

NINER

a screenplay
by
Eric Dickson

FADE IN:

EXT. SAMMS HORSE RANCH - NIGHT

TWO SADDLEBREDS, one black, one brown, gather near a picket fence. On the other side sits a three story colonial house sparkling with CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

A nativity scene on the front lawn.

The black horse trots for the fence near the trees, STARING INTO THE WOODS. Focused. Unflinching.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS

SUPER: WINDERMERE, FL, CHRISTMAS EVE

A woman SCREAMS. And then...a GUNSHOT.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMMS HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A young woman is startled out of a deep sleep. She grabs her beating chest, dazed and confused.

On the tile floor.

Her eyes are tired - weary. She surveys the room and spots a half-drunk glass of eggnog on the sink.

This is ABBY SAMMS (17), streaked blonde hair, cut short on the neck. Strangely attractive.

ABBY

What the hell...?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Abby slowly shuffles her way across the tile -- exhausted. She spots several uneaten slices of sweet potato pies and MELTED VANILLA ICE CREAM on the counter near the sink.

The nearby living room is strangely quiet.

ABBY

Hello?

A one gallon container of ice cream is DRIPPING VANILLA all over the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

HELEN SAMMS (40s), aging southern belle, all dolled up in a festive red and green sweater -- uses an ice cream scoop to serve up little balls of vanilla onto small plates of sweet potato pie.

The melodic sounds of "Baby It's Cold Outside" is played on a nearby PIANO. A MAN and WOMAN singing.

THE LIVING ROOM

Helen's husband RICHARD (50s), old money, gray hair, sips a coffee, watches RICKY JUNIOR (13), chubby -- and big sister BECCA (19), blonde bombshell, thumb wrestle, goof off.

UNCLE GARY and AUNT NIKKI (40s) at the piano, playing "Baby It's Cold Outside".

Ricky Junior's TENOR SAXAPHONE rests on a nearby chair.

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

Abby enters from the kitchen.

The beautifully lit Christmas tree with dozens of un-opened presents at the base. Ricky's sax lay haphazardly on the carpet.

A chair KNOCKED OVER. Some BLOOD has dripped onto the carpet near the PIANO BENCH.

Abby spots full cups of coffee, uneaten plates of cookies on a coffee table.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby steps inside the wide open doorway, an empty bed. The comforter is a ruffled up mess, pillows on the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMMS HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Abby walks outside. The night air is cold as she wraps her arms around her waist. She is still barefoot as she makes her way down the steps, onto the property.

CARS still parked in the driveway, on the lawn.

Abby is clearly uneasy. She watches her back.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMMS HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

SCOTT PERRY (20s), bushy, unkempt, drug addict type, runs a water faucet at the edge of the house. He washes the sticky BLOOD from his hands.

TRENT (20s), dark goth, thin build, is hunched over, puking onto the grass.

Abby spots the two boys. They spot her. Scottie and Trent both stand.

SCOTTIE

Get the fuck out of here. Before
they see you.

TWO UNIDENTIFIED MEN

step from the nearby woods -- carrying shovels. They begin for the house. Abby takes notice.

Trent also notices them.

TRENT

Go, Abby. Now.

Abby runs off. Around the house and into the nearest patch of open woods --

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

Abby loses herself in the trees, full panic mode. Her bare feet SNAPPING and CRACKING the sharp terrain.

Her face twists and contorts in unbearable pain. Every few steps, she turns and checks for pursuers.

No one. Only darkness.

Before Abby can face forward, she trips and falls face first onto a thick tree trunk. KNOCKED OUT.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. TWO LANE BLACKTOP - NIGHT

Abby, now bleeding from the head, shuffles down the side of the highway. Her arms wrapped around her waist, shivering, lips quivering from the cold.

A CAR pulls to the side, about fifty feet in front of Abby. She stops. The passenger door opens.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM #1 - NIGHT

CARLY DENNIS (20s), a hot young ER nurse, short black hair, dabs a damp cotton ball on a nasty case of ROAD RASH. This is T.J. (20s), a real white trash grease ball, and his face is a mess.

DETECTIVE RAWLEY NINER (38), thick blonde hair, steely blue eyes - watches Carly's perfectly proportioned behind from a corner. He snaps at his chewing gum, blows bubbles as Carly works on his prisoner.

Carly is clearly annoyed, sighs under her breath.

NINER

I'm trying to figure out if I
know you from somewhere. I
thought I knew all the nurses.

CARLY

You bring a lot of suspects to the ER, do you?

NINER

Ouch. Is there a window open? I'm detecting a cool chill in the room.

(to T.J.)

What do you think, T.J.?

T.J.

I don't think she likes you.

CARLY

I thought prisoners were supposed to be in cuffs.

NINER

He's technically not in custody.

CARLY

What is he then? Technically?

NINER

Lucky he's not being charged with robbery and aggravated assault.

T.J.

Yeah. Don't I look lucky?

CARLY

Your friend has some pretty bad road rash. What did you do? Cuff him to your bumper?

Niner smiles.

NINER

Close, but no. T.J. here had himself a motorcycle accident.

T.J.

Yeah. It's too bad bullets aren't covered as a road hazard.

Carly applies some gauze to T.J.'s face. He's unusually mellow. His eyes glazed over.

CARLY

(to T.J.)

I'd offer you some Demerol for the pain but I see you've got that taken care of.

Carly tapes the gauze to T.J.'s face. Done.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Okay, boys. Merry Christmas.
Happy New Year.

Carly cleans up her work area, tosses out some trash and heads for the door.

Niner takes one last look at her rear before she disappears down the hall.

NINER

(to T.J.)

She wants me, right?

CUT TO:

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Abby sits, waits with a bag of ice to her head. Some BLOOD from her wound has dried on her forehead. She still shakes. Freezing. Barefoot.

A concerned young WOMAN by her side, watching her closely. This is MRS. MABRY.

Her husband MR. MABRY stands at the ADMIT DESK, impatiently paces back and forth. No one behind the counter. He curses under his breath.

MRS. MABRY

What's happening?

MR. MABRY

It's like no one works here.
Ridiculous.

MRS. MABRY

Find someone!

Mr. Mabry tosses his hands in the air. Defeated.

MR. MABRY

Who??

MRS. MABRY

A fucking janitor! Who cares?
Just get somebody out here!

Mr. Mabry loses his patience, storms down the hallway.

Abby is completely withdrawn, gazes at the floor, staring blankly at nothing.

MRS. MABRY (CONT'D)

My husband's gone for help. The
doctor's are gonna ask your name.
You don't have to tell me if you
don't want.

(beat)

They have to ask so your family
isn't worried. You don't want to
worry, do you?

Nothing from Abby. A blank stare. Mrs. Mabry awaits an
answer as she stares deep into Abby's eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. SUTURE ROOM — NIGHT

Carly uses scissors to rip open boxes of medical supplies,
unloads the contents into various cabinets and drawers.

NINER (O.S.)

Let me take a wild stab at
something. You dated a cop?

Carly spots Niner in the doorway.

CARLY

You again?

NINER

So tell me I'm right and I'll
leave you alone.

CARLY

You're right. Now leave me
alone.

NINER

E.R. nurses and cops. They're
like burgers and fries.

CARLY

You said you were gonna leave me
alone.

NINER

No, I didn't. I said I'd stop
asking about you and cops and I
did.

Carly folds the cardboard in quarters, cuts open a new box.
She does her best to appear busy, avoids eye contact.

NINER (CONT'D)

It's no biggie. I knew anyways.

CARLY

So why did you ask?

NINER

I just wanted to hear you say
it. You're forgetting, I'm a
detective. I know things.

CARLY

Okay. Tell me a story.

Niner takes a seat on a swivel stool.

NINER

You got this love hate thing for
cops. On one hand, you like the
attention dating a cop brings.
Their possessive, overprotective
nature. They make you feel safe.

NINER (CONT'D)

Like nobody can touch you. In a job where you don't always feel appreciated, that makes you feel good...

Carly cracks a bashful grin.

NINER (CONT'D)

Plus, you saw each other a lot, worked the same miserable hours.

CARLY

Sounds great. So what possibly could've gone wrong?

NINER

You saw the ugly, not so sexy side of police work. He started getting in your way of treating stab wounds and gunshot victims. He was talking to your patients like suspects and not people. Before you know it that whole macho man act wasn't cutting it anymore.

Carly stops re-stocking, turns to Niner. She folds her arms, clearly aggravated.

NINER (CONT'D)

And what really pissed you off... He thinks his job is more important than yours. How am I doing?

CARLY

That was absolutely amazing.

NINER

I know, right. Pretty impressive.

CARLY

You and my ex would get along great.

NINER

And in there lies the problem. I remind you of your ex.

CARLY

You're twice the asshole he was.

Niner rolls his eyes, returns with a smile.

In runs a hopping mad Mr. Mabry. He stops at the door, peeks his head inside.

MR. MABRY

(to CARLY)

Excuse me? You work here?

Carly pushes Niner and his stool out of the way. He laughs it up, feeds on her disdain like a vulture.

CARLY

Yes. What can I do for you?

MR. MABRY

You can get the thumb out of your ass for starters! Then come with me, if you don't mind!

Mr. Mabry disappears down the hall before Carly can react. She stares back at Niner, who smiles and smacks at his gum.

NINER

Merry Christmas.

EXT. EXAM ROOM #2 - NIGHT

Carly watches through the glass as DR. STEINDLER speaks one on one with Abby. She is distant. Withdrawn. Not paying him any mind.

DR. KRAUSE, a young resident, walks up to Carly. She stays focused on Abby. Dr. Krause peeks in the window - takes a look for himself.

DR. KRAUSE

What do you have for me?

CARLY

A Jane Doe. Sixteen -- maybe seventeen. Picked up on the side of the road. Barefoot, bleeding from the head. No ID, no phone.

CARLY (CONT'D)

And she hasn't spoken a word in
the last thirty minutes.

DR. KRAUSE

You call the police?

CARLY

They're on their way. In the mean-
-time I called in a psyche consult.

DR. KRAUSE

Did you do a rape kit?

CARLY

As long as she's not talking,
consent's gonna be a problem.

DR. KRAUSE

Alright. See what Doc Steindler
can get out of her. And call
me as soon as the police arrive.

CARLY

Okay.

Dr. Krause walks off. A NURSE passes by, peeks through the
window at Abby. Stops.

NURSE

Hey. What's Abby doing here?

Carly turns to the Nurse --

CARLY

Did you say Abby?

Carly is distracted by some LAUGHTER at the --

ADMIT DESK

A whole crew of third shift NURSES gather around Niner as
he cracks jokes - does a magic trick with a deck of cards.

Carly rolls her eyes as the crowd tee-hee like a bunch of
school girls. She heads over, interrupts the fun and
games.

CARLY
(to Niner)
I need you.

NINER
Well, admitting your problem is
the first step toward recovery.

The girls all laugh. Carly grows impatient, grabs his arm and drags him away.

NINER (CONT'D)
Be gentle, would you? I bruise
easily.

INT. EXAM ROOM #2 - NIGHT

Doc Steindler - psychiatric consult - is still speaking one on one with Abby. Doc sporting a multi-colored plaid shirt and an even more horrid neck tie.

DOC
I know you're scared. But what-
- ever happened doesn't need to
leave this hospital. It won't
leave the room. Not if you dont
want. But I can't help unless I
know what's wrong.

Niner steps in, shuts the door, passively watches.

DOC (CONT'D)
(to Niner)
Excuse me... but I'd like to be
alone with my patient. I'll let
you know if we need assistance.

NINER
Police business.

DOC
May I see some identification?

NINER

Sure thing.

Niner pulls back his coat, flashes his gun. Doc shoots him an ugly stare and heads for the door.

NINER (CONT'D)

And change your shirt. You're making the patients dizzy.

Niner winks at Abby. Doc isn't amused as he steps out.

NINER (CONT'D)

Hello, Abby.

Abby looks away. She's been found out.

NINER (CONT'D)

Yes -- we know who you are. So the silent bit's not gonna work anymore.

Abby gives him a dirty stare. Niner smiles.

NINER (CONT'D)

It's alive. And she can hear.

Niner plops himself down in a chair, stares deep into Abby's eyes, desperate to make a connection.

NINER (CONT'D)

Listen, Abby. I'm a cop. A detective.

(leans in)

Homicide.

This grabs Abby's attention.

NINER (CONT'D)

Right about now, I'm your best friend in the world.

Abby listens closely, stares back at him.

NINER

I can get you out of whatever mess
you're in...or make things worse.
It's your decision. If it's just
attention you're looking for, I can
bring twiddledink back in here and
you guys can see who blinks first.
I really don't care.

Abby stares at the floor, ashamed. Niner smiles.

NINER (CONT'D)

But that's not it. I think you're
hiding something.

Abby stares at Niner, a bit angry.

NINER (CONT'D)

And if I make some calls and find
out you're hiding something...this
friendship is officially over. All
deals are off the table.

Abby thinks it over. Her eyes shift, side to side.

NINER (CONT'D)

If you understand me, say 'Yes'.

Abby stalls. Niner leans in closer, puts a hand to his
ear. This makes Abby clearly uneasy.

NINER (CONT'D)

What was that...?

ABBY

(barely audible)

Yes.

Niner smiles.

NINER

Good. Let's start at the beginning.
What happened?

INT. ER ADMIT DESK - NIGHT

Carly stands at an HP inkjet as Abby Samms MEDICAL RECORDS print out. She spots Niner and a UNIFORM COP standing near exam room two - talking it over. Niner heads for the Admit Desk.

The UNIFORM COP takes a seat, guards the room.

Niner stops at Admit.

NINER

You got an address on Abby Samms?

Carly hands him the records.

CARLY

I tried calling eight times.
Nobody's picking up.

Niner smiles, walks off.

NINER

Thanks for your help.

Carly's left at the desk, a bit put off.

CARLY

Now wait just a minute.

She pulls a heavy coat from the admit nurse's chair, tosses it on -- chases after Niner. They head toward the ambulance bay doors.

NINER

She wasn't raped.

CARLY

So what then?

NINER

I don't know.

CARLY

I don't know? What does that mean?

The two exit the ambulance bay doors.

EXT. AMBULANCE BAY - NIGHT

Niner and Carly head for the parking lot. Niner sparks up a smoke while Carly races to keep up with him.

NINER

She drank something funny, then passes out in the bathroom for almost three hours. Wakes up and her family's gone.

CARLY

And what about the bump on her head?

NINER

A couple of guys chased her into the woods.

CARLY

Who?!

NINER

She doesn't know who. If she does, she's not saying.

Niner holds his arm out, keeps Carly from getting run over by a passing car. They head across, into the lot.

NINER (CONT'D)

Look. If you want the details, ask Officer Dawes. I'm headed there now.

CARLY

I'm going with you.

NINER

No you're not. You're going back to work.

CARLY

I was off two hours ago.

Niner laughs, smiles at Carly.

NINER

Not exactly what I had in mind for
our first date.

CARLY

What happened to what's his face?

NINER

T.J.? -- I called him a cab.

CARLY

You usually let armed robbers off
with a warning?

NINER

Not typically, no.

CARLY

So why's he a special case?

NINER

Because he is, okay? Don't worry
about it.

