

EMERGENCY PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES
EPS
PILOT
"NORMAL"

EPS

"Normal"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. - QUAIN T HOME. BEDROOM - DAY

SAMANTHA, a little girl (8), sits on her bed. Samantha's wearing a nice dress. She looks pretty. She appears apprehensive. She looks out the window at some twisted branches of an oak tree; a blue bird lands on the tree branch.

SFX: Soft, tense, instrumental music.

WOMAN (V.O.)

At some point she was normal, like everybody else.

Samantha studies the branches, the bird, its wings, then...

She focuses on a pad on her lap, shading in a sketch of the view. It's good. She has talent.

SFX: Music stops.

WOMAN (V.O.)

God, only knows when it started.
Because, she can't tell you.

Her bedroom door opens. SAMANTHA'S DAD (35, clean cut) enters.

Sits on the bed next to her.

SAMANTHA'S DAD

It's time, Samantha.

SAMANTHA

No. No More.

SAMANTHA'S DAD

Get up.

Samantha, moves to the far end of the bed away from her father, pushing at him.

SAMANTHA'S DAD (CONT'D)
If I drag you, it will just hurt.

Samantha, gets up and reluctantly walks with her father down the hallway to the basement door. She looks back toward her bedroom.

They reach the door.

SAMANTHA
NO, DADDY, NO!

She fades out, whimpering.

SAMANTHA'S MOM (31), well dressed, comes up behind her and injects her with something.

SAMANTHA'S MOM
You wont remember a thing.

Samantha starts to go limp; she can hear other voices as her parents lead her downstairs to the basement.

At the bottom of the stairs, Samantha can see fuzzy outlines of a pink frilly bed, with straps on it; shadow figures of people standing away from the bed. Then everything goes black.

CUT TO:

INT. QUAIN T HOME. BEDROOM - DAY

Back in her bedroom, we see her pad on the floor, still open to her drawing; but, out the window, the blue bird is gone.

Rain begins to pour.

WOMAN (V.O.)
At some point, she was normal.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES.

ACT ONE

CUT TO:

INT. - CAR - NIGHT

Rain drops are flooding the car's windshield, like a car wash. The windshield wipers are on full blast, but ineffective.

The car is idling.

A woman, HELENA (29)-- energetic, insightful, kind; medium height, curvaceous, medium-length thick brown hair, brown eyes -- looks at the driver, JAKE (31), a cute guy in pajamas.

HELENA

Thanks for taking me, I hate driving in the rain.

We recognize her voice. It's the woman from the voice-over earlier.

Jake smiles.

JAKE

If you can't handle it, just call me. I'll wait up for a bit.

HELENA

Go home, go back to sleep, I'll be fine.

JAKE

You sure? You never seemed this nervous at the VA.

HELENA

First days are always nerve wracking. It's the unknown. I know once I get in, I'll feel better. I'm just feeling a little off balance; but don't worry, it's...

JAKE

I know -- it's nothing you can't handle.

Helena smiles. She kisses him.

HELENA
You know me better than I do.

JAKE
I know I love you.

As she goes to get out of the car, the rain is coming down hard; she struggles to open her umbrella.

Jake yells out to her through the car-door window.

JAKE (CONT'D)
First day is always hard, just
remember to breath. You'll figure
it out, you always do.

Helena turns and faces the door.

HELENA
(to herself)
It's nothing I can't handle.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - DAY(EARLY MORNING, 7 AM)

PEARL (44), petite, well put together, sharp and warm, is standing just inside the EPS lobby door.

Pearl notices the car as Jake drives off.

Helena struggles to open the lobby door, struggles against the wind and rain. She enters the lobby.

PEARL
Helena?

HELENA
You must be Pearl.

PEARL
(With confidence in her
voice)
Yes. Welcome to Emergency
Psychiatric Services. I'm, Pearl,
your head nurse.

Helena closes her umbrella.

HELENA

It's nice to finally meet you.

PEARL

I know you've been through the EPS training, but we need to go over a few things before we enter the unit.

HELENA

Okay. I'm a quick study. Fire away.

Pearl pulls out a new lanyard and presents it to Helena, with the clasp towards her.

PEARL

(kind, empathetic)

Make sure there's a safety attachment on your lanyard. If someone tries to grab it from around your neck...the safety will release...

HELENA

(Said with a question in her voice, and a slight laugh)

So I won't be choked to death?

PEARL

Correct.

Helena takes the lanyard and clips her ID to it.

The ID reads:

HELENA HOLLUS
PSYCHIATRIC NURSE II
EMERGENCY PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES

Helena checks the attachment, making sure the lanyard separates when she pulls it.

Helena puts it on, it separates; she then re-attaches the lanyard.

Pearl extends a sheet of kids' stickers.

Helena looks at the stickers, then notices a rainbow sticker on Pearl's badge.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Put one of these over your last name, to cover it. You don't want anyone in here to know it; they can find out where you live. And I promise, you don't want them to know.

Helena nods, like she's understands the situation. She chooses a sticker and puts it over her last name.

HELENA

I'll go with the hummingbird. It'll remind me of my grandma.

(CONT'D)

PEARL

I'm serious. Don't let them know *anything* about you.

HELENA

(softly)

I understand. This is already really different from the VA.

Pearl grabs Helena's ID and pulls it, popping the lanyard and snatching it from Helena, shocking her.

PEARL

Here's another thing that's different. Your key can't be around your neck.

Pearl separates a key that was clipped to the ID.

PEARL (CONT'D)

A patient can rip it off like I just did and open any of the security doors. Remember, like in training?

Pearl hands the lanyard back to Helena.

Helena nods and takes the key off her lanyard.

Pearl is moving fast and efficiently. She hands Helena a pink stretchy bracelet.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Keep it on this.

Helena puts her lanyard back on, and she puts the unit key on the stretchy pink lanyard.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Is this all making sense?

HELENA
Yes.

PEARL
Good. Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. TINY VESTIBULE - OUTER DOOR - DAY

Pearl leads Helena through a locked door in a narrow hallway into...

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. TINY VESTIBULE - INNER DOOR - DAY

They are in a tiny vestibule, one locked door behind them, one in front of them. The yellow lighting casts a jaundice hue on the walls; the floors are dirty.

SFX: SCREAMING can be heard in the direction they're headed.

PEARL
Your key works for both doors.

Helena reaches her key out to open the door in front of her, but Pearl grabs her hand, stopping her abruptly.

PEARL (CONT'D)
Look first. *Always look first.*

Helena, frazzled, slowly moves to the door's window to look.

Suddenly, a crazed FEMALE PATIENT's face slams onto the glass window. This is SAMANTHA, who is now a woman in her twenties.

Helena screams and jumps back, bumping into Pearl.

Helena stabilizes herself, and steps forward toward the window.

Samantha, her face dirty, tear stained, with thick, short matted hair and mucus coming from her nose, makes direct eye contact with Helena through the glass, then screams at her; bloodshot eyes wide.

She pushes violently up against the window and spits towards Helena.

HELENA

I know what this is.

PEARL

You've seen this before?

HELENA

No. But I know just what it is.

SAMANTHA

Let me out of here!

Samantha pounds her fists on the door.

Pearl watches Helena's reaction carefully.

SFX: A BELL ALARM sounds.

