

THE GIRL WITHOUT

by

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FADE IN:

INT. SHELTER - 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

A long hallway in a homeless shelter. PRUDY CARAWAY (17, white), a serious-looking girl with a blonde ponytail, rolls a laundry cart.

The cart JOLTS to a halt, sending its handle into Prudy's gut. She rocks the cart violently to clear the snag. No use.

She stoops down to inspect. A ratty carpet fiber has wrapped itself tightly around a front wheel.

Prudy glances at her watch. Ten to nine.

She cranes her neck around the cart to look down each side of the hallway. All clear.

She grabs hold of the fiber and bites through it. A chill sparks through her jaw. She shakes her head from the sting and runs her tongue over her teeth. All there.

Prudy pushes the freed cart to the next doorway, which sports a translucent shower curtain instead of a door. On the wall is a list of names crossed out in black Sharpie, except for the last one: JACKSON.

She raps on the doorframe.

PRUDY  
Mr. Jackson, you in there?

She peers through the shower curtain.

PRUDY  
If you're in there, you better be decent.

INT. JACKSON'S ROOM

Nobody's home. A single bed and a plywood shelf. Green wallpaper from a happier time pulls itself from the walls, revealing brown water stains underneath.

Prudy buries her nose in her pink t-shirt and swirls the bedsheets into a ball. Fresh urine stains mark Jackson's favorite sleeping position.

PRUDY  
Goddamn bedwetter.

She carries the sheets by her fingertips and tosses them into the cart.

She picks up trash on the floor until she notices a framed picture propped on the shelf. It's Mr. Jackson and Prudy's mother Tera, both smiling and giving the thumbs-up sign.

Prudy straightens the frame and steps back. Unsatisfied, she re-adjusts the frame.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy knocks on the doorframe of the next room.

PRUDY  
Renelle? You in there?

She waits a tick and draws back the shower curtain. Same furniture, but the bed's made.

PRUDY  
That's more like it.

INT. RENELLE'S ROOM

Prudy reaches for the sheets. A thin wisp of white smoke catches her eye. She creeps around the mattress to find RENELLE (24), a small black woman huddled against the floor.

PRUDY  
Renelle! What the hell are you doing?

Renelle's bloodshot eyes look up from under her wiry hair. In her hands is a broken radio antenna and a lighter.

RENELLE  
Shit, Prudy, keep it down.

PRUDY  
Mom will have your ass!

RENELLE  
Don't talk crazy now, girl. Ain't nobody gonna tell her, right?

PRUDY  
Oh no, don't put this on me. You know the rules.

Renelle lights the rock at the end of the tube. Snap, crackle, pop. She takes a hit.

RENELLE

Now I can fight the day, child.

PRUDY

If Mom finds out I know--

DEMETRIUS (8) bursts into the room holding a naked Barbie doll. He owns the clear version of Renelle's eyes. Renelle stays hidden behind the bed.

DEMETRIUS

Hey Prudy! You seen Momma?

PRUDY

Not like I'm used to.

DEMETRIUS

Who you talking to then?

His hips rock wildly, perhaps to a song hidden in his head. Prudy picks a thin pillow off the bed.

PRUDY

I'm talking to this pillow, Demetrius.  
His name is Jared.

DEMETRIUS

Hey, that's a silly name.

PRUDY

Not where I come from. Jared's been  
telling me that he's about done  
keeping you cozy at night.

DEMETRIUS

Good. Jared smells bad.

PRUDY

I'll do my best to clean him up.  
Now go find your mom somewhere else.

DEMETRIUS

Read me another book.

PRUDY

Later.

Demetrius holds his crotch and bounces up and down.

DEMETRIUS

OK, but I want Jared back.

PRUDY

Pop quiz: spell "bathroom."

The boy skips out of the room blaring in a high-pitched voice.

DEMETRIUS (O.S.)

P P P P P P P P!

PRUDY

(to Renelle)

You're welcome.

RENELLE

You tell your momma on me, I tell  
her you gave me this shit.

Prudy rips off the sheets, nearly pulling the mattress off  
its frame.

PRUDY

Just get rid of it. Save your kid.

INT. ENTRYWAY

Prudy rolls the cart into the shelter's entryway, once the  
lobby of an elegant downtown hotel. Those times are obviously  
long gone.

She produces a ring of keys from her pocket and pops open a  
lockbox. She pulls out a tattered Cubs cap and her purse.  
After a peek at her watch, she scribbles "LAUNDRY 9:15" on a  
clipboard posted by the door.

She looks at a nearby plaque.

"BUT MANY THAT ARE FIRST SHALL BE LAST, AND THE LAST WILL BE  
FIRST. MATTHEW 19:3"

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Someone unseen uses a hand-held video camera to tape Prudy  
exiting the shelter with the laundry cart.

The camera zooms in to show the lettering on the door: "HOUSE  
OF HOPE." Prudy stops to don her cap and fire up a Marlboro  
Light.

The camera zooms out to show the decrepit five-story hotel  
that houses the shelter.

It then watches Prudy muscle the cart away against a backdrop  
of chain-link fence.

INT. DR. G'S LAUNDRY - DAY

Walking backwards into a laundry, Prudy flicks away her cigarette and tugs the cart through the doorway. The aluminum door chimes RING.

She turns to the counter to see four people frozen in a stare at her.

Behind the counter are the owner, DR. G (56, Laotian), and his daughter SAENG (28). Both look visibly upset, the owner in anger and the daughter in fear.

Two thugs stand in front. CHAINS (22, white) sports a dazzling array of piercings: ears filled with rings and a lightning-bolt stud through his cheek. JERMAINE (24, black) went the tattoo route, a pair of serpents winding around his arms until they disappear under his black leather vest.

A petrified snake on Jermaine's ring stares back at Prudy with two ruby eyes.

CHAINS

What you looking at, bitch?

Jermaine SMACKS him in the back of the head. Chains returns a scowl.

CHAINS

The fuck, man?

Dr. G points Prudy to the far wall.

Prudy reaches a cart filled with folded sheets and a card on top reading "CARAWAY." She exchanges carts and heads for the exit.

From the corner of her eye, she notices Saeng push a plump envelope over the counter to Chains. Dr. G throws a rag to the ground and roars foreign obscenities.

Prudy heads out the door.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Prudy rolls the cart forward along the cracked pavement.

Jermaine struts up behind her.

JERMAINE

Wait up.

PRUDY

Get away from me. I don't have shit unless you need clean sheets.

JERMAINE

C'mon, it's not what you think.

PRUDY

I know who you are and I know a robbery when I see one.

JERMAINE

There you go, you got it all fucked up. That guy's been robbing me blind the last three months.

PRUDY

I don't buy it. They're good people.

JERMAINE

Yeah, well I didn't see you pay the man. Are you in the laundry stealing business?

PRUDY

Ha ha, asshole. My mom's known them for years. Your story doesn't fly.

JERMAINE

There's something called the cost of doing business around here. Just like rent.

PRUDY

And what are they renting from you?

JERMAINE

You know, you should be smarter than that. I've seen you go in and out of that homeless shelter. You mean to tell me you haven't learned a damn thing?

PRUDY

I've seen enough over the past few years.

JERMAINE

Guess you need more than that to understand how things work.

PRUDY

Then go return that money.

JERMAINE

Can't do that. It's not mine.

PRUDY

Then get the fuck away and earn some.

Jermaine stops and watches her leave.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Prudy opens the front door to meet chaos inside. Prudy's mother TERA (48) uses her frail arms to jab a cane at Renelle, who is sobbing at Tera's ankles.

D'KORR, a black man (34), holds a paper sack of clothes in one arm and a crying Demetrius in the other.

TERA

(to Renelle)

You know the rules! No druggies, no crazies, no faggots. I run a clean place here.

RENELLE

Please, Tera, no! I won't do it again!

TERA

Leave my place right now.

RENELLE

I'll do anything for you! I'll scrub this place from top to bottom!

TERA

Prudence, escort this woman outside.

D'KORR

Hey Prude, I'll take care of it.

TERA

No, you will not. You fix the air conditioner like I told you.

D'KORR

Yes, ma'am.

He gives the sack to Prudy and the boy to Renelle.

PRUDY

Mom, I can't do this.



TERA  
Take them outside! Now!

Prudy reluctantly guides Renelle and Demetrius out the door.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

The hidden camera watches Prudy usher Renelle and her son down the steps, but Renelle resists.

RENELLE  
You goddamn Judas bitch! I'll fucking  
kill you!

PRUDY  
I never told her. You know I  
wouldn't.

Renelle notices Tera watching from the window.

RENELLE  
(to Tera)  
C'mon, bitch! Too afraid to come  
outside and get rid of me?

Renelle rips the bag away from Prudy and throws the clothes all over the steps.

RENELLE  
How 'bout I just live here?

ZUKA, an African minister (45) in a black Catholic frock, races across the street to the shelter. He speaks with a crisp African accent.

ZUKA  
What's going on?

RENELLE  
They're kicking us out, that's what.

PRUDY  
She has to leave.

ZUKA  
Why? What has she done?

PRUDY  
I'm sorry, but this is a private  
matter.

ZUKA

When I see a person cast out into  
the streets, I make it my business.

Prudy turns to the window, but her mother is gone.

DEMETRIUS

(through tears)  
Prudy, will you read me a book now?

PRUDY

I can't, baby.

RENELLE

We don't have nowhere to go. His  
life is on your head.

PRUDY

I didn't--

Renelle wails against Zuka's shoulder.

RENELLE

My baby's gonna die!

Zuka gives her a black prayer book bound by a rubber band.

ZUKA

Look at me, woman. This is hope.  
I'll take you to St. Mark's and find  
a bed.

RENELLE

Oh thank you, Father, thank you.

Zuka scoops the clothes off the steps and comes face-to-face  
with Prudy.

ZUKA

Little girl, the Lord will judge  
your home.

He moves the family down the sidewalk.

The camera zooms in on Prudy's face. Stunned.

INT. SHELTER - 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Prudy barrels through the hallway with her laundry cart.

She stops in front of Tera's room. No shower curtain here;  
Tera has the real thing. Prudy tries the doorknob, but it's  
locked. She POUNDS on the door.

PRUDY  
Open up, Mom! I need to talk to  
you!

No response. Prudy digs in her pocket for the key ring.

PRUDY  
All right, I'm coming in!

She finds the right key and unlocks the door.

INT. TERA'S ROOM

Prudy opens the door to an expansive room, three times larger than the others. The room is a museum relic of the old hotel: gilded wallpaper, Oriental rugs, and antique furniture.

Tera hobbles to the bed using her cane.

PRUDY  
What was that? You didn't have to  
throw her out!

TERA  
You know the rules. No druggies, no  
crazies--

PRUDY  
I get it. But sometimes you have to  
give someone a break. She has a  
little boy.

TERA  
Why should that matter?

PRUDY  
Yeah, I forget you don't give a crap  
about kids.

Tera COUGHS violently into a rag. She pulls it away to reveal a patch of blood.

PRUDY  
Oh my God, Mom, it's getting worse.

TERA  
Don't worry about me. You never do.

PRUDY  
Same old story. Flip over, time for  
your meds.

Prudy opens a drawer in a cherry dresser and pulls out a medicine vial and a syringe. She fills the syringe.

TERA  
You lock the door?

PRUDY  
Yeah... sure. Turn over.

Tera hesitates and then lies face down on the bed. She erupts with another stream of COUGHS. Prudy waits for a dead spot in the fit and then plunges the syringe into Tera's right buttock.

PRUDY  
God, Mom, you need to go to the clinic. You sound worse.

TERA  
I can't. It's not safe.

PRUDY  
Me and D'Korr can take you.

TERA  
You read the papers? Another shooting just a block from here.

PRUDY  
What a surprise. Look, I don't have time for this. I have to make the beds.

Tera turns over and grips Prudy's arm.

TERA  
Promise me you won't leave the shelter again today.

PRUDY  
Where can I go? Chill out.

She tears away from Tera and tosses the syringe into a trash can.

TERA  
I've told you not to wear that around here.

Prudy scans her clothes and then reaches for her neck.

PRUDY  
What? My necklace?

TERA

Nothing else on you screams money.

PRUDY

The safest place is around my neck.

TERA

And that's what you'll lose if you flaunt that damn thing.

PRUDY

Mom, get a grip. Nobody around here is dangerous.

TERA

People here are desperate. If they smell money on you, they'll attack you like a pit bull.

PRUDY

I don't understand you anymore. First you move us down here to povertyville, then you hide from everyone.

TERA

You're learning more about life here than at any school.

PRUDY

There's a big difference between charity work and living among the natives.

TERA

This is the same disrespect your father would allow.

Prudy stops and glares at Tera. She then flings the door open, sending the doorknob CRASHING into the wall.

PRUDY

Well, you won't have to deal with me much longer.

TERA

That reminds me, your probation officer will be here tomorrow. It's too bad you haven't lived up to your end of the deal.

PRUDY

What do you mean? I've done every little thing you've asked me to do.

TERA  
I smell cigarette smoke. That's a violation.

PRUDY  
It's not mine.

TERA  
Don't think I'm a fool, Prudence.

Tera reaches into the cart to pull out a floral-patterned bundle of sheets tied with a satin bow.

TERA  
I'm not an invalid either. I'll make my own bed, thank you very much.

Prudy storms out of the room.

INT. JACKSON'S ROOM

SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS

A) Prudy billows a white sheet over the bed.  
B) She creases a triangular fold on a corner of the sheet.  
C) She tightly tucks the edge of the sheet under the mattress.  
The result is a professional, hospital-made bed.  
Prudy rips the sheets off in a fit of rage and tears.

D'KORR (O.S.)  
You OK?

Prudy whirls around to see D'Korr and quickly dries her tears.

PRUDY  
Just leave me alone.

D'KORR  
Can't do that, I need your help.  
Come upstairs with me.

PRUDY  
(hushed)  
What? You can't go up there! It's locked shut.

D'KORR  
Got my own way. Just don't tell your mama.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Following D'Korr, Prudy carries a toolbox into an alley next to the shelter. He digs behind a trash bin and pulls out a metal pole. He jumps on top of the bin and uses the pole to lower the fire escape.

PRUDY  
That's still off limits.

D'KORR  
Artificial limits, girl. Don't you  
listen to a word your mama says?  
Now gimme the box.

Prudy hands it to him. He wraps a rope around his waist, loops one end through the box handle, and ties a knot.

D'KORR  
A trick I learned in the good old  
days.

He smiles down at Prudy.

D'KORR  
Don't worry. I'm reformed.

He lifts himself up to the fire escape. Prudy jumps and catches the bottom rung, but she struggles to pull herself up.

D'KORR  
Need to get you in the weight room.

Prudy grits her teeth and forces herself up.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

D'Korr and Prudy make their way up the fire escape. The old rusted structure MOANS with each step they take. Plywood prevents entry into every window they pass above the first floor.

D'KORR  
Just keep looking up.

PRUDY  
I'm not afraid of heights.

Suddenly the guard rail pops loose with a CRACK. Prudy falls to her knees and grips the steps.

D'KORR  
Now you are.

PRUDY  
Very funny.

She regains her footing and climbs higher with a bit more caution. She kicks at one of the plywood-covered windows.

PRUDY  
So what's going on with the windows?

D'KORR  
Same reason as the lock downstairs.

PRUDY  
I've asked Mom what happened, but she won't tell me a goddamn thing.

D'KORR  
She's a mean ol' mother hen, ain't she? Word is this was a cathouse years ago. The place had gone to shit, nobody giving a fuck. One of the ceilings fell down one night and killed a shitload of girls.

PRUDY  
Oh my God.

D'KORR  
City keeps trying to shut us down, but your mama's a tough nut.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

D'Korr climbs onto the roof, followed by Prudy. He walks to the A/C unit while Prudy absorbs the view around her. Shiny skyscrapers loom in the distance.

She strolls to another side of the roof and tiptoes to the edge. The dizzying height forces her back a step. She watches the miniature people and cars below.

PRUDY  
Sure is peaceful up here.

EXT. ROOF - LATER

The metal cover of the A/C unit lies to the side, along with several coils and a crowbar.



D'KORR  
All right, go.

Prudy touches two wires together with a spark. The A/C unit jumps to life, but with a nails-on-a-chalkboard SQUEAK.

D'KORR  
Stop, stop!

She disconnects the wires. D'Korr reaches inside the unit and sprays WD-40 generously.

D'KORR  
Again.

Prudy complies. The unit WHIRS for a moment but then CLANKS off. He smacks it in frustration.

D'KORR  
Goddamn piece of shit!

PRUDY  
At least I'm getting a tan.

D'KORR  
(with a smirk)  
A little darker, maybe you fit in down here.

He mops the sweat from his head with a rag.

PRUDY  
I've decided to leave.

D'KORR  
Ain't done yet. I'll figure this out yet.

PRUDY  
No, I mean the shelter. I'm out.

D'KORR  
The hell? You can't do that.

PRUDY  
I turn eighteen tomorrow. Probation's over.

D'KORR  
Now wait a minute, this ain't no small thing. You leave and everything gets fucked up. Shit, that sonuvabitch Abe would be two years in the ground without you.

PRUDY

They'll survive without me. And  
it's time my mom gets off her ass.

D'KORR

Damn, that's harsh, Prude. She's in  
bad shape.

PRUDY

I don't care about her anymore. She  
took away my life. I should be  
starting college, and here I am  
cleaning up a goddamn homeless  
shelter.

D'KORR

Suits me fine now, don't it?

PRUDY

Not what I mean.

She produces a folded-up piece of notebook paper from her  
pocket. She hands it to D'Korr, and he spreads it out.

FLOWERY HANDWRITING lists a series of girl's names and  
addresses.

D'KORR

Marissa Gaylord... Tori Jones...  
what the hell is this?

PRUDY

I saved it when we moved down here.  
It's a list of my friends back home.  
I'm gonna hook up with them.

D'KORR

Back to the high life, huh? Good  
luck with all that.

He wads the paper in a ball and tosses it to her.

PRUDY

Hey, be careful with that!

The A/C unit suddenly HUMS to life. They exchange looks of  
surprise. It then DIES just as quickly.

D'KORR

Gonna be a hot night.

INT. ST. MARK'S - HALL - DAY

Zuka leads Renelle and Demetrius through St. Mark's homeless shelter. The expansive hall is crowded with beds separated by thin dividers. BEATEN-DOWN MEN AND WOMEN sit on the beds or troll around aimlessly.

SISTER MARTHA (34) stops Zuka.

SISTER MARTHA  
Excuse me, Father. The Reverend  
Mother would like to speak with you.

ZUKA  
Could you find room for them?

SISTER MARTHA  
It's tight, but I know just a spot.

ZUKA  
You are kind.

INT. OFFICE

Zuka enters a large, crumbling office. MOTHER ASTER (62) sits behind a massive desk. Zuka stops when he notices HEDLEY (44), a nervous homeless man, to the right of the desk. Hedley avoids Zuka's stare.

MOTHER ASTER  
What excellent timing, Father. I've  
had a long talk with Mr. Hedley. He  
turned this in.

She places a prayer book on the desk in front of her.

ZUKA  
This man rejects the word of the  
Lord?

HEDLEY  
N-n-o, I d-d-don't--

MOTHER ASTER  
Mr. Hedley, when I need your  
assistance, I'll turn in your  
direction and ask you for it. Am I  
clear?

HEDLEY  
Y-y-yes, m-m-ma'am.

MOTHER ASTER

Now Father Zuka, don't play a fool  
with me. This book is merely a  
vessel.

ZUKA

A vessel of our Lord, yes.

MOTHER ASTER

By itself, I agree.

She places another prayer book in front of her, identical  
but bound by a rubber band.

MOTHER ASTER

Mr. Hedley also had possession of  
this. Now why would he need two  
prayer books?

ZUKA

I have no control over what a man  
does with the Word. I teach, but I  
don't force learning.

MOTHER ASTER

What will I find in this book?

ZUKA

(staring down Hedley)

Hope.

Without taking her eyes from Zuka, she removes the rubber  
band and opens the book. A small crystalline rock in a  
plastic baggie falls to the desk.

ZUKA

This isn't as it seems.

MOTHER ASTER

Mr. Hedley represents a confirmation.  
He is not the first.

ZUKA

(to Hedley)

Haven't I given you mercy? Haven't  
I offered you hope? Why do you hurt  
me like this?

Hedley's left hand rubs his face uncontrollably, tearing  
away a bleeding scab.

MOTHER ASTER

Mr. Hedley, you may go.

He keeps his distance from Zuka as he races out. Mother Aster rises from her chair.

MOTHER ASTER

How dare you bring drugs into our church? The very evil we battle?

ZUKA

This world is not the reality you believe.

MOTHER ASTER

Don't force my hand. I'm placing you on leave, effective now.

ZUKA

May I defend myself?

MOTHER ASTER

Sister Catherine has packed your things.

ZUKA

I refuse to accept this... this mockery.

MOTHER ASTER

(loudly)

Sister Catherine!

(to Zuka)

Recognize pity and opportunity, Zuka. I know the evils you have seen. Use this time to overcome them.

ZUKA

(leaning in)

You swear to a god that keeps you above the hopelessness that surrounds you. My god is in the hearts of the people that live in this filth. I must use any means possible to break through the barriers people build around their heart, so they might realize the hope within.

MOTHER ASTER

What you're doing is wrong.

Sister Catherine enters.

SISTER CATHERINE

Yes, Mother?

MOTHER ASTER  
Escort Father Zuka out, please.

ZUKA  
Any path to the Lord is right.

He storms out of the room. Sister Catherine scurries after him.

MOTHER ASTER  
Father, heal his soul.

INT. SHELTER - DINING HALL - NIGHT

A crowd of people murmurs in total darkness. Suddenly a group of candles dances through the air and lights up Tera's face.

TERA  
Someone hit the lights. I can't find  
our man of the hour!

The lights flicker on and reveal about twenty RESIDENTS gathered in the shelter's dining hall.

TERA  
There he is. Tomas, we're all proud  
of you!

She places the cake in front of TOMAS (Hispanic, 36), a beaming man sitting between his two CHILDREN. Tomas tears up.

TOMAS  
Tera, how can I pay you back?

TERA  
My part was small. You're the one  
who worked hard, and now you'll take  
your family to better places. Now  
hurry up and blow these candles out  
before someone starts singing "Happy  
Birthday!"

Tomas's kids beat him to the punch. The crowd applauds and cheers.

TERA  
People, this is the success I've  
been telling you about. This place  
is more than just a bed for the night.  
This is your way out. Follow the  
rules, work hard, and your life will  
come together. Can I have an amen?

## RESIDENTS

AMEN!

Prudy rolls her eyes.

D'Korr plays HIP-HOP MUSIC on an old boom box. A few of the younger residents start dancing. Tera distributes cake.

D'Korr tries to get Prudy to dance, but she waves him off.

## PRUDY

I've had enough of this lovefest.

She leaves the room.

## INT. PRUDY'S ROOM

Prudy passes through the shower curtain to her room. Faint light comes from the street outside.

Prudy lies down in her bed and stares at the ceiling. The wind outside causes the hotel to GROAN and CREAK.

She plays with the gold cross pendant on her necklace and closes her eyes.

## START FLASHBACK

## INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

YOUNG PRUDY (13) sits with her parents at a fancy restaurant. WAITERS in red neckties and cummerbunds circulate among the tables. Her father, ROGER CARAWAY (44), looks sharp in a business suit.

## ROGER

Finally a teenager, Prudy. Time flies.

## YOUNG PRUDY

I don't feel much different.

## ROGER

Between my business trips and your mother's charity work, I know we haven't been there for you.

He glances at Tera, who returns a stony look.

## ROGER

I have -- we have -- a gift for you.

He produces a velvet box from his jacket and slides it to Prudy.

ROGER  
Happy birthday, honey.

Prudy cracks open the clamshell box and gushes at the gold necklace inside.

YOUNG PRUDY  
Wow! Thank you!

ROGER  
Listen to me, Prudy. You can be anything you want when you grow up. Don't listen to anyone else.

He gives Tera a look.

YOUNG PRUDY  
Mom, help me put this on!

Tera creases a napkin and ignores her. Prudy dangles the necklace in front of her eyes and gazes at it.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SHELTER - PRUDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A THUNDERCLAP jolts Prudy from her thoughts. Rain PELTS the window. She glances at a clock next to her: 12:42.

Lightning illuminates the room, and thunder quickly CRASHES.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy scurries into the hallway and tries Tera's door. It's unlocked. She frowns and then opens the door.

INT. TERA'S ROOM

Prudy tiptoes to Tera's bed, where her mother rests peacefully.

PRUDY  
Mom?

Another burst of lightning brightens the room, followed by immediate THUNDER. Prudy nudges her mother. The body doesn't move.



PRUDY  
Mom! Wake up! Mom!

Prudy turns her mother over. A lightning flash reveals her mother's blue face.

Prudy stifles her screams through her hands. She shakes Tera's body repetitively.

PRUDY  
Wake up! Please wake up!

BOOM! The thunder sends a shock through Prudy, and she deflates to the floor. Lightning reveals her sobs.

BOOM! At this thunderclap, Prudy jumps up and darts out of the room.

INT. PRUDY'S ROOM

Prudy throws as much as she can into an old backpack. Tears stream down her face.

INT. D'KORR'S ROOM

Prudy rouses D'Korr from a deep sleep.

D'KORR  
What the -- what's going on? Prude?

PRUDY  
I have to go. I can't stay. I can't stay here.

D'KORR  
Prude, what's the matter? What time is it?

PRUDY  
I have to go.

D'KORR  
Would you tell me what in the hell is going on?

He notices Prudy gripping her notebook paper.

D'KORR  
It's late. I'm going with you.

PRUDY  
You can't.

D'KORR  
Not your choice. Hang on, I need to  
take a piss.

INT. D'KORR'S BATHROOM

Still groggy, D'Korr stumbles inside the bathroom. Lightning flashes through the doorway. He pees but misses the toilet.

D'KORR  
Goddammit.

INT. D'KORR'S ROOM

D'Korr comes back into his room. Prudy's gone.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

D'Korr races down the hallway, quickly looking into Prudy's room and continuing on.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

D'Korr bursts outside the shelter, where he's immediately doused by rain. He looks in all directions, but there's no sign of Prudy.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Covered in a thin jacket and clutching her backpack, Prudy walks quickly down the rainy streets. She passes several VAGRANTS taking cover under collapsed packing boxes.

She sees a lit sign ahead: "BUS DEPOT". She sloshes faster through the rain.

A hand grips her arm. A DEALER in scraggly hair grins at her with a mouthful of gold-rimmed teeth.

DEALER  
Looking classy, baby! Wanna buy an  
eightball?

Prudy tries to pull away but can't.

PRUDY  
No, I need a bus.

DEALER

Last one just left. C'mon, I got some good shit.

PRUDY

Let go of me!

DEALER

Hey, we should have a party back here.

EXT. ALLEY NEAR BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

He drags her toward a nearby alley, kicking and screaming. He throws her on the ground. He digs his heel into her back while he unzips his jeans.

DEALER

Now don't go anywhere.

WHAM! His head jerks forward and he slumps to the ground. Prudy turns around to see Zuka standing there with a police-style baton in his hand. Rain bounces off his shimmering plastic poncho.

Zuka STRIKES the man again, a powerful blow glancing off a lifeless body.

He STRIKES again. Again. Again.

PRUDY

Stop!

Zuka turns to her with the baton dripping blood. Headlights suddenly flip on and blind both of them. Zuka shields his eyes.

He grabs Prudy's hand and bolts through the alley. A beat-up white van RACES behind them.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The van chases them for a few blocks, but Zuka eludes it by ducking into a side street. The van ZOOMS by.

Zuka looks at a wide-eyed Prudy. He realizes he's still holding his baton, so he shakes it dry and shoves it inside his poncho. He drags her forward into the rain.

INT. ST. MARK'S - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The front door opens and Prudy stumbles forward, dripping wet. HOMELESS PEOPLE wake and turn to stare at her.

The door closes behind her. Zuka has disappeared.

Sister Martha quickly intercepts Prudy.

SISTER MARTHA  
I thought the door was locked. I'm  
sorry, we're full.

PRUDY  
But there's nowhere--

SISTER MARTHA  
You should have been here before  
nine. I'm sorry.

PRUDY  
I can't go back out there! Please  
help me!

SISTER MARTHA  
I said we're full. Now out you go.

Demetrius bursts into the entryway.

DEMETRIUS  
Prudy!

He clings to her legs. Prudy falls to the floor and embraces him. Sister Martha shrugs.

SISTER MARTHA  
I don't have a bed, but you can use  
a blanket.

INT. HALL

Prudy huddles against the shelter wall as Demetrius sleeps soundly next to her. Prudy stares across the hall and watches the sleeping DERELICTS.

A man's cry breaks the silence.

CRAZED MAN (O.S.)  
Gimme the truck, Jesse! The truck,  
man! Need the truck!

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)  
Shut the fuck up!

Another voice chimes in.

SCHIZOPHRENIC MAN (O.S.)  
Speaker-man! Speaker-man!

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)  
Chrissakes!

SCHIZOPHRENIC MAN (O.S.)  
Speaker-man?

CRAZED MAN (O.S.)  
NEED THE TRUCK!

Prudy unhinges her necklace and clasps it in her fist. She closes her eyes, wet with tears.

START DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Young Prudy sits with her parents at the same restaurant. The waiters are dressed in solid black.

ROGER  
Between my business trips and your mother's goddamn, good-for-nothing charity work, I know we haven't been there for you.

Tera glares at Roger, her face the bluish-gray color of death.

ROGER  
I have a gift for you. Your mother would rather watch you suffer in filth.

He produces a velvet box from his jacket and slides it to Prudy.

ROGER  
Good-bye, honey.

Prudy opens the box. A BLAST of fire bursts forward, which forces the sprinkler system to jettison water down on everyone.

One of the black-clad waiters arrives at their table.

WAITER  
Tonight's special is a single-engine plane crash, garnished with an impeccable sauce of no survivors.

ROGER  
Mmm, sounds good. I'll take one of those.

PRUDY  
No, Daddy!

A white-haired MINISTER steps up to the table.

MINISTER  
Prudence, I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this. But your father isn't coming home tomorrow.

PRUDY  
No!

She looks at Roger's place, and he's no longer at the table.

MINISTER  
Your mother is very sad right now, and you must be strong and comfort her.

TERA  
(laughing loudly)  
Sell, sell, sell!

PRUDY  
No, Mommy, don't! I want to go home!

The minister has turned into Zuka.

ZUKA  
The Lord will judge your home.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. ST. MARK'S - HALL - NIGHT

Prudy writhes in her sleep, soaked in her sweat and tears. The ruined piece of notebook paper lies next to her, rivulets of ink no longer making sense.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Under a new sunrise, police cars and an ambulance veer down the street and stop in front of the House of Hope.

INT. SHELTER - TERA'S ROOM - DAY

Two POLICEMEN load Tera's body onto a gurney. A CRIME SCENE AGENT inspects the room.

INT. ENTRYWAY

D'Korr sits on a chair, his head in his hands. After a moment, he lifts his head to watch the police go back and forth. Several shelter residents ogle like paparazzi.

A homeless man, ABE (48), wanders into the room.

ABE

It's getting warmer in here! Can't breathe right.

(nudging D'Korr)

Ain't you supposed to be fixing the A/C? Get a move on, boy.

D'Korr puts his head back in his hands.

ABE

Don't give up so easily, boy. Get on up there.

Abe shoves D'Korr with more force. D'Korr leaps out of his chair.

D'KORR

Get the hell away from me, Abe!

(to all the residents)

Everyone get the hell outta here!

Now!

Zuka enters through the open front door while D'Korr tries to pull the residents away from the scene. They resist.

D'KORR

Goddammit! Move!

Zuka places his hand on D'Korr's shoulder.

ZUKA

Son, calm down. They mean no harm.

D'KORR

They don't respect anyone, they don't give a shit--

ZUKA

We all give respect in our own way. Now what's happened here?

D'KORR  
Tera, man... she's dead.

Zuka embraces D'Korr. After a moment, Zuka holds D'Korr's head in front of his own.

ZUKA  
This place must have a kitchen. Am  
I correct?

D'KORR  
Yes.

ZUKA  
Now I want you to go into that kitchen  
and see what you can prepare. These  
people must be hungry.

D'KORR  
Yes, sir.

D'Korr heads out. A police DETECTIVE surveys the room and addresses Zuka.

DETECTIVE  
Sir... excuse me... Father?

ZUKA  
Yes?

DETECTIVE  
You in charge here?

Zuka looks around the room at the residents.

ZUKA  
Yes, yes I am.

DETECTIVE  
C'mon, let's go outside.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

The hidden camera watches the detective lead Zuka down the shelter's steps.

DETECTIVE  
They don't have a chance, do they?

ZUKA  
I give them hope.



DETECTIVE

Yeah... well, the woman appeared to be very sick.

ZUKA

Yes, her time had come.

DETECTIVE

Did you know Ms. Caraway?

Zuka looks directly into the camera's viewfinder. The camera stops taping.

From Zuka's point of view, he notices a beat-up white van parked across the street.

DETECTIVE

Father, you must have known her.

ZUKA

(preoccupied)

She was afraid. She couldn't help anyone.

The white van PEELS OFF into the street and drives away.

DETECTIVE

I've been told that her daughter lives here. Prudence Caraway. Have you seen her?

ZUKA

She ran off in the night.

DETECTIVE

Is that the case?

A POLICEMAN steps out the shelter's door.

POLICEMAN

We're done in here.

DETECTIVE

Thanks for your time, Father. Keep people out of that room, you hear?

Zuka nods.

EXT. ST. MARK'S - DAY

Homeless people file out the front door of St. Mark's. Toting her backpack, Prudy walks out with Demetrius in hand. She stoops and gives him a hug.

She looks up to see Renelle.

RENELLE  
What are you doing here?

Without waiting for a reply, Renelle pulls Demetrius away from her and guides him down the street. Prudy watches them leave.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Prudy walks slowly along the sidewalk, past SHOP OWNERS pulling back their iron bars for business.

Prudy stops to look absentmindedly at music posters in front of a used CD store.

The white van cruises down the street and suddenly veers into a parking space. BILLY WATTS (38, white), a man in a two-week beard and long curly hair, jumps out.

Prudy continues to walk. Watts follows Prudy by a few yards.

Watts looks around and then catches up to her.

WATTS  
I know who you are.

PRUDY  
(startled)  
Excuse me?

WATTS  
The name's Watts. Billy Watts. I make documentaries.

He offers a handshake but Prudy hesitates.

WATTS  
A Murder in Whitestown? You see that?

PRUDY  
Sorry... I haven't been to a movie in a long time.

WATTS  
No sweat. But I know who you are. You're Prudence Caraway.

PRUDY  
(trying to hide her  
surprise)  
I don't know what you're talking  
about.

WATTS  
I'm sorry about your mother.

PRUDY  
What? How did you--

WATTS  
Doesn't matter. The world needs to  
see your story.

PRUDY  
My story? What story? I don't have  
a story.

WATTS  
You don't belong here. You know  
that.

PRUDY  
I don't know what you're talking  
about.

WATTS  
Your father was Roger Caraway, CEO  
of Atria. One of the largest software  
companies in the world. Where is  
Atria now? Gone. Dead. Just like  
your father.

PRUDY  
How dare you--

WATTS  
Has the amnesia cleared? Good.  
Your mother went nuts and dumped the  
family fortune into an old hotel.  
Started a homeless shelter.

PRUDY  
Leave me alone!

WATTS  
A tragic fall from grace. You  
survived, Prudy. Now you need to  
tell the world your story.

INT. DINER - DAY

Jermaine sits in a booth at a greasy diner and sips a cup of coffee. Chains scarfs a plate of runny eggs across from him.

JERMAINE

So how much are we short?

CHAINS

Looking like fifty big ones.

JERMAINE

Fifty? Goddammit, I thought it was ten or twenty. Twenty's impossible, fifty's a fucking spaceflight to Mars.

CHAINS

Been there already, boss. Seen it on the news.

He laughs and smears his toast in his eggs.

JERMAINE

That's repulsive.

Through the diner's window, Chains notices Prudy across the street.

CHAINS

Yo, there's that bitch from the laundry place.

Jermaine turns around and watches Prudy storm away from Watts, but he continues to follow her. Jermaine puts down his cup and leaves the booth.

CHAINS

Dude, I'm not finished!

Jermaine deftly maneuvers past the oncoming breakfast crowd and exits.

Chains mops up the remainder of the eggs and then takes off for the exit. He slams into a WAITRESS and sends plates SMASHING to the floor.

WAITRESS

Hey, watch it!

He shoves her aside and runs out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Watts grabs Prudy's shoulder and she shoves his hand away.

WATTS  
OK, wait up. I'll be straight with  
you.

PRUDY  
Stop following me!

WATTS  
Just promise me a cut.

She ignores him.

WATTS  
Fifty percent, anything we find.

Prudy stops and faces him.

PRUDY  
What are you talking about?

WATTS  
Promise me, right down the middle.

PRUDY  
Sure, what the hell.

WATTS  
Seriously, we're cool?

PRUDY  
Yes, alright already. Fifty-fifty  
of your super-duper secret.

WATTS  
(quieter)  
OK, listen. Your mother. Look,  
total up the assets she had after  
your father's death. Subtract from  
that the cost of the hotel. All of  
this is public record.

Jermaine and Chains come into view down the street.

JERMAINE  
Hey you! Get away from her!

Both Prudy and Watts look at the oncoming thugs. Watts  
hurries up.

WATTS

Which leaves a helluva lot of money.

PRUDY

You're crazy. I don't believe--

WATTS

Shut up for a sec. I've checked every bank in the area, and there ain't shit. Trust me, I have my ways. Now we both know how reclusive your mother was. There's no way she'd keep her money further away.

The thugs are twenty feet away now.

JERMAINE

I said leave her alone, motherfucker!

WATTS

It's here, Prudy. Close to her.

JERMAINE

Get the fuck away, man.

Chains pushes Watts backwards.

WATTS

(yelling to Prudy)

Ever see a checkbook? A courier? I don't think so!

Chains lands a punch. Watts struggles to keep his balance and then stumbles to his van.

WATTS

It's here, Prudy! You know it!

PRUDY

(under her breath)

The shelter.

Prudy walks, then runs toward the van. Watts is already inside trying to start it.

JERMAINE

What are you doing? The guy's a goddamn lunatic!

Jermaine's cell phone RINGS. He answers.

JERMAINE

Dammit, what?

Prudy reaches the van but stops when she recognizes it from last night.

WATTS

Get in!

Chains POUNDS the front of the van, leaving a dent. Prudy jumps inside.

JERMAINE

Goddammit. Chains, c'mon. We gotta go.

Watts starts up the van and SQUEALS out of the parking space. Prudy watches Jermaine as the van passes him. Jermaine has his arms outstretched as if to say, "What the hell?"

INT. VAN - DAY - TRAVELING

Prudy sits on a pile of papers, which she shoves to the floor while the van moves along.

WATTS

Ex-boyfriend? I don't remember seeing him.

PRUDY

Far from it. Local scum of the earth. I heard he killed a clerk up on 5th just for giving him lip.

Prudy looks behind her seat in the van. Wall-to-wall video editing equipment with a cot wedged in the middle.

PRUDY

Nice place.

WATTS

Yeah, all the comforts of home.

She notices something dangling from his keyring: a plastic hand flipping the middle finger. She smiles.

PRUDY

Where are we going?

WATTS

Back to the shelter, of course. You need to find something, anything, about the money.

PRUDY

Hold on, I can't go back there right now.

WATTS

Where else we gonna go, Princess?

PRUDY

I don't know. I just need someplace to think about all this.

Watts turns a familiar corner.

PRUDY

I said I don't want to go back there.

WATTS

Look... you don't have much of a choice.

PRUDY

Like hell I do. Let me out right now.

WATTS

To answer the question that popped in your head back there, yes, this is the van that chased you around town last night. Now you return the favor -- who the fuck was that black dude with you?

PRUDY

I'm still trying to figure that out. Some priest or something.

WATTS

Goddamn prick believes in capital punishment, doesn't he?

PRUDY

Well at least he disappeared.

WATTS

And reappeared at your goddamn shelter.

PRUDY

What?

WATTS

That's the sense of urgency I'm trying to instill in you.

(MORE)



WATTS (cont'd)  
I don't know what the hell he wants,  
but we need him the fuck away from  
the shelter.

Watts comes to a stop along a curb.

PRUDY  
You can at least drop me off at the  
front door.

WATTS  
Can't do that. Fucking dude saw my  
van this morning.

PRUDY  
Great.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

The last of the police cars drive away from the shelter.

INT. SHELTER - DINING HALL - DAY

Zuka addresses most of the residents in the dining hall as  
they finish bowls of oatmeal. D'Korr starts to clean up.

ZUKA  
For those of you who don't know me,  
my name is Father Zuka Oweta. This  
shelter needs a new leader, and I've  
decided to leave my post at St. Mark's  
to help you.

The residents exchange skeptical looks.

ZUKA  
Now I've heard about the rules laid  
down by the previous owner. I am  
not so narrow-minded. I have only  
one rule: my heart is your heart.  
Trust in me.

ABE  
What about the A/C in here?

ZUKA  
Done. It'll be fixed by this hour  
tomorrow.

D'KORR

Say what? The A/C's so old we can't find anyone that knows shit about it.

ZUKA

Then we'll figure something else out. There's always a solution.

ABE

Now that's a fresh breeze already.

There's scattered applause. Another resident, SADIE (52), pipes up.

SADIE

This is our home. We're proud of it. You gonna let any cockroaches off the street in here?

ZUKA

Every man and woman deserves a chance.

SADIE

Everyone out there has had too many chances. You can't be bringing that shit in here. They'll take over.

ZUKA

I've survived the death camps of Rwanda. I can take care of them.

The other residents clap again, louder this time. Sadie catches a puzzled look from D'Korr as she sits down quietly.

EXT. ALLEY NEAR BUS DEPOT - DAY

A group of seven GANG MEMBERS huddle up in an alley. Jermaine and Chains arrive in a filthy black Mustang and climb out.

The group breaks to reveal the dead drug dealer crumpled on the ground. LEROY walks up to Jermaine.

LEROY

Fucking rats were eating his brains, man.

JERMAINE

They must've gone hungry.

LEROY

He was a goddamn top earner, Main. What the fuck we gonna do?

CHAINS

It's the Triads, man. Goddamn Asians.  
We need to fuck 'em up.

JERMAINE

A gang war isn't going to bring in  
any cash.

CHAINS

Eye for an eye, man. Send a message.

JERMAINE

Shut the fuck up. We're all gonna  
be sent downstairs if we don't make  
the level.

CHAINS

This ain't about money, boss.

JERMAINE

It's always about money, you fucking  
idiot.

He points to everyone.

JERMAINE

Listen up. No retaliation, you hear  
me? Now everyone quit standing around  
and pump your guys for more cash.

The gang looks around at each other. Chains seethes.

JERMAINE

Now!

Slowly they scatter away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Prudy walks down the street toward the shelter. She sees  
Tomas and other residents leaving for work. She ducks into  
the alley next to the shelter.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Behind the trash bin, Prudy watches the residents pass. A  
police car slowly passes as well.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Prudy sneaks into the shelter. The entryway is empty.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy slips through a crisscross of yellow "POLICE SCENE - DO NOT CROSS" tape. She closes the door quietly and locks it.

INT. TERA'S ROOM

Prudy sees the mess left behind by the police. She picks up a few empty bottles and plastic bags and dumps them into a trash can.

She stares at the empty bed, sheets twisted and pillows askew. After a moment, she grabs the bedsheets and billows them until the bed surface is smooth. She makes the rest of the bed.

Prudy picks up a picture frame lying face down on the floor. Through a cracked pane of glass, the photo shows Tera and Prudy smiling cheek-to-cheek at a charity event.

She flips the frame over, opens the clasp, and looks inside. Nothing.

Prudy drifts to a bookcase and locates a large photo album. She sits on the floor against the bed.

The first few pages exhibit Prudy's baby photos. She flips through her elementary school years. She stops on a photo of her father helping a 12-year-old Prudy fish.

She turns the page and gasps. The middle of the album has been cut out, any photos in the way destroyed. Inside the makeshift hole lies a brown paper package.

Prudy rips open the thin package. Hundred-dollar bills scatter across the floor. She holds one and feels it between her fingers.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

D'Korr passes Tera's room with his toolbox in hand. Hearing loud thumps from the room, he stops and listens.

A CRASH!

He tries the door. Locked. He knocks on the door, and the noises stop.

D'KORR  
(hushed)  
Prude, that you?

No reply.

D'KORR

C'mon, you're the only one with a key. It has to be you in there.

Still no answer.

D'KORR

We need you back, Prude.

INT. TERA'S ROOM

Prudy stands frozen in a war zone. Tera's mattress lies on its side, polyester fluff tumbling out of a large tear. Books are scattered throughout the room. House plants have been uprooted, spilling soil across the floor.

Prudy wipes her forehead, her shirt drenched with sweat. She looks down at her feet and notices the wood floor.

Prudy pushes the bed aside. She kneels on the floor and POUNDS on the wood slats with her fist. Solid.

She crawls to another section and POUNDS. Solid.

Another. Solid.

Another. The slat flips out of its groove. Prudy reaches below and pulls out a key.

The top of the key reads "Yale."

PRUDY

So you DID go upstairs.

She bolts to the door and opens it. Zuka stands waiting.

ZUKA

Prudence. We meet again.

He looks over her shoulder to view the damage inside. Prudy steps forward and gets entangled in the police tape. She rips it down and shuts the door behind her.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

ZUKA

Lose something?

PRUDY  
Don't worry about me. I just had to  
get a few things, but now I'm leaving.

ZUKA  
Be careful out there.

PRUDY  
I can take care of myself, thanks.

ZUKA  
I don't think you can.

Prudy starts to leave.

ZUKA  
The police seem to think your mother's  
death wasn't... natural.

She stops.

ZUKA  
And then you disappeared. Quite  
odd, they said. Quite suspicious.

PRUDY  
Please don't tell them you saw me.

ZUKA  
(gesturing toward the  
exit)  
Run away, child. Run away.

Prudy slowly turns and leaves.

ZUKA  
Just like your mother.

INT. VAN - DAY

Prudy returns to the van. Watts films her with the video  
camera.

PRUDY  
Turn that thing off.

WATTS  
Can't, this is your story.

Prudy lunges for the camera and tries to turn it off.

WATTS  
Easy! Stop it, I got it!

He turns it off.

WATTS  
So what did you find?

She reveals the package of money in her backpack. Watts WHISTLES and slams his palms against the steering wheel.

WATTS  
I knew it! That's just a taste of  
what's hiding in there.

He reaches for a bill, but she quickly zips up her backpack.

WATTS  
You have to go back. Is that preacher  
guy still in there?

PRUDY  
Just get me out of here.

WATTS  
We can't give up now.

PRUDY  
Goddammit, take me to St. Mark's!

He nods to himself and then puts the car in gear.

WATTS  
OK, but don't do something stupid.  
There's a shitload more where that  
came from.

EXT. ST. MARK'S - DAY

Later that afternoon, Prudy waits in a long line of homeless people in front of St. Mark's.

INT. HALL

Prudy walks up and down the rows of beds. She stops Sister Martha.

PRUDY  
The little boy from last night.  
Have you seen him?

Sister Martha shakes her head.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

That night, Prudy lies awake on a cot. Similar deranged conversations rattle on in the hall.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

The next morning, an appliance delivery truck rests outside the shelter. The DELIVERYMAN meets Zuka on the shelter's steps.

DELIVERYMAN  
You order all this stuff?

ZUKA  
Yes, sir, I did.

DELIVERYMAN  
(handing him a bill)  
Cash on delivery.

D'Korr exits the shelter and sees Zuka paying the deliveryman.

D'KORR  
Hey Zuka, what's going on?

ZUKA  
Help the man unload these.

D'KORR  
Unload what?

DELIVERYMAN  
(heading to the truck)  
Our entire stock of AC units.

D'KORR  
(smiling back at Zuka)  
Damn.

EXT. SHELTER - LATER

Zuka watches with pleasure as the air conditioners file into the shelter. D'Korr wipes sweat off his brow.

D'KORR  
I'll set these up in the rooms right  
away.

He lifts another box as a black Mustang SQUEALS to a halt in front of the shelter. Jermaine bounds out, followed by Chains. They head toward Zuka.



D'Korr sets the box down and stands between them.

JERMAINE  
Easy there, my friend.

D'Korr holds his ground, but Zuka shakes his head. D'Korr steps aside.

Jermaine motions to the alley nearby. Chains grabs Zuka by the shirt and drags him down the sidewalk.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Chains thrusts Zuka into the alley by the shelter.

JERMAINE  
Finally caught up to you, Z-Man.  
What've you been up to?

ZUKA  
The Lord's work.

JERMAINE  
Great, so you're not doing your job.  
You're late. Payment was due  
yesterday.

ZUKA  
I need more time.

Jermaine grabs Zuka by his collar and SHOVES him against the garbage bin.

JERMAINE  
You picked the wrong fucking month  
to be late!

ZUKA  
When have I ever failed you?

JERMAINE  
Right now, you son of a bitch.

ZUKA  
One week. I promise.

JERMAINE  
Give me what you have right now.

ZUKA  
I haven't collected yet.

JERMAINE

What the hell? Are you selling crack on credit now?

ZUKA

You don't know these people like I do.

JERMAINE

Goddamn homeless fucks. Where do they get the money anyway? I need that money tomorrow. End of story.

He stares into Zuka's eyes.

JERMAINE

(to Chains)

I don't think our friend here understands me. Give him a fucking Post-It note.

CHAINS

(hushed)

I ain't hitting a priest, man.

JERMAINE

What the fuck is the matter with you lately? You do what I tell you. I'll get the car.

Jermaine leaves the alley. Chains picks up Zuka by the shirt.

ZUKA

Why do you take that from him?

CHAINS

Cause I have to do my job, just like you.

Chains launches his fist into Zuka's gut, and Zuka reels to the ground. Chains shakes his head.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

D'Korr still stands by the shelter. Jermaine walks up to him.

JERMAINE

You work here, right?

D'Korr glares at him.

JERMAINE  
Have you seen a girl recently?  
Ponytail, Cubs cap?

Just a glare.

JERMAINE  
C'mon, man. I'm not the bad guy  
here.

Ignoring Jermaine, D'Korr walks away to the alley. Chains  
exits the alley and gives D'Korr a shove.

Jermaine steals an A/C box off the truck and puts it inside  
his car.

JERMAINE  
Goddamn homeless fucks.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

D'Korr races over to Zuka, who kneels on the ground.

D'KORR  
What'd he do to you?

He tries to pick up Zuka, but Zuka refuses.

ZUKA  
Nothing. I'm OK.

D'KORR  
Like hell. What's going on?

ZUKA  
(standing on his own)  
He wants money from the shelter.

D'KORR  
He crazy? We don't have shit here.

ZUKA  
D'Korr, how did that woman keep this  
place going? State money?

D'KORR  
Nah, they wouldn't give her a damn  
thing. On account that she wouldn't  
let retards in here.

ZUKA  
Then how?

D'KORR

I don't know. Must've had something  
stashed away.

ZUKA

Let's get those air conditioners  
inside.

INT. ARMY/NAVY SURPLUS - DAY

Prudy walks through a store aisle, grabbing a flashlight and  
batteries. She finds a medium-sized duffel bag and holds it  
in the air.

WATTS

I think we're gonna need a bigger  
bag.

Prudy grabs an extra-large one. And then another.

She dumps everything on the counter in front of a CASHIER  
dressed in fatigues. She takes a handful of energy bars  
from a display and tosses them on top. The cashier totals  
up everything as Watts shakes his head at Prudy.

CASHIER

That'll be \$354.23.

PRUDY

(to Watts)

Takes money to make money. My dad  
always said that.

She walks off, distracted by a tent display. Watts pays.

WATTS

(under his breath)

Yeah, sounds like the prick.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Prudy and Watts wait in the van down the street from the  
shelter.

PRUDY

Ten o'clock, lights out. We should  
be clear at eleven.

Watts scrounges in the back.

WATTS

How 'bout a quickie?

PRUDY

Excuse me?!

He holds up the camera.

WATTS

Interview.

PRUDY

Go to hell.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Prudy and Watts walk up to the shelter's front door. She carries her backpack, and he has the duffel bags.

She pulls out her key ring, finds the right key, and unlocks the front door.

INT. SHELTER - 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The shelter lies silent in the darkness. Prudy and Watts creep to the upstairs door. It looks heavy and is secured by a padlock labelled "YALE".

She finds the key on the ring and unlocks the padlock. Watts starts to open the door.

PRUDY

(hushed)

Wait.

She reaches into her backpack and finds a small can of WD-40. She sprays the hinges liberally.

She opens the door without a sound. Her nose wrinkles as stale musty air hits her face.

PRUDY

Ugh.

INT. STAIRWELL

Prudy and Watts carefully walk up the stairs with flashlights on. Boards CREAK under their feet, so they use the edges of the stairs to quiet their steps.

Their lights reveal other flashlights fastened to the wall with duct tape every few feet. Watts turns one on.

WATTS  
Thanks, Mom.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy and Watts enter the hallway upstairs. A pack of rats greets her with a scurry across the floor. She dances sideways to dodge the rodents and ends up face-first into a massive spiderweb.

Frantically brushing the web away, Prudy drops the flashlight. It SMACKS the ground and goes out.

WATTS  
Rats and spiders, big fucking deal.  
Keep your eyes on the prize, Princess.

She brushes herself off and flips her light back on.

They see more spiderwebs clinging to a collapsed beam that has fallen through the ceiling above.

Just like downstairs, all the doors are missing.

INT. RAT ROOM

Prudy steps into the first room and gags on a horrible stench. Her flashlight reveals a large decaying rat against the wall. Other rats run away from their fallen brother.

WATTS  
Excellent, you start here. I'll  
check the rooms at the end of the  
hall.

PRUDY  
No way, we're not splitting up.

WATTS  
You realize how big this place is?  
Get to work.

He leaves her. She reaches into her backpack and pulls out a dust mask and a hammer. She dons the mask and starts TAPPING at the boards below. She finds a rotten board and pries it loose with the other end of the hammer.

INT. RESTORED ROOM

Prudy enters the next room. Her flashlight circles the walls, revealing a teenager's room.

A day bed, a dresser, a rocking chair. Rock band posters and a University of Chicago banner hang on the wall.

PRUDY

Oh my God.

She notices a battery-powered lantern in the middle of the room, and she switches it on. An eerie fluorescent glow illuminates the room.

She walks to the dresser and opens the drawers. She pulls out a cashmere sweater.

PRUDY

My favorite sweater!

She lays it against her, but it's obviously no longer her size.

PRUDY

Damn.

She finally sits on the rocker. A half-empty glass of water rests next to her on a small table. She takes the glass and swirls it around.

She rocks back and forth, thinking. She sees a packing box poking out from under the bed.

INT. 2ND FLOOR ROOM

Watts tosses a rotted floorboard to the ground in frustration. He plays his flashlight around the torn-up room.

WATTS

It's gotta be here.

INT. RESTORED ROOM

Prudy stoops over the open box. Inside are stacks of manila folders. She rifles through them but finds no money.

She stops on a thick folder titled "CARAWAY V. WATTS". Looking at the empty doorway, she sees the beam of a flashlight coming.

She shoves the folder into her backpack and pushes the box under the bed.

WATTS (O.S.)

Goddammit, Princess. I hope you're having better luck than me.

Watts appears in the doorway and sees the room.

WATTS  
What on earth?

PRUDY  
It's my room. I mean, my old room.  
When I was younger.

WATTS  
Hoo-wee, your mom was nuttier than I  
thought. Find anything?

PRUDY  
Just a lot of things I had forgotten  
about.

WATTS  
Then pull off memory lane, sweetheart.  
Back to work. We only have a few  
more hours.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy ducks under the collapsed beam and carries her backpack  
to the next room.

INT. 2ND FLOOR ROOM

Prudy pries a loose floorboard away and shines her flashlight.  
Nothing. She pauses to wipe sweat off her forehead.

EXT. VAN - DAWN

In the slightest trace of morning, Prudy and Watts trudge  
back to the van.

PRUDY  
Where do we sleep?

Watts feeds quarters into the parking meter.

WATTS  
Cheapest room in the city. Front or  
back?

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

D'Korr carries several empty A/C packing boxes into the  
entryway.



He glances through a window and notices a SHORT-SLEEVED MAN (42) standing near the shelter and looking upwards. He sports a tie and hard hat.

D'Korr walks outside.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

D'Korr watches the man step back and peer toward the top of the shelter. The man glances at D'Korr and then paces to the other side of the shelter, repeating the same look upwards.

D'Korr notices a white pickup with a city seal and "FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY" lettering.

D'KORR  
Can I help you?

The man keeps his concentration for a few moments longer and then climbs the shelter steps.

SHORT-SLEEVED MAN  
Who's in charge here?

INT. SHELTER - DINING HALL - DAY

Zuka sets up the room for breakfast.

D'Korr knocks on the doorframe. The short-sleeved man bursts through and holds out his hand.

SHORT-SLEEVED MAN/FLOYD TURNER  
Floyd Turner, City Inspection  
Services.

Zuka looks quizzically at D'Korr and D'Korr shrugs. Zuka accepts the handshake.

ZUKA  
Father Zuka. How can I help you?

FLOYD  
Zuka, is it? That's a new one.  
Police told the city about Ms.  
Caraway. Sorry for your loss, but I  
need to take a quick look around.

ZUKA  
There are no problems here. We're  
under new management.

FLOYD  
That so? Maybe you'll do better  
than your predecessor. This place  
has barely met code.

ZUKA  
It serves its purpose.

FLOYD  
There's more to it than that. I  
want to see the upstairs.

D'KORR  
Can't, sir. It's locked.

FLOYD  
Who do you think put the lock there?

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Floyd pops open the lock and swings the upstairs door wide.

FLOYD  
Mmm, smell that urban blight.

INT. STAIRWELL

Floyd leads the way with a high-powered flashlight, followed  
by Zuka and D'Korr.

Zuka's foot CRASHES through a decayed stair board, but he  
regains his balance.

FLOYD  
I don't recommend you coming up here  
with me.

ZUKA  
I need to see for myself.

FLOYD  
Don't see the point. Nobody's ever  
gonna live up here.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

The group enters the upstairs hallway. Floyd shines his  
light across the corridor.

FLOYD  
Looks just as bad as last time.

ZUKA

Last time?

Floyd tries to push the collapsed beam out of the way, but a loud CREAKING makes him stop.

FLOYD

Years of neglect turned this old hotel into a minefield. Had to get a court order to seal the upstairs. We were trying to shut down the whole place, but Ms. Caraway put up one helluva fight.

Floyd inspects the empty doorframe of the rat room.

FLOYD

Yep, doors are first to go in a place like this. About the only thing you can salvage for a quick buck.

INT. RAT ROOM

Floyd leads them into the room.

His flashlight reveals scattered energy bar wrappers. Rats chew on a half-eaten bar, ignoring the spotlight. Several boards have been pried from the floor.

FLOYD

What the hell? Who's been up here?

ZUKA

(to D'Korr)

What is this?

D'KORR

I-- I don't know. We don't have a key.

Floyd pushes them aside and rushes out.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Floyd speeds down the hallway and directs his flashlight into a few rooms. He finds that they're torn apart.

FLOYD

This is a clear violation of the court order!

ZUKA  
I'll find whoever did this.

FLOYD  
I don't think you understand, buddy.  
One strike, this place is condemned.

ZUKA  
I see.  
(to D'Korr)  
Leave us, son.

D'KORR  
Zuka, I don't know who--

ZUKA  
It's all right. Let us be.

D'Korr heads downstairs while Floyd fumes.

FLOYD  
I have to report this. If another  
accident happens, the city can be  
sued.

Zuka turns his eyes toward Floyd. They blaze with  
determination.

ZUKA  
People will die without this shelter.

FLOYD  
Yeah, but my ass won't be on the  
line.

ZUKA  
So this is about you now?

FLOYD  
Well, indirectly, yes.

ZUKA  
Then it's time you got involved.

Zuka pulls something from his robe and clasps it in his hands  
for a moment. Floyd looks nervous.

He gives the envelope to Floyd.

ZUKA  
I can't offer more than this.

Floyd flips through the bills inside.

ZUKA  
Enjoy it. Enjoy knowing you have  
saved lives.

FLOYD  
I'll have to think about this.

ZUKA  
No, this gift ensures that we never  
see each other again.

Floyd stares at Zuka, expressionless.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Floyd carries his hard hat and flashlight to his truck.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

D'Korr and Zuka watch Floyd leave.

D'KORR  
Are we shut down?

ZUKA  
No, he chose the greater good.

D'KORR  
(shaking his head)  
Don't know how you do it, but damn  
you do it good.

Zuka shuts the door and sees the "THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST"  
plaque. He takes a Sharpie from a nearby basket and adds a  
"0" at the end of "MATTHEW 19:3".

ZUKA  
Wrong verse.

INT. VAN - DAY

Prudy lies on the cot in the back of the van. She looks in  
the front to see Watts sound asleep, snoring.

She takes the manila folder from her backpack and looks  
through the contents...

...a legal document stating "TERA CARAWAY V. WILLIAM WATTS"

...an article with the headline, "CHARITY HEAD SUES REPORTER  
FOR LIBEL"

...another article with the headline, "REPORTER LOSES SUIT, JOB".

Prudy scans the hundred of tapes in racks against the walls of the van. A large group of small tapes are labelled "PRUDY" with different dates. She finds a group of videotapes labelled "ATRIA". She pops one of them into a nearby VCR.

A news anchor talks silently on the TV with the words "ATRIA INVESTIGATION" next to him. Prudy scrambles to find the headphones.

The screen has changed to a clean-cut version of WATTS, microphone in hand. "BILL WATTS, INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER" is the caption. Prudy plugs in the headphones and listens.

WATTS

Thanks, Paul. Roger Caraway's sudden death last week has ground this investigation to a halt. My key sources are distancing themselves from this matter, and US District Attorneys are demanding this station to reveal their names.

In the front of the van, Watts stirs.

Prudy flips off the TV and feigns sleep on the cot.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Outside the van, Watts stretches with a yawn. Prudy climbs out from the back.

WATTS

We're not getting anywhere upstairs, and I'm not about to do the same thing for three more stories. Go back to your mother's room and see if you can find anything else, any kind of clue.

PRUDY

I'm not doing that.

WATTS

What the fuck? Don't give up so easily.

PRUDY

I'm not giving up. I want to know the truth.

WATTS

There's a lot of fucking money, that's all you need to know.

PRUDY

What do you know about my father?

WATTS

What does this have to do with him?

PRUDY

Tell me, how did that lawsuit work out for you, Bill?

He pauses.

WATTS

Again, there's a lot of money in there. Focus.

PRUDY

This is more than just money, isn't it? You have something against me?

WATTS

Look, you seem like a nice girl. Amazing considering the stock you come from.

PRUDY

Better than the person you've become.

WATTS

Your mother stole my life. I lost my job, my reputation, and that lawsuit garners every fucking dime I make. We're gonna find what's mine. I'm gonna take every penny I'm due for the last five years of pain and suffering.

PRUDY

You ever happen to think what your lies did to me?

WATTS

Lies? Let me tell you something about your father. He was as corrupt as they come.

PRUDY

I don't believe you.

WATTS

I have no sympathy for you. You didn't deserve your life in the fucking mansion in the hills. All of it was stolen from shareholders.

PRUDY

He earned his money. Not like you, who's trying to steal it.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Zuka exits the shelter. He looks directly at Prudy and Watts.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Watts sees Zuka as well.

WATTS

Oh fuck.

A police car comes down the street, heading toward the van.

WATTS

Enough of this shit, get in the van.

Jermaine's Mustang appears from the opposite direction. He slows down when he sees Prudy.

She runs up to the Mustang and bangs on the window. Jermaine stops, and Prudy jumps into his car.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY - TRAVELING

Prudy slides down to avoid the police car.

JERMAINE

What, little Miss Perfect is hiding from the cops now?

PRUDY

Just drive. Not too fast.

JERMAINE

Don't tell me how to drive.

The police car passes them.



EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Jermaine glares at Zuka as the Mustang passes the shelter.  
Zuka smiles and salutes.

Zuka then watches the white van take off down the street.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY - TRAVELING

Prudy sits up in her seat and looks through the rear window.

JERMAINE  
So what happened with the lunatic?

PRUDY  
Just take me to St. Mark's.

EXT. ST. MARK'S - DAY

A police car is parked in front of St. Mark's, and two officers check each person waiting to get in.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Prudy watches from the Mustang parked down the street.

JERMAINE  
So what's going on?

PRUDY  
Thanks for the ride, but this really doesn't concern you.

JERMAINE  
Look, I'm getting a little pissed off by your attitude. I'm not a goddamn taxi to get you out of trouble.

PRUDY  
I'm sorry. Are you missing out on a robbery?

JERMAINE  
You think you know what I'm all about? You have no idea. I have to deal with guys trying kill each other and making a goddamn impossible mark. Know what? I'm out. A few more months and I'm leaving the city. I'm sick of this.

PRUDY  
Finally something in common.

JERMAINE  
Yeah, I think there's more than you  
would care to admit.

PRUDY  
Not that it matters. Just drop me  
off here.

JERMAINE  
Look, if you're in real trouble, you  
can crash at my place.

PRUDY  
No thanks.

JERMAINE  
Seriously, it's clean. I just gotta  
make a stop at the university and  
then I'll take you there.

PRUDY  
(a spark of interest)  
University? Downtown?

JERMAINE  
Yeah. Are you game?

EXT. MIDWAY PARK - NIGHT

Early evening. Jermaine drives past the lush Midway Plaisance park and the ornate Quadrangle towers of the University of Chicago.

The Mustang comes to a stop on the side of the road. Prudy steps out and sits on the grass, watching SOCCER PLAYERS finish up a game nearby. Jermaine gets out and stands against the car.

EXT. MIDWAY PARK - LATER

Prudy strolls by the long stretch of trees along the park. She turns around to see Jermaine still by his car. She motions for him to join her.

EXT. MIDWAY PARK - LATER

It's dark, and the campus towers are partially lit. Prudy and Jermaine sit on a bench near the trees.

PRUDY  
So what's with the ring?

He looks at his snake ring and rolls it around his finger.

JERMAINE  
Intimidation. Works wonders on the weak.

PRUDY  
(laughing)  
That and a gun.

JERMAINE  
Yeah, well... I don't carry a gun anymore.

Prudy studies his eyes for a moment.

PRUDY  
Now that's a lie.

JERMAINE  
Search me. I got Chains now, so why should I bother?

PRUDY  
Rumor is you killed someone. A grocery clerk.

JERMAINE  
(sitting up)  
Shit, you heard that?

PRUDY  
That's a lie too?

JERMAINE  
No. But it was an accident. Guy didn't want to pay my share, pulls a shotgun. I had no choice.

PRUDY  
Everyone has a choice.

JERMAINE  
(standing up)  
Well, I choose that we move on.

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

Jermaine parks the car near a fraternity house. Blazing torches border the path to the entrance.

STUDENTS mill about the area, many already drunk.

INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT

Jermaine and Prudy gaze out her window at the scene.

JERMAINE

Look, I've gotta take care of some business. You want to tag along?

PRUDY

Someone else owes you rent?

JERMAINE

Ha, ha. No, this one's different.

PRUDY

It's drugs, isn't it.

Jermaine rubs his neck and looks away.

PRUDY

And you want me to come with? Are you crazy?

JERMAINE

These are college kids. Harmless.

PRUDY

You go. I'll stay here.

JERMAINE

You're the one who wanted to see the campus. C'mon.

PRUDY

I'm looking at the campus. It's nice. Wish I could go here. Too bad, so sad.

JERMAINE

It's just a party. Let's go.

PRUDY

Yeah, a thug and a homeless girl. We'll fit right in.

Jermaine takes off his leather jacket. He searches behind his seat and comes up with a ratty long-sleeve shirt.

PRUDY

What are you doing?

He puts the shirt on, and it covers up his tattoos. He snatches Prudy's Cubs cap.

PRUDY

Hey!

JERMAINE

(donning the cap)

What do you think? Average college slacker?

PRUDY

(looking him over)

OK, not bad. But that doesn't change my situation.

JERMAINE

You're a girl. You could be dressed in a goddamn clown outfit, for Christ's sakes. Let's go.

PRUDY

(pointing to his snake ring)

Hand it over.

JERMAINE

C'mon, no way. I don't take this off for anything.

PRUDY

Then I stay.

He pauses and then loosens the ring and hands it to her. She strings it through her necklace.

PRUDY

Class ring.

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

Prudy and Jermaine stroll toward the fraternity house, their path lit by tiki torches. Beside each torch stands a FRATERNITY PLEDGE, decked out in a grass skirt and coconut bra. The pledges proudly display stoic faces. Prudy laughs at the sight.

As they near the house, Prudy points at an entire pig being roasted on a spit, spun by LOWLY PLEDGES.

The party has already spilled onto the front patio. Prudy and Jermaine make their way to the door. A handsome ASIAN MAN (21) smoking a cigarette stops Jermaine.

ASIAN MAN  
Hey pal, invitation-only.

Jermaine takes off the cap, and the Asian man does a double-take.

ASIAN MAN  
Oh shit, the Main Man? Is that you?

JERMAINE  
Yeah.

ASIAN MAN  
Fucking-A, I didn't recognize you  
for a sec. Good look, man. Signing  
up for classes?

JERMAINE  
We need to talk.

ASIAN MAN  
We're kicking off the school year,  
dude. C'mon, sit back and enjoy a  
little Huh-wah-eeeeeee!

He gestures with both arms toward the festivities.

JERMAINE  
First we talk.

ASIAN MAN  
Have it your way. Let me get the  
boys.

He leads Jermaine and Prudy to the house.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Watts stands at the shelter's front door. All the lights  
inside the shelter are off. He has Prudy's key ring, and he  
keeps trying each key in the lock. Finally the deadbolt  
CLICKS.

INT. FRAT HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Raucous RAP MUSIC assaults their ears. The Asian man cuts a  
swath through wall-to-wall STUDENTS. Jermaine and Prudy  
follow him closely.

Jermaine looks back at Prudy, who gapes in wonder at the  
party.

JERMAINE  
You gonna be OK by yourself?

PRUDY  
What?

Jermaine points away from the direction they're heading.

JERMAINE  
(yelling)  
I'll find you later!

PRUDY  
No, wait up!

But Jermaine's already gone. The crowd swallows her up, but somehow she manages to fight her way through.

INT. KITCHEN

Prudy bursts into the kitchen, which is less crowded. A CREW-CUT GUY hands her a beer from a nearby keg.

She stands to one side and sips her drink. Yuck.

A BLOND HUNK slides up to her.

BLOND HUNK  
No taste for beer?

PRUDY  
Always thought it would be better.

He snags a tequila bottle from the counter and pours two shots in plastic cups. Prudy sniffs her cup. Not bad.

BLOND HUNK  
Down the hatch in three. One, two, three...

They both gulp the shots. Prudy gasps and clutches her throat.

BLOND HUNK  
The second one is smoother, trust me.  
(pours another round)  
Go!

Prudy downs the drink again with the same result.

PRUDY  
Ugh, no more.

BLOND HUNK  
I respect that.

He places his arm around her shoulders.

BLOND HUNK  
How 'bout I show you around our house?

PRUDY  
I guess so.

BLOND HUNK  
The tour starts upstairs... in the  
bedrooms...

PRUDY  
Uh... no thanks.

Prudy ducks out of his grasp and scurries off.

INT. SHELTER - 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Watts now tries the keys for the lock to the upstairs door.  
Suddenly he drops the keyring, and it JINGLES to the floor.  
He freezes.

He looks up and down the hallway. Nothing.

He picks up the keys and resumes. The padlock POPS open.

INT. FRAT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Prudy stumbles into a group of girls outside the kitchen.

BLONDE GIRL  
Hey, you look like a freshman. Am I  
right?

PRUDY  
Me?

REDHEAD GIRL  
Are you rushing?

PRUDY  
No... just staying right here.

BRUNETTE GIRL  
(thumbing Prudy's  
shirt)  
Real funny. You aren't going anywhere  
in those rags.



BLONDE GIRL  
I'll die if I don't get in.

PRUDY  
Into college?

The girls laugh.

BRUNETTE GIRL  
No idiot, into the Alpha Sigs.

BLONDE GIRL  
They're the best.

REDHEAD GIRL  
Which dorm are you in?

PRUDY  
Uh... I forget the name...

BRUNETTE GIRL  
She's so shit-faced she doesn't know  
where she is.

BLONDE GIRL  
(nodding to the  
brunette)  
Marissa's the favorite to get in.

Prudy takes a closer look at the brunette, who looks away.

PRUDY  
Marissa? Marissa Gaylord?

BLONDE GIRL  
Oh my God, do you know each other?

PRUDY  
Prudy Caraway. Jesuit Prep?

BRUNETTE GIRL/MARISSA  
(forced)  
Oh wow, Prudy! It's been forever!

They hug, Prudy much tighter than Marissa wants.

MARISSA  
So how are you?

PRUDY  
Could be better. This is where we  
always wanted to go, remember?

MARISSA

Well, we made it. Where've you been all this time?

PRUDY

Away.

MARISSA

I heard you moved downtown.

PRUDY

No, just way out in the country.

Marissa eyes her suspiciously.

MARISSA

Yeah, right. So you girls wanna have some fun?

BLONDE GIRL

Yes!

MARISSA

Who wants some blow?

The girls look around, waiting for the first person to say yes. Prudy looks down.

BLONDE GIRL

OK, me!

The other girls nod in approval, except for Prudy.

MARISSA

OK, Prudy, what do you have?

The other girls look quizzically at Prudy.

PRUDY

Nothing, Marissa. C'mon.

MARISSA

Girls, Prudy's got the best shit in town. Always has. So how much, Prudy? My treat.

PRUDY

(in tears)

Shut up, I'm not into that.

MARISSA

Oh come on, it was your ticket to high style back in the day.

(MORE)

MARISSA (cont'd)

I remember one time she sold smack  
to the captain of the football team.  
The idiot jock bubbled that shit  
right on a bunsen burner in Chem  
Two. Lab partner turned him in.  
The rest was history, right Prudy?  
What'd you get, probation?

PRUDY

I SAID SHUT UP!

She slaps Marissa. Students in the area turn to watch.

MARISSA

(stung)

You're just as fucked as the rest of  
your family.

INT. MAIN ROOM

In sight of the girls, a brawl CRASHES through the dancing  
students. The rap music stops.

ASIAN MAN

C'mon, boys! Let's teach this  
motherfucking dealer a lesson!

Prudy runs away from the girls and fights her way through  
the crowd. She emerges in the front to see a BEEFY FRAT  
BROTHER shoving Jermaine to the floor.

Jermaine gets up and dives through the students to bolt out  
the front door. FRAT BROTHERS pursue him.

Prudy wedges her way through the door.

INT. SHELTER - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Watts shines a flashlight into one of the untouched rooms  
upstairs.

Suddenly a police baton slides under Watts' neck, pressing  
hard against his windpipe.

ZUKA

(in Watts' ear)

The man with the van.

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

The frat boys catch Jermaine and start kicking the shit out of him. They form a circle around him and jeer.

Prudy tries to force her way in, but she's pushed aside.

INT. SHELTER - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Watts flails violently as Zuka continues to suffocate him. Finally Watts is able to get his hands in between the baton and his neck.

WATTS  
(hoarsely)  
Money! Money!

EXT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

Prudy finally breaks through the circle.

PRUDY  
Stop! Stop!

She shields Jermaine from the blows, and the frat boys stop, surprised. She helps Jermaine stumble through the circle, and he finally gets his legs back.

The frat brothers watch them walk away.

ASIAN MAN  
We'll pay you when we want to pay  
you, asshole!

JERMAINE  
Gotta call your daddy?

The frat tear after them. Prudy and Jermaine race to the Mustang.

INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT

Jermaine and Prudy jump into the car. A bottle SMASHES against his window. Jermaine GUNS the engine and starts to drive away. More bottles CRASH against the back window.

INT. SHELTER - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Watts slumps to the ground, trying to breathe.

Zuka picks up Watts' flashlight and crowbar, looking curiously at them.

ZUKA

Talk.

INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Jermaine drives the Mustang in silence, blood dripping from a gash on his head.

Prudy watches the city lights pass by her window.

Jermaine takes off his long-sleeve shirt. The car SWERVES, but he quickly gets it in line. He opens the window and throws the shirt outside.

They continue to ride without a word.

Suddenly Prudy checks her pockets. Nothing. She finds her backpack in the back seat and rifles through it. She slams it down in frustration.

PRUDY

He took the keys.

She stares out the window for a few moments.

PRUDY

I... I don't have anywhere to go.

Jermaine continues to drive.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jermaine leads Prudy into his apartment, a basic one-bedroom place. Everything is surprisingly tidy.

PRUDY

You're right. It is clean.

JERMAINE

Take the bed.

PRUDY

Let me help you.

He shrugs her off and goes into the bathroom, SLAMMING the door.

INT. BEDROOM

Prudy enters the bedroom. The bed is made. She walks around the room, looking at posters of jets and the Air Force.

Exhausted, she lies down on the bed and shuts her eyes.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - MORNING

A loud KNOCK disturbs the quiet shelter.

D'Korr rolls a laundry cart into the lobby and parks it. He opens the front door to find Floyd standing with two muscle-bound WORKMEN.

FLOYD  
Good day again.

He holds a paper in front of D'Korr's face.

FLOYD  
I have authorization from the city  
to enter.

D'KORR  
For what?

FLOYD  
Let us through or I'll notify the  
police.

D'Korr steps aside, surprised.

FLOYD  
Right this way, boys.

He leads the workmen inside. They carry thick plywood boards and toolboxes.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Floyd points the workmen to the upstairs door.

FLOYD  
Seal it.

D'Korr races off.

The men replace the lock with a sturdier one. They fasten the boards to the door with powered nail guns and bolts.

Enraged, Zuka enters with D'Korr.

ZUKA  
What's this? What's going on?

FLOYD  
It's over. I've condemned the  
shelter.

ZUKA  
We had a deal!

Floyd looks at the workmen and then back at Zuka.

FLOYD  
I have no idea what you're talking  
about.

Zuka lunges at him and flattens him against the wall.

ZUKA  
These people will die on the street!

The workmen leap to pry Zuka off of him. D'Korr tries to help, but one of the men pushes him to the ground.

Floyd leans in close to Zuka.

FLOYD  
You don't have enough to play with  
the big boys.

Zuka attempts another lunge, but the men restrain him.

FLOYD  
I'd give you a week to move out, but  
c'mon, these are homeless people.  
How much stuff could they have? You  
got one day. Anyone left behind has  
to deal with the wrecking ball.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Floyd power-staples a large "CONDEMNED" sign to the front door. He leaves with his workmen.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Zuka and D'Korr watch them drive away.

D'KORR  
Goddammit. I'll get everyone to  
pack up their shit.

ZUKA

No.

D'KORR

C'mon, man. It's over.

ZUKA

(turning to D'Korr)

No. We're staying right here.

D'KORR

I ain't getting my head knocked off  
by no wrecking ball.

ZUKA

Men like him are driven only by money.  
We'll buy this shelter back.

D'KORR

Buy it back? With what?

ZUKA

Have a little faith in me. In the  
meantime, not a word about this to  
anyone.

He RIPS down the sign. He wads it into a ball and tosses it  
to D'Korr.

D'KORR

I ain't down with this, bro.

ZUKA

I thought you cared about these  
people.

Zuka leaves the room. D'Korr hesitates, then drops the ball  
into a nearby trash can.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Prudy slowly stirs. That was the best sleep she's had in a  
while. She smiles.

She turns to see a YOUNG BOY (4) standing next to the bed,  
staring at her. She bolts upright.

PRUDY

Who are you?!

The boy simply continues his stare.

In the next room, a HISPANIC WOMAN calls out for him.



HISPANIC WOMAN (O.S.)

JJ? JJ?

She soon appears at the doorway.

HISPANIC WOMAN

(in Spanish)

There you are, my little shrimp!

She starts to pick him up, but then she sees Prudy.

HISPANIC WOMAN

Oh... oh...

Jermaine appears at the doorway, groggy from sleep. He's in his boxers, and his wounds from last night are painfully visible.

JERMAINE

Cordelia, don't worry about it.

HISPANIC WOMAN/CORDELIA

Oh sorry, Mr. Jermaine! So sorry!  
I did not know.

She tries to lead the boy out, but Jermaine stops her.

JERMAINE

It's OK, it's OK. I'll take care of  
him.

CORDELIA

I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

INT. FOYER

Jermaine guides Cordelia to the front door.

JERMAINE

I should have told you earlier. I  
have company.

CORDELIA

So sorry, Mr. Jermaine.

JERMAINE

It's OK. Come back in one hour?

He holds up a finger and then points to his watch.

CORDELIA

Si, si, una hora.

JERMAINE

Thank you.

She exits the front door.

INT. BEDROOM

Jermaine comes back into the bedroom. Prudy lies on the edge of the bed holding her arms out toward the boy, but he stands still.

JERMAINE

I'm sorry about all this. I completely forgot he was coming over today.

PRUDY

It's OK. He's cute.

Jermaine slumps onto the bed.

JERMAINE

About last night...

PRUDY

Oh no!

The front of JJ's pants has turned dark and a small puddle has formed at his feet.

JERMAINE

JJ!

JJ starts crying. Jermaine stoops down and hugs him as Prudy watches. The boy burrows his head into Jermaine's shirt.

INT. BATHROOM

JJ sits in a bathtub full of bubbles, having a blast. Jermaine sits on the closed toilet seat as Prudy stands at the doorway.

JERMAINE

There's not much to tell. His mom OD'd when he was one. Cordelia keeps him with her, because I can't let the guys know. A weakness, you know.

PRUDY

Surely they wouldn't.

JERMAINE  
I've seen it happen.

They watch JJ play for a moment.

JERMAINE  
As much shit as I have to take, he keeps me going. Funny thing is I shouldn't even be here. I enlisted in the service, but they refused me. Won't take goddamn single parents. So here I am, leading a gang rather than flying planes.

(pauses)  
Look, I'm sorry about springing this on you. You can run like hell if you want.

PRUDY  
Why do you stay in the gang?

JERMAINE  
I keep telling myself I'm out after the next score. Trouble is the boss keeps raising the level.

Prudy continues to watch JJ.

PRUDY  
What if I told you I could get us out of here?

JERMAINE  
I'd say you're smoking what I'm selling.

PRUDY  
I'll see you later.

She leaves the bathroom.

JERMAINE  
Hey, wait!

JJ starts splashing waves of water over the tub. Jermaine hears the front door SLAM and shakes his head.

INT. DINER - DAY

Zuka sits at the counter, a glass of ice water in front of him. He glances around at the other PATRONS.

He hears the diner's front door close, and he turns around. Nobody. He turns his attention to his ice water.

CHAINS (O.S.)  
Time's up, Father.

Zuka jerks around, but Chains has already grabbed him by his collar. He drags Zuka to the kitchen.

INT. DINER - KITCHEN

Chains SLAMS Zuka against the wall. A FRY COOK AND WAITRESS nearby freeze and stare.

CHAINS  
You have the collections?

ZUKA  
No.

CHAINS  
Then why'd you fucking call me?  
What's wrong with you?

ZUKA  
Jermaine made the same comment about  
you, didn't he?

CHAINS  
You leave that shit alone. We need  
the goddamn payment today.

ZUKA  
I told you, I have no money.

CHAINS  
Then give me the goddamn merchandise!

ZUKA  
It's gone.

Chains PUNCHES the wall with his fist.

CHAINS  
GODDAMMIT!

He forces Zuka to the ground and pulls out a gun. He moves his aim around the entryway, addressing the cook and waitress.

CHAINS  
GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!

They quickly exit the room. Chains trains the gun on Zuka.

ZUKA

It doesn't matter what you do. God forgives.

CHAINS

Shut the fuck up.

ZUKA

Why do you stay under Jermaine's heel? You know his heart's no longer in it.

CHAINS

Doesn't matter. We're already in the hole big time, a big thanks to you. We're all fucked.

ZUKA

So where is he this morning?

CHAINS

Shut up.

ZUKA

You don't know because he left with the girl, the one from the shelter. While you're hard at work collecting.

Chains lowers his gun.

ZUKA

This is a time for new blood. A new leader.

CHAINS

What the fuck are you saying?

ZUKA

I know where great wealth can be found. Find it in front of your friends, and you're the hero.

CHAINS

Bullshit, I don't believe you.

ZUKA

If we find this treasure, it's yours. But either way, I'll make sure that Jermaine... steps down.

Chains considers this.

CHAINS

So where do I start?

ZUKA  
It starts with the girl.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Prudy stoops behind an old car as she looks at Watts' van across the street. She then watches an oncoming police car pass.

After the police car turns the corner, Prudy bounds toward the van.

She tries all the door handles. Locked.

PRUDY  
Watts, goddammit! Let me in!

She peers through the passenger window but sees nobody. She SLAMS her fist against the metal door.

A hand grips her from behind. She whirls around to see D'Korr.

PRUDY  
Shit! You scared me!

D'KORR  
What the hell's going on, Prude?

PRUDY  
Nothing, just waiting for someone.

D'KORR  
Looks to me like you're hiding from someone.

PRUDY  
Don't worry about it.

D'KORR  
You're right, I shouldn't worry about you. Got my own problems. Like the goddamn city making us hit the streets.

PRUDY  
What are you talking about?

D'KORR  
The shelter. It's condemned. Thanks to whatever the fuck you did upstairs.

PRUDY  
Are you serious?

D'Korr just glares at her.

PRUDY  
Oh my God. I had no idea.

She slumps against the van.

PRUDY  
You have to believe me, there's a  
good reason for all this.

D'KORR  
Yeah? Well just know we ain't your  
problem anymore. Goddamn Zuka has a  
plan.

PRUDY  
Oh shit, he's still there?

D'KORR  
He's doing a lot more than you to  
save those people.

PRUDY  
Don't trust him, D'Korr.

D'KORR  
(pauses)  
I know, there's something not quite  
right with that cat.

PRUDY  
I need to go back up there, D'Korr.

D'KORR  
Good luck with that shit. City's  
shut it down real tight.

PRUDY  
It's not just about me anymore, you  
know.

D'KORR  
So what's up there anyway?

PRUDY  
It's something I have to do by myself.

D'KORR  
You're a tough nut too, you know.

D'Korr shrugs.

D'KORR  
Guess I don't need my tools anymore,  
do I?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Prudy sneaks around the back corner of the alley, past a bunch of KIDS skipping jump rope. She carries her backpack and lugs D'Korr's toolbox.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

Using all her strength, Prudy tries to hoist herself up the fire escape ladder. She's not strong enough. She grits her teeth and her arms shake.

Finally she makes it onto the platform.

She hurries up the fire escape to the second floor and stops at one of the boarded-up windows. She pulls a small crowbar out of the toolbox and tries to pry open the board. It doesn't budge.

She climbs the stairs to the next level and kicks the board. It moves a little.

She grabs an overhead bar on the fire escape and swings herself against the board. THUMP! A corner of the board loosens.

She continues her swings as the fire escape GROANS and CREAKS. Finally the board POPS loose. She cautiously climbs through the window.

INT. SHELTER - 3RD FLOOR ROOM - DAY

Prudy TUMBLES inside, narrowly missing the exposed nails on the board.

She pulls the toolbox through the window and runs out of the room.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy races down the hallway with her flashlight revealing the floorboards in front of her.



Suddenly the floor opens into blackness, a chasm caused by the collapsed beam below. She stops short of the hole, but the water-ravaged floor falls apart underneath her feet, plummeting her downward.

She grasps the edge of a doorframe at the last second. The toolbox tumbles out of her hand and CRASHES to the floor below.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

D'Korr hears the CRASH above him as he walks down the hallway. He stops, puzzled.

He then pokes his head into a nearby room and sees Sadie quietly packing her things into grocery bags.

D'KORR  
(hushed)  
C'mon, hurry up.

Sadie nods and picks up the pace.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy clings to the doorframe.

PRUDY  
Oh God...

The rotted boards start to give away underneath her. She puts her flashlight in her teeth and uses both hands to pull herself up, but she's losing ground.

Finally she gets to a stronger section of the floor. She climbs out of the chasm and catches her breath.

She finds a narrow strip of floor against the hallway wall and slowly edges her way forward. She makes it across.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

D'Korr leads Sadie and other residents down the hall, each of them with sacks of their belongings.

Abe stands in the doorway of his room as they pass.

ABE  
Damn fools, all you. Ain't nowhere  
to go out there.

D'KORR  
You'll have no choice tomorrow.

ABE  
The preacher man'll come through.  
You'll see.

D'Korr leaves him and continues down the hall.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy finds the toolbox and starts collecting the scattered tools.

INT. 2ND FLOOR ROOM

Prudy picks up a hammer that had bounced into one of the rooms. Her flashlight reveals a figure hunched in the corner of the room.

She slowly creeps toward the person.

PRUDY  
Hey you.

No answer. She tosses the hammer by the figure, but it doesn't flinch.

She gets close enough to reach the body, and she gives it a quick poke. It falls sideways to reveal the face: Watts.

INT. ENTRYWAY

The entryway is empty. D'Korr quickly leads the residents to the door and opens it.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Zuka sits on the steps in front of the shelter. He turns to see D'Korr and the residents with their bags.

ZUKA  
Going somewhere?

D'Korr sees cars pulling up in front the shelter, on both sides of the street. Gang members exit the cars carrying crowbars, sledgehammers, and other tools.

Chains appears and motions them toward the shelter, and they follow him.

INT. SHELTER - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Zuka leads the gang into the shelter, pushing aside D'Korr and the residents.

D'KORR  
(to Zuka)  
What the hell's going on?

Zuka brushes past him to talk to Chains.

ZUKA  
Find the girl?

CHAINS  
She'll find us, sooner or later.

He nods toward Jermaine, who has just entered the shelter.

JERMAINE  
Z-man! Holding out on us? What's  
this about a big score?

INT. RESTORED ROOM

Prudy arrives at her old room empty-handed. She turns on the battery-powered lantern.

Prudy searches the room frantically, dumping out drawers and boxes.

PRUDY  
Give me something, Mom!

She pulls a framed award off the wall. OUTSTANDING STUDENT, 8TH GRADE. She smashes it against the dresser and bends it in half.

She notices a folded-up piece of paper inside.

She opens it and takes it to the day bed. She reads it as her father talks.

ROGER (V.O.)  
Tera. There was a time when our  
love would overcome this chaos, this  
weakness in my soul. I blame myself  
for the trouble that our daughter  
has found, and now my own troubles  
are coming to light. I've let you  
down.

(MORE)

ROGER (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Now I have one last thing to do, and  
it's the only way to save what we  
have. Just promise me you'll do  
what I could not: do something right.  
Goodbye.

Prudy folds the paper in half and is lost in thought. Tears  
well up in her eyes.

Suddenly she hears a loud THUMP from downstairs.

Another THUMP.

THUMP.

She dries her tears with the bedsheet. Then she notices the  
empty duffel bags lying on the floor.

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY

Two THUGS take turns POUNDING the sealed door with  
sledgehammers. Chains paces near Jermaine and Zuka.

CHAINS  
Goddammit, break that shit down!

THUG #1  
You fucking do this! It's just a  
teensy bit harder than breaking  
fucking legs!

Chains grabs the hammer from the thug and pushes him aside.  
Furiously, Chains swings at the door.

More thugs file into the crowded hallway with their tools.

Finally one of the boards breaks free.

THUG #2  
We're in, guys!

The two keep HAMMERING apart the door, splinters flying  
everywhere.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy stands still in the darkened hallway, her head dripping  
with sweat. She hears FOOTSTEPS climbing the stairs.

As soon as the first gang member enters, she blinds him with  
her flashlight.

It's Jermaine. He shields his eyes as Prudy steps back.

PRUDY

What-- what are you doing here?

JERMAINE

Prudy? What the hell's going on?

Gang members walk up behind him and fill the room with flashlight beams.

PRUDY

How could you? This money is mine!

JERMAINE

Yours? Why didn't you tell me? I had to find out from fucking Chains?

PRUDY

Does it matter? Call this off!

JERMAINE

This is a big fucking place, Prudy. I've brought a whole army to search. You're just one person.

Chains SMACKS Jermaine in the head with a gun. He crumples to the ground unconscious, blood flowing from a gash.

PRUDY

No!

Chains KICKS Jermaine's body. Prudy rushes to protect Jermaine.

ZUKA

(to Chains)

Stop this! We have work to do.

Zuka takes Prudy by the arm, forcefully.

ZUKA

Right above my head the whole time.

INT. UTILITY ROOM

D'Korr snaps open a long fuse box. An ARMED THUG trains a gun on him.

D'Korr searches for the right fuses, but no luck. He moves to the next fuse box and pops it open.

ARMED THUG  
Just turn the fucking lights on  
already!

D'Korr glares at him and continues to take his time.

The thug reaches over and starts flipping on all the fuses.

ARMED THUG  
Get out of my way.

D'KORR  
Don't!

The thug continues to flip switches.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

The lights sputter on overhead. Zuka continues to hold Prudy, who struggles mightily. Chains addresses the gang.

CHAINS  
Everyone, listen up! I want every  
goddamn room in this place torn apart.  
Every wall, every ceiling tile, every  
floor board. Everything goes. You  
find anything, tell me immediately.  
Get moving!

The gang files past Jermaine's limp body, spreading out into different rooms.

INT. RESTORED ROOM

Zuka guides Prudy into her old room, which is still illuminated by the lantern. Chains blocks the entrance, holding his sledgehammer.

ZUKA  
Your room, correct? A sanctuary  
from your past?

He walks around the room, inspecting the mess.

ZUKA  
I couldn't find anything of relevance  
here either. But it looks like you  
did a more thorough job.

PRUDY  
There's nothing here.

ZUKA

Contrary to what you must think, I don't care about the money. That's the difference between you and me. I'm just trying to save this shelter.

He picks up the shattered award.

ZUKA

You knew your mother better than anyone. There's some little detail inside your head, something insignificant until now. Your long-haired friend was convinced of this.

PRUDY

Where is he?

ZUKA

Perhaps he gave up.

PRUDY

Maybe he found the money.

ZUKA

Doubtful. Now think, Prudence. Where would your mother hide it?

PRUDY

Why would I tell you anything?

Zuka tosses the broken award in front of her.

ZUKA

Because it's time to do something right. But that's not in your nature, is it? You're just a girl who's afraid of herself. You want to run back to your past, and then you realize why you ran from it in the first place. Running here and there, never getting anywhere.

PRUDY

Then let me get out of here.

ZUKA

I punched your ticket already, but you decided to come back.

PRUDY

What are you talking about?

ZUKA

Your mother.

PRUDY

You didn't know her.

ZUKA

Oh, I think I knew her more than you know. Your mother was an obstacle to this shelter. Only an evil man rejects people for who they are. God does not discriminate. I did the right thing to ease her pain. She was in so much pain, and not just physical. You know that to be true.

PRUDY

You killed her.

ZUKA

Child, you know nothing of the world. Tragedy has taught me well. When the Hutu destroyed my church in Rwanda, I found a field for our worship. When they torched my house with my wife and child inside, I stood my ground and spat in their faces. They tried to drag me to the execution line, but I rose up against the so-called police and reversed my fate.

He produces the police baton.

ZUKA

A reminder of my strength. I realized at that point it doesn't matter what blood you have on your hands, as long as you're on the path to reach God. Because God... he forgives any sin.

He brushes the baton against Prudy's cheek.

ZUKA

Your mother was a sacrifice for the greater good. Now you can turn her evil into good by telling me what you know.

PRUDY

Go to hell.



ZUKA  
 (to Chains)  
 It's time you take the mantle from  
 Jermaine. Do what's necessary.

Chains turns to leave.

PRUDY  
 Stop!  
 (glaring at Zuka)  
 All right, I'll tell you. Will you  
 let me go?

ZUKA  
 You can run away as you please.

Prudy looks at the award on the floor for a moment.

PRUDY  
 "The last shall be first." The verse  
 downstairs, her favorite. Matthew  
 nineteen three.

ZUKA  
 Thirty, not three.  
 (thinking)  
 Three... three...  
 (to Chains)  
 Check the last room on the third  
 floor.

Chains leaves. Zuka then grabs hold of Prudy.

ZUKA  
 Let's go upstairs.

PRUDY  
 You said I could leave!

ZUKA  
 After we find the money.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Zuka and Prudy pass room after room. Thugs demolish each  
 room, POUNDING sledgehammers into the walls and RIPPING  
 boards apart with crowbars.

INT. STAIRWELL

Chains bolts up the stairs, two at a time. He exits to the  
 third floor.

Zuka and Prudy enter the same stairwell from the second level.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

Chains races down the hallway. He sees the chasm and leaps safely to the other side.

INT. MONEY ROOM

Chains enters the last room. He looks quickly around the empty room and then heads for the closet.

He opens the closet door, exposing the bare interior. He PLUNGES his sledgehammer into the back wall. Nothing.

He looks up at the ceiling. The tiles are missing.

He uses the shelves as footholds to climb up. He spots a large duffel bag, which he knocks to the ground.

He leaps down to unzip the bag. A row of Benjamin Franklin's stares back at him.

CHAINS

Holy shit.

INT. STAIRWELL

Halfway up the stairs, Prudy wrests herself away from Zuka's grip. He tries to grab her again.

INT. 2ND FLOOR ROOM

A gang member BASHES a wall with a sledgehammer. He connects with a support beam, splitting the old wood in two.

The room BUCKLES and the ceiling CAVES IN.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

The rooms on the right side of the hallway collapse with a huge CRASH toward the center of the shelter.

Sparks fly from exposed electrical wiring. Fires sprout up instantly, consuming the old wood with a vengeance.

INT. STAIRWELL

A deep RUMBLE shakes the stairwell. Plaster and ceiling tiles rain down on Prudy and Zuka.

Prudy gets hit by a board and TUMBLES down the stairs. Zuka keeps heading up, dodging the wreckage.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

Zuka races down the hallway as he avoids floorboards jutting into the air. Broken sprinkler pipes leak into harmless puddles of water. Thick smoke fills the corridor.

He arrives at the chasm. He deftly picks his way around the edge and makes it to the other side.

INT. STAIRWELL

Prudy stirs underneath the boards and unsteadily stands up. Blood flows from a long gash on her arm.

She gets her bearings and heads back to the second floor.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY

Zuka reaches Chains, who lies in a broken and bloodied heap. An uprooted floorboard protrudes through his chest. He struggles to lift his arm.

CHAINS  
(gurgling)  
Help me... help...

Zuka stands above him.

CHAINS  
Father... help me...

Zuka looks in the room next to him and notices the duffel bag.

INT. MONEY ROOM

Zuka sees the hundred-dollar bills in the duffel bag. He unzips the bag further and reaches in. He pulls out a long white sheet, the one from the day bed.

ZUKA  
No!

Another SHOCK rumbles through the building. Fire BLASTS inside the room, followed by a storm of debris that seals off the doorway.

In front of Zuka are heavy boards bolted to the window. He tries to pull them off with his bare hands.

He turns to face the oncoming fire.

Amidst the flames, ZUKA'S WIFE and SON hold hands and walk toward Zuka.

ZUKA

My son!

Zuka raises his arms for an embrace. The wife and son transform into ash as fire ravages the room and Zuka's body.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Prudy buries her nose under her shirt as she runs down the smoke-filled hallway. She dodges other gang members rushing out.

She finds Jermaine lying on the floor. She turns him onto his back, and he groans. He opens his eyes and looks at her, confused and in pain.

She helps him stagger up. Straining with all her might, she hauls him toward the stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL

Prudy helps Jermaine down the stairs. With six stairs to go, she stumbles. They CRASH to the floor below.

Smoke suffocates her lungs, preventing her from standing up. Flames BURST through the ceiling.

A figure appears in front of her, and he pulls her up. It's D'Korr. He looks at Jermaine.

D'KORR

(to Prudy)

Why don't you leave this asshole?

Prudy ignores him and struggles to pull Jermaine up. D'Korr decides to help and together they hoist him to his feet. All three of them leave the stairwell.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Prudy finally exits the front door with Jermaine and D'Korr. FIREFIGHTERS rush past them into the shelter. A LARGE CROWD has gathered in front of the shelter, which has smoke bursting from the boarded-up windows.

A HEAVYSET MAN comes to their aid.

HEAVYSET MAN  
Here, let me help you.

He takes Jermaine, who is semi-conscious now. Prudy succumbs to a coughing fit, and D'Korr helps her along. A PARAMEDIC comes to guide them down the steps.

Prudy looks around at the crowd gathered in front of the shelter as POLICEMEN try to push them back.

The paramedic leads her to a row of ambulances. Prudy suddenly realizes that the heavyset man has been taking Jermaine the opposite direction. She takes off toward them.

D'KORR  
Hey, where you going?

She dodges past the people in the crowd. She almost reaches Jermaine when a MUSCULAR GUY steps in front of her.

MUSCULAR GUY  
Time to walk away, sweetie.

Prudy steps back, confused. Then she sees the large man push Jermaine into a yellow Hummer.

PRUDY  
Jermaine!

The muscular guy grabs her. She fights back, but he grips her so hard that she can't move.

A deafening CRUNCH comes from the shelter as one of the floors collapses. Prudy watches firemen stumble out of the front door. One of them pushes aside a laundry cart that's on fire. Prudy stares at the cart.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Prudy rolls the cart to the laundry.

B) Prudy tells Jermaine outside the laundry, "My mom's known them for years."

C) Tera takes the bundle of floral sheets from the cart.

BACK TO SCENE

Prudy blinks. The muscular guy has relaxed his hold, distracted by the crash. With a burst of energy she breaks away from his grasp and bolts to the Hummer.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Hummer starts to pull out of its parking spot, but Prudy runs in front of the car. It stops with a SQUEAL.

The DRIVER rolls down the window.

DIVER  
Get outta my way, bitch!

PRUDY  
I want to make a deal!

DIVER  
What the fuck? Get outta the way!

PRUDY  
I need Jermaine.

DIVER  
He's dead, bitch.

Someone unseen speaks to the driver inside. After a few seconds, the driver pokes his head out again.

DIVER  
So whatcha got?

INT. DR. G'S LAUNDRY - DAY

Prudy enters the laundry, RINGING the door chime. She's a complete mess, blood mixed with soot. Two HEAVIES walk in behind her and take a quick look around.

Dr. G and Saeng are petrified behind the counter.

THE BOSS enters, a sharp-angled man with dreadlocks and a white suit. Another HEAVY drags in Jermaine with a gun pointed to his head.

Prudy walks to a cart against the far wall. The card on top reads "CARAWAY." She searches inside the sheets and produces a bundle of floral sheets wrapped with a satin bow.

She takes it to the counter and unwraps it. A brown paper package lies inside, and Prudy tears it open to reveal the hundred-dollar bills within.

PRUDY  
(to Dr.G)  
I've come for the rest.

Dr. G stares intently at Prudy. He then speaks in Lao as Saeng translates.

SAENG  
My father says your mother was a good woman. Misunderstood. Yet she was the only one who trusted in him to start this business.  
(pauses for Dr. G to speak)  
But she became scared, scared of the...

She glances at the thugs.

SAENG  
...influence in our neighborhood. She in turn trusted my father with her wealth.  
(pauses for Dr. G to speak)  
When you were ready, she asked him to give you this.

Dr. G reaches into his pocket and produces a small key. He gives it to Prudy. He then gives a nod to Saeng.

Saeng reaches under the counter. Immediately the heavies draw their guns. Scared, Saeng slowly reveals an accounting ledger.

Dr. G continues to speak in Lao.

SAENG  
My father says he kept excellent records with the bank. This is now yours.

As she hands the ledger to Prudy, she talks in a hushed voice.

SAENG  
Don't do this.

PRUDY  
It's not mine anyway.

Prudy gives the ledger to The Boss.

PRUDY  
One more condition. This family  
enjoys full protection indefinitely,  
free of charge.

The Boss opens the ledger, flipping through the pages. He then looks hard at Dr. G and then Prudy.

THE BOSS  
Agreed. The boy has one hour to get  
out of town. Permanently.

Prudy hands The Boss the safety deposit key.

JERMAINE  
Prudy, come with me.

PRUDY  
No. I can't run away this time.

She snaps off her necklace holding his ring and hands him both.

PRUDY  
You better hurry.

Jermaine stares at Prudy and then runs out of the laundry. The Boss and his heavies file out of the laundry as well.

Prudy is left standing in front of Dr. G and Saeng. Saeng smiles at her and starts crying.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Prudy walks slowly down the street to the shelter. Thick gray-white smoke forms a menacing cloud over the flaming hotel.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Prudy sees D'Korr among the crowd. He runs up to her and they embrace.

He leads her to an ambulance, where a paramedic starts to work on her.



EXT. SHELTER - LATER

Prudy and D'Korr lean back against a building across from the shelter, watching the firemen spray down the remaining embers. Prudy's arm is wrapped in gauze.

PRUDY  
I want to rebuild the shelter.

D'KORR  
You crazy? Look at this shit.

PRUDY  
Not literally. We'll find a different place.

D'KORR  
Prude, you ain't got no money. It's gone.

PRUDY  
You're right.

She pulls out something from her pocket and shows D'Korr. It's a key, complete with the plastic middle finger dangling from its keyring.

PRUDY  
But I have this.

INT. VAN - DAY

Complete darkness inside the van. There's a CLICK, and the back doors open wide to reveal Prudy and D'Korr standing outside.

EXT. VAN - DAY

They see all of Watts's editing equipment and loads of videotapes.

PRUDY  
I'll let you manage the new shelter on one condition.

D'KORR  
What's that?

PRUDY  
You figure this stuff out.

FADE TO BLACK

START CREDITS

As the ending credits roll, a series of news reports are displayed.

INT. CNN STUDIO - DAY

A CNN REPORTER delivers a news report.

CNN REPORTER  
The documentary about Prudence Caraway  
is sweeping the Cannes film festival.

EXT. CANNES - DAY

News footage shows Prudy walking by a row of REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN. She's shy, but she looks pretty and she smiles.

CNN REPORTER (V.O.)  
Ms. Caraway is rumored to be the  
front-runner for the coveted Palm  
d'Or award.

INT. LARRY KING STUDIO - NIGHT

LARRY KING interviews Prudy, who looks stunning and confident.

LARRY KING  
Joining us today is Prudence Caraway,  
author of the best-selling book "House  
of Hope." A riches-to-rags story,  
well, now back again to riches.

EXT. NEW SHELTER - MORNING

MATT LAUER stands next to Prudy and D'Korr in front of a new homeless shelter. Prudy cuts a large red ribbon.

MATT LAUER  
There you have it. Prudy Caraway  
has opened an impressive new homeless  
shelter in downtown Chicago. Welcome  
to "Tera's Home."

Prudy hugs D'Korr.

END CREDITS

FADE OUT