

Finding Patience

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FADE IN:

The opening credits roll over:

EXT. DAUPHIN, PA - COUNTRY HOUSE - 1990 - EARLY EVENING

A long unpaved, rickety driveway leads up to weathered property and a country house surrounded by picturesque Pennsylvania countryside. Off to the side of the house is a dirt road that goes out a quarter mile to a shed.

A dirt drenched pick-up truck and a busted up sedan is in the driveway.

DIRK, a tall white male in his early forties charges through the screen door barefoot. He wobbles as he squats low and reaches for a switchblade in his back pocket and slashes all the tires.

DIRK

(mumbles)

Ain't leaving me. I'm fixin' things
so none of yous go anywhere.

Dirk gets in his truck and drives down the trail to the shed.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

17 year-old SARAI clutches her 12 year-old sister HATIMA. Each girl seeks solace in one another as they try to block out their mother's screams coupled with gut wrenching THUDS of fists on flesh.

The noises from downstairs are no longer heard. Sarai loosens her grip on Hatima, gets up and tip-toes to the door. Hatima follows, but is stopped by Sarai.

SARAI

Stay here. I'm going to check on
mom. I'll be back.

Sarai kisses Hatima on her forehead and leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

POV - SARAI

The room is in shambles. There are two cut up suitcases and clothes scattered amongst a displaced sofa, broken picture frames, and additional house hold items. There's also a large dent in the wall that looks like a body was thrown into it.

A badly beaten RHEA, 35, lies unconscious next to the large dent in the wall. Next to Rhea is a broken iron board and a heavy "old fashion" iron. Sarai tries to wake her mother, but she's badly beaten and knocked out cold.

She runs over to the

KITCHEN

And frantically rummages through the drawers looking for her mama's car keys. She runs through the LIVING ROOM and out the front door. Rhea slowly comes to.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima sneaks out the room and heads downstairs.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The sun begins to set, night time is not far off.

Sarai trips and drops the car keys, as she bends over to pick them up she sees that all the tires to her mom's car are slashed. She canvasses the area and spots

ANOTHER ANGLE

Dirk's truck next to the shed. Dirk runs out with a gun.

SARAI

Shit.

She runs to the house without the car keys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hatima helps Rhea sit up as Sarai bolts through the front door.

SARAI

I told you to stay upstairs!

RHEA

Don't yell at her.

Sarai walks over to the rotary phone.

RHEA (CONT'D)

No!

SARAI
He slashed your tires.

RHEA
Shit.

HATIMA
What are we gonna do mama?

SARAI
We've got to leave now.

Sarai dials.

SARAI (CONT'D)
Hello. Send a taxi to 225 Orchard
Road. (beat) Yes. 225 Orchard Road.

Dirk's headlights shine into the living room. He parks the car. Sarai hangs up.

SARAI (CONT'D)
Hatima get up stairs.

Hatima runs up the stairs and Sarai follows her.

Dirk trips through the front door with a tight grip on the GLOCK 27. Another gun is tucked in the waist of his jeans.

Rhea struggles to get herself up. Dirk walks over to Rhea and pistol whips her. She falls to the floor. He drops her car keys beside her.

DIRK
I say when it's over.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarai puts Hatima down and locks the door. She brings her to the closet. Hatima balls herself up in the corner. Sarai tries to console her with a hug and kiss.

SARAI
Don't come out...no matter what you
hear.

Sarai motions for her sister to be quiet, she hears FOOTSTEPS. Hatima hugs Sarai. Sarai has to pry Hatima's hands off and sticks her in the closet. She locks the bedroom door and exits.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Dirk waits at the top of the stairwell.

Sarai enters the hallway. Dirk points his gun at her and motions for her to go down the stairs. She has no options but to do what she's told.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarai goes over to her mama. She looks Dirk in the eyes.

SARAI

You ain't gonna get away with this,
Dirk.

Dirk walks over to Sarai and knocks her out.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dirk sucks down a full bottle of scotch. At this moment he's on top of the world.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rhea wakes up Sarai. As Sarai comes to Rhea points to the kitchen.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A taxi cab pulls into the driveway and BEEPS the horn.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dirk swigs down the last bit of scotch from the bottle then heads to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarai looks around the room for something to use as a weapon. Her eyes stop on the "old fashioned" iron.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima exits the closet and leaves the room.

ON THE STAIRWELL

Hatima tip-toes down the stairs, when she gets to the bottom she crouches down, so no one can see her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The taxi cab BEEPS the horn again.

Sarai stands next to the doorway, with her hands frantically shake as she stands at attention. Rhea hides behind the sofa awaiting Sarai's cue.

The taxi cab BEEPS the horn again.

Dirk sluggishly approaches the doorway of the living room.

Sarai stands up straight and readies herself, she pulls back her arms and takes a deep breath. She counts.

SARAI

1..2..

BAM. The iron smashes Dirk in the face and he falls to the floor. His gun flies into the air. Rhea retrieves it. Sarai gives Dirk a swift kick to the gut and takes the other gun in his waist.

The tides have turned, but Dirk isn't ready to surrender. He struggles to get his bearings, but eventually rolls over on his side and get up.

Rhea shakes with trepidation as she points the gun at Dirk. Sarai holds the gun nice and steady.

DIRK

(malicious)

You bitches ain't got the balls.
I'm in control.

Dirk charges Rhea. Two GUN SHOTS go off. Dirk collapses to the ground.

INT. HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Sometime in the 1990's.

An unpaved, rickety drive-way leads up to weathered property and a beat-up country house. Next to the house is a dirt trail that goes to a large shed; its about a quarter mile away from the house.

EXT. HOUSE - A FEW HOURS LATER

The perimeter of the house is sectioned off with yellow crime tape. Police lights FLASH. The area is an official crime scene.

The taxi cab driver is by his vehicle being interviewed by a DEPUTY SHERIFF.

Rhea is escorted out in handcuffs by two OFFICERS. Dirk's blood all over her. The officers place Rhea in the back of the police car. Rhea hangs her head in shame as the car pulls away.

Sarai and Hatima watch from the living room window.

HATIMA

Mama.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

The waiting area is cold and unwelcoming. There are three CORRECTION OFFICERS guarding the waiting area. One watches counter the security monitors, the other two man the metal detectors at the security check point.

ALICE, 30, a white social worker for the Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare sits with Sarai and Hatima in orange plastic chairs. Sarai looks up at the clock on the wall and turns to Alice.

SARAI

How much longer?

ALICE

Not sure. I wasn't told about your mom's meeting with her lawyer.

SARAI

They don't tell you much, do they?

Alice ignores the snide comment.

HATIMA

Is mama's lawyer good? He's gonna help her, right?

Alice is about to answer but Sarai cuts her off.

SARAI

No, she has a public defender.

HATIMA

What's that?

SARAI

A shitty lawyer you get from the state when you don't have any money. It's free, but it's no damn good. Rhea's going to jail, the question is how long?

HATIMA

You said it was self-defense. Him or us.

SARAI

It doesn't matter. Mamma killed a man, a white man.

ALICE

That's enough Sarai.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER 1

Alice, you and the girls are cleared to go back. I'll need the three of you to sign the visitor's log. Empty all your personal belongings and put them in these plastic bags, then walk through the metal detectors.

Alice, Sarai and Hatima get up and follow the instructions.

INT. OFFICE CUBICAL - A FEW MONTHS LATER

Alice enters her office with Hatima and Sarai. They sit in chairs in front of her desk. Alice leans against her cluttered desk.

ALICE

Hi ladies. I'm sorry to bring you in again on such short notice--

SARAI

(cuts off)

Something is up. What's the bad news today?

ALICE

I've had no luck contacting any of Rhea's kin in state. It seems your grandma and aunt have moved and left no forwarding address.

HATIMA

What does that mean?

SARAI

It means you're going to stay in foster care.

ALICE

The judge has decided to terminate Rhea's parental rights due to the severity. Sarai this won't affect you since you're 18 and heading off to Army, but this will make Hatima and the baby eligible for adoption.

SARAI

Baby, what baby?

HATIMA

Mama's having a baby?

ALICE

Your mother is 3 months pregnant

SARAI

That can't be, Dirks?

ALICE

It's been confirmed by the prison doctor.

SARAI

(Sarcastic)

She's keeping that bastards baby?

HATIMA

What's going to happen to the baby?
Can we still see mama?

ALICE

Sweetie, I don't know. I have to talk to your mom's lawyer.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CITY OF PHILADELPHIA - PRESENT DAY

A series of shots that show the essence of the city. We see famous landmarks such as Independence Hall, Liberty Bell, City Hall as well as traffic, downtown buildings, and people going about their daily lives.

The shot changes to an office building that has seen better days.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE - DAY

Organized chaos best describes the atmosphere. It's a hectic morning but just another typical day at the office.

In the front of the office we see LUCILLE CLARK, early forties at her desk. She's the administrative assistant is referred to as the gatekeeper for the department, right now she's bombarded with phone calls.

She manages to keep a pleasant tone as she answers her phone.

LUCILLE

Good Morning. Public Defenders
office. Please hold....

Throughout the rest of the office we catch a glimpse of overworked, under paid PUBLIC DEFENDERS at their cubicals, some review their case work, others are on the phone, with CLIENTS, or they shoot the shit at the empty water bubbler by the coffee station.

In the middle of the room is a desk that distinguishes itself from the rest. It's clean and organized, every picture, file, pen and paperclip has its place and is in its place.

HATIMA, now 33, sits at her desk in a blissful gaze. She admires a graduation photo of Alice and herself from law school.

Her phone rings. She answers it.

HATIMA

Hello. Hold on. Let me get the
file...

She goes through her files and quickly finds the one she needs.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

I got it...Wait a minute that's not
what I have in my notes...Go on.
I'll need to speak with him to
verify what you're telling me
before I go to court.

She grabs a post-it.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

Give me the address.

She writes it down.

