

JUSTIFIABLE SIN

A pregnant teenager must rely on herself when hell comes calling.

FADE IN:

EXT. LANCASTER MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

A GUST of wind RUSTLES through the remaining leaves on the surrounding trees as several couples quickly enter the building.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

Strange BREATHING patterns fill the room. Six "expectant" couples along with ELLIE HARRIS (16) and also pregnant but alone, sit on the floor. They practice Lamaze as the instructor, SHEILA (50), observes.

Ellie, a pretty girl despite too much black eyeliner, tries to concentrate on her breathing but her eyes keep glancing towards the couples. Men, seated behind their wives, hands placed on their pregnant bellies as they breathe in unison.

Ellie doesn't notice Sheila standing next to her.

SHEILA

How you doin' Ellie?

She snaps to attention, gives a thumbs-up along with a forced smile and continues with her breathing.

EXT. LANCASTER MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

Ellie, cell phone to her ear, stands huddled in a corner that protects her from the whipping wind. She angrily SLAMS the phone shut and looks out toward the dark street.

A couple from class, AMOS and SARAH FISHER (30's), notice Ellie as they walk out. Amos, in a baseball cap, flannel shirt and jeans, motions for Sarah, a plain woman, no make-up and peasant dress, to stand back as he approaches Ellie.

AMOS

Young lady? Do you need a ride?

Ellie studies Amos, an odd looking man whose beard and moustache don't exactly match. She shakes her head "no".

ELLIE

My boyfriend's on his way.

Amos stares at Ellie. His piercing eyes make her uncomfortable. She nervously flips open her phone.

ELLIE
I'll call him again.

Just then, tires SCREAM. A black Ford Mustang speeds around the corner, rap music BLASTS from the stereo. Amos glares in disgust, Ellie appears relieved.

The Mustang stops in front of the door. RICKY BARNES (17), a skinny white kid, glassy eyes at half-mast with his baseball hat sideways and a huge gold chain with a dollar sign hanging from it, yells out to Ellie.

RICKY
Hurry up babe! I wanna get back to the party!

Ellie turns around to find Amos and Sarah gone. She opens the car door and takes a closer look at Ricky.

ELLIE
Are you wasted?

RICKY
Just a little.

She motions for him to get out of the driver's seat. He awkwardly climbs over and plops in the passenger seat. She gets in and notices the gas gauge is on red.

ELLIE
You have no gas.

RICKY
Yeah. Can you spot me a ten babe?

She rolls her eyes in frustration and drives away.

INT. MUSTANG - MOMENTS LATER

The gas gauge is now on quarter of a tank. Ellie drives down a dark rural road as Ricky fumbles with the CD player.

The headlights reflect off an orange triangle on the back of a horse and buggy ahead. Ellie slows to carefully pass.

An Amish couple stares ahead, expressionless. As Ellie passes, the man, Amish style beard (no moustache) wearing a wide brim black hat, looks over at her with piercing eyes.

Ricky reaches over and BEEPS the horn, startling Ellie and the horse. The buggy stops. Ellie looks in the rear view mirror and watches the man calm his horse. Suddenly, he looks up at her. She quickly speeds away.

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ellie looks at herself in a full length mirror and winces at her pregnant stomach. She adjusts her necklace, an "E" hanging off a black cord then stuffs books into a backpack.

There's a light TAP on the door then it opens. JACK HARRIS (45), unshaven, rough face, but kind eyes, peeks in.

JACK

Speed it up there buttercup. I gotta get to work.

ELLIE

Okay. Ready.

She flings the backpack over her shoulder. Jack picks up a brochure from her dresser. "CELEBRATE BIRTH WITH LAMAZE".

JACK

You doin' this?

Ellie nods "yes".

JACK

Ricky goin' with you?

ELLIE

Yep. Tonight's our last class.

JACK

Wow. Didn't know he had it in him.

ELLIE

You shouldn't be so hard on him Daddy.

JACK

I guess. That boy just don't seem

JACK (CONT'D)
right to me. Like he didn't get
enough oxygen at birth or somethin'.

Ellie playfully punches Jack in the arm. He laughs.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

The same couples practice their breathing. Ellie is alone.
Amos smiles at her and she nervously looks away.

