

Cadence
by
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FADE IN:

INT. GYM SPIN CLASS - WEST LOS ANGELES - DAY

Clouds of vapor from sweat permeate the dark studio spinning class as JUDITH KRIEG, 43, spins like she's about to take off. Judith is tall and dark, with black, long, curly hair and is beyond fit. She's taller than most men, tougher too.

Leading the class is huge AFRICAN AMERICAN spinning instructor, CORNEL ARBUTHNOT, 63. There are only three students today and the studio looks somewhat worse for wear.

Cornel, muscular and massive, looks more like a body double for "Predator" rather than an aerobic spin bike instructor but looks can be deceiving. He's a looker still and he looks much younger than sixty.

In the front is SUSY ADKINS, 20s. Susy, blonde and flighty, looks dressed for a beach photo session in a skimpy workout outfit. She's tiny and it looks like one gentle shove would launch her into the beyond.

Sandwiched between them is Judith's husband, MICHAEL KRIEG, 30s. Michael, a professional photographer, barely 30, and as fair as Judith is dark, is boyish, tall, and noticeably younger than his wife. He's also a bit of a dish.

CORNEL

Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Move it one more half-turn to the right, that's it, shoulders down, breathe, people!

JUDITH

Yeah, baby.

CORNEL

Just imagine you're on a bus and if the speed falls below eighty rpm --

SUSY

-- A bomb goes off!

CORNEL

Now pump it! That's what I'm saying, Mrs. Krieg. This is Cornel's spin class and we mean business!

SUSY

Amen!

MICHAEL

Yeah!

CORNEL

You ain't living on the beach with
the swells yet!

SUSY

Don't forget the poor people when
you move to the Palisades!

JUDITH

I'll try to remember!

The wheels of everyone's bikes are spinning manically now,
creating a mini vortex of wind, lifting the women's hair.

CORNEL

First to reach 150 output gets a
free month of classes.

MICHAEL

That's nuts, no one can beat you,
Cornel.

JUDITH

I can! And if I lose?

CORNEL

I get to see y'all naked.

Judith laughs this off but Michael isn't smiling. He seems to
sink in the saddle as his bike becomes a children's tricycle
in a room full of adult humor and he's the child. He's
starting to look like a cuckold -- whatever that looks like.

A furious battle of the bikes begins. As they wipe away the
sweat, they take quick glances at the big screen as Cornel
initially sprints ahead with ease. Then Judith catches up,
then Cornel, clearly struggling at his age, starts to flag.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

No one's beaten me in the last
thirty years and believe me, no one
ever will.

The other two watch with grim fascination. Cornel grips his
chest, finally beaten.

But he's a sore loser and tosses his bike to the side and
storms off in a huff. Judith starts to slow down, lightly
touching her eye as if in pain.

MICHAEL
What's up with your eye, hon?

JUDITH
Nothing, it's fine.

SUSY
He's gone, mamas, I'm like, the
battle is over.

But she keeps spinning until Michael comes over and screws down the resistance knob, forcing her to halt.

MICHAEL
Ease down, Ripley. You're just
grinding metal on metal.

Judith gets the "Aliens" reference and finally eases up, leaning in for a kiss -- which Michael refuses.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
The two of you are like sibling
rivals. Lucky your gambit paid off,
Mrs. Krieg.

JUDITH
Don't be mad, hon. Hon! You knew I
was a free spirit when you married
me!

He storms off. Susy shrugs in sympathy.

SUSY
I'm like, 'men are such babies'.

INT. HALLWAY TO LOCKER ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

In the hall leading to the ladies' locker room, Judith notices DAVID, 50s, blonde and pixie-like, the custodian. He stares at her and seems reluctant to move. David is slow, seemingly harmless, and doesn't understand boundaries.

JUDITH
Excuse me, David. David, I need
some privacy.

INT. GYM - WOMEN'S SHOWER - LATER

Judith hesitantly places her face under the shower stream and flinches as the water bounces off her eyes. Susy stares at Judith's voluptuousness and then looks at her own chest and tries to cover it as she washes.

David enters casually and watches the ladies shower.

INT. CORNEL'S OFFICE - SAME

Cornel also watches via security cameras which show David leering outside the women's locker room. On screen Judith suddenly senses something, looks up but doesn't see anything.

POV: BLACK AND WHITE SECURITY CAMERA - LATER

From the security camera, we can see that Cornel is now in the ladies' locker room, handing a towel to Judith. We can just make out the grainy conversation:

JUDITH (V.O.)
I won the battle, Cornel, you don't
get the prize.

CORNEL (V.O.)
I already got the prize, remember?

JUDITH (V.O.)
I'm married now, we're done,
hotshot. That was a mistake.

CORNEL (V.O.)
It was no mistake, missy-miss.
Here, look, he's ready for you. How
about a rematch on the bike?

He loops the towel behind her head and tries to reel her in but she's very strong too and pulls away.

BACK TO:

INT. SHOWER ROOM - CORNEL'S GYM - SAME

Cornel leans forward, grabbing her hand, trying to push it into his groin but she strikes down and we hear a sound like a steak slapping onto a countertop. He bends over in agony.

CORNEL
Goddamn bitch, I am gonna best you
girl. Aagh.

She casually walks away, not even bothering to cover herself. Susy, hidden and scowling, has been watching the whole scene.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CORNEL'S GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Cornel grabs David by the scruff. The women peek out in their towels as Cornel covers David's eyes with toilet paper.

CORNEL

Believe me, I'm not a sore loser.

JUDITH

Look, let's both move on, I'm married now.

CORNEL

You're right. It ain't right.

She pauses for a beat, not cluing into what he's inferring.

JUDITH

It ain't. It isn't.

Cornel takes off, carrying David like a pop-up stand.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CORNEL'S GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Judith notices someone has been rifling her gym bag but, seeing her wallet and phone still in place, shrugs it off.

INT. MICHAEL'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

As they pull out of the parking lot, Michael passes his phone to Judith to show her a text. It shows a text confirming a photographic shoot in London.

ON SCREEN text: "Miss D requests the pleasure of your company for some publicity shots in jolly old London. Down?"

JUDITH

London! Your favorite client. You gotta do it, hotshot!

MICHAEL

Lousy timing during the move; I'm sorry. I can jet in, do her publicity pix, and jet out.

JUDITH

No, no, I'll be fine, we don't have that much stuff.

MICHAEL

Anyway, perhaps this will soften the blow.

He passes her an antique off-white box with a bow attached.

JUDITH

Oh my gosh, I totally forgot our anniversary. The first year too. I'm sorry, I'm a bad wife.

MICHAEL

It's the same type they used at the 1936 Berlin Olympics when your boy

JUDITH

-- Jesse Owens cleaned up.

The box contains a vintage Omega 185 stopwatch. Judith starts to cry, her tears falling freely, staining the old box.

MICHAEL

Use it to time your rides. Better than a digital watch.

JUDITH

Way better. I love it. I love you.

She gives him a killer kiss.

MICHAEL

Come to London. I have a buddy ticket.

JUDITH

No. No way.

MICHAEL

Have tea at Fortnum's while I work.

JUDITH

Okay, crazy boy! Let's do it.

INT. JUDITH'S MID-LEVEL APARTMENT - WEST LA - DAY

A typical Los Angeles apartment with a so-so view of an alley and a Trader Joe's. Large pop concert photos dot the wall.

There's a bust of Shakespeare and stage photos of Judith in a Shakespearian play. She's dressed as a man. Clearly, it's an all-female production at some girls' school.

She's riding an older Peloton bike with a small screen and pumping some light hand weights as the rickety bike wobbles.

As she waves goodbye to a workout buddy visible in a small pop-up window, Judith suddenly grabs her eye in agony. The bike screen goes blurry, then dark as the world closes in.

But the pedals, always tricky to unclip, stay stuck and Judith, blind and frustrated, struggles to get out.

JUDITH

C'mon, damnit. Not now! Relax,
don't think. Just twist and pull.

The shoes are stuck fast. The eye pain is increasing.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Bloody spin shoes.

Finally, she just pulls her feet out of the shoes in frustration and leaves them on the pedals. She almost cascades off the bike and rolls on the floor in agony, refusing to move. Unable to move.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Oh, my eyes! My eyes! Michael,
Michael!

ON-SCREEN TITLES: TWO DAYS LATER

INT. JUDITH'S MID-LEVEL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - WEST LA - DAY

Judith, now sporting plastic eye-protector cups with gauze bandages, is laid up in bed and gabbing on the phone to RICHARD CHARLTON, 80s, her estranged Father.

Richard, her Father, is former LAPD, long since retired, crusty, taciturn, once-distant, and now, remorseful. There's a bowl of porridge in her lap and she's making a mess. She drops the phone which clicks off.

Michael is packing camera gear and oblivious to her struggles. Judith is crying, struggling to eat some oatmeal. The phone rings. Frustrated, she locates the ringing sound and collapses on the bed.

JUDITH

Hello, Dad? Sorry, dropped you.

RICHARD (V.O.)

What's wrong, hon, you're crying?
Baby.

JUDITH

Even after all these years, you can tell. It's nothing.

RICHARD (V.O.)

It's the operation.

She bursts into tears again.

JUDITH

Look. Dad. 'Dad' sounds so weird as we haven't spoken much in the last few years. Thanks again for letting us take over the house.

RICHARD (V.O.)

And that's my fault. It was getting too big for me anyway.

JUDITH

No, it isn't. Well yes, it is. Yes, I can look after your bloody cat.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Ferdy won't leave the main house. So you're flying to London right in the middle of the move? You're OK to fly?

JUDITH

Yeah, the doc said it's safe. Stupid idea, right? Dad? It's Michael's big celebrity client and we need the money.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Eyesight is overrated. Hearing is key. Sometimes you can see things but not really see them. Glaucoma?

Judith stops to listen for a beat but hears nothing.

JUDITH

Acute angle-closure glaucoma. It can come on quite suddenly. It's when the drainage canals --

RICHARD (V.O.)

-- Get blocked or covered over. How's the pain? If you're like Yasmin, I mean Mom -- you're a complete wimp with any kind of discomfort.

JUDITH
Mom was a soldier compared to me.

RICHARD
I have a good realtor.

JUDITH
We have one. Susy.

Judith looks towards the wall and a photo of her mom, YASMIN, AFRICAN AMERICAN, 50s, a young Judith, and Richard, looking distant. Yasmin is very heavy.

INT. JUDITH'S NEW HOME - PACIFIC PALISADES - DAY

Richard's old home and Judith's new home is, on the outside, something out of Architectural Digest -- an ultra-desirable Pacific Palisades turn-of-the-century craftsman.

Judith, still without sight and eyes bandaged, is on the porch, supervising, while Michael, sweating like a pregnant pig, humps the last few remaining boxes.

JUDITH
Do you smell that aftershave? Old Spice.

MICHAEL
Something smells. It's like Hai Karate.

JUDITH
Old Spice.

MICHAEL
Richard, the movers?

JUDITH
We are the movers.

POV: OUTSIDE

Someone outside is watching. FERDY THE CAT lounges on the porch but seems to prick his ears up too, sensing something. Someone is staring into the house.

INT. EXERCISE ROOM/LOFT - SAME

Judith inexplicably turns toward the window as if she senses something. She strains to hear some sound. Nothing.

MICHAEL

What is it?

JUDITH

Nothing. Probably. I just had a sense I was being watched.

POV: GRAINY CAMERA

IT PANS DOWN ON JUDITH'S BODY THEN RETURNS TO SCANNING THE HOUSE, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING.

Michael leans into the bay window and sees nothing. But we can tell he's long since made peace with his wife's intuition. He grabs an Alexa speaker curiously.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Remember that story about a couple who moved into a new house and the previous owner rigged the house with dozens of spy cameras?

MICHAEL

It was a movie.

JUDITH

No, it was a real story.

MICHAEL

Alexa, remind me to check the house later for hidden cameras.

ALEXA (V.O.)

Reminder created.

JUDITH

Do we have to use that thing?

MICHAEL

In your present state, you might find it very useful.

JUDITH

Alexa, remind my husband to stop buying expensive gadgets.

MICHAEL

It wasn't expensive. Alexa, remind my wife to stop obsessively working out so much.

ALEXA (V.O.)
Reminder created.

REMOTE VIDEO POV

They kiss and someone, again, is watching.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
You know I'm coming in for a kiss
even though you can't see.

JUDITH (V.O.)
I can smell it coming.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
What does it smell like?

JUDITH (V.O.)
It smells like you.

A gloved hand turns a receiver knob, tuning it louder until Michael's voice can be clearly heard.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I think I heard a car pulling up.
Probably Susy.

JUDITH (V.O.)
She so totally still wants you.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
She does not. She's our realtor.
And Cornel wants you.

This one hits home -- luckily her guilty eyes are hidden. But Michael's tone throws Judith off her game for a beat. Then --

JUDITH (V.O.)
He does not. He's too big anyway.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
You could manage.

The gloved hand makes a fist as if congratulating themselves. Judith and Michael both freeze, waiting for the next riposte. Their minds spinning until they hear, with relief, FOOTSTEPS.

INT. HALLWAY/FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

There is no knock but the door cracks open as Susy noses in with some real estate paperwork.

SUSY

Hello, Krieg family. Susy, your friendly spin classmate and realtor. I'm like, 'are you guys fighting'?

Susy has brought some paperwork and a housewarming gift -- a molcajete and pestle, the tejolote to pound the avocados into guacamole in the molcajete, the rock bowl.

Michael goes to peck Susy but she leans in for a real smacker which he deflects like she's tried this particular move a million times. But then he changes his mind and takes one good kiss, as if to show unseeing Judith he can cheat too.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Er, that's a greeting.

Susy, wiping her chops with no shame, finally notices Judith upstairs, listening on the landing.

SUSY (CONT'D)

I'm like, 'you guys are so smoochy'. I guess it's from spending time in Europe? Or whatever.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Impulsively, Judith slides down the banisters like a kid, heading right for Ferdy, miraculously manages to avoid him, and crashes onto the wood floor, picking up a splinter.

JUDITH

One for old times? Ow.

She lifts her foot and the huge splinter is clearly visible.

SUSY

Never, mamas, sorry, I'm like, just huggy. Splinter? I mean, I mean, Michael and me are done.

He grabs her foot.

JUDITH

No, leave it. I said 'leave it'!

She swats his hand away and almost goes into a trance, frozen with fear. She feels the splinter and blood smears her hand.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Is that blood? Oh, no!

Judith starts going pale and looks faint. She sits down then storms off in a huff, limping. Susy hovers awkwardly.

SUSY
So you're leaving your poor father-
in-law here all alone?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Susy tries to calm the troubled waters and sets down a huge bag of avocados.

SUSY
I can stay close while you're in
London, mamas? Look after your pop
and his cat.

JUDITH
You'd do that?

SUSY
Yes ma'am, Mr. Grumpy "I ain't
never been beat" can help.

JUDITH
That was a pretty good Cornel.

SUSY
I thought it was a bit high.

JUDITH
No, you have him.

Judith runs her hands over the tejolote and molcajete.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Thanks for the pestle and mortar.

SUSY
Okay, mamas, the volcanic rock bowl
is the molcajete and this is the
tejolote.

Judith feels the weight of the guacamole bowl and pestle. They're solid. And very heavy.

SUSY (CONT'D)
Here's a bowl of chili peppers.

Susy notices a flashlight on the counter. She looks into the beam and accidentally switches it on. It's blinding.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Oh, my God! Ow. I'm blinded! Help.

She stumbles around for a few moments.

JUDITH

Stand still for a second, close your eyes. Calm down, don't panic.

As Susy is hyperventilating, Judith leads her to the couch which groans and CRUNCHES like it's filled with straw.

SUSY

What's up with the couch? I was admiring the fabric but this is just a new cover over an ancient sofa. Get rid of it, girlfriend.

Judith, unconvinced and not able to see, feels under the cover and realizes it is indeed an ancient sofa.

JUDITH

Well, I never.

SUSY

I ain't lying. Probably been here since the house was last sold.

JUDITH

I know, it's pretty nasty. In spite of the new cover. I should give it to Goodwill.

SUSY

Yes ma'am. It smells. And they don't take couches, mamas.

JUDITH

It doesn't smell. Much. It smells, reeks. Not like old, but something.

They laugh. They're now both effectively without sight and extend their hands toward each other in a sisterly embrace. Susy places the tejolote into Judith's hands. The phallic reference is unmistakable, even to a blind woman.

SUSY

I'm like, 'for self-defense, silly!'

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Judith, sleeping sandwiched between two pillows, rolls and attempts to stay immobile. Alexa wishes her and Michael 'goodnight' and they both LAUGH. Then, unprompted:

ALEXA (V.O.)
Goodnight, sweet prince.

Judith just smiles and, peeking out, removes her eye-cups.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Judith tosses and turns, sleeping uneasily. She can't seem to fall asleep on her back and keeps rolling onto her stomach.

LATER:

The room is pitch black apart from the glow of the ringing phone. Michael sits, concerned. Judith's eyes are bloodshot. The phone seems to ring forever. Finally, the eye surgeon picks up. He's groggy -- it's the middle of the night.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
Yes, hello, this is Doctor Stein.

LATER:

JUDITH
Well, they really hurt. I must have rolled onto my side while I was sleeping. I'm sorry.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
Don't be sorry. Take the painkillers before you need them, don't wait until it's agonizing. Look, I recommend keeping your eyes completely covered Judith. Don't be tempted to remove the gauze cups too soon.

JUDITH
So I can't see anything? We're traveling to London in the morning.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
You can't go anywhere by plane Judith. Not for a week or two.

JUDITH
I have to go.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
 You've had a peripheral laser
 iridotomy -- the cabin pressure
 could lead to severe pain and
 potential rupture.

JUDITH
 I can't cancel, it's non-
 refundable.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
 And loss of sight.

This stops Judith in her tracks.

JUDITH
 Okay.

DR. STEIN (V.O.)
 Wedge yourself between the pillows
 as I showed you. Good luck, Judith,
 call me anytime if you have any
 more concerns. Goodnight.

JUDITH
 Goodnight, Doctor Stein.

The phone clicks off, glowing in her hand like a beacon.

MICHAEL
 I'll cancel the trip. You're more
 important than a photo shoot. Nope.
 I've decided.

JUDITH
 No, we need the money.

MICHAEL
 Forget it; I'll cancel the ticket.

He starts searching for the airline app.

JUDITH
 It's non-refundable. Go, I'll be
 fine.

MICHAEL
 No way.

He starts calling the airline but she grabs for his phone. He
 easily dodges her attempts. Then she grabs his nuts.

JUDITH
 I'm serious.

INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Judith awakens suddenly with a start. It looks like she hasn't budged for hours, wedged as she is between myriad pillows. She looks like a human hot dog with cushions for buns. She reaches for Michael but realizes he's already gone.

The clock shows 9 AM. Judith tries to read it from the corner of her eye. She feels for the clock, uselessly, and finds the Omega stopwatch and clutches it like a talisman. She starts the timer. It clicks then ticks soothingly.

Then she hears some noises coming from the loft.

INT. LOFT - MORNING

Cornel is in the loft putting a Peloton spin bike together. Judith sniffs the air and puts two and two together.

JUDITH

Cornel? What are you doing here?

He's flummoxed as to how she knows he's there.

CORNEL

Judith. Hi, what the hell are you doing here?

JUDITH

I live here, remember?

CORNEL

I thought you were in London.

JUDITH

Eye doc insisted I can't fly so I'm stuck. You're the only man I know who uses Old Spice.

He stops smiling and starts mopping his underarms.

CORNEL

It was big when I was growing up, believe me. Look, Peloton gave me the bike to evaluate as a beta tester and I hardly ever use it. It's a way to apologize. It's not even on the market yet. I was going to have it ready when you returned.

JUDITH

Well, that's very kind. But I can't see anything. How'd you get in?

CORNEL

Susy. Here, let me guide you.
Explore while I get some water.

JUDITH

This is like the new super-duper
Peloton, no? Wow, thanks!

But he's already dashed down the stairs, feverishly looking for something. Judith clicks on the Omega stopwatch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Richard, sunning in the backyard, looks toward the house but Cornel ducks out of sight. Cornel watches the old man until Richard returns inside then dashes back to the guest house. We hear scuffling and a bath being run and splashing sounds.

INT. LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

Cornel returns with a water bottle. Judith clicks the Omega.

JUDITH

How fast?

Confused, he looks at the stopwatch.

CORNEL

Fast. It's pretty simple, a blind
man --

JUDITH

-- Could figure it out. Wait,
what's this under the screen?

As she feels around her hands alight on an ominous object with a glowing red light.

CORNEL

Oh, sorry, it's just where I
dropped it. It's epoxy, it'll
harden later. Don't touch it! I
mean, please.

JUDITH

Okay, okay. What is it about you
and spin bikes anyway? You
practically live your life on one.
Didn't you invent them back in the
90s?

CORNEL

Me and Dan Bedhouse, about that time, in 1991.

JUDITH

I spin, I spin a lot but you, you spin for hours.

CORNEL

Y'all get the runner's high without the impact of running. The music. The heat. The endorphins. I can eat whatever I like since it burns an insane amount of calories. It's you and the bike, your own zone. You can find yourself spinning. I found myself spinning; I can find anything by spinning.

This last phrase strikes Judith as somewhat odd.

JUDITH

I'm sorry, I hope you don't mind me asking, but what happened? I mean, you pretty much started the industry.

CORNEL

You mean why am I broke, hustling a few clients...?

JUDITH

Well, yes.

CORNEL

My 'partner' ripped me off, stole the money. Bicycle companies took the idea. Ever try and sue a corporation over an 'idea?'

JUDITH

I'm sorry.

Cornel seems to hesitate, then his phone rings.

CORNEL

Look, I have a client nearby, I gotta dash. Y'all have fun. It's ready to roll. Hasta.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Judith finds and carefully places the super flashlight in the kitchen drawer and turns, points it at the camera, clicks it on, and everything goes WHITE.

INT. LOFT - LATER

Judith, feeling her way, stumbles onto the exercise bike and manages to clip on her spinning shoes.

JUDITH
OK, let's ride.

She jumps suddenly as Ferdy the cat leaps onto her lap.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Whoah! Jeez. OK, let's ride, kitty.

She feels her way onto the saddle and starts pressing buttons. Her hand searches for the 'on' button behind the screen and brushes against some loose wires.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Okay, that's 'on.'

The seemingly innocuous wires are attached to something which looks like grey plasticine.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Kitty, Ferdy, stop playing with the bike!

The cat plays with the dangling wires then jumps to the floor. From behind the screen, a transmitter sits silently, its red LED light glowing ominously.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Anybody home? Cycling buddies? Who do I know that's still on this system?

Swiping wildly and blindly at the screen she gives up trying to find any friends with whom to video chat.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Let's find a class, shall we, Ferdy?

But she can't figure out the screen so she begins to pedal. Then a small 'on' light glows again on the transmitter. The bike seems to pop and come to life, crackling quietly.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Whoah, light me up, Ferdy!

The bike speaks as she gets a friend request from a stranger.

PELTON BIKE (V.O.)
You have a friend request. Accept?

JUDITH
No. Maybe. Who is it?

With her blurry view of the screen, she tries to swipe it away, hurriedly ignoring the beeping request but it keeps reappearing like a demented pop-up ad.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Who is this trying to friend me?
Hello?

She lifts up her eye shield and cotton gauze but everything is still a bright blur. She tries to turn the camera off but to no avail. The camera cover screen has been glued open. The pop-up screen follows her around, refusing to be x-ed out.

PELTON BIKE (V.O.)
Video is enabled.

JUDITH
No, I don't want to enable video.
Go away.

Unsettled now, she tries to unclip her cycling shoes but the metal cleats have been somehow magnetically sealed onto the pedals, effectively attaching her to the bike.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
This is too creepy. I'm outta here.

Then she tries to slip out of the shoes but a squeaky female voice, which is heard via the bike screen, says:

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Don't go away, Judith. Let's go for
a ride.

JUDITH
Who the hell are you? I'm leaving
now, bye!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Judith, I'll blow the bike up if
you try and get out of those shoes.

Judith freezes with fear and stops moving.

The blurry image on the pop-up video looks a little like Susy. A woman? It even sounds like Susy but it might be a deepfake with an electronic voice. An AI creation. Either way, it creeps out Judith.

JUDITH

I can't see you, lady.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Shall we go for a ride?

The pop-up video merges into a full-size video takeover as the blurred-out stranger takes over the entire bike screen. It looks like someone is in the actual, official bike studio.

JUDITH

Susy? Susy? Susy! This isn't funny!
What are you doing?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Let's give it some cadence. You're pretty fit.

JUDITH

How do you know that? Have we met?
What do you want?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Shall we say a leisurely 80 rpm?

Panicking, Judith feels for her phone but it's sitting on a ledge out of reach.

JUDITH

What if I don't want to ride? I can't get off but you can't make me ride.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Ah, but we have a dastardly incentive.

The bike crackles with electricity as a shock travels through the handlebars and pedals. Judith arches her back in shock and SHRIEKS. The bike flashes and Judith's hair smokes, singed by the current.

JUDITH

You bitch. Godamnit! Why are you doing this? Do you want Michael back?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Do I want Michael? Why, no.

She lifts one eye shield and just makes out the blurry image of someone in what looks like a full-on spin class bike studio, professionally lit.

JUDITH

I can see you in the studio. David?
Did you break in? You broke in and
hacked the system. I'm calling the
cops. David, this is not right.

INT. 'BIKE STUDIO' - SAME

But Judith can't see what the audience sees -- the 'studio,' close up, is clearly hand-built. We can't make out who's on the bike in the studio.

INT. LOFT - SAME

Judith loosens the resistance but it too has been taken over. The heavy metal spin wheel starts turning slowly as Judith's legs get spinning, pushing against the resistance.

JUDITH

What do you want?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Just some information. As soon as I
have that you can leave the bike.

JUDITH

Why don't you just ask me? Much
simpler.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Ah, but here, I have a captive
audience.

There is a CRASH downstairs; Judith clearly hears it.

JUDITH

What was that? There's someone
downstairs!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Nobody I know.

There is another CRASH and this time Ferdy appears, all covered in dust as he knocks some pictures off the banisters.

JUDITH

Ferdy! Goddamnit, cat!

Judith loses patience, removes her hands first then forcefully tries to hop off the bike only to get another nasty electric shock which makes her almost collapse in pain.

She slips sheepishly back into the saddle as smoke rises. The room is cloudy with fumes and smoke. She looks really singed this time.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Not good at dealing with discomfort
are we Jude?

JUDITH

You could have killed me. How do
you know my name?

She tries to cover the screen with her towel but the prowler sends another shock through the handlebars which makes her again jump out of the saddle.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Aagh! What do you want?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Throw the towel on the floor, now!

She meekly acquiesces.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Let's go for a ride.

As the prowler pedals with her, the 'suggested' resistance and cadence change dynamically on her screen. She begins to pedal faster, stalling for time, trying to stay at the fast pace and keep up the cadence.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Turn that red knob to the right.
Increase the resistance to 40-60.

JUDITH

That's too hard. I can't keep up
the cadence.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Yes, you can. You're tough. Faster,
keep up the cadence. And don't
think about slipping out of those
cycling shoes my dear. I'll blow
you up and the room you're in.

JUDITH

And whatever you're after.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Localized destruction, dear, have
some decorum!

JUDITH
You're bluffing.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Am I?

Judith clumsily feels behind the screen again and this time her hands reach lower and find a putty-like substance -- a chunk of C4 plastic explosive stuck behind the screen.

JUDITH
What the hell?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
That's right -- C4 plastic
explosive. At this distance, it'll
blow you and that cute Lululemon
sports bra right into your creepy
old lodger's house. And don't try
to disconnect it, it's booby-
trapped. So ride!

She starts panicking and hyperventilating.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Focus, Judy, all you have to do is
stay above 80 and all will be well.
All will be well, mamas.

JUDITH
All will be well. I can do that
easily. Just watch me.

She steps up the cadence, showing off, and it easily passes 80 rpm. Something underneath the screen goes BEEP. Judith hears the sound -- the point of no return.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
What was that?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
I forgot to mention that once you
pass a cadence of 80 the bomb will
go off if you fall below that
speed. And yes, I control the
resistance.

Panicking, Judith nearly faints but recovers.

JUDITH
 Help! Somebody, please help me!
 Help!

EXT. JUDITH'S HOME - PACIFIC PALISADES - SAME

A barely audible PEEP is heard from outside the house. It's a well-designed Craftsman, built to keep noises out. And in.

INT. LOFT - SAME

Judith's cute Lululemon sports gear is already dark with sweat. On-screen, the spin bike's resistance is remotely dialed up higher. Her legs slow down, the muscles bulging. She starts losing speed, falling close to 80.

JUDITH
 You psycho!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
 Dastardly, I know.

JUDITH
 If I blow up you'll get nothing.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
 True but there is another
 incentive.

Another pop-up video screen appears, showing Richard in a bathtub, tied to the taps. The water is slowly filling.

RICHARD (V.O.)
 Help me, Judith! Help me.

JUDITH
 What is that? Is that my father?

INT. BATHROOM - GUEST HOUSE - SAME

Intercut screens within screen: Richard is shackled to the taps in a slowly-filling bathtub, struggling to keep his head above water. Judith can only hear the water and gasping sounds.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
 Your pappy drowns if you don't step
 up, girlfriend. I estimate in
 around 60 minutes.

JUDITH

Hold on, Dad! Damnit, I'll keep riding. Don't hurt him, he's an old man.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Touching.

JUDITH

What do I call you?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

You can call me Edmund, sister.

JUDITH

Not Susy?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Not Susy.

JUDITH

Not David.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Not David.

JUDITH

I promise not to try and escape again.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Really?

JUDITH

I promise. I won't.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Just keep the cadence above 80 rpm. Fall below that and the bomb goes off.

Her legs are turning like a blur now, the draft from the wheel pushing the sweat beads back up her legs. Her leg veins are on fire, prominent, like vines creeping and bulging up her tree-trunk-like muscular legs.

JUDITH

I can't see the screen to see if I'm going fast enough.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Cadence! Feel the pace!

JUDITH
I get it, cadence!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Believe me, you'll know when your
head blows onto the backyard lawn.
Y'all will get little reminders
when you're getting close. Just
feel the pace.

The unknown prowler starts an exercise class schtick like a
real instructor, cheerful and encouraging, but manic.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Reach out to me on social media and
tell me how you liked the class --
@CrazedStalker on Instagram. Turn
the knob to the right to increase
resistance. One half-turn. Lean
right back in the saddle now, keep
your shoulders straight. Breathe.

The unknown prowler LAUGHS manically, then catches himself.

JUDITH
You psycho! What do you want, you
freak?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
You're the freak, addicted to
exercise. I want some money.

JUDITH
What money? We're not wealthy
people. The house was my dad's. We
inherited it.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Now, wasn't that nice. I want the
money hidden in your house.

The speed displayed on the screen starts getting close to 80
as she begins to feel fatigued. But Judith can sense the
cadence falling too and pedals faster.

Gulping feverishly from her sports bottle, she lowers her
head, determined now to survive.

She loses momentum as her shoes get twisted and caught up and
the transmitter BLEEPs ominously as she slows to near 80 rpm
and gets a nasty shock which makes her YELP.

JUDITH
Damn it! That hurts!

Fighting the heat and the bike's resistance, Judith sweats as she spins faster and faster to keep up the speed, but every time she slows down close to 80 rpm she gets another nasty shock from the pedals.

She looks like a glazed donut now as her legs shake with lactic acid and fatigue.

LATER:

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Please stop, I can't go on!

The pedals spin manically as sweat splatters onto the floor, flying off as it collides with the deranged spinning wheel, spraying the room, droplets bouncing on the carpet fibers, some being absorbed, some seemingly floating on the carpet.

Ferdy the cat cowers in the corner, shaking off the flying sweat and watching in feline fascination as Judith, the human dynamo, whirrs in place like an out-of-control wagon wheel.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

I promise to let you go if you tell me where the cash is.

She spins on, blind, with wobbly legs, arms now shaking too as the lactic acid builds up in her muscles. Sweat splatters onto the screen, washing away the video avatar.

JUDITH

It would help if you narrowed it down. Bank account? Stocks, bonds, what? The body in the barrel money? A myth. An urban legend. Hello?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Loot. Filthy loot. You know what I'm looking for.

JUDITH

You're not making sense Edmund. Ask my dad, he might know.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

He's too senile to remember.

ON SCREEN TEXT: ONE HOUR LATER.

MONTAGE

The UNKNOWN PROWLER barks, Judith shakes her head, the prowler cajoles, she shrugs her shoulders. They seem locked together on connected bikes. The prowler, riding with her to keep up, also seems at the end of their tether.

Finally, the unknown prowler coasts and towels off while she struggles on.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Ready to talk?

JUDITH
You've stopped riding. You wimp.

The unknown prowler gives her an electric shock.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Aaagh!

The unknown prowler starts peddling again. Judith allows herself a small smile of satisfaction.

END MONTAGE

INT. LOFT - SAME

But Judith is close to the breaking point too. The sunlight shimmers and reflects off a pool of sweat on the plastic floor mat reflecting the underside of her spin shoes. They're turning like crazy black propellers.

JUDITH
I have to go!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
What? No.

JUDITH
I'm dying to go. I promise I'll come right back.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
What do you mean, 'Go?' Leave?

JUDITH
No, please, David, Edmund, or whatever your name is. I need to go to the bathroom.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
I don't believe you; women can hold
it forever.

JUDITH
'Women?' Listen, damnit! I'm
bursting to go. You can still blow
me up remotely so why won't you be
reasonable?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
I can be reasonable. I can reason.
For 'tis reason which doth maketh
man. Non? Non!

This strange, pedantic speech pattern seems to puzzle her but she shrugs it off for now.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Well?

JUDITH
Non, yes! Reason maketh man. You
want me to wet myself? Is that what
turns you on?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
No! Don't be weird. More cleaning
to do. Don't want that.

JUDITH
Well, then I have to go.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Go potty. Go, child.

The exercise bike abruptly unlocks and stops humming. All is briefly silent. The bomb's red light goes dark. Peace. But Judith can scarcely get off the bike and struggles to unlock the shoe clips on the spin pedals.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
C'mon, c'mon! Quit stalling!

JUDITH
All right, all right, damnit! My
legs are dead.

As she stiffly ambles towards the bathroom, Judith manages to surreptitiously find and grab her phone and stumbles on her wobbly legs to the toilet.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
You have two minutes to return or
else I will set the bomb off.

INT. LOFT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside the toilet, Judith feverishly tries to call 911 and then Michael but no calls go out. Cellular service has been blocked using geo-fencing. The phone BEEPS uselessly.

PHONE (V.O.)
'We're sorry but your call did not
go through. Please try again
later.'

JUDITH
Goddamnit! You freak!

She tries to text Michael but again, to no avail.

She pings Michael on Skype -- and a WiFi connection is made. She smiles for the first time in hours and nearly lets out a YELL of triumph but catches herself.

INT. VIRGIN ATLANTIC JET - SAME

Skype pings softly on Michael's phone as he snores loudly, dead to the world. He seems to awaken but then rolls to his side and starts snoring again.

INT. LOFT BATHROOM - SAME

Judith hugs the phone to her ear, desperate to muffle the sound. It squeaks and pings and she stuffs her chest onto it to keep it quiet.

It bumps into the Jesse Owens stopwatch and she fishes it out and holds it. It seems to give her strength.

She starts the timer and, in slow-motion, Jesse runs. Another click and Jesse soars over the sand, another click and he hands off a perfect baton in the 4 x 100m relay. Finally, he digs up the cinder track to make a starting block push point.

JUDITH
Dig in, Jesse, dig in, Judith.

She pings Michael again on Skype. Nothing.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
 (hissing)
 Michael! Michael! Godamnit! Wake
 up! Baby, please.

Remembering she's supposed to go potty she gently pours some water into the toilet as if she is 'going.'

Then there is a firm KNOCK at the front door. Judith is frozen, unable to react.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
 You have 20 seconds Judith, better
 wipe up.

JUDITH
 (hissing under her breath)
 Psycho! There's someone at the
 door!

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
 Don't forget to wash your hands.

Then another, louder, firmer KNOCK.

EXT. JUDITH'S HOME - PORCH - SAME

A UNIFORMED POLICEMAN, 50s, officious, taps gently on the front door. He's a local Santa Monica cop, somewhat fit, and fiddles like he's got somewhere more important to be. And he's sniffing the air with his well-trained nose.

INT. LOFT BATHROOM - SAME

Judith suddenly realizes she does actually need to go and sits down, straining to empty her bladder.

JUDITH
 Just a minute, please! I'm in the
 bathroom. One second!

She wipes herself, puts the phone where she thinks the shelf is but it falls somewhere on the floor. She quickly splashes her face but can't find the towel. And she's lost the phone. She shakily walks to the landing, listening for instructions.

INT. LANDING - SAME

It's eerily quiet now, the silence broken only by drops of sweat plopping gently from her arms onto the carpet.

Judith feels the sweat trickling down then just uses her sports bra to wipe her face NBA-style.

JUDITH

Well? There's someone at the front door.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Answer it. But don't do anything suspicious. Don't do anything stupid. I will blow you up if you try anything. Go on, answer it.

Holding the banisters tightly, as much for support as for guidance, she shakily edges down the stairs.

INT. BATHROOM - GUEST HOUSE - SAME

Richard is nearly up to his chin in water now and splashes around, managing to get some of the water out of the tub.

INT. JUDITH'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Judith cracks open the front door, trying to look nonchalant. The cop can't help but look surprised to see this sweaty, eye-banded apparition.

LOCAL COP

Ma'am, a neighbor spotted some smoke and called it in.

Judith tries to play it cool in spite of being drenched in sweat and wobbly.

JUDITH

Smoke? And you are?

He realizes she can't see and proffers his badge.

LOCAL COP

Ma'am, I'm offering you my badge. It's right in front of you. A bit lower. Here. Santa Monica PD.

Judith feels for the cop's badge hovering in front of her. He gently places her hands on it and notices she's shaking. He starts to nose into the house, peering up at the loft, but bumps into sweaty Judith and backs out again.

JUDITH

No offense, but I wouldn't know it from a toy badge.

His radio crackles in the background.

COP RADIO (V.O.)
Unit 19, we have a disturbance near
Temescal Canyon, please advise.

LOCAL COP
Unit nineteen, ten-four.

JUDITH
You should go.

LOCAL COP
Mind if I have a look around the
house first?

He spots an old black and white photo of a young Richard at a shooting exhibition back in the fifties on the hallway wall.

LOCAL COP (CONT'D)
Richard Charlton. The 'impossible
shot.'

She doesn't get it at first. Then she realizes he's looking at a photo of her dad and the LAPD sharpshooting team.

JUDITH
Ah, my dad. He's retired. I mean,
of course, he's retired.

LOCAL COP
He's a legend in police shooting
teams.

JUDITH
I know, he shot the switch at the
Santa Susana Field Lab, turning off
the reaction and preventing a
meltdown.

LOCAL COP
No, no the 'impossible shot.' He
took out two feds in the dark at 50
yards without hardly seeing them.
In the dark!

JUDITH
Well, my dad never told me about
that one.

LOCAL COP
They were running away, moving
targets. Greatest marksmanship I
ever heard of.

JUDITH
He shot two feds?

LOCAL COP
Bad guys. People are often not what they seem. You seem nervous, ma'am.

JUDITH
Well, he's got cataracts now and his eyesight is pretty bad.

LOCAL COP
That's too bad.

The cop, suspicious, starts to enter the house.

LOCAL COP (CONT'D)
Mind if I have a look around, ma'am?

JUDITH
No! Yes, I have Covid and can't let you in. I have a fever.

The cop backs away instinctively, donning a handy N95 mask.

LOCAL COP
But well enough to work out.

JUDITH
I thought exercise might help burn it off, like. The heat.

LOCAL COP
Heat.

She's dripping with sweat now, agonizing over telling the cop. The cop can sense the tension but, as he peers in, sees nothing untoward.

LOCAL COP (CONT'D)
Place is a little messy ma'am.

JUDITH
Yes, we just moved in. And I haven't been able to tidy much since the surgery.

LOCAL COP
Place looks like it's been turned over.

Judith stops in horror.

JUDITH
Really?

LOCAL COP
You didn't notice?

JUDITH
I can't see!

LOCAL COP
Okay, okay, ma'am.

The cop clearly is itching to come in but then his radio crackles again.

COP RADIO (V.O.)
Unit 19, what's your twenty?

JUDITH
You're wanted, officer.

LOCAL COP
You might want to wear a mask,
ma'am.

JUDITH
Mask. Yes, a mask. It's kinda hard
with the eye-protectors.

He's not completely convinced.

LOCAL COP
Ma'am, if you need me just put a
flag out on the porch. I'll spot
it.

JUDITH
A flag? Thank you, officer...

LOCAL COP
Riordan. Michael Riordan. I'm
placing a decorative flag in your
hand, ma'am. Here.

She waves the flag uselessly.

JUDITH
Thanks a lot.

Judith fakes a cough and Riordan, reflexively, covers his face, still suspicious, but leaves. Judith hesitates, looks toward Richard and the guest house, then hears UNKNOWN PROWLER calling via the bike upstairs.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Nicely played, sister. As cool as --

JUDITH
-- A cucumber.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
An eggplant parmesan! You looked
too suspicious, Judith! Get back
here!

Judith stumbles up the stairs, finds her towel, and gets back on the bike. It's like a jail cell that clicks and locks her in once more with an ominous, metallic CLICK.

The world seems to close in on her as she clips into the pedals once more. The blinding, dazzling light, visible in spite of the glaucoma, goes dark momentarily and puts Judith in a somber mood. Her sight seems to have gone completely.

JUDITH
No, please.

Panic. She adjusts her eye-protectors and covers her eyes completely with her hand. When she removes them the light is back and she allows herself a small chuckle of relief.

INT. LOFT - CONTINUOUS

She towels off and, shakily, starts spinning again.

MONTAGE

A montage shows Judith struggling to keep up with the bike. The cadence indicator seems to grow as large as the living room, a gargantuan LED TV threatening to swallow her and spit her out.

Sweat pours off her legs like tiny rivers, soaking into the carpet. As she hears the gentle clicking of the stopwatch she imagines the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

As we pull in tight on her lower legs, they become Jesse Owen's strong legs, pulling away from the starting line, pulsing, powerful, and unstoppable.

Jesse Owens in slow-mo, passing the baton in the relay, soaring in the long jump, sweating, mighty and magnanimous.

A black-and-white image of the Omega being used to time an event fuses back into color and we're again in the present as the stopwatch ticks away.

END MONTAGE

The seconds turn into minutes as her legs spin like a demented hamster caught on an ever-spinning wheel.

Each time she gets close to falling below 80 rpm, she senses it now and powers down into the pedals, her leg muscles bulging and pulsing with fatigue.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Ready to talk?

JUDITH
Talk about what I don't know?

Inside her legs, the muscles expand and contract, the lactic acid coursing through like icy streams. She fights back the burning sensation and breathes through it. She cycles on.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
How did you find out about the millions?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
A little birdbrain told me.

JUDITH
Susy?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Your father got irradiated at the Santa Susana Field Lab in the late fifties.

JUDITH
The old Rocketdyne facility.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
Very good. He was investigating a murder -- the famous "body in the barrel" case.

JUDITH
You're doing all this to get his disability payments?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)
No, bitch! There was three million dollars in cash in a railroad car which your dear honest pappy turned in as evidence. LAPD Chief Pete Pitcher gave him the cash as part of an 'off-the-books' pension for his troubles.

JUDITH

He would never take a payoff. No way.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

You're right, he wouldn't. Even when he deserved it. He squirreled it away. Rather than appear churlish, upright sanctimonious old pappy took it then hid the money somewhere in your house or backyard.

The video feed seems to be going in and out.

JUDITH

Why not the bank?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Sure, 'here Mr. Banker, three million bucks in payoff money in 12 large bags.' Don't be stupid!

The screen blinks on and off, the red bomb light faltering.

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

Lucky for you (Unintelligible).

The video feed is breaking up and becoming garbled.

JUDITH

What did you say?

UNKNOWN PROWLER (V.O.)

(Unintelligible). Damn it!

JUDITH

Well, I don't know where it is. Hello?

UNKNOWN PROWLER has gone quiet. They just pant and sit motionless on the bike. It looks like the prowler has passed out on the handlebars.

But Judith is also on her last legs. Spent. Wiped out.

Judith finally notices that they've been silent for a while. She keeps falling in cadence perilously close to 80 rpm.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Hello? Are you still there? Freaky guy? Freaky girl? Hey, Freaky, have you gone? Someone in New York arrested you?

There is just silence.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
 OK, listen, I'll tell you
 everything you want to know. Hello?

The bike stops crackling and glides to a halt. It has been deactivated. The screen goes blank. Her legs, almost with a will of their own, keep spinning as the sweat spits off the whirring sprocket.

Judith trepidatiously extricates herself, taking great care to unclasp the stubborn shoe clips which stick ominously for an eternity. The house seems eerily quiet. As she stands, her legs collapse under her and she sits Indian style and rests.

INT. LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

There is a KNOCK at the front door. She gently steps with shaky legs down the stairs, very slowly this time. It's Cornel putting on a very 'white' voice.

CORNEL (O.S.)
 Hello? Is anyone home? Police.

INT. JUDITH'S HOME - FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Judith can just make out a large outline at the front door.

JUDITH
 Just a minute, one second.

CORNEL
 I'll give you thirty seconds
 exactly, ma'am, then I'm going to
 force the door.

Judith kisses the stopwatch, starts it, then dashes toward the guest house, falling head-first over a box in the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She stumbles through the living room, not noticing, of course, that it has been lightly ransacked.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Judith dashes in and feels for Richard, who is unconscious, thinks the worst, finds and pulls the drain plug, and turns the water tap off.

JUDITH
Dad, Dad, wake up! You're alive!

She pats Richard's cheek a few times to see if he'll come to. Richard starts breathing, gasping. She quickly hugs him.

RICHARD
Cornwall. Cornwall.

He's only semi-conscious.

JUDITH
What? What, Dad, Cornwall?
Cornwell? Stay here, I have to
answer the front door. I promise
I'll be right back.

The knocking at the front door continues, louder this time. She dashes toward the main house but slows down after crashing into some shrubbery and overhanging tree branches.

EXT. JUDITH'S HOME - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

She falls flat on her face and loses her eye-protectors, getting a mouthful of dirt for her trouble. She gags and nearly chokes on the dry soil, spitting it out furiously.

The knocking at the front door has become a loud POUNDING.

JUDITH
Agh, damnit!

After searching fruitlessly for her eye-protectors in the grass for a moment, she finally gives up.

EXT. BACK DOOR/PORCH - CONTINUOUS

At the back door patio, Judith clumsily pokes her finger through the screen door accidentally as she stumbles toward the knocking sound at the front door. The knocking has become incessant, pummeling.

INT. JUDITH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As she uses her hands to guide herself, they alight on a pair of sunglasses on the countertop. She puts them on.

JUDITH
May as well look the part, right?

INT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Judith, drenched and shaky, clicks off the Omega and tries to make out the figure at the front door. She remembers the flag and gets on all fours searching for it on the floor.

At last, she finds it and waves it triumphantly as she opens the door and makes out the outline of a large man. His massive bulk seems to fill the door frame. It's Cornel, dressed like a cop with a faux police walkie-talkie.

CORNEL
Good afternoon, ma'am.

JUDITH
Good afternoon. Officer?

CORNEL
Flag day?

JUDITH
Yes, would you mind placing it in the holder?

Cornel doesn't hang it up and instead hides the flag behind the porch sofa. Streams of sweat are pouring off him too as his uniform begins to soak through.

CORNEL
Looks like you've been doing a spin class, ma'am.

JUDITH
How would you know?

Cornel hesitates for a beat then recovers.

CORNEL
The cycling shoes.

Terrified but still with little vision and unsure of this stranger, Judith plays along, stalling for time. She sniffs the air. Something is amiss.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
LAPD ma'am. ID.

Cornel quickly waves an ID in front of her.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
ID, ma'am.

JUDITH

Another police officer? Santa Monica PD already came by.

CORNEL

I'm off-duty. LAPD, I live nearby. Got a bit concerned about my new neighbor. Light bother you, ma'am?

JUDITH

I had eye surgery. Look, long story, my Dad's drowning in the back, there's a bomb attached to my spin bike, and an ex-girlfriend who has a fixation on my husband is trying to steal my father's nonexistent buried treasure.

CORNEL

Wait, wait, wait, ma'am. There's a bomb on your exercise bike?

JUDITH

Yeah, this nut logged into my spin bike's exercise screen and forced me to ride above a certain cadence or the bike would blow up.

CORNEL

What! I'll look at the bike after checking on your Father.

JUDITH

Thank you. Thank you so much.

CORNEL

So, hidden family jewels, hey?

Judith starts to get suspicious.

JUDITH

That's the crazy thing, officer. My dad never told me, I don't know if there is even a secret stash of loot at all. I don't know how this person came up with the idea.

Cornel pretends to call an ambulance.

CORNEL

We need an ambulance here at --

JUDITH

17 Hepburn Lane, Pacific Palisades.

CORNEL
17 Hepburn Lane, Pac Pal. It's a
large green house. Craftsman.

JUDITH
Thank you, officer --

Cornel hesitates.

CORNEL
-- Rote. Alan Rote.

Something twigs at the back of Judith's mind. Cornel starts
up the stairs.

JUDITH
How do you know where the bike is?

Cornel seems to hesitate then collects his wits.

CORNEL
Just following the train of sweat,
ma'am.

Judith stays downstairs until she hears Cornel yelling from
the loft.

CORNEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's it, ma'am. Just a simple
explosive device with a remote
trigger. I also disconnected the
cattle prod feature. That must have
hurt y'al --
(he catches himself)
-- you.

JUDITH
You're an explosives expert too.

CORNEL
Ex-bomb squad. So, you said your
father never let on where the cash,
treasure, is?

JUDITH
Richard, my dad, didn't let on. It
might not even exist.

Judith reaches, trying to touch his face but he ducks away.

CORNEL
Ma'am, I'm an officer of the law,
please don't touch me.

JUDITH
Sorry. I just can't see anything.

CORNEL
You said it was a girl maybe?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Judith seems placated and sits down on Richard's old couch but as the sweat from her soaking workout clothes seeps through the new cover into the old threadbare cushions, they start changing in texture and color, sinking like wet paper.

The couch beneath the cushions is actually stuffed with cash. She listens as the money crunches. She smells it as the moisture releases that familiar dollar bill smell. She twigs.

JUDITH
Sorry, with AI, it could have been
Joe Biden.

Cornel starts picking through the kitchen.

Judith slides her hands under the cover and gently pushes through the aged, now almost sheer material until her fingers light on what is obviously an old bit of paper currency.

CORNEL
Why do you think she's tormenting
you?

She tries to disguise her shock at finding the money and crosses then uncrosses her legs until she realizes she probably looks ridiculous.

JUDITH
Huh, excuse me?

CORNEL
The realtor woman. Does she know
about the money?

Judith stops in her tracks then catches herself.

JUDITH
Susy's always been jealous of my
husband, they used to date. She
must have found out about my
father's money when she did the
paperwork for the house.

Cornel keeps searching the kitchen, opening cabinet doors.

As she leans back like a manic Little Jack Horner, her arm slips into a torn section and comes away with a fistful of cash, but quickly stuffs it back into the sofa. Ferdy the cat startles her by jumping on her lap.

Ferdy starts sharpening his claws on the couch alerting Judith's sensitive nose to more hidden loot.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Ferdy! Damnit, kitty! Not the couch!

Cornel is getting suspicious and strides towards the cat. Judith hears him and stomps her foot as Ferdy scampers away.

But Judith hears an ancient roll of bills roll out at her feet, leans down but can't find it. Cornel, looking at the high cabinets and suspicious, turns to the noise.

CORNEL

What was that?

JUDITH

Nothing, just some trash. Fell down the sides. Your hearing is acute.

CORNEL

But my nose is hopeless.

As he turns away from her, she hears the voice direction change and realizes he isn't watching her anymore.

Feverishly, she searches at her feet, finally finds the faded roll of bills, and stuffs it down her sports bra. He begins to realize she may be on to him.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Y'all lost something?

JUDITH

Just my marbles. It's been a hell of a day.

He's still suspicious and notices her disheveled cleavage and a bit of paper peeping out the top of her sports bra.

CORNEL

Something sticking out of your top.

She freezes then regains her wits.

JUDITH

Couch trash, an old candy wrapper.

CORNEL
Y'all want to show me?

JUDITH
Why?

CORNEL
I'm curious. I collect vintage
candy bar wrappers.

JUDITH
This, I'm sure is modern, from the
feel of the wrapper. You wouldn't
be interested.

She reaches down her sports bra where she stuffed the bill.
Cornel is almost salivating with anticipation. But when her
hand unfurls it is just a candy wrapper.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Feels like a 'Baby Ruth'. My dad
loves those.

CORNEL
It's actually a 'Hundred Grand'.

Judith goes numb with terror.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Wrapper.

JUDITH
Well, I'll be.

CORNEL
Why don't we locate the money
together and we can put it in safe
keeping for the authorities?

JUDITH
Let's wait for the police.

As Cornel stands by the backdoor his hair moves with the wind
and her nose catches a stronger whiff of Old Spice. She tries
to hide her surprise but he knows she's on to him now and
grabs her by the hair.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Ow! That hurts.

CORNEL
It's what ponytails are for. Unruly
women.

She tries to strike him but he's muscular and immense. He slaps her close to her eyes which startles her.

JUDITH

Don't hit me. Don't hit me, Cornel!
Please.

CORNEL

It was the after-shave, wasn't it?

JUDITH

No, it was the BO, you should have showered after the ride. Actually, I never said Susy was our realtor.

CORNEL

Y'all always did have a smart mouth, Judith.

JUDITH

Your accent was good. Had me fooled for a long while.

CORNEL

(in a 'white' voice)
Yes, I rather thought so myself.

JUDITH

But it was nothing compared to the AI version of Susy on the bike.

CORNEL

Cost about \$75. Pretty good rendition, hey?

JUDITH

I had her all wrong. Was it even you Cornel or ChatGPT?

Cornel just laughs.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Why, Cornel, why? I thought we were friends. Better than friends.

CORNEL

I don't need any more 'friends.'
You can't choose your family.

JUDITH

What do you mean by that?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

He drags her by her ponytail to the downstairs shower where Cornel opens the old-fashioned bathtub taps and the water gushes in. He throws her under the gushing cold water.

JUDITH

You must think you're pretty tough.

CORNEL

Tougher than you, believe me.

He dunks her head in the now half-filled tub as the water washes over her eyes. She gasps for air.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Get me my money.

JUDITH

It's not your money!

CORNEL

Show me where the old man hid it.

JUDITH

Who even says it's here?

As Judith gasps for air under the water he realizes she's going to drown and tell him nothing. He reluctantly stops and drags her back into the living room.

CORNEL

I know you know where it is. You're stalling. Go find it, bitch!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He hurls her onto the floor. As she hits the polished wood floor she hurtles forward, bunched into a rug, and slams into a cabinet, sending plates crashing to the carpet.

JUDITH

You find it. You seem to know your way around.

CORNEL

Believe me, I've been here before.

He backslaps her and she soars across the living room, bouncing into and off the couch which seems to get more translucent with every wet sitting.

CORNEL
You're right. I do.

She seems to be putting the pieces together and he's fascinated to watch her mind work. He lifts both her legs so she can sprawl lengthways on the couch.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Tired?

JUDITH
You gave me a right old workout.

CORNEL
'If we are not challenged then we do not excel,' believe me. No. No?

JUDITH
No.

Suddenly, a feeling hits her in the back of her neck. Sight or no sight, she finally gets it and pulls her long ponytail like a bandana, as if trying to muffle herself. Cornel senses too that she has become aware of something.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Oh, my god. Cornel, Richard's illegitimate son.

CORNEL
At your service ma'am.

JUDITH
A love child? Long-lost son.

CORNEL
The prodigal son returned. Here for my inheritance. Well, it seemed you didn't exactly cover yourself in glory with our dear father either.

JUDITH
Things were difficult.

CORNEL
Difficult.

JUDITH
And what will the son say to the father?

Cornel, uncharacteristically, drops the smart talk for now.

CORNEL
Forgiveness. For I am about to sin.

JUDITH
I remember him muttering something
about a son. Back east.

CORNEL
Back west.

JUDITH
A son.

CORNEL
Not son. Bastard son. Our dear,
amorous father had a tryst with
Kodak investigator Sydney Williams,
who, pregnant, returned to
Rochester, never telling Father.
Until years later.

JUDITH
Your mother. Then you found out
about the money.

CORNEL
I found out about my father. That I
had one. Father, dear father, had a
thing for 'coal-scuttle blondes.'
But you could pass.

JUDITH
I don't think you could.

CORNEL
I came in search of my maker. But
Vida --

JUDITH
-- Richard's first wife.

CORNEL
-- Ensured I'd never get a fair
hearing. She brushed me off in the
swinging sixties. Dumped my ten-
year-old ass right back on the next
plane outta Dodge.

JUDITH
I'm sorry.

CORNEL
I cried all the way back home.

JUDITH

Didn't want a reminder of his
infidelity --

CORNEL

Came back but squashed me in the
soaring seventies --

JUDITH

The 'Me' decade. You must be around
63.

CORNEL

And dashed my hopes in the
dastardly eighties.

JUDITH

Vida stonewalled you.

CORNEL

Vida blackballed me.

They share a nervous GIGGLE together. Cornel slumps into the couch. The musty dollars crunch under his massive bulk. The sweat from his body makes the couch even more musty.

Judith can smell the money now, even from the other side of the room. She can also hear it rustling under Cornel's huge bulk. But he's oblivious.

JUDITH

Then you found out about the
inheritance.

CORNEL

I heard about it from a guy in a
bar. 'The cop who survived the
Santa Susana Field Lab meltdown.'

JUDITH

The sodium reactor experiment in
Simi Valley.

CORNEL

Very good. Top marks. Go to the
head of your class, sis.

JUDITH

You're my brother.

He simply nods in agreement. The penny drops. Judith goes green and finds then retches into a nearby trashcan.

CORNEL
(whispering)
Half-brother. But who's counting?

JUDITH
What was that?

CORNEL
The farce is strong in my family.
C'mon, now, I wasn't so bad, was I?

JUDITH
I'm feeling sick again.

He holds the trashcan and again she vomits into it.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
You're here in search of your
inheritance?

CORNEL
I'm here for my due. Daddy paid for
your college while he barely
acknowledged me.

JUDITH
Well, it was hardly 'Leave it to
Beaver.' Look, I'm sorry. He wasn't
the ideal parent.

CORNEL
But he gave you this five-million-
dollar house. That's a nice
inheritance. You were from wife
number two, my dear. Lucky you
didn't have to deal with the wicked
witch of Vida.

JUDITH
I've heard she was a pistol.

CORNEL
I heard she once pistol-whipped
Daddy's jewels which is why she and
him never had kids.

JUDITH
I've heard it was the radiation.

CORNEL
But Lordy, he got it working for
you Judy. Look how strong and tall
you turned out.

But Cornel's mood suddenly changes. He opens a nasty-looking hunting knife and suddenly slashes into the couch cover and into the old pillows. But he finds nothing, just padded straw-like wadding and springs.

Unconvinced, he slashes the right cushion deep and wide but again, there's no cash to be seen. With a shrug, he moves on.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Too simple. Too obvious.

JUDITH

You never got married. I mean a woman, you know, settle down, tandem spinning bikes.

CORNEL

I found the perfect woman but then found out we had the same Pappy. Believe me, we ain't in Appalachia. But then we can't have kids anyway.

JUDITH

I'm your goddamn sister, Cornel.

CORNEL

Yeah, ain't that a kick?

JUDITH

What's up with the phony Southern accent? 'You all?' Why did you do it? Just to get back at Dad?

Cornel seems to have run out of glib rejoinders.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

To get at me?

CORNEL

Ask Dr. Freud. Less Shakespeare and more Oedipus Rex. Perhaps.

JUDITH

Will you leave once you have the money? You promise not to harm anybody if you get the cash?

CORNEL

I promise, believe me.

But as she untangles her singed hair, she vacillates.

JUDITH

Dad never confided in me about the money, I hardly know the man. We were estranged for the longest time. That's the truth.

CORNEL

Believe me, I know the feeling.

JUDITH

Look, I don't want it. Richard doesn't need it. I could help you find it.

CORNEL

There's three million dollars in 1959 bills, still legal tender. Trust me, it's gonna take up a lot of space.

JUDITH

The attic?

CORNEL

Maybe. He must have told you something.

JUDITH

What would you do with three million bucks anyway?

CORNEL

Buy a bigger studio. Design and sell my own spinning bike. Something better than Peloton.

Judith LAUGHS, then catches herself.

JUDITH

Just for revenge. You don't need the money.

Cornel just stares blankly.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

The seat could use some improvement.

Cornel checks out the high cabinets above the oven and fridge. Nothing.

CORNEL

So. Richard, our dear pappy, guilt-stricken at the payoff and unable to resolve the dilemma, decided instead to hide the money. Let's go ask Pops where it's hidden, shall we? Family reunion?

INT. GUEST HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Richard, lying slumped in a rocking chair, is shocked to see Cornel again.

RICHARD

Cornwall. Cornwall.

JUDITH

It's Cornel, dad. Cornel.

CORNEL

He always called me Cornwall after -
-

JUDITH

-- Yeah, the character in King Lear.

RICHARD

You tried to drown me.

CORNEL

No, if I tried, I would have succeeded. Believe me, I was merely marinating you. Softening you up. Where did you stash the cash, Dad? Judith won't tell me or doesn't know. Pops?

Richard, shivering from being soaked in the tub, lifts himself but fails to get out of the chair. Judith haltingly tries to find a blanket while Cornel, amused, watches her stumble around blindly.

She finds a throw rug but when she finally places the covering over Richard, Cornel instantly rips it away.

He grabs Judith and slams her on her knees in front of Richard. He then grabs a handful of ponytail and starts tugging. She SHRIEKS.

JUDITH

Damnit, Cornel, you asshole! Don't tell him anything, Dad!

When she stands, he tugs and forces her back to her knees.

RICHARD
Stop it Cornel!

CORNEL
Tell me everything, Dad.

Judith freezes. Even without the eye patches, she can see she's done for if Richard gives up the couch.

JUDITH
But, Dad --

CORNEL
Will y'all let him speak!

RICHARD
I can't give you the money, son,
because I can't remember where I
hid it.

CORNEL
You're lying!

He slaps Richard hard. Richard's false teeth go flying across the room, hitting the floor with a gummy SPLAT.

JUDITH
What was that?

CORNEL
Dad's nasty gnashers.

JUDITH
Godamnit, Cornel.

CORNEL
Think, Pops. This is important.
Let's not be having any 'senior
moments.'

He cackles at his own levity.

JUDITH
Dad, you're shivering. Can we give
him a towel or something? Cornel!

RICHARD
It must be in the safe. The floor
safe.

CORNEL
Let's try there, shall we?

RICHARD
It's over there under the
television.

CORNEL
That's a television?

Cornel pulls away a dusty rug from under an ancient Magnavox TV complete with cats' whiskers.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Does this thing even work anymore?

RICHARD
Gets Lawrence Welk.

CORNEL
Believe me, I'll buy you a new one
with my inheritance.

Cornel flings the nasty, dusty floor rug at Richard, covering him in grime. He cracks away the floorboards and finds an ancient, rusty, and stained safe.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Bingo. Well done, Pops. I might
just not have to kill you now.

But the safe contains only some papers, a few hundred dollars, and a small FP-45 paratrooper's pistol. The dollars start crumbling in his hands. Cornel is horrified.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
What, emergency earthquake cash
from the Eisenhower era?

He tosses the dusty bank notes at Judith and Richard.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
And what's this, a toy gun?

He flings the FP-45 at Richard, which cuts his forehead. Richard, unnoticed, secrets the pistol up his sleeve.

Cornel rips the metal safe out of the floor and hurls it at Richard, narrowly missing hitting him. Judith hears this and stands in front of her father to shield him from more. Richard grabs Judith's hand and holds on tightly.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Where is it, you senile old fool?
Where is my money?

RICHARD

Listen, Cornel, son. I was wrong to let Vida cut you out of the will. Forgive me, I'll make it right.

CORNEL

You'll make it right now. Believe me, I'll make it right!

RICHARD

I can rewrite the will. There was something in there for you. You should have been patient. Judith gets the house. The cash is blood money, which is why I never used it.

CORNEL

Let's not be judgmental, shall we? We can put it to good use. But we can't find the cash. You senile old fool.

He lifts Richard and the chair in the air, as if to hurl him out of the window. Judith senses the chair rising.

JUDITH

Cornel, no! Brother, please! Let him down.

Cornel drops Richard with a thud.

RICHARD

I'm sorry I had the affair with your mom.

CORNEL

'Affair.' The thought of you and Mom 'doing it' disgusts me. Don't talk about it.

RICHARD

Sorry.

CORNEL

You should be, believe me.

RICHARD

I was wrong.

CORNEL

And still are wrong, believe me! Think! Where did you put it?

(MORE)

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Did you bury it? Hide it under the mattress?

JUDITH

Let him be, you big bully!

Judith attempts to push Cornel away but he just stands there amused and coldly knees her in the groin. She folds in agony.

RICHARD

I think I might have buried it.
That sounds about right. Yes. No.

CORNEL

Yes, or no?

He slaps his father's head and pulls him up by the hair, like a large rag doll. Cornel drops him and is left with a handful of white hair. He leans down close to Richard's ear.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

That's random. Not like the hemp-like thatch of sissie over here? Y'all must've got Mom's hair. Are you sure the cash is buried here? Is it possible, Pops, that it might be somewhere else?

RICHARD

It's possible. Maybe with Darryl. Your uncle, you never knew him.

CORNEL

Okay, where is Darryl?

Cornel's patience is being stretched to the limit.

RICHARD

Darryl is buried in Westwood Veteran's Cemetery.

CORNEL

Okay, that ain't too far.

JUDITH

We can drive over there tonight.

RICHARD

You can't open the coffin without government permission, without the approval of the Atomic Energy Commission.

CORNEL
What the fu--?

RICHARD
The grave is contaminated with long-
life radioactive isotopes.

CORNEL
So you're telling me my money is
radioactive.

Judith's listening, not buying a word of Richard's story.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Believe me, that's a complete crock
if I ever heard it. "Too loud," as
momma would say.

RICHARD
Sydney hated loud noises.

Cornel backhands Richard who tumbles backwards like a rag
doll.

CORNEL
Don't be getting so familiar with
my momma, Pops! You don't get to
reminisce like y'all were sweetie-
pie lovers or something.

JUDITH
Cornel, c'mon, let's check the
house again.

RICHARD
I loved your mother!

CORNEL
Yeah, and you done loved Judy's
momma too, didn't you?

JUDITH
Dad, here, let me help you up.

She vainly attempts to find some sunlight to warm Richard but
it's starting to set.

RICHARD
It's true.

CORNEL
You done all full of love for the
colored folk, massa Richard.
(MORE)

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Plenty of love to go around for the
black women but none for the black
boys!

EXT. JUDITH'S HOME - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Cornel hurls Richard onto the parched grass between the
houses. Richard starts pawing the soil with his bare hands
next to a small cross with a grave.

RICHARD

I found this cat near the mobster's
cash. He lived for 20 years.

JUDITH

That's long for a cat.

RICHARD

He used to like to nap on the
couch.

CORNEL

Fuck the cat! Is that where the
money is?

Judith is unsure whether Richard is giving her the clue to
the cash's whereabouts or simply babbling.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Here, you're going to take all day,
old man.

He shoves Richard aside and starts pulling the soil out in
huge clumps, feverishly searching for the buried treasure.

Cornel finishes digging up the shallow grave, comes up with a
cat's skull, and holds it aloft like Yorick in "Hamlet." But
even he is losing his sense of humor and drops the skull,
crushing the bones underfoot with a nasty CRUNCH.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

It's just a cat's skull Pops.
There's no loot.

RICHARD

I'm virtually blind now, myself. I
can't see much.

He rocks Richard violently as if it will shake some sense
into the old man.

CORNEL

Where's the stash? The cash?

RICHARD

I don't recall. It was 50 years ago.

CORNEL

No, it was more like sixty!

He side-slaps Richard and the old man takes off, landing on top of the cross, crushing it under his weight.

Cornel picks him up, removes the splinters of wood from Richard's back, and lifts him bodily by the head.

He lets him down softly, brushes the dirt off him as if he was pondering his lineage, thinking through their relationship for a thoughtful moment.

Richard's eyes are awash in tears, both cataract-clouded eyes acting like mini-reflectors as tears well, then hang like tiny mirrors before breaking and streaming down his cheeks.

Cornel seems to hold the old man's head in his hands tenderly. For an instant, it seems as if the father's grief is softening Cornel's hard, avaricious heart.

Cornel looks deeply into his father's eyes and sees himself reflected in the welling, sad, salty pools of tears.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Then you won't be needing these, believe me. "Out vile jelly! Where is thy lustre now?"

As they embrace, Judith blocks her ears against the SCREAMS as Cornel tears out Richard's eyes like the Duke of Cornwall gouging out the Duke of Gloucester's eyes in "King Lear." Richard falls back on his knees with an awful moan.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

"Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise."

As Richard mumbles in agony, Cornel cracks him across the skull with a rock and he slumps backward, unconscious. Judith reaches for his head, feels the blood, and falls to her knees, completely crestfallen.

JUDITH

I can't take any more. You may as well kill me too.

CORNEL

We're not done yet, sissie.
Methinks thou dost know whence Lear
hid his worldlies.

Desperate now, Judith slumps back into the house, crushed and easily dragged by Cornel.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Cornel washes his hands under the kitchen faucet as the gore and dirt form a red, ghastly soup in the sink from the blood and soil.

While he's distracted, Judith feels on the kitchen island for a weapon until her keen sense of smell leads her to the ground red chili powder in a small china dish left by Susy. She furtively grabs a handful.

CORNEL

Care to clean up, sissie?

JUDITH

No, I'm fine thanks.

CORNEL

Wash your hands? Kinda sweaty. I can help.

JUDITH

No, no, thank you.

CORNEL

You're welcome. Here, I found these in the backyard.

He places the eye-protectors in her hand and, after she clumsily attempts to put them back on, he helps her.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

I help you. You help me.

His huge hands are surprisingly dextrous and he replaces her eye-protectors like an ER nurse. Judith flinches slightly as he blows a bit of lint away.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

You have Pop's eyes, for sure. Hard but kinda honest. They're very brown, I can hardly see the pupil.

He stops, thinks about what he just said but shrugs it off. As he waves his hand near her eyes she flinches.

JUDITH
Dad doesn't have Dad's eyes
anymore.

CORNEL
And who's fault is that?

JUDITH
Mine.

CORNEL
That's right. I see that you can
see.

JUDITH
I think my eyesight is returning.

CORNEL
Good, then you can see to it that I
find my inheritance.

Cornel notices a huge cooler on the kitchen floor and hurriedly leaps on it. But it too is empty.

While he's investigating the cooler, Judith circles the kitchen island, trying to keep her distance from Cornel as her hands feel for the heavy stone molcajete.

Cornel, suspicious, moves the stone guacamole bowl beyond her reach but doesn't notice Judith has grabbed the pestle and shoved it down the back of her leggings.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
I think you know where daddy
dearest has hidden the cash so
let's ride again.

JUDITH
Forget it, not again.

He moves surprisingly quickly and grabs her.

CORNEL
Wanna suffer the same fate as Pops?
You wanna keep those eyes, believe
me, I'll tear them out!

He puts his thumbs on her temples.

JUDITH
They're done for anyway! What more
can you do to me?

He hesitates for a moment. Then, pulling her by her sports bra, drags her up the stairs.

INT. LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

He grabs her by the hair and forces Judith on the bike again, reactivating the bomb, this time turning the dial up to give higher voltage electric shocks.

JUDITH

I can't do this again, please.

CORNEL

Let's up the voltage to keep you honest. Bomb is now active again. There. Shall we?

JUDITH

No.

CORNEL

If you're telling the truth then at least you'll be occupied.

JUDITH

I can't ride anymore, please. I'll set the bomb off. No.

He grabs her shoes and helpfully starts the wheel turning. Judith is in agony.

Cornel sprays her face with a sports bottle and she, startled, recoils then searches for the water, desperate and parched as he begrudgingly squirts some water into her mouth. She laps it up feverishly like a desperate dog in a desert.

CORNEL

Now, who's a thirsty girl then?

JUDITH

What's the point of riding me to exhaustion? The elaborate set-up with the bike?

CORNEL

Thought you loved drama, sissy. Doesn't this appeal to your sense of theatre darling? Appeals to mine.

JUDITH

It would have been simpler to just break in and put a gun to my head.

CORNEL

No, it wouldn't. People who are exhausted in the extreme are five times more likely to tell the truth than merely those under torture.

JUDITH

Speaking from experience?

CORNEL

Operation Desert Storm. Bags and electric wires. Them camel jockeys couldn't stop talking once we stripped them and wired them up.

JUDITH

I wondered where you learned how to handle munitions.

CORNEL

'Munitions!' Munitions? Ordnance. My how fancy we are.

JUDITH

But why me, just because I beat you at spinning? Isn't Dad the one you're mad at?

Cornel chuckles an Eddie Murphy laugh.

CORNEL

It gave me a chance to beat your ass, fair and square this time.

JUDITH

You're nuts. You put me through this just to prove you're fitter? You have serious mental issues. I beat your ass fair and square the first time.

CORNEL

NO, YOU DIDN'T! You didn't! I ran out of water.

They're again like two siblings squabbling over a deadly toy. He becomes very serious and hushed now.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

I told you before. Believe me, I can resolve anything if I'm spinning.

She begins to realize the extent of his psychosis. The bike PINGS once more as the cadence hits 80 rpm. There's no going back now.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

There we go! Enjoy.

The flywheel spins remorselessly, unaware of its deadly purpose. Judith feverishly tries to keep up the cadence as her legs shake with muscular spasms nudging too close to once more falling below 80 rpm.

JUDITH

So you thought you'd come and see your charge firsthand?

Cornel laughs uproariously.

CORNEL

Charge! That's good, very good, my dear sissy.

JUDITH

Glad you appreciate the verbal ripostes.

CORNEL

We did done have the same daddy that's for sure, Judith. If we didn't get love we sure got a great classical education and appreciation of Shakespeare and them other great men of letters.

JUDITH

Well.

CORNEL

Believe me, it was a simple connectivity problem. The RV down the street had bad WiFi. What can I tell you, sis, I can't plan for everything. OK, you ride, I'll search.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cornel sets to tearing the house to pieces as Judith is trapped in the loft, spinning the bike.

CORNEL (O.S.)
(yelling upstairs)
It's worse the second time around,
huh? The lactates have built up.
Y'all have a screwdriver, hon? Oh,
never mind, I got it.

A large chunk of painting and wall crashes to the floor.

CORNEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now where would I stash three
million bucks? How much room would
that take up?

He plonks himself down on the couch and seems to fall into a stupor. The banknotes crunch obliviously under his bulk. His hand rests perilously close to the tear in the cover.

INT. LOFT - SAME

The electric shocks keep coming as Judith's speed falls but somehow she steels herself, becoming more resolute with every shock. The cadence monitor on the bike's LCD seems to grow and take over the room.

It's become like an electronic Big Ben -- overpowering, immense, and swallowing the loft as Judith, like a tiny moth, hovers before its demented dial.

It goes up, it goes down, and the electric shocks keep coming, causing her to gasp in frustration as much as pain. But she mentally clicks it back to size with the Omega, taming it.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cornel now trashes the kitchen as he vainly searches for the cash. He stares sadly at some photos on the wall of Richard and LAPD buddies in uniform from the fifties.

Another photo shows a young Judith with Richard's second wife Yasmin at some fairground near a Ferris wheel. Cornell angrily tears it off the wall and crunches it underfoot.

INT. LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Judith can hear the house being destroyed and we can sense her resolution faltering as she cringes each time a memento or picture is destroyed downstairs.

LATER:

INT. LOFT - LATER

It's starting to get dark and Cornel is clearly at his wits' end. He advances up the stairs looking ominous, carrying a screwdriver.

Judith looks finished and Cornel doesn't even have the energy to harass her with any wisecracks. He texts someone.

CORNEL

Keep up the cadence. I'll be downstairs if you need me.

Then Judith hears Richard groaning and moving outside.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Richard's like a vision from a Greek play, with bloody eyes; a deathly apparition, but he's alive and hobbling with his walker below her window. Before he collapses, he cries out.

RICHARD

Wait until dark! Wait until dark!

BACK TO SCENE

Judith, unsure of what he means, keeps pumping away at the pedals, trying to make sense of the advice. Cornel thinks he hears something too and dashes to the window but Richard has collapsed and is hidden behind some bushes.

INT. LANDING - SAME

Satisfied there's nothing outside, Cornel advances toward Judith. She hears him and is resolved. Judith, ignoring the agony, surprises Cornel by painfully ripping herself away from the bike.

The current keeps pulsing and Cornel jumps as the electricity travels through the carpet.

JUDITH

Wanna die?

They're frozen as the electricity pulses through the room, coursing through their bodies. They're stuck, locked still by the current. Cornel is torn as he watches the sizzling explosive. He knows he's too close to the bomb.

The bomb pings away as seconds count down to the explosion as Cornel finally reaches into his pocket, pulls out a remote control, and deactivates the bomb.

CORNEL

You bitch!

But the bike continues to crackle with electricity, seemingly acting on its own as if to punish the humans for their folly and greed.

It pops and fizzles as Cornel pulls its wires out, eventually using a shoe to disconnect the plug from the wall. His hair is now standing on end. Judith peels herself off the carpet, trying to regain her composure.

She makes a dash for the stairs but Cornel easily puts his arm out wrestler style and she runs into it like a too-short doorway.

But now that she's off the bike, Cornel finally notices a bulge in the front of Judith's leggings. He grabs the top of her leggings, peers down, and extricates the would-be weapon she's stuffed down the front. He takes his time.

JUDITH

See anything you like?

But it's a small dumbbell from the bike and not the pestle. The pestle is hidden around her rear end.

CORNEL

It's fine, I'm your brother. What, trying to man up?

JUDITH

I'm the only man here.

Judith gets a face slap for her trouble and tumbles to her knees. She rises shakily.

CORNEL

Don't sass me, girl! Remember how Mom would say that?

JUDITH

Your mom. My mom would use the hairbrush. "Don't give me no lip, child." You can't do that these days.

CORNEL

Heavens, no.

JUDITH

So all this was because you think Richard favored me. You're jealous!

CORNEL

He did favor you! And I want what I'm due! I've narrowed it down to the living room. Y'all wanna come show me?

INT. LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Cornel starts to lead Judith downstairs. As he holds her hand he finally notices something is hidden in her palm.

He moves to snatch it from her but Judith twists away and tries to throw the now-sticky red chili powder hidden in her sweaty palm at him but it's stuck fast from moisture. Cornel laughs a demented CACKLE.

JUDITH

Goddamit!

But Judith, bold now, claps her hands together then rubs her palms into his eyes as he screams in agony.

CORNEL

Agh, you bitch, my eyes! No, I can't see!

She tears off her eye-protectors and the light beams in. Her sight is slowly returning.

INT. JUDITH'S HOME - FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Judith slides down the banister like a child but this time flies into the huge potted plant in the hallway.

JUDITH

Oh, God!

Cornel, reeling from the red pepper, seems to hang over the banisters as if he'll crash down onto the floor but he manages to hold on as he sways back and forth.

He clumsily tries to emulate her and, grasping the dumbbell, slides down the banisters but just ends up tumbling into her in the hallway. The small dumbbell goes flying and Judith scrambles to find it with her blurry vision.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Finally, Judith finds the tiny dumbbell and tries to brain Cornel but only succeeds in grazing him.

She's like a demented wasp and strikes him again and again but each blow just makes him madder and madder.

He grasps at her but only grabs hold of her sports bra and brings it nearly over her head. Ignoring the indignity she pulls him off but he grabs one of her breasts and clings on.

He's dangling off her now, holding onto her chest like a demented commuter clinging on a subway strap. The pain is excruciating.

JUDITH

No, you psycho! Aaah!

CORNEL

They're plenty big enough to hold onto, sis. Does it hurt?

JUDITH

Yes, does it brother?

She swipes him with the weight and his teeth fly out like a spilled tin of mints. Still, he clings on, relentless, casually spitting out his teeth like so much excess popcorn.

Finally, she brings both hands to bear and drills down with the weight into his groin. She's like a crazed Native American woman, furiously pounding a stubborn acorn on a rock. Cornel gags, relents, and finally lets go.

She weighs giving him another blow for good measure but the feminine side steps in and she backs off, pulling her top back down over her chest, and stumbling into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Judith searches clumsily for a knife. She looks to the windows and senses the light fading -- it's quite dark now.

JUDITH

It's getting dark.

Suddenly Cornel appears in the kitchen, bloody and toothless, holding his groin.

CORNEL

Yeah, no twilight in LA. As if a lightbulb was switched off. In Europe, it stays light for hours.

As he delicately opens a trashcan and spits some teeth into it another lightbulb goes on -- then off, in Judith's brain.

JUDITH

Alexa!

CORNEL

What's that gonna do?

JUDITH

Alexa! Turn the house lights off.
All lights off!

The whole house and backyard suddenly go eerily dark.

CORNEL

Alexa! Turn them back on. Damnit,
Alexa turn them lights on!

But it stays dark. Cornel grabs the Alexa speaker then hurls it at Judith. She fails to notice it narrowly whizzing past, missing her head, but feels the wind.

He starts chasing her but Judith leads him in a dance around the kitchen island as Cornel stays just one step behind her. He grabs the molcajete and flings it mindlessly at her and misses. She jumps as it smashes into the wall.

Finally, he pauses the chase and washes his eyes in the sink. Judith carefully stays on the other side of the island.

It's now pretty dark in the kitchen. Cornel scrambles in the drawers looking for a flashlight but misses the super-powerful flashlight among all the paperwork and detritus.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Must be a flashlight in the kitchen
drawer, sis.

Judith nervously moves closer to the drawer but then backs away, worried that he may pin her in the corner. Cornel senses she's up to something, washes the remaining flecks of pepper out of his eyes, and scours the other drawers.

Unsure of how much she can see and wanting to test her he flings a towel at her. She doesn't flinch but is startled when it falls on her shoulder. She casually wraps it around her neck, trying to appear nonplussed.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

You can't see shit.

JUDITH

I can see enough. I can see that
you've come to the end of your
tether. You could have come to me.
Asked me about the money.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I would have shared it with you.
You're like: "The base Indian that
threw away a pearl --

CORNEL

-- "Richer than all his tribe."
Othello.

JUDITH

We had different moms.

CORNEL

But the same crazy batshit
Shakespeare dad. We're kin.

JUDITH

We're akin.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

We're akin.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

You have Pappy's love of
alliteration.

For a moment it seems as if peace will break out. But Cornel keeps creeping around the kitchen looking for a weapon. Judith can only make out his shape and warily awaits his next move. Her eyesight is not back fully yet.

JUDITH

Visual purple not so good in the
over-sixties, huh?

CORNEL

It'll come in, believe me.

As he leans back, a towel falls away revealing a photo of Vida, Richard's first wife, and a set of carving knives. He can just about make it out in the dim light and his mood changes. He grabs a knife.

He goes quiet and Judith senses, without seeing, that his state of mind has altered and the stakes have risen.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

It's time for some cash. I can't
wait any longer!

Cornel leaps across the island and slashes blindly at Judith, hitting home with the blade which sinks into her upper arm. Blood spurts out in a jet, splattering Cornel.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

A hit! A palpable hit!

JUDITH

You maniac!

Blood is now dripping onto the floor making it slippery. Judith feels it under her feet and gets even more queasy.

She slumps to the floor in a stupor of terror as she holds her hand to her arm trying to staunch the blood flow. Cornel knows he's got her now. Her Achilles heel -- pain and blood. The rest should be plain sailing now for him.

But as she grips her arm the blood slows. Her ghostly pallor becomes less pale and her color returns.

While staring straight at him she tightens the towel he threw at her and starts to roll a makeshift tourniquet. She wraps it tightly around her arm, then grabs a dollop of gore and flings it at his face. He doesn't flinch and he isn't amused.

Judith moves to the sink and, with all the sangfroid she can muster, tries to casually wash her arm. Cornel moves to the fridge and, as his hand lights on the refrigerator door, he seems to realize something and smiles.

CORNEL

But let there be light.

Cornel opens the fridge and light fills the room, suddenly giving him the advantage again. He spies Judith standing confidently in the shadows. But she's not cowering anymore.

However, she's too slow to react as he stabs again and it seems to strike home in her chest but there is no blood. Judith slips the Omega stopwatch out of her cleavage. It has a dent in the steel back where the blade bounced off.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Lucky for you.

Judith takes a moment to appreciate the good fortune and slips back the slightly dented stopwatch. She makes for the kitchen drawer again. But Cornel hears Judith moving and shadows her quietly.

She reaches into the very back of the drawer among the junk and easily fishes out the flashlight.

As Cornel grabs her from behind Judith spins around and turns on the flashlight but it's just in SOS mode and flickers uselessly sending out a Morse signal.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

You found our flashlight? That's not gonna help you.

He starts to throttle her, choking her under his huge bear-like paws.

JUDITH

Kill me and you'll never find it.

CORNEL

Maybe I'll just forgo the money and off you instead. Believe me, I'll find it, with or without you.

He goes to strike her but Judith, twiddling with the flashlight buttons, finally finds the full beam mode and turns it towards Cornel's eyes.

Startled, he gets a full blast in the eyes and recoils in surprise, blinded.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Ahh, you nasty bitch! I'm blinded.
No! No!

JUDITH

See what it's like, Cornel. Just feel your way.

He swipes at her as Judith slams the fridge shut but something is jamming the door open. Light is still sneaking out. Judith can't see that Cornel has lodged a towel in the hinge.

A female voice is heard from the other side of the room.

SUSY

By the fridge!

This confuses Judith.

JUDITH

He's by the fridge?

CORNEL

He's by the fridge.

Judith stands, frozen and dumbstruck.

Cornel gently clocks the jaw of the now-visible Judith, who's still trying to process what's going on. She keels over sideways like a toppled mannequin, thudding to the floor, knocked out.

Cornel stands there for a minute, seemingly satisfied, contemplating what to do with his prize. Susy comes over to him and plants a wet one on his bloody chops.

SUSY
How's my baby? Rough day?

CORNEL
You have no idea.

SUSY
And to think butch brunette thought
I had a thing still for her metro
husband.

CORNEL
The temerity.

They laugh and kiss again. He rams his hand down her leggings
but she gently retracts it.

SUSY
Er, I'm like, 'let's wash those
paws first mister'.

CORNEL
Pardon me, madame.

SUSY
I'm like, 'what's with the "Speed
on a spin bike" motif, hon?'

CORNEL
She pissed me off. I had to prove I
could beat her.

SUSY
My big Cornel. You were supposed to
search the house while they were in
London, Major Arbuthnot.

CORNEL
She didn't go to London with the
cuckold, did she, so I had to think
fast. It just moved the plan up a
day earlier. I was prepared.

SUSY
Baby, what a day you've had. What
would you like for your reward?

CORNEL
Three million bucks.

They both giggle.

SUSY

I'm like, 'how did you get her thick, forty-three-year-old ass to stay on the bike?'

CORNEL

Pedal locks and a simple wire into the mains with a remote trigger.

SUSY

My baby, army training.

They kiss and he starts fondling her chest, lifting her top.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Er, knock it off, Cornel. I said cut it out!

He's taken aback, irritated, and for a moment, we wonder who wears the spinning bike shorts in this family.

CORNEL

So you searched the house while I kept my sissy occupied. You found nothing. Squat.

SUSY

It ain't here, babe.

MONTAGE

From when Judith was first trapped on the bike we see Susy, ever so gently, tearing into the living room and the rest of the house, vainly searching for the cash. She opens drawers, tidily putting back the clothes.

Later, losing patience, she flings open the drawers and just tosses stuff out. A bedside table contains an ancient vibrator that fascinates her.

The other bedside table has real handcuffs, and this makes her somewhat pensive. But only for a second as she lifts, then tears, photos and paintings off the walls, looking for a safe, anything that could hide three million bucks.

END MONTAGE

Cornel picks up the unconscious Judith and hurls her, like a mannequin, onto the couch. She lands on her coccyx and the hidden tejolote. The jolt shocks her into consciousness with a start and she leaps upright.

JUDITH
Ow, goddamnit!

CORNEL
Bumpy landing?

Judith stands there, swaying giddily from lack of oxygen, then all seems to clear. She can see Cornel's massive head right in front of her then groggily catches sight of Susy.

JUDITH
Susy? Susy, run!

SUSY
Where would I run to?

She finally realizes that Susy is in on it.

SUSY (CONT'D)
If you could only see your face.

JUDITH
If I could only see. I'll never tell you where the money is.

CORNEL
You see, she does know!

He's getting ready to gouge out her eyes.

SUSY
No, Cornel, that's enough!

CORNEL
Slow burn was your stupid idea.
Shut up.

He relents briefly. But as he turns he comes face-to-face with Susy and a SIG Sauer 9mm. pistol. The safety is off.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
I believe that's my SIG.

SUSY
I believe it was my plan.

CORNEL
Your plan was too complicated.

SUSY
Men, you just can't multitask, can you? So, what happened to Pappy?

From the looks on their faces, she figures it was pretty horrific. Suddenly there is a creak in the floorboards and everyone turns towards the hallway.

It's the Santa Monica cop and he's blinding everyone with a flashlight perched on HIS SIG.

The next scene from the local cop, Riordan, is through a police body cam.

POV: POLICE BODY-CAM

The scene looks like pandemonium.

LOCAL COP

Everybody, stand still. Someone turn the lights on. Drop that weapon!

JUDITH

Is that Officer Riordan? Thank God.

SUSY

Officer, let me explain what is going on. My client, the homeowner, Richard Charlton has been robbed by this woman of three million dollars in stolen drug money. This man here, Cornel Arbuthnot, is a private security guard, off-duty LAPD, ex-military, hired by my client to defend him from this gold-digger.

JUDITH

This is nuts! It's my house --

LOCAL COP

-- Hold on, everyone. One story at a time.

CORNEL

LAPD, Officer Arbuthnot, West LA station. I've apprehended a robbery here. These two women were trying to rob Richard Charlton, the homeowner, former LAPD, and I arrested them.

SUSY

He's lying! Officer!

LOCAL COP
Show me some ID, officer.

CORNEL
Badge, sure. Here you go.

As Cornel makes Riordan stretch for the badge he simultaneously grabs his pistol, pulling him into the blade, and stabs the cop in the eye. Susy jumps and screams. Judith guesses something really bad has happened and backs away.

SUSY
"These two women were trying to rob...?"

CORNEL
Well, it worked, didn't it?

SUSY
So much chaos! No more killing!

CORNEL
Don't tell me what to do, bitch!

He slugs Susy out cold, pointing the pistol at her unconscious prone body.

CORNEL (CONT'D)
Nah, too much of a waste. Believe me.

JUDITH
You psycho!

Judith leaps on Cornel's back, fearless now. But Cornel gets a grip on Judith's face with his massive paws then loses it as he desperately shakes her off.

He grabs Judith by the ponytail and shapes his hand like a double prong ready to gouge her eyes out. Cornel thrusts his fingers at Judith's face and it looks like she's done for.

But Judith, playing possum and with sight returning, lowers her head at the last moment and his sausage-like fingers bounce off her skull.

CORNEL
You little bit of trash!

She reaches behind her leggings, pulls out the hidden tejolote, and bucks her head upwards, smashing Cornel's remaining teeth all over the floor.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

Mrs. Krieg, very sneaky!

He tries to hold on to her ponytail but it's in vain. She's like a bucking pony and whips her head up again with force. She then swipes him with the stone pestle but it seems to bounce off his thick skull.

CORNEL (CONT'D)

I always had a thick head. Whatcha got now, sis?

JUDITH

Courage.

She whacks him again and this blow seems to ring true. He lurches toward her, looking for balance, and she tries to steer him away from the couch but he's too heavy. Finally, he starts falling face-forward onto the couch.

Cornel crashes into the old sofa which splits in two, revealing the ancient cash inside the frame, and it erupts into a choking volcano of micro-dust, paper, and debris.

He starts choking on the bits of old bills, dust, and ancient paper. He coughs, gags, and chokes as Judith pushes his face into the dusty pile of old money.

CORNEL

My money! My money.
(gasping for air)
I can't breathe.

JUDITH

Choke on it!

He turns on his back and becomes like a huge, dusty volcano, spewing ancient dollar bills and spit instead of lava. Each cough sends a cloud of dust and paper into the air.

For a moment, Judith takes pity on Cornel but then hears Richard crawling up the back door, groaning, eye sockets bleeding, and becomes resolved. But as she watches Richard, Cornel reaches up once again and grabs her by the throat.

But Judith, shaking him off, drives the pestle into the cash spewing out of his mouth, ramming the paper down his throat like a croupier stuffing bills with a paddle at a Vegas casino cash box.

He starts choking again, coughing up words, falling back into childhood.

CORNEL

Daddy. I'm so sorry, Daddy. Why didn't you send me a Christmas present, Daddy? Why? Daddy, I loved you; can't you love me back? Please.

Judith's heart is breaking and as her heart softens she starts pulling choking bills out of his mouth.

Cornel clutches at a photograph of a little boy with a stern-looking father, Richard and Vida scowling between them. Judith folds it so that Richard and Cornel are 'together' and places it gently back in his hand.

But then: BLAM! A bullet passes right into Cornel's mouth, through the photo, killing him instantly. Clouds of old paper float upwards like an erupting confetti volcano. Judith stares in horror, flinching at the pistol.

SUSY

One more? Or is he done?

JUDITH

Done.

SUSY

Big Dufus was supposed to hold your father's feet to the fire. Was gonna be like five minutes to get it out of him. Instead, we have Mrs. Olympia and her brother in a battle of whirring wheels to see who has the biggest dick. Siblings.

Cornel lies there, staring with eyes wide open. Judith looks at him for a beat then gently closes them shut, placing a couple of old hundred-dollar bills over Cornel's eyes.

JUDITH

To pay the ferryman, brother.

As she stares at her arm wound for a couple of beats, we think she's going to gag but Judith manages to ignore the blood and tightens the tourniquet into a good field dressing.

SUSY

We can share the money. The legend was true. We can be rich, mamas.

JUDITH

I can be rich. You can shut up.

Susy points the pistol at Judith.

SUSY

Well, then I'll take it all, then.

Judith, still with limited sight, listens for the trigger and manages to move away at the last second as Susy fires.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Impressive.

A scratch appears on her left cheek where the bullet scraped by. Judith refuses to flinch as Susy cocks the pistol again.

JUDITH

I won't give up.

SUSY

Sorry, mamas, I never was a great shot. Bear with me.

Susy gets closer and Judith can now smell the cordite and sniff the smoke coming from the barrel.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Say 'aah.'

Another lower velocity SNAP rings out like a cap gun.

SUSY (CONT'D)

Agh.

Susy, dumbfounded, turns to the backyard. Richard, sightless, has zeroed in on her voice and, using the tiny paratrooper's pistol, has shot Susy clear through the head. She keels over. Judith feels Susy's head and realizes what has happened.

Richard crawls in looking ghastly, blood dripping from his eyes like Oedipus Rex.

JUDITH

Dad! That is the most amazing shot in the history of sharpshooting.

RICHARD

Second-most.

JUDITH

Dad!

RICHARD

Smells like an army field hospital.

JUDITH

I found my mettle.

Richard sniffs the air as the dust from the money settles.

RICHARD
Cornel?

JUDITH
He didn't make it.

RICHARD
I'm sorry about him. Sorry about
all this.

JUDITH
That's okay. It's okay. The
realtor. She was in on it.

RICHARD
Told you to use my gal.

JUDITH
You did. I should've --

RICHARD
-- Listened to your Father.

They both laugh. Richard feels the cash at his feet.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Looks like you found some of the
money.

JUDITH
You could have helped us all out by
stuffing it in your mattress, Dad.

RICHARD
I never said there was only three
million. I'm sure if you can
convince the feds to disinter poor
old Darryl, you can have the other
two million!

JUDITH
The radioactive casket. Let me
think on that one.

RICHARD
It's dirty money in both ways but
maybe you can do some good with it.

JUDITH
Dad, your eyes, I'm so sorry.

She breaks down in his lap, sobbing.

RICHARD

Nonsense, like Lear, I lost my eyes
but gained my sight and my
treasure, which I bequeath to my
lost daughter 'Cordelia.'

Judith starts to clean up the floor then, remembering the splinter in her foot, attacks it with tweezers.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JUDITH

Splinter, somewhere. I'll feel for
it.

RICHARD

Need a hand?

JUDITH

I've got this.

The wound bleeds as Judith tweezes out the massive splinter. She rubs it then blithely shoves her foot into a slipper.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW DAYS LATER - NIGHT

The place looks somewhat tidied up. Michael is home. They're celebrating with some guacamole. There's a decorative flower arrangement made up of folded ancient dollar bills as a place-setting. Judith's eyes look almost healed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Richard is in the living room listening to Lawrence Welk. The old Magnavox TV is on but the screen is blank. A speaker is playing an old recording of Welk. Judith is slumped into the couch, polishing the dented Omega stopwatch.

JUDITH

How did you find Lawrence Welk?

MICHAEL

It's on tape.

JUDITH

Clever. What's 'tape?'

MICHAEL

It's like a podcast with more
hissing. Too bad the cash wasn't
legal tender anymore.

Richard overhears their conversation.

RICHARD

Ah, but you are rich in other ways,
young Michael.

MICHAEL

So really, what did you use to
fight off the big guy?

JUDITH

Oh, just my wits and these.

She holds up her fists like a prizefighter.

MICHAEL

Impressive. Did you notice there's
a chip in the tejolote? We should
return it. Get a new one?

JUDITH

Return it? Never.

EXT. LOS ANGELES NATIONAL CEMETERY - NIGHT

A grave sits on its own in the Veterans' Cemetery in
Westwood. The headstone reads: 'Darryl Legg, Master SeaBee,
Always faithful. Semper Fi.'

But another sign also reads: "This grave, which was
contaminated with long-life radioactive isotopes, cannot be
moved from its location without the approval of the Atomic
Energy Commission and the United States Energy Department."

Below the earth, inside the casket, DARRYL LEGG, pale and un-
decomposed, sleeps peacefully, almost smiling, his arms
resting on the bags of the remaining cash.