

THE ASSIGNMENT

Written by

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SUPER: Black Spring Break aka Freaknik. An unusual Spring Break festival in Atlanta. It is primarily attended by students from historically black colleges and universities.

FADE IN:

INT. JONES APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATE MORNING

SUPER: Atlanta - Saturday July 6, 1996

KIMBERLY JONES (35), African American, medium build, tired and disheveled is moving around in a hurry.

She's in front of the mirror applying makeup to the circles under her eyes. She drops the lipstick on the ground and mumbles under her breath.

INT. JONES APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

SAMANTHA JONES (17), African American, curvaceous and sexually attractive for her age, is at the kitchen table scanning a school book. She taps her pencil to the tunes of the music coming from her walkman.

Kimberly runs into the kitchen and pours herself a cup of coffee.

KIMBERLY

Sam, I'm running late, so you need to clean this kitchen and get that report finished young lady.

Kimberly turns to Samantha who is moving her body to the beat of the music. Kimberly smacks Samantha on the shoulder. Samantha looks up and turns the music off. She glares at her mother.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that, Sam. Now, I'm working a double tonight, and I need you to clean the house and make sure your schoolwork is done.

Kimberly drinks from the mug while gathering her belongings.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

You need to take summer school more seriously if you want to go to the next grade with your friends.

SAMANTHA

Yes ma'am.

Samantha's beeper vibrates. She looks at the screen and smiles.

KIMBERLY

Who's that? Bet it's that trifling ass, Donna? That girl is too old for you to be hanging out with, Sam. That girl is nothing but trouble.

SAMANTHA

(agitated)

So what, Momma? You work all the time! Donna's comes over and keeps me company when you're away and we go to the mall and to the movies. She's cool.

KIMBERLY

Cool my ass! Heard she got an STD and I don't want that girl in my house, Sam. She's nasty!

SAMANTHA

(disappointed)

Ok, momma.

Kimberly's mouth gapes open and she shakes her head.

KIMBERLY

You don't need to be anywhere but at home in those books studying for that test Monday.

Kimberly looks at her watch.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D (CONT'D)

I got to run, honey. There's leftovers in the fridge. Remember to clean the house, do your homework, and stay away from Donna.

Kimberly hugs Samantha as she heads out of the house.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

Love you, bye!

SAMANTHA

Bye, momma.

Samantha sighs and drops her head on top of the textbook with a groan.

Samantha walks over to the phone on the wall. She dials a number.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 What's up girl. I got your page.

Samantha smiles widely.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
 (excited)
 Girl, wait till you see my outfit for tonight.

Samantha laughs while chatting on the phone.

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - MORNING

In the distance, many airplanes travel across the runway. Some taking off, while others land.

INT. CONCORDIA AIRLINES - CABIN - SAME

Inside the plane, the seatbelt lights turn off. PASSENGERS shuffle in their seats.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT (20s), mixed race, slim female grabs the mic and stares at the Passengers.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Welcome to Atlanta. The current temperature is 85 degrees. Make sure you stay hydrated and as always, thank you for flying with Concordia Airlines.

The Passengers ease out of their seats and grab luggage from the overhead bins.

We zoom in to see three YOUNG MEN joking around with one another on the plane.

These Men are BRADLEY WINTERS (18), Biracial, wealthy son of a Congressman. Bradley is full of charm.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON (18), African American, wealthy son of a former US Attorney. Nigel is more on the arrogant side.

TIMOTHY GREEN (18), African American, wealthy son of a self-made entrepreneur. Timothy is more reserved than the others.

The three are wearing "Harvey College HBCU Fraternity" Shirts.

Timothy reaches into the overhead bin and pulls out carry-on bags.

NIGEL

Hey, don't forget my video camera.
My dad will kill me if I lose it.

TIMOTHY

I got it.

The three stand in the line of Passengers, waiting to step off the plane.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM - CONTINUOUS

We see Black STUDENTS scattered throughout the baggage claim area. GIRLS are wearing next to nothing, and GUYS stare at them in awe.

Bradley, Nigel, and Timothy move their heads side to side, checking out the scene with grins.

NIGEL

What baggage carousel are we at?

BRADLEY

Carousel number 2.

Bradley points ahead.

The three walk towards the carousel, passing a group of COLLEGE GIRLS, who seductively smile at Bradley.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

I think I'm in Heaven.

Bradley, Nigel, and Timothy laugh and horseplay at the carousel while waiting for their luggage.

EXT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - EVENING

A taxi pulls up to the entrance of the Intercontinental Hotel. The doors open, and the three YOUNG MEN get out, shielding their eyes from the sun as they gaze up at the luxurious hotel.

The CAB DRIVER (50), Caucasian, rolls down his window.

CAB DRIVER
That'll be \$62.50

Bradley hands the Cab Driver a stack of bills.

BRADLEY
Keep the change.

The cab driver waves at Bradley.

They each walk to the back of the taxi and grab their luggage from the open trunk. They walk towards the doors of the hotel.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is filled with many COLLEGE STUDENTS. Some are inappropriately dressed, but others are dressed casually, with a few dressed in bathing suits.

Faint sounds of jazz music are heard in the background as Bradley, Nigel, and Timothy stroll in, staring at the College Students.

BRADLEY
I'm gonna get us checked in.

Bradley heads towards the front desk while Nigel and Timothy gawk at some of the female College Students.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The doors to the Penthouse Suite open. Bradley, Nigel, and Timothy enter and look around in awe.

BRADLEY
This place is amazing! Look at the view.

They drop their bags at the entrance, and walk over to the large window and look out.

NIGEL
Damn, your dad sure knows how to pick em!

BRADLEY

He says after the election, when we win, he's taking us to New York, and we're staying at the Ritz Carlton. Bill Clinton doesn't have a chance this time.

NIGEL

You're right, Clinton doesn't have a chance of re-election if he doesn't get crime down.

They look around at the large space before heading off in a dash towards bedrooms.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

This room is sick. King Beds, jacuzzi tubs.

Nigel comes out laughing.

NIGEL

Remind me again why you're a Republican?

Bradley exits his room and shows the back of his hands with a perturbed face.

BRADLEY

Why am I a Republican? Because Republicans like me are crapped on every day by the far left. We believe in Jesus, fairness, guns for everyone and the conservative way of life. The Democrats are spending way too much money on the poor, especially poor black people.

NIGEL

I suggest you go back and do some more research because the majority of poor people are white.

Bradley rolls his eyes in a dismissive manner towards Nigel.

Timothy steps out of his room and joins his friends.

TIMOTHY

Nigel, your father is a rich attorney and Bradley, your dad is a United States Congressman, so neither of you know what it's like to be poor.

BRADLEY
He's a Senator.

TIMOTHY
Even worse.

NIGEL
And your dad is a self-made
business mogul, so not like you've
got much room to talk.

Timothy stands tall and proud.

TIMOTHY
That's right, and he knows a thing
or two about taking care of
workers. Something your dads know
nothing about.

Nigel smacks Bradley on the shoulder and points his finger at
him in a mocking fashion.

NIGEL
Damn!!

BRADLEY
Look, enough of this shit! Let's
use this place to its fullest.
Let's throw a party.

Nigel and Timothy glance at each other, confused.

Bradley grabs the Penthouse phone.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
I need some food delivered to the
Penthouse. A lot of food.

Bradley hesitates for a moment while Nigel and Timothy engage
in horseplay.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
Awesome...and let the lobby know
we'll be having a party up here
tonight.

Bradley laughs.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
Things may get a little wild.

NIGEL
Dude, I assumed we were hitting the
streets tonight?

Timothy jumps on Nigel's back and attempts to wrestle him to
the ground, but Nigel easily throws him off.

BRADLEY
Did you look at all that ass in the
lobby? They don't call this
Freaknik for nothing.

TIMOTHY
Freak what?

BRADLEY
Nothing, Tim.

NIGEL
Did you see that one chick in the
bikini with her ass cheeks out?

BRADLEY
She's mine. I saw her first.

NIGEL
Not if I get to her before you.

Bradley and Nigel laugh as Timothy sits on the floor
confused, then joins in the laughter with Bradley and Nigel.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY - SAME

The lobby is filled with more YOUNG PEOPLE with luggage.

The main doors open and DONNA LEWIS (18) and SAMANTHA JONES
(17) walk into the lobby.

Donna looks stunning, dressed in a tight laced dress and
carrying a turtle shaped handbag.

Samantha is more provocatively dressed, wearing a sheer
almost see through dress showing her bra and panties.

The College Students in the lobby examine them with interest
as they walk through. Donna and Samantha flash the MALE
College Students a seductive grin.

SAMANTHA
Thought we were going to the club,
Donna?

DONNA

We are. I just wanted to check this place out first.

Samantha looks around while nervously moving around.

SAMANTHA

Damn, I got to pee.

Samantha walks over to the hotel concierge desk. WALTER COLLINS (25), Caucasian, is on the phone.

WALTER

(into phone)

You want food delivered to the penthouse? What kind of food would you like, sir?

A beat. Walter writes on a notepad.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Yes, Mr. Winters.

Walter hangs up the phone and acknowledges Samantha.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Good evening, Miss, may I help you?

SAMANTHA

Yes, where is the bathroom?

WALTER

The bathrooms are in the hallway to the left.

Samantha leaves and goes in the direction of the hallway.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samantha enters, and several LADIES are formed in a line waiting to use the toilet. Samantha waits in the line.

WOMAN 1

Girl, there's going to be a party in the penthouse tonight, and it's an open bar.

WOMAN 2

Really, who's throwing it?

WOMAN 1

Who cares, they had me at open bar.

The girls laugh and the door to a now empty stall opens. One of the Women walks in as another stall door opens and her friend hurries in.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY - SAME

Donna sees her classmate CONNOR TATE (19), African American, attractive with an athletic built. She walks over to him.

CONNOR
Damn... What's up, Donna?! Didn't expect to see you here.

DONNA
What did I tell you about expecting the unexpected, Connor?

They laugh.

CONNOR
Who are you here with?

DONNA
My girl, she's in the bathroom.

Connor looks her up and down with an impressed look.

CONNOR
I like what I see. You got all the heads turning.

Donna twirls around for Connor.

DONNA
Don't sleep on me! I will bring the party!

Samantha walks up and joins them.

CONNOR
Damn, there's two of you?

DONNA
Conner, this is my girlfriend, Samantha.

Conner looks at her outfit with wide eyes. He's impressed.

CONNOR
What up?

DONNA
Don't get any ideas, Connor. She's only Seventeen.

CONNOR
Seventeen!? Damn, she looks a lot older than seventeen. She needs a neon sign on her forehead. Someone is going to county tonight.

Donna laughs.

DONNA
She'll be fine, but come to think about it, she does look...

SAMANTHA
Yes, I look fine as hell!

Donna surveys the College Students huddled together in the lobby.

DONNA
What's going on in here tonight? Usually there's something outside near the pool or...

SAMANTHA
I heard there's a party in the Penthouse later. There's an open bar, too.

DONNA
I wonder who's in the penthouse? Will Smith, Taye Diggs?

Samantha shrugs her shoulders.

DONNA (CONT'D)
OK, I'm down. Let's go then. Connor, you going, too?

CONNOR
Nah, I'm meeting my girl here. We got plans if you know what I mean?

DONNA
Yeah, whatever.

CONNOR
You guys be safe. She's pulling up now.

Connor hugs and pats them on the back as he runs towards the Hotel doors.

DONNA
Bye dude! Call me if those plans
don't work out.

Donna takes another look at the scene and exhales.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens and six PEOPLE, including Donna and Samantha, step inside where late nineties music fills the suite.

Samantha looks around the room with an impressed expression.

Twenty-Five to Thirty PEOPLE are dancing and drinking. Many eyes look over at Donna and Samantha, including Bradley and Nigel. They lean in close to one another.

BRADLEY
Dude, do you see those two chicks?

NIGEL
Yeah, I see them. That one is thick
as hell. You can even see her
panties.

Bradley scans the room.

BRADLEY
Hey, you seen Tim?

NIGEL
No, the last time I saw him, he was
talking on his phone.

Bradley shakes his head.

BRADLEY
Daddy always comes through.

Bradley and Nigel walk over to Donna and Samantha. Bradley looks them up and down, almost as if he were undressing them.

Nigel takes Donna's hand.

NIGEL
Hello, I'm Nigel. Welcome to our
party. Whatcha drinking?

DONNA
I'll have a rum and coke.

Bradley turns and looks at Samantha.

BRADLEY

And what about you?

Samantha looks at Donna. Donna shakes her head "no."

DONNA

She'll have a coke with ice.

Samantha pulls Donna to the side, away from the boys.

Bradley and Nigel lean against one another, eyeballing the girls.

SAMANTHA

Why are you embarrassing me, Donna?
We came here to have fun, didn't
we?

DONNA

We did, but you're seventeen, Sam,
your moms gonna kill me if you come
home drunk. Drink the coke and
let's party.

SAMANTHA

My mom is not home. She's never
home, so why are you tripping?

Donna sighs in frustration.

DONNA

Just drink the coke or we're
leaving.

NIGEL

Is everything Ok?

Donna looks up to see Nigel standing behind her.

DONNA

Yes, I'll have a rum and coke and
she'll have the coke. Just a plain
coke.

Samantha nods and Nigel walks over to the bar and speaks with
the BARTENDER (30). Bradley looks at Donna again.

BRADLEY

You from here?

Donna smiles, but doesn't show any eagerness just yet.

DONNA

Yes, I live in Decatur. I go to
Turner College.

BRADLEY

That's cool. You wanna dance?

DONNA

Sure.

Bradley takes Donna's hand. They walk to the makeshift dance floor in the middle of the room and dance.

Nigel comes back with the drinks and sees Bradley and Donna dancing. He puts down the drinks and grabs Samantha's hand, pulling her into the CROWD.

EXT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE BALCONY - SAME

Timothy is talking on the phone. He waves and says hello to PEOPLE coming outside.

TIMOTHY

Hey babe, I know. They're having a
party here.

Timothy leans over the balcony and stares out at the city skyline.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

We're here until tomorrow
afternoon, then we're headed back
to Harvey.

Timothy eases off to the side as the People on the balcony make a lot of noise with screams and laughter.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Look, Mark, I don't know why
Bradley changed his mind. He's been
acting weird all day.

Timothy smiles.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I know. I love you, too. Gotta run,
bye.

Timothy hangs up. A BEAUTIFUL GIRL (22), slim with mesmerizing green eyes approaches. Timothy turns to her and waves her off with no interest.

He takes a sip of his drink and goes back into the suite.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Timothy is looking around the penthouse. His eyes lock forward. He is fascinated by two HANDSOME GUYS in the corner.

Timothy glances in the direction of Bradley and Nigel. He takes a deep breath, then heads towards the Handsome Guys.

Donna is sweating after dancing and goes to the bar to order another drink.

Bradley steps away. Nigel and Samantha are still on the dance floor. She is provocatively dancing and grinding her body up against Nigel. Donna looks over with disdain.

At the bar we see white powder poured into a drink. Bradley comes back to see Donna. A drink is placed in front of them by a SERVER.

The music stops, and Samantha and Nigel come back and sit on the couch. Samantha grabs the drink and takes a large gulp. Donna stops her.

DONNA

Hey, that's my drink!

Samantha smiles.

SAMANTHA

Chill out, Donna! One drink is not gonna kill me! Plus, I earned this one.

Bradley and Nigel laugh as Donna sits back. Another song plays. Samantha grabs Bradley's hand and leads him out to dance.

NIGEL

Your girl is something else.

DONNA

Yeah, she's something alright.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Still on the dance floor, Samantha is dancing erratically. She loses her balance and falls against the couch and rolls over it.

Donna sees her and runs over to see what happened. Samantha is slurring her words.

DONNA
Samantha! What's going on? Are you
OK?

SAMANTHA
I don't feel so...

Samantha throws up. Nigel and Bradley come over.

BRADLEY
What's with her?

DONNA
She's had too much to drink, I
guess.

Nigel looks at Bradley with a worried gaze.

BRADLEY
We have some bedrooms in the back.
Go lay her down.

DONNA
Are you sure it's OK?

Bradley smiles at Donna.

BRADLEY
Of course it's okay.

Donna picks up an unresponsive Samantha with the help of
Nigel. They walk back to the rear rooms.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens, and Donna, Samantha and Nigel go inside.

The room is dark, but the moonlight shining through the large
window brightens the room.

A King Bed and an open suitcase are seen, along with many
classy furniture items.

Donna lays Samantha on the bed face down as Nigel stands by
the door.

Samantha incoherently mumbles before going silent.

DONNA
Get some rest.

NIGEL

Lay her on her stomach and she'll
be OK.

EXT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE BALCONY - NIGHT

Donna is looking down at the streets full of hustle and bustle. Music is playing inside, along with celebratory sounds.

Donna closes her eyes. She sways to the music.

We hear gasps from inside, followed by a scream.

Donna jumps and turns to face the sounds of the noise.

The music comes to a stop, and Donna hurries inside.

SUPER: 26 YEARS LATER

PRESENT DAY - INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - MORNING

Through the office windows of the Atlanta Observer Office, we see heavy rain pounding against the windows.

Fingers typing on laptop and desktop keyboards throughout the office are heard, along with a slight chatter of EMPLOYEES talking on phones.

STAFF MEMBERS are seen walking around and some are watching a variety of news channels on several TV Monitors.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - SAME

DANA CONNORS (25), African American, slim and professionally dressed, with a serious demeanor, sits at her desk typing.

She's in deep thought, biting on a number two pencil. Her cubicle is filled with old, cutout newspaper articles with her name on the byline.

A slightly crooked picture frame of her mother SAMANTHA and her father REGINALD DONALD are seen hugging and in a frame with her positioned beside them.

Several other photos come into view. We see Dana in a photo with TAMMY CONNORS (25), Dana's wife. She's dressed in her Army Uniform. The two of them have huge smiles in the photo.

Secured on the wall next to her cubicle are two copies of her Pulitzer Prize for journalism displayed.

They both read, "Columbia University, known all persons by these presents that Dana Lynn Connors, has been awarded A Pulitzer Prize in Journalism for Investigative Reporting."

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Connors, in my office!

FRANK REILLY (40), Caucasian, Slim build, looks over his cubicle.

FRANK
Dana, the boss lady, is calling you!

Dana snaps out of her thoughts.

DANA
What?!

FRANK
Cathy just called you to her office.

DANA
Oh, Ok.

Dana stands and walks a few feet towards the office.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sitting behind the desk is CATHY ATKINSON (49), Caucasian, full-figured, and as intense as a person there is.

Cathy's office is of medium size. She has several Peabody Awards on her wall and several pictures of herself with race horses. Other awards are seen scattered across a bookshelf.

CATHY
Connors, close the door and have a seat.

On her PC screen is a sport betting site. Cathy locks her PC. Dana closes the door behind her and sits down.

CATHY (CONT'D)
I have a new assignment for you.
One I think you'll enjoy.

DANA
I'm not finished with the homeless
article yet.

CATHY
Then finish it because the deadline
got moved up, and I need you on
this one.

Dana sits forward in her chair. Cathy sits back in her chair.

CATHY (CONT'D)
I've been speaking with finance.
Our circulation is way down. We
need a piece that will generate
revenue for the paper.

DANA
What's the story on?

Cathy leans forward in her chair with an exaggerated pose.

CATHY
Freaknik!

Dana's mouth gapes open in shock.

DANA
You got to be kidding me?!

CATHY
No, I'm not kidding.

Dana stands and points out towards the newsroom.

DANA
Cathy, anyone of them out there
could write this, why me?

CATHY
Dana, you're the youngest two time
Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter in
this paper's history. People flock
to your columns like flies to shit
and you generate one third of the
revenue for this paper.

Dana smiles.

CATHY (CONT'D)
Plus, you owe me for getting you
that last award.

Dana ponders. She sits back down in her seat.

DANA

You're right, so tell me some more about this Freak ass assignment.

CATHY

It's called Freaknik, and we're coming up on the thirtieth anniversary.

Cathy pulls out a large folder from her desk and lays it across her desk in front of Dana.

Dana scrolls through the many documents inside.

CATHY (CONT'D)

For years, college students have come by the hundreds of thousands to celebrate black spring break. Half the city's revenue back in the late nineties have come from this one function. I want you to do it some justice and write the story.

DANA

How long do I have?

CATHY

I'm giving you two weeks, maybe three.

Dana looks up at Cathy with a serious gaze.

DANA

Ok, but I want complete control over the article?

CATHY

Don't push it. Let's see what you have first.

Dana stares at Cathy as if she were trying to push the issue. Moments pass, then she nods and grabs the folder.

DANA

Ok.

Dana stands and heads out of the office.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

Dana drops the folder on her desk. Her cellphone rings. She answers.

DANA

Hi Momma,

Dana is flustered.

DANA (CONT'D)

Oh my God! I'm on my way.

Dana grabs her handbag and runs out of the newsroom.

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN CANCER CENTER - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Dana runs into the lobby. She stops at the front desk. A young NURSE (24), is at the desk.

NURSE

Hello, can I help you?

DANA

Yes, Reginald Donald's room?

Samantha Donald, now (41), steps off the elevator. She sees Dana and runs over to her.

SAMANTHA

Hey, Baby!

DANA

Momma, what happened?

SAMANTHA

Reggie was unloading some boxes at work, and he passed out. One of his men found him and called 911.

DANA

Where is Daddy now?

SAMANTHA

He's upstairs. He's with his doctor. They're running tests.

DANA

Tests? What tests?!

Samantha takes Dana's hand. She turns and looks at her with heavy eyes.

SAMANTHA

Your father has cancer. It's leukemia.

DANA
Leukemia?! What?

SAMANTHA
We thought it was in remission, but it must have come back. He's been keeping it from me. I guess he didn't want to worry me.

Dana moves away from Samantha. She is taken aback by the news.

DANA
How long has he had this? Why didn't someone tell me?

SAMANTHA
We didn't want you to worry, baby. You know how your father is.

The elevator doors open. DOCTOR PAUL SAVILLE (50), Caucasian steps off. He sees Samantha and Dana and heads over.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Dr. Saville, this is my daughter Dana.

They shake hands.

DOCTOR SAVILLE
Let's talk in the chapel.

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN CANCER CENTER - CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS
Samantha's demeanor changes. Doctor Saville seems calm.

DANA
How's Reggie?

DOCTOR SAVILLE
Not good, Samantha, he has a rare form of cancer. It's called Acute Myelogenous.

DANA
Jesus!

DOCTOR SAVILLE
He was responding to the treatments and his tests were looking good, but somehow it returned and it's rapidly spreading.

Samantha and Dana wrap their arms around each other.

DOCTOR SAVILLE (CONT'D)
 Early on, we had him on a regimen
 of different trial medications.
 They worked for a while, but as in
 all medical trials, they end. We
 were looking into getting him
 another trial until this setback.

SAMANTHA
 Setback?! What are his chances?

Doctor Saville takes a breath and shakes his head.

DOCTOR SAVILLE
 Not good, Samantha. He needs a bone
 marrow transplant. It's his only
 hope.

Dana looks at her mom. Both women have tears flowing from
 their red and glassy eyes.

DANA
 Can I do it?

SAMANTHA
 Do what?

DANA
 (excited)
 Give him some of my bone marrow.

SAMANTHA
 Dana, but there already on a donor
 registry for this, right, Dr.
 Saville?

DOCTOR SAVILLE
 Yes, there is one, but Dana, just
 because your his daughter doesn't
 mean you're a match. Statically
 speaking, 70% of people don't have
 a fully matched donor in their
 family.

Dana cries. She wipes the tears from her eyes, trying to
 compose herself.

DANA
 (angry)
 I just want to help my dad! I just
 want to... What do I need to do?!

DOCTOR SAVILLE

Dana, if you insist on doing this, we will have to run some tests first to see if your marrow is a match. We don't want any rejections.

DANA

When can we start?

DOCTOR SAVILLE

We can start at once. I'll get the forms and your lab slips ready.

Doctor Saville turns. He walks to the door.

DANA

Doctor, do you think my dad will be Ok?

He glances back. He offers a friendly smile and nod.

DOCTOR SAVILLE

He's very weak, so let's take it day by day, Ok, Dana.

Samantha seems worried. She turns to Dana and pretends to smile.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - MORNING

Dana is at her desk. Again she is lost in her own thoughts and stares aimlessly at the computer in front of her.

Frank looks over the top of the cubicle.

FRANK

You don't look so good. Everything okay?

Dana shakes her head, then attempts to distract herself by flipping through the Freaknik documents on her desk.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, you missed all the excitement. The bomb squad was here.

DANA

What? Why!?

FRANK

An unmarked mysterious package arrived for you. Cathy called security and they called it in.

Dana hesitates and a yell through the newsroom is heard.

CATHY (O.S.)

Connors, to my office!

Dana rolls her eyes and sighs.

FRANK

Uh-oh

Dana walks a few feet into Cathy's office.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dana knocks on the door and Cathy waves her in. An opened, unmarked package is on her desk.

CATHY

This package came to your attention this morning. Security was worried and had to call the bomb squad. They opened it up and there's a mini VHS tape inside.

Dana stares at the package with a confused and perturbed gaze.

DANA

A mini VHS tape? Do they still make those?

CATHY

I guess. The question is, do we have something to play it on?

DANA

Good question.

CATHY

I'll call down to the equipment room. They might have something in the obsolete equipment bin.

Cathy picks up the phone.

DANA

Is there anything written on the tape?

CATHY

The title says "Freaknik 1996" and
a smiley face.

DANA

This should be interesting.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - LATER

A knock on the door.

CATHY

Come in.

JOSH TATE (29), African American enters with a VCR Player and
other equipment on a cart.

JOSH

Here you go, ladies. I don't know
if it'll work, but you'll find out
soon.

Josh connects everything as Dana and Cathy look on in
suspense.

JOSH (CONT'D)

You're good to go.

Josh leaves the office.

CATHY

Let's see what we have here.

Cathy opens the VHS adapter and slides in the mini VHS tape.
She closes the top as the mini tape film strip runs along the
rollers of the adapter.

Once it stops feeding, Cathy places it inside of the VCR
player. The videotape enters and plays. There is a vision on
the screen.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Alright, showtime!

Playing on the screen, we see what seems to be a dark room
coming into view. The faint sound of party music is heard in
the background.

A door opens, the room is dimly lit. The outside light from
the door is seen. The unrecognizable shapes of two WOMEN and
a MAN are seen.

Woman One lays Woman Two on the bed.

The sound from the Woman is mumbled.

There is an eerie silence.

WOMAN ONE

Get some rest.

MAN ONE

Lay her on her stomach and she'll
be OK.

Woman one double checks Woman two. She and the man leave the room and close the door.

The sound of vomiting is heard.

DANA

What is this nonsense!?

Cathy reaches to hit the stop button on the VCR until...

The screen shows that the door to the room opens. A FIGURE enters.

Coming into view for a quick second is the logo "Harvey College". And then the logo disappears. We hear the sound of pants being unzipped and tossed to the floor.

His face is not seen as he straddles the Woman on the bed.

Dana sits back in her chair.

DANA (CONT'D)

(agitated)

Oh Shit! Is he doing what I think
he is!?

The male figure turns the woman on her side and reaches down. The woman lets out a loud moan.

MAN TWO

Yes, you want it.

WOMAN TWO

No, stop!

He pumps harder and faster as the woman lays motionless. The bed is squeaking as the headboard hits the wall.

He punches the woman several times and lets out a loud groaning sound and gets off the woman.

He puts his pants on and walks out of camera view. The door opens, and he leaves.

Dana and Cathy are stunned by the video.

CATHY
Oh my God! She's getting raped!

DANA
(angry)
What the hell is this!?

CATHY
This is a sexual fucking assault.

Moments later, on the screen, the door opens again. Another Man enters.

DANA
Cathy, it's not over.

The man looks at the woman on the bed and shakes her.

MAN THREE
Oh, no! Hey wake up!

The woman speaks incoherently.

WOMAN TWO
No...

A man's crying is heard, followed by the sound of the woman vomiting.

MAN THREE
I'm sorry!

The crying man hurries to the door. The door opens, and he leaves.

There is nothing but silence and darkness on the tape for several beats until...

Another man enters the room. The man is more assertive. He walks in front of the camera out of view. He straddles the woman on the bed.

The man grunts as the bed is shaking and squeaking. The headboard hits the wall in sync to the faint party music playing.

He's seen turning the woman on her side. Faint grunts are heard and then a loud yell.

The man stands and fixes his clothes. He walks to the door and leaves.

Cathy cries. She reaches and takes a tissue from a box on her desk and wipes her eyes.

CATHY

Oh my God! I can't believe this
shit!

DANA

I'm going to be sick. I can't watch
anymore of this.

The tape keeps playing. On the screen, the woman on the bed tries to get up, but falls. She gets up and staggers in front of the camera. She is nude.

The camera refocuses as she passes on the right side of the camera. A discolored patch of a birthmark on her side comes into view.

The woman opens the room door. Party music is heard as the naked woman staggers out.

A few seconds later. The sound of the outside crowd reacting to the woman with loud screams is heard as the music stops playing and the tape ends.

Cathy and Dana sit in silence as the tape ejects. She takes a tissue and wipes her face.

CATHY

What the Fuck! We need to call the
police!

DANA

We can't, we don't know where this
tape came from, Cathy!

Cathy stands up.

CATHY

You heard it! She says "NO" several
times, Connors! There has to be
something we can do?!

Dana stands up and turns to Cathy with an assertive gaze.

DANA

Cathy, as much as this sickens me.
This assault happened 26 years ago.
I don't know what to do.

CATHY
Hot news flash, Connors. You didn't
receive two Pulitzers by sitting on
your ass. You're an investigative
reporter, now go investigate!

Dana sighs.

DANA
I'm on it.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Dana sits at her desk. Hands on her head, in deep thought.
Frank looks over the cubicle.

FRANK
You Ok?

DANA
I just witnessed someone being
raped in 1996. It was horrible.

FRANK
1996?! You kidding me, right?

DANA
Nah man, 1996.

Dana stands and grabs her bag.

DANA (CONT'D)
I have to get out of here, Frank.
If Cathy asks, tell her I'm
following up on a story.

FRANK
Ok. I got you.

Dana walks out of the newsroom in a hurry.

FADE TO:

INT. DANA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Dana flips the switch of the bedroom, bringing it to light.
She looks around and sees a camouflaged flight bag and some
other military gear spread out on the hardwood floor.

The shower is heard in the background.

INT. DANA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dana walks into the bathroom to see steam covering the mirror. A shapely figure is seen washing and humming music behind the shower curtain.

Dana creeps up and pulls back the curtain. TAMMY CONNORS (25), African American jumps, but then laughs.

TAMMY

Hey, babe! Don't do that!

Dana forces a smile.

DANA

I'm so glad to see you!

Tammy steps out of the shower and wraps a towel around her body.

TAMMY

What's wrong?

DANA

It's just been one of those days.

Dana leans against the bathroom vanity with her head hanging low.

DANA (CONT'D)

I just saw a woman getting raped on camera today.

TAMMY

What?

Tammy wraps her arm around Dana to console her.

DANA

And if that weren't enough, Cathy gave me a new assignment on Freaknik?

Tammy laughs.

TAMMY

Freaknik?! My daddy talks about that every summer. I think I was a Freaknik baby.

Dana manages a slight chuckle.

DANA
Yeah and I also just found out that
my dad is sick.

Tammy looks devastated. She embraces Dana.

TAMMY
Oh my God!

DANA
Yes, he has leukemia, and it's not
looking good. I took some tests
yesterday to see if I can give my
bone marrow to him, but I have
received no news.

TAMMY
How's your mom handling this?

DANA
She's hanging in there, but she's
worried. They've been together for
26 years. I...

Dana cries.

DANA (CONT'D)
I'm so worried, Tammy.

Tammy pulls Dana in closer and allows her to cry on her
shoulder.

INT. DANA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Dana and Tammy are in the bed. Her phone rings.

Dana sits up in the bed and answers it.

DANA
Hello.

Several beats, then Dana drops her head and sighs.

DANA (CONT'D)
What? How can I not be a match?

Dana gets out of bed and walks towards the window while
listening.

DANA (CONT'D)
So what are we going to do now?

Dana nods her head, but her face shows disgust.

DANA (CONT'D)
 Okay. Thanks for calling Doctor.

Dana hangs up. Tammy slowly wakes up and looks over and Dana, who is shaking her head, confused and angry.

DANA (CONT'D)
 I'm not a match.

TAMMY
 I'm sure there's an explanation.
 Maybe they screwed something up in
 the lab.

DANA
 Explanation my ass, Tammy. There's
 just one reason I'm not a match.
 He's not my daddy.

Dana dials her mother.

DANA (CONT'D)
 Good Morning, mom.
 (pause)
 Dr. Saville just called me.
 (a beat)
 He told me I'm not a candidate for
 the transplant.
 (pause)
 I don't know why, do you?
 (a beat)
 Can we meet?
 (pause)
 Ok, yes I know where Cafe' Duchay
 is. How about at noon?
 (pause)
 Ok, see you there.

Dana ends the call. Tammy looks over with concern.

Dana grunts, then stomps into the bathroom. The sounds of running water are heard in the background.

INT. CAFÉ DUCHAY - NOON

Dana sits at a circular table drinking coffee. The atmosphere of the café is French. French music is playing in the background.

We see a small selection of tables with GUESTS at them, drinking coffee and scanning magazines.

The bell over the door rings and Samantha enters. She sees Dana and waves. She walks over to the table and gives Dana a hug.

DANA
Hi momma, thanks for coming.

Samantha takes a seat across from Dana. She looks exhausted.

SAMANTHA
I was on my way to the hospital, so
I could use some coffee.

DANA
How's daddy?

SAMANTHA
Your father's not doing well. They
have him in an induced coma. They
think the cancer has spread, but
I'll know more when I see Doctor
Saville later.

DANA
Momma, I need answers.

Samantha looks confused as to where this is going.

DANA (CONT'D)
Why is my marrow not a match to
donate to daddy?

The WAITER (23), Caucasian, comes over to the table.

WAITER
Good Morning, ladies can I take
your orders?

Dana waves her hand at the Waiter in a dismissive manner.

DANA
Can you please give us a few more
minutes?

He nods his head and turns away from them.

Samantha sits back in her chair with a disgruntled appearance.

DANA (CONT'D)
Momma, I need to ask you something?

SAMANTHA
Go ahead.

DANA
Is he my real daddy?

Samantha straightens herself up in the chair. She looks straight at Dana.

SAMANTHA
It's complicated, honey.

DANA
Why don't you tell me the truth,
momma!? I'm 25 years old and I
deserve to know the truth!

Samantha leans across the table with a furrowed brow.

Dana waits impatiently.

SAMANTHA
Dana, It's complicated!

DANA
Complicated! I have a right to know
who my father is.

Samantha's phone rings. Dr. Saville's name is seen on the phone screen. Samantha answers.

SAMANTHA
Good afternoon Doctor.

Dana waits in anticipation with her hands clenched together.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Praise Jesus! I'll be right there.

Samantha hangs up the phone. She turns to Dana.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
He's out of the coma and asking for
you.

Dana breathes a sigh of relief and nods, followed by a slight smile.

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN CANCER CENTER - REGINALD'S ROOM - DAY

Reginald is in bed with his eyes open, they are yellow in color.

We see several IV BAGS over him. A heart monitor is attached to him with faint sounds of beeps filling the room. Over his face is a mask.

Dana walks into the room. Reginald's face lights up in excitement as the heart monitor beats faster.

Dana walks up to Reginald and kisses him on the forehead. She pulls up a chair and sits beside him, taking his hand in hers.

DANA

Hi Daddy.

REGINALD

Hi, baby.

DANA

What happened?

REGINALD

I was loading some crates and I guess I must have passed out.

DANA

Daddy, why didn't you tell us you were sick?

Reginald removes the mask and coughs.

Dana pours him a cup of water and assists him in drinking it. Dana helps him return the mask to his face.

REGINALD

I didn't want to worry you and your mom. I thought I had this under control.

DANA

Daddy, the doctor said you need a bone marrow transplant. I tried to help, but...

REGINALD

I know, baby girl, Dr. Saville told me.

DANA

How can I not be a match? I don't understand.

Reginald looks around. He pats Dana's hand.

REGINALD

Baby girl, I...we should have told you a long time ago. You shouldn't be finding out like this, but...

Dana's eyes widen. She recoils.

DANA

What? What shouldn't I find out about?

REGINALD

Let me explain, baby girl. You need to calm down and listen, OK?

Dana takes a deep breath, then nods. Her eyes slowly begin to fill with tears.

REGINALD (CONT'D)

When I met your mom, she was already pregnant with you. Your mom had so many complications during her pregnancy. You were a miracle baby.

Reginald's heart monitor beats faster. Dana glances at the waves on the monitor increasing.

DANA

Daddy, slow down. Don't get excited.

Reginald shifts in the bed.

REGINALD

Your mother was homeless. I saw her one day, and I approached her and ask her to come stay with me. I felt so sorry for her.

DANA

Homeless, what about Grandma? Why didn't she live with her?

REGINALD

Your mother told me it's complicated.

Dana sighs. She looks around the room as if she were collecting her thoughts. She holds Reginald's hand closer to her chest.

DANA

It's not complicated at all. Just tell me what happened.

REGINALD

That's something your mother should tell you. It's not my place.

Reginald smiles through the mask. His yellow eyes light up as he rests his hand on Dana's cheek.

REGINALD (CONT'D)

Just because I'm not your biological father doesn't mean I love you any less. You're my baby girl, always have and always will be.

Dana tries to hold back her tears, but they fall from her eye and roll down on Reginald's hand.

Samantha is at the doorway. She wipes the tears from her eyes, takes a deep breath, and walks into the room.

She walks over to Reginald and kisses him. Reginald smiles.

SAMANTHA

Doctor Saville stopped me in the hallway. He needs to run some more tests on you.

REGINALD

Tests, tests and more tests.

Concerned, Reginald laughs. Samantha smiles.

SAMANTHA

You take those tests and more tests until you are better, do you hear me?

REGINALD

Yes, ma'am!

Dana stands up. Samantha looks at Dana.

SAMANTHA

We have some talking to do.

Dana nods and glances at Reginald.

REGINALD

I'll be fine. You two need to talk. It's been a long time coming.

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN CANCER CENTER - CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

We see electronic candles lit throughout the Chapel and a large crucified cross of Jesus.

Dana and Samantha are seated in the chapel. Samantha faces away from Dana with a look of shame. She wipes tears from her eyes.

Dana has her hand atop Samantha's leg with a look of shock and disgust.

DANA
Raped? When, how?

Dana holds Samantha's hand tightly.

SAMANTHA
When I was 17. At a party.

DANA
Momma!

Dana turns her attention to the cross where Jesus hangs. She cries.

SAMANTHA
I have no recollection of what happened to me. All I know is afterwards I got pregnant.

DANA
Where were you?

Samantha looks down. Her body posture is limp.

SAMANTHA
My girlfriend and I were at party downtown.

Dana's eyes widen and her mouth gapes slightly.

DANA
A Freaknik party?

Samantha turns to Dana with a half-cocked expression.

SAMANTHA
Yes, you heard of it?

DANA
Momma, I'm writing a new article about it, but that doesn't matter right now.

Samantha nods, breathes and wipes a tear from her cheek.

SAMANTHA

All I remember is waking up at my friend, Donna's, and a few months later, I found out I was pregnant with you.

DANA

How did you meet, daddy?

SAMANTHA

I was a virgin before I found out I was pregnant. I told your grandmother. She got angry and kicked me out. That's when I met Reggie.

Samantha looks slightly up at Dana. Her eyes are red and filled with tears.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

When you were born, he was over the moon with joy. He loved you like you were his very own.

Samantha manages a smile.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

And when I turned 18, he asked me to marry him.

Dana also manages a slight smile through the emotions.

DANA

Do you know who raped you?

Samantha shifts in her seat and shakes her head.

DANA (CONT'D)

And Grandma never did anything to help?

SAMANTHA

She worked two jobs and when she was home; she was always tired. I think she blamed herself for what happened. I mean, for me getting pregnant. I never told her I was raped.

Dana hugs Samantha tightly.

She pulls back and looks at Samantha with a look of intrigue.

DANA

Momma, do you know the month this happened?

SAMANTHA

It was in July 6, 1996. It was a day after my friends Donna's 18th birthday. I'll never forget that day. Why?

Dana pauses and glances off in thought.

DANA

This might be nothing, but I have a tape at my office I want you to look at.

Dana grabs hold of Samantha's hand.

DANA (CONT'D)

It's not going to be easy to watch, but it might be the lead we're looking for.

Dana's eyes shift towards the corner as if her mind were working on a plan.

EXT. SENATOR WINTERS' HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Coming into view is a well-decorated office with exquisite artwork on the wall and a large polished desk in front of a Bay Window.

Behind the desk is SENATOR CHAMBLEE WINTERS (63), Caucasian, heavysset with a menacing demeanor.

Beside him is his son, Bradley Winters (now 42). He's athletic built, ruggedly handsome. A cigar is in his mouth.

Flashing on the TV in the office is a "Breaking Report."

TV REPORTER

Breaking news. Senator Winters has been asked to resign his senate seat due to campaign finance irregularities. The Associated Press and this station have learned that Senator Winters has embezzled over a million and a half dollars of his campaign funds into an offshore account in Belize. The Senator could not be reached for a statement, but his...

Senator Winters turns off the TV.

He glares at the TV with pursed lips.

SENATOR WINTERS
This is bullshit. Made up by the
far left to smear my reelection.

BRADLEY
Are there any truth to these
allegations, father?

Senator Winters looks at Bradley and scarfs.

SENATOR WINTERS
No, there is no proof, but this is
going to cost me some constituents.

Senator Winters pours himself a glass of dark-colored liquor.
He slams it back.

BRADLEY
This is going to run like wildfire.
What are you planning on doing?

Senator Winters stands and slams his hand on the desk.

SENATOR WINTERS
Do they think I'm the first US
Senator that's been caught doing
something like this? Hell no!

Bradley shrugs his shoulders with disinterest and puffs on
the cigar.

Senator Winters sits down. He takes out a cigarette and
lights it. He takes a puff and exhales.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)
I think it's time you run for my
Senate seat.

BRADLEY
Run for your senate seat? I'm not
ready. I've only been a congressman
for three years. I seriously doubt
that I will have the votes or
experience.

Senator Winters takes another puff. He opens his notebook and
turns a page.

SENATOR WINTERS

I've been putting a list together
of people that owe me favors. Plus,
we need to stay in the fight to
make the country great again!

Senator Winters circles names in the notebook.

BRADLEY

That slogan doesn't work anymore.
We need to make this work for
everyone or I'm going to lose.

Senator Winters waves Bradley's comments off.

Bradley rolls his eyes and takes a puff on the cigar.

SENATOR WINTERS

You can run that unity shit with
your negro friends, but we know how
the game is really played!

Senator Winters slams the notebook shut and stares up at
Bradley with menacing eyes.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)

You need to remember where you came
from, boy!

Bradley cowers to his father as he holds his head low.

BRADLEY

Yes, sir!

Senator Winters looks at a report in a file on his desk.

SENATOR WINTERS

Now, tell me about the waitress?

BRADLEY

Waitress, what waitress?

SENATOR WINTERS

Don't play with me, Bradley! It
hasn't reached the papers yet, so
we need to nip this in the bud.

Bradley pauses.

BRADLEY

She was nothing. I met her at a
hotel bar in Atlanta several weeks
ago.

SENATOR WINTERS

She said in the report you groped her breasts.

Bradley looks concerned.

BRADLEY

It wasn't like that. Things just got outta hand, but it was consensual.

SENATOR WINTERS

Consensual? She threatened to go to the paper with her story. Look son, I've been saving your ass since you were 16. Remember the girl who said you touched her when you were 16?

Bradley nods.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)

I took care of that. Remember the roofies you were charged with having? I had that case thrown out? And don't forget about my press secretary, Abigail Rogers. Now that was one we'll never forget.

BRADLEY

I promised to stop, and I did for a while!

Senator Winters' eyes widen as he stands and leans in inches from Bradley's face. He pushes his finger into his chest.

SENATOR WINTERS

No more fucking surprises! Get your shit together or your ass is on the streets. Do I make myself clear?

Bradley nods. Senator Winters moves from behind the desk and strolls around his office, examining photos of him with numerous POLITICIANS.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)

You have an image to uphold, son, one that I can only do so much. The rest is up to you.

Senator Winters walks over to his bar where we see many fancy bottles in a row with whiskey glasses. He pours two shots.

He walks over to Bradley and hands him the drink and then returns to his seat with a smug expression.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)
I paid off too many people to keep
your ass living in the lap of
luxury.

He glares at Bradley.

SENATOR WINTERS (CONT'D)
Don't fuck this up! You do, and
you're finished. Now this is what
we're going to do about that
waitress.

Senator Winters lifts his glass in a toast. Bradley raises
his, then slams it back.

Senator Winters follows suit, then lets out a hearty chuckle.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE SUITE - 1996
(FLASHBACK)

Donna walks back into the suite and see a naked woman
collapsed on the dance floor. It's Samantha.

She's nude and bleeding.

Donna grabs a jacket from a chair and covers her. Bradley,
Timothy and Nigel run over.

BRADLEY
What happened?!

Donna is angry. She looks up at them.

DONNA
What the fuck is this!? What the
fuck happened!?

Samantha tries to speak, but her words are slurred and
incoherent.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Where's her clothes?

NIGEL
They must still be in the back
room. I'll go get them.

Nigel runs to the back of the suite. Donna turns to Bradley
and Timothy.

DONNA

What kind of party is this? Look at her!

BRADLEY

What are you talking about?

DONNA

You know what the fuck I'm talking about. My girl was raped.

BRADLEY

Now, wait a minute! You don't know that...I suggest you get your shit and get the hell out of here!

Donna walks over to Bradley and slaps him. The crowd gasps. Nigel comes back into the suite. He has Samantha's clothes.

DONNA

Fuck you, asshole! I'm calling the police!

BRADLEY

Well, you need to call them from the lobby.

Donna is upset. She tries to hit Bradley again.

Donna swings, but she's retrained by Nigel. She puts on the rest of Samantha's clothes.

With the help of some male guests they walk them to the elevator. Bradley turns and faces the crowd of onlookers.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Sorry people, but the party's over! Now, collect your shit and get out!

Nigel walks over to Bradley.

NIGEL

Not a smart move, dude. The cops will be here soon.

BRADLEY

The fewer people they have to interview, the better.

Timothy walks over to Nigel and Bradley. He is upset.

TIMOTHY

Why did you treat them like that?

BRADLEY

Stop acting like you care, Tim.
Those bitches don't have a case.

TIMOTHY

She's right, Bradley. You're an
asshole! You Have a lot to learn
about women.

Bradley smirks as he walks back to the Penthouse bedrooms.

NIGEL

Let's clean this place up before
the police get here.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - VIDEO ROOM - EVENING

Dana and Samantha are seated at a stationary table in a
private room. Video equipment and a desktop monitor are seen.

Dana's hand presses a button on the VCR, and she turns to
Samantha.

We see Samantha's face with tears streaming down her cheeks.
She covers her face with hands that shake.

SAMANTHA

Jesus, where did you get this?

DANA

It came in the mail. It was
unmarked. Why?

SAMANTHA

That's the voice of my girlfriend,
Donna, Donna Lewis! I don't
recognize the other men.

Cathy hands Samantha some tissue.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I think I'm going to be sick.

Samantha falls to her knees and vomits into a wastepaper
basket. Dana kneels down and strokes her mother's hair.

DANA

Momma, is that woman...

Samantha nods her head as her face is hidden behind her
hands. She stands up and sits in the chair.

SAMANTHA

Yes, that was me on the bed.

DANA

Oh my God, momma!

Dana cries. She hugs Samantha.

SAMANTHA

I was young, too young to be at that party, but I went anyway. Momma told me to stay home, and I went because I wanted to celebrate Donna's birthday weekend.

Dana wipes her eyes.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

(ashamed)

I was seventeen. I should have stayed...

DANA

Momma, don't blame yourself. It wasn't your fault.

Samantha removes her hands from her face. Her eyes are filled with rage.

SAMANTHA

It was my fault! We should have never went to that party. We were going to leave that hotel until I told Donna about it.

DANA

Momma, No! They raped you!

SAMANTHA

When we got to the penthouse, I was like a kid in a candy store. I looked around and saw a place where I could express myself. I remembered dancing, and I even had my first drink.

Samantha stands. She waves her hands and looks away from Dana.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

My clothes were ruined. I was bleeding from my...

Dana moves to Samantha and wraps her arms around her from behind.

DANA
Momma, did you call the police? Did you report this?

SAMANTHA
Donna told me she called them. She said they were investigating it, but I never heard from anyone.

DANA
I promise you, I'll sort this out. I'll get these mother...

Samantha turns and looks deeply into Dana's eyes. She shakes her head.

SAMANTHA
No, honey. I learned to live and I already made peace with it. Please don't stir this up anymore.

Dana places her hands on Samantha's shoulders. She offers a loving smile.

DANA
(angry)
You may have made your piece, momma, but I haven't! I'm a part of this, too. One of those men on that tape is my father. The rapist, the sexual assaulter, and I'm going to get him.

Samantha's phone lights up. She glances down at it and scans it with concerned eyes.

DANA (CONT'D)
What's wrong, momma?

SAMANTHA
It's an urgent text from Dr. Saville. He's been trying to call me, but my phones was muted.

DANA
Is it about Daddy?

SAMANTHA
Probably, I need to leave.

DANA
I'm going, too!

Dana and Samantha hurry out of the office.

INT. GOOD SAMARITAN CANCER CENTER - NURSE STATION - EVENING

Dana and Samantha run down the hall to see Doctor Saville at the nurse's station talking to the CHARGE NURSE.

He sees them from his peripheral and turns to face them. They're out of breath and look concerned.

DOCTOR SAVILLE
(concerned)
Can we talk?

Doctor Saville ushers them down the hall away from the nurse's station.

DOCTOR SAVILLE (CONT'D)
I'm afraid Reggie took a turn for the worse. He's on life support.

Samantha screams.

SAMANTHA
On life support! I just talked to him.

DOCTOR SAVILLE
With the aggressive leukemia and not finding a proper donor in time, this was bound to happen. I'm afraid there is nothing else we can do.

Dana holds on to Samantha. Both look as if they were hit by a bus.

SAMANTHA
What do you mean, there is nothing else you can do?

DOCTOR SAVILLE
Samantha, we have exhausted all of our options. All we can do now is make him comfortable.

Samantha buries her face in Dana's shoulder.

DANA
How long does my dad have?

DOCTOR SAVILLE
It all depends on the patient.

He looks at Dana and takes her hand.

DOCTOR SAVILLE (CONT'D)
You both need to go sit with him.
Talk to him. Let him know he's
loved.

Doctor Saville excuses himself with a pat on Samantha's shoulder.

Dana holds on to her, stroking her back.

DANA
Let's go, momma. He'll be glad to
see us.

Samantha's cries echo throughout the hallway. Dana looks determined as she comforts Samantha.

EXT. 15TH PRECINCT MIDTOWN ATLANTA - EVENING

Police Units are parked in the parking lot. OFFICERS move about, exiting their cars and entering the precinct.

INT. 15TH PRECINCT MIDTOWN ATLANTA - SAME

Dana walks into the 15th Precinct. Many POLICE OFFICERS are walking past her. She stops at the desk and is greeted by OFFICER CARL TANNER (40).

OFFICER TANNER
Hello, can I help you?

DANA
Yes, I need to speak with someone
from your special victims' unit.

OFFICER TANNER
Can I ask what this is about?

DANA
Yes, it's about an incident that
happened in 1996.

Officer Tanner looks surprised.

SERGEANT TOMPKINS (43), approaches and offers a smile to Dana.

SERGEANT TOMKINS

Ma'am, it was called the sex crimes unit back then.

DANA

Okay, I need to speak with someone in that department, please.

Officer Tanner picks up the phone and dials.

Dana turns and looks around at the different "recruitment posters" and "Memorial" on the wall.

OFFICER TANNER

Ma'am, someone will be with you shortly. Please have a seat and I'll send them over to you.

DANA

Thanks.

INT. 15TH PRECINCT MIDTOWN - WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Dana is greeted by Sergeant THOMAS BERRY (43), African American.

SERGEANT BERRY

Hello, I'm Sergeant Berry from SVU. I understand you need some assistance?

Dana rises and shakes his hand.

DANA

Yes, hello Sergeant Berry. I'm a reporter from the Atlanta Observer and I'm writing a story on a rape that took place on July 6 or 7 of 1996 at the Intercontinental Hotel.

SERGEANT BERRY

1996?

DANA

Yes, it occurred during Freaknik. Do you know what that is?

Sergeant Berry smiles.

SERGEANT BERRY

My dad was on the force back then. I was just 17 years old, but I've heard the stories.

DANA

I was hoping you could help me look for a police report, witness statements, or anything from that incident.

SERGEANT BERRY

I would love to help, but our records room caught fire in 2011. We lost a vast amount of evidence from that time and before.

Dana looks defeated. She stares up at the ceiling with a hopeless expression.

Sergeant Berry thinks for a moment.

SERGEANT BERRY (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what I'll do. Let me check if by chance some were made digital.

Dana breathes a sigh of relief. She nods and smiles.

DANA

Thank you. I can be reached at this number.

Dana hands Sergeant Berry her card. He looks at it and places it in his pocket.

SERGEANT BERRY

No guarantees, but I'll call you if I find something.

DANA

Thank you, Sergeant.

Dana shakes Sergeant Berry's hand.

FADE TO:

EXT. DONNA LEWIS-MCFADDEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Dana arrives at an enormous home that screams expensive. She stands in awe at the style of the home and the large door in front of her.

Dana takes a breath, exhales and rings the doorbell.

Donna Lewis-McFadden (now 44) answers the door. There are two African American children, LEAH MCFADDEN (14), and KYLIE MCFADDEN (18), in the background.

DONNA
(inquisitive)
Hello, can I help you?

DANA
Yes, are you Donna Lewis?

Donna laughs.

DONNA
I haven't been Donna Lewis in
sometime. I got married 20 years
ago, but yes, I'm now Donna Lewis-
McFadden. Can I help you?

DANA
I'm sorry Mrs. McFadden. I'm Dana
Connors, a reporter for the Atlanta
Observer. I'm writing an article on
the 30th anniversary of Freaknik.
Your name came up, and I wanted to
know if I could ask you some
questions.

Donna looks perplexed. She curls her lips, raises her eyes.

DONNA
How did my name come up after all
these years?

DANA
Do you know Samantha Jones?

DONNA
Yes, I know her. Why?

DANA
Well, she's my mother.

DONNA
Oh my God...

Donna rests her eyes on Dana for a few minutes. She's taken
aback.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Wow! The last time I saw Sam was in
1999. How is she?

DANA
She's fine, but I'm investigating
an incident that took place at the
intercontinental hotel in July
1996.

(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)

I understand you and my mom were there?

Donna pauses and hesitates. She comes outside and closes the door behind her.

DONNA

You said your Mom? Wow, you're Sam's Kid and a reporter too. How ironic is that?

Donna laughs.

DANA

Yes, ma'am. I'm a reporter and I need some clarification on a story I'm writing about freaknik and that hotel.

DONNA

Clarification? What kind of Clarification, Miss Connors?

DANA

Call me Dana.

DONNA

What's your interest in that hotel, Dana?

DANA

Because you were there that night my mother was raped.

Donna's demeanor changes. She crosses her arms over her chest, shakes her head and escorts Dana down the steps farther away from the house.

DONNA

I... I don't know what to tell you. It was a longtime ago.

Dana stares at Donna with a look of determination and pleading eyes.

DANA

Mrs. McFadden, all I want is the truth.

DONNA

We were both young. Unfortunately, your mother was under age.

(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

We went to a party, and she got really drunk and passed out.

DANA

Why were you partying with a minor, Donna?

Donna uncrosses her arms.

DONNA

Your mom and I became best friends when her dad left. I was kind of like a sister to her. We went places, shopped and did stupid things sisters do. Yes, I was older, but friendship doesn't have an age. When your grandmother found out, I got an STD. She labeled me as a whore.

DANA

So what happened at the penthouse?

DONNA

We were going to a friend's party that night, and I suggested we go to the hotel first because they always have something there on weekends. We got up to the penthouse, we both were having fun, and that's when...

Dana interrupts.

DANA

(angry)

My mother was drugged, and sexually assaulted!

Donna holds her hands up in a defensive manner.

DONNA

Look, Dana, we all moved on!

Dana glares at Donna. Her mouth is slightly open, and she shakes her head in disgust.

DANA

(angry)

Well, I didn't! My mother was raped, and I just found out that I was conceived out of it, so don't tell me to fucking move on, lady!

Donna looks at Dana. She looks like she's going to cry. Her eyes are watery.

DONNA

I'm sorry about what happened that night, but I have nothing more to tell you.

DANA

(pleading)

Please, Donna, I'm begging you. If not for me, then for my mother.

Donna glances back at her large home and smiles. She looks at the garden in front of the house and the fancy car in the driveway.

DONNA

It should have been me.

Donna looks up and closes her eyes. She clears her throat and attempts to compose herself.

DONNA (CONT'D)

That should have been me passed out on that bed, not an innocent seventeen-year-old girl.

Donna wipes a tear from her eye, as she can no longer hold back the emotions.

Dana waits in anticipation.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Yes, your mother was drugged, but that's all I know. I'm sorry, Dana I can't tell you anything else. It's not safe.

DANA

What do you mean? Who are you protecting? Why isn't it safe.

Donna looks around nervous.

DONNA

I've said enough. Do you have a card? I'll contact you.

Dana hands Donna her business card, she turns and walks towards her car on the street. Donna wipes her eyes.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Tell Samantha I'm sorry.

Dana looks back, nods. Donna turns and walks back into the house.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Throughout the lobby are PEOPLE mingling. There is laughter and slight chatter overheard.

Dana steps through the entrance and into the lobby. She looks around, scanning the exquisite decor of the hotel. A BELLHOP passes her and nods.

Dana spots the check-in desk and heads that way.

Behind the desk, typing on a computer, is RAVEN (20s), a Caucasian female with glasses over her eyes. Raven acknowledges Dana with a smile.

Dana pulls her "Press Badge" from her purse and holds it in front of Raven.

DANA

Good Afternoon Raven, my name is Dana Connors and I'm a reporter with the Atlanta Observer. Can I please speak with the manager?

Raven looks at Dana's credentials.

RAVEN

One moment, please.

Raven picks up the phone and dials her manager. She hangs up.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Mr. Jackson will be with you shortly.

Raven points over to some empty plush chairs in the lobby.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

You're more than welcome to wait in the lobby.

DANA

Thank you.

Dana walks over and takes a seat. She takes out her phone and scans through it.

STEVEN JACKSON (47), African American, heavy set, walks over to Dana with a pleasant demeanor.

MR. JACKSON
You must be the reporter.

Dana rises from her seat, and she and Mr. Jackson shake hands.

DANA
Hello Mr. Jackson, Yes, I'm Dana Connors with the Atlanta Observer. I'm doing a story on Freaknik. I'm sure you've heard of it.

MR. JACKSON
Yes, I'm very familiar with it. However, I'm not sure how that concerns a story about my hotel.

DANA
Well, sir, this hotel was the top spot for African American young people from all over during Freaknik, and I was hoping to interview some guests that stayed here at the time of the celebration. You know, see what they have to say about their experience at your fine establishment.

MR. JACKSON
We don't give out personal information.

Dana looks at Mr. Jackson's badge and smiles.

DANA
Can I call you Steven?

MR. JACKSON
Sure.

DANA
Steven, I forgot to mention that my upcoming article will feature you, your hotel and tell our readers in Atlanta and in other cities the history of this awesome event, plus give an awesome review for your hotel. I think your organization will love the free publicity, what do you think?

Mr. Jackson rubs his chin and ponders the idea.

MR. JACKSON
How much will you advertise? Did
you say you will mention me, too?

DANA
Most definitely, and we're looking
at a full-page article with
pictures.

Mr. Jackson smiles. He stands taller with his shoulders back
and chest out.

MR. JACKSON
So, how can I help?

DANA
Do you keep room rentals from 1996?

MR. JACKSON
We have records dating back to when
we first opened.

DANA
Great, I'm looking for a renter
that had the penthouse on July 6th.

MR. JACKSON
Let me take a look.

Mr. Jackson walks to the front desk as Dana breathes a sigh
of relief. She follows behind him to the front desk.

Mr. Jackson stands behind an empty terminal, types a few keys
and scrolls through, scanning the computer.

MR. JACKSON (CONT'D)
July 6, right?

DANA
Yes. You found something?

Mr. Jackson takes off his glasses and looks over at Dana. He
leans in over the desk with a slight hesitation. He looks
around for a moment.

MR. JACKSON
The room was registered to a...

He pauses.

MR. JACKSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Congressman Chamblee Winters.

DANA
Chamblee Winters? Senator Chamblee
Winters?

Dana is stunned. She takes out her notebook and writes quickly.

MR. JACKSON
We also have bank cards on file for
two other guests in that suite. A
Nigel Williamson and Timothy Green.

Dana scribbles the new information, then stops and gathers her emotions. She steps away from the desk, breathing heavy.

DANA
Um, I need to go back to my office.
I'll contact you for an interview.
Thanks again for helping me with
the story.

Mr. Jackson watches with a confused look as Dana turns away, moving so quickly that she bumps into a GUEST.

Without hesitation, Dana continues to head for the exit.

INT. DANA'S CAR - MID AFTERNOON - MOMENTS LATER

Dana slams her car door and pulls her phone from her purse. Her hands tremble as she scrolls through, dialing a number.

DANA
(into phone)
Cathy, you won't believe who rented
out the penthouse on July 6, 1996?

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - SAME

Cathy is on her phone behind her desk. She's listening intently.

CATHY
(into phone)
That's great news, Connors. Keep me
updated.

Cathy ends the call and quickly dials another number. A beat.

CATHY (CONT'D)
We have a problem.

INT. DANA'S CAR - MID EVENING - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Dana is behind the wheel of her car with eyes straight ahead with a focused and determined look.

Her phone rings. She presses the monitor button inside her car, answering the phone via bluetooth.

DANA
(into phone)
Cathy, what did you find out?

CATHY (O.S.)
I dug really deep on Senator Winters. He was not in Atlanta in July of 96. He was attending a republican party meeting in Utah.

DANA
Go ahead.

CATHY (O.S.)
Winters was Trump's first pick as his running mate, but his party chose Pence because of some ethics complaints. He was recently asked to step down from his Senate seat over campaign fraud.

DANA
Campaign fraud? And the story gets more interesting by the second.

CATHY (O.S.)
Yes, and get this. He's endorsing his son, Congressman Bradley Winters, who attended Harvey College at the time of the assault.

Dana smiles upon hearing this. She slams her hand on the steering wheel with excitement.

DANA
So, if Senator Winters wasn't in Atlanta, then it had to be his son.

CATHY (O.S.)
Maybe. There's a fundraiser at the senator's house. I just texted you the address.

DANA
Great. I'll call you when I learn something more.

CATHY (O.S.)
Remember, you still represent this
newspaper, Connors, so keep it
professional.

DANA
I'll remember that. Thanks, I'll
talk to you later.

Dana ends the call with the press of a button. She grins and turns the steering wheel towards the right as the car exits off the Interstate.

EXT. SENATOR CHAMBLEE WINTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Dana's car pulls up at the driveway of a two-story brick mansion. Many cars are parked out front and out past the open main gate.

Hanging high above the front of the home is a banner with the words "Winters is Coming" with a large picture of Bradley on it. In large print under his image, it reads "Bradley for Senate".

There are SECRET SERVICE AGENTS, REPORTERS and STAFF MEMBERS walking around the compound.

Dana exits her car and puts her "press credentials" on. She proceeds towards the press area. Cameras flash as there is an eruption of cheers.

An overconfident Bradley Winters walks into view towards the podium. He is carrying and sipping on a half-full water bottle.

Bradley is waving to the crowd. His two children, BRADLEY JR. (12), and STEPHANIE (16), are following him along with ELKA BRELAND (30), Caucasian and beautiful with modelesque features.

Senator Chamblee Winters is standing near the side of an event tent, smoking a cigar and laughing with several STAFF MEMBERS.

Bradley taps on the microphone. Everyone in attendance turns their attention to Bradley, who flashes a confident grin in their direction.

BRADLEY
Hello everyone. I'm going to answer
a few questions now. Don't everyone
go at once.

A reporter raises his hand.

REPORTER 1

Congressman, can you answer some questions concerning the allegations against your father, Senator Winters?

Bradley looks over to where Senator Winters is standing. He shakes his head no.

BRADLEY

Tonight isn't about my father and alleged accusations. Next question.

Another reporter raises her hand.

REPORTER 2

Congressman, can you speak about the recent deaths of two unarmed black men killed last night by the police?

BRADLEY

I don't know the circumstances involving those two youths, but I'm sure the police had a reason to shoot them.

The crowd reacts with shocked glances at one another and many hands go up.

REPORTER 3

Congressman Winters, the constituents in your district are 72% African American. With a statement like that, how do you expect to get the votes from your people?

Bradley adjusts his suit and flashes a half-cocked grin.

BRADLEY

A redistricting of my district is currently underway. We have a vote on this next week. If approved, or should I say once approved, this district will be a little different.

REPORTER 3

You mean more white votes?

Bradley's demeanor shows he's perturbed, but he remains composed.

BRADLEY

I mean very different from the way it looks now. Look, I'm the man of the people, just like my father was. I intend to run for a change. I intend on being a senator for everyone, not just African Americans.

Senator Winters is clapping. He looks over at Bradley and gives a thumbs up. Bradley looks back at the reporters.

REPORTER 3

What about the removal of the confederate statues at the courthouse?

Bradley looks over to his father. Senator Winters motions with a hand wave.

REPORTER 4

Congressman Winters, do you agree those statues are a sign of hate?

BRADLEY

Those statues are just brass, and they are from our past. They can do no one harm. As I told many people before, I will not push to have them removed.

The crowd is stunned as many hands go up again. A Staff Member quickly walks up to the podium and whispers into Bradley's ear.

Bradley turns back to the microphone. He points to a BLOND REPORTER who has her hand up.

REPORTER 5

Congressman, I'm Julie Davis from Fox news. Donald Trump has endorsed your candidacy for Senate. Any words for the former president?

BRADLEY

Thank you, Mister President! It means so much to me to have your powerful endorsement. You are a star maker and I intend on making America Great Again for all of us, especially African Americans.

Bradley reaches under the podium and pulls out and puts on a red "Make America Great Again" cap. He smiles at the reporters, waves his hand and walks off the stage with his family behind him.

Dana shifts through the crowd. Bradley holds out his hand to shake Dana's hand. Dana takes his hand and reaches in to speak.

DANA
Congressman Winters, I'm a reporter from Atlanta. Can I have an interview with you?

BRADLEY
Which paper are you with?

DANA
I'm with the Atlanta Observer.

Dana opens her notebook.

DANA (CONT'D)
Off the record, do you really think that way about the confederate statues?

Bradley takes a drink of his water and smiles.

BRADLEY
Anything for the vote, right?

Dana smiles.

DANA
Yeah, anything for the vote. I understand you went to an HBCU? Why? You talk like a Harvard man.

Bradley laughs. He looks over at the crowd and waves.

BRADLEY
My mother insisted that I get the total black experience. She felt I was moving away from my black roots.

Dana looks back at her notes.

DANA
Harvey college? Isn't that an all boys' school?

BRADLEY
Yes, the fighting eagles!

DANA
Congressman, have you ever been to
Atlanta?

A Staff Member interrupts and whispers into Bradley's ear. He nods his head, then returns his attention to Dana.

BRADLEY
Yes, many times. I loved going
there in the summer. What a great
city.

DANA
I know I'm a little off base
congressman, but did you attend an
event in July 1996?

BRADLEY
1996? I was still in college. I
might have, but that was so long
ago.

Dana stares at Bradley with an intense gaze.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
I'm confused as to just where
you're going with this.

DANA
Do you recall a party in the
penthouse at the Intercontinental?

Bradley looks over and sees his father approaching. He finishes drinking from the water bottle and tosses it into a nearby wastebasket.

BRADLEY
Do you have questions about my run
for senate? These questions are
totally unacceptable.

Senator Winters walks up to the interview.

DANA
Hello Senator Winters. My name is
Dana Connors. I'm a reporter from
the Atlanta Observer.

Senator Winters takes a draw from his cigar.

BRADLEY

Yes, she was about to leave,
father.

SENATOR WINTERS

Is there a problem, son?

Bradley turns to Dana with a furrowed brow.

BRADLEY

No, father. We were just finishing
up here.

SENATOR WINTERS

Hurry it up, will you? I have a
team from Fox news waiting on you.

BRADLEY

Yes, father.

Senator Winter walks off. Dana looks over at Bradley.

DANA

Congressman, do you have an answer
to my question?

BRADLEY

I don't remember a lot of my time
in Atlanta. I was hungover most of
the time.

DANA

Did you ever attend Freaknik,
Congressman?

Bradley smiles sarcastically.

BRADLEY

You need to ask the other people
that were there and while you're at
it, please remove me from your
paper's left wing hatchet job
article.

Bradley flashes a confident grin at a Reporter who snaps a
photo.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

I don't know why black people
insist on turning back the clock on
racial progress with events such
as...Freaknik. They act like
animals and it's a disgrace to how
far we've come.

Bradley stares hard at Dana.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Now, are we done here?

Dana hands Bradley her card as she flashes a phony smile across her face.

DANA

If you think of anything, congressman, please call me. Just like black lives, every story matters.

Bradley walks over to the Fox News tent where his father gives him a huge embrace, followed by a pat on the back.

Dana looks around and reaches into the wastebasket and retrieves the empty water bottle and places it in her handbag.

FADE TO:

INT. DANA'S RENTAL CAR - WASHINGTON DC - NEXT MORNING

Dana types in the address of "BLESSING MINISTRIES" into her navigation system on the car's dashboard monitor.

The address information appears, and Dana shifts the car into drive and speeds off.

EXT. BLESSING MINISTRIES - MID MORNING

Dana arrives and parks in front of the Mega Church. PARISHIONERS are gathered outside of the building.

INT. BLESSING MINISTRIES - CHURCH CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Inside the church, Pastor Timothy Green-Jacobs (now 42), is with a group of Parishioners. They sit in front of him with a fascinated expression.

Dana eases in and sits in the pew towards the back.

Pastor Timothy glances at his watch.

TIMOTHY

Time flies when you're teaching the word of God! Can I get an Amen?

PARISHIONERS

Amen!

The Parishioners rise to leave.

TIMOTHY

Don't forget gentlemen, we have choir rehearsal later this evening. For everyone attending, please see Choir Director Jacobs at the piano at 5pm.

Timothy turns and walks away from the podium. Dana rises and approaches him in the aisle.

DANA

Pastor Timothy, can I have a word with you?

TIMOTHY

Certainly, who are you?

DANA

I'm Dana Connors, from the Atlanta Observer. I'm doing an article on Black Spring Break. I understand you were in Atlanta celebrating it back in 1996. I'd love to get an interview.

Timothy hesitates. He points to a row of empty seats and they sit.

TIMOTHY

Where did you get my name from? I know nothing about Black Spring Break!

DANA

You may remember it as Freaknik.

Timothy's demeanor changes.

TIMOTHY

Oh Freaknik, yes, how can I forget?

DANA

I found out from one of your Harvey College fraternity brothers that you were in Atlanta at the time and did plenty of celebrating.

TIMOTHY

I'm not sure I can be of much help as I don't remember things clearly from an event over twenty something years ago. Not to mention I was a little on the intoxicated side.

Dana forces a smile, then opens her notebook.

DANA

I'm going to cut straight to the point of why I'm here today. Can you tell me about your stay at the Intercontinental hotel in July of 1996?

Timothy pauses and looks over at Dana as though he's seen a ghost.

Off to the side and out of view is SCOTT JACOBS (47), Caucasian, and husband of Timothy. He stares at them with curiosity.

TIMOTHY

The Intercontinental Hotel?

DANA

Yes, you were there with Bradley Winters and Nigel Williamson. You were in the penthouse. Any recollection of anything that happened that night?

Timothy shifts and fidgets in his seat. He stutters incoherently as Scott Jacobs approaches them and rests his hand on Timothy's shoulder.

Timothy glances up after nearly jumping out of his clothes. He smiles, then leans forward, allowing his lips to meet Scott's.

TIMOTHY

Scott, this is Dana Connors. She's a reporter from Atlanta. She's asking about an event that took place over twenty years ago.

Scott and Dana shake hands, then he looks back at Timothy.

SCOTT

Miss Connors, I'm sure if my husband knew anything he would tell you, right Timothy?

Timothy nods.

Dana shifts her attention between the two of them. She feels something is not being told.

DANA

A woman very close to me was raped
in that penthouse, and your husband
was there.

She looks at Timothy with a perturbed gaze.

DANA (CONT'D)

I just left Congressman Winters,
and I'm confused as to why everyone
is drawing a blank.

TIMOTHY

Look here, young lady, I have a
church to oversee! I don't have
time for these allegations!

Scott puts his hands up.

SCOTT

Look everyone, let's all calm down!
I'm sure we can talk civil about
this.

DANA

I'm writing this story and I
suggest you cooperate! I'm not
trying to cause you any harm, but I
need you to tell me the...

Timothy interrupts, he stands, takes Scott's hand and walks away. He looks back at her and points his finger.

TIMOTHY

"God will be the answer, and what
happens in the dark will always
come to light!" Please show
yourself out!

She stands and sternly looks at him.

DANA

Have it your way.

Dana's phone rings. Dana answers.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

Dana, it's your father!

DANA
 Momma, what's wrong!?

Dana hears Samantha crying. A beat.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
 He's dead! Your father is dead!

Dana closes her eyes. She cries as she walks out of the church, leaving Timothy staring at her with regret.

EXT. WOODMILL CEMETERY - MORNING

Many headstones are seen coming into view. A freshly dug grave with a casket over it is seen.

In the background, only a few feet away out of view, Donna Lewis-McFadden is watching from a distance.

A somber Samantha, Dana, and FRIENDS and FAMILY are gathered for Reginald's funeral.

Dana's phone is vibrating. Dana takes it out of her handbag and looks down at the screen and sees Cathy's name. She places the phone back in her handbag.

Dana wraps her arm around Samantha and they rest their heads against the other as they look on with sadness.

EXT. ATLANTA STATE COURTHOUSE - MORNING

PEOPLE are filing into the State Courthouse. Dana walks up the flight of stairs and into the doors of the courthouse.

INT. ATLANTA STATE COURTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dana enters the courtroom as PEOPLE exit. She spots ARTHUR COX (30s). He's cleaning the courtroom. Dana walks up to Arthur.

DANA
 Well, look what the cat drug in.

Arthur looks up in excitement.

ARTHUR
 Oh my goodness, if it isn't Dana Jones as I live and breathe.

Dana hugs Arthur.

DANA

It's actually Dana Connors. I've been married for 2 years now.

Arthur shakes his head.

ARTHUR

Bet he's a doctor or lawyer? Can't let a pretty woman like you get away.

Arthur laughs.

DANA

No, she's a captain in the Army reserve.

Arthur is surprised. He regroups and smiles.

ARTHUR

So, what brings you down here?

DANA

I was wondering if I can have a word with Judge Williamson? I'm writing this new piece and needed some legal advice.

ARTHUR

I read your piece on the immigrant sex slaves, and it was amazing! Didn't you win some award?

DANA

Yes, I got a Pulitzer.

ARTHUR

Wow, so, what's this next story on?

DANA

It's on Freaknik. Yes, I'm doing my initial legwork first before I write. You think you can speak with Judge Williamson?

ARTHUR

Let me see if I can get you in. All his cases are over and I think he has a tee time for 4:00.

DANA

Thanks.

Arthur walks into Judge Williamson's chambers. He closes the door.

INT. ATLANTA STATE COURTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Arthur walks over to Dana and gives a thumbs up.

ARTHUR

Dana, the Judge will see you now.

INT. JUDGE NIGEL WILLIAMSON'S CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

Dana enters and closes the chamber door. JUDGE WILLIAMSON (now 46), is seated behind his desk.

We see his robe hanging next to him. Several legal books line the shelves beside his desk.

He looks up over the newspaper in his hands and acknowledges Dana with a welcoming grin.

NIGEL

Hello young lady.

DANA

Hello Judge Williamson, my name is Dana Connors. I'm a reporter for the Atlanta Observer.

Judge Williamson puts down the paper. He leans forward over his desk with his hands clenched together. He nods towards the chair in front of the desk. Dana slides into the seat with a stiff position.

NIGEL

So, how can I help with your story?

DANA

First, it was nice of you to see me, but I must confess that I'm here under false pretenses.

NIGEL

Oh really? How so?

Dana opens her notebook and pulls out her ink pen.

DANA

I've been getting the runaround from both of your frat brother's Bradley Winters and Timothy Green.

Judge Williamson looks over at Dana and sighs.

DANA (CONT'D)

It's true, I'm writing a story on Freaknik, but I'm also looking into the rape of a young woman at the Intercontinental Hotel Penthouse rented by your good friend Bradley Winters.

Judge Williamson sits back in his chair and crosses his arms over his chest. He darts his eyes at Dana.

DANA (CONT'D)

Your honor, everyone keeps giving me the runaround, denying any memory of that night's events. Can you tell me anything concerning that night?

Judge Williamson clears his throat and lets out a slight but sarcastic chuckle. He's not amused.

NIGEL

Young lady, I don't know where you are getting this made-up story from; I assure you that none of this is true and if you are trying to smear a high ranking State Judge, I will make a call to the District Attorney's office and have them handle this matter right away.

Dana slams her notebook shut and rests her closed hand on the table.

Judge Williamson stares down at her in anger.

DANA

Judge, a woman was raped that night and it seems to me like a coverup. Even though the statute of limitations has expired, the voters of Atlanta may have something to say about this. I'll ask again, will you give me a statement?

NIGEL

Miss Connors, please see your way out of my chambers.

Dana shakes her head and stands from the chair with a frown.

Judge Williamson grabs his newspaper and holds it in front of his face.

Dana turns to leave, then stops. She glances back over her shoulder.

DANA

By the way, your honor, we received a videotape of the rape that I will hand over to the authorities when my article is completed.

Several beats.

Judge Williamson slowly eases the newspaper down and glares at Dana over the top of it.

NIGEL

You have a videotape of the rape!?

DANA

I'll see myself out. I put my card on your desk if you change your mind.

Dana exits the room.

Judge Williamson pushes the newspaper to the side and takes a hard look at Dana's card. He takes out his cellphone and dials.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - AFTERNOON

Dana is at her desk when her phone vibrates. She smiles upon seeing the text message from Scott.

It reads:

Hello, Dana, this is Scott Jacobs, Tim's husband. Can we chat in an hour? I have something important to share with you.

Dana types back.

Yes, we'll talk in an hour. I'll call you.

Dana drops the phone on her desk and pulls out her notebook. She examines her written notes scattered across the pages.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Dana and Cathy sit beside one another as the face time call is in progress. Dana is writing in her notebook with haste.

SCOTT

A few months ago, I was cleaning out the garage, and I found an old video camera with a tape inside. I thought they were some old vacation movies. I started watching it and...

Scott pauses for a few seconds.

DANA

Hi Scott, this is Dana. Go ahead, we're listening.

SCOTT

I started watching it and I saw the assault. I just panicked and...

DANA

So you sent us the tape?

SCOTT (

Yes, I read in the paper that Dana Connors was doing an article on the 30th anniversary of Freaknik. I thought I would send it in confidentially, but I never knew you would come see my husband.

DANA

Did Timothy ever share any of what happened that night with you?

Dana gnaws on the end of her ink pen while staring at the screen.

Scott is in agony over this. It looks like he hasn't slept in days.

SCOTT

He said he was pushed to go into the room to have sex with the girl, but couldn't do it. He started crying and ran out of the room when he saw the girl waking up.

DANA

So the man crying on the tape is your husband?

SCOTT

Yes, I know his voice anywhere. That was him.

Scott gets emotional. He wipes his eyes and turns his face away from view.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I should have pulled you aside when you were here, Dana, but I got scared and I didn't want Timothy to know what I did.

Cathy looks at Dana for a beat. She nods, then turns back towards the screen.

CATHY

The video proves what happened. Thanks for being honest with us, Scott. If we need to ask you anything else, can we call you?

DANA

Also, will Pastor Timothy agree to a DNA test?

SCOTT

Yes, if it will clear my husband's name.

Dana reaches to end the video call.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Oh, and Dana.

Dana is all ears.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

There are some very powerful people involved here, so watch yourself.

Dana and Cathy share a look of concern and perhaps fear with one another.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Dana falls into her chair at her cubicle. She closes her eyes for a moment and rests her head against her hand.

Her phone rings.

Dana reaches for it, stares at the screen and answers.

DANA

Hello, Sergeant Berry.

SERGEANT BERRY

Hello, Dana, as I feared, most of the physical evidence was lost in the fire. Luckily, I found all the witness statements, including the statements from some guests and the occupants of the penthouse, on the night in question.

Dana grabs her ink pen and flips to a blank page in her notebook.

DANA

That's amazing news.

SERGEANT BERRY

Unfortunately, because of Georgia Law, the statutes of limitations have run out, so nothing can be done to anyone even if they're located.

DANA

So I've been told....I know I'm asking a lot, but can you scan the statements and send them over to me?

SERGEANT BERRY

Sure, you'll have them within the hour.

DANA

Thanks.

Dana ends the call. She leans back in her chair and stares upward with a hopeful gaze.

INT. DANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Tammy is making dinner as the voices from what seems to be a podcast come out of a small speaker in the kitchen.

INT. DANA'S HOUSE - STUDY - SAME

Dana sits in her study that's filled with books, a desk, and a couple of photographs in frames.

She's looking over documents and scans her fingers across the statement and stops at "Bradley Winters" name.

She allows her eyes to move down and scan with a deeper look.

Tammy walks into the study.

TAMMY

You've been reviewing those documents for hours now, Dana.

DANA

I've been reading the statement from Bradley Winters.

Dana looks up at Tammy with a perplexed expression.

DANA (CONT'D)

He states he wasn't in the penthouse during the assault because he was on the balcony with several women.

Dana shoves the paperwork to the side and buries her face in the palm of her hands.

DANA (CONT'D)

This statement is filled with inconsistencies, Tammy.

TAMMY

Dinner will be ready soon. You want me to bring it in to you?

Dana sighs, then pulls out another report. She looks down to see "Timothy Green" printed on top. She grabs her highlighter and scans the typed words.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

So, this is how you got two Pulitzers?

DANA

Huh?

Tammy smiles and laughs slightly.

DANA (CONT'D)

Timothy Green's statement is not making sense. How did he know there was a naked woman in the room?

Dana looks up in thought.

DANA (CONT'D)

Someone must have told him what to expect once he entered the room. He is still hiding something...but what?

TAMMY

Is he lying?

Dana puts down the statement.

DANA

I don't know, but Scott was right.
There are some powerful people
involved and Timothy is still
covering for them.

Dana picks up the statement from Nigel Williamson.

DANA (CONT'D)

Nigel's statement gives a full
description of the witness. It
reads, a young African American, 18
years of age, medium build and
wearing a Harvey College Fraternity
Jacket.

She keeps scanning the report.

DANA (CONT'D)

It concludes with the witness
refuses to give any statements
after consulting with his father.

Dana has an A-HA moment.

DANA (CONT'D)

It also says if his son is
pressured to give a statement, he
would sue the city.

Dana looks over at Tammy.

DANA (CONT'D)

This might be the lead I was
looking for.

TAMMY

That's great, babe. Are you coming
to dinner or what?

Dana glances back down at the report with focus.

Tammy smiles, then heads over to Dana and kisses her cheek.

EXT. ATLANTA STATE COURTHOUSE - MORNING

Samantha is waiting outside the State Courthouse. Bradley and Nigel depart the courthouse front doors and proceed down the stairs. Samantha walks up to both men and stares at them.

Bradley notices her and tries to go in another direction, but Samantha walks in front of them.

BRADLEY

Why are you here?

SAMANTHA

Do you remember me?

Samantha removes her sunglasses.

NIGEL

We don't have any loose change,
lady.

Bradley hits Nigel on the shoulder as she glares at him with anger and hate.

SAMANTHA

I don't want your goddamn change.
We need to talk, gentlemen!

Bradley smirks, then sighs. He isn't in the mood for this right now.

BRADLEY

Samantha, I thought we agreed to
never see each other again.

SAMANTHA

I know, but the shit has hit the
fan. Dana will not stop now that
she knows about the rape!

Nigel and Bradley exchange a panicked look at one another.

A limousine pulls up in front of the courthouse steps and the two men walk past Samantha with disinterest.

Samantha grabs Nigel by the arm. He jerks away.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I said she knows
that it was one of you.

Nigel points his finger at Samantha. He's inches from her face.

NIGEL

No one raped you! So, unless you want me to call security, I suggest you get the hell out of my sight.

SAMANTHA

This isn't over. Not by a long shot.

Samantha walks away in a hurry.

Nigel and Bradley rush to get into the limousine. They open the door, slide in, and slam the door behind them.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Inside the limousine, Bradley's companion TANNER (35), Caucasian, clean, sophisticated look, wearing a shoulder holster is seated.

Nigel looks over at Tanner and then back at Bradley.

BRADLEY

Nigel, this is Tanner. Tanner is what you call a problem solver.

Tanner looks at Nigel and nods.

NIGEL

That bitch is crazy! I thought you had her under control?

BRADLEY

I thought so, too, but...

NIGEL

We need to do something about her! She can really do some harm to your senate run. If a monetary payoff can be made to keep her quiet, let's do it.

Bradley cracks his neck and stares out the tinted windows.

BRADLEY

I can't afford to let her interfere with my plans. I'll deal with her like I should have from the beginning.

Bradley turns his attention to Tanner, who sits upright with a serious demeanor.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Tanner, I'm going to need you to
set up a meeting with Samantha.

Tanner nods with a stone face expression.

Bradley scribbles numbers on a piece of paper and hands it to
Tanner. Tanner pulls out his phone and dials a number.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let anything get
in the way of what I've worked so
hard for...not this time.

EXT. ATLANTA STREETS - AFTERNOON

Samantha's phone rings as she's walking down the street away
from the courthouse. Samantha answers.

TANNER (V.O.)

Good Day Miss Donald. My name is
Tanner. I work security for
Congressman Winters. He would like
to meet with you.

Samantha looks at her watch.

SAMANTHA

He can meet me at the Winston Mall
Food Court today at 2:00 pm and he
needs to come alone.

TANNER (V.O.)

I'll relay your message.

Samantha abruptly ends the call and gazes forward with a look
of satisfaction.

EXT. WINSTON MALL - AFTERNOON

Large scaffolds are seen around the mall. Signs on the walls
and doors of the mall read "Mall Under Construction".

CUSTOMERS are walking in and out of the main doors.

Bradley walks up to the doors. He surveys the area and looks
upward before entering.

INT. WINSTON MALL - FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Bradley continues looking up, but sees nothing that stands out or causes concern.

Samantha, wearing dark glasses, is seated at a secluded corner table by the pizza stand. She waves over to Bradley.

He walks over and sits down.

BRADLEY

What the fuck, Samantha! I didn't expect to see you at the courthouse today!

SAMANTHA

How else do you expect me to get your attention!? I've been trying to reach you for days.

BRADLEY

What do you want, now? Aren't those checks still hitting your account?

SAMANTHA

Yes, but we need to restructure our arrangement.

Bradley appears agitated. He rubs his head and sighs.

BRADLEY

Restructure!? Dammit Samantha! Our arrangement was for you to never speak of what happened!?

Bradley leans closer towards Samantha with a clenched jaw. He shakes his head.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

You've been blackmailing us since 1997 and I'm pretty sure you've been well compensated to keep your mouth shut.

Samantha sits back. She takes off her sunglasses.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

And now that bitch daughter of yours is trying to ruin me. I won't stand for that, Samantha.

Samantha pounds her hand on the table. Some CUSTOMERS look over at them.

SAMANTHA

Watch your mouth, Bradley! Dana is off limits. She found out about what happened by accident and she's extremely inquisitive. So, I suggest you don't fuck with her!

Bradley points at Samantha.

BRADLEY

One way or another, do you hear me, Samantha!? Put a stop to that story! If the truth comes out, it will ruin me!

SAMANTHA

I can no longer control what's going on. Dana is not the one to let this go now that she knows I was raped.

Bradley stands. He adjusts his suit and looks down at Samantha.

BRADLEY

If she doesn't stop asking questions and kill that story...

Samantha points to Bradley and stands up. She is so close to him that their noses almost touch. Her eyes are wide with anger.

SAMANTHA

If my daughter is harmed in any way, there will be hell to pay!

Bradley chuckles with sarcasm.

BRADLEY

You're in no position to make threats, Samantha. I suggest you get your daughter in check... if not, then your sweet family will be another member short.

Bradley walks away with confidence in his steps.

Samantha looks at Bradley walk off with disdain.

SAMANTHA

I want an increase in payments, Bradley, and it's non-negotiable.

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

If Dana is harmed, I'm going to the
authorities with everything,
including proof of the rape and
I'll destroy you, that crooked
Judge and the punk ass Pastor! When
I'm finished with you, congressman,
you won't be elected dogcatcher!

Bradley doesn't look back. He keeps walking and disappears
into the mall Customers.

Samantha kicks the chair at the table and lets out a slight
grunt. She stands, re-adjusts her glasses, and leaves in the
other direction.

EXT. WINSTON MALL - PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha is walking through the parking garage while digging
in her purse. She's not paying attention.

In the distance is a tow truck with Tanner behind the wheel.
He starts the ignition, then pulls a mask over his face. Only
his eyes are visible.

Tanner pulls out of the parking space at a high acceleration.

A BYSTANDER sees the truck speedily approaching and yells out
to Samantha.

BYSTANDER

Watch out, lady! Watch out!

Samantha turns and sees the truck rapidly approaching. Her
eyes light up in fear as the headlights of the truck shine
bright, blinding her.

The tow truck strikes Samantha, and she rolls underneath it
with a THUD!

The Bystander cries out as the truck speeds away out of the
parking lot and onto the main street.

We see Samantha's crushed glasses and purse in the distance
while her hands twitch.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - EVENING

Dana and Cathy are at the desk, reviewing one of the
articles. Cathy looks pleased.

CATHY

This article will definitely grasp the attention of the State Senate and hopefully they will earmark more funding for the homeless. Good job as always.

Cathy pushes the article to the side, sits back and looks at Dana.

CATHY (CONT'D)

So catch me up on where you're at with the Freaknik rape, Connors?

Dana pulls out her notebook and turns to a page filled with words.

DANA

I reviewed all the witness statements from 1996 and this looks like a coverup. Something's not right. I...

There is a knock on the side of the open door.

Cathy looks up to see Sergeant Berry in view. He has a serious expression.

CATHY

What can we do for you, Sergeant?

SERGEANT BERRY

Dana, can I speak with you in private, please?

Dana glances at Cathy and shrugs her shoulders. She moves from behind the desk and walks towards Sergeant Berry.

Sergeant Berry offers a polite smile to Cathy, then follows Dana out.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sergeant Berry closes the door behind them and motions to an empty chair.

SERGEANT BERRY

You might need to sit down.

DANA

Okay, now you're starting to freak me out.

Sergeant Berry pauses.

SERGEANT BERRY

There's been a hit and run at the Winston Mall today and your mother's been identified at the scene.

Dana shakes her head in confusion.

DANA

My mother?

Sergeant Berry looks down and takes a breath. He glances back up at Dana.

SERGEANT BERRY

I'm so sorry, Dana, but I'm afraid she died at the scene.

Dana's eyes light up.

DANA

You must be wrong, Sergeant. I just spoke to my mom two hours ago.

Sergeant Berry pulls out Samantha's "driver's license".

SERGEANT BERRY

Is this your mother?

Dana turns and takes the "driver's license" from his hand.

She yells in agony, then drops to her knees, rocking back and forth.

Sergeant Berry places his hand on Dana's shoulder. Dana knocks it away and carries on with her emotional breakdown.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark, and the shades are closed.

Samantha is on the bed, under the sheets, with tears flowing from her eyes.

Tammy enters and stares down at Samantha with a solemn expression.

She slowly moves to the bed and lies beside her.

She wraps her arm around Samantha and pulls her close.

Samantha closes her eyes tightly and sobs.

FADE TO:

INT. RILEY BROTHER'S FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON

We see several flowers stretched across a closed coffin that sits in front of benches that are filled with FRIENDS and FAMILY.

A large framed picture of a smiling Samantha is on display.

Dana and Tammy are seated in the front row. Dana holds her head low as Friends and Family move past the coffin with slight sounds of sobs being heard.

Donna enters in the back and nervously scans the room. She spots Dana, takes a deep breath and walks that way.

DONNA

Dana, I'm so sorry for your loss.

Dana glances slightly up at Donna with red eyes.

DANA

Thank you.

Dana reaches up and takes Donna's hand in hers.

DONNA

You'll let me know if there's anything I can do for you.

Donna looks at Tammy.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Both of you.

Tammy nods and mouths, "thank you."

Donna walks away as more Family and Friends move towards the coffin and Dana.

EXT. RILEY BROTHER'S FUNERAL HOME - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Dana walks back to her car with Tammy close beside her.

Donna is at her car when she spots Dana. Donna looks nervous as she heads towards Dana.

DONNA

Have you got a minute? I know this is bad timing, but there's something I need to tell you.

Tammy looks over at Dana, who nods her head. They kiss and Tammy walks off towards the parked car.

DONNA (CONT'D)

I know I should have told you this earlier, but I didn't want to get involved and, well, it felt out of place.

Dana looks over at Donna with confusion.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Sam...your mom was receiving monthly payments since 1997. It maybe nothing, and back then she claimed they were from some rich friend who wanted to help, but now, well, something feels off.

Dana struggles to find the words. She looks off and fidgets nervously before glancing back at Donna.

DANA

She never said anything.

DONNA

Not really a topic that's easy to bring up.

Donna places her hand on Dana's shoulder.

DONNA (CONT'D)

I thought you should know...considering everything that has happened.

Dana nods.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Again, I'm sorry. Your mom was a special person.

Donna looks around nervously and quickly smiles at Dana, then heads quickly for her car.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - MID AFTERNOON

Dana opens the front door with Tammy strolling in behind her. Dana's mouth gapes open.

DANA
Oh my God! What?

We see the house destroyed with broken picture frames, furniture knocked over and cut into. Books are scattered on the floor.

Dana shakes her head in shock and turns to rest her head on Tammy's shoulder.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - LATER

Sergeant Berry writes in a small pad as he occasionally shifts his eyes to stare at the ransacked home.

Dana and Tammy are close beside one another with concern and fear.

SERGEANT BERRY
Dana, this break in culminating with the death of your mother tells me that this is not a coincidence. Did your mother have any enemies that you know of?

Dana looks off at nothing with a void expression, as if she were in a daze or deep thought.

DANA
I don't know.

Sergeant Berry closes his note pad and slides it into his pocket.

SERGEANT BERRY
We investigated the hit and run of your mother. There were no tire marks anywhere at the scene. This was a deliberate act.

TAMMY
Sergeant, is Dana in any trouble?

SERGEANT BERRY
At this point, I would say that's a safe assumption.

He turns to Dana.

SERGEANT BERRY (CONT'D)

This all started with your article, Dana. If I were you, I'd consider tabling the article until the department can get a better hold of things.

DANA

Thanks Sergeant, but I can't. More than ever, I have to see this through.

Sergeant Berry nods in understanding. He looks at Tammy, who seems upset by Dana's decision.

FADE TO:

INT. SAMANTHA DONALD'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Dana and Tammy walk into Samantha's bedroom. The mattress is thrown off the bed and ripped open.

The two-night stand desks are overturned and the drawers are turned out. Various belongings are scattered on the floor.

Tammy moves towards the thermostat and turns on the AC. The cold air faintly blows from the upper vent.

Tammy fans herself with her hand and stares up at the vent, reaching her hand upwards. She looks at Dana and shakes her head.

TAMMY

As if anything else could go wrong today.

Dana grabs one of the knocked over chairs and places it under the vent. She climbs on top of it, reaching for the vent.

She squints her eyes.

DANA

The vent is blocked. Grab me something to jam in here.

Tammy digs in the ransacked bedroom, then heads inside the closet.

A couple of beats, and Tammy returns with a screwdriver that she passes to Dana.

Dana unscrews the vent screws and looks inside. She reaches in and pulls out a vacuum-sealed bag with clothes and documents.

The bag contains a stained top and bottoms. She collects the bag and gets down from the chair.

TAMMY
What's that?

DANA
I don't know.

Dana looks at Tammy, stunned.

TAMMY
They look like clothes.

Dana inspects all the things she recovered.

DANA
Yes, and also a bank deposit slip for fifty thousand dollars. The bank stub is dated September 1996, but doesn't state who the money came from.

Dana unlocks and opens the vacuum-sealed bag. The sound of air rushing into the bag is heard and a powerful stench overtakes the room.

TAMMY
Jesus! What's that smell!?

Tammy and Dana turn their heads away and cough, almost gagging.

DANA
By the looks of the chunks of food on the clothes, I think it's the smell of decaying vomit.

Dana covers her nose and reseals the bag. She puts the contents in her backpack.

DANA (CONT'D)
I have an idea of what this may be. Come on, let's get out of here.

Dana holds tight to the vacuum-sealed bag as Tammy grabs Dana's purse. They rush out of the bedroom.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S DESK - NIGHT

Dana is typing at her desk. She's in deep reflection, reviewing all the notes and findings.

On a monitor above her head, a "CHANNEL 12 NEWS BULLETIN" flashes.

News Anchor KIMBERLY BACA (29), mixed race, is seen.

KIMBERLY BACA

Breaking News. An Anniston, Alabama waitress and mother of two children, Melissa Riddick, is missing. She was last seen leaving the Slappy White Pancake House late Saturday night. Miss Riddick is 5'6" and slim build. Her car was found by Anniston police. Anyone having information regarding the whereabouts of Ms. Riddick are urged to immediately reach out to authorities. You can contact the missing person hotline at 888...

Frank peeks over the divider.

FRANK

Hey Connors, this letter from the crime lab came in for you.

DANA

Thanks.

Dana nonchalantly places the letter in her coat pocket.

FRANK

Everything okay?

DANA

Are you seeing this?

Frank looks at the TV monitor and nods.

FRANK

Crazy world we're living in today.

Dana nods and opens her mouth to speak just as her phone rings.

Donna's name flashes on the screen. Dana answers.

DONNA (V.O.)

Dana, Dana, is that you!?

DANA
Donna, what's wrong?

DONNA (V.O.)
I'm being followed. There's a black
van following me!

DANA
Where are you?

DONNA (V.O.)
I'm at a gas station on Peachtree.
I stopped to get some gas and saw
the van in my rear-view mirror.

Dana grabs her keys with haste and throws her purse over her
shoulder.

DANA
Stay there, I'm going to call my
contact at the police department.

DONNA (V.O.)
We fucked up! We really fucked up,
Dana!

DANA
Who? What are you talking about?

DONNA (V.O.)
Your mother and I.

DANA
Stay where you're at. I'm coming to
see you.

DONNA
Oh Jesus! The black van is pulling
up to me!

The phone goes silent.

DANA
Donna, Donna!? Are you there!?

Dana looks at her phone. The line is dead.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - CATHY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dana storms into Cathy's office. She's on the phone and
quickly hangs up.

CATHY
Connors, what's up?

DANA
It's Donna McFadden, one of my
contacts. I don't know, but I think
she may be in serious danger.

Dana is in a panic.

CATHY
Don't worry, I've enlisted the help
of a security company to keep an
eye on you.

Dana shakes her head.

DANA
I can't wait, Cathy...she could be
in danger. I'm going to find her!

Dana heads for the door. Cathy stands up and yells.

CATHY
Dana! Stop! Wait for the security
company...

Cathy picks up her cellphone.

EXT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - NIGHT

Dana walks outside to her car parked on the street. She takes her keys out of her pocket and looks up to see a black van screech to a stop in front of her.

Tanner jumps out with purpose and heads for Dana. She turns to run, but Tanner grabs her from behind and covers her mouth with a cloth.

She briefly jerks, but soon falls to the ground.

Tanner grabs her and throws her into the van. He covers her head with a black hood, then looks behind him, scouting the area. No one is present. Tanner hops in, and the van speeds away.

EXT. PRIME MEAT PACKING PLANT - LATE NIGHT

We see what looks like an abandoned warehouse nestled deep off a road in the middle of nowhere. There are no lights outside.

Above the building is a sign that reads "Prime Meat Packing Plant." The sign is distressed. It looks old.

The black van pulls up and comes to a stop. The side doors open and Tanner picks Dana's unconscious body up and places her over his shoulder.

Slowly, he moves towards the doors of the building.

INT. PRIME MEAT PACKING PLANT - LATE NIGHT

The room is dark and empty. Drips of water fall from the pipes that stretch across the ceiling. It's an ominous and eerie room.

We see Dana is tied to a chair. The hood covering her face is removed.

Bradley Winters and Nigel Williamson are huddled in a corner out of listening range of Dana.

Tanner is sharpening a butcher's knife slowly and with precision. He slides the blade over the sharpening tool as he gazes at Dana with malice.

In front of Dana is a table where her phone lies. The phone is no good as it's been destroyed.

A still groggy Dana slowly wakes up and scans her surroundings. She spots Bradley and Nigel, then looks over at Tanner with the knife. She fidgets in the chair and moans.

Bradley looks over at her.

BRADLEY

About time you woke up.

Nigel looks on as Bradley approaches Dana.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

It didn't have to come to this. We gave you plenty of time to stop the article.

Bradley kneels down in front of Dana with a smirk.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

But you chose to do things your way and because of that, many people died. Your mom and let's not forget that pesky Donna. We don't have to worry about any of them now.

Dana jerks and cries out. Bradley chuckles.

DANA
You killed my mother! Why did you
kill my mom?

Bradley laughs. He points at Tanner. Tanner smiles as he looks closely at the sharpened blade.

BRADLEY
Why? Because she was a greedy
bitch! That's why! That ghetto
trash was blackmailing us, and she
got what she deserved.

Dana jerks forward in the chair towards Bradley.

DANA
You're going to pay for what you
did...what you've done!

She wiggles again to loosen the ropes, to no avail.

NIGEL
We tried to stop this many years
ago. We paid her, but she kept
squeezing us for more money.

Nigel steps closer to Dana and Bradley.

BRADLEY
Then here comes Donna.
Those bitches really did a number
on us. Fifty thousand one year,
forty thousand the next!

Bradley moves within inches of Dana with a furrowed brow.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
It didn't stop!

Bradley turns to Tanner and nods. Tanner walks over to Dana.

Nigel strokes Dana's hair. She pulls away and spits on Nigel. He laughs, then wipes his cheek.

NIGEL
Who else did you tell about the
rape? Tell us and I promise no one
else needs to die.

Dana looks over at Bradley.

DANA

You can kiss my ass! I'm not the only one at the paper who knows about the article or what happened. So it doesn't matter what you do because both of you are finished.

We hear a door creak open. Dana turns to the sound to see Cathy cockily stroll into the room.

Dana looks at her with disbelief.

CATHY

Sorry, Connors, you took the story too far.

Dana turns to Cathy in anger.

DANA

No, not you, Cathy! Why are you doing this?

Bradley starts to laugh and intervenes.

BRADLEY

This is priceless!

Cathy holds her head down. Not making eye contact with Dana.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Why? Why? I'll tell you why. Money, that's why. Cathy here was in debt up to her ears and desperate times call for desperate measures, Dana.

Bradley bends down to Dana's eye level.

DANA

Is this true, Cathy? You're selling me out to pay your fucking debts?

CATHY

They helped me out of my gambling debts. I was in too deep with some very bad people who were threatening my children if I couldn't pay. I never meant for this to happen, Dana. You have to believe me.

Dana wiggles more in her chair and breathes heavily.

DANA

You saw what they did, Cathy! Their monsters!

Cathy shakes her head and bends over and looks at Dana.

CATHY

I'll give you this, Connors. You really know how to sell papers.

Cathy pats Dana on her head and flashes a half-cocked grin.

CATHY (CONT'D)

It's a shame we're gonna lose such an amazing talent.

Cathy rises to her feet and looks down at Dana.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Oh well. Reporters are a dime a dozen these days.

Tanner walks over to Dana, turning the knife around in his hand.

BRADLEY

Where are the clothes you recovered from your mother's house? We know you have them.

DANA

Fuck you!

Bradley nods, and Tanner kicks the chair on its side. Dana lets out a scream as Bradley laughs.

BRADLEY

Yell all you want to, honey, no one can hear you.

Tanner reaches behind the chair and grabs Dana's pinky finger. He jerks it backwards, and Dana lets out a searing cry.

Bradley cocks his head to the side, pouts his lips, then smiles sadistically.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

You have nine more chances to tell me what I need to know.

Dana is rearing in pain with moans and sobs.

Bradley gestures over to Tanner again. Cathy intervenes and stops Tanner.

Nigel walks over and pulls up a chair, and sits next to Dana, leaning forward.

NIGEL

I didn't agree with Bradley about anybody getting hurt. I hope you can reconsider on behalf of your wife Tammy and give us what we want?

BRADLEY

"What a bitch" I should've used a condom and never set up that video camera.

Dana looks up at Bradley from the corner of her eye. She composes her cries for a moment.

DANA

Yeah, because one of you sorry bastards is my father!

In the distance Dana sees a meat grinder. Tanner notices what Dana sees, and he walks over and turns it on.

Meat is still lodged and coming out of the nozzle into sausage wrapper casings. Dana looks near her chair and sees a Slappy White Pancake House NAME TAG with the name Melissa. She starts to cry.

Tanner turns and slowly walks over to Dana. He stands up from the chair, takes the knife and cuts the rope binding her hands.

Dana quickly jerks her hands away, but Tanner grabs Dana's arm and forcefully leads her over to the meat grinder.

Dana jerks again, trying to pull free while screaming. Tanner pulls her in tighter as Bradley, Nigel, and Cathy look on.

A siren blares from the outside of the meat packing plant.

Bradley and the others turn their attention to the sound outside.

EXT. PRIME MEAT PACKING PLANT - SAME TIME

We see several police units parked outside with their red and blue lights flashing. A Swat Truck pulls up and comes to a stop. Several SWAT MEMBERS jump out of the back fully armed.

Sergeant Berry exits a police unit and is passed a megaphone by an OFFICER.

The Swat Members form a perimeter around the entrance of the building.

SERGEANT BERRY
This is the Atlanta Police. Come
outside with your hands up!

INT. PRIME MEAT PACKING PLANT - SAME TIME

Nigel reacts with a scowl.

NIGEL
What the hell is this!?

Bradley runs to the window and looks outside. He slams his hand against the wall and looks back at Nigel.

SERGEANT BERRY (O.S.)
Let the girl go. We have everything
on tape. All the exits are
surrounded.

BRADLEY
How the hell did the police know
she was here?

Dana's flat expression slowly becomes a mischievous smile.

DANA
Because I'm wearing a wire with a
tracking device, dumbass!

Bradley kicks and screams in anger. He grabs the table and flips it over.

The inside of the plant is illuminated with high-beam lights as the sounds of a helicopter are heard outside.

Nigel looks at his chest and sees several red laser dots pointing at him. He slowly puts up his hands and walks towards the door.

Cathy glances at Nigel, then at Bradley, who remains in a panic. Cathy shakes her head and follows behind Nigel.

Dana is left alone in the room with Tanner and Bradley. Bradley looks at Tanner and throws his hands in the air.

BRADLEY

What the hell am I paying you for?
Do something!

Tanner pulls a gun from behind his back and runs towards the window with the gun aimed forward.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Tanner drops dead with three bullet holes in his chest.

Bradley clenches his jaw and slaps his hands against his head in a panic.

Dana reaches into her pocket and pulls out an envelope. "State Crime Lab" is written in the corner.

DANA

When I last saw you, I retrieved your water bottle from the trash. I needed your DNA for testing just in case we found some evidence.

Bradley looks over at Dana with narrowed eyes.

DANA (CONT'D)

Then I had a DNA test performed from the semen left on my mother's clothes.

Dana tears into the envelope and pulls out a piece of paper. Her eyes scan the paper.

DANA (CONT'D)

Congressman, you are the fucking father! You're going to prison for a long time, and I hope you rot in hell!

Dana glances up at Bradley with a cocky look.

DANA (CONT'D)

You son of a bitch!

Bradley is angry. He looks down and grabs Tanner's gun from the floor. He lifts the gun and aims it at Dana. Dana clenches her eyes closed.

Bang!

Bradley jerks and drops the gun. He looks back to see Sergeant Berry holding his gun towards Bradley.

Bradley presses his hand against his shoulder, then slowly drops to his knees.

Sergeant Berry moves quickly to Bradley, jerking his hands behind his back and securing them in handcuffs.

Bradley grimaces in pain.

Sergeant Berry looks over at Dana.

SERGEANT BERRY
You Ok, Dana?

A somber Dana looks back at Sergeant Berry.

Dana manages a grin followed by a nod as SWAT hurry into the room.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S OFFICE - MORNING

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

Dana is behind the desk in what used to be Cathy's office. On the desk is a nameplate that reads, "Dana Connors - Editor-in-Chief."

She shifts her attention to a photograph on the desk of her and Tammy with the mountains behind them. Dana grins.

The TV is on in her office as she's kicked back, observing it with a satisfied demeanor.

Kimberly Baca appears on the screen.

KIMBERLY BACA
Controversy still swirls around the arrest and trial of disgraced Atlanta State Judge Nigel Williamson. The District Attorney is looking into all the cases Judge Williamson presided over and vowed to retry any cases that were conducted unfairly. Now back to you in the studio, Bill.

BILL WHITE (V.O.)
Thanks Kimberly, and in related news. Jury selection starts today for the trial of Bradley Winters, the United States congressman from Alabama accused of murdering three people. His trial is a week away.

(MORE)

BILL WHITE (CONT'D)
Republican Governor Nathan Reed
vows to have a replacement
Congressman and Senator since
former Senator Winters' trial for
conspiracy to commit murder is also
upcoming. The Governor hopes to
have someone in office before both
trials begin. Here's Johnny Davis
with more on this breaking story.

Dana looks at the TV with satisfaction.

Dana grabs the remote and turns the TV off.

She opens a box on her desk and pulls out a Pulitzer Prize.
Dana stares at it with a huge grin.

SAMANTHA
This one's for you, momma.

A knock on the door.

Frank pokes his head in.

FRANK
Dana, I was away last week, so I
wanted to congratulate you on your
new position, the article and the
award.

Dana smiles widely with a spark in her eyes.

DANA
Thanks Frank. Hey, I'm going to
need a second set of eyes watching
the new recruits. You want a
promotion?

FRANK
Wow, thanks, when do I start?

DANA
Right now.

FRANK
You got it, boss.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

OLIVIA BAILEY (24), African American with nervous jitters, is
seated unpacking a box and settling into her cubicle.

DANA (O.S.)
Bailey, in my office! I have an
assignment for you!

Bailey jumps and knocks the box over, then hurries towards
Dana's office.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER NEWSPAPER - DANA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dana proudly smiles, then looks down at the Pulitzer Prize
that shines in the light of the office.

FADE TO BLACK.