

THE REGULAR

Written by
Steven Clark

Steamroller138@gmail.com

ACT ONE

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Several floors of business-class accommodations. A two-night max encampment that overlooks a bustling downtown hub.

EXT. HOTEL, BALCONY - NIGHT

Pretty view of the pool below, aquatic accent lighting.

SHARON (36) exhausted but fighting on as usual, leans along the rail, phone to her ear. Still in her business attire.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A well maintained home in a quiet neighborhood. Nice car parked in the driveway reflects the dusk-light.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

LACEY (14), sprints to the front door. A certain glow about her -- the carefree look of a girl tempered with the burgeoning resolve of a woman.

ROBERT EASTMAN (40), carefree until he's not, slips on a casual jacket, grabs his keys.

LACEY

C'mon, Dad. Coyle's isn't gonna stay open all night.

ROBERT

Banana split?

She stops, hand on the door knob. Ponders.

LACEY

I was thinking about the Supreme.

ROBERT

Ooh. Sounds risky.

Robert's phone rings in his pocket. Takes it out, checks it.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Oh, it's your mother.

(answers)

Hey, hon.

LACEY
 (calls out)
 Hi, Mom!

Lacey runs out to the car.

BEGIN INTERCUT: SHARON AND ROBERT

SHARON
 (into phone)
 Hey. How are you? Was that Lacey I
 heard? Let me talk to her.

ROBERT
 She's already in the car. We're
 heading out for ice cream.

SHARON
 Banana split?

ROBERT
 I don't know. She changes her mind
 every five minutes these days.
 How'd everything go?

Sharon SIGHS, lifts off the balcony. Paces.

SHARON
 Oh, the usual song and dance. You
 know how it is.

ROBERT
 Yeah, but you do it so well.
 Leonard's going crazy at the office
 without you.

SHARON
 What? He's the one who sent me
 here.

ROBERT
 Okay. I'm going crazy.

She laughs.

SHARON
 Well, I'll be back tomorrow.

ROBERT
 Not a moment too soon. Did you eat?

SHARON
 Yeah, a little. I'm just getting
 back.

The car horn honks from outside. Robert, by the door, waves at Lacey to *shush*.

SHARON (CONT'D)
 (off car horn)
 Who's honking the horn?

ROBERT
 That's would be our daughter.
 Getting a little antsy.

SHARON
 She's getting so big, Robert.

ROBERT
 Growing up right before our eyes.

SHARON
 Everything's going by so quick.

ROBERT
 What do you mean?

SHARON
 You know what I mean. Spending so much time with this job doesn't leave room for much else. Maybe it's time I stepped back a little.

Robert looks --

OUTSIDE

To see Lacey in the car. She sees him and shrugs, like *come on already!*

ROBERT
 I see. Well, hey, I'm all for that. The question is -- are you? You gotta be ready, you know what I'm saying?

An unsettled look on Sharon's face.

SHARON
 I'm seriously considering it.

ROBERT
 Look, why don't we discuss this when you get home. Coyle's is gonna close soon, but...

SHARON
Promise?

ROBERT
Of course. Yeah. Promise.

SHARON
All right. I'm gonna turn in. I'm exhausted. I'll see you tomorrow?

ROBERT
I'll see you tomorrow.

SHARON
Tell Lacey I love her.

ROBERT
I will. Bye.

SHARON
Bye.

Robert clicks off the call, steps outside, shuts the door.

END INTERCUT

EXT. HOTEL, BALCONY - NIGHT

Sharon lowers her phone. O.S., children are heard playfully splashing in the pool.

She lingers a moment, turns and goes into her room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. Sharon glances up and stops short to a curious sight. To the right, on a --

DESK

An unfurled, black bag. Something an electrician might use. Several needles are visible. Two bottles of fluid. Neat and in order.

BACK TO

Sharon hesitates a moment. Not quite registering what she's seeing, but she slowly closes the door and--

A chloroformed rag is stuffed in her mouth.

She struggles. Can barely let out a scream.

Accosting her is STEPHEN CALDWELL (37). Nervous energy. Slight frame. Thinning hair. He's making up for all that right here.

Sharon elbows him in the face, knocks him back. Not long enough for the chloroform to take effect.

He stumbles, leaps forward -- She's gonna scream -- Can't let that happen.

He's on her again. Tries to shove the rag in her mouth, but he can't do it. This one's a fighter.

Her arms flail, felling a lamp. A chair overturns.

They fall on the bed. He musters all his energy and shoves her face into the mattress.

CALDWELL
Don't scream! Don't--

SHARON
(growls)
Son of a bitch--

He glances back to the door.

Caldwell has control. For how long, who knows. But he has it. Tries the rag again. She can smell it.

Sharon grunts, kicks, squirms. Desperate. She jerks her head back quick, catches him square in the nose.

He shrieks, rolls off, reaches for her as she --

Grabs a lamp off the floor. She's gonna brain him!

Footsteps. Not hers. *THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.*

A beefy forearm catches her in the mouth, knocks her to the floor. Out cold.

Standing over her is FRANCIS (44), a six-foot-seven tree trunk of a man with olive skin and prominent features.

Heavy breaths as the room goes quiet. Caldwell looks up, blood dripping from his nose.

CALDWELL
She broke my nose.

Francis inspects his forearm. There's blood on it. A man of few words finally speaks--

FRANCIS
 (mumbles)
 Bested by a woman.

CALDWELL
 What did you say?

FRANCIS
 I said you got beat up by a girl.

CALDWELL
 Get out of here.

MOMENTS LATER

Caldwell sits at the desk. Adjusts the lamp with a gloved hand. He jabs a needle into a bottle, fills it. The tip drips as he taps it.

He glances down to Sharon, unconscious on the floor.

And smiles viciously.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Not the same house as before. It'll be cozy in a couple weeks, but right now it's a bunch of unopened boxes marked KITCHEN, BATHROOM, BOOKS.

TITLE: *FOUR YEARS LATER*

Robert enters, box in hand. He sets it down, wipes his brow.

ROBERT
 That might be the last of it. What do you got, Lacey?

Lacey checks the side of her box.

LACEY
 Miscellaneous. Whatever that means.

She's eighteen now, and that burgeoning woman is in full bloom, yet an innocence remains if only in her eyes.

ROBERT
 It means we have to fill a junk drawer. Oh, before I forget.

Lacey GASPS. She moves to the window that overlooks the backyard. Beyond the yard --

VIEW

It's a postcard shot. Lake, sailboats, people having fun.

BACK TO

LACEY

Is this why we came here? This view?

ROBERT

Something like that. Hey, come here.

LACEY

What?

Robert holds something behind his back.

ROBERT

I didn't know which one to get you, so I got you both.

He hands her two thick books. One is -- LAW 101, the other, LAW COMPANION.

LACEY

Whoa. Thanks, Dad.

ROBERT

A little something to keep you busy before you hit school in the fall.

LACEY

Sitting by the lake, reading my books, margarita in hand...

ROBERT

Whoa, whoa, whoa... You're eighteen, not twenty-one.

She smiles, gives him a peck on the cheek.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Things sure are gonna be different when you're gone.

Lacey retreats to the lake view. Stares out pensively.

LACEY

Is she still coming to live with us?

ROBERT

We went over this, Lacey. We're just gonna see how it works out.

LACEY
She'll never replace Mom.

ROBERT
She knows that, honey.

She faces him.

LACEY
Does she?

ROBERT
Of course, she does. She's not going into this blind. Monica knows she can never fill your mom's shoes. I just hope you'll give her a chance is all.

Lacey SIGHS.

LACEY
When is she getting here?

ROBERT
In a few hours, I think. After she's done at the restaurant. You know, I was thinking maybe later we could all go down by the pier, get a bite to eat?

LACEY
I'm not real hungry, Dad.
(holds up her books)
Besides, I have reading to do.

ROBERT
Well, just think about it. Okay?

LACEY
I will.

Lacey leaves the room, trundles upstairs.

Robert turns to the lake, gazes out at the passing boats.

EXT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A Congress Street eatery tucked in among the other shops. A Chef statue out front holds the blackboard specials.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Black and white checkered patterns, clean and airy. The atmosphere is throwback rustic, but the food is the real attraction here.

KITCHEN

MONICA RICHARDSON (36), white chef's coat, hair up, arranges asparagus on a plate with salmon. A dash of salt, drizzle of balsamic.

She hands off the plate to a server, CAROLINE (19), a rainy day type who's sunshine is tough to get to.

MONICA

Is that for my friend out there?

CAROLINE

Yep. Shocker. He's in a good mood today.

MONICA

Of course he is. He ordered the salmon.

CAROLINE

Come again?

MONICA

He always orders salmon when he's in a good mood. Fish equals good mood. Steak, chicken, pork -- bad mood. You're supposed to know this stuff too, you know. Building relationships and all.

Caroline smirks, heads out to the floor. She could care less.

Monica wipes her hands, smiles, peers into the dining room.

DINING ROOM

A man, his back to us, cuts into his salmon. Takes a bite.

MONICA

How's your salmon?

He slowly turns to reveal the face of --

STEPHEN CALDWELL. He's buff, surfer tan. New hair. A complete three-sixty from when we last saw him.

CALDWELL

Monica, you've truly out done yourself. This is delicious. What's your secret?

Monica pulls up a chair, shrugs.

MONICA

Funny, I was just going to ask you the same question.

He raises an eyebrow.

CALDWELL

What do you mean?

Out the front window sits a streamlined blue SPORTS CAR, the kind you get when money is no issue.

MONICA

I don't mean to get personal, but... I just like getting to know my customers. You're here almost every day, beautiful car. You seem like a pretty carefree guy.

CALDWELL

(chuckles)

It's all an act.

Monica laughs as well.

MONICA

So, what kind of work do you do?

He stares quizzically at her.

MONICA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm prying.

CALDWELL

No, no. It's okay. I'm in security.

MONICA

Like, a security guard?

Stephen smiles, shakes his head.

CALDWELL

Not quite. Let's just say I keep people safe.

MONICA

Oh. Well, whatever it is, I'd like
to know *your* secret.

His smile dissipates as he stares into the lower reaches of
her soul.

CALDWELL

No, you wouldn't.

Monica's grin goes from affable to awkward in record time.

EXT. POINT PLEASANT, CONGRESS STREET - DAY

A quaint destination -- trendy small town charm. Tourism
feeds this place like water a rose bush.

Lacey, Robert and Monica stroll the sidewalk in the long
shadows of the afternoon sun.

ROBERT

Ugh. Vacations go too fast.

MONICA

Especially when you spend all your
time moving.

ROBERT

Especially that.

MONICA

Look at it this way... This town is
always on vacation. And now you
live here.

ROBERT

Good point.
(to Lacey)
Hey, honey. What do you think?

They happen to be right in front of Coyle's cream shop.

Lacey peers into the storefront. Ice cream just doesn't
elicit the same response it used to.

LACEY

Eh, I don't know...

ROBERT

You sure? You barely touched your
dinner.

MONICA

I'll buy.

Lacey can hardly look Monica in the eye.

LACEY

No, thanks.

ROBERT

Well, if you're buying, I'm in.
 (to Lacey)
 Sure you don't want anything,
 honey?

LACEY

I'm good, Dad.

Monica looks disappointed. She's really trying here.

They go inside the shop.

Lacey drifts along the street. She checks out the other stores, not really paying much attention to anything, when --

In an ANTIQUE SHOP window she spies a --

LOCKET

It's tarnished silver cover holds a small oval pearl in its center, bordered with an intricate raised design.

BACK TO

Lacey's transfixed.

MONICA (O.S.)

That's a pretty locket.

Lacey whirls to find Monica over her shoulder.

LACEY

Pretty price, too.

Monica considers this.

MONICA

Hey, just an idea, but I am looking for help at the restaurant. I know it's not as interesting as law, but... It's a good way to earn a few extra bucks for the Summer.

LACEY

I don't know.

MONICA

What's to know? I'll train you. You can start tomorrow.

LACEY

I still gotta unpack. Dad goes back to work, there's a lot to do.

MONICA

And I'll help you when we get home.
(beat)

How many excuses are you going to make not to get to know me better?

LACEY

A few dozen.

Monica smiles.

It takes a moment, but Lacey smiles, too.

EXT. DUSKEY & LEONARD OFFICES - DAY

A car turns into the parking lot.

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD OFFICES, HALL - DAY

Robert, suit and tie guy again, heads down the corridor. It opens up to his OFFICE on the right. He goes in.

OUTER OFFICE

At a desk outside is Robert's secretary, SHEILA (44), and God knows what he'd do without her. One of the few people here he trusts.

He tries on a smile.

ROBERT

Good morning.

SHEILA

Robert! Welcome back. Catch any sun?

ROBERT

A sliver here and there.

SHEILA

Good. It's been quiet here,
thankfully. Just the usual
annoyances.

ROBERT

Then I guess we're in good shape.

He enters his --

OFFICE

Airy, neat. He sets his briefcase on his desk, goes to the
window and adjusts the blinds, then --

Picks up a picture.

INSERT: PICTURE

Robert, Sharon and Lacey. Several years ago on some vacation
somewhere. A good memory.

BACK TO

He SIGHS wistfully.

A beefy, goatee'd man in a tan suit, CONRAD LEONARD (54),
stands in the doorway.

CONRAD

Robert. There you are.

Robert places the picture down.

ROBERT

Mr. Leonard. How are you?

CONRAD

Better question is how are *you*?
Feeling refreshed? Raring to go?

ROBERT

Well, it's good to get back to a
routine, that's for sure.

Conrad notices the picture Robert placed down, an unsettled
look on his face.

CONRAD

That's very good. Oh, just a heads
up -- we got the Kensington
account, so expect an influx of new
work hitting your desk soon.

ROBERT
I'll be looking for it.

Conrad turns to go, when --

CONRAD
How'd the move go?

Robert's a little confused.

ROBERT
It went well. Did I tell you about that?

CONRAD
You might have. Small office, though.

ROBERT
Yeah, I guess so.

CONRAD
So, what prompted the move?

Robert hesitates.

ROBERT
Change of scenery, I guess. Memories are thick in that old house.

CONRAD
Understood. Well, if there's anything I can do to make the transition a little easier, just let me know. Anything. I mean it.

ROBERT
Thank you.

Conrad steps out of the office. He turns down the hall to reveal Sheila, who looks in at Robert.

Robert folds his hands, SIGHS.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Bacon and sausage sizzle on the grill. Coffee is poured.

DINING ROOM

Lacey studies a menu with Caroline.

CAROLINE

You can only study that menu so much. You need to be out on the floor.

LACEY

I agree.

CAROLINE

So, where you from? You just moved here?

LACEY

Just a couple towns over. I came here with my father.

CAROLINE

Oh, your mom and dad are...

LACEY

My mom's passed.

CAROLINE

Oh, my god. How did she..? I'm sorry. You don't have to answer that.

LACEY

It's okay. It was a random break in at a hotel she was staying at.

CAROLINE

Are you saying your mom was...
(looks around)
Your mom was murdered?

Lacey nods.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Did they ever catch the guy?

LACEY

Nope. Not yet.

CAROLINE

Wow. I'm sorry. I had no idea.

LACEY

Rains on the just and the unjust, right?

CAROLINE

Mostly the just, from my experiences. Oh. We got a table.

ACROSS THE ROOM

It's Caldwell. Of course, it is. By himself, as usual, he sits and unfurls a newspaper.

Caroline leans in to Lacey.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Oh god, I hate this guy.

LACEY
Why?

CAROLINE
I don't know, just... Gives me the creeps. Monica likes him, though.

LACEY
You know what they say -- never judge a book by it's cover.

CAROLINE
Boy, you're just a walking colloquialism, huh?

Lacey laughs. She likes this Caroline girl.

MOMENTS LATER

Caroline slides up to Caldwell's table, Lacey beside her.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Good morning.

CALDWELL
Good morning. Who's this?

CAROLINE
New recruit. She'll be following me today.

He holds out his hand. They shake.

CALDWELL
Nice to meet you.

LACEY
Nice to meet you.

CAROLINE
So, what can I get for you today?

CALDWELL

I think we're gonna go with the salmon.

Caroline jots it down in her book.

CAROLINE

Ah, you must be in a good mood today.

CALDWELL

Come again?

CAROLINE

Monica says when you get the fish it usually means you're in a good mood.

He peers around the girls to Monica, busy in the kitchen.

CALDWELL

She said that, huh?

CAROLINE

Yeah. Monica's good at making personal connections and stuff.

Caldwell stares ahead, lost in thought.

CALDWELL

Give me the pork chops instead.

He hands Lacey the menu.

LACEY

Would you like a drink?

CALDWELL

Huh?

LACEY

A drink. You didn't order a drink.

He comes out of his daze.

CALDWELL

Yes, you're right. Iced tea, please.

Lacey locks eyes with him. There's an odd look on his face.

The girls turn to go--

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Wait. What's your name?

CAROLINE
I'm Caroline.

CALDWELL
No, not you. You.

LACEY
Me? I'm Lacey.

CALDWELL
Lacey...
(shakes his head)
I'm sorry. It's just... You look familiar, is all.

LACEY
I guess I got one of those faces.

He smiles.

CALDWELL
Yes, you do.

INT. MONICA'S CAR (DRIVING) - DAY

Monica drives, Lacey shotgun.

MONICA
Caroline said you did really well for your first day.

LACEY
I'm sure she was just being nice.

Monica laughs.

MONICA
Boy, you really have a hard time accepting a compliment, don't you?

Lacey shrugs.

MONICA (CONT'D)
How do you react to gifts?

LACEY
I don't know. I guess it depends on the gift.

Monica reaches into the back seat, grabs a small box and hands it to Lacey.

MONICA
Then this is for you.

Lacey takes it.

LACEY
It's not my birthday.

MONICA
Consider it a peace offering. Open it.

Lacey relents, Monica watches anxiously. It's the locket from the antique shop.

Lacey GASPS.

LACEY
Oh, my god. The locket.

MONICA
You like it?

LACEY
I love it. I... I don't know what to say.

MONICA
How about a thank you?

LACEY
Thank you. I don't know if I can pay you back right away.

MONICA
You don't need to pay me back. It's a gift.

LACEY
Monica, I don't--

MONICA
Yes you can. You know the old colloquialism, right? Money can't buy happiness?

Lacey smiles.

LACEY
Of course.

MONICA

Yeah, well, it's overrated.

They smile at each other. A rare occurrence.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The three of them finish up dinner.

LACEY

How was your day, Dad?

But no answer. Staring off into space.

MONICA

Robert?

She points to Lacey.

ROBERT

Hmm? I'm sorry. My day was fine, sweetheart. Hey, how'd it go on your first day?

LACEY

It went well, I think.

MONICA

Better than well, I'd say. She's got the right attitude.

LACEY

What attitude is that?

MONICA

You're a people person. That's a good quality to have, especially if you're going to be a lawyer someday.

ROBERT

(points to the locket)
What's that?

Lacey fingers the chain around her neck.

LACEY

My new locket. Monica got it for me.

Robert's eyes widen.

ROBERT

Really?

MONICA

I noticed her drooling over it in
the window the other day.

They laugh.

LACEY

I want to put of picture of mom in
it.

ROBERT

I think that's a wonderful idea.
You know...

(he rises)

There just may be a picture in this
box.

He heads to one of the unopened moving boxes, rifles through
it. Finally --

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Here.

He hands it to Lacey.

INSERT: PICTURE

A radiant Sharon, early thirties. Standing on green grass,
her hand resting on a park bench.

BACK TO

Lacey is rapt. Can't tear her eyes from the image.

Monica joins Robert.

Lacey looks up, her eyes wet.

LACEY

She's so beautiful.

MONICA

May I?

She carefully takes the picture.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Oh my. You're right. She is
beautiful.

LACEY

Dad, I can't... I can't cut this picture.

ROBERT

Yes, you can. I have that one on my phone.

(smiles, points)

She's up in the cloud, so to speak.

Lacey nods.

LACEY

You bet she is.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Rain-slicked streets. That blue sports car at the curb leads to a large cookie-cutter complex that makes little effort at character.

INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The clink-clank of weights as we circle around to a desk with three computer screens, one with multiple angles of the Duskey-Leonard building.

He bench presses, lowers the weights and sits up. Breathes out, hands on knees.

He appears frustrated. Something weighs on his mind.

He crosses into the --

BEDROOM

Opens a night stand drawer, pulls out a manilla envelope and looks inside.

INT. HOTEL ROOM (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

The night he killed Sharon. He rolls up his equipment, needles and vials, then spots her purse on a table.

He rifles through it -- lipstick, gum, car keys, and...

Pulls out a --

INSERT: PHOTO

It's Sharon, Robert and Lacey. Perfect little family.

He stuffs it in his pocket.

BACK TO

CALDWELL'S APARTMENT

He rifles through the contents of the folder. Photos. Photos of women, victims, their families. Whatever else he found.

Then he finds it. It's right here. He throws everything else down and stares at this one photo --

It's Sharon, Robert and Lacey.

He keys in on LACEY.

Realization hits hard. It's confusion. It's a flash of anger.
It can't be.

His piercing eyes look up.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Lacey fiddles with her locket cover as Caroline watches on.

LACEY

I can't get it to close. It keeps
opening.

CAROLINE

Leave it like that. That way
everyone can see your beautiful
mom.

LACEY

Thanks.

FRONT DOOR

Caldwell glides in, sits at his usual corner spot.

CAROLINE

Oh, it's that guy again. I'll be
back.

Lacey continues to fiddle with the locket.

After a few moments, Caroline reappears, smiling.

LACEY

What?

CAROLINE

He asked for you.

LACEY

For me?

Caroline shrugs.

CAROLINE

Must've made quite an impression
the other day.

CALDWELL'S TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

LACEY

Hello.

Caldwell puts down his paper.

STEPHEN

Why, hello. Lacey, isn't it?

LACEY

That's right. And..?

STEPHEN

Caldwell. Stephen Caldwell.

He extends his hand. They shake.

LACEY

What can I get for you, Mr. Caldwell--

STEPHEN

Stephen, please.

Lacey grins.

LACEY

Stephen. What can I get for you?

He points.

CALDWELL

That's a pretty locket.

LACEY

Oh, thanks.

He stares at the picture inside it.

CALDWELL

Who is that? If you don't mind my asking.

LACEY

That's my mom.

A moment passes as Caldwell focuses intently on the photo.

CALDWELL

(sotto)
Son of a gun.

LACEY

What?

He shakes his head, taps a hand to his heart.

CALDWELL
Nothing. I keep a picture of my mom
close by, too.

LACEY
Oh, that's sweet. Has she..?

CALDWELL
Yes, she's passed on.

Lacey offers a sympathetic grin.

LACEY
Mine too. I'm sure she was a good
woman.

Silence as he holds her gaze, returns a fake smile.

CALDWELL
Yes, she was.

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, ROBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Seated at his desk, crunching numbers, the usual. Suddenly,
he stops. Stops dead.

COMPUTER SCREEN

Numbers. Hundreds of thousands of dollars. This is nothing
new, but for the first time, there's a link.

He clicks it.

BACK TO

Robert's eyes darting back and forth, his lips slightly
apart. Can't believe what he's seeing.

He clicks his mouse. A PRINTER whirs to life behind him.

He gets up, goes to close the door when he catches Sheila's
curious gaze looking right at him.

SHEILA
(mouths the words)
What is it?

Robert says nothing. He closes the door.

EXT. DUSKEY & LEONARD OFFICES, PARKING LOT - DAY

Robert and Sheila stride through the lot. They stop at his car. He checks over his shoulder, nervous, hands her an envelope.

SHEILA

This is it?

ROBERT

I've been doing these numbers for years. Never gave it a second thought. But today, for whatever reason, a link showed up I've never seen before.

SHEILA

And you clicked it.

ROBERT

(nods)
I clicked it.

She takes the envelope, scans the contents.

SHEILA

This dates back seven years, Robert. Back when you started here.

ROBERT

Is it what I think it is?

SHEILA

There's thousands-- Hundreds of thousands of dollars changing hands here. Bank of Columbia. You know what that is?

ROBERT

Some sort of exchange?

SHEILA

It's called the Peso Exchange. Money laundering.
(hands back the envelope)
What do you think this is?

ROBERT

I don't even wanna speculate.

SHEILA

Are you gonna call the police?

He looks desperate.

ROBERT

I don't know. I... Why did I have to find this?

SHEILA

Robert. You know now. If you keep doing this it makes you an accessory. You realize that?

ROBERT

(shakes his head)

This could be nothing. It could be nothing at all.

Sheila doesn't buy that for a second.

SHEILA

You-- Wait. You don't think Sharon knew about this, do you?

And there it is.

Robert looks like a deer in the headlights. He's silent for a long moment.

ROBERT

Jesus.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Busy lunch rush, organized chaos. Work getting done.

Lacey takes someone's order, when --

CHAD (O.S.)

Hey!

At a table, CHAD (32), business-type, slick hair, calls for Lacey.

She finishes up with her table, crosses to Chad.

LACEY

Yes?

CHAD

(agitated)

This burger is not medium rare. I said medium rare, this is well done.

(picks a fry off a plate)

Fries are cold...

LACEY

I'm so sorry. Let me take that back, we'll get you a new one, if you'd like.

She goes to take his plate, he grabs her wrist.

CHAD

No! I don't have time for that

Close by is Caldwell, who has taken notice.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Just... take it off the bill. And I'm still waiting for a refill on my drink. Unbelievable.

LACEY

I'm sorry, sir. I'll get that right away.

She heads off. Looks back, clearly frazzled.

CALDWELL (O.S.)

You can see she's busy, can't you?

Chad turns.

Standing over him is Caldwell.

CHAD

What?

CALDWELL

I said, she's busy.
(looks at the burger)
And that's far from well done.

CHAD

Excuse me?

CALDWELL

Did you get passed over for a raise this month? Didn't hit your quota, bonus never kicked in. Stewing all day in that little cubicle of yours.

CHAD

What the hell are you talking about? Who are you?

Caldwell pulls out his wallet, drops a fifty on the table.

CALDWELL

Is it a free meal you're looking for? I'll make it easy for you.

CHAD

I don't want your money. Mind your business.

Lacey returns with his drink.

LACEY

Is everything all right?

CALDWELL

This man was just about to apologize to you.

CHAD

I'm not apologizing to anyone.

LACEY

Really, that's not necessary.

Caldwell looks at her and smiles. He pats Chad on the shoulder.

CALDWELL

I got his lunch. On me.

Caldwell looks around, takes a cleansing breath, nods.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

(to Chad)

You take care.

He turns and casually heads out.

Lacey and Chad watch as he goes.

LACEY

Here's your drink. Sir?

Chad, clearly distracted by what just happened.

CHAD

Who was that guy?

LACEY

He's a regular.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Small lake front beach. Music is heard. Sail boats off in the distance.

Lacey and Caroline sit on a blanket.

LACEY

And then he paid for his lunch.

CAROLINE

That, what's his name..? That Caldwell guy?

LACEY

Yeah.

CAROLINE

I don't know. He requests you personally, then he defends your honor.

Lacey laughs.

LACEY

Defend my honor? You make it sound like he's my knight in shining armor.

CAROLINE

I don't know. Is he?

LACEY

I mean, I know he's a little older, but... I don't know. There's something about him, though.

CAROLINE

You're not seriously entertaining this, are you?

LACEY

No, of course not... Not really.

CAROLINE

Not really?!

Caroline shudders.

A good looking DUDE, 22, crosses near them.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Now, that's more like my knight in shining armor.

LACEY

Mm hmm.

A GIRL, 22, joins good looking Dude.

CAROLINE

Alas, all of my knights already
have maidens.

They laugh.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Monica sits on the couch reading a book.

Robert stands in a doorway, hands on the door frame and staring at her. Conflicted.

She glances up.

MONICA

Oh, I didn't see you standing there.

ROBERT

Can we... talk?

She puts her book down, sees the concern on his face.

MONICA

Sure.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Dark. Crickets chirp. A car pulls in front of a house. Chad, the guy from earlier at the restaurant, steps out. Clicks his key fob, blinkers flash.

He heads up the walk, reaches the door, opens it, and before he can enter--

Caldwell grabs him from behind, stuffs a rag over his face.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Robert and Monica together on the couch. Quiet. Both stare at each other until --

ROBERT

I didn't question it at first, Monica. Never gave it a second thought, but now...

MONICA

And now you know. Or, at least, you think you know.

ROBERT

I always kept back-ups of the records. Always. It's just something I did. I have enough to shut the business down if that's what I wanted to do.

MONICA

That's providing they're doing something wrong. You don't know that. Not really.

ROBERT

Monica, I wasn't born yesterday. It's got all the earmarks of a laundering operation. Sheila agrees.

MONICA

Sheila knows about this?

ROBERT

She's the only person there I can trust.

Robert rises, runs a hand through his thick hair.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What if--?

He stops abruptly, an uneasy look on his face.

MONICA

What if what?

ROBERT

What if Sharon knew about this? Before she died she was talking about quitting, wanting to spend more time at home. What if there was more to it than just that?

MONICA

You think there was?

ROBERT

I don't know, but the night she told me that was the night she was murdered.

MONICA

It was that night? You're kidding?

ROBERT

No.

Robert paces, lost in thought.

Monica shakes her head, starts again.

MONICA

Robert, this could all just be a coincidence.

ROBERT

Sharon saved everything. Cards. Letters I gave her when we were dating. If she knew what was going on at Duskey and Leonard, chances are she has it somewhere.

Monica sighs.

MONICA

(heavy exhale)

Okay.

ROBERT

Oh, and don't breathe a word of this to Lacey. Please. Last thing I wanna do is scare her.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER

Chad, slumped in a chair. His mouth, hands, legs, ankles bound with duct tape. As sweat beads on his forehead, his eyes slowly crack open.

Caldwell creeps into the room. He unfurls a bag on the counter -- the one with the needles and vials.

CALDWELL

Oh, you're awake.

Chad grunts through the tape.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

Please, don't try to talk. It's annoying, through the duct tape and all.

Chad mumbles.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

That's right. I'm the guy from the restaurant. I bought you lunch, remember?

Caldwell SIGHS.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

You should've gone easier on your waitress. Lacey? She's a good person. Been through a lot, you know. Lost her mother a few years back.

(fills a syringe)

I mean, yes, it was by my own hand. I was just doing what I was paid to do.

(flicks the needle)

My mother? Not a very nice person. You know, she used to lock me up over night in a dog crate when I misbehaved. Can you imagine that? A cage. Like I was some kind of animal. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Messed me up for a long time.

He sneers, turns. Syringe in his hand.

CHAD

Grmmphh!

Caldwell approaches.

CALDWELL

But, as you can see, I'm all better now.

He holds the needle up to the light, eyes wild. His lips curl into a devilish grin.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you agree?

EXT. CHAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Caldwell steps out the front door. Checks around. Coast is clear.

He heads down the walk, black case in hand, then disappears into the darkness.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - DAY

Lacey slips off her apron as Monica wipes her hands.

MONICA
Heading out?

LACEY
Yeah.

MONICA
Okay. Hey-- Good job today, Lacey.
Just wanted to let you know.

LACEY
You're just saying that.

Monica shakes her head.

MONICA
I'm saying it because it's true.
Dealing with the public like this
is a skill and, from my experience,
mostly inherent. You come from good
stock.

Lacey tries hard to blow off the compliment, but she can't
hide the satisfaction of a small win.

LACEY
Thanks.

MONICA
You're welcome.

EXT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT, PARKING LOT - DAY

Around the side where employees park.

Lacey inside her car as the engine sputters, struggles to
turn over.

She pops the hood, gets out. What she sees may as well be an
elaborate math problem. Lacey touches a hose.

CALDWELL (O.S.)
Everything all right?

Lacey jumps, put her hand on her chest.

LACEY
Oh, my god. You scared me.

CALDWELL

I'm sorry. I was just passing by and I saw you pop the hood. Car trouble?

He checks under the hood.

LACEY

Yeah. It's... I don't even know what I'm looking at really. It was acting weird on the way here, then... this.

CALDWELL

Hmm. I gotta be honest with you, I'm not much of a mechanic. I can maybe change the oil and inflate my tires, but other than that...

LACEY

It's okay. I can wait till Monica gets off.

CALDWELL

You live far? I can give you a lift.

Lacey checks out his shiny sports car idling at the curb.

LACEY

That's really nice, but Monica's just closing up. I can wait for her. I don't want to trouble you.

He scoffs.

CALDWELL

It's no trouble at all. I'm not doing anything.

Lacey thinks. Torn. Glances to his car.

LACEY

Let me grab my bag?

CALDWELL

(smiles)
Of course.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, CLOSET - DAY

Robert searches the recesses of the shelves, pulls down a box. Then another.

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He sits on the bed. Sharon's stuff all around him. Just things she saved. He comes upon a FLASH DRIVE. Bingo.

HOME OFFICE

The flash drive inserted. It takes a moment to bring everything up. Then, on the --

SCREEN

The same kind of data he saw in his office. Transfers of ridiculous amounts of money. Rows and rows of it, then--

Bank Of Columbia

BACK TO

Robert's eyes glassy as he looks it over. He puts a hand to his mouth.

He was right.

He removes the flash drive, pockets it. He exits into the LIVING ROOM room and bumps into Monica.

He nearly shrieks in fear.

MONICA

Oh, my god. Are you all right?

He collects himself.

ROBERT

I didn't realize you were home.

MONICA

I just got in. Did you pick up Lacey?

ROBERT

No.

MONICA

She didn't call?

ROBERT

No. Why, what happened?

MONICA

On the way out I saw her car still in the lot. I figured she had some trouble and called you.

ROBERT
No. I... Where is she?

INT. CALDWELL'S CAR - DAY

Cruising along a road with dense greenery. Lacey's not quite relaxed, but impressed by the car's luxury.

LACEY
Beautiful car, Mr.--

CALDWELL
Stephen.

LACEY
Stephen.

CALDWELL
Beautiful but expensive. I must admit I have a taste for pricey toys.

LACEY
I can see that. By the way, I just wanted to say thank you for the other day.

CALDWELL
What do you mean?

LACEY
That rude guy at the restaurant.

CALDWELL
He was out of line. There's no call for that.

LACEY
Well, whatever you said worked. He actually apologized to me on the way out.

CALDWELL
Did he?

LACEY
Yes, he did. I couldn't believe it.

Caldwell snickers.

CALDWELL
I'm sure he was very sorry.

Her phone buzzes. She reaches in her bag and pulls it out. The screen reads: DAD CALLING. She ignores it.

LACEY
That's my father.

CALDWELL
You should pick up. He might be worried about you.

LACEY
Oh, he's fine. You can take a left right up here.

Caldwell doesn't answer. Misses the turn.

LACEY (CONT'D)
You, um, you missed my turn.

A long, uncomfortable beat passes as Caldwell drums his fingers along the wheel.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Mr. Caldwell?

CALDWELL
Hmm? Oh, I'm sorry. My mind was wandering. I thought you'd like to take the scenic route.

LACEY
(hesitant)
It is pretty, but I think we'd better head home.

CALDWELL
Right, you are. I'll just back track up here and we'll get right back on course.

Lacey takes a deep breath, relaxes a bit. Just a bit.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Robert and Monica rush out the front door, frenzied and fearful.

MONICA

I'll go back to the restaurant.

ROBERT

All right. I'll check around town.
Give me a call when--

Caldwell's car pulls into the driveway. Lacey hops out like nothing's wrong. Practically bouncing.

LACEY

Hey.

MONICA

Lacey!

ROBERT

Where were you? We were just gonna
go out looking. Are you all right?

LACEY

Yeah. Mr. Caldwell gave me a ride.

Caldwell steps from the car.

CALDWELL

I told her she should call you.
Said you might be worried. But you
know how kids are.

He casually walks over to Monica. She opens her mouth to speak, but holds it a moment.

MONICA

Hello.

CALDWELL

You sure look different outside of
the restaurant.
(extends a hand to Robert)
You must be Lacey's father.

Robert takes Caldwell in. Incredibly wary. If he's seething, he's hiding it. Takes Caldwell's hand.

ROBERT
I'm Robert. And who are you again?

CALDWELL
Stephen Caldwell. I'm a regular at
Monica's restaurant.

ROBERT
Thanks for getting my daughter home
safe.

CALDWELL
Any good person would do the same.

LACEY
Dad, I'm gonna go inside. Thanks
again, Mr. Caldwell.

CALDWELL
Stephen!

She smiles, goes inside.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Well, guess I better be off.
Monica, I'm sure I'll see you
tomorrow.

She nods, forces a smile as he shakes Robert's and again.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
It was good meeting you.

ROBERT
You too.

Caldwell heads away, opens his car door and stops.

CALDWELL
(to Robert)
You look really familiar. Have we
met before?

ROBERT
(stoic)
I don't think so.

Caldwell shrugs, glances around the property.

CALDWELL
Nice house.

He gets in the car and backs out, waves as he pulls away.

Robert and Monica regard him silently, both watching until he drives out of view.

ROBERT
You know that guy?

MONICA
He comes in the restaurant every day. Beyond that, I don't know very much about him.

Robert slowly turns to the house.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mid-argument. Lacey with her defenses up.

LACEY
Dad, it's not a big deal. I know him. Monica knows him.

Monica comes in, stands next to Robert.

MONICA
Not that well.

ROBERT
Why didn't you just call me if you were having car trouble?

LACEY
I was gonna go back in the restaurant and then he just showed up.

ROBERT
Just like that?

LACEY
What are you trying to say? Dad, he comes by every day. It's not so far out of the realm of possibility that he happened to be there.

ROBERT
Look, I don't want you driving alone with someone like that.

LACEY
Someone like what?

ROBERT
Lacey, he's twice your age. You
gotta be smarter than that.

LACEY
What are you saying -- I'm not
smart?

Nothing to say here that will not offend her.

ROBERT
(hesitates)
Smarter.

She storms off.

LACEY
Thanks for the vote of confidence,
Dad.

Just Robert and Monica.

MONICA
That went over well.

Robert looks lost. He lowers his hand on the table. Dammit.

INT. MONICA'S CAR - DAY

Lacey sits shotgun, staring out the window as Monica drives.
The silence is thick.

MONICA
You know your father's just
concerned about you, right?

LACEY
You know I'm going away to college
all on my own like a big girl,
right?

Monica immediately regrets speaking.

MONICA
I didn't mean for it to come out
like that.

LACEY
How did you mean it?

MONICA
What I'm saying is, in many ways,
you're all your father has left.

Stops Lacey cold. She lowers her head.

MONICA (CONT'D)

I'm sure you can understand if your father's being a little protective of you. You're not a little girl, that's true. But you will always be his little girl no matter how big you get.

INT. BELL'S AUTO - DAY

Robert stands next to Lacey's car as a MECHANIC, thirties, wipes his hands on a rag.

ROBERT

So, what's the damage?

MECHANIC

New distributor cap, plus labor, run you about a buck fifty.

ROBERT

Okay. Not as bad as I thought.

MECHANIC

Have you had this car serviced recently?

ROBERT

Just last week actually. Oil change. Why?

MECHANIC

Well, the distributor cap was missing.

ROBERT

Missing?

The mechanic opens the hood.

MECHANIC

See, some caps are held in with clips. You hit a bad patch of road there's a slight chance of it coming loose.

ROBERT

Uh huh.

MECHANIC

Not this one. This model the cap's screwed in. You actually gotta get in there with a philips head and physically take it out.

ROBERT

Really? So, what are you saying? A mechanic did this?

MECHANIC

A dishonest one, maybe. Give you a reason to come back and spend more money. I would never do that, of course.

ROBERT

Of course.

The mechanic smirks.

MECHANIC

Either that or a stalker.

Robert contemplates those words. All sorts of gears are grinding now.

EXT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT, AROUND BACK - DAY

Lacey slumps against the wall with a cold drink.

The door opens. It's Caroline.

CAROLINE

There you are. Is everything okay?

Lacey sighs.

LACEY

Yeah, everything's fine.

CAROLINE

Really? You don't look fine. You've been dragging ass all day.

This prompts laughter.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

That's the first time I've seen you smile today.

LACEY

I got into it with my dad last night.

CAROLINE

Why?

LACEY

It's so stupid. I had some car trouble after work yesterday and that Caldwell guy gave me a lift home.

EXT. PARKING AREA - DAY

Across the street from the restaurant on a side street is Caldwell. He sits in his car, just out of view, pointing a listening dish out the window.

From his cell phone he can hear Lacey and Caroline.

BEGIN INTERCUT: LACEY & CAROLINE/CALDWELL

CAROLINE (O.S.)

He what?

LACEY (O.S.)

Look, I know what you're thinking.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

He's got twenty years on you. Maybe more.

LACEY (O.S.)

It's not like that, trust me.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Oh yeah? What's it like?

Lacey struggles to find the right words.

LACEY

I think he was just being... helpful. You know, a friend.

CAROLINE

(laughs)

A helpful friend, huh?

LACEY

Right.

CAROLINE

I'm a helpful friend, okay? I'm a helpful friend. Next time give me a call instead of that...

LACEY

That what?

Caldwell, stoic. Doesn't flinch. Listening.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

That creepazoid.

Caroline shudders. Lacey laughs.

LACEY

He's not as bad as you think.

CAROLINE

Yeah, okay. Look, tell ya what. Why don't we hang out after work? We could do a little shopping, grab a bite to eat.

LACEY

I don't know.

CAROLINE

What's there to know? It'll be fun.

LACEY

That actually does sound good.

CAROLINE

I know it does. We'll stop at that little sidewalk cafe down the street. We'll make a night of it.

LACEY

All right. Thanks.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Besides, two good looking girls out on the town. What's the worst that could happen?

They laugh, head to the door when--

Caldwell lowers the dish-- HONK! Accidentally hits the horn. He snaps his head up where he can see a sliver of the back of the restaurant.

Lacey and Caroline stop short. They heard it. Peer around the corner, but not far enough. They don't see anything.

Caroline goes in, but Lacey holds. Looks around. Finally, she opens the door and goes inside.

END INTERCUT

EXT. DUSKEY & LEONARD - NIGHT

Establishing Robert's office building. Purple hues of a brilliant sunset just before nightfall.

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, LOBBY - SAME

Spacious and upscale. The sound of rippling water as Robert and Sheila walk together.

SHEILA

Decided what you're gonna do?

ROBERT

I don't know. Though when I checked again today, the link was gone.

SHEILA

Gone?

ROBERT

Like it never existed. At this point, I think the less I know the better.

SHEILA

(shakes her head)

You gotta admit, it's odd.

ROBERT

Yes, it is.

Just then, Robert locks eyes on someone he's never seen before. A JANITOR pushing a mop. Sticks out like a sore thumb. He's tremendous. Six-foot seven. Olive-skinned.

It's Francis. The guy who backed-up Caldwell the night Sharon was murdered.

Time slows to a crawl. Francis lifts his head, meeting Robert's gaze as he walks by.

Robert turns away, continues walking with Sheila, as they head outside.

One level up, overlooking the lobby, is Conrad Leonard. Expressionless. Observing. Doesn't move. Doesn't react.

Just watching.

INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

In a pair of jeans, Caldwell slips on a Hawaiian shirt. Dabs on after shave. He picks up a black fine-toothed comb and runs it through his hair in the mirror.

He puts the comb down, stares back at his reflection and smiles. A handsome devil and he knows it.

He leaves the room.

The comb sitting on the sink, littered with several strands of Caldwell's hair.

A door closes off screen.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. CHATEAU ROSE - NIGHT

A perfect night at a trendy street cafe overlooking the beach. Palm trees and drinks in coconut shells. Like Jimmy Buffet built this place.

At a table is Lacey and Caroline, colorful mocktails and half-eaten burgers in front of them.

CAROLINE

No, he was like a Summer fling. He went off to college so, hey, easy come, easy go.

LACEY

Doesn't sound easy to me. Sounds hard.

CAROLINE

Well, when you don't allow feelings to get in the way, yeah.

LACEY

That's my problem. Feelings. I can't just shut them off whenever I want.

Caroline sips her drink.

CAROLINE

It's a talent. But I wouldn't worry, if I were you. I'm sure you're gonna meet a lot of people away at college. Find someone more grounded. More worthy of your--

LACEY

Hey. Is that..? Is that Stephen?

CAROLINE

Who?

Caroline turns to look.

LACEY

Don't look! Don't look!

She looks anyway.

Sitting several tables away with a beer is Caldwell.

Caroline tries to hide her face, leans in.

CAROLINE
Oh, how creepy.

LACEY
He looks lonely.

CAROLINE
Oh god, you're not thinking...

She doesn't have to. Caldwell suddenly notices them. He smiles, grabs his beer and heads over.

LACEY
(quietly)
He's coming over.

CAROLINE
No, he's not!

CALDWELL
Evening, ladies.

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, CONRAD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

After hours and everyone gone. Lights are low, barely make out anything except Leonard. Sits at his desk, hands folded under his chin.

Lost in thought. Brooding. He picks up the phone and dials.

EXT. CHATEAU ROSE - NIGHT

Caldwell stands over the girls. He's loose and affable in a Hawaiian shirt.

LACEY
Mr. Caldwell, what are you doing here?

CALDWELL
(points at Lacey)
Stephen. Please. Don't make me tell you again.

LACEY
Okay, Stephen.

CALDWELL
And if you must know, I got stood up.

LACEY

Oh no.

CALDWELL

Oh yes. I met her on this dating sight. She seemed nice, but no call, no show. So far.

LACEY

Well, you're welcome to join us.

Caroline gives Lacey the stink eye.

CALDWELL

Oh, I couldn't. I wouldn't want to ruin your night, too.

LACEY

No, it's perfectly fine.

Caldwell glances to Caroline, who's less than thrilled.

CALDWELL

Oh, I... Are you sure it's okay?

LACEY

Yes, it's fine.

Caldwell finishes his beer.

CALDWELL

(rises)

Looks like I'm a little light. Will you excuse me?

As he heads away, his phone rings. He stops.

CAROLINE

You better get that. Might be that chick who stood you up.

Caldwell smiles, checks his phone, then disappears into the restaurant.

INT. CHATEAU ROSE - NIGHT

People milling about, lively music.

BEGIN INTERCUT: CONRAD LEONARD/CALDWELL

Caldwell answers his phone.

CALDWELL
(into phone)
What do you want?

CONRAD
There was a breach.

CALDWELL
Impossible. I patched that up.

CONRAD
Yeah, well there was obviously a
hole in your net. I did what I
could, but I need you here.

Caldwell sighs. Disturbed.

CALDWELL
I'll come in and have a look
tomorrow.

CONRAD
Now.

CALDWELL
No, not now. I'm busy.

He checks over his shoulder to Lacey and Caroline.

CONRAD
Tomorrow then. We have to talk.

Caldwell ends the call, grits his teeth.

CALDWELL
Shit.

END INTERCUT

EXT. CHATEAU ROSE - NIGHT

Lacey and Caroline's table.

CAROLINE
I can't believe you invited him
over. Now, we're never gonna get
rid of him.

LACEY
Have a little compassion. Guy's
lonely. Just got stood up.

CAROLINE
Yeah, so he says.

Caldwell appears with two strawberry margaritas.

CALDWELL
Drinks, ladies?

He places them down and takes a seat.

CAROLINE
Do those have alcohol?

CALDWELL
Wouldn't be much fun if they
didn't.

Caroline suddenly shifts gears.

Lacey just looks at her drink. Hesitant.

Caldwell raises his beer.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
A toast?

Caroline raises her glass, but not Lacey.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Lacey, you're not gonna toast with
us?

LACEY
I... I don't know. I'm not twenty-
one.

CAROLINE
Oh, a little sip won't hurt.

Caldwell raises his eyebrows.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Monica sits up in bed reading as Robert enters from the
bathroom.

ROBERT
It's after nine.

MONICA
(lowers her book)
Robert, it's nine-o-seven.

ROBERT
Yeah, I know, but--

MONICA
But what? She's with Caroline. They went into town, plenty of people around. You shouldn't worry so much.

ROBERT
Well, I do.

MONICA
Lacey's a smart girl, Robert. Give her some credit. And Caroline? Well... Caroline's Caroline.

Robert slips into bed.

ROBERT
Oh, that makes me feel better.

Monica laughs.

MONICA
Everything'll be fine. You'll see.
(leans over)
Besides, it gives us a little alone time.

She puts her hand on his chest, kisses him.

Robert grins, eases up. He slides his hand along her shoulder, then up to the back of her head and--

ROBERT
Oww! What the hell?

MONICA
What?

Robert pulls a small box cutter from her hair bun.

ROBERT
The hell is this for?

MONICA
(chuckles)
My god, I almost forgot about that.

ROBERT
That's real cute. What's it for?

MONICA

I don't know. An emergency. God forbid, right?

Robert scoffs.

ROBERT

You got an emergency band-aid back there, too?

MONICA

Did you get hurt? Come here.

She leans over. They kiss.

EXT. CHATEAU ROSE - LATER

Caldwell and the girls are laughing like old chums. Two empty margarita glasses on the table.

CAROLINE

I told him to stick it where the sun don't shine!

CALDWELL

Did you?

CAROLINE

Yes!

More laughter.

CALDWELL

Oh, how rude of me. Your drinks are empty.

LACEY

Oh, that's okay. I really think we should be getting home.

CAROLINE

Already?

LACEY

Yeah. It's getting late. And we gotta work tomorrow.

CALDWELL

Lacey's probably right. You don't want to be late to work.

CAROLINE

Killjoy.

SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Caldwell walks side-by-side with the girls.

Lacey's a bit uneasy on her feet, but Caroline is flat out stumbling.

CALDWELL
That's it. You're not driving home.

CAROLINE
Oh, I'm fine.

LACEY
No, you're not.

Caroline plods ahead as Caldwell and Lacey hold and watch.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Caroline, where are you going?

CAROLINE
I'm going to my car, that's where
I'm going.

An oncoming COUPLE from the opposite direction. Caroline awkwardly side-steps them, bumps into a street lamp.

She holds her head.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
(to street lamp)
Excuse me, sir.

Lacey and Caldwell look at each other and laugh.

EXT. CALDWELL'S CAR - NIGHT

The blue sports car, top down, streaks around a sharp curve.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE - LATER

Caldwell helps a woozy Caroline up the walk to her house. In the --

CAR

Lacey sits watching.

Caroline, tired and buzzed, slurs as she talks. Head rolling.

CAROLINE

You're all right, Mister C. You're okay. At first I told Lacey not to be your friend, but she doesn't listen.

CALDWELL

Now, why would you tell her something like that?

Couple drinks in and she's a truth machine. She looks in his eyes.

CAROLINE

(pokes his chest)

Because I think you're a creep. Still do.

CALDWELL

You just said I was all right.

CAROLINE

Nope. You're a bona fide creep.

They reach the top steps to the house, by the front door.

Lacey continues to watch from the car.

CALDWELL

Come on, you're drunk. You better get inside.

CAROLINE

Wait, wait, wait, wait...

CALDWELL

What?

Gets right in his face.

CAROLINE

Stay away from Lacey, creep. Fake hair, fake tan. Getting two underage girls drunk so you can drive them home. Despicable. Freakin des--

SLAP!

He smacks her hard on the side of the face. Hard enough to make her lose her balance.

CAR

Lacey GASPS. Jesus Christ!

BACK TO

Caroline rights herself, mouth agog as Caldwell leans in.

CALDWELL

(snarls)

Listen to me, you little slut. You
best not forget yourself here.

Caldwell steps back, raises his shirt to reveal a shiny black
firearm inside a holster.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

If you speak ill of me again,
you're gonna get what her--
(stops himself - Fuck!)
Let's just say she's not going to
have a best friend anymore.

Caroline is horrified as she eyes Caldwell taking slow
backward steps away from the house.

He puts a finger to his nose.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

Shhh...

Caldwell turns towards the car. Lacey watches tensely as he
approaches, each step measured and confident.

Lacey grips the door handle. About to make a break for it.
Gotta get out of here. Run somewhere. Anywhere. Gotta--

Caldwell hops in, a blast of his aftershave wafts over her.

And she's trembling. Too frightened to move.

Caldwell starts the car, puts it in gear but doesn't drive.
He turns to her, laughs to himself.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

You didn't see that.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, ROBERT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Sheila arranges papers on her desk, slips them in a folder.

She glances up and almost jumps.

Standing over her is Conrad Leonard.

SHEILA

Oh, jeez. Mister Leonard.

Conrad fake smiles.

CONRAD

Where's Robert?

SHEILA

Oh, um... He called out. Said he wasn't feeling well.

CONRAD

He said that?

SHEILA

Ye-aah...

(puts files in a drawer)

I already contacted Spencer. He's gonna pick up Robert's workload today and--

She turns, but Conrad is gone.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Lacey enters slowly. Small hangover, but she'll live. Further in she passes --

Two POLICE OFFICERS and Monica seated at a table. Monica glances up, regards Lacey.

KITCHEN

Lacey comes up on Caroline from behind, puts her hand on her shoulder and when she turns --

Under heavy makeup, barely noticeable, is a discolored bruise near her eye.

LACEY
Caroline! Your face.

CAROLINE
Shh! Don't be so loud. It's
nothing.

LACEY
Caroline, I saw what happened. I--

CAROLINE
You didn't see anything. You hear
me? It's from when I hit my head on
that lamp post.

LACEY
(sarcastic)
Yeah okay. What are we gonna do?

CAROLINE
Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Last
night never happened.

LACEY
But...

CAROLINE
But what? You wanna explain to your
Dad you were drinking? Didn't think
so. Nothing happened. Nothing--

MONICA (O.S.)
Lacey.

Both girls turn to see Monica in the door way.

Monica motions with her finger to follow me.

DINING ROOM, TABLE

The two COPS (40s) sit stone-faced. One of them slides a
photo in front of Lacey.

OFFICER #1
Do you recognize this man?

LACEY
I...

OFFICER #1
His name is Chad Cooper.

Lacey looks at the photo. Her lips slowly part as the
realization hits her.

PHOTO

Clearly Chad. The guy Caldwell murdered.

BACK TO

LACEY

He came in here last week.

Monica turns, eyes wide.

MONICA

He did?

LACEY

(nods)

He was that guy who had the problem with his food. He was rude.

OFFICER #2

Yeah, well he's also dead.

LACEY

What?

OFFICER #1

Apparently he checked in with his sister, Pauline, on the day's itinerary. Told her he was coming here, then going to work, then...

OFFICER #2

Then nothing for two days. Didn't answer his phone, never showed up for work. Sister dropped by and found the body.

MONICA

How did he die?

OFFICER #1

We're not at liberty to disclose that information, Miss Richardson.

MONICA

Jesus.

OFFICER #2

(to Lacey)

Other than being rude, do you remember anything out of the ordinary? Was he acting strange?

LACEY
Strange? No, not really.

OFFICER #2
Did he interact with any of the
other guests?

Lacey turns white as a sheet.

LACEY
No. No, he...

She trails off.

OFFICER #1
He what, Miss Eastman?

Suddenly, Lacey pushes her chair out. As she gets up, she
inadvertantly sends some papers flying. While hunched over,
she sees the name:

PAULINE COOPER -- 37 Jennifer Ln.

Lacey runs to the bathroom.

OFFICER #2
Is she okay?

MONICA
I better go find out.

Monica rushes to the bathroom door and knocks, retching
noises heard from inside.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Lacey? Lacey, are you all right?

BATHROOM

LACEY
I'm okay.

Lacey spits in the sink -- turns on the faucet and rinses --
her reflection in the mirror. If shit getting real has a
face, this is it.

RESTAURANT

Lacey exits as the cops gather their things.

OFFICER #1
We're gonna be on our way.

Monica heads over to them.

MONICA
Are we finished?

OFFICER #2
For now. We'll come back when your
friend is feeling better. Little
too much revelry late at night,
huh?

MONICA
What do you mean?

OFFICER #2
If I didn't know any better, I'd
say she's hung over.

Monica turns to see Lacey by the bathroom door. Head hung
low, just standing there, rocking slowly.

Off Monica--

INT. MONICA'S CAR (DRIVING) - LATER

Monica, stern look on her face.

Lacey, shotgun, head in her hands. Exasperated.

LACEY
Enough already!

MONICA
No, not enough. You're eighteen,
Lacey. What were you thinking?
Wait'll I get my hands on Caroline.

LACEY
It wasn't Caroline's fault.

MONICA
Oh really? Then who's fault was it?
Huh?

LACEY
Don't worry about it.

MONICA
No, I want to know. Who's fault was
it?

LACEY
I said don't worry about it.

MONICA

Tell me.

LACEY

You're not my mother, Monica. Stop pretending you are. It's insulting.

That stung.

Monica knows this is pointless. She turns a corner, and pulls into their driveway.

Robert's car is there.

MONICA

(mutters)

Robert's home.

LACEY

Great.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Robert, twice as upset as Monica. He's losing it, and Lacey has to take it.

ROBERT

Why would you do something like that?! I thought you were better than that!

LACEY

Guess I'm not.

Robert simmers. Rushes to her, grabs her shoulders and shakes.

ROBERT

What is wrong with you?!

He continues shaking until Monica puts her hand on him.

MONICA

Robert...

He brushes her off.

ROBERT

Do you realize you could've been killed?!

Lacey laces her arms underneath, springs up and knocks her father off. He stumbles back, she comes forward and pushes him away.

LACEY
I don't care!

She races upstairs. A door slams. Wow.

Breathing heavy, trying to compose himself. Realizes he just received the full fury of his only daughter and he's stunned.

He hunches down, hands on knees.

ROBERT
Jesus Christ.

MONICA
Robert?

He waves her away. *Gimme a minute.*

When he rises there are tears in his eyes. Looks at Monica.

ROBERT
I feel like I'm losing my mind.

INT. CALDWELL'S CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT

Caldwell takes a bite of a sandwich. Cool as a cucumber as the car door opens and Conrad Leonard steps in.

Conrad looks him over.

CONRAD
I thought you were taking this seriously.

Caldwell looks at him, swallows his sandwich.

CALDWELL
You got something for me?

Leonard reaches into his breast pocket, pulls out a stuffed envelope.

LEONARD
I want all of them.

CALDWELL
No. I told you that already.

LEONARD
Eastman. That was the agreement.

CALDWELL
Nope.

Leonard grabs Caldwell's collar.

LEONARD
You listen to me, you son of a
bitch--

In a flash, Caldwell has a shiny blade pressed to Leonard's
throat.

CALDWELL
That girl lost her mother, now you
want the father? I won't do that.

LEONARD
Need I remind you who she lost her
to?

CALDWELL
I'm glad you mentioned that.
Because if I go down, you're going
with me. Mark my words.

LEONARD
What then?

Caldwell snatches the envelope.

CALDWELL
You'll get everything you want,
except that.

LEONARD
How do you know he won't talk?

He takes the blade away, fingers through the money.

CALDWELL
Once I put the fear of God into
him, he'll wish he was dead.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LACEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lacey on her bed, staring at the picture of her mother in the
locket.

A soft knock at the door.

ROBERT (O.S.)
Can I come in?

LACEY
Yeah.

Robert enters, slowly heads to Lacey's bed and sits.

They regard each other with tears welling in Lacey's eyes.

ROBERT
Lacey, I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. I... I'm just so worried about you. All the time. I'm...

LACEY
Is it because of mom?

Robert nods silently.

ROBERT
Yeah. I guess it is.

LACEY
You know, you never told me how mom died.

This catches Robert off guard. He sighs.

ROBERT
I told you, it was a break in and she was...

LACEY
I know that. But how--? How did she die?

No getting around this anymore.

ROBERT
There were signs of a struggle. A hell of a struggle. Your mom was tough. She had a few bumps and bruises, but that wasn't what killed her.

LACEY
What did?

ROBERT
They still don't know. Maybe thallium.

LACEY

What's that?

ROBERT

It's a type of poison. Almost totally untraceable. Anyway, when the police found her, she was lying in bed. They said it looked like she had just gone to sleep.

Tears are streaming down Lacey's face. She wipes them, gets up and embraces her father.

He holds her tight, kisses her cheek.

LACEY

I'm sorry, Daddy.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, too, sweetheart. I'm sorry, too.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DEAD OF NIGHT

Rows of darkened houses. Trees sway lazily, crickets chirp.

INT. HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

A light is seen from underneath a bedroom door. Out steps a WOMAN, who shuffles slowly to another room.

BATHROOM

It's Sheila. She turns on the water, dips her hands and brings them to her face. She takes a sip straight from the faucet, shuts it and towels off.

She exhales deeply. Holds a moment in front of the closed shower curtain.

The curtain suddenly ripples.

She reaches for it, hesitates. Wide awake now.

Slowly reaches for the curtain's edge. Closer--

She pulls it back! The window is open.

She almost laughs -- nerves getting the better of her -- she turns to leave the room and--

Caldwell stuffs a rag in her mouth!

LIVING ROOM

Couch. TV. The usual.

Thumps are heard off screen. A light goes on.

Arranged on the coffee table on black felt are needles and vials of clear fluid.

Caldwell lifts Sheila's limp body and places it on the sofa -- catches his breath -- cracks his knuckles.

Time to work.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

INT. LACEY'S CAR (DRIVING) - MORNING

It's early, yet Lacey is wide awake. She turns the wheel, cranes her neck.

The open locket dangles from her neck.

She cuts the wheel again. On a mission.

EXT. HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - DAY

Lacey knocks. Waits. Tries again.

A sedan pulls in the driveway. Lacey turns to see --

PAULINE COOPER (46) stepping out. She's wearing a black dress and doesn't appear in the mood for anyone.

PAULINE

I don't want any of what you're selling.

LACEY

Um, I'm sorry. I'm not selling anything.

PAULINE

Raising money for your Girl Scout Troop? Look, please...

Pauline brushes past Lacey, puts a key in the door.

LACEY

I wanted to talk to you about your brother, Chad.

The key freezes in the lock. On Pauline as she processes.

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pauline sets a cup of coffee on a table for Lacey.

PAULINE

I'm sorry I was so rude before. I just got back from the funeral.

LACEY

I'm sorry.

She sits across from Lacey.

PAULINE

It's okay. Wasn't well attended, sorry to say. Chad wasn't the best at making friends. Based on what you've told me, I'm sure you've witnessed that first hand.

LACEY

Everyone's entitled to a bad day.

PAULINE

(scoffs)

He had a bad thirty-seven years. So, what did you want to talk about?

Lacey sips her coffee.

LACEY

When the police came to see me the other day, they didn't say how he died.

PAULINE

And?

LACEY

And... I wanted to know how he died.

PAULINE

Why in the world would you want to know that?

LACEY

I don't know really. Just curiosity, I guess.

Pauline sips, puts her cup down.

PAULINE

Now why don't I believe that?
(points at Lacey's locket)
Who is that?

LACEY

Oh, that's my... was my mom.

PAULINE

I'm sorry. How did she pass?

Lacey looks away.

LACEY
She was murdered.

Lacey looks up, they lock eyes.

PAULINE
I'm so sorry. You know, there's
horror stories of people finding
loved one's dead. Bad odor.
Decomposition. Some pretty awful
stuff people have to go through.
When I found Chad it was nothing
like that.

LACEY
What was it like?

PAULINE
It was like he'd just... laid down
and went to sleep.

There it is.

Off Lacey as this sinks in.

Pauline can see her guest is unnerved.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
You're thinking something. What is
it?

Lacey swallows hard.

LACEY
Thanks for the coffee.

EXT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, PARKING LOT - DAY

Early yet. Lawn sprinklers rise from the grass like soldiers
ready for battle.

A car pulls into the lot.

INT. ROBERT'S CAR (DRIVING)

Robert pulls near his usual space, an uneasy look on his
face.

A sign: RESERVED - ROBERT EASTMAN.

Another: RESERVED - SHEILA JONES.

But, it's empty.

Robert studies this the empty spot. Checks his briefcase sitting on the floor, then up to the super structure that's been his livelihood.

He pulls out his phone. CALLING SHEILA. The phone rings and rings. Goes to voice mail.

He ends the call.

The decision weighs on him, but it must be made now. His hands white-knuckle the steering wheel. A low groan.

He pulls away.

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - DAY

Monica dices celery on a cutting board. A TING is heard as someone enters. Monica looks up and --

MONICA

Dammit!

She cut her forefinger with the knife.

She peers through the opening into the dining room to see Caroline has arrived. Grabs a paper towel and covers her finger.

Caroline enters, brushes past Monica and hangs her back pack.

MONICA (CONT'D)

We need to talk.

Caroline keeps her distance as Monica closes in. She finally notices the bruise over her eye.

CAROLINE

What is it?

MONICA

How'd you get that bruise?

Caroline instinctively touches it.

CAROLINE

I walked into a street lamp.

Two scratch marks run through the discolorization.

MONICA

Looks more like someone hit you.

CAROLINE
No one hit me.

Monica gets closer. In her bubble close.

MONICA
Where did you and Lacey go the
other night?

CAROLINE
Nowhere special. I...

Caroline looks away.

MONICA
I'm not-- Hey! Look at me. I'm not
stupid. You guys were drinking,
weren't you?

CAROLINE
No, we weren't--

MONICA
No, no. You were. I know you were.
So, walk me through it, Caroline.
You guys went out. Where'd you go?

She's caught and knows it.

CAROLINE
We went to the cafe and sat
outside.

MONICA
How'd you get drinks? You got a
fake ID?

CAROLINE
(shakes her head)
No.

MONICA
Then how'd you get--?
(it comes to her)
Who bought you drinks?

INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - DAY (OVERLAP)

The sound of barbells clanking.

Caldwell doing bench presses -- heavy puffs of breath --
sweat on his forehead -- neck veins like they're gonna burst.

CAROLINE (V.O.)
 (softly)
 No one.

MONICA (V.O.)
 No, not no one. Someone bought you
 drinks that night.

Moments later, Caldwell in the bathroom, shaving his chiseled
 face with a straight razor, then...

In his bedroom, slipping on a shirt.

MONICA (V.O.)
 Caroline! Answer me! Who bought you
 drinks?

Caldwell, menacing, heading towards us. Right at us.

CAROLINE (V.O.)
 It was him.

BACK TO MONICA'S RESTAURANT

MONICA
 Who him?

CAROLINE
 I don't know. That guy. That guy
 who always comes in here. The
 regular.

A beat of silence as Monica lets this register.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
 Do you want a bandage?

MONICA
 Huh?

CAROLINE
 (points to her hand)
 You're bleeding through.

INT. ROBERT'S CAR (DRIVING) - AFTERNOON

Robert pulls into the driveway of his house, phone to his
 ear. A recording --

*The party you are trying to reach is not available. At the
 tone...*

ROBERT
 (into phone)
 Monica, we gotta talk when you get home. I didn't go into work today. Sheila's not answering her phone. I'm not going back there. This is-- It's just too much. We gotta talk.

He parks, clicks off the call and exits the car.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Robert enters, wipes his feet. Looks around.

ROBERT
 (calls out)
 Lacey?

No answer.

He walks the house, poking his head in rooms. Heads upstairs.

BEDROOM

He pushes the door open slowly. A curtain flutters in the breeze, then --

The closet door is open. A couple papers on the floor.

This is odd.

Robert closes the door.

Francis's reflection is revealed in the mirror across the room!

ROBERT (CONT'D)
 Hey--!

WHACK!

Francis brains Robert with a retractable night stick. Robert collapses. Unconscious.

Francis, stone-faced, smirks over Robert's body. Groans.

He goes to the closet, collects the papers on the floor and places them inside the closet. He emerges with a thick folder, fingers through it.

This is it.

Francis pulls out a Sharpie, pops the cap off between his teeth.

HALLWAY

Moments later, Francis casually exits the bedroom and heads down the stairs.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER

On the entrance to the kitchen as Monica appears.

MONICA

Robert, I gotta talk to you-- Jesus Christ, what happened?

Robert sits at a table, holding an ice pack on his head.

ROBERT

There was a break in.

Monica rushes to his side, inspects a discolored lump on his temple.

MONICA

A what?! Are you all right? We should get you to a hospital.

ROBERT

It's just a scratch. Believe me, I've had worse.

MONICA

Robert, who did this?

Robert looks around. Confused.

ROBERT

I don't know. I didn't get a good look at him. All I remember is waking up on the floor.

Monica SIGHS. Just relieved he's okay.

MONICA

I still say we should take you to a hospital. Have them check you out, at least.

Robert waves her off.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Did they take anything?

Robert freezes. Locks eyes with her. *Good question.*

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Robert shuffling through a shelf in the closet, Monica behind him in case he falls.

ROBERT

It's gone.

MONICA

What? What's gone?

Robert turns, mouth hanging open.

ROBERT

The copies. The ones I made from work. They're gone. The flash drive, too.

(sighs)

Oh, my god.

Robert turns to face Monica. She goes to say something, but catches her tongue as she looks at Robert's bare chest, just below an undone button.

MONICA

What is that?

ROBERT

What?

She leans in and undoes a button, then another until his shirt is wide open.

She puts her hand to her mouth. GASPS.

MONICA

Robert--

Scribbled on Robert's chest, almost the way a child would write, in bold black marker:

Call the police and I'll kill you... All of you.

END OF ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

INT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Empty. Furniture. Cupboards. Computers and screens. It's all gone except --

Two PLANE TICKETS resting on the counter. A hand scoops them away.

EXT. CALDWELL'S APARTMENT, PARKING LOT - SAME

Caldwell pops the trunk of his car where a large duct-taped box rests. He throws two more boxes in and shuts it.

EXT. MCEVOY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Modest building. Lovingly kept, but seen better days for sure.

JIM MCEVOY (64) ambles slowly through a hall in a suit he pressed himself. He enters the --

WAITING ROOM

To find a man pouring over family pictures on the wall.

MCEVOY
Mister Berman?

The man turns. Bearded. Glasses. Looks nothing like Caldwell.
But it is. He smiles.

MCEVOY (CONT'D)
How can I help you today?

OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

McEvoy and Caldwell across from each other at a desk.

MCEVOY (CONT'D)
Family owned and operated since seventy-four. Always thought the kids would take over, but here we are. So, who is the deceased?

CALDWELL
Oh, it's nothing like that.

Mcevoy raises an eyebrow.

MCEVOY

Oh? Then how can I help you?

Caldwell reaches into his coat pocket, removes a stack of hundreds and places it on the desk.

CALDWELL

How much to use your incinerator?

INT. LACEY'S CAR (DRIVING) - LATE AFTERNOON

Darkness is close.

Lacey stops at a red light, mind racing. She checks the rearview to notice a late model tan car behind her. Thinks nothing of it, but --

The light turns green, she makes a left and the car remains behind her.

Changes lanes. The tan car follows.

Lacey spots this, and it has her attention as she's now on a road that quickly turns barren. Nothing but trees and fields.

She speeds up. An audible RUMBLE as the tan car closes in.

LACEY

Shit.

She white-knuckles the wheel, hits the gas like a lead weight. Her car can only go so fast.

He's right on her tail.

She swerves left, over corrects and careens towards a wooden fence. Plows into it! BOOM! She jerks back, then forward, striking her head on the wheel.

OUTSIDE

Smoke hisses from the engine. Lacey's door opens slowly and she stumbles out, drops to her knees and crawls to the other side.

It's quiet. Like, way too quiet.

Breathing heavy on the ground, Lacey lifts her head to see if that tan car is there.

It is. Of course. Idling on the road about fifty feet away.

She looks all around. More in shock than hurt. Suddenly, a large shadow looms over her.

Standing before her, back against the sun, is Francis. He's massive. Imposing.

Lacey, eyes wide. Heavy breaths. Finally loses it.

LACEY

Who are you!? What do you want?!

He says nothing. Just stands there.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Huh!

(screams)

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

FRANCIS

You're in danger.

She stares at his large, darkened frame.

LACEY

Who?

FRANCIS

Caldwell.

He stares into her eyes a long while.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I wanted to warn you. I'm sorry.

Lacey does a double-take. Confused.

LACEY

You're sorry?

She rises, heads to him. Close enough to get a good look at his intense, somber face.

LACEY (CONT'D)

What are you sorry for--?

But then it hits her. Hits her like a ton of bricks.

LACEY (CONT'D)

You know who killed my mother.
Don't you? Don't you?

A tear rolls down her cheek.

He turns away, heads slowly back to his car. She follows him, winds up and slaps his back. Slaps him again. The frustration of the last four years boiling to the surface.

LACEY (CONT'D)
You tell me! Tell me!

He lets her hit him. Her slaps nothing but a minor annoyance.

She goes to hit him again, but he turns and grabs her hand mid-swing, and gently lowers it.

FRANCIS
Be careful.

He gets in his car and pulls away.

Off Lacey's conflicted face.

She SCREAMS. Lets it all out.

She runs to her car, gets in and takes off.

In the dust, we see her CELL PHONE on the ground with the message screen flashing... DAD CALLING.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Robert, pacing. Phone in hand. Ends the call.

ROBERT
Dammit.

MONICA
No answer?

ROBERT
No. Look, go upstairs and pack a few things. We're not staying here tonight.

MONICA
We're not?

ROBERT
No. I'm gonna run out to the car, grab my bag.

MONICA
Maybe call the cops, too.

ROBERT
Good idea.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Robert behind his car, rummaging in the back. He grabs a large gym bag and shuts the hatch. Fishes for his phone.

From out of the darkness, Caldwell quietly approaches from behind.

Casually douses a rag from a white bottle.

Robert punches in keys on the phone. 9-1--

Caldwell shoves the rag over his face. Robert bats his hands wildly, drops the phone. A moment and it's done as he goes limp and collapses.

Caldwell stretches a length of duct tape, places it over Robert's mouth. He binds his hands behind his back. His feet.

Grabs Robert under the arms and drags him to the house.

ROBERT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Monica selects shirts from a drawer, stuffs them into an overnight bag on the bed. Harried. No time to think.

Going through another drawer. Footsteps behind her.

MONICA

Did you get in touch with Lacey?

CALDWELL (O.S.)

No, he didn't.

Monica spins as Caldwell pounces, tries to shove the rag in her mouth.

Her eyes wide, she pushes her forearm into his throat. Knocks him back.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

Bitch!

She scrambles toward the door. Caldwell reaches and grabs her leg, pulls her back.

She swats at him. Three bloody scratch marks appear on Caldwell's face.

Monica is pure adrenaline. She falls back from the swing, but quickly rises.

Breathing heavy, Caldwell touches his face and gazes at the blood on his fingertips.

They stare at each other.

MONICA
(growls)
Leave my family alone.

