

INLAND EMPRESS

By
Tom Cavanaugh

INLAND EMPRESS

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INLAND EMPRESS

for Sunny Rae

INLAND EMPRESS

Inland Empress was originally produced at the Lounge Theatre in Los Angeles, CA by Mutant Collective, featuring the following cast:

Kaylah.....Alexa Yeaves
June.....Monica Martin
Jolie Beth.....Di Koob
Sierra.....McCready Baker
Louise.....Lily Knight
Butchy.....Jeffrey Wylie

Directed by Jessica Hanna

Inland Empress was developed in workshop at Fierce Backbone and The Actors Gym in Los Angeles, CA.

CAST: 5 Women, 1 Man

JUNE 50s, female, motherly, a little ditsy, but has a brain for business. She's smart and jovial most of the time. The voice of reason in times of trouble.

KAYLAH Late teens, female, takes care of the horses. Wants a better life but doesn't know exactly what she wants.

JOLIE BETH 30s, female. The sensible, responsible, wants out of the family business, but needs money.

SIERRA 30s, female. Hard core, butt kicker of the daughters, in charge of the operation and does not want to relinquish her alpha-female position.

LOUISE 50s, female. A career criminal now reformed, was the core of the family until she went to prison. Has come back to fix things and correct the lives of the family she messed up.

BUTCHY 50s, male. Looks like a legit businessman, but is the county, drug lord who looks like a rancher.

TIME: 2010

PLACE: A Horse Ranch in the High Desert of California.

INLAND EMPRESS

INLAND EMPRESS

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The Living Room: there is a couch at center with a coffee table in front of it. Several chairs to the left and right. S.R. There is a dining room table with several chairs around it with a cupboard and a door on the S.R. wall. S.L. There's a bar against the wall and bunch of framed pictures on the wall behind it. On the back wall is the front door in the up S.L. corner and to the right of the door are stairs with banister that leads up to the bedrooms. The house is a ranch style in pseudo-western motif.

JUNE. *(Off stage in the kitchen singing)* Let me entertain you. Let me see you smile. Let me do some new... *(JUNE enters from the kitchen. She is carrying a box with party decorations in it and sings as she enters.)* Let me do some new tricks, some old and fancy new tricks... *(She starts to unpack the box as she hums the rest of the song. She starts to take out large letters that are a banner and she tries to lay out the words "WELCOME HOME".)* Oh shoot! I thought we had enough letters! *(She snaps her fingers and remembers there's more letters upstairs. June leaves the unfinished banner on the dining room table and heads upstairs. The front door opens, KAYLAH enters. She is seventeen, wearing jeans, cowboy boots and a white tee-shirt.)*

KAYLAH. *(Yells)* Momma! *(She looks around and sees no one is there. Kaylah walks to the kitchen door, opens it and yells.)* Momma! *(Still no answer. Kaylah picks up the phone that is hanging on the wall next to the kitchen door. Into the phone)*

Yeah, this is two, three, seven, two, two Loma Yucca Highway, the Double 6 Ranch.

JUNE. *(Offstage singing)* Let me entertain you! Let me make you smile!

KAYLAH. *(Covers the phone.)* Momma!! *(Uncovers the phone.)*

Hi, I got a runaway horse. No, a horse. Tan with black hooves and black socks up to its knees. What? It's a horse. How many legs do you think it

INLAND EMPRESS

has? *(June comes down the stairs empty handed.)*

JUNE. *(Singing)* And if you're real good. I hope you're real good....

KAYLAH. No, don't send a car. Well, do you have to?

JUNE. That horse ran away again?

KAYLAH. *(Covers the phone.)* Third time this week! *(Back to the phone.)* You know what, forget it. If you get a report of a stray horse, just call us. Come on, you know the number, you been here all week.!

JUNE. Oh, that's not good.

KAYLAH. No, it is not good because it's Mrs. Dunwoody's horse and she's one of the few, regular paying customers that actually pays.

JUNE. The horse will come back. She always does.

KAYLAH. Sierra left the damn gate open again!

JUNE. Don't pick on your sister, she has a lot on her mind.

KAYLAH. I know, but Momma the whole thing could've been avoided!

JUNE. Well, yeah, but...

KAYLAH. We wouldn't have to depend on that shit, if her and Jolie Beth would just carry their weight and make this ranch work!

JUNE. It's not that easy.

KAYLAH. Momma, there's plenty of people with money and horses that would board them here. They don't bring us their business. *(Kaylah looks around.)*

KAYLAH. What's with the party stuff? *(The screen door opens, and JOLIE BETH enters. She is in her forties, overweight and well dressed.)*

JOLIE BETH. Did I see that champagne mare running down the highway again? *(Kaylah jumps off the couch.)*

KAYLAH. Where? Where did you see her?

JOLIE BETH. I almost hit her with the truck!!!

KAYLAH. Where? Where?

JUNE. *(Singing)* And if you're real good.

JOLIE BETH. East-bound on Loma Yucca, then she headed off into the desert.

KAYLAH. Shit! She's running home again. Take me to go get her.

JUNE. I'll make you feel good.

JOLIE BETH. No, no way. Last time we went chasing that crazy horse, the truck got so dusty and dirty from them back roads, Tim had a shit fit!

INLAND EMPRESS

JUNE. I want your spirit to shine!

KAYLAH. Please Jo, I don't want to lose this client too!

JOLIE BETH. What's wrong with your quad? *(Kaylah pouts and walks towards the door. She looks out the window.)*

JOLIE BETH. Why don't you use your quad?

JUNE. Cause she doesn't want to burn up all her gas.

JOLIE BETH. *(To June)* I thought the purpose of getting her that motorcycle was to...

JUNE. Don't start.

JOLIE BETH. We got you the quad so you could go after any horses that runs off the property.

JUNE. You got her the quad; you didn't get her the gas.

JOLIE BETH. So, you figure you can burn up my gas and use my husband's truck to do your job? *(Kaylah shoots June and Jolie Beth a look and then goes back to looking out the window.)*

JOLIE BETH. Well, if you don't want to burn up your gas, you better take out another horse and hunt that crazy mare down because I almost hit her and once the sun goes down, one of them tractor trailers will cream her out on that highway, and they'll just drive on without stopping cause they won't even know they hit her! *(Kaylah gets up and starts to head for the door. June starts to put up a banner that reads "WELCOM HOM")*

JOLIE BETH. And if you don't find her by sunset, come right home. I don't want you driving out there in the desert at night. You can't see a thing and you'll break your neck.

KAYLAH. Bossy all the damn time!

JOLIE BETH. For your own good. ^[SEP]**KAYLAH.** Momma doesn't boss me this much. She don't care if I'm riding out there at night!

JOLIE BETH. That's cause Momma doesn't.... *(Jolie Beth realizes what she's about to say and lowers her voice.)* We won't talk about that... *(Jolie Beth steps closer to Kaylah.)* Mommas in her own mind and she doesn't realize how dangerous things are.

KAYLAH. She knows how dangerous it is! She's just cooler than you. *(Kaylah turns her back and exits through the front door.)*

JOLIE BETH. *(Yells after Kaylah.)* She doesn't know and it's not for

INLAND EMPRESS

Momma to decide! She has her... *(June talks while hanging the sign.)*

JUNE. I can hear you.

