

BLOOD FATHER

Based on the novel by Peter Craig

Current Revisions by
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INT. WAL-MART - DAY

CLOSE SHOT: One by one, down the cashier's conveyor belt come sixteen boxes of **9mm AMMUNITION**, an endless wave -

- followed by DUCT TAPE and a pack of Bubblicious gum.

Concerned, the cashier looks up at:

LYDIA CARSON (16) - an innocent face, blue eyes as pale as a husky's against tangled black hair.

LYDIA
And a pack of Camel lights?

CASHIER
ID?
(a beat)
Can't sell 'em to you without ID,
honey.

Lydia frets for a moment, then nods.

LYDIA
Then just the bullets, please.

EXT. WAL-MART - CANOGA PARK, CA - DAY

She waits at the curb with two loaded shopping bags, eyeing a passing LAPD Cruiser. She double-checks a shopping list written on her hand: "*9mm, Duck tape, Winchester, die!!!*"

LYDIA
(singing anxiously)
*"Lydia, Oh, Lydia. Oh, have you met
Lydia. Lydia, the tattooed lady."*

A '69 IMPALA pulls up to the curb, jammed full. The door swings open, and Lydia climbs in.

INT. IMPALA - MOMENTS LATER

In the shotgun seat, she sits onto the lap of her boyfriend, JONAH PINCERNA (29), while in the back three dealers squeeze together. We'll know them by their tattoos. "EL SALVADOR" spans one's hairless chest. On another's forearm is a "SHAMROCK" with PEN-1 in it. The heaviest has "JOKER" scrawled onto his pale scalp.

JONAH
Everything but the cigarettes.

Behind the wheel, the *veterano* driver has the Aztec word "KANPOL" inked across his fist.

Jonah passes back the bags, and Joker sorts through them.

JOKER

Mine doesn't take these cheap-ass
nines.

JONAH

Thought you all had nine millies.

JOKER

Nah, bra' - I told you. I need
thirty luger ammo.

SHAMROCK

Don't think Wal-mart carries luger
ammo.

Jonah drops the mags from two handguns and hands them
back to Salvador to reload. Joker sulks for a moment.

JOKER

Then I'm useless.

Salvador loads the weapons, and returns one to Jonah. He
gives it to Lydia, who looks pale and anxious.

JONAH

(whispering to Lydia)
There's no safety. Put your finger
square on the trigger like *that*.

JOKER

This range ammo is trash, man. Your
bitch fucked me, Jonah.

LYDIA

Hey? Excuse me?

JOKER

I can't even shoot nobody.

LYDIA

Excuse me?

Joker glances up, frowning. A bullet drops onto the
floor. Lydia blows a bubble.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

You don't know me, so this is just,
like I'm telling you my boundaries.
Okay? Please don't call me that.

Joker's mouth hangs open. For a moment, he has no idea
what to make of her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

If I made a mistake, just tell me.
Okay? Without calling me a bitch.

JOKER

You just *proved* you're a bitch.

She crosses her arms, while the others laugh.

EXT. TOPANGA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The house sits under crooked oaks. Discolored shingles, blankets nailed over the windows - it's a flophouse. The men head for the door, but soon realize that Lydia is still pouting in the car. Jonah sighs and heads back.

JONAH

Go 'round back like I told you.

LYDIA

You let him talk to me like that.

JONAH

Do I have to explain this again?

LYDIA

He can get his own bullets next time.

JONAH

You see this house? Who owns it?

(a long beat)

We do. The people inside are tenants, right? Except they're just like you. They don't pay a dime.

He puts his hand on the side of her neck, gently but like he owns her. Lydia looks away like a scolded child.

JONAH (CONT'D)

We pay *them* to live here. To mow the lawn, pick up the newspaper. To be normal fucking people.

(grinning)

Just like I put you up in a nice little house. Until your friends started fucking around.

She looks scolded now.

JONAH (CONT'D)

And what's *in* this house, Lydia?

LYDIA

I don't know.

JONAH

Exactly. Good girl. Like you didn't know what was in yours. I *believe* you. But a lot of people don't. Let's say every house we own 'round here is like a piggy bank. You ever have a piggy bank?

She just stares at him, irritated by the condescension.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Whatever goes into a piggy bank - it's got to come out.

JONAH (CONT'D)

And when something's missing, what happens?

(no answer)

We have a conversation.

LYDIA

Jonah, I swear to God, I never saw anything, I never took anything --

He begins unbuttoning his dress shirt.

JONAH

(tender, whispering)

Shhh, I believe you. But you want me to trust you, then show me. Prove your loyalty. To everybody.

He shows Lydia the tattoo on his chest, across his heart: "LYDIA" in GOTHIC LETTERS, beside others.

JONAH (CONT'D)

I proved it to you, didn't I?

She nods her head.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Pick up your piece like I showed you - and cover the back door. And maybe you'll get to see how this conversation goes.

She takes the gun off the dashboard, grabs her satchel, and crosses with him THROUGH FLARES OF SUNLIGHT to -

EXT. TOPANGA HOUSE - SIDE OF THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Against the garage, he kisses her - hard. He leans back and removes something from his pocket.

He scrapes out a bump of powder with a long fingernail and feeds it into her nostril. She inhales as if she doesn't have a choice - a child taking medicine.

JONAH

Don't blink.

As he leaves, she fixates on a hornet's nest in the shingles, drones crawling out. Then she opens the gate.

EXT. TOPANGA HOUSE - THE BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Five boys play on the dirt, chasing down a Nerf, tackling whomever picks it up. One by one they notice this strange girl, terrified to be holding a pistol.

LYDIA
Okay, kids, don't trip. There's a
business meeting in the house, so
we're going to be real chill here.

Her voice trembles like she's a terrified babysitter. Rather than frightened, the boys are fascinated.

Whoa, a gun! FRECKLES
Awesome!

He comes forward, wanting to see it.

LYDIA
(shaking)
Everybody sit down in a circle.

The Freckled boy keeps coming toward her.

Can I see it? FRECKLES

LYDIA
Can you see it? No! Get down.

In the sliding glass door, she sees her reflection. Reluctantly, the kids sit - except the BLOND BOY, who makes spit-filled gun noises, pretending to shoot at her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Dude, *seriously?* I'm so stressed-
out. Don't do that.

BLOND BOY
My mom's boyfriend has four guns. I
shoot them whenever I want.

SMALLEST BOY	BLOND BOY
Shut up, <i>faq</i> .	You're the <i>faq</i> .

FRECKLES comes forward, grabbing at the gun, now with a SHIRTLESS BOY beside him, his elbow bleeding.

LYDIA
(shoving him away)
Sit your asses down, all of you
fucking... Children of the Corn...

BLEEDING ELBOW
Just let me *hold* it. No!
Please.

LYDIA

BLOND BOY
I killed a coyote with his Smith and
Wesson.

LYDIA
Nobody is killing anything, I'm just
supposed to guard that door.

BLEEDING ELBOW

Shoot something! Shoot that tree!

LYDIA

If you keep making me nervous, I'm going to shoot *all* of you.

SMALLEST BOY

Oh! Shoot Teddy! *Ple-he-he-hease!*
That would be so awwwwwesome!

BLOND BOY

What are they doing inside?

LYDIA

My boyfriend has some business.

BLEEDING ELBOW

I thought *I* was your boyfriend.

They all laugh, and Lydia reels to study the glass door, seeing shadows moving behind it. Just then - A GUN GOES OFF IN THE HOUSE.

There's a scream. Another shot punctures the door. The boys scatter into the ivy and trees.

Horrified, Lydia heads for the shattered door. Inside, a CD plays a 60s drum solo, which blends with the thuds of Jonah's henchmen searching the house. On a couch saturated with blood, a WOMAN sobs, hands duct-taped, a strip across her mouth.

INT. TOPANGA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Lydia slides open the door, dropping glass, the woman makes pleading eye contact with her. On her BARE FOOT, two toes are blown off, blood pouring down.

A DEAD BODY lies on the Spanish tile. Jonah steps over it, wiping blood off his pants with a wet paper towel.

JONAH

Take the tape off her mouth. She needs to tell us where the cash is.

He tears the tape off her mouth, leaving a raw streak.

WOMAN

Teddy! Run away, baby! Run!

JONAH

Fucking day care center out there.

There's smashing noises in the other room.

JOKER (O.S.)

Can't find shit! She's a liar!

Jonah *snaps* his fingers in front of Lydia's dazed eyes.

JONAH

Wake up. I need you to hold her foot against the couch. This is what she gets. For stealing. You *understand* me now?

LYDIA

Jonah, I *can't*.

He pushes the woman's head down against the sofa.

WOMAN

Please!

LYDIA

Jonah.

JONAH

She cares more about money than she does about her husband. Or her toes.

(to the woman)

What d'you get anyway? A few grand?

Does it feel worth it?

(to Lydia)

See, baby. When somebody sits on a stash, every ounce, every dollar gets counted.

LYDIA

(starting to cry)

Jonah, please don't hurt her.

He looks over at her, challenged.

JONAH

Show me I'm not wrong about you.

He takes Lydia's hand, raising her gun and guiding it.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Shhh. You won't ever lie to me.

Lydia stays rigid as he aims her gun at the woman's temple, as if guiding her through a tennis swing.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Don't look at me, look at *her*.
Promises mean shit; I believe in
actions. This is how you *earn* it.

Lydia is paralyzed. Jonah grows impatient with her.

JONAH (CONT'D)

You're alive because of me. Nobody else believes you. I stood up for you. You need to pull that trigger, so there's no doubt. You're already a murderer, baby. You bought every bullet. Cops will trace them back to that store.

The woman is watching Lydia with wide, yellowish eyes.

LYDIA
I never stole *anything*.

JONAH
You thought it was like going into your mama's purse. But I answer to people, too. It puts my neck on the line. So pay me back. Right now.

The stereo changes to Clapton's "Wonderful Tonight," and Lydia laughs over her tears at the absurd sound.

LYDIA
Jonah?

He brushes her hair off her face.

JONAH
It's a line you cross. Pull that trigger and I'll be waiting here on the other side.

She's barely able to hold the pistol upright. Her hand sweats over the trigger; tears dampen her eyelashes.

With a disappointed sigh, Jonah raises his gun toward Lydia and pulls back the hammer.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Lydia. Do it. *Now!*

She flinches toward him and - *POP!* - her gun goes off, right through Jonah's neck.

Blood sprays as far as the kitchen door. Jonah drops to his knees, astonished, eyelashes netted with blood.

Lydia gasps, mouth open in shock. Jonah blinks slowly, before sagging onto the steps. As she hears the others calling from the kitchen, she panics and -

EXT. TOPANGA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

- flees, her bag held like a sling. From behind her come shouts, as Jonah's crew fills the room and finds him.

The toe bands break off her flip-flops. She leaps barefoot into the ivy, tumbling through the undergrowth.

EXT. TOPANGA CREEK - MOMENTS LATER

She splashes through scummy water, past homeless encampments. Sirens come from all directions, while a helicopter crosses the sky. Lydia crawls past bottles, crushed reeds, exposed roots, until she hears -

THE HAMMER PULLED BACK ON A REVOLVER. Beside rocks covered with graffiti, she looks up at:

THE BOYS. The BLOND holds up the SMITH AND WESSON, tilting it like he's seen in movies. He's trying to look tough, but he's *shivering*, on the verge of tears.

Lydia stares down the barrel. She whispers to him...

LYDIA
Shhhh, baby, it's okay. It's okay.

The boy starts crying, holding the gun, a rill of moisture coming from his nose. He wipes it with the same fist holding the gun.

The fear in Lydia's eyes turns to empathy.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Shhhh, I know. Please put it down.

She stays on her knees. The boy is gasping in pain.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
I'm just a kid. Like you. Please.

Slowly, she reaches out, putting her palm over the muzzle. She gently takes it from him.

BLACK SCREEN

LYDIA (CONT'D)
(post-lap)
I'm lost.

After a moment of passing helicopters and fading sirens, we hear the tail end of "Happy Birthday" sung out of key by fifteen voices. Out of the applause...

LINK (V.O.)
For the two of you who don't know me:
my name's John Link.

GROUP
(in unison)
Hi John.

INT. TRAILER - AA MEETING - OUTSIDE INDIO, CA - DAY

JOHN LINK sits in a smoky trailer, fingering his new chip. In his late forties, he's just completed his sixth year of sobriety and he looks as if he's seen hell. He's got a boxer's flattened nose, a wrestler's girth, one arm sleeved with faded prison and outlaw biker tattoos.

LINK
I been sober six years today. Six -
long fucking years.

LINK (CONT'D)
Four of 'em on the inside, and two
out here. And that's just long
enough to know...

His sponsor KIRBY DOUGLAS (50s) nods. Silver-haired and
sunburned, Kirby has the earnest face of a minister.

LINK (CONT'D)
...it's not getting any easier.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - AN HOUR LATER

Link drives Kirby through town. Even after months, it's
clear how much Link despises driving a "four-wheeler."
Everything in his parole is an insult to his dignity.

KIRBY
Want to get a coffee? Talk it out.

LINK
Got a lady coming for some ink on her
ankle.

KIRBY
Something more creative, maybe?

LINK
She thinks so.

KIRBY
Beats doing tear drops under the eyes
of convicts.

Link grunts and nods.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
Birthdays are hard. Emotional.
(a beat)
Were you thinking about family?
About your daughter?

Link squints into the sunlight, revealing nothing. He
pulls up to a trailer in a mobile home community,
numbered plots of gravel strung together with laundry
lines.

LINK
I am *now*.

A SOUND-PRELAP rises up: BUZZING, loud as a wasp. It's -

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - OUTSIDE INDIO, CA - AFTERNOON

- the needle of a TATTOO MACHINE. Link has been overcome
with ambition. The WOMAN lounges back, cigarette between
lobster-colored fingernails, chattering away.

WOMAN

I don't need the heartache.

He sweep-shades the scales of an elaborate SERPENT on her calf. Reading glasses perch on his thick boxer's nose.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

He used to *break into my house*.

One wall of Link's trailer is covered with Polaroids of his work: skulls, cobwebs, crosses with gang signs. Further down: the Tasmanian devil, Tweety Bird giving the finger, Mickey doing Minnie from behind.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

We been divorced three years, and I come home from work with that man sittin' at my kitchen table.

LINK

(not listening)

Uh-huh.

WOMAN

He just did 30 days on a DUI, and I got no time for it.

Link focuses on the serpent, wiping off drops of blood.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You done a little time, huh?

LINK

Ye'ap, a little.

She's looking at his big arm, where there's a bluish tattoo of a LITTLE GIRL'S FACE.

Then she notices something on his wall: THE SAME LITTLE GIRL'S PICTURE, sitting with a young Link on his Harley.

Around it is an obsessive collage: Missing Persons Bulletins, pictures of LYDIA (a school photo), letters from the National Center for Missing Children, the Runaway Switchboard, the FBI...

WOMAN

That your little girl?

LINK

Ye'ap.

The woman looks sad for him, afraid to say another word.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - OUTSIDE INDIO, CA - DUSK

The woman pays Link and thanks him. Link watches her go, speeding up with each step she takes toward her car.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - OUTSIDE INDIO, CA - AN HOUR LATER

His microwave beeps, and he takes out a CUP O' SOUP. He cracks open a Dr. Pepper, and sits on his front step, watching the sun go down over chalk-colored mountains.

The phone rings. Slowly, he gets up, groaning, the whole trailer rocking with his weight.

LINK
"Missing Link Tattoos."

The line sounds like the inside of a sea shell.

AUTOMATED VOICE
This is an AT&T collect call from -

A pause, and then a gusting recording says:

LYDIA
Your crazy daughter.

AUTOMATED VOICE
To accept the charges, say 'yes' or
press one now.

LINK	AUTOMATED VOICE
Yes.	I'm sorry, I didn't get that.

LINK
Yes! You fucking robot... Yes!

He pushes ONE with a *beep*. There's a long pause.

LYDIA
Daddy?

From the wall, he plucks down fliers, frantic, assembling them as if he's about to face a judge in court.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Are you there? My phone died.

LINK
I'm here. Stay on the line.

It's an amazing thing to see this behemoth so nervous. He faces the collage on his wall, staring into a MISSING PERSONS POSTER of Lydia.

LINK (CONT'D)
Where you calling from?

LYDIA
I know it's been a long time. I've
had your number, but... I left home a
while back.

LINK

I know. You scared a lot of people.

LYDIA

Listen, I would never bother you with this - but you're the only person who might get my situation.

Her voice is jittery, wired from adrenaline and speed.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

I'm just, like, something happened. One minute I'm just some regular amateur fuck-up, and then all of a sudden I went *pro*. Does that make sense?

LINK

No.

LYDIA

This is so, like, unbelievably rude. Normally I'd be all: *Let's catch up*. But I don't even have time to put glitter on the birthday card, you know. My point is, I need cash. Fast. Fuck, I'm so sorry about this.

Link looks over his meager trailer, his Cup O' Soup steaming on the wobbly old table.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Just enough so I can get lost. Because I'm fucking dead. I'm this *fly* about to get splattered on a windshield. I figure I can get to Oregon by Monday.

Link paces down his steps onto the gravel outside.

LINK

(scheming)

How much do you need?

LYDIA

That's *first class*. To step up like that. Thank you. I figure I need two Gs, tops. If I'm going to get settled and start working.

Link surveys the trailer park: *the whole neighborhood is barely worth "two Gs."*

LINK

What kind of work you lookin' for?

LYDIA

I don't know. Maybe... some kind of nanny or something.

LINK
I'll bring you the money. I got it
right here in my hand.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Link has to push the Nova to get it going. With the door open and his hand on the wheel, he runs downhill, then hops in as he turns the ignition.

LINK (V.O.) (POST-LAP)
You just tell me where you are...

INT. CHEVY NOVA - NIGHT

He's driving on I-15, speeding toward Los Angeles.

LINK (V.O.) (POST-LAP)
And stay put 'til I get there.

He flicks the BROKEN GAS GAUGE, seeing needle budge. The wash of traffic becomes THE CRASH OF THE OCEAN.

EXT. TURNOUT - PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Link has been parked a while beneath a PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE. Outside, the wind is blowing, and the ocean looks ragged.

Suddenly, a FIGURE climbs up from the rocks, barefoot and drifting as if on the deck of a ship. Her lean arms hang limp as she drags a satchel.

She freezes as he throws open the passenger door. She's drunk, strung out and crashing.

She doesn't recognize him. He doesn't recognize her.

LINK
Lydia? That you? It's me.
(no response)
Your old man.

She looks nervous - as if it could all be a ruse.

LINK (CONT'D)
Sit down. It's okay. Lydia Jane.
(singing the song)
*"Lydia Oh, Lydia... oh, have you seen
Lydia..."*

She takes a deep, tremulous breath, affected by this. Then she drops into the seat and pulls the door closed.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - NIGHT

As the air blows over her face, she's coming down hard. Her teeth are chattering. He looks down to see an eighth of Vodka in her bag, half-empty.

LYDIA
(slurring)
You bring the money?

LINK
We're going to go get it right now.

She pulls her hair off her face.

LINK (CONT'D)
Straight to the bank.

Delirious, she nods, hair swarming back over glazed eyes.

LINK (CONT'D)
Yeah, take a nap. I'll wake you up
when we get there.

With a grunt, she leans against the door. Under a tanktop strap, on her shoulderblade, he glimpses a TATTOO BUTTERFLY. He winces: he doesn't like it one bit.

LINK (CONT'D)
Might want to roll up that window.

She startles upright, then looks confused by the door.

LINK (CONT'D)
Just *crank* the handle.

Stiffly, she cranks the handle to close her window. He watches the BUTTERFLY move on her shoulderblade.

LINK (CONT'D)
Who did that ink on your shoulder?
Looks like a dead moth?

LYDIA
It's an Aztec butterfly.
(laughing)
And like... where's the fuckin' hog,
dude?! I thought outlaw *bikers*
wouldn't even *touch* a car like
this...

LINK
Part of my parole. 12-steps, no
Harley, no *fraternizing* with the old
gang. No leaving the *county* - so I
guess I bent that one.

Her sigh is exaggerated, like a balloon leaking air. She seems to fade again, staring off. From the floor, Link hands her an oil-stained towel.

LINK (CONT'D)
Use that as a pillow. I'll wake you
up at the ATM.

She wads up the rag and leans against it on the window, staring ahead through her scattered hair.

LYDIA
You're nothing like I remember.

He can tell by the way her weight settles, she's passed out. He faces ahead, eyes lit by oncoming headlights.

LINK
Kid, *neither* are you.

E/I. LINK'S TRAILER - OUTSIDE INDIO, CA - LATE NIGHT

He carries his daughter inside...

...lying her down onto his unmade bed. He studies the scratches on her wrists, a bruise on her neck. Every mark seems to cause him more regret.

QUICK SHOTS:

-- He searches through her SATCHEL, surprised to find a GLOCK. He groans as if struck in the gut.

Then he hides it on the top of his medicine cabinet.

-- He pours out her vodka.

-- He finds her iPhone. He digs further in her bag, and finds a few TAMPONS. He puts them back in, blushing.

-- He finds two empty GRAM BAGS, with traces of crystals on the bottom. He closes his eyes, exhaling, feeling the sting of it.

-- He opens a case and finds inside: A CLARINET. Frowning, he turns it over, studying it curiously.

-- He checks on Lydia, streetlights falling on her through the window. As nervous as the parent of a newborn, he leans close... to make sure she's breathing. When she turns over, he *startles* and leaves the room.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - FRONT STEP - NEAR DAWN

With his Dr. Pepper, Link sits in the light of the TV, dialing his phone. A woman's voice answers, half-asleep.

URSULA
Hello? *Hello?* Who is this?

INTERCUT WITH:

Lydia's mother - URSULA SIMON (40s) - rolls over in bed and pulls off a sleeping mask. She's taken obsessive care of herself, her real age showing only in her neck and hands. Her lips look bee-stung; her eyes have the look of a recent face lift.

URSULA (CONT'D)
(a long beat)
Lydia? Is that you?

Link can't bring himself to respond. The second he does, his daughter will be gone - returned to a life he neither knows or understands. He hangs up the phone.

STATIC ON AN OLD TV SCREEN

An old TV, it flickers through bad reception and static.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - REVERSE ANGLE - AFTERNOON

Eyes as swollen as a newborn mouse, Lydia faces the TV. She looks as if she's slept a year. The trailer is full of late afternoon light, spun full of dust.

Wearing small reading glasses, Link is putting the finishing touches on a trucker's arm: an American Eagle with a flag in its torso.

LYDIA
I don't even know where I am.

Frustrated, she flips through channels again.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
And there's something fucked-up about this TV. There's only five channels.

Link turns off the needle, steps over and adjusts the RABBIT EARS.

LINK
If you kind of angle 'em this way,
you can get Channel 11.

Lydia looks confounded.

LYDIA
So I went back in *time*.

While Link returns to work, Lydia moves away from the TV to study the COLLAGE still taped to the wall: Missing Persons reports, pictures, letters from her father's search. A POSTER OFFERS A \$30,000 REWARD.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
If I turn myself in, do I get this
thirty grand?

LINK
Nope.

LYDIA
What a rip.

The trucker begins a wheezing laugh.

LINK
Hold still.

Lydia turns and faces the tattoo, colorful beneath droplets of fresh blood.

LYDIA
Hey, you know what? That looks
exactly like a logo for a burger
stand in Hollywood.

The trucker stops laughing, and Link is irritated.

LINK
Why don't you go play outside?

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - SUNSET

Lydia does a cartwheel on the gravel, then looks out at the miles of desert. Her feet make a crunching sound in the gravel, which becomes --

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - LATE AFTERNOON

-- chewing. She's eating a bowl of cereal, staring at her father across a narrow card table as he makes a stencil for a tattoo. Outside, the highway plays the fading notes of passing trucks.

LYDIA
Is this a kidnapping?

LINK
Maybe.

LYDIA
I can't stay much longer.

LINK
Uh-huh. Oregon.

LYDIA

I don't have to go to Oregon, I just
have to go somewhere.

She takes another ravenous bite of cereal.

LINK

You pregnant?

She starts to laugh, a bead of milk clinging to her lip.

LYDIA

Why would I have to leave town
because I was *pregnant*?

He shrugs.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

The scorned woman! God. That's so
medieval. No, I'm not pregnant. But
I don't want to say too much. It'd
put you in a bad position.

He stares at her a while, skeptical of every word.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

My boyfriend had this idea we could
get married. So I'd never have to
testify against him in court.

LINK

Pretty romantic.

She shovels in cereal, then talks with her mouth full.

LYDIA

He was so in love with me. I swear
to God. But he was just so...
like... *Ugh!* You know?

She pantomimes something with gnarled fingers.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

I don't even think there's a word for
what was wrong with him.

LINK

And he's worried you'll say that in
court?

LYDIA

No, it's horrible. He's gone. Dead.

LINK

The boyfriend?

LYDIA

He got shot.

LINK

Uh-huh.

LYDIA

In the neck.

LINK

Tough break.

LYDIA

I'm just, like, *numb*. I just don't think it's hit me yet - that all this is really happening.

LINK

Me, neither.

LYDIA

Like maybe I'm traumatized.

LINK

Could *be*.

With her mouth full, she taps her head a few times.

LYDIA

Mmmmm, but that's why I got to keep moving. He was well-connected. So...

(rocking her head)

There's a lot of people looking for my white ass right now. That's why I'm all: this is my last supper, this bowl of starch and food coloring... and then I'm out.

She holds up the bowl and slurps the remaining milk.

LINK

Kid, can I say something? I know what it feels like to come down this hard. For thirty some-odd years I was drinking and fighting and acting like this, like everybody had it in for me. Then one day, I just sobered up and realized *I was the asshole*.

LYDIA

Your "higher power" can't do shit for me here, Dad.

(angry)

Look, when I called, you said you *had* money. I'm not criticizing, just saying -

She scans the trailer: the stove caked with grease; the dust bunnies; the fridge held together with duct-tape.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 - it looks like you probably miss the
 comforts of *jail*.

LINK
 I can get you money if that's all you
 want. But we got to make a deal.

She waits, her face tense.

LINK (CONT'D)
 Give me a week with you. One week
 and you stay clean the whole time.
 You got people looking for you, who's
 going to find you out here? They
 don't know anything about me.

LYDIA
 Cops probably keep track of you.

He restrains a laugh.

LINK
 Which means I piss in a cup once a
 month. I got a parole officer with a
 case-load like...

He spreads his arms out wide.

LINK (CONT'D)
 A week. You dry out. Next Saturday,
 if you're on your feet, I'll give you
 everything I got in this world.
 Whatever it amounts to. But you need
 to take a break from all this drama.

She looks at the fading light through the front door,
 then back at her father, with a cornered look of panic.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - LATE AFTERNOON

Lydia sits on a lawn chair, searching her bag, unable to
 find the GLOCK. Her things are all around her, as if
 she's been marooned on an island: her clarinet, her
 phone, her shoes overturned in the dust. She looks up at
 the trailer window. Link's fingers are hooked in the
 Venetian blinds, holding open a crease to watch her.

ON HER IPHONE

She searches the Internet. The electronic wheel circles
 for bad reception, but a story loads onto Safari.
"Double Homicide Rocks Hillside Community."

Squinting, Lydia magnifies it and sees: *"Police are searching for an unidentified woman after local boys helped her escape through the canyons."*

Startled, she takes her bag and clarinet and heads into -

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

- past her concerned father, and into -

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

- a narrow alcove with a shower-bath and a translucent American flag shower curtain. Lydia sits on the closed toilet seat, and starts to hyperventilate.

Link bangs on the flimsy vinyl door.

LINK (O.S.)
Everything okay in there, kid?

LYDIA
Awesome. Thank you for asking.

LINK (O.S.)
I don't want you taking your purse in there.

LYDIA
Can I have, like, one second to myself, please!?

LINK (O.S.)
Live in there if you want. Just leave your purse out here.

She groans, then opens the door a crack.

CLOSE SHOT: Only her arm emerges, thrusting her handbag out to Link, who takes it. The door slams and latches.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - MAIN ROOM

Obviously *wired* now, she plays the clarinet for him, wailing *"Enter Sandman"* by Metallica. From the tattoo chair, Link studies her dilated pupils, sweating temples and twitchy motions.

LINK
I don't know what it is.

She moves like a snake charmer, poised over a cobra.

LINK (CONT'D)
I said I don't know.

She finishes, eyes pinned. They study each other.

LINK (CONT'D)

I have no idea.

LYDIA

Come on, *dude!* I'm sure you know it!
You must be tone-deaf.

Chuckling, she begins toward the bathroom, and -

LINK surges up off the chair, so fast that he scares her.
He pushes her up against the wall.

LINK

Where you hiding that shit? Tell me
right now. This is *not* cute.

She looks at him with an expression of betrayal.

LINK (CONT'D)

This place is clean. I worked too
hard. I ain't going back to jail for
a stupid fucking game of hide-and-
seek with you.

But she's scared of him, and relents; going to her
clarinet and unscrewing the mouthpiece. She shows him
the last packet of crystal meth, taped on the inside.

LINK (CONT'D)

How long you been doing this?

LYDIA

About a month.

LINK

The *truth*.

LYDIA

That *is* the truth.

She's got big blue eyes - vulnerable. He tries to tell
if she's lying. But the longer he faces her, the more
fear shows in *his* eyes.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Exit light. Enter ni-
hight. Take my hand...*

LINK

What are you doing?

LYDIA (CONT'D)

We're off to never-never land.
Metallica, dude. The song!

LINK

I wasn't listening.

We hear a PRE-LAP of a phone ringing through, searching for a connection.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Stepping outside onto the gravel, Link makes a call on his cordless phone. Kirby answers on the third ring.

LINK
Kirby, I found her. My little girl.

KIRBY (V.O.)
Holy hell, Link. Hold on.

Far across the trailer park, a LIGHT COMES ON. Kirby emerges from his door, shirtless, saluting.

LINK
I thought I could help, but...

KIRBY (V.O.)
Wait, just wait.

LINK
The kid's out of her fucking *mind*.

INTERCUT - between LINK and KIRBY, on cordless phones, just a few hundred yards apart across the trailer park.

KIRBY
John, you're not ready for this. You don't even *know* her.

LINK
She's like a spinning top, man.

KIRBY
Think of where you were six years ago. That's where you're going back. She needs *real* help. You can't take this on yourself.

LINK
Maybe I can get her into the program.

KIRBY
Good. Right.

LINK
She says she got people looking for her - police, some dead boyfriend. I think she might be crazy.

KIRBY
You can't take on her *chaos*. Best thing for her is if the police get to her. Let her dry out in county. Let them scare some sense into her.

A long pause.

LINK

Kirb - you got this twelve-step shit down cold, and I respect that. But I ain't never been a snitch, and I don't plan to start with my own daughter.

KIRBY

John, listen. Just listen...

Link hangs up on him. But he still hears Kirby, shouting in the distance into the phone.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

(calling)

You can't help her!

DISSOLVE TO:

LINK'S TV

Lydia scans in a restless loop through the five channels.

E/I. LINK'S TRAILER - LATE NIGHT

Link sits on his front step, a Dr. Pepper in his fist.

From far down the highway, two cars approach. ONE is a WHITE FORD TAURUS.

It stops, and the SECOND CAR passes ahead: an old IMPALA.

The Impala swings onto the gravel and stops, the stereo thudding like war drums. FOUR SHADOWS rise out and head toward him.

The rolling shoulders, the dangling arms - Link has seen this swagger nearly every day of his life. They step into the outskirts of his porch light.

Link sizes up their brands and ink: "KANPOL" on a fist; "El Salvador" along a collarbone.

LINK

Can I help you gentlemen?

They form a semi-circle around him. The WHITE KID has "PEN1" in a SHARMROCK on his forearm. The fourth has "JOKER" on his shaved head and the *sureños'* Dodgers logo.

JOKER

Yeah, man, we want *tattoos*.

LINK

I'm not open.

Joker points to the sign: "*Walk-ins Welcome.*"

JOKER
We're walking *in*, homes.

LINK
Come back tomorrow.

SALVADOR
Nah, man. Now. I want some NAZI
shit. On my arm.

JOKER
Or a big-ass heart with some bitch's
name in it.

SHAMROCK
Yeah, on my dick.

He grabs himself, and the others laugh.

LINK
Go home.

SHAMROCK
We got money, old man. That's bad
business turning us away.

SALVADOR
Yeah, don't judge us by our looks.

LINK
I'm not judging. I'm going to bed.

JOKER
What if I wanted her name on my
stomach?

He pulls up his shirt to show a LUGER nestled into belt.

JOKER (CONT'D)
"Lydia."

Link darkens at this. He rises slowly, glaring at them.

LINK
Get out of here. All of you.

SALVADOR
We just want to talk to her, mang.
We got no problem with you.

SHAMROCK
Need her side of the story, Wood.
Some shit went down the other day.

LINK
So what are you? Fuckin' Citizens'
police? Get lost.

SHAMROCK

Easy old dude.

LINK

Get off my property. Or I'm calling the cops.

JOKER

You ain't calling the cops, mang.
You on parole. Nobody calls the cops
when they on parole.

Joker draws his gun. Link turns toward his door,
dismissive, more irritated than afraid.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Don't turn your back on me, Wood!

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Link steps back inside and closes the door. Lydia has
been watching through the blinds, in the glow of the TV.

He hooks his finger over the blinds and looks out.

LINK

These guys are the real thing. What
the hell were you *into*?

LYDIA

Dad - seriously. I don't even know
what to do.

LINK

No shit.

Outside, Joker tears off the screen door. When he knocks
harder, the others shoulder into the trailer, rocking it.

JOKER

Come on, man, open up!

He throws a handful of gravel against the window. Link
looks exasperated. He hates having to restrain himself.

LINK

If that punk puts a dent in my
trailer...

But he notices his daughter's scared face in a stripe of
light and goes quiet. She's terrified.

LINK (CONT'D)

How far they going to take this?

Lydia drops down to the cabinets, just as a LOUD BLAST
and a SINGLE GUNSHOT pierces the aluminum front door.

LINK (CONT'D)
Shit. That far, huh?

Smoke steams off the edges of the coarse peephole.

Now *really* angry, Link searches through cabinets, another shot shatters the living room window.

LINK (CONT'D)
 Good to finally meet your *friends*.

From the kitchen, Link picks up a CARVING KNIFE.

LYDIA
 I had a gun. It was in my bag.

Link moves across the bedroom as ANOTHER BULLET punctures the wall and rings across the trailer.

The TELEPHONE begins ringing, and - as Link passes - he checks the CALLER ID: KIRBY DOUGLAS.

LINK
 (to himself)
 Ye'ap, Kirby, you heard right.
 There's a party on plot 16.

He grabs the GUN on top of his BATHROOM MEDICINE CABINET, and tromps back like an ogre. Each step he takes with the gun seems to make him angrier...

LINK (CONT'D)
 I'm going to get blamed for this.
 Breaking parole. *Guar-an-teeed.*

LYDIA
 Dad! They're going to kill me!

Outside, the thugs are leaping into the trailer, scooting it back on its blocks, trying to tip it over.

LINK
 Straight question, kid. Can the police *deal* with this?

LYDIA
 (panicking)
 I'll go to jail, Dad. And I won't make it. I was *involved*.

LINK
 Jesus.

LYDIA
 I fucked up. Bad. They'll kill me in jail. I swear to God.

LINK
 Happy Birthday, Link.

He sighs and turns to the living room, where:

ARMS are scrambling upward through the shattered window, reaching for a hold on the couch.

Link lurches ahead and stabs the knife through the hand.

SHAMROCK screams as the blade penetrates into the wooden frame. He hangs midair, before the knife pulls loose and he drops to the gravel.

LINK (CONT'D)

There it is: Aggravated assault.
Return to custody.

Riled, the thugs fire a BARRAGE through the walls, ripping off Polaroids. Link crawls to his daughter past spraying glass. She's huddled by the fridge, panting.

He touches her on the head, then pulls back the slide on the GLOCK. He rises up.

LINK (CONT'D)

And an unregistered firearm. Thanks
for looking me up, kid.

He fires a shot, aiming right at the ground below SHAMROCK - who is staggering away, holding his hand.

LINK (CONT'D)

Attempted murder. That's what
they'll say that was. And failure to
report a crime. Might as well tack
that on, too.

LYDIA

Dad! They're going to kill us!

Another flurry rips through the walls. One bullet strikes the kitchen tap, spraying water like a geyser.

BOOM! He fires a shot into the dust, driving them back.

LINK

I'm going to get old in *the joint*
'cause you fell in with the wrong
crowd.

He closes one eye, and braces the gun.

LINK (CONT'D)

Which means somebody here has got to
die or *bitch up*.

Moving from exasperation to genuine anger, he squeezes the trigger. *The window of the Impala explodes in the distance.*

The four retreat to the car. When Link sees them opening doors and the trunk, he hollers out the window.

LINK (CONT'D)
You chickenshit motherfuckers!

Clutching his hand, SHAMROCK turns and hollers back.

SHAMROCK
Fuck you! Fucking dick-sucking piece
of -

LINK
See you on the other side, fish! You
can *toss my salad!*

Just then, Link glimpses KANPOL handing out ASSAULT RIFLES from the trunk. It's an arsenal.

They climb into the car and roll down the windows, rifle barrels hanging out. The engine gusts, shifts into gear. Link shifts gears, too - from anger to an intense Emergency-room calm.

LINK (CONT'D)
Lydia, you need to do *exactly* what I
say. Go get in the bathtub.

LYDIA
The bathtub?

LINK
Now! Right *now!*

She scrambles across the dark, as the car begins racing toward them, rifles aimed.

Link fires a last shot, then follows.

LINK (CONT'D)
Make some room, kid.

He dives into the tub, thudding on top of Lydia - as the walls and windows light up with crossing fireworks. A storm of bullets comes through the aluminum.

The mirror sprays into slivers; tattoo pigment bottles explode; light bulbs burst. Bullets ricochet off the tub, chipping porcelain. They ring off the fridge in the kitchen; clatter through a cabinet of pans. The wood paneling splinters, and the screen on the TV blows nearby. It's a fire storm tearing apart the walls.

Link and Lydia nestle their heads together in the tub. Link drapes his heavy arm over her as a shield.

LINK (CONT'D)
Down! Keep your head down!

Outside, the Impala moves with the ascending note of reverse gear.

INTERCUTTING, INSIDE AND OUT

The Impala spins its tires and races for the trailer.

Link clutches Lydia, closing his eyes...

...savoring their embrace.

LINK (CONT'D)

This is it, kid. Hang on.

The Impala smashes head-on into the trailer, caving in the bedroom wall and throwing everything into chaos.

With the scraping of ripped screws, they tip over off the blocks. Lydia screams as tattoo equipment flies.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Uprooting brush, the trailer hits and *begins rolling*.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Link and Lydia are thrown against the shower head as the trailer tumbles. They drop back down, slamming into the tub, tangling in the curtain. The shower rod hits Link in the mouth like a jousting lance.

As the trailer gains momentum downhill, it goes into a fast roll, everything inside flying.

Tattoo needles pierce like darts into the wood paneled walls. Pigment bottles blow like fireworks. The TV, the small fridge, the bed, the chairs -- everything crashes across the floor, the ceiling, then the floor again... as if spinning inside a massive, industrial dryer.

Link hangs onto Lydia, squeezing his legs outward to keep them imbedded in the tub. She screams louder, until -

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

- *with a thud and hiss*, the trailer comes to a rest in the soft desert sand, snagging against an old wire fence.

Above, the Impala sits on the ridge, its grill destroyed.

As the THUGS step outside to look over the destruction -

DISTANT GUNSHOTS echo from deeper in the trailer park.

JOKER spins to find SHADOWS brandishing shotguns, moving across the streetlights toward them.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

They hear the baritone booms of distant shotguns, and then VOICES, growing louder and louder.

LYDIA

There's *more* of them, Dad.

Link is bleeding slightly from his mouth.

LINK

Nah. Neighborhood watch.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Residents from all over the trailer park have come out into the darkness. They're shirtless, in their underwear, chambering bullets in sawed-off shotguns. A back-woods militia.

KIRBY stalks onto the gravel plot, holding his shotgun, wearing big glasses that magnify and warp his eyes.

KIRBY

You boys picked the wrong rednecks.

JOKER swings his gun and squeezes the trigger - empty.

SHAMROCK

Let's go, man. Let's just go.

The four men pile into the wrecked-up Impala, as more residents surround them with baseball bats and rifles.

INT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Link and Lydia hear the Impala speeding away, the Taurus following. Then they hear the voices of an improvised salvage crew digging for them.

Link crawls through the wreck of his trailer, salvaging his wallet, keys, and THE WOODEN BOX of letters.

EXT. LINK'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Lydia limps over the gravel and spent shell casings, grit in her hair and tiny cuts on her face. The angry mob is all around, shining flashlights.

As Link heads for the Nova, Kirby grabs him in the dark. Sirens are finally approaching in the distance.

KIRBY

John? What are you *doing*, man?

LINK

I'll call you.

Link feels his front tooth to see if it's loose.

KIRBY

Brother, you *can't* leave the scene.

Link turns and looks sadly at his trailer: his life's work now a piece of wreckage along the road.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

If she's mixed up, that's called harboring a fugitive. Think! You're going to go back to *jail*.

Link glances at a line of sirens like Christmas lights along the distant highway.

LINK

Kirb, let's have this talk later. I got a friend down in Slab City. Tom Dagget. She needs money, and he owes me. That's it. I'll be there by sunrise and I'll call you. Sober as a judge.

Link is rushing back to the car now.

KIRBY

She's got to find her own rock bottom.

LINK

Ye'ap. And I'm going to give her a tour.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - CONTINUOUS

As he drops behind the wheel, Lydia sits beside him. The sirens are visible far off down the highway. Link turns the key in the ignition - and the car sputters.

LINK

Don't do this to me.

Lydia watches him with huge, startled eyes. Link tries again: the engine strains and stammers.

LINK (CONT'D)

Not now - you piece of shit!

He tries a third time and the scrape deepens, but the car won't start. He floods the carburetor, then stops, slapping the steering wheel.

LINK (CONT'D)
Fucking perfect! I got the worst
luck in the world.

He hears a quiet gasp - and turns to see Lydia, crying.

LINK (CONT'D)
If we sit here long enough an
asteroid is going to fall on us.

As he tries again to start the car, she rocks beside him.

LINK (CONT'D)
Come on, you stupid piece of shit!

LYDIA
I'm sorry, Dad.

He punches the dashboard and a knob falls off the radio.

LINK
What the fuck do I have to do?

LYDIA
I'm so sorry.

LINK
I'll rip your fucking valves out!

He beats on the dashboard, as the sound of sirens grows
closer. Lydia's face is streaked with tears.

LYDIA
I'm so so so-*ho-ho-horry*.

He turns to her. With his rough thumb, he wipes a tear
off her cheek. Then he turns the ignition one more time
and - *the engine turns over*.

LINK
Halle-fucking-lujah.

SLAM CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN RESERVATION - AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN

Along a dark, empty road, the NOVA passes a sign: THE
TORRES MARTINEZ INDIAN RESERVATION.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - CONTINUOUS

She notices him flicking the gas gauge.

LYDIA
You're on empty.

LINK

I'm always on empty. The gauge is broke.

LYDIA

Then how do you know when you're going to run out of gas?

LINK

I just got a feel for it.

They ride in silence a while.

LINK (CONT'D)

I'm heading south. You got something big you're going to miss in Oregon?

LYDIA

I was going to maybe go up there and be like a tree-sitter.

He just looks over at her, deadpan.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

What? You sit in this treehouse made out of ropes, so that the logging companies won't cut down these beautiful trees. There's all this stuff that lives in those trees that doesn't live anywhere else. Like funguses and insects and rare molds.

LINK

That's the getaway plan? You're going to protect some mold.

LYDIA

At least I'd be *useful*.

LINK

Getting wasted in a tree.

LYDIA

Everybody's sober.

LINK

Nobody'd do it who wasn't fucked up.

LYDIA

What are you some tea party biker? You work for the logging industry?

LINK

I'm just not worried about a tree.

LYDIA

Well, pretty soon we won't have any more.

LINK
Sounds like a tragedy.

LYDIA	LINK
Total destruction of the planet.	I'm crying.

Suddenly, the car begins to drift and Link groans.

Shit! LINK (CONT'D)

LYDIA
What? *What?*

He drifts all the way to the side of the road beside a few dark homes, and he drops his head against the wheel.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
We're out of *gas*!? I thought you had
a *feel* for it -

LINK
Kid, you want to be *useful*? I got a
job for you.

SUNRISE

Lydia is pushing the Nova down the abandoned highway,
through the date palm groves in the Indian Reservation,
in silhouette against the brightening sky.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - CONTINUOUS

Link steers past cinder block houses and cyclone fences
netted with trash, guiding the car beside an OLD PICKUP.

EXT. CHEVY NOVA - MOMENTS LATER

Link climbs out, and searches his cluttered back seat -
for a SEVERED PIECE OF GARDEN HOSE.

Link unscrews the Pickup's gas cap, and feeds in the hose. He begins sucking on the other end, siphoning gasoline.

Lydia watches, fascinated.

Link draws hard, sucking on it like the end of a straw.

LYDIA
You must have been really popular in
jail.

He flinches back, coughs, and spits out gas.

The hose is now flowing, and he feeds it into the tank. He keeps spitting, wiping his tongue on his sleeve.

LINK

Be quiet. Some screaming Indian is going to come out of that house.

LYDIA

Is he going to scalp us?

LINK

Just get in the car.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - AN HOUR LATER

The Nova follows the empty highway. The wind has picked up, and the inland sea is a ragged stretch of whitecaps. Plumes of salt swirl over the road. A train rattles past, box cars covered with graffiti.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - CONTINUOUS

Lydia watches as they pass the torched remains of a meth lab. She's never seen anyplace so desolate.

She clicks on her iPhone and activates a GPS-map, far out in the desert, far away from the beacons of her friends. Link looks curiously at the screen for a moment.

LINK

What's that?

LYDIA

A GPS map. Tells me where all my friends are.

LINK

Uh-huh. So where are they?

LYDIA

Doesn't work out here.

LINK

I *know* where my friends are. There's a guy in the Slabs that owes me. For some ink I did. On layaway.

LYDIA

Look, it's obvious you don't have any money. So we can stop pretending you can help me...

There's a demoralized tone; and he waits. Then, he shows her what he knows:

LINK

Two of those kids were Sureños. And that "PEN-1" on that dude's arm stands for "Public Enemy Number 1." Ever since they RICOed the Nazi Lowriders, they're the enforcement arm of the Brotherhood. They work with La Eme, but not unless there's real money involved. I got no idea how you pissed off guys like that. You talking to the Feds maybe?

LYDIA

I'm not talking to anybody but you.

LINK

Yeah, you never stop. But you don't say anything.

(a long beat)

That was supposed to be an easy hit. Take you out in the desert, rape you, and put a bullet in your brain.

She looks rattled again.

LINK (CONT'D)

What do they want from you?

Out her window, she sees FIGHTER JETS practicing maneuvers over the Salton Sea.

LYDIA

What are those?

LINK

F-18s. Dropping ordnance. That's the Naval testing range over those hills. Are you going to answer me?

LYDIA

I'm afraid of what you're going to think.

LINK

You don't want to spoil the great impression you made *so far*.

She starts laughing - at first mildly, then it turns into an uncontrollable fit. Link just watches.

LYDIA

Oh God, I'm going to pee my pants.

EXT. SALTON SEA - EASTERN SHORE - DAY

The wind is blowing up dust devils along this desolate stretch of shore.

As Link waits, he sees Lydia returning to him over a stretch of dunes, appearing at the ridge and disappearing into another valley.

As she emerges again, she's giving a thumbs-up.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - EASTERN SHORE - MOMENTS LATER

They continue southbound.

LYDIA

I was at this party at this crazy nice house. There were all these girls, and they were all so perfect and so put together and for some reason I just couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand my life. So I jumped in the pool. In all my clothes. I don't know why.

Link keeps his eyes on the road.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

So I was looking for a towel...

LINK

Makes sense.

LYDIA

I was dripping wet on these beautiful hardwood floors, and I'm like: somebody's going to be *pissed*. So I walk all the way into the bedroom - and there he was. Jonah. It was his house. He was old, like *thirty*. And I thought, I'm dead. But he was so sweet, such - like - a gentleman almost. He gave me a towel and let me borrow some clothes, and that was how we met.

LINK

Swept you off your feet.

LYDIA

I washed those clothes and folded them - and I brought them back a few days later. I sort of... made myself up a little. Looked as good as I could. But he just - he wanted to know about me. Really about me. Who I was, how I got there. I told him I was living on my own. Sort of. At that point I was living with Chloe. Except her parents didn't know. And I was sick of sneaking around.

(a beat)

And so we started seeing each other.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
He was so hot, and he was, like, a man. I mean, I was blown away at first.

Link is just staring through her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
He knew my situation. And he was in *real estate*, you know.

LINK
You're telling me we're being chased by *realtors*?

LYDIA
No, well... he managed these properties. And he just... he set me up in this cute little, like, cottage in the valley. And all I had to do was take care of it and look normal.

LINK
How'd you pull *that* off?

LYDIA
Except, I guess, his people would *hide* stuff in the house.

LINK
Drugs.

LYDIA
I don't know what they kept in there. I didn't *think* about it, because I wasn't supposed to. And one night, I had friends over, and it just turned into this party. It got out of control. And somebody broke the sliding glass door, and some other dick put his fist through the bathroom wall--

LINK
And something goes missing.

LYDIA
Jonah said there was. The people he *worked* for, they were furious. I swear I never saw anything.

LINK
Is that true?

LYDIA
Yes! But he took me to this place, with these fucking assholes - God, I *hated this one guy!* He was so sexist. They took me to some other house like mine. And these people had stolen some money...

She grows silent and Link waits. Suddenly, she's crying and facing down, her back just bobbing up and down.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
He wanted me to kill this woman. I
still see her eyes in my sleep.

Link keeps facing the road.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
I had a gun in my hand, and I didn't
think. It was like jumping into the
pool. I just turned. I just...
pulled the trigger.
(quiet)
And I killed him.

She cries for a while, while Link stays rigid, staring ahead. He doesn't make a move, he just keeps driving.

EXT. NILAND, CA - AN HOUR LATER

The Nova crosses train tracks and a field of broken glass, glittering in the sunlight.

INT. CHEVY NOVA - CONTINUOUS

They ride in silence now. Near SLAB CITY, they pass a mountain of painted adobe, a giant heart, inscribed with childlike letters: "*Jesus I'm a Sinner, Come upon my body and into my heart.*" Lydia looks at it, wiping tears.

EXT. SLAB CITY - MOMENTS LATER

A post-apocalyptic trailer park on the driest topsoil in America. Libertarians, runaways, and drop-outs hunker in campsites around greasewood trees. Families live in broken-down cars, laundry strung between nettle bushes.

I/E. CHEVY NOVA - MOMENTS LATER

They pull up to a clearing in the mesquite trees, where vintage HARLEYS wait in stages of reassembly around a TRAILER. Lydia stays in the passenger seat while Link shambles out to knock on the trailer door.

LINK
Dagget!

There emerges a man so emblazoned with tattoos that it takes Lydia a moment to realize he's naked - with a small crooked penis stranded on an island of red pubic hair.

She breaks into laughter. The man points to an untouched spot on his back while Link nods with the detached expression of a doctor.

Link waves for her to join them. As the man climbs into a pair of shorts drying on a yucca tree, she approaches.

LINK (CONT'D)
Want to show you some of my best
work. Not this other bullshit.

He looks as if he's made from Silly Putty that's been raked across concert posters. But in a clearing beside a shoulder blade there sits a silhouette of an old man on a spindly horse, riding in a desert covered with windmills.

LYDIA
Don Quixote?

LINK
Kid's got an education under all that
mess. Yeah - Picasso.

LYDIA
You did that?

LINK
I had some people want to put that in
a magazine - but they couldn't find
this motherfucker.

DAGGET
I ain't no male model.

LINK
Damn right, you're not.
(to Lydia)
Stay put. We got to talk business.

The two men move away from her across the plot.

DAGGET
I'm waiting on a VA check, boss.
Ain't much I can do 'til then...

A look of guilt washes over Lydia. She watches her father - out of earshot - argue with a broke man as if trying to extract water from a stone. Link is growing visibly more frustrated and embarrassed.

She turns and heads away, uphill between creosote bushes.

EXT. SLAB CITY - DUNES - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia hears motorcycles in the distance. She climbs a hill to where she sees two DIRT BIKES churning dust. She's deep in thought as she watches them. She takes a deep breath -

- and waves for help.

EXT. DAGGET'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

LINK
You're a fucking art thief, Dagget.
You ought to be ashamed.

DAGGET
I can't give you what I don't have.

Link gives up. As he turns and crosses the clearing, he notices that Lydia is gone. He grows nervous, speeding up in his steel-toed boots, scanning.

LINK
Lydia?

He moves through squatters' plots, ducking under laundry lines, passing barefoot children around a spigot.

LINK (CONT'D)
(to the kids)
Did you see a pretty young girl just
run by here?

They look at him like a madman, and he keeps running.

EXT. RIDGE - SLAB CITY - CONTINUOUS

Against the wide-open sky, he can see two plumes of dust moving along the desert floor. He watches as they clarify into MOTORCYCLES.

Soon, he can see that one of them has TWO PEOPLE riding on it. Next he can discern LONG HAIR flapping in the wind. LYDIA.

The DIRT BIKES growl right to him. Suddenly, LYDIA gusts past, holding onto a TEENAGER'S BACK.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - SLAB CITY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy stops with Lydia, where he lives in a cluster of camouflage tents between two rusted pickup trucks. Scattered bottles cover the rocks.

As Lydia steps off, she sees, at the entrance to a tent, A NAZI FLAG. The sight freezes her as if it were a snake. A shirtless man emerges, eyeing her. He finishes taking a long toke off a pipe, then holds it upward.

SHIRTLESS MAN
You party?

ON LINK

He's following the tracks of the bikes across the dirt and over the ridge. Finally, he sees his daughter on the flat ground ahead.

He storms over and grabs Lydia by the arm, hard.

LINK

What the fuck are you doing?

LYDIA

Ow! Jesus.

The FIRST RIDER is climbing off his dirtbike, while the second still circles the encampment, chewing up dust.

RIDER

Step away from the lady, bro'. She don't wanna go witc' you.

LINK

Fuck you and your Kawasaki.

Furious, the SECOND RIDER accelerates right at him. Link throws a ferocious punch into his helmet, shattering the visor and hurling him off the bike.

LYDIA

Dad, they didn't do anything!

From his reaction, Link has obviously hurt his hand. The rider writhes in the dirt beside his sputtering bike.

The SHIRTLESS MAN disappears in the tent and re-emerges with a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN.

SHIRTLESS MAN

You got a problem, mister?

LINK

I got way too many problems.

He begins walking right at the gun. *Click-click*, THE SHIRTLESS MAN chambers a round, but -

Link grabs the shotgun and forces it aside, just as it fires down into an ice cooler.

LYDIA

Dad! They were just going to give me a ride!

LINK

A ride?

Her expression becomes condescending, like a woman trying to break up with a fragile boyfriend.

LYDIA
To the Greyhound station. They're
not abducting me. I'm just... I
think this is the best thing now.

Link looks at the two kids with a grimace. Then he gives
Lydia a face so heartbroken it rattles her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
You got *enough* trouble without me. I
didn't mean to *do* this to you. Any
of it.

Link turns back to the SHIRTLESS MAN.

LINK
I'm talking to my daughter. I assume
you got the decency not to shoot me
in the back.

LYDIA
You're standing under a NAZI flag.

He pivots and grabs Lydia by the arm, dragging her ahead.
Her eyes begin to show fear.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Very adult. Very mature. I'm so
glad I found you so you could help me
through this. You have so much
fucking perspective!

LINK
Just get in the *goddman* car before I
break your fucking skull.

FROM ACROSS THE DESERT - LONG SHOT

Through the dusty windshield of a parked car, someone
watches Link force his daughter into the Chevy Nova.

INT. MOTEL - BRAWLEY, CA - NIGHT

As Link counts crumpled bills and spare change, Lydia
flirts with the young clerk - whom we'll know as JASON.
She pantomimes counting money, licking her fingers,
mocking her father.

Jason laughs, until Link looks up. Then Link glances
over at his daughter, not amused.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

A deserted motel against a barren sea. Steady white caps
smash against the old pilings. Link finds an ice machine
- and dispenses cubes into a bucket.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Lydia comes out of a shower, in sweats and one of his shirts, Link has his hand in a BUCKET OF ICE.

LYDIA
It'd serve you right if you broke it.
You hit first, like every other
asshole in my life.

LINK
What do I have to do to get you to
shut up?

LYDIA
You'd have to listen to me and
understand me. As a human being.

LINK
Is that all?

LYDIA
And relate to me in some way other
than *do this, do that*. Senseless
fucking violence. I hate people who
think fear is the same thing as
respect. I'm afraid of roaches, that
doesn't mean I respect them.

LINK
I sure as shit do.

FADE OUT.

But we remain in the room, late at night, as both lie on their backs on double beds. Passing headlights outside twist lit SHAPES around the walls.

LYDIA
Dad?

He's asleep. She shifts in the bed, watching the patterns cast through the blinds, lonely and afraid. Link sleeps with a resonant snore.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As if it's a way to center herself, Lydia makes up her face. She traces black pencil around her eyes; she blends two shades of lipstick; she fixes her hair.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Lydia sneaks out of the room, carefully closing the door to avoid waking her father.

She walks along the lit pool, toward the lobby.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

She passes JASON, the clerk, who's typing behind the desk. His eyes open wide at the sight of her. She struts past, sits on the couch, and turns on the TV.

Hey. LYDIA Yo. JASON

She surfs through channels, eating candy from the dish.

JASON
Something I can help you with?

LYDIA
No, just, needed some air.

JASON
Well, we got plenty of that.

She laughs and doesn't notice right away as HER PICTURE comes onto the TV screen.

LOCAL REPORTER (O.S.)
Police are searching for information
about the missing girl, wanted for
possible connection to the multiple
homicides.

Lydia leaps off the couch. It's the SCHOOL PICTURE (from Link's wall).

LOCAL REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A warrant has been issued for her as
a material witness.

As the story moves on to pictures of LINK, Lydia freaks.

LYDIA
Oh my God, I'm a fucking celebrity!

Jason trots over, catching the tail end of the story.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Shit, change the channel. Find
another channel.

He grabs the remote and flips to another local channel, covering the same story, her picture on screen again.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
That is so crazy!

Jason twists his head and marvels at the image.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
That's a terrible picture, though.

JASON
Nah, you look good.

LYDIA
Thank you.

The same picture of Link comes up.

JASON
Did he kidnap you or something?

LYDIA
Sort of. He's my Dad. We got to see
if this national, baby. Viral.

He flips to Headline News, where they're covering a
blizzard gripping the Midwest.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Snow. How is that news? Cold shit
fell from the sky today. Amazing.

Jason keeps flipping through channels, both of them
standing side by side, close, staring ahead.

JASON
You don't look like a murderer.

LYDIA
Aww, you're so sweet.

JASON
I should show you something.

CUT TO:

A FAX. An A.P.B. for Lydia. *"A PERSON OF INTEREST,
Wanted for Questioning in a DOUBLE-HOMICIDE."*

JASON (CONT'D)
We're supposed to call the police.

LYDIA
Did you?

JASON
(flirtatious)
Not yet.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Link is sound asleep, as the phone begins ringing.

LINK
(answering)
Missing Link Ta-

LYDIA (ON PHONE)

You have to come downstairs. It's the most insane thing ever. I'm in the lobby, okay - just bring everything. And I left a bunch of stuff in the bathroom, don't leave that. It probably has DNA on it.

LINK

DNA?

LYDIA

And don't turn on the lights, we're probably being watched. You're going to be so fucking proud of me.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Link is hurrying to gather Lydia's things, noticing her make-up around the bathroom sink. He sighs, irritated at being swept up in the drama.

EXT. MOTEL COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

He trundles their stuff past the lit pool.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

As Link enters, Lydia ushers him to where Jason sits on a swivel chair, looking like a chatroom pervert.

LINK

What the hell is this?

LYDIA

Did you get the stuff in the bathroom, too?

LINK

Yes, I got the stuff in the bathroom.

LYDIA

Good. Because the cops are coming. They may be here already.

She hands him the faxes with their pictures. Link rolls up the papers and points them at the clerk.

LINK

So this cocksucker called the cops?

LYDIA

No, Dad! God! He's helping us. Jesus, you're such an asshole.

JASON

It's all right. I got thick skin.

LYDIA

Is that the way you act? You call somebody a cocksucker when they try to help you?

JASON

I came on at ten. Those were already there, and I think, knowing the day guy -

LYDIA

It's always the day guy. The day guy always fucks the night guy.

Sighing, Link paces to the window. He glances out at the GAS STATION where two cruisers sit waiting.

LINK

We need a new ride. They'll have my plates.

He grimaces and walks to the opposite window, where - beside a weeded lot and an adult bookstore, two more C.H.P. vehicles have pulled up.

LINK (CONT'D)

They made us *hours* ago. They're waiting for an arrest warrant.

JASON

Most of the job is paperwork.

Link stares at him until he squirms.

JASON (CONT'D)

Look, I shouldn't do this, but...

Jason looks between Link and Lydia, then he throws a KEY RING onto the desk.

JASON (CONT'D)

This is the master key. You're surrounded, I don't think you can run. Every room is empty except 3, 10 and 15. They won't see you if you take the inside stairs. Find a room and hide. Okay? I never saw you, you never saw me.

Lydia takes the key and smiles at him, melting him.

LYDIA

Then you're the sweetest person I never met.

She leans in and kisses his cheek. Link boils.

LINK
Jesus Christ, it's *Casablanca*.

INT. ANOTHER MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

With the MASTER KEY, Link opens the door; then he and Lydia hunker down in the dark.

Link goes to the window, where he watches POLICE CARS pull up alongside the lobby. He watches cops fill the lobby and exterior walkways.

LYDIA
(whispering)
They won't search every room.

LINK
And I'm sure your new little friend is going to keep his mouth shut.

LYDIA
He helped us, didn't he?

LINK
After he called the cops. Then you got him all turned sideways and he didn't know what to do. You're a magnet for creeps, you know that.

LYDIA
Maybe that's why you're still here.

Outside they hear the police passing. Inside, there's only the sound of hard candy against her teeth.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Dad?
(a long pause)
What's jail like?

LINK
Like summer camp.

LYDIA
I'm serious.

LINK
They got a big swimming pool. If you're good, they let you ride a pony.

LYDIA
Do they protect people?

They can hear the raid on their former room, a battering ram through the door, a stampede of boots, voices shouting, "*Search warrant.*"

LYDIA (CONT'D)
If somebody was after me - would they
make sure I was okay? Like in a
special cage?

LINK
That's called PC. It's for snitches
and celebrities. Maybe you'll be
both.

Down below, they hear the creaking sound of Link's door,
as police break into the Nova and search it.

LINK (CONT'D)
They're going to impound the Nova.

Her eyes are starting to look terrified now. In a room
below, there's a burst of hollering and kicked furniture.

LINK (CONT'D)
They're going to take this whole
place apart, kid. Room by room.

LYDIA
Dad. I can't get caught. I won't
make it.

LINK
I'm not going back either, kid.

Link rises up and heads to the bathroom. He pries the
METAL BAR off the towel rack and holds it like a club.

He leans against the wall by the door, listening.

LINK (CONT'D)
Stay put. This could get ugly.

Just then - BOOM! - blaring gunshot in their old room.

Lydia looks over at Link, poleaxed. He can't believe it
either. There follows a TORRENT of gunfire.

LINK (CONT'D)
Go, go, go, go.

EXT. MOTEL COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

They push out the door and rush beneath the narrow
catwalk - seeing a scramble above. The cops have
retreated, as someone fires an arsenal from the room.

LYDIA
Somebody was in our room.

A COP has been shot through the neck and lies suffering
on the catwalk, pushed against the railing, blood
trickling down onto the palmetto leaves below.

Lydia is stunned, and Link has to drag her ahead.

As she looks back across the courtyard, she sees the remaining two cops run for cover into the stairwell as...

...a FIGURE, face covered with a feed sack, emerges and fires three merciless shots into the downed officer.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Rushing through the glass door, bells jangling, Lydia glimpses *blood* all over the front desk and carpet.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

As they push out into the parking lot, gunshots echo behind them. The fire alarm goes off in the building.

Link pulls Lydia ahead to an OLD CHEVY PICKUP, where he smashes his elbow through window, and unlocks the door.

LINK

Get in!

Lydia slides into the passenger seat, as Link drops in beside her, stooping to PULL OUT THE IGNITION WIRES.

Another GUNSHOT shatters the glass in the lobby: the FIGURE is approaching.

Lydia glimpses him as the window's glass drops in chunks. She sinks down low on the seat, out of sight.

LYDIA

Who the fuck is that?

LINK

A *cleaner*. He had us. I need you to get down here and do this - my hand is still swollen up.

LYDIA

Do what?

LINK

I need you to strip back these wires.

LYDIA

Hotwire it?

LINK

Hurry. I'll teach you.

LYDIA

Holy *shit*!

INT. MOTEL COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The bodies of two more police officers lie bleeding on the stairs, one of them still coughing and alive.

PAN PAST TO:

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The GUNMAN. There's a feed sack over his face; his arms are covered with brands and TATTOOS: a configuration of DOTS and AZTEC SYMBOLS.

THE GUNMAN'S POV: He steps over Jason, throat cut and blood pooling on the carpet. He glances at the FAXed APB: Lydia's picture surrounded by thumbprints of blood.

Then he turns to the PARKING LOT and the dark cars...

INT. PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Lydia is shearing the red wire. For a few excruciating seconds, all we hear is her labored breathing and a few dogs barking in the distance.

LINK
Touch those together.

She touches the wires to the solenoid, making a spark.

LINK (CONT'D)
Now wrap 'em together.

BOOM! A gunshot goes right through another car.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The hooded GUNMAN steps out, rifle dangling. He begins systematically firing into each car. BOOM! He hits the window of the next. CLICK-CLICK, he chambers another bullet, and fires into a SATURN, setting off its alarm.

INT. PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Link and Lydia freeze, cowering below the seat of the pickup. They hear footsteps on the pavement, approaching. BOOM! Another deafening shot.

She coils the wires together, and the engine roars.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The TAILLIGHTS of the pickup come on, and the GUNMAN turns right toward it, aiming.

INT. PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Link shifts into gear, as Lydia scrambles out from under his legs. He hits the gas and bounces over a parking block onto the field.

THE GUNMAN fires three quick shots. THE BACK WINDSHIELD explodes.

LINK peels out. He spins a donut in the abandoned lot, and floors it, heading back at the gunman.

It's a game of chicken, as Link accelerates at him, his TATTOOS shining in the growing headlights: *numerical signs, Gothic letters, a crucifix of machine guns*.

The GUNMAN raises his shotgun, aiming - and -

Just as the PICKUP is about to hit him, he steps away, sending Link and Lydia careening toward the lobby, smashing through the edge of it, and onto the road.

INT. PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Speeding away, Link turns off the headlights to avoid detection. He glances over at Lydia, and sees an odd, delighted smile on her face.

LYDIA
I just *hot-wired* a truck.

LINK
Congratulations. Now we need to lose it.

Up ahead is a truck stop, glowing against the night.

LINK (CONT'D)
Before you start planning a career, kid... did you see that guy's ink? A crucifix of machine guns?
(no response)
That's not some gang-banger, baby.
Do you know who the Zetas are?

LYDIA
No.

LINK
They're a cartel. Used to be Mexican Special Forces. That was one of their *sicerios*.

LINK (CONT'D)
Your boyfriend wasn't a fucking
realtor.
(a beat)
I got ask some of my guys about this.
What was this kid's name again?

EXT. GAS STATION - HWY 111 - NEAR DAWN

Link feeds his last quarters into a PAY PHONE, while
Lydia waits in the car. The phone rings through...

CUT TO:

A CELL PHONE

It's buzzing, resting in a mouse hole, lighting up.

AS WE PULL BACK -- we see it's in a slightly hollowed out
portion of a wall, beside the coil of a toilet pipe.

A HISPANIC CONVICT takes it and listens to a message,
confused. Dutifully, he begins writing...

INT. CALIPATRIA STATE PRISON - MAXIMUM SECURITY - NIGHT

LOW ANGLE. There's pure silence beneath the bright
lights, as the boots of a corrections officer pass.

Then, quickly, a KITE shoots from one door to another: a
message tied to a string, fished across the open floor.

From the new door, it shoots across at another angle,
reaching ANOTHER DOOR, far across the complex.

INT. RIOS' CELL - CALIPATRIA S.P. - CONTINUOUS

Sitting back on the bunk is ARTURO RIOS (50s), a shot-
caller of *La Eme*. He's covered head-to-toe with tattoos:
his children, gang, the Mexican flag. As he rises for
the kite, we see that a MURAL of his *barrio* (done like a
Hieronymus Bosch) remains unfinished on his back.

He stoops and opens the kite, seeing: "Who is Jonah
Pincerna? - From J.L."

EXT. PARKING LOT - OUTSIDE BRAWLEY - BEFORE DAWN

Link and Lydia abandon the stolen truck and head toward a
group of IMMIGRANTS waiting for work in the parking lot.

I/E. BACK BED - PICK-UP TRUCK - HWY 118 - BEFORE DAWN

Link and Lydia sit in the back of a pickup full of immigrants, heading into the date palm groves. The men watch them, distantly, as the air gusts between them.

LINK

Going on two years out of the joint -
and here I am in a truck full of
Mexicans.

Lydia studies his profile for a while. Then she faces the immigrant workers with a broad smile.

LYDIA

*Buenos dias. Me llamo Lydia. El es
mi padre, pero no le gusta hablar.*

The men nod.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

*No le gusta nadie. Solo motos. Y
tambien, a el no le gustan Mejicanos.*
(to her father)

How do you spend eleven years in the
California penal system and *not* speak
any Spanish?

(to the immigrants)

*No se preocupen. El es un oso
grande, pero no es peligroso.*

The men chuckle and grin, staring at Link.

LINK

You organizing a fucking union?

LYDIA

I just don't want them to think I'm
rude because you're a white
supremacist.

LINK

I'm sure everybody loves you. Every
scumbag across the globe.

LYDIA

What do you have against them?

LINK

And I don't like people coming up
here and taking *my* job.

LYDIA

So you pick oranges for a living?

LINK

I'm sure somebody did.

LYDIA

Nope. Not true. In fact, I will bet you that no white person has ever picked a piece of fruit off a tree. Ever.

LINK

What about Eve?

LYDIA

Eve was not white.

LINK

Ah, Jesus, kid.

LYDIA

You think the Garden of Eden was in Norway? Mankind came from Africa, Dad. If there was an Eve, she was an *austrolopithecus*.

LINK

And I bet they work even cheaper.

EXT. EL CENTRO, CA - DAY

The truck lets them off on the outskirts of the hazy, agricultural hub, just a few miles north of Mexico.

Link and Lydia head toward heat fumes in the distance.

EXT. STRIP MALL - EL CENTRO - AN HOUR LATER

They come to an old BIKER BAR in a boarded-up strip mall. Nervous, Link stares at the four Harleys outside. Lydia notices as he takes a deep, uneasy breath.

LINK

I got to ask about somebody in here. You just wait outside.

LYDIA

That's a *bar*, Dad. You're the one who needs a *chaperone*.

He stares her down; but she doesn't budge. Finally, he mouths "*shit*" - and nods for her to follow.

INT. BIKER BAR - EL CENTRO - CONTINUOUS

They step inside, past a screaming jukebox, into a damp, windowless room. Three drowsy men look up from the bar, ogling Lydia, then sizing up Link.

The bartender has a Fu Manchu and a hoop through his septum. He's dipping glasses in a basin of suds.

BARTENDER
She ain't twenty-one, boss.

LINK
I'm looking for a guy named Tom
Harris - people used to call him
Preacher. He still come here?

Lydia fishes into her pocket and hands over a FAKE ID.
The BARTENDER smirks at it, then shows it to the DRUNKS.

LINK (CONT'D)
Ever hear of him?

BARTENDER
Maybe. What do you want?

LINK
A favor.

A DRUNK gives a wheezing laugh to Lydia's ID, then makes
a big clowning joke about confiscating it.

BARTENDER
Nobody's granting any wishes 'round
here, buddy.

The bartender flicks the license back at Lydia.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
What are you having?

LINK
She'll have a glass of water. He
lived in the foothills last I heard.
One of the originals, Fontana
chapter.

The bartender just fills a glass for Lydia.

She drinks it with ten deepening gulps, and the drunks
watch her like it's a burlesque show.

Link is sweating. He glances at the sudsy beers along
the bar, the drinks in dwindling ice. Then he surges
across the bar to a PAY PHONE.

INT. BIKER BAR - BY THE PAY PHONE - CONTINUOUS

Link feeds in quarters with a shaking hand. He dials,
and closes his eyes as the phone rings through. The
sound of the bar becomes *raucous* - thousands of voices, a
party close to becoming a fight. It grows louder as his
eyes close.

Suddenly, he opens his eyes, the noise ceases, and - it's
the same listless group of four in a near-empty bar.

LINK

Kirby, I'm in deep shit. There's some serious fucking people tailing us and I don't know how...

KIRBY (V.O.)

Where are you? Lemme come get you.

LINK

No, I'm looking for a guy I told you about. Preacher Harris. Lives down near the border.

KIRBY (V.O.)

That where you're headed?

Lydia laughs in the distance, raising her chin. The drunks are mesmerized. Link just pinches his eyes shut.

LINK

Jesus, this kid, she's a fucking carnival. She's every loser's lucky day.

(a beat)

I'm going to get her to Preacher's, and he'll be able to hide her.

KIRBY

So you're going to teach your kid to be a fugitive. Congratulations.

The drunks move chairs to surround Lydia.

LINK

Don't lecture me, man. Just be my sponsor for once. Sponsor something.

KIRBY

Link, tell me where you are.

Link hangs up the phone and rushes back across the bar.

INT. BIKER BAR - BESIDE THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

LYDIA

(mid-joke)

A couple hours later, the flea wakes up, and he's back in the Hell's Angels mustache!

All around the men laugh, savagely. Link grabs her and begins pulling her out of the restaurant.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Just wait! What's the matter with you? I want to *talk* to you.

He keeps tugging her ahead.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
What? Are you relapsing?

He pulls her to a booth.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
You're going to pull my arm out of
its socket.

LINK
You want to talk, talk. Talk here.
Away from those animals.

LYDIA
Jesus, you're really nervous.

LINK
Yeah, I am. Even my *liver* remembers
this place.

LYDIA
I've been thinking. I have a plan.

They face each other across a table carved with graffiti.

LINK
A plan, huh?

LYDIA
I know it's a crime not to report a
crime. But other than that, what
have you done wrong? The warrant's
for *me*, not you.

Link stares back, stone-faced.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
You could go *home*. You could just
tip the trailer back where it was,
and *voila*. I don't have to take you
down with me.
(a beat)
I was talking to these guys, and I
can cross the border at Otay Mesa.

LINK
A pretty little white chick in
Tijuana with no money and a price on
her head.

LYDIA
I'll head down south. I speak
Spanish.

LINK
And you'll be turning tricks by the
end of the week.

A long pause.

LYDIA
That's the most insulting thing
anybody's ever said to me.

LINK
How else you going to make money?

LYDIA
I could teach English...

LINK
You don't hardly *speak* English. What
are you going to teach 'em, how to
send a dirty text? You dropped out
of High School.

LYDIA
Like they're going to ask for a
diploma.

LINK
They sure as shit ain't going to hire
some weird drifter.

LYDIA
That's all I am to you?
(voice shaking)
Just because you can't fucking *read*,
doesn't mean I don't have any skills.
Like, I'm an artist - a good artist.
I have a really good eye for design -

LINK
Oh, they'll be lining up for that.

LYDIA
And I'm musical. I'm *smart*.

LINK
You're a smart-ass. That ain't a
skill. That's just something that
pissed people off.

She breaks at this, crying through her cupped hands.

LYDIA
I must have something *okay* about me.

LINK
Just trust me for once. This is the
only thing I know is running.

LYDIA
You spent eleven years in prison.
How is that running?

LINK
Well then - *surviving*.

LYDIA

I just wanted you to go back... to
your little place. And not have to
do any more time.

(a beat)

I'm a murderer, Dad.

He's quiet for a moment, very serious.

LINK

I know that, kid. And you're going
to face God for it. And so am I.

(a beat)

But not yet.

Lydia begins to recover, nodding to him.

LINK (CONT'D)

I'm going to let you in on a secret.
I'm enjoying myself. I haven't had
this much fun since I was fifteen and
stole a car and drove to Miami Beach.
This shit is a party to a dirtbag
like me. So stop feeling sorry for
yourself and start listening...

She wipes her eyes and nods.

LINK (CONT'D)

There's a buddy of mine - an Angel...
who lives in these hills. He's rich,
he's got connections, and he owes me.
He'll help, but I can't find him.
Those dudes *know* in there, but -

Lydia pulls a cocktail napkin out of her bra. On it is
an ADDRESS, a MAP, and the words, "To Preacher's Ranch."

LYDIA

I sweet-talked it out of the
bartender.

He shakes his head for a moment, unsure how to react.
Suddenly, he can't help himself and he begins to laugh.

LINK

So I guess you *do* have some skills.
You know how to charm the devil.

OVERHEAD SHOT

At the intersection of dusty ranch roads, a truck with a
horse trailer passes, Link and Lydia in the back bed.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - AFTERNOON

Dusty, Link and Lydia hop out. The ranch burrows into a canyon between scrubby hills. Beside tall fences, signs read: "Caution: Electric Fence" and "Beware of Mines."

On the other side, burnt-out car frames are filled with bullet holes. Blackened wood lies in piles from bonfire pits, and beer cans litter the hillside, each filled with holes. *Everything* looks like fodder for target practice.

After a look, Link nods to Lydia and gestures to a CINDERBLOCK RETAINING WALL that spans uphill.

LINK

We hop the fence, follow that wall.

He grabs the fence, testing it - and she jumps. But nothing happens.

LINK (CONT'D)

There's a lot of firepower around here. And a lot of bullshit.

He interlocks his hands to hoist her up.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - FARTHER UPHILL

They walk along the top of the CINDERBLOCK WALL, coming to tents and lean-tos surrounding a concrete hangar.

They hop down, and chickens scamper across their trail. Link nudges Lydia, gesturing to a SECURITY CAMERA rotating in the trees. They avoid it, and move along the shadow of the wall.

UPHILL: CHERISE (50s) suns herself, reflectors under her chin. Her body is so leathery, she looks embalmed. She notices Link and stands up. Her posture goes from confusion to recognition to shock.

CHERISE

Sonofabitch. So they let you out.

LINK

Cherise. This is my daughter.

The old woman has the half-crazed eyes of a mystic.

CHERISE

They do grow up, don't they?

LINK

Some of 'em.

CHERISE

Well, you might as well go on inside
and say hi to him. Careful you don't
give him a heart attack.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

They move into the massive structure, dark compared to the glare outside. It's full of weapons: field mines, grenades, tables covered with ammo. Swallows nest in the rafters, fluttering through the transoms.

At the far edge is a LONG LINE of HARLEYS. Link pauses, regarding them - and Lydia can tell that he recognizes one: A rebuilt **76 Harley Shovelhead**.

LYDIA

One of those yours?

LINK

In another life.

They pass to an office area, partitioned with drywall.

INT. HANGAR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sitting at a computer is a PREACHER (60s) in reading glasses, his shirt off and his tattoos now faded. The reflection of text scrolls on his glasses.

PREACHER

I expected you two years ago.

LINK

Stingy parole board.

PREACHER

Let me finish my thought.

He's blogging on his MILITARY COLLECTIBLES web page. Lydia glimpses the last few lines of a description he's writing: "...in uncertain economic times, NAZI collectibles are a foolproof investment."

Lydia glances at Link, nearly laughing.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

(rising slowly)

Well, let me show you around.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

A LONG SHOT: the old man gives a tour. His voice echoes from far across the warehouse - as he shows them arms, uniforms, collectibles.

PREACHER

A big aspect of my business nowadays,
is the collectibles...

A few dozen wars seem to merge together: (1) Brownshirts hang with RAF jumpsuits; (2) A NAZI officer's coat is framed behind glass; (3) ANZAC fatigues stack beside unused ordnance from Vietnam. (4) A MANNIKIN is dressed as a CONFEDERATE SOLDIER, thrusting out a BAYONET.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

This display is what really brings
them in at the gun shows.
Authenticity. That's my game.

As they tour these curiosities, the SOUND PRELAP rises up
of a PINBALL MACHINE.

INT. FAR CORNER - PREACHER'S HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

As her father and Preacher pace through the space, Lydia plays a PINBALL MACHINE amid stored explosives. But she's eavesdropping on their conversation...

PREACHER

She's a fine looking girl, Link.
Congratulations. You done good.

LINK

I didn't have nothing to do with it.
So what's this collectibles
horseshit?

PREACHER

Been selling at gun shows.

LINK

And it's a front for everything going
south. Like AK-47s.

PREACHER

Nah, I don't sell any of that Commie
bullshit. The vintage *mixes* with the
new. That's the way it is down here.
You know the wall along the border's
made of landing pads from Vietnam.
Think about that: the metal I used to
jump on in a swamp - it's now keeping
the spics off my lawn.

LINK

Trying to. Who you selling to, man?

PREACHER

Come on now. I love you like a son -
but I don't answer questions from
somebody I haven't seen in eleven
years.

Link stares at him, hard - Preacher glares back. The two men would kill each other right here if they had to. Then Preacher laughs, showing his yellow teeth.

LINK

We had a deal.

PREACHER

(ignoring him)

Remember when we used to go out and blow mines in the Anzo-Borrego? I still do it down in that field.

LINK

I want her back. And I need my money.

PREACHER

Which money is that?

LINK

I kept my mouth shut a long time.

At the pinball machine, Lydia has delayed playing the next ball in order to listen.

PREACHER

Yes, you did. You were always the strong, silent type.

(a long pause)

The boys are coming by later. Why don't you stay a bit, catch up.

LINK

I'm sober now.

PREACHER

Well, a lot of people will want to witness that with their own eyes.

Preacher notices his fear and smiles.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

You're a rusty old grenade, Link. Sooner or later you're going to go off.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - DUSK

Giant choppers rumble uphill, churning dust. In the last light, Lydia watches her father's reunion amid opening beers and throttling bikes. The men are either obese or rail thin, as if some have absorbed the years and others have been eroded by them. She watches her father.

One man HUGS HIM while holding a bottle of TEQUILA. It spills on Link. He freezes as if it's icy cold water.

BY THE BONFIRE - Music plays and kids scamper in the arroyo. People are already drunk. A man with long gray hair leans over to Lydia, clutching a bottle of Jack.

GRAY HAIR

Your old man, this mother-ffffucker.
He had the stomach of a fffucking
monster. He could drink for two
wwwweeks straight.

She looks to her father across fire pit. As he talks to his old friends, steadfastly refusing drinks...

...her eyes become sympathetic.

GRAY HAIR offers her a swig of Jack; but she just meets eyes with her father across the distance.

She mouths: "You're okay." He pounds his heart.

BESIDE A HORSE TRAILER - filled with kegs. Angels mill in the dark, lit by the streaks of motorcycle headlights.

COUNT

We must have rode straight from the
coast to Texas in two days - and you
were tripping out of your mind.

Another man - MCCOY - comes and jumps on Link, forcing him to stagger back just a bit.

MCCOY

I thought they *threw away the key!*

Link sees Lydia and moves toward her. He puts his arm around her, and brings her into a larger group - almost as if to stopper the flow of old stories about him.

LINK

This is my little girl, Lydia.

She's greeted by SHEILA, with a voice like an ashtray.

SHEILA

I remember *you*, you little cunt. I
bought diapers for that bony *ass!*

COUNT

She hid her stash in 'em.

A man with a DRAGON TATTOO guffaws loud.

DRAGON TATTOO

Kid, you're lucky your mother was so
damn pretty - because your old man is
ugly as a warthog.

LYDIA

Awww. I think he's sort of cute.

They laugh up at the sky, surprising her with the volume.

QUICK CUTS:

- As the party grows wilder, some of the YOUNGER ANGELS pile lawn furniture into the bonfire, sending the flames so high that they catch in the branches of a nearby tree.

- Motorcycles spin donuts in the ranch, then begin racing around in the dark beyond the HANGAR.

PREACHER

Cherise! There's mines over there.
Get 'em off there! Damn fools.

Cherise puts her fingers in her mouth and whistles loud.
A LOUD BLAST sounds like a mine, but it's:

- A SHOOTING RANGE, where four drunken Angels fire guns at BOTTLES along a fence. Once the flurry is over - every bottle remains completely intact.

- A boy in his underwear *lights* CHERRY BOMBS, throwing them into the crowd.

- The flames spread around the tree, while COUNT, drunk, can't manage to get the pin out of a fire extinguisher. Finally he does, and sprays retardant foam into the branches, while others boo him for stopping the blaze.

- LYDIA sits in a lawn chair, as two obscenely drunk ANGELS (MCCOY and OLEG), regale her with stories.

OLEG

MCCOY

No, no. See... the thing about the Angels... Freedom, baby!

OLEG

Shut up! I'm trying to 'splain something to this chick and you keep inn'erupting.

Lydia glimpses a shadow approaching, past the crackling of fireworks: PREACHER, his face lit by the fire.

OLEG (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What I'm trying to say is it's about... saying no. To all that bullshit.

Preacher comes over, carrying himself like a cult-leader.

PREACHER

What he means, honey, these are the last survivors. And this patch of desert, it's going to be here long after the rest of this country cannibalizes itself.

LYDIA

When's that going to happen?

He doesn't like the twinge of sarcasm.

PREACHER

It's closer than anybody realizes.
Most people are just too comfortable
to see it.

A few others gather around Preacher nodding, as if something in his tone had called them over.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

You see, what you kids don't
understand is that this country *buys*
out the subversives. It turns rebels
into fashion trends. It happened
with the Angels and it happened with
rap, and it'll happen with "Occupy"
Wherever the fuck they are.

He ignores the crowd and kneels down to Lydia, a trace of dried spit around his lips.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

The corporations package it all up...
and sell it online, on hundred dollar
T-shirts for suburban princesses like
you.

Preacher sits across from Lydia, and keeps his eyes on her, hard. She shrinks deeper in her sweatshirt.

MCCOY

Fucking hundred dollar shirts, man!

Preacher just grimaces at the idiotic agreement behind him. He's glaring at Lydia.

PREACHER

You grew up with your mother and you
never knew the world your Daddy rode
in. But your Mama wasn't always
rich. She started with us. She just
married her way up that ladder. Made
herself a hood ornament on the best
cars. She sold her *soul* to find you
a better life. But she lost you
along the ride.

Lydia is befuddled by his harsh gaze.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

How long ago did *you* leave home?

Lydia is troubled and doesn't answer.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair." You never met me, but I've been hovering over your whole life. I helped your father with the lawyers.

She's silent, cautious.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 Your father used to confide in me. He was a violent man. I talked him out of killing your stepfather one night. He was in the joint and told me he needed a favor. Said you weren't *safe* with that man. I declined. Told him he'd never see the light of day again...
 (a beat)
 But I know he used someone else. Scared the man off, made his point.

Lydia's mouth has fallen open.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 See. I know all about why a rich girl runs away.

He's trying to sound sympathetic, but it has the creepy undertone of a man trying to seduce a child.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 You were violated. Because your mama never knew the truth. That there *is* no better life. And there are no *better* people.

Lydia is beyond uncomfortable - she's terrified. He pokes her on the leg with an outstretched finger.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 When a mosquito stings you, it leaves an enzyme that other mosquitos can smell. I smell it on you, girl. Everyone can.
 (eerie)
 You can run forever. But the worst people, they know that *scent*.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - AN HOUR LATER

With the party raging outside with music, shouts, and cherry bombs - Link is polishing his old HARLEY.

Lydia rushes back into the hangar and stops, watching Link from thirty feet away.

With a can of compressed air, he's spraying out dust from around the engine. Then he kneels down with a rag. From his intense concentration, it's clear that he loves this bike - and she's comforted just to watch.

LINK

Sorry to leave you with those animals. I was keeping an eye out.

She's relieved to hear his voice.

LYDIA

I think I was supposed to prove something to that crypt master.

LINK

That's what a few decades of crank does. Ought to scare you sober.

She sits down by the wall beside him.

LYDIA

D'you talk to your sponsor?

LINK

Twice.

LYDIA

Can I call him?

Lydia looks at the bike, shining again under Link's rag.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

That's the old hog?

LINK

'76 Classic Lowrider Shovel head.
Custom built. Psycho handle bars.
RACE valve job, Rivera Pro Clutch.

LYDIA

I feel kind of jealous. I thought I was an only child.

He laughs, just a puff of air.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

You really think this creep can help me?

LINK

He's a lawyer and a notary public.
One of his businesses is making new identities. So... maybe.

LYDIA

Is he going to give you back your bike?

LINK

He owes me more than this, kid.

LYDIA

What does it mean that you "kept your mouth shut"?

LINK

He's talking about back when the Feds RICOed the whole gang. Went after the nest egg - crystal meth. They got together with the DEA and made it hard to get the precursors, ephedrine, red phosphorus.

LYDIA

You were a drug dealer?

LINK

I made some deliveries.

She nods, seeing how it hurts him to say it now.

LINK (CONT'D)

When we got shut down, all this traffic was taken over by the cartels in Mexico. They could buy Ephedrine straight from China. Our little Mom-and-Pop business turned into an industry - and a bunch of assholes like me went down.

(a smirk)

Fucking NAFTA.

LYDIA

I thought you were in jail for manslaughter.

He just turns back to his bike, unable to face her.

LINK

That was later. On the inside. First, I went down for this son of a bitch.

LYDIA

You wouldn't cut a deal?

LINK

(shaking his head)

Did eleven years in Calipatria. I don't sell out my people. I'm not proud of anything I did in my life - but at least I have that. I'm not a snitch, I paid my own debts like a man and I kept my promises.

(a beat)

He made promises, too. Back in the day. Even promised me I was going to get a new lawyer and get visitation.

LYDIA

With *me*?

Outside the party is raucous, with gunshots and firecrackers and howling laughter.

LINK

By the time I got out, you were long gone. As crazy as I was in my prime...

LYDIA

So onto the tattoo needle, right?

LINK

Ye'ap. American flags.

LYDIA

Land of the free.

LINK

Love it or leave it.

He sighs and sits beside her. He puts down the CAN OF COMPRESSED AIR, and she takes it.

LINK (CONT'D)

You're not going to huff that, are you?

After a long pause, she PUFFS it at his face, a hard blast that musses his hair and makes him laugh.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - NIGHT

The party dies down with a flurry of cherry bombs and throttling engines as choppers trail away down the hills.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - NIGHT

In an alcove of the hangar, Link has made his daughter a bed on the floor from the pillows off a couch. She curls up and clutches her sweatshirt between her knees. He's sitting guard over her as she fades in and out of sleep. After a long, silent moment, he picks up a few coils of her hair and studies them in his palms, black and rich. Then he leans back against the wall, his own face turning drowsy. He closes his eyes...

CUT TO:

He awakens with something poking his ear. The light through the transoms is a washed-out gray. He glances up to find CHERISE, in a dirty terry-cloth bathrobe, nudging a SHOTGUN against his head. Link shoves the barrel away.

LINK

What the fuck is wrong with you?

CHERISE

Wake the kid.

Link glowers back at her.

CHERISE (CONT'D)

This is a loaded firearm - and I *will* shoot. The past is long gone.

Clenching his teeth, Link reaches over and shakes Lydia.

LINK

Kiddo. We got to get up. Come on, rise and shine.

Lydia rolls flat onto the ground. Cherise pokes her with the end of the shotgun.

LINK (CONT'D)

Quit that. I'll do it.

He jostles Lydia again...

LINK (CONT'D)

Baby, you need to wake up. It's some sort of kidnapping.

She groans, wiping drool from her mouth.

Cherise fires into the rafters, scattering birds. *Lydia bolts upright.* Cherise drops the shell-casing, chambers another bullet, and points the gun right at Lydia.

LYDIA

I'm up! Jesus.

CHERISE

Let's move into the office.
Preacher's working out the details.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cherise leads them down a corridor past tables of NAZI MEMORABILIA, under hanging beads and a PAISLEY SHEET to -

PREACHER'S OFFICE

- where Preacher sits at a computer with his shirt off and a pen in his teeth. The printer works steadily, beside a .38 REVOLVER. Paper unfurls from a FAX MACHINE.

Lydia plops onto the couch.

CHERISE

Don't let her fall back asleep.

In the clutter of papers, Link sees PICTURES OF LYDIA.

Then a poster falls onto the floor, complete with age-enhanced photo and the offer of a thirty-grand reward.

LINK

You got to be shitting me.

PREACHER

A lot's changed, hombre. I can't let opportunities slide by. You find a nickel on the ground these days, you pick it up.

Lydia watches her father turn pale - so astonished by the betrayal that he doesn't respond with anger, but looks crushed. It breaks her heart to see it.

LINK

(quietly)

For thirty grand.

PREACHER

Thirty Gs is enough to fill a lot of holes around here. I appreciate your loyalty in the past, I do. So let's be professional. We're not going to turn you in, we'll follow the letter of the law. She goes home to her gold-digging mama; you hit the road. Status quo.

LINK

You fucking virus.

Cherise waves the gun at Link.

CHERISE

Sit down!

But Link just stands his ground, sickened.

LYDIA

You can't call the cops.

LINK

(quietly)

You know me, Preacher. You know what I am.

LYDIA

If you turn us in, the cops'll bust you.

PREACHER

Goddamn brat - do not presume to tell me my business. I was running the Coachella Valley before you were an itch in your daddy's sack. My life ain't on *Instagram*. It's in the history books. Vietnam, 19th Engineers Combat battalion - look it up! I dug up enough mines to blow up the moon. So don't talk to me. Cherise! Get them out of here before I lose my patience.

As Cherise waves them out with the shotgun -

LINK

Keep talking, senile motherfucker.

He shuffles ahead with Lydia, the gun at their backs.

LINK (CONT'D)

See how much you got to say with a bayonet in your skull.

Lydia places her hand on Link's shoulder. She's startled: the gathering rage has tightened him like a drum skin. As they move ahead, he grabs Lydia by the elbow and pulls her close, whispering.

LINK (CONT'D)

When I make my move - run.

Cherise gestures with the gun for them to move ahead. They pass under the HANGING BEADS and the PAISLEY SHEET.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

As Cherise follows, Link rips down the SHEET over her... then throws a brutal straight *right* into the lump. Cherise *fires* wild, a loud shotgun blast that sprays off.

Lydia dashes across the hangar. While Cherise struggled to get free, Link smashes NAZI RELICS onto the ground.

LINK

Say goodbye to your Hitler shit.

As Preacher rushes ahead, drawing the revolver, LINK hurls an SS HELMET across the room, striking him hard. Preacher drops to one knee.

While Cherise climbs out, raising the gun, Link throws a punch into Preacher's jaw, throwing the revolver across the floor; then he grabs Preacher from behind to pillory his arms, working him into a full nelson. He pushes his head down hard.

Cherise pointed the shotgun at them both, eyes wide.

LINK (CONT'D)

Drop the gun or I break his neck.

Link backs away, moving Preacher around easily.

LINK (CONT'D)

All I got to do is lean on him and his spine breaks. I can feel his vertebrae right now, Cherise - like fucking Rice Krispies.

Cherise begins crying, mascara-stained tears on her face.

CHERISE

You hurt him and you're going to die.

LINK

So what?

CHERISE

And then I'll go outside and find your little girl.

LINK

Oh, she's long gone. Probably already hitched a ride.

CHERISE

I'll shoot you right past him.

LINK

Good idea, Cherise! With buckshot. See how that turns out.

Preacher can hardly get enough air to speak, but he tries to whisper. Link lifts him up, showing her how easily he can move him as a shield.

LINK (CONT'D)

Make me kill him, Cherise. I want to. I gave my fucking life up for him. Uh-oh, I think I heard something pop in his back. You okay, Preach?

Cherise maneuvers the barrel past Preacher's head and plants it on Link's temple. As she's about to fire, Link rotates and throws Preacher against the barrel. Her aim is knocked off and -

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - CONTINUOUS

- BOOM! Hiding outside in the dried weeds and brush along the riverbed, Lydia hears the shot. She darts upright, fear in her eyes.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - OFFICE ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

Link lets go of the old man, grabs the gun, and wrests it away from Cherise; then he rushes out of the cloud and finds the revolver on the ground.

He rifles through the desk, finding a drawer full of money. He stuffs the bills into his jeans pockets, and when they're overflowing, he turns onto the next drawers and searches through papers.

LINK

You know what I'm looking for?

Preacher sits, rubbing his neck - while Cherise leans against the drywall, mascara streaks down her face.

PREACHER

Link, let's calm down and talk about this. Try to put yourself in my shoes. You know I still love you. You were the best foot soldier I ever had.

This stings Link enough to make him pause.

He clicks back the hammer on the revolver, aiming it at Preacher, doing everything he can to keep from firing.

LINK

Where - are - my - keys?

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Lydia moves upward along the road when she hears another loud blast. But it's the gunning of an engine.

She stands in the weeds, waiting, worry in her eyes.

Suddenly - her father shoots out of the hangar on his rebuilt bike, as if reborn. Her face shows a gust of pure relief as he winds downhill toward her.

LONG SHOT: She runs toward him across the road and the billowing dust. He slows and she leaps onto the back, grabbing onto him as he starts downhill, gaining speed.

They burst out past the open wooden gates in a swirl of dust and wind, moving onto the paved road and accelerating eastward toward washed-out skies.

CLOSE ON LYDIA. The landscape passes as her hair flaps over her face. She feels the anxiety trail off her in the rushing wind, with the firing decibels and the growing speed. She leans down into the leeward spot behind her father's back, resting her head against him.

EXT. GAS STATION - NEAR ARIZONA BORDER - MORNING

At a desolate station in the bare hills, Link fills the tank, wiping his wind-battered face.

INT. GAS STATION MINI-MART - MOMENTS LATER

He buys peanuts, chips, root beer - scissors, shaving cream, razors.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In front of a mirror scratched with graffiti, Link is cutting off his beard. He does it angrily, as if shedding an identity he no longer wants...

EXT. GAS STATION - NEAR ARIZONA BORDER

He emerges with his beard completely shaved. There are nicks and scars on his face, the fading memory of a bad complexion in youth; but, beyond that, he looks almost respectable.

With a swig of root beer in her mouth, Lydia suddenly does a spit take, then bursts out laughing.

LINK

Shut up.

She rolls over laughing. He shows her the scissors.

LINK (CONT'D)

Keep laughing. I'm going to cut your hair like an old lesbian.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - YUMA, AZ - DAY

Lydia faces herself in the mirror with scissors, while Link lies on the bed in the room behind her, listening on the phone. She slowly starts to cut her long locks of hair and - suddenly - breaks into tears. The sadness is like a wind catching up to her.

LINK (ON PHONE)

I just need all the meetings in Yuma.
Women's-only.

Lydia gathers herself - just barely.

LYDIA

I can't do it. I can't cut it off.

LINK

So you want to die for that hairstyle?

LYDIA
(to herself)
Maybe.

Link doesn't hear her as he continues on the phone.

LINK (ON PHONE)
Okay, thanks.

When he hangs up, she leans against the doorjamb, facing him.

LINK (CONT'D)
You left your things there. Your
phone, your bag. That's trouble.

She starts to cry again. It comes over her like a
convulsion - and he's startled by it.

LINK (CONT'D)
Look, kid, you maybe need to eat
something... or take a nap.

LYDIA
Do you ever think about what the
world would be like without you?

LINK
(a long beat)
I think it would be about the same.

LYDIA
If I just went ahead and killed
myself, this would all be over.

LINK
So that's where we are? Jesus
Christ. Fine. If you kill yourself,
then I'll kill myself. And *I'll* take
a bunch of innocent people down with
me. How's that?

LYDIA
You think I'm kidding, but I've
tried, Dad. I've *tried*.

LINK
Uh-huh. And I've tried. Lots of
times. What does that mean?

LYDIA
I took all of my stepfather's pills
when I was twelve.

LINK
Oh, pills are bullshit. People take
pills when they want somebody to find
them.

She grits her teeth and turns furious.

LYDIA
I'm not joking! I tried to hang
myself when I was ten years old!

LINK
You wouldn't know how to tie the
noose.

LYDIA
Don't you even understand what I'm
telling you?

LINK
Sure, I do. Congratulations.

LYDIA
Ten years-old.

LINK
I knew a ten year-old kid who killed
his whole family with a rock. What's
that prove?

LYDIA LINK
Every time I start to think Come here, dummy.
maybe you're not so bad -

LINK
Come here, dummy.

No. LYDIA

LINK
Come here. I want you to feel
something. It's important. Come
here and feel this.

He rubs a spot on his head and knocks it with his fist.

She lets him guide her fingers onto a patch underneath his hair - something hard and smooth like the panel to a fuse box. She squeals, leaping back.

LYDIA
Oh my God, what is that?

LINK
I drove my bike off a cliff on the
PCH and split my head open. I meant
to do it. Fell down into the rocks -
and they *still* saved me. That's a
steel plate in my head. And look at
this.

LYDIA
I don't want to. You're a fucking
cyborg.

LINK

This is where I cut my veins open in prison. With a razor I smuggled in. They sewed me up and then I almost died of sepsis. Two months in the prison hospital watching game shows. I said "I don't need to die now, I'm already in hell."

LYDIA

You win.

LINK

If you wanted to die, what are we going to all this trouble for?

LYDIA

I don't want to die.

LINK

Good. You're a young kid. Dying's too fucking simple.

Lydia sinks down to the floor, staring up at him.

LINK (CONT'D)

Surviving's the only trick there is.

EXT. EMPTY PARKING LOT - YUMA, AZ - DAY

FROM A DISTANCE -- we watch as Link teaches Lydia to ride the Harley in low gear. We can't hear their voices, just the low growl of the bike as she kick starts it.

CLOSER -- He runs alongside the handlebars as she stays in first. Then he lets go. She barely keeps upright on the massive machine.

VOICES (PRE-LAP)

*God grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change...*

ON LINK -- He runs with her, like he's teaching a kid to ride a bike. Then he backs off.

VOICES (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

*The courage to change the things I
can...*

He watches her struggle to balance, rolling ahead at an impossible crawl. He stands in the middle of the lot, as she makes a slow orbit around him.

INT. CHURCH MEETING ROOM - YUMA - WOMEN'S ONLY MEETING

Lydia sits on a foldout chair in a low-ceilinged room - surrounded by the Thursday women's-only group.

GROUP

...and the wisdom to know the
difference.

INTERCUTTING - Link is gunning his Harley back westbound
toward Preacher's.

PUSH IN ON LYDIA - as the chairwoman begins.

CHAIRWOMAN (O.S.)

We'd like to give a special welcome
to new attendees and have you
introduce yourselves...

EXT. HIGHWAY OUTSIDE PREACHER'S RANCH - INTERCUTTING

Near the turnoff, Link pulls to the roadside to study
smoke blowing in an eastward slant. An odd sight, too
big and black for a bonfire. He opens Preacher's
revolver and checks the chambers: THREE BULLETS.

LYDIA (V.O.)

My name's Lydia.

Link starts up again and heads up the winding hill...

INT. CHURCH MEETING ROOM - INTERCUTTING

Lydia faces the women, all patiently waiting for her.

LYDIA

Truth is the only reason I'm here is
because my father forced me. I've
only been sober for the last two
days. I didn't really know my Dad.
And I'm realizing...

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Link pulls up on his bike, stops, and gets off.

LYDIA (V.O.)

I don't know myself. Not at all.

TRACKING SHOT - Link walks to a clearing where he sees
the ground littered with bottles, tire tracks, and shell
casings. Smoke hangs in a haze. The walls are freckled
with bullet holes, the desert pocked with holes from
Preacher's old munitions.

A fire smolders with a blackened tangle of chair legs,
steel furniture, and tires. Some papers blow freely,
partly charred - pictures of Lydia, posters and fliers.

He circles the fire until he comes upon -

- A HUMAN ARM reaching from underneath the debris, blackened but not yet devoured. As Link steps closer, he sees the body is CHERISE, only the bloody darkened sheath of a damp robe remaining around smoldering bones.

High on the stack, PREACHER has been burned atop the tires, his remains look like brittle chicken bones. His charred head tips back, throat cut open, a Colombian necktie.

Link puts his hand over his mouth and nose, surprised that anything in his life can still scare him.

INT. PREACHER'S HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

-- Moving quickly, Link enters, finding LYDIA'S SATCHEL behind the bikes. He checks in it, seeing her phone.

-- He rifles through Preacher's drawers, taking...
PREACHER'S DRIVERS LICENSE.

EXT. YUMA HOUSE - A.A. MEETING - AN HOUR LATER

Link pulls up to the house where Lydia's AA meeting has just let out.

When Lydia sees him from the porch and rises, running across the dried-out lawn, her loose sweatshirt sleeves unrolling over her hands, her face coloring with relief - Link's face shows that he's never loved anything or anyone so much in his life until now.

INT. MARIE CALLENDER'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Link sits across from Lydia in a booth by a window. They're disguised. Lydia's hair is short, stylishly ruffled. She wears a white blouse, while Link's in work shirt and stiff new jeans. She's animated, thrilled by her first meeting.

LYDIA
...and this one lady was talking about how she'd crashed into this tree ten years ago outside her apartment. And now, whenever she drives by, there's this one tree shorter than all the rest. Like a dwarf tree. I mean, she was talking about this terrible car accident - but she was saying it in such a funny way...

Link smiles, encouraging her - but the strain of his new secret is still on him. He's drawing a quick sketch of her on the placemat with the complimentary crayons.

LINK
That's good, kid. Good.

He reaches out and puts her SATCHEL onto the table.

Her eyes suddenly turn wary, studying him for any sign of violence.

Link shakes his head, somber.

LINK (CONT'D)
I didn't touch them. But somebody
was there.

Her eyes are huge and startled.

LINK (CONT'D)
Listen. I got one real friend left
on this earth. But he's on the
inside. If these people are who I
think they are - he can help us. But
I need a few hours. I need to go
back in.

LYDIA
To prison?

LINK
He's got connections with the COs.
But I need you to hang tight.

He hands her the drawing. Lydia is surprised by how beautiful he's made her - how determined her eyes look. She folds it up and slips it into her satchel.

LYDIA
They'll have to kill me to get this
one.

EXT. SOUTHGATE MALL - YUMA - MORNING

Link gusts up to the mall, and stops beside the curb. Lydia steps off, waiting a few steps away.

LINK
You sure?

LYDIA
Trust me, Dad. If there's anyplace I
know how to stay safe.

LINK
You stay in public, in the crowd. I
won't be more than a couple hours.
Anything happens, you call this
number.

He writes on a piece of trash from the car.

LINK (CONT'D)

It's my *sponsor*. I told him you might call. You see anything weird, you tell him and stay on the line with him.

LYDIA

I already feel like he's family.

She watches him ride off, then she blends in with the schoolgirls and shopping families, moving in under displays of tinsel and a giant Christmas tree.

INT. SOUTHGATE MALL - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Lydia sees TEENAGE GIRLS, trying on chintzy necklaces, and YOUNG BOYS slap-fighting in an arcade. Girls gossip along the fountains, hoodies raised. This is the childhood that won't ever take her back.

QUICK SHOTS:

-- Link shoots down the highway on the Harley.

-- Past a stretch of cow pastures, Link scares up a flock of seagulls on the road outside CALIPATRIA PRISON.

-- Link is on the phone, making a call. Someone appears to be watching from a distance.

-- A KITE - passes into a MAXIMUM SECURITY CELL.

-- Link passes through the front gates of the massive, sterile PRISON, sitting alone on a patchwork of farms.

INT. CALIPATRIA STATE PRISON - VISITOR CLEARANCE

He passes through metal detectors, placing his arms out for search batons, frisked by a CO. His ID is on the table: TOM HARRIS (with Preacher's picture.)

The C.O. looks at it and smirks, knowing it's not him. He's waiting for a word.

LINK

I'm here for Rios. He take care of you yet?

C.O.

Keep your voice down, 'wood.

The C.O. scans the area, making sure no one heard. Then he leads Link ahead through security.

INT. CALIPATRIA STATE PRISON - VISITORS' ROOM

In a private room, he waits at a table. Two COs lead in ARTURO RIOS, in shackles. Rios sits down, stone-faced.

RIOS
Man, you missed me so much - I had to
pull strings to get you *back in*.

LINK
Conjugal visit. *Kiss* me.

Rios stifles a laugh. He turns to the guard.

RIOS
Give us a second.

The guard leaves, and then Rios howls with laughter.

RIOS (CONT'D)
Shi-hi-hi-hi-it. You look like the
Public Defender.

They're both laughing, huge men with lungs full of air.

RIOS (CONT'D)
Damn, you are one *ugly* dude. Grow
the beard back, please!

LINK
I need your help.

RIOS
You need me to tie a *tie* for you?

He laughs some more, but Link doesn't join now.

LINK
Shut up, man. I'm going to waste
this whole visit with a hyena.

RIOS
Don't tell me to shut up, 'wood.

Rios turns hard, a homicidal look. Link stares him down, a little uneasy. Then Rios starts laughing again.

LINK
It's about my little girl.

Rios stops laughing, turning respectful.

RIOS
How is she?

LINK
Beautiful, man. *Fucking beautiful*.
But...
(a long beat)

LINK (CONT'D)
That guy I asked you about... You
get that message?

RIOS
She's not mixed up with him?

Link just nods, sternly.

RIOS (CONT'D)
He's a nephew of Alfonso Angél-Díaz.
El Padrino.

Link just shakes his head, looking away.

RIOS (CONT'D)
A fuck-up. Narco-Junior. Went to
school in Los Angeles: they basically
just sent him away. But he started
running *stash* houses, warehousing
meth before it went to
subcontractors.

LINK
And cash before it went back down.
She had a disagreement with him. And
he's not with us anymore.

Rios smiles with gold teeth.

RIOS
Guess you don't need a paternity
test.

LINK
I need protection for her. If you've
got any pull with the cartel,
maybe...

RIOS
Any of his *crew* winds up here, I'll
greenlight 'em. They won't step on
the yard.

LINK
But she's got professionals on her.

Rios thinks about this a while, surprised.

LINK (CONT'D)
See, this punk accused of her
stealing out of one of his houses.
What I can't figure out is why they'd
send guys of this *quality*.

RIOS
Right. Not for his *life* either.
He's not worth the trouble.
(thinking)
Don't you see it, bro?

RIOS (CONT'D)

All these years, you never finished the thought. You never *finish*. I got half of Boyle Heights tattooed on my *back*, motherfucker - and you ain't finished that neither.

LINK

Take it up with the parole board.

RIOS

Wood! *Jonah* was taking the money. Not a few grand... probably *millions*. You got the big guns on her because he blamed it on his tenants. He blamed it on her.

(a beat)

And he's lucky he's dead. What they'd do to him would be a lot worse, bro. A *lot* worse.

Link just nods back to him with narrow eyes.

RIOS (CONT'D)

I'll talk to whoever I can. But she's connected to this, man - to a kid who skimmed *their* money. I'll do what I can in here. But you better teach your girl some judgement. And teach her how to hide. She's got to live right, brother. Clean and straight. Cause people like this, they see in the dark. She's got to learn to *stay in the sunlight*.

INT. SOUTHGATE MALL - CINEPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia waits in line for the movies, scanning the board.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LATER

It's a bloody shoot-out on screen. Lydia sits low in her seat. As the gunshots recede, she hears HER CELLPHONE. She answers, amid dozens of people shushing her. Finger in her ear, she rises up in her aisle.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia comes out through the padded door, hovering on the phone. She hears a damp exhale, and then...

JONAH (V.O.)

How's the movie?

Lydia freezes in the middle of the long, dim corridor.

JONAH

You didn't expect to hear from me.

There's a strained, injured quality to his voice - as if he can no longer get enough air to speak freely.

Lydia scans the hall of sealed doors, each sounding like there's a separate war behind it.

LYDIA

Jonah? Oh my God, baby, you're alive.

JONAH

I told you I'd be waiting for you. On the other side.

LYDIA

How did you know I was at a movie?

JONAH

In Yuma. At the Southgate Mall.

She pushes out through the glass doors into the main vaulted structure of the mall...

INT. SOUTHGATE MALL - CONTINUOUS

...where children's voices echo from a village of candy canes below. She passes into the Food Court.

LYDIA

How have you been following us all this time?

JONAH (V.O.)

I know the right people.

She reels in a CIRCLE, trying to spot Jonah.

JONAH (V.O.)

You have no idea what I lived through. Underground doctors. Blood transfusions, skin grafts.

(a beat)

But that's not why we're here. I got a lot of people angry at me for the money you took. If I'm going to survive, it means you got to pay back your sugar daddy.

She moves farther into the populated court, between the pizza line and a revolving slab of lamb.

JONAH

See, it's you or me. I got to show my people I won't let some bitch take advantage.

LYDIA
Jonah, you know I didn't -

JONAH
I was good to you, too. I gave you a
place to live, everything you needed.
(a beat)
Don't try to leave, we've got guys
all around you right now.

She hangs up and drifts through the crowd. She moves to
a table of teenage girls, dressed gangsta, with brown
lipstick and baggy pants.

LYDIA
Excuse me, can I ask you a favor?

The girl in the middle dismisses her with a wave.

Lydia moves next to a group of four PRE-TEEN BOYS, with
braces, skateboards, and spotted complexions.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
I need you guys to do me a favor.

BRACES
I'm your man.

LYDIA
I'm going to give you a phone number.
If anybody grabs me, I need you to
call that number. Does anybody have
a cell?

They take out phones and place them eagerly on the bench.

ANOTHER POV -- Someone moves through the crowd, stopping
at the edge of the food court, watching Lydia.

REVERSE TO REVEAL -- It appears to be a SECURITY GUARD.
But closer inspection reveals the words "KANPOL" tattooed
onto his fist.

He faces another SECURITY GUARD across the way, this one
with tattoos emerging through the uniform up his neck.

JONAH walks through the crowd, and *sits down* at the table
behind Lydia, so that his back is nearly touching hers.

JONAH
I can't think of any worse hell than
a mall before Christmas.

He's been turned into a monster. Gauze and bandages
cover his neck and misshapen face - over skin grafts, a
missing chunk of his jaw, and sutures in his neck.

Lydia glimpses him, then turns back to the boys, as they play hockey with a KETCHUP PACKET, oblivious. She's listening to Jonah, and tears are welling up in her eyes.

JONAH (CONT'D)
You can't even look at me now.

She stiffens, and the boys stop and look at her.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Your name's on my heart, Lydia.

He opens his shirt, shows her the old tattoo, GOTHIC LETTERS - but she won't look.

LYDIA
That woman, did you do the same to her? Did you steal the money and pin it on her? She was like *me*, wasn't she? All you had to do was kill her.

The boys are stunned, watching her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
The police are coming.

JONAH
No they're not. And if you get arrested, we'll get to you there.

He rotates to face the boys, his wild eyes visible on his ruined face. He shoos the kids, and they quickly flee.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Don't think of running. We've got insurance. We've got someone in the car, someone you know.

LYDIA
(clenching her teeth)
Bullshit, you do.

JONAH
We're going to walk out of here arm-in-arm. Like a proper date.

Lydia climbs onto the table and vaults from one to the next, kicking over drinks and cafeteria trays. She hits the floor, rounds the corner, and sprints into the anchor DEPARTMENT STORE, past Jonah's troops.

She clambers down an escalator.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

In a display of dinette sets, she looks for cover.

Ahead, there's a LOG CABIN DISPLAY on blocks. Lydia crawls inside behind a tinsel-covered Christmas tree.

Outside, she hears footsteps. A SALESWOMAN.

SALESWOMAN

Young lady - no. No. You can't play in here. Come on, out.

LYDIA

Help me.

SALESWOMAN

Let's go. I'm calling security.

LYDIA

Call security, bitch!

Furious, the woman rushes to the cash register, where Lydia can hear her on the phone.

SALESWOMAN

I've got a girl here who's on something.

Lydia steps out and sees, twenty yards away, KANPOL, texting. They're coordinating their search.

She dashes through Christmas displays, vaulting over the made bed, and hitting the escalators. After a few steps, she hops onto the steel center area, and slides down to the bottom level.

INT. MAIN MALL - CONTINUOUS

JOKER and SALVADOR cover the exits.

Between them is the CANDY CANE VILLAGE, where children line up to meet with Santa Claus.

So Lydia runs ahead, drawing as much attention as possible. She steps into the fountain.

LYDIA

Help me! Please! Help me! These people are going to kill me!

The shoppers pull their children away; everyone clears a space, seeming to think the girl has gone insane.

Out of the perimeter of the crowd comes SECURITY - but Lydia sees the TATTOOS on their arms and fists.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

No! Please, this isn't security!

KANPOL

Shut the fuck up, chica.

OVERHEAD VIEW: Jonah watches from above, as the group hauls her straight across the mall.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

KANPOL, SALVADOR, SHAMROCK, and JOKER. They carry her kicking and screaming down the ramp - to a RENTAL CAR (FORD TAURUS), where they try to force her inside. She screams and splays her legs out.

Coming forward from another car is a new man, the ZETA, his arms covered with familiar tattoos. The MACHINE-GUN CRUCIFIX. His death-squad eyes scare even these young men, and they go silent.

He meets eyes with Jonah, who nods. This amuses him, and he gives Jonah a frightening smirk, implying - *you're not giving me any orders*. Jonah looks pale as -

- the ZETA punches Lydia right in the face. She goes limp and they slide her into the backseat.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - MOMENTS LATER

The car screeches out of the garage.

LYDIA'S POV -- She can see JOKER's knees, KANPOL'S hand on an envelope that he gives to the parking lot attendant. Another car is following close. She sees phone wires moving against empty sky.

EXT. SOUTHGATE MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Link rushes past the same phone wires, pulling up to the entrance of the mall, where POLICE CARS are lined up. Closer to the entrance, two OFFICERS talk to the FOUR BOYS from the food court.

BRACES

...and then she got into the fountain, and she was screaming.

Link already knows. Delirious, he heads into:

INT. CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS

He rushes to the front counter. Taking the phone from the cash register, he makes a feverish call.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

As they ride I-8 westbound past the dunes, a phone begins ringing somewhere in the car. In the trunk?

JOKER pushes his boot into Lydia's swelling face.

JONAH
He'll try again.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS

Frustrated, Link hangs up and tries again. As the salesgirl comes to protest, he holds up his hand.

LINK
My cell's out. My wife just had a baby.

She shrugs and steps away, as Link listens.

LINK (CONT'D)
Come on, Kirby... come on.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

Lydia hears THE RINGING, now clearly inside the trunk.

Jonah nods to KANPOL, who pulls off the Interstate onto a dirt road, driving out of view from the passing semis.

The IMPALA is continuing ahead, the Zeta at the wheel.

JONAH
Tell that psycho to slow down.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jonah steps out of the car and walks around it to the trunk. KANPOL pops the trunk, revealing:

KIRBY, bound in duct-tape, mouth covered. His phone rings beside him. Jonah rips the tape off, answers the phone, and holds it to Kirby's ear.

Link's faint voice comes onto the phone.

LINK (V.O.)
Hello? Kirby? Hello? You there?

But Jonah stares at Kirby, still, blood leaking from his nostrils, his face grey. Dead. Jonah sighs. He hangs up the phone and slaps the back windshield.

JONAH
Stupid motherfuckers, you beat him to death. What did I say?

KANPOL shrugs.

Frustrated, Jonah draws his pistol and BLOWS three shots into Kirby, as the phone begins ringing again. With his gun still smoking, he sighs and answers.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - INTERCUTTING BETWEEN JONAH AND LINK

Link steadies himself and watches the salesgirl.

JONAH (V.O.)
You're sponsor says '*Go ahead and start drinking.*'

Link's face turns to stone. The salesgirl meets eyes with him and looks terrified.

LINK
That's how you tracked us? If you hurt him -

JONAH
He's at the big support group in the sky.

Link can barely breathe.

LINK
Have you got her?

JONAH
Right here.

LINK
Put her on.

JONAH
That's not going to happen.

LINK
I'm going to say this straight - you're a businessman. Come back and take me instead. I'm going to tell you why it's a smart trade.

JONAH
Yeah, let me in on it.

LINK
I know about the stash houses, and I know your family. She can't put it all together, but I can. I know who to talk to over your head. I won't go to cops: I'll go to *El Padrino*. I know a shot-caller in *Eme* with a line to his ear. He'll tell him how much money you skimmed out of every stash house.

JONAH

This is bullshit.

LINK

He'll tell him you're killing these people to take the rap for you. That *sicerio*, he'll turn right on you. You know it. He's a cleaner, kid, and he's watching you, too.

There's a long, windy pause on the line as Link waits.

ON JONAH: he paces away from the car and his group.

JONAH

You try to threaten me, and
I'm going drag your
daughter out into the
desert -

LINK

I'm trying to let you in on
reality!

JONAH

We're going to fuck her, and shoot her, and leave her bleeding in the dirt!

LINK

If you were a real businessman, you'd know I'm giving you a deal. You kill her, you'll be running. From them and from me.

(a beat)

You tell me where you want me, I'll be there. Kill me, but let her go.

There's crackling reception, and Link thinks he's lost him.

JONAH

Call back this number in ten minutes and I'll give you the meeting spot. But you try anything - she's gone.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - DESERT - TWO HOURS LATER

They sit by the sand dunes along a dimming horizon.

Lydia sits upright, her hands duct-taped in a praying position. Her left eye has swelled shut, and she stares out the window, watching the group discuss the plan.

EXT. ALKALI FLATS - AN HOUR LATER

The RENTAL and IMPALA drive over the crusty desert, toward dark mountains in the distance.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

They continue bouncing over rough ground, uphill over the badlands. The wheels get stuck, but KANPOL reverses and guns it forward again, pulling them out.

JONAH
(re: his cell phone)
I got no fucking bars out here.

EXT. INTERSTATE 8

On his Harley, Link whips through the sparse traffic.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Link tears up a cloud of dust, back into the ranch.

E/I. PREACHER'S HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

Link gets off his bike. He looks down at the BONFIRE pit, where he sees smoldering wreckage. Hanging out of the debris is a SCORCHED HUMAN ARM.... Cherise's.

Repulsed, he turns and enters the HANGAR.

A few BIRDS rustle out of a nest in the rafters. There's blood and spent shell-casings all over the floor, and most of the WEAPONS have been looted.

He looks around through the damaged lockers, finding old boxes of ammo, a few uniforms, sabers, and bayonets - but nothing of much real use.

He opens Preacher's desk, and sees a SMALL MIRROR and a RAZOR. Out of a supplies dish, he finds an ERASER.

EXT. PREACHER'S RANCH - CONTINUOUS

He looks out over the expanse of Preacher's LAND MINES. He kneels down into the dust, like he's a diviner, and he begins digging for something... pulling up... a wire.

EXT. ALKALI FLATS - OVERHEAD SHOT - AN HOUR BEFORE SUNSET

The IMPALA sits in rugged desert. SALVADOR and SHAMROCK stand outside, waving across the open space. The ZETA waits in the front seat.

JOKER is in the rental car, guarding Lydia.

THE WHITE RENTAL CAR

Waits at the top of the ridge - with three of them, plus Lydia. Jonah stands outside, making hang signals.

As he turns, he notices debris along the path: toe nail clippers, a brush, a mirror. He looks up as NAVAL JETS soar overhead, curling off over the mountains.

Jonah sits into the car, slamming his door on the wind.

JONAH
It's a trail or something.

KANPOL
A coyote trail. They take immigrants through the testing range.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beside a murky mirror, Link opens his mouth wide. He ties a STRING around his WISDOM TOOTH, securing it tight.

At the other end of the string is THE ERASER. He pushes the RAZOR into it, deep, covering the blade.

Then, like it's a bitter pill, he SWALLOWS the eraser, fighting the urge not to gag.

CLOSE SHOT -- He opens his mouth and tests the taut string running from his back tooth, down his throat.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia sits in back beside Joker; KANPOL and Jonah in front. The wind is so strong the earth seem to be shedding into the air. The sun is in a mineral haze.

Link becomes visible, a speck in the distance, casting a wake of sand and grit. Lydia can hear his engine, like a separate baritone wind.

The bike becomes visible out of the dust, a dim shape - then her father is clear. He stops the bike about two hundred yards downhill.

JOKER
What is this motherfucker doing?

He steps off the bike, hands in the air, clothes gusting.

KANPOL
He's showing us he's not carrying.

Link takes off his jacket and waves it like a matador. Then he drapes it over the handlebars.

JONAH
Keep going!

He gestures to his own clothes, indicating Link should continuing stripping down.

The jacket nearly blows away - so Link wads it up and secures it under the kickstand.

He unbuttons his shirt, tying the sleeve around the handlebars. He turns around, in just an undershirt, pulling the pockets inside-out to show they're empty.

JONAH (CONT'D)

The shoes!

Link unties the laces. Then he places his boots against the back tire. He walks gingerly ahead on bare feet, his hands behind his head, like a prisoner of war.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Keep the gun on her.

Lydia can see her father's eyes now. He's just a few feet down the road, as Kanpol frisks him.

Kanpol nods that he's okay.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Let's get them both in the car.

We're going to the next spot.

(to Link)

Bet you didn't think of that, huh?

Link pushes into the backseat beside Lydia.

Joker squeezes in beside them, his gun tight on Link. Jonah climbs into the front, his pistol on Lydia.

Then KANPOL takes off driving slowly down the dirt path, his gun resting on the dashboard.

Lydia tries to acknowledge Link, but he won't look at her. Joker rips duct tape, and Link puts his hands out for the thug to bind.

OVERHEAD SHOT: The RENTAL heads toward the parked Harley.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

Strung with clothes, the bike sits in the middle of the pathway. The desert is too rough to pass on either side.

Sighing, Kanpol gets out to move the bike out of the way.

Jonah is trying his CELL again, gun on his lap.

LYDIA

Daddy.

LINK

Hey, kid.

The seat belt bell rings steadily, as Kanpol crunches ahead outside.

JONAH

Whatever you planned, I'm ahead of you.

Link tenses his shoulder into Lydia. She looks over at his eyes and sees him *wink* and gesture to the ground.

Almost clairvoyantly, she understands what he means - and she throws herself down against the passenger seat.

Kanpol grabs the handlebars of the bike. He lifts the kickstand off the bundled jacket and -

PULLS A TRIP WIRE. One of Preacher's claymores goes off. The MOTORCYCLE EXPLODES - with a sudden splash of dirt and blood over their windshield. Debris flies out everywhere like shrapnel, tearing the henchman limb from limb; shattering the windshield; hurtling debris into the body of the car.

The airbags deploy from the detonation's strength. Jonah is struck hard, knocked backwards.

Joker is disoriented. As he goes for his gun -

- Link pulls the string on his molar, whipping out the eraser and extracting the razor. It's a brutal prison trick, and he slashes right across Joker's face and eyes.

As Joker fires the gun, Link grabs it and pushes down, so that shots go through the floor.

Then, like a fast arm-wrestling match, Link bends Joker's arms around, four hands on the gun at once, twisting upward, toward Joker's chin, and -

BOOM! Blood splatters over the ceiling as a bullet goes right through Joker's chin.

As Link grabs the gun and continues firing ahead through the seats, Jonah climbs out...

Link scoops blood from his eye sockets.

Jonah is outside the window - about to *fire at Lydia.*

Link throws her down, leans across her, and fires back. They shoot simultaneously, two men in a duel.

Jonah is *clipped in the shoulder.* He retreats, firing through the broken windows.

Link slashes the razor through the tape on her wrists.

He opens the door and shoves out Joker's body. She climbs into the drivers' seat, pushing aside the airbag.

From far downhill, the IMPALA churns toward them.

LYDIA

There's three more in the other car!

LINK

Turn us around!

Lydia reverses, running over Joker's body with a crunch.

She backs uphill, with the Impala approaching in the cracked windshield, looking as if its sitting upon an expanding dust storm, assault rifles poking out.

On the ground, Jonah empties an entire clip, holes exploding in the glass, bullets WHISTLING THROUGH.

Link has Joker's pistol, looking at the extra clips.

LINK (CONT'D)

Drive!

She skids around and races away from the Impala, coming in the side view mirror, the ZETA behind the wheel.

JONAH -- gets into the Impala as it stops for him. Then it begins pursuing down a low groove in the desert.

OVERHEAD SHOT: The two cars accelerate through the badlands, looking like two separate wind devils.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

As the back windshield shatters, Link fires a round back at the Impala, splashing through the windshield.

It swerves, but gathers speed along an embankment.

As Link RELOADS, the driver's side window of the IMPALA pulls up right beside him.

An ASSAULT RIFLE comes out of the window, the Zeta's hard face behind it. It's a rolling duel. He braces the gun across the open window, his finger on the trigger.

Link slides in a clip, just in time... *FIRING THROUGH HIS CLOSED WINDOW...*

...just as a *STORM OF SHOTS* come through the glass and metal beside him.

The ZETA is struck through the neck and head, falling into the dashboard, dead, as SHAMROCK grabs the wheel.

But Link's blood has sprayed across the backseat.

LYDIA

Dad!

LINK

I got him. I hit the son of a bitch!

(groaning)

Man, that fucking hollow-tip shit
your boyfriend is firing through here
- fancy motherfucker. I see why you
liked him.

LYDIA

Dad, don't even fucking tell me
you're *hit*!

EXT. BADLANDS - SUNSET

In dim light, Lydia can't gauge the bumps, and the car
bucks like a stallion.

The others dump the ZETA HITMAN out onto the desert, and
swerve back into pursuit. Within moments, the Impala is
behind them. A foot kicks out the front windshield, and
a sub-automatic rifle opens fire.

Lydia weaves to hold them off. Her FRONT TIRE blows.
The rim sparks off rocks and grinds. She pushes hard on
the accelerator and continues worming forward, but she
soon stops at the lip of a -

WIDE CRATER, stretching out across the sloped desert.

Ahead, the ground descends into shadows, down loose rocks
and chipped shale. The slope is far too steep for a car.

The CHEVY IMPALA is coming right for them.

LINK

Listen to me. You get out and you
start sliding down into that ravine.
I'll hold them off here. I had to
call the police, and they'll gather
along the highway below. Just go.

LYDIA

No, Dad.

LINK

That's the Naval testing range down
there. Go through it, kid. You're
going to come out the other side of
this.

LYDIA

I'm not listening to you.

LINK

And when you get out, I want you to figure out a way to get in touch with a guy at Calipatria. His name is Arturo Rios Tehada, prisoner C-77105. Remember that number. Say it over and over. C-77105.

LYDIA

No, Dad.

LINK

Tell him what happened and he'll help you. Are you listening to me?

The Impala's rising to meet them, dark against lit skies.

LYDIA

Why are you such a pessimist?

LINK

That's the most optimistic I ever been in my life. I'm ordering you, right now, get out and -

LYDIA

No!

LINK

I don't have time to argue with you!

LYDIA

Then don't! Fuck you if you think I'm leaving you here.

LINK

I'm going to count to motherfucking three, and if your bony ass isn't sliding down that hill...

The Impala is right on them now. It rolls over the last stretch slowly, like a predator circling.

LINK (CONT'D)

I can still hold 'em off. One...

LYDIA

I just told you I'm not leaving.

LINK

Two.

LYDIA

Count to a million if you want to. If you think I'm getting out of this car without you -

LINK

Three.

LYDIA

- then you don't know me. All this time, and you never even knew me.

The Impala guns its engine. It's battered and filled with tumbleweed in the grill, but it sinks lower on the hydraulics, ready to come ahead. Link stares into her eyes and see something he recognizes - deep in his bones.

He nods and hands her the gun.

LINK

All right baby - nice to meet you.
Hold them off as long as you can.

Rifle barrels now emerge from the windows of the Impala - and SHAMROCK rises against the roof to steady his gun. Lydia stares at the pistol as her father offers it.

LYDIA

Fuck that. Grab a seat belt.

EXT. LIP OF THE CRATER - BADLANDS - CONTINUOUS

She spins the tires, heading for the ledge, focused on a path where the eroded rim has smoothed in a landslide.

As soon as Link realizes what she's doing, he laughs.

The car drops, jolting downhill. Shale and sandstone give way into an avalanche. Lydia regains control of the skimming wheels, steering downhill.

LINK

Keep us straight or we start rolling.

Focused, Lydia keeps the car straight, riding like a sled down a hillside giving way. All three remaining tires blow. Finally the car tips in a mass of rocks, rolling on its side, finally coming to a rest on the chasm floor.

INT. WHITE FORD TAURUS - CONTINUOUS

Dirt piles against one window, like they're buried alive.

LINK

You're a goddamn *outlaw*.

EXT. CHASM - JUST PAST SUNSET

She's digging in the twilight around the overturned car, keeping an eye on the headlights of the Impala above.

Suddenly, the IMPALA launches downward, attempting to follow the same dug-out course.

It *flips* and rolls like a tin can down the steep slope toward them.

She drags Link out of the car, realizing that he's hurt worse than she expected. His body is stiff, and he can't straighten his legs.

The IMPALA is now careening downhill like a meteor.

LYDIA

Dad! I can't carry you!

She helps Link to his feet, pulling him away just as the Impala smashes onto the canyon floor in an avalanche.

They wait for the last rocks to carom off the undercarriage. Then, straining, Link kneels and peers into the car. SALVADOR and SHAMROCK are mangled, necks broken, bodies contorted at impossible angles.

But Jonah isn't in the car.

LINK

Everybody but your boyfriend. He's still up there.

LYDIA

Dad, you're really hurt.

EXT. STREAM BED - DUSK

They stop behind rocks piled along the runoff of a distant storm. Link gags, sounding like he may throw up.

LYDIA

Dad? We should head for the highway.

LINK

He's up there waiting for us. We got to head into the bombing range.

She helps him up. He's unsteady, barely able to walk, but she can take a lot of his weight.

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAINS - AN HOUR LATER

With only the faintest rim of light against the jagged horizons, she helps Link ahead. Finally, she has to sit down. He drops in the dust and lies down on his side.

LINK

You should get worse than death for killing somebody's sponsor.

LYDIA

It's getting so cold. How long you think until we get to a road?

LINK

We're nowhere, kid. We should just hunker down for the night. There's going to be ordnance... lying around. We don't want to step on it. Stay guard. That punk could be following us...

(a beat)

There's a prisoner at Calipatria. Rios. Prisoner number C-77105. Say it, over and over. You get in touch with him.

LYDIA

Stop it, Dad. You're going to be okay.

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT

Link and Lydia are quiet. She's tried to shelter him from the wind with rocks and sticks of old creosote.

The night turns cold. They hear nothing. Link is shivering and Lydia nuzzles close, holding him.

LINK

Your hair smells the same, like when you were a baby.

She holds onto him tight, with all her might, rubbing his sides and pressing her face into his chest.

LYDIA

You're so cold.

LINK

Don't ever regret this, kid. I was dirt until you came along.

LYDIA

No.

LINK

Don't hold any grudges. If your mother failed you, go look her in the eye - see who she is, let her see you. We're all fucked up in this world. All we got is *this* feeling I got for you. So stay alive for me, baby. Don't quit. Because I never loved a thing in this world before you. You saved something better than my life. Carry that with you. Hold that someplace and guard it. For me. Forever.

EXT. CHASM FLOOR - CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - LATE NIGHT

Lydia hasn't slept. She sits with her gun in her lap, keeping guard. The moon has risen, and everything is silent.

She feels her father's forehead, sees his teeth chattering. She tries to warm him with her palms. Then she begins burying him with sand to warm him.

There's a sound. A snapping twig. She grips the gun.

Then there comes an unearthly sound. High-pitched, hectoring. COYOTES, smelling blood. Dozens.

She rises up and fires the gun in the air, scattering them, prompting lonely howls from all around the canyon. She kneels beside Link. She pets through his damp hair.

LYDIA
It's almost morning.
(a long pause)
I love you.

EXT. CHASM FLOOR - DAWN

When she wakes up, she can feel the sand has gone cold. She's shocked by the change and turns to his face. His eyes are vacant, staring up at the sky. He's gone.

LYDIA
Dad!

She scrambles away, screaming as NAVAL JETS cut the air, leaving a half-dozen bright vapor trails in the sky.

EXT. CHASM FLOOR - MORNING

Crying, Lydia digs in the riverbed with her hands, her fingernails bleeding, her face stained with dirt and tears. The sun is high overhead.

She rolls her father's BODY into the grave, and she holds him for a moment, crying. Then she begins patting the earth down over him.

LYDIA
I won't leave you here like this.

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - NAVAL TESTING RANGE - DAY

Dehydrated and sunburned, Lydia struggles ahead through the mountains. She looks down and sees the shrapnel of bombs, then faces: a mountain bombed to rocks and dust.

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - LATER

She climbs a ridge, then looks out - demoralized.

ROTATE AROUND LYDIA TO REVEAL HER POV: The landscape unfolds to the horizon in all directions, nothing but carved channels through striped peaks.

She continues downhill, into the next canyon.

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

It's frigid cold. She's shivering, delirious from dehydration. Half-asleep, she hears animals around her.

Suddenly - her eyes shoot open, and -

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - DAY

It's morning, already bright and hot. She's too weak to stand. Her eyelids are sunburned and swollen shut. She gags, but has nothing to throw up.

She finds a shade beside the rocks and lies down into it. She's dying, drying out to a husk in front of us.

LYDIA

Daddy.

All at once, the landscape goes dark, and she's lying in the same spot, hallucinating. The sky fills with stars.

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - LATE NIGHT

She's staring, dazed, up into the air, as people are whispering around her. In Spanish.

VOICE

Esta muerta?

LYDIA

Don't kill me. Please.

FEMALE VOICE

No. No. Esta despierta.

LYDIA

Please, Jonah. Please just leave me.

MALE VOICE

Una gringuita.

Someone leans into Lydia's eyeline - covering the stars:

An IMMIGRANT WOMAN, following the smuggling trail, now petting through her hair.

FEMALE VOICE
Shhhh. Drink. Drink.

The WOMAN dampens her fingers, then puts them into Lydia's parched mouth. Lydia drinks the water off them like a suckling child. She closes her eyes, and -

EXT. CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS - MORNING

- wakes up in the heat, facing a blowing bag. Crackers in a plastic sleeve, weighted down by A BOTTLE OF WATER. Quickly, Lydia goes to the water and drinks, crying as she does. It's a miracle, a piece of *pure humanity*. Then she sees:

FOOTPRINTS. The smugglers' trail out of the mountains. Slowly she rises... and follows them.

The sound PRE-LAP of AM NEWS RADIO rises up.

EXT. INTERSTATE 8 - DAY

Police cars line the highway, officers with weapons drawn, as a lone figure drifts out of the bluffs: JONAH.

AM NEWS ANNOUNCER
A twenty-eight year-old man was
arrested this morning in connection
with multiple homicides off
Interstate 8 last night. The murders
are believed connected to the drug
violence spilling over the border.

As we see QUICK SHOTS, numerous announcers begin to speak over one another, indicating the passage of time.

- JONAH, is led in shackles into a Federal Courthouse.

ANOTHER ANNOUNCER
Pincerna was convicted of drug-
trafficking and murder charges...

- JONAH checks into CALIPATRIA, eyes full of terror.

- He's locked into a cage in the main yard, waiting to be let out into the general population. His jumpsuit is slightly unbuttoned, showing his tattoo: "LYDIA."

- REVERSE ANGLE, RIOS waits across the yard, watching Jonah with an army of Eme soldiers.

SOUND PRE-LAP: A Harley Softail engine rises up.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - MONTHS LATER - DAY

URSULA sits at a cafe, a PACKAGE beside her place mat. She hears the approaching HARLEY and scans to find LYDIA, pulling up in the parking lot on Link's rebuilt bike.

Ursula checks her reflection in the surface of a spoon.

She scans the menu, then looks up - feigning surprise - as LYDIA joins her, dropping a HELMET onto the seat. Her hair has grown out. The sunburn has long since faded.

URSULA

I was just shocked to hear from you.
I just ran out of the house, I didn't
have time to get ready. I look
terrible.

LYDIA

I don't care.

Ursula is twice as nervous as her daughter, and looks back at the menu to occupy herself.

URSULA

I've had so many things I've said to
you in my head, but - now that you're
here, I don't... I don't know what I
can say. I don't know where to
start.

LYDIA

It's okay, Mom.

URSULA

I have this package that came to the
house for you. It's from a prison.

Lydia takes the package and opens it. Inside is a BIBLE.

LYDIA

Did you open this?

URSULA

(a long pause)
Yes.

Lydia laughs slightly. Then she flips through the pages, until they stop at what appears to be a bookmark.

URSULA (CONT'D)

I figured maybe... you'd know who it
was from.

The bookmark *startles* her. It's "LYDIA" inked onto something like leather, dried and pressed.

Beneath it a news article reads: "CARTEL HEIR KILLED IN PRISON SLAYING." Lydia looks at the bookmark: *it's skin*. Jonah's TATTOO, flayed off his chest.

URSULA (CONT'D)

Is everything okay?

Lydia looks at the diners around the patio, gleaming in the sun. She's speechless; but then a look of relief comes over her. She faces her mother with damp eyes.

URSULA (CONT'D)

Lydia? Is something *wrong*?

She closes her eyes. Grief and gratitude wash over her.

LYDIA

I'm not staying long. I wanted to
goodbye. I'm going to head up north
and see what kind of life is up there
- but I needed to see you first - and
I needed you to know: I'm not running
away anymore. I'm just searching...

When she opens her eyes again they look strong and determined, staring right through her frightened mother.

URSULA

You sound just like him.

Lydia squints to hold back any emotion.

LYDIA

I know.

ROLL CREDITS.