECKLINE of the TIGHT, BRIGHT RED MIDRIFF-BARING BUSTIER.

It isn't until she rounds the corner at the end of the block that we see her entire figure and appreciate why everyone is so goggle-eyed. Eye-catching is an understatement. All those folks who say Barbie's proportions are unrealistic have obviously never met ERIN BROCKOVICH.

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

A side street. No pedestrians, just parked cars. 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 rams 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 boring building on a boring block in the Valley, surrounded by strip malls. Definitely not where the power lawyers work.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Morning, Mr. Masry. How you doing today?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, RECEPTION - DAY

Generic. Cottage cheese ceilings, motel art. A sign over the reception desk reads: MASRY & VITITOE, ATTORNEYS AT LAW.

ED MASRY, senior partner, slumps by ROSALIND, his chipper receptionist, with a cup of coffee in his hand. He's in his mid-50's, compact and -- even though it's only 9 AM -- already rumpled.

ED

Don't ask that on Mondays, Rosalind.

Whatever passion he once had for the personal injury law that is his career has long since dissipated. He trundles off toward his office.

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

Ed's secretary BRENDA -- 50's, jaded, hates her job, but what can you do? -- is on the phone when Ed rounds the corner. She puts the call on hold, turns to Ed.

BRENDA

Tony Marvin.

ED

Oh, Jesus. Who's responsible for his pain and suffering this time?

BRENDA

His dry cleaners. You want him?

ED

What do you think? What's this?

He grabs a gift-wrapped bottle off her desk, reads the card.

BRENDA

Tequila. From your drug dealer friend.

ED

Carlos isn't a friend; he's a client.

BRENDA

He's a low-life. Speaking of which, that's your nine o'clock 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

Whoa.

(to Brenda)

Remind me.

BRENDA

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

(sarcastic)

And she looks like such an honest girl, don't you think?

ED

You shouldn't judge, Brenda.

BRENDA

Right. Lap-dancers are people too.

As Ed heads into his office, Brenda picks up the phone.

BRENDA

I can't find him, Tony. We'll have to call you back.

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

Not an office that 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.

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

Jesus, you poor thing.

(he sits)

Well, listen, you came to the right place. Whoever did this to you made one hell of a mistake, and you and me, we're gonna make him pay for it.

He takes out a pad and paper, gets ready to write.

ED

Why don't you tell me what happened?

DISSOLVE 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 in surgical scrubs. 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 judgmentally 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 lawyers 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 - DAY

The door to the courtroom flies open and Erin comes out, furious. Ed follows her as she heads for the elevator.

ERIN

Open and shut? Open and fucking shut?

ED

If you hadn't used profanity --

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 personal --

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.

ERIN

Settle down? I got 74 bucks to my name, Mr. Masry! I can't afford to settle down!

Beat.

ED

I'm sorry, Erin.

ERIN

Yeah? Well, fuck you. Sorry doesn't feed my kids.

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. How was it?

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.

ERIN

It'll be fine, yeah.

MRS. MORALES

Ai, bueno. Because 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)

Wow, that's soon --

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 babysitter, huh? Not the old lady next door.

Oh, God. In Erin's arms, Beth starts to COUGH.

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, MAIN LIVING/DINING SPACE - DAY

Just as dull inside. Salvation Army furniture. A lot of beige. Erin's two older kids, MATTHEW (7) and KATIE (5) are

at the table. Beth is in a baby seat. Erin spoons some Mac & Cheese onto their plates, trying to hide her worry.

MATTHEW

I don't like this part, it's all crusty.

KATIE

I like the crust.

Erin switches the plates.

ERIN

Put your napkins in your laps and eat up.

KATIE

How come you're not eating?

Cause there isn't enough food.

ERIN

Mamma's gonna eat later.

From her baby seat on the table, Beth COUGHS some more. Thick, sick-sounding coughs. Erin looks at her.

ERIN

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

INT. ERIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower and sink are both on full, filling the room with STEAM. Erin is seated with COUGHING, CRYING Beth on her lap, trying to steam the illness out of her.

ERIN

It's gonna be okay, sweetheart. I promise.

But her face doesn't look like she believes it.

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 the 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. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Erin feeds Beth her medicine, feeling miserable about it.

ERIN

Just remember. No matter what your Mamma does, lying and stealing is real bad. I don't ever wanna hear you doing something like that ...

On the table beside her sit the classifieds. Row after row of want ads circled, then X-'d out in red. A WATER BUG crawls across the edge of the paper.

ERIN

... Cause there's no excuse for it, you hear me? No excuse at all.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 out of his cup, onto 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. What do I have this afternoon?

BRENDA

Nothing you can't show up for with a stain.

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, in a miniskirt and leather bustier, talking to MARIO, the firm's mentally challenged office boy. Mario heads away from her.

ED

What's she doing here?

BRENDA

Who?

Ed goes to his office door and waves Mario over.

ED

Hey -- Mario -- what's she doing here?

MARIO

She works here.

Ed looks back at her -- what the hell?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The support staff -- mostly middle-aged women -- are all stealing glances at Erin. Ed comes up to her, all 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, Mario's a little not so bright. He seems to think that you said --

ERIN

There's two things I can't stand, 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. I may have miscalculated -- that happens sometimes, but --

ERIN

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

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. So I figure, since you're the one who said I was gonna be okay, you should be the one to hire me.

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, you'd have time to return your damn phone calls.

She's backing him into a corner here. He shifts gears.

ED

Okay, look. If you really want to apply for a job here, you can do it the way everyone else does. Send in a r, sum, , make an --

ERIN

I'm not everyone else, Mr. Masry. I'm someone you made promises to that you didn't deliver on. I trusted you. With my kids' well-being. Now, I'm smart, and I'm hard-working, and I'll do anything. But if you think I'm leaving here without a job, you got another thing coming.

Ed glances around the room. Not a whole lot of options here. He looks back at Erin.

ED

No benefits.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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

Oh, hell.

(beat)

I'm dyslexic.

ANNA

That's a joke, right?

Erin shakes her head, no. Great, thinks Anna.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

As Anna shows 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 & VITITOE, 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

Bullshit, you don't.

He slaps a hundred in her hand and leaves. When he's gone, she looks at the bill -- her life raft -- and gives it a great big kiss.

EXT. BABYSITTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin is at the door, taking Beth from the BABYSITTER, 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. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Erin is leaving the store, carrying Beth in one arm and a bag of groceries in the other. Katie and Matt are each carrying a bag of groceries as well. They are all singing and moving with the jaunty step of the newly carefree. Katie spots a flower display outside the store.

KATIE

Mommy, can I get a flower?

ERIN

Sweetheart, you can get a whole big bunch.

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, REVING and REVING. 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, REVING 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, and we'll get along fine.

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 other 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 & VITITOE, 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 got this file I need valued. Real estate thing. A lady has some property next to a PG&E plant that PG&E wants to buy. I need to know what to ask for it.

He plunks the box of 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.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 valuing stuff -  
- could you remind me, cause I'm a little  
confused about how exactly we do that.

ANNA

(exasperated)

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

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Katie and Matt are running up to the house. Erin follows, toting Beth under one arm and the box of documents under the other. She steps on another water bug.

ERIN

Ugh.

As she wipes the bug guts off the bottom of her shoe:

GEORGE (O.S.)

Hey, neighbor, wanna beer?

She spots George on his stoop, with a six-pack beside him.

ERIN

No.

GEORGE

C'mon. I bought 'em for you, to make up for that night.

ERIN

Return 'em. Maybe you'll get your money back.

He gets up and follows her to her house.

GEORGE

Now, why're you giving me such a hard time? I'm just trying to be a good neighbor.

Erin turns to him. The kids are waiting at the door.

ERIN

I had a good neighbor, George. She was 60 and Mexican and she watched my kids for free. Something tells me you're not gonna be able to measure up to that.

GEORGE

You need help with your kids? I could probably do that.

George reaches out and grabs the box from under her arm.

ERIN

I'm not gonna leave my kids with you.

GEORGE

Why not?

ERIN

Cause I don't even know you.

GEORGE

Yeah, and whose fault is that?

He's got a point there. After a beat:

GEORGE

What, you got so many friends in this world,

you don't have use for one more?

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.

KATIE

What's that stand for?

GEORGE

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

Erin comes in from the kitchen.

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/MATT

Night.

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

GEORGE

Great kids.

Erin bends down to help him.

ERIN

Yeah. I'm probably ruining them.

GEORGE

How?

ERIN

I'm never here. I gotta leave 'em with this weird sitter all afternoon who costs a fortune and smells like chicken fat.

GEORGE

I was serious before, you know. 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

Great. Another deadbeat.

GEORGE

I'm not a deadbeat. 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. Maybe I'm just out of practice.

GEORGE

Then lemme remind you, the polite thing is to say, thank you, that'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 about life, 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)

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

Tempting. Erin looks him over.

ERIN

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

GEORGE

(with a laugh)

Yeah, we'll just see about that, won't we?

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 and 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 suppresser cells".

Erin stares at it, confused.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, COFFEE AREA - DAY

Erin is talking to Jane, who's pouring herself coffee.

ERIN

It was in this real estate file I'm valuing. And -- see, I know they're the medical records from the people selling the house -- but it talks about things like lymphocytes and T8 suppressers.

Erin sees Ed pass behind Jane. She lowers her voice, so he won't see her asking for help.