JOLIE BETH. I'm sorry, Momma. I didn't mean for you to hear that.

JUNE. But I did.

JOLIE BETH. I'm sorry. She's only seventeen, she can't just be running around doing what she wants to do all the time.

JUNE. Why not?

JOLIE BETH. Cause she's young and impressionable and...

JUNE. Stop mothering her!

JOLIE BETH.

Somebody has to! You let her run wild. I'm trying to give her some structure. Trying to raise her right!

JUNE. I raised you and Sierra the same way I'm raising her. Why is it so bad now? *(Jolie Beth crosses to June and helps her to hang the banner.)*

JOLIE BETH. Cause I have kids and I know the difference now! I just know that it's not right and I just know that... "WELCOM HOM"?

JUNE. We're short on "E's".

JOLIE BETH. Oh my God? She's coming home today?

JUNE. Both of you forgot!

JOLIE BETH. Today's the day? Who's picking her up?

JUNE. You.

JOLIE BETH. ME!!!

JUNE. You just sent the driver off on her quad...

JOLIE BETH. Oh shit.

JUNE. And you don't let me drive anymore.

JOLIE BETH. Last time you drove, you took my truck and didn't come back for three days.

JUNE. That wasn't my fault.

JOLIE BETH. Well, it was somebody's fault, Momma! Who ends up in Las Vegas by accident?

JUNE. I wasn't the one driving.

JOLIE BETH. You were when you left the house! Who was driving after that?

JUNE. I don't know.

INLAND EMPRESS

JOLIE BETH. You know! You just won't tell me.

JUNE. I do not recall such an incident.

JOLIE BETH. Do you recall walking topless through the Belagio Hotel and Casino? Do you recall having no shirt on and just casually strolling through the lobby on your way to the buffet with your bubs in the wind? *(June goes back to singing and decorating.)*

JUNE. *(Singing.)* Just let me entertain you and we'll have a real good time, yes sir! We'll have a...

JOLIE BETH. Listen to me, I am not driving into town at this hour. I don't have the time and I have to get home and... *(Starts to think.)* Does Sierra know who's coming home today?

JUNE. You didn't remember. I doubt that Sierra remembers.

JOLIE BETH. Oh, Momma. That's not good.

JUNE. It's not something we have a choice in. The date was set, and we need to pick her up from the bus depot. No one wanted to drive up there.

JOLIE BETH. I hate that place.

JUNE. You only went once.

JOLIE BETH. Once was enough!

JUNE. What if I was there? What if it was me there and her here?

JOLIE BETH. I'd go see you...

JUNE. Really?

JOLIE BETH. I would've hated it, but I still would've gone.

JUNE. Well, we should've gone up there to get her...

JOLIE BETH. Maybe.

JUNE. Least you could do is pick her up from the bus depot.

JOLIE BETH. What if we...

SIERRA. *(Offstage yells.)* KAYLAAAAAAAAAH!

JOLIE BETH. Ah shit!

SIERRA. *(Offstage yell again.)* KAAAAAYYLLAAAAAAAAAH!!!!

JUNE. Help me make an "E".

JOLIE BETH. What?

JUNE. An "E" for the sign, help me make an... *(The front door flies open and SIERRA enters. She is wearing a leather jacket, tight, faded blue jeans with rips in them and wired rimmed sunglasses.)*

INLAND EMPRESS

SIERRA. Where the hell is... *(Notices the banner.)* “WELCOM HOM”!
Who the hell is “HOM”?

JUNE. We don’t have anymore “E’s.”

SIERRA. I can see that.

JUNE. Jolie Beth’s gonna help me make some.

SIERRA. No, she isn’t.

JUNE. She isn’t?

SIERRA. No, I need her.

JUNE. But you were yelling for Kaylah.

SIERRA. I want her too, but right now I’ll talk to Jolie Beth.

JUNE. Yeah, but I need Jolie Beth to...

SIERRA. The “E” s can wait!

JOLIE BETH. If I want to make “E” s then, I’ll make “E”s if want to...

SIERRA. We got business.

JOLIE BETH. You’re not the boss of me, I’ll do what I...

SIERRA. I am your boss and right now... *(Sierra crosses to Jolie Beth and picks her up by her elbow.)*

SIERRA. Right now, I need you!

JOLIE BETH. Stop it! Stop... that hurts damn it!!! *(Jolie Beth pulls her arm away and breaks free.)*

SIERRA. Tina never got to Rancho.

JOLIE BETH. I know.

SIERRA. Why the hell not?

JOLIE BETH. I couldn’t get there on time.

SIERRA. Why?

JOLIE BETH. It doesn’t matter, why! I missed the drop.

SIERRA. Where is she?

JOLIE BETH. Still in the trailer.

SIERRA. When Tina doesn’t get to where she belongs, then I gotta answer.

JOLIE BETH. I know.

SIERRA. I gotta answer and that means you gotta answer.

JOLIE BETH. We still have the package.

SIERRA. That ain’t the point. I got a boss, and he wants to know where the money is.

INLAND EMPRESS

JOLIE BETH. I never got to the money.

SIERRA. But he doesn't know that!!! He thinks the worst and you know what "the worst" is? *(Jolie Beth says nothing.)*

SIERRA. "The worst" is he thinks someone robbed him not only of his cash, from which he pays us from, but he thinks someone stole the cash and the delivery and that means he's stuck twice and...

JOLIE BETH. I didn't steal anything.

SIERRA. That don't matter, he doesn't know that! No Tina in the hands of a customer means the customer loses trust in us and our system. When we lose a customer, that makes the boss mad, are you hearing me sister, or should I write it out on paper for you?

JOLIE BETH. Tim doesn't want me doing this anymore.

SIERRA. *(Yells)* What?

JOLIE BETH. He wants me to stop.

SIERRA. Does Tim want to get a real job where he can pay rent for you, him and the kids? Cause, if we don't do this, we're in a lot of trouble.

JOLIE BETH. I'm sorry.

SIERRA. Yeah, well don't tell it to me... *(Sierra takes out her cell phone and dials.)* Tell it to the boss. *(Sierra's cell phone is on speaker and the sound of the phone dialing and then ringing is heard. Jolie Beth looks scared. She crosses to Sierra, takes the cell phone and hangs up on the call.)*

JOLIE BETH. I don't have to talk to him. Everything is fine. Tina is still in the trailer.

SIERRA. Go get it.

JOLIE BETH. Ok.

SIERRA. Now! *(Jolie Beth walks to the door, looks at June and then exits.)*

JUNE. You were hard on her.

SIERRA. She's, my employee.

JUNE. True, but she's your sister first.

SIERRA. I gotta answer, mamma. We all gotta answer.

JUNE. I never let anyone talk that way to me.

SIERRA. Not even, Aunt Louise?

INLAND EMPRESS

JUNE. LOUISE! Shit! You have to go pick her up!!!

SIERRA. That's today?

JUNE. You know it is! *(Sierra sits on the couch and looks worried.)*

JUNE. What's the matter?

SIERRA. Send Jolie Beth.

JUNE. I tried, but...

SIERRA. Momma, I'm the boss now.

JUNE. Yeah and?

SIERRA. She's gonna want her job back.

JUNE. I don't think...

SIERRA. Momma, she's a bad bitch and she's out. She's gonna be hurting for cash.

JUNE. Maybe.

SIERRA. You know exactly how she thinks and what she's gonna want. I'm not giving in; I will fight her for it.

JUNE. Maybe we can come to some kind of an agreement.

SIERRA. Either way, we all answer to Butchy and if we don't work this out, he'll make the decision for us. He will hurt a person, if he has to.

JUNE. None of us want that.

SIERRA. Exactly.

JUNE. They have a history.

SIERRA. We both have a history with Butchy.

JUNE. You said you weren't sleeping with him.

SIERRA. Sorry, momma.

JUNE. He's too old for you.

SIERRA. Momma, age don't matter for a man. He can be as old as the hills and sleeping with a nineteen-year-old.

JUNE. She's gonna be mad.

SIERRA. Exactly and I don't want to have to fight her, but...

JUNE. There will be no fighting.

SIERRA. It's been seven years. I made my rep at twenty-nine when she went into jail. I don't care if she is my aunt. No one is taking this away from me.

JUNE. Just talk to her and see if...

SIERRA. No one, momma. No, one. *(Jolie Beth enters from the front*

INLAND EMPRESS

door with a brown shopping bag.)

JOLIE BETH. Here. *(Jolie Beth throws the bag to Sierra.)*

SIERRA. Feels light.

JOLIE BETH. It is not!

SIERRA. If I take the package out and see one straw hole in it, I swear to God, girl...

JOLIE BETH. *(Yells.)* You know there isn't!!!

SIERRA. It ain't me you gotta worry about, but Butchy don't like liars and he hates thieves.

JOLIE BETH. I did not...

SIERRA. Next time, you call me! We ain't ever missed a drop till today and I'm just warning you, if this package is light...

JOLIE BETH. It's not light.

SIERRA. I'm just sayin', if it is light. Someone will pick you and Tim up in the middle of the night, take you out to The Hole and sick the dogs on you.

JOLIE BETH. It's not light.

SIERRA. Getting bit by one Rottweiler is bad, gettin' bit by six...

JOLIE BETH. Six?

SIERRA. You don't want that.

JOLIE BETH. It's all there. *(Jolie Beth gets up and starts to walk out the door.)*

SIERRA. WAIT! It's important!!

JOLIE BETH. What?

SIERRA. You have to pick up Aunt Louise.

JOLIE BETH. I have to get home and...

SIERRA. Come on, Jo. You know I can't.

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, but...

SIERRA. I'll make a deal with you. Go pick her up and I'll smooth it all out with Butchy.

JOLIE BETH. Will I still get paid?

SIERRA. You didn't deliver the package.

JOLIE BETH. We need the money.

SIERRA. I'll give you half since you took the risk and got Tina home.

JOLIE BETH. Only half?

INLAND EMPRESS

SIERRA. Half is better than none. *(The sound of Kaylah pulling into the yard on her quad is heard.)*

JOLIE BETH. What time does her bus get in?

JUNE. Six. *(Kaylah enters.)*

KAYLAH. I can't find her.

SIERRA. Her bus don't get in till six.

KAYLAH. What bus?

SIERRA. The greyhound.

KAYLAH. What's the greyhound have to do with the horse?

SIERRA. What horse?

KAYLAH. The champagne-colored horse with the black socks.

SIERRA. I'm not talking about a horse. *(Kaylah is looking up at the banner.)*

KAYLAH. Is someone gonna hang the "E's cause without them it makes us look real stupid!

SIERRA. Ma, where's your truck?

JUNE. I'm not allowed to use it anymore. Why would I know where it is?

KAYLAH. That thing's a wreck.

SIERRA. It runs, don't it?

KAYLAH. Out back.

SIERRA. Kaylah, take the trailer off of Jolie Beth's truck and hitch it up to Mom's truck.

JUNE. Where you going?

SIERRA. Santa Anita.

KAYLAH. Mom's truck can't make it Santa Anita! You'd be lucky if it makes it to Palmdale!

SIERRA. I didn't ask your opinion.

JUNE. She's right.

SIERRA. I don't have a choice now, do I? Jolie Beth has to go to the bus stop. You don't drive anymore, and I don't have a truck.

JUNE. Take your car.

SIERRA. No one questions horse women driving a truck with a trailer attached. You know the game.

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, but...

INLAND EMPRESS

SIERRA. You want to make money or what?

JOLIE BETH. It's not me I'm worried about.

KAYLAH. It's okay, I like going to the track. There's jockeys there!
(Kaylah smiles, grabs the truck keys and heads for the door. Sierra is right behind her.)

SIERRA. If Butchy shows up, tell him I'll call him when we're done with the track.

JUNE. If you make it to the track...

SIERRA. We'll make it.

JUNE. Be careful.

SIERRA. If we were careful, we wouldn't be doing this. *(Sierra chuckles as they leave.)*

SIERRA. Hey, Jo?

JOLIE BETH. Yeah?

SIERRA. Tell Aunt Louise I said... "Welcome HOM".

JOLIE BETH. That's not funny.

SIERRA. Wasn't meant to be. *(Sierra and Kaylah leave through the front door.)*

JOLIE BETH. She's out of control.

JUNE. She's just doing what has to be done. It's getting late, she'll be here in twenty minutes.

JOLIE BETH. What's the sense?

JUNE. Seven years in prison, someone should be there to pick you up!

JOLIE BETH. That's what I mean. Seven years of prison for what? Sierra and Aunt Louise are gonna throw down. Sierra ain't giving up her spot and you know Aunt Louise; she'll kill a bitch if she can't get her way.

JUNE. We'll deal with it as it comes. No use worrying about something that might not happen.

JOLIE BETH. Oh, it's gonna happen. It's like throwing gasoline on dynamite. The right spark is gonna set it all off.

JUNE. It might. It just might. *(Jolie Beth and June look at each other.)*

JOLIE BETH. I'll be back in a little bit. *(Jolie Beth gets up and heads for the door.)*

JUNE. No matter how much she asks you, come straight home, NO

INLAND EMPRESS

STOPPING AT BARS!

JOLIE BETH. Oh, we ain't stopping. I'm dropping her off here and I'm heading home. I got a family to feed. (*Jolie Beth exits. June gets up, crosses to a dish closet and takes out a half-finished bottle of tequila. June pours a drink.*)

JUNE. (*Raises her glass.*) Gonna be an interesting night. (*June downs her drink. LIGHTS OUT.*)

SCENE 2

The living room - Morning. June is asleep on the couch. There is a half empty bottle of tequila on the coffee table in front of her. LOUISE quietly and carefully enters the house. Louise looks around and she stands over June and watches June as she sleeps. Louise places her hand as if to touch June's cheek but pulls back. Louise slowly sits down in the chair next to the couch and looks around at the house. Louise smiles and watches June sleeps for a few seconds. June rolls over a bit and opens her eyes.

JUNE. (*Groggy.*) Louise?

LOUISE. Yeah, it's me.

JUNE. Really you or am I dreamin'?

