

INT. JANINE'S CAR - NORTHBOUND ON THE PCH - DAY

PENNY sits in the passenger seat. Her face is contorted with sadness and grief and tears and snot.

Or a reasonable facsimile thereof. She turns to show JANINE, who glances at her daughter out of the corner of her eye.

JANINE

I don't get it. Is that good or bad?

Penny drops the sadness and stops crying.

PENNY

It's acting, mom. If you have to ask then it's obviously bad.

The car drives a long, straight stretch of the PCH. Penny pushes her seat back and puts her foot on the dashboard.

JANINE

What do you want from me? One second we're cruising along, shooting the shit. The next you pull a "hey, check this out" and start crying. I don't know what it says about talent, but it's sure a warning for any guy you might end up in a relationship with.

PENNY

I'm trying to explain my process. Any ol' Betty Sue can cry on command. It's why you're crying that's important.

JANINE

OK. So why were you crying?

PENNY

I was thinking about Bilbo.

Janine leans over the steering wheel. With a huge smile.

JANINE

Oh my god, Bilbo. I loved the shit out of that dog. He always chewed hell out of your dad's shoes. Your dad hated it.

PENNY

See? It's a real emotion. I think about when we put him down and I'm accessing something. Not just crying.

JANINE

Lady, that makes no sense. That was like thirty seconds of your time with that dog. When I think about Bilbo I think about them chewed up shoes and how pissed your dad would get and it makes me want to smile.

PENNY

You don't get it.

JANINE

Remember that one Christmas when he peed on all your dads presents. Just your dads though. But it dried and it took us like twenty minutes to figure out where the smell was coming from when we were opening them? Man that dog hated your father.

Penny's eyes drift out the window. She smiles at the memory.

PENNY

He would sit outside his studio while he was recording and just yowl. Remember? It must have driven dad totally insane.

Janine laughs. The laughter grows. Penny turns to look at her. She can't stop laughing.

PENNY

What?

JANINE

I can't, I can't.

Penny starts laughing even though she doesn't know what Janine finds so funny.

JANINE

Oh my god, I'm going to pee.

She pulls the car on to the shoulder. She laughs. Penny laughs more but still wants to know why.

PENNY

Mom, what?

Janine forces herself to gain a little bit of composure.

JANINE

We got crazy high one night and I convinced him to leave Bilbo's howling on the record because art this, and avant garde that, or whatever. And he did it.

PENNY

No.

Their laughter grows.

JANINE

It's true. There's your father playing all these fancy pants homemade wood instruments and spending hours mixing them and arranging them and in the background is just our dog scratching at the door and howling because he hated your dad's music more than I did.

They laugh until they can't breathe.

EXT. STRAIGHT STRETCH OF THE PCH - DAY

Cars whiz by. Janine and Penny slap their legs and the dashboard and wipe tears from their eyes.

Eventually it fades into chuckling, eventually the chuckling fades into sighs. More cars whiz by.

Janine and Penny get out and change places.

INT. JANINE'S CAR - FURTHER UP THE PCH - DAY

Janine scrolls through a music app on Penny's phone. She's on the album list for DUVALL.

All the album covers show an incredibly handsome black man dressed all in orange.

JANINE

Aw, kid. I'm never going to remember what album it was.

PENNY

Look at the years. We put Bilbo to sleep when I was what, like five or six? So around then.

JANINE

It's never going to be as funny hearing it.

PENNY

I know. But Bilbo.

She settles on an album and scrolls through the tracks. They're all labeled "Track 1" "Track 2" etc.

She presses play.

JANINE

Maybe it's this one.

Very minimal, chirpy avant garde music fills the car. They both strain to listen for a howling dog.

PENNY

Do you really hate his stuff?

JANINE

Yeah, kind of.

PENNY

I never knew that.

JANINE

I always knew you liked it. And it impressed my dad. So. What do I know? Besides, he always looked smoking hot when he played it live.

Penny reaches over to her phone and stops the track.

PENNY

He still does. You should see the twenty something hipster broads at his shows. If girls threw panties at minimalist composers, he would be covered. It's bizarre.

JANINE

Everyone has a thing. You know?

PENNY

Yeah.

They drive in silence for a while.

PENNY

Has he been to see Aldo?

JANINE

You call your grandfather Aldo now?

PENNY

I dunno. After everything it feels weird to call him Grandpa.

JANINE

I doubt he'll go.

PENNY

Dad?

JANINE

Yeah. He won't. You know your father. Always going through the thousand reasons there are not to do something instead of the one reason there is to do it.

PENNY

The right reason, you mean.

They drift into silence again. Janine's eyes perk up when they pass a sign for MESSINA'S DINER.

JANINE

Holy shit. Remember that place?

PENNY

What place? Where?

JANINE

Take the next exit. There's some outstanding grub to be had.

EXT. MESSINA'S DINER - DAY

Penny and Janine sit at an outside table with plates of pretty boss looking food.

Janine has a Pastrami sandwich that looks like it was made with steak. Penny eats a Monte Cristo.

PENNY

Do not tell anyone at the cafe that I ate this kind of stuff. They'll make me do vegan penance. Like "hug a chicken" or "apologize to a cow" or something.

Janine doesn't answer. She flips through emails on her phone. Before Penny even says anything she puts it away.

JANINE

I know, I know. Not today. Sorry, but with Ellie out on maternity leave I'm kind of fucked eight ways to Sunday.

PENNY

No, it's cool.

JANINE

It's cool?

PENNY

Yeah, mom. It's cool.

JANINE

Since when is it cool?

PENNY

Since I feel guilty every second I'm on set that I'm not doing more for Sasha. Even though she would have killed me if I hadn't taken the part.

JANINE

That poor kid. Her parents really haven't come to see her?

PENNY

No. And I'll tell you this much. If they show up any time soon I've got a whole bag of slaps just for them. Whap Whap. Both hands.

JANINE

Add my right hand to that bag. It's my slapping hand. Whap Whap Whap.

PENNY

It's fucking tragic, is what it is. I talked shit on her folks one time and she lost her mind on me.

JANINE

Come on. You know you can't do that.

PENNY

I knew I couldn't before their only child got diagnosed with cancer and their only response was to send a card. After that, though?

JANINE
You did it after she was diagnosed?

PENNY
Yeah, mom. I was livid.

Janine gathers up her trash and gets up from the table. She shakes her head at Penny.

JANINE
Oh kid. No. No no no.

Penny watches her mom walk off. There's a little extra weight in her hips but you'd never know it by how she moves.

Penny hops up from the table.

PENNY
I still want to drive.

JANINE
Too late.

Janine flips the keys at her.

INT/EXT. JANINE'S CAR - EVEN FARTHER UP THE PCH - DAY

Penny and Janine scream along to a 1970's hit. They're both having the time of their lives.

They air drum. They harmonize. Janine even moves the car back and forth a little in time to the tune.

The car glides along the coast as the sun sets the ocean on fire and the clouds disappear in the sky.

The song gets louder and louder.

EXT. ASSISTED LIVING HOME - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Janine and Penny gather their things. They're at the far end of a huge parking lot filled with cars.

The community is boxy and industrial. There may have been something vibrant about it once, but probably not.

Penny cracks the door. Janine puts her hand on her shoulder. Penny closes the door.

PENNY
What's up?

JANINE

We did the right thing, right?
Bringing him here? It was the only
choice we had. Right?

PENNY

Shit, I don't know, Ma. He was losing
time and burning holes in things with
those gross cigarello's he smokes.
But he's still him, you know? He's
still sharp and funny and kind of sad
all the time about grandma. We made
the choice we made. That's how it is.

JANINE

No. Penny. You have to tell me it was
the right choice. I can't get out of
this car, walk up those stairs and
into that shitty looking building if
I think for one single second that
there was any other choice to make.
My legs won't do it. Even if it's a
lie, tell me it was the right thing.

Penny looks at Janine. Janine keeps both hands on the
steering wheel and looks out the windshield.

They sit like that for more than a few breaths.

PENNY

You know the only time in my life
I've ever really regretted anything?
I mean. I've porked the wrong fella
or gotten loaded and said some shit I
didn't mean, but that goes away the
next time you pork the wrong fella or
get loaded and say some shit you
don't mean. But real regret? Only one
time. When Aldo - when Grandpa - was
looking for his place. I was in high
school, remember? I tried out for the
play and didn't get it so I was
pretty down. He popped by with a
couple of soft pretzels and all these
apartments circled in the paper and
all I wanted to do was listen to
Morrisey and tell the world to go
fuck itself. He was all chipper and
energetic, like I hadn't seen him in
a long time, and for some reason it
just...bugged me.

Janine turns her head to look at Penny, whose now the one looking out the windshield.

PENNY

It got on my nerves that this great, wonderful man, who never did anything but hold me high on his shoulders, wasn't as miserable as I was. So I told him I got the part and had rehearsal and he left me a pretzel and bounded down the street with a spring in his step that I swear to god I imitate to this day. Whenever I feel lousy or sorry for myself I force my body to move in this way that, in my mind, is the same way he moved his that day. And it makes me feel better. Every single time.

She looks at her mom. Both have tears in their eyes.

PENNY

Maybe we fucked up, mom. I don't know. But this is how it is. Now. All we can do is walk up those steps to that shitty building the way he walked down the street that day. We can't change things. We can't lie to ourselves. We can walk. OK?

Janine nods her head a little.

PENNY

OK?

Janine nods more and more and wipes the tears from her eyes.

JANINE

Yeah. OK.

They get out of the car and walk across the parking lot arm in arm. There's even a little spring in their step.

INT/EXT. JANINE'S CAR - SOUTHBOUND ON THE PCH - MORNING

A bright sun reflects a tremendous glare off the water. The kind of glare no driver can get away from.

Janine drives the car with the windows open. Their morning is in the cupholder - coffee. Fast food wrapper.

Penny has her feet up on the dashboard. Janine adjust her over-sized sunglasses.

Her shoulders shake. She steps on the gas. Penny sticks her arm out the window. Her hand rides the air like a wave.

Janine chokes out a suppressed sob. It doesn't lead to more tears - it's just like a single note in an orchestra.

Penny grabs one of her hands off the wheel and squeezes it. Janine squeezes back for all she's worth.

Penny grabs her phone and clicks through to the song HARD TIMES by BABY HUEY.

The glare off the ocean completely obscures the car as it takes a curve. Penny presses play.

CUT TO BLACK: