

AFTER THE HUNT

Written by

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"People never lie so much as after the hunt, during a war, or before an election."

- Otto Von Bismarck

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

ALMA OLSSON (40's) is holding court at a well-appointed table. The meal is finished; there are candles and wine and the general ambience of elitism mixed with the buzz of intellectual superiority - real or imagined.

Alma holds a bottle of (good) red in one hand.

ALMA

I'm saying--I'm not contesting the perceived existence of a collective morality, I'm saying that--more?

FREDERIK OLSSON (Alma's husband, late 40's, handsome but fatigued; greying all over), covers his wineglass with his hand, not looking up from his phone.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I'm saying that, to pretend like the ethics of a society, or how it functions for or against a person or group of people--Maggie?

MAGGIE PRICE (late 20's or early 30's, Alma's star pupil, who bears a stark and striking resemblance to Alma), nods, her attention rapt on Alma.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Hasn't always been decided in the highly biased, stone-throwing court of public opinion is a convenient elision.

HENRIK

Aimed at what?

HENRIK GIBSON (30's, Alma's colleague. Handsome and smart, but is keenly aware of both, which can either add to or detract from his charm), nods and pushes his cup towards her.

ALMA

Aimed at making us feel like at one point we, as people, had a plan for ourselves. That we were "better" or more unified.

HENRIK

Weren't we?

ALMA

Would you say we've always agreed about god or sex or race or politics?

(MORE)

ALMA (CONT'D)

Or was it simply that there were
less voices, less easily amassed in
dissent?

HENRIK

Speaking of--

(then, to Alma)

Have you read any of Maggie's
dissertation?

A brief, awkward pause.

ALMA

No, I didn't realize it was ready.

MAGGIE

(blushing, uncomfortable)

It's nothing special, it's hardly
even coherent, it's--I was going to
ask you to, but--

HENRIK

I think it's going to cause quite a
stir, once it's finished. I haven't
read anything as good since Alma's.

ALMA

All those years ago.

HENRIK

It's very special. And it is
definitively, not nothing.

Henrik raises his glass to an increasingly uncomfortably
Maggie. Her fellow PHD STUDENTS around the table have a hard
time masking their jealousy.

Maggie pushes out her chair.

MAGGIE

I have to use the restroom.

ALMA

Oh, honey, don't use the downstairs
one--the plumbing's all fucked.
Upstairs, second door on the right.

Maggie leaves to go to the bathroom. As we follow her, we
hear in the BG:

FREDERIK (O.S.)

You know what I'm curious about?
How you and Henrik are going to
maintain such a *robust* friendship
when the tenure slot remains at one
and there are two of you. Two
thoroughbreds but only one Kentucky
Derby purse.

Back with Alma, who looks at Frederik, now very much
uninterested in his previously very interesting phone.

Alma raises her glass to Henrik.

ALMA

May the best horse win.

Laughter. We return to MAGGIE, who is now in:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - SAME TIME

It's quieter up here, but the sounds of voices and clinking
glasses still carries.

Maggie opens the second door on the right, just as Alma
instructed. But it's not a bathroom, it's a closet. She turns
on the light revealing the usual: coats, old sports
equipment, a rowing machine no one ever uses.

Maggie starts sorting through the coats on the rack, snooping
and admiring Alma's nice clothes. One hanger is caught on the
strap of a DUFFEL BAG on the upper shelf of the closet.
Maggie moves this hanger and sends the duffel and A BOX ON
TOP OF IT TUMBLING DOWN. It's not quiet.

MAGGIE

Shit, shit shit shit shit.

The box's lid has come off and the contents have spilled
everywhere. We, and Maggie, can just make out the stencil on
the box's lid, written in Swedish: "*Alma - Ungdom*" [Alma -
Youth]. Maggie starts shoving the contents haphazardly back
into the box, but she STOPS when she sees:

A PICTURE OF an adolescent Alma, leaning on a man who has his
arm around her. In the foreground, a woman who looks like
Alma is laughing, playing with a little baby boy sitting on a
blanket. The group stands by a fjord; sun-dappled light and
perfect blue-green water. It's a beautiful picture, except
for the MAN ALMA LEANS ON - HIS FACE has been entirely
blackened out, crossed over by many angry lines.

Maggie stares, spooked. Stuck to the back of the picture is a newspaper article. Maggie unsticks it, just a little. We almost see what it reads when we hear--

ALMA (O.S.)
(calling)
Maggie! It's the third door!

HENRIK
(calling after)
Let us know if you need a guide!

Laughter from below. Maggie quickly shoves everything back into the box, hides it behind the fallen duffel. As she stands up:

MAGGIE
(calling)
Found it!

Maggie quickly shuts off the light, leaves. We stay in the closet, on the box's stenciled label, now in grey darkness. Alma - Youth.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Maggie descends the stairs. The assembled party is still talking in small factions, Alma observing and chiming in every so often.

Maggie returns to her seat. Alma looks to her, clocks her mood.

ALMA
(privately)
You okay?

MAGGIE
Yeah, fine.

But Maggie doesn't seem okay. Alma smiles at her anyways.

Out of nowhere, ARTHUR UNIACKE (late 20's, another PhD. Chip on his shoulder as large as the sense of entitlement masking it), decides now is the time to interject.

ARTHUR
I think you'll get it because
you're a woman.

Maggie almost chokes on her wine.

ALMA

Get what?

ARTHUR

(shrugging)

Tenure. It's the culture, isn't it. Like you were saying before: the common enemy has been newly chosen and it is the white, straight, *cis* man.

(then, to Henrik)

No offense.

HENRIK

None taken.

ALMA

Was that what I was saying?

ARTHUR

It used to be that the man would edge out an equally qualified woman because he was a man. Now, the woman edges out an equally qualified man. Because she's a woman.

MAGGIE

That's such bullshit! That's a lie men like you tell themselves to soothe their own latent feelings of mediocrity.

Alma pours herself another glass of wine.

ALMA

Do you believe that someone else deserves my job more than me, Arthur?

ARTHUR

Well, no, that's not what I'm--

ALMA

Then do you believe that, for as many years as I've been in academia, the "culture" has been that as you've described?

ARTHUR

...No, but -

ALMA

So are you then suggesting that,
even despite the many professional
accolades I've accrued in a deeply
sexist and misogynistic
environment; even despite my
singularity as a woman of my
position in my field, my
prospective tenure could not
possibly be earned because its
awarding happens to coincide with
higher education's sudden
subservience to demands of
inclusivity?

ARTHUR

Um, I...I don't...

HENRIK

...I need a smoke.

(then)

Arthur, it was fun while it lasted.

Henrik stands, extends his hand to Arthur. Arthur shakes it;
laughter. Tension broken. Henrik leaves the dining room.

Alma sits back. She looks at Frederik across the table, who
is staring at her. She takes a long sip of her wine.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

Frederik and Alma are washing up. Alma pours more wine,
Frederik watches this, wary.

ALMA

Don't look at me like that.

FREDERIK

I didn't say anything.

ALMA

You're the worst person I've ever
met at hiding your true feelings.

FREDERIK

Coming from the welter-weight
champion, I'm flattered.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

All I'm saying--

ALMA

--Not saying.

FREDERIK

--Is I can only write you so many
scrips before it raises a red flag.

ALMA

I'm fine. I haven't had any pain in
weeks.

(then)

It was a nice evening. I'm capping
it off. I'm fine.

FREDERIK

I imagine it was, for you. Nice to
bask in Henrik's continued
obsession with you.

Alma laughs. Frederik doesn't.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

The least he could do is hide it
better.

ALMA

He's a friend. Always will be.

But she's smiling.

FREDERIK

Henrik's *and* Maggie's. Adoration.
Of you.

ALMA

What are you saying?

FREDERIK

I'm *saying* you tend to *choose*
people, to elevate people to the
status of your approval, because
they worship you on bended knee,
not because of any actual merit on
their part.

ALMA

Maggie is brilliant. She's a
brilliant student.

FREDERIK

Is she? Or does she just think
you're brilliant?

Alma is about to retort, when Maggie enters the kitchen,
carrying plates.

MAGGIE
I think that's everything--oh.
Sorry.

Alma smiles, Frederik goes back to washing dishes.

ALMA
Did you have an alright time? The
fish was over salted.

FREDERIK
I made the fish.

MAGGIE
It was perfect. Another perfect
evening. I *should* get going, though--

ALMA
I'll walk you out!

MAGGIE
You don't have to--

ALMA
It's down the hall. Please. Easy.

MAGGIE
Fine, fine. Goodnight, Freddy!

Alma beams conspiratorially at Maggie.

FREDERIK
You know I hate it when you call me
that.

MAGGIE
And you wonder why I do it.

She goes up to him, kisses his cheek before going.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - FRONT ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maggie is pulling her coat around her.

ALMA
You sure you'll be alright, heading
home alone?

MAGGIE
Henrik's just outside. I'll have
him walk me.
(then, seriously)
Hey. You know it's you.
(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And not because you're a woman.
Because you're a genius. And you've
earned it.

ALMA

I know. Thank you.

But it feels so good to hear. Maggie starts to leave, but
turns back.

MAGGIE

Okay, I can't lie, I hate lying.
(deep breath)
I knocked over a box, in your
closet, in the closet upstairs,
when I was looking for the
bathroom.

Alma's demeanor immediately shifts. She's on edge, but
remains outwardly warm and kind.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

It fell and I tried to clean it up
but, but before I did, I saw...I
saw a picture of you. And your
family? I don't know, they all
looked like you, but you never talk
about them...I assumed they passed,
but I was curious--

ALMA

They did. And you're right, I
don't.

Maggie picks up on Alma's terseness.

MAGGIE

Sorry, that's wildly inappropriate.
I'm drunk, I'm sorry.

ALMA

It's fine! Maggie, please. My
family died. Well, all but my
little brother. It was a long time
ago. Hardly up to you to pay
penance for it now. Do you need a
scarf or will you be alright?

MAGGIE

I'm alright.

Maggie kisses Alma on the cheek, Alma kisses her back. Maggie
offers her an awkward wave, then goes. Alma follows her out
of the door.

ALMA
(calling)
Being hungover won't excuse you
from class tomorrow! Even if it was
my fault!

Maggie laughs, it rings in the cold night. Alma watches as Maggie catches up to Henrik, takes the cigarette he offers her. He lights it for her and they walk off. Alma watches them go.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY- LATER

The dishes are done and the night is over. Alma, spent, pauses at the top of the stairs. She stares at the second door - the hallway closet door. It looms, massive in her vision, an entity unto itself.

Suddenly, she is struck through with a shot of pain, right in her midsection. She crumples, sitting heavily at the top of the stairs. She breathes in and out, riding out the pain.

When the worst crest is over, Alma - now pale and sweaty - pulls herself up and heads towards bed, turning off the hall light as she goes.

EXT. YALE UNIVERSITY - THE NEXT DAY

Alma walks through the still quad, her shoes echoing on the cobblestones.

EXT. WOOLSEY HALL - LATER

Alma stands, resisting the urge to pace, in front of the entrance to Woolsey Hall. She hears a robust peal of laughter from inside.

ALMA
Oh, please. Fucking butchers
comparing meat. Glad handing on
derby day.

Alma takes a deep breath as the laughter grows louder and the door opens. She plasters a smile on her face as Henrik exits, followed by JOHN (late 60's, a card carrying member of the Old Guard).

JOHN
As always.

HENRIK

A pleasure.

The two men shake hands.

JOHN

Alma, we'll have someone come
collect you in a few minutes.

ALMA

(still smiling)

Fine.

The door closes behind John. Henrik turns to Alma, grins at her.

HENRIK

(as a way of greeting)

Seabiscuit.

ALMA

Secretariat.

(then)

How'd it go?

Henrik makes a gesture with his hand to indicate:

HENRIK

Smooth as ice. May the best horse
be victorious.

ALMA

I've always bet on myself.

HENRIK

Then let's hope you have a winner.

Henrik walks away. Alma, galvanized by his bravado, steels herself.

INT. WOOLSEY HALL - LATER

Alma sits before the tenure committee. John, two other MEN,
and one WOMAN sit in a semi-circle on stage, facing us. Alma
sits facing them, right in the center.

JOHN

Considering the imminent
publication date for your second
paper--

ALMA

--And the considerable advance on my second book.

JOHN

--And the *considerable* advance on your second book, yes, I hadn't forgotten. Considering these elements, plus your loyalty, longevity, and the continued alignment of your efforts with the University's overall purpose and message, I see no reason why you're not the preeminent candidate for tenure.

The woman, PATRICIA (70's), chimes in.

PATRICIA

It also bears noting that many of your students have submitted anonymous feedback extolling the virtues of your teaching. It would not be hyperbolic to call the reviews "glowing."

ALMA

I've been very lucky.

JOHN

I somehow doubt that luck had anything at all to do with it.

Something about this phrasing irks Alma. But her cool demeanor doesn't falter.

PATRICIA

We still have a few more candidates in the running, interviews that have to be conducted as a matter of form.

ALMA

Of course.

JOHN

As you know, the decision has to be entirely unanimous across the board.

ALMA

I do.

PATRICIA

We should have our decision in a
matter of weeks, a month at most.
So, no popping champagne yet!

Alma laughs appreciatively.

ALMA

I look forward to it.

John stands; they all follow suit.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time.

They shake hands. Alma's handshake is firm, her eye contact unwavering.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - YALE - LATER

We pan along the bottoms of the bathroom stalls until we reach the furthestmost one. This stall is occupied. We see two feet, facing the wrong direction, and then we hear it: the raw sounds of retching, followed by flush.

ALMA steps out of the stall, and walks, business-like, to the bay of sinks. In a practiced order, she:

-Drinks water straight from the sink.

-Pulls a piece of gum out of her bag, spearmint, and folds it into her mouth.

-Roots around in her bag for a bottle of pills (painkillers), opens it, takes two, swallows more water from the sink.

Then, she performs the specific series of checks that every woman performs to make sure that this or that body part is still in its right place; that she's still attractive, at least in this lighting, looking in this particular mirror.

INT. ALMA'S CLASSROOM - LATER

A small, carefully chosen dissertation class. This is Alma's domain; where she feels the most powerful, the most like the version of herself she wants to be. She is a benevolent God, but a God all the same.

She sweeps into the room, sets down her briefcase. The five other STUDENTS in the class perk up, open their laptops. One chair, MAGGIE'S, is NOTICEABLY ABSENT.

ALMA
Katie, you'll be presenting today,
with critique and interrogation by
Maggie. Begin when you're ready to--

Alma turns, abruptly stops. She sees the empty chair.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Has anyone heard from Maggie?

KATIE BALLARD (late 20's, plagued by a bad case of Imposter Syndrome, and someone we might recognize from Alma's dinner party), looks around at her peers before answering:

KATIE
I haven't seen her. But she's off-campus, so.

Alma looks at her phone.

ALMA
Ah, well. More will be revealed.
Katie, let's pair you with Arthur,
instead.

KATIE
But--

ALMA
Whenever you're ready.

Alma sits. Katie stands, begins reading from her paper. And Maggie's desk remains empty. Alma is visibly annoyed, but tries to shake it off.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ALMA'S OFFICE - YALE UNIVERSITY - LATER

Alma approaches her office, her phone out, texting.

We see the text on screen:

FROM: FREDERIK - "How did it go w the tenure committee?"

ALMA - "Simple and excruciating. A few more weeks. Thanks for checking in xx"

FREDERIK - "I'm sure you blew those blowhards away. Making cacciatore tonight. See you for dinner?"

Alma is about to respond, but instead she opens a new text, to HENRIK: "Want to--" But then she LOOKS UP, and sees MAGGIE waiting for her by her office door. Alma pockets her phone.

Even though it's only been a night, Maggie looks like she hasn't slept in weeks. Suddenly, an IMAGE OF THE HALLWAY DOOR flashes on the screen. Alma shakes her head, rights herself.

ALMA

I did mean it, that being hungover
wouldn't excuse you from class.

MAGGIE

Can we talk?

Alma takes in Maggie's stricken face.

ALMA

Are you alright?

MAGGIE

Can we just talk inside?

But suddenly, Maggie's face goes slack. She's looking at something over Alma's shoulder. Alma turns, and sees HENRIK stopped, feet away.

ALMA

Henry, hi--give us just a second,
okay? Unless--

Alma turns to Maggie, but sees the panic on Maggie's face.

MAGGIE

(small)

Can we please just go inside.

Alma turns back to Henrik. He, too, looks far worse for wear.

Alma, her heart sinking with portentous knowledge of what's to come, nods and ushers Maggie into her office, shutting the door behind them.

INT. ALMA'S OFFICE - YALE UNIVERSITY - SAME TIME

A Scandinavian office in WASP-Y New Haven. White wood, soft lighting, warm blankets, and books everywhere. Alma draws two chairs together, facing each other. Maggie sits. Alma stays standing.

ALMA

Do you want some tea?

Maggie shakes her head no.

ALMA (CONT'D)

There's some coffee, too. Or I think I have some...but they might be stale. Ah, yes. Stale.

MAGGIE

Can you--can you please just sit?
(then)
Sorry.

Alma does. She looks at Maggie.

ALMA

...Did something happen?

MAGGIE

I don't want to tell you.

ALMA

Why not?

MAGGIE

I'm worried about what you'll think of me. If you'll never be able to see me the same way. And because telling you would make it real.

A beat. Alma waits for Maggie to go on. She doesn't.

ALMA

You don't have to say it.

MAGGIE

(shaking her head; softly)
I do. I didn't want to have to. But I do.

During this next monologue, we stayed on Alma's face.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Henrik walked me home after your party, like I said he would. It was friendly. The way it usually is. Which, I guess, probably is a little flirty. I don't know, it's hard for me to turn that version of myself off, the student in dire need of approval. The girl who needs a man to like her. Or want her. I don't know.

(then)

Alex wasn't home, they're still in Boston. Henrik asked if he could come in for a nightcap;

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I said sure. I don't even know what I poured us. It was something Alex brought home from a party a few weeks ago. But I guess I should remember it, shouldn't I? Because if I don't then I'll be crucified, or called a liar, or a fake, or something. Someone will seize on that detail and make a meal out of it.

ALMA

It's okay, Maggie, you don't have to keep going.

MAGGIE

Yes, I do.

(then)

I think he was already pretty wasted. You know how he gets. We were talking about my work, my paper, when all of a sudden he started asking me all sorts of inappropriate questions about Alex, about what our sex was like, if we'd ever had any men in our relationship. It was funny at first. Or, if not funny, I don't know, manageable. I could understand the size of it. And you know Henrik is so beloved in this program. Everyone is so fucking obsessed with him. Even me.

(then)

When he first kissed me, I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything, so he kept going. And then I said 'No,' and he still kept going. And then...

(then)

While it was happening I kept looking at this cereal box Alex had left on top of the fridge. We were on the couch and over his shoulder I could see where the cereal box was ripped, at the top, the cardboard just kind of spilling open...and I kept thinking how stupid it was that I hadn't noticed it sooner. That we would definitely get mice coming back into the apartment because it's cold, you know, if I didn't close it up.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

When he left, the first thing I did was pour the cereal into a Tupperware and put it back on top of the fridge. Isn't that so ridiculous? I recycled a fucking cereal box immediately after I was raped.

A long beat. Alma is still.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

He *raped* me. I wanted to tell you, because I trust you and...you know what my mother is like. She'd start crying and ask why *I* did this to *her*.

Maggie looks at Alma. A long moment passes between them. When she speaks, Alma's demeanor is perfunctory, verging on cold.

ALMA

Who else knows about this?

MAGGIE

Just you. So far.

ALMA

And why me?

Maggie is taken aback. She studies Alma.

MAGGIE

Because...I trust you? Because I thought...it's the right thing to do, isn't it? To tell somebody?

(then)

Because I thought...we're friends, aren't we?

Alma is silent.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

...And because of your history, I thought--

ALMA

(scalpel sharp)

What do you mean, my history?

MAGGIE

Nothing, I--I didn't mean anything--

ALMA
You said it, so you must have meant
it. What did you mean?

MAGGIE
(stammering)
I-I meant your history supporting
women. In the department. That's
all.

A beat. Alma takes a deep breath.

ALMA
What do you want to do?

MAGGIE
What do you mean, what do I want to
do?

ALMA
Why did you decide to tell me? To
bring me into this?

MAGGIE
Because...because I want him to
pay.
(again, with feeling)
I want him to *suffer*. Don't you?

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - FRONT ENTRYWAY - LATER THAT EVENING

Alma, exhausted, takes off her coat; puts down her keys and
bag. She hears faint music and fire going in the other room,
and wishes more than on any other night in her life, that she
was alone on this one.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - FREDERIK'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Alma tries to pass by the ajar door of Frederik's study
without him seeing her. But he calls out--

FREDERIK (O.S.)
It's late.

Alma backpedals. Stands in the doorjamb of the study.

ALMA
I'm sorry. The paper.

FREDERIK
Of course, the paper.

ALMA
If I don't publish this month--

FREDERIK
--your position isn't secure, etc.
etc. I know. I get it.

ALMA
Publish or perish.

FREDERIK
Publish or perish.

A familiar, well-trodden argument between husband and wife.

ALMA
I missed the cacciatore.

FREDERIK
I left some in the oven.

ALMA
I don't deserve you.

A sweet sentiment that sours in the air as soon as Alma speaks it.

FREDERIK
Did something happen with the
tenure committee?

Alma shakes her head no.

ALMA
Who did you see today?

Frederik laughs.

ALMA (CONT'D)
What?

FREDERIK
Oh, so now you take an interest in
my work?

ALMA
I've never not been interested.

FREDERIK
Alma, please. We are too old and
too married to lie to each other so
blatantly.

ALMA
Are we so old?

FREDERIK
I saw that teenager who hates me,
the woman who is lying to herself
about her husband's cheating, and
another patient. New. A referral
from Tim? That psychiatrist I told
you about?

ALMA
I thought he annoyed you.
Interesting?

FREDERIK
Remains to be seen.

A beat.

ALMA
What would you...

FREDERIK
...yes?

ALMA
Have you ever disagreed with one of
your patients? Over a...sensitive
issue?

FREDERIK
(shrugs)
Of course. Most people aren't
looking to change when they come to
therapy, they're looking to be
right. And most are, inevitably,
wrong.

ALMA
But did you ever tell them so?

Frederik tips his head back, thinking.

FREDERIK
One time. Years ago, when I was
still an LMFT. I had a patient, a
young woman. I believe I told her
that she was "Lacking the necessary
perspective to be a mature adult."
And she never came in again. We'd
worked together for four years.
(then)
Why? What is this about?

A beat.

ALMA

Nothing. I don't know. I don't know
what's wrong with me. I'm starving.

FREDERIK

It's in the oven.

ALMA

Again: I don't deserve you.

FREDERIK

Again: no one is contesting that.
(then)
Did something happen? With a
student?

ALMA

No. I just wonder...if I can be
cold, sometimes.

FREDERIK

Cold? You?

ALMA

I mean it.

Frederik thinks.

FREDERIK

Impenetrable, maybe. Aloof, sure.
But no, I don't think you're cold.
Or unfeeling.

ALMA

I didn't say unfeeling.

After a beat, she turns, walks away.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - LATER

Oven mitts on, Alma is taking out the large Le Creuset of
Cacciatore from the oven. She places it on the stove.

The microwave above the oven dings, and Alma pulls out a
steaming bowl of pasta.

She gets out a fork, is going to get out a knife and a nice
cloth napkin when she pauses, considering the vat of chicken.
Abruptly, she DIGS IN RAVENOUSLY, eating the chicken forkful
by forkful, varying it with forkful of pasta, barely chewing
between bites.

FREDERIK (O.S.)
(calling)
I'm headed up to bed.

Alma turns and spits her bite into the prep sink.

ALMA
(calling)
Not far behind you!

Alma uncorks a nearby bottle of wine, washes down her meal.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Tipsy, Alma stops in front of that same hall closet. She waits, listens. No sounds from the master bedroom.

This time, Alma opens the door. Liquid courage. She pulls her phone out of her back pocket, turns on the flashlight, and roots around on the floor of the closet. She moves aside the DUFFEL BAG, to reveal the box that Maggie shoddily put back together.

Alma sees the picture we noticed before sticking out of the top of the box. She pulls it out. THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE THAT USED TO BE ATTACHED TO IT IS NO LONGER THERE. Alma is about to panic, when her PHONE BUZZES. Frustrated, she grabs it.

We INSERT ON: Alma's phone, multiple e-mail notifications, gone ignored--assignments to grade, student questions, requests for speaking engagements...she's falling behind.

ALMA
Fuck.

A beat passes. Alma's paralyzed. Then:

FREDERIK (O.S.)
(calling)
Alma? Are you coming?

Alma pulls herself together. Shuts off the light with a definitive click.

ALMA
(calling back)
I have to work, love. I'll try not
to wake you.

Even from here, we can hear Frederik sigh.

EXT. YALE UNIVERSITY - FACULTY PARKING LOT - THE NEXT MORNING

Alma parks her old school BMW, locks it. She starts walking towards her office when:

HENRIK (O.S.)
Alma, wait up.

Alma stops, doesn't immediately turn.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
Alma!

Henrik runs to catch up with her. She fumbles her keys. He picks them up for her, hands them over. She looks at him: five o'clock shadow, a long wool coat with the collar half tucked, desperation vibrating the air around him.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
She talked to you.

ALMA
I don't know what you're--

HENRIK
Don't bullshit me. Fuck. She got to you first. I was hoping to--fuck.

ALMA
I have to go, Henrik.

Henrik grabs her arm, Alma pulls away, backing towards her car, as if frightened. Henrik makes a gesture of surrender.

HENRIK
Okay, okay.
(then)
Can we at least--please let me tell you my side of things. Please. Coffee?

Alma doesn't respond.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
I'm your friend, Alma. I've been more than your friend. I'm your colleague and your champion and your...and that doesn't go away because of one thing one girl said. That's years. Years, in exchange for one coffee. Please.

Off Alma:

INT. CODY'S DINER - OUTSKIRTS OF NEW HAVEN - LATER

Henrik and Alma sit across from each other, mugs of coffee in front of them. Alma hasn't touched hers; Henrik is pouring cream and sugar into his.

HENRIK

Look. I don't even know where to begin with this. I don't know what she told you; I don't know what's going around the school, with the faculty...I don't know. I'm sure as shit off the board for tenure, so, congratulations.

Henrik takes a deep breath in. Sips his coffee. He puts another sugar in it.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

That was a joke. Kind of. I told myself I'd avoid insincere vitriol.

ALMA

Only the sincere kind, then?

HENRIK

I know that I sound like one of *those guys*, but I feel like there's no way to avoid clichés with this...thing. In fact, everything about it feels like a fucking cliché, like a script written by the cruelest god and here I am, a poor man's Adam, playing it out.

(then)

And I know that by saying that, I am making myself out to be the victim, a blameless entity in this fucking ouroboros of he said/she said. But see, this is what I mean: I'm damned if I do, damned if I don't. Everything I say is something that has been said before by someone in my position, who was probably guilty, and therefore I am guilty by association. But--

Just then, a WAITRESS (20's), APPROACHES.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything besides coffee?

Simultaneously:

ALMA
No, thank you.

HENRIK
Yes, please.

Alma stares at him, disbelievingly. If Henrik notices this, he does not acknowledge it.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
I'll have a short stack and a side of bacon. Do you have any sausage patties?

WAITRESS
We do.

HENRIK
Two of those, and some maple syrup, if you've got it. Thank you.

He smiles, and the waitress melts a little.

WAITRESS
(to Alma)
Nothing for you?

Alma shakes her head. The waitress nods and heads back to input their order. Alma watches her go...she could be college age, someone on scholarship, paying their way at the University...she looks back at Alma. Smiles. Alma looks away.

ALMA
Short stack?

HENRIK
Yeah, a smaller stack of pancakes.

ALMA
I didn't think anyone used that phrase outside of John Wayne movies.

HENRIK
I'm not sure even he used it. I don't know, it's a family phrase.

ALMA
A family phrase.

A moment. The tension broken before it appears again.

Henrik moves his coffee cup and attendant detritus of sugar packets aside. Looks seriously at Alma.

HENRIK

It's not true, Alma. It's not.

(then)

I am going to assume, even if you don't say anything, that the fact that you're not walking out on me right now means you're open to listening, which--in all seriousness--means the world to me. You would be shocked--well, maybe you wouldn't. But it all happened so quickly, like wildebeest scattering from an approaching lion. One minute, you're part of a pack, the next minute, your leg is in the jaws of some apex predator and everyone is thinking "Damn, glad it wasn't me."

ALMA

I'm not sure that's what everyone is thinking.

HENRIK

What's that quote? "There are no poor people in America, only temporarily embarrassed millionaires?"

ALMA

Steinbeck said some of that.

HENRIK

What I mean to say is: we all imagine we are going to be billionaires, but we are far closer--collectively--to being impoverished than to being wildly rich. And we are all--you and me, people like us--far closer to being fucking *cancelled* than getting tenure, I promise you.

The waitress drops off Henrik's food. Alma looks out towards the street to hide her face from the waitress. Henrik clocks this, laughs. The waitress leaves.

ALMA

What?

HENRIK

Nothing. It's just, you know. I infect people now. I'm contagious. A leper sans colony.

Henrik starts eating.

ALMA

Are you going to tell me why it's not true? Or did you beg my counsel in hopes that I would be one of the few not already bearing torches and pitchforks?

Alma hands Henrik a napkin from the dispenser on the table. He wipes his mouth, his fingers.

HENRIK

I caught Maggie cheating a few months ago. I didn't think anything of it, really. I talked to her, she said she was under enormous pressure, trouble at home, etc. etc. I gave her a pass.

He pauses, takes a bite. Chews.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

But then--do you remember her dissertation? The one I was so *fond* of? Well, it turns out: she plagiarized it. At least, all of it that I read. I found out right before our party the other night.

ALMA

How?

HENRIK

I had a feeling. It was too...*perfect*. Too neat. Then I did a reverse text search from an electronic document. It's not complicated.

ALMA

So you brought it up, in public...why? To draw her out?

HENRIK

Exactly. I wanted to see how she would react. Especially in your company. And I thought I had enough evidence, but I still wasn't sure. So I waited for her after dinner.

(then)

We did go back to her apartment that night. I did ask her for a nightcap.

(MORE)

HENRIK (CONT'D)

I was, believe it or not, nervous. I don't like confronting anyone, much less someone as well-loved and well-connected as Maggie. You know how much her family has put into this institution.

Alma nods.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

Right. Well, we had the drinks. She said her "partner" was out of town. Truthfully, and I know this sounds so brutally *male*, but I thought she was coming on to *me*. And I was terrified, you know, because of the...

He gestures, vaguely.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

The fucking...climate. Of higher education these days. I wanted to get out of there as fast as possible. I knew it was a mistake as soon as I was up there. But I forced myself, I told her I knew about her dissertation, about her cheating. She seemed calm. She didn't even deny it. But then, the next day...this...*story*. This utter fabrication. And now it's going to follow me everywhere, this one woman's word against a lifetime of hard work and good deeds and busting my fucking ass through red tape and I'll never be able to claw my way out of it. I'll never be free, even if exonerated. Isn't that punishment enough? I may never teach at this level again, if she keeps going. Do I really have to lose my friends, too...?

Henrik puts his hand on Alma's on the table. She doesn't immediately pull away, but she does, eventually, move her hand into her lap. Henrik puts down his fork.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

They're going to want to speak with you. Especially since it was after your party that all this...happened.

Alma's head snaps up.

ALMA
Are you threatening me?

HENRIK
Of course not. Just stating a fact.
Giving you ample warning.

Alma nods.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
I never told anyone about us.

ALMA
Why would you?

HENRIK
Did you?

ALMA
What do you think?

A loaded beat.

HENRIK
Well, my hope is that you will give
whomever eventually comes asking my
side of things. Or, remain neutral.
My *hope* is that you won't allow
what is "correct" keep you from
doing what is *right*.

He sits back.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
See you at the event tonight?

ALMA
...You're coming?

HENRIK
They haven't banned me from campus.
Not yet, at least. Besides. Only
the guilty hide. And we both know I
didn't do anything wrong. Right?

A long beat. Alma looks at him.

INT. ANTEROOM - YALE - LATER

An empty, gothic, cozily self-important space. Alma sitting
in a chair outside of a closed door.

A SECRETARY taps away on her computer, feet away from Alma. It's been long enough that the incessant typing is getting to her.

The door swings open. DEAN RJ THOMAS, (70's, once-imposing but now so close to retirement he can taste it), steps out, stops short when he sees Alma, who stands.

DEAN RJ THOMAS
I apologize, I don't believe I was
expecting you...

ALMA
Alma. Olsson.

DEAN RJ THOMAS
Yes, Alma, I knew, I know.

SECRETARY
She's not on the schedule, sir.

ALMA
Do you have a moment?

SECRETARY
She's not on the schedule.

ALMA
I think we should speak.

Dean Thomas checks his watch. Sighs.

DEAN RJ THOMAS
Uhm, yes, that's alright, yes. Come
on in.

SECRETARY
Sir--

DEAN RJ THOMAS
That's alright.

Alma, triumphant, steps into the office.

INT. DEAN RJ THOMAS' OFFICE - LATER

A well-appointed, career academic space. Books, brown liquor, and gothic arches housing stained glass windows. A nice framed family portrait on the desk for local color.

DEAN RJ THOMAS
Sit, sit.

Alma is already sitting. Dean RJ Thomas notices this, and sits himself.

DEAN RJ THOMAS (CONT'D)

So-

ALMA

I imagine you know why I am here.

The Dean looks equal parts relieved and uncomfortable that Alma's gotten straight to the point.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

We...a formal inquiry is going to be conducted, yes. I believe with all haste and via the appropriate channels.

ALMA

I know. I think it's important I pre-empt those channels, and go straight to you with what I perceive to be sensitive information.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

(sighing)

I knew this would happen. It was only a matter of time. I was so close.

ALMA

...I believe there is a conflict of interest that would preclude me from speaking either without bias or without the assumption of bias. If I were to be asked what I believe I am to be asked.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

Which is...?

Alma looks at him. The Dean takes off his glasses, pinches his nose. He opens the bottom desk of his drawer and pours himself a double shot of Jameson, neat.

DEAN RJ THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's a minefield. A fucking minefield, these days.

(to Alma)

Any for you?

ALMA

You keep the fancy stuff just for show?

DEAN RJ THOMAS

I hate that Laphroaig shit. But, what looks good looks good. And against all odds, I've found myself in the business of aesthetics, rather than substance. So that's a no?

ALMA

I have to teach, later.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

Ah. Of course. Purpose. Not just Sisyphean administration.

He sits. Takes a sip.

DEAN RJ THOMAS (CONT'D)

So. This conflict of interest. Do I want to know?

ALMA

It's nothing like that.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

Good. Thank God. I'd like to allow myself one less shattered illusion. Until absolutely necessary.

ALMA

(deep breath)

As you know, Henrik and I are in direct competition for the tenure position. I have been led to believe we are the two frontrunners.

The Dean's lack of response is a response in and of itself.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I imagine any statement I make regarding this...situation, will be construed with an air towards those competitive aims and thus, more apt to be discounted.

DEAN RJ THOMAS

(already wishing this was over)

So then. Off the record?

ALMA
...Off the record.

The Dean looks wearily at her. He pours himself another long pour of Jameson.

INT. BATTELL CHAPEL - YALE - THAT NIGHT

A gorgeous, gothic hall. The weird mix of the loftiness of academia abutting the constant miserliness of academia is exhibited by the pathetic fruit and cheese plates and cheap wine on offer. A large poster board on an easel advertises:

**MAKING METAPHYSICAL SENSE OF FEMALE OBJECTIVITY AND
OBJECTIFICATION WITHIN THE NOTIONAL SOCIAL CONSTRUCT: A VERY
SPECIAL EVENING WITH SALLY HASLANGER.**

Alma is at the easel, reading this truly ridiculous title and eating a cube of cheese.

HENRIK (O.S.)
Do you think we're going to have to
spend the rest of our careers
pretending like we give a shit
about stuff like the notional
nature of the social construct?

Alma almost chokes on her cheese.

ALMA
You came.

HENRIK
I told you I would.

Whispers follow Henrik. Alma clocks this. Henrik ignores them, studying Alma instead.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
You look strange.

ALMA
You scared me. That's all. I'm
eating cheese.

Something in Henrik's face goes cold. The lights dim and brighten twice, announcing it's time to sit.

HENRIK
You better get in there. No use
coming if John and Patricia can't
see you sitting in the front row.

He breezes roughly past her. Alma tosses the rest of her meager cheese plate, having lost her appetite. She waits as the hall empties out, staring at the door.

Just when she's about to give up her vigil, in walks MAGGIE.

Maggie sees Alma, stops a short distance away.

ALMA
(re: easel)
Popular discussion topic. Who
would've thought.

A beat. Not the time for a joke, maybe.

ALMA (CONT'D)
I was surprised, the other day. I
reacted poorly. It's not news
that's easy to hear.

MAGGIE
Imagine telling it.

ALMA
I was someone you trusted. I was
not there in the way I should've
been. As teacher, or as someone who
considers you, also, a friend.

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE
Thank you.
(then)
Shall we?

Maggie starts towards the theatre's doors.

ALMA
He's in there, Maggie.
(then)
I didn't think he would show or I
would've warned you.

Maggie stops, blanches. She looks, for the first time, scared and small.

MAGGIE
(almost a mantra)
I have the right to these spaces.
He doesn't have the right. He
shouldn't have the right. I have
just as much the right as him.

ALMA
We don't have to go in.

MAGGIE
I need the credit.

ALMA
I'll sign off on it, who cares?

Maggie turns, looks at Alma a little bit oddly, but chooses not to follow that instinct. For the moment.

MAGGIE
Right. Who cares. Who the fuck cares.
(then)
I didn't really come here to hear Haslanger.

ALMA
(sarcastic)
I'm shocked.

MAGGIE
I wanted to ask you something.

ALMA
Alright.

MAGGIE
I'm...I've decided to press charges. Against Henrik.

ALMA
You have?

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE
And I'm hoping...it would mean a great deal if I could count on your support.
(then)
More specifically: your testimony. If we go to trial.

ALMA
You have a lawyer.

MAGGIE
Not yet. Well, sort of.

ALMA
Alex?

MAGGIE
Someone they recommended.

ALMA
And you went to a clinic?

MAGGIE
A clinic?

ALMA
I'm not sure this is the best place
to, um...to have this conversation.
(then)
To collect DNA evidence. A clinic.

MAGGIE
...Fuck. I wasn't thinking.

ALMA
It's probably past the time of
viability now.

MAGGIE
Fuck and--fuck, Alex got rid of the
couch.

ALMA
The couch...?

It dawns on Alma.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Jesus. Henrik.

MAGGIE
But even without that evidence,
with your testimony, I'd have a
strong case, still. Right?

Alma, all empathy, shakes her head.

ALMA
I didn't see anything, Maggie. I
don't know what I would say.
(then)
I believe you. You know I believe
you. I told the Dean as much today.

MAGGIE
You did?

ALMA

I did. But I don't know that I would help your case, should it come to that. In fact, I might hurt it.

MAGGIE

How?

ALMA

The last thing you said to me that night was that he would walk you home. I saw him light a cigarette for you. I saw the two of you walk off together. As *friends*. Is what it looked like to me. If I had to say. Under oath.

MAGGIE

Right, but that's good--

Just then, the WOMEN'S RESTROOM DOOR OPENS. Out walks PATRICIA, from the tenure committee. She sees Alma and Maggie and is immediately awkward.

PATRICIA

Alma? Maggie...? Everything alright?

A beat. Alma looks at Maggie.

MAGGIE

Of course. Everything's fine.

She smiles. So does Alma. Patricia starts walking away. Maggie watches her back, then says:

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

But I can count on you, right? To support me? Even if it comes to a trial?

Alma is painfully aware of Patricia's proximity to their conversation, her thinly veiled eavesdropping masquerading as getting more wine and cheese.

ALMA

I...excuse me.

Off Alma: walking away, feeling the walls close in.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - ALMA'S STUDY - LATE THAT NIGHT

It's clear that Alma has been drinking, but in the WASP-ish way of getting drunk, wherein you get sharper and more honest, not dulled or sloppy.

Alma is at the record player. She puts on some loud, weird, not-the-vibe music, like IGGY POP or ABBA. She goes to the wet bar, where there's an open bottle of wine, and pours herself another glass. On the floor of her study are all the contents of the box from her closet. She drinks her wine, studying all the disparate particulars of her life.

Alma walks to her computer, sits down at her desk. We see a Word document open to her PAPER--the title of which is:

"Epistemological Thought in the Anthropocene: Technological 'Ethics' and the Cotillion of the Internet."

She stares at the cursor, blinking black.

Abruptly, before she can think too much, she closes out of the doc and opens a private fire-walled browser and Googles a name: "Mattias Wolff." Suddenly, it's like the music has stopped. It hasn't, but for Alma it has. There's nothing but silence and the sound of her breathing, her heart beating.

Alma clicks on the first article that comes up, from a local Swedish paper. Translated, it reads: **"Man's body found in Torne River - dead by apparent suicide."**

Alma is momentarily paralyzed before she closes the article and wipes the computer's browser history, shuts off the desktop. She sits there, visibly shaken.

Without thinking, she begins tossing all the scraps of her childhood from the box into the study's fire. Very quickly, however, the room begins to fill with smoke.

ALMA

Shit.

Alma runs to open the windows; the breeze is frigid. She coughs.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Fuck.

She tries pouring the rest of her wine on the fire to dampen it. It does almost nothing.

SUDDENLY, there is a knock at the door, and all sound comes rushing back in. Alma, startled, looks up. A very sleepy and not a little bit annoyed Frederik is standing by the door.

FREDERIK
Is something burning?

ALMA
No.

FREDERIK
I can't hear you, can you--are you
going to turn that off?

Alma doesn't immediately move, so Frederik goes to the record
player, turns it off.

ALMA
I'm sorry.

FREDERIK
You didn't open the flue, you have
to--we closed it when the cleaners
came--

Alma coughs again, Frederik starts over towards the fire.

ALMA
NO!

Frederik stops, his old sleep shirt pulled up over his nose.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Just tell me--tell me how to open
it.

FREDERIK
(coughing)
There's a lever, to the left--no,
your left. Right, there and then
push it up. Up, Alma. Up--there you
go.

With a sucking sound, the smoke starts to leave the room.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
Have you been drinking?

Alma doesn't answer. Frederik starts to walk away, and
simultaneously, Alma jerkily walks towards him.

ALMA
I'm sorry--

She moves to kiss him; it's strange and forced. Frederik does
not reciprocate or respond. Alma backs away.

FREDERIK
(wearily)
It's late. Come to bed.

Then, as he leaves:

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
Brush your teeth first.

Frederik goes, turns off the light. Alma stands, alone and embarrassed in the near-dark, the fire behind her incinerating her youth.

INT. ALMA'S CLASSROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

The dissertation class is assembled again. Maggie is missing, but there are also, now, two other seats empty.

ALMA
We'll give everyone another five minutes.

Katie and the other student still in class sit awkwardly, looking at their laptops. Alma is painfully aware of the weird, stilted atmosphere.

Suddenly: there's a KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Alma, thinking it's a student, looks over hopefully, but it's HENRIK.

She freezes. Her students stare at her. An excruciating moment passes.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

Alma walks to the classroom door, a walk which suddenly seems ten times as long.

EXT. ALMA'S CLASSROOM - YALE UNIVERSITY - SAME

Alma opens the door, closes it quickly behind her.

ALMA
(whispering)
What are you doing here?

Alma tries to pull Henrik away from her classroom's window. He shakes his arm out of her grasp.

HENRIK
(normal volume)
I thought you were on my side,
Alma.

ALMA
Let's go to my office, come on--

HENRIK
I was fired this morning. Not
suspended, FIRED. A generous
severance package, sure, but only
so I won't sue.

ALMA
If you want to talk, fine, we can
talk but not here, and not now.

HENRIK
I told you the *truth*, and you
blatantly ignored it for personal
gain.

Alma looks behind her--Katie and her other classmates are
assembling at the window, watching this exchange.

ALMA
I am begging you, for your own
sake. Let's go to my office. We can
talk there.

HENRIK
There is no "my sake" anymore.
There's no reputation to save. But
not for you. You now have a clear
path to tenure. Razed and ready.
Don't tell me that this isn't
exactly what you wanted. Always
five moves ahead up there. A Grand-
fucking-master.

Henrik pushes his finger into Alma's forehead. She grabs his
wrist but he keeps pushing. Katie steps into the hallway.

KATIE
Professor Olsson? Are you okay?

HENRIK
Oh, she's fine. The blood on her
hands will wash off, eventually.

ALMA
Are you drunk?

Henrik looks at her, viciously.

HENRIK

You knew the truth. You gave me hope that you believed me, and then you used that hope to destroy me. I hope this comes back to you exactly as brutally as it came to me.

Finally, Henrik starts walking away.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

(to the whole hallway)

Let he without sin cast the first fucking stone! That's what I have to fucking say.

He turns, walks out of the building. Alma turns around and sees that more students and faculty--including JOHN, from the tenure committee--have assembled in the hallway, and witnessed the whole exchange.

One student's face in the crowd stands out--MAGGIE, standing next to the STUDENT LIAISON/THERAPIST, KIM (late 40's). Maggie is near to tears. She catches Alma's eyes and turns, walking quickly outside. Alma follows her.

KIM

(As Alma walks past)

Alma--

Alma keeps going.

EXT. YALE UNIVERSITY - SAME TIME

Maggie is outside in the midst of a panic attack. Tears stream down her face. It's freezing cold. Alma forgot her coat. Maggie looks up when she hears the heavy doors shut.

MAGGIE

I didn't want this. I didn't want *this*, this way.

Alma moves closer to her, like as one would approach a skittish animal.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

It's real, right? It really happened? I didn't just make it all up?

ALMA

If it's real to you, it's real.

MAGGIE

What do I do now? Everyone keeps looking at me like...like I've done something horrible when he's the one...he's the one...

She trails off.

ALMA

You want my advice?

MAGGIE

My parents still don't even know yet.

(then)

Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it. I don't even fucking care anymore. Just tell me what to do.

A deep breath.

ALMA

I can't tell you what to do. I can tell you what I think. But you may not like it.

Maggie gestures for her to keep going.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Look: I know how tempting it is to believe in some form of justice. In the fairness of the system for people like us. I know that right now it feels like the gap between being wronged and getting retribution is one that you can live in, at least for a little while. Until it swallows you whole.

A beat. She looks to see if Maggie is still with her.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I'm not suggesting you bury this. I know you will do whatever it is you need to do. And I *will* support you. I *will* be here to pick up the pieces. I am also telling you that there is no winning, here. There is no version of this where you come out not having incurred *more* damage than has already been done.

(then)

You could be a renowned academic one day. I see it. I know it.

(MORE)

ALMA (CONT'D)

But if you move forward with this...you'll forever be associated with one story, one man's name, *for the rest of your life*. And it will--sadly--make you radioactive. Higher education is still run by white men, and you'll need those white men to hire you, but they won't, because they can't even look at you without thinking about him, and being terrified that you'll ruin their lives, too, if they ask you to work late or touch your shoulder for too long or offer you a meeting during office hours. It, not your work, will be the first thing they see when they see you.

(then)

So why force yourself to justify your pain, your worthiness as a woman, in front of a jury of people already primed to discredit you?

MAGGIE

...So I just...do nothing? Try to pretend my life hasn't been totally, irrevocably ripped apart by someone who will never face the same consequences?

ALMA

You've not done nothing. Henrik has lost his job. He won't work in higher education ever again. His livelihood is shot. Is that not some kind of retribution?

Maggie shakes her head.

MAGGIE

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what I want. I don't know what's fair. I don't know who I am, anymore.

(then)

Maybe you're right. Maybe it's not worth it.

ALMA

Come over tonight, okay? You, me, and Frederik. I'll cook. We can talk. Or not talk. You don't have to have the answers yet. Alright?

MAGGIE

Arthur and some others were going
to go to Three Sheets...

Maggie looks at Alma. The two break into some kind of
laughter.

ALMA

I'll see you later?

Maggie nods.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Alright.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - SITTING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

A fire is burning down to the embers. Alma sits next to a
plate of wilted hors-d'oeuvres and a cheese and charcuterie
plate that has started sweating. She's been stood up.

Alma stares into the fire. She taps the screen of her phone:
no new notifications. Frederik enters behind her, squeezes
her shoulder.

FREDERIK

I think it's time to give up the
ghost.

ALMA

It's not like her.

FREDERIK

She is, at the end of the day,
still a grad student. She's not
incapable of immaturity, simply
because you'd rather her not be.

(then)

Is something else going on?

She doesn't speak.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

Alright.

(then, re: the food)

I'll put this in the fridge, then,
yes?

Again, she doesn't respond. He lets go of her shoulder, picks
up the food, and walks out of the room.

Alma does not get up. She does not follow him.

EXT./INT. THREE SHEETS BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

A shitty bar that serves shitty beer and shittier liquor, full of rich college kids high on the notion of slumming it, safe in knowing they will never actually have to.

Kim sits at a booth, nursing a glass of beer. There are a few more empties on the vacant side of the booth across from her.

We see Kim from OUTSIDE the bar, where Alma finishes a cigarette underneath a lurid neon sign that reads "Three Sheets," the "t" of which is the mast of a ship.

Alma studies this sign, then looks back at Kim in the bar. She stubs out her cigarette and sighs. Heads back in.

INT. THREE SHEETS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Alma takes her seat in the booth across from Kim, smelling of cigarettes and the cold.

KIM

I'm jealous. Tim made me quit last year.

ALMA

He didn't like the smell?

KIM

He wanted me to live to see old age, for the good of our kids, or some bullshit.

Alma is distracted, looking around the bar.

KIM (CONT'D)

That was a joke.

ALMA

Sorry. Long day.

KIM

I saw.

(Then)

How is she?

ALMA

Maggie?

KIM

I know you two were close.

ALMA

We are close.

(then)

Has she talked to you?

Kim shrugs.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I know, I know. Doctor/Patient confidentiality, you're deeply honorable and deeply boring.

KIM

I'm not *technically* a doctor.

Alma is suddenly interested.

KIM (CONT'D)

I shouldn't and I don't want to say anything. As a therapist. But as your friend...

(then)

Maggie and I of course, talked. And whilst I cannot, and won't, divulge the details of that conversation, I will say...when she told me about Henrik--horrible--she also mentioned a favorite teacher of hers, a mentor, who was...less than supportive when she came forward. Which made her feel like perhaps, this person could not be trusted.

A beat, she takes a sip of her beer.

KIM (CONT'D)

I was glad when you texted tonight because I wanted to tell you. I thought you should know. As a friend. That you should be ready.

ALMA

Ready for what?

KIM

Backlash. Potentially. I don't know. These are insane times we are living in.

The Jukebox switches over to Billy Joel's *Uptown Girl*.

KIM (CONT'D)

God, I hate this song.

ALMA

Do you think she's telling the truth?

KIM

Who? Maggie? About Henrik? Yes. I do.

ALMA

What about me?

KIM

I'm not sure I know what you mean.

ALMA

Do you think I have something to hide?

Kim takes a long sip of her beer.

KIM

We've been friends for what, fourteen, fifteen years now? And everything I know of your marriage has come from Fred. I've never really heard much about your personal life, your family...

ALMA

Misunderstanding my need for privacy is different than thinking I have something to hide.

KIM

Respectfully, Alma, I'm not sure it is.

(then)

You know you can always talk to me. On the record, or off. I can refer you, too, to some excellent people -

ALMA

Why would I trust a therapist who violates their clients' privacy?

Kim is stunned.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Sorry. I should go. I'm tired.

Alma drops a wad of cash on the table.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I've got yours.

Alma slides out of the booth as the jukebox switches over to "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me."

KIM

Give me a fucking break.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - MASTER BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

An alarm goes off. The sound of Frederik already in the shower.

A bleary, hungover Alma turns off her alarm, and then sits up, too suddenly for her nausea. We INSERT ON:

ALMA'S PHONE: A slew of text messages and mail notifications. Maggie's story is out there, in a big way. A picture of Maggie looking somber, standing outside of Yale's campus. The story has been picked up by many major news outlets.

Just then, Alma's phone rings: HENRIK calling. She ignores it. Opens one of the articles, heart pounding, scouring for her name. HENRIK CALLING. She ignores it again, puts her phone on Do Not Disturb. She scrolls through the articles, frantically.

But she doesn't see her name. Not yet, at least. There's mention of being met with "...considerable resistance from trusted professors, ones Margaret thought would be on her side," but that's it. Alma breathes a sigh of relief.

She puts her phone down, sees that Frederik left her two Advil and a glass of water. Something about this nice gesture angers Alma. She leaves the Advil where they are.

INT. KITCHEN - ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

Alma, considerably more put together and well-coiffed, is pouring coffee at the kitchen counter. Frederik comes in, his head buried in his phone.

FREDERIK

Have you seen this?

ALMA

What?

FREDERIK

Maggie. It's awful.

(then)

And Henrik...Jesus Christ. They were here, together, just the other night. I can't believe it.

Frederik looks up as Alma is pouring coffee into a to-go mug.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

Did you know about this?

ALMA

No. I was as blindsided as everyone else.

FREDERIK

Did Maggie...did she talk to you?
Before she went public? Is that why
she didn't come the other night?

ALMA

Why would she do that?

FREDERIK

Are you kidding?

ALMA

Am I?

FREDERIK

It's not a ridiculous question,
Alma. It's not like the boundaries
between student and teacher were
well reinforced between the two of
you.

ALMA

More reason for her not to tell me.
It's a hard thing to tell. You know
that.

FREDERIK

So should you.

ALMA

Don't use that against me,
Frederik.

FREDERIK

I'm not using anything against you.
I'm simply drawing a parallel--

ALMA

Maybe she thought I wouldn't want
to hear about my friend in that
way.

FREDERIK

I hope not a friend of yours
anymore.

Alma shoots him a scornful look.

ALMA

What do you think of me? What kind of person do you think I am?

FREDERIK

I honestly don't know, Alma.
I'm...I feel like your reaction to this...You seem *fine*. And you won't talk to me, you won't tell me fucking *anything*, so how am I to know?

Just then, Frederik notices a bag packed at Alma's feet.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

Are you going somewhere?

ALMA

The city. To my place there. To write. Alone.

Alma grabs her bag, her coffee.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Because, babe: I am not fucking *fine*.

She walks briskly past him.

FREDERIK

Let me--I'll come with you, I'll cancel my appointments.

ALMA

No thank you, I'm sure your patients need your incisive observations about their faulty characters.

(then)

I'll be back later.

And with that, she walks out.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - GRAND CENTRAL APPLE STORE - LATER THAT DAY

We see Alma buying a new laptop, the arched ceiling with all the painted celestial bodies above her. She's wearing large sunglasses and a ball cap indoors. She looks at the ceiling while the TECHNICIAN rings up her order.

TECHNICIAN

Alright...

Quickly, in the deft way of good customer service, the technician looks at Alma's credit card to make sure of her name.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

...Mrs. Torvald, you're all set.

ALMA

Thank you.

We register that Alma has given a **fake name**.

TECHNICIAN

I hope your husband enjoys it!
Happy anniversary.

ALMA

Thank you.

Alma walks off, bag in tow. The technician moves on to the next customer.

INT. TINY NEW YORK APARTMENT - LATER

We hear a key scraping in a lock. The door opens--and Alma steps through. She drops her purse, takes her hat and glasses off, tosses them onto the table by the door...before noticing that the table is incredibly dusty.

ALMA

Shit.

Alma picks up her hat, dusts it off. Looks around the apartment.

It's a small, but sweetly bohemian, place. Remnants linger of someone with taste and personality. But clearly, it hasn't been used in some time.

Alma looks at herself in the mirror by the door, combs out her hair with her fingers. Smiles.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. TINY NEW YORK APARTMENT - LATER

In the "living room," Alma has set up her new laptop, connected to a hotspot.

She's rummaging around in the kitchen while it boots up, looking for something to eat. A tea kettle is boiling. She tries a cracker from an old box: disgusting. She spits it out as the kettle begins to whine.

Alma pours some instant coffee into a mug, stirs it, sips. It's also disgusting, but it'll have to do.

Alma takes the coffee, and sits in front of the computer. She registers it under her chosen fake name: "Hedda Torvald."

We watch as Alma changes her VPN to Canada, then opens a private browser. She takes a deep breath, tries to take a sip of her coffee, but is too nauseous and nervous. She takes another deep breath.

ALMA

Come on, Alma. Come on.

Quickly, before she can think too much, Alma types in Mattias Wolff's name, *plus her own name*. There are not a lot of results, mostly in Swedish, but there are a few.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Okay. That's okay.

But one URL heading catches her eye--she clicks on it. We can't see the content of the article, not really, but we see that it is the exact same newspaper, byline, and photograph layout as the CLIPPING that WENT MISSING from ALMA'S CHILDHOOD BOX.

The world apertures. Alma begins hyperventilating. She opens her phone, hands shaking, and clicks on--of all things--the DOORDASH APP. She begins placing an OBSCENELY LARGE order for food. A binge. As she is ordering, she gets a call from HENRIK.

Suddenly, she calms. An idea forming. On the last ring, she picks up Henrik's call. We don't see his side of the conversation.

HENRIK (O.S.)

She lives.

ALMA

For now.

HENRIK (O.S.)

It's always for now. I assume you've seen everything that's out there?

ALMA

I have.

HENRIK (O.S.)

Then, *et tu brute?*

ALMA

Original.

HENRIK (O.S.)

I am calling to congratulate you on successfully aiding and abetting the destruction of my life, and engineering your own subsequent rise; a tenured phoenix rising from the fucking ashes of *my* career, you slanderous--

ALMA

Did you tell Yale about Maggie's cheating?

A beat. Henrik clearly wasn't expecting this.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Did you tell them that you caught her cheating?

HENRIK (O.S.)

No I...no. I didn't. Why--

ALMA

Thank you.

HENRIK

Alma--

She hangs up on him. Begins to pack up her stuff.

ALMA

(realizing)

Oh fuck.

Alma speedily opens her phone; cancels her obscene food order. Then, she gets up, tosses her coffee in the sink, grabs her laptop, and hauls ass out of there.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - LATER

Alma is walking quickly through the city, eating a hot dog.

As she nears her subway station, she throws away the paper sleeve the hot dog came in, licks her fingers, wipes her hands.

She starts to walk towards the mouth of the subway, when she DOUBLES OVER. Suddenly, she can barely move without being ripped through with incredible pain.

No one on the sidewalk takes notice of her--very New York City.

Digging frantically in her purse, Alma dry swallows the only pills she can find--two Midol. Buoyed by either the hope of pain relief on the way, or pure adrenaline, Alma grabs her phone, and manages to call an Uber to take her home.

She sits heavily on the curb, almost doubled over in pain. She looks up when someone drops a half-empty water bottle by her, as a gesture of aide, and then keeps walking.

INT. UBER - MINUTES LATER

Alma crawls into the backseat of the Uber, bent in half. The UBER DRIVER looks at her, warily. She's ashen and sweaty in the rearview mirror.

The Uber driver, having seen and done this a hundred times before, reaches into the glove box and pulls out a black plastic bag, hands it to Alma, who doesn't take it. He drops the bag and starts the drive.

Alma, still riddled with pain, pulls out her phone. She tries to sound polite, but her desperation comes through.

ALMA

(into phone)

Hi, hi, Elias, yes, yes it's me--I know, hi.

She listens and tries to breath through the insane pain in her stomach.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Of course, we'll do that--coffee, but...and look, I hate to ask you to do this again, but there's another article up there...I don't know, but it's there, and I would really appreciate it if it--thank you. Thank you, so much. You're a godsend.

We hear Elias still talking to Alma on the other side of the phone as she hangs up on him. She deletes the record of the call. Breathes.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - ENTRY WAY - LATER THAT EVENING

Alma is still white knuckling it with pain. It's abated some, but not enough. She staggers into the house, dropping her keys and bag in a clatter.

ALMA

Fuck.

Frederik might have woken up. Alma listens for a second, doesn't hear anything. She makes her way to the stairs, one hand clutching her stomach, and the other holding onto the wall.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - GUEST BATHROOM - SAME

Alma rifles through the bathroom's medicine cabinet, frantically. She finally finds a bottle of VICODIN.

She tries to open the pill bottle, but her hands are shaking. She's hit with another spasm of pain. She tries to calm herself: breathe in, breathe out.

Finally, she manages to get the bottle open, and shakes the LAST OF THE PILLS into her palm. Now is not the time for correct dosage. She swallows them, drinking straight from the tap to wash them down.

She closes her eyes. Finally: relief.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Alma, now anesthetized, stops outside the door to the master bedroom. It's slightly ajar, and a light is on. Alma, hesitant, pushes the door open a little further...

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

...and sees Frederik in bed, fully clothed, but only from the waist up. His socks, and the bedside table light, are still on. His back is to Alma, and his laptop is open in front of him. Alma steps forward, and Frederik stirs. She stops.

Then, we hear a LOUD SNORE. Alma breaths a sigh of relief. She walks with more confidence towards the bed, picking up a blanket from a nearby chair as she goes.

Alma is about to drape the blanket over Frederik's bare lower body when she sees: his laptop. Open to a GRAPHIC PORN SITE.

Whatever video he was watching has long since timed out, but in its place are graphic ads of Anime characters having sex, ads for Cam Girls, and suggested videos based on his recent searches: milquetoast, predictable, and so blatantly *male*. Sorority girls. Step daughters. That kind of thing.

Alma lays the blanket over Frederik's exposed lower half. She closes his computer and turns out the light with a definitive click. She'll sleep in the guest room tonight.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

Frederik is up, making breakfast for himself. Alma is dressed, only looking a little worse for wear. Frederik looks up when she arrives, then busies himself with coffee.

FREDERIK
I didn't expect you home.

ALMA
That explains it.

Frederik doesn't take the bait, but he blushes, deeply.

FREDERIK
I have early appointments.

Frederik begins to leave, but Alma stops him.

ALMA
Hey.

She takes the coffee out of his hands, puts her arms around him.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Hey. I'm sorry. Really.

FREDERIK
For what?

ALMA
For...everything. For all of it.

Alma burrows into Frederik's chest, holding him.

ALMA (CONT'D)
I've been so unfair to you, and I'm sorry. I should have trusted you. I should've trusted you to help me.

This level of apology is clearly abnormal for Alma.

FREDERIK

I would have been here to listen.

ALMA

Sometimes I worry that, I don't know. You're there for everyone else, all the time. Wouldn't it be exhausting to be there all the time for your wife, too?

Frederik tips her face up to his.

FREDERIK

No, Alma. You are my wife. That's what makes you different.

He kisses her. She kisses him back.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

I know how triggering everything that's happening with Maggie must be. This happening to her, now...it must be like it happening to you, all over again.

ALMA

Thank you.

FREDERIK

I love you.

Alma kisses him as response. They break apart; Alma playfully takes his coffee and begins to walk out the door.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

You have classes today?

ALMA

No, just going to my office. And I know you never have clients before ten.

He laughs.

FREDERIK

Working on your paper?

ALMA

What?

FREDERIK

...Your paper. *The* paper. The one that's kept us from maintaining any semblance of healthy marital life for the past few weeks? It's due soon, isn't it?

Clearly, Alma's mind has been elsewhere.

ALMA

No, you're right. Yes. Of course.

She gives him another quick kiss.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Hey, you wouldn't happen to have a spare script pad lying around, would you?

FREDERIK

Why, is the pain back?

ALMA

No, not really. It's been better actually. Of late. I just want to be preventative.

FREDERIK

Why don't you let me write you one?

ALMA

I don't want to bother you every time I--

FREDERIK

Alma, it's no problem.

He grabs a prescription pad from his briefcase, writes her a prescription, and hands it over.

ALMA

I'll see you at home later?

FREDERIK

In time for dinner?

Alma laughs.

ALMA

In time for dinner.

As Alma walks away, her smile falters.

EXT. NONDESCRIPT APARTMENT BUILDING - NEW HAVEN - LATER

Drinking the coffee Frederik made for himself, Alma stands outside a shabby apartment building in a far less desirable area of New Haven. She paces, ignoring the occasional twinge in her side.

Finally, a WOMAN exits the apartment building, her back towards us. She wears a bright red sweater. As the woman locks the front door, Alma approaches her, and we see the WOMAN is MAGGIE.

MAGGIE
(jumping)
Jesus christ--

ALMA
I need one second.

MAGGIE
No.

ALMA
One second.

MAGGIE
What are you doing here? How do you
know where I live?

ALMA
We had tea here. A few times
before. Many times, in fact.

A short beat.

MAGGIE
My lawyers have advised that I not
speak to you without one of them
present.

ALMA
Did Alex pass the bar, then?

MAGGIE
I have to go.

Maggie starts walking off. Alma grabs her arm, roughly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Hey!

A person on the other side of the street turns to look at them. Alma withdraws her hand.

ALMA

I know what you did.

MAGGIE

What *I* did?

ALMA

I know about the cheating.

MAGGIE

What are you talking about?

ALMA

I know that you cheated. That you plagiarized your *brilliant* dissertation. And that Henrik caught you. And you should know that we, collectively, have a zero tolerance policy on cheating. Especially for PhD students.

MAGGIE

I have no idea what you mean.

Maggie turns to go, again. Alma grabs her again, harder this time.

ALMA

I also know what you told Kim. You tell anyone, anyone, about the article you saw--the one you stole from me--or what you *think* you know, and I will inform Yale of your indiscretion. Okay?

Maggie pulls her arm away.

MAGGIE

I never want to see you again. If I do, I'm calling the police.

Maggie starts to walk away. Just then, ALMA IS HIT WITH A SPASM OF PAIN. She doubles over. Maggie hears her DROP HER COFFEE MUG on the pavement. She turns, instinctually, sees Alma concave. She almost doesn't help Alma, but finally, she takes the high road.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Alma? Are you alright?

ALMA

(gasping)

I'm fine. It's nothing. My stomach.

MAGGIE

...I really think--do you need an urgent care?

Alma shakes her head no, just as another spasm of pain hurts.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Okay. I really think you need help. I can drive. Come on.

ALMA

I don't need help! I need time to work, not time waiting for a teenaged nurse with eyelash extensions to prescribe me two Tylenol every four hours.

Maggie scoffs.

MAGGIE

Right. Well, good luck to you.

And she walks off, leaving Alma on the pavement. Alma shakily stands up, and hurls herself to her car, barely getting the door unlocked and slipping inside before she collapses again.

INT. ALMA'S CAR - SAME

Hands spasming with pain, Alma roots around for the PRESCRIPTION FREDERIK WROTE HER. She can't find it. Not in her coat pockets. Not in her purse. Finally, in desperation, she pops open the center console. There it is. Right where she left it.

INT. CVS PHARMACY - MOMENTS LATER

Alma stands in line at the pharmacy. She looks pale, and impatient. Finally, it's her turn.

ALMA

Alma Olsson. 03/01/74.

The CVS EMPLOYEE inputs the relevant information. Goes to get the pills. Alma looks shifty. The pharmacist returns.

CVS EMPLOYEE

This is a protected substance. I need the pharmacist to sign off. Give me just one second.

Alma looks at the employee, incredulous. The employee seems unperturbed.

Suddenly, Alma is hit with another spasm of pain. She stumbles a bit, grabs the counter. This gets the pharmacist's attention, and the attention of other people in line.

CVS EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Ma'am? Are you okay?

Alma straightens as much as she can: using all her strength to compartmentalize.

ALMA

I'm fine.

The pharmacist looks warily at her, but completes the requests on the screen. The CVS employee is staring. Alma is starting to sweat, literally.

PHARMACIST

Do you have any questions or do you decline instructions?

ALMA

I decline.

CVS EMPLOYEE

You have to check the box.

ALMA

What?

PHARMACIST

You have to check the box. That you decline.

The CVS employee gestures to the card reader. Alma, hands shaking, checks the box.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

This is your last refill. You'll need to see your primary care doctor before we can issue any more.

ALMA

(softly)

Fuck.

PHARMACIST

Excuse me?

ALMA

Nothing.

CVS EMPLOYEE
That's \$15.67.

Pulling out her card, Alma tries to tap. It doesn't go through. She tries to tap again. No luck.

CVS EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
Try swiping.

PHARMACIST
Or inserting your chip.

Alma looks at them, murderous. She inserts her chip, violently. Finally, the card beeps--ACCEPTED. She grabs the bag from the pharmacist and turns--

CVS EMPLOYEE
You have to sign? Ma'am?

Alma turns back, signs, then turns again.

CVS EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
(Calling after her)
Do you want your receipt?

Alma doesn't even bother acknowledging the employee, her face a mask of pain. The pharmacist and the CVS employee share a look.

INT. ALMA'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

High as a kite, Alma is floating on a bubble of relief. Pulled up on her computer in front of her is her article to be published. Next to her computer is what looks like a plate of cafeteria chili-cheese fries; next to that is an open bottle of Pepto-Bismol.

Housing chili-cheese fries at regular intervals, begins to write, and write fast. Maybe it's the pills, but she's moving at a feverish, all-consuming pace.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

We see Alma in a comfy corner armchair, looking at her phone, a print version of her dissected article beside her.

We INSERT ON: Alma's phone. She is obsessively refreshing a Google search for: "Maggie Price + Yale + assault." We see that all the loaded articles are hyperlinked in purple (they've been read already), and backdated. There's been no news for a while.

We hear Frederik returning home. Alma quickly hides her phone, turns back to her work.

Frederik enters the living room. Alma beams up at him.

ALMA
Home in time for dinner!

He leans down to kiss her.

FREDERIK
So you are. Thank you.

He kisses her again.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
I need a shower.
(then)
How was your day?

ALMA
Almost finished.

FREDERIK
You know, offer still stands, if
you ever need an extra pair of
eyes...

Alma ignores this.

ALMA
I think I'd like to have a dinner
party, to celebrate getting
published. And hopefully, the
tenure committee's decision.

Frederik is clearly surprised by this, but not altogether displeased.

FREDERIK
Alright. Friday night?

Alma nods.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
I'll do the shopping.

ALMA
That's okay. I'd like to.

Frederik looks at her.

FREDERIK

Okay. Sounds good. Whatever you like. I'll get the wine, then.

Alma turns back to her work. Frederik goes up the stairs, then turns back to look at his wife.

INT. UPSCALE GROCERY STORE - NEW HAVEN - THE NEXT DAY

Alma is, once again, high as a kite. Maybe there's a particular song that plays when she's floating in an opioid daze, or maybe she's hearing the Muzak of the grocery store as if it's Beethoven's Ninth.

She shops for her dinner party in this haze. But SUDDENLY: she gets a notification on her phone.

WE SEE ON THE PHONE: Alma has set another Google alert for Maggie: **a new article has been published**, in *Rolling Stone*, no less.

Immediately, Alma's high seems to ebb. Her world pinholes into quiet. She opens the article. It mentions further accusations, a rehashing of Maggie's story. Alma quickly scrolls through this, and then - suddenly, STOPS SHORT. She sees: **HER OWN NAME**.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

"It's what Price, aptly, refers to as the 'Feminist Generation Gap.' 'This woman was my mentor. She's a well respected woman in our field-- one of the only women who is allowed in rooms full of men. I considered her a surrogate mother.'"

Alma looks up, as if people are watching her. A WOMAN BUYING CEREAL LOOKS at her--too long? Alma pushes her cart into the refrigerated section, continues reading.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

"Alma had to fight for everything she should have been rightfully given, and I understand that. But she can only conceive of progress in the way that she achieved it: by subsuming herself to the patriarchal agenda and never ruffling feathers, always working within that system, even when that system is abusive.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (V.O) (CONT'D)

Even when people with power in that system are abusive with impunity. But abuse begets abuse, and now, like a victim of Stockholm Syndrome--she is only able to imagine and live in a world in which her truths, and the pain she had to endure, is the final and whole truth for everyone else, too.'"

Alma's stomach spasms. She looks in her purse for her pills--but when she opens the bottle, the pills spill all over the floor.

Trying not to draw attention to herself, but convinced everyone is watching her, Alma tries to scuttle as many pills as she can underneath the store's shelves. Her prescription bottle empty, she then walks as fast as she can towards the pharmacy aisle, for the softer stuff.

Once there, she tears opens a box of Advil, her hands shaking.

Just then, she gets a TEXT. We hear the text read in Maggie's voice:

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Was this the article you were talking about?

And with that, Maggie sends a GOOGLE IMAGE RESULT OF THE TRANSLATED ARTICLE WE SAW BEFORE, the HEADLINE OF WHICH READS: **"Crying Wolff? Girl Who Accused Family Friend of Sexual Abuse Retracts Her Statement, Saying 'I made it all up.'"**

MAGGIE (V.O.)

For the record: I didn't know about it until you told me. And now everyone else will know about it, too.

Suddenly, it's as if (and maybe it is actually happening?) everyone in the store is looking at Alma. She tries to remain calm but it's impossible. She ditches her cart and runs out of the store, employees and customers watching her go.

EXT. UPSCALE GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NEW HAVEN - SAME

Bent over, like she has a stitch in her side, Alma approaches her car. She fumbles for her keys; her hands are shaking badly; she drops them.

ALMA

Fuck!

Alma gets on her hands and knees on the pavement, reaching for her keys under her car. From behind her, we hear:

VOICE (O.C.)

Ma'am?

Alma is in a full blown panic now. She shoves her shoulder under the body of her car, grabs her keys, pulls them out: cutting the top of her hand in the process.

VOICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Ma'am?

Trying to unlock her door, Alma drops her keys again, picks them up. Her breathing is haggard and rapid. Finally, she gets her door open. She goes to sit, trying to shut the door, when a HAND STOPS IT from closing.

Alma looks up and sees: A GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE.

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

You forgot to pay for these.

The employee shows her the bottle of Advil. Alma, ashamed, in pain, confused, exhales.

ALMA

Right.

She stands, hands the employee a \$20.

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

Uhm--you kinda have to come back into the store--

ALMA

Just take it. Keep it.

She peels off a fifty, hands it to the employee.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Please.

The employee nods, takes the cash. Walks away.

She is about to turn and get back into her car, when she sees across the lot: HENRIK. He's on the other side of the lot, holding a coffee and a bag of groceries. His dog is in the car, panting against the window and fogging it up.

He looks at her. Raises his Styrofoam cup of coffee in greeting. She stares at him for a beat too long, before getting in her car and driving away.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

Alma walks into her living room. Turns on the light.

FREDERIK AND OTHERS
SURPRISE!!!!

A bunch of people stand up--Alma's colleagues from work--Frederik's colleagues. But the crowd remains sparse, with some familiar faces NOTICEABLY ABSENT.

Alma is stunned. People's smiles start to fade. She tries to laugh but she's in visible pain. Frederik, not immediately catching on, tries to recover.

FREDERIK
I know nothing's set in stone,
counting chickens and all that, and
I know you wanted to celebrate in
your own way, but...!

Alma stares around the room. People with champagne, waiting for her to say something.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
The article is in--

ALMA
What article?

FREDERIK
Sorry, your paper! Your paper is
in, and it's sure to be utterly
brilliant and soon, I'll be the
proud husband of the youngest
professor ever to receive tenure
from Yale University!

Frederik tries to get people to cheers. Most do, but Alma notices some looking at their phones.

ALMA
(softly, almost to
herself)
No.

Finally, Frederik is noticing something is amiss.

FREDERIK

Babe?

More people looking at their phones. Whispering. Or are they?

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

(re: Alma's hand)

Honey, you're bleeding--

ALMA

Stop. It's not--it's not true.

Frederik comes close to her, trying to cover.

FREDERIK

Alma? Is everything okay.

And then, unceremoniously and disgustingly, Alma VOMITS BILE all over her living room floor.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - MASTER BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

An alarm goes off. Alma wakes with a start. It's FRIDAY - the day of the tenure board's review. Alma tries to throw off the covers but a concerned Frederik is sitting on the bed.

ALMA

I've got to shower.

Frederik doesn't get up.

FREDERIK

Alma--

ALMA

We can discuss this later, okay?

He keeps not getting up.

FREDERIK

I really think--

ALMA

Frederik, I'm fine. Let's wait until after I get tenure, and then we can talk.

Alma gets up, almost pushing Frederik off the bed in the process. She walks into the bathroom. The shower starts.

INT. AUDITORIUM - YALE - LATER

A familiar auditorium. A familiar set up of tenure committee members in a half circle, Alma sitting facing them. An unfamiliar, stale, awkward feeling in the room. Alma notices it but is actively choosing to ignore it.

JOHN

We will begin momentarily, we're just waiting on one more.

Just then, KIM enters the auditorium, followed by another SEVERE-LOOKING WOMAN with a folder. Everyone is quiet as they walk across the auditorium to take their seats.

This is a very bad sign. Alma knows this. But she ignores it, plastering a smile on her face.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ah. Good. Well.

The sound of scraping chairs. Someone coughs. John clears his throat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, Alma. No sense in dragging this out.

A beat. Alma keeps smiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)

The board has reviewed your application for tenure, and it has been denied. This was a unanimous decision. I know it is not what you wanted to hear, but competition this year was extremely stiff. As you know, you can re-apply in five years, should you so want to.

A long silence. Alma is still smiling. John looks around him for help. No one steps up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's...well, Alma. That's it. Thank you for your time.

He stands. Extends his hand. Alma remains seated, smiling, frozen in disbelief.

INT. THREE SHEETS BAR - LATER

Alma is sitting in a dingy corner of the bar, drinking. In the way of vocation, not of pastime.

Her phone rings. We INSERT ON: the screen - 20 missed calls from FREDERIK. Alma turns her phone over.

It's at the hour where the bar is little more than serious hard drinkers, but it's still a risky choice for Alma: a bar, this close to campus, beloved by colleagues and students alike. And maybe she knows this.

Alma motions to the BARTENDER for one more. The bartender hesitates.

ALMA
(slightly slurred)
I'm not driving.

The bartender walks off.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Fitta.

(That's Swedish for "cunt").

The bartender pours her another, sets it in front of Alma, a bit harder than perhaps is necessary.

Alma takes a long drink.

THROUGH THE BOTTOM OF HER GLASS, SHE SEES: a flash of bright red. A red just like--

Alma puts down her glass. And there she is, like an apparition, like seeing a beloved ex with their new lover: Maggie.

Maggie, with a group of friends, is laughing and talking as she enters the bar. Suddenly, upon seeing Alma, she stops. The whole group quiets.

Without thinking, Alma stands up and walks towards her. She is a bit wobbly.

MAGGIE
Alma? What are you--I thought that--

ALMA
That I was too much a pariah to
show my face in public? Not yet!
Not despite your best efforts.

Alma puts her arm around Maggie.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Let's talk. Okay?

A FRIEND steps in between them.

FRIEND
Don't grab her.

MAGGIE
(to friend)
It's fine.

ALMA
I'm not *grabbing* her.

Maggie's PARTNER, ALEX (late 20's, non-binary, studying for the bar, big into the show *Couple's Therapy*) steps up.

ALEX
If you leave now, Maggie won't have
to press charges.

ALMA
There'd be nothing Maggie could
take from me she hasn't already,
Alex. But I appreciate your
startling alacrity with legal
jargon all the same.

There's something in Maggie's face--a mix of fear of this
authority figure, and pity.

ALEX
Alright, I warned you--

Alex pulls out their phone. Maggie stops them.

MAGGIE
Alex, it's fine. It will only be a
second. Right?

She looks to Alma. Alma nods, exaggeratedly deferential.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Fine. Let's go.

Alma follows Maggie outside. She stumbles, and for a second,
Maggie has to hold Alma's hand. She quickly lets go. Alma
seems reluctant to.

EXT. THREE SHEET BAR - CONTINUOUS

Maggie and Alma step out into the cold, their breath coming in twin clouds.

MAGGIE

So. Here we are. What do you want?

ALMA

(hard and bright)

It's good to see you. You look good. Great, even. Happy.

MAGGIE

What is wrong with you?

ALMA

(a harsh laugh)

To answer that question, we would need a lot more time.

(then)

Do you know what just happened to me?

Maggie shakes her head no.

ALMA (CONT'D)

(clipped)

I'll try again: do you know. What just happened. To me?

Maggie doesn't move.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I was denied tenure. The thing I have been working towards for the better part of my fucking *life*--my *entire fucking life*, Maggie--was taken from me. Do you know what tenure means to me? What it meant?

Maggie doesn't want to answer, but Alma seems hell-bent on getting a response.

MAGGIE

I--no, I can only assume--

ALMA

No, of course you don't. I would have been *free*. I would have, *finally*, been able to put all this bullshit I've been carrying down, and live without looking over my fucking shoulder every goddamn day!

MAGGIE

Why--

ALMA

--and ALL OF THAT, ALL of THAT was taken from me in one fell swoop. Because of you.

MAGGIE

...I don't see how that has--

ALMA

Don't lie to me! You can lie to the whole fucking world, to *Rolling* fucking *Stones*, but don't lie to me.

Alma is raising her voice. Maggie's friends and Alex start to gather in the window.

MAGGIE

I don't feel comfortable having this conversation with you anymore.

ALMA

Not everything in life is supposed to be comfortable, Maggie. Not everything is supposed to be a lukewarm bath for you to sink into until you fall asleep and drown.

MAGGIE

I didn't--

ALMA

You did! Tell me, tell me if anything I ever did, beyond supporting you, mentoring you, *caring* for you, warranted this?

MAGGIE

Caring for me?! *Supporting* me?! You've got to be fucking--okay. Okay. No, Alma. Believe it or not, I told no one about your frankly? fucking *appalling* behavior towards me. But maybe I should have. I mean, *blackmailing* a student? Showing up at my *private residence* and *threatening* me? Manipulating me to not come forward because of some twisted projection of your fucked-up past onto *my* present? THAT is what you call CARING for me?

A beat.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You did this to yourself, Alma. I'm not the only one who has noticed how twisted up in yourself you've become. How deeply destroyed you've been by what I now know is your own capacity for denial. This is on you. You. And you alone.

Alma shakes her head. A scoff.

ALMA

I didn't think you had it in you. To so blindly ruin someone else's life because of your own selfish, stupid, childish vendetta. Because they had a different opinion than your own. Because you were jealous.
(then)
Henrik didn't do anything, did he?
I should've known...

Maggie looks at Alma: sad, confused, livid.

MAGGIE

I haven't ruined anyone's life that didn't deserve ruining, Alma. Unlike you.

Alma steps back, like she's been hit in the chest.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Just because you lied, doesn't mean everyone else is lying, too. And, for the record, I always knew the consequences of telling the truth. Well, I didn't, not really, but I knew that whatever came at me, I could live with. It was the consequences of *not* telling the truth that I knew I couldn't stand.

A long beat. Alma is at a loss for words.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go now.

She walks back into the bar. Back into light and warmth and love and her friends and a future that will keep moving forward, without Alma. And Alma lets her.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - LATER

Frederik is prepping dinner. He hears the door close.

FREDERIK
(calling)
Hello?

He wipes his hands on a kitchen towel flung over his shoulder.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
Alma?

Alma, as if sleepwalking, enters the kitchen. Her whole body is slack and lifeless, save for her cheeks: still red from the brutal cold.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)
Finally. I called!

ALMA
I know.

FREDERIK
Many times.

ALMA
It's cold.

Alma goes to stand by the fire.

FREDERIK
I figured maybe, what with everything going on, our celebratory dinner should just be you and me tonight...?
(then)
I bought champagne, shall I...

He trails off.

ALMA
I didn't get it. I don't know who they are giving it to. But it's not me.

Frederik doesn't move. Alma is in a rare position of vulnerability.

ALMA (CONT'D)
(flat)
I should've known.
(MORE)

ALMA (CONT'D)

I should've known that right when I was closest to what I've always wanted, right when I was getting comfortable, slackening my never-ending vigilance...it would all be taken from me.

FREDERIK

Here, sit.

Alma doesn't sit. She turns to face Frederik.

ALMA

I've never told you the truth.

Frederik knows this, of course, and though he has always claimed to want the truth, now that it's here, facing him... he's not so sure.

FREDERIK

That's alright, my love. It's been an awful day, a horrible couple of weeks, maybe we just--

Alma looks at him with something like disgust.

ALMA

Oh, Frederik. Now is not the time to petition me for cowardice.

(then)

I told you that when I was a child in Sweden, my father's best friend, a man I regarded as a second father or a beloved uncle, physically assaulted me. That he abused me. Sexually.

Frederik nods, dreading what's coming next.

ALMA (CONT'D)

But I wasn't a child. I was sixteen.

FREDERIK

...That's still *incredibly* young--

But once she's begun, she cannot stop.

ALMA

And he didn't sexually assault me. Or abuse me. Ever. He was a good man. He was a better father to me than my own.

(MORE)

ALMA (CONT'D)

But still, I let people believe a horrible story and made it so believable as to be unassailable.

(a breath)

I knew I was about to cross the invisible threshold that separates most people believing what a girl says, and most of the world turning on a woman.

(then)

I loved this man, this dear friend of my father's. He was everything to me. I wanted him like I never wanted any other man, and he rejected me. Which he was absolutely right to do. It was, in fact, the kindest thing he could've done for me. But I couldn't handle it. It broke my heart and shamed me so deeply I didn't think I would ever recover. So I made up the story that I knew would hurt him the most.

(then)

He killed himself. Earlier this year. Before that, he lost his family, his finances, his friends. Slowly and then all at once. And then he killed himself.

(then)

I knew what I was doing. I wanted to ruin his life. The way I felt he had ruined mine. And I did.

A long, long beat.

FREDERIK

I know.

Alma looks like she's been hit.

ALMA

What do you mean?

FREDERIK

(shrugging)

I know, Alma. I know all of it. I have for a very, very long time.

Another beat.

ALMA

But...that's impossible, how did you--

FREDERIK

I don't mean to pour salt on the wound but you're not quite as opaque as you imagine yourself to be. Plus, there is the internet. Anyone with a certain amount of savvy and enough motivation can find enough traces of your past to create a clear picture.

ALMA

Why? Why would you do that to me?

FREDERIK

I didn't do anything to you. Why did you lie to me?

ALMA

You never asked me--

FREDERIK

I helped you maintain a story it seems--or *seemed*--like you wanted to maintain. I knew who you were, what happened. I knew who you had worked so hard to become. And I loved that woman. *Love* that woman. Everything else...didn't matter.

ALMA

So you let me...you let me tie myself in knots...you let me shape myself around this black hole for years, for years, without saying anything?

FREDERIK

Would you have married someone who *didn't* let you?

A beat. He's got her there.

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

You needed me to see you the way you wanted to see yourself. You needed me to let you have what you needed most to survive: a lie. And I did. I let you. I fulfilled my husbandly duty. Pretty well, by my accounting. Didn't I?

Another beat. Alma is rocked to her absolute core. Frederik walks over, kisses her gently on the cheek. And with that, he walks up to bed. Alone.

Alma, alone, feels a sharp pain in her side, and doubles over. She reaches in her bag and swallows two more Vicodin. Then she picks up her bag, turns, and walks right back out the door.

INT. AMTRAK - LATER

Alma, sunglasses on, clutching her bag to her chest, rides the Amtrak into the city. She looks out the window.

INT. TINY NEW YORK APARTMENT - LATER

Alma sits with a glass of whisky in her hand, neat. She has a slew of take out food in front of her, and is sitting on the couch facing the front door. We hear A BUZZER.

Alma jumps up, hits the intercom.

HENRIK (O.S.)

I'm here.

Alma buzzes him in. She unlatches the door. Looking around, Alma decides there's nothing to be done about the obvious mess.

A KNOCK.

ALMA

(calling)

It's open.

Henrik opens the door, almost hitting Alma in the back. She steps forward, unfazed. He is out of breath. She notices.

HENRIK

I started smoking again.

The door closes behind him. He has a coughing fit. Alma goes to the sink, fills a glass with water. When she leaves, Henrik takes in the room.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

You ordered dinners.

Alma hands him the glass of water. He drinks it. She replaces the empty glass with a glass of whisky, like hers.

ALMA

I was anxious waiting for the buzzer. I figured if I could get the door to buzz as much as possible, I'd be less anxious.

HENRIK
Did it work?

Alma doesn't answer him.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
Can I have an ice cube? Or some
soda water?

Alma gets neither of these things for Henrik.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
Okay, then.

ALMA
Help yourself to the food.

She sits on the couch.

HENRIK
Don't you want any?

ALMA
You can eat.

Henrik shakes his head. He doesn't touch the food, but he
does get out a cigarette, defiantly lights it, takes a drag.

HENRIK
You want?

ALMA
No, thank you.

HENRIK
Well. I'm glad you finally came
around. I'm sad that it took your
own demise to remind you of a
dormant capacity for compassion.
But, I'm not surprised.

He exhales a plume of smoke.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
Look at us, two Icaruses. Both
flown too close to the sun.

ALMA
Last I checked, we were still
living.

HENRIK
What's being alive, if your
livelihood is stolen from you?

ALMA

Actually, I will have one of those.

Henrik hands her a cigarette, lights it for her.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I feel like...like something deep
inside of me *expected* this.
Expected the rottenness in me to be
seen by other people right before I
managed to expunge it. Or
effectively protect it.

HENRIK

Spoken like a true woman. I never
felt myself to be rotten, at all.

Alma laughs.

ALMA

Spoken like a true man.

HENRIK

A man you loved, once.

Henrik finishes his cigarette, immediately lights another. He
looks at Alma, smiles.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

I knew I was always right about
that.

ALMA

Didn't stop you from wanting me to
say it.

He shrugs.

HENRIK

What can I say? I'm a simple man.
Even I, occasionally, want my
feelings to be reciprocated.

ALMA

You loved me?

HENRIK

Alma, come on.

(then)

I told you. I've told you.
Countless times. That never went
away. Not for me. Why do you think
I'm here...?

Alma looks down at her drink. Takes another drag of her cigarette.

ALMA
You're not, you know.

HENRIK
What?

ALMA
A simple man.

In a swift, business-like movement, Alma puts out her cigarette on the rug beneath her feet.

Henrik laughs, and is about to say something when Alma stops him with a fierce, rough kiss. A kiss that's fueled as much by hatred as it is by love. Of a certain kind.

Immediately, the two fall into each other. Clothes are torn away with adolescent need. To-go containers hit the floor, greasy noodles and beef with broccoli spilling everywhere.

Henrik is worshipful and submissive in a way we've never witnessed before; Alma is domineering and aggressive, pushed forward by the swelling tide of her own desperation.

HENRIK
Wait, wait.

Henrik extricates himself from Alma.

ALMA
(impatient)
What?

Henrik is breathing hard. He could be blushing.

HENRIK
I love you.

Alma, for a moment, says nothing. Then she weaves her hands into Henrik's hair and pulls, hard.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
And I know you love me, too.

Alma pulls harder. Henrik smiles, just a little bit. And Alma leans down to meet his open mouth with her own.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. TINY NEW YORK APARTMENT - LATER

Henrik lies in between Alma's bare legs, stroking an OLD SCAR on her inner thigh. Alma's leg twitches, almost like she wants to pull away, but stopped herself.

HENRIK
You're beautiful.

Alma doesn't respond.

HENRIK (CONT'D)
And vicious. To yourself, most of all.

He kisses her scar, lightly. Alma winces.

ALMA
Who says I don't deserve it.

Henrik laughs, and reaches for another one of his cigarettes.

HENRIK
For what?

ALMA
I thought you would be the one person who didn't have to ask "for what."

HENRIK
But you didn't do anything wrong, right?

He winks, exaggeratedly. Something in Alma goes ice cold.

ALMA
No--I. No, I didn't.

HENRIK
Right. Neither did I.

He smiles, winks again. A cat who's got the cream.

ALMA
But...you didn't, right? She did cheat, right? Maggie?

HENRIK
That was another thing I was right about: you and Maggie...the closeness there. There was always something...sour about it to me.
(then)
(MORE)

HENRIK (CONT'D)

Not on your end. But on hers. It felt like...like one morning I was going to wake up, or one night I was going to come to your house for a dinner party and *she* was going to be handing me a drink and talking about whether or not the chicken was dry and kissing poor Fred on the cheek, and no one would bat an eye. She looked at you like she wanted to live inside of your skin. Who wouldn't, though? With all that you have. Or...*had*, I guess.

ALMA

"*Had?*"

HENRIK

God, I'm starving.

Henrik reaches for a rogue pair of chopsticks, starts scavenging for whatever food didn't make it on to the floor.

ALMA

Henry.

HENRIK

(mouth full)

Not bad, cold. Reminds me of college.

ALMA

Henrik.

Alma grabs his chopsticks out of his mouth.

ALMA (CONT'D)

What happened, with Maggie?

He rolls his eyes, reaches for the chopsticks again. Alma moves away from him.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Tell me. I need you to tell me now. The truth. What happened?

HENRIK

Isn't what happens inextricable from what either party *believes* to have happened?

(then)

I was really drunk and sad. Sometimes you, Fred, the two of you together--you make me sad.

(MORE)

HENRIK (CONT'D)

I thought Maggie and I could help each other. But she didn't want my help.

Alma feels the walls of the apartment closing in.

ALMA

So you--

HENRIK

She didn't cheat. Are you kidding, Alma? I was a desperate man. That girl is clean as a whistle. Or she was, at least.

ALMA

You wanted to *blackmail* her?

HENRIK

Hey, pot, kettle, black, my friend.

The truth of this statement hits Alma, right in her chest. Henrik gets the utensils free from Alma's grasp, and goes back to his food.

ALMA

I thought we could understand each other. But I don't think so. Not anymore.

HENRIK

Oh, we definitely understand each other. We always have. We're the same type of person, Alma. Willing to do what it takes to get what we know we deserve. That's why I'm not even mad at you, not really. In fact, I'm impressed.

He kisses her. Alma lets him, for a moment, then pushes him away, roughly.

Henrik looks at her, registering her disgust. He barks out a harsh laugh.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

Let it go. We're the same now. Both discredited, both ostracized, jobless, alone. There's a certain intimacy in that. Clearly.

He slides his hand up her thigh.

ALMA

I'm not alone.

HENRIK

Please. Fred's days are numbered.
Even he knows. He couldn't keep up
with you even at his very best.
Which is, by now, far behind him.

His fingers reach the edge of her underwear. She pushes him away, forcefully.

ALMA

What do you mean, jobless?

Henrik sighs, sits back.

HENRIK

You didn't think you were going to
hold onto your job after all of
this, did you? They're going to
quietly let go of you, like they
did me. Pad your white-walled Elba
with a nice, fat severance package
so you can't claim wrongful
termination, and before you know
it, you'll be teaching at
Housatonic Community College next
year, just like me.

(then)

Actually, I can still have my day
in court with Maggie. Or, worse
comes to worst, I can sue her for
defamation of character--it's
happened before, successfully. So,
perhaps only you, my friend, will
be at HCC next year. I'll buy you a
sweatshirt.

All of a sudden, Alma is overcome with nausea. She runs to
the bathroom in just her underwear, and throws up. Violently.
Henrik, still naked, follows her.

Alma sits back, wipes her mouth: BLOOD. There's blood
intermingled with bile in the toilet.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

Oh, god.

Alma gags, throws up more blood and bile.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

I'm calling an ambulance.

Alma stands, grabs Henrik's phone out of his hand.

ALMA
Please, no--

And then FAINTS. BLACKOUT.

INT. LENOX HILL HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

The steady beat of a heart monitor. Alma wakes up in a bleary daze. She registers the NURSE taking her vitals down.

NURSE
There she is.

Alma coughs, pitifully. She notices a MORPHINE DRIP in her arm.

NURSE (CONT'D)
I'll tell the doctor you're awake.

ALMA
What happened?

NURSE
I'll let her give you the full
rundown but long story short is
your stomach is near-shredded.
Multiple perforated ulcers. Ignored
for too long. Bad news. Weren't you
in terrible pain?

ALMA
Did you call my husband?

NURSE
The man who dropped you off?

Clearly, she has a judgement about Henrik.

NURSE (CONT'D)
He said he wanted to grab you a
coffee. Because coffee is
historically good for ulcers. That
was about five hours ago.

The nurse gives her a look.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Is there someone else we can
contact for you?

Alma shakes her head no.

ALMA

My phone?

The nurse gestures to Alma's bedside table. Alma moves to grab it, winces. It's almost dead.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Do you have a charger?

NURSE

No, but...

The nurse, who has been carrying a clipboard, flips up Alma's chart and triumphantly makes a big "X" on piece of paper beneath it.

ALMA

What is that? What did you just write about me?

NURSE

Oh, no, it's--don't worry, it's not about you.

She flips the clipboard around, and we see:

NURSE (CONT'D)

Night Shift Bingo. We play a different board every shift. Keeps things interesting. I just got: "Patient immediately asks for a phone charger after coming out of anesthesia." I just need "Blood in a catheter bag" and I win!

Alma looks at her, not sure how to react. The nurse doesn't care.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I'll be back in a few hours to check in on you. Wish me luck!

The nurse walks out. Alma uses some of the last percentages of her battery to type out a TEXT to FREDERIK: "In the hospital. Don't worry. Im fine. Not that you would worry, at this point."

She deletes that last bit. Re-writes: "I'm in the hospital. Passed out. Stress. Don't worry I am fine but they need to keep me overnight to monitor. I will see you tomorrow. Xx"

She turns off her phone. The heart monitor beeps.

INT./EXT. LENOX HILL HOSPITAL - THE NEXT DAY - EARLY AM

Alma fills out her own discharge paperwork. She turns on her phone, now charged by some other friendly nurse, as she exits the hospital.

On the street, Alma seems to suddenly register her broken body, her extreme fatigue. We hear her phone start BUZZING with hundreds of notifications.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - LATER THAT DAY

Alma, ashen and exhausted, enters. It's silent. She doesn't call out or announce herself; something in her expected this.

On the foyer table is a letter from DEAN RJ THOMAS. Alma opens it--scans it briefly.

WE SEE OVER HER SHOULDER: NOTICE of "Suspension pending further investigation into the allegations raised by MARGARET PRICE." We also see that contingent on her suspension is the vacancy of her university housing, to be packed up and vacated in two weeks.

Alma calmly folds the letter and puts it back into its envelope.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - SITTING ROOM - SAME

We follow Alma, on her back, as she walks into the sitting room. Suddenly, she stops.

We whip around to see: FREDERIK, sitting in his favorite chair.

FREDERIK

I wanted to make sure you were
alright.

ALMA

Perforated ulcers. Plural.

Suddenly weak, Alma sits.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I saw Henrik. I was with him, when
I collapsed.

FREDERIK

...Him? Really. Again?
(then)

(MORE)

FREDERIK (CONT'D)

I guess that makes sense. An eye
for an eye.

ALMA

Nothing happened. But I did
entertain it. I thought we were
both finally debased enough, what
was a little bit more?

FREDERIK

(half-joking)

And are you going to tell me that
you thought of me, and that thought
stopped you?

ALMA

(shaking her head)

No. I didn't think about you. I
didn't think about you at all. I
haven't been thinking about you.
Not for a long time.

Frederik nods.

FREDERIK

I thought it wouldn't hurt so much.
To hear the truth like that. But it
did.

ALMA

You and me, both.

Another beat. Alma closes her eyes.

ALMA (CONT'D)

I think you should leave, Fred. I
think it's time.

Frederik considers protesting, but doesn't. He knows she's
right.

FREDERIK

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I let you
believe what you needed to believe.
I thought I was being kind. But I
was being selfish. It would've been
kinder, ultimately, to have made
you face the truth.

(then)

I'll call you.

And with that, he stands, leaves to pack his things.

When Alma is sure she's heard him clear the stairs, she opens her eyes.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - STUDY - LATER

Alma is drinking, which she definitely shouldn't be doing this close to being in hospital. But here we are.

She pulls out her phone, scrolls through the contacts.

A beat while she dials and the phone rings.

ALMA
(into phone)
You picked up.

INT. CODY'S DINER - LATER THAT EVENING

A booth at a diner we might recognize. It's where you go when you don't want to be seen by anyone you know.

Alma has a cup of coffee and a pile of shredded sugar packets in front of her. Kim sits opposite, nursing a chamomile tea. A lull in the conversation, all niceties having been divested of.

KIM
So. Should we talk about it?

Alma nods. The waitress comes by with more hot water and Kim puts her hand over her mug.

ALMA
I thought you weren't going to show.

KIM
Well, I did tell you I would always be here. If you wanted to talk.

ALMA
I know.
(then)
You don't want more hot water?

KIM
Will we be staying long?

Oof. Noted. Alma takes a deep breath.

ALMA

I don't even know where to begin.
There are so many things I did
wrong it's hard to untangle the
beginning of one wrong thing from
the end of another.

Kim nods, steepes her tea bag. Waits.

ALMA (CONT'D)

It feels like the only way to go is
to really go, you know? To leave in
the final, mortal sense. But I know
that I don't...I don't know. It's
hard to see that there's
anything...that this gets better.
That I can return to my old self.

KIM

Is that a self you really want to
go back to?

ALMA

Desperately. I know I am not
supposed to say that, but yes.
Desperately.

A beat. This doesn't please Kim.

ALMA (CONT'D)

And it means a great deal to me
that you're here, that you picked
up my call, that you're willing to
listen. I know these aren't small
favours, anymore.

KIM

(gently)

Alma. I know. Everything. Maggie
told me everything. About your
past.

Alma goes rigid.

KIM (CONT'D)

It doesn't excuse your behavior,
but it does offer some explanation.
And it is an explanation I have
compassion and empathy for, if not
understanding.

ALMA

What did she say happened?

KIM

She was offering it in terms of context. It was not weaponized against you nor offered as gossip, I promise you. And I am so, so sorry for what happened to you. What an incredibly traumatizing thing.

ALMA

Which thing?

KIM

...The abuse, Alma. The rape.

ALMA

That's all?

KIM

...Is there anything worse...? To happen to a child...?

Alma's body relaxes, a little bit. Maggie at least kept part of her secret.

ALMA

Right. No, of course not.

Kim leans conspiratorially over the table.

KIM

(sotto)

Off the record: I don't think what happened to you is fair. I don't think the punishment fits the crime. But, that said, I do believe there needs to be some...consequence. Some type of retribution.

(a beat, then:)

The bottom line is: I can't be there for you as a friend. I can offer you my compassion from afar, and a recommendation for a very good psychologist who works on a sliding scale. But anything else...it's too risky. For me. Professionally.

A beat.

KIM (CONT'D)

You understand, right?

Off of Alma's face, we cut to:

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - STUDY - LATER

Alma is sitting in her study, smoking indoors. Fuck it. She gets up and looks around at the things from what is now her past, the things that she loves: the good books, the essays and papers published under her own name. The accolades, the awards.

INT. GARAGE - ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - SAME

Still smoking, Alma roots around in her recycling bin. She pulls out a few flattened cardboard boxes.

INT. FREDERIK'S OFFICE - ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - SAME

Flipping on the lights, Alma sees just how much stuff Frederik has taken. She doesn't stop, though. She moves to his desk, opens the bottom drawer, ashing everywhere. Who cares? She grabs a giant tape gun from the drawer and a fistful of sharpies out of a coffee mug on the desk.

INT. ALMA'S BROWNSTONE - STUDY - LATER

With the tape gun, Alma re-assembles the broken down boxes. She labels them "STUDY" in big ol' permanent marker writing. She puts out her cigarette on the carpet; immediately lights another. While she's up, she puts on a RECORD. FRANK SINATRA, or something--a record that's obviously Frederik's.

She starts packing. Books in boxes. But this devolves or escalates quickly, her rage and pain and years of repressed selfhood taking over. She starts throwing books, splitting them apart, smashing things. A general tantrum. It goes on for however long she needs it to.

When she finally calms, Alma sinks to the floor, sobbing. But out of the CORNER OF HER EYE, SHE SEES: tucked in the infinitesimal crack between one of the bookshelves and the floor, the ARTICLE she accused Maggie of stealing.

It must have gotten detached and then put back in the box by Maggie. Then, when Alma was tossing all that shit around earlier, it ended up here, right where she couldn't see it.

Alma laughs, then the laughter turns into tears. Then, abruptly, it all stops. She goes to her desk, boots up her computer, enters her passcode. She looks something up, writes what she sees down in a small notebook.

We don't see what she's writing.

EXT./INT. ALMA'S OFFICE - YALE UNIVERSITY - THE NEXT DAY

Alma stands outside her office door, carrying a banker's box. She opens the door with her key.

Alma enters her office. She places the banker's box on her perfect desk; she touches her favorite chair. She picks up a picture, then puts it back down again. She looks out of her window, unto the spotless, gorgeous lawn of the university. The sun is out. Spring is here, at least for today.

She takes a letter out of her back pocket--a resignation letter. She leaves it on the desk, the key to her office on top of the letter.

Then, Alma turns, taking nothing. She turns the lights out and shuts the door to her old office behind her.

INT. BRADLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NEW HAVEN - LATER

With only a small suitcase, Alma checks in for a flight in the international terminal. She packed light.

EXT. QUAD - YALE UNIVERSITY - SIMULTANEOUS

We see, from a respectful distance, Maggie, enjoying the respite of sunshine with her friends and Alex. We come in closer.

All the friends are talking, maybe one or two smoking or eating from to-go containers from the dining hall. We don't hear them. Maggie, Alex's head on her lap, closes her eyes and tilts her face up towards the sun.

She smiles. It's sunny, and warm, and the breeze is light and gentle. And isn't that nice? Isn't that beautiful?

INT. HOTEL BAR - SWEDEN - THE NEXT DAY

It's cold and early but late in a country that is dark for most of the winter. Alma has a drink in front of her, but she hasn't touched it. She is the only patron at the bar. It's the off-season.

Alma opens the notebook we saw her writing in previously. She looks at the page, then gets out her phone, types in a number.

The phone rings. She gets voicemail.

ALMA

(In Swedish)

Mrs. Woolf, this is Lydia Engels from Expressen. I am a reporter working on a podcast about local true crime, and I would like to bring a more humane angle to the story of your son, Mattias Woolf, which I have been following for some time. I will be at Vette-Katten tomorrow, I will wait all day. If you want to talk.

Alma hangs up the phone. She gestures for the check. The WAITER comes over.

WAITER

(in Swedish, re: drink)

No good?

ALMA

(in Swedish)

Delicious.

Alma pays her bill.

EXT./INT. VETTE-KATTEN CAFÉ - STOCKHOLM - SWEDEN - THE NEXT DAY

We watch from the outside of the café as Alma waits. And waits.

The mother of Mattias Wolff never comes.

EXT. VETTE-KATTEN CAFÉ - STOCKHOLM - SWEDEN - NIGHT

True to her word, Alma waited until closing. She exits the café, waves goodbye to the few staff still working.

She starts out onto the cold street, her breath coming in dense clouds. Then, suddenly, she stops: looks up.

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS, playing across the sky, are stunning. They arrest Alma, making her forget that she is so cold, and so alone in her home country. She watches them, and so do we.

EXT. SWEDISH HOME - UPPSALA - THE NEXT DAY

In a rental car, Alma approaches a compact, but charming home in Uppsala, about one hour outside of Stockholm.

She parks and idles for a moment outside of the house.

EXT. SWEDISH HOME - ENTRYWAY - LATER

Alma knocks on the door. No response. Unfortunately, this lack of immediate gratification makes it easier for Alma to second guess herself. She decides to knock one more time. Just as she's about to, she hears a voice from within:

WOMAN'S VOICE
(In Swedish)
Coming!

Now would be the time to turn around and leave, if she wanted to. But just then, the door opens to REVEAL: a tall Scandinavian woman who looks exactly like Alma, especially around the eyes.

She looks completely shocked to see Alma there, an apparition, on her doorstep.

***NOTE:** The next scenes are to be spoken in Swedish, denoted by *italics*. If the dialogue is un-italicized, it is to be spoken in English.*

ALMA
Momma.

This is ALMA'S MOTHER: EBBA.

EBBA
Alma? Are you alright?

Alma shakes her head no.

EBBA (CONT'D)
Are you ill?

Another no. Alma leans towards her mother, rests her head on her mother's shoulder, and starts to cry.

EBBA (CONT'D)
Oh, honey. Oh, my daughter, my dear.

ALMA
(sobbing)
I didn't know where else to go.

EBBA

That's okay. It's okay.

Ebba holds Alma. From behind Ebba, NILS, ALMA'S FATHER, enters. He and Alma make eye contact. He looks like he is trying hard, very hard, to be happy to see his only daughter. But his usually stoic face betrays him.

INT. SWEDISH HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT EVENING

The pitch black of Nordic winter outside, but a warm, inviting atmosphere inside. Cozy and bright and soothing.

Alma is showered, changed. She and her mother are cooking in the kitchen. Nils sits in the living room beyond, reading.

Ebba and Alma cook and sip wine.

EBBA

You'd think that the house would've appreciated by now but with all the new buildings going up--you'll see, driving around the city, it's unrecognizable.

ALMA

I did see.

EBBA

Do you ever keep track of your friends from school? Lila or Kat?

ALMA

You know neither of those girls were my friends. I had no friends.

EBBA

Their babies are very sweet. They had children almost immediately after University. Both of them, in lockstep.

(then)

So, maybe not so much little girls anymore. Will you see your brother while your here?

ALMA

He's here? In Uppsala?

EBBA

Of course. He never left, you know that. I'll arrange something.

(MORE)

EBBA (CONT'D)

*A dinner, maybe, with all of us,
how does that sound?*

(then)

Pass me the salt?

ALMA

I don't--

EBBA

*Yes you do, same place it's always
been.*

Alma smiles. She goes to a shelf above the kitchen island and takes down a small brown box with a notch for a small wooden spoon in its lid. Next to the brown box is a FRAMED PICTURE. Alma stops when she sees it. She takes it down.

ALMA

Momma--this picture...

EBBA

Which? Ah -

Ebba turns. It's clear she forgot the picture was there, otherwise she would've removed it before Alma could find it.

WE INSERT ON: The picture. **The** same picture - a young, adolescent Alma, amongst her family, leaning on who we now know to be Mattias Woolf. Only in this picture, Woolf's handsome, bright face remains intact.

ALMA

You still have this?

EBBA

(defensive)

Of course.

ALMA

You see this every day?

Ebba shrugs.

EBBA

I don't need salt every day.

Ebba looks over and see that her daughter is starting to cry.

EBBA (CONT'D)

*Here, give it to me, I'll put it in
a drawer somewhere and won't tell
you which.*

ALMA

Is it easy for you? To see this all the time?

EBBA

I didn't say it was easy.

ALMA

I ruined his life. I destroyed us. I destroyed everything.

EBBA

What are you talking about?

ALMA

I lied. I let his real life fall apart, so I could keep my false one. He didn't kill himself; I killed him. My lie killed him. How do I ever get over that? How is it right that I should move on from the worst thing I ever did, when he never could?

Suddenly, in the background, Nils gets up. He opens the sliding glass door to the back porch and steps out, shutting the door behind him. He walks towards the fjord in the distance as he lights a cigarette. The women are silent for a moment.

Ebba studies her daughter. She takes the photo from Alma's hand, looks at it.

EBBA

There is no "getting over things," my Almi. There is no getting past or forgetting what cannot be forgotten. Hoping that there is is both childish and naïve.

(then)

Some things simply cannot be undone. For some things there is no atonement. Some things just are and will remain so. It's how life works. It isn't fair, but assuming there is some type of fairness is what will, ultimately, destroy you.

Ebba hands Alma back the photo.

EBBA (CONT'D)

And there was so much good, too. So much good to remember. Wouldn't you say?

(MORE)

EBBA (CONT'D)

(then)

There was so much good.

Ebba turns back to the sink.

EBBA (CONT'D)

Salt?

Alma puts the small wooden salt box next to her mother's cutting board.

EBBA (CONT'D)

Tak.

Ebba continues to cook dinner. We see, in the dark outside, Nils lighting a massive bonfire. In the glass, we can see the sparking flames overlapping with Alma's reflected face.

The salt is passed. Things go on.

We FADE TO BLACK.

CHYRON OVER BLACK: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. BEIGE COURTHOUSE HOLDING ROOM - CONNECTICUT - DAY

Alma, back in the states, wears a tactfully beige suit to fit in with her tactfully beige surroundings. BILLY JOEL Musak plays. A steaming cup of burnt coffee sits in front of Alma.

A DOOR, disguised to look like wall paneling, opens.

COURT AIDE

Alma Olsson?

Alma looks up.

COURT AIDE (CONT'D)

You're being called up.

Alma nods, stands.

INT. COURTHOUSE - CONNECTICUT - SAME TIME

We follow Alma as she walks into this small, unglamorous courtroom. She walks up to the witness stand, the little door of which won't open until a COURT OFFICER comes to open it. Alma thanks the OFFICER and steps into the witness box.

She makes eye contact with MAGGIE, who sits in the PROSECUTOR'S position. Maggie nods at Alma. Alma nods back.

COURT OFFICER

Do you swear to tell the truth, the
whole truth, and nothing but the
truth...

We pan out as Alma, whose eyes have not left Maggie's, takes her oath to testify in Maggie's case.

EXT. UPPSALA - SWEDEN - SAME TIME

Back in Sweden, at Alma's childhood home, we see Ebba gardening in the backyard, Nils puttering around near where the bonfire was, re-shaping the homemade fire ring.

Suddenly, Nils stops. He stoops as quickly as his aging body will let him, and sifts through the ashes at his feet.

WE INSERT ON: a burnt shard of the picture that used to sit in Ebba's kitchen. That used to be hidden in the box in Alma's closet. We pan out, to see Ebba watching Nils. Across the yard, across years, across the things they will never say: they look at each other. Their gaze mimics Maggie's and Alma's.

Finally, Nils turns back to his tidying. After all, what is left, but to keep going?

THE END