ERIN

I mean, it's not a problem or anything, but -- I'm just a little unclear on what those things are. I thought maybe you'd know.

JANE

What do I look like, Erin? A library?

And Jane walks away with her coffee.

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. Over this:

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Masry & Vititoe, can I help you?

ERIN (O.S.)

Hi, Rosalind, this is Erin. Brockovich. From the file room? I was wondering if you could tell Mr. Masry that I'm following up on that real estate thing out of the office.

The librarian gives her directions to somewhere else.

EXT. UCLA MEDICAL LIBRARY - DAY

Smaller, but still establishment. Erin's Hyundai pulls into the parking lot.

INT. UCLA MEDICAL LIBRARY - DAY

Erin is at the reference desk, eating a candy bar while she talks to the LIBRARIAN. He checks something on the computer. A couple of WHITE-COATED MEDICAL STUDENTS pass her, double-taking. They don't see many like her around here.

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 "Jim Paulsen, Epidemiology" and KNOCKS.

The door opens and DR. JIM PAULSEN appears. He's a classic scientist: unruly hair, thick glasses. Nothing like Erin has ever shown up at his door. He reels at the sight of her.

ERIN

Dr. Paulsen?

PAULSEN

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 epidemiology? -- and the fella there told me to find you, cause you know all about it.

PAULSEN

(suspicious)

Is this a joke? Did Baxter put you up to this?

ERIN

Who's Baxter?

PAULSEN

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. Paulsen is immediately embarrassed.

PAULSEN

Oh. Oh.

ERIN

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

PAULSEN

(mortified)

Of course! Oh, gosh, of course --

INT. PAULSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Orderly chaos. Dr. Paulsen, still recovering, has Erin's file in his hands. Erin is sitting across from him.

PAULSEN

Well, look, there isn't a ton of information here, but from what there is, I'd say that these two people here -- what are their names? Shanna and Ashley?

ERIN

Right, I guess those are the kids --

PAULSEN

They've both got some immune system problem. Can't say what from, whether it's viral or genetic or what, but something's wrong. And these guys -- Donna and Peter --

ERIN

Their parents, I'm pretty sure.

PAULSEN

Well, from what this stuff says, I'd say they both have some form of cancer.

Wow. That's more serious than Erin was expecting.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON THE FILE on the kitchen counter. The Irvings' phone number is written on the front. A PHONE IS RINGING.

ERIN (O.S.)

Whoa, whoa! Easy, easy, easy --

WIDEN to see Erin, phone to her ear, grabbing a carton of juice from Matt and Katie, who are fighting over it at the table. Just as she takes it from them, the phone picks up.

DONNA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hi! You've reached the Irvings. Leave a message and we'll get back to you just as soon as we can. Bye-bye.

BEEP. Erin thinks a bit, then hangs up and looks at the file. Scrawled on the cover is the Irvings' address, in Hinkley, California.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAY - DAY

The beat-up old Hyundai heads east out of L.A. DISCO MUSIC blares from its speakers.

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 the 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.

INT. ERIN'S HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin looks around. The house she's passing has been razed. A heap of lumber and wires in the middle of the property.

As she checks the piece of paper with Donna's address, she drives by the PG&E COMPRESSOR STATION, a massive gray structure of pipes, chimneys and ladders, set way back from the road. Erin passes it without noticing it.

She stops at an intersection. The house on the corner has been boarded up with plywood. Erin notices it -- depressing -- then turns the corner onto Donna's street.

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 needlepoint 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

Right.

DONNA

Cause first you gotta move, then there's decorating, 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 Peter 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

I'll say. Holy moley.

DONNA

So the whole idea of selling the house -- don't get me wrong, I'd be glad to move to some better place, but 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

Are you kidding? With how our lives are, if I start subdividing files, I'll be sunk. I just kept all PG&E correspondence 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. IRVING HOUSE, GARAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON A BOX, with "CHROM INFO" scrawled on it.

DONNA (O.S.)

PG&E came around a few years ago, told us they put chromium in our well by mistake. And since we shouldn't have to drink it if we don't want to, they gave us free spring water and offered to buy our house.

WIDEN to see Donna pulling the box down into the room.

ERIN

What's chromium?

DONNA

It's a chemical they used over at that compressor station up the road there.

ERIN

Well, hell, maybe that's why you all have been so sick --

DONNA

I thought the same thing, right off the bat. That's why we went to see the doctor. But hunh-uh. Turns out one's got nothing to do with the other.

She rifles through the box.

DONNA

This is the info they gave us. You'll see if you look through it, chromium's good for you. When I saw what they charged for it at the health-food stores, I about fainted.

She hands Erin a printed fact sheet. Erin scans it.

ERIN

Seems like an awful big coincidence -- your water being messed with and you being so sick.

DONNA

Not around here. This is a rough part of the world. Hard times, not a lot of money, not a lot of luck.

(beat)

It's a challenge, staying healthy in a town like this. Heck, even our dogs up and die.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin's driving away from Donna's house. A street lamp throws light on the box of chromium documents in the passenger seat.

She gets to an intersection and looks across the street at the massive COMPRESSOR STATION. Six stories high, lit up like a Christmas tree, with all sizes of PIPES criss-crossing the outside and GIANT COOLING TOWERS sticking up out of it. Far more massive than anything else in town, it looms over the horizon like the Capitol in D.C. or St. Peter's in Rome.

Erin takes a long look at the compressor station, then turns onto Community Boulevard and drives away.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Erin is holding Beth, making her a bottle, when she hears NOISES coming from outside. She follows them.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin opens the door to find George attaching bars to her windows.

ERIN

What're you doing?

GEORGE

Better safe than sorry.

She shakes her head, amused by his persistence.

ERIN

You want some coffee, George?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

George follows Erin in.

GEORGE

I'm gonna put a dead bolt on your front door, too. This isn't exactly the safest neighborhood in the world, you know.

ERIN

Thanks for reminding me.

GEORGE

I guess we get what we pay for, huh?

Erin pours him some coffee, hands it to him.

ERIN

You think it could make you sick, living in a place like this?

GEORGE

What do you mean?

George settles in, helps himself to sugar.

ERIN

I was talking to this lady -- she and her husband both got cancer, and she thinks it's cause they live in a bad neighborhood. You think that's possible? That living in a bad neighborhood could give you cancer?

George laughs a little at the thought.

GEORGE

Man, I hope not. You got enough damn problems.

But Erin's still mulling it over.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE, ERIN'S BLOCK - DAY

Erin clips down the block in short-shorts and high-heeled boots. Up ahead a few of DOWN-ON-THEIR-LUCK MEN are out on a stoop, drinking their breakfast. Erin approaches them.

ERIN

Hi, y'all -- how you doing today?

MAN 1

Hangin' in, baby. How about yourself?

ERIN

I'm okay, I'm just fine. I was wondering -- could I maybe ask you a couple questions?

She settles down on the stoop with them for a chat.

INT. PAULSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Paulsen and Erin are sitting, talking. He's thrilled to have her back in his office.

ERIN

... and when I realized our area's just as bad as Hinkley, I thought maybe my neighbors are all sick too. So I went and asked.

PAULSEN

(surprised)

You did?

Erin digs a pad of paper out of her bag.

ERIN

Uh-huh. Spent the last few days knocking on doors. And you know what? They're not.

(reads from the pad)

I mean, they got problems, but none of this cancer stuff. And their pets are fine. So I don't know -- I just can't shake the feeling that it wasn't no multivitamin they put in the water.

PAULSEN

Well, if you're talking about contamination, you're getting out of my area of expertise. Let me give you the name of a toxicologist friend of mine over at USC.

Paulsen reaches for a notepad, scrawls on it.

INT. UCLA MEDICAL BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Paulsen is seeing Erin out of his office.

PAULSEN

I gotta say, Erin -- first time I saw you, I did not peg you as the kind to go off and conduct her own epidemiological study.

ERIN

Don't go telling anyone. It'll ruin my reputation.

EXT. USC CAMPUS - DAY

Erin towers over DAVID FRANKEL as she walks across campus with him. He's the grittier variety of scientist: Patagonia,

Birkenstocks, bushy beard. He's as dry as dust, and as much as Dr. Paulsen responded to Erin, Frankel barely notices her.

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.

ERIN

Harmful, like -- how? What would you get?

FRANKEL

With repeated exposure to toxic levels -- God, anything, really -- respiratory disease, liver failure, heart failure, reproductive failure, chronic headaches, 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

Well, how do I find out what kind of chromium is up in Hinkley?

FRANKEL

Have you been to the 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 ...

His line continues over:

EXT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL WATER BOARD - DAY

Erin's Hyundai pulls up and stops in a cloud of dust.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

... Incriminating records have a way of disappearing when people smell trouble.

Erin hops out, checks her reflection in the side-view mirror, then heads into the building.

INT. LAHOTAN REGIONAL COUNTY 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. This guy just might be all right, after all.

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 hexavalent chromium in an on-site ground water monitoring well ..."

(beat)

... hexavalent ...

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 & VITITOE, 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 & VITITOE, 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 & VITITOE, 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 & VITITOE, 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 fucking door for me.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin's Hyundai rumbles to a stop in front of the house. Erin shoves open the creaky, reluctant door, lifts her box of stuff off the seat, and gets out.

