

a taste of blue

by

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SCREENWRITER'S NOTE: *Action lines in italics indicate that we're seeing the world through Jo's 'super-vision', similar to augmented reality.*

FADE IN:

INT. ERIN'S CAR - MORNING

Bruised-coloured CLOUDS dot the horizon, framed by a car window. **JO** (22), in the passenger seat of an old brown sedan wears a pale blue t-shirt and faded jeans. She leans against the glass, her reflection: pale, thoughtful.

ERIN (O.S.)  
Seatbelt.

Jo fights with the seatbelt, wins.

Jo's sister, **ERIN** (27), tense, frazzled, in a red turtle-neck and baggy grey sweatpants grips the steering wheel. If Jo's a window, Erin's a door: dark, hard, closed.

Outside, Pittsburgh's Mount Oliver neighbourhood, winding streets with a mix of homes built from the late 1800s to early 1900s. Most are encased in vinyl or aluminium-siding.

Erin pauses at a stop sign. Two kids run through a sprinkler. Jo watches them. *Jo's super vision: a pink aura surrounds the kids, trailing behind them, like a smear of pink lipstick on a window that evaporates quickly.*

ERIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I'm taking more shifts.  
(pause)  
I've made a chores roster, so  
everyone knows what needs to be done.

Erin drives, Jo watches the kids until they're out of sight, then her attention, back to the clouds.

JO  
(to herself)  
Cumulonimbus.

ERIN  
You'll need to help more around the  
house, looking after Lily.

Jo twists a strand of hair around her finger, wraps until the tip turns white, releases.

JO  
I'm painting a portrait of Dad. Think  
he'll be back soon?

ERIN  
Don't know, the date keeps changing.

EXT. HOME ZONE PARKING LOT

Erin parks near entrance to HOME ZONE, a single-story store.

ERIN (O.S.)  
I want to get Lily new bed sheets.  
You know what she likes.

INT. ERIN'S CAR

Erin puts the keys in her purse, opens the car door.

JO  
You could call me when you're inside,  
describe what you see and I-

Erin pauses, half-way out, sits back, looks at Jo.

ERIN  
I need your help for five minutes.

JO  
You remember what happened last time-

ERIN  
You've not had an episode in months-

Jo finally looks at Erin. *Waves of energy pulse off Erin, growing increasingly red and spiky.*

ERIN (CONT'D)  
*Just follow me, keep your eyes down.  
You pick something, we leave.*

*The red spikes lunge dangerously close to Jo.*

ERIN (CONT'D)  
*Hey, we'll be in and out in a blink.  
Big Sis Promise.*

*Erin crooks her pinky finger. The angry spikes are gone, replaced by a dusty pink aura with undulating soft curves.*

Jo smiles, links her pinky with Erin's.

INT. STORE - BED LINEN SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Erin holds up few gender-stereotyped designs. Jo shakes her head, points to one with a blue sky and clouds.

INT. STORE - CHECKOUT

Jo sees a bar of SOAP on the floor, picks it up. Returning it to the shelf, she glances at the label: an elegant woman, a bathtub filled with RED rose petals.

THUD. The soap drops to the floor. Jo, like a sleepwalker, shuffles toward the exit.

Erin, trapped in the middle of checking out.

ERIN  
Jo? Jo! Wait! What the hell-

EXT. HOME ZONE PARKING LOT

Jo plods through the lot like a zombie, ignoring noises, people, cars. She heads down a row, towards a MINIVAN.

[Jo's blank out: it's deathly quiet as she walks barefoot down an endless white-tiled hallway.]

INT/EXT. HOME ZONE AND PARKING LOT

Erin, bag in hand, hurries out the exit and--

-- into the PARKING LOT...

She runs along a row, calling for her sister.

ERIN  
Jo?...Jo!

EXT/INT. MINIVAN IN HOME ZONE PARKING LOT

THUNK. The hatchback door of the minivan closes. A **HARRIED MOM** (39) hurries to the driver's side and --

-- into the MINIVAN...

Two kids fight in the backseat. An infant SCREAMS.

HARRIED MOM  
What are you doing back there? Why  
would you- stop pinching your sister!

Harried Mom puts the van in reverse.

HARRIED MOM (CONT'D)  
For the love of God, stop it!

Jo appears in the rear view mirror. Harried Mom doesn't see her, she presses the gas pedal. The van jerks back.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Mom brakes hard, swivels in her seat. Visible through the back window, Erin and Jo. Erin smacks the van again. BAM!

ERIN  
Watch where you're going!

[Jo's blank-out: the sound returns first, an echo of Erin's voice, "-where you're going!" then the grey outline of objects around her, the minivan, Erin, before the colour fills in, and the blank-out ends-]

ERIN

You scared the shit out of me.

Jo looks at the clouds.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Why'd you leave?

JO

I don't remember.

Erin shakes her head, walks toward their car, Jo follows.

ERIN

I thought you were getting better.  
But if the episodes are coming back,  
maybe you should start see-

Jo sighs. They've reached the car.

JO

It was a waste of time, you said so  
yourself. The doctor kept asking what  
I remembered, but there's only so  
many ways I can say 'nothing.'

EXT. ARLINGTON STREET

Erin drives on Arlington Street. On the right, a small CEMETERY. On the left, 2-story Prairie box and Victorian houses, some in better repair than others. The car turns --  
--into a DRIVEWAY of a Victorian house whose blue paint is faded, peeling.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE

Erin parks in front of a 1-car garage.

The back of the house overlooks a small patio and a narrow yard with maple and oak trees. A weathered shed, converted into Jo's studio, sits 30 feet from the house.

Erin goes into the house. Jo heads to the studio.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

SWISH. WHOOSH. The sound of brush-strokes. A slash of indigo blue. Jo holds the brush, music leaks from her headphones.

On the canvas, a portrait of a silver-haired man. Next to the canvas, a family PHOTO: Mother, Father, two girls.

The small studio is cluttered with canvasses, paint, palettes, brushes, murky-coloured jars of water.

The door opens. **LILY** (10), Jo's niece, steps inside. Pale, awkward, her right arm in an air cast.

LILY  
Whatcha painting?

Jo, in her own world, no reply. Lily steps in front of her, gestures to the canvas.

LILY (CONT'D)  
Grandpa Archie?

Jo slips the headphones off, rests them round her neck, looks at Lily. *Lily's aura, a mix of dusty pink and tangerine, swirling round her like vibrating hula hoops.*

JO  
Yes. He'll be out soon.

LILY  
In time for my birthday?

JO  
Not sure.

LILY  
Blue is the BEST 'cause it's the colour of the sky, and fresh air, and Joey Bizzaro's eyes.

Jo smiles, places a blue dot on Lily's nose. Lily giggles.

Erin enters without knocking, massaging her neck.

ERIN  
(to Lily)  
Homework.

LILY  
Aw, I was just-

ERIN  
Now, or you won't have a party!

Jo looks back to the painting as tears well up in Lily's eyes. Lily wipes the dot off her nose, leaves.

ERIN (CONT'D)

I need you to watch Lily tonight.  
Make sure she goes to bed by nine.

Jo nods absently, still looking at the painting.

Erin recognizes the man in the portrait, scratches the DIP at the front of her neck (jugular notch). She picks a dirty sweatshirt off the floor, leaves.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A tidy kitchen from the 1980s. The frilly, ultra-feminine décor seems at odds with its current owners.

**NEIL** (36), Erin's boyfriend stirs sauce on the stove. His apron, decorated with Dachshunds, protects a baggy, long-sleeved t-shirt disguising his muscled arms and chest.

Lily sits at the breakfast bar, sniffles, opens book, reads.

NEIL

Eh, whatsa matter. Is my sauce-a too  
spicy. It make-a you cry?

Lily shakes her head 'no,' a smile emerges. He brings a sauce-laden spoon to her, blowing on it.

NEIL (CONT'D)

What's it need?

She tastes, makes a serious face, taps her finger against her lip, like she's considering multiple possibilities.

LILY

Seasoning. More seasoning.

NEIL

Now-a, why didn't I think-a that?

Lily giggles.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Smells delicious.

Erin enters. Neil nods to the open wine bottle near the stove. Erin smiles, grabs a large wine glass, pours.

The backdoor opens, Jo carries a sketchpad. She sits next to Lily, opens the sketchpad and draws her niece.

LILY

Draw me without the cast, I'm gonna  
take it off for the party.

ERIN  
Lily, we talked about-

LILY  
But my arm needs fresh air and  
sunshine to heal!

JO  
Vitamin D helps with bone-

ERIN,  
(sarcastic)  
Thank you Doctor Jo-

ERIN (CONT'D)  
(to Lily)  
It's better to keep it wrapped up.  
You don't want to re-injure it.

Lily sighs, pretends to read. Jo goes back to drawing.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Jo arranges the remnants of a spaghetti lunch artistically  
on her plate. Also at the kitchen table: Erin, Neil, Lily.

Neil pours Erin a glass of wine, massages her neck.

JO  
(to Erin)  
I need more art supplies.

ERIN  
(eyes closed)  
I'll transfer money tomorrow.

LILY  
Will Grandpa Archie be at my party?

An awkward silence. Jo looks at Lily.

JO  
You know, my favourite birthday party  
was Erin's eleventh. Dad organised a  
little circus in our backyard. When  
we lived in Shadyside.

Lily's eyes widen, Erin scratches her neck.

JO (CONT'D)  
There were clowns and a petting zoo-

LILY  
Can I have a circus?

ERIN  
 (to Lily)  
 Go play outside.

Lily pouts, heads to the backyard. Erin turns toward Jo.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 Don't mention Archie's antics. It's  
 not...we can't afford all that.

Jo, back to moving noodles on her plate.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Lily sings [a pop song by an artist like Ariana Grande].

A LOUD ENGINE interrupts her. She steps on a large stone,  
 peeks over the fence into the neighbour's driveway.

EXT. NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE/DRIVEWAY

A tough-looking black woman (FLORENCE MACKOWSKI "MACK", 52)  
 with short grey hair unloads a moving truck that's parked  
 beside a squat Ranch house clad in beige aluminium siding.

Everything about Mack says practical, no-nonsense. Except  
 for the small dog with tufted ears who weaves between her  
 feet (**GIZMO**, a Chinese crested).

Gizmo looks up, sees Lily, stops, wags tail. Mack nearly  
 trips over him, drops the box she's carrying.

MACK  
 (mild 'burgh dialect)  
 Gizmo! You tryin' to break my neck?

Mack leans down toward the lidless box. Resting on the top,  
 a framed photo of police officers, including a younger Mack.  
 Mack picks it up, a crack runs down the pane of glass,  
 separating Mack from the others.

Lily ducks back behind the fence, starts singing.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Crickets CHIRP. The back of a tall figure, standing in  
 shadow. The lights in the house blink out one by one. The  
 figure waits, the night is quiet, no movement in the house.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

The BEAM of a flashlight jumps along the shelves.

A gloved hand holds the barrel. The figure directs the beam, hovers over a cluster of paint cans, places a gallon tin of blue paint amongst the others, nudging it toward the back.

The beam clicks off.

EXT. ERIN'S GARAGE/BACKYARD - DAY

A hand-painted "**Happy Birthday Lily**" banner strung across the the garage. Inside, Erin and the other parents talk and drink, sheltering from the sun. On the patio, children play musical chairs. Neil blasts MUSIC, nodding to the beat like a DJ. Jo leans against the garage, watches the kids.

EXT. MACK'S BACK PORCH

Mack reads a book, Gizmo sleeps on the floor, his head resting on her feet. The MUSIC next door blasts.

MACK  
Unbelievable.

She stands, Gizmo stands.

MACK (CONT'D)  
(to Gizmo)  
Stay. Stay here.

Mack walks off the porch keeping an eye on Gizmo, who wags his tail hopefully.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Stay.

Mack opens the gate and - ZING - Gizmo runs out.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Shit.

Mack sighs, closes gate, walks down her driveway with Gizmo.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

A boy (**SAM**, 9) sees Mack and Gizmo, beelines for them.

SAM  
You one of the garage-livers?

MACK  
A what now?

Sam points at the garage.

SAM  
The grown-ups who live there.

MACK

No.

Erin spots Mack, makes her way over.

SAM

Cool. You wanna play? It's fun!

MACK

No.

Sam shrugs, runs to join the kids.

ERIN

You must be the new neighbour, Lily saw you moving in.

MACK

Yeah, and I was hoping-

Erin motions Jo over. Jo joins, smiles at Gizmo.

ERIN (CONT'D)

I'm Erin, that's Jo, my sister.

Neil approaches, carrying two bottles of beer.

NEIL

(to Mack)

Hi. Neil.

MACK

Mack and...Gizmo.

Gizmo growls.

NEIL

She must be hungry.

MACK

She's a he, and he's always hungry. I'd appreciate it if you played the music below ear-splitting volume.

NEIL

Sure. Have a beer and I'll get you and Gizmo a burger.

He offers a bottle to Mack, she hesitates. Gizmo barks, dashes toward the kids. Mack takes the beer, resigned.

ARCHIE'S CAR ON ARLINGTON STREET

Drifting through the half-open window of a vintage Chrysler New Yorker, the sounds of Lily's party.

A tall, handsome, silver-haired man (**ARCHIE**, late 50s) in the drivers' seat.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

Erin sets a birthday cake with 11 lit candles on a table.

ADULTS & KIDS  
(singing)  
Happy Birthday dear Lil-y, Happy  
Birthday to you!

Lily wears multi-coloured dragon wings that flap as she bounces with excitement. Erin sets the cake on the table.

ERIN  
Make a wish, lady bug.

Jo stands next to Lily, she closes her eyes, same as Lily, like she's making a wish too. Lily opens her eyes, blows out the candles. The crowd hoots and claps.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY

A small PRESENT taps against Archie's trousered leg as he walks down the driveway, toward the backyard.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

Erin and Jo on the patio, eating cake and talking as the kids run around in the yard.

ERIN  
Lily loved the sheets-

LILY (O.S)  
Grandpa Archie!

Erin's eyes grow wide, she turns in Lily's direction, sees Lily laughing as she rides on Archie's shoulders. Jo drops the plate of cake onto the table, runs to him.

JO  
Dad!

ARCHIE  
Jo-Jo!

Jo hugs him, avoiding Lily's dangling legs, releases from the hug as Erin approaches.

ERIN  
(to Lily)  
Get down, it's not safe.

ARCHIE  
 (mild 'burgh dialect)  
 My little Carin' Erin.

Lily bounces on Archie's shoulders, precariously. Archie laughs, grips her thighs to keep her steady.

ERIN  
 (to Archie)  
 Please, put her down.

JO  
 When'd you get out, Dad?

*A pale pink aura vibrates around Archie, punctuated by a brief flash of green when he answers-*

ARCHIE  
 Yesterday.

ERIN (O.S.)  
 Down!

Jo looks at Erin. *Crimson spikes interspersed with yellow thorns vibrate around Erin.* Jo averts her gaze.

Archie sighs, sets Lily on the ground, musses her hair.

ARCHIE  
 (to Erin)  
 I hear you're a nurse now?

Erin nods, relieved that Lily's on the ground.

ERIN  
 You got out early-

ARCHIE  
 You look good, Erin. You too Jo-Jo.

Jo smiles.

JO  
 I'm an artist. A painter. I've done a portrait of-

HONK! The horn blasts from Archie's car. Irritation, anger on Archie's face, quickly replaced by a charming smile.

ARCHIE  
 I'd love to see it, Jo-Jo.

Jo beams, beckons him toward the studio. Lily tries to follow but Erin grabs her, turns her toward the house.

ERIN

You've got icing all over your hands  
and face lady bug, go wash up.

Lily huffs, leaves, passes by Neil who stares at Archie.

Erin crosses her arms, looks at Lily then to Jo and Archie  
as they disappear into Jo's studio.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo shows Archie his portrait. She's too shy to look at his  
reaction, stares at the painting instead.

ARCHIE

That's something. You musta got that  
talent from your Mum.

Jo smiles, sadly.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

She was sensitive, like you, Jo.

Archie moves to Jo, pulls her into his chest, hugs her,  
kisses the top of her head.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

But not as strong.

JO

I'm not-

ARCHIE

You got that from me. Some say  
stubborn, but I prefer strong-willed.

Jo's laugh, muffled in his shirt.

JO

You could open an art gallery again-

ERIN (O.S.)

Cake?

Erin stands in the doorway holding a paper plate with cake.

Archie smiles, pulls out of the hug, takes the cake from  
Erin. Jo's disappointed, jealous.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

Archie, Jo and Erin walk toward the patio.

HONK! HONK!

ARCHIE  
I've got to go-

JO  
You just got here-

ARCHIE  
-meet my parole officer.

JO  
Can you come back after?

ARCHIE  
I have to check into the half-way  
house by 7pm-

JO  
You could come back tomorrow-

ERIN  
Wednesday is better.

JO  
But he can still come by tomorrow-

ERIN  
I'll make your favourite, tacos.

ARCHIE  
Sounds great.

He hugs Erin, then Jo. Lily runs out, he picks her up, spins her around, sets her down. He gives Erin a piece of paper.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
If you need to reach me. Bye girls!

Archie heads down driveway, waves. His eyes meet Neil's briefly. On Archie, a mix of curiosity and suspicion. Neil looks relaxed, but he tracks Archie until he's out of sight.

In the yard, kids play on a 'slip and slide' shrieking, laughing. Lily watches from the sidelines.

On the patio, Neil drinks, Mack feeds Gizmo a bite of burger, Jo sips wine, Erin chugs wine.

Lily skips over. She wears a gold NECKLACE with a red-lacquered heart. It falls at her jugular notch.

Erin freezes, blood drains from her face.

ERIN  
Where'd you get that?

Lily touches the heart, smiles.

LILY  
Grandpa Archie.

JO  
He gave your Mom the same necklace  
when she turned eleven.  
(beat)  
I never got one, because he wasn't  
around when I was eleven.

LILY  
He said I'll be a grown up soon, I  
should have some grown up jewellery.

ERIN  
If you're on the slip and slide, you  
could break it. I'll take it.

Erin grasps the clasp of the necklace, her hands shake.

LILY  
You said I couldn't do the slip and  
slide 'cause of my cast.

Erin removes the necklace.

ERIN  
Well, it's your birthday, be careful-

LILY  
(already running)  
Yes!!

MACK  
Gizmo! No!

Gizmo nabs a hot dog off a table, sprints away.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin and Jo at the kitchen table. Erin drinks wine, Jo stabs  
a fork at what's left of Lily's birthday cake.

JO  
He didn't tell you he was coming?

Erin takes a large sip of wine.

ERIN  
He likes surprises.

Jo chews thoughtfully on a mouthful of cake, swallows.  
Inspects the remaining cake with her fork.

JO  
Can I call him?

ERIN  
Too late now. They only let him use  
the phone during certain hours.

JO  
Oh. I can call him tomorrow?

Erin swirls wine in her glass.

ERIN  
Sure.

INT. ERIN'S CAR IN DRIVEWAY

Erin in the car wearing nurse's scrubs, phone at ear.

ERIN  
(on phone)  
Hey, it's me. Can we meet?

Erin listens for a moment.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
See you then.

She ends the call, gazes at the garage through the  
windshield. She starts the car, backs out.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - JO'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Jo sleeps on a single bed in a dark room. The sun hasn't  
risen yet. On the nightstand, several BOOKS.

**What Every Body is Saying: An Ex-FBI Agents Guide to Speed  
Reading People**

**A Resonance Theory of Consciousness**

Next to the books, an ALARM CLOCK: Wednesday 6:03AM. Jo  
tosses, turns, opens her eyes, squints at the clock, groans.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY/KITCHEN

The THUD of Jo's sneakers on the hallway's hard-wood floor.  
She wears her standard outfit: faded blue t-shirt and jeans.

Jo walks down a stairway --

--into the KITCHEN --

She reads the CALENDAR on the fridge. Today: Erin's night  
shift ends at 6AM, Lily's at a friend's and **Archie, 2PM**

Jo smiles.

Below the calendar, the chores roster: today is garbage pick-up day. She lifts a black bag from the kitchen bin, heads out the back door.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY

The sky brightens, a few birds CHIRP.

Jo heads toward the trash bin near the garage. She lifts the lid. Lily's birthday banner lies crumpled on the bottom.

WHOOSH, THUMP. Jo drops the bag in the bin.

She turns back to the house, pauses. A muffled ENGINE sound emanates from the closed garage. She places a hand against the door, senses vibration. She grabs the handle, lifts.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

Archie's CAR, engine idling. A hose runs from the exhaust pipe to the rear window. The interior obscured by FUMES.

As Jo approaches, a **FIGURE** appears in the passenger seat.

She opens the passenger door. Fumes pour out. She chokes. Her vision clears. She reaches out, touches the shoulder.

JO

Dad?

Archie's eyes, closed. His skin tinged a grey-ish blue.

Jo stumbles from the garage, falls to the ground.

EXT. ARLINGTON STREET AND ERIN'S DRIVEWAY

Mack and Gizmo out for an early walk along Arlington Street. Gizmo's ears perk up. He dashes toward --

-- Erin's driveway...Mack follows.

Jo kneeling on the driveway, unable to speak.

MACK

You okay?

Jo points to the garage.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

Archie in the passenger seat, the door open. Mack checks his vitals. No pulse. She pulls her jacket sleeve over her hand, turns off the ignition, makes a phone call.

MACK  
I'm reporting a death, 525 Arlington-  
(voice fades)

Jo stands up, off-balance, walks toward her studio.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo numb, in the doorway. A quiet determination takes over.  
She turns on MUSIC, sets up a canvas.

INT. ERIN'S CAR

CRUNCH of car wheels on gravel as Erin turns onto the  
driveway. She sees Mack standing before the open garage.

ERIN  
What the...

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY

Erin parks, exits car, approaches Mack.

MACK  
I'm sorry. Your father...he's gone.

ERIN  
No. I just saw him. What happened?

Erin steps around Mack, sees the car in the garage, the hose  
from the exhaust pipe, a figure in the passenger seat.

MACK (O.S.)  
Might be fumes, from the exhaust...

Erin closes her eyes, drops head, breathes out slowly.

ERIN  
Shit. When did you find him?

MACK  
Jo found him-

Erin's head snaps up.

MACK (CONT'D)  
She's in the shed, I was about to-

Erin runs toward the studio.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

Erin in the open doorway.

ERIN

Jo?

Jo paints, a flurry of brush strokes, a woman possessed. Erin watches, debates whether to interrupt, decides not to.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY & JO'S STUDIO

A black policeman (**BILL**, 42) and an East-Asian woman (**ARADHANA**, 44) in a Coroner jacket intersect on the driveway. Aradhana, paper bag in hand, eats a deep-fried PEPPERONI BALL.

BILL

(thick 'burgh dialect)  
Morning, Arad. Breakfast of  
champions?

ARADHANA

(thick 'burgh dialect)  
Fuck you.

BILL

From Mancini's?

Aradhana smirks, retrieves a ball, hands it to Bill. He takes an appreciative bite. Mack sees them, heads over.

BILL (CONT'D)

Hey Big Cheese. Good to see you.

MACK

Bill, Aradhana.

Mack nods at the bag.

MACK (CONT'D)

Mancini's?

Aradhana nods, offers bag to Mack, who declines.

MACK (CONT'D)

The vic's daughters are over here.

Bill finishes the pepperoni ball as Mack leads them to --

-- JO'S STUDIO...Erin stands in the doorway, watching Jo.

MACK

Erin? You okay to talk?

Erin turns to face Mack and Bill. She nods.

BILL  
 (to Erin)  
 I'm Detective Bill Glade. Sorry for  
 your loss, ma'am.

ERIN  
 Let's go to the patio.

Erin takes a last look at Jo.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo covered in blue and green speckles, stands before a painting with the same colour scheme.

The painting's more expressionistic than realistic, though a few objects are recognisable: the alarm clock, the calendar, the crumpled birthday banner.

Jo holds a palette of GREY paint.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

Bill, Erin and Mack sit at a small metal table on the patio, drinking coffee from matching floral mugs.

BILL  
 -last time you saw him...

ERIN  
 Yesterday. At the halfway home. He  
 wanted to move in with us right away.  
 I said we needed time to adjust. He  
 didn't take it well.  
 (wiping tears)  
 He used to drink, and, uh...

Erin covers her mouth with one hand, shakes her head.

BILL  
 Lots of ex-cons struggle when they-

ARADHANA (O.S.)  
 You freakin' jagoff!

Mack and Bill turn to see Aradhana screaming at a CROW. It drags the paper bag across the lawn, towards Jo.

Jo looks like she stepped out of one of her paintings, clothes and face splattered in blue, green and grey paint. She watches the crow struggle with the bag. Gizmo chases it.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

Erin, Mack and Bill stand uncomfortably, look at Jo.

ERIN  
Jo, I'm so sorry.

Erin considers hugging Jo, doesn't.

MACK  
This is Bill, he wants to ask some questions. That okay?

JO  
Yes.

Jo goes into her studio. Mack and Bill look at each other, uncertain whether to follow. They go inside, careful not to step on anything.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

BILL  
If you can start from the beginning, when you got up this morning.

Jo points to the vibrant panels on the left canvas.

JO  
That's what this shows. Before I found Dad. And this-

She motions to the grey-scale painting.

Like it's colourful counterpart, it's more impressionistic than realistic, but a few objects are recognisable: the garage, the car, and a figure in the passenger seat. The overwhelming feeling is sadness and loss.

JO (CONT'D)  
-is after I found him.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD - LATER

A crow CAWS from a tree.

On the driveway, Aradhana pushes a stretcher loaded with Archie's body, zipped in a black bag. Jo, Erin, Bill and Mack watch from the yard.

Erin heads to the patio, clears up the mugs. Jo turns back toward her studio. Bill and Mack go into the garage.

EXT. JO'S BACKYARD AND GARAGE

Jo pauses on her way to the studio. She walks back to the garage, leans against the exterior wall, out of sight of Mack and Bill, but within earshot.

MACK (O.S.)  
He's wearing gloves.

A TOW TRUCK reverses into the driveway. The driver's dark hair displayed in a world-class mullet.

The truck's stinger extends into the garage, the driver hums to music, THUMPS the steering wheel.

Snippets of Mack and Bill's conversation, heard between the tow truck's hydraulics and the driver's music.

MACK (O.S.)  
...passenger seat...rolled back all  
the way. ...driver seat pulled in...  
someone shorter...

BILL (O.S.)  
...someone drove him?

The driver pounds the steering wheel during a drum solo.

BILL (O.S.)  
...not suicide?

MACK (O.S.)  
What I think...not important...Gizmo!

Gizmo appears, a half-eaten pepperoni ball in his mouth. He glances at Jo, then trots toward Mack.

MACK (O.S.)  
Jeezus. That can't be good for you,  
you little gremlin. Let's go.

BILL (O.S.)  
Later, Mack.

Mack and Bill leave.

The tow truck drives forward, pulling Archie's car. Jo notices something's scrawled by hand on the dirty hood, squints, sees: **sorry**

The message recedes as Archie's car is towed away.

#### INT. JO'S STUDIO

A paintbrush dips in a blob of blue. On the grey-scale painting, Jo creates a blue QUESTION MARK on the driver's side of Archie's car.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin and Jo at the kitchen table, drinking tea. Jo looks at her mug, swirls the tea.

JO  
I can't believe he'd do that.

ERIN  
(pause)  
I know-

JO  
You think someone else was involved?

ERIN  
What do you mean?

JO  
Maybe someone made him do it?

ERIN  
That's not how it looked...

JO  
He was happy to see us, why would he-

Erin looks down at her mug.

ERIN  
I saw him, the day before. He was a mess, drinking and-

JO  
You saw him?

Jo looks at Erin. *A constellation of yellow thorns surround her. Punctuated by green spikes when she says...*

ERIN  
*He called, asked to see me. Talk about him moving in with-*

JO  
And you went? Without me? So typical-

Jo shakes her head, looks down at her mug. Erin stands, goes to the sink, her back toward Jo.

ERIN  
He was in bad shape. Drinking-

JO  
It's not fair, he was going to help me-

ERIN,  
Yeah, well, life isn't fair-

JO  
You had five more years with him!

ERIN  
It wasn't all rainbows and unicorns.  
He hid things. He lied. He went to  
jail for Christ's sake-

JO  
Nobody's perfect. You're angry he  
left. You had to raise me after Mom-  
(long pause)  
Can't you forgive him?

Erin's shoulders sag. Jo bites her lip, holds back a sob.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

A blueberry pancake bubbles on a griddle.

Neil, in an apron decorated with flowers, carries a pancake-laden plate to the kitchen table, joining Jo and Erin.

ERIN  
Lily, Breakfast!

NEIL  
(to Erin)  
I noticed some damp in the basement.

ERIN  
The basement?

NEIL  
I was looking for the crock pot-

LILY (O.S.)  
Mom, you have the necklace from  
Grandpa Archie?

Lily enters the kitchen, sits next to Jo at the table.

ERIN  
Uh, I forgot where I put it with  
everything...but I'll-

Erin's cell phone rings. Lily grabs a PANCAKE with her hands.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
(on phone)  
This is Erin Cardinal.

Erin motions that Lily should use a fork. Lily sighs.

ERIN (CONT'D)

I see.

Lily stabs at a pancake with her fork, tears it in half.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Uh huh.

Lily stabs again, tears it into smaller pieces. Erin grabs the pancake with her hand, throws it on Lily's plate.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Okay, thank you.

Erin sets the phone down.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Archie had alcohol and sedatives in his bloodstream...but he died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

(pause)

Looks like suicide.

Jo stares at the back garden. She rises, goes outside. Lily runs out, slips her hand in Jo's.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - JO'S BEDROOM - DAY

A cloudy full-length mirror reflects Jo. She smooths the wrinkles on an ill-fitting black dress.

She walks to a dresser. The PORTRAIT of Archie, the one to celebrate his return, is propped against the wall.

She touches his face. The overhead light flickers.

*Archie's expression changes from generous to manipulative, as if another side of Archie's face is projected onto the portrait, slightly altering his features.*

EXT. CEMETERY

A grey day. Jo's vivid portrait of Archie leans on the coffin, the only vibrancy amongst the black-clad gathering.

Erin, Neil, Jo, and Lily at the grave. Off to one side, a few shady-looking men and a Latina woman (**LISA**, 36).

LILY

(whispering)

Who are they?

ERIN  
Friends of Grandpa, probably.

RED rose petals rain down on the casket as it's lowered into the grave. A few more petals drift from Lisa's hand, the wind picks up and they land on Jo's shoes.

Jo blanks out, nearly tips into the grave.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Jo!

Erin reaches out to steady Jo.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

RING. RING. Jo sets her mug down, picks up the landline.

OPERATOR  
Collect call from an inmate at the  
Loretto Federal Corrections Institute  
for the Cardinal family. Will you  
accept the charges?

JO  
Yes.

The raspy voice of **LEON** (42).

LEON (V.O.)  
My condolences.

JO  
Who's this?

LEON (V.O.)  
Leon, Archie's cellmate.

Erin stuffs a brown lunch bag in Lily's backpack.

ERIN  
Who is it?

Jo makes a 'just a minute' gesture to Erin.

JO  
What do you want?

LEON (V.O.)  
Archie didn't commit suicide.

JO  
How-

LEON (V.O.)  
Is this Erin, or Jo?

JO  
Jo.

Lily enters the kitchen, slides the backpack on. Erin kisses the top of her head.

ERIN  
(to Jo)  
You're walking her to school,  
remember?

LEON (V.O.)  
Little Jo-Jo. Not so little now. I've  
got proof he didn't off himself. But  
I'll only speak to you, Jo-Jo. You  
come visit, I'll tell you everything.

ERIN  
Now, or she'll be late.

Jo hangs up, her fingers linger on the handset.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - AFTERNOON

A brush dips into a riot of pinks, oranges, blues. Jo turns on MUSIC. A blank canvas awaits.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - LATER

Jo's studio visible through a WINDOW. Hot breath fogs it. Lily draws a cloud around Jo's studio.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Exhausted, Jo sinks to the floor. Lily enters, joins Jo, looks at the painting: bright, joyous, bursting with colour.

On the left side, Erin, Lily, Jo and Archie form a family unit. Each glows with an aura: saffron for Erin, dusty pink for Lily, periwinkle blue for Jo, sea-foam green for Archie.

On the right side, multi-coloured squares.

LILY  
What are those?

JO  
My art gallery. Dad'd run it.

Lily considers this possibility for a moment.

LILY  
Why'd he kill himself?

Jo shakes her head, tries to hold back tears.

JO  
I don't know, maybe he, I don't know.

Jo unable to speak. Lily leans her head on Jo's shoulder.  
Tears streak Jo's cheek.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erin and Jo cleaning up the kitchen table after dinner.

JO  
I want to talk with Dad's cellmate.

Erin takes a few plates to the sink, rinses one.

ERIN  
Leon? Why?

Jo picks up a few wine glasses.

JO  
He knows something about Dad's death-

ERIN  
He's just playing some angle-

Jo sets down the glasses.

JO  
I have to know the truth.

Erin slams off the faucet.

ERIN  
The truth is, he left us, again! And  
it doesn't help wondering why.

Jo wraps her arms around herself, moves to the window, looks  
out into the darkness.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

The grey-scale painting of Archie sits next to Jo's latest  
work, the real versus the ideal. Jo's fingers stroke the  
figure in the car, hover over the blue QUESTION MARK.

EXT. MACK'S HOUSE

Jo RINGS the doorbell. A rustling from inside, Mack answers  
the door in a robe, Gizmo dances at her feet.

MACK  
You know what time it is?

JO  
Help me find out what happened to my  
Dad.

MACK  
No.

JO  
You're a cop, you can-

MACK  
Not anymore, and I don't get involved  
in family matters. Go home, Jo.

Mack closes the door. Jo stares at it, raising her hand to knock. Gizmo barks. Jo hesitates, then leaves.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo paints. A few hours pass in 15 seconds. She curls up on the floor, sleeps.

EXT. MACK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jo's pale finger hovers over the doorbell, then presses. Mack answers holding a steaming cup of coffee.

MACK  
What now?

JO  
I painted something, for you.

Jo wiggles the painting.

MACK  
(hesitating)  
You...Come in.

Mack opens the door wider. Gizmo BARKS, greets Jo.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN

A functional and reasonably tidy kitchen with a few cardboard moving boxes. Classical MUSIC plays from a speaker on the counter.

Jo sits at a small round table with two chairs. Mack sets her mug down, a faded message on it: **World's Greatest Mom'**.

Mack reaches into a box, finds a plain white mug, pours coffee from a carafe.

MACK  
Milk?

JO  
A splash, thanks.

Mack joins Jo at the table, gives her the coffee. Jo passes the painting to Mack.

Mack looks at it. Gizmo is a ball of energy, colourful, dynamic, with eyes that seem to peer into the viewer's soul.

Jo stares at the steaming mug of coffee in front of her.

JO (CONT'D)  
It's Gizmo.

MACK  
Yeah, I can see that.

Gizmo jumps onto Mack's lap, sniffs the painting.

MACK (CONT'D)  
(to Gizmo)  
Down.

Gizmo wags tail, brushing Mack's face, she swats it away.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Down!

Mack places Gizmo on the floor.

JO  
I need your help. To find out what happened to my Dad-

MACK  
Look, I told you I don't get involved-

JO  
They said it was suicide, but I don't, I can't believe that.

A flicker of doubt in Mack's eyes, she shrugs.

MACK  
That's the coroner's...I don't have anything to do-

Jo grips the mug, her fingers turn white.

JO  
 (in a rush)  
 My mother committed suicide.

Mack leans back in her chair.

JO (CONT'D)  
 I don't know why. Why she did that.

MACK  
 I'm sorry but-

JO  
 When you lose someone you love, you  
 want to know why did they leave you?

Mack sighs, Jo looks at her. *Misshapen blobs of grey emerge from Mack, heavy and full, like a molten-lead lava lamp.*

MACK  
*Yeah, I get that. But sometimes the  
 answers don't help.*

JO  
 I have to know. If he killed himself,  
 or someone killed him.  
 (pause)  
 My mother's death. I don't remember  
 what happened. And no one will talk  
 about it.  
 (pause)  
 And now, with Dad, Erin says I should  
 leave it alone. But I can't. I just,  
 I can't. I have to know the truth.

A sob escapes from Jo, she looks at her mug.

JO (CONT'D)  
 Please Mack, I need your help.

Gizmo rests his head on Jo's leg. He looks to Mack.

MACK  
 Christ...

Mack sets the painting down, relenting.

MACK (CONT'D)  
 We can look at his phone records-

Jo lets out a long breath, scratches Gizmo, his tail thumps.

MACK (CONT'D)  
 -find out who his associates were.

JO

His cellmate Leon can prove my Dad didn't kill himself. Said he'd tell me about it when I see him.

MACK

Inmates aren't the most reliable source, but we could start there.

JO

He's at Loretto.

MACK

I'll find out if he was Archie's cellmate, then we can pay him a visit.

JO

Can't we call him?

MACK

We'll get more out of him if we're in the same room. And I can tell whether he's bullshitting.

JO

How's that work?

MACK

Micro-expressions. People try to hide the truth, but it leaks out-

JO

I know about that. I mean, how do we see him. In his cell or...

MACK

It's the same room you'd visit your Dad in.

A long pause.

JO

I never visited him.

Mack sips her coffee.

MACK

Loretto has a visitation room.

JO

What's it like?

MACK

It's a room. With tables and chairs.

Mack turns the mug in her hands, observes Jo. Jo stares at the table. The silence extends. Gizmo scratches his ear. A clock TICKS.

JO

So, sometimes...I have these episodes where I blank out.

MACK

Uh huh.

JO

It's like I'm sleepwalking, walking down a white hallway with no sound. I wake up and can't remember anything. I don't know what causes them, so I don't go to new places.

MACK

That must limit your socialising.

Jo shrugs.

MACK (CONT'D)

How long have you been having these-

JO

Blank-outs. Since I was nine or ten. I can go months without any, but lately...

MACK

The visitation room is pretty dull. Grey metal tables, plastic chairs, white walls.

Jo fidgets.

MACK (CONT'D)

Look you're the one who came to me, and you spoke to the guy, so...

The clock TICKS. Gizmo yawns. Jo takes a deep breath, nods.

EXT. MT WASHINGTON HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Classical MUSIC plays. A silver SUV navigates the Mt. Washington hillside. Breathtaking views of downtown Pittsburgh.

MACK (O.S.)

What was Archie in for?

INT. MACK'S SUV

Jo looks at the sky.

JO  
Counterfeiting. It's going to rain.  
(pause)  
He owned an art gallery in Shadyside,  
before he... Those are cumulonimbus.

Jo cracks the window open.

JO (CONT'D)  
I was eight when he left.  
(inhales deeply)  
Smells like wet dogs. That's another  
sign it's going to rain soon.  
(pause)  
He travelled a lot. I didn't get to  
spend much time with him. Erin was  
Daddy's little girl. Whenever I tried  
to get time with him, she'd butt in.

They approach ROAD CONSTRUCTION, a one-way system, cars  
backed up in a long line.

MACK  
You didn't visit him in prison.

JO  
Grandma Margaret didn't allow it. We  
lived with her after Mom-  
(trailing pause)  
Margaret died a few years ago. She  
left Erin the house.

The cars inch forward. A woman in a high-vis vest rotates a  
stop/go sign. A car HONKS. An **IRATE DRIVER** yells.

IRATE DRIVER (O.S.)  
Why is the road always under  
construction but we got fucking  
potholes everywhere?

JO  
After she died I asked Erin if we  
could visit Dad and she said he  
didn't want us to see him locked up.

The flag person waves them through. Jo shifts in her seat to  
face Mack.

JO (CONT'D)  
Why'd you quit?

MACK  
Quit what?

JO  
The police.

*As Mack talks, green spikes shoot out briefly.*

MACK  
*I didn't, I retired. Early.*

JO (O.S.)  
Do you have family in Pittsburgh?

*Yellow thorns mix with the green spikes when she answers-*

MACK  
*Look, we're not friends. I ask questions to get information pertinent to the case.*

RAIN splats on the windshield. Mack turns on the wipers.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Did Archie have a drinking or drug problem?

Jo turns back to the clouds.

JO  
No.

EXT. MACK'S SUV ON HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The SUV cruises, the exit for Loretto appears.

MACK (O.S.)  
We're seeing Leon Aguilar, 42,  
serving six years for money  
laundering.

INT. MACK'S SUV

MACK (CONT'D)  
Open the glove box.

CLICK as the glove box opens.

MACK (CONT'D)  
There's a foam stress ball thing.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF FCI LORETTO

Mack pulls into the parking lot for FCI Loretto, a one-story building with a pale-green facade.

On the roof, a 20-foot metal fence wound with razor wire. She parks the SUV.

MACK (O.S.)  
Lots of lonely men makes for an uncomfortable situation. They're going to stare, make lewd comments.

INT. MACK'S SUV

Jo looks at the yellow STRESS BALL.

MACK (CONT'D)  
We can't do anything about that. The only thing we can control, is how we respond. We need to stay calm to control the conversation. If you feel threatened, you squeeze that ball and imagine all your fear, anger, pity, whatever, goes into it. Out of your body and into the ball. And while you're doing that, take deep breaths.

Jo squeezes the ball.

INT. FCI LORETTO - VISITATION ROOM

A plain white room with metal tables and plastic chairs, a murmur as several inmates speak with their visitors.

Mack and Jo sit on one side of a metal table. Jo keeps her hand in a pocket, the stress ball just visible.

An inmate (**CROW**, 28), a hulking brute of a man, sits at a nearby empty table, whistles at Jo.

Leon laughs with two guards as they escort him inside.

If it weren't for the crisp orange jumpsuit, he could pass as a high-powered CEO. His black hair, streaked with grey, is brushed away from his face, tucked behind his ears. A short neatly-styled beard reveals surprisingly white teeth.

A guard removes Leon's handcuffs before he sits.

LEON  
I thought we were going to be alone, Jo-Jo.

Jo stares at Leon's hands.

MACK  
You have info on Archie Cardinal.

Leon ignores Mack, he's checking out Jo.

LEON

Archie told me so much about his girls, I've been dreaming about them, about you Jo-Jo.

MACK

What you got, Leon?

LEON

(focused on Jo)

You like poetry?

He reaches into a shirt pocket, removes a piece of BLACK PAPER. Mack tenses, watches him closely.

LEON (CONT'D)

Archie showed me a photo of you. It reminded me of something.

Jo's eyes gradually move from his hands to his face. He smiles, recites part of a Rilke poem from memory.

LEON (CONT'D)

She seems to hide all looks that have ever fallen into her, so that, like an audience, she can look them over, menacing and sullen, and curl to sleep with them.

As he talks, he folds the piece of paper.

LEON (CONT'D)

But all at once, as if awakened, she turns her face to yours; and with a shock, you see yourself, tiny, inside the golden amber of her eyeballs. Suspended, like a prehistoric fly.

He places a black ORIGAMI FLY in front of Jo. Her fingers squeeze the stress ball, she breathes deeply.

Crow makes kissing noises, ogles Jo. Leon shifts, turns toward Crow, gives him a hard look.

LEON (CONT'D)

Crow, show some respect.

Crow gazes down at his feet. Leon turns back to Jo.

MACK

Okay, Wordsworth, open mic night's over. Tell me something useful or Jo and I walk. You have...60 seconds.

Mack looks at her wristwatch.

LEON  
Top up my commissary, two hundred  
bucks, and I'll talk.

MACK  
45 seconds.

JO  
What was he like, my Dad?

LEON  
He loved his little girls. Felt bad  
about not being there for you when  
your mother passed.

MACK  
Ten seconds.

Leon finally looks at Mack, assessing.

LEON  
Life insurance policy.

Mack folds her hands on the table, waits.

*As he speaks, Jo scrutinises him, tuning into his facial expressions, breathing, blinking. A pale blue aura pulsates around him as he talks...*

LEON (CONT'D)  
*He was paranoid, knew he was getting  
out soon, thought some of his old  
associates would come after him.*

*A swirl of green flashes around his face when he says...*

LEON (CONT'D)  
*So he took out life insurance. You  
think he's going to kill himself and  
void the policy?*

MACK  
Who threatened him?

LEON  
(to Jo)  
I get out in six months. Time off for  
good behaviour. I could tell you more  
about your Dad, over dinner-

MACK  
Names of Archie's associates.

Jo knuckles turn white from squeezing the ball. Her eyes remain locked on Leon.

LEON  
Commissary, then names.

MACK  
Names, or I fuck with your release date.

LEON  
You're bluffing.

MACK  
Only one way to find out.

Leon exhales through pursed lips, leans back in his chair.

LEON  
I don't know the names, he called them the Russians.

Mack pushes back her chair, half-rising, looking like she's ready to leave.

MACK  
Let's go Jo.

LEON  
But I know who would know.

Mack eases back down.

LEON (CONT'D)  
My sister, Lisa. She met Archie when she visited me, a year ago. They started talking, writing letters.

MACK  
Where can we find her?

LEON  
She's a bartender at Schadenfreude, in the Strip District.

Mack gestures to a guard.

MACK  
We're done here.

A **GUARD** approaches Leon.

GUARD  
Alright Leon, let's go.

Leon stands, stares at Jo as the guard handcuffs him.

LEON  
Bye Jo-Jo. I'll see you soon.

INT. FCI LORETTO - SECURE STORAGE ROOM

A small room with a metal table. Mack sets a box on it, removes the lid. Inside: two cell phones, Mack's keys.

Jo sees the SCREENSAVER on Mack's phone: a young woman with haunting eyes.

JO  
That your daughter?

Jo watches as Mack tucks the phone into her pocket. A heavy *grey aura pulses slowly around Mack.*

Jo looks at the stress ball, it bears the crescent-shaped indents of her fingernails. She offers it to Mack.

MACK  
Keep it.

EXT. MACK'S DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Mack's SUV parked on a driveway, a wooden fence on the left and Mack's house on the right.

Jo and Mack walk toward the back of Mack's SUV.

MACK  
You're wrong.

JO  
It's my opinion, it can't be wrong.

MACK  
You're still wrong. Aliens is better than the first one.

Gizmo barks from inside the house.

MACK (CONT'D)  
I gotta feed the gremlin.  
(pause)  
I'll find out when Lisa's working.  
Then we can pay her a visit.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Erin at the kitchen table, drinks coffee, reads a newspaper. The backdoor opens, Jo steps through.

JO  
Hi.

                  ERIN  
Hey.

Jo sits down, concentrates on tracing a finger over a stain on the table.

                  JO  
I saw Leon, Dad's cellmate.

Erin looks up from the paper.

                  ERIN  
Where?

                  JO  
Loretto. Mack took me.

                  ERIN  
Mack?

                  JO  
He said Dad had an insurance policy.

                  ERIN  
Why is Mack-

                  JO  
You know anything about that?

Jo raises her eyes from the table, looks at Erin.

*ERIN*  
*No. But he keeps, kept, a lot of*  
*stuff to himself.*

*Swirls of blue surround Erin.*

*ERIN (CONT'D)*  
*Don't involve Mack in family stuff.*

*A flash of red.*

                  JO (O.S.)  
She was a cop, a detective.

*Erin's blood pressure rises, her skin flushes, a red-ish haze surrounds her, getting darker.*

Jo quickly looks back down at the stain.

ERIN

We don't need a fucking ex-cop to know Archie's dead! You know how I feel about cops-

JO

I remember them handcuffing Dad-

ERIN

-arresting me for all kinds of bullshit, when way worse stuff was going on-

LILY (O.S.)

You got arrested? For what?

Lily enters the kitchen from the hallway. Erin glares at Jo, who's still examining the stain.

ERIN

(to Lily)

For stupid teenager stuff.

LILY

Like what?

ERIN

Like none of your business. You ready?

LILY

But-

ERIN

You want to go to Sarah's or not?

Lily sighs, grabs her backpack, heads to the car.

ERIN (CONT'D)

I don't want Mack-

JO

Okay, but-

The cellar door opens, Neil steps out, sweaty and dusty wearing leather handyman gloves. He holds a pipe wrench.

NEIL

The good news is, I found the leak.

ERIN

(to Neil)

That's great hon.

Erin stands up, pecks Neil on the cheek, heads to door.

JO  
-she's coming by later...

Jo, thinking fast, trying to generate a plausible reason she'd be talking with Mack.

JO (CONT'D)  
I'm teaching her colour theory.

Erin pauses, half-way out the door.

ERIN  
You want a friend? Fine. Just...We'll talk about this later.

Erin leaves. Jo glances at Neil briefly, a smile flits across her face. She stands, then heads out the door.

Neil waves as Erin drives away. He watches Jo enter her studio. He finishes Erin's coffee, eyes roaming over the kitchen, like he can peer into cupboards, through walls.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - LATE AFTERNOON

Mack stands at an EVIDENCE BOARD: a large sheet of paper, with mugshots of Leon and Archie and handwritten notes.

Jo turns on the radio. Icelandic alt-rock MUSIC plays. Gizmo's ears twitch in his sleep.

Mack changes the radio to Classical, works on the board.

Jo puts on headphones, works on Leon's portrait. Surrounding him are various shapes and a few recognisable objects: a black fly, a crow.

MACK  
Did you say Erin's shift started at 7 on Tuesday night?

Jo flicks paint at the canvas, some lands on Mack's shoes.

MACK (CONT'D)  
What the, Jo, this isn't Burning Man.

Jo doesn't respond, she's immersed in painting.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Find me when you're ready to help.

Mack leaves.

EXT. MACK'S BACK PORCH

Mack sits with Gizmo. Jo approaches, Gizmo barks, wags tail.

JO  
I want to show you something.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo points to the PORTRAIT of Leon.

MACK  
It's very...colourful.

Jo steps closer to the canvas. She's excited, nervous, hopeful. She speaks quickly, her face flushes.

JO  
I've painted when Leon was lying during the interview-

MACK  
You've done what now?

Jo points to an area with various squiggles.

JO  
When he's lying, he breathes faster, and the muscles in his face-

MACK  
Hang on, you're saying, you're some kind of, human Polygraph?

Jo considers.

JO  
No. I see brief flashes of emotion. Like an aura, each emotion has a specific colour-

MACK  
(sceptical)  
Auras?

Jo looks at Mack, scans her face, frowns.

JO  
Yes, right now you're afraid and angry. Yellow mixed with red-

MACK  
I'm not...

Mack clenches her jaw, looks out the window, back to Jo.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Sounds like hocus pocus, auras, crystals...

Jo, slightly offended.

JO

Everything, everyone vibrates with energy. From individual cells to the body as a system, we're all vibrating, resonating at different frequencies. I see those vibrations as clouds of energy.

Jo points to several swirls on Leon's portrait.

JO (CONT'D)

The colour of the-

MACK

Clouds, of energy.

Jo, thinking fast, determined to make Mack understand.

JO

You know how movies work? Still images strung together to give the illusion of movement. Twenty-four frames per second.

Mack nods.

JO (CONT'D)

I see what's in between the still images. The flicker of true emotion. As specific colours.

Jo points to a yellow swirl on Leon's portrait.

JO (CONT'D)

When he was talking about the Russians, he was afraid.

Mack, thinking, calculating.

MACK

The life insurance policy?

Jo points to a green swirl.

JO

He was lying, made it up.

Mack tilts her head, not quite a nod.

MACK

Yeah...

Encouraged, Jo points to a blue swirl.

JO  
Blue is truth, like when-

MACK  
Still sounds woo-woo to me.

JO  
We came to the same conclusion, about  
the life insurance policy.

MACK  
Lucky guess.

Jo disappointed, crosses her arms, looks out the window.  
Mack sees she's deflated Jo's enthusiasm.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Okay, look, I'm used to...Let's just  
stick with what I know works.

Jo nods, half-heartedly.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - LATER

Mack stands at the evidence board, stretches, yawns. Jo sits  
on a cushion on the floor, rolls her head side to side.

MACK  
Neil.

JO  
Been dating Erin for four months.  
He's a chef. Last name's Chatham.

Mack scribbles on the evidence board.

MACK  
Lily's father?

JO  
Nobody knows. Erin was a wild child,  
pregnant at 16. She calmed down a lot  
after she had Lily.

Mack writes notes.

MACK  
How'd Lily break her arm?

JO  
How's that relevant?

MACK  
Don't know til I hear the answer.

JO

She fell from the maple tree. I think she was spying on Joey Bizzaro. He lives a few houses down. She's got a crush on him.

PING. Mack gets a text. Reads a message.

MACK

Lisa's working tonight. Let's go.

JO

Where?

MACK

Schadenfreude.

Jo shakes her head.

JO (CONT'D)

I might have an episode, blank out.

MACK

Possible. But you can't get answers from here.

Jo wrings her fingers and swallows hard. Mack, trying to be patient, failing.

MACK (CONT'D)

If it's that bad, I know a therapist, he helps people suffering from past trauma. Teaches methods for staying in the moment, connecting with your body so you don't blank out or freak out from intrusive thoughts.

JO

I tried therapy, didn't help. Talking about stuff I can't remember.

MACK

Yeah, talk therapy doesn't work for everyone. Dr. Cole's methods are more, physical.

JO

You could show me something?

MACK

I'm not a therapist.

(sighing)

I can show you something quick, something he taught me. But you have to promise to see a professional.

Jo nods, stands.

MACK (CONT'D)

You gotta stop the mind from hijacking the body. Turning us into the Hulk, or in your case, the walking dead. So you focus on the body, what it's feeling. Simple things like, are you hot or cold, tensed or relaxed.

Jo looks at her hand, it's gripping the brush tightly. She relaxes it.

MACK (CONT'D)

Second thing, control your breath. Count to four on the exhale.

JO

Should I breathe from my nose or mouth?

MACK

I don't know. Whatever feels right. As soon as you feel like you're blanking out, tap the area just above your lip, below the nose.

Jo practices tapping.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Jo and Mack at the top of the driveway, near Arlington Street. Mack nods to the cemetery across the street.

MACK

That freak you out?

JO

No. They're very quiet.

(pause)

Seventy percent of uber drivers have a second job.

MACK

Uh huh.

JO

I'll bet I can guess our driver's other job.

MACK

What you going to bet? Don't say another painting of Gizmo-

JO  
Point of pride, your methods versus  
mine.

Mack shrugs.

JO  
Beer?

MACK  
I get to ask the questions.

A Nissan Leaf pulls up, they get in.

INT. NISSAN LEAF

The driver, an older woman (**LOUISE**, 72) with kindly eyes and wispy grey hair.

EXT. NISSAN DRIVING THROUGH PITTSBURGH STREETS

Pittsburgh's BRIDGES lit up and sparkling in the night.

EXT. NISSAN PARKED ON STREET IN THE STRIP DISTRICT

Mack and Jo exit the car.

LOUISE (O.S.)  
Have a nice night now!

Mack looks at the piece of paper she wrote her guess on.

MACK  
Sunday school teacher.

JO  
There were A LOT of crosses.

MACK  
And the bible in the back seat...  
Maybe she borrowed the car.

JO  
I guessed Louise was a writer.

MACK  
Of erotica?

JO  
Travel guides.

They crumple their guesses, walk towards the bar.

INT. SCHADENFREUDE BAR

A narrow room with hard-wood floors, 20-foot pressed-tin ceilings, exposed red brick walls.

An androgynous person (**JAX**, 22) sits at one end of the bar, eats from a plate of pierogies.

A little person (**SHAWN**, 29) walks along the top of the bar. He stops in front of Jax, pours liquid from a green bottle straight into their mouth.

Mack and Jo at the other end of the bar. Shawn greets them.

SHAWN

Welcome to Midget Monday Madness.  
Absinthe?

He offers the green bottle.

MACK

Yuengling.

JO

Same. In a glass.

MACK

We're friends of Lisa's. She said her shifts starts...

SHAWN

Soon.

Shawn goes to the fridge, grabs two bottles of beer.

JO

Do you think Lisa is a little person too? Maybe the whole bar is run by little people.

Mack shakes her head. Shawn brings the bottles over, goes back to get a glass.

Lisa ducks under the opening at the back of the bar, laughs and chats with Shawn. He points to Mack and Jo. Lisa looks at them, confused.

She takes the GLASS, walks over, slams it down between Jo and Mack.

LISA

I'm not your friend.

JO  
 You were at the funeral. You tossed  
 red rose petals...

Jo trails off as she begins to blank out.

MACK  
 Just want to ask a few questions-

Jo slips off the bar stool, stumbles a few steps backward.

MACK (CONT'D)  
 Jo, you alright?

[Jo's blank-out: the colour begins to drain from the room  
 and people, the sounds fade away.]

LISA  
 What's wrong with her?

Mack realises Jo's blanking out, stands up, approaches Jo.

MACK  
 Jo! How do your hands feel?

[Jo's blank-out: the echo of Mack's voice '-hands feel'. Jo  
 looks down at her hands, there's still a blush of colour to  
 them, she senses the pulse of blood flowing through them.]

JO  
 Warm.

LISA  
 I don't know what kind of freak show  
 this is, but I'm not interested.

Lisa walks away.

MACK  
 Jo, what else do you sense?

JO  
 Pierogies. I can smell them.

MACK  
 Breathe deeply, and tap like you did  
 earlier.

[Jo's blank-out: the sound of her breath, she moves her  
 hand, taps the acupressure point. The colour returns full  
 force, she's back in the present.]

Mack guides Jo back to the bar, they sit.

MACK (CONT'D)

You okay?

JO

Yeah.

Jo pours beer into the glass, takes a sip. Mack scrutinises Jo for a long moment.

Jo watches Shawn and Lisa interact. She grabs a NAPKIN from the bar and sketches.

Shawn says something, nods toward Jo, Lisa shakes her head. He continues, she laughs. She looks at Jo again, reluctantly picks up a cloth, wipes the bar, gets closer to Jo.

Jo gives Lisa the drawing. It shows Shawn and Lisa, leaning toward each other, heads touching. A sweet, romantic sketch.

LISA

Nice, but Shawn and I are just friends.

JO

But you want more.

Mack looks sideways at Jo.

LISA

I mean, we work together so...

JO

He wants more too.

Lisa furrows her brows, casts a quick glance at Shawn. He catches her eye, winks. Lisa blushes.

Jo observes Lisa intently. *When Lisa looks at Shawn, a pink aura shimmers around her.*

LISA

(to Jo)

I recognise you from the funeral.

JO

You were friends with my Dad?

LISA

Yeah. I'm sorry, for your loss.

Jo nods.

MACK

I'm helping Jo get answers about her father.

(MORE)

MACK (cont'd)

(pause)

How'd Archie feel about getting released? He worried about anyone coming after him?

LISA

No, he couldn't wait to get out. But once he did, the calls started.

JO

You saw him after he was released?

LISA

Yeah, a few months ago, that's when the calls started.

JO

Months?

MACK

What calls?

LISA

Some guy named Nico.

JO

He got out months ago?

LISA

Yeah, back in April. Said he got out two years early.

MACK

You ever see this Nico?

Lisa shakes her head.

MACK (CONT'D)

What'd they talk about?

LISA

Don't know. They'd didn't talk long. One time Archie said 'stay away from my family' but when I asked him about it he said mind my own business.

MACK

What about a life insurance policy?

LISA

Don't know anything about that.

A group of people enter, lining up along the bar, looking at Lisa expectantly. Lisa nods at them.

LISA  
I gotta get back to work.

Lisa leaves to serve the new customers.

JO  
(to Mack)  
I can't believe he got out early and  
didn't tell me, or stop by.

MACK  
It's strange. Two years would be a  
lot for good behaviour-

JO  
Why else would he get out early?

MACK  
He mighta cut a deal, informed on  
someone.

JO  
Would that make someone mad enough to  
kill him?

MACK  
Maybe.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Mack at a laptop on the kitchen table, cell phone on ear.

MACK  
(on phone)  
Uh-huh. Send what you have, Bill.

The printer on the kitchen counter fires up. Mack picks up  
the printout, stares at it.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

MUSIC plays. A flurry of brush strokes on a canvas. Jo  
paints with intense concentration. A familiar face emerges.  
It's Mack.

A KNOCK on the door.

MACK (O.S.)  
Jo?

Jo hides the portrait.

JO

Yes.

Mack enters, holding a thermos and two cups. Jo pours coffee as Mack pins the photo on the evidence board.

MACK

Archie did cut a deal. He provided information to indict Aleksei Volkov, who distributed Archie's counterfeit money internationally.

Mack points to one of the men in the photo.

MACK (CONT'D)

That's him.

Jo looks at the grainy photo of Aleksei, then at the MAN standing next to him. It looks like a younger, blurrier, version of a familiar face.

JO

Is that...Neil?

MACK

Could be. It's not the best photo. He's been identified as Nikolai Volkov, Aleksei's younger brother.

JO

The Nico that Lisa mentioned?

MACK

Maybe.

JO

So if Neil is Nikolai...

MACK

Not good.

Jo turns to face Mack.

JO

He's dating Erin, he's in our house. You could arrest him-

MACK

On what charges? Looking a little bit like a guy in a blurry photo?

(beat)

We need to tie him to Archie somehow.

JO

I could pay more attention to him,  
try to figure out if he's-

MACK

If he's Nikolai, we don't want him  
suspecting anything. We need to  
figure out why he's involved with  
Erin, what he's after.

JO

I can find out, in an hour or two-

MACK

Just, don't.

JO

If he is dangerous, I don't want him  
around Lily or Erin-

MACK

The safest thing is to act like  
nothing's changed-

JO

I have to tell Erin, she-

MACK

What's she gonna do?

Jo considers.

JO

She'd confront him.

MACK

If Neil is Nikolai, we don't want to  
challenge him, because then he...

(pause)

We don't know what he'd do, because  
we don't know why he's here. Right  
now, we have the upper hand.

(pause)

I'll dig into Neil Chatham's  
background. Find out everything I  
can. Give me a few days before you  
say anything to Erin.

Mack goes to remove the photo from the board.

JO

Leave it.

Mack stops, looks sceptical.

JO (CONT'D)

I'll take it with me when I leave.

Mack shrugs, pulls a paperback book out of her jacket. A business card pokes out from between the pages, like a bookmark. She hands the book to Jo.

Jo takes it, sees the title: **The Body Keeps the Score, Mind brain and body in the transformation of trauma.**

MACK (O.S.)

It helped me a lot, dealing with...

Mack shakes her head. Jo removes the card from the book, reads a quote on one side by Elvin Semrad.

JO

"The greatest source of our suffering is the lies we tell ourselves."

Jo flips the card over, sees the name of a therapist, Dr. Cole and a phone number.

MACK

The book talks about ways of dealing with traumatic experiences. Why we act certain ways, some people get angry, others freeze. And how lying to ourselves helped us survive, but prevents us from healing.

JO

What happened to you?

Jo looks at Mack, who shrugs.

MACK

*I seen lots of shit, as a cop.  
Murder, abuse, addiction.*

*Green spikes poke out briefly, replaced by blue when she says 'addiction.'*

JO (O.S.)

And personally?

MACK

*Yeah, that too.*

*Grey blobs emerge, tinged with purple.*

JO (O.S.)

Your daughter?

*The blobs grow larger, heavier, looking like they might suffocate Mack.*

ERIN (O.S.)  
Jo, breakfast!

Mack nods, opens the door, looks back at Jo.

MACK  
Don't forget the therapist, he does remote sessions.  
(pause)  
And Jo? Stay away from Neil.

Jo nods.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

A pink plastic GLOVE drives a yellow sponge across a plate.

JO (O.S.)  
Tell me your secret.

The glove hands the plate to a tea towel decorated with Dachshunds.

NEIL (O.S.)  
About what?

Jo dries the plate, turns toward Neil. He washes a mug.

JO  
How you get your pancakes so fluffy.

NEIL  
I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.

JO  
Fair enough.  
(pause)  
I was thinking. Maybe I could make lunch for you. Thank you for cooking.

Neil pulls the plug, draining the sink.

NEIL  
You can cook?

JO  
I make a mean grilled cheese.

NEIL  
With tomato?

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - LATER

A juicy slice of tomato SPLATS onto a plate decorated with Dachshunds. Neil eats a greasy grilled cheese SANDWICH.

He raises an eyebrow at Jo who sits across from him at the kitchen table. She delicately nibbles her sandwich.

NEIL

This is proper grilled cheese. Your Dad teach you?

JO

Grandma. The trick is lots of butter.

NEIL

That's a chef's trick.

JO

How'd you learn?

NEIL

I taught myself.

JO

Me too. As a painter.

NEIL

The portrait you did of Archie was really good. Weird, but good. When did he sit for you?

JO

I used a photo, of Erin and me, Mom and Dad. When we were a family.

Neil takes a large bite, chomps quietly.

JO (CONT'D)

You have family?

Neil sets down the sandwich, leans back in his chair.

NEIL

Just my Mom, in Florida. I send her money when I can.

He picks up the tomato, slurps it down.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Your Dad leave you anything?

JO

No. The government took everything. Even our home in Shadyside.

Neil bites into the sandwich.

JO (CONT'D)  
You think you might move in with  
Erin, with us?

Neil starts to choke, recovers, swallows.

JO (CONT'D)  
Sorry, if that's too personal. It's  
nice to have you around. Lily really  
likes you-

NEIL  
What about you?

He licks a dot of butter from the corner of his mouth.

JO  
Me? Yeah, I like you. I don't know  
you that well, but Erin's much calmer  
when you're around-

NEIL  
(laughing)  
I'm the Erin-whisperer am I?

Neil drinks Jo in, a flicker of a smile. He licks his  
FINGERS one at a time.

ERIN (O.S.)  
This looks cosy.

Neil and Jo startle as Erin enters through the back door.

JO  
I, wanted to make lunch for Neil. To  
thank him for cooking.

ERIN  
Awesome.

Erin heads toward the stairwell.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A plain jewellery box sits on a dresser. Erin opens it.

Neatly organised within a grid with separate compartments  
are a few rings, brooches, necklaces and pendants, including  
the red-lacquered heart necklace. Erin picks up an antique-  
looking purple brooch.

She pushes up her sweater sleeve, revealing her arm. It's  
covered in thin, criss-crossing SCARS.

She scrapes the sharp pin of the brooch across the underside of her arm, drawing blood.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A printer spits out a PHOTO. Mack picks it up. She stares at Aleksei's torso, covered in TATTOOS.

Mack holds the phone in one hand, photo in the other.

BILL (V.O.)

Aleksei was head of the Wolf Pack, a criminal organisation back in the Motherland.

MACK

Russian Mafia?

BILL (V.O.)

More like a small family business.

MACK

Nikolai?

BILL (V.O.)

Next in line. He's been off the radar for a few years. Paper trail ends in Berlin, where he may have gone by Nicklaus Holz.

MACK

Photos?

BILL (V.O.)

Nothing. He's a ghost...  
(voice fades)

Mack stares at the photo.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN

Jo enters the kitchen from the backyard, sees Neil and Lily at the breakfast bar. Neil, wearing the Dachshund apron, ties a blue apron on Lily.

LILY

Neil's teaching me how to make cupcakes!

Jo smiles, pours a glass of ice tea from the fridge, sits at the far end of the breakfast bar.

NEIL

Sift the flour. Pick up the bowl...  
(his voice fades)

Jo watches Neil. *She sees Neil's heartbeat, a steady pulse, surrounding him, pink swirls as he works with Lily.*

Jo smiles.

Lily pours flour from a bowl, loses control, all the flour pours out at once, creating a white cloud, dusting Lily and Neil's face in fine powder.

They laugh, Jo joins.

ERIN (O.S.)  
What's so funny?

Erin enters, wearing a turtle-neck and jeans.

LILY  
Mom, you seen my dragon wings?

ERIN  
They're probably with the dress-up stuff, in the basement.

Lily looks nervously at the cellar door.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
I'll get it for you, lady bug.

Erin opens the cellar door, flicks a light switch. A narrow wooden staircase descends into the basement.

INT. ERIN'S BASEMENT

Erin stares at something.

ERIN  
What the fuck?

A small room with a concrete floor and a low ceiling with pipes running the length.

The mean illumination of a single light bulb casts shadows on old furniture, cardboard boxes and, fist-sized holes punched into the drywall.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN

Erin enters the kitchen from the basement, sees Neil give Jo a strawberry.

JO  
Hey, Erin! You should try these-

Erin looks at Neil.

ERIN

What's with the holes in the basement?

JO

-strawberries.

NEIL

Holes?

(recognition dawns)

Oh right, that was the bad news.

Mice. I was looking for their nest.

ERIN

Fucking rodents.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Mack and Jo examine the photo of Aleksei's tattooed torso.

MACK

Nikolai and Aleksei were members of Volch'ya staya, the wolf pack, a criminal gang. That's their symbol.

(points to tattoo)

JO

If they're from Russia, wouldn't they speak with an accent?

MACK

They spent a lot of time as kids shuttling between Russia and the US. Aleksei speaks English without any accent. Safe to assume Nikolai would be the same.

(pause)

A few years ago, a competing gang took over their business, killed most of their people. Aleksei and Nikolai escaped to Germany. When Aleksei was convicted, the government froze their assets.

JO

What about Neil?

MACK

So far, he checks out. Social security number, Driver's license.

Jo examines the various tattoos on Aleksei's torso.

INT. JO'S STUDIO- LATER

Jo holds a pink pencil over a page in her sketchbook. In the foreground, Neil's portrait. In the background, pencil sketches of Lily, Erin, Jo and Archie. Jo connects Lily to Neil with pink swirls. The others aren't linked to Neil yet.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM

Erin stands before a mirror, removes her turtle-neck. Dark bruises encircle her neck. She traces a finger over one on her jugular notch, presses, grimaces.

## BEGIN FLASHBACK

Neil and Erin's reflection in the mirror. Neil stands behind her, a vacant look in his eyes. She wears a plain bra. His hands slide up her bare arms until they reach her neck.

As she stares at their reflection, his hands circle her neck, increasing the pressure, she struggles to breathe. She presses her hands against the mirror to keep her balance as Neil thrusts from behind, his hands still gripping her neck. She takes pleasure from the pain.

Then, the context changes. Erin as a pre-teen, wearing a red-lacquered heart necklace and a yellow and green, horizontal striped dress, stares into a mirror.

Two large hands, a man's, rest on either side of her neck. One hand grips her neck as the other slides toward the necklace, then lower.

## END FLASHBACK

Erin opens her eyes. Her reflection: anger, fear, shame.

She opens the jewellery box with shaking hands, removes the lacquered heart.

She picks up a heavy wooden brush and SMACKS the back of it hard against the heart. The pendant cracks. She smacks again, it breaks into pieces. She keeps smashing it, breathing heavy and crying. She pauses to catch her breath.

She looks into the mirror. Mascara runs down her cheeks. She wipes away the tears viciously.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY AND BACK PATIO - EARLY EVENING

Erin in the driver's seat, parked on the driveway, stares at her reflection in the rear-view mirror, sees dark circles under her eyes. She turns off the engine, exits the car.

Laughter drifts from the backyard. Male and female. Erin walks toward the patio, sees Jo and Neil, drinking wine, laughing, talking.

NEIL  
(to Erin)  
Hey hon, I made you some dinner-

ERIN  
I'm tired.

Erin trudges into the house.

JO  
Maybe I should-

NEIL  
I'll check on her, bring her some  
dinner. Let's finish this first.

Neil pours the remains of the bottle into Jo's glass.

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Erin sits on a double bed covered in a garish floral pattern, she drinks from a large glass of wine.

Jo appears in the doorway.

JO  
You okay?

ERIN  
(slurring)  
Peachy.

JO  
(hesitating)  
Okay.

Jo turns away.

ERIN  
You and Neil seem to be getting on.

Jo steps back into the room, looks at Erin.

JO  
Yeah, I wanted to get to know him  
better.  
(beat)  
And I need to tell you something.

Erin glares, makes a 'go ahead' gesture.

JO (CONT'D)  
I've been looking into Dad's death-

ERIN  
For Christ's sake Jo, leave it alone!

JO  
And I think Neil-

ERIN  
Wants to fuck you?

Jo looks at Erin in shocked silence. *A whirlwind of blood-red and sickly yellow rages around Erin.*

It's too much for Jo, who looks down at the floor.

Erin slides off the bed.

JO  
It's not like that-

Erin closer, a few inches from Jo.

ERIN  
Go find your own boyfriend you  
fucking freak!

Spittle flies from Erin's mouth, lands on Jo's face. Jo flinches, steps back into the hallway.

Erin SLAMS the door.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - LATER

A coloured pencil portrait of Erin with garish reds and yellows. SPLAT. A drop of clear liquid lands on it.

Jo wipes her tears, she's sitting on a floor cushion, a sketchbook with Erin's portrait on her lap.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

MACK (O.S.)  
Jo?

Jo wipes her tears, stands, opens door.

MACK (CONT'D)  
I got some phone records-

Mack notices dark circles under Jo's eyes, her swollen nose.

MACK  
You look like shit.

JO  
Had a fight with Erin.

MACK  
About?

JO  
Sister stuff.

MACK  
Okay. Well, we could take a break-

Jo looks at Mack, hopeful, nods.

EXT. JAKE'S BAR

MACK  
It's a little...rough 'round the  
edges in there.

JO  
I'm with you so-

MACK  
I'm not your...You call the therapist  
yet?

Jo shakes her head.

INT. JAKE'S BAR

The interior décor, a psychopath's basement crossed with a shanty-town. The walls, covered in tatty carpets and sheets of ply-board tagged with graffiti and questionable stains.

Jo, looks around, equally fascinated and horrified. Mack sees Jo's reaction.

MACK  
Beer's cheap here.

JO  
Does it come with a free hepatitis  
shot?

Jo approaches a panel of ply-board, examines a particularly vivid splotch of yellow, green and brown.

JO (CONT'D)  
Like a scatological Jackson Pollock.

Mack gets two beers and steers Jo towards a DART BOARD. Jo observes the patrons closely as she walks by them.

*First, a tattooed woman chats with the bartender. A halo of green pulses around the bartender. Pink sparks shoot off the woman as she leans towards him.*

An old man plays pool, knocks the eight ball into a corner pocket. A skinny woman sighs.

*A flash of red around her, which fades quickly to pink when she hands him ten dollars, laughs.*

A Goth woman punches the buttons of the jukebox, summoning a song [like Wilco's 'I am trying to break your heart.']

*Grey globules jostle around her, growing nearly black.*

Mack and Jo reach the dart board, Mack removes three darts.

JO

So many stories here.

Mack throws a dart.

MACK

Don't tell me you can see what people are thinking-

JO

What they're feeling.

MACK

How's that a story?

Jo smiles.

JO

When I don't know what they're talking about, I like to make up stories.

(pause)

The Goth girl by the jukebox. She followed her heart, quit her job, moved here, to be with her lover. But was ditched for a flight attendant, and now she drinks cheap beer to numb the pain.

Mack swigs the beer, considering. Throws second dart.

MACK

We're all numbing something.

JO

Like?

Mack shrugs.

MACK

Things we can't change, or forget.

JO

Or forgive?

Jo looks at Mack. *A pulse of blue around her as she sips the beer, throws a dart.*

Mack retrieves the darts from the board, hands them to Jo.

INT. JAKE'S BAR - LATER

The old man plays the tattooed woman at pool. The Goth girl plays a Lucinda Williams tune on the jukebox. Four empty bottles of beer clutter Mack and Jo's table.

MACK

When'd you realize you could see people's emotions?

JO

Nine, maybe ten years old. I didn't know what I was seeing at first.

(pause)

And I thought everyone could see what I saw, but when I asked them-

Jo smiles sadly, shakes her head.

JO (CONT'D)

So, I learned to keep it to myself. And not look too long at people I'm close to. Well, the adults anyway, their auras are complex, murky. I'm afraid I'll get sucked into their world and not find my way out.

(pause)

But kids, animals, strangers, that's fun. That's when I get to make up stories.

Jo hiccups. Mack laughs.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE JAKE'S BAR

The door opens onto a quiet street. Mack and Jo step out onto a narrow sidewalk. MUSIC from the bar follows them, fades as the door closes.

The music blares as the door opens, the tattooed woman stumbles out, drink in hand. The door closes, the music fades.

The woman spills a RED drink, it splashes on Jo's shoes. The woman smiles apologetically, mutters, walks away.

Jo looks down, blanks out, her body stiffens.

[Jo's blank-out: She walks barefoot down the silent white hallway.]

A BUS sprays water from a large puddle as it speeds toward Mack and Jo. Mack's engrossed in her phone.

Jo's shuffles toward the road. The bus, 15 feet away.

Mack looks up, sees bus, grabs for Jo, misses.

The bus, 10 feet away. Mack grabs Jo, pulls her back. The bus whizzes by, their clothes flap in the slipstream.

Mack talks to Jo. Jo doesn't respond. Mack holds her lightly, rocks her.

MACK

You're okay, you're safe now. You're okay, you're safe.

[Jo's blank-out: gradually the SOUND returns. Above the faint MUSIC from the Jukebox, Mack's comforting voice '- you're safe now.']

INT. TAXI DRIVING ON SMITHFIELD STREET BRIDGE

Mack and Jo in the back of a taxi, Jo looks out a window.

MACK

You need help, Jo. Professional help. You could have died tonight.

Jo stares at the blue steel GIRDERS of the bridge flashing past, the river below.

JO

I don't remember.

MACK

I'm not sure I can do this again. If you can't help yourself...

Mack, fighting painful memories, looks out her window.

JO

Okay Mack, I promise.

Mack breathes out slowly, nods.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - DAY

Mack pours coffee from a thermos into a mug, gives it to Jo.

MACK  
You look paler, if that's possible.

JO  
I feel like someone put little socks  
over my teeth-

Mack steps back, knocks over a sketchbook, which lands on the floor, opening to the page with Neil's portrait.

MACK  
What the...I told you to leave him  
alone.

Mack picks up the sketchbook, looks at the portrait.

JO  
But he's here ALL the time. I've been  
careful-

MACK  
(staring at sketch)  
Leave Neil to me. I don't want you  
getting involved.

JO  
I'm ALREADY involved-

Mack sets the sketchbook down, looks at Jo.

MACK  
What's that mean?

JO  
I can't not talk to him, that would  
look suspicious. I've been very  
careful, asking obtuse questions-

MACK  
You don't understand how dangerous  
Nikolai is. And if Neil is Nikolai-

JO  
But if he's not Nikolai-

MACK  
Stay away from him.

Jo crosses her arms over her chest, shrugs.

JO

Okay.

MACK

I got Archie's phone records. Shows calls to Lisa, an incoming call from Erin, plus a few calls from an untraceable number.

JO

Nico?

Mack shrugs.

MACK

No calls to or from Neil's phone.

PING.

Mack looks at her phone, reads message.

MACK (CONT'D)

Gotta go.

Mack leaves.

Jo reaches in her pocket, takes out a piece of paper, unfolds it. It's the photo of Aleksei and Nikolai. She traces a finger over Nikolai.

LILY (O.S.)

Jo!

Jo pins the photo to the board and leaves.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

Lily, giggling, out of breath, as she hula-hoops in the yard. She points to another hoop on the ground.

Jo steps inside the hoop, picks it up, swings it round her waist, awkwardly tries to keep the momentum.

Lily and Jo laugh.

INT. JO'S STUDIO - EARLY EVENING

Jo paints Mack's portrait.

NEIL (O.S.)

Jo? Okay if I come in?

JO

(under her breath)

Crap!

Jo covers the evidence board with a sheet. She smooths her ponytail, unlocks and opens the door.

Neil holds a tray with lasagne, a CANDLE, a bottle of wine.

JO (CONT'D)

Oh, wow.

He forges inside, forcing Jo to step aside.

NEIL

You didn't get to finish lunch today.

He sets the tray on the floor. He lights the candle.

JO

Thanks. I just have to...  
(motions to phone)

Jo steps out, leaves the door open.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

She backs farther away from the studio, keeps an eye on Neil as she calls Mack.

MACK (V.O.)

Leave a message.

A gust of wind closes the studio door. Jo walks toward it, stops when Mack's voicemail BEEPS.

JO

(whispering)

Neil just showed up at the studio.  
He's brought dinner, so it's a bit awkward, but I don't think it's dangerous...

(voice fades)

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Neil lifts the sheet on the Board, scans it quickly.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

The door opens and Neil steps out, phone in hand.

JO

(on phone)

When you get this message-

NEIL

Sorry, I have a work emergency.

(wiggles phone)

I'll be back as soon as I can.

Neil waves as he walks toward the driveway. Jo waves back.

JO  
(on phone)  
Call me.

EXT. HALLORAN'S BAR

Neil walks toward a derelict building. A woman (**HANNA**, 24) wearing a short dress, boots and tights, holds the door.

NEIL  
Hanna!

Hanna pauses, turns to face him. She's 6-months' pregnant.

HANNA  
(faint German accent)  
Nicki, what kind of shit hole is  
this?

He grabs the back of her head, pulls her in for a long kiss.

INT. HALLORAN'S BAR

A dive bar. Posters for bands, pawn shops, and missing persons decorate the walls.

Neil beelines to a red vinyl BOOTH occupied by an old man nursing a bottle of Iron City.

NEIL  
Out.

The old man's bloodshot eyes appraise Neil. He mutters under his breath, leaves.

Hanna slides into the booth. Neil heads to the bar.

HANNA  
Fuck!

She examines the hole in her tights, stares at the crack in the vinyl seat.

HANNA (CONT'D)  
(yelling to Neil)  
You owe me a new pair of tights!

Neil returns with two bottles of beer, slides next to Hanna.

NEIL  
The freak sister is sniffing around.

HANNA  
You fucking her now, too?

Neil takes a long drag from the bottle, sets it down. His jaw tightens.

NEIL  
I slept with Erin three times and we didn't-

HANNA  
Like a two for one deal, yes?

NEIL  
-even kiss. I was thinking of you the whole time, babe-

He reaches to stroke her hair, she bats his hand away, takes an EMERY BOARD from her purse, files her nails.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Jo found an old picture of me and Aleksei. It's a shit photo, but-

HANNA  
How'd she get it?

NEIL  
Don't know. Maybe Archie, if he wanted to warn them about 'Nico.'  
(makes quote gesture)

HANNA  
Now that he's gone, you don't have to play nice. We need money...

Hanna blows on her nails, sets the file down, rubs her tummy. Neil taps the bottom of the beer bottle against the table.

NEIL  
I know.

He reaches out, strokes her belly, his features soften.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
A fresh start, meine Liebling.

HANNA  
With no loose ends.

Neil takes a long swig of beer, nods.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo works on Mack's portrait. The door opens, it's Mack.

MACK  
Where's Neil?

JO  
He left. Work emergency.

Mack spots the sheet draped over the evidence board.

MACK  
Reckless, letting him in.

JO  
He was here for a minute. And if he's not Nikolai, then he's just some guy dating my sister.

(pause)  
You have any more on Neil?

MACK  
I'm working on it. I put a tracker on his car, but I can't snap my fingers and get answers.

JO  
No, you can't do that anymore.

MACK  
What?

JO  
If you were still a cop, if you didn't quit.

MACK  
I didn't quit!

Mack sees the portrait, recognises her face.

MACK (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

JO  
It's your story, Mack.

Jo points to a greenish swirl.

JO (CONT'D)  
You didn't retire, you quit.

She gestures to another section, it's the face from Mack's screensaver, the young woman with haunting eyes.

JO (CONT'D)  
 You feel guilty about your daughter.  
 You couldn't help her.

Mack clenches her fists, tries to control her building sense of anger, betrayal.

MACK  
 Stay outta my personal life. You don't want me getting into your business.

JO  
 What does that mean?

MACK  
 You're 22, living with your sister, who pays all the bills and does the laundry and gives you a weekly allowance. You hide away in your little studio and paint stories about other people's truth, but you won't face your own.

Jo shakes her head, confused, defensive.

MACK (CONT'D)  
 You ever wonder why you have blank-outs? You ever think, what did you see or do, that's so terrible you can't face it?

Jo wraps her arms around her like shielding. Finally finds her voice.

JO  
 Your daughter killed herself, didn't she?

Mack's face, a palette of grief, guilt, pain.

MACK  
 Don't...

Mack chokes up, can't speak. She shakes her head, leaves.

The door BANGS shut.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN

Lily at the breakfast bar drawing with a blue crayon. Erin comes in, hugs her from behind, looks over Lily's shoulder.

ERIN  
 That's nice.

LILY  
That's you and me, Aunt Jo and Neil.

ERIN  
Where's Neil?

Lily shrugs.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Time for bed.

LILY  
But-

ERIN  
No ifs, ands or buts, lady bug, get a  
move on.

Erin calls Neil, gets voicemail.

NEIL (V.O.)  
Leave a message-

Erin ends the call. She pours a large glass of WINE, drinks  
it quickly, pours another.

She leans against the window, looks into the backyard, sees  
a light on in Jo's studio.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Jo lifts the sheet on the evidence board long enough to  
remove the photo of Aleksei and Nikolai. She places it on  
the easel near an in-progress painting of Neil's portrait.

Erin enters, drinking wine. She takes in the dinner for two  
and the candle.

ERIN  
(slurring slightly)  
Very romantic.

Jo looks at the dinner, back to Erin, blushing.

JO  
Neil wanted to-

ERIN  
You are really something.

JO  
I didn't-

Erin sees Neil's portrait.

ERIN

The fuck?

Erin approaches the portrait, tips the glass of wine on it, streaking it with red.

JO

Erin!

ERIN

You can sleep here tonight, with your boyfriend.

Erin kicks a jar of murky water. It shatters against the wall. She leaves.

Jo turns to Neil's portrait, tries to wipe the wine, but it mixes with the wet paint, creating a red mist that obscures his face.

EXT. ARLINGTON STREET & ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tyres roll slowly over gravel. Neil parks his car on the cemetery side of the road.

Heat lighting dances across the graveyard, flickering shadows across the tombstones.

NEIL (O.S.)

Wait here.

He exits, adjusting a HANDGUN tucked into the back of his jeans, pulls his jacket over it.

He crosses the street to Erin's driveway, slides along the side of the house, staying out of sight.

He pops his head up briefly to look through a window. Erin's asleep on a couch, barely visible in the light of a flickering TV. An empty wine glass on the coffee table.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

Neil peeks through the window. Jo's alone, sitting on the floor, drinking wine from the bottle.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Neil enters. Jo looks up, surprised.

NEIL

Sorry I had to leave. You okay?

He shuts the door behind him and sits next to Jo.

Jo's nervous, the photo of Nikolai is on the easel, next to the ruined portrait of Neil. Her eyes dart briefly to it, then back to Neil.

She turns to face him, hoping to engage in a conversation so he doesn't notice the photo or portrait.

JO  
I had a fight with Erin, over you.

Neil raises an eyebrow, holds out his hand, toward the wine bottle.

NEIL  
She's been wound pretty tight lately.

Jo sighs, passes the bottle, he takes a swig.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
(motioning to bottle)  
Pretty good.

Jo nods to the nearly finished plate of lasagne.

JO  
Lasagne is my favourite.

NEIL  
I know. I wanted to do something special for you.

JO  
You think I'm  
(holding up air  
quotes)  
special?

Neil passes the bottle, Jo drinks, sets the wine down between them.

NEIL  
You're different. You see things others don't.

Lightning illuminates the room for a second. He drinks.

JO  
Well, with you, I think, there's more than what meets the eye.

NEIL  
There's thinking, and then there's feeling.

Jo takes a long swig.

JO  
How do you feel, under those baggy  
clothes?

Neil raises his eyebrows, laughs.

JO (CONT'D)  
Let's see.

He considers for a moment. Then he lifts up his shirt to his neckline. He's cut like a fine diamond. Muscles ripple under his skin, covered in TATTOOS.

JO (CONT'D)  
Impressive.

NEIL  
(smiling)  
A troubled youth.

Jo pales when she sees the wolf's head tattoo, same as Aleksei's. She searches for something to discuss. A cluster of blue gems catches her eye. She points to them.

JO (CONT'D)  
What are those?

NEIL  
Sapphires. You like them?

JO  
I like blue.

Neil drops the shirt.

NEIL  
You blue, Jo? You ever think about  
killing yourself, like your Dad?

Jo sits back suddenly, eyes wide. *Neil's aura, dark red spikes, some almost black, vibrate with a frightening intensity.*

She looks down at the floor.

JO  
No, why would, that's awful.

NEIL  
Imagine how Erin would feel, first  
her father and then her sister. And  
Lily?

JO  
I would never-

NEIL

I dunno, never say never. You're so fragile, Jo. Still grieving from the death of your Dad.

Jo stands, edges away from Neil, toward the back of the studio, still looking at the floor.

JO

I think you should leave, now-

NEIL

You're hard work. Erin's even worse.

Neil stands, drains the last of the wine bottle.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Lily's alright, but if she stays in this family she's gonna be fucked up too.

He looks at the photo on the easel.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Where'd you get it?

Jo looks toward the door. Neil moves to block her escape.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Archie...Leon?

Jo struggling to think quickly, push down the panic.

JO

I don't know. I found it.

She nods towards the door.

JO (CONT'D)

Slipped under the door. I wasn't sure what it meant.

Neil smirks.

NEIL

But now you do.

Jo crosses her arms over her chest, shrugs.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Give me the sapphires, and I'll leave you alone.

JO

Sapphires?

He lifts up his shirt. Jo looks at him. The *red spikes now interspersed with blue sparks.*

NEIL

*The ones that Archie bought with MY-*

*He SLAPS the sapphire tattoo with the palm of his hand, red and blue sparks fly in all directions, making Jo flinch.*

She looks back at the floor.

NEIL (CONT'D)

-money. They belong to me.

JO

I don't-

Neil drops the shirt.

NEIL

I've turned the house upside down. If he gave them to you or Erin-

JO

He didn't give us anything!

Jo shakes her head. Takes a deep breath. Tries to collect herself, think of a way out.

JO (CONT'D)

He could have hid them, after he got out. Maybe even here.

Jo pulls canvasses away from the wall, gradually working her way to the door. She tilts one toward her and stops.

JO (CONT'D)

What the...

Jo reaches down.

Neil peers behind the canvas. Jo throws a jar of murky water in his face and breaks for the door, opens it a few inches.

NEIL

Bitch!

Thunder RUMBLES, shaking the walls.

Neil wipes his eyes, lunges for Jo. He SLAMS the door shut, pins Jo against it.

She makes a fist, extends quickly from the elbow, strikes backward, lands a hit near his groin. He wheezes, steps back. Jo wiggles free.

CRACK as the wine bottle strikes the top of her head. Jo crumples to the floor.

Neil drags her away from the door.

He sets down the wine bottle, opens a bottle of turpentine, douses a cloth with it. The candle FLAMES lick it.

He knocks the candle over, drops the flaming cloth on his portrait. The flames burn holes in the canvas, melting his face. The photo of the brothers catches, Aleksei burning first, then Nikolai.

The door opens: it's Mack.

Neil draws his gun. Mack crouches, gun in hand. Two GUNSHOTS explode as THUNDER crashes.

Mack rolls toward Jo.

A bright red blossom appears on Neil's shirt, near his shoulder.

Smoke fills the room, burning Neil's eyes. He stumbles out, closes the door behind him.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO

Neil watches SMOKE pour from the window. As his eyes clear, he steps toward the shed.

An **ELDERLY NEIGHBOUR** peeks over the fence.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOUR  
I've called 911! Are you hurt-

A siren wails in the distance. Neil slips away.

INT. JO'S STUDIO

Mack smothers flames with her jacket, coughs, passes out.

EXT. JO'S STUDIO/ERIN'S BACKYARD

Smoke billows from the window, under the door.

The door bursts open. Jo drags Mack out.

Jo and Mack stand for a moment, catching their breath.

Mack touches her left sleeve, sees blood. She checks something on her phone, fishes a keyring out of a pocket.

MACK  
Look after Gizmo.

Mack hands Jo the keys.

JO  
I'm so sorry, I should have-

MACK  
I gotta go.

JO  
What? You're hurt-

MACK  
I'm alright.

JO  
What about Nikolai-

MACK  
I'm gonna take care of him. You'll be safe.

Mack walks away. Jo watches Mack leave, then takes a step toward the studio but the heat forces her back.

INT. ERIN'S LIVING ROOM/EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

LILY  
Mom? Mom!

Lily shakes Erin awake. Erin, groggy, tries to focus.

ERIN  
What, what is it?

Lily drags her mother to the kitchen. They look out the window. Smoke rises from the shed. Jo stands motionless, watching the destruction.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Oh God. Stay here!

Erin rushes out the door--

-- into the BACKYARD...She grips Jo's arm.

ERIN  
What happened?!

JO  
(dazed)  
The fire, I don't know how-

ERIN  
Are you hurt?

Jo winces as she touches the back of her head.

JO  
My head. Neil-

Lily runs out, sobbing. Erin leads her back to the house, then returns to Jo, but a flurry of activity prevent the sisters from speaking.

First the firefighters arrive and Erin speaks with them, then an EMT, who Erin directs toward Jo.

EXT. MACK'S DRIVEWAY

Mack dials a number as she walks down her driveway.

MACK  
(on phone)  
Neil Chatham tried to kill Jo and me.  
He's on the run.

BILL (O.S.)  
You okay?

MACK  
Bullet graze, nothing serious.

BILL (O.S.)  
Gonna have to call you Swiss Cheese  
you get any more holes.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

The firefighters douse the shed. An EMT examines Jo, flashes a light in her eyes.

EMT  
You look okay, but you might have a  
concussion. Let's get you to the  
hospital for-

JO  
My sister's a nurse, she can look  
after me.

The EMT looks at Erin, who nods. The EMT shrugs, packs up.

EXT. MACK'S DRIVEWAY

Mack on the phone walks toward her SUV.

BILL (V.O)  
-put protection on the family, and an  
APB on Chatham. You get your arm  
checked out-

MACK  
Got something to do first.

BILL (V.O)  
Don't do anything stu-

Mack ends the call, brings up a map of Pittsburgh with a dot moving North on Route 51. The dot turns left onto Telford Street, stops.

Mack smiles, then her nostrils flare, her eyes widen, something's wrong.

The barrel of a gun presses against the back of her head.

NEIL (O.S.)  
Hands on the vehicle, officer.

It starts to rain.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD

A police car pulls into the driveway. The driver (**KYUNG-WAN**, 27) exits, speaks with the firefighters, keeping an eye on the back of the house. The family is visible through the kitchen window.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN

Lily hugs Jo. Erin stands near the sink.

LILY  
I was so scared-

JO  
I'm alright. Just a bump on the head.

ERIN  
Tea?

Jo nods. Erin fills a kettle, puts it on the stove.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
(to Lily)  
Okay, lady bug, it's way past your bedtime.

Lily opens her mouth to protest, stops. Hugs Jo again.

LILY  
'night.

JO  
Goodnight.

Lily heads up the stairwell. Erin drops a teabag in a mug.

JO (CONT'D)

I have to tell you something-

Erin leans back against the kitchen counter, looks at Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

I think Neil started the fire-

ERIN

Neil? Why? The firefighters said it was a candle.

(pause)

You had one of your episodes didn't you? You can't remember-

JO

He's not who he says he is! His real name is Nikolai Volkov. Dad put his brother in jail and he-

ERIN

Nikolai? Volkov...

(laughing)

A high-pitched WHISTLE of the kettle boiling. Erin turns to the stove, her back to Jo, pours water into a mug.

JO

He might have killed Dad-

ERIN

You gotta stop this obsession-

JO

Why don't you care about finding the truth? It's the least you could do as Dad's little-

Erin turns to face Jo.

ERIN

Don't talk to me about truth. You don't know...

Erin shakes her head, stirs the tea. Jo tries to think of some way to convince Erin.

JO

Neil's tattoos-

Erin looks at the ceiling, then back to Jo.

ERIN  
You've seen him naked-

JO  
Oh my god no. That's not the point.

ERIN  
(slurring)  
Well what is the fucking point? You think someone killed Archie, when he killed himself! You think Neil is a Russian spy, so you try to fuck the truth out of him? You've always been strange, but this-

Erin unsteadily waves a hand, indicating the whole of Jo.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
-is a whole new level of crazy.

JO  
(takes a deep breath)  
I can prove it to you.

ERIN  
Fucking awesome. I'll be right here.

Jo heads out the back door.

Erin looks at the cup of tea, dumps it down the drain. She pours a large glass of wine, drinks.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY AND BACKYARD

The firefighters are leaving as Jo walks out the back door.

She passes a police car in the driveway. Kyung-wan on the radio, in the car, nods to her. She doesn't notice, she's trudging toward the remains of her studio.

She stands in the rain looking at the ruins. Only a partial corner of the studio remains.

Mack's evidence board is ash, as are nearly all the paintings. Jo dejected, absorbs the destruction.

She sifts through the debris, finds: her sketchbook, the painting of Archie she did to celebrate his return and the family photo. They're damaged, but salvageable.

She picks up the items, walks toward the garage.

It rains harder.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

Jo sets the items on a shelf, looks at the family photo. Heat lightning flashes outside, giving a strobe effect.

*Archie's face changes from benevolent to malignant.*

INT. MACK'S SUV PARKED IN DRIVEWAY

Mack observes Neil in the rear-view mirror as lightning flashes outside. Mack sits in the driver's seat, Neil behind her, pressing the gun to her head.

NEIL

Airport.

Mack slowly shakes her head. Neil presses a hand on her injured arm. Mack winces and breathes heavy, through the pain. Mack's blood seeps between Neil's fingers.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

Rain water runs along the floor, from the back of the garage to the front, soaking Jo's shoes.

She grabs the painting of Archie, tries to set it on a higher shelf. It tilts forward, the edge of the frame smacks the bridge of Jo's nose, creating a cut that bleeds.

She sets the painting down, picks up the family photo, as she bends down, blood drips onto her t-shirt.

Lightning flashes. Her blood-splattered shirt reminds her of something buried deep in her unconscious.

[Jo's blank-out: The colours start to drain away, the sound of the rain fades.

She breathes deeply, whispers to herself.

JO (O.S.)

My feet are wet. My hands are cold.

(pause)

I can do this. I can remember.

The rain, faint, gets a little louder.

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

I will remember.

INT. MACK'S SUV PARKED IN DRIVEWAY

Neil, sweating, grimacing, holds the gun to Mack's head.

NEIL

Drive!

MACK

Where's this end, Nikolai? You kill me, you're going away for a looong time.

Neil, eyes like daggers, seething.

NEIL

I said fucking drive!

Neil peers into Mack's eyes. Takes a different tack.

NEIL (CONT'D)

You gotta death wish, huh?

Mack's face, a study in impassivity.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Well think about who you leave behind. What's gonna happen to Jo?

Mack's jaw tightens. Neil smiles.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE

JO

I will remember.

Jo taps the acupressure point and breathes deeply. Rather than completely blanking out she experiences strobe-like snippets of memory, like internal flashes of lightning.

Flash: 9-year-old Jo wears a nightgown, stands barefoot on a white tiled floor as pink-tinged water flows over her feet.

Adult Jo in the garage, rain running over her feet.

Flash: Young Jo cries, runs blindly into a white door, her nose bleeds, dropping blood onto her nightgown.

Adult Jo looks at the blood spatter on her t-shirt.

Flash: Young Jo tries to open the door, but can't. She dips her fingers in the RED blood on her nightgown, smears it, painting with her fingers.

Adult Jo takes several deep breaths. The colour and sound return, the blank-out is over.]

INT. MACK'S SUV PARKED IN DRIVEWAY

Mack studies Neil in the mirror as lightning flares. Neil's face flashes to Mack's memory of his portrait, his affection for Lily.

MACK  
You got kids?

NEIL  
Drive.

MACK  
I'm sure you had your reasons for attacking Jo, destroying the studio. Maybe it was an accident.

Neil glares at Mack, mouths the word 'drive.'

MACK (CONT'D)  
We do crazy things to protect our kids.

NEIL  
Shut the fuck-

MACK  
Assault and destruction of property. You'd be looking at 3 to 5. Plus time off for good behaviour. You could be out in 2.

NEIL  
I said shut the fuck up and drive!

MACK  
Time enough to watch your kid grow up. But kidnapping, murder, of a law enforcement officer? That's a pine box sentence, Nikolai.  
(pause)  
What about your co-conspirator? Whoever is driving your car. Your wife, your kid? The police are already on the way to Telford to pick them up.

Neil pales, breathes heavily, sweat rolls down his face.

MACK (CONT'D)  
You wouldn't want them to be caught in the crossfire, would you?

Neil coughs up blood, wheezes, tries to focus on Mack but wavers.

MACK (CONT'D)

Turn yourself in. Do your time, then  
you're free.

Neil coughs again. Like a snake striking, Mack snatches the  
gun from Neil and turns in her seat, facing him.

He slowly raises his hands.

INT./EXT. ERIN'S GARAGE

Jo puts the family photo on the shelf. She picks up the  
sketchbook, turns toward the driveway, rain patters on the  
roof and hood of Kyung-Wan's cruiser.

As she leaves the garage, Kyung-wan waves her over.

KYUNG-WAN

Ms. Cardinal...

He sees the blood on Jo's shirt, pauses.

KYUNG-WAN (CONT'D)

Neil Chatham's in custody.

Jo relieved, closes her eyes for a moment. She takes a step  
toward the police car, looks at Kyung-wan.

JO (O.S.)

Mack?

*A soft pulse of blue.*

KYUNG-WAN

*Getting treated at Allegheny. Should  
be released tonight or tomorrow.*

Jo nods, heads toward the house.

KYUNG-WAN (CONT'D)

Detective Glade wants to speak with  
you and your sister-

Jo pauses, sees Erin through the kitchen windows.

JO (O.S.)

It's been a long night-

Erin drags a hand along the counter-top to balance, stumbles  
toward the stairwell.

JO (CONT'D)

-and Erin's not feeling well.

KYUNG-WAN

He can come by tomorrow.

Jo nods, continues toward the house.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - JO'S BEDROOM

Clothes land in a bag. Jo adds her sketchbook and the book from Mack as Erin watches, leaning unsteadily against the door frame.

JO

Don't worry, I'm leaving, going to Mack's.

ERIN

(heavy slurring)

You might have a concussion.

JO

You can text me every hour to make sure I'm alive.

ERIN

Don't go-

JO

We'll talk tomorrow, when you're, clearer.

ERIN

What's that supposed to mean-

Jo picks up her bag, slips by Erin.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Jo sits at the table with Gizmo curled on her lap. She holds a business card in one hand, her phone in the other. She punches in a number.

A RECEPTIONIST answers.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Dr. Cole's office.

Jo, shaky voice, but determined.

JO

I'd like to make an appointment.

(pause)

As soon as possible.

Gizmo perks up, looks at Jo.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN - EARLY AFTERNOON

Jo fills Gizmo's water bowl, places it on the floor.

The back door opens, Mack steps in. Jo hesitates, then hugs her. Gizmo dances around their feet.

They pull out of the hug.

JO  
How are you?

MACK  
Right as rain. Looks like you got  
into a scrape.

Jo touches her nose, nods.

JO  
Coffee?

Mack smiles, sits at the table. Jo pours coffee into the **World's Greatest Mom** mug.

JO (CONT'D)  
I'm starting to remember what  
happened with my Mom.

Jo gives the mug to Mack and joins her at the table.

JO (CONT'D)  
I found her in the bathroom, got  
locked inside.

Mack in the middle of sipping her coffee, sets the mug down.

JO (CONT'D)  
Dr. Cole says my blank-out are a  
coping mechanism, triggered by things  
that remind me of the traumatic  
event. Seeing something red on my  
feet reminds me of the water  
overflowing from the tub.

Mack shakes her head.

MACK  
That's intense, Jo. I'm sorry.

JO  
He thinks painting could be a way to  
access my memories, without being  
overwhelmed by them.

MACK  
Huh. You did a remote session?

Jo nods.

Mack looks at the wall next to the table, two pictures are hung: Jo's portrait of Gizmo and a family photo of Mack and her 19-year-old daughter holding a puppy-sized Gizmo with a blue bow on his collar.

Mack looks at the family photo.

MACK (CONT'D)  
He helped me with...  
(pause)  
My daughter got hooked on fentanyl,  
got mixed up with some dealers...was  
in and out jail, rehab...

Mack looks at her coffee.

MACK (CONT'D)  
The day she got out, I was supposed  
to meet her, but I got tied up at  
work, and by the time I got there, it  
was too late. She OD'd.

Jo reaches her hand out, touches Mack's hand. They look at each other. A mix of grief, pain, understanding.

JO  
I'm sorry, about your daughter.  
(pause)  
And Neil, and what I said about you-

MACK  
I was pretty brutal too-

JO  
You were right. I have to take  
responsibility, sort my life out.

Mack smiles.

MACK  
Don't we all.

Gizmo looks expectantly at Mack, who leans back in her chair, creating space. Gizmo hops up, licks her face.

MACK  
(to Gizmo)  
Alright, enough.

She shifts Gizmo so that he faces Jo. He settles on Mack's lap. She pets him.

MACK (CONT'D)  
You talked with Erin yet?

Jo shakes her head.

JO  
She's so angry.

MACK  
Sounds like that's her coping mechanism.

JO  
For what?

MACK  
I dunno. You can stay here until you're ready.

Jo nods, grateful.

MACK (CONT'D)  
You heard about Neil? He's in jail, awaiting trial. No bail.

JO  
I have to see him.

MACK  
That's not a good-

JO  
I didn't get a chance to ask if he killed my Dad.

MACK  
You think you'll be able to get the truth from him now, when you couldn't before--

JO  
I saw the real Neil that night. He peeled back the layers.

Mack sips her coffee.

MACK  
I still don't think it's a good idea.

JO  
But you'll help.

MACK  
Absolutely not.

INT. JAIL - INTERVIEW ROOM - AFTERNOON

CLINK. CLANK. CLINK. Neil's handcuffed hands shift over a metal table in a small room. A lawyer (**MELANIE**, 30s) in a cheap blue suit sits beside him.

Across the table: Jo and Mack. A guard blocks the door.

Jo's hand squeezes the stress ball in her pocket.

NEIL  
Melanie says if I tell you what I know about Archie, you'll put in a good word with the DA.

Mack nods. Neil spreads his hands in a 'go ahead' gesture.

JO  
Did you kill Archie?

Jo gazes at him intently, tuning into his breathing, facial expressions. *A background aura of red slowly pulses around him. Then a spike of blue when he says-*

NEIL  
*Killing him doesn't get me what I want.*

JO  
The sapphires?

NEIL  
I was encouraging him-

Neil spreads his hands as far as the handcuffs allow, and smiles, though it doesn't reach his eyes.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
-to do the right thing, for his family. But he was selfish.

JO  
He wasn't, he was very generous.

Jo fights to keep looking at Neil. *The red aura dulls a bit, blue sparks fly when he asks-*

NEIL  
*Did he tell you he'd stashed something away for a rainy day? That people might come looking for it?*

Jo shifts in her seat, squeezes the stress ball.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
No. For him, sapphires...

Neil flips the palm of one hand up as if he's holding something in it.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
daughters...

He flips the other hand palm up, raises and lowers each hand as if comparing the weights, like a balance, until they rest at the same height.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Same thing. He owns them, he can do what he wants with them.

Jo, eyes watering, shakes her head, looks down at the table.

JO  
(to Mack)  
Let's go.

Jo stands, heads for the door, Mack behind her. Before she exits...

NEIL  
(smirking)  
I'm just trying to help you Jo, see the light. See who Archie really was.

On Jo. Anguish, disbelief, uncertainty.

INT. MACK'S SUV DRIVING IN PITTSBURGH

Mack drives as Jo draws in a sketchbook, a likeness of Neil emerges. Mack glances at Jo.

MACK  
So?

JO  
He didn't kill my Dad.

Mack nods in agreement.

JO (CONT'D)  
Maybe my Dad did commit suicide, to try and save us. So that others wouldn't come looking, use us as leverage.

Mack looks back at the road, shrugs noncommittally.

MACK

What do your spidey-senses tell you?

Jo flips the pages of the sketchbook.

MACK (CONT'D)

Anybody been acting suspicious?

Jo lands on the page with a portrait of Erin, the one with yellow and red spikes.

JO

(to herself)

She's scared and angry, whenever I brought up Dad...

MACK

Who?

Jo flips to a sketch of Archie, it's an early practice sketch of his portrait.

Mack drives over a bridge, the portrait dims and illuminates as the sunlight filters through the girders.

*Archie's features change from charming to cold, manipulative.*

JO (O.S.)

*Why?*

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jo picks up the family photo, the one she used to paint the portrait of Archie. She traces a finger over Archie.

Her finger moves to the stuffed rabbit held by her younger self. She breathes deeply, sets the photo down, looks at a blank canvas.

She flashes back to her CHILDHOOD HOME, when she and Erin were kids (8 and 13) and paints.

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE MIXED WITH PRESENT-DAY JO PAINTING

The sound of WATER running. Young Jo, barefoot in a nightgown, walks down a hallway, carries a stuffed bunny rabbit...As the memory fades, the rabbit becomes a brown triangle on the canvas.

Jo in the girls' bedroom, picks up Erin's lacquered heart necklace, tries to put it on. Young Erin grabs it...The necklace fades into a bloody anatomical heart.

The sound of WATER running. Jo in the hallway, her hand on a doorknob. She turns it, opens the door...Door fades into a grey-ish white rectangle.

Jo and Erin in their bedroom. Archie in the doorway. Erin gets off the bed, takes Archie's hand, leads him away... Archie fades into a large sea-foam green figure looming over Erin, crushing the anatomical heart.

The sound of WATER running gets louder as Jo steps from the hallway into the white-tiled bathroom. Pink-tinged water runs over her bare feet...Water fades to shiny red puddles.

Erin at the kitchen table with their mother, who reads a newspaper. Archie stands behind Erin, places a hand on the back of her neck. Her mother's face tight, pinched, she turns a page...Mother fades to a swirl of yellow, cowering below Archie's sea-foam green figure.

The sound of WATER running. Jo looks up from the tiled floor toward a clawfoot bathtub. Her elegant mother, in a black suit, wrists slit, lies in a tub of bloody water that spills onto the floor...Bloody bathtub fades to a casket filled with red roses.

In the kitchen, Mother yells at Erin-

JO'S MOTHER

Liar!

-and slaps her...Slap fades into a knife plunged into the heart.

In the bathroom, WATER running, Jo turns away from the bathtub, runs into the door, smacks her nose. It bleeds onto her nightgown. She tries to open the door but can't.

YOUNG JO

Let me out! Let me out, Let me out!

...Door becomes barbed wire.

Jo walks into a bedroom, sees Erin cutting her arm with a needle...Cuts fade to slashes of red.

Sound of WATER running. Jo sits on the bathroom floor, hoarse from yelling, can only whisper now.

YOUNG JO (CONT'D)

Let me out.

She dips fingers on her bloody nightgown, paints on the bunny...Fades to red slashes on the brown triangle.

END FLASHBACK

SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT as crimson flecks cover the canvas.

Jo flicks paint angrily.

She sets down the brush, steps away from the painting. She's unsteady, shaking.

The painting is sombre and vibrant, and beautifully violent.

EXT. ERIN'S GARAGE

The sound of RETCHING. Jo bent over, outside the garage.

Mack comes round the corner.

MACK

Jo?

Jo stands up, wipes her mouth, RETCHES again. Mack holds back her hair. Jo straightens up, leans against wall.

MACK (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Jo shakes her head, points to the painting. Mack looks at it. Takes a deep breath.

MACK (CONT'D)

Shit.

Mack hugs Jo.

Jo's voice, muffled in Mack's jacket.

JO

I have to talk to Erin.

MACK

Okay, do you want me to-

JO

I have to do this on my own.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

A chef's KNIFE slices through a red pepper. Erin grips the handle. Jo, at the breakfast bar, studies her big sister.

ERIN

Coffee?

JO  
No thanks.

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

ERIN  
Cops told me about Neil.  
(long beat)  
Fucking piece of shit.

Erin's jaw quivers. She tries to hold it together. A few tears leak out.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
(under her breath)  
Stupid.

Erin wipes the tears viciously with the back of her hand.

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
You must think I'm a fucking moron. I  
thought he actually liked me. Ha!

Jo moves closer to Erin.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Stupid to think that he, that anyone  
could...

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

JO  
He gets into people's heads, that's  
what he-

ERIN  
(scathing, sarcastic)  
He wanted to take things 'slow',  
wanted to build something 'real.'

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
But he didn't want me...Disgusting...

Erin bites her lip, her hand trembles, the knife goes off course, slices into her finger.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Shit!

She drops the knife. The wound is superficial, but bright blood oozes out.

Jo grabs kitchen paper, presses it to Erin's finger.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 Can't do anything right. Fucking...  
 (trying not to cry,  
 failing)  
 ...useless. He was right.

JO  
 Who?

ERIN  
 (acidic)  
 Archie.

JO  
 Erin, I know. I know what happened...  
 between you and Dad.

ERIN  
 No, you don't...It doesn't matter.  
 You get what you deserve.

Jo holds onto Erin's wrist, lightly, pulls up her sleeve, exposing the scars. Erin looks away, shakes her head.

JO  
 Is that...why?

Erin pulls her arm away, lowers the sleeve. It's speckled with blood from her wounded finger.

JO (CONT'D)  
 Why?

Erin shrugs.

ERIN  
 You get what you deserve.

Jo thinking, struggling to reach Erin somehow.

Lily's SINGING drifts in from the back garden.

JO  
 What does she deserve?

ERIN  
 Lily?

Erin doesn't know how to answer. She gazes out the window, toward Lily, deep in thought.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 To be safe, loved.

JO  
 Who did you feel safe with, when we  
 were kids?

Erin shakes her head.

JO (CONT'D)  
 Who looked out for you?

Erin shrugs.

ERIN  
 No one. There was nobody.

The realisation hits Erin like a brick wall. A churn of emotions, sadness, frustration, grief.

JO  
 You know who I had?

Erin shakes her head.

JO (CONT'D)  
 You.  
 (pause)  
 You don't have to protect me anymore.

Erin takes a deep, shaky breath.

ERIN  
 You weren't supposed to find Archie.  
 I thought you'd sleep in.  
 (pause)  
 I couldn't let him...

Erin puts a hand over her mouth, trying to hold back. A howling sob escapes, agonising, heartbreaking. And then another.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 ...Lily

Jo embraces Erin, who's stiff at first, then collapses into the hug.

JO  
 I know. I know.

Jo rocks Erin, soothing her.

JO (CONT'D)  
 I'm here for you now, no matter what.

The sisters pinky swear, Erin smiles briefly.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jo and Mack drink coffee at the table, Gizmo nestles on Jo's lap. Jo taps her mug nervously, glances at Mack.

JO

If I knew what happened with Archie,  
and why. Who drove him into the  
garage-

(pause)

But this person did it to protect  
their kid, to stop Archie from  
abusing them.

(pause)

Is that self-defence, of a sort?

MACK

No, in the eyes of the court it's  
still murder. Maybe they'd get a  
reduced sentence, because of the  
circumstances, but they don't get a  
'get out of jail free' card.

JO

So they'd take her, this person, from  
her kid?

Mack nods. Jo looks downcast.

MACK

Is this person a danger to herself or  
others?

JO

No! I mean, she's angry. But not  
violent.

MACK

Would her kid be better off without  
her?

JO

Absolutely not. The kid's lost so  
many people already.

Mack looks at the photo of her daughter on the wall.

MACK

In my experience, people don't get  
the help they need when they're..

(pause)

The justice system focuses on  
punishment, not treatment.

Mack sips her coffee.

MACK (CONT'D)  
But that's just my opinion.

Mack rises, goes to the counter, tops up her mug from a carafe. Turns to face Jo.

MACK (CONT'D)  
What are you going to do?

JO  
I don't know.

EXT. ERIN'S BACKYARD - DAY

Erin and Jo on the patio, drinking ice tea, watching Lily and Gizmo play at the far end of the yard.

ERIN  
I know I fucked up. But when I saw  
the necklace...

Jo looks at Erin. *A blue aura pulses around her, punctured by yellow thorns.*

ERIN (CONT'D)  
*That's how it started, when I turned  
eleven. I couldn't stop him.*

*The thorns lengthen, intertwine, trapping Erin underneath.*

ERIN (CONT'D)  
*But I had to stop him now, before he  
could ruin Lily. Like he ruined me.*  
(pause)  
*What happens now...You gonna tell the  
police?*

Jo looks toward Lily, who vibrates with joyous pink and orange bands.

Jo takes a deep breath, shakes her head.

JO  
It's not my story to tell.  
(pause)  
Lily needs you. But she needs all of  
you, not just the fighter.

Erin nods, a tear slides down her cheek.

JO (CONT'D)  
I can call Dr. Cole, make an  
appointment.

ERIN

Okay.

A blue ball rolls across the grass, stops at Lily's feet. Gizmo looks at the ball, then to Lily, back to the ball.

Lily picks it up, throws it a few feet.

LILY

Sorry Gizmo.  
(motions to cast)

ERIN

(to Lily)  
Let's take a look, might be time to take it off.

Lily skips to Erin, Gizmo follows.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Hold still.

Erin removes the cast, slowly bends Lily's arm.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Any pain?

LILY

No, it's so pale!

Lily compares her arms, fascinated.

ERIN

It was under wraps for awhile.

Erin squints at the sun.

Lily grabs the ball and throws it with her newly freed arm. It sails to the far end of the yard.

Erin takes Jo's hand. The sisters smile as they watch Lily.

INT. ERIN'S GARAGE - A FEW MONTHS LATER - DAY

Jo bundled up in a winter coat, hat, gloves.

LILY (O.S.)

Hurry, Aunt Jo!

Gizmo in a coat and booties sniffs at shelves.

JO

Think you can sniff out a sled?

Gizmo sneezes, paws at something behind a canvas. The sound of a metal can rolling along the concrete. The lid falls off, Gizmo sticks his head in it.

Gizmo emerges, something dark and soft in his mouth, he tries to growl around it.

JO (CONT'D)  
Whatcha got Gizmo? Better not be a mouse...

Jo approaches. Gizmo runs in circles around her. Then he drops the soft dark thing at her feet. Jo picks it up.

INT. MACK'S KITCHEN

Fat snowflakes swirl outside. Mack and Jo watch them through the window, drinking coffee at the kitchen table.

JO  
Guess what Gizmo found in the garage.

MACK  
Spiders?

Jo shakes her head.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Squirrels?

Jo laughs.

She hands Mack a black velvet bag. Mack tips the contents into her palm.

MACK (CONT'D)  
Holy Sh-

Large sapphires spill out.

JO  
Neil was right.

MACK  
What are you going to do?

JO  
Give them to the police?

MACK  
Won't do anyone any good in an evidence locker.

JO  
I don't want them. Don't want  
anything to do with him.

MACK  
I know a place could use the money.

JO  
You can sell them? Even though...

Mack smiles.

MACK  
They weren't stolen. Only Aleksei and  
Neil were looking for them. If you  
know the right people, there's always  
a way.

Jo nods, sips her coffee.

EXT. ERIN'S DRIVEWAY - A FEW MONTHS LATER - DAY

A cardboard box labelled 'studio stuff' lands in the back of  
Mack's SUV.

Mack shuffles to the side. Jo loads the next box, labelled  
'Women's Shelter.' Jo's hair is short and stylish, she wears  
a bright orange dress.

The birds SING, the flowers bloom, a beautiful spring day.

JO  
That's art stuff for the shelter.

MACK  
I'll take it with me tonight.

JO  
When's your shift start?

MACK  
Six.

JO  
Stop by for dinner.

Gizmo barks.

JO (CONT'D)  
(to Gizmo)  
Of course you're invited.

Mack smiles, closes the hatchback.

INT. JO'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jo carries a cup of coffee from a small galley kitchen to her studio, a converted bedroom. Classical MUSIC plays.

She sits on a wooden bench under a large, long window that looks onto a garden. She sips the coffee. At her feet, an empty cardboard box labelled 'studio stuff.'

A blank canvas sits on an easel.

She turns her attention to a book on the window sill, **The Body Keeps the Score**, removes a bookmark tucked near the end, reads.

TAP. TAP.

Jo looks up from her book. Lily in the garden, outside the window smiling, next to her, Erin, wearing a white v-neck shirt and khaki trousers. Jo smiles opens the window.

JO

C'mon in.

ERIN

What, through the window?

Lily laughs and hops up onto the inside ledge, scoots onto the bench. Erin follows, a little more slowly.

Lily stands, approaches the blank canvas.

JO

What should we paint?

LILY

We?

Jo gives Lily a paintbrush, takes her hand. Together they make a swirl of blue. Erin watches, smiling.

The sun streams onto the canvas.

THE END.