

TELL THE DEVIL

written by

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**EXT. REMOTE DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET**

An unwashed early-90s Toyota Camry sails down an empty two-lane highway stretching across a slice of Arizona landscape with the sun low on the horizon. "I Want It That Way" by the Backstreet Boys plays softly on the radio.

SUPER: "Arizona, 1999"

**INT. NINA'S CAMRY - SUNSET**

The driver is NINA REDDY (early 20s, Indian-American). Her face glows in the warm sunlight. The windows are down and her long black hair blows in the wind. On the seat next to her is a road atlas, a notebook, and some old fast-food wrappers.

Her gaze shifts slightly and she squints as she notices a gas station on the side of the road.

**EXT. GAS STATION - SUNSET**

The old gas station and convenience store has neon signs and sun-faded posters in the windows.

A lifted 1980s Ford F-150 is stopped at the pump. A chubby bearded guy in overalls, TODD, holds the gas nozzle. His skinny friend in a plaid shirt, FREDDY, sits in the truck.

Nina pulls into the parking lot and parks the Camry near the front door of the store. She turns off the engine, cutting the Backstreet Boys mid-chorus.

Todd and Freddy eyeball her as she gets out of the car.

TODD  
You lost, sweetheart?

Nina doesn't look at him. She walks toward the store.

**INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

The door chimes jingle as Nina enters the store. "Goodbye Earl" by the Dixie Chicks plays in the background.

The CASHIER perks up when he sees a good-looking girl about his own age.

CASHIER  
Can I, uh, help you with anything?

NINA  
Bathroom?

CASHIER

Oh, uh...

He reaches under the counter and pulls out a rubber ducky with a key tied to it on a string.

CASHIER

It's out on the side of the building. Usually you have to buy something first, but... go ahead.

She gives him a polite smile.

NINA

Thanks. I'll bring it back.

**INT. PICKUP TRUCK - SUNSET**

Todd climbs into the lifted truck. Freddy cracks his knuckles. Their eyes are locked on the store's door, waiting for Nina to emerge.

TODD

Freddy, how you feel about a little catch and release?

FREDDY

She's even cuter than the last one.

Todd pulls his keys out.

TODD

Time to feel alive.

**EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Nina exits the store and walks alongside the building.

At the gas pump, the lifted truck growls to life. She's aware of them but avoids looking their direction.

She rounds a corner and finds the bathrooms, quickly unlocks the door to the women's bathroom and steps inside.

**INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

She sets the key on the sink and uses the toilet.

The truck's growl gets louder outside. Tires crunch on the gravel right outside the bathroom door. The engine idles.

She finishes, flushes, and pulls her jeans up.

She removes the heavy toilet tank lid and leans it against the wall by the door.

She digs into the flush mechanism and pulls out the toilet handle attached to a metal rod.

She takes a deep breath and exhales slowly, calming herself.

She opens the door. Outside, the truck is idling.

Todd and Freddy lunge for her from each side of the door.

Nina brutally shoves the metal rod into Todd's throat. His eyes bulge and his hands go to his throat, where a toilet handle is now lodged firmly.

Both men stumble backwards, Freddy watching in horror as Todd gurgles and tries to scream.

Then Freddy turns back toward Nina and sees her swinging the toilet tank lid into the side of his head. There's a wet crack and he drops like a brick.

Todd falls to his knees, then flops to the ground, clutching his throat and writhing in wide-eyed agony.

Nina checks the cab of the truck and finds a coiled rope behind the seat.

Working quickly, she ties one end around Freddy's neck, loops the rope through the trailer hitch, and fashions a rough noose around Todd's neck, who flails and makes desperate sounds but can't fight her off.

She walks around to the driver's side, shifts the truck into drive, and wedges the toilet tank lid onto the accelerator. The engine roars. She releases the parking brake and jumps clear.

The truck leaps forward, yanking both men behind it. It bounces over the curb and charges into the desert, dragging them in a cloud of dust. The noise fades. The dust settles. It almost looks like nothing ever happened.

Nina returns to the bathroom to wash her hands and grab the key, then walks back around the building to the store.

#### **INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

The door jingles as Nina enters the store again.

She walks up to the counter and places the rubber ducky and key down. She grabs a pack of gum and pulls some cash out of her pocket.

NINA  
How far to Harmony from here?

He rings her up and takes the cash.

CASHIER  
Ohhh, thirty, forty minutes,  
depending how you drive. What're  
you heading there for?

He hands her the change.

NINA  
Used to live there. Just going to  
visit.

CASHIER  
Well, all right then. You have a  
safe trip. Stop by again on your  
way back, if you want.

She nods her thanks, then leaves. It's getting dark outside. She gets back into the Camry, backs out of where she'd parked, and steers it back onto the highway.

TITLE:

TELL THE DEVIL

**INT. STARLITE ARCADE - DAY**

The arcade pulses with the noise and colors of teens having a great time eating pizza and playing video games.

ELI FREEMAN sits in a "Cruis'n USA" racing game, hands on the steering wheel, eyes on the screen.

In the seat next to him is a younger Nina Reddy, the very picture of an innocent mid-90s teenager.

Their good friend RAY COBBINS hovers behind them, leaning in, hands on the back of Eli's seat, eyes locked on the screen.

A moment later, Ray turns his head and sees RICKY, a swaggering street gangster about their age, approaching them.

RICKY  
Hey. My turn.

Nina glances over at him and frowns.

ELI  
We're almost done, dude.

RICKY

Maybe you didn't hear me, bitch.  
You don't disobey a Pit Lord.

ELI

Ricky, we're almost done. It's like  
thirty seconds.

Ricky raises his eyebrows, like Oh, no you didn't.

RAY

(trying to lighten mood)  
Dude, you drive a Supra! You don't  
need this. You got the real thing!

RICKY

(to Eli)  
Yo, the class clown speaking for  
you now?

Ray frowns, hurt by that.

Eli wrestles with the agony of quitting mid-game, then sighs  
and puts his hands up. His on-screen game car wrecks.

Eli climbs out of the game seat as Ricky gets in his face,  
chest out, asserting his dominance. Eli ignores it.

ELI

All yours, dude. Enjoy.

Nina glares at Ricky, then leaves her game as well.

RICKY

I didn't say you had to go, Nina.

NINA

Nah, I'm good.

RICKY

Come on, I wanna play you.

NINA

I just felt sick all of a sudden.  
Weirdest thing.

Ricky gives a your loss shrug and slides into the seat Eli  
vacated.

RICKY

(to Nina)  
I heard your parents are late  
paying back their loan.

NINA

Tell your boss it's coming.

Ricky looks her up and down.

RICKY

Hope so. Shame if something happened to you.

Eli's about to say something, but Nina gives him a not worth it head shake and they walk off together.

RAY

You should use some of those boxing moves on him.

ELI

I'd rather not get jumped.

**EXT. ARCADE - DAY**

Later, Eli, Nina, and Ray leave the arcade, laughing. They turn and head down the Main Street sidewalk.

They pass an alley where several PIT LORD GANGSTERS, including Ricky, are smoking joints.

The three try to ignore them, but Ricky reaches out and grabs Nina's butt as she passes. She jumps and the others laugh.

Eli charges Ricky and shoves him back, knocking him against the wall.

Immediately, the other gangsters spread out to surround Eli as Ray and Nina step back out of the way.

LANKY GANGSTER

Yo, he really just do that?

YOUNG GANGSTER

Can't touch a Pit Lord, man.

Eli quickly accepts the situation and puts his hands out to the side in a Let's not do this gesture.

ELI

Hey, it was just reflex. I'm sorry.

Ricky collects himself and acts like he barely noticed.

He approaches Eli slowly, then surprises him with a headbutt to the face. Eli goes down.

RICKY  
Nice reflexes, bitch!

Ray and Nina push through the laughing gangsters to help catch him as he crumples to the ground.

NINA  
(whispering)  
Come on, let's go.

RICKY  
Woo! That felt good. I liked that.  
Let's go again, tough guy. Come on.

Blood streams from Eli's nose. He checks it with his fingers, wipes them on his jeans, and struggles to his feet.

ELI  
I said I'm sorry.

Ricky lunges. Eli instinctively tucks his chin and puts his fists up.

Ricky throws a wild haymaker but Eli ducks it and drives a hard punch into Ricky's side, right under the ribs.

Ricky's face contorts as he falls to his knees, gasping.

Everyone stands motionless for a moment, trying to figure out what happens next. Then Eli, Nina, and Ray take off running.

The gang hesitates. Give chase or help their homie?

RICKY  
What are you doing? Go! Go!

They snap out of it and finally take off after the three.

**EXT. STREETS OF HARMONY - CONTINUOUS**

The three charge down side streets but the gang keeps pace.

They come around a corner. Eli points to a door where an elderly SHOPKEEPER has emerged to take out the trash.

Ray and Nina scurry into the door, closing it behind them. The shopkeeper tries to follow them, but it's locked.

SHOPKEEPER  
I just mopped in there!

Eli waits for the gangsters to come around the corner and see him, then takes off in a different direction, drawing the chase away from his friends.

He cuts through alleys and side streets until he reaches a dark pedestrian tunnel under a bridge. He sprints into the darkness and the tunnel swallows him.

END FLASHBACK.

**EXT. STREETS OF HARMONY - NIGHT**

...and 4 years later (1999), he bursts from the same tunnel in a cop uniform, looking older, stronger, more confident.

He's sprinting after TONY, a chubby gang member clutching a grocery sack full of watches. Tony doesn't look like a runner, but adrenaline's a hell of a drug.

Eli chases Tony through traffic, over fences, and straight through somebody's living room before finally tackling him on a side street and cuffing him.

ELI  
(panting)  
You can't run from your problems,  
Tony. They always catch up.

**EXT. HARMONY POLICE STATION - NIGHT**

Harmony's cop shop is a humble brick building cast in the blue glow of a nearby neon sign. The windows reveal dim interior lighting for the night shift.

A Ford Crown Victoria patrol car pulls up. Eli steps out, holding the bag of watches. He opens the back door and pulls Tony out in cuffs.

**INT. HARMONY POLICE STATION - NIGHT**

Eli sits behind his cubicle desk with a typewriter. He opens a drawer and pulls a blank arrest form from a thick stack of identical forms. He stares at it for a moment, then starts typing.

In front of him, Tony sits handcuffed, looking idly around the office. Eli grabs a can of soda from his desk and slides it across to Tony without looking up. Tony glances at it, surprised, then takes it.

TONY  
How long's this gonna take?

ELI  
 (distracted)  
 Judge is on vacation, so you'll be  
 here until Monday at least.

TONY  
 Nah, man. I ain't doin' that.

RODNEY SIMMONS approaches. He's older, business casual, pager  
 on his belt, .357 on his hip.

RODNEY  
 Hey, Freeman, I'm heading home.  
 (nodding toward Tony)  
 What'd he do this time?

Eli nudges open the bag of watches.

ELI  
 Emptied the watch case at Walt's.

RODNEY  
 Eh, let him go. Just give the  
 watches back to Walt.

Tony smirks at Eli, who looks up at Rodney.

ELI  
 You're kidding.

RODNEY  
 No harm, no foul, right?

ELI  
 Chief, I'm not letting him go.

Rodney motions for Eli to follow him, and they step away. Eli  
 positions himself to keep an eye on Tony.

RODNEY  
 I know you love being a cop but you  
 gotta relax, kid.

ELI  
 I caught him with the watches.

RODNEY  
 You don't have kids. You know what  
 happens when you punish kids for  
 every little thing? They turn into  
 monsters. Believe me, I know.

ELI  
 He wasn't sneaking a cookie, Chief.  
 It was a jewelry store.

RODNEY

There's more of them than us in  
this town. Pick your battles.

Eli shakes his head.

ELI

He'll be on the cameras. There'll  
be fingerprints everywhere. It's  
open and shut.

RODNEY

Hey, we help the Pit Lords today,  
they help us later. It's how we  
keep the peace around here. That's  
the job. Keep the peace.

ELI

That sack of shit just earned two,  
three years in prison, and we're  
gonna walk him?

RODNEY

Yeah, Freeman, we're gonna walk  
him. Go uncuff him. Drive him home.

ELI

This is wrong.

RODNEY

Welcome to the real world, kid.

**EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Eli pulls up and parks his patrol car, then gets out and opens  
the door for Tony like a reluctant chauffeur.

Tony emerges like a celebrity, earning whoops and cheers from  
gang members hanging out in front of the building. He's got  
fast food bags in his hand and a big drink cup.

TONY

Yo, I made him take me to the drive  
thru on the way here!

His friends laugh, applaud, and mock Eli, who ignores them and  
slinks back into the patrol car.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Eli grips the steering wheel, stares straight ahead, and pulls  
back onto the street.

**EXT. HARMONY TOWN LIMITS - NIGHT**

Nina's car passes a sign reading "Welcome to Harmony / Historic Mining Town / Population: 3,267"

She passes old stores, mechanic shops, junkyards, and gas stations.

**EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT**

She pulls her old Camry into a cheap motel with a flickering vintage neon sign. She parks near the office and heads inside.

**INT. MOTEL FRONT OFFICE - NIGHT**

The MOTEL EMPLOYEE at the front desk notices her approaching and frowns.

MOTEL EMPLOYEE  
Good evening.

NINA  
Need a room, please.

The employee glances to see if there's someone else outside.

MOTEL EMPLOYEE  
(trying to be delicate)  
Um...for the night?

Nina gives a momentary disapproving look, then gets it.

NINA  
Yeah. For the night.

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Nina hauls two heavy black duffel bags from the Camry's trunk and carries them into the small room. She rests them on the foot of the bed.

She unzips one and pulls out neatly-folded stacks of colorful shirts and faded jeans. She puts them into a small dresser that doubles as a TV stand.

She unzips the other duffel. It's full of weapons. MP5. M16. Pistol-grip combat shotgun. Handguns. Extra magazines.

She pulls out a pistol and checks the magazine. She walks to the bathroom and puts it behind the toilet.

Then she pulls out the MP5 and places it under the bed, then moves the duffel with the remaining guns to the closet.

She double-checks the room, nods to herself, then leaves.

**EXT. MAIN STREET / INT. NINA'S CAMRY - NIGHT**

Nina cruises slowly down Harmony's quiet main street, her car illuminated by neon signs in shop windows.

As she passes various locations, sounds of the past come back to her.

There's a boarded-up store with faded window signage saying "Appliance Sale" and "Lowest Prices in Harmony." She hears the lightly Telugu-accented voice of her father, RAVI REDDY.

RAVI (V.O.)

We're going to be okay. I got a loan to help us get by until the economy improves.

NINA (V.O.)

The bank changed their mind?

RAVI (V.O.)

It's not from the bank. But what matters is, we're going to be okay.

She passes the Starlite Arcade, which has aged badly. The sign's broken and the building tagged with graffiti. She hears the noise of teenagers and video games.

RICKY (V.O.)

Shame if something happened to you.

Nina's expression hardens and she keeps driving.

**EXT. DOTTIE'S DINER - NIGHT**

Nina arrives at Dottie's Diner, an old-school restaurant with a neon sign.

She pulls off the main road into the otherwise empty parking lot, parks near the front door, and walks inside.

**INT. DOTTIE'S DINER - CONTINUOUS**

The diner's empty except for an elderly waitress, DOTTIE, who gets up from her seat and approaches Nina. Patsy Cline's "Walkin' After Midnight" plays softly in the background.

DOTTIE

Good evening, sugar!

(MORE)

DOTTIE (CONT'D)  
 What's a pretty thing like you  
 doing out this late?

She adjusts her glasses and squints, then her mouth falls open  
 and her eyebrows shoot up.

                  DOTTIE  
 Oh my word, is that Nina Reddy I'm  
 seeing right now?

                  NINA  
 Hi, Dottie.

                  DOTTIE  
 Sweet Lord in heaven, it's been a  
 spell. Come here, honey.

Dottie puts her arms around Nina, who returns the embrace  
 carefully, conscious of Dottie's fragile frame.

                  DOTTIE  
 It makes me feel so happy to see  
 you, Nina dear. What brings you  
 back to Harmony?

Dottie slowly guides her over toward a booth by the window.

                  NINA  
 Oh, just wanted to visit, you know?

                  DOTTIE  
 How long has it been now? I swear  
 it's been at least a year, huh?

                  NINA  
 Four years.

                  DOTTIE  
 Four years. Isn't that something?  
 Well, I just love that you came.  
 Feels like the old days. You want  
 your usual spot?

Nina smiles as she sits.

                  NINA  
 I can't believe you remembered.

                  DOTTIE  
 Of course I remember, honey, the  
 three of you always parked  
 yourselves right there. You over  
 here, Eli and Ray over there.

(MORE)

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

You know, I don't see Ray much these days.

NINA

Hank still back there cooking?

DOTTIE

Oh, yes, until the day he dies. Might not even quit then. You still want the meatloaf and fries?

Nina chuckles at Dottie remembering her order.

NINA

Yes. Please.

DOTTIE

So polite. You always were polite. I'll get that in for you. And don't worry, he'll be here any minute.

Nina frowns.

NINA

Who'll be here?

DOTTIE

Eli. You're here to see Eli, right?

NINA

Oh, no, he doesn't know I'm back yet. I was going to go by his place and see him tomorrow, maybe.

DOTTIE

No, no, dear, he works the graveyard shift. He comes here every night around now.

Nina's eyes widen and her mouth falls open.

NINA

Eli's coming here? Tonight?

She turns as she sees headlights outside the window on the far side of the dining room. A police patrol car. It rolls up near the door and parks.

DOTTIE

We call him 'Officer Freeman' these days, of course.

Nina inhales sharply.

DOTTIE

Anyway, I'll go put this in and  
give you two some time to catch up.

Nina is frozen, looking out the window at the patrol car.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Eli sits contemplating for a moment, still sore about letting Tony go. Finally he grabs his radio to call DISPATCH.

ELI

Dispatch, this is two-two. I'm  
going ten-seven at Dottie's.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy, two-two. Ten-seven at  
Dottie's. Tell her I'll bring her  
sewing machine back this weekend.

ELI

Copy that.

He puts the radio down, sighs, and gets out of the car.

**INT. DOTTIE'S DINER - CONTINUOUS**

Eli walks in with a smile and nod for Dottie as she makes her way to the kitchen. On her way past she nods toward the booth where Nina sits. Eli sees Nina and freezes.

She stares back at him. They're motionless for a moment, then Nina slides out of the booth and runs toward him. She throws herself at him, wrapping her arms and legs around him, almost knocking him backwards into the door.

He exhales sharply, stunned. He doesn't embrace her back.

NINA

(tearfully)

Eli...

ELI

How? What...?

NINA

Eli, I'm so, so sorry.

Eli's proud stance falters, and he finally puts his arms around her, squeezing her back. Tears well in his eyes.

ELI

I can't believe this. Are you real?

NINA  
(laughing)  
Yeah, more or less.

**INT. DOTTIE'S DINER - NIGHT**

Eli and Nina sit across from each other. Nina's got her meatloaf and fries and Eli has his eggs and sausage.

They're avoiding each other's gaze, not yet comfortable.

ELI  
Four years. I wanna be mad at you.

NINA  
I know.

ELI  
I'm...happy to see you, though.

She looks up at him and reaches out to squeeze his hand.

NINA  
I wish I could have talked to you.

ELI  
You wanna...tell me what happened?

NINA  
What do you know already?

ELI  
Well, uh...the Pit Lords gave your parents a loan for the store. Business was bad. Couldn't make payments. Gang threatened them, so you guys packed up and left town.

Nina holds his gaze but says nothing.

ELI  
I kept waiting for you to reach out. Can't blame you for bailing, I guess. Just wish you'd called or something. How's your family doing?

Nina's face turns hard. Her breathing is tense.

NINA  
They cleaned that up real nice.

ELI  
What do you mean?

NINA

They caught us, Eli. That day. We hadn't even packed yet. I was gonna talk with you first. But they caught us.

His expression shifts as the realization hits.

ELI

No...

She pauses, trying to stay composed.

NINA

Someone told them we were gonna leave town. They, uh--Sorry, I wasn't expecting to get into this.

ELI

Did they...hurt you?

Nina doesn't answer. Her expression says enough.

Eli grips the edge of the table, knuckles white.

ELI

Who was it? Who did it?

NINA

Remember that guy Nacho from school? Always wore black? He ran the crew that came to our house.

ELI

Nina, I can't even--I'm so sorry. I thought you guys just left town.

NINA

I know. I just...I thought it might have made the news or something. Missing person posters and all that. Guess not, huh?

ELI

What did they do to you?

Nina holds his gaze, her expression hardening.

FLASHBACK TO 1995:

**INT. NINA'S FAMILY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

Nina stares with frantic tears in her eyes. Her mouth is taped shut.

Her sister MAYA REDDY kneels next to her, also gagged, whimpering. Gang members stand behind them, holding them tight as they're forced to watch some kind of struggle we don't see yet.

END FLASHBACK.

**INT. DOTTIE'S DINER - NIGHT**

Nina swallows and shakes her head, not ready to talk about it yet. Eli looks down, seeing it's bad. It's quiet for a moment while she pulls herself together.

NINA

Is, uh...Ray still with the gang?

Eli chews a moment, then reluctantly nods.

ELI

He's actually the local shot-caller, believe it or not. But I don't know if he... knows, you know? About your family? He'd barely joined the gang back then.

NINA

Still...

ELI

Yeah.

NINA

So, he's in charge of the Pit Lords in Harmony?

ELI

Yeah. He answers to the big boss over in Benning.

NINA

That's impressive career progress.

ELI

He went all in. The Pit Lords became his family.

NINA

That used to be us, huh?

Eli looks embarrassed.

ELI

I, uh...I wasn't there for him like I should've been. After you left.

They're quiet for a moment, chewing awkwardly, then she motions toward his uniform with her fork.

NINA

I see you went the other direction.

ELI

Yeah. Didn't like what I was seeing happen around town. Can't do much about it, turns out, but figured I should at least try.

She smiles nostalgically. Same old Eli.

NINA

Is Jamal still around? He was working on Maya's car when everything happened.

ELI

Yeah, he's kept it at his shop all this time. Keeps it ready for her.

Nina grimaces.

NINA

I could use better wheels.

ELI

We can go talk to him tomorrow. I'm sure he'll let you have it.

He pauses. Tries to ask something, stops, then tries again.

ELI

Nina, why'd you come back? You're not just here for old times' sake.

She's silent for a long time.

NINA

I need to take care of some things.

ELI

Like what? The car?

NINA

Yeah, like that.

ELI

What's going on? If you need help, I want to help you.

NINA

You can't help me with this.

ELI

We made a pact. You, me, and Ray.  
Right here at this table. We swore  
we'd always take care of each  
other.

NINA

Yeah, we did.

Eli sighs, feeling the implication that they weren't there when she needed them.

Nina puts her fork down on a plate still half-full of food.

NINA

I gotta go.

ELI

Just like that? Four years. You're  
gonna walk out on me?

She looks down at her plate, not saying anything. Then she slides out of the booth and stands.

NINA

A lot's happened. A lot's changed.

ELI

Stop dancing around and talk to me.

NINA

I don't want to drag you down with  
me. I can tell you that much.

ELI

Whatever's going on, I'll help you.

She pulls a money clip out of her pocket and puts two twenties down.

NINA

I'm sorry. It was good to see you.  
But I gotta go.

Eli watches, stunned, as she walks across the diner and out the door.

He sits for a moment, then looks back at where she was sitting. The money clip. A thick fold of bills. He picks it up and turns it over in his hand.

Dottie comes back from the kitchen and sees the empty booth.

DOTTIE

She left already?

ELI

She always have that kind of cash?

Dottie glances at the money clip and frowns.

DOTTIE

Not the Nina I remember.

ELI

Dottie, if she comes back, will you call me?

DOTTIE

Of course, honey.

Eli nods, still looking at the money clip. He picks it up, turns it in his hand, then pockets it and heads for the door.

FLASHBACK TO 1995:

**INT. DOTTIE'S DINER - DAY**

Nina, dressed in a cheerleader outfit, throws her backpack down and slides into her seat. Eli and Ray are already eating.

NINA

You guys, I've been thinking.

ELI

That's good, because out of the three of us, you're the best at it.

Nina leans forward conspiratorially.

NINA

I think we should make a pact.

Ray, his face bruised and cut from a bad fight, frowns and stops chewing.

RAY

What kind of pact?

NINA

The way things are going, we're gonna need each other. Ray, you've got home problems...

Ray rolls his eyes, like Tell me about it.

NINA

Eli, you keep getting in trouble with the Pit Lords because you just can't do what you're told.

Eli shrugs like, I am what I am.

NINA

And my family's borrowed a lot of money from the gang to keep the store alive, and some of them think that means they get a piece of me.

She takes a deep breath.

NINA

So, I propose we make a pact that we'll have each other's backs, always and forever, no matter what.

Eli nods.

ELI

Absolutely.

Ray is embarrassed about admitting he needs help, but then looks at both Nina and Eli and finally nods.

RAY

Yeah, all right. I'm in.

NINA

Good.

She takes a napkin from her pocket and puts it down between them. It reads, "The Harmony Three" in neat cursive.

She pulls out a Swiss Army knife and opens the blade.

A moment later, three thumbs appear below the text, leaving behind three bloody thumbprints.

END FLASHBACK.

#### **EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT**

A partial bloody handprint near the bathroom, caught in the bright beam of a flashlight. Eli inspects the print closely.

CASHIER

Weirdest thing I've seen here.  
Can't make sense of it.

ELI

Do you remember anyone suspicious using the bathroom key?

CASHIER

No, just the regular locals and some random people passing through.

ELI

Nobody with injuries that you saw?

CASHIER

No, nothing like that.

Eli frowns and scans the area in front of the door. The flashlight picks up more blood in the gravel. He moves toward it.

CASHIER

And someone stole the toilet lid and handle. Why would they do that?

Eli shakes his head and shrugs.

ELI

I'll write it up, but someone probably just cut their hand. Not sure about the other stuff.

CASHIER

Alright. Well, thanks for coming all the way out here, I guess.

Eli starts walking back toward his patrol car.

ELI

I need to get back to town but don't clean that up until we can get prints, okay? They'll come out tomorrow morning to get all that.

CASHIER

I'd rather the day cashier clean it up anyway, so that's fine by me.

Eli nods a goodbye and gets in his patrol car.

#### **EXT. STREETS OF HARMONY - NIGHT**

Nina, dressed in a dark hoodie, marches under streetlights through the quiet town, passing shops closed for the night. She glances around quickly, searching. She's hunting.

Eventually, she hears some faint, muffled music. It's Britney Spears, "Baby One More Time," coming from a distant bar. She turns and heads up a side street toward the music.

**EXT. RED ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT**

The Red Rock Tavern is a run-down building with neon beer brand lights. Parking lot is half full.

The muffled music from inside grows louder as Nina approaches. Louder still as she enters.

**INT. RED ROCK TAVERN - CONTINUOUS**

It's dark inside, the most prominent light coming from the neon signs behind the bar. It's busy but not packed, mostly BLUE-COLLAR TYPES talking, drinking, playing pool and darts.

An old TV high up in the corner silently shows CNN running headlines about Y2K fears.

Nina prowls through the bar, acting casual while inspecting faces. She's not finding what she's looking for.

She approaches the bar and waves to get the BARTENDER'S attention.

NINA  
(mouthing)  
Bathroom?

The bartender points to the back. She goes down a little hallway and enters the bathroom.

**INT. RED ROCK TAVERN BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

She enters the bathroom, lowers her hood, and looks long and hard in the mirror.

She turns on the water and washes her face briefly, trying to reinvigorate herself.

She takes out a pill bottle and shakes a couple out, tosses them in her mouth, cups her hand in the water, and drinks.

She dries her face with a paper towel, then free-throws it into the wastebasket. She pulls her hood back up and leaves.

**INT. RED ROCK TAVERN - CONTINUOUS**

She passes back through the bar, still hunting. This time, she spots someone.

Gang member MOCO RICHARDS sits talking to an older man, JEROME. Several empty beer glasses sit between them.

She inhales, then changes her gait, sauntering slowly in their direction.

She approaches Moco slowly, non-threateningly, and runs a single finger along his arm. He looks up at her in confusion.

She smiles at him, then turns and walks toward the door, moving deliberately, letting him watch her go.

Moco watches her walk away, then looks at the older man, who throws his hands up like, Fine, go get some.

Moco fishes some cash out of his wallet and drops it on the table, then gets up and heads for the door.

**EXT. RED ROCK TAVERN - CONTINUOUS**

Nina walks alongside the building toward the shadowy rear. Moco comes around the corner after her.

MOCO

Hey, girly, slow down.

Nina raises a hand and beckons him to follow her behind the building. Moco smiles. She turns the corner.

Moco comes around the corner with a grin on his face and finds her leaning up against a wall.

MOCO

Yo, what's your name?

NINA

You don't remember me?

MOCO

I mean, you look really familiar,  
but I'm not so good with names, you  
know?

NINA

Nina Reddy. We had a couple of  
classes together.

He approaches her slowly, looking her up and down.

MOCO

Nina! Yeah, it's coming to me. We  
had classes together.

NINA

Yeah, and you helped kill my  
family, remember?

He freezes, his expression turning serious.

Nina pulls a telescoping baton from her pocket and whips it out to full length.

MOCO

Aw, shit.

He reaches back and pulls a pistol from his waistband, but before he can aim, Nina nails his hand with the baton, breaking bones. He yelps. The gun falls and skitters away.

Nina executes a roundhouse kick to his head, sending him stumbling into the wall.

Moco doesn't go down. He charges her, slamming her into the opposite wall hard enough to knock the wind out of her. His good hand finds her throat. She chokes, clawing at his grip.

She drives a knee into his ribs. He buckles just enough for her to break free and crack the baton across his temple. He drops to his knees.

She hooks an arm around his neck from behind as he drops, locking in a chokehold. He thrashes, reaching back with his good hand trying to grab her face, but can't connect. She tightens her grip. Blood streams down his face.

NINA

Where's Maya? Where's my sister?

MOCO

I don't know! Really!

NINA

Who'd they sell her to?

He thrashes harder, nearly throwing her off. She locks her legs around his torso and squeezes the chokehold tighter.

MOCO

(struggling to talk)

They don't tell me nothing!

NINA

(straining to hold him)

You'd better give me something good or else I don't need you.

MOCO

Nacho. Nacho Gutierrez would know.

NINA

I know that already. What else?

MOCO  
(gasping)  
I'm...too drunk...to deal with this  
shit. Let me go.

She tightens her hold hard now, and he whimpers.

MOCO  
Stop...

NINA  
Say hi to the Devil for me.

Moco falters, then passes out. Nina drops him to the ground.

She repositions, then gives him a brutal whack on the head with her baton, bone giving way to brain with a wet crack.

She does it again. And again. She pauses for a breath. Then one more time for good measure.

She looks around to see if anyone saw. Everything's quiet except for muffled music from inside.

She puts her hood up and grabs Moco by the legs. She pulls him toward a nearby ditch, stopping twice to adjust her grip, her boots slipping in the gravel.

She finally reaches the ditch and pulls the body over the edge.

Then she sees headlights nearby. She ducks down.

NINA  
Don't see me, don't see me...

**INT. GARCIA'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Officer JENNA GARCIA patrols casually. A radio deejay talks in the background about a county fair coming up.

She glances toward the bar and squints at the shadowy figure crouching out back. She slows the car as she watches.

She reaches for her radio.

GARCIA  
Two-one to Dispatch, I've got  
someone acting weird behind Red  
Rock Tavern.

DISPATCH (V.O.)  
Copy, two-one. You want backup?

GARCIA  
Wouldn't hurt. Two-two, you back  
from Brody's station?

ELI (V.O.)  
Copy two-one, I'm back in town. Be  
there in a minute.

Garcia turns a corner and drives toward the bar's entrance.

**EXT. DITCH BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Nina sees the patrol car turn.

NINA  
Shit.

**INT. GARCIA'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

The shadowy figure gets up and bolts.

Garcia grabs her radio.

GARCIA  
He's running. West, toward Oak  
Street. Jeans, dark hoodie.

She flips on her red and blues and takes off down the street, trying to intercept, but the suspect runs across a field toward some buildings and adds distance between them.

**EXT. ALLEYS - CONTINUOUS**

Nina darts athletically through the back alleys of the sleeping town, vaulting over obstacles, periodically changing direction to try to lose her tail.

She leaps over a fence into a yard of rusted-out old vehicles.

When she reaches the building at the other side, she presses up against the wall in the shadows, glancing back. Nothing.

She turns and runs down the narrow walkway beside the building.

As she reaches the street on the other side, something registers a half-second too late. She starts to pivot, but Eli steps out and clotheslines her with a firm arm. Her legs fly out from under her and she goes down hard on her back, knocking the wind out of her.

Eli rolls her over and yanks her hands behind her back, kneeling on her to keep her in position. He cuffs her, then grabs his radio.

ELI  
Suspect detained in front of  
Willy's Auto Repair. All clear.

GARCIA (V.O.)  
You need help or you got this one?

ELI  
I got this, two-one.

GARCIA (V.O.)  
Copy two-two. Thanks for the  
assist.

NINA  
Eli?

Eli frowns, then quickly rolls her back over and yanks her hood down.

There's a long pause while he tries to process what's happening.

ELI  
What the shiiit?

NINA  
He was one of them, Eli. One of  
Nacho's guys.

ELI  
Who?

Nina freezes, realizing he hadn't seen the body.

ELI  
Nina, who are you talking about?

She says nothing.

ELI  
What did you do?

#### **EXT. RED ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT**

Eli stands near the ditch where she dragged Moco's body. Nina's hands are still cuffed behind her back.

A muffled version of Jennifer Lopez's "Waiting for Tonight" plays from inside the Red Rock Tavern.

ELI  
I have to call this in.

NINA  
Eli, please don't.

ELI  
You have about 10 seconds to be  
real convincing.

A young couple exits the bar and walks toward their car in the parking lot. Eli watches them and pulls Nina into the shadows so they won't be seen.

Nina is panting and emotional, not looking him in the eye.

ELI  
(warning)  
I gotta do my job, Nina.

She finally looks up at him with an intense expression.

NINA  
Eli, they killed my parents.

Eli is stunned for a moment.

ELI  
Wait--your mom and dad? They're  
dead!?

She nods. Eli rubs his head.

ELI  
That day?

She nods again.

NINA  
They, uh...they made us watch. Me  
and Maya. They made us watch.

FLASHBACK TO 1995:

**INT. NINA'S FAMILY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

Nina and Maya are on their knees, gagged with duct tape, armed gang members standing behind them, holding them tight and making them watch.

We hear the voice of NACHO GUTIERREZ (late 20s), but we don't see him yet, just their terrified reactions to him.

NACHO (O.S.)  
I named this knife. I call her  
Justice.

(MORE)

NACHO (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 When you don't keep your  
 commitments to the Pit Lords, you  
 get Justice.

A brutal struggle. Wet sounds. Maya squeezes her eyes shut, but Nina watches with eyes wide open. We see the vendetta forming in her glare.

END FLASHBACK.

**EXT. RED ROCK TAVERN - NIGHT**

Her glare's still hard as she thinks back to what happened. She exhales and looks down, her throat tight.

NINA  
 After that, they, uh...rented us  
 out to pay off the debt.

ELI  
 Nina, I--

NINA  
 Don't call it in.

ELI  
 I'm still a cop standing in front  
 of a dead body. I have a  
 responsibility.

NINA  
 Eli, you have a responsibility to  
 me, too.

ELI  
 You should have reported it. The  
 police could have--

NINA  
 Is Rodney still with the  
 department?

Eli frowns.

ELI  
 Chief Simmons? Yeah.

She shakes her head with disgust.

NINA  
 He was one of the cops who got  
 treated to a free ride with me and  
 Maya as a favor from the gang.

Eli's silent as he watches his world fall apart.

NINA

You think justice is served by  
putting me into the custody of cops  
who used me as a sex slave...

She motions toward Moco's body.

NINA

...so you can do the right thing  
for the guy who helped kill my  
family and make whores out of me  
and Maya? Then turn me in, then.

Eli closes his eyes. His hand goes to his radio, hovers there.

ELI

Damn it, Nina...

He looks down at Moco's body in the ditch, then keys the radio.

ELI

Two-two. It was just some kids  
being stupid. I'm sending them home  
with a warning.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy, two-two.

They stand there for a long moment, then Eli reaches over and uncuffs her. She rubs her wrists.

ELI

What did you touch?

She digs in her pocket and pulls out the now-collapsed baton, handing it to him.

NINA

This. And I used the bathroom.

Eli puts the baton into his pocket.

ELI

What else?

NINA

Nothing.

ELI

Drop anything?

NINA

No.

ELI  
Go back in and clean your prints.  
I'll get him in my trunk.

NINA  
Then what?

ELI  
Then we go see Ray so you can beg  
for forgiveness.

NINA  
For what?

ELI  
You killed a Pit Lord. They're  
gonna hunt you down and kill you  
unless he says otherwise.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT**

Eli and Nina drive in silence, the colors of streetlight and neon signs playing on their faces.

Nina stares out the window, jaw set. Eli rubs his face with both hands, then puts them back on the wheel.

NINA  
Don't get mixed up in this, Eli.

ELI  
Pretty sure I already am, thanks.

NINA  
Let me finish this. By myself. Then  
I'll just disappear again.

**EXT. GANG PALACE - CONTINUOUS**

They pull up in front of a huge Pit Lords gang den. It's a sprawling house with fresh paint, floodlights, and a wraparound porch that looks like it was built with money that didn't come from a paycheck.

DMX's "What's My Name?" thumps from inside. Colored lights flash from the windows. Muscle cars and tuned imports fill the large driveway.

Eli doesn't park in the driveway, but in the shadows on the street out front.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Eli puts the car in park and turns to Nina.

ELI

I'm trying, Nina. I'm trying to make things better in Harmony. But I can't do jack shit if we go to prison for what you did tonight.

She glares at him.

NINA

Nobody else is going to find my sister. Cops don't care. To the FBI, she's just a name in a database. I'm all she's got. I need to know who they sold her to, and they're not gonna tell me without a fight, so I'm gonna fight.

Eli takes a long breath, studying her.

ELI

I don't know what all happened to you in the last four years, but I want you to know...you scare the hell out of me now.

NINA

Good.

Eli takes one last look at her, then sighs, shakes his head, and gets out of the car, walking toward the palace.

FLASHBACK TO 1995:

**INT. ELI'S HOUSE - DAY**

Nina's running up the same stairs in Eli's house.

Downstairs, Eli's mother JOYCE FREEMAN (late 30s) leans out from another room and looks up at Nina.

JOYCE

Nina, honey, what's wrong?

Nina ignores her and keeps going up the stairs, rounding a corner and knocking on Eli's door.

NINA

Eli!

She knocks again. Eventually, the door cracks open a little, revealing Eli peeking out. He's shirtless.

ELI  
What's up?

NINA  
Ray's dad got out on parole.

Eli sighs in resignation.

ELI  
Is it bad?

Nina nods urgently.

ELI  
Hang on, I'll get dressed.

He closes the door.

**INT. ELI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Eli grabs a pair of jeans and starts getting dressed.

Sitting barely-dressed on the bed next to him is a snotty cheerleader type, TIFFANY. She shoots him a concerned glare.

TIFFANY  
What am I supposed to do?

ELI  
Hide in my closet?

TIFFANY  
I am not hiding in your closet.  
When are you coming back?

Eli throws on a t-shirt.

ELI  
Might take a while.

TIFFANY  
I have cheer practice at four.

ELI  
Sorry, Tiff. Don't know what to  
tell you. You can try the window if  
you want, but it's a long way down.  
I'll be back as soon as I can.

She crosses her arms.

TIFFANY  
Ugh.

ELI  
Sorry. Gotta go.

He opens the door and leaves the room, attempting to block Nina's view as he does. She stands on her tiptoes and peeks inside, making eye contact with Tiffany, who glares.

NINA  
(quietly)  
Tiffany Bosco? Really?

ELI  
Ssh.

They head downstairs.

**EXT. RAY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Eli and Nina roll up to Ray's house on BMX bikes.

Ray's mom, DEBBIE COBBINS, sits on the front porch crying.

Inside the house, Ray's dad STEVE BROWN rants drunkenly.

STEVE  
That what you've been teaching him?  
Bein' a joker's gonna put food on  
the table? He needs to learn to be  
a man. A real man. He's my son and  
no son of mine is going to waste  
his life like that...

Debbie looks up at Eli and Nina, her face stained with tears, and she points down the road. Nina nods and they take off again on their bikes.

**EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY**

Eli and Nina pull up to where Ray is marching up the sidewalk. His face is twisted in anger and determination.

ELI  
Ray. Ray!

Nothing. He keeps walking.

ELI  
Hey, man, hold up. Just stop.

RAY  
Nah.

ELI  
Where you going?

RAY  
Toby's.

ELI  
Why didn't you go to my house?

Ray finally stops and turns to them.

RAY  
You don't have a gun, that's why.

Eli raises his eyebrows and steps back.

NINA  
Ray, I know it's bad right now but  
don't go doing something you can't  
undo.

RAY  
He hit her, Nina. He hit her.

Eli lays his bike down. Nina does the same.

ELI  
I know, dude.

RAY  
Because of me.

ELI  
Wasn't because of you. He's mad at  
himself and taking it out on you.

RAY  
Well, it's gonna stop.

ELI  
You go get a gun, you're going to  
prison even longer than he did.  
Your mom's gonna be even worse off.  
Don't you do that to her, Ray. I  
know you're mad but you gotta snap  
outta this shit and think bigger.

Ray looks up at the sky, tears in his eyes. Nina steps forward  
and wraps her arms around him. He remains stoic.

RAY  
It's gotta stop, though.

NINA  
We're gonna help you, Ray.

ELI

We're always gonna help you.

Ray gives a ragged sigh, trying to hold himself together and act tough. Then he pries himself loose from Nina.

RAY

Ain't exactly fair, though, is it?

Nina releases him gently and steps back.

ELI

What?

RAY

The pact. I'm not like you two. I'm not cool, and popular, and smart.

NINA

We're equals, Ray. Nobody here's better than anyone else.

RAY

That's what cool, popular, smart people say. People don't take me seriously, though.

ELI

You've helped me a bunch of times, Ray. You know you have.

NINA

You stopped me from running away from home at least twice.

ELI

Remember when Janae dumped me, and I stayed in my room crying all day? Do you remember what you said?

Ray shakes his head.

ELI

You said, "Eli, quit being a whiny bitch and let's go get some hotdogs."

Ray chuckles despite himself.

RAY

That's good advice, though.

ELI

Ray, you're the one who always drags us out of the swamp.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)

We can't have you going to prison.

NINA

We need you. We need each other.  
We're the Harmony Three.

ELI

So quit being a whiny bitch and  
let's go get some hotdogs.

Ray starts to settle down. He hastily wipes his nose.

RAY

I gotta do something about him,  
though. Gotta.

ELI

I know you do. But do something  
smart, not stupid.

Ray gives a reluctant nod.

RAY

Alright, fine.

Eli and Nina sigh and glance at each other. Nina closes her eyes for a second, relieved.

END FLASHBACK.

**EXT. GANG PALACE - NIGHT**

Eli walks between the many muscle and tuner cars in the driveway, reluctantly admiring some of them as he passes.

He checks in on his radio.

ELI

Dispatch, this is two-two. I'm at  
the Palace. Gonna ask them to turn  
down the music.

DISPATCH

Good luck with that, two-two. Don't  
get yourself shot.

ELI

I'll do my best.

He approaches the impressive front door and knocks loudly.

A HEAVY GANGSTER opens the door and the music gets louder. He holds up a TEC-9 submachine gun to his chest.

HEAVY GANGSTER

I'm sorry, Officer Freeman, this is  
a pork-free household.

ELI

I gotta talk to him. It's serious.

The gangster looks him up and down, then grunts.

HEAVY GANGSTER

We'll see.

He turns and walks back into the house, leaving the door open.  
Eli enters, following the heavy gangster inside.

#### **INT. GANG PALACE DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS**

In the living room, a group of GANGSTERS is doing coke off the  
coffee table. There's hip-hop and graffiti-inspired art on the  
walls.

In the dining room, apprehensive PROSTITUTES share a pizza  
under the watchful eye of another gangster.

As the heavy gangster leads Eli through the house, they pass a  
closet full of assault rifles. The gangster reaches back and  
slowly closes the door, holding eye contact with Eli the whole  
time. Then he continues toward the stairs.

#### **INT. GANG PALACE UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS**

The music gets quieter as they head up the stairs. The heavy  
gangster leads them to a door and knocks loudly, three times.

RAY (O.S.)

What is it?

HEAVY GANGSTER

Boss, I got the honorable Officer  
Eli Freeman here. Says he's got  
something important to say to you.

Silence for a moment. Footsteps and shuffling from inside.

The door opens and a VETERAN GANGSTER comes out towing a  
stumbling BEAT-UP GANGSTER by the collar, blood on the guy's  
lip. He hauls him past Eli without a word.

VETERAN GANGSTER

He says you can go in.

**INT. RAY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Eli enters the office and the heavy gangster closes the door after him.

Two guards stand with submachine guns in the corners of the room.

Ray Cobbins, dressed in a designer tracksuit and gold jewelry, sits behind an impressive desk in an equally impressive chair. On the wall behind him is a massive street art piece. There are stacks of bills on one side of his desk, and a bottle of wine and glasses on the other.

He's got the cocky swagger of a man who knows how much power he has, but there's something practiced about it.

They do a reflexive dap, perfected in their childhood.

RAY

Hey, Eli, how's my favorite cop?

ELI

Good, brother. Doubt I'm your favorite, though, since you got the rest on your payroll by now.

RAY

Nah, Garcia's holding out, too. She still work nights with you?

ELI

Yeah. Just leave her be, man.

RAY

Y'all should come in together, negotiate a better deal.

Eli gives him a not gonna happen look. Ray laughs, then notices Eli not laughing.

RAY

Serious, huh? Maybe we skip the pleasantries?

Eli leans in close so the guards don't hear.

ELI

I got two people you need to see. Only one of them's alive. Just you, though. Nobody else.

RAY

I'm bringing my bodyguards.

ELI

You'll wanna figure out how to play  
this before people find out.

Ray eyeballs him skeptically for a moment, then nods.

RAY

That bad, huh? Alright, then.  
(to the guards)  
Stepping out, boys. Tell Coco and  
Dolly I'm coming for them later.

The guards nod, and Eli follows Ray out of the office.

**EXT. GANG PALACE - NIGHT**

Eli and Ray approach his patrol car in the shadows, having  
passed all the showy cars in the driveway behind them.

RAY

You could join us and have any one  
of those beautiful rides, but you  
just love that Crown Vic life, huh?

Nina steps out from the shadows.

NINA

Hey, Ray.

Ray's jaw drops.

RAY

Holy shit. No way.

He embraces her. She's apprehensive at first but he's so  
genuine that she finally laughs and returns the hug.

Ray steps back, his face lighting up.

RAY

Where the hell have you been? What  
happened to you?

NINA

Let's go for a ride.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR TRUNK - NIGHT**

In the closed trunk, Moco's blood-splattered face stares  
lifelessly, dimly illuminated by brake lights and passing  
street lights peeking in around the lid. He wobbles slightly as  
the car pulls out.

FLASHBACK TO 1995:

**INT. NINA'S FAMILY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

Moco grins with animal zeal as he rips off a length of duct tape and roughly applies it to the mouth of LEELA REDDY (Indian, 40s), who kneels with her arms bound behind her back, her eyes wide and face streaked with tears.

Another GANGSTER does the same to Leela's husband RAVI REDDY, punching him in the head when he resists.

Opposite them, Nina and Maya are on their knees, similarly bound and gagged, whimpering with terror. More GANGSTERS stand behind them, holding them tight and making them watch.

Nacho Gutierrez steps between them, dressed all in black with a black cowboy hat. A large knife sheath hangs from his belt.

NACHO

You think 'cause we go to the same school, we're all students. But it ain't like that. I'm actually a teacher. I'm gonna teach you a real important lesson. The most important lesson of your life.

Leela gives a muffled squeal and one of the gangsters slaps her hard, reminding her not to interrupt the teacher.

NACHO

It's real simple. Only three words. You listening? 'Active listening,' the teachers call it, right? Here's the lesson...

He bends down to get in the girls' faces, enjoying the power he wields over them. They lean back as he gets close.

He lifts his hand, counting off his vicious words, 1-2-3.

NACHO

Keep. Your. Commitments.

He stands back up, casually strutting and glancing around the room to show his command of the situation.

NACHO

If your parents kept their commitments, if they'd paid us back that loan instead of trying to leave town, we wouldn't be here right now. But here we are.

Ravi shouts from behind the duct tape, trying to explain, trying to stall, trying to beg, but it just comes out as muffled screams.

Nacho ignores him. He turns to face the girls again.

NACHO

Gotta pay your debts. Oldest rule  
in the world.

He reaches down to his belt and slowly unsheathes an enormous Bowie knife with a black handle. The blade has the word "Justice" engraved on it in a gothic blackletter typeface. He brandishes it back and forth, admiring it.

NACHO

I named this knife. Her name's  
Justice. And when you don't keep  
your commitments to the Pit  
Lords...you get Justice. Now, watch  
and learn.

He turns to Ravi, who stares at his daughters. Ravi inhales sharply through his nose, then lifts his chin slightly, accepting what he knows is coming.

NACHO

(to Ravi)

Huh. Brave man. Good man.

Maya closes her eyes hard shut and whines with fear, but Nina doesn't. She watches, staring bullets at Nacho, hardening herself and letting the experience wash over her.

GANGSTER

Do it, Nacho! Do it!

Nacho puts the knife to Ravi's throat and slices right through. Blood pours out and his face goes rigid, then he drops to the floor making wet gurgling sounds as Leela's muffled scream pierces through the duct tape.

The other gangsters cheer, ecstatic with bloodlust.

Nacho turns to Leela, who's almost convulsing with shock and terror. They tighten their grip on her.

One gangster grabs her chin and lifts it, presenting her neck to Nacho, who casually slices deep into it. Blood gushes. They drop her to the floor, where she convulses.

Maya wails and the gangsters have a hard time holding her, but Nina doesn't resist. She just glares.

Nacho looks down at his enormous, blood-covered knife, soaking in the power of what just happened. He's breathing hard, like

it's a spiritual experience. Or maybe sexual.

It takes a moment to come down from his killing high. Then, he turns to the girls and speaks to them matter-of-factly.

NACHO

The two of you, you're property of the Pit Lords now. We're going to use you. Then we're going to sell you to repay your parents' debt. That's your commitment. And if you don't keep that commitment, you'll get Justice, too.

(to the others)

Take 'em to the dungeon. We're gonna break these bitches down.

END FLASHBACK.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT**

The car cruises along a long, dark stretch of road on the outskirts of town. Eli drives while Ray and Nina sit in the backseat.

Ray nods, absorbing the story he's just been told. Lets out a deep sigh.

RAY

Shit, Nina, I don't know what to say to that. I'm real sorry.

Nina looks hard, like she had to turn off her emotions to get the story out.

NINA

Thanks.

Ray shakes his head.

RAY

I need you to know, on my mother's life, I did not know about this. I just barely joined the gang back then. That would have been Marty's decision, back when he was in charge before me.

She looks up at him.

NINA

Nacho's still one of your guys, though, right?

Ray looks down.

RAY  
I mean, yeah. He's been a set leader as long as I've been with the gang.

NINA  
He never told you what he did to one of your best friends? It never came up?

RAY  
I swear I never knew. I always thought you guys just left town.

Nina gives a terse shrug.

NINA  
So how are you gonna make this right?

Ray leans back, turning businesslike.

RAY  
Okay, what do you want?

NINA  
I wanna know where my sister is.

RAY  
The gang doesn't exactly keep a lot of paperwork.

NINA  
Who would know?

RAY  
Probably just Nacho, if he even remembers. It was his set, would've been his deal.

NINA  
Then I want Nacho.

Ray frowns, confused.

RAY  
For what? He's not going to give you anything.

NINA  
He's going to give me everything.

Eli glances back from the front seat.

ELI

Ray...

RAY

Nacho's dangerous. You wouldn't know what to do if you had him. Besides, I can't hand over a set leader. I'm the boss here, but there are lines even I can't cross.

ELI

Ray...

RAY

Eli, do not address me like that! I'm having a conversation here, and I don't need you disrespecting me by interrupting. I'll answer you when I'm good and ready. I'm not some goofy kid anymore, you know. Everyone respects me in this town.

His voice cracks slightly on that last part. He catches it and straightens up.

RAY

I'll handle this my way.

Nina watches him, seeing right through the act but saying nothing.

#### **EXT. DARK DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

On a long stretch of road on the edge of town, lit only by a full moon, the patrol car's brake lights come on, throwing red light across the landscape. The car comes to a stop in the middle of the road.

The trunk pops loose, and Eli gets out of the car and walks back, opening it.

Then he steps back and waits.

#### **INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Ray looks over at Nina like, What the hell is going on? She nods backward toward the trunk like See for yourself, then unbuckles and gets out of the car.

Ray shakes his head, unbuckles, and gets out as well.

**EXT. DARK DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Nina stands beside the trunk, not needing to look inside--and also giving herself a little distance from Ray.

Ray comes around and sees the body. He cocks his head to the side and takes on a serious look.

ELI  
It's Moco Richards.

RAY  
Yeah, I see that. What's he doing  
dead in your trunk?

Eli hesitates to answer, glancing at Nina.

NINA  
I killed him.

Ray glances between her and the body.

NINA  
He was at my family's house that  
day. He helped kill my parents.

RAY  
So, you just...?

NINA  
I saw him, so I killed him. I'm not  
even a little bit ashamed. And I'll  
do the same to anyone who was there  
that night. I remember their faces.  
All of them.

Eli rubs his forehead and sighs.

ELI  
Ray, we came to pay respect to you.  
As soon as it happened, we came to  
you to let you know. And to ask  
forgiveness.

Nina motions toward Eli.

NINA  
I'm not asking forgiveness, I'm  
just telling you what happened. And  
what's going to happen.

Ray's jaw tightens. His hands ball into fists.

ELI  
Nina, stop. You're not helping.

RAY  
(to Nina)  
And what exactly do you think is  
going to happen?

NINA  
I'm going to find my sister, no  
matter what it takes. I'm not going  
to stop unless I'm dead.

Ray shakes his head.

RAY  
You're putting me in a real bad  
spot, Nina.

NINA  
Now you know what your gang did to  
me, my sister, my family. I wanna  
know, what do you do to people who  
hurt your friends like that?

RAY  
You gotta understand, I have  
responsibilities. I swore an oath  
to protect my gang.

NINA  
The three of us swore an oath, too,  
and that was in effect before any  
of this happened.

RAY  
Nina...

NINA  
I have a prior claim on your  
protection, Raymond John Cobbins!

Ray sighs, softening a little.

RAY  
My boss, the big boss, over in  
Benning, is a very... hard man.  
That's why this gang has been so  
successful. If he thinks I've sold  
my people out, he's not going to  
yell at me. He's going to cut me up  
and hang me from a bridge, cartel-  
style.

NINA  
I get it, but in this--

RAY

You don't get it. He really is modeling us after the cartels. You can't imagine how they...

He trails off as Nina holds her hand out, fingers splayed, showing three tiny Aztec symbols tattooed between her fingers where they wouldn't normally be visible.

Ray leans back, stunned.

RAY

What the fuuuck!?

ELI

What? What is that?

She puts her hand down. It takes Ray a moment to find his voice. His jaw still hangs open.

RAY

Our Nina here apparently works for the Western Wind cartel in Texas.

ELI

What!?

NINA

They took me in when I needed help.

ELI

That's what you were doing while you were gone?

NINA

Among other things.

ELI

Jesus.

RAY

What are you? What do you do for them?

She pauses.

NINA

I'm...an operative.

Ray nods toward Moco's body.

RAY

Moco here wasn't your first, was he?

Nina shakes her head slowly, her eyes fixed on his.

Eli's eyes widen at this revelation.

Ray reaches up and pulls the trunk down.

RAY

Alright, no need to keep displaying this. Bring the body by tomorrow after we come up with a story and I'll have my guys bury him. Now let's head back before they get nervous and start looking for me.

They get back into the car.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

They get back into the car. Eli throws it in drive and makes a U-turn, heading back toward the palace.

RAY

(to Nina)

I have to ask: are you here on business?

She bristles, then catches herself.

NINA

This is personal.

RAY

Because if Western Wind's pushing into my territory, I hope you'd at least give me a heads up before I wake up dead.

NINA

Yeah, of course I'd help my friend. That's what friends do.

ELI

You know what? Let's just sleep on this, alright?

(to Nina)

Ray knows now. It's his people, his jurisdiction. Let him sleep, let him think about it, let him decide what to do, okay? We can talk about this tomorrow.

Nina stares at Ray.

NINA  
Why put off to tomorrow what we can  
do right now?

Ray stares back, not willing to blink first.

RAY  
Nah. We're not gonna do that.  
Nobody forces me into a decision.  
I'll tell you what we're doing when  
I'm good and ready. Tomorrow.

**EXT. GANG PALACE - MINUTES LATER**

Eli pulls the patrol car to a stop in front of the gang palace.

**INT. ELI'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Ray turns to Nina.

RAY  
I wish this reunion were for better  
reasons. I'm real sorry about what  
happened. It's good to see you,  
though.

Nina gives a frustrated sigh.

NINA  
Ray, I'm disappointed in you.

Ray shakes his head slightly, stunned.

RAY  
What?

ELI  
(hissing)  
Nina...!

NINA  
You're a big man now. Everyone  
fears and respects you. Even Eli  
buys into it. Not me, though. I'm  
not afraid of you. Even if I were,  
fear doesn't earn you my respect.

RAY  
Pssh. I don't need your respect.

NINA

That's good, because if you need time to think about whose side you're on after what happened to me, I might never respect you again.

Ray is livid. He looks around, fists clenching at his sides, unable to come up with a response to that.

He abruptly opens the car door and gets out.

He's speechless another moment, then finally coaxes some words out through gritted teeth.

RAY

Nobody talks to me that way. Ever.

She points at herself.

NINA

I do. Someone has to. Stop pretending this is who you are, Ray.

Ray forces himself to be calm, to reassert his control.

RAY

You need to leave this town and never come back, or I can't promise you'll live through the night.

NINA

Goodbye, Ray.

Ray sneers at her like You ain't worth it, then slams the door with a vengeance. He storms back toward the palace on the long car-filled driveway.

Nina gets out of the back seat, rounds the car, and gets in next to Eli in the front.

They both watch Ray, making sure he doesn't turn around and come at them.

ELI

Real smooth. I don't know if that door's ever going to work again.

NINA

He needed to hear it.

ELI

Can we be done for tonight? One dead body in the trunk is enough.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)  
We'll figure it all out tomorrow.

NINA  
Yeah. Take me back to the motel.

Eli puts the patrol car in drive. The tires squeal as he urges it quickly away.

**EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT**

The patrol car pulls into the lot and parks in front of Nina's room. Her Camry is parked right next to it.

They both get out. Nina leans against her car and Eli against his.

ELI  
Nina, let's just do this the right way, okay? We'll type up your testimony, gather whatever evidence we can, and I'll talk directly to the judge when he gets back to town. We'll get a warrant and I'll arrest Nacho myself. We'll have a court date before Rodney even knows what's happening.

NINA  
It's not enough, Eli. He's not going to say who he sold Maya to. It'd be public record. He knows they'll come after him when they find out he ratted.

ELI  
Nina, I know you've spent four years fantasizing about getting back at these guys, but this isn't the way. They're gonna kill you. I'm not kidding.

NINA  
Eli...

ELI  
We'll pretend Moco never happened. Forget about Nacho. I don't...I can't lose you again. I can't handle it.

NINA

With the shit we dealt with growing up, I never would have made it if it weren't for you and Ray...but especially you, Eli.

She puts her arms around him and rests her head on his shoulder.

NINA

I kept wishing I could talk to you, ask you what to do, ask for your help. You were always there and then suddenly I didn't have you anymore. I missed you so much.

This hits Eli hard. He squeezes her tightly.

NINA

Remember how everyone teased us that we'd end up married someday?

ELI

Ha, yeah.

She looks up at him.

NINA

I used to think about that all the time. The world could have been so different. But...here we are.

He pushes away from her, holding her by the shoulders, searching her face.

ELI

We can walk away right now. Phoenix. Just you and me. I'm serious.

She looks down and sighs.

NINA

Maya's out there somewhere. Getting used. Getting hurt. I'm the only one fighting for her.

Eli tries to say something to make it right, but nothing comes out.

NINA

There's one clue, Eli. Just one. Nacho Gutierrez would know who bought her.

He sighs and crosses his arms.

ELI

Maybe...maybe I can talk to him?  
Get some answers without it turning  
into a whole thing.

NINA

Guys like him don't stay in  
business by sharing sex trafficking  
details with cops.

ELI

We thought our lives were so hard  
back then, before all this  
happened. We kept waiting for it to  
get better.

He trails off. She puts her arms around him again. Eli pulls her close and kisses the top of her head.

She looks up at him, holds his gaze, then presses into him and kisses him.

**EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS**

On the roof of a nearby building, a SKINNY GANGSTER watches Eli and Nina through binoculars.

He reaches for a walkie-talkie.

SKINNY GANGSTER

Now they're kissing.

**INT. RAY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Ray stands behind his desk. In front of him, the heavy gangster stands with a walkie-talkie. Rap music thumps in the background from behind a closed door.

SKINNY GANGSTER (O.S.)

This guy plays his cards right,  
he's getting some tonight.

The heavy gangster glances worriedly at Ray.

Ray scowls.

RAY

She always liked him better. No  
matter what I did, she never gave  
me a chance.

He clenches and unclenches his fists, then pounds the desk, on his feet now.

RAY  
That bitch!

The heavy gangster jumps, startled.

Ray paces furiously, breathing ragged, eyes unfocused. He grabs the back of his chair, knuckles white, then shoves it away.

The heavy gangster watches him with wide eyes, perfectly still.

Ray shakes his head, muttering to himself.

RAY  
Can't do it. Can't do it. Can't let  
that stand. Can't tolerate the  
disrespect...

He stops and turns sharply to the heavy gangster.

RAY  
Send a hit team.

The heavy gangster frowns.

HEAVY GANGSTER  
Boss, you sure? They're your  
friends, right?

RAY  
You'd think after everything I've  
done in the last few years, people  
would take me seriously.  
(erupting)  
If you took me seriously, you'd do  
what I told you!

The heavy gangster starts backing toward the door.

RAY  
When this is over, you make sure  
everyone in town knows Ray Cobbins  
put a hit out on his two best  
friends because they threatened the  
Pit Lords, you understand?

The heavy gangster nods.

HEAVY GANGSTER  
You the real thing, boss. I'll make  
sure everyone knows it.

He backs out the office door, closing it behind him.

Ray slumps down into his chair, spent. His face crumbles and he buries his head in his hands, sobbing.

**EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT**

Eli and Nina are still outside, standing close together. They're breathing a little heavier now, both grinning sheepishly.

NINA  
I always wanted to kiss you.

ELI  
Was it weird?

NINA  
A little. You?

ELI  
A little.

NINA  
You wanna...go inside?

He looks at her a long moment, like, Are you serious?

ELI  
I'm not saying I don't, I just...a lot's happened tonight, you know?

NINA  
No, no, it's okay.

ELI  
I haven't seen you for four years, and you've only been back a couple hours...and there's....  
(whispering)  
...there's still a dead body in the trunk, you know?

Nina raises her eyebrows and nods, like, Fair point.

ELI  
I'm not rejecting you, believe me. I'm just saying, let's give it a minute.

Nina smiles.

NINA  
I feel safe with you. I always took that for granted, but it's....it's been a long time since I--

She trails off as two vintage muscle cars and a tricked-out Civic roar down the street toward the motel. They both turn to look as the engine noises grow louder.

ELI  
Get inside.

Nina pulls the key from her pocket, jumps to the front door of her room, working the lock.

Eli ducks down behind his patrol car and keeps watching. He reaches down and unfastens the service weapon holstered at his hip, a Glock 17.

Nina gets the door open.

NINA  
Is it for us?

Eli pauses and sees them slowing to enter the motel parking lot.

ELI  
Looks that way.

He reaches for his radio.

ELI  
Two-two to dispatch. I've got three Pit Lord cars approaching at high speed. I think I might be in trouble here. I need as much backup as you can give me. Harmony Motel, room 12.

NINA  
Get in here!

DISPATCH (O.S.)  
Copy, two-two. I'm working on it.

Eli darts over to the front door and they both get inside. Nina locks and bolts the door behind them.

#### **INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The room's small. Bed against the back wall, dresser to the left of the door, closet on the right sharing a wall with the next room over. A window next to the door looks out at the parking lot.

Nina pulls the MP5 from under the bed. Eli raises his eyebrows when he sees it.

ELI  
Damn, girl!

NINA  
Help me.

She leans down to push the wheeled bed. Eli comes around and helps push it up against the front door.

The engine sounds roar outside as the cars descend on them and come to a stop.

Nina pushes over the dresser, letting the TV crash to the floor, and together they shove it up against the bed frame, making it even harder to get in.

She picks up the MP5 off the bed.

NINA  
You know how to use this?

ELI  
Uh, no.

She switches the lever on the side.

NINA  
It's on auto. There'll be more recoil than your pistol, so just use short bursts.

Eli takes the gun.

ELI  
We might be able to talk our way out of this.

Several car doors slam outside.

Nina pulls a pistol-grip shotgun from the duffel in the closet and cocks it, then grabs the M16 and slings it over her shoulder.

NINA  
Ray betrayed us. They're not here to talk.

She nods toward the closet.

NINA  
The back wall's thin. We're going through here.

ELI  
What?

An unseen GANGSTER pounds on the front door.

GANGSTER

Listen, we just want to talk. Open  
the door and nobody gets hurt.

Nina aims the shotgun at the door and fires, ripping a hole  
through it at head height.

Eli jumps back against the wall, startled.

Nina pivots and puts two rounds through the front window,  
shredding the curtains and shattering the glass.

Yelling, screaming, and swearing from the remaining GANGSTERS  
outside. Distant screaming from other motel guests.

Nina turns and fires two rounds through the back of the closet,  
one high and one low. She kicks through the drywall into the  
adjacent room.

NINA

Hurry!

She pushes through the drywall. Eli finally gets it and follows  
her through.

Behind them, gunfire erupts and bullets punch through the  
walls.

NINA

Shut the door!

Eli reaches back through and closes the closet door behind  
them.

**INT. ADJACENT MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The room's dark. Loud gunfire and yelling outside.

A siren wails in the distance.

Nina tosses down the shotgun and grabs the M16, checks the  
safety and cycles the charging handle.

She sneaks toward the window and peeks out behind the curtain.

ELI

How many?

NINA

Two down, six standing.

He grabs his radio.

ELI  
 (quietly)  
 Shots fired. Two Pit Lords down,  
 six standing. I'm with a civilian  
 in room 13 now.

DISPATCH (O.S.)  
 Copy, two-two. Garcia's on her way,  
 I'm calling in the day shift. I can  
 hear the gunshots from here. Hang  
 in there, Freeman.

The shooting slows, then stops.

GANGSTER #2 (O.S.)  
 Did we get 'em?

GANGSTER #3 (O.S.)  
 Shut up!

GANGSTER #2 (O.S.)  
 I think we got 'em.

GANGSTER #4 (O.S.)  
 Let's bail before the cops get  
 here.

GANGSTER #3 (O.S.)  
 Nacho said to finish this. Shoot  
 the cops if you have to. Marcus, go  
 kick that door down.

Thumping noises as they kick in the door.

ELI  
 What do we do?

NINA  
 Ssh. Just wait.

More thumping.

GANGSTER #3 (O.S.)  
 It's blocked. Go in the window!

The siren is loud now, coming from the other side of the  
 parking lot.

GANGSTER #2 (O.S.)  
 Cops are here.

GANGSTER #3 (O.S.)  
 Just go, go, go!

Sounds of glass being cleared out. Grunting as they climb  
 inside.

Nina watches out the window, then reaches over and gently unlocks the door.

She counts down with her fingers for Eli.

Three. Two. One.

She yanks the door open.

**EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS**

On the far side of the parking lot, near the entrance, a patrol car has stopped. Officer Garcia is behind it, her Glock drawn and aimed toward the chaos.

Nina emerges from the door and advances military-style, rifle smoothly leveled at her shoulder.

Two gang members linger outside, and Nina drops them with a single bullet each before they can even turn around.

Eli looks toward the now-smashed window and sees a gangster turn and raise a gun. Eli takes him down with a short burst from the MP5.

Nina quickly pivots and puts a round into each of the three men still standing.

Silence. Panting. Eli's wide-eyed. They watch the dead men for movement.

ELI

Shit. Shit shit shit.

More sirens approach in the distance.

Nina throws the M16 in the backseat of her Camry and gets into the driver's seat. Eli gets into the passenger seat, still holding the MP5.

They back out of the parking space and turn toward Garcia's patrol car at the entrance.

**EXT. MOTEL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS**

When they reach her, she leans down to talk to them. Eli is hyped on adrenaline, but Nina is calmer.

GARCIA

You throw quite a party, Freeman.  
You hurt?

ELI

There're gonna be more coming. We gotta disappear.

GARCIA

(motioning toward Nina)  
Who's this?

NINA

Innocent bystander.

GARCIA

I could tell from the assault rifle.

(to Nina)

You're the one that ran from me earlier, aren't you?

Nina shrugs and gives a sheepish smile.

NINA

Yeah, sorry. Long story.

GARCIA

I can guess most of it. Pit Lords coming after you, you gotta run, and ol' Garcia gets to clean up the mess. Gonna be one of those nights, I guess.

The sirens in the background are getting closer.

Garcia sighs.

GARCIA

Well, Chief and the day boys'll be here in a sec. Wanna stick around and fill 'em in on the situation?

Eli and Nina both shake their heads.

ELI

No, you know how it is.

GARCIA

Yeah, alright. Well, go on, get out of here. I'll evacuate and get the place blocked off. Stay alive if you can, huh?

ELI

I owe you, Garcia.

Garcia nods. Nina pulls out into the street and speeds away.

**EXT. JAMAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Nina's car pulls to a stop in the street in front of a modest house with a couple of project cars in the front yard.

Nina grabs the M16 from the back seat and gets out. Eli follows, holding the MP5. They hurry to the front door of the house, glancing around to make sure nobody sees them.

Eli pounds on the front door.

A moment later, a shirtless and squinting JAMAL JACKSON pokes his head out of an open window.

JAMAL

Eli, that you? What the hell time is it?

ELI

Hey, Jamal, come open the door.

JAMAL

Why you carrying them big guns?

ELI

Open the door!

JAMAL

Alright, alright.

His head disappears back into the window.

**INT. JAMAL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Jamal shuffles toward the front door, wearing only his tighty-whities. He swings the door open and freezes when he sees the M16.

JAMAL

Whoa, whoa, whoa. What is this?

ELI

Gang's looking for us. Let us in.

Jamal steps aside. Nina and Eli duck inside.

JAMAL

And you decided to bring that shit to your ol' friend Jamal's house, huh? Take me down with you?

NINA

Hi, Jamal.

Jamal looks at her for a moment, frowning.

Then he recognizes her, and his eyes bug out.

JAMAL

Oh, shit! Nina! How you been? What are you doing here? You in trouble?

NINA

You still have Maya's car? Is it running?

Jamal goes still.

JAMAL

Is she here? Maya?

Nina shakes her head, and Jamal looks down, heartbroken in an instant.

NINA

I'm trying to find her, but I need a faster car. Eli said you still had Maya's?

JAMAL

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I'll show you.

#### **INT. JAMAL'S GARAGE - NIGHT**

Jamal's garage is full of car repair tools, auto parts, welding equipment.

To one side of the garage, there's a car covered in a dust cloth.

He gently peels the cloth back, revealing a gleaming, flawless, show-ready 1968 Ford Mustang Fastback.

JAMAL

Kept her running in case Maya ever came back. Made a few enhancements. She's in good shape.

NINA

Maya was taken, Jamal. We both were. She never would have just left you like that.

Jamal swallows.

JAMAL

I wondered if it was something like that. Is she okay now?

NINA  
I don't know. But...no. She's not.  
That's why I'm trying to find her.

JAMAL  
Oh, God. Okay. Okay.

He reaches over to a parts organizer and opens a drawer, taking out a set of keys. He hands them to her.

JAMAL  
Take it. Find her. If I can do  
anything else, just say it.

She gives him her Camry keys in return.

NINA  
Might want to hide my old one until  
this blows over.

Eli gives Jamal a fist bump.

ELI  
We gotta go, brother. It's too hot  
here tonight.

JAMAL  
No boxing this week?

ELI  
Not at the gym, anyway.

JAMAL  
I'll pray for you. If, uh...if you  
see Maya, tell her...

Nina steps forward and embraces him.

NINA  
I'll tell her. Thanks, Jamal.

**EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JAMAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

It's quiet.

Then a powerful, throaty, growling engine roars to life.

A moment later, the Mustang prowls out from the house, its curves catching the overhead street lights.

It eases out into the street and turns, barely restrained, wanting to run.

The Mustang cruises away through Harmony down an empty street, the only thing in motion in an otherwise still night.

**INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT**

Eli and Nina stare forward as the Mustang pulsates beneath the overhead street lights, their faces catching the passing neon.

NINA

Your Glock's a nine, right? You should reload from your extra mag.

Eli frowns, then takes out a spare Glock magazine from his belt, then removes the magazine from the MP5 and begins transferring rounds.

ELI

You really got me in some shit, Nina.

NINA

I remember telling you I didn't want to drag you down with me.

ELI

Yeah, then you went and killed someone.

NINA

Wasn't my idea to go to Ray.

ELI

I was trying to keep you alive.

NINA

I've gotten pretty good at it on my own.

ELI

I think telling him you didn't respect him was a bad idea.

NINA

Nah, that wasn't it. I'm thinking he had someone watching us at the motel. Got jealous when he saw us...you know...

He looks down at the MP5 resting on his lap.

ELI

I never killed anyone before. Winged a suspect once, but he didn't die or anything.

NINA

It's good to get your first one out of the way.

Eli turns and looks at her, but doesn't speak, so she keeps going.

NINA

My first was my pimp in New Mexico. I just couldn't take him anymore. The other girls were so happy when they found out. It made the world a better place.

ELI

I'm a cop, Nina. We need laws, and we need people to enforce them. That's my job. My duty. That's what I do.

NINA

I know you, Eli. I know what you're about, and I love that you're one of the good guys. But...there are no cops in this town. There's no justice being served. You do what the gang lets you do, and ignore what they tell you to ignore. It's just...theater.

ELI

I'm trying to save my town. What the hell else am I supposed to do?

They've left town. A long, dark two-lane highway through the desert.

Nina turns and looks at him for a moment.

NINA

That's exactly what I did.

She turns back to watch the road.

NINA

I killed my pimp, stole a bunch of money from the gang, and ran away. I was homeless until the cartel found me, helped me get off heroin.

Eli looks at her.

NINA

They trained me as a sicaria. An assassin. I'm smart, so I could infiltrate, get close. I told them I wouldn't kill civilians, just rival criminals, people the world would be better off without.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

Not my dream job, but I got away from a lot of bad stuff and made a better life for myself, only because I stopped doing what I was told. Stopped following rules.

Eli's silent for a while.

ELI

I'm sorry I wasn't there for you.

She shrugs it off, though her eyes are moist.

NINA

Wasn't your fault. You didn't know. You're here for me now, though.

Nina notices headlights in the rearview, gaining on them quickly. She narrows her eyes, watching them.

Eli manages a small smile, then looks down.

ELI

I, uh...I'm trying to be. I don't know how far I can go down this road with you, you know? It's just...

Red and blue lights flash behind them, accompanied by a police siren whoop.

NINA

Shit.

ELI

Were you speeding?

NINA

I'm about to. We can lose him.

He sticks the mag back into the MP5 and pushes it down beside him. Holsters his Glock.

ELI

Don't do anything stupid, okay? Pull over and I'll talk to them.

NINA

Can you see who it is?

He turns and looks back.

ELI

I can't tell. Just pull over.

Nina's reluctant, but slows and eases the Mustang to the side of the road.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The patrol car behind the Mustang has its brights on, and pops a spotlight as well, flooding Eli and Nina with light.

A dark figure steps out, his revolver drawn and leveled at the Mustang.

Chief Rodney Simmons's voice blasts over the patrol car's loudspeaker.

RODNEY

Step out of the car. Hands in the air.

**INT. MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS**

Eli frowns.

ELI

That's Chief Simmons.

Nina gives him a look.

NINA

I told you what he did to me.

ELI

You are not going to shoot the Chief of Police, Nina. Just hold it together.

RODNEY (O.S.)

(loudspeaker)

Get out of the car now.

Eli gives Nina one last look, then opens his door and steps out. She hesitates, then does the same.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Eli and Nina emerge into the bright light, hands raised.

ELI

(calling to Rodney)

Chief, it's me.

RODNEY

You never learn, Freeman.

ELI

They tried to kill us.

Rodney advances toward Nina, his .357 revolver aimed.

RODNEY

Well, now the blood's on your hands. You can't do that shit and just leave town. I gotta take you in until we get this sorted out.

ELI

Chief, you know what'll happen if you take us back there.

Rodney pulls out a pair of cuffs.

RODNEY

(to Nina)

Turn around. Hands behind your back.

NINA

I'm not turning my back on you.

RODNEY

(quietly)

You know...I remember you.

NINA

Yeah? Don't blame me for your limp dick.

He levels the gun at her head.

RODNEY

Turn around! Now!

NINA

Come get some.

He steps toward her and grabs her shoulder, spinning her around and shoving her hard against the car.

Eli rounds the car quickly toward them.

ELI

Chief! Stop!

Rodney points the gun at Eli.

RODNEY

Back off, Freeman.

Nina spins an elbow into Rodney's head, knocking him backwards.

He shakes his head clear, snarls, and levels the gun at Nina. There's a bang and blood sprays out the side of his head. He drops.

Nina turns and looks at Eli, who stands holding his Glock.

NINA  
Nice shot.

ELI  
Oh, shit. Shit. Did I really just do that?

Nina inspects Rodney's body.

NINA  
Looks that way.

Eli's gun arm slumps to his side.

ELI  
I just shot the chief of police. To protect a murderer who was resisting arrest. I'm going to prison the rest of my life if they don't just execute me.

Nina approaches him.

NINA  
Only if you keep following their rules. You pulled that trigger because you knew what's right matters more than what's allowed.

He glances up at her, lost.

NINA  
Welcome to my world.

#### **EXT. DESERT - NIGHT**

Eli and Nina drag Rodney's corpse behind a large, scrubby bush where he won't be seen by passing cars. The landscape around them still flashes red and blue from Rodney's patrol car lights.

They drop his legs unceremoniously. Eli stares at the body. Nina watches him.

ELI  
A few hours ago, everything was normal. Now nothing is.

NINA

I've been there.

Eli looks down at himself. At his uniform.

He reaches down and undoes his badge, then hurls it with an animal grunt into the darkness of the desert landscape.

Nina nods to him.

He frantically untucks and unbuttons his uniform shirt, peels it off, and throws it into the darkness, leaving him without any police identifiers.

NINA

Imagine the good you could do if you answered only to yourself.

ELI

I don't even know what I am now.

NINA

I was thinking...the gang knows we took off, and they think this asshole went to finish us, so they think we're either dead or running. We've got an opportunity here.

ELI

To do what?

NINA

The last thing they'd expect now is for us to show up at their door.

Eli stares out at the empty desert.

ELI

I just want it all to stop. I want our town back. I want Maya back. I want Ray back.

NINA

We're only going to find those things in Harmony, and we've got surprise on our side if we go now.

Eli takes a deep breath. His expression hardens.

ELI

I guess we better go back and ask Nacho Gutierrez about your sister.

**EXT. NACHO'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

The Mustang stops on the street outside the small house. Cypress Hill's "Loco en el Coco" blasts from inside.

Eli and Nina get out and march side by side up to the front door. Nina has Rodney's .357 tucked behind her back.

They reach the front door and Eli knocks. A moment later the door opens a crack, held in place by a chain latch. A NERDY GANGSTER peeks out.

NERDY GANGSTER

What?

ELI

Officer Freeman, Harmony Police.  
We're looking for Ignacio  
Gutierrez. Is he home tonight?

NERDY GANGSTER

What's this about? Where's your  
badge?

ELI

Welfare check. Passerby said he  
heard crying children in the house.

NERDY GANGSTER

Nah, man, ain't no kids here.

ELI

Hoping you'd say that.

Eli steps back and kicks the door open, breaking the chain and sending the nerdy gangster sprawling onto the floor.

**INT. NACHO'S HOUSE (VARIOUS ROOMS) - CONTINUOUS**

The music's blasting now. Nina ducks inside and kicks the nerdy gangster in the face before he can scream.

Eli pulls his Glock and aims it at a HAIRY GANGSTER, who's sitting with his LAPDANCING GIRLFRIEND. Eli jerks his head toward the door. They take the hint and run outside.

A STOCKY GANGSTER emerges into the hallway, startled when he realizes something's up. He charges at Nina. She gets low and hip-tosses him, straining under his weight, dropping him hard on the ground.

They move further into the house. Eli pushes open a bedroom door. Smoke wafts out. Inside, a group of POTHEAD GANGSTERS sit around smoking and playing Halo. Guns rest on the coffee table with pizza and soda cans.

ELI  
Where's Nacho?

POTHEAD GANGSTER 1  
Who's asking? I don't know you.

ELI  
Police. You wanna get arrested?  
Tell me where the hell he is.

POTHEAD GANGSTER 1  
This house is off-limit to cops. Go  
ask Chief Simmons, he'll tell you.

Nina taps on Eli's shoulder. He steps back and she takes his place in the doorway.

NINA  
Any of you know who I am?

POTHEAD GANGSTER 2's eyes go wide. Nina notices.

NINA  
Oh, yeah. You were at my parents'  
store.

She levels the .357 and puts two rounds into his chest. The gunshots are lost in the music.

Eli flinches at the shots but keeps his gun up, scanning the room. His breathing's changed. He doesn't look at the body.

The other gangsters turn and look at their dead homie, their smoked-out reflexes not kicking in yet.

One of them finally makes a lunge for the guns on the coffee table, but Nina kicks him in the face. The other gangsters recoil at getting sprayed with his blood.

NINA  
If you run right now I won't shoot  
you. Five, four, three...

The gangsters hesitate, then take off for the door. One stumbles. Nina and Eli make way for them to run away.

From down the hallway, a TOUGH GANGSTER emerges.

TOUGH GANGSTER (O.S.)  
Hell is goin' on?

ELI  
Where's Nach--?

Nina suddenly pushes past him and punches the tough gangster, who falls backwards but collects himself quickly.

He hits back hard, knocking Nina into the wall. She absorbs it, comes back swinging. He catches her once more, but she drops him with a groin punch followed by a knee to the head.

She shoves him to the floor, straddles him, and punches his head until blood spatters the floor.

ELI  
Nina, stop!

Nina hits him one more time, then gets back to her feet, wiping blood off her hands onto the wall.

NINA  
He was there that day. At the store. That's three down so far.

They keep moving. Eli clears a bathroom, motions forward.

They enter a dark bedroom where a GANGSTER COUPLE is doing the dirty under the covers. They stop and glare.

ELI  
Get out of here.

They see the guns and scramble naked out the open window.

They're about to turn and leave when they see a GIANT GANGSTER, an enormous bodybuilder who fills the doorframe.

NINA  
Jesus.

He growls and charges them.

Nina draws the .357 but drops it as he throws her at the wall, smashing drywall and sending her to the floor.

Eli can't get a clean shot. The giant gangster spins and yanks the Glock away, throwing it across the room. Eli scrambles backward to the wall.

ELI  
Shit...

Nina climbs to her feet, wincing, and looks around for a weapon. She grabs a lamp and rips the cord loose. She wraps the ends around her hands.

The giant gangster lumbers toward Eli.

GIANT GANGSTER  
Come here, little piggy...

Eli falls into a boxing stance and throws some well-delivered punches that do nothing except hurt his own hands.

The giant gangster grabs Eli and throws him back against the wall, knocking picture frames to the floor.

Nina leaps onto the gangster's back, throwing the cord around his neck and pulling it tight, but his neck's so muscular he hardly notices. He grabs and lifts Eli.

Nina leans backward, and the giant gangster finally releases Eli and topples backward on top of her. She gets her legs free and wraps them around his neck from behind, crossing them together and squeezing hard in a leg chokehold.

His eyes go wide as he realizes he can't breathe. He tries to pry Nina's legs free but can't get enough leverage.

Eli scrambles and finds his Glock, then gets to his feet. He looks at Nina. Nina nods.

Eli winces and puts three bullets into him. The giant gangster struggles for another moment, then goes still.

Nina's hurting as Eli helps her to her feet, but she forces herself to shake it off. She scoops the .357 off the floor.

NINA

I'm fine. Keep going.

#### **EXT. NACHO'S BACKYARD - NIGHT**

A small norteño band plays a narcocorrido ballad, drowning out the sounds from inside the house.

String lights criss-cross the backyard, swaying gently in the breeze.

Nicely-dressed GUESTS sit at a picnic table in the yard, eating a carne asada dinner. A grill sizzles nearby.

Among them is NACHO GUTIERREZ, dressed all in black, including a black cowboy hat.

Two bodyguards standing nearby with Uzi submachine guns drop after two gunshots. The guests at the table are startled. One woman screams. The band stops playing and scatters.

Eli and Nina emerge from the patio door, guns up, moving smoothly toward the table. Some guests move away, hands up.

NINA

We want Nacho. The rest can go.

The guests scatter and Nacho sits alone at the picnic table. He stares at Eli and Nina, looking defiant.

The guests disperse through a patio gate, except for one older GANGSTER who stands his ground. He reaches for a gun.

GANGSTER

Hey, you think you can just--

Nina turns and shoots him in the chest. Guests scream and stampede toward the gate.

Eli glances around, making sure nobody sneaks up on them, while Nina turns back to Nacho.

NINA

Remember me?

NACHO

You look familiar.

NINA

Nina Reddy. My parents owned the appliance store on Main. Four years ago, you killed them and took me and my sister Maya.

Nacho nods.

NACHO

Okay. What, you want revenge?

NINA

I want to know where my sister is.

He shrugs.

NACHO

I don't know.

NINA

Who'd you sell her to?

NACHO

Well, I need to think about that. It was a long time ago, you know?

NINA

You're stalling.

NACHO

No, I just--

Nina tucks her gun into her pants and rounds the table, grabbing a steak knife on her way. She kicks him in the head, knocking him sideways.

Then she reaches down, grabs his ear, and begins sawing it off with the steak knife. Eli reacts with shock.

Nacho screams and reaches for his ear, trying to knock her away. He eventually succeeds in pushing her back, sitting back upright and clutching what's left of his ear with bloodied fingers.

NACHO

Bitch, you're psycho!

Nina throws down the bloody partial ear and holds her other hand toward his face, fingers splayed, showing the tiny tattoos between them.

NINA

You know what these tattoos mean?

Nacho's swagger shrivels. He swallows.

NINA

Next time you stall, this steak knife literally goes up your ass. Where's my sister?

Panting, Nacho tries to collect himself.

NACHO

I'm trying to remember!

Nina moves toward him, knife ready.

NACHO

Stop! Stop! It was...it was the Vagos MC, in Tucson.

NINA

No, that's who you sold me to.

NACHO

Okay, okay, okay, it was, uh...I remember, uh...it was a guy named Popeye from Sierra Vista. Aryan Brotherhood.

NINA

What's he look like?

NACHO

Like a skinhead, what do you think?

NINA

Okay. Fine. How do you wanna die?

NACHO

What?

NINA

You answered my question, so I'm letting you pick. Make it fast.

NACHO

You're not gonna kill me.

NINA

You made me watch my parents die. Of course I'm gonna kill you.

Nacho looks to Eli for help.

NACHO

You gonna let her do this!?

Eli shrugs, like I don't know what to say, man.

NINA

This is taking too long.

She pulls the gun and aims it at Nacho.

RAY (O.S.)

Stop!

She turns and sees a crew of heavily-armed GANGSTERS streaming into the backyard, weapons on her and Eli.

They take Eli and Nina's guns away and shove them down to their knees. Nina fights back but gets hit several times.

Ray Cobbins stands nearby, arms crossed. Nina glares at him, not with rage but with disgust and pity.

NACHO

Bitch cut my ear off!

RAY

It's over, Nina. You're done.

NINA

Thought we were friends, Ray.

RAY

I could say the same, you coming here and killing my people.

NINA

They aren't your people, Ray. We're your people!

One of the gangsters puts duct tape over her mouth, then does the same to Eli. Others start binding them with rope.

NACHO

I'm gonna carve her up like a mango. Someone go get my knife from inside. And get me a doctor!

Ray hesitates, then his expression hardens.

RAY

Take 'em to the dungeon.

**INT. COPPER MINE CAVERN - NIGHT**

Darkness.

RAY (O.S.)

Get the bag.

Nacho yanks a heavy bag off Nina's head. Blinding light.

She's tied to a metal chair bolted to the stone floor of an excavated cavern. Copper oxide streaks the rough walls in patches of green and blue. Old ore cart rails run along the floor, disappearing into black tunnels on either side. Utility lamps buzz overhead, throwing harsh shadows across the timber supports.

Ray and Nacho stand there, flanked by half a dozen GANGSTERS. Nacho's ear is bandaged, bleeding through.

RAY

What am I gonna do with you, Nina?

NINA

Untie me and show me the way out?

Ray smirks.

RAY

No. Not that.

NACHO

What she needs is Justice.

RAY

You know where we are?

Nina looks around and curls her lip.

NINA

Yeah.

RAY

This is sacred ground.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

The O'Leary Copper Mine, birthplace of the Pit Lords. When the company shut it down thirty years ago, laid everyone off, the miners decided the system wasn't working for them. Went another way.

NINA

Propaganda doesn't work on me, Ray. This is where a bunch of unemployed men decided exploiting the weak was easier than working.

Ray stiffens.

NINA

And they made you shot-caller in Harmony in just a few years. You must be better at it than anyone.

The gangsters stir at the insult, but Ray shuts them down with a glance.

Nacho spits on her, and Ray holds up an annoyed hand.

RAY

Out. All of you.

NACHO

Boss...

RAY

The grownups need to talk. Leave.

Nacho bristles, but obeys. He motions to the others, and they depart into the darkness.

Ray paces, arms crossed.

RAY

I'm trying to be reasonable, Nina, but your disrespect only--

NINA

I want to talk to Ray.

RAY

What?

NINA

I don't want to talk to this dickhead gang lord with a respect complex.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

I wanna talk to Ray Cobbins, my friend, the one I grew up with, the one I hung out with, the one who made me laugh, the one who swore to protect me...  
...the one I loved. He still in there somewhere?

Ray's expression falters, but he gets tough again.

RAY

Not as much as you loved Eli, apparently.

NINA

Have I even asked where he is?

Ray frowns. Nina studies him, reading the hurt beneath the anger.

NINA

It was always you, Ray.

RAY

Bullshit. You were kissing him.

NINA

I thought it was gonna be you, to be honest, but you wouldn't help me. I was lonely, rejected...I needed help. I messed up.

RAY

So, what are you saying?

NINA

I'm saying before jackass kingpin Ray has me tortured and killed, it'd be real nice if I could have 60 seconds with my boy Ray Cobbins. I just want to see him one more time. Then you can go back to being...this.

Ray swallows. His composure wavers. He inhales sharply and exhales slowly.

NINA

Is that you?

Ray is quiet a moment, his swagger gone. His lip quivers.

RAY

Yeah.

She smiles.

NINA

Ray.

She lets that hang in the air.

NINA

Don't just stand there. Sit down!

Ray chuckles despite himself, hesitates, then sits cross-legged on the stone floor in front of her. He sighs.

RAY

I'm...I'm really sorry about how things worked out, it's just--

NINA

Listen to what I'm going to say now. It's important. For all of us.

RAY

Okay...

NINA

The worst thing a person can do to themselves is try to be someone they're not, but the hardest thing a person can do is admit that they're lying to themselves. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Ray stares at her, jaw tight, eyes searching hers.

NINA

Your brain's gonna fight you on this one because you're terrified of what it might mean if you accept the truth.

RAY

What truth?

She leans forward.

NINA

That you're not a boss. You're a prisoner. You're in charge, but that just means everyone's watching you and you can't screw it up. You bought into it and now you think you're stuck, but you're not. That's the big lie. The big illusion. You can leave. You can start over.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

You can be someone else. I know, because I did it. Twice. If I live through this, maybe a third time. But you can be free from all of this.

RAY

Nina, it doesn't work like that.

NINA

Let yourself believe it, just for a second. Just hold the idea in your head that you could walk away from all this, go back to being the real Ray Cobbins, that man I love so much. Would you do it?

He stares at her for a long time, then a tear rolls down his cheek. He closes his eyes.

RAY

Oh, God...

He wipes his eyes roughly and stands, putting distance between them.

RAY

You're playing me.

NINA

You know I'm not.

RAY

You're a cop. This is what you do.

NINA

I'm not a cop, Ray. I never was. I was a girl from Harmony who got out, same as you're about to be.

He stares at her, wanting to believe it and terrified to.

NINA

They told me I'd be a whore and a junkie the rest of my life, but I walked away from that lie. You can walk away from this one.

RAY

Nina, I can't. They'll kill me.

NINA

That's what I thought, too, but here I am. I'll help you, Ray.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

We made a pact.

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a worn, yellowed napkin. She unfolds it and holds it up. "The Harmony Three" in faded cursive, with three bloody thumbprints underneath.

Ray stares at it. His composure cracks.

NINA

I'll help you.

RAY

I can't. I can't.

NINA

Look at me. Remember me. Remember the years we spent together. Remember everything we've done. Look at me, Ray. I'm tied to a chair. Nacho's gonna come in here and cut me to pieces. Why would you choose that path? Let's get out of here and go a different way.

RAY

This is my life, Nina. This is all I've got.

NINA

You've got me, Ray.

He looks at her almost in disbelief.

NINA

Untie me. Untie your old friend.

He looks at her for a long time, then lets out a ragged sigh and gets to his feet. He walks behind her and unties the rope binding her to the chair, then the one around her wrists.

She stands, turning to face him. She gets close. Very close. Then she leans into him and kisses him, putting her arms around his neck. Her eyes stay open for a moment, scanning the shadows over his shoulder. Then they close. He hesitates at first, then gives in.

In the distant shadows, Nacho watches this encounter unfold. He shakes his head, disgusted, and walks away into the darkness.

#### **INT. COPPER MINE VALVE ROOM - NIGHT**

Elsewhere in the facility, Eli is alone in a small industrial valve room, hands tied behind his back.

Outside the room, two gangsters stand guard.

Eli prowls the room, testing things. He tries to hook the rope on a sharp pipe fitting and pull, but it just tightens the knot. He winces, flexes his hands to get the blood flowing again.

He scans the room and notices a large valve handle with exposed threads.

He turns around and forces his arms around the big round handle, then begins rubbing the rope on the threads.

**INT. COPPER MINE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

Nacho and a few gangsters from his crew sit scattered around the mine's abandoned employee lounge, watching a late-night Bowflex infomercial on an old TV set.

Ray marches in. They turn to look at him.

RAY

Nacho, I need to talk to you.

NACHO

Yeah, boss.

Ray approaches and stands over Nacho.

RAY

You knew Nina and I were friends.  
Why didn't you tell me what the  
gang did to her?

Nacho shrugs.

NACHO

Didn't seem important. We'd already  
sold her by the time you came up  
the ranks.

RAY

You withheld important information  
from me, and I can't tolerate that.

NACHO

Didn't seem important to me. There  
were dozens of girls like her.

RAY

I don't like your attitude, Nacho.  
You're forgetting who's in charge  
around here.

Nacho shrugs and shakes his head.

NACHO

No, I know exactly who's in charge.

RAY

Yeah? Who's that?

Nacho reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a Nokia 3210 cell phone. The screen shows it's on an active call.

NACHO

Your boss, the big boss, Mr. Clyde Zimmerman over in Benning.

Ray glances around the room nervously. The other gangsters stand and approach menacingly.

NACHO

I told Mister Zimmerman your girl killed a bunch of our guys tonight, but all you could do was... kiss her. Seems like compromised leadership to me.

CLYDE ZIMMERMAN's gravelly voice sounds from the phone.

CLYDE (V.O.)

Ray, I'm disappointed in you. Nacho's taking your place as shot-caller for Harmony, and he's going to bring you here tonight for judgment.

#### **INT. COPPER MINE CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

Nina moves quickly through a tunnel, a pry bar in hand. She rounds a corner and sees two gangsters standing guard outside a door. She doesn't hesitate.

#### **INT. COPPER MINE VALVE ROOM - NIGHT**

Eli continues to work on rubbing the ropes against the valve threads until they start to come loose and he's able to free his hands.

He hears noises outside the door. He looks around frantically for a weapon. He finds a length of railing with some rusted welds and moves it back and forth until it pops loose.

He wields the makeshift weapon like a baseball player as he hears the doorknob rattle.

The door opens and he comes at it swinging.

Nina ducks out of the way just in time.

NINA

Hey, hey, it's me!

Eli stops, confused. Two dead gangsters are slumped on the floor, one in a pool of blood and the other with a pry bar sticking out of his chest. Nina holds a pistol she took off one of them.

ELI

You okay?

NINA

Yeah. Ray turned. He got me out, but Nacho saw us together. They took him.

ELI

Wait, what? He just let you go?

NINA

He's back. Ray is back. Let's move.

#### **EXT. COPPER MINE - NIGHT**

The sprawling mining facility sits among barren desert mountains. Sodium lamps on tall masts throw orange light across terraced rock faces and rusted conveyor structures. A row of massive haul trucks sit dormant near the pit's edge, tires taller than a man.

Nacho leads a gang procession through the facility, pulling a beaten and bloodied Ray by a rope around his neck, his arms bound to a crossbar, crucifixion-style. Gangsters taunt him.

They march past idle crushers and leach pads toward a distant parking area where the gang's muscle cars and tuner imports are parked.

#### **EXT. COPPER MINE PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Crouching low in the shadows, Nina and Eli sneak between cars, Nina checking doors to find one that's unlocked.

Finally, one pops open. It's a Toyota Supra. Eli rounds the car to get in on the passenger side.

Eli checks the backseat. A pistol loose on the floor.

Nina climbs into the driver's seat, then reaches down under the steering wheel. She yanks loose the panel below the steering

column, then fiddles around to find the right wires.

She uses her thumbnail to strip the insulation off the ends of the ignition wires and twists them together.

ELI

Hurry.

Nacho, Ray, and the other gangsters near the parking lot, unaware of Eli and Nina.

She strips the starter wire with her thumbnail.

NINA

Let's hope this works.

She touches the starter wire to the joined ignition wires, and the Supra starts.

#### **EXT. COPPER MINE - NIGHT**

The gangsters look toward the lot as they hear the engine come to life and the headlights turn on.

COLORFUL GANGSTER

Yo, someone's taking my car!

NACHO

It's the whore and the cop. Your former boss here helped them escape. Just more evidence for his tribunal with Mr. Zimmerman.

He motions toward the lot.

NACHO

Rico, Hiroshi, go hunt them down.  
If you don't kill them, don't bother coming back.

Two of the gangsters, RICO and HIROSHI, nod and start running toward the parking lot.

#### **INT. TOYOTA SUPRA - NIGHT**

Yellow lines whip past in a blur as Nina and Eli fly down the two-lane highway through the darkness, the engine emitting a throaty, high-RPM growl.

Eli looks back over his shoulder and sees pinprick headlights in the distance behind them.

ELI

There.

Nina glances in the rearview mirror and sees them.

Nina reaches back and grabs the pistol off the backseat floor.

NINA

Check the glove box.

Eli glances around his seat and under the dash. He opens the glove box and pulls out a gold-plated 1911 pistol with ivory grips and elaborate filigree work.

ELI

Wow.

He checks the mag and racks a round, then looks back again.

NINA

Where would they take him?

ELI

Their headquarters is in Benning.  
That's where they'll go.

NINA

We've got a head start. We need to  
grab some stuff. We're not going  
back to Harmony after this.

ELI

Yeah, I guess not.

NINA

A clean start's a beautiful thing.

Nina glances in the rearview again. They're getting closer.

NINA

They tuned this car to sound good  
instead of go fast.

ELI

How do we wanna do this?

NINA

As soon as we come over this hill,  
I'll show you.

**EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

A 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS with a beastly V8 roars through the night, pulling ever closer to its prey.

**INT. CHEVROLET CHEVELLE - CONTINUOUS**

Hiroshi drives with quiet focus. In the seat next to him, Rico sits with an A-Team style Ruger Mini-14, the stock folded for close quarters.

The red lights in front of them ascend, then disappear.

RICO  
Where'd they go?

HIROSHI  
There's a hill.

RICO  
Oh.

HIROSHI  
When we catch up, I'll move into the oncoming lane. I want you to shoot out their left rear tire.

RICO  
Ah, man, we're gonna be heroes. Jenny won't be able to keep her hands on me after this.

HIROSHI  
Just stay focused. You gotta be cold as ice. Don't get excited. You get excited, you miss. Just take a long, deep breath--

They crest the hill and immediately see a pair of headlights parked in their lane staring right at them.

HIROSHI  
Shit! Shit!

He slams the brakes and yanks the steering wheel to swerve away from the car.

**EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The Chevelle slides out of control toward a roadside cliff.

Gunfire erupts from the roadside. Nina is visible only in the muzzle flashes, tracking the Chevelle smoothly as it slides past.

**INT. CHEVROLET CHEVELLE - CONTINUOUS**

Rico's window shatters and his head explodes, splattering blood over the side of Hiroshi's face.

Seeing the cliffs coming ever closer, Hiroshi yanks the wheel the other way, sending the Chevelle lurching into a sideways slide down the highway.

Suddenly it catches and the outside world spins crazily while everything inside the car becomes weightless.

HIROSHI  
God Jesus!

**EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Eli and Nina watch as the Chevelle sails through the air sideways, spinning for a long moment before smashing down to earth and ripping into pieces as it continues to tumble.

NINA  
That worked better than last time.

She glances at Eli, standing in the moonlight next to her.

NINA  
C'mon, we gotta go.

They climb into the Supra, turn back around and continue down the road, carefully weaving through the remains of the Chevelle, then opening the throttle once clear.

**EXT. NACHO'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

They pull up in front of Nacho's house, which is now dark and quiet. The Mustang still sits in front where they'd left it earlier.

Eli and Nina ditch the Supra and scramble into the Mustang. The engine roars to life, the lights come on, and they take off down the street.

**EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT**

Eli's patrol car and Nina's Camry are still parked out in front of her room. A couple other patrol cars are scattered nearby.

Nina pulls the Mustang up near the room.

Eli hops out and approaches the room's door, which is open, with police tape across it. The lights are on inside.

Eli ducks under the tape.

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

JOHNNY WASHINGTON, a cop in jeans and a t-shirt with a police utility belt, stands inside taking evidence photos.

ELI

Hey, Johnny. Sorry they woke you up for this. Where are the others?

JOHNNY

(sleepily)

They went to Dottie's for coffee. What are you doing here?

ELI

Chief wants the firearms secured at the station before the ATF liaison gets here in the morning. I'm just grabbing the bag from the closet.

JOHNNY

Yeah, alright. I already got pictures of the closet.

ELI

Cool.

Eli grabs the heavy black duffel of weapons out of the closet. He unzips it partway and checks the contents: handguns, shotgun shells, a scoped rifle, a couple of grenades. He zips it back up and ducks under the police tape.

**EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS**

Eli hauls the bag over to the still-running Mustang and tosses it in the back seat.

Then he walks over to his patrol car and gets inside. He starts the engine.

The two cars back out and speed across the parking lot, then turn and accelerate onto the street.

**EXT. FARM ROAD - NIGHT**

The powerful engines of Eli's patrol car and Nina's Mustang roar as they charge down a long dirt farm road at high speed, a huge cloud of dust behind them.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The two cars eventually reach a junction where the farm road emerges onto another desert highway.

They take it fast, their suspensions bucking as they go over the bump between the dirt road and the highway.

Once on the long, straight highway, they open their cars up to full throttle and take it at an insane speed.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

Elsewhere on the highway, a long convoy of gang cars flies down the freeway at high speed.

**INT. BUICK GRAND NATIONAL - NIGHT**

Ray, his face bloodied, sits in the backseat of a murdered-out Buick Grand National with his wrists bound behind his back. He stares ahead at the road, bracing himself for what's coming.

A big Polynesian gangster, SIONE, sits on his right holding an Uzi. Another gangster, CHICO, is up front driving.

Ray glances over at him.

RAY  
(whispering)  
Hey, Sione...

Sione glances over at him.

SIONE  
Ain't supposed to talk.

RAY  
You like Nacho?

SIONE  
Boss, you ain't supposed to talk.

RAY  
I always did you right, Sione. Took care of you.

Chico looks back at them.

CHICO  
Nacho said no talking.

SIONE

Chico, you little shit, he pulled you from a bad home and gave you a life. Don't tell him he can't talk.

Chico shoots Sione a puzzled glare in the rearview mirror.

RAY

I'm just asking as someone who was good to both of you...if you see me running, just look the other way, would you?

Sione looks at him stonily for a long time.

SIONE

Okay, now it's quiet time.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

A blacked-out Lexus takes lead of the convoy.

**INT. LEXUS - NIGHT**

Nacho sits in the backseat with his GIRL, all acrylic nails and gold hoops, who stares at him adoringly and runs her finger along the side of his face.

In the front seat, a SUITED GANGSTER has the wheel and a TACTICAL GANGSTER rides shotgun.

The tactical gangster squints at some strange light up ahead.

TACTICAL GANGSTER

Slow down.

The suited gangster frowns at the strange light and eases up on the speed.

Nacho feels the shift and turns from her, looking ahead.

NACHO

What is that?

As they come around a mountain curve, they see the source of the unusual light...

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

It's a flaming police car, parked sideways across both lanes. The red and blue lights on top melt away. The blaze illuminates the desert in flickering orange light.

**INT. LEXUS - NIGHT**

Nacho leans forward.

NACHO  
Go check it out.

The tactical gangster nods and pulls out a big handgun.

**EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The convoy pulls to a stop in a line behind the Lexus.

The tactical gangster steps out and approaches the fire. His head swivels around, assessing the surroundings.

A sharp crack. The whistle of a bullet. The Lexus's rear window shatters. A wet thud. Nacho's leg sprays blood and he screams.

The girl freezes, then scrambles out of the car with a small handgun and starts firing into the darkness.

The tactical gangster spins toward the Lexus, sees Nacho's leg, turns to her.

TACTICAL GANGSTER  
Where'd it come from?

She waves toward the hill, still shooting.

TACTICAL GANGSTER  
Sniper! Ov--

Another whistle. His chest explodes with blood. He crumples to the ground.

Chaos. Gangsters pour from their cars, shooting blindly into the night. Others dive behind doors and bumpers. The girl empties her clip and runs.

More zips, thuds, and screams as bullets continue to hit them from out of the night, taking out tires, gas tanks, and gangsters who failed to get to cover fast enough.

**INT. BUICK GRAND NATIONAL - CONTINUOUS**

Chico's eyes dart around at the unfolding pandemonium. Finally he sighs and draws his gun.

CHICO  
Shit, I guess we're doing this. You stay here with him.

Chico opens the door and ducks out into the darkness.

A moment later, Eli jumps into the driver's seat, gun in Sione's face.

ELI

You wanna get out or get shot?

Sione stares at him impassively, then turns to Ray and gives him a respectful nod.

SIONE

You were good to me.

Ray nods back. Sione opens the door and slowly climbs out of the car.

Ray's eyes close. He exhales.

Eli puts the gun down and starts the car.

ELI

Hold on, Miss Daisy.

**EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The Grand National, stuck in the middle of the convoy, makes an awkward three-point turn, pushing into one of the other cars.

The car bounces as they drive over a dead gangster.

Once clear, they take off the opposite direction.

**INT. BUICK GRAND NATIONAL - CONTINUOUS**

They drive a short distance, then Eli makes a hard turn into the desert.

He turns the headlights off, driving only by the light of the moon.

Ray, arms still bound, bounces around the back seat.

**EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT**

Nina crouches behind a large rock reloading a Remington 700 sniper rifle with an integral suppressor. Bullets ping around her from the gangsters firing randomly in the darkness.

Looking around, she catches a glimpse of the Grand National moving in the darkness in the desert behind her.

She smiles.

She finishes loading, emerges from behind the rock into firing position with the rifle, scans quickly, and takes a couple more shots toward the convoy.

When they start shooting back, she ducks back behind the rock again and picks up a frag grenade. She pulls the pin and lobs it in the direction of the convoy.

Seconds pass. Then an explosion. Screaming.

She scrambles through the darkness up and around the hill to where her Mustang waits in the moonlight.

#### **EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT**

It looks like a war zone. Scattered bodies. Flames. Moaning and screaming from the wounded.

Those few still alive get back to their cars and turn them around, escaping down the highway back the way they came.

Nacho, in agony from his bad leg wound, struggles out of the backseat of the Lexus, smearing blood everywhere.

He opens the driver's door and pulls out the dead suited gangster, the body tumbling to the asphalt.

Wincing and whimpering, he tries to lower himself into the driver's seat, then finds himself pulled backward.

It's Nina.

She shoves him to the ground, then reaches into the car and pulls the keys from the ignition.

NACHO

Please...

She turns and hurls the keys toward the flaming police car.

Then she turns back and kicks him hard in his shot leg.

He screams and sobs.

Nina reaches down and unsheathes the knife at his side, the bowie knife with "Justice" etched on the blade.

NINA

Life changes fast, huh?

She straddles him, pinning his arms, and grabs his hair.

NACHO  
Please, God...

NINA  
You're not in God's jurisdiction  
anymore. You want a favor, tell it  
to the Devil.

Then he notices the knife in her hand. His eyes go wide.

NACHO  
No, no, nonono...!

His pleas become an unintelligible bloody gurgle as she slides the knife into his throat, spilling blood everywhere.

She holds him there until he stops moving.

Silence, except for the crackling of the burning police car.

Nina stays where she is for a long moment, the knife still in her hand. She looks at his face. Looks at the knife. Her expression doesn't change.

She gets to her feet, drops the knife on his chest, and walks back toward the Mustang.

**EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN**

The sky to the east glows warmly. The night's over.

Eli and Ray stand leaning against the dusty Grand National.

Nina approaches in the Mustang, a trail of dust behind her. She pulls up beside them, window down.

NINA  
Good morning, boys.

Ray leans down to the window and holds up a finger.

RAY  
One night. You've been in town one  
night and caused all of this.

ELI  
I had a promising career in law  
enforcement before she came along.

RAY  
And I was the most powerful man in  
town a few hours ago.

Nina smiles.

NINA  
Yeah, but look at us. The Harmony  
Three, back together again.

ELI  
It's not always going to be like  
this, is it?

NINA  
I hope not.

Eli shakes his head.

RAY  
Well...I call shotgun.

He pulls the driver's side door open and folds the seat  
forward.

**INT. MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS**

Eli climbs into the back.

ELI  
Fine, I'm gonna lay down and sleep  
back here.

Eli awkwardly makes himself at home in the back, then Ray puts  
the seat back and gets in, closing the door.

Ray looks out the passenger window, back the way they came. The  
glow on the horizon behind them. He turns forward.

RAY  
Where we going now?

Nina turns the car around and starts heading back toward the  
highway.

NINA  
I figure we get cleaned up and find  
somewhere to eat, then make our way  
to Sierra Vista.

RAY  
What's in Sierra Vista?

NINA  
The next clue about where my sister  
might be.

RAY

Well, uh, speaking for me and Eli,  
we don't much have to go back to,  
so I guess count us in.

ELI

Starting over. It's a scary thing.

RAY

No shit, brother.

NINA

We burned down half a town tonight,  
got a bunch of people killed, and  
lost everything we had.

She lets that sit. Then, slowly, she smiles.

NINA

Fresh start.

**EXT. DESERT - DAWN**

As the first rays of sunlight peek over the horizon, the Mustang rolls onto the highway and accelerates into the distance, a cloud of dust trailing behind it.