As she walks around the car and toward the house, she runs into the MAILMAN. He hands her a packet of mail.

MAILMAN

Here ya go, Miz Brockovich.

Erin looks at the top of the stack. It's the electric bill.

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 pepper, 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 bit of difference.

(then, fragile)

Oh God, George, how'd this happen to me? How'd I end up so ... so nothing?

George picks a napkin up off the floor, hands it to her.

GEORGE

You're not nothing, Erin.

ERIN

Well, I'm sure as hell not what I thought I was gonna be. I was supposed to have one of those great lives, with everything all laid-out and perfect. I mean, hell -- I was Miss Wichita, for God's sakes. Did I tell you that? You live next door to a real live beauty queen.

(wipes her nose)

I still got the tiara. I kept it cause I thought it meant something. I thought it meant I was gonna do something great with my life. I thought it proved I was gonna grow up to be someone.

GEORGE

You are someone.

ERIN

No I'm not. Look at me. I'm not.

GEORGE

You're someone to me.

(beat)

You're someone real special 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

I'm no good, George. I make people miserable.

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.

GEORGE

Man. Even your earlobes are beautiful.

He kisses one.

ERIN

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

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 bobbing 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 McMahon.

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

What are you doing here?

ED

I got an interesting call this afternoon.  
It was from a Dr. Frankel.

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 give 'em the ax?

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

Boy, are you ever a shitty judge of people.

Ed takes a beat, copping to the charge.

ED

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.

ED

But, PG&E told her about the chromium?

ERIN

They told her something, but it can't have been too specific, cause I talked to her, and she sure didn't think her water was bad.

ED

So what made you think it was?

ERIN

It doesn't take a genius to look at those medical records and think something's wrong.

ED

What medical records?

ERIN

The ones in the box of files.

(off Ed's blank look)

The box of files? The one from your office?

ED

I didn't see any medical records in there.

ERIN

Boy, you musta really fine-tooth-combed it then, huh?

(to herself)

And you fired me. Jesus.

Ed thinks for a moment.

ED

That document you found, 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, weighs her odds.

ERIN

I want a raise. And benefits. Including dental.

ED

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

Erin doesn't budge.

ED

Okay. A 5% raise, and --

ERIN

Ten.

(off his look)

There's a lot of other places I could work.

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

Find out.

EXT. 10 FREEWAY - DAY

Erin's Hyundai zips along the freeway. "Funky Town" is blaring from the tinny stereo. Over it:

MATTHEW (O.S.)

I hate this music.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

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

ERIN

There's no way a son of mine hates Funky Town. It's impossible.

MATTHEW

Well I hate it.

KATIE

I hate it too. I hate this trip.

ERIN

Oh, come on, where's your sense of adventure? We're going someplace you never been before.

KATIE

I'm gonna hate it.

MATTHEW

Me too.

She glances at them, frowns a little.

ERIN

You know what I'm realizing for the first time? You kids are a couple of downers. I mean, you are the real thing -- a couple of honest-to-God depresso-types.

(small smile)

Who in the heck raised you, anyway? Some kind of moron?

Katie smiles a little. She likes this side of her mom.

KATIE

Yeah. A real moron.

ERIN

Some kind of half-wit, no-good, big-haired, bimbo, I bet.

MATTHEW

(also smiling)

Yeah.

ERIN

Thank God we got you away from her, huh?

By now they're all smiling. Funky Town plays on.

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.

Whining, fussing. Ross goes over to her.

ROSS

You know what, Erin? I got nothing but time here. Why don't you let me do that for you, and you can get your kids some dinner.

ERIN

Ross -- you are an absolute angel.

She hands Ross the STACK OF DOCUMENTS.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 I.D. comes up on the LED: PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

INT. IRVING HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Another copy of those DOCUMENTS, now 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 a 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 he 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. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - DAY

It's morning. Ed is checking the lie of his tie in his reflection in the window. Erin is on his couch, high-heeled legs stretched out in front of her.

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

Jane is delivering paychecks. When Brenda gets to her desk, Jane tips her head toward Ed's office, as if to say, check it out. Brenda peers in and sees Erin.

BRENDA

What's she doing here?

JANE

He hired her back. With a raise.

BRENDA

What?? Why?

JANE

Well, let's see. It's not cause she's smart, and it's not cause she's professional. That leaves ...

Brenda's stunned. Takes a beat. Makes assumptions.

BRENDA

And dumb old me thought working hard and being loyal was the way to get ahead.

INT. ED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ed is still checking his reflection.

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 got 'em scared?

ED

It sure as hell sounded like they were

sitting up and taking notice.

Brenda pops her head in, ignores Erin.

BRENDA

David Baum from PG&E is at reception.

Erin feels the chill Brenda's sending her way.

ERIN

Nice to see you again, too, Brenda.

Brenda leaves without acknowledging Erin.

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.

ERIN

Not to question your judgment or anything, Mr. Masry, but -- that doesn't exactly look like sitting up and taking notice to me.

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 a 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)

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 a 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.

ED

(to himself)

Jesus Christ.

(he stands, to leave)

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

As Ed starts out:

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 28-billion dollar corporation.

ED

(containing his anger)

Thanks. I'll keep it in mind.

And Ed leaves the conference room. Erin follows him out.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Erin follows Ed as he stomps back to his office.

ERIN

At least they made an offer.

ED

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.

ERIN

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

ED

Because they can. You heard that kid -- they have 28 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?

Behind them, Baum steps out of the conference room.

BAUM

Hey, you know where I can get a cab? My plane leaves Burbank in forty-five minutes.

Ed turns and looks at him. He gets a tiny smile.

ED

Tell you what, why don't you go on over to reception, tell them I said Mario should take you to the airport.

BAUM

Hey, excellent. Thanks.

Baum heads out to the reception area.

ERIN

Mr. Masry, Mario gets lost going to the bathroom. They'll be driving around the valley for hours.

ED

(gleeful)

Yeah. Isn't that a shame?

She watches him go into his office, impressed. Big smile.

ERIN

Well I'll be God damned.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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, on account of the fact that I look at the word "dog" and see "god".

ROSALIND

Hey, just so long as you see Him.

Rosalind turns on Erin's desk lamp and heads out.

Outside the big glass office doors, Rosalind stops to talk to a lost-looking COUPLE IN THEIR MID-30's. These are MANDY and TOM BROWN. He's 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, 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. You guys still awake?

CLOSE ON MATT AND KATIE. They're awake and pissed.

ERIN

Come on, now. No faking. George told me he just shut out the light a few seconds ago.

They still don't answer. She comes in and sits on a bed.

ERIN

Look, I know you're mad. But the way this job is, things come up at the last minute, real important things, and I gotta deal with them. Now I don't like me missing dinner any more than you do, but we're all gonna have to get used to it, cause the fact is, it's gonna happen sometimes.

KATIE

It happens all the time.

ERIN

That's not true; we had dinner together just last night.

MATT

You were reading the whole time.

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

ERIN

I'm sorry, pumpkins. I'll try a whole lot

harder to be around, okay? I promise.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Erin enters and flops down onto the bed, exhausted. George is lying on the bed next to her.

GEORGE

If it's any consolation, I love you.

EXT. ROUTE 10, INLAND EMPIRE - DAY

Dry, flat California. Ed's big old Mercedes is toodling down the freeway, at an overly safe, almost-geriatric speed.

INT. ED'S MERCEDES - DAY

Frank Sinatra is playing on the stereo. Ed is swaying in time. This is his kind of music. He smiles, looks at Erin.

ED

It's Sinatra's world, we just live in it.

Whatever. Erin glances at the speedometer. Oy. So slow. His car phone rings. He picks it up.

ED

Hello? ...

(his voice softens)

Hi, babys. Baby's fine. Yes, I did. I did, too, you just didn't feel it.

He starts swerving across the lane markers. THWACK THWACK THWACK. Ed doesn't notice. Erin's getting nervous.

ED

You think I could leave without kissing my babys? Okay, here you go.

He kisses into the phone. Swerves. A car barely misses them. Erin's eyes widen. Not fun at all.

ED

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

He finally 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. Opens the door.

ERIN

First of all, don't talk baby talk to your wife in front of me. It really undermines your authority. And 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. They pull back out onto the freeway in silence.

EXT. MANDY BROWN'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.

DONNA

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

ED

It's okay. We're not suing. 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 God damn 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. Let's hit the road.

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

ERIN

(whispering)

Mr. Masry, if you don't mind my saying, you got a lot to learn about being friendly. These people just hired you as their lawyer. The least you could do is make a little pleasant conversation.

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. Then, finally:

ED

So, what's, uh... what's new?

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 --

PETE

She's not alone on that one.

LAURA

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

PETE

The bones start growing again. Gives her headaches like you wouldn't believe.

LAURA

-- they just don't know what caused it.

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.

Erin is holding Beth, watching Matt and Katie sleep. Erin hears the floor creak as George steps into the doorway.

ERIN

Tell me something, George. What kind of God lets a beautiful little 10-year-old girl get brain cancer? Isn't He supposed to be in charge of stuff like that? Make sure it doesn't happen?

(beat)

I swear, any other job, He'd be fired.

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

It's not about working hard --

ERIN

Bullshit.

ED

-- It's about being realistic. Something like this, Erin -- it could take forever. They're a huge corporation. They'd completely bury us in paperwork. I'm just one guy with a shitty little P.I. firm.

