

INNOCENCE

Written By:

Challis Lee

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - HOUSE - FLASHBACK - DAY

TONI, 30s, stands in her bedroom. She looks over at the bed where JACKSON, 5, is lying. She walks over and pulls the covers up over him. She kisses him on the forehead.

TONI  
My sweet boy.

Toni gets a call and answers it. She steps out of the room.

TONI  
(into the phone)  
What?... Budget cuts? But I... Okay.

Toni drops her shoulders in defeat. Then she cracks the bedroom door open and stares at Jackson for a moment. She walks away.

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Toni pulls a small grocery bag out of a drawer. She dials a number on the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - AT THE SAME TIME - DAY

Jackson starts to wake up and hears his mother on the phone.

TONI (O.S)  
  
Yeah well, what else do you expect me to do? I have bills, Dan, rent's due in a week and Jackson's school fees... No I'm not falling off the wagon. Look, are you going to help me or not?

INT. COURTROOM - FOUR YEARS LATER - PRESENT DAY

Toni stands in a blue pantsuit next to a LAWYER, (40s), opposite a JUDGE (50S). Jackson sits next to LAWYER TWO, (40S), on the other side of the courtroom. There is an OFFICER, (30s), standing in the back.

JUDGE

I'm sorry, miss Monroe.

TONI  
(appalled)  
You're sorry?... What are you  
saying?

The judge reviews the files in front of him. He sets them  
down and takes his glasses off.

JUDGE  
  
Unfortunately, it looks like-

TONI  
  
Like what?

JUDGE  
  
I'm sorry, but your case just  
isn't sufficient enough.

TONI  
  
Why? Please judge. I've been sober  
for three years now. I've held  
down a job, I've done everything  
you've asked of me. I've never  
slipped up once. Please don't send  
my baby back into the system.

JUDGE  
  
Ma'am, you have to understand... You  
also sold and partook in illegal  
drugs. That isn't something that  
can be overlooked. You just aren't  
suitable to take on a child. You  
simply took too long.

TONI  
  
It's a disease, your honor. I  
really have beat it this time... I  
swear, and when will I be  
suitable? In another 3 years?  
He'll be 12, I won't be able to  
see him grow up, your honor.  
Please... I have no idea what  
happens to him in these homes he's  
placed at, what kind of suffering  
he endures. Do you want to see him  
endure more pain by keeping him  
from his mother?

JUDGE

It's my final decision. I can't help you. The best you can do is keep being consistent and maybe you can file an appeal in a couple months.

Toni walks closer to the Judge's podium.

TONI

That's not fair and you know it.

She points at him.

JUDGE

Miss Monroe, please don't make me have to remove you from this courtroom.

Toni walks back over to where she was standing.

TONI

I'm standing here, and I'm giving you my all. My son is all I have. Are you really going to deny a mother from taking care of her child?... Would you want your son to be taken from you?

JUDGE

It's in his better interest to be in the care of a providing family.

TONI

You don't know what's best for him, I do. He is my son, and I love him.

The Judge sits up and stares intently at Toni.

JUDGE

You will not continue to berate me in my own courtroom. Now, this situation is out of my hands, as it was in yours. You are not

competent enough to provide for  
your son. And so, I will give you  
once chance to say goodbye to him,  
and you can leave this courtroom  
with your dignity.

Toni lets out a painful cry. Then she looks over at  
Jackson, and notices that he has tears rolling down his  
face.

TONI  
(to Jackson)  
I brought your favorite teddy bear  
cause I knew I was gonna see you  
today.

Toni smiles at him. She pulls a teddy bear out of her bag,  
and holds it up.

TONI  
  
Mr. Knuckles, remember him?

JACKSON  
  
Mommy, please don't let the men  
take me away again.

TONI  
  
Baby... I promise you, I will not  
let that happen. These men, these  
courts, they can try to take you  
away from me but it won't work. I  
will die before I let them take  
you away from me again!

The Officer clutches his gun. Toni surveys the courtroom.

TONI  
  
You will be taken from me because  
of this dipshit of a legal system!  
Where you can be taken from me at  
any point! Everything I did to get  
you back meant nothing!

Jackson holds his arms out for Toni. Lawyer 2 grabs  
Jackson's arm and pulls them back.

Toni walks closer to Jackson.

TONI  
(to Lawyer 2)  
Don't you dare touch him!

JUDGE  
(sternly)  
Miss Monroe... I will hold you in  
contempt.

Toni takes a deep breath.

TONI  
  
Okay, fine, let me just give him  
Mr. Knuckles, I'm supposed to be  
saying goodbye, right?

The Judge nods in approval.

Toni grabs the bear. She rushes over to Jackson, and tries  
to hug him. The Officer runs over to stand in between  
Jackson and Toni.

OFFICER  
  
No touching.

Toni tries to get past the Officer. She stands there  
beating on his chest. The Officer does not move.

TONI  
(crying)  
Just let me hug him! One final  
time... please! What did I ever do  
to you, huh? This is the Judges  
fault, not mine!

Toni tries to punch the Officer but he catches her hand.  
She then starts to kick him. The Officer grabs his cuffs  
and puts them on Toni. He starts to lead her out of the  
courtroom.

Toni spits on the Officer.

TONI  
  
Fuck you.

They reach the door and Toni takes one last look at  
Jackson. A single tear runs down her face. Jackson cries  
out.

JACKSON  
  
When will I see you again? Mommy?  
Mommy?

The Officer escorts Toni out of the courtroom.

FADE OUT: