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The Anti-Hero Struggle: Mental Health and Addiction Overwhelming the Postmodern Protagonist

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A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Humanities and Teacher Education Division
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

by
Nicholas Michael Durdan

December 2022

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This thesis, written by

Nicholas Michael Durdan

under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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The Anti-Hero Struggle: Mental Health and Addiction Overwhelming the Postmodern

Protagonist

I. Introduction: Chasing It

Stories have tremendous power to grip the viewer in drama, comedy, and suspense. The struggles of the characters, regardless of the levels of stakes, grip us as the plots unfold. Often, we envision ourselves in those struggles, we see part of us in them. We keep coming back for more. After a childhood of coming back for more, I decided I wanted to be the one to write those stories. Originally, I had little vision, I merely wanted to write something I thought would be entertaining; something to bring home a paycheck. Consequently, many of my early scripts were riddled in one-note, unlikable characters. I did not simply lack vision, but I lacked purpose. This yearning led me to the Pepperdine M.F.A. program in Writing for Screen and Television. After being exposed to many great films throughout the program and the writers who wrote them, I decided I wanted to be a feature writer, specializing in action movies. Two and a half features later, I still found the characters lacking in likeability, but also in realism. Many notes I received early on were: “go deeper,” “why are they doing this?” Many scenes in these scripts were well detailed action sequences with some regard for plot but were largely devoid of characters seeking fulfillment. Again, it seemed I wanted to earn a paycheck, instead of focusing on why I wanted to write.

I am on the autistic spectrum, as such, mental health always fascinated me. Thinking rigidly is part of my life, and writing helped me become a more abstract thinker. Yet, it is this disorder, and I believe it to be a disorder, that caused my earlier scripts to be more about the entertaining action scene and not the meaning behind the characters’ goals within the scene. In

Autism, Creativity, and Aesthetics, Ilona Roth writes that there are multiple avenues for someone on the spectrum to be creative. One aspect I took on is “genre—the idea that autistic artworks are likely to share certain specific characteristics, again attributable to the condition rather than to individual artistic flair” (500). My strongest piece at the time was a drama pilot which was a crime-thriller that chronicled the lives of two people whose ideologies are diametrically opposed, yet, they need to accomplish the same goal. Each character was suffering from unchecked mental health issues. I had forgotten about this work, until two years later. My love of crime dramas was reignited during the COVID-19 pandemic. My wife and I would often watch some of television’s greatest works. After watching *The Sopranos* for my third time, I remembered this old work of mine. I also remembered my struggles living on the spectrum, and it was there I saw myself in these old characters. I finally had my purpose, and I chose to become a television writer for dramatic programming.

Pepperdine helped me find this vision. Through learning of the struggles of various famous writers, to honing on film theory, I was able to grow from someone who merely wanted to make money, to a writer with a purpose. They helped me master techniques to overcome obstacles, to write real and honest characters we can all relate to. I learned how to outline, how to build a story from the ground up. In addition to my formal education, three showrunners have heavily influenced my work, particularly on the development of characters, and the world in which they live. David Chase taught me the power of the character’s inner struggle through his groundbreaking drama: *The Sopranos* with its protagonist Tony Soprano. Vince Gilligan, architect of *Breaking Bad* and co-creator of its spinoff *Better Call Saul*, taught me the importance of structure. Journalist-turned-screenwriter David Simon and *The Wire* taught me the

value in the impact of your work. These three showrunners notably had anti-hero protagonists, which greatly influenced my work. They came at a time of turmoil for the United States.

Siobhan Lyons writes in *The (Anti-)Hero with a Thousand Faces*, “the rise of the anti-hero appears to coincide with the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001; the impact of the attacks and America’s subsequent involvement in the Iraq War led to greater moral ambiguity in the United States” (226). It does not seem so accidental that the 2000’s saw such a rise in the televised anti-hero. On the world’s stage, I saw an America that was losing its status as the world’s hero that it seemed to have during the Cold War. “This state of moral ambiguity provided a convenient landscape for characters such as Tony Soprano, Jimmy McNulty, and Walter White to emerge” (226). It is because of their influence that my work largely contains an anti-hero as a protagonist. In addition to professional influences, I will answer how my education at Pepperdine helped me in achieving my mission to become a television writer and the purpose behind my vision as a cultural leader: to tell stories about characters who battle mental health and addiction.

II. David Chase: The Strong, Silent Type

Arguments have been made that without Chase’s groundbreaking show *The Sopranos*, and by contrast its troubled protagonist Tony Soprano, many of the shows that came afterwards featuring the anti-hero, may not exist. As Siobhan Lyons writes “Not only did Tony Soprano’s character provide a template for the initially law-abiding Walter White, but Tony’s wife, Carmella, also foregrounded the fractious dynamic between Walt and his wife, Skylar” (228). Tony Soprano represented more than a troubled man in therapy, he represented more than a mob boss in an era of the organizations continued decline, he represented the everyman. He is the

postmodern Michael Corleone; stuck in a criminal enterprise lacking in its former prominence. One could watch Tony make reprehensible if not evil actions in one scene, and then in another, he returns home to trouble with his wife and children.

When Chase penned this series, the idea of a small-screen anti-hero seemed out of reach. Lyons writes: “in comparison to earlier television series that featured decent, law-abiding protagonists, the new golden age of television focuses on characters embroiled in criminal activity and often morally reprehensible behavior” (227). Previously, television shows always had to be inoffensive, its characters likeable. Television of the 1990’s, around when *The Sopranos* started, began to feature grittier settings, such as *NYPD Blue*, *Homicide: Life on the Street*, and even HBO’s *Oz* which predated *The Sopranos* by several years. What set Tony apart, however, were not only his criminal actions juxtaposed with his milquetoast suburban life, but it was also the characters deep moral ambiguity that made him so interesting. He thought the constant showing of feelings made him “weak”, he admired “the strong silent type, such as actor Gary Cooper” (*The Sopranos*). He fears weakness, which in his line of work is not so easily tolerated. The highlight of season one is “Tony fearing for his life after his joyless mother Livia convincing his uncle Corrado “Junior” Soprano to put a hit out on Tony, while Tony at first believes it is because he is seeing a psychiatrist” (*The Sopranos*). Dean Defino writes in *The Prince of North Jersey* “the desire of critics and audience to mythologize, sympathize with, and, in many cases, champion Tony obscures one immutable fact: *The Sopranos*, like most great gangster stories, is first and foremost a study in the achievement and maintenance of power” (84). His therapist, Dr. Jennifer Melfi, at times gives him advice which he uses in his capacity as a mob boss, and to ultimately further enrich himself.

Though, despite Tony's extraordinary shortcomings, we were able to root for him each episode, outside of his mob life, which was often portrayed as bland. The Sopranos represented something deeper. It was a truly American story. Chase had a pessimistic vision with this show, a representation of consumerism and selfishness run amok. The show was largely noted for its staunch adherence to ambiguity, whether in the dialogue or in the plots themselves. For example, Tony's quote early in the pilot: "It's good to be in something from the ground floor. I came too late for that, I know. But lately I'm getting the feeling, that I came in at the end, the best is over." ("The Sopranos" 4:32-44). Melfi respond with: "Many Americans I think, feel that way." ("The Sopranos" 4:44-47). Tony is most likely referring to joining the Mafia at its decline, far past the RICO statutes and law enforcement crackdowns in the preceding decades. From Melfi's point of view, it seems maybe Tony is speaking about the American system itself. This feeds into this loss of being the world's hero as the Cold War ended, despite the fact this scene predates The War on Terror and America's involvement thereafter. Ultimately we, the audience, are left not fully knowing what he meant, and the series was rife with such ambiguities. I believe it was what made *The Sopranos* so successful.

Chase provided realistic characters with average problems who partook in reprehensible activities. He showed that the hero did not have to be a good guy, but we still wanted him to win. The controversial ending was, in my opinion, the perfectly ambiguous way to end an ambiguous show about an amoral man steeped in mental health issues. Sadly too, as Lyons writes, "Tony Soprano's journey remains more or less consistent, as he is incapable of changing" (231). Finding closure with being autistic and the mental health aspects of *The Sopranos* helped me find my voice in creating characters who are emotionally unwell but grounded in their realism,

especially insofar as it forced myself to examine my own psyche. The characters in my earlier works had a more grandiose vision of what they wanted. Chase taught me to make their desires personal. Many characters in *The Sopranos*, Tony among them, want a larger slice of the American Dream that seems to be slipping away into a post-industrial abyss as time continues. Yet, they kept striving, kept their selfish wants and desires while assuring the audience all they wanted was to be a provider. Now, because of Chase, my first thought when I develop a character is how personal I can make their goal, and what is stopping them? The more personal the goal, the more relatable a character becomes. They may be a former cop with a dark personality lying underneath, or a contract killer by night and rideshare driver by day, but they are also steeped in past trauma, drowning in debt, and dealing with mental health improprieties. Between my earlier notes to “go deeper” and Chase’s deep ambiguous characters, I find myself able to break down dialogue and character goals into realistic situation while being able to do extraordinary things. These tools are invaluable for a successful showrunner.

III. Vince Gilligan: “You And I will Not Make Garbage”

David Pierson writes in *Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul: Struggling and Living in Liquid Times* that “*Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul* both feature protagonists who can be seen as victims of institutions that do not appreciate their talents and abilities” (213). Walter White and Jimmy McGill find themselves at a crossroads in their respective pilots, stuck in mediocrity. They are destined for change. In television, it is a rarity to see a character truly change. *The Sopranos* portrayed a man who was most likely incapable of change. *Breaking Bad* saw a man start out a timid family man who would transition into a monster by the series’ end. Gilligan achieved a similar transition in *Better Call Saul*, through McGill/Saul Goodman. Walter and

Tony Soprano are often compared to one another. Both are suburban family men, both engage in criminal activities through the aide of organized crime, both are mentally ill, and prone to violence to suit their needs. From there they diverge greatly.

Gilligan writes Walter as a boastful man who wants not only to be a success but wants the world to know it was all done by him. Tony's worst weapon is his anger, Walter's is his pride. Producing and selling narcotics began as a means to provide for his family, as Walter believes it is his duty to provide. As the series progressed, this duty transitioned into a narcotics empire. In the series finale, Walter can come to terms with the man he became, and ultimately why he partook in the drug trade. "I did it for me...I liked it...I was good at it. And...I was...really...I was alive." ("Felina" 33:28-59). I believe the argument can be made that Walter always wanted this for himself, and was tired of the bland life he had, which, due to his pride, was entirely of his making. I see Walter as a postmodern Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the former representing Walter and the latter representing Walter's criminal persona: Heisenberg.

I was drawn to Gilligan's work, primarily by how precise and gradual Walter's change became throughout the series. Each season, Walter's actions became increasingly reprehensible. It started out small, such as "allowing Jane Margolis to die in season two" (*Breaking Bad*). Increasingly, Walter's actions became violent. "By the end of season three, Walter had his partner, Jesse Pinkman, kill a business partner of theirs or else they might risk termination themselves" (*Breaking Bad*). By the end of season four, Walter eliminates his competitor, Gus Fring, and in the middle of season five, has "multiple incarcerated members of Fring's operation murdered to guarantee they do not turn the state's evidence against him, and so Walter does not have to continue paying them from his money" (*Breaking Bad*).

By contrast, Jimmy McGill also changes from the beginning of *Better Call Saul*, though his transformation is not by pride. McGill was a recovering conman in the pilot, but he transforms into the flamboyant criminal attorney Saul Goodman towards the series end, a role he began during *Breaking Bad*. Indeed, while Walter and McGill go through a massive transition through the series, Siobhan Lyons contends they had different circumstances.

While Walter White's descent into Heisenberg focuses on the more dramatic transition from all-American suburbanite to drug kingpin, Jimmy McGill's more subtle metamorphosis into the slimy lawyer Saul Goodman reflects a different kind of societal pressure that reveals the multifaceted nature of a society that preaches acceptance and difference while aggressively subduing dissenters simultaneously. (227)

At first, McGill did want to play by the rules as he "felt like he owed it to his brother Chuck, who got him out multiple jams" (*Better Call Saul*). His brother forced him away from his childish chicaneries, which was a persona McGill had from a young age. Walter, changed drastically, though as seen early on, he "entered a criminal enterprise with a propensity for violence" (*Breaking Bad*). I liked this contrast, because with Walter, we got to see how far he could go, with his evil deeds increasing in scope and declining in justifiability throughout the series. Jimmy's misdeeds started out smaller, "he ran confidence tricks for short cons, but even he fell deeper down a rabbit hole of crime until Saul Goodman all but erased the fun-loving Jimmy McGill until the very end" (*Breaking Bad, Better Call Saul*).

McGill wanted to become an individual in a world crushed by conformity. We see much of his change is facilitated by the emotional abuse of his Chuck, who is undoubtedly mentally ill.

Indeed, while Chuck was condescending and unloving towards his brother, he sums up McGill's transformation brilliantly in the pilot. "Jimmy, wouldn't you want to build your own identity? Why ride on someone else's coattails?" ("Uno" 38:51-39:00). This set up seemed perfect to facilitate Jimmy's desire to change his persona, which was ultimately successful. Through various and increasingly convoluted cons in the series, McGill would transform to the amoral Saul Goodman. Much in the way of Walter redeeming himself in death at the end of *Breaking Bad*, McGill would redeem himself by "confessing to his various wrongdoings and become incarcerated by *Better Call Saul's* end" (*Better Call Saul*). Gilligan gave us the perfect comeuppance to suit the world's both Walter and McGill inhabited.

I was first exposed to Gilligan's landmark work *Breaking Bad* for the drama pilot class. We were instructed to read the pilot script online and watch the pilot itself. I still consult the script as I find the structure to be near flawless. Early on as a writer, I had tendency to overwrite. I would design these grandiose scenes with long descriptive screeds and non-sequiturs, my goal at the time was to channel Shane Black. What Gilligan's work taught me was to make every scene count, every piece of dialogue move the plot forward, and end every scene with a good hook. Additionally, I'll read the pilot to determine the ideal place for my act breaks, and I use this technique to deter myself from overwriting. I'll notice that if my Act Two break is on page thirty-seven, but the Act one break is on page seventeen, then my second act is simply too long. A good showrunner needs to have their story structure in line, as they lead the writers who work with them to provide an excellent product in a professional manner.

IV. David Simon: "All The Pieces Matter"

David Simon did not come from a filmmaker's background, in fact, he was not involved in fictional storytelling at all before becoming a professional screenwriter. He was a journalist who saw early success in chronicling the homicide unit in the Baltimore Police Department which became the book: *Homicide: A Year On The Killing Streets*. According to Anmol Chadda, and others writing *In Defense of The Wire* "the show initially set out to expose the drug war as a fraudulent attack on the urban poor and communities of color" (83). Whether one works in law enforcement, a longshoreman, a politician, a teacher, etc, the systems routinely fail to keep the city from falling into increased decline. In contrast from *The Sopranos*, or *Breaking Bad*, whose focus was on the psychology of their protagonists, *The Wire* focused on the sociological. More than the study of one, *The Wire* focused on the downtrodden of an entire city, particular the African American communities of West Baltimore. According to Daniel Dale, author of *The Productivity of the Poor: The Wire and the Expropriation of the Common* "Simon believes that the American economy has moved on, leaving the urban population who used to work in an industrial capacity without jobs or access to the capital and training necessary to become employed" (181). Some turned to a life of crime, perpetuating the drug war not as a means for growth, but for survival. I saw the show in similar fashion to *The Sopranos* where Chase seemed to have a pessimistic outlook on the future of suburban America, *The Wire* adds to this pessimism, but from the perspective of the inner city. He had a purpose to enlighten the show's viewers of a people long ignored by society, and the system.

The Wire's protagonist is up for debate. Jimmy McNulty, played by Dominic West is the first billed cast member, and much of the series follows his exploits, despite the show featuring a vast ensemble cast. McNulty is a troubled but brilliant detective, who suffers from bouts of

alcoholism and frequently engages in adulterous behavior. I see McNulty as a postmodern Sherlock Holmes. He is a dedicated, talented detective, however, he is obsessed with closing cases wanting everyone to know just how good of a detective he is. A conversation in season one between Bill Rawls, played by John Doman, and Jay Landsman, played by Delaney Williams, sums up McNulty's issues perfectly. Landsman explains McNulty is an addict, and Rawls replies: "What's he addicted to?" ("Old Cases" 34:25-6). Landsman continues: "Himself." ("Old Cases" 34:27-8). McNulty, while not possessing the sociopathy of Tony Soprano, or the violent pride of Walter White, nonetheless displays their narcissism. His insatiable need to be a great detective reaches to such a point in the fifth and final season, that he decides to "stage a serial killer preying on homeless men in order to receive proper funding for the police department to apprehend suspects in a drug operation where due to the city's fiscal irregularities the protracted investigation was shuttered." (*The Wire*). Jimmy's addiction to his own genius was his undoing, and even his longtime partner knew this, from early in the series. Wendell Pierce, who played Bunk Moreland sardonically warns "hey Jimmy, you know something? You're no good for people, man." ("Lessons" 54:32-54:36). Keep in mind, this comes after "Jimmy had gotten Bunk out of a jam in a previous scene" ("Lessons"). He had good foresight about his friend, and Jimmy, sadly, was never aware of it.

Simon's work helped give me purpose as a writer. My earliest work had no underlying goals. They were gritty, action-packed features with a relatively straightforward plot. This is what I wanted my work to reflect, I wanted detailed action scenes that only served to entertain. Seeing *The Wire* opened my mind up to a different world, one of a community ravaged by rampant drug use and the dysfunctional institutions dedicated to, but ultimately failing to end this

community's dependence on the drug trade. Chaddha writes that "according to Simon, the central and straightforward goal of *The Wire* was to show that the "system" is broken and that it fails individuals and families" (84). This helped me want to go deeper in the message I wanted to send in my writing. Not simply on a deeper, more realistic character, or a concise script structure, but a deeper sincere message in the story. Simon was familiar with Baltimore's drug trade, both from those who try to stop it and those who facilitate it, gathering information about these various cohorts through his years of research as an author and as a journalist, which gave him insight into that world. Having ASD helped open my mind to a different world to those who suffer with mental health afflictions and depression. This is a world I knew, and it is a world I believe largely neglected by the system. Having purpose to create diverse characters to share with the world is an aspect driving me to become a showrunner.

V. Conclusion: The Next Chapter

Having an ASD could complicate the creative process. Roth writes "The diagnostic criteria for autism, with their emphasis on restricted and repetitive behavior and interests (American Psychiatric Association 2013), promote the view that creativity is likely to be limited in people with autism" (499). While I was diagnosed at a young age, I was not made aware of the diagnosis until I had nearly graduated from high school. I was not fully aware of the limitations at the time, and regarding rigidity and a possible impediment to creative thinking, I ignored it. I decided to use my narrow focus into a positive instead of a detriment. Given the list of showrunners and their works, one can see a recurring theme in my work. My genre is the crime thriller, with the anti-hero as the protagonist. These series showed the life of various people,

bogged down by a system of greed. Tony Soprano, turned to a life of crime at a young age, Walter White and Jimmy McGill chose a life of crime based on circumstance. Jimmy McNulty, while on the other side of the law bends the rules to fit his own end, even going so far to “manipulate crime scenes by the end of *The Wire*” (*The Wire*). I, however, do not see this rigid genre an impediment, but an opportunity. While I did not see myself in Tony Soprano, I saw a man in deep pain, and not knowing what to do about it. Walter White was a man destined for change, and I saw myself needing a change from my early one-note characters. McNulty had a purpose to “rid the streets of Baltimore of its violent criminals” (*The Wire*). That helped give my own writing purpose.

My time at Pepperdine helped bring all this into perspective and helped me grow. I had seen *The Sopranos* multiple times, but because of those notes of “going deeper” with my character’s intentions, I was able to see beyond the swearing, violence, and adult content; that there was a deeper and ambiguous message about America. My professors fostered a need to develop characters with the appropriate structure and always have a “why” for every script you write. I have since amassed an impressive portfolio of numerous pilots, three of which I have gotten professional notes thanks to Pepperdine’s connections. These notes helped hone the skills I learned from class. As I move forward, I continue to network with professional writers, and apply for fellowships. In 2021, I was a semi-finalist for Nickelodeon’s Writing Program, a fellowship of a scant few new and undiscovered writers who learn from professionals and may get staffed on one of their shows.

My education at Pepperdine opened my mind to new possibilities, and helped me grow as a writer, and as a servant to God. I started out as a young writer with little life experience who wanted to use writing as simply a way to make money. I gained the most knowledge from learning proper structure, deep character development, and having a defined purpose. Since I was able to learn about the world around me, using my own experiences coupled with understanding the world of mental health and addiction, I found my purpose. I see the postmodern protagonist as one who feels alienated by the systems and people they serve while stuck trying to succeed in a morally declining America. They battle addiction and mental health issues as many of us do. My goal is to create stories to shed a new light on what mentally burdens the individuals in society and perhaps spur some to action to change, so no one must suffer the way the protagonists from the works of Chase, Gilligan, and Simon do. The anti-hero may be the amoral everyman, but the everyman is still a part of us.

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SHADES OF DEATH (PILOT)

Written by

Nick Durdan

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MT. VERNON STREET - NIGHT

MALIK CIOCCO (31) Black, clean-cut, police badge on a necklace. He stands above the bloodied corpse of JEROME "JAY-JAY" WEST (19) Black, bright white hoodie. An arrow is through the back of his neck.

POLICE OFFICERS (30s) spread caution tape, and mark the crime scene. Several squad cars stand by. Patches on uniforms and emblems on the cars read: CAMDEN COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT.

LOCALS (teens - 60s) Black and Hispanic, stand around.

Malik kneels, looks at Jerome's face, plastered on the pavement, eyes still open, no pupils.

MALIK

Damn, Jay-Jay. What the fuck did you do?

He reaches out his hands, closes Jerome's eyes.

INT./EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

A yellow cab pulls over as a Camden police cruiser drives past, then continues on.

YORI MATSUYAMA (30) Asian, pixie-cut blowout, three piece suit, homemade multi-colored bracelet and pendant on her right wrist, sits in the back, watches outside.

Her driver, HECTOR LUJAN (44) Hispanic, glazed eyes, fedora, watches the road.

HECTOR

He's fired up. Betcha he caught a body, no doubt.

YORI

Such a horrible stigma. Couple murders pile up, and, suddenly, you're crime infested.

HECTOR

Stigma -- that's some Ivy League shit. When you see a murder, you ain't thinking about any stigma.

YORI
It still hurts. Out of curiosity,
what is being done about the crime?
Not that I'm implying anything.

Hector scoffs, shakes his head.

YORI
Enough said.

She smiles.

EXT. MT. VERNON STREET - NIGHT

Pen and pad in hand, Malik takes information from a
bystander. TASHA MILLS, (67) Black, cane.

MALIK
Perp had a cloak, bow and arrow?

TASHA
It was him for sure.

MALIK
And there were two other boys with
Jerome, right? One black, one
Hispanic? White hoodies?

TASHA
They had hoods, couldn't say much
else. These fucking street lights.

POLICE CRUISER

Drives through some caution tape, the drivers's side window
slides down, the driver KEVIN CIOCCO (31), White, police
uniform, military haircut, drunk, sticks his head out.

KEVIN
(slurs)
Hey! They got a sighting three
blocks from here! You coming? I'm
-- gonna catch this prick!

MALIK
Tasha, make sure talk to homicide
once they roll past.

TASHA
Isn't that your brother?

Malik groans, crosses over to the --

POLICE CRUISER

Kevin takes a swig from a flask, on his right wrist is a similar bracelet to Yori's.

MALIK
Move over.

KEVIN
Fuck you.

MALIK
Either you move, or I move you!

Kevin sighs, gets out.

He takes another swig and walks to the other side of the car, gets in. Malik shakes his head, gets in the drivers seat.

They drive away.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Kevin knocks back another sip, then offers some to Malik.

KEVIN
Thirsty?

MALIK
Yeah, now that you mention it --

He takes the flask, then chucks it out the open window.

Kevin scoffs.

INT./EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

Yori stares out the window.

HECTOR
So, Yori, what's your interest in
"de-stigmatizing" Camden?

YORI
FBI, working a case, and, I'm also
in town for a funeral.

Hector grumbles, clears his throat.

YORI
(scoffs)
She was murdered, actually.

HECTOR
By Rutgers, or something?

YORI
I don't think so. She was killed
in a fire. Few nights ago.

HECTOR
No shit? I heard there was a
vacant on Decatur street got lit
up. Yeah, some white chick died.

YORI
She wasn't just "some white chick",
but, yeah, her. And, this will
probably come as no surprise: the
police have gotten nowhere with it.

HECTOR
That's cause they don't know my
sister, Carmen, she's a true crime
freak. I'll bet she knows all
kinds of shit the police don't.

YORI
Really? Can I get a number?

HECTOR
Gimme a sec.

Hector takes his eyes off the road, and rummages around his
center console.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

A Figure crosses the street. QUIVER (26) White, female but
not obvious, wears a dark cloak, hood, body armor,
translucent face mask, and armed with a bow and arrow.

YORI
Look out!

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Quiver quickly loads an arrow, shoots.

>> Direct hit on one of Hector's tires.

>> He slams on the breaks.

>> They swerve onto a sidewalk, lightly crash into a
dilapidated walk-up.

>> Quiver bolts into the night.

INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Kevin burps, makes unsettling noises.

MALIK
Proud of yourself?

KEVIN
You don't get it.

MALIK
It was fucking high school, Kev.
Now she's gone, and guess what?
Your dumbass' still breathin'!
Meanwhile, I just found my missing
CI not breathing and two dozen of
Camden's finest wits fingering
South Jersey's latest and weirdest
serial killer.

KEVIN
It was that fuck who killed her!
I'm sure of it, I saw him there!

MALIK
Quiver killed ten other locals,
too! Locals you're supposed to
protect. But not you, naw, you
over here bitchin' bout some girl!

KEVIN
Anna wasn't just some girl!

MALIK
-- Fuck Anna, let her go! Or
you're gonna piss your career away!
Not to mention she was a bitch an --

Kevin starts smacking Malik, who smacks him back, they swerve
a bit.

THROUGH THE SIDE WINDOWS

They pass Yori and Hector, both out of Hector's car. They
try to flag them down, but Malik and Kevin don't see them and
simply roll right past.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. YORI & FRANK'S APARTMENT - DAY

A gorgeous stone walk-up on the Rutgers Camden campus.

INT. YORI & FRANK'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Sparsely furnished. Aside from the basic appliances, a couch, and a kitchen table, the place is otherwise filled with guns, and tech.

An FBI windbreaker rests on the back of a chair.

A TV PLAYS the news. YVETTE SALINAS (39) mixed race, mayoral, stands at a podium.

A caption reads: MAYOR OF CAMDEN: YVETTE SALINAS (D).

YVETTE (ON TV)

In response to the unprecedented uptick in homicides plaguing our city and in particular the senseless murder of an FBI agent, myself, the city council, and county commissioner's are actively working with the Department of Justice to end the reign of terror on all us.

Yori sits in front of the TV, does some yoga.

YORI

Not a bad intro.

She stands up, breathes deep.

KITCHEN

Yori sets a full coffee mug on the counter.

PILL BOTTLE -- ADDERALL prescribed to Yori.

She plops two pills into her hands, shoves them into her mouth, and quickly chases them with the coffee.

LIVING ROOM

Yori looks over crime scene photos, forms, and the arrow from Hector's tire strewn about on a table. One such photo is of Kevin. Yori picks it up.

FRANK

A door opens across the room, out walks Yori's "supervisor"
FRANK BEDNARIK (41) White, flattop, an empty suit.

She doesn't even look up.

YORI
You're Bednarik, right?

FRANK
That's me, Special Agent in Charge
Frank Bed --

YORI
I can read orders and memos. Let's
keep it simple.

FRANK
Keep it simple... sir, maybe?

YORI
We'll see.

FRANK
I'm out of the Philly office.
Shit, if the Bureau sprung this
nice a place to live out of, you
must've come far.

YORI
San Francisco. I got all the forms
and photos laid out. It stands to
reason we work Anna's case
concurrently with her murder
investigation. I say, we make an
appearance with the police and
remind them the fed owns them for
the foreseeable future, detail a
few humps for our investigation,
and then give the scene a shake. I
already have a potential informant.

FRANK
A fellow agent was murdered, and
you want them to give us humps?

YORI
I know a thing or two about
Camden's police. Trust me, getting
humps is the best we can hope for.

Frank crosses to the table, picks up the arrow, stares at it.

EXT. SONNY'S HOUSE - DAY

A Dodge Charger pulls in front of a two-story row house.

Malik exits, carries a box.

INT. SONNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Old appliances with an ugly backsplash. SANTINO "SONNY" CIOCCO (61) but looks much older, White, Philly accent, stubble, barrel chested, wears a robe, undone, mixes a cup of joe, watches the news on a small TV on the counter.

Malik strolls in, plops the box on the kitchen table.

MALIK

Hey, old man.

Malik hugs Sonny, who recoils.

SONNY

Careful, the stent.

MALIK

My bad.

SONNY

(points to TV)

You see mayor shit-for-brains?
They're sending in the feds.

MALIK

You surprised? Someone burns the
princess of Camden County and
suddenly our homicide rate is of
top concern.

SONNY

I know. Anna Giaretta was a good
kid. It's a real shame.

Malik rolls his eyes, then flicks open the box. It's filled with pastries.

MALIK

Gotcha Santana's.

SONNY

Ah, the sugar. Doc broke my balls
last month about the carbs.

Malik drops the box at the kitchen table, next to a local newspaper.

He sits down, grabs a cannoli.

SONNY

I saw in the paper about your boy,
uh, what was his name? Ray-Ray?

MALIK

Jay-Jay. Jerome. Fucking weird
shit. He's a ghost, just like the
other missing hoppers. Looked like
a fucking zombie.

SONNY

He was your CI, right? Why didn't
you keep better tabs on him?

MALIK

And do what? Hold his hand? He
was in the wind for two fucking
weeks, last night was the fi --

SONNY

-- Alright, Jesus. It's just my
two cents, that's all. Oh, before
I forget, you're going to Anna's
wake tonight, right?

Malik finishes his cannoli, rises, snarls.

MALIK

My squad's got midnights. You know
this-this pep talk, it really lit a
fire under my ass.

He turns, walks from the kitchen, Sonny stands incredulous.

MALIK (O.S.)

Tell Kev he's dead to me when you
see him. Least till he gives me a
fucking apology!

SONNY

For what? What'd he do? Malik!

SLAM! Sonny shrugs, walks to the table, snags a pastry.

EXT. SONNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Malik trudges towards his car.

HEATHER CIOCCO (26) White, blonde, fit, sweaty, jogs towards
him from the sidewalk.

HEATHER

Hey, bro.

MALIK

There's Santana's in the kitchen.
Make sure Kevin gets nothing.

HEATHER

Will do. Oh, hey! I'm uh, I
heard, about Jay-Jay, sorry.

MALIK

Glad someone gives a shit. But
nope, all eyes are on Anna.

HEATHER

Just out of curiosity, who caught
it, from homicide? Anyone good?

MALIK

For Jay-Jay? I think LoBianda and
uhhhhh -- Waltmeyer.

HEATHER

Well... guess we'll see, huh?

MALIK

Forget it, Heather, it's Camden.

He gets in his car.

EXT. VACANT ROW HOUSE - DAY

Dilapidated, plywood covers the windows. Multiple police
cars converge outside.

FRONT DOOR

POLICE OFFICERS (20s-30s) in tactical gear, stumble to stack
in front of the door. Kevin is in front, swaying. He's
still drunk.

KEVIN

Do it.

An OFFICER (29) Black, battering ram, lines up his shot in
front of the door.

Bang! He slams the door open, everyone rushes inside.

MONTAGE

- The officers draw guns, ad lib commands
- Two officers catch DEVANTE TRAUTMAN (19) and ALEC SIMONE (17) both Black, in the KITCHEN.
- Police overturn every piece of furniture.
- A few officers break into the walls.
- Kevin knocks over a dresser, stomps on the back, breaks it, pulls out a very small bag of gel caps, street ready.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CCPD - DAY

A basic brick fortress for Camden's police department.

INT. CCPD - DAMIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Clean and sterile. Chief of police DAMIAN GUTIERREZ (53) Hispanic, non-threatening, sits behind a desk. He's flanked by Captain REGINA STOKES (43) Black, plainclothes, stern.

Frank sits across the two while Yori stands, impatient.

DAMIAN

First of all, let me express my deepest condolences of the loss of agent Giaretta, I understand she was killed in the line of duty.

FRANK

She will be counted. Now, we are requesting some officers for a de --

YORI

-- What exactly, has the Camden County Police done so far in solving her murder?

DAMIAN

Oh, well, we start with an --

REGINA

-- It's self-explanatory, miss...

YORI

Special Agent Yori Matsuyama.

REGINA

The officer finds the body. A homicide detective whose squad is up answers the call, they go to the scene, they work the case, they --

YORI

-- I've seen The Wire, Captain. I don't need CSI by numbers, I want to know what you are doing now.

REGINA

Sounds like you wanna tell me.

DAMIAN

Would anyone like some coffee?

YORI

I haven't been here long, but, I don't like what I see. I've had words with your constituents and they express similar... concerns with Camden's law enforcement. I've read your crime statistics earlier today and they don't represent a city going in the right direction. Now, I hate to label a place crime-ridden, so I won't, but, someone else might. Hell, I understand you are under siege by a serial killer well-versed in archery -- whom I apparently already had the unpleasant misfortune of running into last night on my way in to town.

DAMIAN

You've seen Quiver? Where?

YORI

Oh, it has an adorable name. How many calories were burnt coming up with that one?

Yori reaches down, pulls out an attache case. She opens it, and plops several photographs on the table.

One is a CCTV footage of a burning building at a weird angle. The other is a grainy CCTV photo of Quiver sprinting.

YORI

This is the building on Decatur street where agent Giaretta was murdered in.

(MORE)

YORI (CONT'D)

This was taken half a block away. According to your stats, this "Quiver" is responsible for ten homicides, all of them open. By my intuition, Anna among them. While you have police officers driving by, and, I assume certain officers making quick and easy non-violent arrests. So, you can happy-talk me about what you think you're doing, but, I see a bleaker picture.

DAMIAN

If I may interject, Agent Matsuyama, as we speak our Rapid Response Task Force is serving a warrant for a stash house of a well-known violent narcotics trafficking gang. While I understand this isn't about the deceased Agent Giaretta, I do resent the indictment that our department is preoccupied in "rip-and-runs". Information for this raid was in fact gathered by a criminal informant and I am told felony weight is on the table.

Yori scoffs.

EXT. VACANT ROW HOUSE - DAY

Kevin holds the small bag of drugs.

Devante and Alec, both cuffed, sit on the curb as more police and LAB TECHS (30s) descend inside. Kevin stumbles up to them, belches.

KEVIN

Man, I was impressed. You taped the stash in a place that actually took effort to find. Takes smarts for that level of planning. But, if you were actually that smart, they wouldn't have you watch this piddling shit you call a stash. Or, if you were smarter, you'd be out the game entirely.

They say nothing. Kevin gets right in their faces.

KEVIN

One chance, whose is this?

DEVANTE

(winces)

Yo, you gonna talk to us about slinging? You wasted, bro.

ALEC

Can you even be doing this, drunk?

KEVIN

Yup, wrong answer. Get up.

He picks each of them up. He stops Devante.

DEVANTE'S RIGHT WRIST -- has a homemade bracelet identical to Kevin's and Yori's.

KEVIN

Hey, where'd you get this?

DEVANTE

Huh?

KEVIN

The bracelet, shit-bird. Where'd you get it?

He takes out a pocket knife, cuts it off.

DEVANTE

Found it, I dunno, on the ground.

KEVIN

Like by Decatur street?

DEVANTE

Uh, yeah, maybe.

Kevin snarls, looks around, then breathes. He pushes Devante and Alec to two other officers, looks at the bracelet.

INT./EXT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

Malik steers through the streets, phone to his ear.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

Urban decay, hard to ignore.

MALIK

(into phone)

Don't go talking to me about sentimental shit, Tony, he was my last CI... 'aight, whatever, I'll meet you at the scene, I'm two minutes out, and make sure... man, you can't have white-ass Waltmeyer knocking on doors, you know this! That's why I'm here in the first place -- yeah-yeah, fuck you very much, just get over here.

He hangs up, grumbles.

EXT. MT. VERNON ST. - DAY

Malik stops in the street. He gets out. He looks around, he's alone.

MALIK'S POV - BLACK TOWN CAR

Parked down the block, passengers inside.

He ignores them, turns his eyes towards the --

ASPHALT -- blood stained from last night.

He turns, sees some overgrown weeds in a vacant lot.

He takes a few steps, looks down.

KEVIN'S FLASK -- intertwined with some discarded crime scene tape. Malik picks it up.

MALIK

(mocks Kevin)

Thirsty?

He opens the cap, knocks back a gulp, winces.

MALIK

Okay, Jay-Jay ran from there...

He Makes a line with his finger from the weeds to the street.

MALIK

Quiver William Tell's him in the neck... there.

He points to the blood, then takes another sip.

MALIK

Must've been chasing Jay-Jay. Now,
Tasha said he was --

BICYCLE

CARLOS MUNOZ (18) Hispanic, bushy hair, white hoodie rides up in a bicycle behind Malik, knocks him down.

He swerves to a stop in front of Malik.

They lock eyes. Carlos has the same pupil-less eyes and blank expression Jay-Jay did.

INT. CCPD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The walls are filled with photos of past and current officers of Camden's police force.

A cork board sits towards the head of the room with crime scene photos and forms connected in red twine. Yori looks over the board, cup of coffee next to her on a table.

YORI

What, oh what did you get yourself
into, Anna?

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out her pill bottle. She shakes two pills into her hands, swallows them hard. Yori looks towards the wall.

YORI'S POV - PHOTO WALL

Kevin in full uniform, a placard reads: OFFICER KEVIN CIOCCO.

Yori glares, stares off.

INT. YORI & ANNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: TWO YEARS AGO

Yori barges into the door of this minimalist studio apartment. Two bags of Erewhon on each arm.

ANNA GIARETTA (28) White, brunette, beautiful, sits on the floor of a couch, cries, swigs from a bottle of vodka.

YORI

Anna? Babe, what's wrong?

ANNA

My fucking ex, again! It was our old anniversary today, and he just wanted to text to tell me how much he misses me... again!

YORI

Now will you see, you have to file a harassment claim.

ANNA

No! I wouldn't give that prick the satisfaction of knowing he's actually getting to me! Fuck him!

Yori drops the bags, sits next to Anna, puts a hand on her shoulder. And Anna leans on Yori's shoulder, she smiles, cups Anna's chin with her free hand.

YORI

Why not simply send him one text to explain you're not... into his kind, anymore, let alone him.

ANNA

Please, Kevin doesn't have the IQ to process that. I've told you the Camden police aren't exactly... accepting. I just... I don't know what to do. I don't miss him, but like...

YORI

But, like... what?

Anna says nothing. Yori stares at her.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CCPD - CONFERENCE ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

Yori shakes. She grabs a coffee mug.

She hurls it at Kevin's photo, it falls, shatters.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CCPD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Yori stares at the photo, glass everywhere.

YORI
Fuck... you.

Frank enters with a stack of papers, notices the mess.

FRANK
Locals just caught someone who may have a connection to Anna's... you okay?

YORI
Uh -- it fell. Would this be the Hawkeye wannabe?

FRANK
Some small-fry narco. Caught him in that raid the chief was all-fired up about.

YORI
Pigs probably beat him half to death on his way in. I'll take him... alone.

She walks out, passes Frank, who stares at the fallen photo.

EXT. MT. VERNON ST. - DAY

Malik slowly gets up.

Carlos reaches inside the hood's pocket.

MALIK
Wait-wait-wait-wait... wait. Don't do it. Listen, look, I know you. Carlos right? Yeah, yeah Lupe Munoz's son.

Malik gets a hand on his pistol.

MALIK
Carlos, wait! Can you hear me? It's me... Malik Ciocco. I knew your brother. C'mon man, you're in there, right?

Carlos pauses, no emotion.

MALIK

You, Jay-Jay West, Saquon Fremont,
y'all went missing after your crews
had that beef, right? Who did th --

CARLOS'S POCKET -- he reaches, pulls out a pistol.

Malik rolls before he fires.

REAR OF THE CHARGER

Malik takes cover, draws his gun.

He looks out, sees Carlos bike away.

MALIK

Motherfucker!

He runs to his car, gets in.

INT./EXT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Malik drives away towards Carlos, passes the car.

TRUMAN FLEISHER (27) White, leather jacket, sits in the
drivers seat. Next to him RILEY ROUSSEAU (33) Black, trans,
smokes a hand rolled cigarette.

TRUMAN

We should tail 'em.

RILEY

Naw. I doubt Robin Hood'll come
knocking with police around. And
if they get Carlos, fuck it, we'll
find another. Ain't like Camden's
gonna run low on touts and hoppers.

She passes the cigarette to Truman, he takes a drag.

TRUMAN

Speaking of which, Hector did
Yeoman's work on that fed last
night. Carmen's gonna meet her out
at the site, so, she needs a hit.

Riley opens the glove box, pulls out an Epi-pen-like syringe.

RILEY

Just too easy, sometimes.

Truman smirks, he starts the car, starts to drive away.

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Gray, drab, just a table, two chairs, camera in a corner.

Devante sits, hand cuffed to the table. Yori enters, stack of photos in hand.

She takes a seat.

DEVANTE

You my lawyer?

YORI

Flattered. I'm FBI, not one of the locals. If there's anyone you want to tell the truth to, it's me.

She plops a photo of Anna on the table.

YORI

Look familiar?

Devante shakes his head.

Yori shows a photo of the fire.

YORI

Building on Decatur street, this is where she died. Mean anything?

DEVANTE

That's what I keep telling these chumps. I ain't ever been mixed up with a white woman, hand to God.

YORI

Well, you are here. But, unlike them, I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt.

DEVANTE

(long sigh)

I was nearby, right? I was slinging, got a regular customer over there. I walked over, place was lit the fuck up. I heard the sirens, and I'm like, ready to bolt, then I look down, and, there it was.

YORI

What was?

DEVANTE

This bracelet, saw it on the ground, locket thing on it looked cool, so I picked it up. That's why they think I had something to do with it.

Yori pauses for a moment, looks around.

She pulls up her right sleeve, shows her bracelet.

YORI

Does it look like this?

DEVANTE

Yeah-yeah, exactly like that. S'like a thrift store thing, right?

YORI

Homemade, actually. Anything else happen, before you ran?

DEVANTE

You know Quiver, right? I see that motherfucker leaving the building, and then I hid behind one of those-those newspaper things, I don't fuck with that psycho.

He looks away.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Quiver looks through binoculars atop a commercial building. SIRENS grow closer.

She jogs to the other side of the building, looks down --

QUIVER'S POV - THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Malik's car, lights and sirens full blast. He comes around a corner, speeds along.

INT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

One hand on the wheel, the other on his phone.

MALIK
 (into phone)
 Male, Hispanic. Skinny build,
 white hoodie, on a bike, armed.

Quiver looks around.

QUIVER'S POV - THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

She spots Carlos biking through a clearing and into a mostly demolished commercial structure, only some walls remain.

MALIK
 (into phone)
 One of the ghosts! Same as Jay-Jay
 and the others! I think he's...
 he's at that old clinic, uh --
 Mechanic and Second!

QUIVER'S POV - THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Malik pulls into the clearing, stops.

Quiver puts away the binoculars, readies her bow.

EXT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

He gets out, walks over to his trunk, eyes firmly on the weed-infested building in front of him.

He opens the trunk, pulls out a green pump shotgun with beanbag rounds, slams the trunk shut, racks a round.

INT. CCPD - BULLPEN - DAY

Regina stands outside the interrogation room.

Kevin stumbles over, moves as steady as he can.

KEVIN
 Cap. You see our score?

REGINA
 If you bragging about two bullshit arrests and twelve gel caps, you need a new line of work.

KEVIN
 So what, one of those yo's will be worth something. I swear to God, you're onto something about a new line of work.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

My detective skills were on point.
I'll betchu that mope did Anna.

REGINA

Kevin, the day you make detective
is the day I --
(sniffs, recoils)
-- Oh, hell fucking no!

KEVIN

Captain, it was just --

She swats him in the back of the head.

REGINA

You brain-dead pile of shit!
Forget all the reasons why you
being sauced right now is bad,
there is an FBI agent in there
right now and she is out for some
local police blood!

KEVIN

I already got the third degree from
Malik. Sentimental fuck was crying
'bout his CI.

REGINA

Says the grown-ass man with a
fucking friendship bracelet his
high school girlfriend made him!

KEVIN

It's different... she, came back,
didn't say why, she wanted to get
back together, then... she's gone.

He shrugs, chokes up.

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

Yori writes on a notepad while Devante drums his fingers on
the table.

YORI

So, Quiver ran, then what?

KEVIN

I saw Anna a few blocks down from
Decatur, right? I had midnights.

DEVANTE

Couple seconds later, like literally after Quiver's gone, a rollie shows up. But like, from down the alley next to the building, like I dunno, like he was there or something.

REGINA

Did you see her go in? Or anything of use?

YORI

Local police?

DEVANTE

Yeah, some white cop gets out, I was far enough, I couldn't really see him. He had one of those marine-type cop haircuts, I think.

Yori pauses for a minute.

KEVIN

Just saw Quiver running off, other than that, uh, no, no... I uh, filed a report with Captain Reyes, it's all there.

Regina raises an eyebrow.

YORI

This should be good for now. By the way, the officer who arrested you today, was it this man?

She shows Devante her file photo of Kevin.

He nods.

YORI

I think I got everything I need. And thank you so much for being cooperative.

She picks up the photos.

EXT. COLLAPSED BUILDING - DAY

Malik looks around the place. It's filled with trash, overturned shopping carts, pieces of old machinery.

MALIK
Carlos! I ain't gonna hurt you.

He meanders along, gun drawn.

BICYCLE

Malik turns, spots Carlos's overturned bike, abandoned.

MALIK
I ain't playing, Carlos! Let's
talk, man! Who did this to you?

CARLOS POV

He's nearby, in a hiding spot, he sees Malik.

QUIVER

Behind a nearby wall. She sneaks out, arrow ready.

QUIVER'S POV

She sees Malik, she scans, her eyes fall on some trash and discarded blankets move, then sees Carlos aim his gun.

Quiver snaps into action.

MALIK

He sees Quiver, raises his shotgun.

MALIK
Hey! Camden County police!

He fires.

QUIVER

Hits Quiver, her aim compromised, she fires.

CARLOS

But it just misses Carlos, he jumps.

MALIK
Oh shit!

Malik ducks behind an old desk.

INT. CCPD - BULLPEN - DAY

Yori exits the interrogation room, she sees Kevin.

YORI'S WRIST -- She quickly tears off her bracelet, stuffs it in her pocket.

Regina sees her, addresses Kevin.

REGINA
Fuck, straighten up, that's her.

YORI
(smirks)
Cut him loose.

KEVIN
Are you fucking high?

Regina face palms.

YORI
Oh, and uh... whom might you be, officer?

KEVIN
Kevin Ciocco.

YORI
You would be the arresting officer for the two youths in a vacant house in the vicinity of... "felony weight" in drugs?

KEVIN
Heroin, street ready.

YORI
Yeah, well, I'm not sure if Captain Stokes had time to address the rank-and-file, but for the time being, this department is not prioritizing non-violent arrests. Instead, resources will be allocated to violent crimes.

KEVIN
Chief know about this?

YORI
Oh, he does, and he's scared. See, I'm FBI, that's a federal entity, in case you forgot. I'm here investigating Anna Giaretta's murder, and, while I'm here, as an agent of the federal government, I have a...

(MORE)

YORI (CONT'D)

shall we say, a constitutional obligation to report any departmental discrepancies to my superiors in the Justice Department. They're very interested in police malfeasance.

Kevin stares right at Yori.

YORI

Certain people need to be held accountable for wrongdoings.

An Officer, DEON DRAKE (29) Black, walks up.

DEON

Anyone catch Malik's twenty-threes? He caught a ghost!

YORI

What?

KEVIN

Is Quiver there?

DEON

Didn't say, he needs backup.

YORI

A ghost?

KEVIN

Trust me, I think it'll be violent enough for your taste.

He goes to walk past Yori, she snarls at him.

EXT. COLLAPSED BUILDING - DAY

Malik's still behind cover. He loads a few more rounds.

CARLOS

Hides behind a pile of chairs.

QUIVER

In pain, loads another arrow from behind her cover.

MALIK

'Aight, look, we all here, right? Why don't we just talk?

No answer. SIRENS blare distantly.

MALIK

Quiver? You still there? You even like the name Quiver, or what?

(pauses)

Carlos, man. Look, these is beanbags for fucks sake! Come on, bro, I'm out here leveling with you. Do me a solid, I just want to talk with you. You know me, I ain't just a regular rollie.

QUIVER

Grabs her hip in pain. The SIRENS grow louder. She slings her bow over her shoulder, and rolls away.

CARLOS

Backs away, gun drawn. He slips out a broken window.

EXT. SECOND STREET - DAY

Carlos runs out into the street as multiple police cars pull up to the building.

He fires from his pistol and retreats down an alley.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

Yori drives alone in a commandeered police cruiser.

DISPATCH (ON RADIO)

Suspect male hispanic, white hoodie, he's northbound on an alley way at Second and... Atlantic!

Yori stops. Her phone is on a car mount, she opens the GPS.

YORI'S PHONE -- She's half a block up.

YORI

Ghost... Ghost... why's that ringing a bell?

She speeds up.

EXT. ATLANTIC STREET - DAY

Carlos sprints from the alley, sees nobody, and runs across the street into --

EXT. NARROW ALLEY - DAY

Between two warehouses.

Carlos stops in his tracks as a police cruiser blocks his path forward.

He turns to run away but, Yori stands in his way at the alley entrance, a chromed Walther PPK drawn.

YORI

FBI! Show me your hands!

Carlos reaches for the pistol --

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> He draws.

>> Yori's eyes widen.

>> She fires.

>> The shot hits Carlos's wrist, knocks the gun away.

>> Carlos falls over.

Yori sprints up to him, and handcuffs Carlos before he can get up.

More police converge on the alley.

Kevin runs over, he halts.

Yori picks up Carlos, smirks at Kevin.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ATLANTIC STREET - DAY

Police, crime scene tape, Lab Techs.

Malik walks under the tape, spots Kevin.

KEVIN

This one's breathing.

Malik reaches into his pocket, pulls out Kevin's flask, shoves it into his hands.

MALIK

You're welcome.

KEVIN

You're the one who threw it in the first fucking place.

He opens the cap.

KEVIN

You drink outta this?

MALIK

I spit in it, too.

KEVIN

Whatever.

He knocks it back, Malik keeps on walking.

YORI AND REGINA

Talk to Carlos by an ambulance. A PARAMEDIC (24) Hispanic aids his wounded wrist. He's handcuffed.

REGINA

Your name, shit-bird.

YORI

It'll be much easier if you just cooperate.

PARAMEDIC

Cual es tu nombre?

MALIK

He understands English. I guess he just can't speak.

REGINA

The fuck is wrong with you, Malik?
You're on midnights.

MALIK

I was helping work Jay-Jay's case.

REGINA

You ain't homicide, either. God, I
can't win with you Cioccos, today.

YORI

You know this man?

MALIK

Yeah, Carlos Munoz. He's a street
level guy, works with Los Muertes,
local drug gang. Alleged ties with
the Sinaloas.

Yori looks right at Carlos's eyes.

YORI

Can see why you call them ghosts.
More like this?

MALIK

At least a dozen.

YORI

Drugs, you think?

MALIK

Only explanation. No pupils, mute,
shit, we only see 'em when they're
riding around causing mayhem round
the city.

YORI

Ghosts... shit, what the fuck was
Anna saying about ghosts?

MALIK

Anna... Giaretta? You've got to be
kidding me? This man's clearly
been abused -- not to mention we
got ten others like him murdered.

YORI

Sorry, did she call you Ciocco?

MALIK

Malik Ciocco. Gang and narcotics.

He takes a moment to look Yori over.

MALIK

You're the fed, right? You need to go back to Philly, or DC, or wherever, you need to tell them --

YORI

-- I'll be telling them that the Camden County Police Department is filled with insubordination, racial profiling, and hindering an ongoing investigation into the murder of a federal agent.

Malik goes to speak, he shakes his head, and walks away.

KEVIN

Flask in hand, he swigs, stares at a vacant lot, overgrown with weeds. Malik walks over.

MALIK

Think I may need to come over to dad's side on the feds, bro.

Kevin's not listening.

MALIK

Fuck you staring at?

KEVIN

See that lot? 4100 Atlantic. That was Mr. Wiley's place, remember?

MALIK

Screw you and your good-old days.

KEVIN

She wanted me back, Malik, be just like we was. Said she just had some shit to do. I told her: "Camden's changed, Ann, all the old haunts is dead."

MALIK

Yet the ghosts are in season.

KEVIN

We used to... used to go there after every game, remember?

He smiles, looks at the lot.

EXT. MR. WILEY'S PLACE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: 14 YEARS AGO

A small bar on the street corner.

INT. MR. WILEY'S PLACE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Jukebox PLAYS, PATRONS (teens-70s) commiserate at the bar.

KEVIN (17) longer hair, varsity jacket for Haddonfield Union High School enters with ANNA (17) varsity jacket, long hair, she looks unhappy.

KEVIN

Let's hear it for your group one
New Jersey state champs!

LESTER WILEY (63) Black, lanky, smiles at them.

LESTER

Mr. Big man! Still wanna slum it
with us common folk? Or has that
Haddonfield education watered down
your palate?

KEVIN

Hey-hey, Camden's still my town!

ANNA

Kev, did we have to come here,
again? Taylor's throwing a huge
party tonight. Her dad got their
pool heated.

KEVIN

In a minute, babe, I just wanna say
hi to everyone.

Anna rolls her eyes, groans loudly.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ATLANTIC STREET - BACK TO SCENE

Kevin looks longingly at the lot. Malik shakes his head,
grabs the flask. He takes one sip, then dumps the rest.

MALIK

You amaze me, brother. You've
spent days since she died whining
about what you had.

Kevin snaps out of it.

MALIK

Here's a newsflash, Anna wasn't the only thing that died in Camden. Camden died in Camden. You know why Mr. Wiley's ain't there no more? He died, no one wanted that dump and there it is, nothing but weeds and memories. You could honor those memories by doing your damn job -- saving some lives, but instead here you are; limp dick, piss drunk standing over the grave of the place you and I call home. Ain't no jobs, ain't no future for a lotta people here. We should know, nothing but drugs, Rutgers, and the aquarium, that's it, we on our own! So, while this place falls apart, the least we can do as police officers is keep these streets from turning into some... zombie-shithole with a serial killer channeling Green Arrow.

Malik hands him back the flask, walks away. Kevin watches him go, then stares off for a moment.

INT./EXT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Truman and Riley watch the crime scene from down the road. Riley gets on a cell phone.

RILEY

(into phone)

It's me... yeah, yeah your people got that kid, uh... Carlos... okay.

She hangs up.

RILEY

S'in their hands.

Truman shrugs. He starts the car, drives away.

INT. CCPD - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Yori slaps a file down.

FILE -- named "DEL VAL HOLDINGS INVESTIGATION, SPECIAL AGENT GIARETTA, ANNA".

She opens it up, skims through some papers.

YORI
Ghost... Ghost...

Frank enters, holds a sheet and clipboard.

FRANK
You weren't shitting. I talked to every one in homicide. Humps. God knows how they solve any murder?

YORI
Ghost... gh -- hold up, I want you to add two names to the detail. Malik and Kevin Ciocco.

FRANK
Brothers?

YORI
I'm not sure, but, I definitely think I need to keep them close. Especially Kevin. Remember how I was talking about certain police? Brutal, harassing, prioritizing rip-and runs? That kid described someone matching Kevin's description outside of the murder. He could be running interference for this Quiver asshole. Ten open homicides and no arrests can't be done by one person, alone.

FRANK
All due respect to your intuition, but, he doesn't look smart enough to pull such a 4-D chess move.

YORI
You sound like Anna.

Frank pauses for a moment.

YORI
Anyway, I remember she was investigating this -- Del Val Holdings, it's a real estate conglomerate.

(MORE)

YORI (CONT'D)

Usual bid-rigging, racketeering, OC-type shit, but I remember her muttering something about "ghosts", I think this Munoz kid might've been what she was referring to. There's gotta be a connection.

FRANK

That's another thing. How do you know so much about Agent Giaretta?

YORI

Same office. She grew up in this town not far away called Haddonfield, I dunno, she wanted the case, they gave it to her.

FRANK

Were you two close? Seems awfully personal to know that much about her case like that.

Yori glares at him.

Damien enters, cheesy smile.

DAMIAN

Evening, I understand a suspect was just apprehended?

YORI

One of your "ghosts". It may have a connection to our investigation. I'll need to interrogate him.

DAMIAN

He's mute, he won't be able to understand his rights.

YORI

Informal statements. I'm sure he can nod or shake his head.

DAMIAN

I'd like to stand in. We've never apprehended a ghost before.

YORI

It's your department.

She picks up a file photo she has of Kevin and of Quiver from the pile of evidence on the table.

YORI
We're here to clear a murder,
Chief, all cards are on the table.

DAMIEN'S POV

He spots the photos in Yori's hands.

INT. CCPD - BULLPEN - NIGHT

Malik sits at his desk, signs a slip of paper.

LUPE

Police hold back LUPE MUNOZ (40) Hispanic, crying.

LUPE
Let me see him, please!

OFFICER #1
Ma'am, I tried to explain to you,
he's in custody.

Malik rises, rushes over.

LUPE
Malik! Malik! Where is Carlos!

MALIK
Lupe, he's okay, he's fine.

LUPE
What happened to him? Where were
you? You told me you'd get him off
the streets!

The Officers push Lupe towards the door.

Regina walks over to him.

REGINA
Don't go beating yourself up. You
ain't Superman, Malik.

MALIK
Ain't just Carlos, Jay-Jay, or
whoever's next. We got an FBI
agent who caught a ghost, and all
she gives a good fuck about is one
dead woman -- her, Kevin, dad, the
mayor -- and for what? Shit, you
can lock Carlos up, but I betchu
Quiver can get to him.

(MORE)

MALIK (CONT'D)

Then, they'll be a new ghost. And
no one will give a shit.

Deon walks into the bullpen.

DEON

Yo, Malik? Antoinette West called
looking for you.

Malik sighs, hands Regina the paper.

MALIK

My statement.

He walks out.

EXT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Creepily quaint building in the leafy town of Haddonfield.

INT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - MAIN PARLOR - NIGHT

Filled with MOURNERS (20s-60s) White, in their Sunday best.

Sonny is at a refreshments table, he fills a plate of
goodies. He stuffs his face. Heather is next to him.

HEATHER

What happened to no carbs?

SONNY

(mouth full)
Mind your plate.

She rolls her eyes.

ANNA'S CASKET

Kevin, blazer, kneels in front of the open casket, stares.

Anna looks peaceful, but badly burned, even through the
makeup. Much of her hair is missing.

EXT. ANTOINETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Malik knocks on the door of this old brick walk-up.

ANTOINETTE WEST (40) Black, distraught, opens the door.
Neither says anything.

She ushers him inside, closes the door.

INT. ANTOINETTE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Filled with photos of her and Jay-Jay, often together.

Antoinette sits in a chair, a glass of whiskey sits on a table right next to it.

MALIK

If you needed money for a wake, a casket, I'd help.

ANTOINETTE

Ain't no wake. Reverend Clayton's gonna give a service tomorrow, and that's it. Old man Guzman donated a casket, and, into the ground he goes.

She takes a drink.

MALIK

Ant, I need you to know --

ANTOINETTE

-- What? "Did all you could", "he slipped right through your fingers", tell me?

MALIK

We got him selling dope, I tried, but it was his fourth time -- shit, the piece he had on him was tied to three murders in Philly, I had to do some soul-selling to convince the DA the gun wasn't his!

ANTOINETTE

So what? Make him a CI? That's yo brilliant move, Malik?

MALIK

And do what, Antoinette? Let him take his chances with the system? It was all I could do! I can't predict this ghost shit, and I sure as fuck can't be the only one chasing Quiver 'round! I'm on my own, here!

ANTOINETTE

Yet you had no problem letting yo'self be raised by that white police family, getting bused into that fancy school out there in Leave-It-To-Beaver-land.

MALIK

I was eleven! And I stayed, I watched Camden fall apart, watched people get killed, move away, and all I get in return is shit! "Why didn't you try harder, Malik", "you said you would protect him, Malik", "he was your CI, why didn't you keep better tabs on him?"

He chokes up.

Antoinette sobs. She rises, embraces Malik.

INT. CCPD - BULLPEN - NIGHT

Yori walks towards the interrogation room. VIBRATIONS. She picks up her phone, answers.

YORI

(into phone)

Hello... speaking... Carmen, hi, yeah, I spoke with your brother Hector last night, and... yeah I am, in fact... you can? Excellent. I'll need some time, but I will give you a call when I am on my way to the scene... can't wait.

She hangs up.

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Damian stands in the room. Carlos sits, handcuffed to the table.

Damian has two flesh-colored plugs in his ears.

Yori enters, she sits across from Carlos.

YORI

Sorry I'm late, had to check in with my Bureau office.

DAMIAN

Not a problem, I think we're ready.

YORI

Okay, Mr. Munoz, I am obligated to tell you these questions I will ask you are completely voluntary, you are not required to answer anything, do you understand?

Damian stands behind Yori, he makes ASL.

Carlos nods.

YORI

Good, let's begin.

She smirks.

INT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - MAIN PARLOR - NIGHT

Kevin makes himself a plate, Heather is next to him. She winces, grabs her hip.

KEVIN

It's all that jogging you do.

She ignores him, eyes up PETER PAUL GIARETTA (57) White, across the room. He's well-coifed, clean-cut.

PETER PAUL

He's with Yvette.

PETER PAUL

Father Jerry gives wonderful masses. Obviously I wish the circumstances were better.

YVETTE

She looks so peaceful. I don't even want to think of the pain she must've been in.

PETER PAUL

I told her not to join any law enforcement, I'm still kicking myself. I wish I tried harder. But she spent all her damn time with the --

He pauses, looks across the room.

PETER PAUL'S POV - HEATHER AND KEVIN

He catches Heather eye-fucking him.

PETER PAUL
Excuse me, madam mayor.

He walks away.

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Yori places a photo of Anna on the table.

YORI
This woman was investigating an organization she theorized was creating or facilitating so-called "ghosts", are you one of those she is referring to?

Damian makes ASL.

Carlos shakes his head.

YORI
Interesting, because you fit the description of multiple people this police department refers to as these ghosts. Have you ever seen this woman before?

Damian makes ASL.

Carlos nods.

Yori places down a photo of the burning building.

YORI
This is 6719 Decatur Street, where this woman was found murdered four nights ago, did you see this woman at this location?

Damian makes ASL, and Carlos nods.

Yori places a photo of Quiver on the table.

YORI
Quiver, I'm sure you know. Did you see this man at the building?

Damian makes ASL, again, Carlos nods.

INT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - MAIN PARLOR - NIGHT

Heather puts her plate down. Kevin keeps eating. They see Peter Paul walk over.

HEATHER
Fuck me, he's walking over.

KEVIN
Huh?

HEATHER
I'm outta here. Tell dad I got an Uber home.

She shoves her plate in Kevin's hands, and walks away.

Peter Paul plasters on a cheesy smile.

KEVIN
Mr. Giaretta.

PETER PAUL
Kevin. Where's your pop?

KEVIN
(mouth full)
In the john.

PETER PAUL
I didn't see Malik.

KEVIN
Midnight shift, but he's on admin leave, officer involved shooting. He's okay, got in a tussle with he-who-shall-not-be-named.

PETER PAUL
That archery weasel, right? I should hope the department is doing all it can -- I heard he was there at the scene.

KEVIN
He was, you know, we got a ton of homicides, we're doing all we can.

PETER PAUL
Well, the FBI made Anna's slaying their top priority. I should hope the CCPD is cooperating.

KEVIN

I'm not a homicide detective, sir,
but I can--

PETER PAUL

I hate saying this, but as County
Commissioner I do have authority
over the department. And I'd hate
to leverage my daughter's death
with more funding, say.

KEVIN

Mr. Giaretta, you know how much I
loved Anna, I've been kicking
myself all day over her, and the
days before that, but, we're
stretched pretty thin.

PETER PAUL

All the more reason to try harder.
Because if the federal government
and Camden's police can't solve
this, I'm afraid I've run all out
of options, and patience.

Peter Paul nods.

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Yori places down a photo of Kevin next to Quiver's photo.

YORI

Was this man at the building? I
have another source that puts him
outside there.

Damian signs, and Carlos nods.

YORI

Good... did you see him inside the
building with her?

Damian signs.

Carlos pauses... then nods.

Yori grits her teeth.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. YORI AND ANNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: TEN DAYS AGO

Anna, in tears, pulls two suitcases towards the front door.

YORI
No you don't!

She runs in front of her, blocks the door.

ANNA
Move.

YORI
What did I do, Ann? What?

ANNA
If you can't see through your own
bullshit, there's nothing more I
can do for you. Move!

She tries to open the door. Yori slams it shut.

YORI
I looked through your files. You
took that case in Camden to be
closer to that pig, aren't you?

ANNA
That's none of your business.

YORI
Three years we've been together!
I'm not losing you to this man!
He's clearly been brainwashing you!

ANNA
Oh, don't flatter yourself, Yor! I
can make my own fucking decisions!

YORI
(sobs)
Please... Anna, I love you. Tell
me what I did wrong.

ANNA
You need to figure that out for
yourself, Yori.

Anna pushes past Yori and opens the door.

YORI

Anna, wait! I wanted to marry you!

Anna slams it shut.

Yori falls down, sobs. She looks at her bracelet.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CCPD - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Yori smiles, shuffles the photos together.

YORI

This'll be enough PC to formally
question Kevin, maybe an
indictment. He's all yours, Chief.

Yori gets up, Damian opens the door for her, he lets it shut when she leaves. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handcuff key.

INT. ANTOINETTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Antoinette and Malik sit against a wall, each has a glass. A bottle of Jack is between them.

Malik sees her glass empty, and pours. Then tops his off.

MALIK

I thought that... seeing my parents
die like they did, I'd be able to
carry it okay cause, it's all in
the game, I fucked up. And, you
were right. The Ciocco's were good
parents. Had me, Kev, and Heather
go to Haddonfield, wanted us to get
a good education. But, I'd sit in
class, go to football practice, it
would just... eat away at me, like
I owed it to my folks. It ain't
just Jay-Jay. I see them, every
time I catch a body, like there was
something else I coulda' done. All
I been seeing is death. The
people, the buildings.

He downs the glass.

ANTOINETTE

Seems like everyday, another funeral for a friend.

MALIK

Fuck it, Ant. They won't care till there's another body. Quiver's had the upper hand too long. Time someone hunted that motherfucker.

He gets up.

MALIK

Carlos is court-side... there's one more ghost still in the wind. Most of the killings have been in Bergen Square, all kind of clustered. Betchu if I go looking round there, I'll find Quiver.

He heads for the door, slams it shut.

INT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - MAIN PARLOR - NIGHT

Sonny, his fly down, walks over to Kevin, and Peter Paul.

SONNY

Peter Paul.

PETER PAUL

Santino, how are you?

Sonny shakes Peter Paul's hand.

PETER PAUL

I was just talking to Kevin, hoping the department is working hard.

KEVIN

And we are, count on it.

He walks away.

SONNY

And then there was two.

PETER PAUL

The more the merrier -- are you still involved with the FOP?

SONNY

Nah, I don't do that union shit, anymore.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

No offense to you Democrats, but
I've been awakened in these past
few years.

PETER PAUL

Your fly is down.

He walks away.

Sonny quickly zippers up.

EXT. SHEFFIELD FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Kevin grumbles, walks through the lot.

YORI (O.S.)

Thought I'd find you here.

He turns, sees Yori approach.

KEVIN

Agent whose-its.

YORI

Special Agent Yori Matsuyama. I
read your file, impressive arrest
record. I'm sure much of it is
small time dealers, petty crooks,
victims. Sad aspect of law
enforcement, so many caught up in
the system, yet we completely
ignore the bigger criminals. Some
just slip through the cracks.

Kevin glares at her.

YORI

You know that kid you arrested,
Devante? The one who had a
sentimental item you knew belonged
to Anna, it's funny, he places
someone who looks like you at the
scene as its burning. And, that
ghost, Carlos? Turns out they
can't speak, but they do remember.
Anna was chasing this real estate
company, she liked them for all
sorts of financial fraud, but,
ghosts kept coming up in her file
work.

KEVIN

Yeah, Del Val Holdings. Anna was telling me she thinks there's a connection, there.

YORI

Funny how you know that. See, Carlos was there, maybe Anna found out something, maybe not, but he claims he saw you there, inside.

KEVIN

What the fuck are you thinking?

YORI

I don't know. We have Quiver leaving the scene, a burning building, a cop who could clean up evidence before anyone shows up. Now, a correct defense would be to tell me you were wearing your department issued body cam, but, you haven't, which leads me to believe, you weren't wearing it.

KEVIN

She told me to meet her there. I was on duty, she told me she came back to work a case, then she wanted to get back together. We used to date.

YORI

I know. So, what, then? You go there and nothing happens? You understand if I'm skeptical.

Kevin seethes.

KEVIN

She was burning! I saw her, then a piece of ceiling collapsed, and she was trapped. I couldn't get to her! That you had it right, I was out there crying cause I couldn't get in and save her! I saw Quiver peace and then the building fell. Fine, I admit I had my camera off, but I did what I could to help Anna before that happened. You take me to the scene, I'll piece together exactly what I saw. You can even make that my statement.

YORI

This outta be good. Fine, but,
we're taking my car -- and, I'm
adding a little ripple so you don't
fuck with me. I have an informant
that may know something even you're
not telling me.

Yori leads Kevin over to her car, she gets on her phone.

INT. TOWN CAR - NIGHT

Truman drives. Riley is on her phone.

RILEY

(into phone)

'Aight, we'll be close.

She hangs up.

RILEY

That was Carmen. It's on.

Truman floors it.

INT./EXT. MALIK'S CAR - NIGHT

Scream-o music pours from the stereo. Malik scans the
streets, they're empty.

MALIK

Mount Vernon street... He did Jay-
Jay, and... one other there. At
least another a block over. Shit.

DISPATCH (ON RADIO)

All units be advised, 10-70 at
station. Suspect: male Hispanic,
skinny build, white hoodie.

MALIK

That's an escapee... shit, Carlos!

He flips on his lights, then sirens, and speeds up.

EXT. BURNED BUILDING - NIGHT

The Town car sits in front.

Truman and Riley stand by, they're joined by Hector and
CARMEN LUJAN (33) Hispanic, bookish.

A police cruiser pulls up.

The drivers window rolls down, it's Damian.

DAMIAN

Like a charm. Cut the cameras, had everyone thinking he ran out the back. If all else fails, I think that agent likes one of my officers for Giaretta.

The passenger side door opens, Carlos steps out.

TRUMAN

Good decoy, but we won't need him to go that way.

DAMIAN

Regardless, happy hunting.

He drives off.

Truman reaches into his pocket, pulls out two of the syringes seen in the car earlier.

RILEY

Nice and smooth, stick her, then give us a call, bolt out of there once you do. We'll handle the clean-up. Just like before.

He hands one to Hector and one to Carmen.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Yori glances over at Kevin, who stares out the window.

KEVIN

I loved her, you know? I wouldn't- I wouldn't do anything to harm her.

YORI

If you were in love, why she'd leave in the first place? I'm uh, sure I could take a guess.

KEVIN

Never said. She sprung it on me, I asked why, she said: "figure it out, for yourself." Then, gone. Started working for you people.

Yori pauses, recoils for a moment at the familiarity.

YORI
Just like that, huh?

KEVIN'S BLAZER -- He has a concealed pistol in a shoulder holster partially visible. Kevin adjusts to fully block it from view.

KEVIN
Just like that.

He looks out the window again.

INT./EXT. MALIK'S CAR - NIGHT

Malik rounds a corner, eyes locked on the road. GUNSHOTS heard close by.

MALIK
Aw, shit, I hope they didn't...

MALIK'S POV - THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

He sees Quiver cross the street far in front of him, and take off down an alley.

MALIK
Oh, shit! You're mine,
motherfucker!

He speeds up.

EXT. MALIK'S CAR - NIGHT

He pulls up in front of the alley.

Malik gets out, runs to the back of the car. He opens the trunk, pulls out the same beanbag shotgun from earlier.

He takes off after Quiver down the alley.

EXT. BURNED BUILDING - NIGHT

Yori and Kevin pull up to the building. Carmen and Hector stand right outside.

Yori and Kevin step out.

YORI
Hector... and you must be Carmen?
Thank you so much for taking my
calls on this matter.

CARMEN

My pleasure, I can give you an account of my own independent investigation of the incident. I was on scene before the police.

KEVIN

How? I was there.

HECTOR

Who's this?

YORI

Person of interest. Kevin, why don't you give me your statement. Bare in mind, this is official, if you'd like to wait for a rep --

KEVIN

-- Fuck it, come on.

Him and Yori enter first.

Carmen and Hector nod, and take out their syringes.

INT. BURNED BUILDING - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Some walls remain, but it's otherwise charred and filled with the remains of furniture. No roof.

KEVIN

This wall right over here. There was fire in my line of sight. Then, the roof fell right on top of her, I got blown back. Beforehand, I was riding round the sides trying to find a way in.

Hector nods, he raises his syringe, approaches Yori.

Kevin shakes his hand but Carlos jumps from a pile of rubble.

Yori catches a glimpse of Hector from the side.

She socks him, but Hector pins her down.

Kevin falls, rolls, sees Carmen pounce.

He draws his gun, shoots Carmen in the face.

Carlos kicks a charred dresser onto Kevin's right leg.

Kevin gets some shots off, hits Carlos in the foot, he books it out a window.

Yori struggles with Hector on top of her.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

An old, decrepit playground behind a row of houses.

Malik rushes into the clearing, scans for exits.

QUIVER

Hides behind an old slide, looks for a way out.

MALIK

Moves slow, shotgun drawn.

QUIVER

Takes a step right on a --

TWIG -- and snaps in half.

MALIK

Pauses... then moves quickly away.

QUIVER

Looks, sees no one, she makes a break for it --

SHOTGUN -- blasts.

Hits Quiver, she falls the ground, drops her bow.

She tries to get up, but Malik is right behind her. He racks another round.

QUIVER

(sotto voice)

I hope you don't forget, I saved
your life today.

MALIK

Wait... you're a gi --

Quiver kicks Malik in the shin, he tumbles over.

She bolts up, and makes a sprint back down the alley.

Malik gets up, grabs her bow. He smirks.

INT. BURNED BUILDING - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin's gun jams, he's stuck.

Hector pins Yori. He tries to force the syringe onto her neck, but Yori pushes back.

HECTOR

That was my sister! How's that for you and your fucking stigma!

YORI

What... is... this?

HECTOR

Almost not worth it. Just relax, it'll be over soon... you'll be just like her.

Yori pauses, eyes wide.

Hector nears her neck.

She knees him in the stomach, and pushes him away.

Hector reaches into his waistband for a gun.

But Yori beats him to the draw, and fires. He's dead.

She helps push the dresser off Kevin's ankle.

KEVIN

You heard that, right? "Just like her?"

Yori nods, picks up the discarded syringe from Carmen.

EXT. BURNED BUILDING - NIGHT

Police, lab techs, crime scene tape.

Yori and Kevin stand off to the side.

YORI

If we're right, Anna... might be a fucking ghost.

KEVIN

I saw her at the wake. Kinda looked like her but, you know, she was all burned, lost some hair.

YORI

What are the odds we sneak a DNA sample before she gets buried?

KEVIN

With no warrant? Slim. And ghost or no ghost, we ain't getting the DA to sign off on that in time... we don't even know if it was Anna that guy was referring to. I mean, I saw the ceiling fall, I guess it could've fallen on an angle, or something. I swear it fell on top of her. I'm not lying, I loved her, I wouldn't do anything to hurt her. Gimme a polygraph, whatever.

Yori makes a really long sigh.

YORI

I loved her too.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out her bracelet.

Kevin raises an eyebrow.

YORI

We met at the academy, we bonded over a bad relationship we both left. I wanted to admit, I was really drawn to the fact I was her first woman, so, naturally I was intrigued over who her last male ex was... that would be you. But, I guess she wasn't over you, and she left me, apparently the same way she left you. And I thought you were keeping in contact with her to take her away from me, and whether you wanted to or not, I hated you for it, Kevin. I jumped at the opportunity to come out here and solve her murder when I heard it happened and I desperately wanted it to be you. Circumstantial evidence was not in your favor, but, I'll admit, I let my normally collected judgment be clouded by jealousy. For that, I'm sorry.

She slips on the bracelet, and reaches out her hand.

Kevin grips it, shakes. But Yori clenches.

YORI

I owe you the benefit of the doubt,
as long as moving forward, they'll
be no more lies, and we can be
adults about this. Got it?

Kevin nods. He then stares off.

FADE TO:

EXT. ANNA'S GRAVE - DAY

Rain. Umbrella-clad MOURNERS (teens-70s) mostly White, watch Anna's casket get lowered into a grave. A large headstone sits in front.

Peter Paul stands with a blank face. He's joined by his wife MARIA (53) brunette, sobbing.

Yvette stands next to them. She looks at Peter Paul, they exchange a small nod.

Yori is in front of them, she glares.

EXT. JAY-JAY'S GRAVE - DAY

Different cemetery. Jay-Jay's casket sits on a grave, a small headstone in front.

Malik stands next to Antoinette, only reverend GEORGE CLAYTON (59) Black, bald, is with them.

Malik looks over.

Kevin and Sonny join them.

A slight smile creeps onto Malik's face.

INT./EXT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Truman and Riley frantically drive around.

RILEY

We should've stayed closer to them.
What are we going to say to S...

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - DEVANTE

He skateboards past them at a crosswalk.

TRUMAN

"Ain't like Camden's gonna run low on touts and hoppers."

Riley smirks, opens the glove box, and takes out a syringe.

EXT. GIARETTA HOUSE - DAY

Everyone gathers to the Giaretta's stately manor.

INT. GIARETTA HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Malik makes a plate of food with Sonny, who already has a full plate.

SONNY

I knew reverend Clayton back when I worked homicide, good man, but, it's sad all the funerals that man's done over the years.

MALIK

I know you and Kev didn't know Jay-Jay, but I really appreciate it.

SONNY

Was his idea. Said something about "being there for our community."

MALIK

Least one of my ramblings stuck on that boy.

SONNY

In all candor, take this from a guy who saw his fair share of whodunits over the years: it don't get easier, you end up spending your life wishing you would've done more. Cause there's always gonna be another Jay-Jay. You want my honest advice, son? You're wasted in narcotics. You can't spend your thirties chasing hoppers and raiding stash houses like your brother. You wanna help Camden, truly? Be a murder police.

Malik pauses, ponders on it.

INT. GIARETTA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Yori and Kevin sit on opposing couches with a coffee table separating them. Yori has her bracelet on.

Yori looks up at Frank who gives her a look, then walks by.

YORI

I'm kicking myself. That Carlos kid, perfect shot to the wrist, but this guy, when we needed him, stomach and spine. Dead.

KEVIN

But, we know that shit they had is how they make ghosts, if we're right, Anna... may be with us.

Malik hops over on the couch, sits right next to Kevin.

MALIK

One thing 'bout rich white folk. They throw a good funeral.

KEVIN

Yeah, there's a caveat to this one. By the way, Malik, this is Yori Masta-something, Yori, Malik.

YORI

(flips him off)

Mat-su-yama. I hope we can get off on the right foot.

KEVIN

Last night, that off-duty shoot I had? These two mopes caught us off guard. We think it might be a stretch, but, they had these works, that I think whatever liquid is inside is what turns people to ghosts.

YORI

And, also a stretch... one of those ghosts might be Anna.

Malik stops, looks over at Kevin, glares.

MALIK

So, when you and dad came to... never mind. Um, so what?

YORI

Anna's case, Quiver, the ghosts, it's possible there's a connection. Which going forward will be my responsibility, and by association my detail, which I've placed you both on. And I expect us to be adults and professionals. That means not drinking on duty, don't think I didn't notice.

Malik looks over at Yori, sees her bracelet.

Then over to Kevin's.

MALIK

You know y'all got the same ugly-ass bracelet on? I thought Anna made that... for...

He pauses, realizes, starts chuckling.

YORI

So much for professionalism.

KEVIN

By the way, I heard you snagged Quiver's bow?

MALIK

Yup. Couldn't catch her, but, she ain't doing any killing without it.

KEVIN AND YORI

Her?

Malik shrugs, nods.

INT. SONNY'S HOUSE - HEATHER'S ROOM - DAY

Clean bedroom. Heather sits on her bed, she holds the Quiver mask, stares down at it.

FADE OUT:

END OF EPISODE

BORDERLINE (PILOT)

Written by

Nick Durdan

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM - DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES, 2014

ALEX SHEEHAN (29) Hispanic, sporty, anxious, sits strapped to a chair in a gray room. She wears a Los Angeles Police Department uniform, wedding band. She fidgets, shakes a leg.

ALEX

Hello? Anyone there?

A MALE VOICE (60s) SOUNDS OFF over a loud speaker.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Our apologies officer Sheehan, it's taken us longer than expected to synthesize your last dose. While you wait, have you any questions about the operation, or process?

ALEX

Okay, so... Borderline, what happens when... he -- she, I don't even know how to ask the question.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Quite simple. Borderline is an experimental artificial intelligence that will be chemically inserted into your bloodstream. As you know, the Los Angeles Police Department was chosen to undergo an experiment to aid officers in times of great stress. Once you find a situation too overwhelming, Borderline will overcome your brain function and assume all bodily capabilities and with ease incapacitate the problem at hand without the need of emotions clouding your judgment. Borderline is designed as your personal protector in the field.

ALEX

Protector? That doesn't sound bad. What am I expected to do? What happens -- where do I go?

A NURSE (37) Hispanic, enters with a plate of syringes.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Okay, so, Borderline will take over your entire body when you are faced with insurmountable stress. You will feel tingling, shaking, your face will appear emotionless, and to the outside world, your pupils will turn a neon yellow hue. You will see nothing, we believe merely a white light, you will feel as though you've gone to sleep. Now, do you have any other questions? And are you prepared?

ALEX

Y-yes. I am.

Alex shakes, breathes deeply.

The Nurse swabs Alex's right arm, and takes the syringe.

THE SYRINGE -- penetrates Alex's skin, the plunger forces a yellow substance into her.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her hands shake.

>> Her face goes blank.

>> Her pupils turn yellow.

The nurse backs away with the plate.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Test subject number three. Patrol Officer Two Alexandra Sheehan, Wilshire Division. Borderline? Are you there?

Borderline uses Alex's voice, only deeper, devoid of emotion.

BORDERLINE

I am. I am ready for orders.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Excellent, let's bring her back in.

SOOTHING MUSIC fills the room.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Alex's pupils return

>> She forces a smile.

>> Her hand stops shaking.

Alex sweats, looks at her surroundings.

EXT. WILSHIRE DIVISION - DAY

Alex trudges over to a small sedan sitting in a parking spot outside her police barracks.

INT./EXT. SCOTT'S CAR - DAY

Alex's husband SCOTT SHEEHAN (35) White, redhead, pissed-off-look, rubs his hands together. He sees Alex get in next to him, stops rubbing.

SCOTT
Jesus, bout fucking time.

ALEX
I tried to hurry them up, baby, it was my fault.

SCOTT
Heads up woulda' been nice, Al, I waited a whole hour! You hungry?

Alex shrugs, stares off.

ALEX
C-can we just go home, please?

SCOTT
Whatever, fucking traffic to the Valley's gonna be a time suck.

ALEX
Okay, we'll get food.

Scott starts the car, drives away.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. TARA'S CELL - DAY

SUPER: FIVE YEARS LATER.

TARA WELCH, (38) White, Blonde, Boston accent, grins, orange jumpsuit, lays on a bed, small smirk.

FOOTSTEPS. CLINKING. Tara looks up to see a burly LA Sheriff's Deputy, SEAN HIRSCH (31) White, at her door.

SEAN

Tara Welch! On your feet.

TARA

Good. I really need help.

He opens up her door.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

She lays in bed, alone, blank face. She shakes as she looks towards her alarm clock: 6:59 am.

It turns to 7:00, the radio blasts --

ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)

Good morning Los Angeles! It's the top of the hour, time for --

Alex sighs, she gets up and sits on the side of her bed. We see her room is perfectly kept, nothing out of place.

POST-IT -- attached next to her alarm clock: Book signing! Knock em' dead!

Alex shifts the radio. SOOTHING MUSIC blares.

She sighs of relief, walks over to the nearby --

BATHROOM

The radio continues to PLAY as Alex pushes some toothpaste onto her brush. She stares at herself in the mirror, her eyes blank. She forces a smile.

INT. BRIDGET'S BATHROOM - DAY

BRIDGET KIM (45) Asian, bullet proof vest, insanely fit, brushes her teeth. She spits.

She looks at herself in the mirror, nods, then smiles big.

BRIDGET
Did you look in my drawer?

STEVE (O.S.)
Twice. It's not there.

BRIDGET
Well I know I didn't move it
anywhere else.

Her husband STEVE (51) Asian, half-dressed enters. He holds up two ties; blue and gold.

STEVE
You know it's supposed to be in the
safe, Bridge.

BRIDGET
Blue.

STEVE
You sure? I like the gold.

BRIDGET
It's ugly. Go blue.

Bridget walks into the --

MASTER BEDROOM

Which is a little messy. She grabs a windbreaker laying on the bed, on the back it reads: U.S. MARSHAL.

BRIDGET
Not my Desert Eagle, my thirty-
eight. I like to keep that handy.

STEVE
Oh yeah, for all the violent crime
in Westwood?

BRIDGET
What is that? Comedy?

Steve rolls his eyes.

Bridget ponders for a moment. She sits on the bed and puts on a pair of shoes at the foot of the bed.

INT. LOS ANGELES CHRONICLE - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Modern office, long conference table.

BINITA LAGHARI (28) Asian, long hair, sits in a chair, rests a leg over another, admires her designer shoes, she then scrolls on her phone through Instagram.

IRV KAPLAN (53) White, addresses other PEOPLE (20s-40s) paying attention to him. Behind him a sign reads: THE LOS ANGELES CHRONICLE.

IRV

Alright, everybody, that'll do it for budgets, if there's nothing else, do go commit a daily act of journalism, huh?

Binita chuckles, raises her phone to take a selfie, smiles.

Irv looks at her, groans.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Garage door opened. Some boxes sit against a row of shelves, filled with junk.

Alex has the trunk of Scott's car opened, she stuffs a box inside, hears a NOISE.

She turns, sees a package at the opening. Alex sees the DELIVERY GUY (26) Black, Amazon vest walk away.

ALEX

Wait!

The Delivery Guy stops.

ALEX

Hi, you just delivered a package? Do I need to sign anything?

DELIVERY GUY

No, I would've asked for a signature if I needed.

ALEX

Oh, sorry, you want a water, or something, anything?

DELIVERY GUY
I'm good, thanks.

ALEX
Okay, go.
(mumbles)
Leave like everyone else.

He walks to his truck, gets in.

Alex snuffles, grabs another box next to the shelves.

She jostles the shelf and another box of junk falls, an FN Five-Seven pistol falls out of it.

She drops her box, books fall out, she falls backward.

She crawls over picks up the pistol.

BANG!

EXT. BRIDGET'S BACKYARD - DAY

Bridget's now found Thirty-Eight Special, barrel smoking, is wielded by her oldest son SAM (17) hoodie. He's joined by his brothers ERIC (13), and DAN (12), all three Asian.

Sam is taken aback.

SAM
Oh, shit! It wasn't supposed to be
fucking loaded!

The two other brothers run away.

KITCHEN

Bridget storms from the kitchen, flings open a sliding door.

BACKYARD

Sam's at a loss for words as his pissed off mother trudges over to him.

SAM
Mom-mom, I'm sorry-I'm sorry I
didn't--

Bridget grabs him by the collar, and pins him to a nearby picket fence.

BRIDGET
What the fuck is wrong with you?

SAM
I just wanted to --

BRIDGET
-- What? Get yourself killed?
Jesus fucking Christ, Sam, I don't
got enough to worry about I gotta
think about my own son shooting
your own foot off?

SAM
Mom I swear to God, I just wanted
to -- wave it around, you know?

BRIDGET
No, I don't know! I don't do that
because I'm responsible.

Sam looks away but nods. Bridget grabs the gun from him.

BRIDGET
No car for a month.

She stomps away while Steve walks out.

BRIDGET
You don't see Jerry's kids doing
this shit.

She walks back inside.

INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Tara, handcuffed, sits on a hospital bed.
She turns, and spots a tray of a syringes.
She smirks. Starts to hum.

INT./EXT. SCOTT'S CAR - DAY

SOOTHING MUSIC pours from the stereo. Alex grips the
steering wheel, dirt under her nails.

The back of the car is filled with boxes.

ALEX
Positivity. Relax. Go kill it,
girl. Help others.

She watches out to her side, sees a Corvette swerve wildly,
he brakes hard behind a car.

LICENSE PLATE -- "WLTHBSS"

Alex's jaw drops.

ALEX

What a piece of shit.

The Corvette makes a dangerous lane change, swerves around the car in front of him.

Alex gasps, then sneers.

SCOTT (V.O.)

How about you drive with a little urgency for fuck's sake!

Alex screams, smacks her head, then turns UP the music.

INT. BINITA'S CAR. - DAY

Binita drives, her car's bluetooth on a call with Irv.

BINITA

You're killing me with this color piece, Irv.

INT. LOS ANGELES CHRONICLE - IRV'S OFFICE - DAY

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

IRV

(into phone)

Binita, it's a major event in the Los Angeles area, you are my local events reporter.

BINITA

It's in Long Beach! And, look at this name!

She picks up a brochure sitting next to her.

BINITA

W.A.A.C. Women, Against Abuse Coalition. It's not even associated with the Women's March! You know I'm better than this!

IRV

(into phone)

Just find a subject, get some react quotes, and come home.

(MORE)

IRV (CONT'D)

Look, I know you said you wanna be my cop writer, but, you gotta crawl before you walk, okay? Do good now, and I'll see about you doing some crime reporting soon. Sound good?

BINITA

But, Irv!

The call cuts. Binita's jaw drops. She turns, sees the corvette weave right past her.

EXT. TERMINAL ISLAND PENITENTIARY - DAY

Outside the stone walls.

SIRENS WAIL. Police cars from various agencies sit shot up, lights flashing. BODIES strewn everywhere.

Bridget sobs, she performs CPR on JERRY METCALFE (46) Black, U.S. Marshal windbreaker, cracked pair of Oakleys, multiple gunshot wounds.

BRIDGET

C'mon... C'mon Jerry! Come on!

He grips Bridget's hand.

His grip slips, falls.

Bridget seethes, she looks up.

LA SHERIFF'S CRUISER

Speeds down the road, shot up.

Bridget grabs a discarded AR-15 next to Jerry, fires it towards the fleeing cruiser.

INT. LA SHERIFF'S CRUISER - DAY

Tara drives, blood splattered on her face and neck. She ducks as bullets WHIZ through the rear windshield. Sean sits next to her, bloodied.

A round hits him in the neck, he coughs blood.

TARA

Fuck, didn't think it was that bad.
Chin up, kid.

She pats him on the shoulder, wipes blood from her face.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Alex opens her trunk, grabs a box, bumps the trunk shut.

She turns, looks in front of her.

THE CORVETTE

"WLTHBSS" parked across from her... in a handicap spot.

ALEX

Are you kidding me? Tell me this
maniac's not here for our thing.

She snarls, walks away.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Tables, streamers, and banners line the massive room. A large banner spanning the room reads: "WOMEN AGAINST ABUSE COALITION. HEADLINED BY ALEX VALIENDEZ"

EMILY COSGROVE (42) White, fashionable, waspy, walks through as many ASSISTANTS (20s) move past her setting everything up.

JOSH DANZIG (33) White, yuppie, oozes entitlement, walks beside her.

JOSH

I feel like Anaheim would have been
a better fit. Larger impact.

EMILY

It's still a bit too...
conservative for our core.

ALEX

Walks in, drops her box.

ALEX

Okay, this is good, but come on,
people, we are on a time table.

JOSH AND EMILY

EMILY

There she is.
(whispers)
Go easy around her, she's a bit...
(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

temperamental.

(loud)

Oh, Alex!

Alex hands her keys to a HELPER (27) white, nice blazer.

ALEX

Oh, Emily, hi.

They hug, very awkward.

ALEX

I had such a chore getting over here, the 710 was a parking lot.

JOSH

Been there.

EMILY

Alex, I'd like you to meet the reason our app is coming to life.

Josh reaches into his pocket, pulls out a business card.

JOSH

Josh Danzig, it's a pleasure. Emily's told me so much about you, and your work.

ALEX

Oh, well, I'm not much, it's-it's a group effort, truly.

She takes his --

BUSINESS CARD -- "JOSHUA DANZIG, THE WEALTH BOSS, VENTURE CAPITALIST SPECIALIZING IN TECH START-UPS."

Her face immediately sours.

ALEX

Wealth boss? Funny, there's a Corvette in the parking --

JOSH

-- That was a little gift from my old firm. I don't like to brag, but, I'm the reason their net worth went from millions to billions.

ALEX

Uh-huh. Well, that's... yeah, good to meet you.

She walks off.

Josh shrugs, flummoxed.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Binita trudges, phone glued to her face. She takes several selfies, not satisfied.

BINITA
Fuck this lighting.

She trips, drops her phone.

She gasps, crawls forward, but CECIL WESSON (67) White, gray, mustache and beard, picks it up.

CECIL
Think it's just the screen
protector. No harm done.

Binita stands, grabs the phone.

BINITA
My life is this phone. You here
for the uh... thing?

CECIL
Absolutely. Dr. Cecil Wesson, UCLA
Department of Psychology.

BINITA
Binita Laghari, Los Angeles
Chronicle, reporter -- no, I'm more
of a professional muckraker.

CECIL
Oh, a young Upton Sinclair?

BINITA
Ha. He wishes.

She walks past. Cecil turns, smirks.

EXT. OCEAN BLVD - DAY

Tara's bullet-ridden cruiser slows to a halt after every terrible car NOISE can be heard from the engine.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - DAY

Tara fruitlessly tries to start the engine. No use.

TARA

Oh, no-no-no-no-no. Come on,
start! Start, God dammit!

She turns to see Sean, slumped over, he's dead.

She reaches for his belt, pulling out his service pistol, a Glock. She hears tires SCREECH.

She looks behind her, sees a Dodge Charger with flashing lights coming up fast.

TARA

Hits just keep on coming.

She takes two of his clips and climbs out.

EXT. OCEAN BLVD - DAY

Tara racks the action.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Tara fires at the car

>> A shot hits a tire.

>> The car swerves to a halt.

Tara takes off.

EXT. BRIDGET'S CAR - DAY

Bridget gets out with the AR-15. She wears Jerry's Oakley's.

She shoots indiscriminately at her target.

BRIDGET

You're dead, Welch! You hear me?

She turns to her car and slams a fist on the hood.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Alex rubs her head, she breathes deeply.

She sets up her booth, with copies of a --

BOOK -- "YOU ARE NEVER ALONE. OVERCOMING SPOUSAL ABUSE. BY:
ALEX VALIENDEZ."

She hears LAUGHTER.

JOSH AND DEMI

Josh is nearby, speaks to a young helper DEMI GUZMAN (23)
Hispanic, ponytail.

JOSH
Seriously, I have a nice penthouse
in Century City, great views.

DEMI
That's okay, I really --

JOSH
Come on, a little champagne, I'm a
world class cook.

DEMI
(firm)
I said no. Thank you, though.

She walks off. Josh swears under his breath.

Alex grits her teeth.

ALEX
You motherfucker.

ALEX'S HAND -- shakes.

She leaves her booth, eyes locked on Josh. Binita strolls
over to her.

BINITA
Alex Valiendez, hi. Binita
Laghari, Los Angeles... Chronicle.

Alex ignores her, walks on, her eyes tingle.

EXT. OCEAN BLVD - DAY

Tara runs through the street. Stops to catch her breath.

Far in front of her, a police road block.

She turns behind her.

BRIDGET'S CAR

Coming in hot, lights flashing.

TARA
Oh, fuck me!

She turns sprints to a --

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY

Tara runs, turns a corner --

DEAD END

Sees the alley ends, but there's an open sewer entrance with work signs all around it.

She runs, but Bridget rounds a corner.

Tara trips, drops the gun.

SEWER ENTRANCE

It slides right down.

Bridget stops just in front of Tara.

She gets out, aims the gun right at her.

BRIDGET
On your knees! Now!

Tara grumbles, she complies, hands up.

TARA
Oh, come on.

BRIDGET
Shut-up.

TARA
Fine, you got me.

BRIDGET
Oh, you think the bracelets are gonna go "click"? That's cute.

TARA
Wait... y-you can't. I'm fucking unarmed! You're a fed!

BRIDGET
And I don't care.

Bridget drops the assault rifle, reaches into her holster and pulls out a chromed Desert Eagle.

She aims it right at Tara's head.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Josh lights a cigarette, right next to a no smoking sign.

Alex walks up to him.

ALEX
You got a lotta balls.

JOSH
Excuse me -- shit!

Alex grabs him by the collar.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her hands shake.

>> Her eyes glow yellow.

>> Her face... turns into a sinister grin.

>> Her voice lowers.

BORDERLINE
You, with your pride, and your
toxic bullshit. Did you come here
to chase women? People are coming
here today, people who faced untold
amounts of trauma! Do you cause
trauma, Mr. Wealth Boss?

Josh stares wide-eyed, too stunned to say anything.

BORDERLINE
You should see how it feels.

Borderline's grin grows.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Borderline grips Josh hard.

BINITA

Is nearby, she has her phone record the scene.

Josh tries to speak.

BORDERLINE

Yeah, it's not so fun, is i...

Borderline stammers.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her pupils return.

>> Her grip ceases.

>> Her grin fades.

Alex is back. She looks at Josh horrified.

ALEX

Oh no. Oh my God, no.

She quickly lets go of him.

ALEX

Oh no, no, no. Did she -- I, hurt you? I am so-so sorry.

Josh falls against the wall, his eyes firmly on Alex.

Alex falls to her knees, dusts off his shirt. She turns.

BINITA

Quickly puts away her phone.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DEAD END - DAY

Bridget rests the barrel of her gun right on Tara's temple.

BRIDGET

Fucking look at me, you psychotic little shit-bird.

TARA

How about you... listen to reason?
Since you clearly have little
regard for the rules --

THE HAMMER -- Bridget clicks it back.

TARA

Wait, wait! You think I just
peaced without a plan? I got money
stashed away -- millions. Take me,
we'll split it.

BRIDGET

There isn't a dollar amount I'd
trade to see your brains all over
that ground.

TARA

You can't! You fucking cops don't
know what I went through!

BRIDGET

Fuck your sad-sack story. You're
still here. My friend isn't!

TARA

I didn't kill anybody!

The two look up.

A helicopter is right above them.

BRIDGET

Aw shi --

Tara slides, and kicks Bridget to the ground.

She hops into the sewer. Bridget sneers, gets up.

INT. SEWER - DAY

Tara lands, grabs her pistol, dashes off.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Alex sobs, she paces into the convention.

Emily stands in the middle of the room with a microphone.

A sea of PEOPLE (20s-60s) surround her.

EMILY

There she is! Ladies and
Gentlemen, introducing our
headliner and my business partner:
Alex Valiendez!

Everyone claps.

Alex stops, awkwardly waves, she walks on while Binita is
behind her, texting into her phone. Josh walks nearby, shell-
shocked. He tries to clap.

Binita turns to Josh.

BINITA

What the hell was that about?

JOSH

(fake smile)

That fucking psycho nearly
strangled me.

BINITA

I felt your pain just from
watching. I need a moment. But,
I'd love to get a quote from you.
Binita, LA Chronicle.

She smiles big at him.

Alex walks over to her booth, breathes deeply, feigns a large
smile. Emily is there to greet her.

EMILY

Jesus Christ, you look like someone
just stabbed your grandmother.

ALEX

I'm going through something right
now, Em, I can't force the
happiness on cue. Just give me a
minute, I'll be fine.

Emily rolls her eyes, and walks away. Alex sits down, looks
away nervously.

ALEX

(mutters)

I could've handled it. I'm a big
girl, Borderline. You make me look
like I'm crazy.

She sighs, forces a smile.

She unfolds a banner, it reads: "BOOK SIGNING WITH THE AUTHOR. ASK ABOUT OUR APP: SAFETYNET."

A line begins to form.

INT. SEWER - DAY

Tara sashes forward. She pauses for a breath. Amidst the running water she hears FOOTSTEPS.

Tara continues, indistinct CHATTER is ahead of her.

SEWER ENTRANCE

Below an open entrance to the sewer, city utility worker ARTURO CALDERON (43) Hispanic, heavy-set, shines a light through the tunnel.

ARTURO

I can't find where they're saying
the crack is!

He pauses. FOOTSTEPS. Tara turns a corner, running up to him. She feigns fright.

TARA

Oh thank God! You got to help me!
There's this psycho on my tail!

ARTURO

Uh-wait. What?

TARA

Please! C-Can I get up there!

ARTURO

I-it's a work area...

He shines his light right at Tara, sees the orange jumpsuit, and her gun.

He shines the light up at her face, the worry vanishes, ire is in its place.

ARTURO

Uh-s-s-sure. And uh -- I didn't
see nothing.

TARA

That's an acceptable answer...

ARTURO'S NAME TAG -- sewn in fabric.

TARA
...Arturo Calderon.

Tara takes off up the ladder, leaving Arturo breathless. A moment or two later, Bridget turns the corner, pistol drawn. The AR is slung over her shoulder.

BRIDGET
Freeze! U.S. Marshal! Let me see your hands!

ARTURO
Alright-alright. Shit.

BRIDGET
Did anyone run through here?

ARTURO
What? N-no.

BRIDGET
Don't lie to me! Did a blonde woman in an orange jumpsuit run by you, here?

ARTURO
No. I swear.

Bridget looks at Arturo, flop sweat gushes.

ARTURO
Alright. Blonde chick -- woman.

BRIDGET
Why did you lie? Do I look like someone you should lie to?

ARTURO
She saw my name-I-I-I panicked.

Bridget grabs Arturo and slams him into the wall.

BRIDGET
Panic is what gets people killed!

Arturo hyperventilates. His face beet red.

BRIDGET
You're lucky she's my priority.

She let's him go, then climbs up the ladder.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Binita and Josh walk up to Emily.

JOSH
We need to talk.

BINITA
Emily Cosgrove, right? Binita
Laghari, LA Chronicle.

Emily's taken aback.

ALEX'S BOOTH

Alex's phone sits on the table, SOOTHING MUSIC plays.

She finishes her signature in the book of an uninterested college student KELSEY, (21) White, preppy.

ALEX
The book was a passion project of
mine, but what I'm really
interested in is our new app.

She points below to the banner.

KELSEY
Like, what does it do?

ALEX
Uh, it's amazing, that's what.
Say: God forbid, you or someone you
know is a victim of abuse, sexual
assault, or rape; what this app
does is it instantly alerts every
police department and criminal
database around with a description
of your attacker and gives you
instructions on where to find the
nearest support.

EMILY

Is nearby, still with Binita and Josh. She overhears Alex.

Kelsey shrugs.

KELSEY
Oh that's cool. I appreciate you
signing my book.

ALEX

Right, but the app? It's really gonna help people. Don't you care?

KELSEY

I mean, it's cool and all but I go in groups, and to be honest my gender studies professor promised extra credit if I got your book and got it signed. But it's really good, though.

Alex's face sours. She looks at a slew of college STUDENTS (18-22) in her line.

BINITA, EMILY, AND JOSH

Emily facepalms. Binita records with her phone.

EMILY

Must you?

BINITA

It's for my story. Freedom of the press is under far too much of an assault as it is.

JOSH

As I was saying, I'm afraid I'm going to have to pull my funding. I can't continue to be associated with an organization that can't run a simple background check.

BINITA

I watched your business partner practically choke this man.

EMILY

The app is supposed to launch now. She's literally pushing it as we fucking speak.

JOSH

You're an experienced businesswoman, right? Figure it the fuck out.

Emily groans.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - LADIES ROOM - DAY

Modern and clean. Alex barges in.

She turns on a sink, throws cold water on her face.

ALEX

Try to fucking help people. But no, "fuck you, sign my book." I'm out here, busting my ass, and for what? For Emily to fuck around with that entitled asshole. How many DUI's you think daddy got him out of?

She looks at herself in the mirror.

HALLUCINATION

In her reflection, her eyes glow yellow.

Alex shakes her head. Her reflection is herself.

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

SIRENS everywhere. Tara sprints through the street.

BRIDGET

Not far behind.

Tara stops at a cross-walk, cars move in every direction.

She takes a moment, looks behind her. She sprints.

Cars brake hard as Tara runs in between them.

She reaches the other side, catches her breath. She sees Bridget at the other end.

BRIDGET

Takes out her badge, holds it up, and simply walks across as more cars brake for her.

TARA

Screams in agony.

TARA

Fucking pig!

She runs away.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Alex walks back from the restroom. She wanders, shakes her head, rubs her temples.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: 2016

Scott sits in an easy chair, beer can in hand. Three more are beneath him. He's glued to the TV.

Alex stands nearby.

ALEX
So, what do you think?

SCOTT
See Trump, today? What an asshole.

ALEX
Scott, my idea?

SCOTT
What? A professional motivational speaker? Is this supposed to make me feel better cause you quit the force? We got bills, Al.

Alex pauses, a tear forms in her eye.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Alex snaps out of it, sees she's back in the main room.

Emily and Binita walk up to her. Binita's recording.

EMILY
What did you do?

ALEX
Sorry?

EMILY
I got all our app money halfway out the door, cause he told me you tried to strangle him.

BINITA
I saw.

ALEX

I -- are you kidding me? Did David Simon over there explain to you that Mr. "Wealth Boss" was sexually harassing a non-interested waitress? Not to mention, he drove here like the world's most entitled pile of shit!

EMILY

What are we going to do now? We can't launch the app. We'll need to get more funding or else we won't be able to --

ALEX

-- Sure-sure, let's go get another rich guy. What difference does it make, Em, nobody gives a shit. Look around? Blood suckers and ungrateful stoners! People will just keep suffering trauma, and we'll be here, signing books and drinking cocktails.

She turns to Binita, flips her both birds.

ALEX

Hey, Bob Woodward? These are for you! Go put that in your story!

Alex stomps off, Binita still records.

CECIL

Walks in front of Alex, he holds a copy of her book.

CECIL

Ms. Valiendez. Dr. Cecil Wesson, Big... Fan?

But Alex passes him by.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Tara catches her breath for a moment. She looks beside her.

PORSCHE 911

Enters the parking structure.

She smiles, follows it.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Alex sobs, walks through the garage, clenches both fists.

ALEX

Maybe she should date that scumbag,
see how well he treats her.

She loses her balance, falls down.

SCOTT (V.O.)

What the fuck is wrong with you?

She sobs and looks up.

INT. ALEX'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Alex looks up. Her mind flashes back, and Scott stands above her, wobbling, beer bottle in hand.

END FLASHBACK

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - BACK TO SCENE

Alex blinks and she's back, still in tears.

INT./EXT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

DENNY HOLTZMAN (55) White, v-neck shirt, shuts off the car.

Tara comes into frame outside the window and punches him right in the face. She sticks her pistol right at him.

TARA

Don't make this difficult, pops.
Just move over and I'll make it
worth your while, I swear.

DENNY

Sure-sure.

He reaches --

UNDERNEATH THE DRIVER'S SIDE SEAT

And pulls a thirty-eight revolver.

He decks Tara in the face with it, her gun falls loose.

Denny opens the door, as he steps out, Tara side swipes him, and his gun falls free.

He rolls on top of Tara, beats on her.

ALEX

Hears WAILS, she walks further and

ALEX'S POV - THE FIGHT

Sees Denny sock Tara right in the face.

Alex seethes.

ALEX

Not again.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her wrists shake.

>> Her face grins.

>> Her eyes go yellow.

Borderline sprints over to --

DENNY AND TARA

Denny slams his fist into Tara, making her black eye worse.
FOOTSTEPS.

He turns and is surprised seeing Borderline bull rush him.

DENNY

What the fuck?

BORDERLINE

Get the hell away!

She tackles Denny off of Tara, knocking him into the concrete stopper in another parking spot. He's down.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her grin ceases.

>> Her pupils return to normal.

>> Her grip steadies.

Alex is back.

ALEX

Are you okay, ma'am?

Tara smirks, reaches for Denny's gun.

TARA
Better now...

Alex turns, sees Tara aim the gun right at her.

TARA
...Sorry, baby, you should've
minded your own business.

Alex's eyes widen. She trembles.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

A dumbfounded Alex stares at the pistol.

Tara's look is cold, serious, yet whimsical.

TARA
Drivers's seat. Get in.

ALEX
U-I-I'm-uh, l-look --

Tara fires into the pavement, then aims right at Alex.

TARA
You think I'm kidding?

Message received. Alex hops into the drivers's seat as Tara picks up her fallen pistol.

She gets in the passengers' side.

INT./EXT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Alex watches Denny, he awakens just as they back up, and drive away.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

The Porsche speeds away, while down the corridor, Binita stands, phone in hand.

BINITA
And that's how a Pulitzer is gonna
fall into my lap.

She quickly turns around, starts texting.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

They bust out, and race south down Ocean boulevard, just as an exhausted Bridget runs up to the parking structure.

She watches them drive off.

BRIDGET
Oh, go fuck your mo...

BRIDGET'S POV - LICENSE PLATE

"DDYPRSH"

She grins big.

INT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Alex breathes quickly, she tries to multi-task with focusing on the road and on Tara, who has the gun at her side, pointed at Alex.

TARA

Breathe deeply one more time. I dare you.

ALEX

I'm sorry, I-I've just never been kidnapped before? That is what this is, right?

TARA

No, I thought we'd go to the salon, get mani-pedis. Make a day of it.

ALEX

Right. Stupid question. Reasonable question: where would you like me to take you?

TARA

Just drive south.

ALEX

Okay, but is there some place in particular?

TARA

Are you fucking slow? Just drive, I'll direct you. Christ!

ALEX

Again, I-I don't mean to agitate you --

TARA

-- Then shut-up and do as I say.

ALEX

Look, let's address the elephant in the room: you're an escaped convict. Terminal Island, right?

TARA
Ooh, maybe you're not slow.

ALEX
I understand you want to get away,
but-but--

She fidgets and shakes her head, sighs.

Tara gives her an obvious: "what the fuck?" look. Alex grits her teeth.

ALEX
Making your kidnapped getaway
driver nervous and keeping your
plans need-to-know isn't exactly --
(forced Boston accent)
-- Wicked smaht!

Tara scowls, half-smirks.

TARA
Okay. I'm going to Mexico.

ALEX
Should've guessed.

TARA
I'm going in style, though. All
you gotta do is get me to
Huntington Beach. Easy simple.

ALEX
Fine. I can get you there.

TARA
You fucking better.

The two share a glare or two but the sound of silence grows.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Bridget is over her phone.

BRIDGET
(into phone)
California plates, Delta-Delta-
Yankee-Papa-Romeo-Sierra-Hotel.
And I'm gonna need one of the local
humps to drive me back to my car...
roger that -- and be quick about
it, I've wasted enough time, here!

She hangs up. Bridget chokes up, grits her teeth.

INT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Tara looks quizzically at Alex.

TARA
Wicked smaht, huh? You from Mass?

ALEX
LA. My h -- ex-husband, he was
from Charlestown, originally.

TARA
An aristocrat. I'm Southie. Shit,
wonder if that fat fuck had any...

She reaches into the glove box, cheers. She pulls out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

TARA
Mary and Joseph, thank you!

She tosses one into her mouth, lights, takes a long drag, blows smoke.

Alex dramatically coughs.

TARA
Bitch, don't pretend like I don't
still got a gun pointed at you.

ALEX
Might as well, just put me outta my
fucking misery, with the day --
screw it, the life I have.

TARA
Oh, poor you, do I look like one of
the fucking Kardashians? No, I'm
desperate and tired!

ALEX
Fuck you, and your desperation!
You wanna die too? Go ahead, kill
me! Right now I don't have much.

Tara looks at Alex.

She's serious.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Binita walks over to Emily and Josh.

BINITA

Boy, you sure know how to pick 'em.

EMILY

You are on my last fucking nerve.

BINITA

I just got your "business partner" leaving in a car I don't think is hers. There's a guy laying next to where the car was parked, bleeding. I nearly escaped with my own life.

JOSH

See, what'd I say? Look, far be it from me to call a woman crazy, b --

EMILY

-- Be quiet.

JOSH

Wait, she beat a guy up?

BINITA

I didn't record that, but I saw her leave, and he was on the ground.

EMILY

We should call the police.

Emily walks away, takes off her phone.

JOSH

Wow, you are so brave, being so close to danger like that.

BINITA

It's what a good journalist does.

She smiles at him.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DEAD END - DAY

A Long Beach police cruiser pulls up to Bridget's car.

She gets out, says nothing, and simply gets into --

INT. BRIDGET'S CAR - DAY

She starts up. She rubs the photograph, and backs out. Her radio BLASTS. Her Dispatch SUPERVISOR (50s) loud voice.

SUPERVISOR (ON RADIO)
Marshal Kim! Bridget, what the fuck's going on? I got three different agencies up my ass!

BRIDGET
I did a report on what happened.

SUPERVISOR (ON RADIO)
I know that, I got a Long Beach PD helicopter getting you on camera having your weapon menacing on the escapee while surrendering?

Bridget sighs.

SUPERVISOR (ON RADIO)
I got the DA, AUSA, State's Attorney, the fucking ACLU all out for blood here!

BRIDGET
It's not fucking true! I sent to control the current vehicle the suspect is in. Definitely stolen, possible hostage.

SUPERVISOR (ON RADIO)
You need to come home.

BRIDGET
I'm fine! I don't need anyone's help! All I need to do is catch this psycho!

A tear falls down her cheek.

INT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Tara lights another cig.

TARA
He Irish? Your ex?

ALEX
It isn't relevant. I-I don't want to talk about him.

TARA

I'll go out on a limb and say you're Latina. Funny how they thought the Church would bring us together, but we never seem to get along, huh?

ALEX

Please stop.

TARA

He beat you, didn't he?

Alex chokes up, sobs.

TARA

Oh, fuck me, I'm sorry, okay? Color me curious.

ALEX

Look, I get it. You're risking your life right now, you've kidnapped me, clearly you've got a lot going on, but, you really don't understand what I've been through.

TARA

You wanna trade shitty boyfriend horror stories? And here I thought we'd pass the Bechdel Test.