HATIMA (CONT'D)
Thanks. I owe you one.

She hangs up the phone.

Next to her cubical, is RICHARD TILTMAN, also early thirties. He's the complete opposite of Hatima, a half-assed lawyer on a good day.

Richard juggles a bunch of paperwork as he grabs his jacket and briefcase. He accidentally drops a case file when he leaves.

Hatima spots the file and picks it up, she's about to call him when her phone rings. She decides to answer the phone and goes back to her desk.

HATIMA (CONT'D)
Hello. I'm sorry but his is not social security. No I can't transfer you, but here's the toll free number, 1-800-772-1213.
You're welcome.

She picks up Rich's case file and goes through it. Her facial expression becomes less jovial as she continues to read the file. She closes the file and walks over to Lucille's desk.

HATIMA (CONT'D)
Where's Rich at?

LUCILLE
He's in conference room B with a client. Why?

HATIMA
He dropped this?

She shows Lucille the file. Lucille reaches for it.

LUCILLE
I'll bring it to him.

HATIMA
I'm heading out. I can just drop it off.

LUCILLE
Okay.

Lucille gives Hatima a questionable look as she leaves the office.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Richard is at a table with a MOTHER, early forties and her 17 year-old SON. He in the midst of a conversation with the mother about her son's charges.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hatima walks down the hallway. She's turns the corner and approaches conference room B.

INTERCUT - CONFERENCE ROOM DOORWAY AND HALLWAY

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B

There is a knock at the door. Richard gets up and opens the door.

RICHARD

What's up? I'm with a client.

Hatima pulls out the file and hands it to Rich.

HATIMA

You dropped this.

RICHARD

Oh. Thanks.

Rich is about to close the door, when Hatima shoves her foot in and pushes it back open. Rich is caught off guard by this, but keeps his composure in front of his clients.

HATIMA

(lowered voice)

It's self-defense, you should go to trial.

RICHARD

Excuse you.

HATIMA

An abused house wife with two daughters doesn't commit murder. It's called self-defense. She has hospital records to substantiate the abuse and complaints with the police department on file.

RICHARD

(angry)

You have no business looking at my case, besides I don't need you to tell me how to do my job.

HATIMA

(disgusted)

Part of your job is working in the best interest of your client...

She looks over to the mother and son.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

I mean clients. Not teaming up with the prosecution to shrink your case load.

Hatima snatches the file back from Rich. Hatima proudly walks away. She won this battle.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B - CONTINUOUS

Rich slams the door shut and goes back to the table. The mother gives Rich an unpleasant look.

RICHARD

Now where were we?

MOTHER

I want another lawyer. What's that lady's name.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE - DAY

Hatima is on her way back to her desk when she is stopped by Lucille.

LUCILLE

Marcus wants to see you ASAP. He didn't sound happy.

Hatima looks around for Rich. The two make eye contact. Rich gives Hatima a malicious smile that says, "I got your ass."

HATIMA

I know what it's about. Thanks.

She leaves.

INT. MARCUS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The office is a tight space, barely enough room to breathe let alone work. The furniture has a 1980's feel. The wall behind the desk displays a law degree and a few plaques of achievement for MARCUS HODGINS, a middle-aged African American man.

There's a knock at the door.

MARCUS

Come in.

Hatima enters. Marcus waits for her to close the door before he speaks.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Sit. (Beat) What were you thinking?

Hatima's about to answer, but Marcus doesn't give her an opportunity.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Don't answer that. Don't say anything!

HATIMA

But...

MARCUS

Just listen. Hatima you're one of the best lawyers in this department. I usually don't keep lawyers as good as you for more than a couple of years, you've been here four. You're passionate, you work hard, hell you're an ACE, but I can't have you reading cases that aren't assigned to you or belittling Rich in front of his clients. It's wrong and unacceptable at your level in the game.

Hatima gets up and Marcus points his finger for her to sit back down. She sits back down.

HATIMA

He wasn't doing his job and I caught it.

MARCUS

You don't get to make those calls.
I DO!

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You should have brought it to my attention. I would have handled it. (Beat) Two weeks ago it was Martin, a month ago it was Alexis. One by one, you're alienating yourself from your colleagues.

HATIMA

Are you firing me?

MARCUS

No, I can't afford to.

HATIMA

Suspending me.

MARCUS

No..and that's not because you don't deserve it.

HATIMA

Then what is this?

MARCUS

You're going to take time off.

HATIMA

A vacation?

MARCUS

You need a break. Hell the office needs a break from you. Clear your head, relax. You and Colin can spend more time together. Y

HATIMA

That's it. How long?

MARCUS

Kid, I'm doing you a favor. Two weeks. Finish out the week, any cases you have open will be transferred in the meantime. I don't want you working on any cases while you're out. When you get back you're on probation. I'll decide when you go back to court.

Hatima sits poised and silent processing what she's been told. She takes her time to get up and leave. When she outside of Marcus's office she yells--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

HATIMA

FUCK!

Hatima pulls out her cell phone and dials a number.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

Colin I need to talk?

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY

Law office ASSOCIATES and STAFF are in conservative business attire going about their business. Hatima approaches the RECEPTIONIST, who is on the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

The offices of David, Lawlor, and Finch, how may I help you? I'll transfer you call please hold. Hey Hatima.

HATIMA

Colin is expecting me.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll let him know you're here. You can go back.

Hatima heads to Colin's office.

INT. COLIN'S OFFICE

Colin stands by the window. His office has a great view of the city. He could easily pass for an GQ model in his designer suit. Flummoxed, he wipes sweat from his forehead and gulps down a bottle of water.

COLIN

I'm in the running for partner.
Isn't that great news?

HATIMA

(unenthusiastic)
That's wonderful.

COLIN

(enthusiastic)
It's not a sure thing, but I'm still pretty excited about it. If I get the promotion that can mean changes for us.

(MORE)

COLIN (CONT'D)

I thought we could move in together, get engaged. Tima, what's wrong? I thought you'd be excited about this?

HATIMA

I'm sorry. I have a lot going on at work. Marcus put me on probation. Indefinitely.

COLIN

What happened? Marcus wouldn't put his best PD on probation for nothing.

HATIMA

(inhales)

Rich dropped his case file. I looked it over and called him out for skating on a case.

Colin shakes his head, he's heard this explanation many times before.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

He was with a client.

COLIN

Are you crazy? You're lucky you didn't get suspended.

HATIMA

I know. I know. I messed up, but my heart was in the right place. Richard wasn't doing his job.

COLIN

That's not your job.

HATIMA

You sound like Marcus right now. Lets change the subject.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hatima checks her cell phone and sees that it's almost 5 p.m.

As she packs up her belongings, her cell phone rings.

HATIMA

Hello...Hey Rebecca...Oh my God..What hospital? City General...I'm on my way.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Hatima rushes in and stops in her tracks when she sees Alice's birth daughter REBECCA, late twenties and SARAI, now middle thirties around an empty bed.

Sarai walks over to Hatima. The two are face to face.

SARAI

She's gone.

REBECCA

Our mother is gone.

Hatima steps away from Sarai. She tries to hold in her anguish, but can't. Sarai and Rebecca move in to comfort Hatima.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - DAY

A gray and cloudy day. A crowd gathers, Hatima, Colin, and Sarai stand beside Rebecca. Colin comforts Hatima as best he can, but she pushes him away.

Alice's casket is lowered into the ground.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

People fill the house. Rebecca and Colin mingle with guests. Conversations are ad-libbed, upbeat and lively.

INT. HOUSE - ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alice's room has pictures of family, plaques, degrees, and certificates of achievement. Hatima sits on the bed.

Sarai stands in the doorway. She knocks on the door.

SARAI

Mind if I join you.

HATIMA

Sure.

Sarai sits.

SARAI

How are you holding up?

HATIMA

Okay, I guess.

SARAI

I'm leaving soon. I got to get back to the kids.

HATIMA

Why didn't you bring the family?

SARAI

I wanted to, but the timing wasn't right.

HATIMA

I thought we were going to catch up.

SARAI

Another time.

Sarai leaves.

HATIMA

Always another time, never now. Conversations are ad-libbed, upbeat and lively.

INT. HATIMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hatima lounges on the sofa, looks through childhood photos in her life book. It's a memento she made with Alice. Some reality show is on the T.V., but she could care less.

The sound of a key as it TURNS in the front door lock doesn't faze her.

Colin enters.

COLIN

I've been trying to call you for a couple of days. What's going on?

HATIMA

I'm not up to talking.

Colin turns off the T.V.

COLIN

I know you're hurting, but this is not a healthy way to deal with Alice's death.

HATIMA

I'm not ready to let go.

COLIN

You're using her death as a reason to shut me out. I don't deserve this.

HATIMA

It's not like that.

COLIN

That's not how you're acting. Maybe you should give Diana a call. Some therapy might help.

Hatima doesn't look up.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Just think about it. It can't hurt.

HATIMA

Okay. I'll clean up and we can go out for dinner.

Hatima kisses Colin and then heads to the bathroom.

INT. DIANA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Hatima sits across from DIANA WILKIN, a stylish woman in her late forties, they are in mid-session.

HATIMA

I didn't expect to be back here.

DIANA

It's okay. Life throws us curve balls. How are you feeling or should I say dealing?

HATIMA

I'm internalizing my feelings.

DIANA

A little more than the text book answer.

HATIMA

I'm not sleeping, my nightmares have started up again. I'm on probation at work and the second most important woman in my life is dead. My world is falling a part.

DIANA

I can prescribe Ramelteon to help you sleep, but you've got other things brewing. Maybe we should go back to weekly sessions.

HATIMA

Is that really necessary?

DIANA

Remember you called me?

HATIMA

Colin said I should.

DIANA

He may have recommended you call me, but you picked up the phone. I'm here to help you Hatima, but you got to let me in if I'm going to.

HATIMA

All right.

DIANA

We have to wrap it up for today, but I'm looking forward to seeing you next week.

