

LAND OF THE LIVING

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INT. DARK ROOM

A female figure stretched out on a bed. Her eyelids flutter: she's dreaming. Her features are drawn tight. Her eyes suddenly fly open:

She's crying.

TITLES OVER:

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - DAY

A crisp, beautiful morning.

TWO GIRLS, mid-20s, climb their way up the lonely trail.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

ANOTHER GIRL, 16, listens to her Ipod as she waits for the bus.

A red muscle car stops next to her. We don't see the driver. The girl takes the earphones off, exchanges a few (unheard) words. She gets in the car.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

A WOMAN, 30s, staggers out of a ramshackle house. She's wasted. LOUD MUSIC THROBS behind her.

A MAN runs after her. He wraps his arm around her waist and turns her around back toward the house.

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - DAY

The two girls keep climbing. They are near the top of the hill. No one else around. Except...

A MAN in street clothes, oddly out of place. He's walking down toward them...

EXT. URBAN STREET - DAY

A SCHOOLGIRL, 10, walks past the construction site next to school. We can hear CHILDREN AT PLAY. She turns, suddenly aware of something... someone.

CLOSE ON her wide, haunting eyes, as --

SOUND FADES. TITLES END. WE ARE BACK IN:

INT. DARK ROOM

The woman lays there.

ALICE (V.O.)
People vanish.

A beat. We adjust to the darkness, begin to see the room.
It's bare, windowless.

ALICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Some do it by choice. They leave
behind unpaid bills, court summons,
failed marriages. They change their
names and start over... Or they
just get lost.

We see something we can't immediately recognize, a kind of
long line snaking up the wall next to the woman's head...

ALICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Others are *taken*. Sometimes we find
their bodies. Dumped in the woods,
or at the bottom of a lake. Buried
in the nice neighbor's backyard.

And now we make it out: A CHAIN.

ALICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Mine will not be found.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

ALICE (CONT'D)
My name is Alice Parker.

A door is UNLOCKED.

ALICE (CONT'D)
This where I die.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Three weeks earlier.

A two-bedroom house in the Hollywood hills, overlooking the
vast expanse of L.A. You can see the 101 streaming toward
downtown, the hypnotic pattern of red lights/white lights.

A vintage Jag, slightly beat-up, sits in the car port. Wind
chimes TINKLE in the night breeze.

A dog BARKS from inside some house-- another joins in.

A mangy coyote tries to pry a garbage can open.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Loft-like open floor plan. Zen/industrial/rock'n'roll decor: large cushions on cement floors, track lights, foldable metal chairs and carved Indonesian table.

ALICE PARKER sits with her friend MICHELLE.

Alice: late twenties, T-shirt and sweatpants, mid-length hair. An imperfect beauty, all the more engaging. Ten years in LA just beginning to tug at the corners of her smile.

Michelle: same age, more plain-looking. Bone-tired. Threadbare faded pajamas tell us this is *her* house, and she wasn't expecting guests.

A large duffel bag in the hallway completes the picture: Alice just popped in for the night. She can be like that.

Watch her juggle a cigarette, glass of wine, potato chips and cell phone, checking her messages as she talks. It's been a rough day.

ALICE
No... This is it. Time to cut my losses.

Michelle looks unpersuaded.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What?

MICHELLE
Nothing. Just... you said that before. When he hit you. And then you went back.

ALICE
Wasn't so simple.

MICHELLE
Oh, I think it's pretty simple. A guy hits you -- he's gotta go.

ALICE
I hit him too.

MICHELLE
He hit you *first*.

Alice SIGHS. Adjusts the BLUE PIN in her hair.

ALICE
It was messier than that. We were both drinking...

MICHELLE
Tom drinks. He's never hit me.

Alice says nothing.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, but being a musician
 does not give you the right to be a
 jerk. Even if he was a rock star.

ALICE
 Can we change the subject?

MICHELLE
 Why are you defending him? He
 cheated on you.

Alice's phone vibrates.

ALICE
 I'm not defending him. I just --

She stops talking as she reads the text message...

ALICE (CONT'D)
 You *fucker*...

Michelle waits...

ALICE (CONT'D)
 He's outside.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE

The coyote flashes yellow eyes at the approaching car, then
 scampers off.

TERRY SILBERT, 30, bad-boy sexy, rock-star manque still
 holding on to the dream, parks his customized pick-up behind
 the Jag, blocking it. He steps out.

Michelle walks out the door to meet him.

MICHELLE
 Not a very good time...

Terry smiles.

TERRY
 So let me guess: you're gonna have
 some tea, put on a Meg Ryan movie,
 and bitch about men all night?

MICHELLE
 Just go, Terry.

TERRY
 (changing focus)
 Hey...

Alice has joined Michelle on the threshold.

TERRY (CONT'D)
 Can I come in?

Michelle looks at Alice. Urging her to hold the line.

ALICE
I don't think so.

TERRY
Let's go for a ride and talk about
it. We could hit Vegas... Back to
work on Monday.

Alice shakes her head.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Look -- I fucked up. I know. But
she means *nothing*.

A BABY starts WAILING inside.

Michelle SIGHS -- now we know why the dark circles.

TERRY (CONT'D)
It sounds adorable.

Michelle bristles. She walks back inside...

TERRY (CONT'D)
Alice, Alice, Alice...

And before he can say more, Michelle is already back, this
time holding a cordless phone:

MICHELLE
Leave or I call the cops.

TERRY
(to Alice)
Is that how you wanna play it?

A long beat. Terry shakes his head, shoots a last look at
Alice:

TERRY (CONT'D)
You'll regret it.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

JOYCE, 35, sad eyes, a little overweight, hangs up the pump
and screws the tank cap back on.

She gets back into her old-model Volvo and drives off.

ANOTHER VEHICLE (we don't see what kind) takes off behind
her.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR

Joyce fiddles with the stereo, selects some slow and gloomy
rock ballad.

She spots the vehicle behind her in the rearview mirror.
Can't see who's inside. Doesn't make much of it.

EXT. KOREATOWN - JOYCE'S STREET

She parks the car and gets out. Starts walking.

Somebody else is parking half a block away.

She gets inside the building.

EXT. JOYCE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Joyce walks out again, corgi on leash.

The dog eagerly sniffs every tree, getting the latest from his dog-world. Finds a suitable spot and squats.

Joyce looks around, weighing her chances to walk away from the droppings without a tsk-tsk.

She sees she's not alone. She sticks her hand into the plastic bag and bends to do the job.

It's the last thing she sees before --

Something comes smashing down on her head. Joyce goes down --
The Corgi BARKING furiously as we

CUT TO:

INT. FBI OFFICE - MISSING PERSON UNIT - DAY

Joyce's picture. We PULL BACK TO REVEAL that it's part of a missing person flier, which someone is pinning to a bulletin board. And as we keep PULLING BACK, we see:

A tapestry of portraits, mostly females, mostly smiling. Girls from places like Petersburg, Virginia, Champaign, Illinois, Myrtle Creek, Oregon. Last seen at work, the local bar, the 7/11. Casualties of an undeclared war.

Isolated words come into focus: runaway... suspicious circumstances... parent abduction... stranger abduction... catastrophic event... whereabouts unknown.

One by one, we spot the girls from the title sequence.

THE FBI OFFICER turns his back and walks away down the office corridor. TELEPHONES RING, OFFICERS rush to and from.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Alice drives to work, looking just a bit worse for wear, hair still held by the blue pin.

Her windows play the West Hollywood nature channel show:
Euro-trashy playboy types sipping coffee at sidewalk cafes...
Hard-bodied men on their way to the morning workout...
Women on billboards, advertising clothes they aren't wearing.
Alice looks at her world slide by -- part of it, but somehow
out of synch, just fractionally disconnected. This is her
commute. This is her life. *Or is it?*
She pulls into a small parking lot.

INT. BLINK - DAY

An ultra-hip boutique ad agency.

The walls are covered with art and framed ads. Lots of slick
imagery hawking unattainable beauty.

The people - CREATIVES, ACCOUNTANTS, SUPPORT STAFF - are all
studiously cool. You can't tell who's what.

Alice walks into the office, greeting colleagues. Stops by:
STEPHANIE, early 30s, her closest work friend.

STEPHANIE
Well?

ALICE
That's it... We broke up.

Stephanie toasts her with her Starbucks.

STEPHANIE
Good for you.

She takes a sip.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Let's toast this properly tonight.

ALICE
You're on.

STEPHANIE
How did he take it?

ALICE
In character. He went psycho. Then
he went home.
(shrugs)
He'll live.

STEPHANIE
And you're sorted out? Got your
stuff and--

ALICE
I kinda left with my toothbrush.

STEPHANIE
But you got a place?

ALICE
Michelle's going out of town, so I
can stay there a few days. I'm
gonna look for a place to rent.
Might have to do a little couch-
surfing...

STEPHANIE
I'll fluff mine up.

INT. BLINK - LATER

Alice looks at some mock-ups of a vodka ad campaign:

A young woman in a wet T-shirt downing a shot.

Two women in a club, holding hands, looking suggestively into camera.

A bottle of the stuff on a bedside table, next to a man's hand cuffed to the railing. A female hand holds the key.

MARK, 40s, nerdy-cool, the visionary behind the ads, studies her reaction -- expecting mild outrage, and already proud of it...

ALICE
(shrugs)
Could be edgier.

Mark can't believe his ears.

MARK
You serious? I'd say this is
pushing the envelope already.

ALICE
Come on. Maybe you do phase two,
show the guy's arm's been cut off
and she's holding a machete. That'd
be pushing it. This is tame.

MARK
Well, we're not selling crack to
terrorists. *Damn...* You really
think they're tame?

VICKY, 50s, perma-tan and a subtle face-lift, owner of the shop, approaches them.

VICKY
(to Alice)
I need you to have drinks with the
Verizon guys tonight.

ALICE
That's Tanya's account.

VICKY
But she's on holiday. And I can't
go. The kids are under the weather.

Alice SIGHS. She hates being pimped out like that --
especially on short notice, and on someone else's account.

ALICE
OK. Great. I mean, I'd rather stick
pins under my nails. But OK.

VICKY
You're a darling.

She takes a sideway look at the mock-ups.

VICKY (CONT'D)
(to Mark)
Try *edgier*.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Alice sits in a dimly lit, crowded bar packed with
businessmen and working girls.

Her drinking companions - TROY, STEVE - are in the heat of
an imaginary battle for her favor.

TROY
I just had to break free. I can
live with monogamy, but don't
smother me. Right?

Alice smiles politely.

STEVE
So, are you... what? Single,
coupled up? Dating?

ALICE
I'm... coupled up.

TROY
'Course. But is he the one?

She thinks about it. Finally:

ALICE
She.

TROY
You're *bi*?

ALICE
Nope. No men.

STEVE

Huh.

TROY

Well... I know a lot of girls
who've gone through a phase. Then
the clock starts ticking.

Alice LAUGHS.

ALICE

We'll see. But speaking of clock...
I really need to get going.

She turns it full on:

ALICE (CONT'D)

We love the brand, and we're really
excited about it this approach,
So... let us know.

She stands up. Hand-shakes, air kisses.

Troy swiftly hands her a business card.

TROY

My cell. Can I have yours?

She hands him her own card.

ALICE

It's on there.

She leaves.

Troy grins smugly. Steve shoots him a questioning look.

TROY

Trust me-- she's bi.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Alice, in her car, slaps a ten in the hand of the VALET, who
just stands there holding the bill, trying to smile her away.

ALICE

Just give me five back.

He does. She peels off into the hot LA night.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - LATER

A younger, hipper scene-- teeming with show-biz hopefuls,
self-styled gangsters, frat boys and girls. Bling, tats,
music blaring from a thousand speakers.

Alice enters a parking lot, pays in advance, parks her car.

EXT. CLUB

She cuts in front of the line, BOUNCER nodding recognition.
THE ROPE gets unhooked, then re-hooked behind her. *She's in.*

INT. CLUB - LATER

A combo techno-dance club/Amerasian restaurant, with a floor for the peons and a different one for VIPS, where--

Alice and Stephanie sip bizarro-drinks at the bar, eyeing a couple of guys-- FINLAY, handsome grad student-type, and RON, more like a regular club rat.

STEPHANIE

He does... computer stuff. I didn't really get the details. But I know he's on Facebook. Just do a proper check before... you know.

Alice makes a face -- what are you talking about?

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Before you get biblical.

ALICE

Wow. Are you questioning my judgment, or just calling me a slut?

Stephanie takes a beat, sorry she hurt her friend's feelings.

Alice starts LAUGHING. *Gotcha.*

Stephanie LAUGHS along, then turns to the guys, gestures to them to come over. They do.

Ron smiles at Alice.

RON

Good to see you.

STEPHANIE

This is Finlay... My friend Alice.

'Nice to meet yous' are exchanged as the guys sit down.

FINLAY

(pointing at drink)
What the hell is that?

ALICE

This? Atomic Estrogen. Wanna try?

Finlay LAUGHS. Holds on to his beer bottle.

FINLAY

I think I'll finish my beer.

INT. CLUB - LATER

Late. Finlay and Alice alone now-- closer, relaxed, good chemistry getting better.

FINLAY
So tell me more about you.

ALICE
Like what?

FINLAY
Biggest dream... Worst fear.

She rolls her eyes.

ALICE
Come on.

FINLAY
I'm serious.

ALICE
OK -- Dreams... How about getting out of the rat race?

FINLAY
What do you mean?

ALICE
'Be nice not having to work for a living.

FINLAY
What would you do?

ALICE
Live?

FINLAY
But people work... That's life. Not having to -- sure, it sounds nice, but... kinda takes you out of the *human* race, don't you think?

ALICE
Nice pun... Want a job?

FINLAY
Got one. Thanks.

ALICE
Just checking. One time this cute guy was hitting on me... I gave him my number... Turns out he just wanted a job interview.

FINLAY
You think I'm hitting on you?

ALICE
(a beat)
You tell me.

Finlay smiles:

FINLAY
I'm just getting warmed up.

Alice smiles back.

ALICE
I guess another dream would be
getting on the creative team.

FINLAY
What's keeping you?

ALICE
Got stuck as a support drone. The
better I get, the more I get stuck.

FINLAY
And that's your fear?

ALICE
Well, it's LA... Where dreams come
to die.

FINLAY
Wow. You must really miss Kansas.

ALICE
Colorado...

She checks her watch. They both sense they've hit the wrong
note.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Guess we should call it a night...

FINLAY
Can I see you again?

She looks him in the eye. He holds her gaze. Open. Hopeful.

ALICE
I'd like that.

She starts to leave.

FINLAY
Alice?

ALICE
Yeah?

FINLAY
Keep dreaming.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Alice walks to her car. Almost nobody outside now. Just A GUY stumbling to his own car, drunk; A homeless WOMAN squeezing slowly out the shadow, muttering to herself.

Alice ignores them.

But there's someone else. Somebody's watching her. She can feel his eyes on her.

She plays it cool: *don't turn. Don't let them know you're scared.*

CLOSE ON HER HAND AS:

She pushes her keys between her knuckles.

She finally reaches her car, opens the door, gets inside.

She locks the door, turns the ignition on, checks the rearview mirror --

Nobody there.

She lets out a long breath.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A man, face unseen, drags a naked body along the floor and onto a large plastic sheet.

It's Joyce. Her body is covered with cuts and bruises. She's dead.

The man grabs a hatchet off a work bench.

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE - MORNING

A small, unpretentious office in a Beverly Hills medical building. Ordered bookcases, low-maintenance potted plants.

A clock on the desk says 7.20 p.m. Last appointment of the day.

Alice sits on a leather couch. DR. NICHOLS, 50s, good-looking, still a good tennis player in his spare time, sits on a chair in front of her.

A tape recorder on the coffee table records the session.

ALICE

I saw him a couple more times. It's been good. He's smart. Perceptive. Kinda reminds me of you.

Nichols doesn't take the bait.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I'm waiting for the catch.

DR. NICHOLS
Why does there have to be a catch?

ALICE
(shrugs)
That's been my experience.

DR. NICHOLS
Shouldn't hold it against him.

She nods, a bit tentatively.

ALICE
Yeah... Perhaps he's really just a
nice guy. I can be with a nice guy
for a change. Right?

DR. NICHOLS
Of course.

ALICE
Just not my shrink.

DR. NICHOLS
I think we covered that subject.

ALICE
I wish we covered that subject.

Nichols just stares. He can't completely hide a knot of
complex feelings -- temptation/regret/resentment.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Sorry.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Alice gets out of the office, shaking her head at herself.

EXT. MEDICAL BUILDING

Alice walks out into the street. It's dark. Home-bound
traffic. The nightly evacuation of Beverly Hills.

EXT. B.H. STREET - LATER

Alice walks back to the building, carrying a couple of
shopping bags. Big one from Barneys, small one from Rite Aid.

She enters the lobby.

She pushes a button for the elevator. Waits... Keeps waiting...

ALICE
Shit.

She takes the stairs. Hears the CLANGING of the elevator lurching back into motion.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Of course.

She walks down to her parking level. Opens the door. Steps into the garage. Empty.

Her cell phone RINGS.

She stops. Reaches into her handbag. Before she finds it:

A blunt object hits her head with a sickening THUD.

Blood rushes to her head, seeps through her hair...

A MAN, face unseen, grabs her from behind and presses a wet rag on her mouth.

She tries to pull herself free, but the man is strong --

She wants to scream but the rag muffles it --

She bites it, trying to bite his hand -- she elbows him, kicks backwards, her whole body flailing desperately...

He holds his hand over her mouth, pushing the rag in until --

Her body slumps.

A series of dreamlike, liquidy images:

The interior of a moving car...

A man's arms carrying Alice down a flight of stairs...

A dark, windowless room...

A CHAIN.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Faint light filtering under a door.

Alice lies in a small, rough bed. She stirs. Hazy. Slowly waking up, only to realize that --

Her eyes are wrapped with thick dark cloth, held tightly in place by a loop of duct tape. Her hands are bound behind her back with plastic cuffs.

She tries to sit up. Something pulls her back.

There's a crude metal collar fastened around her neck, chained to a ring in the wall.

She starts BREATHING faster, her heart racing, the fog in her brain giving way to panic -- *Where/When/Who/Why* --

She tries to feel her way around the bed. It's pushed tight against the walls on three sides. She dangles her feet out of the open one. They don't touch the floor.

We see she's laying on a wide wooden plank six feet off the ground, like a top bunk without a ladder. If she jumped off it, she would hang on the two-foot chain.

Her feet keep searching for ground underneath -- her heart races faster --

ALICE

Hello? Please... Hello?

There is no reply.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice reacts to the sound of FOOTSTEPS.

She tries to control her fear. But she can't. She's shaking, crying, adrenaline flooding her body. This isn't supposed to happen. This happens to girls on drugs; girls who accept rides from strangers, or camp out in the woods. It doesn't happen to girls like her.

But it is happening.

INT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

A HOODED MAN, average size, dark clothes, stands still. Listening. Soaking up her misery like some precious balm.

It's dark enough we don't quite see what he's doing, except for a glimpse of repetitive, rhythmic movement. Is he getting himself off?

They sense each other across the wall -- two hooded figures in the dark, prey and predator, characters in some primordial play.

Neither of them talks. She can hear him breathing. She can hear the sound of her own heart. Suspended time -- like a waking dream. Too real to be real.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice tenses as she hears the door being UNLOCKED, CREAKING, SWINGING OPEN.

The man steps inside.

Suddenly his hands are on her. Moving up to her collar, unlocking it, then lifting her off the bed and lowering her to the ground.

ALICE
Who are you?

He grabs a bottle of water.

HOODED MAN
Open your mouth.

He speaks in a low, raspy whisper. Muffled by the hood, disconnected from expression, it feels almost disembodied. Might as well come from outside the room -- or from inside her head.

Her mouth stays closed.

He grabs her hair:

HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
Open. Your. Mouth.

Alice parts her lips, trembling.

He brings the bottle to her dry lips.

She drinks.

The hooded man steps back.

HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
Sit.

ALICE
I can't see... where's the chair?

HOODED MAN
Sit on the floor.

She obeys. Her head tilting up now, addressing him from below.

ALICE
Where am I?

HOODED MAN
You're home. This is where you're
going to live.

A beat.

 ALICE
What day is it?

 HOODED MAN
That doesn't matter anymore.

Alice trembles -- her fear like raw electricity cursing
through her body.

 HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
You'll be fed. You'll have pills to
sleep.

 ALICE
This is a mistake... My name is
Alice... Alice Parker.

 HOODED MAN
Your name is anything I call you.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice, hands untied, eats some thick porridge-like slop from
a bowl. Each spoonful is a fight. She puts the bowl down...

 ALICE
I... need to go to the bathroom.

 HOODED MAN
It's behind you.

 ALICE
Can I take the blindfold off?

 HOODED MAN
Go ahead.

She removes the duct tape, which tears some of her hair off.
Unwraps the cloth from around her eyes.

She blinks, adjusts, slowly turns her head to him.

ALICE'S POV:

THE MAN, looming over her in his dark hood. She can see, but
she can't see *him*. His eyes peer from two small slits.

A large hunter KNIFE is strapped to his belt.

The room is bare, except for the wall-mounted bed, like a
large shelf, and --

A plastic bucket on the floor.

ALICE
I -- I can't with you here.

He stays where he is for a moment, savoring her discomfort.
Then he turns and gets out.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Alice sleeps, chained to the wall. Voices bounce inside her head, accompanied by flashes of the Hooded Man.

ALICE (V.O.)
They'll find me. My friends --

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
You friends think you went on a
bender... lost your phone...

ALICE (V.O.)
No... They're looking for me...

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
In two weeks' time they'll be
talking about you with some TV
clown. Two months, you'll be a
faded memory.

ALICE (V.O.)
My mother... my boyfriend...

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
(LAUGHS)
You skipped daddy. What happened?
Did he touch you in your private
places? Or did he just leave?

ALICE
No... no...

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
I can read you like an open book.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The man forces Alice's mouth open. She tries to jerk her head away, but the chain pulls tight. The man shoves some pills down her throat.

HOODED MAN
Don't worry. This isn't how you
die.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice lays naked on a plastic sheet in the middle of the floor. She's half-passed out.

ALICE'S POV - distorted, hallucinatory:

Her own body stretching motionless on that plastic surface,
tiny rivulets flowing down the sides.

The POV tilts up and reverses -- she's now looking at herself from above, also seeing:

The hooded man crouching beside her, giving her a sponge bath. His head close to her body, examining it, searching for something.

Whatever it is, he can't find it.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice opens her eyes. She's untied. Wearing a different shirt. She wriggles inside them, inside her own skin. Like it feels dirtier for having been cleaned.

A disembodied voice echoes in her head...

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
(re: shirt)
A little loose... Got it from a
bigger girl.

And now the man materializes from the shadows -- and it could be a dream, or a flashback, or a sudden awakening, because the boundaries of reality are beginning to blur...

HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
Lost a lot of weight once she got
here though. She kept throwing up.

Alice listens, trying not to give her fear away, but it's no use. She's terrified.

HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
I made her eat her sick but she
threw it up again. So I cut her.

She shakes her head -- *please stop.*

HOODED MAN (CONT'D)
You don't like me, do you?

 ALICE
I... don't know you...

He doesn't respond.

She swallows hard. *Does she know him?*

Out of the corner of her eye, she glimpses an A/C vent on the wall, covered by a metal grate. It's big enough she could squeeze through.

She makes sure he doesn't catch her looking.

 HOODED MAN
I'm all you have. Hand that feeds
you. Hand that lays you to sleep.

A telephone RINGS above.

The hooded man hesitates, then walks out of the room.

He locks the heavy door behind him.

Alice sees her bowl and spoon on the floor. She grabs the spoon, runs to the vent... She crouches down and starts working the spoon as a screwdriver...

The grate comes off -- She shimmies in, head first...

INT. VENT

She drags herself through dust and dirt -- bending through a 90 degree corner --

Sliding DOWN, where it only seems to get DARKER --

Chocking on dust and fear, until --

The vent opens into a wider, higher TUNNEL...

She stands up...

Her footsteps BOOM in the tunnel's echo-chamber, her heart thumping in her chest.

INT. TUNNEL - MINUTES LATER

The tunnel splits -- she goes left -- keeps going till it splits again -- she goes right --

A RAT SQUEALS -- she SCREAMS, runs faster, falls down and picks herself up, sees --

Rays of light from above, filtering through a storm drain.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Blinding sun. Asphalt melting. Mexican radio playing some LOUD COMMERCIAL in the parking attendant's cabin.

Alice's hand comes out of the storm drain, followed by her leg, as she hoists herself up and slowly crawls into the light like some nightmare insect --

Several PEOPLE notice her, start walking toward her from different sides of the lot...

She gets up, blinks, fills her lungs with the fresh air, her eyes with the sight of the world as she knew it: people, buildings, cars... The land of the living. Everything so colorful, so vibrant, it's almost overwhelming.

Somebody wraps a jacket around her torn, dirty camisole.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Alice sits on a couch, sipping hot tea. She's changed out of the dead woman's clothes and into a crisp LAPD T-shirt.

50-something detective STAN MURPHY sits across from her. He looks wise. Paternal.

MURPHY

We left word for your mother. Your friends are on the way. We are retracing your steps -- I think we have a lead.

INT. POLICE STATION - WAITING ROOM - LATER

Alice is escorted outside, where her friends have congregated. It feels surreal - a welcome home party in this drab police building.

Alice's MOTHER gets the first hug in.

MOTHER

Oh, baby... Thank God you're safe.

They break the hug, smiling through tears.

One by one all friends hug her, kiss her, throw their arms around her.

MICHELLE

I love you, girl.

STEPHANIE

Vicky sends her best... She would have come but she's stuck in a meeting. These are from the office.

She produces a huge bouquet of flowers.

TERRY
 Whatever happened between us -- I'm
 glad you're back.

FINLAY
 Hey. I... I missed you.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' OFFICE - DAY

Alice sits on the couch, Nichols listening and recording.
There's some new artwork on the wall -- a somewhat
 incongruous, naive painting of a stray dog in an alley.

It's all so surreal. She went down the rabbit hole, and now
 she's back. But the real world feels just as strange...

ALICE
 I guess it's a cliché, but... it's
 like I've been reminded of how much
 I have. How lucky I am.

DR. NICHOLS
 (cheerfully)
 Well... some clichés are clichés
 for a reason. Oops. Another one.

They share a smile -- almost a laugh. Almost like friends.

Her cell phone rings.

ALICE
 Sorry... Let me turn it off.

DR. NICHOLS
 Could be important.

She picks up:

ALICE
 This is Alice.

INTERCUT WITH:

MURPHY
 This is detective Murphy. I think
 we got him.

A rush of elation surges through her.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
 We need you to come over to
 identify him. I know you never saw
 his face, but it's procedure. You
 might spot something.

INT. POLICE STATION - VIEWING ROOM

Alice sits in front of the two-way mirror, looking into the next room.

A man sits there, head down.

ALICE
Who is he?

The man lifts his face:

It's blank.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

She comes back to her senses: the hooded man stands in front of her. She never left that room, except in her mind.

She notices the vent on the floor -- much smaller than it appeared before. She can see she'd never make it through, let alone re-emerge safely somewhere else...

ALICE
Please let me go... I won't say a word... I never saw your face...

HOODED MAN
Stop.

ALICE
Please --

HOODED MAN
You think you can manipulate me?
You think you can *seduce* me? You
have no idea what you even look
like.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice sits on the floor, bent, *crumpled*, rag doll-like. The hooded man sits on a stool in front of her.

HOODED MAN
I want to play something for you.

He holds a small tape recorder in his hand. He presses 'play'.

ON ALICE'S FACE:

WOMAN (V.O.)
No... No... please. I'll do
anything you want.

HOODED MAN (V.O.)
I want you to die.

Alice closes her eyes, but she can't help hearing --

An awful SQUISHY SOUND, like a knife makes on flesh --

WOMAN (V.O.)
No... PLEASE!

The sound repeats.

The woman SCREAMS -- high-pitched sounds of terror fading
into moans and then a single plaintive word --

WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Mommy...

CLICK.

HOODED MAN
I put her in your food. She's
inside you now. You'll be inside
the next.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The hooded man brings Alice a yellow notepad and a pen.

HOODED MAN
You can write a goodbye letter.
I'll post it. Just don't mention me
or... *this*.

ALICE
You want me to write... a *suicide*
letter?

HOODED MAN
(shrugs)
Amy did... Some of the others, too.
Better than to keep everyone
wondering if they're still alive.

Amy. Alice registers the name. She takes the paper and pen.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Alice lies in her cot. Druggy. DREAMING:

A little girl running in a field. The earth CRACKS and SPLITS like ice -- behind her -- around her -- til she's trapped on a small patch, surrounded by darkness. The girl has Alice's face.

She looks at a butterfly, dancing in the air around her.

She reaches out.

The butterfly flies down, fluttering fearlessly into the darkness.

The girl keeps reaching, leaning over the abyss...

BACK TO:

Alice stirring in her cot. She's awake but her eyes remain closed, trying to stay with the dream. She takes a long, slow breath...

She swings both legs sideways...

She throws herself down.

The chain pulls tight -- A CRACKING SOUND -- And...

THE COLLAR SNAPS.

Alice crashes to the floor, hands still bound behind her back...

She rolls over onto her back -- streaks of terror and hope flashing across her eyes...

She raises her legs off the ground and tilts them back over her head, then bends them, pulls her knees down to her chest and tries to pull her tied wrists over in front of her...

Too hard. Her muscles scream, shoulders getting out of joint.

She lets all the air out, squeezes herself tighter, tries again until --

Her hands slip in front of her. She starts chewing the plastic ties. It doesn't help. She starts grinding them on the edge of the bed.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The door swings open.

The hooded man walks in and --

CRASH -- Alice hits him from behind with the stool, smashing it on his head --

The man falls down, unconscious --

She looks at him, hesitating -- conflicting instincts vying for control. Run... kill...

Look.

She reaches forward to lift the hood -- He twitches -- She pulls her hand back. He starts trying to get up --

RUN.

She gets out of the room and up a flight of stairs, into:

INT. WAREHOUSE

A derelict, abandoned warehouse. Crates, boxes, tools...

She bumps into a work table, stumbles -- HEARS:

The hooded man coming up behind her.

She moves along the table, trying to keep it between them --

He runs along the other side, barring her way to the front door. He turns toward her, knife drawn --

Alice looks to the nearby window and --

Flings herself through.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

She lands in a dark back alley.

Run...

The hooded man jumps out through the broken window --

Lands badly, twisting his ankle --

He tries to keep up with her but he's limping, then hopping...

She keeps running as fast as she can in the trash-littered alley --

She crosses a deserted street -- there's no sign -- she couldn't read it anyway...

She runs into the next back alley, past another block and straight into the path of:

A MOVING CAR --

She freezes in the headlights.

The car - old-school brown Caddy Seville, golden rims - skids to a stop inches away from her, as --

INT/EXT - CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

DIAMOND PIMP DADDY DAZZLE - 50s, purple shirt, *blinging* like an apparition - exhales in relief.

DPD DAZZLE
God-damn.

He gets out of the car.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Hey! Wanna get yourself killed, do it -- just don't fuck my car up!

She stands there.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
You OK?

She struggles to catch her breath.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Get in.

Alice looks around. No better option.

INT. CADILLAC - MOVING - NIGHT

The passenger seat is cluttered with DPD Dazzle's stuff -- feathered hat, sex ad paper, a vintage doctor's bag.

Alice sits in the back.

