

DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A battered STARTER CAR, fitted with glass packs and custom wheels, winds down the tree-lined street.

MUSIC BLARES, hard and fast, but with a delicate feminine voice singing vocals.

The car pulls to a stop before the CARVER HOUSE, a two-story mini-mansion in a sea of them.

INT. STARTER CAR - CONTINUOUS

SUSAN CARVER (17), black hair streaked with platinum framing a pretty face with a pierced nose, gives a seductive stretch in the passenger seat.

CONNOR, just-turned-18 and dressed like an alt-rocker, watches Susan twist in her seat.

Susan's hand snakes behind her, rubbing at the bandage covering her lower back.

SUSAN

You didn't tell me it would itch so much.

CONNOR

It will for a while. You have the card, right?

Susan reaches into her hoodie, holding up a card reading "STAINED SKIN TATTOOS".

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Do everything it says or it'll fade.

SUSAN

I will...

Susan moves closer to Connor.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You think it's sexy?

Susan SLIDES HER HAND up Connor's thigh.

CONNOR

Oh, hell yes.

Susan laughs.

SUSAN
You boys are all the same...

Her hand moves up further, over his swelling crotch.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
(correcting herself)
Well... Maybe not exactly the same.
Some are boys...
(SQUEEZE)
And some are men.

CONNOR
(writhing)
You bet your pretty ass I'm a
man...

Susan leans in for a hungry kiss.

Over her shoulder, the PORCH LIGHT COMES TO LIFE.

Connor's EYES POP OPEN. He reluctantly breaks the kiss,
holding Susan back.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I think we have incoming.

Susan continues to paw at him.

SUSAN
We would if you'd just relax...

CONNOR
No, Suse.

Connor tilts her head to the light.

SUSAN
Shit.

CONNOR
Dad?

SUSAN
Worse. Mom. Gotta go.

Susan gives him a brief, wet kiss. She opens the door while
still lip-locked and slips out.

CONNOR
Call you tomorrow?

SUSAN
You better.

EXT. CARVER HOUSE

The FRONT DOOR OPENS. RUTH CARVER (42), wraps her terry cloth robe around her against the cold.

Susan, one hand still on the hood of Connor's car, looks back at her mother.

SUSAN
Coming, mother!

CONNOR (O.C.)
(quietly)
Almost...

Susan turns her attention back to Connor, laughing. She leans in to give him a final kiss, her shirt pulling up to reveal the BANDAGED TATTOO on her lower back.

Ruth sees it, notes it, bites her tongue.

INT. CARVER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth holds the door wide as Susan sweeps through, making for the stairs.

SUSAN
(over her shoulder)
I'm beat. I think I'm just going to crash.

RUTH
Sure. Big night for you. Not calling, not bothering to tell me who you were with. And now you've defiled your own skin with God knows what.

Susan pauses on the stairs.

SUSAN
I don't know-

RUTH
Don't insult me, anymore. I saw it.
(beat)
They call them 'tramp stamps', did you know that?
(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

Is that what you've decided to do
with yourself? Be the town whore?

SUSAN

Whoa! Little extreme for a tattoo,
don't you think?

RUTH

I don't know what to think anymore!

SUSAN

(spitefully)

No reason to start thinking now,
Mommy.

Susan stalks up the stairs to her room. Ruth watches her go.

RUTH

When your father gets back from-!

The BEDROOM DOOR SLAMS, cutting her off.

INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Susan collapses back onto her bed, grabbing the iPod from her
night stand without looking, slipping the ear buds in place.
Faint HEAVY METAL PLAYS. Her eyes close as bubbles from the
LAVA LAMP by the bed flow slowly upwards.

Beside her bed, a copy of HEAVY STUFF MAGAZINE sits on the
night stand, opened to an article by Steven Falsey on the
band Hell's Fire. Front and center is the lead singer,
SERENA, decked out in leather.

INT. CARVER HOUSE

KITCHEN

Ruth dumps the contents of a grinder into an upscale coffee
maker, the drip-drip-drip of the coffee filling the room as
it begins to flow.

She turns, greeted by a silent Susan.

RUTH

Oh!

Susan says nothing. A cursory glance reveals nothing wrong.

RUTH (CONT'D)

You scared me to death. What are
you doing down here so late?

Ruth looks closer. Susan clutches her iPod in one hand, the other behind her back. One earbud is fixed in Susan's right ear, the other hangs loose. A thin STREAM OF BLOOD trails from her ear down her cheek.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Oh my God, Susan! Are you okay?

Ruth rushes over, halted as Susan's hidden hand comes around, wielding her LAVA LAMP, cracking it against Ruth's skull.

Ruth stumbles, dazed, back against the kitchen counter.

SUSAN

You're the tramp!

Susan raises the lamp again, the top snapped off, spilling colored oil onto the floor. Another swing and the jagged plastic SINKS INTO RUTH'S NECK.

Ruth stares up at Susan, blood flowing into the lamp, sealed against her skin, creating bubbles of bright red within the lamp.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You're the fucking tramp, now! You are!

Ruth sinks onto the floor, wide-eyed, gurgling.

Susan approaches, placing her iPod on the kitchen counter, pouring herself a cup of coffee, pushing Ruth onto the floor with a shove of her foot.

CLOSE on the iPod, an album cover from the band Hell's Fire, a decadent scene from a party, the room decorated in rich reds and bright whites.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

NEW YEAR'S EVE

It's the room from the album cover. The place is alive with professional up-and-comers, an Upper East apartment with more design flairs than character.

The sign above the door - HEAVEN AND HELL - 1988 - sets the theme for the evening, but sin is the order of the day.

SATAN drifts through the crowd, decked out in a satin red-on-black smoking jacket, a twinkle in his eye.

He's tall, dark-haired, predatory - just old enough to look wise, young enough to be seen as devastatingly handsome. Behind him, women of all ages follow him, want him.

When he spies the ANGEL on the couch, blonde and beautiful, spilling out of her costume, he slips towards her, moving from the well-lit entry with its faux pearly gates to the red-lit Hell, crepe flames swirling from a fan.

CATHY, early 20s, beautiful but thin, her face bent to the table, takes a long snort from a conspicuous pile of blow.

Satan has a seat.

CATHY

Hey.

SATAN

Hey, yourself. I'm sorry, was this seat taken?

CATHY

(shrugging indifferently)
Suit yourself.

SATAN

I will, thank you.

(beat)

I know you must get this a lot, but you look very familiar.

CATHY

You ride the bus?

SATAN

Do I look like I ride the bus?

Cathy gives him a once-over.

CATHY

(approvingly)
Definitely not.

Cathy stands and poses, as though she is blowing dust from the palm of her hand, her lips pursed. She breaks the pose with a coke-fueled giggle.

CATHY (CONT'D)

It was an ad they plastered all over the buses. 'Sowing the seeds of change.' I was the girl blowing the dandelion seeds.

SATAN
Now, I remember. It's those lips.

CATHY
Pays the bills, you know?

SATAN
(changing the subject,
abruptly)
May I say you look angelic this
evening?

CATHY
Thank you. And what are you? The
devil?

SATAN
(grinning)
I am. I am the devil.

CATHY
I guess that's where they get that
expression.

Satan moves closer.

SATAN
Which one is that?

CATHY
You know. Handsome devil.

SATAN
You think an angel could make a
little time for the Devil?

CATHY
I guess that depends on how hot he
makes it for her.

Cathy leans into him -

SATAN
I'm the Devil. I carry the heat
with me.

- presses against him, kissing him wetly.

CATHY
Just keep clear of the wings. Hate
to get my feathers singed.

She collapses in tweaked laughter.

SATAN

You know what I love about this town? Hell, what I love about this whole planet?

CATHY

(still recovering from her giggle fit)
What's that, you dirty devil?

SATAN

You love pleasure. And pleasure...

Satan runs his hand over Cathy's waist.

SATAN (CONT'D)

... is what I do best.

Satan leans to her ear and whispers, a WASH OF VOICES, all his.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Pleasure. Give yourself to me. So much pleasure. Lover. Give yourself.

The words are almost unintelligible as they tumble over one another, but the effect is clear. Cathy is writhing under Satan's hand.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Why don't we get out of here and I'll show you just how dirty I can be.

Satan stands and reaches a hand down to Cathy. She regards the hand, then Satan's face.

A FLASH. Satan's face - corrupt, decayed, misshapen horns. Cathy GASPS.

It's gone. Just the smooth, handsome stranger.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Shall we?

With a shake of her head the image is gone. Cathy takes his hand.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The art on the walls is expensive and rare, the statuary likewise elegant. It is simple, '80s modern chic.

Satan leads Cathy inside.

SATAN
Come in, come in.

The door closes, Cathy's body against his instantly, kissing.
He breaks the kiss.

SATAN (CONT'D)
Such an eager beaver.

Cathy tugs Satan by his lapels, backing against the couch,
all smiles.

Satan grabs her and SPINS HER ROUGHLY around, bending her
over.

SATAN (CONT'D)
I'd tell you this won't hurt.

He seizes Cathy by the hair.

SATAN (CONT'D)
But that would be a damned lie.

EXT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Cathy's SCREAM echoes through the night.

FADE OUT.

AGAINST A DARKENED SCREEN--

TITLE: NINE MONTHS LATER

FADE IN:

EXT. MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

LIGHTNING CRASHES against a gothic hospital building.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A gurney busts through double doors, EMTs and DOCTORS
surrounding the patient.

There's a a scream - it's Cathy, supine, clutching her
swollen belly.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Clear the way! Move, damnit!

INT. OPERATING THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The gurney slams open the swinging doors, ATTENDANTS depositing Cathy onto the operating table. Cathy SCREAMS again.

Two metal CLICKS! - her feet are locked into the stirrups.

CATHY
There's something wrong! Oh, God!
Please, God, help me!

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Where is the anesthesia?

CATHY
Get it out of me!

NURSE PATTERSON
Anesthesia's on the way, Doctor.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Oh my God.

BLOOD BLOSSOMS, staining the sheet, dripping onto the table.

CATHY
It hurts! Get it out!

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Where is that fucking anesthesia?!

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A med student, NEAL, early 20s, young and nervous, leans against the glass of the observation room above onto the chaos of the operating room.

SATAN (O.C.)
Some mess.

Neal finds Satan seated, stethoscope around his neck, a medical coat on. The pocket reads "Dr. Cypher".

NEAL
Oh, Doctor, I'm sorry, I'll go.

SATAN

Not at all. You're not on rotation
are you?

NEAL

No. My shift's over. I saw them
pushing her down the hall and-

SATAN

You were curious.

NEAL

Yes.

SATAN

Me, too.

NEAL

She's lost a lot of blood.

SATAN

She won't make it.

NEAL

I'm sure-

SATAN

So am I. She's a goner.

Satan pats the chair beside him.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Go on. I don't bite.

Neal sits, eyes darting between the horror below and the
mysterious doctor beside him.

SATAN (CONT'D)

This is a big day for me, you know?
It's nice to be able to share it
with someone.

(interrupts himself,
looking into the
operating room)

Oh, that is a mess.

(back to Neal)

I'm going to be a daddy.

Neal's face registers horror as he turns his attention to the
Operating Theater below.

NEAL

Not her.

SATAN

Oh, yes.

A THUNDERBOLT CRASHES outside, the lights flickering.

NEAL

Is she your wife?

Satan holds up his ring hand and wiggles the bare finger.

SATAN

No strings on me. She was an angel
I picked up at a party. You know
how it is. How could she know that
the most important thing she would
ever do is have my baby? When I
met her, she was so strung out, it
almost wasn't fair to take her.
Don't get me wrong, it was still
fun.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The anesthesia is kicking in.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE

Thank Christ, she's out.

From beneath the sheets, the sound of TEARING.

NURSE PATTERSON

What is that?

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE

(panicked)

Pull back the sheets.

Beneath the sheets, it's a bloodbath. The labia is
splitting, the head of a child crowning. The baby pushes
out, insistent, the RIPPED FLESH WIDENS.

NURSE PATTERSON

Doctor...

Cathy's body twitches, and an ALARM SOUNDS. Her heart has
stopped.

Doctor Woodhouse is motionless, eyes fixed on the flesh as it
splits like a sheet, exposing blood and bone.

NURSE PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Doctor!

He snaps to attention.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
I need sutures!

NURSE PATTERSON
It's too late.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Suction, clear away some of that
blood!

NURSE PATTERSON
Doctor, it's too late.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
I'll tell you when...

CRYING, faint, then louder as the baby slips from the gaping
wound onto the table.

NURSE PATTERSON
The baby's alive!

Doctor Woodhouse lifts the baby, growing quiet as soon as it
is held. Woodhouse holds the child at arm's length, the
disgust on his face clear.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Call the time of death, Nurse. And
get an open warmer down here and
take this child to NICU.

NURSE PATTERSON
Have you ever seen-

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
No. Never.

NURSE PATTERSON
She split in half.

Doctor Woodhouse turns on her, baby in hand.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE
Is that how you're describing this
in the report?

NURSE PATTERSON
I don't know, Doctor.

DOCTOR WOODHOUSE

If you ask me, it was simply the unfortunate death of a mother during complications related to childbirth. Isn't that how you saw it?

NURSE PATTERSON

(reluctantly)
Yes, Doctor. It was.

DOCTOR #1

Good girl. Where's that fucking warmer?

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Satan stands, Neal rising with him.

Satan pulls a pair of cigars from his coat pocket and sticks one in Neal's gaping mouth.

SATAN

All right! It's a girl!

Neal is stunned. The cigar drops from his mouth. Satan retrieves the cigar from the chair into which it has fallen and tucks it into Neal's breast pocket.

Satan begins to exit, pauses.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Thanks for being here with me.
(squinting, recollecting)
Neal, right?

NEAL

Um, yeah. How did you-

SATAN

(appreciatively)
Had my eye on you and the dean's wife. Keep it up, kid. The whole thing ends with a bang, if you know what I mean.

Satan levels a cocked finger at Neal and drops the hammer. With a wink, Satan exits. Taking his cell from his pocket, Neal dials quickly.

NEAL

Hello? Beth? I know this is out of the blue, but we can't keep doing this.

Neal staggers back into his chair, sweating. He watches as the child below wheels away in a warmer.

INT. HEAVY STUFF MAGAZINE - DAY

Under piles of loose papers, magazines and mail, STEVEN FALSEY (30s) leans back in his office chair, feet propped on the only clear corner. His hair is dark, oily, but stylish. He sports three days worth of stubble on his face. An unlit cigarette dangles from his mouth.

His laptop is propped on his legs, fingers pounding out a new piece on some flash-in-the-pan band, when MARTY (late 50s), a bulldog of an editor, pauses before him.

Finally noticing his boss, Falsey's eyebrows raise ahead of his eyes.

FALSEY

Chief.

MARTY

My office in five.

Marty turns to go, stops, PUSHING FALSEY'S FEET OFF the corner of the desk.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Keep your goddamn feet on the floor.

Falsey sits abruptly upright.

FALSEY

Yes, sir.

Falsey peers around the corner of his cubicle until Marty vanishes into his office. Once gone, Falsey's feet return to the corner of the desk.

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - LATER

Falsey enters the well-kept office, filled with music memorabilia. His cigarette is behind his ear, a notepad in hand.

He hesitates, spotting rival reporter CHRIS McMAHON (20s) leaning against the opposite wall. He's a young go-getter, well-groomed, ambitious.

Marty rises from his chair upon Falsey's entry and begins his usual pacing.

MARTY
(to Falsey)
Shut the door.

Curious, Falsey quickly closes the door and leans against it.

FALSEY
Secret meeting?

MARTY
I'm trying to spare you some grief here.

Falsey leans against the door he's closed.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Your last two pieces have been shit.

FALSEY
Now I get the closed door.
(nods to McMahon)
What's with him?

MARTY
Visual aid.
(pointing at McMahon)
That's the guy that has your desk if you come back from L.A. with another piece of shit story.

McMAHON
(to Falsey)
Look, Steven...

FALSEY
(quickly)
Shut the fuck up, Chris.
(to Marty)
You send me to see crap bands, what do you want me to say about it? I was transported?

MARTY
You make it interesting. That is your job, isn't it?
(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)

To report news in a way that makes people want to read it? It seems like I heard that somewhere before.

MCMAHON

Maybe I should go.

MARTY

Stay right where you are. I'm not done with you, yet.

McMahon quiets, shoulders slumping.

FALSEY

Did you say I'm going to L.A.?

MARTY

You're seeing a band called Hell's Fire. They've been selling out The Warehouse for two weeks and are about to drop their first album.

FALSEY

Marty...

MARTY

Book the flight. You come back with anything less than brilliance, this asshole-

(points to McMahon)

-gets your cubicle and your assignments.

(to McMahon)

Now you can go.

McMahon exits quickly, red-faced but silent. Marty smiles as the door closes.

FALSEY

(grinning)

You are cruel.

MARTY

Looked like he was going to have an aneurism, didn't he?

(sternly)

I'm serious about this article, Falsey.

Falsey makes for the door, arms half-raised in surrender.

FALSEY

You know I'm better than him.

MARTY

He may be a stuffed shirt, but he gives a shit. It goes a long way. Oh, and I'm sending Ben Li after you when he gets back from New Orleans. He'll be your shutterbug on this one. Now, get out of here.

Falsey does.

INT. LAX - DAY

Carving a path through less experienced travellers, Falsey checks his voicemail.

VOICEMAIL (O.C.)

You have... one messages.
First message...

Beat.

EDWARD (O.C.)

Steven? Is this a recording?
(pause)
I don't how the hell...

CLICK.

Falsey returns the phone to an expensive leather belt matching an expensive leather jacket. He's clearly a New Yorker in L.A.

Moving past the security stations, Falsey is free, digging in the single carry-on bag hanging from his shoulder. He flips a cigarette to his mouth from the pack inside.

CHIPPER LADY (O.S.)

Those aren't allowed, sir!

Falsey stops, his unlit cigarette tucked in the corner of his mouth. He finds the CHIPPER LADY (40s), a broad smile on a vacant face.

FALSEY

Sorry?

CHIPPER LADY

Your cigarette. Big no-no!

FALSEY

It's not lit, lady.

Falsey begins to move past her, pauses, turns back.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Shut up.

Falsey leaves her behind, the previously upbeat expression now one of stunned hurt.

EXIT

Falsey approaches a sea of people standing at the entrance with placards in hands. He approaches an older, casually-dressed man holding a sign that reads 'FALSEY' and stops in front of him.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Really?

EDWARD

I thought it would make you feel important.

FALSEY

You are a strange man, Pop.

EDWARD FALSEY's face breaks into a warm smile as he hugs his son, who returns the gesture awkwardly. Despite his 65 years, he's a spry, young-at-heart father.

EDWARD

And take that cigarette out of your mouth. You look like a hoodlum.

Edward leads his son to the entrance. Falsey stops, his father continuing on ahead, in the middle of some story about a neighbor, mindless of his son's disappearance.

FALSEY

Welcome home, Steve-o.

Falsey plucks the cigarette from his mouth and flicks it into a trash can.

INT. EDWARD'S HOME - LATER

GUEST ROOM

Falsey drops his bag on the bed, covered with a home-made quilt. He removes carefully folded clothes, quickly hanging them in the cluttered closet.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Everything in its place?

Falsey turns to see his father in the doorway.

FALSEY

Just don't want them to wrinkle.

EDWARD

Your mother was that way.

(beat)

Just wanted to let you know, dinner will be ready in half an hour.

FALSEY

Thanks, Pop. Oh, I have something for you.

Falsey pulls from his bag an iPod.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Hope you don't mind, I pulled it out of the box. Loaded some music on there for you. Beatles, some Kinks.

EDWARD

What is it?

FALSEY

It's an iPod. A music player. Don't tell me you're getting old on me.

EDWARD

Not a chance. And, thank you. Show me how to work it later.

(beat)

When are you going back?

FALSEY

(not looking at Edward)

A date yet to be determined. When the article's ready.

EDWARD

Good.

(again, to himself)

Good.

(back to Falsey)

How's Kelly?

FALSEY

Her lawyer says she's fine. We don't have a lot of direct communication these days.

EDWARD

I always liked her.

FALSEY
Lots to like.

EDWARD
She stood by you for a long time.

FALSEY
Everyone's got their breaking
point, I guess.

EDWARD
You're still married in the eyes of
God. And yours, too?

Edward nods to the WEDDING BAND on Falsey's finger.

FALSEY
The eyes of the State of New York.
For now, anyway.

An uncomfortable silence descends between them.

EDWARD
I'm going down to the church
tomorrow night. We have a new
priest. Father Ryan. He's younger
and I thought-

FALSEY
(finally meeting Edward's
eyes)
Pop, please. We've already had an
awkward moment over Kelly. Do we
have to have one over God, too?

Edward looks at his son for a long second.

EDWARD
Of course not. Just glad you're
home. Lasagna. Half an hour.

Edward retreats, closing the door behind him.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

METAL MUSIC plays in the background. The club is a hot spot
for the hard rockers, filled with smoke and anger. Lots of
neon beer signs, a smattering of letters burned out.

Falsey leans against a busy bar as music blares. Tatted-up
and mustachioed rockers thrash onstage as a mosh pit
undulates on the floor.

Falsey waves a ten dollar bill between two fingers to get the attention of a similarly tatted-up bartender, STACI (20s). Falsey notes the PENTAGRAM TATTOO on her forearm.

STACI
Whatcha want?

FALSEY
Cranberry and soda. Lime.

STACI
(already at work)
Not much of a drinker, huh?

FALSEY
Not much. You get a lot of repeats for this band?

Staci glances at the stage as she works.

STACI
Vital Front? Nah. Next band, though.
(appreciatively)
Woo.

FALSEY
Hell's Fire, right?

STACI
Seen 'em?

FALSEY
Why I'm here. Pretty good?

STACI
Fire? Shit, yeah. You an agent or something?

FALSEY
Reporter. Ever read Heavy Stuff?

Staci delivers the drink.

STACI
(taking the ten)
My boyfriend keeps a copy in the shitter.

FALSEY
Sounds about right. Keep the change.

STACI
Rock on. Enjoy the show.

Staci moves to the next customer.

The music crashes to a halt, sporadic cheers and growls from the crowd.

As Vital Front leaves the stage, Falsey notes more of the crowd drifting towards the stage. The room GOES DARK.

A FLASH OF LIGHT - Hell's Fire's musicians onstage. DARKNESS, accompanied by frenzied guitar.

Another FLASH OF LIGHT - SERENA now in front. DARKNESS and more guitar as the crowd erupts. The thrashing bleeds into a solo as the LIGHTS COME UP, giving Falsey the first look at the band.

Serena wears a tattered and sultry goth outfit, twisting around the mic stand as the band plays. She could pass for 18.. Or 30. Timelessly sexy and overtly sexual.

Behind her DENNIS WAVERLY, early 30s, the bassist, strums his bass. CAM HOLT, the late 20s drummer.

ALEX TOOMER is the band's elder statesman in his 30s, a veteran of other broken bands. The guitarist is all energy as he pounds out the notes.

As Serena sings, the crowd roars, her voice angelic against the pounding rock.

Falsey comes to attention, now. The band is good. His eyes scan the CROWD, most of whom are shaking fists, jumping up and down, bouncing off one another.

A smaller group, standing around the fringes of the mosh pit, sway gently back and forth, enraptured by the singer.

FALSEY
(turning back to Staci)
Really get the crowd going, don't
they?

His comment falls on deaf ears. Staci sways in time with some of the others. Falsey scans the bar, finding himself singularly not watching the stage.

Falsey turns his gaze to follow theirs to the lead singer. Serena's lips wrap around the words as she sings, eyes scanning the crowd and LOCKING ON FALSEY'S.

Her lips wrap around the lyrics, curling into a smile as they share a moment, eyes heavy-lidded, a look of dark ecstasy on her face in keeping with the tone of the song. When she LEAPS INTO THE AIR for her big finish, she falls to one knee, face hidden. As her head raises, Falsey finds her stare trained on him still.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - LATER

BACKSTAGE

Falsey pushes past the sycophants angling for Hell's Fire, most suggestively-dressed GROUPIES hoping to make time with the boys in the band.

Falsey finds a door marked DRESSING ROOM, graffiti and band logos covering it. He raps quickly on the door, opened by TERRY (40s), an oily manager.

TERRY

Unless you have the fucking bottle
we asked for twenty minutes ago,
you can piss off.

Falsey grins. He's dealt with this type before.

FALSEY

No problem. I'll tell my editor
Hell's Fire isn't interested.

The door opens a little wider.

TERRY

Interested in what?

FALSEY

A story on your band. It is your
band, right?

TERRY

(a moment's hesitation)
I'm their manager.

SERENA (O.C.)

Let him in, Terry.

DRESSING ROOM

Terry opens the door fully, revealing Serena, still in her stage outfit, sitting before a mirror almost undone by the band stickers covering it. She dabs at her face, removing makeup.

FALSEY
 (condescendingly offering
 a hand to shake)
 Steven Falsey. Thanks, Terry.

Falsey gives him a hard shoulder as he passes.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
 (to Serena)
 Some show tonight.

SERENA
 (not turning)
 We were off. Dennis is getting
 sloppy.

FALSEY
 Bass, right?

Serena turns in the chair, half her face still covered by
 pale makeup, lips ruby red, eyes dark.

SERENA
 You've done your homework, Mr.
 Falsey.
 (to Terry)
 That's all for now. You can close
 the door behind you.

TERRY
 Do you want-

SERENA
 He's fine, Terry.
 (to Falsey)
 You are, aren't you? Do I have
 anything to be afraid of?

Falsey turns to Terry.

FALSEY
 Pure as the driven snow.

SERENA
 That would be a shame.

Falsey jerks back to Serena, her face broken into a seductive
 smile.

FALSEY
 I won't take long.

SERENA

We'll see.
 (without looking at Terry)
 Bye, Terry.

TERRY

Back in ten, then.

Terry exits, closing the door.

FALSEY

He seems nice. Mind if I take
 notes?

Falsey pulls a notepad from his jacket pocket. Serena waves
 her hand, dismissive.

SERENA

Terry is a necessary evil in this
 business. Heavy Stuff, right?
 I've read some of your articles.
 Not bad. And you're here for me?

FALSEY

You could say that.

SERENA

Why don't you, then?

FALSEY

We got word back East that there's
 a band we had to hear. I'm the we.

SERENA

And?

FALSEY

I think you have a great sound.
 How long have you been playing?

SERENA

Six weeks.

Serena struts to a table covered with bottles of liquor and
 buckets of beer.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Drink?

FALSEY

No. Thank you. Six weeks isn't
 much time.

SERENA

The band was already together. I was dating the lead singer. He left. But people have a way of doing that don't they?

FALSEY

I suppose they do.

SERENA

Are you sure I can't get you anything? You're not a prude, are you?

Serena pours herself a glass of wine.

FALSEY

I just don't drink.

SERENA

Anymore.

FALSEY

(looks up from his notes)
What?

SERENA

Usually when people say they don't drink, what they mean is that they did drink, but couldn't handle it. So, rather than be a man and deal with their problem, they quit entirely. Thus, "I don't drink."

(beat)

Anymore. Like that cigarette behind your ear. You gonna smoke it?

FALSEY

I quit.

SERENA

You keep a lighter though.

FALSEY

How did you-?

Falsey follows Serena's pointing finger to the bulge in his right pocket. Zippo-shaped.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

It was a gift.
(back to business)
(MORE)

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Do you write your own lyrics?
Singer-songwriter?

SERENA

I do. Of course the rest of the
band has input.

Serena draws close.

FALSEY

What's next for Hell's Fire? I
can't imagine you're happy with
playing dives like The Warehouse.

SERENA

Can I tell you a secret, Mr.
Falsey?

FALSEY

As long as you don't mind it being
printed.

Serena grins and lifts the cigarette from behind Falsey's
ear. Grinning around it, she removes the lighter from his
front pocket and lights the cigarette. Falsey is taken
aback.

SERENA

We're going to take over the world.

FALSEY

And I can quote you on that...
Miss?

SERENA

Just Serena. And I'd be very, very
disappointed in you if you didn't
quote me, Mr. Falsey.

(pause)

Or do you prefer Steven?

FALSEY

I think Mr. Falsey is fine. Do you
have a record, yet?

SERENA

Soon.

FALSEY

How soon?

Serena steps closer.

SERENA

Day after tomorrow soon enough?
We're having a listening party
tomorrow night. You should come.
Unless you have a date with the
wife?

Serena points with her eyes to Falsey's ring finger and the
wedding band on it.

FALSEY

Back in New York. And soon to be
ex, by all accounts.

SERENA

Her loss is my gain, I guess.

Falsey stammers for a response.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(slyly)

At least as far as the party goes.
Now you don't have a good excuse
not to come.

FALSEY

(changing the subject)

So, things are moving fast.
(Serena smiles)
For your band.

SERENA

Patience is not one of my virtues.

Falsey flips the notepad closed and slips it into his pocket.

FALSEY

Me, neither. That's good for now,
I think.

SERENA

Aw, that was fast. I feel... I
don't know. Unfulfilled.

FALSEY

Sorry to hear that.

SERENA

But, you'll come tomorrow?

FALSEY

You'll just have to wait and see.

Serena grins.

SERENA
I'll be watching for you.

FALSEY
Thanks for your time.

SERENA
"Thanks for your time...?"

Falsey shows confusion.

SERENA (CONT'D)
(prompting)
"Thanks for your time, Suh-..."

FALSEY
Thanks for your time, Serena.

Her smile is lupine.

SERENA
I just wanted to be there the first
time you said my name, Mr. Falsey.
Have a wonderful night.

FALSEY
Yeah. You, too.

SERENA
Oh, wait!

Falsey pauses, turning. Serena is there, sliding the lighter
into his pocket.

FALSEY
Thanks.

SERENA
Any. Time.

BACKSTAGE

Falsey exits, turning back to the dressing room. As he meets
Serena's eyes again, Terry reappears with ELIOT, a handsome
young man, in tow.

TERRY
(to Serena)
This is Eliot. He's a big fan.

SERENA
How nice to meet a fan. Without
you, I'd be nothing.

The DOOR CLOSES. Falsey pushes past them, angling for a side door.

A FLASH OF LIGHT spills around the door frame, unseen by others.

SERENA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Delicious...

INT. EDWARD'S HOME - NIGHT

Edward prepares coffee as Falsey finishes his dinner. They do not speak for a long beat.

Edward pours them a cup and sits beside his son.

FALSEY
Thanks.

EDWARD
How's the band?

FALSEY
Loud. Not bad, though.

EDWARD
A lot of these bands today don't know the meaning of music.

FALSEY
Here we go...

EDWARD
When you were growing up, we had The Beatles and The Beach Boys and Elvis.
(distastefully)
Now it's all death and drums and murder.

FALSEY
People said The Rolling Stones were Satan worshippers.

EDWARD
How can you be so sure they weren't? Look at Keith Richards.

FALSEY
Bad example.

A jovial silence falls for a beat.

EDWARD

I don't like you being in bars.

FALSEY

I'm really okay, Pop. No drinking for me.

EDWARD

Why surround yourself with that kind of temptation, though?

FALSEY

Because it's the job. And that's more important than me getting shit-

Falsey stops short, seeing his father's eyebrows raise at the language.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

That's more important to me than getting wasted. So are you.

Falsey takes another sip of coffee, standing, kissing the top of Edward's head.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Coffee's good, too, Pop. I think I'm going to step outside for a sec. Get some air.

EDWARD

Stay on the porch. And don't get Ms. Kirschner's dog barking. That beast should be in a circus, not a yard.

FALSEY

You know I love you, right, Pop?

EDWARD

Of course I do, Steven.

Edward rises to do the dishes.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Take your coat. It's getting cooler out there.

FALSEY

Pop, it's seventy-
(he shuts his trap)
I will, Pop. Be back in a minute.

Falsey stares at his father's back for a moment before leaving the kitchen.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOME - NIGHT

Falsey slings his coat over his shoulder, descending the brief steps to the sidewalk.

FALSEY
I should have gotten a hotel room.

As he stands on the porch, Falsey is represented in a series of STILL BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS, the accompanying sounds of a camera's SHUTTER CLICKING.

Falsey looks out over the empty street when he spies a glowing red LED pinprick of light, and a the dark shape of a STRANGER between two houses.

The two men make eye contact, the Stranger young and frightened-looking. Falsey takes a tentative step towards the stranger, who DISAPPEARS into the darkness.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Falsey rushes across the street. He pauses between the two houses, squinting into the darkness. Falsey moves slowly, removing the ZIPPO from his pocket and igniting the flame.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Hello?

A breeze blows the flame against Falsey's hand. He jerks away from the flame, losing the lighter.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Shit!

Falsey bends, feeling the grass for the lighter. A RUSTLE comes from ahead, to the right.

Falsey moves towards the sound, duck-walking as he feels for the lost lighter.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
You there? What are you, private eye or something? You working for my wife?

The RUSTLING IS CLOSER.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Aha!

Falsey raises the found lighter, flicking the cylinder, bring the flame to life.

A SAINT BERNARD, safely behind a chain link fence and certainly the source of the sound, is revealed, suddenly springing to life and launching into BELLOWING BARKS.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

Falsey falls backward into the grass as porch lights illuminate on nearby houses.

MS. KIRSCHNER (O.C.)

Franklin? What is it boy?

Falsey gets to his feet.

FALSEY

Did you see someone come through here?

MS. KIRSCHNER (O.C.)

Who are you? Get away from that fence! I'm calling the police!

FALSEY

Sorry...

Falsey trots quickly across the road. Edward stands on the porch, the door open.

EDWARD

(quietly scolding)
I thought I told you not to bother Ms. Kirschner's dog.

Falsey pauses before Edward, panting.

FALSEY

Did you see somebody, Pop?

EDWARD

No. Why?

FALSEY

(breathless)
Someone was there.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

On stage, a PENTAGRAM has been constructed, the face of a rotted demon within it. The band members mill about the floor, Serena's absence conspicuous. The band looks haggard, especially Alex.

Falsey scans the room, and, seeing no one, makes for the bar where Staci is mixing drinks.

STACI
Hey, Mr. Tonic-and-a-lime.

FALSEY
You got me.

Falsey pauses, seeing her. Staci's skin is pale, and her lips and hairline show signs of sores.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
You feeling okay?

STACI
(smiling, serious)
Never better. Went to an after party for the band. Guess I've been burning it at both ends.

Falsey nods and pays her for the drink.

FALSEY
Take care. Never underestimate the power of a good night's sleep.

STACI
Yeah...

Suddenly, Staci's eyes grow wide and a look of pure adoration washes over her.

SERENA (O.C.)
Nice to see you again, Staci. Mr. Falsey.

Falsey turns to see Serena, decked out in leather, looking sultry and dark. He flirts openly with her.

FALSEY
Just taking in the sights.
(points to the demon)
Friend of yours?

SERENA

(her tongue rolls around
the words)

Close. Personal. Friend.

(beat)

Don't you look nice. Something's
different. I can't seem to put my
finger on it, though.

They shake hands, Serena's fingers caressing Falsey's hand,
flitting over his now-bare ring finger. He holds the grasp a
moment.

FALSEY

Thanks.

(looking back at the set)

Some money went into this.

SERENA

Our A & R man said he wanted to
"emphasize the darkness", whatever
that means.

FALSEY

I'd say he's on the right track. I
was hoping to talk to the band
while I'm here, too, if that's
okay.

SERENA

Of course. We have our big release
show here tomorrow night. Can I
convince you to spend another night
with me?

FALSEY

I think you could.

TERRY

(interrupting)

Serena, we need you on stage, love.

SERENA

Guess I have to go. See you soon.

FALSEY

Absolutely. Break a leg.

Serena offers a shy smile, contrasted by her meager wardrobe,
as she takes the stage.

Dennis helps her up, looking as though he can barely stand
himself. She thanks him with a stroke of the cheek and he
smiles gratefully.

SERENA
 (to CROWD)
 Are all you lost souls ready to
 rock?

While some of the Crowd explodes in applause, a group, larger than the night before, sways slowly to and fro, eyes focused on Serena.

Falsey finishes his soda and lime, turning to the bar.

FALSEY
 Another one, Staci?

Falsey looks back to Staci at the bar, her face likewise upturned to the stage in awe.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - LATER

The show ended, Serena and the other band members mix with the crowd, signing autographs, meeting and greeting.

ALEX (O.C.)
 Pretty lady, huh?

Falsey finds Alex, munching a sandwich, at his side.

FALSEY
 Hollywood pretty.

ALEX
 Fuckin' A.

Alex licks his fingers clean, wipes them on his jeans, extends it to Falsey to shake. He does.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 Alex Toomer.

FALSEY
 Steven Falsey. I've met you
 before, haven't I?

ALEX
 You interviewed me in '98. I was
 with-

SIMULTANEOUS
 Wicked Letter.

FALSEY
 I never forget a face. You guys
 were pretty good.

ALEX
'Preciate it.

FALSEY
Shitty drummer.

ALEX
Yeah. He enjoyed the spike more
than the sticks, if you know what I
mean.

FALSEY
Sad to say I do. Things are
looking up for you, huh?

ALEX
(eying the stage)
Bigger than anything I've done
before and the record's not even
out yet.

FALSEY
And yet...

ALEX
And yet...
(reflecting)
Showbiz sure ain't what it seems,
you know?

FALSEY
How so?

ALEX
(shaking himself from his
reverie)
I gotta get back. No rest for the
wicked and all that.

FALSEY
I thought that was 'No rest for the
weary.'

ALEX
One and the same, my man, one and
the same. Good seeing ya, again.
And Serena...

FALSEY
(too quickly)
What about her?

ALEX
 (pausing to get his words
 right)
 Just keep an eye out for the catch.
 With her, always is one.

Falsey quickly makes notes in his pad as Alex heads back to the throng.

EXT. LA STREET - NIGHT

Falsey trudges past the neon glare of several bar fronts, pausing before one advertising its scotch selection, rain falling.

Falsey is SHOVED FORWARD as someone bumps into him hard, nearly sending him to the ground.

STRANGER
 Into the diner. Not too close.

Falsey rights himself, looking into the back of The Stranger from the night before, now past him and ducking into a diner decorated to resemble a 1950s decor.

INT. RETRO DINER - CONTINUOUS

Falsey enters, looking around for The Stranger, now seated facing the door.

The Stranger wears faded jeans, a tee and a Desert Storm Marine utility jacket. His eyes dart from Falsey to the plate glass window and the night beyond, back again. He is nervous, distracted.

Falsey moves to stand beside the table. He removes his CELL PHONE and begins to DIAL.

STRANGER
 What are you doing?

FALSEY
 I'm calling the police.

The Stranger grabs Falsey's wrist and brings his hand down hard on the table, jarring the cell out of Falsey's hand and across the table.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
 Son of a bitch!

A YOUNG WAITRESS (20s) approaches.

YOUNG WAITRESS
Is everything okay over there?

The Stranger looks into Falsey's eyes, pleading.

STRANGER
Sit down. I just want to talk.
(beat)
Please.

Falsey looks back to the Young Waitress.

FALSEY
We're fine. Couple of cups of
coffee?

YOUNG WAITRESS
(warily)
Sure thing.

Falsey sits, rubbing his wrist.

FALSEY
Some reflexes you've got.

STRANGER
You can't get the police into this.

FALSEY
Who are you?

STRANGER
A friend.

FALSEY
That shit is definitely not going
to fly.

Falsey reaches for the phone again.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
You're... what? Six-foot-two? I
want to get the description right
for the police.

STRANGER
(scolding himself)
This went a lot better in my head.

FALSEY
Just tell me your name. Start
there.

STRANGER

I can't. Believe me, the less you know right now, the better off you are. You have to get out of Los Angeles.

FALSEY

Why?

STRANGER

There's a very old and very dangerous game going on here. If you stay...

The Young Waitress appears, delivering the coffee.

YOUNG WAITRESS

You boys want to look at a menu?

STRANGER

No, thank you.

FALSEY

We're fine.
(to The Stranger)
For now.

YOUNG WAITRESS

Just yell if you need me.

FALSEY

(eyes still on The
Stranger)
Will do.

The Young Waitress departs.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

What happens if I stay? Who the hell are you? What were you doing outside my father's house?

STRANGER

I'm begging you. Get out of this city.

FALSEY

Or what?

STRANGER

She's watching you, just like the Soldiers.

FALSEY
Who is? What Soldiers?

STRANGER
Serena. She's getting stronger.
(levels a finger at
Falsey)
She's marked you.

FALSEY
Okay, that's it.
(to himself)
Fuckin' stalkers.

Falsey scoops up his phone.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Thanks for the coffee, but crazy
time is over. You come near me or
my father again...

Falsey begins to leave, half-standing, frozen in place by The
Stranger's next words.

STRANGER
Your name is Steven Falsey. You
live on West 37th street in New
York City. You and your wife,
Kelly, are separated. She lives
outside the city now with a man
named Pierce and your dog, Hamlet.

Falsey sits, stunned.

FALSEY
You're watching my wife? Who the
hell are you people?

STRANGER
Not me. Not anymore. But I know
that if you stay, you're putting
your life and the lives of every
man, woman and child in danger.
(frustrated)
You don't understand! She wants
you. You have to go.

FALSEY
(shaken)
What do you know about Serena? And
what's with the kids at her shows?
If you know something, now's the
time to spill it.

The Stranger fidgets nervously.

STRANGER
 You wouldn't believe me.
 (laughs bitterly)
 You won't leave, will you?

Falsey stands again, tossing a few bills on the table.

FALSEY
 Coffee's on me.
 (drawing close, quiet)
 I see you again and you can forget
 the police. I'll beat the shit out
 of you myself.

Falsey turns his back on The Stranger as the young man calls after him.

STRANGER
 (pleading desperately)
 You have to get out of here!

FALSEY
 (to himself)
 I am.

Falsey pounds through the door.

The Young Waitress approaches The Stranger at his table.

YOUNG WAITRESS
 You sure you're okay?

STRANGER
 (downcast)
 Never better. More coffee, maybe.

YOUNG WAITRESS
 You got it.

The Young Waitress disappears to find a fresh pot.

The Stranger looks out the rain-battered plate glass window beside him. A WHISPER, a low and sensual FEMALE VOICE finds him, the words unintelligible. DARK LAUGHTER can be made out in the quiet.

The Stranger's smile fades immediately. As the WHISPER GROWS LOUDER, FROST APPEARS on the exterior of the glass, starting at the bottom, spreading until it creates a silhouette of the Stranger at his booth.

He looks down at the cup of coffee in his hands, seeing the drink change from steaming to cool to frozen as he holds it.

The Stranger is out of the booth, jacket on, in a hurry. He's out the door fast.

The Young Waitress notices the departure, crossing to the table, finding two wadded twenties there.

YOUNG WAITRESS (CONT'D)
(calling after)
You want your change?

He's gone.

YOUNG WAITRESS (CONT'D)
Big tipper, I guess.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

The rain is coming down hard as the Stranger moves quick through the crowd, eyes darting behind him.

Seeing no one, he DUCKS INTO AN ALLEY, back pressed hard against the wall.

ALLEY

From beneath his shirt, he reveals a ROSARY and a military-issue SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL, fingers playing over the beads as his lips work the prayers.

STACI (O.C.)
Which of those little piggies goes
to market, again?

The Stranger turns to the sound of the voice, gun raised, revealing Staci beside him. Her face, lips and hairline are covered with sores, her skin pale, almost blue.

He trains the gun on her, interrupted by Staci's TALONED HAND seizing the wrist and giving it a wicked SNAP.

Her other hand closes around his neck, lifting him from the ground, her PENTAGRAM TATTOO on display. His black-booted heels kick the bricks.

When she speaks, Staci's voice is echo-y, Serena's voice beneath.

STACI (CONT'D)
The reporter is ours.

The Stranger moans, hand twisting for his pocket. Letting loose of the rosary, the Stranger reaches for a pocket inside his coat.

STACI (CONT'D)

Shhhh. Close your eyes. Give us a kiss.

Staci leans to his face, mouth opening. Within her mouth, tentacles writhe and glisten spilling over cracked and sore-ridden lips.

The Stranger grins triumphantly, raising the crucifix from his pocket to Staci's face, pressing it against her forehead.

She pauses, disappointed.

STACI (CONT'D)

Do I look like a twinkle-y fucking vampire to you?

She moves fast, mouth wider, eyes rolling up to white as her JAW UNHINGES and reveals rows of sharp teeth, her tongue wrapping around the Follower's head as a SECOND SET OF JAWS clamps over his face.

EXT. THE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Falsey pushes through a crowd gathering to see Hell's Fire.

BEN LI, late 20s, decked out with a photographer's vest and torn jeans, takes shots of the crowd waiting to get in.

Falsey spots Li and offers a wave as he approaches.

FALSEY

Ben, right?

BEN

Ben Li. Falsey?

FALSEY

That's it. Good to see you.
(gestures to the door)
Ready for this?

Falsey makes for the entrance, Li following after snapping a final shot - a girl giving devil horns to the camera, her professionally-split tongue forked for effect.

Ben gives her a thumbs up after snapping the shot.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE

Falsey leads the way with Ben rushing to catch up. More fans are inside, milling about. Many are looking pale, sores on their faces.

BEN
Crazy scene, huh?

Falsey draws Ben into the corner bar.

FALSEY
One way to put it. Crowd's gotten bigger since yesterday. With the album release...

Falsey pantomimes an explosion.

BEN
What do you want? Shots of the band, the crowd? Lead singer?

FALSEY
You're going to want shots of her, anyway.

BEN
She's hot?

Falsey gestures towards the stage as the band emerges from back stage. The crowd ROARS.

BEN (CONT'D)
Holy shit.

Serena is all smiles, waving to the crowd as she approaches the microphone. She's wrapped in a latex one piece, decorated with silver charms.

FALSEY
Told you so.

BEN
I think I just met my first ex-wife.

Falsey motions for the bartender, CHAD (20s), a tattooed hipster with a long van dyke.

CHAD
Getforya?

FALSEY
Cranberry and soda. Ben?

BEN

What? Oh.

(digs in his pocket for a
few bills)

Heineken. Bottle's fine, draft's
better.

FALSEY

(to Chad)

You heard the man.

Chad digs for a bottle in ice.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Where's Staci?

CHAD

Who?

FALSEY

Bartender. Pretty girl, tattoo on
her arm?

(Falsey indicates his
forearm)

She wasn't looking too good last
time I saw her.

CHAD

Didn't show up tonight.

FALSEY

Shame.

Chad sets the drinks on the bar.

CHAD

Ten-fifty. Couple of people said
she might be using. Rock and roll
lifestyle, man. She was hanging
out with Alex and the guys from the
band. Serena, too.

Falsey hands Chad a twenty.

FALSEY

Keep it. You think of anything
else, tell me, okay?

CHAD

You a stalker or something?

FALSEY

Reporter.

CHAD
Is there a difference?

FALSEY
(with a grin)
Pays better.

Chad moves away, dishing out the drinks.

Ben grabs his beer, shaking his head at the crowd.

BEN
Some scary looking chicks here.

FALSEY
Keep your eyes open tonight, okay?

BEN
What am I looking for?

FALSEY
Anything strange.

A TATTOOED MAN slips between them to order a drink, his head shaved, his skull tattooed with a giant spiderweb and a fat, hairy spider sitting on the web positioned at the back of his neck.

He nods at Ben and Falsey as he backs away with his drink.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Stranger than that.

SERENA (O.C.)
Our first album, Embers, is out today!

She pauses as cheers erupt and Ben and Falsey turn to the stage.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Thank you, thank you, thank you for all your support! Next week, we're kicking off our tour with a live set at the Municipal. If you can't be there, you can see it on three channels and the fucking internet! And I promise you-
(beat, lower)
We will burn that place down!

More cheers, louder.

SERENA (CONT'D)
But enough of that corporate
bullshit!

The crowd is nearly in a frenzy.

BEN
(to Falsey)
She's a potty mouth.

SERENA
Let's rock!

Flash pots explode in smoke as the band gets rolling, hard
and fast.

BEN
I'm going to cruise around, get
some shots of the crowd.

FALSEY
Meet me back here.

BEN
You're not hitting the pit tonight?

Falsey grins.

FALSEY
(indicating his knee)
Bursitis.

Ben disappears into the crowd with a grin. Bodies twist
around him, jumping up and down, pumping fists. He holds the
camera slightly aloft for protection.

Finding a COUPLE MAKING OUT in the midst of the crowd, Ben
carves some space and takes a quick shot of the pair,
oblivious to the bodies in motion around them.

Another shot, this time of Alex in the middle of a solo,
fingers blazing.

Ben pauses, seeing a group of FANS (all late teens), one a
METAL GIRL, the other two METAL GUYS, all three of whom are
decorated with several piercings and their favorite black
concert tees. They are pale, almost motionless, rocking
slowly, staring at the stage.

Ben lowers his camera, capturing the three of them in frame,
the sores on their faces clearly seen. As he lines up the
shot, the Metal Girl faces him, her face devoid of emotion.
He SNAPS THE PICTURE.

Lowering the camera, Ben sees the Metal Girl turn back and resume her swaying with the Metal Guys. Ben retreats to the back of the club as the music hammers on, looking through the LCD display of the camera.

Several pictures, some very good, but it's the last he wants to see. There it is. The Metal Girl looking right at him, but beneath her face, like a ghost of an image, something else, full of teeth and rows of arachnid eyes.

BEN
 (jerking his head up,
 bewildered)
 Falsey!

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - LATER

BACK STAGE

Falsey jots notes as he speaks with Dennis, who's doing his level best to sound sober.

DENNIS
 You know, man, it's just the rush -
 the rush - of playing. It's like
 you give it out and they give it
 right back, man. Circle of fucking
 life and hakuna matata, man.

FALSEY
 Never pegged you for a Disney fan.

DENNIS
 What?

Ben finds Falsey.

BEN
 Falsey!

FALSEY
 Ben. This is Dennis Waverly,
 bassist extraordinaire for Hell's
 Fire.

DENNIS
 Yeah, extraordinaire and all that
 French shit!

BEN
 (ignoring Dennis)
 I need to talk to you.

FALSEY

Sure.

(to Ben)

You want a picture of Dennis first?

DENNIS

Ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille.

Dennis smiles and poses with his bass, as if he's been caught *in medias* rock. His sunken eyes are bad, but the bruises near the veins in his upper forearm are more telling.

BEN

Maybe later.

(takes in Dennis's
appearance)

Definitely later. Thanks.

Dennis looks crestfallen.

DENNIS

Before long, you guys'll be paying us to take our picture.

BEN

(giving a false smile)

I bet.

(to Falsey)

Can I talk to you?

FALSEY

See you, Dennis.

Falsey leads Ben to the side.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

What's up?

BEN

You said to let you know if I saw anything strange, right?

FALSEY

What did you see?

BEN

I didn't just see it, man. I have a picture of it.

Falsey leans over Ben's camera, suddenly distracted by the sound of a man's voice rising above the din.

ALEX (O.C.)
...Because it's not worth it! You
can kiss my ass goodbye!

Ben and Falsey turn to see Alex pressed against the back wall
by Serena, whose smile never falters.

BEN
And you're-

FALSEY
Going to stick my nose in that.

Falsey is off.

BEN
There's got to be a better way to
phrase that.

CALLIE (20s) sidles up to Ben, peeking over his elbow to see
the camera. Ben angles the display away from her.

CALLIE
I didn't mean to interrupt you.

BEN
I was done, anyway. What's your
name?

CALLIE
Callie. Are you with the band?

BEN
I'm taking pictures-
(rethinks it)
Yes. Yes, I am. Would you like to
hear more over a martini?

Callie grins and follows Ben towards the bar in front.

BEN (CONT'D)
One sec.

Ben snaps a picture of Callie, checks the display.

BEN (CONT'D)
We're cool.

Falsey makes no pretense of stealth as he crosses to Alex and
Serena. Alex sees him first.

ALEX
Mr. Falsey.

FALSEY

Alex.
 (to Serena)
 Serena. Bad time?

Serena's attention begins to shift, returning briefly to Alex.

SERENA

You're in the band, Alex. Once you're in, you're in. That's all I'm going to say about that.
 (to Falsey)
 Never a bad time for you, Mr. Falsey. What can I do for you?

FALSEY

I was hoping to talk to Alex, actually. Just wrapped up with Dennis, so...

There's a moment's hesitation.

SERENA

Maybe this isn't the best time, after all. Alex-

ALEX

No, this is a perfect time. Let's talk, Falsey.

Alex pushes past Serena towards Falsey.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Want some air?

FALSEY

Sounds good.

SERENA

(looking away)
 Terry!

Serena marches off, burying her rage.

EXT. THE WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alex pushes fast through the rear entrance, stretching as he steps into the night air.

ALEX

Man, it feels fucking great out here.

Falsey follows him, close behind.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You learn to appreciate the little things, older you get, isn't that right?

FALSEY

I don't know. I appreciate the big things, too.

Alex grins looking at Falsey, sliding an unlit cigarette over his knuckles.

ALEX

You seem like an honest guy.

FALSEY

I try.

ALEX

Good enough, I guess. You want a real story, Falsey? Probably won't believe a word of it, but...

FALSEY

Try me.

Alex pauses, wondering where to begin. Falsey removes his notepad and makes notes.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Sounded like you were threatening to quit. Are you?

ALEX

Maybe. I don't know.
(beat, looks at Falsey)
You get to a point where you start measuring cost. What does it cost to be famous? Am I willing to pay it?

FALSEY

What's the cost?

ALEX

Your soul, man.

FALSEY

Not a new story. Am I giving up on a family, a regular life...?

ALEX

I'm talking about the real thing.
Your immortal fucking soul.

FALSEY

What?

Alex leans forward, conspiratorially.

ALEX

Look, man, this band was a blip on the radar a few months ago. A bunch of decent guys with more dreams than talent. That was okay by me. I'd seen some good cats get caught up in fame and come crashing down, face-first usually. If it didn't kill them, it left them fucked for life one way or another. Drug habit, booze problem, dick problems. I was okay with the small time. Play some gigs, make a few records, maybe sell some locally, have a few thousand Facebook friends, that sort of shit. Get a real estate license in ten years and grow the fuck up.

(suddenly)

You got a smoke?

FALSEY

Yeah.

Falsey hands over the cigarette that is again tucked behind his ear.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

I didn't know you smoked.

ALEX

(with a mournful smile)

Just started.

(back to confession)

Like I said, there's a cost. I'll never see that real estate license. I'll be on the cover of guitar magazines, and I'll be able to fuck a different girl every night, but I'll never have grace.

FALSEY

Grace?

Alex looks back to the sky, grinning bitterly, spitting smoke. He makes a face at the taste of the cigarette.

ALEX

Old.

FALSEY

Had that pack a while now. You're not talking about God and Heaven and all that shit?

ALEX

On the nose, man. I will die, eventually, and I'll spend my eternity in hell.

FALSEY

So you're saying that all the occult shit your band is into...

ALEX

(smiling, looking back to Falsey)
All real.

Falsey closes his notepad.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You think I'm crazy? Gone around the bend? Guess you would. Unless you see it.

FALSEY

See what?

ALEX

Some of the kids, the way they react to her. Like a light's turning on in their brains. You noticed that yet?

FALSEY

Some of them are a little weird, but look around you.

Alex laughs.

ALEX

(turning off)
So much for confession. I look forward to reading your article.

FALSEY

Maybe you just need a break, huh?

ALEX

Maybe so. I'm heading out.
Serena's probably pissed. Guess
I'm in dutch with the missus.

He stands and grabs his gear.

ALEX (CONT'D)

See you around, Falsey.
(levelling a finger at
him)
You think about what we talked
about.

Falsey watches him disappear into the night.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE

DRESSING ROOM

Serena sits before a mirror, dabbing at the thick white make-up. She pauses, tilting her head, seeing herself from several angles. She casually rubs her temples, then higher. No horns.

SATAN (O.C.)

Big day.

Serena spins in the chair, seeing Satan reclining on the dirty couch, graffiti scrawled above him. Lots of pentagrams. He turns a CD of their album, Embers, over in his hands. It's the cover from the first scene.

He looks up, admiring the decor.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Nice place.

Serena stands, wrapping a robe around herself to cover her stage outfit.

SATAN (CONT'D)

When did you get modest?

SERENA

What are you doing here?

Satan stands, brushing his well-tailored suit with a handkerchief from his lapel.

SATAN

You don't sound happy to see me.

SERENA

It's not that-

SATAN

Ah, you got a little taste of the good life. Worshippers fawning over you, doing your evil bidding.

(grinning)

It's sweet, ain't it?

Satan comes close, giving Serena a long up-and-down.

SATAN (CONT'D)

I am always surprised by how beautiful you turned out.

(musing)

I'd fuck you myself if I didn't think it would kill you.

SERENA

What do you want?

SATAN

(amiably)

I wanted to wish you luck.

SERENA

I don't need luck.

SATAN

Pride goeth before a fall, baby girl.

SERENA

It's perfect. The album is out. The big event, next week. Just like we talked about.

SATAN

That will be a sight.

SERENA

Will you be there?

SATAN

In one form or another. What about the reporter?

SERENA

What about him?

SATAN

He's dangerous.

SERENA
 He's just a man.
 (coyly)
 Besides. I want him.

SATAN
 There are plenty of others that
 would do. Other men that won't put
 up a struggle...

He can see she won't be persuaded.

SATAN (CONT'D)
 But you like this one.

SERENA
 He'll come to me.

SATAN
 Probably.

SERENA
 And then, whether he wants to or
 not, he'll give himself to me.

SATAN
 I am so proud of you, sugarbottom.
 Nothing like a father's pride
 before his daughter's wedding day.

Satan strokes Serena's hair, drawing very close, one hand
 untying the knot on Serena's robe.

SATAN (CONT'D)
 You are lovely.

He slips a hand inside the robe.

SERENA
 I thought you said you'd kill me.
 And with our big night so close...

Serena tilts her head, bringing Satan's finger into her
 mouth, sucking softly.

SATAN
 (pleased)
 Nasty little thing.

His finger pops from her mouth.

SERENA
 I'm daddy's little girl.

SATAN
That you are.

Satan turns to leave, pauses.

SATAN (CONT'D)
You're sure you want this reporter?

SERENA
He tries so hard to be good. When
he lets me in...

Serena shivers with pleasure at the thought.

Satan gives her a final look.

SATAN
My my my, you would be a delicious
lay.

Satan opens the dressing room door and slips away.

INT. DINGY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ben flips on a light over the small work station in the room
as Falsey follows behind.

BEN
Here.

Ben flips through pictures taken at The Warehouse, now
downloaded to his laptop.

FALSEY
Those are good.

BEN
Thanks.
(pause)
Here it is.

It's the shot of the Metal Girl, her face grave, the
distortion beneath it.

FALSEY
Some kind of light problem?

BEN
I was shooting in the same light
all night. Besides, look at it!
That's not light or smoke or
anything else.

FALSEY

What are you saying? She's got
some crazy spider face?

BEN

The camera doesn't lie.

Falsey pops a cigarette from behind his ear into his mouth.

BEN (CONT'D)

No smoking in here.

FALSEY

I'm not lighting it. Helps me
think.

BEN

It's a bad habit.

Falsey gives him a withering stare.

BEN (CONT'D)

Just saying.

(pause)

So, what do we do about the
picture?

FALSEY

Nothing. Could have been a problem
with the camera-

BEN

There is nothing wrong-

FALSEY

Could have been lots of things.
Whatever it is, there's an
explanation.

BEN

Something's going on with these
kids.

FALSEY

Something that has nothing to do
with us. We do the story, we get
out.

(another look at Ben's
room)

Nice room. Marty goes all out,
doesn't he?

Falsey exits.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - MORNING

Buzzing around the kitchen, BARBARA (40s) prepares breakfast for her son, KEVIN (16), sitting at the table. He is in a daze, listening to a Hell's Fire bootleg, hair dark and messy, clothes full of angst.

BARBARA

Kevin.

Kevin is unresponsive.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Kevin!

She lifts one of the headphones from his ear, frustrated.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Hey, kid, you want scrambled this morning?

KEVIN

Whatever.

BARBARA

Scrambled it is.

She releases the headphone, popping it back to his head. She grabs the carton of eggs and a container of orange juice. Behind her, on the stove, an iron skillet sizzles.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I swear sometimes, you tune everything out and I don't know how to-

Barbara's words are cut short as she turns back to the stove and finds Kevin, standing behind her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Kevin! You scared me to-

Kevin swings the sizzling IRON SKILLET, sending Barbara to the ground, her skin burning.

KEVIN

Scrambled! Scrambled!

He is laughing maniacally as the skillet goes up and down, turning Barbara's skull into searing mush

INT. EDWARD'S HOME - MORNING

BEDROOM

Falsey's CELL BUZZES on the night stand. He props his eyes open, having fallen asleep while reading. He pushes the laptop off his lap, on the screen a picture of Serena as a teenager, along with another girl, both dressed as cheerleaders.

A fumbling hand finds the phone.

FALSEY
(drowsily)
Hello?

BEN (O.C.)
Falsey, turn on the news.

FALSEY
I gotta go downstairs.

BEN (O.C.)
Then get there. Call me back.

LIVING ROOM

Pulling on a clean shirt with his jeans, Falsey hears Edward humming away in the kitchen. He turns the old television on and finds a news channel.

A styled REPORTER (40s) speaks to the audience while an image of a CHURCH BURNING plays in the background.

REPORTER
...The suspect has said nothing since his arrest, leading some to wonder if this is part of a more organized attack than initially thought.

The image changes to a suburban home, POLICE TAPE cordoning it off, with other LOCAL REPORTERS swarming around. The image FREEZES as Kevin is seen being led from the house by POLICE. He's wearing a Hell's Fire T-shirt, his face stuck in a silent, blood-spattered grin.

FALSEY
Holy shit.

Falsey grabs his jacket and heads for the door at a clip.

Edward peeks around the corner, the iPod his son gave him plugged into both ears.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - EVENING

Ben double- and triple-checks his camera as gravel crunches under the tires of the RENTAL CAR.

BEN
Sort of exciting, huh?

Falsey breaks from his thoughts.

FALSEY
What's that?

BEN
You know. Investigating.

FALSEY
We're not investigating. I just wanted some background. We get background, we go to the big show, we talk to the band, we go home.

Ben pauses, putting the lens cap on the camera.

BEN
Maybe she'll have tea. People in the country always offer tea. Or lemonade. But we drink it inside. I don't want to be out here with all the bugs.

FALSEY
We're there.

EXT. RURAL HOME - EVENING

The houses are far apart here, each home barely visible from the next.

Falsey's sedan pulls into the driveway as a screen door opens. NATALIE steps onto the porch, now in her late 20s with family. She is the girl from the cheerleader photo, older, but still earthy and pretty.

Falsey waves as he climbs out of the car, Ben in tow.

FALSEY
Ms. Carter?

NATALIE
Pendleton, now.

FALSEY

Sorry.

NATALIE

(smiling)

Took a while for me to get used to,
too.

BEN

Nice to meet you. I'm Ben.

Ben extends his hand. Natalie does not shake it. Ben slowly lowers it, uncomfortable.

NATALIE

(to Ben)

Nice to meet you.

(to Falsey)

That makes you Mr. Falsey. You sounded older on the phone.

FALSEY

And you look as pretty as your picture. May we come in?

NATALIE

Rather you didn't. Not to be rude, I just don't want this conversation in my house. How about a walk?

FALSEY

Sure.

Ben rolls his eyes, falling into step behind Falsey and Natalie.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Natalie walks alongside Falsey, enjoying the view of the quiet country road. Ben pauses occasionally to snap a shot of the picturesque countryside.

BEN

Peaceful.

NATALIE

(looking back to him)

It is. When John moved us out here I thought I was going to hate it, but it's really grown on me. Hard to believe there are still places where you don't have to lock the doors at night.

FALSEY

I don't know if I could sleep.

NATALIE

You learn to. I kept checking the locks, until one night I forgot. Been forgetting ever since. But, that's not what you came to talk about, is it?

FALSEY

(taking a breath)

No, ma'am, I'm afraid not.

NATALIE

You want to talk about her.

FALSEY

Have you been in touch with her?

NATALIE

I read the news. Looked her up occasionally on the web.

FALSEY

Out here?

NATALIE

(teasing)

Just because it's quiet doesn't mean it's prehistoric, Mr. Falsey.

FALSEY

Sorry.

NATALIE

Don't be. She's getting famous, huh?

FALSEY

She is.

NATALIE

Have you met her, Mr. Falsey?

FALSEY

Yes.

NATALIE

Then you've felt it?

FALSEY

It?

NATALIE

I don't know. That thing.
She's... persuasive.

FALSEY

I would call it charismatic.

BEN

I would call it hot.

Falsey shoots a disdainful look at Ben, who grins merrily.

NATALIE

That's putting a pretty coat of
paint on it. When we were girls,
Mr. Falsey, we were best friends.
That's what I thought, anyway. She
never laughed. Never smiled, not
really.

FALSEY

That doesn't sound like her at all.

NATALIE

Not anymore. She's learned to fit
in. That started after Drew's
funeral.

FALSEY

Drew?

NATALIE

(matter-of-factly)
The boy she killed.

Falsey stops dead.

FALSEY

I'm sorry?

NATALIE

She didn't do it herself, not
exactly. After the funeral, she
started acting more like a typical
teenager, but that's what was
strange about it. Does that make
any sense?

BEN

Acting normal was abnormal.

NATALIE

Right. She was incredibly popular
her last year in school.

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Always a crowd around her. I fell by the wayside.

FALSEY

You said she killed him, but not exactly?

NATALIE

She talked him into it. She could talk anyone into anything. Sometimes she didn't even have to say it. I always thought her oddity came from being raised by foster parents or something. I think, now, she was born wrong.

FALSEY

(prodding for more)
Wrong?

NATALIE

Evil, Mr. Falsey. I think she's evil.

FALSEY

Nobody's purely good or bad, Mrs. Pendleton.

NATALIE

She is. I'm sure you have your own beliefs, Mr. Falsey, but I'm telling you what I know. The first time I saw her smile, really smile, was when she told me about Drew, about how she was on the phone with him right before he did it. It was the most awful smile I'd ever seen.

FLASHBACK

INT. DREW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

DREW lies on his bed in a battered high school football tee shirt and sweats, phone pressed to his ear.

NATALIE (V.O.)

She told me he called her, asked her to the homecoming dance. I wasn't surprised he asked, but I was stunned when she said 'yes.'

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM

A YOUNG SERENA sits cross-legged on her bed, a phone pressed to her ear. She speaks rapidly.

NATALIE (V.O.)
I don't know what else she said to
him. I only know what happened
next.

INT. DREW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Drew makes his way from his bedroom towards the garage, his father's work area. DREW'S MOTHER (40s) works in the brightly-lit kitchen beyond.

Drew continues into the garage.

INT. DREW'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Drew enters, making his way around his mother's car to his father's work area. His hands trace over the various tools and blades.

Behind him, a TENNIS BALL swings from a string, a warning that the car backing in is near the rear wall. He gives it a bump, sending it swinging.

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

NATALIE (V.O.)
When she told me about the
conversation, one thing stuck out.
She said when she hung up with him,
she had her first-
(bashfully)
-orgasm.
(back to normal)
I don't believe that.

Serena builds to a powerful climax.

INT. DREW'S GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The garage door ROLLS UP as DREW'S FATHER (50s) backs his truck into the garage. He hits the brakes as a bump against the tailgate stops him.

DREW'S FATHER
What the hell?

He tilts the rearview mirror, revealing Drew, SWINGING BY A ROPE tied to the garage's ceiling supports. The tennis ball hangs at his chest. His shins THUMP again against the tailgate.

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Serena presses her face into the pillow as she is wracked by her first ORGASM. She rolls onto her back, loud laughter filling the room.

NATALIE (V.O.)

I think she came the exact second
Drew Parker's soul left his body.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. RURAL ROAD

NATALIE

I dream about it sometimes.
(shivers)
Except she's smiling at me because
I'm next.

FALSEY

Why would she tell you if she was
responsible?

Natalie turns around, guiding them back to her house.

NATALIE

Because she didn't know any better,
yet. She didn't know she wasn't
supposed to like it. My advice to
you, Mr. Falsey, is to stay far
away from her. Your family, too.

FALSEY

I don't know if I can do that.

NATALIE

Then pray. Pray that she isn't the
last thing you ever hear... or see.
I have to get back, now. John's
home soon.

FALSEY

Thank you, Mrs. Pendleton.

Natalie sighs, relieved the interview is over.

NATALIE

Sure. You may think I'm some nut, Mr. Falsey, but if you believe it a little bit, and I suspect you might, seeing as how you drove all the way here, then I hope you'll believe enough to keep safe.

FALSEY

Why do you believe she, um, influenced the boy? What does she want?

NATALIE

To see the world burn, Mr. Falsey. That's one thing I'm sure of. To see the whole fucking thing go down. Good-bye, Mr. Falsey. Ben.

FALSEY

Thank you.

BEN

Have a good night.

Natalie disappears into her house.

BEN (CONT'D)

You know what's the grade-A creepiest thing about our little walk?

FALSEY

What's that?

BEN

She never used Serena's name.

Falsey ventures a final look at the Pendleton home before joining Ben in the car. As he stands in the driveway, he hears the front door LOCK.

INT. HAMPSHIRE MOTEL - NIGHT

Falsey works at his laptop at the small table near the large motel window overlooking the parking lot. Sheets of scribbled notes are spread out. His head jerks up at a KNOCK.

Falsey opens the door - NO ONE THERE.

The knock repeats. Searching the room, he sees a door in the wall beside a rummage-sale bureau.

FALSEY
Hello?

BEN
It's me. Open up.

Falsey removes the chain and twists the deadbolt with some difficulty. The door opens.

BEN (CONT'D)
Convenient, huh?

Ben takes a leap, landing back-first onto Falsey's bed, seeing the notes spread out.

BEN (CONT'D)
Bullshit you're not investigating.

FALSEY
Need something?

BEN
Nah. Bored. And mildly freaked.
(regards the laptop and
notes)
What'd you find?

FALSEY
Trying to get a chronology on our
sweet Serena.

BEN
And?

FALSEY
We know about high school. Before
that, she bounced around a few
foster homes.

BEN
No takers?

FALSEY
Not for long.

Ben fishes in his breast pocket, removing a tightly-rolled joint.

BEN
Lighter?

Falsey tosses Ben his Zippo. Ben lights the joint, inhales, holds.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (blowing smoke as he
 speaks in a staccato
 voice)

No one wanted her as a kid, her
 high school pal thinks she's a
 killer and her fans look like
 extras from "Night of the Living
 Uglies." That about right?

Ben hands lighter and joint to Falsey, who accepts both.

FALSEY
 Things have taken a strange turn.

Falsey inhales. They pass back and forth as they talk.

BEN
 Strange?
 (he thinks a moment)
 What did you think about the MILF's
 story? Do you think Serena's evil?
 Like Old Testament, fire-and-
 brimstone evil?

FALSEY
 No.

BEN
 Then what?

FALSEY
 Abused, maybe. Traumatized.

Falsey notices Ben fingering a St. Christopher's medallion
 around his neck.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
 (pointing the medallion
 out)
 You're religious?

Ben realizes he's been rubbing the medallion.

BEN
 Sorry. Old habit. My mother was
 Irish Catholic.

FALSEY
 And your father?

BEN

Wasn't.

(beat)

So, you don't believe in Hell?

FALSEY

Nope.

BEN

That's it? No explanation?

FALSEY

My mom died a few years back.
Cancer. I watched her erode in six
months. That's the only word for
it. She just withered away. She
was the most devout Catholic I ever
met. When she needed him, God was
out to lunch.

BEN

Sorry.

FALSEY

(shrugging)

It happens. It taught me that God
either doesn't exist or doesn't
give a shit. Either way, he can go
to Hell.

Ben offers the joint again. Falsey waves him off.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

I'm good.

Ben nods, stubbing it out in the tin ashtray by the bed.

BEN

(rising from the bed)

I, for one, feel bad for you, Mr.
Falsey.

FALSEY

Because I'm a hopeless sinner?

BEN

Because if that smoking hot singer
is something... different... then
you are screwed.

FALSEY

Something different?

BEN

I refuse to say it until she
sprouts horns. I'm crashing.
Don't wake me before nine.

Ben disappears into his room.

BEN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

And feel free to make it ten if you
want.

Falsey stands and closes the door, flipping the deadbolt.

BEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Good night, Johnboy!

Falsey smiles wanly, attention moving to the notes and open
laptop on the table.

FALSEY

(trying it out)
Something different.

EXT. THE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Alex bursts out the back door, holding aloft his middle
finger.

ALEX

Th-th-that's fucking all, folks!

Dennis follows on his heels.

DENNIS

Hey, man, wait up!

ALEX

Fuck you, Dennis!

Alex doesn't breaks stride until Dennis's hand falls on his
shoulder, spinning him around.

DENNIS

Come on! What's wrong?

ALEX

Are you serious? Have you seen the
news? We did that, Dennis. Us.

DENNIS

It's like Serena says, just some
kids who can't handle it.

ALEX

You're buying that? You've seen the kids at the shows, the ones coming out of her dressing room after the shows.

DENNIS

They're just groupies, man...

ALEX

Maybe the dust has fucked you for good, Den, and that's a shame. You're a hell of a bass player, but you have shit in your head if you won't or can't see what's happening around here.

Alex turns and hoofs it.

DENNIS

(calling after him)
So what if it is us?!

Alex pauses, not turning.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

We get to be stars, man! We're going to be the biggest band alive! Isn't that what we wanted? You wanted it, too!

Alex closes his eyes.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Don't pull that "I'm so above you" bullshit, Alex! You're nothing without her! I'm nothing without her! And you're gonna walk away now?

(pleading)

Now, Alex? Right before it all takes off? And it's gonna, just like she said. We do the show and the whole world's ours for the taking. You can't go.

Alex half-turns to see Dennis's face, almost shattering into tears.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Please don't go.
(beat)
You're my friend.

ALEX
Why don't you come with me, then?

DENNIS
Where?

ALEX
Away from her.

DENNIS
I can't, man. I can't leave
Serena. She's special.

Alex fully faces Dennis, walking back to him, setting down his guitar and wrapping his arms around Dennis's thin frame.

ALEX
She's planning something, Den, and when it happens, I want you to get your head down and don't lift it until it's all over.

DENNIS
(sniffling)
You don't think something's gonna happen to us?

ALEX
I don't know. Just promise me you'll do what I said.

DENNIS
Yeah, man. Head down. I promise.

ALEX
You take care, now.

Alex turns and walks fast, snatching up his guitar and disappearing into the night.

INT. EDWARD'S HOME - NIGHT

Edward makes Falsey's bed, tidying up the guest room for his son's return. As he straightens and fusses, he spies Falsey's iPod.

EDWARD
He gave me the cheap one.
(smiling)
Ingrate.

Edward places the earbuds in his ears, pulling up the album by Hell's Fire.

He presses PLAY.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE

DRESSING ROOM

Dennis stands before Serena, hands continually flattening his wispy hair.

DENNIS
He just walked away.

Serena stands, hugging Dennis like a mother might, lips against his ear.

SERENA
I always knew he would betray us,
Dennis. Not you.
(a wash of voices)
Never you. Favorite. So strong.
So brave. Always you.

As the voices echo, Dennis's features calm, soothed.

Serena steps away from him, holding him at the elbows.

SERENA (CONT'D)
We may need some help, though.
Could you send Matt in?

DENNIS
(wiping his face)
Sure. Thanks.

SERENA
Of course, Dennis. Get some rest.
We have a big show coming up.

DENNIS
Yeah. Right. I'll send him right
in.

Dennis exits into the-

HALLWAY

Dennis moves to a young, pale, emaciated teen - MATT.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Hey, man, you're Matt, right?

Matt nods. He doesn't look well. Sores bubble at the corners of his lips and eyes, which have become milky and infected.

MATT
(eagerly)
Does she need me?

DENNIS
Guess she does, little brother.

Matt doesn't offer thanks, racing to the dressing room door as fast as his weakened frame will carry him.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Yeah, you're welcome.

PATTY (O.S.)
Dennis, I got a present...

Dennis finds PATTY (20s), dressed in emulation of Serena, beckoning him with a curling finger, a pile of white powder on a mirror before her.

DENNIS
Snow, and it ain't even
Christmas...

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Matt kneels before Serena's chair, his head on her lap. She strokes his hair softly.

SERENA
Matt, sweetie?

MATT
(dreamily)
Yes?

SERENA
I need you to do something for me.
Would that be alright?

Matt lifts his head to look up at her.

MATT
Anything.

Serena smiles and places her hands on either side of Matt's face. Pussy tears leak from his rolled-over-white eyes.

Serena removes her hands as Matt nearly collapses, catching himself, standing. Serena stands with him.

SERENA

Understand?

Matt nods dully, a snake-like tentacle slipping from his mouth, skittering along his lips and disappearing again.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Matt exits as Serena opens her palm, licking Matt's blood from it, revealing a fading JAGGED-TOOTHED MOUTH of vaguely vaginal shape.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

Alex lugs his guitar, pausing to light a smoke. The alley is narrow, littered with trash, a few passersby glancing at Alex, most apparently homeless.

A CAN RATTLES behind him. Alex turns, sees nothing, continues on.

Another sound echoes through the alley, the sound of STONE GRINDING AGAINST STONE.

Alex looks over his shoulder, hurrying his pace.

His head turned behind him, he doesn't see Matt in front, dragging a piece of concrete by its rebar support.

Alex turns in time to meet the SWINGING CONCRETE with his cheek, sending him to the ground and loosening teeth as his jaw cracks.

Alex rolls to his back, moaning in pain. The side of his face is ruined, driven in. The eye on the damaged side of his face rolls independently of the other, which has focused on Matt, standing over him, leering down in a frenzy, double-rows of teeth attended to by ropey tongues in the boy's face, the skin at the corners of the mouth splitting wide.

ALEX

Fuck me.

Matt swings again, tittering madly as the concrete lands squarely in the center of Alex's face.

EXT./INT. - FREEWAY - NIGHT

Inside his rental car, Falsey is on the phone with Marty. In the distance a wisp of back smoke rises from the city. Ben points to the plume and Falsey nods.

MARTY (O.C.)
Finished spending my money, yet?

FALSEY
I'm back in L.A. now.

MARTY (O.C.)
You seen the news today?

FALSEY
Not yet.

MARTY (O.C.)
L.A.'s gone crazy. News says
people are losing their shit out
there, setting themselves on fire
in the middle of malls. It's
insanity.

FALSEY
(pointing)
We can see smoke. Something's on
fire.

MARTY (O.C.)
Cover the concert tomorrow night
and get the hell out of there, huh?

FALSEY
Don't have to tell me twice, Marty.

MARTY (O.C.)
They're planning a simulcast on the
video channels and the web.
They're estimating an audience in
eight figures anyway. Get the
band's reaction tomorrow night,
then get you and your dad out of
that town, got me?

FALSEY
(to himself)
Tens of millions of people.

MARTY (O.C.)
That's right. I read what you got
so far. Nice work. This Serena
sounds like quite the minx.

Falsey HITS THE BRAKES, the headlights falling on a POLICE CRUISER stranded on the interstate, under attack by several POSSESSED TEENS on the road. The COPS within fire through their windshield, splitting the skull of one of the Teens, who topples onto the pavement.

BEN

What the fuck? Step on it, would ya?!

From the cell phone, hurled to the floorboard, Marty's tinny voice is heard.

MARTY (O.C.)

Falsey? Ben? What the fuck is going on?

Falsey is transfixed, until one of the Teens meets his gaze, the Teen's eyes shimmering black, face distorted and demonic.

FALSEY

Jesus.

The Teen takes a step towards their car. Falsey hits the gas, putting the horrific scene in the rearview mirror. Looking out his windshield, he sees not one, but several pillars of smoke rising.

BEN

That look like the apocalypse to you?

FALSEY

Gimme the phone.

Ben reaches down, retrieves the phone and passes it to Falsey.

MARTY (O.C.)

-you guys okay?

FALSEY

Marty? Fuck the concert. We're on a plane tonight.

INT. EDWARD'S HOME - LATER

In the living room, the iPod is playing, ticking down the time remaining on track ten. A headphone wire extends from the player, drooping on its way to the headphones, which sit in an easy chair. An EAR lies beside the blood-streaked earbuds.

Throughout the house, the sound of EDWARD WEeping. He is in the kitchen, hands bloodied, claw marks on either side of his head. His other ear hangs by a thin piece of flesh. His sobs are soul-deep, unimaginably sorrowful.

In one bloody hand is a meat tenderizer, serrated metal, heavy. He raises it to the place his ear had been, pauses, gives it a good whack. He can't get the voices out. Another whack. Another.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOME - NIGHT

Falsey pulls into the driveway, out the driver's side door as soon as the key is turned.

FALSEY
(to Ben)
Wait here.

BEN
Won't move a muscle.

INT. EDWARD'S HOME

Falsey enters with trepidation, all motion and near-panicked energy.

FALSEY
Pop?

Falsey pokes his head in the living room, not seeing the headphones there. On to the stairs, pausing at the bottom.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Pop, you up there? We're going to
New York tomorrow night!

Falsey makes his way to the kitchen, anxious.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Pop?

There, in the kitchen, blood pooled around his head, thickening now, the mallet still loose in his hand.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Pop!

Falsey collapses beside his father, afraid to touch him, unable to stop reaching for him.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
 Are you okay? Pop? You're okay.
 You're gonna be fine, Pop.

One of Edward's eyes opens, the other swollen shut. The single orb is red-rimmed and panicked.

EDWARD
 Steven?

FALSEY
 I'm here, Pop.

Falsey sees Edward's hand claw the air. Falsey takes the searching hand, quickly released and cast away by Edward, who snatches the meat tenderizer from the floor beside him. He brings it hard against his skull again.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
 Pop!

EDWARD
 (pitifully sobbing)
 I can't get it out. I can't get it
 out!

Edward seizes Falsey's shirt, bringing him close.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 She won't let you get away, Steven.
 She needs you to say yes.
 (more tears)
 Don't say yes...

FALSEY
 I won't, Pop, I promise.

EDWARD
 Please, son. Get it out.

FALSEY
 What is it, Pop?

EDWARD
 (gravelly, panicked)
Her. Get her out of me!

The report of a single GUNSHOT rings out, a hole appearing in the center of Edward's forehead. Edward is gone.

Falsey turns to find a tall, salt-and-pepper-haired man in his mid-50s, his plain suit unable to hide the impressive physique beneath it. COMMANDER PROCTOR. He holsters his gun beneath his suit coat.

Behind him, two of GOD'S SOLDIERS, MAREN and DICKINSON, both young and severe, stand in combat fatigues, assault rifles in their hands.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
That was the last mercy I could
give him, son. Sorry.

Falsey launches himself at the Major.

Maren steps in front of Commander Proctor and gives Falsey a quick blow to the skull with the butt of his rifle. Falsey is down.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
So much for first impressions.

Major Proctor heads for the door.

MAJOR PROCTOR
(over his shoulder)
Take him out the back. Keep him
under.

MAREN AND DICKINSON
Yes, sir!

INT. GOD'S SOLDIERS HQ - LATER

INTERROGATION ROOM

Falsey's eyes open to a small, white-paneled room. The only furniture: a table, two chairs - the one in which Falsey sits and another across from him.

The side of his head is bruised and swollen, He reaches to touch it, his hands and ankles cuffed to the arms and legs of the chair. His head whips to the door as it opens, revealing Commander Proctor and an aide, SGT. MAJOR TAYLOR (early 40s).

Proctor's piercing blue eyes fix on Falsey's wound.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
That's quite a bump. We'll have to
get that looked after.

FALSEY
Let me out of this goddamn chair
and I'll-

As Falsey speaks, Proctor nods to Taylor.

Taylor grips Falsey's hair and slams his face into the table, hard.

When Taylor brings his face up, Falsey is bleeding from his nose and a cut above his eye.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
(hisses sympathetically)
That looked downright painful. Mr. Falsey, I am Commander Proctor. The man to your right is Sergeant Taylor.

Falsey spits blood onto the table.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
Believe it or not, I detest violence.

FALSEY
I think my father would disagree with you.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
I am genuinely sorry about that. Seemed like a good man.

FALSEY
How would you know?

Falsey spits another phlegmy mouthful of blood onto the table.

Proctor shoots a glance to Taylor, who quickly moves to clean the table with a handkerchief.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
Not from personal experience. You'd be surprised what you can learn from surveillance. Did you know that the average person is caught on seventy cameras each and every day?

Proctor removes a manila folder from his attache case and opens it, spreading out a series of photographs of Falsey, some with Edward.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
Then again, being a reporter, maybe you appreciate the power of a photograph. A thousand words and all that.

Falsey smiles through bloody teeth.

FALSEY

Here are some words for you. You killed my father, you sick son of a bitch.

Taylor moves to give Falsey another taste of the table, but a wave of Proctor's hand freezes him in place.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Mr. Falsey, I think you are under the impression that we are your enemies. That's just not true.

(beat)

There's a very old and very dangerous game at work here.

FALSEY

Seems like I've heard that line before.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Right. The man from the diner was named Davis. He left our happy family here and came to you. This is what they left of him.

Proctor places another photograph on the table, this one of the Stranger from the diner, in the alley where he was murdered, most of his face missing.

Falsey regards it for a long second.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)

I would love to give you time to grieve over your father, to process all this, but we don't have that sort of time, son.

FALSEY

Don't call me 'son.'

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Fair. But I need you to focus, now. You do understand what's happening?

FALSEY

I understand that my father was murdered by the same crazy fucks who kidnapped me.

Proctor sighs, leaning away from the table.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
You know who Serena is. What she
is.

FALSEY
You're crazy.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
I'd like to show you something, Mr.
Falsey. If Sergeant Taylor unlocks
those cuffs, can you remain calm?

Falsey nods.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
Very good. Go on, Sergeant.
(to Falsey)
Let's continue.

Falsey rubs his freed wrists as Taylor uncuffs his ankles.

FALSEY
Who are you people? Army?

COMMANDER PROCTOR
Not exactly.

FALSEY
If you're not army, what are you?
C.I.A.?

COMMANDER PROCTOR
We are not affiliated with any
government, Mr. Falsey. Many of us
have served in the Armed Forces,
but we have given up our
commissions in favor of a higher
calling. And the time has come for
us to act. For that, I'm
embarrassed to say we need your
help.

FALSEY
(grinning)
Well, I hate to disappoint you, but
you can go straight to hell.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
If you don't give us a hand, I
think that's exactly where we're
headed. You've seen it with your
own eyes. Li's picture, the
children at the shows, your own
interactions with Serena.

(MORE)

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
 Not to mention your father. Do you
 honestly believe your father
 snapped? Lost his mind? It was
her, Mr. Falsey.

FALSEY
 (unconvincing)
 There's no such thing as demons and
 devils.

Proctor smiles and stands.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
 Come with me.

FALSEY
 Where?

COMMANDER PROCTOR
 To a window into Hell, Mr. Falsey.

INT. GOD'S SOLDIERS HQ

Falsey follows Proctor, Taylor behind, holding an assault
 rifle. They wind down a bare hallway towards a row of
 plastic cells. Inside, POSSESSED FANS of Hell's Fire are
 trapped.

FALSEY
 Where are we?

COMMANDER PROCTOR
 Safe, Mr. Falsey.
 (pointing)
 There.

Falsey follows Proctor's finger to one of the cells. Inside,
 the room decorated with a cot screwed to the wall and a sink
 and toilet, a POSSESSED TEEN paces in the cell. His face is
 pale, sore-riddled, his back warped, leaving him in a
 perpetual stoop, his gait loping.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
 This entire facility was designed
 for us to keep an eye out for signs
 that the Apocalypse was coming.
 Between you and me, this ain't the
 first rodeo, but it's the closest
 they've ever come.

Falsey peers into the cell, where the Possessed Teen paces in
 a predatory manner, eyes locked on Falsey.

FALSEY

Jesus.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Given the circumstances, I'd prefer you didn't use the Lord's name in vain.

FALSEY

(transfixed)

Yeah. Right. Sorry. How long has he been here?

COMMANDER PROCTOR

We took this one yesterday. His condition is advanced.

FALSEY

Condition?

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Possession. Whatever was human in that boy is gone. Watch.

(to Taylor)

Hit the water.

Taylor turns a valve outside the cell, the Possessed Teen watching Taylor keenly.

Falsey watches as a sprinkler pours droplets of water into the room, each one raising lesions on the Possessed Teen's bare skin. The boy howls in pain, the lesions bursting and releasing goeey blood, a bifurcated tongue spilling from his mouth.

FALSEY

Holy Christ.

Proctor shoots Falsey a disapproving look, but lets it go.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Shut it off.

Taylor twists the valve off. The Possessed Teen dripping water and sloughing skin, revealing twisted bone beneath.

FALSEY

What was that?

COMMANDER PROCTOR

Holy water.

FALSEY

You've got to be shitting me.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

I am crapping you negative. That boy in there is possessed by a God's-honest-truth demon. He didn't get that way by accident. She did it. Her words, her music. Without her, it's just noise. As long as she breathes our air, she can infect more. And this show tomorrow is her checkmate. Millions just like this boy. Soulless. Vicious.
(truthfully)
Disgusting, really.

FALSEY

So, what? You and the rest of your G.I. Joes are going to get some giant Super-Soaker and douse Serena? Great. Sounds like a hoot. What does this have to do with me?

COMMANDER PROCTOR

She needs you. For whatever reason, she's marked you. You're the key to completing her plan. There's a catch, of course.

FALSEY

Of course.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

You have to offer yourself to her. We don't intend on letting that happen.

FALSEY

You know where she'll be tomorrow. Send your boys in and shoot the living shit out of her.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

I wish it was that easy. She's strong, now. Bullets won't quite do the trick.

Falsey looks at the Possessed Teen, mewling in pain on the ground. The other Possessed Fans stand, COMING CLOSER to the doors of their cells.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)

Fire seems like our best bet.
That's where you come in.

FALSEY

Me?

COMMANDER PROCTOR

You can get close to her. No muss, no fuss. Minimal collateral damage. She's expecting you. We outfit you with a vest holding incendiary charges. When you're close enough-

(makes a tugging motion at his chest)

-and boom.

FALSEY

I'd call you crazy, but that doesn't really capture the apeshit-ness of your plan. And it doesn't sound like it leaves a lot of room for me, you know... living.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

We all have sacrifices to make in this glorious battle. This is yours.

FALSEY

No. Absolutely not.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

You are key to her plan, Mr. Falsey. If you refuse to help us, we have only one other recourse.

FALSEY

Fine. Plan B it is. Good luck with your apocalypse.

COMMANDER PROCTOR

If that's your choice.

(to Taylor)

Sergeant Taylor, shoot this man.

FALSEY

Wait, what?!

COMMANDER PROCTOR

She needs you. She'll find another to fill your place, but it'll buy us time. God's will, Mr. Falsey. You die here, you die there. But you have to die.

Proctor nods, Taylor levelling the assault rifle at Falsey.

FALSEY
 (shrinking from the gun)
 Wait!

They are interrupted by HOWLING from one of the inhabited cells. They all turn in unison to see the Possessed Fans standing at the doors of the cells, mouths wide, a hideous SCREECHING filling the hall. They join the Hellish chorus one by one.

COMMANDER PROCTOR
 Taylor, hit the water. Drown 'em
 if you have to!

Taylor makes for the water valves outside the nearest cell as the cell door shatters, the screeching reaches a higher pitch, the cacophony joined by the tortured Possessed Teen, now standing, his skin hanging loosely from him.

A moment as the Possessed realize that freedom lies before them, then they attack.

Taylor, closest, is beset by two of the Possessed, one chewing neatly through his neck while the other pulls his head free, his assault rifle firing blindly into the ceiling. ALARMS SOUND.

Proctor does not panic, removing the pistol from his hip and firing once, twice, putting holes into the heads of two of the Possessed before he is overcome by several others.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
 Choke on me!

Shrieking, as Proctor is, quite literally, pulled apart.

COMMANDER PROCTOR (CONT'D)
Choke on me!

Falsey turns to flee, coming face-to-face with SERENA'S VESSEL, a formerly pretty girl whose skin has begun to peel from the skull, her teeth jumbled and savage, a clawed hand grasping Falsey by his face.

When she speaks, Serena's Vessel's voice is echo-y and harsh.

SERENA'S VESSEL
 Come to me, Steven.

FALSEY
 S-Serena?

A scabrous, tentacular tongue stretches out and lovingly caresses Falsey's face.

SERENA'S VESSEL

Run!

She flings Falsey backwards, sending him sliding along the tiled floor, his back coming to rest against the opening doors of an ELEVATOR.

Two of GOD'S SOLDIERS see the chaos on the floor and step over Falsey to get to the fray. Screeches and gunfire follow Falsey into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR

Falsey depresses the "G" button and the doors slide closed as he sees one of the Possessed dig its clawed hands into the throat of the first of the Soldiers to arrive.

INT. BANK LOBBY

The elevator opens. Outside the doors, it's the marbled and serene lobby of a bank, tellers against one wall, customers in line, security guards near the entrance.

As Falsey steps out into the sudden peace, he spies Maren, one of the soldiers from Edward's house, in civilian clothes standing across the lobby. Maren's eyes meet his.

Maren begins to move quickly towards Falsey and the elevator, halting as Falsey is grabbed suddenly.

BEN

I thought you were going to take
forever. Let's go, already. Bank
time is over.

Maren pauses as the pair pass security guards on their way to the door.

Falsey's eyes never leave Maren until they are out the door, into the sunlight of freedom.

EXT./INT. FALSEY'S CAR

Falsey slips into the passenger seat as Ben, on the lookout for followers, gets into the driver's seat.

BEN

You okay?

FALSEY

Not even close. How'd you find me?

BEN
Drove. I don't think they're
following us.

FALSEY
Trust me, they have their hands
full.

BEN
What do we do?

FALSEY
Get to the airport.

INT. LAX - DAY

Falsey follows Ben inside.

BEN
What do you want me to tell Marty?

FALSEY
Tell him the story's not finished
yet.

BEN
I can stay. If you think-

FALSEY
No. It's just me she wants.

BEN
Then get out of here.

FALSEY
She'll come after me. And that
means no one around me would be
safe I can't let her hurt you or
Marty. Or Kelly.

BEN
So she's really-?

FALSEY
Something different. She really
is.

BEN
Always thought it would be a guy.

FALSEY
See you around, huh?

BEN
Yeah. God be with you, Steve.

FALSEY
To His ear.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOME - LATER

Falsey sits in his car, same clothes, same tired expression. Yellow POLICE TAPE surrounds the house now, a MARKED PATROL CAR sitting in front of the house.

From his safe position a block down, across the street, he watches a COP sipping coffee, bored.

Falsey digs the cell phone from his pocket. He scrolls down the list of names, not finding the one he wants. He dials the number from memory. As it rings, Falsey dabs at his facial wounds with a damp cloth.

KELLY (O.C.)
(a happy voice)
Hello?

Falsey begins to speak and can't find the words.

KELLY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Hello?

FALSEY
Hey, Kel.

KELLY (O.C.)
Steven?

FALSEY
Yeah.

KELLY (O.C.)
(the voice grows cold)
You have a lot of nerve, Steve.
You should really be talking to my lawyer. I'll be sure to tell him you called.

FALSEY
Kelly, wait. Please.
(pause)
I know I'm the last person you want to talk to right now, but I needed to hear your voice.

Kelly hesitates.

KELLY (O.C.)
Are you okay, Steve?

FALSEY
(with a bitter laugh)
Not especially. I'm in L.A.,
now...

KELLY (O.C.)
Has something happened? I saw on
the news that there are riots or
something. You didn't get caught
up in that did you?

FALSEY
You could say that.
(a deep breath)
I love you, Kelly, I want you to
know that.

KELLY (O.C.)
That was never your problem.

FALSEY
I know. But I understand, now. I
wish-
(emotion takes over a
moment)
I wish I could go back and do it
all different. I wish I could have
seen then how important it was, how
important it all is.

KELLY (O.C.)
(more concerned)
Steven, where are you? What's
going on?

EXT. EDWARD'S HOME

The conversation continues in V.O. as Falsey slips around the
back of Edward's house unseen, fishing a spare key out of a
false rock.

FALSEY (V.O.)
I wanted you to know I loved you as
best I could, and I know that
wasn't very good at all.

INT. EDWARD'S HOME

LIVING ROOM

Falsey peeks out the window to see the Cop, still in his car, oblivious.

FALSEY (V.O.)

I hope you find that guy that can love you like I couldn't. And I promise I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that this is a world where you can love each other.

Falsey makes his way upstairs to his room.

KELLY (V.O.)

You're scaring me, Steven.

FALSEY (V.O.)

I know. I'm sorry. This will all make a lot more sense tomorrow. Or maybe not, I don't know. I just want you to believe that what I'm doing is for you and Pop and...

(chuckles)

... and everyone, I guess.

Falsey crosses to the night stand, finding his discarded wedding ring there. He slips it back on, covering the paler skin. His hand has missed it.

KELLY (V.O.)

Tell me where you are. I can get you help. We'll talk-

FALSEY (V.O.)

I love you, Kelly.

(finally)

Good bye.

CLICK.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Amidst the trash and desperation of the downtown neighborhoods, the church stands as a symbol of possible rejuvenation.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH

The bright day spills onto the solid flooring as the front door opens, admitting Falsey into the church. Several PARISHIONERS sit in the pews, praying, counting on their rosaries.

Falsey makes his way to the sanctuary, past the pews. He passes a WORSHIPPER, raising from her knees after prayer. He bows his head to her as she passes.

SANCTUARY

Falsey stands before the SACRAMENT, bending to both knees, his Catholic upbringing flooding back. He dips his fingers into the Sacrament, holding HOLY WATER, and makes the sign of the cross. His eyes flit up to a STATUE OF JESUS.

FALSEY
(quietly)
So. Here we are.

Falsey contemplates the pained expression on the statue's face.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Been a while. For a long time, I was real pissed at you, you know that? I wouldn't allow myself the possibility of you anymore.

The statue is silent.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Recent events being what they are, I suppose I have to admit that there's something else, something good.
(convincing himself)
There has to be. People talk about how God could allow so much suffering in the world, how he could ignore the cries of starving children...

Falsey locks eyes with the stone Jesus.

FALSEY (CONT'D)
Not talking, huh? I understand. Or don't. You know what I mean.
(pause)
I think I have to do this, right? I have to stop her and the only other people at bat are a bunch of psychos with explosives using you for a reason.
(anger rising)
What sort of grand plan do you have? Why don't you just come out and tell me, goddamnit!

Falsey collects himself before the silent statue of Christ.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(clears his throat)

I guess that's it, then.

Falsey slips a flask from his coat, standing and ensuring no Parishioners are watching, then dips the flask into the Holy Water.

He pauses, staring up again at the statue.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

(emotionally)

You take care of Pop for me. Keep Kelly safe, if you get to it. And if I have to do some things tonight that you don't approve of, cut me some slack. I'm trying to help.

(beat)

See you around, huh?

Falsey turns his back and exits the Sanctuary as a single, bloody tear falls from the corner of the statue's eye.

EXT. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Hell's Fire fans mill outside the venue, the marquee announcing the night's performance. "BROADCAST LIVE!"

A veejay for a cable music network, SAM, 20s, pretty as a model, holds a microphone, positioned before the venue and the crowd. She's all hip cheer and swagger.

SAM

As you can see behind me, the crowd's really starting to gather for tonight's performance from Hell's Fire. Behind those doors-
(pointing behind her)
- a select group of fans are watching the sound check. While fans of the band are going crazy, others in the media say their music makes fans crazy. And considering the turnout here, I'm beginning to believe them...

Falsey passes by in b.g., moving away from the cameras, looking for a way into the auditorium.

He stops, making eye contact with a familiar face - Maren, a dark raincoat covering him. Falsey swims through the crowd, trying to reach him.

INT. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

ON STAGE

Stage smoke swirls against a gothic backdrop, concealing the cables snaking across the floor to the gear. A replacement guitarist, JERRY (20s, wiry), stands stage left, Dennis stage right and Cam behind them, idly twirling his sticks as a ROADIE checks the mics for feedback.

Dennis's smile is forced as he looks over the crowd of "special guests." The throng of Hell's Fire fans are, to a one, pasty, pale and covered with lesions. They have felt the influence of Serena's music most directly.

DENNIS

(to Cam)

Big night.

CAM

Biggest of our lives.

DENNIS

Wish Alex was here.

CAM

Yeah.

DENNIS

I gotta be honest. I'm scared shitless.

SERENA (O.C.)

Don't be, baby.

Dennis turns to find Serena slinking from the wings onto the stage in her skin-tight outfit, oozing vitality and excitement.

The so-called fans do not scream at her arrival, but begin rocking to and fro, whispers of praise escaping them.

SERENA (CONT'D)

We're going to bring down the house tonight.

Serena sidles up to Dennis, one hand around the back of his neck, another at his crotch, leaning in to kiss him deeply.

When she releases him, blood trickles from the corner of his mouth, his eyes as hazy as any coke binge left him.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 (grinning)
 Don't you just feel it?

DENNIS
 (his smile now near-mad)
 Yeah. Down to my toe-sies.

SERENA
 Good boy.
 (to the crowd)
 Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages!

The whispering worship ceases. The room is SILENT.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 (with a crooked smile)
 Let's get this party started.

EXT. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

Maren's eyes are closed when Falsey's hands clamp around the collar of his raincoat. They snap open in time to see Falsey's eyes alight with rage.

MAREN
 What are you-?!

Falsey shoves him hard against the wall, drawing only the mildest of curiosity from fans surrounding them.

FALSEY
 (hushed but angry)
 Hello, again.

Another rough slam against the wall.

MAREN
 You have to get away from here.

FALSEY
 I'm giving you this one chance.
 Turn around, walk away. Easy as that.

MAREN
 I can't do that. You know what's at stake.

FALSEY

I do. Look around you. Look at these kids.

MAREN

They'll be remembered as martyrs.

FALSEY

Like you?

MAREN

And you.

FALSEY

Fuck you and fuck your martyrs. I'm going to tell you one more time. Go.

MAREN

I can't...

FALSEY

Your call.

Falsey suddenly rips open the raincoat, revealing the explosive belt and several incendiary charges pinned to the interior of Maren's jacket.

Falsey steps away, pointing with one hand, pocketing one of the fused explosives with the other.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

Bomb!!! This man has a bomb!!!

The CROWD ERUPTS in terror, scattering as they scream, while the posted guards charge Maren. He's on the ground fast.

MAREN

You can't do this! You have to stop her!

In the foreground, Sam the veejay puts on her serious reporter face.

SAM

Nothing confirmed, yet, but outside of tonight's scheduled Hell's Fire performance, a man has been wrestled to the ground and someone yelled the word 'bomb'.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Again, no confirmation, but there may have been an attempt on the lives of the fans gathered here for tonight's show. The only word to describe the scene is chaos...

In the b.g., Falsey slips into the entrance, the police and security distracted by the crowd's response and the suspected bomber on the ground, still crying-

MAREN

Let me go! You have to stop her!

INT. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

ENTRANCE

Falsey adopts a look of authority as he steps into the entrance, posters for upcoming shows lining the walls. ASSORTED CREW mill about, focused on the commotion outside.

As Falsey passes them, making his way to the performance hall, he is stopped by a SOUND ENGINEER.

SOUND ENGINEER

Hey, you know what's going on out there?

FALSEY

Some nut with a bomb, they say. Thought it was safer in here.

SOUND ENGINEER

Don't be so sure. Did you see those kids watching the rehearsal?

FALSEY

Pretty creepy.

SOUND ENGINEER

They look like the cast of Night of the Living Venereal Disease.

The Engineer roars with laughter, Falsey doing his best to chuckle.

FALSEY

Speaking of, I have to get in there.

SOUND ENGINEER

Godspeed, man. I'm staying out of there 'til they wrap it up.

(MORE)

SOUND ENGINEER (CONT'D)
 Something about that lead singer...
 Sexy as hell, but I don't know.

FALSEY
 I'm right there with you. Take it
 easy.

SOUND ENGINEER
 Take it any way I can get it.
 (turning to an associate)
 Brian, did you hear about the bomb?

Falsey breathes a sigh of relief and opens the double doors
 into the performance hall.

PERFORMANCE HALL

While the band plays, a slower number than usual, dripping
 with sexuality and heavy guitar, Falsey scans the crowd.

The fans look to the stage with simple and complete
 adoration, some with their skin bubbling with new sores, some
 with flesh peeling away entirely. Their eyes shine, many of
 them black as pitch. Some gnash their teeth together as new,
 sharper teeth are revealed. These are the POSSESSED, their
 bodies warping with the taint of Serena's influence, all
 hideous, all uniquely demonic.

Falsey goes unnoticed as he makes for the stage, twisting his
 body to avoid touching these twisted versions of humanity.
 Serena's voice drips from the speakers, keeping them
 enthralled.

Falsey makes it to the edge of the stage, unnoticed, as the
 song crashes to a close. The stage has been set.

When Falsey turns back to the stage, Serena's eyes meet his.
 When she speaks, her words echo through the room.

SERENA
 (genuinely happy)
 Steven. You came! Hell of an
 entrance.

Falsey is silent.

SERENA (CONT'D)
 We were so worried you wouldn't
 make it. And you're practically
 the star.

Serena walks towards Falsey, her voice no longer amplified,
 but just as commanding.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Daddy kept saying, 'He's not gonna come', but I knew. I knew. Little secret about him - he's a pessimist. But I knew you wouldn't let me down.

Only a few yards away. Keep her coming.

FALSEY

Why don't you let these kids go, and we can talk about us?

Serena pauses, bemused. She gestures towards the crowd in all their misshapen glory.

SERENA

Kids? Them? Maybe once. Now they're mine. Just like dear ol' Pop would have been if your holy pals hadn't put a bullet in his brain.

Falsey stiffens. Just a little closer.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Sore subject? Let's change it. I want to show you something.

Serena scans the front rows of the stage and finds the warped version of Staci there.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(pointing)

You.

Staci's black eyes alight with worship.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(sweetly)

Tongue, please.

Staci's mouth drops open, revealing the now-forked tongue swirling in her mouth. It extends and stills as a secondary set of jaws clamps over the flesh, SEVERING HER TONGUE as it drops into her waiting hands. She extends the offering to Serena, smiling as blood flows freely from her mouth.

SERENA (CONT'D)

No, thank you, honey, I was only making a point.

(to Falsey)

That's what you want to save? I don't know what you'd do with them.

(MORE)

SERENA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Between you and me, I think they're
a little off-putting.

Serena shakes her head as she continues her approach towards
Falsey, feigning disappointment.

SERENA (CONT'D)

There's just nothing left to save.
Quite frankly, after tonight,
you're going to be a lonely man.
Unless...

Falsey's hands shake with anticipation. Almost.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(eyes narrowing)

Just what are you up to?

FALSEY

What do you mean?

Serena wiggles her ring finger at Steven.

SERENA

Something's different.

(pouting)

And here I thought you came all
this way because you knew we are
meant to be together. But it
isn't, is it? Why did you come
here? To kill me? Oh, honey, it's
way too late for that.

Serena takes the last crucial step forward.

SERENA (CONT'D)

But there's still time to change
your mind. Get on the winning
team? I had hoped you'd stand by
my side, but seeing you at my feet
would be... just delicious.

Falsey takes a step to meet her, pulling the flask from his
coat and spinning the cap open.

Falsey hurtles the Holy Water within the flask at Serena, who
shrieks and recoils as the water hits her.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What have you done?!

Serena writhes, her hair covering her face as her cries grow louder. The cries become lower, staccato, as they melt into laughter.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What a world, what a world...

Serena turns, her face smiling and beautiful, her eyes brimming with humor.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(chastising)

Steven Falsey. Did you really think some aquatic parlor trick is going to work on me?

(stern and sharp)

Grab him.

Followers on either side take Falsey by the arms as Serena resumes her approach, smiling wickedly.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Now, then. Let's talk about your future, Steven.

Her hands frame his face as Serena strokes him in an almost-motherly fashion.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Such a good, strong man. I think you should get something special. Someone special. From what I hear, downstairs is no fun. Every last tortured soul is trying to get up here, trying to find a suit that fits. But you, Steven. You...

Serena leans in, whispering to him.

SERENA (CONT'D)

I'm going to make sure the one who gets your skin finds your wife. I'll even give him the choice to bring her into the fold or kill her. Either way, you'll get to watch.

FALSEY

I'll kill you first.

SERENA

You already tried that, lover.

FALSEY
 (beginning to crack)
 Please. Please. Not Kelly.

SERENA
 (pleasantly surprised)
 Are you begging? So soon?

FALSEY
 Yes. Anything. Just not her.

SERENA
 A deal, then. You give yourself to
 me, of your own free will, and
 Kelly's fate is up for grabs again.
 (sympathetically)
 Best I can do under the
 circumstances. What do you say?

FALSEY
 You won't touch her?

SERENA
 We can pinky swear, if it makes you
 feel better.

FALSEY
 Yes.

SERENA
 Yes what?

FALSEY
 I give myself freely and willingly
 to you.

Serena takes a step back, making a squeal of joy.

SERENA
 Steven, baby, that felt almost as
 good as I'd hoped! Ooh, you gave
 me the shivers!
 (calming herself, but
 smiling)
 Still, business to be done. Let
 him go.
 (seductively)
 Open up, honey. You've never had a
 kiss like this.

Falsey stands, sagging, as Serena comes to him, squirming
 against his body as she closes his mouth over his. An unholy
 light illuminates their mouths from within as something is
 taken from Falsey and replaced by something within Serena.

Falsey's arms slide up her back, holding her like a lover and, briefly, Serena succumbs to the pleasure of it, embracing him as she pollutes his soul.

Serena breaks the kiss, but can't escape Falsey's arms, forced to watch as his eyes cloud over with black pools, his skin boiling with lesions.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Let me go, now.

FALSEY

You were right.

SERENA

(to the Possessed)

Get him off of me!

(to Falsey)

Let me go!

Falsey's teeth warp and sharpen as skin splits across his forehead, revealing twisting bone beneath. The Possessed can't break his hold.

FALSEY

Business to be done.

Falsey leans in, holding Serena closer.

FALSEY (CONT'D)

You want to see it burn, Serena?

SERENA

No! Let me go!

FALSEY

Let's burn together.

Falsey holds her tight as she gives up the pretense of humanity, her body melting away from him, goat-like eyes opening on the sides of her face, her arms, her hands. The vaginal mouths that were glimpsed on her hands now ERUPT OVER HER FLESH, a squirming mass of fanged mouths and hideous eyes, roiling to be free.

The misshapen version of Falsey keeps her tight against him with one arm as he reveals the swiped explosive, tucked into his belt. He flips the top to his Zippo and strikes the cylinder, his thumb splitting open to make room for the talon growing beneath.

Serena's mouths scream in unison as the FLASH OF FIRE EXPLODES outward, incinerating Falsey and Serena together, burning alive the demonic fans left in the hall.

EXT. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

The front doors of the venue blow off their hinges as fire spills onto the sidewalks and a pressure wave shatters glass and drops the fans to their knees. A cacophony of sirens and shrieks follow quickly.

From the dust and glass, Sam the veejay rights herself, microphone still in hand, staring at the unseen camera man.

SAM
We good? Did you get that?

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
I got it. We're rolling.

Sam straightens her hair, adopting again the face of the serious journalist.

SAM
We have just witnessed an explosion that seems to have come from inside the theater. No official word yet, but emergency crews are arriving now.

FAN (O.C.)
She's dead! Serena's dead!

More shouts of outrage and sorrow follow the pronouncement.

SAM
We are hearing unsubstantiated reports that Serena, the lead singer of Hell's Fire, has been killed in the blast.
(she pauses, listening to the earpiece she wears)
We are receiving additional news that a crazed fan is responsible for the explosion, which took place inside the theater. Things are happening fast, and we can't confirm any of it, yet, so stay here for news as it happens-

Satan, wearing a black on black suit, the dust and glass seeming to have missed him entirely, strolls through the maelstrom of EMERGENCY WORKERS and weeping fans.

As he scans the crowd, his expression is one of only mild frustration. Best laid plans...

MOTHER TO BE (O.C.)
 She was so beautiful, so full of
 life.

Satan pauses, looking down at a young girl, his MOTHER TO BE
 (20s), pretty and smeared with dirt, speaking into a cell
 phone with a shattered screen.

MOTHER TO BE (CONT'D)
 It's like Kurt all over again.

Bemused, Satan reaches down his hand, holding a handkerchief.

SATAN
 I felt the same way when we lost
 John.

MOTHER TO BE
 Lennon?

SATAN
 Sure. Let me help you up.

She allows herself to be lifted, comforted by the elegant
 man.

MOTHER TO BE
 (choking on her tears)
 Th-thank you.

SATAN
 There, now.
 (he wipes her face)
 What are you doing for the next
 nine months?

The image GOES DARK, the SOUND FADES.

Beat.

In the darkness, a woman's SCREAM and a NEWBORN BABY CRIES.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
 It's a boy.

FADE OUT.