Two MALE STAFF MEMBERS quickly come up from behind Samantha and move her away from the door.

STAFF MEMBER 1

Come on, Sam, I have a cheeseburger for you. Let's not make this difficult.

SAMANTHA

I don't want... No, God-dam burger!

Samantha is thrashing around screaming.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

NO, I SAID. NO, DADDY, NO!

HELENA

Yeah, that's what this is about.

Helena watches the staff members take Samantha to the floor, kicking and screaming.

She looks through the window again carefully, seeing that the coast is clear. But in the distance, staff have surrounded Samantha who is now pinned to the floor.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Looks safe now.

PEARL

Okay.

Helena opens the door and they enter.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - DAYROOM - DAY

As Helena and Pearl enter the dayroom, they see that MORE STAFF MEMBERS have arrived to help restrain Samantha, some of them holding leather restraints.

Two staff members hold down Samantha's arms, above and below the elbow, pinning them to the floor.

Samantha continues struggling and screaming.

Two more staff members hold her legs down, above and below the knee.

Eventually, Samantha is lifted off the floor and is carried away to the Seclusion Room.

PEARL

That's called a "show of force,"
like you were taught in training.

It's very different with a violent
patient. We've dropped patients.
That's why we have ongoing
training.

HELENA

She's here because of her family?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Samantha? She's a 5150, danger to
herself and others; but basically,
she just can't deal with it.

Helena turns to find the source of the voice, which belongs to...

GAYTAN, 32, a tall, muscular, surfer type with light-blue eyes, comes up behind Pearl and Helena.

Helena is caught off guard by his handsome appearance for a moment. She is speechless. Gaytan breaks the ice by extending his hand for a shake.

GAYTAN

Gaytan.

Helena grabs his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. - FANTASY LOCATION - DAY

Helena and Gaytan are pressed up against a wall kissing.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - DAYROOM - DAY

HELENA

Helena. (slowly, somewhat dazed)

Pearl watches their interaction with interest.

GAYTAN

Welcome to the EPS. Listen to Pearl, she knows everything.

HELENA

Will do.

He smiles at her, looks over at Pearl and nods before heading off. Helena watches him leave.

PEARL

That's Gayton Oster, our Medical Director.

HELENA

I never would have guessed that; seems kind of young to be a Medical Director?

PEARL

Young. And handsome.

HELENA

But...there is something else about him.

Pearl looks at Helena inquiringly.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Just something. I don't know, doesn't matter.

Helena shrugs it away.

PEARL

I saw someone drop you off this morning? Family?

Helena snaps out of it.

HELENA

Huh?

PEARL

Looked like a man who dropped you off. Your husband?

Helena fumbles with her response:

HELENA

My, uh, fiancé. Jake. He came with me. Here. To California. You know. We're together.

Helena shrugs again.

PEARL

Well, congratulations. Let's head over to the Seclusion Room.

Pearl leads Helena over to the Seclusion Room, which Samantha is now inside of.

Beside the Seclusion Room entrance is JACKIE, 50s, a bit sour in appearance, clipboard in hand, a magazine on top of all her important papers.

PEARL (CONT'D)

(to Jackie)

Anything been ordered?

JACKIE

(hostile/irritated)

Does it matter? Won't help her anyway.

PEARL

That's not your call.

Pearl looks over her shoulder and notices DR. YEN nearby.

PEARL (CONT'D)

(to Dr. Yen)

Can I get 2 of Ativan IM, as a verbal?

Dr. Yen waves and yells back at Pearl.

DR. YEN

You got it!

Pearl turns back towards Jackie, looking sternly into her eyes.

PEARL

Jackie, give me the magazine and go
get the 2 mg of Ativan IM.

Jackie gives the magazine and the restraint clipboard to Helena while looking at Pearl.

Helena and Pearl watch Jackie head over to the medication room door, unlock it and enter.

(CONT'D)

PEARL

Staff come and go here all the
time, and then there's Jackie.
She's been here a long time. Too
long.

Pearl gently takes the clipboard from Helena's hands and looks at the documentation.

Then Pearl unlocks the Seclusion Room door, while leading Helena through the entrance into the Seclusion Room.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS SECLUSION ROOM - DAY

Pearl approaches Samantha, who is restrained.

Helena looks on nervously.

PEARL

Are you feeling calm enough for me
to let you out of the restraints?

Samantha looks over at Helena.

SAMANTHA

(hostile, flippant tone)
Who's this?

HELENA

My name is Helena.

Samantha licks her lips at Helena.

PEARL

Keep it together Sam, if you want
out of here. You can't be
threatening anyone or yourself.

SAMANTHA

The hell with you. I'm ready. Now.
Unless you girls want to play?

Samantha cackles.

HELENA

Samantha, it is up to you when you
get out of here.

SAMANTHA

You don't know anything...

(CONT'D)

PEARL

(cutting off Samantha)
We'll come back later.

SAMANTHA

You'll come, that's for sure.

Samantha chuckles more, cold and sickening.

Helena follows Pearl out of the room, feeling Samantha's eyes
on her back.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - DAY (CONT'D)

Helena takes a deep breath as she exits the Seclusion Room,
resting one shoulder against the wall. She has an uneasy
feeling that something is about to happen.

Pearl approaches Dr. Yen, then starts looking over medical
orders with him.

Helena looks back through the door's window at Samantha, who
now struggles against the restraints, her laughing having now
turned to crying.

Jackie walks by Helena, without making eye contact and
looking a little nervous.

JACKIE
Got the 2 of Ativan.

Helena notices Jackie has the syringe of Ativan hanging low, dangling in her hand.

HELENA
Okay, I'll go with you.

Helena unlocks the Seclusion Room door and opens it to Jackie's surprise.

Jackie puts her hand on Helena's hand, trying gently to stop her from coming along.

CUT TO:

INT. - A FANTASY LOCATION - DAY

A blurry scene of an EPS staff member -- Jackie perhaps -- hitting a patient.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - OUTSIDE OF SECLUSION ROOM - DAY

JACKIE
No, honey, that's okay; Sam and I go way back.

Helena shudders, feeling something wrong with Jackie's touch.

She looks at Pearl, who is still engaged in conversation with Dr. Yen, then back at Jackie.

HELENA
Really, I just need the practice; don't want to be seen as a newbie for too long if I can help it.

Jackie tries to disguise her displeasure with this.

JACKIE
All right, it'll be quick though.

They enter the room together.

Pearl looks over her shoulder at the sight of them entering the Seclusion Room together.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - SECLUSION ROOM - MORNING (CONT'D)

Samantha grimaces at Helena and Jackie as they approach.

SAMANTHA

Thought I told you to leave me the hell alone.

HELENA

We're here to give you a shot of Ativan. It'll help you calm down, and if you're calm, that's a step closer to you getting out of here.

Jackie approaches her with the shot.

SAMANTHA

There's no way that bitch is touching me.

JACKIE

(harsh/hostile tone)

You don't have any say.

Helena is alarmed by their exchange.

HELENA

(firm)

Step aside, Jackie.

JACKIE

You're not my boss.

Pearl enters the room.

PEARL

Jackie, Helena has the authority to ask you to step aside; so please do as she asked.

Jackie steps back.

HELENA

Please hand me the syringe.

JACKIE

You can't give it, you didn't draw
it up.

HELENA

I didn't say I was going to give
it, just hand it to me.

Samantha watches Jackie and Helena's tension over the syringe; Samantha struggles against the restraints, hard, like she can get away.

Jackie looks at Pearl, then hands the syringe to Helena.

Helena takes the syringe, then kneels down by Samantha's bedside.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Samantha, you want out of here,
right?

Samantha looks at Helena silently. Then up at the ceiling, as Samantha hears adult voices in her head.

SFX: Indistinct chattering.

CUT TO:

INT. - A FANTASY LOCATION - DAY

Helena also hears the indistinct chattering and sees blurred people standing around a bed.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS - THE SECLUSION ROOM - DAY

HELENA

Samantha, can you hear me? Did you
hear what I said?

Samantha refocuses on Helena's face, her eyes are tired, she is calmer.

SAMANTHA
They...call me Sam.

HELENA
Then...Sam it is.

SAMANTHA
Whatever.

Samantha looks away toward the wall.

HELENA
I can help you. You know the deal.
You have to contract for safety;
demonstrate that you're not going
to try to hurt yourself or anyone
else. Do that, then you're free.
Can you do that?

Samantha looks away from Helena to Pearl, who nods at her.

Samantha looks back at Helena.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, I'm not going to do anything.

Helena looks to Pearl.

HELENA
I'll take responsibility for her.
We can take her out and she can be
on a one-on-one for an hour or so;
she'll be all right.

PEARL
Your call.

Helena nods, to confirm her responsibility.

Pearl leaves the room to go get more staff.

Jackie starts to head out too, but Helena stops her.

(CONT'D)

HELENA
I need to talk to you for a minute.

Jackie leers at her.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. MEDICATION ROOM - DAY

Helena stands in the tiny medication room with Jackie.

HELENA

Pearl asked you for 2 mg of Ativan, and you drew up 4 mg. This is a definite medication error; you could have put Samantha in a coma, or even killed her, considering we don't know what she's already taken today.

JACKIE

I'd advise you to mind your own business. You don't know me, or anyone around here. I'm the Union Steward.

Helena steps closer to Jackie.

HELENA

Here's what I know. You draw up the wrong dose on any patient ever again, and I will see to it that you're fired.

You ever lay a hand on Samantha or any patient, you'll find yourself in the County Jail, hanging out with all the EPS patients you've abused.

JACKIE

Abused? You have no idea what you're talking about.

HELENA

There's not much I haven't seen in my short life. So, if you have nothing to hide, then why are you so defensive?

JACKIE

(hesitates)
Why didn't you show Pearl the syringe?

HELENA

An incident like this -- like what could have happened -- would get EPS a lot of bad press, and it wouldn't help Samantha.

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

Good health-care workers live by a code; they protect their own; but not the bad ones; we deal with those.

SFX: Suddenly, there is a knock on the door.

Helena and Jackie turn their heads, noticing Gaytan entering.

GAYTAN

Hey, everything okay in here?

HELENA

Yeah, everything's fine.

JACKIE

(nervously)

I was just leaving.

Jackie walks out, and Gaytan walks towards Helena.

GAYTAN

You all right?

HELENA

(laughing)

Yeah, just getting to know Jackie.

Gaytan picks up the syringe on the counter before Helena can stop him.

GAYTAN

I thought Yen said 2 mg; there are 4 mg in here. Who drew this up?

Helena looks down at the floor.

GAYTAN (CONT'D)

Was it Jackie?

Helena struggles with how to respond.

GAYTAN (CONT'D)

You're not here to protect anyone; I need to know.

HELENA

I dealt with the problem and it won't happen again. Can you co-sign for me to waste this 4 mg of Ativan?

GAYTAN

Ah...yeah. I saw that you got Sam out of restraints without the Ativan; guess she didn't need it?

HELENA

No...Sam...didn't need it. I sense that she has a long history of people giving her things she doesn't need.

GAYTAN

You sense it?

HELENA

Uh, you know, she seemed calm, she was able to contract for safely, that type of sense, (sarcastically) common sense.

He accidentally bumps up against her as he reaches for the error log book.

GAYTAN

Sorry.

CUT TO:

INT. - A FANTASY LOCATION - DAY

Helena flashes on Gaytan crying in his car.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. MEDICATION ROOM - DAY

He sets the book on the counter next to her. Signs it.

HELENA

Thanks.

Helena also signs it; she puts the book back.

GAYTAN

(nervous and uncomfortable)

They should've made this room bigger.

HELENA
 (trying to act nonchalant)
 Same problem at the VA I worked at;
 microscopic medication room.

They share a laugh.

GAYTAN
 Well, we'd better get back out
 there.

HELENA
 Yup, thanks for your help.

They walk towards the exit, and get stuck against each other in the doorway, both trying to leave at once, again bumping into each other.

HELENA (CONT'D)
 Here, you go first.

She backs away, Gaytan heads through the door. Stops. Turns back and says:

GAYTAN
 It's nice to see somebody looking
 out for Sam.

Helena smiles. Gaytan does, too. He exits.

Helena stands in the medication-room doorway, then moves back inside. She lets out her breath and if she was holding in all of her emotions; she is holding back her tears.

She opens a freezer and pulls out an ice pack. She touches it to her face, cooling herself off.

HELENA
 (to herself)
 How did I get here?
 (laughs)
 Can I really handle it?

CUT TO:

INT. - HALLWAY - DAY

Helena emerges, watches the nurses moving about, tending to their work. Most look at her and nod, as if she is already one of them. Helena keeps patting herself with the ice pack.

She makes her way down the hall to the door of the Seclusion Room.

She looks through the window and the bed is empty. Sheet has been changed and restraints are nowhere to be found.

Helena looks across the dayroom and sees Samantha sitting calmly in an over-sized chair with a staff member at arm's length. She has a sketch pad and she is drawing.

The large windows to the courtyard outside show the heavy rain coming down. Helena tosses the ice pack in the trash, walks over to Samantha and the staff person.

HELENA

How are you doing, Samantha? Want something to eat?

You know we only have cheese burgers, it's the county way.

Samantha doesn't look up; keeps drawing

SAMANTHA

Not hungry.

HELENA

Is that a blue bird?

Helena looking down at Samantha's drawing pad.

SAMANTHA

Yea, my crappy blue bird of happiness; he goes where I go.

FADE TO DARK:

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is still completely full of boxes.

Helena sits at the table in the cramped kitchen across from Jake; the two of them are eating Chinese food from the cartons.

HELENA

The patients at the VA were similar in a lot of ways to each other. Most were Vietnam Vets, with PTSD or schizophrenics; there were some psychopaths. But EPS is different. I used to have a routine with my patients; I could kind of predict how they would react in certain situations. But here, anybody could come through that door; anything could happen.

JAKE

Are you worried?

HELENA

In an odd way, I feel comfortable there, behind the locked doors.
(laughs)
The staff seemed really well trained, and Pearl has it together. There was a show of force today, you know a restraint, and well, no one got hurt, but I know it happens.

JAKE

Oh, that's reassuring, no one got hurt today. What about the staff? I mean, any *guys* I should be worried about?

Helena rolls her eyes and laughs.

HELENA

Oh, please. You know my baggage... And nobody else wants to deal with...

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)
(points to herself,
laughing)
...all this.

She looks into her Chinese food box, digging around with the chopsticks for a bit. He watches her closely.

