

THERAPIST OF THE YEAR

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BALL ROOM, MILWAUKEE CONVENTION CENTER (1977) - NIGHT

An AUDIENCE of hundreds enjoys dinner at the black tie event.

But all eyes are on the stage.

A giant banner overhead reads:

**MILWAUKEE CONVENTION CENTER WELCOMES
25'TH ANNUAL AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION AWARDS**

BETSY (50), a brunette with a beehive haircut, clutches her pearl necklace in nervous trepidation.

ON STAGE: A NANCY SINATRA-esque singer finishes her song to fanfare and applause from everyone... everyone except

Betsy, whose eyes are fixated completely on a middle-aged BLONDE WOMAN at the table across from her... She turns!

Their eyes meet... Blondie flashes a wicked smile...

Then drags a finger across her throat left to right.

BLONDIE

(silent)

You're dead.

BETSY

(silent)

Fuck you! Fuck you!

BLONDIE

(silent)

No. Fuck you. You're dead.

BETSY

(silent)

I'm not dead. You're dead.

ON STAGE: The elderly PRESIDENT of the A.C.A. hugs Nancy.

MR. PRESIDENT

Isn't she wonderful ladies and gentlemen?

NANCY

You're too kind.

MR. PRESIDENT

And now for the moment you've all been waiting for.

He holds up to them a GOLDEN ENVELOPE as if it were an idol.

A hush falls across the ball room. Nancy oohs and ahhs.

MR. PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I hold here in my hands... the results for the most coveted... the most prestigious... the most undeniably important award in all the world of counseling.

Betsy clenches her fists. Blondie adjusts her hair.

MR. PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

THE THERAPIST OF THE YEAR AWARD!
NINETEEN SEVENTY SEVEN!

Thunderous cheers break out. He quiets everyone down.

MR. PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

And without further adieu... the award... for therapist of the year... goes to...

He pulls out the envelope... and hands it to Nancy.

MR. PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I'm too nervous. You read it.

NANCY

You want me to read it?

MR. PRESIDENT

Sure. Can you do that?

NANCY

I don't know... Do you think I should?

MR. PRESIDENT

Yeah. Go for it.

NANCY

And the award... for therapist of the year... goes to... I'd better not. You read it.

BETSY

OH MY GOD! JUST READ IT ALREADY!

Shocked faces turn to Betsy in her embarrassment.

Blondie makes a comment to her table and everyone laughs.

MR. PRESIDENT
The award goes to...

Blondie turns... and stares Betsy dead in the eye.

<p>BLONDIE (silent) Vanessa Manessa.</p>	<p>MR. PRESIDENT Vanessa Manessa!</p>
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Betsy fumes in silent fury...

As Blondie stands and revels in the applause,
acknowledgement, and admiration of the crowd...

She makes her way up onto the stage. Nancy even hugs her.

Betsy's fingernails draw blood from her tightened fists...
when a TINY CHILD'S HAND gets placed over her own...

Betsy turns to find her YOUNG DAUGHTER sitting next to her.

Tears in her little five year old eyes.

HER DAUGHTER
I'm sorry mommy.

Betsy's heart melts. She strokes her Daughter's hair.

BETSY
Don't cry baby. It's ok. It's fine.
There's always next year.

ON STAGE: Nancy starts SINGING a victory song!

President presents Blondie with a beautiful crystal trophy.

He holds it up for her to take it...

But Blondie SNATCHES Nancy's microphone instead.

BLONDIE
I have something to say first.

The music dies down. Blondie turns to address the crowd.

MR. PRESIDENT
Umm. Ok. Sure. Go ahead.

BLONDIE
I just want to thank the A.C.A.

Blondie stares down directly at Betsy... and smiles.

BLONDIE (CONT'D)

But I also want to thank my competition. If they... if SHE, weren't so mediocre, so completely lacking in every category, then my genius... my star... would never have shined quite as bright.

Betsy calmly rises and pushes in her chair.

BETSY

Mommy'll be right back.

She pats her Daughter's head and disappears into the crowd.

BLONDIE

I'd also like to thank my son Bradley, my little muse. And my darling hubby Darryl. Baby.

Blondie drops the mic and holds up the trophy triumphantly.

BLONDIE (CONT'D)

Baby! I did it! I did -

Betsy races SCREAMING out from offstage and TACKLES BLONDIE!

They GRAPPLE across the stage in a frantic struggle for control of the award. Dresses ripping. Shoes lost.

Both manage to get to their feet, but neither takes their hands off the trophy. President tries to break them up.

MR. PRESIDENT

LADIES! LADIES! SHOW SOME GRACE!

He pulls at their dresses and to his surprise TEARS THEM OFF!

But Betsy and Blondie are undaunted, even in their underwear.

BETSY

That award belongs to me!

BLONDIE

Get fucked! It's mine now!

The crystal trophy goes flying!

KASMASH! It hits the floor and shatters to a million pieces.

BLONDIE (CONT'D)

Look what you did, you whore!

BETSY

You're the whore! You slept with my husband!

The audience gasps in shock! Blondie freezes, surprised.

BETSY (CONT'D)

You really thought I didn't know!?
Why do you think he's not here!?
Why do you think my work has been suffering!? But I get the last laugh! Yeah! Yeah! That's right!

Betsy stares Blondie down with a vindictive grin.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Your precious hubby! I gave hubby a handy in the bathroom an hour ago!

The audience gasps again! HUBBY hides his face.

Blondie SLAPS Betsy. Betsy SLAPS back!

They grab each other's throats and choke in a mad frenzy.

HER DAUGHTER

Stop hurting my mommy!

The little girl PUSHES Blondie, and gets BITCHSLAPPED back!

BETSY

Don't touch my daughter!!!

Betsy PUNCHES Blondie with a right hook! LEFT! RIGHT! LEFT!
She connects again and again... pushing them both towards

HER DAUGHTER

Mommy! Look out!

Betsy punches Blondie OVER THE SIDE of the stage, then herself goes TUMBLING OVER right along with her!

Betsy and Blondie CRASH DOWN onto the cold hard floor...

HEAD FIRST.

Their necks SNAP... instantly killing both of them.

Betsy's Daughter rushes to the edge and looks down...

Down at the dead bodies of her mother and Blondie.

Blondie's six year old son Bradley rushes to her side. And when he realizes she's dead... he looks up. Hate in his eyes.

INT. CASSIDY'S THERAPIST OFFICE (PRESENT DAY) - DAY

COUPLE 1 sits on opposite ends of a white couch.

They are white, rich, and middle aged.

Him: Harvard tie with a turtleneck.

Her: wearing a Gucci pant-suit and pearls.

HER

He used my card and bought two X
Boxes! Two! One of them was gold.

(she glances at his watch)

And whose money do you think he
used to buy that watch?

CUT TO:

COUPLE 2 sits on the couch facing each other.

Him: young, black, handsome in a three-piece suit.

Her: gorgeous black supermodel. Busy texting.

HIM

She's always on about the watch!
Like I'm not allowed to buy our son
a fourteen thousand dollar watch!

HER

You bought him a brand new BMW with
it! You're spoiling him! Did you
even see his latest report card?

CUT TO:

COUPLE 3

Him: A tough black NYC Cop. Lying on the couch.

Also Him: White Jewish author. Nervously pacing.

ALSO HIM

And he just kept on hogging the
remote! Like, yes I understand that
the Westworld season finale holds a
somewhat elevated station over the
banality of your garden variety
regular episode, but i-i-it's nine
o' clock on a Sunday and that's
Walking Dead time.

CUT TO:

COUPLE 1 stares daggers at each other.

HIM

Why don't you tell her she's missing the point.

HER

Well why don't YOU tell HIM that if he eats my oreos one more time, I'll delete all his Call of Duty achievements. Every. Last. One.

HIM

Tell HER she wouldn't dare.

HER

Tell HIM I would.

CASSIDY (O.S.)

Boys. Girls. I'm over here. If you want to talk to me, please look at me when you're speaking.

They turn from one another and look across the coffee table.

For answers... For hope.

HIM

So what do you think, doc? Do we have a chance?

CASSIDY MENDEZ, their marriage counselor, adjusts her thick eyeglasses, sets down her notebook, and leans forward.

Late forties. German Irish. Brown hair. A purebred New Yorker with an air of sophistication and roguish self entitlement.

A large framed photo of Betsy hangs on the wall behind her.

CASSIDY

This habit the two of you have of stealing and taking things from one another is unhealthy. Why don't we try replacing it with a habit of giving, and offering, instead.

CUT TO:

COUPLE 2 shake their heads in defiance.

HIM

She's impossible though. Every time money comes up she starts a fight. It doesn't matter where we are.

HER

But he's giving it all away!

CASSIDY

Try this. Pick a codeword. A secret phrase just the two of you know. And the next time a fight starts, say it to put the fight on pause. Then simply find an unconventional place to start it back up again.

CUT TO:

COUPLE 3 are just how we left them. One pacing. One sitting.

CASSIDY

And whenever you feel like you're losing a fight, keep in mind it's ok to compromise. Treat yourselves like the A-team. Put us first.

ALSO HIM

I suppose that makes him Hannibal. He's more the leader type. Even if he is an E.N.F.P.

HIM

Hell no. I'm a B.A. baby.

CASSIDY

Both of you are the leaders. But you're also both the passengers.

ALSO HIM

So what's our mission?

CASSIDY

It's less about where you're going, and more about enjoying the flight.

Cassidy stands and approaches her massive bookshelf. Most of the shelves are all stacked with the same yellow book.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

In fact, I have the perfect book for you two. Where is it... Ahh!

Her finger scans the shelf until she finds... a blue book.

She takes it out and offers it to them.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

I think you'll both enjoy it a lot.

ALSO HIM
What about us? Will you take us on?

CASSIDY
Absolutely.

HIM
You will! You really will!?

CASSIDY
My secretary'll be in touch to
schedule our very first session.

They're exhuberant, and crowd her with handshakes.

HIM
Thank you, Doctor M. Thank you so
much. You'll never regret it. We
won't let you down.

ALSO HIM
What he means is. You don't have to
worry. We won't be the ones.

CASSIDY
The ones?

HIM
You know, the ones that fuck it up
for you. An unsaveable marriage.

ALSO HIM
Break that perfect streak of yours.

Her intercom buzzes. Cassidy presses it.

JUDY (V.O.)
Your publisher's on line three.

CASSIDY
Tell him I'll be just a moment. And
Judy, can you call the airlines
again and make sure they changed my
meal to the vegan one.

HIM
Going somewhere?

CASSIDY
My book tour starts tomorrow.

ALSO HIM
You have a NEW book?

She grabs a yellow book from the shelf and hands it to Him.

HIM

Wow. Look at that. *Charting the Course. How to Save Every Marriage. I Have. By Doctor Cassidy Mendez.*

ALSO HIM

But what about us? When will you be back?

CASSIDY

Seven weeks.

ALSO HIM

SEVEN weeks?

CASSIDY

And of course that'll be five hundred for the consultation, and forty nine ninety five for the books.

INT. WAITING ROOM, CASSIDY'S THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

Cassidy enters in her overcoat, followed by Him and Also Him like puppies trailing in her footsteps.

She excitedly reaches for a stack of mail, but JUDY makes eye contact with her and shakes her head no. Cassidy deflates.

That's when she spots a GIANT EDIBLE ARRANGEMENT of fruit.

CASSIDY

Are these from Raph? Why would he send them here so late?

ALSO HIM

Seriously. We won't be the ones.

CASSIDY

Yes. Thanks. Night. Good night.

They leave as she pulls out the card and opens it up.

INSERT: THE CARD

DAKOTA (V.O.)

(heavy Scottish accent)

I know we got off on the wrong leg.
Something for your sweet tooth.
Good luck on your tour. - Dakota.

Cassidy balks at the card in disgust... but when she spots a chocolate covered strawberry she reconsiders her reaction.

JUDY

If you want I could make a few more calls. Somebody, somewhere has to know if you were nominated.

CASSIDY

No. Just forget it. The awards are this fucking weekend. If I was chosen I'd have heard by now.

JUDY

I'm sorry.

CASSIDY

It's fine. Like my mom used to say. There's always next year... until you die.

She hoists the oversized bouquet into her arms, balances it with her briefcase and pocket book, and nods goodbye to Judy.

JUDY

What about your publisher?

CASSIDY

Have him call me later on my cell.

A scary thought stops Cassidy halfway out the door.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Judy. The fruit basket. She didn't drop it off herself, did she?

JUDY

No. Security brought it up.

Cassidy seems relieved.

CASSIDY

Good... That's good.

INT. LOBBY, CASSIDY'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Cassidy tries to pass through the stylish security turnstiles, but the arrangement's too large to get through.

BILLY, the gruff security guard, takes the basket from her.

BILLY

Lemme help you with that Doctor M.

She passes through and he gives it back to her.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Hope you have a great tour!

CASSIDY
Oh Billy! I have something for you.

She fumbles with her stuff.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Could you? It's just. That pink
card there, sticking out of my
pocket book. Yeah. That's it.

He pulls out the pink card and blankly stares at it.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
I know how much your daughter loves
the ballet, and I won't be able to
go... so I figured...

Billy can't help himself. He ugly cries.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Oh. Billy. No.

BILLY
You don't. You don't know what this
means. You don't. You just don't.

Billy locks her in a great big bear hug. She pats his back.

He sobs into her shoulder like a baby. Blows his nose.

BILLY (CONT'D)
YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD FRIEND!

He cries harder.

CASSIDY
Ok Billy. Ok.

CUT TO:

ALMOST OUT OF THE LOBBY

Cassidy is finally nearing the exit, when she spots
DAKOTA TENNESSEE lingering at a NEWS STAND near the doorway.
She's mid twenties. Lustrous long blonde hair. Really fat.
A spitfire of energy with a snooty Edinburgh Scottish accent.

Cassidy fills with purpose and stomps her way towards her.
A late-teens NEWS STAND GUY sets a Kit Kat on the counter.

NEWS STAND GUY
That'll be one even.

DAKOTA
I can't believe how expensive the
hackney carriages have gotten
around here.

Dakota gives the guy a ten, and gets back nine ones.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
I'm always stressing about having
enough money to tip them. You take
them right, you know how it is?

NEWS STAND GUY
Uhh... I take the subway?

DAKOTA
Oh actually. Could I give you back
ten ones, and get that ten back?

Dakota gives him a stack of bills and gets back the ten.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Just count that for me.

NEWS STAND GUY
You gave me an extra ten.

DAKOTA
Excuse me?

NEWS STAND GUY
You gave me a ten and nine ones.

DAKOTA
I need the big bills for the taxi.
Just like I was saying. You've got
nineteen there, could I just give
you a one and get a twenty back?

NEWS STAND GUY
Uhh... sure.

She hands him a one dollar bill and gets back a twenty.

DAKOTA
Thanks. You're a sweetie pie.

Dakota turns and sees Cassidy. Her eyes light up.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Oh, hi Doctor M! I see you got the edible arrangement.

CASSIDY

Dakota. You need to stop.

DAKOTA

Ok, I know that we may have gotten off on the wrong leg -

CASSIDY

I read your note. And it's foot. It's wrong foot.

DAKOTA

Back in Edinburgh we all say leg.

CASSIDY

That's a lie.

DAKOTA

It doesn't matter. I just wanted to say I'm sorry.

CASSIDY

Look. I appreciate the sentiment, and I accept your apology.

DAKOTA

You do!? You really mean it?

CASSIDY

I do. But I hope you understand this doesn't mean I'm going to take you and your wife on as clients.

DAKOTA

I understand.

CASSIDY

Do you? Because I feel like we've had this conversation before. You need to respect my boundaries.

DAKOTA

Oh, I do. I totally do. I only had to come in to see my lawyer. See?

She points to the GUEST BADGE pinned on her lapel.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

I was in the neighborhood and I saw the fruit... and I thought... Why, Dakota. You should send this lovely basket to her to apologize.

CASSIDY

Well thank you. It was very thoughtful. Uhh, I have to get -

DAKOTA

Hey! Would you like a coffee? I was supposed to meet up with my friend but she bailed.

CASSIDY

No! I can't have coffee with you.

DAKOTA

No. I mean I have an extra one right here.

Dakota produces two fresh coffees from a bench.

Cassidy disarms.

EXT. CASSIDY'S OFFICE BUILDING, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Cassidy sets the fruit basket on the sidewalk, takes the coffee from Dakota, and brings it up to her lips.

Dakota's expectant gaze shifts to delight when Cassidy sips.

DAKOTA

It's french roast... And vanilla.

Dakota starts to take a sip of her own... when

WHAM! She gets knocked in the side and SPILLS her coffee ALL OVER HER WHITE BLOUSE!

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

God damn it! Watch where you're going you stupid idiot!

But Dakota softens when she sees her idiot is really a MOTHER with a baby carriage that's accidently bumped into her.

THE MOTHER

(uptight British accent)

My goodness! I'm terribly sorry! My sweet lady. Have you taken injury?

Dakota shakes her head and turns her attention to the BABY.

DAKOTA

Oh what a cute baby!

Cassidy and Dakota admire the baby boy with his bright blue eyes, cheerful dimpled giggling face, and pinstripe suit.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Wow. He's really well dressed.

CASSIDY

Awww...

DAKOTA

You know, with a baby on board, you really oughtta be more careful. It's dangerous out there when you're only a little whittle baby waby. Yes you are. Yes you are.

The Mother looks Cassidy dead in the eye.

THE MOTHER

Would you like to hold him?

CASSIDY

Oh well I really shouldn't...

THE MOTHER

Here! Take it!

She thrusts the Baby into Cassidy's arms.

Cassidy holds him awkward at first... but when they make eye contact... they share a long silent moment... That is until

The Baby PEES HIS PANTS. It trickles down onto Cassidy's foot. She groans in disgust and gives the child back.

CASSIDY

Oh... Oh no. No. Here.

DAKOTA

He's just excited is all.

THE MOTHER

Alright. I'll get to changing it.

DAKOTA

Well. Goodbye.

THE MOTHER

Adieu-dieu.

The Mother strolls the baby carriage away.

Cassidy packs her coffee in her purse, picks up the fruit bouquet, and smiles, signaling its time for her to go.

DAKOTA

Would you like me to get you a cab?

CASSIDY

No. I drove. The parking lot's just over -

Dakota steps to the street, raises her arm, and whistles.

DAKOTA

TAXI!

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET

The Mother's pushing her baby carriage along... when

WHAM! An oncoming TAXI CAB SMASHES into the carriage and knocks it over!!! The Baby rolls out into the street!!!

THE MOTHER

AHHH!!! THAT'S MY BABY!

Cassidy drops her stuff in shock! Speechless! Frozen!

But not Dakota. She charges forward with purpose and runs out into the street, just as the TAXI DRIVER is stepping outside.

TAXI DRIVER

Asshole! You can't just jaywalk and OH MY GOD DID I JUST HIT A BABY!?

The Mother kneels down and crowds over her child.

THE MOTHER

Someone help my baby! Help! Help!

Cassidy fumbles for her phone, but can't find it.

CASSIDY

Somebody call nine one one!

DAKOTA

Don't worry! Dakota's here now ma'am. Let me handle this. Everything's gonna be alright.

THE MOTHER

My baby! My baby must not die!

Cassidy can't believe it. She walks closer to Dakota.

CASSIDY

Do you have some kind of training?

DAKOTA

I'm gonna need you all to take a step back now! Give me some room!

TAXI DRIVER

I don't think he's breathing!

Dakota leans over the Baby as she inspects it...

DAKOTA

Oh no. He's not breathing.

CASSIDY

Maybe we should wait for the ambulance.

DAKOTA

I'm going to initiate CPR procedures! Gently now!

CASSIDY

I don't think that's a good idea.

Dakota pumps the baby's chest with two fingers...

then covers its mouth and nose with hers... and blows.

DAKOTA

BREATHE BABY! BREATHE! Come on!
Breathe! You can do it damn you!

Dakota repeats the process... It doesn't work. She starts pushing harder and harder, faster and faster.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

DON'T YOU DARE DIE ON ME!!!

CASSIDY

What are you doing... Stop. You're going to break his ribs.

DAKOTA

DON'T GO INTO THE LIGHT! DON'T GO INTO THE LIGHT! IT'S THE BAD PLACE!

CASSIDY

It's not working. Stop.

DAKOTA

FIGHT BABY! FIGHT TO LIVE! THE POWER OF CHRIST COMPELS YOU!

(MORE)

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 THE POWER OF CHRIST COMPELS YOU!
 THE POWER OF CHRIST COMPELS YOU!

Cassidy moves to stop Dakota and THE BABY STARTS CRYING!

Dakota lifts the child up and hands him to the Mother.

A group of THREE EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS arrive immediately. They crowd around the Baby and its Mother.

Dakota takes a step back beside Cassidy. She catches her breath. Wipes her brow. Cassidy is astonished.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 I just did that. Yup. I just did that. That was real. That was totally real. That just happened.

CASSIDY
 I can't believe it...

TAXI DRIVER (O.S.)
 And we have that woman to thank!

They all look to Dakota, admiration on their faces.

EMT GUY
 In my medical opinion. Without any doubt. If not for that woman's heroics. This baby would be dead.

EMT GUY 2
 What's your name stranger?

DAKOTA
 Dakota Tennessee. Baby saver. That's me. Yup. Saving babies. All day long. That's what I do bitches. Savin' babies up in this piece.

CASSIDY
 You know... I have to say... I am genuinely impressed.

DAKOTA
 It was nothing really. I just did what anyone else would do. You know. If they were in my position.

CASSIDY
 Dakota... You surprise me. You have no idea how rare that is.

An ambulance stops alongside the taxi and the gathered crowd.

Two PARAMEDICS get out. A TOUGH guy and a CHICK.

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
What happened? Who's the patient?

THE MOTHER
That woman saved my baby!

DAKOTA
Let's get out of here before we
cause any more of a scene.

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
Give that child to me. Let me look.

THE MOTHER
Uhh. No! He's fine!

Dakota takes Cassidy's arm and leads her to the sidewalk.

DAKOTA
I'm not really one for the
spotlight. Last thing I need is the
media up in my business. Could you
imagine? Help! Dakota! My baby's in
trouble! Come save it! Like I need
that kind of stress in my life. I'm
savin' enough babies as it is.

CASSIDY
Maybe I was too hasty after all.
You know, you don't make the best
first impression.

DAKOTA
That's been said of me before.
Listen we really ought to -

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
You have to let me inspect him!

EMT GUY
This child's fine, sir. I inspected
him myself. You may go. Dismissed.

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
Who the fuck are you? Get out of
the way. Give that baby here.

The Tough Paramedic tries to wrestle the Baby from its
Mother's arms and starts a scuffle in the street.

TAXI DRIVER
Get your damn hands off her!

The Chick Paramedic pulls out pepper spray and circles them.

CHICK PARAMEDIC
All of you! Back off! It's a
federal offense to stop a paramedic
in the administration of his duty!

Everyone but the Mother backs off... and when she doesn't
stop fighting, she gets PEPPER SPRAYED IN THE FACE!

THE MOTHER
MY EYES! WHY! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!
WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT! WHY!?

Cassidy and Dakota are shocked at the display.

DAKOTA
Come on, Doctor M. Let's peace out
this popsicle stand. We don't need
no arbitrary argle-bargling.

But Cassidy pulls from Dakota's grip and comes to the
Mother's defense. She gets in the Paramedics' faces.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Don't do it. Don't do it Doctor M.

CASSIDY
How dare you! This woman almost
lost her child, so you maced her!?

DAKOTA
Forget it doc. It's Chinatown.

CHICK PARAMEDIC
Ma'am. Step back to the curb ma'am.

CASSIDY
What's your name!?

CHICK PARAMEDIC
Ma'am don't test me! Ma'am!

CASSIDY
The cops are gonna hear about -

Cassidy gets PEPPER SPRAYED in the face!

She grabs at her eyes in pain. Dakota comes to her aid.

DAKOTA
Don't worry Doctor M! Dakota's got
your back!

She stares down the Chick Paramedic.

CHICK PARAMEDIC
Stay back ma'am. I'm warning you.

DAKOTA
You tryin' to get crazy with me
esse'? Don't you know I'm loco!?

She BULL RUSHES FORWARD through a peppery mist and TACKLES the Chick to the ground. They wrestle across the pavement.

Dakota pins her down tight with her massive body.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Yeah... Don't you feel that? That's
three hundred pounds of dead
weight. Wishing you didn't skip all
those meals now huh? That's it.
Sleep. Just sleep. It'll all be
over soon.

Dakota leaves Chick Paramedic unconscious in the street, and grabs the hot cup of coffee from Cassidy's purse.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Brace yourself doc. This might
sting a little.

She pulls off the lid and blows at the steaming hot coffee, then DUMPS IT all over Cassidy's face!

Cassidy screeches, cries, grabs the cup from Dakota's hands and pours the rest in her mouth. Gargles. Spits. Breathes.

Dakota removes her sweater and wipes Cassidy's face with it.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
There there. Feeling better champ?

CASSIDY
That hurt so much more than I
thought it would.

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS!? SOME KIND
OF JOKE? WHO PUT YOU UP TO THIS?

DAKOTA
I'm getting you out of here. No
more heroics for us. No sirree.

CASSIDY
What's he talking about?

DAKOTA

It's nothing. What were you saying before? What was that? Something about you being too hasty?

Dakota grabs Cassidy and turns her away, right into the chest of TWO NYPD STREET COPS that have arrived on scene.

STREET COP

What's going on here?

TOUGH PARAMEDIC

Some asshole called nine-one-one for a fake baby!

CASSIDY

What!?

TOUGH PARAMEDIC

It's just a fucking doll!

The Tough Paramedic holds up A LIFELIKE DOLL dressed in a pin striped suit. Everyone's totally shocked!

None more so than Cassidy, who pulls herself away from Dakota's weakening grip and stomps towards the doll...

CASSIDY

It can't be! I saw the baby myself.

She grabs the doll... And inspects its porcelain face.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

I... I don't understand. You did CPR on a doll?

DAKOTA

Nahhh. Baby was real. You saw him. You saw him. Totally real baby.

Cassidy looks the Mother in her equally blood-shot eyes.

CASSIDY

Where's your baby?

The Mother non-chalantly motions across the street, where a MAN IN A SUIT is holding the Baby. He waves back at them.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

But you all... They all...

The Tough Paramedic grabs EMT Guy by his shirt collar.

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
And you call yourself a doctor!

EMT GUY
This is outrageous! I'll have you
know I trained at Harvard!

TOUGH PARAMEDIC
Bullshit!

EMT GUY 3
It's true! I was there! I saw him!

DAKOTA
Guys, guys, guys. The jig is up.

The Taxi Driver takes off his hat and sighs to Dakota.

TAXI DRIVER
I'm sorry, lass. It was a good show
while it lasted.

STREET COP
Who the hell are all of you!?

EMT GUY 2
Twelfth street Theater Troupe.
(with a flourish)
At your service.

EMT GUY
Well, not the baby.

EMT GUY 2
No, not him.

TAXI DRIVER
We booked him through an outside
agency. Big talent that one.

Cassidy turns to face Dakota. Hurt. Betrayed. Surprised.

Dakota freezes... then RUNS AWAY at top speed!

The Taxi Driver, the EMTs, and the Mother all SCATTER

Leaving Cassidy holding the crying baby doll...

INT. CASSIDY'S MERCEDES, LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY - DAY

A distant accident has brought gridlock to the L.I.E.

Covered in coffee stains, Cassidy rubs at her swollen red
eyes. She drives six feet... hits the brakes... then repeats.

She pulls out a pineapple flower from the edible arrangement in the passenger seat when her PHONE RINGS.

MERCEDES DASHBOARD (V.O.)
Call from, publisher.

CASSIDY
Take call. Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THE BOSS'S OFFICE, WHITE RIBBON PUBLISHING - DAY

THE BOSS, a large, bald, elderly, iconic black man with a Darth Vader voice looms over the speaker phone, smiling.

THE BOSS
Cassidy! I'm so glad we finally managed to get a hold of you.

Cassidy searches for an opening in traffic to change lanes.

CASSIDY (V.O.)
Sorry. I'm having a bad day.

THE BOSS
I'm saddened to hear that Cassidy. Allow me to make it a bit better. Let me introduce you to Jason Martin. He's my number one guy.

JASON MARTIN, 42, leans in over the phone beside his Boss.

He is a serious man with plain features, eyeglasses and cheap business attire. The kind of guy who loves doing his taxes.

The Clark Kent who isn't Superman.

JASON
Hello Cassidy, uhh, Doctor Mendez. Nice to meet you. Well, we'll meet officially at the airport tonight.

An opening appears in traffic... And Cassidy goes for it!

BUT A CAR CUTS HER OFF!

CASSIDY (V.O.)
Up yours! Scumbag!

JASON
Excuse me?

CASSIDY (V.O.)
 Sorry. Traffic. You were saying.

THE BOSS
 I've assigned him to oversee every aspect of the tour. You can rest easy in his most capable hands.

CASSIDY (V.O.)
 Thanks.

JASON
 If there's anything you ever need, please, don't hesitate to ask.

The baby doll CRIES in Cassidy's back seat.

JASON (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. Is that a baby? Is she bringing a baby on the tour? Because that would be amazing.

CASSIDY (V.O.)
 No. God no. It's not my baby.

Cassidy grabs the doll and fumbles to find its batteries.

JASON
 What are you doing with someone else's baby?

A HORN HONKS! Cassidy spots a wide opening in traffic, but when she guns her engine another car CUTS HER OFF!

She SLAMS ON THE BRAKES! WHAM! And gets rear-ended!

CASSIDY (V.O.)
 SON OF A BITCH!

JASON
 Are you alright? What happened!?

The baby doll keeps crying and crying!

CASSIDY (V.O.)
 Some loser just rear ended me!

Cassidy opens her car door and terminates the call.

JASON
 Oh my God! Is the baby ok? Doctor Mendez? Hello? Hello? She hung up.

THE BOSS

Nevermind that Martin. You're gonna have to get used to this kind of unpredictability from the talent if you're ever going to advance in this company. And you do want to advance, don't you Martin?

JASON

It's Jason, sir. Jason Martin.

THE BOSS

I haven't made an error in giving you this assignment... Have I?

JASON

No, sir. You haven't. You can put your utmost faith in me.

THE BOSS

I don't need to stress how critical it is that this tour goes smoothly.

JASON

No sir, you do not.

THE BOSS

Well I'm going to stress it anyway.

JASON

Stress away, sir.

THE BOSS

Thirty five years. That's how long my father toiled in the coal mines. Thirty five years... Long, cold years. Down. Deep down in the pits.

JASON

I'm familiar with your book, sir.

THE BOSS

When's the last time you ever spent thirty five years on anything?

JASON

Not since I was seven, if I recall correctly.

THE BOSS

None of our books last year made best seller. But that's about to change Martin. And that change starts with you.

(MORE)

THE BOSS (CONT'D)

I want her book on that list, and I want you to be the one to put it there! Is that understood?

JASON

Implicitly, sir.

THE BOSS

This tour is your coal mine, Martin. Don't be afraid to get your hands down there in the dust. Don't be afraid to get dirty. Get down on your hands and knees if you have to. Really get down in there.

JASON

Sage advice, sir. Very wise.

THE BOSS

Now get out of my office.

EXT. BOB'S MECHANIC SHOP, THE SUBURBS - EVENING

Cassidy's car zips into the lot, where she's met by BOB the grizzled owner with a beard and a freshly cracked open beer.

CASSIDY

Got rear ended on the L.I.E.

BOB

Awww man. That's awful. Awful.

CASSIDY

Listen, I have to go to the airport tomorrow. Do you think I could just leave it here, and you drop me off?

BOB

At the airport?

CASSIDY

At home...

BOB

Uhh... I'm a few deep... but Ray'll drive you home, sure.

Bob turns towards a Chevy de Ville on cinder blocks in the shop. Its hood is up, and someone's RATCHETING at its engine.

BOB (CONT'D)

Hey Ray! Get out here.

REAGAN RIGGS, 22, slaps the hood down and approaches.

She is a stunning, lively and jovial black mechanic from Georgia with long, luscious hair in a tanktop.

She wipes a rag over her greasy hands and smiles at them.

REAGAN

Oh, hi Doctor Mendez.

CASSIDY

Oh no. No, no! What's she doing here? Bob, what is she doing here?

REAGAN

Tough day?

CASSIDY

Reagan, look me in the eye, and tell me this isn't part of some elaborate scheme. Are you... Are you following me?

Reagan looks on at Cassidy, confused and concerned.

Bob sips his beer and shakes his head.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Have you been stalking me? Last year you said. Bob! Bob. She said she lived in Queens, and now she's working one block away from my house? This... This is a violation... I feel violated.

REAGAN

Are you ok Doctor Mendez? Do you want us to call someone?

CASSIDY

Oh! Oh I'm calling someone alright!

Cassidy pulls out her phone and starts dialing.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

I'm calling my husband!

She holds the phone up to her ear, fuming with anger.

SANTIAGO (V.O.)

Honey! If you're hearing this, I'm in the kitchen cooking up your favorite. See you soon! I love you!

She lowers the phone, both pleased and pissed.

CASSIDY

Bob. I want you to fire this girl immediately. I'm sorry, but this just can't be allowed to continue.

BOB

Fire her!? She's my best mechanic.

CASSIDY

She's causing emotional distress.

REAGAN

Look lady, I know you're famous and all, but fuck you, seriously.

CASSIDY

No no. No no no. Do you have any idea what your wife put me through today? And whatever crazy plan it is that you've concocted, you're not going to get away with it!

REAGAN

What plan? Wait... my wife?

CASSIDY

Yes! With the fucking dead baby and the CPR and -

REAGAN

Hold on.

CASSIDY

Don't play dumb with me. I know you were involved somehow. Just stay away from me, or I will file for a restraining order. Mark my words.

BOB

What about your car?

CASSIDY

How many beers did you say you had?

BOB

Uhhhh...

EXT. THE STREET, BY CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy stomps down the road, giant fruit basket clutched in her arms. The porcelain doll's been stuffed inside.

And every few steps she keeps glancing over her shoulder... at an OLD STRAY DOG that's following close behind her.

INT. KITCHEN, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cuban dance music plays over an old beige portable radio.

DING! The timer on the oven goes off, and

SANTIAGO "RAPHAEL" MENDEZ, 44, opens it up.

He is a handsome, tall and athletic Cuban man with slicked back hair and a freshly colored Shell Tattoo on his forearm.

He slips a giant spatula into the oven and pulls out a pizza!

EXT. THE STREET, BY CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy grunts with exhaustion as she crests a hill...

and sees her driveway.

ON HER FRONT PORCH

Cassidy sets the basket down and catches her breath.

Hands on her knees, she spots the Dog walking up to her.

CASSIDY

No... No! Go away! Shoo!

The Dog sits down in the middle of the yard. Staring at her.

She turns towards the house and through the window she spies:

INT. KITCHEN, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago dancing to the music as he opens a bottle of wine.

BZZT! His cellphone on the counter buzzes. He got a text.

UPS: *Special Delivery tonight?*

He picks it up and responds: *Yes.*

UPS: *:)*

Santiago locks his phone screen, and pops the cork.

EXT. FRONT PORCH, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy smiles as she watches Santiago dance. She laughs a little, and just like that her mood lightens. She's home.

It even starts to snow.

She turns back to the fruit basket and THE DOG'S RIGHT THERE.

Staring at her with frozen eyes.

CASSIDY
Get out of here! Shoo! Shoo!

She grimaces at its filthy knotted fur.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
You really are a miserable, mangy
little thing, aren't you? You want
some fruit, boy? Do ya? Can't eat
chocolate... How's this?

Cassidy pulls out a pineapple stick.

She offers it to the Dog... but it doesn't even blink.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Go! Fetch!

She tosses the pineapple into the yard...

And the dog KEELS OVER DEAD. DEAD AS A DOOR NAIL.

Cassidy is mortified... She taps its face with her shoe.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Dog...?

Its dead mouth opens, and out rolls a chocolate strawberry.

INT. DINING ROOM, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago hears the front door open as he pours the wine.

SANTIAGO
Honey! Is that you?

He turns to find Cassidy crying in the doorway.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Cassy. My God... You look awful.
What happened to -

To his surprise she runs into his arms and hugs him.

CASSIDY
Where's the wine?

Cassidy releases him and grabs a filled glass.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
You won't believe the day I've had.

She downs the whole glass in one sip.

SANTIAGO
Stressed about the tour? Relax.
It'll go fine.

A BABY CRIES out from the foyer.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Is that a baby?

Cassidy grabs Santiago and moves close to him.

CASSIDY
You're so sexy when you dance.

SANTIAGO
No, seriously. Is there a baby?

CASSIDY
Don't worry about him. He'll cry
himself to sleep.

Cassidy pushes him down into a chair.

SANTIAGO
What are you talking about?

CASSIDY
It's just a doll.

SANTIAGO
Why do you have a crying baby doll?

She straddles his lap and leans in close.

CASSIDY
It's snowing outside and I'm
feeling romantic. Kiss me.

Santiago lifts her off of him and stands up.

SANTIAGO
You're acting crazy.

Cassidy freezes. Her face turning ice cold.

Santiago realizes his mistake.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
No. No, not crazy. Not crazy.
That's not what I meant. English
second language!

CASSIDY
I'm trying to be spontaneous.

SANTIAGO
And I like it! Hey. Cassy. I like
it. But honey... Look at you.

He takes a step back and looks her over.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Your clothes are filthy. Your hair
is a mess... You're... You're...

CASSIDY
I'm what!?

Santiago pulls a wad of dog hair off her forehead.

SANTIAGO
You're sticky...

Even Cassidy can't deny how that looks.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Your flight's in a few hours. Why
don't you go upstairs? Take a nice
hot bath. Unwind.

She grabs a slice of pizza and the bottle of wine.

CASSIDY
Fine. But this isn't over. We have
a lot to talk about.

EXT. FRONT YARD, SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Dakota sneaks across the lawn like a raccoon towards a fence.

With the careful grace of a ninja, she opens the SQUEAKY GATE
to the most marginal of sounds... and passes through into

THE BACKYARD

where she stops at a door, uses a key, and grabs the knob...

But when she pulls her hand away and looks at her palm

It's covered with messy RED INK!

Reagan steps from the shadows behind her... with an airhorn.

AIRHORN BLAST! bwAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHP!

Dakota JUMPS OUT OF HER SKIN.

DAKOTA

Fuck a duck! Fuck a fucking duck!

She grabs her own face in fright, red ink going everywhere.

REAGAN

I have you caught red handed.

DAKOTA

I literally just shit myself.

Dakota pushes past her and stomps into

THEIR APARTMENT

which would be spacious for just the two of them, if not for the overwhelming hoard of books and arts and craft supplies.

DAKOTA

Now look you what you made do...
I have to change my pants.

Dakota disappears into the bathroom.

DAKOTA (O.S.)

Why! Why did it have to be red?

REAGAN

Didn't you hear my pun?

DAKOTA (O.S.)

It looks like I just murdered a
small child in my underwear.

REAGAN

So. How was your day?

DAKOTA (O.S.)

Oh, you know. Same ole same ole.

REAGAN

Oh yeah? Nothing special? Nothing
out of the ordinary?

Dakota exits the bathroom, wet hair, new clothes, perfectly clean. Not even the slightest hint of red ink anywhere.

DAKOTA

Nope. Nada. Nada thing.

Reagan turns away in a huff, walks down the hall, and passes through a dark curtain. Dakota follows after her into

THE DARK ROOM

where photography equipment is illuminated by dim red light.

REAGAN

Doctor M came into the shop
tonight. She told me everything.

Reagan passes a series of undeveloped photos through the
chemical wash bins, and hangs them on a clothes line.

DAKOTA

That little thing? Psh. I'm sure
she blew it way out of proportion.
You know how she gets.

REAGAN

You can't be pulling any more crazy
stunts like this.

Reagan clips her last photo and watches as it develops.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

It could jeopardize everything. All
of our hard work.

Dakota pulls the photo off its clips and takes a look at it.

INSERT: A PHOTO OF CASSIDY

Dragging the dead Dog across her lawn towards a ditch.

DAKOTA

Is that a fucking dead dog, Ray?

Reagan snatches the photo from her hand, and fastens it onto

A wall that's TOTALLY COVERED in photos of Cassidy!

Pictures from every season, rain and shine. Day and night.

REAGAN

You're too impulsive.

DAKOTA

I almost did in five minutes what
you've been trying to do for a
year. I had her in the palm of my
hands! Now... What do you say I
palm something else, eh?

REAGAN

You don't even know how badly you
fucked up, do you?

Reagan pushes past her, revolted.

Dakota watches her go, then turns to the wall of Cassidy.

DAKOTA
Help me Obi Wan...

She rubs her fingers over a blowup of Cassidy's face.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
You're my only hope.

INT. FOYER, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago waits at the bottom of the steps with Cassidy's luggage while she finishes getting ready upstairs.

SANTIAGO
Cassy! About earlier! You didn't hear from the A.C.A. yet did you!?

CASSIDY (O.S.)
I would've told you if I did!

SANTIAGO
Don't worry honey! I'm sure you'll be nominated this year!

A CAR HORN honks from outside.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
The taxi's here!

Cassidy rushes down the steps and hugs him goodbye.

CASSIDY
I'll see you saturday at the hotel.

SANTIAGO
Remember. You need to believe it first, in order to make it happen.

EXT. CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy rolls her luggage out to the taxi.

The snow has gotten heavier and accumulated a few inches.

The DRIVER loads her bags into the trunk and she gets in.

INT. TAXI CAB, OUTSIDE CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy shuts the door and buckles her seat belt.

CASSIDY
J.F.K. Terminal five.

She rolls down her window for some air, and spots Santiago waiting at the front door. He waves to her. She waves back.

INT. CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago shuts the door with a whistle. A bounce in his step.
He strides into the

KITCHEN

and sets a bottle of red wine on the counter...
Followed by two glasses.

INT. TAXI CAB, BELT PARKWAY - NIGHT

Cassidy stares out the window lost in thought, as the cab makes its way to the right lane and approaches the airport.
Her PHONE RINGS and snaps her out of her daydream.

INT. DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TERMINAL, JFK AIRPORT - NIGHT

Crowds of frustrated fliers swarm around the help desks.
Jason stands calm and collected as he watches the flights on the DISPLAY switch from DELAYED to CANCELLED one by one.

JASON
A plane skid out on the runway. I know. I've rebooked us with a nine AM departure. Why don't you go home, get some sleep.

INT. TAXI CAB, BELT PARKWAY - NIGHT

Cassidy ends the call and leans forward.

CASSIDY
My flight was cancelled. Can you take me back home?

TAXI DRIVER
Sure.

She scrolls to RAPH in her phone and starts typing.

INT. KITCHEN, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago's cell phone sits forgotten on the counter...

EXT. CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan's car zips down the road and stops across the street.

INSIDE THE CAR

Reagan shuts the lights off. Dakota pulls out binoculars.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS: She focuses in on Santiago and SHEILA (20s), a hot blonde girl straight from the valley. Naked. Having sex on the couch. Right by the front door.

DAKOTA

This is bad. Really really bad.

A taxi turns onto the street and approaches the house.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

We have to put a stop to this.

Dakota opens her door, but Reagan GRABS HER FORCEFULLY.

REAGAN

Sit your white ass back down.

DAKOTA

This is fucked Ray! We can't let her find out. It's wrong!

REAGAN

You want our marriage to work, don't you? Think about it. If we get involved, she'll hate us even more. It's too risky. We need her.

The taxi stops and out gets Cassidy. Dakota stares.

DAKOTA

But this will destroy her Ray!

REAGAN

She's stronger than that.

Reagan takes Dakota's hand into her own... and squeezes.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

You gotta have faith. She'll survive. It's his ass that's grass.

EXT. FRONT PORCH, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy pauses by the door to search for her keys...

Right next to the window... where inside...

Santiago's BARE BUTT is pressed up against the glass as he rails into Sheila who's bent over the couch.

THUMP. THUMP. His butt bumps the window. Cassidy turns.

HOOOONK! HONK HONK! Cassidy spins to look to the street.

But it's dark, and there's nothing out of the ordinary...

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dakota and Reagan sit frozen like deer in headlights...

But Cassidy just turns away with a shrug, and opens the door.

 DAKOTA
I've failed her.

 REAGAN
Don't blame yourself. Blame him.
She will.

They watch with bated breath as Cassidy enters the house...

And stops in the doorway... silently watching them fuck.

But Cassidy says nothing. Does nothing. She just watches...

 DAKOTA
I'm closing my eyes here Ray. I
can't watch. This is too much Ray!

And after a long lingering moment, Cassidy turns, silently shuts the front door, and leaves.

Santiago and Sheila keep going. Oblivious she was even there.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Is it bad? How bad is it?

Dakota opens her eyes and spots Cassidy walking the street, braving the blizzard as she drags her luggage behind her.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Whoa. Should we offer her a ride?

 REAGAN
Let's just follow her. I know where
she's going anyway.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE BOB'S MECHANICS - NIGHT

Reagan and Dakota watch from their car as Cassidy uses her spare key to unlock her Benz. She gets in and starts it.

DAKOTA

She couldn't even confront them.
What's she gonna do? How will she cope? What if she takes up smoking? What if she tries heroin!? I hope she's seen Requiem for a Dream.

REAGAN

What if she kills herself?

DAKOTA

You shut your fucking mouth.

But when Cassidy exits the mechanics, instead of turning onto the highway, she heads back towards her house.

REAGAN

What if she kills them?

Reagan and Dakota share a worried look.

EXT. CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan's car is parked down the street. Lights off.

Cassidy's parked a few cars ahead... Lights also off.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan cracks her knuckles, while Dakota cracks a beer.

DAKOTA

This is a legit stakeout, Ray. I wish Emilio Estevez was here. Do you think he has a twitter?

SHEILA HAS EXITED THE HOUSE!

She enters her car in the driveway and starts her engine.

Cassidy starts her engine.

Reagan starts hers.

EXT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheila's car turns onto the street and pulls in the driveway.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan and Dakota watch in suspenseful silence as Sheila gets out of her car and walks across her front lawn.

Cassidy's parked ahead of them. Engine off. Lights off.

And when Sheila goes inside her house...

Cassidy quietly slips out of her car... sneaks across the front lawn... and follows in after her...

DAKOTA

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy shuts the front door behind her and slinks in.

There's movement upstairs. A distant shower turns on.

The house is well decorated, but aged, as if lived in for a very long time. Cassidy examines a prominent desk...

Assorted photos of pretty Sheila and her middle-aged Parents are on display beside their memorial prayer cards.

Cassidy picks up a picture of Sheila... and stares.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan and Dakota each share an eye hole on the binoculars.

AND THROUGH THOSE BINOCULARS: Cassidy enters Sheila's

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM... Right next to the bathroom door.

DAKOTA

Ray... She's gonna kill her, Ray.
She's gonna fucking kill her, Ray.

REAGAN

I think you're overreacting.

DAKOTA

I'm talking about murder here, Ray.
Homicide. Deliberate. Premeditated.
First degree. Thirty five to life.
Hard time. That's Attica, Ray.
Fucking Attica! Attica! Attica!

Reagan hands Dakota the binoculars and pulls out her phone.

REAGAN
I guess... Just in case.

She opens the camera app and zooms in on the window.

DAKOTA
Facebook live it?

INT. BATHROOM, SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheila shuts off the shower. WATER POOLS on the tile floor as she wraps herself in a towel, and opens the door to the

BEDROOM

Where Cassidy's sitting by her bed... crying hysterically!

Sheila pauses in the doorway, more annoyed than scared.

CASSIDY
Do you love him? Does he love you?

SHEILA
What? No. We're just... just...

CASSIDY
Please. I want you to be honest with me. I need to know.

SHEILA
Like, know what?

CASSIDY
I JUST WANT TO KNOW IF HE STILL
LOVES ME!

Cassidy uses Sheila's comforter to blow her nose.

SHEILA
I really can't deal with this right now. Go, like, talk to your husband or something. You're his problem, not mine.

CASSIDY
In the beginning. It was always so natural with us. It was obvious we were in love. But now it feels like he's just going through the motions. Sometimes when he tells me he loves me, I get the sensation he's lying. Did he ever tell you why we can't have any kids?

Sheila rolls her eyes and crosses her arms.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
 He's sterile. Bone dry. I didn't even find out until after we were married. But he knew. Can you believe that? I found out on accident from his doctor.

SHEILA
 I like totally don't care.

CASSIDY
 And when we talked about it, he was so consolidating, I didn't even get angry. Like it was my choice. We didn't even want to adopt...

Cassidy blows her nose into the comforter again.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
 (hysterical)
 I didn't even freeze my eggs!

SHEILA
 Oh my gosh! Stop! You're fucking up my sheets. Do you even know how many threads are in those?

CASSIDY
 Can I? Can I have a tissue?

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reagan and Dakota watch Cassidy walk towards Sheila.

DAKOTA
 It's happening Ray! IT'S HAPPENING!

INT. BATHROOM, SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheila reaches up to grab a box of tissues from a shelf...

AND SHE SLIPS in a puddle of water!

She falls to the tile floor and instantly knocks herself out.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheila disappears from view. They're both speechless.

DAKOTA
 Aaaaand it happened. It happened Ray. It fucking happened.

INT. BATHROOM, SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy kneels down beside Sheila and cradles her head.

CASSIDY
Are you ok? Hello?

But something's wet... Her hands. They're covered in blood.

INT. REAGAN'S MUSCLE CAR, OUTSIDE SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Their faces pale when they see Cassidy stand up.

Staring at her hands... BLOOD ON HER HANDS.

DAKOTA
We're all going to prison Ray.

Cassidy washes her hands in the sink.

REAGAN
We have nothing to do with this.

DAKOTA
On the inside you'll be my bitch.
They're like jackals in there, Ray.
Jackals. But don't worry. I'll die
before I let them get within an
inch of your sweet Georgia peach.

REAGAN
Nobody's going to jail! Well...
Well alright. Doctor M's going to
jail. But we're getting the fuck
out of here.

DAKOTA
We can't abandon her, Ray! She
can't go to prison without us.
She's too fragile. Like a delicate
glass caterpillar.

REAGAN
Ok... Whatever you're thinking, no.

DAKOTA
You have no idea what I'm thinking.

Cassidy exits the house and wipes the door knob clean.

REAGAN
You want to blackmail her.

DAKOTA
I want to blackmail her, Ray.

They watch as Cassidy runs to her car... and drives away.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Ray. We're gonna throw this momma
from the train.

INT. CASSIDY'S MERCEDES, OUTSIDE CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassidy's a total mess. Mascara run red. Shivering.

She stares at her phone... 911 dialed. Her finger over send.

After a long moment of silent contemplation, she pockets the phone, opens the door and gets out.

But after a beat... The door opens and Cassidy gets back in.

She pulls out her phone and dials 911 again.

RING! INCOMING CALL FROM: PRIVATE CALLER

She hesitantly presses accept.

CASSIDY
Hello?

BATMAN VOICE (V.O.)
Look behind you.

Cassidy turns to see the flashing headlights of a parked car.

BATMAN VOICE (V.O.)
We know what you did.

CASSIDY
I didn't do anything. Who is this?

BATMAN VOICE (V.O.)
Don't worry. We can help you.
Unless you want to spend the rest
of your life in maximum security
swallowing packets of heroin for a
bitch named Martha, follow us.

CASSIDY
And if I don't?

BATMAN VOICE (V.O.)
Then you can kiss your sweet bony
ass goodbye, sucka.

Cassidy swallows her breath... and starts up her car.

INT. THIRD FLOOR, EMPTY CAR PARK - NIGHT

Dakota and Reagan hide in the shadows by a cement pillar.

Dakota shines a bright light at Cassidy as she approaches.

DAKOTA
(muffled)
That's close enough.

Cassidy shields her eyes, unable to focus in on the shadows.

REAGAN
(to Dakota)
It doesn't matter if she sees us,
D. She's gonna know it's us anyway.

Dakota shuts the light and steps forward to reveal herself.

DAKOTA
Surprise motherfucker.

Cassidy SCREAMS and RUNS AWAY! They give chase after her!

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
No wait! Doctor M! It's ok! I was
only kidding! Doctor M! Wait up!

CASSIDY
You two stay the hell away from me!

She stops at her car and fumbles for her keys.

REAGAN
We don't want to hurt you! We're
just trying to help!

Cassidy turns to confront Reagan as Dakota catches up.

DAKOTA
(heavy breathing)
Just. Just five. Five. Just five.
How are you two not out of breath?

REAGAN
What she means is. There's
something you need to see.

INT. CASSIDY'S MERCEDES, IN THE CAR PARK - NIGHT

Reagan shows Cassidy the incriminating video she recorded.

CASSIDY

It was an accident! She just slipped! I didn't do it!

DAKOTA

I believe you... Now watch this.

Dakota takes the phone... and DELETES THE VIDEO.

CASSIDY

But... why? Why did you do that?

REAGAN

I told you. We want to help.

DAKOTA

Look. You gotta face reality here, Doctor M. You can't go to the police. They'll never believe you. But you can't do nothing either. You're all motive and no alibi.

REAGAN

The first thing homicide's gonna do is investigate her private life. Hey look, an affair! A jealous wife. One day from now you're gonna be suspect numero uno.

CASSIDY

I need a lawyer. Get out ahead of this. How's your guy in the city?

DAKOTA

Oh my sweet, sweet summer child. You can't get a lawyer.

CASSIDY

Well why the hell not?

REAGAN

Because we're blackmailing you.

DAKOTA

You just got Hitchcocked bitch!

CASSIDY

But you said you wanted to help! You even deleted the video!

REAGAN

We are helping! Don't you get it.
You didn't go back home after your
flight was canceled. You went over
to our place to help us out.

DAKOTA

And while you were with us saving
our marriage, you weren't out
murdering your husband's lover.

INT. TSA SECURITY CHECKPOINT, JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Jason waits his turn in line near the body scan machine.

He watches carefully as a muscular TSA GUY flags each person
left: to the machine, or right: to the full body pat down.

Left. Left. Left. Left. Jason reaches the Guy. Left.

JASON

Excuse me?

The Guy looks down at Jason, conveying zero emotion.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'd like to opt for the full body
pat down instead. Can I do that?

So he flags him right instead.

JASON (CONT'D)

Thanks. It's the radiation.

A SPANISH MOM in her thirties, who's helping her FIVE KIDS
pile stuff into plastic bins, SCOFFS at his remark.

JASON (CONT'D)

Ma'am? Did you just scoff?

THE SPANISH MOM

You're wrong.

JASON

What? I'm not wrong.

THE SPANISH MOM

Did you know you get more radiation
from just being on a plane than you
do from that machine, dumbass?

JASON

It's called minimizing risk.

He motions to her five kids with a smirk.

JASON (CONT'D)
Something you should read up on.

INT. DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TERMINAL, JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Jason casually saunters up to a PRETZEL SHOP, oblivious to a CAPTAIN and his COPILOT that he just beat there by seconds.

He leans against the counter for a beat. The CASHIER stares.

JASON
Sorry. Just reading the menu.

THE CAPTAIN
Hey. Do you mind if we get ahead of you? We're in a rush.

JASON
Would you mind? I'm trying to conduct a financial transaction.

THE CAPTAIN
We just want to get some coffee.

The Captain raises his hand and holds up two fingers.

THE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
One black. One light and sweet.

JASON
No. Don't make that coffee. I'm first... you serve me first.

The Cashier hesitates, unsure.

THE COPILOT
It's just coffee! You look like you're ordering a whole meal!

THE CAPTAIN
Yeah. It's no big deal.

JASON
It is a big deal. It's a matter of principles. Rules are rules.
(to the Cashier)
Two parmesean please.

Jason turns back to them and shakes his head.

JASON (CONT'D)
Really. You both should know better. Come on. You're ranking officers. Set a higher standard.

CASHIER
That'll be four ninety three.

Jason pulls out a five dollar bill, and pauses.

JASON
I think I have exact change.

CUT TO:

HIS FLIGHT'S DEPARTURE GATE

where Jason spots Cassidy wheeling her luggage to the line. He jogs over and offers his hand out to shake.

JASON
Nice glasses. Thanks.

CASSIDY
Nice glasses. Thanks.

JASON
Doctor Mendez? It's nice to finally put a face to the name.

CASSIDY
You must be umm -

JASON
I'm Martin- uhh, Jason Martin.

CASSIDY
Like Bond? James Bond?

JASON
What? No, uhh. Yes. Haha. Good one.

CASSIDY
Fancy yourself a spy Mister Martin?

JASON
Yes. Yes, that's right. I'll figure out all your secrets.

Even in jest, Cassidy doesn't like the sound of that.

CASSIDY
What if I don't want you to?

JASON

Oh, you don't have any say in the matter. I have to. It's my job.

She pauses, suddenly unsure if he's still joking.

CASSIDY

Wait, what? What do you mean? Why would you say it's your job?

JASON

It is my job...

Cassidy stares at him silently for a beat.

JASON (CONT'D)

Because I'm a spy.

CASSIDY

Right... Right.

INT. FIRST CLASS, THE AIRPLANE - DAY

Cassidy settles in her roomy cabin across from Jason's.

JASON

Do you fly first class often? I don't know about you, but I've really been looking forward to it.

CASSIDY

No. I haven't flown first class since my honeymoon. My last book wasn't so high profile.

JASON

Oh, you're married?

CASSIDY

Twenty one years. We met when I was a senior.

JASON

So... Do you have kids?

CASSIDY

No. No kids.

JASON

Don't want them... or...?

CASSIDY

Yeah. Or. How about you?

JASON

No kids. Bachelor. Single! Not by choice. Heh. Life of a spy and all. How's that baby by the way? Your friends baby? Doing well, I hope.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT steps between them. Jason looks up at her.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Excuse me. Mister Martin? I'm sorry, but the Captain's informed me that there's a weight distribution problem on the plane.

JASON

And how does that concern me?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We need to move a passenger to the back or we can't take off. Please follow me, and I'll take you to your new seat in economy.

JASON

No. No, I don't think so. I'm talking to the Captain about this.

But when he stands up and heads towards the cockpit, he spots the AIRLINE CAPTAIN from before smiling back out at him.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm sorry sir. Rules are rules.

CUT TO:

THE VERY LAST ROW

where Jason's ushered into an open seat beside a crying baby.

He settles into the seat with a sigh, buckles his belt, and turns to face: THE SPANISH MOM, and her five children.

She smiles at him devilishly.

THE SPANISH MOM

Look kids! This kind man is gonna help you with your coloring books.

INT. PRIMETIME NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

LEONARDO BANDERAS, a middle-aged Spanish hunk of a man sits across from a FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR as he gets interviewed.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR

What are the top three words people
thought of when polled about you?
Resilience. Perseverance. Wheaties.

No sign of emotion shows on his face.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Born to a poor dirt farmer, you
couldn't afford shoes until you
were ten. Yet you single-handedly
placed Spain in the top three gold
medal count five Olympics in a row.
So tell me... How does it feel
being the ultimate alpha-male?

Banderas breaks down into tears. He sobs like a baby.

INT. DAYTIME TALK SHOW STUDIO - DAY

A HUNDRED CRYING WOMEN stare up at a GIANT TV MONITOR.

The screen transitions into a graphic for: **THE CONVERSATION**

The host on stage: WANDA, a charismatic Brooklynese black
woman, wipes away tears and addresses her studio audience.

WANDA

He sure is hot when he cries, isn't
he? Well, he's with us today! Let's
hear it for Leonardo Banderas!

The Women go absolutely berserk.

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE

where Cassidy watches the show from behind a curtain.

Jason walks over, taps her on the shoulder, and she jumps.

JASON

What's the matter? Nervous?

CASSIDY

How am I supposed to follow that?
He's so attractive. I'll never get
that kind of response.

JASON

Don't worry. You've got two great
big things he hasn't got.

CASSIDY

My tits are pretty great.

JASON

You're female, yes, but you're also married. So is every one in the audience. But he's not. He's a bachelor. He's the dream but you're their best friend.

CLAUDINE (O.S.)

(heavy Russian accent)

Please turn to camera.

They both turn to find CLAUDINE, an ex-supermodel Russian photographer in her mid thirties, snapping pictures of them.

BLINDING THEM with FLASH after FLASH of her camera!

JASON

Ack! Stop that! That's enough. Who are you? Who do you work for?

CLAUDINE

Actually. I'm work for you. Claudine? I'm the photographer?

JASON

Yes. Yes you are. I can see that. Well alright Claudine. I'm Jason Martin, and this here's -

CLAUDINE

I know who she is. The therapist.

Cassidy balks at Claudine's dirty look.

CLAUDINE (CONT'D)

My husband get filthy idea from therapist. Divorce me. Take half my money. Force me to find new career.

CASSIDY

Actually. I save marriages.

INT. REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dakota and Reagan snuggle as they watch Cassidy on TV.

INT. DAYTIME TALK SHOW STUDIO - DAY

Cassidy and Banderas sit on a couch across from Wanda.

WANDA

One of the big claims in your book is your perfect success rate in saving marriages!

(applause)

Yeah! I know right! Incredible.

CASSIDY

Thank you.

WANDA

So does that mean you could take any couple off the street with a failing marriage, sprinkle your magic fairy dust, and keep the demons of divorce away? I know a few lawyers who might not be so happy about that!

CASSIDY

It's not that simple, Wanda. Not every marriage is worth saving.

The audience gasps.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

No! No. Look, sometimes people grow apart, and while still very much in love, they need to make the mutual decision they'd be better off separated. I choose my patients carefully to avoid those people.

WANDA

So you discriminate?

CASSIDY

If a couple seriously wants it to work, then I'll take them. I don't save couples. I help them save themselves.

WANDA

These people that can't be saved. I wanna hear more about them.

CASSIDY

Well with patient confidentiality -

WANDA

But they're not your patients right? Come on. We all wanna hear some juicy gossip! Don't we folks?

Cassidy's uncomfortable, but the audience eggs her on.

CASSIDY

Ok. Ok. This actually happened just the other day. So there's this young woman from a same sex couple I turned down, and -

WANDA

Now hold up! I thought you said you didn't discriminate.

The audience laughs at Wanda's staged attitude.

Haha. She's so funny. This is why she has a TV show!

CASSIDY

Anyway, I was walking out of my office, and there she was. Waiting.

INT. REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Reagan is furious and Dakota is mortified!

INT. DAYTIME TALK SHOW STUDIO - DAY

Cassidy's swept up by her story. Everyone else is shocked.

CASSIDY

And he handed me the baby... And it was just a porcelain doll.

Every single person in the studio gasps, even Banderas.

WANDA

Holy ****! I just got a chill. You just gave me the chills. You've got stalkers! What if they hurt you? They seem mentally unstable if you ask me. Don't they folks?

CASSIDY

No. No. No. The people they hurt is themselves. They're petty. They're manipulative. And it's a miracle that their marriage has lasted as long as it has.

INT. REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Reagan walks away upset and Dakota silently watches her go...

INT. DAYTIME TALK SHOW STUDIO - DAY

Wanda sniffles for the audience's sake, and wipes her eyes.

WANDA

Wow... That's really sad, actually.

CASSIDY

However, in order to save them from themselves and their selfish narcissistic tendencies, I've decided to take them on as clients.

WANDA

Really?

CASSIDY

But to be perfectly honest with you. I may be risking my perfect record by agreeing to help them.

INT. REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dakota rubs her fingers across Cassidy's face on TV.

DAKOTA

I'm worried about you Doctor M...
You need us now more than ever.

INT. BASEMENT, REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sheila lies unconscious on the couch.

Her head's bandaged. IV drips run into her arms...

She wakes up in a groggy daze. Feels her head. Takes in the unfamiliar surroundings. Examines the IV...

DAKOTA (O.S.)

Hey Sheila... Sheila. Over here.

Sheila looks to the TV where Reagan and Dakota are on screen.

DAKOTA (ON TV)

Don't be alarmed. You're in our basement. You had an accident. We found you and took care of you.

SHEILA

Uhh... who are you?

REAGAN (ON TV)

You know Cassidy right?

SHEILA

Yeah?

REAGAN (ON TV)

We're her friends.

SHEILA

Uh... Like, why didn't you take me to like the hospital, or something?

DAKOTA (ON TV)

Cassidy's afraid of how it looked. Motive and all. We just kind of wanted to hold off and see if you might not wanna press charges? Hmm? Maybe? Perhaps?

SHEILA

She didn't hurt me. I fell. I remember. Gosh.

DAKOTA (ON TV)

Great! That's great!

SHEILA

So. Can I get a ride home? Why are you on TV anyway? What's going on?

REAGAN (ON TV)

Uhh. Can you give us a few days?

SHEILA

A FEW DAYS!? In here?

She looks around at the dingy basement.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

I'd literally rather be gagged with a spoon.

DAKOTA (ON TV)

Cassidy's kind of having a teeny tiny mental breakdown right now.

SHEILA

She did seem a little crazy.

REAGAN (ON TV)

Just let us get her settled down.

DAKOTA (ON TV)

We're afraid she might stalk you. Or hurt you. Or worse. So we locked you in our basement.

SHEILA
Seriously?

REAGAN (ON TV)
Just trust us. It's for your own
protection.

DAKOTA (ON TV)
Don't forget. She knows where you
live.

Sheila groans into her hand, and sighs.

SHEILA
Do you at least have netflix?

INT. NIGHT LOUNGE, PHOENIX HOTEL - NIGHT

Cassidy sits at the bar, staring into her glass of white wine. She rubs her finger along the rim, making it HUM.

Jason takes a seat beside her. Cassidy doesn't look up.

CASSIDY
Can I buy you a drink?

JASON
No thanks.

CASSIDY
So how'd I do today?

JASON
Maybe next time try ending things
on more of a positive note?

CASSIDY
I shouldn't have thrown them under
the bus like that.

JASON
It was a bit of a downer.

CASSIDY
It was very unprofessional of me.

JASON
All I can say is, the only thing we
can do is move forward. We have
some exciting days ahead of us...
Well, I'm beat. I'm going to hit
the sack.

CASSIDY
It's six thirty.

JASON
Jet lag.

When Jason stands up and leaves, Cassidy finds Banderas right behind him... staring at her with a weird look on his face.

He immediately walks over and fills Jason's seat.

Cassidy straightens and takes a sip of her wine.

CASSIDY
You're that Olympian. Leo, Right?

BANDERAS
(thick Spanish accent)
You look like you could do with
some fisting.

She sets her glass down, and turns to fully face him.

CASSIDY
What?

BANDERAS
Fisting. Real good fisting. All
night long. Hot and moist but worth
it! My salmon are about to spawn,
and they wanna swim upstream.

Cassidy can't believe what she's hearing.

BANDERAS (CONT'D)
Come on doctor! Fisting. Real good
fisting! Don't you want to come?

She throws her wine in his face

CASSIDY
Pig!

and storms off! ... Leaving Banderas thoroughly confused.

Claudine slips into Cassidy's empty spot at the bar.

CLAUDINE
I could do with a good fisting.

Banderas looks Claudine up and down.

BANDERAS
Meet me outside in five minutes.

INT. BEDROOM, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago lies back in bed, scrolling through his old texts with *UPS* as he chats with Cassidy over the speaker phone.

SANTIAGO

I should fly out there right now
and kick his Spaniard ass.

He's sent *UPS* dozens of messages with no response...

CASSIDY (V.O.)

Jesus Christ, Raph! Can you just
not right now.

SANTIAGO

Not what?

He types in another text: *WHERE R U?* and clicks send.

CASSIDY (V.O.)

Sometimes I just want you to
listen, not try and rush to my aid
like a prince on his white horse.

SANTIAGO

Look, I know you spent the whole
night last night at the airport,
but you don't have to take your
attitude out on me.

CASSIDY (V.O.)

I didn't.

INT. CASSIDY'S ROOM, PHOENIX HOTEL - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK! Someone's at Cassidy's door.

SANTIAGO (V.O.)

You didn't come home did you?

CASSIDY

No. I was with clients. Listen.
Someone's here. I have to go.

SANTIAGO (V.O.)

Ok. I love y--

Cassidy ends the call and answers the door. It's Jason.

He peers in and spots the ravaged remains of the mini bar.

JASON

Having a little party I see.

INT. BEDROOM, CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago picks up his phone and types in: *I'm coming over.*

INT. CASSIDY'S ROOM, PHOENIX HOTEL - NIGHT

Cassidy backs herself up against the wall.

CASSIDY

Can I get you a drink?

JASON

You keep asking me that. I feel like you want to get me drunk.

CASSIDY

Well I'm getting drunk. And the less for you means the more for me.

JASON

I come bearing good news.

CASSIDY

Don't keep me in suspense now.

JASON

It's official! The American Counseling Association nominated you for Therapist of the Year!

Cassidy opens a tequila mini-bottle and downs it in one gulp.

CASSIDY

Holy shit.

JASON

Congratulations Doctor Mendez! It's really quite an accomplishment!

She wipes her lips clean and stares him up and down.

CASSIDY

Cassy. Just call me Cassy.

JASON

Cassy. There's something else. You've been invited to a special A.C.A. dinner tomorrow night.

Jason takes the empty bottle from her and sets it down.

JASON (CONT'D)

If you win, it could be really big for you and your book...

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Really big. We don't want to give them any reason to doubt you, or your ethics. So until the awards, you have to be on your absolute best behavior. No more going off the script.

Cassidy nods meekly as she continues to stare at him.

Jason gulps, suddenly uncomfortable.

JASON (CONT'D)
Well. Goodnight.

She silently watches him turn and abruptly leave the room.

EXT. FISHING BOAT, OUT ON A LAKE SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

Banderas casts his fishing pole into the water with a smile.

BANDERAS
Ahh... Nothing like a good fisting.

Claudine sits in the chair beside him... totally bored.

EXT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago KNOCKS on the door again and again...

INT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago takes an awkward step inside.

IN THE BEDROOM

Santiago pushes into the darkness, confused and concerned.

He flips on the light switch and discovers the room empty.

Santiago pulls out his phone and texts *UPS*:

Where'd you go?

He pockets his phone, turns off the light, and leaves.

BEEP! CHIRP! A RINGTONE echoes from somewhere.

Santiago walks back in and flips on the light...

SANTIAGO
Sheila!? My little shell! Where are you? Hide and go seek!

He sends another text... BEEP! It came from the bathroom!

Santiago gets down on his hands and knees and finds in the space between the toilet and the bathtub...

SHEILA'S CELL PHONE!

EXT. SHEILA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago exits the house, gets in his car, and leaves.

An SUV in the street turns its lights on... and follows.

EXT. CASSIDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santiago pulls into the driveway and stops...

But he doesn't get out.

INSIDE THE CAR

Santiago stares at Sheila's forgotten phone in his lap...

His phone's in his hand... 911 dialed. His finger over send.

And after a long moment of silent contemplation...

THE DRIVER SIDE DOOR BURSTS OPEN!

and FOUR STRONG HANDS GRAB Santiago and PULL HIM OUT!

IN THE DRIVEWAY

Santiago finds himself confronted by THREE TOUGH UNION GUYS.

THE LEADER

Where's Sheila bro?

SANTIAGO

Who the fuck are you?

THE MUSCLE

We're the Union, bitch.

SANTIAGO

I think you have the wrong guy. I'm no politician.

THE LEADER

We know exactly who you are!

Leader RIPS the shirt from Santiago's shoulder... and reveals

His Shell Tattoo.

THE LEADER (CONT'D)

Now where is she, bro?

SANTIAGO

I don't know.

THE MUSCLE PUNCHES Santiago hard in the gut. He doubles over.

THE LEADER

Don't fucking lie to us.

THE SUCKUP

Holy -! You're not gonna like this.

SUCKUP pulls out from Santiago's car... SHEILA'S CELL PHONE!

THE LEADER

Oh you're in some deep shit now,
bro.

SANTIAGO

No no no. I just found her phone. I
swear. I did nothing to Sheila.

THE SUCKUP

Mhmm. Tell that to the judge.

THE LEADER

Bro. If you hurt her.

SANTIAGO

I'd never hurt her! I love her!

Muscle and Suckup share a look... turn to Leader... He nods.

BAM! Santiago SUCKER PUNCHES Suckup and knocks him down!

Santiago makes a break for it! He pushes past them and runs!

They chase him out into the street.

THE LEADER

You ain't getting away from us bro!
No one escapes the Union!

Santiago tries to flag down a PASSING CAR, but it just HONKS
its horn and swerves around him speeding off down the street.

He faces down his would-be attackers and keeps backing away.

SANTIAGO

I'm telling the truth! I swear! We
both want the same thing. We both
want to find her.

THE SUCKUP

You trying to trick us, esse?

THE LEADER

We know you know where she is, bro!
Now tell us before you get hurt.

SANTIAGO

Me? Hurt? Me? I should warn you.

Santiago stops and sinks into a martial arts stance. Knees bent. Arms raised. Fists out. He smiles.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

I'm a fifth degree master of Cuban martial arts. *Juego de mani*. The dance of the games of war.

THE LEADER

Yeah? Well I did Jiu-Jitsu bro.

Leader also goes down into a fancy martial arts stance.

SANTIAGO

Then why don't you come at me...
(ice cold)
Bro.

WHACK! Santiago drops to the floor unconscious.

A FOURTH UNION GUY stands behind him with a golf club.

THE LEADER

What the fuck bro!?

THE GOLFER

Uhh... Fore?

INT. THE BACK OF A MOVING SUV - NIGHT

Santiago wakes up gagged and bound on the floor.

His wrists tied behind his back with duct tape.

He strains to make out what they're saying over the EMPIRE CARPETS commercial playing over the RADIO.

THE SUCKUP (O.S.)

Where we going? That was our left.

THE LEADER (O.S.)

We're not going to the cops, bro.

Santiago doesn't like the sound of that one bit.

He tries to keep silent as he STRUGGLES to free himself.

THE GOLFER (O.S.)
Huh? We talked about this, bro.

THE LEADER (O.S.)
Nah bro. This dude's guilty as
fuck. We're gonna get some answers.

THE SUCKUP (O.S.)
But like. How bro? Bro. How?

Santiago succeeds. He swings his arms, BREAKS THE DUCT TAPE around his wrists, frees his legs, and ungags himself.

THE LEADER (O.S.)
I dunno. You saw Casino, right? We
could put his head in a vice.

SANTIAGO
Bro.

They all turn to find Santiago. Fists up in martial pose.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
More like... Miami Vice.

He ONE-TWO PUNCHES Golfer and Muscle who are in the back, and tumbles over the divider to come to a seat between them.

Leader SWERVES the car in surprise and Suckup SCREAMS!

Santiago engages in hand-to-hand combat with Muscle and Golfer, exchanging volleys of strikes to the head and face.

THE MUSCLE
You ain't got the strength pretty
boy.

SANTIAGO
You're the pretty boy.

Santiago KISSES MUSCLE ON THE LIPS! And when he raises his arms to protest, Santiago UNBUCKLES Muscle's SEAT BELT!

Then OPENS UP THE DOOR, and PUSHES him out!

He goes flying from the car! Tumbling to the roadside.

Everyone's eyes are on Santiago, totally fucking shocked.

THE GOLFER
Bro! ... Bro.

Santiago doesn't let up! He LEAPS onto Golfer and starts beating the ever-living shit out of him.

The car SWERVES as Leader tries to help from the front.

THE LEADER
Somebody get him under control!

Santiago's eyes focus in on TWO ONCOMING HEADLIGHTS!

SANTIAGO
Balls.

He LEAPS from the open door!

ON THE SIDE OF THE EMPTY SUBURBAN ROAD

Santiago comes tumbling to a halt and looks up as

KASMASH! The SUV crashes into another car!

The WRECKS of both vehicles scatter across the street.

Santiago wipes blood from his battered head and stumbles over to the smoldering remains of a Honda Civic.

He gets to his knees and looks in the shattered window, but the ELDERLY COUPLE in the car are quite dead.

He pushes to his feet and lumbers to the UPSIDE DOWN SUV...

where he finds Golfer, neck broken in the back seat.

Suckup hangs upside down trapped by the belt.

Leader's in the same predicament. He groans as he wakes.

THE SUCKUP
Please don't let me die like this.

Santiago kneels down beside Suckup and examines him...

THE SUCKUP (CONT'D)
My family has open casket funerals.

But he's got no visible injuries and just a few minor cuts.

SANTIAGO
Bro, you're fine. But uhh. Your friend...

They look to the back at Golfer's mangled corpse.

THE LEADER

We ain't done here, bro! You're fuckin' dead bro! Fucking dead!

Santiago stands and taks a few healthy steps back.

He looks to his right: Distant red and blue lights flash.

He looks to his left: Muscle's limping down the road.

Caught between the union and the cops... Santiago runs!

THE LEADER (CONT'D)

You can run, bro! But you can't hide, bro!

INT. CASSIDY'S ROOM, PHOENIX HOTEL - DAY

Cassidy startles awake in bed from a drunken stupor to find:

Dakota. Gazing down at her. Chin resting on her palm.

DAKOTA

Good morning sunshine.

Cassidy's shocked utterly speechless.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Need to take a tinkle?

SMASH CUT TO:

IN THE BATHROOM

Cassidy sits on the toilet seat, face buried in her hands.

She pees... .. and flushes.

After a few deep breaths she looks herself over in the mirror. She's a mess. She rubs at her eyes.

CASSIDY

Keep. Charting. The course.

INT. PHOENIX BOOKSTORE - DAY

Cassidy signs her name on the inside cover of her book, then hands it over to an eager SOCCER MOM with a smile.

CASSIDY

Keep charting the course.

SOCCER MOM

Thank you! Thank you so much!

DAKOTA (O.S.)
You're welcome.

They all turn to Dakota, who's sitting right next to Cassidy at the table, where dozens of WOMEN are waiting in line.

SOCCER MOM
Umm. I'm sorry. Who are you?

DAKOTA
The pinnacle of her greatness.

SOCCER MOM
No, really. Who are you again?

JASON (O.S.)
That's what I'd like to know!

Jason slaps a copy of Cassidy's book on the table.

JASON (CONT'D)
I just had a nice conversation with a lovely lady outside, who told me she was surprised at how much weight Doctor Mendez had put on.

DAKOTA
The camera does add fifty pounds.

JASON
That doesn't make any sense.

DAKOTA
It makes dollars and cents.

JASON
Look at her copy.

He opens the book and shows the penned inscription.

JASON (CONT'D)
Keep charting that course! Signed, truly yours, patient zero.

DAKOTA
Too obscure?

JASON
Who the heck do you think you are?
And what the frick are you up to?

DAKOTA
Would you like a mint?

JASON

Yes, please. I mean no! No, why?

DAKOTA

Because your mouth is filthy.

CASSIDY

I'm sorry Jason, let me introduce you to Dakota Tennessee, and her wife Reagan who's around somewhere. (through her teeth)
They're my newest clients.

JASON

Oh. Oh really? I didn't know you had any patients in Arizona.

CASSIDY

I don't... They're... They're from New York. I... I flew them out -

DAKOTA

Rest your voice for your speech, Doctor M. Let Dakota handle this.

Dakota walks around the table to address the crowd.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Listen up everyone, I've got something to say! My name's Dakota. Hello! Welcome. Bonne journée. Don't worry I'm not an alcoholic. What I am... is three years married to the true love of my life.

Everyone moves closer, trying to decipher Dakota's accent.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

And never in all that time did we have an easy day. Marriage for us has been a struggle, but we've also somehow always made it work. That is... until wednesday.

Dakota circles Jason like a shark as she tells her story.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

We had a bad fight wednesday. So bad we almost signed the papers. You know, most therapists only talk to you in session. And maybe... maybe if you're lucky, they'll give you some advice on the phone. But not Doctor M. No... No. Not her.

Dakota points her finger at Cassidy with gravitas.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Not this wonderful lady! Not this
GENIUS! She found out about our
predicament, and even though she
had to be at the airport the next
morning, she came over just to talk
my wife out of the bathroom... She
was there when we needed her. And
shut up. Just shut up! She had us
at hello.

Dakota looks out to the faces of the emotionally kept crowd.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Doctor M taught us, that sometimes
it's the wrong things in a
relationship that can make it work.
You just have to do the wrong
things... in order to... do the
things that are not wrong... right?
You know?

The women all nod their heads in blind agreement.

Dakota sheds real tears, and holds her hands out to Cassidy.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
What you did for us, Doctor M. What
you did for our marriage. Spending
wednesday night with us. The entire
night start to finish... You don't
understand. It changed our lives...
And you'll be in our prayers... our
daily prayers... Forever.

A wave of teary-eyed admiration has swept the crowd.

Dakota starts a SLOW CLAP, and soon everyone has joined in.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
That's right! Take a bow! Come on
Doctor M, don't be shy! Take a bow!

Although reluctant, Cassidy finally stands and curtsies.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Yeah! Let's hear it for Doctor
Cassidy Mendez! And that's why
she's decided to take us with her
on the rest of her book tour! Yeah!
Wow! What an honor!

Everyone claps even louder. Jason's taken by surprise.

Cassidy maneuvers herself beside Dakota.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
(whispered)
Relax. Now your alibi's rock solid.

CASSIDY
(whispered)
This isn't what we agreed.

DAKOTA
Buckle your seatbelt Doctor M.
The eagle has landed.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

THE JUDGE stares down at THE LEADER as he renders his decision before a packed session with dozens in the gallery.

THE JUDGE
And while there was no alcohol found in your blood stream, as a result of your history of reckless behavior, I am nonetheless compelled to consider you a high flight risk, and hereby deny bail altogether. Bailiff, take him into custody.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

Suckup and Muscle stand on the steps with a UNION SUIT.

THE SUCKUP
And meanwhile she's still missing and the police haven't done dick.

UNION SUIT
Here's the bottom line. Finding her's our top priority, but unless we get this guy to testify that he caused the accident, our boy's looking at three to five.

THE SUCKUP
Dude. He's our bro. We can't let that happen.

THE MUSCLE
How are we supposed to get that bitch? He probably run off by now.

UNION SUIT

We already found him, and you two are taking point on this. Your flight leaves in two hours.

THE SUCKUP

Woah. They said you were good bro. And you are good bro.

THE MUSCLE

So what do we do once we get a hold of him?

UNION SUIT

What do you think!? You bring him to the U.P.S.

INT. PHOENIX BOOK STORE - DAY

Banderas stands at a podium giving a speech to the crowd.

BANDERAS

And that's when I had to drop the baby... Luckily, his parachute deployed. I built it myself.

Nearly a hundred Women sit hypnotized by his presence.

Claudine takes photos of Reagan and Dakota striking poses.

Cassidy lingers nearby watching them. Jason walks up to her.

JASON

I wish you would have told me sooner about bringing your patients with us. It changes a lot.

CASSIDY

Please don't be upset with me.

JASON

No. No, I'm not. I'm pleased. I think it's a great idea. It's sure to get a lot of traction. It's just... There's the extra plane fares... the hotel reservations.

CASSIDY

You don't have to worry about it. I'll pay for all their expenses.

JASON
Really? You'd do that for them?

CUT TO:

Reagan spots Cassidy and Jason talking... There's something about the way they are around each other. The chemistry.

She nudges Reagan with her elbow and points them out.

DAKOTA
I'm totally shipping them. What do you think? Cason, or Jassidy?

Reagan watches as Cassidy and Jason share an awkward moment.

REAGAN
O.M.G. I think I have a new O.T.P.

BACK TO:

Cassidy exchanges a silent stare with Jason for a beat.

CASSIDY
Aren't you going to ask me why?

JASON
Why what?

CASSIDY
I thought you'd ask me why I'd go so far to help them.

JASON
I just assumed...

CASSIDY
Assumed what?

JASON
Nothing. It's nothing.

CASSIDY
No. Tell me. I want to know.

JASON
I assumed that... well. I assumed -

CASSIDY
What!? JUST TELL ME ALREADY!

JASON
That you were an angel.

Cassidy blushes.

JASON (CONT'D)
It's just that's really nice of
you, is all I meant.

There's a COLLECTIVE GASP across the room of women.

Cassidy and Jason both look to Banderas at his podium.

BANDERAS
But it was too late, the rogue
pirate group of the Maldives
Islands had already captured my pet
turtle... And Gary... was gone.

CASSIDY
What's that asshole doing here
anyway? And when am I supposed to
give my reading?

JASON
That's a very good question.

Jason spots the STORE MANAGER. He and Cassidy approach him.

JASON (CONT'D)
Excuse me. How long is Mister
Banderas supposed to be talking?
He's been reading from his book now
for almost an hour.

THE MANAGER
Oh, uhh. He doesn't have a book.

JASON
Then why is he speaking?

THE MANAGER
I don't know. He just turned up.

CASSIDY
What do you mean he just turned up?

THE MANAGER
I don't know. He's so famous, I
didn't want to tell him to stop.

Banderas leans against the podium, tears in his eyes.

BANDERAS
And as I knelt over my him, holding
his hand through the final beats of
his life... I pulled the trigger...
(MORE)

BANDERAS (CONT'D)
and transferred all the money into
the orphanage's account.

Banderas weeps as he gets helped offstage by four women...

Jason crosses the store to confront him, and Cassidy follows.

JASON
I think it's time you let somebody
else be the center of attention.

BANDERAS
Little Jimmy! He was just a boy!

Banderas wipes away his tears. Jason steadies him.

JASON
Pull yourself together man.

CASSIDY
What are you doing, Leo!? Why did
you come here!? The manager said
you don't even have a book!

BANDERAS
Oh... Hi Cassidy.

CASSIDY
Are you stalking me!?

A PROTECTIVE LADY steps between Banderas and Cassidy.

THE LADY
Do you know this bitch?

Cassidy's had enough. She stares her dead in the eye.

CASSIDY
You're the bitch... Bitch.

CUT TO:

Dakota cracks her knuckles as Cassidy and the Lady grapple.

DAKOTA
Oh no. Not on my watch.

She rolls up her sleeves and starts walking, when Reagan
grabs her by the arm and stops her.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Back off Ray. I got this.

REAGAN

No. Look.

She points out into the crowd... where

SANTIAGO, duffel bag slung over his shoulder, is standing dumbfounded as he watches his wife slap-fight some Lady.

Dakota WHISTLES and gets Claudine's attention.

DAKOTA

Grab your camera! Shit's about to get real!

Banderas PRIES Cassidy and the Lady apart from one another.

BANDERAS

Please. There's no need for physicality.

Cassidy backs away and Banderas follows after her.

CASSIDY

Don't touch me.

BANDERAS

You don't understand. I came to apologize.

JASON

I think you'd better leave.

Claudine SNAPS PHOTOS as Dakota gets between them.

DAKOTA

You want her, you're gonna have to get through me first!

Dakota raises her arms, stands on one leg, and readies for

A CRANE KICK!

BANDERAS

Please! Lower your weapon! Claudine invited me! She told me to come!

He points out Claudine in the crowd. She lowers her camera.

CLAUDINE

Uhh, yeah. He was real sorry.

JASON

She invited you? When was this?

BANDERAS
When we were fisting.

Santiago emerges from the crowd of swarming women, DROPS his Duffel bag, STOMPS over to Banderas, and taps his shoulder.

SANTIAGO
Hey bro!

Banderas turns into a RIGHT HOOK from Santiago.
He COLLAPSES. Blood spurts from his broken nose.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Stay the fuck away from my wife!

Santiago turns to face Cassidy.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Cassy! Cassy. Are you ok?

JASON
Do you know this man? Should I call
the police?

CASSIDY
He's my husband.

Santiago grabs her arm and leans in close.

SANTIAGO
Come on. Let's go back to the
hotel. We need to talk.

CASSIDY
No! I have to give a speech.

Reagan glances around at the angry mob of judgemental women.

REAGAN
That ship's sailed, Doctor M. I
think you kinda lost the crowd.

CASSIDY
I'll get them back. Don't worry.

JASON
We really should get going. You
need to get ready for dinner.

SANTIAGO
Who the fuck is this guy?

CASSIDY
He's my fucking publicist, Raphael.

SANTIAGO
Can we talk in private?

Cassidy storms off. Santiago grabs his bag and follows her.
Reagan turns to Jason with a smile.

REAGAN
Dinner?

JASON
Yes. And it's a very important one.
So please. Do me a favor and help
keep an eye on Cassidy. She needs
to really ace this dinner and she
seems a little... unhinged.

DAKOTA
I think we're picking up what
you're putting down.

JASON
And dress up. It's black tie.

INT. CASSIDY'S ROOM, PHOENIX HOTEL - DAY

Santiago removes a few bottles from the mini-bar and starts
drinking. Cassidy gathers her evening wear as she strips.

CASSIDY
Acorn! Acorn Raphael! Acorn! I'm
putting a pin in this fight. I have
far more important things I need to
worry about right now than you.

SANTIAGO
Cassy. I'm in serious trouble.
Something happened.

CASSIDY
What? What happened?

SANTIAGO
It's... It's complicated.

CASSIDY
Ugh! I don't have time for this! I
got the nomination by the way! And
this dinner tonight could decide
which way it goes, so I don't need
you fucking it up for me.

SANTIAGO

Cassy! That's wonderful!

CASSIDY

So just stop being so fucking selfish and let me get through one weekend without any of your drama. I have to shower and get changed.

Cassidy starts to the bathroom. Santiago grabs her.

SANTIAGO

Wait! You don't understand.

She violently shakes him off.

CASSIDY

Oh! Oh, I understand. And if there's something you're feeling guilty about Raphael, or whatever it is you want to get off your chest. I need you to shut the fuck up, and swallow that Cuban pride of yours, and pick a better time to ruin my life.

Cassidy slams the bathroom door shut and locks it.

SANTIAGO

Cassidy! Goddammit! Please just listen for once!

The shower starts and it drowns out Santiago's pleas.

IN THE BATHROOM

Cassidy sits on the toilet, crying into her cell phone.

INT. REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S ROOM, PHOENIX HOTEL - DAY

Both dressed in evening gowns, Reagan does her make-up in the bathroom mirror while Dakota tweezes her nose hairs.

DAKOTA

You're being paranoid. There's no murder investigation.

A cell phone sits on the table with Cassidy on speaker.

CASSIDY (V.O.)

But what if the cops start asking questions? Santiago doesn't have an alibi! He was with her! What if he gets arrested?

REAGAN

What do you care anyway? He was cheating on you.

CASSIDY (V.O.)

What if they talk to the cab company? They've gotta have it on record I got dropped off at my house. Plus I used my car! And it wasn't even at my house!

DAKOTA

Will you relax! Nobody's going to jail! It'll be fine. Trust me..

CASSIDY (V.O.)

How can you be so sure?

Reagan and Dakota share a long look. Reagan sighs.

DAKOTA

Ok... Ok Doctor M. If it comes down to it. I got you covered. I promise. If you or your husband get arrested... I'll take the fall.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jason, Claudine, Cassidy, Santiago, Reagan, and Dakota enter.

Posh men and women in ritzy evening gowns crowd the bar.

Jason approaches the HOSTESS and takes off his coat.

JASON

Hi. We're with the A.C.A.

She bids him to follow, and she leads them through a

LAVISH LOUNGE

where MUSICIANS play Mozart on strings for dining patrons.

Dakota adjusts her dress and shuffles uncomfortably.

DAKOTA

I should have worn more deodorant. It's like the swamp of sadness down there. Atreyu's deep in my crotch somewhere losing his horse.

REAGAN

Shut up D. Try to keep it classy.
This is a classy place, and we need
to fit in.

Dakota pulls at her dress and shouts down into it.

DAKOTA

Artax! Artax noooooooooo.

The Hostess leads them into

A SEPARATE DINING ROOM

where nearly fifty PEOPLE are seated at several round tables.

Jason gets Cassidy's attention and holds her back.

JASON

Cassidy. A moment.

She stops. He takes her aside as everyone else walks in.

Reagan lingers nearby behind Cassidy, eavesdropping.

CASSIDY

So umm... What is it?

Jason spots Reagan. She gives him an exaggerated nod.

JASON

I just wanted to say. You're going
to be amazing in there tonight.

He leans in on her and tries to develop a romantic moment.

JASON (CONT'D)

And you're going to be amazing at
the show tomorrow. Because you're
amazing. Win or lose. A brand new
face for the A.C.A. Now I want you
to go in there, and show these
people how amazing you are. I know
you can do it Cassidy.

CASSIDY

Thanks.

Cassidy blushes and rubs at her neck. Uncomfortable. Unsure.

JASON

I believe in you.

CASSIDY
Thanks Jason. Thanks.

Reagan gives him a big thumbs up.

JASON
And maybe later on tonight, you
could finally get me that drink?

CASSIDY
Ha ha. Sure.

JASON
Aaaaand about that confrontation at
the book store...

CASSIDY
I know. She hit me first.

JASON
Ha ha. Well there's that. But I
meant about your husband.

CASSIDY
What about him?

JASON
If anyone brings up the divorce,
don't freak out or anything.

Reagan shakes her head. Signals ABORT! Jason ignores her.

CASSIDY
What?

JASON
Just say it's an ongoing process.
But you both support each other.

REAGAN
(coughing)
Abort. Abort. Abort.

CASSIDY
What the hell are you saying?

JASON
Him being here is very mature of
you. It sends a real positive
message.

CASSIDY
I'm not getting a divorce. Who told
you that?

Cassidy turns and Reagan plays off her presence.

REAGAN

So! I hope they have lobster.

CASSIDY

What the fuck Reagan?

REAGAN

What? I really like lobster.

JASON

I'm sorry if there's been some kind of misunderstanding.

BRAD (O.S.)

Well well well!

BRADLEY MANESSA appears. An apple martini in his hand.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Look what the cat dragged in.

He's late forties, slicked blonde hair and blue eyes, in a designer tuxedo with gold thug-life chains and one earring.

Even worse, he speaks with a haughty southern accent.

BRAD (CONT'D)

A felon's daughter, her queer clientele, and her second-rate publishing firm.

JASON

For the third year in a row!

CASSIDY

Aww. Is wittle Bwadley-wadley cwanky that he lost an earring?

Cassidy gets into his face and stares him down.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Maybe he should check the garbage can. He might find it in there next to his dirty diapers, his practice, and his public school diploma.

REAGAN

Burn! Burn! Oh, shit son! You just got fucking served!

BRAD

You think you can come here, onto my turf, and take from me what's rightfully mine!? You must be brain fucking dead if you think that award's not going to me this year.

CASSIDY

My brain's less dead than your mom.

BRAD

Than your mom.

CASSIDY

Than your mom.

BRAD

Tell me this. How can you even be a marriage counselor, when you don't even know the first thing about being married?

CASSIDY

I've been married longer than you!

BRAD

Yeah. But there's one thing your marriage hasn't got.

Brad points out into the dining room...

BRAD (CONT'D)

Take a look out there. Take a good long look. You see 'em.

A group of seven OLD WOMEN fill a prominent central table.

BRAD (CONT'D)

You know what all those women on the committee have in common? They're all mothers.

Brad gets back in Cassidy's face with intense arrogance.

BRAD (CONT'D)

That's right Cassidy. That's right. Did you really think the A.C.A. would ever, in a million years, give the award to someone who wasn't even a parent? Look at the stats. Look at the numbers. They never have. And they never will. Should have thought of that before you married a sterile Sheryl.

Cassidy has no words. He's right. Deep down he's right.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Aww. Are you gonna cry?

Reagan KNEES BRAD IN THE BALLS and takes his appetini.

REAGAN
Come on Doctor M. Let's show those
bitches the ladies have arrived.

CASSIDY
Yeah.

Cassidy and Reagan strut away, leaving Brad tending to his wounded family jewels. Jason helps him to a seat.

JASON
She got you good, huh?

Brad fumbles around in his pants in a panic.

BRAD
I don't know what happened! I think
one of them's gone!?

JASON
Do you want me to call a doctor?

BRAD
No. No, just fuck off.

JASON
Fucking off then.

Jason leaves. Brad waddles towards the wash room.

EXT. TARMAC, PHOENIX AIRPORT - NIGHT

THE MARINE leans back against a parked SUV blasting rap as she watches a massive UPS FREIGHT PLANE taxi towards her.

She takes off her sunglasses and folds them away.

She is mid thirties, in a black jumpsuit with slender body armor, and a serious looking pistol strapped on her waist.

THE MARINE
They're here! Turn that shit off
and come outside.

She bangs on the window and stands to attention as

THE DRIVER, a huge black man in a tuxedo, opens the door to a cloud of thick smoke. He coughs and sidles beside her.

THE MARINE

So... You have any idea who these guys are? You ever heard of them?

THE DRIVER

Our girl that's missing, she's the grand daughter of one the guys that founded the fucking union. And East Coast, they sent these two out to handle it. It comes from the very top. So whoever they are. They must be the best.

The plane parks, and when the STAIRCASE gets pushed up to its open door, out steps Suckup and Muscle. They wave!

THE MARINE

Well they look like douchebags.

THE DRIVER

It's just the style out there these days. New York's so cutting edge.

THE MARINE

If you say so.

THE DRIVER

Just remember. Do whatever they say. No questions. We can't fuck this up.

THE MARINE

Yes, sir!

Suckup and Muscle saunter over to them.

THE SUCKUP

What's up bro! Bro! Or should I say... brosefina, bro?

The Muscle pales in size to Driver. He tries to act tough.

THE MUSCLE

Sup. Sup. Cool tat. Real hardcore. What is it? A demon viper?

THE DRIVER

It's my nanna.

THE MUSCLE

That's cool bro. May she rest in peace.

THE DRIVER

She's still alive.

THE SUCKUP

Holy shit dude! Check it out! She's fucking strapped! Bro. Bro you gotta let me fire it. Can I?

He reaches for her gun, and she FLIPS him onto his back!

THE MARINE

Try that again and I'll break every metacarpal in your hand.

THE SUCKUP

That's cool bro. That's cool.

THE DRIVER

So uhh. What's our mission? Where are we going?

Suckup stands and dusts himself off.

THE SUCKUP

We're going to dinner bro...
Gangsta style.

INT. DINING ROOM, FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

Cassidy stares down at her table setting as a WAITER serves her dark green pea soup in a fine porcelain bowl.

WAITER (O.S.)

I told you. It's a fixed menu.

She leans over it and mindlessly stirs her spoon.

REAGAN (O.S.)

I'm just saying. You'd think a place as fancy as this would have squid. What do you think Cassidy?

Cassidy turns her attention to the COMMITTEE TABLE, where the seven Old Women sit chatting with Banderas.

A WHITE BANDAGE is wrapped around his broken nose.

REAGAN (O.S.)

Cassidy...

BANDERAS

So the monk turns to him and says:
*You're embarrassed! I'm the one with
 twelve kangaroos shoved up his ass!*

All seven Women LAUGH and CLAP. Cassidy sighs.

REAGAN (O.S.)

How do you like your snake brain,
 Cassidy!?

She turns back to her table, where Reagan, Dakota, Claudine,
 and Santiago are all staring at her.

CASSIDY

What? Oh. Umm. Medium rare.

Underneath the table Santiago puts his hand on hers.

SANTIAGO

Cassy... We really need to talk.

Jason approaches and she pushes Santiago's hand off her.

JASON

His sister's on the committee.

CASSIDY

Seriously?

JASON

Turns out he goes to the awards
 every year. That's why he was in
 Phoenix in the first place.

CASSIDY

Should I go over and say something?
 Do I need to apologize?

JASON

Let's just say it would be
 detrimental if you didn't. At this
 point it's kind of expected of you.

SANTIAGO

I'll go with you.

CASSIDY

The hell you will.

SANTIAGO

I'm the one who punched him.

CASSIDY
No shit, Sherlock.

SANTIAGO
That's why I should apologize.

CASSIDY
God damn it Raphael. Stop being so
fucking difficult. Just stay put.

JASON
It's probably for the better.

SANTIAGO
Fuck you bro. Who asked you?

CASSIDY
Don't talk to him that way.

JASON
No, it's ok. Really.

CASSIDY
No, it's really not.

Santiago stands up and pushes past them.

SANTIAGO
Whatever. Do what you want.

CASSIDY
Where are you going now?

SANTIAGO
To get a drink!

He storms out of the dining room into the

LAVISH LOUNGE

where he makes his way over to the bar and hops onto a stool.

HOT GIRL (O.S.)
Did you get arrested earlier?

SANTIAGO
What!?

Santiago glances around, but can't find who's talking.

HOT GIRL (O.S.)
Because it's gotta be illegal to
look that fine.

He looks DOWN to find that HOT GIRL's a four foot dwarf.
She stares up at him with a wry smile on her face.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
Can I buy you a drink?

He laughs, instantaneously relieved.

SANTIAGO
Sure.

She struggles to lift herself up onto the stool.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Do you need help?

HOT GIRL
No! No, I got it.

CUT TO:

THE COMMITTEE TABLE

Cassidy sits across from Banderas with the Seven Women surrounding her at all sides. All attention on her.

BANDERAS
- and she's proud of you. Yes,
Cassidy... Yes... Looking down on
you. So proud that you've followed
in her footsteps.

The Women clasp their hands together and aww.

WOMAN 1
What a marvelous sentiment!

WOMAN 2
Isn't that just beautifully spoken
Doctor Mendez?

Cassidy shifts in her seat and forces a smile.

CASSIDY
Yes. Thank you. And Mister
Banderas. I want to apologize for
what happened earlier today.

The Women look to Banderas surprised.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
It was all just a misunderstanding.

Banderas slams down his drink and leans forward, pissed.

BANDERAS
(stern)
Get a load of the cojones on you.

CASSIDY
Uhh. What?

BANDERAS
Here! You bring that up here! In the presence of those responsible for deciding your ultimate fate? You must have the balls of steel.

WOMAN 3
What happened earlier?

BANDERAS
I'll tell you what happened. This woman's husband assaulted me.

WOMAN 4
Oh my God!

BANDERAS
He's the one who broke my nose.

WOMAN 5
The brute!

CASSIDY
I'm sorry! Please don't hold his actions against me! He was just trying to... he was just...

Cassidy's protests get stifled by the sudden laughter of everyone at the table, as if the joke's on her.

BANDERAS
Cassidy! It's fine. Relax.

CASSIDY
Why does everyone keep telling me to relax?

WOMAN 6
He told us what happened. He said it was all his fault.

WOMAN 7
He just wanted to have a little fun with you is all. My brother has a twisted sense of humor.

Banderas grins and does a flourish with his hand to her.

WOMAN 7 (CONT'D)

Really you should thank him...
He's the one who petitioned for
your nomination.

CASSIDY

He did? You did? Why'd you do that?

BANDERAS

That's what I wanted to tell you on
the fisting trip. I read your book.
It changed my life.

BRAD (O.S.)

That piece of underdeveloped
pubescent trash?

Brad kisses Woman 5 on the cheek and sits down.

BRAD (CONT'D)

You are all looking lovely today.

BANDERAS

Unlike you Brad. You look like the
love child of Donald Trump and
Thurston Howell the third.

Banderas gives Cassidy a playful wink.

BRAD

Who?

BANDERAS

Donald Trump. He's the pres--

BRAD

No! Not... Whatever. Just, let's
get on with it, ok?

BANDERAS

Get on with what Brad? Your feeble
attempt to detract from Cassidy's
accomplishments with petty insults?

BRAD

Give me a break Leo! Her mom
murdered my mom! Sorry if I'm a
little on edge.

A sudden pall overtakes them. Cassidy clenches her fists.

WOMAN 7

Oh look! The President's here.

They turn to find THE PRESIDENT of the A.C.A. has arrived. She's an elderly woman in a pant suit with a small entourage.

BACK TO:

THE LAVISH LOUNGE

Santiago and Hot Girl hold up shots of tequila and limes.

HOT GIRL

Down! Cheers! Shoot!

They lick their salt, tap the shots on the table, cheers, drink, slap down the glasses, and bite into their limes.

SANTIAGO

I forgot how much fun those are.

HOT GIRL

Again! Hey! Hey two more.

SANTIAGO

How can you fit so much in that tiny body?

HOT GIRL

It's easy when you're an alcoholic.

While Hot Girl deals with the Bartender...

Santiago's attention shifts suddenly to the front door...

Where Suckup and Muscle have just walked in!

Hot Girl turns back to Santiago with the shots in her hand...

But he's gone!

CUT TO:

THE COMMITTEE TABLE

Banderas has everyone enthralled, Brad and Cassidy included.

BANDERAS

So there I was, stuck in an ancient Mesopotamian hut, living off of nothing but a sink and two spoons.

Santiago GRABS Cassidy's wrist and startles her.

SANTIAGO
Time to talk.

He pulls her up. Cassidy realizes everyone's looking at her.

CASSIDY
I'm sorry. This is my husband,
Santiago.

WOMAN 7
Is something wrong?

CASSIDY
Would you all please excuse me for
a moment.

He pulls her aside, and she wrestles herself out of his grip.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
What the fuck is wrong with you? Is
that? Is that salt?

SANTIAGO
We've gotta get out of here.

CASSIDY
I'm not going anywhere with you.
You're drunk.

SANTIAGO
Will you just shut up! Fuck Cassy.
For a counselor you never listen.

That cuts her. She composes herself.

CASSIDY
Fine. I'm listening now. What's so
important you just couldn't wait?

SANTIAGO
They're here... The people after
me. They found me.

CASSIDY
Wait. What? Who's here?

SANTIAGO
I think they want to kill me.

CASSIDY
Ok. Ok just slow down and start
from the beginning. Why would
anyone want to kill you?

SANTIAGO

Cassy... I'm so sorry to tell you like this, but. I was having an affair... I'm sorry.

CASSIDY

And you chose now to tell me, you asshole!

SANTIAGO

It doesn't matter, she's dead. Or at least they all think she's dead. She's missing.

CASSIDY

Missing?

Santiago spots Suckup and Muscle strolling into the room...

And they spot him. They start walking over.

SANTIAGO

Yes, and - Oh, fuck! That's them.

Cassidy turns to face the President and grabs Santiago's arm.

MRS. PRESIDENT

Doctor Mendez. Congratulations on your nomination. Long overdue.

CASSIDY

Oh, thank you. Mrs. President. Let me introduce you to my husband. He was just leaving.

SANTIAGO

Yes. Sorry. Duty calls.

MRS. PRESIDENT

What sort of work do you do?

THE SUCKUP

Oh, shit! Look who it is! Fancy meeting you here bro!

Suckup and Muscle flank the President, eyes on Santiago.

SANTIAGO

Can we just take this outside? Bro?

THE SUCKUP

That's exactly what we're gonna do, bro. Permanently.

MRS. PRESIDENT

Who are you gentlemen? Do they work with you?

THE MUSCLE

We're the Union ma'am. So back the fuck up.

THE SUCKUP

Sorry, bro. But it's time to pay the piper.

Santiago spots Marine walk in the back, her gun on her hip..

His eyes widen, and he runs! Suckup and Muscle don't even bother to give chase as he races out towards the lounge...

and gets CLOTHES LINED down to the ground by Driver!

A GASP overtakes the dining room as Santiago scrambles back.

Banderas makes his way towards Santiago and Driver.

Suckup gets in Cassidy's face.

THE SUCKUP (CONT'D)

Your husband's a murderer, bro! And he's about to learn first hand that nobody fucks with the U.P.S.

Santiago backs away from Driver and circles a table.

He overturns a chair! Driver TOSSES it away. Next he throws a plate of soup! It bounces harmlessly off Driver's huge chest.

Reagan and Dakota rush to Cassidy's side and confront Suckup and Muscle. Dakota pounds her chest like a gorilla.

DAKOTA

You ok Doctor M? You want us to lay the smack down on these jabronis?

THE MUSCLE

Your boy over there belongs to U.P.S. now. And ain't no beached whale gonna stop the delivery.

DAKOTA

What'd you call me?

THE MUSCLE

I called you fat. Fatty.

Dakota sees red. She cracks her knuckles and steps forward, but Reagan gets between them and backs her off.

REAGAN

Naw! Naw. Chill out D. It's fine.
It's all fi-

Reagan SUCKER PUNCHES Muscle in the throat, kicks out his feet, and brings him CRASHING to the floor.

KZZZZAP! Suckup STUN GUNS Reagan and knocks her unconscious.

Dakota goes ape-shit. She grabs Suckup in a SCREAMING FURY, LIFTS HIM UP over her head, AND THROWS HIM!

Suckup comes SMASHING DOWN onto the Committee table, sending the Women back amidst shouts of fright and astonishment.

Muscle TACKLES Dakota to the floor and they start grappling.

CUT TO:

Santiago backs himself into a corner, picks up a steak knife, and waves it at Driver menacingly.

SANTIAGO

Come any closer, and I'll cut you!

Marine circles closer, gun drawn and aimed at Santiago.

THE MARINE

Drop your weapon! I will shoot you!

Santiago hesitates. He positions himself behind Driver.

SANTIAGO

No! You drop yours or. Or I'll kill him! I'll cut his throat!

THE MARINE

Drop your weapon!

BANDERAS (O.S.)

Excuse me madam.

Marine turns to face a ROUND HOUSE KICK from Banderas!

Her PISTOL GETS FLUNG far away across the dining room.

But when he tries to take her down with a punch. She blocks!

Their eyes meet, and within seconds they begin a dance of martial combat across the room. Fist on fist. Foot on foot.

Muscle uses the distraction to disarm Santiago of his knife, and the two start exchanging punches in a bloody brawl.

Cassidy and the President watch on in shock as Dakota and Muscle wrestle at their feet.

CASSIDY

Mrs. President... I hope this doesn't affect my chances.

THE SUCKUP (O.S.)

Hands up or I'll shoot!

Dakota's got Muscle pinned beneath her, his collar gripped tight in her hands. She stops and sees:

Suckup... with Marine's pistol aimed right at her.

DAKOTA

What's that? I couldn't hear you?

Dakota stands and starts a badass walk towards Suckup.

Jason hovers over Reagan's unconscious body nearby.

JASON

Mrs. Tennessee. What are you doing?

THE SUCKUP

I said hands up bro! I'll fire bro!

DAKOTA

Do it. I dare you. Pussy.

CASSIDY

No! Don't!

JASON

Please! Listen to the man.

DAKOTA

You ever kill anyone before?

THE SUCKUP

That's personal.

Jason sees Suckup's finger trembling. Mouths: *Fuck.*

DAKOTA

That's what I fucking thought.

THE SUCKUP

That's it bro! That's the end!

Jason lunges! BANG! Suckup SHOOTS!

Dakota checks herself. She's fine!

 DAKOTA
Did you miss?

But not Jason... He's lying on the ground bleeding profusely from his elbow. Suckup lowers the pistol, scared.

 THE SUCKUP
Oh fuck, bro! Sorry! You ok?

 JASON
I think you shot my elbow bone off!

Cassidy TACKLES Suckup to the ground!

 CASSIDY
Motherfucker!

She punches and smacks at his face as he shields himself.

 THE SUCKUP
Ahh! Get the fuck off me you crazy bitch! Stop! Fucking stop it!

Dakota pulls Cassidy off him and shoves her aside.

Suckup wipes away blood from his broken nose.

 THE SUCKUP (CONT'D)
What the hell's wrong with you lady? Fucked up you'd defend a murderer... I hope Sheila's ghost haunts you, bro.

 DAKOTA
Sheila's ghost?

 THE SUCKUP
You got fat in your ears? Yeah. Sheila. She's fucking dead bro. Your boy killed her.

 DAKOTA
Sheila's not dead.

 CASSIDY
She's not!?

 THE SUCKUP
She's not!?

 DAKOTA
I can prove it!

Dakota motions towards the fighting in the background.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Call off your men. I'll show you.

THE SUCKUP
How?

DAKOTA
I'll call her.

INT. BASEMENT, REAGAN AND DAKOTA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sheila eats a bowl of fruit loops with Dakota on TV.

SHEILA
Wow. You two are like, literally
mentally retarded.

DAKOTA (ON TV)
There's time for I told you so's
later. Just talk to them.

SHEILA
And after? I won't like be stalked
and murdered by your friend? I want
to get out of here. I already
finished Seventh Heaven and it was
like, ok.

DAKOTA (ON TV)
Yeah. Key's in the Friends dvd box.

SHEILA
Fine. Whatever. Put them on.

INT. DINING ROOM, FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Almost all of the other guests are gone.

Santiago's back in his seat, icing his bruised face.

Banderas kneels beside Jason, takes one look at his elbow

BANDERAS
I'm taking you to the hospital.

then LIFTS him up and carries him out the door.

Cassidy and Jason share a lingering look as he's carried off.

Marine and Driver, bloodied and beaten, stand with Suckup and
Muscle as Dakota holds her phone out for everyone to see.

SHEILA (ON SCREEN)
And I'm totally fine. See. See
everybody! I'm just on vacation. I
don't see what the big deal was all
about. I mean. Honestly.

THE SUCKUP
Holy shit bro! Are you fucking
serious right now! Sheila!?

Suckup grabs Dakota's phone and makes off with it.

Dakota feels Cassidy's angry eyes on her.

CASSIDY
You lied to me. You were lying this
entire time.

Dakota approaches her apologetically.

DAKOTA
Let me explain.

Cassidy repulses away from her reach.

CASSIDY
I've had enough of you and your
lies. You're fucking pathetic.

Dakota tears up and runs away. Reagan steps forward.

REAGAN
We were trying to protect you.

The President and Brad approach Cassidy.

BRAD
I guess the apple doesn't fall far
from the tree after all.

MRS. PRESIDENT
I'm very disappointed in you.

BRAD
What did you expect? She's a
criminal. Just like her mother.

MRS. PRESIDENT
Don't bring any guests to the show
tomorrow. Especially not that
troublemaker husband of yours.

Brad and the President leave. Cassidy eyeballs Reagan.

CASSIDY

That's what you call protecting me?

REAGAN

Wait. I can fix this! I'll talk to-

CASSIDY

No! I'm done. We're done.

REAGAN

Doctor M. Please!

CASSIDY

Stay the fuck away from me.

Reagan backs off, and Cassidy storms over to Santiago.

Cassidy stares into Santiago's apologetic eyes.

SANTIAGO

Cassy.

CASSIDY

Don't.

Suckup and Muscle push over to them.

THE SUCKUP

You're off the hook for the murder bro. But you still got shit to answer for with the cops back home.

Sirens wail in the distance.

THE SUCKUP (CONT'D)

Unless you'd rather take your chances with the cops here.

Santiago nods and looks to Cassidy. She sighs.

CASSIDY

Go. It's fine. Just go.

SANTIAGO

So... We're ok then?

CASSIDY

No Raph. We're pretty fucking far from ok. I want a divorce.

Marine and Driver whistle and wave from the back exit.

THE SUCKUP

Time to go, bro. Time to go.

SANTIAGO
Cassy. Can we talk about this?

CASSIDY
We just did.

Cassidy turns and walks away.

FADE TO:

INT. BALL ROOM, PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

An AUDIENCE of hundreds enjoys dinner at the black tie event.

But all eyes are on the stage, where

A CIRQUE DU SOLEIL style performance is mid-swing, with strange clowns, hanging hoops, and atmospheric music.

Cassidy, in a gorgeous evening gown, sits isolated at her table, with empty seats between her and the other guests.

People stare and whisper amongst themselves, and each time Cassidy looks around, they quickly avert their gaze.

INT. BACK STAGE, BALL ROOM - NIGHT

Amidst the hustle and bustle of activity TWO NUNS make their way through the crowd of working CREW and PERFORMERS.

A STAGE MANAGER intercepts them mid-stride.

STAGE MANAGER
Are you with the circus?

NUN 1
(Scottish accent)
That's a stupid question.

The Nuns push past him in a huff, and turn down

A HALLWAY

where the President's having last minute make-up applied.

The Nuns walk by... but Nun 2 BUMPS RIGHT INTO HER!

MRS. PRESIDENT
Oh! Excuse me! I'm sorry!

NUN 2
Bless you my child.

Further down the hallway they open a door. It's empty...

So they enter and shut it behind them.

CUT TO:

The door opens up, and out steps

Reagan and Dakota! Dressed in beautiful evening gowns.

DAKOTA

Did you make the switch?

Reagan holds up a golden envelope and nods, smiling.

REAGAN

Right! Let's do this.

They high-five and split up.

INT. BALL ROOM, PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Everyone CLAPS as the circus performance ends...

The lights go dark... And a hush falls over the room.

MRS. PRESIDENT (V.O.)

And now.... The moment you've all
been waiting for...

SPOTLIGHTS FLICKER ON amidst a shower of SPARKS and MUSIC!

The President's center stage with her arms outstretched!

MRS. PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

THE THERAPIST OF THE YEAR AWARD!
TWO THOUSAND SEVENTEEN! YEAH! WOO!

The crowd goes berserk. CHEERS and APPLAUSE break out...

And in the uproar... Cassidy spots Brad staring back at her.

He makes his fingers guns and shoots her! BANG BANG BANG!

CASSIDY

(silent)

Fuck you Brad! Fuck you!

BRAD

(silent)

Fuck me? Fuck you!

Mrs. President holds up THE GOLDEN ENVELOPE like an idol!

MRS. PRESIDENT
 ARE YOU READY!? The award... for
 Therapist of the Year... goes to...

She rips open the envelope and pulls out the card.

Brad turns... and stares Cassidy dead in the eye.

BRAD
 (silent)
 Bradley Manessa.

MRS. PRESIDENT
 (surprised)
 Cassidy Mendez!?

None are more surprised than Cassidy, who giddily makes her way up onto the stage to the applause of her peers.

Cassidy takes her place center stage and takes the mic.

CASSIDY
 Thank you! Thank you everyone! You
 have no idea how much this means.

And she can't help herself. She starts ugly crying.

Mrs. President holds up the beautiful crystal trophy!

MRS. PRESIDENT
 Congratulations! This belongs to -

A GUITAR RIFF blasts over the loudspeakers!

The LIGHTS DIM and SPOTLIGHTS focus in on...

Dakota! Rising up from the stage on a platform, mic in hand.

She stands in rock-god pose, smoke pluming all around her, as a ROCK SONG FOR CHAMPIONS starts its familiar beginning.

Dakota points at Cassidy and struts towards her as she sings.

And Cassidy laughs! She claps! And sings along!

WHAM! Bradley TACKLES Dakota to the ground!

The MUSIC CUTS OFF. Lights cut back on. Brad grabs the mic.

BRAD
 No! No! No! No! No!

CASSIDY
 Brad! What are you-?

BRAD
 No! No! No! No no no! No no no no!
 That award belongs to me!

CASSIDY

Are you deaf! Or just delusional!?

BRAD

Cheaty mc'cheater pants! That's what you are! A filthy cheat!

MRS. PRESIDENT

But the results! I have them here.

BRAD

It's a trick! It has to be!

Brad lunges for the trophy - But Dakota's faster!

She grabs it and holds it up over her head! He jumps and swipes at it, failing again and again to take it back.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Stop! It's mine! Give it back!

DAKOTA

Oh! Oh! Too slow! Too slow!

Brad PUNCHES Dakota in the face! She goes down. Hard.

Everyone in the audience GROANS in uncomfortable shock.

The trophy slides across the floor. Brad and Cassidy's eyes meet... shift to the trophy... shift back to each other.

They RUN! They DIVE! They both reach it at the same time!

Cassidy and Brad GRAPPLE and FIGHT TUMBLING across the stage!

Each refusing to relinquish their grip on the coveted trophy.

CASSIDY

My. Name. Was. On. The. Paper.

BRAD

It's lies! It's impossible! Mrs. President! Please do something!

CASSIDY

You're such a whiny bitch!

Cassidy HEAD BUTTS him, gets the trophy, and stands up.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Gotcha!

Brad grabs onto the hemline of her dress and PULLS! RIPPING her gown off and disrobing her down to her underwear.

And when Cassidy goes to cover herself Brad GRABS THE TROPHY!

BRAD

Aha! Suckaaaaaa!

Cassidy fumes amidst the rampant stares of the crowd, and with her teeth clenched, KNEES Brad in the balls!

She rips the trophy back as he falls to his knees.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Ughhh... Not the other one.

Cassidy turns to walk away, and Brad GRABS HER ANKLE!

She falls down! He climbs on top of her and they grab and poke at each other's faces and throats in mortal combat.

CASSIDY

I won. Fair and square! It's mine!

BRAD

No! They chose me! I know it!

CASSIDY

How could you possible know that!?

BRAD

How do you think!? I get the results ahead of time! Like always!

Everyone GASPS! Brad realizes his error. They release each other and stand to face the surprise of the crowd.

For the moment... the trophy's untended on the floor.

CASSIDY

But what about the envelope?

An ANNOUNCER rushes to the stage and takes the mic.

ANNOUNCER

I'm sorry. There's been a mistake.
I've confirmed with the committee.
The real winner is Brad Manessa.

BRAD

I knew it! I knew she cheated!
You're nothing but fraud!

That's when Cassidy sees Dakota... looking totally GUILTY.

DAKOTA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry everyone! I did it! I switched the envelopes! It's all my fault! Not Doctor M's. I'm sorry. I'm sorry Doctor M. I just wanted you to have one perfect night... even if just for a minute.

Cassidy SCREAMS AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS!

She bull rushes Dakota!

WHACK! Reagan pops out of nowhere and STOPS HER with a PUNCH!

Cassidy backs away clutching her BLOODY NOSE.

DAKOTA

I can't believe you just did that.

REAGAN

I had to. She was gonna hurt you.

Dakota hugs Reagan and kisses her as SECURITY GRABS THEM.

Cassidy bends down and picks up the trophy.

CASSIDY

I guess this really belongs to -

BRAD

Me!

Brad lunges for the trophy! Cassidy takes a step back!

And they both go CRASHING off the stage!

EXT. PARKING LOT, PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Cassidy sits on a stretcher by a parked ambulance.

She wraps herself in her blanket as she watches:

Dakota and Reagan getting shoved into the back of a COP CAR.

BANDERAS (O.S.)

This seat taken?

Cassidy nods silently as Banderas sits down beside her.

They watch as Brad gets wheeled by on a stretcher.

The trophy's clutched in his arms. Breath mask over his face.

He gives Cassidy THE MIDDLE FINGER as he passes.

BANDERAS (CONT'D)
I bet you're feeling pretty proud
of yourself right now.

She's downright amazed by his comment.

CASSIDY
That's literally... the exact
opposite of what I'm feeling.

BANDERAS
Are you sure about that?

CASSIDY
Pretty sure.

BANDERAS
When I was a boy all I dreamed of
was being a champion bullfighter.
The sheer desire of it consumed me.
But on the day of my most important
match, I let the bull live, and I
lost my chance at the title.
Forever.

CASSIDY
You let it live? You mean they kill
the bulls?

BANDERAS
Yes. But I looked into the soul of
the mighty beast... and in it I saw
myself. And though it meant losing
my dream, I knew I could not kill
it. I was scorned by my peers.
Dishonored. Humiliated. But still.
I was proud.

CASSIDY
Why?

BANDERAS
Because I knew in my heart that I
chose to be true to myself. I
didn't let what I wanted dictate
who I was. Now tell me, Cassidy...

He looks into her eyes... soulful and wise.

BANDERAS (CONT'D)
What's in your heart?

INT. VISITOR'S LOUNGE, COUNTY PRISON - DAY

Cassidy sits at an empty table as dozens of FEMALE PRISONERS meet with their family and friends in the lounge.

SUPER: "THREE MONTHS LATER."

She adjusts her shirt. Fixes her hair. Clears her throat.

And when Dakota and Reagan walk in and spot her, her eyes light up and she stands to greet them.

DAKOTA

Doctor M! You came! You DO love us!

Dakota goes in for a great big hug -

PRISON GUARD

NO TOUCHING!

She backs off, arms raised over her head.

DAKOTA

So annoying.

REAGAN

We missed you. Honestly.

CASSIDY

I got you guys a little something.

She takes out a plate of fruit and chocolates from a bag.

REAGAN

Oh... You got us fruit.

CASSIDY

It's an edible arrangement. But the guards made me take out the sticks.

Dakota can't believe it! That's so sweet!

DAKOTA

Aww... Doctor M. You make me want to be a better man.

CASSIDY

So... I came here to apologi-

Dakota shushes her with a finger.

PRISON GUARD

NO TOUCHING!

DAKOTA

Love means never having to say
you're sorry.

REAGAN

So like... if you don't mind my
asking. Where's your wedding ring?

CASSIDY

We split up. Papers went through
this morning actually.

REAGAN

How's he doing?

CASSIDY

Good. Good. He's up for parole
soon. Got a job lined up with U.P.S
and everything. Can you believe it?
Him with a job.

DAKOTA

How long do you think it'll be
before you move on?

REAGAN

Yeah. What about Jason? You two
hooking up yet? There was a real
heat there I thought.

CASSIDY

We haven't even spoken since.

REAGAN

Shut. Up.

CASSIDY

He asked to be taken off my
account. Book's doing great though!
A best seller. But umm, yeah. I
don't know why.

REAGAN

You should see him.

CASSIDY

Anyway. I just came to let you two
know.... that as your counselor...
I'm sorry for letting you down.

REAGAN

You didn't! Our marriage in here is
better than ever.

CASSIDY
Is it? Really?

DAKOTA
Prison's the best thing that ever
happened to us. Plus I'm gettin
hard. That's prison talk.

Dakota flexes her muscles and takes off her shirt.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Check out my tats.

Cassidy balks and shields her eyes.

CASSIDY
Oh that's. That's sick.

DAKOTA
Thanks!

CASSIDY
Yeah that's definitely infected.
I'm not kidding. You need to have
that checked out immediately.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jason sits reading by the fireplace. His arm's in a sling.

He struggles to eat oatmeal and turn a page at the same time.

DING DONG! The doorbell rings and startles him.

He HOPS to his feet, drops his book, and SPILLS the wet
sticky cereal all over his pants. DING DONG! DING DONG!

EXT. JASON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cassidy presses the door bell again and again.

The door swings open as Jason continues to wipe at his pants.

JASON
I'M COMING! I'M COMING!

He freezes as Cassidy stares eye level at his wet crotch.

CASSIDY
Uhh... Am I interrupting something?

JASON
No! No. Just. Just my breakfast.
What are you doing here?

Cassidy slowly ascends the steps... drawing closer to him.

CASSIDY
Why did you leave me?

JASON
What?

CASSIDY
The tour. I never got a straight answer from the publisher.

JASON
You came all the way here to ask me that?

CASSIDY
Stop deflecting and just answer the question.

JASON
I left because of you.

Cassidy stops... Looks down... Kicks her toe.

CASSIDY
Oh...

JASON
Well to be perfectly honest, I thought that's what you wanted.

She looks up at him... Studying his eyes.

CASSIDY
Me? Why would you think that?

JASON
You know. Because... Because...

Cassidy takes the last step up, and gets on his level.

CASSIDY
Would you like to go out with me?

She leans in close to him...

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
You know... Get some coffee?

JASON
Coffee? Uhh. Like coffee, coffee?
What about your husband?

Cassidy flashes her hand and wiggles her fingers. No ring.

JASON (CONT'D)
Coffee. Ok. Yes. That sounds nice.

Jason steps outside and she giggles.

CASSIDY
Maybe you'd like to change your
pants first?

He laughs, and turns to go back inside, but she stops him.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Wait. Wait. There's just one thing
I've been dying to know.

She takes off his eyeglasses, and swaps them with hers.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Whoah. You're like blind.

JASON
Legally.

FADE OUT.