ALEX

Oh please, my ex was barely a drop in the bucket.

TARA

Sweetheart, I just Cool Hand Luke-d my way over here. You don't think I've seen some shit?

Alex pauses, looks away.

TARA

No, you didn't. You think prison is an endless all girls sleepover? Fuck no, it's fucking hell! Put us inmates aside. We're alone, we have needs, it happens. You really gotta worry about the guards.

ALEX

I-I-I heard about that, but, I-I never really believed --

TARA

-- And why would you? I'm probably the closest you've ever gotten to someone in an orange jumpsuit.

ALEX

I'm so sorry. I didn't... Look, helping people overcome abuse, that's kind of my thing. I'm a motivational speaker. All I ever wanted to do was help others be happy. I'd fucking sell my soul if I could just make a real difference in someone else's life.

Tara looks at Alex, she's serious.

Tara shrugs, feigns concern.

TARA

Well, God, t-t-t-there's just so many things...

Tara trails, forces sadness.

ALEX

No-no, I-I don't want you to relive anything you don't want to. Sometimes it's good to shout your trauma, but, other times reliving it is just too much.

Tara smiles, she lowers the gun.

She takes the pack of cigarettes, flicks one up from the pack, puts it near Alex's face.

Alex shrugs.

TARA

Atta girl.

Tara smirks, puts the pack towards Alex's mouth. Alex chomps on the smoke.

Tara lights it up. Alex drags, blows smoke.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Long Beach COPS and PARAMEDICS tend to Denny.

Binita stands in their way, camera on.

DENNY

The blonde woman tries to jack my car. I try to fight her off and then out of nowhere this other woman just jumps me.

Binita muscled her way forward, holding up her phone with Alex's photo.

BINITA

This woman, correct? Alex Valiendez?

PARAMEDIC

Ma'am, can you move, please? This man might have a concussion.

DENNY

She didn't say her name, but yeah that looks just like her. They jumped in my car and went off.

She turns to an incredulous Emily. Josh stands behind her.

BINITA

Unhinged, ruined your big launch. Wonder how much money was lost? Do you have a criminal negligence clause in your business contracts?

JOSH

I might be persuaded to put this shit-show behind us, if say, Alex was not in the picture.

Emily sighs, and lightly nods.

Binita walks away as the two negotiate. She makes a call on her phone.

BINITA

(into phone)

Irv, are you sitting down? ... No, it's a figure of speech. Listen, this thing in Long Beach has legs, here's my headline: "Unhinged motivational speaker carjacks motorist at event she trashed." ... No, I'm not being dramatic, I got reacts, footage, names and art for two different victims -- and, get this, police are saying they think she may be with an escaped convict from Terminal Island earlier today.

She stops, sees Cecil smile at her, he jerks his head for Binita to follow him.

BINITA
 (into phone)
 Hey, I gotta go.

She hangs up.

INT. BRIDGET'S CAR - DAY

Bridget speeds, lights and sirens on.

SUPERVISOR (ON RADIO)
 Helicopters got 'em on Ocean, just a few blocks south east of you, probably OC bound. And Bridge, AUSA is with me. She wants a word.

United States Attorney for the Central District of California
 NICOLE MARKUM (48) White, angry, hops on.

NICOLE (ON RADIO)
 Tell me this is a sick fucking joke. Tell me the footage of you having your clearly non-issued weapon to an unarmed perp's head execution style is a --

Bridget turns off the radio, scowls.

INT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Alex listens to Tara. Tara forces herself to choke up.

TARA
 It's bullshit, the justice system. It's not reform, it's all punishment. Like... How can I live with myself, just going to the infirmary, for them to shoot me with all sorts of drugs, then to have some guard just whip his dick out... what can I do?

Alex sheds a tear.

TARA
 I'm a bank robber, right? I get it, I'm not gonna be one of those who's all "I'm innocent, wasn't me" and all that shit.
 (MORE)

TARA (CONT'D)

But I don't deserve that. So, yeah, I left, and I didn't know what else to do.

ALEX

Oh my God. That's fucking awful. I-I had no idea.

TARA

How could you? It ain't just the corrections fucks, it's the damn cops. They-they just lock anyone up. "Thin blue line, upholders of law and order", fuck 'em. All the drugs, sex work, all the non-violent shit, people like me who lost their way -- they don't care!

ALEX

Well, they're not all bad. But, I-I feel so guilty right now. I'm over here complaining about my life, and here you are.

TARA

Don't do that. Fuck, I kidnapped you, that doesn't change. I'm still a piece of shit. Sorry, I just, don't know who to turn to. This is me starting fresh.

ALEX

I can relate.

TARA

How, seriously? All due respect, husband troubles and lady prison troubles aren't the same.

Alex's hand shakes, she stares off...

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: 2016.

Alex chops some vegetables with a large knife. She's angry. Her chops are haphazard, loud.

The front door OPENS then CLOSES shut a moment later.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Al?

No words. She answers by slamming the knife into the remains of a tomato.

Scott saunters into the kitchen. Her back is to him.

SCOTT

What's wrong? I-I've been trying to call you for over three hours.

ALEX

It's fine. I'm fine.

SCOTT

Jesus with the fucking drama, again. Look, I know I'm late. There was an accident on the 101.

ALEX

You said that last week. You were at the Federal again, weren't you?

SCOTT

What? No. No, there was an accident. Hand to God.

ALEX

Well you were there last Tuesday. I know that because I saw on your phone's location that's where you were. You lied then.

Scott pinches the bridge of his nose.

SCOTT

Fine. I had one drink. I mean it. But seriously, I was in traffic this time.

ALEX

Yeah Scott. "This time". When were you gonna tell me? I didn't say anything because I thought maybe you'd finally own up to something on your own. Silly me.

SCOTT

Is this why you've been pissing in my ear all week? Well I'm so sorry hon, that I'm stressed with all the extra work I took on because God forbid you hold down a steady job for more than ten minutes.

Alex fumes. She finally turns, facing him.

ALEX

Don't start with that again. If I told you why I had to quit the force, you wouldn't understand.

SCOTT

Couldn't have anything to do with all the psycho drugs they pumped you with? No, couldn't be that.

She sobs, points the knife at him, her hand fidgets.

ALEX

I don't need this shit. I just want you to take ownership of your life but you can't even be honest with me! With all your shit I put up with day in and day fucking out, the bare minimum I want is just a modicum of truth!

SCOTT

Because you count my drinks like I'm a degenerate alcoholic!

ALEX

You are! All I've ever done is loved you, tried desperately to help you and I get nothing from you! No warmth, no comfort! I'm all alone! One day you'll just wake up and I won't be here! Maybe I'll get hit by a bus! You can drink all you want then!

SCOTT

Bullshit. You won't go anywhere. Because the second I go halfway out the door you're on my leg like puppy: "Please don't go, I'm so sorry--"

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her eyes glow yellow

>> Her face goes blank

>> Her hand fidgets more with the knife.

Borderline lunges, Scott pins her against the nearest wall.

BORDERLINE

Let go of her! I'll kill you!

He forces the knife out of her hands and it hits the floor.

The two look into one another but they stop. The doorbell CHIMES.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Her eyes return.

>> Her face turns to sadness.

>> Her hand returns to normal.

Alex is back. Scott pushes himself off of her.

SCOTT

I ordered Postmates. I um, didn't know about dinner so I wanted to help.

ALEX

Thank you, Scott.

He slowly makes a half-assed hug, and Alex calmly accepts.

END FLASHBACK

INT./EXT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - BACK TO SCENE

Alex stares off, her eyes go yellow. Tara shoves her.

TARA

Hey! Pay attention!

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

They're rapidly approaching a stopped crane parked on the side of a street.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> She slams on the brakes.

>> The car swerves

>> They crash into the crane.

They sit, heads smashed on the airbags.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - DAY

A helicopter hovers overhead. Distant SIRENS grow louder.

INT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Tara wipes bits of glass from her face.

Borderline is in, she cracks her neck.

TARA

You fucking space cadet! What's wrong with... you?

She turns, sees Borderline.

TARA

What the hell?

BORDERLINE

Are you serious about starting fresh? Really?

TARA

Uh... y-your eyes are --

BORDERLINE

Shut the fuck up, and listen.

Tara nods, eyes wide.

BORDERLINE

First, gimme that Glock.

TARA

Fuck you, I want the Glock.

BORDERLINE

You don't know how to use it. I critiqued your aim when you aimed that revolver at her earlier.

TARA

Uh... her?

BORDERLINE

Let the professional use the big girl guns, you just stay close by, and let's try to make it look like you're taking us hostage.

TARA

Okay... uh, you need to tell me what the --

BORDERLINE

We can talk and run, give me the Glock, and head for that construction building over there.

Tara ponders. She sighs, and hands the Glock to Borderline. They exit.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - STAIRWELL - DAY

Binita and Cecil are alone on a landing.

CECIL

Quite the piece of muckraking.

BINITA

I know, right? She's a basket case, clearly. And this convict thing... God, I can make a series out of this.

CECIL

Perhaps I can aid in your work?

Binita reaches into her pocket, pulls out a small portable cigarette case.

She pulls out a joint, sticks it in her mouth.

BINITA

Sativa's good for focus.

She offers a joint to Cecil.

CECIL

When in Rome.

She lights hers, then Cecil's. He drags. He takes a long pause, blows smoke.

CECIL

I'm not here by accident. The woman, Alex? We go back. She doesn't remember me... I think?

Josh enters through a nearby door.

JOSH

Binita? Emily wants to hold her press conference.

BINITA

So fucking help me if The Post is here already. I wanna be in front. This story practically fell into their laps.

CECIL

(coughs)
Rain check.

She nods and leaves with Josh.

Cecil looks off, takes a long drag. Pauses, slowly exhales the smoke.

EXT. DENNY'S PORSCHE - DAY

Borderline and Tara make a beeline across the street.

EXT. BRIDGET'S CAR - DAY

Bridget swerves in right behind them.

She gets out, AR-15 in hand.

BRIDGET'S POV - CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX

A partially completed apartment block with a centralized courtyard. Borderline and Tara run through some concrete pillars to the bottom floor. Bridget LOOKS UP, sees a ladder nearby leading to the roof.

BRIDGET (O.S.)

That'll be a good vantage point.
Fish in a fucking barrel.

She sprints forward as more police converge.

INT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - BOTTOM FLOOR - DAY

Borderline and Tara stop behind a stack of plywood.

BORDERLINE
Steps, over there!

TARA
Okay, so, what is "this". You were
this blubbering mess five minutes
ago, now suddenly you're Rambo?

BORDERLINE
We'll lose them inside the
building. They'll think we're just
going to make a break for it down
here.

Borderline grabs Tara's wrist.

They run for a nearby exposed stairwell.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - ROOFTOP - DAY

Bridget climbs onto the roof, crouch-walks, her eyes fixate
on the courtyard, and the rest of the apartment building
across the way.

Much of the building is skeletal with stud-lined walls, some
of the walls have insulation up.

INT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - UPPER FLOOR - DAY

Sacks of plaster and tools lay around. The whole room is
open to the outside, an outdoor hallway is complete.

Tara breaks free of Borderline's grip.

TARA
Hold it! Look, understand
something, I'm the one trying to
escape here, and I'm willing to
stop for one fucking second and get
some answers, so...

She points the revolver right at Borderline.

TARA
...Talk fast.

BORDERLINE

You can call me Borderline. But the blubbering mess who keeps me existing is Alex. She's... she's naive, sweet, kind -- but to a fault. A do-gooder, defenseless. Think of me as another personality -- a far better one, who gives her a helping hand when she can't handle life on her own. She needs me. I've been there for her for a long time, and it's funny, she doesn't know what happens when I take her over...

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Alex holds up the Five-Seven from earlier.

BORDERLINE (V.O.)

Sometimes that's for the better.

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Shovel in hand, Alex buries the gun.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - UPPER FLOOR - BACK TO SCENE

BORDERLINE

I've evolved, too...

Borderline points to her grin.

BORDERLINE

...Used to be more stoic.

She approaches Tara who shakes her aim.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - DAY

Emily stands stone-faced with a sea of REPORTERS (20s-50s) in front of her with phones and recorders. Josh stands next to Emily, big grin.

Binita is right in front. She holds out a recorder, while her phone films her.

BINITA

The question on everyone's mind is: where does W.A.A.C. go from here, knowing their co-founder's mental unpredictability? How can you possibly allow someone who clearly is an abuser herself to council vulnerable individuals?

EMILY

It is... it is of great regret of the... state that Alex Valiendez put this foundation in. I am forced to remove her from Women Against Abuse Coalition effective immediately. Our primary investor, Josh Danzig would like to answer some questions.

Emily moves out of the way.

Binita smiles at him.

CECIL

Watches from the crowd, smirks. He takes a drag from his joint, blows smoke.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

We're back to the beginning, just in a new room. A MONITOR shows Alex strapped to the medical table.

ALEX (ON TV)

Uh, hello? Anyone?

It's Cecil. He presses an intercom button.

CECIL

Our apologies officer Sheehan, it's taken us longer than expected to synthesize your last dose. While you wait, have you any questions about the operation, or process?

He writes on a notepad.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MAIN GALLERY - BACK TO SCENE

Demi walks up to Cecil.

DEMI

Good shit?

Cecil smirks, hands Demi the joint. She takes a puff. He turns to walk away.

JOSH (O.S.)

We are not going to let these...
unfortunate events hamper the
progress to continue to keep the
most vulnerable among us safe!

The crowd CHEERS.

INT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - UPPER FLOOR - DAY

Tara shakes the gun.

Borderline swats it to the ground, grabs her by the throat.

BORDERLINE

Do I paint a good picture? I am
not someone to be trifled with!
Now, you wanna escape? Fine, I get
it, you've clearly gone through
hell.

Tara wheezes, nods profusely.

TARA

Listen... Borderline, I'm not
just... leaving with nothing, I'm
going down south cause I got a fuck
ton of money stashed away,
millions. Help take me there, we
split it. I'll bet Alex could do a
lot of good with that money. And,
you'll help me. What do you say?

Borderline's grin grows, she lets go.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - ROOFTOP - DAY

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

Bridget looks across the courtyard.

BRIDGET'S POV - BORDERLINE AND TARA

Commiserating. Both oblivious.

Bridget smiles.

She kneels takes aim. The sun shines off the scope.

Tara picks up the revolver.

Borderline sees the sun glare, she looks over at --

BORDERLINE'S POV - BRIDGET

Ready to fire.

BORDERLINE

Get down!

She tackles Tara to the ground.

Bridget fires indiscriminately, misses both of them.

BORDERLINE

Get up! You move forward, run
along the sides and shoot towards
the roof!

TARA

Fuck!

She fires, takes cover behind a --

STACK OF CEMENT SACKS

Borderline runs over to her.

TARA

You're supposed to be my hostage.
I can do more with the Glock.

Borderline rolls her eyes, they trade guns.

BORDERLINE

I'll try to wing her, force her to
retreat, you run.

BRIDGET

You're fucking dead Welch!

Bridget drops the now empty clip, quickly reloads.

She moves along the roof.

Tara's eyes widen. She's scared.

TARA

I know that psycho! She was chasing me all day -- she was about to blow my brains out fucking execution style!

Borderline recoils.

BORDERLINE

Alright, on three, you run...
one... two... three!

Tara runs first, shoots blindly towards Bridget.

Borderline gets out from cover, takes aim.

Bridget spots Tara run.

THROUGH THE CROSSHAIRS

Bridget gets a slight lead on Tara.

BRIDGET (O.S.)

This is for Jerry...

TRIGGER -- Bridget slowly squeezes.

Borderline fires.

BRIDGET'S CHEST -- The round slices through the lower of the gun, hits Bridget right in the vest.

Bridget hits the ground.

Borderline stands, smirks. She runs off towards Tara.

Bridget groans, looks at the busted gun. She tosses it, and looks down at her vest, the round nestled dead center.

BRIDGET

Fuck me. Asshole!

She rolls, her Desert Eagle falls to the roof.

Bridget goes to pick it up.

SAFETY -- as she does, her finger depresses the safety, it's now on.

INT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - CORNER ROOM - DAY

Borderline finds Tara, who catches her breath by a trash chute against the wall.

TARA

Come on!

She slides down. Borderline follows.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - REAR AREA - DAY

Pallets of lumber and rebar.

Tara and Borderline hit the deck.

WORK TRUCK

An old pickup is nearby.

BORDERLINE

Can you hot wire that?

TARA

Don't insult me.

They rush over.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPLEX - ROOFTOP - DAY

Bridget moves to the edge of the roof, looks down.

BRIDGET'S POV - REAR AREA

She sees Borderline and Tara break into the truck.

Bridget sprints back to the other side of the roof.

INT. WORK TRUCK - DAY

Tara works fast. She hot wires the truck, it STARTS.
Borderline drives.

MUSIC pours from the stereo.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Borderline's grin fades

>> Her hand ceases shaking.

>> Her pupils return to normal.

Tara cheers, and gives Alex a big hug.

TARA
Jesus! I can't fucking believe
that! You were incredible!

She sees Alex's eyes. She recoils.

TARA
Oh, are you... are you back? Is
this Alex?

ALEX
This doesn't look familiar? What
did she do?

TARA
Borderline saved my life,
seriously. She gave me a bit of a
rundown about how it all works --
still kind of confused, never got a
real origin story.

ALEX
Much longer conversation... fuck,
is this still Long Beach?

TARA
Okay, I am pumped. Pumped!

ALEX
(smiles)
Really?

TARA
Dude, Alex, you -- two, were
awesome.

ALEX
You don't think Borderline's like a
weird thing? Crazy?

TARA
Fuck no. At first, yeah, but, can
you blame me? You made up for it.

ALEX
We saved your life?

TARA
That sociopath fed would've killed
me, I think. Hey, you wanna talk
about saving lives, from abuse, or
whatever, you saved mine. Shit,
I'm Tara by the way. Can she hear
me, too?

ALEX

I think she can, I can't when
she's... around.

TARA

Interesting.

She grins, twirls her hair.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - JOSH'S CAR - DAY

Binita and Josh rush over to his Corvette. A parking ticket
is under the wipers.

JOSH

Hey, where was that old guy you
were talking to?

BINITA

I'll look him up. Everyone's gonna
want a piece of me anyhow once I
leak this to TikTok. You ever
sleep with a soon-to-be Pulitzer
winner?

JOSH

That's the news one, right?

They hop in the car.

They furiously make out, start to remove each others clothes.

EXT. BRIDGET'S CAR - DAY

Recklessly speeds, lights and sirens on.

INT. WORK TRUCK - DAY

Alex smiles warmly, while Tara ejects a clip from the Glock.

ALEX

This is really important to me.
You actually think I had an impact
on your life.

TARA

Don't get schmaltzy.

ALEX

No, I mean it. All I ever wanted to do is fucking help someone who was trapped, and powerless.

(chokes up)

I've tried. There's so many exploited people in the world, and nobody gives a good fuck about any of them. It's all about money, bureaucracy, fucking selfishness. Makes me feel empty.

Tara smirks, she rubs Alex's cheek.

TARA

You did help me and --

The car suddenly GRINDS to a halt.

GAS GAUGE -- well past E.

ALEX

Oh fuck! We're out of gas!

TARA

No fucking shit, Sherlock! Dammit!
We were so close!

SIRENS! They're right on top of the truck.

EXT. COUNTY LINE - DAY

The two are stopped on a small bridge on the one right at the county line. A bridge over the San Gabriel River on PCH.

Bridget's car swerves up right in front of them, blocking their path.

In Bridget's wake she nearly collides with a CYCLIST (20s).

Who is forced to jump out of the way.

INT./EXT. WORK VAN - DAY

They watch Bridget get out, gun trained on the truck.

BRIDGET

End of the line, Welch! Get out of the car!

ALEX

Did you see that maniac? She nearly killed that guy!

TARA

That's the psycho fed. She's the one needs to be in jail.

Alex looks on at Bridget.

BRIDGET

Out of the car! Now! Both of you!

TARA

What do we do?

ALEX

I don't know. I-I-

TARA

I get it. You did all you could, right? It doesn't matter, I'll just give up.

ALEX

B-But, you'll go back to prison.

TARA

Yeah, but you won't. Maybe one of us should be spared that hell.

ALEX

But, I-I don't k --

TARA

-- Just go!

Alex makes a small nod, and opens the door.

INT./EXT. WORK TRUCK - DAY

Alex slowly gets out of the car with both hands raised.

ALEX

Hands are up. I am unarmed.

BRIDGET

Get on your face, shit-bird!

Alex looks at Bridget, then at Tara.

TARA'S EYES -- Cold. Serious.

Alex turns to Bridget, slowly moving towards the open door.

ALEX

A Marshal, huh? Desert Eagles are standard issue over there?

BRIDGET

Quiet!

(to Tara)

You know what you did, Welch!

ALEX

Did you notice that kid you nearly flattened trying to stop us.

BRIDGET

Shut the hell up and get on your fucking face!

Alex looks in the car again.

THE GLOCK

sits in Tara's lap. She slowly slips in a new clip, the action racks.

TARA'S FACE - fidgety.

Alex looks as Bridget slowly steps away and towards the opening. Alex looks at Bridget again.

ALEX'S POV - BRIDGET'S GUN

She can see the safety is on.

She looks back in at Tara, ready to pounce. That safety is definitely off.

Bridget breathes deeply, fighting back tears.

BRIDGET

You little fuck! I'm gonna kill you! You're gonna get what you deserve!

Alex pauses. NO SOUND. Scott's voice suddenly in her head.

SCOTT (V.O.)

You'll get what you deserve!

Just before Tara is about to strike Alex LEAPS up, sound cuts back in.

COUNTY LINE

Alex tackles Bridget to the ground. Bridget is shocked.

BRIDGET
What in the hell?

ALEX
Stay down. Pig!

Alex kicks the Desert Eagle away, and makes a sprint for Bridget's car.

ALEX
Tara, come on!

Tara gets out of the car, and runs past Bridget.

Tara spits in Bridget's face as she runs past.

She hops in the passenger's seat.

TARA
Dropped something, bitch!

Alex swerves back onto the road while a dumbfounded Bridget gets to her feet.

COUNTY LINE SIGN

The car speeds past ORANGE COUNTY LINE signage.

FADE OUT:

END OF EPISODE

ISASSINS (PILOT)

Written by

Nick Durdan

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. THE RENTER - NIGHT

Loud house music blares from this swanky club. CLUBBERS line the streets outside. A large BOUNCER (30s) Black, stands at the entrance, lets three young drunk WOMEN (mid 20s) inside.

INT. THE RENTER - CONTINUOUS

The three walk up to the bar, where many PATRONS drink and stare at their phones. GIGI (21), White and VIOLET (22) Hispanic, laugh as Gigi shows her phone to Violet.

GIGI

Oh my God, Violet, it's that fucking guy again.

VIOLET

Ew, he's so gross.

Near them, a waitress, LUZ, (26), Hispanic, grabs a tray of beverages, walks past a table with two men, CYRUS, (30), and YAZ, (32) both Asian. Cyrus cries, stares at his phone.

CYRUS

I knew he was cheating on me.

Luz walks toward a staircase, walks up. It's a wraparound balcony. She passes three college dudes, TREY White, muscular, AUSTIN White yuppie, and LEVONN Black, skinny, (all 21), phones in hand. Austin shows the other two his phone.

AUSTIN

Yo, check this one out. She's a ten, for sure.

LEVONN

Nah, you're full of shit, bro.

Luz rolls her eyes as she continues on to a door at the end of the balcony, she opens it, walks in.

INNER HALLWAY

Luz gasps, drops the tray. She closes the door in a panic.

In front of her is a DEAD BODY, multiple gunshot wounds.

SCREAMS, BANGS are heard O.S., down the hallway, which ends with a vinyl strip curtain door. Luz falls to her knees, in fear.

The curtain moves, and a MAN staggers forward. SPENCER SCHIFFRIN, (53) White, ugly, bloodied face. He's armed with a revolver.

SPENCER

You'll do -- oh, and you spilled my drink. Let's make up for that.

He grabs Luz.

But as he does, someone emerges from the curtain door. ROXANNE "ROXY" NITSUI, (27) Hispanic, long haired, shaky grip on a silenced Beretta 92FS.

Spencer stands Luz on her feet, gun to her head.

SPENCER

Come on, honey, l-let's just talk this out, now. No one else needs to get hurt, okay?

Roxy shakes. Tears stream from her eyes.

SPENCER'S POV - ROXY

He stares right into the barrel of Roxy's gun.

ROXY

I don't... I don't want to... I-I w-w-want to... I want you to...

She takes a long deep breath. A pause. Her demeanor hardens. Her grip calms. She stops crying.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Why do you even care? She was a fucking thief! She stole from me... she was... She was a wh --

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. THE LAIR - DOJO - DAY

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN COLOMBIA, TWO YEARS AGO

Sleek, filled with martial arts training equipment.

VARIOUS YOUTHS (18-30s) various ethnicities clad in form-fitting battle suits sit cross-legged, and listen to a speech by ANATOLY DRAGOLEVICH (54) White, Russian, bald, fit.

Roxy sits in front.

ANATOLY

Soon, the fruits of our labor will be realized. The global revolution for the workers of the world rests solely in our hands.

Roxy waves nearby to ROSE (25) White, blonde, ponytail, who winks at her.

Anatoly clears his throat, looks down at Roxy.

ANATOLY

This is not a revolution for you. There is no you, that is what we fight against, there is only we. We are the change the world needs.

Roxy narrows her eyes at him.

INT. IMRAN'S OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES, PRESENT DAY

Sterile glass-lined office. Roxy dressed in a pantsuit, adjusts herself in a chair.

She practices her smile once, then twice, not satisfied.

Her hands fidget.

In front of her is IMRAN MONTEZ (35) Hispanic, portly, he flips through some papers.

ROXY

So, I hope my degree from Tufts is satisfactory? I have three customer service jobs.

IMRAN

I saw those, good.

He sighs, sets the papers down.

IMRAN

Roxanne.

ROXY

Roxy, please.

IMRAN

Roxy... SoCal Financial Solutions is... we sell life insurance, but, what we offer to our clients is a friendly staff. What can you bring for us?

ROXY

Well... I-I've always wanted to help-others. You know, I'm a do-gooder, I want... I want to bring the American Dream to as many people as I can. To make a difference, I guess.

Imran scoffs.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A JUDGE (58) Black, addresses the JURY (20s-60s) as a LA SHERIFF'S DEPUTY (32) Hispanic, takes a paper from the JURY FOREPERSON (30) white.

Spencer sits as the defendant, he's next to his LAWYER (45).

The Judge reads from the paper.

JUDGE

In the charge of sexual assault in the first degree you, the jury, find the defendant Spencer Schiffrin... not guilty.

Spencer nods.

JUDGE

In the charge of forcible rape in the first degree, you the jury find the defendant, Spencer Schiffrin... not guilty.

Spencer sighs of relief.

GALLEY

A HAND works a futuristic-looking smartphone colored in red and black, this is the DarkPhone.

PHONE SCREEN -- iSassins app: new target? Schiffirin, Spencer.

Spencer happily walks with the Sheriff's deputy, not in handcuffs. He waves to his wife HEIDI (40) White, quickly hugs his daughter Mae (12) White.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - DAY

Old Corolla, Lyft stickers on the windshield. Roxy's phone on a car mount.

She's fresh from her interview, not happy.

ROXY

"A do-gooder, I just wanna make a difference." Oh, fucking shoot me! God, why am I so bad at this?

She pulls over, presses a button on her phone.

ON SCREEN: Lyft app: new passenger, JAKE.

A moment later, the rear passenger door opens, JAKE (25) White, tech bro.

Roxy forces a smile.

ROXY

For J --

JAKE

-- Yeah-yeah Jake, and hurry up about it. I'm late, big meeting.

Roxy sighs.

INT. AKARI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

AKARI FEILIN (47), Asian, makes a cup of espresso with an authentic espresso maker. Her hair is long, she's dressed like a CEO, in her ear is a bluetooth headset.

Akari's daughter, ERICA (27), Asian, walks past, scowl on her face. She dresses very punk.

AKARI

Good morning, sweetie. I ordered DoorDash for breakfast. Should be here any second.

ERICA

Must be nice to be our six-figure personal chef with all the DoorDash we order. I'm meeting Drake for Starbucks anyway for our thing.

AKARI

Great! I'll see you at work.

Erica rolls her eyes, walks on.

Akari sees her shirt pulled up in the back. The grip of a pistol sticks out of her pants.

AKARI

Erica, honey-honey... gun?

Erica pauses, reaches back, fixes her shirt to hide the gun.

INT. RAOUL'S CASINO - DAY

A ball drops into a spinning roulette wheel. VINCENT "VINCE" RENZULLI, (59) White, grizzled, with a Hawaiian shirt, porkpie hat, and slacks. He watches the ball spin.

Surrounding Vince are a plethora of slot machines and tables, most of them broken. COUGHS and BANGS are heard O.S.

