

Rose

written by

Gary Laney

Phone: 971-285-5420  
E-mail: [gjhcl99@gmail.com](mailto:gjhcl99@gmail.com)

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT**

The Flickering streetlights cast jagged shadows across cracked pavement and overgrown yards.

A massive elm tree looms over the street. Balanced high in the branches, **ROSE KINGSTON (30) smart, resourceful and athletic** sits perfectly still. She's clad in a sleek black leather suit, her face lit faintly by the glow of a phone in her hands.

In the distance, the low rumble of an engine. A white van rolls into view, its headlights off.

It slows in front of a abandoned house and reverses into the cracked driveway.

**MAN #1 (40s)**, jittery and wiry, steps out, eyes scanning the empty street.

**MAN #2 (30s)**, broad and menacing, yanks open the van doors.

An **YOUNG GIRL (8)**, unconscious bound and gagged, is slung over his shoulder.

They vanish inside the house.

**EXT. ELM TREE. SAME.**

Game over flashes across the screen. Rose doesn't blink. She calmly types a message.

**ON SCREEN:**

If you want to see your children  
again, be at 1325 S.W. Maple Street  
IMMEDIATELY!

She hits send, slips out of the tree and drops the phone into the open sewer grate.

**INT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - NIGHT.**

From her thigh holsters, she pulls two crackling stun wands.

**MAN #1** peers nervously out the window, tapping his foot.

**MAN #1**

This place gives me the creeps...

The front door slams shut.

He whirls around.

Rose is already airborne, spinning into a vicious roundhouse kick.

Her heel collides with his temple. **MAN #1** drops like a stone.

**MAN #2 (O.S.)**

Yo? You good?

Rose vanishes into the shadows.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.**

The kitchen is a nest of filth—moldy dishes, cockroaches skittering across the counter.

Rose pulls a black rose from inside her jacket.

She sets it delicately on the grimy kitchen table.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.**

**MAN #2** locks the basement door.

**MAN #2 (CONT'D)**

Damn coward.

He turns. Rose explodes from the shadows.

She launches into a flying knee strike, slamming into his chest.

**MAN #2** crashes into the wall, the drywall caving in.

He recovers fast, swinging a crowbar at her head.

Rose ducks, spinning low.

She sweeps his legs with a leg sweep, knocking him to the ground.

He snarls, lunging.

Rose pivots, driving her tanto blade into his shoulder.

**MAN #2** screams, pinned to the floor.

She leans in close.

**ROSE**

Stay down.

She zip ties his hands and feet, and rips the keys from his belt.

**INT. ABANDONED HOUSE. SAME.**

Rose move slowly down the stairs.

Four CHILDREN huddle in rusty cages.

From the shadows below, a THIRD MAN, **LENNY** (40s, muscular), rushes out, swinging a crowbar at Rose. She barely dodges the blow.

**LENNY**

You think you can mess with me,  
lady?!

**ROSE**

You're going to regret this.

The fight is brutal, close-quarters. Rose uses her agility to evade Lenny's brute force, striking with calculated precision. She feints, then sweeps his legs out from under him.

Lenny crashes to the floor.

**LENNY**

You psycho!

**ROSE**

You're done.

She flips Lenny onto his stomach, zip-tying his hands behind his back as he struggles.

Rose approaches cages, unlocking the doors.

Children cower in the cage. Rose extends her hand.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

It's alright. I'm here to take you  
home.

The front door bursts open.

**MOTHER (O.S.)**

My baby! Where is my baby?!

The children sprint upstairs toward the sound.

Rose lingers, listening to the chaos she's ignited.

ROSE  
I thought I'd have more time.

**EXT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - NIGHT.**

Neighbors rush in, parents crying, children screaming.

Police sirens wail, growing louder.

Rose slips out of the house and steps into the cold night, watching the storm unfold.

**EXT. STREET. SAME.**

She approaches her black ninja motorcycle waits under the streetlight.

She swings onto it, casting one last glance at the house.

She vanishes into the night as flashing lights flood the street.

**EXT. RUNDOWN HOUSE. NIGHT.**

Flashing red and blue dance along the walls from the Philadelphia police cruisers.

Officers, with guns drawn, form a perimeter around a dilapidated house.

**OFFICER RAMOS (30s)**, sharp and commanding, takes point.

**OFFICER RAMOS**

Secure the perimeter! No one in or out!

**OFFICER KELLER (40s)**, steady and methodical, approaches the white van in the driveway. He peers inside, hand on his holstered weapon.

**OFFICER KELLER**

Clear. But we've got something in here you'll want to see.

Ramos hurries over. Inside the van, rope, duct tape, and a stained blanket are carelessly strewn about.

**OFFICER RAMOS**

This is bad.

From the house, another officer's voice cracks over the radio.

**OFFICER (RADIO)**

We've got two suspects down inside,  
both alive. Basement's clear. Kids  
are safe.

**RAMOS**

What the hell...?

The officers exchange uneasy glances.

An unmarked black sedan pulls up.

**DETECTIVE ALEX MORROW (50s)** steps out, wearing a long coat  
that flaps in the wind. His face is lined with years of  
experience and sleepless nights.

He approaches, his eyes locked on the house.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Third one in six months. Tell me  
this one's different.

**RAMOS**

Not by much. The perps are inside,  
unconscious. All three hogtied with  
industrial zip ties.

Morrow raises an eyebrow.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Alive?

**RAMOS**

Nobody's dead. No visible injuries  
beyond a few bruises. No witnesses  
saw anything. But...

He hesitates.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

But what?

**RAMOS**

There's something waiting for you  
inside.

Morrow's jaw tightens, as he walks to the house. Ramos  
follows.

**INT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT.**

Morrow's enters the foul-smelling kitchen.

On the grimy kitchen table, sits a single, flawless black rose.

Morrow stares at it, expression darkening.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Again with the rose. What the hell.

**RAMOS**

Same as the last two. No fingerprints. No DNA. Just this.

Morrow doesn't respond. He studies the rose like it's mocking him.

**RAMOS (CONT'D)**

We've got families who need answers, Detective.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Yeah, so do I.

Morrow turns and moves deeper into the house.

In the corner, children cling to their sobbing parents.

Nearby, **MAN #1** lies slumped against the wall his arms bound tightly behind him with zip ties.

**MAN #2 & MAN #3** is sprawled on the floor, wrists and ankles secured the same way, a strip of duct tape haphazardly covering his mouth.

Morrow kneels beside **MAN #1**, inspecting the zip ties.

**DETECTIVE MORROW (CONT'D)**

Professional. Tight, clean. No struggling. No panic.

He looks to Ramos

**DETECTIVE MORROW (CONT'D) (CONT'D)**

This wasn't some Good Samaritan.  
This was tactical.

**RAMOS**

Whoever did this knew exactly how to handle them without leaving a mark.

Morrow's gaze hardens, he straightens up, thinking.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

They could've killed them. But they didn't

Morrow slaps man 1 back to consciousness.

**MAN #1**

Huh. What?

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Can you describe who did this?

**MAN #1**

She was hot.

**DETECTIVE MORROW**

Thanks, thats helpful. Take him away.

Ramos helps man 1 to his feet.

**RAMOS**

Let's go.

**MAN #1**

Hey, I'm the victim here.

**EXT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - NIGHT.**

More Philadelphia police officers canvas the area. Officers speak to terrified parents while children cling to their sides.

A news van pulls up, reporters stepping out, cameras rolling.

Morrow steps outside, watching the chaos.

**MORROW**

Another dead end.

He pulls out a pack of gum, chewing slowly, eyes scanning the rooftops, the trees, the shadows.

**EXT. 50s-STYLE FIREHOUSE - DAY.**

The morning sun gleams on the brick of a 50s-style firehouse. A mix of vintage charm and half-finished renovations, tools scattered around.

Inside, the hum of a circular saw blends with jazz playing from a speaker.

**INT. FIREHOUSE - WORKSHOP AREA - DAY.**

Rose stands at a workbench, her hair tied back in a messy bun. She sands a wooden beam, a distraction from the storm in her mind.

A whiteboard dominates one wall, covered in pinned articles, police reports, and crime scene photos. Strings of red connect different cities: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago. In the center, one word: Motive?

Behind her, the firehouse door creaks open. **MASON REEVES (50s)**, a towering ex military man with a shaved head, steps in. Dressed casually, he carries two cups of coffee.

**MASON**

You know, most people take a break on Sundays, Rose.

Rose glances back, faintly smiling.

**ROSE**

Good morning to you, too, Mason.

Mason holds out a cup.

**MASON**

Thought you could use this.

Rose sets down the sander, wipes her hands on a rag, and takes the coffee.

**ROSE**

Thanks.

Mason surveys the firehouse, nodding approvingly.

**MASON**

It's coming along. Starting to feel like home yet?

**ROSE**

Not quite. Too much to do.

Mason's eyes settle on the whiteboard. He moves closer, his brows furrowing.

Mason gestures at the board.

**MASON**

Still digging into those fires?

Rose drinks her coffee.

**ROSE**

They're connected. I know it. Fires in L.A, New York and Chicago The patterns, the timing, it's not random.

**MASON**

And the police?

**ROSE**

They're not interested. Corporate money has a way of keeping investigations... unfocused.

Mason studies the board closer. His gaze shifts to a cluster of documents on the lower corner, a police report on a car accident, accompanied by a faded photograph of Rose's mother.

**MASON**

You're still chasing this, too.

Rose's posture stiffens, her casual demeanor evaporating.

**ROSE**

I'm not chasing anything.

**MASON**

Rose.

She turns sharply, her voice edged with frustration.

**ROSE**

What do you want me to say, Mason?  
That I've let it go? That I'm okay  
with what happened?

Mason holds her gaze, unflinching.

**MASON**

No. I want you to admit it's  
tearing you and your father apart.

Rose exhales, the fight draining from her. She looks away, running a hand through her hair.

**ROSE**

He won't talk about it. He never did. Just buried himself in work like it would fix everything.

**MASON**

And you?

Rose takes another sip of coffee, staring at the whiteboard.

**MASON** (CONT'D)

He's turning sixty this week.  
There's a party—big, fancy,  
everything your dad hates but  
pretends to enjoy. You're going,  
right?

Rose sets the coffee down.

**ROSE**

I don't know. Maybe .

**MASON**

You should. Life's too short. Your  
mom wouldn't have wanted—

**ROSE**

Don't.

Mason raises his hands in surrender, sensing the line he's  
crossed.

**MASON**

Fair enough.

He gestures to the board again.

**MASON** (CONT'D)

Just don't let all this consume  
you. I've seen what obsession does  
to people.

**ROSE**

I'll be fine.

**MASON**

I'll hold you to that.

As he turns to leave, he pauses, glancing back.

**MASON** (CONT'D)

I'm still better than you with a  
blade, you know.

Rose smirks, the tension easing.

**ROSE**

Keep telling yourself that, Old man.

**MASON**

See you at the gym tomorrow at 4.

Mason chuckles as he exits.

**INT. FIREHOUSE - LATER.**

Rose stands in front of the whiteboard, her eyes locked on the connections she's made. Her fingers hover over her mother's photo, then trace a line to the corporate fires.

**ROSE**

Justice isn't about exposing  
truths; it's about protecting the  
innocent.

Rose walks to her workstation, surrounded by files, police reports, and photos related to her mother's car accident.

She stares at the police report on the accident: Vehicle collision - Cause: Brake failure. Next to it, a grainy photo of her mother's car—a twisted heap of metal.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Brake failure, or sabotage?

She opens a new file titled Witness Statements.

As Rose reviews the file, we hear snippets of witness testimonies in voiceover, interspersed with flashback visuals of the accident site.

**WITNESS #1 (V.O.)**

I heard this loud screeching, and  
then... bam! The car just plowed  
into the guardrail.

**WITNESS #2 (V.O.)**

The driver didn't slow down. Almost  
like... the brakes weren't working.

**WITNESS #3 (V.O.)**

There was this guy—suit and tie—  
hanging around after the crash.  
Looked out of place. Took a call  
and left real quick.

Rose pauses on the third statement, her pen tapping the desk. She scans a highlighted name: Unknown Male - Dark Suit.

**ROSE**

Who were you?

She pulls up an *inspection report* from the vehicle's post-crash analysis. It confirms the brakes were possibly tampered with.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Of course.

Rose opens grainy traffic camera footage from the day of the accident. The video shows her mother's car moving through an intersection moments before the crash. She slows the footage to examine the cars around it.

In one frame, a black SUV lingers just behind her mother's car. A man in a suit is visible in the driver's seat, speaking into a phone.

Rose rewinds the footage, leaning closer.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Black SUV. Witness #3 said you were there.

She snaps a screenshot and runs it through an *open-source license plate tracker*.

The tracker pings back a result: The SUV is registered to Titan Core Security.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

So Titan Core isn't just about fires. You've been covering your tracks all along.

Rose flips to a section of the police report labeled Witness Accounts Missing. A name has been redacted: Jason N. [REDACTED].

Her laptop buzzes with a new email notification. It's from a confidential informant: Info on Jason Novak attached.

She clicks the attachment, revealing a scanned driver's license.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Finally.

**INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT.**

Rose gears in dark, tactical attire. She drops a couple of smoke grenade into her purse and tucks a small recorder into her pocket.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Time for answers.

She glances at her mother's picture on the whiteboard.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

I won't let this go.

The police scanner crackles to life.

**DISPATCHER (V.O.)**

Attention all units, structure fire at Argon Capital. Fire confirmed on the second floor. Night crew reported trapped inside.

She bolts to her gear, grabbing her tactical jacket, mask, and a small rescue bag.

**ROSE**

Let's see if this was an accident.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - NIGHT.**

The scene is chaos. Firefighters are deploying hoses. Police push back a growing crowd of onlookers. The flames on the second floor have begun spreading upward, and the windows explode outward in bursts of glass and heat.

A group of evacuated workers shout frantically behind the police barricade.

**FIREFIGHTER**

(to a POLICE OFFICER)

Three still inside! Stairs are gone, and we can't get the ladder truck in position!

Rose scans the scene, her eyes locking on the construction crane towering beside a half-finished building next door.

**ROSE**

I'm not waiting for a ladder truck.

**EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT.**

Rose sprints up the scaffolding of the building, Sparks and ash rain down as the fire grows more intense. She reaches the crane's control booth and flips the activation switches.

The crane's arm groans as it rotates toward the burning building. Rose climbs onto the platform, grips the controls, and guides it closer to the rooftop of Argon Capital.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT.**

The crane platform shudders as Rose leaps onto the rooftop, her boots landing hard on the gravel. Smoke pours out of rooftop vents, and the air is thick with heat. She pulls her mask over her face and rushes toward a rooftop access door.

**INT. ARGON CAPITAL - UPPER FLOORS - NIGHT.**

The stairwell is filled with smoke, the walls scorched black. Rose descends cautiously, using a small flashlight to navigate.

A sudden crack makes her freeze. A flaming beam collapses inches behind her, blocking the way back up.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

No going back now.

**INT. ARGON CAPITAL - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT.**

Rose bursts onto the second floor, where flames crawl along the ceiling. She hears muffled cries nearby and moves quickly, dodging falling debris.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

I'm here to help! Where are you?

**EMPLOYEE #1 (O.S.)**

Over here!

Rose locates a locked office door. Smoke seeps out from the edges. She grabs a crowbar from her bag and *pries the door open*. Inside, three employees—two men and a woman—cower beneath a desk.

**ROSE**

We need to move!

**EMPLOYEE #2**

The stairs—blocked—there's no way out!

Rose helps them to their feet, handing each a mask from her bag.

**ROSE**

Cover your faces. Stay close to me.

Suddenly, a section of the ceiling collapses, sending a wave of flames into the room. The group dives to the floor as sparks rain down.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Get up! Now! Move!

**INT. ARGON CAPITAL - STAIRWELL - NIGHT.**

Rose leads the group up toward the rooftop. Smoke thickens, and one man collapses, coughing violently.

**EMPLOYEE #1**

I can't.

Rose hauls him up, practically carrying him as they climb.

**ROSE**

You're not dying here. Move!

They finally burst onto the rooftop, gasping for fresh air. Below, the flames continue to spread as firefighters battle to control the blaze.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT.**

Rose guides the group toward the crane platform, now hovering near the edge of the roof.

**EMPLOYEE #3**

We're supposed to jump on that?!

**ROSE**

Trust me, or stay here and burn.

A loud groan from below cuts through the air—the building's structure is failing. Flames shoot up from the lower levels.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Go! Now!

She helps them into the crane platform one by one.

**INT. CRANE CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT.**

Rose operates the crane remotely, guiding the platform away from the building. Lowering it toward the ground.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT.**

Rose exhales in relief, but her moment is cut short by a loud crack.

The rooftop beneath her begins to crumble. She sprints toward the crane arm as the roof collapses behind her, flames roaring upward.

She leaps for the crane's arm, catching it just in time. She dangles over the inferno for a tense moment before pulling herself onto the platform.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - STREET LEVEL - NIGHT.**

The crowd gasps as the crane platform swings back toward the construction site. Rose clings to the arm, her mask askew, smoke and soot streaking her face.

She jumps off onto the construction site roof, rolling to safety as the crane groans to a halt.

**EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - ROOF - NIGHT.**

Rose stands staring at the blazing Argon Capital building. The crowd and emergency responders below look up at her.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Another fire, another secret.

She turns and disappears into the shadows.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - MORNING.**

The Argon Capital building is a charred shell, its facade blackened from the inferno. The street remains cordoned off, with police cruisers, fire trucks, and forensic vans parked nearby. Firefighters and investigators comb through the wreckage, gathering evidence.

A group of reporters clamors behind the barricades, shouting questions at the officials on-site. Rose Kingston, dressed in a sharp blazer with her press badge visible, stands at the edge of the crowd. Her face is calm, but her eyes are sharp, scanning the scene.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Let's see what they're hiding.

She adjusts her press badge and pushes through the crowd toward the barricade.

**INT. ARGON CAPITAL - LOBBY - DAY.**

Rose flashes her badge at a **POLICE OFFICER (20)** guarding the entrance.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Rose Kingston, *West Coast Sentinel*.  
I need a comment on the investigation.

**OFFICER**

No comment. The scene's restricted.

**ROSE**

Really? Because I see other reporters walking around.

The officer scowls, but before he can reply, a fire chief steps over, clipboard in hand.

**FIRE CHIEF**

Ms. Kingston, we're not ready to release anything. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

**ROSE**

That's interesting. I hear the building's fire alarms didn't go off. That suggests tampering.

The Fire Chief stiffens.

**FIRE CHIEF**

Where did you hear that?

**ROSE**

Let me in, and maybe I'll tell you.

The Chief glares at her, but after a tense beat, waves her through.

**FIRE CHIEF**

Ten minutes. Stay out of the way.

**ROSE**

Deal.

**INT. ARGON CAPITAL - SECOND FLOOR - DAY.**

The second floor is a scorched ruin. Blackened beams dangle precariously from the ceiling, and the smell of smoke and burnt wiring lingers in the air. Firefighters sift through the wreckage, while forensic investigators take photos and bag evidence.

Rose moves cautiously, careful as she examines the debris, snapping photos with her phone.

Her spots a cluster of burned office equipment near a window. Something catches her attention—a small metallic *canister*, charred but intact, partially hidden beneath the rubble.

She kneels, brushing ash away from the object. It's a chemical accelerant canister with faint, printed text on its side.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

This doesn't belong here.

She glances around, making sure no one is watching, and quickly snaps a photo of the canister.

Rose starts to leave, but a forensic **FORENSIC TECHNICIAN (30)** blocks her path, looking suspicious.

**TECHNICIAN**

Hey! You're not supposed to be poking around.

Rose flashes her press badge and smiles.

**ROSE**

Just getting some background for my article. Want to comment on the lack of sprinkler activation?

The technician hesitates, caught off guard.

**TECHNICIAN**

That's not... confirmed.

**ROSE**

Right. Well, I'm sure my readers will love hearing about the "mystery" surrounding the fire.

The technician frowns but steps aside, muttering under his breath.

**EXT. ARGON CAPITAL - DAY.**

Rose steps outside, moving quickly she pulls out her phone and examines the photo of the accelerant canister.

She types the text into a search engine: Phoenix Materials - Accelerants Division. A logo matching the canister pops up, along with the name of a subsidiary: Titan Core Chemicals.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

There you are.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

You're leaving breadcrumbs.

Her phone buzzes. She glances at the screen: a text from an anonymous contact.

**TEXT:** If you're looking at Titan Core, be careful. They play dirty.

Rose's eyes narrow as she pockets her phone.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

You can try to scare me. It won't work.

**INT. BOXING GYM - DAY.**

The boxing gym buzzes with energy. In the center ring, Rose Kingston spars with Mason.

Rose's movements are fast but a little sloppy, her punches missing their usual precision. Mason blocks her easily, moving with the ease of a seasoned fighter.

**MASON**

You're telegraphing your right cross, Rose. Focus.

**ROSE**

I'm focused.

Mason smirks and sidesteps her next jab, sweeping her legs out from under her. Rose hits the mat with a grunt, staring up at him.

**MASON**

Clearly.

He offers her a hand, pulling her up.

**MASON (CONT'D)**

You've been distracted all week.  
What's going on?

Rose wipes her brow with her glove, catching her breath.

**ROSE**

Work. Wedding stuff. Dad's birthday. Take your pick.

Mason tosses her a towel and leans against the ropes

**MASON**

You're trying to do everything at once.

**ROSE**

Yeah, it's called multitasking.

**MASON**

It's called burnout. Look, your dad's retiring. I've got plenty of free time now. Let me help.

Rose hesitates, wrapping her hands with the towel as she considers his offer.

**ROSE**

Help with what, exactly?

**MASON**

Anything. Talk to your dad about the party, run interference with your sister, hell, I'll even wear a suit to the wedding if I have to.

**ROSE**

That's a scary thought.

**MASON**

I mean it, Rose. You've got a lot on your plate, and you're not great at asking for help.

**ROSE**

Thanks, Mason. I'll let you know.

**MASON**

You'd better.

Rose's phone buzzes on the bench. She glances at the screen and groans when she sees the name, **LINDA KINGSTON (30)**.

**ROSE**

Saved by Linda.

Rose answers the phone.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(into phone)

Hey, sis.

**LINDA (V.O.)**

Hey, sis. That's all I get? Do you know what time it is?

Rose glances at the clock on the wall, her brow furrowing.

**ROSE**

Uh, mid-morning?

**LINDA (V.O.)**

It's now, Rose. As in, you're supposed to be here now for my dress fitting.

Rose winces, rubbing her temple.

**ROSE**

Ah, sis, I'm sorry. I got caught up in—

**LINDA** (V.O.)

Work. Right. Of course. But, FYI, this isn't just about me. You're a bridesmaid, remember? And your dress is red.

**ROSE**

How could I forget? You've reminded me at least a hundred times.

**LINDA** (V.O.)

Because you keep giving me reasons to! The wedding's in ten days, Rose. This is important to me.

**ROSE**

I know, I know. I'll get there.

**LINDA** (V.O.)

You'd better. Mom's gone, Dad's distracted, and I really need my sister right now.

**ROSE**

I'll be there, Sis. I promise. I'm on my way.

**LINDA** (V.O.)

Good. And don't forget—you owe me for bailing you out of dress drama last month.

**ROSE**

Yeah, yeah. See you soon

Linda groans and hangs up before Rose can say more.

**INT. BOXING GYM - DAY.**

Rose pockets her phone, shaking her head.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)

Apparently, I'm late to yet another wedding thing.

**MASON**

You're running yourself ragged. You sure you don't need me to step in?

**ROSE**

I'll manage.

**MASON**

I mean it, Rose. You don't have to do this alone.

**ROSE**

Thanks, Mason.

She grabs her bag and heads toward the door, throwing one last quip over her shoulder.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

I'll call you when I need a wedding date.

**MASON**

Just say the word!

**INT. BRIDAL BOUTIQUE - DAY.**

Soft classical music plays in the background. The *bridal boutique* is bright and pristine, with rows of elegant gowns lining the walls. Linda stands on a raised platform in front of a trio of mirrors, wearing a stunning, lace-embroidered wedding dress. A tailor pins the hem while Linda examines her reflection critically.

Rose strides in, still in her leather jacket and boots, looking wildly out of place.

**ROSE**

I'm here. Don't yell.

Linda spots her in the mirror and lets out a dramatic sigh.

**LINDA**

I should yell. You're late. Again.

**ROSE**

Sorry.

Linda raises an eyebrow, unconvinced, but lets it go.

**LINDA**

Fine. You're forgiven, for now. Go try on your dress. It's in the fitting room.

**INT. BRIDAL BOUTIQUE - FITTING ROOM - DAY.**

Rose emerges a few minutes later wearing a sleek *red bridesmaid dress*. It fits perfectly but feels entirely wrong for someone like her.

**LINDA (CONT'D)**

You clean up pretty well.

**ROSE**

I feel like I should be handing out  
cocktails.

Linda laughs and smooths a wrinkle on Rose's dress.

**LINDA**

It's a bridesmaid dress, not a  
uniform. You'll survive.

Rose studies herself in the mirror, tugging at the neckline.

**ROSE**

Barely.

**LINDA**

Thanks for showing up. It means a  
lot.

Rose meets Linda's eyes in the mirror.

**ROSE**

Of course. It's your big day.

Linda studies Rose for a moment.

**LINDA**

So... Dad's birthday party. You're  
going, right?

**ROSE**

I wasn't sure if I should.

**LINDA**

Rose. He's turning sixty. Mom  
would've made it a huge deal if she  
were still here. He's been trying  
to hold things together, even if  
he's terrible at showing it.

Rose sighs, fiddling with the hem of the dress.

**ROSE**

I know. I just... it's complicated.

**LINDA**

I get it. But he's still our dad.  
He's not perfect, but he loves you.

Rose looks down, her defenses cracking slightly.

**ROSE**

I'll be there.

**LINDA**

Good. He'll appreciate it, even if he doesn't say it.

**ROSE**

You sure you don't want me to wear this dress to the party? Might steal the spotlight.

Linda laughs, the tension between them easing.

**LINDA**

Stick to your leather jackets, badass.

**INT. BRIDAL BOUTIQUE - DAY.**

Rose changes back into her clothes and returns to find Linda back on the platform, admiring her dress.

**ROSE**

You're gonna knock everyone's socks off.

Linda beams at her reflection.

**LINDA**

Including you. And don't forget—you're walking down the aisle, too.

**ROSE**

I'll be there. Promise.

**INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY.**

The *West Coast Sentinel* newsroom is mostly quiet, the hum of overhead lights and the faint tapping of keyboards echoing in the background. Rose sits at her cluttered desk in the research archives, surrounded by stacks of documents, printouts, and her laptop.

Her screen displays detailed reports of fires at three corporate buildings: Argon Capital (L.A.), Stratford Equity (New York), and Elliot Holdings (Chicago). She types furiously, her eyes darting between the files and the map pinned on the wall nearby.

Rose's desk is a battlefield of open folders, highlighted documents, and notes scribbled on scraps of paper. She writes furiously in her notebook, muttering to herself.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Argon Capital—big tech investments.  
Stratford Equity—global real estate  
dominance. Elliot Holdings—banking  
and cryptocurrency.

She types a search into her laptop: Titan Core acquisition timelines.

The screen floods with press releases and news reports. She clicks one: Titan Core to Acquire Elliot Holdings Amid Financial Instability.

Her eyes narrow. She clicks another link: Stratford Equity's Decline Sparks Speculation of Sale to Titan Core.

Rose pulls a timeline from her desk and jots down dates. Each fire coincides with failed acquisition talks between Titan Core and the affected companies.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(reading aloud)

Fire weakens the company. Stocks  
plummet. Titan Core swoops in.

She pins the new evidence onto her board, connecting the dots with red string.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

It's not arson—it's sabotage.

**INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - BULLPEN - DAY.**

Rose walks briskly to her editor's desk. **EDGAR SLOANE (50s,)** sits with his tie loosened, sipping stale coffee. He looks up as she approaches.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Edgar, I've got something.

**EDGAR**

This better be good, Rose. We're  
holding your story back for the  
third time.

She sets a stack of documents on his desk, spreading them out: articles, timelines, financial reports, and a photo of the accelerant canister she found at the Argon fire.

**ROSE**

It's not just a series of fires.  
It's a strategy.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

Titan Core's been targeting its competitors—Argon, Stratford, Elliot—crippling them with these fires, then buying them out for next to nothing.

Edgar picks up the photo of the canister, squinting at it.

EDGAR

This accelerant. You're saying Titan Core planted it?

ROSE

No one else benefits from these fires. Every target is a company they've been circling for months.

Edgar leans forward, scanning her notes.

EDGAR

This is thin, Rose. You've got circumstantial evidence and a theory. I need facts. I need results.

ROSE

Give me one more day. Let me dig a little deeper.

EDGAR

We don't have time for "one more day." The board wants something big on the front page tomorrow.

Rose stiffens, frustration flickering in her eyes.

ROSE

Edgar, this story is bigger than a daily headline. If we push too early, we'll miss the real players behind this.

EDGAR

Or we'll miss the window altogether. News doesn't wait, Rose.

Rose glares at him.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Get me something concrete by morning. Or I'm pulling you off this.

He takes a sip of coffee, dismissing her with a pointed glance.

**INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - RESEARCH DESK - DAY.**

Back at her desk, Rose stares at her board, tension etched into her face. The names *Titan Core* and *Victor Steele* loom large at the center of her investigation.

Her phone buzzes. She glances at the screen: a message from her source.

**TEXT:** Meet me tonight. 10 PM. Dock 17, Harbor District. Info on the fires.

She grabs her jacket and glances back at the board.

**ROSE**

Concrete, Edgar? I'll give you more than that.

She storms out of the office.

**EXT. DOCK 17 - NIGHT.**

The harbor district is shrouded in mist, lit by flickering streetlights.

Rose stands with **Jason Novak (30)** near a stack of shipping containers.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Jason Novak?

**JASON**

Yeah... you're Kingston?

**ROSE**

That's me. You've got something on Titan Core.

Jason nods quickly, glancing over his shoulder.

**JASON**

Look, I don't have much time. If they find out I talked to you—

**ROSE**

Focus. Why are they setting these fires?

Jason hesitates, then thrusts the folder at her.

**JASON**

Here. It's all in there.

Rose opens the folder, flipping through photos, financial documents, and internal memos.

**ROSE**

These fires... they're not just about corporate takeovers.

Jason steps closer, his voice shaking.

**JASON**

They're covering up something bigger.

Rose pulls out a grainy photo of what looks like a storage facility, with men loading trucks in the dead of night. Another document shows a bank account linked to Titan Core Investments and a shell company flagged for illegal transfers.

**ROSE**

This isn't just arson.

**JASON**

It's funding. The fires destabilize companies, but that's not the endgame. The insurance payouts and asset liquidations—they're funneling that money into offshore accounts.

Jason flips to another page: a shipping manifest for containers marked with coded labels.

**JASON (CONT'D)**

They're using it to fund trafficking operations.

**ROSE**

Human trafficking?

**JASON**

Not just humans. Children. Big money in child trafficking.

**ROSE**

How do you know this?

Jason pulls out a torn receipt, stamped with Phoenix Materials, one of Titan Core's subsidiaries.

**JASON**

I worked on their supply chain. I started noticing discrepancies—containers going missing, shipments rerouted to ports off the radar. When I dug deeper, I found this.

He points to a coded memo in the folder.

**JASON (CONT'D)**

Special cargo. That's their euphemism. These fires are just a smokescreen to keep regulators distracted while they move product through the ports.

Rose stares at the evidence, her mind racing.

**ROSE**

Milner Financial. Are they connected?

Jason nods, sweat dripping down his face.

**JASON**

Milner's next, they've been blocking Titan Core's expansion into cryptocurrency. Titan Core needs crypto to keep laundering the profits from the trade. Milner's in their way, so they're taking them out.

A black SUV screeches into view, its headlights slicing through the fog.

**JASON (CONT'D)**

They found me!

**ROSE**

Wait.

Jason bolts into the maze of containers. Two men in suits step out of the SUV, their movements cold and precise. One draws a gun.

**GUNMAN 1**

Stop him.

The second man spots Rose and raises his weapon.

**GUNMAN 2**

And her.

Gunfire erupts, bullets ricocheting off the shipping containers. Rose ducks behind a stack, gripping the folder tightly. She takes a smoke grenade from her purse, and tosses it toward the nearest container.

JASON

Who the hell are you, lady?

Using the distraction cover, Rose sprints to her motorcycle parked nearby. Jason runs to his car.

ROSE

Time to run.

She revs the engine and speeds off, weaving between containers as the SUV roars back to life in pursuit.

**EXT. DOCK ROADS - NIGHT.**

Rose bursts onto the main dock road, the SUV's headlights glaring in her mirrors. The tires of her motorcycle screech as she takes a sharp turn, aiming for the narrow paths between warehouses.

**INT. SUV - NIGHT.**

The driver grips the wheel tightly, his partner scanning ahead.

GUNMAN 1

Cut her off!

The SUV accelerates, smashing through a stack of pallets in pursuit.

**EXT. WAREHOUSE ALLEYWAYS - NIGHT.**

Rose zips through a tight alley between two warehouses, narrowly avoiding a dumpster. The SUV barrels after her, scraping the walls but forcing its way through.

Ahead, a stack of metal drums blocks Rose's path. She leans low, gripping the handlebars, and guns the engine. The motorcycle launches off a small ramp, soaring over the drums.

The SUV crashes into them, sending drums flying and slowing it down.

Rose glances back.

ROSE

Stay down.

**EXT. INDUSTRIAL ROAD - NIGHT.**

Rose hits the open road, her speed climbing. The SUV recovers and gains on her.

A second SUV appears ahead, blocking the road.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)  
You've got friends.

She veers sharply onto a side road, leading into a sprawling industrial park.

**EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT.**

Rose weaves through a maze of towering machinery and storage tanks. She spots a row of steel beams suspended by a crane.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)  
Let's see how good you are at dodging.

Rose speeds toward the crane and ducks beneath the beams. The first SUV misjudges the height and *slams into the beams*, crumpling on impact.

The second SUV skids to a stop, narrowly avoiding the wreck.

**GUNMAN 2**  
(into radio)  
She's heading east.

**EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT.**

Rose heads for a narrow bridge over the harbor, the second SUV hot on her trail. As she reaches the middle, she notices a construction zone up ahead, with heavy machinery blocking part of the bridge.

**ROSE**  
Time to improvise.

She accelerates, aiming for a *makeshift ramp*. The motorcycle launches into the air, clearing the barricade and landing hard on the other side.

The SUV slams on the brakes but skids into the barricade, teetering on the edge of the bridge.

Rose glances back briefly, then speeds off into the night.

**EXT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT.**

Rose pulls up to the firehouse, her motorcycle screeching to a halt. She hops off, still clutching the folder.

Mason steps out of his car.

**MASON**

Let me guess—another quiet night?

Rose holds up the folder.

**ROSE**

I got what I needed.

Mason gestures toward the bike.

**MASON**

And almost got yourself killed  
doing it.

Rose smirks, already heading inside.

**ROSE**

Wouldn't be the first time

**INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT.**

Papers, crime scene photos, and documents from Jason Novak's folder are spread across the central table. The corkboard is a chaotic web of red string connecting Titan Core, Phoenix Materials, and the fires.

Rose and Mason stand over the blueprint of Milner Financial HQ, locked in an intense discussion.

**MASON**

The fires always start in critical areas—records, servers, infrastructure. But that doesn't stop them. They've got fall guys to take the heat, and titan stays clean.

**ROSE**

Then we catch someone who's not supposed to take the fall.

**MASON**

You're talking about the arsonist.

**ROSE**

They're the weak link. Someone's got to plant those accelerants, set the fire, make sure it spreads fast enough. If we grab them before the fire gets out of control, we can flip them.

**MASON**

And hope they'll talk?

**ROSE**

If they're smart, they will. Titan doesn't leave loose ends, and they know it.

**MASON**

So we're not just stopping the fire  
—we're setting a trap.

**ROSE**

Exactly.

Rose marks a spot on the Milner Financial blueprint, circling the records room and server core on the lower levels.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

This is where they'll start. Fires in confined spaces—quick spread, high damage. If I can get inside early, I can pinpoint the accelerants and wait for them.

**MASON**

You'll need to be in and out before the fire takes off. One wrong move, and you're trapped.

**ROSE**

Then I'll make the right moves.

**MASON**

Still cocky. Some things never change.

**MASON (CONT'D)**

I'll cover the security detail. Shift change is the weak point, right?

**ROSE**

Guards rotating out, less attention on the cameras.

**MASON**

I can keep their eyes busy long enough for you to move in. But what happens when we catch this guy?

Rose pulls zip ties and a voice recorder from her bag, tossing them onto the table.

**ROSE**

We take them alive. Get their confession. That's how we get Titan Core.

**MASON**

If they don't talk?

**ROSE**

They'll talk.

**MASON**

This is risky, Rose. If they catch wind of this—

**ROSE**

They won't.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

We stop the fire, catch the arsonist, and get them to flip. If we don't, Titan Core keeps burning and trafficking, and more people get hurt.

**MASON**

Then we're all in.

Rose and Mason load gear into Mason's car: tactical equipment, a portable fire extinguisher.

**MASON (CONT'D)**

You sure about this whole walk into a burning building, plan?

**ROSE**

You're welcome to stay in the car.

Mason chuckles, shaking his head.

**MASON**

Let's go catch an arsonist.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - LOWER LEVELS - NIGHT.**

Rose moves cautiously through the dimly lit hallway. The faint smell of chemicals hangs in the air. She heads toward the records room.

**INT. RECORDS ROOM - NIGHT.**

At the far end of the room, a hooded figure crouches, pouring liquid accelerant onto the floor.

Rose steps forward, her voice cutting through the silence.

**ROSE**

Put it down.

The arsonist turns slowly, their face obscured by a hood and scarf. He pulls a lighter.

**ARSONIST**

You don't belong here.

**ROSE**

Neither do you.

The arsonist suddenly tosses the lighter at the accelerant. Rose lunges, kicking it midair before it lands, extinguishing the flame.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Not tonight.

The arsonist charges at Rose swinging a metal canister at Rose's head. She ducks, the canister smashing into a filing cabinet, denting it with a loud clang. Rose counters with a sharp jab to the arsonist's ribs, forcing them back.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

You're not walking out of here.

The grabs a metal rod from the floor, swinging it with brutal force. Rose barely blocks it with her forearm, the impact making her wince. She retaliates with a quick kick to the arsonist's knee, causing them to stagger.

The arsonist recovers quickly, slamming the rod into a nearby shelf. The shelving unit topples toward Rose, forcing her to dive and roll out of the way.

**ARSONIST**

You're in over your head.

**ROSE**

Says the one losing.

The drops the rod, pulling a small knife from their belt. They lunge at Rose, slashing wildly. Rose sidesteps, narrowly avoiding the blade, and grabs the arsonist's wrist, twisting it.

Rose uses her elbows and knees to land quick, precise strikes, but the arsonist counters with surprising agility.

The arsonist slams Rose against a filing cabinet, pinning her with their forearm. Rose grabs a stapler from the cabinet and smashes it into the arsonist's temple, disorienting them.

**ARSONIST**

You'll regret that.

Rose grabs her tactical knife from her belt and slashes upward, grazing the arsonist's cheek. Blood drips from the fresh cut. The arsonist roars in anger and headbutts Rose, knocking her back.

The arsonist grabs another **canister of accelerant** and hurls it at Rose. It crashes into a cabinet behind her, spilling liquid everywhere.

Rose flips backward and grabs a nearby fire extinguisher and sprays it directly at the arsonist, disorienting them further.

The arsonist coughs and stumbles back but pulls out a smoke grenade, throwing it at Rose's feet.

The room fills with thick smoke, reducing visibility to almost zero. Rose coughs, hears their footsteps retreating toward the door.

**ROSE**

Not so fast.

She charges through the smoke, tackling the arsonist to the ground. The two struggle violently, trading punches and grappling for control. The arsonist kicks Rose off, slamming her into a cabinet.

The arsonist scrambles to their feet and bolts out of the room.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT.**

Rose stumbles out of the smoke-filled records room, coughing. She spots the arsonist sprinting toward the stairwell.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(into radio)

Mason, he's heading your way!

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - SOUTH EXIT - NIGHT.**

The arsonist bursts out of the building, blood dripping from their cheek. Mason steps into their path, baton in hand.

**MASON**

Not so fast, pal.

The arsonist throws a wild punch. Mason deflects it and lands a clean strike to their ribs.

**MASON (CONT'D)**

You're out of moves.

The arsonist smirks, pulling another smoke grenade and dropping. The sudden cloud of smoke forces Mason to retreat, coughing. When it clears, the arsonist is gone.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - NIGHT.**

Rose runs up to Mason, frustrated.

**ROSE**

He got away?

Mason nods toward her knife, now streaked with blood.

**MASON**

Not unscathed.

Rose glances at the knife, her jaw tightening.

**ROSE**

I'll finish him.

Mason smirks faintly, shaking his head.

**MASON**

You're relentless, you know that?

**ROSE**

This isn't over.

**EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY.**

Marrow pauses at the Ninja motorcycle, jotting down notes in his small notepad. He glances at the address again before stepping up to the front door. He knocks firmly.

**INT. FIREHOUSE. DAY.**

Rose, dressed in casual jeans and a loose sweater, opens the door.

**ROSE**

Can I help you?

Marrow flashes his badge.

**MARROW**

Detective Marrow, Philadelphia PD.  
Are you Eleanor Kingston?

**ROSE**

Nobody calls me Eleanor. I go by  
Rose.

**MARROW**

Fair enough. Mind if I come in?

Rose hesitates but steps aside, letting him in.

Marrow takes a slow look around the living room, noting the  
unique decor and the faint smell of coffee.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Nice place, a firehouse. You've  
been here long?

**ROSE**

A few years. What's this about,  
Detective?

Marrow takes out a photo from his jacket pocket: a blurry  
image of a *black motorcycle*.

**MARROW**

This bike was seen near an  
abandoned house few days ago. Same  
night some child kidnappers got  
taken down, and some kids got  
rescued.

He holds up another photo.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Same bike, spotted at two other  
similar locations. That wouldn't  
happen to be yours, would it?

Rose glances briefly at the photo before meeting his gaze.

**ROSE**

It's a popular model. You're gonna  
find a lot of them in this city.

Marrow tucks the photos back into his pocket.

**MARROW**

You ride, much?

**ROSE**

Occasionally.

Marrow steps closer, pulling out his notepad.

**MARROW**

What do you do for a living, Ms. Kingston?

**ROSE**

Freelance work. A little writing, a little consulting.

**MARROW**

Consulting, huh? That sounds flexible. Gives you a lot of freedom to be in the right place at the right time.

Rose smirks faintly but doesn't bite.

**ROSE**

You sound like you're working up to a point.

Marrow chuckles, tucking his notepad away.

**MARROW**

Just getting a feel for you. You don't strike me as the type to let trouble pass by unnoticed. And whoever was riding that bike? They don't, either.

Rose moves to the counter, pouring herself a cup of coffee.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Are you still working at West Coast Sentinel?

**ROSE**

I didn't know detectives did homework for casual visits.

**MARROW**

I'm thorough. Old school.

Rose sips her coffee, keeping her voice calm.

**ROSE**

Yes. I currently work at West Coast Sentinel.

**MARROW**

Are you working on a story now? Because it looks like you're in the business of digging up trouble.

Rose sets her mug down, crossing her arms.

**ROSE**

You want to accuse me of something,  
Detective, go ahead and say it.  
Otherwise, I've got things to do.

**MARROW**

No accusations, Ms. Kingston. Just  
questions. Like how someone took  
down kidnappers without leaving a  
trace. No prints, no DNA.

He steps closer.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

And why that bike keeps showing up  
in all the right places.

Rose stares him down.

**ROSE**

Maybe you're chasing ghosts.

Marrow studies her carefully, then smiles faintly.

**MARROW**

Maybe. But ghosts leave traces.

**EXT. FIREHOUSE. DAY.**

Marrow steps out, glancing once more at the *black Ninja*  
motorcycle. He pulls out his phone, snapping a quick photo  
before getting into his car.

Inside the house, Rose watches him from the window. She picks  
up her phone and dials quickly.

**ROSE**

(into phone)

Mason, we've got a problem. There's  
a Philly detective sniffing around.  
Call me.

**INT. KINGSTON MANSION - EVENING.**

The Kingston mansion exudes elegance. Guests dressed in  
formal attire mingle beneath shimmering chandeliers in the  
grand ballroom. The jazz band plays softly in the corner.

Rose enters, slightly late, her sleek black dress drawing  
subtle glances from some guests. She moves confidently  
through the crowd.

Her sharp eyes quickly spot her father, **Edward Kingston (60s)**, holding court near the center of the room.

**INT. KINGSTON MANSION - NEAR THE BUFFET - MOMENTS LATER.**

Rose is helping herself to a small plate of hors d'oeuvres when Edward approaches.

**EDWARD**

Eleanor, you made it.

Rose freezes for a moment before turning to face him.

**ROSE**

I go by Rose, Dad.

**EDWARD**

Your name is Eleanor. It's a family name.

**ROSE**

And it sounds like one. Eleanor is an old lady name. Rose suits me better.

**EDWARD**

Still as stubborn as ever.

**ROSE**

Runs in the family.

**INT. KINGSTON MANSION - GUEST TABLE - LATER.**

Linda waves Rose over. Sitting beside Linda is her fiancé, **Mark Bennett (40s)**, an earnest man in a tailored suit.

**LINDA**

Rose! Come sit with us.

Rose approaches reluctantly, her small plate in hand. She slides into the chair across from them.

**LINDA (CONT'D)**

You remember Mark, don't you?

**MARK**

Good to see you again, Rose.

**ROSE**

Likewise.

**LINDA**

So, since we're all here, we should talk about the wedding.

Rose suppresses a groan, sipping her whiskey.

**ROSE**

You mean the one next week?

**LINDA**

Yes! There are still some details we need to sort out. Mark and I were thinking—

**ROSE**

Linda, I'm wearing the red dress. I'll walk down the aisle. I'll smile for pictures. What more do you want?

Linda huffs dramatically.

**LINDA**

I want you to act like you're happy to be there!

**MARK**

It's fine. She's here tonight. That's a good start.

**ROSE**

Thanks, Mark.

**LINDA**

Don't thank him. We're not done.

**ROSE**

I'll be there, Linda. I promise. Let's leave it at that.

**LINDA**

Fine. But I'm holding you to it.

**INT. KINGSTON MANSION - LATER.**

Rose leans against the bar, nursing another whiskey on the rocks. The room bustles around her.

Suddenly, **ADRIAN CROSS (40s)** enters the room. His tailored suit and confident stride draw attention.

Adrian spots her almost immediately, he approaches.

**ADRIAN**

I had a feeling I'd see you here.

**ROSE**

Can't say I'm thrilled.

Rose notices the cut on Adrian's cheek.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)

What happened? Did you forget how to duck?

**ADRIAN**

Accident. Nothing serious.

**ROSE**

Right. You always had a talent for finding trouble.

**ADRIAN**

You're one to talk.

Rose glares at him, but before she can respond, *Edward* appears beside them.

**EDWARD**

Adrian! Glad you could make it.

Adrian straightens, shaking Edward's hand.

**ADRIAN**

Wouldn't miss it, sir. Happy birthday.

**EDWARD**

Eleanor, I see you've reconnected with Adrian.

**ROSE**

(sighing)  
It's Rose.

**EDWARD**

Adrian and I were just discussing some cybersecurity work for my retirement fund. He's brilliant, you know.

**ROSE**

I've noticed.

**EDWARD**

I'll leave you two to catch up.

Edward moves off, leaving Rose and Adrian alone.

**ADRIAN**

Still as direct as ever.

**ROSE**

What are you really doing here,  
Adrian?

**ADRIAN**

We need to talk. Alone.

**ROSE**

Then talk.

Adrian glances around.

**ADRIAN**

Not here. Let's step outside.

**EXT. KINGSTON MANSION - BALCONY - LATER.**

Rose steps onto the balcony. Adrian follows, closing the door behind him.

**ADRIAN**

I really didn't expect to see you  
tonight.

**ROSE**

You're stalling.

**ADRIAN**

You're on their radar, Rose.

**ROSE**

Whose radar?

**ADRIAN**

Titan Core's. They know about  
you, and what you're doing.

**ROSE**

Then they should know I don't scare  
easily.

Adrian steps closer.

**ADRIAN**

This isn't a game. They don't just  
watch people—they eliminate them.

Rose studies him carefully.

**ROSE**

Then why are you warning me?

**ADRIAN**

Because I owe you that much.

Adrian gives a faint smile.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

I missed this. The fire in you.

**ROSE**

Don't.

**ADRIAN**

Fair enough. But this conversation isn't over.

**ROSE**

It is for tonight.

**ADRIAN**

Then let's pick it up over dinner.

**ROSE**

You're kidding.

**ADRIAN**

I'm not. There's more you need to know, and we can't cover it all here. Let me take you to dinner. Just to talk.

**ROSE**

You've got nerve, I'll give you that.

**ADRIAN**

It's not about nerve, Rose. It's about helping you stay alive. I still care about you.

There's a long pause as Rose considers his words.

**ROSE**

Fine. Dinner. But no games, Adrian. If I even think you're holding back.

**ADRIAN**

No games. I promise.

**ROSE**

We'll see.

Adrian steps back, watching her for a moment before heading toward the balcony door.

**ADRIAN**

Enjoy the party, Rose.

He disappears inside, leaving Rose alone on the balcony.

**INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DETECTIVE MARROW'S OFFICE - NIGHT.**

The cluttered office is dimly lit, with the glow of a desktop monitor illuminating *Detective Marrow's* weathered face. Stacks of case files, coffee-stained papers, and pinned photos adorn the desk. On the SCREEN: A property ownership database, listing the addresses of the three houses where child kidnappers were arrested.

Marrow pulls up the first address, an abandoned house in North Philly.

**MARROW**

Who owns you?

The ownership record lists a holding company: Liberty Street Enterprises LLC.

**SERIES OF SHOTS:**

The second address, a house, also owned by Liberty Street Enterprises LLC. The third address, an abandoned abandoned, yields the same result.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Liberty Street Enterprises.

He runs the LLC through another database, digging deeper into its corporate filings.

A document pops up on the screen:

Parent Company: Titan Core Investments.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Titan Core.

He grabs a folder off his desk labeled. Argon fire incident and flips through its contents. Among the notes are property records for the Argon Capital building and Milner Financial HQ.

On the documents Both properties are a subsidiary of *Titan Core Investments*.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Kidnappers hideouts. corporate fires. The same corporation owns it all.

He types faster, pulling up Titan Core's corporate structure. The screen floods with layers of shell companies, each one connected to obscure entities like Liberty Street Enterprises

Marrow pulls up a separate folder labeled Child trafficking cases. He flips to a page listing unsolved disappearances of children in the area. Next to it is a report highlighting frequent activity at the three properties owned by Liberty Street Enterprises.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

They're not just burning buildings.  
They're hiding something bigger.

He picks up his phone and dials.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Captain, it's Marrow. I need a warrant for Liberty Street Enterprises and all its properties. No, I don't care how deep this goes. Just get me what I need.

He hangs up, his gaze locked on the Titan Core logo.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

Let's see how untouchable you really are.

**INT. KINGSTON MANSION - FOYER - NIGHT.**

The grand birthday celebration winds down. Guests filter out of the *Kingston mansion*, their chatter and laughter fading into the cool night air. Rose stands near the staircase.

Edward approaches.

**EDWARD**

Eleanor?

**ROSE**

(interjecting)

Rose.

**EDWARD**

I'm glad you came tonight.

**ROSE**

Wouldn't miss your big night, Dad.

**EDWARD**

I know we don't always see eye to eye, but, you're still my daughter. That hasn't changed.

Rose hesitates, then nods.

**ROSE**

Goodnight, Dad.

Edward smiles faintly before stepping back as *Linda Kingston* and Mark approach.

**LINDA**

Rose, you're not sneaking out without saying goodbye, are you?

**ROSE**

Wouldn't dream of it.

Linda gives her a quick hug.

**LINDA**

Don't forget. Next week, no excuses.

**ROSE**

I'll be there, sis.

Mark offers a polite nod, and the couple heads out.

**EXT. KINGSTON MANSION - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT.**

Rose walks to her black Ninja motorcycle. *Adrian Cross* is leaning casually against the bike, a *bottle of champagne* in one hand and two glasses in the other.

**ADRIAN**

Thought you could use a nightcap.

**ROSE**

You've got a strange definition of boundaries, Adrian.

Adrian shrugs, holding up the bottle.

**ADRIAN**

It's a celebration, isn't it? Your father's milestone, reconnecting with old friends—

Adrian gestures to himself.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

Me.

**ROSE**

Don't flatter yourself.

Adrian chuckles, setting the glasses on the seat of the motorcycle. He pops the champagne with a practiced ease.

**ADRIAN**

(toasting)

To old friends and new  
opportunities.

Rose hesitates, taking one of the glasses he offers.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

You know, Rose, I didn't just come  
here to talk about Titan Core.

**ROSE**

Let me guess. You came to save me?

**ADRIAN**

Maybe I just came to see you.

Rose shakes her head, setting her glass down on the seat of the bike.

**ROSE**

You always did have a knack for  
mixing business with whatever this  
is.

**ADRIAN**

"This" doesn't have to be  
complicated.

**ROSE**

You think a bottle of champagne and  
a few warnings will get you back in  
my good graces?

Adrian leans in, his tone soft but confident.

**ADRIAN**

I was hoping my charm would do the  
trick.

Rose laughs softly, shaking her head.

**ROSE**

You're insufferable.

**ADRIAN**

And you're impossible to resist.

Their gazes lock, the tension between them finally breaking as Adrian leans in to kiss her.

Rose pushes him away.

**ROSE**

Not Here.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - NIGHT.**

Rose unlocks the door and steps inside, *Adrian* following close behind.

Adrian glances around, his sharp eyes taking in the details.

**ADRIAN**

You always did like a fixer-upper.

Rose tosses her keys onto a table, shrugging off her jacket.

**ROSE**

It suits me. Functional.

Adrian's gaze lingers on her for a moment before he moves toward the small bar cart tucked into a corner. He picks up a bottle of whiskey, inspecting it.

**ADRIAN**

You've got good taste.

**ROSE**

Are you offering to pour, or just admiring?

Adrian grabs two glasses, pouring the amber liquid carefully before handing one to her.

**ADRIAN**

Both.

Rose takes the glass.

They move to the leather couch in the middle of the firehouse. The bottle of whiskey sits between them, nearly half-empty.

Adrian leans back, his tie loosened and his demeanor relaxed.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

You know, when I saw you tonight...  
it reminded me why I hated leaving  
in the first place.

Rose scoffs, taking another sip of her drink.

**ROSE**

You didn't leave, Adrian. You ran.  
There's a difference.

**ADRIAN**

You're right. I made a lot of  
mistakes.

He looks at her, his tone softening.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

But I never stopped thinking about  
you.

**ROSE**

You've got a funny way of showing  
it.

Adrian leans closer, his voice quieter now.

**ADRIAN**

Rose... I'm here now. I'm not going  
anywhere this time.

Rose glances at him, the tension between them palpable.

**ROSE**

You've said that before.

Adrian hesitates for a moment, then smiles faintly.

**ADRIAN**

Let me prove it.

Adrian leans in slowly, giving Rose plenty of time to pull  
away. She does.

The whiskey glass tips almost spilling over.

**ROSE**

You're trouble, Adrian.

**ADRIAN**

You always liked trouble.

**ROSE**

You've aged well. A little more polished than I remember.

Adrian chuckles, raising his glass in a mock toast.

**ADRIAN**

You, on the other hand, haven't changed a bit. Still sharp. Still dangerous.

**ROSE**

Still don't trust you.

**ADRIAN**

I earned that.

Rose takes a sip of her whiskey, her expression unreadable.

**ROSE**

You disappeared, Adrian. No warning, no explanation. Just... gone.

**ADRIAN**

I know.

He leans forward.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

You think it was easy for me? Walking away from you?

**ROSE**

Looked easy enough from where I was standing.

**ADRIAN**

It wasn't. But if I'd stayed... they would've come for you, too.

Rose stiffens slightly, the bitterness in her tone replaced by curiosity.

**ROSE**

They?

Adrian swirls his glass, avoiding her gaze.

**ADRIAN**

Back then, I thought I could fix it from the inside. Thought I could protect you by keeping my distance.

He lets out a bitter laugh.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

Turns out I was wrong on both counts.

Rose leans back against the couch, her gaze fixed on the ceiling. Adrian watches her, his expression softening.

**ROSE**

Do you remember that cabin up in the Poconos? The one with the leaky roof?

Adrian chuckles, nodding.

**ADRIAN**

How could I forget? You made me climb up there in the middle of a storm to fix it.

**ROSE**

You were complaining so much, I thought you were going to fall off the ladder.

**ADRIAN**

Hey, that ladder was ancient. I'm pretty sure it had termites.

They both laugh, the tension between them easing for a moment.

**ADRIAN** (CONT'D)

That was one of the best weekends of my life.

Rose glances at him, her smile fading slightly.

**ROSE**

Yeah. Me too.

There's a long pause as the weight of old memories settles between them.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)

What happened to us, Adrian?

Adrian sets his glass down, turning to face her fully.

**ADRIAN**

I let my fear get the better of me.  
You were the one good thing in my  
life, and I thought walking away  
would keep you safe.

He reaches for her hand, hesitating slightly before his  
fingers brush against hers.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

But I was wrong. I should've  
stayed.

Rose looks at their hands for a moment before pulling hers  
away gently.

**ROSE**

You don't get to rewrite history.  
You left. And I had to pick up the  
pieces.

Adrian leans back, exhaling sharply.

**ADRIAN**

I know. And I've spent every day  
since wishing I could take it back.

**ROSE**

You're here now. What's different?

Adrian meets her gaze, his tone steady.

**ADRIAN**

Because this time, I'm not running.

They sit in comfortable silence for a while.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Do you ever wonder what it would've  
been like? If we'd stayed together?

Rose smirks faintly, taking another sip of her drink.

**ROSE**

You mean if you hadn't disappeared  
in the middle of the night?

Adrian raises his hands in mock surrender.

**ADRIAN**

Fair point. But seriously. What if?

Rose tilts her head, considering his question.

**ROSE**

I think we would've burned out eventually. You were always chasing the next big thing, and I wasn't exactly the settling-down type.

Adrian chuckles.

**ADRIAN**

Maybe. Or maybe we would've figured it out.

Rose glances at him, her smirk fading into something softer.

**ROSE**

Guess we'll never know.

Adrian reaches out, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear.

**ADRIAN**

We may not be able to change the past, but we can still make this moment count.

Rose hesitates, her walls momentarily lowering as she meets his gaze.

**ROSE**

Don't make promises you can't keep.

Adrian leans in, his voice barely above a whisper.

**ADRIAN**

Not this time.

Their lips meet in a slow, lingering kiss, the weight of their shared history melting away as they lose themselves in the moment.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - MORNING.**

*Adrian Cross* stands shirtless by the kitchen counter, pouring coffee into two mugs.

Rose sits on the couch, her hair slightly tousled, glancing through a stack of documents from the night before. Adrian carries the mugs over, setting one in front of her.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Coffee. Black, no sugar—still your favorite?

**ROSE**

You remembered.

Adrian smirks, sitting beside her.

**ADRIAN**

I remember a lot of things.

Their quiet moment is interrupted by the sharp sound of a knock on the door. Rose exchanges a glance with Adrian before setting her coffee down and walking to the door.

**EXT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS.**

*Detective Marrow* stands on the doorstep, a manila folder in one hand and a tired but determined look on his face. Rose opens the door, her expression unreadable.

**ROSE**

Detective Marrow. You're getting predictable.

Marrow glances past her, noticing a man's jacket draped over a nearby chair. His brow raises slightly, but he doesn't comment.

**MARROW**

I thought you'd want to hear this in person.

Rose steps aside, motioning for him to enter.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS.**

Marrow takes in the space as he steps inside, his sharp eyes catching the details: the scattered papers on the table, the whiskey bottle from the night before, and Adrian leaning casually against the counter, now wearing a T-shirt.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Friend of yours?

Rose glances back at Adrian, her voice calm but clipped.

**ROSE**

This is Adrian Cross.

Adrian steps forward, extending a hand with a polite smile.

**ADRIAN**

Pleasure to meet you, Detective.

**MARROW**

So, Adrian Cross. What exactly do you do?

Adrian raises an eyebrow, smirking faintly.

**ADRIAN**

Cybersecurity. I build systems.  
Break systems. Depends on what the  
client needs.

**MARROW**

Clients like Titan Core?

Adrian's smirk falters slightly, but he recovers quickly.

**ADRIAN**

They were one of them. Briefly.

Marrow's expression doesn't change as he continues.

**MARROW**

Where are you from?

Adrian shrugs.

**ADRIAN**

Originally? Baltimore. But work's  
taken me all over—L,A, London, Hong  
Kong, New York, Chicago.

Marrow glances at Rose.

**MARROW**

And how long have you two known  
each other?

Rose exhales, setting her coffee mug down.

**ROSE**

What do you want, detective Marrow?

Marrow pulls a folded newspaper article from his folder,  
holding it out to her.

**MARROW**

This.

Rose takes the paper, unfolding it. Her eyes narrow as she  
scans the headline:

Vanishing Children: A Hidden Epidemic in Philadelphia.  
By Rose Kingston.

Beneath the title is a detailed exposé connecting rising  
child abductions to a shadowy network operating out of  
abandoned properties in the city. The article, written nine  
months ago, delves into the slave trade, speculating on links  
to shell corporations and untraceable financial backers.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

This ran nine months ago. Right before the first safe house was hit and those kids were rescued.

Rose hands the paper back, her voice calm.

**ROSE**

I remember. What's your point?

Marrow pulls out another document—a list of property and financial records and sets it on the table.

**MARROW**

These properties you wrote about? Turns out they were all owned by Titan Core Investments. On paper, at least.

Rose frowns, leaning over the table to examine the records.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

The same shell company that owns the financial institutions that burned down. The same one tied to those kids.

Adrian steps closer, his voice low.

**ADRIAN**

Titan Core doesn't actually exist. It's a front?

Marrow glances at Adrian, his suspicion evident.

**MARROW**

That's the conclusion I came to. The problem is, every time I pull a thread, it leads to another dead end.

**ROSE**

Because it's not about Titan Core. It's about who's behind it.

Marrow crosses his arms, his expression tightening.

**MARROW**

Ever hear of the Red Hand?

Rose looks up sharply.

**ROSE**

The name came up. But, I couldn't find anything substantial. What do you know about them?

**MARROW**

I know they've been cleaning up their messes. Erasing evidence, burning buildings, silencing people. If Titan Core is their shield, the Red Hand is the sword.

**ADRIAN**

So the fires weren't just about insurance payouts. They were destroying records—any trace of their trafficking operation or their financial schemes.

Marrow nods, pulling out another document and a map of Philadelphia marked with red dots.

**MARROW**

These are the properties that burned. All of them were either financial institutions or locations tied to child trafficking.

He points to one particular cluster on the map.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

But there's some property they haven't touched yet.

Rose leans closer, her eyes narrowing at the map.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

This is every location tied to the child abduction cases in the last year. Three of them were abandoned houses where those kids were rescued. The others? Vacant properties owned by Titan Core.

He pulls out several pages of **property records** and spreads them across the table.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Before Titan Core got involved, they were owned by small financial institutions—Stratford Equity, Milner Financial, Argon Capital. Sound familiar?

Rose's expression hardens as she leans forward, her eyes scanning the records.

**ROSE**

They're the same buildings that were burned.

**MARROW**

Right before you published this, there was a spike in missing children reports in those neighborhoods. A few weeks later, the first house was hit.

Rose's eyes flick to Adrian briefly before turning back to Marrow.

**ROSE**

What are you saying?

Marrow exhales, his voice lowering.

**MARROW**

I'm saying someone read your article and decided it was time to clean house.

He pulls out photos of burned properties, pointing to one in particular.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

Take Argon Financial, for example. After the fire, all their physical records were destroyed. No audits, no accountability. What's left? Nothing. No record to who is really behind this organization. No money trail.

Adrian steps forward, his tone serious.

**ADRIAN**

Money that's tied to trafficking.

**ROSE**

So Titan Core isn't just cleaning up after themselves—they're erasing evidence that points to the Red Hand.

**MARROW**

That's what it looks like. And your article? It put you on their radar.

Rose steps back, her eyes narrowing as she processes the implications.

**ADRIAN**

This isn't just about the trafficking. The Red Hand's using Titan Core to get control of independent financial institutions. Then they foreclose on hundreds of delinquent homes, to use as safe houses. The fires are a cover, the real goal is consolidation.

Marrow tilts his head, studying Adrian carefully.

**MARROW**

And you know this how?

Adrian stops pacing, turning to face Marrow.

**ADRIAN**

I built some of the systems they're using. When I was working for Titan Core, I noticed irregularities—accounts that didn't add up, encrypted data routed through offshore servers. When I dug deeper, I found the Red Hand pulling the strings.

**MARROW**

And you didn't think to report this?

**ADRIAN**

To who? The police? The FBI? The Red Hand has connections everywhere. You try to expose them, and you disappear.

Rose glances at Adrian, then back to Marrow.

**ROSE**

He's right. They don't just cover their tracks—they eliminate anyone who gets too close.

**MARROW**

And yet, here you are. Both of you, digging deeper.

**ROSE**

Because someone has to.

Marrow points to the last remaining property on the map.

**MARROW**

There's one property they haven't touched yet. A financial office downtown. Milner capital.

Adrian leans over the map, his expression sharpening.

**ADRIAN**

If they haven't destroyed it, there's something there they need.

Rose stands, grabbing her jacket.

**ROSE**

Then that's where we start.

Marrow stands as well.

**MARROW**

Listen to me, both of you. This is bigger than a couple of burned buildings and some shell companies. You're dealing with people who don't leave loose ends.

He points to the map.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

The Red Hand isn't just some shadowy organization you can expose with a headline or a hacked server. These people kill to protect their secrets. And you?

Morrow gestures to Rose and Adrian.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

You're in over your heads.

**ROSE**

We've already seen what they're capable of. That's why we can't stop.

**MARROW**

You think I don't get that? I've been chasing this for months. But if you keep digging, you're going to end up as another accident, or a name on a missing persons report.

**ADRIAN**

And if we back off, then what? Let them keep trafficking kids and burning down the city?

**MARROW**

It's not your job to stop them. It's mine.

**ROSE**

You can't take them down alone, Marrow.

**MARROW**

I'm not asking for your help. This isn't just about you anymore. Your article put you in their crosshairs. You've already done enough. Let me handle this.

**ROSE**

And what's your plan?

Marrow glances at the Milner Capital logo on one of the documents.

**MARROW**

I'm going to talk to Milner Capital. If there's anyone left in that organization who hasn't been bought out or scared off, they might have something we can use.

**ADRIAN**

You really think someone at Milner's going to stand up to the Red Hand?

**MARROW**

If they've been resisting this long, they've got something to lose. And they'll want to protect it.

**ROSE**

And what about the other property.

**MARROW**

Leave it alone. If there's anything useful there, I'll find it. You two stay out of it.

Rose's jaw tightens, but she doesn't argue. Adrian looks like he wants to push back, but he catches Rose's subtle glance and stays quiet.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

I know what you've been doing. Now it's time to step back. No more heroics. This is a police matter.

He grabs his folder, maps and papers glancing briefly at Adrian.

**ROSE**

I Promise no heroics.

**MARROW**

Stay out my way. Don't give them a reason to come after you.

Marrow moves toward the door, pausing to look back at Rose one last time.

**MARROW** (CONT'D)

You're a hell of a reporter, Kingston. But this fight is not yours anymore.

Rose watches him leave.

**INT. FIREHOUSE. - MOMENTS LATER.**

The door slams shut as *Detective Marrow* leaves. Rose stands there, her eyes locked on Adrian.

**ROSE**

You tried to burn Milner Financial.

Adrian stiffens, the faint smirk on his face fading.

**ADRIAN**

It wasn't what it looked like.

Rose takes a step closer, her arms crossed tightly.

**ROSE**

It looked like arson.

Adrian exhales sharply, running a hand through his hair.

**ADRIAN**

It was more complicated than that.

Rose slams her hand on the table, her voice rising.

**ROSE**

Don't give me that. I was there,  
Adrian. You knew exactly what you  
were doing.

Her fingers brush against her hip, recalling the fight.  
Adrian instinctively touches the faint scar, his expression  
hardening.

**ADRIAN**

You don't understand.

**ROSE**

Then explain it to me! Because you  
were in *New York, Chicago, and LA*  
when those other financial  
buildings burned. And every time,  
it was the same story: Titan Core  
cleans up, and the Red Hand walks  
away clean.

She steps even closer, her voice dropping to a dangerous  
calm.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

What the hell were you doing,  
Adrian?

**ADRIAN**

I was doing what I had to.

**ROSE**

Which was what? Burning evidence?  
Covering for them? Helping the Red  
Hand destroy everything in their  
way?

**ADRIAN**

I was trying to stop them!

Rose freezes, her eyes narrowing.

**ROSE**

By setting fires? That's your idea  
of stopping them.

**ADRIAN**

The buildings were supposed to be  
empty. No one was supposed to get  
hurt.

**ROSE**

People died, Adrian.

Adrian steps closer, his voice low and raw.

**ADRIAN**

Do you think I wanted to do it? Do you think I enjoyed any of this? They had me by the throat, Rose. Every move I made, every choice—I didn't have a say.

**ROSE**

What exactly did you do, Adrian?

**ADRIAN**

I hacked into a federal agency and altered some records. I had no choice.

**ROSE**

You had a choice the night of Milner. You didn't have to light that fire.

Adrian exhales shakily, his hand once again brushing the scar on his cheek.

**ADRIAN**

And you didn't have to cut me. But you did.

**ROSE**

And if you try something like that again, I won't stop at a scratch.

Adrian smirks bitterly, shaking his head.

**ADRIAN**

Still as ruthless as ever.

**ROSE**

Only when I have to be.

The silence between them stretches, heavy with unspoken tension.

**ADRIAN**

They didn't give me a choice, Rose. The Red Hand, blackmailed me, threatened to ruin me, to destroy the people I cared about. When I tried to walk away, they made it clear what would happen if I didn't follow orders

**ROSE**

And what? Burning Milner was your penance?

**ADRIAN**

No.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Burning Milner was my way of keeping them off my back. If I didn't do it, someone else would've—and they wouldn't have left anything behind.

**ROSE**

So you're the hero now? You didn't stop the fire, Adrian. You started it.

**ADRIAN**

I knew you'd find the evidence. I knew you'd see through the ashes.

**ROSE**

Don't try to turn this into some kind of favor. You didn't light that fire for me.

**ADRIAN**

No, I didn't. But I'm here now, and I'm trying to make it right.

Rose lets out a bitter laugh, shaking her head.

**ROSE**

You think showing up here erases what you've done?

**ADRIAN**

No. But it's a start.

Rose's eyes narrow as she takes another step forward, her tone dropping to a dangerous calm.

**ROSE**

Do you even realize what that means?

Adrian meets her gaze, confused.

**ADRIAN**

What are you talking about?

**ROSE**

You failed, Adrian. The Red Hand  
doesn't tolerate failure.

Adrian's face goes pale as the realization hits him.

**ADRIAN**

They'll be coming for me.

**ROSE**

You think?

Adrian runs a hand through his hair, pacing the room now as  
the weight of the situation sinks in.

**ADRIAN**

They'll send someone to tie up  
loose ends. They always do.

**ROSE**

Then you'd better figure out how to  
stay alive.

Adrian stops pacing, turning to face her.

**ADRIAN**

I didn't ask for this.

**ROSE**

No. But you made your bed. Now  
you're going to lie in it.

There's a long silence between them.

**ADRIAN**

You could've killed me that night.

**ROSE**

Maybe I should have.

**ADRIAN**

Guess I owe you twice now.

**ROSE**

Save the gratitude. If they're  
coming for you, they'll come for me  
too.

**ADRIAN**

I won't let that happen.

**ROSE**

Then we'd better take the fight to  
them before they get the chance.

**ADRIAN**

Together, then.

Rose doesn't respond immediately.

**ROSE**

Together, for now.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - DAY.**

The Milner Financial building gleams under the afternoon sun, its glass façade reflecting the bustling city around it. Detective Marrow steps out of his car, a manila folder tucked under his arm. His eyes scan the building as he walks toward the entrance.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS.**

The lobby is modern and minimalist, the faint hum of activity from employees and visitors barely audible over the clicking of shoes on polished floors. Marrow strides up to the reception desk, flashing his badge.

**MARROW**

Detective Marrow, Philadelphia PD.  
I'm here to speak with someone from  
your executive team.

The *receptionist*, a composed young woman, glances at his badge and picks up the phone.

**RECEPTIONIST**

One moment.

As she speaks quietly into the receiver, Mr. *Griffin* (40s, sharply dressed, and impeccably calm) enters the lobby from the executive elevators. His movements are measured, his demeanor composed as he approaches the desk.

**GRIFFIN**

Detective. I'm *Edward Griffin*,  
Chief Operating Officer. How can I  
help you?

Marrow eyes Griffin, his expression neutral but wary.

**MARROW**

Milner Financial has been connected  
to my investigation into recent  
arson attacks. I've got questions,  
and I'm hoping you can provide some  
answers.

Griffin's polite smile doesn't waver.

**GRIFFIN**

I'm afraid I don't know what you're referring to.

**MARROW**

You're telling me you don't know that every institution connected Titan Core has gone up in flames? Or that your company's next on the list?

Griffin clasps his hands behind his back, maintaining his calm.

**GRIFFIN**

Milner Financial has no dealings with Titan Core, Detective. And we certainly have no knowledge of any incidents.

Marrow steps closer, lowering his voice.

**MARROW**

What about the Red Hand? Does that name ring a bell?

Griffin's expression hardens ever so slightly, but he recovers quickly.

**GRIFFIN**

I think it's time for you to leave, Detective.

**MARROW**

Not until I get some answers.

Griffin's smile fades, his tone taking on a sharper edge.

**GRIFFIN**

Milner Financial operates within the bounds of the law. We're not involved in whatever conspiracy you think you've uncovered. And we certainly don't answer to baseless accusations.

Marrow glares at him, his voice cold.

**MARROW**

I've got the receipts, Griffin. Property records. Financial transfers. Your name might not be on them, but it's all connected.

(MORE)

**MARROW (CONT'D)**  
If you're not working with them,  
then help me stop them.

Griffin takes a deliberate step back, raising a hand to stop him.

**GRIFFIN**  
I think we're done here.

He nods to the security guard standing nearby.

**GRIFFIN (CONT'D)**  
See Detective Marrow out.

Marrow doesn't budge, his tone firm.

**MARROW**  
You think ignoring this will make  
it go away? These people don't just  
burn buildings—they erase  
everything. Including anyone who  
gets in their way.

Griffin's jaw tightens, but he maintains his composure.

**GRIFFIN**  
Goodbye, Detective.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - DAY - MOMENTS LATER.**

Marrow storms out of the building, muttering under his breath  
as he heads back toward his car.

His phone buzzes—a call from an unknown number. He answers,  
cautious.

**VOICE (DISTORTED)**  
Detective Marrow. You've been  
asking the wrong questions.

Marrow stiffens, his grip on the phone tightening.

**MARROW**  
Who is this?

**VOICE (DISTORTED)**  
You're digging into things you  
don't understand. Walk away, or you  
won't get another chance.

Marrow glances at the warehouse, unease settling in.

**MARROW**  
If you think I'm backing down—

The line goes dead. Marrow turns, pauses, then starts walking back to the Milner building.

As he nears his building, he pauses, glancing up at the reflective façade of the building. A subtle unease creeps over him. He scans the windows.

A deafening explosion shatters the stillness, the Milner Financial building erupting into flames. Glass and debris rain down onto the street as the force of the blast knocks Marrow off his feet.

The sound of car alarms and panicked screams fills the air as Marrow scrambles to his knees, coughing from the dust. He looks up at the burning building, his expression a mixture of shock and fury.

His phone buzzes again—a text message this time: You're next.

Marrow staggers to his feet, his phone still clutched in his hand. He dials again, his voice hoarse but determined.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

(into phone)

This is Detective Marrow. I need  
fire and rescue at Milner  
Financial, now!

He lowers the phone, his gaze locked on the inferno before him.

**MARROW (CONT'D)**

I'm too late.

He clenches his fists, the flames reflecting in his eyes as he stands amidst the chaos.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - DAY.**

The crackle of the police scanner breaks the quiet, its sudden voice drawing both their attention.

**POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)**

All units, report of an explosion  
at Milner Financial. Structural  
damage reported. Fire and rescue  
are enroute.

Rose's hand stills, her pen slipping from her fingers.

**POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

Additional units requested.  
Possible casualties.

Adrian looks up sharply, meeting Rose's gaze.

**ROSE**

Milner.

The scanner crackles again, this time with Detective Morrow's voice, tight with urgency.

**MORROW (V.O.)**

This is Detective Morrow. I'm at  
Milner Financial—need backup!  
Building's compromised—repeat,  
building's compromised!

Rose bolts upright, grabbing her jacket from the back of the chair.

**ROSE**

Morrow's there.

Adrian quickly closes his laptop, snatching his coat and keys.

**MORROW (V.O.)**

Explosion's taken out the upper  
floors. Fires spreading fast. I'm  
checking for survivors.

Rose grabs her helmet, already moving toward the door.

**ROSE**

We're going.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - DAY.**

The Milner Financial building is a scene of chaos. Smoke billows from shattered upper-floor windows, flames licking at the sky. Police cars and ambulances line the street, their sirens wailing. Firefighters rush to contain the blaze, their hoses spraying arcs of water against the inferno.

Rose skids to a stop near the barricades, pulling off her helmet. Adrian's SUV pulls up moments later, screeching to a halt.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(to Adrian)

Where is he?

Rose strides toward a cluster of firefighters and police officers by the barricades. She flashes her press badge.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**  
Kingston, Independent Times. Is  
Detective Morrow inside?

The officer hesitates, glancing toward the burning building.

**OFFICER**  
He went in before we got here. Said  
he was looking for survivors.

Rose stares at the building, smoke curling ominously into the sky.

**ROSE**  
He's still in there.

Adrian steps up beside her, grabbing her arm.

**ADRIAN**  
You can't go in there.

Rose yanks her arm free. She takes out her phone, her fingers moving quickly as she dials.

**ROSE**  
(into phone)  
Mason?

*Mason answers immediately.* His calm, familiar voice comes through the line.

**MASON (V.O.)**  
Rose? What's going on?

**ROSE**  
I need you to get dad's helicopter  
ready. Now.

**MASON (V.O.)**  
Should I ask, why?

**ROSE**  
No. Can you get it fueled and ready  
to go. I'll explain later.

**ADRIAN**  
You're calling in a chopper?

Rose nods, covering the phone with her hand as she speaks to him.

**ROSE**

If Morrow's trapped in there, we're not waiting for fire crews to clear it.

**MASON (V.O.)**

Does your dad know about this?

**ROSE**

It doesn't matter. Just get it ready.

**MASON (V.O.)**

Fine, I'll have it ready in fifteen. You better not get yourself killed.

**ROSE**

Not today.

She ends the call, tucking her phone back into her pocket. Turning to Adrian.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Let's move. The airstrip's ten minutes out.

Adrian hesitates, looking back at the burning building.

**ADRIAN**

What if we're already too late?

**ROSE**

Then we make sure we're not too late for anyone else. Get on.

Adrian nods, then gets onto Rose's bike. They fly down the street.

**EXT. PRIVATE AIRSTRIP - DAY - MOMENTS LATER.**

The sleek Kingston family helicopter sits on the tarmac, its rotors beginning to spin as Mason stands nearby, his phone to his ear. The small airstrip is quiet.

Rose and Adrian pull up on bike, both dismount quickly. Mason approaches them, his face set in a mix of concern and disapproval.

**MASON**

It's ready. Care to tell me what's going on now?

Rose doesn't slow down, heading straight for the chopper.

**ROSE**

Milner Financial's gone up in flames. Morrow's inside.

Mason's eyes widen slightly, but he quickly recovers, falling into step beside her.

**MASON**

And you're planning to go in after him?

**ROSE**

That's the idea.

Mason shakes his head, exhaling sharply.

**MASON**

You're just like your mother.

Rose freezes for a moment at the mention of her mother, then shakes it off, climbing into the helicopter.

**ROSE**

Someone has to do it.

Adrian follows her into the helicopter, buckling himself in as Mason steps back to give them room.

**MASON**

Just... come back in one piece, alright?

**ROSE**

No promises.

Mason watches as the helicopter lifts off, his expression grim as it disappears into the sky.

**EXT. SKY OVER PHILADELPHIA - DAY.**

The helicopter speeds toward the city, the rising plume of black smoke from Milner Financial visible on the horizon. Inside, Rose grips the controls, her face set with determination. Adrian sits beside her, checking the small handheld radio connected to the scanner frequencies.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(to herself)

Hold on, Morrow.

Adrian glances at her, his voice calm but firm.

**ADRIAN**

We'll get him.

Rose doesn't respond, her focus locked on the burning building ahead as the helicopter closes in.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - ROOFTOP - DAY.**

The helicopter lands hard on the rooftop of the Milner Financial building, the rotors whipping the smoke into furious spirals. Flames flicker dangerously close to the rooftop access door as Rose and Adrian jump out, crouching low beneath the rotor blades.

**ROSE**

We're getting everyone out.

**ADRIAN**

This building isn't waiting around for us to play hero. Let's make it quick.

Rose rushes to the rooftop access door and pulls it open, her gloves singeing slightly from the heat. Smoke billows out, forcing her to shield her face.

**ROSE**

Go!

They descend quickly into the stairwell.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS.**

The stairwell is a nightmare, lit only by flickering emergency lights. The building groans under the stress of the flames, sending bursts of debris raining down with every step.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(shouting)

Morrow! Anyone here?

A faint voice echoes up from the floors below.

**MORROW (O.S.)**

Here! Down here!

Rose and Adrian exchange a glance before hurrying toward the sound.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - OFFICE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS.**

They burst onto an office floor. The space is chaos, cubicles overturned, flames devouring the far walls. Smoke and ash obscure the air, and the groaning of the building grows louder.

Morrow is crouched with a group of Milner Financial employees, three men and two women, near a partially collapsed section of the ceiling. They're coughing and covered in soot, their faces etched with fear.

**ROSE**

Morrow!

Morrow waves them over, his voice hoarse.

**MORROW**

(over coughs)

Took you long enough!

Adrian doesn't wait, moving to help a woman who's clutching her ankle.

**ADRIAN**

We need to move now. This place is about to come down.

Rose scans the area, spotting a heavy *support beam* pinning a man's leg to the floor. She rushes to him.

**ROSE**

Hang on, I'll get you out.

She grabs a nearby piece of *metal tubing* and wedges it under the beam, using it as a lever. Adrian joins her, adding his weight to shift the beam just enough for the man to pull free with a groan of pain.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Can you walk?

The man nods weakly, leaning on one of his coworkers.

Morrow gestures to the group.

**MORROW**

They're all that's left.

The building shudders violently, another section of the ceiling collapsing in a shower of debris and fire.

**ADRIAN**

That's our cue.

**INT. MILNER FINANCIAL - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose leads the group back up the stairwell, Morrow limping heavily but keeping pace. Adrian brings up the rear, helping the injured employee.

Flames roar below them, racing up the stairwell. The heat grows unbearable as the structure groans again, chunks of concrete falling around them.

**ROSE**

Don't stop! Keep going!

The group stumbles up the final flight of stairs, coughing and gasping for air.

**EXT. MILNER FINANCIAL - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS.**

They burst onto the rooftop, the intense heat making it hard to breathe. Rose jumps into pilot seat.

Adrian ushers the survivors into the helicopter, helping them climb aboard. The rooftop sags and cracks beneath them, flames licking at its edges.

Rose has the rotors spinning at full speed. Adrian climbs in beside Rose.

Rose looks back toward the rooftop access door, her instincts screaming at her to check one last time. Adrian grabs her arm.

**ADRIAN**

That's everyone! We're out of time!

The rooftop collapses further, sending debris tumbling into the stairwell. Adrian climbs into the helicopter as it begins to lift off.

**INT. HELICOPTER - DAY.**

The helicopter pulls away from the *Milner Financial building* just as the rooftop caves in completely. The survivors huddle together, coughing and shaken but alive.

Morrow leans back, exhausted, his face streaked with soot.

**MORROW**

You two are out of your minds.

Rose smirks faintly, wiping sweat and ash from her face.

**ROSE**

And you're welcome.

**EXT. SKY OVER PHILADELPHIA - DAY.**

The helicopter flies over the city, the column of *black smoke* from Milner Financial visible in the distance.

**EXT. SKY OVER PHILADELPHIA - DAY**

The helicopter glides over the city, its rotors slicing through the air. Rose grips the controls tightly, her face streaked with soot and determination. Adrian sits beside her, keeping an eye on the shaken survivors huddled in the back with Detective Morrow.

Below, a section of the city has been blocked off by emergency vehicles. Paramedics, firefighters, and police are gathered, waiting for their arrival. The flashing lights reflect off the nearby windows as thick black smoke rises in the distance from the wreckage of the Milner Financial building.

**ROSE** (CONT'D)

(into radio)

This is Kingston. I'm bringing the helicopter down on Broad and Pine. Clear the area.

**EXT. CLOSED CITY STREET - DAY.**

The street is cleared, emergency personnel waving back onlookers as the helicopter descends. The rotors whip up debris as it touches down gently on the asphalt.

Paramedics rush forward, carrying stretchers and medical bags. Police officers hold the crowd back as the helicopter doors open.

**INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose shuts down the engine as Adrian moves to help the survivors. He assists a limping Morrow to the door while Rose helps the two office workers step out.

**PARAMEDIC 1**

Over here!

The paramedics swarm the survivors, quickly assessing their injuries.

**EXT. CLOSED CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS.**

Morrow winces as he's lowered onto a stretcher, his voice hoarse.

**MORROW**

(coughing)

Guess I owe you one, Kingston.

**ROSE**

I'll add it to the list.

Nearby, the office workers are loaded into an ambulance, their coughing subsiding as oxygen masks are placed over their faces.

**PARAMEDIC 2**

They'll be okay. Mostly smoke inhalation.

Rose nods, relief flickering across her face for a moment before her focus sharpens again.

**ADRIAN**

The Red Hand just erased every trace of what Milner had.

Rose approaches *Morrow*, who's sitting upright on the stretcher, shaking off attempts to lay him down.

**ROSE**

Did you see anything? Records, files—anything they didn't burn?

*Morrow* coughs into his hand, his voice strained.

**MORROW**

They torched the place good.

Rose's eyes flick to the ambulance, then back to the building.

**ROSE**

They erased Milner, but not everyone who worked there. Someone knows something.

*Morrow* winces as the paramedic checks his leg, which is bruised but not broken.

**MORROW**

I'm fine. Let someone else have the stretcher.

The *paramedic* doesn't budge, his tone firm.

**PARAMEDIC**

You inhaled too much smoke. You're going to the hospital.

**ROSE**

You heard him, *Morrow*. Be a good patient for once.

*Morrow* shakes his head, coughing lightly.

**MORROW**

You didn't pull me out of that death trap just to put me in a hospital bed.

**ROSE**

You'll live. But you'll breathe a lot better after they check you out.

Morrow sighs in defeat, leaning back as the paramedics load him into the ambulance.

**MORROW**

Fine. But I'm sending you the bill.

Rose chuckles softly as the ambulance doors close.

Adrian stands near the helicopter, watching the scene unfold. Rose joins him, wiping soot from her hands.

Suddenly, her phone buzzes, the shrill sound of her alarm breaking the moment. She pulls it from her pocket, glancing at the screen.

**ON PHONE SCREEN:**

*Reminder: Dress Rehearsal Dinner -  
7 PM Tonight*

Rose groans, tucking the phone away.

**ROSE**

Great, Just what I need, right now.

**ADRIAN**

Rehearsal dinner? Didn't take you for the bridesmaid type.

**ROSE**

It's my sister's wedding. Trust me, I'd rather be anywhere else.

Adrian chuckles softly, but his amusement fades as he glances at the plume of black smoke rising from the ruins of Milner Financial.

**ADRIAN**

The Red Hand won't stop

**ROSE**

No, they won't. But neither will we.

Adrian nods, his smirk replaced with a grim resolve.

**ADRIAN**

You think this is over?

Rose glances at the smoke plume in the distance.

**ROSE**

Not even close, I think I know what  
the red hand is going to do next.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - EVENING.**

Rose stands in front of a tall mirror, her usual black leather jacket and jeans replaced by a sleek, dark green cocktail dress. Her hair, still damp from the shower, falls in loose waves over her shoulders.

She frowns, tugging at the dress and muttering to herself.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

(muttering)

I still can't believe Linda picked  
this color.

She turns to the *closet door*, where a hanger with a bridesmaid sash is draped. She glares at it like it's mocking her.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Don't think this means I'm going to  
enjoy myself.

**INT. FIREHOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose leans over the sink, carefully applying a touch of eyeliner.

Her phone buzzes on the counter, snapping her out of the moment. She picks it up and sees a *text from Linda*.

**TEXT MESSAGE:**

*Don't be late! Mom would've wanted  
you to be there for the whole  
thing.*

Rose's jaw tightens, the mention of their mother stirring an ache in her chest. She exhales sharply, putting the phone down.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - LIVING AREA - LATER.**

Adrian sits on the couch, scrolling through files on his laptop. He glances up as Rose emerges, dressed and ready. He raises an eyebrow, a smirk tugging at the corner of his lips.

**ADRIAN**

I didn't think you owned anything  
that wasn't black or covered in  
grease.

Rose rolls her eyes, grabbing her clutch from the table.

**ROSE**

Don't get used to it.

Adrian closes his laptop, standing as she heads for the door.

**ADRIAN**

Need a ride?

**ROSE**

Not unless you've suddenly  
developed a taste for small talk  
with my sister and her fiancé.

Adrian's gaze shifts toward the door, then back at her.

**ADRIAN**

You're not seriously thinking about  
riding your bike in that dress, are  
you?

Rose hesitates, then sighs, realizing he has a point.

**ROSE**

I've done worse.

**ADRIAN**

Yeah, no. You'll shred half the  
dress before you get there.

He tosses her the keys to his SUV, grinning.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Take my car. Try not to crash it.

Rose catches the keys, raising an eyebrow.

**ROSE**

You sure? I thought this thing was  
your baby.

**ADRIAN**

It is. Don't make me regret this.

Rose smirks, tucking the keys into her clutch.

**ROSE**

Thanks. I'll bring it back in one piece.

Adrian steps closer, his tone more casual.

**ADRIAN**

While we're being all polite... The wedding's the day after tomorrow, right?

Rose nods, watching him curiously.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Well, if you need a date.

**ROSE**

Actually, I was going to ask you.

**ADRIAN**

You asking me to be your plus-one?

Rose crosses her arms, her tone defensive.

**ROSE**

Don't make it weird. I just need someone to keep me sane and fend off sisters bridesmaids.

**ADRIAN**

I'm in.

**ROSE**

Good. Don't make me regret it.

**EXT. LE JARDIN - SIDE ALLEY - NIGHT.**

Rose faces her father, Edward in the dimly lit alley. The tension between them is palpable, the weight of unspoken truths hanging in the air.

**EDWARD**

Is this about your joyride in my helicopter?

**ROSE**

I've been digging into the Titan Core fires.

**EDWARD**

And?

**ROSE**

Your name came up.

Edward's expression falters, and he looks away.

**EDWARD**

It's not what you think.

**ROSE**

Then tell me what it is. Because right now, it looks like you've been involved with Titan Core for years. What's your connection?

**EDWARD**

Titan Core came after me and the family bank. They wanted control, and when I refused, they made it personal. They twisted the law, made threats—they wanted to break us.

**ROSE**

So what? You made a deal?

Edward's silence is answer enough.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

You made a deal with the same people who've burned down buildings and killed people just to cover their tracks?

Edward takes a step forward, his voice rising slightly.

**EDWARD**

I didn't know it would go this far.

**ROSE**

And Mom? Did you know it would go that far?

**EDWARD**

Your mother's death, wasn't an accident.

**ROSE**

You knew.

**EDWARD**

I found out afterward. They wanted to send a message, punish me for resisting.

**ROSE**

And instead of fighting back, you let them get away with it.

**EDWARD**

You don't understand what I was up against. They threatened to destroy everything, our family, our legacy. I thought I could contain it, keep it from getting worse.

**ROSE**

How's that working out?

**EDWARD**

Rose, listen to me. You're a journalist. You know how this works. If my name gets tied to this, it's over. For me, for the family, for everything we've worked for.

**ROSE**

You want me to cover for you.

**EDWARD**

I need you to.

**ROSE**

I'll cover for you publicly—for now. But you'd better pray Detective Morrow doesn't find anything. Because if he does, I can't stop him.

Edward's gaze sharpens, a flicker of his old commanding presence returning.

**EDWARD**

Morrow's investigation doesn't have to go anywhere.

**ROSE**

No, Dad. That's where I draw the line. If you did anything illegal, I won't cover that up.

Edward steps closer, his voice low and urgent.

**EDWARD**

You don't understand what's at stake.

**ROSE**

I understand just fine. You made a choice. And now we're all paying for it. If Morrow finds something, I can't help you.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

And if Titan Core finds out I've been looking into them, I'm on their list too.

Edward reaches for her arm, his voice tinged with desperation.

EDWARD

Then stop looking. Stay out of this.

Rose yanks her arm away, her eyes blazing.

ROSE

Not a chance.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I'll keep your name out of my article. But don't expect me to save you if this comes crashing down.

Without another word, Rose turns and walks away.

**INT. LE JARDIN - NIGHT.**

The elegant dining room of *Le Jardin* is alive with warmth and polite chatter. The Kingston family sits across from the Sinclair family at a long table adorned with flickering candles and floral arrangements. Crystal glasses sparkle under the golden light as servers move between the tables.

Rose sits next to her sister, *Linda*, who is glowing with excitement. Across the table, *Peter Sinclair* sits between his parents, *Elaine* and *Charles Sinclair*. *Edward Kingston* holds his usual place at the head of the table, his diplomatic charm intact, though a subtle tension lingers between him and Rose.

*Linda* leans toward *Peter's mother, Elaine*, smiling brightly.

LINDA

Peter tells me you designed the Sinclair family vineyard from scratch. That's incredible!

*Elaine* laughs modestly, patting *Peter's* hand.

ELAINE

It was a lot of work, but it paid off. We've had some good years, though nothing compared to the estate Peter has built for himself.

Peter chuckles, raising his glass.

**PETER**

I've had a lot of help. Besides,  
none of it would've happened  
without my parents' example.

The group chuckles politely, their glasses clinking together.

Across the table, *Elaine* turns her attention to *Rose*,  
curiosity gleaming in her eyes.

**ELAINE**

Linda tells me you're quite the  
adventurer, *Rose*. A journalist,  
yes?

**ROSE**

That's right. Investigative work,  
mostly.

Charles Sinclair leans in, his tone amiable but probing.

**CHARLES**

Important work. Though I imagine it  
can't be easy.

**ROSE**

It's not supposed to be.

The tension in her tone is subtle but noticeable. *Elaine*  
tilts her head, intrigued.

**ELAINE**

What sort of stories do you  
investigate?

*Rose's* gaze flicks to *Edward*, who sips his wine calmly but  
doesn't meet her eyes. She exhales, choosing her words  
carefully.

**ROSE**

Corruption, mostly. Corporate  
misconduct, abuses of power.

**ELAINE**

Sounds dangerous.

**ROSE**

Only if you're digging in the right  
places.

The table falls quiet for a moment before *Linda*, sensing the  
tension, speaks up brightly.

**LINDA**

Rose always keeps us guessing. One day she's overseas chasing a story, the next she's riding that motorcycle of hers like she's in some action movie.

The group laughs, though Rose's smile remains faint.

As dessert is served, *Edward* addresses the table, his diplomatic charm smoothing over the earlier tension.

**EDWARD**

It's been wonderful getting to know the Sinclair family. I have no doubt this marriage will be a strong union, built on the best of both families traditions.

The group toasts, raising their glasses, but Rose sets hers down quickly, avoiding his gaze.

Peter notices, leaning toward her.

**PETER**

Everything okay?

Rose forces another smile, nodding.

**ROSE**

Just a long day.

Edward's gaze flickers toward her, but he doesn't comment.

As the plates are cleared and coffee is served, *Elaine* speaks up again, her tone friendly.

**ELAINE**

Rose, with everything you've seen in your line of work, I imagine it's hard to step back sometimes. How do you unwind?

**ROSE**

I don't, really.

**CHARLES**

Spoken like a true professional.

Rose gives a faint nod, but the conversation shifts as *Linda* jumps in, steering it back to lighter topics.

**LINDA**

Peter and I were thinking of doing a vineyard tour for the honeymoon. Maybe Italy or Napa. Any suggestions?

The group laughs and chats about travel, but Rose retreats into her thoughts, her gaze occasionally drifting to *Edward*.

**CHARLES**

I vote for Italy.

As the group mingles with coffee and champagne, *Linda* takes Rose's arm, pulling her aside.

**LINDA**

I know this isn't your scene, but it means a lot that you're here.

Rose softens slightly, squeezing her sister's hand.

**ROSE**

Of course. It's your big day.

*Linda* beams, but before she can say more, *Edward* approaches, gesturing subtly to Rose.

**EDWARD**

Eleanor, can I have a word?

Rose's jaw tightens, but she nods, following him to a quieter corner of the room.

The hum of conversation fades as *Edward* and *Rose* face each other near an ornate window.

**EDWARD (CONT'D)**

I meant what I said earlier. About your mother.

**ROSE**

And what about now? You want me to pretend everything's fine while you sit at the table like nothing happened?

**EDWARD**

What do you want me to say, Rose? That I failed? That I should've fought harder?

**ROSE**

That's a start.

Edward exhales sharply, lowering his voice.

**EDWARD**

I can't change the past. But I need you to understand—the decisions I made were to protect this family.

**ROSE**

And what about the people who've already been hurt? The ones Titan Core burned to the ground?

Edward looks away, his hands tightening into fists.

**EDWARD**

I made mistakes. But if this becomes a scandal, it'll destroy everything.

Rose's glare doesn't waver.

**ROSE**

If you're asking me to keep quiet, fine. I won't drag you into my article.

Edward steps closer, his voice low and urgent.

**EDWARD**

I'm asking you to think carefully. This isn't just about me—it's about all of us.

Rose shakes her head, stepping back.

**ROSE**

You made your choices, Dad. Now I'm making mine.

Without another word, she walks away.

**INT. ROSE'S FIREHOUSE - MORNING.**

The morning sun streams through the tall windows, casting long shadows across the scattered maps and files on the kitchen island. Rose leans over the counter, sipping her coffee, while Adrian types furiously on his laptop. Across from them, Mason stands with his arms crossed, listening intently.

**MASON**

So, you're saying this address is another one of their safe houses?

**ROSE**

Yes, But this time, I'm not going in alone.

She spreads out a map, pointing to the marked location on the outskirts of the city.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

The Red Hand isn't stupid. They'll have security watching the place. If they're moving the kids, they'll want to know if anyone's tailing them.

**MASON**

You're talking cameras? Guards? Maybe even a scout car?

**ROSE**

All of the above.

Adrian glances up from his laptop, his tone dry but sharp.

**ADRIAN**

They'll expect someone to follow. And if they do, they'll try to lose us—or worse.

Mason steps closer, pointing at the map.

**MASON**

Then you'll need backup. If they spot you, it's over.

**ROSE**

That's why we're splitting up. Adrian and I will use my car. You follow in yours. If I get made, you or Adrian take over surveillance.

**ADRIAN**

So, we're playing leapfrog with a bunch of traffickers who probably have better tech than I do. Sounds fun.

**MASON**

If we're doing this, we do it right. We stick to the plan—no heroics, no improvising.

Rose grabs a small tactical bag from the counter and slings it over her shoulder.

**ROSE**

We'll see about that.

**MASON**

I mean it, Rose. If things go sideways, we regroup and pull out. No taking unnecessary risks.

**ROSE**

I know the stakes, Mason. But if we don't follow them to their lair, we lose the kids. And we lose any chance of stopping the Red Hand.

**MASON**

All right. But we're keeping comms open the entire time.

Adrian taps a small device on the counter, his voice cutting through the tension.

**ADRIAN**

Encrypted radios, linked to my feed. If anything goes wrong, you'll know before they do.

**ROSE**

I hope your tech is as good as you think it is.

**ADRIAN**

It is. Try not to get me killed proving it.

**EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT.**

The safe house is a small, nondescript property at the edge of the city. Its darkened windows and overgrown yard hide its true purpose.

Rose sits in her bike a short distance away, parked in the shadows of a cluster of trees. Through binoculars, she surveys the house.

Adrian is parked further down the road, his laptop glowing softly as he monitors the area. *Mason's car* sits even further back, strategically positioned for a quick getaway.

**MASON (V.O., RADIO)**

Two cameras on the front porch. Looks like a guard in the living room—blinds are moving.

Rose presses her radio, her voice low.

**ROSE**

Got it. Adrian, are you seeing any external signals? Scout cars? Drones?

Adrian types quickly, scanning the feed.

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

Nothing yet. But I'm picking up chatter on their encrypted network. They're definitely planning a move.

**ROSE**

Then we wait. They'll have to come out eventually.

**EXT. SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT.**

The stillness of the night is broken by the low rumble of an engine. A *large moving van* slowly backs into the driveway of the safe house, its headlights cutting through the darkness. Moments later, two *black SUVs* pull up behind it, their windows tinted, engines idling menacingly.

**MASON (V.O.)**

Looks like they're making their move.

Through the binoculars, Rose watches as the front door of the house opens. Two *armed men* emerge, flanking a group of others carrying a *large crate*. The crate is heavy, requiring four people to lift it carefully into the back of the moving van.

**ROSE**

(into radio)

That's not kids. What the hell is in that crate?

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

Could be equipment. Could be worse. I'll try to intercept their comms once they're on the move.

**ROSE**

Are the kids in the crates? Mason, stay sharp.

The men finish securing the crate in the van, closing the back with a heavy slam. The convoy pulls out—first the van, then the two SUVs.

**MASON (V.O.)**

You want point?

**ROSE**

I'll take lead. Adrian, stay a few blocks behind. Mason, keep an eye out for anything trying to intercept us.

The three vehicles fall into position, their lights off as they tail the convoy from a distance.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT.**

The convoy weaves through the quieter parts of the city. The *moving van* stops briefly at a run-down house, where two more men load another *crate* into the back.

Rose sits in her car, watching through binoculars as the process repeats.

**ROSE (V.O.)**

Second stop. Same routine. *Crate's* going in.

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

These guys are playing Santa Claus.

**MASON (V.O.)**

Three stops so far. They're collecting something, not just moving kids.

The convoy moves again, stopping at another house.

*Rose, Mason, and Adrian* stay in formation, their movements coordinated and precise.

**EXT. LARGE MANSION - NIGHT.**

The convoy finally turns down a winding road, lined with tall trees and iron gates. In the distance, the glow of a large mansion comes into view. The convoy pulls into the driveway, the massive front gates opening automatically.

Rose slows her car, parking in the shadows near the entrance. Mason and Adrian follow suit, their cars hidden in the tree line.

**ROSE (V.O.)**

This is it.

Mason scans the area with binoculars, his voice low but tense.

**MASON (V.O.)**

High walls, gated entry, cameras on every corner. They're not hiding anymore.

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

And look at that driveway. Three more cars parked in front. They've got company.

**ROSE**

This isn't just a safe house. This is their base.

**INT. ROSE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose lowers her binoculars, her mind racing.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

What are they planning?

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

We've got two options--wait for them to move again or find a way in.

**MASON (V.O.)**

If we go in now, we're outnumbered and blind. We need more intel.

Rose exhales sharply, glancing back at the mansion.

**ROSE**

Then we wait. But we're not leaving until we know what's in those crates.

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

You're quiet. Too quiet.

**ROSE**

(into radio)  
I'm going in.

**MASON (V.O.)**

(urgent)  
Rose, no. That place is locked down tighter than a bank vault.

**ADRIAN (V.O.)**

We don't even know what's inside. Wait for an opening.

Rose adjusts her gloves, ignoring them as she stows the binoculars in her jacket.

**ROSE**

(into radio)

There's no time. I'll find a way.  
Cover for me if it goes sideways.

**EXT. MANSION PERIMETER - NIGHT.**

The tall *stone wall* surrounding the property is lined with security cameras that sweep in calculated intervals. Rose moves silently along the wall, her dark clothing blending into the shadows.

She pauses at a section where the *camera sweep* leaves a small blind spot. A faint smirk crosses her face.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Found you.

She puts a tree branch against the wall, she runs up the branch, and leaps up gripping the top of the wall. With practiced ease, she scales the wall, her movements silent and fluid.

**EXT. MANSION GROUNDS - NIGHT.**

Rose lands softly on the other side, crouching low in the bushes. She scans the area, noting the *patrolling guards* and the faint hum of additional security cameras near the mansion itself.

Staying close to the shadows, she moves along the driveway, her steps measured and deliberate. The glow of the mansion's exterior lights casts long shadows, which she uses to her advantage.

**EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - NIGHT.**

From her hidden position, Rose sees the three cars parked neatly in the circular driveway. She pulls out her phone, using the zoom feature to take several quick photos.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Got a sleek black Mercedes. A black  
SUV and A dark sedan. Sending you  
*both* something new.

She presses send, the pictures flying off to Adrian and Mason.

Still crouched in the shadows, Rose hears the faint creak of the mansion's front door opening. She freezes, pulling back further into the bushes.

She watches as **Judge Bennett (50)** step onto the porch. He's tall and imposing, dressed in an expensive suit. Watkins pauses, pulling a cigarette from and lights it.

The flicker of the lighter illuminates his face briefly—calm, almost smug.

**ADRIAN**

(into radio)

The cars belong to the congressman. Watkins and Daniel Silva owns half the tech in the state. These guys aren't just players, they're running the show.

**MASON (RADIO)**

Do You know who owns this house?

**ROSE (RADIO)**

Judge Bennett.

**MASON (RADIO)**

Yes, how did you know?

**ROSE (RADIO)**

He's Staring at me.

**MASON (RADIO)**

What's he doing?

**ROSE (RADIO)**

Smoking. Doesn't seem like he's in any rush to go back inside.

**ADRIAN (RADIO)**

You need to get out of there, now.

Rose crouches in the shadows. Through the foliage, she watches as security guards work unloading heavy crates from the moving van and carrying them into the house.

**ADRIAN (RADIO) (CONT'D)**

These people are untouchable in a normal investigation. Congressmen, judges, billionaires—they're not losing sleep over a warrant.

**ROSE (RADIO)**

Those poor kids have been through hell. Mom would not just walk away.

Rose dials the number, her voice calm and measured.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Hi, I'd like to report a break-in  
at Judge Bennett's estate.

**DISPATCHER (V.O.)**

Judge Bennett's house? Are you  
sure?

Rose picks up a rock.

**ROSE**

Oh, and vandalism.

Rose throws a rock through the car window. Alarms start  
blaring and lights flashing.

**DISPATCHER**

Hello, Hello anyone there?

Rose hangs up the phone, puts it away. Rose takes a smoke  
Grenada from her bag, pulls the pin, tossing it under the  
cars.

Rose darts toward the moving van, sticking close to the  
shadows. The guards are inside the mansion now, their voices  
echoing faintly. She approaches the crates, her heart  
pounding as she carefully pries one open.

Inside, she finds a group of terrified children, their faces  
pale and tear-streaked. They look up at her, frozen with  
fear.

**ROSE**

It's okay. I'm here to help. Come  
with me.

She gently lifts the lid, helping the children climb out one  
by one.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Stay very quiet. Get inside the van  
and don't move. I'll be back for  
you.

The children nod, their eyes wide with trust. Rose leads them  
to the back of the moving van, motioning for them to stay  
hidden behind some empty crates.

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

No matter what you hear, stay here.

She shuts the van door carefully, her hands shaking slightly  
as she steps back.

**EXT. MANSION GATES - NIGHT.**

Mason and Adrian sit in their respective cars, engines idling. Through their earpieces, they hear Rose's calm voice.

**ROSE (V.O.)**

The kids are safe. It's time.

**MASON (V.O.)**

You sure about this?

**ROSE (V.O.)**

Do it.

Adrian chuckles faintly, revving his engine.

**ADRIAN(V.O.)**

Showtime.

**EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - NIGHT.**

Suddenly, the roar of engines cuts through the quiet night. Mason's SUV and Adrian's car slam through the gates, shattering the iron bars as they race toward the mansion.

The guards react instantly, shouting orders as they scramble for their weapons. Floodlights swing toward the driveway, illuminating the chaos.

**EXT. MANSION GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose uses the smoke distraction to slip further into the shadows, avoiding the guards rushing outside to intercept the intruders.

The screech of tires and the crash of vehicles colliding with barricades fills the air.

Mason steps out of his SUV, his gun drawn, while Adrian exits his car, a smirk on his face despite the tension.

**MASON**

(to Adrian)

You're insane, you know that?

**ADRIAN**

You're welcome?

The wail of sirens grows louder, flashing red and blue lights cutting through the darkness as a fleet of police cars races toward the mansion.

The guards freeze, realizing the scale of the situation. Several drop their weapons as officers storm the grounds, shouting commands.

**EXT. MOVING VAN - NIGHT.**

Hidden inside the van, the children stay silent, huddled together as the chaos unfolds outside.

Rose watches from her hiding spot, her breath catching as officers begin to arrest the guards.

She steps forward cautiously, but before she can reach the van, an officer spots her.

**OFFICER**

(to Rose)

Hands up!

Rose raises her hands slowly, her expression unreadable.

**ROSE**

The van. The kids are in the van.

The scene is chaotic as police officers handcuff everyone on-site, including Mason and Adrian.

**MASON**

You're making a mistake! We're the good guys!

Adrian smirks faintly, even as he's cuffed.

**ADRIAN**

Doesn't feel like it.

Rose is cuffef, and led toward a police car.

**ROSE**

(to officer)

Where's Bennett?

The officer doesn't respond, but Rose already knows the answer.

**EXT. MANSION SIDEROAD.- NIGHT.**

Judge Bennet, having slipped away during the commotion.

He steps into an unmarked car waiting on a side road, the engine already running.

**DRIVER**

Where to, sir?

**BENNET**

Just drive.

The car disappears into the night.

**EXT. MANSION GROUNDS - NIGHT.**

Rose, Mason, and Adrian are loaded into separate police cars as officers secure the scene.

The moving van, still holding the rescued children, is carefully approached by officers, who open the back doors cautiously. The children's faces peek out, relief mingling with fear.

Rose, sitting in the back of a squad car, watches as the children are led to safety. A faint smile touches her lips, despite the cuffs on her wrists.

**INT. CITY JAIL LOBBY - MORNING.**

Morrow leads Rose, Mason, and Adrian through the busy jail lobby. Rose's phone buzzes constantly with missed calls and texts from Linda, but her focus is on Morrow.

**MORROW**

You're lucky you've got me,  
Kingston. The fallout from last  
night is already a storm.

**MASON**

What are we looking at?

Morrow stops, turning to face them with a grim expression.

**MORROW**

Judge Bennet's on the run. He  
slipped out during the raid, but  
we've got a manhunt underway. He  
won't get far.

**ADRIAN**

A Judge on the lam. That'll look  
great on the front page.

**MORROW**

Watkins isn't much better. He's  
holed up, screaming about  
diplomatic immunity. Claims this is  
all a misunderstanding.

**ROSE**

And Silva?

**MORROW**

Silva's toast. His entire tech empire's under investigation. Feds seized his servers this morning. He'll be lucky if he has a penny to his name by the end of the week.

**MASON**

That's something, at least.

**MORROW**

Yeah, but don't get too comfortable. Bennet's a slippery one, and Watkins has friends in high places. This isn't over.

Morrow turns back to Rose.

**MORROW (CONT'D)**

I'm putting my neck on the line for you. I told my boss you're my confidential informant. That's the only reason you're walking out of here today.

**ROSE**

Appreciate it, Detective.

**MORROW**

Don't thank me. If this blows up again, I'm not covering for you.

**EXT. CITY JAIL - MORNING.**

**ROSE**

What time is it?

**MORROW**

10:30 a.m.

**ROSE**

Oh crap the weddings at 11. I'll never make it.

A police cruiser sits outside, its lights flashing as Morrow gestures toward it.

**MORROW**

You will with a police escort.

**ROSE**

You giving me a ride?

**MORROW**

No, You're getting a police escort.  
That way you're not late, and I can  
get some peace of mind.

As the cruiser pulls up, Rose turns to *Adrian* and *Mason*.

**ROSE**

Adrian, go home and change. I don't  
need you showing up at the wedding  
looking like you rolled out of a  
dumpster.

**ADRIAN**

I'll meet you at the house. Don't  
miss me too much.

**ROSE**

Mason, I need you to grab my dress.  
It's at the firehouse—second-floor  
railing. Bring it to the wedding  
venue.

**MASON**

Got it.

Rose steps into the back of the cruiser, glancing back  
Morrow.

**ROSE**

You're coming, right?

**MORROW**

Well I don't know. I wasn't  
invited.

**ROSE**

Get in here.

**MORROW**

Okay .

Morrow steps into the car.

**ROSE**

Don't screw this up.

**INT. POLICE CRUISER - MORNING.**

The cruiser weaves through the busy morning traffic, its  
lights flashing but sirens off. Rose sits in the back.

MORROW

We'll get you there. Don't worry.

ROSE

Not worried. Just dreading the fallout.

**EXT. WEDDING VENUE - MORNING.**

*The police cruiser pulls up to the elegant estate, the venue bustling with activity. Linda spots the flashing lights from the entrance, rushing out with an exasperated expression.*

LINDA

Rose! Are you kidding me? A police car?

Rose steps out, smoothing her clothes with an apologetic look.

ROSE

Long night. Don't ask.

LINDA

I'm not even surprised anymore. Just get inside and get ready.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS.**

Mason's car pulls up moments later, screeching slightly as it parks. Mason steps out carefully, holding Rose's wedding dress.

MASON

Hope this makes up for last night.

Rose grabs the dress, giving him a grateful nod.

ROSE

You're a lifesaver.

MASON

Don't mention it.

**INT. WEDDING VENUE - BRIDAL SUITE - LATER.**

Rose stands in front of a full-length mirror, adjusting the bridesmaid dress with Linda fussing over her hair.

LINDA

You're lucky you clean up fast.

Rose smirks faintly, her reflection showing a hint of amusement.

**ROSE**

Wouldn't miss this for the world.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY.**

The sprawling lawn of the Kingston estate is bathed in golden light from strings of fairy lights and ornate lanterns. Tables adorned with crisp white linens and floral centerpieces are scattered across the reception area. A band plays soft jazz in the background, adding a lively, elegant energy to the night.

Guests mingle, laughing and chatting with glasses of champagne in hand. The earlier chaos of Bennet's arrest is a distant memory, replaced by the warm buzz of celebration.

Rose stands by the bar, sipping a glass of champagne as she surveys the crowd. Her gaze lands on her sister Linda, radiant in her wedding gown, laughing with her new in-laws.

Peter Sinclair approaches Rose, his expression warm but slightly hesitant. Behind him, his parents, Elaine and Charles Sinclair, hover nearby.

**PETER**

(to Rose)

Hey, thought I'd check in. You good?

Rose smirks, taking another sip of her champagne.

**ROSE**

I'm always good.

Peter chuckles, glancing toward his parents.

**PETER**

You know, my mom's been dying to talk to you.

Elaine Sinclair steps forward with a warm but curious smile.

**ELAINE**

Rose, right? I just wanted to tell you what a wonderful time we had at dinner the other night.

**ROSE**

I enjoyed it as well. We should do it again.

Elaine laughs politely, while Charles raises an eyebrow, clearly intrigued.

**CHARLES**

Tell me more about investigative journalist. That must be... interesting work.

**ROSE**

Keeps me busy.

**ELAINE**

Sounds very exciting.

The slight tension is broken as Peter steps in, smiling.

**PETER**

Mom, Dad, let's not grill her.  
She's here to celebrate, not work.

Elaine and Charles laugh lightly, stepping back as Peter gives Rose an apologetic look.

**PETER (CONT'D)**

They mean well.

**ROSE**

Don't worry. I'm used to it.

As Rose moves through the crowd, she's intercepted by Mrs. Haddock, an older woman with a sharp eye and a sharper tongue.

**MRS. HADDOCK**

Eleanor Kingston!

**ROSE**

It's Rose, actually.

**MRS. HADDOCK**

Oh, nonsense. Eleanor's such a strong name.

Rose forces a smile, subtly glancing around for an escape.

**MRS. HADDOCK (CONT'D)**

How are you, dear? Still gallivanting around the world?

**ROSE**

Something like that.

**MRS. HADDOCK**

Well, you've always been the adventurous one. Such a shame you haven't settled down yet.

Rose's smile tightens, but before she can respond, Adrian appears at her side, grinning.

**ADRIAN**

(to Mrs. Haddock)  
She's got standards. Keeps life  
interesting.

Mrs. Haddock narrows her eyes slightly, then huffs with a faint smile before walking away.

**ROSE**

Thanks for that.

**ADRIAN**

Anytime.

Linda, approaches Rose with two bridesmaids in tow, all of them glowing from champagne and laughter.

**LINDA**

There you are! I've barely seen you  
all day

**ROSE**

You've been busy.

One of the bridesmaids, Kara, grins at Rose.

**KARA**

Busy looking perfect. I mean,  
seriously, Linda, you're like a  
princess tonight.

Linda laughs, spinning slightly to show off her dress.

**LINDA**

It's all about the gown.

The second bridesmaid, Monica, nudges Rose playfully.

**MONICA**

And you're not too bad yourself.  
You clean up nice, Rose.

**ROSE**

Don't let it get around.

**LINDA**

Seriously, though. Thank you for  
being here.

**ROSE**

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

*Later, Rose spots Mason sitting at a table with a group of young cousins, laughing as he folds elaborate napkin shapes for them.*

*She approaches, crossing her arms with a smirk.*

**ROSE (CONT'D)**

Didn't peg you as a babysitter.

*Mason grins, holding up a napkin swan.*

**MASON**

It's called multitasking. Keeping them entertained while keeping an eye on the room.

**ROSE**

Yeah, because the 10-year-olds are the real threat.

*Mason chuckles, setting the napkin swan down as one of the kids grabs it eagerly.*

**MASON**

Just staying sharp.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT.**

*As the music shifts to a livelier tune, the dance floor fills with guests. Rose lingers at the edge, watching as Linda and Peter share a moment in the center.*

*Adrian appears again, holding out his hand with a faint smirk.*

**ADRIAN**

Come on. One dance won't kill you.

**ROSE**

Don't step on my toes.

*They join the dance floor, blending into the crowd as the energy of the night takes over. The earlier chaos is a distant memory, replaced by laughter, joy, and a sense of peace.*

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - WEDDING VENUE - DAY.**

*The sprawling Kingston estate is a picture of elegance. Guests in formal attire mingle under white canopies, sipping champagne as a live quartet plays softly in the background. The ceremony space is set, with rows of white chairs facing a floral arch.*

Rose, now dressed in her bridesmaid gown, stands off to the side near Linda, who is glowing in her wedding dress.

**LINDA**

I'm so glad you made it, but barely.

**ROSE**

Can't imagine any other place to be.

*Linda squeezes her hand, a soft smile on her face.*

**LINDA**

Thank you.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - LATER.**

The ceremony is in full swing. Peter, Linda's fiancé, stands at the altar, beaming as Linda walks down the aisle. Rose watches from her place among the bridesmaids, her expression softening as she takes in the moment.

The officiant begins the vows, and the crowd falls silent. Everything feels serene, perfect.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - DRIVEWAY - DAY.**

Unnoticed by the guests, a black sedan pulls up at the edge of the estate. The driver steps out, revealing Congressman Bennett, his face cold and determined. He adjusts the cuffs of his suit jacket, a glint of something metallic tucked beneath it—a concealed weapon.

He moves toward the crowd, blending in seamlessly with the mingling guests.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - RECEPTION - DAY.**

The newlyweds are being congratulated by friends and family.

Rose stands near a table, talking quietly with Mason.

**MASON**

You should take a breather. You've been on edge all day.

Before Rose can respond, her instincts kick in—a flicker of movement catching her eye. She turns, her heart skipping a beat as she spots Bennett, weaving through the crowd.

Her grip tightens on her champagne glass, her voice low but urgent.

Bennett moves quickly, his hand brushing against the concealed weapon under his jacket. His eyes lock onto Rose, his face twisting with fury.

Before anyone can react, he pulls the weapon—a *small pistol*—and raises it toward her.

**BENNET**

You should've stayed out of this,  
Kingston!

Guests scream, the joyful atmosphere shattering in an instant.

Rose ducks instinctively, grabbing the edge of the table for cover as the first shot misses her by inches.

Mason moves like lightning, pulling a small concealed firearm from his jacket as he shouts.

**MASON**

(to Adrian)  
Get the guests out of here!

Adrian immediately starts ushering people away, his voice calm but firm.

**ADRIAN**

Everyone, move! Get to the other  
side of the estate!

*Bennett fires another shot, narrowly missing Rose.*

**BENNET**

You ruined everything! You stupid  
bitch.

*Morrow steps out, his weapon trained on Bennet.*

**MASON**

Drop it, Bennet! It's over!

Bennett hesitates for a moment but then takes aim again. Before he can fire, a gunshot rings out.

Detective Morrow appears from the shadows, his gun drawn. He's the one who fired the warning shot.

**MORROW**

Drop the weapon. Now!

Bennett turns, his face pale as he realizes he's surrounded. He hesitates, then slowly lowers the gun.

Morrow moves in, cuffing him swiftly while the remaining officers secure the scene.

**MORROW** (CONT'D)

Judge Bennett, you're under arrest.

Bennet glares at Rose, his voice a low growl.

**BENNETT**

This isn't over.

**MORROW**

Oh, it's over.

Morrow takes Bennett away, puts him into police car.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY.**

The sun shines brightly over the manicured lawn of the Kingston estate. Guests mill around the reception area.

Rose stands off to the side near the bar, a glass of champagne in her hand. Her bridesmaid dress is slightly rumpled, but her sharp gaze scans the crowd.

Detective Morrow approaches, his suit slightly askew from the commotion. He's speaking into his radio, finishing up instructions to officers before turning his attention to Rose.

**MORROW** (CONT'D)

(to radio)

Keep Bennet in holding until I get back.

He clicks off the radio and sighs, sliding his hands into his pockets as he looks at Rose.

**MORROW** (CONT'D)

Well, Kingston, you certainly know how to keep things interesting.

Rose smirks faintly, sipping her champagne.

**ROSE**

It's a gift.

**MORROW**

Bennett's in custody, but you and I both know this isn't over. Congressman Watkins may walk with his diplomatic immunity

Edward walks over.

EDWARD

Sorry , couldn't help overhearing  
but I revoked Watkins immunity this  
morning.

ROSE

Thank you, dad.

EDWARD

I Know it's a small gesture. But  
he'll pay for what he's done.

MORROW

You should talk to your sister.  
She's holding it together, but this  
is her day.

Rose exhales deeply, setting her glass down.

ROSE

Yeah, I know.

Morrow starts to walk away but stops, turning back.

MORROW

For what it's worth, you handled  
yourself well back there.

Rose gives him a small nod before he disappears into the  
crowd.

Rose finds Linda standing near the floral arch. Peter is at  
her side, his arm around her shoulders. Linda is visibly  
upset but trying to smile as guests offer reassurances.

Rose approaches cautiously, her voice soft.

ROSE

Sis.

Linda turns.

LINDA

What the hell, Rose? A gunfight at  
my wedding? Bullets in the wedding  
cake. What is wrong with you?

Rose holds up her hands defensively.

ROSE

I didn't invite him, sis.

**PETER**

(to Linda)

It's over now. Everyone's safe. No one was hurt.

Linda exhales sharply, brushing a stray tear from her cheek.

**LINDA**

This was supposed to be perfect.

**ROSE**

It still can be.

Linda stares at Rose for a long moment, then nods reluctantly.

**LINDA**

Fine. But if anyone else pulls a gun, I'm blaming you.

**ROSE**

Fair enough.

The mood begins to shift as the band strikes up a lively tune. Guests slowly return to their seats or head to the dance floor.

Rose stands near the bar with Mason and Adrian.

**MASON**

You think we'll get through the rest of the day without any more surprises?

Rose raises an eyebrow, her smirk faint.

**ROSE**

Doubt it.

**ADRIAN**

Well, I don't know about you, but I'm here for the cake.

Linda and Peter appear nearby, pulling Rose toward the dance floor.

**LINDA**

(to Rose)

Come on. You owe me a dance.

Rose hesitates, then sighs, setting her glass down as Adrian steps back with a grin.

**ROSE**

You're not letting this go, are you?

**LINDA**

Not a chance.

The sun casts a golden glow over the dance floor as Rose and Linda sway together, sharing a rare moment of peace.

**LINDA (CONT'D)**

You're not so bad, you know.

**ROSE**

Don't spread that around.

Linda laughs, pulling Peter into the dance as Rose steps back, watching her sister with a rare, genuine smile.

Adrian appears at her side, holding out his hand with a faint smirk.

**ADRIAN**

Your turn.

Rose raises an eyebrow but takes his hand, letting him lead her back onto the dance floor.

**EXT. KINGSTON ESTATE - LATER.**

The reception winds down as the sun dips lower in the sky, casting long shadows over the estate. Guests linger, sharing laughter and stories as the band plays one last song.

Rose sits at a table with Mason and Adrian, the three of them sharing a rare quiet moment.

**MASON**

So, what's next?

**ROSE**

Dinner. Then sleep. Then probably more trouble.

Adrian raises his glass with a grin.

**ADRIAN**

Here's to more trouble.

They clink glasses. A new song begins the music shifts to a livelier tune, the dance floor fills with guests.

**ADRIAN (CONT'D)**

Dance?

She hesitates for a moment, then takes his hand, letting him lead her onto the dance floor.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY.**

Sirens wail as a police chase barrels through the crowded city. A black sedan swerves wildly, narrowly missing pedestrians as it speeds through intersections.

Inside the car, three masked robbers grip the seats as the driver barks orders.

**ROBBER #1**

Left! Take the alley!

The car skids hard, tires screeching as it veers into a narrow alley, clipping a trash can. Police cars follow closely, their lights flashing.

**EXT. CITY ALLEY - CONTINUOUS.**

The sedan bursts out of the alley, hitting open streets again. The robbers make a quick turn into a parking garage. Moments later, a different car, a nondescript silver SUV, emerges from the other side.

The police lose sight of their target, their cruisers splitting up in a desperate attempt to find them.

**EXT. QUIET TREE-LINED STREET - DAY.**

Rose beneath a large oak tree. Her posture is relaxed, but her eyes are sharp, tracking every movement.

A silver SUV rolls slowly down the street. The same three robbers glance around nervously as they pull into the driveway of a modest house.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS.**

The robbers exit the car quickly, carrying duffel bags stuffed with stolen cash. They move toward the house, glancing over their shoulders before disappearing inside.

Rose watches silently, her phone in hand. She types a quick message.

**TEXT TO POLICE:**

Suspects spotted. 135 Maple Drive.  
Stolen money inside. Proceed with  
caution.

She hits send, tucks the phone into her pocket, and steps out of her car, her movements quiet and deliberate.

**INT. ROBBERS' HOUSE - NIGHT.**

Inside, the *robbers* are celebrating. The duffel bags are dumped on the *kitchen table*, stacks of cash spilling out.

**ROBBER #2**

Man, we did it! Clean getaway.

The sound of faint footsteps echoes from another room, but none of them notice.

**INT. ROBBERS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS.**

Rose moves like a shadow, her movements silent and calculated. She steps into the living room, spotting the three robbers in the kitchen.

From her thigh holsters, she pulls two crackling stun wands.

The robbers are too busy counting the money to notice Rose slip into the room.

**ROSE**

Party's over.

The robbers whirl around, startled, but Rose moves quickly. She jabs the stun gun into the first robber's side, sending him crumpling to the floor. The second robber lunges at her, but she ducks, using his momentum to flip him over the kitchen counter. The third robber swings wildly, but Rose sidesteps and sweeps his legs out from under him.

In moments, all three are subdued. Rose pulls zip ties from her pocket, securing their hands behind their backs with practiced efficiency.

**ROBBER #3**

You're crazy! Who the hell are you?!

**ROSE**

You don't want to know.

She grabs a nearby black rose from her bag, placing it delicately on top of the stolen money.

**EXT. ROBBERS' HOUSE - DAY.**

The wail of *sirens* grows louder as *police cars* pull up outside. Officers pour out, their weapons drawn.

Officers spill out, guns drawn, forming a perimeter around a dilapidated house.

OFFICER

Secure the perimeter! No one in or out!

An unmarked black sedan pulls up, detective Morrow steps out, wearing a long coat.

**INT. ROBBERS' HOUSE - DAY.**

The officers and Morrow burst into the house, finding the three robbers bound and struggling on the floor. The stolen money sits neatly on the table, the black rose on top of the cash.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Looks like someone beat us to it.

MORROW

Good call, officer. Get this trash out of here.

Morrow takes out his phone.

**EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - NIGHT.**

Sitting on her bike parked down the street, Rose watches as the officers lead the robbers out in cuffs. She smirks faintly, her phone buzzing with a new text.

TEXT FROM MORROW:

Was that you?

Rose types back quickly.

TEXT TO MORROW:

Perhaps. See you next time, detective.

She puts the bike in drive, disappearing down the street.

**FADE OUT.**