DPD DAZZLE
(fast & smooth:)
You need to get yourself scrubbed up, girl. I can tell you *fine* under that grime. You and I can make some loot, know what I --

He looks in the rearview mirror.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Aw naw you don't.

Alice is passed out on the back seat.

DPD Dazzle stops the car and leans back across the seat.

He slaps her gently to wake her up. She doesn't. A thin line of drool dribbles down the side of her mouth.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Shit.

He turns around, puts the car back into gear. He drops the player act altogether.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Hang on... I'm gonna take you to a
hospital, y'hear?

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

The street is deserted.

A large institutional building looms in the background.

DPD Dazzle unloads Alice on a patch of grass along the
sidewalk.

DPD DAZZLE
I'm gonna call them now...

Alice MOANS.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
Good luck.

EXT. COUNTY-USC MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

NURSES push a gurney through the main entrance. Alice is on
it.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL - ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

DR. MULLER, 40s, white coat, enters Alice's room, smiling.

Alice wears hospital-issue scrubs. She looks like a mile of
bad road. Her neck is scratched and bruised.

DR. MULLER
Morning. I'm doctor Muller. I'd
like to ask you some questions that
will help us evaluate your memory.

ALICE
Are you a psychologist?

DR. MULLER
I'm a neurologist. Why don't you
count down for me. Start from 10.

ALICE
You serious?

DR. MULLER
It'll get harder.

She starts counting:

ALICE
10, 9, 8, 7, 6 --

DR. MULLER
From 20, 5 at a time.

ALICE
20, 15, 10, 5, 0.

DR. MULLER
Now listen: 7, 5, 6, 11. Repeat.

ALICE
7, 5, 6, 11.

DR. MULLER
Very well.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Alice sits in a small office with DETECTIVES COURTNEY and AYALA.

JONATHAN COURTNEY: 41, middle-weight. Hair like steel shavings. The suit's off the rack but it fits him to a T. Divorced (one child), wedding band still stuck under a broken knuckle. *Don't ask.*

REYNALDO AYALA: 44, heavy-weight getting heavier, faint ghosts of gang tattoos from his undercover days. Married, five children. The boat in Baja keeps him sane.

AYALA
We'll be asking you a bunch of questions -- you don't remember or are not sure, just say so. Ready?

She nods.

He turns a tape recorder on.

AYALA (CONT'D)
For the record, start with your name and basic information.

ALICE
My name is...

A beat -- Tears start welling in her eyes.

Your name is anything I call you.

COURTNEY
You OK with this?

She dabs the tears with her fingers, tries to put her game face back on.

ALICE
(small)
My name is Alice Parker.

AYALA
Can you speak a bit louder?

ALICE
Alice Parker. I'm 28. I work for an
advertising agency...

INT. HOSPITAL - ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Dr. Muller looks at a picture book, showing a dozen of shapes
in numerical sequence.

DR. MULLER
What number is the pear?

ALICE
The pear is... number 4?

It is.

Dr. Muller smiles.

Shows her another page with more shapes.

Alice fixates on one: a butterfly. Much like the one from her
dream. She gasps...

He turns the book away from her.

DR. MULLER
What number is the star?

She stares at him blankly.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Alice fidgets.

COURTNEY
Anything recognizable about the
man?

ALICE
I think he was young. Middle-age
perhaps. Medium build.

COURTNEY
Voice? Accent?

ALICE
No accent. He kept his voice low
and it came out sort of muffled.

COURTNEY
Any idea where he took you?

She shakes her head.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Would you please speak up?

ALICE
No. I've no idea.

COURTNEY
Was there any violence other than
at the moment of abduction?

She tries to formulate the answer -- how does she explain all
the wounds are inside?

INT. HOSPITAL - ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Muller speaks in a calm, professional tone:

DR. MULLER
Your basic mnemonic functions are
working. I suspect you might have
been given certain drugs, like
Rhoypnol or Ketamine. You probably
heard the terms 'roofies' or
'special K'.

Alice nods.

DR. MULLER (CONT'D)
They cause unconsciousness and
amnesia, generally anterograde.
Meaning you don't fully remember
things that happened under the
influence. In your case we've got
the retrograde kind, too-- meaning
you lost some memory of time before
the event. May be due to the head
trauma.

ALICE
Will it come back?

DR. MULLER
Probably not.
(a beat)
Could be a blessing in disguise.
You could have the opposite
problem, vivid memories you can't
shake. Now, here's the complicated
part...

He takes a long pause, giving her time to prepare.

DR. MULLER (CONT'D)
You had some hallucinatory
episodes. Ketamine does that.
(MORE)

DR. MULLER (CONT'D)
Recreational users call it the 'K
hole'. Bottom line, you may at some
point remember things your mind
experienced but didn't really exist
outside of it.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Alice sips from a water bottle.

Ayala's shirt hang looser, cuffs rolled up one turn.

Courtney's gone.

AYALA
You said you escaped through the
window into a back alley?

ALICE
Yes.

AYALA
You ran several blocks.

ALICE
I think so. Yes.

AYALA
You didn't notice any street signs?

ALICE
(shakes head)
I was running for my life...

AYALA
So, you ran into an African-
American male in his forties or
fifties and accepted a ride.

ALICE
Yes.

AYALA
But you don't know his name.

ALICE
I passed out.

AYALA
You didn't happen to notice the
licence plate?

ALICE
I wasn't thinking straight...

AYALA
Make? Model? Color?

ALICE
It was dark. Black or blue. Or
brown.

INT. HOSPITAL - ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Muller continues:

DR. MULLER
It's tricky because, at the end of
the day, we are our memories. And
if we can't trust them, how do we
trust ourselves?

A beat.

ALICE
You're gonna answer that?

DR. MULLER
It's... a challenge.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Ayala sips Diet Coke. Looks at Alice. Takes a noisy breath.

COURTNEY
How many did he say he killed?

ALICE
I don't think he did...

COURTNEY
But he mentioned Amy...

ALICE
Yes.

COURTNEY
Just Amy?

ALICE
(frustrated)
He didn't give me a last name or
address. Sorry.

Courtney nods. Flips through his notes.

COURTNEY
In December last year you made a
complaint about a Terry Silbert for
assault and threats.

ALICE
That was... Why are you bringing
that up?

COURTNEY
We need to have a picture of the
people in your life.

ALICE
I withdrew that complaint.

COURTNEY
I'm aware of that.

ALICE
It wasn't him, if that's what
you're thinking.

COURTNEY
But he hit you?

A long beat.

ALICE
Yes.

COURTNEY
In more than one occasion?

ALICE
Just once.

COURTNEY
Hand open or closed?

ALICE
Why is this relevant? It wasn't
him!

COURTNEY
Why did you withdraw the complaint?

ALICE
(sighs)
It didn't seem like the right way
to deal with it.

COURTNEY
What is your relationship with...
Terry at this time?

ALICE
He's my boyfriend...

COURTNEY
He didn't file a missing person
report.

Alice takes that in.

ALICE
So who did?

COURTNEY
Actually, you are kind of...
reporting yourself missing.

TIME LAPSE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - LATER

Ayala leads:

AYALA
You mentioned you've been under
psychiatric care...

ALICE
I've been seeing a shrink once a
week for a few months... Like every
other person in this town.

AYALA
You were prescribed some anti-
depressants three years ago.

She looks at him -- *how would you know that?*

AYALA (CONT'D)
It's in the insurance records.

ALICE
Wasn't the same doctor.

AYALA
I see.

Checks his notes.

AYALA (CONT'D)
You didn't mention this other
doctor, did you?

Her face hardens -- frustration tipping to anger --

ALICE
I carved my name on a tree when I
was eight and nearly cut my finger
off when the knife slipped. I
didn't mention that, either.

Ayala trades looks with Courtney.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Courtney and Ayala are alone in the big hospital elevator.

AYALA
No rape, no injuries. And she cried
wolf before.

COURTNEY
What about the bruise on her neck?

AYALA
Could be anything. Rough play.
Necklace snatch.

COURTNEY
But if there are others...

AYALA
She didn't see any actual evidence
of other victims --

COURTNEY
She heard the tape.

AYALA
But she said she's been
hallucinating.

The elevator door opens. An OLD LADY steps inside. Courtney and Ayala smile politely.

COURTNEY
Still. Let's have a chat with this
Terry guy.

EXT. SILVERLAKE BUNGALOW - EVENING

Alice, wearing ill-fitting hospital hand-me-downs, gets out of a taxi and rings the doorbell.

No answer.

She walks around to the back of the house.

There's a small patio with barbecue, table and chairs. She lifts a small flower pot and finds the key underneath.

INT. BUNGALOW

Alice walks into the kitchen door. Turns the lights on. Fills the kettle with water and puts it on the stove.

She walks around the house. Something's off but she can't quite tell what.

The telephone's message light is blinking. She presses "play". An automated voice says "you have 4 new messages".

MAN
This is Perry. The mixing board is
fixed, you can pick it up anytime.

ALICE
Hi. It's me. I'm at County-USC
Hospital downtown.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Something happened... I've been...
 (her voice breaks)
 I'll explain when I see you. I'm OK
 but... please come. I'm in 708.

Third message is a hang-up, followed by:

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Terry, where are you? You're not
 home and you're not answering your
 cell... I don't have mine with me
 so just call the hospital... Bye.

She shakes her head -- Terry... always reliably unreliable.

She walks into the bathroom. The shelves are almost empty --
 no make-up, no creams, no perfume.

One toothbrush in the cup.

She shakes her head, confused.

Starts filling the tub.

Bangs the toilet seat down.

She takes her top off and look in the mirror.

There are hollows in her cheeks. Her ribs jut out sharply.

She sees Terry's bathrobe hanging on the door. Takes it off,
 looking for hers underneath. It's not there.

She walks to:

INT. BEDROOM

Unmade bed, the jumbled-up duvet still holding the shape of
 Terry's body.

Random clothes (Terry's) are strewn on top and around.

She walks to the closet. Her bathrobe is not there. More
 stuff seems to be missing.

She goes back to:

INT. BATHROOM

She puts on Terry's robe.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Alice talks on the phone:

ALICE
 Hi, it's me again. I'm home...
 Where are you?
 (MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
 And where's all my stuff? I don't
 remember where... Anyway -- Call
 when you get this.

She dials another number.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELIZABETH PARKER'S HOUSE

Elizabeth, Alice's 50-something mom, sits on her couch
 watching TV.

ELIZABETH
 Alice? Is that you?

ALICE
 Yes, hi, mom --

ELIZABETH
 I left a bunch of messages...

ALICE
 Mom, I wanted to tell you --

ELIZABETH
 This week's being the worst. My
 back's killing me... Can't sleep...

Alice takes a deep breath.

ALICE
 Have you been to the doctor?

ELIZABETH
 He gave me some pills but they're
 bad for my stomach...

ALICE
 Mom, I... I was wondering if you if
 you could come here.

ELIZABETH
 Oh, I don't think I'm in any
 shape... Why don't you come? It's
 been a long time.

ALICE
 (gives up)
 Maybe I will.

ELIZABETH
 I'm sorry -- could we talk later?
 My show's about to start.
 (a beat)
 I gotta get Tivo.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

A small boombox on the floor plays acoustic moodscapes.

Alice soaks in the tub, a cup of tea perched on the edge. She finally looks relaxed. Until:

Rushing footsteps -- the door is thrown open --

Terry bursts in.

Alice startles, flailing about in the water as she braces for attack--

TERRY
What the fuck are you doing?

Alice looks at him, mouths agape.

ALICE
Aren't you gonna ask me If I'm all right?

TERRY
You look pretty cozy to me... can we go back to *my* question?

ALICE
You didn't get any of my messages?

TERRY
My battery died. Alice -- What's going on?

ALICE
Why didn't you call the police?

TERRY
What?

ALICE
I'm gone a week and you don't call the police?

TERRY
So is that why these cops came to see me today? Where were you?

ALICE
What did they say?

TERRY
They asked some questions about us. Which I answered. Obviously they never really erase a complaint.

ALICE
What did they say happened to me?

TERRY
They said you had a mild injury but
you were OK, and they were trying
to figure out what happened.

ALICE
And you didn't want to check -- I
was *kidnapped*, Terry!

TERRY
Wait wait wait...

He looks at her with suspicion.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Is this some really fucked-up way
of coming back?

ALICE
I just got discharged...

CARLA (O.S.)
Terry -- Is everything OK?

Alice looks at Terry, dumbstruck.

He starts saying something but then just walks out.

INT. LIVING ROOM

CARLA stands there, arms crossed. She's a disturbingly close
match for Alice - same age, size, hair, skin, eyes.

TERRY
Look -- something weird's going on.
I don't know if she's drunk or --

CARLA
You want me to go?

TERRY
No, no. I'll deal with it.

Carla starts to say something -- stops as she sees:

Alice, coming out of the bathroom, towel wrapped around her.

They regard each other warily for a moment. Alice steps out
of the hallway and back into--

INT. BEDROOM

She finds a pair of old jeans, flip flops, a T-shirt...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alice steps in -- wet hair in a hair band, no make-up,
looking terribly lost.

TERRY
Carla, Alice. Alice, Carla.

Alice nods, struggling to keep composure... Something clicks:

ALICE
Is that my coat?

A pained expression comes over Terry's face.

Carla looks down at her coat, then at Terry:

CARLA
You gave me her coat?

TERRY
No. Of course not. She's confused.
She's got a similar one.

Carla doesn't buy it but she's reluctant to take it off.

ALICE
(sadly)
So you do have a type.

Carla looks at her like, *you wish*.

TERRY
Alice...

CARLA
You know what -- I should go.

Terry makes a calming gesture toward her.

TERRY
Just... just wait a minute.

He turns to Alice:

TERRY (CONT'D)
Alice -- this is awkward. Tell me
what exactly happened.

Alice hesitates, then:

ALICE
I told you. I was kidnapped.

TERRY
By whom?

ALICE
I don't know -- he wore a mask.

Carla is getting more and more weirded-out.

CARLA
Is this for real? Cause I feel like
I'm getting punked.

TERRY
It's OK, Carla --

CARLA
Not really --

TERRY
I told you everything about her...

CARLA
You told me she had issues -- You
didn't tell me she's...

Crazy. She doesn't say it but it hangs in the air.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
Sorry, but this is too weird.

Alice summons her pride:

ALICE
I'm the one who should go.

Terry doesn't object.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Where *is* all my stuff?

Carla looks at Alice -- this just got weirder...

TERRY
It's at Michelle's. I dropped it
off like you asked.

A beat.

ALICE
Did we... break up?

Carla ping-pong stares Alice -- Terry -- Alice --

ALICE (CONT'D)
I was drugged. There's a block of
time I don't remember...

CARLA
Terry...

TERRY
Just let me deal with it, OK?
(to Alice)
Is this true?

Alice's face gives the answer.

TERRY (CONT'D)
We did break up... You left me.

Carla reacts -- Terry spins it:

TERRY (CONT'D)
We left each other. It was the
right thing.

They stand there, tangled emotions bubbling undersurface.

ALICE
Did you...

Hit me? His eyes beg her: don't say it.

Alice shakes her head -- never mind. Finally accepting the whole thing.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Could I borrow some cash for a cab?
I... lost my bag.

Terry takes some cash from his pocket and peels off a few bills.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Thanks.
(to Carla:)
Forget about the coat. I really
can't be sure.

She walks out. Terry closes the door behind her.

CARLA
Is she gonna be OK?

TERRY
(shrugs)
You're a chick... You tell me.

Carla looks at Terry, deeply uneasy, still wondering what exactly just happened.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A taxi drops Alice off.

She gets out, knocks on the door.

Michelle opens. Gives Alice a long hug.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - LATER

Alice and Michelle sit in the kitchen.

Michelle's BABY, TYLER, sleeps in an automatic swinger, swaying gently back and forth. TICK... TOCK...

MICHELLE
I called a few times and then I
just got too crazy. Between the
baby and my parents --

ALICE
I know...

MICHELLE
Wasn't the first time I wouldn't
hear from you for days...

ALICE
I know.

MICHELLE
I just figured you were hanging out
with some new guy. Which I didn't
really wanna hear about. Or you
were back with Terry... Which I
really didn't wanna hear about.

ALICE
I was hanging with a guy who wanted
to kill me. A new low, even for me.

She forces a smile -- it comes and trembles and quickly
waned.

Michelle puts her arm around Alice's shoulder.

MICHELLE
Oh, Alice...

Alice cries.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
It's OK now. It's over.

ALICE
No, it's not.

MICHELLE
They'll find him...

ALICE
I don't even think they *believe* me.

MICHELLE
Why do you say that?

ALICE
All their questions... their whole
attitude...

MICHELLE
They're cops... They're not paid to
take it all at face value. They'll
look into it, piece it together...

ALICE
(sudden)
Do you believe me?

MICHELLE
Sure. Of course I do.

ALICE
Why?

MICHELLE
Well... made-up stories sound a whole lot better than this...

Not quite what Alice needs to hear...

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I know you. You're my friend. I believe you.

Alice nods. This touches her.

ALICE
Thanks.

Michelle smiles. *You're welcome.*

MICHELLE
Now let's try to take your mind off it. I know this is hard. But the sooner you can go back to living your life --

Alice pulls away.

ALICE
He's out there, Michelle --

MICHELLE
I know, but...

Alice speaks slowly, searching for words:

ALICE
He took... something from me.

Michelle looks at her, puzzled.

MICHELLE
What are you talking about?

ALICE
In that basement, I lost track of time. The past was just... ghosts. The future was gone. And the present was a dark room. A man with a hood feeding me grub.

She spots a pack of cigarettes. Reaches for it.

Michelle tenses. Alice feels it, follows Michelle's eyes to the baby, gets it. Puts the cigarettes down.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Sorry.

MICHELLE
Thanks.

ALICE
 He took away my name. I didn't have
 one anymore. I was some nameless
 animal, waiting to be slaughtered.

Michelle listens on, stuck between horror and
 incredulousness.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 The only thing I could do was end
 it.
 (off Michelle's look:)
 If I wasn't going to be killed by
 him, I had to be the one who did
 it. *I had to kill myself...*

Michelle puts her arm back around Alice -- determined to
 comfort her.

MICHELLE
 Thank god you didn't...

ALICE
 (softly:)
I did.

Michelle narrows her eyes, not understanding.

They stay like that, the swing beating time like a metronome.
 TICK... TOCK...

Finally Michelle makes a decision:

MICHELLE
 You should stay here for now. You
 shouldn't be alone in that
 apartment.

Alice draws a blank. *What apartment?*

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

A TELLER in oxford shirt and tie, no coat, listens with fake
 concern to Alice's plea:

ALICE
 You don't understand -- I *need* that
 card.

TELLER
 I understand. I just can't go in
 the back and print you a card while
 you wait.

ALICE
Well, it's either that, or you can
give me all my savings, in cash,
and explain to your supervisor why
you just lost my business.

TELLER
Excuse me a minute.

INT. BANK - LATER

The teller counts bills in front of Alice and stuffs them in
an envelope.

TELLER
Anything else I can do for you
today?

EXT. CAR IMPOUND LOT - DAY

The sleazy-looking MANAGER shakes his head.

MANAGER
Sorry. It's not a negotiable rate.

Alice reaches into the cash-stuffed envelope.

EXT. CAR IMPOUND LOT - LATER

She drives her car off the lot.

INT. CELL PHONE STORE - DAY

Alice stands in front of a STORE CLERK, holding a brand new
phone.

CLERK
You want to keep the same number?

ALICE
I... Yes. Sure.

CLERK
We can do that for you.

She stares uncomfortably at his too-cheerful smile.

INT. ALICE'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Alice sits, engine off. She listens to her messages,
scribbling in a notebook. We hear:

MICHELLE
--Anyway, guess you're busy... Just
give me a ring when you can.

MAN
Hi, this is Frank. Vicky's pissed off. She needs the Greenline presentation asap. You better call.

ELIZABETH (MOM)
Hi. Guess what -- Larry Tuttle had a heart attack. I made an appointment with my cardiologist. Call me.

TROY
Hey... Troy. I'm back in town Monday. Was hoping we could get together. Give me a call either way, OK? I promise I don't bite. Unless I'm asked to. Bye.

She writes the name Troy, circles it.

VICKY
Alice -- where are you? This is not OK.

Alice's startled by a CAR HONK. She turns to face:

EXT. PARKING LOT

An ANGRY DRIVER leaning out of the window.

ANGRY DRIVER
Yo, lady. You own that spot?

Alice turns the engine on.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A two-story white stucco building in Los Feliz, clean, well-kept, an inner courtyard visible through the gate.

Alice parks and gets out of the car.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

EDDIE, live-in building manager - late forties, beer belly, T-shirt and cargo shorts - escorts Alice to apartment 2B. She's holding a big stack of mail.

EDDIE
We don't change locks when a tenant loses the key, no. Don't change them when you move, either. You're free to do it yourself, though.

He opens the door. She steps inside.

He lingers there a moment.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Next time you go away, let me know.
Mail and stuff... I'm here to help.

A beat. He senses her discomfort.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Or just tell a neighbor. This
town... You can die in your
apartment and no one'll notice for
a week.

He just made it worse. She's on the edge of tears.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
I don't mean *you*... It's not like
you're some old lady with a cat.
I'm just making a point.

ALICE
I know what you mean.

He nods.

Alice watches him go. Too fat to be *him*.

She closes the door. Looks around.

It's a small studio apartment with a view of the yard. Not
much bigger than a hotel room. Not lived-in enough to bring
back memories.

Two chairs, wooden table. She puts the mail on it - bills &
junk.

She stands there, a stranger to herself, waylaid in this
unfamiliar place where she somehow took her stuff and opened
utilities accounts.

She takes dead flowers out of a vase, puts them in the trash.

She turns the TV on. An old movie channel comes up. She won't
watch it but she leaves it on just for the company.

She looks at the boxes of books and cds, opened but still
unpacked. She SIGHS.

She picks two shirts out of a small closet. Green, blue. She
takes off the one she's wearing, tries the green one.

She checks herself in the mirror-- not quite right.

Green off, blue on. No good, either.

She starts pulling it off -- changes her mind. *Fuck it.*

INT. EXT. CAR - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Alice, blue shirt on, drives around the Blink building and into the small private parking lot in the back.

It's full.

She goes around again and parks at a meter.

INT. BLINK

Alice enters. Some uncomfortable glances.

She walks to her work station and finds:

ELLEN, sitting in her chair. A little younger, a little chirpier, a little more skin exposed. The new year's model.

ELLEN

Hi.

Alice just looks at her.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Vicky... told you about this, right?

VICKY (O.S.)

Alice. Could I see you in my office?

Ellen contrives a smile.

Alice walks by her, toward --

INT. VICKY'S OFFICE

Vicky sits in her high-tech ergonomic chair, surrounded by expensive furniture.

Alice takes a seat across the desk.

VICKY

We decided to promote Ellen to your former position.

She studies Alice's face for a reaction -- there's no discernible one.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I told you in the past that these disappearing acts are not acceptable. Was bad enough when it was just Mondays. I've put up with it because I know going out nights is part of the job. After all, you've been a good earner.

(MORE)

VICKY (CONT'D)
But to be gone a week with no
explanation is just --

ALICE
I was abducted.

She says it with no emotion. This is beginning to sound crazy even to her.

Vicky lifts an eyebrow on her botoxed forehead -- it's hard work.

VICKY
Are you making fun of me?

Alice shakes her head.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Look, if you were victim of some
kind of accident or crime, we will
consider reintegrating you. I'm
going to need some persuading
evidence.

ALICE
That won't be necessary.

VICKY
You mean, you don't want the job
anymore?

ALICE
I... don't think I ever did.

VICKY
Well. Thanks for clarifying that.

INT. BLINK

Alice leaves Vicky's office. Stephanie has been waiting outside.

