

FOOTSTEPS

Written by

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EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - MORNING

Title: December, 1976

The school is tucked away in a blue collar neighborhood of National City, California. This time of year it's chilly and damp under gray, morning coastal cover.

We HEAR the CHATTER of children playing. Most of them are standing around in huddles, waiting for the bell. CONNIE (9) is with her friend JENNY.

JENNY

She thinks she's so cool just 'cause she's got all the My Little Ponies. But she doesn't even have any Barbie stuff.

CONNIE

My Mom says you can never have all the My Little Ponies anyways.

JENNY

I know.

She doesn't.

CONNIE

'Cause as soon as you think you have all of them, they just make more.

JENNY

What are you getting for Christmas?

Connie is saved by the SCHOOL BELL. Students start to move toward the building.

CONNIE

(Hanging her head)  
I don't know.

JENNY

Ask your Mom for a Malibu Barbie...

Connie looks over her shoulder, to a spot at the edge of the playground.

JENNY (CONT'D)

When you take her swimsuit off, she's got these like real tan lines underneath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE CONNIE'S POV, a row of bushes and short trees growing at the edge of the playground. A pair of eyes belonging to JESSICA (11) peers out at the school from deep inside a bush.

She sees the playground is clearing out and moves back into the bush.

EXT. RAVINE

Emerging from a low tree, Jessica runs and leaps down a steep ravine, raising a cloud of dust. The dirt plates her tight pants and pours into her shoes.

Unlike her sister Connie, she tends toward holey jeans and ripped t-shirts with inflammatory slogans and pictures. All this places her with a lower class, which she suits her fine. She works at being noticed and actively disliked.

EXT. CANYON

The ravine runs into a canyon heaped with dead cars and piles of rubbish. At the base of the path, Jessica takes a fork that sends her deeper into the canyon. Now, a safe distance from school, she relaxes and bounces along freely, swinging her lunchbox.

At first glance, you see a strikingly beautiful young girl in early puberty, trying too hard to be mature. Her figure is slim and starting to blossom, but her clothes and cheap make-up class her with the unwashed, unmotivated stragglers, who hang around in the corners of life, and simply wait for it all to be over. She's a natural leader, but views herself as inconsequential, and life as oppressive.

EXT. CANYON BY JESSICA'S PLACE

Well into the canyon, she stops and checks around. Satisfied she is alone, she pulls up some dried branches, revealing another path running up to the side.

She heads up the fainter path, carefully replacing the branches behind her.

The hill is steep and slippery. About half-way up, she stops by a boulder and checks behind her. Satisfied she wasn't followed, she crawls through a small entrance under a thick bush by the boulder.

INT. JESSICA'S PLACE - DAY

An irregular ceiling has been scooped out of the lower branches of the bush, sheltering a worn-in comfortable floor of smooth, loose dirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In Jessica's place, life can be whatever she wants. As she enters, she becomes softer. Her true innocence and inner child-self are allowed to emerge.

She carefully sets her lunchbox aside and lifts a wood cover, revealing an old baby doll. She tenderly brings the doll up to her chest and kisses it on the bald head.

Then, she opens the lunchbox, unwraps a peanut butter sandwich and lies back against the boulder.

QUICK CUT TO

INT. '66 CADILLAC - DAY

As the Rolling Stones' "Paint It Black" SCREAMS over the car's eight-track. The Caddy interior is cherry - thick, white tuck 'n roll seats; shiny-new, chrome everything; and plush, fuzzy carpet.

RON HENDERSON (31) sits in the driver's seat, head down, hoping it will all magically go away with enough loud music and alcohol.

He empties another beer and tosses the can out the window. He sinks back into the plush headrest and closes his eyes.

EXT. ABSCO SHIPYARD PARKING LOT - DAY

Ron's Caddy is parked in a small lot, surrounded by a high fence, adjacent to the shipyard personnel office - a gray wooden structure tacked on to a massive, concrete building. The area is difficult to distinguish from a prison yard.

INT. ABSCO PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

One small dying plant sits behind stacks of paper on a chipped, Formica counter. Twenty gray metal desks are jammed together behind the counter, and piled with papers, folders, debris.

Ron stands at the counter, as a large unattractive WOMAN approaches.

WOMAN  
(Not smiling)  
Yes?

RON  
(Abrasively)  
Smolinski here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

Mr. Smolinski is in a meeting at the moment. Are you here to apply for a job?

RON

Yeah.

She hands him an application form.

WOMAN

Fill this out completely and turn it in over there.

RON

Wait a minute. Let me talk to Smolinski.

WOMAN

If you're here to apply for work-

RON

No, I'm here to get my job back. Let me talk to Smolinski.

WOMAN

Did you work here prior to the strike?

RON

Yeah, seven years.

WOMAN

Did you participate in the strike?

RON

You bet your ass I did-

WOMAN

Unless you returned to work voluntarily prior to the deadline of December first, you are considered terminated and must reapply.

RON

Hey, I just want my job-

WOMAN

Your former position has probably already been filled-

RON

What do you mean filled-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOMAN

Prior to December first, all  
striking employees-

RON

Yeah, whatever. I just want to talk  
to Smolinski.

WOMAN

You can't.

RON

I worked in this fucking place  
seven years-

WOMAN

Look, do you want an application or  
not. I'm not going to stand here  
and listen to that kind of  
language.

He considers.

RON

Give it to me.

She tosses it down and turns to leave.

RON (CONT'D)

You got a pen?

She hands it to him in a clenched fist.

WOMAN

I want it back.

She's off. Ron glances over the application, moving his lips  
as he reads. It seems as if he might actually try to fill in  
a few items, but quickly loses it.

He wads it up and throws it with the pen across the room, and  
SLAMS the door on his way out.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN - NIGHT

FRAN (29) is making scrambled eggs for herself and her two  
girls, Connie and Jessica. She is still wearing one of her  
three nice work dresses and some uncomfortable shoes.

The kitchen is small like the rest of the house, which has  
never been anything but strictly practical in its 40 years of  
existence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Connie is quietly eating some toast, while Jessica rests her arms on the table, swinging her legs and fidgeting.

CONNIE  
Mom, Jessica kicked me.

JESSICA  
I did not, you weeny.

She continues.

CONNIE  
Mom!

FRAN  
Jessica stop kicking.

JESSICA  
Connie's a weeny. I barely touched her.

CONNIE  
Hah.

FRAN  
Connie stop complaining.

CONNIE  
But mom!

This time Jessica really does kick her.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Mom!!

FRAN  
Connie.

Connie starts crying and rubbing her leg. Jessica grins and continues to swing her legs.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
Can't we ever have a nice quiet dinner?  
(To Jessica)  
Get your elbows off the table. Now, young lady.

Jessica sits up straight, as Fran walks over with the pan. She wraps Jessica lightly on the head with the spatula, then dishes out the eggs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAN (CONT'D)  
 Connie, knock it off. You're going  
 to live.

CONNIE  
 Tell Jessica to knock it off!

FRAN  
 Jessica.

JESSICA  
 Weeny.

When Fran isn't looking, Connie sticks out her tongue.

INT. DEEP SIX BAR - NIGHT

A working class bar near the shipyards - smoky, old and  
 dirty, with the pervasive odor of working men and cheap  
 booze.

The bartender carries a mug of beer along the bar and sets it  
 in front of Ron, who's sitting next to friends FRED and SAM.

FRED  
 I've been up in the bridge for a  
 couple of weeks.

SAM  
 I wondered where you were. View's  
 nice up there, ain't it?

FRED  
 No shit. Beats sweating your ass  
 off below.

SAM  
 Yeah, I'm still down on the third  
 deck.

ANGLE RON'S POV, as he watches YOUNG WOMAN 1 enter and sashay  
 over to a table by herself.

SAM (CONT'D)  
 I remember, it was like two or  
 three years ago, back when we were  
 building them littorals...

FRED  
 Shit, I remember those.

SAM  
 It was nice to see some sunlight  
 occasionally, you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RESUME THE THREE

RON  
Hey, can we talk about something  
else?

SAM  
Like what?

RON  
Pussy, for one thing.

Sam and Fred give each other a knowing glance.

SAM  
Did you ever talk to Smolinski?

RON  
Fuck Smolinski.

SAM  
(Kidding, sort of)  
Fuck you. Where've you been  
anyways? I went to all the trouble  
to put in a good word with the old  
man, and you don't even bother to  
show up.

RON  
I've been busy.

SAM  
Doing what? Those fitting jobs  
aren't going to be open forever.

RON  
I told you I ain't going back to  
work at a lower scale. You guys can  
whore yourselves if you want-

SAM  
It ain't whoring, it's working.

FRED  
Hey Sam, he's got his wife working  
for him. Why should he-

Ron stands.

SAM  
Fred, come on. Give us a break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RON

Hey, it's okay. You guys can say whatever you want. But the truth is, you're both just feeling shitty for crossing the line and fuckin' us all over. I'd feel bad too if I was you.

FRED

Strike's over, Ron. Gotta work. Don't have any choice.

Ron looks hard at the two of them.

WE FOLLOW Ron, as he walks off with his drink in hand.

He stops at the juke box, which just happens to be within spitting distance of YOUNG WOMAN 1. Ron pretends to read the song titles, as he runs his eye over her.

RON

They ought to get some new records in this thing. Same stuff in here for a year now.

She smiles, as he makes a selection. Something slow and COUNTRY comes on, SCRATCHY and LOUD.

He steps over to her table.

RON (CONT'D)

Like country?

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Some.

RON

Well. We got something in common already.

He sits next to her.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN

Connie is helping Fran dry dishes. The TV is on in the other room.

CONNIE

I suppose Jessica is going to hog the new TV all night, as usual.

FRAN

Why are you so worried about her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

I never get to watch what I want.

FRAN

You never seem to care.

CONNIE

I do sometimes.

FRAN

It sounds like you just want to pick a fight.

CONNIE

Why do you always take her side?

FRAN

I don't.

CONNIE

She didn't go to school again today, you know.

Just one more thing Fran doesn't need to hear right now. She gives Connie the last item, a glass mixing bowl, then drains the sink.

FRAN

You have to practice tonight anyway.

CONNIE

Ah, come on. Do I have to?

FRAN

Twenty minutes.

CONNIE

But I'm just a kid.

FRAN

You're the one that wanted to play that clarinet.

CONNIE

I don't need to practice. I'm good enough for that stupid band at school.

Fran sees Connie trying to slip the bowl into a drawer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAN

You know where that goes. I'm paying six dollars a month for that thing.

CONNIE

Can I watch what I want after I practice?

FRAN

Depends.

Connie pulls a flimsy chair over and stands on it to reach an upper cabinet.

CONNIE

But Jessica always gets to-

FRAN

Quit whining or you're not going to watch TV at all.

CONNIE

This damn thing doesn't fit.

FRAN

Don't talk like that-

In a instant, the chair breaks and Connie falls on the glass bowl. Her arm is bleeding. She tries to lift it and SHRIEKS in pain. Fran rushes over.

FRAN (CONT'D)

It's all right. Calm down.

CONNIE

I'm bleeding to death!

Fran attempts to hold Connie still enough to wrap a dishtowel around her arm.

Jessica comes in. She sees the blood and reacts with casual interest.

Fran gives up with the towel.

FRAN

Damn it! Jessica, run next door and get the Coolies.

JESSICA

They moved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRAN

Well, find somebody who has a car.

JESSICA

Who?

FRAN

Just use your goddamn head!

JESSICA

I don't know anybody.

FRAN

Isn't there somebody on the other side?

Jessica shrugs. Fran lowers Connie's arm and gets up.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Useless kid! Stay here and watch your sister. Connie, calm down. I'll be right back.

Fran runs out. Jessica stands over Connie and watches her SCREAM. Then, she steps over her and opens the refrigerator.

CONNIE

Jessica hold me! Jessica hold me!  
My arm! Please! I'm bleeding! Hold me!

Connie's continuous whining seems to fuel Jessica's lack of compassion. She grabs a banana from the refrigerator and sits in a kitchen chair beside Connie, faces her and peels it slowly.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Jessica hold me! Please! Oh God, I'm bleeding to death! Help me!

Jessica watches her, then holds the banana out and raises her eyebrows innocently, as if offering Connie a bite. Connie closes her eyes and SCREAMS all the louder.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Mom!!

INT. DEEP SIX BAR

Ron and Young Woman 1 are dancing slowly in a dark lonely corner, to a whiny, twangy country song. Ron's hands work down her back, and around the seat of her tight threadbare jeans. He lifts his head and their eyes meet hard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

Man, you are a sexy little bitch.

She smiles alluringly. Then, they move in slowly and kiss. They stop dancing, and Ron runs his hands over the back of her head, and then down over her shoulders and breasts.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

How about some more music?

RON

How about we make our own music?

QUICK CUT TO

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM RECEPTION - NIGHT

As Jessica enters from the drive-through, followed by a neighbor BOB, cradling Connie in his arms. Fran rushes alongside, holding Connie's arm up. The arm is wrapped in layers of bloody dishtowels.

A NURSE looks up from a metal clipboard and does a quick detached appraisal, as Fran approaches.

FRAN

We have an emergency.

NURSE

I can see that.

FRAN

She was standing on a chair that she shouldn't have been on. You know. It was old and falling apart. And of course it breaks and down she goes. Lands on the floor, Blood everywhere. I wrapped towels around it the best I could. But-

The nurse steps around the counter and examines the arm. Connie YELPS.

NURSE

How did she get the cut?

FRAN

She was trying to put a bowl... a glass away, and it broke... She fell on the glass... and it uh I don't know...

NURSE

Bring her in here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The group follows the nurse into a patient room, Connie moaning with each step.

FRAN

I've told her before not to stand on that chair. I knew something like this would happen. It's my fault for not getting it fixed. But I've got so much to think about...

INT. EMERGENCY PATIENT ROOM

The nurse points to a bed and Bob gingerly lowers Connie onto it. She SCREAMS in bloody terror.

CONNIE

Mommy!

FRAN

It's all right honey. We're going to get you all fixed up.

Fran steadies the arm and Connie calms a bit.

NURSE

Do you have insurance?

FRAN

Well, it's through my husband. He was working at the shipyards and we should be covered...

Connie SCREAMS.

NURSE

I'll call the doctor.

The nurse leaves.

CONNIE

What are they going to do?!

FRAN

The doctor's going to look at your arm and make it all better.

CONNIE

Do I have to get stitches?!

FRAN

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

Please don't let them give me  
stitches, please!

Connie starts up again.

Bob steps back from them and glances at Jessica. She is standing by herself, leaning against a doorjamb, staring at him with her usual poker face. Bob tries a smile on her. But she ignores him and shuffles out of the room.

FRAN

Now calm down, honey, calm down.  
They're going to take good care of  
you.

CONNIE

Oh, God, stitches, God!

FRAN

SSShhh. Calm down, calm down.

Bob sees no point in staying with them and follows Jessica.

INT. EMERGENCY WAITING ROOM

As Bob spots Jessica sitting in a chair with legs propped up on a table.

BOB

Too bad about your sister, huh?

She shrugs.

BOB (CONT'D)

She'll be all right, though. She  
didn't lose much blood. I think she  
just tends to panic easy.

Jessica rolls her eyes and looks away from him, as he sits next to her.

BOB (CONT'D)

So, isn't your dad Ron Henderson?

JESSICA

(Bored)  
Yeah.

BOB

Well it's a small world. I know  
him... or I should say I know of  
him from the shipyards.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB (CONT'D)

I thought I recognized the last name on your mailbox.

No response.

BOB (CONT'D)

Well, Ron Henderson. Small world.

(Pause)

Yeah, too bad about your sister.

I'm glad I was around to help.

(Fishing)

Your Dad must be working late, huh?

Jessica gives him an evil eye.

BOB (CONT'D)

Well, you don't seem very upset by your sister's... umm...

JESSICA

She was a jerk.

BOB

(Taken aback)

Yeah, well, it's always easy to look at it in hindsight and...

JESSICA

Do you know what a jerk is?

They stare at each other. Then, a SCREAM from the Emergency Room turns his head reflexively.

INT. YOUNG WOMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cheap everything - a low rent dive for low rent people. YOUNG WOMAN 2 lounges in her underwear, eating pretzels and beer, watching "Starsky and Hutch." She has a half-baked perm of blonde-colored hair, and too much make-up. The coffee table is littered with used plates, crumbs and cockroaches.

She lifts her leg and swats at the coat-hanger antenna. It doesn't help.

YOUNG WOMAN 2

Shit.

She is forced to bend forward and make a more scientific attempt to clear the picture.

The door opens. Young Woman 1 enters, followed by Ron. He grabs her from behind and plants a kiss on her neck. She tosses a purse on the coffee table to get Young Woman 2's attention.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG WOMAN 1  
 (Annoyed)  
 I'm going to be busy for awhile.  
 You got something better to do?

Young Woman 2 BELCHES loudly.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (CONT'D)  
 (To Ron, sweetly)  
 Why don't you go in there and get  
 comfortable? I'll be right with  
 you.

RON  
 Nice place you got here.

He brushes past them into the bedroom.

YOUNG WOMAN 1  
 (To Young Woman 2)  
 I suppose you've been sitting on  
 your ass, watching the fuckin' TV  
 all day...

INT. YOUNG WOMAN 1'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron walks in and shuts the door behind him. The argument continues O.S., as he looks the place over. He picks up a picture from her dresser - Young Woman 1 at the beach with a clean-cut boyfriend.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (O.S.)  
 Where the hell's the money coming  
 from to pay the fuckin' rent this  
 month. Huh? Answer me, Goddamn it.

Another BELCH.

He unscrews a bottle of perfume, smells it, then grins as he dabs his neck.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 What are you going to do when they  
 shut the fuckin' power off?

YOUNG WOMAN 2 (O.S.)  
 Why are you being a bitch? Fuckin'  
 leave me alone.

YOUNG WOMAN 1  
 A job. Get a job.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He parts the dust-laden curtains. A neon liquor store sign buzzes off and on across the street, and an occasional flash of a car passes by. A powerful streetlight beams in.

YOUNG WOMAN 2 (O.S.)  
 Fuck off. I'll get a job when I  
 feel like it. Who the hell do you  
 think you are, my fucking mother?

He sits on the bed and pulls his boots off.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (O.S.)  
 You'll get a job tomorrow or I'm  
 throwing your ass out on the  
 street. And don't think I won't.

YOUNG WOMAN 2 (O.S.)  
 Go fuck yourself.

CRASH - the coffee table is dumped over in the other room. The door opens. Young Woman 1 has a smile for Ron, as she comes in and starts to unbutton her pants.

YOUNG WOMAN 2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Asshole!!

YOUNG WOMAN 1  
 (Closing the door)  
 Don't mind her. I'm kicking her ass  
 out of here tomorrow.

He doesn't care.

YOUNG WOMAN 1 (CONT'D)  
 You want, uh, something to drink? I  
 think I got a beer?

RON  
 Come here.

YOUNG WOMAN 1  
 (Smiling)  
 What?

RON  
 Come here.

She walks, kitten-like over to him and stands close. He reaches up and slowly releases each button on her pants, and then pulls them down, moving his hands slowly, sensuously around every curve.

She savors the gentle seduction of this rough-looking character. Most of her customers are not so gentle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He reaches up and gently pulls her down onto the bed. Then, he leans in and runs his eyes over her, like a warm hand. She drinks in the moment with closed eyes, as he moves in.

INT. CONNIE & JESSICA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The only light comes from a clear moon shining through their window. Fran is seated in a low chair between Jessica's and Connie's beds.

CONNIE

Are we getting anything for Christmas?

FRAN

Well, we'll have to see what Santa says about that.

Jessica rolls her eyes.

JESSICA

Mom, we're too old for that.

FRAN

What?

CONNIE

We don't believe in Santa anymore.

FRAN

Why not?

CONNIE

I don't know.

FRAN

It doesn't hurt to believe in something like Santa.

JESSICA

How can you believe in something that don't exist?

FRAN

How do you know Santa doesn't exist?

CONNIE

Because it doesn't make sense. People can't fly in sleighs pulled by reindeer. Besides a sleigh isn't big enough to hold all the toys for all the kids in the whole world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

Who says all people can't fly?

JESSICA

Connie, don't listen to her. She's nuts.

Fran pats Connie's good arm.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

She's just setting us up for not getting anything. Mom and Dad can barely make the house payments. How the hell can they afford a bunch of dumb toys?

CONNIE

Is she right?

Fran protects Connie with her warm hand.

FRAN

Jessica is... (Beat) There are always at least two ways to look at things. We can look at what we have or we can look at what we haven't. If we always thought about what we haven't, we'd be sad all the time... because there will always be something that we don't have, no matter how rich or powerful or lucky we are. But if we look at all the things we have, we see-

JESSICA

In other words, we're not getting anything.

Case closed, Jessica turns away from them.

FRAN

We'll get you kids what we can afford, I promise. Okay?

A wan smile comes to Connie's face.

FRAN (CONT'D)

I don't care how broke we are, we have to live. There's no reason for us to be sad at Christmas time.

CONNIE

Mom, I don't care, really. I don't need anything.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

If you guys can't afford it, that's all right with me.

JESSICA

It's all Dad's fault. If he'd get a damn job-

FRAN

Jessica stop. I don't want to hear anymore.

(Getting up)

If your arm starts hurting I'll get you some more aspirin, okay honey?

Connie nods.

SLAM! A DOOR SHUTS O.S., followed by the SCRAPING and GRATING of hard boots on the wooden floor. In an instant, the world turns evil. The refrigerator opens and SLAMS shut, and a metal chair SLIDES. A new shaft of harsh light CLICKS on from the kitchen.

Fran bends over and kisses Connie's forehead. Then, she bends over Jessica and raises the covers under her chin. With that done, she braces herself and leaves, shutting the bedroom door behind her.

Jessica pushes the covers back away from her chin, rolls over and hides her face. Connie stares straight up and waits.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN - NIGHT

Fran walks in. Ron is seated at the kitchen table, looking down, holding an open beer can. He doesn't react to Fran.

She goes to the sink and finds something to do.

FRAN

We had to take Connie to the hospital tonight.

No response.

FRAN (CONT'D)

That damn chair broke and she fell and cut her arm up real bad. Took ten stitches. It's a good thing she didn't kill herself.

Fran faces Ron.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Fortunately, the neighbor next door was able to give us a ride.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN (CONT'D)

I don't know what I would've done  
if he hadn't been there to help.

(Studying him first)

I never know when you're going to  
be home. It would be nice if you  
left the car here... when you don't  
need it. We never know when we'll  
have an emergency and need to...  
get around. It'd be nice to have it  
just to do a little grocery  
shopping, once in awhile.

(No response)

Do you think you could leave it  
when you go to the bar? Maybe you  
could get a friend to drive you.  
It'd be safer too, for you. You  
shouldn't be out driving when  
you're... (Beat) when you've had...  
alcohol.

Ron stands and drains the rest of the beer.

She watches him walk over to her and toss the empty can in  
the sink. Then, as he leaves...

RON

(Low, contemptuous)

The car is mine.

He shuffles down the hall.

Fran's face tightens as she turns to face the sink with the  
empty beer can. She picks it up, holding it as she would  
something filthy and vile, and places it in the garbage.

Then, she walks out.

INT. HENDERSON MASTER BEDROOM

Ron is lying on the bed in the dark, with his clothes and  
shoes still on. Fran comes in and stands in the doorway. He  
knows she's there, but doesn't look.

FRAN

What do you suggest we do?

A groan.

FRAN (CONT'D)

I think it's only fair that you  
leave the car with me...

RON

No way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN  
Until you go back to work.

RON  
No!

FRAN  
I have to...

RON  
No!

FRAN  
...on the bus. I have to carry...

RON  
No!

FRAN  
...all my ledgers around on the  
bus!

RON  
I said NO! No! No! No!...

FRAN  
Why not! Why won't you help me  
out...

RON  
No! No! No!

FRAN  
Until you get a job. Just until you  
get a job!

RON  
Read my fuckin' lips. No way!

FRAN  
I'm the one who's working and  
supporting the family. If you'd-

RON  
Shut the fuck up! Just shut the  
fuck up! I'm not in any fuckin'  
mood to hear your shit now!

FRAN  
Why is it so damned hard to find a  
job?!

RON  
Shut the fuck up!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He gets up and stumbles toward her. Then, standing inches from her face...

RON (CONT'D)  
 Goddamn no good fuckin' bitch!  
 Leave me alone. You live your  
 fuckin' life and I'll live mine...

FRAN  
 How can I live my life when I have  
 to support a Goddamn drunken...

RON  
 You want to get slapped around?  
 Huh? I'm in no fuckin' mood to hear  
 your whiny gimmy this, gimmy that  
 shit.

FRAN  
 I just want to work out a  
 compromise with the car...

RON  
 The car is mine! That's the  
 compromise. You want a car, go get  
 your own. You're the one that's  
 working.

He shoves her aside on his way out. She stands in the doorway for a moment and watches him shuffle off down the hall.

INT. HENDERSON CHILDREN'S ROOM

Connie's eyes are as wide as they can be, and staring straight up. Jessica is turned on her stomach, face pressed tightly into the pillow. They HEAR Ron's footsteps stop and Fran's follow. The new TV comes on with Johnny Carson.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM

Ron is stooped over adjusting the color, as Fran faces him from the doorway.

FRAN  
 I think your attitude sucks,  
 frankly.

He turns the TV up full. JOHNNY'S MONOLOG is distorted and screaming. The LAUGHTER grates and mocks. Fran steps toward him.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
 I think we need to discuss a few  
 things!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ron stands and lights a cigarette.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
Turn the TV down, please. Turn the  
TV down, please! Turn the TV down!!

She hesitates for a moment, then walks over and jerks the plug out of the wall.

Ron looks up, hissing, seething, his teeth set like a mad dog's. He shoves her hard and she falls back, bouncing off the dining room table and landing on the floor. She watches him as he plugs the TV back in. It comes on screaming loud.

RON  
Don't touch the fuckin' TV!

Ron leaves her on the floor and sits on the couch, confident she has learned her lesson.

Fran stares at him, feeling hatred moving and gnawing at her insides.

In an instant, she lunges at the TV and pulls the plug out of the wall with all her might. Then, she tries to pull the cord out of the back of the TV. The TV slides on the wooden floor, turns and bumps the wall. CRACK! The back comes off.

RON (CONT'D)  
What the fuck you doing bitch!

He gets up and grabs her, slapping her face, lifting her and shoving her against the wall, squeezing and pulling, trying to wrest the cord from her clenched fist.

SNAP! Wires pull out of the TV.

RON (CONT'D)  
Let go of the fuckin' wire, bitch!

She is hanging on fast through the deluge of fists and pounding - crying, SCREAMING.

FRAN  
Goddamn you! Damn you! Damn you!  
How can you be such a heartless  
bastard?!

RON  
Let go of the fuckin' wire!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAN

I'll let go when you start acting like a human being, and listen to me when I talk-

He slugs her in the mouth.

RON

I'll listen to you, when you have something decent to say.

She is pushed up against the wall, blood oozing from her mouth. She drops the cord to protect her face. This time it's a hard flat hand to the other side of her head, swung like a bat.

She stumbles sideways and falls, sliding into the dining room hutch, head glancing against a sharp corner on the way down.

Ron stands and stares, panting madly. Her head is bent and pushed into the lower part of the hutch. There is no movement.

He turns to examine the TV. The back is pulled off and wires are hanging out. He picks up the back panel, stares at it a moment, then drops the panel and stomps off.

On his way to the hall, he passes a screw-on shelf filled with knickknacks. He sweeps them all to the floor and rips the shelf off the wall, leaving white, jagged holes. Then, he hurls the shelf across the room into a floor lamp.

INT. HENDERSON CHILDREN'S BEDROOM

Connie is staring straight up, tears filling her eyes. There is no SOUND. SILENCE pounds in her head. She turns to Jessica.

Jessica is lying on her side now, eyes fixed on Connie. Jessica has no tears and shows no fear. Her usual poker face is tight. Something in her is about to snap.

CONNIE

(Whispering)

What happened? What's going on?

JESSICA

Probably killed her.

CONNIE

Oh God.

She starts to cry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

Knock it off, would you. Give us a  
Goddamn break, for once.

CONNIE

What's he going to do?

JESSICA

Probably kill us too.

CONNIE

(Trying to be brave)  
Oh God.

The reality of the situation dries her tears.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What're we going to do?

JESSICA

I don't know about you, but if he  
comes for me, I'm going to... kick  
him and kick him... as hard as I  
can.

(She thinks)

Then, I'm going to scratch his eyes  
out.

(Grits her teeth)

Then, I'm going to stick a knife in  
him, right through his heart.

CONNIE

Oh God.

FOOTSTEPS! He's coming down the hall. Connie freezes, pulls  
the covers up and stares at the door. Jessica doesn't move.  
She's ready.

The FOOTSTEPS pass by, then fade away down the hall.

INT. HENDERSON MASTER BEDROOM

Ron plops on the bed, face down.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM

Fran is lying absolutely still, head bent sideways, defaced  
with blood and cuts.

INT. HENDERSON MASTER BEDROOM

Ron rolls over on his back and stares up. It doesn't look  
like he's going to be able to get any rest tonight.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM

Fran's eyes pop open. She scans what she can of the room without moving her body.

INT. HENDERSON MASTER BEDROOM

Ron sits up, unable to relax. He scratches his head, then stands. As he ambles toward the door, his shoulder bumps the dresser. He angrily pulls the doily, sending bottles of perfume and pictures to the floor.

INT. HENDERSON CHILDREN'S ROOM

They listen as the FOOTSTEPS approach, then pass and fade away.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN

He's in the refrigerator and can't find any beer. He pulls cartons of milk out and throws them across the room. Jars, cans, bottles all come out and smash to the floor.

He SLAMS the door and sweeps the contents off the top. He looks around the room and kicks a smashed bottle of mayonnaise.

RON

FUCK!!

He turns and punches the refrigerator door, then again and again full force. It bends in and slides back with each blow. Again and again and again. He slows, then stops, his hands dripping red and raw. He kicks it with the bottom of his boots, leaving deep black dents.

He turns away from the refrigerator and topples the kitchen table, picks up a chair and SMASHES it into a knickknack shelf, splintering both and gashing the wall.

Then, he turns to the dining room door.

INT. HENDERSON DINING/LIVING ROOM

He is looking down as he enters, expecting to see his wife on the floor. Instead, she is standing before him, eyes wild with venom, tears and blood painting her face with broad strokes, holding a rifle pointed directly into his face.

He is suddenly sobered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

(Low, hard, trembling)

Get out of my house. Get out of my house.

RON

Now you're trying to take my house away from me. Bitch.

FRAN

It's not your house. You don't belong here. You treat us all like dirt and you get drunk and tear the place apart. Who's paying for all of it and doing their damndest to keep what's left of this family together? It sure's hell isn't you. You and your drinking and whoring 'til all hours of the morning. And sucking off me and the rest of us like we were... were...

RON

(Condescendingly)

Hey, calm down. Put the rifle away and we'll talk...

FRAN

You don't have anything to say to me. Nothing. The best thing I could do would be to blow your Goddamn head off...

RON

Hey come on...

FRAN

Get out.

They are locked in a stand-off, tension rising.

RON

Come on, give me the gun.

BLAM! She lets off a round that slams through a wall.

FRAN

Get out!

RON

Hey, we've both had a bad day. Let's just clean up the mess and forget-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAN

Get out. I have one more bullet and it's going through your Goddamn head, so help me-

RON

Come on, your head is... uh, you know, you got knocked out and...

FRAN

Get out.

He pauses to reassess, then starts to turn.

RON

Okay, that's okay. I'm going.

He turns away from her. She drops her guard for a split second and he's on top of her. The gun is pointed up, as he grabs it and wrests it from her. Then, he shoves a boot into her stomach, knocking her breathless to the floor.

He rams his foot under her chin and rests the rifle muzzle against her nose. His face is tight and trembling, glistening with sweat.

RON (CONT'D)

You're going to kill me, huh?  
You're going to kill me? You're going to kill me and watch me splash all over the Goddamn wall?

He milks the moment for all it's worth, then disarms the rifle and tosses it aside. A nasty smile comes to his face. He gets down and crouches over her. Fran stares up at him, disgust and loathing contorting her features.

He runs a filthy hand over her breast and up along her shoulder to her neck. He squeezes and moves in.

RON (CONT'D)

What do you say we kiss and make up, huh Franny?

FRAN

Get away from me. You stink. You're disgusting.

He exhales a load of alcoholic breath in her face.

RON

Come on, let's do it babe. Remember how we used to do it? We used to do it all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He forces a wet open-mouthed kiss on her lips.

RON (CONT'D)  
Come on babe, don't that turn you  
on?

FRAN  
Get away from me.

RON  
We used to do it all the time,  
Franny. I remember when we did it  
in the-

FRAN  
Get away. Get out of my house.

RON  
Come on, don't you want to do it  
one more time, just for old times  
sake?

He grabs her blouse and rips it savagely, clawing and kissing  
her all over.

FRAN  
(Crying)  
Ron, please, get out, please.

RON  
(Getting mean)  
I ain't going no place until we do  
it one more time. I know you want  
it. You're just playing with me.

He moves back and rips her blouse open. Fran sees her chance  
and thrusts her knee hard into his groin.

He stops breathing, and moves off her, curls up in pain. When  
he finally does take a breath, it's a wrenching, throaty,  
animal howl.

RON (CONT'D)  
Fuckin' bitch!

With all his strength, he lands one final blow to the side of  
her head, tossing it sideways. She is out.

He stands, shakily, and ambles around the room, still bent  
over holding his crotch. Everything he sees he pulls down,  
breaks, topples over, while howling and roaring in pain and  
hate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

He picks up his rifle, cocks it and explodes a hole through the TV and half the wall. He then stands and uses the weapon as a bludgeon to demolish more of the living room: walls, lamps, windows, curtains. And when he's done there, he moves to the kitchen and finishes it.

INT. HENDERSON CHILDREN'S ROOM

Connie is crying, in bed with Jessica, holding her tight. Jessica looks straight up and waits and listens, as Ron continues his rampage. Jessica's jaw is set tight, but there are no tears.

Then, SILENCE.

JESSICA  
(Heavy whisper)  
Connie, shut up. Damn it, shut up.

Connie stops. They listen.

CONNIE  
What's happening?

JESSICA  
How the hell should I know. Shut up.

The heavy boots slide and scrape down the hall. The SOUND gets closer and closer. It stops outside their door.

CONNIE  
Oh God.

JESSICA  
Shhh!

They listen. It is quiet. SLAM! The door is open.

The silhouette of Ron looms in the doorway, like an evil beast. Connie closes her eyes, Jessica stares straight into his, almost inviting him.

For an interminable moment, they stare in SILENCE. Then, Ron takes a small step into their room and stops. He grabs the doorknob, then steps out of the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

The BOOT STEPS recede.

CONNIE  
(Opening her eyes)  
What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

Nothing.

We HEAR the KITCHEN DOOR SLAM SHUT, and then no more FOOTSTEPS.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM

Fran is still, eyes closed, blood oozing slowly from her mouth.

The room is destroyed - everything broken and turned over.

A CAR STARTS and TACHS LOUDLY O.S., and then BACKS OUT, screeching, engine howling. It stops and slams into drive and ROARS away from us. The SOUND recedes as it disappears into the night.

It is quiet now. It is still. It is over.

Out of the QUIET we HEAR SOBBING - faintly at first, then gradually louder. The dark scene slowly...

FADES OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY WOMEN'S RESTROOM - DAY

Title: 15 years later

ANGLE CLOSE on a woman facing a mirror in a small restroom. She is leaning on a sink, head bent, sobbing quietly. Her CRYING SOUNDS forced, contrived. Rather than release her tears in one emotional outpouring, she controls the tears, so they come out in shudders and short, tense GASPS that echo coldly in the tile room.

A VOICE comes over a paging system O.S.

PAGE (V.O.)

Jessica Henderson to the lobby  
please, Jessica Henderson.

Jessica looks up into the mirror. Her eyes are red, make-up streaked. She stops sobbing and carefully, quickly pats each eye dry and smooths her hair.

JESSICA

(Quietly)

Shit.

Her eyes will never do. She rummages through her purse and pulls out some Visine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAGE (V.O.)

Jessica Henderson to the lobby  
please, Jessica Henderson.

She squirts a load in each eye, then stands back, straight and stiff. A new, brighter face comes to her on cue. She takes one last moment to flatten her creases, then grabs her purse and flies out the door.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY HALL - DAY

Jessica bursts upon the modern, cubicled office maze with store bought energy and renewed charm. FRANK, an agent, passes her.

FRANK

Hey, Jess, you hear the page?

JESSICA

(Smiling)

Yeah.

(Points to the restroom)

Caught again.

They LAUGH.

FRANK

Never fails, huh?

Jessica heads off at full power, looking sharp, like a panty hose ad, a smile wider than her built-up shoulders. BOB STARR, the boss, passes.

BOB

(Big smile)

Closing another one?

JESSICA

(Fingers crossed)

I think so. It's taken some work,  
but I think they're coming around.

BOB

I won't hold you.

She starts walking.

BOB (CONT'D)

Come see me when you're through.

She smiles, winks an "okay" and heads around a corner.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY LOBBY

Jessica enters selling. ROY and NORA GRADO, a pain-in-the-ass middle-age couple, are brought to their feet, smiling broadly. Roy extends his hand to her.

JESSICA

Hello Roy, Nora. Why don't we come back to my office?

(To receptionist)

Get us some coffee please, Barb.

Barb smiles gladly, as Jessica ushers her charge down the hall.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY HALL

As they walk briskly.

JESSICA

So, you had a chance to see the property?

ROY

We drove by it.

NORA

(Always suspicious)

Need to see the inside first.

JESSICA

Oh, of course. I just thought it would be helpful for you to drive by a few homes first to sort of narrow down the field a bit before we actually started looking through them.

ROY

I hope it's no trouble.

JESSICA

No, no, not at all, Roy. That's what I'm here for. Why don't we work up some figures and take it from there?

They stop by a small glass-walled meeting room.

ROY

(Checking his wife)

Well, we should probably look inside first...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORA

What good's it going to do to look  
inside if it costs too much?

JESSICA

We'll do both. Why don't you have a  
seat in here and I'll call the  
owners and see if we can come by  
now?

PAGE (V.O.)

Jessica Henderson, line 3. Jessica  
Henderson, line 3.

JESSICA

Better get this. Be right back.

Roy and Nora go in the room and start looking through a  
listing book. Jessica steps around a corner and answers her  
phone.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hi.

ED (V.O.)

(Flat)

Hi.

JESSICA

Ed, I'm, uh, busy now. Can I call  
you back later?

ED (V.O.)

I won't be here.

Ed's voice is low, beaten, troubled.

JESSICA

(Hesitantly)

Well, I can't talk now.

ED (V.O.)

I love you.

JESSICA

I know. Please Ed...

ED (V.O.)

You don't have to call me. I'll  
just... I just wanted to tell you  
that.

JESSICA

Ed, I... I'll call you tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ED (V.O.)  
That's okay. You don't have to.  
I'll be gone anyway. I, umm, I  
can't put you out of my mind.

JESSICA  
(Keeping friendly)  
Ed, I don't need to hear this now.  
I'm in the middle of-

ED (V.O.)  
I'm sorry. Forget it.

He hangs up and she lowers the phone. Then, she puts her happy face back on and walks around the corner to her cubicle, winking to Roy, as she passes.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY JESSICA'S CUBICLE

She tries to call something up on her computer. It's wrong. She tries again. Wrong.

JESSICA  
Shit.

Again, this time pounding the keys angrily. JUNE, another agent, pops her head in.

JUNE  
(Smiling)  
Congratulations.

JESSICA  
On what?

JUNE  
(Wide eyes)  
Oh, nothing.

JESSICA  
Come on, what? Did you hear something? Tell me.

JUNE  
Maybe.

JESSICA  
(Mock anger)  
You're going to get it.

JUNE  
We'll see.

June bounces off. Jessica's smile is back on, big and cheesy.

EXT. HENDERSON HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

It is late afternoon. The sky is turning red. The trees and bushes are bigger now, the lawn is green and pretty. The blue collar neighborhood is filled with happy children on bikes, pulling wagons with younger brothers. The air is clean and cool.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Fran is busy at the counter squeezing a meatloaf together, as she talks on the phone.

FRAN

That's nice... That's nice... Good for you... Good... Good... I can't believe it either... Goodness, really?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY JESSICA'S CUBICLE - LATE AFTERNOON

The lights are still on, but most people have left. Jessica is still driving in high gear, looking only slightly frazzled after a long day.

JESSICA

I'm getting my own office that I can decorate anyway I want. I get to hire my own staff. It's going to be... my big chance. Finally!

FRAN

Good for you.

JESSICA

There are a few people from here I'll take with me - Lucy and Steve, for sure, maybe Frank, if he wants. But of course, I can hire from outside the company.

(Deep sigh)

I'm still in shock.

FRAN

I am too. That's very nice. You can tell me more tonight.

JESSICA

Oh Mom, this is the best thing that's ever happened to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

I know. I'm so happy for you. By the way, is Ed coming?

JESSICA

Why do you always have to bring him up?

FRAN

I just wanted to know so I could set a place-

JESSICA

Here it is, the best day of my life and all you can think about is Ed. Aren't you happy for me?

FRAN

Of course, I am. Aren't you two getting along?

JESSICA

Yes, we're getting along. He's not coming tonight is all.

FRAN

That's fine. I won't set a place.

JESSICA

(BEAT)

Well, I'd better...

FRAN

It's just too bad.

JESSICA

No, it's not. And don't start.

FRAN

That's fine.

Another long pause.

JESSICA

I'll tell you more about it when I get there. Bye.

FRAN

Bye.

Connie enters, as Fran hangs up and continues slicing carrots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She is 23 now, slightly overweight, wears thick glasses, pink hair, and loose clothing that further diminishes her femininity.

She reaches for a jar of cookies.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
(Slapping her hand)  
Connie. You don't need any more of those.

She takes one anyway.

CONNIE  
Who was that?

FRAN  
Jessica. Another good news, bad news call.

Fran cuts her finger.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
Damn.

CONNIE  
Let me guess. She sold North County and she's bored with her boyfriend.

FRAN  
Close. Here, finish this.

Fran fusses with her bleeding finger and Connie takes over slicing.

CONNIE  
Mom, it's not going to do any good to worry about her. She's never going to be the way you want.

FRAN  
I don't want her to be the way I want her. I just want her to be happy. (BEAT) And get married. I think she'd be happier.

CONNIE  
Mom, you don't need to have a man to be happy. Look at me.

FRAN  
Yeah, look at you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Fran pinches Connie's flabby butt, and she squishes a spoonful of raw meatloaf on Fran's forehead. Fran retaliates by tickling Connie's waist, sending her into a fit of uncontrollable giggles.

INT. JESSICA'S BMW - NIGHT

The high tech front control panel glows cool green to power the stereo playing electronic dance music at full throttle. The car interior is immaculate and powerful, black and tough.

One tight spotlight hits an area big enough for a square pocket mirror, razor blade and five long-nailed fingers working up a line of coke.

Jessica moves forward under the light and does each nostril with a rolled-up five. She closes her eyes and inhales all the way, drawing the drug up deep inside her. Then, she rubs the excess into her gums.

She feels it. It's doing the trick. She starts to breathe. Her eyes pop open and she's back on, ready for business.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Connie and her friend DI are seated close together on the couch. They both wear faded jeans, dark, loose-fitting sweaters, and beat-up Nikes. A TV is on somewhere.

Di whispers something funny to Connie and she covers her mouth and GIGGLES quietly. Fran calls from the kitchen.

FRAN (O.S.)

Do you guys want anything to drink?

CONNIE

No thanks, Mom.

DI

(To Connie)

Got anything diet?

CONNIE

(To Di)

Coffee?

DI

(To Connie)

No, it'll keep me awake.

FRAN (O.S.)

Coffee? Tea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DI  
(To Connie)  
I don't know.

FRAN (O.S.)  
Orange juice?

CONNIE  
(To Di)  
Beer?

FRAN (O.S.)  
One percent?

DI  
(To Fran)  
That's okay. I'll just wait.  
Thanks, anyway.

Fran sweeps into the dining room.

FRAN (O.S.)  
I can go to the store and get  
something, if you'll watch the  
meatloaf.

DI  
That's okay. Thanks anyway.

FRAN (O.S.)  
You're sure?

CONNIE  
Why don't you come in here and sit  
for a minute?

FRAN (O.S.)  
Well, I got to watch the stuffing.

CONNIE  
It'll be fine.

FRAN  
Okay, sure.

She sits away from them in the dining room, and looks Di  
over.

FRAN (CONT'D)  
So. Are you a Psych major at State  
too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DI

No, I didn't actually (COUGH) go to college, uh, too long. I'm, uh... I drive a school bus.

FRAN

(Smiling)

Oh.

DI

Out in the Lemon Grove area.  
Primary kids mostly.

FRAN

Sounds interesting. You must like children.

DI

Oh, they don't bother me. Uh, actually, I, uh, just like driving.

FRAN

Uh huh.

DI

Getting up early and... driving.

FRAN

Connie's going for her Masters in Psych...

CONNIE

She knows, Mom.

FRAN

Maybe you could use some psychology on the kids you drive.

Di nods. DING. A timer goes off. Fran pops up.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Stuffing. Got to go.

Fran is off. There's a brief knock at the door and it opens.

JESSICA

(Big smile)

I'm here.

FRAN

(From Kitchen)

Dinner will be ready in a minute.

Jessica comes in and sits across from Di and Connie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESSICA

How you doing, Con? This a new friend?

CONNIE

Yeah, Di.  
(To Di)  
That's Jessica.

Di stands and leans over to pump her paw.

DI

How you doing?

JESSICA

(Mile a minute)  
Unbelievable. Today was as crazy as ever.  
(To Connie)  
Mom tell you? I'm going to be managing my own office.  
(To Di)  
I'm a real estate broker.

DI

I heard.

JESSICA

God, I'm still walking on thin air. I couldn't believe it when Bob... Bob Starr, the owner... Called me into his office and told me. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. I was useless all day. Couldn't keep my mind on anything else. I get to pick out the decor and hire my own staff and plan the interior lay-out, not to mention, work out sales plans and predictions and all that good stuff. It's going to be a hell of a lot of work, but this is just the break I've been waiting for my whole life. What do you think of mauve for an office?

She stops for a moment.

CONNIE

Congratulations.

DI

Yeah.

INT. HENDERSON DINING ROOM - LATER

The four are seated at the table, working on apple pie following the main course. Jessica's initial drug-induced energy is on the wane.

JESSICA

It really turned my whole life around. After Jim Dixon spoke, I immediately knew the direction my life was going to take. It was all crystal clear to me - almost a religious transformation. I felt this rush of energy all over, you know?

Jessica takes a bite. Di can no longer muster a plastered-on smile. She is probably thinking about driving her bus.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

When I walked out of the seminar, I was like floating on air. I'd talk to people and it was like, I don't know... I was saying things for the first time, but it was like, so natural and real, like it was a part of me all my life.

DI

Cosmic.

JESSICA

Hmm?

DI

Sounds like it was a cosmic experience.

JESSICA

Then, one thing led to another. I met Bob for the first time. And we had a long talk. We really connected.

Connie gives Di a knowing glance. Out of Jessica's view, she pokes an index finger through a circle of finger and thumb on the other hand. Di tries to stifle a smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(Slower now)

He turned me on to all the opportunities available with a career in real estate - all the money you can make and people you can meet. It's all about connecting. Buying and selling property is the only way to make money today. And let's face it, money can buy you anything... anything you want. I don't care what people say. Money can buy you happiness. From there, it was only a matter of time before I had my license and I was selling... and... I haven't looked back since.

Jessica sighs and rubs her forehead.

FRAN

Want some more pie?

JESSICA

I think I'm getting a headache.

FRAN

I got aspirin.

JESSICA

No, no. I, uh, have something in the car... that I take, to uh...

Connie gives Di another knowing look. Jessica stands.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Don't do anything with the dishes until I get back. Promise?

FRAN

You can have them.

Jessica breezes out, leaving the three in a void. They exchange looks. Di lets out a deep breath...

DI

Wow.

INT. JESSICA'S BMW - NIGHT

ANGLE CLOSE, as Jessica inhales another load of coke up each nostril. She breathes in deeply, closing her eyes and holding her head back. Then, her eyes pop open - she is back on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks around at the dark world, just as a deep green economy car drives by and parks just ahead of Jessica on the other side of the Henderson driveway. Jessica CLICKS her spotlight off and watches.

INT. HENDERSON DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The three are still at the table.

CONNIE

If you don't know what she's doing out there, you're more naïve than I thought.

FRAN

What am I supposed to do about it? She's an adult now. I can't go running her life.

CONNIE

That's no excuse. We all have a responsibility. Closing your eyes to the situation is as much as saying you don't care.

FRAN

Of course, I care.

DI

I got third-grade kids on my bus that're smoking dope. It makes me sick.

FRAN

That's terrible.

DI

If I catch them, I rat on them to the school, but it doesn't do any good most of the time, they just get more somehow.

CONNIE

You see, it's not just a problem for individuals, it's a problem for society. We're all responsible.

FRAN

How can you say that? I don't sell drugs to kids.

Fran takes some plates to the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

If you're not part of the solution,  
you're part of the problem.

FRAN (O.S.)

(From the kitchen)

What's that supposed to mean?

She RUNS WATER, which drowns out the answer.

DI

It means, if you don't do something  
about the problem...

CONNIE

If you just try to ignore it and  
hope it'll go away on its own...

DI

You're only making things worse.

Fran comes back in.

FRAN

Why don't you talk to her? You're  
the psychologist. You know what to  
say.

CONNIE

She doesn't listen to me.

FRAN

She doesn't listen to anybody.

The doorbell RINGS.

DI

Why don't we all talk to her?

Fran and Connie look at each other and shrug. The door RINGS  
again.

FRAN

(Calling)

It's open! Oh, she probably locked  
herself out.

Fran goes to the door and opens it.

FRAN (CONT'D)

The door was open. Why...

She freezes. A man is standing in the doorway, face hidden in  
darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN

Hello, Fran.

She says nothing, as she studies the familiar person before her. The mustache is gone now, the hair is cut and combed neatly, and he's dressed nicely, but it is still the same man.

CONNIE

Who is it, Mom?

The blood has drained from her face. She has to hold on to the door for support.

INT. JESSICA'S BMW

Jessica's eyes are wide, staring out toward the front door. She looks away and around, not focusing on anything in particular.

After a moment, her hands start the car and put it in gear. She revs it loudly, as if she has suddenly forgotten how to drive. Then she is off, speeding at full throttle down the quiet street.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM

Connie is at the window, trying to catch a glimpse of the speeding car. She turns in and looks at Fran. The SILENCE is thick.

RON

I bet you weren't expecting to see me.

FRAN

No.

Connie goes to the door.

RON

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. I wanted to see you and I couldn't think of any better way to do it. I knew you'd be here and-

FRAN

(Calmly)  
Go away.

RON

I'm sorry?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

Go away.

RON

Can I give you something first?

FRAN

What?

He steps forward and Fran recoils. Seeing her reaction, he stops.

RON

Sorry. Here.

He holds out an envelope. Nobody touches it for some time. Finally, Connie grabs it. They stand and stare for another eternity.

RON (CONT'D)

Bye.

Ron turns and walks off. Even though he is wearing a shiny new pair of black shoes, his FOOTSTEPS still SOUND the same, DRAGGING and SCRAPING on the cement walkway. Fran and Connie watch until he is swallowed up by the darkness. Then, Fran closes the door.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are low. A long window frames a spectacular view of downtown San Diego across the harbor.

The dark silhouette of a man moves into FRAME. He lowers his head and sits on a bed in the FOREGROUND.

RON'S eyes are distant. He is staring at nothing out across the bay. His lips start to move, then stop. He closes his eyes and holds his hands still in his lap.

RON

(Quietly, haltingly)

Dear Lord. Please give me guidance.  
I don't want to hurt these people  
anymore. I want them to... (Beat) I  
don't expect them to forgive me,  
but I want them to know... that I  
mean them no harm... and that I  
am... (Beat) so, so, terribly  
sorry.

A tear falls down his cheek, as he lifts his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON (CONT'D)  
God, you know what I have done to  
them. Please help me.

INT. HENDERSON FRAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She is alone, seated on the edge of the bed with the unopened envelope in her hand. She sets it on the night stand and takes off her robe. Then, she sits again and turns to the letter. She wishes it weren't there. She picks it up. Then, she opens it quickly.

Inside is a two-page letter folded around a small worn photograph. It is a picture of Ron with his arm around Fran at the beach, taken before they had children.

She looks at it fondly, longingly. She shakes her head and starts to read.

INT. CONNIE'S STUDIO APT. - NIGHT

It is late and the single room is dark except for a small lamp by Connie's bed. She is lying there reading a fat book. She is too tired to stay awake, but too sick to find the peace to sleep.

She puts the book down and sits on the edge of the bed. Then, she gets up and walks around the dark room. She checks the front door lock, then stands next to the window and peers through an opening in the curtains.

The clear blue glare of a streetlight cuts a sharp pattern on her face as her eyes search outside for something that isn't there.

Something terrible and odious is reoccurring in her life. She feels pain in every part of her body - an aching, a yearning for it to just go away and leave her. She turns in, closes her eyes and wraps her arms tight around her stomach.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HENDERSON HALLWAY

FLASHBACK 17 YEARS.

ANGLE FACING THE KITCHEN DOOR. The door opens and six-year-old Connie enters, dressed in school clothes, carrying her lunchbox. She sets the lunchbox on the counter and continues down the hall. We follow her CLOSE, as she walks toward her bedroom. Then, she stops suddenly at the door. Something is wrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WE PUSH IN CLOSER as CONNIE reaches for the doorknob, then freezes. She HEARS LOUD, almost violent RUSTLING coming from inside the room.

Connie grabs the doorknob. She freezes again, deafened by the pounding of her heart. Her hand turns the knob and shoves the door open.

Her eyes are already looking down toward Jessica's bed. Reflexively, she puts her hands over her mouth and stares O.S. in horror.

INT. BOB STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The moonlight rakes across a king-size bed, where two silhouetted bodies are involved in deep sex. The two are driven by something other than pleasure. They are a machine, pounding, clawing, racing. The woman pulls and tears at the man's back.

Finally, an intense release, and all is quiet. The man slides off and over to the side.

Jessica is tense, eyes closed. Her face looks haggard in the harsh light. She catches her breath, then rises and sits on the edge of the bed, looking away from Bob. Bob Starr is on his side, watching her. He wants to say something, but can't find the words.

Jessica answers him by standing abruptly, walking into the bathroom and closing the door.

CUT TO:

INT. OPEN HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

ANGLE ON A CLOSET DOOR, as it opens, revealing an empty space.

Jessica is with a young couple and their five-year-old daughter. The WOMAN is opening doors and drawers, imagining them being hers. The girl is hanging on her father, bored.

WOMAN

Can you get different cabinets?

JESSICA

Yes. There are several styles to choose from. Did you want something darker?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

Oh, I don't know. A lot of our furniture is dark, more oak colored.

JESSICA

You can get oak. There are also quite a few choices in the floor tiles, and of course, the wall color.

WOMAN

I'm not so sure we'd even want a different color, we'll have to get all new furniture anyway.

The woman shoots a look at her husband, who shudders.

MAN

What would the payments on something like this be?

The KID wanders over to her mother.

JESSICA

Depends on your down.

KID

Can I go outside?

MAN

Minimum.

WOMAN

No. You'll get all muddy.

JESSICA

And your financing, of course.

MAN

Low. Low payments. Very low.

KID

No, I won't. Please, please...

JESSICA

Well, why don't we look at the rest of the house, then we can sit down and look at the options.

MAN

Can you give me an idea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOMAN

I said no!

KID

Please, please...

JESSICA

Mmm. I need more specifics first.  
There are so many variables.

MAN

A range.

WOMAN

Do you want to sit in the car young  
lady?

KID

No. Why won't you let me...

JESSICA

Well, a range. I would say, umm...

She gets out her calculator and starts pecking away.

MAN

(To woman)

Can't you get her to shut up?

WOMAN

Why should I have to be the one!

KID

I'm bored! All we do is look at  
houses all the time.

MAN

(To Jessica)

I'm really sorry about this.

JESSICA

(Still working)

I understand. It's hard for  
children to sit still.

KID

I want to go! I'm bored!

WOMAN

Can't you take care of her for just  
a minute?! That's all I ask!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAN

(Pointing to Jessica)

I'm talking to her right now. Why don't you?

KID

I want to go outside!! I want to go outside!!

WOMAN

Please!

JESSICA

Okay, assuming you can come up with the three percent-

KID

I want to go outside!! I want to go outside!! I'm bored!!

MAN

Excuse me.

The man stomps over to the cute little girl in her Sunday clothes, and carries her under his arms to the sliding door leading to the unfinished backyard.

WOMAN

(To Jessica)

What about counter top colors?

JESSICA

(Distracted)

Well, of course, there are a couple, I, umm, think. I'll have to check...

The man dumps the kid outside, and she slips and lands in a puddle of mud.

MAN

There! Are you happy!

The kid starts to SCREAM and CRY.

WOMAN

Oh, that was real smart. Real smart! Goddamn you!

The mother continues her harangue, as she picks the kid up and carries her out of the room, dripping and SCREAMING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JESSICA

Why don't I call you?

(Sees his reaction)

Or you can call me. I'll be in the office the rest of the week. Here's my number.

MAN

(Taking her card)

Thank you.

JESSICA

It'll give me more time to work out the numbers...

MAN

That's okay, don't bother. We'll talk about it and let you know if we decide to pursue it.

The kid is still SCREAMING.

WOMAN

Hurry up!!!

MAN

Thank you.

He quickly shakes Jessica's hand and runs out. We can HEAR them arguing all the way down the drive to their car.

WOMAN

I was never so embarrassed in my whole life-

MAN

What am I supposed to do-

WOMAN

You can help out once in a while. It's not going to kill you...

Jessica's head droops and she rubs her temples. She steps over to the sliding door and closes it. She is alone now and her weakness shows. She is weary and unhappy.

For some years now, she has had a lot of starts and no finishes. Every time she thinks she has found the answer, it ends nowhere. She is hoping that her promotion will give her a lift, but she is pretty sure it won't.

She picks up a doll the girl left behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

She places all her faith in the next line of coke, as she struggles with the realization that the craving deep inside her is for itself only. It is a pain that has no reason.

She puts the doll in a drawer and steps through the short opening into the living room.

INT. OPEN HOUSE LIVING ROOM

As she enters, she looks up. Ron is facing her.

RON  
Jessica. Jessica Henderson?

JESSICA  
(Coldly)  
Yes.

RON  
I'm, uh, Ron...

JESSICA  
I know.

RON  
Uh, How are you?

JESSICA  
Fine.  
(Hesitating)  
You?

RON  
Couldn't be better.

They stare at each other for an uncomfortable moment.

RON (CONT'D)  
Well. I had prepared a whole lot of things to say for this moment. But right now I can't think of one of them. Maybe it's because my brain wants to say more than my mouth can handle.

Trying to be funny falls flat.

RON (CONT'D)  
I guess now's a bad time to talk, but it's the only way I had to...

He holds up a dog-eared magazine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON (CONT'D)

This. This is why... what really got me to come back. I'm sure you've seen it.

He opens it up to a specific place and reads.

RON (CONT'D)

"Salesperson of the year. Jessica Henderson of All Starr Realty in San Diego, California tells us her secrets of success." Man, I read that and it did something to me. I don't know. I was never much of a father...

(Checks her reaction)

Or a human being. But when I read this, I was so proud and happy, that my little girl could do all that... I started to cry. There I was, sitting in this real estate office in Centralia, Washington, reading this article, and tears were coming out and... people were sort of staring at me.

Something softens in Jessica.

RON (CONT'D)

Anyhow, I umm, just wanted to come back and see you and everybody else and, I don't know, not patch things up. I know what I did was... horrible and wrong and there's just no way that can ever change, but... I guess seeing this article got me thinking. I've been a louse all my life, no two ways about it. I don't expect anybody to... forgive me for what I done. (BEAT) I guess what I'm saying is, it's my turn. I've been taking all my life. Now I want to give back. I don't want to go to my grave with everybody hating me. I want people to, if they don't love me, at least know that I tried... to fix things up... to do some good and help people... not be some kind of leach.

He looks into Jessica's cold eyes.

RON (CONT'D)

Don't you think that's a good idea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESSICA  
(After deliberating)  
Sure.

RON  
Will you come over tonight? To your  
Mom's house?

Jessica sees some people coming up the driveway.

JESSICA  
Look. I got to... There are some  
people.

RON  
I'm sorry. I won't bother you  
anymore. I just want to know... if  
you'll come.

JESSICA  
(Rushing)  
Yeah. I'll umm...

RON  
Good. Good. Thanks. See you  
tonight.

Ron turns to leave, just as the other people are entering.

RON (CONT'D)  
Nice house, Miss Henderson. Just  
the right size too. I'm sure we'll  
be doing some business real soon.

Big smile, as he walks out. There is even a hint of a smile  
from Jessica.

WOMAN  
Mind if we look around?

JESSICA  
(Back on)  
Not at all. Help yourself. Let me  
know if you have any questions.

They start off through the house, as Jessica watches Ron get  
in his car.

INT. HENDERSON DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ron and Connie are standing apart from each other next to the  
dinner table. Fran enters with opened cartons of Chinese  
food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

Mmm, Moo Goo Gai Pan. My favorite.

She sets the cartons down on the table.

FRAN (CONT'D)

So, are we all good with chopsticks?

RON

I'm fine.

CONNIE

Yeah.

FRAN

Well, okay. Let's sit down, then. Uh, thank you for the dinner, Ron.

RON

It's nothing. Should we wait for Jessica?

FRAN

She's usually late. We can get started.

They sit and start dishing out food.

RON

Just so you know, tonight I'm chief cook and bottle washer. Your wish is my command.

(She smiles)

Been almost fifteen years since I've had Chinese food from Fat Boy's. You guys probably go there all the time.

CONNIE

We haven't been there in years.

FRAN

Well, no. I think we went a couple of months ago. Wasn't that it?

CONNIE

No Mom. That was Chinese Village in La Mesa, remember?

FRAN

I don't remember. It all tastes the same to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RON

Did you get enough rice?

FRAN

Yes, thank you. I don't really care for flavored rice that much.

RON

Oh yeah. I should've remembered. I'm sorry.

FRAN

How could you remember? It's been so long.

RON

You'd be surprised what I remember.

A moment of SILENCE. Then, they dig in to their food.

CONNIE

So, what have you been up to?

RON

Well.

Ron forces a chuckle, as he works on phrasing his answer.

RON (CONT'D)

That's the sixty thousand dollar question, isn't it? What have I been up to?

FRAN

Connie, let's finish dinner before we get into all that-

RON

No, no. She asked. That's a perfectly reasonable question. Why after fifteen years am I coming back here... and butting my way into your lives and taking the chance of upsetting everybody and everything again? Why wasn't I content with being just another bad memory?

He sticks a big wad of food in his mouth.

RON (CONT'D)

Well. I'll tell you. I didn't want to be a bad memory.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RON (CONT'D)

People don't need bad memories  
always eating away at them.

He has prepared the following.

RON (CONT'D)

I'm here... to do whatever I can to  
make your lives better.

They ruminate on that for awhile.

RON (CONT'D)

I've done a lot of living the last  
fifteen years and I've done a lot  
of thinking. The biggest change in  
my life was accepting Jesus Christ  
as my savior a few years back. The  
idea that Jesus could forgive even  
me for all I had done - all the  
misery I'd inflicted on people -  
and make me whole again. It's  
just... too much to even imagine.  
Well, to make a long story short,  
I'm a new person now. And I can't  
live with myself without at least  
trying to help pick up the pieces.

There is another SILENCE.

FRAN

This is delicious.

CONNIE

(Can't resist)

I don't get it. I just... it  
doesn't make sense to me. I'm  
sorry.

RON

Put yourself in my place-

CONNIE

I can't. I just can't.

He stops eating and takes it all in. She still can't look him  
in the eye.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What you are, what you did. I... I  
like to think I'm a pretty good  
judge of character. That's why I  
decided to get into psychology. But  
this is the hardest thing in the  
world to do...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

to crawl into somebody's skin when you have... absolutely nothing in common with them. No offense. I mean, as human beings, we have nothing in common, nothing.

The doorbell RINGS.

FRAN

I'll get it.

Fran springs to the door.

CONNIE

I either have to simply disregard everything you say or believe it at face value. I have no way to judge. Do you see what I mean?

RON

Yes. I think so. Well. I certainly don't expect you to believe everything I say at face value, especially after... what happened. I guess it will just take time.

Connie and Ron eat in SILENCE. Somehow talking about the past comes easily. The old Ron seems very distant.

Jessica comes in, immediately focusing on Ron. She makes her way slowly to the table.

FRAN

Why didn't you just come in? The door was unlocked.

JESSICA

(Distantly)

I... thought it was locked. I don't know.

RON

Hello Jessica.

(To Fran and Connie)

You know, it was Jessica that got me going. Did I show you the article?

He pulls the article out of his back pocket and spreads it out.

RON (CONT'D)

When I saw this, I was so proud. Something just got to me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

RON (CONT'D)

I saw this and I... felt... I knew I was missing something. Not missing, that I had deserted something. You know what I mean? It came to me like a flash. Like God was speaking to me. I could almost hear him. This is where I belong... where I'm needed... where I can find happiness for myself... and where I can bring happiness to others.

Connie and Fran stare at the article.

FRAN

Well, we are very proud of Jessica too, of course. She's so good at what she does. And she works so hard, sometimes I think too hard.

Jessica is still fixed on Ron.

JESSICA

(Unusually quiet)

Thanks, Mom. Why is it every compliment from you ends with a criticism?

FRAN

I'm sorry. I didn't-

RON

So, would you like some Chinese? I got it at Fat Boy's. You remember Fat Boy's-

JESSICA

What is this?

RON

(Smile and a wink)

Moo goo gai pan. What do you mean?

JESSICA

I mean. What is this?

She remains standing.

RON

(Pleading)

Jessica. I know what you're thinking. I truly do. But everything I say is the God's honest truth. So help me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JESSICA

No. No, I can't hear this. Do you think we're all crazy? When you left this house-

FRAN

Jessica please-

JESSICA

When you left this house, everything was broken and ruined. You left my mother to die.

Fran takes something into the kitchen.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

She was lying right there! Right there! Bleeding and half dead! We had to call an ambulance. I was only eleven. We were little girls and we had to call an ambulance for our mother who was unconscious and bleeding!

RON

(Calmly)

Jess-

JESSICA

And now you're here again with your Goddamn Chinese food, sitting there like nothing ever happened!

She reaches out and sweeps boxes of gooey Chinese off the table. Ron watches her, taking it all with the patience of a Saint.

CRASH! Something drops in the kitchen.

FRAN (O.S.)

Damn.

Jessica turns to the door and opens it. Ron springs up, and it all comes out, as if God himself is speaking through him.

RON

(Evangelically)

I'm a new person now, Jess.

Jessica stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

RON (CONT'D)

Believe what you will. Jesus Christ has come into my heart and turned me inside out. I know at long last what my purpose in life is. And I pray to God every night that I have the strength to do his will.

There is even a hint of a tear in his eye.

The front door closes.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK 16 years earlier.

It is Saturday morning on a summer day. The TV is on with Roadrunner cartoons. Jessica and Connie are in their pajamas, lying next to each other on the floor. A 10,000 ton Acme safe falls on the coyote and they giggle.

Then, a FOOTSTEP. Their eyes grow wide, as they look up toward the kitchen door.

Ron staggers into the dining room from the kitchen, wearing only jockey shorts and a tee-shirt. Judging by the way he is rubbing his eyes and shuffling his feet, he must be suffering through another morning hangover.

He pulls the drapes closed, then notices the TV sound.

RON

Turn that fucking thing off.

Connie turns it off, then both girls sit and watch. He is obviously very sick. He drags a dining room chair back and falls into it, drops his arm on the table and bends forward. He coughs deeply, barely able to hold back the poisonous contents of his stomach. He sees the girls.

RON (CONT'D)

What're you looking at?

They both turn away. Then, Jessica dares to look back for a moment, long enough to see through his alcohol-withered shell.

EXT. JESSICA'S PLACE - DAY

FLASHBACK 16 years earlier

She is holding a father doll. Two girl dolls are next to each other on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

(As father)

Well, I'm home from work. I'm so hungry I could eat a bear.

(As Mom)

Well we're not having bear. Is meatloaf okay?

(As Father)

Meatloaf! I love meatloaf! Here's a big daddy kiss for you and a big daddy kiss for you... And a big daddy hug for Mommy.

Jessica closes her eyes and hugs the father doll.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(As the mom)

Dinner's almost ready, dear. Why don't you sit at the table and rest your weary feet?

(Dad)

Okay, dear.

She puts the father doll on the dirt floor beside the girls.

INT. HENDERSON KITCHEN - DAY

FLASHBACK 16 years earlier

A weekday morning, probably Wednesday. The girls are seated eating Trix. Fran is rushing, trying to knot Connie's hair into braids.

CONNIE

OWW!

FRAN

Hold still. Jessica quit dawdling.

JESSICA

I'm done.

FRAN

No, you're not.

JESSICA

I'm not hungry.

FRAN

You'll be hungry in one hour if you don't eat now.

JESSICA

No, I won't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN  
Eat, I said!

CONNIE  
OWW!

FRAN  
Hold still.

JESSICA  
(Drops her spoon)  
I hate this kiddy shit.

FRAN  
Jessica!

CONNIE  
OWWWWW!!!

FRAN  
Connie. I give up.

Fran puts a ponytail band around what there is and heads for the counter.

JESSICA  
You ALWAYS braid Connie's hair.

Ron comes in from the hallway, and the air sucks out of the room. No one looks at him directly, but they follow his movements. He goes to the refrigerator and pulls out a beer. Then, he opens it and walks past them into the dining room.

FRAN  
(Innocently)  
What time did you get home last night, Ron?

RON  
I don't know.

INT. HENDERSON DINING ROOM

CONTINUING FLASHBACK

Fran follows him in and he sits at the table.

FRAN  
I, uh, thought you had to work Wednesdays.

RON  
Not anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

Oh... So... Is this going to be your day off from now on?

RON

Yup.

Fran knows what's coming.

FRAN

Is Thursday going to be your day off, too?

RON

Yup.

FRAN

And Friday, and all the other-

Then, Ron lashes out, as if explaining to a stupid, annoying child.

RON

I've been fired, Fran! Fired, Fran! Fucking fired, Fran!

FRAN

Oh Ron. I'm sorry. What, uh...

RON

That fucker Novak had it in for me. He'd been on my ass and on my ass, since he started three months ago. So, fuck him. I don't have to deal with that asshole anymore. Good fucking riddance.

He drains the can of beer.

FRAN

I'm sorry. I... Do you think you'll have trouble finding-

RON

I don't know.

FRAN

It's just that we're not in good shape now-

RON

I don't know. I don't know!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAN

Are you going to start looking  
today?

He gets up and grabs the end of the table and lifts it.

RON

I don't fucking know!!!

He rams the table forward and throws it over. Knickknacks,  
vases and doilies CRASH to the floor.

He STOMPS away from them toward the hallway. Connie starts to  
cry.

EXT. JESSICA'S PLACE - DAY

CONTINUING FLASHBACK

The SOUND of Connie CRYING continues, as Jessica holds and  
comforts her doll. Jessica opens her eyes. She, too, is  
crying. She kisses the baby doll's forehead. The crying grows  
in intensity, as she holds the doll tighter.

INT. HENDERSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FLASHBACK 21 years earlier

Two year old CONNIE is sitting on the couch, wailing. Her  
mouth is open and tears are streaming down. It is a hurt and  
desperate cry. Jessica is facing her, at a distance.

RON

Can't you shut that fucking kid up?

Ron has entered the room and wants to watch TV, while Fran  
straightens the room.

FRAN

It's okay, just let her cry it out.

RON

She can cry it out someplace else.

FRAN

Ron, she's only two, she'll be done  
crying in a minute.

Jessica drops her doll on Connie's lap.

RON

Get her the fuck out of here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN  
Just leave her.

RON  
Connie! Shut the fuck up!

FRAN  
Ron please don't use that kind of  
language-

RON  
Shut up! Shut up!

Connie cries all the louder.

FRAN  
Ron, please leave her-

RON  
Shut the fuck up!

FRAN  
She's only two-

RON  
She's going to be dead if she  
doesn't shut the fuck up-

FRAN  
Yelling at her won't do any good.

RON  
Well if you're not going to do  
anything, I guess I'll have to.

He gets up out of the easy chair and storms over to Connie.

RON (CONT'D)  
Shut the fuck up, you Goddamn  
brat!!!

He hoists her up and belts her with the broadside of his  
hand.

FRAN  
Ron!!

Fran runs over to him and tries to pull him away. Connie's  
desperate cry is out of control. She is too lost too react  
any other way. Another blow. She shudders, then...

CONNIE  
Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jessica stares, with no expression, as the blows keep coming and the SCREAMING and pulling and wrenching keep coming. The pain is too much to bear.

FRAN

Ron stop! Let me have her! You're going to kill her!! Ron!!

One last blow. And Connie slumps silently.

FRAN (CONT'D)

You killed her! Oh God! You killed her! My baby!

Ron drops her limp body on the couch and storms off toward the hall, his day ruined. Fran sits on the couch and holds Connie tightly, rocking her desperately.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God. My baby, my baby. Please don't die. Please God.

Jessica takes a step forward, holds her hand out and touches Connie's hair.

Power is meant to hurt. And in this world, Jessica is learning that power is everything, hurt or be hurt.

Fran's crying blends with another adult female crying.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY WOMEN'S RESTROOM - DAY

The present day. Jessica is once again hunched over the small sink, crying.

PAGE (V.O.)

Jessica Henderson extension twenty,  
Jessica Henderson extension twenty.

Her head moves up quickly, red eyes stare at the bedraggled face in the mirror. She knows who extension 20 is.

She pulls handfuls of paper towels out of the dispenser and anxiously dabs away tears and smudged make-up.

PAGE (V.O.)

Jessica Henderson extension twenty.

JESSICA

I heard you Goddamn it. Give me a break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She dumps the paper towels in the trash and stands. Her instant smile looks a little damp. It's the eyes. She pushes through stuff in her purse and finds the Visine. A few squirts, a "close 'em" smile and she's out the door.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY HALL - DAY

The place is buzzing. She runs into a man coming at full speed down the hall. They exchange "Whoops" and a smile and Jessica continues across the aisle into a cubicle belonging to RUTH.

JESSICA  
Ruth, mind if I...

PAGE (V.O.)  
Jessica Henderson extension...

JESSICA  
(Smiling)  
That woman never gives up.

RUTH  
Sure.

Jessica grabs Ruth's phone and dials.

JESSICA  
Hi Bob, it's me.  
(Pause)  
Sure thing, be right there.  
(Hangs up)  
Thanks.

She's off.

INT. BOB STARR'S OFFICE

As Jessica flies in.

JESSICA  
Hi.

BOB  
Jess, come on in. Got a surprise  
for you.

She looks around the door to where Bob is pointing, and freezes.

Ron is standing there with a sincere-looking half-smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB (CONT'D)

Well, come on in Jess and have a seat.

She closes the door and moves into the room to a chair opposite Ron's.

BOB (CONT'D)

Your Dad here's looking for a job.

Jessica's eyes widen.

BOB (CONT'D)

But I had to check him out first. Didn't want to hire just anybody off the street.

He gives Ron a wink.

JESSICA

What uh, what kind of job?

BOB

Well, remember we were looking for someone we could pay under the table to do odd jobs around the office, you know, a little cleaning up, driving things around, picking stuff up?

She nods slightly.

BOB (CONT'D)

Well, here he is. I didn't even know you had a father.

Ha ha.

RON

It's the perfect job for me right now, until I get more established.

BOB

Hey, better look out. You do too good a job and we won't let you go.

The men CHUCKLE. Not Jessica. The joke appears to be on her.

BOB (CONT'D)

So what do you think, Jess? Think he looks trustworthy enough?

JESSICA

I, um, I think...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She tries to avoid looking at him.

RON  
Jessica?

BOB  
(Still smiling)  
Hey, no fair. Let her talk.

JESSICA  
Well, you seem to have made up your  
mind.

Bob's smile starts to droop, but she catches it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Bob, it's fine. I'm a... It's just  
a little surprising... to see him.  
You know...  
(animates to life)  
It was the last thing I expected. I  
mean I haven't seen him in fifteen  
years and now he's going to work...  
here.

BOB  
Well?

JESSICA  
Well what?

BOB  
(With flourish)  
Do we have your blessing, madam?

JESSICA  
Oh Bob, of course.

BOB  
Well, it's a done deal then.

Bob and Ron shake.

BOB (CONT'D)  
Glad to have you onboard. And I  
don't want to hear any gossip  
around the office about favoritism.

Ha Ha Ha.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY HALL

As Jessica steps out of Bob's office and walks away at a  
brisk pace. Ron catches up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON  
Hey, thanks for the good word.

JESSICA  
Sure, any time.

He grabs her arm to stop her.

RON  
I really am grateful.

JESSICA  
Let go of me.

He does.

RON  
Sorry.

She continues through the door leading to the stairwell. Ron follows her.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY STAIRWELL

As Jessica moves quickly down the concrete steps to the garage, her SHARP HEELS ECHOING wildly. Ron tries to catch up.

RON  
Jessica, can I talk to you for a minute, please?

JESSICA  
(Stopping)  
What?

He wasn't expecting her to stop.

RON  
Umm, I just... I don't know what to tell you to get you to believe me. This is me. I'm for real. I'm not out to scam nobody. You helped me get a job and that's, uh, that's all I want. I owe you one, that's all.  
(deadly pause)  
What do you want me to do?

JESSICA  
Go to hell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON  
(Pleading)  
Jess, please...

Jessica turns and opens the garage door noisily, then leaves.  
SLAM!

Ron turns and walks slowly back to the door. He grabs the doorknob and stops. He BASHES the side of his fist against the doorjamb, then leans against it and closes his eyes.

INT. SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPT. ENTRANCE HALL

A door opens at the end of a long white echoey hall letting in a stream of outdoor light. FRED TOUGAS enters flanked by Detectives DEWITT and GARCIA, all dressed for work in shirt sleeves and ties.

GARCIA  
(Cracking a smile)  
How's the weather up your way?

TOUGAS  
Funny.

Tougas is holding a suitcase and raincoat.

GARCIA  
Expecting rain?  
(to Dewitt)  
That's a raincoat, right Dewitt?

DEWITT  
Yeah, I think so. Geez, I haven't seen one of those in ten years.

TOUGAS  
It was raining when I left Seattle, okay?

GARCIA  
Raining? Raining? What's that?

They stop at a guard station beside a heavy locked door. A uniformed female cop is seated on the other side of a reinforced window.

DEWITT  
(To female cop)  
Can you check to see if you have a temporary badge made up for a Frederick Tougas?

She looks. He approaches the window and signs a logbook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOUGAS

Hey, I don't mind the rain. I had enough sunshine here to last me the rest of my life.

GARCIA

(Shaking head)

I don't know, man. There's something wrong with people that don't like sunshine. Something Unamerican about 'em.

Dewitt takes the badge from the female cop and hands it to Tougas.

DEWITT

Here, remember it's only temporary.

TOUGAS

(Smiling)

You guys don't believe me. I'm not coming back.

The door buzzes and Tougas follows the others in.

TOUGAS (CONT'D)

There is nothing good about sunshine all the time. It's not good for you anyway.

INT. SDPD. SQUAD ROOM

The cubicled nerve center of the station. The three walk down an aisle, weaving in and out of people.

TOUGAS

You get skin cancer, sunburns, your organs get all dried up.

GARCIA

Hey sunshine ain't dried up my organ, man. I don't know. I don't know.

(Points with thumb)

You need to powder you nose first?

TOUGAS

No thanks. I'm already late.

GARCIA

Hey, calm down, the briefing can wait ten seconds.

(Shakes head again)

Geez, all that rain...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOUGAS

No, let's do it. You got that stuff  
I emailed you?

DEWITT

We're ready.

TOUGAS

Good.

Tougas leads the way into a conference room.

GARCIA

Look out, DeWitt. This is what  
happens to you when you get too  
much Goddamn rain, man.

Dewitt is getting as tired of it as Tougas at this point.

INT. SDPD. CONFERENCE ROOM

Garcia and Dewitt take seats in the small room with three  
other Detectives. One fellow, KRAMER, dressed nicer than the  
others stands and offers his hand to Tougas.

KRAMER

Fred, nice to see you again.

TOUGAS

Same here, Chief. It's just too bad  
it has to be all business.

Kramer offers Tougas the head of the table by the whiteboard,  
but remains standing.

KRAMER

Okay let's call this thing to  
order. For those of you too young  
to remember, this here is Detective  
Fred Tougas, formerly of San Diego  
PD, now of Seattle PD. The boys up  
in Seattle were kind enough to loan  
us Fred who's been on this case  
from the beginning. Right, Fred?

TOUGAS

Right.

KRAMER

You all should be pretty familiar  
with the case by now. So, I'll let  
Fred take over from here.

Kramer sits and Tougas takes the lead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOUGAS

About the only thing good you can  
say about our man is he dresses  
nice. And not even that nice.

INT. RON'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

As Ron hangs up a sports coat in a beat-up old chifforobe, and then closes it and his empty suitcase. He sits on the bed and looks out the window, as the street and factory lights begin to burn through the red, early-evening sky. It looks good to him from his second floor perch.

He opens the drawer of a painted-over night stand and takes out a small handgun. He checks to make sure the safety is on, and then puts it away under some papers.

INT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

As a tall thin man (blonde, balding, mid-thirties) enters from the secure gate area. ED is dressed in a light suit and a slightly hip tie, holding a briefcase and tan overcoat - not unattractive, but certainly not a catch.

He stops just inside and scans the area with nervous, expectant eyes. His mind has been obsessing over the same disturbing thoughts until he is weak and sick all over.

He spots someone, obviously the one he was hoping to find. A huge involuntary smile washes over him, as he pushes his way single-mindedly through the crowd.

Jessica is standing by a conveyer belt. She has a faint smile for Ed and recoils at his touch, as one would a happy dog jumping up, licking your face. With a clammy hand on her back, he bravely kisses her cheek, hoping for a reciprocal sign. He gets none and backs off.

ED

God, I really expected to walk out  
here and not find you.

JESSICA

Well, here I am.

ED

You don't know what this means to  
me. I fully expected to have to  
take a taxi home.

JESSICA

(Coldly)

I said I was going to pick you up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I wouldn't just leave you at the airport.

ED

Well, I know but... you know... things haven't been going real good between us and... I've been such a pain in the ass recently.

(Smile)

God, I'm glad you're here.

She starts to walk down the concourse. He stays with her.

ED (CONT'D)

Well, so how have you been?

JESSICA

You've only been gone a couple of days. Jesus. You act like it's been a year.

ED

It feels like it. It's been killing me the whole time, thinking about what I said on the phone. It was totally inappropriate. I don't know what's gotten into me. I've been acting like some lovesick... fool recently. Calling you all the time. You must think I'm crazy.

He pauses for a reaction. There is none.

ED (CONT'D)

Can I buy you a drink? I'd like to... We can talk. It's been a month since we've sat down and just talked about things.

She looks away from him.

ED (CONT'D)

Just for a minute. I swear. Then, you'll be on your way.

This time when he doesn't get a reaction, he grabs her arm and pulls her gently off to the side.

ED (CONT'D)

Listen, is there something wrong? You seem unusually distracted. Is it me? Please, you have to tell me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESSICA  
(Annoyed)  
It's not you, Ed.

He waits for more of an answer.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
I'm just not in the mood to talk now. All right? Do you really need more of an explanation? It has nothing to do with you.

ED  
What does it have to do with?

JESSICA  
There's nothing to talk about. I just need to sort things out.

ED  
Let's have a drink. Please?

JESSICA  
(After a pause)  
One drink.

INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT

Dark gray, not very busy. Jessica and Ed are at a table by the window, overlooking the runway. The only light at their table comes from harsh overhead spots. Jessica tends to keep her face out of the light.

ED  
Something funny happened to me when I was walking out of the meeting at BMT. There was this guy... a big guy, and all through the meeting he was questioning this and that. Every time I'd make a point, he'd be there picking away at it, you know. All the others were rolling their eyes and yawning. You could tell he was just trying to impress Hartman. So the meeting drug on and on. It was like every time I'd say something, everybody would look over to Clemmons to see if he was going to start up again. So, we finally got through the presentation and we were on the way out...

(Containing laughter)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED (CONT'D)

And there's old Clemmons walking down the hall leading the way, with this supercilious gate, you know, and hanging out of the back of his pants is this two foot long streamer of toilet paper, flying along behind him.

The BARTENDER picks up the empties.

BARTENDER

Can I get you another drink?

JESSICA

No, thanks.

ED

Come on, one more. Just one more.

She nods. The bartender leaves.

ED (CONT'D)

So anyway, there's old fatso waddling down the hall like a duck with this look on his face-

JESSICA

Ed, can I tell you something?

ED

Sure.

She lights a cigarette.

ED (CONT'D)

When did you start smoking again-

JESSICA

I... I'm going through a lot of changes in my life right now.

He listens with wrapped attention. She rubs her brow.

ED

Yeah?

JESSICA

I really have to be going. I can't think. I'm afraid I might say... something I shouldn't, that I don't mean. I know you want to talk, but umm...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ED

Okay. Okay. I've been preparing for this. It's okay, I understand. I've been coming on too fast. Right? My expectations are too much. I understand. I get it. The last thing I want to do is push too fast and ruin what we have. I'll back off. No more phone calls. No more guilt trips. Okay? We'll just take it one step at a time. You lead your life and I'll lead mine.

She is still rubbing her brow. He waits for a reply.

JESSICA

(Disinterestedly)

Uh, yeah, that sounds good. I just need some time...

ED

(Sighing)

Boy, that takes a load off my mind. Jessica, I really do love you, and I don't want anything to ruin it.

JESSICA

I really have to go. I'm sorry.

She is becoming more and more agitated.

ED

Please, tell me what's wrong. Please. I can't figure it out.

JESSICA

Nothing is wrong.

ED

There must be something wrong and I can't tell if it's me or... if there's somebody else... or what. I... I think there's probably somebody else. I'm not accusing you, believe me, but if there is somebody else, I'd feel better knowing. You can be honest.

She laughs.

JESSICA

Okay, there's somebody else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ED  
Another man?

JESSICA  
(Smiling)  
Well, I should hope so.

He's crushed.

ED  
Well, that's cool. I understand.  
Umm, I don't...

JESSICA  
Three men.

ED  
What?

JESSICA  
No four. I'm fucking the entire  
U.S. Navy.

ED  
Is this a joke?

JESSICA  
Everything's a joke, Ed.

The bartender delivers drinks. Jessica begins to inhale hers.

ED  
I'm serious Jess. If you have a  
problem-

JESSICA  
I don't have any problems, only  
fucking men... everywhere fucking  
me here, fucking me there. Fuck.

He stares at her, mouth agape.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
You've never heard me say fuck,  
have you? I bet you didn't know I  
could even say it. Well, fuck. As  
in fuck me, fuck your mother, fuck  
life.

Ed thinks he has made a break-through.

ED  
What's the problem, tell me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JESSICA

(Through her teeth)

The problem is, Ed, the problem is my whole fucking life is loaded up with people and men and things I feel nothing for. All crap! I don't ask for much and I don't get anything back, except a whole bunch of crap I don't need. You get my drift? Know what I mean, Ed?

ED

I think...

JESSICA

I feel nothing when I'm with you.

(Pause for effect)

You serve no purpose in my life. You're just part of all the little shit things I have to do. Pick you up at the airport and take you home and wipe your nose and spread my legs-

ED

I'm sorry, I had-

JESSICA

You are. You are always sorry. Sorry about everything you do. You're this little weaselly, shitty man who's never gotten anything right in his life.

She lights another cigarette with hands cold and shaking. Ed looks away from her, fighting back tears.

ED

Well, you're not exactly what I'd call the perfect human being-

She blows smoke in his face. He just closes his eyes tightly.

ED (CONT'D)

Jessica, man, you need help.

JESSICA

You think? You think I'd come to a sorry little shit like you for help? Go fuck yourself, Ed.

His eyes are still closed and his shoulders hunched, as she stands and walks off.

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A cold fog glows orange from the streetlights. Cars are steaming in the aisles waiting for spaces.

The BMW is sandwiched between two cars with barely enough room for the door to clear. The rear lights beam on as the engine roars to life. The car backs out, screeching with the turn, barely missing the bumper of the next car.

Then, with engine howling at high tach, it speeds down the aisle dodging in and out of stopped cars and makes a sharp turn onto the main road without stopping at the pay booth.

INT. SKATING RINK - NIGHT

The rink is packed with weekend evening hotrodders doing tricks. The MUSIC is echoey and loud over the roar of skates and happy SHOUTING.

Di spends her time skating along slowly beside Connie, who is clinging on to whatever she can around the edge of the rink. When they come to the end of a railing, Connie shakes her head and stops. Di does some circles to show Connie how easy it is, but Connie's not buying it. She turns and starts to make her way back along the railing. Di skates over to her and puts an arm around her waist.

Connie looks at her, a little shocked.

DI  
Come on. I got you.

Connie looks around at faces in the crowd. Then, she lets go of the railing and puts her arm around Di, and they move off slowly around the rink.

INT. SKATING RINK ANOTHER AREA

CRASH! Fran is down, blocking the way. Both of her legs are splayed out sideways, skate wheels still spinning. Ron tries to help her up, but finds it next to impossible to lift her while LAUGHING hysterically.

Every time she thinks she has her balance, the wheels run away from her and Ron loses his grip from doubling over with laughter. Just then, a skater doing a fancy spin, slides into Ron and the three of them end up in a heap on the floor. This time, Fran laughs too.

EXT. HENDERSON HOUSE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON the front of the house from the street. It is dark inside. The porch light is on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WE CRANE down and through the open passenger window of a car parked across the street. A man is seated in it watching the house. A call comes over a radio inside.

TOUGAS (V.O.)  
Garcia, what's up?

Detective Garcia picks up the microphone.

GARCIA  
Nothing yet. They're still gone.  
Did Harrison ever find the car?

TOUGAS (V.O.)  
Negative. It's your show man.

GARCIA  
Thanks.

TOUGAS (V.O.)  
Base, 10-4.

GARCIA  
10-4.

Garcia yawns and settles down in his seat. It is going to be a long night.

INT. JESSICA'S CONDO - NIGHT

A shaft of light enters the dark room from the front door. Jessica enters holding a small brown bag. She flicks a wall switch, and the large living room is instantly bathed in light from several well-planned sources.

It is sparsely decorated with ultra-modern furniture. A glass coffee table is surrounded by a long curved sofa with a tight pale pattern. The tall, peaked ceiling ends in a window, stretching the width of the room.

She walks over to a pale marble dining table next to sliding doors. Most of the surface of the table is taken up by a large floral display of long, thin, twisted sticks and small artificial buds.

She places the bag on the table, then opens it and pulls out a small handgun.

She holds it up and looks it over.

INT. STARR REALTY HALLWAY

As a door flies open from one of the glassed-in meeting rooms, revealing Jessica LAUGHING LOUDLY, presumably at something the Grados have just said. They walk out first with half-smiles, followed by Jessica.

JESSICA

Oh, that must have been terrible. I can just imagine.

ROY

It's easy to laugh about it now, but at the time-

NORA

Everything was soaked. It took weeks to dry out.

Jessica calms down and rubs her eyes, as if they were tearing from laughter.

ROY

The carpet, the drapes...

JESSICA

The drapes?!

NORA

The water was two feet high in some places.

Her laughter is waning.

JESSICA

That's terrible. Two weeks?

ROY

Who knows how long the water had been running?

NORA

The pipe probably broke after that freeze. Remember when it got real cold here about four years ago?

JESSICA

Oh yeah.

NORA

Well, so anyway, that's why we're being extra careful about the plumbing. Especially in the older houses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jessica leads them down the hall toward the lobby.

JESSICA

Well, you get your brother to look at it, but I'm sure everything will be just fine. The house is in very good shape.

NORA

Well, it's the best one we've seen so far anyway.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY LOBBY

As they enter.

ROY

Assuming the plumbing is all right, how soon can we get started on the paperwork.

JESSICA

(Brightening)

Well, we can get all that started this afternoon.

NORA

One step at a time.

JESSICA

Of course.

They're at the front door. JESSICA checks in her purse.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I must have left the keys on my desk. Why don't you have a seat right here? It'll just take me a second.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY HALL

As Jessica walks back toward her desk at full speed. She passes Bob.

BOB

Hey Jess, I hope it's nothing serious with your father.

She stops.

JESSICA

(Annoyed)

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

He called in sick today.

JESSICA

I'm sure it's nothing he won't get over.

Bob watches her, as she continues walking.

INT. ALL-STARR REALTY JESSICA'S CUBICLE

Frantically, she checks through drawers, under papers, in little containers - no luck. Then, she notices a small, shiny black jewelry box with a card attached sitting in the center of her desk. She picks it up and looks it over, then opens it.

Inside is a gold necklace. Jessica takes it out carefully.

Almost immediately, we see a transformation in her face, in her hands. As she looks the tiny necklace over, everything around her magically melts into the distance, at once unimportant.

With the tenderness of a child, she holds the tiny gold heart pendant up on the tip of her finger. With her other hand she feels the fineness of the gold chain, run like wisps of hair through her fingers.

She opens the tiny card and reads. Without seeing the card, we know what it says by the change of expression on her face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JESSICA'S PLACE - DAY

FLASHBACK 15 years earlier

She is sitting on the smooth dirt floor of her shelter. Several dolls are placed in a semi-circle facing her. Her Daddy doll is by her side.

Jessica picks up a small box which has been hastily wrapped by her to look like a present. She removes the paper with mock excitement.

JESSICA

Oh Daddy, you shouldn't have.

Her lines come from TV.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's not even my Birthday or anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She slowly takes the lid off, speechless with joy. She reaches in and scoops out a bracelet made of multi-colored plastic balls.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Oh thank you, thank you. This is  
the most beautiful gift I ever got.

She slips it on her wrist tenderly. Then, as if hearing a voice, looks up.

INT. HENDERSON CHILDREN'S ROOM - ANOTHER TIME

FLASHBACK 15 years earlier

Ron is looking down, leering. This is the old Ron - unshaven, bleary-eyed, dark greasy hair hanging in clumps over his forehead. He wears jeans and an open neck t-shirt.

Jessica is next to him, sitting on the edge of her bed, wearing a sleeveless t-shirt and shorts. Her head is bent, her eyes looking at nothing.

We see a young body and soul stripped of innocence - a girl becoming a young woman with no optimism.

She feels Ron staring at her and folds her arms to cover her chest. She knows in her heart that the gift of beauty she carries is nothing more than a sweet scent to attract the looks and touch of boys and men that have cruel minds and carnal motives.

Ron reaches in and rubs the back of her tender neck with his calloused hand. His touch sends an involuntarily ripple of ice throughout her body. He squeezes her neck. She closes her eyes hard.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

The present. Nora Grado is running her hand over the white Formica counter in the kitchen.

NORA

I hate white. I just hate it.

ROY

But you like the rest of the house,  
don't you?

Jessica is standing by a doorway with folded arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORA

Oh yeah, the rest of the house is fine.

ROY

It's the right price. It's got the bedrooms where you want them. The plumbing is good. It's even close to an Albertsons.

NORA

But this counter is white! I hate white. I'm sorry.

ROY

But can't you overlook the white-

NORA

(Interrupting)

I thought we weren't going to buy a house unless it was exactly what we wanted.

ROY

I'll install another countertop.

NORA

No.

ROY

It's worth it.

NORA

No, it's not.

ROY

If it's going to make you happy-

NORA

The right house is going to make me happy.

ROY

Well, I don't know if we're ever going to get exactly-

NORA

Then, I don't want to move.

ROY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NORA

I'm not moving unless we get  
exactly what we want. Let's go.

Nora is playing games. She picks up her purse and walks snappily out toward the front of the house, breezing past Jessica without a glance.

ROY

(To Jessica)

I... I'm sorry. I don't know what  
to say.

Jessica cannot muster a fake smile this time.

JESSICA

(Quietly)

Well, I think you're right. Of  
course you can never get exactly  
what you want. There will always be  
compromises... to a certain extent.

ROY

I know. I know. Try to explain that  
to her.

JESSICA

Well, I'd like to but I don't think  
it's my place to get in the middle-

Nora is there, behind Jessica, listening.

NORA

(Suspicious)

That's right. It's not your place.  
Your job is to find us a house we  
like. That's it. Not get in the  
way.

JESSICA

I'm sorry.

NORA

You'd do a lot better, if you  
stopped trying to change people's  
minds and just concentrated on  
getting them what they want.

JESSICA

I honestly don't-

NORA

(To Roy)

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She turns away from Jessica, Roy follows.

JESSICA

I honestly don't think I tried to  
change your minds.

NORA

Well, you didn't do much else.

Jessica follows them, as they go out the front door.

JESSICA

How did I try to change your minds?  
Just tell me.

EXT. EMPTY HOUSE PORCH

Nora ignores her and continues walking. Jessica stops just  
outside the door.

JESSICA

Just tell me how what I did!

Nora knows she has gotten under Jessica's skin and plays it  
to the hilt. She stops and faces her with a nasty smile.

NORA

Nothing. I'm very sorry. You didn't  
do anything. All right. Now let's  
just calm down and go back to your  
office.

JESSICA

Then, what?

A direct attack.

NORA

I don't think that's any of your  
business. Do you mind?

JESSICA

Yes, I mind. I didn't spend the  
last month dragging you up and down  
every street in the goddamn city  
just to have you dump me for no  
reason. Now, what's the problem?

Nora is truly taken aback.

NORA

I don't have any problems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

I worked my goddamn ass off for you for a fucking month. A fucking goddamn month! I wasted my precious time, one month out of my life, to find you a goddamn house and do you even appreciate it, do you even thank me? I'm supposed to care about your stupid little problems? I'm supposed to give a damn? What about me? Do you give a goddamn about me? Do you care whether I live or die? Fuck no! Fuck no! Nobody cares. I'm just supposed to walk around like fucking Pollyanna and smile and take it all and eat your shit and suck your cocks and sit there and do what I'm supposed to and pretend that nothing's happened!

Nora and Roy are visibly frightened. This is not the affect she was going for.

Jessica is tight and trembling. She suddenly bursts forward and pushes out with both arms, shoving Nora full-force into a thick bush.

Roy is at a loss, as Jessica stares at him with wild-eyes. Then, she turns away and heads off toward the company Cadillac. The Grados watch, as she starts the car and drives away.

INT. BOB STARR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob is seated at his desk, somberly. Jessica faces him, standing near the door with arms folded.

BOB

Have a seat.

JESSICA

Is this going to take long? I have things to do.

BOB

I don't know. Why don't you sit down?

She rolls her eyes, then saunters over to a chair by the desk, sits and glares at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB (CONT'D)

I just got a very disturbing call  
from that Grado woman, Nora is it?

JESSICA

It's all true. She's a bitch. Can I  
go now?

Bob is at a loss for words.

BOB

No, no. Wait a minute. Is this a  
joke or something? What's going on?

JESSICA

I'd rather not talk about it.

BOB

Jess, I'm afraid you're going to  
have to. Now, what's going on?

JESSICA

It's just a disagreement between me  
and my client. What's the big deal?  
Since when is that any of your  
business?

BOB

When I get calls like that one.

JESSICA

Don't worry, I'll take care of it.

BOB

Jess, you can't go around  
physically abusing clients. Now,  
this woman is calling her attorney  
and she's going to sue you and me  
and everybody she can get her hands  
on.

JESSICA

Is that what she said?

BOB

YOU tell me what happened.

JESSICA

I'd rather not.

BOB

Why? What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESSICA  
(Standing)  
Listen, I don't feel too good now.  
Can we continue this little  
inquisition another time?

He holds out his hand to stop her.

BOB  
What in the world is going on here?  
Sit down.

JESSICA  
No.

She starts toward the door.

BOB  
Jessica!

JESSICA  
Sue me.

BOB  
I will, goddamn it! Get your ass  
back here!

She SLAMS the door behind her.

INT. JESSICA'S BMW - DAY

She is driving at full throttle on the freeway, weaving madly in and out of cars. Her long nailed fingers are wrapped tightly around the steering wheel. Her eyes are wide and distant.

She SNAPS on the MUSIC and cranks it up LOUD. She is moving. Faster and tighter. Suddenly, above the roar...

JESSICA  
God Damn you! God Damn you!

She keeps repeating the words, until they drive out the tears. She doesn't know where she is going, but she is getting there faster and faster.

INT. SDPD. HOMICIDE DEPT. - DAY

Fred Tougas is on the phone, sitting at a desk in a pool of desks and detectives. Dewitt is standing over him, waiting impatiently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOUGAS

(On phone)

Yes. Uh-huh. Yes. Yes. Well, we  
certainly have no intention of...  
Uh-huh.

Tougas shrugs his shoulders at Dewitt and makes a "yak-yak"  
motion with his hand.

TOUGAS (CONT'D)

(On phone)

Can't tell you now. Right. Can't  
tell you now. Of course not. You'll  
be the first to know... I can't  
tell you anything now. Come on, you  
gotta play along with me on this,  
okay? Right.

He hangs up.

TOUGAS (CONT'D)

(To Dewitt)

The media's got wind of it, now.  
It'll be all over the air by this  
afternoon. What you got?

DEWITT

(Cocky)

Oh nothing. I just got off the  
phone with Henderson's fucking  
landlord, that's all.

TOUGAS

(Standing)

You what?!

DEWITT

Well, it seems this landlord called  
here to check up on a guy he was  
renting a room to just last week.  
Somebody downstairs made the  
connection, called me up, I called  
the landlord and everything fits.  
The guy is Henderson, no question.

TOUGAS

Now, let me get this straight.  
You're telling me we know where  
fucking Henderson lives?

DEWITT

Fuckin' "A".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOUGAS

Fuckin' "A". What's Garcia doing?

DEWITT

Staking out Jessica Henderson's house.

TOUGAS

Pull him off and tell him to get his ass over there.

DEWITT

What about the real estate place he's working at?

TOUGAS

Called in sick. Must've smelled something.

DEWITT

Well, if he smelled something, he could be anyplace.

TOUGAS

Yeah, I know. Well? You got any better ideas?

DEWITT

I'll call Garcia.

TOUGAS

We'll have to move in, before this thing goes public. Once that happens, we've lost him for good.

Dewitt turns away. Tougas buries his face in his hands.

INT. CONNIE'S APARTMENT - DUSK

It is only mid-afternoon, but it is winter and cloudy. The inside of the small, studio apartment is almost totally dark when Connie enters balancing a grocery bag under one arm. She pushes the door closed with her foot. Then, as she turns into the room, she looks up.

CONNIE

Jessica.

(Puts her hand over her heart)

My God. You nearly gave me a heart attack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jessica is sitting sideways in a beat-up comfy chair, legs dangling over an arm. She regards Connie casually over a plastic glass of wine.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Well. What, uh... to what do I owe the honor of your presence in my humble abode?

She smiles and sets the bag down in the kitchen.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I didn't even think you knew where I lived. Have you ever been here?

JESSICA

Sure.

CONNIE

Really? Well, hell if I remember. I've been living here three years now. Do you believe it? Three years. And I can count on one hand the number of visitors I've had.  
(Waits for a response)  
Not even a whole hand. Half a hand.

Connie stands facing her, smiling, arms akimbo. Jessica kills another glass.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

So...

An uncomfortable pause.

JESSICA

(Lifting the glass)  
This the only stuff you got?

CONNIE

Where did you even find that?

JESSICA

On a shelf.

CONNIE

A shelf. Hmm. I honestly don't know where that came from. Probably a present from one of my many guests.

JESSICA

God, I hope she didn't have anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Connie walks over to the couch and sits facing her.

CONNIE  
My guests don't have things.

JESSICA  
That's not what I hear.

CONNIE  
Listen, did you come here to  
criticize my lifestyle?

JESSICA  
No. You got anymore of this stuff?

Jessica hauls herself up out of the chair and ambles into the kitchen, where she sets to rummaging through every cabinet and drawer.

CONNIE  
I didn't even know I had that. I  
don't normally keep alcohol here.  
As you know... well you probably  
don't remember, but I don't drink  
alcohol anymore as of a couple of  
years ago. So if you find anything,  
it's, umm...

Jessica finds a bottle of something in the refrigerator and pours it sloppily.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Besides I don't think you... you  
probably don't really need anymore.  
(No response)  
Don't you think you've had enough?

Jessica ignores the comment and gulps down a mouth full.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Is something wrong?

JESSICA  
You're the psychologist. What do  
you think?

CONNIE  
I'm not a psychologist.

JESSICA  
Well, what have you been going to  
school for the past ten years for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CONNIE

I've been going to school for five years and I've been studying psychology.

As she talks, Jessica moves around the room. She picks objects up and looks at them, but doesn't remember a thing about them.

JESSICA

So, you think you know a lot about people, huh?

Connie becomes the aloof therapist.

CONNIE

As a matter of fact, I think I do.

JESSICA

You like getting into people's heads and playing around with them, don't you?

CONNIE

I care about people and I like helping them-

JESSICA

It makes you feel big and important to know you're in control, that you got them right where you want them, right in the palm of your hand.

CONNIE

I don't feel that way-

JESSICA

(Matter of fact)  
I'm not happy.

Jessica is looking at a gray sunset through a crack in the curtains. Connie chooses her words carefully.

CONNIE

I know.

JESSICA

Not just now. I haven't been happy since I was born.  
(Faces Connie)  
What do you think of that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CONNIE  
(Carefully)  
I know.

JESSICA  
How do you know? How the hell do  
you know? God Damn it!

She approaches Connie.

CONNIE  
It doesn't take a genius-

JESSICA  
I'm a successful realtor. I'm doing  
what I want. I got my license. I  
sell property. People come to me...  
ME... because I know what I'm doing  
and I make them feel good about  
what they're doing. And that makes  
me feel good. And I'm making money,  
lots of it, tons of it, because  
people come to ME...

Connie stands and faces her.

CONNIE  
But that doesn't make you happy.

JESSICA  
(Deflated)  
How the fucking hell do you know?!

CONNIE  
Because you're not!!

JESSICA  
How the fucking hell do you know?!

CONNIE  
You just told me for one thing!!

Jessica turns away.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Besides, I'm your sister. We went  
through the same shit all of our  
lives.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

How could anybody be happy with all that shit all around us and inside us, eating away at us, until we were raw, until the only thing left was hatred, just wanting to get back, get even, so we can have the same feelings all human beings deserve to have as a child?

Connie is looking for any sign of a "break-through." Jessica is wandering around the room, not about to show her anything.

JESSICA

(Matter of fact)

I cry everyday. Just bawl my brains out.

CONNIE

Well, if that makes you feel better-

JESSICA

Every time I think I've pulled myself out, I get sucked right back in. Every time I think I've found a way... to be happy...

Jessica is looking at an old family photograph. After a long moment, Connie steps in.

CONNIE

You just have to forget. You're a-

JESSICA

Do you think it would have been different if I'd been a boy? You know, someone to follow in his footsteps?

CONNIE

No. Definitely not, he'd still be-

JESSICA

God! What a thought!

(pacing)

God help the poor shit who'd follow in his footsteps. Sick, miserable all the time, for the rest of his life.

Jessica heads back to the kitchen for a refill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

CONNIE  
 Jessica, you're just...  
 (stops herself)  
 Come here.

Connie holds out her arms for a hug. Jessica shakes her head.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
 Why don't you stay here tonight?

Jessica takes a long pull off her drink, as she walks back in and stops at the opposite end of the couch from Connie.

JESSICA  
 Ah no. First you get a girl drunk,  
 then you-

CONNIE  
 Jess come on, you're in no shape-

She shakes her head.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
 You can sleep on the couch, okay.  
 It's 20 feet from my bed, see? What  
 do you think I'm going to do,  
 anyway?

JESSICA  
 No way.

She smiles and keeps her distance at the other end. Connie shakes her head and walks around. Jessica moves away from her.

CONNIE  
 You can't drive in your condition.  
 Besides, I'm worried about you. You  
 shouldn't be alone when you're like  
 this.

They continue to play keep away. With every step of Connie's, Jessica moves away by that much. Connie gets bolder, Jessica counters. Finally, Connie grins and plays along.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
 You little shit.

They are at a stand-off, facing each other across the couch. In a bold move, Connie lunges and grabs her around the waist, laughing breathlessly. Jessica explodes with sudden rage and pushes her away.

Connie backs off, confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Jessica is trembling and seething with hate.

JESSICA

Don't touch me. Don't ever, ever  
touch me.

The game is over. Jessica drops her wine glass, grabs her purse and flies out the door.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DUSK

It is the last light of a gray, wet day. We can HEAR the OCEAN a few blocks away. The road is narrow, winding through a sparsely populated upper class beach community.

COP 1 is standing by his cruiser on the radio. COP 2 is using his flashlight to check through the contents of a dark green economy car, partially hidden on an abandoned driveway.

COP 1

(On mike)

Dark green, badly scratched up,  
looks like about a 72, 73. And it's  
got the Washington plates too.  
Over.

RADIO

(VO, after a pause)

Looks like that's the one. Any idea  
how long it's been there? Over.

Cop 2 is running his flashlight over the front seats and floor.

COP 1

Engine's a little warm. Maybe a  
couple of hours. Over.

RADIO

(VO, another pause)

Okay thanks, I'll get back to you.  
Over.

COP 1

Over.

Cop 2's flashlight holds on a magazine folded open to a page with the headline, "Salesperson of the Year."

INT. JESSICA'S CONDO - DUSK

The front door swings open slowly and Jessica enters. Her face is long, make-up worn off and smudged, hair flat and tangled. She shuffles into the room, kicks off her high heels and tosses her purse on the couch. Then, she turns and faces the dining table.

She is beaten. The alcohol has had its effect. She leaves the lights off and takes the few long steps to the table. Then, she reaches behind the flowers and slides out the paper bag.

The wood floor CREAKS behind her, a FOOTSTEP. She drops the bag on the table and spins around. Ron is facing her, barely visible in the near darkness.

RON  
(Tenderly)  
Hi Jess. Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

He shows her a gun in his hand. She freezes.

RON (CONT'D)  
I... I need your help. I'm in trouble. The police are after me.

Jessica trembles, like a cornered deer.

RON (CONT'D)  
Listen... Uh. All I need is a ride. Hey, I'm sorry, look.

He puts the gun in his pants pocket and raises his arms. He tries a smile to show her he's friendly.

RON (CONT'D)  
I'm not going to force you to do nothing you don't want to. Okay? I just... I swear to God I'll pay you back. If you could just give me a ride to uh, I don't know, Campo or someplace East of here.

She reaches behind her and picks up the bag.

RON (CONT'D)  
Or if you'll let me borrow your car. I swear I'll, uh, get it back to you somehow. I got some money...

In a instant, she pulls out the gun and points it right in his face, holding it steady with both hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON (CONT'D)

Hey. Look.

(Tries a joke)

Bang, bang. I'm dead. You got me,  
okay?

(Serious)

I wasn't going to use this gun on  
you. I swear to God. It's just-

JESSICA

(Between clenched teeth)

Give me the gun.

He reaches down casually.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Slow. Real slow.

He slowly pulls the gun out, holding the stock gingerly  
between forefinger and thumb, and hands it to her. She places  
it under her belt.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I want you to know that I do know  
how to use guns and this one is  
loaded. Do you understand?

He nods, still holding his arms up.

RON

Hey, Jess, I wasn't going to do  
nothing. You got this all wrong. I  
told you before that... it's all  
true. Everything. Let me prove it  
to you in some way. You name it.

She doesn't move. Her eyes are set. Her finger is tight on  
the trigger. They stand in SILENCE.

The doorbell RINGS. Jessica doesn't let her guard down for a  
second.

RON (CONT'D)

You going to answer it?

She waits. RING. Ron begins to ease up. Another RING.

JESSICA

Go in the bedroom.

Ron smiles and does as he is told.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jessica hides the guns under a sofa cushion and goes to the door. Tougas and Dewitt are standing outside with badges displayed.

TOUGAS

Good evening. Jessica Henderson?

She smiles.

JESSICA

Why, yes.

TOUGAS

I'm Detective Fred Tougas, this is Detective Arnold DeWitt. We're with the San Diego Police. I'm sorry to bother you-

JESSICA

That's perfectly all right. Why don't you come in?

She hits the lights. They come in and close the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I just got home. Haven't even had time to turn on the lights. Would you like some coffee? It's awfully cold out there.

They stand by the door. Their eyes don't miss a thing.

TOUGAS

No, thank you.

JESSICA

You sure?

DEWITT

Yes, ma'am. We're in kind of a hurry.

JESSICA

I'm sorry. Sit down.

They follow her to the long sofa. Jessica sits on the cushion with the guns.

TOUGAS

Thank you. This won't take long. Do you have a father by the name of Ronald Henderson?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESSICA

Yes.

TOUGAS

Have you been in contact with him recently?

JESSICA

Why, yes. I hadn't seen him in, oh, sixteen years or so, and he just recently came back to San Diego. I think he was living in Washington or someplace like that.

(smiling)

What did he do, rob a bank?

They don't smile. Tougas studies the remark.

TOUGAS

No ma'am. Do you know where he might be at this time? We need to locate him.

Jessica looks around, as if thinking.

JESSICA

Hmm.

TOUGAS

We checked All Starr Realty, where he works; his apartment; we know he's not at your mother's or your sister's.

JESSICA

Well, he could be anyplace.

TOUGAS

That's true, but... his vehicle was found abandoned several blocks from here.

Jessica gives them a fearful look.

TOUGAS (CONT'D)

So, he could very easily be somewhere in this vicinity. Do you have any idea why he would be in this area? Did he know anybody? Umm, an old friend?

JESSICA

(Concerned now)

What did he do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TOUGAS  
(Carefully)  
He's a suspect in a homicide case.

JESSICA  
He killed someone?

TOUGAS  
A prime suspect. And we have good reason to believe he is armed and fairly unstable, mentally. So we do need to get to him as soon as possible.

JESSICA  
Well.

Tougas notices her obvious lack of true surprise.

TOUGAS  
Do you know where we might find him?

JESSICA  
Goodness, no. He and I were never very close. He... he would have no reason to come here. I can't imagine. Did you check along the beach?

TOUGAS  
Yes. We're checking the area very thoroughly.

Tougas waits for an answer.

JESSICA  
(Looking down)  
Well, I'm sorry I can't help you. I just got home, as I said and, um, no one is here. I can't imagine why he would come here of all places.

Tougas stares at her for a moment longer, then stands.

TOUGAS  
Well then, umm, if you should hear anything, if he calls or whatever, we will be nearby.

Tougas and Dewitt go to the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JESSICA

Well that's good to know. This is all quite frightening.

TOUGAS

I'm sorry. It wasn't my intention to frighten you. We have to play all the angles. As you say, he's probably somewhere along the beach or he may have hitched a ride on the highway, for all we know. But keep in mind we are nearby in case anything happens. To be on the safe side, you should probably close your curtains and lock your windows and doors.

The two step outside.

JESSICA

I certainly will. Thank you.

TOUGAS

You're welcome.

She closes the door and leans back against it. Then, she lifts the sofa cushion and takes out the guns, putting one under her belt.

Ron steps in from the bedroom, all smiles.

RON

Thank you.

JESSICA

You're welcome.

He comes toward her.

RON

I don't know what to say. I really don't deserve all this.

JESSICA

Yes, you do.

He stops and looks at her.

RON

I swear to God, if I get through this, I'll make it up to you. I swear. I really have changed. It's like, I'm a different person that's inherited this, this horrible past.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JESSICA

Sit down.

RON

Thanks anyway, but...

Jessica points the gun at him.

JESSICA

(Menacingly)

Sit down.

He sits on the sofa. She walks over to him and aims the gun two inches from his left eye.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

If you walked out now, they'd grab you in five seconds. They're all over the place.

He shrugs.

RON

Never thought of that.

JESSICA

I think we should just sit here for awhile and talk about old times.

She sits, gun still aimed.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So. Who'd you kill?

RON

It was really an accident. I was having an argument with this woman, umm, boss I had. She was being a real, umm... unreasonable.

JESSICA

So, you shot her.

RON

I... pushed her actually. She fell and... hit her head on a desk, the corner of a desk.

She gets up and pushes the barrel against his eye.

JESSICA

What did you do then, pistol whip her? Kick her head in?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

RON

No, no...

JESSICA

Rape her? Huh?

RON

No, no...

JESSICA

Was she dead when you raped her? Or did you kill her afterwards?

RON

Jess, I didn't rape her.

JESSICA

What did you do then? Pour gasoline on her and set her on fire?

RON

I left! I was scared!

She shoves the gun hard against his eye. He falls back and covers it with his hand.

JESSICA

You left?! Gettin' old, huh? Don't have the same old drive you used to? Why back in the old days you would've had some real fun torturing her, watching her scream and writhe in pain. You could've grabbed her around the neck and slowly squeezed until her head popped off like a bottle cap.

A jab in the other eye.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Sounds like fun, don't it?

RON

You're wrong.

JESSICA

Oh, I'm sorry.

RON

I get angry. I get down and I get angry. Sometimes I just can't control myself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JESSICA

Well you know sometimes I get a little angry myself. In fact, sometimes I just feel like killing somebody. Do you ever feel like that?

He is frozen with fear.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

In fact, I kind of feel that way right now. And you know what? I could do it. I could blow your fucking head all over the wall. And you know what? I could do it with an absolutely, crystal-clear conscience - morally, ethically, legally, everything. I would be right in doing it. And it would make me feel so good.

He makes a grab for the gun in her belt. WHACK! She brings the pistol down full force across his eyes and face. Nothing serious, just a lot of pain and bleeding.

He doubles over on the sofa.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Get up. I said get up.

He sits up, holding the wound with both hands.

RON

(Almost crying)

Jessica. Come on. Cut it out.

JESSICA

Cut what out?!

RON

If you're going to do it, do it!

JESSICA

Do what?!

RON

Kill me!

JESSICA

You want me to kill you?

RON

No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JESSICA

Well what do you want, Ron? Make up  
your mind now, you're a big boy?

RON

(Angrily)

Help me!

JESSICA

Help you what?

RON

Give me the fucking gun!

JESSICA

Here!

She hands it to him and stands back. He stands, a bit dazed and points the gun at her. Then, he ambles into the kitchen and looks out the window. He comes back in and stumbles around the room, dripping blood everywhere. She raises her arms.

RON

Help me.

JESSICA

I did. I gave you the gun. Now  
you're free.

RON

You know what I mean.

JESSICA

No. I'm afraid I don't.

RON

I got to get out of here.

JESSICA

Go!

RON

I can't! I need your help!

JESSICA

Why don't you just shove me down  
and kick my face in?!

He moves toward her reflexively, gun poised to strike. But stops. She is trembling, blind with rage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(Pleading)

Do it. Do it, please. I want you to. Come on. I'm begging you. The only thing in this Goddamn world worse than being you... is being me. Just knowing you're alive makes every day of my life unbearable. So do it.

She turns her back to him and closes her eyes. For an interminable moment, beyond the point where the SILENCE is too much to bear, she waits. She listens. His labored breathing stops. Then, the gun FIRES.

A body falls. She opens her eyes. In a beat, the hatred and pain she had lived with all her life evaporates. She walks to the dining table and sits.

The CAMERA stays with her, as we HEAR the front door fly open, and the cops enter O.S. After a moment, we HEAR TOUGAS barking out orders and FOOTSTEPS running and shuffling in and out. Then a voice, much closer...

DEWITT

Are you all right, Miss Henderson?

She nods.

The voices and activity continue behind her and she closes her eyes.

FADE OUT.