

'64 MALIBU

by

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*"Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the
person you are."*

- Kurt Cobain

Room #1

13. SWEET & SOUR CHICKEN..... \$5.25

INT. MOTEL ROOM #1 - NIGHT

The kind of room you rent by the hour and regret every minute. At a table, under the yellow glow of a lamp, is KENZIE (20's), dressed casually and wearing headphones.

She's entranced, music in her ears. It's clear she desperately needs this moment of escapism.

Her old laptop fights for space beside a book on Criminology and the debris of junk food wrappers.

She chugs a soda, fails to dunk it in the trashcan, and grooves along to the tune, getting more and more into it.

A DLSR camera on bed with a long lens.

The melody builds. Her body rises.

She busts more moves. Nods and claps along.

She mouths along to the lyrics, holding nothing back as the song heads to a climax and--

Silence.

She catches her breath, presses the headphones against her ears, and listens intently.

White noise.

She prods her laptop, revealing the waveform of recording software. She plays with levels.

Just static.

She moves to the window and tweaks back the curtain.

An old Cadillac deVille. A beat up Tacoma truck.

She grabs the camera and chimps through blurry photos of a young woman eating at a diner. She seems disappointed by what she sees.

Her attention turns to her cell phone. She checks it and tosses it aside. She's bored as hell.

She heaves up that tombstone of a textbook and forces herself to study.

Headlights illuminate the curtains.

She grabs the headphones. Holds them to her ears. Waits.

The lights go out outside. A few moments pass, then--

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK at her door.

Kenzie jogs over and carefully opens it. SAM (30's) enters. He's an awkward, immature looking guy sporting a dorky haircut, a heavy rucksack on his shoulder, and Chinese takeout in his hands.

She closes the door and braces herself against it. She looks mischievous and excited.

He dumps everything on the bed and looks back with the kind of tension only a young man hiding a deep crush can.

KENZIE

Dude! I'm so fucking glad you showed.

SAM

This better be worthwhile.

KENZIE

This is big! This is fucking *big*, okay? If I had a dick, you'd want to suck it so hard right now.

He hands her a Chinese take-out carton plus plastic fork.

SAM

Thanks for that image.

KENZIE

You're a fucking saint.

He tosses her a napkin and retreats to the bed. She proceeds to stuff her face.

SAM

Jeez Kenz, when'd you last eat?

She waves a half eaten candy bar.

KENZIE

I'm in the fucking flow. You know what I'm like when I'm in the flow. Do not kill my buzz.

He draws out an old camcorder from his rucksack and toys with it while picking at his food.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

You sure this is a thirteen? Tastes like a twenty-three?

SAM

You prefer the twenty-three.

KENZIE

Bullshit! You just like the idea of me preferring the twenty-three. Hand that motherfucker over.

They swap meals. She much prefers the alternative.

KENZIE (CONT'D)
You lose, sucker.

She can't contain her excitement and tongues her mouth as she waits for him to say something.

KENZIE (CONT'D)
You not gonna fucking ask me what's going down?

SAM
I got a feeling you're gonna tell me anyway.

KENZIE
I am gonna tell you anyway, smartass. Today I got a tip off. Told me to visit that coffee shop on Hawthorne Boulevard. You know the one? The one where that crazy couple tried to rob the place and then ended up getting robbed during their own robbery?

SAM
Sure, Bobby Ruth's place.

KENZIE
Previously Bobby Ruth's place. He's left now on account of not liking a gun to his head when he's supposed to be serving pancakes, but yeah, that's the joint.

SAM
So?

KENZIE
So, back in the day, who did we know would be getting breakfast at Bobby Ruth's, without fail?

He stops eating and shrugs. She's hurt he doesn't know.

KENZIE (CONT'D)
Dude, be honest, do you give a shit about this or are you just being a cunt right now for fun?

SAM
I give a shit, I do. I'm just done getting excited. Seems like life's ninety percent dreaming and ten percent disappointment.

KENZIE

So, don't let it break your back.
That's how you lose.

He shoulders the camcorder and switches on the spotlight.

SAM

(impersonating news)

We're here live from the shittiest motel in L.A to hear a first hand report from legendary PI wannabe, Kenzie Jaymes who wants to tell us all about something we're absolutely sure our viewers simply will not give a fuck about.

She's evasive. He tracks her.

KENZIE

That better not be recording.

SAM

Chill out. I'm just messing. It's new. You like it?

KENZIE

Yeah, it's fucking amazing, Sam. Go point it at someone else.

Despondently, he eases the camera back down.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

Dude, I found Eleanor Gherardini!

She sits there like streamers should be going off behind her. He isn't shocked.

SAM

Kenz, Eleanor Gherardini is an old It Girl at best and irrelevant at worst. What the hell? If she crossed the street in front of me I wouldn't recognize her.

Kenzie stares hurt.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fine, fill me in.

KENZIE

Right, firstly, fuck you, she's pretty far from fucking irrelevant. Secondly, the backstory; we know she vanished in twenty-twelve at the tender age of twenty-one into something other than obscurity. Now, that's suspicious enough.

SAM

Is it suspicious though, Kenz? Is it really?

KENZIE

Dude, don't be dismissive! She went off the radar completely. Nobody goes off the radar. You know this city, it's a petri dish under a fucking microscope. I've had my ear to the ground for five years, waiting for some sweet Eleanor Gherardini tattle, and I've gotten zip? Right now, within half a mile, I could tell you where Taylor Swift took her last dump and exactly how nutty it smelled, but Eleanor, she's been in Area Fifty One. Now she shows up at one of her old haunts like she's suddenly been beamed back down to Earth, and I follow her back here to this dive, where, according to the bitch of a receptionist, she's been staying at for nearly an entire week.

She's pretty fucking proud of herself right now.

SAM

And you decided to rent a room?

KENZIE

(avoiding the subject)
She's still got great taste in music. Like, freakishly good.

SAM

You decided to rent a room and you know that's a costly risk.

KENZIE

I'm not sitting in my truck all night, fuck that. Besides, parking my ass here is a lot less suspicious. Anyway, you've fallen into my trap. We're partners now. We can split costs.

SAM

This... this is reckless. Even by your standards. This is reckless.

KENZIE

Well, I'm so fucking sorry for trying to bring you some bank. I'm clearly a monumental dick.

SAM

This is slim pickings. Your new camera, that's pretty much point and shoot. I told you to get it for this exact type of situation.

KENZIE

I know but, when you do your thing, you bring out something deeper, something kinda beautiful.

While that should be a compliment, he turns dour.

SAM

I take trash paparazzi footage and in doing that there's never, ever any beauty.

KENZIE

Really? You saying Ron Galella never took a good photo of Jackie Kennedy? Hell, I've seen a photo of Kristen Stewart pumping gas that nearly turned me gay. Miss me with that bullshit, dude. You're good. Just accept that you're good.

They stare a little too long and a little too intense.

SAM

You could just admit you miss working with me?

KENZIE

Oh yeah, that's it. I so miss these constant arguments.

SAM

That why we no longer hang out?

KENZIE

I'm working. I'm building clients. I'm investigating. I'm not waiting around for everything to just fall into my lap anymore. I'm here to fight and I'm here to survive.

SAM

Investigating? You could at least call it what it is.

KENZIE

It's work. That's what it is. Some fucker's gotta do it and some fucker's gotta get paid.

He sighs.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

I'm cool with it, Sam, especially when it's someone who tries hard to evade snoopy fuckers like me. Eleanor Gherardini, she's a fucking snow leopard and I'm Sir David fucking Attenborough. I'm gonna hide in the bushes, sniffing shit, and following prints until I get what I wanna get.

She stares him down.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

And don't get so high and mighty. You're a lousy, no good piece of shit stringer too, running around in an old cop car hoping to see some granny get shot in the face, just so you can catch her on Candid Camera and sell it to the news.

SAM

No, with you and me there's a big difference actually. I hate this. But you know what I hate the most? The fact I got into it a little too late, just like I do with everything. It's not the fact I hate what I do, it's the fact I'm swimming against the tide to do it. That's what pisses me off. I'm fighting every day just to get to the end of it and feel a little worse about the next.

They share a reluctant smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

Besides, don't hate on my Crown Vic. I'd like to see you try and keep up with it in your Tacoma.

KENZIE

Hey! You can fuck with me, but don't fuck with my truck. Anyway, you're looking' at it all wrong. You always wanted to be a cop. Now you get to play at it every day without getting shot at.

He smirks and turns a little dark.

SAM

You see shit on the road, Kenz. Shit you don't wanna see.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

We had a guy find someone on an overpass who'd been thrown from a flipped car. He was impaled on post right through his lower back, somehow still conscious. Below him, on the highway, he could see his wife, blood pouring from her head. It was obvious she was gone. All our guy could do was talk to him, try and tell him it was all going to be okay while he slowly died. But there's no way any of that shit was ever going to be okay. Now our guy's messed up. He can't work. He can't be alone. He didn't go to a war. He didn't even leave the city. He just finally went beyond the lens and faced reality.

He seems haunted by that tale. Maybe it was him.

KENZIE

Shit, did the story still sell?

SAM

(deadly serious)

Dont.

KENZIE

Dude, I'm okay. Chill. Quit worrying about me.

SAM

You know I can't do that.

She turns on the charm. She's good at it.

KENZIE

Look, if I'm gonna do anything stupid, I'm gonna do it with you.

He nods to the headphones.

SAM

So tell me, how'd you get the bug in her room?

KENZIE

Dude! You're in?

SAM

(beat)

Yeah, I'm in.

KENZIE

Wait right there. This is why I fucking love you.

She exits the room. He lets out a sigh.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Kenzie takes a breather outside as traffic hums by. She crosses to the beat up old Tacoma and gets in.

Near silence.

She finds solace in this place. She stares to Room #5, a red light glowing inside. She pines to be in there.

She flips the glove box and takes out a tiny circuit board with a long lead.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #1 - CONTINUOUS

Kenzie reenters with rekindled energy and proudly holds the device aloft.

KENZIE

Raspberry P.I, reporting for duty!

SAM

It's pronounced "Raspberry Pi".

KENZIE

Okay, but still, pretty fucking cool, right? It uses the service port on the lock.

SAM

I got something similar, but it uses my phone.

KENZIE

There's an app?

SAM

Kinda.

KENZIE

Look at you all lowkey.

SAM

Kenz, it's not lowkey, it's breaking and entering. You know all it takes is one felony.

KENZIE

Oh ye of such little faith. Dig this, the bug's not even in her room, it's in the one next door, which is currently empty.

SAM

Wall mounted device? Listening
through the wall?

KENZIE

Yeah Sherlock. Pretty fucking fool
proof, don't you think?

He shoots her a sheepish smile.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

So I reached out to "Mr X".

Sam winces a little.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

No. Don't. He pays on-time, and he
gives good work.

SAM

I just don't see why you think he's
so fuckinh great.

KENZIE

I don't think he's great. I think
he's a fucking asshole, but
compared to corporate media,
compared to their bullshit finance
departments and bullshit payment
terms, he's a fucking saint. You
know what I also think's great, you
getting a pay day. Footage in the
morning when Eleanor leaves for
breakfast. Your exclusive.

SAM

Footage of a woman leaving a hotel
room, that's news?

KENZIE

To normal people yeah. This is shit
they care about. So push your
morals out and cash the fuck in.

SAM

Normal people?

KENZIE

She looks real different now. She's
got this whole eighties thing going
on, kinda punk. Providing nobody
shaves their hair off, or comes out
as molesting kids in the morning,
she's easily tomorrow's biggest
celeb piece.

Sam mulls that over and takes out some gum.

SAM
Tomorrow morning?

She nods. He lies back on the bed.

KENZIE
That's a lotta time to kill.

She sits down and turns her attention to her computer as he watches her out the corner of his eye. She knows he's watching. She knows what he wants too.

SAM
Wait. There's no job, is there?

She tries to ignore him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Oh, you owe me now, Kenz.

KENZIE
I've not been given an assignment per se, but I have been handsomely rewarded for my tip-off which, matter of fact, is how I'm affording to rent this room-

SAM
-You've given it away-

KENZIE
-I'm paying for your food. You can stay here for free. Quit crying. You say you wanna hang out, fill your fucking boots.

She isn't afraid to show she's angry.

SAM
Why'd you call it in?

KENZIE
'Cause I thought there'd be interest, duh, but they're like you, uninspired. They don't get it. They just said, leave it.

SAM
So why didn't you?

She waits till he looks at her, and leans in.

KENZIE
Okay? Dig this. They asked me one question, and one question only "had I seen a cherry red 1964 Chevrolet Chevelle Malibu?". Which I hadn't.

(MORE)

KENZIE (CONT'D)

That tells me there's someone tied up in this who's much bigger. So I'm staking the place out to see who that is. Are they sending in the competition? Yeah, they probably fucking are, but fuck the competition. That's precisely why I'm sat here with my game face on while you're lying around bitching, despite the fact I'm serving everything to you on a silver fucking platter. You want me to sex this up some more?

SAM

Sex me up.

She paces around the room, pointing and gesturing.

KENZIE

We know Eleanor suddenly disappeared, but did you know she used to move around in some very dark corners? No, you didn't, 'cause, unlike me, you're not always keeping one eye on the prize. Now a lot of it is just rumor, but there's enough rumour out there to suggest there's some truth behind it, and where there's truth, there's a theory.

SAM

Kenz, in all fairness, you used to have theory that she'd been bumped off by the Yakuza.

Kenzie karate chops the air a few times.

KENZIE

Yeah, fucking ninjas. That was just like, just one of my theories. However, the most likely, there's an affair, and other party is seriously high profile. Like sucking' a dick in the Oval Office high profile.

She crosses to him and holds her gut.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

You gotta believe me. I gotta hunch.

SAM

Well, you know I always have faith in your hunches.

They lock eyes. She goes back to pacing.

KENZIE

So, don't go saying this is stalking. This is bigger. This is West Coast Watergate and I'm Deep Throat, ready to yummy down on whatever's coming my way.

She mimes a horrific looking blowjob.

SAM

Really? So, you're going against orders, "Mr X's" orders.

KENZIE

We're freelance! Time we started fucking acting like it! We're not employees! I'm sick of being pushed around! We can do whatever the fuck we want and it starts tonight!

Her eyes fill with intensity.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

Maybe we're being set up by a competitor, and maybe they do want us out the picture. They're pulling the "you just missed it" trick all the fucking time. Well not on this, not on me, and not on you!

Sam likes this. He sits up straight.

SAM

Lots of hits then. I could use some more scanners. Is that what he said, "just leave it"?

KENZIE

"Just leave", "Just leave it", who gives a fuck?

SAM

Them. I think they might.

KENZIE

I don't give a shit. He doesn't fucking own me. Dude, nobody does.

They stare, filled with passion, and breathing heavy.

Her headphones pop and hiss static.

She hurries to her laptop. A signal lost message.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

Fucking Craigslist piece of shit
popped in my ears earlier and
nearly deafened me. Fuck! Not now!

SAM

It probably fell off the wall. Did
you glue it on?

KENZIE

(sarcastically)

Yeah dude, like I'm gonna glue a
fucking listening' device to a
fucking motel wall.

She grabs a bag and takes out a maintenance worker's polo
shirt along with a large flathead screwdriver.

SAM

But you are gonna impersonate a
motel worker?

She hurries into the bathroom.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #1, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She leaves the door open while she strips off her top.

SAM

You're really full of surprises,
tonight.

She puts on the worker's shirt and ties back her hair as he
shuffles along the bed until they can see each other through
the mirror.

SAM (CONT'D)

You know what would be more
convincing? A maid's outfit.

KENZIE

Sure dude, but then I'd have to
learn how to clean.

SAM

Look, before you get into this,
hear me out. We try to get some
pics tonight, we sell them to a
blog, and we go legit tomorrow. We
walk away. We can make it. We can
share a pad, share costs. We stay
on the level. You get licensed and
I join the force before it's too
late and we don't have a choice.

She moves to where he can't see her and thinks.

KENZIE

We shoot anything tonight and it
will be grainy as grits.

SAM (O.C.)

Then what are you? A PI, a
stringer, a pap now, or what?

KENZIE

I'm here all night, and it's up to
you if you want to stay.

She paces to the door to finds him stood there waiting.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

My top on okay?

He straightens it a little but doesn't take his hands away.
He slowly moves in and kisses her softly.

She doesn't know how to react. It's very awkward.

He goes to kiss her again. She swerves it. They're both now
in a world of regret and confusion.

SAM

I know you don't know you're doing
it, but you're tempting me all that
time. That's not my fault.

She tries to get round him.

SAM (CONT'D)

I should go.

She slips by and makes a b-line for the door.

KENZIE

No. Don't. Wait for me.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Kenzie exits the room in a fluster, unlocking device in one
hand and screwdriver in the other.

She pauses and looks back at the door, unsure if she should
go back in and deal with Sam.

Instead, she turns and marches to Room #4 to find the lights
off and looking empty.

She checks the coast is clear and, nervous as hell, she
fumbles with the device, searching the door lock for the
service port until--

LED lights flash. Click. She carefully opens the door and
disappears inside.

Room #2

EXPLOIT OR DIE EXPLOITED

INT. MOTEL ROOM #2 - NIGHT

AJAY (30's), a beautiful Asian Indian man with a nobility to his appearance that makes him look like a clean shaven Jesus stands tall with a green bird shaped logo projected over him and the wall behind him.

He's dressed in casual attire fit for a billionaire and commands the cheap motel room like one too.

AJAY

Observation, manipulation, capitalization. That's how the model has always worked. Market analysis, opinion leadership, communications, accounting. All of which takes teams, large teams, sometimes whole divisions. Most of which is poorly targeted, some of which costs more... *can cost... can cost more...*

He shuffles cue-cards angrily.

AJAY (CONT'D)

FUCK! CUNT! FUCK! CUNT! CUNT!

RAVI (20's), Asian Indian, a lackluster imitation of the man he shares the room with and somewhat exhausted, goes to turn the projector off.

AJAY (CONT'D)

No. Keep that bitch running.

RAVI

You got this shit in the bag, man. Just take it easy.

AJAY

Don't tell me to take it easy, and don't tell me I've got this, when I clearly fucking haven't.

Ravi backs away.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Zero bullshit policy, yeah?

RAVI

Yeah.

AJAY

Don't break your contract.

RAVI

You can do it, boss.

AJAY

Right... fuck all you hoes...

Ajay tosses the cards and paces as Ravi clears them up.

AJAY (CONT'D)

The Green Heron may look like an ordinary little bird, but it's one devious motherfucker. When a green heron is sat alone on the shore, watching the lake, looking for fish, it's doing something no other bird does, something special, it's planning how to hunt, because it's one of the World's most intelligent predators. However, it's not born with the knowledge it needs to go fishing. No, every single bird learns for itself what works to lure their prey, even going as far as to steal the bread out of people's hands to use as bait. This is what inspired us to name our new artificial-intelligence product "Green Heron", because that's exactly how it operates. Green Heron watches people's behavior on social media, looking for the easily manipulated, and taking on the persona it needs to deliver individually crafted messages that will coax them into not just buying your products, but aspiring to your most profitable offering. Running on a single server, Green Heron gives you the best salesman you ever dreamed of and puts him in every home, in every pocket, in every wallet you want access to, telling father, mother, daughter, and son everything they think they want to hear and everything you want them to be told. The computer gave us processing, the Internet gave us information, social media gave us connectivity. It's time to take control, because automation isn't just here to build, it isn't here to ship, it's here to sell, and sell harder and faster than anything we've ever seen before.

Ravi applauds although Ajay knows he's nailed it. The wings of the bird logo frame him like an angel.

They high five and man hug.

RAVI

Shit man, look, I got goosebumps.

AJAY

That it? I got an erection.

RAVI

The passion, it's raw, real. You're not actually gonna swear though, are you?

AJAY

Maybe. Fuck it. I don't give a shit. The notes, I told you, are fucking shit, my friend. That's some straight out of business school bullshit. You've got to go in there with your big hairy dick swinging. I shoulda known that from the start. We go to Venice Beach, reading off fucking cue-cards, those shark-eyed motherfuckers are gonna eat us alive. We need to be TED Conference not TED-X.

RAVI

We sure ain't in Philly any more.

AJAY

Like I told you, there's two ways to get rich in the World, get born into money or exploit every cunt who didn't get so lucky.

Ravi stands in admiration of his taller, better looking business partner.

RAVI

I can feel it. Tomorrow man. It all changes tomorrow. In ten years, they're gonna be writing books about you. No, five years.

AJAY

Tomorrow, the next day, the day after, I'm gonna march into every boardroom in the city and make those cunt-faces listen. Then, if they don't like the sound of what I'm saying, I'm going to tell them to go fuck their dad's and move on to San Jose, Washington, Boston, London, Dubai, Singapore-

RAVI

-And before long, you'll be so valuable, you'll be making those journeys via private jet too. Too risky to fly commercial.

AJAY

Nah man, fuck anyone who dies in a plane crash.

RAVI

Sorry, what?

AJAY

Fuck any motherfucker who dies in a plane crash. Seriously, I aren't joking. Fuck me, fuck you, fuck any motherfucker who goes out that way. Flying's arrogant. Sitting in a metal tube, doing five hundred miles an hour, in the sky, the fucking sky! We don't belong up there. Plane crashes aren't accidents, they're justice.

Ravi's still waiting for that punch line.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Look, if I end up packed into a cube of twisted aluminum, with a wine glass in my hand and a DVD player in my face, at the bottom of the fucking Pacific. Don't feel sorry for me. Go to the airport, and when they announce me as a fatality, you say "Good! Good! That arrogant motherfucker sat there reading a magazine at forty-thousand-feet! The smug cunt!"

RAVI

This is fucking harsh, man. Shit.

AJAY

Hear me out. Someone dying the same way in the pursuit of knowledge, or discovery, or because some crazy motherfucker took advantage, that's a tragedy. But you or me, doing it out of indulgence or convenience? Fuck us. The fucking Titanic, man.

(MORE)

AJAY (CONT'D)

Motherfuckers sipping whiskey and twirling their mustaches in front of a fireplace, on fifty thousand tons of steel, on top of the fucking ocean, sailing round icebergs and shit, while wearing a fucking top hat and monocle? Audacious as fuck!

RAVI

When I see those people climbing up on skyscrapers and recording themselves doing handstands and shit, I kinda want them to fall.

AJAY

It's like Icarus and Phaethon. You let your aspirations become arrogance and the universe is ready to fuck you up, either by nature melting your shit or a god shooting you down.

Ravi looks a little guilty and lacks confidence.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Hey, look at me. You gotta think bigger? But you gotta be bigger too if you're ever gonna believe it. Pets, they're arrogant too.

RAVI

Yeah man, fuck pets!

AJAY

Furry little bastards going and getting domesticated. Getting their balls cut off just so they can live in a nice warm house.

RAVI

Wait a minute... you're scared of dogs... and cats?

Ajay laughs openly.

AJAY

I am man! I'll take on the biggest cunt in the room in a war of words, but don't come me with some beat-up old cat. I'm right to be scared of anything that can't be reasoned with, and you should be scared too, especially if you're not prepared for how tough this is gonna be, how bold I'm willing to be, how daring I'm gonna be.

RAVI

I'm with you, but it's hard to live up to a legend. Seriously man, how do you do it? You're like the Neve recording console at Sound City. You turn everything into rock and roll. The money you've made, the girls-

AJAY

-The girls? They're just fucking girls. It ain't shit.

RAVI

Look, I know how lucky I am to be with you on this journey.

AJAY

Know this though, Indians like us haven't had their turn in America yet. We gotta hustle that bit harder to be taken seriously. It's always been like that here too. White folk landed on these shores, mistook a bunch of brown people for us and tried to kill all those motherfuckers just in case we'd swam here first. People are either candles or fireworks, only way to know for sure is to light a match.

They share mutually respectful nods.

BANG! What sounds like a firecracker echos the distance.

They both grin at the coincidence.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Hear that shit? That's either the universe telling us we're ready, or Apollo warning us he's gonna shoot us down. Gotta light that match and see which way things go.

They laugh as they tidy up and switch off the projector.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Just so you know, I'm gonna stay up all night and nail this motherfucker. Fuck sleep. Sleep's for the weak.

Ravi winces and tries to hold back yawning.

RAVI

That drive man, it's hitting me.

AJAY

You're fine. You just need coffee.

RAVI

I could go for coffee. There's a Bad Habit Beans downtown I wanna check out. Cold brew, nitro, Cascara, cocktails...

AJAY

Sounds like some Hiptser shit.

RAVI

Well yeah. I mean, it's like you always say, you only get out what you pay in.

AJAY

But they got like, free coffee at reception. I'll pay through the dick for shit if I know it's good, but I kinda feel like the average coffee shop is just grinding beans and acting like they figured out nuclear fusion.

The reach an awkward impasse.

RAVI

Hey man, I'm cool with whatever. As long as it's hot and wet, I'm all up in that bitch.

Ajay crosses to the door and opens it only to be taken aback by what he sees walking toward him.

ELEANOR GHERARDINI (late 20's), Debbie Harry desperately searching for her Andy Warhol. Shag hair cut, thick eyeliner, and a cigarette hanging from her lips.

He gazes as she trudges by like he doesn't exist, hands in her pockets and a swagger that'll draw anybody in.

Ajay looks back to see Ravi has clocked her too.

RAVI (CONT'D)

I'll be here when you need me.

They share a sly grin as Ajay leaves. Ravi settles down with his iPad. He fucking loves that legend.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The street drones with trucks and cars pushing along the asphalt, blasting by the flickering neon sign that begs for their custom.

Ajay heads toward the tiny reception. Headlights sweep across Eleanor as tires crunch on gravel.

An old Ford Crown Victoria pulls up. Sam gets out with takeout and his rucksack and knocks on Room #1.

Ajay stalks his prey. He can't take his eyes off this woman. The warm light of occupied rooms on her one side. The cold moonlight and vivid neon on the other. Sporadic puffs of smoke clinging to her as best it can.

She moves along the balcony as if it were a catwalk and her the most *laissez-faire victime de la mode* to ever bless it.

Eleanor reaches the glow of reception, tosses her smoke like a dart, and lazily holds the door for Ajay.

AJAY

Thanks.

She quickly checks him out, and shoots him a bold, flirtatious smile that completely disarms him.

ELEANOR

Anytime.

INT. MOTEL RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

A hospitality suit come reception lobby that's neither particularly receptive nor hospitable. Bathed in blue fluorescent. Capitalism at its most efficient and dismal.

Eleanor crosses to the desk. Ajay to the coffee urn.

BING! Eleanor taps the bell. Ajay selects cups.

BING! Hot coffee dribbles.

BING! Eleanor's manicured finger taps on the bell.

BING!... BING!... BING!...

Nothing.

Ajay checks Eleanor out. She leans against the counter and rests her forehead against the bell.

BING!.. BING!.. BING!..

She looks back at Ajay with a mischievous grin. He smirks and averts his attention back to coffee duties.

ELEANOR

Why is it like, when we want attention the most, we seem to be at our most sociopathic?

AJAY

They say, if you worry about something enough, it'll eventually manifest itself.

She turns and rests her back against the counter.

ELEANOR

They say, or you really believe in that mumbo jumbo?

He chuckles a little and clams up. He's a confident man but she's a far more confident woman.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You know, any other night before tonight, I'd have called you out on that law of attraction crap, told you, you're full of shit, told you, I believed in the exact opposite. The more you want something, the more it resists.

AJAY

What changed?

ELEANOR

I realized the thing doing the resisting was me.

They stare for a moment, something tragic hiding under her fearless exterior.

AJAY

Resisting what?

ELEANOR

The man I love to hate, and hate to love. You ever idolized someone only to discover they're everything you despise?

AJAY

My old boss. I looked up to him and he used that to make me feel worthless. I made him rich and he still had to take his pound of flesh. The money he could accept. The fact I was the reason he'd got it, he couldn't handle.

ELEANOR

You ever wonder if they're really so bad, that actually what changed was us, and they've become the target of our regret?

He mulls that over and shows some bitterness.

AJAY

I think the kind of person who threatens to sue you in the summer and sends a Christmas card in the winter is a sociopathic monster.

ELEANOR

Believe me, you've never met a real monster.

She's deadly serious. He pauses for a moment and goes back to pouring coffee.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You should take your own advice and lose that anger.

AJAY

You saying I shouldn't have walked away from that asshole?

ELEANOR

No, not at all. I'm saying you shouldn't have cared afterward.

She's got his attention back.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

It's way too easy to give a fuck about things that don't matter. Things that don't give a fuck about you. There's no power in that.

He nods in agreement.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What do you do?

AJAY

It's really boring.

ELEANOR

I don't care.

AJAY

That's my concern.

ELEANOR

Tell me anyway.

AJAY

I develop automated artificial intelligence solutions that businesses can use to market products face-to-face online.

She sweeps her hand over her head and laughs.

ELEANOR

Wow! Elevator pitch, right? You got that shit pretty well rehearsed.

He fakes a modest smile.

AJAY

You?

ELEANOR

I'm a catering cook, for like, events, movie sets, VIP suites, that kind of thing.

AJAY

No offense but, for someone who flips burgers for a living, you seem quite philosophical.

ELEANOR

Well cooking gives a person a lot of time to think. Time most people don't have.

He smirks.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You can laugh but it's true.

AJAY

You can't bullshit a bullshitter. Tell me something about catering only a cook would know.

ELEANOR

When you send something back, it really hurts.

He wasn't expecting that.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Anyway, two can play at this game. I see through people's bullshit. You know how to spot a lie? Take away the truth and you'll see people don't really believe in the part they made up.

AJAY

You got me. I'm an billionaire Arab prince who likes to hang out with beautiful women at crummy motels drinking the free coffee, looking for a suitable princess.

She laughs out loud, enjoying the flirting.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Now you tell me, could you tell
which part of that I believed in?

ELEANOR

I people watch. I see how we
operate. There's always a strain of
truth within a good lie that
bolsters confidence.

AJAY

Yeah, what's yours?

ELEANOR

Well, that's my little dilemma, I
can't find it anymore.

She stares matter of fact and lets the sadness show, drawing
him in further.

Below the desk, behind her, where neither of them can see,
there's blood smeared across the floor toward a staff door.

AJAY

You seem familiar.

ELEANOR

I probably like, served you a hot
dog one time and it was amazing.

AJAY

No. I've seen you somewhere.

The comment makes her vulnerable.

ELEANOR

I believe you do what you say you
do, but I don't believe you're as
successful as you make out.

AJAY

I never said I was.

ELEANOR

You drink the free coffee in cheap
motels too.

They both share a smirk.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You know what people will assume.

AJAY

Well, you know what they say, fake
it until you make it.

ELEANOR

And then what?

He's lost for an answer.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

They never warn you about that bit, do they? How to become authentic when you've built your life on preconception. Of course, nobody worries about that because we're all caught up in our false-image. That's the real tactic, not to just convince everyone else but embrace self-delusion, until you get there finally, and discover you're an imposter trapped in the persona of a stranger. We put up that wall of bullshit around ourselves as a shield but fail to see we're building our own prison.

While this resounds with him, he tries to cast it aside as he searches for milk, but he can't ignore it.

AJAY

Okay, so you tell me this. You think it's possible for someone to take their ego and crush it?

ELEANOR

Honestly, I don't know. I worry the desire to win's too paradoxical.

He nods slowly. They stare.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I don't think this receptionist is ever coming back.

AJAY

If that's the case, we're all out of milk.

ELEANOR

You're supposed to drink coffee black. Not that I do. I'm a massive fucking hypocrite. It's just that's what people tell me I should do, and I have issues with authority. I like nice things a lot but, I like to rebel a hell of a lot more.

Eleanor's has taken her sexuality and weaponised it.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Given what I've said about surrounding ourselves with bullshit, what if I told you I have plenty of milk in my room?

Room #4

NOBODY FUCKS IN SILENCE

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4 - NIGHT

In darkness, Kenzie carefully adjusts a wall mounted listening device she's secluded behind the TV unit.

She can hear something through the wall.

She leans in. Eleanor and Ajay fucking next-door. She lingers on their moans.

Voices outside. Her eyes widen.

She repositions the TV and stands holding her screwdriver like a soldier on parade.

The door opens. In walks VIRGIL (50's) and CARTER (20's), a white male and black female duo dressed in suits and in the middle of what would appear to be a domestic.

VIRGIL

-You women are all the same. Questions, questions, always with the fucking questions! This is how I do things, okay? Sometimes you gotta simmer down roll with the punches. What's that phrase you're always yapping on about?

CARTER

"Failing to prepare is preparing to fail", and you know it's true. Here's another one for you, "A quick temper will make a fool of you soon enough." You know who said that shit, Bruce Lee!

VIRGIL

I don't live my life based on other people's quotes. I suck up what I see and get on with the job.

Virgil opens the curtains. Moonlight floods in.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

So don't question my methods. Just watch and-

They spot Kenzie stood there.

KENZIE

Oh! Hey!

VIRGIL

Who the fuck are you?

KENZIE

(wiggling screwdriver)
Just maintenance.

Virgil and Carter share a suspicious glance.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

There was a fault with the TV. I fixed it for you. I'll go now.

She motions to leave. They don't stand aside.

VIRGIL

What was wrong with the TV?

KENZIE

The broadcasting module. The thing that transmits the data back to the office so you can buy pay-per-view. The board needed replacing.

Virgil and Carter look at each other and realize they have no idea if that's technically accurate or not.

The sex next door gets louder.

VIRGIL

With a large flat-head screwdriver?
With the lights off?

KENZIE

I just turned them off, because I was leaving.

VIRGIL

No tool kit? Where's the old part?

KENZIE

In my truck with my toolkit. I came back in to get this bad-boy, which I'd forgotten I'd left in here.

VIRGIL

Receptionist didn't say anything about there being a problem with the room.

KENZIE

Well, I'm sorry about the mix up. Anyhoo, I'll just get out your hair, let you settle-

CARTER

-Show me your nails.

KENZIE

I'm sorry?

CARTER

Show me your nails.

Carter is serious.

Kenzie offers her hand for inspection complete with long, unmarked nails in a fetching blazing blue pearl.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, you're lying. Who the fuck are you?

KENZIE

I beg your pardon?

CARTER

This is a god damn twenty-five dollar a night motel. The only thing wandering in and out of these rooms should be comen and call-girls.

KENZIE

Okay, well I've got jobs to do. Enjoy your-

CARTER

-Why you in our room, bitch?

The sex louder still, distracting Virgil a little.

VIRGIL

Listen up, I got no problem with frog marching you to reception, and, if she doesn't know who the fuck you are... well... then we've got a serious problem on our hands.

KENZIE

Firstly, we're a third-party maintenance organization, I doubt she'd even re-

CARTER

-You smell like Chinese food. You know who else smells like Chinese food, undercover fucking cops.

Carter looks to Virgil. He raises his eyebrows.

Kenzie isn't sure what to think.

CARTER (CONT'D)

There's an unmarked car parked up outside. I seen it.

VIRGIL

Charger?

CARTER

Crown Vic.

VIRGIL

The good old P71 Interceptor. About as subtle these days as a big dick in tight pair of speedos.

KENZIE

Well maybe I am an undercover cop. Why would that be such a problem? Maybe management need to know that's a problem?

She tries to stay pokerfaced. Virgil and Carter edgy.

CARTER

Maybe you need to find out why it's such a problem.

The standoff lingers for a few moments.

KENZIE

Okay. Fine. You're clearly not stupid. Let me lay it all out on the table. I'm not a cop but I am a PI, and I've tracked someone I'm following to this motel. It's no big deal. So how about I mind *my* own business, you mind *your* own business, I leave, and we forget this meeting ever even happened?

She's clearly pulled this shit with people before.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

You're the competition, right?

VIRGIL

You bet we fucking are.

Virgil pulls out a Browning High Power revolver. Carter reveals a Heckler & Koch P30.

KENZIE

Okay! Okay! So this is a big misunderstanding-

VIRGIL

Shut the fuck up. Raise your arms.

She raises her arms, terrified.

Virgil grabs her screwdriver and tosses it. He pats her down and finds the room unlocking device.

He shows it to Carter. She shakes her head, no idea what it is either. He tosses that too.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Okay Bob the Bullshitter, how about we continue that new-found honest streak. Keep in mind, I'm a human fucking polygraph machine so you better not get me twitching. Who you working for?

KENZIE

Don't have a name. Just calls himself "Mr-X". Look, you want me outta here, I'm gone.

They ease a little.

VIRGIL

"Mr-X"?

KENZIE

That's all I know.

VIRGIL

You should be gone already. Why the fuck aren't you?

KENZIE

I didn't know I was supposed to be gone, honestly.

CARTER

Oh bitch please! You know exactly what you're doing. Bull. Shit.

Carter searches the room.

VIRGIL

Didn't know we were coming though, did you?

KENZIE

Well, I think that's pretty obvious.

CARTER

Unless she did know, and she's a fucking plant.

KENZIE

I was told to leave it. I didn't know that specifically meant I should actually leave. No offense, but the instructions were a little ambiguous to say the least.

VIRGIL

Maybe, but I don't see a single fucking interpretation that says go sneak around in people's fucking rooms, especially ours.

The wall thumps, Ajay pounding Eleanor against it from the other side. A picture frame rocks back and forth.

CLUNK! The listening device drops from behind the TV.

Carter quickly retrieves it.

CARTER

Look! This bitch trying bug us!

Kenzie knows how bad this looks and lowers her voice.

KENZIE

No, that's designed to listen to the next room, not yours, okay? It listens through walls. I thought this room was empty. I was only listening in on Eleanor next door.

VIRGIL

(thumbing to wall)
Next door?

Eleanor reaches a highly vocal climax, confirming that.

KENZIE

Yeah.

Virgil gestures for Carter to bring the device over. He takes it and holds it to his mouth.

KENZIE (CONT'D)

Nobody's listening in.

VIRGIL

(into device)
You enjoying the show back there? Nobody likes a peeping Tom. I got your girl. Why don't you come get her? Better yet, why don't you call the cops and watch me use her as a human fucking shield. Or how about this, my favourite, I show you why the International Human Rights Treaty strictly prohibits all forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment.

KENZIE

(terrified)
I've told you everything!

VIRGIL
You've told a lot of lies too.

CRACK! He pistol whips Kenzie, knocking her down, and enjoying it way too much. Carter rolls her eyes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4 - MOMENTS LATER

The bathroom light on but no-one visible. Muffled cries of pain echo. Feet frantically kick.

The listening device lies in the floor by the doorway.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #1 - CONTINUOUS

Sam sits fuming, headphones to his ears. He throws them off and thinks hard.

He can't take it anymore and marches to the door.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Sam leaves Room #1 but his confidence immediately wanes. He plucks up his courage, takes one step forward, and--

The door to Room #5 opens. Ajay struts out, looking confident as hell, covered in sweat, shirt thrown over, and hair slicked back like a wise guy.

Sam freezes.

Ajay takes a few steps and spots Sam stood frozen ahead.

Sam stares back, face painted with suspicion.

Both under porch-lights, trying to work one another out, Ajay unfazed. He narrows his eyes. Sam grows timid.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4 - CONTINUOUS

Virgil exits the bathroom with his sleeves rolled up and crushes the listening device under his foot.

He looks to the screwdriver on the bed, picks it up, and turns even more devious but--

He spots Ajay stood outside the window.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Sam backs away to his door. Ajay, now completely baffled, shakes his head in disgust.

AJAY
 (to himself)
 Racist.

The door swings open to reveal Virgil glowering.

Ajay turns and stares back, even more offended. He masks it with bravado and gets in Virgil's face.

AJAY (CONT'D)
 What?

Virgil chuckles, punches Ajay square in the Adam's apple, and drags him inside by the hair.

Sam's eyes widen. He ducks back into Room #1 before Virgil sticks his head back out and checks around.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4 - CONTINUOUS

Ajay chokes and clutches his throat as Virgil kicks him across the floor repeatedly.

VIRGIL
 What kind of.
 (kick)
 Shitshow.
 (kick)
 Are you dumb fucks.
 (kick)
 Running?

He searches Ajay's trousers and finds his cell phone. He tosses it on the bed.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
 You picked the wrong exhibitionist
 to give a microphone, motherfucker.

Carter exits the bathroom and hushes him.

CARTER
 Keep that shit down!

She nods to the room next door.

Virgil takes a knee and grabs Ajay by the collar.

VIRGIL
 You enjoyed my little message then?

AJAY
 What message? What's going on?

CARTER
 What was he trying to pull?

VIRGIL
Found him snooping around by our
window.

AJAY
I wasn't snooping!

VIRGIL
Fucking amateurs. That's the best
you've got?

Virgil punches Ajay in the face.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
So more torture then? It's gonna be
more torture?

AJAY
(long beat)
What?

VIRGIL
(to Carter)
Get the girl.

Carter goes into the bathroom and drags out a beaten and
dishevelled Kenzie.

She dumps her in front of Ajay. Kenzie stares back upset. He
doesn't know what to think or say.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
That's just ten percent of what
I'll do to you. I always go easy on
the girls. What can I say, I'm a
fucking gentleman. Now what were
you doing outside our room?

AJAY
Going back to mine.

VIRGIL
From where?

AJAY
Next-door?

VIRGIL
And why were you next door?

AJAY
I... I... I...
(beat)
I was fucking that famous chick.

Virgil and Carter look to one another. She shrugs.

CARTER

Well, someone sure was fucking her.

Soft music plays from Eleanor's room.

AJAY

(babbling)

Look! I'm just a businessman! I don't know what this is! I don't want any trouble! Just let me go! Please! Just let me go!

CARTER

(to Virgil)

What you think? This motherfucker working for Cooch?

That name causes Kenzie to stir.

VIRGIL

Working for Cooch and fucking his daughter? He may have a dick but he's certainly not got the balls.

Now they've really gotten Kenzie's attention.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

I say we torture him simply for fucking against the wall like howler monkey when decent people coulda been in here trying to catch some sleep. You hear that, asshole? How about I teach you some fucking manners?

CARTER

Fine! Let's torture everybody.

VIRGIL

Wait, you getting shitty with me again? It's like walking on fucking eggshells with you today.

CARTER

We got shit out of her and we'll get shit out of him. You know why we're here and this ain't it. What do we do if the girl comes round looking for him?

VIRGIL

We keep her waiting until that Malibu finally arrives.

Virgil and Carter drag Ajay into the bathroom. Kenzie stares at the crushed listening device on the floor.

She's dragged away by her legs, back into the bathroom.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Virgil struggles with telephone cable as he ties Ajay's wrists to a rail. Carter drags Kenzie beside him.

VIRGIL

You tried trying a knot with this?
It's trickier than wiping your ass
in a long sleeved bathrobe.

CARTER

We gagging them?

VIRGIL

Moaning and banging gets unwanted
attention. Screaming and shouting's
just other people's lives.

She props a lifeless Kenzie up against the tub.

CARTER

Her too?

VIRGIL

Nah. I know when they've got no
fight left in 'em.

Kenzie looks up at them, still woozy.

KENZIE

Cooch?

Virgil squats by her.

VIRGIL

What about Cooch?

KENZIE

I've heard that name before.

VIRGIL

Oh, I bet you have. So, how about
you tell us what means to you?

KENZIE

He's a crime lord. One of the
biggest on the West Coast. Nobody
seems to know who he is, or even
what he looks like... Wait...

(beat)

"Mr-X"?

VIRGIL

You don't know shit, do you?

Carter stands over Kenzie and stares down.

CARTER

Told you. Crazy bitch is more interested in the girl.

VIRGIL

Daughter of a kingpin, and all you care about is who she's fucking in a cheap motel room. Fucking pap.

Virgil and Carter leave the bathroom.

Kenzie sniggers to herself.

AJAY

What's so funny?

KENZIE

I've got the biggest scoop of my life.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4 - CONTINUOUS

Ajay's cell lights up and vibrates on the bed as Ravi calls. Virgil and Carter make sure they're out of earshot of their captors and stare out the window at the car lot.

CARTER

Something tells me they're both telling the truth. We fucked up.

VIRGIL

Now why you gotta be like that?

CARTER

Like what?

VIRGIL

Pessimistic, defeatist, it undermines the whole operation. I'm the one in charge here. I make the call on if we're fucking up or not. The girl's telling the truth, him I'm not so sure about.

CARTER

We should leave. Shit's getting way too noisy.

Ajay's cell racks up missed calls.

VIRGIL

See, now you're getting hysterical. This job ain't one you walk away from. We're seeing it though no matter what.

CARTER

I need a plan. You know I get stressed out if there ain't no plan.

VIRGIL

Here's your plan. We let things get noisy. We do the opposite of what people think we're gonna do. Long story short, we avoid being the dick in predictable.

CARTER

That's not a plan. That's an attitude.

Virgil is close to losing his cool.

VIRGIL

You're an attitude, and your job isn't to worry. Your job is to obey my fucking orders. I'm on top of this broke dick operation. I always am. Now cheer up, ain't you heard? You can't win without a grin.

He forces Carter's mouth into a smile.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

You should do this more often. Looks way more attractive.

INT. CROWN VICTORIA - CONTINUOUS

Sam under dim interior light, searching. He reaches under a seat and pulls out a snub-nose Colt 38 Special.

He stares at it and checks it's loaded. It is.

He's tempted to put it back, but--

He stares at Room #4.

The door of Room #2 opens. Out walks Ravi.

RAVI

(calling out)

Ajay?

INT. ROOM #4 - CONTINUOUS

Virgil and Carter watch Ravi wander around the lot, aimlessly looking for his friend.

AJAY (O.S.)
 (hoarsely)
 Ravi!

VIRGIL
 (to Carter)
 Jesus Christ. We're gonna need to
 upgrade to a suite at this rate.
 Deal with it.

Virgil paces to the bathroom to silence Ajay while Carter crosses to the door and sneaks out.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Ravi no nowhere to be seen. Sam clocks Carter leaving Room #4. He eases the door shut until the interior light flicks off, and ducks behind the dashboard.

Carter stays cool and scans around, gun behind her back.

RAVI (O.S.)
 Ajay! Where are you, man?

Carter edges along the balcony and crosses by the nose of the Crown Vic, fixated on locating Ravi.

RAVI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Stop playing, man. You're freaking
 me out.

Carter creeps by rattling air-con units as she carefully follows the voice.

She reaches the edge of the building and waits by an old humming ice machine.

Footsteps crunch on dirt.

Ravi makes his way round the back into the darkness.

RAVI (CONT'D)
 You back here, Ajay?

Carter readies her gun and stalks after him.

Sam slowly climbs out the Crown Vic, revolver in hand, and eases the door closed. Now's his chance.

He traces Carter's route and gets to the same corner.

He peers into the darkness. He can just about make her out.

The ice machine clicks and clatters.

Carter snaps round.

Sam hides.

Carter heads round the back. Sam peers back out and traces her steps down the side of the building.

Ravi searches along the back of motel rooms while he navigates dumpsters and foliage.

Carter's feet crunch. She pauses.

Sam stops. It's as if she can sense him.

They stand fixed in the moonlight.

Ravi finds what looks like a body wrapped in bedsheets.

RAVI (CONT'D)

Ajay?

He turns and jolts. Carter behind him, looking like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, gun concealed.

CARTER

Shit! I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! You looking for your friend? Ajay?

RAVI

You scared the hell out of me!

CARTER

I didn't mean to. He's in our room. He had a funny turn.

Ravi is quick to follow as she leads him back, keeping him close, ready to pounce should she need to.

RAVI

He okay?

CARTER

We don't know. He take any medication?

RAVI

He's been up for over 48hrs. He was supposed to be getting coffee.

Sam just around the corner.

He psyches himself up and readies the revolver. He can hear them getting closer.

He readies the firearm, not too familiar with it.

CARTER

Which room you staying in?

RAVI

Erm, room two. We're in room two.

CARTER

We're in room four. Don't worry, probably just exhaustion, but you can never be too sure.

Sam folds and retreats, trying not to make a sound, paranoid someone might be behind him.

He gets to the door of Room #1 and ducks inside.

He just about teases the door shut in time and watches the silhouettes of Carter and Ravi pass by the window.

RAVI

I really appreciate this.

CARTER

Hey, it's no problem. You East Coast? You way outta town!

RAVI

Philadelphia...

Sam curses himself.

Carter and Ravi get to Room #4.

She unlocks it, stands aside, and gestures for him to enter the darkness.

CARTER

Please, after you.

RAVI

Thanks. Oh man, what you gone and done now, Ajay?

As Ravi enters, Carter shuts the door and performs a rear naked choke on him. Virgil keeps Ajay quiet.

Ravi tries to call out and throw her off. She tightens more and more. His cell phone drops to the floor.

Virgil watches Carter work, enjoying the show.

Ravi sees Kenzie slumped against the tub and locks eyes with her. She watches coldly as he passes out.

Room #3

SEXY TEARS

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Room #5 with the window aglow in red. Highway silent. The curtain pulls back and Eleanor peers out concerned.

She disappears for a moment and exits wearing a black t-shirt and no pants. The whistle of wind in the air.

She lights a cigarette and stares into the darkness. Something has drawn her out here.

HONK! She snaps round. The old Cadillac deVille unlocks.

She watches an ARTIST (60s), pasty, balding, rotund, and brandishing salt and pepper stubble, saunter back and fro from Room #3, unloading paintings and taking them inside.

He seems lost in his own slow little world as he waddles back and forth, sucking the nicotine from a cigarette like his life depends on it.

A ghost in the darkness due her black t-shirt, she draws in and watches him closely as he rummages in his car.

She savours the voyeurism and gets closer until--

ARTIST

You like watching people with your pants off?

ELEANOR

My bad, I was just trying to catch a look at the paintings.

ARTIST

You're not missing anything.

He turns and stares at her fixated. They blow smoke until it gets a little awkward.

ELEANOR

Can I ask you a strange question, do all men eventually run from the women their lives?

ARTIST

Can I paint you?

ELEANOR

Okay...

AJAY

Right now.

ELEANOR

Thanks, but I'm kinda waiting for someone.

He's dead serious and looks entranced.

ARTIST

I know I look like a serial killer,
and an ugly one at that, but I'm
not gonna take no for an answer.

ELEANOR

And *that* is exactly what a serial
killer would say.

ARTIST

You're the one creeping up on me.

ELEANOR

Have a nice night.

She strolls back toward her room.

ARTIST

My dick don't work.

She stops, a little amused.

ELEANOR

I beg your pardon?

ARTIST

And just because I want to paint
you doesn't mean I want to fuck
you. No offense, but get over
yourself.

ELEANOR

Get over myself?

ARTIST

Yeah, I don't know if you've
noticed, but you're tragic.

ELEANOR

I'm tragic and your dick doesn't
work, so you should paint me, in a
shady motel room in the middle of
the night?

ARTIST

Don't forget the part about me
looking like a serial killer.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #3 - NIGHT

The room lit carefully to give a neutral light. Paintings
everywhere. An easel at the foot of the bed. The TV playing
old music videos.

The Artist ushers Eleanor in and shows her to a seat.

She sits and draws her legs up, making sure to tuck her t-shirt over her knees as he hurries to his sketch pad.

She goes to stub out her cigarette.

ARTIST

No no! Carry on.

He searches through materials, swigs on a diet coke, and lights up a new one of his own.

ELEANOR

We're not supposed to smoke in the rooms.

He sits opposite her with pad and pencil.

ARTIST

We're not supposed to smoke at all.

ELEANOR

Your room charge.

He sketches while she studies him back just as intently.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

So, you live here like, permanently?

He nods, a little cagey.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'm always fascinated by people who settle down, but never to the point they can't pack up and leave tomorrow.

ARTIST

Fascinated by it or relate to it?

ELEANOR

It's all just observation, right?

ARTIST

Your eyelids, that eye shadow or pigment?

ELEANOR

Pigment.

He nods as if he knew that. She's a little weirded out.

ARTIST

The scar?

ELEANOR

I don't have a scar.

ARTIST
Just below your lip.

ELEANOR
That? That's nothing.

He doesn't look so convinced.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I thought I was being painted, or something, not discussed?

He sketches while she reflects.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I made my dad real angry once, but he didn't hit me, if that's what you're thinking.

ARTIST
You blame yourself though.

ELEANOR
Let's just say, I learned actions have repercussions.

ARTIST
Yeah? Or did you learn wounds heal faster with excuses?

She tightens her poise and chuckles to herself.

ELEANOR
I'm not used to people taking me at anything but face value.

ARTIST
Clearly.

ELEANOR
So you do know who I am?

ARTIST
Not really. I know you're beautiful though, and while beauty is often adored it's rarely understood. But why learn to appreciate something which gives so readily and asks nothing for it in return?

Her anonymity bolsters her confidence.

ELEANOR
The dumb fucks that follow me are more interested in the rags that hang off me than the person wrapped up inside them.

ARTIST

Fashion's imitation. You not flattered?

She scoffs.

ELEANOR

You like drawing girls so you can hang out with them? Break a few rules. Get them to tell you all their dirty little secrets?

ARTIST

I'm not gonna answer that. That's a trick question.

ELEANOR

Okay, so you can get to know them, like, that's what gets you off? It's okay. I don't mind.

ARTIST

Honesty likes to be chased. It's not for my pleasure. Which parent taught you to be so devious? Or did you inherent that trait?

She seems bitter and looks away.

CRACK! Flash. She snaps round to see him holding a polaroid camera. She seems betrayed.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

For reference.

She gets up and tours the room, checking out paintings. He sighs and patiently waits, putting his camera firmly away, knowing he's being punished for his intrusion.

She picks up a painting and studies it.

ELEANOR

How much is this worth?

ARTIST

You tell me.

ELEANOR

Well it's a Marcoussis, so it's what, seventy, maybe a hundred years old? How'd you get this?

He's taken aback.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You don't know anything about me. I'm smarter than people think.

ARTIST

Close. You're only out by around a hundred years or so.

She's confused.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Less than a year old. Frame and canvas is probably as old as you said though.

ELEANOR

Fake?

He nods unapologetically.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Really? I've never seen this before. I've never seen any of these paintings before.

ARTIST

Forgery ain't about copying. That's the fool's way to go about it. It's about filling in gaps.

She's interested.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

You study an artist's work, their careers, their lives, everything until you find the paintings that are missing, and you paint those. Or, if you're feeling particularly lazy, you let the curators set up their own deceit.

She looks closely at the painting and sniffs it.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Ultraviolet light, tobacco smoke. Only about a month's work in all the aging. Such is life.

ELEANOR

It lucrative?

ARTIST

Let's just say the Nazis helped create strong demand, and this old Jew's cashing in.

ELEANOR

You do anything with it? Or do you like, chill? You just sit on it?

ARTIST

I had a lot of uses for money once,
until I realized money had more
uses for me.

ELEANOR

So why do it? You trying to fuck up
the art world or something?

ARTIST

The art world is the greatest scam
in human existence. I'm not fucking
with art itself, I'm fucking with
faith. Believers want to believe.
There's leverage in that. If the
Mona Lisa's so incredible photocopy
it, put it every room and burn the
original. If that's a problem to
you then we're not talking about
art, we're talking about property.
That's what the art world really
is; used car salesmen with ugly
turtle necks and cheap wine looking
for the next member of the nouveau
riche pretending to be an adult, so
they can up-sell the equivalent of
a collectable action figure. Value
is the only thing these fucks
understand, not art.

Eleanor crosses back to the chair and curls up on it.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Satisfied?

ELEANOR

Yeah, all the men in my life turn
out to be corrupt.

ARTIST

You asked how much it was worth.

He goes back to sketching, taking his time now she's become
more compliant.

ELEANOR

I wish that's what people did, look
for gaps in other people's lives,
and try to fill them in. But they
only focus on what's easy to see
and assume the rest.

ARTIST

So, they are filling in the gaps?

ELEANOR

Not when they're forcing a
narrative. That isn't truth.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That's people seeing the bullshit they want to see and making someone else the reason it exists.

ARTIST

If there's one thing I understand about everyone, it's that they all feel misunderstood.

ELEANOR

How come you don't paint your own pictures?

ARTIST

Art school put an end to that. Why would I assume you're spoilt? Your parents, they rich?

ELEANOR

Very, and powerful to go with it. What happened at art school?

ARTIST

The teachers mistook my ability for imitating their heroes. Told me I could never be as good. Marked me down for it.

ELEANOR

And you believed them?

He solemnly nods, now the one uncomfortable.

ARTIST

So you know what it's like to have your will crushed?

ELEANOR

I know what its like to do the judging. My father's a dangerous man. I didn't like learning that about him. If you knew those teachers were so narrow-minded, why'd you let them get to you?

ARTIST

I looked up to them. I trusted them. I figured the passion I had came from the wrong place.

ELEANOR

So you ran?

ARTIST

No, I decided that, if I was a hack, I'd be a hack that plays the system.

(MORE)

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Sell those gatekeeping bastards
precisely what they hated in the
first place.

ELEANOR

That's running.

He stops and stares back.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

When I discovered who my father
really was, the things he'd done,
where the money came from, I ran,
hoping that would hurt him. But you
can't reject something if you keep
looking back to see how far you've
fled. That's not apathy, it's
obsession.

She's right.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Soon, any day now, maybe tonight, I
get to run back into his arms and
tell him I hate his guts.

She's deadly serious and lights up a new smoke.

ARTIST

So, he's keeping you waiting?

ELEANOR

This is what I like, to feel out of
control, to be scared, to break
what works and try to fix it. I'm a
woman though, so for all my
failings, I have that unique
ability to create something truly
honest. Men don't have that, they
corrupt from the moment of birth.

ARTIST

The pup doesn't become a wolf
because its father helps teach it
to hunt. It becomes a wolf because
its destiny is hard coded.

She both loves and hates that.

ELEANOR

I fucking envy you. I got all the
support I ever wanted at school. I
was head girl, prom queen,
teacher's pet. I fucking loved that
bullshit version of life. You were
one of the lucky ones. You got
kicked down. You got to struggle.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 School taught you something worth
 knowing.

ARTIST
 Believe me, there's little glory in
 being a teenage pessimist.

ELEANOR
 Can I be honest with you?

He sits back "yes".

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Surely your big joke is ultimately
 on you? Yeah, you're making money
 but you know that doesn't make you
 happy. You're fucking over your old
 enemies but still giving them power
 over you. You're taking your
 authenticity and you're throwing it
 away out of spite, and you know
 what's really sad? You've become
 the very thing those bullies told
 you you were in the first place.

ARTIST
 Look. You're smart, fucking smart.
 Probably too smart for your own
 good. Had you said that on any
 other day, I'd have hissed a
 rebuttal through my aching teeth.

ELEANOR
 What changed today?

ARTIST
 Don't play coy.

She doesn't understand.

ARTIST (CONT'D)
 Fuck me, you really don't see it,
 do you?

She really doesn't.

ARTIST (CONT'D)
 Tonight I found something that
 hurts to be stared at but aches to
 be appreciated. Something that
 can't be captured in a photo-

ELEANOR
 -I should probably go-

ARTIST

-Fine, leave! Fact is, you're my fucking muse now and as messed up as that might be for both of us, that means neither you nor I have any say in the matter.

He looks just as pissed off as she is.

ELEANOR

You know what? You're a very creepy old man.

ARTIST

Yet you're the one under my skin. Anyway, ain't this the point of art, highlighting something hidden in plain sight of us all, even if it resists the attention and as ugly as the result may be? It's truth. The truth doesn't wait for anyone's fucking permission.

ELEANOR

(deeply hurt)

I am not ugly.

ARTIST

Yeah? Tell me then, what defines you? Go on, you're so fucking smart. What are you? The mouth that talks, the words it spits, or the dark thoughts behind them?

ELEANOR

You have no fucking idea how dark my thoughts are.

ARTIST

Who said I was talking about yours?

She stares upset, realizing she's the creation of all she despises. Her face twists with years of hurt. A tear escapes her eye and she looks away.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Look at me.

She sniffs and fights the need to break down then looks back and shoots daggers from her eyes, not an ounce of fear as she waits for him to speak.

He doesn't. He just flips a page of his sketchbook and draws while she broods.

ARTIST (CONT'D)

Perfect.

ELEANOR
 Nobody's going to look at your
 stupid painting anyway.

ARTIST
 Yeah? Why's that?

ELEANOR
 Because I'm becoming an expert at
 blending in.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4, BATHROOM - NIGHT

An extractor fan whirs. Music plays from next door. Kenzie
 against the tub. Ajay and Ravi bound to the rail.

Virgil leans casually against the door frame, keeping an eye
 the car lot. Carter perches on the can, and stares Ravi in
 the eyes.

CARTER
 Nice to make your acquaintance but
 let's talk turkey. I'm gonna win.
 I'm winning. You think you can play
 silent with me? You gotta be
 jocking me, motherfucker. Tell me
 everything you know and you walk
 outta here alive. My final offer.
 Tops. We can go round and round all
 day. I'm gonna win. I'm winning.
 I'm gonna win. I'm winning. I'm
 gonna win.

Kenzie notices Virgil giving her a look of contempt.

VIRGIL
 Funny, how you always find the
 cockroaches in the bathroom.

She isn't afraid to look him back in the eye.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
 You know, it's a rare occasion in
 this line of work to come across
 someone lower on the moral totem
 pole. I don't get to look down at
 many people but the horse I'm on
 right now is pretty fucking high.

CARTER
 Fucking paps.

KENZIE
 I'm not a fucking pap.

VIRGIL

Yeah you are. At least have the gumption to fucking own it.

KENZIE

I'm a personal investigator.

VIRGIL

Yeah and I'm a personal shopper.

CARTER

Even if you ain't a pap, I bet you know a pap. I bet you know loads of fucking paps. You wanna know an ugly truth? Friends are like mirrors, but the only reflection you get is your personality.

KENZIE

I don't mean to be petty, but you both kill people for a living, right?

AJAY

Hey! Quit antagonizing them!

VIRGIL

Nah, it's no big deal. Hell, let me give you an interview, right now, one-on-one. You wanna know what the hardest part about killing someone really is? The aftermath. It's a fucking nightmare, and there's no maid service for it.

Virgil laughs to himself. Carter isn't so sure.

KENZIE

You never looked old friends up on Facebook, gone through ex's holiday pics, touched yourself inappropriately while staring at tagged pictures? Whose mouths do you think I feed? I give everybody what they secretly want but pretend they don't need. Reality.

RAVI

No man. You don't.

Ravi looks at Kenzie with detest.

VIRGIL

Look whose balls finally dropped.

RAVI

It's not reality at all if you spin everything to how you want it to be, just for ratings.

AJAY

No, she's right. Either way, she's just giving people what they want, the reality they want to see.

KENZIE

You want to know what real distortion is? It's when people get to control their own narrative. You not seen what social media has become? It's just people who don't know who they really are trying to dictate how the World should see them. The virtue signaling, the faux modesty, the humble bragging, the endless stream of personal PR. That making us all happier? That making the World a better place? Or do you all crave for someone like me to come along and show everyone the ugly truth?

RAVI

You scumbags should be writing about people like this guy. Business legends, innovators who are driving the stock market and making the World a better place.

Virgil bursts out laughing.

VIRGIL

Oh wow! That's a good one! Hey, last time I checked, the stock market ain't done shit for me or anyone I know, and business types like you claim to be are always the ones fucking everybody over.

RAVI

Yeah, well one day we're gonna be billionaires, then you'll see what good we'll do.

CARTER

Wait, now I got a real fucking bone of contention with that line of reasoning. I hear this shit all the time from people like you. You say you'll give to charity when you're filthy rich, well I hate to break it to you, but that shit's selfish not generous.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

It's selfish as fuck if I'm real honest about it. The second I got off the streets I was sending the elevator back down. But people like you, you're only willing to give a few coins away once you have everything on the table. That's not charity, motherfucker, that's an ass load of greed and a tiny bit of guilt.

Ajay looks up and faces Carter.

AJAY

You're right, I'm a fraud, a materialistic, aspirational, selfish piece of shit who cares more about money than anything else. And you know what, I hate myself for that. But people love me for it, so don't blame someone like me for being the person everyone needs me to be.

Ravi stares at his false idol in horror.

AJAY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, brother. It is what it is. No more lies. No more running.

Ajay's hands, freeing themselves a little.

VIRGIL

All I know is we have a generation raised by women and they beat the man out of every boy.

CARTER

No, I respect that. That's humility. I got time for that. Tell me, what's being rich like?

AJAY

I honestly can't say, I've never felt it. Now may I ask you a question?

CARTER

You can fucking try.

AJAY

What really makes it hard to kill someone? Because when he talked about it, you didn't seem so sure.

CARTER

Well, you see, it's funny he brought that up.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

That shit's a little raw between us right now. Ain't that right, Virg?

VIRGIL

I don't know why we're having this conversation. This is getting pretty fucking weird.

Virgil leaves and stares out the window.

CARTER

That shit he says about the clean up being a bitch, that's true enough. The hard part though, knowing too much about someone, that can make shit real hard.

Virgil storms back in.

VIRGIL

Now why the fuck would you share that? You don't see his game? You're playing right into his hands. Besides, she's a snoop. She feeds off that kind of sanctimonious bullshit.

CARTER

I shared it 'cause it's true!

VIRGIL

Maybe for you it is.

CARTER

Well shit, that don't invalidate my opinion! Besides, you're the one giving her the full Tonight Show treatment. Maybe, if you didn't want us all chatting round the campfire, you shoulda let me gag everyone like I wanted to in the first place. Sheesh!

VIRGIL

(to Ajay)

Okay, you know what I wanna know? I wanna know what it's like being a fucking muzzy in this country. How'd you live with that?

AJAY

Pretty easily, since I'm a Sikh.

VIRGIL

Same fucking difference.

CARTER

My mother was muslim.

VIRGIL
Explains a lot.

Ravi turns his nose up at Carter.

RAVI
So you've killed people then?

Carter thinks and chooses her words carefully.

CARTER
Since I'm not sure who the fuck you really are right now, I'm neither gonna confirm nor deny that shit.

RAVI
Women don't kill, they create.

