

"BORN ON MONDAY"

written by

Adam J. Nadworniak

Final draft
10/26/25

Address
Phone
E-mail

FADE IN:

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM — PRE-DAWN

Dark. City glow leaking through heavy curtains.

ELEANOR (late 40s), alert even in sleep, stirs at a small, wet SOUND.

She reaches across the bed — finds only sheets, cold.

Another WET SOUND. A newborn's breath.

Her hand follows the sound to the foot of the bed.

There, on the comforter: a NEWBORN BOY. Skin flushed. Umbilical stump clamped with a polished money clip engraved with a Samaritan logo.

Eleanor freezes. A long beat.

She lifts the child. He looks at her with shocking presence.

A quiet, almost deliberate INTAKE OF AIR.

ELEANOR
(whisper)
Gregory?

The baby blinks once. Then again, in a steady tick... tick cadence.

Eleanor swallows.

She reaches for her phone.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN — MINUTES LATER

MARSELLA (20s), sleepless, in sweats and an old band T-shirt, bursts in. Eleanor cradles the newborn, white-knuckled.

MARCELLA
Where is he?

ELEANOR sets the baby down on a folded towel on the counter.

ELEANOR
This was the bed.

Marcella goes still as she sees the money clip on the stump. She looks back to Eleanor — both women understand and don't.

The baby sneezes. A thin line of milk dribbles from the corner of his mouth. He turns his head toward the sink. Hungry. Human.

Marcella opens a cabinet with careful hands.

MARCELLA

Bottles are in the back.

Eleanor moves like muscle memory is a path through shock. She heats water. Tests the temperature on her wrist.

The baby's eyes never leave the money clip set beside him.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE BATHROOM — DAWN

Steam rises off a shallow bath in the sink. Eleanor supports the baby's head. He stares at himself in the chrome faucet — an unsteady reflection.

A tiny MILK TOOTH edges through his gum. It hurts. He winces, silent.

ELEANOR

Okay. Okay.

Marcella hovers with a soft cloth.

MARCELLA

He's not crying.

ELEANOR

He doesn't need to.

The baby's gaze flicks to the money clip sitting on a folded towel. He blinks — tick... tick — perfectly in time with the bathroom's slow drip.

Marcella clocks the rhythm, unsettled.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY BEDROOM — MORNING LIGHT

The bed is made now. Too neat. Eleanor sets a small whiteboard and marker on the dresser.

Marcella lays out items on the nightstand like evidence:

- The money clip
- A cracked company ID for GREGORY HALE (48)
- An unopened letter stamped NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY

The newborn's eyes fix on the red stamp.

MARCELLA

Don't.

She flips the letter face-down.

The baby's breath shortens. He head-butts Eleanor's phone on the duvet. Siri wakes.

PHONE (SIRI)

(muted, tinny)

How can I—

He butts it again. Voice Memo opens.

A garbled, wet sound. Then:

BABY (V.O.)

Do... not... hos— (sucks air) —spi...
tal.

Eleanor and Marcella stare, rooted.

MARCELLA

You can't even—

ELEANOR

He can.

Silence. Eleanor presses STOP. Saves the memo.

The three look at each other — two women, one newborn, a room full of history.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATE MORNING

The view is thirty floors of city. Eleanor settles the baby against her shoulder. Marcella tapes seven columns on the wall: MON / TUE / WED / THU / FRI / SAT / SUN.

She writes beneath each:

Mon: Child

Tue: Teen

Wed: Adult

Thu: ???

Fri: Ill

Sat: Old

Sun: Death

She steps back. The board looks like a sentence.

Eleanor doesn't turn.

ELEANOR
He'll see it.

MARCELLA
He should.

They lock eyes — a quiet disagreement that will not be solved today.

The baby blinks. Tick. Tick.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATER

The baby lies on a soft mat. A SKETCHBOOK is opened beside him. A pencil in Marcella's hand. She draws boxes. Bars. A small door with four stick figures inside.

The baby's hands find the page. His fingers smear graphite over the bars. He presses the tip of one finger until it squeaks. A hard, flat sound.

Marcella watches the little smudged fingerprint.

She writes in the corner: YOU ARE HERE.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR — AFTERNOON

Eleanor and Marcella, baby bundled to Eleanor's chest. The elevator hums. A digital floor indicator ticks down slowly.

Marcella watches the red numbers. The baby watches Marcella. The indicator ticks again.

They do not go all the way down. Eleanor hits LOBBY, then hits DOOR OPEN.

She makes her choice: the elevator rises back up.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS

They step out. The hallway is quiet, carpeted, the kind of quiet that hides money.

At the far end, through a square of fire-door glass, the hint of an external stairwell. And beyond that, another building's roofline.

A MAN stands on that rooftop, blurred by distance.

Marcella notices. The man does not move. A long, calm watchfulness.

The elevator doors close behind them. Eleanor turns, baby tight against her.

ELEANOR

Inside.

They go.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN — LATE AFTERNOON

The baby is older. Not by days — by inches. Tuesday bleeds early. A knee pops under the blanket when he kicks.

Marcella searches the pantry. Finds nothing satisfying about any of it.

The letter sits, face-down. She flips it again. The red stamp stares up.

MARCELLA

(low)

He wrote these.

ELEANOR

He signed them.

Marcella looks to Eleanor, measuring how much blame the room can hold without breaking.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY — SUNSET

Wind pushes at glass. The city goes amber.

Marcella steps out alone, arms folded tight against the chill. She looks across at the far roof. The MAN is closer now — or maybe the light just found him.

NIKO MANGIONE (30s). Not angry. Not smiling. Holding the railing as if it's a grave marker.

He doesn't wave. Doesn't nod. Just watches.

Marcella steps back inside.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Eleanor burps the baby. He is quiet, intent. The whiteboard with the week columns glows softly in lamplight.

Marcella tacks a blank envelope on the board beneath WEDNESDAY. She writes in block letters:

FOR TOMORROW ME

She places a pen on the console beneath it. Leaves it there like a dare.

The baby's eyes track the pen. Then the envelope. Then Eleanor's face.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY BEDROOM — LATE NIGHT

Eleanor lays the baby down in a bassinet beside the bed. She stares at the empty side of the mattress.

She turns the money clip over in her hand. It reflects nothing useful.

She sets it on the nightstand, facedown.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — PRE-DAWN (TUESDAY)

A TEEN BOY (15) lies where the baby was, long limbs folded awkwardly on the mat. Hair uncombed. Eyes open, staring at the ceiling.

Marcella sits cross-legged nearby, asleep sitting up, pencil still between her fingers.

The teen breathes once, twice, testing the ribs. He sits up slowly. Looks at his hands, turning them like they might confess.

He sees the whiteboard. The seven columns.

He stands. Walks to it, careful not to wake Marcella.

Close on the WEDNESDAY envelope: FOR TOMORROW ME.

He looks at WEDNESDAY like a promise he doesn't trust.

He pulls the cap off the marker. Writes one word under TUESDAY:

LISTEN.

Marcella wakes to the squeak of marker.

MARCELLA

Hey.

The teen nods. He cannot find "Mom." He chooses:

TEEN

Marcella.

A beat. Marcella absorbs it. She nods back.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN — MORNING (TUESDAY)

Pancakes. The teen stares at the fork like he's forgotten the steps. Then he eats like he's always known.

Eleanor watches him. He doesn't look at her. Not yet.

On the counter: the NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY letter, face-up.

The teen reaches for it. Eleanor slides it away without looking like she did.

ELEANOR

Eat.

He eats. He watches her hands. Learns their weather.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — AFTERNOON (TUESDAY)

Marcella has set up a phone on a cheap tripod. Voice Memo RECORDING. The teen sits on the couch, eyes on the lens.

Silence. He lets it sit.

TEEN

Say back to me.

MARCELLA

Okay.

TEEN

No hospital.

MARCELLA

No hospital.

TEEN

If breath fails—

The words won't come for a second. He touches his throat. Finds breath again.

TEEN (CONT'D)

Call Keller. No ambulance.

MARCELLA

Keller. No ambulance.

He nods. That was the price he could pay today.

TEEN

When I forget — read the paper.

He nods toward the WEDNESDAY envelope. Marcella nods back.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENTHOUSE HALL — DUSK (TUESDAY)

Marcella opens the door for air. The hallway is empty.

Far down the corridor, on a narrow table, sits a small silver coin, etched with a faint knot pattern.

She looks left, right. No one.

She picks it up. Cold. Heavier than it should be.

She pockets it. Closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY BEDROOM — NIGHT (TUESDAY)

Eleanor tucks a blanket around the teen, who is already longer than the bed wants.

He looks at her now. Really looks.

TEEN

You didn't sleep, did you.

ELEANOR

I did. A little.

He nods. He almost says "Mom." Doesn't.

TEEN

Thank you.

She brushes his hair back once.

ELEANOR

Wednesday first thing. We walk.

He nods. Scared. Ready anyway.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — PRE-DAWN (WEDNESDAY)

An ADULT MAN (early 30s) sits on the edge of the couch. Gregory, but not as the world knew him. No grey at the temples. Clear eyes that have already seen too much.

He reads the WEDNESDAY letter. Marcella and Eleanor watch from the kitchen arch.

INSERT — THE LETTER (handwritten, cramped):

- Find Keller.
- Don't go to Samaritan for help.
- Find Lucia Mangione's file. Read it out loud.

- If you can do one good thing, start there.
- Remember us when it hurts.

Gregory folds the page. He breathes in. Out. Checks his watch. It isn't there. He sets his palm on the table where a watch would have been.

He stands.

GREGORY

Let's go.

Eleanor grabs a light jacket. Marcella takes the letter and the coin she found, tucks them both into her pocket.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET — MORNING (WEDNESDAY)

The day is clean, procedural. People hurry. A Samaritan billboard brags:

TOMORROW, GUARANTEED.

Gregory stops beneath it. Looks up. Doesn't move. His jaw tightens once and releases.

Marcella watches him watch it. Then she moves. He follows.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — LATE MORNING

A small, private practice that smells like iodine and sanity.

DR. KELLER (50s) is exacting, not unkind. She glances between Eleanor, Marcella, and this man who is and isn't.

KELLER

You understand there's no chart for this.

GREGORY

There's a week.

KELLER

A week isn't a plan.

ELEANOR

It's what we have.

Keller nods. She checks Gregory's pulse. Counts under her breath. Writes numbers that don't fit any textbook.

KELLER

When breath shortens, you call me.
I won't send an ambulance unless
you ask.

Gregory nods. The concession means something to him.

MARCELLA

We need a name. For the file.

Keller considers. Writes HALE (WEEKLY REVERSION) on a blank folder. It looks absurd and official and new.

She slides a small portable pulse oximeter across the desk.

KELLER

When you get scared, use this. Or
don't. Sometimes numbers are a
worse feeling.

Gregory picks it up. Turns it once. Slides it into his pocket.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMARITAN TOWER — MIDDAY (WEDNESDAY)

Glass. Height. Security. Gregory hesitates at the turnstiles.

SECURITY GUARD

Badge?

Gregory offers his face, then realizes the stupidity of the gesture. He pats his pockets. Comes up empty.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Sir?

GREGORY

I was—
(beat)
I used to be—

SECURITY GUARD

Step aside, please.

He does. He watches men and women in lanyards pass through. They don't look at him.

Marcella touches his arm. He doesn't flinch. That is growth.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — AFTERNOON

Niko stands with a small paper bag. He watches Gregory and Marcella re-enter the building across. He takes out a thermos. Sips once. Stares like someone taking witness statements from the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — AFTERNOON (WEDNESDAY)

The table is cleared. The WEDNESDAY letter sits centered, now flanked by a legal pad and a laptop.

Gregory types. Slow at first. Then faster.

On screen, searches populate:
"Lucia Mangione appeal number"
"expedited trial denial language"
"Samaritan internal review dashboard"

He finds something. His face stills.

Marcella enters behind him, a glass of water she forgets to set down.

The NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY letter sits by his elbow, daring him.

Gregory opens a PDF. The header bears his old digital signature.

He doesn't breathe.

Marcella says nothing.

He scrolls.

Stops.

A line item: UPHOLD DENIAL.

He puts a hand to his mouth. Not dramatic. As if to hold something in that will otherwise get out and ruin the room.

Eleanor stands in the doorway, unseen. She doesn't enter.

Gregory clicks PRINT.

The PRINTER starts. Each page lands like a small, low thud.

He stacks the pages. Aligns the corners three times.
Precision as penance.

GREGORY
(quiet)
I did it.

Marcella nods once. She doesn't move to comfort him.

He turns the printed denial. Reads it aloud. Every word. He stumbles once. Not on a legal term — on the patient's first name.

When he finishes, he lays the denial beside the WEDNESDAY letter. Two pieces of scripture, one for harm, one for repair.

He takes the coin from Marcella's pocket without asking. She lets him. He places it on top of the denial. A small, private ritual.

Marcella watches his hands. The way they shake only after he's finished.

CUT TO BLACK.

A long, honest beat of black. We sit in it with him.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON (WEDNESDAY)

The printed denial and the coin sit side by side. Gregory breathes through his nose. He doesn't touch either.

ELEANOR
We should eat.

No one moves.

MARCELLA
We'll eat.

Gregory nods. He doesn't look up.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN — EVENING

Simple food. Soup. Bread. Steam fogs a corner of the window, then fades.

Gregory tries the spoon. Sets it down.

GREGORY
I'm going to do one thing right.

Eleanor waits.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
Find him. Say it. Make it count.

MARCELLA
Niko.

He nods.

ELEANOR
Do not go alone.

He nods again.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

The WEDNESDAY letter returns to the envelope. Marcella tapes it under THURSDAY now. New ink: READ AGAIN.

She leaves the pulse oximeter on the table. Gregory ignores it, then pockets it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET — NIGHT

Sparse pedestrians. Sodium lamps. A bus exhales and pulls away.

Gregory walks with purpose, hands empty, shoulders squared in a practiced way that has to be unlearned.

Across the street, a figure keeps pace on the far sidewalk. Niko. Not hiding. Not closing distance.

Gregory stops at a crosswalk. The signal blinks WAIT. He waits.

Niko stops too. They study the same red hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP STAIRWELL — LATER

Door kicks back against wind. The city is a low ocean.

Gregory steps out. Niko already there, hands on the rail. A paper bag at his feet.

Silence, long.

GREGORY

I read it.

Niko doesn't turn.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Lucia. Trial denied.

(a beat)

That was me.

Niko breathes once, deep. He turns slightly, enough to see Gregory but not offer anything.

NIKO

She lived one more month. Not good.
Not bad. Just a month.

Gregory takes that in.

GREGORY

I'm sorry.

Niko looks at him fully now. No victory. No permission.

NIKO

Say it to her.

He taps the rail once. The sound is dull in the wind.

NIKO (CONT'D)

You want to make it matter, give
time to someone you'll never meet.

GREGORY

How.

Niko nods at the paper bag. Gregory doesn't move.

NIKO

You'll figure it out. You were good
at finding other ways.

He lifts the bag, hands it over. Inside, a small brown vial with a handwritten label: Relief — not cure. And a simple nebulizer mouthpiece.

NIKO (CONT'D)
For later. When you need to finish
a sentence.

GREGORY
Why.

NIKO
Because I want you awake.

He starts for the door.

GREGORY
Niko—

Niko stops. Turns just enough.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
What ends it.

Niko considers. Answers like a fact.

NIKO
When you make someone's breath more
important than yours.

He goes. The door closes with a soft thud.

Gregory is left with the wind and the bag.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT (LATE)

Eleanor sits at the table. Marcella dozes on the couch,
sketchbook face-down on her chest.

Gregory sets the bag down. He takes out the vial. Eleanor
clocks it. He leaves it on the table in plain view.

ELEANOR
What is it.

GREGORY
A little air.

He sits. He looks smaller for a moment. Then steadies.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
I won't hide it.

Eleanor nods. That means something.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY — DAWN (THURSDAY)

Morning traffic has an edge. A garbage truck compresses a day into a sound.

INT. PENTHOUSE — CONTINUOUS

Gregory wakes in the grey. Older around the eyes. Not ill. Not yet.

He reads the THURSDAY note: READ AGAIN. He does. Every word lands heavier.

He reaches for the laptop.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATER (THURSDAY)

The table is a small battlefield of documents. Gregory drafts a clean, brutal letter:

ON SCREEN — To: Board of Directors, Samaritan
Subject: Restitution Fund — Trial-Eligible Patients
"I authorized denials that shortened lives. Establish a trust in my name. Use it to purchase time."

He deletes my name. Replaces with anonymous.

He prints. Signs. Folds.

He writes a second letter. Handwritten, slow. To: Dr. Keller
"If a courier brings an envelope, it's for expedited appeals. No names. No thanks."

He seals both. Addresses with block letters.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALL — DAY

Gregory hands the board letter to a COURIER. No small talk.

COURIER

ID?

GREGORY

No.

The courier shrugs, tucks it in his bag, leaves.

Gregory closes the door. He leans his forehead to the jamb for one second. Then moves.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — MIDDAY

The waiting room is empty. Fan turning. Keller opens the inner door herself.

Gregory holds out the second envelope.

GREGORY

For when the clock is the problem.

She takes it. Doesn't open it.

KELLER

I can't promise anything.

GREGORY

I can't either.

They hold each other's gaze a moment. The right kind of alliance.

KELLER

How's your breath.

He takes out the oximeter. Clips it to his finger. Waits. 98. He pockets it.

GREGORY

Borrowed.

Keller watches the choice in that word.

KELLER

Call when it changes.

He nods. Turns to go. She stops him with one hand on his sleeve. A boundary, then a human thing.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Eat salt. It helps when it starts.

He nods again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK — AFTERNOON (THURSDAY)

Gregory and Marcella walk, small bag from a corner grocery in hand. Salted crackers. Water.

A passerby does a small double take — recognizes something. Keeps walking.

A young man in a Samaritan hoodie films them for three seconds. Puts his phone away like a secret he'll sell later.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON

Marcella opens the door to let in air. She stares at the small hall table where a coin appeared before. It's empty now.

She leaves the door open two inches. The building breathes.

Gregory sits with the WEDNESDAY denial and the coin. He traces the knot etching with his thumb.

MARCELLA

You don't have to hold it.

GREGORY

I do.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMARITAN TOWER — DUSK

Glass turns the sky into a wall. A PRESS RELEASE scrolls on an exterior display:

"STABILITY THROUGH TRANSITION — Samaritan announces interim leadership continuity."

A small headshot of the old Gregory appears. Then fades. Then the words WE KEEP OUR PROMISES.

Niko watches from across the street. He doesn't film. He doesn't move.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT (THURSDAY)

Dinner again. Better. Eleanor eats, quiet. Marcella nudges the salt to Gregory without comment. He takes a pinch, lets it dissolve on his tongue like communion.

Phone buzzes once. Unknown number. He lets it ring out.

Second buzz. BLOCKED. He silences it.

ELEANOR
You can turn it off.

He sets the phone face-down and pushes it away.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE NIGHT

Marcella asleep on the couch under a blanket. A pencil line marks her wrist.

Eleanor reads under a lamp. Closes the book. Watches Gregory at the window.

He stands, looking at his faint reflection. His mouth shapes words he doesn't say.

ELEANOR
You can sit.

He does. They share the quiet like bread.

GREGORY
If I don't get better—

ELEANOR
You won't.

He nods. That was the right answer.

GREGORY
I want you to have everything
that's mine.

ELEANOR
We already have it. The bills.

He almost smiles. It almost stays.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (FRIDAY)

Gregory wakes with a start. Air catches. He sits up, hand to chest.

He tries a breath. It's thinner. He tries another. The same.

He reaches for the nebulizer. Stops. Leaves it. Not yet.

He checks the pulse oximeter. 93. He keeps his face smooth.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN — MORNING (FRIDAY)

Kettle screams. Eleanor turns off the flame.

Gregory stands, hand on counter. He is a half-shade paler.

MARCELLA

Say if you need it.

He nods. Doesn't.

He breaks a saltine. Lets it melt on his tongue. Counts to ten.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — MID-MORNING

They try leaving. Gregory in a jacket, breathing careful. Marcella at his side.

A SECURITY GUARD from the desk watches their path. Neutral. Curious.

As the doors open, a man in a Samaritan polo (30s) lingers outside, pretending to text. He looks up, eyes flash recognition and simple, unexamined hate.

POLO MAN

(low, to himself)

That him.

Marcella clocks him. Puts herself half-step between them by instinct. Gregory notices the placement. Accepts it without shame.

They step outside. Cold meets lungs. Gregory pauses. He doesn't turn back.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET — CONTINUOUS

The world is too bright. Sound over-describes itself. A bus brakes, a cyclist curses a taxi, a kid drops a soda.

Gregory's breath stutters. The oximeter reads 90, then 88, then climbs to 91 as he stills.

He focuses on a fixed spot: a hairline crack in the sidewalk. The handrail texture. Concrete realities to narrow the room.

Niko across the street. Present. Not intervening.

MARCELLA

We can go back.

GREGORY

No.

They take five more slow steps. He stops at a shop window. Inside, a TV loops a talk show. Closed caption: "not medically necessary" as part of a different conversation entirely. He looks away first.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — LATE MORNING (FRIDAY)

Keller listens. Stethoscope. She watches his chest more than she listens to his words.

KELLER

You're fine until you're not.
That's today's truth.

GREGORY

What do I do.

KELLER

Sit when you can. Stand when you
can't. Salt, sips. The rest is how
you carry it.

She taps the vial in his pocket without taking it out.

KELLER (CONT'D)
When the sentence needs finishing,
use it.

He nods. He doesn't ask for measures she cannot give.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE STREET — AFTERNOON (FRIDAY)

They exit Keller's. Wind finds them around the corner.
Gregory grips a parking sign once to steady.

The Samaritan polo man appears at the end of the block, just
watching now. Not brave enough to act. Brave enough to hate.

Niko leans against a delivery truck, arms folded. He meets
Gregory's eyes briefly, then looks away. A warning: the world
is in the room now.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON

Gregory lowers himself onto the couch. Air is a narrow
hallway. He takes a careful pull from the nebulizer. A
merciful gap in the squeeze.

He sets it down. Doesn't hide it.

He picks up the WEDNESDAY denial again. Reads one line. Puts
it down. Reaches for Marcella's sketchbook.

He flips to her drawing of the barred rectangle and the four
stick figures. He adds an open circle in one corner. A
window.

Marcella watches from the kitchen. She doesn't speak. She
writes FRIDAY under the circle on the whiteboard.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY — SUNSET (FRIDAY)

Eleanor stands with a mug. Gregory steps out, blanket over
his shoulders.

They look at the city. A helicopter stutters far away. Wind
moves his hair like a hand.

ELEANOR
I stayed because I loved the
possible you.

He nods. Accepts it.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I'm here because I love her.

He nods again. That is the right order.

GREGORY
Thank you.

They stay long enough to make the moment real, not
performative.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT (FRIDAY)

Lights dim. Oxygen hiss from the nebulizer (not in use)
becomes the room's metronome.

Marcella curls in a chair, blanket high, eyes open. Gregory
sits upright, half-asleep, breaths measured.

The coin on the denial letter catches a line of streetlight
and throws a small oval onto the ceiling. It trembles. Holds.

FADE OUT TO BLACK.

A beat of pure sound — wind against glass. Nothing else.

FADE IN:

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (SATURDAY)

Grey light. Gregory wakes with a thin, searching inhale. His
hands look older. His voice is a dry leaf.

GREGORY
Marcella.

She is already up.

MARCELLA
I'm here.

He nods. He tries to smile. The skin doesn't remember.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY — MORNING (SATURDAY)

Marcella opens the door. On the small table: another coin, identical etching.

She picks it up. Warmer this time.

She looks down the hall. Empty. She closes the door softly with her shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE MORNING

Gregory stands in the hallway, confused by the framed photos. They don't match the people in the other room. He straightens one that isn't crooked.

Eleanor watches from the bedroom doorway. She doesn't correct him.

He pauses at the window. The city is a soft smear. He presses his palm to the glass, then pulls away and studies the print like a map.

MARCELLA (O.S.)
Sit with me.

He does.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Marcella opens the WEDNESDAY letter and reads. Slow. Clear. He follows for a few sentences, then loses the thread. She doesn't stop.

He breathes. He closes his eyes. He opens them. He is still here.

A quiet knock. Not the door — the wall. A neighbor? No. Another sound — a phone vibrating across a tabletop in the other room.

They ignore it. They let the letter do its work.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE MORNING (SATURDAY)

Grey light. The room looks subtly rearranged. A chair we've seen by the window is now against the wall. Or always was.

Gregory (older now; skin papery, hands shaking) stands in the hallway, studying framed family photos that don't match the faces in the other room.

He straightens a frame that isn't crooked. Steps back. It tilts anyway.

MARCELLA (O.S.)
Sit with me.

INT. LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

He sits. Marcella opens the WEDNESDAY letter and reads. Slow, even.

GREGORY follows for two lines, then loses the thread. He nods anyway.

A PHONE vibrates in another room. They ignore it.

GREGORY
How long have you been—
Word vanishes. He lets it go.

MARCELLA
I'm here.

He looks relieved, then uncertain why.

INT. KITCHEN — LATER (SATURDAY)

Kettle hum low. Eleanor slices an orange into exact eighths.

Gregory enters, stops in the doorway like he's walked into the wrong house.

ELEANOR
You want tea.

He doesn't answer. He's looking at the money clip on the windowsill like it moved there by itself.

He reaches for the cupboard where mugs were yesterday. It's empty. He opens the next one. Mugs. He nods like that makes sense.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Sit.

He sits. Eleanor sets tea down, places an orange wedge by his hand.

Silence. The room breathes.

GREGORY

When did you know.

ELEANOR

That you'd done it? Or that I'd stay?

He waits.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You told a man once: "There's always another way."

(beat)

He believed you. Then he died. I knew then.

Gregory takes that in without flinching. He lifts the orange wedge. Doesn't eat it.

GREGORY

Why did you—

ELEANOR

Because I loved the person I thought time would make you.

(beat)

And then I loved Marcella more.

He nods. He swallows air like a pill.

GREGORY

Thank you.

She doesn't move to touch him. She lets the thanks stand.

INT. HALLWAY — MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor opens the apartment door for air.

On the small hall table: another coin (knot-etched). Warmer than the last.

NIKO stands twenty feet down the corridor, hands at his sides. Not hiding. Not advancing.

ELEANOR
You can't be here.

NIKO
I'm not.

He means: he's not inside.

ELEANOR
What do you want.

NIKO
Witness.

Eleanor holds his gaze. No fear. Just tired.

ELEANOR
This isn't revenge?

NIKO
No.
(then)
Revenge is loud. Grief is patient.

He looks past her. Not into the home—at the air moving through it.

NIKO (CONT'D)
He should feel time like a weight.
Then choose.

Eleanor studies him one more second. She takes the coin.
Closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Eleanor sets the coin on the sill beside the money clip. The two metals don't match.

Gregory stares at both. He doesn't ask.

MARCELLA
Lie down.

He does. On his side. Breathing careful, counting a private count.

MONTAGE — SATURDAY SLIPPAGE (MINIMAL CUTS)

— BATHROOM: Gregory washes his hands, shuts the tap, looks up. For a blink, the faucet is on again. He turns it off a second time.

— HALL: The whiteboard columns look out of order. He blinks. They resolve correctly. He writes SAT under Saturday anyway.
 — BEDROOM: He opens a drawer for a watch that isn't there. He sets his palm flat on the wood where it would be. Leaves it.
 — WINDOW: Steam from a mug fogs a word on the glass: NOT. He wipes it with his wrist. The word goes, the gesture stays.

END MONTAGE.

INT. LIVING ROOM — AFTERNOON (SATURDAY)

Marcella sketches Gregory lying on the couch. Fast lines, then slower ones. The drawing is of a person, not a condition.

GREGORY
 What are you drawing.

MARCELLA
 You, when you're not fighting.

He nods. He tries to hold still for the version of himself she sees.

A THIN RATTLE in his chest. He holds a breath until it smooths out. He lets it go in two pieces.

INT. KITCHEN — LATER

Eleanor stands by the sink, rinsing a cup that was already clean. Habit has nowhere else to go.

Niko knocks once. Eleanor doesn't move. He calls through the door, low.

NIKO (O.S.)
 I left something yesterday. Did you find it.

ELEANOR
 We did.

NIKO (O.S.)
 Good.

Beat.

NIKO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 He'll forget the order of rooms.
 Read to him from the hallway if he looks lost. The sound helps.

Eleanor dries her hands and leaves the towel folded exactly so.

INT. HALLWAY — MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor and Niko stand on opposite sides of the threshold, door open between them like a line drawn.

ELEANOR
How did you—
(stops)
It doesn't matter.

NIKO
It does. But not now.

They stand in a soft wind from the building's lungs.

ELEANOR
I don't forgive you for being here.

NIKO
I don't forgive him for not being
there.

Nothing else to say. She closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM — EVENING (SATURDAY)

Light goes the color of old paper.

Marcella reads the WEDNESDAY letter again. Gregory's eyelids flutter. He tracks her voice like a rope.

GREGORY
Say the part about—

He loses it. She keeps going.

He nods, grateful for something he can't name.

INT. PRIMARY BEDROOM — DUSK

Eleanor opens the closet, reaches for a shoebox. Inside: a folded white shroud cloth with five faint knot impressions and one still unmarked corner.

She runs a thumb over the empty space where the last knot will go. She closes the box.

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT (SATURDAY)

The apartment holds a vigil without deciding to.

Eleanor sits with a book open face-down on her lap. Not reading.

Marcella in the chair, blanket around her shoulders, pencil still.

Gregory upright on the couch, breathing shallower, counting it without looking at the oximeter.

The nebulizer sits on the table. He doesn't reach for it yet.

Wind bumps the balcony door. The curtain lifts and settles.

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATER NIGHT

Gregory wakes from a micro-sleep. He looks toward the kitchen.

From here, in shadow, the doorway looks like a boardroom entrance. He blinks hard. It's a kitchen again.

He rubs his chest. The skin makes a faint crackle sound.

MARCELLA

You're okay.

He nods. He isn't.

GREGORY

The window.

She stands, opens the balcony door a hand's width. Cold slides in. He breathes it like a memory.

She sets the coin on the sill. It reflects nothing useful.

INT. KITCHEN — NEAR MIDNIGHT

Eleanor pours water over a tea bag. The tag reads CALM. She almost smiles at the lie.

Niko's voice, faint through the door again — not intruding, offering a manual.

NIKO (O.S.)

If he asks what day it is, tell him
"the day you're in." Not the name.

Eleanor doesn't answer. She listens. She stirs the tea until it is darker than it should be.

INT. LIVING ROOM — MIDNIGHT (SATURDAY → SUNDAY)

The clock flips. 11:59 to 12:00. Sunday.

Gregory's breath stumbles. He presses the nebulizer to his mouth, takes one careful pull.

It buys him a minute. He uses it to look at Marcella. Really look.

GREGORY

You were...
(beat)
good to me.

MARCELLA

Sometimes.

He nods. That's the right answer. He takes another small pull. Sets the mouthpiece down.

The pulse oximeter reads 82, then 80, then back to 83. He ignores it.

INT. PRIMARY BEDROOM — SAME

Eleanor opens the shoebox again. She lays the shroud cloth on the bed, smooths the edges. Not ceremony yet-readiness.

She pauses, palms flat on fabric, breathes once, twice. She leaves it there. Turns off the lamp.

INT. LIVING ROOM — 2:13 A.M. (SUNDAY)

Dark. Streetlight bands. The room is a ship at night.

Gregory's head tips forward. His chest catches. A soft whistle of air that doesn't want to be here.

Marcella kneels in front of him.

MARCELLA

Look at me.

He does. He holds her gaze like it's a dock.

MARCELLA (CONT'D)

Breathe with me.

They count silently together. In. Hold. Out. Shorter. Slower.

He reaches for her wrist. His hand misses. She puts her wrist into his hand.

INT. HALLWAY — SAME

Eleanor opens the door a crack, as if to let something in or out. The corridor's conditioned air moves past her cheek.

On the table: no coin this time.

She closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM — PRE-DAWN (SUNDAY)

The first blue hint of morning.

Gregory's breaths are small, each one a choice. Sweat at the hairline. Fingers picking at the blanket, then still.

He looks past Marcella toward the window. The curtain lifts, falls. He closes his eyes like listening.

GREGORY
(reading something we
don't see)
Window.

MARCELLA
It's open.

He nods, satisfied. He doesn't ask why that matters.

INT. LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Eleanor sits beside him now. She takes his hand in both of hers. Not for him. For her.

ELEANOR
You can stop fighting.

He looks at Marcella for permission. She gives none. She gives presence.

MARCELLA
We're here.

Gregory tries to smile. It doesn't land. He settles for eyes.

The nebulizer sits on the table. He doesn't reach.

The oximeter slips off his finger, thumps once on wood.
Nobody picks it up.

CLOSE — GREGORY'S CHEST
A rise. A hold. A slow fall.
Another rise. Shorter.
Another. Shorter still.

INT. LIVING ROOM — SAME

We do not hear a rattle. We do not dramatize the mechanics.

Gregory's eyes stay on Marcella. The last small exhale slips.
He does not draw the next.

No one speaks. The room notices before they do.

Eleanor's thumb rubs the back of his hand once. Stops.

Marcella lays a palm lightly on his sternum. Waits. The air
beneath is quiet.

She leaves her hand there.

EXT. SMALL CEMETERY — DAWN (SUNDAY)

A low hill. Mangione stones with names we don't read.

An elder ties the fifth knot in the shroud. Eleanor presses
her lips to the cloth. Marcella rests her hand where a
shoulder would be.

Niko stands back under a tree. Not hiding. Not intruding.
Witness.

Earth covers white.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE MORNING (SUNDAY)

The apartment minus a sound. The whiteboard remains. The
letter remains. The coin on the sill remains.

Marcella writes on a fresh page in a new notebook: MONDAY —
WEEK 2.

She caps the pen. Sets it beside the coin. Leaves the window
open an inch.

HOLD on the slow movement of the curtain.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM — MONDAY 12:00 A.M. (WEEK 2 RESET)

The mattress jumps once, like a breath under the sheets.

GREGORY (48) is back. Older face. New eyes. Colder. Calculating.

He sits up instantly, scanning the room like a floor plan. Finds the window gap, the coin on the sill, the notebook labeled MONDAY — WEEK 2.

He opens it. Inside, the WEDNESDAY letter and a list in Marcella's hand:

- "No hospital."
- "Keller on call."
- "Read this first."
- "You promised to try."

He reads it all. Twice. He closes the book like a contract.

INT. LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Marcella, awake in the chair. Eleanor in the hallway light, still dressed. They have not slept.

Gregory steps out, already steady.

MARCELLA

It's Monday.

He nods once.

GREGORY

How bad was it.

MARCELLA

Bad.

He takes that as data, not sympathy.

GREGORY

I need the letters. The courier receipts.

Eleanor watches his face—different version, same bone.

ELEANOR

Desk.

He moves there. Opens drawers like a surgeon. Everything he needs is exactly where it should be. He approves the order without smiling.

INT. LIVING ROOM — MINUTES LATER

Gregory lays out a grid:

- Board letter (sent).
- Keller envelope (sent).
- Denial printout (Lucia).
- Two coins.
- Pulse oximeter.
- Nebulizer (vial a quarter down).

He places the oximeter left of the coins, the nebulizer right. A triangle.

MARCELLA

You don't have to—

GREGORY

I do.

He moves the money clip away from the coins, like magnets that shouldn't touch.

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY — PRE-DAWN

City black-blue. Wind runs along the rail.

Gregory steps out in a hoodie, bare feet. He takes the air's temperature like a reading.

Across the way, Niko stands in his usual place. No greeting. Witness.

Gregory raises two fingers— not a wave. A count.

Niko returns two. Then one. Then none. A private acknowledgment that the numbers are different this week.

Gregory goes back inside.

INT. KITCHEN — DAWN

Kettle. Crackers. Salt.

Eleanor watches him crumble a cracker with method. He times sips with swallow. He checks the clock once. Makes a note in the notebook:

"Breath: baseline. 06:10."

ELEANOR

You're colder today.

GREGORY

I don't have time to be warm.

Marcella hears that. Doesn't flinch.

INT. HALLWAY — MORNING

Door opens for air. On the hall table: no coin. Only a folded printout someone slid there:

A still frame of Gregory and Marcella from a lobby camera, timestamped Friday. Headline scrawled above in marker: "HE'S FAKING IT."

Marcella brings it inside. Sets it on the table. No commentary.

Gregory reads it once. Then writes LOBBY CAM in the notebook, underlines it twice.

EXT. CITY STREET — LATE MORNING (MONDAY)

They move together. Gregory sets pace like a metronome. Marcella half-step behind, Eleanor flanking.

A Samaritan polo man (from before) lingers at a corner. He falls in behind, distance casual.

Gregory sees their reflections in a shop window: three figures, one tail. He changes cadence—slows to let the tail commit. The man does.

Gregory leads them across at an angle that forces a narrow pass between parked cars.

He stops. Turns. Calm.

GREGORY

Do you need something.

POLO MAN

Just watching the show.

ELEANOR

Keep walking.

The man smirks. Lifts his phone, pretends to check time. The camera is on.

Gregory studies the lens—calculating his own image like a liability.

GREGORY
Record the date. You'll need it
later.

The man hesitates at the confidence. Gregory turns and ends the exchange by moving on.

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — MIDDAY

Keller takes in the whole trio at the door. She looks at Gregory's face and knows: new version.

KELLER
Breath.

He clips the oximeter. 97. He notes it.

KELLER (CONT'D)
You look like you slept.

GREGORY
I didn't.

She nods once—accepts the performance.

KELLER
You're going to try to outrun it
today.

He doesn't answer.

KELLER (CONT'D)
You won't. But okay.

He sets a small white envelope on her desk—CASH.

KELLER (CONT'D)
What's that.

GREGORY
For the first person in your
waiting room who can't afford time.

Keller holds his gaze. She slides the envelope into a drawer without looking inside.

KELLER
Don't make a habit of being decent
only when you're dying.

GREGORY
I am making a habit.

He stands. She watches the efficiency in the way he leaves.

EXT. SAMARITAN TOWER — AFTERNOON

Gregory stops across the street. Glass. Guards. WE KEEP OUR PROMISES scrolling.

He studies camera placements. Sightlines. Rotations.

MARCELLA
We're not going in.

GREGORY
No.

He maps entrances anyway. He isn't going in; he's making sure nothing comes out they can't see.

A delivery door opens. A guard steps out for a smoke, scans the sidewalk. His eyes hold on Gregory a beat too long.

Gregory memorizes the guard's face, and the rhythm of the door's hydraulic.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON

The table grid remains. Gregory adds to it:

- List of threats: LOBBY CAM / POLO MAN / GUARD (delivery)
- Allies: KELLER / NIKO (witness)
- Assets: COINS / NEB / LETTERS / CASH

He draws lines between words like wires.

MARCELLA
You can't wall it.

GREGORY
I can reduce the angles.

He draws a square around MARCELLA at the center. Not a cage—a priority.

He closes the notebook with care. Sets it by her elbow.

EXT. PENTHOUSE HALL — EARLY EVENING

Marcella opens the door for air. On the table: a coin. Fresh. Warm.

She doesn't look down the corridor. She lifts it as if lifting a temperature.

Inside, she places it on the sill beside the others. Three now, not touching.

GREGORY
How often.

MARCELLA
When it wants.

GREGORY
When we're paying attention.

She meets his eyes. It lands.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — EVENING

They attempt a measured exit for groceries. The Security Guard from days past watches.

At the doors, the Samaritan polo man is outside, waiting. He lifts his phone. Records openly now.

SECURITY GUARD
You need help with something, sir?

The guard is talking to Polo Man, not Gregory. That's new.

POLO MAN
I'm fine.

Gregory looks to the guard.

GREGORY
If he follows us into the street again, that's on you.

SECURITY GUARD
Not out there.

GREGORY
It will be when he comes back in here bleeding.

The guard blinks at the calm threat, not sure where to file it.

Gregory doesn't push. He turns to Marcella.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
We go upstairs.

They do. The seed is planted.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Calm order. Eleanor counts medication for no one, a habit that does not know where to go. Marcella washes two bowls. Gregory wipes the counter in precise, slow arcs, keeping his breath even.

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — SAME

Niko watches a different corner of the block now—the delivery door's slice of street. He is a second camera in a moral surveillance system.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE NIGHT

Gregory stands at the window, hood up. He times his breath to the curtain. He takes a fractional pull on the nebulizer—less than he wants. He closes his eyes on the inhale; opens them on the exhale.

He writes in the notebook: "Breath: 93 at 23:42." Underlines EARLY.

He looks to Marcella, asleep upright with the pen fallen from her fingers. He picks it up. Places it in her palm, closes her hand around it.

He steps away like he's leaving a room without waking a child.

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (TUESDAY)

A faint CATCH in his chest. Too early. He sits on the edge of the couch and waits for the room to settle. It doesn't.

He writes in the notebook: "Day 2: onset advanced."

He underlines PROTECT MARCELLA.

EXT. PENTHOUSE BALCONY — DAWN

City goes blue. Gregory steps out, looks to Niko. Niko is there. Gregory taps his own chest twice, small signal: earlier.

Niko nods once. He lifts a hand and points—not at Gregory—at the door below (delivery). Then back to Gregory. Then to his own eyes.

Watch that door.

Gregory nods. A plan that is not a plan forms.

INT. PENTHOUSE — MORNING

Eleanor sets toast, tea, the oximeter. Gregory ignores numbers. Eats with mechanical efficiency.

MARCELLA

You're making lists in your head.

GREGORY

Yes.

MARCELLA

Don't forget me in them.

He doesn't answer. He circles her name on the notebook again.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE — LATE MORNING (TUESDAY)

They step out. The polo man is across the street, less coy now.

Gregory angles them away from him. Not avoiding—drawing.

They pass the delivery door. It opens suddenly—two guards and a third man in a Samaritan windbreaker step out, scanning.

The third man clocks Gregory. A tiny smirk.

WINDBREAKER

There he is.

Gregory moves Marcella behind him without touching her.

He smiles—the colder version.

GREGORY

We'll be upstairs.

He leads them back in before any of the three can decide what scene they're in.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

The Security Guard watches them return. He also watches the three outside. He is doing math he doesn't like.

SECURITY GUARD
(to intercom)
Can I get a supervisor to the front.

No alarm. Just pressure.

INT. PENTHOUSE — AFTERNOON

Gregory redraws the grid with thicker lines now. He adds WINDBREAKER under threats.

He moves the coins so that one sits by Marcella's chair, one by the door, one by the window. Markers.

ELEANOR
What are you doing.

GREGORY
Giving the room edges.

He sets the money clip alone on the table, far from everything else.

INT. LIVING ROOM — TWILIGHT

Marcella draws the three coins in their positions, quick sketch. She labels them NORTH / SOUTH / EAST with a small smile.

GREGORY
No west.

MARCELLA
Pick one.

He points at himself, dry.

GREGORY
West.

It almost makes her laugh. Almost.

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — SUNSET

Niko watches the windbreaker man confer with the polo man. They look up at windows. One points, shrugs. They part ways, not done.

Niko finishes a thermos. Puts the cup away. He does not leave.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Quiet domestic. Eleanor folds a towel as if it matters. Marcella lines up pens. Gregory sits with the notebook open to PROTECT MARCELLA and stares at the line until the ink looks like a road.

He closes the book. Sets it under the coin by her chair.

MARCELLA
You're scaring me.

GREGORY
I will keep you safe.

Not a promise. A decision.

He stands. Tests his breath once. Thin. Acceptable.

He turns out the lamp.

FADE OUT.

INT. PENTHOUSE — TUESDAY PRE-DAWN (WEEK 2)

Dark blue. The curtain breathes. Gregory sits upright on the couch, already awake, counting a quiet count.

He tries a deeper breath. It ends shallow. He accepts the truth without a face.

He writes in the notebook: "TUE — onset earlier. 04:12."

He underlines PROTECT MARCELLA once, hard.

INT. KITCHEN — DAWN

Kettle. Crackers. Salt. Routine as armor.

Eleanor watches him break one cracker into four exact pieces.

ELEANOR
You're worse today.

GREGORY
Earlier.

He eats. Swallows on a count of three. Sips water on four.

Marcella enters, hair tied up. She moves like someone who knows what the day will ask.

MARCELLA
Keller?

GREGORY
Not yet.

She accepts that. For now.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE — MORNING

They step out. Air cuts. Gregory's breath skids.

Across the street, Polo Man lingers with an energy drink. A second man in a Samaritan jacket hangs back, pretending to smoke.

Gregory doesn't break stride. He angles them toward the delivery door. He looks casual. He is not.

EXT. DELIVERY DOOR — CONTINUOUS

The door opens. A GUARD pushes a cart through, glances up, locks on Gregory. Recognition. Irritation. No plan.

Gregory clocks the hydraulic's slow close. One-one-thousand.. two-one-thousand.. shut.

He nods to himself. Noted.

They move on.

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — LATE MORNING

Keller checks his chest with cool hands. Listens. Watches more than she listens.

KELLER
You're borrowing against later.

GREGORY

I know.

KELLER

Then spend cleanly.

He nods. She tips a small packet of salt tabs into his palm.

KELLER (CONT'D)

For the edges.

He pockets them. He does not say thank you. It's there.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK — MIDDAY

They walk. A car horn snaps. Gregory flinches—small, private.

A kid drops a soda. It hisses along the curb like a fuse. Gregory watches the line until it dies under the grate.

Marcella notices. Files it as a weather report.

INT. PENTHOUSE — AFTERNOON

Table grid, thicker lines. Gregory draws STAIRWELL in the notebook and boxes it. He adds ROOF. He circles both.

ELEANOR

Not the roof.

GREGORY

It's clean up there.

ELEANOR

It's far down.

He doesn't argue. He writes STAIRWELL = choke point.

Marcella watches him work the apartment like a diagram.

MARCELLA

You're making a map.

GREGORY

I am making time behave.

She looks at the coins in their compass positions. She nods at WEST, his coin under the couch corner.

MARCELLA

West holds.

He almost smiles. Almost.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — LATE AFTERNOON

They try to exit again. Security Guard watches from the desk, uneasy but professional.

Outside, Polo Man springs to his mark, filming already. Windbreaker idles at the corner, eyes on the doors.

SECURITY GUARD
(to Gregory, quiet)
If there's an issue, come back in.
Don't... resolve it out there.

GREGORY
Understood.

They step out.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE — CONTINUOUS

Phone up in Gregory's face now. Too close. The lens breathes on his skin.

POLO MAN
Hey big man— you walking fine now?
Thought you were dying Friday.

Gregory looks into the lens like into a dead star. Calm.

GREGORY
Step back.

POLO MAN
Public sidewalk, hero.

Marcella shifts in. Half-step between. Eleanor stands taller than she is.

Windbreaker drifts closer. Not touching. Close enough to smell his breath.

WINDBREAKER
You don't belong out here, sir.

GREGORY
Neither do you.

He turns. Leads them back inside at a measured pace.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

The Guard steps around the desk now, body between the family and the doors.

SECURITY GUARD

We're done for today. Thank you.

It's not an order. It is.

Gregory nods once. The exchange is logged.

INT. STAIRWELL — EVENING

Concrete. Cool. The air tastes unused.

Gregory takes the stairs slow. Counts steps to landing: 12 / 12 / 12 — consistency comforts.

He tests the door to the roof (alarm-capped). It doesn't move. Good. Predictable.

He sits on the landing. Breath short. He palms the wall, cool paint. He writes in the notebook: "Stair: safe / quiet."

Marcella sits beside him. Their shoulders barely touch.

MARCELLA

You're going to do something.

He doesn't answer. That is an answer.

MARCELLA (CONT'D)

Don't do it alone.

He nods. A promise he may or may not be able to keep.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Quiet domestic. Eleanor folds a blanket, smooths it once, twice. Leaves it.

Gregory stands at the window, hands in the hoodie pocket. He takes a small draw from the nebulizer. Lets it sit in his lungs. Exhales through his nose.

He writes: "Breath 90 @ 21:18 (early)."

He closes the notebook. Sets it under the WEST coin by the couch leg.

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (WEDNESDAY)

Thin air. Gregory wakes coughing once, the dry kind that steals a second and gives none back.

He thumbs a salt tab. Waits for the edge to smooth. It doesn't. Acceptable.

He writes: "WED — decline confirmed."

INT. KITCHEN — MORNING

Eleanor slices bread, neat. Marcella warms the kettle.

Gregory stands still, eyes closed. Counting. He opens them.

GREGORY
We don't go out today.

MARCELLA
Okay.

ELEANOR
They don't stop existing because
you don't look.

GREGORY
They stop being my problem.

ELEANOR
They already were.

He lets that land. No defense.

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATE MORNING

Marcella reads from the WEDNESDAY letter like liturgy. Gregory's breaths keep time, then lose it, then find it again.

The coin on the sill vibrates minutely when a truck passes below. Nobody looks at it; the room feels it.

INT. HALLWAY — AFTERNOON

Door open two inches. The corridor is a river of cold air. On the side table: no coin. Just a thin layer of dust catching the light.

Eleanor watches dust move as if it's time made visible.

She closes the door gently.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON

Gregory checks the nebulizer vial. Less than half. He sets it dead center on the table between the north/south/east coins.

He pockets the pulse oximeter. Checks it without looking at the number. Puts it away.

MARCELLA
You're saving it.

GREGORY
For when a sentence needs
finishing.

She nods. She knows whose sentence.

INT. STAIRWELL — DUSK

They sit two steps apart. The building hum is human-sized here.

From below, voices. Polo Man and Windbreaker arguing in a whisper that carries. Something about "front desk," "rights," "the clip."

Gregory listens without leaning forward. He counts the distance between the voices and their door. Three landings. He writes "3 x 12" in his head.

Marcella watches his face learn the space.

MARCELLA
You always like this?

GREGORY
Worse.

Not a joke. It almost is.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Lights low. Breaths numbered.

Eleanor opens the shoebox. The shroud cloth waits, five knots finished, the sixth corner empty. She closes it like tucking in a sleeping animal.

Marcella puts the notebook on the table for morning. She slides the coin from the sill onto the page. It makes a small sound.

Gregory looks at the coin on the paper like punctuation.

GREGORY
If I can't carry it—

MARCELLA
We will.

He nods. He means the world. She means him.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE NIGHT

Gregory stands in the dark, facing the front door from inside. He counts the hinges. One, two, three. He counts the steps to the peephole. Two.

He looks through. The corridor is empty. Or not. The glass distorts.

He steps back. He breathes. He chooses calm like a tool.

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — SAME

Niko watches the building's doors, the corners, the delivery slot. He is an unmoving metronome of attention.

He speaks to no one.

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (THURSDAY)

Gregory wakes already sitting. Breath thinner. He doesn't reach for the nebulizer.

He writes: "THU — cost due."

He underlines MARCELLA.

INT. KITCHEN — DAWN

Marcella hands him tea. He doesn't drink it.

MARCELLA
You're going to pull something onto you.

GREGORY

Yes.

MARCELLA

Say it.

He looks at her. He doesn't blink.

GREGORY

If there's a choice, it's me.

She breathes in. It hurts. She doesn't argue.

MARCELLA

Don't make it small.

He nods once. The only promise that matters: no coward's version.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — MORNING

They step out of the elevator. The Security Guard shifts, alert.

At the doors, Polo Man is posted up with a different phone. Windbreaker stands farther back, like he learned a lesson. A THIRD presence now: a woman with a pram, watching too long, not kind, not cruel—curious.

Gregory sees a potential crowd forming. He adjusts the plan that only exists in his head.

SECURITY GUARD

Maybe try the garage, Mr.—
(stops himself)
Sir.

GREGORY

We'll stay inside today.

The guard nods, relieved he didn't have to say the rest.

INT. STAIRWELL — MIDDAY

Gregory rests on a landing. He rolls a coin between finger and thumb, small light blinking on brass. He sets it on the step. It looks like a dropped minute.

He breathes shallow. He presses the salt tab to his tongue. It doesn't help. He accepts that.

Marcella sits two steps below, back against the wall.

MARCELLA

If you do it, do it where I can see you.

GREGORY

No.

MARCELLA

Then where I can get to you.

He doesn't answer. He looks up the well of the stair to the locked roof door. He looks down to the lobby.

INT. PENTHOUSE — AFTERNOON

Eleanor finds another printed still slid under the apartment door: Gregory on the sidewalk, head bent, timestamped. Marker scrawl: "ACTOR."

She sets it with the others. She does not show them to Marcella. Or she does. Either way, the act says the same thing: the world is getting close.

She opens the window. Air moves. She leaves it open.

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATE AFTERNOON

Gregory stands, testing legs. He nods to himself when they hold. He moves the coins back to their compass positions with quiet ceremony.

He sets the nebulizer beside WEST.

GREGORY

If I don't finish—

MARCELLA

We'll finish for you.

ELEANOR

We will not tidy. We will witness.

Gregory takes that like instructions.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE — DUSK

From inside the glass doors, Gregory watches Polo Man and Windbreaker talk to two more men. No uniforms. The men point, laugh, look up at the windows.

Gregory taps the glass once with a knuckle to feel its thickness.

The Security Guard sees him. Comes to stand beside him. Two silhouettes on their side of the membrane.

SECURITY GUARD
I'll walk you out, if you need.

GREGORY
I'm not taking you with me.

The guard glances at him. Doesn't understand. Understands enough.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

The apartment is ready. Nothing dramatic. Everything placed: notebook, coins, nebulizer, water, salt, phone face down, window open one inch.

Marcella sits near him, hand resting on the couch cushion, not touching his hand, close enough if he reaches.

Eleanor checks the door chain once, then again. She turns off the hall light. Leaves the lamp.

Gregory takes the notebook. He writes in steady block letters on a fresh page:

"IF NOT ME = HER / CHOOSE ME."

He tears the page. He folds it once. He tucks it under the WEST coin.

He breathes slow. He looks at Marcella.

MARCELLA
What.

GREGORY
Nothing.

He means everything.

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — SAME

Niko watches the delivery door. He checks his watch. He doesn't record. He doesn't blink long.

He lifts his gaze to the penthouse window. The curtain lifts, falls. He nods once to no one.

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE NIGHT (THURSDAY → FRIDAY)

The oximeter flashes 88. Gregory doesn't check it. It lands face down.

He takes a half-draw from the nebulizer. Enough to finish a thought.

He leans forward slightly. He studies the front door. He studies the distance to it. He studies the hallway in his mind.

He rests his hand on the couch. Not on Marcella's. Near.

He closes his eyes. Breath in. Hold. Out.

CUT TO BLACK.

A long, quiet hold.

INT. PENTHOUSE — PRE-DAWN (FRIDAY, WEEK 2)

Stillness. City far.

Gregory wakes already sitting, hand at sternum. A dry catch. He waits for air to return. It does, thin.

He writes in the notebook: "FRI — breath worse on waking."

He sets the pen down. Leaves the book open.

INT. KITCHEN — DAWN

Kettle. Salt tab. Eleanor places tea where his hand will be. He doesn't reach yet.

ELEANOR

We don't have to leave at all today.

GREGORY

We won't.

She nods once. Acceptance, not relief.

Marcella steps in, hair braided tight. She reads the open notebook, closes it gently.

MARCELLA

Call Keller early.

GREGORY

I will.

A lie of sequence—he will, but later.

INT. LIVING ROOM — MORNING

The room is staged without looking staged: coins at compass points, nebulizer centered, window open a measured inch.

Gregory's breath is careful, counting in the head. He checks the oximeter, then turns it face-down without seeing the number.

SOFT KNOCK at the apartment door.

Eleanor freezes.

Marcella steps halfway to the hall. Gregory lifts a hand—stay.

He moves to the peephole with slow, even steps.

INT. HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS

Through the fisheye: Security Guard and Building Supervisor. No Samaritan faces. Safe enough.

Gregory opens the chain. Three inches only.

SECURITY GUARD

Morning. Just wanted to... check in.

SUPERVISOR

We've noticed some visitors linger—outside. We're monitoring.

Gregory nods.

GREGORY

Thank you.

SUPERVISOR

If you need to use the garage exit today, we can clear it.

GREGORY

We'll stay inside.

A beat of human decency holds. He closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATE MORNING

Marcella reads from the Wednesday letter—cadence even, the sound a rope.

Gregory follows for a few lines, then loses the thread. He touches the page with two fingers, anchors.

He lifts the nebulizer, takes a restrained pull. Sets it down center again.

INT. STAIRWELL — AFTERNOON

Concrete cool. They sit two steps apart, as before.

From below, drifting voices—not aggressive, just there. The polo man laughing with someone we don't see. The sound of a can tab. An echo.

GREGORY
Three landings.

MARCELLA
You counted.

GREGORY
I heard.

He presses a coin flat to the painted step. Leaves it there. A small, bright marker.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOBBY — LATE AFTERNOON

Gregory and Marcella stand just inside the glass. Security Guard stationed forward, body language—protective, controlled.

Outside: Polo Man, Windbreaker, and one New Guy at the corner. Not together; aligned by posture.

The woman with the pram from earlier passes, glances, keeps going. This is not a mob; it is ambient pressure.

SECURITY GUARD
If they approach the door again,
I'll ask them to move along.

GREGORY
Don't. That's your risk.

SECURITY GUARD
It's my job.

Gregory studies his face. A small nod. Respect.

He turns to Marcella. The glass reflects them together, doubled and thinned.

GREGORY
Upstairs.

They go.

INT. PENTHOUSE — EARLY EVENING

Eleanor lays the shroud cloth on the bed, smooths the corners. The sixth knot space waits.

She closes the door quietly.

In the living room, Gregory moves each coin a centimeter, aligning them with the corners of the rug. A ritual of edges.

Marcella watches his hands. The steadiness costs him.

MARCELLA
Sit.

He sits. She brings the nebulizer. He doesn't take it yet.

He looks at her like memorizing shape, not face.

INT. KITCHEN — SUNSET

Eleanor stirs a pot that isn't hungry. She stops. She sets the spoon down, palms on either side of the stove, head bowed —not prayer, calibration.

Niko's voice, muffled through the door, not entering, just there:

NIKO (O.S.)
He can't do two flights fast. If it happens, go slow. Don't run him.

Eleanor doesn't answer. She is listening. She turns the flame off.

INT. LIVING ROOM — BLUE HOUR

The apartment goes cobalt. Streetlight bands rise on the wall.

Gregory takes a longer inhale than he should. Fails halfway.
He accepts it.

He touches Marcella's wrist with two fingers.

GREGORY
I need you to do something.

MARCELLA
Say it.

GREGORY
If I leave the room—don't follow
right away.

MARCELLA
No.

GREGORY
Count to sixty. Then come.

She stares at him. He holds.

MARCELLA
Thirty.

GREGORY
Forty.

A long beat. She nods once. Forty.

INT. HALLWAY — DUSK

Eleanor opens the door two inches for air. On the side table:
a coin, warm from a palm that isn't here now.

She picks it up. Squeezes it once in her fist. The pressure
leaves a faint knot mark in her skin.

She pockets it. Closes the door.

INT. PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Gregory sits upright. The oximeter reads 84 when he peeks; he
flips it face down.

He takes a measured pull from the nebulizer. Enough to finish
a sentence.

He turns to Marcella. This is the soft parting—Choice B.

GREGORY
(quiet)
I love you.

Marcella doesn't break.

MARCELLA
Then don't make me watch you go.

He nods once. A promise he cannot keep.

He stands, slow.

INT. STAIRWELL — NIGHT (SECONDS LATER)

The door eases shut behind him. He descends one landing.
Stops. Breath like glass.

He presses palm to wall—cool. He looks down the well. He
looks up at the sealed roof door. Three landings to lobby.
One to roof. The math of a life.

He fishes a coin from his pocket. Places it on the step where
his foot rests. Marker.

He exhales. Continues down.

INT. PENTHOUSE — CONTINUOUS

Marcella watches the door. She counts under her breath.

One... two... three...

Eleanor stands in the kitchen arch, seeing what is happening
by how the air moves.

Twenty-seven... twenty-eight...

Marcella's throat works. She keeps counting.

Thirty-nine... forty.

She goes.

INT. STAIRWELL — CONTINUOUS

Marcella enters the stairwell. The air is cold, unused. She
looks up—no Gregory. Looks down—one coin on a step, bright
against paint.

She picks it up. Warm still.

She goes down.

INT. LOBBY — SAME TIME

The doors stand like an aquarium glass.

Polo Man steps closer, phone up. Windbreaker hangs back. New Guy pretends to check his laces and looks up through lashes.

The Security Guard moves to the doors, palms out—not opening, mediating.

SECURITY GUARD
Not tonight, fellas.

POLO MAN
Public sidewalk, man.

SECURITY GUARD
Not a debate.

Windbreaker nods at the camera placement. He's learning.

INT. STAIRWELL — LOWER LANDING (NIGHT)

Gregory stops. Breath scissored. He takes a tiny pull from the nebulizer. It buys seconds.

He listens. Above, Marcella's feet hurry—then slow, remembering the count.

He keeps moving. One hand on the rail. He chooses down.

INT. LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

Gregory pushes through the interior door to the lobby. The Guard turns, steps instinctively between Gregory and the exterior doors.

The outside trio look in. A new set of eyes gather across the street. Not a mob—audience.

Gregory steps to the right, toward the stairs to the garage, not the front doors. The guard tracks with him.

SECURITY GUARD
You alright, sir?

GREGORY
I need the stair.

The guard nods. He shifts to block the line of sight from outside.

INT. STAIR HALL (OFF LOBBY) — CONTINUOUS

Dim, institutional. This stair echoes different. The delivery door hallway mouths around the corner.

Gregory pauses. Listens. Footsteps somewhere beyond. Hard to place.

Windbreaker's silhouette blurs briefly against the frosted glass of the delivery corridor. Then gone.

Gregory chooses up this time—toward the main stairwell again—not into the delivery hall. He is pulling the line away from Marcella's path.

INT. LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

Marcella emerges from the building stairwell onto the mezzanine above the lobby, sees Gregory move into the stair hall toward up again.

He looks back—one beat—sees her. A small nod: stay there.

She doesn't. She moves along the mezzanine rail, parallel, above him.

The outside polo man clocks movement, lifts phone higher, confused by angles.

INT. STAIR HALL — CONTINUOUS

Gregory reaches the door back to the main stairwell. He pushes through. The door closes slow, hydraulic counting like a clock.

A hand shoots to catch it from the other side—Polo Man? Windbreaker? A third? The hand misses by an inch. The door seals. Gregory breathes once, costly.

He starts up.

INT. MAIN STAIRWELL — CONTINUOUS

Concrete echo again, cleaner. Gregory climbs one flight. Stops. Palms the wall. Leaves a sweat print that looks like a wing, then runs.

INT. MEZZANINE — CONTINUOUS

Marcella reaches the top of another stair, parallel to Gregory's flight. She can't see him; she feels his count.

Eleanor appears in the mezzanine behind her, silent. She did not stay in the apartment. She stands with a hand on the rail, pulse steady.

ELEANOR

Slow.

Marcella slows. They move together, keeping line of sight angles tight. Two shapes moving like a guardrail.

INT. STAIRWELL — SECOND LANDING

Gregory stops. Takes a last small draw from the nebulizer. Checks the vial—almost empty.

He looks at it like an hourglass. Sets it on the landing ledge. Leaves it.

He climbs.

INT. LOBBY — SAME

Outside, Windbreaker gestures to the New Guy; they split—one to the delivery alley, one staying. Polo Man keeps the camera up. He looks less sure now.

Security Guard watches all of it while pretending to straighten a sign. He is in this now.

INT. STAIRWELL — TOP LANDING (ROOF DOOR LEVEL)

Gregory reaches the sealed roof door. He knows it won't open. He doesn't try. He leans his forehead to the painted metal. Breath ragged. The door is cool.

Footsteps below. Marcella.

She reaches the landing under his. Looks up. Sees him silhouetted.

MARCELLA

Gregory.

He looks down over the rail. His eyes soften when they find her.

GREGORY

(soft)

It's okay.

Two words. Not a promise—permission to feel.

Eleanor reaches Marcella's step. She doesn't call out. She lifts her chin once to Gregory: we see you.

He nods back, the smallest bow.

From below, a new sound—the delivery corridor door slaps and echoes. The New Guy's footfalls enter the main stairwell two flights down, hesitant.

Gregory looks to the roof door—not an option. Looks to his women—too close for what's coming.

He makes his choice.

He starts down toward them—toward the danger—to draw it past them.

Marcella understands in an instant.

MARCELLA

No.

He keeps moving. Controlled. Measured.

They meet on the landing between flights—almost. He stops one step above them, so he is higher, not separate.

The soft, spoken parting lands here, barely above breath.

GREGORY

(whisper)

Go where I'm not.

A beat where none of them blink.

Marcella's eyes fill without spilling. Eleanor's hand finds Marcella's elbow, steady.

A distant shoe scrape below. Time's reminder.

Marcella nods once. Broken, not undone.

He moves past them, down, toward the sound—choosing himself as the focus.

They do not follow.

INT. STAIRWELL - LOWER FLIGHT (SECONDS LATER)

Gregory turns the corner and almost collides with New Guy hustling up, phone out. The man startles.

NEW GUY

Jesus—

The phone tilts. Gregory puts a hand to the lens. Gentle, firm.

GREGORY

No.

New Guy drops the phone to his side, stunned by the quiet force.

From the delivery corridor door, Windbreaker appears at the far end, sees Gregory, starts forward.

Gregory steps into the narrowest point of the stairwell—the choke—forcing anyone coming up to deal with him first.

He glances up one second—toward where Marcella and Eleanor wait out of sight. Then he sets his feet.

He is not fighting. He is positioning.

INT. MEZZANINE - SAME

Marcella and Eleanor stand at the rail where they can see nothing and everything in the way air moves. Marcella's knuckles are bone under skin on the rail.

ELEANOR

We count.

She means: his seconds.

Marcella nods. They count in silence.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Windbreaker stops one step below Gregory, close enough to smell fear and salt.

WINDBREAKER

You can't block a public stair.

GREGORY

I can.

It is not a legal argument. It is a truth of bodies.

New Guy hangs back, uncertain.

From the lobby below, the Security Guard's radio crackles unintelligible.

Windbreaker tries to shoulder past. Gregory absorbs, doesn't shove—holds. His breath tears. He does not look away, does not drop to a cough.

WINDBREAKER

Move.

GREGORY

No.

A beat. Windbreaker reads something in Gregory's face he didn't expect: a man who has already decided how this night ends.

Windbreaker drops his shoulder, steps back. Not conceding—calculating.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Go down.

A flicker—almost compliance—then stubbornness retakes.

Footsteps above—Marcella shifts weight. Gregory keeps his eyes on Windbreaker.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Go down.

Windbreaker breathes out a laugh that isn't funny. He chooses retreat to regroup, heads down toward the lobby again, passing New Guy, who follows.

Gregory waits until their echoes reduce to air.

He leans to the wall. Exhale like a prayer with no words.

He turns. He looks up the stair. He doesn't call to Marcella.

He starts down toward the lobby, alone.

INT. MEZZANINE — CONTINUOUS

Marcella moves to go after him. Eleanor's hand on her arm—not yet.

They listen to his footfalls descend. The sound thins with each landing.

ELEANOR

Forty.

They count again. Forty.

Then they move.

INT. LOBBY — NIGHT

Gregory exits the stair hall into the lobby. The Security Guard steps to meet him, placing himself between Gregory and the glass doors where the silhouettes of Polo Man and Windbreaker hover like stains.

SECURITY GUARD

Let me walk you to the elevator.

GREGORY

No. I'm fine.

He isn't. He stands like a man holding the shape of himself in place.

The guard reads it anyway. He nods—respects.

Outside, Polo Man lifts his phone again, emboldened by seeing Gregory in the lobby. He taps the glass with the phone case, ugly little knock.

Gregory does not look at him. He looks up the stairwell where Marcella and Eleanor will appear in a count.

He breathes in. Holds. Lets it go.

INT. STAIRWELL — SAME

Marcella and Eleanor descend. Calm, quick. Marcella's eyes burn but do not spill.

They reach the lobby-level door.

INT. LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

The door opens. Marcella steps out, sees Gregory where he chose to stand. Eleanor behind her, composed.

Gregory meets Marcella's eyes for half a second. Everything is said without language.

He turns toward the stair hall again, away from the doors, pulling any line of motion with him.

The Security Guard steps between the women and the exterior, near instinct now.

Outside, Windbreaker says something we don't hear. Polo Man laughs, short.

The crowd doesn't break in. The pressure holds.

Gregory disappears into the stair hall once more.

INT. STAIR HALL — CONTINUOUS

Dim. Quiet.

He stops, hand on the rail. A small whistle escapes a failing corner of lung.

He takes the last fraction from the nebulizer. The vial goes empty.

He sets the mouthpiece on the ledge. Looks at it like a finished hourglass.

He straightens. He goes.

FADE OUT.

INT. STAIR HALL OFF LOBBY — NIGHT

Dim. Bare bulb. The nebulizer mouthpiece rests where Gregory left it earlier. Empty.

CLOSE — Gregory's hand on the rail. Knuckles white, a faint tremor.

His breath is short, precise. Each inhale a measured theft.

He listens: lobby voices muffled; a shoe scuffs tile down the delivery corridor.

GREGORY turns away from the lobby doors, toward the main stairwell. He is choosing the route that takes the line with him.

He moves.

INT. MAIN STAIRWELL — CONTINUOUS

Concrete. Cold. CLOSE — the curve of the rail under his fingers. He climbs one flight. Stops. Counts under what breath remains.

Below: footfalls entering the stair — Windbreaker first, Polo Man behind, New Guy third. Not running. Hunting by certainty.

Gregory goes up.

INT. STAIRWELL — SECOND LANDING

He sets a coin on the step where his foot rests. CLOSE — the circle wobbles, steadies. He climbs again.

INT. MEZZANINE ABOVE LOBBY — SAME

MARCELLA reaches the rail, eyes on the stair hall. ELEANOR beside her, still as architecture.

They don't call out. They listen to the breath of the building as if it were Gregory's.

ELEANOR
(very low)
Count.

Marcella nods. In her chest, numbers and fear.

INT. STAIRWELL — UPPER FLIGHT (NEAR ROOF)

The roof door looms: metal, alarm bar, "NO ACCESS" stenciled. Earlier it didn't give. It still doesn't — but it can if he wants it to.

CLOSE — Gregory's palm lands on the cold bar. He doesn't push. His breath scrapes. He presses his forehead to the paint, grounding.

From below — the men's voices bounce up the well, distorted. "He's up there—" "Don't touch him—" "Get the clip—"

Gregory opens his eyes. Decision lands. He turns from the roof door and starts down.

He is not leading danger to the roof; he is dragging it past where Marcella would be, away from her path home.

INT. STAIRWELL — MID-LANDING (MOMENTS LATER)

He and Windbreaker meet at the choke point.

CLOSE — Gregory's chest, rising shallow; Windbreaker's jaw flex.

WINDBREAKER

Move.

GREGORY

No.

CLOSE — Their shoulders touch a second, then separate. No shove, just weight.

Windbreaker tries to edge past on the inside. Gregory absorbs. His breath tears; he holds the line.

Polo Man appears two steps below, phone up, recording. CLOSE — circular lens dead and bright.

POLO MAN

Look at me, big guy.

Gregory looks past him. Deliberately denies the lens.

GREGORY

Go down.

Windbreaker doesn't. He squares again.

CLOSE — Gregory's hand finds the rail and locks. The other hand lifts just enough: a boundary, not a threat.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Go. Down.

Something in the face — a man already spent and decided — unnerves Windbreaker for half a second.

He drops his shoulder; Gregory holds; the moment stalls. Then — Windbreaker steps down one tread, not concession—recalculation.

New Guy hovers, unsure.

GREGORY pivots, descends, forcing them with him.

INT. MEZZANINE — SAME

Marcella and Eleanor move in parallel, staying on their level. Marcella's hand clenches the rail until blood leaves her knuckles. She breathes on fours to match him.

INT. STAIR HALL OFF LOBBY — MOMENTS LATER

Gregory exits the main stairwell into the small hall toward the lobby. He doesn't step into the lobby. He angles past it, toward the service stair that rises to a maintenance landing and roof ladder beyond the alarmed door — an old, rarely used path.

The Security Guard clocks the geometry.

SECURITY GUARD
(low, urgent)
That door alarms.

Gregory nods once: good. Sound draws attention away from Marcella's lane.

Behind, Windbreaker and Polo Man spill into the hall.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
(to them)
Gentlemen — stop.

They don't, not fully.

Gregory's breath knifes. He reaches the service stair.

INT. SERVICE STAIR (NARROWER) — CONTINUOUS

CLOSE — shoe on the first riser. He climbs. It's steeper. His breath stutters. He thumbs a salt tab, lets it melt, useless mercy.

He reaches a heavy door marked MAINTENANCE ACCESS with a rusted crash bar. He presses.

A thin alarm shrills — not cinematic — institutional, ugly. It rattles the hallway air.

He slips through.

INT. ROOF SERVICE LANDING — CONTINUOUS

Low ceiling, exposed ducts, a metal ladder up to a roof hatch already ajar for summer venting — barely enough.

CLOSE — hands on rungs. Skin slips. He climbs anyway.

Below: the door bangs; Windbreaker enters the landing, sees the ladder, hesitates at the alarm.

Wider angle? No. Closer — Gregory's hand, slipping, gripping, pulling.

He reaches the hatch. Pushes. The pane flips. Night air knives in, cold and clean.

He pulls himself onto—

EXT. ROOFTOP — NIGHT

Wind. Low hum of the city like a far ocean.

CLOSE — Gregory's mouth opens to take the air. It doesn't arrive enough. He staggers two steps, stays up.

Across the rooftop — a silhouette already there, calm, facing him.

NIKO.

No surprise. He steps forward, slow. In his palm: a coin.

NIKO
(quiet, to Gregory)
You did it.

GREGORY
(barely)
Not... yet.

He turns — looks back toward the service hatch.

Windbreaker's head pokes up, then shoulders. He stops at the lip, the roof's open space confusing his courage.

CLOSE — Gregory's hand rises: not a stop, not a plea — a boundary. He steps back, drawing Windbreaker toward him, away from the hatch.

Niko's eyes flick to the hatch, then to Gregory. He understands the geometry: if Windbreaker comes for Gregory, no one is between that danger and Marcella below.

Niko steps to the side, not intervening — witness, not savior. He is there if the scene asks for mercy after the choice is made.

Windbreaker climbs onto the roof fully. Polo Man appears beneath him at the hatch, filming, not brave enough to commit to the open.

Windbreaker advances a step. Stops. The wind takes his breath in a way he does not name.

WINDBREAKER
What is this, huh?

CLOSE — Gregory's face. Calm. Wrecked. Certain.

GREGORY
(near-whisper)
Not you. Me.

He takes one more step back, inviting the line to him, away from the hatch, away from her.

CLOSE — his chest. The breath seizes, releases smaller.

Niko moves closer, gently, like approaching someone about to faint. He doesn't touch him.

NIKO
Finish what you came to finish.

Gregory's mouth tries a smile. Fails. He turns his face to the wind. He is aligning himself with air for the last time.

CLOSE — his hand opens. Niko sets the coin in his palm. Niko closes Gregory's fingers around it, soft. A priest's gesture, not a pardon.

INT. MEZZANINE / LOBBY (INTERCUT)

MARCELLA reaches the glass doors below. ELEANOR a step behind. The Security Guard holds them from stepping out into the street pressure.

Marcella looks up, follows the building lines with her eyes, as if she can feel the roof by listening.

EXT. ROOFTOP — CONTINUOUS

Gregory looks at Niko. His lips form a single thought, airless:

GREGORY
Her.

Niko nods, a tiny bow.

Windbreaker advances another half step – then stops. Something holy and awful is happening he doesn't have language for.

CLOSE – Gregory's fingers around the coin. The small etching bites his skin.

He draws a final, small breath. Holds it. Lets it out.

The next breath does not arrive.

His knees soften. He lowers himself to sit, then leans to the cold membrane of the roof. No collapse. Gentle. Chosen.

Niko goes to a knee beside him, present, not claiming it.

Gregory's eyes find the night and stay open.

Wind whips, then steadies.

Silence. Not absolute. Human.

INT. MEZZANINE / LOBBY – SAME

Marcella's head lifts – a felt moment – something in the air changes shape.

She does not cry out. She knows. Eleanor's hand finds Marcella's shoulder. They stand still.

The Security Guard looks from their faces to the stair hall where the alarm stopped. He understands something true without evidence.

EXT. ROOFTOP – CONTINUOUS

CLOSE – Gregory's hand loosens. The coin does not fall. It sits in his palm like a kept time.

Niko places his own hand over Gregory's for a second, eyes wet, not weeping. Witness, not judge.

Behind Niko, Windbreaker hovers, shrinking inside his jacket, suddenly young. The phone in his pocket records nothing now.

Niko looks up at him once – not threatening. A warning against making this moment smaller than it is.

Windbreaker takes one step back. Another. Stops. He can't name it, but he leaves a little.

CLOSE — Gregory's face, at rest. Not redeemed by expression. Human.

HOLD as the city noise continues, indifferent.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWELL — LATER (NIGHT)

Footfalls approach — Marcella and Eleanor, guided by the Security Guard to the service landing. They stand under the hatch. Wind moves above, different now.

Niko leans down through the opening, small in the square.

NIKO
(soft)
Take your time.

He disappears back up.

Marcella closes her eyes. Opens them. Eleanor's nod is not permission — it is with.

They climb.

EXT. ROOFTOP — CONTINUOUS

CLOSE — Marcella's hand touches Gregory's temple first. Then his chest. She leaves her hand there, measuring nothing.

Eleanor kneels opposite. She places her palm over his hand, the one with the coin. She doesn't take it.

Niko steps back a respectful distance. He is present and small.

Nobody speaks. The scene is breath without a body.

Wind runs the edges of the roof like water.

HOLD on Marcella's hand rising and falling — then only resting.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SMALL CEMETERY — DAWN (SUNDAY, AFTER)

Mist low. The Mangione plot.
The ELDER finishes the sixth knot on the shroud strip and touches it with a coal.

Cloth blackens, then embers, then ash. No words. Just breath. NIKO stands back beneath a tree, hat in hand. He does not leave early. He does not come closer.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR KELLER'S OFFICE — MORNING

A YOUNG WOMAN sits, hunched, a paper estimate in both hands. KELLER opens a drawer. The plain cash envelope Gregory left. She hesitates—ethics, then mercy—counts out what is needed, nothing more. Slides it across.

The woman tries to speak. Keller shakes her head once: breathe.

On Keller's shelf: a new file tab: EXPEDITED — USE DISCRETION.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMARITAN BOARDROOM — DAY

A printer hums. A junior counsel feeds a letter through a scanner.

Header: Restitution Trust for Trial-Eligible Patients. No signature block. No PR language. Just instructions and wiring details.

The junior counsel looks around, unsure who to give credit to. He files it under ADMIN — COMPLIANCE like the world always does with grace it didn't plan.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LATE MORNING

Stillness. A different stillness. Not waiting. After.

The whiteboard remains: MON/TUE/WED/THU/FRI/SAT/SUN.

Under SUN: — (no note). Under MON: a blank square that no one will fill again.

ELEANOR moves through the kitchen with exact hands.

She picks up the oximeter from the table, turns it once, sets it in a drawer. Not hiding. Putting away.

Marcella stands at the window. She holds the notebook.

She tapes the Wednesday letter to the inside cover.

On a clean first page she writes, carefully:

FOR WHEN IT HURTS AGAIN.

She closes the book. Sets it on the table. Leaves it reachable.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — HALLWAY

The door stands open two inches. The corridor exhales, then rests.

On the small side table: no coin. Just a faint knot imprint pressed into wood where one once lay.

Marcella closes the door gently with her palm. The latch clicks like a tiny metronome stopping.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LIVING ROOM (AFTERNOON)

The room is as he left it, and not:

- Coin (NORTH) at the window corner.
- Coin (SOUTH) by the door baseboard.
- Coin (EAST) under the lamp foot.
- Coin (WEST) by the couch leg, covering a folded page.

Eleanor kneels. Slides out the folded note from under WEST. Reads the block letters:

IF NOT ME = HER / CHOOSE ME.

She refolds it and puts it back where he left it.

MARCELLA

(soft)

Don't tidy.

ELEANOR

I'm not.

They share a look that isn't comfort. It is agreement.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPPOSITE ROOFTOP — LATE AFTERNOON

Niko stands at the rail. No thermos now. Hands empty. He looks across to the penthouse windows. A long, small nod. Not to them. To the air between.

He turns, leaves the roof cleaner than he found it. No victory. Witness finished.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — BEDROOM (TWILIGHT)

Eleanor opens the closet. The shoebox.
Inside, the folded shroud cloth with six knot spaces now all marked—the last corner faintly scorched.
She closes the lid. Sets the box high. Not out of sight—out of reach.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — KITCHEN (EVENING)

Two cups. Water on. No tea yet.
Eleanor leans on the counter, hands flat, like setting a sail that isn't there. She breathes. She turns the flame off before the kettle screams.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE — LIVING ROOM (BLUE HOUR INTO NIGHT)

Marcella sits on the floor by the couch. The sketchbook open to the drawing of four stick figures in a barred rectangle. She adds a small open circle in the corner—window. She does not add a fifth figure. She darkens the lines that are already there.

She stands. Crosses to the window.
The pane is open a measured inch.

She takes the WEST coin from the couch leg, considers it, then leaves WEST empty.
She places WEST on the sill with NORTH—not touching—two small circles catching the city's last light.
She leaves SOUTH and EAST where they are.

On the table, the nebulizer—rinsed, air-dried—rests on a folded towel. No power. A finished instrument.

Marcella opens the notebook one more time. On the second page, in neat, steady capitals:

TIME IS LUCK. LOVE IS CHOICE.

She leaves the book open to dry the ink.

She and Eleanor do not embrace.
They share the room like a task, like a vow.

ELEANOR

Tea?

MARCELLA

In a minute.

Eleanor nods. She exits frame.

The living room is empty.

We hold.

The open window breathes the curtain in... and out... very slightly.

The city hums. Not louder. Just there.

CLOSE — THE COINS ON THE SILL
(NORTH / WEST) — separate, steady.
They do not move.
They do not explain.

CLOSE — THE TABLE
Notebook open: FOR WHEN IT HURTS
AGAIN / TIME IS LUCK. LOVE IS
CHOICE.
A soft edge of lamplight warms the
paper.

CLOSE — THE NEBULIZER
Clean. Quiet. Done.

CLOSE — THE MONEY CLIP on the far shelf, facedown, away from
everything else.
It stays where they put it.

We drift back to the room as a whole:

- The empty couch.
- The compass coins.
- The open window.
- The slow, almost-not-there curtain.

No score rises.
No lesson states itself.

Just air moving where a life used to be.

HOLD.

Long enough that the audience hears their own breathing.

FADE OUT.

THE END