

GEHENNA

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sounds of a young girl laughing and a distorted image of YOUNG MOONIE and her MOTHER playing in the park.

MOTHER

How high,  
Moonie?

YOUNG MOONIE

To the sun! I want to touch  
the sun!

MOTHER

You can't touch the sun,  
Moonie. You'll burn, burn!  
You'll burn!

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

BIG MOONIE, a 15-year-old light-skinned girl (developed for her age), lays in bed, fighting her dream. Her vision of the playground turns into a dimly lit room filled with other kids.

CUT TO:

INT. YARD SHED - DAY

A single bulb swings from the ceiling. The image is distorted. Children are whimpering and a dog barks off screen. A shadowy figure opens the door and the room is flooded with 20 blinding light. A voice bellows from beyond.

GENO (O.S.)

Get up!

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Big Moonie jumps up from her sleep. Beads of sweat roll down her face. Terror flashes in her eyes, left over from her dream. She settles in to the numbing reality that her life is a walking nightmare.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

GENO, average black guy in his 30s. He wears a faded t-shirt and is in desperate need of a haircut and shave. He walks around the dirty kitchen, collecting a carton of milk, box of cereal, bowl, and spoon. He makes room on the cluttered table for the items and sits down to prepare his breakfast. The phone RINGS. He removes it from his pants to answer the call.

GENO

Yeah.

He listens intently to the voice on the other end.

GENO (CONT'D)

What you mean Moonie has to do it? What happened to Janine?

(beat)

Naw, naw man. She ain't ready. She'll freeze. I promise you, man. She ain't ready. You think you know what you talking bout, but you don't.

Geno walks to the window and looks out at the yard. It is filled with used car parts, old tires, and a chained, sleepy dog.

GENO (CONT'D)

Naw, I hear you. I'll take her, but be ready just in case I'm right.

(beat)

I'm not gonna say nothing to yo ass. Just be ready to fix it 'cause I promise you...she gonna fuck it up and it's gonna need fixing.

Geno hangs up the phone and slams it on the counter. He goes to the closet and removes a big, black duffel bag from the bottom of the floor. He drops the heavy bag on the counter and rummages through it to inspect the items. Inside the duffel is tape, plastic ties, a knife, gun, bag, and rope. Geno zips the duffel shut and walks to a locked door near the kitchen. He takes out a key and unlocks it.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

GENO opens the door and stands in the door frame. The room is small. One window is covered with a bed sheet and two bunk beds line the walls. Eight girls are inside, lying on the beds.

Big Moonie stands by the barred window, peering into the yard. She watches a bird hop from tree limb to tree limb. Her expression is flat and emotionless.

GENO

Get on some clothes. You coming with me today. We got a job.

Big Moonie turns to look at Geno.

BIG MOONIE

Should I take a shower?

GENO

Not that kind of job. No tricks today.

BIG MOONIE

I don't understand. You want me to lift something?

GENO

Kind of. You and me, we going shopping. Bust yo cherry.

Big Moonie slides to the floor, silent.

BIG MOONIE

But you and Janine...

GENO

I don't do shit no more and Janine...  
(beat)  
We all got our place in this and now, you just got fucking promoted. This ain't the type of job you can turn down. You know that. So get yo shit together so we can go. You got 30 minutes.

Geno walks out of the room and leaves the door open. Big Moonie cocks her head back and closes her eyes, focusing on the birds playing outside her window.

GENO (O.C.) (CONT'D)

And dump that shit in the toilet.

Big Moonie slowly opens her eyes. She gets up from the floor and retrieves a medium piss pot from the corner. She walks it across the hall to the bathroom. She dumps it in the toilet and flushes it. The other girls in the room begin to get up.

Big Moonie enters the bedroom and is greeted by LOLA, a sweet 10-year-old girl.

LOLA  
You leaving with papa?

Big Moonie sits on the bed and reaches into a big plastic bag for clothes.

BIG MOONIE  
Don't call him that.

LOLA  
Nothing else to call him.

The girls brush past Big Moonie and Lola as they begin to dress.

BIG MOONIE  
You can call him Geno.

LOLA  
But he said to call him papa. I don't want him to get mad.

Big Moonie stops digging for clothes and studies the young girl.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Moonie is in a small room with a group of KIDS. Geno grabs a trembling Young Moonie and sits her on his lap.

GENO  
You want to go away with all these dirty kids or you want to stay here with me?

Young Moonie breaks down in tears.

YOUNG MOONIE  
I want to go home. I want my mama.

Geno shakes Young Moonie.

GENO  
I'm your papa now. This is your home, unless you too good for it. Then you can go with these dirty kids and live in dog cages and eat

(MORE)

GENO (CONT'D)  
shit. You want that?! Huh? You  
want that?!

Young Moonie cries hysterically.

YOUNG MOONIE  
No! I don't want to  
go!

A smile spreads across Geno's face. He embraces Young Moonie in a tight hug.

GENO  
Don't worry, baby girl. You'll  
stay right here with me. Papa's  
gonna take good care of you.

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Big Moonie stares at Lola and grabs her shoulders.

BIG MOONIE  
You already got a daddy and  
he ain't Geno. Don't forget  
that!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The old country house sits far back on a dirt road. The shutters are barely hanging on, and the paint is faded and peeling under the sweltering August sun. Geno and Big Moonie exit the house down the broken back stairs.

The YARD DOG perks up at their arrival. Big Moonie bends down to pet the dog and feed it a slice of toast. Geno tosses the duffel bag into the passenger seat. Big Moonie instinctively opens the back car door and enters. She wears a plaid shirt; ripped, loose-fitted jeans; a baseball cap; and shades. Geno has shaved and picked his hair out into a neat afro.

INT. SMALL CAR - DAY

Geno and Big Moonie sit in the car for a second to allow the engine to run before they leave the house. The silence is tense and deafening.

Big Moonie studies the house. Lola stands at the window with her small hand pressed against the pane. Big Moonie begins to tear up. She quickly diverts her gaze and uses her sleeve to catch her tears before Geno notices.

Geno catches a glimpse of Big Moonie wiping her tears and silently curses to himself.

GENO (WHISPERING)

Shit!

Geno turns around to face Big Moonie.

GENO (CONT'D)

You gonna be in and out. Piece of cake. Don't talk to nobody and don't give nobody no reason to talk to you. In and out. Got it?

Big Moonie nods her head in agreement.

BIG MOONIE

Can I have some water, please?

Geno looks at Big Moonie in disgust. He reaches into the duffel and pulls out a bottle of water. He goes to hand it to her and as she reaches out to get it, pulls back.

GENO

Don't put your mouth on it!

Geno hands the bottle to Big Moonie. She holds the spout above her mouth, trying not to spill the water.

GENO (CONT'D)

That's enough. I'm the one gonna be stuck in the fucking car.

Big Moonie hands the bottle back to Geno and wipes her mouth with her shirt. Geno revs the engine and the dog goes wild.

GENO (CONT'D)

Let's get this shit over with.

INT. SMALL CAR - LATER

Big Moonie looks nervously around. Geno looks at Big Moonie through the rear-view mirror. The car is parked, but still running. The bass from the radio vibrates the objects on the dash.

GENO

Moonie?

BIG MOONIE

What?

GENO

Don't what me. Act like you know who you talking to. This ain't play time. You remember what I said at the crib?

BIG MOONIE

Yeah...

GENO

So what you gonna do?

Big Moonie looks down at her wrist. She has scars from previous suicide attempts. She rubs the scar nervously. Geno turns down the music.

GENO (CONT'D)

Hey! Cut that daydreamin' shit out and wake the fuck up! This your first snatch. You got to be alert for this shit! Now what you gonna do?

BIG MOONIE

Grab a kid.

Geno nods his head in the rear-view mirror.

GENO

You got an hour. Go out the service entrance in the back of the building. Snatch 'em and run to the exit door. It's gonna say personnel only. That door will take you straight outside. If someone chase you, drop the kid and run. If you get caught... Well, we got folks on the inside that'll handle it from there. You don't want to get caught. Got it?

Big Moonie nods in silence.

GNO

Remember. Come back without a kid and you get shipped. Your pussy won't get much anymore, so there's no telling where you'd end up.

CUT TO:



INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Big Moonie lays in a rickety twin bed with coffee-stained sheets. The smoke from a half-used cigarette butt wafts through the air. She watches the dance of the smoke to distract her from reality. A JOHN in his 50s heaves and pumps her in a primal rhythm. Her eyes remain fixated on the cigarette smoke.

JOHN (O.C)

Ooh baby. That pussy so good.

The John lets out an unmistakable noise of culmination as he finishes. He collapses onto the bed, beside Big Moonie.

He turns to her, lifts a braid, smells it, and whispers in her ear.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You remind me of my baby girl.  
She wore braids too. She's in college now. I miss her at this age. Young and tender. I always wanted...  
What I wanted don't matter no more. Since you came along, I don't have to worry 'bout none of that. Just don't age, baby girl.  
Stay like  
this for daddy.

The John kisses Big Moonie's neck. A tear falls down her cheek. He gets up and begins to put his clothes on. He walks around the bed, tosses a bill on the nightstand, and walks to the door.

JOHN (O.C) (CONT'D) Tell

Geno I got to go out of town next Saturday, but I'll call him as soon as I come back. The next time, I want a double. That damn bed is too small. Fucking hurt my back on a spring. How that saying go? Keep the customer happy? Tell him what I said!

The John closes the door behind him. Big Moonie rolls over. She's exposed and sweaty. She lays there under the slowly rotating ceiling fan, numb and emotionless. There is an ethereal sound of snapping.

BACK TO:

INT. SMALL CAR - DAY

Geno snaps his fingers, but Big Moonie sits unperturbed, staring out of the window. He slaps her across the face. The swift motion sends her face smashing into the glass. Big Moonie holds the side of her head.

GENO

I swear to God. If you fuck  
this up, I'm fucking you up!

BIG MOONIE

I won't. I promise.

Big Moonie tries to redeem herself.

BIG MOONIE

(CONT'D) What do you want?

Geno reaches into the duffel, retrieves a stuffed animal, and tosses it to her.

GENO

Something white and small. Walking  
but can't outrun you. Try to find  
a mama with a bunch of kids. Get  
the smallest. Use the toy. It  
works. Clock starts now.

Big Moonie picks up the stuffed animal and looks at it intently.

GENO (CONT'D)

Stop wasting time and get the  
fuck out the car!

Big Moonie shoves the toy in her purse and hurriedly opens the door.

EXT. KIDSLAND - DAY

Big Moonie looks both ways before crossing traffic. She looks back at Geno as he drives off. She watches as he drives off.

She looks up at the big sign on the building, then slowly walks up to the door. A YOUNG MAN is holding it open for her to enter.

INT. KIDSLAND - DAY

Big Moonie gives the Young Man a small and awkward smile as she passes him.

The sound of kids yelling, and top 40 music surrounds her and for a moment, she closes her eyes and breathes deeply to steady her nerves. Her hands nervously shake at her side and images of her kidnapping flash through her mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Moonie plays on a swing set as her Mother sits on a nearby park bench, reading a book. She sees a ball roll near her feet. She stops swinging and bends down to pick it up. Geno discreetly calls out to Young Moonie.

GENO

Hey, little girl. Can you bring  
me my ball?

Young Moonie sweetly returns the ball to Geno. In one swift motion, Geno clamps her mouth shut and runs off with her to a parked passenger van.

BACK TO:

INT. KIDSLAND - DAY

A WOMAN is speaking to Big Moonie, but she is lost in her thoughts. She is startled back to reality by the Woman's yelling.

WOMAN

Move out the way! Are you deaf?

Big Moonie nervously moves out of the way and lets the Woman pass. She walks suspiciously around the entrances area. She looks at her phone to check the time. She halts in her steps when she sees the sign to remove her shoes.

Big Moonie takes off her shoes and shoves them in her purse.

She picks up a flyer and inspects it as she secretly eyes a group of CHILDREN playing with some games scattered on the floor.

Big Moonie looks in her purse at the stuffed animal and then at the children. They are too old for the toy. She walks away and continues to look down the aisles.

A PLAYGROUND MONITOR watches Big Moonie from a distance. She nods to one of the SECURITY GUARDS. The GUARD, an older black woman in her 50s, approaches Big Moonie from behind and taps her on the shoulder. The tap makes Big Moonie jump in alarm. She swings around to face the Guard.

