

9 1 1

by
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BLACK.

Emerging from SILENCE, a FRANTIC WOMAN'S voice...

FRANTIC (V.O.)

...No -- please -- oh god, somebody --
don't let me die --

(fading)

Please... Please...

SMASH UP:

A METALLIC SEA

Steel cables. Coiled towers. Hundreds of telephone
transformers. BUZZING with ELECTRICAL CHARGE. WE FIND a
line of cable and ANOTHER PANICKED VOICE --

PANICKED (V.O.)

...Help -- somebody's in my house --
I can hear 'im downstairs -- hell do
I do??...

Then ANOTHER, ANOTHER. A FLOOD OF DISTRESSED VOICES --

CRYING BOY (V.O.)

...My daddy -- he fell down, he's
not moving -- think he stopped
breathing...

CALL AFTER CALL travels the lines as WE SPIRAL from pole to
pole, SPEEDING INTO the sprawling city of cables beyond...

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

ARRIVING ALONG a line... An isolated junction. Late. Dark.
Spattering of warehouses, low-end shacks. WE DESCEND from a
pole, RUNNING THE LENGTH of a sagging cable, INTO...

A PHONE BOOTH

Graffiti and rust. Through the murky glass, the empty road.
WE WAIT... SILENCE... Broken by --

THE THRASHING CHORDS of hard rock -- A GUNNING ENGINE -- a
beat-up Honda haphazardly throttling out of darkness --

HEADLIGHTS FLASH across a COYOTE frozen in the road --

The Honda SCREECHES across the yellow lines, swerves out of
control -- jumps a curb -- metal, glass SHATTER -- careening
over an embankment -- plunging into a murky reservoir...

Finally, a stirring from the bobbing vehicle. A teen, KIM,
pulls herself from the carnage, tumbling out the window.

Blood spills from her head, a disoriented stagger in the waist-high water. She FOCUSES...

Stumbles her way up the embankment to the booth. Quaking, bloody fingers clutch the receiver and dial...

9...1...1

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - SAME

A kaleidoscope of lights adorn a state-of-the-art computerized switchboard. A RED BLIP flashes -- WE SPEED DOWN the console, PAST a cluster of wires INTO a warehouse-sized call center.

WE FIND a wire through the maze, TRACKING IT through cubicles TO the headset of a PORTLY OPERATOR --

PORTLY

911, please state your emergency.
..... I'm sorry, miss, I'm having
trouble hearing you...

His computer monitor reveals an instant address TRACE --

PORTLY

Hello...? If this isn't an emergency--

He goes white. Stands, his solemn face gazing over cubicles --

PORTLY

Nicole! Patch sixteen -- hurry --

An operator across the way. NICOLE BAKER. Thirty, pretty, glint of optimism beneath seen-it-all eyes. Wrapping up a call, catches Portly's grave stare. Unusual, she patches in --

NICOLE

911, go ahead?

KIM (OVER HEADSET)

Ni...cole...

NICOLE

Kim??

(sighs)

What are you doing calling this line?
And where the hell's my car -- you
don't even have a license --

KIM (OVER HEADSET)

(weak; tears)

I'm -- cold... Hurts...

NICOLE

Wha? Kim, did -- something happen?
Are you alright??

Nicole works the computer, the TRACE POPS UP. Precinct, ambulatory jurisdiction alongside. Grids and maps.

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
(slurring)
I didn't see him... In the road...
I'm...tired...

NICOLE
Oh my god -- have you been in an accident?

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
It won't stop -- the blood...

Nicole frantically toggles her headset --

NICOLE
Base 168, respond Code 4 to 3rd and Benson Boulevard, Code 4 --
(toggles)
Kim, what's bleeding -- talk to me --

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
(dazed)
My head -- I can't -- see... Have a geometry test tomorrow...

The radio CRACKLES --

AMBULANCE 168 (OVER HEADSET)
Dispatch, 2120 is mobile Code 4 to 3rd and Benson.

NICOLE
2120 -- got a fifteen-year-old car accident victim--
(off monitor)
Shit --

Nicole clicking through TRAFFIC GRIDS, STREET-CAMS --

NICOLE
DTS is reporting a freeway SIG alert -- advise 12th Avenue -- and hurry goddammit -- it's my sister!
(toggles)
Kimmy, an ambulance is on the way -- keep talking, keep talking --
(toggles)
933 Dispatch for police units in Grid 3-Delta --
(toggles)
Kimmy, are you there? Kimmy?!

Top of her lungs. Heads peer over cubicles, raised brows.

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
I need to...lie down...

NICOLE
No -- stay awake, Kim -- let's work
on that geometry together, okay --
what's that one I can never pronounce --
the Pythagowhatsit Theorem?

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
(weak)
Sorry...that I took your car...

NICOLE
Sweetheart, don't you worry about
that now --

AMBULANCE 168 (OVER HEADSET)
Dispatch, request directions to Jenson
street --

NICOLE
Benson, it's Benson, dammit --

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
...I -- screwed up...

Kim's voice weak, trembling. Trailing...

NICOLE
Wha? No, you didn't screw anything
up --
(toggles)
933 for any mobile police -- hello --
where the hell are you??

KIM (OVER HEADSET)
Sorry... Don't be mad...

A MUFFLED FALL. And SILENCE.

NICOLE
Kim -- Kimmy??

The line goes QUIET but for the rustling of WIND. FROGS.
CRICKETS. But no Kim.

INT. ROADSIDE PHONE BOOTH - SAME

Kim on the ground, her bloody fingers clutching the receiver.

WE FLOAT FROM HER BODY...UP the booth...UP the cable from
which we came. WITHDRAWING along the ELECTRICALLY CHARGED
line into a sea of telephone poles beyond...

FADE TO:

TWO MONTHS LATER

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Rims whirring, motor humming as a scooter weaves through lunch hour traffic. Wind in her hair, Nicole speeds through the streets. Focused, intense, checking her watch.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Your typical urban YMCA. Nicole pulling up on her scooter.

SLEEPLESS (PRE LAP)

...It's the jokes that kill me. She was the only one that really got 'em. She'd laugh so hard, like we were really connecting on a level that nobody else could touch, ya know?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A circle of chairs in a gym. Half-a-dozen MEN and WOMEN. Clenched handkerchiefs, raw emotions as they listen to the confessor of the moment. A SLEEPLESS twentysomething young man struggling with it:

SLEEPLESS

Now I got all these jokes. And no one to tell.

(then)

We were gonna get married. Have a life. The whole dog and picket fence deal.

Tears. Hard time. Consoling eyes from others. Except for Nicole. Gaze out the window. A discreet glance at her watch.

SLEEPLESS

(cracking)

The way she looked at me. Can't find that kinda love twice. And I don't really know what to do. I'm confused. Angry. We were meant to be together. But. Now. I don't know what I'm meant for.

Spent. A moment before the social worker, LORRAINE, offers:

LORRAINE

Dan. After being entwined in someone else's life for so long, sometimes
(MORE)

LORRAINE (CONT'D)
 we just need time before we can get
 back in touch with our own life...
 (then)
 Anyone else like to offer any thoughts
 today?

Nicole wishes she was invisible. Pulling teeth:

LORRAINE
 Nicole? Tomorrow's the big day isn't
 it?
 (a nod)
 Well, you want to talk about it?

No. Fuck no.

NICOLE
 Sure. I...feel good. I mean, thanks
 to this group. Made a lot of progress
 and like ya said -- gotta focus on
 the road ahead, not the rear-view
 mirror. Just last week, I packed up
 her room. Took all the posters down.
 Disconnected her phone line. Threw
 out her Ding Dongs from the pantry.
 (then)
 I've got a job to get back to and a
 life to get on with.
 (then)
 I feel good.

Incredulous eyes. Total disconnect.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Ancient trees, cyclone fences. Lower-middle class brownstone.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Modest furnishings yearning to be more. Immaculate order.
 Nary a dish in the sink. Darkness but for a DULL GLOW down
 the hall. WE CREEP TOWARD IT, ARRIVING IN...

KIM'S ROOM

Untouched. Super-model posters and magazine cut-outs on the
 wall, thrift store chic clothes scattered about. And the
 GLOW: a small fish tank inhabited by a pair of tiger barbs.

NICOLE
 What're you looking at? Fed ya an
 hour ago.

Nicole, on the floor with a jug of merlot, working on a silver wrapper. Ding Dongs. A bite and a swig. Quiet.

NICOLE

Alright alright -- pipe down, sushi.

She drops a crumble of chocolate into the tank. Piranha on meat. The evening's amusement.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Drunken hands fumble for pill bottles in the medicine cabinet. Get ahold of the Valium. She swallows one down with wine.

SNOWDEN (PRE LAP)

How have you been sleeping?

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Claustrophobic grey room. Nicole white-knuckling a chair before a paunchy interrogator. MILES SNOWDEN. Forty, beady eyes, smoker's wrinkles. File before him.

NICOLE

Like a log. Never been a problem for me.

SNOWDEN

No sleeping aides? Any other medications?

NICOLE

Just a multivitamin every morning.

He sizes her up. Adversarial? A history?

SNOWDEN

I see that you completed the suggested therapy sessions. That's good. Feel you're ready to go back on the line?

NICOLE

Ready as ever.

SNOWDEN

Good, we're all happy to have you back. I'm happy.

NICOLE

So...that's it?

SNOWDEN

Actually. I did want to run a few ECOT scenarios. If you don't mind.

NICOLE
(stiff upper lip)
Shoot.

He clicks a stopwatch, reads from a sheet --

SNOWDEN
Two simultaneous calls -- injured
female reporting a domestic violence
situation, adolescent male amidst an
apartment fire. In what order do
you dispatch?

NICOLE
Fire. The life of many versus the
life of one.

SNOWDEN
Drive-by shooting victim calls needing
ambulatory care...in Spanish.

NICOLE
Estableceria claramente su
localizacion y enviaria la ambulancia
mas cercana.

SNOWDEN
In Chinese.

NICOLE
I'd search the active roster for a
translator.

SNOWDEN
There are none.

NICOLE
Then I'd patch in Madame Chow's across
the street from my apartment. Ling
Mei speaks fluent Cantonese.

Trumped, he smirks. She grins. So he improvises:

SNOWDEN
Female teen calls in. Been in an
auto accident, car's in the drink.
Massive bleeding. She's having
trouble breathing.

Her cheeks flush. The room closes in on her.

SNOWDEN
Clock's ticking. You're going to
lose her.

NICOLE
Why are you doing this?

SNOWDEN

Are you unable to complete the call?

She's frozen. TICK, TICK, TICK...

SNOWDEN

Are you unable to complete the call?

NICOLE

(finally)

Locate position. Dispatch Code 04
ambulance, Code 03 police.

He clicks the stopwatch. He's done. But she's still in it:

NICOLE

(temper)

And if I'd known it would take so long, I would've scoured the damn grid, found the YMCA two blocks up and rushed a lifeguard over to perform CPR.

Now she's done. Bitter. Regret. Then:

SNOWDEN

Nicole. If you're experiencing some residual anger or grief, we can --

NICOLE

I lost my father when I was fourteen, my mother when I was eighteen. Had to raise my kid sister when I was practically a kid myself. So I've played the "grief" game before -- don't really need you as a coach.

SNOWDEN

I'm simply doing my job. How can I write up that you're fit to go back out there if you're not prepared for the extreme?

Tension. A definite history here. He shakes his head --

NICOLE

Can I go back to work or not?

SNOWDEN

Hate me all you want. I suppose it's better to take out your emotions on me than a caller.

(then)

Yes, you can go back to work.

So out she goes. He eyes her.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

WALTER CORNING (50s) limps through cubicles, Nicole in tow. Ex-cop, dry, walks with a cane faster than most without.

CORNING

Good to have you back, lady. Running out of familiar faces around here...

Passing deadpan OPERATORS taking life or death calls like widget orders. Caffeine, nicotine patches and stress toys.

CORNING

Back in good old shoebox 56, just like you left her --

Arriving at her cubicle. Emergency print-outs, municipal phone numbers, and a tidy wall of photographs.

CORNING

Got Darryl to your left, Marisela to your right.

DARRYL, MARISELA nod hello's amidst calls.

NICOLE

What happened to Tony and--

CORNING

He cracked on a 311, froze on the line. Abby quit.
(checks watch)
You good to go?

No. But she nods. He offers a smile, leaves. She eases in, feeling various locky-loo eyes. Tentatively collects her headset as her gaze drifts to Kim on the wall.

Memories: A mother and father, two daughters. And then just the girls: Nicole and Kim through the years.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

How's my girl, first day of school?

MAGGIE WILLIS, hurrying in. Twenties, vintage-fashion, mischievous eyes. Puts comforting arms around her.

NICOLE

Ready for recess.

Maggie pulls out a thermos. Fills it with a Red Bull.

MAGGIE

So Dr. Shrinker give ya a passing grade?

NICOLE

Kicking and screaming the whole way.

MAGGIE

Your own damn fault -- if you woulda
just bent over the Xerox machine
like he wanted...

She pours another Red Bull. And another. Another.

NICOLE

Good. You've cut down on the coffee.

MAGGIE

Doc's orders. Said if I ever wanted
to see the stage at Carnegie Hall,
had to clean up my act.

(heads on)

Break a leg, hon.

Maggie blows a kiss, heads down the rows. Nicole takes a
breath, here goes. Trembling fingers patch into the board --
WHAM, the URGENT RING of a line assaults her, FLASHING LIGHT --

She's frozen. Beyond, Corning pretends not to watch.

NICOLE

911. Uh, please -- state your
emergency.

CALLER (OVER HEADSET)

I need -- help --

NICOLE

Go ahead, sir.

The TRACE WINDOW pops up an address.

CALLER (OVER HEADSET)

He's stuck -- in the trash compactor --

NICOLE

Who's stuck, sir?

CALLER (OVER HEADSET)

Jimmy -- he's wedged in -- oh no --

She fumbles with the keyboard, medical codes on display.

NICOLE

Is he conscious, sir?

CALLER (OVER HEADSET)

He's trying to get out -- scratching --
clawing --

NICOLE
Clawing? Sir, is Jimmy human?

CALLER (OVER HEADSET)
Wha? No, he's my ferret -- is the ambulance coming??

NICOLE
Sir, 911 is reserved for human emergencies only. You need to call Animal Services, 555-3734.

CLICK. She exhales, one down. Until... RING --

NICOLE
911, please state your emergency.

An odd ELECTRONIC HISS over the line --

NICOLE
Hello? Is anyone there?

A WHISPERY, FEMININE VOICE struggles to speak:

WHISPER (OVER HEADSET)
.....help...me.....

NICOLE
I'm here -- what kind of help do you need?

The TRACE cycles through ERRATIC NUMBERS.

WHISPER (OVER HEADSET)
...I...don't...want...to...die...

Finally, the trace locks: 8342 SYCAMORE DRIVE.

NICOLE
You're not going to die--

The ELECTRONIC HISS WARBLES -- LOUDER, LOUDER -- then, CLICK. DIAL TONE. Eerie. The call gone, and with it the trace address. Unsettled, Nicole toggles to dispatch --

NICOLE
Police units 821, call 933 Dispatch, Code 04. FMT-821, respond Code 4 --

POLICE (OVER HEADSET)
821-16, go ahead --

NICOLE
Take a 222, female caller in distress at 8342 Sycamore Drive -- caller indicates life or death situation --

POLICE (OVER HEADSET)
10-4, mobile.

Anxious, she glances over to Darryl -- gone, bathroom break.
Steals his stress ball and starts squeezing. Hard.

SMASH TO:

LIGHTS AND SIRENS

screech through middle class ramblers -- a police cruiser
skids to a curb -- a pair of UNIFORMED cops storm up to --

8342 SYCAMORE DRIVE

Modest, well-kept. The Unis creep for the front door --
until -- A SHRIEK -- behind the house -- guns drawn, they
race around the side -- barreling through a gate into --

BACKYARD

TO REVEAL...a casual dinner party -- a WOMAN SHRIEKING with
laughter -- freezing at the sight of the city's armed finest.

INT. 8342 SYCAMORE DRIVE - DUSK

One of the Uniforms with the TOMBOY owner of the house.
Late thirties, self-sufficient, pissed --

TOMBOY
...What, that jarhead across the
street set this up?? Well we're not
doin' anything wrong -- sorry that
my "tendencies" offend him so.

UNIFORM
No, ma'am. As I said, a 911 call
from this address--

TOMBOY
911 my ass -- anyone here look like
they're in need of a pair of gun-
happy cowboys?

Uni glances outside: a couple of FEMALE COUPLES. Innocuous.

UNIFORM
Any kids in the house? Possibly a
prank --

TOMBOY
You see any kids?

UNIFORM
Anybody else reside here?

TOMBOY

Yeah, Sheba. Maybe she called?

She indicates the fat Siamese on the couch. The Uni sighs as his partner reappears from a search, all clear. Head scratcher.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - SAME

Nicole on a call --

NICOLE

...sir, were you able to get a license plate number?

UNIFORM (OVER HEADSET)

821-16 for Dispatch 933.

NICOLE

(toggles)

Unit 821, please hold.

She dumps the call to an OVERFLOW PATCH for calls on hold --

ANGLE - SUPERVISOR STATION

Corning at a bank of monitors. Nicole's RE-DIRECTED CALL FLASHES on the screen. He patches in --

CORNING

821-16, this is overflow, go ahead.

INTERCUT - 8342 SYCAMORE

Uniform on his car radio --

UNIFORM

Yeah, we got a bit of a mystery on our hands...

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - TECH CENTER - LATER

A knock at the door -- Nicole enters:

NICOLE

You rang?

Corning and VIJAY, a twentysomething techie. Indian, wheelchair-bound, 20 gigabytes of attitude. Beyond, a massive wall of mainframes.

CORNING

Yeah. You recall dispatching P/A to an 8342 Sycamore about an hour ago?

NICOLE

Sure, weird call.

CORNING

So it seems. I took your overflow -- police unit called back in to report an All Clear at the address, resident claiming she never made the call.

NICOLE

Huh. Prank?

CORNING

What I thought. Until I couldn't find a record of the trace in your archives.

He types the address into a computer: NO RECORD FOUND.

CORNING

Weirder still. So I came back here and asked Vijay to play me the incoming call...

His cue, Vijay works a digital playback console --

VIJAY

Here is the tail of your first call, at 6:06 --

NICOLE (ON TAPE)

...You need to call *Animal Services*, 555-3734.

Corning stops the player. She offers:

NICOLE

Yeah, it was the next call, came in about a second later.

CORNING

Okay. Well here's what's on the tape a second later...

Vijay plays the tape: DEAD AIR. SILENCE. NOTHING.

CORNING

And two seconds, three seconds...
There's nothing there.

NICOLE

Wha? That's impossible -- she asked for help -- said, "I don't want to die..."

CORNING

"I don't want to die?"
(then)
So it was a female?

NICOLE

I -- believe so -- the line was full
of static -- she was whispering --
(then)
This isn't right -- there has to be
something on that tape.

VIJAY

Oh there is something on the tape.
(re: screen timer)
Starting right...about...now --

NICOLE (ON TAPE)

Police units 821, call 933 Dispatch,
Code 04.
(toggles)
EMT-821, respond Code 4...

POLICE UNIT (ON TAPE)

821-16, go ahead --

NICOLE

That's the dispatch I sent out. So --
where's the incoming call?

VIJAY

Sorry, but... There is no record of
the call in the log.

NICOLE

So what are you saying -- that I
just imagined it?!

Silence. Awkward. Finally:

CORNING

There didn't seem to be anything
wrong at the address you provided.

NICOLE

Well -- maybe the trace brought up
the wrong address -- or maybe your
damn computer imagined it --

CORNING

Easy, nobody's implying anything.

No? Nicole vulnerable, insulted. Corning saves --

CORNING

Hey, I can barely get my George
Foreman grill to cook through the
middle -- who knows what gremlins
are running around in this overgrown
Atari. What say we just call it a
day, put this behind us?

Vijay steams. Nicole steams.

EXT. 12TH PRECINCT - DUSK

Outside the Dispatch Center and adjoining police precinct, Nicole hops on her scooter and speeds away.

Pauses. Troubled. Turns around, heads the opposite way...

EXT. CITY STREETS - DUSK

Knuckles clenched, furrowed brow -- Nicole intense on the scooter, weaving in and out of cars --

EXT. 8342 SYCAMORE DRIVE - DUSK

Nicole. Parked half-a-block up. Just staring at the familiar house. 8342 Sycamore. Quiet, still. Puzzled, she just stares intently -- until --

A BLAST OF LIGHT in the eyes startles her -- followed by a NEIGHBOR'S HORN -- HEADLIGHTS --

BURSTING US INTO --

A SPOTLIGHT

DESCENDING to a small stage. A blue note club. A hip jazz ensemble before a half-empty audience. On the trumpet, Maggie. Oozing into her horn; sensual, where she belongs.

Nicole watches from the entrance. There but not there.

INT. BLUE'S CLUB - LATER

House music, the club thinning. Glassy-eyed, Nicole absentmindedly stirs her drink.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Hey, straggler...

Maggie saddling up with her trumpet case. Sees the empty glasses on the table. Knowing.

MAGGIE

She'd be proud of you, ya know.
Gettin' back on the horse.

NICOLE

Don't put a pretty bow on it like everyone else. She resented every minute I was there and not at her

Field hockey game or choir performance...

MAGGIE

She knew you were doin' it for her.

NICOLE

Save it, Mags. We both know she hated me the day I became the "Legal Guardian" 'til the day she stormed off in that car and...

Silence. Long day. Long month. Maggie tries:

MAGGIE

She was a teenager. She was supposed to hate you.

NICOLE

You're supposed to hate your mother. But your big sister? You're supposed to -- I don't know -- idolize, steal make-up from, ask about the pill...

MAGGIE

She did idolize you, Nic. And that's an unbiased observation, not puttin' a pretty bow on it like everybody else.

Maggie waits for a nod. Nicole begrudgingly submits.

MAGGIE

You still eatin' those Ding Dongs in the dark?

NICOLE

'Course not. No.

MAGGIE

(knows better)
Well. I gotta help load the gear. You need anything -- seriously, hon -- you pick up that phone.

Nicole smiles. Touched. Maggie heads off.

NICOLE

Hey, Maggie? You're good up there. Really good.

MAGGIE

Yeah?

NICOLE

Yeah.

Favor returned, Maggie smiles. Heads on, bounce in her step.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The last of the Ding Dongs crush into the trash. Nicole hovering above.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - NIGHT

THE GLOW from the fish tank piercing the dark... Nicole in the doorway, determined. Moves to a Gisele Bundchen poster on the wall. Tentatively removes a pushpin, revealing a splattered glossy RED STAIN on the wall. A smile.

KIM (O.S.)

Stop -- that totally tickles!

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - FLASHBACK

Nicole painting a squirming Kim's toenails.

NICOLE

I'm totally sorry.

Laughing, Nicole moves in for another round of torture.

KIM

Seriously!

Kim jerks her foot, knocks the bottle free -- a splatter of RED hits the wall. SISTERLY GIGGLING ECHOES...

BACK TO SCENE

Nicole struggles with it. But continues, taking down the room. Pauses. A backpack. School papers. A geometry book.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - FLASHBACK

Nicole tidying up the teen Lornado. Comes upon something hidden in a drawer.

KIM (O.S.)

The hell are you doing in here?

NICOLE

Shoving it in a drawer won't make it go away.

She holds a geometry test, F. At the door, Kim snatches it --

KIM

Fine, how 'bout you just go away!

NICOLE

This the only one? Or are there more?

KIM

Guess you'll find out at "parent"-teacher conference.

NICOLE

Kim --

KIM

Why don't you quit trying to make me something I'm not. I suck at math -- BFD, I'll buy a calculator.

NICOLE

And how'll you afford one when you're unemployed because you couldn't even get into college?

KIM

College? What-ever. Just 'cause you didn't go doesn't mean I have to for you. Got other plans, thanks.

NICOLE

Not as long as you're living here you don't.

KIM

Fine --

She storms out -- slams the front door behind her. Nicole reels. Exhales, regret.

A SCREECH -- Nicole reacts -- races to the window -- the Honda skidding down the street --

NICOLE

Dammit -- Kim! KIM!

BACK TO SCENE

Nicole, emotion. But shakes it -- boxing items. Angrily switches off the GLOWING FISH TANK LIGHT. Peels teenage rebellion stickers from the glass. Moves on.

But WE HOLD on the PowerPuff phone on the nightstand...

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nicole on the cordless PowerPuff phone, dumping a box at the front door --

NICOLE
 ...no, not the main phone line, this
 is the second line -- it was in my
 sister's room...

As she turns for another box in Kim's room, STATIC OVERTAKES THE PHONE. Exiting the room, the STATIC DISAPPEARS.

NICOLE
 No, I don't want a discount, just
 disconnect it. ... Today, right
 now --

She freezes. Backsteps toward Kim's room. STATIC HISSING.
 Eying the webcam on Kim's computer -- did it just move?!

She peers into it. Imagining things? Then realizes --

THE GLOW. The fish tank light is back on. A chill. She
 slowly backs out. The STATIC DISSIPATES.

NICOLE
 Hello? ... Yes, I'm still here.
 Yeah, tonight's fine...

Hangs up. Stares at the tank, the phone. Weird. Turns off
 the glow. Again.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Late. WE HOVER through the house, PAST an empty glass of
 wine, bottle of pills...INTO --

KIM'S ROOM

A FLICKER -- THE FISH TANK LIGHT POPS ON. WE CONTINUE TO
 THE POWERPUFF PHONE -- CLOSER -- INTO THE HANDSET --

STORMING THROUGH CABLE -- TWISTING PAST ELECTRICAL SPARKS --
THE HAUNTING ECHO OF VOICES caught in fiber optics --

BLASTING OUT of a phone receiver. Darkness.

A BEDROOM

A woman sleeps. A Siamese beside suddenly wakes with a HISS

Tomboy stirs awake, huh? Yawns. Rises, shuffles for the
 bathroom. Sits on the toilet.

The shower curtain rustling, breeze from the AJAR WINDOW.
 The closet door creaking, slightly open. Someone watching?

She finishes, trudges back to bed. Gets comfy.

TOMBOY
Sweet dreams, Sheba.

Only it's not Sheba -- her eyes rocket open -- A BLUR OF
MOTION -- sheets fling wildly -- a GUNSHOT -- blood sprays --

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAWN

A SCREAM -- dawn sun over a BUZZING telephone cable --

MALE OPERATOR (V.O.)
911, state your emergency.

A QUAKING Hispanic woman's voice --

QUAKING (V.O.)
Oh Dios mio -- come, please come --
it's everywhere --

MALE OPERATOR (V.O.)
What's everywhere, ma'am?

QUAKING (V.O.)
Sangre...

MALE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Excuse me?

QUAKING (V.O.)
Blood.

SMASH TO:

BLOOD

An endless pool. WE CREEP ALONG a cord snaking through the
red, ARRIVING at a phone. A pale hand clutching it. Tomboy's
dead eyes staring up from the bed.

Beyond, the quaking Hispanic HOUSEKEEPER on her cell phone
in the doorway...

INT. JONES' HOUSE - DAWN

A perfectly made bed. A simple wood table containing a simple
bowl of oatmeal. A desk with a police issue revolver and
badge, a single key, and a RINGING cell phone.

A man's hands appear. But they ignore the phone, instead
picking up the key. Its shine worn away. Delicately rubbing
it. Slow. Deliberate. This isn't just a key.

The cell phone continues to FLASH AND RING. Finally, the
fingers take hold of it.

EXT. 8342 SYCAMORE - DAY

Police tape, cruisers. An unmarked sedan pulls up and out steps DETECTIVE JONES. Simple suit, simple demeanor. Intercepted by a stocky, middle-aged plainclothes, BOGGS --

BOGGS

Yo Jonesy, gotta get your opinion on something --

Jones nods and keeps walking, all business.

BOGGS

I been thinkin' about gettin' a motorcycle. But Sherri goes and tells me it's too damn dangerous or someshit -- says it's either her or the hog. So my question to you is...

(then)

Kawasaki or Yamaha?

But Jones just keeps walking. Boggs sighs, realizes --

BOGGS

You ain't heard a goddamn word I said, have ya? Shoulda known.

Jones smiles with a wink, heads through the bedroom door...

JONES! POV - INSIDE BEDROOM (M.O.S.)

SILENT. DEAF. The body of Tomboy in the sheets. Blood spilled from her mouth. Her hand on the phone.

He masks a wince. His fingers now rubbing away at that single key from his pocket. Habit.

SCENE

A uniformed ROOKIE approaches an unaware Jones --

ROOKIE

Housekeeper called it in. Thirty-eight year old female, Marjorie Benton, single gunshot wound through the mouth...

Deaf, Jones takes a circuitous route through the crime scene. Eyeballing flowers in pots, books on shelves...

ROOKIE

Looks like the victim tried to call 911, but didn't make it in time. No sexual assault, no forced entry. Maybe she knew the intruder, ya think?

No answer. Boggs watches from a distance, amused. He helps:

BOGGS

Kid, save your breath. He's deaf.

Finished with his once-over, Jones turns, sees Rookie's confusion. Pulls a pair of plugs from his ears.

JONES

How many chances you get to make a first impression, Boggs?

BOGGS

One, and that's my final answer.

(to Rookie)

Prefers to get his own looksee 'fore the likes of some beat newbie tells him what supposedly happened.

JONES

Blood splatter -- only on the underside of the blanket. Perp was in the bed, under the covers.

BOGGS

Lover who got a little too excited?

JONES

Possible. But the sheets are still tucked in on this side. Doesn't say overnight guest to me.

(thinking through)

Perp was already in the house, maybe climbed in through the bathroom window. She got up, went for a midnight snack, to pee, something. That's when the killer eased into the bed, element of surprise.

BOGGS

Question. The perp's got her at gunpoint -- and she somehow then reaches over to the phone?

JONES

Yeah. Something's off here...

(studying)

She looks... Staged. What if she was posed? After she was killed.

BOGGS

What's the message being sent? Call collect?

Good question. Not a clue.

BOGGS

Well you want my first impression?
Take a look at this --

He offers up a paper: 911 DISPATCH REPORT. Jones scans it.

JONES

I'm impressed.

They share a baffled look. Head out as:

BOGGS

So I've been thinkin' about getting
a motorcycle...

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - DAY

A SHRIEKING RING -- Nicole bolts awake, clutching the geometry book -- realizes she's in Kim's room?! Instinctively reaches for the PowerPuff phone -- NO DIAL TONE.

Stumbles up, shuffles for the...

KITCHEN

...and answers the ringing phone:

NICOLE

Yeah?

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - TECH CENTER - DAY

A SILENT HISS. Vijay manning the digital recording console. Beyond, Jones, Snowden and Corning listen. A moment and...

NICOLE (ON TAPE)

Police units 821, call 933 Dispatch,
Code 04...

JONES

Well that's a quandary isn't it?
Anything like this ever happen before?

CORNING

We get a glitch every now and again--

VIJAY

But nine times out of ten, any
"glitches" are human error.

JONES

Well what of that? What can you
tell me about this --

(re: file)

Nicole Baker.

CORNING

Been on the line goin' on six years.
Without a doubt one of our best.
Probably have my job one day.
(then)
'Course. I'd be remiss if I...

He looks to Snowden. Pregnant pause.

SNOWDEN

Her sister was in a car accident
couple months ago. Called 911.
Nicole took the call, listened to
her die right there on the line.
Needless to say, there's some...
emotional strain.

Heavy. But Jones reveals nothing.

JONES

She fit to be doing this sort of
thing?

SNOWDEN

I evaluated her yesterday to my
satisfaction.

JONES

Yesterday...
(peruses file)
So her first day on the job since
her sister dies...

Thinking. Then, a harried Nicole enters --

NICOLE

Sorry, got here quick as I could --

CORNING

Nicole, this is Detective Jones from
here at the 12th.

JONES

Hey there, how ya doing?

She takes in the solemn room. Suspect.

NICOLE

Uh. Tell ya in a minute...

JONES

Got a situation, peculiar as can be.
My oatmeal was interrupted this
morning by a call to a crime scene.
A murder. Young woman, shot in the
head somewhere around 3 AM. At 8342
Sycamore.

She goes white. Shock. Jones studies her intently.

JONES

Now from what I understand, you
received a call from that address
yesterday, dispatched police.

NICOLE

(stunned)

I... Yeah...

JONES

(re: file)

"I don't want to die," is what you
reported the caller said? But when
our boys arrived, she was very much
alive. In fact, there's no phone
record of any outgoing 911 call from
that address.

NICOLE

(flustered)

But -- I -- saw the trace --

Jones looks to Corning. Unfortunately --

CORNING

Not on the log.

Thick. All eyes on Nicole. Pressure cooker.

NICOLE

Hold on a sec --

(re: Snowden)

What's he doing in here? What
exactly's going on?

CORNING

Easy, Nicole. Surely you can
appreciate the complexity of this.

She stifles it. Fists clenched. Jones casually observes
her condition. Casually offers:

JONES

My caffeine buzz's gone bust. Miss
Baker, what say you and I go fuel
up?

Peace offering. Reeling, she accepts.

EXT. 12TH PRECINCT - DAY

The pair head across the street. Arrive at a door.

NICOLE

Here??

JONES

Best cup of joe on the east side.

INT. LILY'S LANES - DAY

Ancient bowling alley, getting ready for the day ahead.
Jones leads Nicole to a coffee shop in the back.

JONES

How you like it?

NICOLE

Double latte?

He grabs a pot off the burner, helping himself.

JONES

How's black? Morning, Lily.

LILY

Morning, Jonesy.

LILY, the proprietor, wiping down tables in the back.
Familiar wave. Jones offers Nicole a coffee, ushers her to
the rear. A pinball machine.

JONES

You like pinball?

NICOLE

Not...really.

JONES

Everybody likes pinball. You first.

He pops in a quarter. Leads her to the controls, pops a
ball. At a loss, she relents. Bells and whistles.

JONES

So what's it like all day long?
Taking life or death calls?

NICOLE

(re: pinball)
This your way to soften me up? See
how crazy I am?

JONES

Why, you think you're crazy?

NICOLE

Here we go...

JONES

You're the one concerned about the good doctor's presence. Anything you want to tell me before I find out on my own?

NICOLE

Look up prick in Webster's, you'll find his picture.

He hides a grin, sips his coffee. Then gentle:

JONES

Heard about your sister. Sorry.

NICOLE

(keen)

Thank you. But I'm fine. I didn't imagine that call.

JONES

Never said you did. Hit that thing up there, get a bonus ball.

He eyes her. Glances at her feet. And:

JONES

Wonder if you can make any sense of a Vespa tire tread, block down from the victim's house?

Phased, the pinball slips past into the gutter.

NICOLE

I -- was there. My way home from work, just wanted to see everything was okay with my own eyes.

He gives her an inscrutable nod. His play.

JONES

The call. Report says you claimed it was a female?

NICOLE

Yeah, that's what I claimed.

JONES

And turns out it was a woman who was murdered?

NICOLE

If you're asking if I think she "psychically" called me, predicting her own death -- save your breath, I told you I wasn't nuts.

JONES

Point taken. Would you recognize the voice again if you heard it?

NICOLE

I -- don't know. Could barely hear it. There was static.

JONES

What kind of static?

NICOLE

Just -- loud, interference -- I don't know.

JONES

Then tell me something you do know.

He pauses the ball on the flipper. She solemnly offers:

NICOLE

You hear enough calls day in, day out, you start to get a sense of the ones that aren't going to have a happy ending. When Corning said units reported an All Clear, I...

JONES

What?

NICOLE

I had a feeling they were wrong. Why I went there.

He sits with it for a moment. Keeps playing.

JONES

Hm. Maybe all just a computer glitch? Maybe some sick bastard handy with a phone scrambler and a .38, playing a game? Maybe...

(then)

...you did it?

He slams the ball -- LIGHTS AND BUZZERS erupt.

JONES

There's that bonus ball.

(then)

Just kidding, little bowling alley humor.

She's not laughing. Worry. Anxious.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Maggie and Nicole at their lockers, readying for work.

MAGGIE

Freaky Jesus. As if this job isn't funky enough to begin with. So where'd the pinball wizard leave it?

NICOLE

Told me to go back to work. But from the look on his face, he thinks I'm a disaster.

A moment. Maggie agrees?

NICOLE

This is the part where you say "No, you're not."

MAGGIE

'Course I'm on your side, hon. You did your job exactly the way it's supposed to be done.

NICOLE

Tell that to Vijay.

MAGGIE

Puh-lease. That little weasel's halfway out the door. Last thing he's gonna do is own up to a technical screw up.

NICOLE

Wha?

MAGGIE

Nic, he's on probation -- usin' the network for personal use -- and you just know it's porn. Barnyard stuff probably, little twirp.

But Nicole didn't hear. Mind elsewhere.

MAGGIE

What is it, sweetie?

NICOLE

Just... That woman. Yesterday she was alive. Today... Maybe I should've--

MAGGIE

Hey. Don't even go there. You know damn well you start thinkin' about the what-ifs in this gig, you might as well traipse on over to unemployment and get in line. It ain't your fault -- all we're s'posed to do around here is --

NICOLE

I know. "Answer the phones."

Maggie dukes her in the gut. A smile.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

A tangle of cables. Vijay updating the phone board with a set of intricate tools...

Nicole heads past, for her cubicle. Takes a seat, exhales. Eyes rest on a photo of her and Kim, all smiles. She straightens it just so. Finally patches into the line --

ANGLE - SWITCHBOARD

A LIGHT IGNITES WITH A PIERCING RING -- WE STORM DOWN the line, CHASING THE ELECTRICAL SPARK -- TWISTING, TURNING -- ERUPTING into Nicole's headset --

NICOLE

911, please state your emergency.

THE FAMILIAR ELECTRONIC HISS -- THE ERRATIC, SCRAMBLED TRACE -- she skips a breath -- A SHRIEK CLEARLY PIERCES THROUGH --

KIM (OVER HEADSET)

....NICOLE!.....NICOLE!....

NICOLE

(gasping)

I...?

KIM (OVER HEADSET)

...IT HURTS...IT HURTS...

Nicole goes paralyzed. Ashen. Unmistakable this time --

NICOLE

K... Kim...??

KIM (OVER HEADSET)

...MAKE IT STOP...MAKE IT STOP!

The trace SPINS THROUGH NUMBERS, LETTERS -- finally POPS UP AN ADDRESS: 622 LINCOLN AVENUE.

NICOLE
 (whisper)
 ...Kim...?

CLICK. Trace gone. Nicole, quaking. Wet eyes. Trembling.

Goes to work on the keyboard: REPLAY RECORDING FEED. Dead air. Nothing. NO INCOMING CALL. Glances about -- no one paying any attention. She shivers, frozen shock.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - BATHROOM - DAY

Cold sweat, gagging. Nicole over the sink. Losing it.

NICOLE
 ...not possible...

Digs into her pocket, swallows down a Valium. Paces. Crouches in a ball. Tears. Hands clenched. Thinks, thinks.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

A mess, Nicole scrambles through a pair of double doors --

12TH PRECINCT

Searching the detective desks -- there, in the corner -- Jones logging .38 caliber pistols. She bounds up, her quaking hand offering the scribbled address --

NICOLE
 It -- happened again -- here, you have to do something--

JONES
 Whoa, hold on -- how do you know --

NICOLE
 The same static on the line -- the trace was all screwed up at first--

JONES
 Did you dispatch --

NICOLE
 No -- I -- just came here -- I didn't know what else to do--

JONES
 What'd the caller say?

She goes flush. How to put this?

NICOLE
 She -- needed help --

JONES
The same...she?

She manages a nod.

JONES
System record it? Anybody else hear
the call?

She swipes the address back, storms off. He follows --

JONES
Wait a damn minute -- where you going?

NICOLE
(cracking)
Something was hurting her -- she was
begging for it to stop -- if you're
not going to do something about it,
then I will --

He stops her. She's trembling. He grabs the address, reaches
for a phone, dials --

JONES
It's Jones -- get a unit over to 622
Lincoln on a 287.

Hangs up, gathers his things to head out.

NICOLE
I'm coming with you.

He doesn't even dignify that. She digs deep:

NICOLE
Something's happening -- and I don't
know what it is... But I know there
has to be an explanation.
(then)
You won't find it without me.

JONES
And how can you be so sure?

NICOLE
I just...know.
(not good enough)
Because she's calling me.

JONES
That's what's got me. Why? Why you?

NICOLE
I...don't know.

He studies her. She averts her eyes.

JONES

Why do I get the feeling you're not
telling me everything?

Cornered, she digs deep:

NICOLE

All I've been doing is telling you
"everything." What more do I have
to say before somebody else is dead?

He chews on it. Her genuine, pleading eyes. He relents.

INT. JONES' SEDAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Jones and Nicole. Not a word. Driving. Then:

JONES

Ya know. I took a look at your
sister's file. All the T's were
crossed, pretty thorough accident
investigation.

NICOLE

This your idea of an icebreaker?

JONES

Where was she going that night?

NICOLE

Don't know. We'd...had a fight.

And that's all she'll say. Silence. Regret. He feels for
her. Driving. Down a hill, a pair of metallic balls roll
from under her seat.

JONES

Sorry -- refurbishing an old Midway
pinball machine in my garage.

(off her)

Don't knock it. You're looking at
The Joker's Wild All-Time High Scorer.

NICOLE

So it's loss of a hobby and more of
a deep-seeded, all-consuming
addiction?

JONES

(wry)

I don't have a problem. Can stop
any time I want.

He grins. She tries. Car goes quiet. Then:

JONES
 Thing about pinball is... Ball's
 always moving.
 (then)
 Distraction...

The way he said that. Something beneath it. She senses it.

INT. JONES' SEDAN/622 LINCOLN - DAY

Jones and Nicole pull up to a middle-class homestead.
 Outside, a pair of UNIFORMED COPS talking with the homeowner:
 early forties, fit, BUZZCUT.

JONES
 Wait here. Feel free to play with
 the siren if you get bored.

Nervous, she nods. Watches through the glass as the Uniforms
 casually brief Jones. Yet again, no imminent danger apparent.
 Jones shakes Buzzcut's hand, chats. And as if on cue, they
 all turn to eye the woman in the car.

NICOLE
 (sotto)
 Hi -- yeah, I'm the crazy one...

A few more words and Jones returns, opens the car door:

JONES
 More interesting by the minute. The
 owner of the house? A cop.

NICOLE
 And lemme guess, he didn't call 911?

He shakes, no.

INT. 622 LINCOLN AVENUE - DAY

Jones slides forth a photograph of Tomboy --

JONES
 Ever seen this woman before?

Buzzcut across from Jones and Nicole as Voodoo gods await an
 answer. Antique wooden statues throughout the living room.

BUZZCUT
 No, don't think so.

JONES
 Name's Majorie Benton. A
 telemarketer. Single.
 (MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

(no)

Names, faces can run together. Maybe she was in need of a cop once? You gave her a parking ticket?

BUZZCUT

(shrugs)

I'll go through my end-of-day reports for the last few weeks if ya want?

JONES

Make it a year for starters.

(then)

Ever seen her before?

Indicates the fidgety Nicole. He shakes, no. Nicole eyes the gnarled Caribbean figures. Creeped out.

JONES

Had any trouble with your phone line lately?

BUZZCUT

The wife talkin' on it too much count?

(no laughs)

Uh, no.

JONES

Where is your wife?

BUZZCUT

Anguila.

(re: statues)

She's a West Indies artifact dealer.

JONES

Hm, whaddya know. Anybody other than you or her have access to this phone line?

BUZZCUT

Uh, the maid? Comes on Tuesdays.

Nicole blurts out --

NICOLE

Has anything odd -- or unexplainable -- happened in this house lately?

BUZZCUT

Other than this? No.

Jones stares quizzically at her. She ahems.

NICOLE

Right. Uh, do you have a bathroom?

BUZZCUT

Sure, down the hall on your left.

Awkward, she heads into...

HALLWAY

But going tinkle isn't on her mind. Instead, she searches, snoops. Edging through the shadowy corridor, wooden native masks on the wall surveying every step.

Past the kitchen, laundry room. Trips on the corner of handwoven tribal carpet over a floor panel, basement entrance. Weird taste. Heads on -- until...

A CHIME. Haunting. Billowing from the ajar door down the hall. Beckoning. Magnetized, she creeps for it...

THE ROOM

Pitch black. Awaiting her. The CHIME ECHOING.

Her face pops into the doorway. She creeps into the darkness. Blind. Struggles to flip a light switch -- shit -- a man behind her -- she spins -- horror --

Oh. Just a mannequin in a ceremonial gown. She exhales.

NICOLE

Jesus. Nice to meet you.

A workspace. Blacked out windows, restoration tools, dim blacklight bulb. And an ancient WOOD WINDCHIME billowing near the air vent. Creepy. She dares to touch it when --

The PHONE WAILS! Jolted, she freaks -- picks it up -- a HRINOUS SCREECH -- SHRILL -- STATIC, BUZZING --

NICOLE

(sotto)

Hello...??

Then she spots it on the desk -- a phone coupler, TTY unit for the deaf. She sets the phone in place -- digits instantly type on the screen:

9...1...1

She blanches, frozen. And then:

YOU'RE...TOO...LATE.

She trembles -- yanks up the phone --

NICOLE

I'm here --

SPINE-SHATTERING ELECTRONIC HISS -- she slams down the phone
races out the door -- WHAM! Right into...Jones.

JONES

Whoa, where's the fire? You alright?

NICOLE

Fine. I -- just -- need some air.

She scrambles for the living room -- just as the PHONE RINGS
again. She freezes, dread. Buzzcut picks it up...

BUZZCUT

Yello?

He winces, initiates another TTY unit. The screen reads...

9...1...1

Nicole's fingers clasp Jones' -- he raises a brow --

BUZZCUT

Here we go again...

(off them)

Mother-in-law. She's deaf. And a
serious pain in the you-know-what.
Clogged toilet is the international
crisis of the day.

Nicole goes red. Sheepishly releases her grip from Jones.

BUZZCUT

(typing)

Relax. I'll call you back in five.

(to Jones)

That is, if we're done?

JONES

We're done.

(for Nicole)

Hamilton's opted to stay home, keep
watch.

NICOLE

(urgent)

But last night -- what if --

JONES

He's ten years on the force, knows
what he's doing. After I drop you
off, I'll come back, spend the night
on the curb.

Little choice, she exits. Jones points to the Unis outside:

JONES

They'll keep you company till then.

BUZZCUT

No prob.
 (re: Nicole)
 She seems a little...

JONES

Yeah.

He sighs, heads out.

INT./EXT. JONES' SEDAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Jones drives. Nicole peers out the passenger window, chewing her lip. Unnerved. Silence.

NICOLE

I'm not -- normally like this, ya know.

JONES

S'alright. To be expected.
 (then)

Can you think of anyone out there who might hold some kind of grudge against you?

NICOLE

My landlord. No.

JONES

No particularly unusual 911 calls in your past? Somebody you saved? Somebody you didn't?

NICOLE

I don't know. Truth is, you don't really "follow up" in my line of work. After you hang up the line, it's best not to think about what happens next.

A moment. He considers that.

JONES

Guess we have something in common.
 (off her)
 Dead body's just a body. Can't let it become anything more.

Two people. Odd connection. But a connection. The sedan pulls to her curb. She lingers, on edge.

JONES

Was thinking I'd put a unit on your corner for the night.

NICOLE

You really think that's necessary?

JONES

Until I can understand what's going on here, I can't tell you you're safe.

She thinks. Conflicted.

JONES

What is it?

NICOLE

You ever had something happen to you that just -- defied all logic. No matter how you sliced it, it was impossible. And yet...?

JONES

Logic can't be defied.

Matter of fact eyes. She looks away. Knowing better.

NICOLE

Yeah.

She feigns a smile and heads out. Watches after her.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - DUSK

A warbled face through GLOWING AQUARIUM WATER:

NICOLE

Hey, sushi -- here's to logic. May it never be defied.

They just blink. She exhales, frustration. Feeds them. Heads on, but WE HOLD...on the computer webcam, seemingly watching her every move. WE PUSH IN, FURTHER FURTHER...

PUSHING THROUGH --

REFLECTIONS IN GLASS

Warbled light, an UNFOCUSED IMAGE. THRUSTING OUT THE OTHER SIDE... A peephole. Maggie on the porch, doorbell RINGING.

ANGLE - PORCH

The front door swings open --

MAGGIE

Ding dong, the cholesterol has arrived...

Maggie enters with McDonalds. Darkness. Odd, she edges in --

MAGGIE

Yo, where are ya...?

And then she spots Nicole in the shadows. Sitting at the dining table, clutching a framed photo of Kim. Lost. Alone.

MAGGIE

Nic...?

NICOLE

(quiet)

Hey. Thanks for coming, Mags.

MAGGIE

You okay? Sweetie, what is it?

Nicole finds her eyes. Unsure. But finally:

NICOLE

Another call came in.

MAGGIE

Yeah, I heard, some cop's house.
That what this is about -- 'cause
they took you off the line?

NICOLE

No. This is about. Me...recognizing
the caller. Her voice.

MAGGIE

What?! And you didn't tell--?

Maggie quickly gets the sense that something unusual is at work here. She goes gentle:

MAGGIE

Nicole. Who was it?

NICOLE

I think you better sit down. 'Cause
after I say this, you'll need to.

Stunned, she...remains standing. Nicole struggles:

NICOLE

Maggie. You're gonna think I'm --
not right in the head.

MAGGIE

That'd be the pot calling the kettle
black. You can lay anything on me,
girl. Anything.

Nicole chews her lip. Exhales. Screw it --

NICOLE

The voice. Was... Kim's.

Say what?! Floors Maggie. Involuntarily, she sits.

NICOLE

Told ya.

Maggie is speechless. Fucking speechless.

NICOLE

I know -- trust me, I know. But,
I'm telling you -- it was her voice --
been listening to it every day of my
life for sixteen years.

(implores)

Wouldn't you recognize your mother,
or your brother -- without even the
slightest doubt?

MAGGIE

(quiet)

Yeah...

Nicole sees the shocked concern. Sinks.

NICOLE

Dammit. I knew I shouldn'tve...

She can't go on. Spent. Confused. Breaks Maggie's heart.

MAGGIE

No, honey, no. Look. It's an earful.
But. If. You say it was her voice.
Then...

(tries)

I believe you.

NICOLE

Now you're just placating the crazy
woman.

MAGGIE

Hey, who am I to judge? You know I
don't even get outta bed without
checking my horoscope.

Maggie wraps her arms around her. Tight. Long.

MAGGIE

Look. 'Till you start brewing up
potions or collecting locks of hair,
I'll keep an open mind. You'd do
the same for me.

NICOLE
The hell I would. I'd have you in a
straight-jacket.

MAGGIE
Yeah, you would.

Nicole smiles a little. Relieved to have such a friend.

MAGGIE
So say she is... Why? What does
she expect you to do?

Question of the hour. A complete loss. Maggie fires up:

MAGGIE
When in doubt, Google it.

Off Nicole's raised brow --

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - LATER

Nicole eats French fries, Maggie types on the computer.

MAGGIE
*Here we go -- My Husband Paged Me
From the Dead. Or this one --
Grandma's Ghost Comes Through
Electrical Outlet, Gets Stuck in
Vacuum!*

National Enquirer archives. Off Nicole --

MAGGIE
Wha? They got the Monica stain right,
didn't they?
(then)
Alright, alright...

She bangs away at the keys. Nicole finds herself staring
into one of the half-packed boxes.

MAGGIE
So you planning on telling that cute
detective about any of this?

NICOLE
He's not exactly bent this way.

MAGGIE
Oh I'd bend any which way he likes.
Some point, you're gonna have to
fill him in.

NICOLE

I find something real, I will.
(off her)
I will.

MAGGIE

What's his deal anyway -- he as single
as he looks?

NICOLE

Kinda seems like a loner. Plays his
cards pretty close.

MAGGIE

Sounds like somebody else I know...

Nicole clutching one of Kim's dresses. Brilliant red.

MAGGIE

Damn, I couldn't even fit that on
one leg. Oh to be sixteen and
beautiful again.

Nicole reacts. A future extinguished. A moment.

NICOLE

She was beautiful...
(then)
She asked me to buy her this dress.
I said no. Too revealing. She saved
up, got it herself.

MAGGIE

Teenager's job -- no means "screw
you, I'll do it anyway."

NICOLE

Sometimes I think... What I wanted
for her wasn't what she wanted.
Maybe if I'd let up a little, gave
her some room. She wouldn't've been
so angry, wouldn't've --

MAGGIE

Bullshit.

NICOLE

I just didn't want her to end up as
some underpaid, double-shift 911
operator. No offense.

MAGGIE

Nic, that beautiful girl would've
grown up into a beautiful woman that
was everything you hoped for and
then some.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(serious)

But you gotta stop reliving it,
sweetie. I'm worried about you.

NICOLE

Yeah, me too.

MAGGIE

(re: screen)

Huh.

Engrossed, Maggie clicks away. Nicole joins --

MAGGIE

(reading)

...human soul is actually comprised
entirely of energy or electricity.
Contact with spirits can often be
manifested through electromagnet
communication...

(shows)

Paranormal.Com. Speculative Study
by the University of Mannheim --
wherever the hell that is.

Intrigued, they stare into the monitor. A web page, abstract.

MAGGIE

Even after physical death, his spirit
was found to still be alive,
unmistakably and coherently
communicating through electrical
pulses in circuit boards...

They consider that. Close to home. Eerie.

NICOLE

C'mon, in the wires?!

MAGGIE

(shrugs)

When she died -- she was on the
phone...

NICOLE

Yeah, but... I mean -- do you
actually buy into that?

MAGGIE

This is your ghost story, hon.

(continues)

...on two occasions the soul's
electrical current manifested itself
through random and unexplained surges
in a handheld radio. Three of the

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
*examiners attested to clearly hearing
 the voice of the dead man in the
 speakers. He could plainly be
 heard... Asking for help.*

A chill. Could that be possible? An awkward ghostly silence
 Until -- A CHIME. FROM THE COMPUTER. Email alert.

NICOLE
 Email... Kim's.

They eye the mail program: URGENT! FROM: DEAD.

MAGGIE
 Tell me that doesn't say...
 (swallows)
 Uh. I think you better open it.

She backs away. Nicole tentatively clicks it... And...
 Her eyes drop --

NICOLE
 Hm. Add two inches to your penis
 today! Is your sex life...dead?

She crascs it. And Maggie exhales in laughter.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Late. Distant THUNDER, pending rain. A HISSING BUZZ ECHOES
 from towering telephone cables.

Below, an unmarked police sedan curbed a few down.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Late. Alone, Nicole's bleary eyes stare into the computer.
 Clicking through site after site: A Technical Guide to
 Telephone Lines; Basic Physics of Electricity; WebSoul: Now
 and Hereafter...

Exhausting. She leans back, can take no more. A yawn,
 rubbing her eyes. Rises for bed. But pauses. A thought.

Returns for a few keystrokes, mouse-clicks. And she finds
 what she's looking for. A smile, I'll be damned: Arcade
 World Records: Jokers Wild, Efram Jones: 998,778 pts.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THUNDER, hellish rain. Nicole passed out in bed. Until...
 A FAINT VOICE punctures the silence. Eerie.

She stirs. Rises. Her bare feet tentatively creep along the floor. The tinny, ELECTRICAL VOICE GROWING LOUDER...

VOICE (O.S.)
...make a call...

Following it -- CLOSER, LOUDER -- LIGHTS, ELECTRONICS HISS AND FLICKER with lightning -- she eases to the back door --

VOICE (O.S.)
...your call has been disconnected.
If you'd like to make a call, please
hang up and try your call again...

Scared shitless, she inches an eye to the peephole, peers outside. Nothing?

Yet the VOICE persists. LOUDER. Her feet step in something oozing from under the door -- she puts a trembling hand on the deadbolt -- a deep breath -- flings open the door --

Kim -- blood-soaked head -- in a pool of crimson -- clutching the PAY PHONE RECEIVER from which the RECORDING BELLOWS -- SPARKS EMANATE --

KIM
...too late...too late...

Nicole SCREAMS -- terror --

SMASH TO:

NICOLE'S APARTMENT

Nicole bolts awake. Sweating. All a dream? Reaches for a Valium, wraps the blanket around her. Tries for sleep.

But that ain't happening. A SLAMMING ECHOES. Again, again.

Fraying, she sinks to the floor, searches under the bed. An old wood box. A handgun inside. She grips it, eases into --

HALLWAY

Following the SLAM-SLAM-SLAM -- freezes -- the back door -- wide open, exactly where Kim stood -- SLAMMING open, closed amidst the furious rainstorm --

She closes it. Sighs. Just the wind, right?

NICOLE
...losing my mind...

But then... A STILTED BEEPING. Every few seconds, A SINGLE BEEP from across the house. She tenses, tiptoes on --

Her trembling gun hand tracking the BEEP...BEEP... Then she realizes -- it's in Kim's room. Oh shit. She eases in --

KIM'S ROOM

The aquarium light FLICKERING HAPHAZARDLY.

Her eyes widen with disbelief -- for there, beside the PowerPuff phone, relentlessly BEEPING: Kim's answering machine. The red light indicating: 1 NEW MESSAGE.

How?! She anxiously plays it: ONE NEW MESSAGE. ELECTRONIC HISS. AND BREATHING. DEEP, MALE. STALKING. AND...

CHIMING. Unmistakable -- the WINDCHIME from Buzzcut's.

NICOLE

Oh god --

She sprints for the --

KITCHEN

Rifles through her purse for Jones' card -- shit, shit -- finally finds it, dials --

VOICEMAIL ANSWERS. Dammit -- she thinks -- races --

OUTSIDE

A torrent of rain -- she spots a nondescript sedan two houses down -- runs, bangs on the window --

NICOLE

You have to reach Detective Jones!

The window rolls down, a PAIR OF PLAINCLOTHES COPS inside --

PLAINCLOTHES

What's wrong -- you alright?

NICOLE

I'm fine -- just radio him -- please!

PLAINCLOTHES

Ms. Baker, if you explain the problem --

NICOLE

Now goddammit -- just do it!

O-kay. He reaches for the radio --

PLAINCLOTHES

813-Jones, this is 217, copy?

Interminable wait. SILENCE. Nicole frantic.

NICOLE

We have to get over there --

PLAINCLOTHES

Ms. Baker, we'll call dispatch --
but maybe we should go inside --Screw that, she's gone -- halfway up her walk -- on her
scooter -- speeding down the street --

PLAINCLOTHES

Shit -- Ms. Baker!

She cuts through an alley between a pair of houses --

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gunning the engine through the wall of rain -- whipping into
alleys -- over curbs -- through red lights --A HONK, SCREECH! A car skids -- just misses her -- she spins
out of control -- crumples into asphalt --

The scooter totaled -- but she's up, okay -- runs -- faster --

EXT. 622 LINCOLN - SAME

THUNDER, LIGHTNING as Nicole races up -- Christ, hears --

DISPATCH (OVER RADIO)

Base 12 Dispatch to 813-Jones, second
page, do you copy?His car. Door cracked open. But no Jones.

NICOLE

Oh God...

She slowly turns her gaze to the house. Dark, foreboding.
Swallows, wills her feet to move. Down the walk, onto the
porch. Hair standing on edge as she inches to a window.Oblivious to the approaching feet -- WHAM! A figure grabs
her -- Jones. Heart attack.

NICOLE

Jones -- where were you?!

JONES

Taking a leak -- the hell are you
doing here?

NICOLE

He's in there -- right now!

JONES

What are you talking about?

NICOLE

I got a call -- from inside that house -- I heard him in there!

JONES

Wait a -- who called you?

NICOLE

Just get in there -- if I'm wrong, I'm wrong, but I'm telling you -- I'm not wrong!

He eyes the quiet house. Reaches for a walkie-talkie --

JONES

Hamilton, everything alright in there?

(no response)

Hamilton?

(draws his gun)

Get in the car, lock it. Answer the radio, tell 'em to send back-up units per my order.

Breathless, she obeys as he bolts into the shadows.

INT. 622 LINCOLN - NIGHT

Jones slips through the door. Dark. Quiet. Eases through the blackness -- room to room -- down the endless...

HALLWAY

Where the WINDCHIME BILLOWS -- searching -- around blind corners -- through hold-your-breath dark shadows --

KITCHEN

Nudges open the door... And goes pale...

There, prone upon the floor lay Buzzcut. Heinous gunshot, through the mouth. His arm outstretched, phone in hand.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Oh god -- please, why --

Nicole in the doorway, white --

JONES

Dammit, I told you to --

But she's cracking in two. He bites his tongue, ushers her to the hall. Then her tears come. A mess.

Awkward, he just holds her. And she holds him back. Afraid to ever let go. As hiccups of emotion ECHO...

INT. 622 LINCOLN - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

FLASH! A police PHOTOGRAPHER captures the subject of half-a-dozen stares: the open laundry room floor panel leading into the depths of a basement.

BOGGS

Well, there's your "element of surprise."

Jones, Boggs and a chaotic crime scene -- COPS and FORENSICS everywhere, one of their own down. A RANDOM OFFICER reports --

RANDOM

Vent along the back of the house seems to've been pried open. Forensics is dusting it.

BOGGS

Keep the lawn clean, no extra prints please and thank you.

Jones says nothing. Just staring into the black hole. Trudges back into the...

KITCHEN

FLASHES as photos capture Buzzcut in a pool of blood, brain matter on the walls, strewn gun...

BOGGS

So freak pops outta the floor -- oops, intended vic ain't in bed -- he's in the kitchen and he's got a Glock. Freak reacts, gets a shot off -- a .38 again whaddya know -- and good-bye knee-cap...

Boggs kneels. A bullet in Buzzcut's leg.

BOGGS

Hamilton and Glock fall to the floor. Freak circles and proceeds to make his little statement, right in the kisser.

(disgust)

That how you see it?

Jones is still silent. Guilt. Heavy. Boggs senses:

BOGGS

Whaddya gonna do, Jonesy -- thunder
was bangin' out there -- how you
s'posed to hear?

(then)

Oh shit.

The front door: a grizzled CAPTAIN-type entering. Makes
harsh eye contact with Jones, motions to chat outside.

BOGGS

Want me to come with? Know how much
Cappy likes to share his love.

But Jones just heads out. Right past Nicole, huddled in a
blanket in the corner. A daze.

BOGGS (O.S.)

Got ya anything?

No answer. Her eyes fall to one of the Indies artifacts.

NICOLE

Does -- the wife know yet?

BOGGS

Jones reached her a little while
ago.

That sits there. She's nauseous. Stares outside -- Jones
getting an earful from the Captain.

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Nicole's answering machine tape spins in a recorder: *THE
BREATHING, THE WINDCHIME*. Jones and Boggs across from Nicole
reliving it. The eerie sounds proceeding a man's death.

The message stops. Jones chews on it. Exhaustion.

BOGGS

So, Nicole. I did a little research
on your phone line. Now you say you
called for it to be disconnected...?

NICOLE

Day before yesterday.

BOGGS

Uh-huh, according to Ma Bell, that's
when it was disconnected. They show
no signs of it being re-activated.

NICOLE

Well it re-activated for that, now
didn't it?

She swallows the thought of how. Jones thinks aloud:

JONES

Guy's obviously tech-inclined. And he knows his way around underground. Let's start running priors, employment records -- DWP, cable, telephone...

(frustrated)

What's the connection? What do you have to do with a single white female telemarketer and a married cop on the force ten years?

BOGGS

And why's he tipping you off? Does he want to be caught? Want you to catch him?

JONES

Getting caught isn't the agenda. Phone recs show he called you from one of Hamilton's phones -- he takes that kind of time, that risk because he wanted you to know it was happening. To hear it. Feel it.

Nicole can't hold back any longer. Dares, to Jones:

NICOLE

Mind if I speak to you? Alone.

Boggs exchanges a look, odd. Off Jones, he begrudgingly heads out. She squirms for words. Eventually:

NICOLE

What makes you so sure that the caller and the killer are one and the same?

(off him)

Maybe it's -- someone trying to... Communicate what the killer's going to do...

JONES

What, an accomplice? Is there something specific that makes you think that?

Hell yes. But how to tell him?

NICOLE

Have you... Ever lost anyone?

He masks a wince. Subtle.

JONES

This isn't about me. I'm an objective observer, that's it.

NICOLE

I just -- sometimes everything's not black or white, or-- "logical" or...

Anything. Ragged. He waits. Nothing else coming. So...

JONES

Five years ago. A case. Woman found dead on the sidewalk, jumped from her sixth story apartment balcony. Her place was clean, locks locked, alarm armed. Impossible for it to be anything other than a suicide. But. Her husband just couldn't accept it, thought she had everything to live for.

(then)

That and one other thing kept nagging at me. My first impression at the crime scene. She had her keys in her hand. Now locking yourself out isn't really a concern if you know you're not coming back. So I stared at that balcony for hours. Days. Then it occurred to me, forest-trees. Her husband knew she liked to walk up the stairs, exercise. What if some piece of garbage was waiting in the stairwell. Attacked her. Chased her out to the fire escape and...

NICOLE

She was murdered...

JONES

I believe in facts. Because that's what led me to that fire escape.

Facts? She isn't so sure. Feeling very alone.

JONES

Talk to me, Nicole...

NICOLE

No -- I'm sorry... My head's all over the place. It's nothing.

She rises, exits. He exhales. Piqued. Concerned.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

The familiar grief group. An ELDERLY woman, mid-confession:

ELDERLY

...gonna laugh, but I miss his
belching at the dinner table. My
lord, it was like a fog horn.

A few light smiles. Interrupted by the door opening. A
lone figure sheepishly standing there. Nicole.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Quiet gazes on a seated Nicole. Lorraine waiting.

NICOLE

I guess I -- needed to talk. But.
Didn't know who'd listen.

LORRAINE

All friends here, Nicole. No holds
barred.

NICOLE

You haven't heard what I have to say
yet...!

Difficult. Elderly, Sleepless, the others give her room.

NICOLE

See. I was wondering. Sometimes I
get the feeling my sister's --
still...around.

ELDERLY

Around?? Like how?

NICOLE

It's -- hard to explain.

LORRAINE

It's not unusual to experience
lingering feelings of connectedness.
For some, it's dreams or --

NICOLE

This isn't a dream.
(screw it)
She's tried to contact me. More
than once. And I thought maybe --
some of you might've...that I'm not
the only one?

Blank stares. Stunned. Uncomfortable murmurs.

LORRAINE

Well. Perhaps we should wrap up a
few minutes early today?

Nicole sighs. Another dead end.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Nicole exiting, unnerved. Digs out a Valium as --

SLEEPLESS

If your sister is... How come you think?

A downtrodden Sleepless, who we'll now call DAN. She looks away, feeling the fool.

NICOLE

Nothing.

DAN

I was thinking about getting a dog. A terrier or something, I like those.

(off her)

I got this empty house now. Kinda like you said, no one to talk to anymore...

His weary eyes, Kleenex. She understands all too well.

NICOLE

Yeah. I used to pray for some peace and quiet. MTV, blaring stereo, teenage phone gossip at all hours...

(then)

Careful what you wish for.

A moment. Two grieverers, same boat. She warms.

NICOLE

Dog's probably not a bad idea. Between you and me, I talk to fish.

DAN

And...dead people?

Ahem. She hides a flinch. But he's sincere:

DAN

What do you think she's trying to say?

She considers. A believer? Hesitates.

NICOLE

She wants. Me to stop -- things. Bad things.

He goes squeamish. It hangs there. Until...

DAN

Thing is. I've wondered if... My fiancée can really see me up there. What I'm doing every day. If she's proud of me... 'Cause if yours is contacting you -- maybe -- maybe I'll hear something too?

He cracks. Wet eyes. She looks away, guilt.

NICOLE

I didn't mean -- to raise your hopes --

She sinks. A loss. Her distraught eyes. He shuffles on. She remains, guilt.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

On foot, Nicole dazedly trudges across the street for the apartment -- SCREECH -- a car brakes. The driver, Snowden.

NICOLE

Hey--?! What are you doing here?

SNOWDEN

I -- just wanted to check in, make sure you're doing alright.

(casual)

Are you doing alright?

Suspect, she eyes him. He stares back, doctorly-concern.

NICOLE

This a personal question or work-related?

SNOWDEN

Well.

(a smile)

Personal.

NICOLE

Then it's none of your business.

She walks on, slams the front door. He sighs, narrow eyes.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nicole plods in, restless. Locks the bottom bolt. Then the top bolt. Feels a chill, shivers. Ambles toward the dark hall for the thermostat. Turns it, nothing. Taps it, flicks switches.

Behind her, the slightest of ELECTRICAL HISSES. A BLUE GLOW FLICKERS, WASHING OVER HER...

She realizes. Swallows. Is someone there? Something? The GLOW FLASHES OFF. She swallows, sloooooowly turns...

Nothing. Phew. Imagining things? Beyond exhaustion. Head back down the hall -- until the GLOW PULSES again. From Kim room. Shit. Step by step, she edges for the doorway...

The fish tank light SHORTING ON AND OFF. She checks both ways, moves for it. Clicks it off. Darkness.

Makes her way back out. Until it POPS RIGHT BACK ON WITH A SIZZLE. Uh, what the hell?! She spins -- the light TREMORS WILDLY. She delicately dislodges the top -- opens the panel

SPARKS ERUPT! She screams -- drops it with a clang, the light goes dead. Je-sus. She unplugs the damn thing, breathless. And then sees: the wiring tangled and askew -- pinched, exposed.

NICOLE

...could've burned the damn house down.

Whatever, she unhooks it, moves on. But pauses. Noticing something. In the rocks. She reaches into the water, retrieves a buried Ziploc bag. Surprise. And dismay at the contents: a video tape, a matchbook, half-a-dozen joints.

She opens it, takes a whiff -- not what she thought, relief.

But that videotape. No label. Odd.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tape in the VCR, TV coming to life. Nicole fidgets on the couch as a scratchy overdubbed PICTURE EMERGES: Kim, up close Staring INTO CAMERA. Brilliant smile. The luster of youth.

Nicole smiles back. A flash of harmonious perfection. Then

KIM

Listen to me...

Nicole glued, desperate to listen.

The CAMERA BOBBLES, HANDHELD -- TECHNO MUSIC throbbing --

KIM

No, I'm serious -- it was Vogue, like two months ago -- it had Gisele with, like, this, mink wrap-around thing -- there's no way she's part of that whole anti-fur PETA thing, I'm tellin' ya--

The amateur cameraman ZOOMS OUT to reveal Kim on a couch -- primping in a slinky dress, high heels. Sexed up.

KIM

'Kay. So this like a dress rehearsal or what?

MAN (O.S.)

Gotta get you comfortable with the camera, gorgeous. Just do your thing.

She strikes a pose, purposely stretches out cat-like for the camera. Emulating a model. Shifting poses. Determined. The man clicks off photos. Brief glimpses of his shadow.

KIM

Wait, lemme start over -- I can do that better --

She fidgets with her dress, exhales. Tries again. Serious.

MAN (O.S.)

Just let loose -- don't worry about the dress -- you want this, you gotta fuck inhibition --

Okay. She self-consciously tries to relax. Makes a decision, lowers a strap from her shoulder --

KIM

Like...that?

MAN (O.S.)

It's a start -- but you're forcing it. Gotta chill, honey. You wanna be Gisele? How would she do it?

She's nervous. Focuses. Screw it -- she wants this -- pulls a dress strap down. Then another. It falls. Skin revealed.

MAN (O.S.)

Now there we go -- beautiful. You are just beautiful.

KIM

Yeah?

MAN (O.S.)

Oh yeah.

Kim giggles, sexy-shy. But growing confident -- goes for it, cases out of the dress altogether. She stands, seduces the camera. The transformation of a girl to a woman before our very eyes. Winks. Kisses.

MAN (O.S.)

You're going all the way, you hear me? Completely on fire.

Adrenaline, she waltzes closer, closer. Coy:

KIM

Well... What're you gonna do about it?

Bodies meet. CAMERA CLUNKS to the floor -- carpet, dress on the ground -- the man's bare foot steps into frame -- a tattooed ankle, tribal pattern.

Nicole winces. Can barely watch as the sounds of kissing and moans ECHO. Shock, anger, despair.

NICOLE

Kimmy...

The makings of a tear. Many tears. Hitting bottom. Face buried in hands. Torment. Blurry eyes.

Finally coming up for air. Eyes pause. The tape runs out, scratchy lines from the overdub, a SMPTE color bars VIDEO STAMP labeled BASKIN MODELING AGENCY.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nicole flings through a rumpled yellow pages. Searching MODELING AGENCIES. Eyes widen as she discovers several agencies circled in pen, names written in the margins. Beneath the BASKIN AGENCY, the name "Nathan" written.

INT. BASKIN MODELING AGENCY OFFICES - DAY

Dingy offices, low-end. A frumpy, middle-aged female BOOKER studies a snapshot of Kim. Nicole expectantly looks on.

BOOKER

Hard to say -- somethin' familiar in the eyes, but we see so many young girls in and out of here -- hard to keep track.

NICOLE

Does a...Nathan work here?

BOOKER

Who? Oh -- Nathan -- yeah, he was some temp we had -- answered the phones.

Nicole deflates. The Booker takes stock of the anxiety.

BOOKER
She missing or something?

NICOLE
Something.

BOOKER
Well, might leave the photo with
reception. I'll ask around -- see
if anybody remembers her.

Nicole manages a grateful smile.

INT. BASKIN MODELING AGENCY OFFICES - RECEPTION - DAY

Nicole rounds the desk to reveal a young, cocksure fellow
behind the desk, arm in a sling. Scruffy beard, distinctive
SCAR on his lip. He greets her with a charming wink.

NICOLE
She said to leave this with you --

His face registers no apparent recognition.

SCAR LIP
She's somethin' ain't she? She
lookin' for work?

NICOLE
Uh, no she's -- was my sister. Don't
s'pose you recall seeing her in here?

SCAR LIP
No, I'd remember her.

Makes her ill. She fumbles, drops the photo -- embarrassed,
kneels to collect it -- her eyes jolt open -- Scar Lip's
feet -- the tribal tattoo on his ankle -- unmistakable --

She freezes -- what to do?? Shit. Finally rises -- tense --

NICOLE
I think -- I'll just hold onto it
after all -- thanks anyway --

And with that, she's out the door.

EXT. BASKIN MODELING AGENCY OFFICES - DAY

Nicole steadies herself against the wall, breathless. Kim's
photo clutched in her trembling fingers. What now??

EXT. BASKIN MODELING AGENCY OFFICES - LATER

Scar Lip exits with a backpack, headed home. WE HOLD AS... Nicole slips out from the alley, hot pursuit. Keeping her distance. Close behind as he descends a subway entrance.

INT. SUBWAY - CONTINUOUS

Scar Lip throws a token in the slot, slips into the station -- Nicole scrambles up, slams money under the booth window, craning to keep him in sight -- gets her token, races after --

But he's gone. The crowd bustling -- dark bodies swishing past. But THEN...A VISION...piercing through...

A swath of red. A dress. Seemingly floating. Ethereal youth gliding through the sea of commuters. Familiar. Eerie.

Nicole doubletakes. Is that... Could it be...? Kim?!

She races after -- throng of humanity -- but the vision is gone. Hallucinating? But then -- in the corner of her eye -- Scar Lip -- veering toward a train --

She barrels after -- knocking commuters -- down a stairway -- to the platform -- eyes scanning -- dammit, where is he?!

And once again -- THE RED DRESS PIERCES THE CROWD -- Kim? Ghostly, seemingly beckoning her onto the train -- Nicole sprints -- leaps through the closing doors of the train --

Down the aisle, THE RED DRESS SAILS FROM POLE TO POLE --

NICOLE

Kim--??

Nicole lurches after her -- the train swerves down the tracks -- arriving, Nicole reaches out to the red dress -- desperate --

NICOLE

Kim!

Thrusts out a hand, spins her around -- a young WOMAN, baffled --

WOMAN

Hey -- do you mind?!

Nicole sinks. Not Kim. Embarrassed, disoriented --

NICOLE

I...sorry --

She turns away, cracking -- and yet once again, there he is -- end of the car -- Scar Lip. Obviously bobbing to his iPod. She backs away, blending into the crowd. Fear. Anxiety.

Her eyes can't help but glance heavenward...

EXT. MURRAY HOTEL - DUSK

Scar Lip saunters through a dubious neighborhood. Artsy ghetto, gentrified crack-whores and MP3ers. Beyond, Nicole hangs back as he heads into a hotel-cum-apartment tenement.

INT. MURRAY HOTEL - HALLWAY - DUSK

Graffiti, stains color the hallway of rooms. A moment and Nicole slips into view. Lying in wait. Determined, she edges to a door -- it's ajar. Gently pushes it open --

SCAR LIP'S ROOM

By-the-week rental hole. Sparse. Blankets for curtains, maid service once a year. Nicole inches inside -- the bathroom door cracked, shower running --

She creeps over -- sees Scar Lip running the soap over his back: discolored, black and blue with bruises. She recoils, backsteps -- searching -- nervous, bumps a coffee table --

SCAR LIP (O.S.)

Jen? That you?

She freezes, ashen...

SCAR LIP (O.S.)

Just hang -- out in a minute --

She exhales -- moves to a computer desk -- a drawer, slightly open. A metallic reflection. Is it...? She opens it -- yes, A GUN. Bullets. Her heart pounds. Fear.

Eyes dart to a shelf above, stacked with dozens of videos, DVD's -- the spine of each marked with names. Girls. Dated, organized. And there -- KIM BAKER 7/18/04.

Anxious, she scoops the disc into her purse -- spins for the door -- WHAM! Right into Scar Lip --

SCAR LIP

Yo, what the f--

She knees him in the groin -- bolts out the door -- doubled over, he races after -- towel around his waist --

SCAR LIP

Hey!

HALLWAY

Racing for her life -- blasts into --

THE STAIRWAY

Leaping flights at a time -- above, he emerges --

SCAR LIP

The hell you goin' --

ALLEY

Door barrels open -- she stumbles into THE BLACK OF NIGHT -- blind, tripping --

He darts out after -- she spills into a pile of trash cans --

ANGLE - SCAR LIP

Closing in -- rounds the corner --

She's gone?! What the?! He spots a pile of trash cans beneath a fire escape. How'd she make it up that?

ANGLE - TRASH CANS

She didn't. Hiding beneath -- shivering -- he approaches -- closer, closer -- right on top of her --

WOMAN (O.S.)

What on earth?

He turns, an attractive young WOMAN emerging from a cab outside the hotel, calling out to him --

SCAR LIP

Jenny -- I -- hey --

He rushes to greet her. Nicole breathes, heart-attack.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A trembling Nicole opens the front door to reveal Jones on the porch --

JONES

Are you alright?? I couldn't understand a thing on the phone.

NICOLE

(frantic)

He had this wall of tapes -- and photos -- he had a gun --

JONES

Deep breaths. Who is this guy and what were you doing at his place?

She pauses, hasn't thought this through. Exhales, produces the video tape --

NICOLE
Kim. Is on this.

JONES
Kim...? Your...sister?

She hides a wince. Teetering. He's in the dark.

JONES
Nicole? What's going on?

NICOLE
I...

She shrugs, a loss. Cracking.

JONES
What's on it?

NICOLE
I don't know. Don't know if I want to know.

Silence. His eyes on hers. Sympathy. Confusion.

NICOLE
Will you... Watch it with me?

Careful, he nods. Her tentative eyes thank him.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LATER

The TV CLICKS ON: Static is replaced by glare. A HANDHELD CAMERA finding its balance on a tripod.

SCAR LIP
Just a sec here -- cool, there we go...

The lens ZOOMS OUT: Kim, in a chair, Scar Lip's apartment. Short skirt, daring smile, smoking. Hardly camera shy.

SCAR LIP
You good?

KIM
Good.

SCAR LIP
Perfect, let's burn it. Gimme your name, age, all that.

KIM

Kim. Old as I need to be.

Nicole swallows. Jones unsure of which sister to watch.

ANGLE - UNSEEN P.O.V.

FROM BEHIND AND ABOVE, WE VIEW the two of them watching the tape. An odd angle. They're oblivious. Someone else's perspective? Supernatural? Real? Odd.

SCENE

SCAR LIP

My kind of answer. So what're mom's feelings on all this -- modeling?

KIM

(flat)

My mother's dead.

Nicole bristles. Weak.

SCAR LIP

Heavy, sorry... Who ya livin' with then?

KIM

I take care of myself.

(then)

Got a place with my sister -- whatever, basically just roommates.

SCAR LIP

Huh. Maybe she'd like to model, too?

KIM

Yeah, right. She couldn't be wound up more tight. Total prude.

SCAR LIP

And...you're not?

She scoffs. To prove the point, unbuttons her blouse. Poses.

KIM

You tell me.

SCAR LIP

Nice -- tell I will.

(coy)

'Fact I'd say I got the perfect gig for you.

KIM
(equally coy)
Oh yeah? And what's that?

SCAR LIP
Now that calls for a cigarette.

He clicks off the camera. STATIC. Nicole, silent. Empty.

ANGLE - UNSEEN P.O.V.

Continuing to observe. Fly on the wall.

SCENE

NICOLE
I... Don't know that girl. She was
living in my house. For 8 years...
(splintering)
But I didn't even know her...

JONES
I don't have kids. But I've seen
enough of 'em snow their parents to
stop thinking much of it.
(then)
She was a teenager, trying to find
herself, a little naive. Got involved
with some kind of opportunist.

NICOLE
They had sex. She had a tape of it --
the two of them --
(pain)
God... I screwed up, I really...

JONES
It's not your fault. You can only
control what you can control.
(then)
I'll have a couple uniforms pay him
a visit. Might be some solicitation
charges to bring on him.

NICOLE
No, he's responsible -- for all of
this -- I feel it.

JONES
What do you mean?

NICOLE
The calls. The murders.

JONES

Wha--? Hang on, you think he has something to do with my two dead victims...?

NICOLE

He was chasing me -- he had a gun --

JONES

.38?

NICOLE

I -- don't know --

JONES

Did he point it at you, assault you?

NICOLE

No, but --

(re: TV)

Didn't you just watch that??

JONES

(gentle)

I did. And the guy's a scumbag. But he and your sister -- that's got nothing to do with --

NICOLE

It's got everything to do with it.

(deep breath)

There's something I didn't tell you.

About the second call that came in.

(off him)

I... Don't know how to even begin to say this.

JONES

Try me.

NICOLE

If just one percent of you can attempt to fathom what I'm about to... Even if it means "defying logic."

JONES

Spit it out, Nicole. Not gonna bite.

NICOLE

The caller. I -- know her.

JONES

You what?! The hell kind of games --

NICOLE

It was Kim.

Knocks the breath out of him. Completely derailed.

JONES

You...wanna run that by me again?

NICOLE

It was her. I know it.

He's fucking speechless. Can't even look at her.

NICOLE

I understand. That it's next-to-impossible for you to think outside the realm of what's supposedly possible. And if you knew me better, you'd know I don't check my horoscope -- I don't even read fortune cookies for god's sake --

(cracking)

But can you just -- try -- and put yourself in my shoes to see how next-to-impossible it is for me to sit here right now and beg you to believe in something I don't even know how to believe in myself...?

It hangs there. Her desperate eyes. Silence. But...

JONES

When people die -- that's it, they're dead.

(then)

You're tired. You've seen things the last few days that regular people shouldn't ever see.

NICOLE

You're right. But. Sometimes, can't you just take a chance...on chance?

JONES

Not my strong suit.

Dead end, she trudges into the kitchen. He sighs. Headache. He struggles with it. Shit. Follows after...

ANGLE - KITCHEN

JONES

Look, I'll check him out, run him for priors, see if we get a hit. And I'll put a unit on some door to door Q and A. Okay?

NICOLE

But. You don't believe me.

He's quiet. If you can't say something nice... She thinks.
Her eyes on the telephone on the counter. An idea.

NICOLE

Then how about you stop taking my
word for it.

Off his curiosity...

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

WE SPEED ALONG WIRES on the floor, ARRIVING AT: video cameras,
reel to reel tape recorders, digital processors. In the
epicenter, Nicole. Headset in place, waiting.

Adjacent, Jones with a headset. Boggs beside. Vijay flips
a switch -- NOW RECORDING. And a DEAFENING RING --

NICOLE

911, please state your emergency --

ANXIOUS (OVER HEADSET)

Yeah, I think I got a gas leak --

As she takes the call, Boggs walks with Jones, offers papers --

BOGGS

So this Brad Durstin cat didn't show
up for work today. Checked his vitals --
no sheet, no gun registration. Baskin
Modeling Agency seems legit enough;
musta been doing something on the
side.

JONES

Alright, see if you can find any
family, friends.

BOGGS

Mind tellin' me why this guy has
anything to do with anything?

JONES

Probably nothing. But she thinks
there's a connection.

(off him)

She's been through the wringer, Boggs.

BOGGS

So that gives her carte-blanche to
drag us through it with her?

(heads off)

I'm goin' to the Doghouse -- two
double polishes, extra spicy. Want
anything.

JONES

A suspect, hold the onions.

Boggs heads on. Jones rejoins Nicole, dons a headset as --

PREGNANT (OVER HEADSET)

-- ohh jeez, oh jeez -- had to call
three times -- oh jeez -- 911 busy
signal -- what a joke --

Nicole listens intently -- RHYTHMIC BREATHING, timed grunts --

NICOLE

Miss, I take it you're in labor.
How far apart are the contractions?
(toggles)
Base 168, respond Code 3 to 823 Willow
Drive, First Page.

PREGNANT (OVER HEADSET)

About -- ahhhhh -- about a minute --
please send somebody -- 911's never
on time --

BASE 168 (OVER HEADSET)

3240 is Code 3, five blocks away --

NICOLE

Hang in there now, we'll do our best.
What's your name?

PREGNANT (OVER HEADSET)

Who cares -- oh jeez, oh jeez --
Tonya. It's Tonya.

NICOLE

2120 -- got a pregnant woman in labor,
contractions a minute apart--
(toggles)
Tonya, we're gonna make it -- are
you lying down? Try and keep your
feet elevated if you can.

PREGNANT (OVER HEADSET)

Okay, okay -- oh jeez, that's better --

NICOLE

Great. You're gonna have quite the
story for this new addition...

PREGNANT (OVER HEADSET)

Yeah -- she's in big trouble --
(laughs)
Wait -- I hear the sirens -- they're
coming --

NICOLE

'Course they are. I'm a woman of my word.

A wink, she looks to Jones -- white. Sweating. She smiles. Continues on as WE PLOW INTO --

SERIES --

...More calls stream in --

NICOLE

Ma'am, I've contacted medical support --
but can you get to the refrigerator --
do you have any juice or sugar tablets --

...Another -- Jones fiddles with his key, worn out --

NICOLE

423, got a carjacking victim suffering
gun shot wound to the chest -- advise
caution as assailant is still in the
area...

Jones watches in awe at her composed efficiency.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Midnight. Nicole pours a cup of coffee --

NICOLE

Black, right?

Jones nods. Slumps against the wall, spent. Unconsciously flipping his key over fingers.

JONES

Impressive. You out there.

NICOLE

Nah, I just answer the phones.

JONES

How'd you know that woman was
pregnant? She didn't tell you...

NICOLE

Can't just hear the words, gotta
listen to the situation. Half the
people who call are lucky to be able
to even dial.

(then)

Her breathing. Rhythmic. Sounded
like Lamaze to me.

JONES

Twice the detective I am...

NICOLE

How long you been one?

JONES

Forever. And no, my old man wasn't the local sheriff or anything. Just figured I'd be good at it. Didn't seem to be good at much else.

(then)

You? How do you end up in dispatch?

NICOLE

Oh, you cash your last inheritance check and search the classifieds. It fit my needs. Could work weird hours at night, take care of Kim during the day.

Kim. Her presence seems to hang there. Ahem, he sets down his trusty key, pours another coffee.

NICOLE

So what's with the key? Lucky charm?

He masks a wince. As if nothing --

JONES

Reminder. That case I told you about. Murdered woman off the balcony, still had her keys. It was hers. Keeps me... On course.

NICOLE

Right, just the facts, ma'am.

JONES

Most of the homicides I see? It's not your robbery gone bad, the gun that accidentally went off. They're raw, violent acts of jealousy. Revenge. Hatred. You want to solve it, you can't let anything cloud your judgment. Can't let the disgust you have for sharing the same air as a killer dictate how you do your job.

She watches his eyes. Muted emotion. Notes the key back in his hand. Clenched tight.

JONES

We should get back out there. Check my messages, see ya in two --

And he exits. She doesn't. Piqued.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jones. Just standing there. Demons in the closet.

VIJAY (O.S.)
Detective Jones?

Vijay next to him. He snaps to, oblivious.

JONES
Yeah?

VIJAY
I was playing around, found something
weird --

A portable DAT player in hand. Hits play, Kim's 911 call:

NICOLE
-- hello -- where the hell are you??

KIM
Sorry... Don't be mad...

A muffled FALL. CRICKETS. WIND. FROGS. Vijay pauses.

JONES
Yeah? Heard it about a thousand
times.

VIJAY
But did you hear everything? Here's
the last part, amplified three hundred
percent --

Plays it again:

KIM
Sorry... Don't be mad...

AMPLIFIED: The FALL. CRICKETS. CROAKING BULLFROG.

VIJAY
Hear that frog in the background?
Pay attention...

AGAIN, MORE AMP: LOUDER. THE BULLFROG. SOMETHING OFF.
ALMOST...ELECTRONIC.

JONES
What is that?

VIJAY
A frog it is not. It's frequency is
electronic.

JONES
Like...?

VIJAY
Like I don't know.

Jones thinks on it. Shrugs, heads on --

JONES
Doesn't give me much.

Heads on. Vijay plays the BULLFROG NOISE again. Leers.
Beyond, Jones turns the corner, into --

BOGGS
There ya be. So here's everything
ya could ever know about our two
victims from utero to last breath.

A weary Boggs rounds the corner. Hands off two massive files.
But Jones barely glances up.

BOGGS
Hey, you kosher? When's the last
time you got some shut-eye?

JONES
I'm fine.

BOGGS
O-kay... Well if there's a connection
between our two vics and it ain't in
there, I'll lick your hairy heel.

JONES
I'll put on my clean socks.

Boggs hovers. Concern for Jones. Brushes it off --

BOGGS
So this is me goin' home to get yelled
at for the affair I wish I was havin'.

And he heads on. Leaving Jones. Alone.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - NIGHT

Late, graveyard shift. Only a spattering of operators on
calls. Nicole and Jones yawning through take-out Chinese.
Quiet. Awkward. He notices --

JONES

You really don't read your fortune cookies.

NICOLE

You hardly seem the type.

JONES

Oh I'm full of mysterious contradictions.

NICOLE

I'll say.

(then; abashed)

I...looked up your pinball record.
You weren't kidding.

JONES

Unfortunately, no.

(then)

Few years ago, I took a sabbatical
from the force. Think I shaved twice.
Played pinball. A lot of pinball.

She sees beneath the words. Delicate:

NICOLE

Why? The time off?

He won't go there. She senses pain. Relates. Dares to
place her hand atop his. He eases away. Stilted.

Exhales. Reconsiders. Difficult. But -- A RING interrupts --

NICOLE

911, please state your emergency --

(no response)

911, go ahead?

Suddenly -- FAMILIAR STATIC -- no trace --

NICOLE

Hello -- hello??

(to Jones)

That's it -- the static --

Jones reacts -- the STATIC escalates -- finally --

DRIVER (OVER HEADSET)

Oh, hey -- sorry, my cell phone broke
up goin' through a tunnel -- I need
a number for Denny's on Havenhurst.

NICOLE

(sigh)

Sir, this is 911, not 411.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - BATHROOM - LATER

Nicole washing her face, her eyes slits.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Please tell me I didn't hear you're
about to go on a third straight shift?

Arriving Maggie, hands on hips --

NICOLE

Mags, I have to be on the line --
she might call--

MAGGIE

I don't give a damn if it's Denzel
calling -- and I don't say that
lightly -- you need some rest, girl.

NICOLE

But...

But she's too tired for a but. Maggie throws over her keys --

MAGGIE

At least take a nap, woman. My baby's
in the north end of the lot --
pillow's in the cabinet, mattress
hasn't been used since... Well.
That's none a your damn business.
Just go. Sleep.

Fading, Nicole nods. Takes the keys, trudges out.

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAWN

Bleary-eyed, Jones rifling through the victims' files. DMV
reports, high school photos... Getting nowhere. Glances up
to a pair of passing OPERATORS:

OPERATOR

...passed the exam and applied to
four bureaus, ended up here. Helluva
lot better than bagging groceries,
can tell ya that.

OPERATOR #2

I know it. Served my time in a skimpy
cocktail outfit for three years before
this gig...

A lightbulb, Jones stares at Buzzcut's *Precinct Record*.
Then finds Tomboy's credit report. Scans the employer list:
Total Telemarketing, Inc.

Moves down the list. Eyes light up. Glances up -- the photos in Nicole's cubicle. Kim.

INT. MAGGIE'S VANAGON/12TH PRECINCT - DAWN

Dawn. Quiet. Morning sun attempting to break through grey.

Nicole asleep in the back. Stirs awake. A DISTANT BELL. CHIMING. RINGING. A phone? Her eyes crack open, focus on the empty street. Down the way...

A phone booth, RINGING. She swallows, could it be? Trudges out -- walks -- runs -- answers it -- STATIC -- HISS -- CHAOS --

NICOLE

Hello...??

KIM (OVER PHONE)

....MAKE IT STOP!....

NICOLE

Ki--? What -- make what stop??

KIM (OVER PHONE)

(gasps)

....LET ME GO...

NICOLE

I don't understand, honey --

KIM (OVER PHONE)

....HELP ME!....

A SHRIEK and the line GOES DEAD. Nicole trembles. But it only gets worse -- A DISTANT RING. She searches --

Runs, scans streets -- LOUDER -- a block down, a roadside emergency phone -- she tears after -- grabs at the receiver --

NICOLE

Kim??

DIAL TONE. Too late. She paces, adrenaline -- ANOTHER RING -- she runs -- spins -- there, across a park --

An APARTMENT BUILDING -- intercom call box --

She scrambles over a bench -- yanks at the phone --

DIAL TONE. The display flashes UNIT 412 before going blank. She pulls at the door -- locked. Shit, shit. Screw it -- seizes a potted plant on the stoop -- hurls it --

GLASS ERUPTS! The lobby window SPLINTERS -- she squeezes --

INSIDE

Bolts up stairs two at a time -- heaving -- arriving at --

FOURTH FLOOR

Scans the doors -- a RINGING down the hall -- UNIT 412 -- runs, bangs at the door -- locked --

NICOLE

Hello?? HELLO???

Beyond, an ELDERLY NEIGHBOR pokes her head into the hall --

ELDERLY

What in--??

Nicole snatches up a pedestal ash tray -- wails on the doorknob -- harder -- again, again, again --

CRACK! The lock fractures -- she flings open the door -- a RINGING PHONE GOES QUIET. DEAD QUIET.

THE APARTMENT

Dark. She eases in...backs around a corner...WHAM! Right into a MAN -- leaping out -- blood from the mouth --

She shrieks -- he falls -- a bloodied CELL PHONE bounces from his hand to the floor -- on its display:

9...1...1

He gasps. A hideous face wound. Dies on the spot.

She backsteps in horror -- blood all over -- only to halt at the PIERCING WHINE OF THE CELL PHONE -- she hurls it against the wall. Shattering.

NICOLE

LEAVE ME ALONE!

And yet... IT RINGS AGAIN. Then the kitchen phone CLANGS. Then the INTERCOM PHONE. A DEAFENING CACOPHONY. Weak, she finally answers one...

NICOLE

What? What do you want from me?

HISS -- STATIC. AND...

KIM (OVER PHONE)

I'm -- cold... Hurts...

NICOLE (OVER PHONE)

Wha? Kim, did -- something happen?
Are you alright??

KIM (OVER PHONE)
I didn't see him coming... The
truck... I'm...tired...

NICOLE (OVER PHONE)
Oh my god -- have you been in an
accident?

KIM (OVER PHONE)
It won't stop -- the blood...
(fraying)
Sorry... Don't be mad...

DIAL TONE. Brings her to her knees. Crumbling in the corner
as the LINE GOES DEAD. Shivering. Trauma.

Deaf to the arriving SIRENS. Blind to the storming OFFICERS.
Guns trained on her. SHOUTING, SCREAMING --

But there is no response from Nicole Baker. Only a whisper:

NICOLE
.....why?.....why?.....

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Quiet. Tense. The Captain solemnly scanning a file. Jones
standing nearby. Shifting uneasily.

CAPTAIN
Turns things upside down. Whaddya
think?

JONES
(troubled)
I don't know what I think anymore.

Captain eyes him, concern. Too close? Heads on. Jones
sees Nicole out the window, catatonic in a chair. Sighs.

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Boggs ushers in Nicole. Expectant gazes await. The Captain.
Snowden. Jones in the corner. She sits. Dazed.

CAPTAIN
Ms. Baker. I'm Captain Lazono.
I've been apprised of what your
involvement in all of this has been.
Feel up to talking?

She nods, spent. He offers photos of the three victims.

CAPTAIN
Do you recognize these individuals?

She looks to Jones -- this a joke? He averts his eyes.

NICOLE

They're the victims.

CAPTAIN

What else can you tell me about them?

NICOLE

Nothing you don't already know. She was single, a telemarketer, had a cat. He was a cop, married. Don't know anything about him.

CAPTAIN

Allow me to fill in some blanks. She was only recently employed in phone sales. It was a temp job as she'd been let go from her prior position, the result of county-wide downsizing. For the last two years, she worked as a junior EMT. Drove ambulances.

NICOLE

Okay...

CAPTAIN

And yes, he was a cop. And our most recent... What do you suppose he did for a living?

NICOLE

Haven't the faintest. What's going on here?

Jones can't look at her. Outranked.

CAPTAIN

He was a first responder paramedic, Ms. Baker. Isn't that a coincidence? Two medics and a cop? Want to know an even bigger coincidence? Eight weeks ago, these three individuals all responded to the same 911 dispatch.

(then)

Your sister's.

She swallows. Floored. Attempts to absorb it.

CAPTAIN

You dispatched these three to her auto accident. But as I understand it, they were...too late. Surely a fact that's tormented you...

NICOLE

Wait -- are you suggesting--?!

CAPTAIN

I'm merely trying to understand.

NICOLE

But --

(re: first victim)

I was asleep in my house --

CAPTAIN

Not saying you weren't.

Is he not? She's feeling cornered.

NICOLE

I --... The second murder -- the message on the answering machine -- I obviously couldn't call myself --

CAPTAIN

Actually, time of death would've allowed opportunity for you to make the call, carry out the act and get home to "wake up" and discover you had a message. Were I convinced of your guilt, it'd be an almost-perfect alibi.

NICOLE

But -- there were cops on my curb --

CAPTAIN

Does your residence have a back entrance?

She reels, disbelief -- A MENTAL FLASHBACK STRIKES HER -- HER OPEN BACK DOOR, NIGHT OF THE STORMY SECOND MURDER...

NICOLE

(shakes it off)

Yeah, but --

CAPTAIN

(re: document)

Forensics came in this morning. Indicates your fingerprints were all over a telephone at the crime scene?

NICOLE

No -- that's because when Detective Jones and I were first there -- I picked it up --

CAPTAIN

You happen to see that, Jones?

A begrudging no. Nicole panics --

NICOLE

What about the 911 calls -- why would I advertise what I was supposedly gonna do?!

Snowden's been waiting. Calmly launches in:

SNOWDEN

Nicole. As I understand it, you were "asleep" during each of the three murders?

MENTAL FLASHES BOMBARD HER -- WAKING UP IN KIM'S ROOM TO THE RINGING PHONE -- WAKING UP TO THE BEEPING ANSWERING MACHINE -- WAKING UP IN MAGGIE'S VAN...

NICOLE

I -- so what?

SNOWDEN

So I believe it's possible you are suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder.

NICOLE

Excuse me?

SNOWDEN

Brought on by the trauma of your sister's death, exacerbated by the guilt you felt at being a party to it. A subconscious identity deeply hidden beneath your awareness could have plotted revenge against those you deemed responsible for Kim's death.

NICOLE

Give me a break --

SNOWDEN

The 911 calls would be no more real than your fantastical belief that Kim is still alive, somehow attempting to contact you. Which is what you told the detective, isn't it?

Her eyes dart to Jones. Betrayal. He swallows.

NICOLE

I -- yes -- but --

Panic sets -- are they serious?! MORE FLASHES POUND HER THOUGHTS -- VIJAY'S SILENT PLAYBACK OF THE FIRST "CALL" -- NO RECORD FOUND ON NICOLE'S MONITOR AFTER THE SECOND --

Snowden stares into her eyes. But she shakes it off --

NICOLE

No -- you're spinning this into something it's not --

CAPTAIN

Your footprints were at the first victim's house. Fingerprints at the second's. And you at the third. And this is all before I've even petitioned a warrant for your residence.

(then)

Do you own a gun?

ANOTHER -- NICOLE REMOVING THE GUN FROM UNDER HER BED --

NICOLE

I -- it was my father's -- I barely even know how to use it --

New news. Not good news. Her pleading eyes look to Jones:

NICOLE

Do you -- really think...?

BOGGS

The facts on the table... Do need some explaining.

NICOLE

Facts?? Is that all you ever see?

The room closes in on her. Heat rising. Alone.

A BLITZ OF FLASHES -- DOWNING PILLS -- OUTSIDE TOMBOY'S AJAR BATHROOM WINDOW -- STEPPING OVER THE BASEMENT FLOOR PANEL AT BUZZCUT'S -- STANDING AT HER OWN OPEN BACK DOOR, GUN IN HAND --

Snowden leans in:

SNOWDEN

Nicole, if this is true, let me help. I can free the subconscious, the pain, the guilt...

Silence. Every emotion in the book. Quaking.

CAPTAIN

Why don't you take a few minutes.

They rise to leave. Jones pauses. But she won't look up. Can't. Cracking. What's real? What isn't?

ANGLE - HALLWAY

The door closes. Jones corners the Captain --

JONES

I've gotten to know her -- even if she imagined those calls, I don't think she fits our profile.

CAPTAIN

If she imagined them?! Look, unless you can point me in another direction, the D.A.'s gonna lock onto this.

He steps away. Leaving Jones and Boggs.

BOGGS

Whether she did it or had a hand in it, somehow she's smack dab in the middle of it.

JONES

Something. Doesn't feel right.

BOGGS

Feel right? You're the first to remind us, evidence is evidence. Can't have it both ways, Jonesy.

He sighs? Conflicted. The door opens. Nicole. Red-eyed.

NICOLE

I... Maybe this all... Those calls... Weren't what I thought.
(to Snowden)
Can I talk to you?

Jones deflates. Snowden's chest fills. Ushers her down...

THE HALLWAY

Nicole shuffles, lost. Emotion.

SNOWDEN

Nicole, I understand this is all a bit much to take. But the subconscious mind is capable of the uncanny, the unspeakable.

She pauses. Inquisitive eyes.

NICOLE

Is it capable of...this --

She slams a rolling file cabinet into his groin -- he doubles over to the floor, hits his head on the wall -- she bolts -- vanishes into a stairwell door --

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - GARAGE

A door creaks open -- manic, Nicole drops into shadows behind ATTENDANTS washing police vehicles.

She crawls under a car -- rolls out the other side -- shit, right into a PAIR OF SHOES -- freezes -- but the cop somehow misses her, heads on...

She times it -- sprints -- dives into an unmarked sedan in the wash line -- starts it up -- sinks low and proceeds to Sunday-drive it up the ramp, out of the garage...

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - SAME

Snowden slowly comes to, rubbing his head. Jones rounds the corner -- double-takes --

JONES

Oh shit...

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - A FEW LATER

Jones barrels through the door -- finds Boggs, Corning and the Captain at the wall of monitors, computers --

JONES

It's unmarked 658, you got her? ~

CORNING

She's headed up 13th and Boulder --

Vijay, at the keyboard, points to a computerized map of the city, a TRAVELING RED DOT. Beyond, a concerned Maggie eavesdrops from her cubicle.

BOGGS

Any chance a her disabling the LoJack on that car?

VIJAY

No way -- foolproof.

JONES

Kinda like your call traces?

(to Corning)

Can you patch me into that car?

CAPTAIN

Enough talk -- this is turning into a goddamn circus. If there was any doubt of her guilt, that's over now. Get me roadblocks, the choppers, whatever.

JONES

Just -- wait. Give me one more minute --

CAPTAIN

Now.

Corning dispatches units. Fuck it, Jones grabs a spare headset, flicks a switch --

JONES

Nicole. This isn't the way to go about this --

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - GARAGE - DAY

Cruisers screech out -- A TACTICAL UNIT mounts up --

INT./EXT. SEDAN - TRAVELING - SAME

The RADIO CRACKLES with his words -- rattled, she floors it --

JONES

This won't end well for you, okay?
You really need to listen to me here.
(no response)
Nicole, dammit! Don't do this!

But he can merely watch as the RED DOT keeps moving --

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

Jones sweats. Helpless. Exhales. Searches himself:

JONES

Nicole. Answer to your question.

No.

(then)

No, that woman wasn't just a woman.
She was my wife. And yeah. Maybe
losing her -- made me see things
only a certain way. Never really
thought about it before. Nobody's
asked.

(genuine)

You said you couldn't trust me because
I couldn't understand. Well, I can.
So you can. Please.

All eyes on the RED DOT. Which suddenly stops...

INTERCUT - NICOLE

Frozen. Stopped in an alley. Touched. Conflicted. Finally,
her quaking hand reaches out to the radio...

NICOLE
 Thank you, Jones.
 (then)
 But I have to work this out on my
 own.

Her quaking eyes stare into the distance -- a phone booth --
a bloodied Kim inside, holding the receiver --

Teetering, she shakes it off. Looks again -- nothing.

BACK TO JONES

Watching. Hoping. But the RED DOT continues...

CAPTAIN
 Dammit.

CORNING
 Nice, Jonesy -- bought us a few
 seconds.

Boggs eyes Jones. Senses. That wasn't about a few seconds.

INT./EXT. SEDAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Nicole switches off the radio -- flooring it --

EXT. 12TH PRECINCT - ROOF - DAY

Chopper blades slice at us -- Jones straps into a helicopter
 seat -- a PILOT lifts us into sky --

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

Maggie double-fisting Tums as Corning dispatches --

CORNING
 Unit 12-62, you're twelve blocks
 back, cut up 17th; units 11 and 34,
 proceed to Olstead Street, await
 further instructions --

INT./EXT. SEDAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Nicole haphazardly screaming through cars -- cuts into a
 parking lot -- skidding toward the docks --

INT./EXT. CHOPPER - TRAVELING - DAY

Speeding over the city -- Jones nervously spins his key as --

CORNING (OVER RADIO)
 Jones, she just stopped on Harbor
 Way -- she's gridlocked in traffic,
 got units three minutes away...

Jones nods to the Pilot -- they veer for the water beyond --

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

Vijay gawks -- the BLINKING DOT suddenly floats on water --

VIJAY
 Now she walks on water?!

Corning reacts, realizes --

CORNING
 Mother a...
 (into radio)
 All units -- she's on the Sixth Street
ferry --

INT./EXT. FERRY - TRAVELING - DAY

The ferry's blades churn through water, just leaving port.
 WE FIND Nicole's stolen sedan, the last car on.

EXT. COAST GUARD PIER - DAY

A flurry of activity -- a Coast Guard vessel readying --
 Jones' chopper touching down on the flight deck --

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

Corning into his headset --

CORNING
 Operator, this is 911 Dispatch Super
 12-721, I need a direct to the Port
 Authority --

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The Coast Guard vessel plows through whitecaps -- Jones on
 deck, binoculars trained on the ferry just ahead --

INT. FERRY - CAPTAIN'S COCKPIT - DAY

A baffled ferry CAPTAIN shutting her down --

CORNING (OVER RADIO)
 ...repeat -- cut your engines and
 await further instructions...

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Baffled CIVILIANS ogle as the Coast Guard vessel ties up
 alongside -- armed COASTIES, Jones climb aboard --

Fanning out -- searching -- a WHISTLE from a Coastie -- the
sedan -- they creep to it, weapons drawn --

But it's empty. Alas, Jones' eyes realize. A sigh. A smile?

EXT. PIER - DAY

Nicole surfaces from the crowd, watching the chaos beyond.
 An exhausted breath as she vanishes into the maze of people...

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - HALLWAY - DAY

Jones returning, worry on his face. Beyond, the Captain and
 Boggs talking, waiting for him. Jones sighs, heads over.

CAPTAIN
 Quite a confessional you gave her.
 Damn near pillow talk --

JONES
 (covers)
 You know you say whatever needs to
 be said.

CAPTAIN
 You went to her house?

Jones shoots an irked look to Boggs.

JONES
 The case. Got us this far, didn't
 it?

CAPTAIN
 "This far" is a suspect waltzing out
 from our own goddamn walls.
 (then)
 Why do I get the feeling you're plenty
 happy she's still out there?

JONES
 (blurts)
 Maybe because she didn't do it.

Instantly wishes he could take it back. Mistake. Too close.

JONES

Whatever -- enough of this --

CAPTAIN

My sentiments exactly. Take a backseat on this one, Jones.

BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

Jones heads for his desk. Pauses, a wall map. She could be anywhere.

Exhales. Eyes fall to his desk. Headshot of Kim, Post-It note address. Hm. Of course.

INT. MURRAY HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

Shadows. Nicole tentatively emerges from darkness, checks her back. Edges for Scar Lip's door. Cracked open.

She peeks inside. Emptied shelves, strewn remnants of an occupant. Anxious, she tiptoes...around...each...corner...

KITCHEN

Creeping, creeping. Empty. Dead silence. Until --

The creak of the front door, opening! Shit. She panics -- searches -- ducks into the pantry, peering through slats --

A figure. Male. A gun. Closer, closer -- right on her --

She slams open the door --

No one there?! Huh?! WHAM! A hand wraps around her mouth -- muffled scream -- BLURRED CHAOS -- terror --

Jones. Oh. My. God. He releases --

NICOLE

Wha -- the hell--??

JONES

Should ask you the same thing.

A moment. Catching breaths. Phew.

NICOLE

You here to arrest me?

JONES

Don't know why not.

NICOLE

You know I didn't do anything.

JONES
And you really think this guy did?

NICOLE
It's all I've got...
(re: empty room)
Had.

JONES
Clerk said he was overdue on the
rent, hasn't seen him in two days.
(searching)
Sure left in a hurry.

NICOLE
Well that's got to mean something?

JONES
Maybe. Maybe not.

Awkward lull. Nicole edges for the door --

JONES
Don't even think about it.

NICOLE
I don't care if you believe me. But
just give me the chance to--

JONES
Can't do that, Nicole.

NICOLE
Why's everything gotta be black and
white with you?

JONES
Because it is.

And there they are. Impasse. Silence. Interrupted by...
A MUFFLED ELECTRONIC BUZZ. Odd. Jones searches -- the floor --
under the bed covers -- a Palm Pilot phone -- RINGING --

An ELECTRONIC BULLFROG RINGTONE.

JONES
What the...?
(off her)
Cell phone... He -- was with her...

NICOLE
Who?

JONES
Your sister. When she died.

NICOLE

Wha--?! How do you know that--?!

JONES

That ring -- was in the background
of her 911 call --

Floors her. Speechless. He dons an evidence glove as the
phone CROAKS. Quickly answers it --

JONES

Hello?

WOMAN (OVER PHONE)

Heya, baby...

JONES

Who's this?

WOMAN (OVER PHONE)

Wait, is this...?

CLICK. Jones' mind in overdrive.

NICOLE

I don't understand --

JONES

Vijay amplified Kim's 911 call --
that ringer was in the background --

NICOLE

(emotion)

Jesus. I told you, I told you...

But the moment is interrupted -- out the window -- Boggs
arriving, exiting a sedan --

JONES

Shit.

Nicole grabs the phone of his hand -- bolts --

JONES

Nicole, no --

NICOLE

He killed her -- I'm going after him--

He grabs her, caring --

JONES

Wait for me in the alley.

(off her)

Promise me you'll wait for me in the
alley.

Considering. Eyes on eyes. Pressure cooker. She nods --
HALLWAY

She races down the way -- shit, the elevator dings --

INSIDE ELEVATOR

Boggs with Kim's headshot, the Post-It address. Doors open to reveal Jones, crowding him back in --

JONES

Heya, Boggsy.

BOGGS

What bullshit are you up to??

JONES

Checking a lead. Dead end.

Boggs blocks the closing doors, checks the hall -- empty.

BOGGS

(re: headshot)

What is this? What's she got you twisted up in?

JONES

Nothing.

BOGGS

If I found you here, Captain said he wanted you pulled...

JONES

Maybe you didn't find me here?

BOGGS

(difficult)

Maybe I did. Maybe I'm concerned about your job.

Doors open. Jones thanks him with a look. Then bolts -- through the lobby -- outside --

STREET

Racing around the corner -- into the alley -- no Nicole. He sinks. Worry. Helpless. Boggs huffs around the corner.

BOGGS

You misplace your fucking brain this week?!

JONES

Maybe so...

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)
 (resigned)
 Take me in, Boggs.

BOGGS
 Be happy to.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Winded, Nicole stops running. Hides in the foot traffic.
 Leans against a telephone pole. Searches Scar Lip's Palm
 Pilot phone: Numbers, addresses, digital girlie-pics.

Stops. A pic of Kim. Scantily clad. Makes Nicole sick.
 Trembling emotion. Suddenly --

AN ELECTRICAL CHARGE -- AS IF RACING FROM THE WIRES ABOVE,
 down the pole -- into Nicole's hand -- the phone SIZZLES --

She drops it to the ground. What the?! The display FRITZING,
 FREEZING on the calendar:

NOV. 12TH: 4PM, KIM. 432-9843

She swallows, to herself:

NICOLE
 Day she died...

Suddenly, the phone GOES HAYWIRE -- DIES -- she thinks fast --
 a PETITIONER down the way -- barges to him, yanks the pen
 from his hand, scribbles the phone number on her palm.

PETITIONER
 You mind?!

She searches -- a payphone down the way -- bolts for it --

INSIDE BOOTH

Her hand trembles -- dials the digits --

SMASH TO:

DARKENED ROOM

A sprawling steel display board. Photos. Tomboy. Buzzcut.
The paramedic. At home. Work. The grocery store. Stalking.
 Each victim's face burned away with a chemical splash. Except
 for one. Still remaining... Nicole.

The PHONE RINGS -- a computer display LIGHTS UP amidst a
 mass of phone cables, mountainous switchboard. A DIGITAL
 ANSWERING MACHINE pops up: INCOMING CALL FORWARDED TO CELL --

Off which, WE BLITZ into the screen, THROUGH a cable --
piercing WALLS, CEILINGS --

SPIRALING through city blocks, CHASING THE SPARKS UP a cell
phone tower -- BLASTING through air -- OVER buildings,
sidewalks -- A BLUR --

THE SPARK ARRIVING INSIDE a Nokia cell phone's wires, RINGING
on a vehicle's dashboard. Its DISPLAY FLASHING: CALL
FORWARD. RING, RING, RING...

EXT. STREET CORNER - SAME

Nicole listens as A GENERIC ELECTRONIC VOICE EMITS:

VOICEMAIL (OVER PHONE)
Please leave a message at the tone.

BEEP. She hangs up. Rattled. What next?

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

Maggie in her cubicle -- her personal extension lights up --

MAGGIE
This is Maggie --

INTERCUT - NICOLE/PHONE BOOTH

NICOLE
It's me.

Concern, Maggie goes stealth --

MAGGIE
Jesus, Nic -- it's Defcon-1 around
here -- are you okay?

NICOLE
I'm fine -- but I need your help --

MAGGIE
Lord help us. Go ahead.

NICOLE
Can you run a reverse trace on a
number, get me an address -- 667-
8989.

Maggie types -- the screen works it, spits out an answer --

MAGGIE
Uh. This number doesn't exist.

NICOLE

What?

MAGGIE

It's not a usable number -- it's from the FCC reserved list. Supposed to be dormant.

NICOLE

What the hell does that mean?

MAGGIE

Means it hasn't been released to the public yet.

NICOLE

Somebody's using it.

MAGGIE

Well that somebody can't be traced.

Dammit, Nicole sighs. Thinks.

NICOLE

Say it was hacked into, the number was stolen and routed somewhere. Wouldn't the end point show up on the network telecom grid?

MAGGIE

I guess? But I don't have access to the telecom grid?!

NICOLE

No, you don't...

INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - TECH CENTER - LATER

LIVE CO-ED LOCKER ROOM CAMERAS! Excitedly surfing, Vijay covertly works his mouse over a porn site. Suddenly, the room FLASHES: Maggie over his shoulder with a camera --

MAGGIE

Photomat's gonna find that a curious follow-up to the twins' soccer game.

He goes white -- slams off the computer --

VIJAY

What are you doing--

MAGGIE

Now I should ask the same of you, ya little perv. Can you get into the network telecom grid?

VIJAY

And why?

MAGGIE

Because I asked.

(re: camera)

Now start typing or this finds its way
into the inter-office email...

EXT. STREET CORNER - DUSK

Nicole paces in front of the phone booth -- shit -- ducks
inside as a police cruiser rolls by, parks. Jumps out of
her skin as the phone BLARES. She answers --

NICOLE

Maggie, thank god --

MALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

Huh. Not quite who I was expecting...

(then)

You rang, Nicole?

Her blood turns to ice. An eerie, WHISPERY MALE VOICE on
the other end. Her vision SWISHING EVERY WHICH WAY --

MALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

You should really block your caller
I.D. But you're clever; I give you
credit. Where'd you get this number?

She's speechless. Mortified. Weak.

MALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

So I guess you've put it together.
Must even have a hunch who's...next.

NICOLE

Why -- are you doing this?

MALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

Why don't you ask...Kim? Oh, but...
She's dead.

Her face changes -- instant rage -- fire --

NICOLE

You listen to me, asshole--

MALE VOICE (OVER PHONE)

See ya real soon.

NICOLE

Not if I see you first --

She slams down the phone. Ire. Shaken. Until -- IT RINGS AGAIN -- she answers, quaking hatred --

NICOLE

Enough of your games--

INTERCUT MAGGIE/911 DISPATCH CENTER

MAGGIE

Nicole?

NICOLE

Oh -- Mag...?

MAGGIE

You alright, hon?

NICOLE

Uh, yeah -- sorry...

MAGGIE

O-kay. Well, ask and ye shall receive. Here's the deal -- he couldn't pinpoint it exactly. The number originates at Telecom's east branch, terminates within a three block area -- 3500-3800 Lancaster Ave.

NICOLE

So what am I looking for?

MAGGIE

An interruption in the lines -- anything that looks like it doesn't belong there -- perv boy said you couldn't miss it when you see it.

NICOLE

Okay.

MAGGIE

Listen, Nic -- you've got something to go on now. Why don't you let me patch Jones in, do this safely--

The PAIR OF COPS walk by the booth --

MAGGIE

Nicole --??

But there's only DIAL TONE. She's long gone...

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Behind a windshield, CREEPING AROUND A CORNER... Police cruisers and OFFICERS outside Nicole's, a few blocks down.

ANGLE - TRUCK

A Ford pick-up, idling. Tinted windows. WE SLOWLY RISE from the passenger seat, PAST strewn video stills of Kim, PAST a familiar revolver...TO the driver: Scar Lip.

Boggs and an OFFICER emerge onto the front porch, Boggs clutching one of Kim's headshots.

Shit, Scar Lip exhales. He throws the truck into reverse, U-turns the hell outta there.

INT. GARAGE BUILDING - DUSK

The sprawling display board, the burned away photos of Tomboy, Buzzcut, the paramedic. And a smiling Nicole. WE MOVE PAST to a window looking out on the street: Scar Lip's pick-up screeches to a stop.

He climbs out. Gun in his waistband, he marches for the building's entrance --

EXT. LANCASTER AVENUE - DUSK

Nicole jumps out of a bus -- races down the walk -- eyes track the phone cables above -- pole to pole, searching. Freezes. Realizing. The reservoir. The skid marks.

The telephone booth. Where Kim died. A chill. What the?!

Unsure, she studies the phone cables above the booth. Thinks. Follows them -- pole after pole -- sprinting, desperate -- everything in her. Finally, stops. Desolate. Dark. Hunched over, heaving. Crying.

NICOLE

Come on, Kim. Talk to me...

WHAM, AN ERUPTION! Oh, pigeons. She exhales as one lone bird rests on a line above. Sun reflecting, heavenly. Glimmer of magic hour.

And then she sees it. A metal coupler beneath the pigeon. A green line, diverging from the main cable.

She tracks it from below, slowly following it to the garage building. Blacked out windows. Dark entrance.

Spies a pile of refuse beyond. A piece of jagged rebar jutting out. She tentatively pulls it free. A weapon. Gets a good grip. Chest out. Resolve.

She anxiously edges around to the entrance. A pair of massive steel doors. Tentatively knocks. No answer. Tries it -- locked.

Creeps along the wall. High above a dumpster, a half-opened window. Hm.

ANGLE - WINDOW

One foot after another, she scales the dumpster. Struggling, pulls herself up to the window frame. Precarious drop. Fear. Loses her grip -- slips -- drops the rebar --

Clings to a pipe -- hanging for dear life -- sweating --

Struggles -- fights -- makes it back up. Exhales. Continues. Gets through the window -- pries it open --

INSIDE GARAGE

Darker than dark. Blind, she eases along a catwalk -- BAM! She screams --

The window slamming. Heart attack. She continues down a rickety staircase. Finds herself in a hallway. Something odd... A framed print on the wall. She cocks her head, recognizing. Have we seen it before?

She forges into the main room -- and her jaw hits the floor... The couch. The coffee table. The rug. The lamps. We have absolutely seen these before...

In Nicole's apartment.

A perfect mock-up of her home. Down to the magazines neatly stacked on the end table.

Beyond, Kim's bedroom -- an identical fucking replica.

NICOLE

My god...

Apoplectic, she struggles to understand...

She pushes through the "front door" into an alcove -- whoa, video monitor after video monitor -- each capturing live images of her home via the web -- tangled cables running to a hard drive, hubs, routers, telephone units --

Beyond, the wall of pictures. A shrine. Video stills, prints. Kim's most private of moments.

And the photos of Tomboy, Buzzcut, the paramedic. And her. Beneath, a schedule documenting her every move -- work, shopping, Kim's funeral, the grief group...

She trembles, prey. Until -- A SHRIEK -- she yelps --

Oh, just the phone -- on a COMPUTER SCREEN: INCOMING CALL FORWARDED TO CELL...

Sick, Nicole moves to the sprawling web-video epicenter.

On the computer monitor, a folder marked VIDEO FILES, saved footage: KIMMY 11-9-03, 11-10-03...

Queasy, she dares to click PLAY --

One of the VIDEO SCREENS comes to life: Inside Nicole's home -- Kim and Nicole making dinner; music over the stereo. Nicole stirring a pot as Kim twirls in a dress -- playful, mundane --

ANGLE - NICOLE

Quaking. Violated. Struggles through the next FILE: Kim in her bedroom, trying on clothes while talking on her cell --

KIM

Beck, he is not -- would you please just stop -- I saw him at the mall yesterday and I swear to god I thought I was gonna die -- he is so cute...

Then something striking -- she approaches the lens -- knowing. Poses, flashes a goofy smile, sticks out her tongue!

SCENE

Nicole flinches. Processing. ANOTHER: Kim's bedroom --

KIM

Why don't you quit trying to make me something I'm not. I suck at math -- BFD, I'll buy a calculator.

NICOLE

And how'll you afford one when you're unemployed because you couldn't even get into college?

KIM

College? What-ever. Just 'cause you didn't go doesn't mean have to for you. Got other plans, thanks.

NICOLE

Not as long as you're living here you don't.

KIM

Fine --

She storms out -- slams the front door behind her --

SCENE

Nicole trembles. Kim's last day. Emotion. Haunting.

And the file STOPS. Nauseous, Nicole crumbles against the wall. Hiccups of tears -- can't focus -- freezes -- beyond, a chair -- a shirt draped over its back. The pocket -- HORIZON TELECOM. Telephone uniform.

She's cracking in two -- hyperventilating --

NICOLE

You sick bastard --

She's pacing -- can't get a grip -- fumbles in the dark -- for the door -- closer...closer -- a closet -- opens it --

FUCKING WHAM! Scar Lip bursts out -- she SCREAMS -- he grabs at her -- she falls -- chaotic terror --

Blood everywhere -- he's drenched in blood -- a long screwdriver protruding from his jugular --

Dead. Empty eyes.

She gags -- spins -- he tumbles to the floor -- right atop a nest of cables, wiring -- A SUDDEN ELECTRICAL CHARGE --

His eyes spring open! Alive?! What the fuck?! His voice gurgles with blood -- insistent through gasps -- SPARKS SNAPPING AROUND HIM --

He springs forward, grabs her wrist -- WHAM! A BLAST OF ENERGY -- IMAGES BLITZKRIEG HER MIND -- FLASH --

INT. HONDA - TRAVELING - NIGHT

A nervous Kim behind the wheel, make-up, low-cut blouse. In the passenger seat, Scar Lip takes a hit on a pipe.

KIM

I seriously don't know about this -- kinda creepy...

SCAR LIP

Don't sweat it -- he's paying top dollar -- all ya gotta do is have a drink with him, shoot the shit, whatever -- he won't try anything --

KIM
And like how do you know that?

SCAR LIP
'Cause I'm right outside, baby. He
just wants to meet his favorite
internet star face to face -- this'll
be sweet for you, whole new revenue
stream --

The car parks outside the garage. Lights out.

NICOLE - PRESENT

SPIRITUAL ENERGY THROUGH HER, IMAGES BOMBARDING --

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Freaked, Kim walking through the replica set, talking to
someone OFF-SCREEN --

KIM
Uh, yeah, it's pretty cool -- you
really -- uh, matched it --

FLASH --

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Frightened, Kim backing up against the wall in her "bedroom" --

KIM
Dude, this isn't what you think,
okay? I'm not like that -- Brad!

FLASH --

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Kim, screaming, running -- pulling free from a MAN'S grip --

KIM
Get away from me! Brad!

She kicks open the door, races to the idling Honda --

NICOLE - PRESENT

Tears running down her face. In the moment. FLASH --

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

An isolated junction. Late. Dark. Spattering of warehouses, low-end shacks. Broken by --

THE THRASHING CHORDS of hard rock -- A GUNNING ENGINE approaching -- the beat-up Honda haphazardly throttling out of the darkness --

ANGLE - HONDA

Kim white-knuckling the steering wheel, bat out of hell. Scar Lip, high, in the passenger seat, hits the pipe --

KIM

You're such an asshole -- I can't believe you let me alone with that psycho!

SCAR LIP

Easy, Kim, how was I s'posed to know he was off the deep end --

KIM

Oh maybe you could've checked him out first -- I'm done with this shit --
(re: rear view mirror)
Oh my god!

KIM'S P.O.V.

Headlights bearing down on them, a TeleCom truck chasing --

SCAR LIP

What--?

Something in the road ahead --

HEADLIGHTS FLASH across a COYOTE --

The Honda SCREECHES across the yellow lines, swerves out of control -- jumps a curb -- metal, glass SHATTER -- careening over an embankment -- plunging into the murky reservoir.

Finally, a stirring from the bobbing vehicle. Kim pulls herself from the carnage, tumbling out the window. Blood spills from her head, a disoriented stagger in the waist-high water. She FOCUSES...

Stumbles her way to the booth. Past a BULLFROG SOUND, randomly ECHOING in the night air. Scar Lip's phone, thrown from the car into the bushes. On the fritz -- SPORADIC, ELECTRICAL RINGING...

She arrives at the payphone. Quaking, bloody fingers clutch the receiver and dial...

9...1...1

NICOLE - PRESENT

With a final bolt of electricity, she's jolted away from Scar Lip. He instantly goes limp. Dead.

She gazes at his body. Did that just happen? She climbs up -- for the phone -- dials --

ANGLE - HIDDEN P.O.V.

Behind a door. Watching. Emerging from the darkness -- hands reach for a line along the wall --

ANGLE - NICOLE

NICOLE

Hello--? Hello??

UNSEEN MAN (O.S.)

Problems with the phone?

She spins -- shock of shocks --

NICOLE

Wha? No -- you...??

Standing before her in his blood-soaked Horizon Telecom uniform...Dan. She can't even fathom it. White. Frozen.

DAN

(re: Scar Lip)

It sure as hell isn't our web-cam entrepreneur. Shame he didn't drown when he had the chance.

NICOLE

But...?

He roughly kicks Scar Lip over with his foot.

DAN

Guess he put things together, decided to try and clear his good name.

NICOLE

But... How did you -- the 911 calls -- her voice...?

DAN

(stroking computer)

Oh I had enough of her words to say just about anything I wanted...

She shudders at the truth. Horror. Rage.

NICOLE

Why -- why?!
 (sighs)

DAN

You still can't admit it?! You make me sick. If you all would've just done your goddamn jobs way you're supposed to.

NICOLE

What are you...?

DAN

You let her die -- she needed your help, but you were too late...

NICOLE

(seethes)

She never would've died if she hadn't come here --

He winces. But doesn't dwell.

DAN

It was an accident --

(flinches)

She was going too fast --

Buried emotion. Psychological turmoil.

NICOLE

You were chasing her --

DAN

It wasn't my fault! You're the reason she was so upset -- and now you'll pay the consequences --

He grabs at her -- she slams a monitor into his face -- rips the Nokia phone off his belt, bolts -- scrambles over the couch -- to the --

BATHROOM

She slams the door -- panic, tears -- claws at a window -- bars over it --

ANGLE - DAN

Shaking out the stars -- stalks toward the door --

ANGLE - BATHROOM

Terror -- she braces the shower rod against the door -- frantically dials the Nokia --

INT. 12TH PRECINCT - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - SAME

A scolded Jones in a chair. Outside the window, the Captain and Boggs converse. Jones' cell rings --

JONES

Jones.

INTERCUT --

NICOLE

You were right -- oh god, it was never Kim--

JONES

Nicole??

NICOLE

He works for the phone company -- he killed my sister --

JONES

He -- who's he, Nicole? Where are you?!

INTERCUT - DAN

Hears, realizes -- rage -- kicks, slams at the door -- Nicole screams, drops the Nokia --

JONES

Nicole!?

Weight against the door, she can't reach the Nokia -- teetering, Dan races back to the main room -- she senses -- scrambles for the phone --

NICOLE

I can't get out of here --

JONES

Tell me exactly where you are --

NICOLE

His garage -- across from the phone--

WHAM! A splintering massacre of wood and metal -- Nicole and phone go flying -- Dan thrusting enormous bolt-cutters through the door -- again, again --

Nicole shrinks into the corner -- the door crumbles away and Dan emerges -- casually retrieves his Nokia, disconnects it.

DAN

Now. Where were we?

Rabid, he swings the cutters -- right onto her head --

SLAM OUT.

JUMPING IN AND OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS --

-- Masking tape rips, slammed against our mouth...

-- Overhead lights swishing past as we're dragged outside...

-- Dan above us, a razor blade in hand --

DAN

This might hurt a little...

-- Unfocused haze of red blood...

ANGLE - DAN'S TRUCK

Nicole squints -- disoriented -- splayed out on the flatbed of Dan's truck -- idling engine -- tools -- and blood --

Streaming from her slashed wrists -- emptying into pales at her sides. A few pints. She panics -- weak scream --

DAN

Rise and shine --

He slaps her awake, rips off the masking tape --

GARAGE ALLEY

He tosses her to the ground -- she stutters, DIZZY FOCUS on the CELL PHONE holstered at his side, THE GASHES in her wrists --

NICOLE

What -- are...?

DAN

Just a little instant replay, Nicole.

Now get up --

He yanks her by the hair -- she teeters, falls --

NICOLE

(weak)

You're the reason she's dead...

He forces her to her feet, venomous --

DAN

I loved her! She was my life, every day. She was coming to be with me --

NICOLE

You could have...helped her...

He dumps her down -- blood streams -- she struggles to see the BLURRY DESOLATE PAYPHONE a million miles away...

DAN

You don't look so good, Nicole.
Must've been in a horrible accident.
Oh, good thing there's a pay-phone
nearby. 911 will come to the rescue,
right? Won't they?

She coughs, barely audible:

NICOLE

.....help.....

DAN

No one's gonna help you. Just like
no one helped her. Come on now --
Kim at least made it to the phone
booth --

She struggles up -- her eyes dart -- a gas can on the truck --
snatches it, lunges at him -- gas douses him, blinding him --

DAN

You bitch --

Soaked, he furiously wipes his eyes -- she staggers away --
but he's on her -- yanks her by the hair, tosses her down --

DAN

A for effort. But funny thing, Nicole --
it still works out for me in the
end...

(laughs)

And those calls? They think you're
nuts, and here you are -- scene of
the crime -- slashed your own wrists --
what a tragedy...

She summons whatever's left -- crawls into the street --
inch by inch, a trail of blood left behind -- just a few
more feet -- desperate -- climbs into the booth --

Her crimson hands scratch for the receiver -- her BLURRY
EYES searching the numbers --

Front row seat, Dan enjoys the show, watching through stinging
eyes as she dials...

INT. GARAGE - SAME

A brief RING and the computer screen lights up: CALL FORWARDED
TO CELL --

WE ROCKET INTO THE WIRES, CHASING THE ELECTRICAL SPARK AS IT RACES THROUGH THE LINES --

ANGLE - NICOLE

NICOLE
It's for you...

INT. DAN'S TRUCK - SAME

Dan's ears perk to the sound of his...RINGING CELL PHONE?
Reaches for his belt hook -- the phone dripping with gasoline --

ECU - CELL PHONE

THE ELECTRICAL SPARK SURGES INTO THE WIRES OF THE FLASHING DISPLAY -- MET BY A SINGLE SLOOO-MO DRIP OF GASOLINE --

ANGLE - TRUCK

THE PHONE ERUPTS INTO FLAMES -- IGNITING HIS CLOTHES --
CONSUMING HIM IN FIRE -- screaming, he staggers -- right into the pool of gas at his feet --

AN ERUPTION -- A VOLCANO -- the fire races across the truck --
the gas tank -- it explodes into flames and twisting metal --
obliterating Dan with it --

ANGLE - PHONE BOOTH

Nicole collapses -- her hand still clutching the receiver --
the ink of Dan's phone number still in tact --

In the distance, a SIREN approaches -- closer, closer --

But it's too late -- WE FLOAT FROM HER BODY...UP THE BOOTH...

A sedan screeches into the intersection -- Jones -- races out, sees Nicole -- bolts for her --

She's lifeless. WITHDRAWING UP the cable to the ELECTRICALLY CHARGED WIRES ABOVE...

JONES
Nicole?! Nicole, stay with me --

More SIRENS in the distance -- but WE CONTINUE FLOATING...
HIGHER, HIGHER...OVERTAKEN BY A FAMILIAR GLOW --

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - KIM'S ROOM - DAY

The GLOWING FISH TANK. The familiar flashback: Nicole tidying up the teen tornado. Comes upon something hidden in a drawer.

KIM (O.S.)

The hell are you doing in here?

NICOLE

Shoving it in a drawer won't make it go away.

She holds a geometry test, F. Kim at the door. But this time, Kim doesn't snatch it, doesn't get upset. Instead:

KIM

I'm sorry...

Nicole seems to understand something's different. THE GLOW NOW PERMEATING THE ENTIRE ROOM. A dream? A vision? In between two worlds?

NICOLE

No... No, Kimmy. I'm sorry -- I -- wanted you to be something you didn't want to be -- I'm so sorry for--

But shh, Kim quiets her. Their hands touch. A moment. Reconciliation. Peace. Lasting. THE GLOW INHABITS KIM'S FACE -- BRIGHTER, BRIGHTER...

THRUSTING US BACK TO:

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

SIRENS WAILING, Jones over Nicole's limp body --

JONES

I'm here, Nicole -- I'm here --

No response. Lifeless.

JONES

Open those eyes right now, you hear me! Come on now You know I'm gonna need someone to help explain all this mess. Please, Nicole -- you open those eyes right now, ya hear...

And finally...she does. A cough, a tremble. Awake. Their eyes lock as police cars, ambulances storm onto the scene...

NICOLE

Jones...

JONES

First time you've done a thing I said...

He holds her tight. Never letting go.

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Rims whirl as a scooter weaves through traffic. Wind in her hair, Nicole cruises through the streets.

Skids to a stop, locks the scooter.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - PATIO - LATER

Nicole sits at an empty table. Stares at a GROUP OF TEENS beyond, ribbing one another, acting their age. A moment. Finally, a smile surfaces. And then...

JONES (O.S.)
This seat taken?

She turns, lights up. Jones. Off-duty jeans, casual shirt. She offers up a second cup --

NICOLE
Got ya a coffee.

JONES
Black?

NICOLE
Live a little.

He smiles at the frothy latte. Takes a seat close to her. Spies the bandages on her wrists.

JONES
You doin' okay?

NICOLE
Amazing how nice people are to you
when you got these things on.

He grins. Takes a taste of the coffee.

JONES
Not bad...

Slight stall. Man. Woman. History.

NICOLE
Ya know. I suppose I owe you an
apology. For strapping you onto my
roller coaster.

JONES
None needed. But you...alright?

NICOLE
Yeah. I am.

Genuine. Finally content with it.

JONES

Hear you're going back on the line tomorrow?

NICOLE

Somebody's gotta answer the phones.

JONES

Well, good.

(awkward)

Be right next door. So. If you want to. Have lunch sometime...?

NICOLE

No.

JONES

Oh, okay...

NICOLE

Dinner.

She smiles. He, too. And their hands find each other. Tender. A future. The moment interrupted by --

A RINGING. Her cell phone. Hm. She answers it --

NICOLE

Hello? ... Hello??

(then; to Jones)

No one there...?

He ponders it. Slight grin. Convinced.

JONES

Don't be so sure.

He winks. Her eyes beam. AND WE WITHDRAW, RISING ABOVE THEM, OVER the endless telephone poles, INTO THE HEAVENS...

FADE OUT.

THE END.