JASON & RAOUL

The casino's owner: RAOUL YEKYANI (44) Asian, kneels, beaten and bloody. JASON MASSARINO (32), White, well-coifed, knocks him senseless.

RAOUL

Please, Jason! Stop.

JASON

How many fucking times did I tell you, Raoul? How many fucking times? Quit kicking up shit!

VINCE

Snaps out of his trance and looks at the massacre near him.

VINCE

Jesus Christ, Jas! Jason!

He runs over.

JASON AND RAOUL

Raoul stops screaming as Vince runs over, pulls Jason off.

Raoul falls to his side.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - DAY

Roxy is on a call, on speaker.

ROXY

Yes, I understand the payment is late, but I-I...

CUSTOMER REP (ON PHONE)

We're sorry Mrs. Nitsui, but if payment is not made by this Friday, service will be shut off.

Roxy ends the call.

ROXY

Fuck you, pay me... relax, it's just a bump in the road.

She snarls.

INT. MAC'S APARTMENT - FOYER/KITCHEN - DAY

MAC WILLICK (35) White, opens the door, reveals TUCKER LIEBGOTT (40) Black, blazer, tyrolean hat, bowtie, light German accent.

TUCKER

Your chariot awaits.

MAC

You're a lifesaver, Tucker, really.

TUCKER

Might a lifesaver be rewarded with a little caffeine boost?

MAC

We got time? I didn't pack my Nespresso. Fuck knows I can get a new one.

Mac turns to his left into the small kitchen, where a Nespresso maker sits by the sink. Mac stands perpendicular to Tucker.

Mac looks at the water reservoir, it's near empty. He unhooks it, fills it with water in the sink.

TUCKER

Quite the contract out on you, Mac. Real shame, you were a good financier, great potential. Have you given much thought at all the people you've swindled?

MAC

Yeah-yeah, I'll go get right with Jesus once you get me outta LA.

TUCKER

But would you swindle again?

MAC

I-I don't know. Sure as shit would cover my tracks better, right?

TUCKER

(frowns)

I see.

He chuckles, places the reservoir back on the machine.

Tucker sighs. VIBRATIONS, he picks up a DarkPhone.

TEXT ON SCREEN: iSassins app: new contract available: Spencer Schiffrin. Need done immediately! Accept?

TUCKER

Good contract.

He puts his phone away, then reaches into his blazer pocket, pulls out a silenced Walther PPK. He takes aim. Mac doesn't see him.

MAC

All I got is hazelnut, is that --

PEW! Right to the head. Blood splatters all over the counters and wall. Mac's corpse hits the floor.

INT. JASON'S CAR - DAY

Vince drives Jason's car, an old El Dorado. Jason whips out a vape and blows a few fat clouds. Windows up.

JASON

Jimmy's longshoreman says that new casino equipment's gonna be here end of the month. LED slots, new tables. S'gonna be dope.

VINCE

That's nice. Except, since you "sent your message", we now have a useless piece of real estate making this family zero dollars until that comes in. And another thing, you're the boss, Jas, you need to delegate more, okay? Not channel Al Capone on some random deadbeat!

JASON

Watch it, Vincent. You got one thing right, I am the boss, and a boss deserves respect.

VINCE

For fuck's sake, Jason, I've been in this life since you were a gleam in your dad's eye. All I'm saying is: if the feds get your --

JASON

-- Relax, grandpa. You ain't in Brooklyn anymore. The feds could care less about our thing in LA. It's all about: cartels, cartels, and, oh yeah, cartels.

VINCE

Keep acting sloppy and it'll be: RICO, RICO, and, oh yeah, more cock-sucking RICO!

JASON

I won't tolerate homophobia in my presence. I know what I'm doing. I can live without your "years of experience". And, since you clearly have too much time on your hands to wonder how I run things, you can pick up my dry-cleaning before you make your collections. Also, I got a debt in Hipster-land I need collected, and it's final notice time for this one. You want me to delegate, you handle it.

Jason drags, then blows right in Vince's face.

EXT. MAC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Tucker stands outside near the street. He holds his DarkPhone, a demonic logo reading DWT is on the reverse.

TEXT ON SCREEN: Lyft app: Your driver: Roxy, is pulling up!

Tucker sees Roxy's rust bucket pull up in front of him.

He winces, climbs in the back.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Roxy turns, fakes a too-toothy smile.

ROXY
Hi, for Tucker?

He pauses, she still smiles. Despite the awkward pause, she holds this nightmare-inducing grin.

TUCKER
Ah, yes. You are Roxanne?

ROXY
Roxy, please.

TUCKER
Oh, not Roxanne?

Roxy begins driving away. Her face blank.

ROXY
Just Roxy.

TUCKER
Of course. Clean car.

ROXY
I pride myself on cleanliness.

TUCKER
Such a shame you have to work with such an old automobile.

ROXY
Pays the bills.

TUCKER
Does it?

ROXY

It's LA. "Pays the bills" just means you're poor with a roof over your head.

TUCKER

What else are you doing to climb yourself out of poverty?

ROXY

Um, it's not all that easy.

TUCKER

Is this your only source of income? I've heard these "gigs" are supplemental. What else do you do?

Roxy pauses. Scrambles.

ROXY

I'm a writer. Journalism.

Tucker half-smirks.

TUCKER

Why the stutter? You didn't seem you could convince yourself of such borscht. Certainly didn't sway me.

ROXY

I don't usually get analyzed by my passengers. Usually I listen to their tales of woe.

TUCKER

I have no woe to speak of. So, I assume the "journalism" career is sidelined? Any family?

She holds up her left hand, wedding ring on her ring finger.

ROXY

My wife picked it out, herself.

TUCKER

Ah, there it is. I suppose you've put some distance between you and your "old-fashioned" family, ja?

ROXY

Ja. We're uh, not exactly on speaking terms.

TUCKER

So, the closeted lesbian falls in love, parents do not approve, and you've showed them by moving to the city of angels despite having no real plan and would refuse financial assistance even if offered. How'd I do?

ROXY

(jeers)

Wow, it's like you know me.

TUCKER

It's textbook. Hobbies?

She grits her teeth.

ROXY

Journalism.

TUCKER

You just write random snippets? How did you get into journal --

ROXY

-- You know what? How 'bout you just be quiet, or you can walk!

She seethes. It subsides.

TUCKER

Sorry. You don't have to tell me the rest.

ROXY

There's nothing to tell, anyway.

TUCKER

As a penance, how about an opportunity to earn some extra money to pay those troublesome bills? It merely involves your current profession.

ROXY

I'm no drug mule.

TUCKER

No-no, I have a few errands to run this evening and I would appreciate having a reliable driver. No drugs. Five-thousand dollars.

ROXY
Riiiiiiight. Then you lead me to
some undisclosed location where
some of your boys are waiting?

TUCKER
I promise you as a gentleman.

ROXY
Yeah well, you haven't been very
"gentlemanly" to me. Your stop's
coming up.

TUCKER
Pity.

Roxy pulls over while Tucker reaches into his pocket, pulls
out a wad of cash.

Roxy looks in the rearview, eyes widen.

Tucker pulls out a hundred from the stack, places it on the
center console.

TUCKER
Aufwiedersehen, Roxanne.

He steps out.

Roxy crumples up the bill.

EXT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Roxy parks in front of a split level mission style apartment.

EXT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Roxy walks up, NANETTE MAROOKIAN (38) White, too much makeup,
tapes a FINAL NOTICE sign on the door.

ROXY
Oh, come on, Nanette.

NANETTE
No, no come on. I've some deadbeat
tenants in my day but you two --

ROXY
-- We're in a recession, what do
you want from me?

NANETTE

I want my fucking rent. Three months, that's \$7,500.

ROXY

But I --

NANETTE

-- By Wednesday, and don't think I won't evict you. If I were you, I'd get my house in order.

Nanette motions over to the WINDOW, Roxy looks in.

ROXY'S POV - LIVING ROOM

A WOMAN sits on the couch, laptop opened.

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Messy, sparse.

Roxy's wife MIA NITSUI (25) Asian, tired-looking, types away.

LAPTOP SCREEN -- it's online poker.

Roxy opens the door holding the final notice, and Mia quickly shuts the laptop.

MIA

Hey-hey, babe. How'd it go?

ROXY

Fucking shoot me in the face!

MIA

That's about what we expected.

Roxy sits on the couch next to Mia, leans on her shoulder, then throws the final notice sign on the coffee table.

ROXY

Fucking Nanette, she wants all the back rent by Friday, or else.

MIA

Fuck me, when did she turn into such a fascist?

ROXY

When a recession stopped being about semantics.

She throws off her blazer coat.

ROXY

If it helps, I got a few rides. Woulda' been home earlier but the police had Los Feliz blocked, I dunno, a shooting at a Starbucks, or something.

MIA

It doesn't really help. Fuck, what are we gonna do, like I am this close to considering doing porn.

ROXY

You'll never get your SAG card that way. Besides, I'd never share you with other women. I'd kill them.

MIA

You wish. Knowing my luck, it'll be a bunch of gross old white men.

She winces, then kisses Mia on the cheek and gets up, walks past a breakfast nook and over to the --

KITCHEN

The sink is full of dirty dishes.

ROXY

Mia, what were you doing all day?

MIA

I'm sorry. I've been so stressed with my audition, and the bills.

ROXY

Jesus! Were you playing online poker, again?

MIA

No-no, of course not.

ROXY

Well, you were doing something before I walked in.

Roxy's eyes narrow, sighs. She rolls up her sleeves, starts on the dishes.

MIA

Don't worry about the rent. I'll call my mom, swallow my pride.

ROXY

You shouldn't have to.

MIA

Well maybe if you had some family members we could contact? Have you considered your mom?

ROXY

That homophobe's dead to me. I-I don't wanna talk about this. Fuck the dishes, I need to chill.

Roxy looks in the cabinets.

MIA

There's none left, remember? I got half a joint, still.

Roxy smiles, walks back to the --

LIVING ROOM

And sits next to Mia. Mia grabs a half-smoked joint from an ash tray on the floor. She puts it in Roxy's mouth, grabs a Zippo, and lights it up.

Roxy takes a long drag. Nothing, no emotion. Mia snuggles up next to her. Roxy takes another drag, hands it to Mia.

ROXY

DWP's gonna cut us off Friday, too.

MIA

Babe, don't ruin my high.

ROXY

Have you given any thought about what I've been saying about IVF?

MIA

Rox, we were just talking about being this close to homelessness, and you wanna bring in a child?

ROXY

I dunno, I've been thinking about us being a real full family. Two parents, two kids, house in suburbia. America. It's all I can think about lately.

MIA

Beachfront. Redondo Beach has the best schools in the county. Not a bad commute for me if I'm at the studios. Fuck, drinking a coffee, looking out at the beach, together.

She caresses Roxy's hair, but Roxy stares off.

EXT. BEACH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The only sound heard is the ocean. Several empty shell casings line the sandy beach as a wave washes over them.

Anatoly lays near dead, a wave crashes onto him.

Roxy stands above him, tears in her eyes, choke marks on her neck. She raises a smoking Makarov pistol, but Rose quickly tackles her.

MIA (V.O.)

Rox... Rox... Babe... Roxy!

END FLASHBACK

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

Roxy snaps out of it, she sweats.

Mia looks at her uneasy, fearful.

ROXY

Sorry. That's good shit.

She weakly smiles.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MIA & ROXY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Roxy, now in casual clothes, stands by their microwave. It beeps. She pulls out a takeout tray of pad thai.

Her and Mia sit at the breakfast nook, fork their leftovers.

ROXY

Drove some fucking weirdo today.
He was analyzing me like I was a
mental patient. Gussed my entire
life's story right in front of me.

MIA

I mean, your life does sound like
it's out of a sitcom.

Roxy drops her fork.

ROXY

You too?

MIA

I didn't mean it like that, Rox.

ROXY

You wouldn't let me get to the good
part. I think he was like, trying
to fuck me. Told me he'd give me
five grand to be his personal
chauffeur tonight.

MIA

And you turned him down? The hell?

ROXY

Oh please, babe! "Hey cutie, how's
about you drive to wherever the
fuck and I'll pay all your bills",
get real, Mia.

MIA

Hey, I was willing to whore myself
for our future. All I'm saying.

Roxy sighs. Gets up.

ROXY

I'm gonna get more rides. Friday nights have always been good to me. You Doordash-ing?

MIA

I guess.

ROXY

Don't go to that casino, I mean it!

MIA

With what money? Promise me you'll be safe.

ROXY

Always. You be safe too.

They share a kiss.

LIVING ROOM

Roxy grabs her keys on the coffee table.

She looks down on the final notice sign.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

A naked Spencer stands on the side of the bed, thrusts into bored prostitute NINA GALVEZ, (23) Hispanic, slender. Caked-on coke lines Spencer's upper lip. He takes a long sniff.

INT. ISASSINS HQ - BULLPEN - NIGHT

Akari walks through a cubicle-lined room with Tucker. WORKERS (30s-40s) are hard at work.

AKARI

I thought you liked working with Watson, he's one our best cleaners.

TUCKER

All due respect Frau Feilin, he works too quickly. My cop knows two of my contracts now sit as homicide files. I was thinking Vincent Renzulli? I miss working with him, and my other friend Blane Taggart has a full plate.

AKARI

We'll see.

They walk over to --

AKARI'S OFFICE

TV monitors line the walls, it's modern, tech-y. Her desk chair turns around, revealing an angry Erica, she holds up a DarkPhone of her own.

ERICA

What the fuck, mom? Four-thousand for my job? It was clean!

AKARI

Sorry, honey, that's not what your photos read... not to mention, it was all over the news.

ERICA

The contractor wanted it in public. What did they expect?

AKARI

Adaptability would be nice. Oh, what was that you were saying to me earlier? About our personal chef we never use?

Erica's mouth drops.

AKARI

You know what, this solves a problem, doesn't it? Erica, how would you like Watson as your cleaner for the time being?

ERICA

That toxic shit-head? He always hits on me, plus he sucks at this.

AKARI

Well, Tucker here has requested a change, and, he is our number one.

A WORKER (30) White, knocks on the office door.

AKARI

It appears I'm needed elsewhere.

She leaves the two of them alone.

ERICA

Number one... great.

TUCKER

Don't look so glum. As such, I have more contracts than I can complete, on my own, anyway. Including a big time scammer ring.

ERICA

I'm not gonna be your second fiddle, Tuck. I work with Drake.

TUCKER

And how is that working out?

Erica sighs, ponders.

ERICA

No Watson. The way he cleans it's no wonder none of us are in front of a grand jury right now.

TUCKER

Vince Renzulli?

ERICA

I like Vinny, as long as he doesn't whine about his fucking boss.

Tucker chuckles, nods.

EXT. THE LAST ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A white van sits in front of this brick restaurant with a faded neon sign. On the side of the van it reads: "Renzulli Bros. Industrial Maintenance".

Vince steps out. Some dry-cleaned shirts wrapped in plastic slung over his shoulder. Four envelopes in the other hand.

INT. THE LAST ITALIAN RESTAURANT - PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason sits at a round table, smokes his vape.

Near him are two GQ-clad sycophants: GEORGIE TAGANO, (51), and STEVE DICARLO, (40) both White. Georgie shuffles a deck of cards.

Vince enters, walks with purpose over to Jason.

GEORGIE

Hey, Brooklyn Butcher! Come on, play a few hands with us.

Vince ignores them and drops Jason's clothes on the table.

VINCE
There's your shirts.

He plops each envelope on the table, reads each one.

VINCE
Carpenter's Union. Ramirez
Trucking. Guatemalan smoke shop.
Tico's Tv's. Tico was short.

JASON
Did you un-short him?

VINCE
Yes, but I also made sure he'll be
around for the next collection.
I'll handle that "debt" now, make
sure the laundry room's open.

Vince starts to walk out.

JASON
Georgie? Raoul Yekanyi's casino?
I think I want you to run that.

GEORGIE
I'd be honored, boss.

Vince stops halfway out the door, pauses. He groans.

EXT. THE LAST ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Vince stumbles over to his van. VIBRATIONS. He picks a
DarkPhone out of his pocket.

TEXT ON SCREEN: A secure call from "Tucker".

INT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Roxy waits with a scowl. She takes a deep breath.

ROXY
Positive thoughts. You need the
money. Think of the future.

Someone hops in. UMBERTO (31) Hispanic, portly.

ROXY
Hi. For Umberto, right?

She feigns a creepy smile.

MONTAGE

-- Umberto talks Roxy's ear off. She can't get a word in edgewise.

-- TWO MEN, (40s), make lewd and rude comments.

-- A COUPLE, (30s), fights in the back seat.

-- Three WOMEN, (20s), are loud and obnoxious. One takes Roxy's phone charger from her.

-- An OLD MAN (70s) sits shotgun, sleeps. His head rests on Roxy's shoulder.

-- Finally alone, Roxy's head falls onto the wheel.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DOWNTOWN - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Erica feels along the wall of a building while Tucker is nearby, phone to his ear.

TUCKER

(into phone)

I hear you, but you have to understand the absurdity of your situation, Vinny.

Erica finds a piece of --

EXPOSED CONCRETE

And forces it off the building.

INT. VINCE'S VAN - NIGHT

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

VINCE

(into phone)

Don't go Nietch on me, please.

TUCKER

(into phone)

Nietzsche. Malaprops notwithstanding, please, continue.

VINCE

(into phone)

It's like working for a child! He shrugs off RICO predicates like they're a big nothing, then he has the balls to give away the casino that I helped him bust out right in front of my face!

Erica reaches into the hole where the concrete was, she pulls out a --

SILENCED BERETTA 92FS

With a couple of spare clips, fully loaded.

VINCE

(into phone)

Are you even listening to me, Tuck?

TUCKER

(into phone)

Ja-ja, boss is a man-child, doesn't respect your input -- we've been over this, Vinny. I don't know the specifics about "your thing", but for Christ's sake, you're getting too old to be shaking down small business owners. So, for that matter, why not just quit? And don't hand me that: "I swore an oath" bullshit! What have they done for you, lately?

He pockets the pistol and clips into his blazer.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Car's in park. Roxy chugs an energy drink, spills a little. She sighs, glances at her phone.

TEXT ON SCREEN: The Lyft app: current earnings: \$45.71.

She pinches the bridge of her nose. VIBRATIONS, she looks back at the phone.

TEXT ON SCREEN: Text message: "Your recurring online payment for West Coast Mobile of \$130.50 Has been declined."

She seethes, clicks away at her phone...

TEXT ON SCREEN: online banking, \$21.08 Is her current checking account balance.

She screams, pounds on the steering wheel. She sobs.

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFFS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Roxy stands, stares off into the distance. She wears a skin-tight battle suit with a katana in a shoulder sheath.

Anatoly approaches her.

ANATOLY

Come, Roxanne.

She scowls at him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. ROXY'S CAR - BACK TO SCENE

Roxy screams. She breathes heavy, pauses, glances at the --

CENTER CONSOLE

Where Tucker's crumpled-up hundo sits in a cup holder.

Her eyes narrow. Long sigh. She picks up her phone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - CITY STREET - NIGHT

Tucker's still on the phone with Vince, eyes roll.

TUCKER

(into phone)

While I understand your
frustrations, your options are
quite limited. Now, we will need
to get into character for the job.

VINCE

(into phone)

I got my own corpse to make up in
Silver Lake first, an old debt.
Just start the party without me.

Tucker hangs up, groans. He goes to put away his phone, except, VIBRATIONS. He looks at it.

TEXT ON SCREEN: Lyft app: "Oops! Your driver: Roxy, has found an item you lost from your ride. \$5000. You may contact her directly for the safe return of your item."

TUCKER
Erica, I think I found our ride.

He smiles.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT ROOM - NIGHT

The SHOWER runs. Nina, now dressed, reaches into Spencer's pants, pulls out a large wad of cash, she goes to pocket it.

SPENCER

Towel around him, opens the door, catches her in the act.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

She deadpans. Tucker gets in the back.

TUCKER
What changed your mind?

ROXY
Debt and capitalism. Now, where
are we going?

TUCKER
416 Bonnie Brae Avenue.

Erica then gets in next to Roxy.

ROXY
Oh, who's this... now?

Roxy looks at Erica, she flusters.

ROXY
Uh... hi.

TUCKER
Where are my manners, Roxanne, this
is my friend Erica.

ROXY
Uh -- fine, whatever, let's just
get this over with. I have rent
that needs paying.

She starts driving.

ROXY
So help me if this is some kind of
trick.

TUCKER

I'm not asking you to put on the red light, Roxanne, just a ride.

ROXY

It's Roxy!

ERICA

You sure about her, Tucker?

TUCKER

Trust me, I have a sixth sense when it comes to people.

ROXY

Right, like the free therapy-trauma sess you gave me earlier?

TUCKER

How was it traumatic? I seem to recall you saying how little there was to know about you.

ERICA

Did he go Dr. Melfi on your ass?

ROXY

Did he go and tell you? Look, I'm broke, tired, and I don't want to admit it, but I'm getting a little desperate, otherwise I wouldn't be here, right now.

TUCKER

And, where would you be, if not here? You claim you can't stay with your homophobic family.

ERICA

Almost wish mine was, it'd make more sense.

ROXY

Life is not just cut and dry. I left home, got married, and here I am, a struggling journalist trying to raise a family. The good old American Dream.

ERICA

Barf.

TUCKER

My friend doesn't believe you. And neither do I. No, no, I think there's much more to you than meets the eye. You're not just some random person who packed everything with no money and no plan and came to such an absurdly expensive place to live... you're running from someone, or something.

ROXY

Fine. My parents are really into this cult. Need I say more?

TUCKER

No, because, that's a lie, too.

ROXY

Oh, how the fuck do you know?

TUCKER

What's the name of the cult? What were the core teachings? Who led it? You see, Roxanne, you have nothing to fear from telling me the truth. I'm not judging you.

ROXY

It's. Roxy.

TUCKER

No, Roxy is... whatever "this" is. Roxanne is who you're trying to forget... and something tells me it's very hard, isn't it?

Roxy looks ahead. Sheds a tear.

ERICA

Damn, Tuck.

TUCKER

I think that you've gone through something tragic... this basic story you've concocted is so under-planned because merely trying to think of a past is only a reminder of the truth you're desperately trying to escape. You're disheveled, driving ungrateful idiots at minimum wage; you seem to lack any real social skills --

ROXY

-- Just shut up! God, if I didn't
fucking need this money I would --

TUCKER

-- Kill me?

Roxy stops, eyes narrow at the rear view mirror.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A bruised Nina flies out the door, she falls.

She quickly staggers to her feet while Spencer trips out the door, pants on, desperately trying to fix his shirt.

INT./EXT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Roxy scowls, pulls up to a rundown brick building.

ROXY

Here it is. Got my money?

ERICA

Why so touchy? It's not personal,
Tuck does this with everyone.

ROXY

Well, I didn't ask for it. I don't
need to be analyzed.

Tucker smiles, reaches into his blazer.

TUCKER

When I said "kill me", you paused.

ROXY

It's not something you just hear.

TUCKER

What if I told you that Erica and I
are here to kill someone?

Roxy turns, her eyes widen.

ERICA

Why in the name of fuck would you
tell her that?

ROXY

You're... what?

Tucker pulls out the Beretta.

ROXY'S FACE -- eyes wide open.

She lunges, grabs the gun in a smooth, quick motion.

She aims it at Tucker, perfectly still.

ROXY

I... I knew it! You and-and-and
your fucking bullshit!

ERICA

Fuck you, Tucker!

TUCKER

Now what?

ROXY

Now? Now, you don't get to be a
smug, man-splaining fuck, anymore!

TUCKER

Will you kill me like you've
clearly killed before?

Roxy stammers, shakes. She toggles between aiming at Tucker and Erica.

NINA AND SPENCER

Nina storms out of the apartment, right next to Roxy's car. Spencer rushes up, grabs her by the arm.

SPENCER

You fucking thief! Come here!

Nina breaks free, kicks Spencer in the groin. He falls.

Tucker reaches for his pistol, he fires at Nina, who runs right by Roxy's car. Multiple rounds strike Nina and through the window, hitting --

TUCKER

A round hits his left shoulder.

TUCKER

Ugh! Scheisse!

He slumps over, clutches his shoulder.

ROXY

Falls off-balance by the gunfire.

Tucker pauses. He reaches into his coat, grabs his DarkPhone, shoves it into --

ROXY'S HAND -- The phone's screen lights up.

ERICA

Tucker, no!

ROXY

Ow!

Roxy drops the phone onto the center console, a small prick appears on her index finger.

INT. ISASSINS HQ - AKARI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Akari opens a brown bag sealed with a Doordash sticker. BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

MONITOR SCREEN -- "New Recruit (DNA ACQUISITION): Westlake, Los Angeles." More information scrolls on-screen.

Akari stands up. She reads the info, smiles big.

AKARI

I got one. I finally got one!

She falls back on her chair.

INT./EXT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Spencer looks into the car, in shock. He bolts away.

PHONE SCREEN -- iSassins app opened: a photo of Roxy and other information fill the screen.

QUINN (V.O.)

Asset acquired: Roxanne Nitsui,
nee: Huerta. Leverage: events
leading up to 17 June, 2020 in
Andean Region, Colombia, South
America.

Roxy goes still, eyes wide.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Nina's body lies motionless.

INT./EXT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Tucker writhes in pain.

Erica hyperventilates. Roxy shakes, stammers.

ERICA

Number one, huh? You just had to
channel fucking Freud, didn't you?

ROXY

What... the... fuck!

ERICA'S POV - THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

She sees Spencer try to unlock an old Firebird down the road.

ERICA

It's my fucking turn!

She draws a pistol, and exits.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Erica blindly fires.

SPENCER

Opens the door, and reaches inside.

UNDER THE SEAT

He pulls out a sawed off, Remington 870, with pistol grip.

And fires towards --

ERICA

Forces her to take cover.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Roxy holds the phone, she shakes.

TUCKER

Don't look so surprised... to see a
dead body.

Roxy panics.

QUINN (V.O.)

Incoming message from iSassins HQ.

ON SCREEN -- Akari videos in, huge grin.

AKARI (ON SCREEN)

Hello, Roxanne! My name's Akari
Feilin, founder and CEO of Dark Web
Technologies. On behalf of our
entire team I would love to welcome
you to iSassins, where we rid the
world of all it's undesirables, one
sociopath at a time! This is
usually a formality, but I just
read your bio and I... I'm floored!
You are super special and I can't
wait to meet you in person. Now,
I'm sure you have some questions
and I will turn it over to Quinn so
you can get started on your first
contract! I'd wish you luck, but I
doubt you'll need it. Toodles!

The call cuts.

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia cries a little, she's on the phone.

MIA

(into phone)

Fine, thanks for nothing.

She throws the phone, punches the couch.

MIA

What the fuck are we gonna --

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

She sniffles, gets to her feet.

MIA

Forget your house keys, babe?

She opens the door, Vince is there, he holds a double-
barreled sawed off shotgun.

VINCE

No, honey.

Mia stands, eyes wide.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE AVE. - NIGHT

Erica blindly shoots at --

SPENCER

Who throws in some more shells behind cover.

INT./EXT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

Roxy sits, no emotion.

ROXY

What-what is... iSass...

TUCKER

We can explain after you finish
this job... and get paid. Cause if
you don't, that man there will kill
us all.

ROXY

But, wha --

SMASH! A shotgun blast hits the windshield. Roxy gets hit with broken glass, she's disoriented. She looks forward.

EXT. BEACH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ROXY'S POV

She sees Rose get up as a wave hits her, she brandishes a katana from a sheath.

END FLASHBACK

INT. ROXY'S CAR - BACK TO SCENE

ROXY'S POV - SPENCER

He keeps shooting. SIRENS are in the far distance.

Roxy seethes, she grabs the Beretta, and exits.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE AVE. - NIGHT

Roxy crosses the street, fires towards Spencer.

ROXY

Fuck you!

SPENCER

Leaps over the hood of his car.

ROXY

Hides behind a light post across the street.

The gun's empty.

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Roxy ejects the clip

>> Takes the fresh clip, lets it fall.

>> She slams the bottom of the gun onto the new clip in mid-air.

>> The action slides forward, the gun's ready.

ERICA'S POV - ROXY

She watches Roxy move with ease.

ERICA

Whoa.

She goes back to shooting Spencer.

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Just as messy as the rest of the house.

Mia scrambles inside, runs to a nearby bathroom, slams the door shut.

BATHROOM

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

She locks it, hides on the floor, sobs uncontrollably.

Vince enters the bedroom, sighs.

MIA
I-I-I'm calling the cops.

VINCE
Phone's on the living room floor.

MIA
I'll scream!

VINCE
This ain't my first rodeo. You
knew the consequences when started
playing poker with us.

MIA
Life is not fucking Goodfellas!

VINCE
Well, mine is. It is and it sucks!
It's filled with shitheads who
don't know how to run an
organization, and deadbeats who
can't pay debts! Now, the first
shot's going through the door, the
next is going through your chest.

MIA
No, please! I'll do anything!
Anything please, I don't wanna die.
I can-I do whatever you... want.
Just don't kill me.

VINCE
I'm no john.

MIA
I'm begging you! I have a wife,
she works so hard... she works
hard, and all I do is... Fuck
everything up. Fuck it, just kill
me, she'd be better off.

Vince pauses for a moment, leans against the door.

He sighs, breaks open the barrel, the shells fly out.

VINCE
Alright, how about you stop
crying... we'll settle this like
adults, huh?

Mia wipes away some tears.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE AVE. - NIGHT

Spencer reloads his shotgun.

He fires at --

ERICA

Who jumps out of the way.

ERICA
I'm out of ammo!

Spencer pumps, walks along the street, fires at --

ROXY

Who cartwheels away in time.

She shoots, but after one shot --

GUN'S BREACH -- it's jammed.

ROXY
Fuck, jam-jam!

She tries to clear it, and moves out of the way.

SPENCER

Fires again, pumps, runs to Roxy's car, climbs in.

INT. ROXY'S CAR - NIGHT

The keys are still in the ignition.

Tucker grabs onto his shoulder, he's too weak to react.

SPENCER
Hang on, old timer. We're going
for a ride.

He quickly drives away.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE AVE. - NIGHT

Roxy clears the jam just as Spencer drives off.

Erica runs up to her.

ERICA
Your car... oh, and Tucker.

SIRENS grow louder.

ROXY

LAPD response time... six minutes,
they're way early.

Erica raises an eyebrow.

ROXY

We'll take his car. Don't worry, I
can hot wire it.

Erica sprints over to Spencer's ride, Roxy stops.

ROXY'S POV - Nina's body

Blood dripping off the sidewalk.

Roxy pauses, eyes narrow.

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia sobs, she sits on the couch next to Vince.

MIA

I-I-I have some jewelry.

VINCE

Not enough, and I gotta make extra
work trying to fence it.

MIA

What do you want? I owe you guys
over ten grand. I-I don't want...

VINCE

Relax, again, I'm no john. You're
lucky it was me come knocking,
anyhow, my boss, woulda' beat you
to death, I watched him do another
guy like that today. Fucking idiot
thinks he's living in a movie.

MIA

The fucked way life is, I almost
wish this were a movie.

VINCE

There's no etiquette no more. No
compassion, just violence.
See, Mia, I fucked up too, in a big
way.

(MORE)

VINCE (CONT'D)

It's why I'm out here all night chasing debts when I should be running shit. So, here's what's going to happen and nothing is negotiable: I'll spot you the money, if nothing else, it means I get to quietly stick it to my brain-dead millennial of a boss.

MIA

Oh God, thank you, thank you --

VINCE

-- But, every week, I get \$700 from you, no vig, but so help me, if you're late, there will be no second chance, got it?

Mia nods profusely.

VINCE

Aces. I have an 818 number. I call, you answer. You go calling the cops, don't think we can't find you, or your wife, and keep this shit between us. P.S., I do a side-hustle for extra money, and on occasion I may need a spare set of hands. When I need you, whatever obligations you have, you break them. You work with me, now.

He grabs his gun, and leaves.

Mia goes back to sobbing.

EXT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Vince sighs, gets on his phone.

VINCE

(into phone)
Quinn, call Tucker.

He walks down the steps.

INT. SPENCER'S CAR - NIGHT

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

Messy, full of trash. VIBRATIONS.

Roxy reaches into her pocket. Puts the phone to her ear.

ROXY
(into phone)
Hello? Who's this?

VINCE
(into phone)
Tucker?

ROXY
(into phone)
Sorry, Tucker can't come to the phone right now, he's bleeding in the back of my car that some shit-head kidnapped him in!

ERICA
Easy, that's my friend, Vince, he's good people.

ROXY
Yeah, I'm sure.
(into phone)
Listen, whoever this is? I don't know what this is, but I don't want any part of it, you understand me?

VINCE
(into phone)
Easy, is Tucker okay?

ROXY
(into phone)
Left clavicle, he gets medical attention, he'll be fine.

ERICA
(shouts)
Shit got fucked up, Vin. It was that Spencer Schifftrin guy, the one who got off like today on a rape?

Vince heads for his parked van.

VINCE
(into phone)
Oh, that charmer? Surprised it took this long for someone to put a hit out on that pile of shit. Yeah, he pays protection to my people, unless he's really lambing it, he'll be at his club.

(MORE)

VINCE (CONT'D)

I'll go check, he won't suspect I'm involved. I'll make it look like he owes me money.

ROXY

(into phone)

He'll have protection, in which case, you would need more help. More importantly, Vince, I'm done with this conversation, and iSassins. Now leave me alone!

She hangs up.

ERICA

Okay, Roxy, I think we --

Roxy SLAMS on the brakes, and pulls over.

She takes the gun, points it right under Erica's chin.

ROXY

You move one millimeter, and it will be your last. Nod if you comprehend, Erica.

Erica slowly nods, raises her hands.

Roxy holds up the DarkPhone in her spare hand.

ROXY

This... what, it's a phone you can use to kill people?

ERICA

You're a Lyft driver, it's the same concept. You put in as much info about a person as you can, post a very competitive fee, the nearest iSassin can accept or decline. You complete the job, you get paid. A cleaner comes in, disappears the corpse, they get paid. Easy simple. That guy, Vince, he's a cleaner, Tucker, me... now you, are iSassins.

ROXY

No... I'm not. I don't want to be!

ERICA

Alright, hear me out, huh? Look, no ordinary person just gets to be an iSassin, you need leverage we can use to keep you quiet, and you need the stomach for it. When Tucker shoved the phone in your hand, it did a bio-scan, learned everything there is to know about you. And I saw you out there, shit, Jason Bourne outta take notes from you.

Roxy smirks, but shakes it off.

ROXY

It's -- lies! I'm no murderer.

ERICA

Says the woman with the loaded gun to my face.

Roxy pauses for a moment, lowers the gun.

ROXY

But... b-but, the police --

ERICA

-- Fail. Didn't you hear me? Spencer got off on a rape charge, and it wasn't his first. You saw what he did to that girl, to Tucker. Shit, he was gonna do us and not think twice about it.

Roxy stops, stares forward.

ROXY

No... Really, I can't ki... I'm-a good person.

ERICA

Spencer Schiffrin isn't. Just like many others like him. Hey, you want the "American Dream", this is it. Everyone gets sold, killed, and used. The best is over, everyone's just trying to squeeze whatever money and power they can out of what's left. And in the end, there's us, who just facilitate that for someone else, and make real good money doing it.

(MORE)

ERICA (CONT'D)

And maybe, just maybe, get some
real justice in the process.

Roxy drives, she says nothing, and stares off.

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFFS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sunset. Roxy and Rose, clad in battle suits, stare off at
the Pacific Ocean from their perch, lean on two boulders.

ROSE

You really mean it? Leave here?

ROXY

She's wrong about America, Rose.
Her, Anatoly, everyone. There's a
world out there just waiting for us
that doesn't involve throwing our
lives away for this fucking thing.
We could start our own family, a
real one.

ROSE

Hollywood. Those movies we'd have
to pirate and sneak. We could do
something like that, maybe?

ROXY

Whatever you and I want. Fuck this
"we" shit. It's time we did
something for "us". I want to
prove all of them wrong.

Rose smiles.

THEIR HANDS -- Roxy moves a hand on top of Rose's as it rests
on the boulder.

ANATOLY

Walks towards them, clears his throat, eyes up Roxy.

THEIR HANDS -- Rose quickly moves hers away.

Roxy glares at him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SPENCER'S CAR - BACK TO SCENE

Roxy sheds a tear.

ROXY

Fine. I have a soft spot for the abused. I was... taken advantage of, and then, that same guy, took someone very special from me. I never got closure from that, so, let me try to give it to someone else for a change.

VIBRATIONS. It's Roxy's other phone, she answers.

ROXY

(into phone)

Mia, babe, what's wrong?

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

She sobs on the couch.

MIA

(into phone)

I fucked up... I called my mom, and she... she said we had to-had to -- figure it out on our own. I'm so sorry Roxy, I ruined everything. All you've ever done is try.

ROXY

(into phone)

It's okay, babe. I'm gonna try and fix this. You're not a fuck up, and I love you.

MIA

(into phone)

Wait... there-there's s-s-something else... I-I was gambling, and...

ROXY

(into phone)

Tell me later, I'll be home safe, I promise. Don't wait up.

She hangs up. Roxy speeds, determination on her face.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. THE RENTER - NIGHT

The front fills up with awaiting PATRONS.

INT. THE RENTER - SPENCER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

An upstairs back room filled with a safe, table, chairs, and foosball. Spencer chain smokes.

He's joined by three bodyguards: WES (34) White, CARL (38) Black, and JEREMY (36) White.

Tucker sits, with a poorly made bandage on his shoulder. He's handcuffed to a chair, barely conscious.

SPENCER

Fucking bitches came outta the car this guy was in. I don't know who the fuck sent them -- couldn't have been that chick from the case.

WES

So what do we do with this guy? The world's smaller than you think, Spence, they'll come knocking.

SPENCER

I'm thinking -- I'm thinking!

Carl looks out a back window.

CARL

Spence, van parked out back.

Spencer runs over, and looks through the --

WINDOW

It's Vince, he gets out of his van, parked in the alley out back. Roxy's car is parked in front of him.

SPENCER

I know him, he's one of Jason Massarino's drones. Fuck's he doing here all clandestine and shit, thought we paid those guineas already this... week?

Spencer pauses... he looks over at Tucker.

INT. THE RENTER - UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT

Vince walks up the stairs, phone to his ear.

VINCE
 (into phone)
 Jas, I can't hear you so good.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUTS AS NEEDED

Jason sits in a bubble bath, phone to his ear.

JASON
 (into phone)
 You clubbing? Shit, didn't think
 you were that fun, gramps. Hey,
 this is me delegating more: I need
 you to go torch some cabs from --

VINCE
 (into phone)
 -- Not over the phone! Your line
 isn't secure like mine is! Go find
 a pay phone.

JASON
 (into phone)
 Fuck is this, 1987? You got the
 gist, just go do it. And Vincent,
 I'm really not liking this attitude
 of yours, maybe that's why they
 stuck you out here to begin with?
 Now then, what about that other
 thing? My debt?

Vince stops, sneers.

VINCE
 (into phone)
 Took care of it... boss.

He hangs up, walks through into the --

INNER HALLWAY

Vince grumbles, continues through to --

SPENCER'S OFFICE

Where Wes promptly blind-sides him, knocks him out.

INT. SPENCER'S CAR - NIGHT

Erica loads her pistol, winces at the sight of the mess.

ERICA

McDonalds wrappers and shotgun shells. S'like we jacked Ted Nugent's car.

ROXY

This Spencer guy. Your man Vince said he has a club?

ERICA

The Renter in Weho. I say we go in, blast that piece of shit out of that little --

ROXY

-- We will do no such thing. He will be expecting us coming from any door, we'll need to sneak in. I noticed you had a tendency on the street to just shoot without aiming. If we're doing this, we're doing it right.

ERICA

I see the whole Mother Theresa bit is out the window, huh?

ROXY

It's... complicated, for me. But I am trained in certain skills. I wasn't lying to you, or Tucker, but I was raised in a cult... but, keep in mind we were no ordinary cult.

ERICA

Yeah, no shit. What, were you one of those Armageddon-militia-death cults, or something?

ROXY

More like, trying to "free" the oppressed workers of the world. Ironically, we were the most oppressed of them all. And I tell you all this because when this is over, we're all paid, we're done. We go our separate ways and put this whole fucking evening behind us forever. No more killing.

ERICA

Yeah, right. Once you get a taste of the iSassins life, you won't be able to stay away.

She smiles big.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sirens. The police have the murder scene wrapped up. Crime scene tape surrounds Nina's corpse.

A black Charger pulls up.

Two plainclothes exit. One is well-dressed, homicide detectives BEN KORMAN, (35) White, and TANYA LAFEVRE (37), Black, Louisiana accent, fit.

BEN

Who the had the balls to take me away from RuPaul's season finale?

Sergeant ARTURO SUAREZ, (33), Hispanic, greets them.

ARTURO

Jesus, Ben, Tanya. You were bitching two days ago you had a full plate, already.

BEN

Wish someone would remind the murderers that.

TANYA

Who, where, what, sergeant?

ARTURO

Vic: female, Hispanic. Nina Galvez, twenty-three, known prostitute. Two shots, head and neck, no brass, probably revolver, smart money's on thirty-eight caliber, maybe three-fifty-seven. But wait, there's more. I got brass from two different calibers by the building, and out there by the lamp across the street. Multiple twelve gauge shells along the street, here.

TANYA

Jesus, fucking shootout.

ARTURO

One witness, didn't get the best look, claims two women, twenties, slender builds emerged from a parked car, and engaged with the shooter, who is a male, white, lanky, early forties. He had the shotgun. Made his getaway in the same car the women came from. Wit got scared after that and peaced.

BEN

Starts like a familiar movie: john doesn't wanna pay, fight ensues, john pulls a gun, bang-bang.

TANYA

Two women were probably unrelated, right place, wrong time. Gangs is all up in here.

BEN

Sex workers still need pimps, don't rule that one out.

ARTURO

They took off in some dark sports car, but for the shooter, wit did us good here. Corolla, eight-Delta-Tengo-Whiskey-seven-one-nine, Lyft stickers all over it.

BEN

Which might give us our two other shooters, at least.

Ben looks up at the building.

BEN'S POV - OLD SECURITY CAMERA

Dusty and covered in spider webs, but it looks right at the front of the building.

BEN

Let's find the Super for this building, see if we can't get a look at that camera.

TANYA

That old thing?

Ben nods, smiles.

INT./EXT. SPENCER'S CAR - NIGHT

Roxy and Erica park across the street from The Renter.

ROXY

We'll need a good point of entry.
What are we supposed to do, just
case the place? We'll be sitting
ducks out there.

QUINN (V.O.)

I can help with that.

Roxy reaches into her pocket, pulls out the DarkPhone.

QUINN (V.O.)

Hi, Roxy, I'm Quinn, your
DarkPhone's personal assistant.
Sorry I couldn't get acquainted
earlier, buuuuuut life and death
were happening. Anyway, I'll make
up for that by giving you a
complete layout of The Renter.

A 3-D image illuminates from the phone. It's a holographic
floor plan for the club. Roxy awes.

ROXY

Wow... can it... can it do this for
other buildings?

ERICA

Try any building. This thing can
do it all. It's like The Patriot
Act for techies.

Roxy stares up at the building for a moment.

ROXY

Lot of money in this?

ERICA

Oh yeah. Pay a lot of rent with
this job. Fuck, I made four grand
just today, and it should've been
much more, too... not like some
people notice.

ROXY

Alright, let's go.

They exit the car.

INT. THE RENTER - SPENCER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Vince, head bloodied, now tied to a chair, starts to awaken. He's next to Tucker, who is also awake.

TUCKER

Tell me, Vinny, that you did not come here on your own.

VINCE

Didn't think your mark would put two and two together.

TUCKER

You are getting too old for this, we just had this conversation.

VINCE

Believe me, Tuck, I know I'm getting soft. I really spited my boss, though, tonight. I can't just up and go, though, I've done too much damage, and not mention, I don't know anything else.

TUCKER

Well then, you won't quit, now what? You need to take a step back from the physical. Put your years of experience to good use. Be a leader of men.

Vince ponders on that.

Spencer talks on a phone nearby.

SPENCER

(into phone)

Yeah, and have that hot waitress I like send up a couple of drinks.

He ends the call.

EXT. THE RENTER - FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Roxy flips onto the platform with precision while Erica is slow to join her. They rest on the side of the window.

Roxy peers inside.

ROXY'S POV - IN THE WINDOW

Vince's back is to her. She sees Spencer pacing.

ROXY (O.S.)
Three bodyguards, one Spencer.

She gets away from the window, holds the Beretta.

Erica holds up her pistol.

ERICA
You need to tell me exactly how
"complicated" this is, some day.

Roxy scowls, and slowly opens the window.

INT. THE RENTER - SPENCER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The window opens, the two stick their guns in.

WES

Looks, reaches into his blazer.

WES
Gun!

Kyle draws, Spencer too.

ERICA AND ROXY

Roll in, they start shooting.

Erica hits Jeremy, he's done.

Wes takes a hit, then another, he falls back, dead.

Carl falls, staggers up, gets shot again. He trips, falls through the door.

Spencer takes his revolver, shoots, misses, back pedals through the door.

ERICA AND ROXY

Erica tends to Vince. Roxy gulps.

ERICA
Here, you can do this, I'll take
care of him.

Roxy ignores her, forces herself to cry, mumbles to herself.

ROXY
Think emotion, cry, you hate this!

She takes a deep breath, moves through the curtain door to --

INNER HALLWAY

Where she runs into Spencer, who has Luz in a hostage hold.

SPENCER

Come on, honey, l-let's just talk
this out now. No one else needs to
get hurt, okay?

Roxy shakes. Tears stream from her eyes.

ROXY

I don't... I don't want to... I-I w-
w-want to... I want you to...

She takes a long breath. A pause.

EXT. BEACH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Anatoly pins Roxy to the sand, hands to her throat. A wave
crashes into her.

ANATOLY

You were always a little cunt!

Roxy lifts her head up, angry.

END FLASHBACK

INT. THE RENTER - INNER HALLWAY - BACK TO SCENE

Roxy's demeanor hardens, no tears.

SPENCER

Why do you even care? She was a
fucking thief! She stole from
me... she was... She was a wh --

SERIES OF SHOTS

>> Roxy fires.

>> The round hits Spencer in the left eye, just misses Luz.

>> His blood splatters on the door.

>> Spencer's grip fades, he falls over, dead.

>> Luz moves away.

Roxy stares, sees the carnage, then Luz.

She shakes again, feigns fear.

ROXY

W-what have I done?

She trembles.

INT. THE RENTER - SPENCER'S OFFICE - LATER

Tucker and Vince are untied.

Vince counts out some money from a large wad, hands some of it to Luz.

VINCE

Repeat the story as much as you need to. You came up with the drinks. He wasn't there, you didn't feel so good, you went home, period, stop. Got it?

Luz nods.

LUZ

That wasn't even the worst thing he did to me. Thank you.

Roxy smiles.

TUCKER

(smug)

We are merely professionals doing a job is all.

Roxy glares at him.

Luz leaves the room.

ROXY

Vince, right? I'm told you are our cleaner? I hope you have everything we need.

Vince reaches for his phone.

VINCE

In my van, out back. Shit, four bodies, think I'll call my new hand, break her in. We need all the help we can --

ROXY

-- No time. We need to move before
someone else comes up.

Roxy looks around, sees a large rug on the floor.

ROXY

Yeah, yeah this'll be good. We can
wrap the bodies in this, then mop
up the rest.

Everyone stands around.

ROXY

Chop-chop, what do you want, an
invitation? Let's move.

Tucker smiles, then grips his shoulder.

MONTAGE

-- The four enter VINCE'S VAN, grab a vacuum, paper towels,
rags, cleaning solution, mop, bucket.

-- Roxy opens a first aid kit. She sticks Tucker with a
shot of morphine.

-- Roxy properly wraps and stitches Tucker's wound.

-- In the OFFICE, Vince cuts up the rug.

-- They lay out the corpses, Roxy snaps a photo of Spencer
with the DarkPhone.

-- They wrap one of the corpses in the cut-up rug.

-- They scrub blood from the floors.

-- Roxy wipes Spencer's blood from the door.

-- They tape the wrapped corpses shut.

-- The three admire their work.

-- The sun's coming up. They set the corpses in the back of
the VAN. Tucker smiles at them, they close the door.

END MONTAGE

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DARK CORNER - DAY

Roxy, Erica, and Tucker pull into a corner of an underground garage in Roxy's bullet-ridden car. There's a generator fenced in against a wall.

ROXY (O.S.)
This is it?

They pull right next to the generator.

MOMENTS LATER

Roxy and Erica help Tucker over to the generator. There's a closed circuit breaker against the wall next to it.

ERICA
Do the honors. You hold up the
phone to the breaker there.

Roxy nods. She takes out her DarkPhone and holds it against the breaker.

QUINN (V.O.)
Access granted.

The generator moves aside --

REVEAL: a sleek elevator.

INT. ISASSINS HQ - LOBBY - DAY

Glass paneled, modern. The three exit the elevator. Roxy marvels at the place.

INT. ISASSINS HQ - INFIRMARY - DAY

Stocked with beds and the latest in biomedical tech.

Erica and Roxy lay Tucker on a bed.

ERICA
I'll get a nurse... Free
healthcare, by the way.

She walks off.

Roxy turns to Tucker.

TUCKER
Then there were two.

ROXY

Why? Why me?

TUCKER

You... were clearly desperate, and miserable. I don't know the entire scope of your past, Roxanne, but I knew this was your way out of that hole you were in. Am I wrong? Were you not running from someone? Have you not killed before?

ROXY

Who the fuck are you, anyway?

TUCKER

Board certified psychiatrist. In my day-to-day life I have a practice in Studio City. As a penance for this, I may offer my services at a reduced rate. Think this over, when you choose to accept this, this will be your American Dream.

ROXY

Fuck you. This was a one time deal. I'm done. Just, riddle one question. I'll admit, you got a few things about me right, how did you know to ask?

TUCKER

It's all in the smile. That first impression is truly everything.

Roxy recoils, adjusts her facial expression.

She backs away, then leaves.

INT. ISASSINS HQ - HALLWAY - DAY

Erica holds a cup of coffee. Akari walks up to her.

AKARI

Hi, honey. I heard you worked with our newest recruit. Give me all the details.

ERICA

She's unhinged, yet... adaptable.

She gives Akari a cold look.

ERICA

If she stays around, I bet I can learn a few things from her, you know?

She smirks, then walks away.

INT. THE LAST ITALIAN RESTAURANT - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Vince walks in, Georgie sits at a table, half asleep.

VINCE

Georgie! I got some laundry out back. Four pounds of socks.

He throws Georgie the keys to the van. Georgie rubs his eyes, misses the catch, bends down to pick them up.

VINCE

Oh, hey, George... between you and me, I talked to Jas last night, he's wiped. And since I have so much experience back east, he wants me to take a larger hand in things... you know, delegate. In fact, the casino? You and I got that. And let's keep business need-to-know for awhile, okay? We need to stay hidden.

He pats Georgie on the back, and smiles.

GEORGIE

Gonna need help, that casino needs work. Lots of it.

VINCE

I know just the help.

He gets out his phone.

INT. MIA AND ROXY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Roxy enters, her face glued to her DarkPhone.

TEXT ON SCREEN: ISASSINS: CONTRACT COMPLETE! \$7429.

Roxy beams, she sees Mia curled up on the couch.

MIA

Rox?

Roxy sits next to her, gives her a warm hug.

ROXY
We're gonna be okay, babe.

MIA
I don't know if I'm go --

ROXY
-- Mia, we are going to get through all this. I'll get you help with the gambling, okay? I'm here for you. I love you.

In the hug, Roxy looks past Mia, her phone in hand.

TEXT ON SCREEN: ISASSINS APP: NEW CONTRACT. ACCEPT?

MIA
I love you, too.

Mia looks down at her phone, on the couch. It VIBRATES.

PHONE SCREEN: CALL FROM: (818) 555-0768.

Mia releases.

MIA
I need to take this. I uh, might need to out for a while. I uh, got a job, a real one.

Roxy smiles, she stares at her screen.

ROXY
That's great baby! Real great.

Roxy grins.

TEXT ON SCREEN: ISASSINS APP: CONTRACT ACCEPTED!

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - BULLPEN - DAY

Ben sits at his desk, piles of files sit by his computer.

On the desk is a photo of Ben holding hands with another MAN, his husband, DESMOND, (41).

COMPUTER SCREEN -- Roxy's photo appears with her license plate number.

FADE TO:

INT. THE LAIR - COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

COMPUTER SCREEN -- ASSET FOUND! It's a photo of Roxy with a flag dropped on 416 Bonnie Brae Street.

A MAN smiles, GREG, (28) White. He's in a room with many other NERDS (20s-30s) on computers.

GREG

Rose! You should see this!

Rose walks over. She now sports a scar on her left cheek, dressed in a battle suit.

Greg points to the screen. Rose sees it, lights up.

ROSE

You're sure?

Greg nods. Rose beams. She takes out a phone, makes a call.

ROSE

(into phone)

Ma'am... I know you're busy...
right-r-right, but I have something
you need to see. We found your
daughter... I mean it. She's in Los
Angeles... Yes ma'am.

Rose ends the call.

ROSE

Greg, book me a flight.

She rubs the scar on her cheek.

FADE OUT:

END OF EPISODE

FAKE NEWS (PILOT)

Written by

Nick Durdan

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. BARRE U - STUDENT UNION BUILDING - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights shine on this bland and sterile loft area of a college campus's student union building. Signs all around say: BARRE UNIVERSITY.

College junior NICK COLVECCHIO, (21) White, Eagles hat, slovenly dressed, sleeps in a chair. An empty can of beer is in his right hand. Three other empties are beneath him.

He "supervises" reporter KELLY HALBOTKA, (18) White, red head, and cameraman JAKE "BOOTS" BOOZMAN, (20) White, fit.

Kelly interviews BETTY HASSLER, (21) White, knit hat. She holds a poorly made basket.

BETTY

And this basket is my tribute to poor, underprivileged oppressed housewives living in the patriarchal evils of a white male-dominated suburbia.

Boots nearly falls asleep on the camera, while Kelly kicks him awake. She composes herself, puts on a fake smile.

KELLY

Simply inspiring. That was Betty Hassler, Basket Weaving Club Pre --

BETTY

-- And Macrame!

KELLY

And Macrame Club President. Fun times, I'm sure, were had at their bi-monthly safe-space-basket-a-thon. This is Kelly Halbotka saying: back to you in the studio.

BOOTS

And cut. Thank Christ.

KELLY

Ugh, that sucked! You think we should run it again, Boots?

Boots ogles Kelly's chest through the VIEWFINDER.

BOOTS

I thought you looked pretty good.

KELLY

So help me if you focused only my
boobs. Let's ask Nick.

Kelly nudges Nick. His loud snores continue.

KELLY

Nick... Nicholas...

Nick snorts and comes to, rubs his eyes.

NICK

Dammit, that was a good dream.

KELLY

Did you like the interview?

NICK

Refresh my memory.

Kelly rolls her eyes and points to the banner.

NICK

Oh, God, Kelly, I'm sure you were a
regular Anderson Cooper, but this
is the kind of shit that... That...

Nick pauses, moans. He wretches and nearly keels over.

NICK

Aw, fuck! Warm beer, huge mistake!

He scrambles, then lunges for Betty's basket. Pukes a
rainbow inside while Betty freaks.

Boots rolls the camera.

BOOTS

Got it!

He cheers.

CUT TO BLACK:

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. BARRE U - DORM - NICK'S ROOM - DAY

MOANS and GROANS O.S.

Disastrous mess. Clothes strewn about, old takeout boxes and empty beer cans on a nearby desk.

Nick sleeps haphazardly on his bed. Above him, a flag for the INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMAN'S ASSOCIATION LOCAL 1291, and next to that, an AMERICAN FLAG. Next to that, a poster reads: LIVE BETTER. WORK UNION.

Nick snorts, adjusts his eyes.

NICK'S POV - JOSH AND LUZ

Across the room, Nick spots his roommate JOSH HOROWITZ (21) White, skinny, on top of his girlfriend LUZ BACA (21) Hispanic, long hair. Both naked.

NICK
Oh, what the hell!

JOSH
Hey, buddy, we wake you?

NICK
Yes, and fuck you very much.

LUZ
Hey, Nick.

NICK
Hey yourself Luz, do you know what... time...

He picks up his phone on his desk.

NICK
Ah, shit, I'm late for the TV meeting! Shit!

JOSH
You're welcome.

Nick jumps out of bed, clad only in boxers.

He slips, grabs a pair of pants.

JOSH AND LUZ

Lay frozen.

NICK
Almost done.

He falls putting on his pants.

JOSH
Nick, I don't want to rush you,
but, I'm --

NICK
-- Yeah, yeah.

Nick throws on a shirt, grabs a silver flask on his desk. He walks over to a nearby mini fridge, opens it, grabs a can of beer, the last one inside.

LUZ
I mean... you are here.

NICK
And now I'm gone. Good day.

He throws on his shoes, and leaves.

Josh gets off of Luz, gives her a look.

JOSH
What does that mean: "you are here"? With that face?

She shrugs.

EXT. BARRE U - COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - DAY

Boots stands outside the front door with Kelly and ZACH WARNER (19) White, GQ-clad. He smokes.

ZACH
Fucking local station picked some kid from U of Scranton for the cameraman internship.

BOOTS
Yeah, I just got my walking papers from that online publication.

KELLY
It's these bullshit story packages. It's embarrassing, it's hardly news. We look like amateurs.

JENNIFER STENCAVAGE (21) Black, conservatively dressed approaches the three with a stack of organized folders.