Niner clicks open the lock on his black vintage eighty two
Corvette Stingray. Carly crawls in, keeps a suspicious eye
on Niner.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMMS FAMILY FARM -- NIGHT

Niner's Corvette drives up -- stops at the tail end of the
driveway. The other cars still parked out front -- on the
lawn.

The LIGHTS inside the home still ON.

It is eerily quiet.

INT. NINER'S VETTE -- NIGHT

Niner and Carly are taken aback by the scene. Niner checks
his watch.

NINER

It's one thirty. The lights
are still on.

CARLY

I don't like this.

NINER

Yeah. Me either.

INT. SAMMS HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carly and Niner walk in. Carly instantly spots the MESS on the counter. The gallon container of VANILLA ICE CREAM HAS MELTED over the counter and tile floor. A long and STEADY STREAM pours onto the tile.

CARLY

Oh my God.

Niner examines the scene. He moves for the counter, notices a KNIFE BLOCK SET is missing four of its blades.

He spots an EMPTY PIE DISH on the center counter and checks in the sink. No dishes, no silverware. No knives.

NINER

Don't touch anything.

Niner spots Abby's I-PHONE on near the stool where she and Trent were last sitting. He snags it up, pockets it.

CARLY

I thought we weren't touching
anything.

Niner ignores Carly and moves into the living room. Carly follows behind --

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They both notice the presents under the tree. None of them have been opened. Niner spots Richard's half glass of egg nog.

Ricky's saxophone on the floor. The chair knocked over.

NINER

This party ended at dessert.

CARLY

I'm gonna check the rest of the house.

Carly turns to leave --

NINER (CONT'D)

Stay with me.

Carly stops. Turns back.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Niner and Carly walk down a dark set of steps. Headed for the basement.

INT. BASEMENT/GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Niner and Carly step off the stairs and into the near pitch black room. Niner finds a LIGHT SWITCH on the wall.

A POOL TABLE rests dead center of this hobby room.

On the left...A DARTBOARD and LARGE FLAT SCREEN TV hang from the wall.

On the right...some VENETIAN BLINDS cover up A SLIDING GLASS DOOR. The blinds rattle back and forth. As if a GUST OF WIND has ruffled them.

CARLY

What're we doing in the basement?
Shouldn't you be calling the cops
or something?

NINER

I am the cops.

CARLY

You know what I mean.

Niner heads straight for the sliding door.

CARLY (CONT'D)

It's cold in here. Feels like --

NINER

Like someone left the door open.

Niner pulls a cord to OPEN THE BLINDS. The sliding glass door has been left wide open.

A THUMB SIZED SMEAR OF BLOOD on the white frame.

Carly spots the BLOOD on the door frame. A cool chill runs up her spine. She watches her back, nervous.

CARLY

What the hell is going on here?

CUT TO:

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Niner opens the driver's side -- grabs a large FLASHLIGHT from under his seat. Flicks it ON and OFF.

Carly awaits him, arms folded, freezing.

CARLY

What're we doing?

NINER

Going for a walk.

Niner shuts his door, begins around the side of the home as Carly follows.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Niner and Carly walk about fifty yards or so from the home. The FLASHLIGHT stops on a pair of MUDDY SHOVELS left about three feet apart.

NINER

Someone's been doing some digging.

CARLY

Oh, God. Don't tell me that.

Niner takes off one of his gloves. Uses his bare hand to grab a patch of mud from the scoop of the shovel.

NINER

It's still wet.

Niner and Carly stare off into the woods. A sickened look on both of their faces.

EXT. SAMMS HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

It's an official crime scene. PATROL CARS and a CSI VAN are parked in the front lawn.

CRIME SCENE TECHS walk in and out of the home.

Standing on the porch, talking with a UNIFORMED OFFICER is CAPTAIN HAL DRYDEK (50s). Salt and pepper hair, tough.

A K9 UNIT arrives on the scene. It pulls to the edge of the lawn and parks next to an UNMARKED SEDAN.

Carly sits with the corvette door open, her feet kicked out on the grass. She watches Niner and Drydek on the porch.

ON THE PORCH - SAME

Niner takes one nervous drag after the next from a marlboro -- fidgety, upset.

DRYDEK

You did right by calling me first, Rawley. Anyone else would've thrown the cuffs on the moment they saw you.

NINER

I'm still a police officer.

DRYDEK

You're also serving a suspension and facing a felony rap. It means you can't bust into strange homes with a gun strapped to your chest.

NINER

The door was open.

DRYDEK

You can't walk in either.

Niner grows tired of Drydek's scolding and turns his back. Sparks up another smoke.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Do you even grasp what kind of trouble you're in? This isn't I.A. poking a nose up your ass lookin' to see what you had for breakfast. It's a Murder Two rap you're looking at.

NINER

What's your point?

DRYDEK

It's all a matter of time before those dogs catch a sniff of something in those trees and find these people. What am I supposed to tell the cameras when they do?

NINER

Tell them the truth. An ER nurse is doing a follow up on a patient and stumbled on the scene.

Drydek smirks. Disgusted.

DRYDEK

Right. Just like you were never here. That's always your story, Rawley. You're always somewhere else when the shit goes down.

NINER

Do you need anything else from us? I wanna get her out of here.

DRYDEK

We got the nurse's statement?

NINER

Yeah.

DRYDEK

Then you're free to go.

Niner quickly heads to his car.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

By the way --

Niner turns back --

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Stay out of this one. For your own sake. I can't help you as long as your face keeps popping up in the wrong place, Rawley.

Niner offers a half-hearted smile, heads to his car. Drydek heads back inside.

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - NIGHT

Niner leans on the passenger door, stares down at Carly. Her face is red and puffy, tears down her cheek.

CARLY

This is officially the worst Christmas ever.

NINER

We don't really wanna be here right now. I'll take you home.

CARLY

Don't take this the wrong way, but I don't think I can be alone right now.

NINER

Yeah, me either. Let's go.

Carly wipes her tears, places her legs back in the car. Niner shuts her door.

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A real pig sty, bachelor pad.

Carly sits at the dining room table. Her elbows rested on the surface. Her weary face buried in her hands. A bottle of vodka and glass in front of her.

Niner works up a pretty batch of scrambled eggs in a nearby kitchen.

CARLY

This is nice of you. But I'm not sure I can eat.

NINER

You're putting a pretty good hurt on that bottle. And you shouldn't drink on an empty stomach. I don't want you passing out on me and thinking I took advantage of you.

CARLY

I should be hungry. I haven't eaten in twenty four hours.

Niner drops a plate of eggs in front of Carly. Hands her a fork, takes a seat. Nothing for him but a glass of scotch.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Aren't you eating?

NINER

I don't like eggs.

Carly stares at her plate, confused.

CARLY

I keep thinking about Abby. I feel like I should be with her.

NINER

It's a police matter now.

CARLY

You think they found something?

NINER

We'll have to wait and see.

CARLY

Is there someone you can call?

NINER

No. Not really.

CARLY

What do you mean?

Niner holds back a smile, takes a drink. Carly also smiles, strangely intrigued.

CARLY (CONT'D)

What is it?

NINER

That patient tonight. The one I brought to the ER. I didn't just let him go. He was never under arrest.

CARLY

(squints)

I don't understand.

NINER

I'm sort of seeing this pharmacist. Works third shift at the Save On. She was doing the whole shitty Christmas Eve shift, so I thought I'd surprise her. Turkey sandwich. Cranberries, the whole bit.

CARLY

Sounds nice.

NINER

It was supposed to be.

CARLY

What happened?

NINER

Well. Turns out, as I was pulling up to the store, this punk comes running out with his hands full...

EXT. SAVE ON DRUG STORE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Niner steps out of his vette -- spots a MASKED MAN storming out of the store, gun in hand. He takes a last look inside, checks for pursuers, makes for a MOTORCYCLE parked near the front.

CARLY (V.O.)

This is T.J.?

Niner watches him good. The two catch eyes. The Masked Man (T.J.) jumps on his bike -- spins out as he makes a quick u-turn and aims for the exit. Niner pulls his piece -- takes aim.

NINER (V.O.)

T.J. -- cleaned out the registers, made off with the Oxi. I put two and two together and tackled first, asked questions later.

Niner fires a single round -- BAM! The shot BLOWS OUT the front tire of T.J.'s Kawasaki.

T.J. goes flying, face first, from the motorbike. He skids across the pavement like a kid on a slip n' slide. He rolls over, his face a BLOODY MESS.

Niner begins toward him - his gun aimed and ready. A crazed look in his eye. T.J. throws his hands up, giving up as the blood drips from his skinned up face.

NINER (V.O.)

And he's screaming...please don't hurt me. I give up. It's like I couldn't hear him. I saw him running out and all I could see were flashes of him sticking a gun in Angie's face.

Niner holds his gun on T.J. -- ready to finish the job. He spots a fake looking pistol on the lot near T.J. From first glance, it might look real. He snatches it up and gives it a closer look.

NINER (V.O.)

Dumb ass used an air pistol.

Niner gives T.J. a look of contempt, disgusted.

NINER (V.O.)

Needless to say, my blood was boiling at this point. Things kind of got out of hand after that.

Niner swiftly kicks T.J. in the chest - knocks the wind out of him. He rolls to his side. Niner grabs his legs, drags him across the lot. His bloodied, road rashed face scrapes against the asphalt.

NINER (V.O.)

I didn't let him go because I wanted to. I did it because I had to.

Niner picks T.J. up by his balls, stands him upright, gives him another good crack in the mouth.

CARLY (V.O.)

You're losing me again.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY - FLASHBACK

An early sixties CHEVELLE SUPER SPORT leads a chase through midday traffic. The second - a black DODGE CHARGER - falls a short distance behind. RED POLICE LIGHT flashes on the dash.

NINER (V.O.)

A little under a month ago, my partner and I were coming back from a routine investigation. Spot a car weaving in and out of traffic. Must've been doing a hundred.

The blue Chevelle nears a stop light, slams its brakes and SCREECHES into a four way intersection -- almost causing a multiple pile-up. The car cuts right at the light, headed down a side street.

NINER (V.O.)

We light up, run him down. Then followed him all the way to his apartment complex.

The black charger follows behind -- maneuvers through the idle cars blocking the intersection.

Niner is behind the wheel. His partner, CHRIS MAYHEW (30s), rides shotgun, his weapon drawn and ready to fire.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

A large, low-income apartment complex in the near distance. The two cars quickly approaching.

The CHEVELLE brakes, burnt rubber on the asphalt, spins in an almost three-sixty, bolts into the complex.

NINER (V.O.)

He cuts this hard left into the complex. His tires squealing. I try to follow but don't quite make it.

Niner cuts the wheel left, the BLACK CHARGER careens out of control, skidding completely off the road, down a slope and CRASHING into a sewer drainage pipe.

NINER (V.O.)

I end up cutting the wheel too hard and put us in a ditch...

INT. BLACK CHARGER - DAY

Niner, now cut and bloodied, checks with his partner. His mangled up face torn to shreds by the imploding windshield. Niner pulls him back. His lifeless eyes stare back at him with blame.

NINER (V.O.)

We crash into one of those big drain pipes. My partner's hurt. I'm so pissed I'm seeing double.

Niner's lips quiver, his eyes tremble. Enraged.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Niner ducks under a yellow security gate, gun drawn, ready to fire. He surveys the lot, checks cars, searches for the blue Chevelle.

NINER (V.O.)

I run into this place, looking
for his car. I find it parked
out front.

Niner spots a CHEVELLE parked under a tree. The loud sound of a FIST RAPPING ON A DOOR draws his attention to the first building to the left.

NINER (V.O.)

Then I hear this asshole beating
on a door. It's his place.

Niner races toward the building.

CUT TO:

INT. RAUL ORTEGA'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Niner sneaks through an open door, gun drawn, creeps around a corner wall and spots a large CUBAN MAN grabbing his GIRL by the shirt.

This is RAUL ORTEGA (35), muscular, primed and pretty, and JUSTINE HERRERA (20s), long, wavy-haired, true Puerto Rican beauty.

He strikes her across the face, shakes the hell out of her, yelling, cursing. Niner takes aim, holds out a badge. Raul turns, faces him.

NINER (V.O.)

I come through the door with my
gun, ready to pop him one.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Niner sits across from Carly. He continues his story.

NINER

And he's yelling and screaming.
Something about her being with
another guy.

CARLY

Was she?

NINER

No. At least that's what she told
the cops. I don't know.

Carly's look is a cross between suspicion and distrust.
She changes the subject.

CARLY

So you've got your gun on him?

NINER

I've got him. Dead bang. From
me to you, I've got him.

CARLY

You shot him?

NINER

No. But its taking everything in
me to keep from blowing this guy
in half...

CARLY

What was he doing?

NINER

Nothing. He didn't do anything.
Just stood there. Stared at me.

CARLY

What did you do?

INT. RAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Niner mouths instructions to Raul, but we can't hear. Raul slowly puts his hands in the air - starts to back up in the direction of a sliding glass door. One that leads out onto a balcony.

Justine watches on, her nose bloodied.

NINER (V.O.)

I tell this guy to turn around
and grab the wall. Spread them.

CARLY (V.O.)

Did he?

NINER (V.O.)

No. He backs up. He keeps backing
up until he's out on the balcony...

(beat)

And I'm screaming 'get your ass on
the ground, asshole!'

Niner mouths a string of outlandish profanities as he keeps
his gun on Raul. Raul ducks outside.

CARLY (V.O.)

And then you shot him?

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Niner sits across from Carly.

NINER

Then he told me to fuck myself and
jumped. Four stories down. All the
way to the ground.

CARLY

You're kidding. Did he live?

NINER

Broke every bone in his body.
Ended up in ICU for the next
three weeks before he gave out.

CARLY

Unbelievable.

NINER

He was so pumped up on PCP at
the time, he probably thought
he could fly. Or something.

Niner pours Carly another shot.

NINER (CONT'D)

So this woman whose life I just saved tells the cops I pushed him. After he throws his hands in the air and surrenders of course.

CARLY

Why would she do that?

NINER

Maybe she saw a lawsuit in it. We take her husband away, she sees if she can steal a few bucks from the city.

CARLY

I'm so sorry.

NINER

Long story short. I'm awaiting a court date. A possible Murder Two conviction if I'm found guilty. That's it.

Carly's empathy is clearly visible in her eyes. Her view of Niner changes with one simple look.

CUT TO:

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly is on top of the sheets, sound asleep. Niner checks in on her, quietly shuts the door on his way out.

CUT TO:

INT. NINER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Niner's long coat is folded up - draped on the back of the couch. He picks it up, walks to a hanging closet. He stops, reaches into his pocket and pulls out --

ABBY'S I-PHONE

He turns it on. As the phone warms up, he notices that there are THREE UNREAD MESSAGES. All from Trent. Reads them, one at a time.

INSERT - PHONE

-- Are U OK? Where R U?

-- Alone? With cops?

-- Talk to me.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby's PHONE RINGS. The CALLER ID reads TRENT. His FACE appears on the screen.

Niner stands frozen. Unsure of his next move. He allows the phone to RING, over and over again. It finally stops. He sends a text in response.

INSERT - PHONE

Where is my family?

BACK TO SCENE

Niner awaits a response. Nothing. The phone BUZZES.

INSERT - PHONE

Are U with cops?

BACK TO SCENE

Niner bites his lip-- uncertain. Ponders his next move. He begins typing another TEXT.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Niner sits behind his wheel - waiting. It's late and the night is quiet. He sips a black coffee, watches the front of the complex.

A beat-up HONDA CIVIC cruises into the lot, parks near the front of the building. Out steps --

TRENT

He nervously checks his surroundings as he approaches the first floor STAIRS. Takes a seat on the bottom step. He rests his arms on his knees, waits.

NINER

is confused by Trent's behavior.

TRENT

notices Niner suspiciously watching him from his Corvette. He grows nervous, checks the area for cops.

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - NIGHT

Niner steps out, stumbles a bit, plays drunk as he heads for the first floor steps. Trent takes notice, worried.

Niner whistles "Let It Snow" as he stumble back and forth on the asphalt.

Trent slowly pulls a revolver from his pants, rests it on the step behind him.

Niner is oblivious. He greets Trent.

NINER

What a frickin' way to spend
Christmas, huh? Sitting in my
car with a busted heater, no
wallet and a pissed off girl.

Trent cracks a fake laugh.

NINER (CONT'D)

Don't ever get married. If you
do, for your sake don't make out
with their cousin at Christmas
parties. Especially ones they
can't stand.

Niner chuckles, pops a cigarette in his mouth, lights up and offers a second smoke for Trent.

Trent grows nervous.

NINER (CONT'D)

Wanna smoke?

TRENT

Nah, man. I'm good.

NINER

Good for you. Just another one of my bad habits. So what the hell are you doing out here? Your old lady kick you out too?

Trent stalls.

TRENT

Nah. Just coming back from a party and wasn't feeling so good. Thought I'd take a rest.

NINER

Done my share of drinking tonight myself. Bad habit number three.

TRENT

At least you got a nice ride. What is that? An eighty three?

Niner turns, gawks back at his Stingray. Trent snags up his gun, stands, draws down on Niner.

NINER

Eighty Two Stingray. If you want we can go for a ride.

Niner faces Trent. A gun in his face.

TRENT

You can cut the bullshit, friend. Where is she?

Niner isn't the least bit surprised. He plays it cool, puffs away at his smoke.

NINER

Safe.

TRENT

Where?

NINER

The cops know everything, Trent.
You got no play here.

TRENT

Oh, yeah? They don't know shit.
Nothing at all.

NINER

They know you were there. That's
all that matters.

Niner pockets the smokes in his trench coat.

TRENT

What're you doing?!

Niner reaches the pack to Trent.

NINER

Sorry. You want one?

TRENT

No! Keep your hands up!

NINER

All you had to do was ask.

TRENT

Well now I'm asking, smart ass!
Hands in the air!

Niner raises his hands.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Where is she? Upstairs?

NINER

At the hospital. With the cops.

TRENT

Who the hell are you?

NINER

I'm your best friend, Trent.
Your only way out of this.

TRENT

Bullshit! You wanna put me away!
You don't wanna hear anything!

Trent jerks the gun in Niner's face, furious, irrational.

NINER

Okay. Take it easy.

TRENT

SHUT UP!

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly awakens from a dead sleep. She hears TRENT'S LOUD MOUTH ECHO through the parking lot. She jumps up, pulls back the curtains, stares outside --

CARLY'S POV

Trent holding his gun on Niner. His hands in the air.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly's eyes almost bulge from her sockets. She clumsily pulls a cell phone from her pocket, dials 9-1-1.

EXT. NINER'S BUILDING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Trent holds his gun on Niner, hands in the air.

TRENT

I tried to stop it. They were
gonna kill her. I saved her!

NINER

So what was the plan? Just keep
running? If Abby runs and these
guys find her, she dies. Just
like you. Isn't that what you
told me on the phone?

The wheels turn in Trent's eyes.

NINER (CONT'D)

If you truly care about her,
turn yourself in.

Trent snaps out of it.

NINER (CONT'D)

Give these assholes up. If you
run, you got one of two choices.
In the joint or in the dirt.

Niner points at the asphalt.

TRENT

They won't listen. Fuckin' cops.
They won't listen to shit! So
stop jerking me off!

Niner keeps his eyes on Trent's nervous trigger finger.

NINER

They're coming for you. You need
to make a decision.

Trent slowly lets the hammer back on his gun.

INT. NINER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carly watches through the window. Awaits the cops.

CARLY

Come on. Hurry up.

CARLY'S POV

Trent walks Niner into the lot with his hands up. They
approach Trent's --

HONDA CIVIC

Niner crawls in the driver's side. Trent follows on the
passenger side.

A PATROL CAR

pulls into the lot, lights off. Parks near the front of the building.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly is a bit on edge, anxious.

CARLY

Hurry up! Get out! What're you doing?!

CARLY'S POV

A UNIFORMED OFFICER crawls from the PATROL CAR.

NINER

Steps out. Meets the patrolman half-way. They talk.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly exhales. Relieved.

CARLY'S POV

Niner finishes with the officer, walks back to the Honda. The Patrolman crawls back in his squad car and rolls out.

The Honda follows behind.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly steps away from the window, takes a seat on the edge of the bed. Distraught, confused. She drops her phone on the sheets in defeat.

EXT. PAT THOMAS BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Trent's HONDA CIVIC sits just outside the ball park. A chain-link fence surrounds the varsity stadium. Locked up and quiet.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - NIGHT

Trent sits shotgun, holds a revolver on Niner. A bottle of whiskey in his other hand. Tears shoot down his face.

Niner keeps his eyes across the street.

NINER'S POV - WATERMAN MEDICAL CENTER

sits across the highway. The lot is fairly empty. Most of the CARS are parked near the front. A few PATROL CRUISERS parked near the ambulance bay.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner turns to Trent.

TRENT

I owed these fuckin' guys. I owed them big time. Only they didn't want money. They don't want nothin' I'm offering.

NINER

Sounds like you fucked these guys over real good.

TRENT

You don't know the half of it.

NINER

So why don't you tell me about it?

(beat)

How does Abby and her family play into this?

Trent is quiet, too ashamed to answer. He looks away. Niner draws his attention.

TRENT

You have to understand that I didn't have a choice.

NINER

Okay. So now's your chance to plead your case. It's just you and me here.

Trent slowly comes around.

TRENT

Abby invited me for Christmas dinner. Bobby said it was too perfect. Everyone in the same room, all at once.

Trent tears up.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Abby wasn't enough. No. He wasn't gonna be happy until everyone was dead.

NINER

Abby was your girl?

Trent nods.

TRENT

I couldn't go through with it.
I couldn't let them hurt her.

INT. SAMMS HOME - CHRISTMAS PARTY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Uncle Gary, Aunt Nikki at the piano playing "Baby It's Cold Outside", while Becca and Ricky Junior act up on the couch, goof off. Richard sips a coffee -- smiles as he watches his children play.

Helen pulls a PUMPKIN PIE from the oven, sets it on the center countertop.

Trent squats on a tall stool by the kitchen counter -- Abby plopped in his lap. She toys with her IPHONE and sips on an eggnog.

Trent watches her closely. She rubs her tired eyes, tries to focus. Puts a hand to her forehead, sweaty, dizzy.

TRENT (V.O.)

I was supposed to wait until they were all in one room.
Then give Bobby the signal.

Abby loses her balance, slips off the stool. Helen takes notice. She watches with concern.

Trent holds her up, tries to balance her. She rubs at her weary face, jerks away from him, irritable.

TRENT (V.O.)

We were all in the living room,
about to open presents. It was
gonna be now or never.

Abby steps out, shuffles through the kitchen and headed for the bathroom. Helen stares at Trent with blame. He shrugs his shoulders, plays stupid.

TRENT (V.O.)

So I doctored her drink with
sleeping pills. Just enough
to keep her out awhile.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Abby stumbles her way inside, heads for the bathroom. Trent follows behind, keeps a good distance between them, watches her from a far. He quietly steps inside.

TRENT (V.O.)

She got dizzy and excused her-
- self to the bathroom. I went
with to make sure she was all
the way out before I called
Bobby.

INT. ABBY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Abby rests her back against the wall -- on the floor. The toilet seat is up, ready to be sick. Trent pokes his head in, notices her eyes are shut, on her way out.

INT. SAMM'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Trent quietly unhooks the gold chain, unlocks the door and opens. In walks BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP (35) thinly shaved white hair, rough, pockmarked complexion. Next -- his right hand JASON FERRIN (20s), white thug, cornrows, gangster wannabe.

TRENT (V.O.)

I unchained the front door, let
in Bobby and Jason.

The three men stand in silence. They let the sounds of the PIANO MUSIC lead them further into the home.

INT. SAMM'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLAHSBACK

Bobby, Jason, and Trent surprise Helen as she serves up the last of the ice cream and pie. Richard notices the strange men in his kitchen. Becca and Ricky Junior are oblivious, thumb wrestling, slapping each other.

Bobby zeroes in on Becca -- an evil grin. He catches eyes with the young beauty. She loses her silly smile. Scared.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HONDA CIVIC - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Trent and Niner in the front seat. Trent's eyes tear up as he gazes through the windshield.

TRENT

He saw Abby's sister on the couch
with her brother...

Trent, emotional, chokes back his tears.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Bobby had this bag with him. Pulled
out all this rope. He grabbed the
sister first. Put a gun to her head
while me and Jason tied up the
others...

Niner's sympathy for Trent is clear. A saddened look on his face.

TRENT (CONT'D)

He handed me this knife. Made her
watch while we...

Trent sobs uncontrollably.

TRENT (CONT'D)

That sick bastard! Sick fuck made
me do it!

NINER

What happened to the sister?

TRENT

Bastard saved her for last. They did all this shit to her. Oh my God, I'm so sorry!

Trent covers his eyes in shame, cries out.

NINER

Why the sister, Trent? Why did they save her for last?

Trent wipes his eyes dry, composes himself.

TRENT

I told Bobby that Abby had a baby brother.

(stalls)

But she was an only daughter.

Niner shuts his eyes in disgust. Sickened.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Abby was knocked out in the other room. I let them think what they wanted.

NINER

I bought you some time back there with that cop. To get your story straight. But we're out of time. You have to tell them where they can find Bobby.

TRENT

I can't.

NINER

You did what you did to Abby cos you were protecting her.

(beat)

It was your only option and you took it.

TRENT

They're gonna ask why I didn't
call the cops..

Trent punches the dashboard in a drunken rage.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Why didn't I call the cops?

Trent burst into tears, takes a huge belt of whiskey. His
gut twists with guilt and agony.

NINER

Because you knew they wouldn't
listen. And even if they did,
you'd be dead by the time Bobby
got wind of it. You were scared.
He would've smoked you on his
way out of town. You know it.
I know it. That's your defense.

Trent takes another monster chug of the whiskey.

TRENT

I could've saved them. All of
them. I didn't do anything.

The wheels turn in Niner's eyes. In deep thought. He
finally comes around.

NINER

Maybe you did.

Trent awaits an explanation. A half confused, half drunk
off his ass look.

TRENT

What do you mean?

NINER

Tell them you called me. I
helped you out of a few jams
in the past and you thought I
could stop it.

TRENT

Are you serious?

NINER

You called me for help. You trusted me to take down Bobby and his crew and I let you down.

Trent squints, confused.

NINER (CONT'D)

I let you down because I didn't believe you. Just another one of Trent's crazy stories and I didn't wanna hear it. It was my fault because I didn't stop it.

TRENT

Why would you do that? For me? You don't even know me.

NINER

I know you're not a killer. Just by looking at you. And because you're doing the right thing.

Trent stares at the dashboard, unsure, but coming around.

TRENT

Will they believe it?

NINER

Your hand was forced. Bobby made you help him kill those people. Right before you came to my place and turned yourself in. You told me the whole story.

(beat)

How Bobby wanted revenge. You owed him some dead bodies. And if you didn't deliver, he'd kill you. Just tell the truth. Everything you told me.

(beat)

Okay?

Trent thinks it over. A bit unsure. He nods his head. He takes yet another belt of the whiskey. The bottle is almost gone.

NINER (CONT'D)

We're gonna have to go in.
Together.

Trent shuts his eyes -- rubs his face. He half passes out, dumping the whiskey on his lap. Niner quickly snatches up the bottle as it spills out.

Trent is all the way out. Breathing deeply.

Niner isn't surprised. He takes a good sniff of the bottle. Grimaces. He opens his door and steps outside.

EXT. HONDA - NIGHT

Niner steps a good distance from Trent's car. He dumps the remainder of the bottle on the concrete. He stares back at the Honda. A conflicted look in his eye.

EXT. PAT THOMAS FIELD - NIGHT

The pitcher's mound. Facing home plate. The lights of this grand high school stadium are off. The bleachers empty.

A SINGLE GUNSHOT is ECHOED in the night air.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. CARLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Carly sips a cup of coffee at the kitchen table. It's the next day as watches the EMERGENCY NEWS REPORT on TV.

INSERT - TV - NEWS REPORT

A FEMALE REPORTER (20s) stands on The Samms FRONT LAWN, mic in hand. Their three story home and horse pasture in frame.

REPORTER

It was the picturesque home. For twenty years, it sat undisturbed. In a spot where most little girls can only dream of. Horses. White picket fence. Green pastures. For Richard and Helen Samms, it was the perfect life. A place where they would raise their three children. But last night, their perfect dream came to an end..

The TV CAMERAS CUT TO a shot of YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE blocking off a small section of woods.

REPORTER (V.O.)

At approximately Three Thirty AM this morning, police pulled the bodies of six people from these woods...

The TV flashes STILL PICS OF THE VICTIMS.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The bodies of Richard and Helen Samms, their two children Rebecca and Richard Junior, and Richard's brother Gary Samms and wife Nikki..

The backyard. The Reporter strolls the perimeter.

REPORTER

Police would make this grisly discovery after hearing the shocking, first hand testimony of seventeen year old Abigail Samms. At One Fifteen AM this morning, Samms was admitted to Waterman Medical Center after ingesting a near lethal dose of the drug ambitropin. An over the counter sleeping pill...

BACK TO SCENE

Carly leans forward. Eyes locked on the report.

ON TV - NEWS REPORT

A MUG SHOT of TRENT WISE. He holds a number plate in front of his chest. It says P.C.P.D. across the bottom.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Police are saying it was Abby's boyfriend, Trent Wise, who most likely gave her the drug that rendered her unconscious between the hours of Nine Forty PM and Twelve Thirty AM...

Back on The Reporter.

REPORTER

They are also claiming that it was while Abby lay unconscious when Trent Wise brutally and savagely murdered his girlfriend's family..

Carly grows impatient.

CARLY

Come on. Get to it already.

ON TV - NEWS REPORT

The Reporter strolls about the backyard of The Samms farm and stops at the YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE.

REPORTER

In a bizarre twist to this story, Wise was later found dead in the parking lot of Pat Thomas Baseball Stadium from an apparent suicide...

Carly sits in shock. A sack of bricks to the gut.

ON TV - PAT THOMAS FIELD - MORNING

Trent's HONDA CIVIC sits in the lot. YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE secures the perimeter.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Police claim he was killed by a single gunshot wound under the chin. The weapon used was a thirty eight revolver. Found in Wise's right hand. Wise was discovered in the passenger seat of his Honda Civic at Eight Thirty AM this morning and reeked of alcohol, said lead investigator Martin Crowe. It was apparent that Wise had been at the stadium for some time before deciding to end his own life.

TV CAMERA CUTS TO A TWO-LANE HIGHWAY

The Reporter stands at the edge of the stadium parking lot, overlooks the highway. Waterman Medical Center is visible across the street.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

As you can see here Pat Thomas Field sits directly across the street from Waterman Medical Center where Abby Samms was being treated...

Carly is furious, ready to blow.

CARLY

Sonofabitch.

CUT TO:

INT. METRO DIVISION - O.P.D. - MORNING

Niner moves through a maze of busy work desks as he makes his way toward a corner office. A name on the door reads CAPT. HAL DRYDEK. He gives a quick knock and heads inside.

INT. DRYDEK'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Niner steps in and shuts the door behind him. Drydek is leaning against his desk, arms folded.

Sitting in a leather chair with his legs crossed one over the other is SERGEANT DETECTIVE MARTIN CROWE (30s).

Jet black hair, wire rim glasses, purposeful.

DRYDEK

Thanks for coming in, Rawley.

Niner catches Crowe giving him a nasty look. A judgmental stare. He sizes him up. Niner simply returns his stare. These two have a history and it shows.

NINER

So what's so important you couldn't tell me on the phone?

Drydek looks to his left. Niner follows his look into a far corner --

CARLY sits in the second of the matching leather chairs. A nervous look about her. She sneaks a quick glance at Niner. Then back at Drydek.

NINER (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm confused.

DRYDEK

Miss Dennis has brought a few things to our attention. Some things we need to ask you about.

Niner checks with Carly. She avoids him at all costs.

NINER

I see.

DRYDEK

I hear you removed a cellular phone from the crime scene last night. Is this true?

NINER

Can't say that I did.

Carly stares dead at him. Now it's Niner who's avoiding her.

Crowe notices the strange exchange.

DRYDEK

Are you calling her a liar?

NINER

I'm saying she's mistaken. If she's referring to the iphone I retrieved from the counter then that would be my own. And nor did I, at any time last evening, tamper with any other evidence at the scene. Is that all?

CROWE

No, that's not all.

Niner gives Crowe a "who the hell are you" look.

CROWE (CONT'D)

We also hear that Trent Wise was at your apartment last night. And that he had a gun. A revolver. Kind of like the one found in his dead hand.

DRYDEK

You're denying this?

NINER

Yes.

DRYDEK

And do you also deny speaking with Officer Burnette outside your place? Around Two AM. Responding to a 911 call, made by Miss Dennis from your apartment?

NINER

I don't deny speaking with Officer Burnette. The young man with the gun that Miss Dennis saw was a friend of a robbery suspect I detained earlier that evening...

(to Carly)

You remember T.J.?

Carly thinks back. Drydek and Crowe confused.

NINER (CONT'D)

Earlier that evening, I was with a young lady friend at her place of employment. Against my better judgment, I engaged in a physical altercation with a suspect.

Carly scoffs under her breath.

NINER (CONT'D)

Things got out of hand. That's how I ended up at the hospital. This punk T.J. tells a friend of his what happened, spots him a couple hundred and shows up on my doorstep with a gun. That's it.

DRYDEK

He sent a friend?

CROWE

What's his name?

NINER

I don't know. I didn't ask.

Crowe checks with Drydek. A pretty crazy story.

NINER (CONT'D)

Because I had no intention of taking him into custody. I spotted him a few hundred and told him to get lost. Told him to split the money with T.J.

CROWE

Why would you do this?

NINER

With my impending trial I knew that T.J.'s testimony could only hurt my case.

DRYDEK

So you beat the shit out of some punk, then paid him off? Is this what you're telling me, Rawley?

NINER

I'm not proud of what happened, but that's what happened.

Carly shakes her head. Neither Drydek nor Crowe seem too convinced by this story.

DRYDEK

I'm gonna need this T.J.'s sheet. And your word that you stay out of Abby Samms case. And I better not hear of you pulling any more stunts like last night. Got it?

NINER

You bet. Is that it?

DRYDEK

You can go.

Niner gives Carly a dirty look on his way out.

CUT TO:

INT. CARLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Carly sits at a corner work desk, on her laptop. She logs on and Google searches --

INSERT - GOOGLE SEARCH ENGINE

Orlando cop, balcony, Rawley Niner

Several NEWS ARTICLES pop up.

BACK TO SCENE

One of them in particular catches her eye.

MAN FALLS TO DEATH FROM BALCONY OF ORLANDO CONDO

Another article sits a few searches below --

ORLANDO COP KILLED IN HIGH SPEED PURSUIT

Under this search reads --

"O.P.D. Homicide Detectives Rawley Niner and Chris Mayhew observed Ortega's red late model Mustang weave in and out of traffic..."

As well as the words..."fell from balcony"..."Orlando"

Carly double clicks the article. Selects the PRINT option on her laptop.

CUT TO:

INT. ORENA'S PUB AND BILLIARDS - NIGHT

Niner plays a round of nine ball with one of the regulars. A pitcher of beer rests at a corner round table. A couple of empty high chairs.

In storms a hopping mad Carly. A MANILA FILE in hand.

Just as Niner is setting up his final shot, Carly tosses the file onto the middle of the table, blocking his play.

NINER

Okay. I'm here. Ready to talk.

Niner hands Carly a mug of beer and snags up the manila file, looks inside. A printed internet article:

INSERT - ARTICLE

COP KILLED IN HIGH SPEED PURSUIT

BACK TO SCENE

CARLY (CONT'D)

You didn't tell me that your partner died in that accident.

NINER

So what? You didn't ask.

CARLY

You killed that guy, didn't you? Everything they said about you is true. You pitched him right over the side of his own balcony like fucking Peter Pan.

NINER

First I'm stealing evidence and now I'm killing people? So you really do hate me.

Niner sets up his last shot. Leans over the table.

NINER (CONT'D)

And here I was blaming your frigidness on PMS, sore feet and hunger pains. I was gonna give you a pass.

And he sinks the remaining ball with little problem. His opponent tosses a wrinkled twenty on the table, re-racks the balls.

Carly gets in Niner's face.

CARLY

Your partner's dead and you've been blaming yourself ever since. Instead of finding a way to cope with it, you've been taking it out on other people. Like T.J. And Trent Wise.

NINER

So we're back on that again, huh? We've already been over this once. You're wrong.

CARLY

Am I?

Niner's pool buddy gives up and sets his cue back on the rack. The two nod goodbye.

NINER

It was an emotional night for everybody. You wanted to help that girl, but you couldn't. There was nothing you or anyone else could do to help her...

Carly folds her arms in protest. She sips at her beer.

NINER (CONT'D)

It was an absolutely terrible tragedy and it didn't make any sense. Now her boyfriend's dead and people are still looking for somebody else to blame. And they got no fucking clue as to why it happened...

Carly bites her bottom lip, rocks on her heels, impatient.

NINER (CONT'D)

And everybody is pissed off and looking for answers. You wanna know what happened? Abby Samms had her dipshit boyfriend murder her family. He felt guilty and ate a bullet. I think you know that. I think you know it and you can't accept it. The truth is, it's not me that can't let go. It's you. You need to let go and let the cops do what they're paid to do.

Carly tosses her beer in Niner's face and charges out.

Niner snags up some paper towels from a nearby table and wipes himself down.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

It's absolute pandemonium. Several TV NEWS VANS, CAMERAMEN and REPORTERS at the scene.

An ANGRY MOB of picketers and protestors hover behind a carefully positioned row of wooden saw horses.

Some of the more angry crowd raise homemade SIGNS in the air. Most of them describe Abby as a liar and murderer. One of them reads "Stabby Abby".

An SUV slowly coasts down the street, approaches the house. This is Uncle Steve and wife Cynthia. They pull into their driveway as NEWS PERSONNEL crowd the vehicle.

Out steps STEVE and CYNTHIA. They avoid the reporters and news cameras, holding up their hands and refusing to talk. They quickly make for the front door.

INT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - ABBY'S ROOM - DAY

Abby stares out her window at the angry mob. Tears in her eyes. She yanks her curtains closed, curls up on her bed like a scared child.

She covers her ears to avoid the constant noise around her. We PUSH IN on Abby's face as the VOICES of BECCA and RICKY call her name.

BECCA (V.O.)

Abby!...Help us! Please!

RICKY (V.O.)

Help us, Abby! Save us! Please,
Abby! Please save us!

Abby squeezes her hands over her ears, harder and harder, desperate to block out the VOICES around her.

Tears shoot from her eyes as she descends further into a never ending nightmare.

HELEN (V.O.)

What have you done to us, Abigail?

ABBY

(to voices)

Shut up. Just shut up!

CUT TO:

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

An array of deadly weapons are sprawled out on the table. The smaller components of his forty five caliber rests in pieces on an old newspaper.

A sawed off shotgun with the double barrel chamber exposed. And a backup piece, a ten shot twenty two caliber revolver.

Niner uses a cleaning brush to snake out the cylinder on his nickle-plated forty four magnum short barrel.

A KNOCK at the door distracts him. He stuffs the twenty two in the back of his pants, walks to the door. Answers.

ABBY

on the other side. Niner stands in shock.

ABBY

Are you gonna invite me in?

NINER

I don't know yet. Are you alone?

ABBY

Who else would I be with?

Niner looks over her shoulder, in both directions, paranoid.

NINER

Nobody. Come in.

Abby lets herself in. Niner double checks the lot, shuts the door.

Abby shuffles her way to the center of the living room. She is somewhat withdrawn, quiet at first. Unsure.

NINER (CONT'D)

How did you find me?

ABBY

I went to the hospital, asked that nurse if she knew where I could find you.

NINER

Carly.

ABBY

Yeah. That's her.

Abby nervously fidgets with her fingernails, avoids eye contact. Niner observes her strange behavior.

NINER

And? What can I do for you, Abby?

ABBY

Do you remember at the hospital when you said you thought I was hiding something?

Niner reads Abby's eyes. Nods.

NINER

Of course.

ABBY

After they found my family, did you tell those other policemen what we talked about?

Niner slowly steps closer. Abby takes a step back.

NINER

Same thing you told them. You were chased into the woods by two unidentified males.

ABBY

Did they ask you about Trent?

NINER

No.

ABBY

I didn't wanna believe he was involved. I wanted a chance to ask him, face to face. Before I gave away the last thing left in my life.

(beat)

So I didn't mention him to the cops. Not at first. I had to be sure.

Abby spots the arsenal set up on Niner's dining room table. She directs her look to Niner, awaits an explanation.

NINER (CONT'D)

Just doing some spring cleaning.

(beat)

Why don't we step outside. Get some air.

BALCONY - LATER

Niner hands Abby a lemonade. She takes a good belt - gazes out into the front lawn of the complex.

ABBY

The cops all think I set it up, don't they?

NINER

You know as much about it as I do, Abby. They're doing their best to keep me out of it.

ABBY

Why?

NINER

You must not watch the news
much.

ABBY

I guess not.

NINER

Where are you staying now?

ABBY

I'm staying with my Aunt and
Uncle. They think I'm guilty
too.

NINER

You still haven't told me why
you're here.

ABBY

I've got reporters camped at the
house. People throwing rocks and
stones at my bedroom window.

Niner loses his smile, turns serious.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Uncle Steve can barely look me in
the eye. Those two cops, Crowe and
Dees already decided my guilt. I
thought maybe it would be nice to
talk to someone that didn't look
at me like I killed someone.

NINER

What if I told you I think you're
guilty?

ABBY

I would ask you to listen to my
side of the story first. Before
you made up your mind.

NINER

The cops already have your side.
What do you care what I think?

Abby turns to Niner, a dead serious look.

ABBY

I was with this guy for over a
year. And I never knew him. I
want you to help me find the
people responsible.

Niner thinks it over, a bit unsure.

NINER

Do you like pizza?

ABBY

I hate it.

NINER

Great. I know a place that has
really bad pizza. You won't know
the difference.

Abby cracks a slight smile, as big as she can muster.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE EOLA PARK - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Niner and Abby sit on a park bench - a pizza box opened. A
few slices left. Niner pours the contents of his flask into
a big gulp cup, hands it to Abby.

ABBY

Giving alcohol to an underage girl?
Shame on you.

NINER

I figure you've earned it. It'll
be our little secret.

ABBY

That's what they all say.

Niner takes a belt from his flask, winces a bit.

Abby wants to tell him something, but reluctant. She takes a big drink from her cup, nervously spins it in circles, avoids eye contact.

ABBY

That nurse Carly. She told me that Trent came to see you the night he died.

Niner scoffs under his breath, looks away.

NINER

That's why you came to see me?

ABBY

She says that you took my phone from the house. And that you contacted him. That you were the last one to see him alive. But the cops won't listen to her.

NINER

That's because it's ridiculous. Contrary to what you may've read in the papers, or see on TV, I don't kill people in cold blood.

ABBY

Why would she say that?

Niner stands, grabs and chucks a few stones into the lake.

NINER

I took her back to my place for an early breakfast. She had a few drinks in her and thinks she saw something she didn't see. She's an ER nurse. Sometimes nurses like to play detective. Get too attached to patients.

Abby watches him with suspicion.

NINER (CONT'D)

No I didn't kill your boyfriend.

NINER (CONT'D)

Do you believe me?

ABBY

Do you believe me?

Niner tosses another rock into the water, turns to Abby. Serious. He walks within inches of her face.

NINER

I don't know, Abby. You tell me.
Are the cops gonna find motive?

Abby is strangely quiet.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - DAY

Crowe takes away at a cigarette, a digital voice recorder on the table in front of him. Abby's deposition plays out. Drydek paces on the floor -- taking in the details of her testimony.

ABBY'S VOICE (O.S.)

A couple months back, Trent and
I found out we were having a baby.
We were gonna get a place. Move
out of the house...

Crowe and Drydek share a look. This one's dirty.

ABBY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mom and Dad were convinced Trent
was the devil. Any child of his
was the devil's spawn. Tried to
talk me into putting the baby up
for adoption. Break things off
with him for good. I told them if
that's how they felt about their
grandchild, we don't need them...

Drydek squints, a bit confused.

Crowe notices.

ABBY'S VOICE (O.S.)

But then I thought about my baby brother. And my sister. How supportive they were. They never judged Trent, or me. When they found out I was pregnant...

(cries)

That look in their eyes. That real disappointed look they would give me. That shit killed me, ya know?

(beat)

I kept going back and forth. Was I keeping it, or not keeping it?

DRYDEK

This is bullshit. She's just back-tracking.

Crowe motions to the recorder.

ABBY'S VOICE (O.S.)

The funny thing is...with the stress of the whole thing...I miscarried.

Drydek shakes his head. Unbelievable.

ABBY'S VOICE (O.S.)

After that, I decided I was gonna end things with Trent. But then I kept putting it off. I think he knew towards the end that it was over. The way I was acting and all. But neither of us said anything.

Crowe's heard enough and shuts off the recorder. Drydek laughs with disgust.

CROWE

So her boyfriend's dead and she sets him up with motive. And she denies her pregnancy and any plans she had of moving in with him.

In walks Crowe's partner MALCOLM DEES (50s), black, tough veteran. A smile on his face and a white envelope of some sort in his hand.

DEES

I got the cell phone records of one Trent Wise. It seems our own Mister Wise received a few texts Christmas Eve from one Abigail Samms. Six to be exact. Eight minutes after he receives the fifth text, he gets a call from a payphone one block from Rawley Niner's apartment.

CROWE

Surprise, surprise.

DRYDEK

He used an outside line to give him directions to his apartment. Smart, slick sonofabitch.

CROWE

What are the chances Niner still has Abby's phone?

DEES

We got enough for a warrant.

DRYDEK

He doesn't have motive.

CROWE

He was the last one to see this kid alive, Captain. I don't think it's just coincidence.

DRYDEK

Dig up everything you can on Trent Wise. I wanna know where he's from, when and where he did time, known associates. Everything. If Niner wanted him dead, there's a reason. Find it.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Various punks, hop heads and other low walks of life lounge in front of the TV, watch a Japanese anime' porno.

Some are sprawled out on couches with their girls. Another kicked back in a recliner, smokes a fat bowl. This is JONAS WHALEN (20s), Ferrin's roommate, dark goth type.

A YOUNG COUPLE park on the floor by the coffee table. They smoke crystal meth from a base pipe.

A WHITE THUG with a SHAVED HEAD stops in front of the TV, blocks the screen.

He stares down at the half-conscious motley crew taking up space in his living room. This is Ferrin's other roommate CALVIN GAINES (20s).

Standing a few feet from Calvin is Bobby. He watches the crowd of losers with an amused smirk.

CALVIN

(to Jonas)

What is this, man! I told you to get these smelly fuckers out of here! Ferrin's got company. He don't want no one else here.

JONAS

Fuck Ferrin, man. Is this his house or yours?

Jonas points at Bobby --

JONAS (CONT'D)

And who is this queer bait?

(to Bobby)

Yeah, you.

Bobby grins, not shaken a bit.

JONAS (CONT'D)

We're not good enough to be here? We stinkin' up the place? Kiss my ass, bro.

Bobby gives Jonas a cold stare. Calvin loses it.

TOSSES THE COFFEE TABLE on its face.

Knocks BEER, PIPES, ASH TRAYS onto the carpet. The wasted crowd barely flinches. One reaches for his pipe.

CALVIN

Everybody! Get the fuck out!

I'm not gonna tell you again!

The drugged out degenerates slowly collect their things and head for the front door.

Bobby smiles back at Jonas as the young punk leaves. He's all talk with his tail firmly tucked between his legs.

The girl on the floor is so gone, she can barely stand.

Calvin jerks her up by the arm, shoves her to the door.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Move it! And stay gone!

Bobby heads for the door.

INT./EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bobby watches the crowd stumble to their cars.

FERRIN'S CAR

pull to the curb. Ferrin and friend ZEKE (20s) step out. Both wearing ball caps, dark hoodies. Ferrin carries a jansport. Bobby watches with suspicion.

INT. FERRIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ferrin dumps his jansport upside down as bundles of LOOSE CASH falls onto the bed. Zeke watches. In walks Bobby.

BOBBY

Looks like you boys scored big tonight. Where was the party? Funny I wasn't invited.

Ferrin is taken aback. Surprised. Zeke looks worried, shares a look with Ferrin.

FERRIN
(to Zeke)
Give us a minute.

Zeke steps out. Bobby shuts the door.

BOBBY
What did I tell you about laying
low until this thing blows over?
(beat)
You and this idiot go knock over
some stores? What if you got
busted?

FERRIN
Calvin's asking for a piece. I
didn't wanna say nothing because
I knew you'd be mad.

Bobby, with intimidating swagger, moves closer to Ferrin. Gets in his face.

FERRIN (CONT'D)
What're you doing, man?

BOBBY
And why is Calvin asking for a
piece? Does Calvin know some-
-thing that Calvin shouldn't know?

FERRIN
Why would I say anything?

Bobby walks him into a corner.

BOBBY
I don't know. Why would you?

FERRIN
What do you expect? With the
way you been acting. Paranoid.
Not leaving the house. All
secretive and shit.

BOBBY

And he's asking for hush money
or he drops a dime? Is that it?

FERRIN

He knows as long as we're here
we're drawing heat down on this
house. He's been busting my balls
since I brought you here. I tell
him I can't say nothing and he
flips a shit.

BOBBY

That's right. You can't say
nothing. Nothing at all.

FERRIN

So now you're worried about
drawing heat? Where was all
this worrying when you carved
up that family like a fuckin'
Christmas turkey.

Bobby steps inches from Ferrin's nose.

BOBBY

Watch your mouth.

FERRIN

It was supposed to be a quick
score. You didn't say nothing
about cutting up twelve year
olds...!

Bobby grabs Ferrin by the throat, tosses him onto an old
oak armoire like a rag doll.

Ferrin's head CRACKS THE MIRROR behind him. Bobby grips
his throat harder. Ferrin GASPS for air.

BOBBY

You know what I'm thinking, Jason?
I'm thinking you got a big mouth.
You talk too much. Maybe I'll just
cut you loose and take my chances.

FERRIN

Get off me!

BOBBY

From now on, you don't leave this house without telling me. Don't rob registers with your shithead friends...

FERRIN

Get off!

Ferrin struggles to break free of Bobby's grip.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

We're gonna be smart. We're gonna wait. We're gonna see what this girl knows. What the cops know.

Ferrin's face slowly turns blue from lack of oxygen.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

And when the time is right...we're gonna kill her. If you do anything that makes me nervous between now and then...I'm gonna cut my losses.

Bobby, still with a firm grip on Ferrin's throat, tosses him onto the bed.

Ferrin twists and contorts on the sheets, choking, gasps for air. Bobby leaves.

Ferrin rests on the edge of the bed, slowly catches his breath. Anger sets in. He jumps for his stereo --

BLASTS LOUD METAL MUSIC

Paces back and forth on the carpet. Enraged. PUNCHES THE WALL and GRUNTS like a wild animal.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ferrin exits. Hopping mad. Steps across the lawn...down a hill...towards his car. He moves fast and with purpose...

Ferrin makes for the trunk. Pops it open. Grabs his SAWED OFF DOUBLE BARRELL SHOTGUN - checks for SHELLS. Loaded up, ready. LOCKS his weapon and shuts the trunk...

NINER

Stands waiting. His FORTY FIVE in hand. Face to face with Ferrin. The two men stare each other down. Neither making a move...

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - NINER'S TRIAL - (DAY #1) - DAY

A gorgeous, six foot blonde walks the jury box. A matching business suit -- short skirt and form fitting top. This is ADA LAURA STARKEY (30s). Her haunting blue eyes demand the attention of the twelve sitting before her.

STARKEY

One man's life has been lost.
Another's at stake. Raul Ortega
on one side. Detective Rawley
Niner on the other. And all of
you somewhere in the middle...

Niner sits at the defense. His police-appointed attorney DAVE MACGRUDER (40s) by his side. We'll call him "Mac". A short, bookish man with a cheap suit and goofy expression.

We're still in opening statements and he's already tapping a pencil on his notepad in a nervous frenzy.

Niner slowly turns to him -- gives him a long, hard stare; motions to the pencil. Mac drops the pencil on the pad.

ON THE JURY

Starkey rests her hands on the mahogany railing. Catches eyes with each of the jurors --

STARKEY (CONT'D)

You will all be forced to take
sides. Some of you are frightened.
You want to judge correctly.
Without prejudice...

Justine, Raul's girl, sits three rows back. Her eyes are red, watery. Fighting back her tears.

Niner keeps eye contact with the jury. Plays it cool. Mac is still a nervous wreck - scratches at his pencil.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

But sometimes it's hard to hear the truth. When you're unwilling to listen. The defense is counting on this. And they will paint a very simple picture for you. One that's very black and white..

Starkey turns, faces the defense, catches eyes with Mac.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Cop versus convict. The upstanding, law abiding keeper of peace versus the wife-beating criminal.

Justine checks with Niner, who sneaks a quick peek at the grieving widow. She looks away, ashamed. Niner shakes his head at her, faces forward.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

But Rawley Niner sits here today for one reason only. Because of the eyewitness account of Justine Herrera. Who watched Detective Niner force her soon to be husband from their fourth story balcony..

Mac checks with his client. Takes a big breath, exhales.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

The same woman that the defense will claim is the abused victim in this case. But if what they are saying is true. And Raul Ortega was indeed in a violent, drug induced rage, intent on causing serious harm and possibly killing his fiancé...then why is Justine Herrera sitting here today?

Justine checks back with Niner. He ignores her and stays with the jury. Mac turns, spots her looking.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Why is she here? Wanting to testify against the same man who claims to have saved her life...

On each of the jurors. All in deep thought.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Detective Rawley Niner has been the target of five internal investigations. He's been cited with two counts of excessive force...

Niner is no longer able to stare the jury in their eyes. He stares at the desk. Ashamed.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

During the course of this trial we will be carefully examining the lives of these two men. And you will see...with your own eyes...that Rawley Niner is the real criminal in this case.

WITNESS BOX - LATER

Starkey questions her witness OFFICER NICK DIAZ (35). Puerto Rican, tough. He watches Niner with contempt.

OFFICER DIAZ

...So I start running a make on this tag. Meanwhile Rawley's writing the citation...

Justine pays careful attention to Diaz's testimony.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

And all the sudden he stops. Starts getting all upset, shaking his head and staring back at these kids...

Starkey leans on the witness box, stays close to Diaz, watches the jury closely.

STARKEY

And did you ask him what his problem was?

Officer Diaz faces the jury --

OFFICER DIAZ

Says to me the only thing worse than a nigger with money is a spic with a stereo..

Niner buries his face in his hands, embarrassed.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

But it wasn't all what he said that bothered me. It was how he said it.

STARKEY

And how did he say it?

OFFICER DIAZ

It's like he turned. Stared dead at me. Daring me to speak up. To say something. Then he says if they don't turn down that music he'd put a bullet in their speaker...

STARKEY

And what was your response to that?

OFFICER DIAZ

At first I thought he was joking.

STARKEY

And what changed your mind?

OFFICER DIAZ

He pulls his piece and sticks it on the dash. Even chambered one into the pipe. Scared the hell out of me. He said it's nothing I haven't done before...

Officer Diaz faces the jury --

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

He says the secret is making it
look like an accident...

The jurors are disgusted. Staring back at Niner with
contempt. Niner's avoids eye contact.

OFFICER DIAZ (CONT'D)

Just fire a warning shot.
Nobody has to know. He was dead
serious when he said it.

STARKEY

Sounds like he put you in a
very awkward position. And
how did you handle this?

OFFICER DIAZ

I told him to relax. Let's write
them up and get going. He said
you really must be new. Don't
you know when you're working
downtown on a Saturday night,
"reggaeton" is probable cause?

STARKEY

(to MAC)

Your witness.

Starkey returns to her desk. Mac steps to the witness box.
Papers in hand.

MAC

Mister Diaz...?

OFFICER DIAZ

Officer.

Niner shakes his head. Embarrassed by his attorney.

MAC

Yes, of course. Officer. Did
you ever tell anyone about this
supposed incident?

OFFICER DIAZ

Not that I recall. Maybe I did. I can't remember.

MAC

Let me refresh you. You spoke with an Officer Diego of your precinct. Two days following the incident. Told him pretty much in detail what you've told us today. Do you remember what his response was to this?

OFFICER DIAZ

I'm not sure I remember. It was six years ago.

Mac walks over to the first row. Stops next to a UNIFORMED OFFICER. This is SERGEANT DIEGO (30s). Cuban, massive. As tough as they get.

MAC

Officer Diego is present in this courtroom today. Maybe you noticed?

OFFICER DIAZ

Yes, sir. That's him in the front row.

MAC

Then you know he can be called to rebut your testimony.

Diez and his old partner lock eyes. Diez a bit unsure.

MAC (CONT'D)

Let's save the court the time and trouble, shall we? Are you remembering the details of that conversation a little more clearly?

Officer Diaz is a bit reluctant. Checks with the jury. They are all staring, waiting.

OFFICER DIAZ

He said that sounds just like Rawley. When he was his training officer, he did the same thing to him.

Mac approaches the witness stand.

MAC

That wasn't all he said. What else did he say?

Starkey remains seated. Temporarily looks up from her paperwork.

STARKEY

Objection! Officer Diaz has already answered the question!

JUDGE MEYERS

Overruled.

MAC

Come on, Diaz! A fellow officer is on trial for his life! Your fellow boy in blue! Speak up!

Starkey tosses down her pen and jumps to her feet --

STARKEY

Objection! Badgering!

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained.

Niner cracks a grin. Mac's got this witness.

MAC

My apologies. Could you please answer the question, Officer Diaz?

OFFICER DIAZ

He said he does that to all the newbies. Like an initiation. To see what kind of stuff you're made of. I didn't see it that way.

MAC

Officer Diaz, in all honesty,
can you tell this court that
you believe Rawley Niner to be
a racist pig?

OFFICER DIAZ

He was out of control...!

MAC

Answer the question. Yes or no?

(beat)

Do you believe Rawley Niner is a
racist?

OFFICER DIAZ

Yes.

Mac is taken aback. Niner shuts his eyes, unable to watch
further. Starkey is ear to ear smiles.

MAC

Thank you. No more, your honor.

Mac heads to his seat. Not happy.

JUDGE MEYERS

Miss Starkey? Do you have any
more for this witness?

Starkey quickly approaches the witness stand.

STARKEY

Officer Diaz? – Do you agree
with Sergeant Diego's assess-
-ment of Rawley Niner? That his
erratic behavior was nothing more
than a part of some unusual
training method?

OFFICER DIAZ

No, I did not. And I do not.

STARKEY

And why is that?

OFFICER DIAZ

He was high as a kite.

Mac leaps from his chair.

MAC

Objection! My client has been subject to repeated drug and alcohol tests and has always passed with flying colors! Officer Diaz's opinion in this matter is irrelevant and we ask that it be stricken from the record!

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained. Careful, Miss Starkey.

STARKEY

Officer Diaz? – Would you please describe to the court Officer Niner's behavior on the night of July 25, 2005. The night in question.

OFFICER DIAZ

Hyper. Nervous. Fidgety. Loud. Using lots of obscenities. Out of control.

STARKEY

So behavior not unlike that of say...a cocaine addict?

Mac leaps to his feet.

MAC

Objection! Leading!

STARKEY

Withdrawn. No more questions.

Starkey heads to her seat. Niner looks as if all the wind has been sucked from his body.

Justine cracks a reassured smile.

EXT. ORANGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Niner and Mac make their way down a marble-floored hallway. The halls of justice. Niner is hurried, upset. Mac tries to keep up.

MAC

They've got no physical evidence.
Starkey's using shock value to woo
the jury. Calling you a racist.
It's the lowest common denominator.
A cry for the desperate. The jury
can see that. They got nothing.

NINER

You think so, huh? I don't see it
that way.

MAC

Toxicology report on Ortega says
he was pumped up on enough PCP
to kill two grown men. Throw in
an IQ of a tennis ball and a long
history of doing stupid shit and
you've got a case loser. If I
were a betting man, my money's on
you all the way.

Mac pats him on the shoulder. The two men board an elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mac doesn't say a word. Faces the elevator doors. Niner leans on the wall, watches him closely. Reads him. He breaks the silence --

NINER

Do you believe her?

MAC

Who?

NINER

Herrera. Hell do you think?

MAC

What I believe isn't important,
Rawley. It's what I can prove.

Niner flips the EMERGENCY STOP switch. The elevator stalls.

MAC (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

NINER

What a jury believes is impor-
-tant. Do you believe her?

Mac stalls. Not quite sure.

MAC

Don't be so paranoid.

Mac flips the emergency switch back into operating order. Faces forward. Niner isn't exactly convinced.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Niner's Vette pulls to the curb across the street. Parks. There are TWO CARS in Calvin's driveway. Bobby's CHEVY VAN parked on the lawn. Niner uses binoculars to RUN THE TAG.

NINER'S POV

The tag reads X91-KRS.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner lowers the binoculars, reviews some paperwork --

INSERT - DMV RECORDS

A PHOTO I.D. PRINTOUT of Bobby Van Den Kemp's driving history. License tag number - X91-KRS.

BACK TO SCENE

Niner reaches into his GLOVE BOX, snags up his chrome 44 MAGNUM short barrel. Checks for bullets. He steps out.

EXT. NINER'S VETTE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Niner stuffs the magnum in the back of his pants, heads for Calvin's house --

As Niner makes his way up the sidewalk, he hears LOUD SHOCK ROCK coming from the direction of Calvin's backyard.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD PORCH - DAY

Calvin and his GIRL sit in a cheap folding chair -- waiting for some burgers to finish on the grill. The wild redhead grinds Calvin's lap to the rhythm of the LOUD MUSIC.

Niner stands on the other side of the porch with the magnum in hand. Watches closely.

Neither Calvin nor his girl notice the gun wielding cop on the porch. They get more into it. Grinding. GRUNTING like wild animals.

Niner just smiles at them. A sliding glass door sits wide open. Niner steps inside. He goes unnoticed.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CALVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Bobby steps out of a corner bathroom, zips his fly as the toilet flushes. He is shocked to see --

NINER

Leaning against on and old oak dresser, reading a newspaper article about the "Christmas Eve Killings".

NINER

Lead Homicide Investigator Martin Crowe reported today that the forensic evidence recovered from all six victims does not yet confirm or negate Abby Samms claim of a four man job..

Niner drops the paper on the dresser.

NINER (CONT'D)

I guess you and Scottie and
Jason are still in the clear.

Bobby slowly raises his hands. Nervous. Niner digs through another thick stack of printed internet articles and cutout newspaper clippings.

NINER (CONT'D)

It's quite the collection you
got going here. You writing a
book?

Bobby checks the NIGHT STAND next to his bed. Nothing but a CELL PHONE and ASH TRAY.

Niner pulls back his coat. A FIFTY CALIBER in his belt. Bobby's gun.

NINER (CONT'D)

I got it. I thought I better
hold onto it. Just in case.

BOBBY

Didn't think I'd see you again,
cop. Aren't you still on
suspension? Or are you here to
make a citizen's arrest?

NINER

Not really. Sit down. Relax.

Bobby plops down on the mattress. Sparks up a cigarette and props the ash tray on his belly.

BOBBY

Okay, cop. I'm relaxed.

NINER

About a month ago, after I was
charged with giving Raul Ortega
flying lessons...I made it my
business to dig up everything I
could on you...

NINER (CONT'D)

It wasn't that hard, really.
Given the fact that you left
your wallet on Justine's night
stand.

Bobby holds out his hands. Niner reaches into his coat and yanks out the wallet, tosses it on the bed. Bobby smiles.

NINER

I snagged it before the cops came to scoop up Raul from the front lawn. It got me thinking. Other than Herrera, you were the only other one that saw what happened to Raul. You could've turned me in. A convict like you turning in a cop. It's every criminal's wet dream. But you didn't.

BOBBY

What can I say? I guess I got a soft spot for law enforcement.

NINER

The DA could've put you on the stand to cooperate Justine's testimony. And what does she do? She denies that you were ever there. That you weren't fucking her ten minutes before Ortega busted in the door.

BOBBY

It was a complicated situation.

NINER

It took me awhile to figure it out. At first I thought she was just keeping it from Raul. He's in the hospital, fighting for his life. All plugged up and fucked up. Maybe she wanted to keep you on the DL until he came through.

BOBBY

Maybe...

NINER

Then I thought, nah. So I did some more digging. You wanna hear? It's a good story.

BOBBY

I'm a sucker for good stories.

NINER

About a year ago, Christmas. Your brothers and three best friends were gunned down in a police raid at your brother Jackie's meth lab..

Niner drops the report on Bobby's lap.

NINER (CONT'D)

You see, there was this rat locked up in county on a possession charge, looking to cut a deal. His name was Trent Wise. Maybe you heard of him.

BOBBY

Yeah. Maybe I have. So what? You looking to write my life story.

NINER

Of course, there was nothing you could do about it at the time. Just finished a nickel at Starke for grand theft auto. On parole. You were on your best behavior.

BOBBY

That's me. I'm clean now. Haven't you heard? Crime doesn't pay. You should know that, cop.

NINER

So you waited. Followed Trent and his buddy Scottie to Orlando and decided they still owed you six cold bodies. Not just anyone.

Niner steps closer to the bed. Hovers over Bobby.

NINER (CONT'D)

Somebody close to him. Like a brother. Or maybe a girlfriend.

BOBBY

That's quite the story. I guess you wanna arrest me now?

Bobby holds out his wrists. Ready for the cuffs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right. You can't. They took your gun and badge. Last I heard, you were a real menace to society.

NINER

You're right. It's not gonna be that easy. You watched me cancel Raul's check, so taking you in won't do me any good. You hand over a cop, they waive the death penalty and you're looking at twenty instead of thirty to life.

Bobby smiles. Nods in agreement.

BOBBY

This is true.

NINER (CONT'D)

It doesn't mean my report can't find its way into the right hands.

(smiles)

Does it?

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - TRIAL DAY #2 - DAY

Bobby sits in the witness box. A microphone in his face. Mac stands before him. He's giving "first-hand" testimony of Raul Ortega's accident.

Niner tries to appear calm. Yet, his eyes say different.

BOBBY

Raul and I's relationship was more of a...casual nature. I was his dealer.

MAC

His drug dealer?

Mac faces the jury, watches their reactions. Starkey rolls her eyes and drops her pen on the desk.

MAC (CONT'D)

What did you deal to Raul?

BOBBY

Coke, ecstasy, weed. A little bit of everything.

MAC

PCP? Synthetic heroin?

Starkey finally blows. Jumps to her feet --

STARKEY

Objection! Mister Ortega's history of drug abuse is already public record. Nor is it up for debate. The defense is using it for pure shock value.

JUDGE MEYERS

Sustained. Let's move on.

MAC

Mister Van Den Kemp? Would you tell the court how you first came into contact with Justine Herrera?

BOBBY

It was pretty simple really. I came to Raul's place to do a quick deal. Justine was there. And she caught my eye, I caught hers. You could say it was instant attraction.

Bobby really plays it up for the jury with a reflective smile. Justine stares at Bobby with intense hatred.

MAC

And how did the two of you finally get together?

BOBBY

One night I was over. And Raul steps into the other room to get some cash. That's when Justine slips me her number. I called her up as soon as we could both get away. That was that. We saw each other on and off for about three weeks.

MAC

And when did the two of you finally call it quits?

BOBBY

Around the time Raul went into the hospital. Justine said it wasn't a good idea for us to see each other while he was still out of commission.

MAC

Would you walk us through the night of November Twenty Three?

Mac steps to the jury box. Makes eye to eye contact with each of the jurors.

MAC (CONT'D)

Starting about thirty minutes before Raul Ortega fell from his fourth story balcony?

BOBBY

The night in question, I show up at Raul's place while he was still at work. Justine's got a black eye. She tells me that he hit her. So I called him up, said if he did it again I'd pop one between his eyes.

Bobby faces the jurors.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I got this thing with wife beaters. Raul was known to raise a hand or two...

Some of the jurors turn and stare in Justine's direction. Sizing her up.

Justine looks down in shame. Niner cracks a grin.

Starkey jumps to her feet.

STARKEY

Objection! Raul Ortega is not on trial here!

JUDGE MEYERS

Overruled.

(to Bobby)

Continue, please.

BOBBY

So Raul didn't like that so much. Said I better not see you when I get back. It would be the second biggest mistake I ever made.

MAC

And, following this phone conversation, did you and Raul ever speak again?

BOBBY

No. Never got the chance. I wish I did.

MAC

And where were you when Raul
returned to his apartment?

BOBBY

When he showed I was finish-
-ing up in the bathroom..

INT. RAUL/JUSTINE'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Bobby steps out of the bathroom, stops. Pulls a SNUB NOSE
THIRTY EIGHT from his pants. Leans against the wall.

BOBBY (V.O.)

Heard the commotion coming from
the living room. Justine was
screaming. Sounded like he was
giving her a good once over..

Bobby peaks his head around the corner, stares into the
living room. He spots NINER HOLDING HIS GUN on someone.
Someone we can't see...

ON BOBBY

peaking around the corner.

BOBBY (V.O.)

So I pulled my gun. Ready to
run out and blow Raul in half.
That's when I heard a voice.
A man's voice..

BOBBY'S POV - ON NINER

Still holding his gun on someone. He slowly moves in on
his subject. Disappears from our view...

ON BOBBY

BOBBY (V.O.)

So I run out to see what the
hell was going on..

Bobby raises his weapon, ready to fire. Slowly makes his
way into the --

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Niner is holding his gun on RAUL ORTEGA.

Raul has his hands in the air, ready to give up. Justine sits on the carpet near him. A BLOODY NOSE.

ON NINER

Ready to explode with anger. His eyes are wide. Intense. His hands shaking.

BOBBY (V.O.)

That's when I saw Officer Niner
holding his gun on Raul...

END OF FLASHBACK

Mac approaches the jury. Leans on the mahogany railing as Bobby continues his testimony.

MAC

Officer Niner was holding his
weapon on Raul. And did he
attempt to detain Mister
Ortega?

BOBBY

Yes, he did.

INT. RAUL/JUSTINE'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Niner is still angry, ready to snap. Raul visibly senses the detective's growing hatred. He stares at Niner's GUN, a worried look in his eye.

Raul slowly makes for the balcony. Niner follows outside. Aimed and ready.

BOBBY (V.O.)

He tells Raul to turn and face
the wall. Only Raul's not
listening. He's cussing and
yelling. Poking his finger in
Officer Niner's direction. Madder
than hell and hopped up on some-
-thing.

Raul shakes his head at Niner. Pleading. Begging.

Niner walks him to the edge of the balcony, yelling something we can't hear.

BOBBY (V.O.)

He asks him again. Get down or
I put you down. He wouldn't
listen...

Niner SMASHES his FORTY FIVE into Raul's face.

BOBBY

Stands in the living room. His weapon pointed at Niner's back. He watches him assault the defenseless man.

NINER

Gives Raul a swift KICK to the stomach while he's still down. Then another --

BOBBY (V.O.)

Before you could blink, Raul
makes for the balcony. Jumps
right over the side...

Niner picks up Raul from the deck. THROWS HIM over the railing. He FALLS..

...FOUR STORIES to the ground...

Justine beats on Niner's back in outrage. Niner turns, faces her. Shoves her to the floor. He looks up --

Bobby holds his weapon on Niner. The two men face off.

Niner stares down at the GUN'S BARREL. He's facing death in the eye. A sitting duck.

Bobby lowers his thirty eight and quickly makes for the front door. Gone.

Niner stares down at Justine on the carpet. She is still screaming and crying hysterically.

END OF FLASHBACK

BOBBY

On the witness stand. The jury is hanging on every word. He's got them. Bobby makes eye contact with each of them as he finishes his story.

BOBBY

And there I am holding a gun on this cop's back. Before he had the chance to turn and see me, I booked it for the door. I guess I panicked.

Mac smiles at the jury. Case closed. Niner also watches the jury closely. Mac returns to the defense desk.

MAC

Your witness.

Starkey steps to the witness box. More than ready.

STARKEY

Mister Van Den Kemp. You were ready to shoot Raul Ortega when you learned that he hit Justine. Ready to kill, in fact. And now you're here testifying in defense of the man she claimed murdered her fiancé...

Justine and Bobby catch eyes.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

I know I speak for most of the court when I say... Maybe I'm missing something here...?

BOBBY

I'm not sure I follow.

STARKEY

What I'm asking is..why are you here? One month after the fact. And why are we just now learning of this so-called relationship between you and Justine Herrera?

Niner checks with the jury. A worried look.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Miss Herrera never mentioned anyone being in her apartment the night of the twenty third. How do you explain this?

BOBBY

I asked Justine not to say anything. Pretend I wasn't there.

Niner checks with Justine. She steals a quick look at the detective. Then back on Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I was on parole. Cops find out I'm running with Raul again, I go back inside for another five. Guess I got scared.

Justine just watches on. Her expression doesn't give away her thoughts. Just a hard stare at Bobby.

STARKEY

I'm sorry, Mister Van Den Kemp, but that doesn't make any sense. You were afraid of the police discovering that you broke your parole, so you turn yourself in and agree to testify, under oath, that you not only went to Raul Ortega's apartment, but also pulled a gun on a police officer?

BOBBY

When I found out Raul was still alive and in the hospital, I knew there was a small chance he could pull through. Thought maybe the cops questioned him before he passed away. He drops my name, that's all she wrote. I figured I better turn myself in before I got picked up.

Starkey smiles. Not buying a word of this.

STARKEY

This is quite the story, Mister
Van Den Kemp.

BOBBY

Look. He had him dead bang,
Raul panicked and jumped.
Don't know what else to tell
you. That's what happened.

Starkey is speechless. She watches Bobby with contempt.
He's got her and she knows it.

The jury awaits her response.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE GARAGE — NINER'S VETTE — DAY

Niner reaches for the driver's side door, but is stopped by
the sound of Starkey's voice.

STARKEY

Hey!

Niner turns --

Starkey walks briskly toward the Corvette. Raving mad.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

Congratulations, Rawley. You
officially have nine lives.

NINER

Thank you.

STARKEY

How much did this witness cost?
A couple thousand? Five?

NINER

Careful, Counselor. You're
starting to sound like a poor
loser.

STARKEY

Why don't you tell that to Justine Herrera. Her husband's dead. Now who speaks for her?

NINER

You did. And twelve people thought you were full of shit. Don't cry about it now.

Niner opens his car door. Starkey grabs his arm.

STARKEY

This isn't about me?!

NINER

It's about you letting a third year court appointed catch you with your pretty little skirt down.

Niner cracks a sly grin. Gives her a quick wink.

NINER (CONT'D)

You preach about right and wrong, but the truth is you don't give a shit about that spic crack head or her skel husband.

STARKEY

You're unbelievable.

NINER

Yeah. At least you used to think so, didn't you? Face it. You wanna take her word over mine because that's your job. Not cos it's the truth. So why don't you come down off your high horse before you get a nose bleed.

STARKEY

That's great, Rawley. Uglier words were never spoken by a truer bigot.

Niner steps uncomfortably close. She backs up.

NINER

Yeah, Raul used his girlfriend's face as an ashtray because I'm a racist! I'm completely out of the loop! Not in touch with the rest of the world! Ortega was a real class guy!

STARKEY

You know, that keen sense of justice you think God's gifted you with never quite seems to stand on its own merit, does it? You just use it as an excuse to cover your own ass...

Niner is about to boil over, but restrains himself. Cracks a foney smile for Starkey.

STARKEY (CONT'D)

You know what really worries me the most, Rawley? You fucked up so many times you're starting to believe the excuses.

Starkey storms off.

NINER

Does this mean we're not on for tonight?

CUT TO:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE — DAY

Carly, in her ER scrubs, grabs her usual orange and carrot juice from behind the cooler door. A banana and some snack crackers in her other hand. She heads for the counter.

Carly waits in a short line. Stares down at today's edition of THE ORLANDO SENTINEL. The front page reads --

BALCONY COP FOUND NOT GUILTY

Carly puts the juice under her armpit, picks up a copy of the paper. Reads.

INSERT – PHOTO

A black and white image of surprise defense witness BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP. His name listed under his picture.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly is next in line. Drops the juice and crackers. And then The Sentinel.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. PHILLIPS HIGH SCHOOL – HALLWAY – DAY

It's the first week of school since the holiday break. The students roam about the halls, excited. Showing off their new schedules. High-fiving, giving hugs.

Abby struts through the middle of the crowd. Some students stare and whisper to one another. Abby ignores them, keeps her head down.

Abby turns a corner, about to head into class. And waiting by the door are CROWE AND DEES.

Abby is taken aback.

Crowe approaches with a careful ease and with compassion in his voice.

CROWE

Hello, Abby. Didn't mean to startle you. Good to see you.

ABBY

Yeah. You too.

DEES

Hello, Abby.

CROWE

We've got some new developments concerning your family's case. If we could find someplace quiet to talk?

ABBY

Of course. I just need to --

CROWE

It's okay. I've already spoken with your teacher. We won't keep you too long.

ABBY

As long as it's good news.

Crowe smiles. Dees just stares at his partner. Unsure.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The room is dimly lit. Empty. Sitting in a far corner booth is Abby, Crowe, Dees. It's in-between lunch hours. A WOMAN walks the room, fills napkin dispensers.

Crowe and Dees sit across from Abby. Laid out on the table are POLICE FILES, PHOTOS, DOCUMENTS.

Crowe sifts through the pile, picks up a couple photos.

CROWE

Abby, we wanna show you some pictures. Some men we believe may've been working with Trent. Men he used to run with. Mostly small time, petty criminal types.

Crowe lays down a PHOTO OF SCOTTIE PERRY. Abby picks it up. Takes a close look.

CROWE (CONT'D)

This young man here was particularly close with Trent. His name is Scottie Perry.

ABBY

That's him.

Crowe and Dees exchange a look.

ABBY (CONT'D)

The one I saw with Trent.

DEES

Saw? Where?

ABBY

In the back yard. He was one of the four men I saw. His name is Scottie?

DEES

Scott Perry. Heard of him?

ABBY

Trent talked about him a couple of times.

DEES

About?

ABBY

About crazy shit they used to do. Don't know much about him.

CROWE

Now Trent and this Scottie disappeared around the same time. We know that Trent migrated to Orlando, but Scottie...up and vanished.

ABBY

You don't know where he is?

CROWE

Panama City P.D. made a weekly habit of picking this kid up.

DEES

Brawling, petty theft, assault. Until he graduated to attempted murder.

DEES (CONT'D)

A few days after Trent's folks died in a suspicious car accident Perry does a drive by with his old man's shotgun. Only he misses...

Crowe lays down a PHOTO OF BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP.

CROWE

This was his intended target.

Abby stares at the photo with pure hate and rage.

EXT. SAMMS FARM - BACK YARD - CHRISTMAS EVE - FLASHBACK

Bobby and Ferrin step out of the woods. Each with a shovel in hand. Trent and Scottie warn Abby.

BACK TO SCENE

Abby still stares at the photo. Crowe and Dees watch her closely. She obviously recognizes him.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Fearing that he would retaliate, Scottie skips town. The target was Bobby Van Den Kemp. Maybe that rings a bell?

ABBY

I don't know him.

Dees and Crowe look surprised.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Should I?

Crowe reaches over and gently touches his partner's hand.

CROWE

What am saying is this. You've identified Perry's picture. We know he was in town and hooked back up with Trent. That means there's a great chance Van Den Kemp followed him here.

ABBY

And you think he has something
to do with my family?

DEES

If he did, Scott Perry's life is
definitely in danger. Now if you
have any idea where we might find
him, you need to tell us.

ABBY

He killed my family. Don't you
think if I knew, I'd tell you?

Abby scoffs at the detective. Frustrated.

DEES

Those other two men you saw in
the woods. Do you remember any-
thing about them that might help?

ABBY

We've been over this a thousand
times! I didn't get a good look
at them! It was dark!

Crowe reaches over and touches Abby's arm, calms her.
Reaches over with his other hand. Stops his partner.

Dees reluctantly lays off.

CROWE

It's okay. But just think. The
short time you and Trent were
together. Did he ever take you
to see any of his friends? Take
you anywhere you aren't familiar?
Anything that can help us.

Abby fights back her tears. Tries hard to think. Dees
pulls some napkins from a dispenser, hands them to Abby.

ABBY

Thank you.

DEES

You're welcome. Sorry about all the questions. I know it's a bad time for you.

Crowe hangs his head. A poor choice of words.

DEES (CONT'D)

Actually, I don't know. I'll never know what you're feeling inside. But know that O.P.D.'s finest is on the job.

CROWE

He is right about that.

DEES

As good as I am, I'm gonna need some help picking up this guy's slack.

Dees points at his partner. Crowe smiles.

DEES (CONT'D)

That's all I want from you, Abby. Help. We wouldn't be here if we didn't.

Abby sits in deep thought. Thinking it all over. She focuses on the table's surface. Her eyes wide open.

ABBY

We went to this motel once. To buy weed. Trent told me to stay in the car. He said this friend of his was kind of paranoid. And didn't want anyone seeing him he didn't know.

CROWE

And he didn't mention his name?

ABBY

No. I remembered I thought it was funny he lived in a motel.

DEES

Is that what Trent told you? He lived in the motel?

ABBY

He said he just moved to Orlando. And was still looking for a place. He hadn't been in town that long.

CROWE

You remember which motel this was?

CUT TO:

EXT. DR. PHILLIPS HIGH SCHOOL - BUS STOP - DAY

Students race to their next class as Sergeants Crowe and Dees make their way through the crowd.

DEES

Did you see her face? She has no idea who Van Den Kemp is.

CROWE

If your family was just murdered at Christmas dinner, you wouldn't be on top of current events.

DEES

Good point.

CROWE

So Niner blackmails him.

This grabs Dees attention.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Trent Wise serves up Van Dan Kemp, thinking he can cut a deal. Only Niner blows him away before he can talk. He was saving Bobby all to himself.

The two partners step away from the bus stop and into the teacher's --

PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Dees and Crowe head back to their squad car.

DEES

It was a good plan. I'll give him that.

CROWE

Apparently Niner was thinking the same thing.

DEES

What are the odds that Niner's planning on letting this Van Den Kemp breathe?

CROWE

Around the same odds as this Scottie Perry still being alive. Not good.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODCHUCK MOTEL - DAY

Crowe and Dees step out of their squad car. A goofy sign hanging just over their car reads The Woodchuck Motel. A woodchuck wears a collared shirt and tie, carries with him a heavy piece of luggage.

The two partners head for the entrance. Dees stares up at the silly woodchuck. Follows his partner inside.

CUT TO:

INT. WOODCHUCK MOTEL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Crowe and Dees question the MANAGER (50s). A real good old boy with a flannel shirt, suspenders, pot belly. His wild gray hair points in every direction.

Dees lays down some photos. One of Bobby, Ferrin and also Scottie. The Manager points at Scottie's picture.

MANAGER

Yeah, he was here for a couple weeks. Left here on...

The Manager stares at the ceiling, thinking back. It's just not coming to him.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Oh, boy. When was it?

DEES

Christmas Eve?

MANAGER

Yeah, that's right. How'd you know?

DEES

Lucky guess.

MANAGER

Yeah, this fellow here left with this other fellow...

The Manager points at FERRIN'S PHOTO.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Now, his name's Jason.

Crowe and Dees share a surprised look.

DEES

Wait. You know this man?

MANAGER

No, but I heard Calvin talking to him in the driveway once.

DEES

Calvin?

CROWE

Driveway?

MANAGER

Calvin's driveway. My neighbor. I seen him out there a few times.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

This kid with the crazy hair.
He's one of those thug types.
Thinks he's black or something.

(to Dees)

No offense.

DEES

None taken, boss.

CROWE

You live near this Calvin?

MANAGER

Unfortunately, yes. You know,
I could tell you some stories.
Watched the cops do a stand-off
on his front lawn one time. Had
a knife to his girl's neck. He
threatened to cut her head off.
Must've been out there two hours.
Drugs musta wore off. Crazy ass
bastards.

CROWE

Where is this place?

MANAGER

Across the street from my place.
Out near Lake Eola. Big white house.
Old as hell. About to fall apart.
Just like me. Can't miss it.

Dees hands him a notepad and pen --

DEES

If you could just write down
your address for us.

The Manager jots down his address.

MANAGER

Do me a favor. If there's gonna
be any gunplay, call me in advance
so I know to stay out of Dodge.

INT. UNCLE STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

Abby rushes through the front door and hurries upstairs, leaving the door wide open.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abby hurries inside, heads straight to a night stand next to her bed. She yanks open the drawer and pulls out this morning's edition of --

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

Bobby Van Den Kemp's PHOTO circled in RED MARKER.

Abby focuses on Bobby's rough, pockmarked features. His sinister eyes.

EXT. SAMMS FARM - CHRISTMAS EVE - FLASHBACK

Bobby and Ferrin step from the woods with SHOVELS in hand. They walk closer. BOBBY'S FACE becomes more visible with each step.

BACK TO SCENE

ON ABBY'S EYES

As they FOCUS even harder on Bobby's photo.

CLOSE-UP - BOBBY'S PHOTO.

Abby drops the paper and hurries out of the room.

INT. STEVE/CYNTHIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abby hurries in, makes for a corner closet. She opens and reaches for a top shelf. Feels her way around. A number of shoe boxes, folded sweatshirts fall on top of her.

One of the SHOE BOXES dumps OPEN. Some BULLETS and THIRTY EIGHT REVOLVER fall on the carpet.

Abby quickly picks it up, opens the cylinder to check for shells. A vengeful look in her eye.

She stuffs the weapon in her pants and covers it with her sweatshirt. She heads out --

CUT TO:

EXT. NINER'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING LOT - DAY

Abby is dropped off by a cab, steps out. The cab drives off as she stares up at Niner's apartment door. A very cold and calculating look in her eyes.

She checks her gun, takes off the safety switch.

INT. NINER'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door is cracked, Abby pushes it open. It's quiet. No sign of life.

ABBY

Hello?

She spots an unidentified pair of legs on the floor near the couch. A dead body?

ABBY (CONT'D)

Rawley?

All of a sudden, Ferrin jumps from a nearby closet, wraps his arms around her waist and mouth.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crowe and Dees squad car pulls to the curb. Out steps the two partners. They survey the area before heading toward the house.

There are three cars at the front curb by the home. Two in the driveway, one in the lawn. LOUD SHOCK ROCK BLASTS from the living room.

DEES

You smell that?

CROWE

Smell what?

DEES

Trouble.

CROWE

Just watch your ass.

DEES

You watch my ass.

The two partners approach the front door. Give a KNOCK.

Bobby stands at the edge of the front lawn. Gripping a fifty caliber hand cannon. He rests the heavy weapon on his shoulder.

Crowe and Dees face the door. Oblivious. They give a few more hard KNOCKS. No answer.

DEES (CONT'D)

How the hell can anyone hear
with the music so loud?

CROWE

That bastard's here. I can
smell him.

Bobby quietly walks away. Goes un-noticed.

JONAS

What are you punching down my
door for, Ace?

Both Dees and Crowe flash their badges.

DEES

Open the door and get out of
the way. Ace.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

All the usual burn outs are lounging on the couch and carpet - just as enthused as before.

Jonas sits in his usual recliner. A bowl of popcorn on his lap and a cigarette in his mouth. Dees lays out the photos of Scottie, Bobby and Ferrin onto the coffee table.

DEES

Alright. Whoever don't wanna go to jail, give me something.

And they don't budge. Not one inch. One girl is actually asleep. A giant bong in her lap.

DEES (CONT'D)

We know they were staying here. So one of you has to know something. Come on y'all.

CROWE

I guess everyone wants to spend the night in lock up.

DEES

Looks that way, partner. Why don't you wake up your girlfriend. Tell her you're all going to jail.

Jonas stares over at the half comatose young woman with her head tilted back and mouth wide open. He picks up Bobby's picture, takes a look.

JONAS

He left this morning.

DEES

Which one?

JONAS

The blonde one. Bobby.

CROWE

What about his partner?

JONAS

Jason? Took off a couple days ago after him and Bobby got into it. I don't know where.

DEES

And what about your roommie?
Calvin? What does he know?

JONAS

He took off too. Went to work
yesterday and never came back.
Don't know where he went.

CROWE

So nobody's here, you haven't
seen them and you don't know
nuthin? Is that what you're
telling us?

DEES

I don't know, partner. I think
I smell bullshit.

CROWE

It's definitely ripe in here.

JONAS

I'm very sorry, Officers. But,
as you can see, we got kind
of a revolving door around this
place. But do me a favor, cop.

DEES

What's that?

JONAS (CONT'D)

If you see Calvin, tell him his
half of the rent is late.

Dees leans in nice and close to Jonas. Gets in his face.

DEES

Tell you what. We'll just come
back later when your mind isn't
so foggy.

JONAS

And I still won't know shit.
But suit yourselves.

Jonas takes another drag from his cigarette and blows SMOKE in the detective's face. Dees kicks the punk's legs out of his way as he and Crowe head for the door.

JONAS (CONT'D)

You're welcome. You Officers
have a good night.

Crowe stops at the door, turns back --

CROWE

We'll be seeing you.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crowe and Dees walk to their car. Both upset. Bobby's black Chevy Van is parked at the curb across the street. The two cops don't pay it any mind.

CROWE

He's lying. Little shit knows
where they are.

DEES

Yeah, I kind of got that feeling.

CROWE

It's just a matter of time before
one of these turds comes back.

DEES

So what now?

CROWE

Now? We wait.

Crowe steps in the driver's side.

DEES

I was afraid you were gonna say
that.

Dees walks around the car, also crawls in.

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Crowe moves his seat back, gets comfortable. Dees looks up and spots --

BOBBY

standing in front of the car. Still carries a fifty caliber handgun.

Dees taps his partner's arm. Crowe faces forward --

Bobby smiles back at him.

Dees and Crowe reach for their holstered weapons.

BOBBY FIRES INTO THE WINDSHIELD

Dees and Crowe are riddled with MULTIPLE SHOTS. Crowe falls face forward onto the steering column.

EXT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Dees opens his door and falls onto the grass. Bobby walks around the car, points his gun at the wounded cop - crawls away on the sidewalk.

Dees gives out.

Bobby reaches into the squad car. Grabs the police records and photos from the dashboard. Crowe grips Bobby's wrist.

CROWE

Rawley Niner's gonna kill you.
You got no chance.

Bobby opens a long, jagged switchblade. Holds it in front of Crowe's face. A creepy smile.

BOBBY

Thanks for the heads up.

Bobby SLICES CROWE'S THROAT. Hears POLICE SIRENS in the near distance.

Makes a run for it. Towards his Van. SQUEALS OUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE FOUR - NIGHT

Bobby's Van sits in stand-still traffic. HORNS are HONKING. People are CURSING. It's back to back as far as the eye can see.

POLICE SIRENS are faintly heard.

INT. BOBBY'S VAN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bobby behind the wheel. A bit on edge. Sweating, anxious. He checks his side-view mirror - spots a PATROL CAR sitting about five cars back.

Bobby faces forward.

The traffic starts to break up a bit.

Bobby moves forward. His PHONE RINGS. The CALLER ID READS JASON. Bobby answers.

BOBBY

Change in plan, slick. No more running. The cops are are gonna be on your ass. You wanna tell me where you are or do you wanna go to prison?

FERRIN (O.S.)

(filtered)

Shut your mouth and listen, Bobby. I got a friend of yours here you might wanna say hi to.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Jason by his car. The rear passenger door sits open. Abby awaits in the back. Blindfolded, hands tied, shaking.

The car sits at the far end of a remote dirt path in the middle of nowhere.

A SMALL LAKE sits just yards from the vehicle. The water is glassy, peaceful and quiet.

FERRIN

Long blonde hair. Blue eyes.
About seventeen. Real pretty.

Ferrin reaches the phone to Abby.

FERRIN (CONT'D)

Say your name.

ABBY

Abby Samms.

BOBBY (O.S.)

(filtered)

Where are you?

Ferrin steps outside with the phone.

FERRIN

First things first, Bobby. I
wanna find out just how bad
you want her.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S VAN — NIGHT

Bobby sits and listens. Confused. The traffic is starting to break up. Bobby inches forward.

BOBBY

What are you talking about?
Tell me where you are.

FERRIN (O.S.)

(filtered)

We tried it your way. Six months
later I'm still waiting for this
big score you promised. The way I
see it, we're running out of time.
And time is money, Bobby. You want
the girl, it's gonna cost you.

BOBBY

You don't know what you're doing.
I'm your only chance out of this.
Don't be an asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Ferrin shuts the rear door, steps a good distance away from the car. Keeps a close eye on Abby.

FERRIN

I figure from these last few jobs,
we got a little over thirty grand
put away. A dime less than thirty,
I give her your name and drop her
off five miles from the nearest
police station. That's my deal.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S VAN - NIGHT

Bobby is so distracted, he fails to notice the ten or so car lengths in front of him. A car behind him HONKS.

BOBBY

She'll turn you in along with me.
There's no pay-off.

FERRIN (O.S.)

Thanks to you, we're going down
anyways, aren't we, Bobby? This
is as good a chance to get out as
any. Hell. The cops might even
be grateful for turning you in.

Bobby's cocky demeanor suddenly turns dead serious.

BOBBY

Where?

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE – NIGHT

Bobby's Van makes its way down the two-lane dirt road. The thick branches from hundreds of old oak trees hang over the path. They BRUSH and SCRATCH the roof of the van.

Bobby comes to the end, parks a good distance from Ferrin's car. Ferrin stands by the car, gun in hand, waiting. Abby still in the back.

Out steps Bobby with his FIFTY CALIBER in one hand and the BAG OF MONEY in the other.

Ferrin aims his gun at Bobby.

FERRIN

Drop that fuckin' piece! Right now! Not another inch!

Bobby just returns with a smile.

BOBBY

You know better than that, Jason. You know you can't hit me from there. By the time you get close, I'll have the first shot between your stupid, beady little eyes. Just like I did your girl friend Calvin. Or maybe I'll let you get on all fours and beg like Scottie.

NINER

Sorry, Bobby. But we don't like blondes.

Niner walks from behind Bobby's Van with a sawed-off twelve gauge pump.

The color drops from Bobby's face.

NINER (CONT'D)

Drop the piece. Then toss me that bag. Real nice and slow.

Bobby drops the fifty caliber onto the dirt. Throws the duffel bag in Niner's direction. Niner picks up the bag and carefully steps closer to the gun on the ground.

Ferrin still holds his gun on Bobby. He shuffles back and forth on the dirt. Anxious.

FERRIN

(to Niner)

Alright. I got him here. Now
toss me the cash.

Niner bends down, retrieves Bobby's gun.

NINER

Not so fast, P Diddy. Get the
girl out of the back seat.

Ferrin turns his gun on Niner. A grin on his face. Bobby also smiles.

Niner turns to Ferrin. Spots the gun pointed at him.

FERRIN

You don't think I was just gonna
let you and the girl walk out of
here? Did you, cop?

Niner returns with a goofy smile.

FERRIN (CONT'D)

You must think I'm pretty fuckin'
stupid.

NINER

Pretty much.

Without hesitation, Niner POINTS AND FIRES a single SHOT at Ferrin's chest - BOOM!

The BLAST of the fifty caliber knocks the criminal OFF HIS FEET and INTO THE PASSENGER SIDE WINDOW - SHATTERS it into large SHARDS OF GLASS.

Abby SCREAMS OUT from the back seat.

Her eyes blindfolded.

The entire car door SMEARS WITH BLOOD as Ferrin slides into the dirt. He's dead before his body hits the ground.

Niner points the hand cannon at Bobby's face.

NINER (CONT'D)

Bad news. You just shot your partner. In front of a witness. It's gonna be hard to get out of this one. Guess we'll have to put you out of your misery.

BOBBY

It's not too late to take the money and run. You can tell the girl I got away. They took your badge. Your life. You got enough cash here to start over. Don't be stupid.

Niner steps within inches of Bobby's face. An evil smirk on his face. Bobby steps back.

NINER

I have a better idea. Why don't you go untie Abby? So she can see the man that murdered her family. Face to face. We can let her decide what happens to you.

Bobby stares over at Abby in the back. Crying, scared.

NINER (CONT'D)

Go on. She's waiting.

Niner walks Bobby to Ferrin's car. His gun pointed at his head. Bobby stops at the rear door. He stares through the glass at Abby. Then back at Niner.

NINER (CONT'D)

What're you waiting for? You're not scared, are you?

Bobby opens the rear door, reaches inside to get Abby. As he drags her across the leather --

Niner reaches into the dirt and grabs FERRIN'S GUN from his dead hand. He stands back up, waiting for Bobby.

As Bobby pulls Abby from the car, he opens a SWITCHBLADE. Before he can put it to Abby's throat --

NINER

Points and FIRES FERRIN'S GUN - STRIKES BOBBY'S SHOULDER. And down he goes.

Abby SCREAMS HER LUNGS OUT. Niner pulls down her blindfold. He hugs and calms her a bit as --

BOBBY

Squirms in the dirt. He attempts to stand, but falls. He crawls his way TOWARD THE LAKE.

Niner uses Bobby's switchblade to cut the rope from Abby's hands. She stares down at Ferrin's dead body for the first time.

Niner spots Bobby headed for the water and heads down the beach with Ferrin's revolver in hand. Abby just watches. Shakes from head to toe.

Bobby crawls into the shallow end. Turns, falls back first into the water. Niner hovers over him with his gun.

NINER

You know, I've killed so many
dumb fucks like you, I lost
count, Bobby. All of them face
down in the dirt. That same
desperate look...

Bobby stares at the gun's barrel. His hands suspended in the air. Scared stiff.

NINER (CONT'D)

None of them were quite so stupid
You're really something. So I won't
take any pleasure in killing you.
Abby, on the other hand, has been
waiting awhile for this.

Bobby stares over at Abby, still standing on the beach. He laughs out loud. She slowly steps closer to the water.

BOBBY

She's not like you.

NINER

Really?

BOBBY

As soon as you do me, she's gonna hand you over like the rest of us. That makes you just as dumb, cop.

NINER

(to Abby)

Come get it, Abby. Just like I promised.

Bobby loses his cocky smile.

Abby takes the revolver out of Niner's hand. Holds it on Bobby. A dead serious look in her eyes. She steps into the shallow end.

BOBBY

It was never personal.

ABBY

Well this is.

Abby FIRES THREE SHOTS into Bobby's chest. His dead body slowly drifts into the deep end.

Niner makes his way back to Ferrin's car. He unzips the bag of money and dumps it on the hood.

Abby half-heartedly follows behind. Ferrin's gun still in her hand.

Niner drops the empty bag in the sand and faces Abby, who hands him the thirty eight. Niner throws it in the sand near Ferrin's body.

Abby watches as Niner drops her IPHONE in the front seat of Ferrin's car.

NINER

Remember what I said. Ten more minutes and call the cops.

ABBY

I got it.

NINER

And you got your story straight?

ABBY

I got it. I'll be okay.

Niner quickly makes for the woods.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Rawley?

Niner stops, turns back.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Niner smiles. Walks off into the trees. Out of sight.

Abby turns, gives the crime scene a once over. Ferrin's body lay by the car. She checks --

THE LAKE

Bobby has officially disappeared into the water. It's as still and calm as before.

CUT TO:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Carly awaits in line. She has her usual orange and carrot juice, snack crackers and banana. She stares down at --

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

The front page reads --

ABBY SAMMS ABDUCTED BY MURDER SUSPECTS

Carly quickly snags up the paper.

INSERT - BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO

The image of BOBBY VAN DEN KEMP on the article. Just below Bobby's face is partner JASON FERRIN.

BACK TO SCENE

Carly's jaw drops. She stares at the news rack, spots the front page of another paper. This one reads --

CHRISTMAS EVE KILLER TESTIFIES AT COP'S TRIAL

Carly grabs both papers, drops them on the counter with her snacks.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN DRYDEK'S OFFICE - DAY

Drydek at his desk, sits quietly, waiting. In walks Niner. He shuts the door behind him. Drydek stands, takes a seat on the edge of his desk.

NINER

Captain? You wanted to see me?

DRYDEK

I suppose a congratulations are in order.

NINER

Thank you, Captain.

DRYDEK

You do know that IA will be doing an official inquiry into your involvement with Bobby Van Den Kemp?

NINER

Yeah, I kind of figured that. I don't think they're gonna get too far.

DRYDEK

Me either.

Drydek reaches back, grabs a file of papers from his desktop.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

These guys had one helluva rap sheet. Macgruder had some balls putting him on the stand. Funny him just coming forward like that. Almost as if he was coerced.

Drydek throws him an accusatory scowl.

NINER

Something you wanna ask me, Hal?

DRYDEK

No one's shedding any tears about Ferrin and Van Den Kemp. Or Trent Wise. But I got two cops dead. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure what I'm gonna tell their families.

NINER

The same thing I told Chris's wife. The truth. They were cops. It comes with the job.

Drydek smiles.

DRYDEK

What if that's not good enough?

Niner stalls. Thinks it over.

NINER

It has to be.

DRYDEK

I'm glad you feel that way, Rawley.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Just be sure to remember that
the next time you're drawing
down on an unarmed suspect.

Niner looks away in shame.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Especially ones that live in
fourth story apartments.

Niner cracks a smug grin.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

You'll save yourself a whole
helluva lot of trouble.

NINER

Yes, sir.

Niner turns to leave.

DRYDEK

Just one more thing.

Niner stops, faces Drydek.

DRYDEK (CONT'D)

Did you shoot Trent Wise?

Niner stalls. Thinks it over.

NINER

Would you believe me if I said
no?

Drydek turns deadly serious. His look could burn a whole
through your chest.

DRYDEK

Stay close to home, Rawley.

NINER

(smug)

Yes, sir, Captain.

EXT. PAT THOMAS BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

We're back at the scene of Trent Wise's death. Same spot. Trent's HONDA CIVIC is parked on the asphalt. The lot is otherwise completely barren.

Niner steps out. The bottle of WHISKEY in hand. He dumps the brown liquid onto the concrete.

NINER (V.O.)

With Trent Wise dead, I knew I could get to Bobby. It was my one and only chance at swinging the jury my way. With my name in the clear, I knew I'd do more good for Abby Samms than I could rotting away in jail...

Niner turns and stares back at the Honda. A sinister look in his eye. He stops and ponders his decision. He taps the empty bottle on his leg in a nervous frenzy.

NINER (V.O.)

What the hell good would all that do? Nothing. I knew the end would justify the means. To me, the decision was simple...

Niner steps closer and closer to the Honda. He is slow and looks uncertain. Pondering his decision to kill Trent.

NINER (V.O.)

But the funniest thing happened. The kid got to me. Against my better judgment I decided to let the little bastard live and take my chances with the jury. At least that was the plan.

ON THE HONDA'S WINDSHIELD

THE BRIGHT ORANGE MUZZLE FLAIR OF A GUNSHOT LIGHTS THE INTERIOR OF THE HONDA -- BOOM!

Niner rushes to the passenger side of the vehicle. Stares inside. Trent's dead, limp body in the seat. His head is kicked back and BLOOD dripping from his open mouth.

The THIRTY EIGHT REVOLVER in Trent's right hand.

Niner shakes his head as he stares at what's left of the young man before him. No real emotion or remorse. Just a blank expression.

NINER (V.O.)

Trent, on the other hand, decided there was only one way out. On the up side if Trent lived I knew there was a good possibility Bobby and Ferrin would still be on the street or watching cable TV in their cushy cells. How would I ever explain it to Abby Samms? Or look at myself in the mirror again?

Niner slowly stands. Stares out into the night. Pulls a cigarette from his coat pocket and LIGHTS UP.

NINER (V.O.)

This kid blowing his brains out might have been the best thing that ever happened...

Niner takes one last look at Trent's limp body in the passenger seat. Shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAUL'S APARTMENT — BALCONY — NIGHT

We're at the scene of Raul Ortega's murder. The crickets CHIRP in the nearby woods. The STAIN of RAUL'S BLOOD ON THE CONCRETE DECK.

NINER (V.O.)

But what if I didn't toss Raul off that balcony?

EXT. DIRT ROAD/PRIVATE LAKE — NIGHT

Back at the scene of Jason Ferrin and Bobby Van Den Kemp's death. Ferrin's car is gone. The lake is just as peaceful and quiet as ever.

NINER (V.O.)

Would justice still have been served?

CUT TO:

EXT. HORSE RANCH — SAMMS FAMILY FARM — NIGHT

Back where our story started. No cars in the driveway, no horses in the field. Nothing. And then --

NIGHT TURNS TO DAY. Our TWO SADDLEBREDS, one BROWN, one BLACK - suddenly appear behind the white picket fence.

NINER (V.O.)

Ask Abby Samms what she thinks about it.

And lastly...

ABBY appears on the other side of this fence. Strokes the faces of her two favorite horses.

1 FADE OUT.

THE END