HATIMA

Before I go, I better take that prescription.

Diana grabs her prescription pad and writes up the slip. She rips the slip off and hands it to Hatima.

DIANA

Hatima try and find closure. Go over to Alice's house and confront your pain. It may help you begin your healing process.

HATIMA

Ok, I will. Thanks Diana.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Boxes are stacked up all over the room. Rebecca comes in and out to remove Alice's things.

Hatima closes Alice's safe and takes the paperwork to the bed. She sits down to review them.

She skims through the documents and stops when she comes across a folder labeled Patience Miles.

Rebecca comes back in. Hatima shuffles the papers into a pile.

REBECCA

This room looks done. You okay, You looked flustered.

HATIMA

I'm fine!

REBECCA

Okay, okay. How about we grab a bite to eat?

HATIMA

In a minute. Let me clean up this mess.

Rebecca leaves. Hatima grabs Patience's file and stuffs it in her canvas bag and leaves.

INT. HATIMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima has Patience's file spread out on her bed. There's also a Polaroid picture of herself with an infant Patience in her arms. She reaches for the picture and cries.

The phone RINGS. She doesn't answer it. The answering machine comes on.

HATIMA (V.O.)

(on machine)

You've reached Hatima Miles,
please leave your name, number, and
a brief message. Thank you.

A short and loud BEEP follows after Hatima's message. Hatima examines Patience's birth certificates.

COLIN (V.O.)

Hatima, It's Colin, pick up...When
you get this give me a call me. I
love you.

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - DAY

As Rebecca eats her breakfast the doorbell RINGS. She gets up to answer it. The doorbell RINGS again.

REBECCA
I'm coming.

Rebecca opens the door, Hatima is on the other side.

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Rebecca takes her seat and continues to eat breakfast. Hatima stands.

REBECCA
Do you want coffee or something?

HATIMA
No.

REBECCA
What's wrong?

HATIMA
I found this in Alice's safe.

Hatima removes the envelope from her canvas bag and hands it to Rebecca.

REBECCA
What is it?

HATIMA
Just look.

Rebecca examines the documents.

REBECCA
You found this in mom's safe. It doesn't make sense.

HATIMA
I can't believe Alice had Patience's record all these years.

REBECCA
She must have had a good reason.

HATIMA
We'll never know what it was.

Rebecca sits.

HATIMA (CONT'D)
I want to use the information to find her.

REBECCA
Whoa! Hold on.

HATIMA
Why shouldn't I search her?

REBECCA
This is a closed adoption file.
You shouldn't have it.

HATIMA
Well I do, besides she's my sister
not yours.

REBECCA
Think, Hatima. You should talk to
Sarai and your mom before you do
anything. They have a right to
know.

Hatima gets up.

HATIMA
I got to go.

Hatima leaves. Rebecca goes after her.

REBECCA
Hatima, wait, come back.

INT. HATIMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima is under the sheets in her bed with her notebook on
her lap. She's on the internet.

CUT TO:

COMPUTER SCREEN

Hatima types, "closed adoption law in Pennsylvania."

EXT. WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK - DAY

Various shots of the affluent community.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The school bell RINGS and the buildings main doors swing
open. STUDENTS rush to their buses or to the student parking
lot.

The student parking lot is filled with the creme da la creme of foreign and domestic sedans and SUVs.

PATIENCE BRIGHTON (17) and her two FRIENDS walk to the parking lot. Each girl looks trendy and posh in their designer togs.

FRIEND 1

So when's the big birthday bash?

PATIENCE

I'm not having one.

FRIEND 2

What? You're joking right?

PATIENCE

Not at all. I decided to keep my 18th birthday low key. I'll probably have dinner in the city with my folks.

FRIEND 1 AND 2

Why?

PATIENCE

Because I'm backpacking Europe for the summer.

FRIEND 2

I'd rather have a party.

PATIENCE

Not me. I want to see the world and make my mark in it.

Patience turns off the ALARM on her SUV. She and girlfriends get in and drive off.

EXT. HATIMA'S CAR - DAY

The car drives through the country side on Interstate 76. She exits the highway.

INT. CAR - DAY

Hatima glances down at the directions, then looks up to check the street signs. She turns and enters a residential area. Hatima checks her surroundings.

She stops in front of a lovely home.

Hatima turns off the engine and looks over at Patience's file in her canvas bag. She shifts her focus and stares into Sarai's living room window. Sarai is with her children, LODRIC, five years-old and LINA, three years-old.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Hatima steps onto the porch with her bag and wrapped gifts. The front door unexpectedly opens and Lodric and Lina run out. Hatima is caught off guard and drops the gifts and her bag.

She embraces the kids and showers them with hugs and kisses.

SARAI

You should have called.

HATIMA

Hey my little dumplings. You've gotten so big. How old are you now?

Lodric puts up five fingers and Lina puts up three.

SARAI

Give Auntie Tima some breathing room.

Hatima grabs the gifts and hands them to Lodric and Lina. They're about to rip off the wrapping paper, but Sarai grabs hold of them.

SARAI (CONT'D)

Kids, what do you say?

Lodric and Lina look at Hatima and slowly say.

LODRIC AND LINA

Thank you, auntie.

SARAI

That's better.

HATIMA

So, are you going to invite me in?

INT. SARAI'S KITCHEN - DAY

Sarai keeps an eye on her kids in the playroom. A children's video plays on in the background, but Lodric and Lina are more interested in their brand new toys.

Hatima sits on a chair across from Sarai. Patience's file is on Hatima's lap.

Hatima turns away from Sarai and catches a glimpse of Lodric and Lina as they play with their toys. She smiles.

HATIMA

The new house is nice. Lodric and Lina are beautiful.

Sarai gives Hatima a gracious smile.

SARAI

Thanks. I wish you would have called before coming.

HATIMA

I'm on a vacation and there's something I want to talk to you about.

SARAI

If it's something with mama you know where I stand.

HATIMA

Yeah, as far away as you can get.

SARAI

She did it to herself.

HATIMA

Just look at this.

Hatima hands Sarai the envelope. Sarai takes a moment to read through the paperwork.

SARAI

Where did you get this?

Neither sister looks at the other.

Hatima grabs the Polaroid picture from inside her jacket pocket and passes it to Sarai. Sarai briefly skims a glance of the picture before she puts it back in the file.

SARAI (CONT'D)

Why are you showing me this?

HATIMA

It's Patience. I thought you would want to know.

SARAI

Now I know.

HATIMA

That's all you can say.

SARAI

What were you expecting?

HATIMA

Not this reaction. I want to find her.

SARAI

Are you crazy?

HATIMA

I find this information on our sister and you dismiss it. How do you do it? Can't you see that we have a second chance?

SARAI

(angry)

I'm sure Patience has a good life and the Brightons are a loving family.

HATIMA

We're also her family and she has a right to know about us... to know the truth.

SARAI

The truth isn't all it's cracked up to be. Sometimes the truth hurts more than it helps. You know that first hand.

HATIMA

The truth is you walked away from Patience and me once, now you're doing it again.

SARAI

I left to better myself, to help us. What happened to her was out of our control.

HATIMA

She has a name. The least you can do is acknowledge it.

SARAI

Leave the past in the past. For once, listen to me. Leave it alone Hatima. Forget you ever found these papers.

STEVEN, Sarai's husband, in his early forties, enters. He stops short when he sees Hatima.

STEVEN

This is a surprise. It's good to see you.

HATIMA

Same here.

STEVEN

How long are you staying?

HATIMA

I was getting ready to head out.

She stands.

STEVEN

Don't be ridiculous, you had a long drive, at least stay the night.

SARAI

If she says she has to go we should respect her wishes.

STEVEN

You should stay.

HATIMA

I don't know.

STEVEN

Here's a compromise, stay for dinner and then head out.

HATIMA

I can do that. I'm going to join Lodric and Lina.

Hatima collects Patience's papers and puts them back in her bag.

STEVEN

What did I interrupt?

SARAI

Nothing.

INT. HATIMA'S CAR - DAY

The speedometer reads 85 miles per hours. Hatima looks out the window and reads a sign: "Munson Maximum Security Prison fifteen miles."

EXT. MUNSON MAXIMUM SECURITY STATE PRISON - DAY

Hatima's car pulls into the prison's entrance.

She exits her car dressed to impress.

INT. PRISON VISITOR'S AREA - DAY

Cameras are everywhere and OFFICERS stand watch. Hatima is escorted to a table, she sits down and checks out the other VISITORS as they talk with INMATES.

A door leading to the main prison opens. TWO SECURITY GUARDS enter with a line of SIX INMATES shackled.

RHEA, now in her fifties, approaches the table. She's held herself together fairly well despite fifteen plus years in lock down. The prison guard unshackles the locks on Rhea's wrists and ankles cuffs. She reaches over the table and hugs Hatima. It's a long embrace.

RHEA

Baby girl you look great.

She lets go of Hatima and takes her in.

HATIMA

Thanks. I wanted to look nice for you.

RHEA

You don't have to impress me, I'm just happy to see you. How's everybody?

HATIMA

Okay, considering--

RHEA

--Considering what?

HATIMA

Alice passed away a couple of weeks ago. Heart attack.

Rhea reaches across the table and grabs Hatima's hands.

RHEA

Baby I'm sorry to hear that. I know she was a second mother to you.

HATIMA

I'm okay.

Hatima grabs her bag and takes out the envelope. She slides it across the table.

Rhea opens the envelope. She sees the Polaroid of Hatima and Patience. She cries.

RHEA

(sotto)

How did you get this?

HATIMA

I found it in Alice's safe when Rebecca and I were packing up her things. I thought you would want to know.

RHEA

You thought wrong. Damn you.

Rhea stuffs everything back in the envelope.

RHEA (CONT'D)

She's got a family.

HATIMA

We're her family too.

RHEA

Doing this will only unlock doors that people don't want open.