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 dogging Ed down the hall, to the office.

ERIN

And this shit is bad news, Mr. Masry. Not only does it attack every organ of the body, it fucks with your DNA, too. That means 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

Okay, fine. I don't know shit about shit. But I know the difference --

He 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, GROANS to himself. Then he pushes himself up and heads over to his door.

When he opens it, he finds Erin still standing there, exactly where he left her, arms crossed. She hasn't budged.

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.

He heads back to his desk. Erin follows him into his office.

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

What now?

ERIN

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 cel phone, won't I?

INT. TOYS 'R' US - DAY

CLOSE ON A BEEPING CEL PHONE

as Erin tries to program numbers into its speed dial. WIDEN to see she is reading from the phone's manual as she 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. Erin keeps messing with the phone.

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 7-11's 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, in high heels and miniskirt, is straddling a ditch, scooping clumps of gunky moss from the ditch into plastic containers. Over this:

ERIN (O.S.)

Dr. Frankel, it's Erin Brockovich. Tell me something: if I wanna find as much evidence of hexavalent chromium contamination as I possibly can, what should I do?

As Erin labels the containers, her heels slide 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.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

Well, what you have to remember is, if you have hex chrom in the water, you have it in anything that lived off the water.

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 in her spike heels.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

What I'd do is start a collection. Anything that existed in water, on water, under water ...

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

FRANKEL (O.S.)

anything that had water flow over or under 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.

FRANKEL (O.S.)

anything that had water pass through it ...

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.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN'S DESK - DAY

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

FRANKEL (O.S.)

... collect 'em, label 'em, then bring 'em to me. I'll analyze 'em, see what we got.

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?

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 have a dead bolt.  
Remember?

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

GEORGE

Look, don't take this the wrong way, but 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 -- that because they got all this money and power, we don't stand a chance in hell against them. 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.

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.

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

(a bad liar)

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 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.

EXT. WATER BOARD - NIGHT

Erin's car is parked in front. A DIRTY OLD PICK-UP comes rumbling up the road. When its lights hit Erin's car, it slows, then pulls over. The driver flicks on his BRIGHTS to get a better look at the car. The truck sits there for a bit, a dark presence. Then, as the headlights of another car appear down the road, the truck goes back in gear, pulls out and drives off.

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, no jokes, I gotta pee. 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.

LATER STILL ...

Erin and Ed are passing out informational pamphlets. She sticks one in a 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.

As he steps away, a hand reaches down and grabs the flier he dropped. It belongs to a MAN IN A BLACK JACKET. He's in his 50's, strong and sinewy. Military-style dark glasses obscure his eyes. He scans the pamphlet, then watches Erin working the crowd. Watches her carefully. He slides the pamphlet into his inside pocket, and heads back his car -- the DIRTY

OLD PICK-UP TRUCK that idled in front of the Water Board.

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.

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?

LATER ...

The barbecue is winding down. Ed is heading for his Mercedes. Erin storms up beside him, mad as all get-out.

ERIN

I need a ride.

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 cel phone rings. She digs into her bag, pulling it out as fast as she can. Answers.

ERIN

What, asshole?

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. 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.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE STREET - DAY

George, in his leather and denim, is walking down the sidewalk. As we WIDEN, we see he's pushing a PINK STROLLER. He stops at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to change.

In the stroller, Beth starts to whine. George reaches in his pocket, finds her pacifier. As he's leaning down to give it to her, he hears a RUMBLE coming down the street behind him. The roar grows. He stands, looks. A GROUP OF ABOUT TEN BIKERS has pulled up next to him. He looks at them. They look at him, then at the stroller. George feels ridiculous.

When the light changes, the bikers REV LOUDLY and pull out. George just stands there and watches them go.

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 it 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

I guess it was a little too inconvenient. So for fourteen years, this stuff flowed into the groundwater, free as you please.

ED

Jesus.

(beat)

I don't even wanna ask what you did to make this Melendez guy talk.

In response to the insinuation, Erin gives him a glare.

ERIN

For your information, 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.

ERIN

No --

Suddenly, her eyes pop out of her head --

ERIN

SHIT! SHIT! Hot! Hot! Hot!

Tears spring to her eyes. She fans furiously at her mouth. Ed finds the tequila from the client and hands it to her. She takes a swig. There's a nanosecond of relief ... until the tequila hits. Her eyes redden. She spews and gasps.

ERIN

You ... asshole ...

Ed chuckles.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ED'S OFFICE - LATER

The tequila's been dipped into. Ed and Erin are each lying on a couch, staring at documents. Late-night working.

ED

Erin -- lemme tell you something. If I'da put three researchers on this, I wouldn't expect them to dig up all the information you got here. This is some damn good work.

ERIN

Yeah? Then gimme another raise.

ED

Hey, I got a staff to pay, plus rent, plus I haven't billed a minute of my time since I started on this case, so you can quit hitting me up like I'm rich or something.

He gets up, grabs his trash can, and moves around the room with it, cleaning up all the Chinese food cartons.

ERIN

Don't give me that. You're gonna get plenty rich off of this, Mr. 40 percent. We 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 that.

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 punitive damages is where the money is.

ERIN

Jesus Christ, Ed -- you know, the more I work on this thing, the more I realize what a crock of shit this legal system is. Here we got a company that poisoned a whole aquifer -- that built a pool for a town, then filled it with toxic water -- and we're the ones who've gotta bust our ass proving things? That's just not right.

Beat. Ed smiles.

ED

I like this case.

ERIN

Really? It makes me sick.

ED

Me too. That's why I like it. It's been a long time since I had a case I cared about.

ERIN

You didn't care about my case?

ED

I would now.

He gives her a long look.

ED

Hey. I like working with you.

ERIN

Well, good, Ed. I like working with you too.

They both smile a little awkwardly. Take a beat. Then:

ED

When'd you start calling me Ed?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE - NIGHT

The Christmas party. The office is decorated; someone is Santa. Erin and George enter, all dressed up.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Erin's giving George a guided tour. As they head down the hall, every desk is decorated and has a present on it

GEORGE

I'm just saying -- we have one night to ourselves, why do we have to spend it here?

ERIN

Cause it's my office party. If you had an office, I'd go to your party.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN AND BRENDA'S DESKS - NIGHT

It's dark. The door to Erin's area opens.

ERIN

And here, ta-daa, is my desk.

She flicks on the lights. Brenda's desk is decorated and has a present on it. Erin's is empty.

GEORGE

Which one?

(it's obvious)

Maybe they didn't think you were coming.

Erin shakes her head. She's surprised by how hurt she is.

ERIN

(quietly)

God damn. I work so hard. The least they could do ...

George looks over at her, sees her eyes glisten a little. He goes over to her, wraps his arms around her.

GEORGE

Hey. Fuck 'em, babe. Who needs 'em, huh?

He kisses her. She leans into him. He kisses her some more.

GEORGE

(quietly)

See? All we need is each other.

She kisses back. She's gonna let him take care of her. Some more kisses, heating up. He slides her onto her empty desk.

GEORGE

Good thing there isn't a present there, huh?  
That mighta hurt.

She laughs a little. He slides his hands up her skirt. She pulls him into her, tugging his shirt out of his pants.

INT. MASRY OFFICES, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ed is coming down the hall with his wife, JOEY. Joey is much younger than Ed, and very pretty.

ED

I'll show you what we did back here --

INT. ERIN'S DESK - NIGHT

Erin and George, in a rapidly-heating-up clinch on her desk, hear the voices. Erin pulls away.

ERIN

That's Ed.

GEORGE

Lock the door.

ERIN

No, I wanna say hi.

He pulls her back into him, not wanting to move.

GEORGE

We'll say hi later. Lock it.

But Erin pulls away ...

ERIN

Come on, George, it's a party.

He watches her straighten her dress and take a step away from him. It's just one step, but it feels a hell a lot farther.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - LATER

Erin and Ed are at the reception desk, talking and laughing.

NEARBY, Joey and George are standing together, awkwardly.

JOEY

Your wife's real pretty.

GEORGE

She's not my wife.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATT AND KATIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew lies awake in his bed, listening to George and Erin fight.

GEORGE (O.S.)

It wouldn't kill you to talk about something other than yourself and your own fucking job once in a while --

ERIN (O.S.)

What do you want to talk about instead? Your day? That's a fascinating subject.

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

Erin and George are fighting while they get ready for bed.

GEORGE

Fuck you. Just cause I don't spend all day trying to prove what hot shit I am --

ERIN

That is not what I'm --

GEORGE

Bullshit, Erin. Bullshit.

The fight is interrupted by the sound of BETH CRYING.

ERIN

Great. Excellent. Thank you very much.

She leaves the room.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beth is wailing in her crib. Erin comes in in her nightshirt and lifts Beth out. Then, more to herself than to Beth:

ERIN

It's okay, baby. It'll be okay.

She runs her hand over Beth's head, then slides down the wall and crumples onto the floor. As she curls around Beth, Erin starts to COUGH. Deep, raspy coughs from way down low.

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. MASRY & VITITOE, DAY

CLOSE ON THE FAX LED

as DOCUMENTS are faxed once again to the PG&E CLAIMS DEPT.

THEN AGAIN, on another day.

AND AGAIN, on another day.

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

Ed is once again checking the lie of his tie in a window. Erin is popping some aspirin, trying to kill a headache that has brought with it a healthy dose of intolerance.

ERIN

If they've sent that little shmuck Baum again, I'm gonna be real pissed off.

ED

From their tone of voice on the phone, I'd say they're taking us more seriously.

ERIN

Yeah, I heard that one before.

Brenda leans her head in.

BRENDA

Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Webster, Mr. Buda, and Ms. Cooper, from PG&E are here.

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

Erin, Ed and Brenda are staring out at them.

ERIN

Jesus. They look like the Secret Service.

ED

They're trying to intimidate us.  
(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 Mario (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 --

MR. 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. Two 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 -- we got more'n a hundred plaintiffs. They may not be sophisticated, but they do know how to divide, and two million dollars isn't shit when it's split between them.

Mario 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. 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.

And she gets up and storms out of the meeting.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, COFFEE AREA - DAY

Erin drinks a big swig of coffee and pops a few more aspirin. Beyond her, the PG&E lawyers are filing out of the office. Anna wanders over to Erin, a little uncomfortable.

ANNA

Um, Erin?

(Erin turns)

Listen. Even though you're not necessarily my favorite person in the world ...

(beat)

... sometimes you're not half-bad.

ERIN

I'm gonna assume that was meant as a compliment, Anna, and just say thank you.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, ERIN'S DESK - NIGHT

Erin's at her desk, which is completely buried in documents and files. She's visibly exhausted, struggling to focus on the page, and COUGHING while she works. Ed calls to her.

ED

Hey. A new plaintiff called, wants to meet you. I told him we'd be out there Thursday.

ERIN

D'you get his name?

(no answer)

Course not. Jesus, Ed --

ED

He said he'd be at the gas station at six.

ERIN

Boy, this job takes me to some of the best damn places, huh?

EXT. HINKLEY GAS STATION - SUNSET

Erin is sitting out front, swigging cough syrup from the bottle. She checks her watch: 6:30. The GAS STATION ATTENDANT comes out, locks up, and turns out the lights.

ERIN

This is the only station in town, right?

ATTENDANT

Yup.

He gets in his car and drives off. Erin sits down again. Looks down the road in both directions. Nothing.

Then she spots, behind some bushes across the street, a glint of chrome. She shields her eyes against the sunset and sees: the BEAT-UP TRUCK parked behind some shrubbery.

Erin looks around, realizes she's alone. As she looks back at the truck, the ASH of a cigarette brightens in the cab. She realizes she's being watched. The driver's door opens.

Erin bolts for her car, scrambling to find her keys. She jumps in, locks her doors, and tries to start her car, but it won't turn over. Panic. The Man in the Dark Glasses has gotten out and is heading toward her car. Erin looks around again. Not a soul. She tries the engine again. And again.

Just as he gets to her car, the engine engages. Erin peels out of the gas station.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin drives down the road, hyperventilating, trying to focus on the road. She looks in the rear-view mirror -- nothing.

She reaches the train tracks. A train is passing. She has to stop. As she's waiting, the glint of headlights bounce off her rear view mirror. Truck lights, coming her way. Fuck. She looks at the train -- still passing -- then back at the headlights closing in on her. The train, the headlights, the train, the headlights ...

Finally, when the headlights are right behind her, the last train car zips by. Erin peels out, bounding her rickety car

over the tracks. The truck follows.

EXT. HINKLEY ROAD - NIGHT

The Hyundai zips down the road. And behind it, the truck.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

She looks out at the landscape around her. It's black. No other cars on the road. She starts to panic, accelerates.

EXT. HINKLEY ROAD - NIGHT

The Hyundai going faster. The truck still following.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

Erin comes up on a stop sign. She runs it. So does the truck. A little later, she makes a turn and sees THE LOST CAUSE SALOON. In the parking lot, like a lifeboat, sits Ed's Mercedes. She pulls into the drive and jumps out of her car.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Ed is eating ribs when Erin bursts through the door. She rushes over to him, near tears with fear and exhaustion.

ERIN

Someone's following me.

ED

What? Who?

ERIN

Some guy in a truck -- he waited till I was alone, then he followed me, like, two miles. Jesus, I'm shaking. Get me a beer.

Ed gets up and heads toward the door.

ED

(to the counter guy)

Beer, please.

As Ed looks out the door, Erin collapses onto a bench.

ED

What kind of truck?

ERIN

I don't know. Big. Dark.

ED

He's gone.

(back to the table)

Did you get a license plate? Or a make?

ERIN

No, Ed -- what with me running for my life,  
I didn't have time to check those things --

ED

I was just asking. Are you all right?

ERIN

Yeah. Yeah, I'm ... fine.

Ed looks at her. She looks terrible. Shaky, tired, drawn.

ED

Jesus, you look like shit. When was the  
last time you had a decent night's sleep?

EXT. HINKLEY MOTEL - NIGHT

Crappy and pink. Ed's Mercedes pulls into the parking lot.  
Erin's Hyundai follows. Ed stops, gets out.

INT. HYUNDAI - NIGHT

Ed swings by Erin's open car window.

ED

Don't worry. I'm getting two rooms.

EXT. HINKLEY MOTEL - NIGHT

Erin and Ed amble down the porch, checking door numbers, each  
rattling a key. They find their adjacent rooms and stop.  
Erin leans against the wall, too weak to stand.

ED

Lock the door every which way you can. And  
if there's anything -- funny sound, whatever  
-- pound on the wall. I'll come right over.

She nods a little. Then before she goes into her room:

ERIN

I think you should know -- there's very few  
people in the world who don't piss me off 90  
percent of the time.

(beat)  
You're one of 'em.

It's as tender as she gets, and he's moved by it. They look at each other. Maybe even considering. But after a long beat, she reaches for her door again. Moment over.

ED  
I'm triple locking my door, so don't even think of trying to take advantage.

She smiles, goes inside. He watches her close her door behind her before going inside himself.

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.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Katie and Matt are making a mess of breakfast. Beth is on the floor, grinding cereal into the linoleum.

ERIN (O.S.)  
Hello?

Erin enters, having just gotten home, and sees the mayhem.

ERIN  
What are you doing? Where's George?

KATIE  
I don't know.

ERIN  
George!

She heads out.

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

George is sitting on the bed when Erin enters.

ERIN  
Jesus, George, they're turning the kitchen into a hellhole. You know you can't leave them alone like that.

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 earlobes. 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. In six months, you haven't said one nice thing to me. That's a long time.

ERIN

I'm sorry. I'm just working so hard --

GEORGE

I know. But still. Six months.

(he stands)

I think 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 not 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

I can't. Look -- this job -- it's the best

thing that ever happened to me. I mean it. 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. I need it.

GEORGE

More than you need me.

ERIN

I need it.

He nods, then stands, to leave.

GEORGE

Maybe you didn't like who you were before, Erin, but I did. That's who I fell in love with.

Only then does she see the packed duffel bag in the corner.

ERIN

You already packed up your stuff?

GEORGE

I pretty much knew what your answer was gonna be.

He picks it up and walks out the door, tossing the earring box on the bed as he goes.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin is at her window, looking out at the street below. George is strapping a couple of bags onto the back of his bike. He gets on the bike, starts it up, and drives away.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin is driving, looking weary. Her kids are in the car.

Matthew turns on the radio. Erin reaches over and turns it off. Matthew turns it back on. Erin glares at him, turns it off. On/off/on/off. A test of wills. Finally, when Matthew turns it on one more time, Erin turns it off, yanks the knob off the stereo and throws it out the window.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE PARKING LOT - DAY

The Hyundai pulls into the lot.

INT. HYUNDAI - DAY

Erin parks the car, unclips her seat belt.

ERIN

Wait here.

She gets out.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Business as usual. Erin comes in, goes straight to her desk.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 & VITITOE, 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?

JANE

You're clever. I'm sure you'll think of something.

Erin glares at her ...

ERIN

I don't believe this --

... then turns and storms out of Jane's office.

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

Ed is on the phone when Erin barges in, rage in her eyes.

ERIN

I want my fucking money --

ED

(into phone)

I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to put you on hold for just one second here --

(puts the call on hold, then, to Erin)

Do you mind?

ERIN

(seething)

Yeah, I mind. You bet your ass I mind.

Clearly, she's in a dander he's going to have to deal with.

ED

Oh, Jesus. You wanna tell me what the problem is here, or --

ERIN

It's my paycheck. Which I earned. Which I deserve. Which I shouldn't have to beg for. That fat-ass bitch won't give it to me.

ED

Erin, you're a big girl. If you got a problem with Jane, work it out for yourself. I don't have time to deal with --

ERIN

Fuck you. Make time. Cause I bust my ass for you. I watch everything else in my life go straight in the toilet, for you. And what do you do for me? Huh? You see the way I'm treated around here -- but have you ever stood up for me once? Have you ever mentioned to everyone what good work I'm doing? Have you ever bothered saying, hey, Erin doesn't get paid the most cause she has the best tits; she gets paid the most cause she's the best God damn employee I've ever had?

ED

Is that what you want?

ERIN

I want my paycheck. By the end of the day.

Ed sighs. Realizes he's going to have to take this on.

ED

I'll see what I can do.

ERIN

You might want to think real hard about the amount, too. My kids are sitting in the God damn parking lot right now, cause I still don't make enough to afford good child care. Makes me think about looking around for a job where I'm appreciated, for shit's sake.

She storms out.

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.

MATTHEW

Can I play roller hockey?

ERIN

We'll see.

MATTHEW

When?

The DOORBELL RINGS. Erin goes to get it. Matthew follows

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Matthew is dogging Erin on this. Beth is still crying.

MATTHEW

Randy's mom said yes right away.

ERIN

(snapping)

Well, God damn it, Matthew -- Randy's mom doesn't work eighteen-hour days, and Randy's dad didn't leave her, so figuring out who's gonna take who where is a little easier over

at Randy's house.

Erin opens the door. A MESSENGER is there.

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. AND LOOK OUTSIDE. - E."

Erin looks up and sees A BRAND-NEW CHEVY BLAZER parked on the curb. She looks at the keys in her hand. Chevy keys. Whoa.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Erin drives up in the Blazer, pulls into a parking space.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, LAW LIBRARY - DAY

It's dark. Ed's seated at a table, alone. Erin walks by the door, then spots him and stops in the doorway.

ERIN

Believe it or not, I would've been satisfied with just the check.

Ed turns, sees her.

ED

Well, you go threatening to leave, I can't take any chances. You're the only person around who understands what I'm doing. Things come up, I gotta know I got someone to turn to.

She sits, reading him.

ERIN

What kind of things come up?

ED

Things like the head counsel for PG&E  
calling me with an offer.

(beat)

20 million, plus attorney's fees. Take it  
or leave it.

ERIN

Whoa. No shit.

ED

It's about 50 thousand per plaintiff.

ERIN

So what are you thinking?

ED

I'm thinking ... I wish someone else had to  
make this decision.

(beat)

50 thousand bucks is more than any other  
California toxic plaintiff has gotten.  
Ever. But ...

ERIN

... but it won't cover Annabelle Daniels's  
medical bills.

ED

And it's less than pocket change for PG&E.

ERIN

Do you think we'd do better by going to  
trial?

ED

Maybe. but maybe not. We still don't have  
anything linking this to PG&E corporate.  
Plus, there's the statute problem. Plus,  
we're way short on manpower, so we'd need to  
bring on more lawyers ...

ERIN

Plus, 40 percent of 20 million's a whole lot  
of money.

ED

It's eight million dollars, Erin. Eight  
million dollars.

Beat.

ERIN

That's a fucking fortune, Ed. And you know I'm the last person on Earth to walk away from a big payday. But you and me didn't get into this to get rich. We did it cause we both have this voice in our heads saying, do the right thing; get these plaintiffs what they deserve -- the right to live and die in some kind of comfort and peace. If 50,000 isn't gonna buy that, then we gotta say no.

(beat)

Trust me. If you don't do the right thing for these people, getting that 6 million dollars is gonna feel like shit.

He nods to himself, and looks up at her, his mind made up.

ED

I knew I put up with your bullshit for a reason.

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

This guy, Erin -- he's got more toxic tort experience than anyone else in California. He's huge. And he said yes to me on the first phone call, right off the bat.

(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

Don't joke. They might. So do me a favor and behave yourself for once.

(to receptionist)

Ed Masry to see Kurt Potter.

As Ed turns to check his reflection, a YOUNG LAWYER comes

through the reception area. Erin watches him pass, then, still miffed, 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 AREA - 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, KURT POTTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Potter is sitting behind his giant desk when Theresa leads Ed and Erin in.

THERESA

Kurt, Ed Masry's here. And this is Erin Brockovich, Ed's assistant. Erin, this is Kurt Potter.

POTTER

(to Ed, with a wink)

Well. Now I know what you meant when you called her your secret weapon.

Erin gives Ed another look. What the fuck? Ed gives her a firm look back. Behave.

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Potter, Ed, Erin, Theresa and few PARALEGALS are sitting around the table. As the conversation ping-pongs between Ed and Potter, Potter completely ignores Erin.

POTTER

When'd they file the demur?

ED

Yesterday.

ERIN

What's a demur?

ED

It's PG&E saying to the judge that we don't have a case. Their lawyers go --

POTTER

How many counts?

ED

Sixty-nine. We've got good answers to all of 'em.

ERIN

Counts?

ED

Reasons PG&E thinks it shouldn't go to --

POTTER

Who's the judge?

ED

Corey.

POTTER

Good.

ERIN

Why good?

ED

He's got a reputation for doing all his --

POTTER

How long's he gonna take?

Erin's starting to steam at Potter. Theresa sees it brewing,

tries to intercede.

THERESA

You know what? Why don't I take Erin down the hall, so we can start in on this stuff?

Erin notices all her files in stacks against the wall.

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

Because that's how people treat each other!

ERIN

Not in my world.

ED

Gee, I wonder why.

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!

INT. POTTER, HUGHES & ROSEWOOD, HALLWAY - DAY

Potter and Ed are walking down the hallway, mid-conversation. A FEW PARALEGALS follow them with files.

POTTER

I've also been thinking about the team. Responsibilities, who should cover what --

ED

Right.

POTTER

I think we should makes some changes.

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 & VITITOE, 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

That may be. But I don't want her coming to the house again. She's kinda stuck-up, and she upsets Annabelle. Now, I hate to say this, but when she left today, Rita asked if we should get a new lawyer.

ERIN

Ted, no -- don't do that. 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.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, 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 the ass, okay, Brenda? 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 & VITITOE, 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. On the other side of the table, are FOUR SUITED BACKS.

ERIN

What's going on in there?

ROSALIND

Some meeting. With PG&E people.

ERIN

PG& -- Are you sure?

ROSALIND

Yup. They must be important, too, cause they came on a special plane.

Erin feels this like a sock in the gut. She stares at the meeting, stunned.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

This band of PG&E lawyers is the oldest and most impressive of all. Ed, Potter, and Theresa are listening to the most senior PG&E lawyer, MR. CORBIN, talk.

CORBIN

... we would enter into binding arbitration -- judge, no jury -- with a settlement to be between 50 and 400 million dollars.

Ed and Potter hear this and think about it.

POTTER

Any preconditions on the settlements?

CORBIN

The plaintiffs have to agree to it unanimously. And they're barred from ever discussing their settlement with anyone.

ED

50-400 million dollars isn't a whole hell of a lot of money for your company, Mr. Corbin.

HEAD COUNSEL

50-400 million dollars is a great deal of money for your plaintiffs, Mr. Masry.

As Ed mulls this, he sees, beyond Mr. Corbin,

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 & VITITOE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ed comes out. Erin's so angry she can barely breathe.

ERIN

If you tell me to relax, I'm gonna kick your fucking head off --

ED

Erin, it's just a meeting.

ERIN

People don't fly down in their own god damn plane for "just a meeting" --

ED

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.

ED

Okay, look. It's an important meeting. Kurt thought, if it was just lawyers --

ERIN

Kurt thought? What about you? Do you think anymore?

He resists being dragged into an knock-down, drag-out fight.

ED

Look, this is serious now. They're talking serious money --

ERIN

And, what, I'm not serious?

ED

You're emotional. You're erratic. You say any God damn thing that comes into your head. And I'm not saying that's bad. That can be great; that can be a lot of fun --

ERIN

"Fun?" Jesus, "fun?" I kill myself for a year and a half, hand you the best case of your life on a God damn silver platter,

remind you of why you became a lawyer in the first place, and you think of me as "fun?"

ED

Okay, now you're making this personal, and it isn't --

ERIN

Not personal? That's my work in there, Ed. My sweat, my labor, my time. If that's not personal, I don't know what is.

She starts to COUGH and CRUMBLE, but fights it.

ERIN

(weakened)

How dare you take that away from me.

ED

No one's taking anything --

ERIN

Bullshit. You stuck me in Siberia dictating to some God damn steno clerk so you could finish this thing without me. After all I've done for you, that's the thanks I get.

By now the entire office is watching. As are the lawyers in the conference room.

ED

Don't give me that. You've gotten plenty. You've been well-paid; you've gotten lots of perks ...

ERIN

Perks? Jesus -- perks?

Erin reaches into her bag, pulls out her cel phone.

ERIN

If this piece of shit is supposed to take the place of your respect, you can take it and shove it up your ass.

She throws it at him and storms away. The phone hits the glass wall of the conference room, CRACKING it. Ed just stands there, with the lawyers staring at him through the splintered glass wall.

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.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin's driving home. As she turns onto her street, her headlights wash across the sidewalk and illuminate a small boy, wearing a backpack, walking the other way.

ERIN

Holy shit --

She looks over her shoulder, but the sidewalk is too dark. She pulls a U-turn in the middle of the street. A CAR HONKS.

Erin scans the sidewalk, finally sees him again. Holy shit, is right. It's Matthew, wandering the streets at night.

ERIN

Matthew --

She pulls ahead of Matthew and bumps up onto the sidewalk, blocking his path. When he sees her car, he turns and runs the other way. Erin leaps out and follows him.

ERIN

Matthew! MATTHEW!

She catches up and collars him.

ERIN

God damn it, Matthew. What the hell are you doing out here?

MATTHEW

I'm gonna go live with George.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC is playing. TANIA is on the phone. The receiver is yanked from her hand. She turns to see Erin hovering over her, barely containing herself.

ERIN

If you leave here real fast, I might not kill you.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MATTHEW AND KATIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matthew's in his bed, facing the wall. Erin sitting on the foot of his bed, near tears. Katie's watching from her bed.

