

Valerie's Killer

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Immaculately clean, elegant.

The entrance leads to the lobby of a posh hotel.

Classical music plays faintly.

The upper 1% drink, commiserate.

On a large TV, a police procedural TV show finishes.

COLE WHEELER (50s) is behind the bar, expertly making a martini. Every motion he makes is clean and crisp.

He's tall, handsome with salt and pepper hair.

A proper suit fits his athletic physique perfectly.

The end credits flash on screen.

"Produced by Harold Spector" is bold.

Everyone in the bar turns to see--

High-end call-girl VALERIE "CINNAMON" SAINT JAMES (mid 20s) saunter towards the bar.

She's tall with jet black hair.

A tight black dress clings to her curvy figure.

An older, recently cleaned Huguenot Cross necklace is around her neck. A matching bracelet is on her wrist.

An expensive purse is in her hands.

The corner of a DVD peaks out of it.

She walks straight to the bar and sits across from Cole.

He hands her a martini.

She takes a sip. It's delicious.

VALERIE

I brought you something fun.

She takes out the DVD and hands it to him.

It's a German movie with Adolf Hitler on the cover.

Cole looks at it for a moment.

COLE
This is different.

VALERIE
It's super dark but really funny.

He places the DVD under the bar.

COLE
I don't think it's my kind of film.

/VALERIE
You'll love it, I swear.

COLE
I hope you're right.

Her phone buzzes.

VALERIE
When am I wrong?

COLE
That film about the serial killer.

VALERIE
It was funny.

Cole shakes his head.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Maybe my sense of humor is a bit
darker than most.

COLE
What room did you get?

VALERIE
The Admiral Suite.

Valerie slams the drink.

Cole grabs a tablet.

He pulls up a drink management software program.

His fingers pull up the Admiral Suite.

He bills them for Valerie's drink.

COLE
Does anyone ever object?

She signs it, tipping him generously.

VALERIE
Cost of doing business.

He looks at it briefly and smiles.

COLE
I appreciate it.

VALERIE
Take it easy, Cole.

COLE
Stay safe.

Valerie leaves.

Hotel Security Staffer FRED (mid 60s, overweight) sits down.

FRED
How do you do it?

COLE
Do what?

Cole pulls up Fred's tab on the drink management software.

Fred owes several hundred dollars.

FRED
Concentrate with her around.

Cole tries to add a beer to it.

The software refuses.

COLE
She's young enough to my kid.
(beat)
Yours too.

Cole adds the drink to the Admiral Suite's tab.

FRED
Don't ruin it.

Cole grabs a beer and hands it to Fred.

COLE
Your tab is way past due.

FRED
I'll take care of it, promise.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Small, cramped.

An older Army Uniform is in the corner, hung up.

It's overflowing with medals, including a combat infantryman badge as well as a Ranger tab.

Musket Pistols are on the collar.

Six awards for "Valor in Duty" are on the wall

A certificate for "Meritorious service as Senior Military Police Investigator" is between them.

An old news article on Cole is mounted on the wall.

"Local man wins Olympic Bronze" is the headline.

A large photo of a younger Cole "Freight Train" Wheeler in a boxing match is underneath it.

An Olympic Bronze medal from the Seoul games is nearby.

Cole walks in, his tie loosened.

He throws his jacket on the couch.

Cole places the DVD in the player.

His eyes look at it for a long time.

He takes the DVD out and puts it back into the case.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Framed posters of older movies dot the walls.

Cheap furniture is all over.

Valerie's boyfriend ERIC (late 20s, screenwriter) watches an old TV show.

He's tall with a dad bod, bushy beard and shaggy hair.

The front door opens up, revealing Valerie.

She's freshly showered.

A loose-fitting t-shirt and jeans hang off her.

A bag of takeout is in her hands.

Eric looks at his watch.

ERIC
I thought you had the early shift.

Valerie sits down next to him.

VALERIE
Jill didn't show up.

They lightly kiss.

ERIC
Her boyfriend get arrested again?

VALERIE
At this point I don't want to know.

She turns to the TV and sighs.

ERIC
His notes are awful.

VALERIE
It's your big break.

ERIC
I don't want to be this guy.

Eric opens the takeout bag and takes out two meals.

VALERIE
What guy were you before?

ERIC
I always thought this would come
for something more artsy.

He walks to the kitchen.

VALERIE
There's a reason for everything.

Eric opens a drawer, taking out silverware.

ERIC
It's going to define me for the
rest of my career.

VALERIE
What would you rather do?

Eric walks back to the couch and sits down.

They lightly kiss.

He puts his hand on her thigh.

She removes it.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I'm having some issues down there.

ERIC

Again?

VALERIE

I'm seeing my OB/GYN next week.

They eat.

INT. MMA GYM - DAY

PROFESSIONAL FIGHTERS train everywhere.

NOLAN "BOOM BOOM" CRUZ (late 20s, professional MMA fighter) is in a boxing ring, getting jabbed up by a SPARRING PARTNER.

Nolan is well over six feet tall, heavily tattooed, shredded and incredibly handsome.

His left hand hangs low.

Cole watches from the side of the ring.

COLE

(shouting at Nolan)

Raise your left!

Nolan's left stays in place.

Nolan takes a hard shot to the body.

WHAM!

The Sparring Partner hits the ground from a massive right.

Several COACHES get into the ring.

They help the Sparring Partner up and out.

Nolan turns his attention to Cole.

NOLAN

How's that?

Cole rolls into the ring.

COLE
It'd be better if you didn't take
twenty punches to the face first.

NOLAN
(points to his right hand)
All I need is one.

Cole puts up his hands.

Nolan follows suit, his left low.

Cole slaps him over Nolan's left.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
What the hell!

SLAP!

Nolan throws a quick punch at Cole.

Cole ducks out of the way.

His eyes see Nolan's left.

It's low.

SLAP!

Nolan throws a harder punch.

Cole moves out of the way.

His eyes spot Nolan's left.

It's still low.

SLAP!

NOLAN (CONT'D)
This shit is getting old.

COLE
Then raise your left.

Cole throws another slap.

It bounces off of Nolan's raised left.

Cole smiles.

COLE (CONT'D)
I'm going to duct tape it soon.

NOLAN

I've got two national titles on my wall that say it won't matter.

COLE

Are you going to him with a plaque?

Nolan puts his left close to his head.

Cole adjusts it.

NOLAN

It doesn't feel comfortable.

COLE

How does a punch feel?

NOLAN

It'd be more fun to show me with live rounds, Cole.

COLE

Let's hit some pads.

NOLAN

Pads don't hit back.

A pair of gloves are tossed into the ring.

Both men spot them.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Your Olympic fights are on YouTube now. I watched you knock out a guy from South Korea last night.

(makes mock train whistle noise)

Please tell me you didn't tell them to call you Freight Train.

COLE

It's how I did things in the Army. Straight forward until it's done.

NOLAN

How did you only get a Bronze?

COLE

Because I didn't keep my left up.

Wraps land next to the gloves.

NOLAN

One round. Don't make me beg.

COLE
What's the gym rule?

NOLAN
It's only people we know... and I
know you, Cole Wheeler.

Cole looks around.

Everyone is giddy with anticipation.

Cole sighs and wraps his hands.

COLE
Just one round.

Cole puts the gloves on.

Nolan smiles like a small child on Christmas.

Cole and Nolan tap gloves.

COLE (CONT'D)
I'll only go as hard as you do.

The two circle each other.

Phones come out from a handful of people, all aimed at them.

A buzzer rings.

Three minutes are on the clock.

Nolan throws a hard right at Cole, tagging him.

Cole smiles and throws an equally hard punch back.

Nolan smiles.

They throw hands like absolute fucking savages.

People rush from all sides of the gym to ringside.

Nolan and Cole hammer one another in a gym war for the ages.

Cole catches Nolan flush, wobbling him.

WHAM!

Nolan catches Cole clean with a right.

Cole shakes it off, trying not to act hurt.

Both men smile.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Cole's suit is hung up on a locker, freshly pressed.

Cole lies on a bench with a towel wrapped around him. He's freshly showered and exhausted.

His face is bruised up.

Cole's phone is on the ground.

Nolan walks in, fresh out of the shower.

He doesn't have a scratch on him.

Nolan's eyes are glued to his phone.

Cole looks at him and sighs.

COLE

To be your age again.

NOLAN

I just don't bruise.

COLE

Wait until you grow up.

Cole sits up. He gets dressed.

NOLAN

Blake Campbell saw the video of our sparring session.

COLE

No.

NOLAN

If you can stand with me--

COLE

It was one round.

NOLAN

--then you can make a little more money than what you get from me.

COLE

So he's got a younger version of you that needs a win? Pass.

NOLAN

I'll throw in a girl for you.

COLE
I don't get why you pay for it.

NOLAN
It's more honest.

COLE
If you say so.

Nolan hands Cole his phone.

It's a photo of Valerie on an escort website.

Cole hides his discomfort.

COLE (CONT'D)
Your taste is impeccable.

NOLAN
You get paid and laid. I don't see why you'd turn that down.

Cole hands Nolan the phone.

COLE
You need me to fix your left.

NOLAN
Shelve the monkey suit for a while and live the dream.

COLE
That monkey suit comes without the possibility of brain damage.

Nolan shakes his head.

NOLAN
Just sleep on it. For me.

COLE
Fine.

Cole straightens out his tie.

NOLAN
Are you sure you don't want to go another round?

COLE
I'm fine. Get some rest.

NOLAN
Yeah yeah.

Cole closes his locker.

Nolan spots Cole's phone.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Do you use a VPN?

COLE

A what?

NOLAN

You shouldn't connect to the Wi-Fi here without one.

COLE

There's nothing that exciting in my browsing history.

Cole grabs his phone and leaves.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A large gathering of FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS loudly play drinking games at several tables in a corner.

Valerie sits at the bar.

VALERIE

You know at some point I will want something that isn't a martini.

Cole hands her a martini.

COLE

It's not your usual night.

A DARK FIGURE is in the corner, watching her.

She takes a sip. It's delicious.

VALERIE

I've got an appointment at the Waterbuck but your martini is better than theirs.

Cole smiles.

COLE

I haven't gotten around to your movie, yet.

VALERIE

It's good, trust me.

She looks him over.

COLE
Gym fight.

VALERIE
I hope his face looks worse than
yours does.

COLE
That's the shitty part of aging. He
didn't have a scratch and I caught
him FLUSH a couple of times.

She itches her wrist.

COLE (CONT'D)
Someone saw it and offered me an
MMA fight.

VALERIE
You should take it.

COLE
I'm too old.

Valerie takes off her bracelet.

VALERIE
It could be fun.

Beat.

COLE
A friend of mine booked you.

VALERIE
Nice subject change.

COLE
It was weird hearing him describe
you as a commodity.

VALERIE
I am selling something.

COLE
He doesn't see you as a person,
just as a service.

VALERIE
Does he want me to service you?

COLE

I don't think of you in that way.

VALERIE

Everyone does.

COLE

I see you like... you know?

VALERIE

Do I have to state the obvious?

COLE

Please don't.

VALERIE

Then what's the problem?

COLE

Every time I hear about someone who does what you do, it's always bad. I think you should get out while the going's good.

VALERIE

Do you see me out there, Cole?

COLE

Just because you're on the internet doesn't change that. If you need help, just ask.

VALERIE

Can't we just talk about movies? I don't need the father lecture.

COLE

I'm just saying you can walk away now and have the rest of your life to do whatever you want.

VALERIE

This is what I want.

COLE

You could do so much more with your life, honey, than this.

Valerie's phone buzzes.

She looks at the drink and then to Cole.

VALERIE

I don't have any cash on me.

COLE

The party over there won't notice.

Valerie finishes her drink and leaves.

Cole notices the bracelet.

The Dark Figure leaves, following her.

Cole takes his cell phone out.

He pulls up Valerie on his speed dial.

His finger pulls up "Send a message."

EXT. ALLEY BY HOTEL - NIGHT

The hotel is in the distance.

Valerie walks quickly, her heels clacking on the concrete.

Her phone buzzes.

Her eyes glance to it.

Cole texts her: "Your bracelet's in the lost and found."

Her fingers type: "I'll stop by later to grab it."

Three gun shots ring out.

Valerie falls to the ground.

Her purse lands with a thud.

A gloved hand reaches down and rips the necklace off her.

The hand grabs the purse.

Footsteps sprint away.

A video camera in the rear of a local store in the distance points right at her body.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY BY HOTEL - NIGHT

A yellow police line manned by UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS separates the CURIOUS PUBLIC from the crime scene.

A MEDICAL EXAMINER photographs Valerie's corpse.

Homicide detective JACKSON CAESAR (mid 50s) observes the body and then looks into the crowd.

His turns to the Examiner.

Note: this conversation is hushed.

JACKSON
Any ID?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
No purse, no nothing.

Jackson looks at her intently.

MEDICAL EXAMINER (CONT'D)
How much do you think she charged?

JACKSON
We don't know that for sure.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
All the signs are there.

Jackson observes the body.

JACKSON
A grand, easy.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Triple that and you're in the right ball park.

JACKSON
No chance.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
She's young.

JACKSON
And she's a hooker.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Quality versus quantity.

JACKSON
Fair enough.
(looks at the crowd)
There was a witness, right?
(to a uniformed police officer)
Who found it?

The Uniform motions to the hotel.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Not a soul in sight except for--

Cole sits at the bar, slams a glass of Scotch.

An expensive bottle of it is in front of him.

He fills up his glass.

His eyes turn to the lost and found.

Valerie's bracelet catches his attention.

Jackson sits down next to Cole.

JACKSON

Jackson Caesar.

Jackson places a notepad and pen on the counter.

COLE

Cole Wheeler.

Cole pours himself a glass of scotch.

JACKSON

So you're the one that found her.

COLE

I heard some gunshots and went out to see what was up.

Cole reaches for another glass.

JACKSON

I'm working.

Cole puts it down.

COLE

They charge two hundred dollars a glass for this.

JACKSON

Is it worth it?

Cole takes a swig.

COLE

Absolutely.

Jackson grabs a glass.

JACKSON
How do you know the victim?

Cole fills it up.

COLE
She was a regular.

They clink glasses.

Jackson takes a sip. It's delicious.

JACKSON
Do you bust this out anytime
someone dies here?

Jackson puts the glass down.

COLE
We were friends.

Jackson picks the notepad up and takes notes.

JACKSON
We don't have a name or an ID.

COLE
We've got a copy of her driver's
license in the system.

JACKSON
Can you get it for me?

Cole walks behind the bar and over to the ID scanner.

COLE
Technically you need a warrant.

JACKSON
Do I have to?

Cole turns on the ID scanner and pulls up the archives.

COLE
Professional courtesy.

JACKSON
You used to be on the job?

COLE
Army police, way back when.

JACKSON
I appreciate it.

Cole's fingers quickly go back several months.

COLE
You got questions, right?

JACKSON
When was the last time you saw the
victim, Mister Wheeler?

COLE
She stopped in for a drink before
she was going to the Waterbuck.

Valerie's driver's license comes up.

COLE (CONT'D)
Valerie Saint James.

Cole shows the ID scanner to Jackson.

Jackson writes her information down.

JACKSON
Who'd want to hurt her?

COLE
She never mentioned anything.

JACKSON
Boyfriend, husband?

COLE
I assumed in her line of work she
didn't have one.

JACKSON
What did you talk about?

COLE
Movies.

Jackson yawns.

COLE (CONT'D)
She was a screenwriter who was
working on the great American film.
I didn't want to pry.

Jackson puts his notepad away. He takes out his wallet.

JACKSON
If anything comes up, feel free to
reach out and say something.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT (SEVERAL WEEKS LATER)

Mostly empty with a handful of regulars at the far end.
Cole grabs a martini glass and grabs a bottle of vodka.
He turns the bottle and stops.

FRED (O.S.)
Old habits, right?

Cole turns and sees Fred approaching him.
Fred has the lost and found box in his hands.

COLE
I know you're on duty, Fred.

FRED
It's that time of the month.

Fred places the box on the counter.

COLE
Does anyone ever ask about the
stuff they leave behind?

FRED
I've gotten a couple of calls from
assistants but nobody ever shows.

Fred looks inside the box. His eyes spot Valerie's bracelet.

FRED (CONT'D)
How much do you think that will get
at a pawn shop?

Fred reaches in and pulls out the bracelet.

Cole recognizes it.

COLE
It was hers.

FRED
I don't think she's going to wear
it again anytime soon.

Cole glares at him.

FRED (CONT'D)
Or not.

COLE
We should return it to her family.

FRED
I'll let you handle it.

Cole looks inside the box again.

COLE
Everything else is yours.

FRED
There's a mug in there you might
like.

Cole walks over to the ID scanner. He pulls up Valerie's
info. He grabs a napkin and writes her address down.

COLE
I got a memo about your tab.

FRED
You know I'm good for it.

COLE
I'm not the one saying it.

Fred takes a drink.

FRED
Give me some time, OK?

Cole's eyes glimpse at the address briefly.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Six empty bottles of cheap liquor are on the table.

Several more are on the floor, empty.

Mostly eaten boxes of takeout surround them.

Eric is on the couch, crying.

His eyes are bloodshot.

He hasn't showered in several days.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Eric looks up.

ERIC
 (meekly)
 Go away.

Silence.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Eric sits up and walks to the door.

His hand reaches for the handle.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 I said please--

He opens the door, revealing Cole.

Cole is in a dark t-shirt and jeans.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 --go away.
 (looks Cole up and down)
 What outlet are you from?

COLE
 Valerie was a friend.

Eric's eyes perk up.

ERIC
 Always Valerie.

COLE
 She hated Val.

ERIC
 I'm Eric.

COLE
 Cole.

They shake hands.

ERIC
 Come on in.

COLE
 She never mentioned a roommate.

Cole walks in.

ERIC
 We've been together for almost ten
 years now.

Cole is stunned. He looks Eric up and down.

COLE
I didn't think she had one.

ERIC
And not me, right?

COLE
You don't look like her type.
(beat)
No offense, kid.

Eric closes the door behind him.

ERIC
We were waiting for the right time
to make that next step.

Eric motions for him to come in.

COLE
My condolences.

ERIC
Thank you.

Cole walks in.

COLE
She liked a good martini.

Eric closes the door.

ERIC
She could never get used to the
taste of beer.

Cole hands Eric her bracelet.

COLE
She left this at the bar. I'm
assuming you know how to get this
back to her family.

Eric grabs the bracelet and looks at it.

ERIC
This was my mother's.

COLE
She was a good egg.

ERIC
Did you know what she did?

COLE
A person's job doesn't define them.

ERIC
She told me she was a waitress at a
French restaurant in the loop.

Cole looks around. His eyes spot a movie poster.

COLE
She let me borrow that once.

ERIC
Probably my copy.

Cole turns to Eric.

COLE
I've got one about Hitler at home
she wanted me to watch.

ERIC
She had an eclectic taste in film.

COLE
That's a nice way of saying weird.

Beat.

ERIC
I found out on the news. The police
came but they couldn't say much.

COLE
Have they given you any updates?

ERIC
They want me to pick up her body.

COLE
Have you picked a funeral home?

ERIC
I do that and it becomes real.

COLE
(motions to bottles)
No matter how many of those you
drink, she ain't coming back.

ERIC
It sounds easy to say.

COLE
I buried enough of my friends to
know that the only way you move on
is to bury it deep inside you.

ERIC
That sounds toxic.

COLE
Sometimes you have to do things you
hate to make it through the day.

ERIC
I'm not ready for that.

COLE
What about her family?

ERIC
Her parents died before I met her.

COLE
What about aunts, uncles, etcetera?

ERIC
She always said no.

COLE
Then it's up to you.

Eric looks around the room. He spots a half full bottle of
cheap liquor.

ERIC
I'll call them tomorrow.

Cole shakes his head and leaves.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Cole walks out.

He takes his wallet out and digs into it.

His hand takes out Jackson's card.

Cole goes to call him on his cell phone and stops.

His eyes turn to the address.

INT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

HOMICIDE DETECTIVES are all over.

A white board with active cases is in the middle of the room.

Jackson has four open cases marked in red.

Jackson sits at his desk, staring at the white board.

Valerie's file is on his desk.

Homicide Detective ROSCOE JANSEN (mid 50s, Jackson's former partner) walks up to him.

ROSCOE

Just staring won't make them turn black, Jackie boy.

JACKSON

Since when does robbery mix with homicide these days?

They shake hands.

ROSCOE

We've got an opening if you're looking to get out.

JACKSON

I must've pissed the sergeant off.

ROSCOE

(looks at whiteboard)
Tough ones?

JACKSON

Dead hookers.

ROSCOE

The preferred nomenclature now is "sex worker" per brass.

JACKSON

If you ever find someone with a Chanel purse and a thirty-eight--
(points to folder)
--I can close this one out.

ROSCOE

You could be out there, looking.

JACKSON

You want me to go to every john out there and see if they fucked her?

ROSCOE

It's a start.

JACKSON

Or I could wait for a real case.

ROSCOE

Any video cameras?

JACKSON

One's right on the scene but the company won't give it up and three judges won't sign a search warrant.

Roscoe thinks for a moment.

ROSCOE

Then I guess you have to wait for a real case, then.

JACKSON

That opening is sounding good.

Roscoe looks at the folder briefly.

ROSCOE

Five hundred an hour.

JACKSON

Add a zero and you're close.

Cole walks in and looks around.

ROSCOE

No shit.

JACKSON

Inflation is a bitch.

Roscoe spots Cole.

ROSCOE

Is he one of yours?

Jackson spots Cole.

JACKSON

Civilian.

Cole spots Jackson and walks over.

ROSCOE
Robbery is a lot less stressful.

JACKSON
I'll take it under consideration.

Roscoe walks away.

COLE
Detective Caesar.

JACKSON
Bar man.

COLE
I was in the neighborhood.

JACKSON
It's an ongoing investigation.

COLE
I just spoke with her boyfriend.

JACKSON
Can you tell him the M.E. is
breathing down my neck on her body?

COLE
He could use some good news.

JACKSON
You smoke?

Cole nods.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jackson lights a cigarette. He offers one to Cole.

Cole declines.

COLE
You got someone in mind?

JACKSON
Nobody is on our radar.

COLE
She did everything through a
website. Maybe someone there had a
problem with her.

JACKSON

It's a hooker website. What are they gonna complain about, not enough gums?

COLE

You could check into it.

JACKSON

Whoever did this grabbed her stuff after they shot her.

COLE

It's a lead, potentially.

JACKSON

Everything says this is a robbery gone bad, nothing personal.

COLE

She was shot three times.

JACKSON

Some crackhead's hand twitched.

COLE

We have video cameras back there and inside the bar.

JACKSON

So what, someone stalked her and killed her outside?

COLE

If he did he'd have been caught going in and out.

JACKSON

The hotel manager gave me a hard time about the footage.

COLE

Then get a warrant.

JACKSON

Judges usually want more than this.

COLE

Can't you call in a favor?

Jackson takes a deep drag.

COLE (CONT'D)

What about outside? Lots of places
have surveillance around the hotel.

JACKSON

More warrants.

(beat)

My best bet is finding the purse.

COLE

What about the bullets?

JACKSON

The lab guys are doing their job.

COLE

Then tell them to do it faster.

Jackson looks Cole up and down.

JACKSON

I thought military police just
rousted drunks and broke up bar
fights on base.

COLE

I was an investigator for the last
ten years in the service.

JACKSON

What about the first ten?

COLE

Airborne Rangers.

Beat.

JACKSON

This shit takes time.

COLE

I'll take care of the body.

Jackson tosses the cigarette away.

JACKSON

If I get anything, I'll let you
know. Until then.

Jackson walks away.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Cold, dark.

A SENIOR MEDICAL CLERK drinks a cup of coffee.

Cole walks in.

MEDICAL CLERK
Can I help you?

COLE
Valerie Saint James.

The Clerk looks at Cole.

MEDICAL CLERK
My condolences, sir.

COLE
Thank you.

MEDICAL CLERK
It has to be hard to lose your
daughter like this.

COLE
She wasn't--
(catches himself)
Thank you.

The Clerk reaches under the desk and takes out a folder of paperwork. He hands it to Cole.

MEDICAL CLERK
Do you have a funeral home in mind?

Cole looks at the paperwork.

COLE
Where's a good place?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Sprang Funeral Home will take care
of her really well.

Cole looks at a particular sheet of paper.

COLE
Where's her things?

MEDICAL CLERK
Since it's an open investigation,
the police still need them.

Cole signs the paperwork and hands it to him.

COLE

Thank you.

The Clerk looks at the paperwork and signs it.

MEDICAL CLERK

I'll get some copies for your records, Mister Wheeler.

The Clerk leaves.

EXT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Cole walks up to a '71 Dodge Charger.

US Army Military Police License Plate Frames are on it.

Cole's hand grasps the paperwork tightly.

COLE

What do all working girls have in common? Think Cole, think.

(goes to open the car door, stops)

Pimps.

Cole gets inside the Charger.

It roars to life.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

-- The Charger flies down the streets of a downtown area.

-- Jackson drinks coffee, stares at the white board.

-- Cole finds various PIMPS and beats them up, demanding information on Valerie.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PIMP ALLEY - NIGHT

DAN "MAGIC WAND" SANDERS (mid 50s, pimp) beats the shit out of a SEX WORKER (mid 20s, painfully thin).

MAGIC WAND

Where's my money?

SEX WORKER

I had it and then--

SLAP!

A BODYGUARD (mid 30s) is at the end of the alley, disgusted.

The Bodyguard is a mountain of a man.

MAGIC WAND

Where did you get those shoes?

SEX WORKER

I want to look good for you, daddy!

The Bodyguard looks up.

BODYGUARD

Can I--

A foot kicks him square in the nuts.

The Bodyguard doubles over in pain.

A pair of brutal punches connect to his face.

The Bodyguard hits the ground with a thud.

Cole emerges from the darkness, his eyes focused on the Pimp.

His hands are bruised up.

The Pimp slaps the Sex Worker again.

COLE

Touch her again--

MAGIC WAND

Or what?

Magic Wand reaches into his jacket.

Cole punches him with a perfect combo.

A pistol falls to the ground

It bounces towards the sex worker.

Cole beats the ever loving piss out of the Pimp.

Magic Wand hits the ground, his nose broken and bleeding.

Magic Wand's eyes spot the pistol.

She kicks it to Cole.

Cole picks it up and pistol whips Magic Wand.

COLE

I've run into five assholes like you already and no one has anything to say. I hope you do.

MAGIC WAND

Whatever you want.

Cole pulls his phone out. His fingers pull up a photo of he and Valerie. He shows it to Magic Wand.

MAGIC WAND (CONT'D)

I would love to turn her out.

Cole kicks Magic Wand in the nuts as hard as he can.

COLE

You talk about her with respect.

Magic Wand cries in pain.

Cole hits him in the nuts with the gun.

Magic Wand cries in pain.

MAGIC WAND

What was that for?

COLE

The rest of them.

MAGIC WAND

Please, whatever you want.

COLE

Did you send your man after her?

MAGIC WAND

I ain't stupid.

COLE

Then get smart.

MAGIC WAND

I heard a guy tried to shake her and some rich asshole down.

COLE

Give me a name.

MAGIC WAND

You're too late. A bunch of cats in black suits show up, snatched him off the street and he ain't ever came back, you hear.

COLE

What did they look like?

MAGIC WAND

Young versions of you.

COLE

Who did they work for?

MAGIC WAND

I didn't want to know then or now.

Cole points the gun at Magic Wand.

COLE

Your wallet.

Magic Wand reaches into his jacket and takes out a large wad of cash. He tosses it to Cole.

Cole tosses it to the Sex Worker.

COLE (CONT'D)

(to the sex worker)

There are better places to live than here, you hear me.

She nods and sprints into the darkness.

MAGIC WAND

That was ten grand, man.

Cole pistol whips Magic Wand.

COLE

Who's dumber than you?

MAGIC WAND

Go to her website.

COLE

Why would I want to do that?

MAGIC WAND

Internet pussy has internet problems. Maybe someone there did not like their service.

Cole puts the pistol in his lower back and walks away.

Magic Wand flips him off.

INT. SAUNA - DAY

Nolan and Cole have towels around their waists, sweating.

NOLAN

Blake called me. He'll throw in ten grand plus a girl of your choice.

COLE

How does that work?

NOLAN

Did they not teach the birds and the bees back in the forties?

COLE

I'm curious about the process.

NOLAN

You can be real with me, Cole.

COLE

I need some help on something and the less you know the better.

Nolan reaches back and grabs his phone. He pulls up the escort website and logs in.

NOLAN

YouTube is your friend if it gets too deep for you.

COLE

Pull up the girl you're booking.

Nolan pulls up Valerie's profile. He shows it to Cole.

Cole grabs it and views her profile.

COLE (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Internet pussy, internet problems.

Cole scrolls down.

A series of reviews come up.

One stands out: "Chaos Kid 69."

COLE (CONT'D)
(reading)
Worst experience ever.

Another review from Chaos Kid 69 comes up.

And then several more.

Each one is progressively worse.

NOLAN
This guy really hates her.

COLE
Can you figure out who he is?

NOLAN
This whole site runs on usernames.

COLE
How do we attach a name to it?

NOLAN
And say what, exactly?

COLE
How do the police handle this?

NOLAN
The website is based out of a
former Soviet republic so it's a
bit difficult to track. Unless.

Nolan grabs the phone from Cole. He pulls up an internet search engine. He types in "Chaos Kid 69."

A ton of results come up.

Nolan clicks on one.

"Chaos Kid 69" is being an asshole on a tech forum.

Nolan clicks on another.

"Chaos Kid 69" is being an asshole on an MMA website.

COLE
Can we send him a message or--

NOLAN
He uses the same username on a lot
of websites.

Nolan clicks on another.

A long post with pictures of a small apartment come up.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Apparently he needs help with his interior decorating.

COLE

Can you find it?

NOLAN

If he's dumb enough to post it on any of his real profiles.

Nolan does a Google image search.

A Facebook profile comes up.

Nolan's finger clicks on it.

The Facebook profile of ZACK THOMPSON (mid 30s).

He's short, overweight with a neck beard.

His pronouns are listed as "Get" and "Raped."

COLE

He's a real winner.

NOLAN

What am I getting into, Cole?

COLE

Nothing you need to worry about.

INT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

The end results of bad choices and broken dreams are littered all over the walls.

Several pistols are underneath a glass counter.

Two video cameras are aimed at the counter.

A bored PAWN SHOP CLERK (mid 30s) stares at his phone.

Wayne walks in, clutching Valerie's purse.

The Clerk looks up and then back to his phone.

PAWN SHOP CLERK

We don't accept stolen goods.

WAYNE

This is Prada, man.

The Pawn Shop Clerk puts his phone down. He looks at the purse lightly and then intently.

PAWN SHOP CLERK

That's Chanel.

A UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER walks in. He heads to the back.

WAYNE

How can you tell?

PAWN SHOP CLERK

The logo by the--
(spots something)
--blood.

WAYNE

It'll wash off.

The Pawn Shop Clerk steps away from the counter.

PAWN SHOP CLERK

(hushed)
I didn't see it, you weren't here.

WAYNE

(hushed)
No one wants it!

PAWN SHOP CLERK

(hushed)
Get rid of it as soon as you leave.

Wayne reaches into the purse and pulls out a small pistol.

WAYNE

Empty the register!

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Drop it or you get dropped.

Wayne turns to see the Police Officer with his gun drawn.

WAYNE

Fuck me.

The pistol is aimed at Wayne's head.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER

Drop it!

Wayne drops the gun and raises his hands.
The Police Officer forcefully arrests Wayne.

INT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

Jackson is at his desk, filling out a report.
His phone rings.

JACKSON
Detective Caesar.

COLE (V.O.)
This is Cole Wheeler.

JACKSON
How can I help you?

COLE (V.O.)
I've got some information that
could help you on Valerie's murder.

JACKSON
Who?

COLE (V.O.)
Valerie Saint James.

Roscoe sprints to Jackson's desk.

JACKSON
I'll call you back.

Jackson hangs up.

ROSCOE
I've got a guy with a bloody Chanel
purse and a thirty-eight.

JACKSON
And?

ROSCOE
The hooker case?

Jackson looks at the board.

JACKSON
I've got six of them.

ROSCOE
He's in the box.

JACKSON
I'll meet you there.

ROSCOE
He might lawyer up between now and
the time it takes you to get your
head out of your ass.

JACKSON
The good thing with criminals is
they always find ways to fuck up.

Roscoe walks away.

Jackson looks at the white board.

Jackson's hands open up a drawer. Several files are yanked
out and tossed onto his desk.

Jackson goes through them.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Several cardboard boxes marked "Valerie's things" are spread
out on the table.

Eric walks in from the bedroom with a handful of expensive
dresses in his hands.

He drops them into one of the boxes.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Eric opens the door, revealing Cole.

ERIC
I wanted to thank you.

Cole walks in and looks around.

COLE
This is healthy.

Eric shuts the door.

ERIC
She had a lot of stuff she kept
hidden in there.

Cole looks inside the boxes.

ERIC (CONT'D)

It was like I was going through a stranger's things.

COLE

I passed a Goodwill walking here.

ERIC

That's a good idea.

Beat.

COLE

I think I found the guy who did it.

Eric takes a deep breath.

ERIC

Have you told the detective?

COLE

I tried and he just hung up.

ERIC

You should try again.

COLE

I have his address.

ERIC

This doesn't feel right.

COLE

They're waiting to see if her purse shows up. He didn't seem optimistic about it, either.

ERIC

They said it was a robbery. I have to trust the process.

COLE

Or we can find the guy who did it and ask him to turn himself in.

ERIC

What if we screw up the case?

COLE

This will just be a friendly chat.

Eric nods.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A one way mirror dominates a wall.

Wayne is handcuffed to a desk, scratching his leg.

Roscoe walks in with a file folder.

WAYNE

I was just trying to sell a purse I found when that cop just pulls on me because I've got a substance abuse issue.

ROSCOE

The cameras tell a different story.

WAYNE

It was faked.

ROSCOE

And the clerk?

WAYNE

Lying.

ROSCOE

Where'd you find that purse?

WAYNE

It was in the trash.

Roscoe sits down.

ROSCOE

Now that might be the first honest thing you've said today.

Roscoe motions to the mirror.

Jackson walks in with a file of his own.

WAYNE

Is this good cop bad cop now?

Jackson tosses his file onto the desk.

JACKSON

That little piece you have killed someone last month.

WAYNE

It was in the purse when I found it, I swear.

Jackson and Roscoe stare him down.

ROSCOE
You know how this looks, right?

WAYNE
I want my lawyer.

JACKSON
Only guilty people ask for a
lawyer, Wayne.

ROSCOE
The moment a lawyer gets involved
is the moment we can't help you.

JACKSON
And you want our help.

Someone knocks on the window.

The door opens.

A DISTRICT ATTORNEY and a PUBLIC DEFENDER walk in.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
Did they forget to teach you rights
at the Police Academy, officers?

Roscoe and Jackson back off.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Simple mistake, right?

The officers nod.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
I'd like a moment with my client.

Roscoe leaves.

Jackson grabs his folder and leaves.

INT. POLICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

All three men exit.

ROSCOE
He was about to give it up.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
And it would've been tossed.

JACKSON

The purse apparently matches one described as being in the possession of a body I caught.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

What's the victim's name?

JACKSON

Veronica, Vanessa... something with a V, I think.

(looks at his folder)

Valerie Saint James.

The District Attorney groans.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

It's another hooker--

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Sex worker.

JACKSON

Either way.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

(to Roscoe)

Charge him for the robbery.

JACKSON

Can you charge him with the murder, too? I need the blank ink.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Ten seconds ago you didn't know who the victim was and now you want me to charge them with murder.

JACKSON

He'll be here anyways, right?

The District Attorney storms away.

INT. DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cole and Eric approach a door.

ERIC

This is a bad idea.

COLE

We're not doing anything bad.

ERIC
I'd feel better giving everything
to the police and let them do this.

COLE
They'll do it next year.

Cole knocks on the door.

The door partially opens, revealing Zack.

ZACK
Can I help you?

COLE
I'm looking for Chaos Kid 69.

ZACK
Never heard of him.

COLE
Cinnamon.

Zack looks Cole up and down.

ZACK
You must be mister Cinnamon.

ERIC
That's me.

ZACK
Cuck.

ERIC
Excuse me?

COLE
There's no need for insults.

ZACK
Look, I get it. Your daughter
turned into a whore but--

Cole kicks the door as hard as he can.

The door bounces off of Zack's face, sending him backwards.

INT. ZACK'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Disgustingly filthy.

Zack crawls away, moaning in pain.

Cole walks in. He eyeballs Zack.

ZACK

I'm going to call the cops!

Cole kicks Zack in the face as hard as he can.

Zack cries in pain, his nose broken.

A door opens across from Zack.

A NEIGHBOR peeks out.

Cole turns and looks at them.

The door slams shut.

Eric walks in and closes the door behind him.

Cole picks Zack up and tosses him onto the couch.

Zack cries in pain, holding his nose.

COLE

You ever call her that again--

ZACK

I'm sorry, I swear.

COLE

Why did you leave all those
comments, Zack?

ZACK

How do you know my name?

COLE

You did a shitty job of hiding your
real life and your internet life.

Cole punches Zack in the face.

ERIC

What the hell?

ZACK

(crying)
That really hurts.

COLE

You left a dozen comments about her
and they weren't nice.

ZACK
I was pissed off.

COLE
You didn't have to kill her.

ZACK
I didn't do it, I swear.

COLE
Why were you so angry?

ZACK
Please, I'll delete my account.

COLE
The pain will stop once you start
telling me the truth.

Zack takes a deep breath.

ZACK
I scheduled her so I could show off
to my ex.

Cole punches him.

ZACK (CONT'D)
I was having a hard time dating.

Cole punches him.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Please stop hitting me.

COLE
I want the truth.

Zack takes a deep breath.

ZACK
It was an internet thing on 4chan.

Cole takes his gun out and puts it against Zack's head.

Zack shits himself.

ERIC
What the fuck?

COLE
I'm sick of your lies, Zack.

ZACK

I swear to Christ it was a 4chan
prank. A bunch of us hired sex
workers to do humiliating shit,
like clean our apartments.

ERIC

Seriously?

ZACK

I was trying to top the guy who
made a woman change the oil on his
car and I thought it'd be funny to
make her do maid shit.

COLE

This isn't funny.

ZACK

She didn't clean my apartment but
wouldn't give me my money back. I
spent four grand and didn't even
get to laugh about it.

Cole takes the gun away from Zack's face.

COLE

I believe you.

ZACK

Oh thank--

Cole pistol whips him.

Zack falls off the couch, crying in pain.

ZACK (CONT'D)

You said it'd stop if I just told
you the truth.

COLE

That was for her.

ZACK

What about my money?

COLE

You're lucky she didn't tell me.

Zack cries.

COLE (CONT'D)

Where were you four Saturdays ago?

ZACK
I was here.

COLE
Can you prove it?

ZACK
I was on 4chan all night.

COLE
What did I say about lying?

ZACK
There's a thread about a guy who
had sex with some chicken breasts.

COLE
The fuck is wrong with you.

ZACK
It wasn't me. It was some guy and I
was curious why.

Cole stares Zack deeply in the eyes.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Please, don't kill me.

Cole puts the barrel flush on Zack's face.

COLE
Next time you see me will not go as
nicely as today.

Zack passes out.

Cole leaves.

Eric follows him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Cole and Eric walk.

ERIC
That was supposed to be a friendly
chat, Cole.

COLE
It was friendly-ish.

ERIC
You threatened to kill him!

COLE
He should be shot for how awful his
room smelled.

ERIC
He didn't do it.

COLE
He called her a whore.

Eric looks at Cole.

ERIC
If he's smart, he'll call the cops.

COLE
He made threats online in the
commission of a misdemeanor.

ERIC
You broke part of his face!

COLE
He deserved it.

ERIC
I called the morgue today. They
said her father handled everything.

Silence.

COLE
Just say it.

ERIC
Did you... you know.

COLE
She was young enough to be my kid.

ERIC
Wouldn't stop most guys.

COLE
For the record, no. I never thought
of her like that.

ERIC
Every guy who was her friend in
film school just wanted to sleep
with her, no more and no less.

(beat)
Do you know how many guys just
assumed I was her brother?

COLE
They should've been asking you for
advice, honestly.

ERIC
That's insulting.

COLE
You see a woman like that and you
assume the guy good enough to be
with her isn't you.

ERIC
Thanks.

COLE
She must've cared about you to be
with you this long.

ERIC
I don't feel that lucky.

COLE
She was special.

ERIC
You talk about her like you were in
love with her.

COLE
Have you ever met someone and just
know right then and their that they
are meant to part of your life?

Eric nods.

COLE (CONT'D)
I always thought that if I had a
kid, and did it right, that I'd be
lucky if she turned out half as
good as she did.

ERIC
I'd be pissed if my daughter became
a hooker.

COLE
It's not her job that defined who
she was. It was the person inside,
the one you loved.

ERIC
She lied about so much.

COLE

In the end it was you, right?

Eric looks away.

COLE (CONT'D)

I'm trying, kid.

They arrive at Eric's building.

Eric stops and looks around.

ERIC

What if I'm next?

COLE

Have you pissed anybody off?

ERIC

I would've said the same thing
about Valerie six months ago.

Cole looks in either direction. He quickly hands Eric the
pimp's pistol.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(hushed)

I didn't mean I wanted a gun.

Eric quickly hides the pistol in his jacket.

COLE

Throw it away if you don't want it.

ERIC

What if I put it in the garbage can
and it just goes off?

COLE

The safety's still on.

Eric looks around.

COLE (CONT'D)

Where's a good place to get a drink
around here?

ERIC

I still got something.

COLE

Drinking by yourself at home is a
sign you've got a problem.

ERIC
 And drinking by yourself at a bar
 is what, then?

COLE
 Perfectly normal.

Eric thinks for a moment.

ERIC
 Brito's is two blocks--
 (points right)
 --that way.

COLE
 Much obliged.

Cole walks towards the bar.

Eric walks inside.

Magic Wand's Bodyguard emerges from the darkness.

Three LARGE GOONS are behind him.

They walk after Cole.

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

PATRONS are scattered all over.

Cole sitting at the bar.

A nearly empty glass of cheap Scotch in his hand.

The bottle is on the counter.

The BARTENDER looks up and then sprints out.

Magic Wand's Bodyguard sits down next to Cole.

Cole glances to his side and then around the bar.

The Large Goons walk in, wandering around the bar.

Everyone leaves.

BODYGUARD
 My boss spent a lot of money to
 find the old man who robbed him.

One of the Large Goons locks the door.

BODYGUARD (CONT'D)
Nobody fucks with the Wand.

Cole laughs.

BODYGUARD (CONT'D)
Is that funny?

COLE
I gave your boss's forty-five to
someone who wasn't feeling safe.

The Bodyguard laughs.

COLE (CONT'D)
Don't want to go outside?

One of the Large Goons grabs a pool cue.

BODYGUARD
Wand said you don't walk out of
here on your own.

COLE
What are you drinking?

Another of the Large Goons takes out a large slapjack.

BODYGUARD
I think you've had enough.

COLE
An ass-kicking is easier to take
after a couple.

Cole finishes his drink. His hand grabs the bottle and
smashes it over the Bodyguard's head.

The Bodyguard crashes to the ground.

Cole turns to the Large Goons. He motions for them to attack.

The first Large Goon charges Cole.

Cole lays him out with a series of rights, then tosses him
over the bar.

Cole's eyes turn to see--

A pool cue connect with his face.

Cole stumbles to the ground, blood coming out of his nose.

The Pool Cue Goon hits Cole in the face with the Pool Cue.

The cue breaks in half.

Shards fly everywhere.

Cole kicks the Pool Cue Goon in the knee, breaking it.

The Pool Cue Goon screams in pain, falling to the ground.

The Goon with the Slapjack walks over.

WHAM!

Cole hits the ground, hard.

WHAM!

Cole takes a shot to the ribs.

WHAM!

And another.

Cole curses under his breath.

The Bodyguard gets to his feet, walking over. He takes a small knife out of his pocket.

Cole explodes to his feet, throwing a right to the Slapjack Goon's face. And another. And another.

The Slapjack Goon shakes his head and then falls down.

Cole turns to see the knife. He picks up the slapjack.

The Bodyguard swings the knife wildly.

Cole crack him across the face with the slapjack.

The Bodyguard hits the ground. He spits out bloody teeth before passing out.

Cole looks down. A trickle of blood comes out of a good-sized gash on his stomach.

Cole's hand drops the slapjack.

Cole walks over to the bar and grabs a bottle of whiskey. He takes a swig and walks out.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The pimp's gun is on the table.

Eric stares at it.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Eric grabs the pistol and walks to the door.

ERIC
It's late.

COLE (O.S.)
You got a first aid kit?

Eric places the gun in his lower back and opens the door.

Cole stumbles in, clearly in pain.

ERIC
It's in the bathroom.

Cole looks around.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Follow me.

Eric walks towards the bathroom.

Cole follows him.

INT. ERIC'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cole sits on the toilet and places the whiskey bottle at his feet. He takes his shirt off.

Scars from old combat wounds are all over his body.

Fresh bruises compete with older ones for space.

A faded tattoo of a pair of boxing gloves over a pair of musket pistols is on his shoulder.

Cole examines the knife wound.

It's not deep.

Eric walks in with a first aid kit. His eyes spot the blood.

The first aid kit hits the floor.

COLE
Never seen blood before, kid?

ERIC
Not real blood.

Eric grabs the first aid kit.

COLE
You got any super glue?

ERIC
You're not going to put that on
your body.

COLE
I need more than a band-aid but I
don't need stitches.

Cole grabs the first aid kit. He opens it up and takes out a
roll of gauze.

ERIC
I'm going to call an ambulance.

COLE
The less questions the better.

Cole wipes the blood off the wound.

ERIC
If you got assaulted by someone,
you should call the cops.

COLE
You still have that piece on you?

Eric nods.

COLE (CONT'D)
The guy I borrowed it from wanted
it back. He sent some friends.

ERIC
He wasn't a gun dealer, I take it.

Cole tosses the bloody gauze into a trash can.

COLE
He had information and I kindly
asked him for it. When he declined,
I got a little less nice.

ERIC
Is that the way you handle things?

COLE
He was a pimp and she was in that
world. It made sense at the time.

ERIC
That sounds like what a dumb cop
would say.

COLE
I was an Army investigator.

ERIC
Valerie wasn't walking the streets.

COLE
Investigations are about finding
the connective tissue between the
victim and their killer.

Eric takes out a large bandage from the first aid kit.

ERIC
Why didn't you become a real cop?

COLE
I put in my twenty in the Army and
was too old when I got out.

Cole grabs the bandage and opens it up.

ERIC
Maybe you should try not beating
people up for information.

Cole tries to place the bandage on. Can't.

COLE
When you don't have a badge, people
don't have a reason to talk.

Cole hands Eric the bandage.

ERIC
Maybe this is a sign.

Eric places the bandage on Cole's body.

Cole tries to stand up and stop, groaning in pain.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I can get you some Advil.

Cole grabs the bottle of whiskey and takes a swig.

COLE
This is quicker.

Cole offers some to Eric.

ERIC
I didn't think Army cops got a lot
of scars.

Eric grabs and takes a swig.

COLE
A couple of combat zones did that.

Eric hands the bottle back.

ERIC
Sounds like a hell of a story.

Cole takes a swig.

COLE
Not really.

INT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

Jackson fills out a report.

Roscoe stops by desk, a manila folder in his hand and a goofy
smile on his face.

ROSCOE
Hey champ.

Jackson looks up.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)
The file was marked with the
robbery, which is under me.

Roscoe hands Jackson the folder.

JACKSON
Figures.

Jackson opens it up, looking inside.

ROSCOE
His prints were on the gun, the
blood on the purse is hers and his
hoodie had GSR.

Jackson smiles.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Empty.

Cole cleans the counter.

Eric walks in with a laptop.

COLE

Hey kid.

ERIC

I couldn't sleep last night.

Eric places the laptop on the counter.

Cole looks at it.

COLE

If you think it's valuable, you should give it to the detective.

ERIC

I tried and he just said "it's being handled, kid."

COLE

That's because you're twenty-five and guys like us, you know?

ERIC

I don't.

COLE

You remind my generation that we were thin and stupid once. In two decades, it'll happen to you.

ERIC

I'd like to think I'm smart.

COLE

It's more experience smart, not I went to college smart.

ERIC

Fair enough.

Cole grabs a beer.

Eric declines.

COLE

You should keep something of hers.

ERIC

I'm leaving, so I don't have the space in my life for her stuff.

COLE
What happens when they find him?

ERIC
They broadcast trials on the
internet. I'll try and watch it.

COLE
I understand, I think.

Cole extends his hand.

They shake.

COLE (CONT'D)
Take care of yourself, kid.

Eric leaves.

Cole looks around the bar.

No one is there.

Cole's hands place Valerie's laptop on the counter.

He turns it on.

An old movie poster is her background.

"My Scripts" is in the middle of the screen.

Cole stares at it for a long moment.

His fingers pull up an internet browser.

The cursor pulls up her browser history.

Several cryptocurrency websites, her escort website and a
payment processor come up.

Cole logs into the payment processor.

Valerie has a balance of \$51,235.

Cole searches through Valerie's transaction history.

The bulk of the ledger are all deposits and withdrawals from
various cryptocurrency processors.

One stands out:

\$50,000 from "JamesTorkAttorney@JTLAW.com"

Cole types the email address into an internet search engine.

The professional website of attorney JAMES STORK comes up.

Cole types the name into the search engine.

A handful of news articles about Crime boss MAX J UDINESI (mid 60s) come up. James is listed as his attorney.

Max is distinguished with an expensive suit on.

Dozens of news articles over several decades link Max to a number of violent crimes.

His hands pull up Valerie's crypto account.

A series of transactions from numbered accounts in every conceivable cryptocurrency come up.

He stares at it for a moment.

Cole pulls up a video-sharing service.

He types in "How to find someone's crypto wallet."

Thousands of videos come up.

Cole goes back to the search engine.

Cole types in "Max Udinesi" and searches.

A news article comes up.

"Mob boss arrested at social club" is the headline.

A photo of Max being taken out in handcuffs from a Social Club is underneath.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOCIAL CLUB - NIGHT

A large BOUNCER is up front.

He's well over six feet tall and mean looking.

Cole approaches them.

BOUNCER

This is a private club.

COLE

I'd like to make an appointment
with your boss.

BOUNCER

Beat it.

COLE

Tell him it's about Cinnamon.

The Bouncer pauses and touches his ear.

Cole takes a step back.

The Bouncer whispers something in. He listens intently.

Cole's eyes focus on the Bouncer's hands and the move down.

Cole spots a large pistol.

The Bouncer's free hand slowly move down.

Cole's breathing tightens.

The Bouncer takes his hand off his ear and to the gun.

Cole explodes, grabbing it.

They struggle.

The Bouncer yanks it free and see--

Cole's elbow flying towards his face.

WHAM!

The gun falls to the ground.

Cole smashes the Bouncer with elbows.

The Bouncer falls to the ground, out cold.

Cole grabs the gun and walks inside.

INT. SOCIAL CLUB - NIGHT

Armed GANGSTERS are all over.

Cole walks in.

Every gun in the place is on him instantly.

COLE

I'm just looking for Max.

Cole drops the gun and raises his hands.

Every gun is still trained on him.

MAX (O.S.)
Give me one good reason why my guys
shouldn't shoot you.

Max walks in out of the shadows.

COLE
Valerie.

Beat.

MAX
I don't see a badge.

COLE
Don't have one.

Max motions for everyone to lower their guns.

MAX
You got some balls.

COLE
A moment of your time.

Max motions for Cole to follow him.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Photos of Max's FAMILY are on the walls.

Max walks in and sits behind a small desk.

His phone buzzes.

Cole walks into the room.

Cole follows him.

MAX
You're not as tall as I expected.

Max motions to a chair.

Cole sits down.

COLE
I'm surprised you were expecting me
at any point.

Max looks Cole over. His hand moves under the desk.

MAX

The way my Goomah talked about her father made me think you wouldn't sit around, waiting for someone to find the bastard who did it.

Cole's eyes follow Max's hand.

COLE

I'm not her father.

A shotgun is taped underneath and pointed right at him.

MAX

She spoke of you like you were.

(beat)

I'm pleasantly surprised to see you cared for her like this.

COLE

It looks like maybe you were shaken down by a woman who got greedy.

MAX

I'm shocked you would insult her.

COLE

When you don't have any good answers, the bad ones are all you got left.

MAX

What bad answer do you have for me?

Cole tosses a piece of paper on Max's desk.

It's Valerie's PayPal history.

COLE

In the wrong hands, you know?

Max looks at the paper.

MAX

This isn't what you think.

COLE

The cops called it a robbery gone bad and are just sitting on their ass, waiting for a miracle.

Max crumples up the piece of paper and tosses it into a garbage can.

COLE (CONT'D)

I heard a story about someone who tried to charge her for protection. Word is someone sent some rough men to let him know he crossed a line.

MAX

I heard the same thing.

COLE

No one's seen him since.

MAX

Sounds like a happy ending to me.

COLE

You can see how this looks.

MAX

I offered to set her up with her own place, her own money and just be a writer but she refused. Every time I tried, she wanted nothing but our arrangement. I figured this way she might take it.

Beat.

COLE

Is there anyone you can think of who would try to hurt her?

MAX

She told me about a character she wanted to write once. He was a troll who spent his days making women uncomfortable on the internet. That felt personal.

COLE

I looked there first.

MAX

Did you find anything?

COLE

Another happy ending.

Max nods knowingly.

COLE (CONT'D)

How did you find her?

Cole stands up.

MAX

The Mayor is an old friend.

COLE

You got his phone number?

MAX

You'll want to talk to his fixer.
He handles that sort of stuff for
the honorable Jacob Mulroney.

Cole nods.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole logs onto Valerie's laptop.

He pulls up an internet browser.

His fingers pull up an internet browser.

Cole searches for the Mayor's Office.

After several clicks he pulls up the profile of the Mayor's
Assistant, YANCY THURSTON (early 30s).

He's got a weird smile and short hair.

Cole searches for "Yancy Thurston" in a search engine.

Verified social media come up on him.

He's married to MIRANDA (late 20s).

She's tall, thin and beautiful.

Cole searches for "Yancy Thurston address."

A sketchy website with Yancy's address comes up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMALL HOME - NIGHT

A posh neighborhood.

Miranda exits.

Moments later, Cole approaches the front door.

He knocks on it.

It opens, revealing Yancy.

YANCY
Can I help you?

COLE
You work for the mayor, right?

YANCY
Sir, this is wildly inappropriate.
If you want to discuss issues about
the city, you need to make an
appointment at City Hall.

Cole slugs Yancy in the stomach and pushes him inside.

INT. YANCY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Straight out Martha Stewart's dreams.

An epic meal is in the process of being cooked.

A large piece of salami is on a cutting board next to a custom-made kitchen chopper.

Yancy is thrown into the room, landing with a thud.

COLE
Why is it everyone doesn't want to
admit they knew Cinnamon?

YANCY
Her name was Valerie.

Cole spots the chopper. He cuts off part of the salami.

COLE
This is a really sharp knife.

Yancy's eyes focus on the knife.

Cole eats the piece of salami. It's delicious.

The knife cuts through the salami cleanly.

Cole's eyes admire the edge.

COLE (CONT'D)
If it can go through that salami
that cleanly, you know?

Yancy gulps.

Cole eats the salami.

YANCY

It isn't what you think!

COLE

I've been hearing that a lot.
(slices another piece of
salami)

A woman who's vetted by the rich
and powerful winds up dead could
make someone think a particular
way. Especially if they know how to
read a crypto wallet.

YANCY

She was my dinner friend.

COLE

That's a great line for your wife.

Cole tosses the salami to Yancy. He slices another piece off.

YANCY

It wasn't like that.

COLE

It never is.

Cole takes a bite of the sliced salami.

YANCY

When I was twenty-three I had a
stroke. I recovered but I had
severe speech issues. My therapist
advised me to have conversations
with people to help overcome it.
She was the only one who was OK
with it. Every Tuesday for two
years we had dinner and just talked
about life.

COLE

That... that sounds honest.

Cole puts the knife down. He offers Yancy a hand.

Yancy slaps it away, standing up on his own.

COLE (CONT'D)

I'm trying to find her killer.

YANCY

I know the cop on her case.

COLE

I'm a friend of the family.

YANCY

She was... a lot to me.

COLE

You fix things. Did someone ask?

YANCY

I asked Valerie once if we could go to a hotel once. We made love and it was just... I had to stop seeing her because I was in love with her.

A tear comes down Yancy's face. He wipes it away.

COLE

She bother anyone you know?

YANCY

Everyone liked her.

COLE

Someone shot her.

YANCY

I've gone through everyone I ever gave her information, the police and my friends elsewhere.

COLE

Can you get your hands on anything from the police?

YANCY

I got the crime scene report. It was sloppy and half done.

COLE

Was there anything on it that was useful? I'm grasping at straws.

YANCY

I asked the department to send someone else back and take a look but when I'm getting blown off.

Beat.

COLE

Sorry about the punch.

YANCY
If I see you again--

COLE
You won't.

The doorbell rings.

COLE (CONT'D)
Where's your back door?

Yancy points to his left.

Cole leaves.

EXT. REAR OF SMALL HOME - NIGHT

Cole exits.

The sound of polite conversation is faintly heard.

He turns and looks at the house.

His eyes spot a fancy security camera.

EXT. REAR OF HOTEL - NIGHT

Cole walks up, looking around.

His eyes spot the area where Valerie's body used to be.

A chalk outline has faded away.

Cole looks around.

Something shiny is near a garbage dumpster.

He walks toward it.

WHAM!

Cole stumbles to the ground.

He looks up, groggily.

Two impossible big GOONS stare back at him.

Cole gets to his feet, his hands up instinctively.

The Goons charge.

Cole throws a bomb of a right hand at the Goon that hit him.

It connects flush.

Nothing.

Oh shit.

Cole takes an absolute beating at the hands of the Goons.

ZACK (O.S.)
Save some of the fun for me.

Zack emerges from the darkness.

Zack's face is covered in older bruises.

The Goons pick Cole off the ground.

Zack walks right up to him.

SLAP!

Cole laughs.

COLE
That all you got?

Zack punches Cole in the stomach.

Cole groans in pain.

ZACK
You really shouldn't let your phone
connect to every random Wi-Fi that
exists, boomer. You made finding
you that much easier.

Zack hits Cole again.

Cole spits blood onto Zack's shoes.

Zack punches Cole. He turns to the Goons.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Hospital, not the morgue.

The Goons nod.

Cole is tossed to the ground.

The Goons continue to beat Cole up.

Zack watches, smiling.

INT. HOTEL SECURITY DESK - NIGHT

Cole walks in and looks around.

Fred stares at the monitors.

COLE

Can I borrow your first aid kit?

Fred turns and looks at Cole.

COLE (CONT'D)

Stupid games get you stupid prizes.

Fred opens a drawer and pulls out a first aid kit.

A bottle of bourbon sticks out of it.

FRED

I'm going to call the cops.

Cole grabs the bottle of bourbon and opens it.

COLE

You can't.

Cole takes a swig.

FRED

Why not?

Cole curses under his breath.

COLE

Because I fucking deserved it.

FRED

Whatever you're into, Cole, you need to get out of it.

Cole opens up the first aid kit and takes out a piece of gauze. He wipes the blood off his face.

COLE

That's looking like a better idea than the one I've got right now.

Cole looks at the monitors.

It's nothing but trash bins.

FRED

I keep asking for more cameras but they don't listen.

COLE
I must've wandered into a blind
spot, right?

FRED
Back there is nothing but blind
spots.

Cole thinks for a moment.

COLE
How far back does this go?

FRED
This thing logs every piece of
footage you pull up.

COLE
A smart guy like you knows how to
cover your tracks.

FRED
Nothing in life is free, Cole.

COLE
I'll take care of your tab.

FRED
If anyone asks--

COLE
They won't.
(beat)
Inside the bar, three months ago.

FRED
When that girl was murdered?

Cole nods.

Fred's fingers pull up the archives. Video footage from the
day Valerie died comes up.

Fred's hand reaches into his desk and pulls out a thumb
drive. He puts the video onto it.

FRED (CONT'D)
If anyone asks, I don't know what
you were looking for.

Cole grabs the thumb drive.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole stares at the laptop.

Fred's thumb drive is in it.

Video footage from the night Valerie died is up.

He watches as she leaves the room.

The Dark Figure follows her.

For a brief moment he comes into focus.

This is KARL (mid 30s).

Karl is well over six feet tall, incredibly powerful with a buzz cut and an expensive suit on.

Cole saves the image and does a Google image search.

A photo of HAROLD SPECTOR (mid 60s) comes up.

Harold is tall with a dad bod, receding hairline and a Wikipedia entry with a professional headshot.

Several publicity photos of Harold at movie premieres, on film sets and in front of a mansion come up.

Karl is behind Harold in all of them.

He's Harold's bodyguard.

Cole's jaw drops.

He pulls up Valerie's crypto wallet.

His fingers pull up one of the Crypto videos.

Cole clicks on it and scrolls to the about section.

A Website called "FindYourWallet.xyz" is listed.

He clicks on it.

A link says "Transfer tracking."

Cole clicks on it.

He cuts and pastes the wallet IDs.

The wallet who gave Valerie the money has three flags by it.

Cole clicks on it.

"Actively reported for suspicious behavior" comes up.

"Bookmarked by Federal IP address" is underneath.

Cole stares at it.

COLE

What did you get yourself into?

INT. BULLPEN - DAY

Jackson stares at the white board.

His eyes focus on Valerie's name.

It's still red.

Roscoe comes up behind him.

ROSCOE

Congratulations.

JACKSON

What are the odds?

ROSCOE

GSR on the hoodie, prints matched
and the blood was hers. Johnnie
Cochran couldn't get this guy off.

(beat)

Why haven't you changed it?

JACKSON

You usually only get one thing that
maybe ties a guy to the scene.

ROSCOE

Take the black ink, man.

JACKSON

I keep thinking I should--

Roscoe grabs an eraser. He erases Valerie's name. His hand
writes it again, this time in black.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Or I could just let you do it.

Cole walks in, a half dozen sheets of paper in his hand.

Jackson spots him.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
See you at O'Tooles?

ROSCOE
We got victory whiskey!

Roscoe leaves.

Cole approaches Jackson.

JACKSON
We got him.

COLE
Are you sure?

JACKSON
We've got him, dead to rights.

Cole drops the sheets of paper onto Jackson's desk.

A DVD marked "hotel footage" rolls out.

COLE
He followed her out of the bar.

Jackson looks at the paperwork.

Jackson's eyes turn to a printout of Harold Spector.

The Bodyguard is circled in red.

COLE (CONT'D)
Guys like him have security all
day, every day.

Jackson pulls up a printout of the crypto account.

COLE (CONT'D)
It consistently sends her account a
significant amount every six weeks.

Jackson looks at it.

COLE (CONT'D)
I bet you could nicely ask the
exchange for the email address
connected to it. The FBI or the NSA
would know for sure.

Jackson pushes the paperwork back.

JACKSON
This is a file for TMZ.

COLE

Why is the bodyguard of a guy like that following a high-end call-girl out of a hotel bar?

JACKSON

Maybe he was going out for a smoke.

COLE

He wasn't in town that weekend.

JACKSON

Are you sure it's her account? This isn't some mook on the streets.

COLE

There's a video camera that looks right where she was killed.

JACKSON

I tried and couldn't get it.

COLE

The find someone who can.

JACKSON

What do you expect to see on it?

COLE

The guy who did it.

Cole leaves.

Jackson turns his eyes to the report.

He sighs and grabs his phone.

His fingers quickly dial the District Attorney.

JACKSON

I need a favor on Saint James.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY (V.O.)

That's black ink, detective.

JACKSON

There's a camera that looks right at the crime scene.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY (V.O.)

Judge Warner and Judge Beco said no to a warrant.

JACKSON

Can you try one more time? It's a coffin nail for you.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY (V.O.)

I'll try, no promises.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole pulls up the escort website.

He logs in as Valerie.

Her inbox is full.

He pulls up her last appointment.

It was with a blank profile with the username "Higher Power."

Cole types out a message: "Sorry I missed our date, Harry."

He takes a deep breath.

His finger presses send.

A response pops up: "I'm in town tomorrow. Are you?"

Cole's pulse quickens.

He types: "Admiral Suite."

Cole's finger hesitates to press send.

He sends it.

Cole stares at the website.

A response pops up: "See you there."

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Two massive private SECURITY GUARDS are parked by the front door to the Admiral Suite.

Cole approaches them.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Can I help you?

COLE

He's expecting me.

They look at him.

The second Security Guard puts his hand to his ear. He whispers something no one hears.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Are you sure?

COLE
I'm Cinnamon.

The first Security Guard looks at him oddly.

The second Security Guard motions for Cole to raise his arms.

Cole is frisked.

They take out his wallet and phone.

COLE (CONT'D)
Come on.

SECURITY GUARD #2
It's standard practice, sir.

The second Security Guard opens the door.

Cole walks in.