LOUISE. Last time I looked, it was really me. Do I look like me? (*Louise stands up and steps closer so June can get a better look.*)

JUNE. You do, but thinner.

LOUISE. Well, that's good.

JUNE. And older.

LOUISE. Mmmm, not so good.

JUNE. What's that on your head?

LOUISE. This is a... well this is a... (*In one move, June gets up, grabs Louise and hugs her tight.*)

JUNE. Oh, Louise!!! (*They hug tighter and tighter. June pulls back her head to get a better look.*) I missed you, sister! (*The kiss and hug longer.*)

JUNE. I'm glad you're home.

INLAND EMPRESS

LOUISE. I'm glad too.

JUNE. So thin... did they feed you in there?

LOUISE. Yeah, but you know prison food... was never my thing.

JUNE. I'm sorry we never sent you packages. We should've sent you something.

LOUISE. That's okay. I wouldn't have wanted any of that junk food.

JUNE. Seven years without Reese's Peanut Butter Cups?

LOUISE. Yep.

JUNE. They're your favorite.

LOUISE. I don't eat junk food anymore.

JUNE. You don't?

LOUISE. It's all chemicals... pollutants... not good for you, and...

JUNE. How about a drink?

LOUISE. It's eight in the morning.

JUNE. A beer! You used to like beers for breakfast.... beer with tomato juice and a raw egg.

LOUISE. *(Smiles.)* A Bloody Beer with a Red Eye.

JUNE. Every morning, like daddy.

LOUISE. One guaranteed, nasty way of beating down a hangover.

JUNE. We don't have any tomato juice, but there's beer in the fridge.

LOUISE. No, that's okay. I don't drink...

JUNE. What's that on your head?

LOUISE. This is a Taqiyah.

JUNE. A Tackey...

LOUISE. A Taqiyah.

JUNE. Taqiyah?

LOUISE. Yes.

JUNE. It looks African or somethin'.

LOUISE. It's from Saudi Arabia.

JUNE. No shit?

LOUISE. *(Louise lets out a small chuckle.)* No shit.

JUNE. Did you get a towel-head pen pal on the outside who thinks he's your boyfriend?

LOUISE. A what?

JUNE. A towelhead, you know an Arab. One of those guys that thinks

INLAND EMPRESS

if they write a white girl in prison, they'll be so sex-starved when you get out that you just can't wait to bang em.

LOUISE. No, I never...

JUNE. Is he a rich Arab? Did he send you lots of presents or just them standard Walkenhorst's gift boxes with the macaroni and cheese you make with the yellow powder?

LOUISE. No, if I had a pen pal sending me things, I wouldn't let them send me food.

JUNE. Electronics! Music? iPods? I heard you can have a television in there now! Did you have your own TV in jail?

LOUISE. Not my own. No one sent me anything.

JUNE. I'm sorry. *(June takes the hat off of Louise's head.)*

JUNE. It's pretty.

LOUISE. Women don't usually wear them. It's really a man's hat, but my mentor, he gave it to me as a reminder. *(She smiles.)* It's an important gift.

JUNE. What do you call this again?

LOUISE. A Taqiyah... it's a Muslim prayer cap.

JUNE. *(Makes a face as she says...)* Muslim... as in Muslim, Muslim?

LOUISE. As in the religion.

JUNE. Ain't they the enemy?

LOUISE. I don't know. Are they?

JUNE. With all the terrorism and killings... you can't wear something like that from those people.

LOUISE. *(Smiles)* "Those people"... Have you ever met a

Muslim?^[L]_[SEP]**JUNE.** Honey, this is the High Desert. We don't have Muslims here, well... not live ones. *(June places the Taqiyah back on Louise's head.)*

I missed you. *(June hugs Louise and starts to cry.)*

LOUISE. It's okay. It's all right. I'm home, sister. I'm home. *(Sound cue: a car pulls up in the driveway and the car's horn)* Oh God, it's Jolie Beth. She was taking care of some things for Sierra, and she's supposed to take me food shopping. I'm sorry the fridge is empty and all, but.... *(June breaks away and heads towards the door.)* You can come food shopping with us and pick up what you want to eat. I'll get

INLAND EMPRESS

her and...*(June opens the door and yells.)* Jolie Beth! Jolie Beth!!! Come inside and see your Aunt Louise!!! *(June goes through the door and it slams shut behind her.) (To herself)* Welcome home... *(Louise looks around the room. She stops at the coffee table and picks up the half empty bottle of Tequila. She smells the open bottle and makes a sour face. She puts the bottle down and looks around the room. Starts to tear up.)* It still smells the same. *(Sound Cue: June & Jolie Beth coming up the porch and the squeaking of the screen door opening. Louise stands up straight, fixes herself up and smiles.)*

JOLIE BETH. I went all the way into town and waited around that bus stop for over an hour.

LOUISE. I didn't make the first bus.

JOLIE BETH. Apparently didn't make the second either, I went back to check.

LOUISE. Sorry.

JOLIE BETH. That's okay... *(They hug)* Welcome home.

LOUISE. Thanks.

JUNE. How did you get here?

LOUISE. Walked.

JUNE. All the way from town?

LOUISE. It wasn't so bad.

JOLIE BETH. That's over forty miles!

LOUISE. I hitched when I got tired.

JOLIE BETH. All night?

LOUISE. Well... yeah.

JOLIE BETH. I'm sorry. I went to pick you up, but...

LOUISE. It's okay. I've hitch-hiked before.

JOLIE BETH. You're not mad?

LOUISE. No. Actually... *(June and Jolie Beth cautiously look at Louise.)* I got to watch the sun rise over the desert. Haven't done that in years. Don't remember ever doing that sober. Don't remember ever doing that alone. It was beautiful. Quiet at first, every once in a while, a truck would speed past, that high pitched sound of the engine rolling that combined with the morning light... even that was... well, it was just perfect.

INLAND EMPRESS

JOLIE BETH. (*Confused*) Really?

LOUISE. I was sitting there on this little hill, just watching the sun come over the horizon and just a few hills away... this horse ran up to the top of the hill and just stood there.

JUNE. Did it have four black socks?

LOUISE. I don't know. I couldn't tell. All I could see was its' silhouette against the orange ball of the sun. It looked wild and free, and this little breeze just kicked up and streamed across my face. I'll tell you... it was beautiful. (*June and Jolie Beth look confused.*)

JUNE. (*Overly calm*) Are you high?

LOUISE. No.

JUNE. Spent the whole night walking and hitch hiking through the desert, staring up at the sun and seeing horses... sure you don't want a drink?

LOUISE. I told you. I don't drink anymore.

JOLIE BETH. (*Shocked*) You don't drink anymore?

LOUISE. No alcohol, no cigarettes and no more getting stoned.

JOLIE BETH. You... you're clean and sober?

LOUISE. That hard to believe?

JOLIE BETH. Aunt Louise, you're the first person to take me to a bar. You let me have my first beer when I was thirteen. Not to mention what you gave me when I hit eighteen... (*She motions with her index finger to her nose.*) You gave all that up?

LOUISE. Think I can't?

JOLIE BETH. I guess, but then again... a lot of people get clean in prison... and then all that changes when they get out.

