

SWEETHEART

Written by

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A GUN -- a snubnose pistol, resting on the edge of a dresser.

Opposite, perched on the corner of the bed, A GIRL (9) -- thin as a wisp, eyes like saucers as she stares at the intriguing object. She wears a dirty sundress; the room around her is disheveled, dark and unpleasant.

She reaches a tiny hand forward toward the dresser.

MAN (O.S.)
Nuh-uh, sweetheart.

The Girl freezes.

Leaning in the doorway, a MAN -- we see him only from the chest down, and he's muscled, his rippling physique offset by a drinker's gut.

The Girl stays silent, immobile.

The Man lumbers into the room -- the pistol slips off the dresser into his meaty fingers.

His other hand presses onto the top of the Girl's head, slides down to her face, his palm rough against her soft skin -- she tries not to show her discomfort.

Then the hand SLAPS against her cheek, a brief, familiar reproach.

MAN (CONT'D)
You touch my things, you need permission. Understand?

The Girl stays silent, chastened.

The Man crouches down, and we finally get a look at his scruffy, hardened features.

He dumps out the pistol's rounds into his hand. Then holds the butt of the pistol under the Girl's nose.

MAN (CONT'D)
Go ahead.

The Girl blinks, unsure. The Man nods.

She reaches her tiny hand up. Wraps her fingers around the handle. Her heart beats like a hummingbird's.

MAN (CONT'D)
Feel that?

They lock eyes. The side of his mouth curls up in a knowing smile.

MAN (CONT'D)
That's trouble.

The Girl looks back to the gun --

SMASH-CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Those same wide eyes. They belong to DANI COLLINS (25) -- a pretty face, worn in. A cheap, provocative ensemble hugging her petite frame.

She's straddling a HAIRY MAN -- unconscious, sprawled on his back, barrel-chested. Nude but for a dirty pair of briefs.

A pillow obscures his face.

And Dani is pressing a snubnose pistol down into the pillow -- THE pistol, in fact.

Then, like lightning, she wraps the pillow tightly around the pistol and SQUEEZES --

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: SWEETHEART

ROLL CREDITS

PRE-LAP:

DANI (O.S.)
Hey. All done.

RETURN TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dani sits curled in a decaying armchair, smoking a cigarette -- her scant outfit now covered by a hooded sweatshirt.

A cell phone is pressed to her ear; she picks with her fingers at the upholstery of the chair, listening to a voice on the other end.

DANI
(into the phone)
Yup.

She hangs up abruptly, pocketing the phone. She stares at the bed, gaze fixed on the dead man's splayed form, studying its shape.

After a beat, she glances at the clock on the wall. Takes one last puff of the cigarette, smoke rattling into her lungs.

Then she rises, swiftly, packing up her things into a shoulder bag, moving with the confidence and grace of a professional.

She opens the window and slips out into the night.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A street lamp, from a distance, on a mostly deserted highway. A young man, MITCH RONSON (late 20s), is standing under the lamp, leaning against a parked car. Mitch is slim but sturdy, pale, with closely trimmed hair.

A figure jogs from the darkness toward him -- Dani. Mitch notes her presence, mutedly.

MITCH
The guys got inside the room. No problems.

DANI
So we're good?

MITCH
We're good.

Dani nods. A beat.

DANI
Are we waiting for something?

MITCH
Yeah.

Dani raises her eyebrows, waiting for an explanation.

MITCH (CONT'D)
For me to finish my cigarette.

Dani gives him a look, unamused, and gets inside the car.

Mitch grins, takes a long drag, then flicks the cigarette away.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Dani sits alone in the passenger seat, looking tired. The car is parked on some darkened street.

A manila envelope drops into her lap. She looks up to see Mitch sliding into the driver's seat. He starts the engine.

DANI

Thought I was talking to Eddie?

MITCH

Not tonight.

DANI

He doesn't have five minutes--?

MITCH

Not tonight, he doesn't.

Dani knows better than to argue. She opens the envelope.

INSIDE -- A thick stack of TWENTIES. She reaches for her bag, slipping the envelope inside.

Mitch lights up another cigarette. He looks up and down Dani's frame. His hand finds its way to her thigh.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Feel like going somewhere?

Dani looks up at him. Smirks. She reaches for his cigarette, plucks it from his fingers.

DANI

Yeah. Home.

She takes a drag of the cigarette, shifts her leg, and he removes his hand.

He rolls his eyes and guns the engine.

INT. DANI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SLAM. Dani closes the door behind her and stands, alone in her studio apartment.

The room around her is cramped, messy, littered with clothes, drug paraphernalia, other unsavory possessions.

Lonely.

She drops her bag on the floor.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Dani, now wearing old sweats, stands over the toilet, ripping up a BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH of a MAN -- we're not sure, but we think it's the unfortunate gentleman from earlier.

She dumps the remains in the toilet bowl and watches them swirl...

- Dani, cross-legged on the tile, methodically cleaning her snubnose...

- Dani, hunched over on the floor of her bedroom, rooting through a hefty pile of papers. Finds the one she's looking for -- something that looks like a BANK STATEMENT. Her eyes scan the page...

- Dani, finding her checkbook. Scribbling, then tearing out a check...

- Dani, sitting on her couch, bowl of Honeycombs propped on her knees, mindlessly watching late-night television...

- Dani, lying in bed, just a mattress on the floor. Her eyes are wide-open, boring into the cracked ceiling. A familiar look of blankness on her face, maybe boredom.

MORNING SUNLIGHT worms its way through her blinds.

After a long beat, she rolls off the bed to her feet.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Dani, alone among the tombstones, squinting in the sunshine. A lackluster bouquet of carnations hangs from her arm.

JASON COLLINS (21), a mopy-headed young man, appears at her side, backpack slung over his shoulder. The family resemblance is clear -- a shared stoicism, even if he doesn't exude the same casual confidence of his sister.

JASON
Hey, sorry. The bus...

DANI
Don't worry about it.

Jason reaches in his bag, pulls out a brightly colored greeting card envelope. Hands it to Dani.

JASON
I never know whether to get a funny one or not.

Dani pulls the card from the envelope -- it's goofy looking (with an awful pun, probably involving a dog).

Dani smirks.

DANI
Gotta pen?

Jason scrounges around in his bag, digs one out.

Dani scribbles on the card, then slips it back in the envelope and unceremoniously drops it, along with the carnations, on the ground.

They land in front of a TOMBSTONE -- DANIEL COLLINS ingrained on its face.

DANI (CONT'D)
Happy birthday, Dan.

Jason and Dani wait a semi-respectful moment.

JASON
Well. I should get back...

DANI
I'll give you a ride.

INT. DANI'S CAR - DAY

Jason surveys the well-worn interior of Dani's car while she drives.

JASON
You should get a new car. This thing's beat to shit.

DANI
Hey, if you trip over an enormous pile of money, by all means, let me know.

Jason grins.

JASON

What makes you think I wouldn't
just keep it for myself?

DANI

Because. I asked nicely, dipshit.
Besides, you're gonna have yourself
a career pretty soon, you'll be
able to afford your own car.

Jason's smile fades. Something on his mind.

JASON

How's the restaurant?

Dani shrugs.

DANI

I'm still serving food to people,
if that's what you're wondering.

Jason nods, vaguely.

JASON

Ever thought about...

He trails off, uncertain if he should continue. Dani studies
him.

DANI

What, doing something else? Since
when does it bother you that I'm a
waitress?

JASON

No, no, it doesn't...

Dani waits for the other shoe to drop.

DANI

Come on. Spit it out.

JASON

(sighs)

Just, sometimes I think...you know,
what if Dad had...

He's still struggling with how to phrase it, so Dani beats
him to the punch.

DANI

Jason, you needed the money than I
did. And if I had wanted to go to
school, I would have gone.

(MORE)

DANI (CONT'D)
I tried a few classes, remember?
Didn't stick. It wasn't for me,
Dad knew that.

Jason nods, still unsure.

JASON
Doesn't seem fair, is all...

DANI
Hey, don't you dare feel guilty.
Growing up with that man...you
deserved every cent he had.

JASON
...You grew up with him too.

Dani thinks about this.

DANI
He was always harder on you than he
was on me.

She pulls the car into park. Jason looks up, and notices that they're back at his college campus. He opens the door and steps out.

JASON
Thanks for the ride.

DANI
Hey.

Jason stops.

DANI (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm doing fine,
alright? You know me.

Jason smiles, briefly. Not all that convinced.

JASON
See ya.

He SLAMS the door and disappears.

Dani watches him go.

FADE TO:

INT. DANI'S CAR - EVENING

Dani, still behind the wheel, sitting in a parking lot.

THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW -- an OLIVE GARDEN. A glowing bastion of suburban living, sitting alone off the edge of a highway.

Dani stares for a moment.

INT. OLIVE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dani swings open the double doors. She slips past a GRUMBLING FAMILY, haggling with the HOSTESS. Moves down the aisles, unnoticed, weaving past booth after booth, sliding around WAITERS balancing towering plates of gooey pasta.

She turns a corner, knowing exactly where she's going. Through the entire cavernous dining room, until she reaches her destination -- a tiny corner booth in the back.

Sitting at the table by himself, staring down at his menu, beer in hand, is EDDIE RONSON (early 50s) -- imposing, well groomed but not flashy. A good face.

Dani drops herself into the booth across from him.

For a second he doesn't notice she's there. Then he looks up. Blinks.

EDDIE

Danielle.

DANI

Eddie.

EDDIE

Did Mitch send you over here?

DANI

Nope.

EDDIE

...Mitch didn't send you over here?

DANI

Nope.

EDDIE

So you're telling me you just walked in and sat down?

DANI

Yeah.

EDDIE

Without anyone stopping you?

DANI
Yeah, Eddie, I did.

His eyes move to a nearby table -- Mitch and FRANKIE (30s), your typical meathead goon, are laughing over drinks, not paying attention.

Eddie sighs. Looks back to Dani.

EDDIE
You have to wonder what I keep them around for...

DANI
I wanna talk.

EDDIE
Go figure. How'd you know I was here?

DANI
(impatient)
Because. This is always where you eat dinner.

EDDIE
No, it's not.

DANI
It is Wednesdays. Eight o'clock.

Eddie blinks.

DANI (CONT'D)
Four years, Eddie, it pays to keep track of some things.

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE
Routine. It'll kill ya. You hungry?

DANI
Not really...

EDDIE
Have a breadstick.

He points to the basket on the table. Reaches for one himself, starts chomping away.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
This about last night? Mitch said
it was smooth.

DANI
Yeah, 'course it was.

Eddie nods, satisfied.

DANI (CONT'D)
Seems like there've been a lot more
of those recently.

Eddie stops chewing.

EDDIE
We've had a string of hard cases.
You have to come down somewhere.

DANI
I wasn't criticizing, Eddie...

EDDIE
Then work on your delivery.

DANI
What I meant was, seems like a lot
of these jobs I've been doing.

Eddie raises his eyebrows. Motions her to continue.

DANI (CONT'D)
All I used to do was run
deliveries. Then you ask me to do
one of these jobs, every once in a
while. Now though...seems like
there's a new guy every month.

EDDIE
So what? You do good work. You're
my ace in the deck, does that
bother you?

Dani, flattered, can't help herself from smiling. She shakes
her head.

Eddie ruminates.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Will you please eat a fucking
breadstick? You're too damn
skinny.

Dani reluctantly grabs one, picks at it.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
So how can I help?

DANI
Jason graduates in May.

EDDIE
Good for him. What's he studying?

DANI
Economics, I think. Something
business-y.

EDDIE
Smart kid.

DANI
The last tuition payment is next
month.

Eddie tenses.

EDDIE
If this is about money, Dani...

DANI
It's not. It's all squared away.

EDDIE
Then what is it?

She takes a breath.

DANI
No more payments...I'm thinking of
taking a break, is all.

A beat.

EDDIE
What kind of break?

Dani shrugs.

DANI
Just...travel or something. Maybe
start on some classes.

EDDIE
Classes for what?

DANI
I don't know yet, I just wanted you
to know I'm thinking about it.

Eddie sighs, leans back in his seat.

EDDIE

The timing ain't great. We're at an all-hands-on-deck kind of moment...I'm closing down the restaurant.

Dani looks up, surprised. She glances around the dining room.

DANI

Plenty of customers.

EDDIE

There's the problem. It's a distraction. Too much scrutiny. Stupid to open a franchise...

He rubs his forehead, weary.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Narcotics, it's...you can't take your eye off the ball in this business. You work for years and years at something, and the moment you think you can finally relax...ah, I won't trouble you with the details.

Dani rolls her eyes and picks off another piece of breadstick.

DANI

How kind of you.

Eddie smiles.

EDDIE

Dani. Dani, Dani, Dani. You know your old man named you after himself?

DANI

Yeah, Eddie, of course I know...

EDDIE

Couldn'ta just waited for a boy. A hasty, hasty man.

(a chuckle)

I remember you walking up to me. Dan's in the ground not two minutes, and you march right up and ask for work.

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Never said two words to me in my life. I didn't have the heart to say no. This scrawny little teenager...

DANI

I was twenty-one, Eddie...

EDDIE

Not sure if Dan'd be proud or pissed. He probably figured you'd be good at it, but still...his little girl...

Dani clenches her jaw.

DANI

He drove his drunk ass into a tree. How valuable is his opinion?

A tense beat.

EDDIE

I'm thinking we should let this whole conversation slide, because I can tell you're having an emotional episode or whatever. I'm also choosing to overlook the fact that you approached me in public, even though that's rule number one on my list...

DANI

Yeah, write those down for me sometime.

EDDIE

...And the reason I'm being so fucking gracious, is so you understand how valuable I think you are. Not just to my business. To me, personally. So if you still feel this way in a few months, we'll revisit it at that time. Mitchell?

Dani blinks, and realizes that Mitch is standing at her shoulder. She rises, not one to ignore a hint, and blows out of the restaurant without another word.

Mitch and Eddie exchange weary looks. Mitch turns to follow Dani.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Dani moves quickly through the parking lot, heading for the road, not her car.

Mitch catches up quickly, walking a few paces behind her.

MITCH

It was a dumb of you to come here.

DANI

So I've heard.

MITCH

He's lookin' out for you.

DANI

He's looking out for himself.

MITCH

Well, if word gets around what you do for him, you're not much value, you know?

Dani keeps walking, not responding to this comment. Mitch jogs to catch up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Where you going?

DANI

For a walk.

MITCH

It's a twenty minute drive into town.

DANI

It's a nice night.

MITCH

Come on. Let me give you a ride...

He reaches for her, and she spins, wickedly fast, and has his arm twisted in her grasp, a SWITCHBLADE pressed against his bare wrist.

A beat. Mitch takes this in stride.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You pull a switch on me?

DANI

I pull one on anybody.

She lets go of his arm, backing away and pocketing the knife.

DANI (CONT'D)

What I said to Eddie. I mean it.
I need a break from this.

Mitch stands and watches her go, a condescending smirk planted on his face.

MITCH

Well, do me a favor, will you?
Stop trying so hard to act like you
don't enjoy it.

Dani turns and disappears into darkness.

Mitch laughs, spits, and strolls back inside.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dani wanders along the roadside, feet crunching gravel. In the distance we SEE dim light.

She moves toward the light, following the curve of the road.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Dani slows as she approaches a large building, sheltered by trees. Ivy and wooden fencing feign a sort of pastoral scene, but it doesn't quite add up. Inside, we HEAR dance music and dull tones of chatty conversation.

Dani moves a bit closer -- sees a banner hanging over the doorway: WELCOME CENTER VALLEY CLASS OF 2004 10-YEAR REUNION!

Dani smirks, then moves toward the back of the building.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL BACKYARD - LATER

Dani sits at a gazebo, smoking a cigarette, party sounds still faint in the background from the top of the hill. She watches geese make lazy circles in the nearby pond.

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

You like swans?

Dani looks up. A YOUNG MAN (28) leans over the wooden railing, grinning. He's flush, tie hanging loose around his neck.

Dani smiles.

DANI

Sure. But these are geese.

The Young Man frowns and climbs the steps to the gazebo.

YOUNG MAN

Really? That's a rip-off.

He sits himself down next to her, offers his beer.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Drink?

She accepts readily. He points proudly to a sticker on his chest.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

I'm Charlie.

DANI

Hiya Charlie.

He stares at her chest -- no attempt to be discreet.

CHARLIE

You're not wearing a name-tag.

DANI

Nope.

CHARLIE

Why don't you have a name-tag?

DANI

Because, Charlie, I'm trying to stick it to the establishment. Also, I wasn't invited.

CHARLIE

A rebel, huh?

DANI

You bet.

A beat. Charlie watches as she takes another swig of beer.

CHARLIE

(not a question)

But you went to Center Valley.

Dani nods, coy.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Did we know each other?

Dani smiles, knowingly.

DANI
We danced together once.

CHARLIE
...We did?

DANI
You don't remember.

Nope.

DANI (CONT'D)
Guys and Dolls.

Charlie squints, trying to decipher what this means.

CHARLIE
Guys and Dolls?

DANI
High school. You were Sky.

CHARLIE
I was? I was! Who were you?

DANI
One of the dolls.

CHARLIE
Ah...

DANI
I had a dance solo. "Luck Be a
Lady." We were paired up.

Charlie finally puts things together, snaps his fingers.

CHARLIE
Dani!

DANI
Yup.

CHARLIE
Dani Collins.

DANI
Bingo.

CHARLIE
(laughs)
Holy shit.

Charlie shakes his head, grabs the bottle and gulps beer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You were a great dancer.

DANI
Yup.

CHARLIE
I was terrible...

DANI
Yup.

Charlie cracks up. Dani smiles.

DANI (CONT'D)
But you were charming. I was charmed, anyway. I was just a freshman, you were big man on campus...

Charlie sits back, reminiscing.

CHARLIE
I remember, I came back the next year, after I graduated. What was the show?

DANI
(bad Cockney accent)
Ol-i-var.

CHARLIE
Right! My sister was one of the orphans, I think. Who were you?

DANI
Wasn't in it.

CHARLIE
What! Why not?

DANI
I had to pick up a job, after school.

CHARLIE
Bullshit.

DANI
No bullshit.

CHARLIE
Why would you do that? You were so
talented...

DANI
(shrugs)
My dad got arrested.

The air deflates from Charlie's drunken balloon.

CHARLIE
Oh.

DANI
We needed some extra money to pay
off the fine, so I quit the show.

CHARLIE
That's...that sucks. What about
your mom, didn't she work?

DANI
(shakes her head)
She died when I was a little girl.

A somber beat.

CHARLIE
Shit.

DANI
Yup.

CHARLIE
I'm...really sorry about that.

DANI
Don't be. You didn't kill her, did
you?

Charlie smiles, uncomfortable.

CHARLIE
Guess not.

Another beat, as Charlie looks back up the hill. He thinks
about leaving. But doesn't.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
So. If you weren't invited. How'd
you end up here tonight, Dani
Collins?

DANI
Promise not to tell on me?

CHARLIE
Promise.

DANI
I walked.

Charlie laughs, finding the joke funnier than it actually is.

DANI (CONT'D)
How did *you* end up here, Charlie
James?

CHARLIE
I drove.

DANI
Ah.

CHARLIE
From New York.

DANI
Very impressive.

CHARLIE
In a...in a Buick.

Suddenly, he cracks up. Dani is lost.

DANI
What's so funny?

CHARLIE
A Buick? I mean...

She still doesn't get it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's just, I don't own a car, I had
to rent one, and I was...I was
worried what people would think.
So I went for the luxury upgrade.
And then I get to the rental place,
and this guy pulls up with this
fucking *Buick*. I mean my grandma
drove a Buick. Accountants drive
Buicks. Not young, successful,
attractive people.

DANI
People like you.

CHARLIE

Well, that was the idea.
 (he looks at her)
 I sound like a jackass, don't I?
 After your whole dead mom story...

DANI

Kind of.

CHARLIE

Well...I learned my lesson, if it
 makes you feel better.

DANI

And what lesson was that?

He looks back up the hill.

CHARLIE

I mean, all those people in there.
 Trying so fucking *hard*. Everyone's
 too worried about themselves to
 notice other people's problems.

He swigs back his beer. Looks to Dani.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You think, you and me, if we sit
 here talking long enough, we could
 actually get to know each other?

Dani smiles. Leans toward him, nestling into his shoulder.

DANI

Maybe. But probably not.

Charlie gently places his arm around her, feeling the moment.

DANI (CONT'D)

I gotta say, though...

Charlie raises his eyebrows.

DANI (CONT'D)

I've never been in a Buick before.

Charlie grins and takes a final swig of beer.

PRE-LAP: The ROAR of a car engine...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

...And we SEE the BUICK, barrelling through the night, slicing around tight corners, its headlights weaving in a dizzying dance, giving us glimpses of a winding back road.

INT. BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Dani's hands are glued to the wheel, expertly navigating, a look of empowerment on her face as she guides the car through slopes and valleys and breakneck turns.

Charlie braces himself in the passenger seat, laughing nervously, watching branches WHIZ by the window, certain that every twist of the car is going to be its last.

The radio BLARES, a POUNDING rhythm, accenting the mania of their flight.

CHARLIE
(yelling over the radio)
You, ah...do this often?

Dani flashes a grin his way. REVS the engine even louder.

Suddenly, a T appears in the road in front of them -- a STOP SIGN rapidly mushrooms in size.

Charlie's anxious smile drops, replaced by all-out terror.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Dani!

Her foot SLAMS the brake, and the car SKIDS, SKIDS -- then LURCHES to a stop, perfectly in front of the stop sign.

Dani and Charlie look at each other.

And then, simultaneously, they lunge for each other -- passionate kissing fueled by adrenaline.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The door BUSTS open, and Charlie and Dani tumble through, already wrapped in each other's embrace. They fall onto the bed, violent animals, Dani straddling atop Charlie.

She looks up for a breather, taking in the room -- clean, generic, totally removed from her world of seedy motels. She blinks, suddenly lost.

He reaches for her face, and she flinches, skittish.

His grin fades, turning to concern.

CHARLIE
Something wrong?

Dani returns to herself. Her fingers intertwine with his, and she leans down, smiling.

DANI
No. Just different.

They kiss again, roll across the bed, off the bed, impassioned.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Dawn sunlight gently leaks through blinds.

Dani slips into her clothes, silent as a ghost. She turns to look at the bed. Charlie lies facedown, naked, still fast asleep.

Her eyes trace their way to the floor. She spots a WALLET. His wallet.

After a second of hesitation, she picks it up. Fishes out a handful of twenties, shoves them in her pocket.

She notices a few business cards. She pulls one out, studies it: CHARLES JAMES. Some junk about FINANCING. Contact Info. Pretty official looking.

She raises her eyebrows, *slips it into her jeans pocket*. Delicately drops the wallet back on the floor. Then steals out into the hallway, gone.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

SLAM. Dani, alone in her dim mess of a room.

She falls onto her bed. Closes her eyes.

Opens them again, almost immediately. Gets back up.

We WATCH as she:

- Pulls open a dresser drawer -- a GLASS SMOKING PIPE inside.
- Rifles through a book shelf, housing basically everything but books. She finds what she's looking for -- a DVD CASE...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

A grainy VIDEO-RECORDING, on Dani's small television. The focus is off, the camera work unsteady, but we can make out a stage, and TEENAGERS dancing -- we're watching Dani's high school production of Guys and Dolls.

The video ZOOMS in on a pair of dancers, and we know we're watching young Dani and Charlie; even through the grainy footage, we can tell that Dani's pretty good.

As she performs, we HEAR whoops and hollers -- from Dani's FATHER, holding the video camera.

ON THE COUCH, Dani watches, expression blank -- the glass pipe resting in her palm, smoldering.

BACK ON THE SCREEN, the footage has cut to after the performance, and we're outside the auditorium, a MOB of parents and kids. The camera SCANS the crowd, searching out Dani.

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.)
(a little slurred)
Hey. Hey! There she is.

The camera focuses in on one girl in the crowd -- Dani (15) glances at the camera briefly, and we see a faint look of concern. She turns back to talk to a group of GIRLS, all smiles.

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Dani! Danielle, over here!

BOY (O.S.)
Dad...you're yelling...

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.)
Why isn't she coming over here?

BOY (O.S.)
She's talking to her friends.

DANI'S FATHER
Ah...

The camera PANS down and over to a BOY (11) -- young Jason, fresh-faced.

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
So whattayou think, Jason, you like
musicals?

An eye roll and a shake of his head.

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Me neither. But you think your
sister did good?

A broad smile.

JASON
Yeah, she did.

DANI'S FATHER (O.S.)
She did, right? You proud of her?

JASON
Yeah, I am.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Dani, crouching over a bathtub, muscles straining -- we can't quite see inside the tub, but we can HEAR that there's SOMEONE in there, struggling vainly. SOUNDS of choking.

The deed slowly gets finished, Dani's hands twisting tightly, her face a mask.

When it's finally done, she slides out of the tub onto the floor, sits cross-legged, sweaty, disgusting, exhausted.

She reaches for a cell phone on the tile floor, leans her head back against the tub.

DANI
(into phone)
Hey...

CUT TO:

INT. MITCH'S CAR - NIGHT

Dani, in the passenger seat once more. The driver's side door opens and an envelope drops into her lap. She looks inside without interest.

Mitch lights up a cigarette.

MITCH
Eddie says one more.

Dani looks up, curious. Mitch avoids eye contact.

MITCH (CONT'D)
You'll make the deliveries with me this weekend. And then there's one more job coming up, sometime in the next couple weeks. After that...Eddie says take as much time as you need.

Dani isn't sure how to feel.

DANI
When's the guy?

MITCH
(snapping)
If I knew that, I would've told you, wouldn't I?

Dani says nothing. Mitch looks immediately guilty. He starts the engine.

DANI
Mitch...

MITCH
You don't need to explain anything. I get it.

But she wants to explain anyway -- she considers how to phrase it.

DANI
When you said I was trying to pretend like I didn't enjoy it...

MITCH
I shouldn't have said any of that stuff...

DANI
No, it's not that, it's
just...that's something I should be
worried about, don't you think?

He looks at her, puzzled.

A beat. Mitch shrugs, then puts the car into gear.

MITCH
Let me buy you a drink?

Now Dani smiles.

DANI
Sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Dani sits along a brick wall, sucking on a cigarette. She studies the faces of students as they pass.

From a distance, she spots her target -- Jason. He's in the midst of chatting with FRIENDS, between classes.

Dani watches him walk, waiting for him to notice her.

Eventually he happens to look her way. Recognition, but not a smile. He says a few quick words to his friends, then slinks over toward Dani.

She hops off the wall as he approaches, grins broadly.

DANI
Hey bud. Long time no see.

JASON
What's up?

DANI
Got a few extra bucks, thought I
could take you to lunch.

JASON
...Right now?

DANI
Yeah.

JASON

I haven't seen you in months. You didn't think you should call first?

Dani shrugs, stung by his tone.

DANI

You know me and phones. I'm at one of my in-between phases...

JASON

Well I've got a thing now, I can't just...

DANI

Come on, just a quick bite.

Jason glances at his group of friends, then back to Dani.

JASON

Just call next time, before showing up, ok?

Dani notices the friends, hanging back, eyes averted.

DANI

Right. Sure.

Jason nods. An uncomfortable beat.

DANI (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm taking some time off from work at the restaurant.

Jason raises his eyebrows, surprised.

JASON

Everything ok?

DANI

Yeah, I'm just thinking of maybe going on a trip or something. You got a break coming up? I got some money saved, I could spring for it.

Jason winces.

JASON

Yeah, fall break, but...I'm going with some guys to this place in the Poconos.

Dani tries not to show her disappointment.

JASON (CONT'D)
I already told them I'd go, so I
can't just...you know?

DANI
I gotcha.

JASON
When I get back, though. We'll do
something, I promise.
(smiling)
Just...get a cell phone, ok? It'd
make it a lot easier.

Dani reluctantly smiles back.

DANI
I'm gonna work on it.

He nods.

JASON
Anyway, I gotta get going...

DANI
Yeah. Take it easy, bud.

Dani watches him return to his gang of friends. She gazes
around the campus, feeling very out of place.

She quickly turns and walks.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dani lies on her side in bed, staring at an old, beat-up
laptop screen.

ON THE SCREEN: A website for some Community College. Images
of diverse STUDENTS, grinning from ear-to-ear, almost
painfully so.

Dani scrolls down some more, scanning the page, then loses
interest. She closes the computer and rolls onto her back.
Eyes fixed to that familiar spot on the ceiling.

A faint KNOCK on the door.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dani opens the door to find a NEWSPAPER waiting for her on her doormat. She scoops the paper up and shuts the door.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dani sits at the kitchen table, munching Honeycombs and flipping through the newspaper.

A BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH falls from between the pages -- a cross-looking MIDDLE-AGED MAN. She flips it over, reads the scrawl on the back: "Name's Gerald. Leather Post tonight, 7 or 8. - M."

Dani drops the photograph on the table and goes back to eating cereal.

Suddenly, she stops eating, her spoon hovering in mid-bite. A look of concern crossing her features.

Then, out of nowhere -- *she vomits*. Right into her cereal.

Dani sits still for a minute, completely stunned, staring at her now-murky cereal bowl.

DANI

Huh.

She puts down her spoon. Then rises in a daze to clean up.

INT. LEATHER POST BAR - NIGHT

Dani sits alone at the divey bar, chewing on a straw, all dolled up.

She notices, down the length of the bar, a sweaty man -- GERALD GAMBI (50s). In animated conversation with a pair of disinterested GREASEBALLS.

Dani plays it cool, half-watching. Eventually, the conversation between the three men ends, with Gerald clapping the Greaseballs on the back as they turn to leave.

Gerald sits himself down on a bar stool, looking like he's had a long day. He tries to flag down the BARTENDER.

GERALD

Can I get a drink?

The bartender is still busy with others at the far end of the bar.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Hey! A drink please.

Nothing from the bartender. Gerald harrumphs, pissed off.

GERALD (CONT'D)
How hard is it to get a fucking...

Suddenly, a half-empty cocktail SLIDES across the bar, landing in front of him. Puzzled, Gerald looks back to where it came from -- and sees Dani, smiling his way.

Gerald grins back, toothy.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dim and cramped, the SOUNDS of muffled lovemaking oozing from the walls.

Dani appears from around a corner, laughing, scampering, playful. Gerald huffs behind, no spring chicken. He bumbles down the narrow hallway, his weight cracking the floorboards.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dani busts into a bedroom, little more than a closet. She whirls around and plants a kiss on the perspiring Gerald as he appears in the doorway. Amazed at his good fortune, he leans into her, shutting the door behind him.

She spins him around, pinning his back against the wall. Sloppy frenching ensues.

Then we see her *reach behind her back*, seemingly undoing her black corset -- but instead, closing her hand around the handle of a SLIM BLADE...

Her face pressed against his, Dani opens her eyes. We see something in her expression...something not right...

And then she *vomits again*. Dribbling out her mouth onto Gerald's chest.

Dani steps back.

A beat of stunned silence.

Then Gerald's pudgy features contort with rage.

GERALD
What...the FUCK?

He shoves her away, catching her by surprise.

Something CLATTERS to the floor. Puzzled, Gerald looks toward the sound.

The KNIFE, escaped from Dani's corset, lying on the floorboards.

Heavy silence.

And then Gerald's face twists into a snarl. He reaches behind his back --

And Dani kicks him, firm in the stomach, knocking the air out of him. She turns and bolts from the room.

GERALD (CONT'D)
(wheezing)
Hey!

He pulls out his gun and hustles after her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dani's feet pound the creaky floor, Gerald banging behind.

GERALD
Get back here, you little bitch!

Hearing the ruckus, a few HOOKERS poke their heads out into the hallway, watching the chase transpire with mild interest.

Dani rounds the corner of the hallway, reaching the stairs. She takes them quickly, jumping when she gets to the last few, landing catlike on her hands, crouching.

Gerald makes the turn for the stairs, teetering on the edge, out of control -- and suddenly topples down, banging, BANGING, body bouncing off walls, before he lands with a THUD at the bottom.

Dani, at the doorway, stops and turns back. She sees Gerald, a crumpled pile. Maybe alive, maybe not. She hesitates.

A HOOKER appears at the top of the stairs. Eyes wide, taking in the scene. She gets a glance at Dani.

HOOKER
Hey!

Past thinking, Dani is out the door, sprinting into the night.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Dani stands alone in the narrow alleyway, doubled over, releasing another wave of vomit.

Soon the nausea passes and she straightens. Collecting herself. It takes a bit.

She steps out of the alley into the street. Looking around her, paranoid. Starts moving toward a bus stop on the street corner.

As she nears it, she notices, across the street, a PHARMACY, brightly lit against the dark night.

She stares inside. Her stomach flips.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dani blows into her room, locks the door behind her, hands shaking. Throws down a plastic bag on the dresser, stripping off her vomit-stained clothes in a fury.

Down to her undergarments, she reaches into the bag, pulls out a box of PREGNANCY TESTS, rips it apart, flies into the bathroom, SLAMMING the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dani sits on the tiled floor, still undressed, legs curled to her chest.

Next to her, perched on the edge of the tub -- the PREGNANCY TEST. Still blank.

A small CLOCK RADIO sits in her lap. Ticking away. She checks it. Not time yet. She tries to breathe normally.

Suddenly, A RATTLING SOUND. From the bedroom.

Dani's heart stops in her throat. She listens.

The RATTLING again, and Dani springs to her feet, slipping out through the bathroom door.

The pregnancy test lies alone, expectant...

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dani pads soundlessly across the floor to the front door. Staring at the knob. Waiting.

And then it comes again -- the RATTLE of the doorknob. Someone trying to open the door. But this time accompanied by a metallic SCRAPING -- *the lock being picked.*

Dani's hand flies to her dresser --

-- the door CLICKS. She grabs her purse from the top of her dresser and slips behind the door --

-- just as the DOOR OPENS. A GREASY-LOOKING THUG (30s) pokes his head through; slicked-back hair, gold chain, the works. A nasty looking HANDGUN hangs from his stupidly muscled arm.

He smacks gum. Takes in the room. Unimpressed.

Dani is pressed into the corner behind the door, not breathing, out of sight.

The Greasy Thug steps forward, letting the door close behind him --

And Dani springs into action, JAMMING her heel into his ankle. He cries out and drops to his knees.

In one fluid motion, she brings the strap of her purse over his head, around his neck, twisting it tight -- then she yanks him sideways, and his temple SLAMS against the corner of the dresser.

He bounces off and slumps against the front door, out cold.

Dani breathes heavily, in action mode now. She pries the gun from his hand, and then she's flinging on a pair of jeans, a t-shirt, a hoodie, tossing clothes into her bag, scanning, looking, trying to assess what she needs.

Her eyes stop on the bathroom doorway. The pregnancy test inside.

But then there's a POUNDING at the door -- she flies to her bedroom window, pulling it open.

Someone is SLAMMING themselves against the front door, but the Greasy Thug's body blocks the entrance. An arm reaches through the opening, a GUN in hand -- the CRACK of a bullet --

Dani leaps through the window --

EXT. ROW HOME - CONTINUOUS

Dani slides out onto the ledge. She expertly grips the rain gutter, shimmies down into the narrow alley below.

She hits the ground and glances back toward the front of the house -- sees the bumper of an unknown CAR out front.

She turns to the backyard. Runs for it.

And just as she clears the alleyway --

A HAND catches her neck, the butt of a gun SLAMS against the back of her head, and then she's FALLING, FALLING, and as she HITS THE GROUND --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A ROAR of cheers -- ravenous football FANS reacting to a momentous touchdown, screaming their heads off, clobbering each other with high fives.

We're in a neighborhood dive, a friendly one, its run-down appearance an intentional aesthetic.

Our attention floats to a table in the back, where Eddie and his CREW sit, chatting playfully, swigging beer. Bar PATRONS pass back and forth, giving occasional warm handshakes to Eddie, all smiles.

A diminutive, MIDDLE-AGED MAN (50s) stops in front of Eddie's table, wearing a dimpled smile and heavy peacoat -- MORRIS BIJOUX. He's shadowed by an enormously large BODYGUARD (30s) with an unfortunate goatee.

Eddie looks up, recognizes Morris, and breaks into a wide, genuine smile, jumping up and giving him a hug.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Same bar, but a back room, quieter. We see a skeeball machine, an antique.

Beer in hand, Eddie jubilantly hoists up one of the wooden balls, then inexpertly chucks it up the ramp. Morris watches, all smiles.

EDDIE
Whattaya think?

MORRIS
Very nice, Ed.

EDDIE
I make sure it's always open for
when I have guests. You wanna try?

MORRIS
Oh, no, I'm fine thanks.

Eddie frowns, disappointed.

EDDIE
Too plebeian, huh? I'd think on a
night like this you'd be at the
philharmonic or some crap.

MORRIS
I had to give away my tickets.

This gets a laugh from both of them.

EDDIE
What brings you to town?

Morris's smile slips away.

MORRIS
Well, Eddie, it's kind of a, ah,
somber business, I'm sorry to say.
You remember Gerry Gambi, right?

Eddie nods, swigging his beer and chucking another ball up
the ramp.

EDDIE
'Course I do, he's another Philly
guy. Kind of a prick, right?

MORRIS
Oh, sure, sure.

EDDIE
What happened?

MORRIS
Well, he, ah, he passed away.

Eddie's surprise is pretty convincing.

EDDIE

No shit.

MORRIS

Yeah, I'm afraid so.

EDDIE

How'd it happen?

MORRIS

Well, it was a hell of a thing. He was chasing a hooker down some stairs, and he fell. Next thing you know he's in the hospital, and then, ah...you know, he just kind of passed on.

EDDIE

When? Tonight?

MORRIS

Right here in town.

EDDIE

Jesus. That's one hell of a story.
(chuckles)
How are his brothers taking it?

MORRIS

Oh, Tino and Michael, they're pretty broken up, as you might expect. But they don't know about you yet, if that's what you're wondering.

Eddie chucks another skeeball, missing badly.

EDDIE

Come again?

He looks over, and is surprised at the serious look on Morris's face.

MORRIS

(quiet)
Eddie. Come on now.

A beat. Eddie wrinkles his brow, trying to work through the drunken haze.

EDDIE

What're you talkin' about?

Morris sighs.

MORRIS

You should invite me to sit down.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eddie and Morris sit in a booth, Eddie dulling his senses with beer, Morris cheerfully plowing through a brownie sundae.

MORRIS

...I'm not gonna be pulling any fingernails, if that's what you're worried about. The Philly family doesn't even know I'm here. This is strictly between you and me.

EDDIE

If you're tryin' to say something, just say it.

Morris smiles, leans forward, earnest and kind.

MORRIS

Look Eddie, everyone knows that Gerry Gambi was a little shit, and that he wouldn't last two minutes in this business if it weren't for his brothers. So when a schmuck starts moving in on your territory, small as it may be, I think you got a right to bite back.

Morris's voice drops a little.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

But sending a hooker...that's nasty business, Eddie, there's no way around it. Looks desperate. The Gambi boys are gonna want a body, and rightly so. What I'm proposing: we come to an agreement, they get the girl, and the trail ends there. A nice little bow on it. You were never involved.

Eddie wavers, sloppy, still trying to come up with a way out of this.

EDDIE

You got any proof? Or is this just a shake down?

MORRIS

(insulted)

Ed, come on, would I come all this way if I didn't...There were witnesses, for chrissakes. This girl's been seen all over with your nephew Mitchell. It's gonna come back to you eventually, you know it is, or I wouldn't be here.

Eddie contemplates, rubs his forehead. Starting to accept the inevitable.

EDDIE

So. You want me to hand over the girl.

Morris shakes his head, takes another bite of brownie.

MORRIS

I already *have* the girl.

Eddie tries not to react.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

What I want. Is for you to see the value of the Gambis only getting the girl *after* she expires, you follow?

Morris studies Eddie, making sure he understands.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Everyone wins this way. You get to keep your business, the Gambis have retribution or whatever, and I do both parties a favor. Everyone looks good.

Eddie still looks reluctant, so Morris moves in for the hard sell.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

You've been working your whole life to keep your hands on this town, Ed. You shouldn't throw it away over small potatoes.

Eddie keeps his eyes glued to the table top, unresponsive. Morris gives a "what-can-you-do" shrug, and takes a last bite of sundae.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Of course, you can always take your chances, and hope the hooker stays quiet. But--

EDDIE

She's not a hooker.

Morris blinks.

MORRIS

Huh?

EDDIE

The girl, she's not...don't call her a hooker, she's not a hooker.

Morris cocks his head, perplexed.

MORRIS

Eddie, I'll call her whatever you want. So long as we're clear that it's gonna be her and not you.

Eddie nods, vaguely, the wind knocked out of him.

EDDIE

How much?

Morris smiles and stands.

MORRIS

Nothing that'll put you out of business.

He claps Eddie on the back and stands.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Details to come -- I gotta go make the call. Good seeing you, Ed.

He shuffles off, leaving Eddie staring down at the table.

Eddie downs the rest of his beer. Belches.

FADE TO:

INT. TRUNK - UNKNOWN TIME

DARKNESS. The steady RUMBLING of a car traversing an uneven roadway. The muffled, jangling melodies of some classic rock radio station can be HEARD in the background.

A rustling in the dark. We HEAR movement for a few moments, THUMPING and labored breathing.

Eventually, the glow of a FLASHLIGHT -- and we see Dani, *trapped inside the trunk of a car.*

Her mouth is wrapped with duct tape; a light trail of blood dries on the side of her temple. Her hands are bound in front of her, legs too.

She uses the flashlight to survey her cramped surroundings. The beam of the light traces across gray felt.

The light lands on a small hatch, a 1 x 2 foot rectangle outlined against the wall of the back seat.

Dani wedges the flashlight between her legs, raises her hands to the outlined rectangle, fingers searching for a latch, finding a small black handle, pulling, carefully, gently.

The hatch opens, revealing a space, maybe a few inches deep, and a soft red wall behind -- the cushion of the back seat.

Dani gently pushes the felt rectangle forward, and a thin outline of sunlight creeps around the edge...

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

...We SEE the back seat of the car, from inside, and the incremental movement of the middle cushion, nudging forward.

We PAN to the front seats, where two THUGS sit, paying no mind to the faint movement behind them. Our friend, Greasy Thug, sits in the passenger seat, singing along to the radio.

Next to him, a MEATY THUG (40s) with a short, cropped crew cut -- we'll call him ZHUKOV -- silently guides the car.

The Greasy Thug points out the window.

GREASY THUG

Over there.

Zhukov turns the wheel.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car -- Dani's Taurus -- rolls to a halt on the gravel roadway, alone in the woods, dead late-autumn leaves blanketing the forest floor.

In front of the car is an old, dilapidated COVERED BRIDGE, crossing a swiftly-moving stream.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car lurches to a stop. The two men stare at the bridge for a minute.

GREASY THUG
Pretty, right?

Zhukov has no response.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)
Me and my little brother used to come here all the time when we were kids, playing gangster, war games, all that crap. Can't believe it's still standing...

ZHUKOV
(thick Russian accent)
Why are we here?

Greasy shifts in his seat, a little miffed.

GREASY THUG
'Cause. Now that I'm...ya, know, a real gangster or whatever, it's kind of a...ya know, it's just nice. It's like, symmetry, or whatever you call it.

Zhukov doesn't get it.

ZHUKOV
This is not good spot. Other cars, maybe come.

GREASY THUG
No one's ever out here, I promise. We'll just...pop her, drain her, wrap her up and be on our way.

ZHUKOV
Is too visible.

GREASY THUG
It's not too visible! We'll be under the fucking bridge. Why are you bein' pissy about this?

ZHUKOV

(sighs)

I hate farmer country bullshit.

Greasy looks him in the eye.

GREASY THUG

Fuck you. This isn't the fucking country. You see any fucking farms around here? This is a great place to grow up, plenty'a fresh air.

ZHUKOV

There is no good food.

GREASY THUG

There's plenty of good food around here! After we ditch this car, we're going to Yocco's. Best hot dogs ya ever tasted.

ZHUKOV

Hot dog is a hot dog. I can get hot dog in Philly.

GREASY THUG

Not like this hot dog! You'll see.

Greasy pulls on the door handle. Zhukov starts to open his door as well.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

Hang on a sec, I gotta take a leak. Back the car up to the water.

He steps out, and Zhukov patiently pulls the car into reverse.

INT. TRUNK - CONTINUOUS

Dani hears the SLAM of the car door. She grabs the flashlight from between her knees, searching the trunk around her, trying to form a plan.

The flashlight beam traces over blankets, a medical kit, stray coffee cups and soda bottles. Nothing approaching a weapon.

Frustrated, Dani rolls onto her belly, craning her neck to look at the small space above her head.

Just more junk -- but then, her eyes land on a small, thin tube of BUG SPRAY.

She reaches for it.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Greasy Thug stands on the bank of the stream, urinating down into it, enjoying the scenery. He finishes and zips up. He turns back to the car, wincing, his leg still sore from where Dani kicked him.

He knocks on the car window.

GREASY THUG
Alright, come on.

Zhukov steps out, glancing around the forest. He opens the door to the back seat and pulls out a pillow.

Greasy notices with amusement.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)
What the fuck's that for, ya going to a sleepover?

ZHUKOV
Is silencer.

GREASY THUG
What, you didn't bring one?

ZHUKOV
No. You?

Greasy looks sheepish.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)
This will work fine.

They move around to the trunk. Zhukov wedges the pillow under his armpit and grabs his keys to open the trunk. Greasy nudges his arm.

GREASY THUG
You sure she's still out?

ZHUKOV
I hit her, very hard.

GREASY THUG
Well what if she's awake and tries to run or something?

ZHUKOV
She is tied up.

GREASY THUG

Yeah, but what if she like, worked loose or something? She was in that trunk for a long time, she could'a--

Zhukov pops the trunk. The door lifts open.

No movement.

The Russian flashes a condescending smile.

ZHUKOV

See? You do not trust me.

He reaches inside for Dani's shoulders.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

Grab legs.

Greasy looks pissed, but follows orders.

Just as they lift her from the trunk, however, Dani's arms twist up, hands pointed toward Zhukov's face -- revealing the BUG SPRAY, hidden in her shirt sleeve.

She presses the nozzle, and spray UNLOADS into Zhukov's eyes. He SCREAMS, in agonizing pain, and falls backward, his hands clawing at his eyes. Dani's upper body drops to the ground.

Greasy stares, dopey, still holding Dani's legs. Then he realizes the situation, drops her, reaches behind his back --

Dani winds back and KICKS Greasy -- right in the same ankle she hit earlier.

Greasy bellows and crumples, clutching his leg. Dani rolls toward the water, splashes through the shallow bank on hands and knees, trying to get into the stronger current.

Greasy sees this, pulls himself up, favoring his gimpy leg.

GREASY THUG

Shit! Give me the fucking pillow.

He yanks the pillow away from the still-whimpering Zhukov, pulls out his own gun. He points the gun into the pillow, clearly not an expert at this technique. He FIRES in the direction of Dani, but misses badly.

Dani, meanwhile, makes it to the center of the stream, her body picking up speed in the current.

Greasy FIRES one more muffled shot, misses even more broadly.

Dani ducks underwater, trying to disappear from sight.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

Fucking...

He tosses aside the pillow, empties the rest of his gun in Dani's direction, the gun ROARING in the empty forest -- but at this point she is too far downstream.

Greasy growls with frustration, tries to follow after her, but he can barely manage a trot with his damaged leg.

Dani disappears from sight around a bend in the river.

Greasy pants, stunned.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Shit.

(to Zhukov)

Come on. We gotta go.

He moves to help his companion up.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Downstream, Dani fights to tear off the tape covering her mouth. With a furious yank she succeeds, brings her head above water, gulps air.

But the current has picked up speed, and Dani is thrust back under, helpless with her hands and legs bound. She struggles toward the surface, but her body whiplashes, she sees the rushing form of a jutting rock, and then --

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. ROOM - DAY

The CEILING. Like the one in Dani's apartment. But not.

Dani blinks. Tries to sit up. A wave of discomfort.

She's in a HOSPITAL BED, head wrapped in bandages, bruises smudged across her arms and face.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

You're awake.

Dani looks up and sees Charlie, of all people, standing against the wall, looking anxious.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I should probably get the nurse,
right?

He starts to move toward the door.

DANI
Wait.

He freezes.

DANI (CONT'D)
Where am I?

Charlie hesitates, clearly wanting to leave.

CHARLIE
The hospital.

DANI
Which hospital.

CHARLIE
...St. Francis?

Dani puts her hand to her forehead.

DANI
Where's...?

CHARLIE
It's 30 miles away from town. They
pulled you out of the river.

DANI
The river? How did I...?

CHARLIE
I think they were gonna ask you the
same thing, actually.

Dani starts to remember. But isn't sure how much to share.

DANI
I...I'm not sure I...why, uh...why
are you here?

Charlie smiles, wane, and takes a seat.

CHARLIE

When they found you, you didn't have any I.D. -- no wallet or phone or anything. But you still had my, ah, my business card in your pocket. So they called me; I wasn't sure it was you, but it sounded like it. They said I could wait, see if a name would pop up as missing, but I offered to drive out and I.D...

DANI

How long was I out?

CHARLIE

I guess a couple days? I just got here this morning.

Dani shuts her eyes tightly, trying to remember, to think, to process.

DANI

Did they call my brother...?

CHARLIE

Yeah, but they haven't been able to get ahold of him...

A look of panic crosses Dani's features.

DANI

What?

CHARLIE

Woah, he's ok, he's fine. It's just -- they said they called his school, but I think he's on a skiing trip or something...are you ok? You don't look so good.

Dani, breathing pretty heavily, tries to calm herself down. She fakes a smile.

DANI

Yeah, just...

CHARLIE

Maybe I should get the nurse now.

DANI

No, stay here another minute.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE

Sure, sure.

He pulls his chair a bit closer to her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Listen, I ah...I'm sorry to do this, but I feel like I gotta...you know...

DANI

Huh?

CHARLIE

Well, I just gotta ask...It's not, ah...it's not mine, right?

Dani blinks.

DANI

What's not...?

Charlie looks at her, wondering -- she has to already know, right?

CHARLIE

The, um...you know, the baby.

A beat.

DANI

(quiet)

Shit.

She brings her hand to her face, covering her eyes.

DANI (CONT'D)

Ohhhhh shit.

Charlie wonders what just happened.

CHARLIE

...Dani?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

BANG -- Mitch swings the front door of Dani's apartment open. He peers through, with Frankie right behind him.

Frankie moves to enter, but Mitch stops him.

MITCH
Go wait out front.

Frankie gives Mitch a look, then shrugs and disappears.

Once he's gone, Mitch wanders through the living room, taking in the mess around him.

He wanders over to the dresser. Yanks open some drawers. Picks out an undergarment, dangles it, mildly interested.

He opens another drawer -- INSIDE, Dani's snubnose pistol.

Mitch pulls it out, flips it over in his hand, then pockets it.

Done with the dresser, his eyes scan the rest of the room.

His gaze lands -- on the open bathroom door...

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Charlie and Dani ride in Charlie's rental car. Charlie drives; Dani, back in her street clothes, looks out the window, mind elsewhere.

Charlie drums his fingers on the steering wheel.

CHARLIE
We left that hospital pretty quickly, huh?

Silence from Dani.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Sure seemed pretty quick...

DANI
They said I could go.

CHARLIE
They said they couldn't force you to stay.

DANI
Same thing.

CHARLIE
I'd say there's a pretty big difference, actually.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 And I think, if I found myself
 dragged out of a river, three
 months pregnant, I might want to
 try and take it easy for a few
 days. Especially if I couldn't
 remember how I got *into* the river
 in the first place...

DANI
 It's only been 11 weeks.

CHARLIE
 What?

DANI
 I'm only 11 weeks pregnant,
 Charlie, not 3 months.

CHARLIE
 Oh. Then, never mind. Glad you're
 on top of things.

A beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Where am I driving you?

Silence.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Dani? Where are we going?

DANI
 I don't know.

CHARLIE
 Ok. Well. Where do you live?

A beat.

DANI
 I can't tell you.

CHARLIE
 You can't tell me.

DANI
 No.

A beat.

CHARLIE
 And you can't tell me...because...?

DANI
Because we can't go there.

CHARLIE
Right.

DANI
I can see how this might be
frustrating...

CHARLIE
Very astute.

DANI
I think you should know that I'm in
a somewhat serious situation right
now.

This shuts Charlie up for a second.

CHARLIE
What kind of a situation?

DANI
I'm in trouble with a few people.

CHARLIE
...What, like you owe people money
or something?

DANI
Something like that. I can't
really talk about it.

CHARLIE
There's a surprise...

DANI
I promise, it's nothing you should
worry about.

CHARLIE
Well, should we go to the police?

DANI
We can't--

CHARLIE
Right, of course. Jesus *fucking*
Christ...And if I decide to go the
police anyway?

DANI

(quiet)

I don't think you would do that.

Charlie fumes. Dani finally looks his way.

DANI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about this. Really, I am.

A beat.

CHARLIE

Alright. So what am I supposed to do?

DANI

Well, if you promise to help me out for just a couple days. I promise that I'll deal with the pregnancy.

Charlie watches her.

CHARLIE

What does that mean, "deal with the pregnancy"?

DANI

It means I'll take care of it.

CHARLIE

Take care of it, like...what, get rid of it? 'Cause I never said you had to do that, I never said that...

DANI

Charlie...

CHARLIE

I also think we should keep in mind, just because it's mathematically *possible*, doesn't mean it's definitely...

DANI

Charlie! When I say that I'll take care of it, that means *I'll* figure it out. It means you don't have to worry about it. At all. It's my responsibility. Ok? You won't hear from me about it ever again.

Charlie nods, his finger drumming reaching a more frenetic pace against the wheel.

CHARLIE
I'm trying to do the right thing
here...

DANI
I know you are.

A beat. Charlie sighs out deeply.

CHARLIE
So what do we do?

DANI
I gotta get in touch with my
brother. If we can find a pay
phone, at a motel or something.

CHARLIE
Ok.

DANI
I'm also kind of hungry.

CHARLIE
Yeah.
(suddenly remembering)
Shit. What time is it?

DANI
Why?

CHARLIE
I, ah...I just remembered, I...sort
of have dinner plans.

Dani raises her eyebrows.

DANI
Really?

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dani and Charlie sit opposite each other at a cozy dining room table.

A WOMAN bustles around them, a tornado of activity -- CHARLIE'S MOTHER (late 50s), dropping off food dishes on the table, moving back and forth from kitchen to dining room with laser-like precision throughout the following.

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

...hope there's enough, I think we should be fine with the chicken, but I only had the half-bag of potatoes...

DANI

I really am sorry to be dropping in like this...

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

No, stop it, it's no trouble, I'm glad that Charlie keeps in touch with old friends. And after the week you've been having -- fumigation *and* a car accident, that just sounds like a nightmare, so a home-cooked meal is the *least* I can do...

DANI

Can I help with anything? With the food?

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

No, shut up and stay seated. So you'll be staying here tonight, then?

Dani raises here eyebrows, looks over to Charlie.

DANI

Ah...

CHARLIE

Mom, I was gonna find her a hotel...

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

Well, that's a dumb idea, we have plenty of room here.

DANI

I couldn't...

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

You'd be doing me the favor, I promise.

(MORE)

CHARLIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I could use the company, and I'm sure Charles won't mind, right Charlie? Just stay the night.

Dani struggles to raise an objection, but a look from Charlie makes her think twice -- not worth the battle.

DANI

Ok. Yes. Thank you.

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

Wonderful.

DANI

I really do love the house.

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

Oh, well thank you.

(to Charlie)

See that Charles, she likes the house.

CHARLIE

Mom...

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

Charlie wants me to sell it.

DANI

Oh? Why?

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

I don't know, Charles, why?

Charlie's face tightens with frustration, but he knows better than to encourage her.

CHARLIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Something about all the space...But I think mostly he's afraid that I'll go nuts and start knitting sweaters out of dead cats or something...

CHARLIE

Mom...

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

But Danielle, home is home, no matter how broken down it might be. Am I right?

DANI

...Yes. Definitely.

Charlie's Mother smiles, then finally sets herself down at the head of the table, everything settled.

CHARLIE'S MOTHER
Good answer. Eat.

They plunge into their meals on command.

We HEAR, in PRE-LAP:

JASON (O.S.)
Hey, it's Jason, just leave me a message.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Dani stands at pay phone, alone, listening intently with the receiver to her ear, chewing her lip.

The BEEP.

DANI
Hi, it's...
(she thinks better of it)
I'll call back.

She hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie and his Mother sit in the living room, Charlie half-watching some prime-time programming, his Mother fast asleep in an arm chair.

Behind them, we SEE Dani enter and flit up the stairs. Charlie turns his head, but she's already gone.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dani lies on a bed -- the room around her is aggressively decorated in the way only a teenage girl's can be, an explosion of bright colors and outdated posters.

She stares at this strange world around her, feeling untethered. Her hand finds its way to her stomach, and she leaves it there, as if testing its roundness.

Charlie appears in the doorway, knocks gently, stirring her.

CHARLIE

Hey. You get in touch with your brother?

DANI

Not yet.
(a beat)
I like your room.

Charlie smiles. Dani laughs.

DANI (CONT'D)

How old is your sister?

Charlie shifts his feet.

CHARLIE

Ah...she would have been about a year younger than you, I guess.

Dani blinks, thinking she might have misheard him. She sits up.

A beat.

DANI

Charlie...I didn't...

CHARLIE

(shakes his head)
You couldn't have known, don't worry about it...

DANI

I wouldn't have just walked in here if...why didn't you say anything?

CHARLIE

(shrugs)
I ah...well, I guess I just don't talk about it much.

Another beat. Dani waits to see if he'll go on. He does.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She was at some party, after graduation. The kid's dad had a gun in a shoebox or something...And you know, she was stressed out about a lot of things, she was high, she...was alone in the room, I guess, and...

He trails off, then clears his throat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Anyway, now you know why mom
 doesn't want to sell the house.

Dani looks around the room, seeing it for what it is -- a
 snapshot, preserved in time.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Want to see my room?

Dani blinks, brought back, and quickly rises.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The two of them stand in the middle of a room -- a double bed
 and shabby desk the only furnishings. A lot of bare walls
 and floors, stripped of memories.

CHARLIE
 Charming, right?

Dani gives a tepid smile.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 It didn't always look like this. I
 guess this is my sort of...silent
 protest against my mother, for
 holding onto the place.

DANI
 Has it helped?

CHARLIE
 ...Helped my mother?

DANI
 No, I mean, for you. Does it feel
 better? To just move on like that.

His brow furrows -- he's never thought about it.

CHARLIE
 I, ah...I can't really tell, I
 guess. Maybe not. I just know I
 needed to do it.
 (a beat)
 I think she hates me for it though.
 My mom. She wishes I was stuck
 here with her.

Dani shakes her head, looks back at him.

DANI

She doesn't.

Charlie studies her, surprised by her certainty. He chuckles, anxious.

CHARLIE

Anyway, it's not as if I didn't have a reason to leave. I got a career, you know?

DANI

You like it, your job?

CHARLIE

Oh, sure. Financial advising may sound stuffy, but there's stability in it, and I help people make important decisions that impact how they...

Suddenly, Dani doubles over with nausea -- she rushes to the bathroom door across the room.

Charlie watches her go.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hey, it's not that bad.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dani kneels on the floor over the toilet -- Charlie appears and stands hesitantly, unsure of what to do.

CHARLIE

Do you need...?

DANI

No, no, I'm fine.

She flushes and stands, wiping off her mouth.

DANI (CONT'D)

It happens every now and again. Don't tell your mom, I don't want her to think it's her cooking's fault.

CHARLIE

Ah, I don't think you need to worry about me telling her any of this.

A little too honest. An uncomfortable beat.

DANI
You have an extra toothbrush?

CHARLIE
Uh...

He rifles through drawers and pulls out the necessities. She takes them from his hand.

DANI
Thanks.

She rips the toothbrush package open and starts vigorously brushing. Charlie stands, a bit awkward. Building up the courage for something.

CHARLIE
Listen, I want to tell you...you should know that, when we met at the reunion, I had just gotten out of a serious relationship...

DANI
(through toothpaste)
Chahlie...

CHARLIE
So I wasn't trying to take advantage of you, but I was going through...

DANI
Chahlie!
(She spits)
It's ok, really. I promise, I know you're not an asshole.

CHARLIE
No, that's not...that's not what I'm saying. I was trying to explain...we were living together, this girl and me, and now that she's gone, I have all this...I have extra room in my apartment. So if you need a place to stay, out of town, while you...figure out whatever it is you're figuring out. I wouldn't mind.

Dani assesses him, truly surprised.

DANI
Really?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

DANI

Why?

He shrugs.

CHARLIE

I just...I think I like you, I guess.

She cocks her head. He laughs at himself.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I don't know, I guess that's a little bit fast to...

And then she leans forward toward him, kisses him full on the mouth. A tender, honest kiss. A long one.

She pulls back. They look at each other. He wipes his mouth.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You might want to, ah...spit again.

She laughs, turns and spits out the rest of her toothpaste into the sink.

She turns back, and he's already leaning into her, lifting her up onto the counter. She wraps her legs around his waist, and he works to pull her shirt over head...

FADE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS trace a path of light across a winding mountain road, illuminating looming trees.

After a series of turns, the lights settle on a sprawling MOUNTAIN HOUSE, nestled into the woods. LIGHTS are on inside, and we HEAR pounding MUSIC.

The headlights FLICK OFF.

The music SWELLS as we enter --

INT. MOUNTAIN HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason sits, sunken into a couch cushion, staring emptily at the label of his beer.

Around him his WASTED FRIENDS (20ish) laugh and pass around a joint -- there are maybe a half-dozen kids in all, and they've clearly done nothing but indulge themselves since they arrived.

A SCRAWNY KID wanders around the spacious living room, holding aloft a cell phone.

SCRAWNY KID

Chris, this house's cell service is being a dick.

The Scrawny Kid turns back toward the couch -- CHRIS is all but passed out, his face smushed into the armrest. Scrawny Kid kicks him.

SCRAWNY KID (CONT'D)

Chris, I said your cell service sucks.

Chris half-awakes, enough to flash a middle finger before face-planting back into the couch.

Jason watches, a sullen drunk.

JASON

Jus' go outside.

SCRAWNY KID

I'm not going outside, it's dark out there.

JASON

Then shuttup.

SCRAWNY KID

I'm trying to text Sarah good night...

Jason lazily pantomimes jerking off. Snickers from around the room. Scrawny Kid reddens and stumbles toward the front door.

SCRAWNY KID (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Alright, I get it, don't need to be a dick...

He yanks open the front door --

And is surprised to find two hefty figures standing on the front step. Mitch and Zhukov, looking pretty grim.

Scrawny stares for a second, goldfish eyes.

Mitch clears his throat.

MITCH

This is the Bannon's place?

Scrawny blinks, turns back to the living room.

SCRAWNY KID

Uhhh...guys...?

MITCH

Is Jason Collins here?

Scrawny swallows.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Jason Collins, is he here?

SCRAWNY KID

Are you...ah...law enforcement...I mean...how can I help you?

MITCH

Mind if we come in?

SCRAWNY KID

Do you have, a...ah, warrant, sir?

Mitch smirks at Zhukov and steps into the room past the helpless Scrawny.

Everyone stares with stuporous surprise at the new guests.

Mitch's eyes scan the room, finally landing on Jason.

MITCH

Jason Collins?

Jason wrinkles his brow, hearing his name through the drunken haze.

JASON

Whatta you want?

Mitch smiles grimly...

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dani and Charlie, curled up, spoons, on Charlie's bed -- Charlie, small spoon, is fast asleep, snoring gently. Dani stares at the back of his head, her eyes wide open.

She slowly reaches a hand forward, presses it against the small of Charlie's back. Holds it there. He doesn't wake up.

DANI
(quiet)
I kill people, Charlie.

She lets that settle. Charlie stays asleep. So she keeps going.

DANI (CONT'D)
I kill people, for money.

A beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
They're bad men. Or at least they seem like...I don't know, I never know who they are. I'll make up stories about them, sometimes, before I...

Another beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
Am I good at it?

A moment to consider.

DANI (CONT'D)
Yes. I'm very good at it.

She contemplates it some more.

DANI (CONT'D)
Sometimes...the way they look at me...that moment, when they know, and they can't stop it...there's a feeling. This feeling I get...

She shudders, almost imperceptibly.

DANI (CONT'D)
That worries me, a little...

A beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
Jason doesn't know. He'll never
know.

Another beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
I did the right thing, though. It
was for him, it was the right
thing, I know it was the right
thing...

She trails off. Just staring at the back of Charlie's head.
She nods.

DANI (CONT'D)
Yeah. You're probably right.

She rolls over, turning away from him.

Then she notices. Sitting on Charlie's desk -- a TELEPHONE.

Her eyes, glued open, staring. Unable to think about
anything else.

She makes a decision. Slips from the covers, crosses the
room, pulls up the receiver and dials. Holds it to her ear.

After a moment:

JASON (O.S.)
Hey, it's Jason, just leave me a
message.

Straight to voicemail again. Dani breathes out, eyes
watering.

Then the BEEP.

DANI
(very quiet)
Jason. I'm...I want you to know...

Suddenly, a thought occurs to her -- this might be a very bad
idea.

She hangs up quickly.

DANI (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Shit...

She rubs her temple. Watches Charlie's sleeping form.

And then makes another decision.

A SERIES OF IMAGES:

- Dani, picking Charlie's discarded pants off the bathroom floor, fishing through pockets to retrieve his CAR KEYS...

- Dani in CHARLIE'S SISTER'S ROOM. She stands, hesitant, wondering if she should...but she has to. She pulls open the drawers, rifling through stacks of clothes, until she finds what she's looking for -- a BLACK HOODIE...

- Dani in the KITCHEN, moving slowly, wearing the black hoodie, along with black leggings and an old pair of black gym shorts. Her eyes scan the room.

Her gaze lands on a kitchen chair. She crouches, examining its structure. She flips it over and begins carefully unscrewing one of the legs...

- Dani, methodically wrapping the detached chair leg in electrical tape...

- Dani, hood up, a gym bag slung over her shoulder, moving to the front door. She stops.

Sees, through the LIVING ROOM -- Charlie's mother, still asleep in her recliner. A spent woman.

Dani takes a deep breath, flicks OFF the lights in the front hall, and steps out into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Eddie sits, hunched over his stately war-room desk, looking more like a weary professor than a crook.

His desk phone JANGLES to life. He grabs it.

EDDIE

(into the phone)

Yeah...Alright...Has he said anything yet?...What about his phone?...Where are you calling from, then?

Frankie enters, laden with a stack of papers. He drops them off on the desk, lazily, and the pile spills forward into Eddie's lap. Eddie glares.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Alright, get to Tommy's, call me
back with some actual fucking news.

He hangs up. Frankie is already headed back for the door.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(to Frankie)
Hey! These are stacked for a
reason, you animal.

FRANKIE
Sorry, Eddie.

Frankie turns to leave again.

EDDIE
Where you going?

FRANKIE
Home. It's late.

EDDIE
No, you're staying here tonight.

FRANKIE
I am?

EDDIE
Yeah.

FRANKIE
Why?

EDDIE
Because. I desire your company.
Go sit in the parlor, watch some
TV.

FRANKIE
Boss, I'm meetin' with this girl...

EDDIE
There's beer and cookies in the
kitchen. Console yourself.

Frankie pouts, reluctantly exits. Eddie sighs and rearranges
the mess of papers on his desk.

INT. PARLOR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Frankie shuffles into the cozy parlor, grabs the remote off the coffee table. Stares at its daunting array of buttons.

He points the remote at the enormous flat-screen across the room. Presses a button.

Nothing. Frankie wrinkles his nose. Tries another one. Then another.

FRANKIE
(under his breath)
Come on...you fucking...

He tries a few more buttons, but nothing seems to work. He loses patience and chucks the remote on the couch. Moves to the door...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Frankie strolls through the expansive kitchen. On an island in the center sits a large metal tin, all by its lonesome.

Frankie opens the fridge and grabs a beer. Brew in hand, he walks to the island, pries the tin open with his meaty paws.

INSIDE -- an impressive array of cookies, running the full gamut.

FRANKIE
Woah...

He eagerly grabs a handful. Stares at the beer in his other hand. Realizes this won't do the trick.

He tosses the cookies back into the tin, picks up the whole shebang, tucked under one arm, grabs his beer, and then he's turning back to the parlor --

And freezes. Something is pressed against the base of his neck. Something hard.

Behind him -- Dani, holding the end of the chair leg.

A beat.

DANI
Hey Frankie.

FRANKIE
Dani. Hi.

DANI

Do me a favor. Put the cookies and beer back on the counter.

FRANKIE

...What for?

DANI

Just do it, please.

Frankie cautiously follows orders, first cookie tin, then beer.

DANI (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She winds back, and WHAM -- swings the table leg with full force against Frankie's head.

Frankie sprawls to the floor, crumpling with a THUD. Dani places the now-broken table leg onto the counter next to the beer and cookies, grabs Frankie's GUN from the back of his pants, and starts moving toward the parlor.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Eddie runs his fingers through his hair, face turned down toward his desk.

Suddenly, a BARRAGE of noise -- the TELEVISION, volume turned on at full blast from the other room.

Eddie growls with frustration.

EDDIE

Frankie! Turn that shit down,
Frankie!

The noise continues unabated, blaring some high school football game.

Irked, Eddie rises -- on his way out, he picks up a single barrel SHOTGUN leaning against the wall. He slings it over his shoulder.

We FOLLOW HIM through THE HALLWAY, into --

INT. PARLOR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The television is deafening now as Eddie enters the room.

EDDIE
Damnit, Frank!

He looks around, sees the light from the kitchen, moves to the television.

He reaches his hand out to shut off the television. But then stops. Thinking.

He spins, bringing up his shotgun --

PFFT -- a shot, muffled by the sound of the television, and a bullet SNAPS into his shooting arm. He cries out, surprised, and sits back against the entertainment system, his gun falling harmlessly to the carpet.

Dani stands behind the couch, holding Frankie's pistol. She raises the remote and the sound of the TV cuts OFF.

Silence. They appraise each other a moment.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Nice outfit. You look like a professional back-up dancer.

DANI
Fuck you.

EDDIE
Where's Frankie?

DANI
He's napping. I'd worry about yourself.

Eddie shifts his weight, clutching his arm, wincing.

EDDIE
I imagine you're pretty pissed off right about now?

DANI
Wouldn't you be?

Eddie shrugs.

DANI (CONT'D)
I've got questions.

EDDIE
So do I. We can take turns.

DANI
Alright. The assholes that tried
to kill me are from Philly?

EDDIE
Yeah.

DANI
What are they doing here?

Eddie sighs, leaning his head back against the still glowing television.

EDDIE
Your last guy, Gerald Gambi. He
was the brother of a couple big
shots in the Philly family. Making
a lot of noise here in town, so I
wanted him taken care of...

DANI
These guys work for him?

EDDIE
No. Gerald's dead. They work for
Morris.

DANI
Morris...?

EDDIE
Morris Bijoux...he's a...an
opportunist, a headhunter. Used to
be a friend...

DANI
He's looking for me?

EDDIE
Now, yeah.

DANI
I could have used a warning.

EDDIE
You think I knew about this?
Besides, if you hadn't fucked up
the hit...

He coughs.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Speaking of which. Care to fill me
in?

DANI
...You're not gonna believe me.

EDDIE
Try me.

DANI
I threw up on him.

A beat.

EDDIE
You what?

DANI
I blew chunks. Vomited. All over
the guy.

Another beat. Then Eddie chuckles, despite himself.

EDDIE
Well. That's unique. What was it,
the flu?

DANI
No, I...

She shifts her feet, anxious.

DANI (CONT'D)
Eddie, I'm pregnant.

Another long beat.

EDDIE
That so.

DANI
Yeah.

EDDIE
How long?

DANI
Almost 3 months. I just found out.

EDDIE
Who's the father?

DANI
(shakes her head)
You don't know him.

EDDIE

Good.

Another beat.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

So should I say congratulations,
or...?

DANI

I don't really know, Eddie. To
tell you the truth...I'm scared.

EDDIE

Yeah. I can imagine.

A beat.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Ok. What now?

DANI

I want out.

EDDIE

...Out of what?

DANI

Just...out, you know. Our business
is done.

EDDIE

Well, if wishes were fishes,
sweetheart...

DANI

It's over, Eddie. I mean it.

EDDIE

And you think I don't? There's no
reset button on this thing.

DANI

Damnit, Eddie...

EDDIE

What the fuck's your plan, anyway?
You're gonna what, ride off into
the sunset, start a new, glamorous
life working at some mall in
Pittsburgh? Grow up. This is the
job you're built for, and you know
it. I mean, look at you...

DANI

I don't need the money any more.
Neither does Jason.

Eddie's jaw tightens at the name. Dani recognizes something in Eddie's expression, and a wave of fear hits her.

DANI (CONT'D)

(quiet)
...Where is he?

EDDIE

Don't act all surprised...

DANI

Where is he, Eddie?

EDDIE

Mitch and one of Morris's crew
picked him up tonight.

Dani trembles with anger.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

They haven't done anything yet...

DANI

I should blow your fucking head
off.

EDDIE

(losing patience)
Alright, sure Danielle, blow me
away. But do me a favor and cut
the self-righteous bullshit.
Remember, you came to *me* looking
for help, and I gave it to you the
way I knew how. Just like I did
for Dan when your mom died. Did
you see anyone else in this town
willing to go to bat for him? Or
pay your brother's way through
school?

DANI

Yeah, you're a real charity case,
Eddie.

EDDIE

Tell me something. Who do you
think Jason's gonna blame for all
this? You or me?

A beat.

DANI
Just tell me where he is.

EDDIE
And why would I do that?

DANI
Because I don't feel like killing
you tonight, Eddie. And it's
really the least you can do.

Another beat.

EDDIE
I suppose that's so.

Eddie sits up, grimacing with pain.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
There's an old ice skating rink up
in the mountains, right off of the
interstate...

DANI
Tommy's?

EDDIE
You know it?

DANI
When I was a kid. It's a dump, I
didn't know it was still around.

EDDIE
It's not, closed down years ago.
But Tommy is a buddy of mine.

Dani nods.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
You're only gonna make this worse.

DANI
We'll see.

She starts moving her way toward the front door, gun trained
on Eddie the entire time.

EDDIE
I'm sorry, by the way. That this
happened like this. And sorry
about all the yelling, my arm just
fucking hurts...

DANI
I'm leaving now, Eddie.

EDDIE
(holding up his arm)
Wait. Just...how did you know...

DANI
It's Thursday, right?

EDDIE
...Yeah?

DANI
Thursday night. Frankie drops off
the receipts at your house.

Eddie smirks, wanly.

EDDIE
Routine, huh?

DANI
Bye, Eddie.

She slowly backs herself out of the room.

Eddie stares down at the small pool of blood collecting below
him on the carpet.

FADE TO:

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - NIGHT

An expansive, dark lobby, with an off-putting woodsy decor --
taxidermy juxtaposed with vending machines. All collecting
dust.

The front door swings open; a bell CHIMES. Mitch reaches up
and wraps his hand around the bell to silence it. Then taps
the light switch on the wall. Ancient fluorescents flicker
wearily to life.

He looks behind him.

MITCH
Come on.

Zhukov follows, supporting over his shoulder a bleary, still-
out-of-it Jason.

Zhukov surveys the room. Sniffs.

ZHUKOV
Fucking country bullshit.

MITCH
Through here.

They move behind the front counter, past rows and rows of rental skates, open up a back door --

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mitch FLICKS another light switch, illuminating a cramped office -- and a rotund, BEARDED MAN (late 50s) slumped in the corner, an open bottle of whiskey on his desk and a trucker hat pulled over his eyes.

Mitch points to an empty chair.

MITCH
Put him down there.

Zhukov sets Jason down, while Mitch walks over to the Bearded Man. He leans over.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Tommy!

The man, TOMMY, doesn't jump at the noise -- just pops open one bloodshot eye.

Mitch drops a plastic baggie filled with CRYSTAL METH in Tommy's lap.

MITCH (CONT'D)
For you.

Tommy raises his eyebrows. He MUMBLES something expressing gratitude and drops the bag on his desk, next to the bottle of whiskey. Then lowers his eyelids again.

Mitch is already turning back to Zhukov.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Anything from his cell phone?

Zhukov reaches into Jason's pockets. Jason rouses slightly and offers a vague struggle.

JASON
Hey...hey! Getthe fuck off...

Zhukov finds the phone, pulls it out, passes it off to Mitch. Jason tries to rise, but Zhukov easily pushes him back down.

Mitch looks at the phone.

MITCH

(under his breath)

Ah, shit.

(looking up to Zhukov)

Alright. I'm gonna take a trip, try to find some service. You handle him?

ZHUKOV

Sure.

Mitch moves toward the door.

Jason watches, his unease increasing as he sobers up.

JASON

Hey. Hey!

Mitch stops at the door, looks back.

JASON (CONT'D)

What's going on? What did I do?

Mitch shares a smirk with Zhukov.

MITCH

Nothing yet. Make sure it stays that way.

He turns to leave.

INT. PARLOR ROOM - NIGHT

Morris paces around the room, hair disheveled, still wearing his peacoat. His bodyguard stands stoically in the corner, a silent monolith.

Eddie is slouched into the couch, pale, his injured arm now bandaged. Frankie leans back in a nearby recliner, a frozen package of carrots planted to the side of his head.

Morris rubs his chin.

MORRIS

She's on her way there now?

EDDIE

I think it's safe to assume so.

MORRIS
Does Mitch know?

EDDIE
No, I called you first.

MORRIS
Why would you tell her where the
brother is?

EDDIE
Because she had a gun on me and she
asked. What does it matter? If we
know where she's going, we'll be
ready when she--

MORRIS
Because we're not in the
philanthropy business, Eddie. Do I
really have to explain this?
Because things have not exactly
been running smoothly up to this
point.

He sighs, sits down dramatically in a rocking chair across
the room.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
What else did you tell her?

EDDIE
Morris. I don't see why you're
being so pissy about this, I'm the
one who got shot in the fucking--

MORRIS
Did you mention the Gambi brothers?

Eddie blinks.

EDDIE
It might'a come up.

Morris nods.

MORRIS
Did you tell her my name?

EDDIE
...Huh?

MORRIS
Did you mention my name to this
girl?

EDDIE
...No. No, I didn't.

Morris nods again. Then laughs nervously.

MORRIS
Sorry, I'm just a little on edge, I guess.

EDDIE
That's alright. It's late.

MORRIS
No, it's *early*.

EDDIE
Sure, sure.

Morris rubs his eyes.

MORRIS
Alright. And you said you hadn't talked to Mitch yet?

EDDIE
Yeah, Morry, I told you, I haven't been able to--

Morris pulls a HANDGUN with a silencer from his peacoat and stands, firing THREE QUICK SHOTS into Eddie. Eddie's head falls back, a blank look of surprise on his face.

On the nearby recliner, Frankie sits up, stunned, still holding the frozen vegetables to his head.

Morris regards him for a moment. Shares a look with his bodyguard.

Morris turns back to Frankie.

MORRIS
Boy, are you useless.

He fires TWO MORE SHOTS, and Frankie slumps back into the recliner, glassy eyed.

Morris surveys the room. Reaches inside his pocket for a cell phone.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM, ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

The phone on Tommy's desk RINGS. Tommy, his legs propped up against the desk, doesn't move.

Jason is now bound to his chair, hands tied behind his back, mouth gagged. Zhukov leans against the wall, chewing tobacco in his lip, a coffee cup in his hand.

He stares at the ringing phone. Shares a look with Jason, who's looking increasingly sober and terrified.

Zhukov saunters over to the desk and lifts the phone.

ZHUKOV

Ya.

CROSS-CUT WITH PARLOR ROOM:

MORRIS

Is Mitch there?

ZHUKOV

No.

MORRIS

Well I just stopped by Ronson's,
looks like the girl beat me here.
She popped Eddie and his body man.
She may be headed your way next.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAWN

Mitch sits behind the front wheel of his car, driving along a highway. His cell phone is to his ear. His face a blank mask.

MITCH

(into phone.)

Yeah, I understand. Thanks,
Morris.

He hangs up. Stares outside the window for a minute, tightly gripping the wheel.

Then he starts relentlessly PUNCHING the car's sun visor, his face a mask of fury. The visor keeps flipping back, avoiding his blows. Eventually the whole visor SNAPS off, and he tosses it to the floor of the car.

He stares out the window, fuming.

An electronic TONE. Mitch's head snaps toward the sound.

Jason's cell phone, sitting on the passenger seat, has finally regained service -- the screen glows: NEW VOICEMAILS.

Mitch reaches for it...

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM, ICE SKATING RINK - DAWN

Zhukov, Tommy, and Jason, in the same positions we last left them. Zhukov is taking apart and cleaning his gun, to keep himself occupied.

As he performs this chore, Zhukov eyes Jason occasionally, who watches him, fearfully.

ZHUKOV

So. This girl. She is sister?

Jason (obviously) says nothing.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

She is real bitch, you know that?
Huge, giant, super bitch.

He starts carefully re-assembling the gun. Jason tenses with each mechanic CLICK.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

When she comes here. I kill her.
You will watch.

He lazily rises, gun in hand. He leans over Jason, who writhes in terror.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

But first? I think I fuck her.
You know?

He smiles, leering. He pantomimes fucking.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

You know what I mean, ya? Before, boss said no fucking, but then, she spray in my eye, so now...now I spray her, you know? I do it in front of you. Put on show for you. You like that? You enjoy watching fucking? I will do good job for you...

His thoughts trail off -- he hears a SOUND from outside, an approaching car.

His smile disappears. He points his gun at Jason.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

No talk.

He glances at Tommy, glazed in his chair. Then turns to the door and exits.

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov swiftly edges his way toward the front counter, keeping his eye on the front door.

He slides up beside the front window, peering out.

OUTSIDE, a black car, parked diagonally in the middle of the empty lot, idling. The driver is unseen.

Zhukov sets his jaw, then opens the front door, gun drawn.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov steps out into the morning sun and FIRES his gun at the car.

The bullet PINGS against the hood. Greasy Thug scrambles out of the front seat, waving his hands in the air.

GREASY THUG

Jesus! It's me! Put the fucking gun away!

Zhukov lowers his gun. Greasy starts limping in his direction, incensed.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

Why the fuck you walking out here firing your piece off like that? What if I was a cop?

Zhukov cocks his head, looking like an enormous pug.

ZHUKOV

Why you here?

GREASY THUG

Why the fuck you think? Morris called me. He didn't tell you I was coming?

ZHUKOV

No. I thought you might be girl.

GREASY THUG

If I was the girl, you think I'd just ride up and park my fucking car in the fucking parking lot? Huh?

A shrug.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

Next time, think before you try to pop someone in the fucking...

He notices that Zhukov's attention has drifted -- he's staring at something over Greasy's shoulder.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

What are you...?

He turns to see what Zhukov is looking at.

IN THE DISTANCE, a dark square approaches -- a CAR, moving very quickly up the long, straight roadway leading past the ice skating rink.

Greasy squints, putting his hand over brow to shield the sun.

Zhukov raises his gun. Greasy looks at him.

GREASY THUG (CONT'D)

Hold on a sec, could just be someone driving by...

He turns back to the horizon. The car is steadily gaining, seeming to pick up speed as it moves down the road.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dani, behind the wheel of Charlie's Buick rental, Frankie's pistol in her lap -- her eyes are trained on the ice skating rink, growing in size, two small figures standing alone in the parking lot.

She FLOORS the accelerator.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov shares a glance with Greasy.

Greasy sighs.

GREASY THUG

Shit. Ok.

Greasy reaches for his sidearm. Together they move toward Greasy's car, standing behind it for cover, guns pointed toward the onrushing Buick, now maybe a hundred yards away.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dani sees the two figures, their guns drawn.

She takes a deep breath, makes sure the car is on-target, moves her left hand down, yanks the recliner on the seat, leans the seat back just as --

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov and Greasy UNLOAD their weapons at the Buick -- bullets glancing off the hood, SHATTERING the front window.

To their surprise, the car doesn't slow.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dani, lying flat in her seat, one hand on the bottom of the steering wheel, one hand clutching the gun to her chest.

She counts off seconds in her head.

Clamps her eyes shut.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov backpeddles, then dives out of the way; Greasy, dumbfounded and hobbled, just ducks.

The nose of the Buick SLAMS into the side of the parked car -- metal tears, tires skid, and the whole twisted hunk of machinery rolls forward -- right over top of Greasy.

The vehicles lurch to a stop. Stillness.

Zhukov pulls himself up off the pavement. He blinks, looking around.

He sees Greasy, crushed and lifeless, wedged underneath his own car.

Zhukov reaches for his gun on the pavement.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dani opens her eyes, shaken but unhurt. She scrambles to unclasp her seat belt, fighting against the deflating air bag in front of her.

The CRACK of gunshots, riddling the passenger side of the car. She claws open the door, rolling out of the car onto the concrete.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Firing his gun, Zhukov backs his way toward the entrance of the skating rink. Reaches for the handle.

The SNAP of bullets, cracking the glass of the front door -- Dani, crouching behind her car, fires his way.

Zhukov slips inside. Dani rips off a couple more shots, SHATTERING the rest of the glass of the door.

Her gun CLICKS empty.

DANI

Shit.

She squints -- inside the building, Zhukov is crouching, fumbling with his gun, reloading.

Dani takes a deep breath, then rises, sprints straight for the front door --

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Zhukov wipes sweat from his forehead, shoves another clip into his pistol, turns to rise --

And Dani is there, SLAMMING the open door into him.

He falls back, surprised more than anything else. He lifts his shooting arm, but she falls on him, twists his hand, and bullets ROAR harmlessly into the plaster ceiling.

Enraged, Zhukov swings his arm away from her, losing his handle on the gun in the process -- it skitters across the tiled floor.

Dani dives for it, but Zhukov rolls over onto her, pinning her down. She writhes, but his animal strength overpowers her, and he PUMMELS her with heavy fists.

She uses her legs to keep him at bay -- frustrated, Zhukov rises and grabs hold of one of her legs, twisting and flinging her across the room -- she slides over broken glass, COLLIDING with the reception desk.

Zhukov pants for a moment, then moves to retrieve his pistol.

Dani sees this and wills herself to her feet -- she scrambles over the reception desk, falling behind it --

-- just as Zhukov scoops up his weapon and turns, EMPTYING the rest of his clip at the reception desk hiding Dani. The gunshots ECHO through the lobby until his gun CLICKS empty.

Silence. Zhukov sniffs, reaches to his pocket for another clip.

BEHIND THE DESK, Dani is curled up, unharmed -- she hears Zhukov reloading, and her eyes scan for some sort of weapon.

She SEES the rows of ice skates.

Then something BRIGHT RED catches her eye -- hidden under the desk, an old FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

She grabs it, turns, flings it out into the lobby.

Zhukov sees movement and instinctively FIRES --

And the room EXPLODES in white, powdery dust.

Zhukov coughs, pissed off, waving through the fog as the powder settles over him. He staggers forward, kicking the sputtering extinguisher tank in the process.

He rounds the desk, bringing up his gun -- and Dani lunges toward him, holding an ice skate, SWINGING it down.

Zhukov cries out, a broad gash etched in his hand, and drops the weapon. She swings again, but he blocks this time, the blade grazing against his arm.

Pain turns to anger, and he bulls forward into Dani as she tries to raise the blade again.

They COLLIDE with the shelf of old ice skates, and the whole structure cascades backwards, crashing to the floor.

Zhukov kneels on top of Dani, pinning her down. His bloodied hand presses against her mouth. With his other arm, he slowly twists the ice skate gripped in her hand so that the blade points toward her face.

ZHUKOV

Come on. Come on, you can do it,
come, I know you can, I know...

She struggles, and he laughs, guttural.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

Good, that's good, here we go...

He HEAVES, swinging the blade down -- but Dani KICKS up at the same time, and he's off balance, and she twists the blade, just enough -- and the skate lands, angled, into Zhukov's thigh.

He grunts, surprised. He slides off Dani and wrests out the blade -- and is stunned to see blood flow, pumping freely from his femoral artery.

He blinks, already woozy, falling back.

ZHUKOV (CONT'D)

Ohhh..no, no, no...

He turns, trying to find his gun on the floor, clawing through his rapidly pooling blood, hands slipping on the tile.

Dani gulps for air, freed at last. She rolls to her knees, weak.

Zhukov, pale, reaches with trembling fingers for his gun...

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason, still bound in his chair, stares at the closed door, wide-eyed and sweaty. He HEARS a faint struggle on the other side.

Then silence.

He waits, breathing anxiously through his nose.

Then the door BUSTS open and Dani staggers through, Zhukov's gun in her hand. A look of relief washes over her face at the sight of Jason.

DANI

Jason...

She takes another step forward, then stops.

Tommy sits very still in the corner, his bushy nostrils flared, his eyes wide open for the first time.

A moment as they assess one another.

Tommy's eyes drift to his desk -- LOW ANGLE, and we see a shotgun strapped underneath.

A tense beat.

Tommy makes his move -- and bullets TEAR into him, knocking him back. He slumps in his chair.

Dani drops the gun and rushes to Jason's side, fumbling with his bonds.

No sooner is he free, however, then Jason is scrambling away from Dani, that look of terror still present in his face.

DANI (CONT'D)

Jason...

JASON

Don't -- don't --

Dani freezes, puzzled. She moves toward him again. He recoils.

She notices, as if for the first time, the blood all over her arms.

She takes a deep breath, trying to appear calm.

DANI

It's alright. We're safe now.

Jason's eyes dart up and down over his sister. He glances over her shoulder -- sees the heaped, bloodied form of Zhukov lying alone in the hallway.

JASON

You killed them.

Dani blinks, unsure how to respond.

DANI

Yes.

JASON

Why?

DANI

Because. They were going to kill us.

Jason tries to process.

JASON
Why? Why would they want to do that?

DANI
It's...it's complicated...

JASON
Because of Dad? Did these guys work with Dad?

DANI
No -- I mean, maybe, but it's not because of him.

JASON
It's because of you?

DANI
...Yes.

JASON
You knew I was kidnapped.

DANI
Yes.

JASON
Why didn't you call the police?

A heavy beat.

JASON (CONT'D)
Dani, why didn't you call the police?

Dan tries to think of a suitable response. Fails.

DANI
(quiet)
I can explain...

JASON
This is crazy.

He moves toward the desk, and Dani instinctively steps in front of him, grabs him.

JASON (CONT'D)
Don't...

DANI

Jason, please, listen to me. You have to understand...

JASON

I don't care! Please, Dani, it doesn't matter. I just want to call the police.

Dani runs out of things to say. He slips from her limp grasp, moves to the desk. Picks up the receiver.

DANI

I love you, Jason.

He stops. Looks back at her.

DANI (CONT'D)

I love you...the most. You know that?

A beat.

DANI (CONT'D)

Please don't call.

Another long beat. Jason wavers. Lowers the receiver for a moment.

JASON

This isn't the first time you've...done something like this?

Dani furrows her brow, confused.

DANI

(quiet)

What do you mean?

JASON

Killed people.

DANI

...No. It's not.

JASON

...How many times?

Dani blinks. Realizes she doesn't really know the answer.

Jason stares, frightened. Then turns back to the desk and punches 9-1-1 into the phone.

Dani watches as he puts the receiver to his ear. In a daze, she leaves the room.

Jason watches her go. Then hears a voice in his ear.

JASON (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello...?

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - CONTINUOUS

Dani stumbles out through the lobby, past the slumped form of Zhukov. Her feet crunch the glass as she pushes the front door out into --

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Where she staggers toward the cars. She pauses, noticing the bloodied body of Greasy, still wedged beneath the vehicles.

She continues forward to the Buick.

INT. BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Dani slides into the front seat, pushing aside the deflated airbag. She twists the ignition.

Nothing, of course, happens. She tries again anyway. Still nothing.

She sits for a second.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Dani pulls out her bag from the back of the car, slings it over her shoulder, then starts trotting/limping to the nearby woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Tall, dying trees in late-autumn decline, so wooden as to be almost grey. From a distance, we SEE a small, dark figure weaving through these trees, moving downhill -- Dani.

We MOVE closer, and see she is approaching a small pond.

With workman-like efficiency, she begins removing her bloodied clothes and dropping them into the water. She looks exhausted, zombie-like.

As she starts to pull off her leggings, she suddenly is overcome by a sharp pain in her abdomen. She doubles over, waiting for it to subside.

It doesn't. It just gets worse.

Now she is on her hands and knees, crawling into the cold water of the pond, her face contorted by agony. She immerses herself in the water...

CUT TO:

A cloud of blood, drifting...

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Dani, down to her wet undergarments, is curled up against the trunk of a tree -- pale, bedraggled, completely exhausted. Her soaked hair clings limply to her face; dead leaves dot her bare legs.

She pulls herself closer to the tree trunk, hugging it, gripping it as if searching for warmth.

After what feels like a long time, she drags her wet and dirty body back to her bag. With an enormous amount of effort, she begins the process of dressing herself in clean clothes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Dani walks along a mountain road, looking a little better, but not much. With every step she might topple to the ground.

The growling rumble of a CAR -- Dani turns around and sticks out her thumb as it WHIZZES past, not stopping. She resumes walking.

Another car approaches -- Dani turns around again. The car slows down -- and with creeping realization, Dani recognizes the car, and the driver.

She turns, limping for the woods on the side of the road.

The car comes to a stop -- and Mitch jumps out.

MITCH

Dani!

She's into the bramble now, but it's tough going, a steep incline, and she's losing steam, fleeing from Mitch more out of principle than any possibility of escape.

Mitch stands at the edge of the road, hands on his hips.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Come on, Dani, don't do this.

She loses her footing and slips, landing with a thud. She sits, panting.

She looks back at him. He almost looks pitying.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Just get in the car, please.

She doesn't move. He sighs, spits into the dirt, looks back up at her.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Where would you even go?

Her expression says it all -- she doesn't know.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Dani sits in the back seat of Mitch's car, staring at the highway flashing by the window.

Next to her, crammed into the tight confines of the back seat, sits Morris's bodyguard. Mitch guides the wheel in front.

Dani stays silent, her forehead pressed against the cool glass of the window.

On the horizon -- the hazy outline of the city. Her city.

Mitch sees it as well.

MITCH

Home sweet home.

EXT. OLIVE GARDEN - DAY

Under the overcast sky, Mitch's car pulls into the parking lot of a familiar Olive Garden. The parking lot is empty, the windows boarded up.

Mitch's car rounds the back of the building and disappears from sight.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mitch, Dani, and the bodyguard walk single-file down a narrow gray hallway, the cool concrete pressing in around them.

Eventually the hallway opens up INTO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stainless steel surfaces remain, even if the kitchenware has been removed. The space is cold and septic.

A handful of GOONS mill around the empty kitchen, leaning against walls, sitting on counters. They wordlessly notice the new visitors.

Mitch, meanwhile, doesn't break stride, leading Dani and the bodyguard through the cavernous space to a solitary steel door. He KNOCKS on the outside.

As they wait for the door to open, Mitch looks back to Dani. He roughly grabs her arm and wrests her toward him, spinning her, pressing her back into the wall.

His face is inches from hers, his eyes brimming with fire -- her expression is blank in return. He grabs her cheeks with his hand, fingers digging in to her flesh, trembling from anger.

MITCH

You deserve this. Remember that.

The door opens, and Mitch releases his grip. Dani returns her eyes to the floor.

Morris appears in the doorway. He pats Mitch on the shoulder.

MORRIS

Thank you, Mitchell.
(motioning Dani inside)
Right this way, please.

INT. FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

An emptied walk-in freezer; a bare table and a pair of chairs are the only furnishings.

Mitch pulls Dani to the far side of the room and pushes her down into an empty chair. He exits, SLAMMING the door closed behind him.

Morris stands in the corner of the room, arms crossed, head cocked, watching her.

MORRIS

Well. You look positively mortal.

Slumped, hands folded in her lap, Dani doesn't offer a response.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

It's quite hard to believe you could have caused me this much trouble.

Dani raises her head, looks him in the eye.

DANI

You're Morris?

Morris grimaces, disappointed.

MORRIS

So. Ed did tell you about me.

DANI

Where is he?

Morris gives a quick glance to the door behind him.

MORRIS

He's gone, I'm afraid. Couldn't be helped.

Dani absorbs this news, seemingly without emotion. Morris strolls closer to the table.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

If you're wondering why you haven't joined him yet, I promise, we'll get there. But we have a few details to clear up first. A post-mortem, pre-mortem, so to speak.

A quick smile. He unbuckles his belt. Dani's stiffens the slightest bit. Morris notices.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Ah, now, don't get too excited.

He folds the belt over in his hand. Then carefully removes a thin, wicked-looking RAZOR from his jacket pocket. He begins methodically sharpening the razor against his belt throughout the following.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Thanks to your efforts this morning, your brother is safely in police custody. As a result, you may be under the mistaken impression that I have nothing left to threaten you with.

He places the belt down on the table. Then he reaches into his pocket once again, this time pulling out a cell phone -- Jason's cell phone. He holds it up.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Your brother Jason received four voicemails while you were missing: two from St. Francis hospital, one from a pay phone number, and a fourth message, which is, in my opinion, the most interesting. The message itself is definitely from you, but the number seems to be a local landline, a house number. It is not your house number, which leads me to believe, logically, that it is someone else's. Normally I would think a relative of some sort, but since Mitchell assures me you have none besides your brother, I have to ask...

He places the phone down onto the table, next to the belt, and looks Dani directly in the eye.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Who does the number belong to?

She says nothing. He leans forward, an earnest school teacher.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

The mistakes you make, they affect many people, Miss Collins. Not least of all me. I've been stuck here in this shitty town for days because of you. I had to eat at an Applebees, for fuck's sake.

(MORE)

MORRIS (CONT'D)
So I would greatly appreciate it if
you answered my questions.

Dani stares back at him.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Who does the phone number belong
to?

Dani keeps her face blank.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Did you talk to anyone after you
saw Eddie last night?

Nothing.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Did you talk to Tino and Michael
Gambi?

Still nothing.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Did you tell Tino and Michael
anything? About why I was here?

Nada.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Who does the phone number belong--?

DANI
(cutting him off)
Have you tried calling it?

Morris blinks, a bit surprised. Then he smiles.

MORRIS
You know what. That's not a bad
idea.

He puts the razor down and sits in the other empty chair. He
pulls his HANDGUN and points it casually at Dani, leaning
forward.

Then he pushes Jason's phone to the very center of the table
and presses its face.

On SPEAKERPHONE, a METALLIC RING echoes through the room.

The two of them sit, waiting.

CROSS-CUT WITH:

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The phone RINGS in Charlie's empty room. It sits alone -- the room is dark.

BACK IN THE FREEZER --

Morris and Dani sit very still. The phone rings again. And again.

IN CHARLIE'S ROOM --

The phone rings once more. We wonder if no one will pick up...

But then, we HEAR the bedroom door open, and someone moves to the phone.

IN THE FREEZER --

A CLICK. And then:

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Hello?

Dani opens her mouth slightly, but doesn't speak. She looks at Morris. He raises his eyebrows expectantly.

DANI
Hi Charlie.

IN CHARLIE'S ROOM --

Charlie sits down on his desk, eyes darting to the hallway outside his room.

CHARLIE
(quietly, fervently)
Jesus, Dani...

IN THE FREEZER --

Morris listens, curious.

CHARLIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Dani? Are you ok? Where are you?

Dani looks on the verge of tears.

DANI
I'm fine.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
You want to tell me what's going
on?

A beat.

DANI
Yes. I would. But I can't.

IN CHARLIE'S ROOM --

Charlie blinks, completely baffled.

CHARLIE
You sound strange, did something
happen?

Silence.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Where are you Dani? I'll come get
you.

IN THE FREEZER --

Dani tries to hold it together.

DANI
I'm sorry about the car.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
The car? What happened? Where is
it?

DANI
...You'll find out soon.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
I don't understand any of this.

Dani looks back up at Morris.

DANI
I know. But I just...when you do
find out...just know, it was a job.
Just a job.

IN HIS ROOM --

Charlie has stopped knowing what to say.

DANI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're a good guy Charlie...Please
hang up now.

CHARLIE

Dani...

DANI (O.S.)

Hang up Charlie.

He waits another beat. Shakes his head with confusion.

CHARLIE

I don't...

DANI (O.S.)

Good-bye, Charlie.

CHARLIE

...Good-bye.

He slowly puts the phone back down on the receiver. Sits still for a moment.

We HEAR -- the CRACK of a GUNSHOT --

IN THE FREEZER --

We SEE Morris's face, perplexed.

A WIDER SHOT, and then, BLAM, BLAM, BLAM -- bullets rocket into Morris's stomach, and he falls back, disappearing from view.

Dani places the small snubnose pistol, wrapped in tape, onto the desk in front of her. She sits very still, staring at the door.

It slowly swings open -- IN THE DOORWAY, lying sprawled on the floor, the massive form of Morris's bodyguard. Mitch stands over him.

Mitch looks down at the two bodies. Turns back to his waiting group of button men. He nods, and they wordlessly step forward and begin dragging off Morris and his bodyguard.

Mitch looks through the doorway to Dani, still sitting in her chair. They lock eyes.

EXT. OLIVE GARDEN PARKING LOT - DAY

Dani stands alone, leaning against Mitch's car, staring out at an overcast view of nothing in particular.

In her hand, the snubnose pistol. She unconsciously rubs its butt with her thumb.

Mitch appears from a back door and walks across the deserted parking lot toward her.

When he gets there, he leans against the car. She hands him a small slip of paper.

DANI

Thanks.

Mitch looks down at the slip.

WE SEE, written in Mitch's familiar scrawl: "The table. Right hand."

A FLASH:

INT. HALLWAY - EARLIER

Mitch, pressing Dani back against the wall, fury in his eyes.

UNSEEN BEFORE, he presses the small slip of paper into her hand.

RETURN TO:

EXT. OLIVE GARDEN PARKING LOT - DAY

Mitch crumples up the paper and chucks it.

MITCH

Eddie called me last night, after you stopped by to see him. He must've told Morris something else though, cause Morris played it off that you were the one killed him. I knew something was up -- I just needed to get you in the room with him to hear it for myself.

A beat.

DANI

What happens now?

MITCH

Well, I try to patch things up with Philly -- there's still a chance this could all blow over, especially now that Eddie's out of the picture.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

Everyone's had their share of shit stuck to them, think we can all use a chance to clean off.

DANI

...I meant with me.

Mitch looks at her, then away again.

MITCH

Right. You'll leave town. Maybe for a little while, maybe for good. I got a guy working on some new papers for you; short term, there's a place for you up in Rochester. Nothing fancy, but clean, under the radar.

DANI

Rochester, huh?

MITCH

The bus leaves tonight.

He sees her reaction.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(sympathetic)

Hey, you wanted to get away.

Dani smiles wanly.

MITCH (CONT'D)

And I've got a doctor's visit scheduled for this afternoon.

Dani wrinkles her brow. Mitch reaches into his pocket, pulls out a plastic bag, hands it to her.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Found this in your apartment.

Dani looks down -- the PREGNANCY TEST.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I looked it up. The little cross means "positive."

Dani stares down at the test. Trying to hold it together.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You could've told me.

DANI
...Well, it's too late for that.

Mitch looks up.

MITCH
Gone?

Dani's expression says it all.

He pulls her in. She leans against his shoulder. They stay like that.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Shit...

DANI
Yeah. Shit.

MITCH
Should we talk about it?

DANI
Nah.

A beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
You think I could've...if things
were different...you think I
could've done a good job at that?

Mitch tries to wrap his head around the concept.

MITCH
Sure. Sure, definitely.

Dani appreciates his weak enthusiasm.

DANI
If wishes were fishes, right?

Mitch blinks.

MITCH
Huh?

Dani shakes her head.

DANI
Forget it.

Another beat.

MITCH

We should go.

Dani nods. Opens the passenger door, slides in.

Mitch spits, then walks around to the front seat of the car.

FROM ABOVE, we watch the car rumble off and slowly pull away -
- it gets tinier and tinier as we...

LONG FADE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY

A lovely brownstone apartment, somewhere in Manhattan, likely Gramercy. We WATCH, as if standing on the opposite side of the street. A few PEDESTRIANS pass by.

Eventually one man catches our attention -- Charlie. He's got a grocery bag slung in his arm, and looks a bit weary. He stops in front of the apartment.

As he fumbles for his keys, his gaze drifts across the street, and he notices something. He blinks, then turns back toward the door, raising his key to the lock.

He pauses, seeming to have second thoughts. He takes a deep breath. Then pockets his keys and turns to cross the street.

Waiting for him, on the other side -- Dani. She looks infinitely better than last we saw her. Her hair has been died, darker, and her clothes look new, fashionable. Her skin is unblemished. Healthy.

The two of them stand looking at each other a moment.

CHARLIE

Did you follow me here?

Dani twists her feet, thinking of a response.

DANI

No.

(a beat)

I mean...I looked you up.

CHARLIE

I should call the cops.

Dani shrugs, truly ambivalent. Charlie is immediately remorseful.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I guess that's the wrong thing to say.

DANI

No, it's fair...

CHARLIE

It's just...you stole my car.

DANI

It was a rental.

CHARLIE

Dani...

DANI

You're right.

CHARLIE

And then the car turns up, empty, at some *shoot out* at a...an *ice-skating rink*? I mean, it was all over the news.

DANI

Well, I'm sorry about that...

CHARLIE

Don't say it like...it's not an *inconvenience*. I was fucking worried. About you. And the...your baby.

Dani tenses at the mention.

DANI

Charlie...

Charlie reads her face.

CHARLIE

Something happened?

She nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I guess I could have done the math. Was it...planned?

(shakes his head)

That's a stupid question, I'm sorry either way...

DANI
It's ok. Like I told you, my
responsibility.

A beat.

CHARLIE
You should know, I never told the
police about anything you said. I
mean, I told them how we met, the
hospital, how that all happened,
but I never told them...about the
other stuff. Or the phone call.

DANI
Thanks.
(a beat)
Have they...said anything...?

Charlie shakes his head.

CHARLIE
No, they stopped calling a couple
months ago. I don't know what that
means...

DANI
Don't worry about it. Look, I just
came here to apologize. And to
tell you...I'm doing better now.

Charlie blinks, a bit surprised.

CHARLIE
Sure. Of course.
(meaning it)
I mean, you look better. A lot
better.

DANI
Thank you. I wanted you to know.

A beat.

DANI (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'm just in town to meet up
with a friend...

CHARLIE
Right...

Another beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Hey look, I feel like I should...do
you want to get a drink tonight?

Dani raises her eyebrows, surprised.

DANI
You can't be serious.

CHARLIE
Well...I was just thinking, I still
don't know that much about you. Or
anything about you, really.

A hint of a smile from Dani.

DANI
Do you really want to?

Charlie grins, shrugs.

CHARLIE
Yeah. Sure I do.

DANI
Well...I don't know if I can, I've
got this...

CHARLIE
Just the one drink. I swear.

Dani cocks her head. A moment of possibility.

DANI
What time?

CHARLIE
Ten? There's a bar called Molly's,
right on the corner here.

Dani looks down the street, thinking.

DANI
I'll try.

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE
Ok. I'll be there waiting.

Dani smiles back, cryptic.

DANI
Alright.

She ducks in to plant a peck on his cheek, then turns and walks off.

Charlie watches her go.

PRE-LAP: We HEAR the tinkling of jazz piano, which leads us to...

INT. CLASSY BAR - NIGHT

Dani sits alone, looking elegant in a cocktail dress, stirring her drink.

Her gaze is fixed on a CELL PHONE, sitting on the counter.

A moment of decision, and she picks it up, presses a number, puts the phone to her ear.

CROSS-CUT WITH:

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason is sitting in his small, cluttered bedroom, littered with moving boxes. A GRADUATION GOWN is laid out on his bed.

He's surprised to hear his phone ring. Answers it tentatively.

JASON

Hello?

BACK AT THE BAR, Dani stares into her drink, unsure where to begin. So she doesn't.

Jason waits.

JASON (CONT'D)

Dani?

DANI

...Hey.

A beat.

JASON

You finally got a cell phone?

She smiles, thinly.

DANI

I did. We'll see how long it lasts...

JASON
I'm supposed to tell the police if
you call, you know.

DANI
...Yeah, I figured that.

A beat. But he doesn't hang up.

DANI (CONT'D)
I just wanted to say, I'm proud of
you Jason. And I'm sorry. That
I'm not there.

Jason lets this sit.

JASON
'S alright.
(a beat)
You doing ok?

DANI
Yeah. I am.

JASON
I do worry sometimes, you know?

Dani's heart drops in her chest.

DANI
Thank you. I'm fine. You know me,
I always am.

JASON
Yeah, I know you.

An uncomfortable beat.

DANI
How about you? Anything...?

JASON
I should really go, Dani.

Dani nods, unable to argue.

DANI
Yeah. Sure thing. Love you bud.

JASON
Bye.

He hangs up.

BACK IN THE BAR, Dani places the phone down. She stares at it, her expression opaque.

Eventually, her gaze drifts to the end of the bar. She smiles, dry.

A GOOD-LOOKING MAN (late 30s) -- well-dressed, touch of grey to the temple -- is sitting in the corner, looking her way, interested.

She lifts her drink. Toasts to him, deadpan. Tosses her head back, downing the rest of her cocktail.

The man laughs. His eyes linger on her.

Dani sets her empty glass back down. Then places her hand on the cell phone. She opens her purse in her lap, slides the cell phone in.

And we SEE inside the purse, just barely -- and catch a glimpse of a PHOTOGRAPH -- a fuzzy, black-and-white picture.

Of the Good-Looking Man.

And nestled next to the photo -- the butt of a snubnose pistol.

Dani SNAPS the purse shut. She looks back up across the bar.

Lets slip a genuine smile...

CUT TO BLACK

END FILM