

IN THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

By

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GOD SPEED!

EXT. ARIZONA WOODS - NIGHT

A QUIESCENT NIGHT SKY hangs over a woodland forlorn and desolate in its staggering immensity.

Beside a stagnant lake, a RATTLE SNAKE raises its dripping mouth from its strangulated prey.

The shrill hiss and the eyes red and sightless as the eggs of spiders.

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME

A BLACK TELEPHONE, parked on a stool.

Watching the telephone with transfixed eyes are MAXWELL (28) and ERIC BERLIN (24).

Two brothers; analogous in build and stature; analogous in their melancholic impassivity.

A tension in the air, palpable, as Max reads the time on his watch and then on the clock hanging from the wall.

They exchange glances, calming each other.

Eric is about to say something, when the PHONE rings and rings.

Max answers it.

VOICE

(in a dour drawl)

Route 151, exit 10, t15, follow the trail. You'll see two cars, white Mercedes, black van and five men, including me.

Click. Max cradles the phone and scribbles down the directions on a note pad.

Max nods at Eric and the latter heads for a door at the end of the room.

Eric unlocks the door and flips a wall switch that illuminates a short flight of stairs leading to a-

BASEMENT

Eric strides down the stairs and towards a bed occupied by a little LATINO BOY, enfolded underneath the warmth of a duvet.

(CONTINUED)

Eric rouses the boy gently from his slumber.

ERIC
Wake up...up. It's time.

The boy stirs, a look of apprehension streaks across his face.

Eric takes out a plastic rope and shackles the boy's wrists.

ERIC
(to boy)
Too tight?

The boy nods in the negative and shuts his eyes, as Eric blindfolds him.

INT/EXT. 66' FORD MUSTANG - MOMENTS LATER

Max reaches under the backseat and flicks an inconspicuous button that pops the top half of the BACKSEAT open, revealing a hollowed out space.

Eric places the trembling boy into the hollowed space and after pausing to ensure the boy is somewhat comfortable, he snaps the backseat closed.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The wail of a mustang's engine grows out of the distance followed soon after by the emblem of the mustang coming towards us.

The mustang skids off the asphalt in front of a dilapidated sign and starts up a dirt road.

Employing only its parking lights, the mustang creeps up the dirt road, past a skeleton of oak tress and groans to a halt at the foot of a remote forest clearing.

INT. MUSTANG - SAME TIME

The windows are rolled down.

The boy, uprooted from his tomb, now sits anxiously at the back.

Max leans out the window for a better look at the terrain around them.

(CONTINUED)

The boy begins to whimper, prompting uneasy looks from the brothers.

Moments later, and the cry of car engines accompanied soon after by a shaft of headlights flashing down the dirt road.

Max and Eric exit the car, the latter helps the boy out of the BACKSEAT as a Mercedes and a black van pulls to a stop at the foot of the dirt road.

Max and Eric squint from the glare of the headlights.

The lights are dimmed to a faint beam, enabling the brothers to make out the menacing figures of two dark-suited men emerging from the van.

Max casts a reassuring glance at Eric and strides purposefully over to the Mercedes, while the two men from the van saunter towards Eric and the boy.

Max slips onto the backseat of the-

MERCEDES

and regards with a blank expression a dark-suited figure sat adjacent to him: LEONARD "LENNY" BATES, an emaciated black man armed with fiendish eyes that could set the meek alight with a mere glance. But not Max.

LENNY

The asset...?

MAX

Same condition as before.

Lenny nods his approval.

LENNY

Check under...your balance.

Max reaches under the seat in front of him and retrieves a white envelope containing a wad of cash.

He opens the envelope and takes a quick glance at the cash-it's all in there.

Lenny reaches out the window and taps the roof of the Mercedes, prompting the two men before Eric to take the boy and escort him back to their van.

Max watches the two men bundle the boy into the back of the van.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

When was the last time you fed him?

MAX

He's fed, don't worry about it.

LENNY

Who says I'm worried...?

Max exits the car and walks back to the mustang, as the van and Mercedes disappear up the dirt road.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

RAMON "LA VOZ" VELASQUEZ, an ashen old man with a resemblance to El Greco's emaciated saints, labors down the aisle of a luscious green house.

In between his gloved hand squats the handle to an oxygen tank, furnishing much needed oxygen via a tube lodged in his nostrils.

Ramon pauses before a bevy of epiphytics and sniffs its petals.

He winces ever so slightly and sprays the epiphytics with some fragrant pesticides.

Suddenly, the disquieting clatter of a terrified voice spills out from an almost inconspicuous SPEAKER installed on the glass roof.

VOICE (O.S.)

Please...you have to believe me...I
had nothing to do with it.
Please....it wasn't me.

Ramon, in chilling insouciance, moves past a riot of orchids in pots on long tables proliferating in wire baskets hanging from overhead pipes.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Listen to me.....please...I have a
son, he's only seven years
old...and his mother, without me
they're....please.

Cries on deaf ears as Ramon marvels at his maze of blossoms.

He grabs a rag hanging from his apron and wipes off a streak of dirt on a vase.

RAMON'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

(CONTINUED)

The provenance of the feverish pleas for clemency takes the form of a NAKED MAN shackled to a chair by metal chains.

From the lacerations on his face, the man has been on the receiving end of a savage beating.

He thrashes his head forward and howls into the intercom on the office table before him.

NAKED MAN

You got the wrong man...I swear..

The utter futility of his cries begins to dawn on him:

NAKED MAN (CONT'D)

Fucking animal!!....fucking...

The door behind him flies open and the man falls silent.

Two hefty men clad in black suits suddenly appear at the doorway, one of them brandishing a dagger in a black gloved hand.

The naked man turns to look with affrighted eyes the imminent whirlwind of pain hurtling his way.

NAKED MAN

NO....NO....NO!! FUCKING ANIMAL.

A pair of hands seizes a fistful of the naked man's greasy hair and pulls down to expose his throbbing laryngeal prominence.

The glint of the dagger in the air and it plummets-

GREENHOUSE

The shrill gargle of blood cascades from above as Ramon non-nonchalantly gauges the depth of water in a soil.

Silence. The naked man has finally been put out of his misery.

Ramon sticks his nose in the air and sniffs its invigorating aroma. He smiles.

He turns his fastidious attention to a pair of withering dendrobiums.

LENNY (O.S.)

You have a visitor.

Ramon acknowledges Lenny with a raised hand.

(CONTINUED)

RAMON

What kind?

LENNY

It's hard to tell with him, as you well know.

Ramon grins as he waters the dendrobiums.

RAMON

I trust the asset was handled with care.

LENNY

As always, not even a squeak from him.

RAMON

And the brothers..?

LENNY

They behaved.

RAMON

I sense an undertone of contempt for those boys. I can't have that getting in the way of business.

LENNY

Understood.

Lenny turns to leave, but turns back.

LENNY

Should I bring him in?

RAMON

Who...?

LENNY

The-

RAMON

Oh...of course. You may.

Lenny nods and exits the green house.

Moments later, Senator NORMAN POLLEQUIN, a steely 45 year old with salt and pepper hair that was once jet black, strides through the door.

Ramon settles down on a stool and beckons Norman closer.

Norman reluctantly obliges.

(CONTINUED)

NORMAN
You look healthy Ramon.

RAMON
Then you see worse than I do, or
was that simply an attempt at
levity Senator?

NORMAN
We can't all handle the truth.

RAMON
I do better than most, although I
must admit to a feeling of
resentment at the apparent prospect
of having merely a year or so to
live.

NORMAN
If you're lucky....

RAMON
(chuckles)
Yes, you see that's precisely why I
began growing these...
(motioning at his plants)
So tranquil, so...unencumbered by
delusions of morality, they have
nothing to complain about. I inhale
their stillness and it soothes.

NORMAN
I used to know a thing or two about
tranquility, until last night's
news.

Ramon appears oblivious.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
The bodies of three DEA agents were
found butchered in the back of a
trunk on the boarder, along with
five tons of cocaine.

RAMON
Sounds like an accusation.

NORMAN
(raising his voice)
Cut the bullshit!! You know as well
as I do who the culprit is, and
despite my accommodation to
redirect agents from the boarder,
your men are no less violent.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
Need I remind you about our
agreement to lower the violence in
exchange for-

Ramon imposes silence with a raised hand.

RAMON
Etiquette Senator, it's rude to
raise one's voice in another man's
house.

NORMAN
I'm in the middle of a re-election
campaign, and I cannot have the
very thing I professed to put an
end to sabotage my ambitions. I
need to know what you intend to do
about this?

Ramon beams a noxious stare at Norman, prompting the latter
to stifle his indignation.

RAMON
You worry too much.

Ramon labors to an orchid and carefully separates a blossom
from the root structure, and with tender care begins to
place it into a vase with water and a plastic sealer.

Ramon hands the vase to Norman, who takes it with a look of
suppressed fury.

RAMON
A gift for your lovely wife.

Norman nods his head in dismay and starts for the door.

RAMON (CONT'D)
Thread softly senator, one must
respect the hand that feeds it.

Norman pauses by the door, wondering if that comment was a
thinly veiled threat.

He exits the room in a state of consternation.

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

A ceiling fan whirs in the tobacco-fogged air.

Below, Max in a careless sprawl amidst a disarray of sheets. His eyes trace the impeccable legs of one AMANDA KOJO, the fire of his loins, staring absently out the window.

Max smiles. He climbs out of bed and approaches Amanda from behind. Reaching forward, he enfolds Amanda in a passionate embrace.

MAX

I love you..

Max spins her around and presses her flat against the grit of the wall.

They undulate back and forth in a morass of delight.

The shaft of flashing headlight throwing fractured light across their thrashing figures until-

Max gasps, his body shuddering, flopping into hers as they climax ensemble, sweat beading skin.

BEDROOM - LATER

Max and Amanda both lie staring up, eyes glazed from the night of restless fucking.

Max fishes two cigarettes from a pack on a bedside table. He proffers one to Amanda, who promptly rejects it.

MAX

Did I miss a memo?

AMANDA

Cancer...

MAX

(playfully)

Fuck off.

AMANDA

(smiles)

I'm just not in the mood.

Max sets the cigarettes back on the table.

He turns towards Amanda, placing a caring arm around her waist.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

What's on your mind? The bar exam?

Amanda averts her eyes, reluctant to divulge.

MAX (CONT'D)

Babe...come on, what is it?

AMANDA

I got an offer from a firm. They want to retain me, after the bar.

MAX

(elated)

Babe that's great, we should be celebrating.

AMANDA

Max, if I take the job, I'm gonna be working super long hours and you'll be hardly here, as usual. We'll barely see each other.

MAX

Oh come on! Don't worry about it.

AMANDA

But I want to.

(beat)

Max I love you, a shit load.

Max smiles.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

But...I've said this before, and I still feel the same way. I feel like I don't know you that well. You disappear for days, to where...I don't know. You won't tell me anything, I don't know if it's a trust issue or simply-

MAX

(interrupting her)

"Trust"...of course I trust you. But I told you before, I can't tell you about what I do, it's best that way.

AMANDA

(disappointed)

Think about how that makes me feel...the mystery, the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA (cont'd)
worrying...I don't like it Max.
It's not my idea of a relationship,
let alone a healthy one.

Max groans and leans back, he knows where this is going.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
I'm not trying to make you choose,
but....

MAX
I understand.
(beat)
I have to talk to my brother first,
and then....

AMANDA
And then...?

MAX
You're unbelievable you know
that...

Amanda smiles. Max pulls her towards him and they loose each other in an ardent kiss.

EXT. BERLIN'S RESIDENCE, FRONT PORCH - DAY

Amanda, a CRUMBLE PIE in hand, and Max wait before the front door of a modest suburban house.

Amanda looks nervous.

MAX
Relax...she's gonna like you.

AMANDA
Think I overdid it with the pie?

MAX
Nahh, she'll love it.

They kiss.

The door opens to reveal LAURA BERLIN, 60, an ageless matriarch with a waterfall of gray hair, magnanimous in her bliss.

Her face broadens in a gregarious smile, warming the heartstrings of Amanda and Max.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA
(embracing Amanda)
Maxwell, you never told me there
was a special one in your life.

MAX
Gotta keep some secrets.

LAURA
(to Amanda)
I'm glad he finally brought you
over.

AMANDA
That makes two of us, I wonder what
finally got into him.

Max averts his face, embarrassed.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(handing Laura the pie)
This is for you. Max mentioned you
were quite the baker. I'm hoping
it's up to your standards.

Laura smiles.

EXT. BERLIN'S RESIDENCE, BACKYARD - LATER

A big yard, double lot. The grass is expertly coiffed to
perfection. In the middle of this suburban Eden, sits Laura,
Max, Amanda, and Eric around a table.

Congeniality in the air, aided and abetted by Amanda's pie.

ERIC
Amanda, I got to say...this might
be better than mum's.

LAURA
Watch it!!

They all laugh.

LAURA (CONT'D)
(to Eric)
I'm still waiting for your half of
the pie?

MAX
Well that would require him to hold
on to a girl.

(CONTINUED)

Eric shoots Max a middle finger, the latter reciprocates the gesture.

LAURA

Amanda, Max tells me you're on the cusp of becoming a...

AMANDA

Lawyer, hopefully. I'm taking the bar in two months.

ERIC

Easy as pie.

AMANDA

(chuckles)

That's what I hear.

LAURA

Why law? If you don't mind me asking.

AMANDA

My dad was a defense attorney, I spent my entire child hood being ferried from one law firm to another. After my father died, I...I dunno know, I guess I felt like I owed it to him to carry on the baton. Fighting the good fight.

LAURA

I'm sure he'd be proud of you.

Max casts a comforting look at Amanda. She smiles back.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(to Max and Eric)

I have something for both of you.

Laura reaches under the table and retrieves a CIGAR BOX.

She hands it to Max.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I found it in your dad's old car. He planned to give it to you two when you were older, but...the best laid plans and all that.

Max flicks open the case and inhales the musky scent of pristine Venezuelan cigars.

He passes it on to Eric, who's eyes are now moist.

(CONTINUED)

KITCHEN - LATER

Laura having a quiet smoke alone.

She watches, with rueful eyes, her two boys and Amanda from behind the window in the throes of a poker game.

Max succumbs to defeat, slamming his cards down on the table in feigned anger.

Eric and Amanda jostle for the win, as Max joins Laura in the kitchen.

MAX

Your son is a cheat.

LAURA

I find sore losers to be worse.

Max pecks Laura on the forehead and helps himself to a cigarette.

LAURA

I like her...she's kind, smart,
with ambition too.

MAX

Thanks Mum. And thanks for the
cigar. I know it must have been
hard for you, going through Dad's
stuff.

LAURA

It used to be hard, the first few
weeks after he died. But I'm at
peace with it now.

(beat)

It's funny...I used to chide your
dad for smoking in the house, he'd
have to hide out in the car after
dinner to do it. You guys were too
little to remember, but he used to
sneak out into the garage in the
middle of the night and turn the
car engine on, like he was fixing
it. But-

MAX

Oh I remember that, I turned on the
engine for him on more than one
occasion.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA
(playfully shocked)
Nooo!! That man was incorrigible.

MAX
But he robbed off on you didn't
he...?

Laura forces back a tear, prompting a solemn silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
I've been dreaming a lot about him
lately. Not sure why...

LAURA
What kind of dreams?

MAX
Well, they come in different forms.
Usually vague, abstract....

LAURA
(finishing his sentence)
Opaque. Sounds like your dad on a
good day.

MAX
(smiles)
True. I had this one dream last
week, Eric was in it as well. We
were in the woods somewhere,
hunting deers but the weather was
awful...windy, dark clouds forming,
like it was going to rain. We must
have waited for endless hours to
sight a deer but under the
conditions we were out of luck. So
we decided to pack up and leave.
Right as we started loading the
truck with our gear, Eric spotted
the antlers of a deer shrouded
partially in a clump of shrubs. We
couldn't see the rest of it, but we
knew it was there. So I slipped out
my rifle as quickly as possible,
aimed low and bang!.

LAURA
You got it?

MAX
Yeah....there wasn't a sound but
the antlers disappeared. I grabbed
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAX (cont'd)
my knife and went looking for it.
As I got closer, I heard this awful
sound, like....like a child
whimpering. I cut across the shrubs
and...

(riveted)
there was dad....clutching a hole
in his chest, gasping for breath.

Laura's eyes swell with alarm.

MAX (CONT'D)
I screamed for help and tried to
help stop the bleeding but as I
reached down, he grabbed me by the
neck, pulled me towards him
and....he mumbled: "run, run, run".
(beat)
Then I woke up.

Laura looks mystified, as she makes sense of the dream.

LAURA
He just said, "run"?

MAX
Yep, repeatedly. But run from what?
From whom? I don't know.

LAURA
Maybe you're asking the wrong
questions.

MAX
How so?

LAURA
Maybe it wasn't so much as run
away, as stop running, from
whatever and whomever.

A beat, as Max ponders the interpretation.

MAX
Yeah, that certainly sounds like
dad.

LAURA
It sure does.

Amanda walks into the kitchen

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

I hate to say this, but I think
Eric might be a cheat.

Max and Laura laugh in unison. They glance out the window at
Eric rejoicing alone at the table.

MAX

I'll set him straight.

Max pecks Amanda on the cheek before heading out to the
backyard.

Amanda and Laura watch the two brothers launch into an
intense poker game.

Suddenly, Amanda grimaces and palms her forehead as though
stricken by a migraine.

LAURA

Hey...you ok?

AMANDA

I'm fine...I feel a little nauseous
that's all.

LAURA

Sit down, I'll get you a glass of
water.

Amanda sits as Laura fills a glass with tap water.

AMANDA

(sipping the water)

Thank you. I've been feeling a
little light-headed lately, with
all the studying for the bar.

LAURA

And the baby of course.

Amanda stares quizzically at Laura.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(smiling)

No alcohol, the constant trips to
the bathroom, nausea...sort of
narrows it down for a woman.

AMANDA

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Please, don't apologize. How long?

AMANDA

I just found out.
(glancing out at MAX outside)
I'm so nervous.

LAURA

You haven't told him?

AMANDA

No...not yet. I'm not sure he's
ready....I mean, he's a great guy
but...he-

LAURA

Disappears, an awful lot. Then
refuses to tell you where or what
he does.

AMANDA

You know...?

LAURA

Yeah. Their father was exactly like
that, we were married for a long
time and I was left in the dark for
longer.

AMANDA

How did you manage?

LAURA

It sounds counter intuitive, but I
trusted him, despite the fact he
didn't tell me much. I trusted that
whatever he was doing, he was doing
it for the right reasons.

Amanda's features relax, it seems Laura's words have
mollified her qualms.

INT. DENNY'S - DAY

Max navigating his way around a messy Caesar salad, paying
zero attention to a televised broadcast of Senator Pollequin
ranting and raving about the "scourge of campaign finance".

Max takes a sip of his coffee and it soothes.

DING, the front door chimes open as RAUL, a nefarious
looking man in a black suit, strides into the diner.

(CONTINUED)

He flashes a stern look at Max and approaches the counter.

Max watches him make a quick order and sits upright as Raul saunters over to his table.

RAUL
(sitting down)
We got a new asset. High-level.

Raul slides Max a card, face down, across the table.

Max takes it and slips it into his pocket.

RAUL
(rising to his feet)
High-level.

Max watches him leave the premises with a look of reluctance.

He waves a waiter over.

MAX
(to waiter)
You got a phone in the back I can use?

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

A black corolla crawls into a parking spot. Inside sits Max and Eric amidst an air of subtle tension.

Max lights a cigarette and inhales nervously.

Eric senses his apprehension.

ERIC
Everything good?

Max nods in the affirmative. He gazes into the rear view and he's suddenly transported-

INT. RAMON'S OFFICE - FLASH BACK

A much healthier looking Ramon sits behind a desk, scanning a document with characteristic concentration.

The door opens.

Ramon looks up, as Max (24) and Eric (21) are ushered into the room by Lenny.

(CONTINUED)

Ramon smiles and exchanges warm handshakes with the brothers.

RAMON
Please, sit down.

Max and Eric sit before the desk. Lenny stands to the side.

Ramon appraises Max and Eric with squinted eyes, as though attempting to infer their sizes.

RAMON
How was the trip? I know Arizona can be often hellish, temperature wise.

MAX
It was fine, thanks.

RAMON
Good. I'm sorry I couldn't make it to the memorial service. Your dad was a good soldier, very loyal....I had a quiet moment here of my own in his remembrance.

ERIC
Thank you, we appreciate it.

MAX
And we want to thank you for covering the expenses, our mum was....pretty overjoyed. She still thinks we stole the money.

RAMON
(chuckles)
Don't mention it, your dad was like a son to me, it's the least I can do.

That last remark induces a subtle look of contempt from Lenny.

RAMON (CONT'D)
So, I trust Lenny brought you both up to speed in regards to my proposition.

Max and Eric trade a knowing glance.

RAMON (CONT'D)

I know this is far left field from anything you've done for me in the past. But it's a chance to earn real money, take care of your mum.

MAX

It's dangerous, not to mention....children.

RAMON

(sarcastically)

I know, I loathe them. That's why I never had any.

Max and Eric smile.

ERIC

The money's great, no doubt about it. But....

RAMON

(finishing his sentence)

What if you're caught?

MAX

That's one issue.

RAMON

Well put it this way. The last thing these men want, is to get the police involved. The stench of dirty laundry will do that to you.

Max and Eric look reluctant.

Ramon stands and perches down on the edge of his desk.

RAMON (CONT'D)

It's a step up, but I wouldn't be offering you this if I thought you weren't ready, let alone if it was too dangerous. Just keep them in the same condition as before, they're only kids. Whatever you say, they'll do. And they'll be home before they know it, four days at most.

(beat)

It's exceedingly simple.

Max gazes into the steely eyes of Ramon, contemplating.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC (V.O)
Max....Max, they're here.

INT. COROLLA - PRESENT TIME

ERIC (CONT'D)
Max....

Max steels himself and glances into the rearview mirror as a black Lincoln emerges from the ramp.

The Lincoln circles the lot before idling to a stop in the parking spot adjacent to the corolla.

Max quenches his cigarette and rolls down his window.

The back door of the Lincoln cranks open.

LINCOLN

Eric and Max slide onto the BACKSEAT.

Raul is behind the wheel while Lenny is sat in the front passenger seat.

A pensive silence ensues.

LENNY
Check under.

Eric reaches under the chair in front of him and retrieves a bulky brown package. Max doesn't so much as glance at it.

LENNY
Simple keep and deliver. All the info on the asset included. Same as before, same house, same car, same everything.

Eric nods, he's ready.

Max, on the other hand, bears a look of unease and Lenny notices.

LENNY
Problem?

MAX
I need to speak with Ramon.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

You know how this works.

MAX

If I don't speak with him, there's no-

ERIC

(cutting him off)

Problem. He's had a rough day that's all.

LENNY

(to Max)

I thought you were supposed to be more like your father.

MAX

Fuck that's supposed to mean?

RAUL

Easy now. We're all alone here.

LENNY

If you two have a problem with this, speak up. This asset is far too important.

ERIC

(glaring at Max)

He's fine. We're fine.

LENNY

Listen, Ramon appreciates what you two have done in the past, and I think your compensation will go a long way in conveying the full extent of his gratitude. So saddle up, and do your fucking job.

COROLLA - LATER

Max and Eric watch as the Lincoln peels off down the ramp.

ERIC

What the fuck just happened?

Max is in no mood to explain himself.

ERIC (CONT'D)

"If I don't speak with him, there's no..", fuck were you trying to pull back there?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Circumstances have changed.

ERIC

Circum-what?? This isn't about you wanting to quit again right? Could have sworn we already settled that.

MAX

(taking a sharp intake of breath)

I'm losing her Eric.

ERIC

Shit, she said that..?

MAX

She didn't have to. Is the fucking job, she's sick of it. For fuck sake, even I'm sick of it. You know the other night I looked her dead in the eyes and I could tell she stopped trusting me a long time ago. And I know it'll only take one more disappearance and she'll be gone, maybe forever.

(beat)

I can't let that happen. I won't let it happen.

ERIC

But you knew it'd be difficult trying to have a-

MAX

I know. It happened to mum and dad and it tore them apart. I saw it happen first hand. But I'm not going down that path.

ERIC

And where does that leave me? I'm your brother Max, this job's my life, I can't do this alone.

MAX

Who says you have to? You can leave, get a job...

ERIC

As what..?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

What ever happened to publishing a novel? All you ever talked about was literature until Ramon practically forced us into this.

ERIC

He was there for mum Max, you know that as well as I do. He took care of us, like sons.

MAX

True. But just how much do you owe a guy....? Dad never had an answer and look what happened to him.

ERIC

That's below the belt.

MAX

Sorry, but I meant every word of it.

A BEAT.

ERIC

You've really made up your mind uhh?

MAX

After this job, I'm done.

The rigidity of Max's stance reverberates like a faulty alarm in Eric's ears.

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anna watches Max as he stuffs clothes into a duffel bag.

She reaches out and strokes his hand. He stares at their fingers mingling together.

Anna sighs. Max plants a kiss on her lips.

He grabs his duffel bag and leaves.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Mustang approaches the facade of the cabin in the woods and for the first time, one is inundated by its remote location.

Max and Eric step out of the car and take in the yawning landscape with an air of cold familiarity.

INT. CABIN, FRONT STALL WAY - SAME TIME

The front door flings open, sending a shaft of light streaking through the cabin.

Max and Eric step into the living room, duffel bags in hand.

Eric appraises the t.v with a puzzled look.

ERIC

Think they fixed the t.v?

MAX

Fuck if I know. I need a drink.

KITCHEN

The chink of beer bottles, banging up against one another as Max opens the fridge door.

Max peers in, every corner of the fridge filled to the brim.

MAX

Wow.

Max flips open two bottles of beer in a familiar move and bangs the door shut with his foot.

LIVING ROOM

Eric sat in front of the t.v, channel surfing.

MAX

(handing Eric a beer)

Look what I found.

ERIC

Fuck me. People do change.

MAX

Or this asset is as important as they claim. Even had the decency to stock the fridge.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC
(incredulous)
Nooo....

MAX
O yee of little faith!

Eric races to the kitchen to see for himself.

Max moves over to the window. He gazes out, past the steel bars, over the cavernous woodland that constitutes their backyard.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Max and Eric absently watching the highlights of a dreadful baseball game when the PHONE rings.

Max answers it.

LENNY
Anfield Harbor, take 5th street,
exit on Rodiega canyon and keep to
your right. There's an airstrip,
park across.

CLICK. Max scribbles the directions on a notepad.

INT/EXT. ABANDONED AIR STRIP - EVENING

The mustang parked abreast of a rutted tarmac.

Max and Eric waiting restlessly in it.

O.S. drone of a small plane engine perforates the silence,

Max and Eric react by exiting the mustang.

They gaze into the sky and soon their eyes make out the image of a SKYCATCHER emerging from behind a cataract of filthy clouds.

Wheels lowered, the SKYCATCHER soon touches down with a shuddering thump, whistling down the tarmac as it sputters to a halt.

Max and Eric approach the SKYCATCHER as a gangway is lowered.

Out comes Lenny, accompanied soon after by the arresting image of 11 year old ILORIN POLLEQUIN, her hands bound and eyes blindfolded.

(CONTINUED)

Lenny leads her gently down the gangway and towards Max and Eric.

LENNY
You boys settled?

Max and Eric nod in the affirmative.

LENNY
Good. She's yours now.

Lenny nudges her forward into the hands of Eric.

INT. MUSTANG - MOMENTS LATER

Max and Eric watch as the SKYCATCHER barrels down the tarmac and ascends into the air like a desert hawk.

Eric lights a cigarette and takes a long hard drag.

Max starts the mustang, and the engine roars to life.

INT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Mustang cruising down the highway.

Up ahead, a POLICE VEHICLE lurking off road.

Not a vestige of concern on the brother's faces as they pass the police vehicle.

Seconds later, and the whine of sirens sounds off, pulling the mustang over.

Max and Eric remain calm and collected as an OFFICER approaches the mustang.

The window of the mustang glides down and the officer peers inside, casting a glance towards the vacant BACKSEAT.

OFFICER
License and registration.

Max fishes out the required documents from the glove compartment and hands it to the officer, who appraises it with a look akin to suspicion.

MAX
Correct me if I'm wrong officer,
but I think we were doing 55.
That's well below the legal.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER

What you want an award for that?

MAX

A reason for pulling us over would
do just fine.

The officer returns the license and registration to Max with
a sneer.

OFFICER

Now how come I've never seen you
boys around here before?

MAX

We're a reclusive pair.

OFFICER

Is that so...? I'm guessing you two
work at the Johnson's plant?

ERIC

Yes we do officer. Just got
transferred in.

OFFICER

And you boys aren't aware of the
car jacking the other night...by a
fugitive?

MAX

Nahh.

OFFICER

Sonofabitch made off with a car
just like this one, hence why I
stopped ya.

MAX

We'll keep an eye out.

OFFICER

You do that.

(beat)

You boys have a good one.

The officer strides back towards his vehicle as the mustang
disappears down the road.

INT. MUSTANG, INSIDE BACKSEAT - NIGHT

Ilorin HUDDLED in the hollowed space.

A faint glimmer of light emanating from a narrow slit along the ajar BACKSEAT illuminates her blond hair.

Click, and the BACKSEAT is lifted open by Max.

Max lays a hand on her and she flinches.

MAX

It's ok, I'm just gonna carry you
out. Ok...?

A short hiatus, then Ilorin nods her approval.

Max reaches down and lifts her carefully out of the car and carries her into the-

INT. CABIN, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Where he places her gently on a sofa.

Max cuts the rope around her wrists and the blindfold masking her eyes so blue, you could swim in it.

Eric comes over with a plate of tuna sandwich and settles it on the coffee table before her.

ERIC

Ilorin, are you hungry?

Ilorin regards the sandwich with a dubious look.

ERIC (CONT'D)

It's good tuna.

ILORIN

I'm allergic to seafood.

Max and Eric exchange glances of disbelief. They ought to have known that.

KITCHEN - LATER

Max, Eric, and Ilorin at the table, each helping themselves to a HAM sandwich.

ILORIN

Not bad.

Ilorin takes a sip of her apple juice and it soothes.

(CONTINUED)

Eric and Max are visibly struck by her calm composure, giving her predicament.

ERIC
(enunciating)
I-lo-rin. Like *Lorin*...right?

ILORIN
No, more like I-lo-reen, with an *E* sound on both ends. It's a city in Africa, where I was born.

ERIC
Ok.

MAX
(pronouncing it properly)
Ilorin, there's a few rules we have to go through. It'll make life considerably easier for all of us if you follow them.

Ilorin nods her assent.

MAX (CONT'D)
Good. First, you do exactly as we say, when we say it, no questions asked, you'd be wasting your time and ours. Second, due to the fact we know as much as you do about why you're here, consider us as housekeepers. We're only here to make sure you're kept in the same condition you were taken, until they ask for-

ILORIN
(cutting him off)
Who's they?

MAX
I'm not finished. Until they ask for you. So, don't ask us about the state of your parents, when you can speak to them, deadlines, or anything specific that pertains to you being here. We simply do not know. Those are the rules.

ILORIN
That's it...? Compared to my mum's rules at home, you guys are pretty mild.

ERIC

(surprised)

Well...for us, mild means simple
and simple means easily followed.

MAX

We will escort you to the bathroom
to shower twice a day, one of us
will wait outside the door until
you're finished. If you require
further use of the bathroom, just
ask and we'll negotiate.

(beat)

All the windows are barred with
steel and you'll soon find out
we're literally in the middle of
nowhere, any attempt at escaping
will be futile. A waste of time.

ILORIN

I know what futile means.

Eric grins. Max shoots him a disapproving look.

MAX

Your bedroom will be down in the
basement, where you'll be spending
a significant amount of your time.
Any questions?

Ilorin finishes her sandwich.

ILORIN

I need to take a shower.

BATHROOM - LATER

Max and Eric stand guard bedside the bathroom door.

ERIC

I'm more tense than she is. They're
usually crying by this point.

MAX

Should be the smoothest we've ever
had. Good way to go out.

Eric pretends like he didn't hear that.

BASEMENT - LATER

Eric atop the stairway, watching as Ilorin slips into bed.

She smiles at him. Eric is taken aback by this gesture.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC
Leave the lights on?

ILORIN
Off please, my mum says it's more prudent.

Eric smiles and kills the lights.

A LEGEND APPEARS: DAY 2

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - DAY

The HISS and SIZZLE of butter in a pan as Eric fries up some eggs, tomatoes and crispy bacon.

Eric brings the pan over to the kitchen table.

Ilorin digs in with gusto, shoveling a munificent helping onto her plate.

Max and Eric are stunned by the considerable appetite of such a slight figure.

TING! and the toaster spouts four slices of wheat bread.

Eric brings those over as well.

Ilorin helps herself to two slices of bread and an astonishing amount of butter, prompting cringing looks from Eric and Max.

ILORIN
How many kids have been down there?

Max and Eric share a befuddled look.

ILORIN (CONT'D)
The basement. I saw scribbles on the underside of the the bed this morning.

Max and Eric remain reticent.

Ilorin takes a bite of her butter-soaked bread.

ILORIN
Do you guys do this often...like for a living?

Again, the brothers refuse to respond.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN (CONT'D)

You never said I couldn't ask questions not pertaining to why I'm here.

MAX

You ask a lot of questions.

ILORIN

My mum says that a lot. Inquisitive...I think is the word. My dad, on the other hand, says it irritates him.

Max and Eric nod politely. They're desperately trying to avoid being corralled into a conversation.

ILORIN (CONT'D)

You guys are good cooks. I'm a better cook than my mum, she's pretty terrible. She orders out all the time and lies to my dad that she made it. My dad know she's lying, but he pretends.

The brothers are startled by her forthrightness.

ILORIN (CONT'D)

I'm assuming I'm going to leave here not knowing anything about the two of you, assuming of course that I do leave here.

MAX

You will.

ILORIN

How do you know that? I thought you guys were just housekeepers.

Eric grins.

Max rises to his feet.

MAX

(to Ilorin)

Are you done?

ILORIN

Yeah.

Max takes her plate and dumps it in the sink.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN

What's the average time in general?

MAX

You'll be home before you know it?

ILORIN

That's good to know.

(beat)

What do you guys do in the mean time?

MAX

Nothing as exciting as your life back home I can imagine.

ILORIN

My life's very boring actually. See I'm home schooled, meaning I have no friends. So, I pretty much study, and read lots and lots of books. Lots.

Max and Eric exchange an indulgent look.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ilorin sat on the couch.

A pile of comic books and cosmetic magazines are dumped on the coffee table before her.

Ilorin looks distinctly unimpressed.

ILORIN

I don't read comics or magazines, especially those kind. No cartoons either, it's partly my parent's decision.

A pensive pause ensues as Max and Eric ponder their next move.

ERIC

Do you scare easy?

ILORIN

That depends.

HALLWAY - LATER

Max and Eric smoking in the hallway while watching Ilorin turn to the second chapter of Shelly's Frankenstein.

(CONTINUED)

She looks rapt with attention.

MAX

We need to be careful. She's far too talkative.

ERIC

I know.

MAX

Do you?

ERIC

What's that supposed to mean?

MAX

Don't engage with her, is part of the rules.

ERIC

But that would mean I can only talk to you. Bro...

MAX

(playfully)
Fuck you!

Eric chuckles as Max heads for the back door.

BASEMENT - NIGHT

Eric waiting by the door as Ilorin slips into bed.

She opens to a page in her novel, prompting Eric to leave the lights on.

LEGEND APPEARS OVER BLACK: DAY 3

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A gust of wind kicks up behind a pair of runner's legs as they glide rhythmically along a path in the woods.

MAX, his FACE drenched in sweat, exhibits a running form fine-tuned to perfection.

He huffs and puffs but manages to plod forward, the serenity of nature his ultimate fuel.

A barren oak tree up ahead, Max sprints towards it and stops to catch his breath.

He drops down and launches into a series of intense push-ups.

INT. BERLIN'S RESIDENCE - FLASH BACK

PATRICK BERLIN, in the throes of a final push-up.

He manages to propel himself amidst the watchful eyes of Max (12).

Max's face spells a look of inordinate pride.

Patrick springs to his feet and gestures at a towel, which Max brings to him.

PATRICK
(drying himself)
You were counting right?

MAX
Yeah, sixty-five.

PATRICK
Not bad uhh? For an old man.

MAX
You're not old.

Patrick smiles. He slips into a dark suit reminiscent of the kind donned by Ramon's men.

PATRICK
I'm gonna be away for a while Max.
You have to promise me you'll be
the man around here. Take care of
your mum and Eric. I can count on
you right?

MAX
Right. I promise.

Patrick smiles and takes his son into his arms in an affectionate embrace.

Max reaches into a closet and retrieves a . 45.

He hands it to his father, who takes it with a slight look of concern.

PATRICK
Careful now. Remember, they're not
toys. You have to handle it with
respect.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Respect.

PATRICK

Respect, in everything you do.
Understand?

EXT. WOODS - PRESENT DAY

Max in the throes of a final push-up.

But he's struggling, his hands trembling as he struggles to
elevate his frame.

MAX

Respect. I fucking understand.

And with that, he manages to straighten his arms.

He heaves a sigh of exhaustion.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Eric and Ilorin eating lunch at the table when Max flops in.

He opens the fridge and fishes out a bottle of water,
consumes it in two gulps.Max looks at Ilorin, who attempts woefully to simultaneously
devour Frankenstein and her lunch.Both he and Eric are amazed by her serenity, giving the
circumstances.

Inevitably, Ilorin spills her lunch on the book.

She looks at Eric and Max sheepishly.

ILORIN

(giggling)

Sorry.

ERIC

It's ok.

Eric hands her a napkin. She takes it and wipes the book
clean.

ERIC (CONT'D)

How's the novel coming along?

Ilorin takes a moment to gather her thoughts.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN

I'm not sure I understand, did he create the monster because he was lonely or because...he could?

ERIC

Ahh, but who's the monster?

ILORIN

Dr-

ERIC

Careful, it's not that simple. You see the line between man and monster is always shifting in the novel. Grasping that concept will bring you closer to your answer.

Max smiles as Ilorin digests Eric's nugget of elucidation.

ILORIN

Well...if you-

The Phone rings, cutting her off.

LIVING ROOM

The phone rings once more. Max answers it.

LENNY

Put her on.

Max gestures for Eric to bring Ilorin over.

Max proffers a calming look towards Ilorin before handing her the receiver.

Ilorin takes a sharp intake of breath, her eyes swollen with apprehension.

ILORIN

Hello...

VOICE

Ilorin...

ILORIN

(an edge of fear in her voice)
Mum...is that you??

VOICE

(sobbing)
Oh honey, it's me....

(CONTINUED)

Ilorin breaks into tears.

VOICE

I'm so sorry, it's all my fault.
I've been such a bad mother.

ILORIN

Mum stop...please...

VOICE

But it is....it's all my fault.

ILORIN

It's no one's fault. Not you, not
dad, I just miss you both so
much....

VOICE

You have to hang in there, your
dad-

CLICK, the line suddenly cuts off.

ILORIN

Mum...? Mum....?

Max comes over and takes the phone from her.

ERIC

She's gone.

Ilorin tries to compose herself but the ordeal is
overwhelming.

She wipes off the tears cascading down her cheeks and
trudges down the basement.

Max and Eric bear the unmistakable expressions of guilty
men.

A LEGEND APPEARS: DAY 4

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - DAY

SUNLIGHT creeps in through the window and onto Ilorin's face
as she stirs in bed.

She props herself up on her elbow and stares into space,
perhaps pondering over the events that transpired yesterday.

She climbs out of bed and notices, to her surprise, that the
door to the basement is slightly ajar.

(CONTINUED)

She furrows her brows, grabbing her hoody, she heads for the door.

HALLWAY

She emerges from behind the ajar door and steps onto an empty hallway.

All is quiet, no one insight.

She stares into the kitchen and notices the GAPING BACK DOOR.

Even the front door has been left open.

Something's amiss and she knows it.

She tip-toes to the bottom of the stairway and looks up.

The stillness is unsettling.

She casts a glance towards the back door, mulling over her next move.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Ilorin racing through the woods.

Frantically swatting her way past tree branches, parting apart thick bushes after thick bushes.

The ceaseless monotony of sprawling trees and she's going in circles-

Sprinting back and forth between forest growth...menacing in their staggering immensity.

Ilorin halts her escape to catch her breath.

Her eyes dart around and they soon make out a fork in the road.

Panting furiously, she sprints down the left path- stumbling past tree branches.

Up ahead, a protruding bump lies ensconced under a heap of leaves.

Ilorin attempts to skip over it but misjudges its height and trips over.

She crashes to the ground in pain.

(CONTINUED)

She reaches gingerly for her right foot, fearing the worst.

O.S. sound of a CREATURE GROWLING

Ilorin freezes in terror.

She looks up fearfully and to her greater horror sees the terrifying grimace of a-

COYOTE, looming over a carcass, baring its dagger-like canines.

Ilorin springs to her feet, wincing from the pain on her right foot and she runs for dear life.

The menacing patter of the Coyote's paws, ringing in her ears.

Ilorin glances fearfully over her shoulder when-

BANG! the sound of a rifle shot.

Ilorin slips on a film of oil on the ground and tumbles into a filthy lake.

The panic in her eyes as she resurfaces, gasping for breath in the cold air.

She swims towards shore and heaves herself out of the lake.

She lumbers forward, her wet clothes encumbering her movement like shackles to a runaway slave.

Delirious with exhaustion, Ilorin staggers to the ground.

A silhouette falls over her and she turns to see with relieved eyes the figures of Eric and Max.

INT. CABIN, LIVING ROOM - LATER

A MUG of HOT COCOA resting on a coffee table.

A pair of shivering hands raise it to the lips of Ilorin, who has a towel and blanket draped over her.

Her right ankle nursing under an ice pack.

Across the rim of the mug, she regards Max and Eric steadily.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN
You left the doors open
intentionally didn't you?

A BEAT.

ILORIN (CONT'D)
Didn't you?

ERIC
Yes.

ILORIN
(nodding her head in dismay)
And you knew I'd run?

MAX
Actually, you're part of a select
few. Most are too scared to leave.

ILORIN
Or too stupid.

MAX
The point, was to impress upon you
the futility of trying to escape.
We've found there's no better way
to prove it than first hand
experience.

ILORIN
I could have been-

ERIC
(cutting her off)
We won't let that happen.

ILORIN
I'm not afraid of you two. You're
not monsters.

Ilorin takes the ice pack off her right foot and labors to
her feet, inducing befuddled looks from Max and Eric.

She hobbles towards the stairs.

MAX
Where are you going?

ILORIN
I need to take a shower.

BASEMENT - LATER

(CONTINUED)

Max waiting atop the stairways as Ilorin slips into bed.
His face spells a look of regret as he turns to leave.

ILORIN
Kids...

MAX
I'm sorry?

ILORIN
Kids...do you have any?

MAX
No.

A BEAT.

ILORIN
Do you want kids?

MAX
.....when I'm ready, yes.

ILORIN
...me too, good night.

Max pauses momentarily, pondering over the rationale behind that line of question.

MAX
Good night.

He reaches for the wall switch, when-

ILORIN
Leave it on....please.

Max obliges and leaves.

Ilorin slips under the bed, gazing up at the underside to reveal a wooden canvas bearing the autographs and enshrined words of past children:

"I was here, Emma- June 1996", "I survived, Jack- October 1994"....etc

Ilorin fishes out a pencil from her pocket and etches the following:

"Surviving, Ilorin- October 1998".

She smiles.

A bible verse scribbled on the corner catches her attention.
Her eyes narrow and she reads it in a loud whisper.

ILORIN

Yea I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death. I fear no
evil.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Eric absently scanning through television channels, as Max saunters in, beer in hand.

MAX

Wait. Go back to the news.

Eric obeys.

From the monitor: Senator Norman Pollequin and his bereaved wife CATHERINE addressing a herd of reporters outside their home.

NORMAN

My wife and I would like to convey
our most profound gratitude for all
your prayers and kind thoughts.
They've been extremely helpful, and
it's....well it's certainly
uplifting to know that folks out
there, in this community, and in
our great state are capable of
displaying such inundating concern
for the well-being of others. Thank
you.

The senator embraces his wife.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

We always tried to do the best for
our daughter, our little angel.
Hell...she's always been braver
than us two. I know she's staying
strong, and I know in my heart that
when we overcome this storm, this
family will be closer, more
stronger than ever.

(beat)

In regards to the speculations over
my intentions to continue in my
efforts to be re-elected. I can
assure you that we will not be
deterred. This campaign will go on.
Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

The senator and CATHERINE turn to reenter their home, ignoring the frenzied requests for further questions from the reporters.

Eric mutes the t.v.

ERIC

Ramon really outdid himself this time.

MAX

All that publicity.

ERIC

You'd think the senator guy would have paid up by now.

MAX

This shit better just come to an end. I'm sick of it.

Max storms out the living room and marches up the stairs.

LEGEND OVER BLACK: DAY 5

EXT. CABIN, BACKYARD - DAY

A BEER BOTTLE soaring through the air.

BANG! A bullet rips through it.

Pieces of broken glass rain down on a tuft of weeds.

Max lowers his hunter's rifle, marveling at his expert shooting.

He nods at Eric, who sends another bottle wind milling through the air, and another, and another.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Max pulverizes each bottle with unerring accuracy.

Ilorin's face trembles in a seizure of terror as she observes the target practice from the sidelines.

Eric and Max turn to regard her and she averts her eyes .

MAX

There's nothing to be afraid of.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN

I know. But guns, they're...you know...

ERIC

We do.

Eric gestures for her to come closer.

Ilorin hesitates a moment, then complies.

Eric picks up five bottles off the ground and hands them to Ilorin, who takes them with an air of bewilderment.

MAX

I want you to place those-
(pointing out towards a rock
in the distance)
On that flat rock up ahead. You see
it?

ILORIN

(gazing out)
Yeah.

MAX

Arrange them in a circle.

Ilorin hesitates. Unsure as to where this is leading.

ERIC

You're not afraid, right?

Ilorin nods her assent and marches towards the rock, beer bottles banging against each other in her hands.

She arrives at the rock head and arranges the bottles in a neat circle on the surface.

Ilorin raises her thumb in the air, seeking approval.

ERIC

Perfect.

Ilorin walks back as Eric takes out a .22 MAGNUM, while Max reloads his rifle.

Eric takes off his watch and hands it to Ilorin

ERIC

Wait for the second hand to reach
twelve and time us.

Ilorin examines the watch.

(CONTINUED)

Max and Eric assume the position, standing abreast of each other.

ILORIN

Three, two, one. GO!

Eric strides forward purposefully, as Max crouches, takes quick aim and FIRES.

BANG! BANG!! Two bottles disappear like witchcraft, leaving three bottles remaining.

Eric trains his magnum and-

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The remaining bottles are severed in half.

Ilorin stops the clock.

Max and Eric grin at each other.

ILORIN

Ten seconds.

MAX

Not bad, young man, not bad.

Eric breaks into a raspy laugh.

ILORIN

That's fast...right?

ERIC

See for yourself.

Max holds out the rifle, inducing a look of trepidation from Ilorin.

LATER

Ilorin lying prostrate on the ground.

The butt of the riffle pressed up against her shoulder.

She looks a little uncomfortable.

Max corrects her posture slightly.

MAX

You have to relax your shoulders.
Remember, you're in control.

(CONTINUED)

Ilorin listens and flattens her shoulders parallel to the ground.

MAX

Now remember, keep your eyes above the rim of the barrel.

ILORIN

Above the rim.

MAX

You can't let the gun obstruct your line of sight.

Ilorin's arms tremble ever so slightly.

MAX

Control your breathing, try to inhale when you squeeze, and exhale upon release. Ok?

ILORIN

Got it.

Up ahead, Eric places a plastic container on the rock surface.

Max signals at him, and Eric moves to the side.

MAX

Just take aim and squeeze. That simple.

(beat)

In your own time.

A short hiatus as Ilorin readies herself. Then-

BANG!, her body recoils as she squeezes the trigger.

The bullet strikes the underside of the rock.

MAX

That was good. Just remember, you gotta relax those shoulders, and inhale.

Ilorin cocks the gun...finger hovering over trigger, eyes narrowing, inhaling and-

BANG!

This time, the bullet misses the container by an inch, striking the tree branch behind it.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Do you want to-

ILORIN

(cutting him off)

I can do it.

MAX

Ok. Sometimes it helps to visualize a moving object. So you're shifting the barrel an inch ahead, before you fire.

Ilorin digests the advice with a nod of the head.

Beads of sweat cascading down her forehead as she cocks the rifle.

Eyes narrowing as she takes aim.

BANG! The bullet grazes the side of the container, catapulting it off the rock surface.

Max smiles, patting Ilorin on the back.

Eric retrieves the container and hoists it in the air.

ILORIN

I'm starving.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dinner, and Pasta is served.

Ilorin forks a mouthful of pasta into her mouth.

She frowns and reaches for a slab of mozzarella.

As she grazes some cheese over her pasta, she notices Max and Eric making the sign of the cross.

ILORIN

Interesting, that's the first time I've seen you two pray before eating.

ERIC

We're not the most devout Catholics out there.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN
Strange...

MAX
What??

ILORIN
Nothing, I've just never understood
it that's all.

MAX
Praying..?

ILORIN
Prayers, church, God, religion. It
doesn't make sense to me.

MAX
Well you're just a kid. I can't
imagine that's the only thing that
doesn't make sense to you.

ILORIN
Well it's up there.

Eric chuckles.

ERIC
So what are you...an atheist?

ILORIN
Those are the people who don't
believe in a God?

MAX
Yeah.

ILORIN
I think I'm more in the
middle...an agnostic like my dad.
Although he claims he's really
religious in public, to get the
votes. My mum always teases him
that he'd do anything for politics.
(beat)
Maybe she wasn't teasing.

Max and Eric trade glances of unease.

MAX
So tell us, what exactly doesn't
make sense?

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN

Well I studied the bible with my tutor at home, and this might sound childish but....it's a little violent.

ERIC

The Old Testament...

ILORIN

Yeah, I mean....God kills people, lots of people. I'm uncomfortable with that.

MAX

Fair enough.

ILORIN

As for the New Testament, well...the miracles...

ERIC

What about them?

ILORIN

They don't make that much sense.

MAX

That's why they're miracles.

ILORIN

So you admit it?

MAX

No...I meant to say-

ILORIN

(cutting him off)

Take the blind guy for example. If Jesus could cure a blind man, why not cure blindness?

Eric and Max are lost for words.

ILORIN (CONT'D)

And after the resurrection....we're supposed to believe that a bunch of dead guys rose from their graves and went around greeting their loved ones. If that's true, what's so important about one more resurrection?

(CONTINUED)

ERIC
You mean Christ's?

ILORIN
Yeah, seems like an event that happened so often, with Lazarus and that other girl...

MAX
Jarius's daughter.

ILORIN
Yeah her. That kinda makes resurrections seem, common.

Max and Eric are visibly struck by her perspicacity.

MAX
Well...faith goes way beyond miracles. Often the facts are less important than the sense of solace, togetherness, the sense of belonging that Religion offers people.

ERIC
He's right, people are comforted by the fact there might be someone out there, looking out for them.

ILORIN
Even though there might not be.

MAX
But you don't know that.

ILORIN
Neither do you.

MAX
True, that's why I take the leap of faith. I don't see the harm.

ILORIN
Well, as my mum always says, "sounds wishful".

Max beams a dubious look at Ilorin, who smirks back.

BASEMENT - LATER

Ilorin Climbing into bed.

Behind her, Max watches from the stairway.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN
He's not going to pay you know...

MAX
(confused)
I'm sorry..?

ILORIN
My dad, he won't pay....whoever you
work for.

Max looking even more bemused now.

ILORIN (CONT'D)
He won't pay, because he can't pay.
(beat)
I overheard him talking to his
lawyer about money he lost,
campaign funds. I think he might
owe money to some bad people. My
mum doesn't know...he still buys
her necklaces.

MAX
It's been a long day, you should
get some rest.

Max turns to leave, but turns back as Ilorin climbs out of
bed.

ILORIN
Please....I know you're good
people. You're not monsters, you
could look the other way....let me
go. I don't see the harm.

Max regards Ilorin and he's struck by the sudden desperation
her eyes effuse.

MAX
You should get some rest.

Disheartened, Ilorin averts her face. She had to try.

ERIC'S BEDROOM - LATER

Eric, perched on a chair, polishing his magnum.

Max trudges in, pacing back and forth.

ERIC
Some kid uhh?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

That's putting it lightly.

Eric tosses him a pack of cigarette.

MAX

(catches it)

Thanks.

(lighting the cigarette with a
match)

I'm waiting for you to say it...

ERIC

I thought you were going to say it.

MAX

Five days and only one phone call.
You fucking kidding me...

ERIC

I'm not sure I like that record.

MAX

Me neither, something's up.

ERIC

She is a high-level asset.

MAX

You know she just fucking begged
me.

ERIC

Finally, I was wondering when she
was going to do that. Did she cry?

MAX

A tear or two. But before that, she
said the weirdest thing.

ERIC

What?

MAX

"My dad won't pay".

ERIC

She said that?

MAX

Apparently he's in the shits,
financially. She overheard him
talking to his lawyer about it.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

How the fuck is he financing his campaign?

MAX

Ramon...maybe. Who the fuck knows, it's politics right..

ERIC

You think that's why she's here?

MAX

Who knows, but what I do know is Ramon avoids publicity like a fucking plague. If he's keeping her for this long...

ERIC

It aint about the ransom.

MAX

There might not even be a ransom.

ERIC

What the fuck is he playing at?

Max pauses, thinking.

MAX

I read somewhere the senator's a poster boy for the war on drugs. Maybe Ramon's softening him up with a bribe.

ERIC

So? Ramon's got a ton of politicians in his pocket.

MAX

He may have underestimated this one. Someone got greedy, Ramon takes his kid to teach him a lesson.

ERIC

And if the senator's too stubborn to learn...?

MAX

(an edge of fear in his voice)
Ilorin....

Max and Eric stare at each other with an almost disturbing gaze.

A LEGEND APPEARS: DAY 6

EXT. CABIN, BACKYARD - DAY

Max and Eric, facing each other, topless, upper bodies glistening with sweat.

There's a slight bruise forming underneath Eric's left eye as they initiate a standing clinch.

Ilorin the sole and reluctant spectator.

She winces as Max and Eric break from the clinch and reinitiate another violent clinch, heaving and pulling at each other.

Max gets the better of the clinch and spins around Eric's back.

Max wraps his arms around Eric's torso, trying desperately to haul him to the ground but Eric manages to stave off the take-down attempt.

Eric drops an elbow, weakening Max's grip. He enfolds a foot around Max's left leg, shifting his body weight for leverage.

Eric has the upper hand now, as they tussle rigorously.

Ilorin is trying her best to avert her gaze but she can't help but keep looking. She's oddly enthralled by the riveting spectacle.

Max slips a free hand and with this advantage, reaches down and sweeps Eric off his feet.

Eric goes down in a heap, he curls in the fetal position, as Max mounts him.

The aim is not to hit each other, merely to subdue and by the looks of things, it's almost over for Eric.

Max seizes Eric's right arm and in one swift move, ensnares it an arm lock.

Eric groans in agony.

MAX

Tap.

Eric is trying his best to prolong the inevitable, his leg flailing about in a desperate attempt to kick Max off him.

(CONTINUED)

The end soon comes, and Eric taps out.

Max climbs off him and tromps over to the table beside Ilorin. Eric follows suit, clutching his right arm in pain.

Max swigs from a bottle of water and tosses Eric an ice pack for his arm.

ILORIN

You didn't hit each other...

MAX

Believe it or not, that's not the point.

ERIC

We wrestle to keep our aggression in check, not to hurt each other.

ILORIN

But it's violent.

MAX

From certain angles, yes. But it teaches discipline, restraint, it's important to know one's limits.

Ilorin looks like she understands.

ILORIN

I wish I had a little brother...maybe I could wrestle with him.

ERIC

It's hard being the only kid.

ILORIN

It's lonely.

Max and Eric can feel the sense of solitude in her voice.

Ilorin wipes a tear cascading down her cheek.

ILORIN

I want to go home....

Ilorin looks at the brothers with eyes fogged with sorrow and she's suddenly overcome, lurching forward as she weeps.

Max and Eric can barely look at her.

(CONTINUED)

ILORIN

Promise me I'll make it out of here. Promise me....you won't let them take me, no matter what happens.

Max and Eric exchange looks of utter shame.

ILORIN (CONT'D)

I'm taking a leap of faith. I need to hear you say it.

ERIC

(stepping forward to console her)

I promise.

MAX

We both do.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Max and Eric half-watching an abysmal soccer match behind a wall of fuzz.

An air of apprehension hangs in the air like a toxic cloud.

Eric glances at Max fiddling nervously with a cigarette.

MAX

Say it already.

ERIC

What?

MAX

We're f-

The TELEPHONE RINGS, cutting Max off.

Max and Eric exchange perturbed glances.

RING-RING!

Max answers it.

LENNY

Remember Rodiega canyon?

A pause, as Max recalls.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Yes.

LENNY

Be there with the asset.

CLICK! Max cradles the phone and shoots Eric an anxious look.

A pensive pause ensues, as they ponder.

Max heads for the front door and Eric understands what he must do.

BASEMENT

Eric rousing Ilorin from her slumber.

ILORIN

(stirring)

I'm awake...

ERIC

It's time to go.

Wide awake now, Ilorin sits upright in bed. Her face a contorted mess of alarm.

ILORIN

Now...?

ERIC

Yes, we have to go. I'm sorry.

Eric takes out a plastic rope to shackle her wrists.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Eric marshals Ilorin towards the mustang. Her wrists are bound and her eyes blindfolded.

INT. MUSTANG - SAME TIME

Max waits quietly behind the wheel as Eric slips Ilorin into the hollowed space inside the backseat.

Eric takes his place beside Max. The tension is palpable, almost insufferable.

Max casts an uneasy glance towards the BACKSEAT. It's now or never.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The mustang comes around a curve and drops into a dip, reappears almost immediately, streaking down the center of a deserted highway.

The mustang skids off the asphalt in front of the dilapidated sign and starts up the dirt road.

FOREST CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The Mustang grumbles to a stop across the clearing.

Eric moves to open the door, when-

MAX

Wait. Something's off.

ERIC

You mean with-

MAX

No. I mean this location, when was the last time we were given the same location for the drop off?

ERIC

(thinking)

Never.

Max's face spells a look of concern.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'll get her out.

Eric opens the back door and fishes Ilorin out from the hollowed space.

Max sticks a cigarette in his mouth. He takes a pensive drag.

FOREST CLEARING - LATER

The O.S. drone of car engines punctures the silence.

Eric and Max look sharp as the mustang is suddenly bathed in blinding headlights.

Ilorin has her head crestfallen with fear and foreboding.

The white Mercedes and the black van saunter down the dirt road and idle to a stop across from the mustang.

(CONTINUED)

Max and Eric step out of the mustang, the latter leads Ilorin out of the car and keeps her behind him...holding tightly onto her hand.

The door to the van slides open and out comes two hefty men in dark suits. A third man sits menacingly behind the wheel.

Max strides calmly towards the white Mercedes, the two men stride in the opposite direction

Max casts a steely glance at the men as he passes them into the-

INT. MERCEDES - SAME TIME

Max takes a seat and to his surprise, RAUL is sat next to him.

EXT. CLEARING - SAME TIME

Eric keeps Ilorin behind him as the two men stand in front of him.

INT. MERCEDES - SAME TIME

MAX
Where's your boss?

RAUL
Boss?

MAX
Lenny, what you forgot you take orders all of a sudden.

RAUL
Easy, we're here to conduct business no?

MAX
Business..? Well I like to conduct mine with a little professionalism.

RAUL
Meaning?

MAX
Meaning if there's a change in the plan, even a small one, we're supposed to be notified before

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAX (cont'd)
hand. We deliver the asset, and
Lenny pays us. I start seeing
random changes, and I get nervous.

RAUL
(smirks)
I'll keep that in mind for next
time.

MAX
"Next time"...

RAUL
Listen, I'm not here for a fucking
debate. I want that asset, in that
van, right now. Lenny or no fucking
Lenny, you copy?

Max takes a shark intake of breath, stifling his anger.

He reaches under the front seat and retrieves his
compensation.

EXT. CLEARING - SAME TIME

Max steps out of the Mercedes.

Behind him, Raul reaches out of the car window and raps on
the roof, signaling the "take" to the two men.

Max shoots Eric an anxious look as one of the men reaches
behind Eric and grabs Ilorin.

Eric reluctantly lets her go.

Ilorin screams as the man drags her towards the van.

The other man maintains his position in front of Eric,
amplifying the feeling that something has gone amiss.

The third man in the van hops out of the vehicle and flings
open the back door, awaiting the arrival of Ilorin.

Max glances back towards the Mercedes and catches the DRIVER
gesturing surreptitiously at the two men by the van, Ilorin
refusing furiously to be hauled in.

The driver of the van spins around with his gun drawn.

Max drops to the floor before he squeezes off a shot at him.

BANG! The van driver misses.

(CONTINUED)

Quick as a switchblade, Max slips out a .45 and fires a shot, hitting the van driver in the throat.

The van driver falls to his knees, elbows out. A JFK scabbling at his throat.

The man in front of Eric reaches for his gun, but Eric catches his hand in a ferocious grip.

CRACK! Eric fractures the man's nose with a vicious head butt.

The man staggers back, clutching his nose as Eric draws his MAGNUM and empties a shot that explodes in the man's face.

Max, on the floor, squeezing of two bullets that cannons into the chest of the man holding Ilorin.

Ilorin crumbles to the ground as the man's limp body collapses over her.

The driver in the Mercedes takes cover behind a gaping door but it's too little too late for him.

Eric picks him off like a deer in the woods- his face erupting into a bloody mess on impact.

Amidst the massacre, Raul manages to weasel his way onto the driver seat.

FRANTIC, Raul starts the Mercedes as the FRONT WINDOW shatters under a hail of bullets.

A bullet hits Raul in the shoulder. He shrieks in agony but still manages to evade the onslaught from Max and Eric.

The Mercedes reverses up the dirt road, vanishing into the darkness.

Eric and Max stare at each other, the crisis of the situation slowly sinking in.

They rush towards Ilorin and help her onto her feet.

Ilorin's clothes are drenched in blood and she looks traumatized.

MAX
I'll get the car.

Max sprints towards the MUSTANG as Eric severs the rope around Ilorin's wrist and the blindfold, revealing her affrighted eyes.

Ilorin reaches forward, enfolding Eric with a look of inundating relief.

I LORIN
I knew you'd keep your promise.

ERIC
Are you alright?

Ilorin nods her assent.

The mustang pulls up behind them, the doors shooting open.

INT. CABIN, FRONT STALL WAY - NIGHT

(O.S.) CAR TIRES GRUMBLE OVER GRAVEL.

Seconds later, Eric bursts through the FRONT DOOR.

He marshals a shivering Ilorin up the stairs, towards the bathroom.

Max steps in, shutting the door with a furious bang.

He storms into the-

LIVING ROOM

Where he volleys a vase into the air with a violent kick.

The vase shatters against the wall. Max stares down at the broken glass with a look of seething rage.

Eric comes into view, regards the livid figure of his brother and he understands.

ERIC
We promised.

Max is about to respond when-

THE PHONE RINGS.

Max and Eric fix a wolfish gaze on the ringing telephone.

Eric moves to answer it.

MAX
Don't. Let me.

Eric stands aside as Max picks up the receiver.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

The asset...? What's her condition?

A pause, as Max searches for a deliberate response.

MAX

Who ordered the hit on us?

LENNY

I asked you a question?

MAX

Was it you?

LENNY

They had orders, to hand over the money and pick up the asset. What ever happened after that, not my problem.

MAX

Not your problem...? You almost got her killed.

LENNY

No, you almost got her killed. I wasn't there.

MAX

Like you were supposed to. You follow the rules and you don't fucking deviate. Otherwise, what just happened, happens.

LENNY

I understand your frustration-

MAX

(angrily cutting him off)
Frustration...? Your men tried to kill us and almost got Ilorin killed in the fucking process.

LENNY

You mean the asset? Whatever happened to not deviating from the rules?

MAX

You're not listening to me. Your dogs went astray; I need to know who cut their leash?

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

They chewed it off themselves. They got ambitious, saw an opening, and they pounced. It happens. I should have been there but we're dwelling and that's a luxury. So, do you have the asset or not?

A beat.

MAX

Yes.

LENNY

Well done. I can rearrange for another drop.

MAX

When?

LENNY

Most likely in the a.m. But I'll need you to stay put, I'll be coming over myself. We'll make the exchange at the den. Are we clear?

MAX

Clear.

Max hangs up, pauses a moment.

MAX

He's coming.

ERIC

And Ilorin?

MAX

She stays with us. If we leave now, we can make it back to L.A in the morning.

Eric nods his assent and vaults up the stairs to grab Ilorin.

Max rushes out the front door, getting the MUSTANG ready

HALLWAY

(O.S.) SOUND OF CASCADING WATER

Eric raps on the bathroom door.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC
Ilorin....? We have to go right
now.

NO response is forthcoming.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Can you hear me in there....?
(beat)
We have to go now, there are men on
their way here and we have to
disappear.

STILL NO RESPONSE.

Eric furrows his brow and presses his ear against the door
when-

CRACK- a sickening THUD erupts from inside, as though
someone just fell.

Eric recoils back in alarm. Max comes into view.

MAX
Where is she?

ERIC
I-I....I tried calling her but she
won't respond.

MAX
(raising his voice)
Ilorin!! Open the door, right now.
We have to be out of this place in
two minutes, and I mean two.

Still the backdrop of cascading water.

ERIC
I heard a noise...a thump, like she
fell or something.

A look of concern creeps across Max's face.

MAX
You think we should go in?

A BEAT.

Eric nods in the affirmative.

MAX
(thumping against the door)
Ilorin...we're coming in okay?

Max and Eric step back, readying themselves.

They plow forward, shoulder first, and with one attempt force the door open.

BATHROOM

Max and Eric stumble in.

They peer through the semi-translucent shower curtain but see nothing.

MAX
Ilorin...?

SUDDENLY, A FEVERISH FLAPPING sound emanates from behind the shower curtain.

FRANTIC, Eric and Max lurch forward and pull back the curtain to reveal-

Ilorin convulsing with violent spasms on the bathroom floor, like a fish out of water.

Eric is the first to react, reaching down to stabilize her by placing a hand under the back of her head.

Eric cringes as his hand is reddened by blood gushing from the back of Ilorin's head.

Max takes her hand and they prop her gently forward, revealing a garish laceration across the base of her skull and a trail of blood cascading down the drain.

ERIC
We gotta to carry her out. On
three...one, two-

Eric and Max lift her gently out of the bath tub and into their

BEDROOM

Placing her cautiously on the bed.

The convulsions have ceased but from the look of the cerebral fluid leaking from her nose, and the blood trailing down her neck- it's a grim prognosis.

(CONTINUED)

Eric leans over Ilorin and checks her pulse. He feels nothing.

He checks again, same result.

MAX
She's not breathing?

ERIC
No pulse either.

Eric rolls up his blood-smearred sleeves and performs CPR on Ilorin, but it's futile- no vestiges of breathing or life are forthcoming.

Eric rips open a closet drawer and fishes out a FIRST AID KIT.

He zips open the kit and rifles through its contents...*assorted gauze, adhesive tape, antiseptic ointment*- superfluous tools in the face of Ilorin's miserable plight.

Eric screams out an obscenity, shoving the first aid kit to the floor.

MAX
She must have slipped in the bathtub, hit her head on the faucet or something.

ERIC
We're taking her to the-

MAX
(cutting him off)
It's too late, we're too far away from a hospital. By the time we get to one she'd have bled out. If she isn't d-

ERIC
Don't say it, don't you fucking say it.

MAX
Look at her....

Eric casts a fearful glance at Ilorin, the eerie quiescence and he shudders.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

ERIC

She's just a kid Max...

MAX

I know.

ERIC

She's just a kid...

MAX

(yelling)

I FUCKING KNOW OK!!

Max staggers back against the wall, crumbling onto the floor in a dejected heap.

Eric wipes away a tear streaming down his cheeks.

(O.S.) SOUND OF ENCROACHING SIRENS

Eric and Max trade a look that spells *when it rains, it pours*.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The POLICE OFFICER from the earlier scene stepping out of his vehicle, taking in the premises through a hue of suspicion.

He peers at the mustang with its doors open and engine running and he's intrigued.

He approaches the mustang and notices the top half of the BACKSEAT ajar.

He pauses, reaching forward, he lifts the BACKSEAT revealing the hollowed out space.

He nods his head in disbelief.

MAX (O.S.)

You lost officer?

The officer turns to see Max standing by the front door.

OFFICER

(approaching Max)

Left your car running, in a rush to get somewhere?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

What can I do for you officer?

OFFICER

I know it's late but uhh...we got a tip down at the station, apparently someone spotted our little fugitive slipping into the woods the other night.

MAX

Is that right?

OFFICER

(glancing over Max's shoulder into the cabin)

I'm afraid so. You don't mind if I come in do you? Take a look around, routine investigation and all that. Only take about a minute or two.

Max eyes the Officer with a dubious look.

MAX

Do I have a choice?

The officer grins and brushes past Max into the-

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME

The officer's eyes scan the vicinity.

Max watching his every move as the Officer glances into the empty living room and makes his way into the-

KITCHEN

Where he pauses in front of the window, gazing out into the cavernous landscape.

OFFICER

Pretty dark out there uhh?

(O.S.) THE CLICK OF A GUN HAMMER

And the officer's face sobers up, he recognises that sound.

OFFICER

Be careful now, you shoot a police officer and that rope you hanging from gonna start feeling a lot tighter.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Ten seconds. Who sent you?

The officer turns around, staring down the barrel of Max's .45.

OFFICER

Now I'm gonna walk outta here, and you're gonna put the gun down.

MAX

Five.

The officer sees Eric arriving on the scene and he raises a hand to implore.

OFFICER

Put it down.

Max lowers his gun. The officer heaves a sigh of relief, then quickly reaches for his gun when-

BANG! Max discharges a bullet in his left cheek.

The officer clasps his face as he sinks to the floor, blood seeping through his fingers like water breaching a dam.

Max stands over him, and BANG! snatches the life right out of the officer with a bullet to the head.

Max stoops down and rips open the officer's shirt to reveal the word "LA VOZ" tattooed over the officer's torso.

ERIC

One of Ramon's?

MAX

Yeah, fucker was on to us from the get go. Trouble is, who sent him?

ERIC

(turning to leave)

We better start calling-

MAX

Don't. The phone's hacked.

ERIC

Shit.

Max walks over to a storage and retrieves a bundle of garbage bags.

(CONTINUED)

MAX
Figure we have about 15 minutes.

INT. CABIN, FRONT STALL WAY - LATER

FRONT DOOR GROANING OPEN to unveil the nebulous figure of LENNY, flanked by two henchmen.

Lenny steps inside. He motions at the henchmen to fan out in opposite directions.

One man heads up the stairs, while the other strides down the hallway into the kitchen.

Lenny glides into the-

LIVING ROOM

Where he makes himself comfortable on an armchair.

He takes out a cigarette and lights it with a match. A trail of smoke escapes the side of his mouth in a sinuous movement.

The two HENCHMEN appear at the door way, empty handed.

LENNY
Should have known.

HENCHMAN 1
Think they got Gesham?

LENNY
You and your questions. Of course they did.

Lenny rises to his feet, moves over to the PHONE and dials a number.

LENNY
Let them loose. Smart and steady this time. I want blood on my hands.

Lenny cradles the receiver and there's an insidious glint in his eyes.

EXT. CABIN - LATER

THE SHRILL CRACKLE OF FLAMES AND THE CABIN ENCASED IN A BAPTISM OF FIRE.

LENNY stands unblinking before the fire, sheets of sweat pouring down his face, eyes nefarious against the smoldering heat.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

THE DEATHLY PALE FACE OF ILORIN, morbid in its tranquility.

Her BODY enmeshed in a white cloth and she's asleep now...hurled beyond the horrors of this perilous world.

