

VERVE

KILL SHELTER

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Good Fear Film + Mgmt
Verve Talent and Literary Agency

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OVER BLACK

Amália Rodrigues, belting out a gorgeous fado. Singing her heart out through the tinny sound system of a

INT. SAAB 900 HATCHBACK - PARKED - NIGHT (DAY 3)

GORDON -- a tired man in his early 60s -- sits behind the wheel. Just the battery on, headlights killed. He's staring out the windshield at something up the street.

His eyes flit over to the dashboard clock: 10:04.
He lowers the volume, cracks the window...

He takes out a cigarette and BREAKS OFF the filter, tucks the filter back in the pack. He lights what remains of the cigarette... takes one drag and instantly WINCES, repulsed.

He takes another masochistic drag... COUGHS harshly.
He throws the cigarette outside in disgust.

Gordon rolls up the window, turns up Amália again and sits back in his seat. He crosses his arms... mouths a Portuguese phrase along with the music...

He's waiting. After a beat he SITS UP, attention roused by...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

... the front door of a SHABBY STUCCO HOUSE swinging open with a little too much force. A YOUNG 20-SOMETHING WOMAN storms out into the quiet residential street.

BACK IN GORDON'S SAAB

He watches from a few houses down as the woman gets into her car. She slams the door and drives off.

Gordon furtively checks his mirrors, then reaches over to the passenger seat... picks up a SILENCED HANDGUN. He cuts the ignition, interrupting the fado mid-moan, gets out of his Saab and closes the door.

EXT. STREET

We PULL on Gordon as he walks up the sidewalk. Nice shirt, light windbreaker, khakis... Normal enough looking guy, except for the gun.

Things get even less normal when he puts on a HAIRNET. He tucks the gun under his arm and snaps on a pair of LATEX GLOVES.

No fanfare. No nervousness. Gordon dons these items like a hungover Walmart employee throwing on their apron before the morning shift.

He pauses when he reaches the house... moves past us...

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Gordon comes around the side of the house, stops in front of the BACK PORCH, then gingerly makes his way up the warped wooden stairs.

About halfway up, he STOPS -- ducks a few inches --

GORDON'S POV: Inside the house, a YOUNG 20-SOMETHING MAN (back to us) is turning off the sink in the kitchen beyond the living room. He dries his hands and disappears into another room...

Gordon uses this moment to silently creep up the remaining steps. Once on the porch, he tiptoes to the sliding glass door. Edges around to peer inside...

GORDON'S POV: The Young Man, noticeably distraught, returns to the living room. He plops down on a neon purple BOUNCY YOGA BALL... and starts CRYING. Softly. Head in his hands.

ON GORDON: At first confused, even a bit disgusted -- so *it's gonna be one of these, huh?* But his face slowly changes, expression taking on more empathy, more sorrow...

This guy really looks miserable...

Something catches Gordon's eye -- from his POV, we TILT DOWN to reveal:

A DOG

Staring up at us, head bent to one side, tongue lolling. Gordon almost jumps out of his skin -- it's right on the other side of the glass.

The dog, a collar-less five-week-old HUSKY PUPPY, is so cute it's fucking painful. Even Gordon can't help but crack a smile.

He playfully puts a latex finger to his lips. A beat as the dog stares back, winningly stupid... Eventually Gordon looks back up. Sighs.

He SHOVES OPEN the sliding glass door...

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

... and steps into the room, gun drawn. The dog SCATTERS.

Yoga Ball Guy TRIPS BACKWARDS, falling off the bouncy ball, scrambling to wipe away tears:

YOGA BALL GUY
What the fuck is your-- you know
there's a front door??

GORDON
Now now, calm down.

Yoga Ball Guy -- real name BENNETT LASKY -- gets up, embarrassed, as Gordon slides the door closed.

BENNETT
Who are you?? Where's Mr.
Richmond?

GORDON
He's out in the car.

We get a look around: a cute, old house gone to shit through neglect. Clearly decorated by an elderly person. Dishes and beer bottles invade the quaint space, as well as a couple DUFFEL BAGS overflowing with wrinkled clothes.

GORDON (CONT'D)
You didn't really think he'd do
this himself...?

BENNETT
No. No. Of course not.
(then, ashamed)
How long were you, uh...

GORDON
Long enough. Struck out with the
lady, huh?...
(there there)
Least you weren't jacking off.
Or's that what this's for...?

He softly kicks the bouncy ball across the room...

It caroms off a colorful, blinking MECHANICAL DEVICE that looks like a STRAITJACKET DESIGNED BY DAFT PUNK (more info to come).

A beat as they both stare at it...

BENNETT

... Not that it matters to you, but
I suffer from spinal stenosis, an
abnormal narrowing of the--

GORDON

You're right.
(then)
... What's that smell?

BENNETT

Oh -- sorry, I... I should take out
the trash...

He looks Gordon over... hasn't really taken in the gun/
gloves/hairnet combo until now. Gordon notices his worry.

GORDON

(re: gun)
So you don't rob me.
(then)
You've got the uh... the little,
uh...?

BENNETT

... The thumb drive?

Gordon nods.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

Do you have the money?...

Gordon pulls a THICK, SEALED ENVELOPE out of his jacket,
holds it up. Bennett's eyes widen.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

... 90 grand?

GORDON

Mhmm.

Bennett smiles, sincere. Lets out a relieved chuckle:

BENNETT

That's truly... Thank you. Thank
you.

He reaches out to grab the envelope, but Gordon takes a step
back, raises the gun:

GORDON

Not before the wedding.

Bennett's smile fades. Becoming forcibly casual:

BENNETT
It's -- just have to grab it --
(gesturing to another room)
Be right back.

Gordon nods. Bennett exits the room.

A beat as Gordon stands there looking around the living room. He breathes a tired sigh.

Bennett returns carrying a SMALL USB FLASH DRIVE. The HUSKY PUPPY follows him in, sits contentedly in a doorway.

ON BENNETT: We TRACK behind him to see...

BENNETT (CONT'D)
(holding up the drive)
Got it.

... an OLD REVOLVER jammed in the back of his waistband, concealed from Gordon.

GORDON
Good. Good.

He trains his silenced gun back on Bennett. A beat as Gordon stares at him. Unblinking. Stoic. Resigned...

ON BENNETT: Nervous... Sensing something's changed. He holds out the drive. A peace offering.

His OTHER HAND (ever so gently -- imperceptible to Gordon) begins to inch toward his side...

BENNETT
(shaky)
It's... it's formatted for PC, but
it should work in--

PFT!-PFT! -- Gordon FIRES TWO ROUNDS into Bennett's CHEST. Bennett lurches back -- the FLASH DRIVE flies out of his hand and slides to a STOP directly in front of the HUSKY.

Bennett slumps lifelessly to the floor.

A beat. Gordon looks down at Bennett's body...

He turns to collect the flash drive, sees the dog sniffing at it --

BENNETT (CONT'D)
Hey...

He WHIPS AROUND: Bennett's still alive (barely), and holding out his REVOLVER, aimed shakily at Gordon.

GORDON

Easy now... Where'd ya get that...

CLOSE ON THE REVOLVER: Bennett weakly tries to SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER...

Can't muster the strength...

His arm collapses.

ON GORDON: Tension turning to relief, then pity...

He uses his shoe to nudge Bennett's revolver away, then bends down, presses two fingers to Bennett's throat.

No pulse. He goes into Bennett's front pocket, pulls out his IPHONE. He places it on the floor, then STOMPS REPEATEDLY until it's a pile of circuits and powdered glass.

He remembers the flash drive, turns around to grab it...

GORDON'S POV: *It's gone.*

And oh boy does it get worse... TILT UP to reveal:

FOUR IDENTICAL HUSKY PUPPIES

Where there used to be only ONE. A beat as Gordon stands there, bewildered.

GORDON (CONT'D)

No.

He drops to the floor, starts frantically feeling around for the flash drive... No dice. His searching gets more aggravated...

GORDON (CONT'D)

How in Christ...

The four puppies look on placidly as Gordon loses his shit. Tossing aside books and dishes, sliding over furniture. Flash drive nowhere to be found.

ON GORDON: Now staring at the huskies. He wipes his forehead.

GORDON (CONT'D)

There's no way...

Crouched on the floor, he goes down the line prying their mouths open, peering in, wiggling a gloved finger inside.

GORDON (CONT'D)
... You idiots. You goddamn
idiots...

His search comes up empty.

Gordon stands. The puppies look up at him, oblivious to his despair. He wipes his hand on his pant leg.

He gets out his CELL PHONE, dials a number... Takes a deep breath as it rings...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
Gordon? You're fucking late --
what happened? You do it?

GORDON
Hi. Well --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
You handle that parasitic ratfuck?

GORDON
Yeah. He's gone, but --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
(to someone nearby)
Will you give me TWO FUCKING
MINUTES, Gina?! Is that too much
to fucking ask? THANK you.
(back to Gordon)
You smash his phone?

GORDON
I did --

GRANT RICHMOND
(relieved)
It's over... Thank fucking CHRIST
it's over... We're done then --
bring the drive at midnight. Meet
me by the van. I'll still --

GORDON
Hang on, Grant -- there's a
problem.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
Huh? What? What problem?

A beat. Gordon swallows.

GORDON

I -- I don't have the drive. Or, I do. Kind of.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

Is this a fucking zen riddle? What is this shit? Do you have it or do you DON'T have it??

GORDON

Yes, I have it. Technically. But this guy... He's got all these dogs. And I think --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

So?

GORDON

I think one might've... See, there was a bit of a -- not a *struggle*, exactly -- but, when I shot him, he uh, he dropped it...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

You fed my flash drive to a dog?

Gordon winces.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You fed my flash drive to a FUCKING dog??

A beat, then...

GORDON

One of them.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

One of them?? WHICH fucking one of them??

GORDON

I don't -- I'm not sure. There's four --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

Four?!

GORDON

-- and they all look exactly the same --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 God-fucking... So just -- just cut
 'em open one by one until you
fucking find it.

Gordon laughs this off.

GORDON
 Not happening.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 What do you mean not happening??
 (harsh whisper)
You kill people for a living.
 They're just fucking dogs, Gordon.
 You can't kill some dumb fucking
 dogs??

GORDON
 I'd... prefer to find another
 solution.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 You understand what happens if this
isn't taken care of?
 (Gordon tries to answer)
 Shut up. No. You don't. One of
 those dogs is gonna shit that thing
 out the SECOND you leave -- and
 when the cops find that ratfuck's
 body, they find that, they find me,
 they find you -- everything's
fucked. So cut 'em open!! Or
 bring 'em to me and I'LL cut 'em
 open if you're gonna be such a
 whiny fucking pussy about it.

GORDON
 Grant --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 Fuck you. Midnight. At midnight,
 you're either bringing me that
 drive, or you're bringing me every
 single one of those asshole fucking
 dogs. YOU fucked this up. I
 didn't fuck this up. You did. Fix
it.

CLICK -- the line goes dead. Gordon lowers his phone,
 stares out, morose.

BEGIN TITLES

He sits on the YOGA BALL... Stares down at the puppies....
Off the huskies, slowly PUSHING IN:

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY - (DAY 1)

A BOTTLE OF KOMBUCHA

Pink. "Guava Goddess." Sitting on a fridge shelf.

OUR HAND reaches for the bottle, pulls it out. Not breaking the POV, we SPIN around, RUN through a door into a...

INT. LONG HALL

Populated with busy-looking CREW MEMBERS with headsets, binders, laptops, etc. People react as we BARREL through, diving out of the way, spilling coffee, yelling obscenities...

INT. SMALL CAPTIONING STUDIO - SAME

BENNETT. Zero bullet holes. Alive. At least physically...

END TITLES

Different clothes, too. That's because this is THREE DAYS BEFORE HIS DEATH.

He's alone, wearing HEADPHONES that are connected to a large BUSINESS LANDLINE PHONE ("mute" button engaged). He's speaking quickly and robotically into a POP-FILTERED CONDENSER MICROPHONE, talking alongside the audio from a NEWS PROGRAM:

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
*Coming up after the break --
how one local pilates studio
is giving veterans a new way
to deal with post-traumatic
stress...*

BENNETT
(slightly delayed)
Grant colon coming up af-
ter-thebreak comma how wun
local pilates studiozgiving
vetruhnsa-new way to deal
with post-hyphentraumatic
stress period

SANDRA NOGALES (V.O.)
*Plus, a new diet that makes
eating healthy... a piece of
cake?*

BENNETT
(slightly delayed)
Sandra colon plus comma ay
new die-yet that makes
eeting hell-thy ellipsis a
peese ovcake question mark

Bennett's speech is stilted and unnatural. The small room (his "office") is dim and dingy with black soundproofing on the walls, only personalization being a 3D PIN ART BOX at his side -- one of those office toys where you push your handprint into a thousand tiny metal pins.

He sits in front of a DESKTOP COMPUTER, hands hovering over the keyboard in case of any errors.

<p>GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.) <i>You've certainly got my son's attention! (insincere laughter) These stories and more, here on KCBB News at Noon.</i></p>	<p>BENNETT (slightly delayed) Grant colon you have certainly got my SPELL MODE S-O-N STOP SPELL MODE apostrophe S attention period LAUGHTER these stories and more comma here on kay see bee bee news at noon period</p>
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Bennett mouse-clicks a couple buttons on his screen, then visibly de-tenses. Sinks back in his chair...

Because we're getting a direct line from the news studio, their AUDIO FEED continues through the commercial break. Bennett listens stoically:

GRANT (V.O.)
*What the fuck is this?? "Guava
Goddess?" Do I look like a fucking
goddess?... Dave! Where'd you
find this idiot?? She fucked up my
drink. Mystic Mango. Go get the
right one. YES fucking now, go!
Go go go!!*

Bennett winces.

SANDRA (V.O.)
(a beat)
Was that necessary, Grant?

GRANT (V.O.)
*Fuck off Sandra. Next time it'll
be your drink.*

SANDRA (V.O.)
I like guava.

GRANT (V.O.)
*Fuck you. I bet you do. Hey!
Gina! Get me a wipe! Why aren't
they under the fucking desk??*

Off Bennett, pushing his raised middle finger into the pin art box and shaking it at the screen...

INT. HORIZON CAPTIONING - HALLWAY - SHORT TIME LATER

We PUSH down a dusty, fluorescent-lit hallway lined with identical, equally spaced doors. More cell block than office. An UNSETTLING MURMUR of muffled, emotionless voices fills the air (men and women robotically intoning various broadcasts.)

REVERSE on BENNETT. Going from door to door, peeking through each slat of glass... Looking for someone... He opens a door --

INT. SMALL CAPTIONING STUDIO

A nerdy, scruffy-looking GUY is reading pangrams into a microphone, doing a new trainee's best impression of caption-speak. A coworker (SCOTT) sits behind him, jotting down notes.

They JERK AROUND as Bennett pokes into the room. Nerdy Guy pauses -- Scott gestures *keep going*, then looks at Bennett, annoyed, mouths: *what??*

NERDY GUY
(reading)
... before she heard that symphony
again...

BENNETT
(hushed)
Could you take my
observation later? New
lady's starting Unit 3...

NERDY GUY
(in b.g.)
Just as young Arthur
wanted... Mister Jock, TV
quiz PhD... bags few lynx...

SCOTT
Fifty bucks?

BENNETT
Scott...

On Nerdy Guy's COMPUTER MONITOR: the bizarre words go from RED to GREEN like some kind of malfunctioning karaoke machine.

SCOTT	NERDY GUY
She's your fucking trainee.	Shaw, those twelve beige hooks are joined... if I patch a young, gooey mouth...

Off Bennett's dejected face:

EXT. OFFICE COMPLEX - ENTRANCE - DAY - LATER

A massive, character-less plaza downtown. LOGOS next to the heavy glass doors show several business tenants (all broadcasting-related). KCBB's logo is largest at the top. HORIZON CAPTIONING's logo is small at the bottom.

BENNETT emerges from the doors, walks a few feet to a BENCH by the entrance.

He takes a seat. Pulls a rumpled sandwich out of his backpack and starts eating.

As he eats, he looks out at something in the distance...
Fixating on it...

ACROSS THE STREET

WEST TEMPLE ANIMAL SHELTER. A long building that takes up a good chunk of the block it's on.

Bennett's IPHONE RINGS... He answers, still gazing across the street:

BENNETT
Hey... Grandma? Hey, hi... Sure,
sure, just eating lunch...

CLOSER ON THE ANIMAL SHELTER: Through the LARGE FRONT WINDOW, we see a couple EMPLOYEES behind the reception desk: a 20-something woman -- LIZ, and a middle-aged Hispanic woman -- PAOLA.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
I talked to the insurance people,
they're covering 75 percent...

Liz appears to be helping a small family adopt a cat. Perhaps we recognize her as the young woman leaving Bennett's place in a huff at the start of the movie (though her clothes are a little different here).

BENNETT (CONT'D)

(absent)

How're you settling in?... The dogs are fine, they're good... It's a shame, I know... but it's... the room is private, right?...

Bennett's pretty checked out as he talks, instead focusing on Liz. We're currently watching his favorite part of the day... the part where he spends 25 minutes creepily staring at the Girl From The Animal Shelter He'll Never Talk To.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

I know... It's uh, it's gonna get better, I promise. You just have to make some friends...

INT. SMALL CAPTIONING STUDIO - DAY - LATER

A new employee, DOREEN, 50ish, anxiously struggles to repeat the words of a PBS-style educational video playing into her headphones (an off-air training exercise). BENNETT sits behind her, observing.

DOREEN

... history of HOT -- HOT AIR
BALLOONS -- ISN'T just... a-lot-of-
hot-air. PERIOD. LAUGHTER. 1783.
Three animals COMMA a sheep,
duck... ROOSTER. First to
safely... in-a-balloon.

ON BENNETT'S CLIPBOARD: a single piece of paper with two handwritten columns, "GOOD" and "BAD." "BAD" has a strong lead.

DOREEN (CONT'D)

Thanks to the -- Mawg-en-golfer?...
brothers from FRANCE. The sheep
was named... money-seal? Which
means -- MEANING -- climb. Into
the skies. PERIOD.

CLOSE ON HIS NOTES: he scrawls "*SHITTY DIPTHONGS*," joining "*MISSING COMMAS*" and "*DROPPED CONTENT*" in the pileup of criticisms under "BAD."

DOREEN (CONT'D)

We will be RIGHT back... with
MORE...

A beat... that appears to be it.

Thank god. She breathes, takes off her headphones. Then, to Bennett:

DOREEN (CONT'D)
(meek)
... How'd I do?...

Off Bennett, inhaling...

INT. HORIZON CAPTIONING - MANAGER'S OFFICE - LATER

MAE
I had to send her home.

Bennett's boss, MAE (Filipina, 30s), lectures him from across her desk.

BENNETT
Sorry...

MAE
She was in tears. She tried to quit -- thankfully I talked her out of it. Her *stepson* had to come and get her.

BENNETT
I just pointed out what she was doing wrong. She doesn't remember ANYTHING from Unit 2, her punctuation's garbage, her diphthongs--

MAE
Doreen's new. She'll get better. You're supposed to help her do that. We can't have people quitting because of a hostile work environment, Bennett.

BENNETT
So you want me to just rubber-stamp them, even if they suck?

MAE
She passed Horizon's pre-employment screening. She just needs time. This job is hard -- you know that. Rewarding, but hard.

Bennett stifles a scoff.

MAE (CONT'D)

Millions of people depend on us every day. And we're understaffed to shit.

(exasperated)

You're one of our best, but everyone's gonna keep "sucking" until you learn how to share your expertise... nicer. Understand??

Bennett sighs and nods, still standoffish.

MAE (CONT'D)

Good. Now don't you have Delaware Supreme Court at 3?

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

THE YOGA BALL

Depressed into an oblong under BENNETT's weight. TILT UP to see his back facing us.

WIDER and we see he's in front of an armoire-turned-ersatz laptop desk.

ON HIS LAPTOP SCREEN: Search results for "*power of attorney deed transfer*."

His IPHONE rings. Bennett looks at the number... doesn't recognize it. He declines the call, turns his attention back to the laptop --

It rings AGAIN. He looks down. This time a totally different number. *Fuck*. He knows who's calling...

He surrenders, picks up:

BENNETT

Yeah? Hello?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Hello! Hi! Would this be Mr. Bennett Lasky I'm currently speaking with?

BENNETT

Uh-huh.

The voice is professional and cheery.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Great! This is Rachel from Vantek.
I hate to bother you at this hour,
but I'm calling regarding some
delinquent payments on your student
loan account.

TWO HUSKY PUPPIES start BARKING from nearby.

BENNETT
Yeah...

Bennett gets up, clutches his back... He shuffles the dogs
into a room and closes the door.

RACHEL (V.O.)
Your monthly payment amounts to
575.49... We last got a payment
from you on... March 13. Does that
match your records?

BENNETT
Sure.

RACHEL (V.O.)
(laughs a little too hard)
Perfect, great. So what we'll need
from you -- do you have a credit
card handy? -- we'll need a minimum
payment of 1,726.47 to keep you in
good standing.
(a beat)
Otherwise we'll be forced to refer
your account to a collections
agency.

A beat. Bennett's been stewing this whole time...

BENNETT
Oh Rachel... Did it ever cross
your mind that maybe I don't have
seventeen hundred dollars?

RACHEL (V.O.)
Actually... to remain in good
standing --

BENNETT
I just put my grandma in a fucking
home...
(for fuck's sake)
You know what I do for a living?
I'm a *closed captioner*.
(MORE)

BENNETT (CONT'D)
People, uh -- *millions* of people
depend on me. And I don't make
shit. And it's 'cause of you
assholes I haven't been to a
dentist in seven fucking years. So
you -- and Vantek -- can eat my
fucking dick. How's that sound?
Sound good??

A long beat.

RACHEL (V.O.)
We also accept money orders...

CLICK -- Bennett HANGS UP. Puts his phone down. Steams for
a beat...

Muffled barking makes him remember the dogs.

BENNETT
... fucking hate this shit...

He goes over to the door he closed, opens it...

It's a midsize STORAGE CLOSET. Inside we find ALL FOUR
HUSKIES, plus a PISS-AND-SHIT-COVERED PEE PAD. Bennett
winces at the smell.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay. Shhhh, shhh, I'm
changing it... shut up...

He reaches into the BOX of disposable pee pads...

That was the last one.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
Goddammit... Just... you'll get a
new one tomorrow, okay? Jesus --
hey -- *shhhh!*

As he shuts the door on the barking huskies (and us):

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: BRAKES CREAKING as a car slows...

FADE UP ON:

INT. CAR - NIGHT - (DAY 3)

THROUGH A WINDSHIELD

We're pulling up in front of a quiet apartment complex.
HEADLIGHTS rake across PAOLA, gray sweats, waiting for us.

We stop. She waves -- one sec -- then reaches into a nearby
BUSH... Re-emerges into the beams holding an ENORMOUS
REPLICA SWORD.

LIZ (O.S.)
The fuck...?

Paola opens the rear door of Liz's 90's CAMRY, awkwardly
guides the huge, heavy sword to the floor of the backseat.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Paola...

She gets in next to Liz.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I meant like, pepper spray.

PAOLA
Let's go. Where's he live?

LIZ
We're not gonna talk about the huge
ass sword?

PAOLA
It's from Lord of the Rings.
Andúril.
(off her stare)
You gave me like four minutes to
get ready, Liz. It's what I had.

LIZ
Is it even sharp?

PAOLA
Sharp enough.

A beat. Liz seems satisfied.

LIZ
It is pretty intimidating... Plus
it's not like we're killing the
guy. Just taking the huskies.

PAOLA
So gimme the lowdown.

LIZ
Ohhhh man...

Liz shifts into drive, pulls out onto the street:

LIZ (CONT'D)

(pissed)

They were holed up in this tiny closet. All four of them... Dirty, barking... fucking miserable. He's not even fucking walking them.

Paola shakes her head in disapproval -- *piece of shit*.

LIZ (CONT'D)

And... I don't even wanna... There was a pee pad... I almost fucking puked. They'd been using the same one for days.

PAOLA

(disgusted)

Damn... Honestly doesn't surprise me. Seemed like a creep.

LIZ

Yeah. I can now confirm that.

PAOLA

Well, just so we're clear... You know there're ways to do what we're doing that are more... uh...

LIZ

... Legal?

PAOLA

Legal. And ethical. And safe.

A beat. Liz nods, gets a little more serious...

LIZ

We have to do this Paola. The pups need us. We'll call it owner surrender.

(resolute)

We have to get them outta there. Tonight.

Paola understands this is very important to her. She sits back.

PAOLA

Ookay. Just saying, he comes at me...

(MORE)

PAOLA (CONT'D)
 I am straight up stabbing him in
 the motherfucking chest with the
 Blade of the King of Men.

Liz smirks.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

BENNETT's house. SHIFT to see Liz's Camry pulling into a
 spot half a block away.

INT. LIZ'S CAMRY

Liz turns off the car, unbuckles her seatbelt.

LIZ
 So should we have like... a
 strategy?

PAOLA
 If he won't give 'em up?

LIZ
 Well that's what the sword is for.
 I mean more like, should we have a
 speech ready?...

Paola snorts.

PAOLA
 Yeah sure. How about "*give us the
 fucking dogs, asshole.*"

LIZ
 Whoawhoawhoa --

Something's caught Liz's attention:

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: In front of Bennett's house:

GORDON. Struggling awkwardly with a LARGE CARDBOARD BOX,
 roughly the size of a mini fridge, "WAKESTREAM" printed on
 the side. HUSKY SNOUTS AND PAWS poke out of the top,
 harassing his face. Their shifting weight forces him to
 constantly readjust his grip.

PAOLA
 Who the hell's that guy?

LIZ
 I don't know...

Gordon's waddling back to his Saab as fast as he can, given the circumstances. He trips on some grass, barely catches his footing.

PAOLA
(squinting)
Does he... In that box...?

LIZ
That's a box o' huskies alright.

PAOLA
Those are them?

LIZ
(nods)
Uh-huh...
(a beat)
What the fuck's going on?

PAOLA
You don't recognize him?

Liz shakes her head, still staring at Gordon. A beat as they watch him wrestle the puppy box into the back of his Saab...

LIZ (O.S.)
I'm not exactly getting the vibe
he's here to rescue them.

PAOLA
(shrugs)
Guess we can skip Bennett.

LIZ
So then -- wait -- what do we do?
He didn't say anything about
someone coming to pick them up...

Gordon's lights FLICK ON. He starts maneuvering out of his spot...

PAOLA
You got about three seconds to
decide.

LIZ
Where's he taking them? Fuck.

Gordon's Saab starts down the street.

Liz starts the car. Paola grins, rubs her hands together.

As the Camry pulls out onto the street after Gordon...

EXT. GORDON'S SAAB - DRIVING - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

Gordon, behind the wheel. Calm for all of three seconds before SCREEEEECH!

Liz's Camry SWERVES TO CUT HIM OFF, forcing him to PANIC STOP --

GORDON

SHIT!

-- Gordon's arm SHOOTS BACK reflexively to stabilize the puppy box. He HONKS several times (now stopped on the side of the road).

THROUGH HIS WINDSHIELD

Paola gets out of the Camry's passenger side, stares down Gordon. Not breaking eye contact, she strides to the Camry's rear door.

Gordon's pulled away from this by Liz POUNDING ON HIS HOOD:

LIZ

Hey! Sir!

She comes around to his window, which he rolls down a couple inches.

GORDON

... Can I help you?

LIZ

(pointing)

Are those your dogs? Sir? No.
Not your dogs. We saw you taking
 them. We're from, uh -- we're
 acting on behalf of the West Temple
 Animal Shelter, and we uh... we
DEMAND you surrender them to us!
 This instant!

A beat. Gordon processes all this... decides he doesn't give a shit.

GORDON

Sorry miss, I need them.
 (then, maybe recognizing)
 ... Wait... were you--?

KRRKKKKK-KRK-KRRKK...

GORDON (CONT'D)
 (craning his neck)
 Hey! What are you doing?

Paola is trying to PRY OPEN the Saab's rear door with her EGREGIOUSLY LARGE SWORD. And it's kind of working.

GORDON (CONT'D)
 Stop that. Hey.

Gordon puts it in park, gets out. Liz takes a step back. Paola turns the sword on Gordon.

PAOLA
 Stay back!

Gordon wearily PULLS OUT HIS GUN, aims it at Paola.

LIZ	PAOLA
(stunned)	(disappointed)
Holy fuck bro... wait up,	Awww... asshole...
wait up...	

Gordon swings the gun between them. He kicks his door shut behind him, quickly locks the car. (By now the puppies are out of their box, barking, squirming around the backseat.)

GORDON
 (to Paola)
 You. Give me the sword. Now.

Paola reluctantly hands it over. Gordon takes it -- *it's heavy*. Gordon glares at her, very, very fucking done with all of this:

GORDON (CONT'D)
 Who even has this??

Gordon puts his gun in his jacket, then goes over to Liz's Camry --

LIZ
 No -- dude! -- don't --

-- and PLUNGES the sword into Liz's BACK TIRE.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 You fucking -- ah, *fuuuuuck you* dude. Goddammit.

GORDON
 Stop following me.

He impassively drops the sword on the pavement. Liz and Paola are speechless... (Though Paola does seem a little relieved she's getting her sword back.)

Without another word, Gordon unlocks his door, gets back in his car. We STAY with Liz and Paola as he awkwardly steers around the Camry and PEELS OFF...

Puppies in tow, unfortunately.

A beat as Liz gazes helplessly after the Saab.

LIZ
He said he "needed" them... What
in the fuck...?

Paola picks up her sword.

PAOLA
(grim)
Looked like a perv to me.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT - LATER

Gordon's Saab pulls slowly into a dark, deserted lot. He angles the car so his headlights splash against a graffiti-ridden CEMENT WALL. The engine silences but the lights stay on.

Gordon steps out, moving quickly, professionally. He snaps on LATEX GLOVES, then opens the back door.

GORDON'S POV: Scanning the dogs...

ON GORDON: Frowning. Eventually he sighs, picks up the husky closest to him and shuts the car door.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

GORDON'S JACKET

... being laid flat one-handed on the cracked asphalt.

WIDER and we see Gordon's crouched in the yellow beams, using the reflection on the wall for more visibility. He kneels on his jacket, then places the puppy in front of him.

GORDON'S POV: A beat as the puppy stares up at us.

GORDON
Sorry, pal.

And he means it... He places one hand on the dog's NECK and the other on top of its SKULL.

ON GORDON: we PUSH IN slowly...

ON THE HUSKY: Lightly squirming to get free...

ON GORDON: Still PUSHING IN... *just take a deep breath...*
He's about to TWIST when:

ON THE HUSKY: It starts licking his hand.

Gordon stares slackly at the puppy.

He can't fucking do it. At least like this. He releases his grip.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Yeah... Okay...

He closes his eyes. Breathes.

He starts to reach in his pocket -- then PAUSES, something occurring to him.

He scoots off of his jacket, patting it gently. The puppy crawls onto it.

GORDON (CONT'D)
(weak)
Better?...

He goes back into his pocket and pulls out a FOLDING KNIFE. He flicks it open -- it's a horrifying, S-curved TACTICAL BLADE meant for one purpose and one purpose only... and it's definitely not puppy evisceration.

With his free hand, Gordon PINS the husky on its back against the jacket. The dog's squirming gets more intense.

Gordon awkwardly tries to HOLD THE DOG STILL so its belly is exposed...

GORDON (CONT'D)
Stop, will ya?... Don't make this worse...

But it won't stop struggling. Gordon moves the knife over the puppy, trying to find a good enough angle.

The dog YIPS.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Hey... it's okay...

CLOSE ON THE DOG: Gordon begins LIGHTLY SCRATCHING it behind the ear.

GORDON (CONT'D)
It's okay...

And miraculously... the squirming STOPS. The puppy lies still under Gordon's spell.

ON GORDON: Smiling now... but the smile quickly fades as he remembers the unpleasant task at hand.

ON THE HUSKY: Calm... belly up as Gordon scratches it....

ON GORDON: Lifting the knife, face tightening into a shameful wince... Preparing to do something unforgivable...

ON THE HUSKY: BLADE TIP tickling FUR...

A tense beat... Gordon inhales DEEP...

... and PULLS AWAY.

He exhales. Slow. Shakes his head -- *nope*. He closes the knife.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Uh-uh.

A beat.

He goes into a jacket pocket... pulls out his CIGARETTES. He takes one, breaks off the filter.

He PAUSES before lighting it. A short beat as he grimaces at the filter-less tube of tobacco...

Fuck this. He tosses it. He's having a real one. He pulls a new cigarette out of the pack. He lights it, exhales --

Ahhhh yeah. There it is... He takes another puff.

He remembers the dog, looks down at it... solemn expression...

He hangs his cigarette in his mouth, peels off a latex glove.

Off Gordon, scratching the dog with his bare fingers... Wondering what the fuck he's gonna do...

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

Cheap, slow-building library music (pulsating synths, strings) plays over DRONE FOOTAGE of a pristine tropical beach. We land on -- perched incongruously on the alabaster sand --

THE WAKESTREAM HEDONE.

The crazy blinking chiropractic device we saw at Bennett's house. A bespoke leather U-shaped harness covered in LEDs and ROLLING SHIATSU BALLS.

(We're currently watching a PROMOTIONAL VIDEO -- upscale, artsy. Heavy on imagery, light on information).

Superimposed over the WakeStream, which is now reclining in a LUSH BAMBOO GROVE:

hedone (greek myth) - the personification and goddess of pleasure, enjoyment, and delight.

CHILD'S WHISPER (V.O.)
...Hedone...

We CUT TO the WakeStream, triumphant atop a SNOWY PEAK as if it climbed there itself, then --

ANIMATED GRAPHICS: A unisex diagram of a person's back/torso, wearing the device. Glowing ORANGE pressure points turn COOL BLUE as the Shiatsu balls work their miracles.

eight motorized shiatsu spheres
hand-tooled platinum alloy
individually adjustable
radiant light therapy

The WakeStream is now resplendent on the TEAK DECK of a STEAMING ICELANDIC HOT SPRING, basking in the hypnotizing purples and greens of the NORTHERN LIGHTS.

all-new TENS system
high-resolution nerve stimulation
special Rejuvena™ mode on LX models

As the music crescendos, REVERSE on:

INT. SMALL CAPTION STUDIO - EVENING (DAY 2)

BENNETT, watching the video on his work computer. Entranced. *It's beautiful...* Could this be the answer to his back problems?... To... *everything?*

ON HIS SCREEN: The WakeStream in a JAPANESE GARDEN, lounging on a carpet of cherry blossom petals.

Bennett watches intently.

We eventually become aware of soft, tinny NOISE coming from OFF SCREEN...

Bennett hears it, too -- *the fuck is that?* Are those voices? He PAUSES the video -- looks around...

It's his HEADPHONES. Lying on the edge of his desk.

He looks over to the BUSINESS LANDLINE (CALL IN PROGRESS -- both parties neglected to hang up/disconnect following today's broadcast).

Bennett reaches out to hang it up, but --

A LOUD MOAN stops him in his tracks. Coming from the headphones.

BENNETT
...huh...?

He puts them on.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Yeah... oh yeah... ugh...
(grunting)

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
(not enjoying this, but
playing along)
That feels so good...

We all know what's happening. Bennett's leering grin confirms he does, too.

BENNETT
No way.

With the quickness of a horny sparrow, he rushes and LOCKS THE DOOR to the caption studio.

He sits back down, eagerly slips the headphones back on.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Tell me... one more time, baby...

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Yeah?...

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Who's my fucking guava goddess...

A look in Bennett's eyes -- *why is that familiar?... then:*

BENNETT
Shit.

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
I am.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
Say it...

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
I'm... your guava goddess, Grant.

It's pretty much ruined for Bennett now.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
You fucking call me Mr. Richmond.

We hear a SPANK followed by a YELP.

Bennett frowns, now listening mostly out of morbid curiosity as Grant Richmond, respected news anchor, rails a PA who'd probably get fired if she wasn't going along with this.

But Bennett's expression CHANGES...

His eyes slowly WIDEN...

In a burst of movement he LURCHES to his keyboard/mouse, opens AUDIO RECORDING SOFTWARE (like Audacity).

His knees bounce up and down as the software loads -- *come on, come on...*

It finishes. He RECORD ENABLES a track, hits the space bar, then swings over to the BUSINESS LANDLINE, cranks the volume all the way up --

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
(tinny)
Should I get on the desk?...
(awkward movement)

He presses one of the headphone cups over his CONDENSER MICROPHONE, looks at the screen for a signal... the METERS bounce with life. Now BLARING from his computer speakers:

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
-- my asshole -- put another finger
in my asshole --

Bennett quickly turns off the speakers, embarrassed. We still hear them going at it through the loud headphones.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Ohhhhh-ho-ho... That's it -- keep
 doing THAT. Oh fuck... You're
 dirty, Sandra...*

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
Sandra?...

Off Bennett, mind racing with possibilities...

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT - LATER

A BURNER PHONE

Sliding across a scanner. REVERSE on BENNETT, the customer buying it.

The CLERK gives him some side-eye as he rings it up.

BENNETT
I'm... going overseas.

He nervously grabs a CANDY BAR, places it on the counter.

The Clerk stares at him -- *uh huh*. Rings up the candy.

EXT. OFFICE COMPLEX - NIGHT - LATER

A dented, lipstick-red 2001 FORD ESCORT (BENNETT's pride and joy) sits across from the entrance/exit of the building's PARKING GARAGE.

Bennett sits bored in the driver's seat, staking out his own place of work. His LAPTOP rests on the passenger seat.

He chews on the candy bar... seems to be regretting his choice.

His IPHONE RINGS. Bennett struggles it out of his pocket... SCOWLS at the number. Silences the ringer. Must be Vantek...

THROUGH HIS WINDSHIELD: The exit gate lifts for a BLACK TESLA.

Bennett sits up. *Here we go...* He sets aside his candy bar, starts his car.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

The Tesla pulls into the driveway of a SMALL BUSINESS in a ritzy shopping district, disappearing into a rear parking lot.

BENNETT's Escort isn't far behind. It pulls into a space along the main drag.

INT. BENNETT'S ESCORT

Bennett turns off the car. Clocks the name of the business:

SOLSTICE WELLNESS STUDIO

He takes a deep breath. Powers on his laptop.

IN HIS HAND

CLICK -- the FLASH DRIVE'S USB CONNECTOR slides forward like a switchblade.

INT. SOLSTICE WELLNESS STUDIO - MASSAGE ROOM

A FACE CRADLE horseshoes around a MAN's ruggedly handsome, late-50's face.

This is, of course, GRANT RICHMOND. Eyes serenely closed.

GRANT RICHMOND

Iris, do me a favor and really
blast my right hamstring -- think I
did something, and Saturday I got
that fuckin' fun run for fuckin'
retarded kids...

IRIS

Certainly, Mr. Richmond.

Soft MUZAK wafts calmly through the room, which is simultaneously spiritual and chic in design -- half Buddhist monastery, half Apple store. Around the room: various new agey items including a CRYSTAL BUDDHA in the corner, a shelf lined with BONSAI TREES, and against the wall, a large GONG hanging from a wood frame.

In the middle of it, like a centerpiece, is Grant Richmond's EXPOSED ASS. He's entirely nude, lying prone on the massage table. Iris mills around the room, preparing.

GRANT RICHMOND
 Hey can you use that fruity
 lavender shit or whatever's
 strongest?... Goin' home to the
 wife...

IRIS
 Might I suggest Ylang-ylang? It's
 our boldest essential oil.

GRANT RICHMOND
 Fire away, sweetheart.

A QUIET KNOCK as Iris squirts the oil into her palms...

IRIS
 Excuse me one moment.

We HOLD on Grant's ass as Iris goes to the door.

ON IRIS: In the doorframe, whispering with a MANAGER/
 SUPERVISOR. The manager hands her a CORDLESS PHONE. Iris
 turns to look at Grant, mild concern showing...

BACK ON GRANT: We hear the door shut.

IRIS
 Mr. Richmond... There's an urgent
 call for you. A man... He says
 he's your doctor...?

GRANT RICHMOND
 ... Huh? Fuck are you talking
 about? Lenny's in St. Bart's...

IRIS
 He said he's been trying to reach
 you...?

GRANT RICHMOND
 Give me the phone. Give me the
 phone.

Iris awkwardly places the phone in his hand. Grant tries to
 bring it to his ear -- not happening with the FACE CRADLE in
 the way. Grant indignantly turns over, SITS UP. Pissed.
 Into the phone:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 Who are you? Pretending to be my
 fucking doctor??

BENNETT (V.O.)
 Is this Grant Rich--

GRANT RICHMOND
 Who the fuck are you?
 (then)
 How do you know where I am??

Iris tiptoes back to the wall, all too familiar with Grant's temper...

INT. BENNETT'S ESCORT - SAME

BENNETT
 (on the burner phone)
 I'm calling because I... I want to help you.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 Uh-huh. I'm hanging up. Goodbye, fuckface.

BENNETT
 Wait, wait -- I have some... uh... materials. Materials that concern you. Materials you might not want to... um...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 What? Spit it out, asshole. Why the fuck am I talking to you?

Bennett hesitates, then hits the SPACE BAR on his laptop. He holds his phone over the speakers.

RECORDED GRANT (V.O.)
Ughh... You're my little slut aren't ya...

INT. MESSAGE ROOM

Grant sits naked on the massage table with the phone to his ear.

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
 Sure...

Grant's brow furrows as he REALIZES WHAT HE'S HEARING...

RECORDED GRANT (V.O.)
Oh God, I'm gonna -- FUCK! --
 (commotion)
My leg!... God-fucking --

GRANT RICHMOND
(whisper)
You fucking ratfuck...

FEMALE P.A. (V.O.)
Grant are you okay?...

RECORDED GRANT (V.O.)
Yeah... yeah... Lemme just uh,
lemme finish on your --

The recording STOPS.

INT. BENNETT'S ESCORT

Bennett's finger hovers over the space bar, phone back to his ear.

BENNETT
There's uh... there's twelve more minutes.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
You fucking ratfuck.

BENNETT
So here's my --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
How FUCKING DARE you --

BENNETT
Just calm down -- Mr. Richmond,
please -- I... I wouldn't want
your wife, or your son to --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
Stop right there, you fucking, you
fucking --

INT. MESSAGE ROOM

Grant is now STANDING, dick swinging freely as he hisses into the phone:

GRANT RICHMOND
-- you fucking sniveling SHITWORM --

Iris timidly tries to hand Grant a bathrobe which he aggressively SWATS AWAY.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 You're fucking blackmailing me?!
 (screaming)
 I WILL FUCKING EAT YOUR FUCKING
 BONES --

BENNETT (V.O.) GRANT RICHMOND
 Hang on, just -- what? -- -- AND SHIT THEM BACK DOWN
 YOUR MOTHERFUCKING THROAT --

Iris, horrified, starts edging towards the door.

BENNETT (V.O.)
 Okay, okay --

INT. BENNETT'S ESCORT

BENNETT
 -- you seem agitated... Look --
 um -- call me back in the morning.
 The manager has my number...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 DON'T YOU EVEN THINK OF FUCKING
 HANGING --

Click. Bennett hangs up. Exhales.

Didn't really go as planned... but probably could've gone worse.

A beat, then, THROUGH HIS WINDSHIELD:

IRIS RUNS out of Solstice, SHRIEKING, hands in the air...

ON BENNETT: *What the fuck?...*

INT. MASSAGE ROOM

The CRYSTAL BUDDHA *SMASHES* into a thousand pieces as Naked Grant flings it into a STONE FOUNTAIN.

GRANT RICHMOND
 AGHHHHHH!!!!

He looks around for more stuff to break -- seizes on a POTTED BONSAI TREE which he SHOT-PUTS CLEAN THROUGH THE DRYWALL into another massage room. We hear SCREAMS from the other rooms.

He locks eyes on the GONG, sweaty, forehead veins THROBBING with rage... *You're fucking next...*

He starts to LIFT the heavy MESSAGE TABLE:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Fuuuckkkking... raaaat.... fuck...

With Hulk-like strength he grips the table like a BATTERING RAM, HURLS it at the GONG --

INT. BENNETT'S ESCORT

The APOCALYPTIC NOISE it makes is audible even out here on the street. Bennett jumps, staring out, mouth agape --

THROUGH HIS WINDSHIELD

Several NAKED CUSTOMERS (frantic, some clutching clothes) FLEEING into the cold night, tailed by equally alarmed STAFF MEMBERS.

Bennett looks on... awestruck...

BENNETT
(sotto)
Fuckin' A...

He remembers that *he's partly responsible for this* -- quickly looks around... then, with a shrug, keys the ignition.

As the ESCORT putters away from the fucking *Guernica* unfolding in front of Solstice...

EXT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - NIGHT (DAY 3)

LIZ and PAOLA -- grimy from changing Liz's tire -- get out of the Camry, which is parked close to Bennett's house.

LIZ
I'm getting his fucking insurance
I'll tell ya that much. No way in
hell I'm paying for a new fucking
tire.

She slams her door. Paola gets her SWORD from the backseat. We PULL on them as they walk up to Bennett's house.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(worried)
Does it matter that he did it with
like, a sword we threatened him
with?...

PAOLA

I dunno. He might be able to call
it self defense.

LIZ

Self defense?? He's -- but -- *he's*
the one who had a gun. *He's* the
one who's an evil fucking dog
thief.

PAOLA

Courts are fucked up, Liz.

They reach Bennett's front door. Liz hits the DOORBELL.

A silent beat as they wait... Nothing. Liz hits the
doorbell again, getting impatient.

LIZ

C'mon, open up you piece of shit.

Nothing. She KNOCKS on the door. Paola peers into a dark
window, shrugs.

PAOLA

Maybe he's not here.

A beat.

LIZ

Fuck that.

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dark, no lights on. We're looking at the BACK PORCH out
Bennett's back door (where Gordon entered).

LIZ and PAOLA (illuminated by cell phone light) poke
tentatively into view as they tiptoe up to the house. Paola
leads the way.

EXT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH

Paola gets to the door, SLIDES it open a foot. She turns
back to Liz, wiggles her eyebrows -- *lucky us*. She finishes
sliding open the door, readies her sword, takes one step
inside and --

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

CRASH! -- Paola TRIPS OVER SOMETHING just inside the door, sword flying out of her hand as she falls face first into the living room.

Liz gasps, rushes in to help her up:

LIZ
Paola! Damn, you okay?

The dark room becomes weakly illuminated with GLOWING RAINBOW COLORS. Paola tripped over the WAKESTREAM HEDONE, and accidentally flipped it ON in the process.

PAOLA
Fuck...
(then)
What the shit is that thing?

A gentle chime, then a Siri-esque voice proclaims:

WAKESTREAM HEDONE
Please connect unit to charging station.

LIZ
No fucking clue...
(looking around)
Bennett?... Bennetttttt??...

Paola's brushing off her knees when -- out of the corner of her eye -- BENNETT'S DEAD FACE comes into relief as a purple Wakestream light passes over. She JUMPS:

PAOLA
HOLY fuck --

His body is slumped on its side at the edge of the room.

LIZ
What?

PAOLA
Shit -- turn on the light --

LIZ
What? Where is it --
(looking around for a switch)

PAOLA
I dunno just find one!

FLICK -- the overhead light comes on. Liz sees Bennett:

LIZ
Oh my god -- Bennett?? Oh my
god --

She runs over to Paola.

WAKESTREAM HEDONE
*Please connect unit to charging
station.*

PAOLA
(ashen)
My... my sword... Did I kill him?
Did I kill him??

Liz sees what she's talking about... Bennett's looking a little worse than the last time we saw him on Day 3... In addition to the gunshot wounds in his chest, he now has a Lord of the Rings replica sword JUTTING THREE FEET OUT OF HIS ASSHOLE.

LIZ
(increasing panic)
What the fuck??? He's... is he...?
Why is that *there*?? What fucking--

PAOLA
It must've... When I tripped on
the way in...
(then, re: bullet wounds)
Did he get *shot*...?

LIZ
Jesus Christ...

PAOLA
This is fucking baaaaad...

LIZ
The guy who took the huskies...
And stabbed my fucking tire. He
did this.

PAOLA
We need to leave. Right the fuck
now.

LIZ
What about the cops? We have to
call the cops right?

A beat as Paola turns, looks at Bennett... the whole situation...

PAOLA
... No cops.

WAKESTREAM HEDONE
Please connect unit to charging station.

LIZ
Okay... Okay... Agreed. But what about the sword?... We can't just leave it. It's like, evidence or something...

PAOLA
It's in his fucking ass, Liz.
Deep.

LIZ
So we have to pull it out.
(off Paola)
We pull it out or we go to jail.

A tense beat as Paola comes to terms with this. She nods solemnly, then:

PAOLA
So... how should... How do you wanna...

They position themselves closer around the body, sour expressions.

LIZ
I guess... if I like, hold him down... and you, uh, grab the handle --

PAOLA
Uh-uh. Hell no. How come I gotta be the puller?

WAKESTREAM HEDONE
Please connect unit to charging station.

LIZ
Paola, we don't have time. Look -- you pull it, I'll clean it... Pretty good deal right?
(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)
Sooner we do it, sooner we can
forget this whole fucked up night
ever happened.

A beat.

PAOLA
Ugh... motherfucker. MotherFUCKER.
Let's get it over with.

LIZ
Alright, so... count of three...

Liz PUSHES DOWN on Bennett's torso...

LIZ (CONT'D)
One...

Paola makes a face as she GRIPS the sword handle, looking
away...

LIZ (CONT'D)
Two...

Liz swallows, closes her eyes...

LIZ (CONT'D)
THREE --

With a sickening, wet *SSCHHHK* the sword SLIDES FREE --

LIZ/PAOLA
(grossed-out moaning)

Liz jumps back as Paola holds the sword out awkwardly, not
wanting the blood-and-god-knows-what-else-covered blade to
touch anything.

A beat.

PAOLA
I do not feel good.

LIZ
It had to be done... You did
great... Now let's get the
fuuuuuck outta here.

Paola nods, pale from this nightmare.

PAOLA
Let's.

We HOLD on Bennett's DEFILED CORPSE as Liz and Paola hustle out the back door. The overhead light FLICKS OFF, letting the rainbow colors of the Wakestream take over the room again.

WAKESTREAM HEDONE
Please connect unit to charging
station.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

SCANNING across the counter in quick succession:

- FROZEN LASAGNA (a la *Lean Cuisine*)
- A BOTTLE OF WATER
- A SHARPIE
- MASKING TAPE
- PACKING TWINE
- A BOTTLE OF LIQUID LAXATIVES

Reverse on GORDON, the customer buying these items. The SAME CLERK from before (different clothes) gives him a look as he scans the laxatives.

GORDON
And uh... pack of Winstons?...

The Clerk grabs the cigarettes.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

CLOSE ON the number 4 being written on a strip of masking tape... which is STUCK to a husky's furry side.

WIDER and Gordon's sitting on a PARK BENCH, one hand holding a makeshift FOUR-WAY TWINE LEASH attached crudely around each dog's torso, other hand finishing off the last "nametag" (dogs 1-3 are already labeled).

Gordon's shopping bag lies next to him on the bench. He puts the sharpie back in the bag.

He looks around. A few late night strollers, but the park's pretty empty. He CHECKS HIS WATCH: 11:22. Better get movin'.

He TIES his end of the leash around a bench post, anchoring the puppies and freeing up his hands.

He pulls the LASAGNA out of the bag, takes it out of the box, rips off the plastic seal...

He leans over the side of the bench, turns the lasagna upside down, and with his thumbs, PUSHES the frozen food block out of the black microwavable TUB. It thuds softly into the grass.

He uses his jacket sleeve to wipe away some of the residue still inside the tub.

He sets it down next to him, then grabs the WATER BOTTLE. He cracks it, pours some into the tub.

Then, LAXATIVE time. He unscrews the bottle and pours a generous amount in with the water. He lifts the tub, swishing it around a little.

GORDON

Okay guys... showtime...

He lowers the tub to the ground. The thirsty huskies fall upon it excitedly.

He lights a cigarette. Sits back, closes his eyes...

A calm beat... then:

BARK-BARK-BARK!! -- Gordon's eyes JOLT open, he looks down:

A FANCY SHIHTZU on a leash is trying to nudge its way into the water circle, but the HUSKIES aren't having it. They snap at the shihtzu, barking uncontrollably.

Gordon remembers the laxatives -- gently shoos the dog away.

FEMALE VOICE

Oliver!
(whistling)

Attached to the other end of the shihtzu is a WASPY, ATTRACTIVE COUPLE (30's), girl and guy. The guy is quite large.

WASPY GUY

I think he wants some water.

WASPY GIRL

(to Gordon)

Hi! Excuse me, hi -- would you mind letting Oliver have some of your water?

(to Oliver)

Someone's a bit thirsty from all the hiking today, yes he is...

A beat. Gordon shakes his head.

GORDON
Sorry, lady.

A longer beat. The couple looks at him, confused...

WASPY GUY
You serious man?

Gordon shrugs.

WASPY GIRL
Brady, it's okay --

BRADY
No, hold on --
(to Gordon)
What's your problem, guy?? You got
plenty of water there. Our dog
can't take one sip?...

Gordon doesn't answer. A tense beat... Brady steps closer.

WASPY GIRL
Brady it's not worth it --

BRADY
Gimme a minute Darcy --
(to Gordon, angry)
Why're you being such a fucking
dick?? Huh? Well?? Answer me.

A beat... Gordon stands. He's had enough of these people.
Enough of this whole fucking night. He gets in his face:

GORDON
Cause, Brady, it's fun saying no to
people like you. It's really
goddamn fun.

DARCY
You are an *awful* man.

GORDON
You seem to be a connoisseur.
(stamping out his
cigarette, looking down)
Where'dja find this one? He can
talk and everything. Must've been
love at first sight.

GORDON'S POV: as we look up -- BAM! -- Brady's FIST hits us
like a fucking FREIGHT TRAIN as Darcy SHRIEKS --

CUT TO BLACK.

A beat...

FADE UP SLOWLY ON:

A BEDSIDE ALARM CLOCK

5:21 AM. HUGE, GREEN digits designed for elderly eyes...

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

BENNETT lies in bed, staring wide-eyed at the ceiling. Hasn't slept a wink. He rolls over, picks up the BURNER PHONE off the bedside table...

No missed calls. *Goddammit.* He puts the phone back, lays back down.... sighs...

MUSIC CUE: "I Got a Feeling" by Ricky Nelson -- a sunny, bouncy rockabilly tune your parents probably drank milkshakes to.

Bennett rubs his eyes, grabs the phone and crawls out of bed, stiff from back pain.

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Well I've got a feeling / That I'm
gonna get you...*

INT. KITCHEN - SHORT TIME LATER

THE BURNER PHONE

... resting on the kitchen countertop. SHIFT FOCUS to BENNETT in b.g., staring at it while he distractedly fills an 80's Mr. Coffee. *Come on... Ring...*

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Say I've got a little feeling /
That it won't be long...*

INT. KITCHEN - SHORT TIME LATER

LOOSE DOG FOOD avalanches over FOUR PLASTIC BOWLS, spilling all over the place. Bennett doesn't care -- as soon as the bowls are filled he hurries back over to the BURNER PHONE... Checks it... Frowns.

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
'Til I hold you in my arms and,
baby / That's where you belong...*

INT. BATHROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Bennett takes a shit -- one hand clutching the BURNER PHONE, other raising a COFFEE MUG with a baby picture of him on it.

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Well I've got a feeling / That you
think about me...*

He takes a sip, stares icily at the CLOSED DOOR, which jostles as the BARKING HUSKIES launch their bodies against the other side.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

THE BURNER PHONE

... lying on the carpet. Behind it: Bennett SLIDES SIDEWAYS INTO VIEW on a FOAM ROLLER, rocking in and out of frame, puppies in b.g.

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Well I've got a little feeling /
And I hope it's true...*

His eyes never leave the phone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Bennett, shirtless on the couch, sticks small ELECTRODES on his shoulders. Their wires connect to a cheap, Chinese TENS MASSAGER -- a white plastic remote with a couple buttons and dials.

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
'Cause nobody else could want you
so / And love you like I do...*

Bennett punches a button that reads "UPER BODY" (typo included). Turns the voltage dial all the way up. His arms start to involuntarily TWITCH IN UNISON every two seconds. He cranes his head down to the BURNER PHONE in his lap, arms still jerking up and down robotically...

*RICKY NELSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well I got a feeling / That our
love was meant to be...*

INT. BATHROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

IN THE SHOWER

CLOSE ON A SOAP TRAY where steaming hot water pounds against the BURNER PHONE, which is sealed in a plastic sandwich bag.

RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
*And there's a whole wild world of
 happiness / Just waitin' for you
 and me...*

Bennett scrubs himself down, staring at the phone, concerned...

INT. BEDROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Bennett, FULLY DRESSED, appraises himself sheepishly in the mirror. He bends over for one last BACK STRETCH... POP -- a BUTTON flies off his shirt. He notices -- *fuck* -- gets down on the carpet to retrieve it...

RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
*So why don't you tell me / That you
 love me only...*

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET

The closet door opens, revealing Bennett. He rummages through some high shelves... finds a SEWING KIT. He starts to open it -- PAUSES --

Something deeper in the closet's caught his eye... A SHOE BOX on the floor, peeking out between blankets and scarves...

RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
*'Cause I got a feeling / That you
 really do...*

Bennett picks up the shoe box -- "WAYNE" is scrawled on it in sharpie. He puts it on the bed and removes the lid.

INSIDE THE SHOE BOX: Bennett eagerly shoves aside layers of war medals and old photographs to get to the REVOLVER underneath... It hasn't worked in 30 years, but Bennett's wide-eyed expression suggests he doesn't know that.

RICKY NELSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*And I never had this feeling / 'Til
 I fell in lo--*

RING-RING!! -- Ricky Nelson is cut off by Bennett's PHONE. He SHOOTs UP, surprised by the noise -- RING-RING!! He frantically digs his IPHONE out of his pocket -- *fuckwrongphone* -- flings it aside, digs deeper, pulls out the BURNER PHONE.

He looks at the number... It's him. *Holy shit. Holy shit.*
RING-RI--

Bennett answers... attempts to sound calm:

BENNETT
Good... good morning.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
... Good morning??

INT. SMALL DARK ROOM - SAME

GRANT, suit and tie, leans over a wall-mounted BUSINESS PHONE.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Really?? Fuck you.

Hard to tell where we are. Behind Grant: a rack of BLINKING ELECTRONICS... Are we in some kind of control room?...

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
This is a bad morning, so let's not fucking dry hump and just tell me the price, assfuck.

BENNETT (V.O.)
Where uh, where are you? Am I on speaker?

GRANT RICHMOND
Yeah, you're on speaker. But don't worry. I'm alone. I'm -- I'm in my suite at the Roosevelt.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - LOWER LEVEL

A KCBB NEWS VAN sits in the shadowy corner by the dumpsters and HVAC unit. Not exactly a penthouse.

BENNETT (V.O.)
You're alone?...

GRANT RICHMOND (O.S.)
 YES, I'm alone -- I just fucking --
how much do you want?!

The van wobbles with Grant's anger.

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Bennett is holding his Grandpa's REVOLVER... Feeling its heft... As he strokes the barrel with his index finger:

BENNETT
 (hesitant)
 Niiiiinety thousand?...

A long beat. No response.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
 ... Hello?

INT. NEWS VAN

Grant stares into space, placid, probably counting to 5. Perfectly still except for the twitching of a single jaw muscle... Eventually he swallows:

GRANT RICHMOND
 Mhm. Mhm. You can have the
 money...
 (sotto)
 ...fucking ninety thousand fucking
 dollars...

REVEAL, sitting in the news van DRIVER'S SEAT: GORDON. He rolls an unlit cigarette between his fingers, listening in...

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 ... you goddamn fucking TAINT-
 SUCKING LEECH --

Gordon looks incredulously in the rear view, shakes his head, tired -- *can we keep this on track?*

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Bennett blanches --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 -- fucking shit-covered AIDS
 CHOAD -- that's right, you're a
 choad MADE OF AIDS, fucking your
own ass, giving yourself MORE
 AIDS --

BENNETT
 Okay -- okay, Mr. Richmond --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 Why the fuck are you doing this to
 me?? I'm a fucking contributing
 member of society. You're a
 fucking *parasite*... Fucking
 subhuman FILTH...

Bennett looks at the floor... Quietly:

BENNETT
 Student, uh, loans...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 Sorry? What was that?

Bennett clears his throat.

BENNETT
 Student loans. It's... why I'm
 doing this.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
 Student fucking loans?! What in
 the Jesus-shitting Christ... You
 are the biggest pussy in the
history of American crime.

BENNETT
 It's a predatory industry...

INT. NEWS VAN

GRANT RICHMOND
 So what am I getting? For ninety-
 goddamn-k??

BENNETT (V.O.)
 I have the audio file. It's on a
 thumb drive, which is like a little
 uh, USB --

GRANT RICHMOND
I know what a fucking thumb drive
is. That's the only copy?

BENNETT (V.O.)
Only copy.

GRANT RICHMOND
Uh-huh, and why the fuck should I
believe you?? How do I know you're
not gonna release it as soon as you
get your money? Or come back and
squeeze me again whenever you need
a new fucking fleshlight?

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Bennett puts the gun down on the bed.

BENNETT
You're just gonna have to take my
word for it...
(then, sincere)
I want this to be over as much as
you do.

A beat. He really means that last part. Grant sighs on the
other end...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
I want this done tonight. Name the
place.

Bennett's caught a little off guard. He thinks for a
moment.

BENNETT
... Adams Galleria?

Grant scoffs.

INT. NEWS VAN

GRANT RICHMOND
I refuse to get blackmailed in a
fucking Panera Bread. No.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT: Gordon sits back, rubs his temples.

BENNETT (V.O.)
Okay... What about like, a bar or
something?...

Grant grimaces for a beat, thinking... *Ugh...*

GRANT RICHMOND
Sure. Whatever. Anything specific
in mind? Favorite gay bar maybe?

BENNETT (V.O.)
Uh --

GRANT RICHMOND
You know what -- fuck this -- I'm
choosing. Let's do Saddle Ranch.
10pm. At least I'll be staring up
at some drunk chick on a mechanical
bull while you're bleeding me
fucking dry.

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

The burner phone is trembling against Bennett's ear... This
is really gonna happen. *Ninety fucking thousand dollars...*

BENNETT
(*holy fucking shit*)
Yeah. Okay. Saddle Ranch, yeah.
10pm at night. Obviously at night.
I mean -- that works.

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
How will I recognize you?

BENNETT
I'll uh, I'll recognize you, Mr.
Richmond.

A beat... Bennett waits with bated breath... *Is this shit
on?...*

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)
It's a date. See you tonight,
fuckstick.

CLICK. Grant hangs up. Bennett sits down slowly on the
edge of the bed...

Lets the phone slip out of his fingers. Takes a deep
breath. Looks around.

He puts his hands behind his head and FALLS BACK into the
covers. Shuts his eyes... a beat...

He BOLTS UP out of bed --

RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Well I've got a feeling / That I'm
gonna get you...

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bennett, now wearing the shirt he dies in, clicks frantically at his LAPTOP perched on the armoire --

RICKY NELSON (V.O.)
Say I've got a little feeling /
That it won't be long...

ON HIS SCREEN: An Amazon-style shopping cart... One item...

THE WAKESTREAM HEDONE. His mouse pointer strokes its picture. It's fucking \$3,265.99, but Bennett's a man of means now. And men of means proceed to checkout.

RICKY NELSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
'Til I hold you in my arms and,
baby / That's where you belong...

MACRO CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: MASSIVE pixelated letters read SAME-DAY DELIVERY BY 8 PM -- \$132.07.

As the GIANT mouse pointer strikes...

RICKY NELSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well I've got a fe--

INT. WEST TEMPLE ANIMAL SHELTER - DOG CORRIDOR - DAY - LATER

SLAM!!! A STEEL CAGE DOOR shuts thunderously into its concrete frame. A male shelter employee -- ISAAC, mid-30s, unathletic -- wrestles an OLDER PIT BULL away from her cage.

ISAAC
 Right now I'm 117th in East Valley rankings -- which is super good -- but I gotta break a hundred before they let me advance. MLR...

He's talking (loudly so he can be heard over 40 barking dogs) to a LATE-60s MAN, here to adopt the pit bull.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
 Master Lineman's Rodeo. Huge deal. They only hold it every couple years. Transformer replacements... Hurt-Worker Rescue Challenge...

The man nods absentmindedly, feigning interest as they walk down the cage-lined corridor. He's much more concerned about the pit bull.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
 (to the dog)
 That's it Shania, good girl...
 (then)
 Keep my spurs and belt in the trunk at all times. Lotta good practice poles around town. Sometimes people see me up there and wanna know if I'm a real lineman, employed by the state. Legally I have to tell them no. But I guess my form's that good, huh?

The man gives a weak smile -- sure -- bends down to pet Shania. Isaac tightens his grip.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - RECEPTION AREA

LIZ and PAOLA are manning the FRONT DESK. A few other EMPLOYEES/PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS circulate around the large, open reception area with various pets-to-be.

ISAAC, the MAN, and SHANIA enter through DOUBLE DOORS, make their way to the front desk. Liz brightens:

LIZ
 Shania!! Are you getting adopted??

She comes around the desk, takes the leash from Isaac and bends down to pet her.

MAN
 (laughing)
 Yes ma'am, she is...

PAOLA
 'Bout time.

Isaac leaves them with Liz and Paola, heads back the way he came in.

LIZ
 (to the man)
 So we'll need you to fill out theese...

Paola passes a stack of paperwork over to Liz, who hands it to the man along with a pen.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Microchip form -- so she's
registered in your name -- and then
some legal stuff, just your
initials, then signature down
there... Basically you're just
promising to take good care of her.
Walks, feeding, regular vet visits.

The man nods along ("Uh-huh, uh-huh") as he scans the
paperwork.

PAOLA

(looking at her computer)
Medical history's good, nothing
abnormal. Spayed before she came
in... up to date on all her
vaccines...

LIZ

(petting Shania)
I'm SO glad you two found each
other, she is the SWEETEST.
Shania's been here two years ya
know... Unfortunately, older
dogs...

PAOLA

And being a pit bull...

LIZ

Not everyone's favorite combo.

The man smiles.

MAN

I grew up around pitties. Think I
can handle her.
(smile fading)
Though I will say I'm a little
nervous about her age... I just...
I wanna get as much time with her
as I can.

LIZ

That's only natural...
(a beat)
Actually, I lost one of my dogs
recently... An older dog. Little
over a month ago...

PAOLA

(wistful)
Gloria.

LIZ

She came in two weeks pregnant. I took her home 'cause we didn't have any vacancies at the time... Of course, I *immediately* fell in love with her.

Paola nods, somber.

PAOLA

A great, great dog. GORGEOUS husky.

LIZ

She... She had a difficult birth. Didn't make it...

(a beat, then)

Every day was special. I only had a couple months with her, but she was worth it. Worth everything.

(bends down to pet Shania)

And you're gonna have SO much more time with Shania.

A beat.

MAN

I'm very sorry for your loss. Sounds like she was lucky to have you.

OVER BY THE ENTRANCE: The main doors nudge open, awkwardly parting to reveal BENNETT carrying a CARDBOARD BANKERS BOX. Nobody notices him as he makes his way inside.

LIZ

That's for sure. I spoiled the shit outta that dog.

The man chuckles, then, gesturing to the paperwork:

MAN

Well I should get going on all this, uh... Is there anywhere --

PAOLA

Oh -- you two can take a seat anywhere against the wall. Just come back up when you're done.

MAN

Ah, thanks, okay...
(trying it out)
Come on, Shania...

They saunter away from the front desk. BENNETT, with his box, takes their place...

An uncomfortable beat as he smiles at Liz.

LIZ
Hi there. Can I help you?

Bennett sets the box on the desk, leans forward with his hand extended.

BENNETT
I'm Bennett. I was curious if...
I... I've seen you around. I work
across the street. Used to,
actually. Just quit...

Liz and Paola share a concerned look.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
But I decided, ya know, why not
just walk in and... and uh... Do
you think -- whenever you're free,
maybe --

PAOLA
I'm sorry -- can she help you with
anything pet-related?

Bennett looks sourly at Paola before turning back to Liz:

BENNETT
Yeah... she can, actually. I've
got some puppies at home --
adorable little huskies. Adopted
here, from this shelter. I've been
looking after them since my
Grandm--

LIZ
WAIT!

She GRABS BENNETT'S ARM -- his eyes flash --

LIZ (CONT'D)
Huskies?? How many?

BENNETT
Four...? My Grandma -- a few weeks
ago --

LIZ
Oh my god!! I remember your
Grandma!

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

She LIT UP when she saw those
huskies, couldn't bear to separate
'em! How is she??

BENNETT

Yeah... She uh...

(grave)

She had a pretty serious car crash
a few weeks ago...

LIZ

(hand to her mouth)

Oh my god.

BENNETT

Don't worry, she's okay. Um,
well... not really. Last week she
started feeling weird, getting
dizzy and stuff. She just moved
into a home, actually...

LIZ

Wow... I'm sorry, that's so sad...

BENNETT

Mm. It's for the best.

LIZ

Guess it could've been worse
though, yeah?...

(then)

But -- so you're taking care of the
huskies now?

BENNETT

I am, yeah.

Liz looks him in the eyes:

LIZ

You're not gonna believe this --
those are my dog's puppies.

A beat. This is news to Bennett.

BENNETT

What? No way...

LIZ

Your Grandma snatched them up as
soon as they became available!

He can't believe his luck.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 You have GOT to let me come over
 and see them! Please!

BENNETT
 Yeah um... Yeah! Sure, of course.
 I mean, what a crazy coincidence
 right?

LIZ
 I know!! Are you free tonight?

Paola, who's been hovering off to the side in silent judgment, peers over Bennett's BANKERS BOX as the two of them talk --

BENNETT
 Absolutely, yeah, come over and say
 hi to them! I bet they'd love to
 see you.

-- INSIDE BENNETT'S BOX: nothing but the 3D PIN ART BOX and a particularly vibrator-y looking MASSAGE WAND.

Paola looks back at Bennett, weirded out. He's now jotting down on some paper:

BENNETT (CONT'D)
 This is where I'm staying -- it's
 actually my Grandma's house...
 When do you, uh, wrap up here?

LIZ
 I get off at 9, 9:30, so I could
 probably get there around 10...?
 If that's not too late?...

BENNETT
 (handing her the address)
 Perfect! Not too late at all.

Off Liz... beaming:

EXT. STREET - SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

BENNETT
FUCK!

Bennett stops in his tracks, realizing what he's done.

BENNETT (CONT'D)
 Idiot idiot idiot... fucking
 MORON...

He sets down the bankers box, looks around... goes searching for the BURNER PHONE in his pocket, cursing the whole time...

INT. KCBB - GRANT RICHMOND'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME

GRANT is scribbling on a POST-IT with his phone wedged between his ear and shoulder.

GRANT RICHMOND
No shit... perfect... You're a
goddamn saint, Flanagan...

CLOSE ON THE POST-IT: DAD (JAVIER) -- ARBYS

"ARBYS" is underlined three times. As he puts his phone away -- a KNOCK on the door --

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
(covering the post-it)
Yes! Come in!

A UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER enters followed by GINA, Grant's jaded, 20something assistant.

GINA
Grant, this, uh...

OFFICER PALACIOS
Sorry -- hope I'm not
interrupting -- I'm Officer
Palacios. I believe you were told
someone would be stopping by to
follow up on last night's incident.

GRANT RICHMOND
(all smiles)
Yes, yes -- I spoke with Sgt.
Roman, he warned me. I'm happy to
continue the conversation. Please,
have a seat.
(ahem)
Gina?...

She gets the message, leaves and closes the door. Grant and the officer take seats on opposite sides of his Pottery Barn desk.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Palacios... Palacios... Where
have I heard that name?...
(MORE)

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
(before he can answer)
Hold on -- you're not related to
Javier Palacios are you?

The officer smiles, nods:

OFFICER PALACIOS
He's my dad.

GRANT RICHMOND
Get outta town! So you went and
followed in his footsteps...
Family business... amazing. You
know, when your father stopped that
Arby's robbery in '96, I was on the
scene.

OFFICER PALACIOS
No kidding.

GRANT RICHMOND
I covered the story.

OFFICER PALACIOS
He's still telling that story,
believe it or not. Every chance he
gets.

GRANT RICHMOND
Truly an incredible exhibition of
bravery and grace under pressure.
You and your family must be so
proud.

Grant's really buttering him up. Officer Palacios smiles.

OFFICER PALACIOS
Thank you, we are, we are. I can't
believe you remember that, wow...
(shifting gears, reaching
for a notepad)
So... Solstice isn't pressing
charges -- they said you'd come to
some type of agreement. The county
might still hit you for disturbing
the peace. Probably just a fine,
maybe some counseling.

Grant's newsanchor façade strains to contain his rage:

GRANT RICHMOND
Mhm. Of course. Of course.

OFFICER PALACIOS

I did have one followup question -- based on some information gathered after your statement was taken.

Your masseuse... a Miss...

(checking notepad)

Iris Bozajian. She mentioned that you -- during your, uh, tirade -- you screamed the word "blackmail?" Is that correct?...

A beat. Grant plays it cool.

GRANT RICHMOND

Blackmail?...

(laughs)

Absolutely not. No. I'm afraid that's wrong... Absurd. She misheard me. You should have it there in the report -- the call was just some kid messing around...

You see, as a public figure, I'm subject to a little harassment from time to time. It's the cross I bear... Unfortunately, sometimes I just, uh...

(trailing off)

... lose my, uh...

GRANT'S POV: GINA is gesturing through the window looking into his office, holding a PHONE, pointing to it energetically.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, officer, could I -- could you excuse me a minute?...

OFFICER PALACIOS

Oh uh -- sure. No problem.

GRANT RICHMOND

I'll be quick.

Grant gets up, strides casually out of his office...

INT. KCBB - RECEPTION ROOM

... closes the door and approaches Gina -- *what the fuck??*

GINA

(worried)

Sorry, it's just -- your doctor's on the line. It's urgent.

A beat as Grant clenches his whole body to stop from screaming.

GRANT RICHMOND
Why is everyone so fucking stupid??

He looks toward the main office door, starts gunning for it --

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
(over his shoulder)
Say I'll call him right back -- DO
NOT say anything to the cop about
the call --

GINA
Wait -- you're leaving??

INT. KCBB - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Grant passes a smattering of KCBB employees as he FULL-ON SPRINTS down the hall...

INT. CONCRETE STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Grant runs down the steps so fast it almost qualifies as PARKOUR...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - LOWER LEVEL - MOMENTS LATER

Grant BURSTS through steel double doors (painted YELLOW), runs past a row of parked cars until he arrives at:

THE DUMPSTERS AND HVAC. Next to them...

... Empty space. No news van.

GRANT RICHMOND
Fucking SHIT! SHIT!

Might as well be a sign that says "Gone Newsin'." Grant looks around frantically, trying to catch his breath, furious...

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Jesus... CUNT-FUCKING Christ...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - GROUND LEVEL - MOMENTS LATER

Grant BURSTS through steel double doors (painted PURPLE), making a break for his TESLA...

He gets his PHONE and a WADDED UP PIECE OF PAPER out of his pocket, opens his car door and gets in.

INT. GRANT'S TESLA

Grant squints as he dials the number off the piece of paper, trying to move fast. He puts the phone to his ear...

GRANT RICHMOND

Pick up you fucking ASSHOLE --

He SLAMS the steering wheel.

BENNETT (V.O.)

Hello?

GRANT RICHMOND

What the FUCK do you want??!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY - SAME

Bennett's moved to an alley off the main street.

BENNETT

Okay so -- don't get mad -- but is there any chance we can reschedule?... Maybe tomorrow night?...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

Was there a fucking gas leak at the circle jerk?? Fuck no.

INT. GRANT'S TESLA

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)

I want you, and this whole goddamn mess OUT of my life TONIGHT. We had a deal. If you're not at Saddle Ranch, the deal's fucking off.

A tense beat.

BENNETT (V.O.)

Okay, okay...

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Bennett bites his lip... winces... *It's the only option.*

BENNETT

I can do it tonight, I just... I have to change locations. There's a house... If you uh, need a second to find a pen or --

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

Give me the fucking address.

Bennett takes a deep breath, then, already somewhat regretting this:

BENNETT

1819 Avenue 30... Got it?...

GRANT RICHMOND (V.O.)

1819 Avenue 30. 10 o'clock. Are we fucking done here??

BENNETT

I might be, uh... *with* someone... But just ring the doorbell and I'll come meet you outside.

INT. GRANT'S TESLA

Grant rolls his eyes -- none of this matters considering what he has in store for him.

GRANT RICHMOND

Ooookay.

BENNETT (V.O.)

I'll see you tonight then?...

Grant HANGS UP. Guess that's a yes. He SPRINGS out of the car, SLAMMING the door behind him.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Bennett, alone in the alley, lowers his phone... All quiet except for some cars humming along the main street...

He looks nervous. This whole thing's starting to spiral away from him...

He bends down to pick up his BANKERS BOX... STOPS. He looks inside. Grimaces at the items... *What a bleak fucking existence.*

Without much fanfare, he picks up the box and HEAVES IT INTO A DUMPSTER. He wipes his hands, turns to go.

Off Bennett, walking out of the alley, having just thrown his life away...

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: BRAKES CREAKING as a car slows...

FADE UP ON:

EXT. PAOLA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT - LATER

LIZ'S CAMRY pulls to a stop out front.

PAOLA (V.O.)
Wait why are we...?

INT. LIZ'S CAMRY

The sword -- blade now wrapped in Liz's West Adams apron -- sits on the backseat floorboard.

PAOLA (CONT'D)
... Want me to run up and grab something?

A beat. Liz stirs uncomfortably. *CHUNK* -- unlocks the doors.

LIZ
I'm dropping you off.

Paola tries to interject, but --

LIZ (CONT'D)
I shouldn't have dragged you into this... I'm so sorry. Everything got so fucked up... I mean Bennett's fucking dead. And we just pulled a fucking SWORD out of his BUTT.

Paola nods, trying not to think about it.

LIZ (CONT'D)

You're an amazing friend for helping me... really... I'm sorry for all this. I'll take your sword back and clean it with like, peroxide or something. You've done enough tonight.

A beat... *CHUNK* -- Paola re-locks her door.

PAOLA

Not a lot of people would take home a sick, pregnant dog, Liz. That's a lot of responsibility to take on, even for straight up *professional* animal-lovers like you and me. Those little huskies are alive 'cause of you, and what you did for their mama.

(then, steely)

... I don't know what that murderous old asshole's game is, but I am not throwing in the towel yet. We owe it to Gloria.

LIZ

Thanks... but Paola, we're out of moves. That murderous old asshole and the pups are gone... We lost.

Paola plops Bennett's BURNER PHONE between them on the dashboard. Liz's eyes widen, realizing what it is.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Holy shit, Paola.

PAOLA

I stole a dead guy's phone. It's dead, too, unfortunately.

Liz picks it up.

LIZ

You are my fucking hero.

A beat. Paola sighs...

PAOLA

We couldn't save Gloria, but maybe we can still save her kids.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

The HUSKY PUPPIES take turns pawing at GORDON's darkly-bruised, unconscious face.

He's laid out on the ground, dogs still tethered to the park bench.

Gordon's eyes CRACK OPEN... He tries to touch his face -- brushes aside some dogs first -- *FUCK that hurts...*

He elbows himself halfway up... groans... leans his back against the bench seat. Exhales deeply and cradles his forehead.

He notices the LASAGNA TUB is OVERTURNED, which makes him remember --

On his knees, he crawls around in front of the bench, hoping for some DOG SHIT --

GORDON

Come on, come on... None of you??

He stands up... CHECKS HIS WATCH: 11:39.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Shit... Goddammit. *Shit.*

He looks down at the eager, innocent puppies... A beat... His voice breaks slightly:

GORDON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, guys.

INT. GORDON'S SAAB - SHORT TIME LATER

Gordon sinks into the driver's seat holding the FROZEN LASAGNA BLOCK to his forehead. He tosses the lasagna outside, shuts the door. The dogs are in the backseat, returned to the WAKESTREAM BOX (one or two are trying to climb free).

Gordon turns on the battery, jabs the stereo. AMÁLIA RODRIGUES comes to life through the speakers. Soulful. Melancholy. You could cut the *saudade* with a knife.

He cracks the window an inch, fishes out a CIGARETTE... is about to light it --

AROOOOOO!! -- Gordon turns -- *what the fuck?*

One of the huskies -- #3 -- is HOWLING along with Amália. Singing, even... Gordon can't believe what he's seeing...

AROO-ROO-OOOOOO!! TWO MORE DOGS join in. The essential sadness of the Portuguese condition's really gotten 'em going. (Huskies and some other breeds are known to "sing" around music.)

ON GORDON: Laughing for once.

He puts down his cigarette, reaches in the backseat to pet a couple of the crooning huskies...

After a beat, he pulls back, faces the road... Laughter replaced with cold resolve...

He retrieves his SILENCED GUN from the glove compartment, stuffs it in his jacket. A beat...

GORDON

Okay.

He fully keys the ignition, causing a MOMENTARY PAUSE in the fado... When it RESUMES, you better believe the puppies do, too.

Off Gordon's Saab, pulling out onto the street as the DOG CHORUS SWELLS...

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Our favorite CLERK, glaring at us... Reverse to find LIZ and PAOLA on the other side of the counter.

In front of them: a NEW BURNER PHONE (exact model as Bennett's), a STACK OF GARISH BEACH TOWELS, and TWO LARGE TUBS OF VASELINE.

Paola adds TWO MORE Vaseline tubs... stares the Clerk down for a beat.

LIZ

(holding up the phone)

We just want the charger -- do we really gotta buy the whole phone??

INT. WEST TEMPLE ANIMAL SHELTER - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

THE NEW BURNER PHONE, still in its plastic clamshell packaging... oh well. PAOLA, alone at the front desk (everyone gone, most of the lights off), struggles to get it open.

PAOLA
 (calling to a room behind
 her)
 Hey lemme know when you're gonna
 lube it up! I wanna supervise.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - UTILITY ROOM - SAME

LIZ -- smock, safety goggles, N95 mask, latex gloves, and rubber boots -- stands hesitantly before a LARGE INDUSTRIAL SINK normally used for animal baths.

LIZ
 (preoccupied)
 Sure Paola...

THE SWORD is lying at the bottom of the sink, taking up its entire length. This is our first real glimpse since Bennett's steel colonoscopy...

And it is fucked. A foot of the blade is covered in PURE HORROR... A seven layer dip made entirely out of things that would make you throw up. Viscera and feces hardened into a crusty base... Blood and bile mixed into a nightmarish, chunky mole sauce...

Because of the mask, all we see are Liz's FEAR-STRICKEN EYES. She's used to cleaning up shit, but this is a WHOLE NEW LEVEL of fucked up and gross.

She turns on the faucet, starts running hot water over the blade. She picks up a BEACH TOWEL, then uncaps a huge jug of HYDROGEN PEROXIDE...

INT. RECEPTION AREA - FRONT DESK

Paola plugs BENNETT'S BURNER PHONE into the new charger -- the phone's CHARGING LIGHTS illuminate.

INT. UTILITY ROOM

Liz is sloughing off the larger surface clumps with a peroxide towel, averting her eyes, desperately trying to distract herself.

LIZ
 ... Baton Rouge, Louisiana...
 Bismarck, North Dakota... Boise,
 Idaho...

INT. RECEPTION AREA - FRONT DESK

Bennett's burner phone POWERS ON --

PAOLA
Heeeeell yes.

Paola picks it up, waits for it to finish, then...

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: She navigates to "CALL HISTORY."
Three phone calls, three different numbers.

PAOLA (CONT'D)
(calling back to Liz)
Think we're in business!

She moves to the DESK PHONE, dials a number reading off
Bennett's phone. RING... RING...

PAOLA (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Who are you you bag of shit...

RING... RING... CLICK -- then:

VOICEMAIL GRANT (V.O.)
*You've reached Grant Richmond!
Please leave a message and I'll
respond as soon as I can. And
remember, folks -- don't text and
drive!*
(beep)

She hangs up.

PAOLA
(sounds familiar)
Grant Richmond...

She grabs her CELL PHONE to look him up...

PAOLA (CONT'D)
(typing/searching)
Grant Richmond...

A beat... then she slowly looks up from her phone... Looks
out the WINDOW at the OFFICE COMPLEX across the street (KCBB
sign in view)...

PAOLA (CONT'D)
(dawning on her)
Liz...

THROUGH THE WINDOW: Out on the street, GORDON'S SAAB rolls by, turns into the complex's PARKING LOT ENTRANCE.

PAOLA (CONT'D)

LIZ...

LIZ

(from the utility room)

I'll tell you when it's lube time!

Off Paola, gaping out the window:

INT. PARKING GARAGE - LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

SAAB HEADLIGHTS

... flooding the concrete ramp as the car slowly descends. We follow the Saab around the lower level (only a couple scattered cars, pretty much deserted) until it arrives at the KCBB NEWS VAN, now back in its spot.

Gordon pulls in next to the news van... He turns off the Saab, gets out. Locks the doors. He leans against the car, looks around... No sign of Grant...

... until the van door SLIDES OPEN, startling Gordon --

GRANT RICHMOND

(stepping out of the van)

Did you call me??

GORDON

What?

GRANT RICHMOND

From some random 323 number -- did you just call me??

Gordon shakes his head -- *nope*. Grant closes the van door, looks around... *Huh...*

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)

The fuck happened to your face?...

Nevermind -- just tell me you have it. Please tell me you have it.

Gordon stares at him a beat... Before he can soften the blow --

BARK-BARK! -- muffled from the backseat. Gordon winces.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 (hissing)
 Oh FUCK YOU, Gordon.

Grant LUNGES for the Saab door but Gordon's a BRICK WALL -- he gets control of Grant, BACKS HIM UP against the news van.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 (struggling)
 Fuck you!!

GORDON
 Grant -- just stop --

Gordon produces his SILENCED GUN -- puts it to GRANT'S HEAD. Grant stops squirming:

GRANT RICHMOND
Yeah fucking right. You wouldn't.

GORDON
 Listen to me one goddamn second, will ya?

GRANT RICHMOND
 What's there to fucking say?? Give me the fucking dogs.

GORDON
 They drank some laxatives. About 40 minutes ago.

Grant scoffs.

GORDON (CONT'D)
 Just wait with me...

A couple huskies bark EXTRA LOUD.

GORDON (CONT'D)
 ... shouldn't be long.

A beat... Grant considers... nods. *Fine.*

GRANT RICHMOND
 At least drop the fucking gun?

Gordon swallows...

... tucks the gun back in his jacket. A beat as Grant straightens himself out. Gordon sighs, leans against the Saab.

GORDON
What's gonna happen with the girl?

GRANT RICHMOND
Fired her this afternoon.

Gordon shakes his head in disgust.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
What?

GORDON
Didn't say anything.

GRANT RICHMOND
I did her a fucking favor, getting
her away from all this bullshit.

GORDON
How noble.

GRANT RICHMOND
And you're the Dalai Lama all of a
sudden? Mr. fucking discount
hitman?? Taking my money and
fucking up the whole fucking job??

Gordon's gaze intensifies.

GORDON
You made the mess, Grant. You
asked for my help. I'm not the one
cheating on his wife with a goddamn
infant.

Grant CHARGES AT GORDON, PULLING THEM BOTH down to the
ground. TWO SCRAPPING OLDER MEN, grunting and rolling
around in all their awkward glory.

GORDON
Christ --
(gasping)

GRANT RICHMOND
...fuck... AGHH -- my leg --

They look like they're finishing up a long, angry game of
Twister... Grant, painfully contorted on the cement,
wheezes out:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Fuck the deal... Keep the money...
But if you EVER talk to Mikey...
I'm telling him what you do.

ON GORDON: Shaken by those words -- *how could you?*

GORDON
The kid... deserves... to know his
uncle...

Mmmhmm...

GRANT RICHMOND
(in a headlock)
I could not... disagree... more...

Gordon and Grant are BROTHERS.

VOICE (O.S.)
(shouting)
Hey!

They STOP FIGHTING -- still entangled on the ground, they CRANE THEIR HEADS in the direction of the voice, REVEALING, over by the yellow-painted stairwell doors...

LIZ. (Sans sword-cleaning gear.) They stare at her, mouths open, frozen --

LIZ
I know what you did to Bennett!
You're a fucking MURDERER!

... A long, silent beat.

LIZ (CONT'D)
What's up?? Got nothin' to say?

ON GORDON AND GRANT: A split second as their eyes meet -- then Grant PLUNGES HIS HAND into Gordon's JACKET, going for his GUN. Gordon grabs Grant's arm -- PFT! -- the gun GOES OFF inside his jacket as Grant YANKS IT OUT.

Liz JUMPS -- *oh my god* -- RUNS BACK through the yellow doors.

Grant, holding the gun, staggers to his feet as Gordon RAGDOLLS back to the concrete...

GRANT RICHMOND
(stunned)
Gordon... What've you...

He sees Gordon's BLOODY JACKET...

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
The fuck...

Grant turns to the YELLOW DOORS -- shit -- turns back to Gordon... Gordon's sweaty now, clammy, breathing heavy...

An anguished beat...

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)

I... I'm...

(beckoning to the doors)

You know I have to... Sorry.

He makes a break after Liz.

We STAY with Gordon as the yellow doors close with a resonant *THUNK*.

A beat... Gordon groans as he rolls over on his side, turning to FACE THE SAAB.

GORDON'S POV: Low angle, looking up at the BACK WINDSHIELD. Inside we see the YELPING HUSKIES. Their barking is MUFFLED and WARPED...

Still Gordon's POV -- from the dogs, we turn slowly to see PAOLA, tiptoeing towards us and the Saab...

ON GORDON: Weak. Bleeding. *Jesus fucking Christ...*

Paola gives Gordon a sympathetic grimace as she goes for the car door. She tries it...

... Locked. *Shit*. She scans around the parking lot -- SPOTS SOMETHING in the distance. ON GORDON as Paola jogs to retrieve it...

After a beat she comes back with a FIRE EXTINGUISHER. She positions herself at the front passenger window, RAISES THE EXTINGUISHER OVER HER SHOULDER, trying not to look at Gordon...

She takes a deep breath, RUSHES FORWARD --

CHUNK -- the lock shoots up -- Paola FREEZES, fire extinguisher INCHES from the glass --

She looks at GORDON: he's holding up his KEY FOB, which slips through his trembling fingers, hitting the pavement.

Off Paola, staring at Gordon... hesitantly lowering the fire extinguisher...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - GROUND LEVEL - SAME

Liz is RUNNING FOR HER LIFE through the empty garage, scared shitless.

In b.g., the PURPLE DOORS FLING OPEN to reveal GRANT -- sweaty, crazed, armed.

Liz turns to look, keeps on running...

Grant snarls, takes off after her as she disappears out the MAIN GARAGE ENTRANCE/EXIT.

EXT. WEST TEMPLE ANIMAL SHELTER - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Liz races up to the ANIMAL SHELTER'S FRONT ENTRANCE, unlocks the door and rushes inside --

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

She BLOWS PAST the dark reception area, going through double doors, into --

INT. DOG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

-- the DOG SECTION of West Temple, where we met Shania and her new owner. BARK-BARK!! -- Liz's panicked footsteps cause some SLEEPING DOGS to stir, in turn waking up more dogs...

(The dogs are NOT hanging out in their cages, by the way -- at night, they're herded into small CUBBYHOLES at the back of each cage, which are walled off by large, SLIDING STEEL PLATES operated by a LEVER just outside the cage door.)

Liz frantically unlocks a CAGE DOOR, then pulls the OUTSIDE LEVER --

IN THE CAGE: THREE SMALL, ODDLY-SHAPED DOGS pour out as the cubbyhole wall RISES.

Liz opens the cage door, steps in...

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Grant BURSTS through the front door, gun raised. He looks around, getting the lay of the land...

A SECURITY CAMERA catches his eye.

GRANT RICHMOND
Fuckers...

INT. DOG CAGE

Liz marshals the small dogs back into the cubbyhole:

LIZ
 Sorrysorrysorry -- no -- Skeeter --

She gets them back in, then kneels down, POKES HER HEAD INSIDE the cubbyhole, looking from side to side...

She pulls her head out, looks back at the OPEN CAGE DOOR, nervous... *Hope this works...*

CUT TO:

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - SAME

The OPEN CAGE DOOR, sticking out like a sore thumb in grainy, gray-blue SECURITY FOOTAGE (all the other doors are closed).

Reverse on GRANT, watching on a shitty MONITOR, loosening his tie.

GRANT RICHMOND
 (harsh whisper)
 Goddammit, Gordon...

He aims the gun at a COMPUTER TOWER under a small desk...

COMPUTER POV: PFT! PFT-PFT!

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: A cacophony of BARKING DOGS...

INT. DOG CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

... Barking dogs we CAN'T SEE even when we FADE UP. We TRACK SLOW along the cages: eerie, all seemingly empty despite the DEAFENING NOISE...

Reverse on GRANT, creeping down the hall, not reacting well to this environment:

GRANT RICHMOND
 Shut up! Shut the fuck up!!

GRANT'S POV: The AJAR CAGE DOOR about 10 yards down the corridor, getting CLOSER AND CLOSER... The SILENCED GUN rises into frame...

ON GRANT: SCARED beneath the rage... Scared enough to MURDER THIS GIRL in cold blood if he has to.

We're coming up on the cage door now... *Easy... easy...*

Grant TURNS TO POUNCE --

INT. DOG CAGE

Totally empty. Grant drops his shooting stance, exasperated. He stomps angrily, making the barking dogs redline. As he's turning around --

GRANT RICHMOND
...fucking dumb fucking SLUT...

A CHEESY RINGTONE starts emanating from behind the cubbyhole panel. "By the Seaside" (stock on most iPhones).

Grant WHIPS BACK AROUND, gun raised. He smirks. A beat...

He steps inside the cage, following the noise to the STEEL PANEL at the back...

He bends down, gets his fingers under the plate. Painfully LIFTS:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Aghh!!!

It's not supposed to open this way, but it *can* be done. He wrests the steel plate into its OPEN/LOCKED POSITION, then KNEELS to peer inside...

Just Skeeter and his pals. Jumping around a RINGING IPHONE lying in the middle of the cubbyhole.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
... you fucking bitch...

SLAM!! The cage door SHUTS behind him as a LIZ-SHAPED BLUR RUNS BY.

Grant JERKS AROUND, stands up -- *no* -- he SHAKES the cage door... Yup. Locked.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
You fucking BITCH!!

The Shelter Dog Philharmonic is still going strong. Grant looks at his feet -- the three weird dogs are pawing needily at his legs.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 (kicking/waving the gun)
 Get the fuck away from me!!
 (then, yelling out)
 REAL fucking clever, sweetheart --
 I was just gonna shoot you, but now
 I'm gonna *slice off your tits* and
 use them as fucking *kneepads* while
 I SKULLFUCK THE EYES OUT OF YOUR
 FUCKING HEAD!!!
 (shaking the cage door)

Skeeter wags his tail, unfazed. Grant STOPS mid-shake, noticing/remembering his GUN. He grins.

He steps back a few feet, aims the gun at the LOCK:

PFT! -- SPARKS fly out of the steel locking mechanism, scaring the hell out of the small dogs, who flee back into their cubbyhole.

Grant tries opening the door --

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 Fuck!

He steps back, re-aims --

PFT! -- Sparks fly again... but the door still won't open.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 Motherfucker COME ON.

He inhales deep, aims the gun at the DENTED LOCK. A tense beat...

PFT! -- the door FLIES OPEN as a SPARK SHOWER sprays Grant in the UPPER LEG -- he falls over:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 (screaming in pain)
 FUCK! FUCK!!

He looks down to inspect... Through the singed holes in his khakis: a strip of CHARRED, BLISTERED SKIN.

GRANT RICHMOND
 (seething)
 YOU'RE FUCKING DONE YA HEAR ME??!

He PULLS HIMSELF UP, grunting, all traces of fear gone -- now nothing but WHITE-HOT ANGER. As he limps out of the cage:

GRANT RICHMOND
You're fucking done...

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - SAME

PAOLA, anxious, sits at the kitchen counter in Liz's Ikea gift certificate of an apartment, watching her CELL PHONE with growing concern. A smattering of HUSKY PUPPIES frolic on the carpet in b.g.

PAOLA
...okay Liz... Wheeeere are ya...

She picks the phone up, checks the time.

PAOLA (CONT'D)
Shit...

She looks at a WALL CLOCK just to be sure. Breathes deep. Tries to shake off some nervousness. She grabs Liz's keys, stands up.

CLOSE ON HER PHONE SCREEN as she dials:

9-1-1

Paola raises the phone, worry in her eyes... *Hope she's okay...*

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - CAT ROOM - SAME

A CUTE CAT

Moon-eyed, peering out its cage.

GRANT RICHMOND (O.S.)
Fucking twat...

WIDEN to reveal GRANT bent over a steel sink/counter in the corner of the CAT ROOM, a midsize facility with tall rows of CAT CAGES lining the walls.

CLOSE ON GRANT'S THIGH: He finishes tying his TIE around a mass of DAMP PAPER TOWELS pressed against his leg.

CLANG-CLANG! -- out in the DOG CORRIDOR, a NOISE makes Grant twist to the door. He snorts.

Gotcha now...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - LOWER LEVEL - SAME

GORDON lies supine, panting on the ground a few yards from his Saab. Back door flung open, EMPTY. No dogs, no box.

Gordon's JACKET is off -- wadded-up now, pressed to his ABDOMINAL WOUND. Looks like it's already sponged up a lot of blood.

Gordon groans as he SWITCHES HANDS applying pressure, then slowly gets his free hand in his FRONT POCKET... Every inch hurts, but he eventually gets out his CELL PHONE.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN as a blood-caked finger types:

9...1...1...

His thumb drifts to the CALL BUTTON...

... hovers over it...

ON GORDON: Pale. He closes his eyes for a beat. Opens them again.

He DROPS the phone -- CLACK. Feels around for it on the ground...

His hand comes up again... holding the KEY FOB instead.

Keeping the jacket pressed to his torso, he very painfully rolls to one side, manages to prop himself up on his ELBOW...

GORDON
(groaning in pain)
Goddammit, Grant...

Using all the strength he has left and then some, Gordon LABORS AGONIZINGLY to his feet. Once "standing," he TRIPS forward -- catches himself on the back of the Saab.

A beat as he leans head-down against the trunk, catching his breath, holding his wound... He drags himself to the DRIVER'S SIDE DOOR using the Saab roof for support. He gets the door open --

LOW ANGLE ON THE DRIVER'S DOOR: Gordon's wadded-up jacket/tourniquet FLUTTERS to the ground as the door SHUTS.

PUSH IN on the jacket as a RED POOL grows around it...

CLOSE ON THE JACKET (for the rest of the scene): CHK-CHK-VROOOM -- we hear the SAAB ENGINE come to life, then the sound of the door RE-OPENING...

Gordon's weak, BLOODY HAND quivers into frame, fishing out his smeared, crumpled CIGARETTES.

THUNK -- we hear the door shut again. Gordon turns up THE FADO... Filtered and boomy from our POV outside the car...

Off the jacket, wet and oozing on the pavement...
Apparently no longer needed...

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - DOG CORRIDOR - SAME

SKEETER AND HIS CAGE-MATES stand at the far end of the dog corridor, gathered over an UPSIDE DOWN ALUMINUM BOWL, pebbles of DOG FOOD spilled all around.

Reverse on GRANT -- other end of the corridor -- aiming his gun at this. Brow furrowed in consternation...

He grunts contemptuously as he half-lowers the gun. Starts limping his way down the hall, scanning the cages.

ANGLE ON DISTANT GRANT from the other end of the corridor, inching closer to us...

... TRACK SIDEWAYS to reveal LIZ in f.g., crouched behind the last cage -- still as a mannequin -- one hand holding an ENORMOUS HOSE, the other a SNARE POLE (a 5-ft pole with a noose that tightens via a pull-cable protruding out the handle).

Grant's voice becomes a little more newsanchor-y as he calls out to Liz:

GRANT RICHMOND

I -- I take it you saw some things
that upset you... I don't want to
hurt you. I mean it, we can work
this out...

No response.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)

I can raise money for the shelter.
Do a nice little human interest
piece... Hey -- I can even get
you on televi--

FWOOSH!! -- Grant is BLASTED to the ground by a TORRENT OF HOSE WATER -- the SILENCED GUN goes FLYING, sliding across the wet cement as Skeeter & Co. haul ass down the corridor.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 (gripping his leg)
 God-fucking--!

Liz steps out from behind the cage, drops the hose and RUSHES UP to momentarily-out-of-commission-Grant with the SNARE POLE, wrestles the NOOSE around his neck --

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 What the fuck're you -- AGH! --

-- and YANKS AS HARD AS SHE CAN on the pull-cable. Grant's eyes and veins BULGE as the cable DIGS SHARPLY into his trachea.

He tries to grab the pole but Liz STOMPS ON HIS CHEST, pinning him down. She gives the cable a QUICK TUG for good measure:

LIZ
 (all business)
 Listen up, fucko. When I loosen the rope, you're gonna get up slowly, and then you're going back in the cage until the cops get here. You try anything... I pull 'til your fucking head pops off. Got it?
 (a beat)
 Only gonna loosen if you got it.

Grant, asphyxiating, does his best to NOD YES.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 Good boy.

PSH! -- A puff of air as Liz taps the RELEASE BUTTON -- Grant GASPS, gulping for oxygen as the rope slackens a centimeter.

Liz takes her foot off his chest, backs away with the pole as Grant, dripping wet, SLOWLY RISES.

He holds up his hands, turns to start walking down the corridor...

GRANT RICHMOND
 I didn't even know his name until you said anything... What was it... Bennett?...

Liz trails behind him, slow, gripping the pole, watching for any funny business.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
 He was trying to blackmail me.
 He would've destroyed me. My whole
 life. My fucking family.

LIZ
 Well, now *I'm* doing that.

A beat.

GRANT RICHMOND
 Fucking fishstick was that dear to
 you, huh...

LIZ
 No. But you didn't have to *shoot*
him. You didn't have to shoot that
 guy across the street, either.

ON GRANT: That last bit struck a nerve. He spots the GUN
 up the corridor a ways, lying in the shadows...

GRANT RICHMOND
 You have no fucking idea what
 you're talking about.

LIZ
 Uh... I saw it. You *saw me* see it.
You shot him. You di--

Grant GRABS the pole behind his head and LEAPS FORWARD --
 Liz reacts in time to YANK THE CABLE --

GRANT RICHMOND
 (pained gasp)

-- but the POLE RIPS OUT OF HER GRASP as Grant's bodyweight
 pulls it to the ground, causing her to LURCH FORWARD and
 lose her footing. She tries to pick herself up but Grant
 SMACKS HER IN THE FACE WITH THE POLE --

She FALLS BACK as Grant -- WET AND CHOKING -- desperately
 tries to PUSH THE RELEASE BUTTON, but it's too far down the
 pole, just out of arm's reach.

A charged beat as Liz wipes the BLOOD from her temple...
 She clambers to her feet, wastes no time -- she CHARGES PAST
 STRUGGLING GRANT right as (PSH!) he FREES HIMSELF (sort
 of -- the pole's still attached but he can breathe now).

Grant TAKES OFF AFTER HER, pole dangling behind him. Liz
 bolts through the RECEPTION DOORS -- Grant, not far behind,
SCOOPS UP THE GUN before following suit --

INT. RECEPTION AREA

ON LIZ as she makes a dash for the FRONT DOORS -- PFT! --
SPARKS fly off the doorframe as Grant fires off a round --

Liz JUMPS, freezes --

LIZ
Jesus fuck!

Reverse on Grant, gun trained, pole dragging behind him:

GRANT RICHMOND
DON'T YOU FUCKING MOVE! Stay RIGHT
the fuck there!!

Liz rears back, hands in the air... Turns to face him.
Grant, foaming at the mouth, limps a few feet closer.

He HOLDS OUT the POLE.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Press it.

A beat... Liz doesn't want to.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
PRESS IT!

Liz carefully approaches... PSHHH -- she hits the RELEASE
BUTTON, quickly STEPS BACK --

Grant works the noose off his head, gun never leaving Liz.
He furiously THROWS DOWN the snare pole, catches his breath.
Then, strangely calm:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Get behind the desk.

He beckons with the gun. Liz takes a beat... reluctantly
obliges. Grant positions himself across from her.

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Keys to the dog cages.

LIZ
What?...

He shoves the gun in her face:

GRANT RICHMOND
Get them.

Liz rummages through a drawer behind the desk, takes out a SINGLE KEY attached to a FADED ORANGE DOGBONE KEYCHAIN.

LIZ
Opens all of them...
(then)
... Can I ask why?

Grant snatches the key, pockets it:

GRANT RICHMOND
Slain employee? Bunch'a fuckin'
dogs running loose?...
(gesturing around)
Looks to me like some PETA shit that
just got a little too Manson-y.

Liz stares at him hatefully.

LIZ
You're a fucking idiot.

Grant shrugs, READIES THE GUN --

GRANT RICHMOND
Says the girl who got herself
killed.

ON LIZ: defiant but shaking...

Grant sighs, then:

GRANT RICHMOND (CONT'D)
Such a tragedy... I look forward
to interviewing your grieving
family.

Liz SHIFTS HER GAZE as her jaw goes slack, eyes slowly
WIDENING... She sees something behind Grant.

Grant notices her mien as LIGHT pierces through the FRONT
WINDOW behind him -- he PIVOTS to the window --

CRRRAAASSSHHHH!!! -- GORDON'S SAAB SAILS THROUGH THE FRONT
WINDOW/WALL of West Temple Animal Shelter in an explosion of
debris and broken glass -- the car HITS GRANT, CRUNCHING HIM
brutally into the RECEPTION DESK, sandwiching his lower body
as it comes to a halt.

DRYWALL and DOCUMENTS snow around the room as AMÁLIA
RODRIGUES fills the air, blasting from the car speakers.

Grant is folded over the Saab hood, face-down. Dead. Gun
on the floor.

As the dust settles, Liz uncoils from a defensive crouch at the end of the room. Rises to take in the wreckage...

A beat as she looks around, speechless at the destruction. Eventually:

LIZ
...fuuuuuccckkkk...

She pushes through piles of rubble to get to the SAAB. Once there, she looks at Grant dubiously... pushes his head lightly...

Nothing. A SPUTTERING COUGH turns her attention to the DRIVER'S SEAT:

GORDON, covered in small cuts and bruises, pushes out his last breaths as a barely-smoked cigarette tumbles from his lips.

Liz bends down through the shattered car window... Under the fado:

GORDON
Are they... okay...

It takes her a second to realize what he's talking about...

She nods. Gordon closes his eyes. She reaches through the window, puts her hand on his.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Sorry about... my brother...

And with that, he's gone.

ON LIZ: Looking at him sadly. Mercifully. Like he's an animal being put down...

This evil fucking dog thief just saved my life...

After a beat she leans in further -- puts the Saab in PARK, switches off the headlights, then twists the key until the car and fado go silent.

SIRENS can be heard blaring faintly in the distance. Outside, a couple LATE NIGHT DRIVERS slow down to gawk at the scene.

LIZ
(remembering)
Paola...

Liz negotiates back through a pile of splintered furniture, eventually reaches the DOG CORRIDOR DOORS...

INT. DOG CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

LIZ'S PHONE in the CUBBYHOLE, right where we left it. (The shelter dogs are barking like a cat just got elected president.)

LIZ snaps up the phone, stands -- Skeeter and his friends are JUMPING AT HER HEELS. She gets behind them, ushers them in:

LIZ
Fun's over guys...

She quickly exits the cage and slides the OUTSIDE LEVER, shutting the cubbyhole panel. She turns, walks briskly down the corridor as she DIALS HER PHONE, picking debris out of her hair while it rings. As she pushes through the doors to the RECEPTION AREA --

LIZ (CONT'D)
Pick uuuuupppp... Paola pick --

INT. RECEPTION AREA

PFT! -- A BULLET bites into the steel INCHES FROM HER HEAD -- Liz SCREAMS, drops her phone --

Reverse on GRANT... STILL ALIVE AND GUN IN HAND. Pinned by the Saab but now SLUMPED TO ONE SIDE, angled facing her.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE... Through the filth and sweat: a GROTESQUE LUNATIC GRIN...

SSCHHHK!!! -- GRANT'S GRIN IS BISECTED BY SIX INCHES OF BLOOD AND SHIT-ENCRUSTED STEEL, STICKING OUT OF HIS MOUTH like the tongue of a sexually adventurous Robot Gene Simmons.

A GURGLE OF BLOOD... then he falls out of frame to reveal PAOLA behind him. She DROPS THE SWORD HANDLE -- ewww. Backs away.

LIZ
Paola!! Oh my fucking god!!

The SIRENS AND LIGHTS are getting close. Liz rushes over:

LIZ (CONT'D)
What the FUCK...

PAOLA
 (to Grant's corpse)
 I do not love the bright sword for
 its sharpness... Only that which
 it defends.
 (looks at Liz, shrugs)
 Already impaled one guy today...

Liz HUGS her.

LIZ
 Reggie's gonna fucking kill us.

PAOLA
 Safe to say...
 (looking around)
 Man... what fucking happened here,
 Liz??

LIZ
 Family problems I think?...
 I don't know. I don't care.

She pulls away, looks at Paola, genuine:

LIZ (CONT'D)
 All I know is we're alive... Thank
 you. For everything.

Paola smiles, shrugs -- *think nothing of it.*

Liz remembers, concerned:

LIZ (CONT'D)
 The huskies -- were you able to...?

Off Paola, smiling under FLASHING RED LIGHTS...

As the SONIC ANARCHY of arriving emergency personnel
 crescendos...

INT./EXT. ANIMAL SHELTER - SHORT TIME LATER

A DIALOGUE-LESS MONTAGE:

- The warzone of a reception area bustling with police, firefighters, paramedics, etc.
- LIZ and PAOLA being tended to by EMTs in the back of an AMBULANCE out on the street.
- *FLASH-FLASH* -- A FORENSIC TEAM takes photos of Gordon and Grant's corpses, the sword, and the Saab.

- Paola talks animatedly to the police, miming the sword thrust. Liz looks on, nodding her head, exhausted...

EXT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Hours later. The bruise-blue light of a new morning.

A SQUAD CAR slows to a stop outside Liz's building. LIZ steps out of the passenger door, bone-fucking-tired. Gauze bandage stuck to the side of her head, clothes stained and frayed, miscellaneous nicks and scrapes all over.

She wearily shuts the door, half-waves as the cop drives off...

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The front door opens revealing Liz, ORANGE DOGBONE KEYCHAIN dangling from the lock.

She's warmly greeted by SIX -- count 'em -- SIX HUSKY PUPPIES. Gloria's WHOLE LITTER, together again. Two of them (puppies Liz kept) have COLLARS. The other four bear Gordon's SHARPIE NAMETAGS.

Liz bends down to administer pets, smiling, tired, aching.

She pauses, something across the room CATCHING HER EYE. And her nose... She stands, walks to the RUG in front of her couch:

A masterpiece of dog diarrhea. Streaking over an impressive amount of the rug.

ON LIZ: Not happy about this... She looks at the dogs: one of them hides shamefully in the WAKESTREAM BOX. She turns back to the soiled rug... smirks. Sighs.

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

LOW ANGLE ON THE RUG: In f.g., a GLINTING SILVER PIECE OF PLASTIC, mostly submerged in the sludge.

Yup... Bennett's FLASH DRIVE.

Liz doesn't notice it as she ROLLS UP THE TAINTED RUG from the other end.

She stands, wincing in disgust/pain as she HOISTS the rug tube over her shoulder...

EXT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - ALLEYWAY - DAWN - MOMENTS LATER

A small back alley behind her building. A DOOR kicks open as Liz hustles the rug outside...

She THROWS the rolled-up rug into a DUMPSTER. It juts out awkwardly over the edge.

Liz wipes her hands, lets out a long, exhausted sigh. She turns to go back in. We STAY ON THE RUG, poking out of the dumpster...

A beat, then it's SWALLOWED UP as some garbage settles beneath it.

CUT TO BLACK.