Eventually he turns his gaze down to his own food. Helena glances at him to see if he is still reading her. He's not.

HELENA (CONT'D)
We need to eat better than this.

JAKE
I'm sure we will, once we put the place together and can find the kitchen.

He laughs. Helena turns her attention to the boxes around the apartment.

HELENA
Any luck with the job hunt?

JAKE
I sent out a bunch of resumes.
Fingers crossed.

HELENA
We should get the boxes unpacked and the place set up before you find something; otherwise we'll be living out of boxes permanently.

Jake salutes.

JAKE
Aye, aye, Captain. I'll spend all day tomorrow de-boxing while you're playing Nurse Ratchet, passing out paper cups of pills.

HELENA
You really think that's what I do, don't you?

JAKE
Yeah. What else is there to it?

Helena walks away towards the window, then turns back toward Jake.

HELENA
Seriously?

She shakes her head, exasperated.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. REGISTRATION ROOM - MORNING

Helena enters the registration room with Pearl.

PEARL
So, in Registration, patients
either come in by police or family,
or they bring themselves in for
evaluation, which Sam has done
several times. We also accept
transfers from jail.

HELENA
Like actual jail?

PEARL
Yes. If they've got an inmate
that's too out-of-control, we
handle it; that's what the cuff key
is for.

HELENA
Wait, if the *prison* can't handle
them, they send them here? To us?

Pearl smiles.

PEARL
Welcome aboard.

DORAN, an overweight woman in her late 50s, short died-red hair and vintage Alice Cooper T-shirt, sits at the registration intake window.

She looks up at Helena as she and Pearl enter through the registration door into the registration area.

DORAN
Hey, Toto, where'd you come from?

HELENA
My name's H--

Doran turns away from Helena to speak to the MAN in the lobby, through the registration bullet-proof window.

DORAN
 (cutting Helena off; to
 the Man)
 Can I help you with something?

Doran's back now facing Helena and Pearl.

PEARL
 That's just Doran; let me introduce
 you to Robert, Roberta, and
 Colette.

ROBERT, 40s, square shaped haircut, medium build, stands near his wife ROBERTA, 40s, a short Italian woman.

(CONT'D)

HELENA
 Hi, I'm Helena.

ROBERT
 I'm Robert, this is my wife,
 Roberta.

He shakes Helena's hand gently, Roberta follows suit.

ROBERTA
 (re: her husband)
 I know, this is normally frowned
 upon, but HR okay'd it in our case;
 we usually work different shifts.
 Let me know if I can ever help you
 find anything.

Helena smiles, then notices DR. ROGER LELAND, a man with short and stylish salt-and-pepper hair, 40s, leaning against the wall near Doran, peering into his notes on his clipboard.

Leland looks up at Helena briefly with an icy stare, then looks back down at his notes.

Pearl notices their eye contact.

PEARL
 That's Dr. Leland. I'm sure you'll
 meet him, he looks a bit busy at
 the moment.

COLETTE, 20s, a African American woman sporting a Fat Albert and the Gang t-shirt and jeans, approaches Helena, breaking her from the strange feeling she got from Dr. Leland.

COLETTE

Me and you. Lunch. Noon. On the patio. I'll tell you how it really is.

She smiles.

HELENA

Okay, thanks.

COLETTE

See you then. Remember to dodge and weave; dodge and weave; ha!

Colette winks and, just like that, she's off.

Helena smiles at her, and Pearl continues showing her around.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

PEARL

The paperwork starts in registration. Here's the 72-hour hold, contact sheet, history, and physical forms. Make sure the "hold" is signed, if it's not, it's not legal.

Pearl looks at Doran.

DORAN

Back door.

PEARL

Got it.

Pearl hands a clipboard to Helena.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Here's your clipboard, let's bring one in.

Doran gets on her intercom.

DORAN
(into intercom)
Back door.

SFX: A bell-like BUZZER sounds.

PEARL
All police are supposed to lock up
their guns in their car or the
outside gun locker before entering
EPS. They ask why, it's because we
say so.

A POLICE OFFICER enters, escorting an ELDERLY WOMAN/JEAN
who's pushing a SHOPPING CART.

Pearl notices the officer is still carrying his weapon.

PEARL (CONT'D)
(professional but firm)
Officer, please secure your weapon.

POLICE OFFICER
I'm not giving you my gun.

Helena takes a worn paper from her clip board and reads from
it to the officer.

(CONT'D)

HELENA
Policy 168, no such person, police
officer or otherwise, shall carry a
firearm into a locked psychiatric
unit. Law-enforcement personnel
shall either place said weapon or
weapons in their locked truck or
car, or shall be provided a firearm
box to secure said weapon.

She looks knowingly with intent at the officer.

Pearl smiles, in appreciation of Helena's attitude.

The Police Officer exhales with irritation, then backtracks,
putting the weapon in the locked firearm box; then takes the
key.

He re-enters with the woman and her over-stuffed shopping
cart.

PEARL
 (to the Officer)
 You new?

POLICE OFFICER
 About four months, I don't have a
 lot of time to waste here, I need
 to get going.

PEARL
 You put her on a 5150 for gravely
 disabled?

POLICE OFFICER
 Yeah.

Pearl approaches the Elderly Woman.

PEARL
 (in a kind voice)
 What's your name?

ELDERLY WOMAN/JEAN
 (smiling)
 Jean.

PEARL
 Jean, do you know where you are?

JEAN
 County psych ward.

PEARL
 Yes, and what day is it?

JEAN
 Friday; but don't ask me who's the
 president, cause it don't really
 matter, he's crazier then me.

HELENA
 Where do you sleep at night?

Pearl nods; appreciating Helena's initiative.

JEAN
 Under the freeway overpass, near
 First Street. I got my tent and
 camping stove there. Marty, he
 watches my stuff when I go out.

HELENA

Where do you get food?

JEAN

Behind the fancy grocery store on Second and Bascom. They dump the day-old stuff out every morning, early. Jimmy gives me a cup of coffee, when I'm out back by the dumpster.

PEARL

Jean we are going to go through this door in front of us, onto the unit and into the intake room. Okay?

JEAN

Like I have a choice, least it's dry in here.

Helena looks through the looked door window into the day room, indicates it is safe to enter.

Pearl, Jean, Helena and Police Officer all walk through the door, shopping cart in tow.

They all enter into the Interview Room with the cart, the door to the interview room is left open.

Pearl looks at the shopping cart, then back at Jean.

PEARL

What's in the cart?

JEAN

My whole life's in there, everything I got, 'cept my cat; she died last month. Couldn't keep all of her.

Jean looks over at the shopping cart at the remains of her orange cat, just the tail.

PEARL

Any weapons, knives or guns, in there?

JEAN

I got a knife, yeah, but I need that; see, you know things happen out there; and I cut food with it too.

Jean points to where her knife is in the cart.

Helena reaches over to the intake table, takes some plastic medical gloves, and puts them on.

She removes the dirty and sticky knife from the shopping cart, and a MOUSE jumps out of Jean's belongings, past Helena, onto the floor, scurrying around by the police officer.

Everyone including the Officer recoil.

The mouse heads out the door into the dayroom.

Two STAFF MEMBERS chase after the mouse, following it into a side interview room, closing the door behind them.

Jean remains calm, unfazed by the event.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Got anything to eat here?

PEARL

Is there anything else we should know about what you have inside the cart, Jean?

Jean walks up to Pearl, suddenly seeming paranoid.

She leans in to her ear, eyes darting around..

JEAN

(whispering)

Life savings.

Pearl nods in an understanding manner, then looks at the Officer.

PEARL

Jean isn't gravely disabled.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

HELENA

Not to mention... She's got a place to live, somewhere to get food, and has her belongings.

The Officer is irritated.

POLICE OFFICER

I wrote the 5150, you have to uphold it.

PEARL

(shakes her head)

Wait here.

Pearl walks out of the room, and quickly returns with Dr. Yen.

Yen approaches Jean.

DR. YEN

I am Dr. Yen, one of the psychiatrists here. It says on your 5150 that you were talking to yourself, is that true?

Dr. Yen is holding the clipboard with the 5150.

JEAN

No, I was talking to my friend, Marty. See, he was takin' a whizz behind the bushes near the overpass, when this guy decides to drag me and my cart away.

Jean points to the officer.

POLICE OFFICER

There was no one in the bushes.

Dr. Yen places the 5150 on his knee and uses a red pen to draw a line through it and writes "D/C'd" on it.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

You can't just do that!

HELENA

(smiles)

Apparently, he just did.

Pearl motions for the officer to leave, and another STAFF MEMBER lets him out.

DR. YEN
(to Helena)
You're a quick study.

Helena smiles.

DR. YEN (CONT'D)
Jean, would you like a burger and a glass of juice? You can stay here voluntarily for a few hours to get a shower and have your clothes washed. We'll put your cart in the back room, locked up.

JEAN
Don't go touching the stuff in the cart; I don't need a shower or clean clothes. But I'll rest for a bit and take that burger and juice.

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - DAY

Boxes are partially unpacked. Jake has stacks of his folded clothes everywhere.

Jake is sitting at a table, Skyping on his laptop with a well-dressed man sitting in an office conference room.

WELL DRESSED MAN
Do you need to talk this over...with anyone?

JAKE
No...I'm...all set on this end. So...thank you very much for the opportunity. I'm looking forward to getting started and joining your team.

WELL DRESSED MAN
We're lucky to get you, Jake. See you Monday.

JAKE
See you then.

Jake smiles. Signs off and closes his laptop.

He stands and looks over the boxes. Takes a deep breath.
Sighs.

Then lifts some of his folded clothes, putting them back in a box.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. PROCESSING ROOM - DAY

Helena, Pearl, Jean, and a Medical Assistant known as MOUNTAIN -- MO for short, a large Hawaiian man -- all stand in the Intake room near the cart.

Helena starts unpacking the cart.

Pearl holds a clipboard.

HELENA

We have to log all of this?

PEARL

Yes, we log everything.

JEAN

Stop, don't touch anything!

PEARL

We've got to log all of your belongings; you'll be getting everything back.

Helena takes out several blankets, a large blue tarp, and two dolls.

JEAN

Careful, those are my kids.

HELENA

(takes this in, before speaking)

I'll be extra careful then.

Helena respectfully sets down her "kids," then continues unloading the cart, finding a hairbrush, comb, several cans of cat food, Jean's deceased cat's tail, a plastic tea cup, two pairs of well worn shoes, several pairs of dirty clothes, and a newspaper.

Helena notices newspaper inside Jean's shoes as well.

As she starts to handle the newspaper, Jean loses her calm.

JEAN
(Yells)
Put that back!

Other staff are alerted when she yells.

HELENA
(Calm, quiet)
I'll be very careful.

Pearl, waves off other staff and they stay away.

Helena sets down the newspaper, which has something wrapped inside of it.

Helena starts to unroll the newspaper nervously, when suddenly Jean grabs Helena's arm tensely.

PEARL
Stop, Jean!

Helena tries to pull her arm away, but Jean has a good grip. They struggle.

Mountain silently walks over and firmly but gently touches Jean's shoulder.

Jean releases her grip on Helena and Helena holds her arm where she was grabbed.

JEAN
Get outta my stuff!

HELENA
Calm down, Jean. We're not going to take anything! We're just making sure that everything you have is accounted for. It's all yours.

Mountain calmly removes Jean's hand off of Helena.

The newspaper tears open and...TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS pop out like exploding confetti. Thousands of dollars worth.

Helena and the others stare, in shock, at the money fluttering to the ground.

Jean drops to her knees and scampers to clean it all up.

JEAN
(urgently)
It's mine; I didn't steal it;
that's my life savings! My checks!

Helena glances into the cart at a dozen more bundles wrapped in newspaper. She lifts one with her fingers, peeking in. Sure enough, more money.

HELENA
(to Jean)
What do you mean, checks?

(CONT'D)

JEAN
You know, Social Security checks.
No banks, no banks; they can burn
down; got my cart and kids to take
care of. They can burn. They can
burn down. They can burn!

Helena and Pearl look at each other, both shocked at this woman's wealth.

PEARL
Okay Jean, no banks. We will count
it and lock it up. We'll all three
sign, and you'll get it all back.

Jean looks at Helena for confirmation.

HELENA
That's exactly what we'll do. I
know...you've lost some things in
your life. You can believe us...you
won't lose anything today.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

CUT TO:

INT. - CAFE - DAY

Helena sits across the table from Colette; the pair enjoying their lunches.

COLETTE

How much money?

HELENA

Like over twenty grand.

COLETTE

No way, José; not a ding-dang day goes by without something over-the-top happening.

HELENA

Jean has all this money, and she's walking around homeless...

COLETTE

That's why they call it "crazy," Helena. We don't have to make sense of it, we just have to deal with it.

HELENA

Well...I... When she grabbed me... I felt something...hot

COLETTE

Hot?

HELENA

I guess heat, it was when she grabbed me.

Helena shows Collette the red finger marks where Jean grabbed her.

COLETTE

What the heck!

HELENA

Yeah, it just happened. She was so protective of her stuff.

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

All she has...is in her cart. Where she can keep it safe. Especially her kids...two dolls. Just the way she kept saying "burn down" over and over.

COLETTE

Has this happened before?

HELENA

Yes.....I guess there was something burning, it was when she grabbed me.

But I got...the sense...it was more than that. The way she said the word "burn." And you put that together with her dolls. I think...

COLETTE

What?

HELENA

I think her kids...her dolls... replaced her family. I think she had actual children. Who...burned in a fire.

COLETTE

Whoa, That's exactly what happened!

HELENA

What?

COLETTE

They haven't given you access to all the charts yet?

HELENA

No...

COLETTE

Get access. Read her chart. Her kids...like you said, her actual children...burned to death in a house fire.

HELENA

Really?

COLETTE

Yeah. Her house burned down over 20 years ago. I went through her records. She never recovered. Who could? The fire killed her husband and her two daughters. So...now she has two "kids" to protect as best she can.

HELENA

I'm not so sure her cart is a bad idea. Just different.

COLETTE

That's the thing about this place. You get used to the patients, and then this place becomes the norm. You start to struggle with your tame, ordinary, comfortable life, and end up preferring to be at EPS; now that's crazy.

Colette laughs.

HELENA

What's the craziest thing that ever happened since you've been here?

She takes a bite of her salami and cheese sandwich.

COLETTE

H'mmm.

She looks up and considers.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Well, there was this one time a male patient who found some scissors in the intake desk on the unit. He started swinging them around; it got pretty ugly. Two people in the room got cut trying to stop him. Then he was going to turn on himself...but they called a show of force and had to mat him to the wall with a mattress to get the scissors away. It was scary. Much more crazy than a usual crazy day.

Colette laughs to herself, then notices Helena's engagement ring.

COLETTE (CONT'D)
You married? Engaged?

HELENA
Engaged.

She fiddles with her ring.

COLETTE
What's your fiancé think about you
working at EPS?

HELENA
I don't know, really. Mostly
supportive I guess.

Helena takes a sip of water, looking a bit upset.

COLETTE
You guess?

HELENA
Transitions are difficult. Our
apartment is a mess. We have a ton
of boxes still to unpack; we've got
stuff everywhere. He's looking for
a job. It's...

COLETTE
Let me know if you need any help
unpacking; I grew up a Navy brat,
so I'm a pro at it.

Helena smiles warmly at her.

HELENA
Thanks for lunch, it sucks being
"new." I'd rather know everything
sooner, than later.

COLETTE
(sarcastically)
What you want is a magic wand to be
able to read people's minds?
(candidly)
Or do you have one already?

HELENA
(laughs)
The last thing I want to do is know
what people are thinking.
(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

Sometimes...I feel like I get a glimpse. And even that is way too scary for me.

The two laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Helena and Jake sit in the middle of the sea of boxes. They are unpacking. Helena is pulling framed photos out of a box.

HELENA

All this stuff; I don't even know what's in any of these boxes. We probably should have gotten rid of a lot of this before we moved here.

(CONT'D)

JAKE

(tired)
Yeah.

HELENA

There was a woman who came into work today, had all her possessions in a shopping cart. Made me happy that we at least have a roof over our heads.

Jake, not listening to her, takes a deep breath, then looks at her.

JAKE

I got a job offer.

HELENA

That's great! Oh, my God, that was fast! See, I knew this was gonna work out! Yesterday I was thinking...

JAKE

Back home.

A gut punch for Helena.

HELENA

What?

JAKE

The offer was from SomTech. Back home.

She struggles to wrap her head around this.

HELENA

In Michigan?

JAKE

Yeah.

HELENA

It's only been a few days. There's gonna be something out here.

JAKE

It's good money, too. More than I was making at Barringer.

HELENA

How did you...? How did you even...?

(CONT'D)

JAKE

They texted me. Then, a Skype interview. They liked me; wanted to move fast; put me through to HR and we worked it out.

HELENA

"Worked it out?" What does that mean?

Jake looks away at another pile of boxes.

JAKE

I took it. I took it, Babe. You know I love you...but I need to make some money. For us.

There is a deafening silence in the room as Helena takes this in.

Helena nods, looks at the floor.

HELENA

Without even thinking to talk to me
about it?

He leans in to touch her; she jumps away and jumps up.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Without even talking to me?
(she's in tears)
You took a job? In Michigan? Back
home? No--wait! It's not back home.
This is home. Here. This apartment.
This is our home!

(she holds up a box of her
things)

This is our home! Right here! How
could you not see that? How could
you not see that this is our home?

Jake stands and faces her.

JAKE

I want this to be our home. But...I
need to work.

HELENA

Right.
(calming down, still
crying. Jake sits beside
her on the floor)

(CONT'D)

JAKE

I have to have a job. I can't not
have money coming in.

HELENA

I know. But...couldn't you have
tried a little harder?

JAKE

And...

HELENA

And...
(shakes her head)

JAKE

I know we don't see eye-to-eye on
politics.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

But...I wouldn't be surprised if there are huge cuts in mental-health care.

HELENA

Meaning?

JAKE

The government can drain mental health programs, they have done it before, remember? You may be out of a job. Maybe... You should be thinking of...

HELENA

(very calm and direct)

They can cut funding...they can take everything. But, there will still be mentally ill people. You get what you give.

Helena walks away.

JAKE

I'm...sorry

HELENA

(calm)

What are you going to do now? Post on Facebook that we lasted a week in California?

(semi-sarcastic)

And failed.

Jake looks hard at Helena, his face is pale and he looks tired.

JAKE

No, we won't do anything like that. And we haven't failed.

HELENA

Then what would you call it?

JAKE

A set back.

HELENA

A set back? We were supposed to get married here; all our family would fly out and see how happy we are together.

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

I'd have my job, you'd have yours.

You can't quit after a couple days.
I'm not a quitter. And I'm not
giving up.

JAKE

An opportunity like this is not
"giving up." It's far from it. And
I'm not going to get a better offer
than this out here, especially with
no connections.

He looks around the room.

JAKE (CONT'D)

My money is running out; time is
running out.

HELENA

I'll be making money; I could cover
us for a while.

JAKE

I can't live like that. I just
don't see any other way. We'll do
long distance; we'll make it work.

HELENA

Did you just say you "can't live
like that"? We came out here
together. We were going to make it
here together!

Jake gently places his hands on her shoulders.

JAKE

I thought I was doing it for us.

Helena steps away from him, her back is to him.

(CONT'D)

JAKE

I thought if we both had
jobs...here, together, of course,
would have been preferable.

HELENA

(screams)

Preferable! Do you think that makes
any sense?

JAKE
We need time...

HELENA
Time? For what?

JAKE
To...figure out our lives.

HELENA
Oh. Our lives. You want to figure
out our lives? So...coming here
because I found the job I really
wanted ...because you said you
loved me and would be here with me
and we would support each other...
(sarcastically)
Like I said...you get what you
give.

JAKE
We'll talk on the phone. Skype.

HELENA
What will we talk about?

JAKE
What do you mean?

HELENA
Will we talk about our new jobs?
How we wish we were living in the
same state? How I wish you could
touch me, but you can't? Maybe
we'll talk about how now I have to
pay for this apartment all by
myself.

JAKE
You know... You can always get
extra shifts at EPS. You said you
could and I'll help out.

Helena's expression goes flat, all she can hear is her heart
beating.

SFX: Helena's exaggerated heart beat.

Jake's mouth says something else, but she can't hear him.

Helena nods her head up and down as if trying to say "yes" to
herself. Finally...

HELENA

This move out here was supposed to be the start of something great. Not the end of it.

JAKE

It won't be the end, we just need time.

Helena absentmindedly picks up a framed photo from an open box. It is a picture of Helena and Jake during happier times.

CUT TO:

INT - FANTASY LOCATION - DAY

Helena is smiling at Jake.

HELENA

(laughing)

Doesn't it seem like we always do what you want to do?

JAKE

You always say, "Yes."

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

HELENA

How many long-distance relationships have you ever heard have a happy ending?

JAKE

I just can't sit here, waiting, for a job that may never come. I had to do something.

Helena thinks deeply. Jake watches her.

She puts the photo down. Snaps out of it.

HELENA

Yeah, yeah. You're right, I've got this. No biggie. Extra shifts, flying back and forth, everything is going to be okay. It's actually probably going to be better. Yeah, yeah.

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

Now that you've explained
it...yeah, everything is going to
be just great.

Jake is speechless; he absentmindedly closes a box.

JAKE

They want me to start Monday. But
I'll be back soon.

He walks off to the bedroom, leaving Helena alone.