LOUISE. People get clean.

JOLIE BETH. Is this a scam?

LOUISE. No.

JOLIE BETH. Really?

LOUISE. It's no scam.

JOLIE BETH. Are you sure?

LOUISE. Jolie Beth, I have no reason to lie to you.

JOLIE BETH. You would if you wanted us to believe you were clean and you weren't. (*Louise shakes her head.*)

INLAND EMPRESS

LOUISE. Why would I do that?

JOLIE BETH. Lots of reasons. *(Silence.)*

LOUISE. Where's the other girls?

JUNE. Sierra's out on a run.

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, she's working.

JUNE. Took Kaylah with her.

LOUISE. What about Roz?

JOLIE BETH. Roz is...

JUNE. In L.A. Roz is in L.A. *(Jolie Beth looks confused.)*

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, but... *(June turns her back towards Louise, looks Jolie Beth in the eye with a stern look and she motions "NO".)*

JUNE. She's in L.A. Been living down there awhile, now.

LOUISE. What she doin' down there?

JUNE. Why do you think?

LOUISE. She can get heroin here.

JUNE. But not the money to buy it. *(June crosses to Jolie Beth.)*

LOUISE. Why didn't you get it for her?

JOLIE BETH. Don't ask us that.

LOUISE. Who should I ask? Who's in charge? *(Silence.)* Who's the boss now? *(June and Jolie Beth look at each other with a bit of panic.)*

LOUISE. Jolie Beth! Who's in charge, now?

JOLIE BETH. Sierra! Sierra took your place.

LOUISE. Sierra? Sierra can't handle all this. Sierra can't take care of it all.

JOLIE BETH. *(Matter of fact.)* I know, but that's the way it worked out.

LOUISE. If anyone should've been in charge, it should've been Roz. Sierra can't handle all this. She never could.

JUNE. It just... Things turned out... It just worked out that way, Louise. It just worked out that way. *(The sound of a car speeding into the front yard is heard. Two female voices are laughing, and the sound of a car door closing is heard.)*

JOLIE BETH. *(Looks scared)* That's them.

LOUISE. Who?

JOLIE BETH. Sierra and Kaylah. *(The sound of a car speeding away is*

INLAND EMPRESS

heard. The screen door opens, and Kaylah enters. She is wearing a red and white Jockey Cap. Louise slowly moves closer to Kaylah as she speaks.)

KAYLAH. Don't start bitching. I know we were out all night, and we didn't call, but it's not what you think, well, that ain't true! It is what you think, but not like you think. We went to the track and delivered the packages, but then we went to the Jockey's bunkhouse and watched the ponies run and then we started drinking and hanging out with the guys and then...

LOUISE. Kaylah?

KAYLAH. We were drinking and smoking and.... AUNT LOUISE!

(Kaylah runs and gives Louise a big hug and a kiss.)

LOUISE. Oh child, you were a little girl when I left and...

KAYLAH. I grew.

LOUISE. I'll say you did. *(Louise takes the cap off Kaylah's head.)*

You're a jockey? *(Kaylah laughs.)*

KAYLAH. Noooo!

LOUISE. What's with the hat?

KAYLAH. I like... I like the hat.

JOLIE BETH. *(Squints her eyes at Kaylah)* How'd you get that hat?

KAYLAH. None of your business. I got it. That's all you need to know.

JOLIE BETH. You're seventeen years old and all those jockeys are...

(Kaylah and Jolie Beth start to argue.)

KAYLAH. Mind your business...

JOLIE BETH. It is my business and I don't want you...

LOUISE. Where's Sierra? *(Silence.)*

JUNE. What?

LOUISE. Sierra? Where is she?

KAYLAH. She left to drop off the money.

LOUISE. The money?

KAYLAH. Yeah, the money we picked up for Tina.

LOUISE. Who's Tina?

KAYLAH. The Meth.

JOLIE BETH. They call it Tina, now.

INLAND EMPRESS

LOUISE. You're seventeen and Sierra took you with her?

KAYLAH. Well, yeah...

LOUISE. She's selling and she took you with her?

KAYLAH. Nice hat!

LOUISE. Forget the hat. Are you running with Sierra, that's what I want to talk about.

JOLIE BETH. She's out of control. They're both out of control! Kaylah's too young to be...

LOUISE. Does Sierra take the money to Butchy at night? *(Silence as Kaylah and June look away.)*

LOUISE. Jolie Beth?

JOLIE BETH. Every night.

LOUISE. All night? *(June, Jolie Beth and Kaylah look away from Louise.)* I see. Looks like Sierra really did take my place. *(Louise thinks out loud as she adjusts her hat.)* I need to talk to Butchy. You know, he owes me. He owes me big money. Enough to make some important changes around here. I got a plan.

JOLIE BETH. Sierra's right about you.

LOUISE. Right? About what? *(There is a long moment of silence. Kaylah is the first to break away.)*

KAYLAH. What kind of hat is that? It's cool.

JUNE. It's Muslim.

JOLIE BETH. What's Muslim?

LOUISE. Me.

JOLIE BETH. *(Louder)* You?

LOUISE. I'm a Muslim.

KAYLAH. *(With a smile)* No, waaaaay!

JOLIE BETH. You're kidding, right?

LOUISE. No, I'm very serious.

JOLIE BETH. But we're Christians.

KAYLAH. We are?

JOLIE BETH. Shut up... and yes, we are.

LOUISE. Well, you are and I used to be. I wasn't a very good one.

JOLIE BETH. But now you're a good Muslim?

LOUISE. I'd like to think so. Prison Muslim is different than the other

INLAND EMPRESS

sects of Muslim, especially the ones you've heard of...

JOLIE BETH. *(With a very slight laugh.)* Oh, I get it. I thought the clean and sober thing was the scam, but this is it. It's a scam right? You did this in jail so that you had protection. It kept you safe. This isn't for real.

JUNE. It isn't?

LOUISE. *(Louise laughs.)* I'm not scamming anyone.

JOLIE BETH. Then how did it happen? *(Pause.)*

LOUISE. Me and God... we weren't on what you'd call speaking terms. *(Louise steps closer.)* Remember when I was in County? Way back when this all started and I was waiting to get sentenced?

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, we were there in the front row.

LOUISE. That Judge said I sentence you to seven years at the state maximum security prison at Chowchilla!" He slams his gavel on the desk and they escort me out

JOLIE BETH. I remember.

JUNE. Made me cry.^[SEP]**LOUISE.** They were walking me and few other inmates out of the courthouse, walking us down this long hallway and this lady is behind me and she's praying. I can hear her saying, "Lord, oh lord" this and "Jesus" that... she prayed all the way from the holding cells on to the bus. I'm thinking, "She's praying to God. Maybe I should be too?" I'm sitting on the bus, looking out the window and in my window are the County Buildings, but across the aisle, past the other inmates, outside their window is a mountain and between the praying and that mountain I said "God, you and I haven't seen eye to eye in years, but I'm scared, real scared, so if you're there, ya' gotta give me a sign! Something! Anything! Move something... that's it! God, if you're listening, you move that mountain, then I'll know... it's all gonna be all right. *(Louise sits down on the couch.)*

KAYLAH. So, what happened?

