

THE OBSERVED

Original Screenplay by
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FADE IN:

Close on a BLANK CANVAS. A brush swipes across the frame, covering it in dark glossy paint.

The instrumental of "Family Tree" by Evening Hymns begins to play.

The voice of a soft-spoken man:

VOICE OVER

Pierce Greene was one of a kind. When he lost his hearing at age 15, he began to paint. Those canvases were his pride and joy. They became his voice.

A brush swirls in the cup of a palette.

VOICE OVER

Against everyone's expectations, Pierce forged his own path. He married, and had two children. A boy and a girl - Dennis and Dakota.

The brush hastily daubs the canvas. PAN to reveal PIERCE GREENE, 31, a free spirit, watching his children, DENNIS GREENE, 10, and DAKOTA GREENE, 5, paint together.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Painted canvases cover the white studio. Not a sign of life inside.

VOICE OVER

One day, while he was away, his studio caught fire, and in mere minutes, everything burned down. All his work was lost.

EXT. STUDIO - DUSK

Cars pass by in front of the studio. Through the window, a small fire can be seen.

VOICE OVER

Pierce felt he had done something to deserve a punishment like this. In the months following the fire, he did nothing but work on one painting. A piece titled "Observer".

Pierce touches his hand to the BURNED CANVAS.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Pierce, now with a beard and long scruffy hair, works tirelessly on one PAINTING.

VOICE OVER

And yet, just when everything began to turn around for him, on the night of his 33rd birthday, his son found him strangled to death in his living room.

EXT. PIERCE GREENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Police swarm into the house. One tall young cop, PATRICK SAUNDERS, 28, hangs back beside the police cars. He spots Dennis and Dakota watching the scene.

Patrick moves over to Dakota, and pats her on the shoulder, trying to comfort her.

Dennis sits with a Paramedic, staring off.

VOICE OVER

The police did what they could, but in the end, they never found the killer. The case went unsolved. A promising young man was taken from the world too soon.

INT./EXT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dennis and Dakota ride in the back seat of a car. Dakota looks over to Dennis. His eyes look void of emotion.

EXT. PIERCE GREENE'S HOUSE - DAY

Movers carefully carry paintings out of the house and into a moving truck. Dennis watches.

VOICE OVER

Both children were left with nothing. Their father's paintings were seized, and they were taken to a foster home. They were unable to buy back their father's work, and soon, both Dennis and Dakota Greene disappeared from the public eye to live lives of their own.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Close on the bottom of the paintings with his initials signed "P.G."

VOICE OVER

A few years after Pierce Greene's death, his legacy, his artwork, started to gain traction. Small galleries and exhibits began installing his paintings. But of all his work, there was one more coveted than the rest: "Observer."

INT. GALLERY - DAY

Paintings hang on the walls. People come and go.

Push in on one particular PAINTING. It features a landscape cluttered with trees, plants, and animals that, when viewed from a certain angle, resemble an OLD MAN'S FACE.

EYES stare back.

VOICE OVER

The public adored this one. Many people claimed the painting's eyes were watching you. Almost judging you. There was a hard-to-define mystique about it.

A gloved hand places the PAINTING in a wooden crate and boards it shut.

VOICE OVER

Eventually, "Observer" found a new home with a lawyer. The lawyer sold it after just two years. It landed in the hands of a couple, who passed it down to their kids. The children, however, had no appreciation for art, and so they gave it away to their friend.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The "OBSERVER" hangs above a fireplace. Kids run past it chasing each other and laughing.

VOICE OVER

After that, "Observer" disappeared. It could have had one owner or a hundred. For twenty years, it was out of sight, out of mind. The name "Observer" and its artist Pierce Greene became memories lost to time.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

The PAINTING sits on the ground, partly covered in a white cloth.

VOICE OVER

Then one day, "Observer" mysteriously resurfaced at an auction. It was sold to the highest bidder. Perhaps, this was Pierce's reward for his repentance.

Push in on one of the EYES as it stares back, partly obscured by the cloth. Closer.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. BEACH TOWN - DAY

Waves crash in the distance.

EXT. SAN DIEGO BEACH TOWN - DAY

Dissolve to different parts of the town. The sun shines through the ocean layer. Seagulls fly overhead.

TITLE:

**San Diego, California
2012**

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Cars pass by the front of a dull office building - the SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, letters glistening in the sunlight.

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ELEVENTH FLOOR - DAY

Text on a bright computer screen:

At some point, "Observer" mysteriously resurfaced at an auction. It was sold to the highest bidder. Perhaps, this was Pierce's reward for his repentance.

VOICE OVER

"Reward for his repentance..."

The mouse icon hovers over the last sentence. It highlights the text and then waits.

CLACK! The text deletes, and we slowly emerge from the computer screen to reveal--

EDWARD LIM, 38, a droll, wry observer, and also a rather handsome Asian American man. He lacks any physically intimidating features which hide his buried anger.

We pull out even more to reveal a sea of desks. Keyboards clack and phones ring.

Edward glances out the window to see the shoreline below him. The sky may be overcast, but the view remains one of a kind.

He refocuses on his work and types out a new sentence:

Perhaps, this was the world's way of apologizing for what it had done to Pierce.

Edward sits back in his chair, pleased with his work. Then, he scrolls to the top of the document, conducting a once-over.

A short woman, 29, BETTY, with a round face and dressed in a nice pantsuit, walks by confidently as she carries a bundle of envelopes to their destinations.

She drops one of the envelopes on Edward's desk.

BETTY

Hi, Eddie. How's Camille?

EDWARD

Uh, you know... pretty good. How are you doing?

Edward looks up. Betty has already walked off. He sighs and forces himself out of his chair.

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE - CORNER OFFICE - DAY

Edward waits eagerly as a heavy pale man in his 60s skims through his article. Edward focuses on the man's receding hairline.

The man, HARRY, leans back in his chair and readjusts his GLASSES.

HARRY

Mmmm...

(pauses)

Mhm...

(silence)

Ah, I see... and this is for crime in San Diego, yes?

EDWARD

I-- No, it's actually--

Harry looks up at Edward with irritation.

HARRY

You're supposed to be covering the homicide, Edward.

Edward's smile fades.

EDWARD

You see the thing is Pierce Greene was murdered. So technically a homicide if we're being realistic here and...

(notices Harry's irritation)

What homicide are you referring to? Oceanside?

HARRY

No, the one in Florida. Yes, in Oceanside!

Harry sighs frustratedly and goes back to typing something on his computer.

EDWARD

Ok, Harry, hear me out--

HARRY

Hear you out? What are you, my boss? It's going on the front page, for Christ's sake! Get it done!

EDWARD

I'm just saying... this could be it. The next big story, right here. We could solve the Greene case.

Harry shifts his gaze from the computer to Edward menacingly.

Edward squirms. Just then, Harry's phone RINGS and he promptly picks up.

HARRY

This is Harry. No, I'm not approving that shit!

Edward, crestfallen, leaves the room.

"Modern Man" by Arcade Fire begins to play.

EXT. SAN DIEGO STREETS - DAY

A sleek BLACK CAR cruises through the streets alongside the beach. The window rolls down and the ocean breeze cools the interior of the car.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward speeds up. The sound of waves crashing and the wind blowing drowns out his music.

Edward's flowing black hair blows right into his face, and he quickly rolls up the window.

Edward arrives at a stoplight and starts hitting his steering wheel aggressively.

HONK! Edward looks up as an angry Mom in a minivan shouts something that he can't hear. The Mom drives up, offering him a MIDDLE FINGER, and Edward gestures that he's sorry.

Then Edward sees the line of cars behind him and drives off.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - SOLANA BEACH - DUSK

The black car slows to a stop in front of a skinny TWO-STORY BEACH HOUSE squished between a row of other houses.

Edward pulls into the small garage next to a nice WHITE CAR. Framed paintings hang on the walls inside the garage.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DUSK

The light from the setting sun barely illuminates the shadowy interior. Not much to be seen, anyway, with bare white walls and boring clinical furniture.

On one of the walls hangs a BLANK WHITE PAINTING. An odd choice. It blends in with the wall.

A silhouette of a SLENDER ASIAN WOMAN stands next to a glass sliding door, looking out. She holds an empty glass.

The woman turns when she hears the door open. Edward stumbles in and flips on the KITCHEN LIGHT. She turns to the window again.

WOMAN

(absent)

How was work?

Edward drops his bag on the kitchen chair.

EDWARD

Fine. You?

The woman, CAMILLE LIM, 33, walks out of the shadows and into the kitchen light. She stands tall next to Edward. Almost too tall.

She's a young and strikingly alluring woman. Camille walks behind Edward and kisses him on the cheek. Her radiant RED DRESS glows in the light.

CAMILLE

The usual.

She caresses his chest and kisses him once more before walking over to the kitchen. Camille places the empty glass in the dishwasher.

EDWARD

Oh yeah?

(looking at Camille)

Is that all for me? Or are you--

CAMILLE

Company dinner. I'll be heading out in a bit.

She checks her phone.

CAMILLE

(clicking tongue)

Right now, actually. I'll be back at 9, honey.

Camille walks away, grabbing a small purse on her way out.

Edward stands there, dumbfounded.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Edward sits at the kitchen table, illuminated by a single hanging light. He halfheartedly eats a salad while scrolling through the news on his computer.

PRE-LAP: The sound of a phone ringing.

DAKOTA (FILTERED)

Hi, Ed. What's up?

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Edward sits at his desk speaking on the phone.

EDWARD

Hey Dakota, I was just wondering if you got anything new on the Smith homicide?

Edward grabs a LEGAL PAD and pen from his desk.

DAKOTA (FILTERED)

Yeah, I had a good day, thanks for asking.

EDWARD

Yeah, sorry. I'm an asshole, I know.

DAKOTA (FILTERED)

Alright, well, victim was 77 years old.
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Look we spoke on the phone for a bit,
and we agreed... people need to know
your father's name. Pierce was an
incredible man.

DAKOTA (FILTERED)

As you always tell me.

EDWARD

Well, thanks again for this. Keep me
posted if anything new comes up.

DAKOTA (FILTERED)

I'll try. Night, Ed. Take care.

EDWARD

Yup, good night.

Edward hangs up and ruminates over his sparse notes. He opens
up his computer.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

SLAM! Edward jolts awake at the sound of the door shutting.

His drool has soaked into the notepad. He quickly wipes his
mouth and rubs his eyes.

CAMILLE

(calling out)

Edward!

Edward puts some documents away on his desk.

EDWARD

Upstairs!

Loud footsteps approach and Camille emerges in the doorway.

CAMILLE

Honey.

Edward leans back in his chair focusing his attention on
Camille.

EDWARD

Yeah?

CAMILLE

The lock?

Edward remembers.

EDWARD

I was thinking I'd get around to it
next year.

(sees Camille's face)

Ok yeah, I got it. I got it.

Camille sighs. She turns and disappears. Edward sits there for
a moment before going through his notes.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The garage doors open and Edward carries his satchel to the
car. The doors unlock and Edward opens the door.

YOUNG MAN

Morning, Ed!

Edward turns to see a young stocky man, 25, barefoot, waving
at him. CODY wears a wetsuit and grips a SURFBOARD under his
arm. His long golden hair drips with saltwater.

EDWARD

Hey, Cody! How were the waves?

Cody doesn't hear Edward, as he stops to crouch down and pet
the DOG of a passerby.

Edward throws the bag into the passenger seat and drives off.

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE - CORNER OFFICE - DAY

Harry skims Edward's article. His eyes move quickly and with
precision.

HARRY

Mmmm...

(pauses)

Mhm...

(silence)

Okay...

Edward waits patiently fiddling with his hands. Harry leans
back in his chair and Edward perks up.

HARRY

Fine, we'll run it. See if you can get
an interview with the detective. You
know her, right?

EDWARD

Yes, she's a friend, but, she didn't
want to be interviewed on record. I'd
rather not hound her on this.

HARRY

You're killing me, Edward. She's your friend. Just talk to her. Ask her questions and then, like--

Harry's eyes wander back to the article.

HARRY

Also, what's with this title?

Harry continues before Edward can answer.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I feel dumber just reading it. We're running this instead: POLICE ASK FOR HELP IN SUSPICIOUS OCEANSIDE DEATH. See? It's better. Right?

EDWARD

Hmmm, it's almost like you should write the article.

HARRY

Go fuck yourself.

EDWARD

Happily.

HARRY

Get out of my office and get that interview.

Edward heads out the open door.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - OCEANSIDE - DAY

Birds chirp as Edward walks through the neighborhood. He looks around for a specific house.

Finally, he comes to a stop at a modest two-story house. On the lawn, a sign sticks out: FOR SALE.

Edward looks towards the driveway and spots an assortment of boxes and furniture. Two blonde-haired women talk amongst themselves outside.

Edward walks closer and waves to them.

EDWARD

Hi, I'm looking for a Linda Smith?

They glance at him with annoyed looks and start walking off.

Edward looks around and notices a giant AMERICAN FLAG displayed in the garage.

Edward hears a door open and shut, and he glances over to see LINDA, a short timid elderly woman in her late 70s. She speaks softly with a slight Midwestern accent and stands hunched over.

LINDA

Good morning! Take anything you want.
I'm trying to get rid of it all.

EDWARD

Hi, are you Linda Smith?

LINDA

Carver. Smith was Walt's name.

EDWARD

Ah, gotcha. I'm Edward Lim with the Union-Tribune. I'm very sorry for your loss, ma'am. I was wondering if I could get an interview with you. It would only take a couple of minutes. Is that okay with you?

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The clock ticks. Linda slowly makes her way over, carrying a cup of tea. Edward receives the cup and bows his head slightly.

EDWARD

Thank you so much.

Linda takes a seat and takes a sip from her own cup. Her eyes look tired.

Edward notices a dog curled up under the table. He moves to pet it but the dog flinches and runs off. Edward looks up surprised.

LINDA

Yeah, he can be like that sometimes.
My husband used to be rough with him. So how can I help, Edward?

Edward takes out his PHONE and opens the voice recording app. He spots a BRUISE on her arm but Linda quickly pulls up with her sleeve.

EDWARD

Is it okay if I record it? Just helps me remember.

Linda smiles. It's comforting.

LINDA
Oh, of course.

Edward leans forward.

EDWARD
So, uh, can you describe to me what
happened that day?

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Linda and Edward enter the living room, devoid of most of the
furniture. The wallpaper gives the room a welcoming feeling.

LINDA
I woke up and came downstairs. Found
him right there.

Linda points at the COUCH. Edward walks over and feels the
couch cushion.

EDWARD
They didn't take any jewelry or any of
your belongings?

LINDA
No. Nothing was missing.

Edward looks around the room and then stops as soon as
SOMETHING catches his eyes.

He stares in fascination. Edward takes a couple of steps
forward.

LINDA
They came through the backdoor. I don't
know how they did it. The lock was...
melted off... but the home security
system was still active...

Edward doesn't hear her words. He remains fixated on an OBJECT
hanging on the wall. Linda walks up behind him.

EDWARD
You said you were getting rid of
everything?

Linda glances at the OBJECT he's looking at.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward speeds home. He looks to the backseat, where a neatly
WRAPPED OBJECT sits. It's the size of a TABLETOP.

He smiles at it, before returning his attention to the road.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Only the kitchen light glows.

Edward stands next to the sliding glass door, looking out.

He turns when he hears the door open. Camille strolls inside carrying her bag. He turns to face the window again.

CAMILLE

How was work, honey?

She drops her bag on the kitchen chair and proceeds to grab a glass from the cabinet.

EDWARD

Fine...

Camille pours herself a glass of WINE. Edward watches her.

CAMILLE

Fine? What did you do today?

EDWARD

Just had some interviews, that's all.
What were you up to?

CAMILLE

Meetings all day. Honestly, the
paralegals know nothing. Did you fix
the door lock?

EDWARD

What door lock?

Camille doesn't seem amused.

EDWARD

No no I'm sorry I haven't yet *but* I did
pick up a little something on the way
home. Also... were you going out to
lunch or something this afternoon?

Camille doesn't hear him as she notices something on the wall in the living room. With her glass, she walks over and gazes at a PAINTING that was not there before. She looks confused.

CAMILLE

What's this?

She looks closer, inspecting--

"OBSERVER" now hangs on the wall. Within the frame, a landscape dappled with trees, plants, and animals that, altogether, resemble an OLD MAN'S FACE. EYES stare back.

EDWARD

A painting.

CAMILLE

I see that. And what happened to the old one?

Edward walks behind her.

EDWARD

The old one?

CAMILLE

"Blizzard" by Kepler?

EDWARD

I thought that was temporary?

CAMILLE

That was worth ten grand, honey.

EDWARD

(startled)

For a blank canvas!?

CAMILLE

Oh, what would you know about it?

EDWARD

How about the fact that it was a white painting on top of *white* walls!

CAMILLE

Where did you get this?

EDWARD

Do you really want the old one?

CAMILLE

Edward, *where* did you get this?

EDWARD

It was at a garage sale. But honey, *this*.

(points to the painting)

This is no normal painting. *This* is one of the only remaining pieces from Pierce Greene.

CAMILLE

This is an eyesore. It hurts just to look at it.

EDWARD

Honey, *this* is Pierce Greene!

CAMILLE

I don't want *this* in my house. Where's the other painting?

EDWARD

It adds character to the house. *Our* house! Look at the walls. They're all white!

Edward throws up his hands in frustration.

CAMILLE

Which is *why* the other painting worked. It matched the walls.

EDWARD

(laughing)

Are you being serious right now?

CAMILLE

(scoff)

You know what, I have a headache. I can't deal with this right now.

She downs the rest of her WINE, then heads upstairs. Edward watches her leave, then stares at the painting.

"OBSERVER" stares back.

We begin pulling out from the point of view of the PAINTING watching Edward. Farther. Farther.

A high-pitched FREQUENCY rings out. Then a faint crackling noise can be heard. Edward's voice sounds faint almost like a radio as he keeps on staring directly past the camera.

EDWARD (FILTERED)

I mean is she serious right now? I'm not putting this masterpiece in the garage.

PRE-LAP: The sound of LAUGHTER from a crowd--

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

We pull out from the TV screen which shows a '90s sitcom.

The sun begins to set. Edward finishes his food and dumps the scraps into the trash can. Camille walks into the kitchen.

CAMILLE

When are you back again?

EDWARD

Thursday night. Alright, love you.

Edward kisses Camille and grabs his wallet on the counter.

CAMILLE

Love you, honey. Have a safe drive...
Wait, did you fix the door lock yet?

EDWARD

As soon as I get back. I promise.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Music plays lightly as Edward inches along in traffic.

A RING TONE suddenly interrupts the music. Edward glances at the name on the screen: DENNIS GREENE.

He answers.

EDWARD

Hi, Dennis, I'm on my way to Vegas right now. I already have my hotel booked, and I finished most of the article. I had a great chat with your sister already and I'm really excited to talk to you. Thanks so much for allowing me to do this!

A deep baritone voice answers.

DENNIS (FILTERED)

Edward. *Ahem*, you probably shouldn't come right now.

EDWARD

Wha-- why? I have everything paid for. I mean, if you're not comfortable interviewing, we could at least grab a coffee together.

Dennis begins coughing violently.

DENNIS (FILTERED)

Edward, *ahem*, it's just that I'm incredibly sick right now. Incredibly sick.

(MORE)

DENNIS (FILTERED) (CONT'D)
I woke up yesterday to a coughing fit.
Ahem, I'm so sorry, Edward.
I don't mean to cancel on you so last
minute.

EDWARD
Oh. I--

The phone call ends. Edward sits there.

HONK! Edward snaps out of his daze as a line of cars forms behind him. He quickly speeds up, catching up with the rest of the traffic.

He stares ahead at a long line of cars and then looks back down at his SUITCASE.

He sighs and takes the first exit he sees.

Edward makes a u-turn at the stoplight and drives back home in silence.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE - CORNER OFFICE - DAY

Harry skims Edward's article. Edward looks tired. Harry looks upset as always.

HARRY
It's been a month and the police still haven't got a clue. They're slower than I thought.

EDWARD
Why are we still reporting on this then? Also, what did you think of the last bit?

Harry lowers his glasses and quickly glances at it.

HARRY
Mmmm...
(pauses)
Mhm...
(silence)
Ahhh...
(disappointed)
Try again, Edward. We need this killer to be feared. We should give him a name.

Harry hands the document back to Edward who takes it reluctantly.

EDWARD

Harry. I really don't think we should be fanning the flames at this point. We don't want to start another citywide panic.

Just then Betty walks.

BETTY

Harry, the documents to sign.

She hands Harry a MANILA FOLDER.

HARRY

Yes, thank you.

Betty turns to leave.

BETTY

Hi, Eddie!

She smiles at Edward as she leaves.

EDWARD

Betty, how're you doing-- and she's gone.

HARRY

Yeah, and you should be too!

Edward promptly leaves as Harry opens the folder and removes the documents.

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ELEVENTH FLOOR - DAY

Edward crumples up the paper in his hands as he walks to his desk.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight shines on the "OBSERVER" hanging on the white wall. The eyes stare back. They're watching.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The muffled sound of the shower running comes from behind the bathroom door.

The lamp on the nightstand sheds light on Camille, reading a book in bed. Beside the lamp, her PHONE lights up.

BZZT! BZZT!

Camille looks at the contact: KARINNA. She smiles and picks up.

CAMILLE

Kari! How's it going?

KARINNA (FILTERED)

Hey Cami! Just put the girls down. Omigod, they would *not* go to sleep. Like, Cassie was telling me to take away the night light because she's a big girl now, but Emma is still scared. It's just... you should be glad you don't have kids.

As Karinna says that, Camille's smile fades.

CAMILLE

Yeah... that sounds like a lot.

KARINNA (FILTERED)

Anyways, I wanted to ask if you changed your mind about Brittany's baby shower. We haven't seen you in ages! Everybody *rrreally* wants to see you.

CAMILLE

I-I wish, but tomorrow's me and Ed's anniversary.

KARINNA (FILTERED)

Awww, that's cute. Where you headed?

CAMILLE

Well, we have a reservation at Pamplemousse. He knows me too well.

KARINNA (FILTERED)

(singsong)

Exciting! Lemme know how it is, m'kay?
Oh, shit, I think the girls are awake.
Good night!

Karinna hangs up abruptly, leaving Camille stunned.

Camille sets her phone back on the nightstand, next to a framed PHOTO of herself and Edward, smiling.

She gazes at it for a moment. Better times.

The shower turns off. Camille quickly marks her spot in the book and throws it into her nightstand drawer. She flicks the lamp light off.

Camille positions her back to the bathroom door and lies in bed.

Edward emerges from the bathroom, in boxers and a t-shirt. He looks over to the bed, and Camille appears fast asleep.

INT. BEACHSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Edward and Camille sit at a small table in a crowded restaurant. Edward wears a nice BLACK PRESSED SUIT and Camille wears a WHITE DRESS.

CAMILLE

We haven't done this in ages.

Edward holds up his wine glass. Camille raises hers and their glasses clink in a toast.

EDWARD

To us.

Camille smiles and gulps down the wine. Edward watches.

CAMILLE

How's the article coming along?

EDWARD

Good. Good. Just you know the same old story over and over again. Did you guys close out the deal?

CAMILLE

Mmm... not yet. They're asking for a lot right now. Did you know Brittany and George are having a baby?

EDWARD

Wow, is she... is she still working?

CAMILLE

No, no, she quit a while ago when she found out. The baby shower was tonight, actually.

EDWARD

Man, I haven't talked to George since we last got together.

CAMILLE

You guys don't go out to lunch anymore?

EDWARD

No, I've just been so busy. I should reach out to him.

Camille's focus wanders. She sees a family eating with their two children. They're having a good time.

CAMILLE

I'm getting old, Ed.

EDWARD

No, no, Camille, look at me. You're just as beautiful as you were on our first date.

Camille blushes. She looks down and her smile fades.

CAMILLE

I mean, I just think... Look at Karinna and Mason, and now Brittany and George. They're--

The WAITRESS, 26, arrives carrying two dishes. She has the biggest grin as she places the dishes in front of them.

WAITRESS

Here we are. Roasted Sea Bass and the Crispy Half Duck. Let me know if you guys need anything else.

EDWARD

Thank you.

WAITRESS

Enjoy.

The Waitress walks off and Edward looks back at Camille.

EDWARD

What about them?

CAMILLE

It's nothing.

Edward gives her a strange look and starts to cut his duck. He bites off a chunk of it while gazing at Camille with an unreadable expression.

EDWARD

You saw what happened to Dakota and Jack. We used to be so close to them, and then after what happened... it's like we don't even know them anymore. I mean, when's the last time you talked to either of them?

Camille looks up as she carefully slices her fish, but doesn't return Edward's stare.

CAMILLE
...it's been a while.

EDWARD
Yeah. I heard Jack bought that house up
in Rancho Bernardo. 4.3 million.

Camille takes a bite.

CAMILLE
Did he?

EDWARD
Yeah, for 4.3 *million dollars*. Emphasis
on million. It was probably with all
that money he won from the settlement.
What was the charge, again?

CAMILLE
...defamation...

EDWARD
That's right.

Beat. Camille holds her utensils but does not use them. Edward
takes another thoughtful bite out of his duck.

EDWARD
Didn't you represent him on that?

Silence. Edward glances at Camille, waiting for an answer.

CAMILLE
I did.

Edward twirls his fork staring at it.

EDWARD
Jack Terrell...

Camille feigns confusion.

CAMILLE
What happened?

He takes another bite and shakes his head.

EDWARD
Nothing. Just haven't seen him in a
while. Mmmm...

Edward spits out his meal. A SMALL BONE sticks out inside the
partly chewed meat.

EDWARD
That's a... That's--

CAMILLE
Don't overreact.

EDWARD
I'm not. Just surprised.

CAMILLE
Let's walk along the beach after this.
It's so nice outside.

EDWARD
I don't know, I'm pretty tired, honey.
It's been a long day. How about a
movie?

CAMILLE
Ok... let's do that.

Silence. Clanking of utensils and chatter in the background.
The two eat silently.

CAMILLE
You know what I was saying earlier?
About Brittany and George...

EDWARD
Yes?

CAMILLE
What I was trying to say is... they've
settled down now. It's just, now that
we're getting older, don't you think--

EDWARD
Camille, we are settled down. Think
about it: we've finally found a place
we both like. Yeah, we've both been
busy lately, but... this is it. This is
what people work their entire lives
for. We have it right now, and on top
of that, we can still decide to take a
trip to Hawaii tomorrow if we wanted
to.

CAMILLE
But we don't...

EDWARD
Don't what?

CAMILLE

We don't ever decide to go to Hawaii.
Or decide to go on any spontaneous
trips.

EDWARD

We're just busy honey...

CAMILLE

When are we not though? When are we not
going to be busy?

EDWARD

After I finish this next--

CAMILLE

Next article. But there's always
another article, Ed. Just like there's
always another lawsuit. We need to
seriously start thinking about settling
down.

EDWARD

You keep saying settling down. But what
do you mean?

CAMILLE

I mean, like Karinna and Mason
a--and... Brittany and George...

Edward puts his utensils down. He knows what she's saying.

EDWARD

You mean having kids?

Camille swallows her last bite and looks into Edward's eyes as
if she's telling him. He understands but doesn't look pleased
by her face.

EDWARD

You know where I stand--

CAMILLE

Just because Dakota and Jack split
doesn't mean--!

EDWARD

But it could happen.

CAMILLE

But I--

EDWARD

Camille... can we talk about this
another time?

Beat.

CAMILLE

When?

EDWARD

I don't know. Just not here. Not now.

A busboy comes over and fills their water glasses. Edward and Camille don't even look up. They just lock eyes with each other.

The Busboy accidentally spills some of it on the table and grabs a cloth to wipe it up. He feigns a smile and walks off quickly to avoid further embarrassment.

EXT. BEACHSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Camille waits outside the restaurant, and Edward walks out slowly behind her. She doesn't acknowledge him.

The Valet pulls up in Camille's WHITE CAR. She gives him a small tip and rushes inside the car.

EDWARD

Camille!

The door slams shut. Edward watches as Camille speeds off. He hands the Valet his ticket and sighs.

EXT. BEACH BAR - NIGHT

The bar overlooks the ocean. The waves crash and the winds pick up. Edward sits in an empty bar sipping on a glass of whiskey. Three other empty GLASSES sit there.

He looks out onto the black sea. Ruminating on dinner.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Edward walks along the beach at night. Stumbling along. He just walks. No destination in view.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Silence. Just the muffled sounds of waves crashing in the distance. Edward drives slowly, thinking. He winds through the streets. Going in circles.

The driving never seems to end.

CROSS DISSOLVE:

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward pulls into the driveway. He notices the light in the living room still on.

His headlights illuminate the garage door as it slowly opens.

Edward gets out, exhausted. He sees the door to the house wide open.

EDWARD

Honey?

PRE-LAP: The sound of the waves slowly rises in the background, before--

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Waves crash on the shoreline.

INT. DAKOTA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

A hand opens a nightstand drawer. It's filled with a few small tokens and notepads neatly organized. The hand grabs a POLICE BADGE.

It pauses and hovers over a BLACK COCHLEAR IMPLANT. A small sticker on the corner of the implant has written on it: NOAH TERRELL.

The drawer closes shut.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

The sun rises. A faint glow comes from the windows. Album posters hang on the walls. Clothes lie on the ground.

POLAROID PICTURES of smiling teenagers cover one wall. In the bed, MARGOT TERRELL-GREENE, 16, a young, skinny girl, sleeps soundly.

The door peeks open. Dakota Greene, now 39, a short, fit woman, peers through the opening. She opens the door without making a sound and slowly walks over. Along the way, she picks up and neatly places clothing on a desk.

Dakota wears a blouse with rolled-up sleeves and plain work pants. She has broad shoulders with a POLICE BADGE proudly displayed on her belt.

She kisses Margot on the forehead and whispers.

DAKOTA

Have a good day, sweetie. I'll see you tonight. Love you.

Dakota glances at a framed PHOTO on Margot's nightstand. Four people smiling, Margot and Dakota among them.

DAKOTA

Don't be late for school, Margot.

Margot turns over in her bed and sighs heavily.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun shines through the overcast clouds before disappearing again.

Cop cars surround Edward's beach house. Red and blue lights spin. Police stand at the perimeter keeping people away.

Cody, with his wetsuit and board, stands among the crowd asking questions.

He watches as a BLACK FORD VICTORIA pulls up. Black boots emerge from inside.

Dakota exits the car and looks up to the house, appearing distressed. When she stands up, she looks only a little taller than 5 feet. She wears a GUN HOLSTER on her hip.

Another car, a SEDAN, pulls up. Patrick steps out, now 62, with a bushy mustache. He carries a cup holder with two coffees over to Dakota.

He towers over Dakota awkwardly.

DAKOTA

'Morning, Pat.

PATRICK

Dakota. I got it black just for you.

Dakota kindly accepts the coffee.

DAKOTA

Oh, thank you; I needed this. I'll take the body, then.

PATRICK

Okay. Thanks, Dakota. Really. You know how I get--

DAKOTA

Don't sweat it. You got the coffee.

Dakota walks over to the open front door. Cops look up at her. One of the cops, RALPH, an older gentleman, walks up to Dakota.

RALPH
'Morning, Dakota.

DAKOTA
Ralph. What have we got here?

Ralph motions her to follow him.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dakota follows Ralph into the living room as he talks her through everything. The Forensic Photographer snaps pictures throughout.

RALPH
Break-in and homicide. Victim's name is Camille Lim. Kendrick pronounced her at 12:10 AM. Strangled in the living room. No signs of resistance. And, uh, she was doused with water after she was strangled.

DAKOTA
With water?

RALPH
Yeah, water. The husband found her. All of her clothes were still wet.

DAKOTA
It's just like Oceanside...

RALPH
Well, shit.

DAKOTA
When did the husband find her?

RALPH
Found her when he came home, around 5 AM. The door from the garage was left wide open. The lock wasn't busted or anything. Just walked right in.

They reach the living room and Dakota stops dead in her tracks. The BODY lies on the couch covered in a plastic tarp.

Dakota stops in her tracks. Ralph quickly looks away.

RALPH
...did you know her?

Dakota nods, impassively. She walks closer to the BODY.

RALPH
(to himself)
Well, shit.

Dakota puts on thin latex gloves.

She lifts the tarp to reveal Camille's lifeless face. Her EYES stare up at the ceiling, one of them BLOOD RED. Her lips severely SWOLLEN.

Dakota looks unfazed. She continues with her tasks as she raises the tarp even more, to reveal BRUISES around Camille's neck. Dakota produces a BLACK NOTEPAD and begins taking copious notes.

She stands up looking around. The PAINTING catches her eye. Dakota stares at it.

The eyes of the "OBSERVER" stare back. She looks at the corner of the painting. The signature: "P.G."

INT. SDPD INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dakota and Patrick sit at a table opposite Edward. He looks visibly distraught.

Dakota leans in to say something.

DAKOTA
I'm sorry, Edward.

Patrick sits up.

PATRICK
So you came home and the door was open?

Edward just stares at the ground.

PATRICK
Edward, you gotta cooperate with us.

EDWARD
(monotone)
I told the other officer all of this. I came home. I saw the light on downstairs. Then I opened the garage door and saw the door wide open. I went inside and saw her. On the couch. And then I called 911.

Dakota looks at Edward understandingly. She jots down some notes.

PATRICK

And according to another officer, you were at a bar earlier? Do y'know which one?

EDWARD

(monotone)

Beach House Grill.

Patrick scribbles something down in his notepad.

DAKOTA

Thank you, Ed. That's all we need.

They all stand up. Dakota and Patrick let Edward exit.

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

A Police Officer escorts Edward out of the station. Patrick leans down to talk to Dakota as they head in the opposite direction.

PATRICK

Okay, first order of business. We should call the Beach House Grill. Find out what time he left.

DAKOTA

Pat, it's not him.

Dakota looks over her notes.

PATRICK

He was the only one who found her dead. His alibi is that he was at a bar till 5 in the morning. There was no sign of a break-in. The killer just waltzed right through the door. Seems suspicious to me.

DAKOTA

I know him. It's *not* Ed. He's the last person in the world to kill someone, let alone his own wife.

PATRICK

Okay... was there any history of domestic abuse?

DAKOTA

No. They were a happy couple. Picture perfect. What we need to do is look into those glove prints.

PATRICK

Did I ever tell you about that guy we got in OC? He had the gloves with human--

DAKOTA

Human skin. Where the killer wore gloves from the skin of his victims.

PATRICK

Yes, yes, and *who* was the killer?

DAKOTA

I don't know, some guy.

PATRICK

A husband. A disgruntled husband.

DAKOTA

And?

Patrick stops walking. Dakota looks up at Patrick.

DAKOTA

Oh, stop it. *It's not him.*

Something beeps. Patrick looks down and checks a small PAGER DEVICE on his belt.

DAKOTA

Still measuring that?

PATRICK

Yeah, I gotta wear this all day long now. Didn't think my blood oxygen was *that* bad, but doctor's orders, I guess.

DAKOTA

Mmm. Listen, could you look into the glove prints? See if the gloves match with any other homicides.

PATRICK

(sighing)

You got it.

Patrick walks off.

EXT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dakota's car pulls into the driveway of a modest suburban house. The lights glow inside.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Margot and Dakota sit at the dinner table. They pray over their meal.

DAKOTA
...in Jesus's name, we pray. Amen.

On the side of Dakota's neck, a TINY CROSS TATTOO along with the word CLARITY written underneath in small cursive font.

They begin to eat their fish tacos.

DAKOTA
How's school going?

Dakota signs in AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE as she speaks.

MARGOT
(sharp)
Mom, why do you keep doing that?

DAKOTA
...Sorry, honey, it's just a habit.

Margot stares at her taco, uncomfortable. Dakota clears her throat and tries again.

DAKOTA
So how's school going?

MARGOT
Getting busier.

DAKOTA
But you're keeping your grades up?

MARGOT
Mom, I'm doing fine.

DAKOTA
Just making sure. And don't you have that thing with Mr. Osman soon?

MARGOT
What, the art showcase?

DAKOTA
Yes, that; are you ready for that?

MARGOT
Mom, we're a month out. I have time.

DAKOTA
Are you sure?

MARGOT

I've already done, like, three pieces for it anyway.

DAKOTA

You could squeeze in three more before the showcase.

MARGOT

(snickering)

Mom, I don't think you know how painting works.

DAKOTA

Oh, yes I do. Don't forget who your grandfather is.

MARGOT

I know, mom. Also, Mr. Osman wants all the parents to come. But if you're too busy, I can just tell him--

DAKOTA

No, no. I'm gonna be there. You tell him that.

MARGOT

You're not gonna be busy with the case or anything?

DAKOTA

I expect it'll be over by then. We crack these cases pretty fast.

MARGOT

'Cause you're the best on the force, Mom.

DAKOTA

Oh, stop it.

MARGOT

I mean, you caught that guy in La Jolla, and the Oceanside killer, right?

DAKOTA

(laughing)

Margot, La Jolla was just a robbery. Oceanside was... another beast.

MARGOT

Wait, you didn't... get the guy?

DAKOTA
Not in Oceanside, no.
(sighing)
And now Camille's gone, too...

Margot sees that something weighs on Dakota quite a bit.

MARGOT
Maybe you should get a new job.

Dakota notices Margot's concern and tries to lighten the mood.

DAKOTA
You lose confidence in me that quickly,
huh? Thought I was the best on the
force.

MARGOT
(snickering)
No, no, you still are.

DAKOTA
Yeah, and don't you forget it.

Dakota leans in to get more serious.

DAKOTA
Listen, sweetie, I'm not quitting yet.
These killers always have a motive.
Everything happens for a reason. I just
have to figure out *this* guy's reason.

MARGOT
...you will.

Dakota finishes up her dinner and goes to wash her plate. She
grabs a folder off the kitchen table and heads upstairs.

DAKOTA
I'll be in my office!

Margot sits there with a half-eaten taco alone and in silence.

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

Dakota walks with haste through the hallways. Patrick runs up
behind her with a FOLDER in his hands. He grins.

DAKOTA
How're you doing, Pat?

PATRICK
You know, I woke up, and I just had
this ache on my lower back. So I--

DAKOTA

Yeah, yeah, what've you got there, huh?

PATRICK

Oh, you're gonna wanna have a look at this.

Dakota passes rows of desks until she reaches the front desk. One of the ladies behind the desk, PHOEBE, 30s, with a long face and long neck, waves to Dakota.

DAKOTA

Morning, Phoebe.

PHOEBE

Good morning, Dakota.

Patrick opens the FOLDER and shows Dakota. Tucked inside SCANS of GLOVE HANDPRINTS in black and white.

DAKOTA

Looks like a big guy.

PATRICK

Supposed to be 6 foot 3. And get this: the Oceanside murder also had leather glove prints, maybe even the same ones. They said they also had a 6-foot-tall suspect.

DAKOTA

Listen, I gotta go interview some potential witnesses. Check with Oceanside. See if we can get copies of their stuff.

PATRICK

You talk to the bar owner yet?

DAKOTA

(rolling her eyes)

Pat, Ed is clear. Like I said.

Just then a tall MAN dressed in a suit and tie emerges from his office.

MATTHEW CAMPBELL, 40s, African-American, eyes Dakota with his hands on his hips. He looks like he's put up with a lot. Matthew walks up to Dakota and Patrick so he can speak quietly.

MATTHEW

You guys are coming up on 24 hours.

DAKOTA

I know. I know. I'm knocking on doors
all day, Matt.

MATTHEW

And what've you accomplished?

DAKOTA

Glove prints.

MATTHEW

Well, fuck me.

Matthew watches as Dakota lowers her sunglasses and pushes the front door open, walking into the blinding sunlight.

He glares at Patrick who quickly shuffles away.

EXT. SDPD STATION - DAY

A handful of reporters waiting outside the building run up to Dakota as she walks to her car. They begin frantically asking questions, holding up recorders and microphones.

REPORTER 1

Officer! What do you have to say about
the recent homicide?

REPORTER 2

Is SDPD stumped with this one, like the
Oceanside case?

REPORTER 3

Is this connected in any way to the
Oceanside case?

Dakota keeps on walking. She briefly looks out to the crowd, searching for someone. She doesn't find them and ducks her head into the car.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Dakota, with SUNGLASSES, stands outside the front door of a beach house, just across the street from EDWARD'S HOUSE.

She waits patiently. A group of teenagers dressed in bathing suits walk by, talking amongst themselves.

They stop to admire a passerby's little puppy.

Suddenly, the door opens and an older woman, NANCY, appears. Lingerer quickly behind her an older taller man, LENNY, watches.

Dakota puts her glasses up and moves to meet the woman. She holds up her POLICE BADGE.

DAKOTA

Hi, ma'am, I'm Detective Dakota Greene with the SDPD. Your husband called in this morning saying you saw a suspicious car pull up to that house...
(points across the street)
At approximately 11 p.m.; is that right?

Lenny and Nancy both step out of the house. Nancy stands a little taller than Dakota while Lenny towers over.

Nancy looks back and signs something in AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE to her husband. Dakota watches.

LENNY

She just asked if you could speak a little slower. I'm Lenny, by the way.

Lenny extends his hand and they shake hands.

Dakota then turns to Nancy and signs to her. The following conversation in ITALICS is signed and subtitled AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.

DAKOTA

(signed and spoken)
Hi, ma'am, I'm Detective Greene with the SDPD.

NANCY

Hi, I'm Nancy; nice to meet you. Where did you learn to sign?

DAKOTA

Nice to meet you, Nancy. My son is deaf so the whole family learned.

NANCY

Oh wow, that's lovely.

They shake hands. Dakota takes out a small NOTEPAD. Lenny steps back inside the house and waves goodbye to Dakota.

DAKOTA

(to Lenny)
Nice to meet you.
(signed and spoken)
So can you describe to me what you saw?

NANCY

Yes, of course. So... are you a big Agatha Christie fan?

DAKOTA

(signed and spoken)

I can't say I am.

NANCY

Well, I love a good Christie novel. Recently, I've been spending my nights reading through her books, and last night, around 11 P.M., I had just finished The A.B.C. Murders. So I went into our little home library to put it away, and I was trying to pick a new book to read. And let me tell you, we've got quite a selection. My husband gifted me a box set of Christie novels last Christmas, bless his heart. It must have been over twenty novels! But, you see, the thing is, as I was choosing my next book, I saw something through the window. Of course, I stopped to take a look, and I noticed that there was some sort of truck parked outside, with the headlights on. It was quite bright, and I had half a mind to walk out there with my husband and tell the driver to turn it off. As I was putting on my coat, though, I realized something: the sight I was seeing reminded me of a train hurtling through the darkness, with two lights leading the way. It must have been a sign, because next thing I know, I'm taking my coat off, and cozying back up in my armchair with Murder on the Orient Express. Oh, I couldn't resist reading more of that dashing Detective Poirot. Anyway, that's all.

Dakota blinks slowly at the overwhelming amount of information. She jots down some words on her NOTEPAD.

DAKOTA

Did you see anything after that? Do you know when the truck left, or did you see someone get out of the truck?

NANCY

Oh, no, I fell asleep shortly after that.

DAKOTA

Do you remember what the truck looked like?

NANCY

It was too dark to tell. I know it was a truck, though.

Dakota scratches her head and exhales. She offers Nancy a warm smile.

DAKOTA

(signed and spoken)

Thank you so much for your time. Enjoy your novel. Have a good rest of your day.

NANCY

You, too, Dakota. Lovely to meet you. And I'd love to meet your son one day.

DAKOTA

(signed and spoken)

Maybe one day. Take care.

Nancy closes the door and Dakota walks off, rubbing her eyes.

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

Clusters of desks sit in a wide room. Phones ring and police officers pass by.

We slowly push in on two adjoining desks. Both Dakota and Patrick have their heads down on the table, staring at files on their laps.

Stacks of paperwork sit on both of their desks.

DAKOTA

No footprints?

PATRICK

Nope.

Patrick sits up in his chair, thinking. He looks at a PHOTO on his desk. The PHOTO features a red and black ABSTRACT PAINTING of the face of a MAN.

PATRICK

There's gotta be something. I mean, who would break into a house, strangle a woman, and then leave without taking anything? Seems like a crime of passion? But no rape...

Dakota sits up, thinking.

DAKOTA

What are you getting at, Pat?

PATRICK

Did I ever tell you about that lady who ran over her husband?

Dakota nods but Patrick continues.

DAKOTA

It was an accident, no?

PATRICK

No. Not that one. She hit him on purpose. Told me she wanted the insurance money for a new car. Simple as that. Just a little bit of money. That's all. That's the thing, though - I used to be able to line the suspects up and look them in the eye. I'd tell them to smile real big. I swear I could tell every time. Well, that's that.

PRE-LAP: The background noise of chatter and phones ringing rises until--

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ELEVENTH FLOOR - DAY

Betty walks by the line of desks handing out letters and envelopes. Edward packs the last of his belongings into a cardboard box.

She passes by Edward's desk.

BETTY

Hi... Eddie.

She's stopped for once, and she and Edward lock eyes.

EDWARD

Hey.

Edward walks off with his box. Everybody in the room watches him silently. A news report plays on one of the TVs mounted to the wall.

NEWS REPORT (V.O.)

...and after two days, SDPD still has not identified any potential suspects for the murder of Camille Lim.

(MORE)

NEWS REPORT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This follows the unsolved Oceanside homicide from last month. The detective helming these cases, Dakota Greene, declined to comment on either. Whether these murders are linked can only be speculated, but one thing is for sure: public concern is growing right alongside this mystery.

Edward eyes the TV when he hears the name, Dakota Greene. He makes his way to the elevator and looks down. People watch.

The elevator doors close.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

TITLE:

One Month Later

The bell RINGS. Students pile into a large classroom with paint-stained tables, brushes, canvases, and many more art tools. Stools SCREECH as they're dragged away from the tables for students to sit down.

Margot enters with her backpack, heading to the back of the room to retrieve a CANVAS and a SMOCK.

She returns to the tables, near the front, and takes a seat, talking with her friends.

A skinny man, RAMI OSMAN, 42, with graying hair and dark skin, sits at the front of the room behind his desk. He finishes the last bit of his coffee before turning his attention to the class.

Mr. Osman jumps up and claps real loud. His face lights up and he speaks as if he's been waiting years to talk to anyone.

MR. OSMAN

(softly)

Hey, everyone. Glad you could join me. Now, let's mix some of this *hwite* with the midnight black. Bob Ross, anyone?

Silence. The students just stare.

MR. OSMAN

Anyway, I hope, uh, I hope you're all very excited because tonight's the big night!

Mr. Osman pauses for effect, obviously expecting cheers. A couple of students start clapping their hands, prompting the rest of the class to do the same.

Mr. Osman nods with a big smile as he sees the class's enthusiasm.

MR. OSMAN

Yeah, that's the spirit! So I hope you told all your parents about this, all your friends about it. If you haven't finished your paintings yet, be sure to get them done by the end of class today. If you are finished, head into the back room to start preparing the exhibition. Any questions?

Nothing. Mr. Osman claps his hands again.

MR. OSMAN

Great. Great. Let's get painting folks!

The room erupts into noise. Several students stand up and leave. Margot and about half the room remain, finishing up their pieces.

MR. OSMAN

Sara! Everything coming along?

SARA HODA, 17, sits across from Margot working on her piece.

SARA

Pretty good.

MR. OSMAN

Excellent! Keep up the good work!

Mr. Osman walks over to Margot.

MR. OSMAN

Margot, how are you doing over here? You don't need to stress with this one. You already turned in enough to fill an art gallery.

MARGOT

It's fine, Mr. Osman. I'm pretty close to done with this, anyway.

MR. OSMAN

Okay, I'll let the master get back to work, then.

Mr. Osman watches Margot paint for a little longer before he heads to the back room.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Margot walks down the hallway with Sara and a group of friends, all laughing except for Margot.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Margot waves goodbye to her friends as she walks through rows of endless cars. Margot finally arrives at her blue Volkswagen Beetle.

INT. MARGOT'S CAR - DAY

She gets in and puts her backpack in the back seat.

The LOUD footfalls of dress shoes hitting asphalt cause Margot to look up. She spots Mr. Osman strutting over to his car. She watches as he waves to other students.

He spots Margot watching from afar, and waves to her. She smiles back, then looks back down at her phone.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Mr. Osman gets into his SMALL HYBRID CAR and waits for a bit. He finally starts the car and drives off.

INT./EXT. MR. OSMAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

The car doesn't go very fast. 70's music plays. Mr. Osman taps his finger on the steering wheel to the beat of the music. He animatedly mouths the lyrics.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Dakota sits in a dark auditorium with Margot. They both listen intently as they hear the PASTOR, a 50-year-old, tall chubby man, talking.

People fill up each row. Families. Older couples.

The Pastor keeps clearing his throat between each sentence.

PASTOR

In Proverbs 16:4, it says, *ahem...* "The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble". *Ahem*, like a good engineer, God made everything for a purpose. *Ahem*, sometimes the purpose is easy to figure: every sheepherder knows that the purpose of a ram and ewe copulating is to get more lambs.

(MORE)

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Ahem, the purpose of other things like the appendix, take careful observation and time to figure out. *Ahem*, some things, God tells us, we will never know because His ways are higher than our ways...

Dakota sits there, her mind drifting. Margot appears bored.

Dakota excuses herself and exits the auditorium. Margot watches.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - DAY

Dakota stands in front of the mirror, taking deep breaths. She turns on the sink washing her hands.

Dakota turns off the faucet and closes her eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DAKOTA AND JACK'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun has just risen. Dakota sits on the edge of the bed. JACK TERRELL, 42, tall, muscular, and handsome, lies in bed beside her.

He holds out his hand inviting her back to bed. She ignores him. She stares out, thinking.

DAKOTA

I need to go to work, honey.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - DAY

Dakota takes another deep breath trying to compose herself.

Just then, a toilet flushes, and a middle-aged Woman exits the stall.

Dakota smiles at her and quickly wipes her eyes.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Dakota talks with other families outside by the tables with food and coffee. Kids run around outside. Margot talks with other teenagers.

Mr. Osman stands near the parking lot. He watches as two young boys run around.

MR. OSMAN
(calling out)
Hey, don't run too far! Mom's gonna be
here any second!

Mr. Osman watches as Dakota signs to Nancy. They seem to be having a real connection. He then spots Margot talking with her friends.

Margot looks at Mr. Osman and smiles. He smiles back.

CHARLIE, 40s, short, fit, starts walking over to Mr. Osman with a donut in his hands.

CHARLIE
How're you doing Rami?

MR. OSMAN
Good, good. How are the donuts,
Charlie?

CHARLIE
Well, you can't miss with Krispy Kreme.

MR. OSMAN
Oh, boy; you'd better keep me away from
those then.

Charlie notices Dakota signing.

CHARLIE
That's so great.

MR. OSMAN
What? The donuts?

CHARLIE
It's just a great community we got
here. Is her name Dakota? The police
officer?

MR. OSMAN
Yeah. You haven't met her yet? She gave
her testimonial a couple months ago.
She's a great speaker.

CHARLIE
So she's not deaf?

MR. OSMAN
No, no. Her son was.

CHARLIE
Oh... does he go to Beachside?

MR. OSMAN

No, he, uh... he died a year ago.

Charlie stands there stunned. Mr. Osman spots a woman walking toward him.

HELENA OSMAN, 41, well put together, with caked-on makeup, grabs one of the boys. Her high heels clack along the pavement.

MS. OSMAN

Honey, we gotta get going.

(calling out)

Carter, come here right now! We're leaving!

MR. OSMAN

(to Charlie)

I'll see you next week.

Mr. Osman and his family walk out into the parking lot.

EXT. MR. OSMAN'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

A modest line forms out the door. Families and students talk inside.

INT. MR. OSMAN'S CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Osman walks through the crowd, greeting the parents. He stops by Margot, who's talking with one of the students.

MR. OSMAN

Margot, you are the next Picasso! I just stopped by your latest painting. Everyone's loving it!

MARGOT

Oh, thanks.

MR. OSMAN

No, thank you!

Dakota wanders in and spots Margot. She makes her way over.

DAKOTA

Margot! Is this yours?

MARGOT

Hey, mom. Yeah, this one, then there's two over there...

(pointing)

And another one over there.

DAKOTA

Oh, this is wonderful, sweetie!

Mr. Osman clears his throat and walks up to Dakota.

MR. OSMAN

Hi Dakota. Thanks for stopping by!

DAKOTA

Good to see you Rami! Did you put all this together?

MR. OSMAN

Yeah, I did... I mean, students like Margot deserve to have their work shown off like this.

DAKOTA

Well, I'm glad we have such a committed art teacher at this school.

Dakota reaches into her pocket as she gets a phone call.

DAKOTA

I'm sorry, I need to take this.

Dakota answers.

DAKOTA

Pat, I told you I'm busy--

PATRICK (FILTERED)

We got a confession. Get down here as soon as possible.

DAKOTA

I... I'll be right there.

Dakota lowers the PHONE and gazes at Margot apologetically.

DAKOTA

I'm so sorry, sweetie, I gotta take off now. Something came up.

Dakota hugs Margot briefly who shows some disappointment and turns to Mr. Osman.

DAKOTA

Thank you for putting this on.

MR. OSMAN

Oh, I-- No problem! Thanks for being here!

Dakota rushes out of the room. Margot and Mr. Osman stand there awkwardly.

MARGOT

Um... do you need something?

Mr. Osman gives her a smile, patting her shoulder. His hand lingers there before he walks off.

Sara approaches Margot, and Margot greets her.

INT. SDPD INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Dakota and Patrick sit at a table opposite a skinny balding man. RICHARD MARQUEE, 32, wears glasses, and an oversized button-up shirt. He doesn't appear very tall or very big overall.

PATRICK

Mr. Marquee, just to clarify, you are confessing to the Oceanside and Solana Beach murders?

Richard has a blinking tick that Dakota notices.

RICHARD

Heh. Am I *really* confessing, though?

PATRICK

You walked into this station an hour ago and shouted, "I killed Walter Smith, and I killed... Camille Lim." That sounds like a confession to me.

RICHARD

I think you meant to say, "I killed *that bitch* Camille." Heh. But did I *really* kill them, though?

Patrick's monitor BEEPS. He checks it. Dakota focuses back on Richard.

INT. SDPD MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Outside the interrogation room behind the ONE-WAY MIRROR, two police officers talk.

POLICE OFFICER 1

He's fucking retarded.

INT. SDPD INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Dakota watches Richard's HAND. He twitches his fingers in the handcuffs.

PATRICK
...and how did you--

Patrick's monitor beeps. He fiddles with it briefly.

PATRICK
How did you kill your victims?

RICHARD
Heh. You see, they had it coming. *Those fuckers brought it upon themselves!*

PATRICK
Mr. Marquee, do you--

Patrick's monitor beeps. He fiddles with it again.

PATRICK
...do you live with anyone else?
Family?

RICHARD
They say not to shoot the messenger.
Well, consider those two fuckers my
message to the world!

PATRICK
Mr. Marquee--

Patrick's monitor beeps. He lets out a sigh.

DAKOTA
Thank you, Mr. Marquee. That's all.

INT. SDPD MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Dakota and Patrick step out in front of a ONE-WAY MIRROR.
Richard sits there and makes faces at the mirror. Dakota looks
up at Patrick.

PATRICK
So?

They both look at Richard sitting at the table inside. He
waves to them with a smirk.

DAKOTA
He needs help. We should check him into
an institution.

PATRICK
An institution?

DAKOTA
A mental hospital.

PATRICK

Oh yeah, but he'll be tried first.

DAKOTA

Pat, did you check his height before restraining him?

PATRICK

Uh... of course.

DAKOTA

So you're telling me you pulled me away from my daughter's showcase for an insane man who's barely 5'9 and has the same size hands as me?

PATRICK

He confessed, though!

DAKOTA

Night, Patrick. Release him.

Dakota marches out, leaving a sheepish Patrick staring at the ONE-WAY MIRROR. Richard laughs hysterically, pounding a fist on the table, though Patrick cannot hear it.

Patrick walks away, his monitor starting to beep. As he fumbles to turn it off, he passes by the two police officers, who watch him.

POLICE OFFICER 2

He's fucking retarded.

INT. MR. OSMAN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A dark room. Hype EDM music blasts from the speakers. Students sit before the projector screen, looking like zombies. Some talk amongst themselves.

The intro sequence for "BS-TV", the high school news program, plays on-screen.

KYLE

Welcome back to BS-TV, I'm Kyle.

CARSON

And I'm Carson.

KYLE

Today, we reflect on the unfortunate murders that have rocked our community in the past month.

CARSON

Our thoughts and prayers go out to anybody that's been affected by it.

KYLE

We asked students at school to share their thoughts on the ongoing investigation.

CARSON

Let's take a look.

Margot stares at the screen, with red eyes and a perfectly blank expression. Upbeat hip hop music starts to play. Student interviews play on screen.

STUDENT 1

Yeah, I mean, it was, like, I don't know, *insane*.

STUDENT 2

I have a bunch of friends who live in Oceanside and Solana Beach, and it's really scary to think that there's some killer out there.

STUDENT 3

The police force, unfortunately, seems to be just as stumped as everyone else is, and that just makes the case more frightening, really. If they can't solve it, what are we gonna do?

VOICEOVER

If anybody is feeling worried or insecure about this, we have a lot of resources at school that can help...

Right after the piece concludes, a thumping, four-on-the-floor dance beat begins to play. Two students walk on screen, before a poorly keyed greenscreen. Their acting appears forced.

STUDENT 4

Hey, man! What are you doing tomorrow!

STUDENT 5

Just chilling with the boys.

STUDENT 4

Ha, that's lame! You should come to (reverb) *Winter Formal instead!!!*

Mr. Osman lets out a bark of laughter at that. Margot flinches violently at the sound. Another student leans in next to her. The student, JACKSON, 16, whispers to her.

JACKSON

Isn't your mom the detective on that case?

MARGOT

Um--! Yeah. Yeah, she is.

JACKSON

Oh, that's dope. Does she ever talk about it?

MARGOT

She's... not usually home.

JACKSON

Oh, ok. Well, I hope she solves it.

He smiles awkwardly and goes back to talking with his friends.

Sara watches Margot curiously.

Mr. Osman lets out another loud laugh. Margot looks at him helplessly, and rests her head on her desk.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward sits on the bare wooden floor, leaning limply against a wall.

His apartment looks cluttered with furniture and clothes from his beach house. The BLANK WHITE PAINTING sits on the ground amongst an assortment of other paintings.

Edward has gained facial hair since we last saw him. His eyes appear sunken in, and his expression appears completely blank.

Life has not been kind to him.

Edward lets out a long sigh. He checks the time on his PHONE: 8:26 PM. He heaves himself off the ground.

Edward stands up facing a HOLE in the wall the size of a fist. He stares at it.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Edward opens the freezers and grabs some microwaveable meals.

He notices Harry buying some groceries. Harry glances at Edward but doesn't acknowledge him and walks off.

Edward heads over to the checkout. He grabs a pack of gum from the rack over the conveyor belt and tosses it on. He walks over to the cashier with his head down, trying to get his credit card out of his wallet.

MAN

Ed?

Edward looks up to see Cody standing there, smiling.

CODY

How're you doing, bro?

EDWARD

Cody? I'm... doing alright. You?

CODY

Yeah, I've been chilling. Graduating soon...

EDWARD

Yeah? Good for you.

CODY

Hey, I... I heard about the murder. I'm really sorry for your loss. I miss seeing you around... You gotta swing by and ball with us again, bro.

EDWARD

Maybe I will. We'll see.

Edward pays for his groceries, and Cody bags them up.

EDWARD

It was good to see you again.

CODY

You too. Take care, man.

Edward waves as he walks out of the store.

EXT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - DAWN

Dakota's Ford Victoria sits in front of PATRICK'S HOUSE. Patrick opens the door before being pulled back in. He kisses a Woman goodbye and closes the front door.

Dakota watches. She smiles.

Patrick waves to Dakota and walks over slowly.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DAWN

Patrick gets into the car and rubs his hands together.

PATRICK

'Morning, Dakota. So sorry to do this to you. Had to replace the engine on her. She's getting old.

DAKOTA

Oh no, you're totally fine, Pat. You're on the way anyways. Here you go. Extra cream. Extra sugar.

She hands him a coffee.

PATRICK

Thank you so much, Dakota. You really are the best!

DAKOTA

I try.

Dakota starts the car and takes off. Patrick sips on his coffee like a little kid drinking hot cocoa.

PATRICK

Anyway, what are we looking at today?

DAKOTA

Checking out the missing person's case in Del Mar.

PATRICK

They moved us off the case?

DAKOTA

Yep.

PATRICK

Oh no. I'm sorry, Dakota. I know that one was important to you.

DAKOTA

No, no, it happens. There's always other stuff to deal with.

PATRICK

Shoot... and we just had a confession the other day too.

DAKOTA

It happens, Pat. Crime doesn't stop just for us.

The monitor BEEPS. Patrick checks it. Silence. Patrick sips his coffee.

PATRICK

Did I ever tell you about your father's case?

DAKOTA

Yes... where are you going with this?

PATRICK

Well, when your father, Pierce Greene, was strangled in his living room, we arrived on the scene, and there wasn't a trace of evidence. We were completely stumped. But that wasn't even the worst part... the person who called 911 was your brother. I saw you both watching from outside. I mean, you were both just horrified. Just like me. Couldn't comprehend why it had happened.

DAKOTA

It was a long time ago, Pat.

PATRICK

I kept that picture. The one your brother drew of the suspect.

Patrick reaches into his back pocket and pulls out his wallet, stuffed with all sorts of junk.

He pulls out a PHOTO that features a red-and-black ABSTRACT PAINTING of a MAN'S FACE. The same picture on his desk.

PATRICK

You know, I like to think I'm not scared too easily.

DAKOTA

(snorting)

Yeah, right.

PATRICK

Don't get started. But after that case, there was a lingering sense of dread, just knowing that this could happen to anybody at any point down the line. I guess I was scared proper.

(exhaling)

Now, with these new murders... I'm feeling it again.

Dakota looks back to the road, shocked at what she just heard. Patrick sips his coffee.

PATRICK

Damn, this really hits the spot.

Dakota stares ahead. The sounds around her fade as she thinks. Patrick's muffled voice can be faintly heard.

PATRICK

You know, when I was a kid, I used to ask my dad why he always drank so much coffee. He said, "Son, some things you just gotta observe, rather than try to explain..."

The sound fades out.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Silence. Edward's phone vibrates.

He sleeps soundly on a mattress on the ground. Edward's eyes flutter open.

He stares at the ceiling. Edward checks his phone: 7:39 AM.

He sees several missed calls. Each from DENNIS GREENE.

EXT. BEACHSIDE COFFEE SHOP - PARKING LOT - DAY

Edward slams his car door shut and locks the car. He walks past a row of cars, carrying a FOLDER in his hands.

He looks excited for once. Edward waves as he passes a SILVER FORD TRUCK parked next to the entrance.

A tall, neatly dressed man, waves back. Dennis Greene, now 43, with beady eyes, and a crooked nose smiles at Edward.

They shake hands and walk to the entrance.

EXT. BEACHSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The two men sit at a small round table. They look out to the beach as they drink their coffees.

DENNIS

Edward, I just want to reiterate how very sorry I am about the other meeting.

EDWARD

Oh, don't worry about it. Thank you for making time for this, Dennis.

Edward takes out his PHONE and opens the recording app. Dennis watches.

EDWARD

Is it alright if I--?

DENNIS

Of course, of course.

Edward sits back and opens up his folder full of notes and documents.

EDWARD

So I was wondering if you could tell me what comes to mind when you think of your father?

Dennis sits back and crosses his arms. He looks relaxed.

DENNIS

Well, he was imaginative, thoughtful, patient. Caring, of course. But above all, he was determined. He never gave up on his dream. Never.

Edward jots notes down in his notebook.

DENNIS

How's my sister doing?

EDWARD

She's pretty stressed with her work right now. You know how she can be. All work and no play. Do you have any fond memories of him when you were a child?

DENNIS

When I was about 5 or 6, I would always run up to him when he was painting. He was very patient with me. He talked me through everything he did. Why he would use that color, or why he chose that brush. As you know, Dakota was never into anything he did. But he always spoiled her with attention. He did that for both of us.

Edward watches as Dennis taps his fingers on his arm.

EDWARD

Wow, he sounds like he was a great dad... Dennis, are you comfortable talking about what happened?

Dennis looks at Edward.

DENNIS

Of course, Edward. What do you want to know?

EDWARD

Could you walk me through what happened that day?

Dennis looks off, trying to remember.

DENNIS

It was my father's 33rd birthday. It was just me, him, and Dakota. My present was a picture I painted of us fishing at a lake that we would go to. He loved it so much, he hung it in his office later that day. Anyway, at dinnertime, he took us to his favorite burger place, and we ate till we were both full. And on top of that, we had ice cream by the docks. What a day it was.

Dennis stops. He acts as if he had something in his throat.

DENNIS

It wasn't until we got back. I woke up that night to an alarm.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. PIERCE GREENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain gently falls outside. A young Dennis in pajamas shields his eyes from the brightness of the FLASHING LIGHT.

Dennis creeps down the stairs. More flashing lights illuminate the hallway downstairs.

He hears a heavy BREATHING sound, from the living room. He walks over to investigate.

On a table beside the couch, a light strobos, making no sound. He looks up.

Behind the couch, a STRANGER LOOKING MAN, 30s, kneels on the ground, hunched over. His BREATHING slows. The Man turns his head slowly to see Dennis.

Dennis looks down and sees Pierce Greene's LIFELESS face sticking out from behind the couch.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BEACHSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Dennis looks at Edward. He stares at Edward, tears in his eyes.

DENNIS
Do you know what that does to a child?

EDWARD
I don't.

Dennis checks his WATCH.

DENNIS
Do you have any more questions for me?

EDWARD
Um, yes, but--

DENNIS
Because I think I'm going to have to
get going.

Dennis stands up. Edward quickly follows after grabbing his belongings.

EDWARD
Oh, yes. Thank you. Thank you for
coming.

Dennis takes a folded piece of PAPER from his pocket. He hands it to Edward.

Edward unfolds it. The PHOTO features a red and black ABSTRACT PAINTING of a MAN'S FACE. The same PHOTO Patrick has.

DENNIS
That's the man I saw that night. You
can keep it. Maybe use it in the
article.

EDWARD
Thank you.

Dennis shakes his hand.

DENNIS
No thank you. No one's ever written
about my father before. Real pleasure
to have met you.
(pauses)
And I heard what happened. How are you
holding up?

EDWARD
I'm doing alright.

DENNIS
That's good. That's good. The police
haven't found the killer have they?

EDWARD
No, not yet. They will though.

DENNIS
I thought so too. I was just like you.
The unshakeable faith that justice
would be served.

EDWARD
Your sister's on the case. She's real--

DENNIS
Listen. You can't rely on others,
Edward.

(exhales)
Well, I wish you the best. If you want
to talk more, I'd be more than happy
to.

EDWARD
Yes, yes. Thank you again for doing
this, Mr. Greene.

Edward watches Dennis walk off. He looks down at the PHOTO.
The EYES of the MAN stare back.

PRE-LAP: The sounds of phones ringing and background chatter
begin to increase, until--

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

Dakota sits at her desk taking phone calls. Patrick sits
across from her, doing the same.

DAKOTA
Uh-huh. Yeah. Sorry, ma'am, we can't
discuss ongoing investigations. Yeah,
I'm really sorry. Take care.

Dakota slams the phone down and looks over at Patrick who's
midway through telling a story to someone over the phone. She
shakes her head playfully.

Dakota flips through her notepad which is full of writing. She
looks over to her desk neatly organized with folders and
documents.

BZZT! BZZT! Dakota looks over to see her CELLPHONE vibrating on the table. The caller ID: EDWARD LIM

She scoots closer in her chair, curious. Dakota looks around before picking it up.

DAKOTA

Hi, Ed.

EDWARD (FILTERED)

Hey, Dakota, hope I'm not interrupting you or anything.

DAKOTA

No, no, I've got a few minutes. What's up?

EDWARD (FILTERED)

I was just wondering if, uh, you wanted to grab lunch sometime this week?

DAKOTA

I'd love to... um, it's just... actually, how about dinner? Does that work?

EDWARD (FILTERED)

Sorry, you cut out. What did you say?

DAKOTA

Does dinner work? Because that's better for me.

EDWARD (FILTERED)

Oh, yeah, sure. How does Thursday at 7 sound?

Matthew walks out of his office and looks at Dakota confused. He throws his hands up.

DAKOTA

Yeah, that works. I gotta go. I'll text you.

Dakota hangs up and looks at Matthew.

INT. SDPD STATION - MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Dakota sits in the beige-walled office. A few framed certificates hang on the walls. A MURAL of the beach painted on the back wall.

Dakota sits eyeing the name plaque with "CAPTAIN MATTHEW CAMPBELL" written on it. She quickly repositions the plaque so it's parallel with the desk.

MATTHEW

Fuck me. This isn't a homicide, Dakota. It's a missing person's case. And we're coming up on 48 hours now.

DAKOTA

Uh-huh.

MATTHEW

You talking with the family?

Silence. Dakota stares at the MURAL of the beach.

MATTHEW

Dakota?

DAKOTA

Yes?

MATTHEW

You talking with the family? Because they've been coming here. And I gotta feed them some horseshit about how you're out there looking for their grandpa. This isn't how it's supposed to work.

DAKOTA

I mean, I--

MATTHEW

What's on your mind, huh?

(thinks)

You gotta quit thinking about the stranglings, Dakota. It's been a month now.

Dakota focuses back on Matthew.

DAKOTA

I want to be reassigned to the Solana Beach homicide.

MATTHEW

Look, people have already forgotten about the murders by now. It's time to move on.

DAKOTA

Put Pat on this one. He can take care of it. Since when did you need two people working on a missing person's case?

Silence. Dakota stares waiting for a response.

MATTHEW

He didn't tell you?

(beat)

Pat handed in his two-week notice
yesterday.

Dakota looks back at the window facing the office. She stares at Patrick sitting on his desk chatting lively on the phone.

Dakota looks back but can't open her mouth to respond.

INT. GUN RANGE - NIGHT

Edward wears safety glasses and large headphones as he practices taking out a HANDGUN from his holster. Edward stands in a line of people also practicing their form.

An Instructor in uniform stands behind them.

Each person begins firing at the TARGET. Edward stares at his untouched TARGET. He starts firing. Edward hits the target mostly in the center.

INT. FIREARM DEALERSHIP OFFICE - NIGHT

Edward sits at a desk completing paperwork. He signs his name at the bottom of the document.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - MARGOT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Margot stares at the wall full of POLAROID PICTURES. One of the pictures features her and Sara.

Margot buries her tear-stained face into her pillow.

INT. MR. OSMAN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A brightly lit room. Gentle music plays over the speakers. Students work silently on their art pieces.

Margot sits with Sara as they paint at the same table. Margot looks severely disheveled in her appearance. Her eyes have heavy bags under them.

Mr. Osman sits at his desk scrolling through emails. He sips on his coffee. His breathing sounds loud and exaggerated but calm. A soothing rhythm.

A crumpled piece of PAPER falls onto the desk before Margot. They glance up to find who threw it, and they quickly spot a group of boys hiding their snickers.

Margot opens the paper and drops her BRUSH on the table.

SARA

Margot?

Margot crumples up the paper and exits the classroom.

The boys burst out laughing. Sara notices and carefully unfolds the crumpled PAPER. Written in all caps:

MARGOT - DON'T FORGET THAT YOU SPREAD NUTELLA, NOT YOUR LEGS.

Along with a crudely drawn picture of Margot as a stick figure having sex with another, fat stick figure.

Sara stares at it through angry, narrowed eyes.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

The sound of loud obnoxious footsteps hitting asphalt increases. Students look over to see Mr. Osman with a big grin on his face walking to his car.

One student, CARSON, 17, with bleached hair, waves to him.

CARSON

Hey, Mr. Osman!

Mr. Osman looks around before spotting Carson.

MR. OSMAN

Who's there? Ah... Hey Carson! I liked your segment on BS-TV.

CARSON

Thanks. I'll see you tomorrow!

Mr. Osman waves goodbye and approaches his car.

INT./EXT. MR. OSMAN'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Mr. Osman drives very slowly. 70's music plays as he taps his finger to the beat of the music, a small smile on his face.

He looks out the window as he drives beside a group of female students walking on the sidewalk. They wear REVEALING but fashionable clothing.

One of the students, a skinny, stylish Girl, glances at Mr. Osman as he drives by. She smiles at him.

He nods and drives past them.

EXT. MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE - DEL MAR - DAY

Mr. Osman pulls into the driveway of a small one-story house. He exits his car and grabs the MAIL from the mailbox. His Nextdoor Neighbor arrives home, and Mr. Osman waves.

EXT. BEACHSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Dakota walks up to the diner dressed in casual clothing, a blouse and jeans. She takes out her PHONE and answers.

DAKOTA

Hey.

JACK (FILTERED)

Hey, Margot left her backpack at your place. Could you drop it off tonight?

DAKOTA

I can do that. Probably at 9.

JACK (FILTERED)

You still busy with work? I think Margot wants to switch to weekends with you. She says all her friends are closer to you.

DAKOTA

Jack, I have a lot going on. I'll talk to her, don't worry.

JACK (FILTERED)

Alright, I'll see you at 9.

DAKOTA

Bye.

Dakota hangs up and heads into the crowded restaurant.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DEL MAR - NIGHT

A sleek SILVER TRUCK cruises through the neighborhood. It drives slowly as if the driver was lost.

Soon it comes to a stop. A silhouetted Driver looks out the window. The TRUCK pulls over to the side of the street in front of MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE.

The headlights remain on. The car engine emits a low hum. Looking closer, the TRUCK has no LICENSE PLATES.

The lights in MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE glow. Through the window, the Driver can see Mr. Osman at the kitchen table grading papers.

Muffled squeals ring out from inside and Mr. Osman sits up. A high-pitched FREQUENCY rings out. Then faint crackling voices can be heard.

CARTER (FILTERED)

Daddy! Daddy! You're the battleship!

Two young kids run into the kitchen area and race around the table as Mr. Osman watches.

MR. OSMAN (FILTERED)

It's time for bed! Come give dad a hug.

They come running back. He gives both of them a hug and kisses them on the forehead. Ms. Osman walks into the kitchen.

MS. OSMAN (FILTERED)

You almost done?

MR. OSMAN (FILTERED)

Not quite.

MS. OSMAN (FILTERED)

Rami can you put them down?

Mr. Osman sighs.

MS. OSMAN (FILTERED)

It's your turn, honey.

Mr. Osman gets up and exits the room.

INT. SILVER TRUCK - NIGHT

The TRUCK lights switch off. The Driver still sits in the car. His breaths sound nearly silent.

A SMALL ELECTRONIC RECEIVER sits in the passenger seat. The red light blinks and beeps at a constant frequency.

EXT. MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The faint sound of the highway in the distance. One dim light remains on inside the living room of MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE. Crickets chirp.

The Driver exits the car. He carries a METAL CYLINDRICAL TORCH in one hand and a jug of WATER in his other hand. He slowly walks over.

INT. MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Osman sits in the living room in front of his TV. He scrolls through his phone as the TV screen flashes. Behind the couch: DARKNESS.

Suddenly the TV shuts off. Mr. Osman looks up from his phone and checks the TV remote.

A bright flash of LIGHT suddenly flickers in the reflection of the TV screen. Mr. Osman notices.

He glances at the BLANK TV screen. In the reflection of the screen, the hallway looks DARK still. The light must've been a motion light.

Mr. Osman continues messing with the TV remote.

In the shadowy hallway behind Mr. Osman, a dark object seems to move. It stops moving as soon as it reaches the couch.

The TV screen flashes briefly illuminating a silhouette of a MAN standing behind Mr. Osman.

Behind the MAN, the "OBSERVER" hangs on the wall above the fireplace. The EYES stare.

INT. BEACHSIDE DINER - NIGHT

They sit in front of empty plates and half-full glasses. Dakota and Edward both laugh. Edward still has stubble and sunken eyes.

EDWARD

You were a problem. I'm telling you.

DAKOTA

No, no, no, they all loved me.

(pauses)

I haven't had a drink in 8 years...

Silence. Edward drinks the last of his glass.

EDWARD

What time is it?

Dakota checks her phone.

DAKOTA

10:53. Shoot, I should be going. I told Jack that I'd drop off Margot's backpack.

Edward looks up in surprise, then looks back down.

EDWARD

Hey, do you and Jack talk much?

DAKOTA
Sometimes we'll see each other at
Margot's school things.

 EDWARD
 (laughs)
Mmm. He's doing well for himself, isn't
he.

 DAKOTA
I know. I still regret it...

 EDWARD
...oh I'm sorry, I shouldn't have
brought it up.

 DAKOTA
It's fine, really.

Edward slams his glass on the table.

 EDWARD
No! I shouldn't have brought it up. I'm
sorry.

Edward pauses.

 EDWARD
...what did you think of Camille?

Dakota thinks about what to say.

 DAKOTA
She was wonderful, Ed. You really
lucked out. I remember when you and
Camille came over for the first time,
and after you left I said to Jack,
"They're gonna be married before you
know it." And a month later, you
proposed.

Edward smiles, remembering. But a forlornness dampens his
expression. His eyes begin to water.

 EDWARD
I feel like I didn't know her that
well. I didn't know her, Dakota. I mean
Jesus Christ who did I marry?

Dakota looks confused. She's trying to make sense of what
Edward just said.

 DAKOTA
Ed...

EDWARD

I wasn't enough for her. I was always too busy. I never fixed that lock.

DAKOTA

What lock?

EDWARD

The door lock. The goddamn door lock, Dakota.

DAKOTA

Listen, it's not your fault that you wanted different things.

EDWARD

She wanted stability. I just wanted... I don't know, I just liked it the way it was...

Edward's voice quivers and he looks down.

DAKOTA

Hey, that's okay. Edward, that's okay. Jack and I never agreed on a thing. It is what it is.

Edward looks up, trying to hold it all in.

EDWARD

When she died... it felt like I was being suffocated.

(beat)

She left me something. This... weight on my back. I don't know what to do. I tried to talk to him.

DAKOTA

Talk to who? Ed, what's wrong?

EDWARD

I thought I knew her. I came back from the house and what do I see!

Dakota looks around to see if anyone noticed Edward's yelling.

DAKOTA

Ed, calm down.

EDWARD

No, listen to me. I was finishing up my interviews in Oceanside. I had the "Observer" in my hands. I had it.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Can you believe that? I brought it home so I could frame it. But I usually don't get home till 6.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward speeds home. He looks to the backseat, where a neatly WRAPPED OBJECT sits. It's the size of a TABLETOP.

He smiles at it, before returning his attention to the road.

Edward rounds a corner and spots Camille walking out of the house at the end of the street. She wears sunglasses and a blouse, clearly dressed up for something.

EDWARD (V.O.)

I saw Camille exit our house, dressed up like she was going to dinner.

Edward's car slowly cruises down the street. She crosses the street, not noticing Edward's car, and she picks up her pace. She heads towards a sleek SPORTSCAR and opens the passenger door.

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

And she gets into this sportscar parked there. She gets real friendly with the driver. But I can't make out who the driver is.

Camille leans in to hug SOMEONE in the driver's seat, before closing the door.

Edward watches intently, trying to make out who the driver is. Closer. Closer. Who is it?

No luck.

He drives past the car, missing his own house and continuing straight. Edward pulls over into an alleyway. He watches his side mirror as the SPORTSCAR passes by.

Edward reverses the car and slowly pulls out of the alleyway.

He looks around but the SPORTSCAR has disappeared. Defeated, Edward pulls into his driveway.

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

I decided not to discuss what I saw with her because we were both dealing with a lot at work.

(MORE)

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

It wasn't until a week later when I was supposed to drive up to Vegas to interview your brother, that I saw the truth for myself.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward listens in to Dennis Greene on the other end.

DENNIS (FILTERED)

Edward, *ahem*, it's just that I'm incredibly sick right now. Incredibly sick. I woke up yesterday to a coughing fit.

Edward makes a u-turn at the stoplight and drives back home in silence.

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

My trip ended up being canceled, so I headed back home. Must've been gone a total of 3 hours.

Edward drives down the street and past the same parked SPORTSCAR in an alleyway.

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

I should've seen the signs...

Edward pulls into the driveway and opens the garage door. He gets out of the car, exhausted. He hears faint music playing from inside.

Edward slowly opens the door.

The song "Happy House" by Siouxsie and the Banshees plays loudly. Edward walks in, closing the door behind him without making a sound.

He takes each step silently, his eyes locked on the floor. CLOTHES lie on the hallway floor scattered around. Jeans, a jacket, a belt, underwear...

Edward looks up.

Edward's eyes widen as he watches in horror something before him. The sounds of intense breathing and moans fill his ears. The music amplifies.

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

I saw them both. Camille and Jack. Your ex-husband. I don't know what came over me but I just left. I drove off and didn't come back till late.

Edward starts to back away.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward pulls into the driveway. He notices the light in the living room still on.

His headlights illuminate the garage door as it slowly opens.

Edward gets out, exhausted. He sees the door to the house wide open.

EDWARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Didn't speak a word to her until our anniversary dinner. And then I came back... and she was dead. Just like that. No "sorry," no explanation. The lock wasn't even broken off, because I never did fix it.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BEACHSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Edward leans back and attempts to drink what's left in his glass. A drop of ALCOHOL trickles down the glass and into his mouth. Dakota sits there, stunned.

She stares down at her plate, a WHITE CANVAS with brushstrokes of different colors.

EDWARD
I thought about it a lot after she died... Wait.

Edward sits there. Something clicks.

EDWARD
It's Jack. Jack killed her.

BZZT! BZZT! Dakota stares at her PHONE, then picks it up.

DAKOTA
Hello?

MATTHEW (FILTERED)
There's been another murder.

DAKOTA
What?

MATTHEW (FILTERED)
800 Peppermint Drive. Fuck me, it looks like the same guy.

PATRICK
--was a teacher at Beachside High--

DAKOTA
Oh my god.

PATRICK
Yeah, it's real unfor--

DAKOTA
He was my daughter's...

PATRICK
What's that?

DAKOTA
He was my daughter's teacher.

RALPH
Shit. Not a teacher.

PATRICK
Man, it seems like you know all the
victims in some way.

DAKOTA
No, not all... I didn't know the
Oceanside victim.

PATRICK
Well, that aside... bruises on the
neck, splashed with water, melted
lock... everything's consistent, but
none of it makes any sense.

Dakota crouches beside the BODYBAG.

DAKOTA
There *has* to be something.

RALPH
All we have is... shit.

Silence. Low voices and shuffling feet of their fellow
officers remain.

PATRICK
I was hoping to avoid this... I guess
the killer just *had* to give us one more
mystery.

DAKOTA
Pat...

Dakota looks around, and something catches her eye. Two young kids sit in the kitchen, covered in blankets. A female paramedic sits beside them.

She stares at one of the boys' faces, CARTER, 8, as he talks to the paramedic.

PATRICK

One of the kids found him here.

RALPH

Well, shit.

Patrick's monitor BEEPS and he checks it. Dakota stands there. Something in her eyes.

EXT. OSMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NEWS VANS line the streets. Reporters stand around outside the perimeter of the house waiting. Dakota and Patrick emerge from the front door.

Reporters rush to meet them at the edge of the police tape. Patrick lifts the tape so Dakota can walk under.

The sound begins to drown out. The reporters begin yelling over each other but nothing can be heard. Lights flash.

Dakota pushes through the crowd.

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pull out from the TV screen.

Linda watches in horror as the news report plays. She pets her dog in her lap.

EXT. BEACH BAR - NIGHT

Edward sits at the bar sipping on a drink. His eyes remained glued to the TV screen.

INT. SDPD INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ms. Osman sits in the interrogation room staring down at the table.

Her mascara runs from her eyes. She's frozen. Unable to talk. Unable to move.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Margot stares at the TV in shock. She sees a text pop up on her phone. SARA: Margot r u ok?

NEWS REPORT (V.O.)

After the shocking murder of Beachside High teacher Rami Osman in his home last night, the safety of the city is beginning to come into question. Parents have taken to social media urging other parents to keep their students home for the time being. The SDPD have said that they believe this murder is connected to the Oceanside and Solana Beach homicides. This statement only raises further concerns as to whether or not kids should be in school right now. The investigation is still ongoing...

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Students walk the halls acting unaware of what just happened. A group of students LAUGH loudly as they show each other a photo on their PHONES.

Margot walks alone in the hallways as students pass by her. Some students look at her. She keeps her head down.

Margot overhears a conversation with a group of girls.

FEMALE STUDENT

Yeah, my mom doesn't want me going out past 10 anymore.

They notice Margot staring at them and they stop talking. Margot quickly walks away.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Margot rushes out of the school gates and speed walks to the parking lot.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom appears noticeably empty. Students sit scattered at different tables. One of the Assistant Principals and the Vice Principal stand in front of the class, talking.