HATIMA

You sound like Sarai.

RHEA

She's right.

HATIMA

Patience has a right to know who we are.

RHEA

I've made peace with what's happened to my family years ago.

(MORE)

RHEA (CONT'D)

I take comfort knowing you and Sarai are successful and that Patience was adopted by this family and has a good life.

HATIMA

That's not enough for me. I haven't made peace with what's happened to our family. I want to find her. I'm gonna find her.

RHEA

Don't do this!

HATIMA

Burying the past doesn't erase it.

Hatima grabs the paperwork and gets up.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

I wanted your support, but I don't need it. I'll do it on my own.

RHEA

It's your decision, but it's doesn't make it a right one.

HATIMA

(angry)

You would know, having made such good choices yourself.

Rhea signals to the guard that she is ready to go back to lock up and Hatima is escorted out of the visitor's area.

INT. HATIMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Colin paces back and forth. He sits. He checks his cellphone. The time on his phone reads 11:30 p.m.

Hatima enters with her luggage and bags.

COLIN

Where the hell have you been?

HATIMA

Calm down.

COLIN

I'm not going to calm down. I've been worried sick about you.

(MORE)

COLIN (CONT'D)

It would have been nice to know that my girlfriend was leaving town for a few days. Why didn't you answer my calls?

HATIMA

I'm not fighting with you tonight.

Hatima leaves the living room and heads to her bedroom. Colin follows her.

INT. HATIMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima unpacks her bags. Colin pushes the bags out of the way.

COLIN

We're not finished.

HATIMA

I am.

COLIN

Screw that. You don't let me know your leaving town, you don't return any of my phone calls. Are you trying to tell me something?

Colin heads to the door, Hatima stops him.

HATIMA

I had to deal with family stuff. I went to visit Sarai and my mom.

COLIN

What was so urgent?

HATIMA

I don't want to do this right now.

Colin goes to the door.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

Stop! Don't go.

Colin pauses.

COLIN

How can I support you when you don't let me in?

Colin lifts Hatima's chin and looks her in the eyes.

HATIMA

I'm sorry. I needed to see my family, and wanted to update mom about Alice.

COLIN

You and Sarai seemed at odds when she was here for Alice's funeral.

HATIMA

We are always at odds, which is why I drove out there for a visit. I needed to tie up loose ends.

Hatima hugs Colin.

COLIN

We'll I'm glad your back. I've missed you.

HATIMA

I'm glad to be back too!

INT. DIANA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Hatima and Diana are in session.

HATIMA

Everyone's against me.

DIANA

It's not so cut and dry. They have a right to their feelings. Are you sure that's what you need to focus on right now?

HATIMA

I've already started looking for her.

DIANA

What does Colin have to say?

HATIMA

Well, I haven't--

DIANA

--You haven't told him about the files or what you're doing.

HATIMA

I will when the time is right,
besides I don't want to hear
another person tell me that I
shouldn't do this.

DIANA

You're assuming and not giving him
a chance. What choices does he have
when you don't include him.

HATIMA

He's up for partner with his firm,
my family trauma is the last thing
he needs right now.

DIANA

Who are you to decide that for him?

HATIMA

So now you're turning against me
too! I don't need this stress. I
can handle it.

DIANA

I'm not so sure about that. What
about work? Your nightmares?

HATIMA

I'm not back at work yet. No
nightmares lately. The Rameleton is
working.

DIANA

Have you ever thought that Alice
may have had good reasons for not
showing you Patience's files?

HATIMA

I'll never know them. She was wrong
to keep this from me.

DIANA

Not necessarily. Think about the
bigger picture and everything
you've been struggling with over
the years. I'm not saying to ignore
what you're feeling, but you have
to consider all sides, not just
yours. This will have--

HATIMA

--Patience is out there and she
deserves to know the truth.

(MORE)

HATIMA (CONT'D)

I'm not my mother or Sarai. I won't dismiss what I found and move on. I'm the only one who cares enough to step up to the plate.

DIANA

This search is not just about stepping up to the plate. Remember that what you're doing doesn't just affect you.

HATIMA

I'll keep that in mind.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

It's business as usual at the office. Lucille organizes invoices as Hatima trudges past her desk with her leather canvas bag over her shoulder.

LUCILLE

Good to see you back.

HATIMA

I wish I was glad to be back, but thanks.

LUCILLE

For now you will no longer appear on the court docket. Marcus transferred your open cases. Here's a memo from him, it details your new responsibilities. There's a backlog of cases we need filed at the city clerk's office. I'll bring them to you once you get settled.

HATIMA

Filing closed cases, that is salt in my wounds.

LUCILLE

Hatima, it could always be worse. I'll know you'll find a way to make this work to your advantage.

HATIMA

I wish I had your optimism.

LUCILLE

You do.

Hatima reads Marcus's note and continues to her desk.

Alex approaches Hatima's desk.

ALEX
Welcome back.

HATIMA
Thanks.

ALEX
I'll need you to run background
checks for the names on this list.

Alex hands her the list. She snatches it.

HATIMA
Sure?

ALEX
I'll need them asap.

HATIMA
When I can get to it, you'll have
it. Now if you don't mind I have
some work to catch up on.

INT. OFFICE OF THE CLERK - LATER THAT DAY

Endless aisles of filing cabinets. Hatima grabs a closed court file and places it in the appropriate drawer. She grabs another file folder out of the box and accidentally drops it. As she recovers the contents she reads the documents.

She walks over to her briefcase and grabs a pen and pad. She writes down the name Justine Carlton, Adoption.

INT. HATIMA'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hatima sits on the sofa, with Patience's file and the legal pad with Justine Carlton's name. She grabs the phone and dials.

HATIMA
Hello. I would like to speak with
Justine Carlton. Yes I'll hold. Hi
Ms. Carlton, my name is Hatima,
Miles. I wanted to know if you
still specialized in adoption law,
specifically closed adoption?
You do.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

JUSTINE CARLTON, a private practice attorney in her late forties, enters her office, Hatima follows behinds her. The two women sit down.

HATIMA

I appreciate you meeting me on such short notice.

JUSTINE

Not a problem. How can I help you Hatima?

HATIMA

My sister, Patience Miles was adopted in a closed adoption about 17 years ago. I would like to find her. I want to find out my legal rights as a birth sibling?

JUSTINE

You don't have any. When the adoption laws were put on the books they didn't give any consideration to siblings of children who were separated from their adopted brother or sister.

HATIMA

I have to be able to do something.

JUSTINE

If the adoption was even partially opened I would recommend starting with reunion registries. Every county has one. You could comb through adoption agency, hospital, and/or birth records, but since her adoption was closed, your sister's records are sealed. Even if you found the county that finalized her adoption, you couldn't get your hands on her file, short of stealing it.

HATIMA

Can't I ask a judge to open the file?

JUSTINE

The only person who can contest the closed-adoption is the birth mother or father.

(MORE)

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

The reason needs to be something substantial, like inadequate legal representation, proof of discrimination, or some other form a personal bias for a judge to consider opening the case file and that's a long shot. Why did your mother give the two of you up?

HATIMA

Her parental right's were terminated, when she was incarcerated. We were placed in foster care and stayed together for a short time but Patience was eventually adopted and my older sister and I aged-out. I never saw her again.

JUSTINE

I'm sorry. The system is all screwed up.

HATIMA

I know. My mama's trial was botched pretty bad. It's why I--

JUSTINE

--Why you what?

HATIMA

Nothing.

JUSTINE

It's unfortunate but closed-adoptions protect the adoptive family and the adoptee. Your best bet would be to a waiver of confidentiality. That will update her file with information about you and if Patience decides she wants to know about her birth family.

HATIMA

What if she doesn't know she's adopted?

JUSTINE

You have to hope the family told her or will tell her, if not there is nothing else you can legally do. I'm sorry I can't be of more assistance.

HATIMA

Me too.

INT. HATIMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC plays in the background. Hatima casually SINGS the lyrics to the song as she looks at Patience's original and amended birth certificates.

Her CELL PHONE rings. She picks it up and sees it's a call from Colin. She diverts the call to her voice mail and writes down the county from the amended birth certificate.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hatima is at her desk, she thumbs through a box of case files. Lucille approaches with another box.

LUCILLE

These also need to go to circuit court.

HATIMA

Of course. It's like back when I was clerking for this office.

LUCILLE

You got to give Marcus some time.

HATIMA

That's something I have more than enough of these days.

Hatima moves the boxes behind her desk and notices a Post-it note. She dials the phone.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Patience Miles. I'm trying to locate my adoption record. Can you verify if my adoption file resides in your county court? Yes, I'll hold.

EXT. COURT HOUSE PARKING LOT - DAUPHIN, PA - DAY

Hatima parks her car and exits with a briefcase. She looks around the small town and heads to the court house.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS - DAY

Hatima's briefcase goes through a metal detector and she is searched by a COURT OFFICER. She smiles.

HATIMA

Can you tell where I go to file a petition with family court?

COURT OFFICER

There offices are downstairs.

HATIMA

Thanks.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT HALLWAY - DAY

A sign: Family Court Office The family is straight ahead. Half-way between the family court office and where Hatima stands is a women's lavatory. Hatima cases the area as she walks toward the office. No one else is in the hallway.

Before Hatima opens the door she glances at a utility closet and a emergency fire alarm.

INT. FAMILY COURT OFFICE - DAY

There are two WOMAN in their late fifties at their desks. WOMAN 1 plays Suduko while WOMAN 2 works on a crossword puzzle. They are surrounded by a plethora of cabinets. Behind one of the woman's desk is a door to another room.

Hatima enters.

HATIMA

Good afternoon ladies.

WOMAN 1 AND 2

Good afternoon.

WOMAN 1

How may we help you?

HATIMA

I'm here to file a court order on behalf of my client. She would like to petition the court to gain access to her closed adoption file.

WOMAN 2

Hot dog, an actual request.

Woman 1 gets up and grabs some papers. She hands them to Hatima.

WOMAN 1

Don't mind her. She gets excited when we get visitors and they actually have requests. Our county office doesn't see much action. You'll need to fill out these forms.

HATIMA

Thank you. Wow. I didn't expect your small town to have an office with so many records. I'm impressed. You ladies are up to your ears in paperwork.

WOMAN 1

It's a lot but we hold records for two neighboring towns.

WOMAN 2

We're the gatekeepers to the closed and forgotten.

HATIMA

Is this where my client will come if the judge approves her request.

WOMAN 2

Yes. If her adoption took place over 15 years ago, more than likely it's behind that door.

WOMAN 1

Are you going to fill out those forms here?

HATIMA

No, I'll go over it with my client first. Thank you for your help.

WOMAN 2

Good day darling.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hatima gets up from her desk, she carries a box of files. She heads to Lucille's desk.

HATIMA

I'm heading to circuit court to file these. After I finish I'll be gone for the rest of the day. I have a doctor's appointment. I'll have my cell phone if you need to reach me.

LUCILLE

Okay. I'll let Marcus know. Take it easy.

HATIMA

One more thing. Can you cancel my lunch with Colin? Just tell I'm real busy and I call him later to reschedule.

LUCILLE

I don't want to be in the middle of whatever is going on.

HATIMA

Nothing is going on. Everything is fine.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS - DAY - LATER

Hatima enters with a gym bag and some paperwork. Her gym bag goes through the metal detector and she is searched by the same officer from her last visit.

INT. WOMEN'S LAVATORY - DAY

An ELDERLY WOMAN leaves as Hatima enters. The two women smile at each other and exchange a hello. Hatima heads to the stall for disabled persons.

Inside the stall, she opens her gym bag and removes a long sleeved T-shirt and pants along with two pairs of latex gloves.

She changes clothes and puts one set of the gloves on and the other pair in her pant's pocket.

Hatima bends down to check that no one else is in the lavatory. She exits.

She exits.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT HALLWAY - DAY

Hatima quickly walks to the end of the hallway. She goes over to a utility closet. Beside the closet is a fire alarm. Hatima pulls the alarm. A loud BUZZING goes off. She ducks into the closet.

People leave their offices and head upstairs.

INT. UTILITY CLOSET - DAY

Hatima removes the latex gloves she has on and puts on the other pair. She waits for the sounds of FOOTSTEPS to cease and then leaves.

INT. FAMILY COURT OFFICE - DAY

Hatima rushes into the office and goes behind the desk. She continues to the back room.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

The BUZZING sound continues. Hatima feverishly goes through drawers of files. She rummages through the drawers and occasionally checks over her shoulder to make sure no one else is headed her way. Empty handed, she slams the file draw shut and moves to the opposite side of the room.

There's a drawer labeled "Closed Adoptions Records." Hatima opens it and searches through the files that begin with the letter B.

Toward the end of the drawer she sees a file labeled "Patience Brighton." Hatima opens it. Inside are Patience's original and amended birth certificates, petition to adopt, adoption decree, the Brighton's home studies from the state, birth family medical history, and the adoption agency that finalized Patience's adoption.

Hatima takes the home studies and adoption decree.

INT. FAMILY COURT OFFICE - DAY

Hatima makes copies and then goes back to the back room.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Hatima puts back the originals and leaves.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT HALLWAY

As Hatima exits the office she hears FOOTSTEPS come down the stairs. She runs into the utility closet.

INT. UTILITY CLOSET - DAY

Hatima turns off the lights and is in darkness. She hears the sounds of FOOT STEPS running past. She's careful not to make a move.

The door opens and a FIRE FIGHTER turns on the lights. He looks around.

FIRE FIGHTER
Clear in here.

The fire fighter closes the door.

The sounds of disorder on the other side of the door cease. It's safe to move. Hatima slides out from underneath a bottom shelf. She grabs her gym bag and removes her gloves then gets dressed.

INT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT HALLWAY - DAY

Hatima peeks her head out of the door and looks around. The hallway is clear. Hatima makes her way to the emergency exit door and leaves.

EXT. DAUPHIN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

Hatima walks to the parking lot. She is stopped by the fire fighter who checked the closet.

FIRE FIGHTER
Excuse me miss. Are you coming from the building?

HATIMA
Um. Yes. I'm sorry I went back in to get my cellphone.

FIRE FIGHTER
You really shouldn't have done that.

HATIMA
This damn phone is my lifeline. I assumed it was a fire drill and it would be alright to get it.

FIRE FIGHTER

It's not safe to make those assumptions. I'll need you to head to the safe zone across the street next to the parking lot.

INT. ADOPTION AGENCY - DAY

Pictures of smiling babies and happy families decorate the walls. Hatima takes them in as she walks toward the receptionist at the front desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning. How can I help you?

HATIMA

I'm looking for my sister. I was told that this agency facilitated the adoption. It would have been about 17 years ago. Her name was Patience Miles.

RECEPTIONIST

Have a seat and fill out this form and bring it back to me when your done.

Hatima takes a seat in the waiting area. She takes out a pen and fills out the form. The clock on the wall reads 10:30 a.m.

AN HOUR AND A HALF LATER

Hatima checks her watch. She charges the receptionist's desk.

HATIMA

What's the problem? I've been waiting over an hour.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry for your wait, but all records over 5 years old are archived and it's taking some time to pull up.

HATIMA

It would have been nice if you mentioned that earlier.

TASHA JAMES, an adoption specialist in her late forties, approaches the receptionist with a legal pad and file folder under her arm.

TASHA

Ms. Miles I apologize for the delay. Please come with me.

An annoyed Hatima rolls her eyes and follows Tasha to her office.

INT. TASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Tasha motions to Hatima to take a seat. Hatima looks calm and collected. She hands Tasha the picture of herself and Patience. Tasha quickly looks it over.

TASHA

Ms. Miles you didn't have to bring this photo. I apologize for the wait. We normally don't get your kind of requests.

HATIMA

Please call me Hatima. Were you able to find anything?

TASHA

Yes, but how did you know our agency finalized Patience Mile's adoption. Those records should have been sealed.

HATIMA

It was in her foster care file. Your agency was listed.

TASHA

It shouldn't have been.

HATIMA

But it was.

TASHA

I can't give you any information on Patience's adoption.

HATIMA

I'm her sister.

TASHA

I'm sorry, but our job as an agency and under state law is to protect the rights of the adoptee and the adoptive parents.

HATIMA

What about the rights of my family.
I'm her blood. She has a right to
know who I am.

TASHA

I sympathize with you, but I'm not
legally able to help you with any
information on Patience or her
adoptive family. You can file a
waiver of confidentiality--

HATIMA

--How does she find people who
don't exist?

TASHA

There are no guarantees, but it
can't hurt. Would you like to fill
out the forms?

HATIMA

Yeah, since it's my only option.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDERS OFFICE - DAY

Lucille drops the court docket on Hatima's desk.

LUCILLE

Here's this week's docket.

Hatima crumples it up and tosses it in the waste basket.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

HATIMA

I don't understand why you feel the
need to drop off the docket when my
name isn't on it.

LUCILLE

You're still part of the team?

HATIMA

Sure doesn't seem that way.

LUCILLE

Stop feeling sorry for yourself and
show some initiative for the work
you do here.

(MORE)

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

Don't think I haven't noticed that you're falling behind with your workload and out of the office more than you're in. I'm not sure where you stashed those records, but you need to file them today. Put whatever case you're working on to the side and get your head back in your work here.

HATIMA

My work will get done.

LUCILLE

Hatima listen, if I'm noticing you're falling behind and doing half-ass work I ain't the only one. There are certain someones who would like to see you gone, don't give them any reasons to report you to Marcus. You'll have a lot more to worry about than my nagging ass.

HATIMA

I'm sorry.

LUCILLE

Hatima, don't be sorry just get your shit together.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hatima is at her desk on the Internet. She types Donald and Michelle Brighton's address on the home study into Yahoo directions.

EXT. BRIGHTON HOUSE - NIGHT

An establishing shot of the Brighton home.

INT. THE BRIGHTON'S BEDROOM

MR. BRIGHTON, an African American man early fifties, and MRS. BRIGHTON, a bi-racial woman late forties are at opposite ends of the room. They're in the midst of a heated conversation.

MR. BRIGHTON

We should tell her. She's going to be 18 in a couple of weeks.

MRS. BRIGHTON
We've gone this long, why go there
now?

MR. BRIGHTON
Because, it's the right thing to
do.

MRS. BRIGHTON
(cuts in)
Adopting Patience was the right
thing. We love her, we've raised
her, we're her parents.

MR. BRIGHTON
Honey, it's time. She should know.
We'll still be her parents.

MRS. BRIGHTON
(cuts him off)
I won't tell her. We choose a
closed-adoption for a reason.
She's our daughter, end of story.

INT. HATIMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is a mess. Papers are spread throughout the place.
Hatima clears up the clutter on the coffee table.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Hatima ignores it. The
doorbell continuously RINGS and eventually she gets up to
answer it.

She opens the door and Rebecca bursts through.

REBECCA
How come you're not answering your
phones or returning any of my
calls?

HATIMA
I've been busy.

REBECCA
We were supposed to go the movies
tonight.

HATIMA
I forgot.

REBECCA
We have movie night every third
weekend of the month.

HATIMA
I've been busy.

Rebecca walks over to a bunch of articles on the floor. She grabs one of the articles.

REBECCA
Tips to Finding Siblings in a closed Adoption. So this is what's keeping you so busy. I thought you let this go.

Hatima gets up and snatches the article back.

HATIMA
They let it go; I haven't. I have a sister out there and I'm going to find her. Besides this has nothing to do with you.

Hatima takes out the Polaroid picture of herself holding Patience and pushes it into Rebecca's face.

HATIMA (CONT'D)
This is all the reason I need.

REBECCA
You're obsessed!