GUARD

Do you need some help, sweetie?

Big Moonie brushes invisible hair from her face and looks at her shoes.

BIG MOONIE

I'm...

I'm looking for my mom.  
She's supposed to meet me  
here.

Big Moonie adjusts the purse strap on her shoulder and clears her throat.

GUARD

You're supposed to meet your  
mom, here? How old are you  
baby?

BIG MOONIE

She's coming with my sister. She  
told me to get the tickets for her.

GUARD

Well, you're in luck! Mondays  
are free. Just be sure to  
register at the desk.

Big Moonie gives the guard a slight smile.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Okay then. Go ahead and  
handle that for your mama.

Big Moonie cautiously walks away. The Guard fixes her gaze on another FAMILY. Big Moonie takes advantage of the moment and ducks down a side aisle. She braces her back against a Blowup slide. The Guard looks around for her and then walks away.

Big Moonie peeks through open slats in the slide to see that the Guard is gone.

INT. SMALL CAR (IN ALLEY) - DAY

Geno sits in the car, smoking a cigarette. He flicks the ashes out the window as he eyes the building's exit door.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The car is parked but running. The radio is on at a low volume, as to not draw attention to Geno's location.

INT. SMALL CAR (IN ALLEY) - DAY

Geno is excited to see the door open, but curses when he notices it is a MAN exiting to toss trash into a nearby garbage bin.

Geno looks at his phone. He sends a text to Big Moonie, then continues to smoke his cigarette.

INT. KIDSLAND - DAY

Big Moonie's phone vibrates in her pocket. She takes it out and reads a text: "Hurry up." She texts back, "I'm hurrying."

BIG MOONIE

Shit!

Big Moonie looks around frantically. She spots the restroom sign and walks briskly toward the women's room.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

Big Moonie bursts through the door and checks the stalls for occupants.

She checks the time on her phone and begins to panic. She stares at her reflection in the mirror as a look of horror spreads across her face. She splashes water on her face to wash away her nerves, but it doesn't work.

The bathroom door bursts open and startles Big Moonie. She jumps then grabs a paper towel and wipes her face. A LADY rushes into a stall, ignoring Big Moonie in the process.

Big Moonie's phone alarm rings. She grabs it from her pocket to dismiss the alarm. She notices a hand appear from beneath a stall.

LADY  
Hey, sweetie. Can you hand me  
some tissue, please?

Big Moonie enters the closest stall to retrieve tissue to hand to the Lady. She carefully places the wad of paper into the Lady's extended hand.

LADY (O.C.)  
(CONT'D) Thank you, baby!

BIG MOONIE  
You're welcome.

Big Moonie quickly leaves the restroom before the Lady opens the door.

INT. KIDSLAND - DAY

Big Moonie sees MOTHER TWO walk past her with a BABY in a stroller, a TODDLER, and three other CHILDREN. Mother Two seems overwhelmed trying to manage the children.

Big Moonie watches the woman and children as she walks to the reception stand.

A call from behind her shakes Big Moonie's attention. She swings around to find the Lady from the bathroom standing behind her.

The Lady is small in stature. No taller than Big Moonie. She has kind eyes and her hand is extended to Big Moonie. In her hand is the strap of Big Moonie's purse.

LADY  
You left your purse in  
the bathroom, baby.

Big Moonie turns toward Mother Two and the children. They have left the aisle. Only she and the Lady stand in the middle of the aisle.

Big Moonie turns to face the Lady. She takes the purse from her and clutches it to her chest.

LADY (CONT'D)  
You gotta be more careful. Not  
many folks honest enough to chase  
you down to give it back.

BIG MOONIE  
Yeah. Thanks.

Big Moonie begins to walk away. The Lady grabs her arm to stop her. She shoots the Lady a warning look and the Lady releases her grip.

LADY

I mean no harm. You just look lost, baby. Is there anything I can do to help you?

Big Moonie looks at the Lady quizzically.

BIG MOONIE

No. I'm fine.

LADY

I'm no psychic, but I have a feeling you're not being too honest with me. A young lady like yourself can use a little help every now and then, and it's up to us older women to provide it. Now, I expect an honest answer this time. Is there anything I can do to help you?

