

## CHANGELING

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Jones walks quickly down the hall, trying to look interested in a clutch of papers in his hands, Christine following after.

CHRISTINE  
He's not my son.

JONES  
Mrs. Collins --

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CHRISTINE  
I don't know who he is, or why he's saying he's Walter, but there's clearly been some kind of mistake.

JONES  
We agreed you would give him time to adjust --

CHRISTINE  
He's four inches shorter than Walter. Boys his age don't shrink. If anything, he should be taller.

JONES  
Maybe your measurements are off. Look, I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for --

CHRISTINE  
He's circumcised. Walter wasn't.

Jones glances back, uncomfortable about discussing circumcision with a woman in public view. He lowers his voice.

JONES  
Mrs. Collins...your son was missing for four months. For at least part of that in the company of an as-yet unidentified drifter. Who knows what such a disturbed individual might have done? He could have had him...circumcised... might have --

CHRISTINE  
Made him smaller? Captain, please --

He's on the move again, stepping into --  
INT. JONES' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

-- and getting behind his desk as Christine follows him in.

CHRISTINE

-- why won't you listen to me?

JONES

I am listening, damn it, I --  
(beat, calmer)

I am listening. And I understand your feelings. He's changed, no mistake. You've both been through a terrible experience. That's why he needs your support and love to bounce back.

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CHRISTINE

Captain, that boy wouldn't bounce back as my son if you coated him in rubber and dropped him off the roof.

He sits, shaking his head.

JONES

Why are you doing this, Mrs. Collins? You seem perfectly capable of taking care of the boy, your work pays you enough to attend to his personal needs...so I don't understand why you're trying to run away from your responsibilities --

CHRISTINE

I'm not running away from anything, least of all my responsibilities. I'm even taking care of that boy because right now I'm all he has. What worries me is that you've stopped looking for Walter.

JONES

Why should we look someone we've already found?

CHRISTINE

But you haven't found him. He's still out there somewhere, lost, maybe hurt....

JONES

His identity has been confirmed by the best minds in the field of child identification, people who know what they're doing.

CHRISTINE

And I don't? Captain, look, I don't want to cause trouble for you or the department. Honestly I don't. I know you've done everything you

can...but there's been a terrible  
mistake, and I need your help if  
we're going to correct it...before  
it's too late. Please.

She exits. Annoyed, Jones paces, then picks up the phone.

## CHANGELING (2)

INT. JONES' OFFICE

He leaves the door open and indicates for Christine to sit. She does. He paces, working up to what he's going to do.

JONES

You've put us through quite a bit of trouble, Mrs. Collins. This situation has become an embarrassment for the entire department.

CHRISTINE

It wasn't my intention to embarrass anyone.

JONES

No, of course not. You just told the papers we can't tell one boy from another as a compliment for the months we spent working on your case. Are you trying to make fools out of us? Is that it? Do you enjoy this?

CHRISTINE

No, of course not. I had to get your attention, I had to make you understand...he's not my son.

He circles, closing in on her. She becomes aware that the door is open, and he's doing this for the benefit of anyone who might be listening in.

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JONES

You know what your problem is? You want to shirk your responsibilities as a mother. You enjoyed being a free woman, didn't you? Enjoyed not having to worry about a young son. You could do what you wanted, go where you wanted, see anyone you wanted. But then we found your son. Brought him back. And now he's an inconvenience. That's why you cooked up this whole scheme, to try and throw him to the state, let the state raise him for you.

CHRISTINE

That's not true!

JONES

No? Even the boy says he's your son. Why would he do that? How would he know to do that?

CHRISTINE

I don't know! All I know is that he's lying!

JONES

Maybe so. Maybe he is a liar. But that's how he's been trained, isn't it? Lying was born in both of you. You're a liar and a troublemaker and if you ask me you've got no business walking the streets of Los Angeles.

CHRISTINE

Just a minute --

JONES

Because either you know you're lying, or you're not capable of knowing if you're lying or telling the truth. So which is it, Mrs. Collins? Are you a derelict mother? Or just nuts? Because from where I sit, those are the only options.

CHRISTINE

I'm not going to sit here and take this --

Jones stands between her and the door.

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JONES

You want to bring in experts? Doctors? Well, I can do that too.  
(calling OS)  
Matron?

The door opens, and a POLICE MATRON enters. He looks back to Christine, his voice low, his anger replaced by cool determination. This scene is about to take an abrupt change.

JONES

Mrs. Collins...do you still insist that the boy out there is not your son?

CHRISTINE

Yes.

He nods to the matron, who moves to restrain her.

CHRISTINE

Wait...what are you doing?

The Matron cuffs Christine's hands behind her back.

MATRON

Please don't struggle, ma'am. You'll  
only hurt yourself.

A CLICK, and the handcuffs are in place.

JONES

(to the matron)

You are to convey the prisoner to  
the Los Angeles County General  
Hospital Psychopathic Ward.

CHRISTINE

No...wait, you can't --

JONES

(still to matron)

Make the following entry in the  
booking department: Defendant states  
she has been deceived by police and  
others, and that they have given  
her a boy and tried to make her  
think it is her son when she says  
it is not.

CHANGELING (3)

INT. SAN QUENTIN - INTERVIEW ROOM - AFTERNOON

Four bare walls and a long table. Two chairs. One window, behind bars and chicken wire. Christine waits, alone. Then: we HEAR footsteps approaching down the hall. A moment later, a PRISON GUARD escorts Northcott into the room. Northcott nods to Christine, then glances to the guard, who looks to Christine.

PRISON GUARD

I can stay in the room if you want, ma'am.

CHRISTINE

No, I'm...sure I'll be fine.

PRISON GUARD

All right...I'll be right outside the door if you need anything.

(to northcott)

Twenty minutes.

The guard exits, leaving the two alone.

GORDON

Don't suppose you've got a cigarette?

CHRISTINE

No, I don't smoke.

He nods, walks to the window to a nearby structure.

GORDON

That's where they do it, you know. That building right over there.

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CHRISTINE

That's where they do what?

GORDON

The hangings. Ten o'clock tonight, I get to see what's inside. I hear there's thirteen steps going up to the gallows...'cause thirteen is unlucky. Helps make sure you're gonna go to hell when you die. But I got 'em beat. I outsmarted 'em.

He looks to Christine, smiles nervously, glances back out the window.

GORDON

They're gonna let me have whatever I want for dinner. Got a steak

coming, with spinach, mashed potatoes and green beans. I always wondered why they did that whole last meal thing. One of the other guys on Death Row said when you take the drop, you foul yourself, and everything you ate...comes out the other end. So maybe that's why they make sure you got something in you when it happens. They like knowing you fouled yourself on the way to --

He stops himself. Turns from the window.

GORDON

Sure you don't got a cigarette?

She shakes her head. He nods absently for a moment.

GORDON

The warden, Clinton Duffy, he's a good guy. He's writing a book about all the death sentences he's carried out in this place. Says it's called "Eighty-Eight Men and Two Women." Beats my record all to hell.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Northcott...you asked me to come to see you. You said if I did, you would tell me the truth about my son. Well, I'm here.

GORDON

Yeah...yeah, you are. But see, the thing is, I didn't think you'd really come, and now --

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He's pacing, growing more agitated and scared.

CHRISTINE

Now what?

GORDON

I didn't expect....

(beat)

I don't want to see you.

CHRISTINE

What?

GORDON

I can't do this...I can't talk to you...not today, not tonight, not with what they're going to do to me. It's one thing to send a



telegram, that's easy, but right  
now, right here, in person, I --  
(beat)  
I can't tell you what you want to  
hear, Mrs. Collins. I can't, I  
can't --

CHRISTINE

Why not?

GORDON

Because I don't want to die with a  
lie on my lips!

He turns from her, in anguish...but is he just playing her?

GORDON

I did my penance, I asked God to  
forgive me for my sins...and I've  
been good, ever since...if I commit  
a sin now, if I lie now...I'm out  
of time, I can't be forgiven again...  
I don't want to go to hell --

She goes around to him, faces him.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Northcott...look at me.  
(beat)  
Look at me.

He turns almost against his will...meets her eyes.

CHRISTINE

Did you...kill...my son?

His eyes go wide and he CRIES OUT, stumbling back and away  
from her.

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GORDON

Get away from me...I don't know  
anything about it!

CHRISTINE

Mr. Northcott --

GORDON

I'm innocent!  
(pounds door)  
Guard! Guard!

The guard enters, going to Northcott.

CHRISTINE

No, wait, please --

PRISON GUARD

It's okay, ma'am, they always get a  
little nuts the day of.

She pushes past him to Northcott, grabs the front of his shirt.

CHRISTINE

Did you kill him? Did you kill my  
son?

He screams in anguish, and the guard hauls him out, closing  
the door after him. Christine tries to open the door, but it  
won't open.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Northcott...Mr. Northcott!

She slowly slides to the floor, crying as we HEAR the SOUND  
of CHAINS clanking, and we....