

**THE PAWN PROMOTION**

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CAR - TRUNK - EVENING

The trunk opens. Inside lies a young woman with a perfect figure and an impressive bust, her head covered by a black bag. Two large thugs in tracksuits help her out of the trunk. The woman seems completely calm and does not resist, making it easy for the thugs to pull her out.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - EVENING

The two thugs and the woman stand in the middle of the street, surrounded by unfinished houses. The car they arrived in is parked near one of the better-looking houses. The thugs 1 places a hand on the woman's shoulder and guides her toward the door of the unfinished house. The woman cautiously steps forward, holding her hands out in front of her. The thugs 1 and the woman disappear into the house.

The thugs 2 adjusts the gun on his waistband and looks around. It's quiet; no one is around. The thugs 2 spits on the ground and enters the house.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

The thugs 1 leads the woman into a room. The room is dimly lit, a single lamp hangs over the table where several men are seated, leaving the rest of the room in shadows. The men's faces are indistinguishable. Opposite the table stands a chair. The thugs 1 guides the woman to the chair and helps her sit down. The men at the table watch closely.

The thugs 1 steps back, leaving the bag on the woman's head. The woman exhales heavily, pulls the bag off her head, and places it on her lap.

Sitting before the men is Ashley Lewis (Ashley) (23), a blonde with delicate features, flawless skin, and large, expressive eyes. Ashley looks straight ahead, trying to make out who is sitting in front of her. Ashley smiles mysteriously.

ASHLEY

Finally! I was starting to think  
you'd never show up.

## EXT. VITO MARINEO'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

In the spacious backyard, tables are arranged in a checkerboard pattern. At the far end of the yard, a small stage is set up where musicians play Frank Sinatra hits. Children dart between the tables.

Vittorio "Vito" Marineo (60), consigliere to Carlo Montelepre, a stocky man with graying hair and an ingratiating expression, sits at a table near Carlo Montelepre (Carlo) (70), the mafia boss, a man with a head of silver hair, numerous wrinkles, and a heavy, penetrating gaze. Vito, his entire body turned toward Carlo and almost fawning over him, speaks animatedly, smiling slyly and laughing at his own words. Carlo, pretending to listen, nods, but his mind is elsewhere.

A few tables away from Vito, Antonio "Tony" Romano (45), a slim, short man with dark, slicked-back hair, hollow cheeks, and a discontented expression, sits with his mother, Sophia Romano (Sophia) (64), a kindly elderly woman; his wife, Bianca Romano (Bianca) (39), a woman with refined features and dark hair styled festively; and his daughter, Isabella "Bella" Romano (17), whose open, innocent face, large, warm eyes, and bright smile radiate a youthful glow. Tony's younger brother, Paul "Paulie" Romano (30), sturdy with strong facial features and close-cropped hair, sits at a neighboring table. Paulie sneaks glances at a pretty girl nearby, who blushes and looks away. Bianca holds their one-year-old grandson, Rob, a chubby child with messy hair, who is crying. Bianca rocks him, but her efforts only make him wail louder.

SOPHIA

Give him to me.

Sophia reaches for Rob, and Bianca hands him over.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

(to Rob)

What have they done to you, huh?

BIANCA

Mom, he's teething.

Bella talks with the girl sitting next to her, Maria (17), who has dark hair and wears horn-rimmed glasses, while Tony looks at Vito with disapproval.

TONY

(to Bianca, whispering)

Look at him, he is fucking brownnosing!

BIANCA  
Stop it, Tony!

Paulie stops watching the pretty girl.

PAULIE  
Tony, Carlo underestimates you.

Tony makes a face and gestures sharply.

TONY  
I've worked for this fucking family  
for twenty fucking years and I'm  
still a fucking soldier.

BIANCA  
Keep it down!

Tony turns away from Bianca, feeling hurt. He notices Johnny (50), tall, overweight, and balding and Vin (45), short and barrel-shaped, standing by a tree. Tony stands up, taps Paulie on the shoulder, signaling him to follow. Paulie rises and follows Tony.

Tony and Paulie walk past Carlo and Vito, who are engaged in conversation. Tony forces a smile.

TONY  
Boss, Vito, my respects.

Carlo and Vito continue their conversation, ignoring Tony.

Tony and Paulie approach the men by the tree.

JOHNNY  
Have you seen Michele?

VIN  
Carlo is mad at him; he probably  
won't show up. He's likely with  
some slut.

TONY  
If I was Carlo, I'd keep a close  
eye on fucking Michele. He is  
cheating on his wife. If he can't  
be faithful to her, he won't be to  
the family.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Ashley stands in front of the mirror, applying lipstick. She's wearing a tight, short dress and heavy makeup.

There's a knock at the door. Ashley glances at the clock and is about to answer the door when she notices her wedding ring. A second knock sounds.

ASHLEY  
One minute, please.

Ashley struggles to slip the ring off her finger and places it in a drawer.

Ashley opens the door. Michele Sindona (Michele) (50), with well-groomed dark hair and a heavy, penetrating gaze, stands there holding an expensive bottle of champagne.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Hi, Michele, darling, I'm so happy  
to see you! Come on in.

MICHELE  
Ashley, you look as stunning as  
ever.

Michele enters the apartment, kisses Ashley on the lips, and grabs her backside. Ashley giggles flirtatiously. The door closes behind them.

EXT. VITO'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Johnny, Tony, Paulie, and Vin stand under a tree, drinking beer. Nearby, children are running around, and guests are chatting at the tables. Musicians are performing on a small stage.

VIN  
...we threw in a couple of tires.

PAULIE  
Why tires?

VIN  
Helps it burn better. So, we step  
back a few meters - I hate it when  
my stuff smells like smoke. Then, I  
hear gunshots...

PAULIE  
Whoa!

VIN  
I drop to the ground, put DeChico  
beside me. I'm thinking, well,  
that's it, it's a raid. Chico  
starts shooting back...

JOHNNY

And what about them?

VIN

They fired a couple more shots, then silence. We wait a minute, five, ten - all quiet. I fire a couple more times, just to be sure, then decide to crawl up and check. I crawl over... and see our client's ankle lying off to the side. I call Chico over. DeChico crawls up, and guess what! That bastard...

Tony notices Bella and her friend Maria whispering to each other, then they get up from the table enter the house.

TONY

I'll be back.

Tony hands his beer bottle to Paulie and walks away from the group, heading toward the house.

INT. VITO'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Maria and Bella are in the bathroom. Bella pulls a small bag with a joint out of her purse.

MARIA

Is that weed?

Bella nods approvingly.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Where'd you get it?

BELLA

Found it at Paulie's place.

MARIA

What if he finds out?

BELLA

Don't worry. He's got weed lying around everywhere; he doesn't keep track of it at all.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Michele lies in bed, smoking. Ashley lies next to him. Michele offers her the cigarette, but Ashley shakes her head, pushing his hand away.

MICHELE  
(looking at the cigarette)  
My wife tells me it's bad too, but  
I just can't quit. Habit...

Michele looks at his watch.

MICHELE (CONT'D)  
Do I still have time?

ASHLEY  
Yes, of course! I'm yours until  
seven.

MICHELE  
Good, good.  
(sighing heavily)  
And try quitting with a job like  
mine!

ASHLEY  
The feds?

MICHELE  
Nah, they've got nothing on  
me—maybe only some indecent acts.  
(laughs)  
Otherwise, I'd have been locked up  
long ago.

ASHLEY  
Carlo's acting up?

MICHELE  
Oh, Ashley, I envy your youth. If I  
were twenty years younger, I'd go  
to Afghanistan, see the world.

ASHLEY  
Well, Afghanistan might be a bit  
late, but it's never too late to  
see the world.

MICHELE  
(sighing heavily)  
Maybe in the next life.

INT. VITO'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Bella takes a pair of rubber gloves from her bag.

BELLA  
Open the window.

Maria opens the window, and Bella hands her one glove. Maria gives Bella a questioning look.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
So our hands don't smell.

Just then, there's a knock on the bathroom door. Bella gestures to Maria to be silent.

TONY (VOICE OVER)  
Bella, come out—I know you're in there!

Maria's eyes widen with fear. Bella nervously repeats the "silent" gesture. Tony knocks again.

TONY (VOICE OVER) (CONT'D)  
Don't make me break down the fucking door!

BELLA  
One minute, Dad!

Bella silently motions for Maria to hide behind the shower curtain. Bella tosses the joint into the toilet and hides the glove under the sink. She flushes.

Bella opens the door and steps out into the hallway.

INT. VITO'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tony looks into the bathroom but sees no one.

TONY  
Where's that fucking friend of yours?

BELLA  
Who?

TONY  
This fucking slut, Maria!

BELLA  
I don't know!

TONY  
I told you not to hang out with her! Have you heard what people say about her?

Bella tries to block Tony from the bathroom door, but he stands firm.



BELLA

No, and I don't want to hear it!

TONY

She's a fucking tramp, just like your sister! Lucia was enough for us; if you follow in her footsteps, I swear I'll die of fucking shame!

BELLA

Stop it, Dad—I'm not Lizzy.

TONY

Lucia said the same thing-

(mocking)

"I'm not like that, I'm not like that"-

(seriously)

then she dropped a bastard on us, and now we can't find her. Go to your mother and don't leave her side. Got it?

BELLA

Yes, Dad.

Bella and Tony walk away.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Michele and Ashley lie in bed. Michele smokes, tapping ashes into an ashtray placed on his stomach.

ASHLEY

Michele, I wanted to tell you...  
I've decided to quit.

(thoughtfully)

Of course, if you don't mind.

Michele's face remains unchanged.

MICHELE

Found the love of your life? Or did someone offer to pay more?

Ashley smiles.

MICHELE (CONT'D)

Congrats; I hope he's rich.

ASHLEY

(laughs)

Of course.

MICHELE

If it weren't for the family...  
What did Catherine say about this?

Ashley's smile fades, and she becomes completely serious.

ASHLEY

I haven't told her yet; I wanted to  
talk to you first. You know how  
Catherine is—she'll never let me  
go. Help me, please!

Michele sighs heavily, stubs out his cigarette in the  
ashtray, and sets it on the nightstand.

MICHELE

She's strict, sure, but you're  
exaggerating.

ASHLEY

Michele, who are you kidding? I've  
been in this business for three  
years; I know it's impossible to  
quit on your own terms. Do you  
remember Bibi?

Michele make the sign of the cross on himself.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I've saved up a little money; if I  
need to, I can pay.

Michele waves Ashley off.

MICHELE

Fine, fine, I'll talk to her. But  
it'll cost you twenty grand.

Ashley throws her arms around Michele.

ASHLEY

Thank you, thank you, darling.

Just then, there's a knock at the door. Michele looks at  
Ashley thoughtfully.

MICHELE

Are you expecting someone?

ASHLEY

(surprised)

No.

Ashley gets out of bed, picks up the robe lying on the floor, and puts it on as she walks. Michele sits up in bed and starts getting dressed. Ashley leaves the bedroom.

EXT. VITO'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

A disgruntled Bella approaches the table where Bianca and Sofia sit with Rob in Sofia's arms. Tony follows Bella. Bianca looks up at Bella.

BIANCA  
(to Bella)  
What happened?

TONY  
Better keep an eye on your  
daughter!

Tony sits at the table with a frown, folding his arms. Paulie returns to the table and sits beside Sofia, gently pinching Rob's cheek.

BELLA  
(to Sofia)  
Grandma, I was just in the  
bathroom.

SOPHIA  
(to Bella)  
There, there, sweetheart, don't be  
upset.  
(to Tony)  
Son, eat something--the meat is  
wonderful!

Sofia pushes a plate toward Tony, who waves her off irritably.

Just then, Vito rises from his seat and raises his glass. All the guests pause and turn to him. The music stops, and parents try to quiet their children.

VITO  
Thank you all for coming; I'm so  
glad to see all of you!

Vito turns to Carlo.

VITO (CONT'D)  
Don, it's an honor to welcome you  
to my home.

Carlo nods approvingly.

VITO (CONT'D)

I didn't prepare a speech; I'm no performer. But since I have the honor of speaking, I'd like to share...

At that moment, SWAT team burst in from all sides and entrances to the backyard. Women scream, some men run, and officers chase down the fleeing guests, pinning them to the ground. The women at Tony's table are in shock, and Sofia clutches her chest.

Paulie looks at Tony in fear. Tony gestures to reassure everyone at the table. With hatred in his eyes, Tony watches the chaos unfold.

BIANCA

(to Sofia)

Mama, are you alright?

Bella hands Sofia a glass of water, and Paulie waves a napkin to cool Sofia down.

An FBI agent 1 passes by Tony and approaches Vito's table.

FBI AGENT 1

(to Vito)

Happy birthday, Vito!

(to Carlo)

Mister Montelepre, my respects.

Carlo turns away in displeasure.

VITO

Agent, I didn't send you an invitation!

FBI AGENT 1

We don't need an invitation to visit such esteemed folks. Let's go. Your party's over.

VITO

We just started.

Two officers approach Vito from both sides. They try to take him by the arms, but Vito stands up on his own.

VITO (CONT'D)

I can manage, I can manage.

The officers handcuff Vito.

FBI AGENT 1  
Vittorio Marineo, you are under  
arrest...

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ashley approaches the front door and looks through the peephole. In the hallway, opposite the door, stands a delivery guy holding a pizza box.

ASHLEY  
(to Michele)  
It's a delivery guy—he must be at  
the wrong address.

Ashley opens the door. Standing there are several police officers. One of them gestures for her to stay quiet, and Ashley nods in understanding. A SWAT team enters, pushing Ashley aside as more officers follow.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The SWAT team enters the bedroom. Michele looks around and looks at the window. An FBI agent 2 enters the room.

FBI AGENT 2  
Fifth floor, Michele. At your age,  
I'd be careful with such heights.

Michele nods in acknowledgment and continues buttoning his shirt.

The officers approach Michele and handcuff him.

FBI AGENT 2 (CONT'D)  
Michele Sindona, you are under  
arrest for organizing and  
participating in criminal  
activities...

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Michele is being led to the door. Ashley stands in the hallway, leaning against the wall.

MICHELE  
(to Ashley)  
If I find out you're the one who  
called the cops, I'll kill you.

The officer shoves Michele toward the door.

OFFICER  
(to Michele)  
Shut up.

An FBI agent 2 approaches Ashley.

FBI AGENT 2  
So, working hard, huh?

ASHLEY  
I don't know what you're talking  
about.

FBI AGENT 2  
That's okay, you'll understand down  
at the station. Let's go.

The FBI agent 2 and Ashley leave the apartment.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael Martin (Michael) (32), a blond man with strong facial features and an intense gaze, is sleeping when the phone rings. He wakes up, disoriented, trying to understand what's happening. Finally, he realizes the phone is ringing and picks up the receiver.

MICHAEL  
Hello?

ASHLEY (VOICE OVER)  
Hello, honey. Sorry to call so  
late; I'm afraid I won't be able to  
speak at all later.

MICHAEL  
Is something wrong?

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ashley sits at a table in the police station, with a correctional officer standing in front of her.

ASHLEY  
Nothing serious, I'm just a bit  
sick. Probably caught the flu on  
the subway. My throat's sore; I'm  
afraid I'll lose my voice soon.

MICHAEL (VOICE OVER)  
I'll come by and check on you.

ASHLEY  
No, don't—it's fine. The doctor  
told me to avoid contact with  
others. The illness is very  
contagious.

Just then, the correctional officer gestures to his watch.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
I just wanted to say I won't be  
able to have dinner with your  
parents. Please pass on my  
apologies.

MICHAEL (VOICE OVER)  
No problem; don't worry.

ASHLEY  
Sorry, I can't talk anymore; my  
throat really hurts. Bye.

MICHAEL (VOICE OVER)  
Alright, feel better.

Ashley hangs up the phone and looks at the correctional officer.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER  
Quite the storyteller. A favor for  
a favor.

Ashley nods and looks around.

ASHLEY  
Here?

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER  
(gesturing)  
No, in the restroom.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE POLICE STATION - DAY

Catherine Harrison (Catherine) (36), a confident and commanding brunette with sharp yet attractive facial features, exits the police station, followed by Ashley.

ASHLEY  
Anna said she'd come for me  
yesterday.

CATHERINE

You know Anna's a fool and terrified of places like this. She's convinced every cop in town knows her face. So, I decided to come myself.

ASHLEY

You took your time! Got a cigarette?

Catherine pulls out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter, handing them to Ashley.

CATHERINE

You're not exactly grateful, are you? I bailed you out, you know.

Ashley lights up, then hands the lighter and pack back to Catherine.

ASHLEY

Alright, alright, sorry—it's the nicotine withdrawal talking!

CATHERINE

That'll be five hundred.

ASHLEY

You only paid three.

Catherine and Ashley approach Catherine's car.

CATHERINE

I spent a lot on taxis. And my time, darling, isn't free.

ASHLEY

Fine, thanks. I'll pay you back tomorrow. Right now, I just want to go home and take a bath.

Ashley moves in to kiss Catherine on the cheek, but Catherine pulls back.

CATHERINE

I thought we'd go to my place; I need to talk to you.

ASHLEY

I'll come by tomorrow, really—I'm just exhausted.



CATHERINE

That's alright, you can rest at my place. We have things to discuss.

Catherine opens the passenger door of her car, then goes to the driver's seat. Ashley hesitates and doesn't want to get in with Catherine. Catherine stops by the driver's door and looks at Ashley in confusion.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Let's go!

Ashley throws her cigarette butt on the asphalt and gets into the car.

INT. SHOP. CARLO'S OFFICE - DAY

Carlo sits in an armchair, a cigar box in front of him. Johnny paces the room.

JOHNNY

I'll bet within a month, they'll all start singing.

Carlo takes a cigar from the box, trimming its end.

CARLO

I wouldn't be so quick to assume. These guys know the price of silence.

Johnny approaches Carlo and lights his cigar.

JOHNNY

They also know the price of freedom. Carlo, wake up—our golden days are long gone. No one respects traditions anymore.

CARLO

Relax; don't be so sensitive. I have faith in my guys. They know we'll take care of them and their families. Why would anyone bite the hand that feeds them?

JOHNNY

Really? Look who we've lost!

Johnny counts on his fingers.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Vito, Michele, Marko, Big Paul...  
there was someone else...

CARLO  
DeChico.

JOHNNY  
Right, DeChico.

CARLO  
And I have faith in every one of  
them.

JOHNNY  
Even Michele?

CARLO  
Of course! He's got three sons. Do  
you think he's dumb enough to risk  
losing them?

There's a knock on the door. Carlo and Johnny are looking at  
the door.

CARLO (CONT'D)  
Come in.

Tony enters the office. He shakes Johnny's hand, then walks  
over to Carlo, who is sitting at the desk, and shakes his  
hand as well.

CARLO (CONT'D)  
Ah, Tony, there you are. Take a  
seat. How's the family?

Tony sits in a chair in front of Carlo.

TONY  
They still haven't recovered from  
the horror those feds pigs caused.  
Mom even ended up in the hospital,  
and my grandson had the hiccups for  
two hours.

CARLO  
I hope she's alright?

Carlo opens a bottle of whiskey.

TONY  
Yes, she's doing much better.

CARLO  
(to Tony)  
Want one?

Tony nods in agreement. Johnny brings three glasses, and with Carlo holding the bottle, they pour whiskey into the glasses.

CARLO (CONT'D)  
I'll be honest with you, my  
friend—we're in fucking deep  
trouble.

TONY  
I just don't get why the feds are  
acting this way.

Johnny hands a glass of whiskey to Carlo first, then to Tony.

CARLO  
We're just as outraged. They  
arrested the best of our  
organization, right in the middle  
of a celebration!

Tony takes a sip.

TONY  
(choking slightly)  
A rat?

CARLO  
No, come on! Let's discuss more  
important matters.

Johnny places his whiskey glass on the billiard table, sits on the couch, crosses his legs, lights a cigarette, and fixes his gaze on Tony.

CARLO (CONT'D)  
While the guys are in prison,  
you'll take Michele's place.

TONY  
I'll be a caporegime?

Johnny rolls his eyes and looks away from Tony.

CARLO  
Exactly. You'll help out Michele's  
family. Chiara's got three kids—I  
can't even imagine how they're  
holding up.

TONY  
Of course, it's my duty.

CARLO  
You'll get the hookers, Central  
Park Avenue, and Madison Street.

TONY  
That's it? Those are fuck...  
crumbs.

CARLO  
You'll keep your current spots.

TONY  
And Chiara with her brats.

Carlo spreads his hands.

CARLO  
Tony, I don't get it. You've been  
complaining for ages about not  
getting promoted. Now you're  
promoted, and you're still not  
happy!

TONY  
It's too little. Michele covered  
East Garfield Park too.

CARLO  
I decided to make some changes.  
Mickey will take East Garfield  
Park.

Tony frowns and is about to respond.

CARLO (CONT'D)  
Tony, if you're unhappy with your  
new role, just say the word, and  
I'll assign Luca. But I'll be  
honest with you—I'll be very  
disappointed.

Tony looks away. Johnny smirks.

TONY  
(begrudgingly)  
Alright, thank you, boss.

Tony stands and approaches Carlo. Carlo stands and embraces  
him. Carlo gives Tony a friendly slap on the cheek. Tony  
tries to smile.

CARLO

I always said you'd go far!

Carlo returns to his chair.

CARLO (CONT'D)

Now go, and remember—everything must proceed as planned. I won't tolerate delays.

Tony leaves.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - EVENING

Paulie and Tony are driving in the car. Paulie is at the wheel. Tony is fuming, gesturing wildly.

TONY

Carlo and Johnny have lost their fucking minds. They fuck me up... and they handed me that bitch and her bastards. And Mickey got East Park. Fucking Mickey. Everybody knows Michele made all his money in East Garfield.

PAULIE

Did you tell them that?

TONY

What part of "everybody knows" don't you understand?

PAULIE

Tony! Tony! Calm down! I'm on your side!

TONY

Easy for you to say. I've been in this organization for fucking twenty years, and this is how that fucking idiot repays me. Whatever I manage to squeeze out of the hookers and the pushers will barely enough to cover Chiara's bills, that nasty cow.

PAULIE

(laughs)

The guys say Michele was barely making ends meet because she spent all his money at KFC.

Paulie bursts into laughter. Tony's face softens briefly with a smile but quickly hardens again.

TONY

The guys are getting too chatty. I wouldn't be surprised if we had a fucking rat among us.

PAULIE

Come on, are you serious?

TONY

Who saw Michele get arrested? I'm sure he sold us all out.

PAULIE

Michele would never rat us out!

TONY

You're still a kid! We're not the same as before; men of honor forget the basics! Fucking Omerta is just a word now.

PAULIE

Look on the bright side! You're Caporegime now. You've wanted that for so long!

Tony explodes with anger.

TONY

Mama mia! What are you talking about? If you weren't my brother, I'd shoot you by now! What good is being a fucking caporegime if there's no fucking money in it!?

PAULIE

If we want to make any real money, we should start taking more from the hookers and the pushers.

TONY

(irritated)  
We'll see.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Catherine and Ashley are sitting on the couch, holding glasses of wine. Music is playing in the background. A half-empty bottle of wine sits on the coffee table.

ASHLEY

I was so scared when they walked in.

CATHERINE

You should start looking for a new place. Yours isn't safe anymore.

ASHLEY

(sighing heavily)  
Why? I really like my apartment.

CATHERINE

Suit yourself, just don't come crying later when you can't work because agents will fuck you all day long.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I wanted to discuss something with you. After Michele's arrest, Carlo will assign us a new backer. The girls have been asking around, and the guys think it will either be Mickey or Tony. Mickey's a great guy, no problems with him, but if they assign Tony...

Catherine rubs her temples.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I hope it doesn't come to that, but... You're my best girl. I would be grateful if you got close to Tony and won him over.

Ashley bites her lip.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I know Tony is a fucking dick, but we don't have a choice.

Ashley sighs deeply.

ASHLEY

I didn't want to bring it up today, but since you started... I've decided to quit.

CATHERINE

Really? What happened? Did you inherit a fortune, or are you planning on getting married?

Ashley crosses her arms and looks away from Catherine.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Oh my God, who's the lucky guy?

ASHLEY  
No one. I'm just tired of washing  
down antidepressants with vodka.  
I'm done with all of this.

CATHERINE  
Save that story for someone else.  
Does your "suitor" know what you do  
for a living?

Ashley doesn't respond and stands up. Catherine quickly grabs her arm.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
If I were you, I'd think twice  
before making such a reckless move.

Ashley pulls her arm away from Catherine's grip.

ASHLEY  
Cathy, I wanted to end this on good  
terms.

Ashley heads for the door.

CATHERINE  
(yelling after her)  
It didn't work out!

Ashley leaves the apartment. In frustration, Catherine sweeps everything off the coffee table.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Catherine, holding a glass of wine, paces back and forth in the living room. There's a knock at the front door. Catherine smiles, stands up from the couch, and heads toward it. Catherine walks to the front door.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Catherine approaches the door and opens it. Tony and Paulie stand on the threshold.



CATHERINE  
(surprised)  
Tony, Paulie, what a surprise!  
Great to see you. Come in.

Tony and Paulie enter the apartment.

TONY  
Where to?

Catherine opens the door to her office.

CATHERINE  
To the office.  
(laughing)  
The living room's a bit of a mess.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Tony and Paulie enter the office. Tony moves inside and sits in the chair behind the desk, while Paulie stands behind him by the window.

PAULIE  
Nice view.

Tony motions for Catherine to sit in the chair across from him. She complies.

TONY  
You probably heard Michele got arrested...

CATHERINE  
Yes, such a shame. Can I offer you something to drink?

TONY  
I'll be handling your protection now. How much were you paying Michele?

Paulie moves away from the window and stands behind Catherine's chair.

CATHERINE  
A grand a week.

TONY  
Funny, I heard something different.

Catherine glances nervously at Paulie.

CATHERINE

Oh, right, I forgot—it was fifteen hundred.

TONY

Didn't anyone teach you as a child that lying's wrong?

Catherine sighs heavily. Paulie shrugs and sits on the armrest of Catherine's chair, glancing at her neckline.

TONY (CONT'D)

From now on, it'll be twenty-five hundred. Paulie will come by for the cash.

Catherine notices where Paulie is looking and adjusts her robe.

CATHERINE

But that's way too high! I'll be in the red.

TONY

Who said I was asking?

Tony stands and heads toward the door. Paulie, after one last look at Catherine's chest, follows.

CATHERINE

What does Carlo think of this? He won't be happy if you're squeezing every last cent out of me.

Tony stops, looking at her intently, then takes a few steps closer.

TONY

Come here.

Catherine stands and cautiously steps forward. Tony punches her in the stomach. She doubles over in pain as he grabs her by the hair.

TONY (CONT'D)

That's what Carlo thinks. You fucking filthy slut, if you ever threaten me again, I'll cut out your fucking tongue. Got it?

CATHERINE

Yes. Sorry.

Tony shoves Catherine to the floor and walks out. Paulie laughs.

INT. RESTAURANT - RECEPTION - EVENING

Catherine enters the restaurant. The hostess greets her.

                  HOSTESS  
                  (smiling)  
                  Hello! How many for the table?

                  CATHERINE  
                  I'm meeting someone.

Without waiting for an answer, Catherine walks into the dining area. The hostess smiles and returns to her duties.

INT. RESTAURANT - MAIN DINING AREA - EVENING

Catherine looks around the restaurant. On one wall, she notices a photo of Tony and his family, including Bella.

Bella comes out of the kitchen with plates, passes by, and smiles warmly at Catherine. Catherine smiles back and turns her attention back to the hostess.

INT. RESTAURANT - MAIN DINING AREA - EVENING

Michael and Ashley are sitting at a table in a restaurant. Bella approaches and places plates on the table. Ashley looks up at Bella and smiles.

                  ASHLEY  
                  (to Bella)  
                  Thank you.

                  BELLA  
                  Anything else?

                  ASHLEY  
                  We're good, thanks.

Bella smiles and walks away.

                  ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
                  I hope this becomes a  
                  tradition—dining out after the  
                  wedding.

MICHAEL  
 (smiling)  
 Don't even dream about it.

ASHLEY  
 (laughs)  
 I don't even want to hear about it.

Ashley's expression changes, and she lets out a heavy sigh.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
 (tearfully, like a child)  
 Darling, I wanted to ask—can I move  
 in with you? After all, we're  
 engaged, but we're still not living  
 together.

MICHAEL  
 (nodding approvingly)  
 Of course, of course! I've been  
 thinking about it, too. My  
 assistant is already looking for a  
 place for us. As soon as I get back  
 from my business trip, we'll move  
 in together.

ASHLEY  
 Why not now?

MICHAEL  
 Well, if you'd like, we can do it  
 now. I just thought we'd get  
 something bigger.

Ashley smiles contentedly and, like a child, pulls her  
 shoulders up to her chin.

ASHLEY  
 Great! I'll move my things in  
 today!

MICHAEL  
 As you wish, dear.

INT. RESTAURANT - RECEPTION - EVENING

Catherine walks up to the hostess.

CATHERINE  
 Excuse me!

The hostess looks up at Catherine.

HOSTESS  
How can I help?

CATHERINE  
Could you tell me... on that wall...

Catherine points to the wall.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
...the photo—who's in it? That man  
looks just like my first love.

HOSTESS  
(awkwardly)  
That's the owner of the restaurant.

CATHERINE  
Really? I hope he's not here now.  
We had such a tragic ending...

HOSTESS  
Oh, no, he rarely comes in.

CATHERINE  
That's wonderful! You've put me at  
ease. My friends are waiting, and I  
wouldn't want to ruin their  
evening. I saw a girl...

HOSTESS  
You mean Bella? That's his  
daughter.

CATHERINE  
His daughter, you say!

Catherine takes out a ten-dollar bill from her purse and  
hands it to the hostess.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Let me know if he shows up, will  
you?

The hostess takes the money and nods.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Perfect, I'll go find my  
friends—it's so busy here tonight.

INT. RESTAURANT - MAIN DINING AREA - EVENING

Michael and Ashley are seated at a table in the restaurant,  
eating. Catherine approaches their table.

CATHERINE  
 What a coincidence! Ashley,  
 darling, it's been ages!

Ashley, choking slightly, looks up at Catherine, startled.

ASHLEY  
 Catherine! What are you doing here?

CATHERINE  
 What do you think? I came to have  
 dinner, of course!

Catherine turns to Michael and smiles.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
 Darling, aren't you going to  
 introduce us?

Michael stands up from the table and extends his hand to  
 Catherine.

MICHAEL  
 Michael.

CATHERINE  
 Catherine, nice to meet you.  
 (indicating the chair)  
 Mind if I join you?

MICHAEL  
 Of course, of course!

Catherine sits down at the table.

CATHERINE  
 The weather's been lovely today,  
 hasn't it?

MICHAEL  
 Yes, just wonderful.

CATHERINE  
 Ashley, darling, you seem a bit sad  
 today! Did something happen?

ASHLEY  
 No, everything's fine.

Catherine notices Ashley's ring.

CATHERINE  
 Oh my god! I can't believe it!  
 Ashley, you're getting married?  
 (MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Michael, are you the lucky man  
who's going to marry her?

MICHAEL  
(smiling)  
Yes, that would be me.

Catherine takes Ashley's hand to get a closer look at the ring.

CATHERINE  
I'm so happy for you both.

Ashley gently pulls her hand back.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
So, Michael, what do you do for a  
living?

MICHAEL  
Family business.

CATHERINE  
How interesting! Ashley is so  
secretive, she never mentioned you.

MICHAEL  
So, how do you two know each other?

CATHERINE  
We...

ASHLEY  
We used to work together at a  
restaurant, but not anymore.

CATHERINE  
Yes, restaurants can be so noisy.  
By the way, I just remembered, I  
know a great wedding planner, and  
I'm meeting him for lunch tomorrow.  
You should come, Ashley, I'll  
introduce you.

ASHLEY  
Thank you. I don't think we'll need  
a wedding planner.

CATHERINE  
How could you not? When I got  
married, though that was ages  
ago...

(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
(giggling flirtatiously)  
...even then, there were people who  
handled all that.

Michael's phone rings. The women fall silent as Michael looks at the screen.

MICHAEL  
It's work; sorry, I need to take  
this.

Michael leaves the table. Bella approaches the table with menus. Bella tries to place one in front of Catherine, but Ashley shakes her head.

ASHLEY  
No need, we're leaving.

BELLA  
Would you like the bill?

ASHLEY  
Yes, please.

Bella nods and leaves. Catherine watches her go.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Get out of here, Catherine, we're  
done talking!

CATHERINE  
Ashley, your fiancé is quite  
handsome. Let's hope his father is  
single.

ASHLEY  
What do you want?

CATHERINE  
Just a small thing, just to talk.

ASHLEY  
We have nothing to discuss.

Catherine grabs Ashley's hand, squeezing it.

CATHERINE  
Tomorrow, at my place.

Ashley looks at Catherine with irritation.

ASHLEY  
Fine, just leave.



Catherine releases Ashley's hand and stands up. Just then, Michael returns to the table.

MICHAEL

That was about my business trip.  
Catherine, are you leaving?

CATHERINE

Yes, you know, I've changed my mind  
about Italian cuisine. I think I'll  
go to the Asian restaurant instead.

Catherine extends her hand to Michael.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Lovely meeting you.

Michael shakes her hand.

MICHAEL

The pleasure's mine.

Catherine leans down and kisses Ashley on the cheek.

CATHERINE

I'm so happy for you, darling. I'll  
see you tomorrow. Goodbye, Michael.

Catherine leaves. Michael sits back down.

MICHAEL

Nice woman.

Ashley forces a reluctant smile.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - MORNING

Bella walks down the stairs. Bianca is in the kitchen, pacing and talking on the phone. Tony sits in front of the TV, which is on, watching videos on his phone and eating. Rob is next to Tony in a highchair, playing with his food.

Bella approaches Tony and kisses him on the cheek.

BELLA

Good morning!

Tony continues eating spaghetti, muttering to himself. Bella kisses Rob on the forehead and goes to the kitchen where Bianca has just hung up the phone. Bianca looks at Tony's back.

BIANCA  
 Tony, we really need to hire a  
 caregiver for your mom.

TONY  
 (does not turn head)  
 Why? She said she could manage on  
 her own!

Bianca scoops food onto a plate and puts it in the microwave.

BIANCA  
 Her heart is weak; anything could  
 happen!

Bella approaches the fridge and pours herself a glass of  
 orange juice.

TONY  
 Nonsense, she's a tough old lady.

BIANCA  
 (To Bella)  
 Eat first!

BELLA  
 I'm thirsty.

Bella sips her juice and sits next to her father.

BIANCA  
 I can't handle this on top of  
 running the restaurant and taking  
 care of Rob!

Tony continues watching TV and scrolling through his phone.  
 He shows a cat video to Bella, who is sitting next to him.

TONY  
 (To Bella)  
 Look at this.  
 (To Bianca)  
 I never asked you to take care of  
 it. I'm telling you, she's tough.

BIANCA  
 It's always the same; you don't  
 care, and I have to clean up the  
 mess! And when she dies,  
 (make the sign of the  
 cross on herself)  
 you'll blame me.

TONY  
 (To Bella)  
 What a woman your mother is!

Bella turns to Bianca.

BELLA  
 I can move in with Grandma if  
 needed.

Bianca pauses for a moment and breaks into a smile.

BIANCA  
 Great idea! Why didn't I think of  
 that sooner?

TONY  
 Why doesn't anyone in this house  
 hear what I'm saying?

BIANCA  
 We hear you, but you never stop  
 talking! Bella's idea is perfect!  
 The girl wants to be a doctor; this  
 will be great practice for her!

TONY  
 (To Bella)  
 You're too young!  
 (To Bianca)  
 Do you even hear yourself? Bella  
 hasn't even finished high school  
 yet! And if Mom gets sick again,  
 she'll move in with us!

The microwave timer goes off.

BIANCA  
 Do you think I'm a workhorse? I  
 have the restaurant, a staff of  
 ten...

TONY  
 Here we go!

Tony covers his face with his hand.

BIANCA  
 Suppliers, customers, Rob is  
 teething! Bella, you're moving to  
 Grandma's tomorrow!

Bianca walks over to the microwave and takes out the plate of  
 pasta.

BELLA  
(smiling)  
Perfect!

Tony throws the utensils onto the table.

TONY  
(to Bianca)  
Fine! But you tell her yourself!

INT. STUDIO - WILD WEST STREET (STAGED SCENE) - DAY

It's a bright, sunny day on a dusty street in a small Wild West town. Spurs clink, and a guitar riff plays in the background. The saloon doors swing open, revealing a dark, cozy interior.

INT. STUDIO - SALOON (STAGED SCENE) - DAY

Inside, poker games are in full swing, accompanied by laughter and chatter.

Several cowboys sit at the bar, hats pulled low. The bartender polishes a glass. A dangerous-looking outlaw in black with revolvers on his belt enters, and the atmosphere becomes tense.

BARTENDER  
(calmly, still polishing  
the glass)  
What'll it be, friend?

OUTLAW  
(with a smirk)  
The best you've got.

The doors open again. Lucia "Lizzy" Romano (21), a striking young woman with dark, expressive eyes, olive-toned skin, and thick dark hair, strides in, dressed like a cowgirl, exuding confidence. All eyes turn to her as she heads to the bar, ignoring the outlaw.

LIZZY  
(smiling)  
I'll have the same as him, but...  
quicker.

The outlaw stands, his hand moving slowly toward his revolver. Everyone freezes, watching the action. Without turning, Lizzy grabs a bottle from the bar.

With a quick motion, Lizzy pops open the bottle on the table's edge, lifts it, and takes a bold swig, locking eyes with the outlaw. The outlaw hesitates, then smirks, removing his hand from his gun.

OUTLAW  
(respectfully)  
You know the good stuff.

Lizzy sets the bottle down with a smile, tossing him a parting remark:

LIZZY  
Time to drink the best.

The camera zooms in on the bottle, shining in the glow of the setting sun.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - MORNING

Tony jumps up from his chair in surprise. Bianca and Bella freeze, staring at the screen.

TONY  
What the fuck!

Tony looks back at Bella and Bianca, startled.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Did you see that?

BIANCA  
(surprised)  
That's Lizzy!

TONY  
Fuck, she's decided to be some all-American whore!

BELLA  
Dad, what are you saying? Lizzy's a star now.

Tony throws his plate at the TV. It crashes, shattering.

TONY  
I'll be the fucking laughingstock of the guys!

Rob starts crying, frightened.

BIANCA  
Tony, stop it; that's enough.

Bianca rushes over, picking up Rob and trying to calm him. Tony paces back and forth.

TONY  
(raising his hands)  
Oh, Lord, what have I done to  
deserve this!? What the fuck!

Tony points a finger at Bianca.

TONY (CONT'D)  
It's all your fucking genes!

Bianca slaps Tony's hand away and rocks Rob gently.

BIANCA  
Watch it! No one speaks a bad word  
about my family!

Tony heads for the door.

TONY  
Oh my God! What shame!

Tony leaves, slamming the door behind him.

Bianca looks at Bella, shaking her head in disapproval.

BIANCA  
How glad I am that you decided to  
be a doctor; so glad.

Bella forces a smile.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - BELLA'S ROOM - MORNING

Bella enters the room and closes the door behind her. She picks up the phone from the table and makes a call.

BELLA  
Hey! I saw your commercial—it's  
amazing! Dad couldn't handle it and  
ran out of the house!

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
Glad he enjoyed it.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Lizzy, naked, lies in bed next to a young man, also naked. The room is messy around them. Lizzy, holding the phone, sits up in bed and looks at the nightstand, where a small, empty packet of cocaine lies.

LIZZY  
How's Rob?

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
He's grown! Just recently, he broke  
Mom's Chinese vase.

Lizzy scrapes the remnants from the packet with her fingernail.

LIZZY  
I never liked that vase. I have  
good news for you.

Lizzy licks her finger.

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
Really? What is it?

LIZZY  
My agent is looking for an actress  
for the lead role in a film. He saw  
your photos and liked you.

Bella squeals with excitement. Lizzy pulls the phone away from her ear.

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
Really?

LIZZY  
Yes, but you know, Hollywood isn't  
easy.

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
(concerned)  
I understand.

LIZZY  
If you're interested, I'll mention  
you to him.

The guy lying next to Lizzy turns to her, waves his hand in the air, indicating for her to leave and not disturb his sleep. Naked, Lizzy gets out of bed, picks up a robe from the floor, puts it on, and leaves the room.

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
Of course, of course, I'm  
interested!

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - BELLA'S ROOM - MORNING

Bella paces back and forth in her room.

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
That's great. He doesn't want much,  
just ten thousand!

BELLA  
How much? I don't have that kind of  
money!

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
Opportunities like this only come  
once in a lifetime! If you pay the  
deposit, he can wait a bit longer.  
How much do you have?

BELLA  
No more than three.

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
That's not enough... Fine, send what  
you have. You can take the rest  
from Dad. Check the garage; he used  
to stash things there.

BELLA  
There's nothing left. After Vito's  
arrest, he took everything  
somewhere. I don't know where.

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
Then at Grandma's.

BELLA  
Right! Okay, I'll look. Bye.

Bella hangs up and jumps with joy.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Ashley and Catherine walk into the living room.

CATHERINE  
Want a drink?



Ashley doesn't answer and glares at Catherine.

ASHLEY

Get to the point, already.

Catherine goes to the bar and pours herself a glass of whiskey. Ashley watches her nervously. Catherine takes a sip of her whiskey and sits on the couch next to Ashley.

CATHERINE

I wanted to discuss our future collaboration.

ASHLEY

I already told you, there will be no collaboration!

Ashley starts to stand up, but Catherine stops her.

CATHERINE

You have a short memory, my dear. You forget favors too quickly, and that's not good!

ASHLEY

I remember everything you did for me, but I also remember that for the past three years I worked hard without turning clients away. We both made money...

CATHERINE

Ashley, I don't like your tone. If I were you, I'd be more respectful, especially since I have a proposition for you.

Ashley looks slightly embarrassed, signaling she's ready to listen.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'll let you go, but in return, you'll bring me someone new to take your place.

ASHLEY

All my friends already work for you!

CATHERINE

I know. Don't worry, I've already chosen someone. You just need to meet her

(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
(laughs)  
and recruit her, so to speak.

ASHLEY  
Who is it?

CATHERINE  
The waitress from that lovely  
Italian restaurant who served us.  
She'll do just fine.

ASHLEY  
Are you kidding me? How am I  
supposed to make a waitress become  
a prostitute?

CATHERINE  
Keep it down! No one is asking you  
to force her. This is the easiest  
task I could have given you. She  
works as a waitress... probably for  
meager pay, serving arrogant  
clients who think that she must  
suck them for tips. Do you really  
think she doesn't dream of a better  
life?

ASHLEY  
I'm not going to do it.

Ashley shakes her head disapprovingly.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
I'm done with this conversation!

Ashley stands up and walks to the front door.

CATHERINE  
As far as I know, your fiancé has  
no idea about our business.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MORNING

Ashley stops at the door.

CATHERINE  
But even if he did, how would his  
parents react to your clients? I  
bet his mother would be thrilled by  
the list.

Ashley slowly returns to the living room.

ASHLEY

If necessary, I can pay! How much do you want?

CATHERINE

Ugh, how low! Don't judge others, I'm not materialistic! Again, I need someone to take your place.

Ashley sits down on the couch.

ASHLEY

If I do this, will you leave me alone?

CATHERINE

Of course, do you think I'm a monster?

EXT. STREET - SOFIA'S HOUSE - DAY

A car pulls up in front of Sophia's house. Bella and Tony get out of the car.

INT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - DAY

Sophia sits on the couch watching TV. She notices Bella and Tony approaching the house through the window. There's a knock at the door. Sophia gets up from the couch.

SOPHIA

Coming, coming.