LOUISE. I...

JOLIE BETH. I'll tell you what happened! Nothing! The mountain didn't move! So, you decided there's no God and you turned to the other side.

LOUISE. The other side?

INLAND EMPRESS

JOLIE BETH. Yeah, the other side... the enemy... you turned Muslim just cause God pissed you off.

LOUISE. No, nothing like that.

KAYLAH. What did you do?

LOUISE. I fell asleep.

JUNE. Fell asleep?

LOUISE. Right there on the Sheriff's Department Bus. Leg Irons and all! *(Louise turns to Kaylah)* I don't know how long I napped. They were waiting for three more inmates and... well... I was asleep and when I woke up, the bus was facing the other direction.

KAYLAH. And the mountain?

LOUISE. *(Louise whistles and motions with her hands.)* The mountain had moved.

KAYLAH. No way! *(June looks confused. Louise explains it to her with a smile.)*

LOUISE. Somebody moved that bus and the mountain that started on my right was now on my left! *(June laughs with the others.)*

JOLIE BETH. But the mountain didn't really move.

LOUISE. Sure, it did.

KAYLAH. And that made you a Muslim?

LOUISE. No, but it opened the door. That's when I started talking to God again.

JOLIE BETH. There's only one path to God and that is through our lord and savior Jesus Christ.

JUNE. Oh, put a sock in it, Jolie Beth. You been nothin', but a wet blanket ever since you found Jesus! *(Kaylah laughs at Jolie Beth.)*

JOLIE BETH. Watch it you.

KAYLAH. Well, she's right! You used to be more fun.

JOLIE BETH. Shut up. I was about to say, "No one comes..."

LOUISE. "No one comes to the Father except through me."

JOLIE BETH. You know scripture?

LOUISE. John, Chapter Fourteen, verse six.

JOLIE BETH. Don't use the bible to hustle me. *(SOUND CUE: The phone rings. Louise and Jolie Beth just look at each other.)*

JUNE. Saved by the bell! June gets up and steps towards the phone, but

INLAND EMPRESS

Kaylah cuts her off.

JUNE. All this God talk can make a person tense!

KAYLAH. I got it.

LOUISE. Lighten up, Jolie Beth. You always were too serious.

KAYLAH. *(Into the phone)* What? Where? Go after her! You got her! Awesome!!! Okay. I will! *(Kaylah hangs up the phone.)*

KAYLAH. Sierra found the mare!

JUNE. Really?

KAYLAH. She was on her way to... *(Kaylah looks at Louise)* She was driving...

LOUISE. *(Louder, but not yelling)* Sierra was on her way to Butchy's. *(Louise smiles and looks at Kaylah)*

LOUISE. It's okay. You can say it.

KAYLAH. Yeah, so she saw the mare. Chased it into Box Canyon and threw her leather over the horse's head. Once she got the mare calm, she walked her back to the car and tied her up to the bumper. She's almost here. *(Kaylah crosses to the phone and dials and talks into the phone.)*

Yeah, this two, three, seven, two, two Loma Yucca Highway, the Double 6 Ranch. You can cancel looking for that mare... Yeah, the horse! Yes, "that" runaway horse. We got her back. Thanks for the help. *(Kaylah hangs up the phone, puts on her jockey cap and heads for the door.)* I liked your story, Aunt Louise. I don't know if that mountain really moved, but I liked the story.

JOLIE BETH. It didn't move and... *(Turns to Kaylah)* And where are you going?

KAYLAH. To wait for Sierra and the horse. *(Kaylah rolls her eyes.)* Aunt Louise is right, you're waaaay too serious! *(Kaylah walks out the front door.)*

JOLIE BETH. *(Yells after her)* Well, somebody around here has to be!

LOUISE. You don't believe my mountain story?

JOLIE BETH. I believe that you would say or do anything to get back to where you were before you went in.

LOUISE. Really? What's that?

JOLIE BETH. Making money, getting high and doing whatever you want to whoever you want. Doing what you need to do to survive.

INLAND EMPRESS

LOUISE. I'm not that person anymore.

JOLIE BETH. So, you're a better person now that you're a Muslim?

LOUISE. Is it me that bothers you or the Muslim part?

JOLIE BETH. You think just cause you did your time and survived the seven years, you think the slate's clean.

LOUISE. I did a lot of bad things in my life, Jolie Beth. I just don't remember doing anything that bad to you.

JOLIE BETH. The things you've forgotten, I've learned to leave behind. It's called growing up. *(Jolie Beth starts to walk towards the door.)*

LOUISE. *(Without looking at Jolie Beth)* But they still hurt?*(Jolie Beth stops walking.)*

JOLIE BETH. How would you know? You have to have a heart to feel pain. *(The sound of Sierra's car pulling into the driveway is heard. Jolie Beth walks out the screen door.)*

LOUISE. She hates me.

JUNE. Don't mind her.

LOUISE. She hates me and Sierra wants me gone.

JUNE. No, she doesn't.

LOUISE. Yeah, she does. I'm a threat to her, to her and Butchy. She thinks I want all that back.

JUNE. You would, if it was seven years ago.

LOUISE. Hell... seven years ago, I would've done a lot worse.

JUNE. Did you really change?

LOUISE. I think I have, but who knows? You put me in a situation... I just might flip and go right back into my old life. I think I'm just too old and too tired to be anything but a grown up and a responsible person.

JUNE. *(Smiles)* I thought killing was all you "Arab types" want to do?

LOUISE. *(Smirks)* I'm not an Arab.

JUNE. Well, what are you then?*(Louise halfway crosses to the fireplace.)*

LOUISE. Sometimes, even I don't know. Do you think Sierra and Jolie Beth will get over being mad at me?

JUNE. You know our girls, they're all a bit confused.

LOUISE. Got every right to be. We weren't good parents.

INLAND EMPRESS

JUNE. Speak for yourself. I did my best.

LOUISE. Yeah, you did. Me being in and out of jail and running away with every trucker, biker and rodeo clown... that didn't help much.

JUNE. That part was before you started to work for Butchy.

LOUISE. Yeah, but even after that... it was all about the drugs.

JUNE. You kept us alive, all of us.

LOUISE. We did these girls wrong.

JUNE. You can't say that. It was the right decision at the time.

LOUISE. I was wrong.

JUNE. Maybe you were, but not me. I did what I could.

LOUISE. Should we tell them? *(Pause)*

JUNE. *(About to cry.)* Everything? Why bother? *(She looks down at the ground.)* Do you think it'll help?

LOUISE. Maybe.

JUNE. It might make things worse. *(Louise tries to smile.)*

LOUISE. How'd you get so smart?

JUNE. I stayed off the drugs... unlike other people I know.

LOUISE. That wasn't my fault.

JUNE. Every junkie I ever dated said the same exact thing.

LOUISE. Maybe they were telling the truth.

JUNE. You can always tell when a junkie is lying.

LOUISE. Oh yeah, how? *(June giggles and looks at Louise.)*

LOUISE. & JUNE. *(Together)* Their lips are moving! *(They laugh when. Outside the door a loud noise comes from the horse.)*

JOLIE BETH. *(Offstage Yelling)* Oh no! Get her! Get her!

