

INT/EXT. HOME DEPOT PARKING LOT - ALICE'S CAR - DAY

SUPER: ALICE

ALICE, a thin, attractive woman wearing her move into middle age like a well tailored suit, stares at the parking lot.

It's not that full. It's too early in the morning. She unplugs her phone from the car speaker and makes a call.

ALICE

Hi, Ellie? It's Alice. I'm sitting outside Home Depot and wanted to make sure I got the right things. Oh. OK. Sure, I'll try Joanna. OK then -

CLICK. Ellie hangs up before Alice says goodbye. She slides over to Joanna Maxwell's contact and dials.

ALICE

Hi, Joanna? It's Alice. Yeah, I'm there now. I just want to make sure I get everything right. OK, great. Text me the list when we get off the phone. Great. Bye.

Joanna does say goodbye. Alice smiles. She stares at her phone. No text. She looks through her purse. No text.

A few cars pull in to spots around her.

No text.

EXT. THE HP CAFE - BACK - DAY

Alice staggers to the kitchen door of the adorable cafe. She's overburdened with Home Depot bags. Absurdly so.

SMITH (30) a sinewy, scrubby guy in a tie-dye tank top and net over his beard, steps out of the door.

They barely avoid bumping into each other.

SMITH

Shit. Jeez. Watch it.

ALICE

Sorry, sorry. Coming through.

They circle out of their stumble. Smith offers Alice a smug smile when he recognizes her.

SMITH

Hey. Alice.

He puts an unnecessary emphasis on the vowels of her name.

ALICE

Oh. Gee. Hi Smith. I'm just bringing some things in for Joanna.

SMITH

Is that the Home Depot stuff?

She looks at the bags. Yup. Clearly the Home Depot stuff.

ALICE

It is.

SMITH

That's not for here. Max needs that stuff at the house.

ALICE

Oh. This is where she told me to drop it off. Can I leave it with her?

SMITH

She's not here. She locked her keys inside so she's waiting for Ellie to come by with a spare.

ALICE

I have a spare. I guess I'll head up there and drop this stuff off. That way I can let her in, too.

They look at each other. He makes it awkward.

ALICE

Well, I'm off. Bye Smith.

SMITH

Yeah. Later

She turns with her enormous amount of bags. He takes a single step forward.

SMITH

How's Jenna?

Alice winces. She hoped he wouldn't ask.

EXT. JOHANNA MAXWELL'S HOUSE - DAY

Alice struggles the bags to the front door of a nice house set on a hill. Great view of the mountains.

There are no other cars in the driveway. She drops the bags on the porch and takes out her phone.

No new texts. No missed calls. She dials Joanna.

ALICE

Hi, Jo? It's Alice. No, I'm at the house. Your pastry chef told me you were home. Oh. OK. I'll drop the bags off inside. Yeah, I still have a spare. Great. I'll see you then.

She takes her keys out of her purse. They slip from her hand into the bowels of the most over stuffed bag.

INT. THE HP CAFE - EXPANSION - DAY

Alice sits next to a short wall that divides the the cafe in half. The wall doesn't reach the ceiling.

She looks at her phone. She group texted Ellie and Max "I'm here!" There was no response.

She pushes a coffee cup around the table. There's a decent crowd. Every member of it is much younger than she is.

TWO VOICES emerge from the general din. Alice focuses in on them. She recognizes them. She smiles and moves to get up.

ELLIE (O.C.)

She's not our stepmom anymore.

JOANNA MAXWELL (O.C.)

Ellie.

ELLIE (O.C.)

Well she's not.

Alice sinks back into her seat.

JOANNA MAXWELL (O.C.)

What does it matter? She's been a big part of our life since we were kids.

ELLIE (O.C.)

It doesn't creep you out? Tell me it doesn't creep you out.

JOANNA MAXWELL (O.C.)
As long as everyone's happy.

ELLIE (O.C.)
It's weird. And creepy. And it gets
on my nerves.

JOANNA MAXWELL (O.C.)
God. You sound like mom.

A WAITRESS moves to Alice's table. She's halfway out the back door. The Waitress buses the empty coffee cup.

EXT. THE HP CAFE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Alice walks across the street to the fenced in lot for the cafe. Her eyes are on the ground.

They stay there until she reaches her car. Her keys fall to the ground when she looks at it.

The words "GENTRIFYER GO HO -" are spray painted along the entire drivers side. The artist didn't finish.

EXT. AUTO BODY SHOP - DAY

Alice looks behind her at the cramped, shady looking shop. Her car is nowhere in sight.

She checks her phone. An Uber is on its way. Ten minutes. She looks up and down the block.

There's nothing but more industrial waste. She pulls her sweater closed at her neck and opens her texts.

She types into the group text to Joanna and Ellie. "Girls, I'm so sorry if anything I've done has -" she stops.

Delete. Delete. Delete. Her fingers hover over the screen. They don't type anything.

EXT. ELLIE'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Alice gets out of the Uber with a gift basket. She leans toward the drivers side window to try to get him to stay.

He drives off before she can say anything. Her shoulders sag. She straightens them out and walks to the porch.

EXT. JOHANNA MAXWELL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

SUPER: MAX

Max, her own kind of pretty, walks on to her porch, her eyes glued to her phone. The front door CLICKS behind her.

She checks her pockets. No keys. She turns back to the house. The doors locked.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Fuuuuuuuuck.

She calls Ellie. She talks before Max does. Max listens as patiently as she can. Then -

JOANNA MAXWELL

OK, yeah, call me back. It's just. I locked my keys in the house. OK. Bye.

She sits on the porch steps and flips through recreational internet things on her phone. She gets bored pretty fast.

Her eyes wander to the lawn. Some of the plants look a little brown.

EXT. JOHANNA MAXWELL'S HOUSE - LAWN - LATER

Max waters her plants. Alice calls.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Hey, Alice. Are you at Home Depot?
OK, cool. I'll text you a list. Yeah.
Thanks a lot. OK. Bye.

She hangs up. Ellie calls immediately.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Hey, are you coming? I'm watering the lawn. Yes. OK, how long? Ellie. I'm interviewing Jenna's replacement. Can we talk about that later? OK. Bye.

She drops the hose and moves to turn it off.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Pain in my ass, I swear.

EXT. JOHANNA MAXWELL'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Ellie pulls into the driveway and gets out of the car. Max motions at her to get back in. Ellie is SUPER PREGNANT.

ELLIE

Don't you want your keys?

JOANNA MAXWELL

I'll take your spare and let myself in later. I have to go. Now.

They get in the car and pull off. The second they turn the corner Alice's car drives up from the other direction.

EXT. THE HP CAFE - BACK - DAY

Ellie stops the car. Max hops out.

ELLIE

Lunch later?

JOANNA MAXWELL

Sure.

Ellie backs out. Max tries the back door. It's locked. She BANGS on it. Smith appears.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Why is this locked?

SMITH

Beats me, boss. Did you catch your stepmom? She dropped by.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Fuck.

She takes out her phone.

SMITH

That dude is waiting. About the job. He's been waiting.

She puts her phone away.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Fuck.

INT. THE HP CAFE - COUNTER SIDE - DAY

This side of the cafe is much more crowded. There's a line. Ellie and Max sit against the dividing wall.

JOANNA MAXWELL
God. You sound like mom.

ELLIE
Is that a bad thing?

JOANNA MAXWELL
I don't know. She wasn't exactly fair to Alice, was she? It's not her fault Dad left her.

ELLIE
Isn't it?

JOANNA MAXWELL
Is it Jenna's fault Alice left Dad?

ELLIE
Obviously. Isn't that why you fired her?

JOANNA MAXWELL
I didn't fire her. She quit.

ELLIE
Seriously??

JOANNA MAXWELL
I have to go. I have another interview in a few.

She hops out of her seat and heads for the kitchen.

ELLIE
OK. Bye.

EXT. THE HP CAFE - BACK - NIGHT

Max steps into the cool night air. Her face is shiny with sweat. The kitchen closes up shop for the night.

Jenna bounces on her from behind. She JUMPS OUT OF HER SKIN.

JENNA
Gotcha!

JOANNA MAXWELL

Jesus, Jenna.

JENNA

Sorry. Couldn't resist.

JOANNA MAXWELL

What are you even doing back here?

JENNA

Dropping off my uniform and picking up my last check.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Oh. You didn't have to quit. You know that, right?

JENNA

Oh, hey. We're totally cool. I quit because it was time for a change. It had nothing to do with the fact that I'm boinking your stepmom.

Max winces. She doesn't want to. But she does.

JENNA

Sorry. T.M.I?

JOANNA MAXWELL

I guess.

JENNA

If you have any thoughts or feelings or words you want to get off your chest, I'm here. Now. Let's wrap.

JOANNA MAXWELL

I'm good.

JENNA

She's happy, you know? I make her pretty damn happy.

JOANNA MAXWELL

That's nice.

JENNA

And guess what?

Max looks at her with no expression.

JENNA

She makes me pretty damn happy. I'm serious. I think I might give being a one woman gal a shot.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Well that's...great.

Jenna peers in the kitchen. She catches sight of Smith.

JENNA

Crap. I'm out of here. I don't want to get another mouthful from Mister Cranky Pants over there.

She throws her arms around Max for an invasive hug.

JENNA

Oh, hey. It doesn't really have anything to do with you I guess, but she overheard you and Ellie earlier. She felt like shit about what Ellie said all day. Until I put a smile on her face. Love you bye!

She hops out of Smith's line of sight. He misses her and wanders back into the cafe.

JOANNA MAXWELL

Wait. Overheard what?

Jenna is around the corner. Max tries the door to the kitchen. It's locked.

BANG BANG BANG.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT PROPERTY - DAY

SUPER: ELLIE

Ellie stands with LUCY (30) a hip, lovely woman. They stare at a two story single unit apartment.

It sits behind a larger building. Dogs BARK in the yard of the house next door.

LUCY

I figured it was no good. You should probably call the cops.

A DERANGED WOMAN appears in the window of the empty unit. She rants and raves in a truly sinister gibberish.

Max calls.

ELLIE

Hey, I really can't talk right now.
OK, I'll come by later. Bye.

She hangs up. The Woman throws something at the wall. Whatever it is it sticks in the plaster.

EXT. VACANT PROPERTY - LANDING - LATER

An OLDER COP leads the Deranged Woman to his car. A YOUNGER COP takes Ellie's statement.

YOUNGER COP

So are you going to send her away and make things worse, or are you going to let her get the help she needs?

ELLIE

I don't understand. Is that really up to me?

Alice calls. She looks at her phone.

YOUNGER COP

You can answer it.

She does so.

ELLIE

Yeah, hi. Now's really not a good time. Can you try Max?

She hangs up. The Younger Cop steps closer to her.

YOUNGER COP

Do you believe in possession?

ELLIE

What. Like. Legal possession of property? Because she's not a tenant.

YOUNGER COP

No. Do you believe people can be possessed by the devil?

ELLIE

I. Um. I just want to check on the unit, if that's OK.

He steps even closer.

YOUNGER COP

I do. Everyone knows it's real but the media doesn't want you to know about it. Think about that.

He SNAPS his pad shut and walks down the stairs.

INT. VACANT PROPERTY - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The FRESHLY PAINTED WALLS are filled with crayon scrawls and scribbles. No words. Ellie's on the phone

ELLIE

You are not going to believe what just happened to me. Yes, I'm on my way. Seriously?? I'm in the car driving. I don't know, twenty minutes? I was going to stop and get us a treat. OK. God, she's not going to be there is she? Because gross. Fine. OK. Bye.

She approaches the thing stuck in the wall. Even close up she can't figure out what it is. She pulls it out.

Her eyes dart through the room to the stove. It's the metal part of the stove that goes over the burner.