ERIN

We'll work out the roller hockey thing, okay? Whatever you want, we'll work it out. I promise.

MATTHEW

You always say that. Then you go to work and forget you promised.

ERIN

I never forget, honey. I try, real hard. It's just, for some reason, I don't seem to be able to organize things right and -- when it comes to you guys, I end up falling short.

MATTHEW

You never fall short for the work people. I guess maybe you just love them more.

ERIN

Oh, God, sweetheart, no. There's nothing on Earth I love more than you. Nothing.

(beat)

I promise.

She lays her hand on his shoulder, but he shrugs it off and inches away from her.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Erin comes out of the bedroom. As she turns to close the door, she collapses to the floor in a heap. Out cold.

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. They brought her in in an ambulance?

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

She must be a tough cookie, cause 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 ...

GEORGE

... or lemme guess -- toxic waste?

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.

GEORGE (O.S.)

They can stay at my place till you go home.

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

They said that'd be tomorrow. They just wanna keep an eye on me another night.

GEORGE

Fine. 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, hang on.  
(he pauses)  
Look ... I'm sorry. I just --

There's a KNOCK at the door, and Ed enters. George looks at him. Not interested in her apologies.

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 embarrassed me, 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.

ERIN  
Between 50 and 400 million, definitely?

ED  
Uh-huh.

ERIN  
And if you had to guess ...

ED

With nothing linking it to the corporate offices yet, I'd say we'll end up on the lower end of that. Still a lot of money.

ERIN

So why would PG&E offer it?

ED

Because. They know the evidence; they know they're gonna lose a jury trial. Maybe they wouldn't lose 400 million bucks, but once you factor in all they'd spend on this case in the next ten years, it makes a lot of --

ERIN

Wait, what do you mean, ten years?

ED

Five years, maybe, for a trial. Double that for the appeal.

ERIN

(confused)

I'm sorry, are you saying that if this thing goes to trial, it'll be ten years before these plaintiffs see their money?

ED

Hey, that's not so bad. Compare it to the Love Canal -- that was twenty years ago, and those people still haven't seen a dime. So in legal terms, ten years is --

ERIN

Fuck legal terms. We're talking about human beings here. Sick people. A whole bunch of them are gonna be dead in ten years. They need their money now!

(beat)

We gotta get 'em to agree to the arbitration, Ed. We gotta get every damn one of those plaintiffs to --

ED

I know. We're having a meeting, it's all set up --

ERIN

When? Where?

ED

Tuesday at seven, at the Hinkley firehouse.

ERIN

Okay, good. I think I should be the one to tell 'em, cause they trust me more than --

ED

You're not gonna be there.

ERIN

The fuck I'm not. I don't care what the doctor says --

ED

This isn't doctor's orders. It's mine. I'm saying you can't come.

ERIN

Why not?

ED

Because Kurt doesn't want to work with you. He thinks you're a loose cannon.

ERIN

Fuck Kurt.

ED

Erin --

ERIN

No, I'm serious. You know what Kurt Potter is? He's the kind of guy who never would have taken this case in the first place. He's the kind of guy who would have sold these plaintiffs down the river when PG&E offered 20 million. He doesn't work like us, Ed. There's no little voice in his head telling him to do the right thing.

But his mind's made up. He stands to leave.

ED

Don't come, Erin. I mean it. If you do, I'm gonna have to fire you.

(beat)

Just ... concentrate on getting well.

EXT. HINKLEY FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

The parking lot is empty, except for three Mercedes. Ed, Potter, and Theresa are in the doorway, going over their notes. A TRUCK pulls into the lot.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Katie and Matt are watching TV. Beth is playing near them. Behind them, Erin is lying on the couch, under a blanket, distractedly trying to watch TV. She checks her watch.

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.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin's sitting up now, jiggling her knee, unable to sit still. She checks her watch again. 6:30. She can't take it. She throws off the blanket and gets up.

ERIN

Come on, kids, we're going for a ride.

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.

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. Potter's addressing them from a raised platform. Ed, Theresa, and Andrew are seated behind him.

POTTER

Binding arbitration isn't all that different from a trial. It's overseen by a judge. Evidence is presented in much the same way.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

One more car pulls into the lot. It's Erin's Chevy.

INT. ERIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Erin unbuckles her seat belt.

ERIN

Stay in the car, babies, I won't be long.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Erin gets out of the car, looks around, then goes over to a window and looks in at the packed meeting.

PLAINTIFF (O.S.)

And then a jury decides?

POTTER (O.S.)

No, sorry, I should have mentioned that. There's no jury in binding arbitration. No jury, and no appeal.

She climbs up on an old wagon for a better view.

BOB LINWOOD (O.S.)

No appeal? So what are our options if we don't like the result?

POTTER (O.S.)

Well -- you have none. The judge's decision is final. But I really don't anticipate that as a problem.

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Now, in addition to the stifling heat, the large room is thick with mistrust. People are shifting in their seats, whispering to each other.

TOM BROWN

You don't even know what it's gonna be; how do you know we're gonna like it?

Agreeing MURMURS ripple through the crowd.

POTTER

As I said before, it will definitely be somewhere between 50 and 400 million dollars.

MANDY BROWN

Which? There's a big difference there.

POTTER

I wouldn't want to speculate at this point.

MANDY BROWN

Ed -- what do you think it'll be?

Potter turns around and looks at Ed seated behind him.

ED

I think ... Kurt's right. We shouldn't speculate.

MANDY BROWN

So then, what, that mystery number's divided up at the whim of some judge --

POTTER

Judges don't make decisions based on whim, ma'am. They make them based on precedent and evidence.

The GRUMBLE of discontent has overtaken the room. More whispering, more movement.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Erin watches the meeting fall apart. It's driving her crazy.

ERIN

Fucking idiot --

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Potter sees he's losing them, too. Tries to gain control.

POTTER

Look. Everyone. Is this a big decision? Absolutely. But I do believe that if you put a little faith in the system, you'll be quite pleased with the outcome.

Ted Daniels gets up from his seat.

TED DANIELS

Mr. Potter, if you knew me from Adam, you'd know that being pleased isn't an option for me anymore. Now don't take this personally, sir, but I've never seen you before in my life. I'm not about to put my faith in anything just cause you tell me to.

He drops his agreement form, unsigned, then takes Rita's hand and heads for the door.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Meeting's over. The plaintiffs stream out of the firehouse. Cars start up, headlights flick on. People pull away.

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone has left. Erin enters and looks around. The floor is littered with rejected, unsigned release forms.

She thinks for a moment, then gets an idea. She picks up a release form, and leaves the firehouse.

EXT. MINI MALL - NIGHT

Everything's closed, except the KINKO'S store at the far end. Erin's truck pulls into the parking lot.

INT. KINKO'S - NIGHT

A BORED EMPLOYEE is at the register, painting with Wite-Out on a blue piece of paper. Erin enters, dragging her kids.

ERIN

Can I have one of those counter thingies,  
please?

The Employee gives it to her. Erin crosses to the copiers. She slips the release form into one, then taps in the number of copies: 635. Presses "START." The machine WHIRS to life.

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 got a favor to ask you.

GEORGE (O.S.)

I don't do favors for you anymore.

ERIN

It's not for me; it's for my kids. You're the only one I trust them with.

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. She turns around and sees him pulling up next to her Chevy.

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.

GEORGE

They up?

ERIN

Hunh-uh. Not yet.

(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.

GEORGE

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. She gets into her car. Before closing the door, she turns back to him.

ERIN

And I miss you.

GEORGE

Yeah, well -- good help is hard to find.

She sees how mad she's made him. Takes a beat.

ERIN

I treated you real bad, George. I know that. But, my problem was -- I never been with anyone who deserved better than that. You're the first nice guy who ever liked me.

George softens, shifts. He steps toward the truck and gently closes her door, so he's standing close to her.

ERIN

I just ... didn't know how to handle it. That's all.

He thinks about this. Finally:

GEORGE

Think you could learn?

ERIN

(with a smile)

You know me. I pick things up real fast.

He smiles back at her, nods, then tenderly brushes a piece of hair out of her eyes.

GEORGE

You shouldn't be driving around, you know. You're sick.

ERIN

Yeah, but I'm gonna get better. A lot of these folks aren't.

He nods, understanding. Then he taps the side of her truck and turns toward the motel room. She puts the truck in gear and pulls out.

EXT. HINKLEY, COMMUNITY BOULEVARD - DAY

Erin's Chevy is bombing down the road.

INT. ERIN'S CAR, BACK SEAT - DAY

There are two boxes there -- one full of unsigned release forms, the other empty.

EXT. DONNA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Donna's gardening out front, her head wrapped in a scarf to cover her chemo-thinning hair, when Erin's Chevy pulls into the driveway. Erin gets out, goes to the back of the truck, gets two of the release forms, then heads over to Donna.

INT. DONNA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erin is sitting with Pete and Donna.

DONNA

I don't know, Erin -- the way he was talking to us, telling us everything was gonna be fine -- I just didn't trust him.

PETE

And after all we been through -- no jury, no appeal. It just makes me nervous.

ERIN

I understand all that. And I don't wanna force you into anything. If you don't want to sign, that's fine. But why don't we talk it over a little, cause I'd sure hate for you to turn this down for the wrong reasons.

EXT. DONNA'S HOUSE - DAY

The door opens. Erin emerges, holding two signed agreements. Donna is letting her out.