CALDWELL
They're not your family. You're a square peg trying to fit into a round hole.

MONICA
I'll kill you if you hurt them.

Caldwell motions her to come.

CALDWELL
And a bang up job you're doing of that so far. Go ahead. Give me some death.

Monica screams and charges.

Caldwell flips open a baton and smashes her in the back of the head. She drops like a lead weight.

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Caldwell puts the finishing touches of a duct tape job on Monica. She's barely awake and groaning, tied securely in a chair next to an unconscious Robert.

He grabs her face.

CALDWELL
You listen to me. Lacey deserves so much more than this. She needs to be protected, and you and this guy are clearly not capable.

Monica moans, utters something unintelligible as Caldwell grabs a fistful of her hair.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Please, don't speak. It's annoying. It'll all be over soon. Don't make me do something you'll regret.

He lets go, her head droops.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

INT. LACEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Lacey pulls into the driveway behind Robert's car. She kills the ignition, then looks around. Checks her pockets. Something's missing.

LACEY

The hell is my phone?

Another moment of searching and she gives up, opens the door and steps out.

The low rumble of thunder in the distance.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Caldwell stands over Monica when he hears a noise. A car door shutting. He whips his head around and holds.

Turns back to Monica.

CALDWELL

Sleep well.

He checks his watch, slowly exits the room.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lacey stands next to her car, looks around cautiously. This feels off.

She runs her hand along the back of Robert's car.

LACEY

Dad? Monica?

There's no answer. It's so quiet.

She heads to the house. A TWIG SNAPS. She whirls around to see, but nothing's there. Then --

A glow from under Robert's car.

She goes back, gets on hands and knees and reaches under. The glow fades. Searching blindly.

Got it. It's her Dad's phone. She studies it, trying to compute why it's out here.

An ALARM sounds!

Lacey shrieks, nearly jumps out of her skin.

PHONE READS: *Alarm - take out trash.*

Lacey exhales deeply, slowly stands. She pockets the phone and heads for the front door.

Pulls out her keys, twists them in the lock and opens the door.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She steps in, makes her way past the foyer and into the --

DINING ROOM

She sees a figure by the dining room table, his back to her.

LACEY

Dad, I found your--

The figure turns.

Lacey GASPS.

Caldwell.

CALDWELL

I made you some dinner. Have a seat.

Lacey stands there. Frozen. Heart in her throat, unable to utter a word.

Caldwell stares at her as his fingers dance along a black AUTOMATIC on the table.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

END ACT EIGHT

ACT NINE

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lacey standing in the doorway to the dining room. Slightly turns her head back. It's a quick bolt outside, but Caldwell's hand is on that gun.

She inches forward, taking deeps breaths. Trying to regulate her fear.

CALDWELL

That's better.

LACEY

Where's my father?

CALDWELL

He's fine. Trust me. I wouldn't leave you without both your parents. They wanted me to, but I made it very clear I wouldn't do that. It's just not--

LACEY

You killed my mother. It was you.

CALDWELL

It wasn't ethical. I wouldn't do that to you. I hope you like salad.

He tosses the salad, puts some on her plate.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

We need to hurry. We're short on time.

Lacey spies two plane tickets on the table.

LACEY

What are those?

CALDWELL

Plane tickets.

LACEY

I'm not getting on a plane with you.

Caldwell slides a finger along the barrel of his gun.

CALDWELL
I'm not asking.

Lacey, trying hard to calm her nerves as --

IN THE BEDROOM

Monica, eyes wild, struggles frantically to get loose, but the binds are too tight.

Robert is tied next to her, head drooped. Out cold.

She stops struggling. Thinks. Then --

Starts to shake her head violently. Back. Forward, then back again -- CLINK!

The box cutter falls to the floor.

She rocks side-to-side in her chair until -- THUD! -- she topples over.

DINING ROOM

Caldwell lifts his head. Heard that.

Lacey looks up.

Just then, a sheet of rain pelts the window and a loud thunder clap.

CALDWELL
We gotta hurry. Now, listen to me and listen good. We're gonna go to the airport and we are going to get on that plane together. You are not to make eye contact with anyone, or give yourself away in any way, shape or form. Do you understand?

LACEY
And if I do?

He stares at her long and hard.

CALDWELL
I pick up the phone and I make a call.

LACEY
And then what?

CALDWELL
And then you're an orphan.

Her jaw goes slack. She inhales deeply.

LACEY
I thought you cared about me.

CALDWELL
I do care about you, Lacey. That's
why I'm doing this.

LACEY
Kidnapping me?

Caldwell wipes his face with a napkin.

CALDWELL
Let's go.

IN THE BEDROOM

Monica's fingers desperately reaching for the cutter.
Reaching, reaching... Got it!

She slices at the rope, literally crying. Taking forever. But
the adrenaline is kicking back in.

She breaks free! She slices the binds around her feet,
scrambles to Robert and cuts him loose.

He's still out. No time, though. Gotta think fast.

She rushes to the closet, opens it and pulls out the baseball
bat. Grips it when --

The lights flicker and go out. Thunder CRACKS!

LIVING ROOM

Caldwell and Lacey, suddenly in darkness.

CALDWELL
What the--

Lightening flashes. Illuminates the room. Caldwell's suddenly
nervous face.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)
Lacey?!

She's gone.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

(roars)

LACEY!

Darkness again. Another quick flash of lightning.

A rustling from somewhere.

Something falls in the kitchen.

Caldwell turns that way, starts, when --

Footsteps behind him. He turns. DUCKS as a baseball bat WHOOSHES and misses his head by an inch.

MONICA

You bastard!

She goes to swing again. Caldwell grabs the bat. They're both grappling for it. He thrusts it forward, catches her square in the jaw.

Monica stumbles backwards, crashes onto the coffee table.

He drops the bat, rushes over and straddles her. Brings his fist down once. Twice.

Breathing heavy. Manic. Sweat dripping.

CALDWELL

You made a very bad decision,
Monica.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a case. Opens it. Pulls out a filled syringe. Ready to go.

More lightning. Intermittent. Caldwell growls.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

I was hoping I wouldn't have to do
this--

Monica groans. Barely conscious.

THUD THUD THUD! From behind, the baseball bat catches Caldwell on the neck, knocks him off Monica.

The syringe rolls across the floor.

Behind him is Robert, gripping the bat like Shohei. He snarls.

ROBERT

Come on. Come on!

Caldwell gets to one knee. Waves like he's giving up.

CALDWELL

Okay... okay.

Caldwell whips around, cuts Robert's legs out from under him. He crashes onto the floor.

Caldwell snatches the bat -- presses it against Robert's throat -- pushing down hard.

If he doesn't choke him he's gonna snap his neck!

Robert flails his arms wildly. Grasping for Caldwell's face. Strength waning. Fading fast--

THWUMP!

Everything stops. Silence.

Caldwell's grasps at his throat, his fingers finding the syringe stuck in his neck.

He turns, eyes wide. Can't believe what he's seeing.

It's Lacey. Tears streaming down her face.

She steps back.

Robert, coming to, scrambles to Monica. She gets to one knee, and they join Lacey.

Caldwell manages to stand, but he quickly loses his balance. He trips over the table, rises to one knee and locks eyes with Lacey.

CALDWELL (CONT'D)

How could you? All I wanted to do
was keep you safe...

Robert grabs his daughter, holds her close.

Caldwell gurgles. Thallium doing it's work. Quickly. He gags, spittle flying from his lips, clawing at his throat.

Caldwell falls back, strikes his head on the corner of a table and crashes to the floor.

Robert puts his arms around Lacey and Monica. They're all watching. Witnesses.

Caldwell breathes his last. And dies.

ROBERT
 (to both of them)
 You guys okay?

MONICA
 Yeah, I think so. Lacey?

She just nods. It's a bit too much for words.

Robert eyes Caldwell's corpse, splayed on the floor. A pool of blood gathering by his head.

ROBERT
 Not quite like he just went to sleep.

On Lacey's eyes, where fear is suddenly overtaken by anger. Unable to look away..

LACEY
 Good.

A slow FADE OUT into...

INT. DUSKEY & LEONARD, CONRAD'S OFFICE

Conrad at his desk, stone-faced. A thick sheen of sweat on his brow, he nervously clasps his hands.

A knock on the door.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
 Mr. Conrad Leonard?

Leonard begins to shake uncontrollably, spittle flying from his lips.

DETECTIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (to someone)
 You got the keys?

The sound of a key sliding into the door. It opens. A DETECTIVE (40s), suit and tie, approaches with two OFFICERS.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Conrad Leonard?

Leonard sobs.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Mr. Leonard, you have the right to remain silent.
 (MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Anything you say can and will be
used against you in a court of law.
(as he's being cuffed)
You have the right to an attorney.
If you cannot afford an attorney,
one will be provided for you...

The Detective continues as Leonard is led out, his legs betraying him as he goes.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Leonard passes by Francis, the burly janitor, also in cuffs. They silently regard one another.

Together, they do their perp walk past a bevy of onlookers gawking.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Well maintained and peaceful.

Lacey stands next to Robert, his arm around her shoulder in front of SHARON EASTMAN'S HEADSTONE.

Further away stands Monica, leaning against the car. Arms folded and watching on.

Lacey kisses the palm of her hand, and gently places it atop her Mother's marker.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Shedding coats, they've all just gotten in.

MONICA

Lacey, would you like something to eat? I could whip something up.

LACEY

That'd be nice. Thanks.

MONICA

Sure.

Monica heads into the other room.

Lacey meanders to the picture window and stares out at the tranquil lake.

Robert places his car keys on a hook, sides next to his daughter.

ROBERT
I still can't believe you're
leaving in a week?

LACEY
Six days.

Robert smiles, shakes his head.

ROBERT
Practically a woman.

LACEY
(turns)
Dad, please.

ROBERT
I'm sorry, honey. It's just... I'm
so proud of you. You've come so far
and--

LACEY
We've come so far, Dad.

ROBERT
Undestood. I'm sure going to miss
you, though.

Lacey exhales deeply.

LACEY
Dad, I'll be back for all the
holidays and stuff. Turnbull isn't
that far away.

ROBERT
Yeah, I know, but...

LACEY
I'll be okay, Dad. Promise.

ROBERT
I know you will.

They embrace tightly. He kisses her forehead, heads away.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go see if Monica needs
any help.

He turns back to see her continuing to gaze out the window.

LACEY

I kinda wish I had a little more
time to enjoy this view.

ROBERT

It is pretty, isn't it?

LACEY

Yes, it is. Everything's going by
so quick.

And on Lacey, her back turned. Her long hair flowing. Her
posture giving off a hint of defiance.

ROBERT

You know your mother used to say
that all the time.

LACEY

Did she?

ROBERT

Yes.

She turns to face him. Their eyes meet -- the held gaze only
a father and daughter can share.

She turns away, the hint of a smile crossing her lips.

THE END