HATIMA
You'll never understand. You've had a family all your life and mine's been splintered since I was twelve. She's my sister, not yours.

REBECCA
I'm your family too.

HATIMA
She's blood.

REBECCA
Fuck you.

Rebecca shakes her head in disappointment and leaves.

HATIMA
I didn't mean that. Come back.

INT. HATIMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hatima's folding clothes. Hatima's cell phone RINGS.

HATIMA

Hello. Hey babe. That sounds fun but not tonight. I know we haven't gone out in a while. It's just-- okay, okay, fine. I'll be ready in an hour.

INT. THE LOUNGE - NIGHT

The Lounge is a neighborhood bar. It's a dive, but it's got character, a jukebox, cheap drinks, and great cheese steak hoagies. There are a few other PATRONS scattered throughout the lounge.

Colin and Hatima sit across from his close friend DAVID, mid-thirties. Next to David is his date MONICA, a hot twenty-something still wet behind the ears.

A WAITRESS drops their drinks orders off at the table then heads back to the bar. David asks the group to raises his glass.

DAVID

Congrats are in order for Colin's nomination as partner. Cheers to you man. Lets hope the boys at the firm make the smart choice.

Their glasses CLINK and they down their drinks with the exception of Hatima.

A SONG comes on that Monica likes and she drags David to the dance floor. Colin tries to pull Hatima, but she refuses to budge and stares at the T.V.

COLIN

What's wrong and don't say nothing.

HATIMA

I'm not in the mood for drinking games and getting drunk.

COLIN

No one said you had to get drunk. I want us to have a good time. Is that to much to ask?

HATIMA

I didn't realize I was such a drag.

COLIN

You know what, forget I said anything.

Colin gets up and goes to the bathroom.

Hatima briefly looks at David and Monica enjoying themselves before turning her focus back to the television. When the SONG ends a happy-go-lucky, Monica and David make their way back to the table.

DAVID
Where's Colin?

HATIMA
He went to the bathroom?

MONICA
You and Colin should have joined us.

HATIMA
(snaps)
Not in the mood.

Hatima turns her attention to the TV. A grim Colin returns.

DAVID
Hey Colin, don't look so grim.
Tonight is a celebration.

COLIN
I'm cool. Lets get another round.

David looks at an amiss Hatima.

DAVID
Hatima is there a particular reason
why you've been a buzz kill all
night.

HATIMA
Excuse me.

DAVID
You heard me.

HATIMA
I'm trying to watch the game.

DAVID
Since when do you watch sports?

COLIN
Be cool Dave.

DAVID
She's ruining your night.

HATIMA

I'm what!

COLIN

Let it go.

DAVID

Buddy I can't, something needs to be said. She's the one that's been a block of ice all night. She could pretend to be happy for you.

HATIMA

I am happy for Colin.

DAVID

You have an odd way of showing it. How can you expect him to have a good time when you're not?

HATIMA

This is bullshit. I don't need this.

Hatima leaves the table and heads to the bathroom.

MONICA

Dave, you didn't have to be such a dick. I'll check on her Colin.

Monica follows her. Colin finishes off his drink. Dave flags down their waitress to place another order.

EXT. THE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Closing time. Colin, Hatima, David, and Monica exit the lounge. Hatima and Monica give each other informal pleasantries as good-byes.

David goes into to hug Hatima, but thinks better of it when he sees the pissed-off look on her face. Colin comes to the rescue with a bear hug for David.

COLIN

Thanks for the drinks. I'll hit you up later in the week.

DAVID

No problem. I'm happy for you brotha.

Hatima rolls her eyes at David's comment. Colin and David pound fists as a final good-bye then head in opposite directions with their ladies.

Colin and Hatima walk around the corner in silence. Colin turns off his ALARM and opens the door for Hatima. He walks to the driver's side and gets in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Colin sticks the car-key in the ignition, but doesn't start the car. He turns to Hatima.

COLIN

What's going on with you?

HATIMA

Dave was an asshole.

COLIN

Forget him, I'm talking about us. I barely see you...you're not returning my calls. I practically had to drag you out tonight. I feel like there's something you're not telling me?

HATIMA

I don't want to fight!

COLIN

Talk to me. What's going on?

HATIMA

I've been dealing with some family stuff. It's nothing really just stuff...with my mom... and then there's work, but I'm handling it.

COLIN

Are you still seeing Diane?

HATIMA

Like it helps.

COLIN

What can I do?

She smiles and kisses Colin.

HATIMA

You just did it. Colin--I-- need to--

COLIN

--What?

HATIMA

I'm sorry for the way I acted tonight. I shouldn't be taking my frustrations out on you. Dave was right. I've been a jerk.

Hatima leans over and gives Colin a passionate kiss that subsides the tension.

COLIN

Was that so hard?

Colin starts the engine and drives off.

INT. DIANA'S OFFICE - DAY

The minute hand on the clock endlessly TICKS.

Diana looks up at the clock and then straight ahead at Hatima.

Hatima gets up and walks over to one of Diana's book shelves. She looks through her collection of books.

Diana taps her pen against her notebook.

They both look at the clock and back at each other.

Diana uncrosses her legs and sits forward. She's ready to engage Hatima.

DIANA

So, you've made up your mind.

HATIMA

Pretty much. I've come too far not to see this through. This is what I want.

DIANA

If this is what you want, why do you seem so apprehensive?

HATIMA

Stop trying to make me doubt myself.

DIANA

If you have doubts, they're yours. I'm just here listening.

Hatima, sighs out loud and takes a moment before she responds.

HATIMA

I see what you're trying to do.
It's not going to work.

DIANA

Hatima I have no secret agenda, but since you brought it up, lets go back to something I asked earlier. Why haven't you told Coln? The other night would have been a perfect opportunity.

HATIMA

It didn't feel right.

DIANA

That's a cop out. You've used this search for Patience to push him and Rebecca away.

HATIMA

You're wrong.

DIANA

What do you call it then? After you found Patience's info, you should have told him, but you didn't. Colin directly asked you what was going on and you lied. You based your decision on the pretense that he was going to respond like Sarai, Rebecca, and your mother. The truth is he wasn't a thought when you decided to find Patience.

HATIMA

I can't turn back the clock.

DIANA

Then stop trying to. You can't expect to right all the wrongs you've experienced in your life by finding Patience. This search is bigger than you. You're about to unlock a door that was wrongfully shut, but your decision comes with a great responsibility and I'm not sure you can handle it--

HATIMA

--F this.

Hatima gets up. Diana follows her lead.

DIANA

Sit down. You're not going to run from this.

They both take a moment sit back down.

HATIMA

Okay I'm not running.

DIANA

As I was saying, I'm not sure you can all this.

HATIMA

We'll I guess we'll find out.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Hatima gets out of her car. She looks down at the Brighton's address and proceeds to the house. She KNOCKS on the door. An ELDERLY MAN, in his late seventies opens the door.

ELDERLY MAN

Hello, may I help you?

HATIMA

Hi sir, I'm looking for Donald or Michelle Brighton.

ELDERLY MAN

I'm sorry dear, but you've got the wrong house. This here residence belongs to the Stapletons.

HATIMA

Sir, I have a Donald and Michelle Brighton listed at this address. How long have you been at this address?

WOMAN (V.O.)

Dad, where are you? It's time to take your medication.

A WOMAN, mid-fifties is at the door. She gives the old man his medication and then he leaves.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

What ever you're selling we're not buying.

HATIMA

I'm not trying to sell anything. I'm an attorney and am looking for a Donald and Michelle Brighton. I have this address as theirs.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, but they haven't lived here for years. They sold this house to my parents over 15 years ago.

HATIMA

Do you know where they moved to?

WOMAN

I'm sorry, but I don't recall. May I ask why you're looking for them?

HATIMA

It's a family related issue. It's very important that I find them. Can you tell me anything?

WOMAN

I'm sorry, but I can't help you.

HATIMA

Please--Anything you can remember may be helpful. I'm trying to find my family.

WOMAN

You know, I think he was involved in investments, but I can't remember the firms name. Excuse me, I need to look after my father.

HATIMA

If you remember anything else, please call me. Thank you for your time.

Hatima hands the woman her business card.

WOMAN

Wait a minute. I think the financial firm was Sigman & Drexler Financial Services. I believe their main headquarters is in downtown Philly.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Hatima enters. She walks over to the kiosk and looks for Sigman and Drexler's room number. A SECURITY GUARD approaches her.

SECURITY OFFICER
Which office are you looking for?

HATIMA
The offices of Sigman and Drexlers.

SECURITY OFFICER
Dear, they're gone. Moved to New York City.

HATIMA
Are you sure?

SECURITY OFFICER
Yes, but there are other firms in this building.

HATIMA
No I needed that one. I'm looking for someone who would have worked there.

SECURITY OFFICER
You're about fifteen years too late.

INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rebecca sits in front of the TV with a bowl of popcorn. The doorbell RINGS. Rebecca opens the door.

Hatima is on the other side in tears. She enters and they have a seat on the sofa.

REBECCA
What's wrong?

HATIMA
I was so close.

REBECCA
So close to what?

HATIMA
To Patience and the Brightons.

REBECCA

Maybe it's for the better.

HATIMA

You would say that. I don't know why I came here. I should leave.

REBECCA

Calm down. You can talk to me.

HATIMA

I found their house, but they sold it, I found where Mr. Brighton worked, however the offices are no longer there, they moved to NYC. I've done everything I can think of and. I've combed the public records in two states for every listing of Brighton and I've got nothing to show for it. I'm out of options.

REBECCA

Then let it go. I bet Patience is with a good family. Alice would have made sure of that.

HATIMA

We don't know anything about the Brightons. Just because he has a good job doesn't make him or his wife good parents. I need to know she turned out okay.

REBECCA

You've tried, but now it's time to get your life back.