INT. ADMIRAL SUITE - NIGHT

Harold Spector paces around, waiting.

Karl is in the corner.

Cole walks in.

Their eyes connect.

Cole stiffens up, ready for a fight.

HAROLD
You've certainly changed in a couple of months, Cinnamon.

Cole turns to Harold.

COLE
You don't need to be a witness.

HAROLD
You have this wrong, Mister Wheeler. Very wrong.

COLE
Your people are very good if you
figured out who I am.

HAROLD
Not good enough if you found them.

COLE
He was on our cameras. I used
Google for the rest.

HAROLD
This is a misunderstanding.

COLE
He can come quietly, then.

KARL
What if I don't?

The two men stare each other down.

COLE
If you're feeling froggy--

KARL
Ribbit ribbit.

HAROLD
I don't want an incident.

COLE
Bad for the box office?

HAROLD
After the debacle with Harvey and
his friends, I decided to make my
private life more private. Valerie
refused to sign a non-disclosure
agreement so I asked my man to see
if she would reconsider.

COLE
And when she didn't you killed her.

HAROLD
I don't kill people anywhere but on
the screen, Mister Wheeler.

COLE
Then why is she dead?

HAROLD

She pointed me in the direction of my next franchise and didn't even take a finder's fee. That's the sort of person you want to know.

COLE

How about we talk about this with the detective on the case?

HAROLD

You're not a cop.

COLE

I can go get one.

HAROLD

And say what, exactly?

COLE

I'll figure that out later.

Harold sighs.

HAROLD

I have real work to do.

Harold motions to Karl and walks away.

COLE

This conversation isn't over.

Cole walks after Harold.

Karl lunges at Cole.

The two men trade haymakers.

Harold sprints into the bedroom.

The other Security Guards storm into the room.

Cole sees a foot land on his rib cage.

The wind flies out of Cole's lungs.

Cole crumples to the ground.

The Security Guards dog pile onto him.

INT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

Jackson sits down.

Roscoe sprints up to his desk.

JACKSON
Are you going close another one of
my cases for me?

ROSCOE
A call came out on the radio.

JACKSON
And?

ROSCOE
Your frequent visitor got into some
trouble downtown.

JACKSON
The bartender.

ROSCOE
I thought you'd want to know.

Jackson shakes his head and leaves.

A TECHNICIAN drops a video onto Jackson's desk.

INT. ADMIRAL SUITE - LATER

Dozens of police and HOTEL SECURITY are all over.

All three Security Guards are handcuffed on one side.

Cole is handcuffed on the other.

Cole's face is bruised and bloody.

Jackson walks in and looks around. He spots Cole.

JACKSON
(to a police officer)
Uncuff him.

POLICE OFFICER
Detective, he--

JACKSON
(under his breath)
He's one of my informants.

The Officer nods and uncuffs Cole.

Jackson motions outside and leaves.

Cole follows him.

EXT. ALLEY BY HOTEL - NIGHT

Jackson and Cole exit.

COLE
Thank you, Detective.

JACKSON
Consider that a professional
courtesy, Mister Wheeler, and the
last one you will ever get.

COLE
I was doing what you refused to do.

JACKSON
If you're lucky, he won't press
charges for what happened.

COLE
I just wanted to have a chat.

JACKSON
Your face says that, too.

COLE
His guy was there and--

JACKSON
And everything you found out I can
not use, either.

COLE
Why not?

JACKSON
Because his lawyer will argue that
you were acting on my behalf. With
all of the things you brought me,
he can and will argue you were an
agent of the state and thus subject
to all the same rules I am.

COLE
I was only doing this because--

JACKSON
I have someone in custody who has
confessed to the crime.

COLE
He didn't do it and you know it.

JACKSON
He said he did it. His hoodie had
GSR, the gun had his prints. In any
courtroom that's a conviction.

COLE
What if he didn't do it?

JACKSON
Based on what evidence?

COLE
Just talk to the man.

JACKSON
This case is closed, end of story.

COLE
What if I find something?

JACKSON
Then find the public defender and
tell them. We're done.

Jackson walks away

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Most of Eric's things are in boxes.

Eric is on the couch, watching TV.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Eric opens it, revealing Cole.

Eric's eyes look at Cole's face.

ERIC
I would love to meet the guy who
did that to you.

COLE
There was three of them.

ERIC
I got a first aid kit somewhere.

Eric motions for Cole to come in.

Cole walks in.

Eric closes the door behind him.

COLE
I just need to wash my face.

ERIC
Detective Jackson told me they have
someone in custody for it.

COLE
He confessed.

ERIC
So it's over.

COLE
Yeah.

Cole looks around.

ERIC
One of her towels is still in
there. It was the first thing we
bought when we moved here.

COLE
You should take it with.

ERIC
I'll let the next person who lives
here deal with it.

Cole walks to the bathroom.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You have to jiggle the handle to
get it to flush.

COLE
You know you can just open it up
and fix it yourself.

ERIC
I told the super about it.

COLE
They'll fuck you over on the
security deposit for it.

ERIC
They're already fucking me over for
breaking the lease early.

Cole walks to the bathroom.
Eric walks over to his couch.
A small box is by the side.

INT. ERIC'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cole flushes the toilet.
Nothing.
Cole jiggles the handle.
Nothing.
Cole sighs and opens the toilet lid.
He looks inside.

 COLE
 (loudly)
 It's a quick fix.

 ERIC (V.O.)
 It's OK.

 COLE
 (under his breath)
 Pissing his money--

Cole's eyes spot something.

 COLE (CONT'D)
 Away.

They focus on it intently.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eric sits on the couch.
Cole emerges from the toilet.
He raises his hand.
Valerie's necklace is in it.
Silence.
Eric reaches to his left and pulls up the pimp's pistol. He aims it at Cole's head.

ERIC

Do you want to know how I got my big break as a writer?

COLE

You killed someone for it.

ERIC

I wrote a script that got in the hands of Harold Spector.

COLE

Congratulations.

ERIC

I asked him how he got it. He said it was from some hooker he used who had delusions of grandeur.

COLE

Valerie.

ERIC

He told me she had a great script about a small town sheriff who fought a desert monster but that my script was what he was looking for. It made me think who would know about that script and push it ahead of their own.

COLE

She loved you.

ERIC

She helped get that script into shape and my big break came while she was on her back for him.

COLE

You could've talked to her about it, Eric.

Eric stands up, aiming the gun at Cole's face.

ERIC

What would she have said? Your big break came on my face?

COLE

You loved her.

ERIC

And what would've happened if that script becomes a movie, and we go to the premiere? That'd be a hell of a story to tell people.

COLE

Just be reasonable here.

ERIC

Every time I did a Zoom call with him, I saw her fucking him.

COLE

Why did you help me?

ERIC

I wanted to see if anyone could figure out that it was me. When the police arrested that guy, and you were too busy beating up the guys she fucked, I knew they would never suspect that I did it.

The door opens slightly.

Neither notice.

COLE

You didn't have to do any of this.

ERIC

I followed her, to confront her, and then I saw her looking like how she dressed. She never dressed like that for me, not even for the half dozen weddings we went to. But she did for *him*. Do you know what that does to someone, Cole?

COLE

Someone else is going to jail for it for the rest of their life. You can't have that on your soul.

ERIC

He probably deserves it.

COLE

Let's just go to the police and you can make a deal.

ERIC

I wrote something about this, as it was happening. A producer wants to make it into a movie.

COLE

This doesn't end with you getting away with it.

ERIC

Yes it does.

COLE

If you pull the trigger, someone will hear it.

ERIC

I set dressed a crime scene for my senior thesis. Two minutes and I can make it look like self-defense.

COLE

How you figure?

ERIC

All I have to do is point them to Zack and they'll believe you tried to pin that on me.

COLE

That kid deserved it.

ERIC

All they have to do is hear about you threatening to kill him--

COLE

That wasn't a real death threat.

ERIC

--and they'll believe me.

Eric pulls the trigger.

Nothing.

Eric pulls it again.

Nothing.

Eric's eyes go to the safety.

It's still on.

Cole tackles Eric to the ground.

The gun flies out of Eric's hands, landing far from them.

Eric reaches for the gun.

Cole grabs his leg and then screams in pain.

Cole's hands go to his ribs.

Eric's hand reaches the gun.

Cole jumps onto him, reaching for it.

They struggle for the gun.

BANG!

BANG!

Eric's body goes limp.

Cole collapses to the ground.

Police sirens wail in the distance.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

A DETECTIVE writes something on a notepad.

Cole is on the couch, a blanket on him.

COLE

The kid's gun belongs to a pimp.

DETECTIVE

Excuse me?

COLE

Magic Wand on seventy-fifth.

DETECTIVE

One of my informants said he's in the hospital. Someone attacked him.

COLE

He probably deserved it.

The Detective nods.

DETECTIVE

If we need anything else--

COLE

I'm at the Equinox four nights a week and at Powerhouse MMA during the day if you need me.

The Detective nods and leaves.

Jackson walks in.

COLE (CONT'D)

I already gave my statement.

JACKSON

The kid was on video for half a second with the gun in his hand.

COLE

I thought that was too hard.

JACKSON

I called in a favor.

(beat)

I'll make sure the necklace gets to her next of kin.

COLE

They wheeled him out an hour ago.

(beat)

Send it to the funeral home. It should go with her body.

Jackson nods.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole walks in and look around.

His eyes spot the DVD player.

His eyes spot the DVD.

Cole places the DVD into the player and presses play.

He collapses onto the couch, his eyes glued to the TV.

FADE OUT.