SIERRA. *(Offstage Yelling)* God damn it, Kaylah!

KAYLAH. *(Offstage Yelling)* It's not my fault! Watch her! JUMP ON HER! *(The mare lets out another loud noise and the sound of the horse running is heard. The screen door flies open. Kaylah runs inside and heads straight for the phone.)*

JUNE. What happened?

KAYLAH. *(Agitated)* Sierra can't handle a horse. Never could, never will, she couldn't even handle a damn wooden merry-go-round horse!!! *(Picks up the phone and dials)* We had her! We had the mare! Right here and Sierra takes her jacket off the mare's head and that sucker reared up,

INLAND EMPRESS

almost clocked Sierra and takes off running like her tail was on... (*Into the phone*) Hello? Hello? Yeah, Hi! Yeah, this is two, three, seven, two, two Loma Yucca Highway, the Double 6 Ranch. You know that runaway horse? Well, she took off again and... Yeah, I know we call all the time, but... I can't help it... my sister's a little crazy and... I know... I know... I know how many times it's been! Well, then we should get Frequent Flyer Miles, don't you think! Thanks. Yeah, the phone number's the same. Thank you. (*Kaylah hangs up the phone and the screen door enters. Sierra is laughing and Jolie Beth is following behind with a frown on her face.*)

SIERRA. It wasn't my fault.

JOLIE BETH. It was.

SIERRA. Was not.

JOLIE BETH. You took the jacket off.

SIERRA. I need my jacket and besides... (*Sierra plops down on the couch*) Why is that horse so damn crazy?

JOLIE BETH. I don't know. Might be the company she keeps?

SIERRA. Freaking thing's always running off!

KAYLAH. Maybe, if SOMEONE... didn't leave the barn door open.

SIERRA. Here it comes again!

KAYLAH. Every time you get high out there, you leave the door open and...

JUNE. (*Crosses to Sierra*) You're supposed to be out there cuttin' and packaging, not getting high!

SIERRA. Big mouth.

KAYLAH. Sorry.

SIERRA. (*Playfully*) You can't sell the goods, without sampling the stuff.

JUNE. Don't be cute.

SIERRA. I got it under control.

LOUISE. You're making meth out there in the barn with the horses?

SIERRA. No! That would kill 'em.

LOUISE. (*Very calm.*) I know. That's why I'm asking. (*Louise and Sierra stare at each other.*)

LOUISE. Morning, Sierra.

INLAND EMPRESS

SIERRA. Spent the night here, did you?

LOUISE. Kind of.

SIERRA. Moving back in?

LOUISE. Depends.

SIERRA. On what?

LOUISE. How safe it is here.

KAYLAH. Oh, the horses are safe, Aunt Louise. They don't make that stuff here. They make it out in the desert.

SIERRA. Kaylah! Shut your mouth!!

KAYLAH. But, they do. Here we just package it and ship it out. The horses are safe.

SIERRA. I told you don't tell her shit! She wants to learn about this business and how we do it now, she can come work for me.

LOUISE. I wouldn't work for you.

SIERRA. See, right there. Don't even think I'm gonna be working for you.

LOUISE. If want it back, what's gonna stop me from taking it back? You?

SIERRA. Hey lady, you're not taking anything back.

LOUISE. Don't push me, Sierra.

JUNE. Stop it! Both of you stop it, right now! *(June steps in between the two of them.)*

JUNE. You're not supposed to be sampling that shit when you're packaging.

SIERRA. I told you! I got it under control.

JUNE. I've heard that before?

SIERRA. I can handle it. *(Louise starts to laugh.)* What are you laughin' at?

LOUISE. First it starts with "I have it under control"...

SIERRA. What starts?

LOUISE. Then it turns into "I can handle my high".

SIERRA. Well, I can!

LOUISE. I'm sure you can. I bet you have it all in control, but... it's a real, slippery slope you walk on when you're gettin' high on the shit you're supposed to be selling.

INLAND EMPRESS

SIERRA. Ain't nobody slippin' in this house.

LOUISE. Sure, that's how it starts. "I'm just gonna take a little bump here!" and "I just gotta tweak another pipe, just so I know how good the shit is I'm selling!"

SIERRA. (*Smirks*) It's quality control.

LOUISE. (*Very serious*) How much are you into him? (*Silence.*)

LOUISE. How much do you owe?

SIERRA. Stay out of it.

LOUISE. How much do you owe him? You don't have to tell me. I'll just call and ask him. He'll tell me. (*Sierra looks away from Louise.*) We have a past, you know? Me and him. (*Sierra gets up and starts to walk towards the door.*)

SIERRA. Screw you, lady!

LOUISE. Twenty? Maybe, twenty-five thousand?

KAYLAH. Twenty thousand?

JOLIE BETH. Is it true? (*Sierra stops walking, but doesn't turn around.*)

LOUISE. But, not more than thirty thousand. Right around twenty, twenty-five thousand you still feel comfortable enough to try and make some moves and get out of the debt. Still comfortable enough to lie to yourself that you don't have a problem. (*Louise gets up and crosses to Sierra.*) Cause back at five thousand, you didn't care. Take a little here. Smoke a little there and... oops! (*Louise looks at the rest of the room.*) Now it's now, ten thousand! "How did that happen?" (*Louise steps closer to Sierra.*) But it's cool. You can still handle your high and manage your debt. Then out of nowhere... bam! (*Moves a little closer to Sierra.*) It is twenty thousand dollars you owe him and you're thinking, you can pay it down. (*Louise is standing right behind Sierra.*) But, you can't and you know it. So, you cook another batch, smoke up some more and everything looks fine... okay... no problem. Not cause your problems are gone, but because you can't see your problems anymore... because... you're a junky. (*Sierra yells as she turns and grabs at Louise. All the other women pull Sierra away. Louise doesn't budge and stands her ground, cool and calm.*) (*Yelling*)

Stay out of my business, bitch! You don't give a shit about me. You just

INLAND EMPRESS

want it all back. You want what I got. *(Kaylah and Jolie Beth are still holding Sierra back.)*

JOLIE BETH. Stop it! Stop it, Sierra.

SIERRA. This bitch is standing there telling me what I'm doing wrong. She ain't done a thing right her whole life and now she comes in here pointing a finger at me!

JUNE. Is she wrong?

SIERRA. She don't know shit about me!

JUNE. But is she wrong?

SIERRA. Get off a me! *(Sierra breaks free of Jolie Beth and knocks Kaylah to the floor.)*

JUNE. Sierra! *(Sierra charges Louise and throws a punch at Louise's face when Louise with one hand stops the punch straight on, knuckles to palm. Louise squeezes Sierra's hand with a great strength so that she slowly brings Sierra to her knees.)*

LOUISE. *(In total control)* Sometimes, it takes a little pain to put all your problems into perspective. Didn't I teach you to never throw the first punch unless you know you're gonna get away with it? You wanna go to war with me?

JOLIE BETH. Let her go!

LOUISE. Yeah, I might be an old lady now...

JOLIE BETH. Aunt Louise...

LOUISE. But I'm still stronger and I'm still smarter than you'll ever be... you still want to throw a punch at me, little girl?