HATIMA

It's not about that. It's about trying to get back what the system robbed from me, from all of us. There's a basic need that human beings have, to know the truth about what's happened to their family. That's missing for me. I came so close to being able to change that.

REBECCA

You know, maybe his firm got bought out by a bigger company. It happens all the time on Wall Street. Look for online for the firm, I bet you find it.

HATIMA

Yeah...

REBECCA

You better get started.

INT. HATIMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hatima is doing an internet search on Sigman and Drexler. ON THE MONITOR: A Headline: Company Merger.

She hits print and waits for the document to come out. She smiles.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - FINANCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Hatima exits and enters a tall building.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Hatima signs a visitors log and heads to the elevator.

Hatima exits the elevator and proceeds down the hallway. MR. BRIGHTON, leaves the offices of Weisler LLP and passes down the same hallway as Hatima. Mr. Brighton and Hatima smile as they pass each other. Hatima enters the Weisler office.

Inside the Weisler office, Hatima approaches the receptionist.

HATIMA

Good afternoon. I would like to speak with Donald Brighton.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Brighton is gone for the day.

HATIMA

Is there a number he can be reached at?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, but I can't give out that information. Would you like to speak with someone else?

HATIMA

No. I needed to speak with Mr. Brighton.

RECEPTIONIST

Let me take down your name and number.

HATIMA

I can come back tomorrow.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, but Mr. Brighton will be away on vacation.

HATIMA

I can't catch a break.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry.

HATIMA

No, I'm the one who's sorry.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Hatima hands MICHAEL DONAVAN, a private investigator in his forties, the information she's collected on Donald Brighton as well as Patience's information. He looks it over.

HATIMA

The family is somewhere in the New York city area.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Not bad...not bad at all. You've done all the leg work. I'll run their information through a few more databases and will get back to you in a couple of days. I can't promise my results will be any better than yours.

INT. CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

Hatima files records. Her cell phone RINGS. She answers it.

HATIMA

(on phone)

Hello. Hold on a second, let me grab a pen.

(writes)

Wow, White Plains, New York. Ok I got it.

INT. PRIVATE INVESTAGATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
(on phone)
Be careful.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

It's five o'clock. Lucille shuts down her computer and packs up her things. Hatima rushes over with a time off request form. She drops it in Lucille's in-box.

LUCILLE
You better show this to Marcus.
He's still in his office.

INT. MARCUS'S OFFICE - DAY

Hatima enters and hands Marcus her time request. He reviews it.

MARCUS
Hatima you just got back from a vacation. Besides you're on probation.

HATIMA
Marcus it's just a couple of days.

MARCUS
That may be, but I don't feel you deserve more time off. You work has been lackluster and you're not focused.

HATIMA
I'm sorry I've lost focus. I've been dealing with some personal stuff.

MARCUS
Yeah on my time. I know what you've been up too. I would be well within my rights if I fired you on the spot.

HATIMA
Marcus, I love what I do. I don't deserve your leniency but I'm asking for it. Please cut me a break. I will not let this happen again.

MARCUS

You owe me.

She hugs him.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

If you even forget to turn off the coffee pot, I'll report you to the ethics board.

HATIMA

Thanks.

INT. HATIMA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Colin enters with his work bag. He drops it on by the sofa and turns on the lights.

The coffee table is covered in paper work and Hatima's notebook is on the sofa. Colin moves the notebook out of the way and takes a seat. He searches for the remote control under the paper work and comes across Patience's file. Colin grabs it and reads. He puts it down and looks through the other documents on the table.

Hatima enters. Colin confronts her, holds the file.

COLIN

What's all this?

HATIMA

It's not what it seems.

COLIN

That's bullshit and your know it. This must be why you never have time for me. You're a liar.

HATIMA

I didn't lie. I--

COLIN

Neglected to mention a major detail about your life. Why didn't you tell me you have another sister?

HATIMA

I was meaning to, but the deeper I got into the search, the more I felt like I should handle it on my own.

COLIN

Did you think I wouldn't support you?

HATIMA

Everyone was against me doing this. Sarai, Rebecca, even my mom. I didn't need to hear another person tell me not to do this.

COLIN

So you hide this from me. How are we suppose to build a future together when you keep cutting me out of your life?

HATIMA

Colin it's not like that. Let me explain.

COLIN

Now you want to explain. It's a little late for that. I'm fed up with this side of you Hatima.

HATIMA

Colin please, just listen.

COLIN

If you don't love me enough to include me in your life, I'm done.

Colin walks out. Hatima goes after him and grabs his arm.

HATIMA

Wait, no.

COLIN

I get it. You win.

Colin pulls his arm away and slams Hatima's door behind him.

INT. HATIMA'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Hatima tosses and turns in bed. She wakes up in a cold sweat.

She turns to look for Colin, but she's alone. She rolls over and pulls his pillow into her. Tears trickle down her cheeks.

HATIMA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hatima's bags are packed and by the door. She grabs documents from her copier and puts them in her briefcase.

EXT. CAR RENTAL - DAY

Hatima exits the business with a medium travel suitcase, her pocket book, and briefcase. She and a SALESMAN proceed to her rental car. Hatima and the salesman look over the car and she signs the customer contract. The salesman opens the trunk and throws in her things. She gets in the car and drives out the lot.

She continues on the road until she gets to the highway.

INT. CAR - DAY

Hatima grabs her cell phone from her purse and dials a number.

CUT TO:

INT. COLIN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Colin is sprawled out on his sofa, the TV blares and he's almost made his way through a six pack of beer.

His cell phone RINGS and VIBRATES on the table. He checks it, sees "Hatima" calling and puts it down. Colin finishes a beer. The home phone RINGS. Colin grabs a fresh can of beer. BEEP.

HATIMA (V.O.)

I know I'm the last person you want to hear from, but I need to say this. I'm sorry. I should have told you about Patience. (beat) I was wrong.

Colin makes his way to the answering machine.

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

I want to see you when this is all over.

Colin reaches for the phone but Hatima's gone.

INT. THE BRIGHTON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Brighton are dressed in tennis apparel. They're finishing lunch.

Patience enters. She greets her parents with a hug and kiss.

MRS. BRIGHTON

Hey darling, are you sure, you don't want to come and play. It's a beautiful day.

PATIENCE

I just want to chill out by the pool. I'm not going to have this luxury when I back pack through Europe in a month.

MR. BRIGHTON

I still think you're too young.

PATIENCE

(pleads)
Dad, I'm 18 today.

MRS. BRIGHTON

Donald, stop it. Sweetie he's only playing with you. You're going to Europe.

MR. BRIGHTON

Happy birthday!

PATIENCE

You're so not funny.

Mr. Brighton grabs their tennis rackets and Mrs. Brighton grabs the car keys.

MRS. BRIGHTON

Don't forget, you need to be ready by 7 p.m. We have reservations for your birthday dinner at Nobu?

PATIENCE

Nobu? Are you like serious? That's a celebrity hot spot.

MRS. BRIGHTON

Of course. It's your birthday and you're are my celebrity.

Patience hugs her mom. Mr. and Mrs. Brighton leave. Patience heads outside to the pool.

INT. BRIGHTON'S GARAGE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Brighton backs out the high-end SUV.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Hatima's parked across the street from the entrance to the Brighton's home. She sips a bottle of water as she waits.

INT. CAR - DAY

Hatima looks at her watch. It's close to two o'clock. She ducks so she's not seen. She pushes a button to turn off the car's engine.

INT. CAR - DAY

Hatima reaches in her briefcase for Patience's case file. She reaches for the door handle, but doesn't open it. She closes her eyes.

HATIMA

You can do this.

EXT. BRIGHTON'S HOUSE - DAY

Hatima's right hand is positioned to ring the door bell and the other hand has the file. She takes a deep breath and rings the door bell. She waits.

Patience opens the door.

PATIENCE

Can I help you?

Hatima takes Patience in. Patience waits for an response.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Are you alright? How can I help you.

HATIMA

Excuse me. Hi, I'm Hatima Miles. I would like to speak with Patience Brighton. Here's my card.

Hatima hands Patience the card. Patience seems even more confused.

PATIENCE
I'm Patience, but I think you may
want my parents.

HATIMA
No, I'm looking for you.

INT. BRIGHTON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Patience escorts Hatima to a chair. They sit down. Hatima places the file next to her.

PATIENCE
Why does a public defender from
Philly want to see me?

Hatima brushes some hair from her forehead.

HATIMA
May I have glass a water?

PATIENCE
Sure.

Patience heads to the kitchen. Hatima gets up and looks around the room. Her eyes stop on a family photo of Patience with the Brightons. Tells well and she wipes them away.

Patience returns. She hands Hatima the glass. Hatima takes a gulp.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
What do you need to talk to me
about?

HATIMA
It's about your family.

PATIENCE
Are my parents okay? Did something
happen at the club?

HATIMA
No. You're parents are fine. I'm
sure they're enjoying their game of
tennis.

PATIENCE
Wait a minute. How did you know
they were playing tennis?

HATIMA
I--

PATIENCE

--I think you better leave.

HATIMA

I'm not sure how to say this, maybe you already know, you're adopted and the Brightons aren't your birth parents.

Hatima moves closer to Patience.

PATIENCE

Stay the hell away from me. You're a liar.

HATIMA

I know this sounds crazy, please let me explain.

Hatima removes the Polaroid of herself holding Patience. Hatima tries to hand it to Patience, but she's got her guard up.

PATIENCE

I'm calling the cops.

HATIMA

Just look.

Hatima places the picture on the file.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

It was taken before you were adopted. This is a picture of you with one of your sisters. It's all in that file. Your sister just wanted you to know the truth. I can't imagine how you feel.

Hatima holds out her business card. She writes on the back of it.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

I'll go but if you want to know more, here's where I'm staying. My cell phone is on the back.

Patience doesn't budge. Hatima leaves the card and goes. Patience walks to the front door and locks it. She runs back to the living room and examines her file.