CARTER
Oh hell no! You gonna come at me with that Madonna-Whore complex bullshit, motherfucker!-

VIRGIL
-Hey! Hey! Since this seems to have become something between group therapy and Stockholm Syndrome, how about we get with the program before I start remodeling this room in shades of blood red and brain matter.

CARTER
Yeah, we need to wrap shit up.

VIRGIL
Well I'm working on it.

CARTER
We only got so long.

VIRGIL
There's plenty of time. Don't be so fucking flippant.

Virgil has really had enough of Carter's petulance.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
At some point tonight that Malibu's gonna fucking show and I'm gonna be here when it does.

Kenzie looks up at him like she has nothing to lose.

KENZIE
You're here to kill her father, aren't you? That's your mark?
(MORE)

KENZIE (CONT'D)

That's why you didn't want someone on the scene relaying what was happening.

Virgil stares pokerfaced.

VIRGIL

You shut your god damn mouth.

KENZIE

How about you fucking own it?

CARTER

Bitch, please! Don't be so quick to judge. In case you ain't realize it yet, the only reason we're all here right now is because of your big ass mouth.

Those words hit Kenzie hard.

CARTER (CONT'D)

You found Eleanor Gherardini. You followed her. You called it in. You gonna keep claiming you're just the messenger? You own this.

VIRGIL

We appreciate the tip off though. Just a shame you can't follow simple fucking orders. That's the problem with people like you. You're obsessed and you think there's some nobility in that.

KENZIE

Some people want to be chased. They just don't want to make it too easy. It's a game they play.

CARTER

A game! You lie. You bully. You spit on motherfuckers for a reaction, and if that ain't enough, you go after their kids. You hound motherfuckers to death. That sound like a game? Hell, I liked you more when I thought you were a cop.

VIRGIL

How's it feel being the one chased tonight? You wanna play hard to get? I can go all night long.

Kenzie stares into the middle distance and processes what she's learned about herself.

RAVI
 (to Ajay)
 Shit man, you fucked Eleanor
 Gherardini?

Ajay really doesn't feel now's the time for that.

CARTER
 How can we trust this pap piece of
 shit? Lying's all she knows. Maybe
 the girl's gone already.

VIRGIL
 Maybe she has.

CARTER
 Our asses need to move too, before
 the cops get here.

VIRGIL
 Cops?

CARTER
 You shot the receptionist,
 remember?

VIRGIL
 Oh yeah. Fuck me, it's been a long
 fucking day.

Virgil toys with Kensie's room unlocking device.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
 Something tells me this unlocks
 doors. That a good guess?

Kenzie nods. Virgil and Carter look at one another and
 formulate plans in their minds.

CARTER
 The way I see things, the girl's
 bait. We take her somewhere we
 know, somewhere where we're in
 control, Cooch comes to us, on our
 terms and our timeline.

Virgil mulls that over, it's a good fucking plan.

VIRGIL
 Look, I'm willing to step on my
 dick with this one regarding what
 happened earlier, but I want him
 here now, so we can fight things
 out like real men. I don't care if
 the press are here.

Carter stares back "no way".

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Fine. We'll go with your plan then.
I could use some more rough and
tumble tonight.

(to Kenzie)

Get me in.

KENZIE

No.

Tears well in her eyes. Virgil can barely believe it and puts his gun to Kenzie's head.

VIRGIL

I said, get me in.

KENZIE

No.

CARTER

Holy shit. Looks like this bitch
finally found her conscience.

Virgil gets in Kenzie's face.

VIRGIL

Let's get this straight. Right now,
you're a fucking war correspondent
and I'm the most ruthless dictator
you're ever gonna meet. You can
either break the story or be part
of the story. It's up to you.

He cocks the hammer. Ajay and Ravi's eyes widen until--

Kenzie nods regretfully.

KENZIE

Okay.

Virgil drags Kenzie up and leads her out. Carter makes it clear she's got her eye, and gun, on Ajay and Ravi.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Virgil's secluded gun against Kenzie's waist. They get to the door of Room #5 and he leans in to her ear.

VIRGIL

When this is splashed all over the
morning news tomorrow, I'm gonna be
paying close attention to what you
say about me.

Conflicted and regretful, she plugs the device into the lock. CLICK. Virgil psyches himself up, his eyes mean. He grips the back of Kenzie's neck.

Room #5

EVERY BED HAS ITS MONSTERS

INT. MOTEL ROOM #5 - CONTINUOUS

A red mood-light glows on a nightstand beside condom wrappers and cigarettes. Music purrs from a wireless speaker. Clothes lie scattered on the bed and chairs.

Virgil rushes Kenzie inside and snaps his aim from point to point, searching for Eleanor.

VIRGIL

Move.

With his gun against Kenzie's head, they scour every corner and check the bathroom.

He grows impatient and shoves Kenzie against a wall.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

You stay there. You say anything or do anything, I put a fucking bullet in your head, capisce?

She nods terrified.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

And once your ears stop ringing, you get to tell everyone what went down tonight.

He perches on the bed and stares at the door, his Browning High Power ready.

KENZIE

Once my ears stop ringing?

VIRGIL

What part of, I'll fucking shoot you in the face if you talk, don't you understand? I'm six foot two, one hundred and ninety pounds. Don't forget to mention my steely blue eyes.

Kenzie's mind is running a million miles per hour.

KENZIE

You're gonna kill her? Why?

VIRGIL

You think some rich bitch being snatched in a motel gets ratings? Dead bodies are the only thing the media pretends to care about.

Kenzie stands in silence, worrying for a few moments.

KENZIE

She doesn't deserve to be mixed up
in this. She's innocent.

VIRGIL

What's your major malfunction?
She's lived a life of luxury, had
everything people like you and me
dream about. That's a good fucking
deal, if you ask me. I'm the
righteous warrior here. Idolise me.
You can either stand by and report
on a dead body in the morning or
someone else gets to report on two.

She goes to disagree but he hushes her.

Someone eases the door handle from the other side.

Kenzie wants to shout something. She's bursting to scream.

Virgil raises his gun and carefully aims for the door.

The lock clicks. The door opens a little.

Virgil licks his lips. Kenzie shakes her head and--

KENZIE

RUN!

Virgil aims for Kenzie. The door swings open to reveal Sam,
armed with the tiny snub nose 38 shaking in his hands, aimed
right back at Virgil.

SAM

Okay asshole, where is she?

VIRGIL

So, someone has been listening.

Sam sees Kenzie, disheveled and beaten.

SAM

It took me way too long to pluck up
the courage. I'm sorry. I fucking
love you, Kenz. I fucking love the
shit out of you.

Kenzie can't believe it. Virgil couldn't be more calm.

VIRGIL

You ever been in a standoff before,
son?

SAM

Maybe.

VIRGIL

That's a firm no. You see, there's a certain code that's got to be obeyed, and I don't want you getting so giddy with passion you forget all that.

SAM

Yeah, what?

KENZIE

Sam, don't listen to him!

VIRGIL

Oh, you better listen. Now, the first rule of a respectable standoff is you don't draw any more attention to the situation than needed. That's just being needy. So how 'bout you step inside and shut the fuck up?

SAM

Or she can come to me, we back out this door, and we go, forever.

VIRGIL

Let's put a pin in that one for now. You see how that pathetic little thing's shaking around in your hand there. That's not good. I'm willing to bet that old trigger's as sloppy as whore's clit too, and when you go to pull it, you're gonna clench your eyes shut like the little puss that you most certainly are. Now look at me, cool, calm, collected, one slick motherfucker with a nine in my hand. What do you think the endgame is here, you magically turning into John Wayne or you shooting your load up the wall behind me right before I drill both of you?

Sam and Kenzie think. She inches toward him, eyes fixed on Virgil's cold stare.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Don't play fucking games.

SAM

You like torturing girls, asshole?
You like that?

VIRGIL

I find girls easier on the knuckles, yeah.

SAM

Well, you ain't gonna touch this
one ever again.

Kenzie edges across. Sam reaches out his hand. She reaches
out hers until--

Carter's Heckler & Koch presses up against Sam's head.

CARTER

He said, don't play games,
motherfucker, 'cause thing is, we
don't follow the fucking rules.

VIRGIL

Okay, this is how we're gonna play
this. We're all gonna do a little
dance, swap partners, do-si-do, et
cetera and you're gonna lose the
roscoe. Don't worry, we'll lead.
Okay. Ladies do and the gents you
know, It's right by right by wrong
you go.

Carter and Virgil lead Kenzie and Sam with their guns,
switching who they're aiming at and separating them.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Circle eight and you get straight,
and we'll all go east on a
westbound freight.

Virgil, still comfortable on the bed, keeps his gun on Sam.
Carter closes the door, with her gun in Kenzie's back.

Virgil gestures for Sam to drop the revolver. He does.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

You know what? I'm starting to
think this Eleanor is long gone by
now and you assholes have been
stalling us.

CARTER

That's if she ever was here.

VIRGIL

Whole setup's starting to stink
like one of Cooch's traps.

CARTER

Let's bounce.

VIRGIL

You thinking what I'm thinking?

CARTER

I dunno. What you thinking?

VIRGIL
Double execution.

CARTER
Oh how 'bout that, motherfucker?
That's exactly what I was thinking.

Virgil grabs pillows. He throws one to Kenzie. She catches it. He keeps hold of the other.

VIRGIL
Who wants to go first?

They stare back.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Wow, both wanna see the other take a bullet, yeah? You kids married or something? I'm just kidding ya. We can flip for it.

Virgil pulls out a quarter and points at them.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Heads it's a boy, tails it's a girl.

He flips it. It spins round and round through the air, tumbling back down and bouncing on the carpet between his polished loafers.

Virgil leans over and takes a look. He looks back up at Sam with a glum expression and points.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Tough titty, little kitty. Kneel here.

SAM
I love you, Kenz.

Sam takes a few dignified steps forward and kneels before Virgil, who readies his gun and waits a few moments.

VIRGIL
(to Kenzie)
Well, ain't you gonna say you love him back?

Kenzie remains silent and awkward.

CARTER
Holy shit!

VIRGIL
What the fuck did we just get involved in here?

Sam looks back at Kenzie. He's hurt.

CARTER
That is some cold shit.

VIRGIL
Hey, tell this guy you fucking love
him, he tried to save your life,
for crying out loud.

KENZIE
(long beat)
No.

VIRGIL
It's not like you'd be committing
to anything.

KENZIE
I don't. Not like that.

A tear runs down Kenzie's cheek as she struggles to maintain her composure.

KENZIE (CONT'D)
He deserves to know the truth.

Sam seems upset and disappointed.

VIRGIL
You're just gonna take that? Wow,
you need to pick your girls more
carefully, son. What a gyp.

Kenzie remains stoic as Virgil smiles at her and prepares to fire through the pillow into Sam.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Honey, I don't say this lightly
when I say it, but fuck you, fuck
your boyfriend, and most of all,
fuck Eleanor Gherardini.

By Virgil's feet, under the bed, a Walther PPK presses up against an ankle, a manicured finger wrapped firmly around the trigger.

BANG! Virgil's ankle explodes. He tries to stand. His foot folds over. He falls.

He peers under the bed to see Eleanor staring back down the barrel of that PPK.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
You!

BANG! A shot hits his gut.