(Louise squeezes tighter on Sierra's hand.)

SIERRA. Ouw... ouww... ouww... ouuuwww...

JUNE. *(Yells)* Louise!!! *(Jolie Beth tries to get in between them.)*

JOLIE BETH. Let go of her!

LOUISE. I'm trying to help her.

JOLIE BETH. You can't come in here and just bust your way back into our lives!!! *(Louise lets go and Sierra falls to the floor.)*

LOUISE. Don't tell me what I can't do.

SIERRA. Son-of-a-bitch. *(Sierra tries to get back up and come at Louise, but Kaylah and June stop her.)*

SIERRA. Leave go!

INLAND EMPRESS

JOLIE BETH. *(Yells)* You're the one that started all this! Except for Kaylah, you got all of us high, got all of us drunk...

LOUISE. You don't have to tell me! I regret what I did.

JOLIE BETH. So, don't come in here meddling!

LOUISE. I'm trying to fix it!

JOLIE BETH. You never fixed a thing in your life. You destroy. You take, take, take and you destroy.

LOUISE. I know what I did! I'm going to make it right. I have a plan! I have the...

JOLIE BETH. A plan? Who are you to plan any thing for us?

LOUISE. I just want to...

JOLIE BETH. Who the hell do you think are?

LOUISE. *(Yells.)* I'm your mother!!! *(Silence.)*

JUNE. No, Louise... not like this... not... now...

KAYLAH. *(Looks at June.)* Momma?

LOUISE. I'm sorry.

JUNE. Oh, Louise.

SIERRA. No, you're scamming us!

JOLIE BETH. I kept looking for it. I knew there was a scam.

LOUISE. It's not...

SIERRA. She hasn't lived an honest day in her life.

KAYLAH. *(Looking at June.)* Momma, talk to me.

JOLIE BETH. I knew there had to be a scam. There's always a scam.

SIERRA. Remember how she used to fake epilepsy?

JOLIE BETH. Oh yeah! She used to fall on the floor...

SIERRA. And we had to point at her and yell, "Help us! Help us!! Our Aunt's havin' a fit!!!"

JOLIE BETH. Every restaurant or diner from here to Costa Mesa, every waitress would let us eat for free.

SIERRA. Hell, she even foamed at the mouth that one time.

JOLIE BETH. Oh yeah!!! Where was that?

SIERRA. Camarillo!

JOLIE BETH. Not Oxnard?

SIERRA. No Camarillo! She even did it at that roadside stand for the strawberry's.

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JOLIE BETH. Strawberry's! That's right. It was Camarillo.

JUNE. She's not lying. It's the truth. *(Jolie Beth and Sierra look at each other and start laughing louder.)*

SIERRA. You know it's official when Momma backs it up.

JOLIE BETH. One lies and the other swears by it!!!

KAYLAH. *(To June.)* Mom?

JOLIE BETH. OH! How about the time when you used to throw on a business suit, had those phoney "ATTORNEY AT LAW" cards made up and would show up at court reppin' your friends.

KAYLAH. *(To June.)* Mom, answer me.

SIERRA. Or the time you stole the release stamp off the desk at the impound yard and stood a block away charging people half the price to get their cars out and stamping their sheets.

JUNE. We are not lying. It is the truth... I am not your... I'm just not your... *(June can't say it and looks away.)*

KAYLAH. *(To June.)* Ma, why won't you look at me? *(Sierra slightly in shock.)*

SIERRA. Jesus, it's true.

JOLIE BETH. It's true? How do you know it's...

SIERRA. Cause when she's guilty, she looks away. That's her tell, Momma always looks away.

JOLIE BETH. Oh god...

SIERRA. That's why Aunt Louise was the crook! June always gave it away.

JOLIE BETH. This isn't true... why would they...

SIERRA. So in between babies... Louise could work and June would stay with the kids.

JOLIE BETH. Louise was the money maker...

SIERRA. And apparently, the baby maker too!

JOLIE BETH. Someone want to explain how this happened?

SIERRA. How the hell do you think it happened?

JOLIE BETH. That's not what I mean, I mean, well...

SIERRA. She's been gettin' knocked up since she was thirteen!

KAYLAH. I don't understand.

SIERRA. Kaylah... watch... *(Sierra points to the fireplace.)* Pregnant at

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thirteen, she had Roz! (*Sierra points at herself.*) Pregnant at fifteen, she had me! (*Sierra points at Jolie Beth.*) Pregnant at seventeen, she had her.

KAYLAH. What about me?

LOUISE. I was thirty-six, it was 1998.

KAYLAH. But, why? (*Louise goes to speak.*)

JOLIE BETH. Cause if she wasn't in jail, she was on the road with some guy!

SIERRA. Wait no wait!!! If she was pregnant with Kaylah we would've seen it! We would've...

JOLIE BETH. No, that was when she moved in with Butchy for those two years. She didn't live here.

SIERRA. Wow... and we were gone in the summers...

JOLIE BETH. Music Festivals and desert parties.

SIERRA. We weren't here most of the time.

JOLIE BETH. I don't remember ever seeing Momma pregnant.

SIERRA. We were young, stupid and...

JOLIE BETH. Stoned. (*Silence.*)

LOUISE. We did what we did. We knew I'd never be a stay-home-Mom.

JOLIE BETH. (*Loud.*) You could never be a Mom! You always used us kids. Your guys always came first!

SIERRA. (*Yells.*) Some of the biggest shit heads ever!

JOLIE BETH. And, the little amount of time you were around, what did you have us do?

LOUISE. (*Embarrassed.*) Help in the scams.

JOLIE BETH. (*Yells.*) And worse!

KAYLAH. But Momma...

SIERRA. She's not your mother. She's your aunt. Do you understand what was said? That's your aunt, this dried up cunt is your mother. (*June crosses to Sierra and grabs her by the hair.*)

JUNE. Don't you ever call her that again! Not in front of me! I won't have it! You think it was easy for us? You think we did things because we wanted to? Your mother whether you like it or not, your mother is the one that made the money to keep us alive. She figured out how to make money off of this place when everyone else left us to starve. We

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both made mistakes, but it was your mother who taught all of us how to survive. It was easier to raise the four of you this way. You girls have no idea what it was like for her and me growing up. You can be mad at both of us. You can yell at both of us and blame both of us for anything you want, but you show respect to my sister. *(Sierra breaks free, she runs to the door.)*

SIERRA. I don't care what either of you say! She isn't my mother and... *(She points Louise in the face.)* Stay out of my way, stay out of my business and don't go near Butchy or I will kill you. *(Sierra runs out the front door.)*

JOLIE BETH. All these years, you've just been pretending to be our mother?

LOUISE. She was the better choice. *(Offstage the sound of Sierra starting her car and revving the engine is heard.)*

KAYLAH. Aunt Louise, you're really my Mom?

LOUISE. I am... but, we're both your mother. We raised you together. I just wasn't here all the time.

JOLIE BETH. You could've told us the truth. You should've... *(Offstage the sound of the car peeling out is heard and then an animal scream and a crash. The scream continues.)*

KAYLAH. No!!! *(The sound of a car horn is heard that doesn't stop until...BLACKOUT.)*

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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