EXT. LANCASTER MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

Again Ellie waits. She watches as the last of the cars
pull out of the lot. As she opens her cell phone the
lights in the building shut off. She GASPS.

FOOTSTEPS approach. She squints but can only make out a
dark shadow coming closer.

ELLIE
Ricky?

The FOOTSTEPS get closer. She nervously tries to punch in
a number on her phone. The footsteps stop. She looks up
to see Amos standing right in front of her.

The glow of the phone's LCD screen reveals a look of terror
on her face. She drops the phone.

EXT. LANCASTER MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

Ricky's Mustang SCREAMS around the corner. He stops in
front of the dark building and opens the passenger window.

RICKY
Ellie!

He sits for a moment, looks at the abandoned parking lot
then gets out. He takes out his cell phone and punches in
a number.

A MUSICAL RINGTONE comes from somewhere in the darkness.

As he slowly walks toward the RING he steps on something.
He reaches down and picks up Ellie's cell phone. Appearing
very concerned, he looks out into the darkness.

EXT. BUGGY - SAME TIME

Amos, dressed in Amish garb, steers the buggy down the dark road. Sarah, also in Amish clothing, sits next to him, rocking back and forth as she MUMBLES passages from the Bible she holds.

SARAH

And death by sin; and so death passed
upon all men, for that all have sinned...

Sarah speaks louder to drown the MUFFLED GROANS of Ellie coming from the backseat. She has a rag stuffed in her mouth secured by rope along with her wrists and ankles.

SARAH (O.S.)

For as by one man's disobedience the many
were made sinners, so by the obedience of
one shall the many be made righteous.

Ellie's head rests on a flannel shirt, jeans, peasant dress and a canvas sack designed to look like a pregnancy bump.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Jack is asleep until a loud KNOCK on the front door wakes him. He lifts his head and looks at the clock. "12:00".

JACK

What the hell?

LIVING ROOM

Jack, still not fully awake, stumbles to the front door. Another KNOCK, louder this time, aggravates him.

JACK

ALRIGHT! I'M COMING!

He opens the door to see Ricky standing on the front step.

JACK

What the hell you doin' here boy?

RICKY

Is Ellie here?

JACK
Ain't she with you?

RICKY
No sir. I went to pick her up at the
Medical Center and she wasn't there.

JACK
I thought you was goin' with her to
that laymayze class.

RICKY
Well, I. . .ummm. . .

Jack rolls his eyes. He opens the door wider to allow
Ricky in. Ricky follows Jack to Ellie's bedroom.

Jack lightly TAPS on her door then opens it. He flips on
the light, her bed is empty.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jack observes as two POLICE OFFICERS sit across from Ricky
who appears very nervous.

Ellie's cell phone is on the table.

OFFICER #1
Why did it take you three hours to
contact her father?

RICKY
I thought she was mad at me and decided
to walk home. I drove around for a
while, looking for her.

Police Officer #1 notices that Jack looks like he's about
to explode.

OFFICER #1
I think we need to continue this down
at the station.

RICKY
Am I under arrest?

Suddenly, Jack lunges toward Ricky.

JACK

What did you do to my daughter you
inbred son of a bitch?!

Both officers restrain Jack. Ricky is terrified.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The moon is the only source of light outside this modest
farmhouse. The buggy is parked outside.

INT. BEDROOM

A lit oil lamp sits on a wooden table. Ellie's clothes and
necklace are in a heap on the dull wood floor.

Water SPLASHES from a bucket as Sarah dips a washcloth in,
rings it out then brings it up to Ellie's face and washes
the make-up from her teary eyes.

SARAH

Sinners paint, a sign of the Devil.

Ellie lies on a small bed, her mouth still bound. She now
wears a white night dress, her ankles tied together and her
wrists are secured to the wooden bedposts.

SARAH

I will save this baby, this innocent
child, created from sin. We both labour
and suffer reproach, because we trust in
the living God, the Saviour of all men!

Ellie cries in fear as Sarah stands up and SHOUTS.

SARAH

Why Lord, do you bless this sinner
with child?

Amos storms into the room.

SARAH

Why Lord? Why am I barren while you
bless this sinner?

Amos grabs a hold of Sarah, holds her tight and attempts to
calm her.

AMOS

It is not for us to question the Lord Sarah. We will save this infant from a life of sin. That is God's will, it's our mission.

Sarah clings to Amos, buries her face in his chest and cries softly. He strokes her hair.

Ellie watches in horror, tears stream from her eyes.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Ricky, appearing emotionally battered, sits alone in a small, windowless room. DETECTIVE JOHN SMALLS (42), walks in and looks at him.

DETECTIVE SMALLS

Well, your story checks out. We questioned the clerk at the seven eleven and he confirms seeing you at nine o'clock, the same time Ellie made her last call.

Relieved, Ricky sinks down in his chair and takes a deep breath. Suddenly he sits back up.

RICKY

What about Ellie?

DETECTIVE SMALLS

We posted an all points bulletin and a Megan's alert. Hopefully someone will come forward with information.

RICKY

What about the Lamaze class? Were there cameras or a list of people?

DETECTIVE SMALLS

We're looking into it son.

Obviously distraught, Ricky puts his head in his hands.

DETECTIVE SMALLS

If you want to help, maybe you could pass some fliers around.

INT. BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

The sound of children LAUGHING causes Ellie to wake. She tries to stretch but her wrists and ankles are still bound. The door opens and KATIE FISHER (14), a waif of a girl and all smiles, walks in with a tray of food.

KATIE

Good morning sinner. Are you hungry?

Ellie weakly nods, "yes".

Katie sets the tray on the table and sits on the bed. She studies Ellie's face.

KATIE

Now I'll remove the cloth from your mouth but if you scream I will be forced to replace it. Are you going to scream?

Ellie shakes her head, "no". Katie begins to untie the cloth around Ellie's mouth.

KATIE

It would do you no good to scream anyway. Everyone in this house knows you're a sinner.

She removes the cloth from Ellie's mouth then gently holds a water glass to her lips and helps her drink. Ellie chokes a bit on the water and it splashes Katie.

Katie jumps up and wipes the water off like it's burning her skin. Ellie chokes out some words.

ELLIE

I'm s-s-sorry.

Katie relaxes and looks at Ellie.

KATIE

Sinners aren't sorry.

She turns on her heel and walks out and SLAMS the door. Ellie desperately looks around the room. She struggles to get out but then gives up.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack looks more haggard than usual. He opens the curtains and sees Ricky's car parked in front of the house then opens the front door.

Ricky stands frozen on the front step.

JACK
What the hell do you want?

RICKY
I want to find Ellie.

Jack stares at Ricky, not knowing what to make of him.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Six children of various ages sit at a large wooden table and CHATTER as Sarah serves them sticky oatmeal.

Amos walks in and all at once the children go silent. He approaches an older boy, ELIAS (17), and dumps Ellie's belongings into his lap.

AMOS
Elias, do away with these rags.

Amos looks at the children with his piercing eyes then leaves the room.

Everyone relaxes and the CHATTER resumes. Elias examines the clothing and pulls out the necklace. He stares at the "E" and cracks a smile.

EXT. KINKO'S - DAY

Jack sits in his pick-up truck, waiting. Ricky walks out of Kinko's with a cardboard box. He gets in Jack's truck and places the box between them.

Jack opens the box, pulls out a flier with Ellie's picture and stares at what's written under it: "MISSING - ELLIE HARRIS - 8 MONTHS PREGNANT."

Jack and Ricky look at the flier, both with the same sad expression.

INT. BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Katie sits on the bed as Ellie, only her ankles bound now, eats her dinner.

KATIE

I believe your child will come soon.

Ellie just eats, she doesn't acknowledge Katie.

KATIE

Cat have your tongue this evening sinner?

Ellie puts down her biscuit. She looks at Katie, anger emanates from her eyes.

ELLIE

My name is Ellie, not sinner. I've been here for three weeks now. Can't you call me by my name?

KATIE

I call you what my father says to call you. He says you are a sinner.

ELLIE

Do you like it here?

Katie seems a bit confused by the question.

ELLIE

Don't you ever think of leaving? Does it bother you that you're kept here like a prisoner? With no hopes of ever getting out?

KATIE

I can get out. In fact when I turn sixteen I can experience Rumspringa. My brother Elias is of that age. He can come and go as he pleases. Then, when he's ready, he'll be baptized and married. We're all given the chance to leave.

ELLIE

Not me.

KATIE

You must repent. Then at least you
will be released to GOD.

Suddenly Ellie doubles over in pain.

KATIE

Is this the moment Oh gracious Lord?
I must run to the church to tell mother
and father! Hallelujah!

Katie excitedly runs out of the room.

Ellie quickly sits up, obviously not in any pain. She
stands up, hops over to the table and grabs the lit
lantern. She hops over to the window.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

An odd mix of teenagers party next to a large bon fire.

Some of the girls are dressed in Amish garb. They dance to
MUSIC that comes from a tricked out Toyota Camry parked
next to an Amish buggy.

Boys, some in Amish clothing, some not, smoke, drink beers
and dance.

Jack and Ricky drive up to the scene. Jack turns his
headlights off in an attempt not to be seen. He rolls into
a parking spot.

INT. JACK'S PICK-UP

JACK

Jesus.

RICKY

I know. Amish kids go crazy on
Rumspringa.

Two teen BOYS appear at each of the windows and BANG on the
glass, startling Jack and Ricky. They motion for them to
open the windows. Jack opens his.

BOY #1

Who the fuck are you?

Jack pulls a flier from the seat and hands it to the boy.

JACK
We're looking for this girl. You
seen her?

The boy studies the picture. He shakes his head "no" and offers it back to Jack.

BOY #1
You guys cops?

JACK
No, she's my daughter.

The other boy walks over to Jack's side.

BOY #2
Let me see that picture.

Jack hands it to him, the kid studies it.

BOY #2
I haven't seen this girl, but I seen
this necklace.

JACK
You have? Where?

BOY #2
On some Amish kid, over there. Elias.

He points to a group of boys. Jack and Ricky quickly jump out of the car.

EXT. ROAD - SAME NIGHT

Amos, Sarah and Katie ride in the buggy. Sarah is ecstatic and holds her Bible tight as she rocks back and forth.

SARAH
Whosoever shall call upon the name
of the Lord shall be saved!

Suddenly Amos stops the buggy. The three of them stare at the flames and smoke coming from the back of the farmhouse.

EXT. BARN - SAME TIME

A group of kids watch as Jack holds Elias by the throat.

JACK
Where did you get this necklace?

ELIAS
From the sinner!

Elias coughs as Jack squeezes tighter.

JACK
WHERE IS ELLIE?!

INT. FARMHOUSE - SAME TIME

The house fills with smoke. Ellie COUGHS as she hops down the stairs and into the kitchen. She opens a drawer, pulls out a knife and cuts the rope from her ankles.

CRYING comes from one of the bedrooms. She opens the door and sees three LITTLE GIRLS hiding under the bed.

Ellie has them hold on to the rope she cut from her ankles and leads them through the smoky house.

ELLIE
Come on. Out the front door!

LITTLE GIRL #1
We can't follow a sinner.

ELLIE
Would you rather burn in this house?

Just then a window bursts and flames from the back porch enter the house. It spreads quickly. They all run out of the house.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Within seconds the house is an inferno. Ellie moves the children away.

Jack, Ricky and Elias pull up to the scene. Jack and Ricky see Ellie and the children walking towards them. They jump out of the car.

Ellie stops short when she's sees them running towards her. She cries with relief.

Light and SIRENS come up the drive as few police cars pull up to the scene. Detective Smalls approaches Jack.

DETECTIVE SMALLS

Is this Ellie?

Jack glows as he looks at his daughter.

JACK

Yes. And Elias is in my truck.

DETECTIVE SMALLS

We detained Amos just up the road.

Ellie holds on to Ricky, buries her head in his chest and cries. She tries to compose herself and looks at Detective Smalls.

ELLIE

They were gonna kill me. They wanted my baby.

She gestures towards all of the children, now being tended to by Police Officers.

ELLIE

None of these kids are theirs. How could they do this? How could they call me a sinner?

Jack puts his arms around Ricky and Ellie. They both comfort her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Ellie sits up in bed, holding her new baby. Jack sits on one side, Ricky on the other. Ricky kisses Ellie then kisses his baby's head. Jack smiles proudly.

FADE OUT