Sophia opens the door. Bella and Tony stand there, each with a suitcase.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

There you are!

Bella enters the house, followed by Tony. Bella kisses Sophia on the cheek.

BELLA

Hi, Grandma. How are you feeling?

SOPHIA

All good, dear. Who would've thought such a small thing would cause so much fuss.

Tony kisses Sophia on the cheek.

TONY

Hi, Mom.

SOPHIA

(To Bella)

Sweetheart, your parents are worried for no reason!

(To Tony)

Son, I told you, I'll be fine!

TONY

Nonsense! Your health is what matters most! Plus, Bella wanted to feel like a real doctor, and she's tired of the restaurant swill! She begged me to let her move in. Isn't that right, dear?

Sophia beams with a smile.

BELLA

Yes, Dad.

TONY

(smiling)

Perfect, then.

SOPHIA

(To Tony)

Well, it's up to you!

(to Bella)

Bella, dear, the guest room is yours. Go make yourself comfortable and come down soon; I made your favorite lasagna.

Delighted, Bella grabs her small suitcase and heads upstairs. Tony and Sophia stay in the living room.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Hungry, son? The lasagna's still hot.

TONY

Definitely.

SOPHIA

Well, come on then.

Sophia and Tony walk into the kitchen.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bella enters Sophia's bedroom and closes the door behind her. Bella calls Lizzy on the phone.

BELLA  
Where is it?

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
Look in her stuff.

Bella opens the closet and takes out several boxes, opening each one in turn.

BELLA  
Nothing here.

LIZZY (VOICE OVER)  
Weird. Dad's never been one for  
creativity.

Frustrated, Bella sits on the bed.

BELLA  
Fuck!

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Lizzy sits on a bed in a fancy, short dress. An older man enters the room.

OLD MAN  
How much longer are you going to  
keep me waiting?

Lizzy covers the phone with her hand.

LIZZY  
(To the old man)  
Sorry, just one more minute.

The old man leaves the bedroom, and Lizzy removes her hand from the phone.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(to Bella)  
I already gave the agent the  
deposit, it'll buy us some time,  
but you better hurry!

BELLA (VOICE OVER)  
And what should I do now?

LIZZY

Think of something if you want this role.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tony and Sophia sit at the kitchen table. Tony has a plate of lasagna in front of him, eating happily.

TONY

Keep a close eye on her. Lucia was enough of a headache.

Bella enters the kitchen looking a bit upset.

SOPHIA

(laughing)

I don't even know who'll be keeping an eye on whom.

Bella sits at the table beside Tony.

BELLA

Come on, Dad, I'm an adult now!

TONY

In my day, to be considered an adult, you at least had to finish high school.

SOPHIA

(To Bella)

Would you like some lasagna?

Bella shakes her head.

TONY

Lucia used to tell me the same thing, and now I'm raising her son.  
(to Sophia)  
I mean it!

SOPHIA

(disapproving)

Just skin and bones!

Sophia stands, walks to the stove, and serves a plate of lasagna.

TONY

(to Bella)

Just because you moved here doesn't mean you can go out all night...

BELLA  
Do drugs, drink...

TONY  
(interrupting)  
I'm serious!

SOPHIA  
(To Tony)  
Don't worry, son, everything will  
be fine!

Sophia pats Tony on the shoulder.

TONY  
(To Bella)  
If I find out you're misbehaving,  
you're coming straight back home!

BELLA  
Okay, Dad!

Sophia places a plate of lasagna in front of Bella.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Bella and Maria are in a shopping mall riding the escalator. Ashley goes up the escalator; a few steps above her are Bella and Maria.

MARIA  
Why are you so sure she's not  
lying?

BELLA  
She's my sister!

MARIA  
Exactly, you of all people should  
know what Lizzy is really like.

BELLA  
Exactly, I know my sister—she can't  
lie to me!

Maria throws her head back and laughs theatrically.

MARIA  
You've got to be kidding me!

Bella frowns and turns her gaze away from Maria.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Ok, fine, let's say I'm wrong. But then why won't she take the role herself?

BELLA

You don't get it. The producer liked me!

The escalator ends, and the girls find themselves in a spacious gallery surrounded by stores. They step off the escalator and stop a few steps away. Ashley gets off the escalator, looks around, and heads into a clothing store.

MARIA

Holy Mary, I sometimes can't understand why you're so naive!

Bella looks around.

BELLA

Enough! You'll see. When I become famous, you'll be the one asking for forgiveness!

MARIA

Oh, sure! Somehow, I highly doubt that.

Bella notices a cosmetics store.

BELLA

Let's go. I need to take lipstick.

Bella and Maria head toward the cosmetics store. Ashley exits the clothing store and quietly follows them.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - COSMETICS STORE - DAY

The store is bustling with women and girls, with popular music playing in the background. Bella and Maria walk through the aisles, stopping at one display after another.

MARIA

And what role did she promise you?

Maria examines the cosmetics on the shelf. Bella picks up a palette from the display and slips it into her bag. Maria catches Bella's actions out of the corner of her eye.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(surprised)

You already took what you wanted.



BELLA  
Oh, please, the fucking store won't  
go bankrupt!

MARIA  
I don't give a fuck, security is  
going to catch us.

Bella glances around and sees that no one is paying attention to them.

BELLA  
(whispering)  
Keep your voice down! I told you I  
needed money!

Bella continues browsing the shelves.

MARIA  
(whispering)  
This is too much. She's playing  
you—there's no role!

BELLA  
(whispering)  
Lizzy wouldn't lie to me!

MARIA  
Suit yourself, but I'm leaving!

BELLA  
Fine, go ahead!

Maria moves away from Bella and heads toward the exit.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
Fucking pussy!

Bella looks around to make sure no one is watching her, then slips a lipstick into her bag.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - COSMETICS STORE - DAY

The security guard approaches Bella. Bella tenses up but the guard walks past her. Bella moves away from the display and walks to another aisle.

Bella goes to a perfume display, sprays a sample onto a white strip, smells it, and looks around. She puts the bottle back and picks up a box of the perfume, glancing around again before slipping it into her bag.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - COSMETICS STORE - DAY

Bella heads toward the exit, but just as she reaches it, a store security guard stops her.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - COSMETICS STORE - DAY

The security guard holds Bella's bag by the strap, which hangs off her shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD

Miss, could you show me your bag?

BELLA

(nervously)

No, why?

SECURITY GUARD

I suspect you've been stealing.

BELLA

What?

SECURITY GUARD

Let's do this the easy way. We have cameras everywhere...

At that moment, Ashley approaches Bella and the security guard.

ASHLEY

(to Bella)

Oh my God, there you are, I've been looking everywhere for you!

Bella looks up at Ashley in surprise.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(to the security guard)

Officer, what's going on?

SECURITY GUARD

I'm not an officer, and this girl is a thief.

Ashley sighs heavily.

ASHLEY

I knew it, I just knew it.

(to Bella)

Why can't I leave you alone for even a second?

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
 (to the security guard)  
 You see, my sister is a  
 kleptomaniac. She can't control  
 herself and grabs whatever she can.

Bella nods vigorously.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
 (to Bella)  
 Return everything you took, right  
 now!

Bella obediently pulls a box of perfume and a lipstick from  
 her bag and hands them to the security guard.

SECURITY GUARD  
 Ladies, I understand, but it's my  
 duty to report incidents like this.

Ashley pulls twenty dollars out of her pocket. The security  
 guard glances at the money and then looks indifferently at  
 Ashley. Ashley pulls another twenty dollars out of her bag.  
 The security guard steps closer to Ashley and takes the  
 money. Ashley grabs Bella by the arm.

ASHLEY  
 Come on, darling! And stay by my  
 side!

Ashley walks out of the store with Bella in tow.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - SHOPPING ARCADE - DAY

Bella and Ashley enter the gallery of the shopping mall. They  
 stop near a coffee shop.

BELLA  
 Thank you, you saved me!  
 (extends her hand)  
 I'm Bella.

Ashley smiles and looks Bella over carefully. She extends her  
 hand to Bella.

ASHLEY  
 Ashley.

Bella shakes Ashley's hand.

BELLA  
 But why did you help me?

ASHLEY  
You reminded me of myself. So, what  
did you steal?

BELLA  
(nervously)  
Nothing!

Ashley smiles skeptically. Bella peeks into her bag.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
A palette and two shampoos.

ASHLEY  
Stealing is wrong!

BELLA  
I know.

Bella lowers her eyes guiltily.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
Ashley, let me buy you a coffee as  
a thank-you.

Ashley pauses for a moment, thinking.

ASHLEY  
No need! I have to go. And don't  
steal again.

Ashley walks away quickly.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Michael is packing his things in the bedroom. Ashley sits on  
the bed.

ASHLEY  
Will you miss me?

MICHAEL  
(laughs)  
Do I have a choice?

Ashley laughs, gets up from the bed, and steps closer to  
Michael.

ASHLEY  
Even just a little?

Ashley sits on the bed next to Michael.

MICHAEL  
(laughs)  
Maybe just a little!

Michael closes his suitcase and heads to the bathroom. Ashley stares into the distance.

ASHLEY  
(thoughtfully)  
You know, there's something I  
wanted to tell you...

Michael comes out of the bathroom holding a toothbrush and toothpaste. Just then, Ashley receives a message from Catherine. She opens it and sees screenshots of a video showing her having sex with a client at her house.

MICHAEL  
(holding up the dental  
items)  
Almost forgot.  
(to Ashley)  
You were saying?

Ashley snaps out of her daze and quickly turns off her phone screen.

ASHLEY  
Me? Oh, right. I just wanted to say  
that I love you so much.

MICHAEL  
I'll call you.

ASHLEY  
(laughs)  
But not too often!

Michael approaches Ashley and kisses her on the lips. At that moment, Michael's phone rings. He picks it up.

MICHAEL  
Yes, thanks, I'm on my way.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - BELLA'S ROOM - MORNING

Bella is in her room, lying on her bed and playing on her phone.

SOPHIA (VOICE OVER)  
Bella, Mary's here to see you.

Bella grimaces. Maria enters the room, leaving the door open. Bella doesn't look away from the phone.

BELLA  
What do you want?

MARIA  
I just wanted to check if you're okay.

BELLA  
Isn't it obvious?

Maria stands near Bella, slightly leaning in to look at her face.

MARIA  
Come on, Bella, stop sulking! I'm just worried about you.

Bella doesn't respond.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
If it's true, I'll be happy for you. But think about it—if Lizzy is lying to you, you won't just lose money; you'll get yourself mixed up in some awful mess.

Bella shoots Maria a furious look, gets up from her bed, and closes the door.

BELLA  
You might as well have announced it on national TV!

Maria looks away apologetically. Bella flops onto the bed. Maria sits down beside her.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
Because of you, I almost got caught!

MARIA  
What? Do your family know?

BELLA  
I said almost got caught! Some girl saved me.

MARIA  
Do you know her?

BELLA

(laughs)

No! Can you believe it? She pretended to be my sister and said I have kleptomania.

MARIA

Seriously? What if she's with the FBI?

BELLA

The CIA, more like! What are you even talking about? You need to trust people more!

Maria rolls her eyes.

MARIA

Haven't you watched The Sopranos? Adriana lost her life because she trusted too much!

Bella shakes her head in annoyance.

BELLA

Stop going on about that depressing show! If I listened to you, I'd never talk to anyone!

MARIA

In our world, random encounters are never random.

BELLA

I don't understand what "world" you're talking about!

MARIA

The world of our fathers. Don't act like a child!

BELLA

Shut up! Your constant lectures are driving me crazy. You're fucking stuck on repeat!

MARIA

If you weren't such an idiot, maybe I wouldn't have to lecture you!

BELLA

Fuck you! I don't even want to look at you.

Maria jumps off the bed.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
And don't text me when I'm famous!

MARIA  
Don't text me when Lizzy fucks you  
over, and your new FBI friend locks  
up your dad!

Maria storms out of the room, slamming the door.

BELLA  
Fucked in the head!

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Ashley watches as the car with Michael inside drives away and disappears around the corner. She takes out her phone and dials Catherine's number.

ASHLEY  
What is this?

CATHERINE (VOICE OVER)  
What, are you blind? It's your  
motivation. You wouldn't want your  
fiancé to see your dirty videos,  
would you?

ASHLEY  
You filmed them at my house? How  
dare you!

CATHERINE (VOICE OVER)  
You have two weeks - either the  
girl works for me, or your fiancé  
sees all your filthy videos.

Ashley hangs up and barely contains her anger.

ASHLEY  
What a bitch!

Ashley raises her hand, hoping to catch a taxi.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Bella sits at a table in a café, drinking coffee and reading something. Ashley enters the café and walks past Bella. Ashley touches Bella's shoulder. Bella flinches and looks up at Ashley.



BELLA  
Oh! Ashley, hi!

ASHLEY  
I'm starting to wonder if you're  
following me! Mind if I sit?

BELLA  
Yes, yes, of course!

Ashley sits down at the table with Bella. A waitress approaches Ashley.

ASHLEY  
(to the waitress)  
A latte, please.

The waitress nods and leaves. Ashley turns to Bella and smiles at her.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
So, tell me!

BELLA  
(smiling)  
Tell you what?

ASHLEY  
Why are you stealing?

Bella's expression changes, and she falls silent for a moment, searching for the right answer.

BELLA  
(embarrassed)  
I swear to you, it was the first  
and last time.

ASHLEY  
I'm not judging; You know, I used  
to be just like you. I didn't have  
any money, but I wanted to look  
like Kim.

BELLA  
It's not for me, I swear. I have a  
sick grandmother. I sell what I  
steal and pay the hospital bills.

Ashley nods sympathetically.

ASHLEY  
What about your parents?

Bella tries to force out tears.

BELLA  
I'm an orphan.

Ashley presses her lips together.

ASHLEY  
You know what? I have a proposition. I have lots of clothes and makeup at home that I don't use anymore. If you want, I could give them to you, and you could sell them. What do you say?

BELLA  
No, no, I couldn't, that's too much.

ASHLEY  
Nonsense! Come over tomorrow!

Bella takes a deep breath.

BELLA  
Alright!

ASHLEY  
Then it's settled. I live nearby.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Sophia stands in the kitchen, cooking. Her friend Lydia sits at the dining table nearby.

LYDIA  
I saw that terrible advertisement.

SOPHIA  
I don't want to hear about it! Tony is beside himself.

LYDIA  
Yes, I can only imagine!

SOPHIA  
To think, she shamed us like that! At least Bella is a decent child - top of her class, dreams of becoming a doctor!

Bella enters the kitchen.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Ah, it's you, darling. Just another twenty minutes, and dinner will be ready.

BELLA

Hello!

LYDIA

Hello, hello, dear!

Sophia looks at the wall clock. It shows seven in the evening.

SOPHIA

Are you going somewhere?

BELLA

Yes, I need to go to the library to pick up some books. School starts soon, and I haven't finished everything on the list.

Sophia looks at the wall clock.

SOPHIA

It's already late; the library is probably closed by now.

BELLA

(confused)

Not at all; it's open late. And there aren't many people there now—it's the perfect time to study.

Lydia nods approvingly as she looks at Bella.

SOPHIA

But what about dinner?

BELLA

Thank you, but I'm not hungry.

SOPHIA

(to Lydia)

Just look at her — skin and bones.

Lydia shakes her head disapprovingly. Bella approaches Sophia and kisses her on the cheek.

BELLA

Alright, Grandma, I'm going.

SOPHIA  
Don't be too long!

BELLA  
Okay, Grandma.

SOPHIA  
Wait, hold on.

Sophia looks around for her purse. Bella stops and watches Sophia closely. Sophia takes out ten dollars and hands it to Bella.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Here, take this and buy yourself something to eat. And don't stay out too late; we're going to church early in the morning, and you need your rest.

BELLA  
Okay, thank you, Grandma.

Bella takes the money, kisses Sophia on the cheek again, and leaves. Sophia returns to cooking.

LYDIA  
What a golden child. My rascal probably doesn't even know what the word "library" means.

SOPHIA  
Yes, we're lucky to have her.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EVENING

Ashley stands in the hallway with Bella and her friends, getting ready to leave.

ASHLEY  
(pointing to Bella)  
Attention, everyone—this is my friend Bella.

Ben, a tall, athletic, and handsome young man, walks over to Bella and introduces himself. Ben quickly kisses Bella on the cheek. Bella blushes, looking a bit startled.

Jack extends his hand and introduces himself, and Bella shakes it in return. Anna introduces herself, smiling and waving at Bella, who smiles back. Bella makes eye contact with Caleb, who extends his hand to her.

Ashley points to a suitcase in the corner.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(to Bella)

Don't think I forgot about you—I've got what I promised. We're heading to a club. Come with us?

BELLA

No, thanks, I can't.

Ashley looks at Bella, slightly disappointed.

BEN

Oh, come on, join us—it'll be fun.

Bella keeps shaking her head.

BELLA

I want, but I can't, sorry!

Ashley gives Bella a hug.

ASHLEY

It's just for a couple of hours. On the way back, we'll come back by my place so you can pick up the suitcase.

CALEB

Come on, Bella, I promise you won't regret it.

Bella smiles shyly.

BELLA

Well, only for a couple of hours. Alright, you convinced me!

The whole group piles out of the apartment.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Bella enters the club surrounded by Ashley's group. Loud dance music fills the air, and people are dancing all around. Ben breaks away from the group and approaches some men standing at the entrance to the VIP section. Anna grabs Jack's and Bella's hands and pulls them onto the dance floor. Caleb, and Ashley head toward the bar.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony sits on the couch, nervously gripping a beer bottle. A show is playing on TV, and as soon as it cuts to commercials, Tony switches the channel. In the kitchen, Rosa, the nanny, feeds Rob. Paulie stands beside her.

PAULIE

Rosy, what are you doing tonight?  
How about a movie?

ROSA

I can't.

Bianca walks in with food bags in her hands.

BIANCA

Hey, everyone!

Polly quickly pulls away from Rosa. She smiles broadly and quickly walks over to Bianca, taking the bags from her.

Tony flips through the channels again.

TONY

Nothing but shit!

Bianca walks into the kitchen and kisses Rob on the forehead. Tony turns off the TV.

BIANCA

Tony, don't swear in front of the  
baby!

Polly follows Bianca and places the bags on the kitchen table.

TONY

He doesn't understand anything  
anyway! What's for lunch today?

BIANCA

(to Tony)  
The usual!  
(to Rosa)  
Rosa, you're free to go.

Rosa nods and leaves the kitchen. Paulie watches her go.

TONY

I could've guessed.

Tony gets up from the couch and heads to the kitchen.

TONY (CONT'D)

I'm uneasy about Bella staying with mom.

BIANCA

Stop it. She's a good girl; she's probably studying hard right now.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Bella, now tipsy, dances among the crowd. She loves the music and feels freer than ever. Anna and Jack are dancing nearby.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - BAR - NIGHT

Bella notices Ashley and Caleb at the bar, arguing about something. Caleb eventually walks away.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Bella stops and watches Caleb walk off. She's about to leave the dance floor when Jack approaches her. He stands beside Bella, takes her hands, and starts dancing with her. Bella smiles. Jack moves closer and wraps his arms around Bella. Jack kisses her, and Bella kisses him back.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony and Paulie are sitting at the table. Bianca places food in the microwave.

TONY

Maybe we should go to Mom's for dinner?

Bianca shoots Tony a disapproving look.

TONY (CONT'D)

Alright, alright, don't look at me like that.

BIANCA

Why don't you just put a chip in her, like a dog?

TONY

I'd love to!

PAULIE

Tony, you're exaggerating. Bella's a wonderful kid.

TONY

Stay out of it!

Paulie shrugs, offended. At that moment, the phone rings, and Bianca picks it up.

BIANCA

Bianca speaking.

Tony leans in close to Paulie's ear.

TONY

(whispering)

Hey, keep an eye on her for a while. It'd give me some peace of mind.

BIANCA (O.S.)

Oh, Chiara, dear! I'm so happy you called!

PAULIE

You told me to stay out of it!

TONY

Shut the fuck up!

Bianca leaves the kitchen.

TONY (CONT'D)

I can't bear it if this daughter ends up like a... you know.

PAULIE

Alright, alright, I'll think of something.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Girls stand at the mirror applying lipstick. In one of the stalls, the sounds of people having sex can be heard. The girls laugh and leave. All goes quiet. Jack emerges from the stall. The stall door remains open, and Bella steps out, smiling.

BELLA

Did you enjoy it?



JACK  
Of course.

BELLA  
(smiling)  
Me too!

Jack glances at himself in the mirror, then turns to leave but pauses. He takes out a few hundred-dollar bills from his pocket and hands them to Bella, who's smiling. Jack exits the restroom. Bella looks at the money, shrugs, and stuffs it into her jeans pocket.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Sophia is asleep in a chair. She hears a car pull up outside and wakes up. Sophia gets up from the chair, goes to the window, and slightly opens the curtain to look outside. She sees Bella walking toward the house.

Sophia hears Bella struggling to open the door. She opens it, and Bella, standing on the doorstep, smiles warmly.

SOPHIA  
(sternly)  
Where were you?

Bella smiles broadly.

BELLA  
Don't scold me, Grandma. You see, I  
met a friend... at the library...

SOPHIA  
Aren't you ashamed? How are you  
going to go to church in that  
state?!

Bella keeps smiling pleasantly.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
(pointing to the stairs)  
Go to bed! We'll talk after I get  
back.

Bella, barely able to keep her balance, heads up the stairs. Sophia watches her disapprovingly.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

There's a knock on Ashley's apartment door. Ashley walks up to the door and looks through the peephole. Catherine is standing in the hallway.

CATHERINE  
(from behind the door)  
Come on, open up already.

Ashley opens the door.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Finally!

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Catherine steps into the apartment and walks straight inside. Ashley follows her.

ASHLEY  
How did you find my new address?

CATHERINE  
Aren't best friends supposed to  
know everything about each other?

Catherine sits down on the couch in the living room.

ASHLEY  
Why are you here?

CATHERINE  
I came to check on our progress.

ASHLEY  
It's fine.

CATHERINE  
Tell me more!

ASHLEY  
I haven't offered her anything yet.  
But everything is moving along as  
planned; I introduced her to...

CATHERINE  
We agreed on two weeks. Your time  
is almost up!

ASHLEY  
If I rush, I'll ruin everything!

CATHERINE

I'm tired of waiting! Money doesn't make itself! A client will be waiting for her at the club on Saturday.

ASHLEY

Alright, I'll try!

Catherine steps close to Ashley and brushes her hair back from her face. Ashley glares at Catherine, who smiles and heads toward the door.

CATHERINE

Don't try, just do it! Bye, darling, no need to see me out!

Catherine exits the apartment.

INT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN - MORNING

Bella is sitting on the couch, in front of the TV, having breakfast. Suddenly, the front door opens, and Bella sees Bianca standing in the doorway, surprised.

BIANCA

(surprised)

Bella! I thought you were at church with Grandma.

Bella smiles at Bianca.

BELLA

Hi, Mom! I've got a headache. Grandma took pity on me and went alone.

Bianca walks over to Bella and kisses her on the forehead. Bianca pulls out her phone from her bag and starts texting someone.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Why did you come?

Bianca keeps glancing at her phone.

BIANCA

I was passing by, thought I'd stop by and surprise you. You have no idea how much I missed you.

BELLA  
(smiling)  
Want some coffee?

Bianca nods. Bella gets up from the couch and walks to the kitchen.

BIANCA  
(concerned)  
Yes, please. I'll just make a call;  
I completely forgot, I need to  
order some wine.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Ashley sits at a table in a café, near the wall, close to the entrance. Beside her is a suitcase. Bella approaches the table. Ashley sees Bella and smiles warmly at her. Bella sits down.

ASHLEY  
Hey, party animal! I had no idea  
you were such a...

BELLA  
Neither did I.

Ashley nods toward the suitcase.

ASHLEY  
You left this behind yesterday.  
Clothes, makeup. Some new things,  
with tags and in packaging.

Bella looks at the suitcase happily.

BELLA  
(smiling)  
Thank you!

Bella's expression changes as she pulls crumpled bills from her pocket and places them on the table. Ashley looks at the money.

ASHLEY  
I don't want money for that junk!

BELLA  
Jack gave it to me. Please, return  
it to him.

ASHLEY  
What? He just gave it to you?

BELLA

No...

Bella leans in closer to Ashley.

BELLA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

For sex.

ASHLEY

(loudly)

For sex?

Bella blushes.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Then why do you want me to return  
it?

BELLA

Why do you think? It's wrong..

ASHLEY

Honey, you're so silly! Keep the  
money, buy yourself a new lipstick!  
And I don't want to hear about this  
again!

Bella blushes and puts the money back in her pocket.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

He paid you for your services;  
everything has a price. You earned  
that money.

Bella's face flushes with indignation.

BELLA

But I'm not a hooker!

ASHLEY

What's wrong with being a hooker?

Bella's eyes widen in shock, unable to find the words.

BELLA

(stammering)

But... but that's so dirty...

ASHLEY

(laughs)

Do you think I'm dirty?

Bella becomes even more confused.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I worked as an escort, and in my opinion, it's a great, well-paid job. Nothing dirty about it.

BELLA

But...

ASHLEY

I had no idea you were so preachy. When you get married and start asking your husband for money, don't you think that's a form of prostitution?

BELLA

(embarrassed)

No, of course not.

ASHLEY

Nonsense! Sex is the only thing men are really interested in, so why shouldn't we charge for it?

BELLA

What about love!?

ASHLEY

Ugh! There's no such thing as love; Hollywood invented it to sell more movies, and it's all about money! Tell me, you slept with Jack—did you think it was awful?

Bella shrugs, unable to answer.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Exactly.

BELLA

How much did you make?

ASHLEY

It varied...

Ashley pretends to think about it.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

By working hard, it's possible to earn ten thousand a week.

BELLA

(surprised)

Bullshit!

Bella covers her face and looks around fearfully.

ASHLEY

But that's only if things are really pushed; I usually made about five or six.

BELLA

Could I make that much too?

ASHLEY

No, you couldn't!

BELLA

But why not?

ASHLEY

It's dirty work!

BELLA

I could buy a good shower gel.

Ashley pauses for a few moments and looks intently at Bella.

ASHLEY

Alright, tomorrow night at Colson's.

BELLA

Can't we do it during the day? Grandma doesn't take her eyes off me.

ASHLEY

Nonsense, you're of age now, aren't you?

BELLA

Of course! Of course! I just don't want to upset her.

ASHLEY

Then sneak out when she falls asleep.

BELLA

That's impossible; she may sleep a lot, but she wakes up often.

Ashley opens her bag and starts rummaging through it.

ASHLEY

You know what? I just thought of something.

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

When I had insomnia, the doctor prescribed me some pills—I still have a few left. They're completely safe! I took them myself.

Ashley pulls a bottle of pills out of her bag and sets it on the table in front of Bella.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Just add it to her tea or juice.

Bella takes the pill bottle and hides it in her bag.

INT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sofia is asleep on the couch in front of the TV. Bella carefully takes a mug from Sofia's hands, watching to see if she wakes up, but Sofia remains sound asleep. Bella turns off the TV.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joe pulls his car up outside the club and watches as Bella and Ashley enter. He takes out his phone and makes a call.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - BAR - NIGHT

Ashley and Bella are standing at the bar. Bella is nervous but tries to smile.

ASHLEY

One of my regulars will be here tonight. I can introduce you. If he likes you, he'll pay you well.

Bella nods, though she's visibly anxious.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Don't worry so much! He's a great guy.

Ashley nods toward Bella's cocktail. Bella takes a sip of her drink.

EXT. CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Paulie parks his car outside the club, crosses the street, and heads to the entrance. At the door, he nods at the bouncer, who nods back. Paulie enters the club.



Paulie spots Joe, who waves him over.

JOE  
She's at the bar, but you won't  
like who she's with.

Paulie gives Joe an angry look and heads toward the bar.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - BAR - NIGHT

Paulie approaches Ashley and Bella. Joe stops behind Paulie.

ASHLEY  
Paulie, darling, I wasn't expecting  
to see you here.

Bella looks at Paulie in surprise and fear. Paulie ignores Ashley.

PAULIE  
(to Bella)  
Since when do you hang around with  
sluts?

Ashley looks back and forth between Bella and Paulie,  
confused.

ASHLEY  
What's going on? Do you two know  
each other?

BELLA  
Yes, he's my uncle.

Ashley's eyes widen in shock.

ASHLEY  
Who?

PAULIE  
(to Bella)  
Tony is going to be very  
disappointed to hear you've become  
a slut.

Ashley looks at Bella and Paulie in shock.

ASHLEY  
Alright then, I think I'll be  
going.

Ashley picks up her bag from the bar and starts to leave.  
Bella grabs her arm.

BELLA

Ashley, wait, I'm coming with you.

Ashley pulls her arm free from Bella.

ASHLEY

Sorry, but I want to live.

Ashley leaves.

Bella tries to follow Ashley, but Paulie signals to Joe, who grabs Bella's arm to stop her.

BELLA

She's not to blame.

Paulie gives Bella a displeased look.

PAULIE

(to Joe)

Take her home!

Paulie heads toward the exit.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ashley walks down the sidewalk, trying to hail a taxi, but all the cars pass her by. Paulie catches up to her and grabs her arm.

PAULIE

Hold it right there.

Ashley tries to free her arm and run away.

ASHLEY

Let me go!

A taxi stops nearby. Paulie holds onto Ashley.

PAULIE

Oh no, you're not getting off that easy!

ASHLEY

What are you talking about? I just met her! I didn't know she's Tony's daughter!

PAULIE

Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Just imagine what my brother would do to you!

A loud group approaches the taxi, and Paulie pulls Ashley aside as they get in and drive away.

ASHLEY  
What do you want?

PAULIE  
A grand a week.

ASHLEY  
(surprised)  
How much?

PAULIE  
You heard me.

Ashley's expression changes, and she touches Paulie between his legs.

ASHLEY  
Come on, can't we settle this  
another way?

PAULIE  
(smiling)  
Don't flatter yourself, whore. For  
a grand, I can get whoever I want.

ASHLEY  
I don't have that kind of money.  
I'm out of the game!

PAULIE  
Next Friday, same club, bring the  
money. Got it?

Ashley reluctantly nods. Paulie releases Ashley's arm and walks away. Ashley turns and walks away from the club.

ASHLEY  
Fuck! Bitch!

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Ashley paces around her apartment, looking anxiously at the clock. The doorbell rings. Ashley jumps, then cautiously walks to the door, trying not to make a sound. In the hallway stands Michael. Ashley sighs with relief and opens the door.

MICHAEL  
Here I am!

ASHLEY  
(hugging him)  
Hi! I missed you so much. Come in.

Michael enters, rolling his suitcase behind him. Ashley peeks into the hallway, looking around. No one's there. She closes the door and follows Michael inside.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael and Ashley walk into the living room. They embrace, and Ashley holds Michael tightly.

MICHAEL  
I missed you too!

Michael loosens his embrace, but Ashley continues holding onto him. Michael tries to look into her eyes, but she avoids his gaze.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(surprised)  
Is something wrong?

Ashley lets go of Michael and sighs heavily.

ASHLEY  
No, nothing!

Michael kisses her cheek and walks further into the apartment.

MICHAEL  
I'm exhausted, but we managed to  
land a great deal.

Ashley follows him.

ASHLEY  
I'm happy for you.

MICHAEL  
Do we have anything to eat? I'm  
starving.

Ashley stops by the couch, folding her arms. Not hearing a response, Michael turns to look at her, puzzled.

ASHLEY  
(sighing)  
I need to tell you something. I  
can't keep hiding this.

MICHAEL  
(frightened)  
Go ahead.

ASHLEY  
It's about my job. I haven't been  
honest about my job. I was never a  
restaurant manager...

Ashley pauses, taking a deep breath. Michael watches her closely.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
All this time, I've been working as  
an escort.

Michael's eyes widen, shaking his head as if he can't understand her words.

MICHAEL  
Is this some kind of joke?

Ashley looks down, unable to meet his gaze.

ASHLEY  
No.

MICHAEL  
What? An escort? You're serious?

ASHLEY  
Yes, but that doesn't change  
anything. We love each other. I  
just didn't want you to find out  
after we got married. Can't you  
understand?

Michael sits on the couch. Ashley sits beside him, trying to hug him, but he pulls away and stands up, walking to the window.

MICHAEL  
You mean the kind of escort where  
women sleep with men for money,  
right?

ASHLEY  
Don't be so childish.

MICHAEL  
I'm being childish!? We've been  
together for a year, and now you  
decide to tell me you're a  
prostitute!?

ASHLEY

I quit!

MICHAEL

And when did you, if I may ask?

ASHLEY

Two weeks ago.

MICHAEL

What?

ASHLEY

(tearing up)

It's just a job; it doesn't change how I feel about you!

MICHAEL

You were with me; I proposed to you; I was going to introduce you to my parents, and all that time, you were a prostitute!

Ashley tries to hug him again, but he pulls away.

ASHLEY

Honey, love, it was just a job!

MICHAEL

Being a restaurant manager is just a job! Being a teacher is just a job!

Michael heads for the door. Ashley tries to stop him.

ASHLEY

(crying)

Wait, we have to talk about this. You can't just walk away from a problem.

MICHAEL

You are the problem! You are the problem! I might have accepted if you'd been a prostitute a long time ago. I'd try not to judge you. But you were with me, sleeping with men for money, and you think I can just accept that?

ASHLEY

I'm sorry; I didn't think it would be a problem.

MICHAEL  
Give me the ring! And get out of my  
apartment.

ASHLEY  
What?

MICHAEL  
You heard me!

Ashley clutches her hand with the ring to her chest.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
It's my mother's ring; I can't  
leave it with a whore!

Ashley rips the ring off her finger and throws it at him. It  
lands at his feet.

ASHLEY  
Bastard, choke on it!

Michael picks up the ring.

MICHAEL  
You have two hours to get out of my  
apartment, or I'll call the police!

ASHLEY  
Fine, go! I don't need you anymore!  
I've had clients better than you!

Michael leaves, slamming the door behind him.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
I didn't want to marry you anyway.  
Mama's boy! Jerk!

Ashley collapses to the floor, crying.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Tony is driving with Paulie in the car.

PAULIE  
I'm telling you, artificial  
intelligence is going to take over  
the world soon.

TONY  
Stop talking fucking nonsense.

PAULIE

It's not nonsense! When a bank calls you, for example, do you think it's a person?

Paulie looks at Tony, who rolls his eyes.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

It's not! It's a robot. By the way, the most genius thing AI can do is swap faces in porn, for instance.

TONY

No way!

PAULIE

I swear! I almost wore my hand out last night over Sydney Sweeney. I'll show you sometime!

Tony notices something and his face turns red with anger.

TONY

What the fuck!

Paulie looks at him, confused.

PAULIE

What's wrong?

TONY

This is some kind of fucking joke. Stop the fucking car!

Paulie stops the car. Tony gets out, leaving the door open.

TONY (CONT'D)

Get out.

Paulie steps out of the car.

PAULIE

Tony, seriously, how long can this go on? What now...

Paulie stops, stunned, and sees workers putting up a beer advertisement on a billboard. The billboard shows half of Lizzie's face and the phrase "Time to drink the best!" One worker is on a ladder while another is holding it steady.

TONY

Fuck it! When I find out who put this up, I'll kill them, I swear, I'll kill them!



Tony walks away from the car toward the workers.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Hey, you fucking jagoffs, stop  
working!

WORKER 1  
(waving Tony off)  
What's up, man? Don't disturb us!

TONY  
What did you say, bastard?

Tony punches the worker 1, who falls down. The ladder starts shaking, and the worker 2 falls onto the pavement.

WORKER 1  
What the hell? What did we do to  
you?

TONY  
I said, stop your fucking work. Now  
listen carefully. Both of you get  
lost before I shoot you.

Tony begins pulling a gun from his holster. Paulie rushes over and tries to take the gun from him.

PAULIE  
Calm down, they're not to blame!

The worker 1 helps the worker 2 up and gets him into their truck. They drive away.

TONY  
Fuck! Right by the fucking store,  
no less.

Tony sits down on the curb near the billboard. Paulie looks at the billboard.

TONY (CONT'D)  
If I'd known this would happen, I  
would've strangled her in the  
fucking crib.

PAULIE  
Don't worry, I'll call my guys, and  
they'll take care of it.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Music plays in the apartment. Ashley, drunk, stands by the table, where a bottle of vodka sits. Scattered near it are empty pill bottles, and a large pile of pills lies on the table. The phone rings. Ashley is holding a pill blister, pressing pills out onto the table.

The answering machine clicks on.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hi, this is Ashley! I'm not home right now. Leave a message, and I'll call you back.

Ashley approaches the phone.

CATHERINE (VOICE OVER)

Hi, honey! I heard you broke up with your prince. Such a shame; he was a real catch. But that doesn't change the fact that our little bird is still a virgin...

Ashley grabs the phone and smashes it against the wall, then returns to the table. She takes a handful of pills, swallowing several at once with vodka. She repeats the process multiple times.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - EVENING

Paulie and his friends approach Ashley's apartment.

JOE

(pointing at the door)  
This is the place.

The young men listen at the door and hear music coming from inside.

PAULIE

Perfect, she's home. Break it down.

The guys start breaking into the apartment. At that moment, the door of a neighboring apartment opens, and an older neighbor, in his fifties, comes out with a small dog on a leash. He looks at the guys.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Please, go back inside.

The neighbor nods and closes his door. The guys break the door open and are about to enter when the neighbor steps out again, this time holding a shotgun.

NEIGHBOR  
 (threatening with the  
 shotgun)  
 Kids, you'd better go home.

PAULIE  
 This isn't your business, old man!

The neighbor cocks the shotgun.

NEIGHBOR  
 Get lost!

The guys back away from the door and quickly leave.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EVENING

The neighbor slowly opens Ashley's apartment door.

NEIGHBOR  
 Miss, don't be afraid. They're  
 gone.

He sees Ashley lying on the floor, unconscious, and approaches her.

INT. HOSPITAL - ASHLEY'S ROOM - DAY

Ashley opens her eyes; everything is white and blurry, soft music is playing.

ASHLEY  
 Am I dead?

PATIENT 1  
 Not yet.

Ashley's vision clears, and she sees that she's lying on a hospital bed in a shared room with two other women.

PATIENT 1 (CONT'D)  
 These fakers! Everybody knows pills  
 only give you the runs!

PATIENT 2  
 (laughs)  
 Or constipation.

The women laugh. Ashley buries her face in her pillow and cries.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE STORE - MORNING

Tony and Paulie pull up to the store. In the background, there's a billboard covered in paint; Lizzy's face isn't visible, but her chest and the slogan "Time to drink the best!" are.

Paulie parks the car, and the men step out. Tony glances at the billboard, sighs in disapproval, and shakes his head. Paulie shrugs, and they both head into the store.

INT. STORE - OFFICE - MORNING

A few guys are playing pool, laughing loudly. Tony and Paulie walk into the office where Johnny is sitting at a desk.

TONY  
Hey, everyone!

The guys greet Tony in unison. Tony walks over and sits in a chair next to Johnny's desk. Paulie walks over to the pool table and exchanges a few words with the guys.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Hey, Johnny.

JOHNNY  
Hey, Tony. Got anything to make my day?

Tony places a thick envelope on the desk in front of Johnny. Johnny picks it up and looks inside.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Everything's here?

TONY  
Of course!

JOHNNY  
Great! Sid, get Tony a drink.

Sid walks away from the pool table, grabs two beers from the fridge, opens them, and hands one each to Tony and Johnny.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
This is some fine beer!

Tony takes a sip.

SID  
Time to drink the best.

The guys at the pool table burst into laughter. Tony spits his beer all over Johnny, jumps up, and shoves Sid.

TONY  
What did you say, you bastard?

Johnny stands up and wipes his face with his hand.

SID  
Calm down, Tony! What's wrong with you?

Tony smashes the beer bottle over Sid's head, and Sid falls to the floor. The other guys stop laughing.

JOHNNY  
Can't you take a joke?

Tony kicks Sid, who's lying on the floor. At that moment, Paulie and a few other guys rush toward Tony and try to pull him off Sid.

TONY  
Go ahead, joke again, bastard! How do you like that one?

Paulie and the guys pull Tony away from Sid as he struggles to break free.

JOHNNY  
Calm down! We're not to blame for what your daughter's become! Get this shit head out of here!

Paulie drags Tony out of the office.

TONY  
(struggling to break free)  
I'm a man of honor, and you're a fucking idiot! You'll pay for this!

Paulie and Tony disappear down the hallway. Johnny, annoyed, sits back down and points at Sid.

JOHNNY  
Get him out of here!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE STORE - MORNING

Paulie and Tony tumble out onto the street.

TONY  
Fucking pussy! I'll kill him.

PAULIE  
Calm down!

For a moment, Tony stands still, lost in thought.

TONY  
(to Paulie)  
Let's go; we've got things to do!

Tony and Paulie head to their car. The car with Tony and Paulie drives off.

INT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Bella stands by the mirror in the bathroom, brushing her teeth.

She looks into the mirror and notices one of the tiles is out of place. Bella rinses her mouth, dries herself with a towel, and kneels beside the suspicious tile. She presses on it, and it moves easily. Bella finds a hidden compartment in the wall, with money wrapped in plastic inside. She beams with happiness, opens the package, and takes out a stack of cash, counting it.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Tony, Paulie! I'm so glad to see you!

Bella freezes in surprise.

TONY (V.O.)  
(to Paulie)  
Go get Bella.

BELLA  
(dismayed)  
Damn it!

PAULIE (V.O.)  
Hi, Mom!

Bella puts the stack of cash back into the package and hides it in the wall compartment. She hears a knock at her bedroom door next to the bathroom.

Bella closes the tile back in place, flushes the toilet, and leaves the bathroom.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Bella steps out of the bathroom. Paulie is standing in front of her.

BELLA  
(whispering)  
Hi, Uncle Paulie! Did something happen?

PAULIE  
(whispering)  
Your dad has decided to take you home.

Bella looks at Paulie in fear. He smiles warmly and pats her on the shoulder.

PAULIE (CONT'D)  
Don't worry, he doesn't know anything, but I'm covering for you this one and only time. I hope you understand that hanging around with slut is bad company.

TONY (V.O.)  
(to Sophia)  
Mom, this is the best—for you and my peace of mind.  
(yelling upstairs)  
What's taking so long?

BELLA  
Yes, Uncle.

Polly smiles and pats Bella on the cheek.

PAULIE  
That's good, now go pack your things.

Bella lets out a heavy sigh and walks to her room.

INT. HOSPITAL - ASHLEY'S ROOM - DAY

Ashley is lying halfway up in bed in a hospital ward. Nearby, there are a few more beds with other women lying in them. One woman holds the remote control for the TV. A doctor sits by Ashley's bed.

The news begins on the TV. Ashley notices Michael and another man appearing on the screen. She turns to the patient with the remote.

ASHLEY

Turn it up, please.

DOCTOR (VOICE OVER)

You've gone through a deeply serious moment in your life. This isn't just an event; it's a sign of the pain you carry inside. A suicide attempt is a cry for help, a way to express that your pain has become unbearable. I won't try to convince you that everything will instantly improve, but I want you to know—there is a way out, even when it all feels hopeless.

The patient raises the volume.

On the TV screen, there's a news broadcast. The reporter 1 stands in the city center, near a busy road by the bank building.

REPORTER 1

A major event has taken place in the world of business and politics in Chicago. The owner of the well-known "MARTIN" Bank, Henry Martin, has officially handed over management of the bank to his son, Michael Martin. This decision marks an important milestone not only for the company but also for the city's political scene, as Henry Martin simultaneously announced the launch of his campaign for the position of Governor of Illinois. The transfer of leadership took place at a ceremonial event in the central office of the "MARTIN" Bank, located in the heart of Chicago's financial district. Henry Martin, who led the bank for over three decades, said he trusts his son not just because of family ties but due to his professionalism and success in the banking industry. Michael Martin, who has held the position of vice president for the past five years, is regarded as one of the city's most promising young businessmen.



DOCTOR (OFF CAMERA)

Right now, the most important thing is to understand that you don't have to handle this alone. We're here to help you make sense of these feelings. Life's struggles, pain, and despair can feel endless, but with support and care, we can find ways to live with and manage these feelings. Let's start by talking about what matters most to you. What's bothering you the most right now? And what, if anything, might make you feel a bit better right now?

Ashley leans back and rolls her eyes in annoyance.

ASHLEY

(whispers)

What a bastard.

(to the doctor)

You know, doctor, I totally agree with you. I've had troubles—my fiancé left me.

Ashley points to the TV. The doctor glances at it.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

That banker right there. And I thought my life was over. How it hurt. But now, I'm actually glad we broke up. What kind of life would I have had with a man like that? I'd always be alone and a cuckquean.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Bella quietly opens the door to Sophia's house, peeking in and looking around. No one is around. Bella tiptoes up the stairs and hears sounds of a couple from the bedroom.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Bella stops and listens. She approaches the door and stops by it, hearing someone get up from the bed and go into the bathroom adjoining the bedroom.

PAULIE (VOICE OVER)

The only way I see is for us to escape.

(MORE)

PAULIE (CONT'D)  
 Leave everything and let's go to  
 Europe. No one will find us there.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Paulie lies naked on the bed. Half-dressed, Bianca peeks out from the bathroom.

BIANCA  
 We've been over this—I can't. I  
 have the restaurant, the kids.

SOPHIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING  
 Bella stands by the door and, upon  
 hearing her mother's voice, widens  
 her eyes in surprise, covering her  
 mouth with her hand.

PAULIE (VOICE OVER)  
 Mom can take care of Rob, and you  
 know the restaurant's a losing  
 game. And Bella—I actually picked  
 her up from a club recently. Guess  
 who she was with?

SOPHIA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING  
 Bianca steps out of the bathroom  
 and sits on the bed beside Paulie.

BIANCA  
 (surprised)  
 At a club? And with who?

PAULIE  
 Some hooker.

BIANCA  
 What the fuck? No way!

PAULIE  
 I didn't believe it at first,  
 either.

BIANCA  
 Oh God, who did they get this from?  
 Tony would lose it.

PAULIE  
 (laughs)  
 I hope so.

Bianca playfully hits Paulie on the shoulder and starts getting dressed. For a moment, she pauses.

BIANCA

Please, make sure Bella doesn't see that fucking slut again.

PAULIE

Alright.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Bella carefully backs away from the door and quietly goes downstairs to the first floor.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION - DAY

Ashley, now dressed in her own clothes, approaches the nurses' station.

ASHLEY

Can I go now?

NURSE

Just a few more minutes. I need to finalize your paperwork and gather your belongings.

Ashley nods and steps over to the window. At that moment, she glances out the window and spots Paulie and his friends standing at the main entrance.

ASHLEY

What a bastard!

Paulie says something to a friend standing nearby, who then walks away. Ashley rushes to the nurse.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Do you have my phone?

The nurse checks her papers.

NURSE

Yes, I do.

ASHLEY

Please give it to me; I need to call someone to pick me up.

The nurse pulls the phone out from a paper bag and hands it to Ashley. Ashley takes it, but the battery is dead.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Do you have a charger?

The nurse nods and retrieves a charger from a drawer. Ashley plugs the phone in and tries to turn it on.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
(impatiently)  
Come on, turn on!

The phone powers up just as it starts ringing. Ashley picks up.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Hello, Bella.

INT. HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Ashley is sitting in the hospital cafeteria. Bella enters the cafeteria, looking around for Ashley. Ashley waves at Bella, who walks over to her table and sits down.

ASHLEY  
Did they see you?

BELLA  
I don't think so.

Ashley sighs heavily and wipes her red eyes, trying to squeeze out a tear.

ASHLEY  
You said you were an orphan, and now, because of your Uncle Paulie, I'm in the hospital. He threatened to kill me, and I...

BELLA  
If you had relatives like that, you'd say you were an orphan too.

Ashley tilts her head and pretends to cry. Bella gently pats Ashley's hand.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
Oh, don't cry! I think we can help each other.

Ashley looks at Bella in surprise, the tears disappearing from her face.

ASHLEY  
But how!?

BELLA

I want to leave home, but I need money. Can you introduce me to that client you were talking about?

ASHLEY

How much do you need?

Bella thinks for a moment.

BELLA

Six thousand.

ASHLEY

I'll get you the money if you get rid of Paulie for me and get me a gun.

BELLA

Why do you need a gun? Don't worry, I know something about Paulie that will keep him away from you for good!

ASHLEY

Believe me, I have plenty of enemies.

Bella nods.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL - DAY

Bella and Ashley walk out of the hospital. Near the parking lot, Paulie and a few other guys are waiting, engaged in a lively conversation. Paulie leans against a car, with the guys gathered around him. When they notice Ashley and Bella, the group goes silent and parts to let them through. Bella and Ashley approach them.

BELLA

Hey, Uncle Paulie! Can I talk to you?

PAULIE

Ashley, darling, there you are! We've been waiting for you for a while now!

The young men around him laugh. Ashley scowls.

BELLA

Uncle Paulie!

Paulie smiles and steps closer to Bella and Ashley. Bella gestures to the side.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
(to Ashley)  
Let's go...

All three move over to the wall.

PAULIE  
Why is she here?

BELLA  
It's necessary.

PAULIE  
Alright, tell me what you want!

BELLA  
My friend fears for her life.  
Promise me you won't bother her  
again!

PAULIE  
(snickers)  
I won't even think about it.  
Consider it a lesson for her shady  
dealings.

BELLA  
Uncle, what about your shady  
dealings?

PAULIE  
Bella, dear, I love you—you're my  
niece—but watch your tongue!

BELLA  
I'm just curious—what will Dad say  
when he finds out you're sleeping  
with my mom?

Ashley looks at Bella and Paulie, surprised.

PAULIE  
Are you high?

BELLA  
Tell that to Dad while you're  
watching your home videos together.  
Grandma won't take it well when she  
finds out this all happened under  
her roof...

PAULIE

Those are just the words of a little brat. No one will believe you.

BELLA

Are you sure you want to test that?

PAULIE

You little bitch... I didn't expect this from you, Bella. At least think of your mother.

Bella shrugs. Paulie turns to leave.

BELLA

By the way, Ashley needs a gun. I know you have a couple.

Paulie steps away from the girls and talks to Joe, who then approaches them with a paper bag containing something heavy. Bella smiles warmly. Joe returns to the group, and they all get into their cars and drive away.

ASHLEY

Do you really have a video of him with your... mom?

BELLA

No, but he doesn't know that.

ASHLEY

I never knew you had such skills. The money will be ready in a couple of days.

Bella, excited, hugs Ashley.

INT. RESTAURANT - MAIN DINING AREA - EVENING

Michael and his parents, Henry and Camilla, sit at a table in an upscale restaurant, with soft music playing in the background.

CAMILLA

Congratulations, dear! You earned this position!

Henry nods approvingly.

HENRY

I hope everything continues smoothly.

At that moment, Ashley approaches the table.

MICHAEL  
Don't worry, Dad. I won't let you  
down!

Michael looks up, surprised to see Ashley. She smiles.  
Camilla and Henry look at Michael and Ashley, confused.

ASHLEY  
Hello!  
(to Michael)  
Michael, what a surprise! I didn't  
expect to see you here! Aren't you  
going to introduce me?

MICHAEL  
(sighing heavily)  
Mom, Dad, this is Ashley.

CAMILLA  
(surprised)  
The Ashley?

MICHAEL  
(shaking his head)  
No, a different one.

Michael stands up from the table.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Excuse me for a moment.

He grabs Ashley by the elbow.

ASHLEY  
(smiling)  
It was nice meeting you!

Michael leads Ashley outside.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - EVENING

Michael and Ashley step out of the restaurant and stop in the  
parking lot. Michael looks at Ashley, displeased.

MICHAEL  
What do you want?

ASHLEY  
I need your help.



MICHAEL

How much?

Ashley frowns. She hesitates, struggling to find the right words. Michael sighs heavily, annoyed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You know we can't be together.

Ashley tilts her head back, glaring at him.

ASHLEY

Of course we can't, not after what you said to me! But don't flatter yourself—I didn't come here to beg for your forgiveness.

Michael looks around nervously. A couple nearby glances over at them.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Because of you, I'm in trouble, and it might affect you too.

MICHAEL

Are you threatening me?

ASHLEY

Not at all. Do you remember Catherine?

Michael nods.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Well, she's blackmailing me. She has videos...

MICHAEL

But what does that have to do with me?

ASHLEY

She had cameras in my apartment. She recorded everything, you understand?

Michael looks away, thinking.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I heard your father is running for governor. Catherine could go to the press. Do you understand? The recordings need to be erased.

MICHAEL  
I get it. Alright.

Michael takes out his phone, steps away from Ashley, and makes a call. Ashley watches as he paces in the parking lot, talking to someone. His conversation is inaudible due to the traffic noise. After he finishes, he puts his phone away, rubs his eyes, and approaches Ashley.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Look, I'll help you, but you'd better not bother me again.

Ashley nods approvingly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
When it's taken care of, I'll call you and let you know where to meet. Alright?

ASHLEY  
Alright! But I also need twenty grand and a copy of the recordings.

Michael rolls his eyes.

MICHAEL  
Why do you need copies?

ASHLEY  
As a guarantee that she'll leave me alone.

Michael sighs and walks away from the parking lot.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
And the money?

Ashley purses her lips and rolls her eyes, trying not to cry. Michael disappears back into the restaurant.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Ashley enters the bar and sits down next to Michael. A glass of whiskey sits in front of Michael. A bartender approaches Ashley.

BARTENDER  
What would you like?

ASHLEY  
A beer.

The bartender grabs a beer from the fridge, opens the bottle, and places it in front of Ashley.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Ashley takes a sip and looks at Michael.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

So, did you bring it?

Michael places a flash drive and a small bag next to Ashley's hand.

MICHAEL

Who did you get yourself involved with, Ashley?

ASHLEY

I don't know what you're talking about!

MICHAEL

Your Catherine works for the FBI.

ASHLEY

What?

MICHAEL

You heard me. My guy had to leave town, and I had to pay him double. You got what you wanted. If I were you, I'd leave too.

ASHLEY

Is it that serious?

Michael gives her a cold look, stands up from his stool, and walks away.

MICHAEL

Farewell.

Ashley is left alone, clutching the flash drive in her hand.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Bella sits in the passenger seat, watching as Ashley exits the bar. Ashley looks frightened and is hurrying toward the car, carrying a small bag.

Ashley gets into the driver's seat and pauses for a moment, seemingly lost in thought.

BELLA  
Did something happen?

Ashley snaps out of it.

ASHLEY  
No, everything's fine.

Ashley looks into the bag and counts the money.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

Ashley hits the steering wheel in frustration. Bella stares at her, surprised and a bit scared.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
That bastard only gave me eight grand.

Ashley sighs heavily, pulling out a few bundles of cash, leaving just one thin stack in the bag.

BELLA  
(scared)  
But our deal...

ASHLEY  
Yes, yes, it still stands.

Ashley hands the money to Bella. Satisfied, Bella takes it and puts it into her backpack.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Sorry, I can't give you a ride.

BELLA  
Don't worry, I'll get home on my own.

Bella kisses Ashley on the cheek and gets out of the car.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Ashley enters her apartment and heads straight to the bedroom. A laptop is lying on the bed. She opens it and inserts the flash drive. A window pops up on the screen, showing numerous folders. One folder is labeled "Vito." Ashley opens the "Vito" folder and sees a list of video files. She scrolls to the end and clicks on the last video.

NT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING  
Vito is dancing with Anna in his arms, music playing in the background. Suddenly, his phone rings.

VITO  
(to the Anna)  
Turn off the music.

Anna turns off the music. Vito picks up the phone.

VITO (CONT'D)  
At your service, boss!

Vito listens intently to Carlo on the other end, then hangs up and tosses the phone onto the bed, gesturing angrily.

VITO (CONT'D)  
That bastard. He thinks I make money out of thin air. I've outlasted many bosses, but this one's the slimiest piece of shit ever born. I pray every day for someone to shoot him! You know, I'm this close...

Vito gestures with his fingers to show how close.

VITO (CONT'D)  
... this close to going to the feds and handing that son of a bitch over.

Anna steps closer to Vito and tries to embrace him. Vito pulls away and looks her in the face.

VITO (CONT'D)  
I hope this stays between us.

Anna nods, brushing something off Vito's shoulder.

ANNA  
Of course, of course, darling.

Vito grabs Anna's arm.

VITO  
If you spill a word, I'll kill you. Got it?

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Ashley closes the laptop. She stands still for a moment, then gets up, pulls a suitcase from under the bed, opens her closet, and hurriedly starts tossing clothes from the drawers into the suitcase.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - EVENING

Outside Bianca's restaurant, Paulie sits on the hood of a car, with Joe beside him. Paulie holds a phone, showing a video to Joe. The actress in the video looks like Bella.

PAULIE

Just look at what AI can do these days. I found these videos at Ashley's house. Can you believe it? This bitch managed to make a similar one with me and Bianca.

JOE

Bullshit!

PAULIE

I was fucked up when I saw it. Just imagine what else this shit might be able to do! Fucking Skynet will seem like child's play. But that's small-time shit. Tony would've ripped my balls off if he'd seen it first.

JOE

Yeah,  
(laughs)  
he probably doesn't even know what artificial intelligence is.

Joe stares intently at the screen.

JOE (CONT'D)

Looks real. Do you think they could do the same with Selena?

PAULIE

(laughing)  
I'll make one like this with you if you keep talking.

At that moment, Tony walks up to the two young men.

TONY

What are you watching?

JOE  
Mr. Tony, you won't believe this...

Paulie nudges Joe in the elbow.

TONY  
Well, what is it?

PAULIE  
Oh, nothing, just a video.

TONY  
Then show me!

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Catherine sits in front of a mirror, applying a face mask. There's a knock at the door. Catherine ignores it and continues applying the mask. Her phone rings, displaying "Dad" on the screen. Catherine answers.

CATHERINE  
Yes, hello.

FBI AGENT 1  
Open the door.

CATHERINE  
One moment.

Catherine quickly grabs some tissues from a box and wipes her face. There's another knock at the door. Catherine hurries to open it.

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Catherine opens the door to find two agents standing there.

CATHERINE  
(smiling)  
Come in.

The agents enter the apartment and head straight to her office. Catherine follows them.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Is something wrong?