PULL BACK to reveal the sullen figures of MAX and ERIC, gazing rapt and quiet into the ground where Ilorin lies entombed.

They both reach down and grab a FISTFUL OF SAND.

Waves of sand seep out of their hands, cascading into the grave.

ERIC

(in a solemn whisper)

"My spirit will sleep in peace; or
if it thinks, it will not surely
think thus. Farewell".

INT. UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW LIBRARY - DAY

Amanda studying fastidiously at a large desk littered with mammoth textbooks on "Tort Reform" and energy drinks.

A library assistant tiptoes over to her table, trying desperately to maintain the deafening silence.

ASSISTANT

Mandy?

She's going to have to do better than that to get Amanda's attention.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

(gently poking Amanda on the
shoulder)

MANDY??

Amanda reluctantly looks up from her books.

(CONTINUED)

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Sorry to disturb, but there's a guy on the phone for you at the counter, say's I should drag you if you refuse to come over.

AMANDA

A name would help?

REFERENCE COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

The assistant hands Amanda a receiver.

AMANDA

Max...is that you?

MAX

Yeah it's me. How's school?

AMANDA

"How's school"?? What are you shitting me?

That last question induces disapproving glares from onlooking students.

Amanda mouths an apology and averts her face, lowering her voice.

MAX

I'm sorry.

AMANDA

Max, sorry doesn't even begin to do the trick. I honestly thought you were dead.

MAX

Relax...

AMANDA

That's precisely what I can't do with you. I mean, you promised that things would change, then you disappear for-

MAX

(politely interrupts)

Babe, I'm done. I mean it this time. No more lies, no more mysteries. I'm turning over a new leaf, with and only with you.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA
(touched, eyes moist)
Jesus Max...you can't imagine how
happy that makes me.

Amanda places a hand on her belly and she smiles.

MAX
I need you to make me a promise.

AMANDA
But you hate promises.

MAX
New leaf, remember...

AMANDA
All right, name it.

MAX
Promise me you'll do exactly what
I'm about to tell you.

AMANDA
(concerned)
I promise. What is it?

MAX
I need you to do two things. First,
go to the apartment, look under the
mattress and you'll find my gun.
Take it, and keep it on you at all
times.

AMANDA
(an edge of fear in her voice)
Max...?

MAX
At all times.

BEAT

AMANDA
Ok.

MAX
Good. Second-

LIBRARY - LATER

Amanda hurrying back to her desk, her face spelling a look
of visceral anxiety.

(CONTINUED)

She freezes in her tracks as her eyes fall upon the image of two dark-suited men interrogating students opposite her table.

Amanda quickly slips behind a large shelf housing books on Shakespeare.

She peeks fearfully around the corner of the shelf, watching as a student points the men towards her direction.

Amanda draws back instantly behind the shelf, muttering a prayer under her breath.

She rises to her feet and briskly moves towards the opposite end of the shelf, as the men saunter past behind her.

INT. DAY CARE CENTER, JUNGLE ROOM - DAY

A cackle of hysterical children swinging merrily from one artificial tree to another, tossing stuffed gorillas across the room, smearing a MAP OF Africa with crayons, racing miniature safari trucks- raising Cain.

It's NEVERLAND REGAINED and it's LAURA who currently has the misfortune of supervising them.

Laura performs her duties with a smile, helping a Latino boy through a Tarzan comic.

Watching the spectacle from behind a large window adjacent to the front door is a DARK-SUITED MAN, who beguiles a little girl towards him.

The little girl presses her face against the window, as the MAN teases her.

The Latino boy draws Laura's attention to the disquieting scene unfolding behind her.

Laura springs to her feet, as the MAN pretends to stroke the little girl's face through the window.

LAURA

ANNIE...get away from the window.
Now.

The little girl reluctantly complies.

The Man grins at Laura and peels away down the hallway.

Laura grabs hold of the oldest kid in the room.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

You're in charge ok? I'll be back
in five minutes.

The kid nods his assent and Laura hurries out the door onto
the-

HALLWAY

Where she sees the MAN loitering beside the door to the
kitchenette.

LAURA

Sir, do you have a pass?

The MAN grins and calmly enters the kitchenette.

Laura follows suit.

KITCHENETTE

Her face sobers up as she walks in on RAUL, right shoulder
in a sling, with two men beside him, including the MAN.

RAUL

You must be some kind of a saint,
volunteering at a place like this.
All those kids, screaming non-stop.
Do you ever want to just...reach
out and, snap their necks?

LAURA

You're here because of my sons.

RAUL

I'll take that as pleading the
fifth.

Raul approaches Laura, who stares into his oppressive eyes.

RAUL (CONT'D)

You of all people should know, you
tell a child to do something, and
they don't listen. You either spare
the rod or spoil the child. Which
do you prefer?

LAURA

If you're asking where they are, I
don't-

(CONTINUED)

RAUL
(silencing her with a finger
raised to his lip)
The next word outta your mouth had
better be the truth.

Laura averts her face, as Raul lays a menacing hand on her
shoulder.

INT. GAS STATION, PAY PHONE - DAY

Eric trying to no avail to reach his mother on the phone. He
bangs the receiver down in frustration

MAX
Any luck?

ERIC
No. She's supposed to be covering
for a friend at work, but when I
called the day care, no one
answered. That was the fifth time.

MAX
We're too late.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

CELL STRUCTURE OF AN ORCHID UNDER A MICROSCOPE.

Pull back to reveal Ramon sliding another disc under the
microscope.

Ramon smiles as he studies the botanical specimen with
unbridled interest.

Across the room, a BALD MAN in a grey trench coat stands by
the doorway, flipping through a brown portfolio with a blank
expression.

BALD MAN
This is it?

RAMON
Are you accusing me of a lack of
due diligence?

BALD MAN
(slipping the portfolio into
his coat)
One needs to be sure.

(CONTINUED)

RAMON
I certainly hope so.

The bald man starts for the door.

BALD MAN
You know my rate.

RAMON
And you know my expectations. I
want it cleaned, thoroughly.

The bald man exits the room as a WIRELESS PHONE resting on a nearby table begins to ring.

ANNOYED, Ramon labors to his feet and lumbers towards the table, his oxygen tank clanking behind him.

Ramon lets out a hacking cough.

RAMON
(exhaling)
I expected this call approximately
six hours ago. Your slippage is
beginning to worry me.

MAX
Are you aware of the circumstances?

RAMON
I dictate the circumstances.

MAX
So you're the one who ordered the
hit on us?

RAMON
I ordered no such thing.

MAX
Well your right hand man tried to
kill us at the drop, putting Ilorin
at arms-length. Those are the
changing circumstances.

RAMON
Where is the girl?

MAX
Where is Lenny?

(CONTINUED)

RAMON

(admonishing)

Watch that tone, child. Your father and I may have been good friends, but even he knew when to say, "yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir".

MAX

I respect you-

RAMON

(cutting him off)

Then answer my question. Where is she?

A BEAT.

MAX

She's with us.

RAMON

Bring her to me, immediately.

MAX

I can't do that.

RAMON

(suppressing his fury)

Lenny will be disciplined, you have my word. Any man that undermines my business, will be disciplined.

MAX

He has my mother.

RAMON

And he won't lay a hand on her. We both know I promised your father I'd take of your family. I'm a man of my word. Bring me the asset.

MAX

My mother first.

LENNY

(in a furious howl)

BRING ME THE ASSET, NOW!!

A pensive pause.

MAX

My mother, first.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Consider our relationship, as the
rope supports the hanging man.

ENRAGED, Lenny hurls the phone across the room. The phone
shatters on impact against a vase.

EXT. GAS STATION, PAY PHONE - SAME TIME

Max cradles the phone and gives Eric a look that requires no
further elucidation.

ERIC

I have the address. We should go.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

LENNY approaching the door of the green house, accompanied
by Raul and two other men.

They each enter the-

GREEN HOUSE

Where Ramon, armed with a sickle, saws through clumps
of overgrown herbaceous plants and weeds.

Ramon doesn't so much as turn to acknowledge his visitors.

An awkward pause ensues.

Ramon saws off a tuft of weed and holds it in the air,
scrutinizing it with perturbed eyes.

RAMON

Come closer.

Lenny grins and moves closer, stopping a few feet away from
Ramon.

RAMON

Closer.

Lenny obeys.

RAMON

(placing the tuft of weed on a
table)

Dutch clover, "a valueless plant
growing wild", according to the
dictionary. I call them crude

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAMON (cont'd)
opportunists. They crave so dearly
for disturbance, mayhem, they
forget why they were planted there
in the first place.

(beat)
You're an after-birth, a left-over
so sickening, even rats would spit
on you.

Ramon beams an odious stare at Lenny and WHACK!!

Ramon lets fly a savage back hand across Lenny's face.

Blood trickles down from Lenny's lips and WHACK, WHACK!!

Ramon unleashes a barrage of RESOUNDING SLAPS, walloping
Lenny from side to side, like a rag doll.

Lenny raises his hands to his lacerated lips, wiping
off the blood.

Ramon pauses to catch his breath. He reaches down and
adjusts his tank for auxiliary oxygen.

RAMON
What have you done with her?

Lenny refuses to respond.

RAMON (CONT'D)
I won't ask you again.

Lenny's face contorts in a terrifying grimace of seething
rage.

RAMON
You ungrateful, child.
(to the other men)
Get him out of my sight.

Ramon turns towards his beloved Orchids, expecting his
orders to be actualized with immediate effect.

NO such action is forthcoming.

Ramon turns to regard Raul and the two men beside him, and
it finally dawns on him-he's been usurped.

LENNY
Lonely, isn't it? Old man.

RAMON

Judas.

Lenny lurches forward and rips off the OXYGEN TUBE from Ramon's nostrils.

Ramon staggers backwards, trying desperately to control his stilted breathing.

It's an excruciating scene to bear witness: Ramon WHEEZING horridly for air, his fading eyes fixed on his redolent plants, as though wishing he could absorb their vitality.

Lenny watches with scornful eyes as Ramon sinks to the floor.

LENNY

(stooping beside Ramon)

Breathe, breathe old man.

LENNY'S RAISED HAND COMES CRASHING DOWN ON RAMON'S FACE.

CRACK. CRACK. CRACK. CRACK.

Not so much as a slap, as a vicious paroxysm of blows...disfiguring Ramon's face beyond recognition.

Lenny rises to his feet, looking at his men who are taken aback by such savagery.

EXT/INT. MUSTANG - DAY

The MUSTANG, parked two houses away from a sprawling MANSION in an affluent neighborhood.

Three Police vehicles are parked in the capacious driveway of the MANSION.

Eric and Max fix a steely gaze on its FRONT PORCH.

A PRIOR PHONE CALL PLAYS AS VOICE OVER.

LENNY (V.O)

You should count yourself lucky,
you and your brother have a hell of
a mother. A hell of a mother.

Max sketches a MAP on a piece of paper.

MAX (V.O)

You should know, we're willing to
do anything to get her back.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY (V.O)

And I wouldn't blame you. In fact,
I'm willing to make life a lot
easier for the both of you.

MAX (V.O)

You have my attention.

LENNY (V.O)

An exchange. The asset, for your
mother. It's exceedingly simple.

MAX (V.O)

That simple?

LENNY (V.O)

For your mother's well being, yes.
But I can't extend you the same
gesture.

The FRONT DOOR to the mansion swings open and out comes
NORMAN and a furious CATHERINE, remonstrating on the front
porch.

Norman tries to restrain his wife, but Catherine rebukes the
attempt with a slap across his face.

FURIOUS, Catherine renters the mansion.

LENNY (V.O) (CONT'D)

Take the offer, you won't like the
alternative.

Max hands the paper to Eric, who folds it and slips it into
an envelope.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

RED NEON spills onto the forecourt of a seedy motel.

INT. MOTEL, ROOM 36 - SAME TIME

.45. RENTON SHOTGUN. AR-15. MAGNUM. BERETTA 92, each parked
on a bed.

Max and Eric scrutinize their arsenal with brooding eyes.

MAX

Amanda called, managed to get to
her sister's place in Maine.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

Good. How she taking it?

MAX

She trusts me, and that's good
enough for me.

Eric smiles, takes out a cigarette. Max helps him light it.

ERIC

I'm sorry.

MAX

For what?

