

The Girl In My Truck
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FADE IN:

AERIAL – INTERSTATE HIGHWAY – NIGHT

A black ribbon of asphalt cuts through open country.

From high above, traffic is sparse. Headlights drift like slow-moving constellations. The land on either side is dark, unreadable, endless.

A DIESEL RIG moves steadily in the right lane.

Not fast.

Not slow.

Unhurried.

Its engine hums–low, constant, almost soothing.

The truck doesn't weave. Doesn't pass. Doesn't announce itself.

It just goes.

The CAMERA TRACKS WITH IT, gliding effortlessly, godlike. The rig becomes the only thing that matters in frame.

This truck has been here before.

This road knows it.

CUT TO:

CLOSER AERIAL – ABOVE THE CAB

The roof is clean. Maintained. No slogans. No personality decals. No warning signs.

Just a working man's truck.

Inside the cab, barely visible through the windshield–

A DRIVER.

Hands steady on the wheel.

Posture relaxed.

Comfortable.

No rush to get anywhere.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE — CONTINUOUS

The rig passes reflective mile markers.

Each one disappears behind him.

The road stretches forward, offering infinite exits, infinite chances to disappear.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

The DRIVER is BEN.

Early 40s. Clean-cut. Boyish in a way that disarms. Kind face. Gentle eyes. The kind of man strangers tell things to without knowing why.

Country music plays softly on the radio. Nothing aggressive. Nothing sad.

Ben hums along—almost absentmindedly.

His eyes stay on the road.

But they're not empty.

They're observing.

A thermos sits in the cup holder.

A neatly folded map on the dash—old school.

A photo tucked into the visor: Ben with a dog. Smiling.

Nothing out of place.

Nothing alarming.

Ben reaches up, adjusts the visor, blocks a flicker of oncoming headlights.

For a moment, his reflection catches in the glass.

The smile fades—just slightly.

Not anger.

Not menace.

Calculation.

Then it's gone.

The smile returns as if it never left.

CUT TO:

AERIAL – PULLING BACK

The rig continues forward, shrinking against the vastness of the interstate.

One truck.

One man.

Thousands of miles.

A voice crackles over the CB RADIO—distant, distorted. Another trucker laughing about nothing in particular.

Ben reaches over, turns the volume down.

Silence.

The engine carries him forward.

SUPER: Somewhere in the American Midwest

The truck disappears into the dark.

The road remains.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. TRUCK STOP – NIGHT

Neon buzzes against darkness.

A tired oasis off the interstate – diesel fumes, flickering lights, idling engines. The kind of place that never truly sleeps, just blinks.

Ben's RIG eases into a parking space with practiced calm.

No hesitation.

No rush.

The engine cuts.

Silence rushes in behind it.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER – NIGHT

Late-night quiet.

A few truckers scattered in booths. A waitress refilling coffee like it's muscle memory. The hum of refrigeration. A muted TV plays a weather report no one is watching.

Ben enters.

Heads don't turn – and that's the point.

He blends.

He slides into a booth near the window. Removes his cap. Neat hair. Clean face. Ordinary.

The WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS
Coffee?

Ben smiles – warm, appreciative.

BEN
Please. Thank you.

She pours. Moves on.

Ben doesn't open a menu.

He already knows what he wants.

Across the diner, near the counter, sits LUCY (19).

Too young for this place.

Too tired to hide it.

Oversized hoodie. Backpack at her feet. A half-eaten plate of fries gone cold. She scrolls her phone like she's waiting for something that won't arrive.

She glances up.

Their eyes meet.

Ben looks away first.

Important.

A beat passes.

Lucy notices something odd – not the look, but the absence of one. No leer. No curiosity. No pressure.

Just... neutrality.

That disarms her more than attention would.

Ben eats quietly. Unremarkable. Efficient.

Lucy's phone buzzes.

She checks it.

Nothing.

Her shoulders drop.

Ben notices – without looking like he notices.

He finishes. Slides out of the booth. Stands.

As he passes the counter, he pauses – just enough to be natural.

BEN (CONT'D)
(excuse-me gentle)
Hey—sorry. Do you know if the buses
still stop here this late?

Lucy looks up. Surprised to be addressed like a person.

LUCY
Uh... I don't think so. Not after
midnight.

Ben nods. Accepts it.

No disappointment. No push.

BEN
Figures. Appreciate it.

He turns to leave.

That's when she speaks – because now she wants the interaction.

LUCY
You driving far?

Ben stops. Turns back. Smiles – small, reassuring.

BEN
West. Always west.

It lands heavier than he intends.

Lucy hesitates.

LUCY
Yeah... me too. Eventually.

A silence.

Not awkward.

Inviting.

Ben studies her – quietly, invisibly.

Not her body.

Her circumstances.

The backpack. The tired eyes. The way she keeps one foot hooked around the strap like it might vanish.

BEN
You waiting on someone?

She shrugs.

A practiced shrug. Rehearsed.

LUCY
Kinda.

Ben nods – as if that's normal.

BEN
It's a long wait sometimes.

He gestures gently toward the window – rain streaking the glass, trucks rumbling past.

BEN (CONT'D)
You got somewhere warm to be tonight?

The question is careful.

Protective.

Almost fatherly.

Lucy stiffens – then relaxes.

LUCY
I'll figure it out.

Ben doesn't challenge that.

Instead–

BEN
Yeah. You usually do.

That lands.

She studies him now.

He isn't trying to sell her anything.

That's what scares her – and comforts her.

LUCY
You're not from around here.

Ben smiles.

BEN
No one ever is.

A beat.

Ben reaches into his pocket, pulls out a few bills. Slides them onto the counter near her plate.

BEN (CONT'D)
Get yourself something hot. Roads are colder than they look.

He steps back.

Gives her space.

This is the moment.

The fork in the road.

Lucy looks at the money.

Then at him.

LUCY
You don't even know me.

Ben's smile doesn't change.

But his eyes sharpen - just a fraction.

BEN
I know enough.

Too honest.

He catches it - softens.

BEN (CONT'D)
I know you shouldn't be alone out
there tonight.

Silence.

Rain hits harder against the glass.

Lucy swallows.

LUCY
I'm not asking for anything.

Ben raises his hands slightly.

BEN
Neither am I.

Another truth.

Another lie.

Outside, a semi horn BLARES - loud, sudden.

Lucy flinches.

Ben doesn't.

He watches the flinch.

Files it away.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm parked out back for another
hour. If your ride doesn't show...
(beat)
No pressure.

He turns.

Walks out.

No looking back.

Lucy sits frozen.

The money on the counter feels heavier than it should.

The waitress approaches.

WAITRESS
That your boyfriend?

Lucy shakes her head.

LUCY
No.

The waitress shrugs.

WAITRESS
Lucky girl. He looked decent.

Lucy doesn't answer.

Through the rain-streaked window, she sees Ben cross the lot – calm, unbothered – and climb into his truck.

The cab light flicks on.

For a moment, he sits there.

Waiting.

Lucy watches.

Ben does not look back.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben closes the door.

The cab is quiet.

Orderly.

He exhales – slow.

Not relief.

Anticipation.

He glances at the clock.

Sets it.

One hour.

Ben stares forward, face neutral.

Then – barely perceptible –

A faint smile.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. TRUCK STOP – DAY – THREE DAYS LATER

Same place.

Different temperature.

Morning light exposes everything the neon hid–cracked pavement, oil stains, trash caught in fencing. The magic is gone. What's left is utilitarian and tired.

Yellow tape flaps in the wind.

State troopers move with the slow precision of people who've done this before and wish they hadn't.

A patrol car idles near the diner.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER – DAY

The diner is closed.

Chairs upside down on tables. Coffee pots cold. Silence where there should be hum.

DETECTIVE MARA KLINE (40s) enters with a notebook tucked under her arm.

She's sharp-eyed, grounded, no-nonsense. Not hardened-trained. Someone who notices what others overlook because she assumes nothing.

She doesn't rush.

She walks the room like she's listening for an echo.

A FORENSICS TECH dusts near the counter.

FORENSICS TECH
No sign of a struggle. No blood.

Mara nods. She already knew that.

She stops at a booth by the window.

The one Ben sat in.

She doesn't sit. She stands. Looks out through the glass at the lot beyond.

MARA
Who was here that night?

The WAITRESS—mid-50s, worn but observant—stands nearby, arms folded.

WAITRESS
Couple regular truckers. One kid.
Girl.

Mara turns.

MARA
Kid how?

The waitress hesitates.

WAITRESS
Too young to be that tired.

Mara writes that down.

EXT. TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT — DAY

Mara walks the lot with a STATE TROOPER.

STATE TROOPER
Security cams caught her coming in.
Backpack. Hoodie. No ride out.

Mara stops near a space at the far edge.

No blood. No debris.

Just a dark stain where oil has soaked the asphalt for years.

MARA
Anyone talk to her?

STATE TROOPER
Waitress said one guy. Trucker.
Paid for her food.

Mara looks up.

MARA
Describe him.

The trooper checks notes.

STATE TROOPER
White male. Clean-cut. Polite.
Didn't raise a flag.

Mara closes her notebook.

That bothers her more than it should.

INT. DINER — DAY

Mara stands where Lucy sat.

She looks down at the counter.

A faint ring from a coffee mug.

Almost invisible.

She touches it with a gloved finger.

MARA
He didn't grab her.

The trooper looks at her.

STATE TROOPER
What?

MARA
No struggle. No force. No witness
alarm.

She gestures around the room.

MARA (CONT'D)
That means she went willingly.

A beat.

STATE TROOPER
So... boyfriend?

Mara finally looks at him.

MARA

No.

She moves to the window again. Studies the lot.

MARA (CONT'D)

Boyfriends rush.

Predators rush.

This one waited.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

A TOW TRUCK pulls in. Normal life intruding.

Mara watches semis roll past on the interstate beyond the fence—dozens of them. Hundreds.

Identical from a distance.

STATE TROOPER

You thinking serial?

Mara doesn't answer right away.

She pulls out her phone. Scrolls through missing persons photos.

Runaways. Sex workers. Hitchhikers.

Patterns that don't scream.

Patterns that whisper.

MARA

I'm thinking someone who knows how to look harmless.

She pockets the phone.

MARA (CONT'D)

Someone who listens.

She looks back at the diner.

At the booth.

At the door.

MARA (CONT'D)
And doesn't leave a mess.

INT. MARA'S CAR - DAY

Mara sits behind the wheel, engine off.

She watches trucks thunder past.

Each one a possible ghost.

She pulls out a map-old paper, folded and creased.

Truck stops circled.

Too many.

Her jaw tightens—not fear.

Focus.

MARA (V.O.)
(quiet, to herself)
You didn't scare her.

You didn't force her.

You didn't rush.

She marks another circle.

MARA (V.O.)
So you'll do it again.

Mara starts the car.

Pulls onto the road.

Joins the flow.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - NIGHT

Different state.

Same anatomy.

Neon. Diesel. Rain-slick asphalt reflecting red and blue like open wounds. A place built to forget who passed through.

Ben's RIG rolls in.

Unremarkable.

Indistinguishable.

Perfect.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara drives. Wipers slicing rhythmically.

Truck stop signs blur past her windshield.

She doesn't pull in.

Not yet.

EXT. TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT — NIGHT

Ben parks far from the building. Same as before.

He cuts the engine.

Waits.

A practiced stillness.

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Ben enters.

Same posture. Same cap. Same gentle presence.

The diner layout is eerily familiar—booths, counter, tired waitress, muted TV.

But this time—

Ben scans.

Not searching desperately.

Selecting.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara pulls into a truck stop two exits down.

She sits in the car, watching.

She doesn't get out.

She counts trucks.

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Ben takes a booth near the window again.

Same choice.

Same angle.

He orders coffee.

Smiles.

Listens.

Across the room: KAYLA (22).

Older than Lucy. Harder edges. Heavy makeup trying to armor exhaustion.

She laughs too loud at something no one said.

Ben notices the laugh.

Files it away.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara flips through her notebook.

Truck stops circled.

Dates.

Times.

She stops at one detail.

"Paid for food. Didn't sit with her."

Her eyes narrow.

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Kayla gets up to use the restroom.

As she passes Ben's booth, he shifts—just enough.

BEN

Excuse me—
(then, gentle)
Sorry. Didn't mean to block you.

She pauses.

Looks at him.

He's smiling. Apologetic.

Safe.

KAYLA

You're good.

She moves on.

Ben watches her walk away.

Not her body.

Her gait.

A limp she hides well.

He sips his coffee.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara watches a young woman cross a different parking lot—alone, phone to her ear, arguing with someone who isn't listening.

Mara grips the steering wheel.

She wants to get out.

She doesn't.

Not yet.

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Kayla returns to her stool.

Ben waits.

Five beats.

Ten.

Then—

He stands. Approaches the counter casually.

BEN
(to the waitress)
Can I cover hers?

He nods subtly toward Kayla.

The waitress smiles.

WAITRESS
That's sweet of you.

Ben shrugs it off.

BEN
Long roads.

Kayla turns.

Surprised.

Guarded.

KAYLA
You don't have to—

BEN
I know.

That line again.

It lands again.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara's phone buzzes.

She answers.

MARA
Kline.

A beat.

Her expression tightens.

MARA (CONT'D)
Which truck stop?

She listens.

Her eyes flick to the diner ahead of her.

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Kayla studies Ben.

KAYLA
What do you want?

Direct. Defensive.

Ben respects that.

BEN
Nothing.

She doesn't believe him.

Good.

BEN (CONT'D)
Just didn't feel right letting you
leave hungry.

He slides the receipt toward her.

Doesn't touch her.

Doesn't invade space.

BEN (CONT'D)
You heading somewhere safe?

The question is identical.

The tone identical.

The script rehearsed—but alive.

Kayla hesitates.

Ben watches the hesitation.

The exact length.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara hangs up.

Starts the engine.

Pulls out fast.

Too fast.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Kayla pockets the receipt.

KAYLA
I got a friend coming.

A lie.

Ben nods.

Accepts it.

BEN
Good.

He steps back.

Creates distance.

This is where trust grows.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll be outside if you need a phone
charger.
(beat)
Truckers always carry extras.

He turns to leave.

Again-no pressure.

Again-no looking back.

EXT. TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ben walks toward his rig.

Calm.

Measured.

He climbs into the cab.

The interior light flicks on.

Same as before.

A ritual repeated.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara speeds down the interstate.

Lights streak past.

She's chasing a shadow.

She doesn't know how close she is.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben plugs in a charger.

Sets it on the passenger seat.

Prepared.

He looks at the clock.

Starts it.

One hour.

Ben leans back.

Waits.

Outside, rain falls harder.

Inside—

Order.

Silence.

A faint smile.

INTERCUT —
Mara's car racing through darkness.

Ben's truck sitting perfectly still.

Two predators of different kinds.

One saving lives.

One ending them.

Neither aware—

They're finally on the same road.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER – NIGHT

Kayla sits alone now.

Her coffee untouched.

She keeps glancing at the window.

At Ben's rig.

Still there.

Idling lights off.

Too still.

She checks her phone.

NO SIGNAL.

She exhales. Annoyed. Uneasy.

She stands, slings her bag over her shoulder.

Decision made.

EXT. TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Rain heavier now.

Wind pushes trash across the asphalt.

Kayla steps outside, hood up, moving fast toward the payphones mounted on the side of the building—ancient, flickering, barely alive.

She digs for change.

Drops a coin.

It CLATTERS loudly.

She freezes.

The sound echoes more than it should.

She bends to pick it up—

AIR BRAKES HISS.

LOUD. SUDDEN. RIGHT BEHIND HER.

Kayla SCREAMS.

Spins around—

Nothing.

Just a semi three spaces down adjusting suspension.

Her heart pounds.

She laughs nervously at herself.

KAYLA

Jesus...

She turns back—

BEN IS THERE.

RIGHT THERE.

CLOSE.

Too close.

No footsteps. No warning.

He's holding the charger.

Dry. Calm. Unbothered.

BEN

Sorry. Didn't mean to scare you.

HARD JUMP CUT.

Kayla GASPS – full-body flinch.

This is the jump scare.

Earned.

Real.

Ben steps back immediately.

Hands up.

BEN
That's on me. I should've said
something.

Her pulse is visible in her neck.

KAYLA
You—
(shaky)
You scared the hell outta me.

Ben looks genuinely concerned.

Not performative.

Concerned.

That's worse.

BEN
I'm really sorry.

A beat.

Rain between them.

BEN (CONT'D)
You okay?

She nods.

Doesn't fully believe it.

KAYLA
Yeah. Just... bad timing.

Ben offers the charger-arm extended, distance maintained.

BEN
You left it on the counter. Thought
you might need it.

She hesitates.

This is the moment.

Takes it.

Their fingers DO NOT TOUCH.

Important.

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben climbs in ahead of her.

Cab light on.

Warm.

Inviting.

Orderly.

Kayla stands at the open door, rain soaking her jacket.

She looks inside.

Nothing alarming.

No chains. No mess. No red flags.

That's the trap.

BEN

You can just plug it in. Don't have
to get in.

He steps aside.

Gives her the doorway.

She climbs up halfway. Stays near the door.

Plugs her phone in.

Screen lights up.

1% ? 2%

Relief.

She exhales.

Then—

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

BLACK.

SILENCE.

Kayla SCREAMS.

She spins—

The door is shut but—

Ben is already reaching for the handle.

Opening it.

Immediately.

Light floods back in.

BEN

Whoa—hey—hey—

(confused)

Wind caught it. You okay?

Kayla is shaking now.

Real fear.

Ben sees it.

Registers it.

Adjusts.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's my fault.

(soft)

You should get back inside. I don't
want you thinking—

He stops himself.

That restraint is terrifying.

He opens the door wider.

Steps back completely.

Creates space.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll leave it open till you're out.

She grabs her phone.

Unplugs it.

Backs out fast.

Never turning her back.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Kayla hits the ground running.

Doesn't look back.

Doesn't say thank you.

Ben watches her go.

Face unreadable.

Rain streaks down his windshield like tears he doesn't feel.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Ben closes the door.

Locks it.

The click is final.

He sits.

Breath steady.

No anger.

No frustration.

Just recalibration.

He resets the clock.

One hour again.

Different outcome.

Different variable.

Ben looks at the charger still in his hand.

Then-

For the first time-

His smile doesn't come back.

Just a flicker.

A micro-expression.

Something close to irritation.

Or hunger.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARA'S CAR - NIGHT

Mara's headlights slice through rain.

She grips the wheel.

Her phone rings again.

MARA
Kline.

A voice, rushed.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
We just had a call—young woman,
truck stop off Route 16. Said she
was scared. No assault. No crime.

Mara closes her eyes.

Missed again.

MARA
Did she give a description?

A beat.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Clean-cut guy. Trucker. Polite.

Mara opens her eyes.

Hard.

Focused.

MARA
Yeah.

She hits the gas.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Ben sits motionless.

Rain ticks against metal like a metronome.

He removes the charger from the seat. Places it back in its compartment. Everything returns to its place.

Order restored.

He studies himself in the rearview mirror.

Not vanity.

Calibration.

He adjusts his expression—softens it. Practices a smaller smile. Less helpful. Less present.

A lesson learned.

Ben starts the engine.

EXT. INTERSTATE — NIGHT

The rig merges back onto the highway.

This time, he doesn't pull into the next truck stop.

He passes it.

Keeps going.

SCENE 9 — CONVERGENCE
(Mara enters the same
world)

EXT. TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

A DIFFERENT TRUCK STOP.

Bigger. Busier. More lights. More noise.

Mara's car pulls in.

She parks near the entrance. Kills the engine.

She sits for a beat—listening.

Diesel. Laughter. CB chatter bleeding from open windows.

She steps out.

INT. TRUCK STOP – NIGHT

Mara enters the diner.

She doesn't look like a cop. Plain jacket. No badge out. Just another traveler.

Her eyes work the room.

She clocks:

* A young woman asleep in a booth.

* Two truckers arguing softly over pie.

* A man at the counter-clean-cut, quiet, kind eyes–

Ben.

He's not doing anything wrong.

That's what stops her.

Their eyes meet.

Just a glance.

Ben looks away first.

Mara feels it in her gut.

A static prickle.

She orders coffee. Takes a seat where she can see the door.

INTERCUT – BEN / MARA

Ben stirs his coffee.

Mara doesn't drink hers.

Ben listens to the waitress complain about her feet.

Mara listens to Ben listening.

That's the tell.

INT. COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – NIGHT

Kayla sits wrapped in a blanket. Hands trembling.

Mara sits across from her now. Notepad closed.

This isn't an interrogation.

MARA
You did the right thing coming in.

Kayla nods. Swallows.

KAYLA
He didn't touch me.

Mara nods.

MARA
I know.

That surprises Kayla.

KAYLA
I keep thinking I'm crazy.

Mara leans in.

MARA
You're not.

A beat.

MARA (CONT'D)
Tell me something small.

Kayla frowns.

KAYLA
Small?

MARA
Something that stuck.

Kayla thinks.

Long.

Then—

KAYLA
He waited for me to talk first.

Mara's pen stills.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
Every time. He never jumped in.
Never corrected me. Just... waited.

Mara nods slowly.

MARA
Anything else?

Kayla closes her eyes.

KAYLA
He parked far away.
(pauses)
But close enough to watch the door.

Mara exhales.

That's it.

The pattern tightens.

INT. TRUCK STOP – NIGHT

Ben stands to leave.

Mara watches him do it.

Casual. Unhurried.

Ben reaches the door—

Mara stands too.

They nearly collide.

A beat.

Close enough now.

Ben smiles politely.

BEN
Sorry.

Mara meets his eyes.

Longer than is comfortable.

MARA
No problem.

Ben clocks it.

The look.

The assessment.

This woman sees.

He nods once. Steps aside.

Leaves.

Mara watches through the window as he crosses the lot toward his rig—parked far out, angled toward the exit.

Exactly like Kayla said.

Mara pulls out her phone.

Dials.

MARA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Run the plates on that rig.
(beat)
Yeah. I'll hold.

EXT. PARKING LOT — NIGHT

Ben climbs into his truck.

The cab light flicks on.

For the first time—

He looks back at the diner.

Sees Mara at the window.

Watching him.

Their eyes lock.

Not predator to prey.

Hunter to hunter.

Ben's smile fades.

The engine ROARS to life.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara runs.

Gets in.

Starts the engine as—

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Plates are registered to—

Too late.

Ben's rig pulls onto the highway.

Gone.

Mara slams the steering wheel once.

Controlled. Furious.

Focused.

MARA
You almost slipped.

She pulls out.

Follows the flow of trucks.

SCENE 12 — RESET

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben drives.

Jaw tight.

Eyes sharper now.

No smile.

No music.

He reaches up and removes the photo from the visor.

Stares at it.

Then flips it face down.

A change.

Small.

Dangerous.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARA'S CAR – NIGHT

Mara drives the same direction.

Different lane.

Same road.

MARA (V.O.)
You changed your rules.

She accelerates.

MARA (V.O.)
So will I.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. INTERSTATE REST AREA – NIGHT

A wide-open rest area carved out of darkness. Fluorescent lights hum. Vending machines glow like bait.

A YOUNG WOMAN sits alone on a bench near the bathrooms.

Early 20s. Hoodie. Backpack. Phone dead.

She looks exactly like Ben's type.

She is also STATE TROOPER LENA PARK, undercover.

An earpiece barely visible beneath her hair.

Across the lot, unmarked vehicles sit dark and patient.

MARA (V.O.)
(calm, controlled)
Remember—he doesn't rush. If he circles, let him. If he listens, let him. The moment he tries to isolate you, we move.

Lena swallows.

LENA
Copy.

EXT. REST AREA – CONTINUOUS

A diesel rig glides past the entrance.

Doesn't turn in.

Keeps going.

Inside the cab—

Ben watches the rest area in his side mirror.

Registers the woman.

Registers the isolation.

Registers the lighting.

Too bright.

Too clean.

He doesn't slow.

He drives another mile.

Then another.

Then—

He pulls over on the shoulder.

Kills the engine.

Waits.

EXT. REST AREA — NIGHT

Lena checks the vending machine.

Coins clatter.

Too loud.

She hates that.

She sits again.

A car passes.

Nothing happens.

Minutes stretch.

Her breathing slows.

Then—

Headlights sweep the lot.

A truck rolls in.

Not Ben's.

False alarm.

LENA
(into mic, whisper)
Nothing yet.

MARA (V.O.)
He's not impulsive. He's measuring.

EXT. SHOULDER OF INTERSTATE - NIGHT

Ben stares forward.

He notices something new now.

A second woman near the bathrooms—older. Watching the lot instead of her phone.

Security posture.

Not casual.

Ben's jaw tightens.

That's new.

He reaches up.

Turns the visor photo face down again.

Decision made.

He starts the engine.

EXT. ABANDONED TRUCK STOP - NIGHT

Ten miles up the road.

Lights dead. Windows boarded. A ghost of a place.

A lone FIGURE walks across the lot—REAL, not law enforcement.

A teenage runaway.

Cold. Lost. Terrified.

Ben's rig rolls in silently.

No neon.

No witnesses.

Ben parks.

Steps out.

His smile is smaller now.

Sharper.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara's phone rings.

She answers—

Her face drains of color.

MARA
Which stop?

She listens.

Closes her eyes.

MARA (CONT'D)
That wasn't ours.

She slams the accelerator.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

The teenage girl sits stiffly on the passenger seat.

Hands clenched.

Ben drives.

Silence thick.

This time—

He doesn't ask questions.

That's the change.

The girl speaks first.

GIRL
You're not gonna hurt me, right?

Ben answers too fast.

BEN
No.

A lie with no warmth.

The girl senses it.

Her breathing quickens.

Ben notices.

Adjusts.

Too late.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT

RED AND BLUE LIGHTS EXPLODE behind the rig.

Ben stiffens.

For the first time-

Panic flickers.

He signals.

Pulls over.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Ben's hands stay on the wheel.

Perfect.

Controlled.

The girl looks back-hope surging.

GIRL
Police?

Ben doesn't answer.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT

Mara's car skids in behind the rig.

She steps out-weapon low, eyes locked.

A STATE TROOPER approaches from the opposite side.

TROOPER
Sir, step out of the vehicle.

Ben complies.

Slow.

Measured.

He looks harmless.

He always does.

EXT. INTERSTATE - CONTINUOUS

Mara watches Ben's face.

Not his hands.

His eyes.

They flick—just once—toward the trailer latch.

That's it.

MARA
(sharp)
Open the trailer.

Ben freezes.

Just a beat too long.

The trooper reaches for his weapon.

Ben smiles.

BEN
Ma'am, I think you're making a
mistake.

Mara steps closer.

Voice low.

Dead certain.

MARA
No.

You did.

The trailer door swings open-

EMPTY.

Clean.

No compartment.

No evidence.

Nothing.

Silence crashes down.

The trooper looks confused.

The girl looks terrified.

Ben exhales-relief blooming.

BEN

Told you.

Mara doesn't move.

Doesn't blink.

She steps inside the trailer.

Runs her hand along the wall.

Stops.

Presses.

A hollow THUD.

Her eyes lift.

Ben's smile dies.

Ben lunges.

The trooper SHOUTS.

The girl SCREAMS.

Mara dives-

A hidden panel BURSTS open.

Darkness inside.

Restraints.

Proof.

Ben breaks free—

Runs.

Headlights BLAST.

A TRUCK HORN SCREAMS.

Ben disappears into the dark shoulder—

Gone.

EXT. INTERSTATE — DAWN

Sunrise bleeds over the horizon.

The girl sits wrapped in a blanket.

Safe.

Alive.

Mara watches the empty road.

Ben escaped.

But—

The game has changed.

She turns to her team.

MARA
He won't hide now.

She looks east.

MARA (CONT'D)
He'll run.

And that's when predators get sloppy.

INT. TRUCK CAB — DAY

Ben drives into sunrise.

Sweat on his brow.

No music.

No smile.

He grips the wheel harder than before.

For the first time—

He looks afraid.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. INTERSTATE — DAY

A sun-bleached stretch of highway unfurls across state lines.

SEMIS thunder past like migrating animals.

AERIALS sweep low, fast, kinetic.

SUPER: 48 HOURS LATER

INT. STATE FUSION CENTER — DAY

Maps cover the walls. Red strings. Pins. Screens scrolling DOT data.

Mara stands at the center—commanding, razor-focused.

MARA

He won't stop moving. He can't.

He lives in motion.

She taps a map.

MARA (CONT'D)

We don't chase him.

We predict him.

An ANALYST pulls up live weigh-station feeds.

ANALYST

He's avoiding major hubs. Skipping predictable stops. Running old highways.

Mara nods.

MARA
He's scared.

That's new.

EXT. HIGHWAY WEIGH STATION — DUSK
A long line of rigs creeps forward.
Lights flash. Gates lift and fall.
Ben's rig joins the queue.
Cab tight. Jaw clenched.
He checks mirrors constantly now.

INT. BEN'S CAB — CONTINUOUS
CB chatter crackles.

TRUCKER (V.O.)
—heads up, boys. DOT's being real
friendly today—

Ben turns the CB off.
Silence.
Ahead, a DOT OFFICER motions trucks through.
Ben inches forward.
A K-9 UNIT paces nearby.
Ben's breathing slows. He schools it.
Professional.
The officer leans into his window.

DOT OFFICER
Logbook.

Ben hands it over.
Steady hands.
The officer flips pages.
Pauses.

Looks up.

DOT OFFICER (CONT'D)
You skipped three rest stops.

Ben shrugs.

BEN
Trying to make time.

The K-9 SNAPS to attention.

Ben's eyes flick—just once.

Mara's voice cuts in—

INTERCUT —
INT. MOBILE COMMAND VAN — DUSK

Mara watches the weigh station feed.

MARA
That's him.

EXT. WEIGH STATION — DUSK

The K-9 pulls toward the trailer.

The handler tightens the leash.

HANDLER
Easy—

Ben smiles. Forces it.

Then—

A LOUD CRASH.

A truck behind DROPS AIR-suspension hissing violently.

Chaos ripples.

Ben doesn't wait.

He SLAMS the accelerator.

BLASTS through the gate.

WOOD AND METAL EXPLODE.

Sirens erupt.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DUSK

Ben's rig barrels onto open road.

State troopers surge behind him.

Helicopter rotors WHOMP overhead.

Traffic scatters.

Ben weaves the behemoth with terrifying precision.

He cuts across lanes—uses his size like a weapon.

A patrol car clips a guardrail—SPINS OUT.

Fireworks of sparks.

INT. MARA'S CAR - DUSK

Mara races along a frontage road, matching speed.

Eyes locked on the rig through gaps in traffic.

MARA
(into radio)
He's heading for the canyon.

If he hits the downgrade, we lose him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - NIGHT

The highway narrows.

Sheer drops. No shoulder.

Wind howls.

Ben downshifts—engine ROARS.

Brake lights glow red-hot.

A trooper tries to pass—Ben swerves, blocks.

A HELICOPTER dips too low—

WHAM!

Rotor wash sends a road sign tearing loose.

It SLAMS onto the pavement.

Cars swerve.

One flips.

The pursuit fractures.

Ben vanishes into the darkness of the pass.

EXT. DESERT INTERCHANGE - NIGHT

A lonely interchange lit by sodium lamps.

A SINGLE RIG idles beneath the overpass-hazards blinking.

Mara stands nearby with troopers.

MARA
He needs fuel.

He needs food.

He needs a place where people disappear.

She looks at the rig.

MARA (CONT'D)
So we make one.

EXT. INTERCHANGE - NIGHT

Ben approaches slowly.

Sees the idling rig.

A stranded driver.

Too perfect.

He slows.

Circles.

Suspicion wars with necessity.

He pulls in.

Stops ten yards back.

Engine idling.

He doesn't get out.

He watches.

A FIGURE approaches—hood up.

Ben cracks the window.

BEN

You okay?

The figure lifts her head—

Mara.

Ben's eyes widen.

For the first time, fully exposed.

Sirens BLAST from every direction.

Lights flood the underpass.

Ben guns it—

Ben's rig SMASHES through concrete barriers.

Troopers dive clear.

The trailer CLIPS a support column—

The overpass GROANS.

Concrete rains down.

Ben punches through, sparks flying, barely clearing the collapse behind him.

The road caves in—CUTTING OFF PURSUIT.

Silence.

Dust settles.

Ben is gone.

Again.

EXT. DESERT ROAD — DAWN

Mara stands at the edge of the collapse.

Sun rising.

She's furious—but smiling now.

Not defeat.

Understanding.

MARA
He's not hunting anymore.

She turns to her team.

MARA (CONT'D)
He's running for somewhere he feels
safe.

She looks at the map.

A long, forgotten stretch of road circled.

MARA (CONT'D)
And monsters only feel safe in one
place.

INT. BEN'S CAB — DAWN

Ben drives alone through empty desert.

Hands shaking now.

He wipes sweat from his brow.

Ahead—

A faded sign:

WELCOME TO —

The rest is torn away.

Ben exhales.

Almost relieved.

He doesn't see the unmarked car crest the hill behind him.

Mara's headlights flare.

The hunt tightens.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT

Ben's rig cuts through darkness like a blade.

No hesitation now.

No circling.

He takes exits without slowing.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Ben drives harder than before.

No music.

No CB chatter.

He reaches into the visor, pulls the photo out.

Stares at it.

Then TEARS IT IN HALF.

Lets the pieces fall to the floor.

This is not fear anymore.

This is resolve.

- A TRUCK STOP BATHROOM - a GIRL washes her hands, glances up at the mirror. A shadow passes behind her.

CUT AWAY BEFORE
CONTACT.

- A NIGHTCLUB PARKING LOT - bass thumps inside. A GIRL argues on her phone. Ben appears beside her car, holding jumper cables.

CUT TO BLACK.

- A DESERT ON-RAMP - headlights slow for a hitchhiker. Passenger door opens.

SMASH CUT.

— A MOTEL HALLWAY — flickering lights. A room door closes. The DO NOT DISTURB sign swings gently.

HARD CUT TO SILENCE.

INT. STATE FUSION CENTER — NIGHT

Chaos.

Phones ringing. Maps updated in real time.

Faces on screens multiply.

Runaways. Sex workers. Transients.

Too many too fast.

Mara stands frozen at the wall.

This is her worst fear.

ANALYST

He's accelerating.

No cooling-off period. No pattern breaks.

Mara exhales, steadyng herself.

MARA

He's not hiding anymore.

She points to the map.

MARA (CONT'D)

He's punishing us.

EXT. TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

Ben stands with a YOUNG WOMAN near his rig.

This time—

He doesn't smile.

He doesn't listen.

He watches the lot.

Impatient.

YOUNG WOMAN
You okay?

Ben snaps back into himself.

BEN
Yeah. Sorry. Long night.

He opens the passenger door.

Doesn't offer space.

Doesn't ask permission.

She hesitates.

For the first time—

Someone senses it.

She steps back.

Ben's jaw tightens.

A flicker of rage leaks through.

Just a flicker.

A TRUCK HORN BLARES nearby.

The girl flinches.

Ben recovers.

Steps back.

Lets her go.

But the restraint costs him now.

INT. NEWSROOM — DAY

A REPORTER speaks directly to camera.

REPORTER
Authorities confirm three more
missing women across two states—

TV screens everywhere echo the story.

Fear spreads.

Truck stops empty earlier.

Nightclubs close sooner.

Ben sees it all-

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben watches the broadcast on a small dashboard screen.

His face reflected in the glass.

Not pride.

Satisfaction.

BEN (V.O.)
(quiet, almost tender)
You see me now.

He turns the TV off.

Darkness returns.

INT. COMMAND VAN – NIGHT

Mara stares at the map.

Red pins everywhere.

She slams her hand down.

MARA
We stop reacting.

She turns to her team.

MARA (CONT'D)
We flood his world.

Every stop. Every ramp. Every girl he targets–

we put eyes there.

A beat.

MARA (CONT'D)
And we use bait he can't resist.

EXT. MAJOR TRUCK STOP – NIGHT

Crowded. Cameras everywhere.

Ben pulls in anyway.

That's the signal.

He parks close to the entrance.

Visible.

Daring.

He steps out—

And helps a WOMAN load groceries into her car.

People watch.

Phones out.

Ben smiles again.

But it's thinner now.

Forced.

He looks up—

Locks eyes with a SECURITY CAMERA.

Doesn't look away.

For the first time—

He wants to be seen.

INT. FUSION CENTER — NIGHT

Live feed freezes on Ben's face.

Clean-cut. Calm.

Mara steps closer.

This is the clearest image yet.

MARA

That's him.

Silence.

MARA (CONT'D)

And he knows we're watching.

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben drives.

Faster.

Reckless.

He passes a sign:

WELCOME TO –

This time, the name is intact.

A place from his past.

He grips the wheel.

Smiles.

Not boyish.

Predatory.

INT. MARA'S CAR – NIGHT

Mara races toward the same sign.

MARA (V.O.)
He's not just killing now.

She accelerates.

MARA (V.O.)
He's making a statement.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

The road hums.

Ben grips the wheel too tight.

A semi passes in the opposite direction–

Its headlights FLARE–

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM – NIGHT (1980S)

A TELEVISION glows.

A YOUNG BEN (10) sits cross-legged on the carpet.

Too still for a child.

Behind him—his MOTHER, late 30s, exhausted, folded inward on the couch.

The front door SLAMS.

A MAN'S VOICE off-screen. Drunk. Loud. Mean.

Ben doesn't turn.

He turns the TV volume up instead.

The sound of SHOUTING bleeds through anyway.

A GLASS SHATTERS.

Ben's jaw tightens.

He reaches out—

Turns the volume higher.

SMASH CUT BACK
TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben blinks.

The road is still there.

He exhales through his nose.

Keeps driving.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY – DAY

Teenage Ben, clean-cut, quiet, locker door open.

A GIRL cries nearby—friends crowding around her.

A TEACHER storms down the hall.

TEACHER
Who took it?

No one answers.

Ben steps forward.

Calm.

BEN (16)
I think she dropped it in the
parking lot.

Everyone turns.

The girl looks at him—hope blooming.

The teacher nods. Moves on.

The crisis ends.

The girl mouths thank you to Ben.

Ben smiles.

It's the first time he feels it—

Power.

Not from force.

From belief.

SMASH CUT BACK
TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben flexes his fingers.

The smile almost comes back.

Almost.

EXT. ROADSIDE — NIGHT (YEARS LATER)

A broken-down car.

Hazards blinking.

A YOUNG WOMAN stands beside it, crying, phone dead.

Ben—early 20s now—pulls over.

Same kindness. Same calm.

He helps her.

Calls a tow.

Waits with her.

Listens.

She clutches his arm in gratitude.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't know what I would've done
without you.

Ben absorbs it.

Stores it.

Files it away.

This is when the idea forms—

Not harm.

Not yet.

The idea that he is the answer.

SMASH CUT BACK
TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben's breathing changes.

Shallower now.

He wipes sweat from his temple.

The memories aren't comforting anymore.

They're demanding.

INT. TRUCK STOP — NIGHT (YEARS AGO)

A different truck.

A different Ben.

A GIRL younger than she should be sits at the counter.

Crying quietly.

No one notices.

Ben watches.

Waits.

Approaches.

Says the right thing.

She follows him outside.

This time—

We DON'T SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

We only hear:

The truck door closing.

The engine starting.

And Ben's face—

Not angry.

Relieved.

Like something finally clicked into place.

SMASH CUT BACK
TO:

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT — PRESENT

Ben's eyes are glassy now.

The line between past and present thinning.

He whispers—barely audible.

BEN
I helped you.

A beat.

His jaw tightens.

BEN (CONT'D)
I always helped.

INT. COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

Mara studies Ben's profile photos.

Younger ones now.

Employment records.

Accident reports.

She stops on one file.

MARA
(reading)
"Responded to roadside incident. No charges."

She looks up.

MARA (CONT'D)
He didn't start as a monster.

No one argues.

That's worse.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Ben passes a sign:

CHILDREN AT PLAY

He flinches.

For the first time-

Pain crosses his face.

Not guilt.

Loss.

He reaches for the torn photo on the floor.

The dog.

The smile.

A life that might've been.

He closes his eyes—

Then pushes the memory away.

Hard.

Violent.

BEN
(low)
They needed me.

The truck accelerates.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara drives hard.

Her radio crackles with updates.

She doesn't respond.

She's figured it out now.

MARA (V.O.)
You didn't become this.

You decided.

She tightens her grip on the wheel.

MARA (V.O.)
And decisions can be undone.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY — NIGHT

Ben's rig crests a hill.

Ahead—

A familiar truck stop.

Older.

Smaller.

Personal.

The one from his first memory.

Ben slows.

Almost reverent.

He signals.

Turns in.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. OLD TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

The place is half-dead.

One working light. One open bathroom. One vending machine
humming like it's keeping a secret.

Ben's rig idles.

He sits for a long beat before getting out.

This place matters to him.

That makes it dangerous.

INT. TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

A GIRL (17), EMMA, sits on the floor near the vending
machine.

Not crying.

Not panicked.

Alert. Guarded. Watching.

She clocks Ben immediately.

Ben clocks her too.

And something feels... off.

Ben approaches slowly.

No smile yet.

BEN
You alright?

Emma doesn't answer right away.

She looks him up and down.

EMMA
Depends who's asking.

Ben pauses.

That never happens.

He recalibrates.

BEN
Just didn't seem like a great night
to be stranded.

Emma stands.

Keeps distance.

EMMA
Funny. That's what my dad used to
say.

That lands harder than Ben expects.

A micro-flinch.

Emma notices.

Files it away.

They sit at opposite ends of a picnic table outside.

Wind howls across the empty lot.

BEN
You running from something?

Emma shrugs.

EMMA
Everyone is.

Then—

She looks at him directly.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What are you running from?

Ben laughs softly.

Too softly.

BEN
That's not how this works.

Emma tilts her head.

EMMA

Why not?

Silence stretches.

This is new.

She's not vulnerable.

She's curious.

And she's watching him the way he watches others.

Ben opens his truck door.

Interior light spills out.

Familiar. Warm.

BEN

I'm headed east.

I can get you somewhere safer than this.

Emma steps closer.

Peers inside.

Then steps back.

EMMA

You always park with the trailer
angled toward the exit?

Ben stiffens.

Barely.

BEN

Force of habit.

Emma nods.

EMMA

Yeah.

My uncle was a trucker. Same habit.

She smiles.

Not trusting.

Testing.

EMMA (CONT'D)
He said guys who do that don't like
surprises.

Ben's jaw tightens.

Emma suddenly raises her voice—just a little.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Hey—anyone in there?

Her voice ECHOES across the lot.

Ben grabs her wrist—

STOPS HIMSELF.

That restraint again.

But this time it costs him.

A TRUCK passes on the highway.

Headlights wash over them.

Exposure.

Ben releases her.

BEN
You should go inside.

Emma doesn't move.

EMMA
You're not going to hurt me.

Not a question.

A statement.

Ben looks at her.

Really looks.

For the first time—

He's unsure.

Emma steps closer to him.

Too close.

Invading his space.

EMMA (CONT'D)
You help girls, right?

Ben nods automatically.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Then help me.

She pulls out her phone.

Screen cracked.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Call my sister.

She hands it to him.

This is the moment.

If he takes the phone-

* He breaks the ritual.

* He breaks the fantasy.

* He saves her.

If he doesn't-

* She screams.

* He's exposed.

* The road ends faster.

Ben stares at the phone.

His hand shakes.

Flashbacks bleed in-

The boy on the carpet.

The girl saying thank you.

The first truck door closing.

This time-

He doesn't want to choose.

HEADLIGHTS SWEEP THE LOT.

An UNMARKED CAR slows.

Ben looks up—

MARA'S SILHOUETTE behind the windshield.

She doesn't get out.

Doesn't rush.

She just watches.

Ben looks back at Emma.

She's watching him too.

Two mirrors.

One truth.

Ben hands the phone back.

Slowly.

Carefully.

BEN
Go inside.

Emma doesn't smile.

She nods once.

EMMA
You should too.

She turns and walks away.

Alive.

Unbroken.

Unclaimed.

Ben stands alone in the open lot.

For the first time—

Empty-handed.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara speaks quietly into her recorder.

MARA
He aborted.

She watches Ben climb back into his rig.

Drive away.

MARA (CONT'D)
Which means the control is
slipping.

She starts the engine.

MARA (CONT'D)
And when control slips—
predators make mistakes.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben drives.

Faster than he should.

Angrier than before.

He slams his fist into the dashboard.

Once.

Hard.

Not rage.

Grief.

BEN
You ruined it.

But he doesn't know who he means.

Emma.

Mara.

Or himself.

EXT. INTERSTATE — NIGHT

Ben's rig thunders down the highway.

Too fast.

Too loud.

Other truckers back off instinctively.

Something is off.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben's knuckles are white on the wheel.

His breathing is uneven now.

The road noise starts to morph—

For a split second, it sounds like a GIRL LAUGHING.

Ben SLAMS the radio on.

Static.

Music.

He turns it off again.

Silence is worse.

INT. POLICE STATION — NIGHT

Emma sits across from Mara.

Blanket around her shoulders. Hot chocolate untouched.

Not traumatized.

Angry.

EMMA

He wasn't stupid.

Mara studies her.

MARA

No. He's careful.

Emma shakes her head.

EMMA
Not careful.

Controlled.

That word lands.

EMMA (CONT'D)
And tonight... he lost it.

Mara leans in.

MARA
What changed?

Emma doesn't hesitate.

EMMA
I didn't need him.

Silence.

Mara writes that down.

That's the key.

EXT. MEGA TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

Bright. Loud. Busy.

Families. Truckers. Security guards.

The worst possible place.

Ben pulls in anyway.

No caution.

No patience.

He parks near the entrance.

Bold.

Reckless.

INT. TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

Ben moves through the crowd.

This time, he doesn't wait to be invited.

He spots TIFFANY (20s)—too drunk, laughing too loud, separated from her friends.

Ben inserts himself effortlessly.

BEN
You alright?

Too fast.

Too direct.

Tiffany looks him over.

TIFFANY
I'm fine.

She turns away.

That should be the end.

Ben follows one step too many.

BEN
I just meant—

A SECURITY GUARD clocks the interaction.

Ben notices.

Adjusts.

Backs off.

But the damage is done.

Eyes are on him now.

INT. COMMAND CENTER — NIGHT

A live feed freezes.

Ben mid-step. Mid-smile.

Not threatening.

But wrong.

Mara steps closer.

Enhances the image.

Zooms on his face.

There it is—

Not kindness.

Expectation.

MARA
He's stopped asking.

EXT. SIDE ROAD — NIGHT

Hours later.

Ben pulls over where the highway dips into darkness.

A lone FIGURE stands by a broken-down car.

Older than his usual targets.

More confident.

Ben stops anyway.

The woman approaches.

WOMAN
You a tow?

Ben shakes his head.

BEN
No. But I can help.

She studies him.

Sees something flicker.

She steps back.

WOMAN
Actually—I'm good.

She reaches for her phone.

Ben grabs her arm.

This time—

He doesn't stop himself.

HEADLIGHTS BLAST across them.

A TRUCK ROARS past, horn blaring.

The woman SCREAMS.

Ben releases her instantly.

Steps back.

Hands up.

The woman RUNS.

Gone.

Ben stands shaking in the dark.

That was the line.

And he crossed it.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara listens to a 911 call playback.

The woman's voice—panicked but alive.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Caller reports attempted assault by
a semi driver—

Mara stops the audio.

MARA
That's it.

She looks at the map.

Pins cluster now.

Too tight.

Too frequent.

MARA (CONT'D)
He's collapsing inward.

She circles one last location.

MARA (CONT'D)
And he's going to make a mistake
where it all started.

EXT. ORIGINAL TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

The same one.

The birthplace of the delusion.

Closed now.

Boarded up.

Condemned.

Ben pulls in anyway.

He shuts off the engine.

Sits in the dark.

Breathing hard.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben rubs his face.

He looks older now.

Worn.

The boyish innocence gone.

He whispers—

BEN
I did everything right.

The words don't convince him anymore.

Thunder ROLLS.

Rain starts to fall-hard.

Lightning flashes, illuminating the abandoned stop.

Ben looks out.

Sees—

A YOUNG WOMAN standing under the awning.

Impossible.

Or is it?

Ben opens the door.

Steps out.

Rain soaking him instantly.

He walks toward her.

Each step heavier than the last.

EXT. HIGHWAY — NIGHT

Mara's car speeds through rain.

Wipers barely keeping up.

She sees the old sign ahead.

The same place.

Her stomach drops.

MARA

No no no—

She floors it.

EXT. ABANDONED TRUCK STOP — NIGHT

Ben approaches the woman.

Lightning reveals her face—

Not a victim.

A DECOY.

A trained one.

She meets his eyes.

Unflinching.

Ben freezes.

For the first time—

He knows.

He's been led.

Sirens wail in the distance.

Faint.

Getting closer.

Ben smiles.

Not charming.

Defiant.

BEN
You're late.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. EMPTY INDUSTRIAL LOT - NIGHT

A forgotten stretch of concrete on the edge of nowhere.

Chain-link fences. Dead streetlights. Wind pushing trash in circles.

Ben's RIG sits alone.

Engine off.

No witnesses.

No sound but the wind.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Total darkness.

Then-

A faint CLINK of metal.

A WOMAN (early 20s) - SARAH - is CHAINED to a steel anchor point in the trailer floor.

Not decorative.

Not theatrical.

Functional.

Her wrists are raw. Her breathing shallow and panicked.

She pulls again-

The chain HOLDS.

She sobs.

SARAH

Please... please... I won't say
anything. I swear. I swear.

Her voice echoes unnaturally in the empty container.

No answer.

That's worse.

INT. TRUCK CAB – SAME TIME

Ben sits in the driver's seat.

Hands shaking violently now.

He presses his palms to his thighs, trying to still them.

They won't stop.

He hears her through the thin metal wall.

Muffled.

Human.

Real.

He covers his ears.

It doesn't help.

BEN

(shouting)

Stop.

She can't hear him.

Or maybe—

He's talking to himself.

INT. TRAILER – NIGHT

The door CREAKS open.

Light spills in.

Sarah squints, gasps.

Ben steps inside.

No smile.

No calm.

Just a man vibrating with fractured thought.

He doesn't rush her.

He crouches.

Eye level.

BEN

I tried to help you.

Sarah shakes violently.

SARAH

I'll do anything. Please. I'll do anything.

That word anything snaps something in him.

BEN

You already did.

He stands abruptly.

Paces.

Talking now-fast, unfiltered.

BEN (CONT'D)

You don't listen. None of you do.

I listen. I always listen.

Sarah SCREAMS.

Ben turns-

Not angry.

Overstimulated.

BEN (CONT'D)

Stop-stop-
(clutching his head)
I can't hear-

He SLAMS the trailer wall with his fist.

The sound BOOMS.

Sarah curls into herself.

Chains rattle.

We NEVER see what he does.

We hear:

- The chain tightening
- Sarah's sobs turning hoarse
- Ben breathing too close

- A METAL DOOR SLAMMING SHUT

Then—

Silence.

Absolute.

Crushing.

INT. TRAILER – LATER

The door opens again.

Ben stands in the doorway.

Sarah is alive.

Barely.

Slumped.

Broken.

Still breathing.

Ben stares at her.

This isn't satisfaction.

It's revulsion.

At her?

No.

At himself.

He steps back.

Closes the door.

Locks it.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben sits shaking.

He laughs suddenly.

High. Broken.

BEN
You made me do this.

He looks at his hands.

They're smeared—not with gore—but with dirt, rust, oil.

Enough.

He scrubs them with bottled water.

Over and over.

They never feel clean.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara drives.

Then—she brakes suddenly.

Something hits her.

Not a call.

Not intel.

Instinct.

She grips the wheel.

MARA
(low, horrified)
He crossed the line.

She radios in.

MARA (CONT'D)
All units—

We're not dealing with containment anymore.

She swallows hard.

MARA (CONT'D)
We're dealing with a man who's lost
the story he tells himself.

INT. TRAILER — NIGHT

Sarah whispers into the darkness.

Barely audible.

SARAH
Someone... please...

A truck horn BLARES somewhere far away.

Hope flickers.

Ben hears it too.

His face twists.

This is no longer control.

This is panic.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL LOT — NIGHT

Ben's rig idles.

Exhaust billowing.

He's about to leave.

Run.

Again.

But this time—

The trailer ROCKS.

Just once.

Subtle.

But real.

Ben freezes.

Turns slowly.

Stares at the trailer.

For the first time—

He looks afraid of what he's created.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL LOT — NIGHT

Ben's rig rolls out.

Slow.

Controlled.

But he keeps checking the mirrors now.

Again.

Again.

Inside the trailer—

A faint METALLIC KNOCK.

Not loud.

Not constant.

Just enough.

Ben's breath catches.

He turns the radio up.

Static.

The knocking comes again.

Ben SLAMS the wheel.

BEN

Stop.

The knocking doesn't stop.

INT. MARA'S CAR — NIGHT

Mara's radio crackles.

Urgent.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
We've got a partial 911 call.

Female. Weak. Says she's in a trailer. Industrial area near—
Mara is already moving.

Lights on.

Siren screaming.

MARA
That's him.

For the first time, she doesn't hedge.

MONTAGE — THE NET TIGHTENS

- STATE TROOPERS rolling out across multiple counties
- HIGHWAY CAMS auto-flagging Ben's rig
- DOT DATABASES lighting up with his route history
- NEWS ALERTS breaking: "Authorities Seek Long-Haul Truck in Multi-State Investigation"

Ben's anonymity—his greatest weapon—is evaporating.

INT. TRUCK CAB — NIGHT

Ben's phone BUZZES.

Unknown number.

He ignores it.

Buzzes again.

He answers without thinking.

BEN
What?

Silence.

Then—

Sarah's voice.

Weak. Distorted. Alive.

SARAH (V.O.)
Please... don't...

Ben throws the phone across the cab.

It SHATTERS.

He's breathing hard now.

Talking to no one.

BEN
You don't exist.

You don't exist.

The trailer KNOCKS AGAIN.

Harder this time.

Ben SCREAMS.

Ben swerves off the highway.

Misses an exit.

Corrects too late.

The rig fishtails—

Barely recovers.

He pulls onto a frontage road.

Ahead:

A WEIGH STATION / BORDER CHECKPOINT /
TUNNEL ENTRANCE
(flexible depending on
where you want the final
geography)
Lights.

Cameras.

Authority.

Ben slows.

If he keeps going:

* He's exposed.

* He's finished.

If he turns around:

* He loses time.

* They gain ground.

Ben looks in the mirror.

For the first time, he doesn't see a helper.

He sees a cornered animal.

INT. COMMAND CHANNEL - NIGHT

Mara takes control of the airwaves.

Overrides protocol.

MARA
(to all units)
He's escalating because he's
unraveling.

He will try to erase the evidence—the victim.

She pauses.

Chooses her words carefully.

MARA (CONT'D)
We don't rush him.

We don't spook him.

We make him believe there's still a way out.

Her team looks at her.

MARA (CONT'D)
Because that's when he makes his
last mistake.

EXT. HIGHWAY AHEAD — NIGHT

Electronic highway signs flicker.

Then update:

DETOUR — ACCIDENT AHEAD — ALL TRUCKS EXIT

Ben sees it.

Hope flashes.

A way around the checkpoint.

He takes the exit.

Doesn't know—

It's Mara's detour.

EXT. ABANDONED TRANSPORT HUB / CLOSED WEIGH STATION — NIGHT

Floodlights SNAP ON as Ben rolls in.

Too bright.

Too open.

Too late.

Ben slams the brakes.

The trailer KNOCKS—LOUDER NOW.

Sirens wail in the distance.

Ben sits frozen.

Sweat pouring.

Hands trembling.

He whispers—

BEN
I helped you.

The words don't work anymore.

Outside—

Unmarked vehicles take positions.

Snipers set.

Mara steps out of her car.

Calm.

Centered.

She looks at the trailer.

Then at the cab.

She doesn't draw her weapon.

She raises a bullhorn.

MARA

Ben.

I know you can hear me.

Ben shuts his eyes.

MARA (CONT'D)
You don't have to finish this the
way you started it.

A beat.

Inside the trailer-

Sarah finds her voice again.

Faint.

But real.

Ben opens his eyes.

They're full of tears now.

Not remorse.

Loss.

He grips the door handle.

Shaking.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. ABANDONED TRANSPORT HUB – NIGHT

Floodlights bleach the world white.

Ben's rig sits boxed in—law enforcement vehicles forming a perfect, merciless ring. Engines idle. Weapons lowered but ready.

Mara stands alone in front of the cab.

Bullhorn down.

No theatrics.

Just truth.

MARA

You don't get to decide who needs
you anymore.

Ben peers through the windshield.

He looks small now.

A man crushed by the weight of the story he told himself for years.

INT. TRAILER – NIGHT

Sarah lies chained, trembling—but alive.

She finds the strength to shout.

SARAH

I'm here.

The words are weak.

But they land like thunder.

Outside—every officer stiffens.

Inside the cab—Ben closes his eyes.

That voice ruins everything.

INT. TRUCK CAB – NIGHT

Ben's breathing becomes ragged.

He whispers to himself.

BEN
I helped you.

I helped you.

But the words don't stick.

They slide off reality.

He looks at his hands.

They are empty.

Mara steps closer to the cab.

No bullhorn.

Just her voice—carried by the night.

MARA
You listened so you could take.

That's not helping.

A beat.

MARA (CONT'D)
Helping is opening the door.

Ben looks past her—at the floodlights, the cameras, the truth.

For the first time, he understands:

There is no version of this where he escapes the mirror.

Ben opens the cab door.

Slowly.

Carefully.

He steps down.

Hands visible.

The ring tightens—but no one fires.

Ben turns.

Looks at the trailer.

At what he tried to erase.

He reaches for the keys.

They fall from his shaking fingers.

CLATTER on concrete.

Mara nods to a tactical unit.

They approach the trailer.

Cut the lock.

The door CREAKS open.

Light floods in.

Sarah shields her eyes.

Alive.

Real.

The world exhales.

Medics rush in.

They don't look at Ben.

He doesn't deserve their attention.

Ben drops to his knees.

Not in surrender.

In collapse.

Cuffs click shut.

Final.

Unavoidable.

No monologue.

No last words.

Just a man finally smaller than the road he hid on.

EXT. TRANSPORT HUB — MORNING

Sunrise washes the asphalt clean.

Sarah is loaded into an ambulance.

Mara watches as it drives away.

She doesn't smile.

But she breathes.

EXT. INTERSTATE — MORNING

Traffic resumes.

Ordinary people going ordinary places.

The highway doesn't care what happened here.

It never did.

Mara stands on an overpass, looking down.

The road keeps moving.

But one truck is gone.

FINAL IMAGE
A LONG SHOT of the interstate
stretching to the horizon.

Empty lanes.

Endless distance.

Freedom reclaimed from a man who mistook it for permission.

FADE OUT.

THE END.