INT. CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The FBI agent 2 sits at Catherine's desk and opens her laptop, while FBI agent 1 stands behind him. Catherine looks at them in surprise.

FBI AGENT 1  
Yes. You've been hacked.

CATHERINE  
Excuse me?

FBI AGENT 2  
All the videos have been stolen.

FBI AGENT 1  
Tell us, Catherine, why did you need a copy?

Catherine rubs her thumb, searching for words.

CATHERINE  
Just in case.

FBI AGENT 1  
Your "just in case" could ruin our entire operation! If the videos you recorded for us fall into the hands of the mafia, they'll kill all our potential informants.

A distressed Catherine sits down in a chair.

CATHERINE  
So, it wasn't the mafia?

FBI AGENT 1  
No. If it had been, you'd already be dead. Now, tell us—who else was interested?

Catherine's eyes scan the room as she tries to recall.

CATHERINE  
It could be anything; I have plenty of enemies.  
(sighs deeply)  
I don't know, maybe Ashley.

FBI AGENT 1  
Ashley Lewis?

CATHERINE  
That's the one.



The FBI agent 2 stands up from the desk, takes the laptop, and leaves, followed closely by FBI agent 1.

FBI AGENT 1  
Don't open the door for anyone  
else!

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - EVENING

Tony steps closer to Paulie, expecting him to show the video, but Paulie hesitates.

TONY  
Well, go on, show it...

Paulie turns on his phone, and Tony sees a pornographic video featuring someone who looks like Bella.

JOE  
Pretty cool, Mr. Tony.

Tony glares at Joe with disdain.

TONY  
(to Joe)  
Get out of here before I shoot you.  
(to Paulie)  
What is this?

Joe, frightened, runs off. Paulie steps away from the car as Tony stands opposite him and pulls out a gun.

PAULIE  
Tone, calm down. It's nothing  
serious.

TONY  
Nothing serious? Your niece's being  
screwed by some fucking mut, and  
you're showing it to your fucking  
buddies! She's your niece!

Tony removes the magazine from his gun and checks the bullets.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Where did you get this, you  
disgusting pervert? Huh?

He reloads the magazine and cocks the gun. Paulie raises his hands defensively.

PAULIE  
From her friend, the hooker.

Tony lowers the gun.

TONY  
What do you mean, "the hooker"?  
What friend? Who are you talking  
about?

PAULIE  
Ashley. You know, that busty blonde  
working for Catherine.

Tony freezes for a moment, processing the information.

TONY  
I'm going to kill her! Let's go  
find that filthy pimp and figure  
out where this trash lives.

PAULIE  
I know where she lives.

Tony steps closer to Paulie and shoves him toward the car.

TONY  
Then take me there! This is  
disgusting! Why, God, why did all  
my daughters turn out to be sluts?

Tony and Paulie get into the car.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

There's a loud knock at the door. Ashley glances at her  
packed suitcase and freezes in fear.

ASHLEY  
(whispering)  
Fuck! Fuck! I'm in deep trouble.

She pulls a gun from her bedside drawer.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ASHLEY'S BUILDING - EVENING

Tony and Paulie pull up to Ashley's building. Paulie looks at  
Tony. Tony steps out of the car, with Paulie following.

TONY  
(pointing to the car)  
Wait here!

PAULIE

But...

TONY

No buts. I'll take care of this myself. Keep the engine running; I'll be quick.

Tony walks toward the entrance, gripping his gun in his pocket.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EVENING

Ashley, holding her gun, cautiously approaches the front door and looks through the peephole. She sees two men outside.

FBI AGENT 1 (OFF CAMERA)

Miss Lewis, we're with the FBI, and we know you're home. Why put on this show?

ASHLEY

I... I didn't call you.

FBI AGENT 1 (OFF CAMERA)

Miss Lewis, be reasonable and open the door. We need to speak with you urgently.

ASHLEY

I have nothing to say to you. Leave.

The FBI agent 1 steps closer to the door, speaking in a lower voice.

FBI AGENT 1 (OFF CAMERA)

Miss Lewis, you're in danger. Don't make us have this conversation through the door—someone could overhear us.

ASHLEY

Leave!

FBI AGENT 1 (OFF CAMERA)

We need what's on your flash drive. If you hand over the video, we'll help you.

Ashley opens the door, aiming her gun at the agents.

ASHLEY

Show me your badges up close.

The agents pull out their badges from their inner pockets, holding them out for her to see.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Throw them to me.

The FBI agent 1 tosses his badge, and it lands on the floor. Ashley keeps her eyes on the agents as she picks it up and inspects it. Satisfied, she lowers her gun. The agents enter the apartment and close the door behind them.

FBI AGENT 1

We'd better hurry. Take only what's essential.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - EVENING

Tony steps out of the elevator, holding a gun.

At that moment, the apartment door opens, and FBI agent 1 steps out, followed by Ashley. Tony spots them and shoots FBI agent 1, who collapses to the floor. Ashley screams. The FBI agent 2 grabs Ashley's hand and pulls her back inside, slamming the door shut. Tony runs to the door.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EVENING

The FBI agent 2 shoves Ashley's gun into her hand.

FBI AGENT 2

(whispers)

Hide in the bathroom.

Ashley dashes into the bathroom, locks the door, climbs into the tub, and aims her gun at the door.

The FBI agent 2 takes cover at the corner. Bullets hit the door lock, and the FBI agent 2 fires back. He radios for backup.

FBI AGENT 2 (CONT'D)

Agent, over. We've been attacked.

Agent down. I repeat, we've been attacked. Agent down.

Another shot blasts the door lock, and the door creaks open. The FBI agent 2 peers around the corner, firing but missing. Tony shoots, hitting the FBI agent 2 in the shoulder.

The FBI agent groans in pain but fires again, wounding Tony in the leg.

TONY  
You fucking pig!

Tony clutches his wound, noticing the FBI agent 2 peeking out again. Tony shoots and kills the FBI agent 2.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - EVENING

Ashley sits in the bathtub, staring tensely at the door. Gunshots echo through the apartment, followed by shouting in the hallway.

TONY (OFF CAMERA)  
Where are you fucking slut? Is this  
how you welcome guests?

Ashley covers her mouth with her hand, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Suddenly, the door bursts open, and Tony fires at Ashley just as she fires multiple shots back at him. Ashley is hit and collapses, losing consciousness. Black screen.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ASHLEY'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Paulie sits in the car and hears sirens approaching. He slouches in his seat and starts the engine, watching police cars race toward the building. He glances at the entrance.

PAULIE  
You'd better get out now.

He drums his fingers nervously on the steering wheel. The police cars pull into the parking lot. Paulie checks the entrance one last time. No one appears. Just as he's about to drive away, a police officer approaches his car with a gun drawn.

OFFICER 2  
Step out of the car!

INT. NIGHTCLUB - VIP ZONE - NIGHT

Lizzy is sitting on a couch at a noisy party. She puts her phone in her bag and smiles at a young man and woman sitting beside her.

YOUNG MAN

So?

Lizzy grins.

LIZZY

She'll be here tomorrow.

GIRL

Poor girl. She'll be so disappointed when she realizes there's no movie.

LIZZY

No one's going to tell her. It's not my fault she took her sweet time. Believe me, she'll thank me for this. I'm giving her a chance to get away from our crazy father. That's worth more than ten grand.

Lizzy glances at her friends, waves her hands, and stands up from the couch.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Alright, enough about that. Let's go dance!

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A cheerful Bella enters the house and sees Bianca sitting on the couch watching TV. Bella walks over to Bianca and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

BELLA

Hey, Mom. Is Dad home?

BIANCA

No, he's still at work.

BELLA

Alright. Mom...

Bianca shifts her gaze from the TV to Bella.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Are you happy with Dad?

BIANCA

(confused, smiling)  
Of course! Why are you asking?

BELLA

It's nothing! I just wanted to say,  
if you're unhappy, you should get a  
divorce.

BIANCA

But why would you think I'm  
unhappy?

BELLA

No, no reason. Just saying.  
Alright, I'm going upstairs.

Bella heads upstairs. Bianca watches her with a suspicious  
look.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - BELLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bella enters her bedroom and quickly goes to the closet. She  
pulls out a small bag and packs a few dresses and a swimsuit,  
smiling to herself. Suddenly, a piercing scream echoes from  
downstairs. Bella freezes in fear and looks toward the door.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bella rushes downstairs and sees Bianca crying hysterically,  
with a scared Rob looking around in confusion.

BIANCA

He's dead! They killed him!

BELLA

Who?

BIANCA

Tony, oh Tony! Why?

Bella turns to look at the television.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ASHLEY'S BUILDING - EVENING

A reporter 2 stands outside, with numerous police cars in the  
background.

REPORTER 2

According to police, Romano was a  
central figure in the city's  
criminal circles. Several shots  
were fired at him, and one of them  
was fatal.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bella is sitting in the living room, staring blankly ahead. Her eyes are swollen from crying, and she looks exhausted. Bianca's cries can be heard somewhere in the house. The doorbell rings. Bella doesn't react and continues to stare ahead. The doorbell rings again. Bella lets out a heavy sigh, gets up from the couch, and walks to the door.

She opens the door and finds Maria standing there.

MARIA

I'm so sorry.

Bella bursts into tears and throws herself into Maria's arms.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Ashley unlocks her apartment door, sighs heavily, and steps inside. The apartment is clean and untouched, as if nothing happened. Ashley freezes in the doorway, hesitant to go further. Ashley listens carefully, but the apartment is silent. She steps inside, glancing around—no one is there.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Ashley enters the bathroom and looks around nervously. She approaches the mirrored cabinet hanging on the wall and opens the mirrored door. Ashley examines the contents of the cabinet and, with trembling hands, grabs a box of cotton swabs. She removes the lid, turns the box over the sink, and the cotton swabs spill out into the basin. Along with them, a flash drive falls out. Ashley leans on the sink and exhales with relief.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

The funeral hall is almost empty; a few people stand at the back of the room, while a few others sit in the last rows. The hall is quiet, with only the soft sound of women quietly sobbing. By the coffin sit Bianca, Sofia holding Rob in her arms, and Bella. Maria sits behind Bella. The coffin is adorned with numerous flowers, and inside lies Tony. Sofia and Bianca are crying. Bella, with her head lowered, stares at her feet.

Two men sit in the back rows. The men are dressed in black suits.



MAN 1  
 (whispering)  
 It's not fair to Tony--no one came  
 to say goodbye.

MAN 2  
 (whispering, clicking his  
 tongue)  
 After Vito started talking, no one  
 wants to draw attention to  
 themselves.

MAN 1  
 (clenching his fist)  
 Fucking Vito!

Bella turns at the sound and sees Ashley standing at the  
 entrance to the hall. Ashley notices Bella has seen her and  
 waves at Bella.

A man 1 approaches the grieving women.

MAN 1 (CONT'D)  
 My condolences.

A man 1 kisses Bianca on the cheek.

MAN 1 (CONT'D)  
 He was a wonderful friend.

Bianca starts sobbing even harder, wiping her tears with a  
 handkerchief. Bella stands up and walks over to Ashley.

Bella approaches Ashley.

BELLA  
 Hi!

ASHLEY  
 My condolences.

BELLA  
 Thank you.

ASHLEY  
 I thought you had already left.

BELLA  
 There's no need anymore.

Bella sighs heavily and falls silent for a moment.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
 Did he visit you?

Ashley looks at Bella without reacting.

BELLA (CONT'D)  
Please answer. It's very important  
to me.

ASHLEY  
It won't change anything.

Bella wipes her wet eyes with her palm and prepares to leave.

BELLA  
Sorry, I need to be with my family.

Ashley grabs Bella's hand.

ASHLEY  
It's not your fault. Don't blame  
yourself.

BELLA  
Why are you here?

ASHLEY  
I need a favor.

Bella sobs, drawing the attention of the men seated nearby,  
who glance over at her.

BELLA  
Leave. I don't want to see you.

Bella tries to free her hand but fails.

ASHLEY  
I know who's responsible for your  
father's death. Help me get revenge  
for him.

Bella stops and looks at Ashley in surprise.

BELLA  
What does my father have to do with  
you?

ASHLEY  
Let me tell you something, the same  
person is behind both your grief  
and mine. Introduce me to Carlo.

BELLA  
My family is waiting for me.

Ashley catches Sofia's gaze and releases Bella's hand.

ASHLEY  
Please. Bella, please.

Bella walks away, leaving Ashley alone.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

The thugs 1 leads Ashley into a room. The room is dimly lit. The thugs 1 guides Ashley to the chair and helps her sit down. The thugs 1 steps back, leaving the bag on the Ashley's head. Ashley exhales heavily, pulls the bag off her head, and places it on her lap.

Ashley looks straight ahead, trying to make out who is sitting in front of her. Ashley smiles mysteriously.

ASHLEY  
Finally! I was starting to think  
you'd never show up.

JOHNNY  
We were told you've got something  
for us.

Ashley looks around. She notices several figures standing against the walls in the shadows, but she can't see their faces.

ASHLEY  
I wanted to speak with Carlo.

JOHNNY  
You'll speak to us, and we'll pass  
it on to him.

ASHLEY  
(shaking her head)  
This is too important to relay  
through middlemen.

JOHNNY  
Hear me, bitch, we're not here to  
play games. Say what you've got to  
say, or we'll be very unhappy. And  
I hope you understand that our  
unhappiness will fall squarely on  
you.

ASHLEY  
It's about a rat.

JOHNNY

(laughs)

You mean that son of a bitch Vito gave you STD?

Ashley forces a smile.

ASHLEY

Vito is just a victim of circumstance. I have information about the real rat.

The men at the table exchange glances.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I won't say anything until I speak with Carlo.

From the shadows, Carlo steps forward. Johnny turns, rises from his seat, and Carlo takes his place. Johnny moves to stand behind Carlo.

CARLO

Speak.

ASHLEY

Before I begin, I'd like to discuss the price.

JOHNNY

(nervously)

Boss, let me shoot her already.

Carlo ignores Johnny's outburst.

CARLO

How much?

ASHLEY

It's not about money. It's about justice and my future.

CARLO

(smiling faintly)

And what do you want?

ASHLEY

Catherine's position.

CARLO

I have no complaints about Catherine. Why do you think I'd give you her spot?

ASHLEY  
You'll have complaints once you  
hear what I have to say.

CARLO  
Go on.

ASHLEY  
Catherine is working with the FBI.  
She's recording all your guys.

The men at the table exchange uneasy glances.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Men tend to talk a lot before sex.  
The FBI arrested all the  
dissatisfied ones, and the rest was  
just a matter of tying up loose  
ends.

CARLO  
Why should I believe you?

Ashley pulls a flash drive from her pocket and places it on  
the table in front of Carlo.

ASHLEY  
I have proof.

Carlo stares at the flash drive.

FADE OUT.

THE\_ END