She doesn't look at him. Keeps her attention on the box full
of framed photos of the two of them. It is taking every ounce
of her energy to not cry.

It starts to rain again. Helena walks to the window.

We see Helena's reflection in the window; it's hard to tell
if she's crying or if it's just rain drops.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. DAYROOM - MORNING

Helena sits across from Samantha, who seems more calm than
the previous day.

Helena is staring off into space. Samantha studies her.

SAMANTHA

Aren't you gonna ask me how I'm
doin'?

Helena snaps out of it.

HELENA

Sorry. You seem like you're doing
well today?

SAMANTHA

Well enough to let me go?

HELENA

Soon; just hold it together a
little longer.

As Helena speaks, it's unclear whether she's talking to
Samantha or herself.

HELENA (CONT'D)
 Just keep holding it together.
 Sometimes, that's about all we can
 do.

Now Samantha looks off into space.

(CONT'D)

SAMANTHA
 (dryly)
 When you go home at night and
 you're making dinner, and you have
 a sharp knife, cutting vegetables,
 do you ever think, even for a split
 second, of just ramming that knife
 into your skull?

Helena looks at Samantha from head to toe. Does not respond.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 I think, it takes most people a
 lotta effort not to.

Helena shifts in her seat.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 I'm not most people, though. When I
 was little, my parents used to let
 people do "stuff" to me for money.

HELENA
 I'm sorry that happened to you.
 Nothing...really...could be worse.

SAMANTHA
 (avoiding eye contact)
 They told me...that's how they got
 their new Mercedes.
 (laughs)
 I actually thought I'd be entitled
 to that car when I got a license.
 No such luck.
 (looks right at Helena)
 They'd drug me and tie me down.
 Sometimes they'd film what the
 people did to me; sell the tapes.

HELENA
 I'm sorry that happened to you,
 Samantha... Sam.
 (MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

But you have to promise me, you'll
do whatever it takes to not hurt
yourself.

SAMANTHA

I can't make that promise; just
like you can't promise me I'll be
safe out there.

Samantha points to the window and outside.

Helena is moved by what she's heard.

HELENA

Some days it's harder than others
to keep what's "real" in your head.
Not to let your mind wander, to
another time and place; but realize
that you are here, now, safe.

SAMANTHA

Safe for now, but not...

CUT TO:

INT. - A FANTASY LOCATION - A COURTROOM - DAY

Sam is on the witness stand; she is crying.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. DAYROOM - MORNING

HELENA

You'll be safe.

CUT TO:

EXT. - AIRPORT - DAY

Helena and Jake pull up to the airport. Helena is driving.

JAKE

I guess this is goodbye.

HELENA

There's nothing "good" about this.

JAKE
It'll be all right.

An awkward silence, then...

HELENA
Are you really coming to visit me?

JAKE
Like you always say, "Seriously?"

Jake laughs and pulls away from Helena, trying to lighten the mood. He opens the side door, taking his luggage.

HELENA
What are you gonna tell people when they ask?

(CONT'D)

JAKE
I'm gonna tell them you're doing great out here. And I had to chance at a really good offer.

Helena takes a deep breath. Nods, seeming to digest that okay.

HELENA
Say hi to everybody for me.

JAKE
I will.

HELENA
And call when you land.

JAKE
Okay.

They hug.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You gonna be okay?

HELENA
Me? Oh sure. I'll be working so many hours I won't even notice you're not here. There's quite a lot...for me at work. Not to mention...

(MORE)

HELENA (CONT'D)

Now I'll have all the covers, and
the toilet seat is always gonna be
down.

She laughs a fake laugh. Then says, mostly to herself...

HELENA (CONT'D)

Every woman's dream.

Jake smiles gently.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Bye, Jake.

JAKE

Bye, Helena.

They hug, tightly.

Helena clenches her jaw as hard as possible, fighting her
sadness, trying to will it away with toughness.

He lets go. Gives her one more smile, and then turns and
walks away. She watches him go. Her tough expression slowly
crumbling away to sadness.

Jake turns around and waves one last time as he is about to
go through the airport door.

Helena quickly hides her devastation, replacing it with an
empty smile, only for the fleeting moment where she waves
back.

As he turns and exits the airport, a sigh of sadness replaces
Helena's smile. And then the last of her toughness crumbles.

She cries.

END OF ACT 3

ACT 4

CUT TO:

EXT. - EPS - DAY

It's a nice morning. Helena and Pearl are standing outside, having a morning coffee.

Helena notices Gaytan in the parking lot. He is talking to a woman. They kiss; obviously boyfriend and girlfriend.

Helena absorbs this; just another gut punch.

The woman gets in the car and drives away. Gaytan heads toward them.

GAYTAN
Morning, ladies.

HELENA
Good morning.

PEARL
Morning.

Gaytan enters the building. A quiet moment, and then...

PEARL (CONT'D)
His girlfriend.

HELENA
Yeah. I figured that.

Pearl continues with a little more salt in the wound.

PEARL
She's a model.

HELENA
That's nice.

PEARL
Lingerie, swimsuits...

HELENA
Huh.

PEARL
...adult novelties...

Helena tries her best to act normal.

(CONT'D)

HELENA

(dryly)

Wow.

Pearl laughs.

PEARL

Just kidding. I don't know what she does. I think she's a realtor?

Helena laughs. Seeming to let her guard down a bit.

PEARL (CONT'D)

C'mon, Hollus. Let's get to work.

CUT TO:

INT. - EPS. DAYROOM - DAY

Samantha sits, tapping her foot nervously; wrestles in her chair.

Helena walks up to her

HELENA

Getting ready to go?

SAMANTHA

Yeah, my group-home supervisor is coming to pick me up.

Samantha still very restless, trying to keep it together.

HELENA

You know we're here for you.

SAMANTHA

I'm not leaving. Just going somewhere else for a few days.
(laughs)

HELENA

What do you mean?

SAMANTHA

My parents' probation hearing is coming up and that always messes me up.

HELENA

They're not going to get out; not after what they did to you.

Samantha now rocking back and forth in her chair with her hands clenched together.

SAMANTHA

You don't know that for sure.

Helena leaning toward Samantha

HELENA

Look. The simple fact that you can talk about it. Talk about your parents. That takes courage. You will be absolutely safe out there. And, if you need to come back here, I know you will always be safe here.

SAMANTHA

Because you'll be here?

HELENA

I'm not going anywhere.

The side door to the day room opens and a MALE STAFF PERSON enters.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Time to go. Take it... Well I was going to say, take it one day at a time. But...to start...take it one step at a time.

Samantha smiles and turns and walks slowly toward the door. The Male Staff Person escorts Samantha out into the lobby where her GROUP HOME SUPERVISOR greets her.

Samantha turns and gives a faint little wave. Helena smiles sincerely. Samantha turns back and walks out.

Helena watches her leave.

Collette steps next to her.

COLETTE

It's good to care, but just don't lose yourself in the process.

HELENA

I just hope she's okay.

Collette notices Helena's sticker has fallen off her badge.

COLETTE

Hey, looks like you need a new sticker to cover up your last name.

Helena looking down at her badge

(CONT'D)

HELENA

Thanks for noticing. Pearl would have had a field day with that.

COLETTE

You know Helena, Sam is never going to be okay; she's going to get by and we're going to be here when she needs us. And that, my friend, is as good as it gets.