EXT. BRIGHTON'S HOME - NIGHT

The SUV pulls into the garage.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Brighton enter from the garage.

MRS. BRIGHTON
Patience, we're home.

Patience enters the kitchen with her file in her hands. Her eyes are swollen with tears.

MRS. BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
Dad and I are going to shower and get dressed. We'll be ready in thirty minutes.

MR. BRIGHTON

Patience steps forward. Mr. Brighton sees her tears.

MR. BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
Sweetie, what's wrong?

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
How could you lie to me all these years?

MRS. BRIGHTON
Honey, we would never--

PATIENCE
Don't!

MR. BRIGHTON
(cuts in)
Patience, whatever it is your mother and I--.

PATIENCE
Some lawyer came by and told me I was adopted. I didn't believe her until I looked my closed adoption file over.

Patience throws the picture and her adoption records on the table. Mrs. Brighton walks over to look to them.

MRS. BRIGHTON
We were waiting for the right time to tell you--

PATIENCE

Why don't I believe you? A closed adoption. I have two sisters I don't know.

MR. BRIGHTON

--We were wrong not to tell you, we thought we were protecting you.

Mrs. Brighton goes over to Patience, but Patience steps away from her.

PATIENCE

Protect me from what?

MRS. BRIGHTON

We did what we thought was in your best interest.

MR. BRIGHTON

There's more to then what's in these files.

Mr. Brighton motions for her to sit. She refuses. He touches his wife's arm.

MR. BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

We'll tell you what we should have told you years ago.

EXT. THE BRIGHTON'S HOUSE - DAY

Gray clouds loom over the house. Patience pulls out of the garage and heads down the street.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Hatima's bags are packed and on the bed. She's stands by the window, outside is a torrential down pour. Tears trickle down her face.

She walks to the bed and picks up her stuff. She opens the door and on the other side is Patience, with the file in her hand.

A beat.

HATIMA

Come in.

PATIENCE

I just want to give this back to you.

Patience hands her the file and the Polaroid picture drops out. Both women bend down to get it, but Hatima's takes the photo. They share a moment.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

You should have this back.

HATIMA

It's yours to keep.

PATIENCE

I don't want it.

Patience turns to leave. Hatima cuts her off at the door.

HATIMA

That's it? I thought you'd have questions, a lifetime of questions--

PATIENCE

--You thought wrong. My parents did me a favor when they took me out of foster care.

HATIMA

I don't know what the Brightons told you, but there's two sides to a story and you should know the truth.

PATIENCE

Who gave you the right to come into my life and turn it upside down? I don't want any part of this, whatever this is. (Beat) Keep your file, tell my sisters to forget about me.

HATIMA

Don't you want to know about your mother and sisters?

PATIENCE

I know that my mother killed my father. A judge terminated her parental rights. I got new parents and a new life, end of story. The truth isn't always what it's crack up to be.

Patience tries to move past Hatima, but she is blocked.

HATIMA

It was self-defense. She gave her life to save ours...I'm the girl in the picture. I'm you're sister. I wanted to find you. I needed to know you were okay.

Patience pushes Hatima from the doorway and runs out. Hatima gets her bearings and runs after her.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Hatima tries to catch up to Patience.

Patience unlocks her SUV and gets in. She starts the car and peels out of the lot.

Hatima is left in her dust.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Hatima's is stuck in traffic on the New Jersey Turnpike.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Hatima turns on the radio. She looks out at the cars. The traffic lights become a blur.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Alice's death.

Hatima finds Patience's file.

Hatima confronts Rebecca, Sarai, and Rhea.

Diana and Hatima in their last session. Diana says, "This search is bigger than you. You're about to unlocking a door that was wrongfully shut, but your decision comes with a great responsibility and I'm not sure you can handle it."

Hatima and Colin's fight. Colin walks out on her.

Hatima and Patience face to face.

Patience runs out of the hotel room. Hatima goes after her.

BACK TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

A car beeps it's horn. Hatima snaps out of her day dream and sees she needs to move a few feet forward.

EXT. HATIMA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Hatima pulls into the parking lot. She barely has the strength to pull her bags out of the rental car.

She walks to her building.

INT. HATIMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hatima opens her door and drops her bags. She goes to the

LIVING ROOM

And finds Colin on her sofa. Colin gets up and Hatima runs to hug him.

HATIMA

I'm sorry--so very sorry for how I treated you. Everything back fired, Rhea and Sarai were right. I was wrong.

COLIN

We can talk about it in the morning. You should get some sleep.

They head for the bedroom.

HATIMA

I just wanted her to know the truth.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Lucille's at her desk. Works through lunch. She stops typing every once in a while to take a bite of her sandwich. The phone rings. She gives her standard greeting.

LUCILLE
Public defenders office, how may I
direct your call? Please hold.

Sarai walks up to Lucille's desk.

SARAI
Hi, I'm looking for Hatima Miles.
Does she work in this office?

LUCILLE
And you are?

SARAI
I'm her sister.

LUCILLE
Oh. Sarai, right?

Sarai nods.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
Back there.

Sarai heads back to Hatima's desk.

Hatima's bent over looking through an explosion of paperwork
in her briefcase.

HATIMA
I know I put you in here this
morning.

SARAI
I thought you were the organized
one.

HATIMA
Hey--

SARAI
Hi.

HATIMA
You should have called.

SARAI
Sue me.

HATIMA
Lets take a walk.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Hatima and Sarai cross the street and blend in with pedestrians. They stop at an open area a few blocks away from the building.

SARAI

Mom sent me a letter. She told me she's up for a parole and that you're helping her.

HATIMA

It's the least I can do. Considering our last conversation and the fact that you wrote mama off, I didn't feel the need to say anything.

SARAI

No, I'm glad Hatima.

HATIMA

Really?

SARAI

Mama also told me you found her.

HATIMA

So you come to gloat?

SARAI

What? No--

HATIMA

You and mama were right. It was too much. She wasn't ready.

SARAI

What you did took real courage? I didn't have it. I'm sorry I didn't support you. I'm sorry about a lot of things. I want us to be different, Hatima.

They walk a few feet.

HATIMA

She's beautiful, you know? And very determined. She reminds me of you.

INT. DIANA'S OFFICE - DAY

Diana looks down at her watch. She is waiting for Hatima who's late for the session.

Hatima rushes in.

HATIMA

Sorry I'm late. I would have called, but my phone died.

DIANA

No problem. Take a seat.

Hatima settles in.

DIANA (CONT'D)

It's good to see you.

HATIMA

I wanted to come back.

DIANA

It's been a year. How are you?

HATIMA

You were right.

HATIMA (CONT'D)

You were right. My heart was in the right place, but I got in over my head.

DIANA

Any news from Patience?

HATIMA

No.

DIANA

And that hurts you?

HATIMA

I dropped a load of baggage on her and she wasn't prepared. Neither was I. I don't blame her.

DIANA

What about your nightmares?

HATIMA

Gone. The search for Patience freed me of negative shit I really let build up.

(MORE)

HATIMA (CONT'D)

It's funny I didn't connect with her but Colin and I are engaged, my mom is up for parole, and Sarai and I are talking.

DIANA

So there was a connection.

HATIMA

Yeah. Sarai said it took courage to do what I did. She didn't have that.

DIANA

So what about Patience? Where do you go from here?

HATIMA

I know she turned out okay, although now she's probably in therapy.

DIANA

Do you believe your search was worth it?

HATIMA

I know she turned out okay.

They share a laugh.

DIANA

But was it worth it?

HATIMA

I can't say. I found Patience but I almost lost myself.

EXT. STREET - DAY

City traffic is backed up as usual. The leaves on the trees have gone from spring green to fall hues. The sidewalks are buzzing with PEOPLE. Hatima stands out in the mix of black and grey with an orange coat. She walks into the court house.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

The room is closed to the public.

Hatima is seated at a table with her client AMBER ROSS, early twenties. Across from her sits the PROSECUTOR, middle thirties.

JUDGE FONTAINE, a black woman in her fifties sits behind the bench. She makes a decision in favor of Hatima's client.

JUDGE FONTAINE

The court decides in your favor
Miss Ross. You're children will be
returned effective one week from
today.

Amber hugs Hatima and jumps up with excitement.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The sun shimmers on the fall foliage. Hatima tries to hail a cab, then decides to enjoy a walk back to the office.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hatima walks in and removes her coat.

LUCILLE

How was court?

HATIMA

Amber's getting her kids back.

LUCILLE

Way to go. I stayed so I could hear
you tell me the good news.

HATIMA

Things are looking up. I hope it
holds til after Thanksgiving.
Mama's parole hearing is next week.

LUCILLE

Hatima you've got to have a little
faith?

HATIMA

Thanks for the reminder. Is
everyone gone?

LUCILLE

Everyone except you and Marcus. No
surprise there. What are your plans
for the holiday?

HATIMA

Colin, Rebecca, and myself are
going to Sarai's for the weekend.

LUCILLE

Have fun and try to get some rest.
When we get back, you're in court
for the rest of the week. I told
you to put in for vacation, but you
don't listen to me.

HATIMA

I'll be fine.

Lucille leaves. Marcus enters.

MARCUS

I'm outta here, and you should be
too.

HATIMA

I will. I just want to check my
phone messages. I won.

MARCUS

Congratulations.

HATIMA

Thanks for the transfer to family
court?

MARCUS

It's where you belong.

Marcus leaves.

Hatima walks to her desk and dials her phone.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (V.O.)

You have one new message.

A BEEP, then the message plays.

PATIENCE (V.O.)

(on machine)

Hatima, this is Patience. I'm sorry
about how I left things. It's been
hard trying to put the pieces of my
life back together. I've been going
to therapy and I've come to the
conclusion that you have some of
those pieces. I have so many
questions. My number is 914-654-
2020.

Hatima replays the message and writes down the number. She
picks up her phone and dials Patience's number.

HATIMA
Hello, Patience.

FADE OUT.

THE END