

INNOCENCE

Written By:

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12/05/2024
10/13/2025

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 flies 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: