

NINER

screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. HORSE RANCH - SAMMS FAMILY FARM - NIGHT

A couple of pure saddlebreds...ONE BLACK, ONE BROWN, gather near a small piece of WHITE GATED FENCE.

On the other side of this fence sits a THREE STORY COLONIAL HOME covered in CHRISTMAS LIGHTS. A very elaborate NATIVITY SCENE in the sprawling front lawn. The Samms residence.

A choppy, amateurish version of Baby, It's Cold Outside is played on A PIANO. The MUSIC in the home ECHOES - into the open fields and surrounding woods.

THE BROWN HORSE

Trots closer to the fence to get a better listen.

SUPER: WINDERMERE, FL - CHRISTMAS EVE

THE BLACK HORSE

Ignores the MUSIC -- heads for the fence nearest the woods. The surrounding forest is dark, quiet.

A SLIGHT WIND

Kicks up some leaves from the ground, ruffles a few trees. The peaceful serenity is interrupted by an abrupt force of nature. Something is wrong. Very wrong.

THE BLACK HORSE

Simply stares into the woods. Its eyes locked on something we can't see or hear. Focused. Unflinching.

INT. SAMMS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting at a mahogany console piano -- playing and singing "Baby, It's Cold Outside" is UNCLE GARY (50s) - while wife NIKKI (40s) rubs his shoulders.

A beautifully decorated Christmas tree sits in a corner. Dozens of wrapped presents surround the base.

GARY

My mother will start to worry..

NIKKI

(sings)

Beautiful, what's your hurry...?

Gary points back at his niece BECCA SAMMS (19) brunette, gorgeous, plopped down on a nearby couch. Not the least bit enthused.

GARY

Come on, Becca...!

Becca half-heartedly rolls her eyes, stares down at a piece of sheet music in her lap.

BECCA

My father will be pacing the floor.

Becca drops the sheet on her lap, embarrassed. Propped on the chair next to her with a tenor sax hanging from his neck is RICKY (13). He has a good laugh.

Becca's father RICHARD (50s) also laughs. He's on the other side of the couch, having a tall glass of eggnog. Enjoying the peace and quiet.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Richard's wife, HELEN (50s) finishes slicing up a couple of sweet potato pies with a large carving knife. A silly grin on her face. She steals a quick glance at the party.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki CLAPS for Becca as Gary continues to play.

NIKKI

Very nice, Becca.

GARY

And...take it away, Abby!

Gary points at Becca's sister ABBY SAMMS (17) blonde, cute. Her and boyfriend TRENT (19) dark goth type, share a stool by the kitchen counter. Trent's arms around her waist.

ABBY

Wait. What am I doing?

BECCA

You're singing this stupid song
like the rest of us, so stop
acting like you're lost.

ABBY

I'm not acting. I'm lost.

Gary points at Helen, still serving up pies.

GARY

Take it away, Helen...!

HELEN

(sings)

Listen to the fireplace roar...

Trent hears what sounds like a JINGLING OF KEYS behind him
and turns quickly --

A SHELTYE

Trots through the kitchen with a pair of "jingle bells" on
her collar. This is INGRID.

Trent sighs in relief. He appears nervous, on edge. He
stares at the front door. As if he's waiting for someone.

GARY

(sings)

So really I'd better scurry...

NIKKI

(sings)

Beautiful, please don't hurry...

GARY

Let's hear it, Ricky...!

Ricky BLOWS the next few measures through his TENOR SAX.
The crowd goes nuts with APPLAUSE.

NIKKI

(sings)

Put some music on while I pour...

BECCA

God, doesn't this song ever end?

GARY

Hey! -- That's not the next line.

Abby stares at her eggnog, a bit nauseous. Wipes beadlets of sweat from her forehead. She slides off the edge of the stool and almost tumbles to the floor. Trent catches her.

TRENT

What's the matter with you?

ABBY

I don't know. I feel sick.

Trent grabs her arms, attempts to balance her. She jerks away from him.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Let me go.

Abby quickly makes for the bathroom. Helen notices. A bit concerned. Stares at Trent with blame.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby stumbles her way inside. Dizzy, nauseous. Heads straight for the bathroom --

BATHROOM - (CONTINUOUS)

Abby makes for the sink, splashes some cold water in her face. She takes a seat on the toilet. Leans forward with her elbows rested on her knees.

INT. SAMMS HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The outer SCREEN DOOR slowly opens. In walks THREE MEN in long winter coats, leather gloves. All carry duffel bags.

The first through the door is JASON FERRIN (20s) white thug, black cornrows and goatee, tough.

Second is SCOTTIE PERRY (20s) bushy, unkempt hair. Drug addict. His eyes are dark and tired. His build is thin.

Third is BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP (30s) thin snow white hair, shaved close and neatly trimmed. A DRAGON TATTOO on his neck and a rough, pockmarked complexion.

The three uninvited houseguests let the sounds of the PIANO MUSIC lead them further into the home.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helen serves up the last of the sweet potato pie and begins scooping some VANILLA ICE CREAM onto each plate.

Bobby, Ferrin, and Scottie quietly pass through...

Trent turns, spots them. He stands, slowly steps away from the stool. He quietly moves into the kitchen. Stares back and forth between Bobby and the living room crowd.

BOBBY

Merry Christmas. God bless us.
Every one.

Helen turns, spots the three thugs gathered in her kitchen. Her chipper smile replaced by pure panic.

Ferrin walks around the center piece of the counter and boxes Helen in. He sets his black bag on the countertop.

Helen steps back, bumps into the sink. Scratches her arms in a nervous frenzy. Fumbles about with her hands.

HELEN

I didn't realize we were having
any more guests.
(to TRENT)
Are these friends of yours, Trent?

TRENT

No. They're not.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

Gary and Nikki are still at the piano. Searching the music book for a new song. Not paying any mind.

Becca and Ricky are thumb wrestling, laughing. Completely oblivious to the goings on in the kitchen.

Richard gulps down the rest of his egg nog, snatches up a couple of cookies from the coffee table. He spots Ferrin and his wife at the sink.

KITCHEN - SAME

Trent backs himself into a corner as Bobby steps closer.

BOBBY

How can you say that, Trent? After
all we've been through together.

Scottie stands behind Bobby. He is a nervous wreck as he runs his fingers through his filthy, unwashed hair. His eyes dance back and forth between the two men. Ready for the worst.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

Richard spots Ferrin uncomfortably close to his wife.

RICHARD

What's going on, hunny?

KITCHEN - SAME

Helen stares down at the center counter --

INSERT - THE KNIFE

Still covered in pie filling.

BACK TO SCENE

Helen checks with Ferrin. He shakes his head --

FERRIN

I don't think so.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

Becca and Ricky stop thumb wrestling for a second and notice the awkward stand-off in the kitchen.

RICHARD

Is there something we can help
you with?

KITCHEN - SAME

Bobby smiles at Trent who is quivering from head to toe. Frightened to the core.

BOBBY

Relax, Rich. Just stopping by to
wish the family a Merry Christmas.

Bobby finally gives Trent some breathing space and makes his way into the living room. Trent takes a breath.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

Gary and Nikki still laughing it up at the piano. Gary turns around, faces the crowd --

GARY

Hey! Why so quiet back here?
Abby and I are gonna do a duet.

Gary and Nikki notice Bobby hovered over the proceedings. The crowd are all visibly scared.

Nikki turns her attention to a very nervous, very sweaty Scottie standing by the television. A GUN stuffed in the front of his pants.

BOBBY

Take five, Gary.

Gary and Nikki slowly lose their goofy smiles. Bobby drops his black duffel bag on the carpet.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I see everyone could make it out
after all. Uncle Gary, Aunt Nikki.
Ricky Junior, of course.

(beat)

Our lovely hostess Helen. So that
leaves the one and only Abigail.

Becca reaches over and gently touches Ricky's knee. He turns to her. She signals him to keep quiet.

Bobby gives Becca a sly smile.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Trent wasn't lying when he said you
were beautiful.

RICHARD

You haven't answered my question,
friend. How can I help you?

Bobby turns his attention to Richard.

BOBBY

Oh. Hi, Rich. We were just in the neighborhood. Thought we'd finally put a few names with some faces. Mind if I take my coat off and stay awhile?

Bobby removes his trench coat, hangs it on a chair. His 50 CALIBER GUN clearly visible in his belt. Ricky notices.

Richard, Becca and Helen also notice Bobby's weapon.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Sit down, Mister Samms.

Richard doesn't budge. He just stares down at Bobby's gun. As if to contemplate snatching it from of his pants.

Scottie snaps under the pressure and pulls his own gun. Points it in the direction of Becca and Ricky Junior.

SCOTTIE

Enough of this bullshit! Let's just do them and get out of here! What the hell are we doing?!

BOBBY

First things first, Scottie. You're scaring the kid. Why don't you let Ricky Junior show you to his room.

Scottie watches young Ricky. Lowers his gun.

Ricky turns to his father --

RICKY

Dad...?

RICHARD

It's okay, son. They're gonna take what they want and leave. That's all.

BOBBY

Sure thing, Rich. We don't wanna spoil your Christmas.

Scottie snatches up Ricky Junior from the couch. Removes him from the scene.

RICKY

DAD??

RICHARD

Don't worry, son. I'm here.

Richard checks with his wife --

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Are you okay, baby?

KITCHEN - SAME

Ferrin still has Helen boxed in. She simply stares at the floor. Scared stiff. Ferrin unzips his duffel bag, pulls out a SAWED OFF SHOTGUN.

BOBBY

Helen. You're making your husband nervous. Why don't you come over here and join him on the couch.

Ferrin grabs her by the arm, drags her into the --

LIVING ROOM - (CONTINUOUS)

Ferrin violently throws his hostage to the couch.

Becca breaks into tears at the sight of this. Richard's face is overcome with rage.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(to FERRIN)

Take our songbirds and show them to the closet. Trent and I are gonna spend some quality time with Abby and her folks.

(to TRENT)

Isn't that right, buddy?

Trent's lips literally tremble in anticipation.

TRENT

Bobby, please. Don't make me do this.

Ferrin grabs Nikki by the arm and pushes her into a nearby hallway, out of sight. Richard, Helen and the others grow visibly worried.

GARY

Take it easy!

Gary leaps from his seat. A defensive stance.

Ferrin SMASHES the butt of his sawed-off in GARY'S FACE, knocks him to his knees. Gary spits BLOOD on the carpet.

Ferrin yanks him up by the arm and escorts him down the hallway. BLOOD DRIPS from his mouth and nose.

Bobby stares at Becca with lust in his eyes. She is a sobbing mess.

BOBBY

Stand up. Let me get a closer
look at you.

Becca slowly stands -- steps closer to Bobby. He gives her a good look over. A sly grin.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Turn around. Slow.

Richard boils over with uncontrollable rage.

Becca very reluctantly turns her back on Bobby; who wraps his arm around her waist, brings her closer, puts his gun to her head.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Okay, Richard. Get on your knees
and place your hands behind your
back. Real slow like.

Richard slowly drops to his knees. Places his hands behind his back. Trent is a sweaty mess. His breathing is anxious, fast. He gawks back and forth between Richard and Helen.

RICHARD

You do what you want with me,
but take that gun away from
her.

BOBBY

(to TRENT)

You heard the man. Get to it.
We don't have all night. If he
moves, shoot him.

Trent unzips Bobby's bag and pulls out several pieces of already cut rope. He ties Richard's hands.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

So, Trent. You decide which one you're gonna do first? Why don't we ask your girlfriend here? She can help decide.

Helen squeezes her eyes closed. Unable to watch any further. She whispers The Lord's Prayer.

Trent is also in tears as he ties Richard's hands.

RICHARD

Don't look at me! Just keep your eyes shut! Both of you!

Becca shuts her eyes, turns her head.

BECCA

Please...don't...

Bobby leans in closer - whispers in Becca's ear.

BOBBY

Shh. It'll all be over soon.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ABBY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Abby is now passed out on the tile. Her legs sprawled out on the floor. She slowly comes around but has some trouble placing her surroundings.

ABBY

What the hell...?

She checks her watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It reads 12:23 AM

BACK TO SCENE

Abby stands. Tired and sluggish. Grabs her stiff back with one hand, rubs her weary eyes with the other.

INSERT - HALF EMPTY GLASS

Abby's egg nog from earlier still rests on the sink.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby picks up the glass. Takes a sniff. A grimace.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Abby slowly shuffles her feet on the tile -- completely exhausted. She spots the uneaten plates of sweet potato pie and melted ice cream on the counter.

A one gallon container is DRIPPING VANILLA all over the floor. Abby stands in confusion. Shakes her head at the disgusting mess. She moves further into the --

LIVING ROOM - (CONTINUOUS)

The tree surrounded by dozens of un-opened presents. Not a single one has been unwrapped.

Abby spots Ricky Junior's sax lay on the floor.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby steps into her parent's bedroom. The door wide open. The bed empty. No Richard and Helen. The bed is made but the comforter is a ruffled mess. A couple of pillows look to have been knocked to the floor.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Abby walks outside. The night air is cold as she wraps her arms around her waist. She is still barefoot as she makes her way down the steps and onto the property.

Abby notices that everyone's car is still parked in the driveway and surrounding grass. Panic sets in.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Scottie runs a water faucet at the edge of the house. He washes the sticky BLOOD from his hands.

Trent is hunched over nearby, puking onto the grass.

Abby appears from behind a corner, spots the two boys. They spot her. Scottie and Trent both stand.

SCOTTIE

Get the fuck out of here.
Before they see you.

Bobby and Ferrin step out of the woods. Both carrying shovels. They begin for the house. Abby takes notice.

Trent also notices them.

TRENT

(whispers)
Go, Abby. Now.

Abby storms off. Around the house and into the nearest patch of open woods --

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

Abby runs as fast as she can, deeper and deeper into the trees. Her bare feet SNAPPING and CRACKING at the sharp twigs and branches below.

Her face twists and contorts, in agonizing pain. It's almost unbearable. She bites her lip as to not CRY OUT and give away her location .

Every few steps, she turns and checks for followers.

No one. Only darkness.

Before Abby can face forward, she trips and falls face first onto a thick tree trunk. Knocked out.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM #1 - NIGHT

An attractive ER nurse, CARLY DENNIS (20s) dabs a damp cotton ball on a nasty case of ROAD RASH. The patient is T.J. and his face is a mess.

Waiting in the corner and staring at Carly's perfectly proportioned behind is DETECTIVE RAWLEY NINER (30s).

Niner could be a heartbreaker with his thick blonde hair and steely blue eyes. These eyes are tired though. Old before their time. And his hair is an unkempt mess.

Niner obnoxiously BLOWS BUBBLES with his gum as Carly works on his prisoner. She grows visibly annoyed with him as she swabs T.J.'s face with an antibiotic.

NINER

I'm trying to figure out if I know you from somewhere. I thought I knew all the nurses.

Carly all but ignores him, stays focused on T.J.

CARLY

You bring a lot of suspects to the ER, do you?

NINER

Ouch. Is there a window open? I'm detecting a cool chill in the room.
(to T.J.)
What do you think, T.J.?

T.J.

I don't think she likes you.

CARLY

I thought prisoners were supposed to be in cuffs.

NINER

He's technically not in custody.

CARLY

Well what is he then? Technically?

NINER

Damn lucky he's not being charged with robbery and aggravated assault.

T.J.

Yeah. Don't I look lucky?

CARLY

Your friend has some pretty bad road rash. What did you do? Cuff him to your bumper?

NINER

T.J. here's got a problem. You see, the cops have asked him to stop ripping off Oxi from local pharmacies. Apparently his A.D.D. is getting the best of him and he's not remembering so well. Since asking politely didn't work, I thought I'd try a more hands-on approach.

Carly carefully applies some gauze to T.J.'s face. He's unusually mellow and his eyes are glazed over.

CARLY

(to T.J.)

I'd offer you some Demerol for the pain but I see you've got that taken care of.

Carly tapes the gauze to T.J.'s face. Done.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Okay, boys. Merry Christmas.
Happy New Year.

Carly cleans up her work area, tosses out some trash and heads straight for the door.

Niner takes one last look at her back side before she disappears down the hall.

NINER

(to T.J.)

She wants me, right?

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Abby sits, waits with a bag of ice to her head. Some BLOOD from her wound has dried on her forehead. She still shakes. Freezing. Barefoot.

A concerned young WOMAN by her side, watching her closely. This is MRS. MABRY.

Her husband MR. MABRY stands at the ADMIT DESK, impatiently paces back and forth. No one behind the counter. He curses under his breath.

MRS. MABRY

What's happening?

MR. MABRY

It's like no one works here.
Ridiculous.

MRS. MABRY

Find someone!

Mr. Mabry tosses his hands in the air. Defeated.

MR. MABRY

Who??

MRS. MABRY

A fucking janitor! Who cares?
Just get somebody out here! Tell
them there's a girl bleeding all
over their precious floor! That
should get them moving!

Mr. Mabry loses his patience and storms down the hallway.

Abby is completely withdrawn from any reality. She gazes
at the floor. Staring blankly at nothing.

MRS. MABRY (CONT'D)

My husband's gone for help. The
doctor's are gonna ask your name.
You don't have to tell me if you
don't want. But they have to ask.
So your family isn't worried. You
don't want them to worry, do you?

Nothing from Abby. Just a blank stare. Mrs. Mabry awaits
an answer as she stares deep into Abby's eyes.

INT. SUTURE ROOM - NIGHT

Several boxes of medical supplies are stacked up on the
floor. Carly uses scissors to rip them open and begins
unloading the contents in various cabinets and drawers.

NINER

Let me take a wild stab at
something. You dated a cop?

Carly spots Niner standing in the doorway.

CARLY

You again?

Niner helps himself inside.

NINER

So tell me I'm right and I'll
leave you alone.

CARLY

You're right. Now leave me
alone.

Carly goes about her business. Finishes emptying the first
of several boxes.

NINER

E.R. nurses and cops. They're
like burgers and fries, aren't
they?

CARLY

You said you were gonna leave me
alone.

NINER

No, I didn't. I said I'd stop
asking about you and cops.
did.

I

CARLY

Well, now you know. Congrats.

Carly folds the cardboard in quarters, cuts open a new box.
She does her best to appear busy. Avoids eye contact with
the annoying detective.

NINER

It's no biggie. I knew anyways.

CARLY

So why did you ask?

NINER

I just wanted to hear you say
it. You're forgetting, I'm a
detective. I know things.
More than you might think.

CARLY

Okay. Tell me a story.

Niner takes a seat on a Doctor's swivel stool.

NINER

You got this love/hate thing for cops. On one hand, you like the attention dating a cop brings. Their possessive, overprotective nature. They make you feel safe. Like nobody can touch you. In a job where you don't always feel appreciated, that makes you feel good...

Carly goes about stocking the supplies, but can't help but crack a grin. Niner's touched a nerve.

NINER (CONT'D)

Plus, you saw each other a lot, worked the same miserable hours.

CARLY

Sounds great. So what possibly could've gone wrong?

NINER

You saw the ugly, not so sexy side of police work. He started getting in your way of treating stab wounds and gunshot victims. He was talking to your patients like their suspects instead of people. Before you know it, that whole macho man act wasn't so attractive anymore.

Carly stops filling the shelves, turns to Niner. Folds her arms. Clearly aggravated.

NINER (CONT'D)

And what really pissed you off... I mean really put you over the edge. He thought his job was more important than yours. How am I doing?

CARLY

That was absolutely amazing.

NINER

I know, right. Pretty impressive.

CARLY

You and my ex would get along great.

NINER

And in there lies the problem.
I remind you of your ex.

CARLY

You're twice the asshole he was.

Niner rolls his eyes. Just returns with a smile. In runs a hopping mad --

MR. MABRY

He stops at the door, peeks his head inside.

MR. MABRY

(to CARLY)

Excuse me? You work here?

Carly pushes Niner and his stool out of the way. He just laughs at her.

CARLY

Yes. What can I do for you?

MR. MABRY

You can get the thumb out of your
ass for starters! Then come with
me, if you don't mind!

Mr. Mabry disappears down the hall before Carly can react. She stares back at Niner. Smacking his gum.

NINER

Merry Christmas.

Carly rolls her eyes and takes her time walking to admit. Niner has a good laugh.

EXT. EXAM ROOM #2 - NIGHT

Carly watches through the glass as DR. STEINDLER speaks one on one with Abby. She is distant. Withdrawn. Not paying him any mind.

DR. KRAUSE, a young resident, walks up to Carly. She stays focused on Abby. Dr. Krause peeks in the window -- takes a look for himself.

DR. KRAUSE

What do you have for me?

CARLY

A Jane Doe. Sixteen, maybe seventeen. A couple coming back from a party picked her up on the side of the highway. She was barefoot and bleeding from the head. No ID, no phone. And she hasn't spoken a word in the last thirty minutes.

DR. KRAUSE

You call the police?

CARLY

They're on their way. She's completely unresponsive. Filthy. And covered head to toe in mud. Obviously in shock. I think the diagnosis is obvious.

DR. KRAUSE

Did you do a rape kit?

CARLY

As long as she's not talking, consent's gonna be a problem.

DR. KRAUSE

Alright. See what Doc Steindler can get out of her. And call me as soon as the police arrive.

CARLY

Okay.

Dr. Krause walks off. A NURSE passes by, peeks through the window. Spots Abby and stops.

NURSE

Hey. What's Abby doing here?

Carly turns to the Nurse --

CARLY
Did you say Abby?

INT. ER ADMIT DESK - NIGHT

Carly stands at an HP inkjet as Abby Samms MEDICAL RECORDS print out. She pulls a heavy coat from the admit nurse's chair, tosses it on.

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Niner and T.J. have a smoke near the ambulance bay.

T.J.
Come on, man. It's Christmas.
Help me out here. It's a
couple minutes out of your way.

NINER
Call a cab.

T.J.
A cab?! What cab?! It's
Christmas Eve!

NINER
I guess you better get walking
then.

T.J.
It's thirty degrees out!

NINER
You should've thought about that
before you scared the shit out
of my girlfriend! Now get lost!

T.J. stares out into the cold night, reluctant to leave.

NINER (CONT'D)
Go on!

T.J. leaves, mumbling profanities under his breath.

Niner drops and stomps his smoke. Carly steps up behind him, taps his shoulder on her way to the parking lot. In an obvious hurry.

CARLY

Come with me.

Niner smiles, follows behind.

NINER

I love a woman who knows what she wants.

Niner trots after her just to keep up.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Niner finally catches up with Carly. Her mind is focused. And her look is serious. Pays the detective no mind.

CARLY

Got a possible rape victim. Seventeen. No ID. She's not talking to anybody. An OB nurse identified her. Called her parents and let the phone ring for five minutes straight.

NINER

They send a black and white to her place?

CARLY

They're sending out a car as soon as they can. Whenever the hell that means. The cops are with her now. They can't even get her to talk. Something's wrong. I'm headed out there now. By the way, my car won't start. You're driving. Consider it an early Christmas present.

NINER

Okay. But there's something you should know first...

CARLY

What is it?

Niner grabs her arm, stops her. Points in the other direction.

NINER

My car is that way.

EXT. SAMMS FAMILY FARM - NIGHT

Niner's vintage black 1982 CORVETTE STINGRAY drives up, stops at the tail end of the driveway. The other cars still parked out front. The LIGHTS on inside the home.

INT. NINER'S VETTE - NIGHT

Niner and Carly stare at the suspicious scene. Both of them a bit taken back. Niner checks his watch.

NINER

It's one thirty. The lights
are still on.

CARLY

I don't like this.

INT. SAMMS HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carly and Niner walk in. Carly instantly spots the MESS on the counter. The gallon container of VANILLA ICE CREAM HAS MELTED over the counter and tile floor. A long and STEADY STREAM pours onto the tile.

CARLY

Oh my God.

Niner examines the scene. He walks closer. Notices a KNIFE BLOCK SET is missing four of its blades.

He spots an EMPTY PIE DISH on the center counter and checks in the sink. No dishes, no silverware. No knives.

NINER

Don't touch anything.

Niner spots Abby's I-PHONE on near the stool where she and Trent were last sitting. He snags it up, pockets it.

CARLY

I thought we weren't touching
anything.

Niner ignores Carly and moves into the living room. Carly follows behind --

LIVING ROOM - (CONTINUOUS)

They both notice the presents under the tree. None of them have been opened. Niner spots Richard's half glass of egg nog. Ricky's saxophone on the floor.

NINER

This party ended at dessert.

CARLY

I'm gonna check the rest of the house.

Carly turns to leave --

NINER (CONT'D)

Stay with me.

Carly stops. Turns back.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Niner and Carly walk down a dark set of steps. Headed for the basement.

INT. BASEMENT/GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Niner and Carly step off the stairs and into the near pitch black room. Niner finds a LIGHT SWITCH on the wall.

A POOL TABLE rests dead center of this hobby room.

On the left...A DARTBOARD and LARGE FLAT SCREEN TV hang from the wall.

On the right...some VENETIAN BLINDS cover up A SLIDING GLASS DOOR. The blinds rattle back and forth. As if a GUST OF WIND has ruffled them.

CARLY

What're we doing in the basement?
Shouldn't you be calling the cops
or something?

NINER

I am the cops.

CARLY

You know what I mean.

Niner heads straight for the sliding door.

CARLY (CONT'D)

It's cold in here. Feels like --

NINER

Like someone left the door open.

Niner pulls a cord to OPEN THE BLINDS. The sliding glass door has been left wide open.

A THUMB SIZED SMEAR OF BLOOD on the white frame.

Carly spots the BLOOD on the door frame. A cool chill runs up her spine. She nervously checks her surroundings.

CARLY

What the hell is going on here?

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Niner opens the driver's side door and grabs a large FLASHLIGHT from under his seat. Flicks it ON and OFF.

CARLY

What're we doing?

NINER

Going for a walk.

Niner shuts his door. He begins around the side of the home. Carly follows.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Niner and Carly walk about fifty yards from the home. The FLASHLIGHT stops on a pair of MUDDY SHOVELS dropped about three feet apart. Niner kneels down, gets a closer look.

NINER

Someone's been doing some digging.

CARLY

Oh, God. Don't tell me that.

Niner takes off one of his gloves. Uses his bare hand to grab a patch of mud from the scoop of the shovel.

NINER

It's still wet.

Niner and Carly stare off into the woods. A sickened look on both of their faces.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

It's an official crime scene. PATROL CARS and a CSI VAN are parked in the front lawn.

CRIME SCENE TECHS walk in and out of the home.

Standing on the porch, talking with a UNIFORMED OFFICER is CAPTAIN HAL DRYDEK (50s). Salt and pepper hair, tough.

A K9 UNIT arrives on the scene. It pulls to the edge of the lawn and parks next to an UNMARKED SEDAN.

Carly sits with the corvette door open, her feet kicked out on the grass. She watches Niner and Drydek on the porch.

DRYDEK

You did right by calling me first, Rawley. Anyone else would've thrown the cuffs on the moment they saw you.

NINER

I'm still a police officer.

DRYDEK

You're also on suspension and facing a felony conviction. That means you can't break into strange houses with a gun strapped to your chest.

NINER

The door was open.

DRYDEK

You can't walk in either.

Niner grows tired of Drydek's scolding and turns his back. Sparks up another smoke.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Do you even grasp what kind of trouble you're in? This isn't IA sticking their nose up your ass looking to see what you had for breakfast. This is a Murder Two rap you're looking at.

NINER

What's your point?

DRYDEK

The point is...it's a matter of time before these dogs get a sniff of something in those trees and find these people. What am I supposed to tell the cameras when they do?

NINER

Tell them the truth. An ER nurse was doing a follow up on a patient and stumbled on the scene. She found some evidence of foul play and called the cops.

DRYDEK

Right. Just like you were never here. That's always your story, Rawley. You're always somewhere else when the shit goes down.

NINER

Do you need anything else from us? I wanna get her out of here.

DRYDEK

We got the nurse's statement?

NINER

Yeah.

DRYDEK

Then you're free to go.

Niner tosses his smoke on the lawn, heads to his car.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

By the way --

Niner turns back --

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Stay out of this one. For your own sake. I can't help you as long as your face keeps popping up in the wrong place, Rawley.

Niner nods understandably. Heads to his car.

Drydek heads back inside.

NINER'S VETTE

Niner leans on the passenger door, stares down at Carly. Her face is red and puffy from non stop crying.

CARLY

This is officially the worst Christmas ever.

NINER

We don't really wanna be here right now. I'll take you home.

CARLY

Don't take this the wrong way, but...I don't think I can be alone right now.

NINER

Yeah, me either. Let's go.

Carly wipes her tears, places her legs back in the car. Niner shuts her door. As he walks around, he stares up at the front porch. Drydek stares right at him.

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Carly sits at the dining room table. Her elbows rested on the surface. Her weary face buried in her hands.

A bottle of whiskey and a glass in front of her. Niner cooks up a batch of scrambled eggs in the nearby kitchen.

CARLY

This is nice of you. But I'm not sure I can eat.

NINER

You're putting a pretty good hurt on that bottle. And you shouldn't drink on an empty stomach. I don't want you passing out on me and thinking I took advantage of you.

CARLY

I should be hungry. I haven't eaten in over twenty four hours.

Niner drops a plate of fresh scrambled eggs in front of Carly. Hands her a fork and has a seat across from her.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Aren't you eating?

NINER

I don't like eggs.

Carly squints. A bit confused. Stares down at her plate.

CARLY

I keep thinking about Abby. I feel like I should be with her.

NINER

It's a police matter now.

CARLY

Do you think they...found something?

NINER

We'll have to wait and see I guess.

CARLY

Is there someone you can call?

NINER

No. Not really.

CARLY

What do you mean?

Niner holds back a smile. Pours himself a shot. Carly also smiles. Intrigued.

CARLY (CONT'D)

What is it?

NINER

That patient tonight. The one I brought to the ER. I didn't just let him go. He was never under arrest.

Carly still looks lost. A tired squint.

CARLY

I don't understand.

NINER

I'm sort of seeing this pharmacist. Works third shift at the Save On. She was doing the whole shitty Christmas Eve shift, so I thought I'd surprise her. Turkey sandwich. Cranberries, the whole bit.

CARLY

Sounds nice.

Niner cracks another goofy smile. Nods in agreement.

NINER

It was supposed to be.

CARLY

What happened?

NINER

Well. Turns out, as I was pulling up to the store, this punk comes running out with his hands full.

CARLY

T.J.?

NINER

T.J. He cleaned out the registers, made off with the Oxi. I put two and two together and tackled first, asked questions later. I got a little rough with him. As you may have noticed...

CARLY

I noticed.

NINER

And he's screaming...please don't hurt me. I give up. It's like I couldn't hear him. I saw him running out and all I could see were flashes of him sticking a gun in Arielle's face. I snapped. Shot out the rear tire of his Kawasaki...

Carly throws Niner a judgmental stare. Her disgusted look says a thousand words. Scoffs under her breath.

NINER (CONT'D)

There he goes, face first onto the pavement. Dumb ass was carrying an air pistol.

CARLY

And when you saw it was a toy, you felt bad and let him go?

NINER

I didn't let him go because I wanted to. I did it because I had to.

Carly squints. More confused than ever.

CARLY

You're losing me again.

NINER

There's more.

CARLY

I was afraid you'd say that.

NINER

A little under a month ago, my partner and I were coming back from a routine investigation. Spot this car weaving in and out of traffic. Must've been doing a hundred, right?

CARLY

Yeah. Go on.

NINER

We light up, chase him down. Then followed him all the way to his apartment complex. He cuts this hard left into the complex. Tires squealing. My partner and I try to follow, but don't quite make it.

CARLY

What happened?

Niner is tired to the point of exhaustion. He wipes the sleepy crust from his eyes as this memory hits him like a ton of bricks.

NINER

I end up cutting the wheel too hard and put us in a ditch...

Carly senses the pain in his voice. A growing look of sympathy on her face.

NINER (CONT'D)

We crash into one of those big sewer pipes.

CARLY

Ouch.

NINER

Yeah. So my partner's knocked out. I'm so pissed, I'm seeing double. I run into this place, looking for this car. I find it parked in front of one of the buildings. Then I hear this asshole beating on a door. It's his place.

CARLY

He's breaking into his own place?

NINER

He finally busts in. And I catch him out of the corner of my eye running into his apartment. So I come the door with my gun drawn... ready to pop one in his head, right?

CARLY

Right.

Carly is now completely invested in the story. On the edge of her seat. Appalled, but intrigued just the same.

NINER

He's tossing his girlfriend a beating right there. He's yelling and screaming. Something about her being with some other guy...

CARLY

Was she?

NINER

No. At least that's what she told the cops. I don't know.

A reluctance in Niner's answer. Carly's look is a cross between suspicion and distrust. She changes the subject.

CARLY

So you've got your gun on him?

NINER

I've got him. Dead bang. From me to you, I've got him.

CARLY

You shot him?

NINER

No. But its taking everything in me to keep from blowing this guy in half...

CARLY

What was he doing?

NINER

Nothing. He didn't do anything. Just stood there. Stared at me.

CARLY

What did you do?

NINER

I tell this guy to turn around and grab the wall. Spread them.

NINER (CONT'D)

All that. But then he starts to back up. He keeps backing up until he's out on the balcony. And I'm screaming...get your ass on the ground, asshole...

Carly cracks an intrigued smile, despite the violence of the story. She's completely invested.

CARLY

And then you shot him?

Niner laughs.

NINER

No. Then he told me to fuck myself and jumped. Four stories down. All the way to the ground.

Pours himself another healthy sized shot.

CARLY

You're kidding. Did he live?

NINER

Broke every bone in his body. Ended up in ICU for the next three weeks before he gave out. He was so pumped up on PCP at the time, he probably thought he could fly. Or something.

CARLY

Oh my God. That's crazy.

Niner pours his guest another shot of Johnny.

NINER

So this woman whose life I just saved tells the cops I pushed him. After he throws his hands in the air and surrenders, of course.

CARLY

Why would she do that?

Niner stares off into a trance. Shakes his head in disgust as thoughts of the incident continue to haunt his memory.

NINER

Maybe she saw a lawsuit in it. We take her husband away, she sees if she can steal a few bucks from the city. Try to make something good out of a bad situation. I'm awaiting a court date. A possible Murder Two conviction if I'm found guilty. That's it.

CARLY

That's why your boss was giving you the third degree.

NINER

This kid. T.J. He didn't know any better. If he knew who I was, saw me in the papers, he could've turned me in for excessive force. Internal Affairs gets involved and that's that. Anyways. That's the long version.

CARLY

What's the short version?

Niner slowly stares back up at Carly. Very reluctant.

NINER

There are those in the department who think I have a short fuse. As a result of too many years working undercover. Dealing with drug addicts and low lives. The kind of people who'd kill you for ten bucks. They think it's made me a bit paranoid.

CARLY

And you think they're the ones who are crazy?

NINER

Maybe they're right. Maybe I am tired of being a cop.

Carly is totally zonked out, exhausted.

CARLY

All of the sudden, I don't feel
so good.

NINER

Why don't you lay down. Get some
rest. We'll worry about your car
later.

CARLY

The bathroom?

NINER

Over there in the corner.

Carly excuses herself. Niner takes her plate of eggs and
gives it a taste. Yuck! Drops the fork...

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly is on top of the sheets, sound asleep. Niner checks
in on her. He very quietly shuts the door on his way out.

INT. NINER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Niner's coat is folded up and draped on the back of the
couch. He picks it up, walks to a corner hanging closet.
He stops, reaches into a pocket and pulls out --

ABBY'S I-PHONE

He turns it on. As the phone warms up, he notices that
there are 3 UNREAD MESSAGES. All from Trent. He reads
them, one at a time.

INSERT - PHONE

MESSAGE #1: Are U OK? Where R U?

MESSAGE #2: Alone? With cops?

MESSAGE #3: Talk to me.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby's PHONE RINGS. The CALLER ID reads TRENT. His FACE
appears on the screen.

Niner stands frozen. Unsure of his next move. He allows the phone to ring, over and over again. It finally stops. He sends a text in response.

INSERT - PHONE

NINER: Where is my family?

BACK TO SCENE

Niner awaits a response. Nothing.

INSERT - PHONE

TRENT: Are U with cops?

BACK TO SCENE

Niner quickly makes for his balcony. Steps outside.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Niner stares out into the night. Into the trees and well trimmed bushes that surround his apartment complex.

Then, at the HIGHWAY across the lawn. A few random CARS pass by. Other than that, it's almost too quiet.

Niner sends Trent a response --

INSERT - PHONE

NINER: I was. Not now.

TRENT: Where R U?

BACK TO SCENE

Niner SIGHS in exhaustion. Nervously bites his bottom lip. He is uncertain. Ponders his next move.

EXT. NINER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Niner's Vette sits parked outside of his apartment. Niner in the driver's seat. It's late and the night is quiet.

INT. NINER'S VETTE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Niner sips on a black coffee, watches the front of the complex.

A beat-up HONDA CIVIC cruises into the lot, parks near the front of the building. Out steps --

TRENT

He nervously checks his surroundings as he approaches the first floor STAIRS. Takes a seat on the bottom step. He wraps his arms around his knees. Waits.

NINER

Appears confused by Trent's behavior.

ON TRENT

He notices Niner suspiciously watching him from his Corvette. He grows nervous. Checks the area for cops.

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - NIGHT

Niner steps out, stumbles a bit, plays drunk as he heads for the first floor steps. Trent takes notice.

Niner whistles "Let It Snow" as he continues to stumble back and forth on the asphalt.

Trent slowly pulls a revolver from the back of his pants and rests it on the step behind him.

Niner is oblivious. He greets Trent.

NINER

What a frickin' way to spend
Christmas, huh? Sitting in my
car with a busted heater, no
wallet and a pissed off girl.

Trent cracks a fake laugh.

NINER (CONT'D)

Don't ever get married. If you
do, for your sake, don't make out
with their cousin at Christmas
parties. Especially ones they
can't stand.

Niner chuckles, pops a cigarette in his mouth, lights up. Pulls a second smoke for Trent.

NINER (CONT'D)

Wanna smoke?

TRENT

Nah, man. I'm good.

NINER

Good for you. Just another one of my bad habits. So what the hell are you doing out here? Your old lady kick you out too?

TRENT

Nah. Just coming back from a party and wasn't feeling so good. Thought I'd take a rest.

NINER

Done my share of drinking tonight myself. Bad habit number three.

TRENT

At least you got a nice ride. What is that? An eighty three?

Niner turns, gawks back at his Stingray, parked out front. Trent snags up his gun, stands, draws down on Niner.

NINER

Eighty Two Stingray. If you want we can go for a ride.

Niner turns back around, facing Trent. A gun in his face.

TRENT

You can cut the bullshit, friend. Where is she?

Niner isn't the least bit surprised. He plays it cool, puffs away at his smoke.

NINER

Safe.

TRENT

Where?

NINER

The cops know everything, Trent. You got no play here.

TRENT

Oh, yeah? They don't know shit.
Nothing at all.

NINER

They know you were there. That's
all that matters.

Niner pockets the pack of smokes in his trench coat.

TRENT

What're you doing?!

Niner reaches the pack to Trent.

NINER

Sorry. You want one?

TRENT

No! Keep your hands up!

NINER

All you had to do was ask.

TRENT

Well now I'm asking, smart ass!
Hands in the air!

Niner raises his hands.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Where is she? Upstairs?

NINER

At the hospital. With the cops.

TRENT

Who the hell are you?

NINER

I'm your best friend, Trent.
Your only way out of this.

TRENT

Bullshit! You wanna put me away!
You don't wanna hear anything!

Trent jerks the gun in Niner's face, furious, irrational.
Niner grows more and more nervous.

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly awakens from a dead sleep. She hears TRENT'S LOUD MOUTH ECHO through the parking lot. She jumps up, pulls back the curtains, stares outside --

CARLY'S POV

Trent holding his gun on Niner. His hands in the air.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly's eyes almost bulge from her sockets. She clumsily pulls a cell phone from her pocket, dials 9-1-1.

EXT. NINER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Trent holds his gun on Niner. His hands in the air.

TRENT

I tried to stop it. They were gonna kill her. I saved her life.

NINER

So what was the plan? Just keep running? If Abby runs, and these guys find her, she dies. Just like you. Isn't that what you told me on the phone?

The wheels begin to turn in Trent's eyes.

NINER (CONT'D)

If you truly care about her, you'll turn yourself in.

Trent snaps out of it. He grows impatient with Niner.

NINER (CONT'D)

Give these assholes up. If you run, you got one of two choices. In the joint or in the dirt.

TRENT

They won't listen. Fuckin' cops. They won't listen to shit! So why don't you stop jerking me off!

NINER

They're coming for you. You need to make a decision. And could you do it soon? It's getting cold out here and my hands are tired.

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly watches through the window. Awaits the cops.

CARLY

Come on. Hurry up.

CARLY'S POV

Trent walks Niner into the lot with his hands up. They approach Trent's --

HONDA CIVIC

Niner crawls in the driver's side. Trent also gets in.

A PATROL CAR

pulls into the lot, lights off. Parks near the front of the building.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly is a bit on edge, anxious.

CARLY

Hurry up! Get out! What're you doing?!

CARLY'S POV

A UNIFORMED OFFICER crawls out of the PATROL CAR.

NINER

Steps out. Meets the patrolman half-way. They talk.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly exhales. A look of sheer relief on her face.

CARLY'S POV

Niner finishes with the officer. Walks back to the Honda. The Patrolman crawls back in his squad car. Rolls out.

The Honda follows behind.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly steps away from the window, takes a seat on the edge of the bed. Her mind going a million miles an hour. She drops her phone on the sheets in defeat.

EXT. PAT THOMAS BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Trent's HONDA CIVIC sits just outside the ball park. A chain-link fence surrounds the Varsity stadium. Locked up and quiet. No one in sight.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - NIGHT

Trent sits shotgun, holds a revolver on Niner. A bottle of whiskey in his other hand. Tears shoot down his face.

Niner stares through the windshield and across the highway.

NINER'S POV - WATERMAN MEDICAL CENTER

A couple hundred yards away sits the parking lot of this quiet hospital. The lot is fairly empty. Most of the CARS are parked near the front. A few PATROL CRUISERS parked near the ambulance bay.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner turns to Trent.

NINER

I bought you some time back there with that cop. To get your story straight. But now we're out of time. You gotta tell them where they can find Bobby. You did what you did to Abby because you were just protecting her. It was your only option and you took it.

TRENT

They're gonna ask why I didn't call the cops...

Trent grows more and more frustrated. He punches the dashboard in a drunken rage.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Why didn't I call the cops?

Trent burst into tears. Takes a huge belt of whiskey. Niner looks on with sympathy and pity in his eyes.

NINER

Because you knew they wouldn't listen. And even if they did, you'd be dead by the time Bobby got wind of it. You were scared. He would've smoked you on his way out of town. You know it. I know it. That's your defense.

Trent tears up again as he gazes out the windshield in a stupor. He takes another monster chug of the whiskey. Drunkenness sets in as he slumps forward in his seat.

TRENT

I could've saved them. Those people. All of them. I didn't do anything.

The wheels turn in Niner's eyes. In deep thought. He finally comes around.

NINER

Maybe you did.

Trent awaits an explanation. A half confused, half drunk off his ass look.

TRENT

What do you mean?

NINER

Tell them you called me. I helped you out of a few jams in the past and you thought I could stop it.

TRENT

Are you serious?

Niner gazes out the window. Shares his thoughts out loud with Trent.

NINER

You called me for help. You trusted me to take down Bobby and his crew and I let you down.

Niner turns to Trent. A dead serious look in his eye. As if this isn't the first time he's fabricated a story.

NINER (CONT'D)

I let you down because I didn't believe you. Just another one of Trent's crazy stories and I didn't wanna hear it. It was my fault because I didn't stop it.

TRENT

Why would you do that? For me? You don't even know me.

NINER

Because I know you're not a killer. Just by looking at you. And because you're doing the right thing.

Trent stares at the dashboard with a not so sure look on his face.

TRENT

Will they believe it?

NINER

Your hand was forced. Bobby made you help him kill those people. Right before you came to my place and turned yourself in. You told me the whole story. How Bobby wanted revenge. You owed him some dead bodies. And if you didn't deliver, he'd kill you. Just tell the truth. Everything you told me.

Trent thinks it over. A bit unsure. He nods his head. He takes yet another belt of the whiskey. The bottle is almost gone.

NINER (CONT'D)

We're gonna have to go in
together.

Trent half passes out in his seat, dumping the whiskey on his lap. Niner quickly snatches up the bottle as it spills out on Trent and the passenger seat.

Trent appears to be all the way out. His eyes shut, breathing heavy and sporadically.

Niner isn't exactly surprised by this. He takes a sniff of the bottle. Grimaces. He opens his door and steps outside.

EXT. HONDA - NIGHT

Niner steps a few good feet away from Trent's car. Dumps the remainder of the bottle onto the concrete. He turns and stares back at the Honda. A sinister look in his eye.

EXT. PAT THOMAS FIELD - NIGHT

We're on the pitcher's mound. Facing home plate. The lights of this grand high school stadium are turned off. The bleachers are empty.

A SINGLE GUNSHOT is heard in the b.g.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. CARLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Carly sips a cup of coffee at the kitchen table. It's the next day as watches the EMERGENCY NEWS REPORT on TV.

INSERT - TV - NEWS REPORT

A FEMALE REPORTER (20s) stands on The Samms FRONT LAWN - microphone in hand. The official report.

REPORTER

It was the picturesque home. For twenty years, it sat undisturbed. In a spot where most little girls can only dream of. Horses. White picket fence. Green pastures.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

For Richard and Helen Samms, it was the perfect life. A place where they would raise their three children. But last night, their perfect dream came to an end..

The TV CAMERAS CUT TO a shot of YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE blocking off a small section of woods.

REPORTER (V.O.)

At approximately Three Thirty AM this morning, police pulled the bodies of six people from these woods...

The TV flashes STILL PICS OF THE VICTIMS:

REPORTER (V.O.)

The bodies of Richard and Helen Samms, their two children Rebecca and Richard Junior, and Richard's brother Gary Samms and wife Nikki...

Back to The Reporter. The backyard. The scene of the crime. She slowly strolls the perimeter, mic in hand.

REPORTER

Police would make this grisly discovery after hearing the shocking, first hand testimony of seventeen year old Abigail Samms. At One Fifteen AM this morning, Samms was admitted to Waterman Medical Center after ingesting a near lethal dose of the drug amitriptyline. An over the counter sleeping pill...

BACK TO SCENE

Carly leans forward. Eyes locked on the report.

ON TV - NEWS REPORT

A MUG SHOT of TRENT WISE. He holds a number plate in front of his chest. It says P.C.P.D. across the bottom.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Police are saying it was Abby's boyfriend, Trent Wise, who most likely gave her the drug that rendered her unconscious between the hours of Nine Forty PM and Twelve Thirty AM...

Back on The Reporter.

REPORTER

They are also claiming that it was while Samms was unconscious when Trent Wise brutally and savagely murdered his girlfriend's family..

Carly grows impatient.

CARLY

Come on. Get to it already.

ON TV - NEWS REPORT

The Reporter strolls about the backyard of The Samms residence and stops at the YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE.

REPORTER

In a bizarre twist to this story, Wise was later found dead in the parking lot of Pat Thomas Baseball Stadium from an apparent suicide...

Carly sits in shock. A sack of bricks to the gut.

ON TV - PAT THOMAS FIELD - MORNING

Trent's HONDA CIVIC sits in the lot. YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE secures the perimeter.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Police claim he was killed by a single gunshot wound under the chin. The weapon used was a thirty eight revolver. Found in Wise's right hand. Wise was discovered in the passenger seat of his Honda Civic at Eight Thirty AM this morning and reeked of alcohol, said lead investigator Martin Crowe.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

It was apparent that Wise had been at the stadium for some time before deciding to end his own life.

TV CAMERA CUTS TO A TWO-LANE HIGHWAY

The Reporter stands at the edge of the stadium parking lot, overlooks the highway. WATERMAN MEDICAL CENTER is visible across the street.

REPORTER (CONT'D)_

As you can see here, Pat Thomas Field sits directly across the street from Waterman Medical Center where Abby Samms was being treated...

Carly's roommate LYNN (30) shuts off the TV, blocks it from her roommates view.

LYNN

What's the matter? You don't get enough blood and guts at work?

CARLY

I wanted to see that.

LYNN

It's been on the news all day. I forgot. You were in a coma.

CARLY

You leaving already?

LYNN

Already? It's Four o'clock. And you look like dog shit.

CARLY

I had a late night.

Lynn pours some coffee into a plastic mug. Has a seat.

LYNN (CONT'D)

I was hoping you'd change your mind and come with me. Christmas is Mom's one day a year where she feels she has free reign to criticize my life.

CARLY

That's more 365 with my mother.
So don't feel bad.

LYNN

Another year alone, I see. When
are you gonna quit playing around
and find a man so you don't have to
work so damn hard. Last year, she
even accused me of being a lesbian.

CARLY

Ouch. Has it been that long?

LYNN

Are you kidding? Last week, I
named my vibrator Jake.

CARLY

Nice.

LYNN

Thought I'd bring you with. Get
Mom good and confused. Keep the
joke going another year or two.
What do you say?

CARLY

As wonderful a proposition as that
sounds, I think I'll just park in
front of the TV. But you have fun
with that.

LYNN

You don't know what you're
missing, baby.

Carly and Lynn share a laugh. Lynn heads for the door.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Alright. I'm out. And don't eat
too much. I'm bringing leftovers.

CARLY

Yes, Mom.

Lynn continues out. Carly reaches for the television
remote, turns the news back on --

ON TV - A CHRISTMAS PARADE

BACK TO SCENE

Carly gives up, turns off the TV. Rubs her weary eyes.

INT. METRO DIVISION - O.P.D. - MORNING

Niner moves through a maze of busy work desks as he makes his way toward a corner office. A name on the door reads CAPT. HAL DRYDEK. He gives a quick knock and heads inside.

INT. DRYDEK'S OFFICE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Niner steps in and shuts the door behind him. Drydek is leaning against his desk, arms folded.

Sitting in a leather chair with his legs crossed one over the other is SERGEANT DETECTIVE MARTIN CROWE (30s). Jet black hair, wire rim glasses. He is purposeful looking.

DRYDEK

Thanks for coming in, Rawley.

Niner catches Crowe giving him a nasty look. A judgmental stare. He sizes him up. Niner simply returns his stare. These two don't like each other and it shows.

NINER

So what's so important you couldn't tell me on the phone?

Drydek looks to his left. Niner follows his look into a far corner --

CARLY sits in the second of the matching leather chairs. A nervous look about her. She sneaks a quick glance at Niner. Then back at Drydek.

NINER (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm confused.

DRYDEK

Miss Dennis has brought a few things to our attention. Some things we need to ask you about.

Niner checks with Carly. She avoids him at all costs.

NINER

I see.

DRYDEK

I hear you removed a cellular phone
from the crime scene last night.
Is this true?

NINER

Can't say that I did.

Carly stares dead at him. Now it's Niner who's avoiding
her. Crowe notices the strange exchange.

DRYDEK

Really? Are you calling Miss Dennis
a liar?

NINER

No, I would never be so rude as to
call Miss Dennis a liar. What I am
saying is that she's mistaken. If
she's referring to the I-Phone I
retrieved from the counter, then that
would be my own. And nor did I, at
any time last evening, tamper with
any other evidence at the scene. Is
that all?

CROWE

No, that's not all.

Niner gives Crowe a "who the hell are you" look.

CROWE (CONT'D)

We also hear that Trent Wise was at
your apartment last night. And that
he had a gun in your face. A revolver.
Short barrel. Kind of like the one
that was found in his dead hand.

Niner laughs at the absurdity of this story.

NINER

And where did you hear this?

DRYDEK

You're denying this?

NINER

Yes.

DRYDEK

And do you also deny speaking with Officer Burnette outside your place? Around One AM. Responding to a 9-1-1 call, made by Miss Dennis from your apartment?

NINER

No I don't deny speaking with Officer Burnette. The young man with the gun that Miss Dennis saw was a friend of a robbery suspect I had detained earlier that evening...

Niner turns to Carly.

NINER (CONT'D)

You remember T.J.?

Carly thinks back. Drydek and Crowe share a confused look.

NINER (CONT'D)

Earlier that evening, I was with a young lady friend at her place of employment. Against my better judgment, I engaged in a physical altercation with a robbery suspect. Things got out of hand. That's how I ended up at the hospital. This punk T.J. tells a friend of his what happened, spots him a couple hundred and shows up on my doorstep with a gun. That's it.

CROWE

What's his name?

NINER

I don't know. I didn't ask.

Crowe checks with Drydek. A pretty crazy story.

NINER (CONT'D)

Because I had no intention of taking him into custody. I spotted him a few hundred and told him to get lost. Told him to split the money with T.J.

NINER (CONT'D)

Forget they ever met me. For obvious reasons, I kept this information from Officer Burnette. With my impending trial, T.J.'s testimony could only hurt my case.

DRYDEK

So you beat the shit out of some punk, then paid him off? Is this what you're telling me, Rawley?

Carly scoffs in disgust. She can barely believe the words coming out of Niner's mouth. Not buying any of it.

NINER

I'm not proud of what happened, but... that's what happened.

Carly shakes her head. Drydek checks with Crowe. Neither one very convinced with Niner's story.

DRYDEK

I'm gonna need this T.J.'s sheet. And your word that you stay out of Abby Samms case. And I better not hear of you pulling any more stunts like you did last night. Got it?

NINER

I got it.

DRYDEK

You can go.

Niner gives Carly a disapproving stare on his way out the door. He slams it shut.

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - DAY

Abby Samms sits in front of a mic and gives her testimony. DETECTIVE MALCOLM DEES (40s), black, trim and tough, sits before her.

The room is WHITE and cold, as is the long, flat table between them. Abby strokes her arms as she shares the painful events of that fateful evening.

ABBY

I don't remember falling asleep. I just...remember...trying to catch my breath. Shutting my eyes.

DEES

And where was Trent when all this was happening? You said you were dizzy and could barely walk a straight line. Did he help you into the bathroom?

ABBY

No.

DEES

Why not? You were sick. Why didn't he go with? Make sure you were okay.

ABBY

I didn't think much of it. Thought maybe I just drank too much. Trent and I shared a couple bottles of wine earlier that day. I didn't want Mom freaking out, so I didn't make a big scene out of it.

DEES

You were awfully lucky you got sick when you did. Got out of there at just the right time. Almost too lucky.

Abby throws him a resentful stare.

ABBY

I never thought of it that way.

INT. TWO-WAY MIRROR - DAY

Crowe, Drydek and Abby's UNCLE STEVE (40s), Helen's younger brother, stand behind the mirror, watching Abby through the glass.

Uncle Steve watches with an angry, accusatory scowl.

DEES

(filtered)

Seems like these people wanted to make sure nobody left your house alive. Your mother and father. Sister. Your brother. Even your Aunt and Uncle. They got to all of them. All but you...

Drydek and Crowe watch Abby closely as she slowly breaks into tears. A sympathetic look on both of their faces.

Abby's tears only fuel Uncle Steve's anger. He shakes his head in disgust. Crowe notices.

DEES

(filtered)

And that bothers me, Abby. It bothers me because these are the kinds of people that don't make mistakes like leaving witnesses behind. Trent's gone. You don't have to protect him anymore and you don't have to lie for him.

ABBY

(filtered)

I don't...know...anything! I swear! Please...!

Abby breaks into hysterics. A sobbing mess.

UNCLE STEVE

She's lying. Miserable bitch.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - DAY

Back to Dees and Abby. Her face propped in her hands. Crying her eyes out.

DEES

We know that you were moving in with your boyfriend. That you've been fighting with your parents. We also know about your abortion...

Abby looks up, stares at him with hateful disdain. On the verge of snapping. Her lips quivering, chest heaving.

DEES (CONT'D)

A baby that your mother and father insisted that you keep. You see, it was supposed to be a secret between you and your mother. But she let the cat out of the bag. Tells your Uncle Steven...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TWO-WAY MIRROR - DAY

Uncle Steve cracks a grin. Nods his head, as if to agree with Dees. Drydek watches Steve closely.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - DAY

Abby's breathing is much heavier now. More angry. Dees continues to push her buttons.

DEES (CONT'D)

Then your sister. Your sister tells your brother. Next thing you know, sweet little Abby isn't so innocent anymore. Everybody's looking at you different. Treating you differently. That look of disappointment...

Abby's face is flushed red with hatred. Tears now shooting down her face. Her whole body shaking from head to toe.

DEES (CONT'D)

But nobody was gonna tell you what to do with your body, or who you were gonna live with. Or how you were gonna live your life. So you got rid of them. Just like your...

(beat)

...other problem.

Abby GROWLS like a jungle cat as she leaps across the table and SCRATCHES at Dees face like a wild animal. And into the room runs Crowe and Drydek.

INT. CARLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Carly sits at a corner work desk, on her laptop. She logs on and Google searches --

Orlando cop, balcony, Rawley Niner

Several NEWS ARTICLES pop up. One of them in particular catches her eye. It's entitled --

MAN FALLS TO DEATH FROM BALCONY OF ORLANDO CONDO

Another article sits a few searches below --

ORLANDO COP KILLED IN HIGH SPEED PURSUIT.

Under this search reads --

"O.P.D. Homicide Detectives Rawley Niner and Chris Mayhew observed Ortega's red late model Mustang weave in and out of traffic..."

As well as the words..."fell from balcony"..."Orlando"

Carly double clicks the article. Selects the PRINT option on her laptop. The article slowly creeps out of her cheap Lexmark printer.

INT. ORENA'S PUB AND BILLIARDS - NIGHT

Niner plays a round of nine ball with one of the regulars. A pitcher of beer rests at a corner round table. A couple of empty high chairs. In storms a hopping mad Carly. She has a MANILA FILE in hand.

Just as Niner is setting up his final shot, Carly tosses the file onto the middle of the table, blocking his play.

NINER

Okay. I'm here. Ready to talk.
What do you wanna know?

Niner hands Carly a mug of beer. He sips his.

CARLY

Take a look.

Niner snags up the manila file, looks inside. A printed internet article about the death of his partner.

CARLY (CONT'D)

You didn't tell me that your partner died in that car accident.

NINER

So what? You didn't ask.

CARLY

You killed that guy, didn't you? Everything they said about you is true. You pitched him right over the side of his own balcony like fucking Peter Pan.

NINER

First I'm stealing evidence and now I'm killing people? So you really do hate me...

Niner sets up his last shot. Leans over the table --

NINER (CONT'D)

And here I was blaming your frigid-ness on PMS, sore feet and hunger pains. I was gonna give you a pass.

And he sinks the remaining ball with little problem. His opponent tosses a wrinkled twenty on the table, re-racks the balls. Carly gets within inches of Niner's face.

CARLY

Your partner's dead and you've been blaming yourself ever since. Instead of finding a way to cope with it, you've been taking it out on other people. Like T.J. And Trent Wise.

NINER

So we're back on that again, huh? We've already been over this once. I know what you think you saw.

NINER (CONT'D)

You're wrong.

CARLY

Am I?

Niner's pool buddy gives up and sets his cue back on the rack. Niner gives him a quick nod before he takes off.

NINER

It was an emotional night for everybody. You wanted to help that girl, but you couldn't. There was nothing you or anyone else could do to help her...

Carly folds her arms in protest. Niner's touched a nerve with her. She sips her beer.

NINER (CONT'D)

It was an absolutely terrible tragedy and it didn't make any sense. Now her boyfriend's dead and people are still looking for somebody else to blame. And they got no fucking clue as to why it happened...

Carly bites her bottom lip, ready to slug Niner in the mouth. She impatiently rocks on her heels.

NINER (CONT'D)

And everybody is pissed off and looking for answers. You wanna know what happened? Abby Samms had her dipshit boyfriend murder her family. He felt guilty and ate a bullet. I think you know that. I think you know it and you can't accept it. The truth is, it's not me that can't let go. It's you. You need to let go and and let the cops do what they're paid to do...

Carly tosses her beer in Niner's face. Charges out.

EXT. SAMMS FAMILY FARM - NIGHT

The house sits empty. Lights off. Quiet. No cars in the driveway. No horses behind the picket fence. This farm is a mere shadow of what it once was.

Out of the trees walks T.J. Our road rash victim/robbery suspect. He moves to the rear of the house. Dressed in a warm hoodie and baggie sweatpants.

BACK YARD - (CONTINUOUS)

T.J. uses professional hardware to JIMMY OPEN the SLIDING GLASS DOOR which leads us into the basement/game room of the home. He casually steps inside.

INT. SAMMS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

T.J. stands hovered over the couch. He pulls ABBY'S I PHONE from his coat pocket and carefully places it in --

THE CRACK OF THE COUCH

Leaving the top of it within reasonable visibility.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Various punks, hop heads and other low walks of life lounge in front of the TV -- watch a Japanese anime' porno.

Some are sprawled out on couches with their girls. Another kicked back in a recliner, smokes a fat bowl. This is JONAS WHALEN (20s). Ferrin's roommate. Dark, gothic type.

A YOUNG COUPLE park on the floor by the coffee table. They smoke crystal meth from a base pipe.

A WHITE THUG with a SHAVED HEAD stops in front of the TV, blocks the screen.

He stares down at the half-conscious motley crew taking up space in his living room. This is Ferrin's other roommate CALVIN GAINES (20s).

Standing a few feet from Calvin is Bobby. He watches the crowd of losers with an amused smirk.

CALVIN

(to JONAS)

What is this, man! I told you to get these smelly fuckers out of here! Ferrin's got company. He don't want no one else here.

JONAS

Fuck Ferrin, man. Is this his house or yours? He's not even paying rent.

Jonas points at Bobby --

JONAS (CONT'D)

And who is this queer bait?

(to Bobby)

Yeah, you. We're not good enough to be here? We stinkin' up the place? Kiss my ass, bro.

Bobby gives Jonas a cold stare. Calvin loses it.

TOSSES THE COFFEE TABLE on its face.

Knocks BEER, PIPES, ASH TRAYS onto the carpet. The wasted crowd barely flinches. One reaches for his pipe.

CALVIN

Everybody! Get the fuck out!
I'm not gonna tell you again!

The drugged out degenerates slowly collect their things and head for the front door.

Bobby smiles back at Jonas as the young punk leaves. He's all talk with his tail firmly tucked between his legs. The girl on the floor is so gone, she can barely stand. Calvin jerks her up by the arm, shoves her to the door.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Move it! And stay gone!

Bobby heads for the door --

INT./EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Bobby watches the crowd stumble to their cars. Notices --

FERRIN'S CAR

Pull to the curb. Ferrin and his friend ZEKE step out. Ferrin carries a Jansport. Both wearing ball caps and dark hoodies. Bobby watches with suspicion.

INT. FERRIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ferrin dumps his jansport upside down as bundles of LOOSE CASH falls onto the bed. Zeke watches. In walks Bobby.

BOBBY

Looks like you boys scored big tonight. Where was the party? Funny I wasn't invited.

Ferrin is a bit taken back. Surprised. Zeke looks worried. Shares a look with Ferrin.

FERRIN

(to ZEKE)

Give us a minute.

Zeke steps out. Bobby shuts the door behind him.

BOBBY

What did I tell you about laying low until this thing blows over?
(beat)
You and this idiot go knock over some stores? What if you got busted?

FERRIN

Calvin's asking for a piece. I didn't wanna say nothing because I knew you'd be mad.

Bobby isn't happy. With intimidating swagger, he moves closer to Ferrin. Gets in his face.

FERRIN (CONT'D)

What're you doing, man?

BOBBY

And why is Calvin asking for a piece? Does Calvin know something that Calvin shouldn't know?

FERRIN

Why would I say anything?

Ferrin steps back. Bobby walks him into a corner.

BOBBY

I don't know. Why would you?

FERRIN

What do you expect? With the way you been acting and all. All paranoid. Not leaving the house. All secretive and shit.

BOBBY

And he's asking for some hush money or he drops a dime? Is that it?

FERRIN

He knows as long as we're here we're drawing heat down on this house. He's been busting my balls since I brought you here. I tell him I can't say nothing and he flips a shit.

BOBBY

That's right. You can't say nothing. Nothing at all.

FERRIN

So now you're worried about drawing heat? Where was all this worrying when you carved up that family like a fuckin' Christmas turkey.

Bobby steps even closer. Inches from Ferrin's nose.

BOBBY

Watch your mouth.

FERRIN

It was supposed to be a quick score. You didn't say nothing about cutting up twelve year olds...!

Bobby grabs Ferrin by the throat, tosses him onto an old oak armoire like a rag doll.

Ferrin's head CRACKS THE MIRROR behind him. Bobby grips his throat harder. Ferrin GASPS for air.

BOBBY

You know what I'm thinking, Jason?
I'm thinking you got a big mouth.
You talk too much. Maybe I'll just
cut you loose and take my chances.

FERRIN

Get off me!

BOBBY

From now on, you don't leave this
house without telling me. Don't
rob registers with your shithead
friends...

Ferrin struggles to break free of Bobby's grip.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

We're gonna be smart. We're gonna
wait. We're gonna see what this
girl knows. What the cops know.

Ferrin's face slowly turns blue from lack of oxygen.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

And when the time is right...we're
gonna kill her. If you do anything
that makes me nervous between now
and then...I'm gonna cut my losses.

Bobby, still with a firm grip on Ferrin's throat, tosses him onto the bed.

Ferrin twists and contorts on the sheets, choking, gasps for air. Bobby leaves. Shuts the door behind him.

Ferrin rests on the edge of the bed; slowly catches his breath. Anger sets in. He jumps for his stereo --

BLASTS LOUD METAL MUSIC

Paces back and forth on the carpet. Enraged. PUNCHES THE WALL and GRUNTS like a wild animal.

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ferrin exits. Hopping mad. Steps across the lawn...down a hill...towards his car. He moves fast and with purpose...

Ferrin makes for the trunk. Pops it open. Grabs his SAWED OFF DOUBLE BARRELL SHOTGUN - checks for SHELLS. Loaded up, ready. LOCKS his weapon and shuts the trunk...

NINER

Stands waiting. His FORTY FIVE in hand.

Face to face with Ferrin. The two men stare each other down. Neither making a move...

INT. COURTROOM - NINER'S TRIAL - (DAY #1) - DAY

A gorgeous, six foot blonde walks the jury box. A matching business suit -- short skirt and form fitting top. This is ADA LAURA STARKEY (30s). Her haunting blue eyes demand the attention of the twelve sitting before her.

STARKEY

One man's life has been lost.
Another's at stake. Raul Ortega
on one side. Detective Rawley
Niner on the other. And all of
you somewhere in the middle...

Niner sits at the defense. His police-appointed attorney DAVE MACGRUDER (40s) by his side. We'll call him "Mac". A short, bookish man with a cheap suit and goofy expression.

We're still in opening statements and he's already tapping a pencil on his notepad in a nervous frenzy.

Niner slowly turns to him -- gives him a long, hard stare; motions to the pencil. Mac drops the pencil on the pad.

ON THE JURY

Starkey rests her hands on the mahogany railing. Catches eyes with each of the jurors --

STARKEY (CONT'D)

You will all be forced to take
sides. Some of you are frightened.
You want to judge correctly.
Without prejudice...

Sitting about three rows back is JUSTINE HERRERA (20s). Puerto Rican. Attractive. Ortega's girl. Her eyes are red, watery. Fighting back her tears.

Niner keeps eye contact with the jury. Plays it cool. Mac is still a nervous wreck, scratches at his pencil.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

But sometimes it's hard to hear the truth. When you're unwilling to listen. The defense is counting on this. And they will paint a very simple picture for you. One that's very black and white..

Starkey turns, faces the defense, catches eyes with Mac. A smarmy look on her face.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Cop versus convict. The upstanding, law abiding keeper of peace versus the wife-beating criminal.

Justine checks with Niner, who sneaks a quick peek at the grieving widow. She looks away, ashamed. Niner shakes his head at her, faces forward.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

But Rawley Niner sits here today for one reason only. Because of the eyewitness account of Justine Herrera. Who watched Detective Niner force her soon to be husband from their fourth story balcony..

Mac checks with his client. Niner's eyes are unflinching. As cool as can be. Mac takes a deep breath, exhales.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

The same woman that the defense will claim is the abused victim in this case. But if what they are saying is true. And Raul Ortega was indeed in a violent, drug induced rage, intent on causing serious harm and possibly killing his fiancé...then why is Justine Herrera sitting here today?

Justine checks back with Niner. He ignores her and stays with the jury. Mac turns, spots her looking.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Why is she here? Wanting to testify against the same man who claims to have saved her life...

On each of the jurors. All in deep thought.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Detective Rawley Niner has been the target of five internal investigations. He's been cited with two counts of excessive force...

Niner is no longer able to stare the jury in their eyes. He stares at the desk. Ashamed. Justine boils over with rage as she watches the detective.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

During the course of this trial we will be carefully examining the lives of these two men. And you will see...with your own eyes...that Rawley Niner is the real criminal in this case.

Niner looks as if Starkey's words have somehow affected him. He carefully watches the reactions of the jurors.

WITNESS BOX - LATER

Starkey questions her witness, OFFICER NICK DIAZ (30s). Puerto Rican, tough. A P1 Officer for the Orlando P.D. He watches Niner with complete and utter contempt.

OFFICER DIAZ

...So I start running a make on this tag. Meanwhile Rawley's writing the citation...

Justine pays careful attention to Diaz's testimony.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

And all the sudden he stops. Starts getting all upset, shaking his head and staring back at these kids...

Starkey leans on the witness box, stays close to Diaz, watches the jury closely.

STARKEY

And did you ask him what his problem was?

Officer Diaz faces the jury --

OFFICER DIAZ

Says to me the only thing worse than a nigger with money is a spic with a stereo..

Niner buries his face in his hands, embarrassed.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

But it wasn't all what he said that bothered me. It was how he said it.

STARKEY

And how did he say it?

OFFICER DIAZ

It's like he turned. Stared dead at me. Daring me to speak up. To say something. Then he says if they don't turn down that music he'd put a bullet in their speaker..

STARKEY

And what was your response to that?

OFFICER DIAZ

At first I thought he was joking. I wasn't sure if he was serious.

STARKEY

And what changed your mind?

OFFICER DIAZ

He pulls his piece and sticks it on the dash. Even chambered one into the pipe. Scared the hell out of me. He said it's nothing I haven't done before..

Officer Diaz faces the jury --

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

He says the secret is making it
look like an accident...

The jurors are disgusted. Staring back at Niner with
contempt. Niner's avoids eye contact.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

Just fire a warning shot.
Nobody has to know. He was dead
serious when he said it.

STARKEY

Sounds like he put you in a
very awkward position. And
how did you handle this?

OFFICER DIAZ

I told him to relax. Let's write
them up and get going. He said
you really must be new. Don't
you know when you're working
downtown on a Saturday night,
"reggaeton" is probable cause?

STARKEY

(to MAC)

Your witness.

Starkey returns to her desk. Mac steps to the witness box.
Papers in hand.

MAC

Mister Diaz...?

OFFICER DIAZ

Officer.

Niner shakes his head. Embarrassed by his attorney.

MAC

Yes, of course. Officer. Did
you ever tell anyone about this
supposed incident?

OFFICER DIAZ

Not that I recall. Maybe I
did. I can't remember.

MAC

Let me refresh you. You spoke with an Officer Diego of your precinct. Two days following the incident. Told him pretty much in detail what you've told us today. Do you remember what his response was to this?

OFFICER DIAZ

I'm not sure I remember. It was six years ago.

Mac walks over to the first row. Stops next to a UNIFORMED OFFICER. This is SERGEANT DIEGO (30s). Cuban, massive. As tough as they get.

MAC

Officer Diego is present in this courtroom today. Maybe you noticed?

OFFICER DIAZ

Yes, sir. That's him in the front row.

MAC

Then you know he can be called to rebut your testimony.

Diez and his old partner lock eyes. Diez a bit unsure.

MAC (CONT'D)

Let's save the court the time and trouble, shall we? Are you remembering the details of that conversation a little more clearly?

Officer Diaz is a bit reluctant. Checks with the jury. They are all staring, waiting.

OFFICER DIAZ

He said that sounds just like Rawley. When he was his training officer, he did the same thing to him.

Mac approaches the witness stand --

MAC

That wasn't all he said. What else did he say?

Starkey remains seated. Temporarily looks up from her paperwork.

STARKEY

Objection! Officer Diaz has already answered the question!

JUDGE MEYERS

Overruled.

MAC

Come on, Diaz! A fellow officer is on trial for his life! Your fellow boy in blue! Speak up!

Starkey tosses down her pen and jumps to her feet --

STARKEY

Objection! Badgering!

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained.

Niner cracks a grin. Mac's got this witness.

MAC

My apologies. Could you please answer the question, Officer Diaz?

OFFICER DIAZ

He said he does that to all the newbies. Like an initiation. To see what kind of stuff you're made of. I didn't see it that way.

MAC

Officer Diaz, in all honesty, can you tell this court that you believe Rawley Niner to be a racist pig?

OFFICER DIAZ

He was out of control...!

MAC

Answer the question. Yes or no?

MAC (CONT'D)

Do you believe Rawley Niner is a racist?

OFFICER DIAZ

Yes.

Mac is a bit taken back. Niner shuts his eyes, unable to watch any further. Starkey is ear to ear smiles.

MAC

Thank you. No more, your honor.

Mac heads to his seat. Not happy.

JUDGE MEYERS

Miss Starkey? Do you have any more for this witness?

Starkey quickly approaches the witness stand.

STARKEY

Officer Diaz? - Do you agree with Sergeant Diego's assessment of Rawley Niner? That his erratic behavior was nothing more than a part of some unusual training method?

OFFICER DIAZ

No, I did not. And I do not.

STARKEY

And why is that?

OFFICER DIAZ

He was high as a kite.

Mac leaps from his chair.

MAC

Objection! My client has been subject to repeated drug and alcohol tests and has always passed with flying colors! Officer Diaz's opinion in this matter is irrelevant and we ask that it be stricken from the record!

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained. Careful, Miss Starkey.

STARKEY

Officer Diaz? - Would you please describe to the court Officer Niner's behavior on the night of July 25, 2005. The night in question.

OFFICER DIAZ

Hyper. Nervous. Fidgety. Loud. Using lots of obscenities. Out of control.

STARKEY

So behavior not unlike that of say...a cocaine addict?

Mac leaps to his feet.

MAC

Objection! Leading!

STARKEY

Withdrawn. No more questions.

Starkey heads to her seat. Niner looks as if all the wind has been sucked from his body.

Justine cracks a reassured smile.

EXT. ORANGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Niner and Mac make their way down a marble-floored hallway. The halls of justice. Niner is hurried, upset. Mac tries to keep up.

MAC

They've got no physical evidence. Starkey's using shock value to woo the jury. Calling you a racist. It's the lowest common denominator. A cry for the desperate. The jury can see that. They got nothing.

NINER

You think so, huh? I don't see it that way.

MAC

Toxicology report on Ortega says he was pumped up on enough PCP to kill two grown men. Throw in an IQ of a tennis ball and a long history of doing stupid shit and you've got a case loser. If I were a betting man, my money's on you all the way.

Mac pats him on the shoulder. The two men board an elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Mac doesn't say a word. Faces the elevator doors. Niner leans on the wall, watches him closely. Reads him. He breaks the silence --

NINER

Do you believe her?

MAC

Who?

NINER

Herrera. Hell do you think?

MAC

What I believe isn't important, Rawley. It's what I can prove.

Niner flips the EMERGENCY STOP switch. The elevator stalls.

MAC (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

NINER

What a jury believes is important. Do you believe her?

Mac stalls. Not quite sure --

MAC

Don't be so paranoid.

Mac flips the emergency switch back into operating order. Faces forward. Niner isn't exactly convinced.

EXT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

It's absolute pandemonium. Several TV NEWS VANS, CAMERAMEN and REPORTERS at the scene.

An ANGRY MOB of picketers and protestors hover behind a carefully positioned row of wooden saw horses.

Some of the more angry crowd raise homemade SIGNS in the air. Most of them describe Abby as a liar and murderer. One of them reads "Stabby Abby".

An SUV slowly coasts down the street, approaches the house. This is Uncle Steve and wife Cynthia. They pull into their driveway as NEWS PERSONNEL crowd the vehicle.

Out steps Steve and Cynthia. They avoid the reporters and news cameras, holding up their hands and refusing to talk. They quickly make for the front door.

A CARDBOARD PACKAGE addressed to ABBY SAMS awaits by the foot of the door.

Steve snatches up the box and follows his wife inside. The angry mob CURSES him and his murdering niece.

INT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Steve opens up the package and pulls out a thick object protected with bubble wrap. He rips scotch tape from the corners of the wrap, unrolls ABBY'S I PHONE.

Steve walks to the dining room WINDOW and peeks outside at the MOB OF PROTESTORS standing their ground.

INT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - ABBY'S ROOM - DAY

Abby also staring out her window at the angry mob. Tears in her eyes. She yanks her curtains closed, curls up on her bed like a scared child.

A KNOCK at her door. Steve with Abby's phone.

STEVE (O.S.)

Abby? I have a package for you...

Abby covers her ears to avoid the constant noise around her. We PUSH IN on Abby's face as she hears the VOICES of BECCA and RICKY call her name.

BECCA (V.O.)
Abby!...Help us! Please!

RICKY (V.O.)
Help us, Abby! Save us! Please,
Abby! Please save us!

Steve continues to KNOCK on the door.

Abby squeezes her hands over her ears, harder and harder, desperate to block out the VOICES around her. Tears shoot from her eyes as she descends further into a never ending nightmare.

HELEN (V.O.)
What have you done to us, Abigail?

Steve KNOCKS harder and harder, growing impatient.

STEVE (O.S.)
ABBY! OPEN THIS DOOR! RIGHT NOW!

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Niner's Vette pulls to the curb across the street. Parks. There are TWO CARS in Calvin's driveway. Bobby's CHEVY VAN parked on the lawn. Niner uses binoculars to RUN THE TAG.

NINER'S POV

The tag reads X91-KRS.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner lowers the binoculars, reviews some paperwork --

INSERT - DMV RECORDS

A PHOTO I.D. PRINTOUT of Bobby Van Den Kemp's driving history. License tag number - X91-KRS.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner reaches into his GLOVE BOX, snags up a chrome .44 MAGNUM short barrel. Checks for bullets. He steps out.

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Niner stuffs the magnum in the back of his pants, heads for Calvin's house --

As Niner makes his way up the sidewalk, he hears LOUD SHOCK ROCK coming from the direction of Calvin's backyard.

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD PORCH - DAY

Calvin and his GIRL sit in a cheap folding chair, waiting for some burgers to finish on the grill. The wild redhead grinds Calvin's lap to the rhythm of the LOUD MUSIC.

Niner stands on the other side of the porch with the magnum in hand. Watches closely.

Neither Calvin nor his girl notice the gun wielding cop. They get more and more into it. Grinding, GRUNTING like wild animals.

Niner just smiles at them. A sliding glass door sits wide open. Niner steps inside. He goes unnoticed.

INT. BEDROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Bobby steps out of a corner bathroom, zips his fly as the toilet flushes. He is shocked to see --

NINER

Leaning against on and old oak dresser, reading a newspaper article about the "Christmas Eve Killings".

NINER

Lead Homicide Investigator Martin Crowe reported today that the forensic evidence recovered from all six victims does not yet confirm or negate Abby Samms claim of a four man job...

Niner drops the paper on the dresser.

NINER (CONT'D)

I guess you and Scottie and
Jason are still in the clear.

Bobby slowly raises his hands. Nervous.

Niner digs through another thick stack of printed internet
articles and cut-out newspaper clippings.

NINER (CONT'D)

It's quite the collection you
got going here. You writing a
book?

Bobby checks the NIGHT STAND next to his bed. Nothing but
a CELL PHONE and ASH TRAY.

Niner pulls back his coat. A FIFTY CALIBER in his belt.
Bobby's gun.

NINER (CONT'D)

I got it. I thought I better
hold onto it. Just in case.

BOBBY

Didn't think I'd see you again,
cop. Aren't you still on
suspension? Or are you here to
make a citizen's arrest?

NINER

Not really. Sit down. Relax.

Bobby plops down on the mattress. Sparks up a cigarette
and props the ash tray on his belly. His legs sprawl out
on the sheets.

BOBBY

Okay, cop. I'm relaxed.

NINER

About a month ago, after I was
charged with giving Raul Ortega
flying lessons...I made it my
business to dig up everything I
could on you...

Bobby puffs away at his cigarette. Anxious.

NINER (CONT'D)

It wasn't that hard, really.
Given the fact that you left
your wallet on Justine's night
stand.

BOBBY

I was wondering where that went.

Bobby holds out his hands. Niner reaches into his coat and yanks out the wallet, tosses it on the bed. Bobby smiles.

NINER

I snagged it before the cops came to scoop up Raul from the front lawn. It got me thinking. Other than Herrera, you were the only other one that saw what happened to Raul. You could've turned me in. A convict like you turning in a cop. It's every criminal's wet dream. But you didn't.

BOBBY

What can I say? I guess I got a soft spot for law enforcement.

NINER

The DA could've put you on the stand to cooperate Justine's testimony. And what does she do? She denies that you were ever there. That you weren't fucking her ten minutes before Ortega busted in the door.

BOBBY

It was a complicated situation.

NINER

It took me awhile to figure it out. At first I thought she was just keeping it from Raul. He's in the hospital, fighting for his life. All plugged up and fucked up. Maybe she wanted to keep you on the DL until he came through.

BOBBY

Maybe...

NINER

Then I thought, nah. So I did some more digging. You wanna hear? It's a good story.

BOBBY

I'm a sucker for good stories.

NINER

About a year ago, Christmas. Your brothers and three best friends were gunned down in a police raid at your brother Jackie's meth lab...

Niner drops the report on Bobby's lap.

NINER (CONT'D)

You see, there was this rat locked up in county on a possession charge, looking to cut a deal. His name was Trent Wise. Maybe you heard of him.

BOBBY

Yeah. Maybe I have. So what? You looking to write my life story.

NINER

Of course, there was nothing you could do about it at the time. Just finished a nickel at Starke for grand theft auto. On parole. You were on your best behavior.

BOBBY

That's me. I'm clean now. Haven't you heard? Crime doesn't pay. You should know that, cop.

NINER

So you waited. Followed Trent and his buddy Scottie to Orlando and decided they still owed you six cold bodies. Not just anyone.

Niner steps closer to the bed. Hovers over Bobby.

NINER (CONT'D)

Somebody close to him. Like a brother. Or maybe a girlfriend.

BOBBY

That's quite the story. I guess you wanna arrest me now?

Bobby holds out his wrists. Ready for the cuffs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right. You can't. They took your gun and badge. Last I heard, you were a real menace to society.

NINER

You're right. It's not gonna be that easy. You watched me cancel Raul's check, so taking you in won't do me any good. You hand over a cop, they waive the death penalty and you're looking at twenty instead of thirty to life.

Bobby smiles. Nods in agreement.

NINER (CONT'D)

It doesn't mean my report can't find its way into the right hands.

Bobby smiles. Puts out his smoke.

INT. CARLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carly is passed out on the couch, covered in her favorite blanky. A random show blares on the TV.

Lynn walks in looking sad. Shuts off the television and shakes Carly's shoulder. Awakens her from a deep sleep.

Carly slowly sits up.

CARLY

Are you kidding me? I just laid down.

Lynn kneels on the carpet in front of her. Carly notices the deliberate seriousness in her eyes.

LYNN

Abby Samms was brought in a little under an hour ago. She downed a bunch of pills.

Carly sits in shock. Her eyes slowly well up with tears.

LYNN (CONT'D)

I tried calling you.

CARLY

Did she pull through?

LYNN

Last I checked she was stable.

Carly breaks into tears. Lynn grabs her roommate's hand. Her eyes comfort her.

EXT. AMBULANCE BAY - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The mob of reporters, cameras and news personnel that were once camped outside Steve's house are now gathered near the front of the hospital.

CAMERAMEN set up shots, FIELD REPORTERS rehearse. One JOURNALIST gets a statement from a WHITE COAT RESIDENT.

Carly walks straight through the crowd, headed toward the ambulance bay doors.

INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

Abby is now laid up in bed. Tired, pale. Her lips and mouth stained with the grayish remnants of charcoal.

In walks Carly. Abby turns, spots her waiting nervously in the doorway.

CARLY

Abby?

Abby ignores her and faces the window.

ABBY

That bastard just couldn't let me go. As if me dying wasn't good enough for him.

Carly steps closer to Abby's bed.

CARLY

Who?

ABBY

Steve. He found me in bed. Decided to come home early.

Carly has a seat in a corner chair, facing Abby. A careful calmness about her. A supportive smile on her face.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I know he didn't shed any tears when they brought me in. As soon as I came around, he was already yelling at me. Said I just did this for attention. Probably kicking himself right about now for calling that ambulance.

CARLY

Steve is your mother's brother?

Abby smiles. Chuckles under her breath.

ABBY

I see you've been following my story. Pretty exciting, huh?

CARLY

Yeah, I heard you were staying with them now.

Abby watches Carly closely. As if she recognizes her from the night of the murders.

ABBY

Who are you?

CARLY

My name is Carly. I work in the ER. I'm a nurse.

(beat)

You don't remember me, do you?

Abby thinks back. Trying to place her face.

ABBY

I remember. Why are you here?

CARLY

I wanna know why you tried to hurt yourself. And I want you to tell me the truth.

Abby looks away. Reluctant to talk.

CARLY (CONT'D)

You don't have to worry about your Uncle. Or those TV cameras outside. Or the police. I want you to talk to me like you would a best friend...

Abby slowly comes around. Faces Carly.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Someone who saw what happened to you. First hand. Someone who believes you loved your family... and would never hurt them. Not in a million years. I wanna believe you, Abby. But I don't know if I'm fooling myself. Tell me I'm right so I know it's okay to cry for you.

Abby loses it. Sobs uncontrollably as a look of complete and utter loss and desperation consumes her face.

Carly's lips quiver. About to lose it herself. She wipes her tears and stays strong for the broken young woman.

ABBY

Nobody believes me. Nobody talks to me. I always thought things were bad before...but...I always had them. It hurts so bad because ...there's no one there to share the pain with. I don't what to do.

CARLY

I can't imagine what it would be like to go through this alone.

ABBY

I can't take it anymore. I can't talk to anyone. I've lost all my friends. I didn't know what else to do. Where to turn...

CARLY

I believe you, Abby. I believe you. And you don't have to do this alone. Not anymore.

Carly grabs Abby's hand. Abby grips the side of her pillow and cries into it. Carly strokes her back.

INT. COURTROOM - TRIAL DAY #2 - DAY

Bobby sits in the witness box. A microphone in his face. Mac stands before him. He's giving "first-hand" testimony of Raul Ortega's accident.

Niner tries to appear calm. Yet, his eyes say different.

BOBBY

Raul and I's relationship was more of a...casual nature. I was his dealer.

MAC

His drug dealer?

Mac faces the jury, watches their reactions. Starkey rolls her eyes and drops her pen on the desk.

MAC (CONT'D)

What did you deal to Raul?

BOBBY

Coke, ecstasy, weed. A little bit of everything.

MAC

PCP? Synthetic heroin?

Starkey finally blows. Jumps to her feet --

STARKEY

Objection! Mister Ortega's history of drug abuse is already public record. Nor is it up for debate. The defense is using it for pure shock value.

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained. Let's move on.

MAC

Mister Van Den Kemp? Would you tell the court how you first came into contact with Justine Herrera?

BOBBY

It was pretty simple really. I came to Raul's place to do a quick deal. Justine was there. And she caught my eye, I caught hers. You could say it was instant attraction.

Bobby really plays it up for the jury with a reflective smile. Justine stares at Bobby with intense hatred.

MAC

And how did the two of you finally get together?

BOBBY

One night I was over. And Raul steps into the other room to get some cash. That's when Justine slips me her number. I called her up as soon as we could both get away. That was that. We saw each other on and off for about three weeks.

MAC

And when did the two of you
finally call it quits?

BOBBY

Around the time Raul went into
the hospital. Justine said it
wasn't a good idea for us to see
each other while he was still out
of commission.

MAC

Would you walk us through the night
of November Twenty Three?

Mac steps to the jury box. Makes eye to eye contact with
each of the jurors.

MAC (CONT'D)

Starting about thirty minutes before
Raul Ortega fell from his fourth
story balcony?

BOBBY

The night in question, I show up
at Raul's place while he was still
at work. Justine's got a black eye.
She tells me that he hit her. So
I called him up, said if he did it
again I'd pop one between his eyes.

Bobby faces the jurors --

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I got this thing with wife beaters.
Raul was known to raise a hand or
two...

Some of the jurors turn and stare in Justine's direction.
Sizing her up.

Justine looks down in shame. Niner cracks a grin.

Starkey jumps to her feet --

STARKEY

Objection! Raul Ortega is not
on trial here!

JUDGE MEYERS

Overruled.

(to BOBBY)

Continue, please.

BOBBY

So Raul didn't like that so much. Said I better not see you when I get back. It would be the second biggest mistake I ever made.

MAC

And, following this phone conversation, did you and Raul ever speak again?

BOBBY

No. Never got the chance. I wish I did.

MAC

And where were you when Raul returned to his apartment?

BOBBY

When he showed I was finishing up in the bathroom...

INT. RAUL/JUSTINE'S APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Bobby steps out of the bathroom -- stops. Pulls a SNUB NOSE THIRTY EIGHT from his pants. Leans against the wall.

BOBBY (V.O.)

Heard the commotion coming from the living room. Justine was screaming. Sounded like he was giving her a good once over...

Bobby peaks his head around the corner, stares into the living room. He spots NINER HOLDING HIS GUN on someone. Someone we cannot see...

ON BOBBY

peaking around the corner.

BOBBY (V.O.)

So I pulled my gun. Ready to
run out and blow Raul in half.
That's when I heard a voice.
A man's voice...

BOBBY'S POV - ON NINER

Still holding his gun on someone. He slowly moves in on
his subject. Disappears from our view...

ON BOBBY

BOBBY (V.O.)

So I run out to see what the
hell was going on...

Bobby raises his weapon, ready to fire. Slowly makes his
way into the --

LIVING ROOM - (CONTINUOUS)

Niner is holding his gun on RAUL ORTEGA (30s). Puerto
Rican, thin. Druggie type.

Raul has his hands in the air, ready to give up. Justine
sits on the carpet near him. A BLOODY NOSE.

ON NINER

Ready to explode with anger. His eyes are wide. Intense.
His hands shaking.

BOBBY (V.O.)

That's when I saw Officer Niner
holding his gun on Raul...

END OF FLASHBACK

Mac approaches the jury. Leans on the mahogany railing as
Bobby continues his testimony.

MAC

Officer Niner was holding his
weapon on Raul. And did he
attempt to detain Mister
Ortega?

BOBBY

Yes, he did.

INT. RAUL/JUSTINE'S APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Niner is still angry, ready to snap.

Raul visibly senses the detective's growing hatred. He stares at Niner's GUN, a worried look in his eye.

Raul slowly makes for the balcony.

Niner follows him outside. Aimed and ready.

BOBBY (V.O.)

He tells Raul to turn and face the wall. Only Raul's not listening. He's cussing and yelling. Poking his finger in Officer Niner's direction. Madder than hell and hopped up on something.

Raul shakes his head at Niner. Pleading. Begging.

Niner simply walks him to the edge of the balcony. The detective yells at him. Something we can't hear.

BOBBY (V.O.)

He asks him again. Get down or I put you down. He wouldn't listen...

Niner SMASHES his FORTY FIVE into Raul's face.

BOBBY

Stands in the living room. His weapon pointed at Niner's back. He watches him assault the defenseless man.

NINER

Gives Raul a swift KICK to the stomach while he's still down. Then another --

BOBBY (V.O.)

Before you could blink, Raul makes for the balcony. Jumps right over the side...

Niner picks up Raul from the deck. THROWS HIM over the railing. He FALLS...

...FOUR STORIES to the ground...

Justine beats on Niner's back in outrage. Niner turns, faces her. Shoves her to the floor. He looks up --

Bobby holds his weapon on Niner. The two men face off.

Niner stares down at the GUN'S BARREL. He's facing death in the eye. A sitting duck.

Bobby lowers his thirty eight and quickly makes for the front door. Gone.

Niner stares down at Justine on the carpet. She is still screaming and crying hysterically.

END OF FLASHBACK

BOBBY

On the witness stand. The jury is hanging on every word. He's got them. Bobby makes eye contact with each of them as he finishes his story --

BOBBY

And there I am holding a gun
on this cop's back. Before
he had the chance to turn and
see me, I booked it for the
door. I guess I panicked.

Mac smiles at the jury. Case closed. Niner also watches the jury closely. Mac returns to the defense desk.

MAC

Your witness.

Starkey steps to the witness box. More than ready.

STARKEY

Mister Van Den Kemp. You were
ready to shoot Raul Ortega when
you learned that he hit Justine.
Ready to kill, in fact. And now
you're here testifying in defense
of the man she claimed murdered
her fiancé...

Justine anxiously awaits his explanation. Bobby quickly catches eyes with her. Looks away.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

I know I speak for most of the court when I say... Maybe I'm missing something here...?

BOBBY

I'm not sure I follow.

STARKEY

What I'm asking is..why are you here? One month after the fact. And why are we just now learning of this so-called relationship between you and Justine Herrera?

Niner checks with the jury. A worried look.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Miss Herrera never mentioned anyone being in her apartment the night of the twenty third. How do you explain this?

BOBBY

I asked Justine not to say anything. Pretend I wasn't there.

Niner checks with Justine. She steals a quick look at the detective. Then back on Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I was on parole. Cops find out I'm running with Raul again, I go back inside for another five. Guess I got scared.

Justine just watches on. Her expression doesn't give away her thoughts. Just a hard stare at Bobby.

STARKEY

I'm sorry, Mister Van Den Kemp, but that doesn't make any sense. You were afraid of the police discovering that you broke your parole, so you turn yourself in and agree to testify, under oath, that you not only went to Raul Ortega's apartment, but also pulled a gun on a police officer?

BOBBY

When I found out Raul was still alive and in the hospital, I knew there was a small chance he could pull through. Thought maybe the cops questioned him before he passed away. He drops my name, that's all she wrote. I figured I better turn myself in before I got picked up.

Starkey smiles. Not buying a word of this.

STARKEY

This is quite the story, Mister Van Den Kemp.

BOBBY

Look. He had him dead bang, Raul panicked and jumped. Don't know what else to tell you. That's what happened.

Starkey is speechless. She watches Bobby with contempt. He's got her and she knows it.

The jury awaits her response.

Niner is also on the edge of his seat.

INT. COURTHOUSE GARAGE - NINER'S VETTE - DAY

Niner reaches for the driver's side door, but is stopped by the sound of Starkey's voice.

STARKEY

Hey!

Niner turns --

Starkey walks briskly toward the Corvette. Raving mad.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Congratulations, Rawley. You officially have nine lives.

NINER

Thank you.

STARKEY

How much did this witness cost?
A couple thousand? Five?

NINER

Careful, Counselor. You're
starting to sound like a poor
loser.

STARKEY

Why don't you tell that to Justine
Herrera. Her husband's dead. Now
who speaks for her?

NINER

You did. And twelve people thought
you were full of shit. Don't cry
about it now.

Niner opens his car door. Starkey grabs his arm.

STARKEY

This isn't about me?!

NINER

It's about you letting a third year
court appointed catch you with your
pretty little skirt down.

Niner cracks a sly grin. Gives her a quick wink.

NINER (CONT'D)

You preach about right and wrong,
but the truth is you don't give
a shit about that spic crack head
or her skel husband.

STARKEY

You're unbelievable.

NINER

Yeah. At least you used to think
so, didn't you? Face it. You
wanna take her word over mine
because that's your job. Not cos
it's the truth. So why don't you
come down off your high horse
before you get a nose bleed.

STARKEY

That's great, Rawley. Uglier words were never spoken by a truer bigot.

Niner steps uncomfortably close. She backs up.

NINER

Yeah, Raul used his girlfriend's face as an ashtray because I'm a racist! I'm completely out of the loop! Not in touch with the rest of the world! Ortega was a real class guy!

STARKEY

You know, that keen sense of justice you think God's gifted you with never quite seems to stand on its own merit, does it? You just use it as an excuse to cover your own ass...

Niner is about to boil over, but restrains himself. Cracks a phoney smile for Starkey. She's touched a nerve.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

You know what really worries me the most, Rawley? You fucked up so many times you're starting to believe the excuses.

Starkey storms off. Niner just smiles, plays it off.

NINER

Does this mean we're not on for tonight?

Starkey turns back --

STARKEY

Go fuck yourself!

She continues to her car.

NINER

I'd rather you come over, but I'll do what I gotta do!

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Carly, in her ER scrubs, grabs her usual orange and carrot juice from behind the cooler door. A banana and some snack crackers in her other hand. She heads for the counter.

Carly waits in a short line. Stares down at today's edition of THE ORLANDO SENTINEL. The front page reads --

"BALCONY COP FOUND NOT GUILTY"

Carly puts the juice under her armpit, picks up a copy of the paper. Reads.

INSERT - PHOTO

A black and white image of surprise defense witness BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP. His name listed under his picture.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly is next in line. Drops the juice and crackers. And then The Sentinel.

INT. DR. PHILLIPS HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

It's the first week of school since the end of Christmas break. Students roam about the halls, excited. Showing off their new schedules. High-fiving, giving hugs.

Abby struts through the middle of the crowd with little interest. Some students stare and whisper to one another. Abby ignores them, keeps her head down.

Abby turns a corner, about to head into class. And waiting by the door are SERGEANTS CROWE AND DEES.

Abby is taken aback. Crowe approaches her with a careful ease and with compassion in his voice.

CROWE

Hello, Abby. Didn't mean to
startle you. Good to see you.

ABBY

Yeah. You too.

DEES

Hello, Abby.

CROWE

We've got some new developments concerning your family's case. If we could find someplace quiet to talk?

ABBY

Of course. I just need to --

CROWE

It's okay. I've already spoken with your teacher. We won't keep you too long.

ABBY

As long as it's good news.

Crowe smiles. Dees just stares at his partner. Unsure.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The room is dimly lit, empty. Sitting in a far corner booth is Abby, Crowe, Dees. It's in-between lunch hours. A WOMAN walks the room, fills napkin dispensers.

Crowe and Dees sit across from Abby. Laid out on the table are POLICE FILES, PHOTOS, DOCUMENTS.

Crowe sifts through the pile, picks up a couple photos.

CROWE

Abby, we wanna show you some pictures. Some men we believe may've been working with Trent. Men he used to run with. Mostly small time, petty criminal types.

Crowe lays down a PHOTO OF SCOTTIE PERRY. Abby picks it up. Takes a close look.

CROWE (CONT'D)

This young man here was particularly close with Trent. His name is Scottie Perry.

ABBY

That's him.

Crowe and Dees exchange a look.

ABBY (CONT'D)

The one I saw with Trent.

DEES

Saw? Where?

ABBY

In the back yard. He was one of the four men I saw. His name is Scottie?

DEES

Scott Perry. Heard of him?

ABBY

Trent talked about him a couple of times.

DEES

About?

ABBY

About crazy shit they used to do. Don't know much about him.

CROWE

Now Trent and this Scottie disappeared around the same time. We know that Trent migrated to Orlando, but Scottie...up and vanished.

ABBY

You don't know where he is?

CROWE

Panama City P.D. made a weekly habit of picking this kid up.

DEES

Brawling, petty theft, assault. Until he graduated to attempted murder.

DEES (CONT'D)

A few days after Trent's folks died in a suspicious car accident Perry does a drive by with his old man's shotgun. Only he misses...

Crowe lays down a PHOTO OF BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP.

CROWE

This was his intended target.

Abby stares at the photo with pure hate and rage.

EXT. SAMMS FARM - BACK YARD - CHRISTMAS EVE (FLASHBACK)

Bobby and Ferrin step out of the woods. Each with a shovel in hand. Trent and Scottie warn Abby.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby still stares at the photo. Crowe and Dees watch her closely. She obviously recognizes him.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Fearing that he would retaliate, Scottie skips town. The target was Bobby Van Den Kemp. Maybe that rings a bell?

ABBY

I don't know him.

Dees and Crowe look surprised.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Should I?

Crowe reaches over and gently touches his partner's hand. Dees reluctantly lays off.

Abby watches the exchange.

CROWE

What am saying is this. You've identified Perry's picture. We know he was in town and hooked back up with Trent. That means there's a great chance Van Den Kemp followed him here.

ABBY

And you think he has something
to do with my family?

DEES

If he did, Scott Perry's life is
definitely in danger. Now if you
have any idea where we might find
him, you need to tell us.

ABBY

He killed my family. Don't you
think if I knew, I'd tell you?

Abby scoffs at the detective. Frustrated.

DEES

Those other two men you saw in
the woods. Do you remember any-
thing about them that might help?

ABBY

We've been over this a thousand
times! I didn't get a good look
at them! It was dark!

Crowe reaches over and touches Abby's arm, calms her.
Reaches over with his other hand. Stops his partner.

Dees reluctantly lays off.

CROWE

It's okay. But just think. The
short time you and Trent were
together. Did he ever take you
to see any of his friends? Take
you anywhere you aren't familiar?
Anything that can help us.

Abby fights back her tears. Tries hard to think. Dees
pulls some napkins from a dispenser, hands them to Abby.

ABBY

Thank you.

DEES

You're welcome. Sorry about all
the questions. I know it's a bad
time for you.

Crowe hangs his head. A poor choice of words.

DEES (CONT'D)

Actually, I don't know. I'll never know what you're feeling inside. But know that O.P.D.'s finest is on the job.

CROWE

He is right about that.

DEES

As good as I am, I'm gonna need some help picking up this guy's slack.

Dees points at his partner. Crowe smiles.

DEES (CONT'D)

That's all I want from you, Abby. Help. We wouldn't be here if we didn't.

Abby sits in deep thought. Thinking it all over. She focuses on the table's surface. Her eyes wide open.

ABBY

We went to this motel once. To buy weed. Trent told me to stay in the car. He said this friend of his was kind of paranoid. And didn't want anyone seeing him he didn't know.

CROWE

And he didn't mention his name?

ABBY

No. I remembered I thought it was funny he lived in a motel.

DEES

Is that what Trent told you? He lived in the motel?

ABBY

He said he just moved to Orlando. And was still looking for a place. He hadn't been in town that long.

CROWE

You remember which motel this was?

EXT. DR. PHILLIPS HIGH SCHOOL - BUS STOP - DAY

Students race to their next class as Sergeants Crowe and Dees make their way through the crowd.

DEES

Did you see her face? She has no idea who Van Den Kemp is.

CROWE

If your family was just murdered at Christmas dinner, you wouldn't be on top of current events.

DEES

Good point.

CROWE

So Niner blackmails him.

This grabs Dees attention.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Trent Wise serves up Van Dan Kemp, thinking he can cut a deal. Only Niner blows him away before he can talk. He was saving Bobby all to himself.

The two partners step away from the bus stop and into the teacher's --

EXT. PARKING LOT (CONTINUOUS)

Dees and Crowe head back to their squad car.

DEES

It was a good plan. I'll give him that.

CROWE

Apparently Niner was thinking the same thing.

DEES

What are the odds that Niner's
planning on letting this Van Den
Kemp breathe?

CROWE

Around the same odds as this
Scottie Perry still being alive.
Not good.

EXT. WOODCHUCK MOTEL - DAY

Crowe and Dees step out of their squad car. A goofy sign hanging just over their car reads The Woodchuck Motel. A woodchuck wears a collared shirt and tie, carries with him a heavy piece of luggage.

The two partners head for the entrance. Dees stares up at the silly woodchuck. Follows his partner inside.

INT. WOODCHUCK MOTEL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Crowe and Dees question the MANAGER (50s). A real good old boy with a flannel shirt, suspenders, pot belly. His wild gray hair points in every direction.

Dees lays down some photos. One of Bobby, Ferrin and also Scottie. The Manager points at Scottie's picture.

MANAGER

Yeah, he was here for a couple
weeks. Left here on...

The Manager stares at the ceiling, thinking back. It's just not coming to him.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Oh, boy. When was it?

DEES

Christmas Eve?

MANAGER

Yeah, that's right. How'd you
know?

DEES

Lucky guess.

MANAGER

Yeah, this fellow here left with
this other fellow...

The Manager points at FERRIN'S PHOTO.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Now, his name's Jason.

Crowe and Dees share a surprised look.

DEES

Wait. You know this man?

MANAGER

No, but I heard Calvin talking
to him in the driveway once.

DEES

Calvin?

CROWE

Driveway?

MANAGER

Calvin's driveway. My neighbor.
I seen him out there a few times.
This kid with the crazy hair.
He's one of those thug types.
Thinks he's black or something.

(to DEES)

No offense.

DEES

None taken, boss.

CROWE

You live near this Calvin?

MANAGER

Unfortunately, yes. You know,
I could tell you some stories.
Watched the cops do a stand-off
on his front lawn one time. Had
a knife to his girl's neck. He
threatened to cut her head off.
Must've been out there two hours.
Drugs musta wore off. Crazy ass
bastards.

CROWE

Where is this place?

MANAGER

Across the street from my place.
Out near Lake Eola. Big white house.
Old as hell. About to fall apart.
Just like me. Can't miss it.

Dees hands him a notepad and pen --

DEES

If you could just write down
your address for us.

The Manager jots down his address.

MANAGER

Do me a favor. If there's gonna
be any gunplay, call me in advance
so I know to stay out of Dodge.

The Manager hands Dees the piece of paper.

INT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

Abby rushes through the front door and hurries upstairs,
leaving the door wide open.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM (CONTINUOUS)

Abby hurries inside, heads straight to a night stand next
to her bed. She yanks open the drawer and pulls out this
morning's edition of --

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

Bobby Van Den Kemp's PHOTO circled in RED MARKER.

Abby focuses on Bobby's rough, pockmarked features. His
sinister eyes.

EXT. SAMMS FARM - CHRISTMAS EVE (FLASHBACK)

Bobby and Ferrin step from the woods with SHOVELS in hand.
They walk closer. BOBBY'S FACE becomes more visible with
each step.

BACK TO SCENE

ON ABBY'S EYES

As they FOCUS even harder on Bobby's photo.

CLOSE-UP - BOBBY'S PHOTO.

Abby drops the paper and hurries out of the room.

INT. STEVE/CYNTHIA'S ROOM - DAY

Abby hurries in, makes for a corner closet. She opens and reaches for a top shelf. Feels her way around. A number of shoe boxes, folded sweatshirts fall on top of her.

One of the SHOE BOXES dumps OPEN on the floor. A few BULLETS and THIRTY EIGHT REVOLVER fall on the carpet.

Abby quickly picks it up, opens the cylinder to check for shells. A vengeful look in her eye.

She stuffs the weapon in her pants and covers it with her sweatshirt. She heads out --

EXT. STEVE/CYNTHIA'S ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Abby hurries through the door, into the second floor hallway and is grabbed from behind by JASON FERRIN.

Abby kicks and SCREAMS but Jason's hand over her mouth muffles any cry for help.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crowe and Dees squad car pulls to the curb. Out steps the two partners. They survey the area before heading toward the house.

There are three cars at the front curb by the home. Two in the driveway, one in the lawn. LOUD SHOCK ROCK BLASTS from the living room.

DEES

You smell that?

CROWE
Smell what?

DEES
Trouble.

CROWE
Just watch your ass.

DEES
You watch my ass.

The two partners approach the front door. Give a KNOCK.

Bobby stands at the edge of the front lawn. Gripping a fifty caliber hand cannon. He rests the heavy weapon on his shoulder, watches the two detectives with amusement.

Crowe and Dees face the door. Oblivious. They give a few more hard KNOCKS. No answer.

DEES (CONT'D)
How the hell can anyone hear
with the music so loud?

CROWE
That bastard's here. I can
smell him.

Bobby quietly walks away. Goes un-noticed.

Crowe beats his fist even harder. Jonas finally answers.

JONAS
What are you punching down my
door for, Ace?

Both Dees and Crowe flash their badges.

DEES
Open the door and get out of
the way. Ace.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

All the usual burn outs are lounging on the couch and carpet. They look just as enthused as before. Which isn't very much.

Jonas sits in his usual recliner. A bowl of popcorn on his lap and a cigarette in his mouth. Dees lays out the photos of Scottie, Bobby and Ferrin onto the coffee table.

DEES

Alright. Whoever don't wanna go to jail, give me something.

And they don't budge. Not one inch. One girl is actually asleep. A giant bong in her lap.

DEES (CONT'D)

We know they were staying here. So one of you has to know something. Come on y'all.

CROWE

I guess everyone wants to spend the night in lock up.

DEES

Looks that way, partner. Why don't you wake up your girlfriend. Tell her you're all going to jail.

Jonas stares over at the half comatose young woman with her head tilted back and mouth wide open.

He sets down his popcorn. Picks up Bobby's picture.

JONAS

He left this morning.

DEES

Which one?

JONAS

The blonde one. Bobby.

CROWE

What about his partner?

JONAS

Jason? Took off a couple days ago after him and Bobby got into it. I don't know where.

DEES

And what about your roommie?
Calvin? What does he know?

JONAS

He took off too. Went to work
yesterday and never came back.
Don't know where he went.

CROWE

So nobody's here, you haven't
seen them and you don't know
nuthin? Is that what you're
telling us?

DEES

I don't know, partner. I think
I smell bullshit.

CROWE

It's definitely ripe in here.

JONAS

I'm very sorry, Officers. But,
as you can see, we got kind
of a revolving door around this
place. But do me a favor, cop.

DEES

What's that?

JONAS (CONT'D)

If you see Calvin, tell him his
half of the rent is late.

Dees leans in nice and close to Jonas. Gets in his face.

DEES

Tell you what. We'll just come
back later when your mind isn't
so foggy.

JONAS

And I still won't know shit.
But suit yourselves.

Jonas takes another drag from his cigarette and blows SMOKE
in the detective's face. Dees kicks the punk's legs out of
his way as he and Crowe head for the door.

JONAS (CONT'D)
You're welcome. You Officers
have a good night.

Crowe stops at the door, turns back --

CROWE
We'll be seeing you.

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crowe and Dees walk briskly to their squad car. Both of them upset. Bobby's black Chevy Van is parked at the curb across the street. The two cops don't pay it any mind.

CROWE
He's lying. Little shit knows
where they are.

DEES
Yeah, I kind of got that feeling.

CROWE
It's just a matter of time before
one of these turds comes back.

DEES
So what now?

CROWE
Now? We wait.

Crowe steps in the driver's side.

DEES
I was afraid you were gonna say
that.

Dees walks around the car, also crawls in.

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Crowe moves his seat back, gets comfortable. Dees looks up and spots --

BOBBY

Standing in front of their car. Still carrying his fifty caliber handgun.

Dees taps his partner's arm. Crowe checks with his partner, who is staring right at Bobby. Crowe faces forward --

Bobby smiles back at him.

Both Dees and Crowe reach for their holstered weapons. Before they can draw them --

BOBBY FIRES INTO THE WINDSHIELD

Dees and Crowe are riddled with MULTIPLE SHOTS. Crowe falls face forward onto the steering column.

Dees opens his door and falls onto the grass.

Bobby walks around the car -- points his weapon at the wounded cop, crawling away on the sidewalk.

Dees gives out. Falls limp onto the pavement. Dead.

Bobby reaches into the squad car. Grabs the police records and photos from the dashboard. Crowe's hand reaches out and grips Bobby's wrist.

CROWE

Rawley Niner's gonna kill you.
You got no chance.

Bobby opens up a long, jagged switchblade. Holds it in front of Crowe's face. A creepy smile.

BOBBY

Thanks for the heads up.

Bobby SLICES CROWE'S THROAT. Hears POLICE SIRENS in the near distance. Makes a run for it.

EXT. INTERSTATE FOUR - NIGHT

Bobby's Van sits in stand-still traffic. HORNS are HONKING. People are CURSING. It's back to back as far as the eye can see. POLICE SIRENS are faintly heard.

INT. BOBBY'S VAN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Bobby sits behind the wheel. A bit on edge. Sweating, anxious. He checks his side-view mirror, spots a PATROL CAR sitting about five cars back.

Bobby faces forward.

The traffic starts to break up a bit.

Bobby moves forward a couple of spaces. His CELL PHONE RINGS. The CALLER ID READS JASON. Bobby answers.

BOBBY

Change in plan, slick. No more running. The cops are gonna be on your ass. You wanna tell me where you are or do you wanna go to prison?

FERRIN (O.S.)

(filtered)

Shut your mouth and listen, Bobby. I got a friend of yours here you might wanna say hi to.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Jason leans on the roof of his car. The rear passenger door sits open. ABBY awaits in the back. Blindfolded and hands tied. She is shaking.

The car sits at the far end of a remote dirt path in the middle of nowhere. A SMALL LAKE sits just yards from the vehicle. The water is glassy, peaceful and quiet.

FERRIN

Long blonde hair. Blue eyes.
About seventeen. Real pretty.

Ferrin reaches the phone over to Abby.

FERRIN (CONT'D)

Say your name.

ABBY

Abby Samms.

BOBBY (O.S.)

(filtered)

Where are you?

Ferrin steps outside with the phone.

FERRIN

First things first, Bobby. I
wanna find out just how bad
you want her.

INT. BOBBY'S VAN - NIGHT

Bobby sits and listens. A confused look. The traffic is
starting to break up again. Bobby inches forward a bit.

BOBBY

What are you talking about?
Tell me where you are.

FERRIN (O.S.)

(filtered)

We tried it your way. Six months
later I'm still waiting for this
big score you promised. The way I
see it, we're running out of time.
And time is money, Bobby. You want
the girl, it's gonna cost you.

BOBBY

You don't know what you're doing.
I'm your only chance out of this.
Don't be an asshole.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Ferrin shuts the rear door. Walks a good distance from the
car. Keeps a close eye on Abby in the back seat.

FERRIN

I figure from these last few jobs,
we got a little over thirty grand
put away. A dime less than thirty,
I give her your name and drop her
off five miles from the nearest
police station. That's my deal.

INT. BOBBY'S VAN - NIGHT

Bobby is so distracted, he fails to notice the ten or so
car lengths in front of him. A car behind him HONKS.

BOBBY

She'll turn you in along with me.
There's no pay-off.

FERRIN (O.S.)

(filtered)

Thanks to you, we're going down
anyways, aren't we, Bobby? This
is as good a chance to get out as
any. Hell. The cops might even
be grateful for turning you in.

Bobby's cocky demeanor suddenly turns dead serious. He goes from cool to a nervous wreck.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Bobby's Van makes its way down the two-lane dirt road. The thick branches from hundreds of old oak trees hang over the path. They BRUSH and SCRATCH the roof of the van.

Bobby comes to the end of the road, parks a good distance from Ferrin's car. Ferrin stands by the car with his gun in hand, waiting. Abby still in the back.

Out steps Bobby with his FIFTY CALIBER in one hand and the BAG OF MONEY in the other. Ferrin aims his gun at Bobby.

FERRIN

Drop that fuckin' piece! Right
now! Not another inch!

Bobby just returns with a smile.

BOBBY

You know better than that, Jason.
You know you can't hit me from
there. By the time you get
close, I'll have the first shot
between your stupid, beady little
eyes. Just like I did your girl
friend Calvin. Or maybe I'll let
you get on all fours and beg like
Scottie.

NINER

Sorry, Bobby. Not on a first
date.

Niner walks from behind Bobby's Van with a sawed-off twelve gauge pump. The color drops from Bobby's face.

NINER (CONT'D)

Drop the piece. Then toss me
that bag. Real nice and slow.

Bobby drops the fifty caliber onto the dirt. Throws the duffel bag in Niner's direction. Niner picks up the bag and carefully steps closer to the gun on the ground.

Ferrin still holds his gun on Bobby. He shuffles back and forth on the dirt. Anxious.

FERRIN

(to NINER)

Alright. I got him here. Now
toss me the cash.

Niner bends down, retrieves Bobby's gun.

NINER

Not so fast, P Diddy. Get the
girl out of the back seat.

Ferrin turns his gun on Niner. A big grin on his face. Bobby also smiles. This could go in his favor.

Niner turns to Ferrin. Spots the gun pointed at him.

FERRIN

You don't think I was just gonna
let you and the girl walk out of
here? Did you, cop?

Niner returns with a goofy smile.

FERRIN (CONT'D)

You must think I'm pretty fuckin'
stupid.

NINER

Pretty much.

Without hesitation, Niner POINTS AND FIRES a single SHOT at Ferrin's chest - BOOM!

The BLAST of the fifty caliber knocks the criminal OFF HIS FEET and INTO THE PASSENGER SIDE WINDOW - SHATTERS it into large SHARDS OF GLASS.

Abby SCREAMS OUT from the back seat. Her eyes blindfolded.

The entire car door SMEARS WITH BLOOD as Ferrin slides into the dirt. He's dead before his body hits the ground.

Niner points the hand cannon at Bobby's face.

NINER (CONT'D)

Bad news. You just shot your partner. In front of a witness. It's gonna be hard to get out of this one. Guess we'll have to put you out of your misery.

BOBBY

It's not too late to take the money and run. You can tell the girl I got away. They took your badge. Your life. You got enough cash here to start over. Don't be stupid.

Niner steps within inches of Bobby's face. An evil smirk on his face. Bobby steps back.

NINER

I have a better idea. Why don't you go untie Abby? So she can see the man that killed her family. Face to face. We can let her decide what happens to you.

Bobby stares over at Abby in the back seat. Crying, scared.

NINER (CONT'D)

Go on. She's waiting.

Niner walks Bobby to Ferrin's car. His gun pointed at his head. Bobby stops at the rear door. He stares through the glass at Abby. Then back at Niner.

NINER (CONT'D)

What're you waiting for? You're not scared, are you? DO IT!

Bobby opens the rear door, reaches inside to get Abby. As he drags her across the leather --

Niner reaches into the dirt and grabs FERRIN'S GUN from his dead hand. He stands back up, waiting for Bobby.

As Bobby pulls Abby from the car, he opens a SWITCHBLADE. Before he can put it to Abby's throat --

NINER

Points and FIRES FERRIN'S GUN - STRIKES BOBBY'S SHOULDER. And down he goes.

Abby SCREAMS HER LUNGS OUT. Niner pulls down her blindfold. He hugs and calms her a bit as --

BOBBY

Squirms in the dirt. He attempts to stand, but falls. He crawls his way TOWARD THE LAKE.

Niner uses Bobby's switchblade to cut the rope from Abby's hands. She stares down at Ferrin's dead body for the first time.

Niner spots Bobby headed for the water and heads down the beach with Ferrin's revolver in hand. Abby just watches. Shakes from head to toe.

Bobby crawls into the shallow end. Turns, falls back first into the water. Niner hovers over him with his gun.

NINER

You know, I've killed so many
dumb fucks like you, I lost
count, Bobby. All of them face
down in the dirt. That same
desperate look...

Bobby stares at the gun's barrel. His hands suspended in the air. Scared stiff.

NINER (CONT'D)

None of them were quite so stupid
You're really something. So I won't
take any pleasure in killing you.
Abby, on the other hand, has been
waiting awhile for this.

Bobby stares over at Abby, still standing on the beach. He laughs out loud. She slowly steps closer to the water.

BOBBY
She's not like you.

NINER
Really?

BOBBY
As soon as you do me, she's gonna
hand you over like the rest of us.
That makes you just as dumb, cop.

NINER
(to ABBY)
Come get it, Abby. Just like I
promised.

Bobby loses his cocky smile.

Abby takes the revolver out of Niner's hand. Holds it on Bobby. A dead serious look in her eyes. She steps into the shallow end. Stands hovered over her victim.

BOBBY
Listen to me. You have to know
that it was never personal.

ABBY
Well this is.

Abby FIRES THREE SHOTS into Bobby's chest. His dead body slowly drifts into the deep end.

Niner makes his way back to Ferrin's car. He unzips the bag of money and dumps it on the hood.

Abby half-heartedly follows behind. Ferrin's gun still in her hand.

Niner drops the empty bag in the sand and faces Abby, who hands him the thirty eight. Niner throws it in the sand near Ferrin's body.

NINER
Remember what I said. Ten more
minutes and call the cops.

ABBY
I got it.

NINER

And you got your story straight?

ABBY

I got it. I'll be okay.

Niner quickly makes for the woods.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Rawley?

Niner stops, turns back --

ABBY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Niner smiles. Walks off into the trees. Out of sight.

Abby turns and gives the crime scene a good once over. Ferrin's body lay by the car. She checks -

THE LAKE

Bobby has officially disappeared into the water. It's just as still and calm as before.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Carly awaits in line. She has her usual orange and carrot juice, snack crackers and banana. She stares down at --

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

The front page reads --

"ABBY SAMMS ABDUCTED
BY MURDER SUSPECTS"

Carly quickly snags up the paper.

INSERT - BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO

The familiar image of BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP on the article. Just below Bobby's face is partner JASON FERRIN.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly's jaw drops. She stares down at the news rack and spots the front page of another paper. This one reads --

"CHRISTMAS EVE KILLER
TESTIFIES AT COP'S TRIAL"

Carly grabs a copy of both papers, drops them on the counter with her snacks.

EXT. PAT THOMAS BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We're back at the scene of Trent Wise's death. Same spot. Trent's HONDA CIVIC is parked on the asphalt. The lot is otherwise completely barren.

Niner steps out. The bottle of WHISKEY in hand. He dumps the brown liquid onto the concrete.

NINER (V.O.)

With Trent Wise dead, I knew I could get to Bobby. It was my one and only chance at swinging the jury my way. With my name in the clear, I knew I'd do more good for Abby Samms than I could rotting away in jail...

Niner turns and stares back at the Honda. A sinister look in his eye. He stops and ponders his decision. He taps the empty bottle on his leg in a nervous frenzy.

NINER (V.O.)

What the hell good would all that do? Nothing. I knew the ends would justify the means. To me, the decision was simple...

Niner steps closer and closer to the Honda. He is slow and looks uncertain. Pondering his decision to kill Trent.

NINER (V.O.)

But the funniest thing happened. The little shit got to me. Against my better judgment, I decided to let the little bastard live and take my chances with the jury. At least that was the plan anyway.

ON THE HONDA'S WINDSHIELD

THE BRIGHT ORANGE MUZZLE FLAIR OF A GUNSHOT LIGHTS THE INTERIOR OF THE HONDA -- BOOM!

Niner rushes to the passenger side of the vehicle. Stares inside. Trent's dead, limp body in the seat. His head is kicked back and BLOOD dripping from his open mouth.

The THIRTY EIGHT REVOLVER in Trent's right hand.

Niner shakes his head as he stares at what's left of the young man before him. No real emotion or remorse. Just a blank expression.

NINER (V.O.)

Trent, on the other hand, decided there was only one way out. I guess on the up side, if Trent lived, I knew there was a good possibility Bobby and Ferrin would still be on the street or watching cable TV in their cushy cells. How would I ever explain that to Abby Samms? Or look at myself in the mirror again?

Niner slowly stands. Stares out into the night. Pulls a cigarette from his coat pocket and LIGHTS UP.

NINER (V.O.)

This kid blowing his brains out might have been the best thing that ever happened. But who the fuck really knows? All I know is my work here was done.

Niner takes one last look at Trent's limp body in the passenger seat. Shakes his head.

EXT. RAUL'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - NIGHT

We're at the scene of Raul Ortega's murder. The crickets CHIRP in the nearby woods. The STAIN of RAUL'S BLOOD ON THE CONCRETE DECK.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Back at the scene of Jason Ferrin and Bobby Van Den Kemp's death. Ferrin's car is gone. The lake is just as peaceful and quiet as ever.

EXT. HORSE RANCH - SAMMS FAMILY FARM - NIGHT

Back where our story started. No cars in the driveway, no horses in the field. Nothing. And then --

NIGHT TURNS TO DAY. Our TWO SADDLEBREDS, one BROWN, one BLACK - suddenly appear behind the white picket fence.

And lastly...

ABBY slowly appears on the other side of this fence. Strokes the faces of her two favorite horses.

1

FADE OUT:

