

KILL OR DIE CRYING

by

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"KILL OR DIE CRYING"

FADE IN.

EXT. STREET - SUBURBAN BELLINGHAM - MORNING

Bellingham in winter, misty, gray and cold.

In a neighborhood of modest tract homes a big muscular DOG trots down the middle of the asphalt street. A mix of Rottweiler, Pitbull, and warthog, its eyes are rheumy and dull. If a dog can be said to look insane, this one does.

EXT. PRESCHOOL - SAME

At a church preschool a group of CHILDREN play on swings and a jungle gym. A young female TEACHER stands by keeping an eye on her charges. She sorts tissues from her pocket, wipes a child's nose, looks over and sees:

THE DOG

It's on the grass fifty feet away, tongue lolling out. Her reaction - *Oh look a doggie!* - instantly fades.

TEACHER

Guys, come over here please. Josh,
Maggie, over here by me, right now.

The teacher calmly but swiftly gathers the kids around her.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Taylor, Mikey, over here. Avril,
leave that and come here please!

The dog advances, a low GROWL in back of it's throat. The door of the building opens and a SECOND TEACHER appears.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Alicia! Alicia! Before you come out
could you make a call, please?

The second teacher looks across wonderingly, then sees the dog and it clicks. She backs into the building again.

The first teacher gathers the kids beneath the jungle gym.

(CONTINUED)

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TEACHER (CONT'D)
Okay, let's all climb to the top.
Who wants to go first up the
ladder? Madison you go. Okay Mikey
you follow her.

The children climb to a platform six feet off the ground.

The crouching dog inches closer. In the building window, the second teacher peers out as she talks on the phone.

Suddenly the crazy dog bolts.

The first teacher scoops up the last child and clambers up the ladder just as the charging dog hits the bark chips.

As she sets the child on the platform the others SCREAM.

The dog leaps for the teacher's legs and she lands a sharp kick to the dog's muzzle and hoists herself up. The dog hits the ground and leaps up snarling.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Okay! It's all right! Quiet down,
we're all safe! Quiet down now...

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - MORNING

Animal Control officer SERENA GITTS drives through a nearby neighborhood. She's early 20's with short blond hair, fit and pretty if androgynous in her brown Ranger-Rick uniform.

SERENA
Hey you fat fuck, keep your nose
outta my lunch. You already ate,
and if you get any fatter I'm gonna
have to trade you for somebody who
can actually work, not lay around
all day like a pig.

Her interlocutor, a chunky black retriever named RUSTY, stares out the window.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Now shut up a second.

Radio CHATTER sounds. Serena picks up her handset.

SERENA (CONT'D)
This is zero-eight-eight, over. I'm
one and a half clicks north and
headed that way.

She squeals a U-turn and floors it.

EXT. PRESCHOOL - MORNING

The crazy dog still paces beneath the jungle gym.

Two police cars roar up and jump the curb. The FIRST COP leaps out with his pistol drawn. The SECOND COP hoists a shotgun. They spread themselves and begin to move in.

Then Serena's truck jumps the curb and stops in front of the cops, cutting off their view. She leaps out.

SERENA
Officer, mind if I handle this?

SECOND COP
Miss, get back in the vehicle and move it outta here.

SERENA
Sir, please--

FIRST COP
You heard him, dog-catcher - move the fucking truck!

SERENA
Guys, c'mon, seriously?

SECOND COP
I said move the vehicle, now!

SERENA
Hey, hey, what're you gonna do?
Blow the dog's head off in front of
a bunch of four-year olds? Or miss
it and hit one of them? C'mon,
I've done this.

The cops hesitate and lower their weapons.

SERENA (CONT'D)
(aside)
Fucking dopes.

She WHISTLES and Rusty plops to the ground and shakes.

On the driver's side of the truck-box Serena swings open the steel mesh door of the large bottom cage. Moving around to the passenger side she opens the same door there.

She and Rusty advance on the play area.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Okay, Rust, bring him in. Go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rusty lopes over and plants himself at the edge of the play area. The crazy dog ignores him.

Rusty moves closer, tail wagging "let's play!" until the crazy dog turns with a lunging snap.

Rusty dodges away but trots back, this time so close the other dog has no choice but to attack; it dashes after Rusty and the two go tearing around the playground.

From the driver's side of the truck Serena WHISTLES. Rusty turns on a dime and bolts straight for the truck with the crazy dog three paces behind.

Rusty leaps into the open cage on the passenger side and a half-second later cannonballs out the door on the driver's side, which Serena instantly kicks shut.

The crazy dog smashes face-first into the steel mesh. Serena yanks a rope and the passenger side cage slams shut, trapping it inside.

The Children let out a cheer.

Rusty lopes over and gets a slap on the head.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Good job, Rust.

The cops shake their heads.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Serena crosses the mud yard to the door of a rundown duplex.

INT. CHELSEA'S APARTMENT

Serena steps into a living room full of junk furniture and debris. A pudgy White Guy sleeps on the sofa with his shirt pulled up.

SERENA
Hello?... Chelsea?... Anybody home?

A girl (MADDIE) comes out of an adjoining room. She's four, African American, wearing a soiled dress. Serena lights up.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Maddie! How are you, honey bunch?
C'mere and give me a hug!

Maddie hugs her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADDIE

Aunt Serena, did you catch a dog today?

SERENA

You know as a matter of fact I did? Only he's sick so I can't show him to you. Where's your mom?

MADDIE

Sleeping.

CHELSEA calls from the other room.

CHELSEA (O.S.)

No I ain't. I'm awake.

SERENA

Where's your brother?

MADDIE

In the kitchen.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - SAME

Serena enters to see a little Boy, age two, sitting on the floor amidst several cereal boxes. He's got the inner bags pulled out in search of crumbs. Serena squats down.

SERENA

Hey buster! How's my favorite little dude?

Chelsea comes in. She's a couple years older than Serena, bottle blonde, scabby and bone thin.

CHELSEA

Hey.

SERENA

Hey, what's going on?

CHELSEA

Not much.

SERENA

What's the matter?

CHELSEA

I dunno. Maddie, take your brother in the other room.

Maddie leads the boy out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
(indicating other room)
I thought this one worked. What's
he doing here?

CHELSEA
He got fired.

SERENA
So he's *sleeping*?

CHELSEA
It's his prescription; it makes him
tired.

SERENA
Prescription? What kind of
prescription?

CHELSEA
Medical marijuana.

SERENA
Oh, for fuck's sake!

CHELSEA
He injured his back, Serena. It
really hurts.

SERENA
Maybe he shouldn't spend so much
time on it, ever think of that?

CHELSEA
Oh, shut up!

SERENA
You need to find a guy who'll stand
up even when you're not blowing
him.

CHELSEA
Just shut up Serena! Shut up, shut
up! Just shut up!

Chelsea tears up, and seeing this, Serena back off.

SERENA
Sorry... I shouldn'ta said that.
Sorry. Anyway, what'd you find out?
How's Maddie? They know anything?

Chelsea nods, beginning to cry.

CHELSEA
She's... It's her-- Her--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Chelsea squeals something inaudibly.

SERENA

Her *what*?

CHELSEA

Her *heart*, Serena!

SERENA

Well we know it's her heart.

CHELSEA

But it's bad, Serena. She needs an operation! Soon! And it's like thirty thousand dollars! And if she don't get it she could die!...

Chelsea sobs. Serena reaches out and hugs her.

SERENA

Chelsea... C'mon, we'll figure something out. We'll take care of her. You know we will.

CHELSEA

They just give her pills! Pills and pills 'cause they know I'm broke! We're just trash they don't even want around.

SERENA

Chelsea... We're gonna find the money. Thirty thousand's not the end of the world. I'm working now and - and we'll figure it out.

CHELSEA

You think?

SERENA

I promise.

Chelsea composes herself a little.

CHELSEA

Do you - do you have any money?

SERENA

Well not thirty thousand!

CHELSEA

No, I mean just-- We don't have any food here...

Chelsea starts sobbing again and Serena digs in her pocket for a few crumpled bills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SERENA
Here, take this.

Sniffling, Chelsea takes it.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Chelsea's BOYFRIEND is snoring. By the front door Serena crouches in front of Maddie.

SERENA
You're not dizzy today, are you?

Maddie shakes her head.

SERENA (CONT'D)
If you do feel dizzy, what're you supposed to do?

MADDIE
Sit down. Be quiet. Breathe calmly.

SERENA
That's right. Can you promise to do that for me?

Maddie nods. Serena pulls her in and hugs her.

SERENA (CONT'D)
You know Aunt Serena loves you more than anything, don't you?

Maddie nods again.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small rental house half-hidden by trees and brush. Serena's old Land Cruiser, multi-colored with mismatched hood and fenders, is parked in the side yard.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - SAME

In lieu of furniture the main room is dominated by a weight-bench.

Serena comes out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. She heads down the hallway.

INT. JENI'S ROOM - SAME

Her roommate JENI is putting on makeup and talking on her phone. While she waits Serena examines the WIGS arrayed on a hat rack on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENI

(on phone)

...Yeah, I know, right? Last night I get this guy, wants a dance to "Snuff the Rooster", which is like six and a half minutes, and afterwards he gives me ten bucks!

(notices Serena)

...Yeah, yeah, just-- Just a sec...

(to Serena)

Hey, what's up?

SERENA

Can I borrow another wig?

JENI

'Course, help yourself!

(back to the phone)

...Yeah, ten bucks, vice-president of Bank of America. And meanwhile he's got this sad little stiffy like I'm sitting on a breakfast sausage...

Serena selects a black wig and goes out.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A low-lit, fairly upscale room. On a corner stage a four-piece outfit honks out mellow jazz.

At the bar a young woman sits alone with her back to the room. She's in a tight black dress and her hair above her pale shoulders and slender neck is a halo of black curls.

At a table nearby a businessman, RANDAL, sits watching her. He drains off his drink and heads up to get another...

Leaning on the bar, he turns to the her.

RANDAL

How do you like the music?

The woman half turns. It's Serena - in a wig, with mascara like a bruise.

RANDAL (CONT'D)

Waiting for someone?

SERENA

Waiting for this to kick in.

RANDAL

Maybe you'd like another?

The bartender comes over and Randal gives him the nod.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Randal's on the stool next to Serena, tie loose, clumsily smoking one of her cigarettes.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
(drunkenly)
...yeah, I shouldn'ta got married so young... You never get over that feeling that you missed something, know what I mean? Then it's kids, mortgage, blah-blah, and you're hawking industrial detergents coast to coast. Was that Plan A? No. Plan B? Fuck if I remember. But hey, that's life, right? You start out with a bunch of crazy dreams and - and none of 'em come true...

He looks for a reaction but there is none.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
You sure don't say a helluva lot.

Serena shakes her head.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
Why not?

SERENA
I guess I like to listen.

RANDAL
So is that all you do? Listen?

She turns and fixes her eyes on him.

SERENA
No.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Randal's in his boxers on the bed. Stripped to a black bustier, Serena is astride him massaging his flabby back.

RANDAL
Oh yeah... Yeah... Mnnn...

She lifts his left arm and stretches it back, then his right, crossing his wrists behind and holding them there.

She pulls a pre-looped zip-tie out of the back of her bustier and with a deft move cuffs him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RANDAL (CONT'D)
Hey, what the-- Whataya doing?
What is this?...

Ignoring him, she hops off and starts pulling on her dress.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
Hey, where're you going? C'mon!
What the hell you doing?

He tries to sit up but only manages to roll onto his side.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
C'mon! Get this off me! I'm
getting pissed!

She goes through his wallet and finds a wad of cash. She examines his watch and drops it in her purse.

RANDAL (CONT'D)
Oh fuck! C'mon! Why're you doing
this? I didn't do nothing to you!

SERENA
You were gonna.

RANDAL
I thought you wanted to!

SERENA
Right.

RANDAL
Shit, I can't-- How am I gonna--
Hey, what're you doing with my
phone?

She's got his cell phone, scrolling numbers.

SERENA
'Jen' - is that your wife?

She drops the phone next to him.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Maybe she'll think of something.

Serena strides out the door.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - MORNING

Serena comes out tucking a roll of cash into her jeans.

EXT. CHELSEA'S DUPLEX - MORNING

Serena opens the Land Cruiser's lift gate revealing several bags of groceries. She hands Maddie a box of cereal.

MADDIE

Serena, do you go to church?

SERENA

No, hon, not usually I don't.

MADDIE

Aleeya goes to church.

Serena grabs two bags and follows the girl up the walk.

SERENA

Who's Aleeya, your friend?

MADDIE

Hmmm. She prays to God. Do you pray to God, Serena?

SERENA

Sure I do, why not?

MADDIE

Aleeya says God helps people.

SERENA

She's right. But you know what? He also likes it when people help themselves. Makes his job easier.

As they continue to the door:

SERENA (CONT'D)

(sings)

The first time... ever I saw your face...

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Driving, Serena talks into the handset and pulls a U-turn.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena parks at the edge of the road where it borders a thickly wooded hillside sloping away. She gets out.

Under heavy clouds it's nearly dusk. An OLDER GENTLEMAN and five ONLOOKERS wait at the head of a path, all with dogs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

Hi folks, I'm Serena. If one of you
could show me where--

With stricken looks all five point down the path.

OLDER GENTLEMAN

Down a ways I tied a bag to a
branch. Turn in and you'll see it.

He spits, disgusted, and wanders off.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Serena and Rusty descend the path. The woods darken around
them. Rounding a bend, Rusty quickens his step.

Up ahead, a plastic grocery sack is knotted to a branch.
Serena turns right onto a smaller trail.

She stops and stares.

Amidst the silhouetted branches straight ahead a dark shape
hangs suspended six feet off the ground. A DOG.

Rusty whimpers. Serena pats him.

SERENA

It's okay, Rust. You're okay.

Walking, she pulls a glove on, and when she gets to the hung
dog - a big shepherd - she walks a slow circle around it.
Then she stops, blinking back a moistness in her eyes...

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - DUSK

A second Animal Control truck is parked by Serena's. A police
car idles nearby with a cop inside writing up a report.

Serena comes up the trail ahead of two other Animal Control
officers. DONNIE pulls a two wheeled cart while BRUCE pushes
from behind.

DONNIE

Probably just some asshole who
didn't want to pay for the
euthanasia shot.

BRUCE

I dunno, it didn't look too old.

DONNIE

Maybe it was sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUCE
Didn't look sick.

DONNIE
Then why you think they did it?

BRUCE
No idea.

They stop at the tailgate of the second truck. The dead dog is in a black bag in the cart.

SERENA
Who owns this land, do you know?
Is it the city's?

BRUCE
It belongs to some old lady.
Name's DeGroot. I know because she
always calls the office bitching
about trespassers.

DONNIE
Maybe she did it.

BRUCE
She's like ninety-eight years old.

DONNIE
What's her age got to do with it?

BRUCE
I also been hearing some of the
neighbors want the city to buy it
for a dog park.

DONNIE
Great, just what we need, another
turd farm.

SERENA
What would that have to do with it?

BRUCE
I'm just saying what I heard.

DONNIE
Let's load this mother, it's
getting ripe.

As the men load the dead dog Serena heads back down the path.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - LATER

The second truck pulls away just as a dark sedan rolls onto the scene. Two plainclothes Cops get out. The older one, Detective JACK REESE, about 40, says over his shoulder.

REESE

Stay here.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

In the twilight beneath the hanging-tree Serena searches the ground with her flashlight. She squats and picks an object out of the detritus.

She examines it in her palm, a long sharp fang-like TOOTH.

REESE (O.S.)

Hey... What're you doing there?

Serena jumps, startled, and turns to see Reese.

SERENA

I'm not doing nothing, I'm just looking.

REESE

Well careful you don't step on any evidence.

Serena's hand closes around the fang.

SERENA

'Course I won't.

As Reese gets a better look of Serena his tone softens.

REESE

Sorry to scare you like that. I'm Jack Reese, detective.

SERENA

Serena Gitts. Animal Control.

They shake hands

REESE

Miss Gitts... So, somebody killed a dog, eh? We don't like to see that.

SERENA

The cops up top didn't seem too interested. That's why I came back to look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REESE
Well they ought to be interested,
Miss Gitts. We take animal abuse
pretty seriously, just like I
imagine you do.

Reese turns on a flashlight.

REESE (CONT'D)
That the tree?

SERENA
Yes sir.

REESE
What kind of dog?

SERENA
Shepherd. Around a hundred pounds.

REESE
That took some muscle...
(gazes around)
Well, it's getting kinda dark to do
anything tonight. How about I walk
you up the hill and first thing
tomorrow I'll have a man look this
area over.

SERENA
You gonna find out who did it?

REESE
We'll try.

Serena looks back to the tree.

SERENA
Is that what you say when it's a
person killed?

Now Reese looks her over, intrigued.

REESE
No, a person's different.

SERENA
Better? Is that what you mean?

He sees she's more upset than he would've thought.

REESE
No, just different. But we'll try
our damndest here too, Miss Gitts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SERENA
But that's not what you said.

REESE
No, I--

SERENA
Then why not say what you mean?

She brushes past him and starts up the hill. Reese shakes his head, amused, then hurries to catch up.

REESE (CONT'D)
Miss Gitts, was that you out at the West Hills preschool yesterday?

SERENA
Yes sir.

REESE
Nice work.
(when no reply comes)
You can call me Jack if you like, Miss Gitts, everybody does.

Serena turns and looks at him. Reese smiles. She doesn't. She starts climbing again.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Serena parks her Animal Control truck.

INT. FORENSICS LAB - SAME

Serena waits at the counter. An older man, the LAB TECHNICIAN, emerges from the back.

LAB TECHNICIAN
'Morning. What can I do for you?

SERENA
I'm Serena Gitts from Animal Control. On my rounds yesterday I found this tooth...
(shows him the fang)
...and I was wondering if you could maybe tell me what kind of animal it belongs to.

The Lab Technician takes the tooth and looks it over.

LAB TECHNICIAN
Sure, I can tell you by looking. It didn't come from any animal. It's a fake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

A fake?

LAB TECHNICIAN

It's a casting, dental acrylic.
Nice shape, good color, but a
hundred percent man-made.

He hands the tooth back.

LAB TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

My guess is there's a Halloween
vampire's running around out there
with one fang gone.

SERENA

Oh right, you mean like part of a
costume. Or like those Goth people
you see around.

LAB TECHNICIAN

The who?

SERENA

You know, those weird people
wearing black clothes and looking
like they're ready to hang
themselves?

LAB TECHNICIAN

I guess I don't get out that much.

SERENA

Well thank you for your help. I
appreciate it.

LAB TECHNICIAN

You bet.

INT. RECORD STORE - NIGHT

Inside a ramshackle storefront crammed with vinyl a dozen
patrons bob their heads to 'Sweet Child o' Mine.'

Serena comes in, dressed from wig to boots in Goth black with
morgue makeup disguising her face. She eyes the patrons: the
old Hippie, the kilt Guy, Metal Heads in torn jeans...

In back two GOTH GIRLS flip through the bins and when one
speaks to the other pearly fangs glint in her mouth. Serena
wanders over.

SERENA

Hey, what's up?

The near girl, DAHLIA, looks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA (CONT'D)
I noticed your awesome teeth.

DAHLIA
Yeah?

SERENA
I love 'em.

Now Ligeia turns showing her fangs.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Oh, you have 'em too. I was
wondering if you'd tell me where
you got 'em.

DAHLIA
Why you wanna know?

SERENA
I just-- I want to get some.

LIGEIA
Victor made 'em.

SERENA
Victor?

LIGEIA
He makes everybody's teeth. He's a
genius.

SERENA
Wow, they look so real! So do you
think he'd make me some?

DAHLIA
Maybe.

LIGEIA
They're not cheap.

SERENA
That's alright. I can pay.

DAHLIA
Then you could ask him.

SERENA
Great. How do I ask him?

Dahlia looks at Ligeia, who nods.

DAHLIA
Here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dahlia scrolls for a number on her phone.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)
Tell him you talked to Dahlia.

Serena copies the number into her phone.

SERENA
Dahlia, that's a cool name.

DAHLIA
What's yours?

SERENA
I'm... Juliette.

DAHLIA
This is Ligeia.

LIGEIA
(flirtatiously)
Hi Juliette.

SERENA
Hi. Okay, cool. Thanks so much. So,
see you guys around?

DAHLIA AND LIGEIA
Sure, bye...

EXT. RECORD STORE - NIGHT

Serena wanders away composing a text message on her phone.

INT./EXT. LAND CRUISER - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena drives along the bay front as daylight sinks. She looks doubtfully at the last house on the dead end street, an old three story mansion with the upper windows boarded up.

Beyond the house a wooded hillside rises sharply.

Serena parks and gets out. She's in a long black dress, leather jacket, black page-boy wig - the guise of *Juliette*.

Walking to the house she gazes up at the wooded bluff.

EXT. OLD MANSION - SAME

Serena knocks at the door and in a moment a young Man appears. He's mid 20's, lanky, morbidly pale, with thick dyed black hair to his elbows. This is VICTOR.

SERENA
Hi. I'm Juliette.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICTOR
Hello, I'm Victor. Please come in.

INT. VICTOR'S STUDIO - LATER

Victor stands at a work table mixing a compound. Other tables are strewn with the tools and materials of his crafts: sewing and leather work, carving, casting, dentistry...

Serena wanders the room studying the wares on display: studded S&M apparel, leather restraints and lashes, ghastly lucite sex toys, and of course teeth...

SERENA
So do you live here by yourself?

VICTOR
For the most part, yes.

SERENA
Sure is a big house.

VICTOR
Seventeen rooms. Actually it's my grandmother's. She was born upstairs. Or maybe it was the cellar. Anyway, she's ninety-five and she still owns places all over town - quite the old slum lord, really; that whole hill behind us belongs to her.

SERENA
You mean the dog park?

VICTOR
Don't let her hear you call it that. Gram's a die-hard Tea Partier; she can't stand people enjoying things that belongs to her.

SERENA
I just meant I heard some of the neighbors want the city to buy it for that.

VICTOR
(absently)
Lots of people would like to buy that land...

Victor switches on a swing arm lamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Alright, come have a seat and we
can begin.

SERENA
Will this hurt?

VICTOR
Sorry. It's quite painless.

LATER:

Victor applies molds to Serena's teeth.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
So, can I interest you in anything
else while you're here? All the
whips and lashes are on sale, and I
just finished some rather
intriguing dildos...

With his fingers in her mouth Serena can only mumble.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Sorry, typical dentist - asking
stupid questions when your mouth is
full of crap!

LATER:

He polishes her new fangs with a Dremel tool.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
How is it that I've never seen you
around before?

SERENA
I dunno. Maybe you weren't looking.

Victor looks over and smiles.

VICTOR
I think I would have noticed you.
You should come around for one of
our parties. We're here most
weekends. Lots of interesting
people. I think you might enjoy it.

He brings the fangs over to her.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Here, let's try them.

He fits the fangs, steps back and hands her a mirror.

SERENA
Wow... Wow... They're beautiful!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He bends to touch up her lipstick.

VICTOR

...It always amazes me how they complete a lovely face. It's a shame our species evolved away from them. They're so much more in character with who we are.

SERENA

Do people ever lose one, like talking or eating?

VICTOR

Occasionally.

SERENA

(leading him)

Then what, they come back for a replacement?

VICTOR

It happens. Rare though.

He finishes with her lips. Serena gets up and starts digging into her pocket.

SERENA

It'd look pretty weird walking around with only one fang, I guess.

VICTOR

Yes, that would look a bit odd.

She lays money on the table. He slides it back to her.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

On me.

SERENA

Really?

VICTOR

Yes. My prerogative.

SERENA

Well thank you. Thanks so much. Now I feel like I owe you a favor.

VICTOR

Not at all. Though it'd be nice if you you could stop by our party. I'd look forward to that.

SERENA

We'll see.

EXT. OLD MANSION - DUSK

As Serena walks to her car the treetops on the bluff sway violently in the wind coming off the bay.

INT./EXT. LAND CRUISER - EARLY MORNING

Serena follows a sunlit highway into the foothills. She turns onto a washed out track heading into the woods, past logger's shacks, derelict farms, raw-looking clear-cuts.

With clouds now shrouding the mountains beyond, she turns in at a ramshackle stump ranch.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE - MORNING

Serena steps into the kitchen. It's a total disaster - dishes, tools, medicine and whisky bottles and assorted shit everywhere. She looks into an adjacent room.

SERENA

Dad? It's me. You awake?...

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Serena washes the dishes. She's got the kitchen half-way clean. A coffee maker gurgles on the counter.

Through the kitchen window she sees her dad approach. LESTER is 60, an unshaven and unkempt man bearing defeat like a bale of straw. He comes through the door in sodden boots.

LESTER

Looks like you could stand some front tires on your rig. I might have a couple that fit.

SERENA

The tires are fine, Dad. I made you some Starbucks there.

LESTER

I had my coffee.

He reaches in a cabinet, brings out a jug of whiskey.

LESTER (CONT'D)

Now where's all the damn glasses?

Lester grabs a mug and dumps whisky in till it's full.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE - MORNING

Lester and Serena are on the hillside. Ten yards away two human figures made of sticks and old clothes are propped on stumps. One wears a scrawled sign saying "Mr. Frey". The other says "Mr. Klousing".

Lester aims a pistol and fires three shots, shredding the chest of Mr. Frey. He takes his mug off a stump and drinks.

They talk, comparing weapons, then Serena aims her pistol and fires twice, blowing Mr. Klousing's hat off.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE - AFTERNOON

The place is clean. There are ferns in a vase and next to it a portrait of Serena's Mom sitting with her two little girls.

Next to that stands a framed picture of a young Lester with his army buddies back in Vietnam.

Serena comes out of the bedroom with a load of bedding. A pot simmers on the stove. She lifts the lid and stirs.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena and Lester eat at the table. Lester takes a couple mouthfuls of soup and pushes it away. He lights a cigarette.

SERENA

I saw Chelsea...

LESTER

Yeah? How they?

SERENA

She's got another bum hanging around. And Maddie's not doing too good. The doctor says her heart's got a defect... It's why she's always getting dizzy. Not pumping enough blood. She needs an operation.

Lester looks at her then down at the table.

SERENA (CONT'D)

It's pretty expensive though. Well, really expensive. I need to come up with some serious money quick.

LESTER

Yeah? How you aim to do that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
I dunno. Might rob a bank...
One thing that'd help is if you
moved back to town and--

LESTER
I got stuff going on out here.

SERENA
Well you say that but, what?

LESTER
Personal stuff.

SERENA
Like what, Dad? Like getting
drunk? Like shooting dummies of
the bankers who took your boat *ten*
years ago? You're going to shit
out here, Dad. You still got a
family, you know? You can't just
quit on everybody.

LESTER
I can do whatever the hell I want.

SERENA
Sure, as long as you can do it
blind drunk.

LESTER
You're a goddamn loudmouth, you
know that? You always were...

Lester lurches up and stumbles out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Serena stuffs a pistol in her backpack, lays out two hundred
dollars on the counter and goes out the door.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - AFTERNOON

Serena pulls up in her Animal Control truck. A cop car and a
second Animal Control truck are already parked and a few
bystanders hang around to watch. She gets out.

Emerging from the trail head agents Donnie and Bruce are
again carting out a dead dog. Serena joins them.

SERENA
Where was it?

DONNIE
Same tree.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

What the fuck is going on?

BRUCE

I wish I new.

SERENA

Yeah, me too.

BRUCE

No, I mean I *really* wish I knew.
There's a reward out. Five grand
for information leading to an
arrest.

SERENA

What?

They load the bag into the truck.

BRUCE

A couple guys on the bluff are
putting it up. Same ones leading
the dog-park group.

DONNIE

The fags with the Yorkies.

BRUCE

Lay off, they're alright.

SERENA

Five thousand dollars?

BRUCE

Not bad, huh? 'Course first you
gotta track down a freaking
psychopath.

DONNIE

No problem, just shoot him in the
fucking head.

BRUCE

I think they want 'em alive.

DONNIE

Why, so they can electrocute 'em?

Bruce and Donnie climb in the truck and drive off. Reese's
sedan rolls. He smiles but looks concerned.

REESE

Hey... Looks like we got more of a
problem than we knew.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SERENA
Looks like it.

REESE (CONT'D)
I already got a couple men down
there. I'll keep you in the loop
if we find anything.

Serena looks at him not wholly convinced.

SERENA
Thanks.

REESE
So... Can I buy you a cup of
coffee?

SERENA
Well I'm working.

REESE
So am I...

SERENA
It doesn't look like it.

Reese's smile darkens as he watches her walk away.

REESE
Maybe another time, huh?

She doesn't answer.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

At the mirror Serena glues in her fangs with Fixodent. She
comes out of the bathroom made-up as Juliette.

RUSTY
Wooo-woooo-woooo...

SERENA
Oh shut up. It's not that bad.

Rusty slinks to the corner and flops down.

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A party's in full swing. Strobe lights, candles, *Portis Head*
on the stereo, and several dozen GOTHs and assorted FREAKS in
full regalia.

Dahlia and Ligeia are there. And sticking out like a sore
thumb, a clean-cut BASKETBALL PLAYER in his game jersey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Serena edges into the pulsing weirdness of it all. She doesn't know a soul, but spots Dahlia and hurries over.

SERENA
Juliette! From the record store!

DAHLIA
Oh yeah!

SERENA
Look!

Serena shows them her new fangs and when Victor joins in Serena flashes her teeth at him too.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Don't I look like I could chew your face off?

VICTOR
Absolutely! And I wish you would!

LATER:

Serena and a few others stand listening to a greasy-looking guy with an EYEPATCH.

EYEPATCH
...Now it comforts nice people to believe that God no longer requires blood sacrifice. That he's become a kind, gentle fellow who loves children and flowers and good deeds. But I ask you: what price did he exact from his own son?

Serena sets her drink down and A HAND appears and drops a PILL into her glass.

EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
...He wanted blood. The life-juices of his own progeny, wrung from his flesh to drip from the cross into the mud beneath it. You see, what pleases God has always pleased God. Not candles or deeds or vain pathetic prayers: blood...

Serena picks up her glass and drinks...

LATER:

The MUSIC pumps louder and the room and faces turn like HALLUCINATIONS as Serena, with a beatific smile, sort of floats in the center of it all...

LATER:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEATH METAL pounds from the speakers as she dances furiously with Dahlia and Ligeia until, at a climactic moment, Ligeia grabs Serena and kisses her deeply on the mouth.

LATER:

As Serena waits, a bathroom door opens and Eyepatch emerges, his hands and mouth smeared with blood...

LATER:

The crowd has thinned and Serena and the Basketball Player slow dance like King and Queen of the Weird Prom...

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM - MORNING

It's pouring rain. Serena wakes up ensconced in a huge antique bed beneath a portrait of Edgar Allan Poe.

She sees Victor sitting by the window sewing.

VICTOR
Good morning.

SERENA
H-hi...

VICTOR
How are you?

SERENA
Okay... What time is it?

VICTOR
Nearly eight.

Serena rubs her eyes.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I undressed you a bit, just so
you'd be comfortable. And yes we
slept together - but that's all.

Victor sets his sewing down and comes over to the bed.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Given your condition I thought I
was your best option, all things
considered.

SERENA
W-what happened?

VICTOR
I'd say you enjoyed the party.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

No, no, somebody must've slipped me something. I was fine and then - and then I wasn't fine...

VICTOR

Ah. I've asked people not to do that. Sorry.

SERENA

God, I can't even-- Hey, how do I know you're not lying to me?

VICTOR

About?

SERENA

About sleeping... together.

VICTOR

Ah. Well, first of all I'm a gentleman. And secondly I'm not much good in that area. You see, unfortunately I happen to be, well, impotent.

SERENA

Really?

VICTOR

Why would I lie about something like that?

SERENA

I guess you wouldn't but - you're young and - and healthy.

VICTOR

And dead as a doornail, whatever that is. Would you like some tea?

She nods. He gets up, goes to the table and pours a cup.

SERENA

Maybe it's something else.

VICTOR

What is?

SERENA

Your problem. Maybe you just haven't been comfortable. Or you were nervous. Or maybe you just weren't attracted to the other person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VICTOR

No, it's none of that... Really it's not so bad in the scheme of things. My God, some people can't walk, or see. I just can't ball. Even with a lovely creature in my bed. Cream and sugar?

SERENA

Please.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

All my friends thought you were just smashing. Did you like them?

SERENA

Yes. Except the weirdo going on about animal sacrifice.

VICTOR

Eyepatch?

SERENA

Yes.

VICTOR

That would be Charles.

SERENA

Do you think he does it?

VICTOR

Charles wouldn't pull a sliver out of your finger. He's strictly theoretical. I could be wrong.

SERENA

So he wouldn't have done that to the dogs in the woods?

Victor comes back with her tea, hesitant.

VICTOR

You heard about that?

SERENA

Everyone's talking about it. What do you think happened?

VICTOR

Personally, I think it was suicide.

SERENA

Dogs?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VICTOR

Why not? They woke up one morning and realized there's no God and this whole scratching, sniffing, ass-licking life is meaningless. Which it is, of course.

SERENA

Really, what do you think?

VICTOR

I think - I think a lot of people around her don't like who we are. So any one of them might have done it, knowing people would assume it was us.

SERENA

That seems pretty extreme.

VICTOR

People are extreme. Look at 9-11. Look at Shock and Awe. In any case I doubt it was one of us. We're not into that sort of thing.

SERENA

So what are you into around here?

VICTOR

Ah, you mean what's this all about? This scene? This "cult"? It's simple, it's a community. You know, not every peg fits the square hole. Not everyone can drink the kool-aid at church or - or follow the corporate call to live like a drone. We gather here. The freaks, the outcasts, the miscast. Anyone who needs a place to be who they are. That's all it is.

SERENA

I see.

They gaze at each other a beat.

SERENA (CONT'D)

I should probably get going. Thank you for everything.

VICTOR

It was my pleasure.

With a wistful smile Victor holds out a hand to her.

INT./EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - DAY

An approaching sedan gives a headlight flash and SIREN BLOOP. Serena slows to a stop. Reese pulls up beside her.

REESE
Hey. Got something for you.

SERENA
About time.

REESE
The ropes. Both held traces of marine salt, like maybe they came off a boat in the harbor.

SERENA
Or the Indian Ocean.

Reese frowns.

REESE
And the boots. Same unusual type both nights. Men's 11-12 with the print of a brand not sold in the U.S. but common across the border.

SERENA
Canadian.

REESE
How am I doing?

SERENA
Better.

REESE
Cup of coffee?

SERENA
I'm working.

For once Serena smiles and Reese winks and speeds off.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - AFTERNOON

INSERT: a photocopied notice stapled to a tree:

"REWARD \$5000. For Information Leading to the Arrest of the Perpetrator(s) of Heinous Acts of Animal Cruelty Committed in this Vicinity" etc.

Serena carefully remove the sheets. She adds this to the handful she already holds.

EXT. GLASS HOUSE - LATER

Serena rings the bell at a modernist house perched high on the bluff. The door opens and a man lets her in.

INT. GLASS HOUSE - SAME

In a spacious living room with a sweeping view of the wooded bluff and the bay, Serena stands with KEN and LEN, two stylish men with shaved heads. A pair of Yorkshire Terriers scamper at their feet barking constantly.

KEN

This is Len, and these are our girls Harriet and Judy.

LEN

Now *please*, Serena, tell us you're not here to arrest us, my god!

KEN

I told you!

LEN

You didn't stop me!

SERENA

No-no, it's not that serious. We just had a complaint about the ones stapled to the trees. The ones on the light poles are fine.

KEN

See?

LEN

Well I didn't know! Who'd think a couple staples would hurt a tree?

KEN

They stick right into the vascular cambium where the nutrients--

LEN

Oh brother!

KEN

By the way, I love your uniform. Would you say it's sage?

LEN

Sage is green, that's more chestnut.

KEN

Chestnut?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

I-I brought back the ones I took down. You could reuse them if you--

She hands Ken a stack of posters.

KEN

Thank you! I'll put one up in the co-op.

LEN

And the dry-cleaners!

KEN

I like the way you think!

LEN

So be honest, Serena, do you think the five grand's enough? All along I was thinking more like ten, but Len can be a bit snug.

KEN

Uh! Who got the *Baume & Mercier* for Christmas?

LEN

That was nice, that was nice--

KEN

Serena?

LEN

What do you think?

SERENA

I think - I think if we want people to really help and keep an eye out, then the more money the better. I guess. Right?

Ken looks at Len.

LEN

Ten.

KEN

I'll reprint it.

LEN

Thank you Serena! We want this to stop!

KEN

Absolutely! It's awful! Awful! --I still say that's sage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LEN
If you're colorblind.

KEN
I'm not.

LEN
Serena, please, tell him what color
that is.

Serena looks down at her trousers.

SERENA
Brown?

Ken and Len gasp at each other, delighted.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - MORNING

A blustery overcast morning. Serena pulls up in her Animal Control truck where a pair of DOG-WALKERS wait. In silence, with stricken looks, they point down the path.

Serena sets off into the gloomy woods with Rusty crashing ahead. They come to the tree with the bag tied to the branch and Rusty starts to WHIMPER.

SERENA
I told you to wait in the truck.

She continues on. Up ahead is the tree and this time two *shapes* hang in the misty gloom: from one rope the forelegs and head of a large dog; from the other its lower half with entrails dangling to the ground.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Shit, Rust. I'm sorry... We're just
a fucked up species, you know?...
You're lucky you're a dog, you
don't understand half of it. Or
maybe you do, I dunno. Maybe
that's why you're so quiet.

She pulls on a glove.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena walks the hallway to her boss's office. At the front desk the Receptionist looks up with a baleful expression. Serena continues past and taps on a door frame.

INT. MR. KAPROTH'S OFFICE - SAME

SERENA
Mr. Kaproth?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. KAPROTH turns from his computer.

KAPROTH
Yes, Serena, c'mon in. Jesus,
what's going on out there? You know
anything?

SERENA
Not much, sir. But I have an idea
how we could find out.

KAPROTH
Go on.

SERENA
Well, sir, if you'd approve the
overtime we could put an officer in
the woods overnight until we find
out who's doing this stuff. I'd
volunteer, sir.

KAPROTH
You'd volunteer to sit in those
woods overnight?

SERENA
Yes sir.

Kaproth frowns and tips back in his chair.

KAPROTH
You know, I wish those fellas had
never offered that reward? All day
long I got people calling me about
it and all it's gonna do is get
somebody hurt.

SERENA
It's not just the reward, sir--

KAPROTH
No. No! The Answer's no. Jesus,
Serena, reward or not, we are not
in the business of chasing lunatics
through the woods. Let the cops do
that. It's their job.

SERENA
Sir, I just thought--

KAPROTH
I don't want you anywhere near
those woods after dark, understand?

SERENA
Yes sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAPROTH

I mean it. You're doing good work here but let's remember our role.

SERENA

Yes sir.

Watching her go, Kaproth shakes his head.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICE - DUSK

Serena comes out a back door and crosses the alley. A black Porche rolls abreast. It's Reese.

REESE

Hey. Don't try and tell me you're working.

Serena looks at him, shrugs.

REESE (CONT'D)

How about a drink later on?

SERENA

You know anything?

REESE

I know I wish you were a little friendlier. Maybe we can put our heads together and figure this out. Or something. Brick's? Nine O'clock?

Serena waits a beat.

SERENA

'K.

REESE

Great.

SERENA

So how's a dumb cop drive a car like that?

REESE

Easy. Both hands on the wheel. See you later.

Reese smiles and peels away.

INT. "BRICKS" COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

They're seated at the bar. A clock shows 10:30. Reese handles his booze but Serena is already moodily drunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REESE

...It's ugly, it's depraved, it's sick. But you know what? You also need to keep it in perspective. They're dogs. We're not short of dogs out there.

SERENA

We're not short of people either.

REESE

But five grand--

SERENA

Ten--

REESE

Ten grand, darling, is not worth getting shot over. Or worse.

SERENA

Maybe I don't like people who aren't nice to animals.

REESE

Either way, leave it alone.

SERENA

You scared too?

REESE

You know, Serena, you have no idea what kind of nut-case might be out there doing this shit. And maybe I don't want you to find out. Is that okay? Can I care just a little bit? Can I? Let us handle it.

SERENA

Shit, half the dogs in town'll be dead before you dopes figure it out.

Reese smiles, amused.

REESE

Is that right?

SERENA

I'm not waiting.

REESE

Listen--

SERENA

I'll put a stop to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REESE

Serena--

SERENA

Make him fucking regret it too.

Reese catches her wrist, suddenly serious.

REESE

Hey. I said leave it. It's a police investigation. Stay out of the way.

Serena pulls her arm away sulkily.

REESE (CONT'D)

I just don't want you getting hurt.

Serena scoffs, picks up her drink and gulps it.

REESE (CONT'D)

...You know, you're pretty damn tough, aren't you? I'm not criticizing you. Fact I admire it. I mean, I know some tough gals on the force, but they're not like you. You got some hard, unbreakable thing inside, don't you? Like when you're camping and there's a rock under your back. It's just there. It's sharp and you're awake. It never lets you rest or forget it. Right?

SERENA

I dunno. I just look after myself. Been doing it a long time.

REESE

Hell, you're not even old enough for 'a long time'.

SERENA

Long as my life.

Reese smokes, watching her.

REESE

And all the while you're the one holding it together. The whole family turns to you.

Serena shrugs.

REESE (CONT'D)

No wonder you got that - that suit of armor you wear. It protects you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She shrugs again. He leans in closer.

REESE (CONT'D)
And you think with the armor on no
one notices the woman inside.

SERENA
Oh boy, here comes the bullshit.

REESE
It's not bullshit. First time I saw
you in the woods I knew you were
special. And I saw the armor too.
You're like a - like a flower
that's locked in a vault. And no
one's been able to break in, have
they? Not yet.

SERENA
Not ever.

REESE
No?

Serena shakes her head. Reese's face is inches away. They
gaze at each other.

REESE (CONT'D)
There's always a first time though.

Serena's laugh breaks the spell. She leans away, picks up
her phone, points it at REESE and snaps his picture.

REESE (CONT'D)
Now what the hell's that for?

SERENA
So I don't miss you while I take a
pee.
(slides off her stool)
Get me a drink, would ya?

EXT. "BRICKS" COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Reese walks Serena up the street to her Land Cruiser.

REESE
Well, even though it was three-
fourths argument I'm still glad we
had a chance to talk.

SERENA
"A chance to talk--" You make it
sound so important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REESE
Maybe it is important.

He opens the car door for her.

REESE (CONT'D)
Can you drive?

SERENA
I've been a lot drunker than this.

REESE
I don't doubt it, but I'm gonna
follow you anyway. Can I call you?

SERENA
Call me what?

REESE
(laughs)
Oh, let's see. Starting with A?
Argumentative. Brash. Cold. Damned
gorgeous...

Reese takes her by the waist and they kiss deeply. When she
shoves him away he's breathless and stirred.

SERENA
Don't forget I'm drunk.

She gets in and slams the door.

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Another Goth party in full swing. DEATH CORE MUSIC plays.
Serena wanders through the crowd nodding hellos and runs into
the Basketball Player.

BASKETBALL PLAYER
(shouting)
Hey, glad you made it!

SERENA
Yeah!

BASKETBALL PLAYER
Wanna go upstairs?

SERENA
For what?

The Basketball player says something in her ear.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Oh... No!...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He shrugs, smiles, and she wanders off to:

VICTOR'S STUDIO

Victor's at a table with two Latino Guys counting out a pile of cash. He waves to her.

VICTOR
Juliette! C'mon in!

She does, eyeing the money.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Uh, fellas, this is my friend
Juliette. Juliette, this is Juan,
and this is Ricardo.

The guys nod to Serena. Victor hands each a fold of cash.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Thanks, guys. Go enjoy the party.
Lots of hot senoritas out there!

The guys go out. Serena glances at the pile of money.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
So how're the teeth?

SERENA
What? Oh, they're, uh, fine.

VICTOR
Let's see...

Serena shows her teeth and Victor kisses her gently.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Sorry, had to do that.

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME

The front door bursts open and three men barrel in. The first is an over-muscled but stunted goon known as SCARFACE; he's followed by a slob named TWO TONS and an Asian called CHINK.

And following them in: THE CANADIAN

Obviously the leader, he's a short, wiry, pale and completely hairless man. Dressed in a sort of Nehru frock coat and motorcycle boots that JINGLE, he carries a jewel capped walking stick.

He looks around with distaste and gestures with his stick for the goons to proceed. They clear a path as they go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A GUEST
Who the fuck is that?

2RD GUEST
It's the Canadian!

A GUEST
The *Canadian*?

INT. VICTOR'S STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Victor touches up Serena's lipstick.

VICTOR
You just show up, I'll do the rest.
Indian, all vegetarian, and
dessert. You'll think you've died
and gone to, to--

Victor freezes as he sees the Canadian and goons stroll in.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
--to hell...

Serena sees Victor flush and turns to look.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
H-hello boss. What a surprise.

THE CANADIAN
Victor, my friend, long time no
see... Who's the young lady?

VICTOR
A friend, boss. She was just
leaving.

THE CANADIAN
Great.

Two Tons guides Serena to the door and slams it. Victor
watches dry-mouthed as the Canadian strolls about the room.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)
Thought I'd better stop in since I
hardly hear from you anymore.

VICTOR
That's not true, boss. I'm still
working things, you know?

THE CANADIAN
So how is dear Grandma anyway?

VICTOR
Alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE CANADIAN

How unfortunate. That mine?...

He stops at the table, picks up a wad of the money and drops it like soiled kleenex.

VICTOR

Sure is, boss, I was just getting ready to send somebody up.

Chink steps forward and starts gathering up the money.

THE CANADIAN

Have you explained to Grandma the urgency of my proposal?

VICTOR

Of course I have, but nothing's changed. She says the land's not for sale.

The Canadian turns to the display items on the wall and takes down a studded leather flogger. He strokes the knotted tails.

THE CANADIAN

Victor, I feel there's something you're not quite getting. Now I've offered a substantial amount, not so you could endlessly debate the matter with dear Grandma, but so you could fairly and legally close the deal.

VICTOR

I know, boss, but a mill - she knows it's worth ten times that.

THE CANADIAN

No no no, see, the property is worth what I offer. Why? Because I'm the only buyer. And why? Because you know how I work. Now, for some reason you're not communicating that and I'm losing patience. I want the deed, Victor.

VICTOR

Boss, I just don't know how I can--

The Canadian slashes Victor across the face with the flogger. Victor stumbles back and the Canadian follows, striking him with each word he shouts--

THE CANADIAN

I-want-that-fucking-deed-Victor!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Victor falls into Scarface who clubs him to the floor. The Canadian snatches from a table a thick lucite dildo and pounces, jamming the purple shaft down Victor's throat.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)
You hear me, you ugly freak! You
get me that deed or I'll be ass-
fucking Grandma with your dick, you
lost piece of worthless shit!

Victor gags, gasps and finally gurgles up a gullet of vomit. The Canadian leaps up in disgust and flings the dildo aside.

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

An OLDER DUDE in a Salvidore Dali getup holds forth before a group of guests.

OLDER DUDE
...Evil is real. Evil is the
tangible, active, *real*
manifestation of Satan's will. Now,
we can lament or fear it, but the
wise among us choose instead to bow
before Satan's great, puzzling,
majestic contribution to our
universe...

Serena rolls her eyes.

OLDER DUDE (CONT'D)
What is it, my dear, you don't
believe in the power of the Prince
of Darkness?

SERENA
Not so much.

OLDER DUDE
Then do tell us how you explain
this world - the strife, the
violence, war, hunger, suffering
without end?

SERENA
I dunno - people?

He gives a courtly bow and Serena wanders off to:

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A door bangs open and The Canadian and his goons file past. For a moment Scarface and Serena stand face-to-face before he roughly shoves her to the wall.

INT. VICTOR'S STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Serena rushes in and finds Victor on his hands and knees.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Victor! Victor! Are you alright?

She helps him onto a sofa. Coughing, still grimacing with pain, Victor clutches his throat.

SERENA (CONT'D)
What happened? What'd they do to you? Victor, why'd they hurt you?

At last he manages to cough up:

VICTOR
'Cause they're fucking assholes!...

Furious, Serena leaps up from the sofa and runs for the door.

EXT. VICTOR'S FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Serena bursts out the front door just as a giant Hummer is roaring away from the curb.

And coming up the steps with a leering look to pass within inches of her face: Eyepatch...

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM - DAWN

In the early gray light Serena lies awake. Victor is curled up behind her.

VICTOR
Don't think it's because I'm not crazy about you.

SERENA
It's okay, Victor...

VICTOR
What do you mean by that?

SERENA
It's not important to me.

VICTOR
Not important? Why's that?

SERENA
I have reasons...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICTOR
Oh. Something happened to you...
Something bad... right?

SERENA
You could say.

VICTOR
It hurt you.

SERENA
You could say.

VICTOR
Is it something you want to--

SERENA
No.

She turns onto her back, staring out.

SERENA (CONT'D)
It was a long time ago. You can't
let things keep hurting, Victor.
It makes you weak.

A beat.

VICTOR
I wish I were like you, Juliette.

SERENA
You can.

VICTOR
No... No...

Serena stares out. It sounds like he's crying. She turns. He is crying.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I'll never be...

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Serena gets out of bed and begins dressing. Victor is still asleep. On her way out she bends and kisses him.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

Serena takes the wall calender down and lays it on the bed. She circles a Thursday, the next Wednesday, and the following Thursday - three circles in three weeks...

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - NIGHT

Serena parks and gets out. She's in street clothes with her Animal Control cap. She shoulds a backpack.

SERENA
You coming or not?

Rusty leaps down to the road and shakes.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - TRAIL - NIGHT

By flashlight Serena and Rusty make their way down the trail. There's a heavy mist and a sharp wind rattling the treetops.

At the tree with the plastic bag knotted in it Serena looks around, then climbs a few yards up the hill and heads into the brush. She comes to a small clearing where, shining the flashlight downhill, she can see the hanging-tree.

She sits down against a tree trunk, takes a pistol from her backpack and turns the flashlight off.

SERENA
Windy, isn't it, Rust? Chilly too.
We're all right though. It's just
like being in the woods in the
daytime, only it's dark. Same thing
though. No different...

Leaning against the tree, Serena yawns.

LATER:

The sky has cleared and the woods are pierced with silver arrows of moonlight. Serena dozes...

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - TRAIL - LATER

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS ascend the path. A TWIG SNAPS, then A FIGURE in a wide-brim hat appears, dragging a dog uphill on the end of a long rope.

Serena sleeps. Rusty peers out into the darkness.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - SAME

Reese pulls up in his sedan. He sees the empty place where Serena usually parks. He rolls on ahead.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Rusty stands nose in the air. Downhill the other dog WHIMPERS as the Figure drags it toward the hanging-tree.

FIGURE

Come on, you son of a bitch!

Serena sleeps. The Figure yanks the dog close, then coils the rope and tosses it over a high branch.

Rusty peers into the darkness, leg twitching, a LOW GROWL in his throat. Serena's hand comes up to close around his muzzle. She stands and raises the pistol.

SERENA

Freeze! Right there! Don't move!

Her flashlight comes on, illuminating the Figure from the back, frozen with the rope wrapped around his wrist.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Okay now, hands up and don't move
or I'll blow your fucking head off.

The Figure raises his hands. Serena tromps downhill through the brush to the clearing, Rusty at her heels.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Okay now, on your knees, slow...

The Figure drops to his knees. With his head bent his face is in the shadow of his hat. Serena begins to circle him.

SERENA (CONT'D)

So, you're the freak hanging dogs,
huh? You get your jollies like
that? I oughta kill you right now,
you know that?

The other dog edges away into the shadows. The rope trailing back to the Figure is *coiled in a loop near Serena's feet*. She doesn't notice. She pulls a zip-tie from her pocket.

SERENA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna come around and cuff you
and if you move one muscle you're
dead. I feel like shooting you
anyway so don't push me.

The Figure raises his head. It's Scarface.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Hey-- I know you...

And Serena steps right into the loop of rope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Scarface yanks the rope and Serena cartwheels over and lands head-first with a thud.

Her cap flies, and the light, but she has the gun and as Scarface charges she sits up and fires, piercing his thigh.

He kicks the gun from her hand and flattens her with a punch to the head. He's set to punch her again when Rusty attacks.

Snapping and snarling, Rusty clamps onto Scarface's arm and they tear and yank at each other. Scarface slams the dog into a tree trunk, then beats him with his fist until Rusty finally lets go.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Rusty! Leave it! Leave it!

Rusty backs off growling, and Scarface, cradling his shredded arm, heads down the path dragging his bloody leg.

SCARFACE

Fuckin' mutt! Fuckin' bitch!

Serena sits up and Rusty trots over.

SERENA

You alright, Rust? You okay?...
Shit, Rust, we had him!

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - LATER

Reese pulls up in his car just as Serena, Rusty and the other dog emerge from the trail. Reese leaps from his car.

REESE

Are you out of your goddamn mind?

SERENA

Did you see him? Did he come this way?

REESE

Who?

SERENA

The dog killer, we almost had him!

REESE

Jesus, Serena, what'd I tell you?

SERENA

I had him! I shot him in the leg but he got away! He's a tough motherfucker!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REESE
(grabbing her)
Hey! Hey! Serena!

SERENA
--And I know him! I've seen him
before!

REESE
You what?

SERENA
He hangs out with this freak called
the Canadian. They're dope dealers.
They beat the shit outta Victor.

REESE
Victor?

SERENA
He lives at the bottom of the
woods. He's my friend!

Reese studies her a long beat. This has gone where he hadn't
expected.

REESE
Alright. So now what?

SERENA
Arrest him! Arrest the whole
fucking gang and put 'em in jail!

REESE
Alright, so where are they? And
what do we charge them with? Oh,
and the evidence, what evidence
have you got?

This brings her back to earth.

SERENA
I... I know him...

REESE
And now he know you too, which is
great, just great...

Reese lifts her face to the streetlight.

REESE (CONT'D)
What happened?

SERENA
Ah, he punched me...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REESE
You are something else. You are
really something else.

They are close. Reese lightly touches the skin near her
bruise but Serena jerks her head away.

SERENA
I almost had him!

She walks off. And Reese watches her, darkly.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

Serena and Maddie wait while the CLERK rings up their
prescriptions. Maddie holds out a big pack of gum.

SERENA
We got gum in the car, honey.

CLERK
That'll be seventy-eight thirteen,
please.

Frowning, Serena looks at the cashier's screen.

SERENA
Did the Tenormin go up again?

CLERK
It may have. They all are.

She digs in her pocket and comes up with a couple more bills.

SERENA
There. There you are.

CLERK
Thank you. Eighty seven cents is
your change. And you girls have a
wonderful afternoon.

Serena takes Maddie's hand. Near the door they pass the candy
and Serena palms a pack of gum and sticks it in her pocket.

INT. CHELSEA'S DUPLEX - SAME

Chelsea is on the couch with her Boyfriend. She's cooking a
meth pipe when Serena, Maddie and Rusty come in the door.

Chelsea instantly hides the lighter and pipe, Serena glares
at her wild-eyed, and the Boyfriend sits up guiltily.

CHELSEA
H-hiii...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Serena hands the drugstore bag to Maddie.

SERENA
Sugar, take this in the other room
and close the door.

Maddie takes the bag and goes out.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Gimme that!

Chelsea hands over the pipe and Serena opens the front door
and hurls it out into the street.

BOYFRIEND
Hey, what the fuck!

SERENA
Now get outta here.

BOYFRIEND
That's my shit, you fucking bitch!

Serena boots him in the jaw. His head snaps back and on the
rebound she flings him to the floor and starts kicking.

SERENA
Get out! Get outta here! Get
fucking out!

CHELSEA
Serena, stop it! Stop it!!

Chelsea tries to intervene but Serena shakes her off.

SERENA
Get outta this house!

CHELSEA
Stop it, Serena! Stop it! You'll
kill him, stop it!

With a final boot Serena relents. The Boyfriend staggers to
the door shouting thickly through bleeding lips:

BOYFRIEND
You are toast, bitch! You hear me?
I will fucking murder you!

Now Rusty lunges, barking and snapping.

Chelsea SCREAMS.

SERENA
Rusty, leave it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Rusty backs off and the boyfriend hobbles out the door.

BOYFRIEND
You're fucking dead! You are
fucking dead!...

Serena slams the door and locks it.

INT. CHELSEA'S KITCHEN - LATER

Chelsea's at the table crying. Serena paces angrily.

SERENA
You behave like you're the only one
who matters, you know that? Like
you're sixteen and you can do
whatever you want. You have two
kids, one who's sick, and you're
hanging out with a fucking dead-end
loser smoking that shit?
(lunges at Chelsea)
I could just smack you!

CHELSEA
Go ahead!

SERENA
I oughta, you deserve it!

CHELSEA
Go ahead! I don't care! I don't
care about nothing!

SERENA
Maybe you should've thought of that
before you got knocked up twice!

CHELSEA
I'm not you, Serena! I don't plan
everything out!--

SERENA
Oh really? I hadn't noticed.

CHELSEA
--I'm not smart like you. I don't
have your brains or - or the good
job, or - or anything! I'm just
stupid Chelsea! Stupid dumb
Chelsea!

SERENA
You're right, you are stupid.

CHELSEA
I am. I'm stupid and retarded!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
You are retarded.

CHELSEA
I know! I heard it enough fucking
times by now! Don't you think I
know? Don't you think I know?

Chelsea sobs. Serena walks away, stops, comes back, her anger melting into an old pity. She stops behind Chelsea and begins combing out her hair with her fingers.

SERENA
...You're not stupid. Stop saying
that. You're just stressed out.
You need help. You need a break...

CHELSEA
I'm always alone, Serena! No one
cares what happens to me! No one
cares how my life is!...

SERENA
That's not true...

CHELSEA
I can't even help my kids!
Sometimes I just want to kill us
all and get this whole fucking
nightmare over with!

SERENA
Chels, don't say that. C'mon, we're
gonna get through this. Promise...

Chelsea cries quietly as Serena continues to smooth her hair.

EXT. WOODED BLUFF - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena, dressed as Juliette, walks toward the hanging tree in the dusky light, her long dress swish-swishing in the brush.

She begins searching the area, parting the ferns and salal growing around the clearing. After a few moments, not finding anything, she starts up the path.

EXT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - LATER

Serena raps on the door. In a moment Ligeia opens it.

LIGEIA
Juliette!

SERENA
Hi Ligeia. Victor around?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIGEIA

He went to an appointment with his therapist. C'mon in.

INT. VICTOR'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Serena sits while Ligeia fills a teapot at the stove.

LIGEIA

It's not the first time those guys beat the crap out of him. I doubt it'll be the last either unless he gives them the deed.

SERENA

But how can he if it all belongs to his grandma?

LIGEIA

Well, Victor could always kill her. I know the Canadian's suggested that a time or two.

SERENA

Victor wouldn't do that!

Ligeia carries the tea over and pours it into their cups.

LIGEIA

Anyway, you see why he's so stressed. I think the poor guy's gonna crack up.

SERENA

Does it help to see his therapist?

LIGEIA

I dunno. He goes all the time. Does it seem like it's helping?

Ligeia sits down.

LIGEIA (CONT'D)

Did he ever tell you about his life?

SERENA

Not really.

LIGEIA

Well maybe I shouldn't either, except it explains a lot. When Victor was eight he was living with his mom who was a junkie.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIGEIA (CONT'D)

They had it pretty rough, living on the street sometimes, you know, and I guess she'd just had it, because one night she turned the gas on in their apartment and went to bed. Only she forgot Victor's room had a broken window. In the morning he woke up. She didn't...

SERENA

God...

LIGEIA

Yeah, then his dad took him in. Only his dad was a pedophile. He used to let guys come over and, you know, play with Victor...

SERENA

God-damn...

LIGEIA

Yeah. Victor's got a lot to think about. Well, maybe a lot of us do. Sometimes I think life's just too hard for certain people.

Ligeia lights a cigarette and holds the match out to Serena.

INT./EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - DAY

It's raining. Serena stops in front of a run-down house with garbage strewn about the mud yard.

She gets out, tugging on a BASEBALL CAP, and heads up the driveway with a pair of bolt-cutters.

EXT. RUNDOWN HOUSE - SAME

Serena rounds the back of the house. In the yard there's a small chain-link pen and inside it a mangy dog stands ankle deep in water. An old dog house in the corner is flooded.

She squats near the fence and lets the dog sniff her hand.

SERENA

Poor girl. They leave you out here all day? That's no good, huh? That's not nice at all, huh?

She snaps the lock with the bolt cutters, scoops the mangy dog up in her arms and tucks it inside her jacket.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICE - KENNEL - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena comes in a back door with the wet dog in her jacket. An attendant, CHARRISE, is backing out of one of the pens.

CHARRISE

Hi Serena.

SERENA

Hey Charrise.

CHARRISE

Aw, who you got here?

SERENA

I don't know her name but she's in awful shape.

CHARRISE

Awww, she's half frozen. Let me get her a nice blanket.

(taking the dog)

Mr. Kaproth's looking for you.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICE - LATER

Serena comes into the office reception area.

SERENA

Hi, Marge. The boss looking for me?

The Receptionist looks over as though ready to burst into tears. Serena returns a quizzical look as she walks past.

INT. MR. KAPROTH'S OFFICE - SAME

Serena sticks her head in and sees Mr. Kaproth at his desk.

SERENA

Mr. Kaproth? You want to see me?

MR. KAPROTH

Yes, Serena, come in... Close the door please.

As Serena approaches, Kaproth looks at her over his glasses.

SERENA

Something wrong, sir?

Still looking at her, Kaproth opens a drawer and tosses an Animal Control cap on the desk.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Where did you--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. KAPROTH
I think you know.

SERENA
But--

MR. KAPROTH
Wednesday night a neighbor heard a disturbance in the woods. Dogs barking. Possible gunfire. In the morning he went down with a cop to look around. They found it.

SERENA
Mr. Kaproth, I was this close, I had the guy, I stopped him from--

Kaproth raises his hands to stop her.

MR. KAPROTH
No-no-no. I don't want to hear about your crazy escapades. I told you to stay out of those woods and you disregarded it. What if you'd been killed, Serena? Or killed someone else? I told you that's not our role and I meant it. And you just blatantly ignored me.

Kaproth rubs his temples and looks up.

MR. KAPROTH (CONT'D)
I'm letting you go.

SERENA
Mr. Kaproth--

MR. KAPROTH
You're done here, Serena. I'm sorry things didn't work out.

SERENA
Mr. Kaproth, I need this job.

Kaproth raises his hands again.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Sir, it's the only job in my family. I can't lose it. I don't know what we'll do.

MR. KAPROTH
You might've thought of that earlier. I know you're an independent type but when a boss gives an order he generally means it. Let this be a lesson.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. KAPROTH (CONT'D)

Marge has some paperwork for you.
Now please, I have work to do.

Serena stands a moment speechless, then turns and goes out.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICE - KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Serena walks down the row of pens. Watching her go the dogs are strangely quiet.

INT. SERENA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Serena sits on the bed brooding. Jeni stops in the doorway in her thong and pasties, putting on her makeup for work.

JENI

Well that sucks. God, they treat people like pieces of meat. So whataya gonna do?

SERENA

Look for something else.

JENI

You should come work at the club. You'd make a ton.

SERENA

Except I can't dance.

JENI

Guys don't care. You just smile and wiggle a bit.

SERENA

I can't smile either. I'm a fucking worthless unemployed loser.

Jeni comes over and rubs her shoulder.

JENI

You're not either, Serena, you're just sad. But you know what? Nothing ever stays the way it is. Nothing. That's a fact. You'll smile again. You'll see. I know you will because I know you.

INT. LAND CRUISER - DAY

With a cold drizzle falling Serena drives around town.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Inside a Pet World store Serena talks with the Manager who shakes his head "no".

B) In an upscale pet clinic Serena questions a Veterinarian who also shakes his head.

C) In the window of a grubby dog grooming shop Serena talks to the Proprietor who again says no.

INT. LAND CRUISER - PARKED - AFTERNOON

The windshield is awash in rain. Serena makes a call and listens as it RINGS. Finally Reese's message starts:

REESE (RECORDED)
You've reached Detective Jack
Reese. If this is a life-
threatening emergency--

Serena hangs up.

EXT. CHELSEA'S DUPLEX - LATE AFTERNOON

Drenched from the rain, Serena unloads groceries from the back of the Land Cruiser.

INT. CHELSEA'S KITCHEN - SAME

Serena puts groceries away while Maddie watches.

SERENA
We got raisins, baby carrots,
they're both good for you; big bag
of rice, I know you like rice...

MADDIE
Serena, did you catch a dog today?

SERENA
No, I didn't catch anything today,
Maddie, not a thing.

MADDIE
Maybe tomorrow?

SERENA
Yeah, maybe tomorrow...

Serena puts the last of the groceries away and turns and squats in front of the girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA (CONT'D)
I gotta run. You be good now, okay?

MADDIE
Are you good, Aunt Serena?

SERENA
Well not always. But I try to be. I
try to be...

She kisses the girl and gets up.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Half-dressed, Serena gulps from a beer bottle and resumes
applying makeup in front of the mirror.

She picks up her phone, stabs at a number, listens.

REESE (RECORDED)
... You've reached Detective--

She jabs at the phone and slams it down.

INT. TRIBAL CASINO - NIGHT

Serena sips her drink, watching the action at a craps table.
She's in a tight red dress and platinum wig.

Across the table a Gambler named ROGER places his bet and
looks up, meeting her eye. He's about 35, bulky, with slicked
back hair and a chunky gold watch.

The Shooter rolls, Players react and the Stickman pushes a
stack of chips to Roger's pile. Again he looks over, this
time venturing a smile. Serena gazes back and walks away.

INT. CASINO BAR - LATER

Serena's at the bar when ROGER comes up beside her.

ROGER
So, you left the table and my luck
ran out. What the hell, I took it
as a sign to cash in.

SERENA
Hurray for you.

ROGER
Quitting's half the game, right?
So how'd you do?

She shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 ROGER (CONT'D)
Bad?

 SERENA
Enough.

 ROGER
Sorry to hear that. My name's
Roger.

 SERENA
Juliette.

Roger flags the bartender, then reaches in his pocket and puts two poker chips on the bar. He slides them to Serena.

 ROGER
That cover it?

Now she looks at him.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - LATER

Stripped to a bustier, Serena's at the mirror making drunken adjustments to her wig. She knocks her purse to the floor.

 SERENA
Shit...

She stoops to gather her things, stands and with unsteady fingers threads a zip-tie into a loop.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

ROGER is on the bed, dressed, hands behind his head. He watches Serena come in, dim the light and kneel beside him.

 ROGER
Wow...

 SERENA
I'll rub your back.

 ROGER
You don't need to do that.

 SERENA
Then you can't see me. I'm shy.

He smiles, turns over, and Serena starts kneading his back.

 ROGER
So you from around here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
Sorta.

ROGER
Sorta?

SERENA
Uh-huh.

ROGER
Well I'm from Salt Lake. I come
through here a lot on business
though. What do you do?

SERENA
Whatever I want.

ROGER
(laughs)
Such as?

SERENA
...Feed people.

ROGER
Feed people? Like at a restaurant?

She doesn't answer as she slides his shirt up.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Well, full disclosure, I'm married,
four kids... I don't know if that
makes a difference to you but I'm
not into bullshitting people.

SERENA
'Cept your wife.

ROGER
'Cept my wife. So how about you?
You got somebody?

SERENA
No.

ROGER
No?

Nothing from Serena.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You don't say much, do you?

SERENA
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She stretches his left arm behind, then his right, then holds them there with one hand.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Ohhhhssshhhh...

She pulls the zip-tie from the back of her bustier and loops it over his hands, ready to cinch it tight.

Too slow. In a flash Roger rolls and clubs her with a backhand, knocking her to the floor. He leaps off the bed and yanks her up.

ROGER (CONT'D)
What the fuck is this? Huh? What
the fuck is this about!

Serena pulls away but he throws her onto the bed like a rag doll. Pinning her there, he slaps her face.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You come up here to roll me, you
little bitch? You gonna tie me up
and roll me, huh?

He slaps her again as Serena struggles to break free.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Baby, you picked the wrong dude to
fuck with. Anybody gets rolled
tonight it ain't gonna be me.

He clenches her bustier and rips it off her chest.

EXT. CASINO HOTEL - LATER

Serena pushes through the front doors into the cold night. Makeup smeared, lip swollen, she runs across the drive into the shadows of the parking lot.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - LATER

A key turns and Serena comes in. She closes the door with her back, slides to the floor and cries. Rusty comes in from the bedroom and she takes him in her arms.

SERENA
...Shit... Fuck... What're we gonna
do now, Rust?... What're we gonna
do now?...

She pets him, the silence broken by sobs.

Her PHONE RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Serena digs into her bag and takes it out to look.

SERENA (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Yeah... Where are you?

She hangs up and jumps to her feet.

INT. HOSPITAL E.R. UNIT - SAME

Serena bolts through the waiting room, past the reception desk and through the double doors into the E.R. corridor.

Simultaneously at the far end of the corridor Chelsea is hauled out of a room kicking and screaming, two orderlies clutching her arms and a doctor and nurse following.

CHELSEA
No!... Let me go!... She's my
kid!... She needs an operation, not
fucking pills!... Call Dr. Mishra!
He'll tell you! She don't need
more pills!... You'd save her if
she was white!... If she was white
you'd-- *Let me go!*

Chelsea crashes to the floor, dragging one of the orderlies down on top of her.

CHELSEA (CONT'D)
*...Please help her!... Save my
little girl! Pleeeeeease!...*

Another orderly jumps in just as Serena arrives in her clacking heels and escort-garb, to the surprise of all.

SERENA
Let me-- She's my sister! She's my
sister!--

Together the orderlies and Serena get Chelsea to her feet and lead her out of the ward.

INT. E.R. - LATER

Little Maddie sleeps surrounded by glowing machinery.

INT. E.R. WAITING ROOM - DAWN

Bleary-eyed, exhausted, Serena sits on a hard sofa with Chelsea's head in her lap asleep. A NURSE comes through the doors carrying a clipboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE

Miss Gitts? Your niece is ready to go home. We'll need Mom to fill out some paperwork.

SERENA

I can fill it out for her.

NURSE

We'd prefer if she did it.

SERENA

My sister can't read.

The Nurse smiles coolly and Serena looks down tenderly at Chelsea.

INT./EXT. LANDCRUISER - MORNING

Serena is parked in a downtown alley. She's got on a man's coat with a ball cap pulled low. She folds up a handwritten note and stuffs it in her pocket, then gets out of the car.

INT. BANK - MORNING

A bustling mid-morning crowd. Four Tellers are open and a line of customers has formed.

Serena comes in the door, nearly unrecognizable in the big coat and the ball cap pulled low. She walks stiffly, stops, then makes a turn backwards to stand by the writing counter.

She peers under the bill of her cap, then reaches for a deposit slip. Her fingers can't separate it from the stack. She puts her hand back in her pocket.

Across the room the ASSISTANT MANAGER looks up from his desk. He watches for a moment, gets up and saunters over.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Good morning. Is there something I can help you with?

SERENA

No.

The Assistant Manager stands blinking a moment.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Well, would you like to see one of the tellers? The line's moving right along.

Serena shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASSISTANT MANAGER (CONT'D)
...Do you currently have an account
with our bank?

Serena turns, walks stiffly to the door and pushes through,
while the Assistant Manager watches her every move.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - NOON

Serena, still in the big coat, hurries through a noon-hour
crowd to the elevators. A group waits to go up, and when the
car arrives another group disgorges.

Serena sees Reese among them and follows, calling out:

SERENA
Jack!... Jack!...

Reese turns, not happy. Serena catches up.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Can I talk to you?

REESE
I'm in a bit of a hurry. Why
didn't you call?

SERENA
I did, I left a message.

REESE
I was in a meeting. Call me later
this afternoon.

SERENA
Jack, I need to talk.

REESE
Now's not a good time--

A WOMAN'S VOICE
Jack?... Jack?...

Serena and Reese turn to see a strikingly beautiful Woman.
She's mid-thirties, tall and slender in a perfectly fitted
suit, her platinum hair done in an elegant chignon.

The whole package is just worlds beyond Serena in her jeans
and bum's coat. This is ADRIAN REESE.

REESE
Adrian...

ADRIAN REESE
Sorry I'm late, darling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She kisses Reese then looks at Serena, smiling.

REESE
Adrian, this is Serena Gitts, from
Animal Control. Serena, my wife
Adrian. You might recognize her
from the City Council.

Serena flinches.

SERENA
Hello.

ADRIAN REESE
Hello. My, Animal Control, that
must be *exciting*. Darling, I hate
to interrupt but if we're going to
eat we'd better run. I've a meeting
at two.

REESE
(to Serena)
Uh, look, why don't you call me
later on and we'll talk about it.

SERENA
It's okay, I think I figured it
out.

ADRIAN REESE
Nice to meet you, *Sabrina*.

Reese and his wife head off through the lobby.

INT./EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Serena's on her bed despondently playing with a pistol.
There's a KNOCK at the front door. She ignores it.

Outside, Reese peers in and tries the knob.

REESE
Serena!... Serena!...

More KNOCKING follows but Serena ignores it.

REESE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Serena!... Hey, Serena!...

Reese HAMMERS on the door, RATTLES the knob again, and Serena
aims the gun at her doorway.

Reese gives up and walks back to his car.

Serena hears the car start and lowers the gun.

EXT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - MORNING

Serena, dressed in her normal clothes, trudges up the steps and rings the doorbell. Dahlia answers the door.

DAHLIA
Yeah?

SERENA
Dahlia, it's me, Juliette.

DAHLIA
(looking her over)
Juliette? Oh my god, what happened?

SERENA
What? Nothing I - I just got up.

DAHLIA
C'mon in...

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - SAME

Serena follows Dahlia into the house as Dahlia casts troubled glances back. They intersect with Ligeia coming from the kitchen. Ligeia doesn't recognize her either.

DAHLIA
It's Juliette.

LIGEIA
Juliette? My God, what happened?

SERENA
What?

DAHLIA
She just got up.

LIGEIA
Oh, wow...

Ligeia eyes her skeptically as she leads the way into:

INT. VICTOR'S STUDIO - SAME

Ligeia, Dahlia and Serena file in. Victor is lying on the couch with a cold washcloth on his head. He GROANS as Ligeia sits beside him and applies a fresh washcloth.

LIGEIA
Victor's not feeling well.

SERENA
What's the matter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAHLIA

The Canadian called. He wants Victor to come up to the lodge and Victor thinks it's because they're going to kill him.

SERENA

Kill him?

LIGEIA

But they're not gonna because we're going too. They can't touch him if we're there, right Victor?

VICTOR

Ohhhhh!... Who's that? Who's here?

LIGEIA

It's Juliette.

Victor manages to roll to his side.

VICTOR

...Hey. What happened to you?

DAHLIA AND LIGEIA

She just got up.

VICTOR

...You look nice... *Ohhhhh!...*

SERENA

Why would they kill him?

DAHLIA

The land thing. The Canadian wants the deed.

SERENA

But it's impossible. Victor doesn't own it.

DELIA

The Canadian says that's Victor's problem.

VICTOR

Ohhhh!...

Ligeia shoots Dahlia a stern look.

SERENA

So where is this lodge anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAHLIA

In the mountains, couple hours from here. It's really cool. We've gone to parties up there.

LIGEIA

The Canadian has awesome parties.

SERENA

So they're all up there? The Canadian and his guys?

LIGEIA

Yeah, but they're gonna touch you, Victor, because wherever you go we go, right?

Victor moans.

SERENA

I'll go with you.

DAHLIA AND LIGEIA

What? You will?

SERENA

Yeah.

LIGEIA

You hear that, Victor? Now we'll have even more people on our team.

DAHLIA

Only you can't go like that.

LIGEIA

No, people will think you're completely weird.

DAHLIA

Go get changed. We'll wait.

LIGEIA

And bring something warm.

SERENA

Alright. I'll be right back...

Serena goes out. Ligeia and Dahlia turn back to Victor.

LIGEIA

Isn't it great, Victor? We're all going. Do you want me to pack anything for you to take?

DAHLIA

Like maybe a gun?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VICTOR
Ohhhhhh!...

Ligeia gives Dahlia another hard look.

INT./EXT. VICTOR'S CADILLAC - NOON

Victor's dented black Cadillac cruises up Interstate 5 on a crisp winter day.

The women are in front, Ligeia driving with Dahlia in the middle. Serena, back in her Juliette disguise, turns to look at Victor sprawled face-down on the back seat.

SERENA
He's sleeping.

DAHLIA
Good.

LIGEIA
He does that. Has these major panic attacks, then just crashes.

DAHLIA
Then you can't even wake him up.

LIGEIA
He's like a corpse.

They ride in silence, contemplating it.

INT./EXT. VICTOR'S CADILLAC - LATER

Victor sits with his forehead pressed against the side window staring gloomily at the snow shrouded mountains.

EXT. THE LODGE - AFTERNOON

A log mansion facing a sunlit Alpine valley. Deep snow is everywhere - on the pine trees and granite crags, on the beam-ends and roofs of the lodge.

A dozen cars are parked in the lot while a stretch Hummer disgorges Guests under the porte cochere.

INT./EXT. VICTOR'S CADILLAC - SAME

Ligeia, Dahlia and Serena peer out as the Cadillac clears the top of the driveway. Ligeia pulls into a parking spot.

LIGEIA
Victor? We're here. Are you awake?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICTOR (O.C.)
(miserably)
Yes, I'm awake.

Victor sits up.

LIGEIA
Now there's nothing to worry about.
We're all here and if we stick
together nothing bad's gonna
happen, okay?

DAHLIA
Hey, look, it's the Canadian!

Victor ducks down again.

LIGEIA
He's coming out to meet us?

The Canadian is striding toward the Cadillac.

DAHLIA
I hope that's why he's coming...

Ligeia shoots Dahlia a look.

VICTOR
Does he have a gun?

LIGEIA
No, he's got a can of pop. For
heaven's sake, Victor, sit up and
act like a - like a--

DAHLIA
Like a man?

LIGEIA
Well close anyway!

Ligeia, Serena and Dahlia get out of the car.

THE CANADIAN
Ladies, welcome! How good of you
to come. Now where's my friend
Victor? He's with you I hope.

Finally Victor emerges, nervously straitening his pants.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)
Ah, there you are! Hello Victor.
Good to see you. Listen, about
last time. I got a bit over-
excited. No hard feelings I hope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VICTOR
Of course not, boss.

The Canadian claps Victor in a hug that's over-tight.

THE CANADIAN
(in Victor's ear)
We'll talk it over later, huh?

VICTOR
Sure, boss.

The Canadian turns to the ladies, shaking hands.

THE CANADIAN
Now let's see, Ligeia, right? And
Dahlia of course. And who's this
lovely creature?

LIGEIA
This is our friend Juliette.

THE CANADIAN
Juliette, welcome to my cabin in
the woods.

SERENA
Thank you.

THE CANADIAN
Come on, grab your things, the
party's started.

The Canadian sees another car pulling in and wanders off to
greet more guests. Ligeia pops the trunk.

LIGEIA
That didn't seem like much of a
death threat to me, did it to you?

DAHLIA
He remembered my name!

INT. LODGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Several dozen guests mill about in the huge vaulted living
room: young Goths, starlets, burly men in suits, second-rung
celebrities and assorted jet-setters.

A fire burns in the stone hearth and there's an elaborate
buffet of food and drink. Beyond the wall of glass lies the
snow-blanketed valley under mountain peaks.

INT. THE LODGE - NIGHT

The party is going full tilt. Standing by the hearth, Serena sips a drink, warily eyeing the crowd.

A VOICE (O.C.)
So, do you know a lot of these
people?

She turns and sees a handsome Young Man smiling at her. This is STEVE.

SERENA
Hardly any. How about you?

STEVE
Exactly one, and I haven't seen him
in two hours. I'm Steve.

SERENA
Juliette.

STEVE
Juliette. Well now I know two.
You from around here?

SERENA
Bellingham.

STEVE
Cool. I grew up in Vancouver. I'm
living down in L.A. now. I'm an
actor. What do you do?

SERENA
I'm sort of between things.

STEVE
I know the feeling. Like I said I'm
an actor.

Serena smiles.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Have you ever tried acting?

SERENA
Me? No.

STEVE
I think you ought to.

SERENA
Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVE

Because you're beautiful in a really interesting way. That's what they look for.

SERENA

Wow, do you always come on like that?

STEVE

Sorry, I was just talking shop. I mean what I said is true but... Anyway, can I get you a drink?

SERENA

Alright.

STEVE

Whataya got?

SERENA

The punch, whatever it is.

STEVE

Be right back.

Steve heads across to the buffet and Serena waits, eyeing the crowd around her.

Suddenly she does a double-take, ducks her head and circles around the pillar. She peeks out from behind it to look.

Across the room Reese is entering the party. On his arm Adrian is resplendent in dangling diamond earrings and a sable coat. Reese is greeting people, obviously well-known, moving in Serena's direction.

Serena watches until ten feet from where she stands Reese and the Canadian meet in a hearty embrace.

THE CANADIAN

Hello Jack!

REESE

Hello, Claire. You remember Adrian, don't you?

THE CANADIAN

Of course! How could I forget Adrian!

A young ASIAN MAN with a pencil-line moustache walks up and Reese hands him a key fob. The Asian Man departs.

And now Reese looks over and for half a beat seems to recognize the wildly made-up girl standing beside the pillar looking back at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Serena strides from the room.

INT. THE LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Alone in a hallway, Serena stops and looks back angrily.

SERENA

You motherfucking sonuvabitch...

She continues walking, wandering further into the mansion.

She passes through a darkened billiard room, opens a door and goes down a flight of stairs. There, long hallways stretch in two directions. She turns right, passing a workout room, a pool, a line of closed doors...

Suddenly, around the corner ahead, a DOOR SLAMS followed by the sound of approaching FOOTSTEPS.

Serena looks around, sees a partly open door of a dark room, and slips inside.

The FOOTSTEPS grow nearer until a man comes around the corner. It's the Asian Man with the pencil-line moustache. He's carrying a green backpack over one shoulder and a black garbage sack in the other arm.

He turns into the room Serena just entered and flips on the lights, revealing a gleaming stainless steel kitchen.

INT. THE LODGE - LOWER KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Asian Man slings the green backpack and black garbage bag onto a stainless steel table.

He opens the garbage bag and takes out a dozen plastic bags filled with PILLS of various colors. He unlocks a refrigerator and begins packing the bags inside. He closes the fridge and locks it.

In the room's dead silence his cell phone CHIRPS. He answers as he returns to the table where the backpack sits.

ASIAN MAN

Hey... No, I'm just about done. It went fine, perfect. How are you?

He takes the backpack and carries it across the room and drops it carelessly on top of a floor safe.

ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

You hungry?... No, baby, not that, I mean for dinner...

He leans on a desk, fiddling with a rubber band.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)
I know it has... Well, I'll make it
up to you. Right now I'd like a
nice thick steak... Yeah, I bet you
would... Yeah, we'll take care of
that too, don't worry...

Chuckling, he walks over to the door, opens it, turns out the
light and as he walks out, says:

ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)
How about I pick you up in an hour?
That good? You gonna be dressed
and ready?...

The lock turns and his FOOTSTEPS and LAUGHTER recede down the
hallway.

Serena crawls out from behind a pile of boxes in the corner.
The room is dark except for the light sifting through a high
window.

She looks around, crosses to the refrigerator and tries the
door. Locked. She sees the green backpack on the safe.

She goes over to it, unzips the flap and peers inside. Her
eyes widen. She reaches in and brings out several banded
bundles of CASH, all hundreds, ten grand per bundle.

She stuffs them back in, zips the pack and looks around. For
several seconds she just stares, plotting her next move.
Then she hoists the backpack and heads for the door.

INT. THE LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Serena hurries down the hallway with the backpack. She takes
a turn, stops, retraces her steps. She runs up the stairs to
the door leading to the billiard room.

She cracks the door to look but now there are party guests
milling about. She continues up to the next floor.

There she emerges at the end of a long carpeted hallway.
MUSIC and LAUGHTER float up the main staircase at the far
end. She hurries along and is just about to enter a room
when a voice calls out:

STEVE (O.C.)
Juliette?... Juliette!

She freezes, turns.

STEVE (CONT'D)
There you are. I've been looking
all over for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
Oh, hi...

STEVE
I thought you got kidnapped or
something!

SERENA
Sorry, I - I just felt like
changing clothes.

STEVE
You're coming back down though,
aren't you?

SERENA
Sure. Ten minutes?

They exchange smiles and Serena disappears into the room.

INT./EXT. SPORTS COUP - NIGHT

The Asian Man saunters across a parking lot to a black sports
coup. He climbs in, shuts the door, inserts the key and
freezes as a sudden awful thought cramps his mind.

He leaps out of the car and sprints back toward the house.

INT. THE LODGE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Serena pulls on her snowflake print long johns. She hoists up
a pair of ski pants, hooks the suspenders, zips up a ski
jacket and yanks the hood up tight.

INT. ANOTHER GUEST ROOM - MINUTES LATER

A KNOCK sounds on the door. It opens and Serena enters with
the backpack. She sees an overcoat on the bed, picks it up
and shakes it. She pulls out a ring of keys.

INT. THE LODGE - LOWER KITCHEN - NIGHT

A key turns in the lock and the Asian Man comes in. He turns
on the light and hurries to the safe. Dropping to his knees,
he works the tumbler and swings the heavy door open. Empty.
He turns to search the room, breathless. *It's gone...*

EXT. THE LODGE - NIGHT

In the shadows a service door opens and Serena slips out into
the night. She hurries along a pathway, trudges over a berm
of deep snow, and reaches the parking area.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She presses a key fob and across the lot an Escalade flashes awake. She runs to it, tosses in the backpack and climbs in.

INT./EXT. ESCALADE - NIGHT

Lights out, Serena backs the vehicle out of its parking place. After several turns through a maze of vehicles she comes to the top of the driveway.

She starts down the drive, picking up speed and taking the first sharp turn. Suddenly something looms in the darkness and she stomps on the brakes.

A black Hummer is parked sideways across the road.

Men approach from two directions - Scarface on one side, Chink on the other. Scarface swings her door open.

SCARFACE

Leaving so soon? We didn't even dance.

He laughs, baring a mouthful of rotting teeth and a single yellowed FANG.

INT./EXT. UNDERGROUND ROOM - NIGHT

Scarface and Chink hustle Serena down a flight of snow-covered steps. Chink opens a steel door and switches on the light in a dank windowless room. They toss Serena inside and slam the door. A key turns.

She crawls to the frosty concrete wall and slumps against it.

EXT. THE LODGE - EARLY MORNING

Beneath searing skies the lodge sparkles under fresh snow.

INT. THE LODGE - OFFICE - MORNING

The Canadian, in robe and slippers, sits at his huge desk. Across the room Two Tons stands at semi-attention while on a sofa Victor and the Asian Man sit with their heads bowed.

THE CANADIAN

What a night, Victor, eh? And to top it off I had a lovely Ukrainian up for a delightful fuck. What a rabbit! It's a pity you don't go in for that sort of thing, Victor, there's nothing like fresh young cunt. Ah, speaking of which--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Scarface and Chink lead Serena into the office. Her hands are zip-tied behind.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)

Well, how did you sleep, my dear? Better than I, I hope. You know, I must say I'm a bit melancholy this morning. I welcomed you into my home and you repaid my hospitality by stealing from me. That's not only rude, it's so unkind!

VICTOR

Boss, it was me. I put her up to it. I told her where the money was--

SERENA

Shut up, Victor.

VICTOR

Boss, listen. I planned the whole thing out--

THE CANADIAN

Shut up, Victor.

The Canadian comes around his desk, hands in his pockets.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)

No-no-no. No one planned anything. Mr. Lee made an uncharacteristic error, and you, my dear, happened to be nosing around where you could capitalize on it. End of story. Well, not quite the end. We still have to wind things up. But like a good author, I don't waste a lot of ink on the dénouement. There's character, trajectory, outcome... Simple--

The Canadian pulls a pistol from his pocket and shoots the Asian Man through the chest. Everyone jumps from shock and the Asian Man slumps forward.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, about the mess. Now, today will be business as usual, with one exception. Make the drop but take Mr. Lee and our ungrateful guest with you and, you know, let them off somewhere along the way.

Victor leaps up but is cut off by Two Tons who wrestles him to the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VICTOR

Boss! It was me! It was all me!

THE CANADIAN

Oh shut up, Victor.

EXT. HELIPAD - NOON

Scarface and Chink drag Serena through the snow to a Bell 204 helicopter. They toss her inside and climb in after her.

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER - SAME

Scarface takes the lone jump seat in back and Chink climbs in up front next to the Pilot, leaving Serena to share the floor with the dead Asian Man.

There are boxes of "freight" and the green backpack which Scarface tucks between his feet.

The helicopter lifts off...

LATER:

Scarface reaches into his jacket, brings out a small vial of brown powder, spills some onto his hand and snorts it up.

As Serena watches he spills out a bit more and offers it to her. She stares back coldly. Stung by her refusal, he takes another snort.

SERENA

Where're you taking me?

Scarface lets out a putrid rotten-toothed laugh.

EXT. HELICOPTER - AERIAL - LATER

Against the blue sky the helicopter swoops over the craggy shoulders of Mt. Baker. Steep slopes of virgin snow run down into patches of spruce and pine forest a thousand feet below.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME

Scarface, nodding out, begins to slump over in his seat. His open jacket reveals the butt of a pistol in a side holster.

Watching him, Serena lifts herself and manages to crawl through her arms until her bound wrists are in her lap.

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER - LATER

The helicopter turns and descends slowly along a steep slope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Pilot says something to Chink, pointing at the mountain. Craning to look out, Serena sees the mountainside rearing up looking almost close enough to touch.

Scarface snores.

The Pilot points and turns the ship 180 degrees.

PILOT

Right there! Right down from that patch of rock!

CHINK

Big?

PILOT

Huge! Biggest one I ever saw!

Serena dives across the dead Asian, grabs the green backpack, then lunges for the door handle. Grasping it, she wrenches the door aside and leaps out into the frigid sunshine...

CHINK

Hey! Hey! What the fuck--!

SCARFACE

Huh? Wha--

CHINK

She's gone! She's fucking gone!

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME

Serena drops through the air, hits the snow and goes tumbling-rolling-sliding down the nearly sheer slope as the helicopter swoops down the mountain after her.

In the open doorway Scarface stands with an AR-15 and begins pumping rounds at the descending snow-cloud that is Serena. Chink, hanging on by an arm, fires a machine pistol wildly.

And Serena slides over a snow ledge and drops somersaulting through the air before the slope of the mountain catches her again. She lands with a jolt, bounces and tumbles, and slips out of sight at the treeline.

The helicopter pulls up, just clearing the tops of the trees that have lent her cover.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME

CHINK

Fuck! Shit! Take us down! Take us down!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PILOT
No fucking way, man!

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - AFTERNOON

Serena clambers down the mountain, sliding and crawling deeper into the cover of the trees. She takes shelter against a trunk as the helicopter circle overhead.

She cowers as a spray of bullets rains down through the branches. Another spray follows before the helicopter at last ascends and flies off toward the afternoon sun.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - AFTERNOON

Serena makes her way stumbling and sliding down the mountain as the forest thickens around her.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - AFTERNOON

A raging stream cuts through the pine forest. Serena follows it downstream until she comes to a tributary crossing her path. It's a swift rushing creek too broad to jump.

She climbs the hillside along the creek to an ice-bridge. She tries it with her boot and begins to inch across. She's halfway over when the ice starts to crack and give way.

She plunges into the creek.

The swift flow washes her down into the main stream. Thrashing and gasping, she bobs along in the raging current until at last she claws her way to the opposite side. She pulls herself onto the icy bank.

SERENA
Shit!... Oh God!... Shit!...

She is soaked to the skin, and for the first time in this ordeal she breaks under the strain and begins to cry.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Lugging the green backpack, Serena trudges in her frozen clothes, her whole body shivering. She stumbles, gets up, stumbles again, hauls herself back up. Then up ahead:

A SHACK

She sees it through the trees, at first doubting her eyes, but as she trudges closer it appears for real: a hunter's log shack perched on the bank of the stream.

INT. HUNTER'S SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

With a THUMP the door is kicked in and Serena enters. Her eyes widen as she takes in the small room: an iron wood stove; kindling; a box of matches on the shelf...

She loads the stove, then forces her stiff fingers to pick up the match box and spill some on the floor. She strikes and strikes the matches, breaking several before one flares.

In the glow of a small fire she holds a hatchet between her knees and works the zip-tie against it until it breaks.

EXT. HUNTER'S SHACK - DUSK

Smoke billows from the shack's stovepipe.

INT. HUNTER'S SHACK - SAME

Serena stands naked, rubbing herself by the glowing stove.

INT. HUNTER'S SHACK - NIGHT

Serena's outer clothes hang on twine strung across the room. The money from the backpack - 120 bundles - lay spread out on the floor to dry.

She comes in the door in her snowflake long johns carrying a load of firewood. She drops it and sits down on a crate.

Then she notices the small cabinet on the wall. She gets up and opens it. There's a box of tea-bags, a few chipped dishes, candle ends, and a single can of peaches...

She sets the peach can on the floor and with a strike of the hatchet splits open the lid. She sets the can on the stove and sits down to wait.

SERENA

(sings)

*The first time... ever I saw your
face... I thought the sun rose in
your eyes...*

(trailing off to hum)

LATER:

By candlelight she drinks the peach juice down in breathless gulps, then with dripping fingers feeds herself the sweet crunchy wedges of fruit.

EXT. HUNTER'S SHACK - MORNING

Smoke rises from the stovepipe under heavy snowfall.

INT. HUNTER'S SHACK - SAME

Serena puts a handful of farmer matches in an inside pocket, stuffs newspaper in with it, zips up her coat, drains a cup of tea and heads out the door with the green backpack.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - LATER

Serena follows the stream tumbling down through the pine forest deep with snow.

EXT. A CLEARING - MORNING

The sky is darker now and the snowfall swirls in a stiff wind. Serena starts across a clearing, head bent to the storm. She stops, gazing down at something in the snow.

A PAW PRINT

Now she sees lines of prints just like it crossing in every direction around her. She raises her head - and freezes.

THE WOLF

It's sixty feet away at the edge of the clearing - big, scruffy, with silver-gray eyes bright with hunger. Scanning, she spots two smaller wolves to the right and another on her left - an alpha and three bitches.

She takes a step toward the alpha, waving her arms.

SERENA

Go on, go! Git! Get outta here! Go!
Git! GO! GO! GO ON!...

The alpha doesn't stir. But one of the bitches creeps tender-footed across the snow, then suddenly sprints and leaps--

Serena clubs it aside with the backpack.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Go! Get outta here! Go on, get out!

Now another one moves in and Serena again knocks it aside, but not before the third wolf has latched onto the back of her coat and is pulling her to the ground.

Serena swings wildly; but now another has latched onto her arm and she is yanked down to her knees even as she shouts and clubs at the wolves tearing at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The alpha narrows it's eyes and advances. In a sudden flash it sprints and leaps. Serena sees it flying toward her, teeth bared and aimed at her face.

A rifle SHOT rings out.

The alpha falls, knocking Serena back as it lands dead on top of her. With a YELP the bitches flee into the woods.

Gasping for breath, Serena wrestles the hot, dead beast off of her as FOOTSTEPS crunch across the snow.

She sees, upside-down, a Man come into view. He's about 30, with a moustache connected to his side whiskers and a rifle now loosely aimed at her. His name is CLEVELAND.

She shoves at the dead wolf still pinning her legs.

CLEVELAND

Well well. The girl who can fly.

He picks up the green backpack and swats the snow off it.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Get up.

Serena struggles onto her feet.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - DAY

The path through the snow leads to a house - part dugout, part log cabin - with smoke curling out of the chimney.

At gunpoint Cleveland guides Serena toward the front door.

INT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - MORNING

The door swings open and Cleveland shoves Serena inside.

It's a survivalist crib. A vast amount of weaponry lines the log walls, locked in place with steel straps. Shelves are stacked with gallon cans of eggs, vegetables, powdered milk. A fire blazes in the stone fireplace.

CLEVELAND

Bonner?... Bonner!

A VOICE (O.S.)

Yeah, Cleve!

CLEVELAND

Get out here!

(to Serena)

Alright now kick off your boots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cleveland's brother BONNER comes in from the next room. He has the buzz cut and skewed look of a fresh recruit at a mental asylum.

BONNER

Now how in the hell--?

CLEVELAND

That's right, I got her. Now bring me that line you string the clothes on.

(to Serena)

Okay, off with the snowsuit, let's see what we got here.

He pulls the jacket off, jerks her sweater over her head, rips open her snow pants and yanks them down to her ankles, until she's standing there in her snowflake long johns.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Yeah, this'll work, this'll work...

Bonner comes over with a length of rope.

BONNER

Where'd you find her, Cleve?

CLEVELAND

I knew she'd come down the river. I was checkin' the pond traps and there she was with a pack of wolves around all lickin' their chops. I shooed 'em off and nabbed her.

BONNER

Nice goin' Cleve!

CLEVELAND

Gimme that rope and hold this--

Cleveland hands Bonner the rifle and tears off his coat. A clump of KEYS dangles from his belt loop.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Okay, now down! On the floor!

Before she can comply he throws her down and starts tying her wrists. Knotting them, he hops around to tie her ankles.

Bonner returns holding out a satellite phone.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Whatcha got that for?

BONNER

Ain't you gonna call the Canadian?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLEVELAND

Fuck no, not today I ain't. I might tomorrow or I might next week, we'll see. First I'm gonna have some fun with this nice little piece of ass.

(shouting at Serena)

'Cause Cleveland ain't had no fun in a long fuckin' time!

In his excitement Cleveland punches Serena in the side of the head. She recoils and spits at him.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Ooh, we got a frisky one Bonner. Got a bit of attitude here.

He punches her again.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Now give me a hand.

They grab her under the arms, drag her across the floor to a bed along the log wall and fling her face-up onto it. Cleveland sits beside her and clenches her neck.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Now listen here, flying girl, I gotta run check the rest of them traps. But don't you worry 'cause you and me got all the time in the world. --Bonner!

BONNER

Yeah, Cleve.

CLEVELAND

You watch her. Don't untie that rope and don't touch her neither.

Bonner nods. Cleveland bends over Serena and kisses her roughly, groping her crotch while she struggles beneath him. He comes up panting and emotional and hops off the bed.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Oh fuck! You keep your dirty hands off her!

BONNER

I will! I will!

INT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - LATER

Serena opens her eyes. Bonner, seated on a straight chair, watches her, so transfixed he could be gazing at the Virgin Mary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

What?

Bonner is silent.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Well what?

Bonner keeps staring.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Don't stare at me like that. If you got something in mind, do it.

Still staring, Bonner reaches out and, trembling, lightly touches the curve of her hip, her waist, her breast. He withdraws his hand.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Jesus, you're weird.

BONNER

Soon as Cleveland's done fuckin' you, I'm gonna start in.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Yeah, and I'm guessing you don't have a lot of experience in that area.

Bonner looks at her, not sure how to take that.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Way your hand's shaking.

He looks down at his hands.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Where do you pee around here?

BONNER

Huh?

SERENA

Pee. Where do you take a pee around here?

BONNER

Outhouse.

SERENA

Well, you mind walking me out there so I don't pee the bed?

BONNER

I-I can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SERENA
Why can't you?

BONNER
I can't untie you.

SERENA
Says who, your stupid brother? How come he's the boss and you're the gofer-boy around here? Is he that much tougher than you?

BONNER
Hell no.

SERENA
Well maybe you ought to tell him sometime. Anyway, I gotta pee.

Bonner looks at her skeptically.

BONNER
You ain't gonna run off?

SERENA
Sure, in my long johns. Look, you keep my boots, I can't run off barefoot. Either that or get me a pan and pull my pants down 'cause I gotta pee really bad.

That settles it for Bonner. He begins to untie her.

EXT. outhouse - DAY

Serena comes out of the outhouse, barefoot in the snow, her hands behind her back hitching up her long johns.

SERENA
Whew, thought I was gonna-- Hey look, a fox on the roof.

Bonner turns and Serena swings a toilet seat from behind and clubs him in the head. He drops like a sandbag and Serena leaps on him, bashing his head in with the wooden seat.

She stares in disbelief of what she's done, tosses the seat, wipes blood from her cheek and backs away.

INT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - AFTERNOON

Serena tries the steel straps securing the guns to the wall. Locked. She starts ransacking the room - drawers, cupboards - and finds an old revolver. Empty. She tosses it aside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Above the fireplace an ash longbow and a sheaf of arrows hang as decoration. Serena considers them but turns away.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - SAME

Under heavy snowfall Serena tromps around the side of the cabin. In back there's a machine shed. She slides open the metal door and peers in.

INT. MACHINE SHED - SAME

An old Jeep is parked in the shadows. Serena leans in and checks for a key - nothing.

Opposite a blue tarp shrouds something. She tears it away: a snowmobile. But again no key.

Now something else catches her eye. On the posts of the shed, hung on spikes, are several big oddly shaped contraptions of rusted iron with chains dangling.

She stands on a crate and lifts one of the heavy clanking things off its spike and lets it crash to the ground.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - AFTERNOON

About fifty feet from the porch Serena crouches on the path shoveling snow around with her hands. Satisfied, she stands up and follows the path back to the cabin.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Cleveland tromps along the trail. Rifle on shoulder, his left glove clutches the gutted carcasses of a rabbit and a fox.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - AFTERNOON

Cleveland approaches briskly along the path. There's a spring in his step. He's muttering happily to himself.

Sixty feet from the porch a loud SNAP cracks the air as a #16 bear trap leaps from the snow like the jaws of a shark and clamps onto his left leg.

CLEVELAND

*Yeeouuu!... Mother-fuck!... Oh
fucking God!... Bon-nerrrr!...*

He drags the heavy clanking trap a step or two and falls, setting off another loud SNAP as a second trap leaps from the snow and bites crushingly onto his right biceps.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)

Aaaaaaagggggghhhhhh!!!...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From beside the cabin Serena steps into view. She's holding the ash longbow and a clutch of arrows.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)
Hawwwwww!... Get these fuckin' things off me!... Oh God, Bon-nerrrrrr!!...

Serena strings an arrow, raises the bow, aims and shoots. The arrow whizzes over Cleveland's head.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)
Hey! I need help, bitch! I saved your fuckin' life! BON-NER!!...

She aims and fires a second arrow. This one slices through Cleveland's right thigh.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)
Aaaaawwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!!...

Serena readies another arrow.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)
Hey!... I never hurt you!... I never hurt you!... Awww, God-damn somebody help meeeeeee!...

She shoots and this arrow stabs straight into his gullet.

CLEVELAND (CONT'D)
Aaaawwwwggg---Aaaaawwwwgggg--

Cleveland falls face forward.

Serena walks out to him. She yanks his coat open and unsnaps the key ring from his belt.

INT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - LATER

Serena unlocks the straps securing the guns to the wall.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena comes out with the green backpack and a big DUFFEL BAG zipped tight. Off her shoulder hangs a short-barrel shotgun.

INT. MACHINE SHED - SAME

Serena tries a key in the Jeep. The starter *TICK-TICKS* and dies.

She goes over and tries a key in the snowmobile. It fires right up. She bungies the backpack and duffel to the seat, revs the machine across the dirt floor and out into the snow.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Serena speeds jerking and bucking down an old logging road.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - SAME

Cleveland slumps as before, now with a dusting of fresh snow.

The SOUND OF ENGINES grow in the distance until two snowmobiles roar to a stop. Scarface and Chink cut their engines and lift their goggles to look.

CHINK

What the fuck happened to him?

SCARFACE

Whataya think?

Scarface holds up a hand. Now from a distance comes the WHINING SOUND of a snowmobile engine.

They restart their engines and steer for the road. Finding Serena's fresh track, they tear off after her.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DUSK

Serena stops at a high lookout above a frozen lake. She cuts the engine and looks across the miles of untrammelled snow. In the distance headlights shine on a highway threading the opposite shore.

Suddenly she hears the snowmobile engines coming from behind.

She fires her engine and speeds down a steep switchback. Turning too fast, she rolls the machine and lands under it in a berm of snow. She wrestles the machine off and races away.

She bucks downhill like a bull-rider but Chink's faster machine soon gains on her till he's right in her wake.

Serena cuts the next switchback short and plows through the woods. She hits a hillock and takes flight, jumps a stump, bounces, soars over a creek and lands on the road again.

Chink is still with her. She guns it to the next turn and veers off, plunging back into the woods, jerking and jumping downhill until she lands on the smooth ice of the lake.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - SAME

Serena races across the ice. Over her shoulder she sees Chink coming up fast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Standing up and laughing into the wind, Chink overtakes her on the left. He veers to cut her off but she evades him. He veers again and she dodges back.

She races ahead but a moment later Chink roars up beside her. He veers in front and she dodges; he veers again and this time she rises from the seat, swings out the shotgun and fires a blast that knocks him somersaulting across the ice.

Scarface stops next to Chink's lifeless body. Gazing out, he sees Serena slow into a wide turn a quarter mile away and head back toward him. She's coming back!

SCARFACE
Crazy bitch...

Scarface pulls a Beretta machine pistol out of his coat, twists the throttle and his machine leaps ahead. In a moment he and Serena are racing flat out toward each other like medieval knights in a jousting match.

They're a hundred yards apart, then fifty, then twenty and Scarface lets loose a barrage of bullets as Serena answers with a series of concussive chugs from her shotgun.

Scarface flies off his sled and goes skidding across the ice.

Serena looks back, then steers her machine in a wide arc with a rooster tail of snow in her wake.

Scarface lies there, seemingly dead, but after a moment he sits up and watches Serena disappear into the distance.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Serena climbs out of an SUV, dragging her bags along.

SERENA
Thank you again, sir. Good night!

The SUV pulls away. Serena goes straight to her Land Cruiser, opens the tailgate and throws the backpack and duffel inside.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - SAME

Serena comes in and Rusty bounds in from the other room and almost floors her with excitement.

SERENA
Hey, you fat fuck! How are you!
Huh? Did Jeni take care of you?
Huh? You Okay? Alright, down!
Down, down, down! We gotta go! We
gotta go right now!

INT. SERENA'S ROOM - SAME

Serena raids her dresser, stuffing clothes into a gym bag.

INT./EXT. LAND CRUISER - MOMENTS LATER

Rusty jumps into the Land Cruiser, Serena climbs in after him and fires the engine. She backs out and roars away.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - MORNING

With a CRASH the front door bursts open. In comes Scarface with a shot-up face followed by Two Tons and a new helper, PACO. They head down the hallway, check Serena's room, then continue on to Jeni's where Jeni's in bed with a BOYFRIEND.

Paco rips the covers off.

JENI'S BOYFRIEND

Hey, what the hell you--

Two Tons grabs the boyfriend and flings him across the room. Jeni jumps up naked, stomping the mattress and SCREAMING. Scarface turns to the others and shakes his head: *wrong girl*.

He leads the way out.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE - AFTERNOON

Serena's out in the yard talking on her phone.

SERENA

(on phone)

Was one of them ugly? Like really ugly with a huge scar on his face?

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - SAME

Jeni's on the phone. INTERCUT with Serena.

JENI

Yes! Just an awful, awful face! Who are they? What do they want?

SERENA

They want me. I stole over a million dollars from 'em.

JENI

A million--! Serena, was that a wise thing to do?

SERENA

I don't know but it's too late now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENI

Oh Serena, I wish you hadn't done that. These guys are bad news. Really, really bad.

SERENA

Yeah, but it's me they want. They don't want you.

JENI

How'd they know where you live?

SERENA

How'd they know--? Well they-- They must've-- They...

Serena breaks off, dark thoughts furrowing her brow.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Jeni, I gotta go. Don't worry, they won't be back. I'll call you in a bit.

Serena hangs up and immediately scrolls for another number.

SERENA (CONT'D)

(on phone)
Chelsea! It's me!

INT. CHELSEA'S APARTMENT - SAME

Chelsea's on the phone. INTERCUT with Serena.

CHELSEA

Wait, what?

SERENA

I said get the kids and get a cab out to dad's. Don't waste time! Just take the kids and get outta your apartment, right now!

CHELSEA

Oh, like I got money for a cab.

SERENA

I'll pay the fucking cab, just get moving!

CHELSEA

Serena, I don't know what this is--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

I'm in trouble, okay? Big trouble.
And that means you're in trouble
too. Now just for once listen and
do what I say! Okay? Chelsea?...

CHELSEA

Yeah, Jeez, whatever!...

Chelsea hangs up. Behind her the Boyfriend is in his usual posture on the couch. He hands Chelsea a joint he's smoking.

BOYFRIEND

The fuck's with her?

CHELSEA

I dunno, I'm supposed to leave.

BOYFRIEND

Leave where?

CHELSEA

I dunno. I dunno what she's
talking about...

BOYFRIEND

I told you, baby, the bitch just
wants to break us up. I don't know
why she don't mind her own fucking
business and leave us alone. You
wanna go with me to Walmart?

CHELSEA

Sure.

INT. CHELSEA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Chelsea, the Boyfriend, Maddie and her Brother are all in the living room watching cartoons on TV.

Chelsea's PHONE VIBRATES on the table. No one notices.

With a sudden CRASH the front door swings in. Two Tons storms in with Scarface and PACO behind.

Seeing them, the Boyfriend leaps from the couch, sprints to the kitchen, throws up the window sash and dives out. For a moment the others all marvel at the escape.

Scarface looks into the bedroom. He comes back.

SCARFACE

Where's your sister?

Chelsea shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCARFACE (CONT'D)
Where is she?

She shakes her head again. Scarface nods toward Maddie.

SCARFACE (CONT'D)
(to Two Tons)
Get her.

TWO TONS
What?

SCARFACE
I said get her.

TWO TONS
Aw, man, she didn't do nothin'. We
don't need to get her mixed up in--

Scarface turns with his pistol drawn.

PACO
Hey! It's cool! It's cool! I got
her! I got her!

Paco grabs Maddie and throws her onto his shoulder.

Chelsea SCREAMS.

MADDIE
Ma-ma!

CHELSEA
Leave her alone! Please! Take me!
Take me! Leave her alone! Please!

Scarface pivots and floors Chelsea with a punch to the head.
He nods toward the door and the three file out.

MADDIE
Ma-ma?...

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE - NIGHT

Serena is pacing out by the road. Her phone CHIRPS.

SERENA
(on phone)
Chelsea, where the fuck are you!

INT. CHELSEA'S APARTMENT - SAME

Chelsea is bruised and sobbing. INTERCUT with Serena.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHELSEA

Th-th-they t-took Maah-dee-hee!...

Serena's face clenches like a fist and for a moment she is too enraged to utter a word.

SERENA

Stay there. Don't talk to anyone.
I'll get her.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Serena comes in with a flashlight, goes to a pile of truck parts and starts flinging them aside until she's uncovered the duffel bag.

She unzips it: it's a cache of guns from Cleveland's mountain redoubt. She starts laying weapons out on the floor.

Her phone CHIRPS.

SERENA

(on phone)
Yeah...

INT. THE LODGE - OFFICE - SAME

The Canadian paces as he talks. INTERCUT with Serena.

THE CANADIAN

Hello Serena...

SERENA

Where is she?

THE CANADIAN

In good hands, darling. Since I couldn't get to you it looks like you'll have to come to me.

SERENA

You bet your Canadian ass I'm coming to you. And if she's hurt you're gonna wish you'd never left your little boring fucked-up shit-hole country.

THE CANADIAN

Tch-tch, such language from a young lady. Of course if you lived in my boring little country your niece would have health care and we wouldn't be having this trouble. Oh well. Just bring the money, dear. You'll get your niece.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

Why should I believe you?

THE CANADIAN

Because I've come to admire your formidable spunk. Who knows, we may even find the opportunity to do business together. Why not begin with a demonstration of trust? Come in the morning, say ten o'clock? Bring a friend if you like.

The Canadian hangs up and turns to Reese who nods in return.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE - NIGHT

Serena enters the living room. Lester's in his chair, nearly comatose on cheap whiskey, his shirt front soaked with barf.

SERENA

Dad, something happened. I got mixed up with some bad guys. They took Maddie, Dad. I need help.

Lester looks up and Serena sees the years of defeat in his eyes. It's a big moment for her. Her dad is shot.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Then I need your truck at least...

She waits a moment then gives up.

Crossing through the kitchen, she grabs a PARING KNIFE off the counter and heads out the door.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Serena selects some of the weapons and shoves them back in the duffle.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Lester stares out. His eyes narrow. His gnarled hands grip the arms of the chair...

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Lester checks the breach of a shotgun and dumps a box of shells into the pocket of his coat.

INT./EXT. LESTER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Serena hoists the duffle into the back of the battered pickup. Rusty waits by the door.

SERENA

No, you're staying here. These people don't like dogs.

She pats him, gets in the truck and fires it up.

Turning around in the driveway she sees Lester swept by the headlights. One arm is raised. The other cradles a shotgun.

She stops and he swings the door open.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Dad--

LESTER

Go, goddamnit.

INT./EXT. LESTER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Serena drives with Lester silent in the seat beside her.

LATER:

She drives past Victor's mansion, makes a U-turn at the dead end and parks in the shadows of the overhanging trees.

EXT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Serena cuts through the woods to the back of the house. She spots a pallet in the weeds, drags it over, and leans it against the wall under Victor's bedroom window.

She climbs up and taps on the glass. There's a rustling inside and Victor throws up the sash.

VICTOR

(too loud)

Juliette? What the-- Juliette?--

SERENA

Shhh-shhh-shhhh! Quiet! Quiet!

VICTOR

(whispering)

It's you! I can't believe it! I thought you were dead! But you're not dead! You're not dead at all! ...Are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA
No! Now be quiet!

VICTOR
I can't believe it's you!

Victor leans out the window, grabs her under the arms and hauls her up into the room.

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM - SAME

Victor sets Serena on the floor and grasps her in a hug.

VICTOR
God, I thought I'd never see you again! I thought they-- Oh, I've been so sick about it I was gonna commit suicide only I didn't 'cause I thought you'd be mad!--

SERENA
Shhh-shhh-shhhhhh!...

VICTOR
I can't believe it. Oh, Juliette, I missed you so much! I can't--

SERENA
Shhhhhhhh!

VICTOR
(loud)
My God, Juliette! *OH MY GOD!*--

SERENA
What?

VICTOR
(pushing away)
I've got an erection!

SERENA
You do?

VICTOR
Yes. Wanna see?

SERENA
No!

VICTOR
(pulling her close)
Feel it though! Feel it! Can you feel it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA

Shhhhh! Yes I feel it! Now be quiet
for God's sake! I need your help!

VICTOR

Juliette, I'm so fucking happy to
see you!...

SERENA

Shhhhhhhhhhhhh--!

INT./EXT. LESTER'S TRUCK - LATER

Serena drives the truck up a mountain highway. There's snow
piled along the road and the night is pitch black.

In the back seat Victor plays with the cylinder of a huge .44
Magnum revolver - *CLIK-CLIK--CHICK... CLIK-CLIK--CHICK...*

VICTOR

This is cool. Just like Dirty
Harry's gun, remember? *'Do you feel
lucky? Well, do ya, punk?'*
Remember that scene, Juliette?

SERENA

I never saw it.

VICTOR

No? How about you, sir? Ever seen
Dirty Harry?

Lester is silent. Serena shoots him a worried glance.

SERENA

By the way, Victor, my name's not
Juliette. It's Serena.

VICTOR

What? Serena? Why'd you tell me--?

SERENA

Because you hang out with a bunch
of weirdos I didn't want knowing
who I was.

VICTOR

Oh... Serena. That suits you too.
Serena, I like it. Very Serene.

(thinks)

Hey, if it's okay with you two I'd
like to shoot the Canadian. I
always hated that little fucker.

SERENA

Fine with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICTOR
That okay with you, sir?

Lester is again silent.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Okay, great...

Victor cranes to see out the windshield.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Alright Julie - *Serena* - slow down.
There's a road on the left, see it?
That's the back way up.

Serena turns onto a steep road deep with snow. Twenty yards up the hill she shuts off the engine.

Getting out, Victor stuffs a pistol in his belt and carries the big .44. Serena slings a machine pistol over her shoulder and grabs a tactical shotgun out of the truck bed.

Lester gets out last with his shotgun but immediately staggers and nearly falls. He doubles over hacking and barfing into the snow as Serena watches helplessly.

She looks at Victor, puts a hand on Lester's back.

SERENA
You better stay here, Dad. You
watch the truck, okay?. It's
alright, Dad. It's alright...

She helps him back into the cab and shuts the door. She and Victor set off walking up the hill.

VICTOR
Your father's not well, is he?

SERENA
No, he's not well.

INT./EXT. THE LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

On the porch Paco smokes a cigarette, standing watch.

In the kitchen Two Tons constructs a multi-layer sandwich, his pistol on the counter.

Out by the garages a Third Goon stands in the shadows.

A Fourth Goon stands under the porte cochere.

In his lower level room Scarface ties off his arm and shoots up with heroin...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In a bedroom upstairs, Maddie is tucked into a giant bed while a MEXICAN LADY sits beside her.

MADDIE

I want my mommy...

MEXICAN LADY

Yes, Momma is coming. Now sleep...

MADDIE

I want my mommy...

MEXICAN LADY

Si, si, Momma will come soon. Now close your eyes and sleep...

INT. LODGE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

A fire burns and four men sit talking over drinks: the Canadian, Jack Reese, and two hoods, SCHIVELLI and MARTINEZ.

THE CANADIAN

...I think by now she understands.
I expect we'll see her in the morning as agreed.

MARTINEZ

I dunno, Boss, a million-two is a lot of bread to just hand over.

THE CANADIAN

She's a very loyal young woman. And she knows I don't play games.

REESE

Suppose she remembers her last time here?

THE CANADIAN

But I gave her my word, Jack.

(laughs)

That's a calculation she'll just have to make.

SCHIVELLI

(laughing)

That's a bad choice, boss--
That's a real bad choice!...

And all but Reese share a dark laugh.

EXT. LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Serena slips through the pine forest until she is just beyond the glow of light shining from the lodge windows. Through the wall of glass she can see the four men seated by the fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the back side of the house Victor creeps out of the woods bordering the driveway. He can see the cigarette glow where Paco stands guard on the porch twenty yards away.

Serena steps out of the darkness and raises the shotgun...

INT. LODGE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

The Canadian and his pals are still chuckling.

MARTINEZ

You leave it to me, boss. I can make them disappear like magic - *poof!* - no problem.

THE CANADIAN

No, I think we'll let Jack deal with the ladies. Time you earned some of your money, eh, Jack? And no doubt you'll know how to do it without attracting the police.

REESE

Whatever you say, Claire.

Gun SHOTS explode and the wall of glass comes raining down in a million shards.

The four Men dive for cover while outside Serena opens up with the machine pistol, blasting out the chandelier and splintering the woodwork overhead.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Victor steps up and blows Paco away with the .44 Magnum.

B) In the lower level Scarface hears the commotion, draws a weapon and kills the lights.

C) Crouched behind a tree, Serena reloads the shotgun.

D) Schivelli is down, bleeding from a nasty head wound.

D) The Canadian crawls and grabs a gun from a drawer.

E) Reese takes cover and pulls out his pistol.

F) Martinez drags Schivelli behind a sofa.

E) Victor turns a corner of the building and fires two slugs into the Third Goon's chest.

F) In a dark lower-level bathroom Scarface opens a high window and climbs out...

INT. THE LODGE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Reese and The Canadian come in breathless.

REESE

Looks like she's early, Claire. I wonder if kidnapping the girl might've set her off.

THE CANADIAN

Not in the mood for humor, Jack.

The Canadian goes straight to a safe, presses the thumb print lock and swings it open. There's a cache of weapons inside.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)

Here, get something heavier.

REESE

I got all I need. It's just a girl, remember?

The Canadian selects an M4 and jams a magazine in it.

THE CANADIAN

Yeah, well the bitch has caused enough trouble. Money or not she's done tonight. Okay, Lieutenant, show us how the good guys do it.

Reese flinches but controls it. He slips into the hallway with the Canadian following.

INT. LODGE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Serena climbs in through the broken window. Except for the fire the room is dark. She inches across the broken glass.

Behind a sofa Schivelli slumps, bleeding profusely. Hearing Serena, he prepares himself to make a move.

She's thirty feet from the sofa, twenty-five, twenty... Schivelli pops up, wildly firing before Serena pivots and knocks him down with a shotgun blast.

But she's hit; her hand comes away from her neck bloody.

She cringes a moment, moves to the doorway and peeks out. She sucks a breath, swings the shotgun out ahead and fires.

At the end of the hall Martinez flies backwards crashing through a tansu and landing in a heap on the floor.

INT. LODGE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Serena steps in, shotgun ready. There's the LOW HUM of refrigerators and something TICKING mechanically.

Then another sound, a SOFT CLICK. She stops at the corner of a walk-in freezer, breaths, peeks around. The freezer door is open a crack. A pot boils on the stove.

SERENA

Come on out or you're dead.

The door inches open, a black sneaker emerges, then a hand raised high. Now a MAN steps out, hands up - he's Asian, in a white chef's shirt - bowing, shivering like a rabbit.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Get on the floor.

He does, face to the tiles. Serena puts the shotgun to the back of his head. For a moment there's just the TICKING.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Don't ever move.

She backs away, leaving him there.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Two Tons barrels through the shrubs along the building.

B) Scarface dodges between cars in the parking court.

C) Serena eases out a kitchen service door and disappears into the shadow of a dumpster.

D) Victor climbs a trellis and hoists himself onto the roof of the garages. He walks to the edge, looks over, aims and drills the Fourth Goon right through the top of the head.

INT. LODGE - LOWER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Reese and The Canadian creep into a dark hallway lined with windows. They stoop and make a dash for it. Instantly gunfire opens up outside, shattering windows as they pass.

They return fire and for ten seconds a furious gun battle tears the walls apart. In a lull they sprint for the door.

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

Behind a wall Serena reloads her shotgun. She rounds the corner of the building and comes to a passageway between the garages and the low wall of the garden.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Halfway down a shot rings out and she dives for cover in a iron gazebo with stone half walls.

She peers from the gazebo and gunfire erupts from the garden. She fires a shotgun blast and ducks back down.

In the garden Scarface waits.

Serena peeks out, fires another blast, and now shots answer from around the garage. She pivots and fires twice as Two Tons ducks out of sight.

She's pinned in the gazebo. Two Tons knows it - he waits around the corner, a grin on his moronic face. Scarface knows it - he moves in, creeping from tree to tree.

And Victor knows it - from the garage roof he watches the clamp close on Serena.

She fires one way, ducks, fires the other way, ducks, trying to keep them at bay.

Victor waits for his chance; he leaps...

He lands on Two Ton's back, grabs him in a choke hold, jams the .44 into the back of his fat neck and pulls the trigger.

Two Tons goes down like a tree trunk and in the next instant Scarface pops up shooting and Serena wheels and blows him away with a shotgun blast.

The silence is abrupt, leaving only the winter wind.

Victor is down. Serena drops to her knees and gathers him to her, cradling his head in her arms. There's a ragged wound below his ear. Yet his eyes are open.

VICTOR

That didn't work so well...

SERENA

Victor, you saved my life!...

VICTOR

Yes, actually I was supposed to save mine as well.

SERENA

Oh, Victor! Hang on, I'll get you out of here. You can make it, just hang on--

VICTOR

No-no, I'm done. I'm done now. I'm done...

He fades away, but his eyes open again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I'll go to hell, won't I?

SERENA
No, Victor...

VICTOR
It's okay. Probably more
interesting there anyway.

SERENA
But you won't go there, Victor.
You're too good. You're like the
best person I ever met. You're so
good...

VICTOR
Yeah... Good doesn't count for
much, does it? Not in this world.
Not really...

SERENA
Victor...

He dies. Serena lays him down and bends over him crying.

When she straightens up her jaw is set. She snatches the
shotgun from the ground and gets on her feet.

INT. LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Serena climbs in through the blasted windows of the living
room. She crossed into the main hall, then slips past dead
Martinez and enters a parlor. She stops.

Sensing something, she crosses the room and puts her ear
against a closed door.

INT. LODGE - BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

In opposite corners Reese and the Canadian crouch near the
shattered windows. They peek outside from behind the drapes.

THE CANADIAN
Awfully quiet.

REESE
Could mean anything.

Serena listens on the other side of the door.

REESE (CONT'D)
I say we let her come to us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE CANADIAN
Is that safer, Jack?

Reese glances over with a snort of contempt.

In the next room Serena crouches against the wall. She brings out her cellphone and taps at the screen.

REESE
...If either of us had any brains
we'd bring the girl down, toss her
out the door, and be done with this
bullshit.

THE CANADIAN
Too late, Jack. I sense a very
different ending is upon us.

REESE
Yeah. So do I...

The Canadian looks surprised as his cellphone begins to VIBRATE. He takes it out of his pocket and looks.

INSERT: a text message PHOTOGRAPH OF REESE Serena took at the bar weeks before.

The Canadian stares at it, blinking. He looks up from the phone to where Reese is peering out a window.

Serena stands behind the door waiting.

The Canadian rises, the M4 leveled at Reese.

THE CANADIAN
Well we can't hide here all night.
Either she's dead or she needs to
be. One way or another we'll have
to find out.

REESE
So why don't you go out and check?

THE CANADIAN
Actually I thought you might be the
one more concerned, Jack.

Reese turns and sees the barrel of the M4.

THE CANADIAN (CONT'D)
Drop the gun, Jack.

Reese lets his weapon fall.

REESE
What's going on, Claire?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE CANADIAN
Maybe you should tell me.

REESE
I don't know what you're talking about. It's the same as before. We're partners on the land, right? I'm getting it all fixed up with City Hall, just like I said. You're gonna make a fortune, Claire, all legal this time...

The Canadian holds up his phone. Now Reese gets it.

REESE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Claire, it's not what you think. I-I ran into her, okay? She didn't know a thing. I was just gonna get in her pants, that's all. A little piece of trailer-trash to pass the time, nothing more.

Listening, Serena tastes bile.

THE CANADIAN
Tch-tch-tch. Don't disrespect the girl just because you're scared, Jack. You'll embarrass us both.

The Canadian advances to the corner of the billiard table.

REESE
Claire, it's the truth. Look. I never wanted any of this. I'll get you the permits and you can cut me out of the deal. I don't want the money. I got in over my head, Claire. I never really wanted it.

THE CANADIAN
Jack, you married her... You know, women like Adrian are like heroin: you find yourself doing all sorts of unsavory things to support the habit. And still it's fatal.

REESE
Claire--

The Canadian fires a burst from the M4 and the drapes behind Reese dance with a smattering of blood.

In the next instant the door bursts open, the Canadian turns and fires and Serena triggers a shotgun blast that drives him to the wall and drops him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Serena steps into the cold room. She walks up to Reese. He's gurgling blood, his eyes open as though begging for something. Whatever it is, she doesn't care.

SERENA

I don't live in a fucking trailer.

She aims the shotgun at him, waits a beat, sees he's mostly dead anyway and moves on.

She continues around the billiard table. The Canadian is slumped against the wall, still as stone, his left shoulder and chest soaked with blood. She walks past him...

And suddenly he lunges, grabs her boot and yanks her legs from under her. She slams to the floor and in an instant he's on her fighting for the gun.

They roll and club each other. Serena wrenches the gun free and scrambles up, but before she can fire he rushes her with a driving tackle that sends them both crashing through a window and out onto the snow.

And now he's on top, forcing the shotgun down across her windpipe with all his might. Serena gasps, struggles, chokes and finally seems all but spent as a smile breaks on the Canadian's hairless face.

FWITTTT - Serena's hand swings up and jams the paring knife into his temple. For an instant shock registers on the Canadian's face. Then he slumps. Serena shoves him off.

INT. LODGE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Serena crosses the billiard room. At the doorway she ducks back as from deep in house GUNSHOTS ring out: pistol fire and the low whumps of a shotgun.

She peers out, wondering. She slips across the hall and makes her way along it checking doorways right and left.

She comes to the grand staircase leading up. Two Mexicans lie dead on the stairs, a river of blood spilling down.

She hears FOOTSTEPS above and backs behind a pillar. The FOOTSTEPS descend. She readies the shotgun. Through the balusters legs appear. She steps out, swings the barrel up.

But doesn't fire. It's Lester, limping on a bloody leg with Maddie asleep on his shoulder.

SERENA

Dad... She alright?

Lester nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA (CONT'D)
Your leg...

LESTER
It's fine.

EXT. BACK ROAD - NIGHT

The moon is up. Lester trudges ahead while Serena carries Maddie. She stops to shift the girl to her other arm and stands a moment staring out at the moonlit mountain sky.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A SURGEON comes out of an operating room and starts down a busy hallway. He pushes through a set of double doors.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

The Surgeon enters. On a sofa sit Chelsea, Lester and Serena. Chelsea's in a nice outfit with a new hairstyle. Serena's mostly healed but for the bandage on her neck.

Lester is the most changed of all - he's shaved, his hair trimmed, wearing a neat shirt and pressed trousers.

SURGEON
Ms. Gitts?

CHELSEA
(jumping up)
Yes?

SURGEON
Ma'am, your Maddie's a little trooper. Everything went beautifully. C'mon, let's see her.

Chelsea breaks into a gushing smile of relief.

INT. POST-OP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maddie is in bed asleep; wires and tubing connect her to half a dozen blinking machines.

Chelsea comes in ahead of the others. She touches her daughter's forehead and her eyes spring with tears as she turns to Serena and Lester.

CHELSEA
You see her, Dad? She's gonna be fine. She's gonna be fine, Dad. She's gonna live!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESTER
I see her...

CHELSEA
She's not gonna die, Dad.

LESTER
No, I see that...

CHELSEA
Oh, Serena! Serena!...

SERENA
Chelsea...

CHELSEA
(hugging her)
I love you, Serena.

SERENA
I love you Chels.

And Chelsea draws her dad into the embrace too.

CHELSEA
I love you, Dad. I love you all...

EXT. A COUNTRY HOUSE - MORNING

On a gorgeous spring day Rusty sits on the porch of a spacious rambler surrounded by two acres of park-like yard. A new pickup truck is in the driveway and two new little-kid bikes are on the porch.

INT./EXT. LAND CRUISER - DAY

Serena drives her Land Cruiser along a country lane and turns in at the rambler where Rusty waits. The Land Cruiser has new wheels and tires and fresh white paint.

Serena parks and leans to open the passenger door. Rusty is standing on the driveway looking up at her.

SERENA
C'mon, you fat fuck, hop up here
and we'll go for a spin.

Rusty doesn't budge.

SERENA (CONT'D)
It's the same truck, I just had it
painted. New wheels too.

Rusty stands there looking up at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERENA (CONT'D)
C'mon, don't worry about your
feet. I don't care. Get up here!

At last Rusty jumps up into the passenger seat. Serena backs out of the driveway and taps the brake, causing the passenger door to swing shut.

She guns the engine.

INT./EXT. LAND CRUISER - SAME

Serena drives off down the road.

CLOSE on Rusty's gray-flecked, tongue-lolling face:

SERENA (O.C.)
(singing)
*The first time... ever I saw your
face... I thought the sun rose in
your eye-eyeeeeees... And the moon
and the stars were the gifts you
gave...*

And CLOSE on Serena with tears in her eyes:

SERENA (CONT'D)
*...To the dark and the endless
skies...*

BLACK.