HELENA

Yeah, as good as it gets.

Collette and Helena start to walk out the back door; it's the end of the day.

COLETTE

You know, I saw that homeless lady yesterday with the small fortune in her shopping cart.

HELENA

Where?

COLETTE

Under the overpass, right where she said she lived. She was sleeping in an old sleeping bag, her head sticking out of her small tent tucked back in a corner.

HELENA

With many year's worth of rent
money wrapped in newspapers next to
her. Incredible.

COLETTE

No, crazy.

Colette smiles.

HELENA

Crazy, like a fox

This makes Helena smile. They both laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT - SUNSET

The sun sets behind Helena's apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Helena lays on the bed, phone to her ear, looking at the
empty space beside her.

Jake is on the other line, sounding more upbeat than usual.

JAKE (O.S.)

Kevin and Millie say hi. They got a
dog. Mitch, I think.

HELENA

(into phone)

How nice. You all ready for work?

JAKE (O.S.)

Totally. Looking forward to getting
back in the swing of things.

Helena doesn't like that comment.

HELENA

I didn't realize you had been "out"
of "the swing of things."

JAKE

Don't be like that. You know what I mean.

HELENA

(into phone, cutting him off; but softer)

It's okay. I gotta go, I gotta make some dinner. I can't eat anymore takeout.

JAKE

Oh, call the VA. I saw Murphy at the grocery store and he said they were trying to contact you.

HELENA

Why? And...why didn't he just call me?

JAKE

I don't know. He said he'd been trying. I told him I'd let you know. I'm just passing on the message.

HELENA

What does he want?

JAKE

He didn't say.

HELENA

And you didn't ask?

JAKE

No. I didn't ask.

HELENA

(upset with him)

Well... Thanks.

JAKE (O.S.)

No prob, sweet dreams.

She hangs up the phone and lays there for a moment, lost.

Eventually, Helena gets up and exits the room.

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The sounds of nearby late-night traffic, arguing couples, loud music, sirens and airplanes fill the apartment.

Helena sits down on her grandmother's rocking chair, calmly rocking forwards and backwards, a notebook and pencil on her lap.

She begins to write in the notebook...

HELENA (V.O.)

So here I am again, alone, thinking about how messed up my life is. Why can't I just get it right? There's so many people that have nothing. I feel overwhelmed, lost, like them. There are murderers running around free, corporations stealing their employee's retirement, druggies looking for their next fix. Samantha is out there--all alone. Jean is out there--all alone.
(a wry smile)
And I'm in here--all alone.

She laughs to herself.

HELENA (V.O.)

People do things to children and we have to pick up the pieces.

She feels the unconscionableness of those people.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

HELENA (V.O.)

I guess everyone's crazy; some just deal with it better than others.

One step to the left or right too far and you just fall off. Well, at least I learned...

(pause)

... not to judge a shopping cart by the driver and the stuff that is in it.

(pause)

...not to believe what you see, appearances mean nothing.

(MORE)

HELENA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(pause)

...not to be effected by what a man
says, it's what he does that
matters..

Helena smiles, puts down the pencil and turns her head
towards the window and continues to rock.

CUT TO:

INT. - HELENA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT - KITCHEN

Helena is cutting vegetables on a cutting board. The knife is
sharp, as it slices through carrots and celery.

Muzak is playing from her Amazon Dot wireless speaker on the
counter. Eventually the muzak stops and we hear a man's
voice.

MURPHY (O.S.)

Helena!

HELENA

Hey, Murph.

MURPHY (O.S.)

Finally! I have no idea what was up
with the phones.

HELENA

Note sure but you've got me now.
So, what's up?

MURPHY (O.S.)

Listen, I'll get right to it. Your
replacement didn't work out. She
was a total flake. HR is going back
to the drawing board in the hiring
process and I told them I'd reach
out to you and see if we could get
you back.

(CONT'D)

HELENA

Did Jake put you up to this? You
know I live in California. They all
know that.

MURPHY (O.S.)

Jake doesn't know anything; he didn't ask why I wanted to talk to you. So, anyway, they understand your value and they're willing to pay for it.

They have grant money to spend on personnel and they basically said you can name your price and it's yours. And, well, obviously, Jake is now back here as well.

(hopeful)

You interested?

Helena stops cutting. Thinks deeply.

MURPHY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

To be quiet honest, we'd love to have you back; the VA gang misses you.

HELENA

Is this a real offer?

MURPHY (O.S.)

Real as steel. Come back to Michigan, surrounded by friends and family; only this time making a lot more money. What do you say?

Helena is still in deep thought. Dead air as she doesn't respond. Eventually...

MURPHY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you need more time to think about it?

Helena seems to come to a decision.

HELENA

Murph, it's happening again.

MURPHY

Like before the visions, the marks?

HELENA

Yup, same stuff, but more intense.

MURPHY

Even more reason to move back, they're not going to understand.

HELENA

I need more time here. There has to be a reason why its starting again.

MURPHY (O.S.)

So its settled your moving back. Right? What day do you want to start?

HELENA

I'm... I'm not coming back.

MURPHY (O.S.)

Helena... This isn't something to turn down on impulse. You need support!

HELENA

Murph, when have I ever done anything on impulse. You know me.

Helena walks over to the window and looks out over San Francisco; night lights.

MURPHY (O.S.)

That job, that place. EPS, has a hold on you, I can tell by your voice. I think its triggering your abilities.

HELENA

I think I can make a real difference here, Murph. The city is amazing and I am getting used to good Chinese food.

MURPHY (O.S.)

At least talk numbers with HR first. They're desperate and who knows how high they're willing to go?

Helena takes a deep breath. Looks at the knife in her hand.

HELENA

I really appreciate it, Murph. But I have a plan, and I'm gonna stick with it.

MURPHY (O.S.)

I remember you telling me that your mom always said, "It's Helena's way or the highway" I hear ya, kid.

HELENA
(faint laugh)
You know me too well.

(CONT'D)

MURPHY (O.S.)
You know that I'm here for you.
Call me if things change, okay?

HELENA
Murph you're on my speed dial, but
don't wait by the phone.

MURPHY (O.S.)
Take care of yourself, kid.

HELENA
I will. Big hug to you and the
gang.

She hangs up. Takes a deep breath. Goes back to cutting her vegetables.

SFX: Quiet, eerie music.

She finishes cutting the celery. Grabs the last carrot and begins cutting it. The blade slices through the carrot.

She finishes and scoops all of the cut vegetables into a bowl.

She rinses the knife, then shuts the faucet and looks at the knife's blade for a minute.

Her eyes follow the steel all the way to the blade's tip. She tightens her grip on the handle. Squeezes it.

SFX: Eerie music ends.

She pauses as she holds it for a moment, then she opens the dishwasher and sticks the knife, blade down, into the dishwasher's utensil basket.

She closes the dishwasher; clicking it closed tightly.

Helena walks off, leaving us alone in the kitchen.

We see something sticking out of the garbage can. It is the framed photo of Helena and Jake that we saw her unpacking earlier.

We can hear sirens in the distance outside.

CUT TO:

FULL SCREEN DARKNESS

No more sirens in the distance. No more noise of any kind.
And then...

(CONT'D)

HELENA (V.O.)

At some point, she was normal.
Just like everybody else.

END OF EPISODE