

THE STATIONERY DEPARTMENT

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING, WASHINGTON - MORNING (PRESENT DAY)

A throng of REPORTERS surrounds a clutch of microphones set up for an impromptu press conference near the steps outside the US congress, the Capitol Rotunda in the background.

A caucasian woman with dark shoulder length hair, **REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN**, early-50s, emerges from the throng. She speaks into the microphones with an unpolished southern US accent.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

As you all know, my home state of Tennessee has been hit hard by the opioid crisis. It's a travesty that this settlement with the justice department means not one big pharma executive will spend a single day in jail for the misery their industry has caused. Yet another sign this country is not being run by the people elected to run it.

FEMALE REPORTER (O.S.)

Senator, are you saying that this is a deep state conspiracy?

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

That's up to you to decide but how is it, powerful individuals aligned with the other side of the aisle avoid prosecution when key witnesses to their crimes accidentally fall out of tenth floor windows?

MALE REPORTER (O.S.)

Are you suggesting that people were deliberately killed, Senator?

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

I'm suggesting there's plenty of signs that Washington is still a swamp that the American people need to drain. That's all I have to say.

Reporters call out as she turns, disappears into the throng.

FEMALE REPORTER (O.S.)

Senator! Senator!

MALE REPORTER (O.S.)

One more question Senator!

EXT. URBAN L.A. STREET CORNER - SAME TIME

An urban Los Angeles neighborhood with more than its fair share of homeless, unhoused and addicted.

A mid-30s male Caucasian drug dealer, **VICTOR**, lounges against a wall. He scans for clients, and the police.

A strung-out male **ADDICT**, early-20s, approaches.

ADDICT

Blues? Have you got any, man? I need to find some Blues.

VICTOR

Supply chain issues, friend. Los Angeles is low on stock at the moment. But I got plenty of Yellows for your head.

No time for small talk, the buyer moves on.

LUCIA, a petite mid-20s Latina in grunge thrift chic, takes the male addict's place. Her striking face looks tired, pale, unhealthy but with the focus of a streetwise survivor.

LUCIA

I heard 'Yellows'. How much?

VICTOR

For a favorite client like you, Lucia, twenty bucks for six. But if you're short on cash maybe we can do a little barter trade somewhere private, if you follow my drift.

LUCIA

Cut the crap Victor, you know all I'll give you is money.

VICTOR

Ouch! You crushed the dreams of a humble intoxicant merchant. And me thinking my charm was getting to you.

LUCIA

Your chemicals do, charm not so much. So are you selling Yellows or just jerking me around? Jake's waiting, he really needs to take something.

From a pocket, Victor pulls out a clear plastic bag containing 6 YELLOW PILLS, each with letters engraved on them. He gives the bag to Lucia.

VICTOR
Proudly purveying quality products
for over two years.

Lucia examines the pills through the plastic.

LUCIA
Are these genuine? They're not cut?
There's been a lot of people O.D.-ing
on something lately.

VICTOR
Look at the lettering. Only Big
Pharma prints that neatly.

Lucia pockets the pills, hands over a folded 20 dollar bill.

VICTOR (cont'd)
Could be some Tranq coming into my
inventory tomorrow, if you're
interested.

LUCIA
You must know that stuff rots flesh.

VICTOR
Just trying to meet my customers'
needs.

LUCIA
Losing body parts isn't one of our
needs, Victor.

Lucia leaves.

EXT. URBAN L.A. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lucia walks to the left along the sidewalk, past the detritus of existence on society's margins. Assorted trash, AWOL shopping carts with bagged possessions. Different sexes, races asleep on the ground or slumped in a stupor.

A LATE MODEL CAR with just a **DRIVER** slows beside Lucia, curb-crawls her. A middle-class man, mid-40s, lowers the car window, calls to her in a cheerful, friendly voice.

DRIVER
Hey doll!

Lucia walks, ignores him as the car crawls beside her.

DRIVER (cont'd)
You want to party?

Lucia continues, looks straight ahead.

DRIVER (cont'd)
How about a B.J. for a hundred?

Without turning, Lucia gives him the finger, continues. His face becomes a scowl, voice a snarl.

DRIVER (cont'd)
You miserable skank.

The car pulls away.

She comes to a collection of tents side by side on the sidewalk. They give a semblance of temporary order.

Lucia walks towards a smaller orange dome tent between larger, more permanent looking tents with annexes.

ROSE, an amiable African American woman, early-50s, washes clothes in a bucket on a foldable table under the annex of the first larger tent. She notices Lucia.

ROSE
Lucia! I haven't seen you and your man for a few days.

Lucia stops in front of Rose.

LUCIA
We haven't been feeling that great, Rose. And money's been a problem.

Rose keeps washing.

ROSE
You should get into a program. I hear there's a lot of programs to get clean, get off the streets. You're young, they'll help you.

LUCIA
Drying out is rough, Rose. We've tried. Jake couldn't make it. Don't worry, I'll talk to him about it.

INT. LUCIA'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

A basic camping tent with zippable flap door. A person can stoop inside but not stand. Strewn around are belongings in bags, bottled water, cigarettes.

A mid-20s good-looking African American, **JAKE**, lies on a sleeping bag, head on a folded jacket, arm over eyes. The flap door unzips, Lucia crawls inside, shoes off.

JAKE

Did you find something?

Lucia sits cross legged, pulls out the plastic pill bag.

LUCIA

I got some Yellows. Victor says they're genuine.

Jake takes the bag, can't hide disappointment.

JAKE

I don't know if they're enough, baby. I'm feeling really bad today.

LUCIA

That's all we can afford. Maybe I can do some boosting at the mall later. Get more money.

Jake opens the bag, takes out a pill, examines it, puts it in his mouth, reaches for a bottle of water, washes it down.

LUCIA (cont'd)

You should have taken half. We don't know if they really are genuine. I'm taking a half.

Jake hands the pill bag to her, lays back, closes his eyes.

JAKE

Security at the mall is tight. I heard lifting stuff is getting hard. Why don't you make some real money? You could easily make a lot quickly.

Lucia turns away from Jake.

LUCIA

Don't Jake. You know I don't want to do that. Don't start acting like my pimp. You're better than that.

Lucia takes a pill out, breaks it in half.

LUCIA (cont'd)

We should get clean. Tilly needs us. She's going to be three soon. She'll start figuring things out.

She puts the half-pill in her mouth, washes it down with a swig from the water bottle.

LUCIA (cont'd)
I want her to feel loved by her
parents... Jake?

She realizes Jake's been silent, turns to him. His eyes are closed, mouth hangs open. She scrambles over, slaps him.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Jake! Jake! Wake up! Open your eyes!

No response. She pulls open an eyelid, listens to his chest, scrambles to the tent door.

EXT. OUTSIDE TENT - CONTINUOUS

Lucia's panicking head pokes out of her tent's door.

LUCIA
(calling)
Rose! Rose!

Rose looks up from her washing.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Call nine one one! Jake swallowed a
pill, he stopped breathing. It must
be cut with something.

Rose reaches into a pocket, pulls out a phone, stabs at the screen with a finger, holds it to her ear.

ROSE
(to Lucia)
What about you?

LUCIA
I swallowed a half. I'm okay so far.
(remembering)
I have a Narcan spray! I'll try that!

INT. INSIDE TENT - CONTINUOUS

Lucia scrambles back inside, rummages through a bag.

Frantic, she pulls out a NALOXONE NASAL SPRAY, rips open the packaging, positions its nozzle into one of Jake's nostrils, holds it between 2 fingers, presses the center plunger with her thumb. The spray HISSES into his nose.

She looks for a response. Nothing. She shakes him with waning strength, weakening voice, tears welling up.

LUCIA
Come on. Come on. Wake up, dammit.
Don't leave me. Don't. Leave me.

She slumps unconscious over Jake. A distant AMBULANCE SIREN gets louder.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM BAY - A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER

A curtained Emergency Room bay. In patient gown, Lucia lays on a bed, eyes closed, drip in one arm. Beside her, a heart monitor wired to her chest. It beeps. She's alive.

Lucia's eyes open. She stares at the ceiling, sits up abruptly, breathes deeply, looks around her.

A **SENIOR NURSE**, early-50s Latina, slides back the bay's curtain, comes to the bedside.

LUCIA
(to the nurse)
Jake?

SENIOR NURSE
I'm sorry. We couldn't revive your partner. He didn't respond.

Lucia exhales, falls back onto the pillow.

SENIOR NURSE (cont'd)
But you did. You hadn't stopped breathing.

Lucia looks up, tears fill her eyes, run down her face.

LUCIA
(to herself)
One day, I'm going to find the people responsible for all this, and I'm going to give them a message.

SENIOR NURSE
His family asked us to send the body to them. Is that what you want?

LUCIA
(turns to the nurse)
Yes, that's best. They'll just blame me if I see them.

The nurse switches off the heart monitor. Lucia lays back again, stares back at the ceiling, tears still in her eyes.

SENIOR NURSE
Everything looks good now. You got off lightly this time.

LUCIA
I only swallowed a half. Maybe it was from a different batch.

SENIOR NURSE
You can rest now. We'll leave the drip in for a little longer so you're not dehydrated. The police have some questions when you're ready. Was this your first overdose?

Lucia shakes her head.

INT. HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

A silent room with chairs, examination bed, windowed door closed. Now in her street clothes, Lucia sits in a chair, alone. Visible and near her, a STETHOSCOPE hangs on a hook.

The door opens, a Caucasian uniformed **POLICE OFFICER**, mid-50s, enters with a DOCUMENT FOLDER in one hand. He has a warm, reassuring voice, fatherly manner. He closes the door.

POLICE OFFICER
Hello Lucia. How are you feeling?

LUCIA
Much better thanks.

He pulls a chair close to her, sits down.

POLICE OFFICER
Don't worry, you're not in any trouble. I just want to ask some questions.

LUCIA
Okay. No problem.

He opens the folder, pulls out a MUGSHOT of dealer Victor.

POLICE OFFICER
There's been a lot of overdoses recently. Is this the man that sold you the fake pills?

Lucia looks at the picture, looks at the officer.

LUCIA
You really think I'm going to snitch?

The officer puts the picture away, closes the folder.

POLICE OFFICER
I understand. What are you going to do now?

Lucia shakes her head as he stands up.

LUCIA
I don't know.

He leans over, strokes her hair. She freezes, tenses up.

POLICE OFFICER
I could help you out.

He puts his hand on her knee, slides it up just inside her skirt.

POLICE OFFICER (cont'd)
Why don't you come home with me?

Lucia's rage explodes, she punches her clenched fist at his Adam's apple. He staggers back, clutches his throat, gasps for air. She springs up, kicks between his legs. He moans, doubles over, falls on his knees, one hand on his crotch.

Lucia grabs the stethoscope, comes behind, wraps it around his neck, forces him face down onto the floor with her weight. She pulls the stethoscope tight around his neck as she kneels on his back. He can't breathe. She leans down.

LUCIA
Just because I'm a junkie, you think you can do what you want? Think again, asshole.

The door bursts open, TWO YOUNG HOSPITAL ORDERLIES in white jackets rush in, pull Lucia off the officer who rolls onto his back, clutching his throat, gasping for air.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Hunched over in a well lit public waiting area, Lucia sits, looks at the floor, sips a hot drink. Random staff and patients pass by, other chairs are empty.

A tallish, slim South Asian **DOCTOR** in a white coat, spectacles, late-30s, approaches, sits opposite Lucia. He has a sympathetic demeanor. A NAME BADGE says "DR. AYWON".

DOCTOR

I'm sorry you had to go through that, Lucia.

LUCIA

Will I be charged with assault?

DOCTOR

We have the security video. If it went to court that man's career would be over. Where did you learn to hit someone's windpipe like that?

LUCIA

I did some martial arts in high school. I took a lot of notes.

The doctor reaches into his coat, pulls out a PLASTIC PILL BOTTLE. He hands it to Lucia who looks at the label.

DOCTOR

Suboxone.

LUCIA

Friends have told me about this. They didn't give it five star reviews.

DOCTOR

It goes under your tongue. You won't get a high but it should suppress any cravings for a while. Do you want us to get in touch with social services?

LUCIA

No. Not them. I need to stay off their radar if I'm going to get my daughter back.

DOCTOR

You have a daughter?

LUCIA

In foster care. We needed to stay out of trouble, get clean, show we can take care of her. I guess that means just me, now.

DOCTOR

Look, I know someone, she manages a small department at the Environmental Protection Agency, at the federal office building downtown.

He reaches into a pocket, pulls out a notebook and pen, scribbles a number, rips off the sheet and offers it.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

She might have a job for you.

Lucia takes the sheet, looks at the number.

LUCIA

Me? Someone at the E.P.A. would be interested in me?

DOCTOR

She'll understand your situation and you may have some skills her department needs. Here...

He reaches into his other pocket, pulls out THREE TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

...take it. It should cover getting some food and the ride downtown. Do you have somewhere to sleep?

Lucia looks at the money, hesitates, takes it.

LUCIA

We have a tent. And good neighbors. I'll stay there tonight. When can I ring this number?

DOCTOR

First thing tomorrow, say, around nine. I'll tell her you may call.

INT. FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING, LOBBY - MORNING (NEXT DAY)

Carrying a shoulder bag, Lucia pushes open the glass entrance door, enters the lobby.

Before her, a uniformed female **SECURITY GUARD**, 30s, behind a metal detector. Lucia places her bag to the side of the detector, walks through.

The detector is silent. The guard opens her bag, pokes around, pulls out the Suboxone, holds it up to Lucia's face.

LUCIA
I have a prescription.

The guard puts the Suboxone back, hands the bag to Lucia.

Lucia walks on to a reception desk. Behind it, a motherly **RECEPTIONIST**, mid-60s, who looks up.

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you?

LUCIA
I have to find Office Supplies.

RECEPTIONIST
They're expecting you?

LUCIA
Yes, I rang earlier. The name is Salazar, Lucia Salazar.

The receptionist puts on glasses, taps at a keyboard, checks the screen. She hands a VISITOR PASS on a neckband to Lucia.

RECEPTIONIST
Please give this back when you leave.
You'll find the room on the fourth floor, at the end of the corridor.

LUCIA
Thank you.

Lucia puts the pass over her head, walks away.

INT. FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING, CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

A deserted, silent office corridor with lines of closed doors on either side. The elevator doors at the end open, Lucia steps out, the doors close behind her.

She walks slowly down the corridor, reading the signs on the doors: "INLAND WATERWAY MONITORING", "AIR POLLUTION ACTION COMMITTEE", "SEWAGE SPILL MITIGATION".

At the end is a door marked "OFFICE SUPPLIES". She knocks. Footsteps inside come to the door, it opens.

At the door is **A2**, a mid-30s Caucasian woman, ID around her neck, short highlighted hair, like a glamorous mathematician with a calm, precise voice.

A2
So glad you could make it. Do come
in.

A2'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A2 steps aside for Lucia to enter then closes the door. It's a spartan, windowless, ceiling-lit, almost bare room.

The only sign of occupancy is a desk, chair on either side. On the desk, a PACK OF BOTTLED WATER and BLACK CELLPHONE.

Lucia turns to A2.

LUCIA
Should we shake hands? I'm new at
this.

A2
To be honest, I'm not a fan of
handshaking. I prefer the greeting
they use in Southeast Asia.

A2 puts her hands together as though praying, bows her head so her nose touches the tips of her fingers, lifts her head.

LUCIA
That looks very elegant. I should
probably do it back to you, right?

Lucia puts her hands together, copies the gesture.

A2
It's like you were born in Bangkok!

Ice broken, they move towards the desk and chairs.

LUCIA
I tried Thai boxing a few times. I
liked kicking as well as punching.

A2
I heard you know some self-defense.

A2 walks behind the desk, gestures to the bottled water.

A2 (cont'd)
Something to drink? I've got water.

LUCIA
Water would be good.

A2 rips open the pack's plastic, hands Lucia a bottle.

A2

Please, have a seat.

Lucia sits in the visitor chair, opens the bottle, takes a swig. A2 sits down behind the desk.

A2 (cont'd)

I'm sorry about your partner.

LUCIA

I should be more upset but I'm just numb. I thought drugs could kill one of us. Turns out it wasn't me.

A2

We did some background checks. You were a promising student in high school. What happened?

LUCIA

Fell in love. Got pregnant. Probably hung out with the wrong crowd. Maybe a lot of really bad decisions.

A2

You must have seen a lot of death.

LUCIA

Oh yeah, lots of overdoses. It's normality so you don't really care any more. And all the wrong people die. People who already have nothing.

A2

Maybe we can change that. You're probably wondering what kind of job we could offer you?

LUCIA

I was wondering. I didn't know the government hired people like me.

A2

We deal with environmental problems. Man-made problems that create hazards for all Americans. We need someone who can get close to the people causing the problems.

LUCIA

Why me?

A2

You're young, female, streetwise. You don't look threatening but we know you can take care of yourself. Plus, you have a lot of experience handling pharmaceuticals.

LUCIA

You mean drugs? Why are they important?

A2

One of many types of hazardous substances we have to work with.

LUCIA

So I'd be some kind of spy?

A2

Not a spy. More like a representative of the government, delivering a message, from the American people.

LUCIA

What kind of message?

A2

A message to let them know, that we know, what they've been doing.

LUCIA

There are benefits?

A2

Salary, pension, health coverage with dental. We'll find you an apartment. Get you on your feet.

LUCIA

Aren't you forgetting I'm an addict with a serious habit?

A2

That's the catch. You'll need to stop using and stay that way.

LUCIA

Do you know how hard withdrawal is after a few years? You'll need to lock me up and throw away the key.

A2

We'd like you to try.

LUCIA

When?

A2

Now.

LUCIA

Right now? Today?

A2

I have a colleague waiting outside the building who can get things started. If you agree. She's around your age. Her name is Bee.

LUCIA

If I wasn't in this office, I'd bet this was a practical joke.

A2

We're totally serious. Uncle Sam is asking for your help. You could make your country a safer place.

LUCIA

Partner's dead, child's in care, overdose risk every day and may not survive the next. Things aren't looking so peachy right now.

(beat)

If you really think my life could be any different, then yes, I'll try.

A2 opens a desk drawer, brings out printed forms and pen.

A2

Before you go, you have to sign these. Government non-disclosure. No journalists, no interviews, no books, etcetera, etcetera, in the future or ever.

A2 slides the forms over, offers the pen, Lucia takes it.

LUCIA

And if I talk?

A2

One option is political asylum with the comrades in Moscow. But since even Russian elites move wealth and families here, it's not recommended.

(points to the forms)

Sign here, here and... here.

Lucia signs, puts the pen down. A2 gets up, walks to the door. Lucia stands, picks up her bag, follows A2 to the door, A2 opens it for her.

A2 (cont'd)
When you leave the building, you
can't miss Bee. She's from Louisiana.

LUCIA
One thing I forgot to ask...what
should I call you?

A2
Everyone calls me A.2.

LUCIA
Isn't that a paper size?

A2
It is!

EXT. FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

An office building with parking lot in front. With her bag but minus visitor pass, Lucia emerges from the entrance.

Parked across from her is a MATT BLACK FORD F-SERIES TRUCK. Leaning against it is **BEE**, late-20s African-American.

Feminine with a dash of southern tomboy, Bee wears a sweatshirt with a diagram of the DOPAMINE molecule on it, the text "dopamine" below.

Bee raises an acknowledging hand. Lucia walks towards her, stops just beyond hand-shaking distance.

LUCIA
I'm guessing no handshaking.

A sanguine young woman who embraces her southern roots, Bee speaks with a strong, melodic Louisiana accent.

BEE
You got that right! What do you say
to some chow? 'Cause I'm hungrier
than a tick on a teddy bear.

LUCIA
I haven't really eaten today.

BEE
Jump in my li'l truck. I know a great
place. Just 'round the corner.

INT. BEE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The two of them clamber into the truck, shut doors. Bee fastens her seat belt, starts the engine, the vehicle moves.

Lucia fastens her seatbelt, spies something between the seats. She holds up a RED "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN" CAP.

LUCIA

You can't be freaking serious?

BEE

I kind of took you for a Democrat.

LUCIA

You're for real?

BEE

Did Thomas Jefferson hate the British?

LUCIA

What about abortion rights?

BEE

Proud pro-life gal here.

LUCIA

Guns?

BEE

Hunting since I was old enough to squeeze a high-powered assault rifle trigger. Was an N.R.A. junior member.

LUCIA

Religion?

BEE

Jesus definitely saves in the U.S. Of A. But I'm okay if Vishnu or the Buddha is your jam.

LUCIA

Illegal immigration?

BEE

Send them back already! Dang! Now I'm figuring 'progressive Democrat'.

LUCIA

And what about L.G.B.T. rights?

BEE

You know, conservatives aren't
against people choosing how they want
to live. Just keep it to yourselves.

(parking truck)

And I'm always ready to reach across
the aisle...

(looking at Lucia)

...and seek compromise. Let's get
some food.

INT. AMERICAN DINER - MINUTES LATER

A classic American diner with counter, booths, checkered
floor. Lucia and Bee sit opposite each other in a booth by a
window. They scan menus, Bee puts hers down.

BEE

It's all good but let's find out what
the special is.

A waitress, **SUZIE**, comes by, early 30's, dark hair, dark
makeup. A devotee of goth in a white apron. She puts two
COFFEE MUGS on the table, pours coffee into them.

SUZIE

Hi Bee. Haven't seen you for a while.

BEE

Business trip. Just got back. Any
specials today, Suzie?

SUZIE

We've got corn beef hash with sweet
potatoes and poached eggs.

BEE

Doggone Suzie, that sounds mighty
fine!

(to Lucia)

What do y'all think?

LUCIA

(to Suzie)

Make that two.

SUZIE

Two beefs coming right up.

Suzie leaves. Bee sips her coffee. Lucia stares at her.

LUCIA
So you go to those Republican
rallies?

BEE
Sometimes. It's good to be around
like-minded folks.

LUCIA
I don't want to upset you but have
you looked in the mirror lately?

Bee is unfazed, a picture of calm.

BEE
Newsflash: Not all conservatives are
white Anglo-Saxons. And a reminder:
it was Republicans who fought a civil
war against the Democrats to free the
slaves. I'll admit the party's been a
little bipolar since then.

Suzie returns with the food, places it on the table.

SUZIE
(leaving)
Bon appétit!

Lucia and Bee dig into the food.

LUCIA
This is really good!

BEE
I'm hoping those Michelin star people
don't show up one day, 'cause I hate
queuing. Listen, I know something
about you but not where your family
is.

LUCIA
Only child. Father died right after I
was born. My mom went back to
Colombia a couple of years ago to
take care of my grandmother. I've
been pretending my life here is
normal. She doesn't know the truth.

BEE
I'm guessing it might upset her.

LUCIA
She crossed the border when she was
pregnant to give me a better life.
(MORE)

LUCIA (cont'd)
You'd probably call me an 'anchor
baby', right?

BEE
No judgment here but, yeah, some of
my buddies would.

LUCIA
I got to be an American but not the
kind my mom planned on.

BEE
You wanna get clean?

LUCIA
Who wouldn't? Using destroys
everything. My daughter's in care.
She'll be three soon.

BEE
We have a place where you can dry
out.

LUCIA
Those clinics don't work. I've tried.
You can just walk out and there's
dealers waiting right outside.

BEE
This clinic is a little different.
After I pick up the check, let's go
for a ride. But first, I want to ask:
do you want to be with your daughter?

LUCIA
Of course I do. With all my heart.

BEE
Hold that thought.

INT. BEE'S TRUCK - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Bee drives along a freeway leaving L.A. Lucia sits next to her looking at the thinning suburban sprawl through a half lowered window. A breeze blows through the truck.

LUCIA
I've never been out here before.
Where are we going?

BEE
A little further and we'll be there.

LUCIA
Why did they team me up with you?

BEE
Maybe because I represent everything
you would loathe. Here's our exit
coming up.

Bee flicks the indicator stalk, turns onto an off-ramp.

LUCIA
That makes no sense.

BEE
Hatred can be a powerful motivator.
One more turn and we're there.

The truck stops outside a FEDERAL PRISON. Lucia peers at the
foreboding exterior.

LUCIA
This is a prison.

BEE
They're expecting you.

LUCIA
You're going to lock me up?

BEE
No, you're locking yourself up.

LUCIA
You know, there's lots of drugs in a
prison's general population.

BEE
You won't be in the general
population. You'll be the
government's V.I.P. guest, with your
very own private cell.

LUCIA
You mean solitary?

BEE
But with en-suite and private gym.

LUCIA
A gym?

BEE
You'll see. But you can bail here if
you want to. Your life, your choice.

Lucia considers.

LUCIA
No, I want to do it.

BEE
When you go in, don't use your real name. Tell them you're A.7. And say that B.3. brought you.

LUCIA
(repeating)
I'm A.7. You're B.3. Okay, got it.

BEE
And you're only allowed to take in one book so I got something for you.

Bee reaches into her door shelf, pulls out a PAPERBACK BOOK. She hands it to Lucia who reads the title aloud.

LUCIA
'The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War'. Shouldn't I be reading something more upbeat?

BEE
Fratricide can be very sobering.

LUCIA
Can you tell my neighbor, Rose, that I won't be back for a while.

Bee grabs a pen and notepad from beside her.

BEE
She's got a number?

Lucia takes the pad and pen, scribbles a number.

LUCIA
Ask her to take everything out of the tent. Tell her she can rent it out and keep the money.

Lucia hands back the pad, pen, reaches for the door handle.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Thanks for the meal.

BEE
You've forgotten something, haven't you?

Lucia pauses, lets go of the door handle, reaches into her bag, pulls out the Suboxone, looks at it, hands it to Bee.

BEE (cont'd)
One for the road?

Lucia shakes her head.

LUCIA
It's already begun. I'm starting to sweat.

Lucia opens her door, exits the vehicle, the door closes.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON CELL - HALF AN HOUR LATER

A spacious prison cell. Single bed space with thin foam mattress, steel water fountain, steel basin, steel toilet. On the bed is a new pair of BLUE THAI BOXING GLOVES.

The cell door opens, Lucia comes in dressed in ORANGE PRISON JUMPSUIT, the book in her hand.

The door slams shut, LOCKS ARE TURNED. Lucia looks at the toilet.

LUCIA
(to herself)
The en-suite.

She goes over to the bed, puts the book down, picks up the gloves. She sees a LARGE LONG PUNCHING BAG hanging from the ceiling. She walks over, caresses the bag.

LUCIA (cont'd)
(to herself)
And this must be the gym.

Suddenly, she throws the gloves to the floor, kneels in front of the toilet bowl, vomits violently into it.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON CELL - DAY (MANY DAYS LATER)

Lucia lies on the bed, an arm across her eyes. On her chest is the book, well thumbed, pieces of toilet paper sticking out as makeshift bookmarks.

The CELL DOOR LOCKS TURN, it opens. An unseen **FEMALE PRISON GUARD** speaks.

FEMALE PRISON GUARD (O.S.)
A.7., you've got a visitor.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON VISITOR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A room with typical visitor bays, chair and black phone handset on either side of a glass partition.

A door at the back opens, looking rough, Lucia enters. She sits in a chair, picks up a phone handset.

On the other side of the glass sits Bee in a white hoodie, a diagram of the ESTRADIOL molecule on it, the text "estrogen" above. Bee picks up her handset, they look at each other. Lucia breaks the silence in a tired voice.

LUCIA
So much death. Three quarters of a million soldiers never came home.

BEE
Four years of insanity.

LUCIA
How long have I been in here?

BEE
Do you need to know?

LUCIA
Not really. At least the hallucinations have stopped. The food's okay, in case you're wondering.

BEE
I rang Rose. She was worried about you. Said she'll try and rent out the tent.

LUCIA
How much longer will I stay here?

BEE
A while longer.

LUCIA
And then?

BEE
It's up to you but there's an apartment if you want it.

LUCIA

Does it have a hot shower and a soft bed?

BEE

Both included.

LUCIA

I want it.

INT. A2'S OFFICE - ONE HOUR LATER

Bee, in the white hoodie, sits down in front of A2's bare desk. A2 sits behind it sipping a bottle of mineral water.

A2

Is A.7. going to make it?

BEE

She just might. If only to spite the annoying redneck who visits her.

A2

I'm hopeful you two can find some common ground. You'd be a good team. Meanwhile, we've got a disgruntled ex-employee problem.

BEE

You mean envelope girl?

A2

She's been talking. And to the wrong person. To someone who's asking too many awkward questions in Washington.

BEE

She needs money, A.2. A fake identity, somewhere to live. Who's helping her? Is it the red team?

A2

It might be the comrades, we're not sure yet. But we need to deal with the ripples until we can silence what's causing them. You're good with electrical circuits, aren't you?

BEE

Helped my daddy wire up barns.

A2 reaches into a drawer, pushes a one and a half inch high BRIGHT YELLOW PLASTIC DUCK WITH RED BEAK across the desk.

A2

Here's the details. Potemkin Services is moving into the pool maintenance business.

Bee takes the duck, pulls off its head to reveal a USB CONNECTOR PLUG - the duck is a Walmart USB THUMB DRIVE.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON CELL - MORNING (MANY MORE DAYS LATER)

The top of her jumpsuit hanging down exposing a t-shirt and wearing the boxing gloves, Lucia enthusiastically punches, kicks the hanging punch bag. Sweat on her face, arms, t-shirt, she looks healthier, stronger, fully alive.

The CELL DOOR LOCKS TURN. She pauses, sees the door opening.

FEMALE PRISON GUARD (O.S.)
Time to go home, A.7.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON, EXIT HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Now wearing the street clothes she arrived in, Lucia walks to a service window where the female prison guard hands back her bag through a gap in a wire screen.

FEMALE PRISON GUARD
And this was left for you.

The guard passes through a SMALL CLEAR SEALED PLASTIC BAG.

Lucia holds the bag up to her eyes, turns it around. Inside is a DOOR KEY and a YELLOW POST-IT note with an address hand written on it: "APPOMATTOX COURT, APARTMENT 49".

EXT. FEDERAL PRISON, EXIT GATE - MOMENTS LATER

Lucia emerges onto a wide deserted sidewalk outside the prison, squints at a bright, sunny sky. By the curb across from her, a male **UBER DRIVER**, 50s, stands by a large late model car. He calls to her across the sidewalk.

UBER DRIVER
I'm picking up someone called A.7.

LUCIA
(calling back)
I'm pretty sure that's me.

The driver holds open the back door for her.

UBER DRIVER
I'm your Uber driver.

INT. LUCIA'S APARTMENT - HALF AN HOUR LATER

A new fourth floor apartment with kitchen/lounge divided by raised island. On the island's top, neatly arranged, lies a BLACK CELLPHONE, CREDIT CARD, CAR KEY FOB, CALIFORNIA DRIVING LICENSE WITH LUCIA'S PHOTO/NAME.

The front door unlocks, opens. Lucia comes in, looks around at simple, modern furnishings. In front of her, through sliding windows leading onto a balcony, stretches middle-class L.A. suburbia.

She closes the door behind her. The black cellphone on the island VIBRATES. She walks over, picks it up, presses the screen, holds it to her ear.

BEE (O.S.)
(filtered)
So whaddya think? Home sweet home?

Lucia puts the phone back on the island, jabs the screen to turn on the loudspeaker, looks at the other items.

LUCIA
I'm not missing camping.

BEE (O.S.)
(filtered)
There's just some water in the refrigerator. But you can use the credit card for anything you need. The department'll cover the bill.

Lucia picks up the credit card, holds it up, examines it.

LUCIA
Are you serious? Anything?

BEE (O.S.)
(filtered)
Within reason. The bean counters might get antsy if you start buying designer dresses and Wagyu steaks. The pin code is eighteen sixty five.

LUCIA
The end of the civil war.

BEE (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Easy to remember! And you got a
 leased car in the basement car park.

Lucia picks up, examines the license then car key fob.

BEE (O.S.) (cont'd)
 (filtered)
 Take it for a spin! Got to run now.
 Will see you in Las Vegas in a couple
 of days.

LUCIA
 What's happening in Las Vegas?

BEE (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 An easy first assignment! You'll find
 the bookings in the travel app on the
 phone. In the meantime, get settled
 in! Y'all take care now!

Bee hangs up.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOUSE, BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Bee stands in the sunlit landscaped garden of a luxurious hacienda style home. Next to her, a large IN-GROUND SWIMMING POOL, filled with cool clear water.

She takes a finger from her BLACK CELLPHONE, puts the phone into a pocket of the NAVY BLUE WORKMAN'S BIB OVERALLS she's wearing over a short-sleeved t-shirt, a matching NAVY BASEBALL CAP on her head.

On the overalls and the cap are matching patches saying "Potemkin Services".

She takes a long SCREWDRIVER from a side-pocket in the overalls, lies flat on her stomach next to the pool, leans down and starts to unscrew an ELECTRIC LIGHT COVER just below the water-line.

INT. LUCIA'S BASEMENT CARPARK - SAME TIME

A basement carpark with a few parked cars. Lucia walks to the middle, holds up the key fob, presses the button. Near the corner, the lights of a new CHEVROLET EQUINOX CAR flash.

Lucia walks to the Chevy, opens the door, peers inside.

EXT. BANK ATM - 10 MINUTES LATER

Lucia stands before an ATM MACHINE next to a parking lot. She feeds in the credit card. The ATM BEEPS as she presses the screen several times.

The sound of the ATM COUNTING NOTES. Lucia takes the card from the ATM, removes 10 crisp ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. She spreads them out in her hand, looks at them.

INT. LUCIA'S CHEVY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens, Lucia climbs into the driver's seat. She closes the door, stares through the window across the parking lot at the ATM machine for a few seconds.

She pulls out her black cellphone, dials a number, holds it to her ear, waits for someone to answer.

LUCIA

Hello? Yes, I'd like to speak to my case manager, Lilith... Yes, it's Lucia Salazar calling... Thank you.

(few seconds wait)

Hi, Lilith? Yes, it's Lucia... It's going well, really well. I've got clean. And I've got a job... No, I'm not with Tilly's father any more... things didn't work out... I really just wanted to find out: how is Tilly?

(Lucia listens, nods)

That's really great Lilith... Yes, yes of course... I was wondering Lilith, when do you think we could review custody?... Okay... I understand... I'll give you another call around that time then... Thank you so much Lilith.

Lucia jabs the screen, puts the phone down, stares ahead for a few seconds. She slowly breaks down into floods of tears.

INT. U.S. CONGRESS COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

A senate committee hearing, seen as a C-SPAN broadcast. An arc-shaped bench with 6 seats each side of a Chairman.

Facing is **MICHAEL CHALMERS**, early-40s, an affable African American in suit and tie, sitting alone at a witness table. In front of him, a name card: "HON. MICHAEL CHALMERS".

An **ELDERLY CHAIRMAN**, mid-70s, BANGS A GAVEL.

ELDERLY CHAIRMAN

The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Tennessee, Miss Rebecca Gibbon-Brown, for five minutes.

To the Chairman's far right, REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN activates her microphone. A sign in front reads: "MS. GIBBON-BROWN".

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Thank you Mister Chairman.
Mister Chalmers, are you asking us to believe that allowing the Environmental Protection Agency to spend taxpayer dollars on enforcing expensive air discharge mitigation rules in states like my own is going to help reduce what everyone calls
(air quotes gesture)
'climate change'? Isn't this just a way to punish industries and states the E.P.A. doesn't like?

Chalmers leans toward his microphone.

MICHAEL CHALMERS

Senator, air discharge is a shared problem. One state's pollution affects its neighbors. I can assure you that the E.P.A has no hidden agenda against your state or any industry.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Thank you for that assurance, Mister Chalmers. I hope no whistleblower comes forward to contradict your statements. I yield back the balance of my time, Mister Chairman.

ELDERLY CHAIRMAN

In the limited period we have left, the Chair recognizes the Senator from California, Miss Elvira Fernandez.

On the left side of the Chairman, **ELVIRA FERNANDEZ**, late-30s Latina, fresh-faced, eager, leans forward to her microphone. A sign in front of her reads "MS. FERNANDEZ".

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ

Mister Chalmers, I was looking at the E.P.A. budget and I was struck by the amount allocated to office supplies. Shouldn't the E.P.A. be saving paper and not destroying forests to buy it?

Chalmers clears his throat, leans forward to the microphone.

MICHAEL CHALMERS

With regard to our use of office stationery, Senator--

Rebecca cuts off Chalmers.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

--Point of order, Mister Chairman.

ELDERLY CHAIRMAN

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Tennessee.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

I submit that budgetary questions would be better raised in a sitting of Ways and Means.

ELDERLY CHAIRMAN

The Chair is inclined to agree with the Senator from Tennessee.

(looks at wristwatch)

Our time is almost up so I think it would be best to conclude today's hearing. Thank you for your time Mister Chalmers.

Chalmers nods, stands up. Chatter spreads around the room, everyone stands, picks up documents, starts to leave. The C-SPAN view ends. Elvira intercepts Rebecca on her way out.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ

Rebecca, have you got a few moments?

Rebecca is surprised, wary, responds coldly.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Is this about blocking your shared restroom proposal? Senator, I don't want men urinating near my stall.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ

Alright, we don't talk much, I know.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 Senator Fernandez, I'm always ready
 to reach across the aisle and seek
 consensus, but the restroom idea is a
 urinal too far.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
 Please, come to my office for a few
 minutes. It's about something we
 might have a mutual interest in.

INT. SENATOR FERNANDEZ'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

A small congressional private office, pictures of Democrat
 presidents on the wall, desk covered in draft legislation.

Elvira sits behind the desk, Rebecca sits in front holding
 open an edition of the VARIETY newspaper. She finishes
 reading a story under the headline: "TRAGIC HOLLYWOOD HILLS
 ACCIDENT", closes the paper, hands it back to Elvira.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 So this Hollywood producer comes home
 on a hot day, dives into his pool and
 gets electrocuted because of bad
 wiring. Tragic but stuff happens. And
 don't pools have circuit breakers to
 prevent that?

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
 The circuit breaker didn't work. And
 not just any producer. An award
 winning documentary maker who was
 working on a new project.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 What new project?

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
 His assistant contacted my office
 after his death. She said he'd been
 approached by a whistleblower who
 told him there was a secret
 government assassination unit
 operating in the U.S.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 Sounds really far-fetched. What
 precisely was he told?

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
 Only he knew exactly what the source
 said. No recordings, no notes.

(MORE)

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ (cont'd)
But the assistant said he was following up on the tip. Asking a lot of questions.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
Only now he's silent. And I assume you have a theory he was getting too close to the truth? Kind of ironic that a Democrat would suspect hidden hands are at work when shadowy globalist hands are funding their reelection campaigns.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
Okay, point taken, but I'm starting to think some of your controversial statements might not be so far off the mark. Maybe there really is a deep state at work in our country.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
The liberal fake-news press loves to make fun of me when I talk about that. 'Looney tunes R.G.B.' is what a so-called journalist keeps calling me. So what would you like me to do?

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
You're on Intelligence Oversight. You can ask questions I can't.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
It's interesting, Senator. Hard to believe, but then again, we've been vaporizing individuals overseas for years with missiles from drones. Okay, I'll think about it. We've got the C.I.A. Director in front of the committee in the next meeting.

Rebecca stands up, about to leave.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN (cont'd)
If our government is quietly whacking anyone on home soil, he would know something about it. But I still want to assure you, urinals in the ladies room, over my dead red-state body.

INT. SINGLE AISLE COMMERCIAL JET - AFTERNOON

Engines hum as a narrow bodied jet descends. Dressed casually, Lucia sits motionless, half asleep in a slightly reclined aisle seat, eyes closed. An **ELDERLY WOMAN** next to her leans over.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Going to try your luck in Vegas?

Lucia opens her eyes, turns her head.

LUCIA
You could say that.

A **FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT** makes an announcement over the aircraft's public address system.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)
(filtered)
We will shortly be landing at Harry Reid International Airport, Las Vegas. Please ensure all tray tables are stowed, seat-backs are in the upright position and your seat belt is fastened.

Lucia closes her eyes, pushes the seat button, her seat-back returns to the upright position

INT. LAS VEGAS HOTEL CORRIDOR - 15 MINUTES LATER

Lucia pulls a WHEELED CABIN BAG along a silent hotel corridor, looks at room numbers. She stops at a door, knocks, waits. The door opens, she enters.

INT. BEE'S LAS VEGAS HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bee holds the door open, Lucia enters. Bee wears a t-shirt with a diagram of the ADRENALINE molecule on it, the text "adrenaline" below.

BEE
Good flight?

Lucia stops in the middle of a spacious hotel suite, curtains closed, lights on, twin beds untouched.

LUCIA
It was quick.

BEE
Sure as hell beats driving!

Bee closes the door.

LUCIA
So what's the assignment?

BEE
Not complicated. Should be a breeze.
But first we have to get you dressed
for the part. I brought the clothes
and the makeup.

LUCIA
There's some acting involved?

BEE
Strictly improv'. There's some lines
but not the kind you speak.

INT. LAS VEGAS HOTEL RECEPTION AREA - SAME TIME

The reception area of a 5-star hotel. At the front desk, a MALE HOTEL CLERK hands a keycard to a tall, Caucasian male **ENGINEER**, mid-30s, with receding fair hair. He's dressed in jeans, white shirt, smart jacket.

He walks away from the desk pulling a WHEELED CABIN BAG, the cell phone in his pocket BUZZES. He stops, answers.

ENGINEER
Hi honey! I just checked in...

He continues slowly towards the elevators.

ENGINEER (cont'd)
...Yeah, it's really warm here. Are
you getting the kids ready for
bed?... No, I'm just going to stay in
the room. Get some food sent up. No
gambling. The engineering conference
starts early tomorrow. What did the
realtor say? Did we get the house?...
How much?... Tell her we'll match the
other bid and go ten thousand
higher... Don't worry, I'll find the
extra cash. Honey, I'm just taking
the elevator, I'll call you before I
sleep... Love you too.

He puts phone in pocket, walks into a waiting elevator.

INT. BEE'S LAS VEGAS HOTEL ROOM - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Bee and Lucia stand opposite each other. Lucia looks glamorous but a touch trashy with heavy makeup, heels. Bee holds a CLEAR SEALABLE PLASTIC BAG with WHITE POWDER in it.

BEE

Let's just go over it again.

LUCIA

As soon as he snorts a line, I say 'Abracadabra'. Agents burst in, arrest him. They let me leave.

BEE

You've got it. And you're definitely oozing Jezebel joytoy charm. I could not pull this off.

Bee hands the bag of white powder to Lucia who holds it up, looks at the contents through the plastic.

LUCIA

You'd trust a recent-addict with a bag of high-grade cocaine?

BEE

Honey, I'm church going Pentecostal. I have faith.

LUCIA

Afterwards, someone should explain what this has to do with the E.P.A.

BEE

Trust me, we're mitigating a major environmental hazard tonight.

INT. ENGINEER'S LAS VEGAS HOTEL ROOM - 15 MINUTES LATER

An upper-floor hotel room suite with a large bed. Curtains open, fading daylight outside, Vegas's attractions glitter, the HIGH ROLLER FERRIS WHEEL is visible.

There's a knock at the door. In just jeans, white shirt, bare feet, the engineer goes to the door, opens it.

ENGINEER

Come in! I was getting worried you wouldn't show up.

Lucia steps inside carrying a DESIGNER HANDBAG. He closes the door, they look at each other. He's clearly pleased.

ENGINEER (cont'd)

You look... great! Much prettier than I expected. Different from the photos on the web site.

LUCIA

Yeah, sorry, Angel couldn't make it. I'm Peach.

ENGINEER

The name really suits you. Peach is a juicy fruit I love to eat. Here...

He reaches over to a nearby table, picks up an envelope, hands it to Lucia. She takes it, looks inside, there's at least a dozen new one hundred dollar bills.

ENGINEER (cont'd)

...I hope that covers everything. Just so you know, I always use condoms. But there's some unusual things I like. We can talk about that later. Did you bring the, er... special delivery?

Lucia puts the envelope in her handbag.

LUCIA

I did.

She takes out the bag of white powder, hands it to him. The engineer looks at the powder. He's excited.

ENGINEER

Oh, this is going to be great! Let's use the table by the sofa. Peach, would you like something to drink?

LUCIA

No thanks, I'm fine.

She follows him over to a SOFA next to a LOW GLASS TOP COFFEE TABLE. On the table is the ENGINEER'S CELLPHONE.

ENGINEER

I've got to tell you. I'm kind of new at this. I mean the cocaine part.

He sits on the sofa, Lucia sits down across the table from him in an ordinary chair.

LUCIA

You've never done coke before?

ENGINEER

Never snorted. Just rubbed it on my gums at parties. Could you show me exactly how it should be done? I imagine you girls get to do it a lot.

LUCIA

Sure, I can show you. It's not rocket science. First, you make a line.

She takes the bag from him, opens it, empties some white powder onto the table's glass top.

LUCIA (cont'd)

Have you got a credit card?

He reaches into his trouser pocket, pulls out a WALLET then a CREDIT CARD from the wallet, hands it to her. Lucia uses the card to push some of the powder into a line.

LUCIA (cont'd)

Now I need a dollar bill for a tube.

He takes a crisp twenty out of his wallet, hands it over. Lucia rolls it into a tube, leans over towards the powder, the tube in one nostril, a finger on the other.

LUCIA (cont'd)

So you put the tube against one nostril...

(bends over the line)

...push the other nostril flat with a finger. Then do one long hard snort as you move the tube along the line. The idea is that all of it hits the back of your nose.

Her tube is almost touching the powder. She doesn't snort.

She straightens up, hands the dollar tube to the engineer. His head dips, out of sight. THE SOUND OF A LONG SNORT. His head reappears as he sits up, leans back, blinking his eyes.

ENGINEER

Whoah! That's powerful stuff.

LUCIA

Abracadabra, you've got it!

Lucia looks around. Nothing happens.

LUCIA (cont'd)

I mean, Abracadabra! You've really got the hang of it.

ENGINEER

Wow, I think I want a second hit.

He pours some powder, takes the credit card, starts shaping another line.

LUCIA

Would you just excuse me for a minute? I have to ring my agency so they know everything is alright.

The engineer picks up the dollar tube for the second line.

ENGINEER

(slurring)

Sure. You can use the bathroom if you want some privacy.

Lucia gets up, takes her cellphone from her handbag, walks towards the bathroom. The engineer LOUDLY SNORTS the second line behind her.

HOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lucia enters with her phone, turns on the light, closes the door, taps the phone's screen. She holds it to her ear, waits a couple of seconds while it rings at the other end.

LUCIA

Bee?

A2 (O.S.)

(filtered)

Hello A.7. This is A.2. speaking.

LUCIA

I said the word. No one came in.

A2 (O.S.)

(filtered)

Has he snorted the powder?

LUCIA

Yes, he's just done a second line.

A2 (O.S.)

(filtered)

There's been a change of plan. Do you know the High Roller?

LUCIA

No. What's that?

A2 (O.S.)

(filtered)

It's the big ferris wheel you can see from the window. A taxi can take you there. Collect your things, meet me at the bottom of the High Roller. Leave the powder behind but take the money he gave you. We want to try and trace where the notes came from.

LUCIA

I can't just walk out!

A2 (O.S.)

(filtered)

Yes, you can. He's already dead.

A2 hangs up. Lucia lowers her phone, thinks, remains calm, emotionless.

HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lucia emerges from the bathroom, walks to the sofa. The engineer is slumped back, lifeless, a blue tinge on his open lips. His open eyes, with pinprick pupils, stare at nothing.

The engineer's cellphone, lying next to the open drug bag, VIBRATES. Lucia looks at it. The screen displays a picture of a smiling young woman holding 2 young children. Over the image are the words: "LAURIE CALLING".

Still impassive, Lucia picks up her handbag, puts her cellphone inside, walks to the door, leaves, the door shuts behind her. Next to his dead body, the engineer's cellphone CONTINUES TO VIBRATE with his young family on the screen.

INT. LAS VEGAS HIGH ROLLER BOARDING AREA - 10 MINUTES LATER

The High Roller ferris wheel's deserted boarding area. One of the wheel's large egg-shaped pods waits with doors open.

Carrying her handbag, Lucia walks along the covered concourse between metal handrails towards the pod.

HIGH ROLLER POD - CONTINUOUS

A deserted pod except for A2 standing with her back to the doors, looking through one of the pod's windows. Lucia enters, the doors slide shut, the pod moves. She comes to stand next to A2. Both look through the windows.

LUCIA
That was pure Fentanyl, wasn't it?

A2
If you knew, you might have warned him.

LUCIA
What did he do?

A2
He was an engineer who was selling secrets about our newest missiles. He had to be stopped.

LUCIA
Why not just arrest him? Lock him up.

A2
We knew he was selling secrets but we didn't have enough courtroom evidence. He could have walked free. The coroner will determine accidental overdose. It happens hundreds of times a day in the U.S.

The pod continues to climb.

LUCIA
Is this how we mitigate hazards?

A2
We take out America's trash. Quietly. No guns, no violence, no malice.
(beat)
We'll understand if you want to quit. You'll get three months severance.

LUCIA
He had a family. I saw them on his phone.

A2
You felt sorry for him?

Lucia considers her answer. The pod ascends higher.

LUCIA
No. I felt...
(beat)
...anger. Because of his stupidity for thinking I was harmless.

A2

We'd like you to stay with the department. But it's up to you.

They look across the shimmering lights of Vegas, distant mountains are silhouetted by the fading light.

LUCIA

I understand now. You needed someone who doesn't care about death.

A2

Could you go to New York next week? Another hazard needs mitigation.

Lucia looks at the view, thinks for a couple of seconds.

LUCIA

Today wasn't hard for me, it wasn't hard at all... Okay, I'll go.

A2

You have to visit the paper shop, to pick up some things you'll need.

LUCIA

What's the paper shop?

A2

Potemkin Paper. It's a place where we keep our tools. It's in L.A.'s south side. B.3. can explain where it is and what to say when you get there.

The pod is near the top. Lucia turns to A2.

LUCIA

Something that's bothering me: How could you be sure I wouldn't snort the powder?

A2 looks Lucia in the eye.

A2

We weren't.

EXT. OUTSIDE POTEMKIN PAPER SHOP - DAY (A FEW DAYS LATER)

A run-down urban L.A. street with assorted shops. One has "Potemkin Paper" on its window. Lucia, back to grunge thrift look, walks along the sidewalk with a SMALL BLACK BACKPACK.

She stops at Potemkin Paper, tries the locked door, peers through the window, presses a button by the door.

INT. POTEKIN PAPER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The shop's interior has wall posters advertising brands like "3M", "Pentel", "Pilot". Shelves hold assorted boxes and packets of paper and envelopes.

On one side, a counter with sales-terminal next to display boxes of small products like post-its, pens, pencils plus some "Potemkin Paper" branded mugs.

ARCHIE, East-Asian male, early-30s, like a soldier out of uniform, appears from the back, walks behind the counter, presses a button underneath. The door buzzes, Lucia enters.

Archie speaks like he's used to presenting arguments in a courtroom, with authoritative, well thought out words.

ARCHIE

Sorry about the door but the neighborhood isn't the best. Is there something you're looking for?

LUCIA

Yes, I need some paper.

ARCHIE

American or International size?

LUCIA

American. Something for architectural drawings.

ARCHIE

Then you want the 'Arch' series. Any particular dimension?

LUCIA

I'm looking for Arch size E.

ARCHIE

Welcome to Potemkin Paper, A.7. I'm Archie. I've got some things ready for you in the back, if you'd like to follow me.

He gestures towards the back. Lucia follows him through a doorway with a clear PVC strip door curtain into a backroom.

BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

A stockroom with shelves stacked with more packaged paper of different sizes. In the middle, a table with stainless steel top, no chairs. Archie enters followed by Lucia.

ARCHIE

I heard you wanted to continue working with us after Las Vegas. Some people find what we do to be a little... how can I say... psychologically challenging.

They stop and face each other across the table, Lucia puts her backpack on the floor.

LUCIA

What I saw in that hotel room, I'd seen many times before. It didn't bother me. Maybe it should have. Or maybe all my empathy got drained away. But what about you, Archie, what's your story?

ARCHIE

Was in the Marines for a few years. Then law school, then federal prosecutor, followed by disillusioned prosecutor. The guilty walked free too often. Our department does what the justice system can't, even if it is in a legal gray area.

LUCIA

Are you sure that's the right color Archie, gray?

ARCHIE

The government can lawfully take life to protect its citizens.

LUCIA

Is that how it works?

ARCHIE

A police marksman shoots dead a gunman who went into your local school to massacre the children. When we stop the gunman, no one notices.

LUCIA

No guns, no violence, no malice.

ARCHIE

The definition of murder requires malice. There's none in what we do.

He reaches up to a shelf, takes down an unmarked shoebox-sized BLACK PLASTIC CASE from a shelf, puts it on the table.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Here's your chemistry set.

He clicks open clasps, opens the lid.

Inside, in protective plastic foam, are PLASTIC BOTTLES and 2 DRUG AUTO-INJECTORS, One injector has a THICK RED BAND around it, the other a GREEN BAND.

LUCIA

I need all this?

ARCHIE

Everything might be useful. Put them in checked luggage if you fly.

He picks up the auto-injector with the red band.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Automatic drug injectors. Remove the top, stab hard into the upper arm or thigh. The injector does the rest. Delivery into the body takes a couple of seconds.

LUCIA

And the difference with the colors?

ARCHIE

The red band is a big dose of Diamorphine. I'm guessing you know what that will do.

LUCIA

I know exactly what it will do.

ARCHIE

The one with the green band is Atropine. Important if you get the next one on your skin.

He puts back the red injector, picks out a SMALL WHITE PLASTIC BOTTLE that appears to be drugstore eye-drops.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

This is the hot sauce you need for New York. Just squeeze some drops onto the target surface.

LUCIA

How many drops?

ARCHIE

Five or six. It needs contact with bare skin for about fifteen minutes. The comrades on the red team like to put it into the underwear of regime critics. Not really our style.

LUCIA

Isn't there some treaty, some law that bans this stuff?

ARCHIE

For warfare, yes. No country can make more than a hundred grams in a year. That's all we need.

LUCIA

What about protecting myself from it?

ARCHIE

Rubber gloves are best but if you must have exposed skin you can use this as a chemical barrier.

He picks out a LARGER PLASTIC BOTTLE, labeled like everyday skin moisturizer.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Smear the gel in this moisturizer bottle onto your skin, rub it in, the hot sauce can't penetrate. With the sauce applied on top, you could shake hands with someone and they'd never know they have minutes to live.

LUCIA

I'm starting to see why handshaking isn't popular these days. But what if it does get on my skin, Archie?

ARCHIE

Wash it off straight away. If you feel any effects at all, inject the Atropine, stat. It's the only thing that'll stop your body shutting down.

Archie picks out what appears to be a normal pharmacy brand CHAPSTICK marked "LIP BALM", takes the top off.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

This is new. Just came in. Solid version of the barrier gel. Looks like lip balm but smearing it on also protects against the hot sauce.

He puts the top back on the chapstick, puts it back.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

And finally, a new weapon that arrived with the chapstick. You can be the first to try it out. This one is really ingenious...

INT. REBECCA'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE, WASHINGTON - DAY

An office in the Capitol Building, past Republican presidents on the wall. **PAULA**, a Caucasian female congressional aide, late-20s, sits alone, typing at a screen on one of the desks.

The door from the corridor opens. Rebecca Gibbon-Brown enters in overcoat, pants suit underneath, comfortable flat shoes, leather briefcase in one hand.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Morning Paula! Anything I should look at before I start hollerin' on the phone at my weak-kneed abstaining colleagues to get back in line?

Paula replies with a distinct southern US drawl.

PAULA

Not a lot. C.N.N. wants to do a face-to-face interview about immigration.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

I know a media ambush when I hear one. They'll cherry-pick my words in the edit so I look nuttier than a porta-potty at a peanut festival. Tell them N.O. Too busy serving the voters. Y.E.S. if Fox News calls.

Paula picks up an unsealed ENVELOPE on her desk.

PAULA

And this was hand-delivered at the gate. No traces of Anthrax detected.

Rebecca takes the envelope, pulls out a note, reads it. She thinks for a moment, looks at her wristwatch.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
Would you take messages for the next hour or so, Paula?

PAULA
You're not really going are you?
You'd be out in the open. Any left-wing Antifa crazy could get to you.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
It's a public place. It's close. No one else is expecting me to be there.

PAULA
I can call the Capitol Police and have them positioned nearby.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
No, I'll go alone. I want to find out what else this whistleblower claims to know. Besides, there'll be Federal Parks officers around that location.
(smiles, chuckles)
But the irony wouldn't be lost on me if I get assassinated in front of Abe Lincoln by a fanatic with a pistol.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL, WASHINGTON - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Rebecca, dressed in overcoat, TENNESSEE TITANS BASEBALL CAP, SURGICAL FACE MASK, walks up the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. A few random tourists are visiting. She takes off the mask, sits down on a step, Lincoln's statue behind her.

Looking from behind her, there's a view of the Reflecting Pool with the Washington Monument obelisk beyond.

A slim female, the **WHISTLEBLOWER**, in hoodie and jeans, sits down near her. The hoodie covers her head so, from behind, her face isn't visible, only strands of blonde hair.

Rebecca glances sideways at her, looks ahead to the obelisk.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
If you're wondering, I came alone.
Your note got my attention.

The Whistleblower speaks with a late 20s, educated American voice, without regional accent.

WHISTLEBLOWER

The government has a hidden department. It quietly kills people. Accidents that aren't accidents. Suicides that aren't suicides. Deaths from natural causes that are anything but natural.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

That's a wild claim. Do you have any evidence?

WHISTLEBLOWER

Follow the money. Congress funds them. A small group called 'The Collective' controls them. It creates the kill-list. Few know about it, not even the President.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Who is in this group, this collective? Are they Democrats?

WHISTLEBLOWER

They don't take political sides. I've given you enough for now.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

How can I contact you?

WHISTLEBLOWER

You can't. I'll contact you. But I'll be watching to see what you do. You should shut the collective and their assassins down before they shut you down.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

One question: why me?

WHISTLEBLOWER

You say you're going to drain the swamp. Now you know there's some lethal creatures living in it.

The hooded woman stands up. Rebecca watches her walk away.

EXT. URBAN L.A. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Lucia pulls up to the curb in her Chevy car. She gets out with a shoulder bag, walks towards the collection of tents where she used to live. Rose is outside in her annex stirring a steaming pot heated by a gas camping stove.

ROSE
 (seeing Lucia)
 Well, look at you!

They hug.

LUCIA
 It's good to see you Rose.

ROSE
 So you're officially employed now?
 Your colleague told me you were in a
 detox place and had her fingers
 crossed for you. Looks like things
 worked out.

LUCIA
 So far. They got me an apartment and
 I'm getting paid.

ROSE
 Who says the government doesn't care?

Lucia reaches into her bag, pulls out an envelope, hands it
 to Rose who takes it, sees hundred dollar bills inside.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Are you sure? This is a lot.

LUCIA
 Take it. I owe you so much.
 (beat)
 Did someone want the tent?

ROSE
 Had some people stay and leave. A new
 tenant turned up a couple of days
 ago. Nice looking young man starting
 an office job downtown. Said he was
 desperate for somewhere to sleep. You
 know how crazy rents are in this
 city. I think he just came back from
 work. Why not say hello?

INT. LUCIA'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

BRAD, Caucasian late-20s, sits on the tent floor with a
 notebook computer open on his lap. Even casually dressed
 with some face stubble, he'd be at home in GQ magazine.

He taps on the keys, sips some coffee from a takeaway cup.

LUCIA (O.S.)
Knock, knock.

Brad looks up, speaks with a strong Canadian accent.

BRAD
Who is it?

LUCIA (O.S.)
My name's Lucia. You're renting my tent.

BRAD
Oh right! Come in.

Lucia opens the entrance flap, crawls into the tent without shoes on. Brad closes the computer. He holds an open hand out for her to shake.

BRAD (cont'd)
Hi, I'm Brad. Rose told me a bit about you.

LUCIA
You know, I think I might not be a hand-shaking person anymore. I hope you're not offended.

BRAD
(puts hand down)
Not at all, I understand. Are you going to evict me?

LUCIA
No, no, I'm just saying hello. You can stay here as long as you want. But you don't look like someone who should be sleeping in a tent.

BRAD
You might think that but I'm just an intern at a software company and the rents here are insane compared to Canada. I get a gym membership with the job so I can always shower there.

LUCIA
So you have a good job but have to sleep in a tent on the sidewalk?

BRAD
Interns don't get much, if anything, and I'm not alone. Some of us are couch-surfing.

(MORE)

BRAD (cont'd)

One guy is living in the back of an ex-U.P.S. delivery truck, another in an old R.V. parked up on blocks.

LUCIA

That's kind of messed up.

BRAD

Totally nuts, right? But California is where the opportunities are. How about you? I heard you were in a detox place. Did it work out?

LUCIA

It did. And I got a job.

BRAD

That's great! What's the job?

LUCIA

It's... it's in office supplies, for the government. I'm still learning the ropes.

BRAD

Look, I don't really know anyone in L.A., except from the job. Do you want to maybe, I don't know, catch up for a coffee, maybe a bite to eat?

LUCIA

You know, that sounds really nice. Really normal. I think I'd like that.

BRAD

Are you free tomorrow night? We could get some food somewhere.

LUCIA

Yeah, tomorrow, that would be good. Should we meet here?

BRAD

My manager is flying to Europe tomorrow morning. He said I can use his apartment so I'll go there after work. Ring me when you're ready and we can arrange where to meet. Here, I'll give you my number.

Brad takes a notebook, scribbles, rips out the page and hands it to Lucia. She takes it, glances at the number.

LUCIA
Thanks. How about I ring around seven
o'clock?

BRAD
I'll definitely be ready by seven.

INT. LUCIA'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MORNING (NEXT DAY)

The morning sun shines through the drapes onto Lucia who
lays sprawled out, dozing in bed. On a nightstand, Lucia's
PHONE VIBRATES. She feels for it, brings it to her ear.

LUCIA
(half asleep)
Hello.

BEE (O.S.)
(filtered)
Did you know there's an entire gym we
can use?

LUCIA
I thought this was my day off?

BEE (O.S.)
(filtered)
Technically, it is. But you want to
stay in shape, right? Plenty of time
to catch those zees when you're very
old and very dead.

INT. GYM - HALF AN HOUR LATER

A deserted, spacious gym with weights, lifting benches,
sparring mats, RAISED ROPED FULL-SIZE BOXING RING.

Lucia, bare feet, BLUE shorts and t-shirt, gym bag, enters,
drops the bag, catches thrown BLUE thai boxing gloves.

LUCIA
Should I join a union and demand
overtime for this?

Bee, barefoot in RED shorts and t-shirt (a diagram of the
TESTOSTERONE molecule on it, text "testosterone" below) puts
a TRAINING KICK PAD on each arm to absorb blows.

BEE
A union. Now that would suit you. The
prison said you pounded the punchbag
a lot. Let's see what you've got.

Lucia puts on the gloves, Bee holds the pads up.

LUCIA
I was working all that chemical
garbage out of my system.

Lucia begins punching.

BEE
Are you punching yet? Not sure if I
can feel anything here.

Lucia punches harder.

LUCIA
So how did you get hired into the
department?

BEE
Got raped. Got even. Was charged with
attempted murder. The department
offered me a suspended sentence if I
help clean up the environment.

Lucia punches some more, stops, removes one glove, takes out
a water bottle from her bag, drinks some water.

LUCIA
Attempted? Why didn't you kill him?

BEE
Actually, there were two. Death was
too painless. The aim was to maim
them. I was back from college, two
jocks from high school spiked my
drink in the local bar. Woke up on
the family veranda with a sore butt
and no memory how I got there. But
the morons made a stupid mistake.

LUCIA
What moronic mistake was that?

BEE
Put my panties back on the wrong way
round. Not enough for a police
report, but enough to plan payback.

Lucia puts down the water bottle, puts the glove back on.
Bee lifts the pads again, Lucia starts practice kicks.

LUCIA
So what was the payback?

BEE

Got a job for Halloween in the same bar. All the staff wore masks. Did you know factories put Propylene Glycol antifreeze in some alcoholic drinks for better taste?

LUCIA

No. I'm guessing they didn't either.

BEE

Put enough in and vital organs fail. I hear they're both waiting for a liver donor. The good ol' boys shouldn't mess with a chemistry postgrad.

LUCIA

No guns, no violence.

BEE

But plenty of real sweet malice.

Lucia stops kicking. Bee takes off the pads, picks up a BLUE BOXING HEAD GUARD, throws it, Lucia catches it.

BEE (cont'd)

I'm fixin' to whoop yo' progressive liberal ass, so let's do this.

BOXING RING - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing the blue head guard and blue gloves, Lucia faces the ropes in a corner shadow boxing. OVERHEAD LAMPS ARE SWITCHED ON bathing the ring in light. Lucia stops, turns.

Bee climbs into the ring through the ropes at the opposite corner wearing RED BOXING HEAD GUARD and RED THAI BOXING GLOVES. The two opponents walk to the center, arms down, face each other, eye to eye.

LUCIA

So what are the rules?

BEE

Punching and kicking only. No elbows, no knees, no clinching. Winner floors their opponent twice. And remember: in Thai boxing you lose points for showing fear. If we were scoring.

They touch gloves then lift their hands in a defensive stance, circle each other, bounce on their feet as they look to land the first blow.

Not using mouth guards, they can speak. Bee baits Lucia.

BEE (cont'd)

Come on Miss! Oh, pardon me, did I use the wrong pronoun? Are you triggered? Need a safe space? Going to cancel me?

Lucia takes the bait, swings with her right. Bee dodges, lands a light blow on Lucia's head, Lucia lands a heavy return blow, Bee reels backwards.

LUCIA

That's from all the women whose bodies you want to control.

Lucia spins with extended leg to topple her recovering opponent. Bee catches her leg under one arm, kicks Lucia's other leg away so she goes down. Bee looks down at her.

BEE

So the unborn have to stay silent?

Undaunted, Lucia gets up. They circle each other again.

LUCIA

Didn't you people want to get big government out of people's lives? That sounds like the opposite.

Lucia swings, Bee counters then swings her leg at Lucia who steps out of the way.

BEE

Well, defunding the police wasn't our idea if we're on that subject.

Lucia comes in fast with kicks, punches. Bee stumbles, goes down. Lucia looks down at her.

LUCIA

I don't mind the police as long as they don't assault the innocent.

Bee gets up looking shaken.

BEE

'Assault'. That word gives me flashbacks. Now I'm triggered.

Bee comes in with kicks, Lucia defends, punches. More blows frenetically exchanged. They throw kicks at each other, they go down at the same time. Both are sprawled on the canvas panting, perspiring, exhausted.

LUCIA
Is my face messed up?

Lying flat, Bee turns her head to look at Lucia.

BEE
Don't think so. Why?

LUCIA
I'm going on a date tonight.

Bee looks back at the ceiling.

BEE
That reminds me. A.2. asked me to warn you about something...

INT. L.A. BAR - NIGHT (SAME DAY)

A hip L.A. bar full of people socializing. Lucia enters with Brad. She's glamorous with shoulder bag, some makeup but NO LIPSTICK. Brad's CLEAN SHAVEN, smartly dressed in jacket.

They're an attractive couple, enjoying each other's company.

LUCIA
I really liked that restaurant.

BRAD
Thanks for putting the bill on your card. At least let me get you a drink.

LUCIA
Just a soda water, thanks. I'll grab us a table.

Brad goes to the bar. Lucia finds a vacant circular standing table, puts her bag on top.

She scans the crowd. A petite **YOUNG WOMAN**, early 20s, in SIMPLE LIGHT COLORED COTTON DRESS plus shoulder bag, enters the bar with a taller, older **BEARDED MAN** in a jacket, mid-30s. They go to the bar. Brad returns with drinks.

BRAD
You didn't say ice so they just put a few cubes in.

Both stand at the table drinking, Lucia sips the soda water.

LUCIA

You look really dapper tonight. You should move out of that crusty old tent so you can look this good all the time. How is your boss's apartment?

BRAD

It's amazing. You should see it. Listen, why don't we go back there for a nightcap after we leave here.

LUCIA

Do people really still say 'nightcap'? It sounds like code.

BRAD

Unencrypted, it means I really like you.

Lucia smiles, sips her drink, her gaze goes back to the bar where the petite young woman and bearded man stand talking. The young woman sips a full GLASS OF DARK RED WINE, puts it down on the bar. The man points at something behind her.

She turns to look, he drops a SMALL PILL into her wine.

LUCIA

You know, I'm suddenly craving peanuts. I'm going to see if they have peanuts.

Before Brad can reply, Lucia takes her bag, hurries towards the young woman who is raising her glass to her lips. Lucia BARGES into her, WINE SPILLS onto her dress. Shocked, upset, she puts down her glass, looks down at the red stains.

LUCIA (cont'd)

I am sooo sorry. That was completely my fault. I am so clumsy.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's all over my dress!

BEARDED MAN

(to Lucia)

What do you think you're doing?

LUCIA

Don't worry. We can fix this. Let's go to the ladies room and get you cleaned up.

Lucia takes the young woman's hand, leads her across the floor. The young woman takes her shoulder bag with her.

LADIES ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An empty ladies room with sinks and mirrors on one side, toilet stalls on the other. Lucia enters followed by the upset young woman whose hand she still holds.

YOUNG WOMAN

This dress is brand new. I'm going to have to get it dry cleaned.

Lucia drops her hand, turns, her tone turns serious.

LUCIA

Who is that man? How do you know him?

The young woman is indignant.

YOUNG WOMAN

What is it to you?

LUCIA

When you looked away, he spiked your drink.

The young woman hesitates, becomes fearful.

YOUNG WOMAN

We, we met online. I thought we had a lot in common. This is our first date. Are you sure?

LUCIA

Trust me, he spiked it. Outside this restroom there's a fire exit. Leave that way. Did you drive here in your car?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes, yes I did.

LUCIA

Get in your car, drive straight home, go inside, lock the door. File a police report if he follows you or comes anywhere near you again.

YOUNG WOMAN

I can't believe how naive I was.
Thank you, thank you so much. But
what about you? What will you do?

Lucia turns, lifts her bag, places it next to a sink. She leans forward, calmly examines her face in the mirror.

LUCIA

I think I'll fix my makeup. Got a
feeling things could get hot and
steamy later.

INT. BRAD'S APARTMENT - 15 MINUTES LATER

An expensive apartment, artwork on the walls, designer furniture. A big SOFA faces tall windows with a view across the city. In front of the sofa is a LOW COFFEE TABLE.

The door opens, Brad enters, holds it open for Lucia. Bag on her shoulder, she's now wearing BRIGHT RED LIPSTICK. She looks around, Brad closes the door.

LUCIA

Oh, wow! This is really bougie.

BRAD

I know. Not bad, right? How about
that nightcap? But all I have is a
bottle of chardonnay, is that okay?

LUCIA

Well, I'm not sure about alcohol. I
have a history with intoxicating
molecules.

BRAD

Come on, one or two sips of a good
white wine won't kill you.

LUCIA

You're right. It shouldn't kill me.

Brad opens a cupboard, pulls out 2 LONG STEMMED WINE GLASSES and a CORKED BOTTLE OF CHARDONNAY that appears unopened.

LUCIA (cont'd)

I know that wine! I had an
acquaintance who'd get it all the
time. But I doubt she paid for it.

Brad picks up a corkscrew, screws it into the cork.

BRAD

Your friend had good taste. So what exactly happened with that girl you spilled wine on. Her date sounded really upset she'd disappeared.

He pulls out the cork with a POP, pours wine in each glass.

LUCIA

I think she had second thoughts about beards. They can be itchy.

Brad hands her a glass which she takes in HER LEFT HAND. Lucia runs the open palm of HER RIGHT HAND seductively over Brad's smooth jaw and cheek.

LUCIA (cont'd)

I'm also on team 'clean-shaven'.

He CLINKS his glass against Lucia's.

BRAD

Here's to... you and your future!

Neither drinks, Lucia looks over at the sofa.

LUCIA

That sofa looks really comfortable. Let's sit down and enjoy the view.

They walk to the sofa, Lucia puts her bag on the coffee table. They sit down side-by-side, Lucia on Brad's right.

Lucia puts her glass on the coffee table, leans her left elbow against the sofa back, looks at him. He puts down his glass, stares into her eyes. They talk softly like lovers.

LUCIA (cont'd)

Now what does a great looking, clever guy like you see in a messed up, recovering addict like me?

BRAD

Someone who survived, overcame the odds, got her life together. Found a job, found a career for herself.

The space between them shrinks, lips approach lips.

LUCIA

I'm still very much learning the ropes. And there's a lot of them.

Their lips meet in a long, tender kiss as Lucia caresses Brad's face and neck WITH HER RIGHT HAND. The kiss ends, they gaze into each other's eyes.

LUCIA (cont'd)
You've got a good razor.

Lucia reaches over, takes her glass. She looks into Brad's eyes, brings the glass to her lips. He watches her intently but she doesn't drink. Suddenly, he blinks, disorientated.

LUCIA (cont'd)
What's up Brad? Not feeling well?

Confused, Brad leans forward to get up, he can't.

BRAD
No, no I'm not. Something's wrong. I can't move. I've, I've been drugged. But, but how?

With her glass, Lucia gets up, stands in front of him across the table. She's like a teacher scolding an errant pupil.

LUCIA
Here's the situation, Bradley. That wine should have metal foil around the top of the bottle. My junkie acquaintance and I used that foil to heat up crack. Which means you'd already opened the bottle before. Now why on earth would you do that, Brad?

Lucia holds up her glass, looks at its contents.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Tick tock, tick tock. Time's up. We both know why you did it, don't we?

Brad is immobile, sweating, breathing impaired. His Canadian accent is replaced by a RUSSIAN ACCENT.

BRAD
(Russian accent)
I know who you are. You work for The Stationery Department, don't you? We got the security video from Las Vegas. I saw you leaving the hotel room. This must be Organophosphate poisoning. I need Atropine. You must have some with you. Please help me. I'm dying.

Lucia puts her glass down, picks up her bag, brings out one of the auto-injectors Archie gave her. She holds it out, her hand around it so the colored band ISN'T VISIBLE.

LUCIA
You mean this?

Brad holds out his hand.

BRAD
(Russian accent)
Please. Give it to me. I can give you something valuable. One of your own, who is working for us.

Lucia puts her bag down.

LUCIA
Sounds like a fair deal. Here.

Lucia hands over the injector. Brad takes it, removes the cover with his teeth, stabs it into his thigh through his clothes. He holds the injector in place in his clenched hand, closes his eyes, leans back in relief.

LUCIA (cont'd)
So who is the traitor?

Brad opens his eyes wide, looks down at the injector he is clutching in his thigh, looks back at Lucia.

BRAD
(Russian accent)
This isn't Atropine. What is it?

He looks at the injector, opens his hand to reveal a RED BAND around it.

LUCIA
Oops, must have got them mixed up.
The one with the red band is
Diamorphine. I mean Heroin. Now
aren't overdoses just a bitch, Brad?

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BEE'S TRUCK - 10 MINUTES LATER

Bee's truck is parked in an L.A. residential neighborhood. The passenger door opens, interior light comes on. Behind the wheel is Bee in black hoodie, a diagram of the NOVICHOK A-230 molecule on it, the text "A-230" above.

Lucia gets into the passenger seat with her bag, all makeup washed off, wet hair, same clothes. She pulls the door shut, towels her face and hair dry using a SMALL TOWEL.

BEE

You had time for a shower! I'm mighty impressed.

LUCIA

A.2. was right, he was going to kill me.

BEE

Shoot! I hate first dates like that.

LUCIA

He'd seen me in video leaving the Vegas hotel room.

BEE

A.2. had heard the comrades had sent someone to find you. Must be madder than wet hens about losing their missile engineer.

LUCIA

While he could still talk, he said someone from the department is working for them.

A light bulb comes on in Bee's head.

BEE

We figured that's what might have happened to her!

LUCIA

Happened to who?

BEE

C.5. She was new, like you, then she vanished. We thought she might have gone over to the red team. She speaks good Russian.

LUCIA

C.5. ? Isn't that an envelope size? Everyone else is a paper size.

BEE

She was our femme fatale. Great looking gal, Ivy League, super smart. But even smart people go crazy.

LUCIA

Or fall in love? Comrade Bradley is,
or was, very charming. The red snake
almost charmed the panties off me.

BEE

Femme fatale seduced by dude fatale?
Sure sounds like messed up karma.

LUCIA

Can we find her?

BEE

We'd like to 'cause she's been a
helluva chatty gal lately. At least
now we know whose side she's on.

(starts engine)

Looking forward to New York? Archie
and I are coming too. Same flight.

LUCIA

I thought I was going to work alone.

Bee switches off the interior light, checks mirrors.

BEE

You will. We've got some other
hazards to mitigate. But you can just
holler if you need us.

Bee drives forward.

INT. LATCHFORD SECURITIES, TRADING ROOM - DAY (3 DAYS LATER)

A spacious trading room with lines of desks, low partitions
between, desks have racks of computer screens above them.

At a desk in the corner is a male **CURRENCY TRADER**, mid-30s,
middle-eastern appearance, dark suit, jacket on chair back,
white shirt, sleeves partially rolled up, gold Rolex. Above
him, on the wall, a sign: "MIDDLE EAST FX".

He glances at graphs, flashing numbers on the screens, makes
notes, taps his keyboard. A LIGHT ILLUMINATES on a desk
console next to a FRAMED PICTURE OF HIM WITH A YOUNG FAMILY.

He puts a WIRED HEADSET WITH STALK MICROPHONE on his head,
presses a console button, speaks into the microphone.

CURRENCY TRADER

Latchford Securities, Middle East
F.X. desk.

He becomes tense, glances around for eavesdroppers, lowers his voice, hunches over the desk.

CURRENCY TRADER (cont'd)
 I told you, it's getting difficult.
 They could start examining my trades.
 I have a young family to think about.

He listens some more, glances furtively around.

CURRENCY TRADER (cont'd)
 Alright, Cayman Islands. Same account numbers. I'll execute it now. But please, this has to stop. If questions get asked, I don't know if I can explain it away.

INT. SINGLE AISLE COMMERCIAL JET - SAME TIME

Lucia sits, eyes closed, in a rear aisle seat of a packed narrow bodied jet. The plane is already on the ground, bumping along over tarmac, taxiing to the gate.

The plane stops rolling with a jolt, engines spin down, fasten-seatbelt sign goes out accompanied by a beep, the aircraft goes quiet. Lucia opens her eyes, unbuckles her belt, gets up at the same time as the other passengers.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 We have now reached our destination
 and will shortly be disembarking.

Lucia opens the overhead compartment, takes out a SMALL BLACK BACKPACK.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.) (cont'd)
 (filtered)
 Please remember to take all your
 belongings with you. Both in the seat
 pockets and overhead compartments.

Lucia looks down the length of the plane. Half way down on the same side, Bee, in navy "Potemkin Services" baseball cap, takes down a black holdall bag.

A few rows beyond, Archie takes down a black cabin bag. They all glance at each other without acknowledgement.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.) (cont'd)
 (filtered)
 Thank you for flying with us and we
 hope you enjoy the rest of your day
 in New York.

INT. NYC SUBWAY TRAIN CARRIAGE - NIGHT (SAME DAY)

A rocking MTA subway carriage rumbles below Manhattan. Chewing gum, dressed as a janitor with "Rosie the Riveter" RED HAIR SCARF, chunky black-rimmed spectacles, Lucia sits with her black backpack on her lap.

Scattered around are assorted workers on their way to the city's nocturnal manual jobs.

The train brakes, stops, Lucia gets up, doors slide open, she exits. Beyond her, on the platform's wall, the subway station's name: "WALL ST".

INT. NYC OFFICE TOWER, UPPER-FLOOR HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

The elevator doors open revealing Lucia standing next to another **FEMALE JANITOR**, 30s, North African in appearance. Both have JANITOR CARTS holding cleaning materials, open BLACK TRASH BAG, both wear RUBBER GLOVES.

They push their carts across the hallway. The female janitor talks to Lucia with a North African accent.

FEMALE JANITOR
 So you know what to do?

Lucia replies in a fake Latin American Spanish accent.

LUCIA
 (Spanish accent)
 No problem, I've done this job at
 plenty of other places.

They approach closed glass doors. Behind the doors, a reception desk with a sign: "LATCHFORD SECURITIES".

The female janitor pulls out a KEYCARD, waves it in front of a card reader next to the doors, punches in a pin code.

LUCIA (cont'd)
 (Spanish accent)
 So what do these people do?

The doors slide open, the two of them enter with carts.

FEMALE JANITOR

They make a lot of money looking at screens and pushing buttons. I hope my kids get to do the same one day.

LATCHFORD SECURITIES, TRADING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The female janitor flicks a switch, ceiling lights illuminate the darkened room.

FEMALE JANITOR

Which side do you want?

Lucia looks around and spies the desk in the corner, above it the wall sign: "MIDDLE EAST FX".

LUCIA

(Spanish accent)

I'll take the right.

FEMALE JANITOR

All yours sister.

They wheel their carts to opposite sides. At the desks near the corner, Lucia empties wastebaskets into the cart's trash bag. On the other side of the room, the female janitor does the same while she talks with raised voice to Lucia.

FEMALE JANITOR (cont'd)

So what's your status? Are you legal?

Lucia empties wastebaskets, raises her voice to reply.

LUCIA

(Spanish accent)

I wish. I'm going to try to get documented before I get deported.

Lucia comes to the "Middle East FX" desk, reaches into her pocket, pulls out the bottle of eye-drops Archie gave her, unscrews the top. She picks up the headset on the desk next to the trader's family photo, glances at the photo, squeezes 5 colorless drops onto the HEADSET'S EARPIECE COVERING.

FEMALE JANITOR (O.S.)

Good luck with that. They don't make it easy. At least you can speak pretty good English. That's a help.

The female janitor with her cart suddenly comes around the corner of desks near Lucia. Lucia is wiping the desk, the headset placed back next to the photo. Lucia looks up.

LUCIA
 (Spanish accent)
 I'm hoping they'll see I can make a
 positive contribution to society.

INT. U.S. CONGRESS COMMITTEE ROOM - MORNING (NEXT DAY)

Another senate committee hearing seen C-SPAN style. The **CHAIRPERSON** is an African American woman, 50s. Rebecca Gibbon-Brown sits on one side among assorted other senators.

CHAIRPERSON
 Firstly, I want to thank the C.I.A.
 director, Mister Scarsgard, for
 appearing before this committee. We
 greatly appreciate your time, Sir.

At the witness table is **RICHARD SCARSGARD**, Caucasian, late 60s. A name card in front of him reads: "R. SCARSGARD DIR. CIA". Scarsgard nods in acknowledgement.

CHAIRPERSON (cont'd)
 The questioning will commence with
 the Senator from Tennessee. The
 committee recognizes Miss Rebecca
 Gibbon-Brown, for five minutes.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 (to Scarsgard)
 Director Scarsgard, I want to
 question you in relation to some
 troubling information that was
 recently brought to my attention. You
 would have full knowledge of all
 C.I.A. activities inside the U.S., is
 that correct?

Scarsgard speaks with a soft, measured tone.

RICHARD SCARSGARD
 Perhaps not the details Senator, but
 certainly I'm aware of the missions
 of all domestic C.I.A. units.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 And the C.I.A. would also have some
 knowledge of the types of covert
 activities carried out inside the
 U.S. by other agencies, correct?

RICHARD SCARSGARD

Yes, my agency liaises closely with other arms of government so there's no duplication of effort.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

What I'm getting to is this: could there exist a covert federal government unit that carries out targeted assassinations of individuals on U.S. soil?

Shocked murmurs. People lean forward, look at each other.

RICHARD SCARSGARD

That's an extreme proposition, Senator. I'm not aware of any such group and I think I would know if it existed. Besides, any unlawful homicide on U.S. soil would be investigated by the police or F.B.I.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

But what if it never looks like homicide? But what if it appears accidental, or self-inflicted, or even from natural causes like heart failure?

RICHARD SCARSGARD

With respect Senator, you're going into the realm of wild conspiracy theories. May I point out, any part of the federal government needs funding and congress has a list of everything it funds. Congress would know if such a group existed. It would cost money to run.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

So it couldn't be hiding in plain sight in some obscure department?

RICHARD SCARSGARD

That's inconceivable Senator. In the nineteen seventies, after Watergate, safeguards were put in place to prevent the creation of any domestic clandestine operation.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Thank you Mister Director.

(MORE)

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN (cont'd)
(to the Chair)
I yield back the balance of my time,
Madam Chairman.

INT. LATCHFORD SECURITIES, TRADING ROOM - SAME TIME

The currency trader sits at the desk under the "MIDDLE EAST FX" sign, jacket on chair back. He is wearing the headset that Lucia tampered with the previous evening. He looks up at screens, scribbles notes, types orders into a keyboard.

A **FEMALE INTERN**, early 20s in office attire, comes by, gives him half a dozen envelopes, the morning mail.

CURRENCY TRADER
(to the intern)
Thanks!

The intern leaves, he glances through the envelopes, opens one, takes out the letter inside, scans it, puts it down.

He takes off the headset, rises from his chair, undoes the top buttons of his shirt. Takes his jacket, puts it on, speaks to an unseen colleague at the next desk.

CURRENCY TRADER (cont'd)
I think I need a little air. I'm just
going outside for a few minutes.

UPPER-FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The trader walks unsteadily to the main elevator doors, pushes the call button. The doors open, he enters.

INSIDE THE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

He pushes the button for the entrance floor, the doors close. He leans against the wall for support, breathing labored, eyes blinking. He's looking ill, getting worse.

INT. NYC OFFICE TOWER, ENTRANCE LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Elevator doors open, the trader exits. Like a drunken man he lurches towards the lobby security turnstiles, passes through them, a busy Manhattan street visible beyond.

More steps, he falls to his knees, then onto his face on the lobby floor, lifeless. A uniformed **BUILDING SECURITY GUARD** rushes to help, kneels to check his condition.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, VIEWING DECK - AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

A sunny, hazy Manhattan afternoon. A2 looks through one of the telescopes. Lucia appears, approaches her, stops.

LUCIA

Why would a loving family man, move
so much money for such evil hombres?

A2 keeps looking through the telescope.

A2

We can only speculate. He would have
told a jury he didn't know the
recipients were terrorists who kill
innocents. He probably would have
walked free.

A2 stands up straight, turns to Lucia.

A2 (cont'd)

The autopsy usually says cardiac
arrest from undiagnosed heart
arrhythmia. It happens a lot.

LUCIA

Who do we really work for? Who
decides who is on the list?

A2

The list comes from a group of
concerned individuals. A collective
of true patriots inside government.
They prefer to remain in the shadows.
(beat)
We'd like you to go back tonight.

LUCIA

To retrieve the evidence?

A2

Bag it and throw it. Outside the
bottle, it eventually degrades,
becomes harmless, undetectable.

LUCIA

This time, I'll choose the hair
scarf.

Lucia turns, begins to walk away. A.2. calls to her.

A2

A.7. !

Lucia pauses, turns back.

A2 (cont'd)
 Thanks for finding out what happened
 to C.5. Apparently she's been talking
 about us again. If you meet her...

LUCIA
 ...I can guess: She's an
 environmental hazard.

INT. HAMPTONS BEACH HOUSE, LONG ISLAND - NIGHT (SAME DAY)

The lounge area of a well-appointed Hamptons beach house.
 Large windows look out onto a darkened patio.

Two Hispanic people sit talking to each other on opposite
 sofas. **ISABELLA**, late-30s, a serious woman with curly hair.
PABLO, early-40s man, spectacles, suave.

Both speak English with Latin American Spanish accents.

ISABELLA
 (whispering)
 Do you think this house is bugged?

PABLO
 That wouldn't surprise me, which is
 why we should speak in English...
 (raises voice, looks
 around)
 ...so the Americans don't get a
 botched translation of what we say in
 Spanish.

ISABELLA
 Let's talk about tomorrow's speech.
 Will you use the teleprompter?

PABLO
 (normal voice again)
 I don't think I need it. I've got all
 the main points in my head.

ISABELLA
 You know a lot of General Assembly
 members will walk out when you step
 onto that podium. They think we're
 narco-terrorists with no right to
 address the U.N. It's risky just
 being here without diplomatic
 immunity.

PABLO

The Security Council invited us to present our case. No one would dare touch us. It would be too public. Besides...

(raises voice again)

...America wants us to lay down our weapons, cease financing our struggle from narcotics and negotiate with the fascist thugs the West calls the legitimate government.

(normal voice)

In case they're listening.

Isabella shivers, reaches over for a THICK SWEATER lying near her, pulls it on.

ISABELLA

We need heat. The forecast says it will drop to near freezing tonight. How long did that heating engineer say it would take to do the service?

PABLO

Can't be much longer. I'll check.

Pablo gets up, starts to walk towards an interior door across the room but stops when the door opens.

Archie comes through the open door dressed in NAVY BLUE COVERALLS and NAVY CAP, in one hand a TOOL BOX, illuminated UTILITY ROOM behind him. On both coveralls and cap is a "Potemkin Services" patch.

PABLO (cont'd)

(to Archie)

All done?

Archie flicks a switch just inside the utility room, it goes dark inside, he closes the door behind him.

ARCHIE

All done. The timer is set to light up in fifteen minutes or so. It'll turn itself off mid-morning. You'll both be as snug as bugs in a rug.

(looks around)

Even for the Hamptons, this is a lovely place you're renting.

PABLO

We're just here for a week. Do I need to sign something?

Archie walks over to a patio door.

ARCHIE

No need. The Potemkin Services office will send the paperwork to the owner. We'll also recommend they install some carbon-monoxide detectors. These older heating units can cause serious accidents if they're not serviced correctly.

ISABELLA

Thanks for your help. We didn't know it was going to be so cold on the Long Island coast at this time of year.

ARCHIE

Glad to keep you warm. I'll go out across the patio if that's alright.

Archie opens the patio door. A **SENIOR CAT**, weather-worn and beaten from daily survival, slinks inside. Its **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES** make it easily recognizable if people see it again.

PABLO

It keeps finding ways to get inside since we arrived. We think it's a stray other guests have been feeding.

Archie bends down, sweeps the cat up with his free arm.

ARCHIE

Come here you.

The cat clings to Archie, glad of the attention.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

This old puss probably just needs some tasty meals and a soft couch. Don't worry, we'll find its owner, or failing that, a forever home.

ISABELLA

That would be really kind of you.

PABLO

We're lucky you're a cat person.

ARCHIE

I always vote libertarian. Cats would too if they voted. They're all about freedom of choice. Have a cozy night!

Archie leaves carrying the cat, closes the patio door.

INT. FORD TRANSIT VAN OUTSIDE BEACH HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The passenger door of a spacious van opens, the interior light comes on.

Archie puts his toolbox on the floor, gets in with the cat still clinging to him, closes the door.

Bee, also wearing navy blue "Potemkin Services" coveralls, is in the driver's seat. She looks at the cat.

BEE

When you left this vehicle, I don't recall a cat. But now you got a whole ragamuffin of a cat.

Bee strokes the cat.

ARCHIE

They think it's a stray. Kept getting inside. We can't let this little guy become collateral damage.

BEE

Animal shelter to check for a chip?

Bee starts the engine, the dashboard lights up.

ARCHIE

You read my mind. Where do you think A.7. is right now?

Bee glances at her wristwatch.

BEE

I'd say on her way to the office. What about the heating system? Did you fix it?

ARCHIE

It's spewing monoxide gas and all the windows are closed. They'll sleep peacefully but waking up is unlikely.

The interior light dims, Bee drives the vehicle forward.

INT. LATCHFORD SECURITIES, TRADING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dressed again as a janitor, new PAISLEY HAIR SCARF, chunky spectacles, gloves, Lucia wheels a JANITOR CART to the desk marked "MIDDLE EAST FX". She looks around. The same female janitor from before speaks from the far side, voice raised.

FEMALE JANITOR (O.S.)

So you had enough after just a couple of days?

Lucia takes the poisoned headset in her gloved hands, unplugs it, throws it into the cart's BLACK TRASH BAG.

LUCIA

(Spanish accent)

My cousin says she can get me a fast food job that pays a lot more. So yeah, last day. It was really nice to have met you though!

FEMALE JANITOR (O.S.)

I'll miss the good conversation. This can be a lonely job.

EXT. NEW YORK BACK ALLEYWAY - MINUTES LATER

A deserted alleyway lined with dumpsters between tall office buildings. Big city sounds of building air conditioner fans, traffic, distant sirens can be heard.

A steel service door opens, Lucia emerges, black backpack on her back. In her bare hands, she carries a BULGING BLACK TRASH BAG, closed at the top with a tie.

The door slams shut behind her. She swings the bag into a dumpster, steps back, brushes her hands together. Job well done. She pockets hair scarf and spectacles.

A **MALE ASSAILANT** dressed in black, face hidden by a ski mask, approaches silently from behind.

He grabs Lucia with one arm, puts a hand over her mouth with the other. She struggles, elbows his chest, turns, lands one Thai boxing kick after another so he stumbles backwards.

A **SECOND MASKED MALE ASSAILANT** in ski mask tries to grab her. She fends him off with punches. The first assailant recovers, is back in the fight.

Outnumbered, they subdue Lucia, hold her standing, struggling, yells muffled by a hand over her mouth.

THE WHISTLEBLOWER that met Rebecca Gibbon-Brown, dressed in black with ski mask, appears. She holds an AUTO-INJECTOR and speaks to the male assailants in Russian.

WHISTLEBLOWER
Derzshat yee-yo!

SUBTITLES
Hold her!

The Whistleblower STABS THE INJECTOR into Lucia's upper-arm, holds it there for 2 seconds, removes it. Lucia struggles, gradually goes limp, held up only by the 2 male assailants.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. EMPTY NEW YORK OFFICE FLOOR - AN HOUR LATER

An expansive, darkened unoccupied office space on a high floor. Windows on three sides, closed blinds over them.

The only furniture is at one end: LARGE BARE DESK, FLOOR LIGHT, SIMPLE OFFICE CHAIR WITH WOODEN ARMRESTS. Lucia's black backpack is on the floor next to the desk.

A female hand switches on the floor light to illuminate Lucia. She's secured to the chair with lots of DUCT TAPE, head slumped and covered by a BLACK CLOTH BAG.

A female hand rips the bag off Lucia's head. She regains consciousness, lifts her head, squints at her surroundings.

LUCIA
(groggily)
Ketamine. Definitely a Ketamine
hangover.

WHISTLEBLOWER (O.S.)
My, my, not just plucky but knows her
horse tranquilizers too!

LUCIA
Special K was never my thing but I
hear it's big at Hollywood jacuzzi
parties. You're C.5. aren't you?

C5 removes her ski mask, shakes out blonde locks. She has all-American WASP good looks, some makeup, NO LIPSTICK.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5
Not any more. I'm a Colonel now. I
prefer it to being office stationery.

LUCIA
Am a little curious: how did you know
where I would be?

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

When our freedom-fighting militia friends told us their Wall Street money conduit had dropped dead, we knew who would be responsible. So we waited, and look who turns up? The same little annoying Latina from the hotel in Las Vegas.

LUCIA

I'm feeling famous. Would you like to get a selfie together?

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

Comedian too! You won't be joking for long. But first I want to find out what happened to my fiancée.

Lucia squints, confused.

LUCIA

Fiancée!? Have you abducted the right annoying Latina? Ohhh wait... you must mean Bradley... my condolences.

Anger welling up, C5 leans down close to Lucia's head.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

His name was Sasha and we were going to make a life together in his country. That is until he was assigned to terminate you. How did you get him to inject Heroin?

Lucia looks her in the eye, their noses almost touching.

LUCIA

I guess after I kissed him, he realized what a mistake you were.

Enraged, C5 SLAPS Lucia hard across the face.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

You little shit!

Lucia recovers, looks back at C5.

LUCIA

P.S. he was ready to betray you for being allowed to live.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

You're lying! He and I were going to work directly for the office of his President. Over there, they have one strong leader, creating a great empire of stability and unity. There's none of the petty political squabbling that's ripping this facade of a republic apart into little bickering pieces.

LUCIA

And so you betrayed the republic?

C5 leans down again, speaks softly, sympathetically.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

Don't you see, my little immigrant friend? This disunited States of America is near its final sad end. Civil war is coming and my new country and I will help it start. The state of the union is terminal.

C5 steps back, picks up Lucia's black backpack from the floor, unzips it, reaches inside. Lucia watches her.

LUCIA

Just for your interest, Colonel, I'm an American.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5

Sure you are. And I wear sombreros.
(beat)
Now, what have we got here? A cellphone. That's been turned off.

She pulls out Lucia's black cellphone, puts it down on the desk, looks in the bag again, pulls out an auto-injector.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5 (cont'd)

One Stationery Department Atropine injector. Not sure why you need that if you don't have any nerve agent.

C5 puts the green-banded injector on the desk NEAR THE EDGE. Lucia eyes its position.

C5 pulls out a SMALL ZIPPED MAKEUP POUCH, unzips it, looks inside, pulls out the CHAPSTICK that came from the Potemkin Paper shop, puts it on the desk.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5 (cont'd)
 One chapstick. One mirror and one
 lipstick. You know, you really should
 watch more beauty tutorials.

She takes out a LIPSTICK and SMALL MAKEUP MIRROR, takes off
 the lipstick's top, screws it out. It's the SAME BRIGHT RED
 LIPSTICK Lucia wore in Brad's apartment. Lucia gets angry.

LUCIA
 Leave my makeup alone, you psychotic
 asshole!

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5
 Oh, this really gets to you, doesn't
 it? Pretty color. I wonder if it
 suits me?

C5 holds up the mirror, applies the lipstick to her bare
 lips, pouts, admires her look in the mirror.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5 (cont'd)
 This looks good on me.

She bends down close to Lucia, venom in her voice.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5 (cont'd)
 But no amount of lipstick is going to
 cover up the pathetic, little
 Hispanic pig that you are.

C5 chokes, stumbles back, drops mirror and lipstick, tries
 to breathe, grabs at the desk so it SHAKES. The ATROPINE
 INJECTOR FALLS to the floor, BOUNCES away from the desk,
 comes to rest next to Lucia who glances down at it then
 looks back at C5.

LUCIA
 Whoops! You didn't put the chapstick
 on first to shield your lips,
 blondie. That's what your girl did
 before she kissed your squeeze. Seems
 like vanity was your fatal flaw.

Choking, C5 holds her throat, falls to her knees gasping.
 Desperate, she puts an arm out towards the Atropine injector
 on the floor, crawls slowly towards it, life draining away.

Lucia ROCKS HER CHAIR VIOLENTLY, it FALLS SIDEWAYS to the
 floor, Lucia in it. The wooden arm of the chair, Lucia's arm
 taped to it, CRUSHES THE INJECTOR, the contents drip out
 with C5's outstretched hand inches away.

WHISTLEBLOWER/C5
No... no... the Atropine.

Now lying sideways on the floor, fixed to the chair, Lucia looks directly into C5's dying eyes.

LUCIA
Actually, you're right... that lip color really does suit you.

On her side, arm outstretched, C5's face freezes. MULTIPLE MUFFLED GUNSHOTS come from somewhere inside the building.

ALL THE CEILING LIGHTS COME ON, the door at the other end BURSTS OPEN. Bee and Archie rush in, each wearing body armor, holster, pointing BLACK GLOCK 9MM GUN with 2 hands.

Seeing Lucia in the overturned chair, body of C5 lying next to her, they holster guns, run to help.

Archie and Bee pull Lucia's chair upright. Archie pulls out a KNIFE from a pouch in his body armor, talks to Lucia as he cuts the duct tape.

ARCHIE
We realized something was wrong. Your cellphone left just enough location data in the cloud.

Bee stands looking down at the now deceased C5 who lies blankly staring across the room, lipstick and mirror nearby, arm outstretched to the smashed Atropine injector.

BEE
So you met C.5. You had a good talk?

Nursing her wrists, Lucia comes to stand next to Bee. They both look down at C5.

LUCIA
She shared some beauty tips with me.

Archie comes to stand with them, looks down too.

ARCHIE
That lipstick really is lethal.

BEE
The color did suit her though.

LUCIA
I want to ask you both something.

Archie and Bee look at Lucia.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Do I get a gun too?

INT. REBECCA'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE, WASHINGTON - DAY

Paula sits at a screen typing.

Rebecca emerges from a door at the back to her private office carrying a SMALL SHOULDER BAG. She unhooks a coat from a coat-stand, puts it on.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
I'm going out to see my doctor for a
checkup Paula. Shouldn't be too long.

PAULA
Senator Fernandez called. Wondered if
you could stop by her office

Rebecca glances at her wristwatch.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
I think I've got a few minutes to
spare.

INT. SENATOR FERNANDEZ'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

At her desk, Elvira reads a print edition of THE WASHINGTON POST newspaper.

The door opens, Rebecca comes in, Elvira puts down the newspaper, stands up.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
Senator! Thanks for dropping by.

Elvira offers Rebecca her hand to shake.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
No problem. I was just going out
anyway and...
(looks at Elvira's
extended hand)
...to be honest, I've sort of gone
off handshaking recently. Sorry.

Elvira puts her hand down.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
No offense taken.

Elvira sits back down, Rebecca sits in the visitor chair opposite, puts her shoulder bag on the floor.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
So I asked him, point blank.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
I read the transcript.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
I asked the Director: 'Is the federal government killing people in the U.S. and making it look like something other than assassination?'

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
And you believed his answer?

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
He was under oath. By the way, I jotted down some numbers for you.

Rebecca reaches into her bag, pulls out a SMALL NOTEPAD.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN (cont'd)
These are government statistics for the entire U.S. over the past year.
(glancing at notepad)
Every day, every twenty four hours, there've been, on average, six hundred and sixteen deaths from accidents, plus another one hundred and thirty two from self-harm. And many more from natural causes. Over one thousand each day from heart failure alone.

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
I see where you're going with this.

Rebecca puts the notepad back in her bag.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
No guns, no violence, no proof. Maybe your Hollywood producer was just having a really bad day when he dived into that swimming pool. Did his assistant say if she'd heard from the whistleblower again?

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ
I rang her yesterday and asked that very question. She'd heard nothing more.

(MORE)

ELVIRA FERNANDEZ (cont'd)
 Maybe it was just another hoaxer. To be honest, I thought I was connecting dots but on reflection, maybe it's just human nature to try to see patterns in random chaos.

Rebecca stands up, picks up her bag.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 And there's plenty of chaos to see patterns in. You'll have to excuse me, Senator. I have an appointment at the doctor's office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Rebecca sits in a doctor's reception area. She flicks through a magazine. Her coat hangs on a nearby coat stand. An unseen female RECEPTIONIST speaks.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
 The doctor will see you now, Senator.

Rebecca puts down the magazine, stands, picks up her bag.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 Thank you.

INT. DOCTOR'S CONSULTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A dimly lit consulting room. Bright sun outside casts sharp shadows through partially closed window blinds. The door opens, Rebecca comes in, closes the door behind her.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
 Hello Senator. Take a seat. I wondered when you'd stop by.

Rebecca sits down in a chair in front of the doctor's desk.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 I've been under a lot of stress lately so maybe you should check my blood pressure while I'm here.

Standing near her, only the doctor's white coat is visible. On it, a NAME BADGE WE'VE SEEN BEFORE that says "DR. AYWON".

DOCTOR
 Sure. I should write something in the notes anyway for the visit.

The doctor wraps a BLOOD PRESSURE CUFF around Rebecca's arm. She reaches into her bag with her free arm, puts on the desk one of the same BRIGHT YELLOW DUCK SHAPED USB THUMB DRIVES that A2 gave to Bee. The arm cuff expands with a SLOW HISS.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

The latest list from our collective. Usual encryption. There's someone on this list that may be difficult. They're surrounded by a lot of security. Everything we know about them is on the thumb drive.

The doctor's face and glasses become visible. It's the SAME DOCTOR AYWON who recruited Lucia at the hospital.

DOCTOR

Don't worry, we have a valuable new team member who's good at getting close to people. And we also have some new tools that are virtually impossible to defend against.

The air HISSES out of the cuff. The doctor removes it.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Your blood pressure looks fine.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN

Out of morbid curiosity, I want to ask what these new tools are but I think I'll sleep better not knowing. I'm still trying to work out how a politician can avoid shaking hands. Elegant leather gloves may become everyday wear.

The door opens, an unseen third person comes in, the door shuts. Rebecca watches them enter, walk across the room.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN (cont'd)

(to the unseen person)

I didn't know you would join us. I was just telling A.1. that I've been stressed lately. Particularly by the talkative young woman who wanted to tell me all about your department.

A2 sits down in another chair by the wall, facing Rebecca.

A2

She's been dealt with. She won't be talking to anyone again.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN
 Good, because she could have ruined
 everything. The voters love me for
 being their warrior fighting the deep
 state. I hope they never find out...

Rebecca's eyes look directly at us.

REBECCA GIBBON-BROWN (cont'd)
 ...I'm part of it.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. L.A. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOUSE - DAY (SIX MONTHS LATER)

A sunny day. The exterior of a neat suburban home, Lucia's Chevy car in the driveway.

A path from the sidewalk to the front door runs through a lawn, a sprinkler waters the turf. The American Dream distilled into a single dwelling.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Six Months Later"

Rose, Lucia's former tent neighbor, walks along the sidewalk carrying a SMALL OVERNIGHT BAG. She turns into the path through the lawn, walks up to the front door, knocks.

INT. L.A. SUBURBAN FAMILY HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

In the hallway stands a HARD-CASE WHEELED SUITCASE. Lucia, with new hairstyle, new confidence, comes to the door as she puts on a stylish jacket. She opens the door to greet Rose.

LUCIA
 Thanks for coming over Rose. How's
 the new apartment going?

Rose enters, puts down her bag. The door is left wide open.

ROSE
 Feels like I'm living my best life.

LUCIA
 Tilly was really excited when I said
 you were picking her up from
 preschool today. She really loves
 elephants after we went to the zoo so
 I left some elephant stories next to
 her bed that you can read to her.

ROSE

How long will you be gone for this time? Is it Florida again?

LUCIA

No, New England for a couple of days.
(glances outside)
There's my ride to the airport. I left the car keys in the kitchen and there's some cash for you in the Potemkin Paper coffee mug.

A SENIOR CAT saunters through the open doorway into the house. Lucia and Rose look down at it as it passes their ankles. It's easily recognizable. It's the SAME CAT that Archie rescued from the beach house in The Hamptons.

Lucia and Rose look back up at each other.

LUCIA (cont'd)

And Lincoln has lots of his favorite cat food in the kitchen cupboard.

Lucia gives Rose a kiss on the cheek, squeezes her arm.

LUCIA (cont'd)

I'll call when I'm on my way back.

Lucia leaves, towing her luggage. Rose stands in the doorway, calls after Lucia.

ROSE

Take care, whatever you're doing!

EXT. FRONT OF NEW ENGLAND MANSION - EVENING (NEXT DAY)

A driveway sweeps through rolling lawns to an expansive gray stone mansion. A LARGE BLACK SUV CAR cruises along the driveway, stops outside the main house entrance.

From a distance, an Hispanic **CHAUFFEUR**, early-50s, is seen getting out, opens the rear door for the passenger.

A wiry Caucasian white-haired **OLDER MAN**, early-70s, in a dark suit, white shirt, no tie, steps from the car. His mid-Atlantic patrician voice can be heard through the cool air.

OLDER MAN

(to the driver)

That's all for today, Eduardo. I won't be needing you until tomorrow.

CHAUFFEUR
 (Spanish accent)
 Very good, sir.

The older man walks briskly up steps to the front door, disappears inside. The chauffeur gets back in, drives away.

INT. NEW ENGLAND MANSION, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The older man walks across the hallway to a wide, sweeping staircase leading to the upper floor.

He pauses at the bottom step, listens. Silence except for the SWINGING PENDULUM of a large standing clock in the hall.

OLDER MAN
 (calling out)
 Maria? Could you bring me up a whisky
 to the study? You can go home after
 that... Maria?

Silence except for the clock pendulum. He continues up the staircase, takes off his jacket as he ascends.

INT. NEW ENGLAND MANSION, STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

A spacious, opulent study, bookshelves filled with bound books line the walls. Log fire burns in a fireplace.

On the left side is a LARGE ANTIQUE WRITING DESK, simple ANTIQUE CHAIR beside it. On the desk, UNOPENED MAIL next to a YELLOW LEGAL PAD with SILVER BALLPOINT PEN on top.

Beyond the desk, slightly ajar, is the STEEL REINFORCED DOOR OF A PANIC ROOM. The inside of the panic room is dark.

The man enters, throws his jacket on an antique chaise-longue, walks to the desk, leafs through the mail. He takes one envelope, moves away, pulls out a letter, reads it.

There's a GENTLE KNOCKING at the study door. Standing, he continues to read, doesn't look up. Speaks absent-mindedly

OLDER MAN
 Come in Maria.

Two female hands in WHITE GLOVES carry a SMALL ROUND SILVER TRAY with a TUMBLER GLASS OF WHISKY on it, to the desk.

The man looks up, something's not right.

OLDER MAN (cont'd)
You're not Maria. Where's Maria?

Dressed as a housekeeper, Lucia faces him, gloved hands behind her back.

LUCIA
Maria had to go home early. I'm standing in for her. I also brought you a message...

Lucia raises a BLACK GLOCK 9MM GUN WITH SILENCER to his head, the silencer touches his chin.

LUCIA (cont'd)
...from the American people.

Terrified, the man drops the letter, raises his hands.

OLDER MAN
Who are you? What do you want? Are you here to rob me? Do you want money?

He glances sideways at the panic room's steel door.

LUCIA
Your panic room is just a little too far, isn't it? I'd blow your head off before you got inside.

OLDER MAN
Look, I can pay you. How much do you want? I can arrange cash. Delivered to wherever you say.

Lucia steps back, circles behind, keeps the gun on him.

LUCIA
Sit down at the desk.

Still with his hands up, the man sits at the writing desk. Whisky, yellow pad, pen before him, Lucia behind.

LUCIA (cont'd)
You need to calm down. Put your hands down and drink the whisky.

He drops his hands, takes the glass of whisky, smells it.

OLDER MAN
Is this drugged?

LUCIA
No, it's whisky.

He drinks the whisky.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Now write this in the middle of the
yellow pad: 'I feel so guilty'.

The man finishes off the whisky, puts down the glass, takes
the pen, writes the words, puts down the pen.

OLDER MAN
Why did I have to write this?

LUCIA
Stand up, move away from the desk,
put your hands behind you.

He does what she asks. Gun in one hand, Lucia takes METAL
HANDCUFFS from her pocket, clips them onto his wrists.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Don't worry, I'll take the cuffs off
before I leave.

OLDER MAN
Is this about the pharmaceuticals? Is
that what this is about? My lawyers
settled with the government. I paid
billions in the settlement. I was
never charged.

Lucia stands behind him, silencer at the back of his head.

LUCIA
And your name still adorns museums,
galleries and universities. Seems
like you won. Congratulations. Now
walk to the panic room door.

He walks to the panic room with Lucia behind, silencer at
his head. He stops at the partially open door.

LUCIA (cont'd)
Push the door open with your foot.

The man pushes the panic room door wide open with his foot.
The interior remains mostly darkened, not fully visible.

OLDER MAN
What are you going to do?

LUCIA

There was a young man once. He tried to kill me. I told him I was still learning the ropes... I've learned them now.

Lucia flicks a wall switch. A single naked light bulb hangs from the ceiling, it floods the panic room with white light.

Inside stands an open ALUMINUM STEP LADDER. Next to it, also hanging from the ceiling, dangles a HANGMAN'S NOOSE made from thick braided rope.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. AMERICAN DINER - LATE MORNING (TWO DAYS LATER)

Bee sits in a booth sipping coffee, holds open a USA TODAY newspaper. She wears a sweatshirt with a diagram of the SEROTONIN molecule on it, the text "serotonin" above.

Dressed casually, Lucia arrives. Bee lowers the newspaper.

BEE

You made it! I was fixin' to waste away in this booth.

Lucia puts her bag down, sits down opposite Bee.

LUCIA

Sorry I'm late, I was volunteering at Tilly's preschool.

Waitress Suzie comes by, pours coffee into Lucia's mug.

SUZIE

Don't think you two will need menus. The special is corn beef hash with sweet potatoes and eggs.

Lucia looks at Bee who nods back at Lucia and Suzie.

LUCIA

Make that two, Suzie.

SUZIE

Coming up!

Suzie leaves.

LUCIA

What's in the news today?

Bee folds the newspaper, puts it down.

BEE

Second Big Pharma billionaire took his own life. Hanged himself.

LUCIA

That's tragic. What happened to the first billionaire?

BEE

Jumped from his sixty sixth floor Miami penthouse.

LUCIA

Ouch! That must have hurt.

BEE

Two in just a couple of months. Both left short suicide notes.

LUCIA

And your point is?

BEE

You get to figuring. Did they really end their own luxurious lives?

LUCIA

Are you one of those conspiracy nuts who sees hidden forces everywhere? Next, you'll be telling me there's a secret government hit squad at work.

BEE

And maybe a member of that squad has gone rogue, become a vigilante. But then, how would we know?

LUCIA

If they're careful, we wouldn't.

BEE

No, we wouldn't. Anyway, it might be just something they do in their spare time. Bit like a hobby.

LUCIA

Interesting hobby. Not exactly crocheting baby clothes... I was thinking... will you take me to one of those Republican rallies you go to? I'm in the mood for some dog-whistling nationalism.

BEE

Butter my butt and call me a biscuit!
Are you finally reaching across the
aisle? Guess you better see my new
hat.

From beside her, Bee picks up a RAINBOW COLORED GAY PRIDE
CAP, puts it on.

BEE (cont'd)

What do y'all think?

LUCIA

Are you wearing that to the rally?

BEE

Could be a conversation starter.

Bee reaches into her pocket, brings out a BRIGHT YELLOW DUCK
USB WALMART THUMB DRIVE.

BEE (cont'd)

A.2. asked me to give you this... a
new hazard to mitigate.

BEE pushes the duck across the tablet towards Lucia.

BEE (cont'd)

And this one's a doozy!

Lucia picks up, examines the duck. She holds her mug out
towards Bee in a toast.

LUCIA

Long live The Republic.

Bee picks up her mug, bumps it against Lucia's.

BEE

The Republic.

FADE OUT.

THE END