



IF I HAD YOUR FACE

Written by  
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**INT. DARK RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

A low lit restaurant in a trendy but not-totally-gentrified area of Seattle - *definitely* too fancy for a first date.

A pair sit across from each other. Kind of awkward. Afraid of silence. They're both attractive - that might be only thing they have in common.

RINA (IRENE), Korean American woman in her mid 20s, pretty and she knows it. Loved and hated for being hot *and* nice to people who don't know her better. She's "that" girl.

PRESTON, white man in his late 20s. I mean WHITE. Pale with almost translucent blue eyes. A head of dirty blonde hair. It takes a moment to realize that he's handsome. Even charming.

Rina sips her water. She wishes it was vodka.

RINA  
(attempting a joke)  
You know a restaurant is fancy when  
it's so dark you can't see your  
plate.

Preston laughs more than the joke deserves.

PRESTON  
Sorry, I know it's annoying. I hope  
it's okay?

RINA  
Of course! Just joking.

They sit in another awkward silence.

RINA (CONT'D)  
So, what kind of law do you  
practice?

PRESTON  
Corporate. You?

RINA  
Patent.  
(beat)  
Do you like corporate?

Preston shrugs.

PRESTON  
Enough. Do you like patent?

Rina rolls her shoulders back and sighs, she's getting tired of the small talk.

RINA  
(sarcastic)  
I loooove it.

Finally, a waiter comes by with two glasses of red wine. A lifeline.

Preston goes to clink their glasses together but Rina either doesn't notice or doesn't care. She slams it back, taking down the entire glass in three big gulps.

She sets the glass back on the table.

RINA (CONT'D)  
This isn't very fun is it?

Preston laughs, for real this time.

PRESTON  
If I'm being totally honest, I  
don't really want to talk about  
being lawyers.

Some awkwardness dissipates between them. Rina smiles.

RINA  
Good. You don't want to get me  
started.

PRESTON  
Are you sure? Sounds like there's  
something you want to say.

RINA  
It's kind of a bummer.

PRESTON  
If it's about you, I want to know.

Rina takes the signal of interest in stride, pleased. She narrows her eyes at him, half flirting.

RINA  
We're being totally honest?

PRESTON  
Completely.

Rina sighs deeply out of her nose.

RINA

I love my job. It doesn't love me.

Preston leans forward. Pitch perfect body language.

RINA (CONT'D)

I work so fucking hard, long hours, extra projects. I'm the most experienced junior at the firm and they had me running coffee orders for a year. And they keep promoting other people over me.

Preston shakes his head sympathetically.

PRESTON

It's a problem in every firm, women don't get promoted into leadership.

Rina let's out a sharp laugh, though it's not funny at all.

RINA

Plenty of women at my firm are getting promoted. They're just not promoting me. I'm the problem.

PRESTON

Because?

RINA

Because.

Rina stares at him, dares him to say it.

PRESTON

I'll guess they look more like me than you.

Rina sits back in her chair.

RINA

It doesn't feel good to say it, you know? My roommate thinks I should quit.

PRESTON

I get it.

RINA

If this was a performance issue I could change that. I could control it. I can't change who I am.

There's a stray eyelash on Rina's cheek. Preston reaches his hand forward.

PRESTON  
Sorry, you have an eyelash.  
(small laugh)  
It's kind of distracting me.

RINA  
Really?

She leans forward. Preston gently lifts the eyelash off her face. He holds it out on his finger for her.

PRESTON  
Make a wish.

Rina makes a show of closing her eyes.

RINA  
I wish there was something I could  
do. Something in my power.

She opens her eyes and blows the eyelash off his finger.

As we're close up on Rina's face, notice that she has MONOLIDS - There is no fold in her eyelids. *Remember this.*

They stay leaned in toward each other.

PRESTON  
Irene-

RINA  
(correcting him)  
Rina. Irene sounds *ancient*.

PRESTON  
(beat)  
*Rina*, I know how hard this must be.

Preston holds her gaze, sincere as anyone could possibly be. Rina quirks an eyebrow.

RINA  
Do you?

PRESTON  
More than most can, I think.

Rina regards Preston for a long moment, then signals the waiter. Will she ask for the check? Or-

RINA  
More wine, please.

Preston smiles.

-

*Dear Reader: if you were watching this movie you would have noticed by now. Or maybe not. But you would eventually.*

*Preston hasn't blinked. He never does.*

#### **INT. KOREAN BBQ RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Bustling KBBQ spot with huge vents and packed tables. At the center of the restaurant is a long table full of young Asian American professionals.

Sitting by Rina is her best friend and roommate JO (JOANNE), Chinese American in her mid 20s, a fighter way more often than a lover, and too smart for her own good.

The energy at the table feels subdued. You would expect this table of young folks to be raucous, vibrant, and loud. Instead people pick at their food and try to smile.

At the far end someone suddenly stands. KEVIN (late 20s), Chinese American man, looks small despite standing above everyone else. His head is tilted down, staring at the table. His eyes are red and puffy. He's cried recently.

KEVIN  
Um. Thank you everyone for being  
here tonight. It's been two years  
since-

His voice cracks. He pauses. Takes a shuddering breath.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Since Darla-

Breath catches in his throat. His lip trembles.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

Kevin turns on his heel and runs out of the restaurant. Two friends get up to follow him out.

The rest of the table is left in a sad and awkward silence. Nothing but the sound of sizzling meat.

Finally, Rina speaks up.

RINA

She would hate to see us like this.

She doesn't have to speak loudly to have the attention of the whole table.

RINA (CONT'D)

I miss her every day. I don't know where she is, or what she's doing, or if she's still-

She doesn't finish that thought.

RINA (CONT'D)

But what I do know is that the last thing she'd ever want us to do is get together and cry like some sorry sacks of shit.

There are murmurs of agreement around the table and nods of affirmation.

Jo raises her glass.

JO

To Darla.

The table does the same. Smiling for the first time tonight.

EVERYONE

To Darla!

They suck down their drinks. Jo slams her glass down. She looks at Rina, they smile at each other. Then Jo looks at the rest of the table.

JO

Let's get fucking smashed.

From there it's a flurry of energy. Rina and Jo clink shot glasses full of soju together and down them. Everyone at the table is yelling to do soju bombs and eating too much food. Finally, people seem happy.

#### **INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT**

The group has migrated to a private room in a Korean karaoke bar. Rina and Jo duet the English sections of Girls' Generation's GEE and mumble through the Korean bits. They're terrible and they're *so drunk*. They're having so much fun.

**INT. KARAOKE BAR BATHROOM - NIGHT**

A small women's bathroom with a few stalls. There's a muffled sound of someone belting their lungs out next door.

Rina has her purse on top of a paper towel on the counter. She's touching up her makeup, trying to conceal the redness in her cheeks from drinking.

A toilet flushes, Jo kicks open the stall and half stumbles to the sink. Rina flips one of the sink handles before Jo gets there so it's already running.

JO

Do you think it was rude to suggest karaoke after dinner?

RINA

The living must party on. It's what Darla would've wanted.

Jo nods her head. She starts washing her hands.

JO

Would've. You think she's dead.

Rina swipes on a new coat of lip gloss.

RINA

I don't know. Maybe she just got tired of us and left.

JO

I don't think so.

RINA

Whatever happened, Kevin needs closure or he'll obsesses about her until he dies.

Jo turns off the tap and grabs a paper towel. Neither want to talk more about this.

JO

You didn't come home last night.

Rina's mouth curls into a smile she can't contain.

RINA

I went on a date.

JO

One and done?

RINA

I *definitely* want to see him again.

It takes Jo just a second too long to answer and seem happy.  
If Rina notices, she doesn't say anything.

JO

That's good. Is he nice?

RINA

I think he could be my soulmate.

Rina is lost in a dream, but Jo crash lands on earth. She's suddenly feeling much more sober.

JO

Whoa. Rina-

RINA

He really gets it, you know? I felt so seen by him.

JO

One date seems a little soon to be using the word, "soulmate".

RINA

That's what I feel. Seriously.

JO

Okay.

RINA

Okay?

JO

Okay, it's just,  
(frustrated)  
You literally just got out of a relationship. A messy one.

Rina's shoulders set back, braced to defend.

RINA

This isn't a rebound.

JO

Then what is it?

RINA

You've never liked any of my boyfriends.

JO  
Oh so he's your boyfriend now?

RINA  
Why do you hate everyone I date?

JO  
I don't.

RINA  
Who have you liked?

JO  
I liked Carlos.

Rina scoffs.

RINA  
My first college boyfriend.

JO  
He was nice!

RINA  
Preston is nice too.

JO  
Well what does *Preston* want from you?

RINA  
He doesn't want anything.

JO  
Men always want something from women.

RINA  
So he wants me! Is that terrible?  
Is it wrong?

JO  
Everyone wants you Rina.

The words *including me* are not said, but perhaps they're felt. Rina exhales and softens.

RINA  
This is different. I really like him.

JO  
Really?

RINA  
Really really.

Jo's takes a long hard look at Rina. Then her face softens. She rolls her eyes and sighs loudly.

JO  
Okay. Fine. Show me.

Rina squeals happily.

RINA  
Promise me you won't be judge-y.

JO  
I will literally never promise you that.

RINA  
He's white.

Rina makes a "surprise!" face but it looks more like a grimace. Jo's mouth drops open in open shock.

JO  
Rina! The last white boy you dated made a *body pillow of you*.

RINA  
I admit I was off with that one, but Preston gets it.

JO  
Gets how not to be a fucking creep?

RINA  
Gets my cultural background. His. The differences.

JO  
What's his cultural background? Tailgating and white supremacy?

RINA  
His family's Dutch.  
(beat)  
And he said he'd read MINOR FEELINGS for me.

JO  
Incredible. The bar is in hell and you're playing limbo.

Rina pinches Jo's arm.

RINA  
Be nice.

JO  
Stop stalling.

Rina digs her phone out of her purse and opens a photo of him. It's a polished and posed photo, like what you'd find on a "meet the team" page of a legal firm's website.

Jo squints hard, drawn in yet disturbed by his eyes.

*Pale.*

She almost can't pull her gaze away from them, as if they're a vortex pulling in. She blinks violently.

JO (CONT'D)  
That's a White Walker.

RINA  
(whining)  
Jo!

JO  
Sorry. Yes, he looks...  
interesting?

Rina pulls her phone away. She pouts at his photo.

RINA  
You would think he was hot if he  
was a girl.

JO  
So he's not my type. If he's nice  
to you and he treats you well then  
whatever.

RINA  
He does treat me well. Like really  
well.

Rina wiggles her eyebrows suggestively.

JO  
Ew dude.

They laugh.

RINA  
More shots?

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - DAY**

A two bedroom one bath apartment, nice for 20-somethings in Seattle (even so, still sharing a bathroom). The living room, kitchen, and eating area all occupy the same room.

Jo wrenches the door to her room open and stumbles out. She's *desperately* hungover, wearing a huge t-shirt with a stretched out neck, no pants. There's still makeup around her eyes.

The TV is on, faintly playing the news in the background. It sounds like someone is putting away dishes in the kitchen.

Jo rubs her eyes and drags her feet to the coffee machine. She pours herself a cup to the brim, black as sin.

JO

Thanks for putting the pot on. I think I still might be drunk.

PRESTON

You're welcome.

Jo jumps out of her skin, realizing for the first time that it's not Rina in the kitchen as she assumed. She startles so suddenly that the steaming hot coffee sloshes over the brim of her cup and onto her hand.

She curses first from the shock of seeing a stranger in her kitchen, and then immediately again from the scalding coffee.

JO

Fuck. Ah fuck!

Preston immediately flips the cold water on the sink faucet and takes Jo's hand under the running water.

PRESTON

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you.

JO

Uh-

NEWS CHANNEL (O.S.)

Breaking news-

Before Jo can react to anything, a news jingle and a flashing red banner on the TV distracts them both.

NEWS CHANNEL (CONT'D)

Another unidentified body of a young woman has been discovered in the shallows of the Green River.

(MORE)

## NEWS CHANNEL (CONT'D)

This follows the discovery of two other women in the last 2 years, all unidentified, all Caucasian, and all blonde. Police investigators are considering the involvement of a serial killer going forward.

PRESTON

It's just so awful, isn't it?

Jo tears her eyes from the TV. Preston is staring at the news, a look of sympathy and pity on his face. His hand is gripped strongly around her wrist.

JO

Yah.

RINA (O.S.)

Isn't it too early for the news?

Jo rips her hand from Preston's grasp. Rina picks up the remote and turns the TV off.

JO

It's literally called morning news.

Rina ignores her. She walks up behind Preston and wraps her arms around his bicep. She leans into him sleepily and blinks up, doe eyed and pretty.

PRESTON

Hi.

RINA

Hi.

They can't seem to look away from each other.

JO

(deadpan)

Hi.

Spell broken, the couple looks at Joe.

RINA

You look terrible.

JO

You look like you put on a full face before you went to bed.

Rina sticks her tongue out at Jo.

It's true, Rina does look great. Nearly radiant standing next to Jo. Even without makeup her skin is glossy and bright, not at all like she drank her body weight in soju just hours ago.

RINA  
I woke up like this.  
(flips her hair jokingly)  
And I feel great.

Rina runs her hand up Preston's arm.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Crazy since I snuck this guy in  
after you went to bed.

They're back making eyes at each other. Jo, still holding her scalded hand, can't stop herself from rolling her eyes.

RINA (CONT'D)  
(distracted)  
Oh yah, Jo. This is Preston.  
Preston, this is my best friend  
Joanne.

Rina's eyes are still on Preston, but his eyes are set on Jo.

Rina takes Preston's hand and tugs him back toward her room before anyone can say anything else.

RINA (CONT'D)  
We should get some more sleep.

PRESTON  
It's nice to meet you, Joanne.

JO  
It's just Jo.

Preston holds her gaze.

PRESTON  
It's nice to meet you, Jo.

His eyes linger on Jo a little too long, almost *drinking her in*, until finally Rina closes the door behind them.

Jo blinks rapidly, trying to catch her brain up. She realizes that the water is still running and shuts the faucet. Then realizes that her hand is one big red scald. Then, that she's not wearing any pants.

JO  
(to herself)  
Fuck. That hurts.

Jo picks up her coffee cup - even though it just burnt the shit out of her - and chugs it down.

**INT. KENDO DOJO - DAY**

A cavernous room with benches against the walls. The only adornment is a shrine centered on the front wall where a ceremonial katana lays on a stand.

Pairs of two wearing full kendo armor spread across the room and spar with bamboo swords. None spar more fervently and energetically than the pair at the center.

The pair CLASH, their bamboo swords crossing as each puts their full weight behind them. One has a BLUE flag tied to their waist, the other RED.

Blue lunges forward, trying to get past Red's sword. Blue's movements are fast, but there's a lack of grace and intention. Red blocks - the strike does not land true.

Another crossing of swords, this time Red moves first. In contrast to Blue, Red's every movement is measured and sure, using exacting strength, no more no less.

Blue makes another fast motion - an action that seems like it will hit, but Blue hesitates at the last second, giving Red all the space they need to make their own move.

Red's sword feints right. As Blue moves to block, Red shoots left, striking Blue on the caged helmet with a loud shout.

SENSEI, an old Japanese man in a track suit with one red flag and one blue flag, holds up the red, indicating the winner.

The two fighters separate, back up to their starting positions, and bow to one another. They approach Sensei.

SENSEI

Naomi, well done using that opening.

Sensei turns and give Blue a stern look.

SENSEI (CONT'D)

Joanne, you have to follow through.  
You would have won if you had  
stayed your course rather than  
hesitating.

Red pulls off her helmet to reveal NAOMI (late 20s), Black woman, hair cut close to the scalp. She has an easy confidence to her smile and presence.

NAOMI  
Thank you Sensei.

Blue pulls off her helmet to reveal Jo. She's sweaty and out of breath. Definitely less composed than Naomi.

JO  
I didn't think I was going to hit

SENSEI  
And it was your doubt that made it true.

Jo sighs.

JO  
Yes sensei.

Sensei waves them both off.

SENSEI  
Go cool down, we're done for the day.

**- BENCH - DAY**

Naomi and Jo sit on a bench and strip off their armor.

JO  
I hate sparring against you.

Naomi laughs.

NAOMI  
You hate losing against me.

JO  
Isn't that what I said?

NAOMI  
Don't back off next time. Lean in instead of running away.

JO  
(sarcastic)  
Wow. Genius. I will take that into serious consideration.

Naomi laughs again and Jo rolls her eyes, smiling.

Jo pulls off her glove. Her hand is wrapped messily in bandages. She unravels them wincing slightly, exposing patchy brand new pink and thin skin.

NAOMI  
It's looking better.

Naomi reaches for Jo's hand, Jo lets her take it.

JO  
You ever think about going into  
dermatology instead?

Naomi rewraps the burn, neat and tight.

NAOMI  
Cardiology has my heart.

Jo laughs at the joke. Naomi's hand lingers. Jo doesn't pull away. They look at each other.

A practice sword clatters to the ground loudly, startling them both. They pull away at the same time and start packing their gear into their large duffle bags.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
How's the weird boyfriend?

JO  
Rina's fully dickmitized.

NAOMI  
Damn. Imagine dating  
(pause for effect)  
men.

Jo laughs.

JO  
She's always been like this. In her  
last relationship she got really  
into French New Wave *cinema*. Not  
movies, c i n e m a.

NAOMI  
Wow.

JO  
Fully disappears into her  
boyfriends.

The two of them stand, slinging their bags over their shoulders.

NAOMI  
Is she the first Asian girl he's  
dated? It's weird if there's a  
pattern.

JO  
No clue.

NAOMI  
Stalk his socials.

JO  
I've tried. He doesn't even have a  
LinkedIn. He's an internet ghost.

NAOMI  
You know what they say.

JO  
Do I?

NAOMI  
If you don't have social media  
you're either or a luddite or you  
have something to hide.  
(beat)  
Should we hit up a food truck?

**EXT. TACO TRUCK - NIGHT**

Jo and Naomi sit at a plastic table lit by a parking lot lamp  
post. A taco truck and other people idle nearby.

Jo stuffs a taco in her mouth, talks while chewing.

JO  
He's been over every day for the  
last three weeks but I never see  
them. They might as well be horny  
raccoons that live in my walls.

NAOMI  
It's the honeymoon phase. It'll end  
eventually.

JO  
Who do you think has to be around  
to pick up the pieces?

NAOMI  
You ever think that maybe it's time  
to move out?

JO  
I've tried.

NAOMI  
Tried?

JO  
Last year she had this really  
serious boyfriend so I got my own  
place. A month later she broke up  
with him and asked me to move back.

NAOMI  
So you did.

JO  
(shrugging)  
She needed me.

NAOMI  
Sure.

JO  
What?

NAOMI  
You just sound a little  
codependent.

JO  
(defensive)  
No no no. We have separate lives.

Naomi leans back in her plastic chair, arms crossed,  
unconvinced.

NAOMI  
Uh huh. How are your boundaries?

JO  
Boundaries-

Jo's phone rings on the table. The caller ID flashes RINA.  
She looks at Naomi.

JO (CONT'D)  
I don't want to be rude.

Naomi sighs dramatically, then smiles to be clear it's a  
joke.

NAOMI  
If you must.

Jo gives her a grateful smile and puts the phone to her ear.

JO  
Hello?

Immediately the smile slips from Jo's face. There's yelling on the other end. It's indistinct, but clearly panicked.

JO (CONT'D)  
What? Rina, what's going on?

More yelling, something that sounds like it could be sobbing.

JO (CONT'D)  
Wait- Rina- okay yes. Yes. I'm coming. Yes, I'm on my way.

Jo hangs up. She takes a moment to herself, sighs, and rubs her face. She looks at Naomi.

JO (CONT'D)  
I know how this looks-

NAOMI  
It's okay. Go.

Jo grimaces.

JO  
I don't have to.

Naomi shakes her head supportively.

NAOMI  
It sounded like an emergency.

JO  
Okay. Fuck. I'm sorry.

Jo gets up and quickly gathers her things. She was never actually going to stay.

JO (CONT'D)  
I'll see you next week?

NAOMI  
See you next week.

Jo leaves the parking lot without a second look back. Naomi sits beneath the beaming white light of the lamp post, alone.

#### **INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT**

The apartment is a whirlwind. A mess of clothes and makeup, strewn across every free surface, leading to Rina's room. A speaker sits on the living room coffee table, playing pop music so loud that the sound is blown out and squeaky.

Jo toes her shoes off and throws her kendo bag down. She grabs the speaker and turns it down.

JO

Rina?

Rina emerges from her bedroom with a searing hot curling iron in her hand. Her hair is half pinned up, the bottom half curled. Her face is completely done up in glamorous and heavy makeup. Her skin is unusually pale, like alabaster.

RINA

You took fucking forever to get here!

JO

What's wrong?

RINA

Come here!

Rina clamps another strand of hair in her curling iron and disappears into her room. Jo follows.

#### **- RINA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

You can't even see the floor in here.

Rina sets the curling iron down on her vanity and picks up two dresses. One black, one red.

RINA

Which one looks better?

Jo is not processing.

JO

What?

RINA

Which. Dress. Looks. Better?

JO

What the fuck are you talking about? This is the emergency?

Rina sighs and rolls her eyes, as if she cannot *believe* how unreasonable Jo is being right now.

RINA

My firm is having a networking cocktail party with Preston's firm so I'm definitely going to meet some of his friends there. I *have* to make a good impression.

JO

This is about meeting his coworkers?

RINA

It's also the first time we're appearing as a couple in public.

Jo drags her hand across her face, tired.

JO

Rina, you're not some B-list celebrity. What's the big deal?

Rina stops her frenetic movement for a single blink.

RINA

You don't get it.

Rina drops both dresses on her bed and turns her back on Jo to stare at herself in the mirror. She fusses with her makeup. Jo sighs.

JO

Okay I'm sorry. I guess I'm just... surprised? I've never had an actual conversation with Preston and I live with you.

She sighs, wondering if it's worth admitting this-

JO (CONT'D)

It feels like your relationship is moving faster than I can keep up.

RINA

I don't expect you to understand. But the least you could do is be supportive.

Rina whirls around and gives Jo a look.

RINA (CONT'D)

And it takes two people to have a conversation, Jo. You could try harder to get to know him.

Rina spins back around and obsessed over her nose in the mirror.

Jo stares incredulously at Rina's back. She mouths "*what the fuck.*" She takes in a deep steadying breath.

JO  
You're... right. I'll try harder  
with Preston.  
(beat)  
I'm just worried about you. You  
look really *pale*, are you feeling  
okay?

Rina whirls around again, this time with a huge smile.

RINA  
Really? Thank you so much.

Rina sees the question on Jo's face.

RINA (CONT'D)  
I mean, don't all Asians want to be  
*pale*?

JO  
You get a spray tan every Winter.

RINA  
I look better *pale*. Which dress?

Rina holds the dresses up to herself again.

Jo crosses her arms, she almost doesn't want to indulge her.  
But of course she will.

JO  
The red.

RINA  
I thought so too.

Rina throws the black dress at Jo.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Put that on, we're gonna be late.

JO  
We?

RINA  
(like it's obvious)  
You're coming.

Jo drops the dress. She's shocked at Rina's behavior.

JO  
I'm not going to a *networking event*  
with you.

Rina looks Jo in the eye. The air of mania around her drops into something real and earnest.

RINA  
Please, Jo. It's an open bar at a  
fancy hotel downtown, it'll be fun.

JO  
I write code, remember? I'm not a  
lawyer.

RINA  
No one will care. There will be  
tons of plus ones.

Jo is silent.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Please. I would feel so much better  
knowing you were there too. I'm  
really nervous.

When Jo still doesn't say yes, Rina pouts and gives her best pleading look.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Please?

Finally, Jo picks up the black dress from the floor.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Yay! But hurry up the Uber will be  
here in like five minutes.

Rina grabs her curling iron, ON THE HOT END. She releases it immediately and shrieks in pain. There's a huge red welt on her palm.

Jo immediately surges forward.

JO  
Holy shit-

RINA  
STOP.

It's a deeply aggressive syllable, a sound coming deep from within her chest. Jo freezes in place. Rina hides her hand behind her back. She gives a forced smile.

RINA (CONT'D)  
It's fine. It doesn't really hurt I was just surprised.

JO  
I literally have a healing burn on my hand. I really think you should-

RINA  
(forcefully)  
You should get ready. I don't want to be late.

There's something in Rina's tone of voice that makes Jo put her hands up in a surrender gesture.

JO  
Okay.

She takes several paces backward before daring to turn around.

*Don't turn your back on a predator, right?*

#### **INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT**

A swanky bar full of good looking but incredibly dull people. Men and women cluster together in circles. There are at least three conversations about the PGA Tour happening at the same time. A supermajority of the people in the room are white.

Jo stands in the corner, alone, in the black dress. She holds a half full wine glass and eavesdrops on the group beside her. She looks bored.

Rina holds the full attention of a group of lawyers with Preston at her side.

RINA  
It's so nice to finally meet all of you, Preston has told me so much.

PRESTON  
Bad things only.

Rina laughs and touches Preston's arm playfully. Next to him, she's glowing. The center of attention.

Jo rolls her eyes.

WHITE LAWYER  
He won't stop talking about you.

Rina glows at this.

WHITE LAWYER (CONT'D)  
Where does the name Rina come from?

RINA  
Oh, I actually go by *Irene* these days.

PRESTON  
Irene is a good name. Confident.

Jo chokes on her wine. This is the first she's heard of this.

The group laughs at another dull thing. Jo tips her wine glass to her lips and downs the whole thing in three big gulps. She wipes her mouth with the back of her hand.

She wanders to a table with charcuterie on it and pops a grape in her mouth.

Two female lawyers are gossiping quietly to each other. Jo recognizes them as some of Rina's work friends, KATE and ISABELLE.

KATE  
God, he's hot.

ISABELLE  
Only Irene could pull it off.

Jo straightens up, they're also calling her *Irene*?

JO  
Hey.

Kate and Isabelle look up, take a moment to recognize her, then both smile wide.

ISABELLE  
Hey! You're Irene's friend. Hang on, I know your name.

KATE  
Jo!

ISABELLE  
Yes, exactly.

KATE  
How are you Jo?

To their credit, they're very nice women. Jo smiles at them.

JO  
Oh you know, here for moral  
support.

KATE  
Don't think she needs it.

ISABELLE  
Total power couple.

JO  
Something like that.

A waiter comes by with a tray of champagne flutes, Jo grabs one and takes a sip. Then, as nonchalantly as she can muster,

JO (CONT'D)  
Has Rina seemed... different these  
days?

ISABELLE  
If by different you mean better  
than ever, absolutely.

KATE  
She's crushing it. She's possessed  
by the spirit of patent law.

ISABELLE  
They're finally talking about  
making her partner.  
(joking)  
Tell us your secret Irene!

Kate laughs.

KATE  
I think we all know what her secret  
is.

JO  
What?

KATE  
Since she started dating Preston  
she's even sexier than before. He  
must have a magic dick.

Kate and Isabelle laugh uproariously. Jo does her best to chuckle along.

Isabelle raises her glass.

ISABELLE  
Cheers to magic dick.

Jo raises her glass and tries not to grimace.

JO  
So what's this whole Irene thing.

Kate and Isabelle look at each other, they shrug.

ISABELLE  
She asked everyone at the office to  
start calling her that.

KATE  
It suits her though.

ISABELLE  
It does.

KATE  
She mentioned outgrowing her  
nickname, or something.

ISABELLE  
I *does* sound a little more  
professional than "Rina".

Jo smiles politely, then spies Rina breaking away from the  
tight conversation group to get another drink.

Jo looks at Kate and Isabelle and smiles. She tilts her head  
towards Rina's general direction.

JO  
Speaking of, I'm gonna check on  
her. It was nice seeing you both.

KATE  
You too!

ISABELLE  
We should all catch up some time.

*They never will.*

JO  
Absolutely.

Jo breaks away from them and intercepts Rina. She touches her  
elbow.

JO (CONT'D)  
Rina,

Rina immediately pulls away. There's a flash of annoyance on her face before she fixes her expression into a smile.

RINA (IRENE?)  
It's actually Irene now.

JO  
Yah? That's news to me.

Rina shrugs.

IRENE  
I've been trying it out and I like it.

Jo is incredulous.

JO  
You *hate* going by Irene.

IRENE  
No I don't.

JO  
I've heard you say, "Irene is such an old white lady name" a hundred times.

IRENE  
I've never said that.

JO  
"The only name that could be worse is Ethel or Doris." You said that.

IRENE  
I think you're confusing me with someone else.

Jo's mouth hangs open. *Is Rina gaslighting her right now?*

JO  
You know I hate calling women crazy, Rina, but right now you're acting F U C K I N G C R A Z Y.

Rina steps in closer.

IRENE  
*It's Irene.*

JO  
What the fuck is wrong with you?

Rina grabs Jo's hand. She's feigning concern, but her grip is *crushing* Jo. Jo winces.

IRENE

I think you should go, Jo.

JO

(through gritted teeth)  
You asked me to come!

IRENE

You don't seem well. And to be  
frank, you're embarrassing me.

Jo pulls her hand out of Rina's grasp.

JO

I've never seen you act so ugly,  
*Irene.*

The name is like venom in Jo's mouth.

Rina looks past Jo's shoulder. Jo turns to see Preston standing alone across the room. He stares intently at Jo. No one else seems to notice the three of them in this moment.

Jo's breath hitches in an involuntary fear response. She whips around to face Rina again. Only then does she realize that Rina had grabbed her with the hand she burned on her curling iron.

But there's no burn there. The skin is smooth and perfect. It's like it never happened.

Jo takes a step back. Rina is smiling at her. False. Forced.

*Jo does not recognize this person in front of her.*

Jo turns around, puts her champagne flute on the nearest surface, and leaves as fast as she can.

#### **INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - JO'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Morning light filters in. Jo lays in her bed, wide awake, scrolling on her phone. The black dress Rina made her wear is flung across a desk chair sitting in front of a huge computer set up with multiple screens.

Judging from the dark circles under Jo's eyes, she hasn't slept at all.

On her phone she scrolls through Darla's Facebook page - her missing friend.

Darla's timeline is plastered with people sharing their happiest memories with her in honor of the two year mark of her disappearance. Many urge her to come home. Many more eulogize about her, as if sure she's already dead.

Jo keeps scrolling and lingers on a group photo including Darla. In the photos she's looking straight ahead at the camera, but she's not smiling. It's as if she wasn't quite ready for the photo flash. Her eyes seem far away.

There's a knock on Jo's door. Jo startles. Unsure why she's hiding what she's doing, she quickly puts away her phone.

RINA (O.S.)  
Hey, can I come in?

Jo sits up in bed. She suddenly remembers how mad she is at Rina. She crosses her arms.

JO  
Why?

RINA (O.S.)  
(beat)  
Please?

Jo sighs heavily through her nose.

JO  
Fine. Come in.

Rina sheepishly opens the door with a paper bag in hand. She sits gingerly on the edge of Jo's bed.

RINA  
I bought bagels.

When Jo doesn't answer, Rina puts the bag down and sighs.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Jo, I didn't mean anything I said  
last night. I just-

She sighs again, like she doesn't know where to start.

JO  
You sucked last night.

RINA  
I barely remember what I said. I  
wasn't in my body. I was so worried  
about making a good impression on  
Preston's friends, I don't know  
what happened.

This isn't an apology. Rina has not said the words "I'm sorry," so Jo does not say the words "it's okay."

But Jo does give Rina a hard look, sees the slump in her shoulders, and reaches for the bag of bagels. Olive branch.

JO

Is there a plain one in here?

RINA

Yes! And cream cheese in the kitchen. I was thinking we could also do a girl's day? Stay in? We haven't done that in a while.

JO

What about Preston?

RINA

He's not here.

JO

No?

RINA

(shaking her head)

He has to catch a red eye flight for a weekend business trip. He'll be back the day after tomorrow.

Jo has only a moment to feel relief before she suddenly realizes something is different about Rina. She zeros in on her eyes.

Rina's eyelids are folded over into DOUBLE EYELIDS.

FLASH to the shot of Rina in the restaurant in the first scene, her eyes fluttering open from closed into MONOLIDS.

Jo leans forward and reaches a hand up to Rina's eye.

JO

Are you wearing eyelid tape?

Rina suddenly jerks her head away. The two of them freeze.

Rina brushes it off with a laugh and stands up from the bed.

RINA

I slept on my face funny. I'm probably getting wrinkles. Let's eat breakfast!

Rina goes to the door as Jo gets out of bed.

JO  
You're not getting wrinkles.

**- MAIN ROOM - DAY**

Rina and Jo are plastered to their couch watching some shitty reality TV dating show. They have bowls of chips and sheet masks covering their faces.

JO  
These people are insane.

RINA  
He's so toxic. Someone tell her  
he's toxic.

Jo tries not to make a face. That's rich coming from Rina.

JO  
Maybe she just needs to a step  
back. See him for who he really is.

RINA  
Yah, way fucking back.

The two of them snort in laughter. It's so silly. It feels good to be like this.

Then, Rina's phone pings. She grabs it off the coffee table with lightning speed and reads the text. She smiles, then forces it off her face. She turns to Jo.

RINA (CONT'D)  
So... Preston's actually coming  
home early...

Jo sighs and rolls her eyes.

JO  
Seriously?

RINA  
I swear I'll make it up to you.  
Coffee tomorrow morning?

JO  
You're really-

RINA  
(whining)  
Please. Please. Please.

JO

Rina-

RINA

He's asking me to come over and I haven't spent like any time at his place yet. You understand.

Jo takes in a deep breath. She sinks deeper into the couch.

JO

Go. I'll see you tomorrow.

Rina is up and off the couch and in the bathroom before Jo can even finish the syllable. Within seconds the face sheet mask is discarded, she's changed, and she's wearing blush. She grabs a prepacked bag from her room.

JO (CONT'D)

You had a bag ready?

RINA

(distracted)

Oh you know.

JO

I don't.

If Rina heard her she doesn't acknowledge it. She slips on her shoes and throws a goodbye over her shoulder before she shuts the front door.

In a whirlwind few seconds Rina is gone, and Jo is left alone sitting on their couch.

Jo peels the sheet mask off her face and throws it on the table. The reality TV show that seemed so funny moments before is now stupid and unbearable.

Jo takes the remote and flips through random channels. She passes the news channel, thinks about it, then flips back.

NEWS CHANNEL

Law enforcement is now turning to the public in the hopes of identifying the murdered women. Though the crime scene photos are too gruesome to air, the police have commissioned these sketches of the women, meant to capture what they might have looked like in life.

Three sketches flash onto the screen and stay there, side by side. Jo leans in. She's drawn into them, staring.

NEWS CHANNEL (CONT'D)

If you have any information on the possible identities of these women, please call the tip line on the screen below. Help the police bring peace to these women's families.

The words of the news anchor fade to the background as Jo continues to stare.

As if driven by some force, Jo gets up from the couch and walks closer to the TV. She stands right in front of it.

The sound of the news fades into the background and Jo's breathing gets louder and louder in her ear.

Her eyes focus on the center sketch, a portrait of a white woman staring forward, completely neutral.

Jo's memory flashes to the photo of DARLA she fixated on. Also front facing, the same emotionless expression.

Then the sketch again. Then the photo of Darla again. Then the sketch. Then Darla. Sketch. Darla. White. Asian. Again and again, these two images flip between one another.

It's starting to become *obvious*. Even though their races are different, *they look so similar*. The same face shape, the height of the ears, the distance between the hairline and the eyebrows. The curve of the chin, the placement of the eyes and lips, even their expressions are the same.

Jo's shallow breath is like an ocean in her ears, roaring with panic. The images flip faster and faster between each other until finally they overlay one another and then it's clear.

*This murdered white woman and missing Darla are one in the same.*

But how?

Jo's eyes are wide and unblinking. She brings her shaking hands to her mouth in shock, horrified. She's breathing so fast, so shallow, she's soon to collapse.

Finally, Jo breaks from her trance. She grabs the remote and turns the tv off.

Silence.

Jo stands alone clutching the remote. Breathing hard. No one is there to bear witness but her.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Jo gasps, startled. It takes her a moment to collect herself. She puts the remote down and goes to open the door, assuming it's Rina.

JO  
Did you forget your keys-

At the door is Preston. He smiles at her.

PRESTON  
Hi.

JO  
Oh.

Jo, completely overstimulated and confused, goes blank.

JO (CONT'D)  
I thought you were Rina.

Preston tilts his head, confused. The movement is a little artificial, as if carefully acted out.

PRESTON  
She's not here? I came to pick her up.

JO  
She just left. She said she was going to yours.

Preston looks at his phone.

PRESTON  
Must be a miscommunication. Ships passing in the night. Can I come in?

He doesn't wait for her to respond before he pushes the door open and enters.

*Entitled. Rude.*

Jo stares at him. She's still reeling from her revelation while watching the news seconds before.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Irene mentioned you're a software engineer.

*Irene.*

Jo is about to say something snappy before she remembers she promised Rina she would try with Preston. She sighs.

JO  
Uh, yah. I code.

PRESTON  
She told me she encouraged you to pursue it as a career.

Jo exhales, annoyed that this is how Rina talks about her and that she's telling Preston things about her at all.

JO  
Sure, if that's what she says.

PRESTON  
There wasn't something you liked more?

JO  
I mean, I love kendo. But it doesn't pay. Rina suggested I get a corporate job so I can keep doing it as a hobby. I didn't want to be a lawyer so I code. It's fine.

*Mind numbing. Dull.*

PRESTON  
You seem to take her counsel into high regard.

Jo frowns.

JO  
Are you implying something?

PRESTON  
Just making an observation.

At this point Jo's lost all patience to entertain this strange conversation. What does he want from her?

JO  
Do you need something?

Preston smiles, as if delighted by her annoyance.

PRESTON  
Where's your family from?

JO  
An hour south of here.

PRESTON  
(a little laugh)  
No. You know that's not what I'm asking.

JO  
Then say what you mean.

PRESTON  
I don't want to be rude.

JO  
You're already being rude.

Preston smooths his hair back.

*Disgusting.*

PRESTON  
That's actually what I wanted to talk about.

He gestures between them.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I feel that things between us are... well let's say we got off on the wrong foot.

JO  
Sure.

PRESTON  
I'm sorry if you feel like I'm creating tension in your relationship with Irene.

Jo lets out a sharp laugh, humorless.

JO  
"I'm sorry if you feel-" are you serious?

PRESTON  
I'm being earnest.

JO  
Did that sound like an apology to you?

PRESTON  
Joanne, I want to be friends-

*Selfish. Presumptuous.*

JO  
Friends? We don't have to be  
friends, Preston. In fact, *I don't  
want to be your friend.*

Jo's statement hangs in the air between them. For a long moment, Preston says nothing in response. He simply stares at her. Jo can still feel her anger bubbling up. She refuses to break eye contact first.

Preston takes one step towards her. Jo takes one step back. Another forward. Another back. Again and again until the ledge of the kitchen island presses into the small of Jo's back. Cornered.

Preston is very close, so close that Jo has to crane her head up to look at him.

Still, he's staring. The way he's looking, *drinking* her in, sends a chill up Jo's spine.

PRESTON  
You're Chinese. See? It's not so  
hard.

Jo doesn't dignify this with a response.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I see the way you look at me.

JO  
How?

PRESTON  
Bald distaste. Mistrust. You don't  
hide your emotions very well.

JO  
What are you-

PRESTON  
I see the way you look at Irene,  
too.

Preston crowds in even closer, he places his hands on the counter behind her, caging her in. His face comes down to hers, close. Too close.

*Danger. Danger. Danger.*

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I like honest women, Joanne. I like how much you fucking hate me. I like that you don't even *try* to hide it.

JO

There's something wrong with you.

PRESTON

You have no idea.

Preston kisses her. In this moment he is huge and she is small. The counter ledge digs into her back, bruising.

For a moment, Jo is shocked into stillness. She can't process what's happening. Then, Preston sighs out a sound of such satisfaction that Jo is knocked straight back into her body.

*You have no right to derive satisfaction from me.*

Jo bites his lip, HARD. C R U N C H.

Preston rears back. Jo shoves him off and pushes past him.

She turns back to look at him. He rises to his full height, touching his bloodied lip. Jo's own mouth is covered in his blood.

Without thinking she licks her lips.

They stare at each other. Chests heaving with adrenaline. Bloodied mouths. They are two feral animals. Fight? Or flight?

*Flight.* Jo turns on her heel and runs. The front door of the apartment slams behind her.

Preston stands alone in the apartment. He wipes his bloodied lip and smiles.

#### **EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY**

Morning on the Puget Sound. It's early morning and there's a chill coming off the water. Rina and Jo walk the path along the waterfront, hands wrapped around cups of coffee.

Rina's hood is up, hair tucked in for warmth.

RINA

Uhg! When did it start getting so cold?

Jo walks a pace or two behind her, only half paying attention to her. Rina notices.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Jo! Hello?

JO  
What?

RINA  
You've been spacing out all morning. You okay?

JO  
Yah.

Jo seems to gather some courage.

JO (CONT'D)  
Actually. There's something I wanted to talk to you about. About Preston.

RINA  
What?

Jo swallows the lump in her throat.

JO  
Yesterday he kind of tried to... make a move. He, uh, he ki-

Just then Rina absentmindedly pulls her hood down and fixes her hair. The words die in Jo's mouth.

Rina hair is like an illuminated halo around her head. She's blonde.

JO (CONT'D)  
Holy fuck.

RINA  
He what?

JO  
Rina. Your hair.

Rina twirls a strand around her finger.

RINA  
Oh yah. I thought it was time for a change.

Jo strides up to her and holds some of the hair between her fingers, staring. It doesn't look like it's from a bottle. It looks like it's growing from her roots.

RINA (CONT'D)  
Looks good right? Anyway what did he do? Something about a move?

JO  
(distracted)  
What?

RINA  
Preston?

Jo releases Rina's hair. She takes a step back. Then another.

JO  
He came to the apartment right after you left.

Rina waves her hand.

RINA  
It was some silly miscommunication.

Jo nods.

JO  
I think I'm actually gonna head home and catch up on some work.

Without waiting for a response Jo speed walks away.

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY**

Jo locks the bathroom door behind her, turns on the faucet, and splashes her face with water.

JO  
(whispering to herself)  
What the fuck.

She wipes her face with a towel. Takes a moment to breathe, then starts unwrapping the bandage around her burned hand.

The bandage falls away to reveal smooth, perfect looking skin underneath. The burn is miraculously gone. Not just gone leaving behind new pink skin, but gone, perfectly healed like the burn never happened.

Jo grabs her own hand, shocked.

JO (CONT'D)  
(whispering to herself,  
more intensely)  
*What the fuck?*

Jo looks up and glances at herself in the mirror, but she doesn't see her own face looking back.

She see's Darla's face, expressionless and neutral.

Jo gasps. Panicked, her hand flies out to the light switch and flips it off.

DARK.

She flips the light back on.

LIGHT.

Just her panicked face looking back.

Is she seeing things? Jo lets out a shuddering breath and messily rewraps her healed hand in bandages.

#### **INT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

Jo fidgets as she stands at the front desk and an officer checks her in. She's wearing her hood up, her head is down, hands shoved into her pockets. Her eyes are sunken in, as if she has not slept in days.

A FEMALE OFFICER steps out from the back and indicates to Jo to follow her.

#### **- INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY**

Jo sits in an interrogation room, her hands are clasped tightly together.

The female officer sits across from her. She places a manila folder on the table.

FEMALE OFFICER  
These are disturbing images. If  
this is your friend, you'll see her  
in some very upsetting and  
compromising situations.

Jo nods her head.

JO  
I understand.

FEMALE OFFICER  
You're sure you want to see these?

Jo nods again, if a bit more hesitantly.

The officer slides the manila folder across the table.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Take as long as you need. I'll be  
right here.

The officer folds her hands and leans back in her chair. To give Jo some modicum of privacy? Or because she herself doesn't want to see the photos again? Maybe a bit of both.

Jo carefully flips open the cover of the folder. We stay on her face the whole time.

*The camera does not need to linger on the spectacle of a dead woman, we will imagine how bad it could be.*

Immediately Jo's breath hitches in her throat. She looks away from the folder. Her hand covers her mouth in shock.

JO  
I'm sorry, I-

Jo stands abruptly. She shuts her eyes. A tear rolls down her cheek.

JO (CONT'D)  
I can't-

The female officer immediately flips the cover of the folder closed. Jo exhales.

FEMALE OFFICER  
That's okay.

The officer rises from her seat and puts her hand on Jo's shoulder. She gives her a comforting squeeze.

JO  
I was wrong. I don't recognize her.  
(again)  
I'm sorry.

The officer nods, understanding.

FEMALE OFFICER  
We appreciate you coming in.

JO  
Where's the bathroom?

**- POLICE STATION BATHROOM - DAY**

Jo clutches the edges of one of the sinks, knuckles white. The faucet runs. She breathes heavily. She looks at herself in the mirror. She sees herself looking back, tired and haggard. Then she sees a flash of one of the crime scene photos - a bloody mouth.

She squeezes her eyes shut, trying to banish the image from her mind.

When she opens her eyes and looks in the mirror, once more she sees Darla's face staring back.

Blink.

Rina's face.

Blink.

"Irene's" face, with all it's subtle yet damning changes.

Jo, launches herself away from the sink with such panic that her back slams against one of the stall doors behind her. It's just herself staring back in the mirror.

She flees the bathroom, the sink still running.

**EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

Jo pulls her hood over her head and exits the police station as fast as she can. Before she can put any real distance between herself and this place, her shoulder slams into another person walking up, also with their hood drawn low.

JO  
(mumbled)  
Sorry.

She gets one pace away then,

KEVIN  
Jo.

Jo stops in her tracks. The stranger pulls his hood down. It's Kevin, Darla's older brother.

**EXT. PARK - DAY**

Jo and Kevin sit next to each other on a park bench. They're a strange mirror of each other. Both dressed in dark clothes. Both tired, a heavy droop in their shoulders.

JO  
What were you doing at the police  
station?

KEVIN  
I was going to ask you the same.

JO  
You first.

Kevin shrugs his shoulders.

KEVIN  
They stopped answering my calls  
about Darla. So I have to show up.

JO  
Anything?

KEVIN  
No.  
(beat)  
Now you.

Jo lets out a long exhale, she shoves her hands into her  
pockets and finds it difficult to look at Kevin.

JO  
I was there to look at the crime  
scene photos of those unidentified  
women.

KEVIN  
Why?

JO  
I thought I might know one of them.  
It was... All her teeth were pulled  
out and her fingers had been cut  
off. It was... fucking terrible.

KEVIN  
Did you recognize her?

JO  
No. Maybe. I don't know.

Jo shakes her head, as if trying to rationalize with herself.

JO (CONT'D)  
Probably not.

They sit in silence.

KEVIN

Be honest with me. Really honest.

He looks at her. She looks back. She nods.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Do you think there's any chance  
that Darla's still alive?

Jo takes a moment, then slowly shakes her head no.

Kevin nods. He smiles weakly. Then he starts to cry. Out of grief. Out of hearing it out loud. The relief of letting go.

Jo moves closer and puts her arm around his shoulder. He leans into her for a long moment before pulling away.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

My family is going to temple for  
her next week. It's time to let go,  
you know?

JO

Yah. I know.

KEVIN

You'll come?

JO

Of course.

Kevin drags his sleeve across his eyes and laughs at himself.

KEVIN

Look at me I've been such a sad  
piece of shit.

Jo does her best to smile.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

The thing is, even if she was still  
out there somewhere, I'm not even  
sure I would recognize her.

JO

What do you mean?

KEVIN

Right before, she really changed up  
her style. Went blonde. The last  
time I saw her she had started to  
wear these weird blue contacts.

Beat.

JO  
When did it start?

Kevin gives her a bewildered look.

KEVIN  
What?

JO  
Her changes.

Kevin sighs and thinks.

KEVIN  
She started dating this white guy.

There's thunder in Jo's ears.

JO  
No one could ever get a hold of  
her.

KEVIN  
Yah. She was obsessed with him.  
Spent every second together.

JO  
Who was he?

KEVIN  
I don't know. She wouldn't let me  
meet him and she never showed me  
any pictures.

Jo grabs Kevin's arm.

JO  
What if it was him?

KEVIN  
...Who?

JO  
The boyfriend. She didn't change  
herself, Kevin. What if he- he  
changed her. What if *he did*  
*something to Darla.*

Kevin smiles pityingly at Jo, as if to say, *silly Jo, your  
grief is making you sound crazy.* As if he has not been driven  
to near madness by grief himself. He gently dismisses her.

KEVIN

The police always look into the boyfriend first. They cleared him. Besides, they broke up before she disappeared.

JO

Why did they break up?

Kevin gently shrugs her hands off his arm.

KEVIN

I don't know. Dating him made her more... aware of it. She really struggled with it sometimes.

JO

What?

KEVIN

(shrugs)

You know... being Asian. Being different.

JO

Different? We're Chinese we're not extraterrestrial.

KEVIN

Of course she knew that. But you know what the internalized racism is like. She was embarrassed to like boba and she wanted to be more like Margot Robbie than Awkwafina. You never noticed? Weren't you two... friends?

Jo looks away, ashamed.

JO

Rina didn't really want-

She catches herself about to make an excuse.

JO (CONT'D)

I *should* have noticed. I should have tried harder to reach her.

Kevin doesn't refute this.

Jo is holding back tears. The conflict on her face is evident. Does she tell him what she suspects? If anyone would believe her, wouldn't it be him? Her mouth is dry.

JO (CONT'D)

Kevin I- I think I might be going crazy.

Kevin frowns.

KEVIN

What are you talking about?

Jo presses her palms against her eyes, trying to collect herself.

JO

I wasn't totally honest about why I came to the station. Yes I thought I recognized one of those murdered women but it's because... It's because I thought one of them might be Darla.

KEVIN

Jo...

JO

I don't know, I don't know. And I couldn't even say for sure because those photos were so *fucking horrifying* but my gut-

KEVIN

Those missing women are all white. Do you hear yourself right now?

JO

I know I KNOW but the way you're describing Darla feels *so similar* to how Rina's been acting since she started dating this weird guy and-

Kevin holds up a hand. There is cold anger on his face.

KEVIN

Stop it. This isn't about Darla, this is about Rina, isn't it?

JO

What? It's about them both-

KEVIN

Jo. You've had this little crush on Rina our whole friendship, and it's always been harmless. But don't you fucking dare make my sister about your jealousy.

Jo is horrified at this accusation.

JO

No! That's not- I would never make this up or say anything if I didn't think-

KEVIN

Rina is happy. I have spent two years flying after every single mundane and fantastical explanation for Darla's disappearance and I'm *tired* of being so consumed. I want to be happy too.

JO

Kevin...

Kevin's anger dissolves into a deep well of grief.

KEVIN

Stop it, Jo. I'm begging you. Just stop it. You sound insane and I can't do this with you. Not now.

But she can't. Jo feels shame burning her face. Maybe he's right. But she can't let it go.

JO

Do you remember anything else she said about her ex-boyfriend? Please Kevin, *please*.

Kevin sighs. It's unbelievable. She's still on about it.

KEVIN

She really didn't talk to me about him at all.

JO

Anything.

He shakes his head.

KEVIN

She only ever talked about how obsessed she was with the color of his eyes.

JO

What color?

KEVIN

Same as her contacts. Blue.

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - JO'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Jo sits at her work set up in front of her double monitors. Though the sun is still up her curtains are drawn. Her face is bathed in the monitor's blue light.

Jo is searching the Missing Persons Database for local disappearances. She pulls together the pictures of all the Asian women reported missing in Seattle the last five years.

She opens a new window and compares those photos to the police sketches of the other two unidentified white women.

Jo soon matches the two faces up. Like Darla, they would be irreconcilable if you didn't know what you were looking for. But the key features of their faces line up.

Jo sits back in her seat. She rubs her eyes. *Fuck. All three of the unidentified white women were Asian, once.*

But Jo's not done sleuthing yet. She dives deep into Darla's Instagram archives.

Jo scrolls past all the missing persons posts she's been tagged in, to the most recent photos of Darla pre-disappearance.

She's tagged in one particular photo by a night club called Halcyon on New Year's Eve. Darla's smiling face is in a sea of many. Beside her, but facing away from the camera, is a tall man with dirty blonde hair. It's a familiar back. It's a familiar head.

Jo clicks into Club Halcyon's account and scrolls back to the New Years posts.

She leans in, her eyes unblinking, as she flicks through carousal after carousal of photos from that night.

Finally, she lands on a similar photo. This one is blurrier and taken from farther away. Darla and the man are just a smear in the background. But now the man is facing forward. Though it may only be a few pixels, it's clear that the man's eyes are an almost white, bright blue.

Jo's vision tunnels. *Preston is Darla's ex-boyfriend, and they were dating right before she disappeared.*

*Oh, shit.*

BUZZ BUZZ.

Jo's attention is pulled away as her phone vibrates. The screen lights up. Caller ID: NAOMI

She picks up.

JO  
(distracted)  
Hey what's up?

NAOMI  
What's up? Are you coming to  
practice?

JO  
Oh, fuck. Uh...

Jo checks the time on the computer. She's late.

NAOMI  
You're not coming?

JO  
I am. I, uh, lost track of time.

Jo runs to her kendo bag and starts throwing things in.

NAOMI  
If you rush you might make it  
before warm ups are over.

JO  
I'm coming, fuck, see you in a  
second.

Jo hangs up her cell, grabs her bag, runs out of her room,  
and closes the door behind her.

A second passes. We hear the door of Rina's room open and  
close. A moment passes. We stay on the empty room. Another  
moment. One more.

Then, the door handle s l o w l y turns.

The door opens without haste and *Preston* slips inside. He  
closes the door quietly behind him.

Preston looks around Jo's room. He picks up a discarded shirt  
and brings it to his nose. He smells it deeply.

He drops the shirt and then runs his hands over Jo's  
bedspread, reveling in it. He's done this before - come into  
her room without her knowing. Breathing in her musk.

He sits on the edge of the bed as if to lay back, but stops  
short. His eyes are drawn to her computer. He rises and leans  
over the monitor.

All of Jo's evidence is right there, she didn't even think to minimize it.

He knows he's been made.

**INT. KENDO DOJO - DAY**

Jo and Naomi are sparring again, one blue and one red. One of them is clearly dominating the other in terms of strength of speed. With what we've seen so far, we assume it's Naomi.

The stronger fighter strikes down the weaker. Sensei calls for the end of the match.

SENSEI

Better Joanne! Much better! Look what happens when you follow through.

He turns to Naomi.

NAOMI

Naomi, you must have been surprised - raise your arms higher when you block.

The two bow to their sensei and meet off the mat. Naomi pulls off her helmet, revealing that *she* was the one being dominated.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Holy shit, Jo. Have you been lifting outside of practice?

Jo pulls off her helmet. We're expecting a look of pride and triumph - she's finally beat her sparring partner. But instead her face is knit together in confusion and fear.

JO

No.

Jo squeezes her hand open and closed, flexing her arm.

*Has she always been this strong? Definitely not.*

NAOMI

You gonna tell me what's going on?

JO

Huh? What do you mean?

NAOMI

Don't lie to my face.

Naomi's expression is set in a stubborn way. Jo's mouth opens, then closes. She can't think of what to say.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You're never late for practice but these days if I don't text you it feels like you'll forget to show up. And even though this is the least focused I've ever seen you, you're suddenly *faster* and *stronger* than you've ever been.

JO

I-

NAOMI

Are you taking steroids?

Jo turns from Naomi and walks quickly to the benches, shaking her head.

JO

I'm not taking any drugs.

Naomi follows close behind, she's not going to let Jo get away without hearing some answers.

NAOMI

Then what is it? What's up with you?

Jo suddenly whips around. Naomi has to backpedal to stop from crashing into her.

JO

*I'm scared.*

Naomi falters. That's not what she thought Jo would say.

Jo grabs Naomi's gloved hand in her own. She pulls her to the far end of the room beside the shrine where there's a modicum of privacy.

JO (CONT'D)

Don't freak out.

NAOMI

About?

JO

Please. Be chill.

Naomi sighs heavily out of her nose.

NAOMI

Okay. Fine.

Joe takes a deep breath. She pulls off both of her gloves, then starts unwrapping the bandage around her hand. The bandage comes away to reveal perfect skin. No sign a burn ever happened, not even discoloration or a scar.

It takes Naomi a moment to understand. Then the realization dawns on her face. Her eyes go wide. Her mouth falls open. She grabs Jo's arm as if to make sure it's real.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

(panicked whisper)

Girl, what the fuck.

JO

I told you not to freak out.

NAOMI

I'm whispering, aren't I?

Naomi rubs the unmarred skin. It's not makeup. It's not a trick. It's real.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Jo, I am a *doctor*. You were burned.  
How did- I don't understand.

JO

I bit Preston.

NAOMI

What?

JO

Really hard. And some of his blood  
got in my mouth and I swallowed it.

NAOMI

Uh huh?

JO

And then my burn healed overnight.  
And now... I'm stronger too.

Naomi stands with her hands on her hips saying nothing for a long time. Then finally,

NAOMI

Okay. Start from the beginning.

**INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Naomi puts a steaming hot cup of tea on the table in front of Jo. She takes it but doesn't drink.

JO  
You know those women in the news?

Naomi sits across from her with a mug of her own.

NAOMI  
The murdered ones? Sure, they're everywhere.

Jo's hands squeeze around her cup.

JO  
I recognized one of them. Or, I think I did.

Naomi reads Jo's expression. Self doubt pinches her face.

NAOMI  
Who is she?

JO  
My friend Darla. She disappeared two years ago.

NAOMI  
You told the police?

Jo presses her lips together. Her eyes water.

JO  
Darla is Chinese.

Silence.

NAOMI  
But... Those women aren't.

Jo massages her eyes.

JO  
I know how fucking crazy that sounds but I know it's HER. I went to the police station to try to confirm it but Naomi,  
(voice shaking)  
all of her teeth had been ripped out and her fingers were cut off.  
(MORE)

JO (CONT'D)

She looks like a stranger and  
there's nothing left to identify  
her with. *HE did that to her.*

Jo stifles a sob. She takes a deep, shaking breath. Naomi gets up from her seat and moves to sit beside her. She puts her hand on her shoulder.

NAOMI

Who? Who did this?

JO

Preston. He was dating Darla, and  
she was changing, and then she  
disappeared. Now Rina is dating him  
and she's changing too.

Jo looks at the perfect skin where her burn should be.

JO (CONT'D)

He came onto me and I bit him so  
hard he bled into my mouth. In the  
morning the burn was gone. You saw  
it. I'm stronger than I should be.  
And the same exact thing happened  
to Rina. She had a burn and then  
she didn't. When she grabbed my  
arm... it was like someone three  
times her size was squeezing me.

NAOMI

So he's some kind of  
supernatural... healer?

JO

No. I don't know what he is. But I-

Jo can't seem to say it out loud. Naomi takes Jo's hand in hers and squeezes.

NAOMI

Say it.

JO

I think the Asian women he's  
dating... turn into white people.  
And when they can't be recognized,  
he kills them. He killed Darla. He  
killed those other women. And I  
think he's going to kill Rina.

Jo's face cracks open and her tears flood out of her eyes.  
It's such a relief to say it out loud.

NAOMI

What you're saying sounds...

Jo rubs her eyes, exhausted.

JO

I know. What time is it?

NAOMI

I am.

Jo sits up abruptly.

JO

Oh my god I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to stay so late. I should go.

NAOMI

It's late, just spend the night.

JO

I've already inconvenienced you enough.

NAOMI

I want you to stay.

Jo finally looks up. When did Naomi come so close? Jo seems shy for a moment. Then turns to fully face her. They're inches apart.

JO

Do you believe me?

Naomi is quiet for a moment, but she never breaks eye contact.

NAOMI

I don't know.

Jo smiles sadly. She understand why Naomi doesn't. She leans in a little, her voice soft and earnest.

JO

I really like you. I want to stay. But I can't.

NAOMI

I know.

Jo leaves their bubble of space first and pulls on her shoes.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Just one thing.

Jo looks up at her.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Rina's not stupid. Whatever is  
happening here, she knows.

JO  
What do you mean?

NAOMI  
On some level she must be aware of  
what he's doing to her. She might  
even be letting him.

Jo stands back up, immediately defensive.

JO  
You think she wants him to kill  
her?

NAOMI  
I'm saying that Rina is a big girl.  
She has the agency to walk away.  
(sighing)  
Maybe you're feeling... lonely.

Jo sinks back down onto the couch, resigned.

JO  
My friend Kevin told me I was being  
jealous.

She shrugs her shoulders weakly. She's confused, afraid.

JO (CONT'D)  
Maybe you guys are right.

Naomi sighs.

NAOMI  
You know it all sounds a little  
wild. But I'm trying to understand.  
Just... Sleep on it.

Finally, Jo nods her head.

JO  
Okay.

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT**

Jo closes the front door and locks it quietly behind her.  
It's the dead of the night.

The door to the bathroom is open, lit only by a plug-in night-light. From the living room we can see that someone's standing in the bathroom at the sink.

Jo walks quickly past the bathroom to her own room. As she's passing, we catch *just a glimpse* of the person standing in the bathroom. Their back is to us, but we can see their face in the mirror.

It's Rina, staring at herself in the mirror, expression completely blank. But her body is *all wrong*. Too tall. Too broad. Too... male. Jo's walking fast and doesn't notice.

*But we do.*

Before we can even process what we saw, she's past the bathroom.

She puts her hand on her bedroom door handle and pauses. She wasn't planning to say anything to Rina tonight, but maybe she should.

Jo slowly backtracks to the bathroom. As she's approaching,

JO  
(whispering)  
Hey Rina, do you think we could  
talk in the morning-

Back in eyeshot of the bathroom, the face we see reflected in the mirror is Preston, not Rina. Jo jumps back, startled.

*That's not who she just saw in the corner of her eye.*

JO (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

She takes another step back.

JO (CONT'D)  
Sorry I thought- I thought you were  
Rina.

PRESTON  
She's in bed.

Preston doesn't turn from his position at the sink. He continues to stare ahead looking at himself in the mirror with that same emotionless expression.

Jo's breathing grows shallow. Goosebumps erupt across her skin, the hair on her arms stand straight up.

*Danger. Danger. Danger.*

JO  
Okay. Goodnight-

PRESTON  
What are you going to talk about?  
In the morning?

Beat.

JO  
Nothing.

PRESTON  
Don't lie. Tell the truth.

Jo's pulse quickens.

JO  
Excuse me?

PRESTON  
Why didn't you tell her I kissed  
you?

Jo takes another step back.

JO  
You want me to?

PRESTON  
It could be interesting. I'm  
curious what would happen.

*There is something profoundly wrong with this man.*

JO  
(voice quivering)  
You're a fucking freak.

Preston continues on, completely unshaken.

PRESTON  
I'm going out of town for a week  
tomorrow morning.

JO  
So?

PRESTON  
I don't think Irene is going to  
feel very well while I'm gone.  
You'll keep on eye on her for me,  
won't you?

JO  
What are you gonna do to her?

PRESTON  
It's more about what I won't be  
doing.

JO  
You're threatening me.

PRESTON  
I'm asking you for a favor. I know  
you'll take care of her.

Finally, Preston's eyes shift from his own face to look at Jo's reflection in the mirror behind him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Thank you, Joanne.

Jo turns on her heel. In three long strides she's at her bedroom door, opening it, and closing it behind her.

#### **- JO'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Jo stands frozen at the inside of her door breathing hard.

CLICK.

She locks the door behind her.

Slowly, she turns to the door and backs up, picking up a spare kendo sword leaning against the wall on her way. She walks backward until the back of her legs touch her bed.

She sits and lays the sword across her thighs. She watches the door.

**MATCH CUT TO:**

#### **- DAY**

Morning. Jo is in the same position. She's slumped over, having fallen asleep sitting up.

Her sword slowly slips off her lap and clatters to the floor.

Jo immediately straightens. She fell asleep. Daylight pierces through her curtains.

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - DAY**

Jo stands outside of Rina's closed door. She brings her hand up to knock, then drops it. She takes a deep breath, gathers the courage, then brings her hand up again.

KNOCK KNOCK.

No answer. She knocks again. No answer. Jo tries again, this time banging on the door.

JO  
Rina? Rina are you in there?

RINA (O.S.)  
(annoyed)  
What!?

Rina sounds groggy, like Jo's knocking just woke her up.

JO  
Is... Is Preston still here?

RINA (O.S.)  
He left for the airport already.

Jo's posture visibly relaxes. Thank god he's gone.

JO  
Can we talk?

RINA (O.S.)  
Can it wait?

JO  
It's important-

Rina interrupts her, voice impatient and disinterested.

RINA (O.S.)  
*Jo, I'm tired.*

Jo grits her teeth. Everything has to be on Rina's time.

RINA (O.S) (CONT'D)  
Later.

JO  
Okay.

**MONTAGE:**

Jo spends the next several days trying to corner Rina and find time to chat with her, but Rina's impossible to pin down.

1) Jo checks Rina's room. The door is open and she's not inside. She slipped out of the house without Jo's notice.

2) Jo sends a text to Rina: "where are you??" The messages is marked as "read" but Rina doesn't respond.

3) Jo tries knocking on Rina's closed door again, assuming she's inside. "Rina?" No response.

4) Jo hears the toilet in the bathroom flush, she gets up from her desk and runs to open her bedroom door and see if she can catch Rina. She sees Rina's heel disappear into her room before the door closes tightly behind her.

5) Jo tries the handle on Rina's door. Locked. She exhales loudly in frustration.

6) Jo stands at an office reception desk. The secretary shakes her head, no.

**INT. JO'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Jo is on the phone with Naomi, pacing her bedroom.

JO

She's been avoiding me all week.  
Won't leave her room. Won't respond  
to texts or calls. I even went to  
her office but she hasn't been  
there.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Does she know what you want to talk  
about?

JO

No! Or at least, I don't think so.  
But Preston comes back tomorrow so  
we have to talk today.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Where is she?

JO

She's in her room. She won't even  
respond to me when I knock on the  
door anymore.

NAOMI (O.S.)  
So stop knocking.

JO  
And what? Break her door down?

Beat.

NAOMI (O.S.)  
Yah.

Jo stops her pacing.

JO  
That extra strength I had from  
biting him faded earlier this week.

NAOMI (O.S.)  
You're still stronger than most  
people normally.

JO  
She doesn't want to talk to me. She  
doesn't even want to see me.

NAOMI (O.S.)  
So? Don't give her the option.

Jo's hand curls into a fist.

JO  
You're right.

NAOMI (O.S.)  
Keep me updated.

Jo hangs up. She goes into her closet and pulls out a heavy  
pair of boots. She puts them on and laces them up.

**INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - DAY**

Jo stands outside her door once more.

She bangs on the door.

JO  
Rina. I'm done messing around. Let  
me in, we have to talk.

No response.

JO (CONT'D)  
Rina. I'm serious. I will kick this  
door down.

No response.

Jo takes a step back, tucks her right leg into her chest, then kicks the door at the handle. The door rattles, caving slightly. Jo raises her leg and kicks again. And again. And again, until finally the door flies open.

As soon as the interior of the room is revealed to her, Jo freezes in shock.

JO (CONT'D)  
Oh fuck.

**- RINA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Jo gingerly steps inside over splintered wood littering the ground.

Rina lays on her bed propped up by pillows. She looks *fucking terrible*, like she's aged 30 years.

She looks both sallow and gaunt. Her skin seems thin and pulled tight over the bones of her face. Her blonde hair is stringy and brittle, as if just touching it may cause it to fall out. Her lips are dry, cracked, and close to bleeding.

She looks like she's already dying.

RINA / IRENE  
(weak, gasping)  
Get out. Get out!

Jo ignores her and steps up to her bedside.

JO  
Rina. We need to go to a hospital  
right now. You're sick!

IRENE  
Shut up!

Rina's eyes are bloodshot and jaundiced.

IRENE (CONT'D)  
Leave me the fuck alone!

Jo kneels at her bedside and grabs her hand. Boney. Cold.

JO  
Every time I see you, you seem  
more... wrong.

IRENE  
I look incredible.

JO  
He's killing you.

Rina laughs meanly, dry and rattling.

IRENE  
He saved me. Because of him, people  
actually respect me. I'm finally  
getting the recognition I deserve!

JO  
Is that what Darla thought too?

With surprising strength, Rina pulls her hand out of Jo's  
grasp. Disgusted.

IRENE  
Darla probably got bored of this  
city and left. I don't know why  
everyone's crying so much about her  
being gone. She was boring.

Jo stands up.

JO  
You don't mean that. Darla was our  
friend.

IRENE  
Darla was an idiot.

JO  
She was dating Preston before she  
"disappeared". Did you know that?

Rina's face stiffens. *She didn't.*

IRENE  
I don't care who he dated before  
me.

JO  
She changed too. I'm sure she  
looked a lot like you do now.

Rina's face twists in anger.

IRENE  
You're lying.

JO  
You're not special, Rina. You're just ONE of the girls he's done this to. There are more out there lying in ditches! They were all like you. They were all like Darla. And now they're dead.

IRENE  
Prove it! Prove it!

Rina is screaming at this point.

JO  
I will.

Jo pulls her phone out of her pocket and starts scrolling. It's only a moment before concern flashes across her face. She scrolls down faster, then backtracks up. All the while, Rina becomes more and more gleeful.

JO (CONT'D)  
It was... I swear it was here, the club took the photos down-

IRENE  
You think I need to be saved? That you're a hero? *I chose him, Jo.* And he's giving me everything I've ever wanted. And that's none of your business.

JO  
You're my friend. I won't sit back and watch.

IRENE  
If you were really my friend you'd bring Preston back to me. *I'm thirsty.*

Jo picks up a glass of water on the bedside table and tries to hand it to Rina. Rina slaps the glass out of her hand with startling strength. It flies and shatters against the wall.

JO  
You need to stay away from him. I can get the locks changed-

IRENE

God you're stupid. You think you know everything but you're just a fucking idiot. Why do you think I look like this? Bedridden and weak!

Rina cranes her head forward.

IRENE (CONT'D)

He's not here to feed me.

JO

Feed you? What-

IRENE

If there's an easier life, why shouldn't I have it? I should get what they have and I deserve.

Jo's mouth curls in disgust.

JO

It's not real, Rina. It's all fake. You're all fake. *I don't even recognize you anymore.*

IRENE

I'm unstoppable with him. I'm more successful. I'm happier. *He loves me.* And you're *jealous.*

JO

You think I'm jealous of you? Of this?

Maybe there was jealousy once. But as Jo looks at Rina's decrepit body, she only feels sick to her stomach.

JO (CONT'D)

You look disgusting.

Rina cackles.

IRENE

I know how you look at me. *You want me so fucking bad it's embarrassing.*

Jo says nothing. Her hands clench into fists.

IRENE (CONT'D)

It was so cute how you followed me around like a little lovesick puppy, even to college. It was annoying, but I felt bad for you.

JO

(quietly)

Shut up.

IRENE

You're OBSESSED with me, Jo! It's so fucking sad! You're in LOVE me and it's frankly PATHETIC.

Rina musters a huge force of spitting disgust and hatred.

IRENE (CONT'D)

I will never love you. I will never want you. You are sickening!

Jo is silent for a long time. She recedes into full neutrality. No anger. No defense. No emotions. Just facts.

JO

Preston kissed me. What do you think he'll do to you when you have nothing left to take?

Rina's face screws up in anger, but she has nothing to say.

JO (CONT'D)

He killed Darla. And unless you do something, he's going to kill you too. Don't forget you wanted this.

Jo leaves the room and does not look back.

#### **EXT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Jo stands outside Naomi's apartment door. She has a packed bag slung over her shoulder. Her hands are deep in her pockets. There's a droop to her shoulders.

Naomi opens the door. She gives Jo a long look. Jo tries to smile.

NAOMI

It went bad, huh?

JO

So bad.

Naomi pulls Jo into a hug, Jo leans into the hug and takes a deep breath, then pulls away.

JO (CONT'D)  
Thanks for letting me stay.

They share an intimate look. Naomi reaches for Jo's hand and gently pulls her inside.

**INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**

Naomi and Jo lay together in bed, their heads touching. They're mostly undressed, there's a comfortable silence between them.

Naomi turns to face Jo.

NAOMI  
Are you in love with Rina?

Jo shifts her body to look back at Naomi.

JO  
You didn't want ask that before we slept together?

NAOMI  
(innocently)  
I was in a hurry to see you naked.

Jo laughs at this. She rubs her eyes.

JO  
Once, maybe.

She thinks for a moment.

JO (CONT'D)  
Yes. I don't know.  
(beat)  
I couldn't tell if I *wanted* her or  
if I wanted *to be her*.

NAOMI  
Classic.

JO  
I know. I'm not confused about  
this, though. For the record.

Naomi smiles.

NAOMI

I'm not either.

(beat)

Do you still love her?

JO

It's different. When we first met it was like, that's the secret. *If I have to be an Asian woman in this world I should be one like Rina.* It was easy for her. I would get embarrassed having Chinese leftovers for lunch and she would tell people if they thought her kimchi smelled they were racist.

They both laugh at this.

JO (CONT'D)

I thought it was easy for her. But I was wrong. It was always hard. She was just brave.

Jo shakes her head.

JO (CONT'D)

She taught me how to be less ashamed. I owe her for that.

Naomi pushes herself up to a sitting position. Jo follows her. Naomi looks for the right words.

NAOMI

If you still have feelings for her-

JO

I don't.

It surprises Jo too, how much she means this.

#### **EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - COURTYARD - DAY**

Groups of people mill around a large stone courtyard, waiting their turn to enter the temple or lingering afterward. A portrait of Darla's smiling face rests on a stand.

Up a short flight of stairs is the prayer room of the temple. The two sides of the gate are pushed open, painted with ornate reds, golds, and greens.

Naomi and Jo stand in middle of the courtyard. Jo stares into the open doors of the prayer room, lost in thought.

NAOMI  
I've never been to a temple.

Jo turns to her and smiles.

JO  
Thanks for coming.

Kevin catches sight of them and waves. He extricates himself from another conversation and makes his way to them.

He and Jo hug.

KEVIN  
Thank you for coming.

JO  
I'm so sorry Kevin.

KEVIN  
It's time.

There's a sense of peace to Kevin that wasn't there last time we saw him. He's had time to process. Time to let go.

Jo gestures to Naomi.

JO  
This is Naomi, my...

Naomi swoops in, saving Jo from having to define their relationship right then and there.

NAOMI  
Jo and I practice kendo together.

KEVIN  
It's nice to meet you.  
(to Jo)  
Is Rina coming?

Jo smiles tightly.

JO  
I'm actually not sure.

KEVIN  
I haven't seen her much recently.

JO  
Me either.

KEVIN

I hope she makes it. Thanks again.  
For coming.

JO

I wouldn't have missed it.

Kevin gives her one last smile before heading off to greet another group.

Jo turns to Naomi and takes a deep breath. Naomi hands her a couple of incense sticks.

NAOMI

I'll be here. Take your time.

Jo nods, then ascends the stairs up to the prayer room. Outside the open doors she toes off her shoes and crosses the threshold barefoot.

#### **INT. TEMPLE PRAYER ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A room glittering with golden light. A huge statue of the Buddha towers over visitors at the end of room, surrounded by offerings of fruit, flowers, water, and lit incense.

It's quiet here. Though there are many people in the room with her, Jo feels privacy in the peacefulness here.

Jo approaches the altar. She lights a stick of incense with a candle, holds it to her forehead in reverence, then puts it in the incense pot. She takes a step back, palms together and to her forehead, she bows.

She slowly lowers to her knees, folding her legs beneath herself, head bowed, palms in prayer.

She slows down for the first time in weeks, breathing deeply. A tear rolls down her cheek.

The statue of Buddha watches over her.

#### **EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - COURTYARD - DAY**

Jo exits the temple and toes her shoes back on. She wipes her face of any tears and sighs. She's calmer, more centered.

She sees the back of Naomi's head and moves to her, taking her hand when she's near.

JO

Thank you for waiting.

Naomi doesn't turn to look at her. She squeezes Jo's hand, staring at something. The blood has drained from her face.

JO (CONT'D)

What?

NAOMI

Is that... Rina?

Jo looks to the point Naomi is fixated on.

Rina and Preston walk into the courtyard hand in hand. The decrepit and ill Rina is gone. Once again she's vibrant and vivacious, glowing. But now, Rina's eyes are blue.

Preston wipes the corner of her red stained mouth with his thumb. Jo's stomach *turns*. No one else sees.

*That's not lipstick. That's blood.*

Jo squeezes Naomi's hand in return.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Let's go. Now.

But it's too late, Rina catches Jo's eye and waves.

RINA

Hi!

Rina pulls Preston over. They're a strange mirror of each other. Two couples, both hand in hand.

Rina, acting like nothing happened, gawks at them.

RINA (CONT'D)

Oh my god, are you guys like? What is this!?

Jo is stock solid, but Naomi regains herself more quickly.

NAOMI

I'm Naomi, nice to meet you...?

Rina holds out her hand.

RINA/IRENE

Irene.

Naomi shakes her hand.

NAOMI

Nice to meet you, *Irene*.

IRENE

So are you two... dating?

Jo watches Preston carefully. His eyes rove around the courtyard, taking in the number of young Asian women who have come to honor their late friend.

*Lecherous. Insatiable.*

Anger bubbles up in Jo until it's pouring out of her.

JO

What are you doing here?

Her eyes flit between both Preston and Rina, like she isn't sure who the bigger threat is.

IRENE

Here to pay our respects to Darla,  
of course.

JO

Really? Because last time we spoke  
you said it was stupid that people  
were sad she's dead. Then you  
called her boring.

Jo does not measure her voice. In fact she says it almost too loud. People nearby turn their heads and look at her.

Rina giggles nervously.

IRENE

You're so funny, Jo.  
(through gritted teeth)  
*Stop fooling around.*

PRESTON

Grief can manifest itself in  
unusual ways. It's understandable  
that you're upset. We all loved  
Darla.

JO

You talk about her like you also  
knew her. Did you?

A challenge from Jo.

Rina looks up nervously at Preston's face, her smile wavering. But his lips curl up, as if delighted by this.

PRESTON

Why ask questions you already know  
the answer to?

Jo's hands shake, shocked that he returned her boldness with  
boldness of his own.

Naomi feels the shake in her hand and tugs, as if to say,  
"let's just go". Jo ignores her.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You always seem to run off before  
we can end our conversations. I  
think we should finish talking.  
Don't you?

Irene's face tightens. She attempts to redirect.

IRENE

Jo, I have such great news. I  
wanted to tell you but you haven't  
been home, I got promoted! They  
finally made me junior partner.

Jo turns back to Rina and smiles, strained.

JO

Congratulations.

She opens her arms and pulls Rina into a hug.

JO (CONT'D)

I'm happy for you.

Rina smiles tightly and steps into the hug. Just as they wrap  
their arms around each other Jo whispers into her ear so only  
she can hear.

JO (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I hope your promotion was worth  
bringing Darla's killer to her  
fucking funeral.

Rina pulls back too fast. Her smile cracks. She's rattled.

Naomi tugs on Jo's sleeve and finally gets Jo to look at her.  
She makes sure that Jo is listening to her.

NAOMI

Should we head out?

Jo nods tightly.

Naomi turns to smile at Preston and Rina.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
We're late for practice but it was  
nice meeting you both. Condolences.

Naomi leads Jo away, but not before Preston gets the last word. He and Jo lock eyes, knowing on both their faces.

PRESTON  
See you soon, Jo.

Naomi has to pull Jo to get her to look away.

### INT. DOJO - DAY

Naomi and Jo stand side by side in uniform in a long row of people practicing sword drills. They all move in unison, bamboo arcing through the air again, and again, and again. Tempo as sure as the beating of a heart.

But Jo is off balanced. She seems far away and unfocused. Worried.

Naomi whispers to her out of the side of her mouth.

NAOMI  
Are you okay?

Jo's breathing stutters.

JO  
He knows I know.

Sensei walks up and down the rows of people, correcting posture. When he reaches Jo and Naomi they shut their mouths.

Sensei nudges Jo's stance slightly wider.

SENSEI  
You're distracted.

JO  
Sorry Sensei.

He grabs hold of her bamboo sword and guides the arc of it, showing her the full range of movement she should follow.

SENSEI  
Remember what I told you. *Follow through.*

Something in Jo's face hardens. She nods to Sensei who continues down the row. When he's out of earshot, Naomi turns her head slightly to Jo.

Jo's expression is now one of iron. Completely resolute and cold with anger. Naomi whispers to her.

NAOMI

You look like you're planning something reckless.

JO

I have to kill him.

Naomi almost stumbles off beat, but recovers.

NAOMI

Jo I- I'm sorry I doubted you. I saw it. He's *dangerous*. You have to go to the police.

Doubt flickers across Jo's eyes. How long did it take Naomi to see the truth? How long will it take the police?

JO

Will they believe me too?

Naomi's silence is her answer.

JO (CONT'D)

I can't let him kill Rina.

NAOMI

Maybe she deserves it.

JO

You were there. *It was a meat market*. It's never going to end with Rina. If I don't stop him his next victim will be another one of my friends. Another Asian woman in this city.

NAOMI

Then you need help, if not the police then someone else. Anyone.

JO

Who? I'm out of time, and I won't put anyone else in danger.

NAOMI

What if he kills you?

Jo shakes her head. She can't even consider this.

JO  
He might.

NAOMI  
I'm asking you not to do this, Jo.

JO  
I have to.

Naomi thinks for a long moment.

NAOMI  
I know you don't want or need my  
permission. Maybe you're right.  
It's time for you to stand up for  
yourself.

JO  
He has to go.

NAOMI  
Not just Preston. Rina too.

Jo looks at her, considering, then nods. An understanding  
passes between them.

Sensei calls out loudly. Everyone transitions stances to a  
new drill. The movement becomes more forceful and frenetic.  
The pace speeds up. Sweat beads their foreheads.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
When?

JO  
Tonight.

NAOMI  
There's no time to prepare.

JO  
The eyes were the last thing he  
changed in Darla before he killed  
her. Rina has nothing left to take.  
I have to hide her before he does  
something.

NAOMI  
She won't go quietly. And she's  
probably... strong now.

JO  
She's not who I'm worried about.

NAOMI

Preston?

Jo breathes heavily from the strenuous drill but it doesn't matter. As soon as she hears his name she hits the drill even harder, gritting her teeth in effort.

JO

I'll call him and tell him that I finally understand, and that I want to see him. He won't say no. That's when I'll kill him.

CUT TO:

**INT. KENDO DOJO - LATER**

The end of the same practice. Jo sits on the ground in the corner, stretching. Her eyes scan the room.

NAOMI (V.O.)

How?

JO (V.O.)

I haven't noticed any obvious supernatural weaknesses. But I've made him bleed.

NAOMI (V.O.)

You need a weapon.

Folks start saying their goodbyes and leaving. Jo slowly gets to her feet.

JO (V.O.)

A gun?

NAOMI (V.O.)

Do you have one? Know how to shoot?

JO (V.O.)

No.

Jo catches Naomi's eye as she's headed out the door. They give each other a silent nod.

*Be safe.*

NAOMI (V.O.)

You have to pass a background check to buy a gun in Washington. It would take days.

JO (V.O.)

Fuck.

When the crowd has mostly thinned out, Jo pulls aside Sensei.

JO

Sensei, can I stay late and  
practice those forms?

He pats her on the back.

SENSEI

Make sure you lock the door.

NAOMI (V.O.)

What about a katana?

JO (V.O.)

(laughing)

Sure.

(beat)

Oh. You're serious.

When the dojo is empty, Jo turns off all of the lights. Only an emergency light stays on, casting the room in shadows.

NAOMI (V.O.)

You actually know how to use a  
sword, so that's a leg up on a gun.

JO (V.O.)

Well I'm not going to kill him with  
a bamboo sword. Don't you think  
it'll be harder to source a *real*  
katana than a gun?

NAOMI (V.O.)

No. There's one in our dojo.

Jo approaches the shrine at the end of the room and kneels before the ceremonial Katana displayed.

Carefully, she lifts the sword and pulls it out of its scabbard, metal ringing. The edge gleams.

Jo makes one exploratory swipe at the air. Clean.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Jo. If you're doing this you have  
to commit. Lean fully in or not at  
all. There's no running from this.

JO (V.O.)

I know.

NAOMI (V.O.)  
(beat)  
And be careful. Please.

JO (V.O.)  
I just hope I'm not too late.

She sheaths the sword.

Then, Jo's phone suddenly pings. Sword in one hand, phone in the other, she reads the message.

PRESTON (TEXT)  
Come get your girl.

JO  
Fuck.

#### **INT. RINA AND JO'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT**

Jo, in full kendo armor sans helmet, slips inside her apartment and quietly closes the door behind her. The lights are off but the curtains are still open, letting in the bright light of the full moon in the sky.

It's strange to see her removed from the context of her dojo, especially with a katana secured in the tie of her pants.

She's ready to see him there. Ready to fight. But no one seems home.

Laid out on the kitchen table are a series of strange items: bleach, a disposable full body suit, pliers, gloves, a shovel, and a hacksaw.

Jo balks at the sight of it. It's everything Preston would need to commit a horrible crime and get away with it.

Not him. Not Today.

JO  
(whispering to herself)  
Please please please. Let her still  
be alive.

Suddenly, Jo hears a faint moan from the bathroom. Immediately, she's back on guard. With light feet barely lifted from the ground, Jo draws her blade and creeps towards the bathroom.

The bathroom door is only slightly ajar. Jo peeks through the gap. She sees bent knees poking up from the lip of the tub.

**- BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Jo pushes opens the door, it's Rina in the tub. Her hands and feet are ziptied together. She looks so different from when we first met her. There's a glassiness to her eyes. She's weak and foggy.

RINA

Jo.

A sob escapes her throat. Her wrists are red where she's been attempting to pull her arms apart.

Immediately Jo is at the side of the tub, reaching for her.

JO

Rina.

RINA

You were right, he's going to kill me. I thought he really loved me.

She hiccups.

Jo positions her sword between her wrists.

JO

Where is he?

RINA

I don't know, he- he said he was going to be right back.

*Overconfident bastard.*

JO

We have to get you out of here before he gets to make a fucking entrance.

Jo cuts the zipties. As soon as Rina's arms are free she throws them around Jo's neck and holds her tight.

RINA

(sobbing)

You came. I should have listened. I thought I wanted this but I don't.

With her free hand, Jo hugs her back.

JO

We're going now.

PRESTON (O.S.)  
This is what I get for forgetting  
the drop cloth.

Jo immediately whirls around, sword pointed forward. Rina shrinks down into the tub, legs still bound.

It takes everything in Jo not to roll her eyes. *She was right. He wanted the drama.*

Preston is framed in the door, holding a plastic bag in his hand. He seems pleased, even... eager to see her.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I'm glad you made it.

JO  
If you'd given me another day I  
would have called you myself.

Rina is pressed back as far into the tub as she can be, panting in fear, eyes wide and bloodshot. Preston smiles down at her. The expression is so false it's chilling.

PRESTON  
Doesn't she look lovely? Finally so  
docile and demure. As she should  
be.

A bark of humorless laughter falls out of Jo's mouth.

*Beyond the fucking pale.*

JO  
Are you kidding me?

Preston smiles with all his teeth.

PRESTON  
Why don't you come out into the  
living room and we'll talk?

Preston turns his back and moves out of sight. We hear him putting the plastic bag on the table and taking everything out.

Jo and Rina look at each other. Jo squeezes Rina's hand.

**- MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Jo inches slowly out of the bathroom. Nothing could make her take her eyes off Preston in this moment. Her sword is trained in front of her, grip tight, ready to take action.

Preston's back faces Jo, as if unconcerned that she's armed.

PRESTON  
I wanted to speak sooner but you  
stopped coming home.

Silence.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Where have you been?

Jo's mouth is completely dry. The sound of her own rushing blood thunders in her ears.

JO  
I had to think.

PRESTON  
About this.

JO  
About what I was going to do with  
you.

PRESTON  
Did you decide?

JO  
I'm here, aren't I? Let her go.

The corners of Preston's lips lift into a smile. The rest of his face doesn't move.

PRESTON  
You must understand. Irene wanted  
this. She asked for this. She  
wanted to change and I helped her.

Speaking of Rina,

**CUT TO:**

**- BATHROOM**

Rina is attempting to pull herself out of the bathtub. She's so weak and disoriented that she can hardly get her upper body over the lip of the tub. Her bound feet slip around, unhelpful. She gasps with exertion.

**CUT TO:**

- MAIN ROOM

Jo and Preston very carefully circle each other.

JO

Why are you doing this? What do you want?

PRESTON

I'm a collector. I love beautiful things. And I love to make them perfect.

He says it like it's obvious, like it's as natural as breathing air.

Jo's grip on her sword tightens.

JO

She's not a porcelain doll.

There's a twinkle of excitement in Preston's face.

PRESTON

No. She's better. You women are real. *Look at you.* You're so vibrant, you're so...

His nostrils flair. Disgust rises in Jo's throat.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I can't say no to something so lovely.

JO

None of those women knew what they were getting into.

Preston takes a step forward.

PRESTON

They knew exactly. You're not smarter than them, Joanne. As badly as you want to believe it, you're not different from them either.

Jo takes a step back.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Irene gave me her silky dark hair, her sweet skin, her narrow eyes and small nose.

Preston's face starts to change. Like putty, his face rearranges itself, molding into the shape of Rina's true face.

*He's wearing her face.*

The sight of this is *grotesque*. It's a thing of such utter revulsion that Jo almost has to look away.

Preston reaches up to caress it. His hands, male and large, over Rina's small and feminine features.

Jo takes another step back. Preston continues. The lips of Rina's face move, but it's Preston's voice that comes out.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
She changed for me. Became a good girl. In return I gave her a face that won her better work assignments, more respect, a promotion. Everything she wanted.

#### **- BATHROOM**

Rina has made progress getting out of the tub. Her torso is almost free. Hands on the ground, she pulls herself forward until her legs fall out. She lays on the tile floor belly down and sucking in air. She's too exhausted to pull herself any further.

#### **- MAIN ROOM**

Jo's hands are shaking. With each step she takes back, Preston, wearing the face of Rina, steps forward.

PRESTON  
Darla was the same. She wanted more than she thought this face could give her.

Preston's face rearranges itself once more, this time into Darla's.

JO  
(disgusted, breathless)  
Stop. Stop it.

Darla's face smiles at her, gleeful. Jo's voice quivers.

JO (CONT'D)  
What are you?

PRESTON

I do not know. Once, I was a Dutch trader bringing Chinese porcelain back to my homeland.

Preston's features rearrange once more, undulating into something profoundly different. Not old in appearance, but in feeling. A Chinese woman's face appears, round and soft with hair piled high on her scalp, in the tradition of the Ming Dynasty - 1600 BC.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

The Emperor's favored consort was the perfect woman. Traditional, docile. She gave herself to me. I wanted more. It changed me.

Preston strokes the face of his first victim with reverence.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

When I realized I no longer aged, I knew there was a reason. I was put on this Earth to treasure beautiful and well behaved little dolls. Even if they were flawed - headstrong, independent, singular - I could fix them. I could make them demure, like they should be. Across the ages I have tirelessly curated my collection.

His face starts to morph quickly. Like a slideshow, he begins to show Jo tens of Asian female faces. All are distinct, many with features and hairstyles indicating different eras of history. Traditional dynastic updos, the bob of a flapper, big hair from the 80s. So many faces. So many women.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I went wherever I had to go. I was an advisor to an emperor, a diplomat, an American GI in the Korean War. Anyone I had to become, I did. I reinvented myself as often as I reinvented these women.

The flesh of Preston's face continues to contort endlessly into women that look like Jo, could be Jo. Jo is nearly sobbing now, barely holding onto her sense, onto her bravery.

JO

Why do you have to kill them? Why can't you just let them go?

Finally, his face morphs back into his own.

PRESTON

It's normal to shift resources from completed projects to new.

He says it pointedly, as if he's looking at his next project already.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I can't sustain every woman I've collected from. I only have so much blood.

JO

So you pull out their teeth and cut off their fingers.

PRESTON

A necessity of modern life. There's a great deal of pleasure in what comes before. Everyone gets what they want. Consider it, Joanne. You would be my greatest challenge yet. I could make you *feel wanted*. And all you would have to do is be sweet and perfect, just for me.

Jo remembers herself now. Remembers her disgust and her anger. Rage roils through her stomach, up her throat, until she's spitting it out of her mouth.

JO

I'd rather fucking die.

With her whole chest, Jo raises the sword over her head and swings down as if to cut Preston in half. But Preston is fast, much faster than a human should be, and he easily moves away.

Jo follows up with a slice to the side, but once again, Preston steps out of reach.

Again and again, Jo comes for him in dogged pursuit, until Jo can feel herself tiring, until her attacks become more and more sluggish.

Preston can see it too. As soon as Jo leaves a window of even half a second, Preston throws a knockout punch across her face.

Jo's head snaps back, she loses her grip and sword clatters to the ground. There are stars in her eyes.

Then Preston is behind her. His arms snake around her neck and he puts her in a choke hold. His bicep squeezes around her windpipe.

#### - BATHROOM

The sound of the sword clattering and of Jo gasping reaches Rina. Rina lets out a sob and she *digs deep* to find the strength to get on her forearms. She grunts, powered only by the *primal desire to survive*, and begins to pull her body across the floor.

*I want to live. I want to live. I WANT TO LIVE.*

#### - MAIN ROOM

Trapped in a choke hold, Jo's vision tunnels. She claws at Preston's arms to no avail.

PRESTON

Such a pity. You would have been so lovely beside Darla and Irene.

Jo can feel herself losing strength. The easiest thing to do would be to fall limp.

*Fight or flight, fight or flight, fight or flight.*

Just then, Rina manages to drag her body out of the bathroom. She looks at what's happening and screams,

RINA

JO!

It's enough to bring Jo back to her body.

Fight.

With a burst of energy, Jo tucks her chin, opens her mouth, and chomps down on Preston's bicep, HARD.

So hard that she breaks skin. Preston yells and tries to pull away, but Jo has her arms up, clamping his flesh to her mouth as she bites down with the jaw force of a fucking shark.

The wound wells with blood. Jo SUCKS up as much of it as she can until it's FILLING her mouth.

S W A L L O W.

Jo finally lets her grip go. Preston tears his arm away and stumbles back. For the first time we see him falter.

Jo heaves, catching her breath quickly. His blood makes her stand taller, feel stronger. The welt on her face from his punch stitches back together.

She rises to her full height and stares Preston down. She wipes her blood covered mouth, smearing it across her cheek.

They square off with each other, knowing that the playing field is leveled.

At the same time, their eyes flick to the katana on the ground, then back at each other.

At once they both dive for the sword. Preston slams into Jo, throwing them both away from the weapon. They wrestle on the ground, throwing punches at each other, slamming each other into the ground.

A particularly gnarly elbow to the gut causes Preston to double over and allows Jo to grab him in a headlock of her own. For a moment it seems like Jo has the upper hand.

Preston rolls forward, pulling her with him and throwing her over his shoulder.

Jo slams down on her back. The impact knocks the wind out of her and leaves her gasping and stunned. Preston climbs on top of her and wraps his hands around her neck.

He squeezes his hands and bears his whole body weight down on her. Jo's eyes water, her face goes red.

All this while, Rina has slowly been dragging herself across the ground. Her face is streaked with tears, teeth grit against the fear. She inches closer and closer to the katana.

Preston's back is to her. He doesn't see. He stares down at Jo, a look at fury on his eyes. But Jo's eyes flit to Rina.

Preston's face melts away so that it's Rina's face looking down at Jo, choking her.

PRESTON

I've roamed this rock in space all these centuries and no one has ever bested me. Certainly not a pretty piece for my collection like you. I would have worn your face stunningly.

In that moment, Rina manages to grasp the hilt of the sword in her hand and push it, sending it skittering across the floor - right into Jo's open palm.

Jo slams her knee upward with all her strength, smashing between Preston's legs. Immediately he lets go of Jo and rears upward.

With her free hand she smashes her fist into his cheek.

*Yes, it feels good to punch "Rina".*

Preston's face melts back. He clutches his groin and takes a step back.

*Commit.*

Jo maneuvers onto one knee with her other foot planted on the ground. She looks up at Preston with cold and furious eyes.

*Follow through.*

JO

Pervert.

Rising from the ground and using the leverage of the momentum, Jo slices upward with an incredible roar of effort, CUTTING PRESTON OPEN FROM GROIN TO THROAT.

Jo is showered with blood. Preston's body falls back and hits the ground, still spurting.

Jo, with her sword pointed high above her head and her chest heaving, stands tall. She wipes the blood from her eyes on her sleeve and looks down at Preston's face.

Nothing is there.

Preston's face is a blank sheet with no features. No mouth. No nose. No eyes. Just blank flesh like undetailed clay. His hands are the same - smooth and devoid of fingerprints.

Jo looks back at Rina. She's still on her belly with her legs bound, but she's her again. *She's the Rina we first met*, in all of her true features.

Jo and Rina's eyes meet. Rina begins to cry again. Jo moves to her side and cuts the ziptie at her feet.

They embrace, holding onto each other as tightly. They're alive. *They're alive.*

JO (CONT'D)

Can you stand?

RINA

I think so. I feel... better.

She looks better too. The color is back in her skin. Melanin and good blood flow, both.

Jo pulls Rina to her feet. The two of them limp over to Preston's dead body. A huge puddle of blood is growing beneath him.

Rina spits on his face.

JO  
Should have put down that drop  
cloth.

The two girls look at each other. A wordless conversation passes between them. They nod.

#### **MONTAGE:**

Rina and Jo grab the things Preston had left on the table and get to work.

A) They roll the body up in the carpet, then lay down the drop cloth and wrap the plastic around the outside, sealing it shut with copious amounts of duct tape.

B) Jo takes a shower. She scrubs harshly at her skin and hair. Brown and red water pool at her feet. Normal clothes sit on the counter to change into.

C) Meanwhile Rina stuffs Jo's blood covered uniform into a plastic bag. She wipes the sword clean. Then she gets on her hands and knees and starts scrubbing the floor with bleach.

D) Jo and Rina carry the long plastic covered carpet/body through the elevator, into the garage, and stuff it into the back of Jo's car.

E) Jo drives with Rina in the passenger seat, who knows how long, until there's nothing but towering evergreen trees around them.

#### **EXT. FOREST - NIGHT**

A clearing in the forest off the edge of a burn zone where an acre of trees has been downed and set aflame.

Jo and Rina stand up from their hunched positions and throw their shovels to the side. They're panting and covered in dirt and grime, lit only by the headlights of Jo's car.

They've dug a relatively uniform rectangular hole, five feet deep. Together, they grab the ends of the plastic covered carpet/body and chuck it in the pit.

Jo douses the body with a full canister of kerosene. Rina lights a match, looks at the flame, and drops it in. The body alights in a huge roaring fire, contained only by the grave.

Rina reaches for Jo's hand and squeezes it tight. They watch the body burn.

Then, into the silence,

JO  
You've been a huge cunt.

Rina looks at Jo, mouth open in shock.

JO (CONT'D)  
I can't be your friend anymore.

END