

#1.

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#FADE IN

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MAIN HALLWAY - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

The camera slowly ZOOMS IN on the entrance to Monroe Academy--a set of large oak doors with stained glass windows. The two doors swing open. Through them comes running SULLIVAN STOKES, a tall, handsome 18-year old. He is wearing a black graduation robe. His hair is disheveled. He has a large, somewhat bloody gash above his left eyebrow. He runs down the long hall of lockers, past a very large trophy case and through another set of doors.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. COURTYARD - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes descends down the stairs into the courtyard. He sprints across the giant courtyard and goes through another set of doors.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AMPHITHEATER - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

The amphitheater is packed. Bright stage lights are blinding Stokes. He stands on the upmost level. Sweaty, confused, he scans the stage desperately.

POV - STOKES

The FLOOR LIGHTS are blinding. The individual students onstage cannot be made out, only silhouettes. Everything becomes blurry, then clear, blurry, then clear. His eyes are having trouble focusing.

BACK TO SCENE

He wipes tears and sweat out of his eyes.

STOKES

(hoarsely)

Stop.

Something happens onstage. The audience breaks out in applause. He slowly descends down the narrow steps.

STOKES (CONT'D)

(hoarsely)  
STOP!!!

He can't be heard over the applause.

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AUDITORIUM. BACKSTAGE - EARLY EVENING.  
WEDNESDAY

DETECTIVE PAMELA WILKES is a pretty woman in her early 30s. She is dressed in a formal suit. She scans the stage, looks out into the audience and sees the young man in the gown among the audience. She raises her sleeve and speaks into a Secret Service-type walkie-talkie.

PAM  
(into walkie)  
Ms. Carter, there is a youth in a robe  
yelling.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AUDITORIUM. AUDIENCE - EARLY EVENING.  
WEDNESDAY

DETECTIVE DEANNA CARTER is a little older than Pam. She's pretty too, but in a more earthy sort. She's in the audience, walking up and down the aisle, patrolling it--policing it. She also has a walkie-talkie.

DEANNA  
(into walkie)  
Where?

Pam examines Stokes's location for a moment. The auditorium is immense.

PAM  
(into walkie)  
Middle stairway, about row 40 and coming  
down quickly...

Deanna is in the 20 or so row, left. She begins to push and hustle her way across the crowds to get to the center stairway.

Pam strains her eyes to see the silhouette coming down the stairs, the stage lights are blinding her too.

PAM

(into walkie)

Ms. Carter, I think it's Stokes.

Deanna is still trying to reach the center stairway. Her face changes from stoic to being satisfied and redeemed.

DEANNA

(into walkie, confidently)

It would be.

Pam rushes offstage to a STAGE DIRECTOR and grabs a ROSTER from him. She frantically flips through the pages until she reaches the appropriate page.

PAM

(into walkie)

Yes, it is him; he didn't sign in with the program director.

Deanna's almost in the center stairway. She gets by the last seat and is now in the middle stairway. She pivots around and draws her GUN just in time to greet Stokes with it. He stops dead in his tracks. He has his hands up in a motion of gentle coaxing. Deanna's tense, but feels pretty in control of the situation. The audience doesn't notice this standoff.

DEANNA

Down!

STOKES

Carter, didn't you get the package?

DEANNA

I don't know what you're talking about--was trying to get you the benefit of the doubt.

Stokes shifts back and forth and sideways in his steps and with his eyes. His eyes are dilated. He's bleeding from the gash on his brow. He's sweating and seemingly disorientated, looking like he's on speed. He's dying to get past Deanna, but knows it's not worth being killed over. Seeing the chances of having a rational discussion with her are over, he just yells out for all the auditorium

to hear.

STOKES

Get off my ass. There's someone onstage,  
with a gun!

Deanna looks at him confused.

DEANNA

(not taking her eyes off him,  
into walkie)

Pam, do you see a shooter onstage?

Pam scans the stage again. The crowd is still applauding loudly. The stage lights are still blinding.

POV - PAM

TWO ROBED FIGURES are in front of a podium, hugging. The lights only allow Pam to make out their robed silhouettes.

BACK TO SCENE

PAM

(into walkie)

I don't know--I can't--

DEANNA

(interrupting, into walkie)

Pam, do you see anyone!?!

Pam doesn't respond; she looks around desperately. She slowly walks onstage but tries to avoid making a scene. She sees something.

PAM

NO!

Deanna's a little confused. She takes the "no" as meaning Pam does not see a shooter and continues to hold Stokes at bay.

Pam runs further onstage and draws her GUN from a holster on her back and stops somewhere near the podium but in front of the graduating class who sits on bleachers behind the podium. She's no longer concerned with blending in. We don't see where exactly she points her gun.

DEANNA

Down.

(asserting herself with her  
gun)

DOWN!

Deanna hears all this, but she doesn't flinch. Stokes is now making little faking movements right and left.

STOKES

Carter, Carter,...(beat)...CARTER! You have three seconds to put it down or kill me. I'm not playing games with you like before.

DEANNA

On the floor!

STOKES

One...

DEANNA

On the floor!

STOKES

...TWO!!!...

CUT TO BLACK

SFX - GUNSHOT

SFX - PEOPLE SCREAMING

FADE IN

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - NIGHT. SUNDAY

A pretty 16-year-old girl, SAMANTHA, is running along the center divide screaming. Her BLOUSE is torn, as are several buttons on her fly. An occasional CAR zips by her.

SAMANTHA

HELP!!!

She waves her arms in the air, frantically trying to get a driver's attention--to no avail. A GRAY BMW comes from

nowhere. The tires SCREECH. The luxury vehicle hits her. She flies several feet and lands on the pavement with a grotesque THUD. Out steps BRYAN (French pronunciation) and EDDIE (Eddie was in the driver's seat), two clean-cut and handsome 18-year-olds dressed in parochial school uniforms. They regard the girl's bloody body lying on the pavement for a moment, and then step back into the car.

INT. EDDIE'S BMW - NIGHT. SUNDAY

The two teens fasten their seatbelts.

EDDIE  
(calmly and casually)  
Well, that's that.

Bryan nods in agreement. Eddie starts the car, and they drive off, leaving a pair of tire treads in the fresh blood.

INT. EDDIE'S BMW - NIGHT. SUNDAY

The two are on the freeway. Eddie's paying great attention to the road. Bryan's intensely concentrating on his jacket lapel.

POV - BRYAN

There's a small hole in his lapel where something was obviously once pinned. He fingers this hole, thinking.

BACK TO SCENE

EDDIE  
(not taking his eyes off the  
road)  
Something wrong, dude?

BRYAN  
(a little worried)  
No. Nothing.

He lets go of his lapel. Meanwhile, back at the crime scene, Samantha's broken body lays with her face upwards to the night sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - MORNING. MONDAY

CLOSE SHOT - COLLEEN'S FACE

COLLEEN, 18, beautiful, delicate features are locked in slumber. A TULIP enters the shot. The bulb gently caresses her cheek and moves up to her mouth. She smiles, becoming more conscience of the real world but not totally awake. She GIGGLES a little and kisses the flower.

We WIDE OUT. Stokes, in his school uniform, is holding it.

CLOSE-UP - THE TULIP

The bulb slowing moves down her chin and neck through the valley of her exposed cleavage, down her belly and down...

CLOSE SHOT - COLLEEN'S FACE

She's awake now, with her eyes closed. The smile on her face is now wider, more mischievous.

STOKES (O.S.)

Wow, you sure like your bulbs.

COLLEEN

(ecstatically)

You're such a pervert.

STOKES (O.S.)

I'm a pervert? You're the one who's obviously enjoying it. (beat) Wakey, wakey, you have to get to school early today. All part of being on the graduation committee.

(teasing)

You took an oath, didn't you?

Her eyes jerk open.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING. MONDAY

CLOSE-UP - A BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY

Samantha's being held down by a pair of hands from a person outside of the shot. Her face is stricken with a horrified expression, one of great pain and humiliation. A large, gaudy DIAMOND RING on a Latino's hand is catching the sun

in a blinding way, like a small prism from Hell. He taps the pictures with his index finger.

BRYAN (O.S.)

Here are the pictures.

MARIE (O.S.)

Was she scared?

EDDIE (O.S.)

Of course.

We WIDE OUT. Her bedroom is large and heavily Spanish influenced. MARIE VALETTE is a beautiful 18-year-old dressed in a parochial school girl uniform. She wears little make-up, and her basic mannerisms reek of innocence. She reclines in a chair in the center of the room. Bryan and Eddie are sitting at the coffeetable before her, looking at the photographs. A large UNKU TATTOO adorns the shirtless Bryan's muscular back.

BRYAN

I stayed up 'til three developing them.

EDDIE

Assignment complete.

Marie picks up the pictures and sorts through them. She chooses a close-up of the girl's horrified face and stares at it with her intense eyes.

MARIE

You don't sound as happy as you should be.

She runs a well-manicured finger along Samantha.

MARIE (CONT'D)

She was pretty.

EDDIE

We had a small problem--...

BRYAN

(interrupting)

She's dead.



MARIE

I know.

We WIDE OUT, and Marie's room is revealed to be even larger and more exquisite. Paying great notice to her, standing and sitting and leaning in various parts of the room, is a score of TEENAGE BOYS. The one common factor is that they're all dressed in identical black and blue school uniforms and skinny '60s era ties. Most of them are in the shadows.

MARIE (CONT'D)

We live in the Information Age, my friends. The "PCH Killer," I believe Matt Lauer called you. Like when a girl is found dead in South Central, she's a victim of the "Martin Luther King Boulevard Killer."

She places the photographs down on the coffeetable. A boy named LOUIS is basically lurking in a dark corner.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Congratulations. You two knuckleheads just picked up a nobody off the street and made her a celebrity.

CLOSE SHOT - LOUIS

A clean-cut boy with slicked back hair and whose uniform is evilly sharp and clean, he takes out a CIGAR and a CIGAR CUTTER. He cuts an end off it. Louis places the cutter back into his pocket and removes a ZIPPO LIGHTER. He speaks in a deep Southern drawl.

LOUIS

Just like Lana Turner.

BACK TO SCENE

MARIE

(sarcastically)

I know. They're heroes.

CLOSE SHOT - LOUIS

He has already lit the cigar and gives it a couple of starter puffs before taking it out of his mouth.

LOUIS  
But that's not it, is it?

EDDIE  
(embarrassed)  
No. It is not.

Eddie SNIFFLES.

LOUIS  
(to everyone)  
You see, Edward and I go way back--first grade, in fact--screwing up and around is second nature for him.

Louis continues to puff away in faux thought. Eddie looks pissed.

EDDIE  
(nervously)  
There arose an issue--during the actual act...

Eddie clears his throat.

BRYAN  
She scratched me.

This arouses the interests of TERRANCE SHERWOOD, a tall, imposing African American standing behind Marie. He isn't wearing his jacket.

TERRANCE  
Excuse me?

BRYAN  
The bitch scratched me.

Bryan lowers his pants and boxers a half inch and removes a large BAND-AID to show the assembly the deep red scratch mark just below his navel.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
Shit-for-brains over there didn't hold her down right.

EDDIE

(to Marie, trying to ignore him  
and keep his cool)  
She was thrashing.

BRYAN

She was, like, 100 pounds!

Some of the group members GIGGLE.

EDDIE

Excuse me, I don't need to do this as often  
as you.

BRYAN

What the fuck--

MARIE

(interrupting)  
Boys.

Eddie, Bryan and the rest of the group snap back into  
attention.

MARIE (CONT'D)

There is no need for negativity. But I  
forgive you. What is a family without  
forgiveness? And casting blame will not help  
us.

She thinks. She has no annoying ticks while she takes time  
off to think--not like most people. She is a perfect being.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Now we have a problem--a petite, blonde  
problem which requires solving. Come back  
at four, you'll see the solution. Any other  
business? (beat) Cool. See you later.

All of the boys gather their JACKETS and EXIT the room.  
Bryan's the last one to leave, putting his SHIRT and TIE  
on. With Bryan gone, Marie takes the photographs, places  
them in a manila FOLDER, and walks over to an ARMOIRE, and  
places it in the topmost drawer, and CLOSES it. She smiles  
wickedly.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. PARKING LOT - MORNING. MONDAY

The lot is filled with LUXURY/SPORTS CARS and SUVs. A MERCEDES drives through the gates and parks in one of the two remaining spaces (which happens to be side-by-side). Out steps Louis. He closes the door. His attention is drawn to an area of the hood--he sees a flaw in his perfect machine. He takes a HANDKERCHIEF from his jacket and begins to softly rub the offending area. A loud MOTOR breaks his concentration. A beat up MOTORCYCLE REVS through the lot, makes a sharp turn and pulls into the last space, leaving a long skid mark on the asphalt. The driver, Stokes, turns the engine off. He leans the bike against the kick stand and gets off.

AERIAL SHOT - PARKING LOT

Stokes's bike is in sharp contrast with the other vehicles.

BACK TO SCENE

Stokes takes off his HELMET and SUNGLASSES. Louis stares at him and the bike, knowing he should say something, but not knowing what. Stokes looks back at him.

STOKES

(jokingly)

Hey, dude, don't steal it.

LOUIS

(to Stokes)

Let me guess: scholarship student?

STOKES

No, but some of my best friends are.

Stokes walks away.

LOUIS

(quietly)

Asshole.

STOKES

(loudly, over his shoulder)

Bitch!

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HEADMASTER WALLACE'S OFFICE. MORNING.  
MONDAY

WALLACE is a man in his early sixties. He's still in good shape; only his face and gray hair indicate his years. His office is spacious, comfortable. The walls are adorned with PHOTOGRAPHS of various graduation classes and PLAQUES awarded to him for excellence in administration and teaching. He sits behind his DESK, studying DOCUMENTS. A loud BUZZ emits from his INTERCOM. He answers.

SANDRA (V.O.)

(over intercom)

Sir, Marie Valette is here to see you.

WALLACE

(into intercom)

Send her in, please.

Marie comes in. Wallace promptly drops the paperwork. She closes the door behind herself. Wallace has a somewhat frantic look on his face.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

(into intercom)

Sandra, would you please run down to accounting and help the boys Xerox this year's invoices?

There's a pause.

SANDRA (V.O.)

(over intercom)

Well, yessir. But that will take me at least until lunch.

WALLACE

(into intercom)

Thank you, Sandra.

A plastic smile breaks on his wrinkled face. He stands up and reaches over the desk and grasps Marie's hand in a gesture that suggests a great friendship and yet a not so subtle animosity between the two. She returns the sentiment. Only her smile looks more real.

MARIE

Good morning, Mr. Wallace. Congrats on the buy-out.

WALLACE

Thank you. Will you have a seat?

They release each other's hand and sit down.

MARIE

How are the kids?

WALLACE

Oh, fine, fine.

MARIE

And how about Charlotte?

Wallace's false smile turns into something more genuine.

WALLACE

(proudly)

Growing like a weed. Soon she'll be talking.

MARIE

That's nice--remember: I want to see pictures.

WALLACE

(nods)

I'm making you a copy.

MARIE

Good.

There's a moment of camaraderie between the two. Marie, modest, adjusts her skirt to ensure that it covers as much of her thigh in the seated position as possible. Wallace has obviously forgotten why he called her in.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You wanted to see me?

WALLACE

Oh, yes. Ms. Valette, I attended Monroe Academy for four years...

He stands up and walks to a wall. She turns to face him. He looks at one of the pictures on the wall and points to his

old black and white class portrait.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
...Graduating Class of 1954. After I left Harvard, I could have taught at any school or institution in the country but I came back here. Do you know why I came back here?

He turns to Marie. Marie doesn't answer; she just stares attentively.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
(proudly)  
Tradition! No other school in this nation has kept such a consistent record in academics, sports and honor. In the 1960s, when other schools were in turmoil and National Guardsmen were called to keep the peace, our school remained in order. President Nixon visited in 1969...

He's now looking at another picture on the wall.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
...and called Monroe the Educational Jewel of the West, wanted it to serve as a model for all American high schools, public and private--a great man, his life was only marred by his poor choice in associates,... (beat)...but as the old saying goes, "history is written by the victors," Ms. Valette.

He returns to his desk.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
We accepted our first female students in 1980 after a California Supreme Court ruling that we must maintain at least a 9:1 gender ratio at all times or lose our accreditation.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
We'd still be the greatest institute for pre-collegiate learning, but according to

the state, we'd actually be beneath even the most common public schools. And there's nothing exceptional about being common. (beat) Don't misunderstand me, looking back that was a great moment for all of Monroe. We could have doubled our influence.

He sits back down in his chair.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, around this time the male students' standardized test scores began to decline in a seemingly direct relation to the rise of female enrollment. Lacking a better way of saying it--

MARIE

(frankly, unoffended and accepting)

Girls were ruining Boys' Town.

Wallace is obviously somewhat taken aback at this feat of mindreading. He looks for a moment at her pretty stoic face and her haunting eyes.

WALLACE

Yes, well, I never liked that nickname--I mean we're not exactly Sparta, are we?

He smiles for a moment at what he feels was a witty observation. Marie sits rigid and unmoved.

MARIE

Tradition and integrity isn't just why you want to avoid a higher level of female enrollment, is it?

He leans forward, crossing his hands and addressing her in an informal manner.

WALLACE

If enrollment drops below the court mandate, the school's major shareholders will have to achieve a greater balance by granting scholarships to children who although intellectually qualified, do not fit our...



Wallace chooses his words carefully.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

...preference toward the more financially stable.

MARIE

The rich.

WALLACE

(tired)

I've worked almost 50 years to get where I am today. I have a lot tied up in this school. We can't all be as well-to-do as the Valettes; any financial hardship this school suffers comes directly out of my pocket. When Lady Monroe bleeds, I hemorrhage.

MARIE

I don't see what I can do.

WALLACE

Ms. Valette, we both know that in every enclosed environment, there is a select group of people who for one reason or another control nearly everything, and within that group there is bound to be a nucleus--a single person who heads the group.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

This person may or may not rule on an official capacity, but they do rule nonetheless--that's called power. Now would you say we are in an enclosed environment?

MARIE

Yes, sir.

WALLACE

Thus there must be a student union that I am not at present aware of--and I trust I never will be, because if such knowledge is released to--anyone--I will be forced to seek reprisal.

MARIE

Of course. You'd be expected to.

MARIE (CONT'D)

But how could you be sure that such  
a...(beat)...conspiracy exists here?

WALLACE

Although not privy to the goings on here  
before your entrance, I'm sure you've  
noticed a good share of oddness happens  
here atypical of any other school.

MARIE

Like?

WALLACE

Like what happened in the faculty parking  
lot two years back.

FLASHBACK

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. FACULTY PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

A LINCOLN TOWNCAR slowly pulls out of the parking lot.

INT. LINCOLN TOWNCAR - AFTERNOON

Through a rolled down window, we see Wallace is alone in  
the driver's seat. He drives over something like a  
speedbump. We hear a loud POP and his car is no longer  
even--the front end is sloped down. He stops immediately.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

To this day,...

Wallace gets out of the car. He sees the extensive damage  
done to his front wheels.

CLOSE SHOT - THE SEVERE TIRE DAMAGE SPIKES

The SPIKES which should have been curved outward were  
reversed, turned inward.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

...I don't know why a student would risk  
expulsion, their entire future, just to

reverse the parking spikes and ruin  
someone's day.

BACK TO SCENE

We PAN AROUND toward the athletics field. We quickly ZOOM across the field like a bird going at mach speed. As the camera moves along, we see that beyond the field are bleachers; on the bleachers, our attention is drawn to Marie sitting, holding a pair of BINOCULARS. We STOP.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

Wallace is sitting pensively at his desk and looks at Marie, obviously waiting for an answer.

MARIE

I don't know why either.

WALLACE

Yes, well...

FLASHBACK

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HALLWAY - MORNING

STUDENTS line both sides of the hall, turning their locker knobs to and fro and trying to push the latch up and open them. Some of them have out SLIPS OF PAPER with their combination on it. They MUMBLE and CURSE to themselves aloud.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

...one day last September, students were  
unable to open their lockers;...

Wallace walks down the center of the hall, a confused old man in the midst of confused youth. He wants to help, but doesn't see how he can.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

...there was a break-in the night before.  
Nothing was taken, but every locker's  
combination was altered.

Marie watches her classmates struggle with their lockers--a gleeful observer of the chaos. Wallace sees her. She sees

him coming towards her with a grave(r) look on his face. A little panicked, she turns towards the first locker she sees and begins going through the motions of trying to open it like everyone else.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

We have a night watchman come by every hour on the hour to check the grounds, and the only way to change a combination is by hand.

Wallace is within two feet of his target, pauses--then moves on.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

WALLACE (CONT'D)

There are almost 2,000 lockers--why? For what purpose?

Marie shrugs.

FLASHBACK

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. GYMNASIUM - EVENING

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

Promising young basketball player Tyler Harris suffered his career ending injury here during the state semi-finals.

The gym is brimming with SPECTATORS. The SCORE BOARD reads "Home: 85/Guests: 92." From out of nowhere, a tall boy clad in green, with the name "HARRIS" written prominently on his JERSEY takes possession of the BALL and leaps up into the air. He soars majestically like a young Michael Jordan as he approaches the basket. The ball is slammed in, but he chooses to pull a Charles Barkeley and holds on to the hoop. Then every screw and bolt on the basket comes popping off. So does the glass backboard and the piping affixing it to the wall. Like a house of cards scattered to the wind, everything comes down. All of the other team members manage to clear the area beyond the free-throw lines. Harris falls, hitting the ground with a boneshattering CRASH. The

glass backboard and piping come down on him, pinning him. Everyone rushes around the spectacle, including Wallace.

WALLACE

(taking control)

Don't touch him! Don't touch him!

He turns around and sees Marie sitting in the bleachers, staring as everyone else is in a panic.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

MARIE

That was awful.

FLASHBACK

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Marie is in the same position as before and surrounded by the "boys." Same room. Same atmosphere but more fast paced.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Tyler Harris, son of software magnet Lorne Harris, starter for Fairview High's basketball team--nouveau rich.

TERRANCE

They're good. Beat us, the championship's theirs.

MAXIMILIAN SAYLES, a prim young man is sitting on Marie's elaborate FOUR POST BED. STEVE CHEN is standing by the window which opens onto the balcony.

MAXIMILIAN

Even money?

TERRANCE

Yep.

MAXIMILIAN

Fuck.

(to everyone)

What do we do?

CHEN

What can we do?

We see a pair of big white hands playing with a SLING BLADE. The hilt is gold. LESLIE's hands. We also see his legs and can tell he's tall and lanky. His pants are a little short, and we see his thin shins above hideous brown socks.

LESLIE (O.S.)

Break his legs.

There is an awkward moment of silence. This is a serious idea to be seriously considered by the group. ELI's in the light. He isn't as fond of darkness as the others. He's not ugly, but he's pale and somewhat scrawny with unkempt hair. He too speaks with a Southern drawl.

ELI

(to the ensemble, but especially  
to the unseen Leslie)

Yeah. Yeah, maybe something a little less  
psychotic. It's just a game.

TERRANCE

Not just. A championship.

MAXIMILIAN

Athletics and academics keep us on top. The trophies and pennants which line our Lady Monroe's hallowed halls are as important as the volumes in her library; as long as Monroe's on top, we'll be--we sure as Hell cannot allow these little upstart fuckers upset our standing.

ELI

So how far will we go to win?

MARIE

Not to win. To teach him a lesson. Everyone knows he's destined for greatness, so we shall prevent his success. Put the fear of...(beat)...something greater into him.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

Wallace no longer looks irritated. Now he looks just plain

pissed.

WALLACE

And then just last month there was the  
incident at the prom--  
(sarcastically)  
--that was just plain subtle...

She nods in agreement.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I have had my suspicions over the years,  
but I've never wanted to accuse a student.

FLASHBACK

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. THE GYMNASIUM - EVENING

The EMTs load Harris onto a STRETCHER and roll him towards  
the door.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

First and foremost because I did not want  
to make an accusation I could not  
substantiate with actual evidence instead  
of fleeting across the room glances,...

He looks across the gym and sees her--her in her neat  
parochial school girl outfit with legs crossed like a  
perfect lady--her staring at him with pensive, plotting  
eyes.

WALLACE (CONT'D, V.O.)

...but also because somewhere--perhaps in  
the back of my mind somewhere--I knew that  
letting such a sleeping dog lie would come  
to my advantage at some later time.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm going to call a long overdue favor out  
today.

MARIE

That's quite an imagination you have, sir.

MARIE (CONT'D)

But I'd think someone who wielded such sway would want some kind of incentive for the task I believe you are suggesting.

WALLACE

Such as?

MARIE

Maybe the keys to Berlitz Hall--at least for an afternoon.

He opens a drawer and removes a set of KEYS.

WALLACE

Out of the question. I can't violate a student's privacy like that.

He gets up and walks around the desk to her. She stands. He hands the keys to her. She takes them and smiles.

MARIE

Why again did you want to see me, sir?

WALLACE

Just wanted to congratulate you. Being class valedictorian is a great achievement.

MARIE

Yessir.

She walks out the door.

INT. LAPD STATION. HALLWAY - MORNING. MONDAY

POV - PAM WILKES

She walks down the hall. Everywhere she goes there are smiles and "hellos." A HANDSOME COP comes toward her.

HANDSOME COP

Pam, are we still good Friday?

She turns her neck to see him.

PAM (V.O.)

Sure.



HANDSOME COP

Great.

She turns her neck forward and keeps on walking.

INT. LAPD STATION. ROBBERY-HOMICIDE DIVISION - MORNING.  
MONDAY

Deanna is quietly sitting at her DESK, doing a NEWSPAPER  
CROSSWORD PUZZLE. Pam places her BOX of personal belongings  
on Deanna's desk. She then extends her hand.

PAM

Hi, Detective Deanna Carter? Detective  
Pam Wilkes--actually, Dr. Detective Pam  
Wilkes, I guess.

Pam smiles. She has obviously gone through this moment a  
little too much. Deanna looks up over her READING GLASSES  
at her. She forces a smile. She does not shake Pam's hand,  
talks to the young go-getter like she just got off the  
little yellow bus.

DEANNA

Well isn't that nice?

She places the pencil and paper on her desk, gets up, and  
takes off her glasses and goes to a FILING CABINET. She  
rolls open the topmost cabinet wide. Pam, finally figuring  
out no return of respect will be given, takes her arm back  
and places it on the box.

PAM

I just made detective last month; this will  
be my first case working in Robbery-  
Homicide--as you can imagine, I'm quite  
anxious.

Deanna seems to be ignoring her.

DEANNA

(not looking at Pam)  
What did the powers that be actually tell  
you about this murder?

PAM

Honestly, nothing. Just that my degree in psychology and personal background will be an asset to the investigation.

DEANNA

Yeah. Did you bring your suitcase?

PAM

In my car.

After a final minute of searching, she produces a small EVIDENCE BAGGIE.

DEANNA

Great, let's go.

She slides the drawer shut, turns and removes the key, LOCKING it.

PAM

Now?

Deanna walks towards the door. Pam reluctantly follows.

DEANNA

Why not--you have plans?

PAM

Nothing I couldn't can--

DEANNA

(interrupting)

Good.

Deanna opens the door and steps through. Pam follows. After several seconds of walking down a low traffic hall, Deanna turns to her and for the first time shows her the baggie's contents.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

A pin. Taken from the death grip of that Palisades girl found this morning on PCH. Raped. Murdered. This and a sketchy vehicle and suspect description are the only things we can even vaguely call evidence--this being the better of the two.

She hands it to her.

CLOSE-UP - THE PIN

The CLASS PIN is gold with several blue gems surrounding it. Inscribed on it: "Notre Chère."

DEANNA (O.S.)

Recognize it?

Pam holds it to the light, twisting and turning it to see it at every angle.

DEANNA (CONT'D, O.S.)

Fourteen carat gold embedded with a half dozen top quality blue sapphires.

BACK TO SCENE

PAM

Monroe Academy. (beat) Any hope for forensic evidence?

DEANNA

None. The rape kit yielded nothing. No semen, no hairs. The assailants were meticulously clean.

They continue walking.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

10:56 p.m., Samantha Lane is seen leaving a mall by a closing shopkeeper with two males, white or Hispanic, age 16-21, in a gray BMW sedan. No plates. It was too dark, and in the absence of a struggle, no one's suspicion was aroused. Earlier accounts by other witnesses had the girl pleasantly conversing with the same two young men, who were just described as being well-dressed and having no distinctive characteristics whatsoever.

They speed up.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

The Commissioner, in cooperation with Seacrest's Sheriff Office, wants no more

than two detectives to investigate as inconspicuously as possible. Apparently our being there trying to catch two killers would just spoil their ambiance--or something like that.

She stops, gently grabs Pam lightly by the elbow, stopping her.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

We don't want another William Kennedy Smith Scandal here, and I don't want to loose these punks; they all have the resources to run, easily.

They stand in silence for a quick moment. Deanna feeling Pam needs time to process this. They continue down the hall-- slower.

PAM

And the school?

DEANNA

We have not yet gained permission from the board to enter, but we don't need to. What we prefer are for the teachers and administration to keep quiet for the duration of our investigation--that's all.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. BERLINTZ HALL - MORNING. MONDAY

AERIAL SHOT

Marie sits, surrounded by FILE CABINETS, at an OAK DESK, pouring over dozens of MANILA FOLDERS. She opens one. She writes on a "HELLO KITTY" PAD with a PINK OVERSIZED NOVELTY PENCIL. Closes the file and picks up and opens another one. She writes, circles what she's just written, closes her pad and gets up and leaves. We ZOOM IN on the file. As we get closer, we see it is a dossier of some kind. As we get closer still, we see a 1 1/2" by 2" picture of Stokes and his name on the front page. A door can be heard OPENING and CLOSING.

INT. DEANNA'S CAR - MORNING. MONDAY

Deanna is driving as Pam sorts through an apparently

endless amount of PAPERS. They are both wearing SUNGLASSES (they have that in common). Hole's "BE A MAN" is playing on the radio. They're totally into what they are currently doing-- Deanna driving, Pam going through the documents-- trying not to mind each other; especially Deanna. Realizing they can't do this forever, Deanna turns off the radio.

DEANNA

So, I suppose this must be kind of a homecoming for you?

She halts her meticulous attention to the papers.

PAM

Oh, yes.

Deanna nods. Pam shifts in her seat. Suddenly there's a childish LAUGHTER coming from somewhere in the car. Then there's a falsetto: "YOU'RE FUNNY". Pam pulls something from under the dash: a TICKLE ME ELMO DOLL. She looks at the little red monster and squeezes its belly, and it releases the same obnoxious message. Deanna looks over at her for a moment to see--what could have been called in the dead silence--the commotion.

DEANNA

They were big two years ago--I was once the coolest mom in the neighborhood, y'know. You have kids?

PAM

Want to someday. How many?

DEANNA

Two daughters, one cheating soon-to-be ex.

PAM

I'm sorry. Do you want to talk about it?

DEANNA

Fuck no.

PAM

Great. But talking's good--

DEANNA

(interrupting)

Fuck no.

She tosses it into the backseat. It lands there perfectly and sits there like another passenger.

PAM

I haven't been to Seacrest in maybe ten years--not since graduation. Matter of fact, it was a drafty old college town with absolutely nothing to do. There was a diner, movie theater, a lovers' lane; basically we left town or entertained ourselves. (beat) There were a lot of guys, though.

DEANNA

Yes, exactly, an unusual amount of guys--do you remember how many girls were in your senior class?

Pam removes a pack of VIRGINIA SLIMS and withdraws a CIGARETTE. Deanna isn't waiting for an answer, and Pam isn't interested in supplying one.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Forty-two. Forty-two out of about four hundred--about ten percent. Now the figure is something like forty-five out of a class of approximately four hundred and fifty--no rhyme or reason to it--if anything in these days of alleged equality, we should be seeing an increase in female enrollment.

She puts the cigarette into her mouth. Her perfectly painted lips grip the cig loosely.

PAM

What are you suggesting?

DEANNA

I don't know, something...

(bitterly)

I may never make lieutenant, but then I would have never made detective thirty years ago--see where I'm going?

Pam nods. She removes a LIGHTER from her PURSE and lights

up. The passengers side window rolls down.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Out the window.

PAM

I was looking over these files, thinking. Graduation is this Wednesday. Here we have the most prestigees preparatory school in America, a high school with a Nobel Laureate on its faculty.

She blows smoke out the window.

DEANNA

(mockingly)

Yeah, in economics.

PAM

Still a Nobel Laureate. (beat) If our suspects are seniors, then they will almost certainly attend. The time I spent in Seacrest I learned style and substance were two sides of the same coin.

DEANNA

(sarcastically)

Deep.

PAM

Thank you.

DEANNA

That's not even mentioning the time and money the students' parents invested in them.

PAM

(sarcastically)

Right, time.

She blows smoke out the window.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON. MONDAY

SFX - SCHOOL BELL

Students file out of the classrooms in a rush. Through the other students and the other conversations, we see and hear Stokes and Eli coming down the hall.

STOKES

Have you decided where you're gonna go?

ELI

Nah. I'm thinking Stanford or maybe Oxford, but nothing's written in stone yet....

STOKES

Shit. Wish I had that problem.

Approaching Stokes's locker, they slow. They stop; Eli swings around opposite him and leans against the lockers.

ELI

Still feeling like I have to weigh my options.

Stokes nods in absent thought and opens his locker. Inside, taped to the top so it's hanging downward from the top and is the center of attention, is a BLACK ENVELOPE. Stokes takes the envelope down and opens it, sliding his finger along the closed flap. He removes and unfolds a LETTER. Something excites him. He SLAMS the locker shut.

STOKES

I have to go. See you tomorrow.

He quickly walks down the hall towards the exit.

ELI

(under his breath)  
Or later.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. FRONT ENTRANCE - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Deanna and Pam pull up. Pam immediately unbuckles her seat belt and gets out of the car, SLAMMING the door shut behind her and heads for the main entrance. Deanna also gets out and begins to do the same, but then hesitates, keeping the door ajar.

Pam stops in her tracks to look back at her. Deanna opens the door and reaches into the car. She retrieves a folded NEWSPAPER and tucks it under her arm. She then SLAMS her



door shut, and when she reaches the point Pam's standing at, they both walk together up the many stairs which leads to the front doors. Deanna turns around momentarily to arm her car alarm with a KEYCHAIN REMOTE.

PAM

You know, you don't need to do that here.  
There wasn't a crime in this town for the  
four years I was here.

DEANNA

(sarcastically)

Do you remember why we're here?

She looks at the extravagant façade of the school with a mixture of sincere impress and sarcastic glee.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

This is much nicer than Belmont.

The two massive doors open. Students flood out. Most of them do a good job going around Deanna and Pam; Stokes, in a hurry and carrying the letter, runs right into Deanna. They turn around and regard each other for a moment; then without a word, he keeps on going.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

(indignantly)

Why didn't he run me down already? God!  
Rape, murder and assault all day and still  
the lack of common courtesy bothers me the  
most.

They ENTER the main building.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. WALLACE'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING.  
MONDAY

Wallace is behind his desk. His intercom BEEPS. He answers it.

SANDRA (V.O.)

(over intercom)

Mr. Wallace, a Detective Carter and Wilkes  
here to see you.

WALLACE

(into intercom)

Let them in.

They ENTER his office. They shake hands, just as Marie did earlier. Pam and Wallace hug. He kisses her on the cheek.

PAM

I didn't think you'd remember me.

WALLACE

(smiling)

I remember all of my best students.

Pam sits down across from him, next to Deanna. Wallace sits too.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I only wish we could have seen each other under better circumstances. A horrible sort of business you've gotten yourself into.

DEANNA

Actually, the most horrible.

She unfolds the newspaper and places it on his desk so he's facing the front page. He picks it up a little to get a better look. On the front page is an almost larger than life portrait of Samantha--probably a school portrait. The caption: "Teenage Girl Found Dead on PCH." She is seemingly smiling at Wallace.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Homicide.

She waits for any sort of response. He places the paper down on his desk.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Mr. Wallace, we've tracked the killer down to this place.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Although presently I am not at liberty to discuss how we've come to this conclusion, I promise you that the one thing we're certain about is also the only thing: The

killer or killers have been here but are most likely still here.

He shifts nervously in his chair. This conversation is like the salespitch for some new product, and Wallace is playing the part of the squeamish buyer who's waiting for the pitch.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Mr. Wallace, is it true you submit all your students to an annual psychological profile as a condition of enrollment?

WALLACE

Why, yes. It's how we insure a safe campus for everyone.

DEANNA

Very progressive. Will you grant us access to the files?

WALLACE

I'm afraid I can't allow that--those files are confidential to all but the counseling staff, the individual students and myself.

DEANNA

Mr. Wallace, I trust you're a reasonable and well-educated man, so I'm probably just reminding you by pointing out we may do this one of two ways: The first being you allow us to access those files without a hassle, the second is we bring the lawyers into your school and audit the books both pertaining to this school and your own personal financial records. (beat) The annual profits you post--your school's a corporation, you have your improprieties.

Wallace turns a little pale. He nervously licks his lips. He's too old for this. Deanna changes her strategy.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Do you have a daughter? Granddaughter?

WALLACE

I do not believe anyone in my school is capable of the deed you are suggesting.

He takes a set of keys out of his coat pocket and places it on his desk--*let her pick it up*. She does. Pam and Deanna stand up.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

If a word of anything from those files are breathed to the tabloids, my attorneys will break you.

Deanna is smiling a little now. She won.

DEANNA

Not a word.

She goes through her purse, looking for something. Wallace picks up the newspaper to give it back to her. She waves it away.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

No. You keep it. If it helps jog your memory, call me.

She pulls out a BUSINESS CARD and places it on his desk by the phone. Pam produces a BUSINESS CARD out of thin air (no digging for her) and places it by Deanna's. They both EXIT the office.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MAIN HALLWAY - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

They're walking toward Berlantz Hall. Students are still walking around them.

PAM

(softly)

Well, that was a little mean.

DEANNA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt your reunion with a murder investigation.

A STUDENT almost collides with her. She looks around contemptuously at the river of plaid they're fighting upstream against.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

God, I feel like I'm in a bad Britney Spears video.

PAM

Would we have done that?

DEANNA

Probably not. The D.A.'s overworked and would never go for it.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

I just find the threat to be just as effective as the actual follow thru. Mostly I was just B.S.-ing him. Is there a library in this town?

PAM

Only one's in the school. East wing.

DEANNA

Great, you go through the files.

She hands the keys to Pam.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

I have stuff to do.

PAM

Stuff?

DEANNA

Exactly.

There's a pause.

PAM

Were we both supposed to give him our cards?

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. THE LIBRARY - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Deanna ENTERS with a LAPTOP tucked under her arm. She walks up to the reference desk, where a STUDENT WORKER is engrossed in a thick novel--he pays her no attention. Hanging on the wall is a huge black and white PORTRAIT of Maximilian, like something out of "Citizen Kane."

DEANNA

(sarcastically, to herself)  
Yeah. That just blends right in.

She rings the little BELL at the front desk--DING! The student worker comes to the reference desk.

STUDENT WORKER  
May I help you?

DEANNA  
I'm looking for microfiche of the town newspaper from all of last year.

He turns towards a set of FILE CABINETS and opens the topmost drawer.

STUDENT WORKER  
(over his shoulder)  
I've never seen you around town.

He searches--or pretends to--as he bleeds information out of her.

DEANNA  
That's because I'm not from town.

Removing several boxes of FILM, he then places them on the reference desk without removing his hand.

STUDENT WORKER  
I'm going to need a piece of ID--driver's license, California State Identification, passport...

DEANNA  
The machine's just over there.

She motions over her shoulder to the MICROFICHE READER just across the room, on the opposite wall.

STUDENT WORKER  
It's policy.

Not happy, she removes her black leather BIFOLD and opens it. She removes her CALIFORNIA ID as the student worker eyes her badge. She shuts it, places the ID on the desk and places the bifold back into her pocket as the worker

reliquences the boxes.

EXT. VALETTE MANOR - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

FULL SHOT - VALETTE MANOR

Marie's home is gigantic and looming and lording over an estate worthy of royalty. There is a pair of tall automated gates closing. A DODGE DURANGO goes up to the main entrance, having the massive driveway all to itself. It stops right at the front door, and Stokes emerges. He walks to the doors, and looks up towards the roof.

CLOSE-UP - A STONE GARGOYLE

It looms over the doorway, its mouth wide open in an expression of torment, its claws extended and poised for attack.

CLOSE SHOT - STOKES'S RIGHT HAND

Behind his back, its chain wrapped loosely around his hand, dangles a small gold CRUCIFIX. This hand moves up to the door knob. A POST-IT NOTE: "Welcome, just follow the lit path."

INT. VALETTE MANOR. HALL - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

He walks down the immense, wide corridor. It is more museum than home--it's lined with OIL PAINTINGS and SUITS OF ARMOR.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

He ENTERS, his right hand still behind his back, and sees he's surrounded by some of his classmates; he eyes them all with suspicion. As usual, Marie sits in the center.

MARIE

Your name is Sullivan Stokes?

STOKES

(confused)

Yeah.

MARIE

Step forward.

He slowly moves towards her--towards the center of the room. While doing so, his eyes move to-and-fro, taking all their faces in.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You prefer to be called by your last name, Stokes?

He nods.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Alright. I like it. It's very "ER"-ish.

He stops.

MARIE (CONT'D)

We were unsure you would accept our invitation. It was a bit overly dramatic and ominous;...

(smiles)

...pardon me for trying to sound impressive.

STOKES

You said you can help me change my life--get me into any college I want?

MARIE

As we can.

STOKES

How much? (beat) But then I suppose yours are not the type who takes cash or check.

She smirks again--she finds him amusing.

STOKES (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

Mastercard?

MARIE

Stokes, do you believe in Preordination? Fate? People being brought into this world to serve a purpose?



STOKES

I am obliged to believe we pretty much all  
make our own choices.

Marie processes this.

MARIE

We are in agreement then. You came on time,  
just as the letter instructed.

She directs her attention to a very expensive CLOCK.

MARIE (CONT'D)

4 p.m. sharp. You were buying time,  
weighing your options; people like us never  
walk into a room we can't walk out of.

(beat) Is that the saying?

(smiles)

I always screw up those action-movie  
clichés--I'm such a girl.

Eli sneaks up behind Stokes.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Anyway,...

Eli softly SLAMS the door. Stokes spins around and sees him  
for the first time. He looks betrayed; he's now an animal  
in a sprung trap. Eli looks even more awkward. He tries to  
manage a smile.

ELI

(shamefully)

Hey.

Stokes says nothing. He just stares at him in harsh  
judgement.

MARIE

(seriously)

There's your way out.

Stokes turns back around. The realization of the  
peculiarity and danger of his situation finally comes.

STOKES

What is this?

MARIE

This is as my note suggested, a chance for you to change your life--the course of, at least.

STOKES

How?

MARIE

Daddy is a donor to every major university in the country. We have wings and entire buildings named after us. Do the Stokes even have a urinal dedicated to them at the University of Chicago?

(smirks)

That is where dear Colleen's going, is it not?

Eli walks over behind Marie and places a hand on her shoulder. She places her hand across her body and grabs his, and looks behind her shoulder up at him not as much with affection but with obligation. Stokes stands waiting uncomfortably.

MARIE (CONT'D)

And I think you should be able to go. You have the grades, the test scores. Community service and extracurricular activities are pretty much a crock--I mean, why should one or two or...(beat)...thirty-seven youthful indiscretions ranging from drug possession...

FLASHBACK

EXT. SEACREST. AN ALLEY - NIGHT

Stokes exchanges a ROLL OF BILLS with a SHADY DRUG DEALER for a PARCEL. Suddenly the red and blue strobe lights of a cop car light up the alley with the accompany SIREN.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

MARIE (CONT'D)

...to assault.

FLASHBACK

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. PARKING LOT - EVENING

A red FERRARI stands out in the darkness. Stokes, dressed totally in black, emerges from the night. He opens the lock with a bent COAT HANGER. He gets in.

INT. FERRARI - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT - STOKES'S GLOVED HANDS

He uses a simple SWISS ARMY KNIFE to open an electrical console under the steering column, severs several WIRES and reattaches them. The engine starts up.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

STOKES

I thought it would be fun.

MARIE

You see? That's the answer I wanted to hear. You're a thrill seeker. Good. Man is nothing if not a creature of chance. Come,...

She indicates an OTTOMAN before her and next to where Terrance sits.

MARIE (CONT'D)

...sit.

Stokes, still wary, complies. He comes forward and sits where she indicated, his right hand now at his side but still holding the cross. He glances over at Terrance, whose toying with a heavy silver CANDLESTICK in his big hands. But then he looks at Marie, not just with suspicion, but now, since he's closer to her, begins to search for something in her rich eyes he could recognize.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Stokes, accept everything I'm about to tell you as being true: You know the girl who was killed in L.A. last night--maybe you saw her on "Good Morning America"--

STOKES

(interrupting)  
I don't watch the news. It's too  
depressing.

MARIE

Please don't interrupt. Well, some may say  
we--our afterschool club--are responsible  
for her death. Shock. Get over it. In a  
court of law, we may be asked why we did  
it, albeit in the court of our Lord, any  
reason we may give would most likely not  
allow us the prerogative of explaining  
ourselves,...

Stokes stares out, not out of shock, but in a determination  
to keep on his own train of thought.

MARIE (CONT'D)

...but you see, we are not asking you to  
act as a savior for our own souls, rather  
an--

Terrance WHACKS him on the sensitive part of the knee with  
the candlestick. Stokes reflexively grabs his knee and  
releases a small yelp of pain.

CLOSE SHOT - MARIE

She ordered the attack by some unspoken manner.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(pissed, sounding like an  
impatient school marm)  
Mr. Stokes, are you paying attention?

BACK TO SCENE

He releases his knee. The pain has dissipated.

STOKES

Yeah.

MARIE

As I was saying, we are not asking you to  
save our souls, rather to save us on a more  
Earthy plane. Everyone has accidents, ...  
(beat)...ours just yielded a body. We just

need a little--Divine intervention.

Stokes is now a little more relaxed--but still very tense.

STOKES

By me?

MARIE

By someone delivered to us by what someone of your specific faith would consider Providence. How else would you explain the presence of a man truly as daring as you in a school of bluebloods who live in constant fear of soiling their Banana Republic Khakis?--

(to everyone)

No offense, guys.

No one argues with her.

MARIE (CONT'D)

The right man for the right job.

Stokes's attention seems to be drifting away again, searching his mind for her eyes. Terrance once again hits him in the knee.

TERRANCE

Listen to the lady. It might just save your life.

This time his knee is really hurting--he begins grasping and rubbing it.

STOKES

(shaking his head back and forth)

Can't--I can't help you.

MARIE

You can. It's just a small night trip into the city.

STOKES

You want me to help you--what? Get rid of a body?

MARIE

It's nothing. Think of it as taking out the garbage. What, do you think you would be making her less dead by not?

STOKES

It's desecrating a body--I'm Catholic.

She finds this response hilarious--friggin' hilarious.

MARIE

And how many rows of coke is it traditional to snort on Lent?

She restrains additional laughter. Smiling, she nods, trying to establish a faux camaraderie with him.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Because you're human. It's not like a priest has never gotten plastered on Communion wine and boned an altar boy or Pope Pious XII told the Nazis to, you know, cut out the whole genocide thing.

FLASHBACK

INT. BALLROOM - LATE EVENING. PROM NIGHT

We see a banner: "PROM NIGHT 2003: A MAGIC NIGHT OF MAKE-BELIEVE". We PAN DOWN. The ballroom is packed with hundreds of REVELERS. Positioned all across the room are a dozen elegant, life-size FIBERGLASS REPLICAS of the Venus de Milo. In the center of the room is a humongus REPLICA depicting the emergence of Aphrodite on the clam shell. Several CUPIDS hang from the ceiling.

Everyone is dressed in masks and many in elaborate costumes. Fatboy Slim's "PRAISE YOU" is playing loudly. Stokes, dressed as a Colonial-era townsman is at the foot of the master stairs with Colleen, dressed as a maiden from that era--they have a whole theme going for them.

CLOSE-UP - THE TOP OF THE STAIRS (SUB EYE-LEVEL)

A pair of HIGH HEEL RED BOOTS enters the shot.

BACK TO SCENE

COLLEEN

I'm going to get us something to drink.

STOKES

'Kay.

She floats out the scene towards the PUNCH BOWL. The MUSIC dims. The DISCUSSIONS in the background dim. Then, a CREAK. After another moment, CREAK. Stokes looks up the stairs. Descending: a cloaked figure. Female, dressed in a short, sexy SLIP-LIKE DROWN and the aforementioned CLOAK/COWL, carrying a long WAND topped with a small, silver skull. Covering the top half of her face is a skull mask like something from the "Phantom of the Opera." She moves slowly, deliberately taking her time and emphasizing ever step on the creaking stairs. He's the only one who sees her; she's all he can see. She finally reaches the foot of the stairs. Time and the volume of the rest of the world resumes, the last line of "Praise You" plays. Before she can pass him, he grabs her by the arm and pulls her to him. She's not scared.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Death. That's not too ostentatious.

She take the wand and uses the skull tip to nudge his hand. He, realizing he shouldn't have grabbed her, releases her arm.

DEATH

(smiling slyly)

Pardon me for trying to look impressive. I like your costume. Is your gun real?

He brings up a DUELING PISTOL modeled from his costume's time.

STOKES

As real as they get.

DEATH

Like the soirée? I was unofficially on the planning committee.

He nods.

STOKES

It's alright.

DEATH

I'll let you in on a little secret:...

She comes closer to him so she's speaking right into his ear.

DEATH (CONT'D)

...on the eleventh hour, things will really  
liven up.

She looks down again.

DEATH (CONT'D)

(flirtatously)

Don't let your gun accidentally discharge.

She then moves away, placing a finger over her fine lips to make a "Shhh" sound and walks away, fading into the crowd. Stokes is left in a blur; he has just flirted with Death. He removes a POCKET WATCH from his waistcoat.

CLOSE-UP - POCKET WATCH

It's 10:53. He closes it.

BACK TO SCENE

Colleen returns, carrying two glasses of punch.

STOKES

Did you see her?

She hands him a glass.

COLLEEN

See who?

Dazed, he shakes the whole question off.

STOKES

Nevermind.

He takes a sip.

CUT TO:



A small ORCHESTRA plays a QUICK WALTZ.

CLOSE-UP - THE PUNCH BOWL

The BOWL is big and made of the highest quality crystal. It's filled with deep, dark crimson (almost like water downed blood) punch. Orange slices float in it. A fine CRYSTAL CUP dips into it and pulls out thin, sweet hemoglobin.

BACK TO SCENE

Colleen and Stokes are dancing slower than the beat. She's enjoying herself; he's out of it. As they spin around the room, he's looking.

POV - STOKES

The room spins slowly around. We catch a glimpse of a GRANDFATHER CLOCK. It reads 11:02.

BACK TO SCENE

There's an EXPLOSION somewhere. The entire room reverberates a little. Everyone stops dancing, and the music stops playing. A girl SCREAMS. The camera SPINS around to see her. She's an ANGEL. Once dressed in white--once, being that now she's totally saturated with blood. A moment of shock, then most everyone tries to get the Hell out as quickly and disorderly as possible. Stokes turns to Colleen, confused, and grabs her; she's covered in blood too; so are a lot of people. So is Stokes, but he doesn't care.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Go! Get outta here!

He pushes her into the general direction of the other party goers, towards the main entrance. He goes against the crowd, calling back at her while she's fleeing:

STOKES (CONT'D)

With the crowd! With the crowd!

One of the De Milo statues EXPLODES, spraying blood throughout the room. This explosion further confuses

everyone else, but not Stokes, realization kicking in as one of the hanging Cupid statues EXPLODES. The thick red goo splatters everywhere--the walls, ceiling, all the fine fixtures and chandeliers--everywhere.

STOKES (CONT'D)

(to everyone)

The statues--stay away from the statues!

But no one listens. A YOUNG MAN, dressed in his nines, stands facing one. It EXPLODES, sending him flying backwards with arms flaying. He lands halfway across the room, covered in blood, colliding with the punch bowl. There's one giant SHATTER followed by a dozen additional SHATTERS from the cups. After that, full blown anarchy breaks loose: Everyone's running... but only Stokes seems to know where he's going.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Stay away--

He sees the familiar cloak bobbing in the crowd, heading down the hall towards the elevators.

STOKES (CONT'D)

It's her!

He pursues her against an onslaught of people.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Someone stop her! Death! DEATH!!!

Death glances back at him, and then cheeses it, heading for the elevators. Stokes pursues. They run, fighting upstream against a tide of fleeing students. Somewhere along the way, his bloody TRI-CORNER HAT blows off. He is but ten feet from her; she knocks a GUY just trying to escape across the temple with the skull of the wand, sending him to the floor as a human hurdle. Stokes leaps over him. Death turns around and sees she's still being chased. She swivels around, knocking a PODIUM holding a large VASE over and her cowl is blown down, exposing her hair. The vase SHATTERS. He jumps over the podium but lands on a PORCELIN SHARD, slips and takes a header into the carpet. Undaunted, he gets up and continues.

INT. THE BALLROOM. ELEVATOR - LATE EVENING. PROM NIGHT

Death's safely in the car. A little winded, she presses the button. The sliding doors close; a hand appears and stops their progress. The doors open. Stokes swings around and places the barrel of his dueling pistol right between her eyes. Immediately in response, she produces out of thin air a large HUNTING KNIFE and holds it to his jugular, poised to cut his throat like a pig. It's a standoff.

DEATH

You're bluffing. You wouldn't bring a loaded gun to the prom--who'd do that?

He pulls the hammer back.

STOKES

Someone who comes prepared, I guess. My turn to play the skeptic--you're bluffing, why would you bring of all things a big-ass knife?

She applies just a little pressure to the tip of the knife.

CLOSE SHOT - STOKES'S NECK

A small stream of blood flows from the incision. The knife is very real, very sharp.

BACK TO SCENE

He squirms a little in pain. His arm shakes, but he's not lowering the gun.

DEATH

Someone who comes prepared.

STOKES

(in pain)

Just...(beat)...a little phallic is all....

He winces in a brief moment of weakness.

DEATH

You're stalling;...

CLOSE SHOT - STOKES'S EYES

He's horrified at her astuteness, as his eyes stare into her's.

BACK TO SCENE

DEATH (CONT'D)

...if you weren't, you'd be dead now--we'd both be, actually. Noble. No one was seriously hurt tonight, but someone will be if you don't take maybe three steps back and allow these doors to close.

He reluctantly backs out of the elevator; Death only removes the knife when he's completely out. The doors slowly close as he grips the slash on his throat to halt the bleeding.

DEATH (CONT'D)

(sweetly)

Oh, and I'd appreciate it if you don't tell anyone about this. Thanks.

The doors completely close.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

He begins to rub the spot on his neck where he had been cut a month ago. He's still staring into her eyes.

MARIE (O.S.)

Why are you so spe--?

Three words:

STOKES

(interrupting)

I know you.

Wrong answer. Terrance goes through the motions of striking his aching knee again for the outburst. Stokes stops the blow with his left hand and swings his right elbow out, delivering a pretty weak blow to his sternum. Terrance relinquishes the candlestick, grabs Stokes by the lapels of his uniform jacket, and leaps up, bringing them both to their feet. The candlestick drops to the floor. It's ass-kicking time--not because the blow hurt him but the ethics of it all. Stokes puts his hands up in apparent concession,

then drops them to an area OFF CAMERA.

TIGHT SHOT - THE TWO

Terrance is angry. Stokes's still cool.

BACK TO SCENE

MARIE

Terrance!

Terrance doesn't respond. He's in the zone.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Terrance, be so kind to place Mr. Stokes  
down.

Terrance is still angry. Begrudgedly, he quite literally  
drops him, letting him land hard on the ottoman.

TERRANCE

Cocky little fuck.

Terrance sits back down, jerking his JACKET straight. He's  
pouting. Stokes looks to both sides of him. He gets up,  
walks towards the door and EXITS, not taking the time to  
close it behind him. Terrance stands up to pursue; Marie  
waves him down.

MARIE

No. He knows not to tell anyone--and at  
this point, he needs familiarity.

She looks again at Eli.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Love.

Eli gives chase.

EXT. VALETTE MANOR. FRONT DRIVEWAY - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Stokes is now out of the mansion, walking towards his  
vehicle. Eli is right behind him.

ELI

Sully, wait.

Stokes ignores him. Eli has just about caught up with him.

ELI (CONT'D)

Stokes--

He grabs Eli's wrist and throws him against the passenger side of his Durango. Eli flinches a little but doesn't protest. He had that coming.

STOKES

What the Hell did you get me into?

ELI

It's the Group. We're just a club.

STOKES

A club? Christ, you people are murderers.

Disgusted, he goes around the front of his car. Unlocks the door. SLAMMING the door shut behind him, he TURNS THE IGNITION. It ROARS, and he speeds off.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. LIBRARY - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Deanna is entrenched in her work: She is simultaneously working on her laptop and the microfiche-reader. She works on one and then rolls in her CHAIR to the other. On her laptop: The Los Angeles Times online archive, "Monroe Academy" produced three hits in the past year. She CLICKS on one: A15, "NCAA Favorite Injured." She then rolls over to the microfiche reader. Nowhere, anywhere, does it mention Harris. It takes some looking, but she finds it buried in the back. She ROLLS back to her computer and CLICKS on the second one: A22, lower right hand corner, "Bizarre Bloodbath at Elite Academy." The Herald's archive makes no mention of it. She turns back to the first page and reads the staff listings: Skipping all the others--the editors, typesetters, et al--her eyes land on one name and title: Maximilian Sayles III/Editor-in-Chief. And sticks; she knows that name. Behind her, over her shoulder, the giant black and white portrait staring at the back of her head. She turns and sees for the first time the heading under "Citizen Kane's" name: Maximilian Sayles III/Senior Class President.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT. MONDAY

His loft is big, spacious--lofty. It is moderately and sporadically furnished: a SOFA here, a LOVE SEAT there, and a DESK in a corner positioned so someone seated there would be able to see who's coming in the door and who's in bed. The door swings open. He enters, plopping his keys down somewhere in the general area of a stand. He moves across the main room to the desk. His ANSWERING MACHINE blinks, indicating he has three messages. He presses the "play" button. Tired, he removes his coat and tosses it across the room onto a CHAIR.

MRS. STOKES (V.O.)  
(over the answering machine)  
Hi, Sullivan, it's mom....

He removes a thin leather bound BOOK off the desk and turns on his COMPUTER.

MRS. STOKES (CONT'D, V.O.)  
(over the answering machine)  
...I'm sorry, but I got hung up in Paris--there's some kind of a pilot's strike or something--I don't know, it's a French thing. Anyway, I won't be able to make it back until at least Sunday. I'm sorry....

He leafs through the book with "Memories, Forever" engraved in gold on the front. It's a yearbook. He finds the page he wants, the one with Marie's portrait on it, just as the second message begins to play:

MR. STOKES (V.O.)  
(over the answering machine)  
Hey buddy, the closure meeting has been put off until Wednesday, so--...

Stokes is unconcerned with these messages. He has opened a program containing the scanned images from the yearbook and is cropping Marie's portrait out.

MR. STOKES (CONT'D, V.O.)  
(over the answering machine,

there's almost a pang of guilt in  
his voice)  
...so you know the deal, don't you? This  
will bring good things for my company--our  
company. But at least your mother's coming;  
I promise I'll make it up to you.

The third message begins to play:

ELI (V.O.)  
(over the answering machine)  
Stokes, tomorrow morning we're gonna have a  
meeting to discuss what we'll be doing  
about our...(beat)...situation. Same place,  
about 7:30. Bye.

INT. THE COMFY INN. DEANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT. MONDAY

INSERT - PHOTOCOPY OF A RECORD

On one edge, in what must have been printed in red ink in  
the original: "CONFIDENTIAL RECORD/DO NOT REMOVE FROM  
SCHOOL GROUNDS/DO NOT PHOTOCOPY."

BACK TO SCENE

Deanna's sitting at a desk, writing in a little NOTEBOOK.  
Pam places several PHOTOCOPIED PACKETS on the desk for her  
to see. Pam begins pacing around the room, smoking.

PAM  
I've spent the past seven hours reading and  
studying, reading and studying--

DEANNA  
(interrupting)  
Yeah, shut up now.

Pam does and quits pacing. Deanna stops writing in the  
notepad. She closes it and places it down on the desk. She  
then brings the packets in front of her and leafs through  
the topmost one.

DEANNA (CONT'D)  
Are these our suspects?

Pam lies down on the bed; removing her cigarette, she blows



a long, tall pillar of smoke into the air.

PAM

These are the seniors most likely to perform anti-social acts of violence, taking into account the information I have been given--ruling out females, African and Asian Americans, and students who are simply too short, tall or heavy to match physical descriptions. (beat) Place an asterisk on the third one, Sullivan Stokes. Arrested 37 times in the past four years for assault, breaking and entering, grand theft auto, minor weapons violations and drugs--mostly drugs.

DEANNA

Isn't it always? What about Max Sayles?

She walks to her BRIEFCASE and removes a LEGAL PAD partially blackened by the ink of her (thorough) notes. She flips through the pages.

PAM

Senior Class President, honor roll, plans on attending Harvard this fall. Full-blown narcissus. Harmless. Why do you ask?

Deanna removes her own PACKET from her BRIEFCASE and tosses it to her. It was a good throw, but Pam wasn't able to catch it. She picks it up.

DEANNA

This year--from September to June--there were three incidences in this town which made the L.A. Times. The first was a Founders' Day festival--that's unimportant. The second was in October, when the star player of an opposing school's basketball team was severely injured during the semi-finals--

Pam looks at the info, even though her mind is obviously not with it.

PAM

(interrupting)

So?

DEANNA

So, the backboard fell on him. Apparently the whole apparatus was being kept together with Spearmint. Just a month later at the prom, someone went all "Carrie"--rigging a dozen fiberglass sculptures to explode, showering the attendees and chaperones with sheep blood. Showering these kinds of kids with sheep blood--like that's not too symbolic. And do you know what's so strange about all this, besides the blatantly obvious? All of this was buried in the town's newspaper. What warranted a short article in the L.A. Times was granted just a sketchy recount on the last page of the Seacrest Herald. The young editor-in-chief, Mr. Sayles, who for whatever reason has been downplaying everything.

Pam gets up and drops the psychological profiles into her briefcase.

PAM

Maybe he was concerned of the way these things would reflect the school.

DEANNA

Or maybe he had a part in the prom debacle and our murder.

Pam shuts her briefcase and heads straight for the door.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Either way, we'll be visiting him in the morning.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - NIGHT. MONDAY

The room is dark aside from the lone, warm glow of monitor light; a clock glows 11:47. Stokes is well asleep in front of his computer. His head is slumped over against an arm as a pillow. The screen displays the yearbook pictures of a score of young men and, at the top, Marie. A door OPENS. Before he even opens his eyes, his free hand quietly opens a low drawer and slowly pulls out a short barreled

REVOLVER. His eyes jerk open as we hear soft FOOTSTEPS. The lights turn on, and he quickly brings himself upright. It's Colleen. She was trying to sneak in.

COLLEEN

Sorry.

Relieved, he places the gun back into the drawer and SLAMS it shut and turns off the monitor. Colleen has already taken off her shoes and her uniform SWEATER, hanging it on the rack by the door. She walks to the bed and begins to unbutton her BLOUSE.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

What were you doing, writing a letter?

She takes off her shirt and drops it by the bed.

STOKES

Yeah.

(changing the subject)

My parents aren't coming to graduation.

She sits down on the bed and unbuttons her SKIRT.

COLLEEN

I'm sorry. It's their lost.

STOKES

Not really.

She doesn't say anything else; they've obviously been through this before at night--maybe every night. She slides out of her skirt and pushes it off the bed, letting it drop to the floor by her blouse. He turns the monitor back on. She gets under the covers.

COLLEEN

Good night.

She turns off the LAMP. He's alone again in the room illuminated barely by the monitor.

INT. COMFY INN. DEANNA'S ROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

The two detectives stand before a laptop. Playing on it is a video feed of the destruction caused in Kingwood, Texas.

DEANNA

Kingwood, Texas, 1997. Several high school students went on a vandalism rampage, trashing homes and were possessed to get it on tape as to relive it over and over again. This was a small town. Growing fast, but just fast enough to raise real estate prices--not growing quickly enough to attract, what most small-town law enforcement agents refers to as, the "negative element." As if there ever were such a thing. State police found their actions to be some of the most wanton and senseless that they'd ever seen.

Pam obviously doesn't follow where she's going with this.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Nothing is a greater enemy to a law enforcement officer than preconceived notions about what shapes a person's character. Remember this. It'll probably be important later.

EXT. SAYLES MANOR. FRONT - MORNING. TUESDAY

Maximilian is kneeling at a FLOWERBED, on a TOWEL, in full uniform sans jacket and with the cuffs of his shirt rolled to his elbows. He STABS the SPADE into the soft, black earth with an intense contempt for nature. He overturns the soil and places a grown LILY into the ground and covers its roots. His home is large, but obviously not as decadent as Marie's. (If such a thing exists.) Interestingly enough, there's no fence, so Deanna's car just drives right up the driveway, stopping at the frontdoor. She turns off the ENGINE, and she and Pam step out and approach the stoop when they hear the STAB of the spade into ground. They turn and head for the sound, around the main building. They approach him, his back turned to them.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Mr. Sayles? Mr. Max Sayles?

He turns and looks up at them--at these two conservatively dressed women wearing loafers and carrying attaché cases.

MAXIMILIAN

No thanks. I'm already satisfied with my current religion.

Deanna doesn't laugh; she just kinda goes along with the comment as if it was funny. She coolly removes her bifold from her pocket as Pam fumbles around in her purse for hers.

DEANNA

No, I'm Detective Deanna Carter,...

She flashes her shield, then folds it back up.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

...and this is Detective Pamela Wilkes. We're from the LAPD.

MAXIMILIAN

(stands)

You're a long way from L.A.

He shakes Pam's hand. Then he shakes Deanna's.

DEANNA

Oh, cops are sometimes like superheros-- justice knows no bounds.

Before releasing his, she turns it to better see the faint purple veins snaking up the underside of his forearm.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Quite some trackmarks you got there.

He quickly withdraws his arm. She has stumbled onto something he's not very proud of.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Heroin or morphine? It's heroin, isn't it? Seems like no one does morphine anymore.

MAXIMILIAN

(sincerely wounded)

I've been clean for almost a year now.

He brings his collars back down to his wrists and begins to walk towards the front door. Deanna and Pam follow him.

PAM

That's certainly an achievement. Heroin is the most addictive substance known to man.

DEANNA

You're dressed oddly for gardening.

MAXIMILIAN

I have an early appointment this morning; it's best to tend these flowers at this time of day.

DEANNA

An appointment. May I ask with whom.

MAXIMILIAN

No, you may not.

DEANNA

I'm sorry. When I said "may I ask," I obviously gave you the impression it was a question.

She stops. Pam and Maximilian do the same. He turns around.

MAXIMILIAN

If you must know, I have a liaison with a beautiful young woman.

DEANNA

Oh, a morning-er. Good for you.

MAXIMILIAN

Do you have a purpose for trespassing on my property?

DEANNA

Prom night, A Magic Night of Make Believe, the dance hall where it was held is still closed until health inspectors are sure it's not an anthrax hotzone. Why wasn't it given priority in your newspaper?

MAXIMILIAN

Detective Carter, the Seacrest Herald is not a yellow journal. I saw no reason to

trump such a story. We wouldn't want to grant the hooligans who did this anymore satisfaction from their crimes.

DEANNA

"Crimes"?

MAXIMILIAN

Yes, "crimes."

PAM

"Crimes" is plural.

MAXIMILIAN

What? What about it?

DEANNA

You said "crimes"--"crimes" is plural. Saying "crime" would have been a sincere denial; saying "crimes" indicates what's commonly called a "Freudian slip."

Maximilian grips the handle of the spade. Hard. He's been caught--they have no evidence and they've caught him.

PAM

Mr. Sayles, we are not accusing you of anything. We're just asking you if you were in L.A. last Sunday; and if not, if others can account for you.

MAXIMILIAN

I attended services until about noon and spent the rest of the day making accommodations for my move to Boston.

MAXIMILIAN (CONT'D)

You can check my phone and e-mail records if you need confirmation. I also took a dump once or twice--would you need confirmation of that too?

DEANNA

None of that would be necessary. Thank you for your time.

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

INT. TAYLOR MANOR - MORNING. TUESDAY

CLOSE-UP - BACK DOOR KNOB

A figure in black comes to it. A gloved hand slips a CREDIT CARD into the crack of the door jam and begins to unsuccessfully manipulate the lock.

STOKES (O.S.)

Screw it.

The card returns to his pocket, and he puts a fist through a glasspane--SHATTER.

INT. DEANNA'S CAR - MORNING. TUESDAY

SLAM--Deanna and Pam's doors shut at exactly the same time as to make one loud noise. They buckle up...at exactly the same time. Deanna turns the IGNITION.

CLICK--the gloved one unlocks the knob and deadbolt from the inside. He opens the door, and we QUICKLY PANS UP to reveal STOKES dressed in burglar attire. He ENTERS the kitchen.

INT. TAYLOR MANOR. EDDIE'S ROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes walks to a shelf opposite the bed. He places a matchbox size little black box--a CAMERA--atop the shelf, turning to make sure it's facing the bed. He removes a sheet of MUCH SCRIBBLED LOOSELEAF then walks to Eddie's desk, sits down and turns on his COMPUTER. The monitor makes a BEEP.

Deanna turns the IGNITION off; she just had an epiphany.

Stokes types.

Deanna looks a little tired, fully realizing how daunting this will be.

DEANNA

You know, I'm sure you're trying to pull off the Gen-X good cop routine, but you



can't give a fetus the benefit of the doubt. How many violent crime suspects have you interviewed in your career?

PAM

(under her breath)

None.

DEANNA

What we are facing is a case with no good witnesses or forensic evidence. We don't have anything, and they probably know it. Our only chance is to get under their skin, make'em nervous. We need one to crack.

She checks her WATCH.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

We have less than 36 hours.

END INTERCUT SEQUENCE

EXT. VALETTE MANOR. FRONT DRIVEWAY - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes's Durango once again goes up the driveway.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S ROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

The members are waiting for him, sipping lemonade. There is a KNOCK at the door, and the member closest to the door opens it. Stokes ENTERS. He immediately removes an ENVELOPE from his pocket and tosses it to Marie. She catches it as the door SHUTS behind him.

MARIE

Good morning to you too. Do you want something to drink? I have Yoo-Hoo.

She places a BOTTLE OF YOO-HOO atop a COASTER atop the coffeetable.

STOKES

I won't be long.

Marie opens the envelope and removes a sheet of FOLDED PAPER. This is familiar. She unfolds it. It's a compilation of a dozen of the members' portraits with their names

captioned below it.

STOKES (CONT'D)

I have that information stored on disk and  
is being kept in an out of town safe  
deposit box.

She shows the letter to the others.

STOKES (CONT'D)

If anything happens to me, that information  
will be e-mailed to the LAPD, the FBI--

MARIE

(interrupting)

And if anything you see here is spoken to  
the outside world, Colleen will be killed.  
Didn't I mention that yesterday?--You know  
my memory...

She does a crazy sign with her hand, and then kinda lets it  
trail off...

MARIE (CONT'D)

...WOO...

He looks around in desperation for help. She refolds the  
letter and places it back into the envelope, outstretches  
her arm to hand it back to him. He walks over and takes it  
with one hand, and with the other, grabs the Yoo-Hoo  
bottle, SHATTERS it against the coffeetable. At that  
moment, she jerks up and several members withdraw handguns,  
aiming them at him. He holds the jagged edge of the bottle  
to her neck-- just as "Death" held a knife to his not too  
long ago.

STOKES

Leave us alone!

Eli outstretches his arms, trying to be the voice of reason.

ELI

Whoa!

Stokes is looking at Marie with fierce, tunnel-vision eyes.

MARIE

(still coolly)

I know you don't want to end this so early,  
you're having too much fun, starting to  
feel alive for the first time in awhile.

He's seething.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(changing her strategy)

Okay, then let's look at this in a  
different light: Would this help your  
situation?

He blinks. She grabs his wrist, and twists the bottle away from her neck and slaps him as if he propositioned her. This brought him back to reality. It's all very surreal--she just Bobbited him--she totally emasculated him. He drops the face shredder, turns and splits. As he's leaving, he turns around.

STOKES

(pointing at Marie)

No, I will not do this, you cannot make me  
do this!

He leaves, SLAMMING the door behind him. Marie ponders this for a moment.

MARIE

(to everyone)

You know, we really outta start blocking  
that door. (beat) Someone take a note.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. WALLACE'S OFFICE - MORNING. TUESDAY

Marie ENTERS. Wallace gets up and goes around his desk to meet her halfway. He's holding the newspaper Deanna gave him yesterday. It has obviously been rifled through more than once.

MARIE

Sir, you wanted to see me?

He calmly rolls the newspaper up as she is attentive to his countenance.

WALLACE

Two police inspectors came to see me  
yesterday--up from L.A.

MARIE

What did they--

His calm is like the silence before the storm, the quiet before the breaking point. Taking the roll, he SMACKS her across the cheek with it. Her head turns with it, and she dares not look at the expression on his face anymore. He just broke. He unrolls the paper to try to show her the front page; she keeps her face turned from meeting his, the girl in the paper's dead eyes.

WALLACE

Did you do this? Was it you?

Her head's still turned. Wallace is almost in tears.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

You brought this school into this--my  
school into this, you--

MARIE

(interrupting)

Sir--

WALLACE

(interrupting)

What!?!

She turns her face back around to face his.

MARIE

Sir, sir, just listen to the sound of my  
voice.

Wallace is silent. She thinks for a moment.

MARIE (CONT'D)

This will be taken care of.

This statement enrages him.

WALLACE

Taken care of!?! Taken care of!?!--

MARIE

(interrupting)

Yes sir, taken care of. We had an accident,  
and I accept full responsibility--

WALLACE

(interrupting)

How do you take care of this? How?

Marie once again misdirects her eyes. This time downward  
not out of respect but out of exhaustion and impatience.

MARIE

(quietly, almost to herself)

Do you know what your problem is?

WALLACE

(angrily)

Excuse me?

MARIE

Your problem is you want the Whopper but  
don't just not want to know where it came  
from, but know and feign ignorance around  
vegetarians. Now in the next two months,  
you'll not receive any applications for  
admission from female students--they'll  
simply never reach Monroe. You will begin  
reviewing applications on July 15th--as  
you've done every year--and conclude as  
usual on August 15th. Acceptance and  
rejection letters will be sent out  
throughout the week, and the unlucky  
prospective female students whose  
applications were never received by your  
office will be out of luck. You will be  
given something your idol Dick Nixon never  
received, plausible deniability.

She looks up at him in the eye, then turns and heads for  
the door.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(over her shoulder)

You've just had it your way.

She EXITS, SLAMMING the door behind her.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MAIN HALL - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes walks to his locker with a CARDBOARD BOX. He drops the box at his feet and turns the dial. Right, left, right--entering his combination. He opens the locker and begins placing the contents into the box.

A book: Taming the SATs; a HACKY SACK; another book: Guide to California Criminal Law. He stares at this last book, almost in retrospection. His cell phone RINGS. He returns to planet Earth and drops the book into the box and removes his PHONE from a jacket pocket.

STOKES

(into phone)

Talk to me.

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

You left early again this morning. Have you considered our proposal?

STOKES

(into phone)

Where did you get this number?

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

Some of the boys were worried, but I was not. Emotional outbursts are normal among most people--not me, of course, but most people...

He's not listening to this.

STOKES

(into phone)

Where did you get this number?

A locker OPENS. It was swung open so hard, it swung over and struck the next one to it. Stokes turns. It's Terrance; that was his casual, conspicuous way of gaining his attention. Their eyes meet.

MARIE (V.O.)  
(over phone)  
We're everywhere, Mr. Stokes.

Stokes gets moving, SLAMMING his locker close behind him but leaving the box. Terrance nonchalantly closes his and calmly pursues. Stokes gravitates to one wall and begins to check doors for an unlocked one.

STOKES  
(into phone)  
I saw your vanity plate;...

FLASHBACK

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. PARKING LOT - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes looks down at Marie's LICENSE PLATE. He's having trouble deciphering what "KALI4NA" means.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
...there should be an "I" in it--it's not phonetically correct, Einstein.

Without losing too much speed, he checks behind him. Terrance is gaining.

MARIE (V.O.)  
(over phone)  
Don't I know it? Damn DMV allowed me only seven characters.

STOKES  
(into phone)  
Yeah, shit happens.

He starts making faux static sounds into the phone.

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Marie?

He makes more static sounds and checks another door. Locked.

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Marie, I can't hear you--

More "static" as he checks another locked door, checks behind him and speeds up.

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(into phone, louder)  
I must be going through a tunnel!

He finds a loose knob and ENTERS the classroom. After a moment, Terrance ENTERS the room too.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. CHEMISTRY LAB - MORNING. TUESDAY

The lights are out. Terrance walks up and down the aisle. Stokes just...disappeared. Stokes is scrunched up inside an enclosed space, trying not to breathe. He's clutching his cell phone; the indigo display glows "mute."

POV - STOKES

He's looking at Terrance's shins and big feet through a grate--he's in one of those cabinets under the counter where chemicals are stored. He sees the loafers turn away from him. That's his cue.

BACK TO SCENE

He lunges out the cabinet and seizes Terrance's shins, pulls, sending him crashing chin first into a lab table. He's floored, stunned. Stokes steps over him and heads for the door.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HALLWAY - MORNING. TUESDAY

He's once again hurrying down the hall with phone to ear.

MARIE (V.O.)  
(over phone)  
You weren't answering me.

STOKES  
(into phone)  
You were on mute. I had to drop a couple hundred pounds.



There's a pause.

MARIE (V.O.)

(over the phone)

As I was saying, you have a chance for greatness--

STOKES

(interrupting, into phone)

But why go out of your way to screw up other people's lives?

He ENTERS the stairwell.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. STAIRWELL - MORNING. TUESDAY

He hurries up the steps.

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

Do you know how some people are anal retentive--they just have to put everything so neatly in its place? Well, maybe some people are just the opposite. Maybe they get one off on chaos. And what difference does it make to you? We're talking about you watching your lover die.

He's at the second floor. Eddie's head is turned away from the little spoiler window in the door. He turns just as Stokes ducks out of sight. For exactly three seconds, Eddie waits. Satisfied there's no one in the stairwell, he turns back around. Stokes carefully rises. He's now considerably quieter heading up the stairs.

STOKES

(into phone, whispering)

You hurt one hair on her head, I'll kill you!

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR HALLWAY - MORNING. TUESDAY

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

Yeah, and then one way ticket to Hell for you.

Down the hall, walking towards him, is the unmistakable swagger of Louis smoking a cigar.

STOKES

(into phone)

Well then, talk to the can.

He tosses the phone into a TRASH CAN he passes and turns into the physics lab. Louis soon follows.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. PHYSICS LAB - MORNING. TUESDAY

Louis looks left, right--it's hide and seek again. He sees an open window. He turns and sees an open door. Door's too obvious. He walks to the window and looks out. Both sides of the building: no one. He looks down.

POV - LOUIS

No one; if he had jumped, he would be laying broken on the pavement.

BACK TO SCENE

Forget about it--Stokes went for the door. Louis removes his cell phone and begins to DIAL as he leaves the window. We WIDE OUT. Stokes is hanging from the rain gutter. He pulls himself up, grasping the structure where he can. A CLAY SHINGLE comes loose and slides down the slope of the roof. He stumbles, but succeeds in grabbing another one.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. FRONT ENTRANCE - MORNING. TUESDAY

Deanna walks to the steps. CRASH--the clay shingle falls to the ground three feet from her, shattering. She looks up.

POV - DEANNA

A pair of legs wiggle onto the roof.

BACK TO SCENE

She shakes it off--her eyes are messing with her. She continues walking.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. ROOF - MORNING. TUESDAY

He stands and scurries up the roof like a spider to one of the cellar windows. He unlocks the latch, swings the twin doors open and ENTERS.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR. HALLWAY - MORNING. TUESDAY

He has returned to the same can he dumped his cell phone in, reaches in and retrieves it. He holds it to his ear again.

STOKES

(into phone)

Hello?

Nothing. He returns the phone to his pocket. Chen is following him. Stokes turns into the men's room.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR. MEN'S ROOM - MORNING.  
TUESDAY

Chen ENTERS. No windows here. Just stalls; all the stalls' doors are shut. He bends down. No feet, of course not. He starts with the first stall, the one closest to the door. He swings the stall's door wide open: no one. Then the second: no one.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR. MEN'S ROOM. BATHROOM STALL  
- MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes squats on the toilet seat. He removes a SHARPIE and a PAD. He softly scribbles something on it.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR. MEN'S ROOM - MORNING.  
TUESDAY

Chen is now on the second to the last: nothing. Last one...

AERIAL SHOT

Stokes climbs over the divider between the second to the last stall and the last one.

POV - CHEN

Under the stall, he sees the SHEET OF PAPER, darkened with a marker's scribbling, drop to the last stall's floor.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. TOP FLOOR. MEN'S ROOM. 2ND TO THE LAST STALL - MORNING. TUESDAY

A pair of expensive LOAFERS, lowering, softly make contact with the toilet seat.

CUT TO:

Chen cautiously pushes open the door. He moves in closer to see the sheet. Closer, bending over and picking it up. It says: "don't struggle, you'll just make it worse." Stokes leans way over the stall divider and places Chen's head through a loop he made with his BELT. He instinctively tries to remove it, struggling. Stokes lets his body fall, free of any support, acting as a counterbalance against Chen's lighter, rising body. He places the second loop--the device has two loops, like an "8"--around a coat hanger in his stall. He then EXITS the room, leaving Chen hanging two feet off the ground, desperate for air.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. DINING HALL - MORNING. TUESDAY

The hall is decked out for a semi-formal reception. There are TABLECLOTHES, nice CHINA, SILVER and GLASSWARE, and a BANNER: "SENIORS, WELCOME TO YOUR LUNCHEON." Bryan ENTERS the apparently empty dining hall, GUN in hand. He walks between the two rows of long TABLES. Something sweeps the legs from under him, sending him to the floor face first, and he drops the gun. Stokes emerges from under one of the tables. Bryan goes for the gun, but Stokes kicks it, sending it sliding across the freshly polished floor. He squats down over him and turns him over, taking him by his starched collar with his left hand. He punches him. Blood dampens his fist and Bryan's face. Again--twice-- and raises his hand up to confirm to him bad things come in threes when a SHOELACE garrote comes across his throat. Pulled off Bryan, dragged and thrown onto one of the neatly made tables by his assailant Eddie. He manages to place his left middle and index fingers between the rope and his flesh, his right hand searching the table for a weapon--A STEAK KNIFE. He brings the knife up to his throat and severs the cord. He swings, K.O.s Eddie with one strike across the temple. Stokes gets off the table.

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(sarcastically)

Great garrote, dumbass.

He throws the knife to the floor and EXITS.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HALLWAY - MORNING. TUESDAY

Exhausted and walking at a paranoid, fevered pitch, he wipes his chin with his right fist, unwarily smearing blood along it. His cell phone RINGS. He doesn't wait for it to ring again--promptly removing it with his bloodied right hand and receives the call.

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

We're very special young people. That's why we own the world. I'll see you later.

STOKES

(into phone)

I sure as Hell don't intend to ever see you a--

A door opens. He stops, startled. It's Marie. She holds a CELL PHONE in one hand and a GUN in the other. She shoots him in the chest. Shocked, he looks down.

POV - STOKES

There's a small crimson stain on his TIE, SHIRT. He dabs it with his left fingers, allowing the tips to be stained.

BACK TO SCENE

Marie's still holding the phone, and her voice is still being transmitted through it, creating a stereo effect.

MARIE

Bang. You're dead.

She walks to him, and he finally realizes, having not dropped dead, he was hit with a paintball.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Sorry about ruining your shirt.

She walks away.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MAIN HALL - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes returns to his locker, unlocks it, opens it. A large NEWSCLIPPING is taped in a similar fashion as the letter was to his locker. It's the front page of Monday's Los Angeles Times. A PICTURE of Colleen is glued atop Samantha's. The original headline (Girl Found Murdered on PCH) has been altered: "on PCH" is crossed out. He holds it by its edges and places it in the box. Deanna approaches him.

DEANNA

Sullivan Stokes?

STOKES

Yeah?

She sees his hand is covered with blood.

DEANNA

Is that blood?

STOKES

Yeah, but it's not mine.

He thinks about it for a second.

STOKES (CONT'D)

No, wait,...(beat)...that's worse.

INT. SEACREST SHERIFF'S OFFICE. INTERROGATION ROOM -  
AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

Stokes now sits at an interrogation table, still in his uniform, but with a loosened tie and his jacket hung on the back of his chair. Deanna and Pam stand at his opposite.

DEANNA

Are you a fan of photography? Let us show you some pictures.

She slides a MANILA FOLDER across the table to him. He stops the folder--it was pushed with too much force, may have slid off the table. He opens it.

PAM

Mr. Stokes--Sullivan--some people find

crime scene photographs disturbing,...

He doesn't. He goes through the LAPD's color 8x10s with seemingly remorseless eyes.

CLOSE-UP - CRIME SCENE PHOTOS

Similar to the ones Eddie and Bryan took, but these are color and have dried blood stains and a chalk outline around the body. A tear drops on a close-up of Samantha.

BACK TO SCENE

It was a tear he shed for Samantha but only a single tear. He places the photographs back in the manila folder and closes it.

STOKES

I can't help you.

Deja vu. Deanna, tired of standing, sits down.

DEANNA

Can't or won't?

STOKES

Same difference.

DEANNA

I like fortune cookies too. I'm asking you to defend yourself, and you're giving me this cryptic shit--

Here comes the "good cop"!

PAM

(interrupting)

Sullivan, as you're well aware, you have quite the sizable criminal record for someone your age. None of this is any concern to us--none of it is relevant to our investigation--but your arrest last year for assault. Do you want to talk about it?

STOKES

What is there to discuss--I kicked his ass.

PAM

It was unprovoked.

He shakes his head in disgust-amusement--disgustment.

STOKES

The man was a total fascist. He was spreading his bigotry around town, putting hateful flyers on everyone's cars.

DEANNA

So you were exercising your civic pride?

STOKES

As a Catholic, I took offense to it. Words hurt, Detective Cunt-er.

Deanna stands up so quickly, her CHAIR tips over backwards; she removes her badge and places it on the table. Stokes gets up, and Pam takes her position as the only person to come between them.

PAM

Ms. Carter, he wants nothing better than to cry police brutality.

Deanna's not immediately caring.

STOKES

(pointedly)

What's wrong, De-tec-tive Carter? Did I push you too far? Did we just find your breaking point?

Deanna calms down, corrects her chair and sits down. Stokes does too. They both cool down for a second, as she takes up her badge again.

STOKES (CONT'D)

You know, a famous criminologist once suggested that more often than not the innocent rarely have good alibis simply because they don't need them.

He slides the folder back to Deanna and stands up, removing his jacket from where it hung.



DEANNA

I know you aren't telling me how to do my job. At least I have a job.

STOKES

(puts on his jacket)

Look, I don't care. Unless if you want me to call an attorney, I'll be leaving.

He walks to the door, OPENS it.

DEANNA

(calling as he's exiting)

Yeah, enjoy flipping burgers for your father!

The door SLAMS. There's a moment of silence.

PAM

Well, he was erratic.

DEANNA

And obnoxious and arrogant and potentially violent--and I hope he contracts a disfiguring STD in the immediate future--but y'know what? Not homicidal.

PAM

I know; he's our best suspect.

DEANNA

He's a loner--I'd be surprised if he even has friends. The boy's a loser.

PAM

You realize he knows more than he's saying?

DEANNA

Obviously; the million dollar question is will he tell us what he knows? Who's behind curtain number two?

Pam removes her legal pad from her case and turns several pages back.

PAM

Leslie Bennington. Ten drug arrests--a  
Boyscout when you stand him next to Stokes.  
And...(beat)...he has blue hair.

She replaces the pages.

PAM (CONT'D)

Insert "Marge Simpson" joke here.

DEANNA

I was thinking The Smurfs. (beat) How old  
am I?

PAM

We still have a half dozen other students.

DEANNA

No, I think we should pursue another  
avenue.

She gets up and heads for the door.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

I have a friend who's a federal agent. I  
asked him if there was anyone in this town  
that has been of interest to the FBI in the  
past. He gave me a hot tip, you could say.  
I'll tell you when we get there--you have  
to first see this set-up.

EXT. VALETTE MANOR. FRONT ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

Deanna and Pam walk up to the door. Deanna hands her a  
DOSSIER.

DEANNA

Her name is Marie Valette. Her father is a  
billionaire French industrialist, but  
what's interesting is her mother: Her  
mother was a Soviet defector and later a  
fashion model.

Pam opens the dossier. The first thing she sees is a black  
and white PORTRAIT of a beautiful woman with stunning  
eyes-- MARIE'S MOTHER.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

All fairly smalltime, but it paid for a law

degree and she gained entrance into the high-end party circuit, where she met your standard dirty old man--a French industrialist named Valette. The FBI had her, the mother, under surveillance--suspecting money laundry for the mob--concluding, after three years, she had no ties with the Russian Mafia. Then one morning she got into her car and...

They reach the front step, and Deanna presses the bell.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

...it exploded.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

There's a long RING. Marie walks by a SECURITY MONITOR, placed in a cabinet, displaying the two unaware detectives. She throws Terrance's large JACKET onto a chair. She closes the cabinet, and there's another RING.

EXT. VALETTE MANOR. FRONT ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

PAM

I didn't know there was so much informal cooperation and file-sharing between us and the FBI.

DEANNA

No, there isn't.

She presses the ringer again. That was her way of changing the subject.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

Do you think "Citizen Kane" knows there are people living in his house?

MARIE (V.O.)

(over intercom)

Hello?

Confused, they look around for a place to speak into. It was like God just spoke down to them. Deanna just speaks aloud.

DEANNA  
Yes, is this Marie Valette?

MARIE (V.O.)  
(over intercom)  
Speaking.

DEANNA  
I'm Detective Deanna Carter with the LAPD;  
I'm with my partner, Pamela Wilkes. We'd  
like--

MARIE (V.O.)  
(interrupting, over intercom)  
Enter.

There's a BUZZ. Pam experimentally turns the knob. The door yields, and they ENTER.

DEANNA  
"No one sees the Wizard--not no one, not no  
how."

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

Marie's sitting in her usual seat. Pam's sitting across from her, and Deanna's lingering around, taking in the grandeur. They are both drinking tall GLASSES OF LEMONADE-- Pam's drinking, Deanna's just holding for show.

PAM  
It must be pretty lonely, living here.

MARIE  
I'm not entirely alone. My father visits as often as business allows. He's currently in Zurich--on business.

PAM  
Any servants?

MARIE  
Just a cleaning lady which comes by once a week; and the groundskeeper, of course, but he doesn't actually enter the house.

Deanna's now standing at the BOOKSHELF.

DEANNA

Tell me: Don't you want to know why we're here?

Deanna's about to set her glass on the bookshelf. Marie doesn't even have to turn her head to look, like a hot little Martha Stewart.

MARIE

(over her shoulder)

Use a coaster.

The glass stops. Deanna reaches to a stack of COASTERS by the bookshelf. She takes one and places it under her drink before setting it down.

DEANNA

Do you do much entertaining?

MARIE

Me? No, I've been told I'm quite the wallflower.

Pam nods; Deanna's skeptical. She picks a BOOK that seems to stand out--a BOOK which is pulled out a little farther than the rest off the shelf: The Complete Works of Nietzsche. She replaces it.

DEANNA

(patronizing)

If I was a small-town girl confronted with two homicide detectives from L.A.--

MARIE

(interrupting)

I assure you, there's nothing small about me. (beat) I'm starting Oxford this fall.

PAM

A cousin of mine went there. England is such a beautiful country--not Southern California beautiful with all our sun...

MARIE

Oh, I know...

Deanna, without her lemonade, walks around to face Marie again.

DEANNA

When are you leaving?

MARIE

Tomorrow. My plane's leaves at midnight--  
I'm not sure if that's technically tomorrow  
or Thursday.

PAM

So soon?

MARIE

Everyone in town's leaving--everyone with a  
future.

DEANNA

Yes, but you're the only one who is  
stepping off the stage and onto a plane  
heading out of the country....

Marie places her hands behind her head, stretching. Her  
PLANE TICKET is now conspicuously sticking out her pocket.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Isn't that a tad odd?

MARIE

("taken aback")

Well, you don't think I did anything? I  
mean, I'm sure your nose is really hard to  
the pavement to crack this, but there's no  
need for character assassination.

DEANNA

No, of course not. Don't blow up. The LAPD  
is not as corrupt as the media makes us out  
to be. (beat) Besides, it's not like we can  
pin evidence on you.

MARIE

(surprised)  
Pin evidence?

DEANNA

Yeah. Just think about that.

Deanna signals Pam to stand. She does so obediently.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

You're a very gifted young woman, but I've never had a murder suspect get away--not in eight years. Tell your friends that.

MARIE

Oh, I'm sure you haven't, and none of my friends are worried.

DEANNA

I wouldn't be so sure.

She and Pam head for the door. Deanna spots the large jacket. She picks it up and shows it to Marie.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Whose is this?

MARIE

That? That's Terrance Sherwood's, our very own Cal Ripken Jr.--not because they're both African American but because they both play the baseball so well. I was planning on returning it to him when next I see him.

DEANNA

No need. We'll return it to him today.

They EXIT.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. THE HALLWAY - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

Deanna and Pam walk down the hall, back towards the front entrance.

PAM

What the hell was that about?

DEANNA

Didn't you hear the clues she kept on dropping? "Crack the case, nose to the ground, character assassination"--who talks like that? And the way she practically waved her plane ticket in our faces, insisting she's mousy while keeping a couple dozen coasters lying around. Of course, you didn't see it--you were five minutes away from doing each other's hair.

PAM

What I find doubtful is that she could or would have personally done this. Two males--witness' statements are taken under the assumption that they can distinguish a 150 pound man from a hundred pound woman.

DEANNA

She knows who did, then.

PAM

So, what, coercion? Or she's acting out an unconscious desire to be caught?

DEANNA

No, I've seen that. I think she knows we can't connect her to this--not in a million years--but still wants us to know she had a part in it. As long as we don't have proof, she can do and say whatever she wants. Just for fun. Who says reality TV is dead?

PAM

That's a little hard to swallow.

DEANNA

And I had you pegged as a swallower--just think about it: What do you give someone who has everything?

PAM

Something to put it in.



DEANNA

So what does someone do who could do anything? (beat) Try and get away with murder--and be a real smug priss about it.

PAM

I'm feeling the smugness right now; is that woman's or cop's intuition?

DEANNA

A sampling of both.

They EXIT the manor.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON. TUESDAY

Stokes sits at a table, losing himself in an opened BOOK. Around his main selection are other BOOKS about Charles Manson, Jim Jones, David Koresh.

STOKES (V.O.)

(reading, growing louder)

The Thuggees of India were a cult of assassins who prospered from 1550 to 1900 A.D. Although their main motive for killing travelers and merchants on the roads between towns was robbery, the fact that many lived normal family lives and held sometimes lucrative careers for most of the year and the ritualistic murder and burial practices, mandated later, were attributed to the belief that their victims were sacrificed for Kali, the Hindu goddess of chaos and destruction. It is estimated that the Thuggees' victims numbered...

(whispers aloud)

...two million.

He puts a hand to his face, processing this. He turns the page. On the next page is an etching of Kali, the multi-armed goddess.

CLOSE-UP - ETCHING

It looks a little like Marie.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. BASEBALL FIELD - EARLY EVENING. TUESDAY

A PITCHING MACHINE hurls a BALL at lethal speed. Terrance swings and hits a homer. Another BALL, another one way, way out there. Deanna approaches him from behind the batter's cage, carrying his jacket.

DEANNA

Hello. Terrance Sherwood?

He doesn't take his eyes off the target.

TERRANCE

That's what is says on the jersey.

Another BALL. Another great hit--out of the park, in fact.

TERRANCE (CONT'D)

I'm not going to get my father's autograph for you.

DEANNA

No, I'm here to talk to you.

TERRANCE

I've already decided which college I'm going to go.

DEANNA

No, I'm a detective with the L.A.P.--

This next BALL takes him by surprise. It was barely a double. Deanna sees the flinch.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

I'm in town, taking in your clean air--ever been to the Valette Residence?

He misses the next BALL altogether.

TERRANCE

Who?

He swings the bat around, loosening up, preparing for the next pitch.

DEANNA

Marie Valette, she goes to your school--assuming there's only one Monroe Academy

in Seacrest. Have you ever been to her home?

Another pitch. He misses.

TERRANCE

I don't know, maybe.

DEANNA

I see. (beat) I'm sure it's not easy being you--must be lonely.

TERRANCE

Not really. I've found my circle.

DEANNA

I mean, when your father was your age, he was batting like .390; you bat, what, .340? And he wasn't either attending a school nearly as nice as this. It must be a total pain in the ass, living in a parent's shadow.

He misses again.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Had a few troubles with the law--

TERRANCE

(interrupting)

What, have you been checking up on him?

DEANNA

Actually, I read his autobiography. Very inspirational and uplifting--Oprah was right again.

Misses again. Deanna sees she's not going to make any more progress here.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

Don't make the same mistakes your father did. That's the advantage of being a son.

She hangs the jacket on the fence.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

I'll leave your jacket over here. I found it in Marie's room; I hope you find out who your real friends are.

She walks away.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - EARLY EVENING.  
TUESDAY

The lighting is poor; many of the lights aren't even on. Terrance is now fully dressed. He SLAMS his locker and heads for the door. From the darkness, Eddie springs atop the considerably larger jock, forcing him to the ground face first.

EDDIE

Face down!!!

Eddie's eyes are bloodshot and teary. His nose is running, and his once neat hair is at a disarray. He kneels down, with his knee in the fallen giant's back and a GUN pressed to the base of his neck. With his free hand, he keeps him facing the ground--or at least to the side, away from him.

TERRANCE

(calmly)

Okay. Wallet in my left jacket pocket; car keys in my front right pants pocket--

He snorts loudly and wipes his nose with the backside of his trigger hand.

EDDIE

(interrupting)

Where is it!?!

TERRANCE

I have no prescription or illegal drugs in my possession, and don't think you're fooling anyone, boy. The first chance I get you alone, you're dead. Do you hear me, you coked-out little freak--you're dead! I don't know what the hell this is suppose to be, but I'm giving you a headstart.

Regardless of their present positions, Eddie lets up and hurries out the locker room.

EXT. SEACREST. SEACREST BAY - EARLY EVENING. TUESDAY

Eli stands on the beach, barefoot and with the cuffs of his trousers rolled up. Stokes's Durango comes ROARING off the road and directly to him. He turns with his hands extended in a stop gesture. The Durango stops within six feet of striking him. Stokes steps out and SLAMS the door bitterly. He walks up to him.

STOKES

Hey, sorry, the sand was giving my tires  
crappy traction.

They start walking.

ELI

You could've killed me.

STOKES

Yeah, I'll look into buying better tires.

ELI

We used to go down here all the time,  
remember?

ELI (CONT'D)

We--you and Colleen and Marie and I--  
could've someday had a picnic or...  
(beat)... something. Well, I suppose that's  
out.

STOKES

Oh, definitely.

Pause.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Who did it?

ELI

We did, man--the Group.

STOKES

No, which one--don't fuck with me, I know

you weren't all there.

Pause.

ELI

What makes you think I know? Members of the group are forbidden to fraternize with each other outside of the group. The stakes are too high. If we can be connected with each other--

STOKES

(interrupting)  
And you and Marie?

ELI

Marie's special.

Pause.

STOKES

Who did it?

ELI

(reluctantly)  
Bryan and Eddie.

STOKES

Why? You owe me that, at least for what you people are asking me to do.

ELI

I don't owe you anything.

STOKES

(confused)  
You're a great guy. Why do you act as Marie's lapdog?

ELI

I'm not acting as anyone's lapdog. In fact, for the first time in a long time, I don't feel like someone's bitch.

STOKES

We're all God's bitches--we all have an obligation to do what's right.

ELI

(sarcastically)

Wow, the eloquence here. (beat)

(seriously)

But the thing is: What's the difference between doing right to people and doing what's right for people? If we toss Eddie and Bryan to the cops, we'll all take the fall.

Stokes draws his revolver from his waistband and holds it to Eli's mid-section.

STOKES

I'll give you another, bizarrely placed asshole--roll on them, man. Go to the cops, cut a deal.

They stop.

ELI

(coolly)

I'm no longer afraid to die. Ever since my parents' death, I'd feared death. Carpis diem--life is for the living and all that. That girl is dead, Stokes; her death was an accident.

Stokes puts the gun away.

STOKES

Why was she attacked?

ELI

It was their assignment. Once in awhile, Marie would give us an assignment to perform to encourage unity, like at those motivational seminars where you have to fall back and trust the guy behind you will catch you. Their's was to drive down to L.A. and pick a girl at random and to--...

They continue to walk.

ELI (CONT'D)

...her death was an accident.

STOKES

Why bother with me? A dead woman tells no tales.

They stop again.

ELI

Everything was surgical-clean--everything.  
But the girl scrapped Bryan.

Eli looks at his own fingernails.

ELI (CONT'D)

If they can get the DNA from under her nails, they may be able to someday track it back to him. Then they track the car back to Eddie, and then it's a low squeal to the rest of us. (beat) That's a whole lotta people.

Stokes continues walking. Eli follows.

STOKES

What does she have on you? Is it sex?

Eli jumps onto a LOG, and they both stop. He's jubilant for some reason--as jubilant as he probably gets.

ELI

Nah, it's not like that--it's the way she makes me feel.

STOKES

You're my bestfriend, and I love you like a brother, but I'm not going to let her get away with this.

ELI

Just do it, man, just save everyone the trouble.

STOKES

You know me--I don't save people trouble,...

INT. STOKES'S DURANGO - EARLY EVENING. TUESDAY



It is empty of people; in the passenger's seat is a LAPTOP. Stokes opens the driver's side door, and as he's getting in, he picks up and opens the laptop. He SLAMS the door behind him.

STOKES (CONT'D, V.O.)  
...I give it to them.

STOKES (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Already? Oh, Eddie. It's not even dark.

INSERT - LAPTOP SCREEN

Eddie and a young red-haired girl, ROSALINE, are making out on his bed, taking their clothes off.

INT. LOUIS'S MANOR. LOUIS'S BEDROOM - EVENING. TUESDAY

He walks into his room and up to his computer--he's "Got Mail". He CLICKS to receive it. A video window pops up and a computer generated voice speaks:

C.G.V.  
Hell-o, rec-og-nize the lit-tle red-haired girl?

He's a little confused at first. Then angry. Very very angry.

C.G.V. (CONT'D)  
Now this is my fav-or-ite part. This is when he ties her up.

He SLAMS a clenched fist on the desk. He leaves the room, taking a titanium DRIVER with him.

INT. ROSALINE'S MANOR. GARAGE - EVENING. TUESDAY

The door swings up, open. Louis has a REMOTE. He ENTERS with driver in tow. He looks at Rosaline's car, a brand-spankin' new, red Mazda MIATA. Its VANITY PLATE: "REDDEVL." He winds up with the driver like a baseball player and bashes the hood dead center with it. The aluminum panel bends like foil. He continues along the side, trashing the sides, breaking the windows. He does this all around the car. And finally splinters the windshield's safety glass.

Satisfied, he leaves.

EXT. DUVALL MANOR. FRONT DOOR - EVENING. TUESDAY

A LEATHER GLOVED HAND enters the shot from the side of the building. It presses the doorbell. The door CREEPS about six inches open. Through the opening, peeks the face and a sampling of the well-developed 16-year-old LEANNE DUVALL.

LEANNE

Hello?

The glove comes through the crack, grabbing her across her mouth and cheeks. Then the figure hiding against the side of the building emerges, a young man with a rubber BILL CLINTON MASK on. "Clinton" forces the door open with his free hand and ENTERS the home, as LeAnne's screams are muffled. She takes the hand off her and breaks for it, heading towards the stairs. "Clinton" SLAMS the door behind him and wedges it shut with a nearby CHAIR. He then gives chase.

POV - "CLINTON"

He follows her up the stairs. She stumbles halfway up, losing some distance over him. He pursues her through some interconnecting upstairs rooms: a bathroom, several bedrooms, etc., and back down the stairs. She heads for the front door; seeing the chair blocking her, she goes for the rear exit in the kitchen.

INT. DUVALL MANOR. KITCHEN - EVENING. TUESDAY

"Clinton" dives, tackling her.

BACK TO SCENE

He turns her over, holding her down, kneeling over her midsection. Tears gush down her cheeks. He grabs a STEEL BOWL from a counter and hits her across the temple with it. It makes a hollow RING when it strikes her skull. She's still sobbing. He hits her again, knocking her out.

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - EVENING. TUESDAY

Eddie is in the driver's seat; on his lap rests a SILVER PLATE. Atop the plate is a line of COKE, a RAZOR and a ZIPLOC BAG with white residue lining it. An unsorted line is still on it, and white particles are still scattered about. He SNORTS and wipes his nose. He's feeling better. His CELL PHONE RINGS. He pours the unused coke back into the bag.

EDDIE

(to himself)

Have to conserve my supply--

His cell phone RINGS again.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

This will have to last me awhile.

Cell phone RINGS. He zips up the bag and finally gets his phone.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. DUVALL MANOR. LIVING ROOM - EVENING. TUESDAY

MRS. DUVALL is in tears. Through the open front door, we see several SHERIFF DEPUTY CARS and an AMBULANCE. She's on the phone.

MRS. DUVALL

(into phone, struggling to keep composure)

Edward, it's your sister...

(sob)

EDDIE

(into phone, growing worried)

What is it, ma? What's wrong with her?

MRS. DUVALL

(into phone, really losing it)

Someone attacked her!!!--Some creature knew when we weren't here and attacked her!!!

God, there's blood everywhere--but that's not it, Edward....

FLASHBACK

"Clinton," having done his business--having left the half-naked, violated LeAnne in a spreading pool of her own blood--removes a MAGIC MARKER and writes on her exposed buttocks: "payback, duvall, payback."

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

EDDIE

(into phone)

What else?

FLASHBACK

"Clinton" removes his mask. It's Louis, grinning.

END INTERCUT SEQUENCE

EXT. DUVALL MANOR. FRONT ENTRANCE - EVENING. TUESDAY

Pam and Deanna are EXITING the home. Pam's looking at the undoubtably perfect notes she'd just taken.

PAM

The assailant wore a mask, clubbed her unconscious and had his way with her. Generally well-liked, she has no known enemies. Probably wasn't even about her.

DEANNA

Was he one of ours?

PAM

I doubt it. Our's are sort of seduce and destroy; this one is more destroy and revel in the destruction. He's probably getting as much joy from the feeling afterwards than the actual act. Extremely personal.

DEANNA

Agreed. The writing on the wall couldn't be more obvious if it was actually written on a wall. Does she have a brother?

PAM

One Edward. Should we contact him?

DEANNA

No. He'd just tell the others. This will all lead back to Valette, watch.

They stop.

PAM

(low)

I don't need to watch. Ms. Carter, if you're having a problem maintaining impartiality during this investigation--

DEANNA

(interrupting, raising voice)

And if you're having a problem staying impartial during this investigation, I'll ask for you to remove yourself!

Disgusted at her insolence, Deanna walks ahead to her side of the car. Free from the earshot of the DEPUTIES, Pam yells at her inhibitably.

PAM

Maybe you should have removed yourself from the Department a long time ago! I checked up on you last night; you were almost indicted in the Rampart scandal a few years back! You wonder why you'll never make lieutenant? Maybe it's the rampant corruption!

DEANNA

Maybe I became tired of the hypocrisies--having to pull drunken pillars of the community off their battered wives--the cesspool I work in everyday and the damn lawyers who proudly take a crap on justice! You don't change things in this job--not really. The things--the little things, the big things--they change you! If you've been doing this job even remotely as long--

PAM

(interrupting)

Harris didn't matter!

This catches Deanna's attention. The anger subsides between the two.

PAM (CONT'D)

(calmer)

A week after Harris was injured, there was a rematch against Fairview, and Monroe still lost. Crippling him would have been pointless.

Deanna's now perfectly cool.

PAM (CONT'D)

And Marie's father isn't in Zurich on business. He's in banishment there. A year ago he incited a riot at a rival's complex. Six people were killed. If he returns to France or America, he'll be arrested at the airport.

They both get into the car. After a moment of silence:

DEANNA

What if I got it all wrong? What if they're a cell of something larger--some kind of an anarchist organization?

PAM

(sarcastically)

Yeah, maybe Marie's part of SPECTRE.

Deanna doesn't get it.

PAM (CONT'D)

(explaining)

"James Bond."

DEANNA

Oh, I see.

INT. LOS ANGELES. BEVERLY CENTER. TOP LEVEL - EVENING.  
TUESDAY

Stokes walks up to the glass elevators. He presses the call button--going down. An elevator's doors slide open. He sees

Colleen...standing next to Marie.

STOKES

(startled)

Colleen.

COLLEEN

Sully! Do you know Marie?

She gestures towards her. Marie hugs him. (An awkward time for such an awkward "meeting of acquaintance.") Colleen stands in the threshold, keeping the doors open.

MARIE

(whispering into his ear)

Don't even breathe.

They withdraw from each other.

MARIE (CONT'D)

We've met once or twice.

Marie wraps her arm around Colleen's waist in a friendly (yes, just friendly) way.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Colleen and I, we've drawn really close these past few days--I just don't think we'll be able to separate for the next couple days. We're having a sleepover tonight--y'know, just one last girlish act before we take that great march into womanhood.

Stokes's at a loss for words. The two girls begin to walk away--Marie is walking, Colleen's just following. Stokes looks on, stunned. As they walk away together, Marie turns her head. Looking over her and Colleen's shoulder, she tugs at one strain of Colleen's hair.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(mouthing)

One hair...

Stokes just stands staring at them. Terrance and Leslie-- large, blue-haired, with a half dozen pierces in each ear, one through each eyebrow, and a bull-like HOOP between his

nostrils--emerge from the adjoining elevator and "gently" coax him into an adjacent one.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER. ELEVATOR - EVENING. TUESDAY

As the doors close, and before anyone has a chance to say anything, Terrance seizes Stokes, holding his arms behind his back. As Leslie approaches for some easy hits, Stokes kicks him in the crotch as hard as he can; pushing off with his full bodyweight, rams Terrance into the elevator wall, snapping back his head, smashing his nose.

Terrance has had enough. He does a reversal, slamming Stokes against the elevator wall. Blood explodes out of Stokes's mouth onto the glass. We FOLLOW a bloody, lone TOOTH as it falls to the floor. Leslie slumps into a corner, grabbing his crotch.

TERRANCE

What? Are you a masochist?

He BANGS him against the wall again.

TERRANCE (CONT'D)

Do you get a boner--me kicking your ass!?!

BANG again.

TERRANCE (CONT'D)

Well, you're about to fall in love with me!

BANG. Stokes has been beaten.

TERRANCE (CONT'D)

I don't give a flying fuck about you or your girl, but I'll be damned if I take any heat for this. Just think about it--just do it and we'll all leave you alone!

He releases him. Terrance wipes his nose, as Stokes wipes his mouth. Leslie is still clutching his crotch. First floor. Basement. The doors slide open.

LESLIE

He kicked me in the balls!!!

TERRANCE



(uncaring)  
Then walk it off.

They EXIT.

INT. A MEN'S CLOTHING STORE - EVENING. TUESDAY

POV - EDDIE

This is a fairly upscale shop. Eddie walks to Louis, who's standing atop a PEDESTAL--a tailor's pedestal--as the tailor, CARUSO, adjusts his pants.

LOUIS  
Give me a little more room around the  
crotch.

BACK TO SCENE

Eddie slugs Louis off the stand. He lands hard on his back.

EDDIE  
Sonofabitch!!!

Louis is a little stunned; he expected this. He swabs the stream of blood from his cut cheek with the handkerchief and removes a CIGAR from his jacket pocket.

LOUIS  
(calmly)  
Mr. Caruso, will you please leave my friend  
and I alone for about ten minutes?

The tailor, Caruso, leaves. Louis gets up.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
Well, aren't we all hypocrites?

EDDIE  
No, this is different! She's my sister!

LOUIS  
Everyone's somebody's sister. Worst still,  
everyone's somebody's daughter.

Eddie is getting sick; he knows what this is really about.

Louis rolls the cigar with his thumb and forefinger. We all know what that symbolizes.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

And don't underestimate LeAnne. She's a very beautiful, ripe young wo--

Eddie grabs him by his lapel. Louis doesn't fear him. Actually, it's almost the other way around. Louis smiles.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Now what, Eddie? You kill me? But then, you'd have to kill Mr. Caruso and then, when you're caught--and you will be, you not being the heartless sex-fiend you want the other guys to think you are, you big pussy--they'll find out what happened in...

LOUIS (CONT'D)

...L.A. Killing your sister's attacker, that's heroic; killing the tailor, that's incidental--still temporarily insane after discovering the vile betrayal by your best friend--former best friend, but still...(beat)...to attack an innocent--to kill an innocent--at someone's beck and call. Well, that's unforgivable. So make your choice. Make your fuckin' choice.

Disgusted, Eddie releases him and leaves.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

(after him)

It's a good thing you didn't kill me. Then you'd have performed both first and second-degree murder in a single week!

He laughs and puts the cigar in his mouth.

INT. LOS ANGELES. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT. TUESDAY

JOHN HAITT'S "HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN ME" plays in the background. Everything's dark. Moonlight comes through the stained glass windows, making Jesus and the Apostles look sinister. A single priest, FATHER PAUL, is placing BIBLES in the boxes at the aisle end of each PEW. Paul is a young man--one of those hip priests who plays basketball with his flock and the like. He drops a Bible across the pew. He

places the rest down and bends over, with his back against the entrance, to retrieve it. A DARK FIGURE walks down the aisle towards him. The figure taps a gloved hand on Paul's shoulder. Startled as hell, he leaps up, Bible in hand to fend off the creature of the night.

FATHER PAUL

Oh, Jesus!

It's Stokes, who smiles.

STOKES

Too early for Wednesday services?

FATHER PAUL

Sully, this is neither the time nor neighborhood to be sneaking up on people.

He places the Bible atop the others and picks them up again.

FATHER PAUL (CONT'D)

Just for that, you'll have to help me distribute these Bibles.

He passes the entire heavy stack to Stokes.

FATHER PAUL (CONT'D)

And ten Hail Marys for God.

STOKES

Aw.

FATHER PAUL

What's wrong?

He takes several Bibles; places them in the box. And they both continue down the aisle.

FATHER PAUL (CONT'D)

Drugs? Booze? Protestants? You know, I once went out with a Protestant. That was before...

(pointing to his collar, smiling)  
..."the noose."

Stokes shakes his head and smiles just to be polite. Paul stocks another box.

STOKES

I'm afraid, father, this is serious.

Paul now sees that it is.

FATHER PAUL

Do you want to talk here or take it in the booths?

Paul places the stack down.

STOKES

Booths.

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

INT. LOS ANGELES. CATHEDRAL. CONFESSIONALS - NIGHT. TUESDAY

Stokes slides open the divider window. On the other side of the grate is, of course, Paul. Stokes once again holds the gold cross and chain like a rosary in his right hand.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Forgive me, father, for I have sinned. It has been almost two months since my last confession. I guess this isn't as much a confession or asking how I can achieve redemption, but I have a sudden need for guidance or continuity--some sense of up...

FATHER PAUL

That's alright. We point up, we point down; we go up, we--...

(thinks about it)

...we're a very versatile denomination.

(seriously)

What's troubling you?

STOKES

Recently I've been torn between doing the right thing or doing the thing which would save a life--like I said, this is serious, someone I love hangs in the balance. I can't get into details--you won't believe what I'm into.

Paul is intrigued, bothered.

FATHER PAUL

If it is something of such a pressing matter, I think you should go to the police.

STOKES

No. I mean, I will go to them but only when the time is right. For now, I need to do some stuff myself.

FATHER PAUL

(nods)

You know, that's how most people get in trouble. They assume they need to take on all their problems themselves.

STOKES

But there are enough problems that are our own--

FATHER PAUL

(interrupting)

No, not with God. With God, you're never alone.

STOKES

Sometimes, with somethings, father, we have to live here on Earth--in the real world.

FATHER PAUL

The things that we do in this life is carried onto the next world; isn't that reason enough to tend your soul, regardless of your relationship with God?

(changing his strategy)

I'm sorry the Good Book can't stop bullets. Now Satan, if it were Satan, I could better help you--Satan I can fight.

STOKES

Not Satan. (beat) Not too far off. Father, do you believe someone can have a dark soul?

FATHER PAUL

I believe someone's soul can fall into a dark place. (beat) I remember, once I counseled a dying murderer--this was in San Quentin, a few years back--instead of confessing asking for forgiveness, he spent his last days ranting how he was given a raw deal, and how the world didn't really need people like me. I considered giving up the clothe after him; thank God I'd already gave up all my earthly possessions.

Stokes smiles.

FATHER PAUL (CONT'D)

There was simply nothing in his soul--he had no content. Maybe he wasn't doomed to Hell; maybe the life of suffering he led used him up. (beat) So no, I don't believe a person can have a dark soul--if I did, he'd be right, the world would have no need for people like me.

STOKES

Thank you. I know you think I've fallen into more trouble...(beat)...

Father Paul is still listening intently.

STOKES (CONT'D, O.S.)

...--I can hear it in your voice,...

Stokes wipes the side of his mouth with his right hand--the hand he holds the necklace.

STOKES (CONT'D)

...but what I need you most is to pray. Pray, and believe that I'm gonna do the right thing.

FATHER PAUL

That I will--and I'll try most sincerely to believe you will.

END SEQUENCE

Stokes does the Trinity blessing and leaves the booth. He

walks down the aisle. As he's about to EXIT, he passes a MIRROR...

FLASHBACK

INT. LOS ANGELES. BEVERLY CENTER. RESTROOM - EVENING.  
TUESDAY

Stokes is cleaning his mouth at the sink, looking at himself in the mirror. His cellphone RINGS, making a deep, resonating sound against the walls. He answers it.

STOKES

Hello?

MARIE (V.O.)

(over phone)

Mr. Stokes, this is how it's going to go down...

EXT. THE COMFY INN. PAM'S ROOM - NIGHT. TUESDAY

It is raining moderately. A pair of muddy LOAFERS tread through the small puddles which formed in the cracks of the street. As they approach the door, they stop. A hand brings a SMALL GUN down into the right sock of the "footman."

INT. THE COMFY INN. PAM'S ROOM - NIGHT. TUESDAY

There's a KNOCK at the door. Pam opens it. Bryan is standing before her. His slicked back hair is now disheveled, and his uniform is wet and heavy. The storm is getting worse.

BRYAN

(not really knowing what to say)

Hello,...(beat)...I got stuck in the storm.

(beat) Don't get all paranoid--it's a small town, I knew where to find you.

PAM

What can I help you with?

BRYAN

Actually...(beat)...I'll say you're helping me right now.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

EXT. LOS ANGELES. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT. TUESDAY

Stokes is on the steps, leaving.

MARIE (V.O.)

You're going to drive down to L.A.--I advise that you take something with a lot of cargo room. You'll enter and leave Pacific Palisades Coroner's Office through a back entrance between 11:50 p.m. and 12:10 a.m.--security cameras will be disabled and the attendee and I have an...(beat)...understanding.

STOKES (V.O.)

How can I trust you?

MARIE (V.O.)

Haven't you learned by now? You can't. (beat) Self-preservation is crucial. I have no interest in this coming back to me.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE. HALLWAY - NIGHT. TUESDAY

Stokes slowly rolls A CART down the hall.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE. MORGUE - NIGHT. TUESDAY

The cart is stopped at the lockers. He searches for the appropriate cabinet and slides open one. He pulls back the bright blue DEATH SHROUD, uncovering Samantha's cold, dead bust. Like a morbid magic trick--voila!

INT. STOKES'S DURANGO - NIGHT. TUESDAY

Stokes drives down a highway, into an upcoming storm. He looks at the rear view mirror. There's a familiar bright blue bulge in the storage compartment in the rear.

MARIE (CONT'D, V.O.)

After you've located the corpse in question, you'll transport it to a steel mill just west of our town, whose keys were so kindly donated by one of our members.



He looks again in the mirror. There's a bright, white burst of lightning, then a sharp THUNDER CLAP. Then there's Samantha, alive and naked, behind him in the passenger seat.

INT. A STEEL MILL. FURNACE ROOM - EARLY MORNING. WEDNESDAY

CLOSE SHOT - STOKES'S GLOVED HAND

It turns a dial. The INCINERATOR EXPLODES with a raging fire. We WIDE OUT, revealing that the furnace room is huge. There are several FURNACES lined in a row, but only one is seemingly alive--like a beast, a dragon. He looks at the corpse one last time. Her right hand is poking out through the wrap.

CUT TO:

Stokes opens the furnace door.

CUT TO:

He has the body slung over his shoulder. He feeds the corpse to the dragon...

MARIE (CONT'D, V.O.)

There, you'll place the package into an incinerator. It will reduce the problem to remains which would not fill an extra large popcorn tub.

...and watches it be chewed by flames.

MARIE (CONT'D, V.O.)

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, Mr. Stokes. We're but doing the Lord's work for Him.

He closes the door, walks to a corner, slouches down and cries like a child.

INT. THE COMFY INN. PAM'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING. WEDNESDAY

Deanna ENTERS, dressed hurriedly in jeans and a tee. Bryan is sitting on her bed, on a towel, stripped of his tie, JACKET and SHIRT. Pam walks to greet her at the door.

PAM

Heh, sorry to wake you. This is Brian

Hernandez--

BRYAN

(correcting her)

Bry-an.

PAM

Right. Mr. Hernandez has some information which may prove very useful to us.

Untrustful, Deanna shakes his hand.

BRYAN

Let me start off by saying I've never killed no one.

Deanna folds her arms.

DEANNA

Nice to know. But I'm guessing you're not wasting our time by saying you don't know who killed that girl.

BRYAN

Let me also start off by saying I can't tell you.

DEANNA

Wow, for an informant, you're not very informative.

(heads for the door)

When you're ready to talk, I'll be in my room, watching Craig Kilborn.

BRYAN

(to Deanna)

I'm not here to cooperate--I'm here for an ironclad alibi!

This catches her attention. She stops moving and turns back to him.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

What I can tell you is that as we're speaking--between the time I've left home, driving and walking around town, to the present--the girl's body has inexplicably

disappeared from the morgue. And as I've learned from my uncle, a lawyer--you'll find many lawyers in this town for a reason, by the way--if there are no remains, there was practically no murder--obviously, people are convicted all the time without a body--but in the absence of one hurts a murder case. Corpus delicti really helps in a murder trial.

PAM

That, and the coroner "losing" Samantha's body would open the door for claims of massive M.E. incompetence and sloppy evidence gathering. Let's face it--it's happened before to the LAPD.

Deanna ignores this last comment--she, unlike Pam, was a cop during the O.J. trial.

DEANNA

Do you know Marie Valette?

BRYAN

I can't--

DEANNA

(interrupting)

Yeah, I can't tell you. Why is it that no one in your school seems to know a damn thing about your valedictorian?

BRYAN

Maybe she doesn't want to be known. (beat)  
I've said too much.

DEANNA

One more question.

Deanna kicks the bulge, and the revolver drops to the carpet.

DEANNA (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that?

BRYAN

(defensively)

This is a dangerous town. I may have been followed.

(sniffles)

I'm pretty sure I wasn't followed.

PAM

We needn't even get into how many laws you're breaking, carrying around a weapon.

He picks the gun back up.

BRYAN

(unapologeticly)

And I needn't even remind you that I'm the only student in town who has been helpful.

He stands up.

PAM

(bluffing)

No--no, you aren't the only one.

Bryan's interested. So is Deanna.

PAM (CONT'D)

In fact, a classmate of yours--Sullivan Stokes--told us our suspect will be graduating onstage tomorrow.

Pam picks up the shirt and jacket by the lapel--noticing the small hole where his pin would have once went thru--and hands it back to him. He slides them both on. He shrugs.

BRYAN

Really?

PAM

Certainly.

BRYAN

Hmm. Well I'll be seeing you there.

He EXITS the room, walking back into the rain.

DEANNA

That was good.

PAM

Did you notice the hole in his lapel-- there was a large hole in his lapel like where something had been stuck through many times. (beat) Ms. Carter, I think it would be prudent if we put aside any personal feelings we may have--for the remainder of this investigation.

DEANNA

I agree.

PAM

But I still think we've approached this the wrong way: We've been focusing on the who instead of the why. If let's say that you're right and there exists a certain methodical nature to these crimes and the perpetrator is compelled to flirt with being caught, then we would surely be searching for an extreme egomaniac whose capacity for violence and need to be the center of attention'll make him act out during the graduation ceremony. It'll be the perfect time; for a moment, his delusions of grandeur will be confirmed-- he'll be the center of the entire universe.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT. LIVING ROOM - NOON. WEDNESDAY

The room is dark. Still fully clothed from his mission, he's asleep on the couch. Suddenly he awakes. He glances at his watch.

STOKES

(startled)

Shit!

He leaps off the couch, and pulls the curtains apart. Sunlight filters through the window, illuminating the whole room. It's morning; the storm's over....He hurries into the bathroom,...as his answering machine blinks that he has one new message.

CUT TO:

We just see a pair of hands adjusting their GRADUATION ROBE.

CUT TO:

Then another.

CUT TO:

Then another.

CUT TO:

Then another.

CUT TO:

Then another. But this time after adjusting the robe, a hand clutching a small REVOLVER places it inside a pocket within the robe.

INT. THE COMFY INN. DEANNA'S ROOM - NOON. WEDNESDAY

Deanna and Pam are dressed as they were in the first scene. Deanna opens an aluminum sensitive EQUIPMENT CASE. Inside are the two walkie-talkies.

DEANNA

Well, this is the do or die. Last chance.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes, dressed in his black suit and robe, ENTERS the living room and notices, for the first time, the machine. He presses the "play" button and time stops--everything goes silent.

EXT. STOKES'S LOFT - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

As he runs down the street to his car, someone big shoves him into an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes lands in a group of GARBAGE CANS. He's stunned but fine. Leslie, pissed, ENTERS the alley.

LESLIE

You know, last night I was picked up by the sheriff and held overnight for something I didn't do--as trite as it may sound, I was set up.

Leslie removes his switchblade and presses the trigger. The blade extends.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

And I got thinking...  
(tapping his forehead with the tip of the blade)  
...who'd have a pair large enough to set me up?

Stokes slowly gets up. Slowly, as not to arouse Leslie from his ranting. He picks up a TRASHCAN LID.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

And then it occurred to me: Sullivan-fuckin'-Stokes, the town troublemaker. I was gonna get a gun, blow you away. But then I figured that may have been what you wanted--

STOKES

(interrupting)  
You're crazy, man.

LESLIE

So I'll just cut you right bad. That way, it'll be untraceable.

Leslie lunges at him savagely. Stokes takes the blade in the lid, but is forced back by the blow, almost against a wall. Leslie slashes at him--left, right. He deflects it with the lid. Leslie shoves him against the wall with his free hand. Stunned, Stokes drops the lid--he then brings the knife across his left temple in a downward slash. Stokes jerks his head towards the right just in time to keep damage at minimum--the gash on his left brow. As Leslie prepares for another strike, Stokes grabs the hoop around his nose and jerks it out like the pin of a hand grenade. Leslie grips his badly torn-up nose; his nostrils liberally spurt blood. Before he has time to scream, Stokes clocks him. Leslie falls.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AMPHITHEATER - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Wallace stands onstage behind the podium, presiding over the ceremony. Behind him sits Marie, Maximilian and several other decorated MEMBERS of the student body.

WALLACE

Parents, guests, distinguished members of the faculty and graduating class.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Today we allow the fine ladies and gentlemen that we all so wisely invested our time in raising to be freed from the shackles of uncertainty and change of adolescence unto the free soil of adulthood....

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AUDITORIUM. THE AISLES - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Deanna, scanning the crowd, looks like she's going to be sick.

DEANNA

(to herself)

Oh brother...

INT. STOKES'S DURANGO - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes races down Main Street in his Durango, pushing 50 mph. The streets are dead--everyone's at graduation. With one hand and eye on the wheel and road, he dials with the other hand and eye. But to no avail--the batteries are dead.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MAIN HALLWAY - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

The camera slowly ZOOMS IN on the entrance to Monroe Academy--a set of large oak doors with stained glass windows. The two doors swing open. He is still in his graduation robe. His hair is disheveled. He now has a large, somewhat bloody gash above his left eyebrow. He runs down the long hall of lockers, past a very large trophy case and through another set of doors.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AUDITORIUM - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Wallace still has the podium.



WALLACE

But enough from me. To say a few words,  
may I now introduce our valedictorian, Ms.  
Marie Valette.

Marie approaches the podium, and the audience APPLAUDS.

MARIE

I cannot describe the joy I feel now,  
standing in a room flooded with so much  
greatness.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. COURTYARD - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes descends down the stairs into the courtyard. He dashes across the giant courtyard like a sprinter. He goes through another set of doors.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. AMPHITHEATER - EARLY EVENING. WEDNESDAY

The amphitheater is packed. Bright stage lights are a little too brilliant. He stands on the upmost level. Sweaty, confused, he scans the stage desperately.

POV - STOKES

The floor lights are blinding. The individual students onstage cannot be made out, they're only silhouettes. Everything becomes blurry, then clear; blurry, then clear. His eyes are having trouble focusing.

BACK TO SCENE

He wipes tears and sweat out of his eyes.

MARIE (CONT'D)

This road has not been easy for all of us.  
One young man had to persevere considerably  
harder than the rest of us after the loss  
of his parents. My dear dear friend, Elijah  
Davison.

APPLAUSE. Eli walks to the podium. They hug. He slowly withdraws the revolver from his robe and places it to Marie's stomach. (Concealed from nearly any vantage point

by the podium and their robes.) He FIRES--the bullet tears into her gut.

CLOSE SHOT - MARIE'S FACE

Stunned, horrified, her eyes widen and a grotesque expression of pain comes across her beautiful countenance. He spins around with her dying body in a macabre dance of death.

ELI

(whispering into her ear)

We're in the light now, Luv. We're in the light.

BACK TO SCENE

PAM

No!

She rushes onstage.

CUT TO:

Stokes throws himself atop Deanna, grabbing her hands and forcing her to point the gun away from him. The two land with a heavy THUD on the stairs. They continue to struggle for the weapon. Another GUNSHOT comes from the stage, and they stop.

CUT TO:

Eli has shot her a second time. Satisfied that she's dead, he lets her body drop and tosses the gun into the audience; and places his hands up, as Pam now has her gun trained on him. The crowd goes crazy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY - DUSK. WEDNESDAY

A NEWSOPTER passes low overhead. The entire male student body--still dressed in their robes, and a few in their caps--are lined up in several rows. Some of the students have stepped forward, singled out as Stokes walks down the rows with Pam, Deanna and several DEPUTIES behind him. A TELEVISION REPORTER is in the foreground, broadcasting.

TELEVISION REPORTER

After almost three day, the search for the PCH killer has come to a bizarre and violent conclusion...

CUT TO:

Occasionally Stokes points to one of the students, and he automatically steps forward. He finally gets to Terrance--who looks at him nastily--and, gleeful, he points him out.

STOKES

This one.

They all resume walking. Deanna's tone toward Stokes is now noticeably friendlier--or at least less antagonistic.

DEANNA

(friendly)

Mr. Stokes, we hope that you'll stay in town for the next couple weeks; we still have some things we'd like to clear up.

Colleen walks to him. They put an arm around each other. Together, they walk like this.

STOKES

I thought my deposition could be taken anywhere.

DEANNA

It can, but to satisfy my own curiosity....

They all stop; he doesn't even consider what she's asking.

STOKES

No.

He and Colleen walk away, still holding on to each other dearly.

PAM

Ms. Carter, I know this isn't the time, but almost half of the people he has pointed out were on my list of suspects based on their

psychological and criminal histories.

DEANNA

You're right. This isn't the time.

We PAN OVER to Wallace, by an opened rear door of his Lincoln Towncar, being swarmed by REPORTERS.

WALLACE

I am immensely saddened by the loss of Ms. Valette; she had tremendous potential to change the world--for the better.

REPORTER #1

(calling over the others)

Mr. Wallace, do have any idea how many students were involved in her murder?

WALLACE

One, of course. A very emotionally disturbed young man--possibly an ex-boyfriend, in fact.

REPORTER #1

(calling over the others)

And what about Samantha Lane?

WALLACE

(feigning ignorance)

Who?

The other reporters cool down, realizing what is said next will be beneficial for all their stories. Reporter #1 doesn't have to yell as loud anymore.

REPORTER #1

(undeterred)

How many students do you think were involved in Samantha Lane's rape and murder?

WALLACE

(feigning outrage)

It is a disgrace--two young women are dead this week; to trivialize their families' loses with such ridiculous, farfetched conspiracy theories--

REPORTER #2  
(interrupting, cynically)  
Right now...

WALLACE  
(pissed)  
No comment!

He gets into the rear of the car and bitterly SLAMS the door. And the driver drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SEACREST SHERIFF'S OFFICE. INTERROGATION ROOM -  
EVENING. WEDNESDAY

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

Eddie is tired at this point.

DEANNA  
Did you kill Samantha Lane?

No response.

ASSISTANT D.A. SPITZER  
Were you a part of, or were you privy to, a  
conspiracy to cover up the murder of  
Samantha Lane?

No response. Deanna has an idea.

DEANNA  
Eddie, which one of them raped your sister?

He seeths for a moment.

EDDIE  
(losing it)  
I want my lawyer!!! I don't need to answer  
anything--the questioning must stop until  
my lawyer comes!!!

CUT TO:

Chen is sitting at the interrogation where his buddy sat a

little while ago.

CHEN

Marie offered us--with the Group--an escape  
from the mundanity of our lives.

DEANNA

Mundanity? You rich sonsofbitches?

CUT TO:

Bryan, sitting.

BRYAN

Everyday--day and night, day and night--the  
routines, the expectations.

CUT TO:

Terrance, sitting.

TERRANCE

It got old.

CUT TO:

CHEN

Ms. Carter, do you know that feeling you  
get when you're home alone? (beat) My  
home's five times bigger.

CUT TO:

Louis, cocky as usual, is sitting at the table. He removes  
a CIGAR from his jacket pocket. He places it in his mouth,  
preparing to light it. Pam's hand seizes it and drops it  
into the water pitcher.

PAM

No smoking.

LOUIS

(ticked)

That was a Cuban.

PAM

Those are illegal.

LOUIS

(ticked)

Not worried about that now, thank you.

(removing another cigar)

Have you ever arrested someone as rich as me?

Louis stretches. He's in no hurry.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I'll be out in an hour.

CUT TO:

Eli, who's obviously in it the deepest, is oddly at ease. He wants to talk.

ELI

None of us found the Group. It found us.

CUT TO:

ASSISTANT D.A. SPITZER (O.S.)

Why'd you join?

TERRANCE

Why do some people go to church?

CUT TO:

BRYAN

To build connections, to encourage unity, networking, teamworking--It's not about God--why do so many people have to insert God into it?

CUT TO:

CHEN

Fact is, you could build the greatest fuckin' cathedral in the world for 'im; that doesn't mean he'll grace you with His presence. The group was right here, right in front of us--how could we have been

expected not to join?

CUT TO:

Max is a mess. The cocky air he had on and wore so well is gone. He's been clean for a year, but looks crappy.

MAXIMILIAN

(blubbering)

I don't know...

CUT TO:

ELI

I was invited to join a year ago, immediately after I lost my parents. I imagine it was like that for all of them--bad breakups; recovering from drug, alcohol or gambling addictions--that's when you'd be invited to join, when you're trying to rebuild your life and relationships. Marie didn't have to break any of us down because we were already broken. We were broken people--all of us. Some more than others. We were allowed to do whatever we wanted because we existed below normal society.

PAM

Robespierre?

ELI

Charles Manson.

DEANNA

Of all the guys, why did you kill Marie?

ELI

Does it matter?

DEANNA

Call it a professional curiosity. Why'd you do it?

FLASHBACK

INT. LIMO. PASSENGERS' SECTION - PROM NIGHT



Empty(?) In the near darkness, we hear suggestive MOANING.  
Then:

MARIE (O.S.)

Okay, that's enough.

She rises. (She was lying down.) She's nude, and we CATCH her back by way of the little light present. There's a giant Anarchist TATTOO--an "A" inscribed within an all-encompassing circle--on her left shoulder flank. As the camera SPINS AROUND, she puts on her bra--when we are finally looking at her from the front, she has fastened it. She's looking down at someone. She's kneeling over someone. It's Eli. Shirtless, he's out of breath.

MARIE (CONT'D)

An hour 'til showtime.

She pulls up her slinky prom dress.

ELI

(short of breath)

We have plenty of time--I mean, that is not to say it would be that quick...

He exhales deeply.

MARIE

Not here, Luv. I want to do this in the light;...

(places the mask over her head)

...you coming?

ELI

I'd better not. I think I'll sit this one out.

MARIE

Have it your way.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

Eli spends a moment BREATHING in and out slowly and quite loudly.

ELI

I entered the Group with high ideals--just like many of the others. (beat) But of all of us, I held mine most steadfast--felt I was holding onto. We were to make a better world--together, the Group wanted to make a better world--even if it was within the confines of each other. Yesterday before the ceremony, I went to Marie's to tell her I made up my mind and was going to Oxford with her. (beat) I had my own key, so she didn't have to ring me in--she didn't know I came...

FLASHBACK

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

Eli, although he has been there scores of time, ENTERS cautiously. Steam is wafting in through an ajar door.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

...I went up to her bedroom. She was in the bathroom, showering. I went in--hey, nothing there that I'd never seen before;...

He ENTERS the bathroom.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BATHROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

Eli passes through the white fog which almost consumes him. His eyes water from the humidity. He finally sees Marie showering in an opulent open air shower--no walls or partitions. Her back is turned to him, so the Anarchist tattoo is even more prominent than before. Water flows down the crevices of her magnificent body. He stands in awe as if he was witnessing a miracle. She finally turns to him and smiles.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

...I was wrong.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ASSISTANT D.A. SPITZER

(interrupting, mockingly)

Ah, never had the talk with your father?

ELI

Mr. Spitzer, of all the ancient religions of the world--Greek, Roman, Egyptian--a common thread is that to bear witness to the true form of a god is to expect death or insanity. For the first time--ever--I saw her for what she was--what Stokes tried to tell me she was.

FLASHBACK

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BATHROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

She walks to him with a come hither but icy stare. Eli looks almost scared.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

Me seeing her in her true form like this--away from the darkness--aroused her,...

She gives him a long, passionate kiss; they all but melt into the floor.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

...and we--

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

DEANNA

(interrupting)

We--don't need you to draw us a picture, thanks.

FLASHBACK

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BATHROOM

They're lying on the bathroom floor, together, their nude bodies covered with his clothing. Marie's satisfied. Her needs just met, she has dozed right off. Eli's holding her, disturbed and wide awake.

ELI (V.O.)

Afterwards, I had an epiphany. I'd always considered myself a man who walked along the straight and righteous path. But when

we were together--I mean, physically together--it was like I felt her evil pass into me. She had completed her assignment. She had made us, spiritually, into one. For that she had to die.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI (CONT'D)

And that's it. (beat) Now if you excuse me,...

(beginning to break down)

...I've just killed my best friend.

He genuinely and sincerely weeps. No more questions. Deanna and Pam leave the room.

INT. SEACREST SHERIFF'S STATION. HALLWAY - EVENING.  
WEDNESDAY

They walk down the hall.

PAM

The state won't be able to do much. Together these 20 or so men have family fortunes of at least \$50 billion. Can you image what the D.A. will be up against? Only Bryan, Eddie and Eli will be charged with murder. The rest will probably just have to pick up garbage along I-5.

DEANNA

(sarcastically)

God willing. (beat) What do you think of Eli? Insanity plea?

PAM

Well, he's obviously delusional. Untreated depression after his parents' deaths coupled with an inferiority complex.

DEANNA

Or maybe he actually believed in something. Are you gonna write excuses for all of 'em? 'Cus, that's what their lawyers will be doing.

PAM

You know you're a bitch as a partner?

DEANNA

Yeah. But I'll enjoy working with you in the future.

INT. SEACREST SHERIFF'S OFFICE. INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING. THURSDAY

Looking like hell, Eli once again sits at the interrogation table. He's shackled and still in the suit he graduated in (though, obviously, it's wrinkled and the tie is history). The heavy door opens. Stokes ENTERS. He is now well rested. The door SHUTS behind him. They are alone. Wary, he sits across from Eli.

ELI

(friendly as usual)  
How's Colleen?

STOKES

You wanted to see me?

ELI

Yeah. I stayed up half the night trying to ascertain how all this really happened.

STOKES

You do have bigger problems....

ELI

Still. The group always had fissures--a group of anarchists? It was merely a matter of time. And yet it wasn't 'til you were brought in did we come apart. Listen, please, and tell me when I get off track.

Stokes listens half-heartedly, as if to amuse him.

ELI (CONT'D)

Intrigued or bothered by the contents of our letter, you went straight home--I know this because you only ride your motorcycle to school; Colleen feels they're too dangerous...

Eli stops and smiles in retrospect of the past couple days.

ELI (CONT'D)

...and then you arrived at Marie's in your Durango.

NOTE: INTERCUT SEQUENCE

FLASHBACK

EXT. VALETTE MANOR. DRIVEWAY - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Stokes pushes Eli against his Durango.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI (CONT'D)

But first--first you wrote a letter.

FLASHBACK

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

Stokes sits at his desk, writing a LETTER...

CUT TO:

...he seals it in an ENVELOPE and turns it over.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

Making a small note that it should only be opened in the event something were to happen to you.

Stokes writes this message on the lower right side of the rear.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI (CONT'D)

You then certified mailed it to someone you trusted.

Eli produces the certified letter from a jacket pocket (it was close to his heart). He places it on the table by Stokes.

ELI (CONT'D)  
I appreciate that you trusted me that much.

STOKES  
(picking up the intact letter)  
That was a mistake.

ELI  
Still--

STOKES  
(interrupting)  
It hasn't been opened.

ELI  
You trusted me that much. (beat) The moment  
you walked into Marie's room,...

FLASHBACK

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
...you knew she was going to ask you to do  
something you didn't want to do. So you  
begin taking notes on everyone.

Stokes looks around at the Group.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
There's more: I bet you also recognized her  
from some past conflict, I'm not sure  
where.

INT. BALLROOM - LATE EVENING. PROM NIGHT

Death takes the wand and uses the skull tip to nudge his  
hand. He, realizing he shouldn't have grabbed her, releases  
her arm. She smiles slyly.

DEATH  
Pardon me for trying to be impressive--...

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

MARIE

(smiles)  
...pardon me for trying to sound  
impressive...

CUT TO:

Three words:

STOKES

I know you.

INT. VALETTE MANOR. MARIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING. MONDAY

ELI (V.O.)

You then took a bum swing at Terrance...

Stokes delivers the poorly executed blow to Terrance's chest. Incensed, Terrance grabs him by the lapels and brings him up to his level. It's ass-kicking time.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

...when his and everyone's attention was diverted, you used sleight of hand to steal some personal affect from him--his wallet or pager--...

He reaches down to the area previously OFF SCREEN. He softly removes Terrance's PAGER from his BELT and conceals it in his shirt sleeve--all with one hand.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

...something which would have been easily traced back to him...

CUT TO:

Terrance drops him back into his chair.

TERRANCE

Cocky little fuck.

INT. DUVALL MANOR - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes's gloved hand punches through the glass pane-- SHATTER. He reaches in and unlocks the door. He ENTERS.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)



Breaking into Eddie's home,...

He nonchalantly drops the pager. It falls to the floor.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
...you planted it there.

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. HALLWAY - MORNING. WEDNESDAY

As he standsby, not expecting anything, two DEPUTIES open Leslie's locker and pull out a BRICK OF COKE. Wallace is supervising, self-righteous as always.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
Early Wednesday morning, a kilo of cocaine was found in Leslie's locker after an anonymous tip on the school's hotline.

LESLIE  
(startled)  
I don't know how that got there!

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI  
Now everyone knows Eddie does the nose candy--what with all the--...  
(sniffles loudly)  
...and Leslie sincerely doesn't.

FLASHBACK

DEPUTY #1  
Maybe you should just come with us.

He grabs Leslie by the forearm.

LESLIE  
(protesting)  
But I don't even know how that got there!

WALLACE  
Mr. Bennington, we don't tolerate this at our school or town--not this close to graduation, not ever!

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

STOKES

(hostile)

Then how did it get in his locker?

ELI

Someone who knew how to pick a lock had put it there.

STOKES

Wait. If you guys weren't allowed to talk to each other--

ELI

(interrupting)

I play tennis, Sullivan.

FLASHBACK

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. MEN'S LOCKERROOM - EARLY EVENING.  
TUESDAY

A pissed Eddie has Terrance down on the floor, threatening him with the gun. We PAN OVER across a row of lockers; there's Eli listening attentively, dressed for tennis with RACKET.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI (CONT'D)

While you were in Eddie's room, you trashed it, making it appear the work of a desperate druggie looking for a fix. But the real intention was not drugs, it was to hide a surveillance device.

FLASHBACK

INT. DUVALL MANOR. EDDIE'S ROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

Stokes plants the camera that will catch the Rosaline-Eddie dalliance on tape.

EXT. MONROE ACADEMY. STUDENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

There are only two vehicles left in the parking lot: Stokes's motorcycle and Rosaline's Miata. The Miata's windows are steamed and there are very loud MOANS coming

from it. Stokes, being consumed with curiosity, walks to the Miata. Trying to be funny, he stands there for a second. Then there's silence. A window rolls down and Rosaline's pissed face is seen; Eddie stays low and unsuccessfully tries to hide from view in the ultra-compact.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

I don't know how you knew Rosaline and Eddie were messing around,...

ROSALINE

(pissed)

A little privacy.

STOKES

That's what I was thinking.

Stokes walks away.

ELI (V.O.)

...but you knew enough.

INT. DUVALL MANOR. EDDIE'S ROOM - MORNING. TUESDAY

Everything is scattered around. Stokes is at Eddie's computer, typing.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

While in his room, you sent Bryan an e-mail as Eddie.

STOKES

(writing, thinking aloud)

I am sick and tired of this goddamn secrecy shit. If something happens, the others won't be blamed--we will!!!

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI

Whatever you wrote, you made Bryan very nervous. Nervous enough to go turncoat on the rest of us--I deduced this from outside of first-hand sources, so excuse me if I got anything drastically wrong in the details' department. After that, the bottom

just fell out by itself;...

FLASHBACK

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - LATE EVENING. MONDAY

Stokes places Marie's letter into a ZIPLOC BAG.

CUT TO:

He removes his shirt. Taped to his chest: a small MICROPHONE--with a WIRE that leads to a hidden tape recorder, obviously.

INT. THE STEEL MILL - EARLY MORNING. WEDNESDAY

Stokes sees the exposed right hand. He takes it up and positions the middle finger between the blades of a pair of PRUNING SHEARERS he has brought with him.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
...all the while...

He cuts it off, making a disgusting SQUISHY SOUND.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - EARLY MORNING. WEDNESDAY

He places the severed FINGER, sealed in a ZIPLOC BAG, into a BROWN PAPER PACKAGE with the other evidence--the AUDIO TAPES, the letter.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)  
...collecting evidence against us....

INT. THE COZY INN. FRONT OFFICE - EVENING. WEDNESDAY

Tired, Deanna ENTERS the office. The DESK CLERK is "busy" watching a small TELEVISION. He notices her for the first time.

DESK CLERK  
(not taking his eyes off the set)  
Oh, Ms. Carter. I forgot to give you this before you left.

He motions vaguely to the package. She opens it right there. Inside: the evidence against Marie, et al.

INT. STOKES'S LOFT. LIVING ROOM - NOON. WEDNESDAY

Stokes, dressed in his suit and robe, ENTERS from the bathroom. He notices for the first time the blinking machine. He presses the "play" button.

ELI (CONT'D, V.O.)

But just like Marie, you underestimated me--that was certainly one thing that you had in common.

(over the machine, calmly)

Hey Sully, I've been thinking about what we talked about; I don't think you're going to have to worry about Marie anymore.

Stokes processes this for a moment. Then he realizes exactly what Eli just told him. He rushes out of the loft.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

ELI (CONT'D)

I don't understand why you did all this. You did the job, we would have kept our part of the bargain--you and Colleen would have went off to college together, lived happily ever after.

STOKES

So I got my revenge on her.

ELI

No, it wasn't that. (beat) You knew about us long before last Monday; you knew we had something to do with Lane from the moment you found out there was a police presence in Seacrest. I'm guessing the D.A. is now granting you an incredibly sweet deal for your assistance in our prosecution; that's what you wanted all the time--a clean record. Marie gave you a chance to change your life, and you screwed her.

STOKES

The way I hear it, you screwed her.

ELI

Seriously. Don't fuck with me.

STOKES

"History is written by the victor," Elijah.  
No one will ever believe--

ELI

(interrupting)

I was never planning on telling anyone.  
There's just one thing: The two detectives  
were the wildcards in your planning. How  
did you keep track of them so well?

FLASHBACK

INT. MONROE ACADEMY. WALLACE'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING.  
MONDAY

Pam places her business card on Wallace's desk right next  
to Deanna's.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

STOKES

Wallace is my uncle--he's married to my  
mother's sister. How else did you think I  
was able to remain in Monroe after all the  
crap I used to pull?

Eli nods. It now all makes sense.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Look, is there anything you need? Anyone I  
could call?

ELI

No. It's all been taken care of. Actually,  
I'm worried about you. The group was a  
microcosm of a much larger universe. Marie  
had contacts with people outside of this  
pissant little town--contacts even I don't  
know about. Surely you realize this?

Now Stokes is genuinely nervous. Eli sees the sincere worry.

ELI (CONT'D)

(smiles)

You didn't.

Stokes stands up quickly. He EXITS the room, leaving Eli... alone.

INT. SEACREST SHERIFF'S STATION. HOLDING ROOM - MORNING.  
FRIDAY

As sunlight filters through the bars, Spitzer ENTERS, followed by deputy #1.

ASSISTANT D.A. SPITZER  
Wake up, Sleeping Beauty. Time for extra--

He stops dead in his tracks.

ASSISTANT D.A. SPITZER (CONT'D)  
Shit--we should have placed him on suicide watch.

In his cell is the shadow of a young man who has just hanged himself. The camera PANS into the cell. On a PAD, scrawled in a neat hand: "When you stare long enough into the abyss, eventually it stares back."

FLASHBACK

INT. STOKES'S LOFT - NOON. THURSDAY

Colleen is packing quickly--unselectively throwing articles of clothing into a SUITCASE, more like it. Someone TURNS the deadbolt on the door. She freezes but first manages to shut the case. The door swings open. It's Stokes. She breaths a sigh of relief.

STOKES  
Got all your stuff?

He rushes and takes her hand, totally blocking out everything--including her. they rush out so quickly, she almost forgets her bag.

COLLEEN  
Yeah.

STOKES  
(hurriedly)

Good, good, we'll send for the rest.

EXT. A LONE STRETCH OF HIGHWAY SOMEWHERE - DUSK. THURSDAY

Stokes's Durango speeds down the deserted road.

INT. STOKES'S DURANGO - DUSK. THURSDAY

Colleen looks worried, very tired. Stokes is concentrating on the road. They've obviously not spoken in awhile.

STOKES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I got you into this.

COLLEEN

We all choose our own destiny; I'm glad mine is with yours.

EXT. A LONE STRETCH OF HIGHWAY SOMEWHERE - DUSK. THURSDAY

As the sun sets, they head into an uncertain future, together.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END