Plaster dust SPILLS from the hole.

INT. ELLIE'S CAR - EAST L.A STREETS - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Ellie guides the car through back roads streets. The traffic is thin but persistent.

She stops at a red light. A FAST FOOD RESTAURANT sits on the next corner, in all its mass market glory.

She pulls into the drive through when the light changes.

INT. ELLIE'S CAR - JOANNA MAXWELL'S STREET - DAY

Ellie turns off Max's street.

JOANNA MAXWELL
Where are you going?

ELLIE
I have to drop off a key for a
tenant. It's basically on the way.

JOANNA MAXWELL
I have to get to work. Jesus.

ELLIE
OK. I'll swing around.

She turns down the next street. Max stares at her phone. She
sniffs the air.

JOANNA MAXWELL
Did you stop at McDonald's?

INT. ELLIE'S CAR - THE HP CAFE'S STREET - DAY

Ellie talks on the phone.

ELLIE
I know, I don't get it either.

Max's phone rings. It's Alice. She presses a finger in her
free ear when she answers it.

JOANNA MAXWELL
Hi Alice. Are you at the cafe?

ELLIE
Who would even want to get involved
with one of their stepdaughters
friends? It's bizarre.

JOANNA MAXWELL
Ellie's dropping me off now.

ELLIE
I think they're both wrong.

JOANNA MAXWELL
That would be great. Do you still
have a key?

ELLIE
I don't know. I haven't talked to him
about it.

JOANNA MAXWELL
 Why don't you come by later and grab
 something to eat.

She pulls the car into back of the cafe.

JOANNA MAXWELL
 See you then.

She hangs up and hops out of the car the second it stops.
 Ellie talks into her phone.

ELLIE
 Hold on.

She rolls down the window.

ELLIE
 Lunch later?

INT. THE HP CAFE - COUNTER SIDE - DAY

Ellie watches Max head into the kitchen. She takes a picture
 of the food left on their plates.

LYNCH (20's) a junkie-thin, weasel faced guy, walks in.
 Ellie looks up at him. He stops when he see's her.

LYNCH
 Well lookie here. If it isn't slum-
 lord millionaire.

He takes a step toward her.

ELLIE
 Good lord. Beat it, dirt-ass. This is
 my sisters restaurant.

LYNCH
 Well I don't give a fuck.

Smith barrels in from the expansion and grabs Lynch by the
 shoulders. He drags him out the door.

SMITH
 You swear at a pregnant lady? In her
 sisters place?

BANG. The screen door closes behind them. Ellie watches
 Smith toss Lynch into the street.

He PLOPS on his ass. SNAP. She takes a picture of it.

INT. ELLIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - EARLY EVENING

Ellie walks out of her bedroom into the short hallway that leads to the kitchen. She rubs her eyes.

Someone's been napping. From the kitchen she can see through the whole house to a picture window that looks on the porch.

Alice writes the note for the gift basket. Ellie ducks out of sight. She steps funny and winces.

She grips the counter and leans forward. She's in real pain. She scoots forward into the doorway.

ELLIE
(Weakly)
Alice.

She watches Alice walk down the steps. She can't catch her breath long enough to call after her.

INT. ELLIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellie lies on her back in bed. BRUCEY (33) a tall, lanky guy with a mustache and no shirt, dotes on her.

BRUCEY
Sure you're OK, momma? You're positive?

ELLIE
The Doctor said it was gas.

The gift basket sits on the bed next to her. She picks through the crackers and chocolate treats.

She pops a chocolate in her mouth.

BRUCEY
I'm gonna shower. I'll make it quick. Yell if anything happens. Yell as loud as you can.

ELLIE
I'm fine, I swear.

He grabs a towel and kisses her on the forehead.

BRUCEY
Yell anyway.

He walks out.

BRUCEY (O.C.)

Did you thank Alice for the basket?

Ellie scrunches up her face. Yuck. She didn't like whatever filling was in the chocolate.

She stares at her phone. And TURNS OUT THE LIGHT.

CUT TO BLACK: