

FATAL ATTRACTION

"Part I"

Written by

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Writers' Fifth Draft

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. LEVI'S STADIUM - SANTA CLARA - DAY

FOX NFL FOOTBALL. Seventy thousand RABID FANS are on the edge of their seats as the 49ers' quarterback drops back and launches a pass... DOWNFIELD, the receiver makes a breathtaking catch, but is promptly HAMMERED with a bone-crunching tackle... As the crowd ROARS its approval...

INT. LEVI'S STADIUM - VIP LOUNGE

FIND: A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN -- DOMINIQUE "NIKKI" SHAW

Brainy-hot, a bounce in her step, hip work style, and eye-catching crimson lips, as she hurries towards--

INT. OWNER'S SUITE - LEVI'S STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The luxury box is brimming with bigwigs. Nikki gives her name at the door--

NIKKI

Dominique Shaw. I'm with
CityScape.

She's let in by a couple of BRAUNY GUARDS, squeezes past curious stares. Only her business partner, PATRICK KELLER, a thirty-something NorCal entrepreneur type, rises with an alarmed look as she sidles up to him.

PATRICK

Nikki?

NIKKI

I know, I'm late. Sorry.
Traffic.

She drops a kiss on his cheek, small waves to other guests. Patrick awkwardly ushers her aside.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

PATRICK

Didn't you get my message?

NIKKI

What message?

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK

I've been hit with malware.
Someone hacked into my phone, my
emails, contacts, calender-- it's
all compromised.

A beat.

NIKKI

Oh, no. I'm sorry to hear that.

PATRICK

Are you?

He shoots her an accusatory stare.

NIKKI

I hope you don't think I had
anything to do with it?

PATRICK

The source of the breach was
internal. It was traced to your
office computer.

NIKKI

That's impossible. You know I use
a laptop. I'm hardly in the
office. You know that.

Nikki's color rises. She starts to feel stares from
people around them... whispering accusations... Patrick
signals to THE GUARDS.

PATRICK

I'm sorry to have to do this now.
I need you to leave.

Nikki grabs his arm.

NIKKI

You know I didn't do this. Why
would I? I put this NFL deal
together. We're hot right now,
you can't shut me out.

(then)

I've done things to protect you
you didn't have the balls to do.

Patrick breaks away from her grip.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK

You've been a mouth-watering
distraction. But you've gone too
far this time.

Nikki is reeling. This can't be happening.

NIKKI

You can't do this.

PATRICK

Check your contract.

Nikki is speechless, the Guards now at her side.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Don't make a scene. You're a
smart, beautiful woman. You'll
land someplace else.

Nikki looks around, only to find accusatory eyes burning
into her from all across the room.

THINGS GO SLOW MO, AS THE GUARDS GRAB NIKKI...

And "escort" her towards the exit, keeping a vise grip on
her elbow. She walks a gauntlet through the crowd, no
one willing to lift a finger to help her...

SUBLIMINAL FLASH -- NIKKI'S POV: The scene takes on a
macabre texture as the gauntlet MORPHS into the ominous
corridor of a MENTAL WARD -- the guards into MENACING
ORDERLIES, the employees into laughing and crying
PATIENTS -- a recurring nightmare for Nikki suddenly come
to life.

OFF the unsettling moment...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

(CONTINUED)

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - SAN FRANCISCO - EARLY MORNING

The bridge dazzles the eye. A high wind whips the ocean. Despite the blue sky, fog lurks just out to sea patiently waiting to envelop the city.

A SUPER FADES UP: **Three Years Later**

INT. HEARING ROOM, CITY HALL - DAY

A hearing is underway about a proposed streetscape renovation project. The room is half-filled with lawyers, Municipal Transit Representatives, and HIPPIESQUE CITIZENS clad in outdoorsy garb.

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN has the floor. She wears a sexy business suit, silk blouse, high-heeled boots, and "Don't fuck with me" vibe. A CLOSER LOOK and we recognize her as NIKKI SHAW, although she has dyed her hair blond.

NIKKI

...We've come up with a plan for the Market Street corridor that involves protecting *pedestrians* through new designs of sidewalks, and protecting *cyclists* with new and improved elevated bike lanes.

MAYOR LEE (60), stuffy, humorless, stares up at a POWERPOINT PRESENTATION for new city bike lanes: IMAGES of crappy city streets, alternating with shiny-new renderings of proposed renovations-- GREEN BIKE LANES raised above street level.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Mayor Lee, we believe that this plan supports your objective of eliminating traffic deaths in the city by 2024.

ANGLE ON THE HEARING ROOM DOORS as another lawyer slips in, CLARK BODDEN (40's), affable but unscrupulous. His eyes are automatically drawn to Nikki.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Making our streets safe for cyclists helps the environment by encouraging more people to get out of their cars and hop on a bike. I'm a case in point. I biked here this morning.

JERRY KING(50s), a Transit Representative, jovially stands:

JERRY KING

I can vouch for that. Nikki's tight spandex nearly made me swerve off the road.

A ripple of chuckles from the gallery. Nikki and the rep exchange a friendly smile.

NIKKI

Don't be ridiculous, Jerry. Everyone knows those hands were nowhere near that steering wheel because you were too busy sexting.

The room explodes with laughter. Clark LAUGHS loudly, catching Nikki's eye. She clocks him.

MAYOR LEE

(eyeballing)

Someone desperately needs a harassment and sensitivity refresher before he loses his job.

The gallery immediately falls silent.

JERRY KING

Sorry, Mayor. Nikki.

NIKKI

I'm good.

MAYOR LEE

How do you address the concern that creating bike lanes takes away much-needed parking spaces?

NIKKI

We believe we've solved the impact on parking by contracting with the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition to provide bike valets for affected businesses.

(CONTINUED)

MAYOR LEE

Bike valets?

NIKKI

Just like it sounds. They park and lock your bike for you safely in a secured area.

MAYOR LEE

What's the cost to the city?

NIKKI

Nothing. The Coalition's bike valets are all volunteers.

Nods and murmurs from the room.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- HEARING ROOM, A SHORT WHILE LATER

The meeting has adjourned. Nikki is busy packing up when her client, TED (40's), polished, leans in.

TED

It only took twenty meetings, but we did it. Thank you, Nikki.

NIKKI

I've been told I don't know when to quit. Comes in handy.

They share a smile.

TED

Why don't you let me take you for a celebratory drink?

NIKKI

No, thanks.

TED

At least let me give you a ride. Now that we won, you don't have to keep riding that bike around town.

NIKKI

You don't know me. When I'm in, I'm all in.

She grabs her bike helmet and turns away, leaving Ted a little rejected.

ANOTHER ANGLE: THE HEARING ROOM DOOR OPENS--

DEAN CHAMBERS (30's), an architect, pushes his way in against the others who are in the midst of exiting. Charismatic, well-dressed, but with slightly rumpled hair and an artistic temperament. He's juggling a portfolio and a BAKERY BOX labeled from "Miette." Clark hails him over, impatient.

CLARK

What the hell's that?

Clark tries to peek inside the bakery box.

DEAN

I heard he has a weakness for
Gingersnaps.

Dean makes his way up to the bench just as the Mayor is about to exit.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Mayor Lee, Dean Chambers, of
Chambers-Bodden. Could I have a
minute? It's about zoning on the
York Street Parcel.

MAYOR LEE

You know better, Mr. Chambers.
Call my office and set an
appointment like everyone else.

DEAN

That's just it. I've been trying
to get on your dance card but I
keep getting pushed.

MAYOR LEE

So you thought you'd just come
down here with a bribe and cut in
on someone else's time?

Dean grins sheepishly, opens the box.

DEAN

They're fresh out of the oven.

Unmoved, the Mayor disappears with his entourage. Dean turns away, defeated. Clark grabs a Gingersnap.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I just told the client we weren't
behind schedule.

(CONTINUED)

Clark catches sight of Nikki's ass as she exits the hearing room.

CLARK

How do you feel about consultants?

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: CLARK'S FACE, RED WITH EXERTION

As he's slammed down onto a workout matt. Dean's knee comes down on Clark's neck, compressing his oxygen flow--

INT. JIU-JITSU ACADEMY - DOJO - DAY

Dean and Clark are now sparring in a martial arts studio. A dozen men and women, barefoot, wearing "gi's," train in pairs. A sharp-eyed MASTER scrutinizes their technique.

Dean doesn't seem to notice that Clark is TAPPING OUT. Clark taps out harder. Dean finally releases him.

CLARK

Jesus! You gotta lighten up.
We're suppose to be here to blow
off steam, not kill each other.

DEAN

You're right. This isn't helping.

Dean offers Clark a hand up. Clark grudgingly takes it. His eyes wander across the room towards a FEMALE TRAINER in skin tight boy shorts and crop top.

CLARK

You know what helps me? I keep
picturing my head buried deep in
Tracy's lap with my hands locked
inside her sports bra.

BAM! Dean throws Clark back down on the mats--

DEAN

The developer's started pre-
selling units. We don't even have
permits yet!

OFF CLARK tapping out again...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - SHOWERS - MOMENTS LATER

The two men now soap up in the communal shower. Dean is lean and muscular; Clark is less cut but proud of it.

CLARK

There's only so much I can do.
The Planning Office is back
logged, two thirds of the city's
under construction, there's not a
crane to be had from here to San
Diego.

DEAN

All I'm hearing is excuses. You
remember why we started this firm?
So we could have control over the
buildings our name goes on. Well,
I'm feeling pretty out of control
right now.

CLARK

So let's hire a consultant,
somebody to grease the wheels.

DEAN

Another slick operator pushing
their own agenda? No thanks.

He tosses him the soap. Clark fumbles the catch and
drops it. They look at each other.

CLARK

I'm not picking that up. That
soap is radioactive to me.

EXT. CHAMBERS HOME - BERKELEY HILLS - ESTABLISHING

A modest architectural home in the East hills. A white
Tesla zooms into the driveway and Dean gets out.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - CONTINUOUS

Comfy, slightly modern decor. French doors off the deck
open to a panoramic view of the San Francisco Bay. A
hall table displays family photographs. ONE OF THEM-- of
Dean in his 20's embracing his wife, STEPH, on a pristine
beach in Thailand-- stands out. They're barefoot, with
backpacking gear and suntans, carefree young lovers.

The DOOR OPENS and Dean enters, setting down his bags.
His eyes find the photograph with a hint of regret.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Anyone home? Steph? Oliver?

He walks out onto the deck.

EXT. CHAMBERS HOME - DECK - CONTINUOUS

OLIVER CHAMBERS, (seven years old, cute) is hanging over the railing, watching something in the yard with concern.

DEAN

Hey, buddy. What's going on?

OLIVER

I can't see Mom. She's with the bees.

DEAN

It'll be alright. Go inside.
Shut the door behind you. Okay?

EXT. BACKYARD - A BEAT LATER

A terraced hillside garden with native California flowers overflowing their beds. A BEEHIVE with stacked wooden honeycomb trays is positioned at the bottom of the yard. A metal SMOKER CAN billowing white smoke sits pointed at the hive. Bees BUZZ and SWARM around STEPH CHAMBERS, beautiful, slightly offbeat, and earthy but in no way delicate, as she scrapes the honeycomb off a frame into a white plastic "uncapping tub" with a large, metal knife. She is not wearing any bee-keeping gear.

DEAN

(slightly alarmed)

Honey?

Steph's face brightens, seeing Dean gingerly stepping down the terrace.

STEPH

Look at this honeycomb, it's positively dripping!

She's so pleased with her "catch" it's hard for him to be upset. Still...

DEAN

Why aren't you wearing your gear, Steph?

(CONTINUED)

STEPH

There's plenty of smoke. There's no danger.

DEAN

You realize you're scaring the crap out of our son.

STEPH

I told him to text if he needs me.

Dean holds up her cell phone in a PINK case.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Augh, I took it out so it wouldn't get sticky.

Dean gives her a scolding look, still careful in keeping his distance.

DEAN

I wish you'd take up an innocuous hobby.

STEPH

Like jiu-jitsu?

Steph sets the frame aside and comes over, her hands sticky. They kiss "hello."

DEAN

You taste sweet.

STEPH

(a smile)
And there's that.

He sees something on her forearm, concerned.

DEAN

You're getting stung, babe. You don't feel that?

STEPH

So how was your hearing?

She plucks out the stinger, still under her skin, nonchalant. OFF DEAN'S unsettled expression...

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - EVENING

TV news is on in the bedroom. Steph is showering in a glass stall.

(CONTINUED)

Dean, now in a T-shirt, sits on the bed with a half-drained whisky and architectural plans. After a beat, weary, he looks up... and catches sight of his wife's body in the shower stall. He gets up, enters the bath, and watches her a moment through the glass, water and suds accentuating tan lines on her skin. Steph notices him... A slight smile. Dean opens the shower door.

DEAN

Have I told you how much I like
your new bikini lines?

Steph looks at him. Catches his drift.

He peels off his T-shirt and pants and steps in with her. Dean kisses Steph insistently, and slides his hand down, OFF SCREEN, to her ass...

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE BATHROOM DOOR

Slowly opening... A WOODEN SWORD poking through... then a SHIELD...

STEPH STARTLES!

...But it's only Oliver in a cardboard knight's armor.

STEPH

Oliver?!

OLIVER

Can we get a dog?

DEAN

My fault. Forgot to lock the
door.

Dean reaches for their towels and they cover up.

STEPH

No. You know you're allergic.

OLIVER

(disappointed)

Aw.

DEAN

How about a helmet to go with that
suit of armor, Conquistador?

OLIVER

Yay! Make it scary.

Dean and his son exit. Steph lets out a breath.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - THE MISSION - EVENING

A traditionally Latin community turned hipster haven. Nikki is the very picture of urban, aspirational San Francisco as she cruises up on a cool, motorized, software-enhanced, Yuba Spicy Curry bike and rolls into the parking garage of a renovated condo building.

INT. NIKKI'S BUILDING - PARKING GARAGE

Nikki locks up her Yuba. She activates a small **anti-theft tracking device** on the bike's screen, checks that it's connected to her cell phone, then heads through quiet parking garage towards the elevators.

She hears a metallic CLANG behind her. Stops. Is someone behind her? She turns-- but sees only empty parked cars.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY - A BEAT LATER

Nikki gets in, checking email on her cell. She punches the "up" button. Just before the elevator doors close, she spots a FIGURE loom in front of the outside door!

INT. NIKKI'S BUILDING HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER.

Nikki gets off on her floor and hurries to her unit. There's a BING as the elevator DESCENDS again, summoned.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nikki lets herself into a sleek loft residence. It's a combined work/living space designed with reclaimed wood, cement, and decorated with low cubic furniture. Her work area is laden with COMPUTER MONITORS. She hangs her bike helmet on a wall rack, drops her bag. Then, turns to bolt the door behind her--

SUDDEN POUNDING startles her!

A beat as she collects herself, presses to the peep hole.

NIKKI'S POV: The distorted image of CLARK stares back at her.

As we wonder why the hell he's following her, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. ARCHITECTURAL FIRM - HAYES VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A contemporary three-story building with an open design plan. Several draftsmen and assistants work in a central bullpen. Dean walks up a staircase carrying his briefcase, coffee, rolled-up plans. He drops a drafting pencil, reaches down, just as--

A gorgeous pair of legs in sexy heels step over...

Dean stares a beat before collecting his pencil, straightens up...

Nikki catches Dean's gaze full on--

NIKKI

Mr. Chambers. It's such a pleasure to meet you. I heard you speak at Berkeley after you won the AIA Award.

DEAN

You must be one of Clark's interns.

NIKKI

What makes you think that?

DEAN

Let's just say, I'm familiar with Clark's taste.

NIKKI

Well, Clark did hire me.

CLARK (O.S.)

But she's not an intern. She's a consultant.

Clark steps over. Dean shoots him the stink eye.

NIKKI

I'm here to help on York Street.

She hands Dean her business card. He sticks his drafting pencil behind his ear to take it. An awkward beat.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

I don't know what Clark told you,
Miss Shaw--

NIKKI

--Everyone calls me Nikki--

DEAN

--But we're not hiring any
consultants right now. I'm sorry
my partner wasted your time.

CLARK

First of all, she comes highly
recommended and that's not just
coming from me. This is our first
high profile build and we both
know the money that's at stake.
Not to mention our very young
reputation. We can't afford any
more delays.

Dean, walks away..

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Clark follows Dean in. A beat, then Nikki follows...

CLARK

You want to play Starchitect, this
is how it's done.

NIKKI

Can I say something?

Clark holds up a finger, drilling down on Dean.

CLARK

I think you'll find Nikki is a
very dynamic thinker with amazing
instincts, not to mention she
knows everyone at City Hall.

DEAN

If I wanted outside help, I
would've hired someone myself.

CLARK

Well you didn't. And now the
developer's up my ass. She can
help us push the permits through.
Just listen to her.

(CONTINUED)

A beat. Then, Dean turns to Clark:

DEAN

All right. You, out.
(to Nikki)
You have one minute.

Clark reluctantly exits, shutting the door behind him.

NIKKI

I want you to know I really am a fan. You designed my favorite incubator building on Townsend. Genius.

(beat)

On the other hand, your building on York Street, stunning as it is, won't comply with the city's new ordinances.

DEAN

You're wrong. We've already met with all the compliances.

NIKKI

No, you haven't. There's a park near the site.

DEAN

I know all about it.

NIKKI

Did you know the shadow of the building falls directly over it? You're in violation the Sunlight Ordinance.

DEAN

Doesn't matter.

NIKKI

You're wrong.

DEAN

What matters is that my building is creating jobs, providing housing, and generating tax revenue which more than offsets a few minor shadows.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

That sounds really good, but unfortunately your building is a luxury building which only caters to the rich.

Dean sits back smugly and sticks another PENCIL behind his ear. He doesn't realize he still has a pencil behind his other ear. He now looks like he has horns.

DEAN

Miss--

NIKKI

--Nikki.

DEAN

I'm under a lot of pressure, and the last thing I need right now is someone looking over my shoulder second guessing me and making my life more difficult than it already is.

NIKKI

Whether you realize it or not, Dean, your project is in serious trouble. City Hall's under a lot of pressure too from people being displaced and ignored by architects less brilliant than you. After we shake hands, I promise you my only focus will be to make sure your vision gets the attention and praise it deserves.

She steps over to him and takes one of the pencils out from behind his ear.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You don't need two.

A beat of tension, as Dean considers what to do next.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- IN THE HALLWAY

Clark watches Dean and Nikki finally smile and shake. He's a little jealous.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE -- EVENING

A blood red sunset stains the city. Building cranes scar the iconic skyline in all directions.

INT. VIVIEN'S APARTMENT - NORTH BEACH - EVENING

Older, mismatched furniture crowds an apartment in what should rightfully be a tear-down. Seated in a lounge chair is VIVIEN SHAW. Her luminous looks have faded with age, hard living, and a stroke, suffered two years prior, which has left her partially paralyzed on her left side, half her face frozen in a rictus of sadness. We hear the FRONT DOOR OPEN O.S. A moment later, Nikki walks in.

NIKKI

Mom?... I brought some groceries.

Nikki drops a kiss on Vivien's cheek. Vivien doesn't reciprocate.

VIVIEN

Did you bring me gin? The Chink down the street stopped selling me booze and cigarettes. He claims you're not paying the bills. Did you lose your job already?

NIKKI

No, mother. You know very well liquor's not good for you. Doctor's orders. Only wine on special occasions.

VIVIEN

I hate wine. I want gin and bourbon.

NIKKI

And no more unfiltered cigarettes either. I know Ramon's been sneaking them to you.

VIVIEN

What good are you if you can't buy me booze?

NIKKI

(sighs)

Just once I would love to come here and have a real conversation, like we used to. Wouldn't that be nice for a change?

VIVIEN

I'm sorry. What do you want to talk about, honey? The past? The future? I'm tired of remembering and I'm ready to die. How's that?

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI
(calls out)
Ramon!

INT. VIVIEN'S HOUSE - GROW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nikki walks into a bedroom which has been converted into a grow station. A dozen MARIJUANA PLANTS thrive beneath hydroponic lamps. Vivien's caretaker, RAMON (30), a handsome, accented Latino, is wearing one of Vivien's silk kimonos over a wife-beater, tending his clippings.

RAMON
She's very gassy today.

NIKKI
Don't make fun of her.

RAMON
She knows I'm only playing.

NIKKI
I don't care. I don't like it.

INTERCUT WITH: VIVIEN in the living room, struggling to overhear, irritated by the inattention.

VIVIEN
I hear her fussing. Is she
fussing, Ramon? Tell her to shut
up.

RAMON
(calls out)
It's okay, mija.

NIKKI
Why couldn't the stroke have
paralyzed that tongue?

Ramon feels her pain. Nikki looks around, noticing:

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Jesus, there's more weed in here
than ever. Please tell me you're
not dealing again.

RAMON
I do this all for her, except for
a few buds I keep for myself, I
swear. She smokes more than you
think. She smokes a lot.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

She's in a lot of pain.

VIVIEN (O.S.)

What are you two doing back there?
Did you tell her one of her Johns
turned up at my door? Sniffin'
around like some hound dog.

NIKKI

What's she talking about?

Ramon shrugs.

VIVIEN (O.S.)

No wonder none of 'em last. She
can't keep her legs closed.

Annoyed, Nikki shoves the bedroom door closed. Turns to
Ramon:

NIKKI

Did someone come here looking for
me?

RAMON

I didn't see anyone.

NIKKI

I don't believe you.

RAMON

Her mind plays tricks. I told
you, she smokes a lot.

VIVIEN (O.S.)

Tell her to go masturbate on the
bathroom floor.

NIKKI

God, if I end up that way don't
just sedate me, give me the hard
stuff.

Ramon lights a sympathetic JOINT and offers it to her.
She takes a long drag...

CUT TO:

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - BACKYARD - EVENING

An adorable wild BUNNY RABBIT quivers on the gravel path.

OLIVER

Hah!

Oliver pounces at the bunny. It scoots into the bushes.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- THE DECK

A gathering of the Chambers' couple friends is underway. Dean and the menfolk sit at an outdoor seating nook by a stone fireplace and grill. A table is laden with farm-to-table goodies, Cowgirl Creamery cheeses, bowls of olives, bottles of wine. The SOUND of LAUGHTER takes us to...

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - STEPH'S WORKSHOP - SAME

The front room has been converted into Steph's workshop, with a comfy seating area for receiving clients and a separate exit to the outside. Bottles, dried flowers, salves and tinctures line shelves, along with bizarre ingredients like dried coyote skin and animal teeth.

LUCY

So how exactly does this work?

A very pregnant Chinese-American woman, LUCY, lays on a daybed with a crystal placed on her sternum. Two of Steph's girlfriends, EVA and ANGELA, poke about.

Steph slides her hands underneath Lucy's back.

STEPH

Just breathe. Let the scent of the smudge pot and the energy relax you.

ANGELA

Steph is a miracle worker. She completely healed my eczema, and my panic attacks disappeared.

STEPH

We operate in a relentless, success-driven, hyper connected, urban world. I use aromatherapy, plant medicines, and touch to bring the body out of its overstimulated fight-or-flight alertness.

(CONTINUED)

LUCY

(a giggle)

I feel kind of silly. Didn't your husband say you went to Stanford?

STEPH

Chemistry major. But don't hold it against me. It wasn't until I turned my back on my training and embraced the primitive that I heard my calling.

LUCY

(drowsy)

Well, whatever you're doing, it feels amazing.

STEPH

It doesn't matter if you've been in an actual life-or-death situation, or if you're holding on to past traumatic experiences, or just simply overwrought from the pace of everyday life-- the negative effects are powerful. I know from my own experience that when the body is released from fight-or-flight, you feel an immediate difference. It's an actual chemical reaction-- very hard to describe but it is more than just relaxing.

Lucy lets out a blissful sigh. Then-- startles!

LUCY

Oh! He's kicking!

STEPH

Can I?

Lucy nods. Steph feels the baby kicking Lucy's belly, a little envious. Eva uncaps a vial, reading the label.

EVA

What's this "Chinese Business Powder?" It smells like sex.

STEPH

Careful. A lot of things in here have aphrodisiac properties. You don't want to get overstimulated.

EVA

That's exactly what I want.

(CONTINUED)

ANGELA

Speaking of overstimulation...

She pulls a clear film canister with a fat marijuana bud inside from her pocket. Waggles it at Steph.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Gary from the Farmers Market sends you his best.

EVA

Who's Gary?

STEPH

My green thumb.

With a smile, Steph takes the canister. Pockets it.

EVA

I want some Gary.

They all laugh...

EXT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Everyone's around the table eating, drinking, the conversation flowing. Mid-scene:

LUCY

...I still don't know how you keep bees with a child around.

STEPH

Oliver knows not to go near the hive.

Dean grabs Steph's hand across the table and kisses it.

DEAN

As long as the queen bee is healthy, everything's okay. If she's threatened, all hell breaks loose.

Oliver's grunge-pretty, nose-ringed, 19-year-old-babysitter, EMERALD, comes out from the house.

EMERALD

Mr. Chambers? Phone for you.

Clark eyes the girl with more than passing interest. To Dean:

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

New babysitter?

DEAN

That's little Emerald, from across the street.

CLARK

How they grow.

DEAN

(as he exits)

Steady.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dean is on the phone, a crease in his brow.

DEAN

(into phone)

... Clearly this isn't the news I was hoping for. Run the numbers again and I'll call you in the morning.

Dean hangs up, rakes a worried hand through his hair. Clark steps in, having followed him in from the yard.

CLARK

Don't tell me there's another problem with the financing.

DEAN

Not on York Street, something else. That was my private banker.

CLARK

Ah. Your little pet project?

DEAN

Do me a favor? I don't want Steph to know about this. The last thing I need is her worrying about anything.

CLARK

My lips are sealed. You're not the only one with a suspicious wife.

They both step back outside to join the others.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Later. The guests have gone home. Dean, shirtless, opens the medicine cabinet. We see a lot of PRESCRIPTION DRUG BOTTLES on the shelves. He collects a couple of pills from the bottles and fills a glass of water. In the bathroom mirror, he spots A HIDEOUS FACE MASK.

DEAN

Oliver, it's late.

OLIVER

I'm guarding the house.

Oliver comes in, in his pj's. Lifts up his mask.

DEAN

Mom's going to be mad if you can't get up tomorrow.

OLIVER

(re: the medicine)

Is she always going to be sick?

DEAN

No. She takes medicine so she won't get sick again. You should never, ever touch any of Mom's pills. You know that, right?

Oliver nods. Dean ruffles his son's hair.

DEAN (CONT'D)

C'mon, I'll tuck you in.

They exit, leaving Steph's medicine on the counter.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steph sits on the end of the bed in a tank top and panties. She has a faraway expression on her face. Dean enters with the glass of water and pills.

DEAN

You okay?

STEPH

Mm. Probably should've sent them home a little earlier, but everyone was having such a good time.

Concerned, Dean sits, too, gives her a probing glance.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Why didn't you say something?

STEPH

I just want to be normal again.
Have a night with our friends,
like we used to.

Dean hands her the pills and water.

STEPH (CONT'D)

And I really want to stop taking
these. Putting chemicals in my
body goes against everything I
believe.

DEAN

Modern medicine saved your life.
Not-- witch doctoring.

STEPH

It also killed my libido. What
about our sex life? Our plans of
having another child?

DEAN

I won't risk you having another
aneurism.

Dean stubbornly waits for her to swallow the pills.
Steph relents and does. He turns the light off. They
settle into bed.

STEPH

I'm sorry you went through hell
when I was sick. But I'm not
fragile.

She rolls over to face him. Dean looks at her. He pulls
her close, and she lays her head on his chest. After a
beat, Steph closes her eyes. He stares at the ceiling.

EXT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICE PARK - NIGHT

Nikki, in a scarf and jacket, walks up to a storefront
door and knocks. A beat later an INTIMIDATING MAN with
sleeves of tattoo opens the door.

INTIMIDATING MAN

Ladies Night is Tuesday.

NIKKI

I'm a friend of Kayla's.

(CONTINUED)

He looks her over. Finally, he lets her in.

INT. INDOOR GUN RANGE - SAME

A badly lit shooting gallery. Ten lanes with white brick walls and sound-muffling ceiling tiles. The unmistakable sound of heavy weaponry as a gauntlet of battle-hardened VETS, all of them males, discharge assault rifles and handguns at various paper targets.

IN THE FARTHEST LANE - KAYLA FRANCO

A fierce but attractive female vet (30's), assists a DISABLED VET from a wheelchair on to a makeshift platform. His pants are folded and pinned where his legs should be.

KAYLA

Don't worry, I got your six.

She helps settle him in a flat position. He nervously tucks a rifle under his shoulder, aligns his target.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

That's it. Find your target.

DISABLED VET

(struggles, sweating)

I can't see him.

She inches closer, gets in his head.

KAYLA

Patience, soldier. Take your time. Breathe. He's there. You just have to find him. That hajji may have taken your legs but he didn't take your soul. You hear me? You channel the anger on that target and nothing else... See him now?

He focuses on the bland paper target. In his mind it begins to take shape, morphing into a distant battlefront that only he can see.

DISABLED VET

I see him.

KAYLA

Good. You gotta take him out so he can't hurt no one else.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA (CONT'D)

Slide that finger on the trigger.
That's it. Fire when ready.

The vet clenches his jaw, bracing himself... and finally pulls the trigger. Blam! Blam!

Kayla pulls away and makes eye contact with Nikki.

NIKKI

Exorcising demons?

KAYLA

Something like that. Cheaper than a therapist.

ANOTHER LANE -- A COUPLE BEATS LATER

Kayla stands behind Nikki as she grips a GLOCK with both hands and empties the full clip into a target. They remove their ear muffs.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

(impressed)

Damn girl! You made a mess of my zombie. And I thought I was popping your cherry.

NIKKI

(beat)

I got issues with an ex.

KAYLA

That'll do it.

NIKKI

Thanks for the invite. You were right, this is way more cathartic than yoga.

KAYLA

Wanna try something bigger and louder?

OFF Nikki's game expression...

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

A local hangout. Nikki and Kayla drink beers at a secluded table. Nikki eyes the vets at the bar.

NIKKI

I'm jealous. Those guys don't see you as a pair of tits.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

They actually respect you.

KAYLA

When I did boot camp, I was the only female in my squad. I learned to aim my kicks below the belt so that my opponents would think twice the next time they came at me.

NIKKI

Kick'em in the balls -- really? That's your trick?

KAYLA

Don't tell me that corporate battlefield of yours is any different.

NIKKI

I guess it's pretty much the same. Every once in a while you're forced to fight dirty to get a fair shake. But I wish I knew what it was like to have a relationship where I could count on a man to have my back.

They swig their beers. Kayla studies Nikki a beat.

KAYLA

Tell me about this ex of yours.

NIKKI

I don't like to talk about it. We launched a company a few years back. For a while it was magic. Success will do that.

(beat)

Then one day, I discovered he'd hijacked my business out from under me.

KAYLA

Damn, I hope you sued the shit out of him.

NIKKI

I tried. But I lost. Ended up with a fraction of what I was entitled to.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLA
(shakes her head)
How'd you get past it?

NIKKI
I haven't, in case you didn't
notice. I don't react well to
being cheated. Sometimes I really
don't like who I've become.

KAYLA
Sounds like you need a new
challenge.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dark. Quiet. Dean can't sleep. He glances over at Steph, sawing wood. Slides out of bed... and over to the laptop computer resting on his home drafting table.

By the light of the laptop, he scrolls through articles. CLICK-- a set of images pop up, pictures of NIKKI. CLICK-- A PROVOCATIVE PHOTO: Nikki at a red carpet event, her body accentuated by clingy silk. Another CLICK brings him closer... to her sensuous lips... and cleavage.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

A ROAST slides out of the oven. Hot, juicy, steamy. JOYCE CHAMBERS (40), in a housedress, no make-up, grabs a large carving knife and slices the beef on a sideboard.

INT. DINING ROOM - A BEAT LATER

Joyce brings the dish to a modest dining table where FOUR BOYS (ages 17-12) are seated, just itching to eat. One chair remains empty.

JOYCE
Where's your brother?

Their eyes drift upstairs. She shakes her head.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
Don't you dare start without us.
You hear me, dad?

LUKE CHAMBERS(40s), seated at the head of the table with his nose in a newspaper, ink-stained fingers, GRUNTS back. Joyce heads upstairs...

INT. BOYS' ROOM - A BEAT LATER

On the floor is an elaborate metropolis made of Legos, inhabited by dinosaur and superhero action figures. TEN-YEAR-OLD DEAN, wearing a cape, is busy dishing out justice with a plastic sword, demolishing the intricate Lego buildings and terrorizing the plastic residents.

DEAN

(dark voice)

That's what you get for questioning my authority! Submit to my will or suffer the ultimate price.

Joyce suddenly opens the bedroom door...

JOYCE

Dean? What are you doing?
Dinner's ready. Didn't you hear me calling?

She spots the carnage on the floor. Dean stands there, speechless. Mom fixes an admonishing glare on her son.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

It's Sunday. Clean this up, wash your hands and come downstairs, now. Everyone's waiting on you to say grace.

(beat)

And get rid of the cape.

Joyce closes the door...

Dean, irritated, slides his cape off and goes about collecting the pieces, tossing them inside a plastic bin.

Until something else catches his eye...

DEAN'S POV: Through a partially-raised shade of a window next door, THE NEIGHBOR LADY IS GETTING UNDRESSED...

Dean carefully sneaks over for a better look... It's clearly the first time he's seen a naked female. He's mesmerized... the Woman turns and sees him. They lock eyes a beat. Dean is frozen, both ashamed and excited...

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The family sits impatiently waiting on Dean to come downstairs, food getting cold. Joyce's frustration boils.

(CONTINUED)

JOYCE

He's in his own little world. I
don't know what to do with him.

Everyone stares at her as she takes a deep breath.
Finally, she looks over at the youngest boy:

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Robbie. You may do the honors.

ROBBIE

For the food we're about to eat--
Amen--

He reaches for the meat, until--

JOYCE

(shoots him a look)
You can do better than that.

ROBBIE

(beat, more composed)
Blessed be the Earth for providing
this food. Blessed be the hands
that prepared this meal...

INT. DEAN'S ROOM - SAME

Dean is still glued to his window, unable to look away.
The Woman, unfazed, continues undressing, putting on a
show for him.

ROBBIE (O.S.)

Blessed be our father in heaven.
Blessed be our family, neighbors,
and friends...

OFF the moment...

INT. DEAN AND STEPH'S HOUSE -- BACK TO SCENE:

BUZZZZZ! BUZZZZZZ! The SOUND of his cell phone vibrating
startles Dean. We see "NIKKI SHAW" on its screen. He
considers... then lets the call go. Rises and exits.

A screensaver suddenly pops up: Dean, Steph, Oliver. We
HOLD ON his smiling perfect family.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH RISE BUILDING - LOBBY - LATE DAY

Nikki stands in front of a glass wall in the lobby of a new high rise. She's a vision of urban chic in a bright yellow trench coat and leather boots. Dean approaches from the street. She turns, there's that smile again--

NIKKI

Sorry I called so late last night. I don't sleep much. I get my best ideas in the early hours.

DEAN

For future reference, I try not to take calls after midnight. I have a seven year old with a pretty fertile imagination.

NIKKI

Say no more. It won't happen again.

DEAN

Thanks.

She hands him a security pass for building guests. Their hands touch accidentally. There's a moment of chemistry, and they lock eyes. Then:

DEAN (CONT'D)

So, what is this brainstorm you're so keen to show me?

NIKKI

We're gonna play a little make believe.

She walks him towards a bank of glass elevators. They get in one and ascend...

INT. HIGH RISE BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A CAD/CAM layout of the rectilinear blocks of SOMA down to the Waterfront and bordering the Mission materializes on a huge monitor. Dean and Nikki are now in a conference room on the 26th floor of the high rise.

NIKKI

We all want what we want when we want it. But we rarely think about how it will affect the things and the people around us.

A software engineer works a keyboard.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

May I?

The engineer slides out of the way, allowing Nikki to take control.

As Nikki types, the ON SCREEN IMAGE morphs into a three dimensional rendering of complete city blocks: Buildings, parks and proposed construction sites take shape.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

This is SOMA as it exists today. Here's the Transbay Transit Center project which is under construction, and blocks targeted for redevelopment through year 2020... and yours, the York Street parcel.

A new rendering of Dean's space-age like skyscraper sprouts up on the redevelopment site...

Intrigued now, Dean takes a seat beside Nikki as she works the keyboard. ON SCREEN, his tower's shadow begins to move position, shading different blocks of the city to correspond with the sun's movement in the sky...

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Your tower will be the tallest in the city when it's finished. Here it is at nine AM... At noon... And at sunset tomorrow...

Dean glances at Nikki, impressed.

DEAN

The city never looked so striking, if I may say so.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

Don't get ahead of yourself,
Michelangelo.

(a beat)

When we slug in parameters for the
whole year, the shadow pattern
changes season to season. Now we
add wind affects... and here's
something we didn't anticipate...
The tower's sway invades the air
space of the adjacent parcels.

ON SCREEN -- the image of the building curves slightly,
crossing over the airspace of the buildings next door.

Dean's shoulders slump, defeated.

EXT. HIGH RISE BUILDING - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Dean exits the building, hot. Nikki on his heels.

DEAN

How did I miss that in the
planning phase?

NIKKI

Don't beat yourself up. There's
ways around it.

DEAN

How?

NIKKI

By tapping into the big money
that's pouring into this city.
That kind of power never has to
compromise.

DEAN

This is a complete waste of time.
I'm going back to the office.

Nikki bristles.

NIKKI

Get in the car.

She steps off the curb and walks around to the driver's
side of a VINTAGE DARK GREEN 1970 CORVETTE STINGRAY
parked in front of them. Dean's about to protest until
he sees it.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

You're kidding me. This is your car?

She gets in, slamming the door. He does, too.

INT. NIKKI'S CORVETTE - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Nikki guns the engine, engages the clutch. Pulls aggressively into traffic. Dean sits, stewing. Tension hangs in the air.

DEAN

Look, my company is young, and we beat out a lot of bigger firms for this bid. All the accolades I've won won't mean a thing if it becomes a debacle.

NIKKI

Don't underestimate me.

She shifts gears, driving even faster.

INT. CORVETTE/EXT. THE FAIRMONT HOTEL - NIGHT

High atop prestigious Nob Hill, the Crown Jewel of San Francisco hotels is abuzz with European sports cars, limousines... Nikki's Corvette pulls up to the front.

DEAN

Where are we going, high tea?

NIKKI

Try and keep up.

Nikki gets out of the driver's side, leaving her leather coat in the car and revealing a sexy black cocktail dress. With the high boots-- she looks amazing. Dean's a little dumbstruck. She strides towards the entrance.

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

A pair of officious HOSTESSES man the guest list at a table outside the entrance to a grand ballroom.

NIKKI

Nikki Shaw... Plus one.

A long beat as the hostesses peruse the list. Nikki doesn't break a sweat.

(CONTINUED)

Finally, one of them locates Nikki's name and checks her off. Hands Nikki a place card.

HOSTESS

Enjoy your evening, Ms. Shaw.

As some well-heeled guests cruise past, Nikki takes Dean's arm and leads him into the event.

INT. THE FAIRMONT HOTEL - ELEGANT BALLROOM - NIGHT

A benefit is raging. Sparkling chandeliers, fine linens, gorgeous flower arrangements and a live jazz combo sizzles. The crowd is a mix of new wealth and Barbary Coast old money. Everyone's dressed to the nines. Dean looks and feels out of place in his work duds, but Nikki's confidence and style make up for that.

DEAN

(a little stunned)
Holy Shit. Is that--

NIKKI

Nick Woodman. The "mad
billionaire" head of GoPro.

She smiles a little, enjoying that he's star struck. Nikki takes his hand and leads him into the middle of the place, onto the dance floor where couples sway to a jazz ballad. As they pass, a few of people stare at Nikki, then converse to each other as if they've recognized her. Nikki turns towards Dean, making him dance with her.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Relax and pay attention.

She pulls him close, taking the lead, singling out party guests from the crowd:

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Over there... That's Wang Jianlin,
the richest developer in Beijing,
talking to the CEO of Wells
Fargo... And that's Carlos Slim,
the Mexican mogul, at the bar.

DEAN

I get it. You get around.

NIKKI

You want to make the list? 'Cause
that's the only way you get to
plant your flag.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Okay, I'm impressed.

(beat)

But it's one thing to get in the room. It's another to get them to open their wallet.

NIKKI

You have to let them fall in love with you. Play the game. You can't be so stiff and inflexible. I mean, look at you: Is this really how you hold your wife when you dance with her?

DEAN

I'm not used to being in another woman's arms.

NIKKI

Don't flatter yourself. If I wanted something to happen, I would have taken you upstairs.

He stiffens up even more, caught off guard by her comment.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You should see your face.

DEAN

Are you enjoying making a fool out of me?

NIKKI

Terribly.

She smiles... and moves closer to him. Dean holds her, swaying together... Something more magnetic builds between them... The song comes to a finish, but they stay a moment in each other's arms.

DEAN

Thanks for the lesson.

NIKKI

I know what I'm doing. You just have to trust me.

(beat)

Let's go press some flesh.

Nikki ushers Dean towards a group of people.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

*Salut, Jean. Ça fait longtemps
qu'on s'est pas vus. [Hi, Jean.
It's been too long.]*

A colorfully-dressed AFRICAN MAN, JEAN AMADOU, embraces Nikki.

AMADOU

*Ma chère Dominique, quelle
surprise. [Dear Dominique, what a
surprise.]*

They kiss on both cheeks.

NIKKI

Jean, I want you to meet San Francisco's brightest young architect, Dean Chambers. Monsieur Amadou is a hotel developer from the Ivory Coast.

Dean shakes the man's hand.

AMADOU

*Enchanté. Any friend of Dominique
is a friend of mine. Elle m'a
sauvé la peau, plusieurs fois.
[She saved me, more than once.]*

DEAN

(sotto to Nikki)
You speak French.

NIKKI

Stick around. I'm just getting started.

Dean stares at her as she goes to work, impressed...

ANOTHER ANGLE - LATER

Dean and Nikki are at opposite ends of the room, each in their own discussion group. She stares at him a beat from afar... He finally turns and they make eye contact... They meet halfway:

NIKKI (CONT'D)

How's it going?

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

I've been invited to a yacht race.
But I'm pretty sure I'm expected
to make a substantial contribution
to a charity, so I'm gonna skip
it.

NIKKI

(laughs)
Sounds like you've had enough.
Why don't you get the car and I'll
meet you out front?

INT. LADIES ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nikki comes out of a stall. Two WOMEN whisper to each other and cast her looks as they exit. Nikki checks herself in the mirror, taking out a lipstick... then stares at her reflection. Alone, she lets her guard down and we see a flash of vulnerability in her expression. The image in the mirror MORPHS --

SUBLIMINAL FLASH -- POV moving down the corridor of an ominous MENTAL WARD, patients staring out from their cell doorways. We PUSH IN ON a cell at the end of the hall... its door swings open, revealing an OLD WOMAN sitting alone in the corner, with scraggly white hair. She turns towards us with a tortured expression... Her face MORPHS--

NIKKI snaps out of her WAKING NIGHTMARE. Her eyes drift sideways to the mirror... WRITTEN ON THE GLASS IN RED LIPSTICK are the words-- "YOU'LL PAY, BITCH."

EXT. THE FAIRMONT HOTEL - SAN FRANCISCO -- NIGHT

The Corvette has been brought around. Dean waits on the passenger's side. Nikki strides out of the entrance. Surprisingly, she's composed.

NIKKI

Let's go.

They get in and she hits the gas. The Corvette screeches out of the lot.

INT. NIKKI'S CORVETTE - TRAVELLING - A COUPLE BEATS LATER

Nikki speeds over the Bay Bridge.

(CONTINUED)

As the Corvette zips through traffic, lights flashing past, Dean takes in the details of Nikki's presence beside him... Her hair, pushed behind one ear. The curve of her lip which she bites, changing lanes... The way her hem slips up her shapely thighs. Her hand on the stick shift... He looks up, at her profile. Sensing some distance between them now...

DEAN

Everything okay?

NIKKI

Why wouldn't it be?

DEAN

You're quiet. And you're driving very fast.

NIKKI

Want me to slow down?

DEAN

Not especially.

They finally share a smile. She shifts into higher gear and accelerates.

EXT. CHAMBERS HOME - NIGHT

The windows emit an amber glow. Nikki's Corvette pulls up with a soft growl... and idles in the driveway.

INT. NIKKI'S CORVETTE - SAME

Nikki and Dean sit a beat. Then:

NIKKI

Nice house.

DEAN

Thanks.

NIKKI

Shall I come in and meet your wife?

Taken aback, Dean meets her eyes... She finally laughs.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

There's that face again.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

You're a little reckless, don't you think?

NIKKI

I'm only joking. Don't be so uptight.

DEAN

(a beat)

I'm calling it a night. You should, too.

NIKKI

See you at the office, grumpy.

He steps out, shuts the door. Nikki watches him walk down the driveway. Then she looks at the house, lit up like a Christmas tree. The picture of warmth, comfort and security.

It's everything she doesn't have. Her expression darkens ever so slightly.

INT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - SAME

Steph stands at a window, watching, as the Corvette backs out and drives away.

INT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - A BEAT LATER

Steph gathers her medication, her spirit low. Her mind wanders...

EXT. SLUMS - A BAZAAR - INDIA - FLASHBACK

Steph and Dean, younger (as in the photograph) and a MALE INDIAN GUIDE, tour a passageway lined with cramped workshops. Steph is unaffected by the impoverished scenery. Dean seems clearly out of his comfort zone.

DEAN

Steph, I don't know if this is such a good idea. Why do you always insist on going down the diciest looking alleys?

STEPH

You gotta get off the beaten path to have an authentic experience.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPH (CONT'D)

(teasing)

Don't worry, I'll protect you.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Standing out from the workers are a number of WOMEN IN SIMPLE WHITE SARIS, some young, but most elderly and frail. Moving along, the women seem everywhere. Some huddled over looms; others with cup in hand; a few too proud to beg.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Who are these women?

GUIDE

They are widows. Outcasts.
Witches. You must not speak to
them. Very bad luck.

ANGLE ON ONE WIDOW -- crouched next to a SMALL CHEST displaying a dozen or so various-sized antique moss-green glass bottles -- each embossed with SKULL AND CROSSBONES.

Steph's interest is instantly piqued. The widow smiles, beckons her to sit down. She has hennaed fingertips, a crescent scar on her chin.

STEPH

Do you speak English?

WIDOW

Yes.

GUIDE

(alarmed)

Please, madam. She is cursed.

STEPH

(slightly irritated)

Why, because her husband left her
alone in the world?

GUIDE

(to Dean)

It is forbidden.

Dean helplessly shrugs.

DEAN

Trust me, that only makes her want
to do it more.

STEPH

(ignoring them)

What are these bottles?

(CONTINUED)

WIDOW

Poisons. From trees, spiders,
snakes.

Undeterred, Steph sits across from the widow.

DEAN

(un-amused)

Seriously? C'mon Steph, let's get
out of here. This place is giving
me the creeps.

STEPH

She's seems harmless enough.

WIDOW

Not all poisons kill. Some are
medicine. For pain, for bad
heart. Cancer.

DEAN

Well there you go. We found the
cure for cancer in a Calcutta back
alley. Can we go now?

OFF DEAN'S apprehension, Steph fixes her gaze on the
widow.

STEPH

Teach me what you know.

INT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - MASTER BATH - NIGHT

BACK TO SCENE:

OLIVER (O.S.)

Daddy's home!

Steph steps over to the toilet and drops the pills in the
bowl. As they FLUSH out of sight...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

(CONTINUED)

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

A small neighborhood store. The slightly annoyed CHINESE OWNER behind the counter keeps an eye on Vivien as she peruses the stock. She finally settles on the largest bottle of gin she can find. Then struggles to the counter, negotiating the booze and her walker.

VIVIEN

Put it on my tab.

CHINESE OWNER

No tab.

A flash of anger crosses her face. She looks toward the back.

VIVIEN

Where's Walter? Get him out here.

CHINESE OWNER

I told you, Walter retired ten years ago.

VIVIEN

Bullshit. He was standing right where you are the last time I was in here.

CHINESE OWNER

He's gone, lady, like your mind.

VIVIEN

(beat)

Don't get cute with me, Chinaman. I've been living in this neighborhood for fifty years and I don't recall seeing your slanty face before. You want to stay in business? Then you better show me some respect. Now chop chop -- ring me up. And throw in a pack of those Camels while you're at it. I'll send my daughter around to settle up with you later.

(CONTINUED)

CHINESE OWNER

No credit.

VIVIEN

Listen, Chinaman--

CHINESE OWNER

--I'm an American.

VIVIEN

Like hell you are! The only reason you're here and not some refugee cornhole is because of tax-paying citizens like me.

CHINESE OWNER

I've had enough of you, lady. You better leave, now. Or I swear I'll call the cops this time.

VIVIEN

Go ahead, call them. See how fast you go back to eating dog and selling children.

OFF their tense standoff, he starts dialing the phone...

INT. BAR - DAY

Nikki walks in and spots Dean sitting in a corner booth with a CHINESE BUSINESS MAN, EDDIE CHONG (50). She steps up to the bar and spies on them from afar. She seems to recognize the business man. The double earrings. His barely visible tattoos peeking underneath his neck and wrists. After a beat, the man stands, shakes Dean's hand and exits, followed by a couple of bodyguards, suddenly emerging from a nearby table.

A beat, then Nikki surprises Dean at his table.

DEAN

What are you doing here?

NIKKI

Stalking you.

(then)

I called your office. They told me where to find you. I never figured you for the type who hung out with criminals.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

You saw that, huh? Eddie's an old client. I built a house for his mistress.

NIKKI

Charming. Didn't he just get out of jail for murder?

DEAN

It was racketeering. And he got out eighteen months ago. He says he's a changed man and wants to lead a law-abiding life.

NIKKI

I bet he's on his way to lecture a bunch of kids about the importance of staying in school and out of gangs.

DEAN

Give him a break. It's hard to find work after prison.

NIKKI

Don't tell me you're thinking of hiring him.

DEAN

Why not? He still has a lot of influence in Chinatown.

NIKKI

You know what? You should bring his name up in your meeting with the mayor next week. See how far that gets you.

DEAN

What meeting?

She let's him work it out.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(realizing)

You got me a meeting?

NIKKI

Wednesday, three o'clock.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

(thrilled)

You're kidding me? This is amazing!

NIKKI

When I'm in, I'm all in.

He flags down a passing WAITER.

DEAN

Tequila. Blanco.

(back to Nikki)

We have to celebrate this immediately. Do you know how long I've been trying to make this happen? I can't believe you got to him. What'd you have to do?

(then)

No, don't tell me. I don't want to know.

(then)

Actually, I already know.

The waiter swoops in with a bottle and a couple of shot glasses. Dean takes over and shoos him away. Pours the shots.

NIKKI

I did nothing unethical, if that's what you're insinuating.

He hands her a glass.

DEAN

You don't have to. No one can say "no" to you.

They drink, keeping their eyes glued on each other. He pours another round.

NIKKI

You looking to get into trouble?

DEAN

Just stating a fact.

NIKKI

Believe me, I've heard "no" plenty of times. This happens to be one of those situations where there's... chemistry.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Is that your way of saying you like me?

NIKKI

(beat)

I've made the mistake of mixing business and personal before. It's a potent cocktail.

They drink. He keeps pouring.

DEAN

How do you do that, anyway? My partner plays around. He has no conscience. I've never been the type.

NIKKI

It's easier than you think. People cross the line unexpectedly all the time. We're all vulnerable that way.

Their eyes meet again. Another drink.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Lucky for you, I'm terrible at relationships.

Nikki slips her jacket off. Dean lets his eyes linger on the curve of her shoulder as the drape of her silky blouse slides off.

She grabs the bottle and pours them another drink. Then, in one smooth motion, shakes some salt on her hand and licks it, before sliding the next shot between her lips.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Now that's better.

Enlivened, Dean knocks back his own glass...

DEAN

I haven't felt this good in a long time.

Their eyes meet again. The air is thick with temptation.

Suddenly, Dean's phone BUZZES. He looks at the screen -- "STEPH" comes up. They both look at it, then each other. She picks up her jacket and purse and rises.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

I'll return the bottle while you
get that.

She nods to his phone. Dean watches her walk away. Then he picks up the call. Too late -- it has gone to voicemail.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Nikki steps out onto the street, a little wobble in her step. Dean catches up to her, pulling his coat on.

DEAN

Hang on, I'll give you a ride.

NIKKI

It's okay, I'll take Uber.
Neither of us should probably
drive.

THUNDER rolls overhead. They both glance up.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

We should try and beat this.

He takes her by the arm... Their touch is magnetic.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Don't make it harder. Go home,
Dean.

We stay with Nikki as she starts walking away, quick...

Suddenly the sky opens in a torrential downpour. THUNDER BOOMS! Nikki pulls her jacket up over her head and runs for the nearest awning. A beat... Then-- HONK HONK! Dean's Tesla suddenly pulls up to the curb. He leans across and opens the passenger door--

DEAN

Get in!

INT. DEAN'S TESLA - MOMENTS LATER - STOPPED

They both are soaked to the bone.

NIKKI

I'm getting everything wet.

DEAN

Here, take this.

(CONTINUED)

He pulls off his sweater and hands it to her. She wipes her face. He's stripped down to his shirtsleeves. Suddenly, it's intense in the small space... body heat fogging the windshield as rain hammers the car, falling even harder.

He tries to pull out into the street, but TRAFFIC is stalled in front of them, a sea of red tail lights.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Looks like there's an accident.
We're not going anywhere.

He looks at her. She turns to hand his sweater back... and Dean pulls her to him, kissing her hard on the mouth.

They part. She gasps.

There's a moment when either of them could stop this.

But neither of them wants to anymore.

They give in to their desire, crush together, kissing passionately... Dean's hand slides up her skirt, on her thighs. She gasps with anticipation...

BOOM BOOM BOOM -- An elbow on the passenger side window knocks them back to reality. We catch a glimpse of a COP in a slicker--

COP (O.S.)

Move along!

Nikki and Dean stare at each other, breathless... OFF the moment...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

(CONTINUED)

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - KITCHEN -- AFTERNOON

Steph stands at the French doors, looking out at the downpour. She dials Dean on her cell phone. RINGING... his voice mail picks up.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Oliver sits at the kitchen table, working on a cardboard model of a California Mission. A wall falls off.

OLIVER

My Mission Project sucks. Where's Dad?

Steph looks at him. Hangs up the phone.

STEPH

Let's go get a dog.

CUT TO:

INT. VIVIEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Vivien, in her nightgown, sits in a rocking chair next to her bed, while Ramon puts away her clothes. Nikki enters, flustered. Off her expression--

RAMON

It's totally my fault. I should have been more careful. She pretended to be asleep and sneaked out. Lucky I got there before the police took her away.

NIKKI

Can you give me a moment with my mother, please Ramon?

RAMON

(to Vivien)

Next time, I'm going to tie a leash around you, mija.

Ramon exits. Nikki shuts the door.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

You know you're not supposed to go anywhere by yourself. What did the police say?

VIVIEN

We had a big laugh. The cops know who I am. I may be old but I haven't forgotten how to flirt.

NIKKI

Ramon should have been there. That's it, I can't trust him.

VIVIEN

Don't blame him. I was thirsty. He's the only one who cares about me.

NIKKI

That's why your nightgown is inside out.

VIVIEN

So what?

NIKKI

Did you brush your teeth?

VIVIEN

Stop fussing over me like I'm a child. I can still wipe my own ass.

She finally looks at her Nikki, noticing her daughter's rumpled look.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

Where were you, anyway?

NIKKI

I was with a client.

VIVIEN

You were with a man. I smell it. It's all over you.

NIKKI

He's a friend. We got caught in the rain. So don't get prickly over nothing.

VIVIEN

Liar.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

I'm not lying, mother.

VIVIEN

Did he slip you the business?

NIKKI

Nothing happened. Why do you have to be so crude all the time?

VIVIEN

You think I'm too old and crazy to notice what's going on, but I know. It won't last. They never last. You're just like me.

That hits home with Nikki.

NIKKI

I'm nothing like you.

VIVIEN

You love the attention of men but you can't keep 'em, 'cause you've been cursed with a mean streak.

Nikki rubs her forehead, beginning to come unravelled...

NIKKI

Please, mother. You're tired and it's very late. Let me help you get in bed. We'll talk about it tomorrow.

VIVIEN

I don't want to go to bed. Not now. I need you to listen to me...

She grabs her daughter's arm, forcing her to listen.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

They're back -- the headaches, the dreams. I keep seeing my mother in that horrible place. The screams, the cries. Don't let me end up like she did. Put me to bed with a shovel before you lock me up in the bat house.

NIKKI

Mom, don't talk that way. I would never do that to you. It's just a bad dream.

(CONTINUED)

VIVIEN

It's not just a dream. It really happened. It'll happen to you too, you'll see.

Nikki wrestles her arm away. She glares at her mother and storms out, leaving Vivien to her misery.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Madness runs in the family. The deepest, darkest clouds.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

(CONTINUED)

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A SERIES OF QUICK FLASHES: (FANTASY)

Hot, electrified, Dean and Nikki crush together, kissing.

Dean pushes her up against the wall. She rips his shirt open. He yanks her blouse down. PANTS hit the floor--

BLUEPRINTS shove off the drafting table. Nikki's ASS hikes up onto the surface. His HANDS push up her skirt. She GASPS as he pushes into her--

INTERCUT:

INT./EXT. DEAN'S TESLA - NIGHT - PRESENT

Dean drives like a maniac, lost in this FANTASY, filled with desire... and guilt.

BACK TO QUICK FLASHES: (FANTASY)

NIKKI'S HANDS pressed against glass wall. Dean fucks her from behind, one arm around her neck, pulling her head back, the other roaming below screen.

NIKKI's lips part. She moans.

Their bodies move, hot, passionate, slightly violent--

He throws her over his desk, face down... SOUNDS of their CLIMAX--

INT. DEAN'S TESLA - NIGHT - PRESENT

Dean snaps himself out of it.

He's now parked outside his house. He shoves his sweater --still wet with rain and Nikki's scent-- into his briefcase. Checks his reflection, then gets out of the Tesla.

INT. CHAMBERS HOME - VESTIBULE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dean sneaks in to the dark house, closing the door silently behind him.. He puts his jacket and briefcase down--

In the darkness, he hears something stir... then grunt...

DEAN

Who's up?

There's a SQUEAL... then a CHARGE... Alarmed, Dean flicks on a light and discovers a POTBELLIED PIG.

Steph appears from the bedroom, laughing.

DEAN (CONT'D)

What's going on? Why is there a pig in the house?

STEPH

Oliver and I tried the kennel, but he couldn't stop sneezing. So we improvised.

DEAN

You're serious? A pig?

STEPH

That's what happens when you leave us alone too long and come home in the middle of the night.

A beat.

DEAN

So this is some sort of punishment for me working late, is that it?

STEPH

I've only been half a wife. And I haven't been able to be here for Oliver. It's time I started fixing things.

She comes over and kisses him on the lips.

STEPH (CONT'D)

You're not really mad, are you?

(beat)

Oliver's crazy about him.

(CONTINUED)

She corrals the cute creature into her arms, amused by Dean's discomfort.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Look at that sweet face. He loves to have his belly rubbed.

She forces it into his arms.

DEAN

Good thing Thanksgiving is just around the corner.

STEPH

Don't worry, Wilber. He's a little cranky 'cause he's been neglected. I'm gonna work on him.

Then she looks up at Dean... wanting.

STEPH (CONT'D)

Come to bed.

He watches her slip out of her nightgown on her way to the bedroom. Dean just stands there...

EXT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Nikki's green Corvette is parked in the darkness across the street, obscured by trees and away from the streetlight's illumination. From the drivers seat, Nikki watches as the last light in the house goes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MANSION - WOODSIDE, CA - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Establishing of a stunning mansion in the ritzy Peninsula town, home to Silicon Valley's most expensive properties.

INT. MANSION, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Patrick Keller lays entwined in the arms of his sleeping wife, TIFFANY. A BUMP from somewhere in the house wakes him. He sits up, on alert. His movement stirs her.

TIFFANY

What's wrong?

BUMP. There it is again. Definitely someone in the house. She's frightened now.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK

Get in the safe room.

They get out of bed quickly. She reaches for a robe-- Freezes, with a GASP!

Patrick follows her eye line to the NEARBY MIRROR. On it, someone has written in RED LIPSTICK, the words, "YOU DESERVE TO DIE."

Patrick pulls his wife out of the bedroom into their walk-in closet... There's a DOOR to their Safe Room at the back... He jiggles the door. It won't open.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

It's locked! What's happening?

He goes to a wall panel and types in a code. Access Denied. He tries again, punching numbers--

PATRICK (CONT'D)

The system's been compromised.

TIFFANY

Oh my God! Call the police!

Smoke is now seeping under the walk-in closet door from out in the bedroom. Patrick opens the door--

FLAMES leap up-- the bedroom is engulfed in fire.

Tiffany screams...

EXT. THE MANSION GROUNDS

A FIGURE, dressed in black, its identity obscured by an oversized hoodie, walks briskly towards camera. SMOKE billows and flames dance from the Mansion's shattered top floor windows. But no alarms sound. No fire trucks come. No help arrives at all.

As the mysterious figure swiftly approaches and BLACKS OUT THE CAMERA, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF PART I