Sara sits there staring at her desk. She looks over to Margot's EMPTY SEAT next to her.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dakota enters the house. The kitchen table is empty. She quickly washes her hands and rearranges the fruit bowl on the kitchen island.

DAKOTA

Margot!

Dakota checks the time.

DAKOTA

Margot, honey we're gonna be late!
We need to take off in 10 minutes!

No response. Dakota heads upstairs.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - MARGOT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dakota opens the bedroom door and peers in. Margot lies on the bed, frozen. Her room is a mess.

Dakota looks around the room, disgusted.

DAKOTA

Margot, please clean up your room.
And we're leaving in 10 minutes. Get
dressed c'mon.

Dakota walks off leaving the door open. The hallway light shines on Margot as she rolls over. Margot stares at the ceiling.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - NIGHT

The dim school lights flicker slightly as students and families congregate in the middle of the courtyard. Each person holds a lit CANDLE in their hands, standing in silence.

They begin placing flowers and candles down by a SMILING PICTURE of Mr. Osman.

Dakota and Margot stand dressed in heavy jackets towards the back. Dakota fixes something in Margot's hair.

Margot stands there, emotionless. She stares at the picture of Mr. Osman.

Margot turns away and quickly walks off away from the crowd. Dakota watches her and opens her mouth to say something but chooses not to.

Dakota stands there watching the crowd of people. She spots Ms. Osman, who stares ahead, emotionless. Her kids cling to her hands.

Dakota then notices a tall, bald, heavy man, BRUSSELS QUIMBY, standing amongst the crowd. He glances at Dakota, but when she catches him looking, he looks down.

She studies his appearance. He wears round glasses and dresses in a plain red sweater. He has small patches of stubble on his lower face. Dakota notices his hands. Brussels wears BLACK LEATHER GLOVES.

She begins approaching the crowd, curious. Brussels retreats into the crowd. Dakota pushes her way through the crowd.

Dakota reaches the other side and looks out on the parking lot. No one can be seen.

She spots a SILVER FORD TRUCK sitting in the parking lot.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dakota walks over to the TRUCK and pulls out a FLASHLIGHT. She approaches the car with her FLASHLIGHT raised.

Charlie starts walking over.

CHARLIE
(calls out)
Hey! Hey, what are you doing there?

DAKOTA
Sir, is this your car?

Charlie gets to the car and shows her his keys.

CHARLIE
Yes.

Dakota flashes her BADGE at Charlie.

DAKOTA
I'm Detective Greene; I'm with the SDPD. Sorry to bother you. I thought someone else owned this vehicle.

CHARLIE
Oh, got it. Well, I hope you find the killer, detective. Have a nice night.

Charlie unlocks the car, and Dakota turns away. He watches her walk off.

Dakota stands at the edge of the school gates. She looks back at Charlie. Dakota lights a CIGARETTE and lets out a sigh.

She takes out her phone to see a missed call notification from Edward.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dakota and Patrick sit in a booth chatting. They've both finished their meals. Patrick sits back in his chair letting out a sigh.

PATRICK

Well, you can always visit me. You know where to find me.

DAKOTA

I'll miss you, Pat. Actually, what did Matthew give you?

PATRICK

A bottle of whiskey and a coffee maker. I guess that's me.

DAKOTA

How sweet.

(pauses)

Thank you, Pat. I mean it. You taught me how to be a cop.

PATRICK

I tried. It feels good, you know. After so many years, to say I retired. My dad used to say to me, "Son, you can't just retire from something; you gotta have something to retire to." Well, Dakota I woke up recently, and I realized just that. I'm on the other side of it now, and I'm happy. I'm happy with what I did.

DAKOTA

Oh, Pat. I'm so glad you're happy. Now I'll get to tell all the recruits about you and your stories.

(thinks)

What was the one about the hamster?

PATRICK

The one that turned into a butterfly?

DAKOTA

Mhm. That was my favorite. Where I really got to know you and what little Patrick was like.

PATRICK

Okay, okay, but after this, I gotta get home to Grace...

Dakota leans in and Patrick begins reminiscing.

PATRICK

Now, I was around 6 or 7 years old, and for my birthday, my parents gifted me a pet hamster. I named him Nugget because his head was shaped like a chicken nugget. The only problem was that both my parents and I didn't know how to take care of a pet. One day before school, I decided to clean the cage for Nugget. It had gotten real dirty and smelled like urine. So I went to the cabinet with the cleaning supplies and got some *Windex*.

Dakota laughs and sits back.

PATRICK

Yeah, I was stupid and naive.

DAKOTA

And thoughtful.

PATRICK

And thoughtful. I guess. Anyway, I come back from school and find Nugget missing. I run downstairs crying, all broken up about it. Guess what my mom tells me? She says that she saw Nugget fall out of the window, but when she went outside to find him, he had transformed into a beautiful butterfly. And from that day on, I believed that hamsters turned into butterflies. I was so convinced, I even argued with my teacher in fourth grade that butterflies come from hamsters and not from caterpillars. Wasn't until I went to middle school that I finally found out what happened to Nugget. She'd found his corpse smelling like hand sanitizer, so she had opened the window to get rid of the smell, and buried him in the yard. I was older, so I had a good laugh over it. But, man... if she'd told me I killed him when I was 6, that wouldn't have ended too well.

Dakota can't control her laughter. Patrick smiles.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Patrick takes out his car keys and Dakota looks at him with some sadness in her eyes.

PATRICK
Don't let that case weigh you down.
Remember, some things are better left
observed than explained.

Dakota nods.

PATRICK
I'm just a call away.

DAKOTA
I know. Take care, Pat.

They hug each other. Patrick turns to leave and then stops.

PATRICK
Actually... here. Take this with
you.

Patrick digs in his back pocket and pulls out his fat wallet.

He removes the PHOTO of the red-and-black ABSTRACT PAINTING
and hands it to Dakota.

PATRICK
From your father's case. Better off
with you than it is with me.

Dakota takes it and stares at it.

PATRICK
Good night, Dakota.

DAKOTA
Night, Pat.

Patrick walks off to his car. Dakota watches him leave on the
verge of tears. She quickly wipes her eyes. Then Dakota looks
down at the PHOTO.

She stares into the EYES of a KILLER. The EYES stare back.

INT. DAKOTA'S CAR - DAY

Birds chirp outside. Leaves on a tree drip from the morning
dew.

Dakota sits inside the car, staring at a police file sitting
on a stack of folders in the passenger seat. The file is WELL
MARKED.

She takes a sip of coffee. Dakota's clearly read it a hundred
times. Her car sits parked in the driveway in front of her
house.

Outside, Margot rushes out of the house and runs to the car. Dakota starts the car as Margot gets into the passenger seat.

DAKOTA

Margot, please don't make me late. I'm doing this as a favor for you, okay?

Margot pulls on her seatbelt.

MARGOT

Yeah, sorry, mom.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dakota starts driving through the neighborhood. Few cars drive on the road.

DAKOTA

How's Sara doing?

MARGOT

Fine.

A RING TONE suddenly interrupts them. Dakota glances at the name on the screen: EDWARD LIM. She hangs up.

DAKOTA

Do your teachers bring up the murders?

MARGOT

Not really.

DAKOTA

What about the APs?

Silence.

DAKOTA

Honey, are you okay?

MARGOT

...I'm fine, Mom. It's just school.

DAKOTA

You're not worried about the murders, right?

MARGOT

No.

DAKOTA

It just doesn't make any sense. Mr. Osman was a nice man and a good husband and a loving father.

Margot looks away. The car stops in front of the school behind a line of cars. Dakota puts the car in park.

DAKOTA

Margot Terrell-Greene. Look at me right now. What's going on, huh?

Margot glances at Dakota and Dakota grabs her hand. Dakota notices tears in Margot's eyes.

DAKOTA

Margot. What happened? It's okay, honey.

Dakota brings Margot's head into her arms and embraces her. She strokes Margot's hair.

DAKOTA

Honey, it's okay. It's okay.

The school bell rings. Margot turns away.

DAKOTA

No no no. Margot, do not leave this car until you tell me what happened. Okay?

MARGOT

No, I can't! You never wanna talk about anything. You never talk about Noah. I mean you can't just expect me to suddenly open up to you!

Silence. Dakota doesn't know what to say.

DAKOTA

Margot, what's going on? Is it the SAT? Your friends? Is it Sara? Is it a boy?

MARGOT

Can I just go home?

Tears roll down her face. Dakota stares into her daughter's eyes.

DAKOTA

It's alright. Okay, okay, why don't you stay home today?

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward drives down the street looking up for a specific address. He spots a dull OFFICE BUILDING and pulls into the parking lot.

Edward sits in his car, watching the entrance of the building.

INT. SDPD STATION - MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Dakota enters the office. She looks disheveled and worn down.

MATTHEW
Your friend, Edward Lim, came in a
while ago. He wanted to talk with you.

DAKOTA
What about?

MATTHEW
Said he had a lead on our killer. Go
talk with him when you get the chance.

DAKOTA
I will. Is that all?

MATTHEW
No... we found Rami Osman in possession
of cocaine. Found it in his lockbox in
the closet. He had stashes of it. We're
thinking he was a dealer. Maybe even to
students. Turns out he was a fucking
loser.

Dakota stands there, starting to put it together.

INT. SDPD STATION - STORAGE BASEMENT - DAY

The overhead fluorescents flicker to life. Rows of filing
cabinets fill the basement.

A cop standing next to her, MILO, 30s, goes over to a table
with a handful of SEALED EVIDENCE BAGS cluttered on it.

Milo finds one of the bags. He carefully takes out a
SMARTPHONE and hands it to Dakota.

DAKOTA
Thanks, Milo.

MILO
You got it. Password should be
disabled. We unlocked it yesterday. Let
me know if you need anything else.

Dakota nods and Milo walks out.

Dakota scrolls through the MESSAGES. One of the TEXT
CONVERSATIONS has no contact assigned to it.

She opens it up and begins scrolling through it. Dakota stops when she sees something. She drops the phone on the table and runs out.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - MARGOT'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door creaks open. Dakota slowly walks in, trying not to step on anything. Clothes lie piled up on the ground.

Margot lies on her bed, her back toward Dakota.

Dakota takes a seat at the edge of the bed. Margot turns over to see Dakota.

She looks annoyed.

MARGOT

Mom. What are you doing? Why aren't you at work?

DAKOTA

Don't worry I'm just picking something up. I just wanted to check in on you.

MARGOT

Can you get out of my room, please?

DAKOTA

Margot...

Margot doesn't make eye contact.

DAKOTA

Margot. I need to talk to you about something.

MARGOT

What?

DAKOTA

Listen, I know you liked Mr. Osman a lot.

Margot turns away. Dakota reaches for Margot's shoulder and turns Margot back to face her.

DAKOTA

No no, honey. I need to know something. Did he ever seem like he was under the influence of any substances? Did he ever try to sell anything to you?

Margot can't bring herself to speak, so shakes her head.

EDWARD

Dakota, just the person I wanted to see. Have you talked to Jack yet?

DAKOTA

What?

EDWARD

You know *what*. He's a suspect. Did you talk to him?

DAKOTA

No... he's not a suspect, Ed. I'm sorry.

Dakota reaches to open the door but Edward stops her.

EDWARD

Hold on. did you not hear what I said the other night? He slept with my wife, Dakota! I catch on and then she's conveniently killed. Who's the leading suspect right now, huh?

DAKOTA

I'm sorry. I can't talk about an ongoing investigation right now.

Dakota opens the door. Edward lowers his voice and tries to speak reasonably.

EDWARD

Please, just go and talk to him. I'm begging you.

DAKOTA

And I'm begging you to stop talking about this. I don't have time to waste on Jack.

EDWARD

You're making a mistake! Dakota!
Dakota!

The door closes. Edward looks frustrated. He marches over to one of the trash cans on the sidewalk and kicks it over.

Edward begins aggressively kicking the trash can as trash flies out. Just then Ralph comes storming out of the building.

RALPH

Hey, cut that shit out!

Edward picks up the trash can.

RALPH
And clean all that shit up!

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DEL MAR - DAY

Dakota looks up at the tall apartment building. She proceeds to head into the lobby space.

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The clock ticks. Linda's dog sleeps soundly on the ground. Dakota and Linda both sit in armchairs facing each other.

Linda sips on tea. She wears reading glasses. Dakota has her NOTEPAD out with a few scribbles.

LINDA
He never liked to talk about his work.
So I never pressured him.

DAKOTA
But you had an idea of what was going
on?

LINDA
Yes, yes... I had an idea...

DAKOTA
Ms. Carver, did your husband ever hit
you?

LINDA
Oh... yes, when he wasn't in a good
mood. Which was a lot of the time,
unfortunately...

DAKOTA
I'm sorry about that.

LINDA
Oh, it's okay, honey. I'm fine talking
about it. It's in the past now.

Silence. Dakota doesn't know what to say.

DAKOTA
Well, that should be all. Thank you for
taking the time to do this. I really
appreciate it.

Dakota gets up. The dog perks up and runs to Dakota. Dakota smiles before leaving.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DEL MAR - DAY

Dakota walks to her parked CAR on the street. She sighs and stops to answer her phone.

DAKOTA

If you call one more time, I'm blocking you.

EDWARD (FILTERED)

He matches the physical description! Yesterday I saw Jack driving a truck. He owns a truck, Dakota. Jack owns a truck. The same silver truck that was outside Osman's house.

DAKOTA

Ed, I get that you're upset right now, but please don't call again, I'm busy.

EDWARD (FILTERED)

Jack killed my wife. I want justice. I want him arrest--

Dakota hangs up and takes out a CIGARETTE PACK. She goes to light one.

EXT. BEACH BAR - NIGHT

The waves crash in the distance and the winds pick up. Edward sits and looks out upon the sea. Six other SHOT GLASSES sit face-down on the table.

Two other men sit across from Edward. They seem to notice him but don't say anything.

The BARTENDER, 30s, with a big build and wearing a DODGERS cap, looks at Edward. He sees the hurt in his eyes.

BARTENDER

You better not be driving after this.

Edward looks at the Bartender.

EDWARD

Fuck off, man.

BARTENDER

Take it easy, fella.

EDWARD

(scoffs)

You think you're so fucking big, huh. Take that Dodgers shit back to LA.

He stands up and the Bartender approaches him. The Bartender towers over Edward.

BARTENDER

Get out of here.

EDWARD

Go fuck yourself!

Edward slams cash on the table and walks out. The Bartender watches him leave.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Waves crash. Water soaks Edward's shoes as he walks along the beach clumsily. Edward kicks the sand and screams.

He stumbles down and takes out his PHONE. Edward scrolls through his contacts and stops as he sees Dakota's name. Right below her name: CAMILLE.

He hesitates before clicking Camille's name. Edward brings the PHONE to his ear.

BRRRRRRR... BRRRRRRR... BRRRRRRR...

Edward hears Camille's VOICE on the other end.

CAMILLE (FILTERED)

Hi, this is Camille. Leave your message at the beep. Thanks.

BEEP. Edward pauses, not knowing what to say. He hangs up.

Edward calls again. RINGING.

CAMILLE (FILTERED)

Hi, this is Camille. Leave your message at the beep. Thanks.

BEEP. Edward stares out. His breath slows. He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

BRRRRRRR... BRRRRRRR... BRRRRRRR...

CAMILLE (FILTERED)

Hi, this is Camille. Leave your message at the beep. Thanks.

BEEP. Edward's breath trembles. He prepares himself.

EDWARD

(shaky)

It's, uh... it's... it's great to hear
your voice again.

Edward lets out a short nervous laugh. He pauses before
beginning again.

EDWARD

I never got to apologize... I know
you're not listening, but... I'm sorry
I never fixed the lock.

Edward's composure breaks a little bit, but he maintains
himself.

EDWARD

I'm gonna make up for it. I'm gonna
find the one who did this and get
closure for everyone. Sit tight, okay?
I love you.

He looks out to the black sea. Edward knows what he has to do.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Silence. Muffled sounds of waves crashing. Edward drives
slowly. His headlights illuminate the long stretch of road.

He stares straight ahead.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dakota sits alone at the kitchen table. She has piles of
folders and documents on the table next to her laptop. She
smokes some of a CIGARETTE.

Dakota skims one of the documents before moving on to the
next.

She taps her CIGARETTE into an ashtray. Dakota leans in
closer.

The three NEWS ARTICLES of the homicides lay on the table.
Dakota stares at them.

She has a spreadsheet on her computer that describes each
victim.

Walter Smith: Judicial Misconduct, Domestic Abuse

Camille Lim: Adultery

Rami Osman: Drug Dealer, Statutory Rape

Underneath each victim: *Strangled, Doused with water, Killed in their house, Home security system glitch. Lock melted off* noted for Walter and Mr. Osman, but not Camille.

Dakota opens up one of the folders and starts placing crime scene PHOTOS next to each NEWS ARTICLE.

She raises the CIGARETTE but before she can she notices something.

On the table, she removes all the photographs but leaves three. Each PHOTO captures the living room of the three victims featuring the "OBSERVER".

The PAINTING hangs on the wall in every picture. She stares at each of them.

In the corner of the PAINTING, she sees the signature: "P.G."

Dakota looks shocked at what she found.

EXT. MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Birds chirp outside. Dakota walks up to MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE and takes off her sunglasses. She notices a sign on the lawn: GARAGE SALE.

The driveway looks full of cardboard boxes. A handful of people gather outside looking through the boxes. One of the boxes appears full of CHARGERS merchandise.

Dakota walks up and spots one of the kids she saw that day at the crime scene.

The Kid stares at Dakota, before running up to his mom who looks up and sees Dakota. She doesn't look happy to see her.

Dakota forces a smile and walks up to Ms. Osman. Dakota notices her BLOODSHOT EYES.

DAKOTA

Hi, Ms. Osman, I'm Detective Greene with the SDPD. I'm just here regarding a painting you owned. Looks like this.

Dakota holds up the PHOTO of the PAINTING. Ms. Osman studies the PHOTO before shaking her head.

MS. OSMAN

Sorry. We don't have it anymore.

DAKOTA

What do you mean?

MS. OSMAN

We sold it yesterday to a man who came by.

DAKOTA

Do you remember what he looked like?

MS. OSMAN

Umm, he was pretty tall, bald, had glasses. That's all I remember.

DAKOTA

Did he give a name?

Ms. Osman looks up, thinking. Her Kid pulls her arm trying to get her attention.

MS. OSMAN

It was an odd name. Started with a B. Um...

Just then, Carter runs out of the garage.

MS. OSMAN

Carter, don't run into the street!

(to Dakota)

I'm sorry, I don't remember right now.

DAKOTA

That's alright. Thank you for your time.

Dakota lowers her SUNGLASSES and begins to walk off. Ms. Osman stands there still thinking. Then it hits her. She calls out to Dakota.

MS. OSMAN

Brussels! That was his name!

Dakota looks up.

DAKOTA

Thank you so much. Take care.

Dakota runs to her car.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Dakota pulls out of her parking spot with her PHONE in one hand.

BRRRRRRR... BRRR--

DAKOTA

Hey, Milo. Could you get me the address of a Brussels? Yeah, that's his first name. Brussels.

As she passes MR. OSMAN'S HOUSE she watches as Ms. Osman violently GRABS Carter's arm and rebukes him.

Dakota drives past.

INT. SDPD STATION - MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew stands up staring at the beach mural on the wall alongside a signed Junior Seau CHARGERS JERSEY. Matthew has a FOLDER in his hands. Dakota stands at his desk.

DAKOTA

Brussels matches the physical description as well. He lives alone. And he works for a home security company.

Matthew throws the folder on his desk along with the PHOTO of the PAINTING.

MATTHEW

Well, fuck me. What does your dad's painting have to do with it, though?

DAKOTA

Every victim has owned this exact painting. Every time it transfers ownership, we get a new murder. Maybe the killer targets people who own this painting. That's the mark.

MATTHEW

But these people aren't innocent, right? You said one was a domestic abuser, another was a sex offender. I mean this guy is targeting bad people. People who broke the law.

DAKOTA

Not Camille.

MATTHEW

Didn't she have an affair?

DAKOTA

It's not the same.

MATTHEW

Still doesn't make her innocent.

DAKOTA

What are you saying? You're just willing to let this guy continue killing?

MATTHEW

Fuck no. I'm just saying there's nothing we can do about it right now. It's just best to forget about it.

DAKOTA

What?

MATTHEW

Dakota, it's time we move on from this case.

Dakota takes a step closer looking up at Matthew.

DAKOTA

Look, this painting... it's the best lead we've had in months. I *have* to pursue this.

MATTHEW

Okay, sure, he *owns* the painting. Doesn't mean shit though.

DAKOTA

All I'm asking you to do is talk to a judge; get me a warrant. Please do this for me.

MATTHEW

Yeah, I'm not doing that.

DAKOTA

What? I've given you all the evidence there is, and--

MATTHEW

And it's not enough. Pack it up, Dakota. You're *not* getting a warrant.

Dakota stares at an unwavering Matthew in disbelief. She sighs and storms out of the office.

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

Dakota takes a seat, hopeless. Documents sit on her desk. Phones ring and officers talk.

The office phone RINGS and Dakota picks it up. She doesn't say anything.

REPORTER

Hi, I'm Reuben with the Union-Tribune.
I was wondering if you had any comments
on the recent murder?

Dakota puts the PHONE down, hanging up. Then she picks up the PHONE and slams it down on the desk, breaking the phone into PIECES.

Everyone around looks at her in surprise. Matthew stands up from his desk and watches Dakota from his window.

Dakota sits there breathing heavily.

She stares at the PHOTO PHOTO of the PAINTING on her desk. Dakota grabs the photo and marches off.

INT. EDWARD'S CAR - DAY

Edward sits in his car, watching the entrance of an office building. He puts the phone down and opens up the glovebox.

A plastic bag sits inside. He peers inside to reveal a BLACK HANDGUN enclosed.

Edward shuts the glovebox and fixes his focus back on the office building.

A group of men in their 40s walk out of the building. They chat for a bit before going their separate ways.

Edward's eyes lock on Jack. Jack walks over to his sleek SPORTSCAR. The same car Edward saw months ago.

The car's brake lights power on. Edward starts his car. The SPORTSCAR exits the parking lot, and Edward follows.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DUSK

The sun begins to set. Dakota drives through a rural part of the county. She passes fewer and fewer houses.

She spots a CAR ACCIDENT up the road and catches a glimpse of Ms. Osman standing outside her car, SOBBING. An ambulance and police car sit parked behind her.

She tries to light a CIGARETTE while her two kids cry in the backseat.

Dakota passes them and Ms. Osman glances at her. She turns away quickly.

Dakota looks back, worried, but pushes on. Her car turns onto a small narrow road with a row of small one-story houses.

She slows down, looking at both sides of the street, checking the addresses.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DUSK

Edward follows two car lengths behind Jack's SPORTSCAR. He looks around at the modern houses, most of them gated.

Jack ascends a hill as Edward follows. They go higher up and Edward looks around at the houses.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DUSK

Dakota spots a TURQUOISE-COLORED HOUSE. It's surrounded by a nice green garden. The address: 1113.

Dakota pulls over and puts the car in park.

EXT. TURQUOISE HOUSE - ESCONDIDO - DUSK

Dakota exits her car and approaches the front door. She adjusts her POLICE BADGE on her belt. Then she knocks.

INT. EDWARD'S CAR - RANCHO BERNARDO - DUSK

Edward watches as Jack pulls into the driveway. Jack parks his SPORTSCAR outside and gets out. He enters his house through the garage.

The garage door slowly closes. Inside sits a GRAY TRUCK and a JEEP.

Edward grabs the GUN from the glovebox.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - RANCHO BERNARDO - DUSK

Edward exits his car wearing dark clothing. He approaches the house looking up at the enormous property.

EXT. TURQUOISE HOUSE - ESCONDIDO - DUSK

Dakota stands in the doorway looking around. The door creaks open and an EYEBALL appears in the crack. The person wears round glasses.

DAKOTA

Hi, I'm Detective Greene with the SDPD.
I'm here investigating the death of
Rami Osman. I just have some questions
for you. You are Brussels Quimby,
correct?

A man speaks very softly with a lisp.

BRUSSELS

Yeth... I am.

DAKOTA

Do you mind if I come in? It's hard to talk to you if I can only see your eye.

The EYE disappears from the crack in the door, and the door closes. Dakota sighs and listens as several LOCKS can be heard unlocking from inside.

The door swings open, revealing Brussels Quimby, the man Dakota saw from the vigil. She looks at his figure: a heavy, balding man.

He stands tall looking down at Dakota. He opens the screen door.

BRUSSELS

Come in.

Dakota looks around before stepping into the house. Brussels carefully closes the screen door and closes the front door.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Jack opens one of his drawers and produces a bag of COKE. He begins setting it up on the counter.

Outside the window, a FIGURE passes by. Jack snorts a line of COKE.

He walks over to the living room and turns on the TV. A basketball game plays.

KNOCK! KNOCK! Jack glances at the front door. He scrambles to grab the bag of COKE and hide it.

Jack quickly wipes his nose and fixes his shirt.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - DUSK

The door swings open and Edward stands there.

JACK

Edward?

EDWARD

(out of breath)

Sorry, I... I have nowhere else to go right now.

Jack stares at Edward, confused.

INT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dakota looks around in each small room. She passes by small animal CAGES and habitats. Every wall appears decorated with GREENERY and many varieties of FLORA.

Behind the greenery, Dakota notices newspaper clippings, posters, sketches, and pictures, covering every inch of the walls and ceilings.

Brussels enters the room, Dakota stands in and watches her movements carefully.

BRUSSELS

Would you rather thit in the kitchen?

DAKOTA

Yes. Could I just take a look around first?

BRUSSELS

Yeth, I'll get some tea for you. Just pleathe be careful with the plantth.

DAKOTA

Thank you.

Brussels exits the room and Dakota pulls out her PHONE. She makes a call.

DAKOTA

This is 1460. I need an additional unit for search. 1113 Winter Way. Possible homicide suspect on the premises.

She hangs up and continues looking through the house.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Edward stands at Jack's kitchen island. Jack stands before him, towering over him. The TV still plays in the background.

JACK

Edward? What are you doing here?

Edward doesn't make eye contact. He notices some WHITE POWDERY RESIDUE on the counter.

EDWARD

I just... needed to talk to you.

JACK

Uh, we're talking now. Can you tell me what exactly you're doing here?

EDWARD

I just need to hear something from you.

JACK

Yeah, I know. What is it?

EDWARD

Yeah, um... can I use the bathroom?

JACK

...sure...

Something dawns upon Jack.

JACK

Edward. How did you get this address?

Edward provides no response. He looks up at Jack.

INT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brussels sits opposite Dakota. A dim lamp hangs over the table.

He looks at his tea and blows on it to cool it down. Dakota watches as he rubs his hands against his pants nervously.

DAKOTA

So you work at Audeo Security?

BRUSSELS

Yeth, ma'am.

Brussels places his hand around his mug. His fingers wrap around the cup. Dakota watches.

Everything looks right. His height. His hands.

DAKOTA

Could I ask why you tried to run from me at the vigil?

BRUSSELS

I, uh, jutht get nervouth around other people. I don't like talking to thtrangerth.

DAKOTA

Do you happen to own this painting?

Dakota shows Brussels the PHOTO of the PAINTING.

DAKOTA

I talked to Ms. Osman today and she said you bought it from her.

BRUSSELS

Yeth... yeth, I do. It's in the attic.
Here, I'll thhow you.

Brussels stands up and motions for Dakota to come. Dakota stands up and follows him down a DARK HALLWAY.

He flicks on another dim light that illuminates a small area. Brussels ascends a set of narrow creaky stairs. Every footstep causes the floorboards to creak.

Dakota rests her hand on her HOLSTER as she follows him up the stairs into darkness.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jack begins to look concerned.

JACK

Shit. How did you find out?

EDWARD

It doesn't matter.

JACK

Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to--

EDWARD

Will shut up for one goddamn second?
Look I want you to tell me the
truth.

JACK

About what?

The song "Happy House" by Siouxsie and the Banshees plays faintly on the TV. Edward slowly looks up. Terror and fury fill his eyes.

EDWARD

Did you kill her?

JACK

Kill-- what? What are you talking
about, man? Okay, you know what, you
gotta leave--

EDWARD

Did you kill Camille, yes or no?

JACK

You gotta go now. Come on, let's--

Edward shoots up, grabbing his GUN and pointing it directly at Jack's face.

EDWARD

Answer me, you sick fuck! Yes or no?

JACK

Jesus Christ! What the fuck? Edward!
Edward calm down.

Jack reels backward and raises his hands slowly.

INT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - ATTIC - NIGHT

Brussels turns on a small lamp. It flickers but doesn't fully turn on.

BRUSSELS

Watch your head, ma'am.

The ceiling pushes down on them. Dakota looks around at all the boxes that fill the small space. She sees jugs of WATER lined up next to the cardboard boxes.

DAKOTA

What are those for?

BRUSSELS

For the plantth.

Brussels bends down. He points at the PAINTING tucked away behind cardboard boxes.

The BACKSIDE of the CANVAS is exposed. Dakota notices a tiny barely visible RED LIGHT blink. She takes a step closer.

Brussels steps in front of her. She looks up at him.

DAKOTA

Did you know Mr. Osman personally?

BRUSSELS

Yeth, he wath my only friend.

The lamp begins to flicker before going out.

PITCH BLACK. Short quick BREATHS. Dakota feels something on her shoulder. Dakota's breath quickens.

Dakota takes out her FLASHLIGHT and GUN. She points them at Brussels.

DAKOTA

Freeze! Put your hands on your head and turn around. Spread your legs!

Brussels pushes past Dakota and runs down the stairs. Dakota takes off after him.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jack backs into a wall as Edward approaches with the GUN. Jack holds his hands high in the air.

EDWARD
Give me your phone.

Jack takes out his PHONE and hands it to him. Edward hurls the PHONE away.

JACK
Woah. Put the gun down, man--

EDWARD
Tell me. Did you fuck my wife?

JACK
Edward, can you put--

Edward thrusts the HANDGUN closer to Jack's head.

EDWARD
Answer me!

JACK
Yes! Yes! I did. I slept with her. Is that what you want to hear?

EDWARD
...and you thought I'd never find out if you just *killed* her. You sick fucking bastard.

JACK
Killed her? Edward, what are you saying? I--

Edward cocks the GUN, cutting Jack off.

EDWARD
Did you kill her? Did you kill her?

JACK
Fuck!

EDWARD
You fucking killed her, didn't you?

Jack begins to slide down the wall hopelessly.

JACK
No, no, no--

EDWARD
You killed her, didn't you?! You killed her!

JACK
I didn't kill her!

EDWARD
Shut the fuck up! I will fucking put a bullet through your head!

Edward watches as Jack crumples onto the ground, cowering.

JACK
I didn't kill her. I didn't, I swear. Please, I don't wanna die. Please. I just bought this house.

Edward watches in astonishment as Jack begins to sob.

JACK
Please don't kill me...

Edward continues to hold the GUN at Jack, but his hand shakes even more.

JACK
...I miss her...

As he hears this, Edward's hands drop to his side. He almost seems to come to his senses, realizing what he's holding.

Jack continues to sob as Edward backs away from the scene, then bolts for the front door.

INT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dakota rushes down the stairs and looks around frantically for Brussels. She rushes outside the front door and stops in her tracks.

EXT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - ESCONDIDO - NIGHT

Two police officers pin down Brussels. They put him in handcuffs. Dakota watches as Brussels stares at her. His EYES ask for her help.

Dakota looks out at the street. She sees a SILVER TRUCK drive by. The headlights shining bright. She can't make out the driver.

Dakota runs to her car. Her headlights flash and she catches a glimpse of the back of the TRUCK. No LICENSE PLATE.

Blue lights flicker on from her car.

She glances back to Brussels and sees him shove the cops away and grab a GUN from one of their holsters.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Woah, woah, woah. GUN! GUN! GUN!

POLICE OFFICER 2
DROP IT! DROP IT!

Dakota watches as the TRUCK speeds off. She looks back to Brussels again and exits her car reluctantly. Dakota runs over with her GUN raised.

Brussels points the GUN at the two cops. Brussels sees Dakota run out.

DAKOTA
Brussels! Put the gun down!

He looks around, unsure of what to do. Dakota takes a step closer. Brussels brings the GUN up to his chin slowly.

DAKOTA
Brussels! NO! NO! NO! NO!

The two cops rush him.

BANG! Brussels falls to the ground, DEAD.

Dakota falters, shocked at what she's witnessed. She lowers her GUN.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Shit.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Fuck, man.

Dakota looks away.

DAKOTA
(gulps)
Call an RA.
(louder)
Call an RA!

One of the cops shuffles away quickly, radio in hand.

Dakota walks out to the street. Empty. The TRUCK has disappeared.

Dakota paces around breathing heavily in the middle of the street.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jack's breathing slows. He regains his composure and finds his PHONE cracked on the ground. He taps it, and it still works.

Jack makes a call.

911 OPERATOR
911, please state your emergency.

JACK
(shakily)
Yes, a man just threatened me. He had a gun. I don't know where he went, but...

Jack's voice fades out.

EXT. BRUSSELS'S HOUSE - ESCONDIDO - NIGHT

Police lights flash. Yellow police tape wraps around the perimeter. Forensics officers carefully carry "OBSERVER" out of the house.

Dakota watches as the painting leaves. Its EYES seem to pierce her soul.

She leans down as if she's going to throw up. Dakota spots Matthew and quickly stands up. Her hands shaking.

She grabs a CIGARETTE from her pocket. Matthew walks up to her visibly upset.

MATTHEW
You happy now, detective?

Dakota remains silent. She proceeds to light her CIGARETTE. Matthew looks down at her.

MATTHEW
Fuck me. Now I'm gonna have to suspend you.

DAKOTA
I'm sorry, Matt. I take--

MATTHEW
Fuck your sorry. Save it for the guy's family.

Matthew looks around trying to control his anger. Dakota tries to keep up her stone-cold facade.

MATTHEW
I told you! I fucking told you not to
do this. Shit!

DAKOTA
(calm)
I'll submit the form tomorrow.

MATTHEW
Did you at least get anything out of
him?

Dakota shakes her head. Matthew looks off, pissed.

MATTHEW
Well, fuck me. I gotta go explain this
to the reporters.

Matthew walks off to the group of reporters standing at the
perimeter.

Once he's far enough Dakota turns around, panting. She looks
on the verge of tears as she tries to calm herself.

She checks her phone and sees multiple missed calls from
Margot.

EXT. RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD - RAMONA - DAY

TITLE:

The Next Morning

A police radio BEEPS. Police cars line up outside a long
winding driveway. A small wooden cabin sits atop the hill.

Police officers slowly ascend one by one, GUNS raised.

Dakota exits her car. She looks up at the hill and spots a
SILVER TRUCK sitting in one of the sheds. It has no LICENSE
PLATE.

EXT. LOG CABIN - RAMONA - DAY

Dakota follows behind a group of cops as they approach the
front door. A Cop nods and they kick down the door.

They race into the house, searching and yelling. Dakota slowly
walks in.

INT. LOG CABIN - RAMONA - DAY

Dakota, GUN raised, slowly rounds the corner into an empty
room. She looks up frozen. Her hand slowly lowers.

Above her, FEET dangle midair. Dakota forces herself to look once more, revealing a hanging MAN with a trash bag over his face.

His all-black clothes drip with WATER, and Dakota notices jugs of WATER in the corner of the room.

Dakota stares back at the Man. She's finally done it. It's over.

EXT. LOG CABIN - RAMONA - DAY

Dakota stands outside the perimeter as police lights flash. Ralph stands next to her as they chat quietly.

NEWS VANS park along the street. They set up their equipment as Dakota watches them.

Matthew pats her on the shoulder as he walks past her toward the reporters.

A weight has been lifted off of her. Dakota goes to light a CIGARETTE but hesitates. She pockets it instead.

The song "Song to Sleep to" by Evening Hymns begins to play.

NEWS REPORT (V.O.)

Just after the horrific suicide of Brussels Quimby last night, the SDPD were tipped off regarding the location of the killer of these disturbing homicide cases taking place so close to home. This morning, the killer has been discovered having committed suicide in their living room. SDPD reports that they seem to be ex-military, though they have yet to determine the identity of this individual. For her efforts helming this case, Detective Dakota Greene will be awarded. Her ceremony will take place in a week's time. With this news coming out, everybody in San Diego can be at ease. The danger has passed, and this dark chapter of our lives has come to a close.

INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Linda watches the TV as the news report plays. She pets her dog in her lap.

Push in on the TV.

INT. SDPD STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Pull out of the TV. Edward watches the screen intently as he sits on the bench.

He smiles as he sees Dakota on the TV. She gives a speech and receives applause from the reporters.

INT. MS. OSMAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Push in on Ms. Osman as she lights a CIGARETTE. She notices Dakota on the TV.

Her mascara runs under her eyes. Wet with tears. Her two kids jump on the bed behind her.

She smiles as she hears the report. Push in on the TV.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pull out of the TV. Patrick sits on the couch with an arm around his wife, GRACE, 60.

Patrick smiles proudly.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Dakota puts her BADGE on the counter. Margot runs downstairs and looks at her mom.

Dakota outstretches her arms and Margot runs in to hug her.

Dakota smiles as she sees the news report on the TV.

INT./EXT. DAKOTA'S CAR - MOVING - DAWN

Dakota drives silently. No music or radio plays. Just the sounds of cars passing by and the hum of the engine.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

Waves lap along the shore.

EXT. BEACH OVERLOOK POINT - DAWN

The wind howls aggressively. Dakota walks out onto the wooden platform. She stares down at the ocean.

Dakota carefully takes out a CIGARETTE and struggles to light it.

She takes a deep breath. Dakota's eyes water. She stares out taking another deep breath.

A TEAR rolls down her cheek.

INT. SDPD STATION - MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Dakota walks into Matthew's office. She stands there, silent at first. Then they both smile at each other.

MATTHEW

Well, fuck me, Dakota, we did it!

Dakota laughs and they both hug.

MATTHEW

Congrats, detective.

DAKOTA

Thank you, captain.

MATTHEW

As you know, the city wants to award you with a medal of honor. It's just that...

DAKOTA

Am I still suspended?

MATTHEW

Yes, about that. We're still gonna have to file something for that. It'll probably be around 30 days.

DAKOTA

I understand.

MATTHEW

You deserve the time off anyway, so just think of it as an extended vacation. But with no pay.

DAKOTA

No, no, I totally understand. I take complete responsibility for my actions.

Dakota turns to leave.

MATTHEW

Before you go... I need to show you something.

Matthew stands up and walks out.

INT. SDPD STATION - STORAGE BASEMENT - DAY

Matthew leads Dakota to one of the tables. On top sits the PAINTING covered in a thin plastic sheet.

Matthew lifts the sheet to reveal the BACKSIDE of the canvas.
A carefully cut INCISION was made.

Matthew picks up a small plastic bag on the edge of the table.
Inside, he points out TINY ELECTRONIC DEVICES connected with
wires. One of the devices blinks RED.

MATTHEW

The team felt something rattling around
in there. They found this inside.

Dakota leans in closer to the devices.

DAKOTA

Is this a--

MATTHEW

A tracking device. Yeah. The other's
some sort of microphone.

Dakota inspects the devices.

MATTHEW

The bastard was listening the entire
time.

BZZT! BZZT! Matthew takes his phone out.

MATTHEW

I'll be right back.

Matthew heads upstairs. Dakota stands over the table looking
down at the PAINTING. She's puzzled.

What does it mean?

INT. SDPD STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Edward sits there on the bench, staring at the ground.
Footsteps approach.

Edward looks up. Keys jingle and the cell door creaks open.
Dakota stands there looking down at Edward.

DAKOTA

Let's go, Ed.

EDWARD

So you guys finally got him?

DAKOTA

Yes, we did.

EDWARD

Congrats, Dakota.

DAKOTA

Thank you.

EDWARD

Who was it?

DAKOTA

Just some crazy guy. No one special.

Silence.

EDWARD

I'm sorry. I don't know what happened the other night.

DAKOTA

It's okay.

EDWARD

I'm not a bad person.

DAKOTA

I know.

Talking can be heard in the hallway. Dakota looks off. She takes a seat next to Edward.

EDWARD

You know that painting?

DAKOTA

My father's?

EDWARD

Did he ever tell you what it was?

DAKOTA

I don't know. I was 5 or 6 at that time.

EDWARD

What did you see when you looked at it?

Silence.

DAKOTA

I saw an old man. He had eyes that stared at you when you looked at him.

EDWARD

That's what most people saw. But some claimed they didn't see the old man. Do you know what they saw instead?

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

A perfectly ordinary, but beautiful landscape... yet, the closer you looked, the more it came apart. You saw trees that grew upside down, mountains that formed random shapes... none of it made sense. I suppose when we see the old man, it's just our minds making sense of all the madness...

Dakota stares off.

DAKOTA

Well, some things are better off observed than explained.

EDWARD

(scoffs)

I guess we'd all rather see the old man...

DAKOTA

It's comforting.

Brief silence.

EDWARD

Thank you.

DAKOTA

For what?

EDWARD

For sticking by me.

Dakota smiles. Edward and Dakota sit there on the bench both exhausted.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BEACH TOWN - DAY

Waves crash in the distance.

EXT. SAN DIEGO BEACH TOWN - DAY

Dissolve to different parts of the town. The sun barely pierces an overcast sky. No birds in the sky.

EXT. BEACHSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A fresh-faced man in his 30s with a beard, ROBBY, gets out of a van. A camera crew follows him as he walks over to a coffee shop.

Out on the shoreline, he watches as surfers ride the waves.

Then from the corner of his eye, he spots Edward.

Edward looks around and spots Robby. He looks noticeably older, now in his late 40s, with some gray hairs, clean-shaven, and wearing glasses. He makes his way over.

Edward shakes Robby's hand.

ROBBY

Mr. Lim, thank you so much for meeting with us.

EDWARD

Please, it's Edward. And the pleasure's all mine.

ROBBY

The crew needs some time to get set up and everything, so I was thinking I could ask you some questions. Just for a short article.

EDWARD

Ah, of course, Robby.

Edward pours some cream in his coffee and notices a BOOK in Robby's satchel. Edward watches Robby. Robby reminds him of his younger self.

On the cover in big red font: "THE OBSERVED: THE SHOCKING TRUE STORY OF THE INFAMOUS SAN DIEGO SERIAL KILLER by Edward Lim, author of *The Greene Files*".

Robby reaches into his satchel and grabs the BOOK along with a small NOTEPAD.

ROBBY

Shall we get started?

Edward nods and Robby taps the recording icon on his phone.

ROBBY

So Mr. Lim-- Edward, I gotta say I'm a big fan of your work. I still remember reading your articles from the Union-Tribune. You've had quite the impressive career in the past decade, and now with your seventh book, "The Observed" just published, it seems that people were quite surprised when you announced that it would be your last.

EDWARD

Not last. No. I'm just taking a break for now.

ROBBY

Some people criticized the way you painted the victims, while others praised how you presented them honestly. How would you define your portrayal of the victims?

EDWARD

Well, I just wanted to tell it as it really happened. Because the victims were not perfect people, they weren't saints by any means. And that's okay. In the end, it gives us a little insight into the killer's mind. The killer didn't kill innocent people.

ROBBY

Ah, okay.

(pauses)

You said it took you over a decade to write this book, and you also stated that now seems like the appropriate time to share this story. Why now?

Edward pauses.

EDWARD

Well, you've read the book, so you'll probably understand why it took so long. I had to get accounts of all the events I didn't personally witness, all the crime scenes, the police investigation... interviews with all the victims' families.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

But I think the reason I didn't feel it was right to publish this before now was because everyone was so shaken up.

ROBBY

As I was reading, it became clear who you believed the killer to be. There's obviously no way of knowing, but what led you to that conclusion?

EDWARD

I didn't realize till after I began writing the book that Dennis Greene was a possible suspect. Everything lined up. He was 6 foot 3. He drove a silver truck. He was ex-military. Had no alibis. Unfortunately, we'll never know because he died a year later, but it's...

(scoffs)

It's ironic.

ROBBY

What is?

EDWARD

A survivor of trauma inflicting trauma on others. It's just a cycle.

ROBBY

Who do you think killed Pierce Greene?

EDWARD

I don't know. Probably just some crazy guy.

ROBBY

I assume you've heard about the controversy surrounding the ending of this book?

EDWARD

Yes, yes... I understand why some people are upset. But... to me and to everyone involved, it was a sense of closure, I guess. Because, in reality, the police and Dakota Greene never solved the case. They never caught the killer or found the killer hanging in his house. That was my own imagining. And I never had that conversation with Dakota in that cell. It never could've happened, because...

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Dakota's daughter committed suicide on January 23rd, 2013. The same day that Brussels died. Dakota came home and found her hanging in her room. She moved away soon after and I haven't spoken to her since.

Silence. Waves crash in the distance. Robby looks at Edward as Edward remains deep in thought.

EDWARD

So you see, these people, these families never found out who the killer was. The man who watched the life leave his victims' eyes. The man who watched their private lives through a painting. Who acted as judge, jury, and executioner. This man was never brought to justice. But what sense of hope or closure does a reader get from an ending like that? That's why in the book, I gave them that closure. I gave them the ending we all wanted.

Edward stares out at the ocean. The waves rise and then fall.

INT./EXT. EDWARD'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Edward drives home listening to the sound of the ocean. He looks at peace. Outside the car window, the sun glistens on the waves.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DEL MAR - DAY

Edward arrives home in the driveway. A little boy, OWEN LIM, 5, runs out, and Edward picks him up and spins him around. Owen laughs and stretches out his arms.

EDWARD

What did you do today at school, Owen?

OWEN

We painted in class. I painted a picture of my friend.

EDWARD

Oh, that's wonderful, buddy.

Then Betty, now in her late 30s, emerges in the doorway. She looks better than ever.

Edward looks at her and smiles. She smiles back. He walks over carrying the boy and kisses her.

BETTY

How was it?

EDWARD

Oh, it was great.

Edward puts his arm around Betty, but quickly pulls away and takes his phone out. He stares at the notification.

EDWARD

One sec.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Snowflakes drift lazily towards the ground. Car windows appear frosted over. No one walks outside on a day like this.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

It's fairly quiet. Kids roam around the hallway but no talking can be heard. A short woman walks through the halls wearing a massive coat.

We follow from behind her. She carries folders and a handbag in her arm.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The room remains dark and still. Suddenly the door opens to reveal Dakota, now 49, noticeably older. She keeps the door open and makes her way to her desk.

Dakota begins setting up her supplies. Around the room, the decoration looks colorful suited for younger kids.

Dakota flips the LIGHT SWITCH on.

Children around the ages of 9 and 10 begin filing in with their backpacks. Occasional laughter can be heard along with a few mumbled words.

The children SIGN to each other as they take their seats.

Dakota flips the LIGHT SWITCH on and off to get the children's attention. They all look to Dakota as she raises her crossed fingers in the air.

The kids all follow her lead and stop moving.

Dakota begins signing in AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE as she paces in front of the class.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

The wind howls. Snow covers the streets and the sidewalks. Dakota walks along bundled up in her coat, fighting against the wind.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

DING! The bell above the front door rings as Dakota enters. She stomps her boots on the doormat.

She walks in and gets in line. While in line she spots "THE OBSERVED" on one of the book racks. She takes a step closer.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door creaks open, and Dakota drops her keys in a small bowl. Her apartment remains dimly lit with little furniture.

The TV turns on and a news report starts playing.

ROBBY (V.O.)

Inspired by the grisly true events that rocked the small beach city of San Diego a decade ago, Edward Lim decided that this horrifying story, which he himself lived through, needed a better ending.

EDWARD (V.O.)

...all these families whose loved ones were victims, they never got the closure they needed. I wanted to be able to provide that.

ROBBY (V.O.)

And provide it he did. His latest New York Times best-seller "THE OBSERVED" has sold almost 7 million copies, and it seems the families of the victims were particularly receptive to it.

Carter Osman, now 18 and dressed like a skater, appears on screen.

CARTER OSMAN (V.O.)

A lot of people, you know, thought it was too sensitive a topic. I thought it was perfect.

Dakota stares at the TV in awe. She gets out her phone and searches for Edward's name in her contacts.

She finds it, and her thumb hovers over the "Call" button.

The song "Family Tree" by Evening Hymns begins to play.

INT. ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCE - DAY

Linda, now in her 80s, sits on a couch with other elderly ladies chatting. She looks in good health.

Her dog rests at her feet. She plays bingo with the other ladies, and they look like they're having a good time. On the table sits Edward's book: "THE OBSERVED".

EXT. COURTYARD - DRUG AND DETOX CENTER - DAY

Carter Osman sits across from his mother. He wears a visitor name tag.

Ms. Osman, now in her 50s, has bags under her eyes, graying hair, and looks severely skinny. She has tears in her eyes as she looks at Carter.

Carter slides "THE OBSERVED" onto the table. Ms. Osman picks it up and gazes at the cover.

INT. BEDROOM - NANCY'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

A reading lamp glows beside her bed. Nancy sits on the bed engrossed in Edward's book: "THE OBSERVED". She flips another page.

Nancy leans forward, totally absorbed in the material, her reading glasses about to fall off of her face.

INT. SDPD STATION - DAY

Police officers walk by, revealing Cody, now in his 30s, talking with Ralph, now much older and balding. He sits at Dakota's old desk. Cody cut his hair and looks more mature.

Matthew exits his office and signals to Cody. Matthew now has a beard and tired eyes. Cody hangs up and runs over to Matthew's office.

On Cody's cluttered desk sits Edward's book: "THE OBSERVED".

INT. SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE - GREENSCREEN STUDIO - DAY

A Makeup Person finishes up with Harry's face and rushes out of the way. Harry clears his throat and begins shouting at a camera.

Harry holds up "THE OBSERVED" angrily and shouts scathing words about it.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Patrick sits backstage, now in his late 70s, with a white beard. He's reading "THE OBSERVED".

A Lady walks up to him. Patrick nods, setting the book down, and he walks out onto a stage before a crowd that erupts into applause.

Patrick waves and launches into a long tangent. People in the audience laugh.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DAY

Jack, now in his 50s, sits on the couch with a younger Woman and a young child. They watch TV together.

He puts his arm around both of them and smiles.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Snow gently falls.

Dakota slams the car door shut. Edward emerges from the passenger seat. She leaves her car running with the headlights on.

They walk over to the warehouse door, and Dakota presses a switch. Suddenly, the huge overhead door begins to open.

As the door rises, it slowly reveals the "OBSERVER," partly covered in a white cloth. It leans against the wall, illuminated by the car headlights.

Closer. The EYES stare back. A clear liquid droops down over the painting.

Edward tosses aside a bottle and looks to Dakota. Then...

The sound of a lighter FLICKING. Igniting.

Bright. Flames. Growing.

Dakota and Edward stand over the painting, WATCHING.

The PAINT slowly melts, turning black and shrinking in on itself. Closing in. The EYES keep staring. And we...

CUT TO BLACK.

CREDITS.

END.