ERIN

You wouldn't happen to have a little time right now, would you, Donna?

DONNA

For what?

ERIN

Well, I was gonna head over to the Browns now. I was thinking -- Mandy really values your opinion ...

INT. MANDY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erin, Donna, Mandy, and Tom are seated on the sofas. Mandy signs an agreement. Hands the pen to Tom, who also signs.

EXT. LINWOODS' HOUSE - DAY

From outside, we see Erin at the kitchen table with Donna and Bob and Ruth Linwood, who are listening intently.

INT. DESOTOS' HOUSE - DAY

Erin and Donna are leaving, saying good-bye to Mary DeSoto. Erin has a signed release form in her hand.

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S CAR - DAY

DISCO blares. The two boxes. The formerly empty one now has a small stack of signed release forms in it. The top one has Bob Linwood's signature.

IN THE FRONT SEAT

Erin is driving, eating a hamburger, and going over her list of plaintiffs.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - EVENING

People are going about their shopping. Rita Daniels is stopped, talking with A FEW MORE PLAINTIFFS.

RITA

I thought so, too, but Erin says a trial's gonna take years

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.

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 the group of them, feels their shift toward acceptance. Smiles, moved.

ERIN

Eggs'd be great, baby. Eggs'd be perfect.

INT. ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

Erin's driving along a dusty Hinkley road, eating cold eggs out of a take-out container with her fingers.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

Morning. A GROUP OF MEN are arriving at work. Erin's truck pulls up. She grabs some release forms from the truck and wanders up to the men.

ERIN

Hey, y'all. How you all doing today?

INT. THE BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

She tosses eight more agreements in the signed stack.

EXT. HINKLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Morning drop-off time. Erin is handing out release forms to a GROUP of MOTHERS who just dropped off their kids.

EXT. HINKLEY MART - NIGHT

Erin is leaning on the hood of her truck, going down her list of plaintiffs, checking off the ones who have already signed.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - DAY

Another day. Erin has set up shop here and is at a table with about FIVE PLAINTIFFS, all reading agreements. MIKE

AMBROSINO enters. Erin spots him.

ERIN

Mike! I been looking all over for you.  
Come here, I wanna talk to you.

INT. BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The signed stack is getting bigger.

INT. BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

And bigger.

INT. BACK OF ERIN'S TRUCK - DAY

And still bigger.

EXT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

CLOSE ON ERIN'S TRUNK. A bunch more forms get thrown onto the signed stack, which is now much higher than the unsigned.

ERIN (O.S.)

I'm gonna head out to Barstow and talk to some folks out there tonight.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Erin talking on a nearby pay phone.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Promise you'll turn around if you get tired.

ERIN

I will. Bye.

She hangs up. As she turns to get into her car, she finds herself face-to-face with the Man in the Dark Glasses.

ERIN

Jesus!

He's just standing there, a foot away, blocking her exit. She recognizes his truck as the one that chased her.

ERIN

Okay, what're you gonna do? You gonna kill me? Dump my body in a ditch somewhere? Or maybe you just wanna inject me with some poison too -- why change tactics at this stage of the game?

(beat)

Get outta my way, you make me sick.

She pushes past him. But he grabs her by the arm. He's a big guy; it's a strong grab. Now she's scared. For a moment, he does nothing. Just looks at her. Then:

DARK GLASSES

If PG&E made someone destroy a whole lot of documents -- would that matter to you?

Erin takes a beat, realizing she completely misread him. She gently pulls her arm away.

ERIN

Well ... I guess that depends on what the documents were.

(she takes a beat)

I'm sorry -- I didn't get your name.

DARK GLASSES

Embry. Charles Embry.

INT. LOST CAUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Erin and Embry are the only patrons. Erin's eating a burger. Embry has a beer. He's talking quietly, not looking at her.

EMBRY

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?

EMBRY

Nope. And I didn't ask.

ERIN

Did you get a look at the stuff you destroyed?

EMBRY

Well, it's pretty boring work, shredding -- you gotta find some way to entertain your mind. So yeah, I took a look.

ERIN

And ...?

EMBRY

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 tries to hide her excitement at this information.

ERIN

And you were told to destroy those?

EMBRY

That's right.

Destruction of evidence. Pretty big deal. Erin plays it down. Wipes her mouth with her napkin, takes a sip of beer.

EMBRY

Course as it turns out, I'm not a very good employee.

ERIN

What do you mean?

EMBRY

Well. There were a few documents that I somehow didn't get around to shredding.

(beat)

That I kept instead.

Erin stops, mid-bite.

INT. EMBRY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

He's dug out an inch-high stack of documents. Erin looks them over, stunned. Embry is standing apart from her, hands shoved deep in his pockets.

ERIN

How come you didn't say anything when you found these things?

EMBRY

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.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Rosalind is at the desk. Anna, Brenda, and Jane are helping themselves to coffee. Erin enters, with a big box in her arms and a whole lot of attitude.

ERIN

Hey, Ros, where are they?

ROSALIND

In the conference --

But Erin's spotted them and headed off before Rosalind can finish. Anna, Brenda and Jane notice the purpose in her gait. They watch her with interest.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The table is covered with boxes of documents: the anticipated slew of paper that PG&E is sending them. Ed, Kurt, Theresa, Andrew and ABOUT FIVE PARALEGALS are sifting through them.

Erin breezes in like sunshine.

ERIN

Morning!

ED

Erin? What are you --

ERIN

(ignoring Ed)

You know what, Mr. Potter? I completely forgot your birthday this year. And seeing as how you've been so good to me, I think that is a terrible oversight. So what I been doing over the last few days is I've been putting together a present for you.

She plunks the box down on the table. Potter opens the top of the box. Looks in.

ERIN

635. They all signed. Every single one.

IN THE DOORWAY, Anna, Brenda and Jane appear, wondering what's up. A huge smile of appreciation slowly spreads across Ed's face.

ED

Ho - ly - shit.

ERIN

Oh, now don't get all jealous, Ed. I got a little something for you, too.

Erin hands Ed a manila envelope. He 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. Ed 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, I just went on up there and performed sexual favors. 635 blow jobs in five days. Whew, am I ever tired.

And she struts out of the room, leaving everyone slack-jawed. The CLIP CLIP CLIP of her heels carry her away.

EXT. MASRY & VITITOE BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Erin comes out of the office, flushed with success, and heads down the hall. She presses the elevator button. The doors open. As she steps on, Ed comes out of the office.

ED

Hey!

Erin puts her hand in the door, keeping it from closing. He stares at her, in awe.

ED

I don't know what to say.

ERIN

Say you were wrong.

ED

I was wrong.

ERIN

Say you shortchanged me and you shortchanged yourself.

ED

I did. Both.

ERIN

Say you'd be the luckiest son of a bitch on Earth if I didn't up and quit over all this.

ED

The luckiest son of a bitch in the universe, Erin. The luckiest son of a bitch in history.

He looks down the hall at her, standing so tall and proud in the elevator. He walks toward her, stops right outside the elevator.

ED

But I know you're not gonna quit on me.

ERIN

How do you know that?

ED

(with a smile)

Cause you got a little voice in your head saying, do the right thing. Give him another chance.

Of course she will. She releases her hand so he won't see her smiling. Ed watches the doors close.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PCH - DAY

One of those days when the bay sparkles like a glitter ball.

Erin's Chevy moves up the PCH. DISCO music emanates from it.

INT. ERIN'S CHEVY - DAY

Erin's at the wheel. Time has passed -- her hair's a little different. She's singing along with "Funky Town."

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.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Donna is standing at the edge of the water, watching her girls boogie board in. Erin comes up behind her.

ERIN

How you feeling today?

Donna turns, sees her. Smiles.

DONNA

It's a good day. I feel good.

ERIN

Well, then -- if you're feeling up to it, maybe we should talk shop.

Erin sits down on a rock.

ERIN

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.

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. Her reaction indicates this isn't the first time. The front doors open and Erin enters.

ERIN

Hey, Ros. Nice view, huh?

ROSALIND

Yeah, I'm gonna start sleeping here.

(into phone)

Masry & Vititoe, can I -- damn it.

(calling out)

Does anyone know anything about these phones?

Erin heads on down a hall to:

INT. ED'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

A beautiful corner office. Ed is unpacking when Erin enters.

ERIN

Careful you don't spit from here; you could kill someone.

ED

You see your office?

ERIN

Yeah. Yours is nicer.

ED

Oh, okay. Here it comes.

ERIN

Here what comes?

ED

The extortion, the threats ...

ERIN

I wasn't gonna --

ED

"I can always find someplace else to work. Someplace that'll pay me a fortune and give me a view of the French Riviera ..."

ERIN

Ed, I swear, I'm not --

ED

Okay, fine. Fine You backed me into a corner again. You're holding me hostage ...

He reaches into his breast pocket, pulls out a check. Hands it to her.

ERIN

What is that?

ED

Take it.

Erin does. Looks at it. Her eyes bug out.

ERIN

Two million dollars?

ED

The firm took in sixty. That's three percent. Seemed like a fair bonus to me.

She stares at it, speechless. He goes back to unpacking

ED

Oh, now I suppose you're gonna say it's not enough. Well, tough, Erin. Too goddamn bad. Cause this is absolutely, positively where I draw the line.

FADE OUT.

THE END