JENNIFER

What up shit-whistles? Can I get a hit of that?

Zach puts the cigarette in Jennifer's mouth, she takes a long drag.

KELLY

Anyway, Zach, make sure you look good when you meet my dad, tonight, I forgot to mention.

BOOTS

You two still doing that gay and lesbian fake dating thing?

JENNIFER

(coughs)
That's really un-healthy, you two.

ZACH

I'm a good friend, and Kelly's parents are traumatic.

Nick sprints over.

BOOTS

Hundred booze dash.

NICK

(pants)
Gold medal, motherfucker.

JENNIFER

Good, Nick's here. I have the answer to our boring story problems.

She heaves the stack of folders into Nick's arms. He grunts, nearly falls over.

NICK

Hang on, I'm the producer, I tell you what to dole out.

He shoves the stack back at Jennifer.

NICK

Let's go.

They all walk inside.

INT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - MEETING ROOM - DAY

The assembled show STAFF looks anxious. Some swivel in their chairs. Others tap at their cells.

Nick, Jennifer, Boots, Kelly, and Zach enter. Nick takes to a nearby podium, sips his beer.

NICK

Top of the morning, reasons-why-I drink. I of course say that with the utmost love and tolerance for... most of you. Alright, first order of business because Jen is growing... what's the word -- "tumescent" with whatever the fuck she spent the last night making in an Adderall stupor I'm sure.

Jennifer smiles, holds up her folders.

NICK

Alright, let's congratulate and wish our fake lovebirds on a nice fake date this evening. Zach, Kelly, round of sad applause.

There's one, maybe two claps.

NICK

Next order of business. Packages are edited. We are three minutes short, so we're gonna rerun some B-roll of the ultimate frisbee team practicing in the quad.

Groans fill the room.

NICK

Oh, sure, we groan every meeting about the boring time fillers, but when I beg hat in hand for anyone to give me a story, suddenly, you all got chem 101 to study for. Anyone care to break the tradition?

He turns to Kelly, who shrugs.

NICK

Well, then, guess it's more Pulitzer-worthy dreck from our friends in Macrame Club.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

Listen, kids, I get this campus is about as fun as Bob Ross on Xanax, but, news companies want to see that we have reels to show them, painfully dull as they may be.

ZACH

That's the thing, they do want to see shit that isn't fucking macrame club and ultimate frisbee.

BOOTS

We're getting passed the fuck by for internships right and left.

NICK

Alright-alright, Jen, I'm hungover, do your thing.

Jennifer stands up, she shoves the stack of folders into Kelly's hands. She doles them out.

JENNIFER

Everyone, these are crime statistics for our city: Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

NICK

We know; Newsweek named us: "East Coast's Answer to Breaking Bad". It was a good article, actually.

JENNIFER

Exactly! Crime, that's what keeps people invested in the news.

NICK

Ooh, crime stories, now we're talking; that's a great idea... except the fact our litigious faculty liaison won't go for this. He barely let's us off campus as it is, let alone allow us to report in the trenches. He's the real reason we're stuck in this shit.

JENNIFER

But, who could sway Dr. Valdez better than our fiercely competent and hard-working producer?

She motions to Nick who rolls his eyes and takes a long sip of his beer.

NICK

Fuck it, he's already writing me a letter of recommendation. What's one more favor, right? Yo, Elise?

He startles the show's neurotic director, ELISE WOO, (20), Asian, nervous.

ELISE

God! What?

NICK

That never gets old. We're good on that B-roll, yes?

ELISE

Almost done.

NICK

Get it done. Alright kids, get to class, and meet back here at six tonight to set up. Make good choices, don't drink and school, and for the love of God, please go commit a daily act of journalism.

Everyone leaves while Jennifer gives Nick a wink.

He takes a sip of beer, shakes the can, it's empty.

INT. BARRE TODAY STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elise steps in, takes a triumphant sniff of the air.

ELISE

Ah, I love the smell of news in the morning. Alright, people, tonight's show has to be perfect.

She looks over to a white board reading: WEEKS SINCE LAST SHOW ACCIDENT, which stands at nine.

ELISE

If we pull it off tonight, we break Barre Today's all-time record of safe and accident-free shows.

KHADIJAH BULLOCK, (20) Black, an editor and the switcher, looks at Elise.

KHADIJAH

Nine weeks?

ELISE

No one's perfect, Khadijah. But tonight, we will be. We will give the performances of a lifetime. It doesn't matter if you're the chyron or the teleprompter, everyone will be a winner.

KHADIJAH

And if we're not?

ELISE

Then what is left of my self-esteem will die, along with my pride and possibly my vital organs.

(pauses, shakes)

I wonder if Nick has another beer?

Elise sheds a tear. Khadijah looks uneasily at her.

INT. BARRE U - DR. VALDEZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick knocks on a nice door, opened. He holds one of Jennifer's crime stats folders.

A placard on a fancy solid oak desk reads: RAMON VALDEZ, PHD. Behind the desk sits the well-coifed and Armani-suited DR. RAMON VALDEZ, (55), Hispanic, full-figured.

NICK

Dr. Valdez, is that a new suit, sir? New desk? New... anything?

RAMON

Nick! Your ears must be burning. I was just about to email you. Come in, come in.

Nick takes a seat opposite Ramon's desk. It squeaks, and Nick cannot get comfortable.

RAMON

How are my show packages coming?

NICK

Yeah, that's kind of why I wanted to have this little back-and-forth. Currently, the staff and I are looking for content that's a bit more... hard-edged. Barre U is a snooze-fest.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

All our stories are useless puff pieces about school functions, club party nights -- hell, the best piece we've had since I was here was that random drunk who crashed his truck into the library... They never did fix the hole he made.

RAMON

It gives the library character.

NICK

Not to mention, you wouldn't even let us air the story I made of it!

RAMON

Teamster lawyers don't play.

NICK

It's news! Everyone loves an alcohol-related car accident! But, anyway, Jen Stencavage made these beautiful statistics -- things. Local crime stats.

Nick plops the folder on Ramon's desk. He opens it up, and immediately recoils.

NICK

Wilkes-Barre was named "East Coast's Answer to Breaking Bad".

RAMON

Wasn't that the show about the mob boss in therapy, or something?

NICK

My point is: I think it's time Barre Today started to report news people crave: Post-Industrial urban blight, with all the crime and opioid-related deaths that go with it. I'm talking some real David Simon-type shit... sir.

Ramon scoffs and closes the folder in disgust.

RAMON

Not a chance. I can't put your lives in danger.

NICK

It would be a personal choice.

RAMON

But it's the school's insurance and reputation on the line if someone were to get hurt. Or worse! Look, I get this kind of news is boring now, but it's for the best. Packages like this will still make for great portfolio pieces, regardless of what you cover. And, not to pile it on but I can't stress how important tonight's show has to be.

NICK

Yeah, I know, the Dean will be watching. We got the memos.

RAMON

Same woman who dictates which clubs get more funding... and which ones get less.

NICK

So, you want me to get creative... with our boring stories?

RAMON

Un-boring them. I'm counting on you, Nick. Anyway, I was going to email you that I was nearly done with your letter of recommendation. I do have a lot on my plate right now, though.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION -- Ramon's hand is atop an almost blank paper with Nick's name on it and "letter of recommendation" at the top of it.

Nick scowls.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Jennifer is alone. Her glassy eyes preview the screen of the ultimate frisbee b-roll on a MONITOR.

Nick barges in, shakes. Flask in hand.

JENNIFER

I feel like death would be a lateral move right now. Thought maybe I'd find something worth salvaging from this.

Nick sits in the chair next to her. He offers Jen a sip, there's a pause, but, she accepts, and takes a long gulp.

JENNIFER

Guess you're ditching psych, too? That looks says Valdez shot ya down... hard. You showed him my stats, right?

NICK

He looked like I just showed him pictures of his wife dying... no, he might've liked that, actually.

She takes another sip.

JENNIFER

Fuck my life. We can't show the Dean this-this televised melatonin.

NICK

I already fucking know that, Jen!

He grabs the flask back, takes a nip.

JENNIFER

So, what are you gonna do?

NICK

Play Internet-roulette. If I can find Doritos-flavored moonshine in my area, I think I can find some article to help us find some way to un-boring our stories.

Elise enters with a cup of tea. She wasn't expecting anyone there and has a panic attack when she sees Nick and Jennifer. She spills the very hot tea on herself.

ELISE
Hot! Skin bubbling!

NICK
What's the good word, Elise?

ELISE
Nothing! The circuit breaker keeps surging! I guarantee it's gonna cut out for the show! And someone is going to try to fix it, they're gonna get electrocuted and boom, there goes our new safety record!

JENNIFER
Fuck safety! I can't become a professional reporter with my boring-ass portfolio the way it is! Elise, grab Khadijah and a camera. We're going to find a street corner and film a drug deal!

NICK
Jen...

ELISE
Uppers or downers? I need both, sometimes. Okay, all the time.

Jennifer walks out with Elise while Nick rubs his forehead.

EXT. BARRE U - COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Zach and Kelly sit at a picnic table, coffees in hand.

ZACH
Halbotka. Polish, right?

KELLY
Do not forget to pronounce the "t"; Dad is very strict about that.

ZACH
Who are we kidding, Kel, this idea is absolutely terrible.

KELLY

I know that! But my parents aren't exactly the most accepting. I'm sure yours aren't, either?

ZACH

Not this bad. What we need right now is a miracle.

Boots then plops down right next to them, steals a sip Zach's cup of joe.

BOOTS

Hey, friends!

KELLY

God! Jesus, Boots!

BOOTS

Sorry, but I couldn't help but overhear your dilemma.

KELLY

Were you following us?

BOOTS

Look, is it safe to say convincing you this is a terrible plan is out of the question, right?

KELLY

Oh, absolutely!

ZACH

I'm open to other options.

BOOTS

Great. What you both need is a third wheel.

KELLY

A third wheel?

BOOTS

Someone to accompany you on your "date" in order to make it less awkward and keep you both from looking nervous in front of Kelly's conservative-ass parents.

ZACH

So, kinda like a fall guy of embarrassment, or something? I like this plan.

KELLY

I hate it. It sounds like a terrible subplot to a sitcom.

ZACH

Seinfeld was full of that.

BOOTS

And thirty years later, we're still talking about it. And, it would be my honor to nominate myself as said third wheel.

ZACH

Buddy, I don't want to curb your enthusiasm, but what exactly is in it for you? This sounds like it's going to be nothing short of humiliation-central.

BOOTS

My contribution to fix our TV show is to film my experiences.

KELLY

I'm liking this plan even less.

ZACH

A little movie magic and we won't even know it's us with your folks.

BOOTS

Ratings go up and everyone gets a good laugh. Now, as payment for this brilliant plan, lunch is on you guys.

Kelly sighs, but she's outvoted.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Various students sit and study, all ignore the previously mentioned hole in the wall, sparsely covered in caution tape.

Nick sits at a table near the truck-sized hole. Scans his --

LAPTOP SCREEN -- and a: "HOW TO MAKE BORING NEWS FUN AND INTERESTING" webpage.

Nick's eyes scroll down, he groans.

NICK

You can't.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

Shh!

Nick snarls, reaches into his bag, and pulls out his flask. He looks around, nobody sees him. He knocks back a hearty gulp, pauses, takes another.

He feels a presence above him. It's Josh, fully clothed.

JOSH

Sir, is that an alcoholic beverage you're consuming?

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

Shhhhhh!

JOSH

(quietly)
This seat taken?

Nick motions for him to sit next to him. He also talks in a lower voice.

NICK

No class?

JOSH

I'm a theater major.

There's a beat of silence. Then --

JOSH

Hey, sorry about me and Luz.

NICK

S'all good. Just let her know: I don't swing, *capice*?

JOSH

Oh no, me too.

Awkward silence. Nick offers Josh a sip from his flask. Josh takes it, knocks back a sip.

NICK

Sometimes I wish I went for theater, you know? This news shit is killing me. I'm saying, everything's screwed. Nobody seems to give a good fuck about any news that isn't a major scandal, or adorable puppy. Corporate shit.

JOSH

How do you fix that?

NICK

You adapt, which we can't do because this campus is less fun than sepsis. I grew up in Philly, even I have to admit: Wilkes-Barre, for sure has more crime per capita.

JOSH

I don't think that's right.

NICK

My point is: there's good crime stories out there, but I can't record any of them because our stick-in-the-mud faculty liaison is so fucking afraid with insurance or the school's reputation, we get stuck with boring shit. Shit that keeps my people from getting jobs they want cause some well-connected fuck-face gets a job at CNN, or they take some kid with a portfolio that isn't "Biomed's annual half-kilometer-no-stress-fun-run"!

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

Shhhhhhhhhh!

Nick grabs the flask back from Josh, takes a huge gulp.

NICK

But fuck it, there's always telemarketing, right?

JOSH

You think theater's easy? Try making a living doing off-off-off-off Broadway. Cause that's where my future's headed, my dude.

NICK

How many "off's" is that? Shit, that's practically Secaucus.

JOSH

It's rough, but, I feel you, bro. I can at least make a play up, news has to live in reality.

NICK

Yeah, yeah...

He thinks it over for a moment.

He goes for a sip, but, it's empty.

NICK
Yup, that's about right.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)
Shhhhhhhhh!

Nick snarls at her.

INT. KHADIJAH'S CAR - DAY

An unassuming Corolla hatchback sits on the corner of a city street. Inside is Khadijah at the wheel. Next to her is Jennifer with Elise in the back.

KHADIJAH
Someone want to fill me in on why we had to use my car for this?

JENNIFER
You got the best insurance, Khadijah, don't deny it.

ELISE
It's even better than my insurance, and I use it... a lot.

JENNIFER
All I need is some shocking B-roll footage of a drug deal -- something interesting for tonight so we don't have to use that stupid ultimate frisbee shit, again!

ELISE
So, I was under the impression that drugs would be purchased. Is that still on the table?

KHADIJAH
Man, fuck Valdez. This narco-shit is easy.

JENNIFER
Who says the War on Drugs is all dangerous and shit?

Elise and Khadijah nod.

INT. MARKET - COOLER - DAY

Inside this small deli and market, Nick grabs a twelve-pack of ice cold cheap-ass beer. He looks at the box, giving it a kiss, and walks over to the --

COUNTER

He plops his beer on the counter, his drivers license is on top of it. The stoned CLERK (33) White, looks glassily at him.

CLERK
Anything else, brah?

NICK
Pack of smokes.

Nick turns, and entering is an older woman, well-kept, stern. This is the Barre University Dean, WILMA WINTERS, (50) White.

Nick's eyes widen as the clerk puts the cigarettes on top of the beer. Nick scrambles.

NICK
Uh -- sir! Thank God! Someone left this case of alcoholic beer on the floor! Lucky I was there to-to-to pick it up!

CLERK
Wait, what?

NICK
And what are you trying to pull with these cigarettes? Do I look like I smoke, sir? Put those cancer twigs back, forthwith!

CLERK
Are you okay, bro?

NICK
Yes! I came here for a spring water and a copy of the latest --

He snatches a "Field & Stream" off the counter magazine rack. Double-takes, but:

NICK
Deer season's right around the corner, after all.

Wilma rolls her eyes as Nick turns to her.

NICK

Dean Winters? Nick Colvecchio,
communications major.

WILMA

Yes, the uh, producer for the Barre
TV news... thing.

NICK

That's the thing! We are stoked
you'll be tuning in tonight.

WILMA

I hope it's good, our budget's
looking abnormally tight for the
next fiscal, and I've had to make a
few... tough decisions.

NICK

I sure hope we are not going to be
one of those... I mean, we deal in
electronics, after all. Cheap
isn't really an option -- we're
barely in the twentieth century
down in the studio.

WILMA

Knock me dead, then. I hate to
impart such wisdom on you like
this, Mr. Colvecchio, but, life's a
numbers game out there. Me
personally? I like high numbers.
I wanna see something that's gonna
make me say: "shit, The Barre U TV
News Thing", that's where I want to
get my information from.

NICK

And, out of pure speculation, what
uh... what about low numbers?

WILMA

Picture this: if I must see footage
of the ultimate frisbee team
practice one more time, I'm going
to take all your cameras and re-
make the opening credits in
Apocalypse Now with the napalm.

NICK

Great movie.

WILMA

Except it'll be your cameras
melting. Proverbially speaking.

Nick scowls, he digs into his pocket for his phone and goes to leave as the Clerk holds up the magazine.

CLERK

Sir, your magazine! Sir?

WILMA

Shush, get me a pack of cigarettes.

He nods.

INT/EXT. KHADIJAH'S CAR - DAY

With a school camera in hand, Jennifer looks like she's getting a conversation with TWO GUYS, (30s), across the street. Her phone VIBRATES. She grabs it, while Elise takes control of the camera.

JENNIFER

Shit fuckers!
(into phone)
What?

NICK (V.O.)

Get to the studio!

JENNIFER

(into phone)
Now? I'm getting a money shot!

NICK (V.O.)

*Yes, now! Don't worry, I got a
plan. A good one.*

The call cuts. Jennifer turns to Elise and Khadijah.

TAP-TAP-TAP-TAP

The two guys tap on the passengers's side window.

GUY ONE

May we help you?

The three scream. Khadijah quickly starts the car.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Everyone: Boots, Elise, Jennifer, Khadijah, Kelly, and Zach sit confused. Nick enters, stands at the podium.

NICK

Listen up! Why are we here? To get an education? Ha! We can get all the learning we ever needed from Sparknotes and Wikipedia. Are we here to "find ourselves"? Perhaps, but there's a helluva lot cheaper ways to do that besides the five-figure a year tuition for this place. What does that leave us with? Drinking, and making reels for news jobs! Oh, we got the drinking down -- hell, I can turn that into an Olympic sport. But our reels are shit, we know this. Sadly, we know what news has to be today: violence, crime, scandal... it's not our fault, it's just life right now. You know who fucked us, right? Woodward and Bernstein, Hunter S. Thompson, and possibly Facebook, those dicks made news look like a fucking Hitchcock movie, and everyone followed suit. Now, news is just another form of entertainment. And we're stuck with stories that could put Huell Howser to sleep! Our macrame clubs and ultimate frisbee snore-a-thons just won't do, and it's literally costing us our futures! So --

KELLY

-- How much more of the tearjerking speech, Nick? Zach and I need to go meet my parents in an hour.

NICK

Stay with me, cause my plan involves them. Now, my very, very, very shameless roommate offhandedly gave me an idea. We can't make our boring stories interesting, and we can't just keep filming shit, so...

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

what if... we faked the news? If Valdez is so concerned with safety, and we need interesting stories, i think we can mesh the two! And that is how we're going to get a hard news story for tonight!

JENNIFER

I like this, but how do we do it?

Nick smirks.

INT. BARRE U - BLACK BOX THEATER - DAY

Nick talks to a clothed Josh and Luz, both read a script while Nick paces around.

NICK

The dirty secret is I'm trying to hack it as a screenwriter. I hope the dialogue is to your liking?

LUZ

Kinda stilted, but we can work around it, I guess.

JOSH

I love you, bro. But maybe stick to reporting.

Nick frowns, grits his teeth.

NICK

Anyway...

He pinches the bridge of his nose.

INT. BARRE U - PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Kelly and Zach walk with Boots, who acts as goofy as possible. Boots has his arms around both their shoulders, phone in hand recording.

Nick continues in a voice over.

NICK (V.O.)

So, the fake lovebirds --

BOOTS (V.O.)

-- And Boots!

NICK (V.O.)

O...kay, and Boots will go meet Ned and Maude Flanders for their early dinner date in the poorly lit parking structure on the north side of campus instead of wherever the fuck they were supposed to.

They walk towards a large SUV where two well-dressed boomers: FRED and THERESA HALBOTKA, (both 57) both White, stand confusedly as the three approach.

KELLY

Mom, Dad, this is Zach Warner.

The two stand in befuddlement.

BOOTS

And I'm Jake Boozman. Pleasure to make your acquaintances Mr. and Mrs. Halboka!

FRED

Halbo-t-ka.

BOOTS

How silly of me. My friends call me Boo-t-s.

THERESA

I feel I don't want to know the genesis of that nickname.

BOOTS

It's actually a very moving story.

Kelly and Zack smile to one another, Boots's plan works like a charm.

THERESA

More importantly, why are you here?

BOOTS

My family's a mess, I don't have any money.

KELLY

Knowing our family's great tradition of kindness, neighborliness, and hospitality, I told Boots he should come along.

Fred and Theresa sigh.

JOSH AND LUZ

Hide behind a couple of cars. Ski masks raised up. Both hold very fake-looking prop guns.

NICK (V.O.)

That is when my two theater friends will "ambush" the dinner party -- safely and without injury.

Josh and Luz look at each other.

JOSH

What do you think, babe? Pumpkin and Honey Bunny?

LUZ

Kind of gauche, no?

JOSH

The hell's gauche?

She sighs. They pull down their ski masks and rush over to --

FRED, THERESA, KELLY, BOOTS, AND ZACK

Josh and Luz raise their guns. While the elder Halbotkas are in shock, the younger three don't sell it as well.

LUZ

Money, bitch!

JOSH

(English accent)
Everybody be cool, this is a robbery!

THERESA

AHHHHH!

LUZ

Gimme yer purse! Wallet, too! And that watch!

Josh grabs a gold watch right off Fred's wrist.

He struggles to get his wallet from his pocket.

FRED

I'm having a hard time getting my wallet out of my pocket!

KELLY

Oh, my God!

ZACH
The humanity!

BOOTS
I don't even have any money to give
you guys!

Their bad acting echoes through the structure. Boots films himself falling over.

JENNIFER AND KHADIJAH

Film the scene behind another car. Khadijah operates a studio camera.

NICK (V.O.)
Then, Jen and Khadijah will just
"happen" to walk by and film the
incident for us to use for our
missing three minutes.

Jennifer quickly sets up the camera.

Through the VIEWFINDER Khadijah gets a shot of Josh and Luz abandon the robbery and dash off.

INT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - EDITING ROOM - LATER

Jennifer, Khadijah, and Nick make some final touches to the story package.

KHADIJAH
Dammit, Mr. Halbotka pissed
himself. It's all good, though, I
can edit that out.

JENNIFER
You know, I really don't want to
rain on anyone's parade --

KHADIJAH & NICK
-- Then don't.

JENNIFER
It just seemed too easy.

NICK
Sometimes the easy way is the best
way. And hell, it finally livened
up this place. You know this is
the first, like, ten minutes I've
been inside this club sober?

JENNIFER

Were you saying that thinking
that's a moment of triumph?

NICK

I love this job, really. The
boredom and bureaucracy just broke
me down. But I finally feel
something, you know?

Jennifer looks at him, smiles.

JENNIFER

Yeah, I kinda do.

There's a beat of tension and silence.

KHADIJAH

Uh, you two need the room?

Elise then opens the door and hits herself on the forehead.

ELISE

Ow!

JENNIFER

It's okay, Elise, we won't count
that as an accident.

ELISE

No, it's just, Dr. Valdez is here.

Nick looks at his phone.

NICK

Six-thirty. Well, It's almost
showtime, folks.

Jennifer transfers the clip to a zip drive.

KHADIJAH GRABS it from the port --

FADE TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - LATER

-- SHE INSERTS the drive into the port of the switcher.

Everyone is at their stations, the show is in full swing.
Kelly's boring macrame package is on the MONITOR.

Nick stands off to the side with Dr. Valdez.

RAMON
Mother of Christ, macrame club?

NICK
Relax Doc, we're covered.

Ramon pauses, sighs.

RAMON
Hey, look, about the letter of rec,
I-I-I --

NICK
-- Shh, don't you worry about it.
Just watch.

He points to the monitor where Jennifer is now ON SCREEN in the studio.

JENNIFER (ON TV)
And we have a very special report.
Ladies and gentlemen, we were
gripped by a shocking smash-and-
grab attempted robbery with three
of our own in a Barre University
parking structure just this
afternoon! Barre Today has
exclusive footage of the robbery
gone horribly wrong.

The screen CUTS TO the footage of the robbery.

Ramon looks in horror at the scene. He seethes with rage as he turns to Nick whose smirk fades.

INT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick stands against a wall while an angry Ramon paces about.

RAMON
What did I say? What did I say?
No crime stories!

NICK
Dr. Vald --

RAMON

-- No, shut up! You know, I smelled alcohol on your breath when you were in my office and I let it go, given the circumstances, but I should've had my fucking head examined! What in God's name were you thinking, Nick?

NICK

Dr. Valdez, it's not what you th --

RAMON

-- Oh, shut up! Do you know the-the legal ramifications of this kind of stunt? Our reporters in harm's way?

NICK

Seriously, could I just --

RAMON

-- Shut up! You're done, you hear me? You are out of this club, and if you think for one second that there won't be a disciplinary hearing for you, and Stencavage, and whoever else was involved then you, sir, are sadly mistaken! So, why don't you just --

NICK

-- It's fake, dammit!

Ramon stops, incredulous. One or two of the club members venture out into the hallway.

RAMON

F-fake? What do you mean "fake"?

NICK

Fake. False. Fictional. Fallacy.

RAMON

I know synonyms! Why, though?

NICK

We need better stories, so I did a Hail Mary! I had two actor friends of mine do the "robbery", totally staged.

RAMON

Are you shitting me? Why would you do a crazy stunt like that?

NICK

'Cause I'm saving this club! I have to! Because I don't want end up...

(trails, pauses)

You know what? Fine, take it, it's yours, anyway.

Nick turns to leave.

Ramon fixes his blazer. VIBRATIONS. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out an ancient flip-phone, he opens it.

RAMON

Hello?

The clubs' members look at him disapprovingly.

EXT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - NIGHT

Nick stands outside the doors to the studio, newly filled flask in hand.

Ramon exits. He can barely get the words out.

RAMON

Some timing. The, uh, the Dean called. She really enjoyed the segment. And she... she hopes to see more like this in the future.

NICK

You're serious?

Nick smiles at the sound of that.

RAMON

Apparently so. She stressed that she will be watching more often, and with interest. She also said the shock value was wildly entertaining and suspenseful.

NICK

Figures. Look, I get her job's rough. But it ain't fair with the willy-nilly-ness she has with the crossing of line items at the drop of low ratings. You need to...

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

you need to understand, doc, we don't have much, here. If we don't have good portfolio pieces no one respectable is going to hire us. News ain't that way anymore. But, I get the hole I put us in. This won't just end. We're gonna need a lot more "crime stories".

RAMON

Well, in the future I will be taking a larger role and supervise everything. You think you're gonna be the Steven Spielberg of this thing? No, sir, I'm gonna be the Martin Scorsese.

NICK

I like Michael Mann better, anyway.

He holds out his hand. Nick smiles and shakes it.

RAMON

Welcome back.

They go back through the doors.

INT. BARRE U - BARRE TODAY STUDIO - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Most everyone in the club waits for Nick and Ramon to enter.

RAMON

While it's against my better judgment, I am reinstating the briefly fired producer of Nick Colvecchio, and with great and utter bewilderment, I will say that Barre Today has officially entered the criminal news business -- but safety is our concern! And all the stories must be fabricated! No one is to get hurt, understand?

An elated Elise exits the control room with Boots.

ELISE

Done! And we made it ten weeks without a major workplace acci --

The light above her sparks and rumbles. It subsides, but then the ceiling panel above Boots breaks, and falls on top of Boots. He moans in pain.

BOOTS

I'm okay!

Elise hangs her head.

ELISE

I'm not.

Nick face palms while Ramon looks away, uneasy.

INT. BARRE U - DORM HALLWAY - NIGHT

A tired Nick walks outside his dorm room. He puts his ear against the door and hears nothing. Thinking he's in the clear, he opens the door and confidently strides in.

INT. BARRE U - DORM - NICK'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

But no sooner does he enter, he sees Josh mid-kiss with Luz. Both clad only in their underwear. Fred's watch now adorns Josh's wrist. The two pause to look at Nick.

Luz shrugs. Josh groans but shrugs, too.

Nick sighs, rolls his eyes.

NICK

Fuck it.

Nick starts to take off his shirt and shuts the door.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT./EXT. HALBOTKA RESIDENCE - NIGHT

DING-DONG.

The door of this two-story colonial opens up, reveals the trenchcoat-clad ABIGAIL KWAN (49) Asian, long hair. She flashes a police badge reading: WILKES-BARRE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ABIGAIL
Mr. And Mrs. Halboka?

FRED
Halbo-t-ka. Yes.

ABIGAIL
I am Detective Abigail Kwan with the Wilkes-Barre Police Department. I understand you two were the victims of a robbery earlier this evening? A watch was stolen?

FRED
Yes. We were just trying to meet our daughter and her wonderful boyfriend... and their very strange other friend.

ABIGAIL
I'm sorry to hear that. But, I will get to the bottom of this. May I come in? And perhaps, might I trouble you for a glass of hot water with lemon and stevia?

THERESA
Certainly, please come in -- oh, is Splenda okay?

ABIGAIL
It will do.

She enters and the door closes behind her.

FADE OUT:

END OF EPISODE