

KNIVES OUT

A Murder Mystery by

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SCREEN SCRIPT

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE MANOR HOUSE - DAWN

The grounds of a New England manor. Pre-dawn misty.

INT. MANOR - PANTRY / LIVING ROOM / FOYER / HALLWAY - DAWN

INSIDE THE MANOR

Unlit and still. Gothic with a theme of antique games, arcane puzzles and decorative weapons.

First floor: A drawing room, living room, kitchen. The detritus of a party. Stray champagne flutes.

INT. THROMBEY ESTATE - 2ND FLOOR - DAWN

Follow one housekeeper named FRAN carrying a tray of coffee up a flight of stairs.

Second floor: a hallway, doors all closed. The house has not woken up, and Fran steps lightly. Up a much narrower creaky flight of steep stairs.

INT. THROMBEY ESTATE - 3RD FLOOR MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN

Third floor: the master bedroom suite.

FRAN
Morning Mr Thrombey

But the bed is empty, unslept in. A robe thrown across it.

Fran heads out onto the landing and UP an EVEN NARROWER half flight of stairs, which leads to a single door.

FRAN (cont'd)
Mr Thrombey you up there? Mr Thrombey
I'm coming in

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - DAWN

A cramped attic study, every shelf crammed with curios.

The door swings open and Fran sees:

HARLAN THROMBEY himself. 85 years old. Slung across a white leather day bed.

Throat slit. Drenched in blood. Very much dead.

Fran's tray slips out of her hands for a second.

FRAN

Shit.

CUT TO: Title card, on black.

THEN TO:

INT. MARTA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MARTA CABRERA wakes with a cry.

Plain, modern, cramped. Marta, in her late twenties, takes a moment to catch her breath. Opens a window.

EXT. SOUTH BOSTON HOUSING PROJECT - MORNING

A tiny window in a cheap apartment building opens, Marta's face appears breathing deep.

SUPER: "ONE WEEK - after Harlan Thrombey's demise"

INT. CABRERA KITCHEN - MORNING

Marta sits in front of a laptop. Her MOM is at the table with her, her sister ALICE watches CSI on an iPad on the counter top. Murder related dialog from the show.

Marta scroll through a jobs site, tired, eyes dead. Her mom watches, concerned.

MOM

Alice, turn that off now.

ALICE

Why it's almost over, what - they're finding out who did it and the wifi sucks in my room so it doesn't play it's like two minutes left what there isn't even anything bad on it, it's just normal tv and they're just talking ok ok godddd whatever ok whatever.

MOM

Now please just turn it off.

Turn it off. Now.

Alice. Off.

They're talking about murder on it, your sister just had a friend she loves slit his throat open she doesn't need to be hearing that right now let's be sensitive!

Mom standing yelling, Alice slams the iPad cover closed. Marta puts her head in her hand. Looks at her mom, who looks back at her with protective sympathy. Marta starts laughing at the absurdity of it, but the laugh turns into crying.

MARTA

Alice you can keep watching your show it's alright.

ALICE

No, I guessed who did it anyway. I'm sorry Marta.

Alice hugs her sister. Marta's phone rings. WALT THROMBEY.

MARTA

It's Harlan's son.

(answers)

Hi, Walt.

(listens)

Uh huh.

Her face shifts in confusion.

MARTA (cont'd)

What?

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD - LATE MORNING

A long narrow private road leading to the Thrombey estate.

Marta's shitty SUBCOMPACT car buzzes by, towards the house.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

Several cars, including a police cruiser with a few uniformed officers by it. Marta pulls up. An officer eyes her, approaches.

COP

Hey! Excuse me ma'am. Are you with the help?

MEG, Thrombey's college aged granddaughter, trots out.

MEG

Hey! Her name is Marta, she was granddad's nurse, she's with us. "The help?".

MARTA
 (to the cop)
 It's ok, sorry.

MEG
 (mutters)
 No. It's not ok. What the hell?

They hug, and are both instantly crying. They laugh.

MARTA
 Not very good. Alone, lots of just, this
 (the crying)
 and not knowing what to do next.

MEG
 Anything you need, you're part of this family Marta.

MARTA
 Thank you.

INT. FOYER

Thrombey's eldest daughter Linda opens the door for Marta.

LINDA
 How you doing kiddo.

Linda is 60ish, well put together, sharp and steely eyed. She dresses and speaks with just a little more sharpness than any situation she's in requires.

MARTA
 Hi Linda. How are you?

LINDA
 Ueuh. The funeral helped. I guess. Just seeing him. I thought you should have been there. I was out voted.

Linda's husband Richard walks in, on the phone. Same age as Linda, gruff and confident, will put his feet up on anything.

RICHARD (ON PHONE)
 I'm not the cop so I don't know. Alright fine, don't come, get arrested. Die up your own ass all I care.
 (hangs up)
 He's not coming.
 (MORE)

RICHARD (ON PHONE) (cont'd)
 (to Marta)
 Ransom. Little shit. Missed the
 funeral.

STATE TROOPER WAGNER, fresh faced in his 30s, pokes his head
 in through a door.

TROOPER WAGNER
 Excuse me, we're ready for you now,
 we'd like to see you one at a time.

LINDA
 Alright I'll go first. I'm assuming
 this will all be wrapped up before
 the memorial tonight.

TROOPER WAGNER
 We'll do our best ma'am.

Linda exits with Wagner, leaving Richard and Marta.

RICHARD
 So. How you doing kiddo.

INT. LIBRARY

Mystery and horror memorabilia scattered on the shelves.

Linda sits opposite three men: LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT, in his
 30s, in a working suit. Very good at his job. The young
 Trooper Wagner stands behind him.

Sitting back behind both of them, almost blending into the
 background, is a slight man in a linen suit. Legs and arms
 fold sharply, like a paper crane. Silent, listening.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 We are just going to reintroduce
 ourselves as a formality, I'm
 Detective Lieutenant Elliott, and
 this is Trooper Wagner. Now, I'm
 going to record, just makes it
 easier.

(squints at his phone)
 Alright, we're with Linda Drysdale,
 nee Thrombey, Harlan Thrombey's
 eldest daughter, in discussing the
 events the night of his demise, one
 week ago, November 8th.

TROOPER WAGNER
 We're sorry for your loss.

LINDA
 (dry as chalk)
 Thank you that means a lot.

Elliott checks his notes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 So we understand that night the family had gathered to celebrate your father's eighty fifth birthday.

LINDA
 Yes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 How was that?

LINDA
 The party? Pre my dad's death? It was great.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY - FLASHBACK

Warmly lit, classic rock playing, food laid out. Linda and Richard mingle happily with the rest of the family (who we'll meet shortly.)

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Did anyone besides the family show face?

LINDA (V.O.)
 Uh. There was Fran, the housekeeper. Marta, Harlan's caregiver, good girl, hard worker. Family's from Ecuador. And Wanetta - Greatnana, Harlan's mom.

At the snack table wearing a dozen coats, a woman who might be three hundred years old. She pounds down chips and dip like a machine.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 (wow)
 His mom? How old is she?

LINDA (V.O.)
 We have no idea.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Okay, Your son Ransom, was he there as well?

LINDA (V.O.)
Yes but he left early.

RANSOM DRYSDALE, roguishly handsome in his early 30s,
breezes out the side door, past Greatnana.

GREATNANA
Ransom, are you leaving?

INT. LIBRARY

The strange man in the linen suit taps a piano key, as if
reminding to ask him something.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Right, did all three of you show up
at around the same time?

LINDA
N...o, Richard came early to help the
caterers set up.

She raises a questioning finger to ask about the man but

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Okay and you and your husband Richard
work for a real estate firm in
Boston?

LINDA
(sharp)
It's my company.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
(checks notes)
Sorry. Right.

LINDA
I built my business from the ground
up.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Just like your dad. You two were very
close?

LINDA
We had our own secret way of
communicating. You had to find that
with dad. You had to find a game to
play with him. And if you did that,
and played by his rules...

CUT TO: Richard in the chair Linda was in, giving his statement.

RICHARD
Everyone idolizes their dad, right?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
I don't know, do they?

RICHARD
Very much not, don't know why I said that. But Linda does.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Harlan Thrombey, surrounded by his family, Richard and Linda flanking him, a birthday cake with candles. All smiles.

RICHARD (V.O.)
Harlan started with a rusty Smith-Corona, built himself into one of the bestselling mystery writers of all time.

INT. LIBRARY

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Seems like all his kids are self made overachievers.

Richard makes a "...sure" face.

RICHARD
Sure.

CUT TO:

WALT THROMBEY now sits in the questioning chair. Late 40s, softly obsequious in a sweater and loafers. His leg is in a cast.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
For the record, I'm speaking to Walt Thrombey, Harlan Thrombey's youngest son.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (cont'd)
So you run your father's publishing company?

WALT

Yeah. It's my - it's our, it's the family's publishing company, dad trusts me to run it. 30 languages, over 80 million copies sold. A real legacy. You guys fans?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

I don't do much fiction -

TROOPER WAGNER

BIG fan. Big.

TROOPER WAGNER (cont'd)

His plots, like something like "A Thousand Knives," with the - I don't want to spoil it but - the cow and the shotgun, like where do you come up with that?

WALT

Dad said the plots just popped into his head fully formed, that was the easy part for him -

TAP from the linen suit man's finger.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

You live in town, right? You guys probably arrived at around the same time?

Walt looks at Linen suit, thrown.

WALT

Uh. We all got here around 8.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt laughing and mingling with his nervous wife DONNA.

WALT (V.O.)

My wife Donna, she's my rock.

Richard backs up into Donna, who YELPS in fear and throws her martini in the air. Richard jumps, but Walt doesn't even register it.

RICHARD

Jeeesus! Donna, you alright?

WALT (V.O.)

And my son Jacob, he's sixteen. Very politically active.

His angry looking son JACOB, who is always on his phone.

INT. LIBRARY

Quick cuts, each in the chair:

RICHARD
The boy's literally a Nazi

MEG
He's an alt-right troll dipshit

WALT
Kids today, with the internet,
amazing.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
So the night went well?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The exact same moment we saw with Richard and Linda of Harlan in front of the birthday cake - but now it's Walt, Donna and Jacob next to Harlan.

WALT (V.O.)
I mean. We're all gutted but I'm happy we got that night with him. To be by his side, to think about our books and what we've accomplished with them, it's like I can still feel his hand on my shoulder.

INT. LIBRARY

WALT
Passing the torch.

Cut to: JONI THROMBEY in the chair. A striking woman, tall and boho chic in chunky jewelry and a flowy dress.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
So we are with Joni Thrombey, Harlan Thrombey's... daughter in law?

JONI
Mm. I was married to his son Neil, We had one daughter, Meg, and then Neil passed on fifteen years ago.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And you remained close to the
Thrombeys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Joni dances with various family members, free and flowing.

JONI (V.O.)
Oh they're my family. I feel
simultaneously freed by and supported
by them, that balance of opposites is
the nugget of Flam.

INT. LIBRARY - PRESENT

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Sorry, the Nugget of?

JONI
Flam.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Ah! Yeah Flam, right, your skin care
company. Sorry.

JONI
I forgive you, yes, it's skin care
but it promotes a total lifestyle.
Self sufficiency with an
acknowledgment of human need. That's
Flam, but it's also Harlan. He got
me and Meg through some tough times.

Meg in the chair.

MEG
Granddad gives my mom a yearly
allowance, and he's never missed
wiring a tuition payment to my
schools. He's a genuinely selfless
man.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
You left his party early?

MEG
To see some friends at Smith.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Meg trots out. Linda, pissed, to Richard so Joni can hear:

LINDA
 you know, Dad's paying for her
 crypto-Marxist postdeconstructual
 feminist poetry theory whatever
 major, she could have stuck around
 for the cake.

INT. LIBRARY

JONI
 I think Linda was upset. But Harlan
 understood.

Tap.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 Right. You two arrived together to
 the party at the same time?

Joni looks at the linen suit man.

JONI
 If I could - pause - because I, who
 is that guy? And why are we doing
 all this? Again?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 Just some follow up questions, just
 being thorough, in order to determine
 the manner of death.

Cut back to Walt in the chair.

WALT
 (almost laughing)
 So by "manner of death" you mean if
 he was killed. If one of us killed
 him. One of his family?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 None of us think that, this is pro
 forma, all of it.

CUT TO: Richard in the chair. He doesn't buy it.

RICHARD
 Ok. So who the fuck is that?

He points at linen suit. Elliott takes a breath.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
This is Benoit Blanc.

RICHARD
(the hell?)
Benoit Blanc?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Yes. Mr. Blanc is a private
investigator of great renown.

Joni in the chair.

JONI
Wait a minute - I read a tweet about
a New Yorker article about you. The
last of the gentlemen sleuths? You
solved that case with the tennis
champ - you're famous!

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Mr. Blanc is not with the police
department, he is not officially
involved with the case but he has
offered to consult. I happily obliged
and I can vouch for him.

Linda in the chair.

LINDA
Mr. Blanc, I know who you are, I
read your New Yorker profile. It was
delightful. I just buried my eighty
five year old father who committed
suicide. Why are you here?

Elliott and Wagner turn back to Blanc, who leans forward
slightly and speaks in the gentlest southern lilt you have
ever heard in your life.

BLANC
I am here at the behest of a client.

LINDA
Who?

BLANC
I cannot say, but let me assure you
this: my presence will be
ornamental.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
 You will find me a respectful, quiet,
 passive observer. Of the truth.

Elliott and Wagner turn nervously back to Linda. She
 doesn't look thrilled. Cut to Richard.

RICHARD
 Fine. Are we getting there?

BLANC
 Nearly. Harlan's nurse. She was at
 the party in a professional capacity?

Blanc begins idly playing with a silver dollar.

RICHARD
 Marta?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The family is engaged in an animated discussion, Marta
 standing on the outskirts.

RICHARD (V.O.)
 I guess. Harlan hired her to be
 around, take care of whatever medical
 needs pop up, but really she's like
 part of the family.

Richard beckons with his cake, calls Marta into the
 discussion, into the circle of the family.

RICHARD (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Good kid, been a good friend to
 Harlan. Her family's from Paraguay.
 Linda really likes her work ethic.

INT. LIBRARY

RICHARD
 "Immigrants - we get the job done."
 From Hamilton.

Wagner gives him a smile to show he got the reference.

TROOPER WAGNER
 Oh Hamilton!

RICHARD
 I saw it at the public.

Cut to Linda back in the chair.

BLANC

May I just - and then I'll recede,
but as a self made man myself I have
to express my admiration for how
you've followed in your father's
footsteps.

LINDA

Thank you.

BLANC

Just marvelous. The whole family too.
Joni with her things, Walt with his
publishing empire.

LINDA

Well.

Blanc pauses. Doesn't push anything. Just waits a moment.

LINDA (cont'd)

Yes. I mean. Walt, yeah. He's done
well with what dad's given him.
Walt - not like it matters but he was
sort of adrift, dad gave him the job,
but really dad hands him a book twice
a year and Walt publishes it, I
mean... it's just not the same.

BLANC

But surely Walt runs the
merchandising, adaptations, film and
television rights...

Linda squints, narrowing her eyes on Blanc. Softly:

LINDA

Are you baiting me, Detective? You
know he doesn't, and you think I'm
dumb enough to be baited into talking
family business, into shit talking my
brother in front of a police
detective and a state trooper -

Richard in the chair.

RICHARD

Walt doesn't run shit! There are no
film or TV rights, Harlan's never
allowed any adaptations of his books.
Hates the idea.

BLANC

No!

RICHARD

Oh yeah! Drives Walt nuts, cause that's where the real money's at. When he gets a little Irish courage in him he'll get into it with Harlan.

BLANC

Did he get "into it" at the party?

RICHARD

Oh my god.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt with a drink in his hand has cornered Harlan. Richard watches across the room as Walt goes from arguing to pleading.

RICHARD (V.O.)

He wouldn't leave him alone, poor guy. Harlan had to give him the hook.

Harlan has had enough, he takes Walt's arm and leads him into the drawing room for a private talk.

RICHARD (V.O.) (cont'd)

I didn't hear what he said but he must have really handed him his lunch, Walt was like a wounded puppy the rest of the night.

INT. LIBRARY

Walt in the chair, indignant.

WALT

What? Richard said what? Jesus. No, we didn't get "into it."

BLANC

I'm just trying to get an accurate impression - Harlan took you aside at the party, when you returned you were chastened, what did Harlan say to you?

Walt starts to open his mouth, hesitates. Off his frightened face we FLASH BACK:

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt, drunk, Harlan guiding him firmly into the shadows.

<p>WALT</p> <p>The Netflix guys, their business affairs guy sent over something, hard numbers this time, and I think - this is a window, it's not going to last and you should just look at these numbers</p>	<p>HARLAN</p> <p>Walt.</p> <p>Walt.</p>
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WALT

Dad you put me in charge of our books
let me be in charge, let me do this!
Please.

HARLAN

They're not our books, son. They're
my books. And this is not how I
wanted to have this conversation but,
you're right, it's unfair of me to
keep you tethered to something that
isn't yours to control.

WALT

What?

HARLAN

I've done you a grave disservice all
these years, I've kept you from
building something of your own,
that's yours. You're not going to
run the publishing house anymore. You
are free of it.

WALT

Dad. Are you firing me?

HARLAN

We'll talk about details tomorrow.
But my mind's made up. Good boy.

Harlan pats his face, then leaves him shell shocked.

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Walt's hesitating face. The briefest of moments has
passed. Walt lies:

WALT

We talked, we had a business discussion, about e-books, Jesus, it was nothing. You want to talk about an argument, hell Ransom had an argument with him.

BLANC

Ransom, Richard and Linda's son?

WALT

Look we love Ransom, he is a good kid, we love him.

BLANC

...but

WALT

But he's always been the black sheep of the family, and I'm not, I, I keep stuff like this in the family, but with Ransom, he's never had a job. But dad for some unknown reason has always supported him, they've got this love hate bond. They fight. But that night, god. They had a blow out.

BLANC

About what?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The family having a conversation, everyone but Harlan, Jacob and Ransom. It grinds to a halt as through the door to Harlan's study indistinct shouting booms.

WALT (V.O.)

We couldn't make it out, but it was huge. And it was strange they went in another room to do it - they usually love stoking up drama in front of the whole family.

Ransom bursts out of the doors and storms out of the party, past Greatnana.

GREATNANA

Ransom are you leaving?

INT. LIBRARY

Richard in the chair.

BLANC
Speaking of getting into it, you were at the house early to help the caterer set up. Did you converse with Harlan at that time?

RICHARD
He was there, we must have spoke.

BLANC
In his study?

RICHARD
I don't think so.

BLANC
You see, I spoke with the caterer this morning. She didn't see you helping her staff, but she did hear Harlan in a screaming match with someone that afternoon. In his study.

RICHARD
I don't, a screaming match? No. Joni was here too, she was early, maybe it was her, ask her.

BLANC
These were two male voices.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY OF PARTY

A CATERER walks through with a platter. Pauses, hears shouting through the wall.

BLANC (V.O.)
Harlan shouted the phrase

HARLAN (O.S.)
...you tell her or I will!

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC
You tell her. Or I will. Bells ringing?

For a just a split second, Richard considers what he is going to say. In the second, we FLASH BACK:

INT. SMALL STUDY - DAY OF PARTY

Harlan showing Richard photos on a laptop. Long lens photos, of Richard kissing a woman who is not Linda. Richard glares at it, Harlan turns an old baseball over in his hands.

RICHARD

That's none of your business, Harlan.
Stay out of my marriage.

Harlan holds up a sealed small envelope with flowery embroidery, "L" written on the front.

HARLAN

I know my daughter. She'd want to know. I've put it all in this letter to her, tomorrow she gets it.

RICHARD

I'm warning you once, don't do this like hell -

HARLAN

She deserves to know, you're going to tell her!

Harlan slams the baseball down on the desk.

HARLAN (cont'd)

You tell her or I will!

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Richard. He grins, snaps his fingers.

RICHARD

Yes. I know - yes, ha. So. Harlan decided to finally put his mom in a nursing home. Which Linda always opposed. And I was going to wait till we were back home in Boston to tell her, so there wouldn't be a whole scene, but Harlan wanted me to tell her then. That was it. Sorry. Forgot.

Joni in the chair.

JONI

The house?

BLANC

Early. Richard said you were there.

JONI

I was. At the house early.

BLANC

To see Harlan?

JONI

To see Harlan. Yes.

Joni stops, smelling something in the air. She's about to ask about it but -

BLANC

What were you seeing Harlan about?

JONI

It was just a mix up with the payment for Meg's tuition.

BLANC

I'm sorry to press, what kind of mix up?

Joni hesitates, we FLASH BACK:

INT. SMALL STUDY - DAY OF PARTY

Harlan at his desk, toying with the same old baseball. This is a thing he does at his desk. Joni standing, arms crossed.

JONI

The school hasn't got the check yet, I don't know why Alan didn't mail it

HARLAN

Alan didn't mail it because he caught a discrepancy. Alan's office has been wiring tuition directly to the school, as per your request. But Phyllis's office that handles your yearly allowance has been wiring the tuition money directly to you as well. As per your request. You've been double dipping Meg's tuition, stealing from me. A hundred thousand dollars a year. For the past four years.

Harlan shows Joni a letter from his business manager, with transaction receipts attached.

JONI

Harlan. I don't know how this mix up happened but

Harlan opens his ledger, hand writes a check.

HARLAN

I'm writing this tuition check, then that is the last money you or Meg will get from me.

JONI

Please you don't understand

HARLAN

I know it'll hurt but it's for the best.

Joni's speechless, her face frozen. Harlan puts the baseball down and detaches the check, holds it out to her.

HARLAN (cont'd)

My mind's made up.

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Joni. She shakes her head.

JONI

Just a money wiring issue. With the office at the school. So I had to ask Harlan to cut a check for this semester. No big deal.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Why don't we take a breather.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Joni comes out into the foyer from the library, obviously rattled. She pulls it together quick when Linda comes down the stairs.

LINDA

Joni. You haven't seen Richard have you?

JONI
No, I was just in with the - no.

INT. SMALL STUDY

LINDA (O.S.)
Richard!

Alone, Richard waits very still for Linda's footsteps to walk away, then when he knows she's not coming in he furtively rifles through desk drawers, finding various ridiculous ephemera. He finds a small locked drawer, jimmies it open with a letter opener.

Inside - the small pink envelope Harlan threatened him with in his flashback. He rips it open, pulls out the card inside.

It is blank.

Richard almost laughs. Drops it onto the desk.

RICHARD
Son of a bitch.

He spots Harlan's old baseball. Grabs it, spitefully chucks it out the open window.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

Blanc, Elliott and Wagner stroll long the wide lawn beside the house. Blanc ignites a long thin cigar.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Maybe I'm a victim of my own expectations. But when the great Benoit Blanc knocks on my door, I expect it's going to be for something... if not extraordinary, at least interesting. This is an open and shut case of suicide.
(checks watch)
And Benny we're at the point where I need to know what we're doing here.

Blanc notices the OLD BASEBALL lying in the grass. He picks it up idly.

BLANC
The method, throat slit. Typical of
a suicide?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Dramatic. But look around. The guy
practically lives in a CLUE board.

INT. FOYER

Marta sits alone, across from a portrait of Harlan. Muffled
voices out on the patio. Cigar smoke drifts by outside.

She creeps over to the glass door. Puts her ear to it.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (O.S.)
You ask me to drag all these good
people back for questioning, go over
it all again, I don't get it. This
is a pleasant family with the usual
quarrels but no possible motives for
murder - where are you going?

At that moment, BLANC's face appears right next to Marta's
staring right at her through the distorted glass. She yelps
and falls back.

EXT. PATIO

Blanc opens the glass door. Marta steps back sheepishly,
but with a warm nod Blanc beckons for her to join them.

BLANC
Harlan Thrombey's nurse, Marta...

MARTA
...Cabrera

BLANC
Marta Cabrera.

TROOPER WAGNER
Miss Cabrera, you can just wait
inside - we'll be with you soon.

BLANC
Miss Cabrera, I been doing a little
poking, you're hired on a part time
basis as a registered nurse, yes?

MARTA

Yeah, I don't work for a VNA. Harlan hired me directly.

BLANC

You're paid a flat rate for how many hours a week?

MARTA

I started at 15, but slowly he... needed more help.

BLANC

Medical help?

MARTA

He needed a friend.

Blanc smiles at the girl, genuinely touched.

BLANC

Does having a kind heart make you a good nurse?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Blanc.

BLANC

Yes. Marta we were just discussing possible motives in the family. I suspect Harlan has told you much unfiltered truth about each of them, and a little bird has told me, how shall I put this delicately? You have a regurgitive reaction to mistruthin'.

MARTA

Who told you that?

BLANC

Is it true?

MARTA

Yes. It's something that I have had as a kid. It's a physically thing that I - I - Just the thought of lying, yeah, it makes me puke.

BLANC

Really? Is Richard having an affair?

Marta is stunned. She FLASHES BACK TO:

EXT. PATIO - DAY - FLASHBACK

She reads, Harlan sits at his laptop, heavy with sadness.

HARLAN

Why do men instinctively pull at
loose threads on their parachutes?

MARTA

What?

Harlan spins his laptop towards her - the Richard photos.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Back to our scene. Marta looks queasy, tries to stall.

MARTA

Heh - Richard? - affair? Heh.

BLANC

A yes or no will do.

She struggles, her jaw clenched, face working hard, then
attempts -

MARTA

.....no

And immediately VOMITS into a nearby planter.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Whoa!

TROOPER WAGNER

Oh my god!

They all rush to her, Blanc brings water, awfully concerned.

BLANC

Dear girl I'm sorry. I assumed you
were speaking figuratively.

Blanc takes the shortest acceptable beat of concern before
turning to Elliott.

BLANC (cont'd)

Quite something. But I was obviously
right, Richard is having an affair,
his father in law found out and
confronted him. "You tell her. Or I
will."

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Even if it's true... you ok?

Marta gives a weak thumbs up, recovering

ELLIOTT
 Even if that was right, protecting
 his marriage is weak sauce as a
 motive.

BLANC
 Well. And then there is... Joni.

	LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT	TROOPER WAGNER
Joni?	Joni?!	

TROOPER WAGNER (cont'd)
 Lifestyle guru Joni? No. Harlan was
 supporting her and her daughter, she
 had the opposite of a motive.

Marta tries to quietly slip back into the house

BLANC
 And if that support was threatened?
 Miss Cabrera one moment please

MARTA
 I'm just going to go get some Scope

BLANC
 Miss Cabrera, was Harlan planning on
 cutting off Joni's allowance?

Off Marta's "oh god no" face:

INT. STUDY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Harlan looking at the letter from his business manager, with
 the transaction receipts. He sighs heavily.

HARLAN
 Oh, Joni.

MARTA
 What's up?

He hands her the letter.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Marta's face works against impending nausea.

MARTA

I...

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Ok don't answer that if you're going to puke. Please.

But Blanc presses.

BLANC

Meg said Harlan pays the school directly, Joni says he sends the money to her. Both were true, she was pocketing the double payment, Harlan found out and cut her off without a cent. Yes?

Marta starts to shake her head no, but her throat convulses. She nods. Blanc hands her a glass of water.

TROOPER WAGNER

And she bumps him off for the inheritance? Come. On! Have you seen her insta? She's an influencer.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

An allowance as a motive, Blanc. She has her business. More weak sauce.

Blanc idly scratches a spot on the side of his neck.

BLANC

Granted. But she lied. To me. All three of them did.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Three?

BLANC

Walter.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

I see where you are going with this.

BLANC

But there was something else. Harlan had turned Walter down before regarding film rights, but that night something Harlan said shook him. We look at the pattern, Harlan was cleaning house. I wonder...

(to Marta)

did he plan to fire Walter?

MARTA

(honest & relieved)

Can I wait inside? I don't feel like I should be here.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Yes, please just wait inside but stay close.

She steps back in, grateful. Blanc to Elliott:

BLANC

You've been very patient my friend, and you are right, none of these weak alibis and domestic squibbles answer your question: why is Benoit Blanc here? But now I will tell you why.

(beat)

I am here because this morning someone dodged one very important question.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Who?

BLANC

Me. Linda asked who hired me.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

So who hired you?

BLANC

I. Do. Not. Know. An envelope of cash showed up at my apartment yesterday, with the news clipping of Thrombey's death.

TROOPER WAGNER

An envelope? That worked?

BLANC

An envelope of cash.

Blanc indicates with his fingers - several inches thick.

BLANC (cont'd)

So somebody suspects foul play, but goes through this ha cha dance of hiring me, of staying anonymous. It makes no damn sense. Compels me though.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
 (beat)
 Walk me through everyone's
 whereabouts at the time of death.

Elliott hesitates, but Blanc's got him hooked. He flips open his notebook. Blanc leans back, closes his eyes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 We know, the party broke up at 11:30.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Marta and Harlan vanish up the stairs towards the third floor, while Richard and Linda head into the bedroom right next to the stairs. Down the hallway Joni waves, and ducks into another bedroom.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Marta took Harlan upstairs to give him his meds, Richard and Linda and Joni went right to bed. Now we do have this: the stairs leading up to Harlan's bedroom and his attic office creak horribly.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Richard sleeps deep, Linda sleeps lightly.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 And Linda is a light sleeper. So we know every time someone took the stairs that night.

INT. JONI AND MEG'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni has decorated the room with colorful silks and candles. She is in lotus position on her bed, meditating.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 The first was when Joni heard a ka-THUNK from somewhere above her in the house.

Ka-THUNK! Joni looks up at the ceiling.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni trots down the hall and up the creaky stairs.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 She's concerned about Harlan, she
 went up to investigate. Waking
 Linda.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

CREAK CREAK CREAK! From outside. Linda's eyes pop open.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni knocks on the door of Harlan's attic office. It opens,
 and Harlan answers. In the room behind him we see Marta,
 her back turned, preparing a hypo needle.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Harlan was in his attic office with
 Marta. He explained that they had
 just knocked the GO board over - that
 game with the grid and stones, they
 play it every night, and he was fine,
 go to bed. So she does.

The spilled GO board on the floor. Joni kisses Harlan on
 the cheek, goes. He shuts the door.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Linda has just gotten back to sleep.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Ten minutes later, Linda is woken a
 second time, by Marta leaving.

CREAK CREAK CREAK! Linda wakes, supremely annoyed.

MARTA (O.S.)
 Walt! I'm leaving!

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF PARTY

Walt and Jacob sit on the porch, Walt with a cigar, Jacob
 with his phone. Marta trots through, saying goodbye.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
 Walt was smoking a cigar on the porch
 with his son. He saw her leave and
 drive off, and noted the time -
 midnight.

Walt glances at his watch. Midnight.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Linda with a pillow over her head.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Fifteen minutes later, Linda is woken
for the third and final time. By
someone coming down the stairs.

CREAK CREAK CREAK! Linda wakes. You've gotta be kidding me.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF PARTY

Walt, still smoking with Jacob, spots Harlan through the
glazed glass, coming down the stairs in the foyer.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Harlan. Who came down for midnight
snacks, which Walt tried to
discourage.

WALT
Dad, go to bed!

Through the glazed glass, Harlan goes back up the stairs.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Based on this, the medical examiner
determined time of death to be
between 12:15 and 2am. As Walt was
finishing his cigar, about 12:30, Meg
came home. She went straight to bed.
Walt and Jacob turned in shortly
after that.

Meg pulls up, trots past Walt and Jacob and inside.

INT. JONI AND MEG'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Meg stirs, wakes. Joni is asleep.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Sometime later that night,
undetermined but possibly near 3am,
Meg woke up because the dogs were
barking outside. She used the
bathroom and went back to bed.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Elliott snaps the notebook closed.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And that's it. Everyone's stories
matched, every movement accounted
for.

BLANC
There is no other staircase up to
Harlan's room?

Blanc scratches that same spot on the side of his neck.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
No. Just the creaky one.

Blanc seems intrigued by this.

BLANC
Interesting.

TROOPER WAGNER
So I guess we can rule out Ransom, he
wasn't there. And Marta, Harlan was
alive after she left. But Meg got
home during the time of death window.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Except it was a suicide. Harlan hit
both carotids, we saw from the blood
blood splat patterns that they were
uninterrupted. Meaning, It's almost
impossible for anyone to have been
around him at the time. He's the one
that cut his own throat. I don't know
why we keep going over this.

BLANC
Physical evidence can tell a clear
story with a forked tongue.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
What?

BLANC
And as we've seen this morning,
everyone can lie. Well. Almost
everyone.

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Marta in the chair. She shifts, uncomfortable.

Blanc, Elliott and Wagner in their normal places.

BLANC

Ms. Cabrera, we've kept you waiting all afternoon because I wanted to hear from you last. I wanted to have the entire picture of the evening in my head. Your piece of it is at its very center. So please, take your time. You took Mr. Thrombey upstairs at 11:30. And left at midnight. Think very carefully. And with as much detail as possible, tell us what happened in that half hour.

Marta is very still. A moment of silence. Blanc flips his silver dollar into the air.

She does not say a word, but in that moment while the coin hangs in the air we FLASH BACK with her to:

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The night of the party. A clock on a nightstand: 11:32. Off screen we hear Marta leading Harlan up the creaky stairs.

MARTA

Up up up up - you got it?

HARLAN

I got it. Up up up I got it.

Marta enters the room, and behind her we see Harlan keep climbing up the narrow stairs to his office.

MARTA

Up up nooooo no not tonight, no straight to bed tonight it is soooo late c'mon. Harlan. Harlan!

She grabs a med kit from the bedroom and follows him, exasperated.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Harlan sits, setting up a GO board. Marta enters.

MARTA
It's late, I had champagne
no no no

HARLAN
It's my birthday, we are -
You had one glass - we're
not breaking tradition on my
birthday.

Marta puts two vials and a pill box on the GO board. She pulls out two plastic wrapped hypodermics.

MARTA
Take your goddamn medicine and go to
bed.

HARLAN
If you're going to put that vile shit
in me you will have to earn it. On
my birthday.
(playing it up)
Eighty fifth. So old. Soo olddd

MARTA
Alright old man. 8x8 game. You
ready?

She sits and they start clacking white and black stones on the board.

HARLAN
Why can't I beat you at this
game?

Oh uh huh.

MARTA
Because I'm not playing to
beat you, I'm playing to
build a beautiful pattern.

They play fast, and Marta is obviously winning.

HARLAN
Elder abuse. I'm calling the AARP.

MARTA
Don't make me get the belt.

HARLAN
It's basically over. My only hope is
that an earthquake will strike. But
what are the chances -

Harlan starts shaking the table with his knee. He looks around, startled. Marta just stares at him, deadpan.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Get under a door frame!

He tips the whole table and the GO board and med vials and syringe and med kit fall to the soft rug. Things spill out of the kit. A mess. Marta just shakes her head.

MARTA
Meds then beds.

HARLAN
Fair.

She retrieves the vials and loads a syringe from one of them. Harlan rolls up his sleeve revealing a pre-inserted catheter. He crosses to close the room's only small window.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Ugh, Walt's smoking a cigar on the porch. Nasty things.

MARTA
How was tonight?

She hooks the syringe up to the catheter and slowly injects him bit by bit while he talks.

HARLAN
Tonight was... good.

MARTA
Because I know you weren't looking forward to it.

HARLAN
No. But I did it. Cut the line on all four of them. It was not easy. This goddamn fortune. Sometimes I think, everything I've given my family, I've done, maybe without knowing it, maybe, to keep them beneath me. I should have what... maybe, I don't know. Encouraged Walt to write his own stories, not just be a caretaker of mine. Like you said I should. Been a father, not just a provider, to Joni. Like you've also said. I should have been kinder to Linda. And Ransom.

Harlan takes a curved ornamental dagger from a display mount, turns it over in his hands.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Jesus there's so much me in that kid. Confident, stupid, I dunno.
(MORE)

HARLAN (cont'd)
Protected. Playing life like a game
without consequence, till you can't
tell the difference between a stage
prop and a real knife.

He stabs it into the desk, sharp and real. Leaves it there.

HARLAN (cont'd)
I don't fear death. But god I'd like
to fix some of this before I go.
Close the book with a flourish. I
guess we'll see.

MARTA
I guess we will. Hey. Old man.
You've had a long day. Wanna do
drugs.

She loads the second syringe from the second vial.

HARLAN
you mean the good stuff?

MARTA
Yeah but just a tiny bit.

HARLAN
Send me to lala land. Why did I wait
till my mid eighties to become a
morphine user, what a schmuck, what a
nud-nig, this stuff's the best.

She pulls the needle from the second vial... then sees the
label. Freezes. Blinks at it.

MARTA
Oh my god.

She snatches up the first vial she just injected him from.
Compares the label to the one she just picked up. They're
similar but not the same.

HARLAN
Is there a problem?

MARTA
This is what I just gave you 100
milligrams of. But I messed up.

HARLAN
You gave me 100 milligrams of the
good stuff.

She immediately pulls an EMERGENCY KIT from a nearby shelf, starts calmly but quickly going through its contents.

HARLAN (cont'd)
What's the good stuff dosage supposed to be?

MARTA
Lets not call it that right now - three milligrams.

HARLAN
That's much less. So what happens?

MARTA
I give you an emergency shot of Naloxone, so that you don't die in ten minutes.

HARLAN
Well no pressure. You know that's an interesting, efficient method for murder, I need to write that down.

He gets a little notebook and scribbles while she checks and rechecks the kit contents with increasing urgency.

HARLAN (cont'd)
So if someone switched the meds on purpose I'd be dead in ten minutes, like stone cold dead?

MARTA
You'll feel symptoms in five. Sweats, disorientation. Then yeah, that big a dose, injected, within ten your respiratory - your - yes ten minutes.

HARLAN
From the time of injection, so eightish now. And even if the victim called an ambulance when he first felt symptoms, if he was at a country home like this one... where the ambulance takes fifteen minutes to arrive, it would be too late. If the victim didn't have this emergency Naxostuff.

He watches her. She's now digging around the carpet, looking under the couch. She dumps the entire contents of the kit out and is now frantically going through it. A bead of sweat rolls down Harlan's brow.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Marta. Do you have Naxostuff?

MARTA
Yes! Naloxone yes it comes with the
emergency kit - it should be here,
it's - fuck. No Harlan it's not
here. It's not. Oh my god.

They look at each other for a second. She's panicked. He's thinking.

MARTA (cont'd)
Where's my phone? Shit -

She picks up a landline phone on the table, dials 911 with shaking hands -

Before it can even ring, the line goes dead.

She looks, unbelieving: Harlan's finger is on the cradle. His eyes are locked with hers, serious and certain.

MARTA (cont'd)
Harlan what are you doing?

HARLAN
Marta, listen to me.

<p>MARTA Harlan we need to - are you crazy, we need to call, they need to get here I need to -</p>	<p>HARLAN Stop. Stop stop, Marta listen there isn't time stop now stop</p>
--	--

She goes for her cell phone across the room and Harlan stops her - they trip and fall to the ground with a KA-THUNK.

<p>MARTA What are you doing are you nuts?</p>	<p>HARLAN Marta it's too late it is over, it's too late I am dead listen. LISTEN.</p>
---	---

He actually puts his hand over her mouth.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Listen. If what you said is true I
am gone, there's no saving me, we
have six minutes. There is one last
thing I need to do in this world, and
only you can help me do it. But you
need to trust me and do everything I
say.

MARTA

What do you want to do?

HARLAN

Get you out of this. Think of your mom - please trust me, we have to make this look ironclad like it can't have been your fault. You. Can't. Have done this.

MARTA

My mom...?

CREAK on the stairs outside.

HARLAN

Get up.

A knock on the door.

JONI (O.S.)

Harlan? Marta? Everything alright?

Harlan and Marta stand. She's dazed, deer in the headlights, but he's focused and sharp. He turns her away from the door.

HARLAN

Stand here, keep your back to me, don't say a word.

Harlan opens the door. While he gets rid of Joni we stick with Marta, who stands stock still, tears running down her face, eyes wild - what does she do?

HARLAN (cont'd)

Joni.

JONI

I - hi - I heard something, is everything ok?

HARLAN

Oh yes we just, I just knocked over the GO board, sorry about that.

JONI

Everything's alright?

HARLAN

Yes yes all fine, go to bed Joni.

JONI

Ok. And maybe we can talk tomorrow
about the, uh, the thing with

HARLAN

Yes. Tomorrow.

JONI

Love you, Night.

HARLAN

Night night.

Harlan shuts the door. Looks at the knife still sticking in
the desk. Then takes Marta's shoulders, looks in her eyes.

HARLAN (cont'd)

Pay attention now, your mom is still
undocumented, if this is your fault
she'll be found out and at best
deported, your family will be broken.

A new kind of fear in Marta's eyes.

MARTA

Oh god

HARLAN

But we're not going to let
that happen. I have a plan,
it's not going to be easy
but you have to do exactly
what I tell you. Will you
do this Marta? This last
thing. For me, and for your
family.

She's terrified. But she nods.

MARTA

What do you want me to do?

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF THE PARTY - FLASHBACK

Walt smoking and Jacob.

HARLAN (V.O.)

Go downstairs as noisily as you can,
say goodbye loudly.

MARTA (O.S.)

Walt! I'm leaving!

Marta exits quickly, down to her car.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Call attention to the time if you
can.

MARTA
God it's midnight already.

Walt checks his watch.

INT. MARTA'S CAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

She drives out the guard gate and down the private road.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Drive out the gate, then to avoid the
security cameras, pull off the road
BEFORE the carved elephant.

Up ahead - a weathered wood carved elephant statue.

MARTA
Wait... was it before or after?

HARLAN (V.O.)
AFTER the carved elephant.

MARTA
No, he said - before? Was it?

HARLAN (V.O.)
BEAFTERFORE the carved elephant.

MARTA
Shit...

She yanks the wheel and pulls off BEFORE the statue.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta trudges away from the parked car, tree branches
catching her hair.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Park and come back on foot up to the
house,

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE GATE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A waist-high stone wall with a little pedestrian gate. The house up ahead. Marta goes through the gate and up towards the house.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Take the side yard path, through that little gate.

The DOGS sprint down the moonlit yard from the house towards Marta.

HARLAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
The dogs will know you, they shouldn't bark.

The dogs stop at Marta and lick her hand.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta looks up the side of the looming house. A sturdy trellis on the wall, and high above a third story window.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You've got to get up to the third floor without being seen, and the only way is to climb the side trellis and come in through the trick hall window.

MARTA
You've gotta be kidding me.

HARLAN (V.O.)
I am not. Do it.

Cut to: moments later, Marta climbing the trellis. It's easy going until a piece BREAKS under her foot, and she swings for a second by one hand.

HARLAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
And for godssakes don't make any noise.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

What appears to be a dead end hallway, with a painting at the end. BUT suddenly the end wall swings away like a door, revealing a WINDOW behind it. Marta heaves her way in through it, and steps lightly into Harlan's bedroom.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Once you're inside, this is the
tricky part.

MARTA (V.O.)
THIS is the tricky part?

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

HARLAN (V.O.)
Get my robe and cap from my bedroom.
And put them on.

She picks them up from the bed. Stops. A moment of doubt.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Back to the scene with Harlan. Marta stops him.

MARTA
Harlan this is - I - this is crazy -

HARLAN
We need to make this so airtight your
average cop will entirely dismiss you
as a suspect. This seems crazy but
it will work.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta in the robe, pulling the cap on, tucking her hair
under it.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Marta, in Harlan's robe and cap, creeps down the creaky
stairs, then keeps going down.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Walt and Jacob are smoking outside.
They'll see you...

INT. FOYER - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Marta come down the stairs, and sees the outline of Walt and
Jacob outside through the glazed window windows.

HARLAN (V.O.)
...through the glazed window.

She holds her breath, a deer in the headlights.

WALT
Dad, go to bed.

Marta heads right back up the stairs.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You were seen leaving, the security
cameras show you driving off, and
twenty minutes later I am seen alive
and well by my son.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT

Marta climbs the creaky stairs.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You've gone from suspect number one
to an impossibility.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marta ducks in, ditching the robe and cap on the bed.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT

Marta shimmies down the last of the trellis.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Leave the way you came. And don't.
Be. Seen.

She hops to the ground, then FREEZES and almost shouts.

She's facing a darkened first floor window. Wide open. And
inside it, staring RIGHT AT her, is Greatnana.

Marta is frozen. Greatnana isn't moving either. Just has
her eyes locked on Marta.

After what seems like forever, Greatnana cocks her head
slightly and asks...

GREATNANA
Ransom? Are you back again already?

Marta breathes. And backs away. Then turns and goes, quickly, down across the lawn.

HARLAN (V.O.)

Drive home. Sometime in the next few days the police will question you.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Back to Harlan and Marta.

MARTA

Harlan I can't lie I'll puke

HARLAN

Don't lie. Tell fragments of the truth. In this exact order:

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Blanc catches his coin. Lieutenant Elliott and Trooper Wagner look up at Marta, expectant. Just a brief moment has passed since we left them.

MARTA

I took him upstairs. We played our nightly game of GO, at some point he knocked the board over and Joni came up to check on us. Then I gave him pain medication, he pulled his shoulder last week, and left him in his study. At midnight. Said bye to Walt, went home.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

What medication did he get?

Marta chooses her words very carefully:

MARTA

Since his injury I've been giving him a 100 milligram IV push of Toradol, a non narcotic analgesic. And to help him sleep, 3 milligrams of morphine.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Anything unusual about his demeanor?

Uh oh. Marta keeps it solid. Superhuman effort.

MARTA

No.

The three men nod. Blanc holds Marta's gaze. She holds it right back. Then he smiles.

BLANC

Well that sounds about right. Thank you Ms. Cabrera.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Marta walks calmly out of the library. Then across the foyer into a small door.

INT. HALF BATH

Marta walks in, closes the door behind her, locks it, turns on both the taps, and PUKES into the toilet.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM

Linda stands in her childhood room, by the window in the ebbing light. From a shelf she pulls a stack of PINK NOTECARDS, identical to the one Harlan showed Richard in his office. But these are covered in writing, sweet little notes, a father to his daughter.

WALT (O.S.)

Hey sis. People are going to start getting here for the memorial pretty soon. Are you- Are you alright?

She looks up. Walt in the doorway. She wipes her eyes, indicates the notes.

LINDA

I was just thinking about Dad's games. This all feels like one, it feels like something he'd write, not do. I keep waiting for a big reveal, where it all makes sense. How nice would that be?

Her little brother hugs her. His eyes tired and dark.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

HARLAN THROMBEY - his portrait, with an ambiguous look on his face.

Marta. Soda water in hand at the reception that night. Staring shell shocked at Harlan.

The reception for friends of the family. Tables of food. Twenty or thirty people milling, in dark tasteful clothes, with the whole Thrombey family.

A tearful Fran has cornered Marta, talks through sobs:

FRAN

I don't think he killed himself I don't. I don't. There's this Hallmark movie Deadly By Surprise where Danica McKellar plays a wife who gets poisoned by her husband but bit by bit so she thinks she's going crazy and she ends up killing herself, and my cousin who's the receptionist at the medical examiners office says that kind of thing can totally happen, she says it's not even like 3% as crazy as stuff she's seen come through the -

As Fran's talking, Marta looks at the room of family members, gathered around talking. She FLASHES BACK to:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Harlan and Ransom go off together to have a private talk, leaving the family having a heated conversation in the living room.

RICHARD

I don't like him no he's an asshole but maybe an asshole's what we needed
oh uh huh yeah there you go

JONI

Oh god. Yeah an asshole's what Germany needed in nineteen thirty ever

Marta stays on the outskirts. Fran, with a tray of champagne flutes:

FRAN

Jesus. I'm gonna disappear until the politics talk is done. You want some champers?

MARTA

No I'm technically working. Thanks.

Marta checks her watch. Meanwhile Donna, who's had a few, is tearing into the family fight.

DONNA

We're losing our way of life and our culture, there's millions of Mexicans coming and this isn't Joni don't make this a race thing, I'd say the same thing if they were European immigrants - we allow them in and they think they own what's ours

JONI

Oh god really - yeah it's not a race thing yeah

Oh yeah, if the Swiss were clogging in the streets - They're putting. Children. In cages. I mean these are camps.

RICHARD

Nobody's saying that isn't bad, but I blame the parents

JONI

For wanting a better life for their kids, isn't that what America

RICHARD

For breaking the law. You're going to hate hearing this but it's true, America is for Americans. Marta, come here.

Richard beckons her over, waving his cake plate. We've seen this moment before, silent, during Richard's questioning.

LINDA

Oh god don't.

Marta is drawn over next to Richard, very uncomfortable.

RICHARD

No, Marta your family came from Uruguay but you did it right, she did it legally, I'm saying. You work hard, and you'll earn your share from the ground up just like dad and all of us did - Marta I bet you agree with me.

LINDA

Leave the poor girl alone.

RICHARD

No Marta do you agree, I'd like you to answer - you wanna become an American, there are legal ways to do it, but if you break the law it doesn't matter if you have a good heart, you gotta face the consequences.

At that moment booming shouts begin behind the study door - Harlan and Ransom going at it. Ransom bursts out.

Marta takes the opportunity to slip into the hallway, alone. She breathes hard. Takes a champagne flute from the tray. Drinks it in one gulp.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

END FLASHBACK. Marta in the same spot, Fran still talking her ear off. The room sways. Marta sucks in breath, sways, and braces herself against the wall.

FRAN

Oh my god Marta, what?

Meg runs over, rubs her back.

MEG

Whoa hey, c'mere, hey. What do you, you want water? Breathe. Hey. Fran have you still got your stash?

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Empty and dark, fireplace blazing. Above the fireplace is an ornate mantle clock. Fran uses a key to unlock one of several tiny drawers hidden in its face, takes out a joint and hands it to Meg.

FRAN

Take em whenever you need em - they're just drying out since you gave me that Juul.

MEG

Thanks Fran.

Fran leaves them alone.

MARTA
I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm
sorry

MEG
Stop saying you're sorry
Jesus

Meg lights the joint.

MARTA
God my heart won't stop, I can't -
it's just everything, no, thank you

she refuses the joint, then realizes where it came from.

MARTA (cont'd)
That's where Fran keeps her stash?

MEG
Who's going to open a clock?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Walt yells at a non responsive, bored Greatnana.

WALT
DO YOU WANT DINNER, NANA?
DINNER? TO EAT? EAT?

LINDA
Walt she's fine, she ate the
whole salmon spread already.

Meg grabs Walt, pulls him to Marta.

MEG
Did you tell Marta yet? What we all
talked about?

WALT
No, not yet, is now a good
time?

MEG
Yes a very good time. Right
now.

WALT
Marta. We've talked it over, and
(wait)
Have you been smoking grass?

MEG
No.

WALT
We talked it over and the whole
family, we want to take care of you.

MARTA
What does that mean?

MEG

We all think you deserve something.

WALT

Financially, we want to help you out. You were never anything but good to dad. Because of that, you can count on us.

Walt embraces her, Meg puts a hand on her back.

Over Walt's shoulder, Marta sees Harlan's portrait again. Has its expression changed? It looks like it has a slight conspiratorial smile. Marta breathes - maybe this is all going to be ok.

WALT (cont'd)

I thought you should have been at the funeral, by the way. I was outvoted.

EXT. SIDE PORCH - NIGHT

Later. Marta comes out to get some air. Exhales deeply.

And then jumps - she's not alone. Benoit Blanc sits in a wicker chair in the dark, smoking a long thin cigar.

MARTA

Wah ha. Detective. You're still here?

BLANC

Mm.

Silence. Blanc smokes and stares at Marta. Marta shifts.

MARTA

Did you know Harlan?

BLANC

He knew my father who was a police detective. Years ago. My father respected Harlan. That says quite a lot.

MARTA

So that's why you're here?

BLANC

Here now here? No. I stayed hoping to speak to you a little more.

MARTA

Uh?

BLANC

Something is afoot with this whole affair. I know it, and I believe you know it.

MARTA

So you're... going to keep digging.

BLANC

Harlan's detectives they dig, they rifle and root, truffle pigs. I anticipate the terminus of gravity's rainbow.

MARTA

Gravity's Rainbow.

BLANC

It's a novel.

MARTA

I know. I haven't read it.

BLANC

Neither have I. Nobody has. But I like the title. It describes the path of a projectile, determined by natural law. Voila, my method. I observe the facts without biases of the head or heart, I determine the arc's path, stroll leisurely to its terminus, and the truth falls at my feet.

(beat)

The medical examiner was ready to rule this a suicide, but Elliott agreed to keep it pending for forty eight hours. Tomorrow morning I search the grounds and the house, begin my investigation. I want you to be by my side for it. My confidant, my eyes and ears.

MARTA

What but - why me?

BLANC

I trust your kind heart. Also you are the only one who had nothing to gain from Harlan's death. So. Watson.

Blank puts out his cigar, stands.

MARTA

You want my insight into this family? None of them are murderers. That's my insight.

BLANC

And yet. Be it cruel or comforting, this machine unerringly arrives at the truth. That's what it does.

MARTA

Always?

He does a little bow.

BLANC

Tomorrow at eight.

Marta watches him go.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marta gets home. Her mom is on the couch, zoning out in front of the TV, still in a cleaning uniform. Without a word Marta sits next to her. Stares at the TV.

Off her eyes, we FLASH BACK with her:

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

HARLAN

I know I missed something... there's going to be something I missed. But I know you can beat it. Without losing your soul you have to do what you have to do to beat this, and win.

MARTA

I can't.

HARLAN

You can and you have to. For me. Right now.

She's out the door and he shuts it.

INT. OUTSIDE HARLAN'S ATTIC OFFICE DOOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta stands frozen. Soft voices of Walt and Jacob float up from downstairs. She turns back to the door.

Silence. Moments going by. Shit. Can she do this? Shit.

No. She turns and pushes back into the office -

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

MARTA

Harlan I have to get you help -

Harlan reclines on the couch in the middle of the room, ornate dagger against his throat. Marta's eyes go wide.

HARLAN

Do what I say and everything's going to be ok, Marta. I promise.

She makes a move to stop him and with one quick motion he DRAWS THE DAGGER across his throat. Blood sprays.

She leaps back, hands to her mouth, spins and leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

EXT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Breathing hard, silent crying. Then her breathing slows. Her brain taking over. Resolve settling. The dice are thrown. She wipes her eyes. Then bounds down the stairs, out of frame.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

Back to Marta and her mom on the couch. She puts her hand on Mom's knee.

MARTA

Everything's going to be ok. I promise.

MOM

(of course)

I know.

They go back to watching TV. But Marta's mind is buzzing.
On her white sneaker, we see but she does not - one single drop of blood.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE GUARD GATE - MORNING

The gate is open, Marta's car pulls up just inside it. The small Guard house next to the gate, Blanc, Elliott and Wagner outside it. Blanc waves to her.

INT. GUARD HOUSE

Thrombey's security man, MR PROOFROC, guides them into the cramped dusty space. Proofroc is old and salty. He shows them old photos of the house, stuck to a steel fridge with big brightly colored fruit magnets.

MR PROOFROC

Fifty years I worked this estate, you know security back then meant making the rounds with a 94, keeping your ears open. Before all this modern technology.

Nothing in the room is newer than 1988. An 8 inch CRT monitor shows a phosphorescent live feed of the road outside the gate, and a top loaded VHS VCR sits next to it.

MR PROOFROC (cont'd)

Well the video here, I saved the tape from that night, usually I erase 'em with the magnetic de-gauser, but I thought better save that one. Cause, security. That's the live feed there.

Marta notices something with alarm - the video feed shows the road outside, and at the top edge you can just barely see the carved elephant that marks the gardener's utility road. She realizes Harlan said

HARLAN (V.O.)

...to avoid the security cameras, pull off the road AFTER the carved elephant.

Marta keeps a poker face, but.. shit.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 (to Proofroc)
 Can we see the actual TAPE?

MR PROOFROC
 Oh sure.

CLACK! The tape loads into the mechanical VCR. An impossibly grainy, smeared night vision view of the road outside the gate. Time stamp: 10:02pm.

TROOPER WAGNER
 It's like a Japanese horror movie.

MR PROOFROC
 (proud)
 I record it SSLP, gets eight hours per tape. Nine pm to five am.

BLANC
 Can we -
 (to Marta)
 Can we scan forward?

MARTA
 (to Proofroc)

Can we scan forward?

MR PROOFROC
 Hold the play button down and press the FF down halfway till you feel it grind.

Wagner does, the machine makes horrible noises and the picture frizzles and frazzles. Then stops and ejects.

MR PROOFROC (cont'd)
 And hold the tape down or it'll eject.

BLANC
 Can your guys digitize it so we can scan it properly?

TROOPER WAGNER
 I'm sure we can.

MARTA
 I got it.

Marta grabs the tape from the VCR.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They all hack through the overgrown gardener's path.

TROOPER WAGNER

You know all these statues that you see around here - they are all straight out of his series the "menagerie tragedy series", pretty cool.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

(dry)

Awesome. Blanc the grounds are lovely but you think what, someone broke into the house? To kill Harlan? Is that why we're out here?

BLANC

I think it's an unlikely but if they did, there will be traces.

TROOPER WAGNER

I'll take that, thanks ma'am.

Marta hands Wagner the VHS tape. Then she discretely pockets something she had held in her hand next to it - a few of the bright fruit MAGNETS from Proofroc's fridge.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD

The group hikes up out of the woods, towards the low wall with a small pedestrian gate that leads to the east lawn.

Marta is out in front. During the following, she notices something: The earth around and under the gate is soft and bare. And clear as day: HER FOOTPRINTS from the other night, the only ones from women's shoes. The same ones she has on now. Her breath catches. SHIT.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Any luck with - whatshisname?

TROOPER WAGNER

Ransom. No, but we have an address. Ten Kenoak street.

BLANC

Ten Kenoak. That's a pleasant thing to say. kenoak. I awoke amid Kenoak.

TROOPER WAGNER

Ugh this mud, my boots are going to stink.

BLANC

Mud - has it rained the past week?
No - Nobody move! Freeze! Everyone!
These footprints must not be
disturbed!

(sees)

Marta!

Marta has already walked through the pedestrian gate and up onto the lawn, stepping in her pre-existing prints. She turns back, playing dumb.

MARTA

What?

BLANC

Don't - stop there, don't -

MARTA

I can't hear you, what?

She trots back to them through the gate, stepping into her returning prints.

BLANC

No no no no don't - don't step on
the, ok, alright. Aughhhhh ok.

MARTA

What?

Blanc sidesteps up to the gate, not stepping in the mud.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Alright, Wagner let's get the boys on
it, check the prints, tape off this
area, keep it clear.

The dogs come running down the lawn, barking at the men. They tear through the gate, further messing up the mud.

MARTA

Hey boys, easy. Hey. Hey.

She pets them and they quiet down.

BLANC

Best judge of character is a dog.
I've found that to be true.

The dogs start BARKING and bolt towards the house, where Richard and Linda are pulling up in their lux SUV.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 They're doing the will reading at
 ten, whole family will be here soon.

Elliott heads up towards the house. Blanc meanders up the lawn, and Marta follows.

MARTA
 I've never been to a will reading.

BLANC
 You think it'll be like a game show.
 No. Imagine a community theater
 performance of a tax return.

They approach the side of the house. Blanc does a gentle, meandering study of the layout.

Marta steals a look at the trellis she climbed.

Oh no. A piece of the white lattice trellis that broke off when she was climbing - about eight inches long - lies in the grass beneath it. Her eyes dart up - yup, there's the broken spot. Shit.

BLANC (cont'd)
 SWEET BEANS

Marta starts - did he spot it? No - he's come face to face with Greatnana, standing stock still on the porch. She stares at him like a bird.

BLANC (cont'd)
 Good morning Mrs. Thrombey.

He approaches her, slowly. When his back is fully turned Marta takes her shot and KICKS the piece of trellis under some thick bushes at the base of the house.

Blanc and Greatnana stare at each other. Blanc gets very close to her, great sympathy in his eyes. Greatnana stares back. It's almost like they're communicating. This goes on for a little too long. Then Blanc breaks from the trance, and turns to Marta.

BLANC (cont'd)
 Do you think you could handle the
 study?

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY

The blood is now only a subtle dark stain, but other than that the room has been left intact from the night of the party. Marta and Wagner observe as Blanc paces the room.

BLANC

(to Marta)

Where's your medical bag?

MARTA

I... don't know - I left it here, I always leave it with Harlan at night.

TROOPER WAGNER

They must have taken it in as evidence. I'll check on it.

Blanc picks up the GO board and sets it on the table. Examines its grid idly.

BLANC

How'd the GO board get knocked over?

MARTA

We were just goofing around.

(beat)

What are you thinking?

Blanc sighs gently, turns the baseball over in his hands. Looks like this was a bust.

Blanc tips the GO board over, and it lands on the carpet with a nearly inaudible WHOMPH. He stares at it.

But his concentration is broken by sharp barking outside. They go to the tiny window and look out. A DASHING MAN in his early 30s climbs out of a vintage Porsche. The dogs go NUTS, biting at his pant legs.

BLANC

Let me guess.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

The man kicks off the dogs and limps toward the house, cursing. Lieutenant Elliott and Trooper Wagner step out onto the porch.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Hugh Drysdale?

RANSOM

Ransom. Call me Ransom, my middle name. The help call me Hugh.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

I'm Lieutenant Elliott, this is officer Wagner, we'd like to ask you a few questions about the night of

RANSOM

Uh huh.

He blows past them and into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Walt, Donna and Jacob (nose in his phone) sit around the room. Linda and Richard stand, on their phones. Ransom breezes in, bumping Donna who YELPS, startled.

Elliott and Wagner follow.

TROOPER WAGNER

Sir excuse me, we are officers of the law.

RANSOM

You gonna run me in? I don't feel like talking. I'm distraught.

Ransom disappears into the kitchen, comes out eating a sleeve of pinwheel cookies.

Blanc and Marta slip in. Elliott nods to Blanc.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Blanc, anything you need to ask him?

RANSOM

The hell anyway is this arrangement?

BLANC

Mr. Drysdale

Ransom sizes up Blanc with a grin.

RANSOM

CSI KFC?

Ransom grabs Fran the housekeeper's sleeve as she walks by.

RANSOM (cont'd)
 Hey Frannie can you get me a glass of
 cold milk?

Meg and Joni have just entered, and Meg heard this.

MEG
 Hey asshole. Not her name, not her
 job.

Fran walks off with a scorching look at Ransom.

RANSOM
 Meg. How's your SJW degree coming?

MEG
 Trust fund prick.

JONI
 Alright. Guys.

ALAN STEVENS, the family's attorney, knocks and enters with
 an assistant, SALLY, who juggles several attache cases.

ALAN
 Hey everyone. Hey. I'm just going
 to set up in the other room, be ready
 in ten minutes.

They go off to the library, leaving the family all together
 in tense silence.

WALT
 Funny Ransom, you skipped the funeral
 but you're early for the will
 reading.

JONI
 Ok, people grieve in different ways,
 let's not

WALT
 (to Ransom)
 It's funny you're here at all. Why
 are you even bothering, that's what I
 want to know.

RICHARD
 What's that supposed to mean?

WALT
 He knows what it means.

LINDA
 Walt, what?

WALT
Jacob was in that bathroom the night
of the party.

JONI
Is that where you were all night?

RICHARD
The hell were you doing in the
bathroom all night?

JACOB
Nothing.

MEG
Swatting Syrian refugees.

JACOB
No.

MEG
Alt right troll.

JACOB
Liberal snowflake.

WALT
I don't know what any of that means

RICHARD
It means your son's a little creep.

WALT
Oh MY son's a creep?

JONI
Guys! Walt he was in the bathroom...

WALT
He was in the bathroom

RICHARD
Joylessly masturbating to pictures of
dead deer.

WALT
Ok you wanna go?

They go at each other and do some half-hearted slap-fighting
before Linda and Joni break them apart. Ransom's loving
this.

RANSOM

We gotta do this more often.

LINDA

Alright! Enough. Jacob, we get where this is going. The bathroom's next to Harlan's office, where he had the big fight with Ransom. You heard something. Spill it.

JACOB

I just heard two things.

INT. HALF BATH - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Jacob on the toilet, hearing non distinct yelling through a vent high in the wall. But two words poke through:

HARLAN (O.S.)

...my will!

INT. LIVING ROOM

JACOB

And then there was more shouting, but I also heard Ransom say "I'm warning you."

Walt raises his arms, triumphant.

LINDA

Ransom? What's this mean?

He just eats cookies, silent.

WALT

It means dad finally came to his senses and cut this worthless lazy brat out of the will.

(to Ransom)

And you better sell your little Beamer and you better give your notice at that country club and kick whatever fashion drugs you're on cause if you think after the bridges you've burned, the shit you've said and what you've put this family through for the past ten years that any of us are going to support you, are going to give you like dad used to say a single red dime you're nuts.

Ransom looks around the room. Cold faces.

RICHARD

Son.

RANSOM

(mock gravity)

Father?

RICHARD

Did Harlan tell you he was cutting you out of the will?

RANSOM

Yes.

RICHARD

Then he's done what we weren't strong enough to do - this might finally make you grow up.

Ransom is really slapped by this but he doesn't let it show.

LINDA

I think it might be the best thing that could happen to you.

RANSOM

Thanks - my mother, folks.

JONI

It won't be easy for you but it'll be good. Nothing good is ever easy.

RANSOM

Up your ass Joni, you've got your teeth bit into this family tit so hard

MEG

Oh 'up your ass' very nice you homophobic privileged -

RANSOM

(going down the line)

As a matter of fact - Eat shit, hows that? In fact eat shit, eat shit - eat shit - Definitely eat shit. Eat shit.

And now everyone is shouting at each other.

Blanc has heard enough. He sets the baseball down on a side table, and drifts out. Marta follows him.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Blanc breathes in the air. Marta joins him. From inside the house, the shouting continues.

MARTA
What was that about will readings
being boring?

BLANC
Exception that proves the rule.

Fran bursts out of the living room, muttering

FRAN
Asshole.

She storms off around the house. A beat of thought. Then:

BLANC
I'm warning you. Ransom said. I'm
warning you.

One of the dogs bounds up the steps to Blanc.

MARTA
You heard Ransom in there, it's the
kind of thing he says.

When Blanc goes to pet him, the dog drops something to his feet with a clatter. Marta freezes.

MARTA (cont'd)
What's he got there? Hey boy. You
find a stick? He's always bringing
junk into the house -

It's the piece of broken trellis. Blanc picks it up, examines it, and suddenly his eyes go sharp.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD

Holding the piece up as he studies the trellis that runs up the side of the house. Marta runs up beside him.

BLANC
This looks like a relatively fresh
break - yes. Right there.

He's spotted the broken spot on the trellis. Just up from it, what looks like a boarded window.

BLANC (cont'd)
 Wait - that doesn't make sense,
 where's that window?

INT. LIVING ROOM

The whole family in a screaming match, but Blanc and Marta walk through and up the stairs. Three people notice: Elliott and Wagner (who follow) and Ransom (who doesn't.)

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING

Blanc looks down the "dead end" hallway. Marta joins him, out of breath.

BLANC
 Show me, but don't step on the
 carpet.

It's a runner rug, and Marta delicately steps on the wood siding as she goes to the wall with the painting. And swings it open, revealing the window.

TROOPER WAGNER
 It's the trick window! From "A Kill
 For All Seasons!"

Elliott and Wagner at the top of the stairs, and Blanc motions them not to approach.

BLANC
 Off the carpet!

He drops down to his knees, removes a loupe from his jacket, and holds it in his eye. Then, his face inches from the carpet, he scans it. All the way to the window. Then stops.

BLANC (cont'd)
 Traces of dried mud. I suspect they
 go the length of the hallway.

MARTA
 Footprints?

BLANC
 No, just traces.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 Depending on when it was last
 cleaned, it could be from anytime

BLANC

But that would not explain this.

He motions to the base of the window sill - obvious scuffs of dried mud. Marta winces.

Blanc tosses the piece of trellis to Elliott.

BLANC (cont'd)

Analyze this mud. It will match these traces, and you will find similar samples leading up the trellis on the side of the house.

(beat)

On the night of the party, somebody who did not want to be heard climbing the steps went to a great deal of trouble to break into Harlan Thrombey's rooms. The game is afoot, eh Watson?

INT. LIBRARY - MINUTES LATER

The whole family assembled. Marta stands in the back, with Blanc, Elliott and Trooper Wagner.

Alan Stevens, Harlan's attorney, sits at a table with papers in front of him, assistant Sally beside him.

ALAN

Well. Thank you all for getting together like this, it isn't legally necessary but I thought because you're all in town and some of you are leaving soon, it would be best -

BLANC

Excuse me Mr. Stevens. As to that, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to gently request you all remain in town until the investigation is completed. Shouldn't be more than two days.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

He's gently requesting, I'm ordering. Nobody move until we figure this out.

Nobody likes this.

LINDA

What?

JONI
Can we ask why? Has something
changed?

BLANC
No.

JONI
No it hasn't changed or no we can't
ask?

BLANC
Mr. Stevens, please continue.

ALAN
Right. Well the other reason I
thought this gathering would be, uh,
beneficial is that as I told Walt,
Harlan altered his will one week ago.
He sealed it and asked me not to
submit it to the courts for probate
until after his death. So in case
there's any confusion about anything
we're all together, we can talk. I
can't imagine any of it will be that
complicated, Harlan's assets included
um

SALLY
...the house

ALAN
the house which he owned outright, um

SALLY
sixty million

ALAN
right in various cash accounts and
investments, yes and of course the
real assets are sole ownership of um

SALLY
Blood Like Wine

ALAN
Blood Like Wine publishing, his
publishing company. Ok.

Walt's wife puts her hand on his knee. He squeezes it,
smiled tightly.

ALAN (cont'd)

Um, he did write up a statement when he made the recent changes, he wanted it read first, so:

(reads)

"Some of you may be surprised by the choice I've made here. No pleasure was taken in the exclusion, and its purpose was not to sow greater discord in the family, quite the opposite. Please accept it with grace and without bitterness. But do accept it. It's for the best."

Gently condescending eyes shift to Ransom. Linda sees this, puts her hand on her son's hand, and he immediately gets up and moves to a chair in the corner.

Alan's assistant hands him an envelope and he removes a single sheet of paper with one short typed paragraph.

ALAN (cont'd)

Ok. So - oh wow, yeah, not complex at all. This'll be quick. "I Harlan Thrombey, being of sound mind and body, yada yada, my assets both liquid and otherwise, I leave in their entirety to Marta Cabrera. My entire ownership of Blood Like Wine publishing I leave in its entirety to Marta Cabrera. The copyright of its catalog likewise I leave in its entirety to Marta Cabrera.

The air around Marta's head goes away. The room spins. She's not sure what's happening. Blanc is looking at her. The whole family is looking at her.

Walt bursts out of his chair and grabs the will

WALT

No.

LINDA

No.

WALT

No. What?

(beat)

That can't be - that can't be right

RICHARD
What the genuine shit

WALT
That can't be right it's
right

ALAN
It's right

Donna begins to hyperventilate. She puts her head between her knees, breathes deep.

LINDA
No no no no Alan this can't be legal,
there are, we're his family

WALT
We're his family, Alan he
obviously wasn't,
something - I don't know
what but something wasn't
right here

RICHARD
Are there safeguards against
this?

And from the back of the room, slowly rising above the din of confusion and cursing, slowly drawing even Marta's deer in the headlights attention... Ransom. LAUGHING. Loud and weirdly sincerely, tears down his cheeks, laughing his head off.

JONI
Alan there's a mistake

MEG
Mom if it's what granddad
wanted

JONI
No this is a mistake, this
is ours.

LINDA
Alan take that piece of paper and
shove it up your ass and get out.
And you cops, out!

They don't but Ransom slips out, his child-like laughter trailing after him.

RICHARD
Linda -

LINDA
No, we need to talk and we need to
fight this thing and we're not going
anywhere. GET OUT! We're the
Thrombeys goddammit! This is still
our house!

A beat of silence. Then all eyes go to Alan. Who looks down at the will. His assistant Sally points helpfully.

ALAN

Sorry, there's, uh. "Likewise the house at two Deerborn Drive and all belongings therein I leave to Marta Cabrera.

Linda goes for Marta.

LINDA

You little bitch. Did you know about this? What did you do to him to make this happen, were you two what were you boinking my father?

Marta recoils, stumbles back.

MEG

'Boinking?'

RICHARD

Linda!

JACOB

Anchor baby.

WALT

Marta! Jacob! And Linda - please!

JONI

Linda please - Marta, you need to tell us though,

WALT

Yes Marta, did dad discuss this with you?

JONI

You need to tell us everything you know about this and we need to talk about this,

WALT

This isn't what dad wanted, this isn't fair but we can work this out

RICHARD

Jesus don't mob the girl, let's talk about this

The whole family is coming towards her like zombies. Blanc takes her by the arm and steers her towards the door.

BLANC

I think heads have to cool a little, and in the meanwhile I'd maybe run.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

Marta stumbles out of the house in a daze. Behind her, the entirety of the family floods out after her, shouting reassurances and questions and accusations and a general din of confusion.

MARTA

I - I have no idea why he - I just need to think - I'll call you or have him call me or do something I don't know

She gets in her car and slams the door, and it's instantly like A Hard Day's Night - the family gathered around trying to talk through the window and rapping to get her attention.

Marta keys the ignition - chug chug chug. Nothing. Oh god, not now - chug chug chug. It won't turn over.

Richard opens the door, she pulls it closed again and locks it, this is like a horror movie. Blanc is trying to get the family to back off but no dice.

Marta puts her head in her hands, all of it swirling and echoing and horrifying, she has no idea what to do.

HONK!

She turns - a honking car pulls up right beside her and through the family crowd she sees Ransom in his Porsche, waving "get in." With no other options she pushes out of her car and through the family and JUMPS IN with him.

As he GUNS IT and careens out of the driveway he shouts back at the family with a wave

RANSOM

I think this could be the best thing to happen to all of you!

And they're gone. The family keeps shouting at each other.

Blanc watches the Porsche recede, his expression unreadable. DING! His phone buzzing. He checks it. His expression darkens.

INT. RANSOM'S PORSCHE

Tearing down the private road, away from the house. He's still laughing, she's still shell shocked. Slowly, his laughter eases to a stop. A moment of silence.

RANSOM

Ok seriously though, what the hell?

She shakes her head, looks at him. What the hell indeed.

EXT. ROADSIDE FAMILY RESTAURANT - LATER

The Porsche parked out front.

INT. RESTAURANT - CORNER BOOTH

Tucked into a dark corner, Marta is miserable. Ransom is bemused, but regards her closely.

They sit in silence. A waitress sets a sausage plate down.

RANSOM

(to the waitress)

Could we get an extra bowl please?

(to Marta)

You look like you're gonna pass out.
Have you eaten all day? Eat.

She joylessly shovels food in her mouth, starving.

MARTA

This is a nightmare.

RANSOM

Uh huh. So why.

MARTA

Why

RANSOM

Why. Hey, this is everything. There has to be a bigger reason why and you know it.

MARTA

Well Ransom how about it had more to do with you guys than with me.

RANSOM

(agrees)

Yeah.

(beat)

Yeah that's the only thing that makes sense.

Marta is unexpectedly effected by this. The waitress breezes by, sets an empty bowl on the table.

MARTA
Did he tell you anything?

RANSOM
Just I wasn't getting a cent.

MARTA
He wanted you to build
something from the ground
up, like your parents

RANSOM
something from the ground
up, like my parents

RANSOM (cont'd)
yeah. My mom built her business from
the ground up with a million dollar
loan from granddad. My dad owns none
of it, and mom made him sign a
prenup. He lives in fear.
I know that's what granddad wanted to
protect me from by doing this, and I
know I shouldn't say this out loud
but when he told me, Jesus Christ I
coulda killed him.

(beat)
After I left the party, though. I
was driving fast, nowhere, just in
the night. And I got this weird...
clarity. That from here on I was
going to have to do for myself. And
that felt... good. The old bastard.

(beat)
Marta I know three things. One: I
know he didn't commit suicide.

MARTA
What makes you think that

RANSOM
I don't think it. I know it. Cause
I knew my granddad. So you're not
going to bullshit me. Because two:
I know lying makes you puke. Cause
of that mafia game last fourth of
July.

Marta sinks back, suddenly nervous.

RANSOM (cont'd)
And three. I know that you just ate
a full plate of sausage and baked
beans.

She looks down at her empty plate. Oh no. He pushes the large empty bowl in front of her.

RANSOM (cont'd)
So look me in the eye. And tell me
what really happened to my granddad.

Her lip quivers. She looks like she might attempt it. But then tears drop from her eyes.

MARTA
You bastard.

Ransom pull the bowl away, and puts his hand on hers.

RANSOM
Marta. Tell me everything.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE - EVENING

Dusk settles heavy. Warm light from the windows.

WALT (O.S.)
There have to be options here.

ALAN (O.S.)
No. I don't know how many times I
can repeat the same two simple pieces
of information.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Lit by a fire in the fireplace, the whole family pacing around, Alan the lawyer looking very tired seated at a table in the center of the room.

ALAN
If Harlan was of sound mind when he
made the changes, and we've all
confirmed he was

RICHARD
Would a sound person do
this! Sound how?

LINDA
The very action speaks to
unsoundness!

ALAN
not legally no, you not liking what
they did does not speak to
testamentary capacity.

JACOB
What about undue influence?

WALT
Yes! Undue influence!

ALAN
(weary)
Did you just google that?

WALT
If Marta was manipulating dad
somehow, if we found out that she had

LINDA
Gotten her hooks into him

WALT
Somehow or something

ALAN
You need a strong case for that.
You've got nothing. "She endeared
herself to him through hard work and
good humor" won't cut the salami.

JONI
What about the slayer rule?

All eyes turn to her. Her face is lit by her phone.

JONI (cont'd)
I did just google that.

ALAN
The slayer rule obviously does not
apply here.

RICHARD
What the hell is the slayer rule?

JONI
It's if someone is convicted of
killing the person they can't get
their inheritance.

ALAN
Not even convicted, even if they're
held responsible for their death in
civil court

WALT
Like OJ

ALAN
Like OJ, yes. But Harlan
committed suicide.

All eyes turn to Blanc, who this whole time has been sitting in a chair by the fire, lost in thought.

JONI

Detective Blank. You said that the investigation is continuing. You made a point of that. Do you suspect foul play?

BLANC

Mister Blanc. If you please.

(beat)

There is much that remains unclear. But yes. I suspect foul play.

The eruption you would expect breaks out.

RICHARD

Marta?

BLANC

I have eliminated no suspects.

RICHARD

You're full of shit, I don't trust this guy in the tweed suit, and Alan god bless you you're useless.

ALAN

Thank you.

Alan takes that as an excuse to leave.

RICHARD

There's one answer to this: she can renounce the inheritance.

WALT

She knows it's what she should do, it's the right thing to do.

LINDA

We've gotta make her do the right thing.

Meg rounds on her mom, speaks quietly, in tears.

MEG

Mom. If Granddad wanted Marta to have everything, that's what he wanted.

JONI

No, this was not him. He loved us, he wanted us taken care of. He wanted you to have an education.

(MORE)

JONI (cont'd)

Meg. You think I can pay for your school?

This leaves Meg shaken.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Beer bottles now stacked up in front of Ransom. Marta has just told Ransom everything. He stares into space, and makes the slightest hint of a laugh which I'll write as:

RANSOM

Heuh.

MARTA

I know, just saying it it sounds insane but it's all true. I think Blanc's been on to me from the start - I don't care if I go to jail, but my mom... my sister, we can't -

Nothing but silence from Ransom. Maybe he's deep in thought. A strange glint in his eye.

MARTA (cont'd)

You going to say something?

RANSOM

I always thought I was the only one who could beat Granddad at GO. I always thought that meant something.

MARTA

I know you did.

RANSOM

At the party, that night, my last conversation with him, our last fight, that's what he told me, about you. That you beat him nearly every time. More than me. And I thought what a strange thing to tell me. But I think I get it now. I think it did mean something.

(beat)

I'm not telling the family shit. You're not going to jail. That detective is not going to catch you. And you're not giving up the family fortune.

(MORE)

RANSOM (cont'd)

Think about what Granddad did to see this through, this was what he wanted not just for you but for his family, and for him. And yes for you. You've come this far. Let me help you go all the way.

Marta looks at him hard.

MARTA

This isn't you. You could turn me in right now and get your cut of the inheritance. Why?

RANSOM

Because fuck my family. They don't deserve any of this. I can help you and we can fool them all and get away with it... and then you will give me my cut of the inheritance. The perfect ending, we all win. You, me and Harlan. Deal?

Silence. Broken by Marta's phone ringing. On the phone ID - "MEG T"

Marta takes a breath, looks at Ransom. And picks it up.

MARTA

Meg

MEG (ON PHONE)

Marta. Oh that was nuts.

MARTA

I know

MEG (ON PHONE)

Are you ok?

MARTA

Yeah are you?

MEG (ON PHONE)

I'm fine, I mean everyone's nuts, they're all going, I don't know, they've lost it. No one knows I'm calling you, I wanted to - I don't know what I wanted, I wanted to say sorry for how everyone was.

MARTA

No...

MEG (ON PHONE)

And... I guess I wanted to ask...

(beat)

What are you going to do?

MARTA
What do you mean?

MEG (ON PHONE)
Well the... with the, will. What are you going to do?

Marta looks at Ransom. What indeed.

MARTA
What do you think I should do?

MEG (ON PHONE)
You should do what you think is... right. I think you should give it back to us. Granddad always took care of us, we're his family, I know he was like family to you but we're his actual family. Marta you know this isn't fair, we've always been good to you and we're going to take care of you, everyone loves you and you're like family and we'll take care of you but you have to make things right, you know what's right.

Marta, keeping eye contact with Ransom. Then, her voice quavering, Meg drops what is for her the big bomb:

MEG (ON PHONE) (cont'd)
Marta, mom's broke, she says I'll have to drop out of school.

MARTA
No, no. I won't let that happen.
(beat)
Whatever money you need Meg, I'll help you. I don't want you to worry.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg on the phone. Her face horrified, mortified, barely comprehending what she's just heard.

MARTA (ON PHONE)
I'll take care of you. I promise.

MEG
Thanks.

MARTA (ON PHONE)
And once I get the -

Meg hangs up, lets the phone drop from her ear. Tears in her eyes. She turns to her whole family gathered behind her, silent and expectant.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Marta realizes the connection's dead, holds the phone in her hand like something delicate she just broke.

RANSOM

Ok then. Did the detective find anything suspicious at the house?

MARTA

(in a daze)

Mud. Tracks upstairs - where I broke in through the window.

Ransom winces.

RANSOM

Identifiable prints?

MARTA

No.

RANSOM

Good. Ok. Good. Hey. You've just gotta ride the next few days out until the investigation putters out, cause it will, cause no matter how sharp this Blanc guy is he's got nothing. Relax.

INT. MARTA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

She wakes to a sharp rapping at her door. Her sister Alice pokes her head in, flustered.

ALICE

Marta get your ass up, what the hell is happening? There's a guy here and a bunch of stuff, everything's going crazy, are we rich??

Marta lifts her head from her hands.

MARTA

Maybe, I dunno.

ALICE

I don't even know what that means but
you better get your ass up.

Marta looks at her phone - 28 missed calls.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

Marta stumbles in - Alice in front of the TV, mom pacing.

MOM

(subtitled Spanish)

Oh my god Marta what is all this,
what did you do?

The TV is tuned to local news - an anchor stands outside
THEIR APARTMENT BUILDING.

LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)

...we again we don't know much about
Marta Cabrera or the exact
relationship she had to Harlan
Thrombey, beyond being his home
nurse, and the Thrombey family has
yet to release a statement...

MARTA

Is that here?

ALICE

Oh yeah it is. Wait so is that true?
Are we rich?

Marta looks out the blinds - several local reporters down in
the streets with their vans and cameras.

MARTA

Oh my god.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Wagner's prowler pulls up. Blanc gets out of the passenger
side.

Blanc nods to the Wagner and the officer.

INT. GREATNANA'S ROOM

Dim. By an open window stands GREATNANA. Blanc enters, she
turns. They look into each others eyes.

BLANC
Good Morning Mrs. Thrombey.

A long pause as he thinks of exactly the right word.

BLANC (cont'd)
Why is grief the providence of youth? I don't know. But I'd imagine that age deepens all feelings. Including grief. This was a long walk to offering condolences for the loss of your son. And asking you if it isn't presumptuous of me to not think too harshly of your family, if I am as I suspect the first to console you. They're young aren't they.

Blanc sits.

BLANC (cont'd)
One thing I do assume of age is weariness. Damned if I don't get more tired every day. Tired of what I do. Following arcs, like lobbed rocks. The inevitability of truth. But the complexity and the gray lies not in the truth but what you do with the truth once you have it.

Greatnana's eyes move slightly.

BLANC (cont'd)
I think you have something you want to tell me. I think you're very perceptive and very capable of telling me what you saw the night of your son's party. But I'll happily wait. I'm in no rush. I find it quite pleasant. Sitting here with you.

He reclines, not particularly looking at her. She looks back at him. Every now and then a breeze stirs the window sheers.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

MOM

Lawyers were here, very big lawyers it looked like, and some other guys I didn't know, they left all this for you and business cards, so many business cards, and there was a pile of other stuff when I got home -

Mom shovels some official looking legal letter and courier envelopes into Marta's arms.

MOM (cont'd)

(subtitled Spanish)

Hey. I don't like this.

MARTA

(subtitled Spanish)

I don't like it either mom. I'm slipping out the back - I'll be back later, don't talk to anyone.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY

Dim and dingy. Marta comes out of their apartment door, then jump, startled - at the end of the hall, lurking: Walt.

MARTA

Hey.

Walt's eyes are rimmed red. His heavy cane taps.

WALT

Hey.

They're not sure what to do so they awkwardly hug. Marta still has the envelopes in her hands.

WALT (cont'd)

How you doing?

MARTA

Well. Walt I want you to know I didn't know about any of this. This is

WALT

I know you didn't, we all went kinda crazy yesterday

MARTA

Understandable

WALT

You're still very important to all of us, I want you to know that.

MARTA

I haven't even looked at all this yet, this legal stuff, is this from you guys?

Marta flips through the envelopes, squinting.

WALT

it isn't from us. Maybe just local lawyers and accountants who saw the news and want to jump on it, I'd be careful of it all.

One envelope sticks out - a blank plain letter sized envelope, no postage, no return address.

WALT (cont'd)

Marta. Is it your intention to renounce the inheritance?

MARTA

This is what Harlan wanted.

WALT

Well. Harlan has put you in a very hard position here. It was unfair of him.

Walt's hand on his cane. Gripping tight.

WALT (cont'd)

You see what this kicks up with the press and the scrutiny, and we know... with your mother...

MARTA

...with my mother.

Marta's spine straightens.

MARTA (cont'd)

What did Meg tell you.

WALT

This isn't about who - you're missing the point, we're not attacking you with this.

(MORE)

WALT (cont'd)

Marta if your mom came here illegally, criminally, if you come into this inheritance with the scrutiny that entails I'd be afraid that could come to light. That's what we're all trying to avoid here. We can protect you from that happening, or if it happens.

MARTA

You're saying even if it came to light, with the family's resources you could help me fix it.

WALT

Yes. The right lawyers, none of those local guys but New York lawyers, DC lawyers, enough resources put towards it, yes. But there's no need it should ever even come up. But yes.

MARTA

Ok. Good.

WALT

Ok?

MARTA

Cause Harlan gave me all your resources. So that means with my resources I'll be able to fix it. So I guess I'm going to go find the right lawyers.

WALT

Marta.

He shuffles towards her. For the first time she feels a hint of physical threat, and backs up quick into her apartment.

WALT (cont'd)

You better be sure you want to -

She slams the door

INT. CABRERA KITCHEN

and leans against it, breathing hard. But angry and focused. She dumps the legal envelopes in the trash but keeps the mysterious envelope, opens it and pulls out:

Half a sheet of paper, roughly torn. A photocopy of the header of some sort of medical document, "OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER" Under that, a photocopy of a tag with her name on it. And hand written in block letters at the top: "I KNOW WHAT YOU DID."

Marta's phone BUZZES, and she jumps. Caller ID: "maybe B BLANC". She hesitates, then sends it voicemail. Looks at the mysterious letter in her hands.

INT. RANSOM'S LIVING ROOM

Ransom studies the mysterious letter. Marta pushes aside a stack of New Yorkers and sits on the couch.

RANSOM

Well I don't know what this is from

Indicating the tag photocopy with her name.

MARTA

It's my medical bag tag. They have my medical bag. For some reason.

RANSOM

OK, but this is just a photocopy of the header of a blood toxicology report, from the local crime lab. On Harlan. Marta, it would show the morphine overdose.

MARTA

So I'm screwed! How do you know all this stuff?

RANSOM

I was Harlan's research assistant. For a summer.

He sips his morning coffee.

RANSOM (cont'd)

But what kind of blackmail scheme is this? I mean the actual evidence is sitting up the street at the crime lab. What was the point of sending you this?

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Siren blazing, the cop car SPEEDS into town.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

The cop car pulls past an identifying sign into the parking lot of a one story stand alone building, joining several other cop cars, and fire trucks. Journalists kept at bay.

The building is a charred brick husk. Black smoke, debris. It's been gutted with an explosion and a blazing fire.

Blanc steps out of the cop car and finds Lieutenant Elliott.

BLANC
What's the cheese?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Five AM, security systems here was all triggered. It went up quick. Blood stores, records, all gone. No employees around, thank god.

BLANC
Any surveillance cams?

Elliott gestures wearily to the charred remains of a security camera on the smoking shell of an awning.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And speaking of security, the security tape from the Thrombey residence was scrambled. For some reason.

Blanc unsurprised. He motions back to the building.

BLANC
What was still pending from the autopsy?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
The report on the blood work.

BLANC
Blood work?

Blanc chews on this.

Across the street, Marta and Ransom pull up in her car.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

MARTA
Holy shit. This is insane.

Ransom looks at her - yeah it's likely. They both instinctively duck down in case the cops look over.

MARTA (cont'd)
Who would blow up a whole real official building just to blackmail me?

RANSOM
Marta this means that the blackmailer has the only paper copy of the thing that can prove your guilt. You didn't get any other instructions, no phone call no email, no nothing?

Marta looks stunned. She stabs at her phone, quick swipes.

MARTA
...nothing...I didn't check my email.

She shows him an email from 092832@shushmail.com. No subject line, simple text: 1209 Columbus Rd 10AM

RANSOM
That's it. 1209 Columbus Road, 10am.

Marta looks at Ransom, then at the clock on her dashboard - 9:32, then at the charred building.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Blanc looks around, deep in thought. He spots Marta's car.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta peeking up through the window.

Blanc sees her. She sees him. Ducks back down. Shit.

RANSOM
You know what this means right? If you destroy that copy you are totally within the clear.

Blanc begins to walk straight towards Marta. Quickly and with purpose. Shouts something, Lieutenant Elliott follows.

RANSOM (cont'd)
Marta. Did you hear me.

Marta peeks again - Blanc coming at them full speed. Twenty paces from the car. Closing in fast.

MARTA

Yeah.

She sits up, throws the car in gear and FLOORS IT.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Her subcompact PEELS OUT and buzzes off down the road.

Blanc, crestfallen, runs back towards the cop cars in the parking lot, shouting at Elliott, who flags a cop.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

The whine of the engine, Ransom puts on his seat belt. In the rear view, siren lights as cop cars pour out of the parking lot in pursuit.

MARTA

You regret helping me yet?

RANSOM

I regret not taking the beamer.

Her phone buzzes - Blanc calling. IGNORE.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta buzzing down the road, cop cars a quarter mile back.

INT. COP CAR

Blanc in back, Elliott in front, Trooper Wagner driving.

TROOPER WAGNER (ON RADIO)	LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Vehicles in pursuit in	(into radio)
Washington Street	No force - repeat that.
	Possible murder suspect.

Their speedometer creeping up on 85

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta's speedometer creeping up on 55.

MARTA
 Oh my god oh my god oh my
 god I am literally flooring
 it

RANSOM
 Are you flooring it?

Her phone rings - Blanc again. She looks over - cop cars are RIGHT ALONGSIDE them. Blank holds his phone up, looks at her quizzically. Points to the phone.

RANSOM (cont'd)
 This is going well.

MARTA
 This is stupid, I'm pulling over

RANSOM
 If you miss your shot at getting that
 tox report it's all over...

MARTA
 Aaauuuuuawwwaaagghhh

She hits the brakes.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car PEELS TO A STOP and the two COP CARS on either side blaze by, hitting their brakes.

She pulls off onto a SIDE STREET and into narrower city streets, down narrow alleys, using her small car to nimbly dart through small spaces.

The cops can't follow, and she loses them.

She pulls to a stop in a secluded little back lot.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta, breathing hard. Ransom is shocked.

MARTA
 Ok. I'm all just pure
 adrenaline now it's like I
 swallowed bees. What's the
 the whatsitcalled address
 ok. And I just - I mean
 whatever they want, I just
 say yes right, just to get
 that report back.
 And destroy it. Ransom.
 Thank you. I couldn't do
 this without you.

RANSOM
 1209 Columbus road.
 And destroy it.

He smiles slightly. A quick moment of silence between them.

Then: RAP RAP RAP on Ransom's car window.

Blanc. Standing right outside. Marta looks in her rear
 view - the cop car has pulled up silently behind them.
 Another pulls up in front.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Ransom and Marta step out of the car, hands raised for some
 reason.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 That was the dumbest car chase of all
 time. Put your hands down.

BLANC
 (to Marta)
 I spoke to Wanetta Thrombey,
 Greatnana. The night of the party
 she saw someone climb the trellis to
 the third floor.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 Mr. Drysdale, come with us please.

Elliott leads Ransom off by the elbow. Ransom throws a look
 back at Marta - he has no idea what's going on.

MARTA
 What's going on?

BLANC
 "Ransom came back" she said. I don't
 know what he came back to do, but
 we'll find out.

Marta looks at Ransom - oh no. Senile Greatnana thought she was him. This is a mistake. But... she glances at her watch - 9:51.

BLANC (cont'd)
Did he ask you to drive when he saw me coming?

Ransom's being led to the police car. Marta decides:

MARTA
Yes.

Marta gets back in her car. She pretends to take a sip from an empty soda cup, but actually SPITS UP a little into it.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (O.S.)
Blanc. Coming with us?

BLANC (O.S.)
(to Elliott)
I'll drive with Marta.

To Marta's horror Blanc opens her passenger door.

BLANC
Let's go to the police station, I want a full run down of everything he said to you, and I can catch you up on where we're at.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Cop cars coast through town, Marta's bringing up the rear.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta glances at the dashboard clock - 9:55. Blanc, casual:

BLANC
Strange case from the start. A case with a hole in the middle. A donut. I'm just talking through my process here, let me know if this is boring.

Marta's arms are locked, her eyes steal a glance at the clock - 9:58.

BLANC (cont'd)
I feel the noose tightening - the family are truly desperate.
(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
 Desperate motives, the mystery of who
 hired me, the impossibility of the
 crime, and yet -

Up ahead, a street sign - "Columbus Road." Marta tenses.

BLANC (cont'd)
 A donut! One central piece, and if it
 reveals itself the fog would lift,
 the arc would resolve, the slinky
 become unkinked

MARTA
 Do you mind if I stop for a second. I
 need to pick something up. It will be
 very quick.

BLANC
 Sure.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car makes a sharp turn, leaving the cop caravan.

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

A row of storefronts - 1209 is vacant. Marta's car pulls a
 few stores past it. She gets out of the car.

MARTA
 I'll just be a few minutes.

Marta runs into a bustling hair salon.

EXT. BACK ALLEY

Marta ducks out the back door of the salon, goes two doors
 down to 1209, and slips into the back door.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

Dark, empty retail space. Lit only by the painted-over
 front windows. Marta edges her way in, her eyes still
 adjusting from the sun.

MARTA
 Hello?

Her foot hits something on the dirty concrete floor.

HER MEDICAL BAG.

She kneels, picks it up gently.

Next to where it was lying, she finds something else curious - the burned remnants of a piece of paper. Only a charred corner remains.

She turns her attention back to the room. Creeps forward.

MARTA (cont'd)

Hello?

Ahead - a silhouette. A person. Seated in a chair, in the center of the room. Silent, facing her.

MARTA (cont'd)

Listen I don't know what you want. Whatever you want we can work it out, but we have to figure it out right here, right now, and I'm leaving with that report.

A beat of silence. Nothing. Something's not right here.

MARTA (cont'd)

Hello?

Marta takes a step closer, lifts her phone, and turns on its flashlight.

Illuminating the ghostly face of FRAN, the housekeeper.

Marta, barely breathing:

MARTA (cont'd)

Fran?

A SPIDER crawls across Fran's face. Marta STIFLES A SCREAM and leaps back, sucking in air.

A moment of stillness. Her phone BUZZES - Blanc calling. Marta ignores the call, frozen.

Her eyes go to: A white letter sized ENVELOPE in Fran's hand, resting on her lap.

Marta swallows. Leans in, carefully and quietly for some reason, and SLIPS the envelope from the lifeless fingers.

Unsealed. She opens it.

It is empty.

Before this can even sink in, a rattling, grating DRAW OF BREATH - from Fran.

Marta starts - oh my god - and goes to her, checking a pulse, checking her eyes, lays her on her back. Fran sucks in thin breath, her eyes finding Marta in the glare of the dropped phone flashlight.

MARTA (cont'd)

Fran! Fran! Can you hear me? Fran, give me a sign if you can hear me!

FRAN

You

MARTA

Me? Fran it's Marta, you called me here, you sent me the email, I'm here. I'm going to call an ambulance and you're going to be ok but can you tell me what happened, did you take something, what's happened to you -

Weak, Fran grabs Marta's wrist, and Marta focuses on her.

FRAN

...copy... copy

MARTA

What?

FRAN

...stashed...

These words are barely given breath:

FRAN (cont'd)

you... did this... won't... get away.. with this

Her eyes seize. Her breath gets ragged. Marta is paralyzed with shock and fear. Fran is dying.

Marta looks at the medical bag in her hand. Then at Fran, struggling with her final breaths, eyes wide with fear.

She takes a step back from the dying Fran. Fingers tight around the medical bag. Letting her die.

But then, a decision: no. Marta dials 911 on speaker, drops to her knees and starts administering mouth to mouth.

PHONE
911, what is your emergency?

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

Blanc sitting in the car, singing softly to himself.

BLANC
Sometimes I stand in the middle of
the room... not going left... not
going right...

He looks at the hair salon - what's taking so long? And then sirens, as an AMBULANCE pulls up two doors down, and EMT's run into the abandoned storefront.

BLANC (cont'd)
Oh lord.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Marta and Blanc sitting silently in the fluorescent-lit waiting room. Marta with her face in her hands. Blanc is on his phone, mostly listening.

BLANC
(listens)
Alright my friend, thank you for the update. No I'm here with her. No need for that, I'll bring her in once we get word that the housekeeper is stable. It's still touch and go.
(listens)
Alright.

He hangs up. Marta looks at him.

MARTA
This is over. People are getting hurt. I'm going to tell you the truth.

BLANC
Young Ransom just told Lieutenant Elliott everything. Who just told me everything.

MARTA
 Good. Wait god I hope he
 didn't cover for me, did he
 tell the real truth, about
 me switching the-
 And the disguise and all
 the-
 And the blackmail with the-

BLANC
 Yeah
 Yes
 Mm.

MARTA
 But why did Fran take my morphine?
 Obviously she had swiped my bag from
 the house, but she didn't seem like a
 user to me, unless that's why she
 needed money...

(beat)
 I dunno, doesn't matter. I should
 tell the Thrombeys myself, I feel
 like I owe that to them.

BLANC
 I don't think that's a good idea

MARTA
 No, I need to do it. I won't do any
 of this if I can't do that. I really
 need to. I gave the doctors my
 number, they'll call if anything
 changes with Fran.

BLANC
 We'll round up the Thrombeys at the
 house, along with a police escort.

MARTA
 For the arrest after.

BLANC
 You can tell me your whole story on
 the drive over. I want no more
 surprises.

Marta stands, a dead man walking, resigned.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car drives through the scenic countryside. Inside
 we see but don't hear her telling a long story to Blanc, who
 looks at the passing countryside, brow knit.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - AFTERNOON

All the family cars there, along with two police cruisers. Marta's pulls up.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

MARTA

...said it was stashed, the copy, and then she told me "you did this, you won't get away with it" and then I called the ambulance. And that's it.

She turns the engine off. Looks up at the house. Breathes.

BLANC

Alright. Are you ready?

INT. FOYER

Marta and Blanc enter. This really feels like a walk towards the gallows. Richard, Walt and Meg are there. Meg avoids eye contact with Marta.

RICHARD

Ah. Ok, has she come to her senses?

WALT

She's standing right there Richard she can speak for herself -

BLANC

Is the rest of the family here?

WALT

In the living room.

BLANC

I think maybe, if we could...

Blanc beckons, and Richard and Walt file out. On her way out Meg hugs Marta, weeping.

MEG

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I told them about your mom. I was angry and scared, I'm sorry

MARTA

It's ok, Meg. I understand. Believe me. It's alright.

Meg sniffs, dries her eyes.

MEG

God I am so raiding Fran's stash
after this.

They hug one more time. Then when Meg walks off towards the living room, Marta realizes something. Blanc walks back.

BLANC

I still think this is a bad idea, but
the family is assembled.

MARTA

(to Blanc)

I know where the tox report is.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Marta jimmies the clock drawer open with a letter opener.

She pulls a FOLDED PIECE OF PAPER from inside, blows loose pot leaves off it. She hands it to Blanc.

MARTA

She practically told me where it was.
Anyway this'll tie everything up.
And I just handed it to you, god
you're you're not much of a
detective are you?

BLANC

To be fair you're a pretty lousy
murderer. Perhaps we deserve each
other.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The family gathered, impatient. Lieutenant Elliott and Trooper Wagner are there too, with another uniformed officer. Ransom sits in the corner, his face passive.

Marta gulps. Blanc is a few steps behind her. As she speaks, he unfolds and reads the tox report.

MARTA

Um. You guys have always been good
to me. And what I'm about to say
isn't going to be easy, and you're
going to be upset, but especially
after everything you've gone through
the past few days, I thought you
deserved to hear it from me.

Walt smiles at her, "you're doing the right thing." Marta takes a deep breath.

Blanc has finished reading the report. He refolds it carefully.

MARTA (cont'd)

I -

BLANC

Excuse me. You have not been good to her. You have all treated her like shit to steal back a fortune that you lost and she deserves. You're a pack of bloody vultures at the feast, but you're not getting bailed out, not this time.

(beat)

Ms. Cabrera has decided definitively not to renounce the inheritance.

WALT

What?

MARTA

What?

BLANC

Furthermore it will be my professional recommendation to the local authorities that the manner of death in the case of Harlan Thrombey is ruled as suicide, and the case is closed.

RANSOM

What?

MARTA

What? No, Blanc -

BLANC

Thank you all for coming
goodbye.

He firmly guides Marta out by the elbow. A beat of silence.

RICHARD

Is anybody else confused?

As the family breaks out in hubub, Linda notices her dad's OLD BASEBALL on the side table where Blanc left it. What's that doing here? She picks it up.

INT. LIBRARY

Blanc steers Marta into the library, as sounds of hubub and shouting come from the other room.

MARTA
What the hell? I want to come clean,
this is over -

BLANC
Almost.

Elliott bursts in, motions to the living room, then Marta, then Blanc.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
What - with - what?

BLANC
I'm sorry - officer Wagner!

Wagner enters.

BLANC (cont'd)
Please keep the family out of this
room and get them out of the house if
you can. But stand by with your
additional officer.

TROOPER WAGNER
Get the family out?

BLANC
Yes but not all of them.

Blanc whispers something to Wagner, who nods and exits.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Blanc c'mon, what's all this Drama.

BLANC
Indulge me.

Marta sits. Elliott remains standing.

MARTA
Blanc. I told Ransom, Ransom told
you, I'm telling you now - it is an
immovable fact that I killed Harlan.

BLANC
Yes you did, yes he did, yes you are,
but. But.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)

I spoke in the car about the hole at the center of this donut. And yes, what you and Harlan did that fateful night seems at first glance to fill that hole perfectly. A donut hole in the donut's hole. But we must look a little closer. And when we do, we see that the donut hole has a hole in its center - it is not a donut hole at all but a smaller donut with its own hole, and our donut is not whole at all!

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Blanc I understand that this is amusing for you -

BLANC

Why. Was. I. Hired? Why would someone hire me?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Someone fishing for any crime that could help reverse the will.

BLANC

I was hired before the sealed will was read. Yes, the person must have known the contents of the will. But one step further - that same person must have known a crime was committed, and further, if the intent was to reverse Marta's inheritance, they must have known that Marta was responsible.

(beat)

An intriguing combination of factors. Someone who knew what Marta did, wanted to expose it, but could not reveal how they knew.

MARTA

Fran? She was blackmailing me, she knew what I did

BLANC

But Fran wanted money, ergo she did not want the crime exposed.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Did someone in the family see Marta doing something suspicious?

BLANC

They would have had no reason to not speak up. No. The answer is not so simple.

Blanc sits, suddenly weary.

BLANC (cont'd)

Now with the entire solution in my field of view, the arc of this case is a tragedy of errors. And Marta, it will not be easy to hear. But there is at least one truly guilty party behind it all, guilty in the true sense of acting with malice, and committing a heinous crime with selfish intent.

(calls)

Trooper Wagner.

MARTA

(stunned)

Trooper Wagner??

Blanc squints at her. No.

A moment later Wagner leads Ransom in. Ransom looks at Marta softly, sadly.

RANSOM

Marta I'm sorry. I told them everything, I figured it was all up. I'm sorry.

MARTA

It's alright Ransom, I'm glad you did.

BLANC

Not exactly everything though.

MARTA

Is this about what Greatnana told you? She saw me that night, she mistook me for Ransom

BLANC

We'll get to that. But first, Mr. Hugh Ransom Drysdale, you might tell us all why you hired me.

RANSOM

Why I hired you?

BLANC

You're right, let's back up. To the night of the party. Your argument with Harlan. What were the overheard words by the Nazi child masturbating in the bathroom - "my will" and "I'm warning you." You and Harlan were "drama mamas," you shared a love of twisting the knife into one another. I don't believe he would have slipped it in halfway - no, I submit that Harlan told you everything.

INT. SMALL STUDY - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom and Harlan face each other.

RANSOM

You can't be serious.

HARLAN

Not a red dime or word of my work to a single one of them, you included.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

Marta, remind me what Ransom said his conversation with Harlan ended with.

MARTA

Harlan told him that I could beat him in GO.

BLANC

And I asked myself - Marta? Why would the topic of the will have steered around to Marta? There is one obvious explanation...

INT. SMALL STUDY - NIGHT OF PARTY

RANSOM

You are not this crazy. You would not just throw your fortune away

HARLAN

No. I'm giving it to Marta. All of it.

RANSOM

Ha. To your Brazilian nurse are you
goddamn insane.

HARLAN

I'm sane for the first time
in my life and I've done it
I've made the change to **my**
will it's done

RANSOM

I'm going to stop this
Harlan, I -

RANSOM (cont'd)

I'm warning you!

Push into a vent in the wall.

INT. LIBRARY

RANSOM

That is some heavy duty conjecture.

BLANC

Granted. But it's the only way what
comes next makes sense. So you storm
out, you drive off into the night.
You tell Marta later of what was it,
feeling an overwhelming sense of...

MARTA

Clarity. That he has to make do for
himself from here on out.

BLANC

Exactly.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom's Porsche SKIDS TO A STOP on the side of the empty
road. Sits idling.

BLANC (V.O.)

Marta. The will. Harlan. "You
won't get away with this." Do for
yourself. And a plan forms.

A beat. Then the Porsche roars into a skidding U-TURN and
drives back the way it came.

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom's Porsche kills its lights and drives slowly down the private road, hooking a left at the CARVED ELEPHANT that marks the utility road.

BLANC (V.O.)
You return, careful to avoid the gate's security camera range.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT OF PARTY

The Porsche parked, Ransom hacks his way through the woods.

BLANC (V.O.)
Then on foot up towards the house,

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY

The party is still going on inside. Ransom slips through the side gate, up towards the house, and up the trellis.

BLANC (V.O.)
You sneak in, up the trellis so as not to be seen by the rest of the family, who are still having their party downstairs.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

The painting wall swings aside, and Ransom climbs through, leaving mud traces on the sill and the carpet. He heads straight down the narrow hall and into Harlan's bedroom. The party din from downstairs.

BLANC (V.O.)
What you need to do will take moments. But it is essential you are alone, and undetected.

Ransom disappears into the darkened doorway.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
You knew the medications Harlan took. You knew what Marta would be injecting him with that night.
(MORE)

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
And you knew if Marta was responsible
for his death, even unintentionally,
the slayer rule would nullify the
changed will, and you would get your
share back.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM

Dark and still. Marta's medical bag, open. Ransom has
unwrapped two syringes and has the two vials out - the
Toradol and the morphine (the "good stuff.")

Using the syringes he extracts the liquid from both vials...
and then injects the liquids back into the opposite vials.
He SWITCHES THE MEDICATIONS.

BLANC (V.O.)
You use the syringes in the kit to
switch the liquids in the two
medication vials. And as a final
precaution, you take the Naloxone,
the life saving antidote.

Replacing the vials he takes an injection pen, closes the
bag up and leaves.

INT. LIBRARY

Marta is stunned, she can't even process this.

MARTA
No, no that's impossible.

BLANC
It is the truth. Hand me that vial
of morphine, I'll show you.

Blanc has placed two identical vials on the table behind
Marta. Her mind is still spinning, she glances at them,
takes one and absently hands it to him.

MARTA
If he did that, if the meds were
switched, then when I got them mixed
up...
(oh my god)
I accidentally switched them back.
But then I gave Harlan

BLANC

The correct doses. Yes. But not accidentally. I taped over the labels of these two vials.

Blanc shows white tape over the one she just handed him. Picks up the other vial, shows the same.

BLANC (cont'd)

The vials themselves are identical. How did you know that this was the morphine?

MARTA

I... just knew

BLANC

You knew because there is the slightest, almost imperceptible difference of tincture and viscosity between the liquids. You knew because you had done it a hundred times. You gave him the correct medication. Because you are a good nurse.

MARTA

Then Harlan was...

BLANC

I'm sorry Marta. But yes. Harlan was perfectly fine.

He unfolds the tox report and hands it to her.

BLANC (cont'd)

His blood was normal. The cause of death was truly, solely suicide, and you are guilty of nothing but some damage to the trellis and a few amateur theatrics. In fact if he had listened to you, he would be alive today.

Marta is white as a ghost. She shudders, buckles over.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Hot damn.

BLANC

A twisted web, and we are not finished untangling it. Not yet.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
Marta when Greatnana spotted you
climbing down the trellis she said

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY

Marta facing Greatnana, who says:

GREATNANA
Ransom? Are you back again already?

BLANC (V.O.)
Are you back again already, because
earlier that night -

CUT TO: the exact same scene but RANSOM hops down off the
trellis, and is startled by Greatnana staring at him.

GREATNANA
Ransom, you're back!

He puts his finger to his lips - shhh, and blows a kiss as
he walks off into the night.

INT. LIBRARY

Marta with her fingers on her temples, still unbelieving.

RANSOM
Marta c'mon.
(to Blanc)
This is stoopid with two o's and you
don't have a shred of evidence,
you're just spinning a fairy tale.

BLANC
Not a shred no, just as we have no
real proof of Marta's mixing up the
vials so it's your word against -

RANSOM
You have her confession!

The sharpness of this makes Marta look at Ransom for the
first time.

BLANC
Ah right, we do have that. If you'll
indulge me, I'd like to spin a little
further.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Moonlit, silent.

BLANC (V.O.)

Much later that night you would have to come back to the house, to break back in and retrieve the incriminating tampered vials.

A dark figure, Ransom, approaches the side gate. But when he opens it, the two dogs come bounding across the lawn, barking loudly.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

However, this time the dogs were outside. They barked. Waking Meg.

A light goes on upstairs. The dogs keep barking, paws on the gate. Ransom backs off.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

No matter. You'll get the vials tomorrow.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

But tomorrow brings news not of a medical error and guilty nurse, but of a slit throat and suicide!?

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

A nervous Ransom tears a clipping from the local newspaper about Harlan's death, stuffs it in an envelope with a huge fold of cash, and addresses it to Blanc. The New Yorker profile open on the couch.

BLANC (V.O.)

Now the circumstances are perfect for the anonymous hiring of a me: you know a crime has been committed by Marta, you need her to be caught for it, you cannot reveal how you know.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

Enter Benoit Blanc.

Elliott can't help but roll his eyes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Benny look I hear what you are saying

Trooper Wagner quickly shushes Elliott, enthralled by every word Blanc says.

BLANC
The body was discovered early the next morning. The police, the medical examiners, the family, everyone swarms in,
(to Ransom)
and there is no possible way you can get to Marta's medical bag to remove the vials. You must wait for your moment, when the investigation is over and you know the house will be empty. And that is why you missed the funeral.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Ransom bounds up the stairs, climbs under the POLICE TAPE blocking Harlan's study, and enters.

BLANC (V.O.)
there is no one home to wonder why you're going into Harlan's study. Or so you think.

Fran comes around the corner, spots Ransom and is about to say something, but doesn't.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
Poor Fran. She witnessed you tampering with Harlan's medication in the medical bag. She did not know what you were doing. But she knew you were up to no good. And so her mind begins to turn.

Ransom pockets the two incriminating vials from the medical bag and replaces the Naloxone pen. When he stands to go she retreats.

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA

Oh god that movie she told me about,
with Danica McKellar, that's what she
was talking about -

TROOPER WAGNER

Deadly by Surprise.

BLANC

She loved Harlan. She hates Ransom.
So the poor girl decides to test her
theory and make this asshole pay.
She gets a copy of the toxicology
report, I will be honest I have no
idea how

MARTA

She has a cousin - she told me, she
has a cousin who works as a
receptionist at the examiners office!

BLANC

Well voila. The numbers mean nothing
to her, but if Ransom is guilty its
existence is a threat, so she
photocopies the header and makes her
blackmail note.

MARTA

So why did she send it to me?

BLANC

She did not. She sent it to Ransom.

INT. RANSOM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Ransom walks in sorting mail - finds the blank envelope,
reads the blackmail note inside, and slowly grins.

BLANC (V.O.)

And when Ransom first gets it, what
is his reaction? Elation! He still
thinks Marta gave Harlan the tampered
drugs! A blood tox report will prove
Marta's guilt!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

The will reading, the family assembled. Ransom sits in back, a sly smile on his face as the will is read.

BLANC (V.O.)

He goes to the will reading in high spirits, ready to see the family tear themselves apart, secure in the knowledge that it will all be undone when the tox report comes to light. And then...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Beers stacked up. Marta has just confessed. Ransom's face is unreadable.

BLANC (V.O.)

Marta's confession. And everything turns on its head. Now he realizes that Marta has committed no crime, and the tox report will prove her innocence. The changed will is going to stand. He has lost. Unless.

INT. LIBRARY

Blanc rounds on Ransom.

BLANC

Unless you decide.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ransom giving Marta his pep talk -

RANSOM

...you're not going to give up the money.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

You are not going to give up the money.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

RANSOM
You've come this far!

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC
You have come this far. Just one
step further. Just one last act, in
for a penny, in for a pound. You
decide. You are in.

CLOSE ON: A lighter ignites a rag stuffed in a tin gas can.

THE CAN: Being thrown through a window in a brick wall.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE MORGUE - FLASHBACK

Empty, dark. The flaming can falls in slow motion from the
high window. Hits the floor, ignites.

BLANC (V.O.)
Step one: destroy all evidence of
Marta's innocence.

The flames dance in the reflection of a glass case of
refrigerated BLOOD SAMPLES.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
Step two:

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT / DAY?

CLOSE ON: The BLACKMAIL NOTE - at the bottom is written
"1209 COLUMBUS ROAD 8AM" A hand TEARS this bottom part off,
then puts the top half in an envelope.

BLANC (V.O.)
Send Marta the anonymous email with a
late morning rendezvous time,

CLOSE ON: An email addressed to Marta being typed on a
phone, "1209 COLUMBUS ROAD 10AM"

INT. APARTMENT BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ransom creeps down the hall, slips the ENVELOPE into the
letter slot of Marta's door.

BLANC (V.O.)
and deliver her the blackmail note.

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Ransom's Porsche pulls up. He gets out, pulling on gloves.

BLANC (V.O.)
Step three: keep your appointment
with Fran.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - 8AM - FLASHBACK

Fran standing in the middle of the room, nervous. She turns as Ransom walks in and strides towards her.

FRAN
I knew it. I knew you were a no good
son of a bitch, I knew Harlan
wouldn't have just killed himself.

RANSOM
Yes, you were right Fran.

Ransom sees the medical bag on the floor, kneels and pulls something out of it.

FRAN
I knew you were guilty as shit. Now
you're gonna pay for it don't come
near me I'm warning you I -

But he's upon her, hand over her mouth, stifling her scream as he pushes the syringe into her neck and PUSHES THE PLUNGER.

MINUTES LATER - her inert body in the chair. He fishes through her pockets, finds the envelope, and takes the TOX REPORT from it, leaves the empty envelope in her hands.

On his way out: lights the tox report on fire, drops it burning next to Marta's bag. We stay with it as it burns away.

BLANC (V.O.)
Now the board is set. Marta will get
the blackmail note. You will put the
pieces together for her - the tox
report, her one chance at getting
away with it all. You'll guide her
to the rendezvous.

(MORE)

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
You'll make an anonymous call to the police, they will catch her there with the body and the burned evidence. Marta will be arrested for killing Fran... and Harlan.

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA
She said -

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Marta holding Fran on the floor, her dying words -

FRAN
you... did this...

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA
She didn't say "you did this," she wasn't talking about me, she said

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Exact same moment but this time we hear -

FRAN
Hugh... did this...

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA
Hugh did this. Cause you made the help call you Hugh. Cause you're an asshole.

BLANC
(to Ransom)
It would have worked. If we hadn't brought you in for questioning, so you could not make your anonymous call. And if Fran had not stashed a safety copy of the tox report.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Marta turns away from the dying Fran.

BLANC (V.O.)
And if Marta had not outplayed you
once again.

Marta turns back, calls 911, gives mouth to mouth to Fran.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
By having a kind heart. By saving
Fran's life, though it meant her
losing the inheritance and going to
jail. She didn't play your game, she
saved Fran's life.

INT. LIBRARY

For the first time, Ransom looks afraid.

RANSOM
Fran's alive?

Marta's phone starts to ring. They all see the caller id -
it's the hospital.

BLANC
(to Marta)
Oh yes. Fran, who will confirm this
fairy story or something close to it.
(to Ransom)
And will send you, Hugh, to jail.

She answers the call, puts the phone to her ear.

MARTA
Yes.

A long beat, then her face breaks in relief.

MARTA (cont'd)
Yes. Thank you doctor, that's great
news, we'll be there soon.

She hangs up. And smiles with radiant joy.

MARTA (cont'd)
She's okay.
(to Blanc)
She's ready to talk.

Ransom stares at Marta, his face a mask.

BLANC

Trooper Wagner, if you would keep Mr. Drysdale in custody while Lieutenant Elliott, Ms. Cabrera and myself go to the hospital to take Fran's statement.

Ransom stands. Steps to Marta, who's frozen, looking in his eyes. His poker face breaks. And he grins.

RANSOM

I want to say this just to you, not to a courtroom of cameras, just to you because you know it's the truth: we allowed you into our home. We allowed you to take care of granddad, to be part of our family and now you think you can steal it from us? You think I'm not going to fight for our birthright, our home, our ancestral family home?

BLANC

Harlan bought this house in the eighties. From a Pakistani real estate baron.

RANSOM

Oh shut up Blanc, shut up! Shut up with that Kentucky fried fog horn rag-horn drawl. Yeah I killed Fran but I guess I didn't, so what do you have on me. Nothing
What? attempted murder -
(to Blanc)
I get arson for the bombing, maybe a few other charges, with a good lawyer I'll be out before you know it.

Face to face, Ransom's face hateful, Marta's strong and set.

RANSOM (cont'd)

(to Marta)

And then you'll see just how much hell I can wreak on your life, you vicious little bitch.

But then... Marta's face starts to do things. Odd things. Convulses. Her jaw clenches. Her cheeks bulge.

And the PROJECTILE VOMITS into Ransom's face.

RANSOM (cont'd)
AUGH! WHAT THE SHIT!

He falls back cursing, she drops to her knees, spitting.
Wagner, inappropriately excited:

TROOPER WAGNER
That means she was lying!

MARTA
That's right, Fran's dead.
(to Ransom)
And you just confessed to her murder.

Ransom takes this in. Then he smirks.

RANSOM
Well. In for a penny...

In one fluid motion he spins to the ornamental WALL OF
KNIVES, grabs one -

BLANC
No!

and TACKLES MARTA...

Time slows as Blanc and Elliott lunge to stop him but it's
too late -

Ransom and Marta fall together, his arm arcing down

And as they hit the ground his arm comes down

PLUNGING THE KNIFE UP TO THE HILT IN HER CHEST.

They lie still, breathing hard. Her eyes wide with pain and
horror. His cold and wild.

But then she blinks. Squints.

And he cocks his head. Realizing something.

Withdraws the knife from her chest.

Its fake blade had retracted into the handle. It's a
theatrical prop.

He pumps it up and down a few times, the spring making a
pathetic toy noise.

Ransom smirks.

RANSOM

Shit

And is VIOLENTLY TACKLED out of frame by Trooper Wagner.

Leaving Marta lying on her back. Blanc shouting if she's alright, Elliott and Wagner wrestling Ransom into cuffs, it all fades into the background as she holds the knife and stares at the ceiling.

INT. SMALL STUDY

CLOSE ON: Harlan's old baseball being set carefully back in place.

By Linda. She's about to leave, but she notices the pink envelope on the desk. Picks it up, takes out the blank note. Seems to recognize it, and smiles sadly.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - LATER

Linda comes outside and joins the family.

Several more police cars, and an ambulance. Ransom is loaded into the cop car. His family are held at bay by officers, but they react in different ways -

Richard yelling at the cops. Walt sobbing, Donna collapsed against him, Jacob on his phone.

Joni staring into space, ruined. Meg talking to Lieutenant Elliott, crying. She's just learned about Fran.

Linda watches the circus, strangely disconnected, going to light a cigarette. With a strange smirk, she uses the flame to warm the blank note from the office, and HIDDEN WRITING starts to appear - a note from her father. Their secret communication. As the letters appear, her face changes.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Marta sits, a blanket over her shoulders. An officer who's just taken her statement walks away. Blanc approaches.

MARTA

Can I ask. At what point did you suspect I had something to do with Harlan's death?

BLANC

From the moment you first set foot in front of me.

Taps her shoe. The tiny, faded spot of blood.

MARTA

Oh my god.

BLANC

I want you to remember something very important: you won not by playing the game Harlan's way, but yours.

Through the window she sees the family outside.

MARTA

I should help them. Right?

BLANC

I have my own opinion. But I have a feeling you'll follow your heart.

He gives her a wink, and strolls off.

INT. FOYER - LATER

Marta shuffles to the front doorway. One last glance at Harlan's portrait, its grin now gentle and content.

EXT. FRONT PORCH / BALCONY

She stands on the threshold. Sees Blanc get into the front door of a cruiser, and it drives off - Ransom in the back. He looks back at her through the window.

The family out on the lawn. Not sure where to go or what to do. They all turn to see: Marta standing very small, but somehow not, in the doorway of her house.