Carter grabs Kenzie's hair and pulls it back hard.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Fabric flies as she unloads with vengeance.

Kenzie winces in horror, the shots deafening her

INT. MOTEL ROOM #4, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As more gunshots echo, Ajay gets free while Ravi writhes.

RAVI

Don't leave me, man, please.

Ajay unties Ravi.

RAVI (CONT'D)

What about them?

AJAY

They all wanted this. We didn't.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #5 - CONTINUOUS

Kenzie looks to the bed distraught, the cover in tatters while fabric and feathers float in the air.

Virgil lies in the foetal position, clutching his gut, his agonising cries gradually fading in.

Smoke wafts from the barrel of Carter's gun as she stares like daggers at the bullet riddled bed.

Virgil takes in a long pained gasp.

Click.

Carter snaps round to see Sam has managed to grab Virgil's gun and is aiming right at her.

Carter puts her gun to Kenzie's head, and kicks her legs so she falls to her knees.

SAM

Let her go!

CARTER

(to Virgil)

Virg, you alive?

Virgil winces and rolls onto his back.

VIRGIL
Something like that.

SAM
Let her go! Now!

CARTER
Shut your mouth! What the fuck you gonna do? What the fuck you gonna do? You fire, you gonna miss, and after you miss, I'm gonna vaporize this bitch's face.

SAM
I'm not gonna miss.

CARTER
You couldn't even hit on her, how the fuck you gonna hit me?

Sam squeezes the trigger. Kenzie winces.

SAM
No!

Eleanor rises to her feet from the other side of the bed, PPK aimed and a cut across her forehead.

Virgil moans on the floor, blood all over his hands.

ELEANOR
Okay bitch, I'm done listening to your bullshit. Let's lay all our cards on the table. You just shot a lot of fucking rounds and, way I see it, that means there's no way you can keep your hold on her and reload.

Kenzie winces, Carters nails clutching her skull.

CARTER
Heckler & Koch P30, *bitch*. Fifteen round clip, and one more bullet is all I need. Nice try though.

ELEANOR
No, one more bullet puts you in a shootout with us. One and two makes three. You need at least three to get out that door alive.

CARTER
Well, I ain't gonna need three, am I, 'cause you ain't gonna let the girl die. Plus, I ain't convinced weak-ass-white-bread in the corner even knows how to shoot.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

So how 'bout you stop trying to make it sound like you got the advantage here, okay?

ELEANOR

I think he's got what it takes, and don't call him names either. That's just mean.

Eleanor stares at Carter confidently.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Seems to me I've got three options here. Option one, I propose a deal that gets each of us out of this room alive, and we all go our separate ways. Option two, I kill you, finish off your friend and walk out that door.

CARTER

Kill me? Oh okay, Malibu Scarface.

ELEANOR

Yeah, I'm a pretty fucking good shot with this thing actually.

CARTER

Amuse me, what's option three?

ELEANOR

Well, since you're all pursuing me, and I'm not sure who I can trust, I execute all you motherfuckers just to be sure that stops happening.

Kenzie somewhat shamefaced.

CARTER

Oh, you're hilarious!

ELEANOR

Now, it just so happens I'm going through a lot of personal discovery right now and I'm learning to accept people aren't necessarily bad, they're just the result of their bad situation. You get your man out, you hand her over. That sound like a good deal to you?

VIRGIL

Don't listen to her! Go! Get the fuck outta here! I really fucked the dog on this one.

Virgil stares up at Carter. He looks pathetic.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
I was a lousy fucking mentor. Sorry
'bout that.

Carter is clearly upset by this, as true as it may be. She fights back tears.

Blood weeps from Eleanor's scar.

ELEANOR
He can make it, but only providing
you get him out of here right now.

Carter sulks for a moment and nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(to Sam)
That work for you too?

Sam nods.

CARTER
C'mon Virg, time to go.

Virgil heaves over and drags himself out his pool of blood, toward Carter and Kenzie, his bald spot glistening in the light and what's left of his foot dangling behind.

They all wince as he progresses painfully until he just about reaches them and--

He slumps face first into the carpet and wheezes.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Virg?

Nothing.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Virg? Fucking talk to me, asshole.

A long painful silence.

ELEANOR
Okay, let's not go jumping to any
conclusions.

She daintily taps Virgil with her foot.

CARTER
Don't you dare fucking die on me,
motherfucker. Get up. Get up.

She trembles, fighting tears with fury and looks back up.

ELEANOR
Stay cool! Stay cool!

Carter is pretty far from fucking cool.

She growls and presses the gun hard against Kenzie's head, wary the door's closed behind her.

CARTER

You know what you ain't considered?
Option four, kill these paparazzi
motherfuckers! Your beef should be
with them! They're the ones that
led us here, they're the ones
hounding, stalking, taking photos!

Eleanor stares down at Kenzie.

ELEANOR

I know who she is.

Kenzie looks guilty and ready to be judged.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You don't think I start to
recognize faces? Connect the dots?
You don't think I know who tips who
off? Who knows where I go? Who
knows where I eat? I see you in
your little Tacoma, eating,
sleeping, taking photos.

CARTER

Guilty. As. Charged.

(to Sam)

And you, you're willing to die for
this girl while she don't even have
the common curtesy to love you
back. Even with a gun to her head.
That's some Shakespearean shit. Get
with the program, Romeo.

SAM

She's a friend, my best friend.

That means the World to Kenzie right now.

SAM (CONT'D)

And it doesn't matter how crazy I
am about her, she doesn't have to
love me back.

CARTER

Crazy, you said it, motherfucker.

ELEANOR

Why don't you let her make her own
case. I want to hear what she has
to say.

Carter smiles down the barrel of her gun at Kenzie.

CARTER

Oh yeah. You tell this bitch what you told me. How this is all just one big game to you.

KENZIE

(to Eleanor)

That's true. I did say that. But you were never like the others. You were real. You had something to say. Every time I saw you, you were fighting with everything you'd got, and the way I see it, if someone's fighting something you can't see, that means they're struggling with something you don't know. Something internal. You never hid that. You never put on a show. That's so fucking rare to see. I deal in finding truth, and there's no way I'm just gonna ignore that. And yeah, despite what people think, I hate what I do but I love what you bring to it. I adore you for what you stand for. Maybe this isn't the right way to show it. Maybe it creeps you out, but what the fuck am I supposed to do? I just wanted to reach out and hug you. I wanted to be a friend, because I know what it's like to fucking struggle, and I know what it's like to fucking fight, and I don't see how any amount of money, beauty, or fame makes anybody less in need of another shoulder to cry on.

CARTER

Nice speech. But you're still a weird ass stalker who uses your job as a crutch.

KENZIE

It's admiration. That's all it is.

Kenzie couldn't look any more sincere and Eleanor any more unconvinced.

ELEANOR

You want to know something crazy, Tacoma Girl? When I tried to disappear, people came looking but they all gave up eventually, all except little old you.

KENZIE

It's 'cause you're worth following.

CARTER
You seriously buying this?

Eleanor might be.

CARTER (CONT'D)
She's got a gun to her head and a
mouth full of shit.

KENZIE
(to Carter)
You said it yourself. You see the
humanity in someone and you decide
if you're gonna do something with
that. But it's not a weakness like
you think it is, it's a strength.

CARTER
Fuck your manipulating bullshit,
trying to use my own words against
me. You wanna know what real
strength is? It's the fact that,
despite me saying that, I still got
the guts to pull the trigger and
none of you weak ass bitches ain't.

She motions to back out.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I'LL FUCKING KILL HER!

SAM
DON'T!

CARTER
I'LL DO IT!

ELEANOR
NO! NO YOU WON'T! STAY CALM!

SAM
DON'T! DON'T! I LOVE YOU KENZ!

ELEANOR
WAIT! OKAY? WAIT!

Carter pauses, chest heaving.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
One last chance. That's what we'll
give you to walk away. Think about
what she said about strength. Put
your anger aside and take it.
Please. Listen to me. Take it.

CARTER

You of all people, you should know,
nobody ever really gets to walk
away.

ELEANOR

Maybe not, but we all get to chose
wether or not we keep looking over
our shoulders or start looking
inside our souls.

Carter's going to shoot and run.

CARTER

Well, I seen inside my soul and it
says, fuck your lilly-white ass.

Carter goes to pull that fucking trigger. Kenzie accepts this
is the end, she's said her piece, and--

BANG!

Kenzie jolts. Carter slumps to the floor behind her, blood
squirting from the side of her head, a bullet hole right
between her startled eyes.

Kenzie opens hers. Her ears ringing. Heart throbbing.

Eleanor's gun smoking in her hands, she looks just as shocked
as she is.

Kenzie looks to Sam, the pistol smoking in his hands too.

She checks the back of her head. No blood.

Carter on the floor. Two gunshots to the head, both of which
must have been fired at exactly the same time.

Sam collapses to the floor in shock and sits against the
wall. He can't believe what just went down.

Kenzie remains on her knees. She shouldn't be alive.

Bright light beams through the curtains and doorway behind
her, illuminating the inside of the room.

Eleanor winces into the glare.

The ringing in their ears fades out. The glug of an old
carbureted engine outside.

Eleanor lights up a cigarette, hands shaking and stares at
Kenzie, her lips quivering as she blows smoke.

ELEANOR

You okay?

Kenzie nods slowly.

KENZIE

I think so... you?

ELEANOR

I'll get over it. That all true,
what you said about just wanting to
be friends?

Kenzie nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You got a real strange way of
showing it.

They share a difficult smile.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That's going to change too because,
the second I leave, it's all
different for you and me. I think
you know who my father is and he's
a very private man.

Kenzie nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That's me doing you a big favor by
warning you about that.

Kenzie understands.

KENZIE

I guess we'll just have to hope we
bump into one another.

Eleanor doesn't react to that. Instead, she crosses to Kenzie and towers above her. She reaches down and offers her hand. Kenzie takes it. Eleanor helps her up.

ELEANOR

Ellie.

They shake.

KENZIE

Kenz.

Eleanor stares, trying to work Kenzie out, both of them battle-scared and bruised by the night's events and everything that led up to them.

With indifference, Eleanor leaves, heading into the light. She looks back at Kenzie through the doorway.

ELEANOR

Maybe see you around.

There's something resembling friendship here now, not in an conventional sense, but it's there. It's a start.

Kenzie walks to the door and low and behold there it is, a gleaming '64 Malibu sat rumbling in the darkness.

Eleanor takes a long drag on her smoke, tosses it, and stares inside as the engine idles.

She wants to be angry but can barely hold back the tears as she stares into the car, her reflection staring right back at her.

Kenzie watches Eleanor get in and tightly embraces the shadowy figure that is her father.

This is her chance, a few steps forward and she could see the legend few have ever seen.

Kenzie takes a step back and closes the motel room door.

She slumps down beside Sam on the floor and they share a look somewhere between "I fucking told you so" and "Dude, I fucking love you so much right now".

The music plays on, two dead bodies before them, and a story that can never be fully shared.

Sam puts his arm around Kenzie. She puts her head against his. They nuzzle, finding a moment which is just them.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

With the motel's neon sign flashing above, the Malibu eases across the car park and pulls onto the highway, cruising away into the night as police sirens close in.

THE END