ERIC

For not feeling the same way you
did about this job. Who
knows...maybe we wouldn't be in
this position if we were both on
the same page.

Max embraces his brother, and it's a long one, evoking a
hint of finality.

The motel phone rings, breaking apart the embrace.

Max answers it.

LENNY

Head down to Fontana, take exit
twenty-one to Baseline onto 4th
boulevard, and take the second
right. You'll see the sign to your
left. Drive into hangar C.

CLICK.

EXT. MUSTANG - DAY

THE MUSTANG approaches the gaping gate of a
decrepit "FLIGHT SCHOOL".

No sign of life, as the mustang saunters past rows of
corroded planes and empty hangars.

EXT/INT. HANGAR C - MOMENTS LATER

A large steel door rattles open, as the Mustang pulls into HANGAR C.

Max and Eric emerge from the MUSTANG, furrowing their brows at their vacant surroundings, save for the crates of airplane parts stacked to the side.

Seconds later, a CORNER DOOR at the far end of the hangar whines open.

Max and Eric look sharp, as Lenny strides into view, flanked by Raul and two other men we recognize from earlier scenes.

LENNY

Tip your hats to the future gentlemen. All this-

(pompously gesturing around the vicinity)

Soon to be transformed. Private jets flying routes nationwide, it's gonna be a printing press.

(beat)

If only Ramon could appreciate the visionary he had on his hands.

MAX

Where is she?

Lenny grins.

Suddenly, the corner door opens and LAURA, hand's bound and blindfolded, stumbles into view.

A man appears behind her and drags her forward, shoving her hard to the ground in front of Lenny.

Lenny shoots Max and Eric a look that says "*your turn*".

A beat, then-

Eric saunters towards the back of the trunk, hesitating a moment before popping the trunk open.

Lenny leers at the MUSTANG, restlessly awaiting the arrival of the "asset".

CHH-CHH, the O.S sound of a COCKED SHOTGUN and Max drops to the floor, drawing his .45 mid-air.

Eric appears from behind the trunk, shot gun leveled, and BOOM!

(CONTINUED)

One man is sent sprawling across the room.

Lenny quickly grabs Laura, employing her as a human shield as the men beside him scam for cover behind the CRATES, returning fire for fire in a frantic flourish.

Lenny hauls Laura by the hand and vanishes into a room behind the corner door.

Max hurls himself behind a CRATE, evading a wave of bullets, as Eric crouches and nails a man in the leg as he spins out from behind his cover to unload.

The man crashes to the floor, his severed leg scissoring behind him and he's a SITTING DUCK.

Max puts him out of his misery with a bullet to the head.

Eric behind the gaping trunk of the mustang, reloading the shotgun.

Only Raul and another man left. The former imploring the latter to head for the stairs opposite them.

The man reluctantly obeys, swallowing his fear as he sprints for the stairs to gain vantage.

QUICK AS A FLASH, Max spins out from behind the crate and squeezes three shots at the running man.

The man is felled twice in both legs, collapsing head first onto the jagged stairs. His head splits open in a bloody mess on impact.

MAX exposed now, and RAUL emerges from behind a crate to capitalize.

BOOM! The force of the shotgun blast picks up Raul before he can shake a shot off, flinging him against the wall like a rag doll.

Max nods a thank you at Eric, as the latter grabs an AR-15 from the trunk.

MAX
(taking the AR-15)
See where they went?

Eric motions at a gaping door at the corner and they hurry towards it.

Max and Eric stand against the wall, pausing for caution.

Eric peeks into the room. He sees nothing.

(CONTINUED)

They move stealthily into the
ROOM

Which evidently served as Laura's dungeon but neither Lenny nor Laura is anywhere to be found.

Eric motions at a back door and they sprint towards it.

SLAM! The back door flies open, and Max and Eric exit the hangar-

EXT. HANGAR C - SAME TIME

Onto a rutted path leading to an empty car park.

(O.S) sound of A REVOLVING PROPELLER and Max and Eric turn their attention to the TARMAC where they see the SKYCATCHER, from the earlier scene, preparing for take-off.

Max and Eric race towards it, guns leveled at the plane's engine.

But it's too late, LAURA'S FACE appears behind the plane window, Lenny's gun pressed to her temple.

FRENETIC, Max and Eric sprint after the SKYCATHER, as it barrels beyond their stride and ascends into the air.

MAX

FUCK!!

They can only stand and watch in hopeless fury as the SKYCATCHER soars at full speed into the sky.

Eric is about to hurl his shotgun to the ground when-

BOOM!! THE SKYCATCHER EXPLODES INTO A MUSHROOM OF FIRE.

Eric and Max recoil in wordless horror as the SKYCATHER plunges to the ground in flames.

They look at each other, stupefied into stunned silence and-

ZZZZ!! A bullet rips through the back of Eric's head, and he sinks face down to the ground.

MAX ducks down instantly, eyes searching frantically for the shooter.

His eyes narrow as he makes out a FIGURE on the roof of a hangar.

(CONTINUED)

ZZZZ!! , Max goes down in a heap, as a bullet perforates his throat.

Max clasps a trembling palm over the gaping hole in his throat.

His palm reddens as blood spews and it's almost over now.

He glances over at Eric on the floor and he grimaces, more in regret than pain.

He gazes up at the parting clouds above and he manages a smile, just in time, as life seeps away in a final exhale.

EXT. HANGAR C - SAME TIME

ON THE ROOF OF THE HANGAR, the BALD MAN from the GREEN HOUSE disassembles a sniper rifle with scrupulous attention.

He slips the parts into a sniper case and lowers a rope down to the ground.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

The sun high in the stark sky and the wailing wind sweeping over an immense stretch of sand.

Amidst the swirl of sand, CATHERINE plods forward, eyes fixed fearfully on a WOODEN CROSS in the distance.

She unfurls a flailing paper in her right hand to reveal MAX'S MAP to Ilorin's burial site.

Catherine soon arrives at the site and she drops to her knees upon seeing her daughter's name emblazoned across the wooden cross.

The shrill hiss of the wind, like a weeping widow.

And Catherine weeps all right....she weeps.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

SQUACK. THE DRYER signals the end of its cycle.

AMANDA empties dry towels and baby clothes from the DRYER into an empty laundry basket.

She moves the basket to a folding table on the other side of the room, and begins folding the clothes into thirds.

(CONTINUED)

A frown suddenly forms across her face, and Amanda pulls out a SMALL PISTOL tucked in her jeans.

She mutters an obscenity and dumps the gun into the laundry basket, then absently places a towel over it .

HALLWAY

Amanda ambles down the hallway, laundry basket in hand, and quietly enters a-

BEDROOM

Where she recoils in fright upon seeing the disturbing image of the BALD MAN rocking a SLEEPING BABY in a cradle.

The Bald man regards Amanda with a gentle look and raises a finger to his lips.

BALD MAN
(whispering)
She just fell asleep.

Amanda is frozen solid with fear and foreboding.

The Bald man proffers a fiendish smile and glides towards Amanda.

BALD MAN
Is she yours?

AMANDA
(just about managing to speak)
Umm...N-No. She's my niece.

BALD MAN
Does she have a name?

AMANDA
I'm sorry....who are you? How did you get in here?

BALD MAN
Ahh, I asked first.

Amanda glances down at the laundry basket.

AMANDA
(swallowing audibly)
Eden. Her name's Eden.

(CONTINUED)

BALD MAN
Eden...biblical utopia. That's a
lot of pressure to put on a child.

The Bald man steps forward, takes the laundry basket off
Amanda, and parks it on a nearby table.

BALD MAN (CONT'D)
You look awfully tired.
(pointing at a rocking chair)
Please, sit down.

Amanda casts a petrified glance at the rocking chair and
tears begin cascading down her cheeks.

AMANDA
I have a baby on the way.

BALD MAN
Then you need your rest. Please,
sit down.

Amanda wipes away her tears with the back of her hand.

She casts a surreptitious glance at the laundry basket,
inducing a look of defiance.

AMANDA
No. I won't do it.

The Bald man grins, as though amused by her futile dissent.

Amanda shuffles towards the laundry basket.

The bald man slips out a silenced pistol.

BALD MAN
You need to sit, now.

Amanda freezes. A pensive silence ensues.

DING-DING! The front door bell reverberates, puncturing the
silence.

AMANDA
It's my sister.

FRONT STALL WAY

The front door opens and Amanda's SISTER walks in,
brandishing several grocery bags.

(CONTINUED)

SISTER
(in a loud tone)
You upstairs Mandy?
(beat)
Well I found the soy milk you
wanted....took me a while. Did you
finish the laundry?

NURSERY

BALD MAN
Where's your room?

AMANDA
End of the hallway.

Bald man motions for the door.

Amanda reaches for the laundry basket, as she starts to the door.

BALD MAN
Leave it.

AMANDA
She'll come looking for me if I
leave it untouched here.

Bald man nods his assent and they exit the room.

Moments later, Sister scuttles up the stairs.

NURSERY

Sister walks in, takes in the tranquility, and she smiles.

She approaches the cradle and grazes the side of Eden's lip with a gentle finger.

Sister exits the nursery quietly and approaches the door to Amanda's room.

SISTER
Mandy dear are you asleep?

No response is forthcoming.

SISTER
Mandy...? I got milk.

Sister giggles and places her hand on the door knob.

AMANDA'S ROOM

(CONTINUED)

The door opens and Sister enters a dark room where she sees Amanda frozen on the bed, the laundry basket lying adjacent to her.

SISTER
(concerned)
Mandy....? Why are you sitting
there in the dark?.

Sister edges towards Amanda, the latter desperately trying to alert the former to the imminent peril with a subtle nod.

SISTER (CONT'D)
(reaching forward to feel
Amanda)
Mandy....you're worrying me. What
are you trying to say?

Amanda casts a terrified glance behind her and sister turns to look, when-

THE LIGHT'S FLASH ON to reveal the Bald man perched on an arm chair in the corner, pistol on his lap.

Sister shrieks in horror upon seeing the Bald man.

BALD MAN
Sit down, please.

Sister obeys at once, shifting the laundry basket behind her as she sits beside Amanda on the bed.

Amanda eyes the basket discretely.

BALD MAN
You have a beautiful daughter.

Sister, with her head slumped in dread, begins to whimper.

Amanda places a consoling arm around her shoulder, then tactfully slides her hand down her sister's back into the laundry basket.

BALD MAN
(to Amanda)
Dangerous move coming here,
endangering your sister's life. He
must have warned you someone was
coming.

SISTER
Please, I have a child.

BALD MAN

I know. Eden.

Using Sister's back as decoy, Amanda's hand snakes underneath a towel, fishing for her pistol.

SISTER

We both have children.

BALD MAN

I know. But you've complicated things. I only came for her.

The Bald man points his gun at Amanda, who remains remarkably calm.

SISTER

Please.....don't do this.

BALD MAN

Do you have a husband?

Under the towel, Amanda's hand clenches the handle of the pistol.

SISTER

(sobbing)

.....We separated.

BALD MAN

Pity, two single mothers. American tragedy.

Amanda clicks the pistol's hammer as Sister howls in desperation, muffling the sound.

BALD MAN (CONT'D)

(to Sister)

You have two choices. You can leave right now, get a head start, call the police et cetera. Or, you can remain where you are and face the inevitable, with your sister. It's exceedingly simple.

Sister looks into the odious eyes of the Bald man.

BALD MAN (CONT'D)

You have five seconds to choose.

Amanda embraces weeping Sister with her free hand and whispers something into her ears.

(CONTINUED)

BALD MAN (CONT'D)

Three seconds.

Like a flash, Sister bends over, as Amanda pulls out the pistol and shakes off a shot before the Bald man discharges a bullet at her.

Amanda jerks back, as the bullet hits her on the right shoulder but the Bald man is worse off, staring down at the hole in his chest.

Sister scrams for cover behind an armoire.

Amanda winces as she readies herself for another shot.

The Bald man dips a finger in the trail of blood leaking from the hole in his chest.

AMANDA

(training the pistol at him)

Max, Eric....you killed them?

BALD MAN

I signed a contract. They we're surplus to re-

BANG! A hole in-between his eyes silences him.

AMANDA'S FACE, gun still leveled on the limp body of the Bald man, and she's panting....panting...panting.

DARKNESS.

FADE OUT:

THE END