Tears begin to fill Big Moonie's eyes. Her alarm begins to sound. Her eyes dart to the service exit on the far wall. She searches around for the Woman with the toddler, then back at the Lady, who is waiting for a response. She backs away from the Lady in near confusion. She turns and walks off briskly, leaving the Lady standing in the aisle alone.

BIG MOONIE

No. I have to go.

LADY

Wait!

Big Moonie continues her search for Mother Two and the children. She spots three of the children alone waiting to play on a slide. The Woman and oldest child are nowhere to be found.

Big Moonie walks up to the toddler and grabs the child in her arms. She darts down the aisle.

The toddler cries loud enough to alert nearby customers. MOTHER TWO appears from one of the aisles and lets out a deafening scream. She charges in Big Moonie's direction and pushes customers out of the way.

MOTHER TWO

Stop! Somebody stop her! She got my baby!

Confused customers move out of the woman's way. One CUSTOMER uses his cell phone to record the incident.

CUT TO:

SWITCH TO CELL POV

Big Moonie runs toward the exit, but Mother Two grabs a hold of her purse and yanks her back. She grabs the toddler by the waist and the two women tug on the child.

CUSTOMER

Oh, shit! You see this? These  
bitches fightin' over a baby.  
This shit crazy! This some  
biblical, Solomon ass, slice a  
muthafuckin' baby in half shit  
right here!

BIG MOONIE

I need him! Let him go!

MOTHER TWO

Give me my baby!

The Guard enters the dispute, choking Big Moonie from behind to get her to loosen her grip on the child. They all crash onto the floor.

Mother Two swoops her crying child into her arms. The Lady from the bathroom yells for assistance.

LADY

Someone call the cops!

BACK TO:

INT. SMALL CAR - DAY

Geno hears the SOUND of sirens and he goes into a fit of rage, beating the steering wheel.

GENO

Shit, shit, shit! That  
fucking bitch!

Geno regains his composure and drives off down the alley.



INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Geno dials a number on his cell phone and speaks to the inaudible voice on the other end.

GENO

She fucked it up! I told your stupid ass she wasn't ready. Now they gonna put her in lock up and I know the bitch gonna talk. Get Mike on it. Now!

(beat)

Mutha-fucker, what I say? Now!

Geno disconnects the call and tosses the phone out the window as he speeds down the highway. He pounds on the steering wheel and checks the rear-view mirror to make sure he isn't being followed. Geno reaches into the glove compartment for a burner phone and makes another call.

GENO (CONT'D)

) Move 'em. All of them.

Geno hangs up the phone and speeds toward the city.

INT. KIDSLAND - DAY

Big Moonie elbows the Guard and slips from beneath her grasp. She kicks the Guard in the chest and runs off just as the POLICE enter the building. With the police in pursuit, Big Moonie darts through the aisle. She makes her way to the exit door and pushes through.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Big Moonie bursts through the door. She sees a board on the ground and places it in the door handle to block it. She looks around for Geno.

She runs to the end of the alley and is immediately blocked by police cars. The police draw their weapons.

Big Moonie stands in the center of the alley, surrounded by police (incomprehensible yelling). A look of fear and defeat spreads across her face.

BIG MOONIE

Geno! Geno! Don't leave me (whispering).

Big Moonie closes her eyes as she is pushed over the hood of a cop car. Her hands are drawn behind her back and her wrists are cuffed. Tears race down her face.

LADY (O.S.)

Don't be so rough with her! That baby needs help. Something wrong with her. Can't you see that?

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Moonie holds hands with her Mother. They walk out of the playground as the sun sets beyond the horizon.

BACK TO:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A smile spreads across Big Moonie's face.

BIG MOONIE

Mama.

The police lift Big Moonie from the hood of the car, shove her into the backseat, and slam the door.

She rests her head against the window.

BIG MOONIE (CONT'D)

Mama.

Mother Two stands outside the car, clutching the toddler. The Lady holds up a sheet of paper with a phone number and the words "CALL FOR HELP" scribbled across it. They silently watch as the young girl in the police car is driven away.

FADE OUT

THE END