

S.T.E.M. CELL

Written by

Tom Stohlgren

C O N T A C T

Tom Stohlgren

Writer

E: tjstohlgren@gmail.com

Eleni Larchanidou, LLM

Literary & Talent Manager

E: managerelenillm@gmail.com

P: + 30 690 902 0698 GR (WhatsApp | Viber | Telegram)

P: +1 714 702 5507 USA (Direct | SMS | Voicemail)

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FADE IN:

SUPER: "There is no great genius without a mixture of madness." -- Aristotle

INT. HOSPITAL BIRTHING ROOM - NIGHT

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- CONSTANCE CARNAGE-ZENT (mid-30s) screams as she clutches her husband's hands (BRIGHTON ZENT; late-40s) in a tailored business suit with shiny leather shoes.

-- Three Doctors (40-50s) in surgical scrubs grunt as they assist in the difficult birth.

-- A baby girl is finally born, but she's unresponsive.

-- Constance and Brighton panic as the doctors try everything to get the baby to show signs of being alert.

BRIGHTON

Do something! I said, do something!

CONSTANCE

Oh my God! What are we going to do?

Brighton pleads with a doctor.

BRIGHTON

I'm a direct descendant of Charles the First, the last Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. My baby may be queen someday!

CONSTANCE

Brighton, you're such an ass. They abolished that monarchy in 1918. You're a nobody.

BRIGHTON

(threatening to Constance)

All your Carnage money isn't doing her any good, Constance!

(to the doctors)

We're going to do something! I can guarantee you that!

END MONTAGE

INT. BEACH ESTATE DINING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "Twelve years later."

AVALON CARNAGE-ZENT (12), a pretty girl with long curly hair sits in a bright yellow dress and formal white gloves. She is neither happy nor sad staring at her elegant place setting, designer table-scape, and bakery-bought birthday cake with unlit candles begging to be lit.

Standing around impatiently checking their smartphones are Avalon's old-money, socialite mom, Constance (now late-40s); stuffy dad, Brighton (60) a businessman; attractive ELLEN WATERS (40), Avalon's and Constance's weekly therapist; and handsome MAX SHEEHAN (22), Avalon's tutor, who for reasons of family privacy and security, is always referred to "NINE" after Avalon's eight previous tutors.

ELLEN

We're ready anytime you are, Avalon dear.

Silence. Avalon ignores her therapist, who quickly writes a note in her notebook.

Brighton stands and glares at Avalon. He speaks with a deep, booming voice at all times.

BRIGHTON

We haven't got all day!

AVALON

U.T. will be here any second!

CONSTANCE

My brother Thurmond will be late for his own funeral!

BRIGHTON

I'll be the one who kills him!

ELLEN

Every family has an oddball member, but I find Thurmond deeply troubled.

Avalon smiles weakly and mumbles.

AVALON

I like him.

A BUZZER sounds in the kitchen. Brighton and Constance dash to the sound.

CONSTANCE
That's the unruly rascal now!

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A BUZZER sounds again on a small gate-security monitor with an intercom.

Constance and Brighton glare at each other before reaching the monitor.

They see THURMOND CARNAGE (40s), waiting impatiently at an impressive iron gate. He drives a new red convertible and wears a long coat with a red scarf. A leather briefcase rests in the passenger seat.

Thurmond presses the button again.

THURMOND (O.S.)
I know you're there! You're always there! Open up. I was summoned by her highness.

Brighton whispers angrily to Constance.

BRIGHTON
Thought you monitored all her correspondence.

Constance presses the intercom button to speak.

CONSTANCE
How, Thurmond? How did she summon you?

THURMOND (O.S.)
Email, text message, passenger pigeon? What's the difference?

Brighton presses the intercom.

BRIGHTON
You know damned well...

THURMOND (O.S.)
(interrupts)
Oh, swell! I get to see the great Bitcoin thief and the wicked warden of the prison today. Let me in! I've got the birthday gift you had me order for my favorite niece.

Brighton presses the intercom button in anger.

BRIGHTON

Ahh! That special Princess Watch.
Take the cost from the trust fund,
without a word otherwise, Thurmond.

Constance presses the "Open" button, and they see the gate opening.

CONSTANCE

At least it's not a goddamn pony
this time!

Constance turns and begins stomping away.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

You get the door. I'll tell Avalon
he's here. You know how she gets
when she sees him.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - DAY

Looking in the front door, we see Brighton, wearing a thin blue medical mask and blocking the entrances to the parlor and dining room. Behind Brighton is a majestic staircase.

Thurmond saunters in only to be rushed by Brighton to the dining room, while handing him a medical mask to wear.

THURMOND

Is this really necessary? I know...

BRIGHTON

(interrupts)
Put it on or out you go.

Thurmond reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a custom-made mask with his face painted on it. He slips on the mask as he approaches the dining room door.

THURMOND

N-95. I brought one for everyone.

Brighton rolls his eyes in disgust.

BRIGHTON

Wait here.

Brighton stands six feet from Thurmond like a guard as he opens the dining room door.

INT. BEACH ESTATE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Constance and Avalon stand in front of the birthday table wearing thin blue medical masks and with Constance tightly holding Avalon's hand.

Ellen and Nine stand at their seats and smile politely. Ellen wears a thin blue mask, Nine does not.

Thurmond sees Nine and is smitten. He has to fight the urge not to gaze at him.

CONSTANCE

She's been dying to see you!

Avalon breaks free and runs to hug Thurmond.

Thurmond returns the hug, before Constance separates them.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Avalon!

BRIGHTON

I knew this would happen.

AVALON

I knew you'd come.

THURMOND

Highlight of my year.

CONSTANCE

Six feet. Please! It's not safe.

Ellen sees Thurmond gazing at Nine.

ELLEN

I'll say.

Thurmond refocuses on Avalon.

THURMOND

When a little girl has that much money, you can never be too safe!

Nine's eyes open widely.

ELLEN

It's her well-being they're concerned about, you twit!

THURMOND

(laughs)

That's why I brought my little girl
a new medical mask.

Thurmond pulls out a custom-made mask for Avalon that perfectly matches her facial features, with one obvious difference. The mask has bright red lipstick on its lips, causing Avalon to laugh and jump up and down in circles.

She puts the mask on immediately.

Thurmond hands Brighton a mask (with a devilish grin and handlebar mustache on it). He stares at it and tosses it aside.

THURMOND (CONT'D)

I brought masks for everyone.

Thurmond hands Constance and Ellen identical masks which have boils and moles all over the nose, cheeks, and chin, along with a witch's mouth with rotten teeth.

Constance quickly puts it in her pocket, while Ellen rolls her eyes in disgust.

Thurmond turns to Nine with puppy-dog eyes.

THURMOND (CONT'D)

And who might you be? I brought a
mask for Seven.

Thurmond holds up a mask with a handsome man's face on it, which Nine graciously accepts and puts on.

NINE

I'm Nine, Mr. Carnage. Avalon's
told me so much about you.

ELLEN

(to Nine)

Be careful of this one, Nine.

Thurmond growls at Ellen.

THURMOND

Never trust a courtesan disguised
as the family shrink.

(beat)

Nice to see you again, Ellen. Did
you bite and scare away Seven?

AVALON

No. Seven quit. And Mommy scared away Eight 'cause she was a girl.

CONSTANCE

(sweetly to Avalon)

A forward woman not to be trusted!

(sternly to Thurmond)

Anything else on your twisted mind, dear brother?! Or can we get the birthday cake over with?

Avalon trudges to her chair and pouts as she stares at her cake.

Thurmond, Brighton, and Constance take their seats.

THURMOND

Regarding Av's trust fund, as her attorney, I'm here to inform her of her rights after reaching the age of reason: Twelve.

BRIGHTON

Hold it right there, Thurmond. That's only in the case of our...
(glances at Avalon)
You know.

AVALON

What, Daddy?

CONSTANCE

In case we could no longer care for you and keep you safe, dear.

Thurmond laughs.

THURMOND

She has to learn to take of herself someday. I fully expect the rest of you to follow your family shrink off a cliff and into the sea like a bunch of spineless lemmings.

Everyone's eyes open, stunned by Thurmond's spite, but Avalon laughs.

AVALON

Good one, U.T., except it's a myth. Lemmings don't commit suicide. They're smarter than that!

Nine stands and moves behind Brighton to take a photo of the event with his smartphone. No one looks happy. Brighton turns and snatches the phone from Nine's hands.

Ellen angrily throws her napkin down on the table, stands in a huff, and begins to storm out.

ELLEN

I'll come back after one despicable guest leaves.

BRIGHTON

Ellen, please stay. We'll muzzle Thurmond.

THURMOND

Everyone else quit wearing masks two years ago. Paranoid fools, all but this handsome young man!

Thurmond smiles at Nine as Ellen turns to grunt at Thurmond before leaving.

CONSTANCE

It's a precaution for Avalon's preexisting conditions. We're so proud of our little girl almost getting into Mensa.

BRIGHTON

She was in the top five percent in terms of IQ.

(softly to Constance)

She'll have to study harder to get into the top two percent, won't she, dear?

Constance looks away, disappointed.

AVALON

(giggles)

I haven't been in the top five percent since I was nine. Ms. Waters told me my IQ has been dropping like a stone ever since. I don't care.

Constance shakes in disappointment.

CONSTANCE

Nonsense, dear. Of course, you care. For now, let's all eat your birthday cake and be happy for once. Shall we?

Thurmond takes out a pen and a \$100-bill, and hides what he writes on it before folding it and handing it to Avalon, while stealing glances at Nine.

THURMOND

A little something for your piggy bank, Av, from U.T.

AVALON

Thanks, U.T. I'll put it right in there.

THURMOND

(laughs)

You'll need it when you break out of here in six years! You'll be 18, and that hundred-dollar bill will be worth fifty-seven dollars or so, right, Brighton?

BRIGHTON

Inflation could be...

THURMOND

(interrupting)

I would have sent her bitcoins, but I know how you pirate my messages to her.

AVALON

So great to see you, U.T. How long can you stay?

CONSTANCE

(sweetly to Avalon)

Five minutes. You know about the aerial spreading of germs and disease. Let's sing and cut the cake.

Avalon pouts.

AVALON

I'm going to live with U.T. when I turn eighteen and my IQ won't matter to anyone when it's back to normal.

Brighton steps over to put an arm around Avalon.

BRIGHTON

Don't be silly, Avalon. Your IQ will bounce back, and your uncle is a confirmed bachelor who travels to unsafe corners of the world, bringing back all manner of...

Thurmond pulls a small box from his pocket and interrupts.

THURMOND

I brought you a watch.

Constance and Brighton hover over the gift, as Avalon opens the box.

BRIGHTON

(winks to Thurmond)

We said, no gifts.

Avalon can't hide her disappointment when she hugs Thurmond.

AVALON

A princess watch. Thanks, U.T.

CONSTANCE

The money was enough.

THURMOND

It's a special princess watch I heard about from your dad!

Avalon glares at her dad for a second, as she breaks off the hug from Thurmond. She looks at the watch suspiciously.

Constance lights the candles in a huff.

CONSTANCE

Let's get this over with!

Happy Birthday is poorly sung by everyone except Nine, which Avalon notices.

When the song is over, Avalon watches the candles burn down, rather than blowing them out.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Mommy says it's time to blow out the candles, dear.

Silence. Avalon ignores her mom.

Nine shrugs and looks on with pity, as Brighton stomps over to Avalon and puts his face close to the cake.

Avalon continues to stare at the burning candles dripping melting wax on the frosting.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
Dear, let her do it.

THURMOND
She can do it, Brighton.

Brighton glares at Constance and Thurmond before blowing out the candles.

BRIGHTON
You two can sit idly by and watch
her ruin a sixty-seven-dollar cake!
I can't!

CONSTANCE
I don't think...

Brighton calmly returns to his seat and addresses Avalon.

BRIGHTON
(interrupts)
Avalon, do you have something to
say to all of us?

Avalon looks up confused and she mumbles.

AVALON
I wet my pants.

Nine looks away, hiding a giggle and a smirk, as Constance races to Avalon's aid, and Thurmond looks on sadly.

CONSTANCE
I'll take her.

Avalon looks bewildered as her mom leads her away, and Brighton stares at the pee stain on the dining room chair.

Brighton turns and stares blindly out the windows.

BRIGHTON
I only hope she returns with
upholstery cleaner.

Nine begins to exit when Brighton stops him.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
Nine.

Nine turns with a blank look.

NINE

Yes, Sir.

BRIGHTON

I don't have to remind you that you are covered by an ironclad NDA and Confidentiality Agreement.

NINE

Nondisclosure agreement. Yes, Sir.

Thurmond looks upon Nine with pity.

Nine turns to exit, but Brighton stops him again.

BRIGHTON

Complete silence. Is that clear?

NINE

Perfectly clear, Sir.

BRIGHTON

What's today's lesson plan?

Nine pulls out an iPad from his back belt and checks his schedule.

NINE

The history of the Austrian Empire, again. Yes, Sir.

Constance returns with upholstery cleaner.

CONSTANCE

And appropriate table manners.

BRIGHTON

Is that clear, Nine.

NINE

Yes, Sir. Ma'am.

Nine smiles and exits quickly.

CONSTANCE

Avalon demands that Thurmond stays for her birthday dinner!

Brighton gets in Constance's face.

BRIGHTON

Quite impossible, dear. You know the rules.

Constance pouts.

CONSTANCE
But Daddy...

Thurmond's eyes open widely at the domineering Brighton, and subservient Constance.

BRIGHTON
(interrupts)
After her lessons, she may go walk
the grounds with Nine if she stays
on the paths and is back in an
hour.

Constance glares at Brighton.

CONSTANCE
I hate you when you're like this?

THURMOND
All the time, then?

Brighton tries to hug Constance, but she pushes him away.

BRIGHTON
You're the one who keeps telling me
she needs more lessons for her IQ
development!

CONSTANCE
And you keep telling me you'll find
another surgeon...
(glances at Thurmond)
Never mind. I'll find one.

Constance storms out.

Brighton turns to Thurmond calmly.

BRIGHTON
We think it's time you leave.

Thurmond stands, ignoring Brighton as he looks out the window to see Nine pacing outside on the grounds, a manicured landscape with a helicopter pad, and walking paths leading to an elegant dock and the Pacific Ocean.

THURMOND
Perhaps I should be going. Please
pass my regrets for not staying for
dinner in your prison mess hall,
Warden.

BRIGHTON

I know you're after her trust fund
more than I!

Thurmond ignores Brighton as he exits.

INT. BEACH ESTATE LIBRARY - DAY

Avalon smiles big, holds an iPad, and enters the modern library dressed in sweatpants, T-shirt, and tennis shoes. The library contains Mac computers, a flat-screen TV, and a powerful modem. Nine sits in an overstuffed leather chair flipping through web pages on his iPad.

Upon seeing Avalon, Nine holds a finger to his lips, points at the Baby Monitor on the bookshelf, and shows her the lesson plan on his iPad that reads, "History of the Austrian Empire."

NINE

The Austrian Empire was once the
grandest and most influential in
all of Europe...

Avalon sees the lesson plan and calls up a video program on her iPad and sends it via Bluetooth to the Baby Monitor.

AVALON

We're clear.

Nine doesn't look up.

NINE

Thank God! What's all this about
the Austrian Empire all the time.

Avalon looks away shyly.

AVALON

Daddy thinks he has royal blood as
a direct descendant of Charles the
First, but they abolished the
monarchy in 1918, so he's nothing.

NINE

And your mom?

AVALON

Her family had a ton of money a
long time ago. Rockefeller rich!
She didn't trust Daddy, so she put
it all in my trust fund. She's poor
now.

Nine looks out the window at the beach estate.

NINE

I wouldn't say 'nothing.' Of course, we could rappel from your window with my climbing gear and escape in a heartbeat.

AVALON

I'd rather learn to kiss like a grown woman. You said you would teach me.

Nine, shocked, turns around and stares at Avalon.

NINE

I said I'd teach you when you were a grown woman. Can't you build STEM toys like other smart kids?

AVALON

They put stupid boys on the boxes of seventy-eight percent of STEM toys. When I was nine, I could look at the box, make a 3-D model on my iPad, then delete it.

NINE

Is your IQ really dropping?

AVALON

It peaked at age eight in the top three percent, but at age nine, it started to drop. Mom and Dad were furious, 'cause I didn't care.

NINE

And it's still declining? Didn't you memorize every book you read?

AVALON

I used to. I still remember every Dr. Seuss book. "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

NINE

The Lorax! My favorite. He was talking about trees.

AVALON

(snarls)
He was talking about people.

(MORE)

AVALON (CONT'D)

But all the other books are fading fast. Now my IQ was down to one-twenty-five two years ago. Haven't seen the last test scores.

NINE

It's a big deal, those standardized IQ tests. My ex-girlfriend told me all about them. Some British schoolgirl, your age, got in the top percentile and got into Mensa.

AVALON

I hear about her at breakfast every morning! I must be getting dumber every year. It doesn't bode well for your tutoring either.

Avalon giggles and laughs like a younger child, then her voice changes to a deep, dark tone.

Avalon points to the baby monitor and flirts by dancing around Nine.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Baby monitor is four hours on repeat.

(deeper, darker)

One word from me and you'll be fired and sent packing.

Nine stands, worried and scared.

NINE

Wait... I was just...

Avalon sounds like a demon.

AVALON

Kiss me or I'll scream! One scream from me and I'll have you arrested! How does ten years in prison sound?

Max is stunned and can't speak. He paces considering his options.

NINE

I'll tell your folks you peed your pants today to get out of your own birthday party.

AVALON

They won't believe you.

NINE

I'll tell them how you break into their security cameras and change footage.

AVALON

They'll blame you. I'm just a kid!

Silence.

Avalon puckers her lips and closes her eyes.

Nine stops pacing and picks up his iPad and smiles.

NINE

I'll show them each and every video recording I've made of our private lessons!

(shows her the video)

Like this one!

Avalon opens her eyes, stunned!

Nine ends the video recording.

AVALON

You didn't! You have a non-disclosure agreement!

NINE

Not against extortion! My settlement would be huge! High six figures, maybe seven. No major university will touch you!

AVALON

You wouldn't...

NINE

A friend of mine stores the videos for me on a private cloud. In the event anything should happen to my iPad or me, God forbid, all the videos would be released on multiple web platforms, and your parents would be ruined.

Avalon shifts to a child-like voice and innocent expression.

AVALON

They are not my people.

NINE

Who?

AVALON

My parents...
(dark voice)
You're recoding again!

Nine laughs and holds up his iPad.

Avalon races up and kicks Nine in the shins.

Nine laughs more, as Avalon sinks into a chair.

NINE

Did I mention I was a four-point-oh
and valedictorian?

Avalon's voice softens again.

AVALON

I'm sorry, Max.

Nine laughs, then stands and turns serious.

NINE

They hear you call me Max, and I'll
be out on the street facing a
litany of lawsuits.

Avalon races over to hug Nine and speaks like a little girl
again.

AVALON

You worry too much, Max, I mean,
Nine! I won't let anyone harm you.
(laughs)
Besides, I don't have the time to
train Tutor Number Ten!

Nine pushes Avalon back and smiles.

NINE

What's on your agenda today, Av?

AVALON

It's my birthday, so birth records,
hospital records and medical
records?

NINE

Sounds fun! Beats the hell out of
the Austrian Empire.

AVALON

You're the history major, Mr.
Valedictorian.

NINE

(serious

What do you mean, you don't have much time?

AVALON

It's coming to an end.

NINE

What?

Avalon looks away and mumbles.

AVALON

A woman knows these things.

Nine tilts his head, perplexed.

NINE

You mean...

AVALON

Two nights ago. Bit of blood, cramps, I couldn't eat.

(looks at Nine)

Not that my parents noticed any of it. I gotta get to my medical records.

NINE

Every girl goes through...

AVALON

(interrupts)

It's not that.

Nine collapses back in the chair.

NINE

Then what?

AVALON

I'm not entirely sure, but it has to do with rapid evolution.

NINE

Rapid evolution? Like Charles Darwin?

AVALON

Like rapid evolution of insecticide resistance in the Colorado potato beetle.

(MORE)

AVALON (CONT'D)

Rapid evolution of invasive freshwater fish to predators and pollution in Hawaii. I have a lot to learn about me!

Nine remains calm.

NINE

You're making no sense today. Plus, your violent threatening behavior and crazy dark voice thing are very concerning.

Avalon gets in Nine's face and speaks in her deep Sci-Fi voice again.

AVALON

Find a way to get me my medical records and I'll explain everything. Is that clear?

Nine's eyes open widely in fright.

NINE

You're scaring me, Av!
(sincerely)
You sound like your father.

She glares at him as he types as fast as he can on his iPad.

AVALON

One kiss?

NINE

No, Av.

AVALON

One hug?

NINE

One short hug.

Avalon hugs Nine for a long time and closes her eyes.

NINE (CONT'D)

I bet your new Princess watch has a location device in it. I don't trust your dad, mom, or Uncle Thurmond.

Avalon opens her eyes widely, but Nine doesn't see them.

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - SAME

Constance listens in on a scratchy monitor that is practically worthless, while Brighton pours himself a scotch across the room at a small liquor cabinet.

BRIGHTON
Are you sure Ellen's gone?

CONSTANCE
(angry)
You saw her leave!
(mumbles)
Probably French-kissed her goodbye.

Brighton isn't listening.

BRIGHTON
What's going on up there?

CONSTANCE
Another lesson of some sort. He sounds official and she's bombarding him with questions, but I can't make 'em out.

BRIGHTON
(snickers)
You wouldn't understand her anyway.

Constance shuts off the monitor and glares at her husband.

CONSTANCE
You married me for my money, and you never let me forget it!

Brighton downs his scotch.

BRIGHTON
Not now, Constance.

CONSTANCE
Gonna have to tell her about her operation someday.

Brighton pulls an envelope from his pocket from: "Standardized IQ Testing Association."

BRIGHTON
I can't look.

Constant races to tear open the envelope.

CONSTANCE

She was eleven years and nine months old...

(reads and panics)

Oh my God. She did it! Top two percent. But how? Ellen says her I.Q. has been dropping steadily over the past five years.

BRIGHTON

You believed that nonsense that her injected stem cells are wearing out?

CONSTANCE

She's going to find out.

BRIGHTON

Ellen promised never to reveal her I.Q. or standardized test scores to anyone! It would be unethical!

CONSTANCE

(angry)

Unethical things happen every day! But you know that, don't you, Brighton!

BRIGHTON

Stay out of my business!

Brighton's eyes open up in fear.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

Her computer, iPad, smartphone, Apple watch. They have to go. Today! Keep her off Wi-Fi and the Internet!

CONSTANCE

Tell her the truth about everything or she and I will leave you tomorrow!

Constance starts to exit, but Brighton stops her by grabbing her arms forcefully.

BRIGHTON

Not now, Constance.

Constance breaks free from his grasp and glares at him.

CONSTANCE

I'm telling her everything!

Brighton slaps her, backhanded across her face.

She's stunned and angry.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
You bastard. It was your idea! I
just went along with the surgery.

BRIGHTON
To stop you from crying all night
long for her first two years.

He stomps back to the bar and pours himself another scotch.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
Tell her. See if I care. After
three suicide attempts, I knew this
day would come.

Brighton looks genuinely sad and sorry.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry for slapping you. I'm
truly sorry. Don't report me again.
They'll take her away from us.

Constance collapses to the floor in frustration.

CONSTANCE
That's what you abusers always say.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE GROUNDS - DAY

Nine and Avalon talk and walk, careful to talk only about the weather when they are near light posts or any of the obvious security cameras, like they are passing now.

NINE
Could rain later this week.

AVALON
We could use the moisture inland.

They get to an open spot.

NINE
What's with the gloves?

AVALON
Mom says they're anti-bacterial and
anti-viral.

NINE

What did your uncle write on the one-hundred-dollar bill that was important enough to deface the bill?

AVALON

First, he's not stupid. He uses washable ink.

NINE

(laughs)
You launder money?

They pass a security camera.

AVALON

I'd rather have rain than continuous fog.

NINE

Me too.

They get to another open spot.

AVALON

He wrote a phone number for a burner, whatever that is, in case I'm ever really in trouble.

NINE

A burner phone is untraceable. Drug dealers use them.

AVALON

He's not a...

Nine sees a security camera and interrupts.

NINE

They need more snow in the mountains.

Avalon smiles.

AVALON

Our major water supply.

They walk further, closer to the dock.

NINE

My ex-girlfriend says she hacked your medical records.

AVALON
(excited)
Really?

NINE
She said you won't like everything
that's in there.

Nine hangs his head in sadness like he knows something.

They continue walking and whispering in the distance toward the dock.

INT. BEACH ESTATE LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

Avalon pulls Nine by the hand into the library and shuts the door quietly and suspiciously.

She points to Nine, who speaks authoritatively.

NINE
Let's continue our lesson on the
history of the Austrian Empire.

Avalon grabs her iPad and calls up a video program on her iPad and sends it via Bluetooth to the Baby Monitor.

AVALON
We're clear. Now tell me! I wrote
that App when I was ten.
(sad)
Couldn't do it now.

Nine calls up a double-encrypted messaging app on his iPad, which Avalon sees.

NINE
It's a double-encrypted messaging
app.

AVALON
Can I download it?

NINE
What did your parents tell you?

Avalon and Nine hear the stomping of Brighton's feet approaching the library.

Avalon hurries to end the video feed to the baby monitor when the door swings open.

Brighton races to the baby monitor.

Avalon holds her head as if in pain and turns angry at Nine.

AVALON

My parents taught me nothing about unconditional love. I'm a prisoner, plain and simple.

Brighton rips the baby monitor from the wall and glares at Nine and Avalon.

BRIGHTON

I'm from royal blood. I launched the biggest cryptocurrency security business in the world, and you think I'd fall for this old trick!

NINE

I didn't know...

BRIGHTON

(interrupting)

Cut the crap, Nine. Consider this your two-week's notice!

Brighton looks around for something by the baby monitor's previous location, as Avalon and Nine are stunned.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

Magnets? Wi-Fi interference? How'd you do it, Nine?

Avalon stares down at her Princess watch on her hand.

AVALON

Maybe it was my new watch!

Constance enters with a new baby monitor still in the box.

CONSTANCE

What's going on here? So a baby monitor failed? Big deal, Brighton!

Constance sees the Princess watch on Avalon's hand and goes to hug Avalon, who pushes her away.

Avalon speaks in a deep, threatening voice, causing Brighton to stop searching for the cause of the technical problems.

AVALON

Leave me alone!

Everyone stares at Avalon like she's deranged.

Avalon rips the baby monitor box from her mom's hands, and screams as she lifts the box over her head and slams it into the fireplace.

CONSTANCE

Dear...

AVALON

(interrupts)

I said, leave me alone. All of you, get out!

Nine leaves his iPad behind, and scurries out.

Brighton is angry and speechless, as he glares at Avalon and stomps out.

CONSTANCE

We'll discuss things calmly with Nine...

Avalon glares at her mom like a demon-possessed, and yells.

AVALON

I said, out!

Constance exits quickly and shuts the library door.

Once alone, Avalon calmly steps over to Nine's iPad, stares at a screen that reads, "A. Carnage-Zent Medical History." She smiles devilishly.

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - EVENING

Brighton and Constance whisper to each other as they wait like hungry lions for Nine to enter the kitchen.

BRIGHTON

I heard her too.

CONSTANCE

Like a demon-possessed.

BRIGHTON

And headaches. Are they getting worse?

CONSTANCE

And more frequent.

BRIGHTON

Tone and volume?

CONSTANCE
Deeper and louder. Much louder.

BRIGHTON
Let's see what Nine has to say.

Constance and Brighton smile as Nine walks in and heads straight to the fridge for a cold drink.

NINE
I'd better enjoy this while I can.
Two weeks. Huh?

BRIGHTON
How was your walk with Avalon?

NINE
Grounds were as beautiful as ever.

CONSTANCE
What did you two talk about?

Nine turns his head, perplexed.

NINE
Weather mostly.

Brighton turns confrontational. He stomps toward Nine.

BRIGHTON
For forty-seven minutes?

NINE
It calms her down! Takes her mind
off her captivity.

Brighton and Constance glare at Nine, and approach him.

BRIGHTON
You're walking on thin ice. One
word from me and you won't get a
job anywhere but the fast-food
industry!

Nine looks scared.

NINE
I can't afford any bad references
for the government security check
they're doing now!

CONSTANCE
(yells and paces)
Then tell us what you talked about!

NINE

I told you! The weather.

CONSTANCE

I can't take this anymore. I need my pills!

Nine puts his head down as Constance storms out.

NINE

I'm sorry, Mrs. Zent. I meant no harm.

Brighton forcefully grabs Nine by the arm and leads him back out the backdoor.

BRIGHTON

Perhaps if you and I retraced your steps, it would jog your memory.

INT. BEACH ESTATE CONSTANCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Constance reads several prescription medicine pill bottles, before leaving the door open and shuffling through even more pill bottles in the top drawer of her vanity.

Constance's hands shake as she looks at the upper cabinet again in vain.

Constance growls as she slowly closes the mirrored door slowly to see Avalon sitting on the bed holding two open pill bottles. Avalon wears her yellow dress and white gloves.

Constance screams and glares at Avalon, who speaks entirely in a deep, foreboding voice.

AVALON

Looking for these?

Avalon holds up the pills.

Constance takes two large steps toward her daughter.

AVALON (CONT'D)

One more step and I'll take them all.

(reads the labels)

Hydromorphone. I think they call it Dilaudid now. This one's Fentanyl, which needs no introduction.

Constance freezes.

CONSTANCE
You wouldn't dare!

AVALON
I know about my migraines and the potential for schizophrenia and a brain tumor.

Constance looks away.

CONSTANCE
I don't know what you're talking about, Avalon, my baby...

AVALON
(interrupts)
It's all in my medical records. Unresponsive for birth. At 21 months, I received the lowest score possible on the Bayley test for Infant and Toddler Development.

Constance looks sad and disappointed.

CONSTANCE
You didn't move. You were only happy being hugged. We cried for two years. We had to do something. Daddy's royal blood and my old family money...

AVALON
(interrupting)
I left you one small pill for your nerves under your water glass.

Constance lifts the water glass to see the pill, and she immediately takes it with water.

CONSTANCE
Go to bed, dear.

She squeezes toothpaste onto her toothbrush and begins to brush her teeth.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH ESTATE GROUNDS - SAME

Brighton presses Nine as they reach a clearing between security cameras.

BRIGHTON

What were you and Avalon talking out here?! Right here!

NINE

The weather. Honest, Mr. Zent.

BRIGHTON

Your signed confidentiality agreement is with me, not Avalon!

NINE

I'm aware of...

BRIGHTON

(interrupting)

The damn Wi-Fi from the house is too weak out here. The new princess watch her Uncle Thurmond delivered for me was supposed to fill in the gaps, but it's weak too, like he is!

NINE

The watch. Yes, Sir. She didn't like it. The whole 'royal blood' thing.

BACK TO:

INT. BEACH ESTATE CONSTANCE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Avalon stands in the tile bathroom, as Constance watches her while sitting on the bed.

AVALON

I'm not royal blood, I'm no longer a genius, and I don't want my trust fund. I want to be normal and loved!

Avalon removes her new Princess watch, crushes it with her heel, and flushes it down the toilet.

Constance begins to act groggy.

CONSTANCE

We didn't know.

Avalon points to her forehead.

AVALON

You and daddy okayed a highly experimental use of stem cells.

(MORE)

AVALON (CONT'D)

A three-inch needle was inserted
into my brain.

CONSTANCE

(groggier)

We were assured it was safe.

AVALON

To stimulate my brain?

CONSTANCE

(groggier still)

You would have been a vegetable. A
vege... table.

AVALON

You couldn't love me like I was.
You were ashamed.

CONSTANCE

Time for you to brush your teeth
and get to bed, dear. We wanted...
you... to be... normal.

Constance falls back asleep as Avalon exits while talking.

AVALON

Normal? I'm watched constantly. I
have no friends, you won't let me
out of here, and I have stem cells
dying in my brain.

Avalon slams the door.

AVALON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What part of this is normal?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH ESTATE GROUNDS - SAME

Brighton presses Nine as they reach another clearing between
security cameras. Now, their conversation is friendly.

BRIGHTON

She was normal soon after the
procedure, but soon became a highly
accelerated learner.

NINE

Really?

BRIGHTON

She memorized every book we gave her. Science, technology, engineering, and math were her favorites since age four. Hence our elaborate security measures for her protection and privacy.

NINE

You sentenced her to life in prison! Her STEM cell! The cameras, baby monitors, listening devices...

BRIGHTON

Speaking of which, I need to check the dock if you could check the front gate.

NINE

Yes, Sir, but I'll be glad when this is all over.

Brighton walks away shaking his head in disgust.

BRIGHTON

Give me two more weeks to find a doctor somewhere in the world to give her more stem cells!

Nine nods 'yes,' and heads to the front gate and disappears.

The beach estate and the grounds appear peaceful and silent for a few moments.

We HEAR a gunshot from a pistol inside the house. BAM.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - EVENING

Nine races in from the front door to see Brighton at the top of the stairs.

BRIGHTON

No!

Nine is paralyzed at the bottom of the stairs.

NINE

Oh my God!

INT. BEACH ESTATE CONSTANCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brighton races into the bedroom to see Avalon in the corner of the room, in shock (or drugged) as in a catatonic state.

Constance lays on the bed with a pistol in her open hand, and a pool of blood under her head.

BRIGHTON

No! No!

Brighton sees the sprinklings of blood on Avalon's yellow dress and gloves, as he picks her up in his arms to carry to her bedroom.

He's exiting the room as Nine is about to enter.

Brighton shields Avalon from Nine's view and yells at him.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

Nine, call 9-1-1 and report an accident. Stay in the kitchen and open the gate when the Police arrive. Got it.

Nine shakes in panic.

NINE

Got it, Sir. Is Av alright?

BRIGHTON

In shock. Now go!

Nine peeks in the door then races downstairs while calling 9-1-1, as Brighton carries Avalon to her room.

NINE

Police? This is Max Sheehan. I need to report an accident.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE - NIGHT

DETECTIVE THERESA RAMOS (40s), a stunning Latina in a black pantsuit races up in a new BRAND sedan to see a Police car and the coroner's wagon have beat her to the scene.

She leaps from her car, spots the security cameras, and lets herself in the front door.

INT. BEACH ESTATE CONSTANCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Detective Ramos nods to the CORONER (50s, Asian) as she steps into the room to see one POLICEMAN (30s) taking photos, and the POLICEWOMAN (30s) interviewing Brighton near the door.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(to Brighton)

Mr. Zent is it? The one who called?

BRIGHTON

I found her. My daughter's tutor called you.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Uh-huh. I'm Detective Ramos. Sorry for your loss.

(sweetly to the
Policewoman)

Want to take it into the hallway so I can look around?

Brighton gets in the Detective's face.

BRIGHTON

Detective? Look around?

Detective Ramos answers very compassionately.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I'm so sorry. Standard procedure. I would like to talk to you later if you don't mind, just for my report.

They are interrupted by Ellen who races upstairs to give Brighton a sympathy hug that lasts far too long. The Detective is now stern.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Who are you, and how did you get in?

ELLEN

Ellen Waters, psychologist treating Avalon and Mrs. Zent. Mr. Zent called me first right after the accident. And Nine called me too.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Nine?

POLICEWOMAN

The little girl's tutor. His real name is Maxwell Sheehan.

ELLEN

I'd better go to her. She's as fragile as they come.

The Detective takes a softer tone.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

She found the body, correct?

The Policeman stops taking photos.

POLICEMAN

Yes. Right there. After the shot was heard, Mr. Zent and Mr. Sheehan heard her scream.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

How long after the shot was heard?

POLICEMAN

Not sure. She's still in shock.

ELLEN

Poor thing!

BRIGHTON

There was a considerable interval between the gunshot and her scream.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(stern)

I'll need to talk to her first. Then you can have her, Doctor Waters.

ELLEN

It's just Ms. Waters, or Ellen.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Wait downstairs, please.

ELLEN

Can I just see if Avalon's all right?

BRIGHTON

Of course, she's not all right! She's in shock! Her mother just shot herself, and she found her.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Downstairs, please.

The Policeman photographer takes a photo of a note found on the floor on the far side of the bed. It reads, "I'm so sorry. Mom."

POLICEMAN

Detective, you gotta see this.

Brighton looks away.

BRIGHTON

We saw the note. Didn't touch it.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

We?

BRIGHTON

Nine and I.

The Detective tilts her head.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

Max Sheehan and I.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Mr. Zent, wait for me in the kitchen, if you don't mind.

BRIGHTON

I want to see my daughter.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

After I speak with her. Give me five minutes.

Brighton trudges down the hall and downstairs.

The Detective aims an ear down the hallway and listens.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Is that a shower?

POLICEWOMAN

May be coming from the little girl's room.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Stop her, will ya? I'll be there in a minute.

The Policewoman marches down the hall.

The Detective bends down to inspect the pistol, then goes around the bed to look at the note, while the Policeman watches her.

POLICEMAN

Suicide.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Probably, but what set it off? Is she a pill-popper?

POLICEMAN

More than a dozen bottles in the medicine cabinet, including some real bad actors.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Bag 'em. And the note and the pistol, of course.

The Detective turns to the Coroner, who is waiting like a vulture.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

You can have her. Get me a full tox report, powder burn work-up, and fingerprints on the pills and gun.

CORONER

And complete stomach contents. The works. You got it!

The Detective turns to the Policeman.

Get me handwriting samples from the vic and others in the household.

POLICEMAN

You got it, Ma'am.

INT. BEACH ESTATE AVALON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Avalon is groggy as she sits on the corner of her bed like a frightened little child, in pink pajamas and a fluffy pink bathrobe. She is flanked by the Detective and Policewoman.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I'm Detective Ramos and I have to ask you some questions.

Avalon doesn't look up.

AVALON

Okay.

Detective Ramos smiles at Avalon.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

First, what's your name and how old you?

Avalon answers in a groggy voice without looking up.

AVALON

My name is Avalon Zent and I'm twelve years old.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Where were you when you heard the noise?

AVALON

Here. Playing with my dolls, I think. Or in bed. I don't remember.

The Detective looks around the room to see the decorations of a much younger child, such as dolls, books for toddlers, a dollhouse. Then she spots an iPad.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Or video games?

AVALON

Video games are too hard.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

How old did you say you were?

AVALON

Twelve. Today.

The Detective and Policewoman look away, sad.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Again, we're so sorry. We have to ask you these questions, okay?

AVALON

Okay.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

What happen when you heard the noise?

AVALON

I... I... I don't remember.

The Detective sees a baby monitor on a bookshelf but doesn't say anything about it.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Who said you could shower?

AVALON
Miss Waters. My guidance counselor.
I threw up...
(beat)
I was in bed. She woke me up with a
hug and said I could shower. I
stunk pretty bad and she said it
might help erase the bad night
after I threw up and...

DETECTIVE RAMOS
(interrupts)
That happens. I'm so sorry. I'll
have this wonderful Policewoman
watch you for a few minutes until I
send your daddy up, okay?

Avalon still makes no eye contact with the law officers.

AVALON
Okay.

The Detective stands to exit but turns to Avalon with one
more question.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Do you remember if you walked or
ran to your mother's room?

Avalon finally looks up and speaks sadly.

AVALON
I... I... don't remember.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
That's okay, dear.

The Detective smiles and exits.

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brighton is confronted by the Detective, who takes notes.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Your pistol was in your combination
gun safe in your bedroom which is
separate from your wife's?

BRIGHTON
I've told you. Yes.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
You and your wife are the only ones
with the combination?

BRIGHTON
Yes, as I...

DETECTIVE RAMOS
(interrupts)
But you said she never liked guns?

BRIGHTON
Pills were her weapons of choice.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
So it's not the first time?

BRIGHTON
Matter of public record. Three
previous attempts.

The Detective sees the driveway gate monitor.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
How did Ms. Waters get in tonight?

BRIGHTON
She has an electric gate opener in
her car. Doesn't even stop.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Part of the family?

BRIGHTON
I guess. She sees Avalon and saw my
wife.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
You and your wife have any marital
difficulties lately? Outside of
separate rooms? Stressful period?

Brighton turns angry.

BRIGHTON
No, and I resent the implication,
and I want to go to my daughter. Do
you mind?

DETECTIVE RAMOS
No, go ahead. I'll call if I have
anything else.

The Detective looks troubled as Brighton exits.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- The Detective speaks to Ellen in private.

-- The Coroner wheels Constance out on a gurney, covered with a sheet.

-- The Detective talks to Nine in private out on the grounds.

-- She times herself as she runs from the front door to Constance's room.

-- She times herself as she runs from the backdoor to Constance's room.

-- The patrol car and coroner's wagon are gone, but Ellen's fancy car is still outside the house when the Detective drives away.

-- The Detective does a double-take look at the car.

END MONTAGE

INT. BEACH ESTATE LIBRARY - DAY

Ellen enters to see Avalon sitting in an overstuffed chair. Avalon wears a pink top with a unicorn on it and matching pink leggings.

Ellen straightens her dress when she thinks Avalon isn't looking, but Avalon catches her every time.

Avalon speaks like a sweet but sad little girl and avoids eye contact.

AVALON

You were with my Daddy again.

ELLEN

That's nonsense.

AVALON

Smearred lipstick, and ruffled clothes. Dead giveaways. Plus I put my baby monitor in Daddy's bedroom last night.

Ellen is furious.

ELLEN

You would never...

AVALON

Interesting video. But I want to know why my Mom killed herself.

ELLEN

Do you think she was overwhelmed by you? Your Dad? Or life in general?

AVALON

You tell me.

ELLEN

How do you feel about what happened?

Avalon establishes eye contact and speaks with a slightly deeper voice.

AVALON

What was Mommy so troubled about?

ELLEN

I don't know. What do you...?

AVALON

(interrupting)

Something in her past?

Ellen freezes at Avalon's change in tone and direct question.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Maybe ten years ago?

ELLEN

I wouldn't know what...?

Avalon's voice deepens.

AVALON

She mentioned a doctor. A surgeon named Robert Stillwell?

Ellen's hand begins trembling. She can no longer type notes into her iPad.

ELLEN

What did she tell you?

Avalon's voice is deeper still.

AVALON

I can't seem to locate him anywhere on the web. No record of death. I'd like to meet him.

(MORE)

AVALON (CONT'D)

(whispers to Ellen in a
demonic tone)

If you don't bring him to me this
afternoon, a certain recording of
you and my daddy from last night
will be broadcasted all over the
web!

Ellen's eyes open widely in fright.

ELLEN

You blackmailing...

Avalon interrupts with her little girl's voice.

AVALON

Let's say three o'clock for tea?

A BUZZER sounds in the kitchen. Someone is at the gate.

BRIGHTON (O.S.)

I'll get it.

Ellen is too stunned to speak. Avalon races out the door.

INT. BEACH ESTATE PARLOR - DAY

Detective Ramos paces and stares at her notebook, while
Brighton and Ellen sit in the overstuffed leather chairs.

A large painting of Charles I, Emperor of Austria, that hangs
on the wall catches the Detective's eye.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Who's that?

BRIGHTON

Charles the First, Emperor of
Austria and King of Hungary. I'm a
direct descendant, and...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(interrupts)

Monarchies are dead too, or haven't
you heard.

Brighton gets defensive.

BRIGHTON

Detective Ramos, I'll have you
know...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(interrupts)

Nobody has time for that nonsense.
Just a few more questions so I can
wrap up my report.

BRIGHTON

Had she taken pills?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Haven't gotten the tox report back.
Did she take 'em often?

ELLEN

When stressed. At least, that's
what she told me.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

How long was she in your care?

ELLEN

Ten or twelve years. I'd have to
check my records.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Do that for me.

(to Brighton)

Who was prescribing her
medications?

Brighton looks away.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Mr. Zent?

(beat)

We traced them to a small pharmacy
in Cabo San Lucas, but they have no
record of Constance Zent, Constance
Carnage, or any combination.

BRIGHTON

What she did on her vacation...

Detective Ramos looks out the window at Ellen's fancy car.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Ms. Waters, how many years have you
been... counseling the little girl?

Ellen fidgets nervously.

ELLEN

I'd have to check...

DETECTIVE RAMOS
(interrupts)
How frequently do you meet?

BRIGHTON
Weekly. Wednesdays. Like today.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
(to Ellen)
Weekly?
(shrugs)
That explains the nice car.

ELLEN
And birthdays like yesterday. Some
holidays.

The Detective sees Brighton and Ellen glance at each other.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
I see. That's all I have. I'd like
to see her bedroom again, and your
gun safe, if that's okay.

Brighton stands quickly and leads Detective Ramos out.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Brighton and the Detective see Avalon at the top of the
stairs.

Nine exits a side bedroom door at the top of the stairs.

NINE
Thanks for waiting, Avalon. Ready
for that morning stroll?

Avalon answers like a sweet little girl.

AVALON
All the way to the dock, okay?

NINE
Okay, kiddo!

They hop downstairs as Brighton and the Detective slowly
climb the stairs.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
You said you were at the dock when
you heard the shot? I'd like to see
the dock sometime.

BRIGHTON
Anytime you'd...

The Detective pushes Brighton up the stairs and interrupts him.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Let's see that safe of yours.
(beat)
Oh, I asked Mrs. Zent's brother to
join us. I understand he was at the
birthday party.

Avalon turns and glares at the Detective at the top of the stairs before exiting with Nine.

Everyone hears Ellen's car peel out from the front of the house.

EXT./INT. BEACH ESTATE CONSTANCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The Detective puts on gloves before entering the bedroom.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Thanks for showing me your gun
safe. Nothing unusual. Always
locked. I'll just take a quick look
around and be out of your hair.

The front gate BUZZER sounds downstairs.

BRIGHTON (O.S.)
That will be Thurmond.

The Detective hears Brighton descending the stairs.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Please have him wait in the parlor.
From our brief conversation on the
phone, I'm sure you two have lots
to say to each other. He was very
broken up. I'll join you in a
minute.

The Detective enters the bedroom and pulls out a plastic bag.

She pulls out a photo of the bathroom and zeros in on the tile floor, where she finds a small piece of glass.

She bags the tiny piece of glass in an evidence bag, and looks around for a broken object, but doesn't find one.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE DOCK - SAME

Avalon is distracted and edgy as they sit on the dock. She speaks to Nine in an adult-like, almost seductive voice as she hands him her one-hundred-dollar bill.

AVALON

I think you should take the
afternoon off.

NINE

What? And stay in my room?

AVALON

No. I need some things from town,
but I can't tell daddy.

NINE

Not feminine hygiene...

Nine examines the bill and sees no phone number on it.

He stares at the list.

AVALON

Just get them. No questions asked.

NINE

(reading)
Drug store...

AVALON

(interrupts)
Daddy will think my mom got them
for me.

NINE

But...

AVALON

No questions asked. Sneak them up
to your room. I'll get it later.

Nine puts the note in his pocket.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Make some excuse like you need to
mail some applications out.

NINE

Applications?

AVALON

My daddy isn't going to let you be my tutor when he learns I've come of age. He'll hire a woman.

NINE

(chuckles)

Ten?

Avalon places her hand on Nine's hand.

AVALON

I'll miss you most of all.

Nine makes eye contact with Avalon, who is seducing him.

NINE

I guess I do need to get applications out.

They share a moment.

INT. BEACH ESTATE PARLOR - SAME

Detective Ramos enters to see Brighton and Thurmond facing each other and abruptly finishing a heated discussion. The Detective is without her gloves. Thurmond wears his bright red scarf. The painting of Charles I is behind them.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Mr. Thurmond Carnage. Are you royalty too?

THURMOND

No, Ma'am. Just old money, now gone.

The Detective eyes Thurmond's red scarf.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I see. Thanks for coming out. I mean, coming clean.

BRIGHTON

We were making arrangements for, you know...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I hope I'm not interrupting. Just a few questions for Mr. Carnage.

Brighton begins to exit.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

You can stay, Mr. Zent.

(to Thurmond)

You told me earlier this morning
you gave the little girl some money
and a watch for her birthday.

THURMOND

Yes, that's correct. A princess
watch. My pompous brother-in-law's
idea, the Prince of Delusions, the
Duke of Diddley Squat...

Brighton grows angrier.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(interrupts)

She wasn't wearing the watch today,
and I didn't see it around.

BRIGHTON

I've had enough of this. I'll go
look for the damn watch!

DETECTIVE RAMOS

No. I'll ask her in a minute.

The Detective starts to exit, but then looks around the room.

THURMOND

You had me drive all this way
for...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(interrupts)

There it is!

The Detective picks up her iPhone from the cushion in one of
the overstuffed chairs as Brighton and Thurmond look on with
worried faces.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Damn thing gets lost all the time.

She glances at the gentlemen holding up the phone.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

I'll let you know if I have any
more questions. Again, so sorry for
your loss.

Brighton and Thurmond glare at each other.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)
 Dock is out back, I presume?

The Detective exits with a smile.

Brighton whispers to Thurmond.

BRIGHTON
 Can we take your car to meet with
 the funeral director? We'll talk on
 the way.

THURMOND
 In private, this time?

BRIGHTON
 Exactly.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE DOCK - SAME

Detective Ramos walks quietly to the dock to see Avalon and
 Nine weakly smiling at each other.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
 I know you're both broken up over
 Mrs. Zent's passing, but I have a
 few more questions for Avalon if I
 may.

Avalon and Nine scoot apart and stare out to sea.

NINE
 It is sad. Very sad!

DETECTIVE RAMOS
 Yes, I know.

AVALON
 Nine has to find a new job. Daddy
 will take him away from me.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
 Look, I get it. No other people
 come to see you. No friends. You're
 all each other have, despite the
 consequences of...
 (beat)
 Your obvious age difference. You're
 both the only game in town!

Nine stands, uncomfortably and starts to exit.

NINE
It's not like that.

AVALON
You wouldn't understand.

The Detective stops him, as Avalon glares at her.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Try me. I know about the
confidentiality agreements, NDAs,
and legal issues associated with
them. I want to know why you put up
all this shit, Mr. Berkeley
Valedictorian, a dehumanized
servant with a number?
(looks around)
And this is the only place on the
estate with no security cameras.

NINE
I do this all for Av! No other
humans around, including her
parents, the quack of a
psychologist, and eccentric uncle!

Avalon looks perplexed at Nine.

AVALON
U.T. is not eccentric, he's just
gay.

Nine looks sadly at Avalon.

NINE
My point is, everybody needs
somebody.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
You feel sorry for her? Is that it?

Avalon glares at the Detective but bites her tongue.

NINE
I didn't say that.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Court records show she's a trust-
fund child. Did you know that?

Nine pushes his way past the Detective and he exits.

NINE

I'm not stupid, but I don't care.
(to Avalon)
I'll see ya, Av. I'm going into
town.

The Detective looks to Avalon, who looks away.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

That boy has it bad for you. You
know that?

Avalon speaks in a childish voice.

AVALON

He's a wonderful tutor. The best
I've had.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I take it you've had eight others?

Avalon stands, still looking out to sea.

AVALON

Since I was two, I think.

The Detective stares at Avalon wrists.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Uh-huh. I see you're not wearing
the watch your uncle gave you.

AVALON

Couldn't find it in my room.
Princess watch. I loved it.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I traced it with your uncle's help.
It contained a GPS location device.

Avalon shrugs.

AVALON

I liked the princess jewels.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Huh? Okay.

She hands Avalon a business card.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

If you can think of any reason why
your mom was particularly stressed
lately, please give me a call.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Again, I'm very sorry for your
loss.

Avalon looks away as the Detective turns and begins to exit.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Nine? That's one handsome tutor. I
would have given him a ten.

Avalon glares at the Detective as she exits.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

Avalon walks to the staircase from the backdoor of the
estate. She pauses before going up the stairs.

She peeks out the front window to see the Detective in her
car listening to a video recording on her iPhone.

The Detective turns to see Avalon at the window.

Avalon steps back and away from the window. She hears the
Detective start her car and drive off.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - AFTERNOON

Just outside the front door to the estate, Avalon waits
impatiently with her iPad that reads the time: "2:59." She's
wearing a little black dress and nice shoes, like a sassy
teen. She has a platter next to her with a small teapot and
three demitasse teacups, and sugar bowl with sugar cubes, and
small creamer.

One minute later, Ellen's car pulls to a stop in front of the
house. Frail DR. ROBERT STILLWELL (50s) sits in the backseat
next to a folded wheelchair.

Ellen's window automatically rolls down.

ELLEN

I brought Dr. Stillwell; I don't
know why...?

Avalon approaches the car with a smile, carrying the tea
serving platter. She interrupts Ellen in a childlike voice.

AVALON

I'm sure Dr. Stillwell wanted to
pay his respects to my mother. I
made us tea.

We see the security camera in the corner of the entrance behind Avalon.

ELLEN

He can't leave the car, and his caretakers said no food or drink, so no tea. It took three people from the facility to load him in...

AVALON

(interrupts, smiles)
I'm sure my mom and dad appreciate the effort you both made.

ELLEN

He's paralyzed since his stroke and can't speak.

AVALON

Yes, I heard about the poor doctor having a stroke two years ago. I just want to show the good doctor a few family photos after coming all this way.

Dr. Stillwell's eyes look away.

ELLEN

You can sit in the passenger seat...

AVALON

(interrupts)
Fine idea. We'll shut the door because it's cold.

Avalon sets the tea service platter down, picks up her iPad, hops into the front passenger seat of the car, and shuts the door.

INT. ELLEN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ellen shifts uncomfortably in her seat as Avalon shows Dr. Stillwell family photos on her iPad.

Avalon shares the first photo of Brighton, Constance, and an unresponsive Avalon as a newborn in the birthing room.

AVALON

My mom and dad didn't share this photo with anyone. I had to borrow it from Mom's iCloud folder last night.

Ellen looks at the photo and quickly turns away. Avalon shows the photo to Dr. Stillwell and holds it in front of his face for a few agonizing moments.

Dr. Stillwell turns his eyes again but can't turn his head.

Ellen is disgusted and turns her head away from Avalon.

Avalon shows only Dr. Stillwell a diagram of a two-year-old girl with a hypodermic needle in her forehead.

AVALON (CONT'D)

This is us on vacation in Hawaii. I was just two years old.

Avalon advances the photos without Ellen being able to see them, and Dr. Stillwell can't turn away.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Here we are, one small, but happy family, when I was four.

The next slide reads, "Direct injection of stem cells into the cingulate cortex had only been used on brain tumors."

AVALON (CONT'D)

Here we are when I was six. You were a frequent visitor to our home in the early years. Always checking up on me. That was sweet.

The next slide reads, "This procedure is known to cause severe psychological disorders including schizophrenia."

AVALON (CONT'D)

Here we are on our boat cruising to Mexico when you had your severe stroke. So sorry.

The next slide in bigger print reads, "Severe psychological disorders including schizophrenia."

AVALON (CONT'D)

This was us yesterday at my twelfth birthday party, the day my mom died so tragically.

The next slide reads, "This procedure was outlawed in 2007, two years before I was born!"

ELLEN

We'd better be going. He's on a two-hour pass.

Avalon's last slide reads, "I'm sending all my medical records to the Detective handling my mom's death."

Avalon turns off her iPad and looks sadly into the back seat at Dr. Stillwell. He has tears welling up in his eyes.

AVALON

Miss Waters, thanks so much for bringing Dr. Stillwell out to pay his last respects. Like you, he's been a member of our family as long as I can remember.

Ellen looks suspiciously at Avalon.

ELLEN

I've got to get him back.

Ellen turns her head toward the front door to see a security camera looking right at the car.

AVALON

I'm sure he has lots to think about.

(sadly)

Goodbye, Dr. Stillwell. Thanks for everything you've done for us.

Dr. Stillwell's eyes open widely for a moment, but it's unnoticed by Ellen who is pushing Avalon out of the car.

Avalon exits and shuts the door.

ELLEN

Tell your father I may be back later tonight.

Avalon smiles and waves goodbye as Ellen drives off.

AVALON

I'll be sure to tell him!

Avalon ambles over to the teapot, pours it out, and enters the house with the security camera capturing every move.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - EVENING

Nine enters a dark house to see Avalon sitting at the top of the stairs dressed in her little black dress. She holds her iPad and watches the robot floor cleaner in the hallway below.

Nine has a small bag from the drug store in his hand.

NINE

Hey, Av. I got those things you wanted.

Avalon doesn't take her eyes off of the robot floor-cleaner as she answers in a sweet, childlike voice.

AVALON

Could you please put them in your room?

NINE

Wow. Not even a thank you? Are you okay?

Avalon swipes her fingers across the iPad, and the floor cleaner increases speed and crashes into the wall, and busts apart. Avalon smiles.

NINE (CONT'D)

What'd you do that for?

Nine stares suspiciously at Avalon.

Avalon reaches behind her and produces a brown shopping bag. She continues to speak in a child's voice.

AVALON

I hate my yellow dress. I hate yesterday. I miss my mommy!

Nine races up to Avalon's side and gives her a quick hug.

NINE

Of course, you do.

Avalon looks slowly and seductively into Nine's eyes.

AVALON

Will you burn this and toss the ashes in the ocean so I can get on with my life?

NINE

I don't know. I bet that dress was expensive.

Avalon's voice gets a little deeper.

AVALON

Put it in a trash can and burn it!

Nine looks around, stunned.

NINE

I don't know. Smoke alarms?
Security cameras out front and
back?

Avalon's voice deepens.

AVALON

Out by the dock. No security
cameras there! Do it now!

Nine reluctantly takes the paper bag and trudges down the stairs.

Once he reaches the bottom of the stairs, Brighton and Thurmond enter the front door. Both are sad.

BRIGHTON

We're back.

THURMOND

Wasn't fun.

BRIGHTON

We're pushing for a rapid
cremation.

Brighton holds a brochure of a funeral parlor with a deluxe cremation urn on the cover.

Brighton and Thurmond see Avalon's face staring at the urn.

Brighton sees Nine with a paper bag.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

NINE

Avalon's new yellow dress brings
back terrible memories. She wants
me to burn it out by the dock.

THURMOND

Burn it? Why not give it to
charity?

Avalon starts to cry. She speaks like a little girl again.

AVALON

I never want to see it again.

Nine holds up the paper bag.

NINE

Mr. Zent?

Brighton looks compassionately at his daughter.

BRIGHTON

Burn it if it makes her happy.

AVALON

Thank you, Daddy. And dump the ashes in the ocean!

The three men look sadly at Avalon.

THURMOND

Yesterday was an awful day.

NINE

You got it, Av!

Nine looks up to Avalon who smiles weakly.

AVALON

Thank you.
(suddenly happy)
What's for dinner?

Brighton looks at Thurmond and shrugs.

BRIGHTON

Frozen pizza?

Nine heads to the backdoor with the bag, shaking his head like he doesn't understand everything going on.

AVALON

Yippee! Oh, our robot vacuum broke.

Avalon runs to the kitchen, while Brighton and Thurmond stare at the broken vacuum, puzzled.

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Brighton and Thurmond hear the gate BUZZER sound as they enter the kitchen. They see Avalon staring up at the gate monitor with an angry expression and clenching her fists.

Brighton looks at the monitor then at his daughter with suspicion.

BRIGHTON

It's the Detective. We have to let her in.

Avalon speaks in a deep, slow voice, alarming Brighton and Thurmond.

AVALON

No.

Thurmond steps closer to put an arm around Avalon, but she pulls away, not taking her eyes off the gate monitor.

THURMOND

She's trying to put this tragedy behind us.

Avalon turns and glares at her uncle and father, then stomps out of the kitchen.

BRIGHTON

She's upset. Perfectly normal.

Brighton presses the button to open the gate, as Thurmond looks worried for Brighton.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - EVENING

Detective Ramos enters to see Brighton and Thurmond whispering to each other, Avalon sitting and moping at the top of the stairs, and Nine entering the backdoor with a long butane lighter in his hands. Everyone looks guilty.

BRIGHTON

Detective Ramos, what brings you out here?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Mr. Zent, may I speak to you privately.

Brighton points around.

BRIGHTON

Big place. Any room is fine.

The Detective glances up at Avalon.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

My car will do.

Detective Ramos turns to exit. Brighton looks perplexed and sad as he follows.

BRIGHTON

You can start the pizzas, Nine.

Avalon clenches her fists as her dad and the Detective head out the front door.

INT. DETECTIVE RAMON'S SEDAN - NIGHT

Detective Ramon holds several "reports" in her hands as Brighton stares out the front windshield in disbelief.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
You can see why I'm a little
puzzled.

BRIGHTON
Would you mind telling me why
again? In simple terms?

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Tox report showed high levels of
opioids and a common date-rape drug
in her bloodstream.

Brighton fidgets in his seat, which the Detective sees.

BRIGHTON
I knew she took opioids sparingly
for sleep, but a date-rape drug?

DETECTIVE RAMOS
People don't take those themselves,
and the autopsy found several
undigested pills in her throat and
stomach.

(beat)
I can't imagine how anyone could
shoot themselves after being so
drugged up and probably
unconscious. And how they could
swallow more pills afterward.

Brighten stumbles for words.

BRIGHTON
Huh? Uh... Uh...

DETECTIVE RAMOS
It looks like she committed suicide
three times!

BRIGHTON
Pills, gunshot, then pills?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I don't see how she managed it. You remember we wiped down your hands and Mr. Carnage's hands with a wet-wipe?

BRIGHTON

Uh-huh.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

No powder burns. We didn't get to your little girl before she showered.

Brighton turns angry at the Detective.

BRIGHTON

She threw up all over herself, and Ellen... Ms. Waters, directed her to shower.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Yes, we know.

(beat)

What were you and Mr. Carnage whispering about? You're always whispering.

Brighton is angrier still.

BRIGHTON

The tragedy! Funeral arrangements. More care for Avalon. What else?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Just curious.

(checks her notebook)

More care for Avalon?

BRIGHTON

We monitor her health closely. Her mother was worried about her reaching puberty.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Why? That's perfectly normal!

BRIGHTON

Her birth was not a normal one, and she suffered as a young child.

(yells)

And it's none of your goddamn business!

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Sorry. I didn't know she was in such poor health.

BRIGHTON

It's all precautionary. She may have a very important role to play in world politics someday.

The Detective rolls her eyes in disgust.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Right. Princess B.S. I looked you up. There's nothing royal about your bloodline any longer. You did the DNA tests yourselves.

BRIGHTON

Yes, but if the monarchy is reinstated...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

More delusions. You're a bitcoin security nerd. Nothing more! Wasted two days of my staff's time to prove it! You lease this estate! Your daughter's trust fund pays for most of this because your salary isn't anything special. That trust fund is the only thing of value around here!

Brighton looks away, ashamed.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

How many minutes did you say you were out walking the grounds, as you call them, with Mr. Sheehan before you heard the gunshot?

BRIGHTON

I don't know, okay. Half-an-hour, forty-five minutes, maybe. I don't know. Max and I split up. I went to the dock. He went to the front gate before we heard the shot.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

How can I get a more precise estimate of the time sequence?

BRIGHTON
Security cameras if you're that interested. The computer's in my bedroom next to my gun safe.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Yes, I'd like to look at all your security tapes if you don't mind.

Brighton angrily steps out of the sedan and slams the door.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - SAME

Avalon is at the top of the stairs with her iPad. Her display shows what the front door security camera sees. She swipes her hands across her screen as her father stomps in with the Detective behind him.

BRIGHTON
Go eat your dinner, Avalon.

Avalon stomps down the stairs while glaring at the Detective in silence.

BRIGHTON (CONT'D)
I'll join you all shortly.

Brighton and the Detective disappear into Brighton's bedroom.

INT. BEACH ESTATE KITCHEN - LATER

Brighton and the Detective walk into the kitchen shaking their heads in disbelief.

BRIGHTON
I can't explain it.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation.

BRIGHTON
(to Nine)
You haven't been in my room, have you... Max?

NINE
Never, Mr. Zent.

BRIGHTON
(to Avalon)
And it's always been off-limits to
you, dear.

Avalon nods 'yes' like a little girl.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
So the security system functioned
properly for the past eight years,
then suddenly stopped recording two
days ago?

BRIGHTON
It went out in a storm two years
ago and took us a week to get it
back online.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
No storm this week.

THURMOND
Didn't it go out four or five years
ago too? I remember you having to
open the front gate by hand.

BRIGHTON
Power went out due to the fire up
the canyon, and we have had random
blackouts with the power grid for
the past three years.

THURMOND
Damn power company. Me too, at my
place.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Curious timing is all.

Detective Ramos glances at Avalon who avoids eye contact.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)
I'll be heading out then.

Everyone watches as the Detective begins to exit but suddenly
turns.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)
Oh, I'm still trying to establish
Mrs. Zent's emotional status
before...

NINE

I took one photo at the birthday party.

Avalon glares at Nine.

BRIGHTON

I don't see how it's useful but go ahead... Max. Share it.

Nine shows his phone to the Detective without making eye contact with Avalon.

The Detective stares at the picture intently, while she speaks.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

You see, the Coroner hasn't yet fully determined the cause of death.

THURMOND

But...

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(interrupting)

We have to assess extenuating circumstances, motives, if any, and other factors. Mr. Zent, thanks for the financial disclosures. Strictly voluntary, but it should help move things along for cremation.

Avalon and Thurmond look at Brighton suspiciously.

Detective Ramos remains glued to the photo. She notices how Constance is glaring at Brighton while Ellen is smitten with him, and Avalon is in a bright yellow dress with white gloves.

The Detective smiles at Avalon who looks away.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

What a cute yellow dress. I was looking to buy my niece something similar. May I take a look at it? And the gloves?

NINE

It was too painful a memory for Av.

Brighton takes the Detective by the arm and begins to escort her out of the kitchen.

BRIGHTON

We are trying our best to put the tragic events of yesterday behind us, Detective. Perhaps another day.

The Detective exits reluctantly.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (O.S.)

If you could all stick around town for a few days. That would be great.

Nine, Thurmond, and Avalon stare at each other suspiciously, as Brighton returns.

BRIGHTON

Burning that dress was a mistake.

NINE

Why?

BRIGHTON

It looks like we have something to hide.

THURMOND

That's ridiculous.

Avalon looks away, which Nine sees.

NINE

Nobody has anything to hide.

Thurmond glances at Avalon's wrists and asks his question in a non-threatening way.

THURMOND

Where's that princess watch I gave you, Avalon?

Avalon answers in a deeper and darker tone as she stomps out of the kitchen.

AVALON

It must have fallen off outside. Cheap clasps. I wish you'd all stop picking on me!

Brighton, Thurmond, and Nine stare at each other, afraid to address Avalon's behavior.

BRIGHTON

Go attend to her, Nine. I've got business to discuss with Mr. Carnage, here.

NINE

Sure thing, Mr. Zent.

Nine exits, as Brighton gets in Thurmond's face.

BRIGHTON

The Detective thinks you or I killed Constance!

THURMOND

I wasn't here, and you were with the tutor outside!

BRIGHTON

No proof. Faulty security system. Anyone could have let you in at the front gate. She might think Nine is my conspirator.

(grabs Thurmond's throat)

Or you!

Brighton pushes Thurmond across the room and chases after him.

THURMOND

Me?

Brighton has an evil epiphany.

BRIGHTON

You had the most to gain. Constance set you up as Avalon's Power of Attorney if anything happened to her. You could have slipped her pills. I noticed your fees increased as executor of Avalon's trust, and the Detective will too!

Thurmond cowers and buries his face in curled arms.

THURMOND

Not nearly as much as your costs! What about the rent and expenses for this palace of yours -- or I should say, hers! And what about that recent fifty-grand payoff?

Avalon steps into the kitchen from behind the door.

Nine runs up behind her.

NINE
She was listening behind the door.

BRIGHTON
Avalon!

Avalon glares at each man before she storms away.

EXT. BEACH ESTATE AVALON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nine taps on the door.

NINE
Av? I'm not gonna ask again. Let me
in.

Nine sulks outside the door.

INT. BEACH ESTATE AVALON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Avalon is intently listening to another argument unfold between Brighton and Thurmond in the kitchen from the gate intercom system linked through her iPad. She's still in her little black dress and wears earbuds and can't hear Nine until he POUNDS on the door louder.

NINE (O.S.)
I said, let me in!

Avalon swipes off her iPad and slides it under her bed.

She leaps to the door, finally remembering her earbuds, and takes them out a split second before opening the door a crack while pretending to yawn. She palms the earbuds behind her back.

NINE (CONT'D)
What took you?

AVALON
I was falling asleep.

NINE
In a tight dress? I doubt it!

Nine swings open the door further and pushes his way in.

He tosses the bag from the drugstore into the corner of the room.

NINE (CONT'D)
I'm leaving. Tonight

Avalon is stunned.

AVALON
You can't go.

NINE
You used me to burn that yellow dress, gloves, your undies, and the white gloves. I saw things. Blood spots. I'm out of here! Who the hell knows what you're planning?

Avalon turns and paces as if stalling.

AVALON
Planning my escape from this STEM cell prison. That's what!

Nine goes to hug Avalon from behind, and she smiles devilishly, which he can't see.

NINE
You're twelve years old! You have nowhere to go! Your dad has complete control of you until you're eighteen.

AVALON
Unless my dad and U.T. make you the executor of my trust fund until I turn eighteen. You'll own them!

NINE
That will never happen while your father's alive.

Avalon turns and hugs Nine, seducing him.

AVALON
It's what my mom wanted. She told me before she died!

Nine is stunned in disbelief.

NINE
You said you were in your bedroom asleep!

AVALON

I can't remember anything. I'm pretty sure Mom came in to kiss me goodnight before she... she...

Avalon collapses to the floor, as Nine paces and rants.

NINE

Doesn't matter anyway. When the Detective finds out you shot your mom, you'll go to prison or a psych hospital and your trust will be frozen 'til you get out in twenty years! Your dad and uncle will be financially ruined!

Avalon looks up sadly.

AVALON

But you burned my dress. They'll never know!

Nine laughs maniacally.

NINE

I didn't burn your dress! That would make me an accomplice. If you don't convince your dad and uncle to make me executor of your trust, I'm turning you in!

Avalon leaps to her feet and punches Nine as he laughs and begins to exit her room.

AVALON

You can't do this to me!

NINE

I'll give you ten minutes.

Nine exits, as Avalon collapses to the floor again.

Avalon hears the gate BUZZER sound and she shakes in fear.

Avalon exits her room to the top of the staircase.

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Avalon stops at the top of the staircase to see Ellen barge in the front door where Brighton, Thurmond, and Nine are waiting.

ELLEN

He's dead! Dr. Stillwell is dead!

Ellen points to Avalon at the top of the staircase.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

She killed him!

Everyone glares at Avalon, who looks innocent and perplexed.

BRIGHTON

She's been here all day!

THURMOND

That's impossible!

Nine smirks at Avalon which only she can see.

ELLEN

I brought the doctor out from his rehab center to pay his respects to the family.

Ellen points to Avalon.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

When I brought him back, he had a panic attack while they took him out of my car. Stopped breathing. Died on the spot.

BRIGHTON

He's old and he had a severe stroke two years ago. You can't blame...

ELLEN

(interrupts)

She could have slipped him something, or put a hex on him!

THURMOND

A hex? That's ridiculous!

The BUZZER sounds again. Brighton, Thurmond, and Ellen race to the kitchen.

NINE

That will be Detective Ramos.

Ellen and Brighton race into the entrance hallway, Brighton speaks sadly up to Avalon.

BRIGHTON

The Detective is here with an
arrest warrant. She's just waiting
on backup Police officers.

(even sadder)

She's going to take me away.

Avalon stands in horror.

AVALON

She can't...

ELLEN

(interrupts)

There must be some mistake!

Brighton hugs Ellen.

BRIGHTON

I'm sorry, everyone. After my wife
shot herself, I forced pills down
her throat to prove it was suicide,
and not...

Brighton looks slowly up to Avalon.

Nine steps in front of Brighton and Ellen and pulls a trash
can from the parlor and lifts a paper bag from it.

NINE

I'll have to come clean with the
Detective!

From the paper bag, Nine pulls out a small section of
Avalon's yellow dress with red blood splatters across the
front of it.

Brighton glares up at Avalon who looks away sobbing.

BRIGHTON

(to Avalon)

I didn't want to believe it.

(to Nine)

You said you burned that!

NINE

I didn't want to be an accomplice
to murder.

Ellen gets in Brighton's face, angry.

ELLEN

You knew about this?

Nine glances back at Avalon.

NINE

Blood splatter on the dress. Powder
burns on the gloves. If the
Detective sees this, Avalon will
get twenty years, unless...

ELLEN

(interrupts)
Unless what?

Thurmond enters from the kitchen with a pistol in his hands.

THURMOND

Put the trash can down, Nine.

Nine puts the can down then puts his hands on his hips.

NINE

Mr. Carnage? Do you think I'm
stupid? This is one glove and half
the dress. The other half of the
dress with blood stains and one
glove, also with powder burns, is
at a friend's house for
safekeeping.

Brighton threatens Nine.

BRIGHTON

That's why Avalon asked my
permission to burn it!

NINE

Which makes you an accessory. Plus
tampering with evidence! Or maybe
you shot your wife!

BRIGHTON

Are you insane?

Ellen races to hug and plea with Brighton.

ELLEN

You can deny it all, Brighton!
Let's escape. We'll take the boat!
Leave all these sickos behind!

THURMOND

It's obvious, isn't it, Brighton?

Nine laughs and points at Ellen.

NINE

It could have been Ms. Waters!

ELLEN

You are insane! I'm calling 9-1-1!

Ellen begins to call 9-1-1.

NINE

Hold it right there, Ms. Waters. I think the Detective's arrest warrant is for you!

Everyone glares at Ellen.

NINE (CONT'D)

You can sneak in and out of the gate at any time. You wanted Mrs. Zent dead and wanted Mr. Zent for yourself!

ELLEN

You can't prove...

NINE

(interrupts)

When were you going to tell Avalon?

Ellen freezes.

NINE (CONT'D)

I assume Mr. Zent knew.

AVALON

Knew what, Daddy?

Ellen looks away with guilt.

Avalon races down the stairs to plea to her Dad.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Somebody better tell me what's going on or I'll call the Police!

Thurmond gets in Brighton's face.

THURMOND

Explain yourself.
(glares at Ellen)
Both of you.

Brighton bends to talk to Avalon softly.

BRIGHTON
The stem cells in your brain are
wearing out.

Avalon pushes her dad away.

AVALON
Then it's true? The hypodermic
needle in my brain when I was two?

THURMOND
What hypodermic...?

Brighton glares at Ellen.

BRIGHTON
(interrupting)
A highly experimental and illegal
operation. Ellen convinced your
mother and was blackmailing me to
keep quiet.

Thurmond turns his pistol on Ellen.

THURMOND
Blackmail?

BRIGHTON
Her job here. Money for her
silence. Sexual favors.
(glares at Ellen)
Which tormented Constance, but she
was being blackmailed too.

Ellen turns defiant.

ELLEN
You can't prove any of this?

Nine holds up his phone.

NINE
I can. Photos of your confidential
files from your office! Cheap locks
beg for thieves.

Ellen uses a Mixed Martial Arts chop on Thurmond's gun hand
and disarms him and turns the pistol on Nine.

ELLEN
Hand me that phone!

Nine laughs.

NINE

You are as dumb as the rest of them.

(beat)

A complete electronic copy resides with a friend, and on the cloud. If anything happens to me, it's all automatically released on the open web, and sent to the Police, of course.

(laughs)

Shoot me! I dare you!

Ellen points the pistol momentarily at Brighton, Thurmond, then Avalon.

NINE (CONT'D)

A little desperate, Ms. Waters? The Detective and Police are at the gate.

(steps toward the kitchen)

I think I'll let them in.

Ellen points the gun at Nine, who scoffs.

NINE (CONT'D)

Anyone else think it's coincidental that Doctor Robert Stillwell died the same afternoon you were driving him here and back?

Avalon points a finger at Ellen and yells.

AVALON

He was alive in the afternoon when I saw him in your car!

Ellen points the pistol at Avalon.

ELLEN

Maybe you poisoned him! What was in that tea!

Avalon is defiant.

AVALON

He didn't drink any. Nobody did!

Nine stands in front of Avalon to protect her.

NINE

(to Ellen)

Maybe you poisoned him on the way back?

Ellen turns to Nine.

ELLEN
Maybe... Maybe...

BRIGHTON
I'm calling Detective Ramos. I don't care what happens to me, but I want Avalon to live a normal life from here on out.

Avalon SCREAMS.

AVALON
I'm sorry, U.T., but I think Max should be named the executor of my trust fund.

Nine turns lovingly to Avalon, holds her hands, and speaks softly and lovingly.

NINE
I love you, Av. I've loved you since the day we met.

Avalon's eyes open widely, unsure how to react. The others are equally stunned.

NINE (CONT'D)
I'll burn the dress and protect you. Our age difference is less than your parents. I want to marry you when you come of age.

Thurmond senses a rat and glances at Avalon.

THURMOND
Are we sure about this?!

Avalon is defiant.

AVALON
When he's 100, I'll be 90! What's the big deal?!

Nine turns calmly to Thurmond.

NINE
I wouldn't waste Av's trust fund as you three have done.

They HEAR the gate BUZZER sound in the kitchen.

Nine holds up the paper bag, pulls out a lighter, and lights it under the paper bag.

NINE (CONT'D)
It's up to you?

Brighton orders Thurmond.

BRIGHTON
Sign it over to him. Now!

Thurmond resists.

THURMOND
We'll be ruined!

Ellen grabs Brighton's arm.

ELLEN
What about us?

NINE
You three can go sponging off Av's trust fund until she turns eighteen, if you leave us alone and let us travel!

Avalon smiles huge.

AVALON
Travel! That would be great! I'll be free!

Brighton lowers his head in shame.

The BUZZER sounds again.

BRIGHTON
Avalon, I've made so many mistakes, but you're only twelve years old.

AVALON
(interrupts)
You need to make it right, Daddy. There's not much time.

BRIGHTON
Sign it over, Thurmond. Write a quick note, and I'll witness it.

THURMOND
But...

BRIGHTON

Just do it! I'll let in the
Detective.

Brighton exits to the kitchen.

Ellen hands the pistol to Thurmond, who puts it in his
briefcase by the door, takes out a yellow legal pad, and
scribbles a quick note.

THURMOND

You'll need a notarized copy. My
office will send one for signature
in the morning. Our offshore bank
will need other assurances and
documents, but this should do in
the interim.

Thurmond reluctantly hands Nine the note.

Nine examines it and smiles. He lights the bag in the trash
can.

NINE

We'll burn the rest of this
tonight.

Nine races the trash can to the backdoor and returns.

Avalon looks suspiciously at Nine, as the Detective and two
uniformed Police officers (same ones as before) enter the
front door.

The Detective holds several pieces of paper.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Sorry to have to do this, but I
have a warrant here.

BRIGHTON

Search warrant? Not an arrest
warrant?

The Detective acts surprised.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Arrest warrant? Did I say arrest
warrant? I meant search warrant.

The Detective smells the smoke from the trash can fire.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

Burning something?

NINE

Frozen pizza from dinner.

The Detective ambles around looking at everyone suspiciously.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Huh! What's going on around here?

BRIGHTON

Nothing, I assure you.

The Detective points at Brighton, Ellen, and Thurmond.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Good, then you three won't mind coming downtown for a few questions, while these officers collect your computer equipment, iPads, and cellphones for a bit more analysis. Sometimes they can undelete videos and messages. Leave it to the nerds, huh?

THURMOND

Are you charging us with a crime?
I'm an attorney.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Good. You'll have an attorney present. Just a few simple questions. Voluntary, but I strongly suggest you come with me.

The Detective points upstairs and the Police officers head up to gather equipment.

BRIGHTON

What about Avalon?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I can have an officer stay with her if you're uncomfortable leaving her with her boyfriend, I mean, tutor.

NINE

We'll be fine alone.

Avalon nods yes, semi-convincingly.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I thought you might.

The officers return with a desktop computer, a laptop computer, and four iPads.

NINE

Hey, that's my laptop!

Detective Ramos waves the search warrant.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Judge's orders. I'm sure you won't mind. Anything that might be of value it says.

The officers begin to head out the front door.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

But we don't need the little girl's iPad.

POLICEWOMAN

Found it under her bed.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(scoffs)

Good hiding place. We'll see what's on it later unless one of these three talks.

The Policewoman hands Avalon's iPad back. The iPad looks off.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

I'll have the adults back to you kids in a few hours.

Nine looks suspiciously at the Detective as she exits, leading Brighton, Ellen, and Thurmond to the door.

The Detective glances back at Nine and Avalon.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

We think one of these three knows more than they're telling us.

(beat)

People can hold secrets.

Nine runs to the door to watch them drive off.

Nine turns and runs to hug Avalon, while she stares at the door in worry.

NINE

We did it, Av! Our dream come true.

AVALON

I don't...

EIGHT (24), Av's previous tutor, a beautiful woman who likes like an older version of Avalon, appears at the top of the stairs in a tight black dress. She's super excited.

EIGHT
Max, we did it!

Avalon spins to see her previous tutor, who is confidently walking down the stairs.

AVALON
Eight? What are you doing here?

Nine rushes to hug Eight, to Avalon's horror.

NINE
Went just like you said, Bree.

Eight pats Avalon on her head in a condescending way.

EIGHT
Have you missed me, Av?

AVALON
(puzzled)
You were my smartest tutor,
(to Max)
No offense, Max.

Max smirks.

NINE
Some taken.

AVALON
But you quit the day after you
drove me to my last standardized IQ
test for Mensa membership, which I
don't remember taking.

EIGHT
You fell asleep on the way. A deep
sleep.

Nine and Eight nod like it must be true.

AVALON
Asleep?

EIGHT
Don't worry. I took the test for
you.

NINE

And aced it! Top two percent! Not surprising since she's already a Mensa member.

Nine gives Eight a high-five.

EIGHT

All of us pretty little white girls look the same when we dress as nerds. Your dad paid me fifty grand.

NINE

Well, your trust fund paid her, but your mom never knew.

EIGHT

So I got to quit this demeaning tutor job with a load of cash.

AVALON

When did you get here?

EIGHT

I share Max's keys.
(giggles)
We've been kind of seeing each other.

Avalon frowns.

NINE

Maybe we'll get married and adopt you.

Nine smiles and looks away, as Avalon's heart sinks and she has trouble breathing, but never lets loose of her iPad that looks like it's turned off. She struggles to speak.

AVALON

Why don't I remember anything the night my mom died?

Nine confides in Avalon.

NINE

You were in a state of shock.

Eight moves to hug Avalon.

EIGHT

Complete nervous system shut down.
Such an awful thing to witness.

NINE

Your dad found you in the corner of your mom's room. Spatters of blood on your dress. Completely out of it.

Avalon has an epiphany.

AVALON

I think you two killed my mom and framed me and my dad to get my trust fund!

Avalon races to the top of the stairs, turns, and points at Nine in an accusatory way.

AVALON (CONT'D)

You kept my dad talking outside while my mom was having another nervous breakdown after I revealed seeing my medical history.

Avalon points at Eight.

AVALON (CONT'D)

Which you hacked for Max to leave on his open laptop for me to find.

NINE

You didn't tell your mom, did you?!

Avalon looks away sadly.

AVALON

I did. I'll never forgive myself.
(angry)
But I didn't kill her, and she didn't kill herself!

NINE

Of course, she did. How do you know otherwise?

Avalon motions for Nine and Eight to join her.

They trudge up the staircase, glaring at each other as Avalon reaches her mother's bedroom door.

Avalon stops and opens the door.

AVALON

My mom and I were talking with the door shut. She was in her bathroom and I was on the bed.

(MORE)

AVALON (CONT'D)

I told her I knew about my stem cell surgery, and she took one pill to help her sleep, while I went to my bathroom to brush my teeth. Max and my dad were walking the grounds.

NINE

Maybe she took more pills after you left her.

AVALON

But there was no gun, and my father kept guns locked in his room.

NINE

Then your dad and I both heard the gunshot and eight seconds later, your scream, and your dad came in and found you in here in a state of shock.

AVALON

All I remember is brushing my teeth and waking up in the shower! Like I was drugged. Just like before my last IQ test!

Eight and nine are angry.

EIGHT

You're crazy.

AVALON

(angrier)

You asked my dad for the combo to the gun safe in case of a home invasion and he wasn't home.

NINE

This is crazy. I'm going to the kitchen for a snack.

Avalon glares at Nine.

AVALON

You bragged about rappelling us out my bedroom window for an easy escape anytime. You have the climbing gear to do it in your room.

NINE

No one repelled from anywhere!

AVALON

Not without help. Someone would need to undo the hook thing on the rope and shut and lock the window.

Eight glances at Nine in a guilty way that Avalon sees.

AVALON (CONT'D)

I thought so. One of you shot my mom while the other stood me up a few feet away to catch the blood splatter, before sitting me in the corner.

EIGHT

You're mad!

NINE

That blood puts you at the scene of the crime with a motive: revenge for your dangerous operation. You won't talk, or you'll do twenty years in jail or ten in an asylum!

Nine and Eight smirk as they head downstairs.

AVALON

But if I confess, you won't get my trust fund.

Nine and Eight stop to glare back at Avalon.

EIGHT

You wouldn't do that!

NINE

Never!

Avalon smiles and speaks in a deep, ominous voice.

AVALON

I'm crazy, right? Schizophrenic? Nope! I'm predicting a miracle recovery when my stem cells wear off. One year, tops! My IQ is dropping precipitously, you know.

They HEAR the gate BUZZER sound in the kitchen.

Eight's eyes and Nine's eyes open widely.

AVALON (CONT'D)

(laughs)

I'll get it! Who could it be?

INT. BEACH ESTATE ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Detective Ramos escorts Brighton and Ellen, handcuffed together) in the estate to see Nine sitting on the stairs, covering his face with his hands.

Thurmond enters the house with a sheepish look.

Avalon races to hug Thurmond, as the Policeman enters with handcuffs open for Nine.

AVALON
U.T.! You're okay!

THURMOND
Worried sick about you.

Detective Ramos points at Brighton and Ellen.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
We didn't get a mile down the road
when these two sang like canaries.

The Policewoman enters the backdoor with Eight in handcuffs.

POLICEWOMAN
Down by the dock like you thought.

EIGHT
I didn't do anything wrong! I want
my attorney present!

NINE
Me too, I guess.

Avalon hands Detective Ramos her iPad and smiles. The iPad looks like it's turned off.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Amazing! You were right, kid! You
can't tell it's even on, much less
recording video with that app you
have.

Eight and Nine glare at Avalon.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)
Don't worry, we bugged the house
before we left with the computers
and phones.

BRIGHTON

The Detective here knew you conspired, and Avalon pieced it together.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

We know Mr. Zent didn't kill his wife.

(to Avalon)

But he thought you did, so he tried to cover it up by forcing more pills down her throat after she was shot. He carried you to your room, put you in your pajamas, and put you to bed, but you were out of it. He was going to take the wrap for you.

AVALON

(glares at Eight)

Roofies!

(glares at her dad)

And she told me about my Mensa IQ test. Roofies again, I bet.

(softens to her dad)

I think mom's toothpaste and my toothpaste had roofies inserted in the tip of the tube.

The Detective smiles, as Eight looks away.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Maybe you're right! I bet we don't find any fingerprints on the two toothpaste tubes up there now. Wouldn't that prove your accusation, Avalon? Such a smart little girl.

Avalon hugs her dad briefly.

AVALON

But thanks for wanting to take the wrap for me. It doesn't make up for my dangerous surgery, but it was a nice gesture.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

(to Avalon)

I can't imagine it makes up for your dad's abusive behavior, or your incarceration here.

Avalon looks her dad in the eyes.

AVALON

For the record, I think I was happiest in my first two years of life when I was always being hugged.

Brighton melts in tears.

Ellen bends down to apologize to Avalon.

ELLEN

Avalon, I'm so sorry for...

AVALON

Save it, Ms. Waters. You're fired!

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Damn right. She was bilking your trust fund and she was humping and blackmailing your daddy. I'd fire her ass too.

Ellen stands but slumps and looks away.

The Detective points to Nine and Eight.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

So, we also obtained a warrant for your love nest of an apartment in town.

Avalon glares at Nine.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

We found half a yellow dress and a glove. No powder burns on the glove, so she didn't pull the trigger.

The Detective turns to Brighton.

DETECTIVE RAMOS (CONT'D)

No powder residue on Mrs. or Mr. Zent, Ms. Waters, Mr. Carnage, or Mr. Max Sheehan, so that narrows it down to our stowaway, Ms. Bree Templeton, or Eight, as you call her.

EIGHT

I deny everything.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Including the scream you staged for Mr. Zent. The little girl was in no shape to scream after being drugged.

(beat)

We'll sweep the closet in Max's room for powder residue and blood droplets. Even if a suspect is very careful, they often touch something before they take off their gloves.

AVALON

And below the dock?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

That was a great suggestion, young lady!

(to Brighton)

No security cameras down there.

(to Eight and Nine)

Our dive team this afternoon found a climbing rope, black leotards, surgical gloves, and two tubes of toothpaste down there. Imagine that? Wonder if we'll find a DNA match and other clues when we examine them. Let's take the we cuffed folks downtown.

The Policeman and Policewoman lead the captives out the front door.

AVALON

What will happen to my dad?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Disturbing a crime scene, obstructing justice, but protecting his daughter. Probation is my guess, but he could lose custody.

Thurmond pleads with the Detective.

THURMOND

I could take her in until she wants to come back. Please!

Avalon hugs Thurmond tightly.

The Detective kneels and smiles at Avalon.

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Public schools, team sports,
playing with kids your own age?

Avalon smiles.

THURMOND
You bet!

DETECTIVE RAMOS
Your uncle is the only one who
maintained your innocence all
along. I'll see what I can do.

Thurmond, Avalon, and Detective Ramos hug.

AVALON
My mom had problems, but I loved
her just as she was. Like U.T.
loves me. Like my mom loved me
before my operation, and like my
dad did when he thought I was in
real trouble.

THURMOND
Let's go pack your bags, Av.

AVALON
Public school?! I'm free! I'm
finally free!

EXT. BEACH ESTATE - DAY

Thurmond, in his red scarf and sports car, drives off with a
smiling Avalon. Her suitcases and a soccer ball are in the
backseat.

FADE OUT.

THE END