STEPHANIE
I'll walk you out.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Alice and Stephanie sit at a table having coffee.

STEPHANIE
I got sick... I didn't even know
you were gone.

Alice nods.

ALICE
It's OK... There's nothing you
could have done.

STEPHANIE
I heard Adworks's looking for
someone.

Alice shakes her head.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Did you talk to Finlay?

Alice scans her memory...

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
You do remember Finlay?

ALICE
I... I need your help.

She pulls a little notebook out of her purse, starts
scribbling in it.

ALICE (CONT'D)
When did I meet Finlay?

INT. EXT. ALICE'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Alice drives up the Hollywood hills, talk radio on the car
stereo.

HOST
You broke every rule -- What were
you thinking? You date a single
mother, you buy her flowers --

CALLER
What can I say -- I was in love.

HOST
And look what happened!

CALLER
So how do I get her to have an
abortion now?

Alice listens, entranced.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - LATER

Alice parks two houses away on the small, cramped hilltop
street.

She gets out of the car and starts walking to the house.

Two cars - Michelle's and another - already occupy the
carport.

Alice reacts as she hears VOICES from inside the house.

BABY CRYING. GROWN-UPS ARGUING.

She steps closer to the wall...

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Yes, I know she's a handful.

TOM (V.O.)
She's a fucking disaster is what she is.

They step into the living room, where we can see them through the window.

MICHELLE
Don't be cruel.

TOM
She just needs to create drama in her life to fill the emptiness, and I'm sorry for her, but --

MICHELLE
She needs help!

TOM
Yes -- *professional* help.

MICHELLE
Come on, Tom.

TOM
She's either delusional or a pathological liar. You may call it a cry for help -- fine. It just shouldn't come at the expense of our relationship anymore. Not if we wanna save *that*. There -- I said it.

MICHELLE
I see.

TOM
Make me the bad guy -- I don't care.

The baby WAILS LOUDER.

MICHELLE
I'm gonna go check on Tyler.

Alice quietly steps away.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Alice sits on a stool by herself, scribbling in her notebook.

CLOSE ON the page:

Tuesday 11: broke up with Terry.

Wednesday 12: out with Steph. Met Fin.

Thursday 13 to Thursday 21: (blank)

Friday 22: rent the apartment.

Monday 25: left car at Dr. Nichols'. Never get it back.

Troy?

She starts jabbing the pen lightly on the blank space.

As she shakes her head, she catches:

A DARK-EYED MAN, sitting at the end of the bar. Watching her.

He catches her looking back, nods at her.

She looks away.

She works through it. Forces herself to look again. Their eyes meet -- hold --

Are you him?

FINLAY (O.S.)

Hey.

She turns.

ALICE

Oh. Hey.

He hugs her, gives her a light kiss. She kisses him back, a bit stiffly.

She steals a last glance at the dark-eyed man, who's about to pay for his drink and leave. She wishes she could know where he's going, whether she's just being paranoid, or --

FINLAY

So how are you?

ALICE

(snapping back)

What did Stephanie tell you?

FINLAY

That you had a terrible experience
but I should hear about it from
you.

ALICE

Get a drink.

INT. BAR - LATER

Finlay just heard the tale. He draws a long breath.

FINLAY
...Of course I believe you.

ALICE
You're in the minority.

FINLAY
What do you mean?

ALICE
Cops don't. My best friend doesn't.

FINLAY
Cops are jaded... Anyway, they get it wrong all the time. Your friend... well, it's not something people hear every day.

ALICE
It's funny. The only person who knows I'm telling the truth is *him*.

FINLAY
Look, if there's anything I can do... Anything at all...

ALICE
Thanks.

FINLAY
If you want me to sleep on your couch, or come to my place... It's really no trouble. And there wouldn't be any... assumptions.

She fixes him with a wary gaze.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry if I even assumed I had to say that.

She smiles. Then shakes her head.

ALICE
I'll be fine. But thanks.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alice sits at the table. Formal setting for one, a plate of hot pasta. TV quiz show in the background.

She picks at her food. It's slow going.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Alice slumps on the bed, still fully dressed. She stares at the ceiling. Thinking of another, very different room. She's free now. Except she's not.

She lays there, tense, alert to every noise.

A can of Mace sits on her bedside table.

An old clock TICK-TOCKS the seconds away.

The sound merges into:

INT. CAR - MOVING

The WHOOSH of a windshield wiper, keeping the same tempo...

Light rain falls on the moving car.

We can glimpse Alice's reflection, framed against the neon-lit night.

The sound merges into:

EXT. TERRY'S STREET - NIGHT

Quiet, empty, poorly lit by a distant lamp post.

Alice slams the car door shut, and starts walking. TICK...
TOCK...

Suddenly ANOTHER SET OF STEPS close in on her from behind --

She half-turns --

A dark figure jumps on her.

A knife *flashes* --

She opens her mouth to scream --

The knife rips her throat open.

A SHRIEK turns into a GURGLE as she crumples to the ground, face down.

Tires SCREECH -- an unseen car drives off.

Lights go on inside some of the houses.

A MAN hurries to the body.

A puddle of blood is spreading underneath, already diluting in the rain. The man rolls the body over to reveal --

It's not Alice, but Carla. Dead outside Alice's old house, inside Alice's old coat.

INT. COP BAR - NIGHT

A regular-Joe, old-school sports bar.

Look closer and spot the framed newspaper clippings on LA's finest, the plaques honoring cops fallen in the line. This is when you'll notice all the regular Joes have regulation haircuts.

A few WOMEN stand out. Cop groupies, looking to get handcuffed for the night.

Courtney and Ayala play pool with two other cops -- ELLIS and VASQUEZ.

Ayala's shot. His belly hangs over the table.

VASQUEZ
(to Ayala)
You gotta hit the gym, bro. You
look chubbier by the day.

AYALA
That's cause every time I fuck your
wife she gives me a cookie.

They LAUGH.

ELLIS
Listen to you. You used to be a
good Catholic boy.

COURTNEY
He lapsed a loong time ago, man.

VASQUEZ
Yeah? I still see him in church.

AYALA
I got kids, don't I?

COURTNEY
No shit.

That gets another LAUGH.

ELLIS
Leave him alone... You know they're
allergic to rubber.

VASQUEZ
So you're a lapsed catholic now?

AYALA
Yeah, well... When they start going
bankrupt from molestation
settlements, you gotta wonder.

COURTNEY
I don't get it. You think they're
child molesters, why you wanna
expose your kids?

AYALA
(annoyed)
It's-- Don't you worry about it,
OK? Dumbest priest in the world
knows better than to touch *my* kids.

A cell phone RINGS. Courtney picks up:

COURTNEY
Courtney.
(listens, then:)
Yeah, that's the guy... On our way.

He hangs up.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
(to Ayala)
Remember Terry Silbert? Dickwad we
talked to about the girl in the
hospital?

AYALA
Yeah?

COURTNEY
Looks like he just offed someone.

CUT TO:

INT. LAPD CENTRAL STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Courtney and Ayala face Terry in the spare, harshly lit room.

TERRY
We were *lovers*, for god's sake.

Courtney sneers.

COURTNEY
People kill the ones they love.
Happens every day.

TERRY
Where do you get off -- look,
whatever my faults as a man, I'm
not a killer. OK?

COURTNEY
Yeah? And whatever my faults as a
detective, I've never seen a woman
slaughtered at the house of a *lover*
with a history of abuse by somebody
other than him, you lying asshole.

TERRY
I want my lawyer now.

INT. DOWNTOWN COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Lawyers and cops mix with perps and their families on the lunch break from the dozen trials in the city's courthouses -- starches suits vs. baggy pants, neckties vs. gold chains.

COURTNEY
Look at that.

He points across the street.

A storefront wedding chapel/legal office advertises both wedding licenses and divorces, in English and Spanish.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Gotta love this town.

Alice's eyes travel across the room.

ALICE
What's with this place anyway?

COURTNEY
Courtroom break. Sorry... I'm testifying.

ALICE
Oh.

COURTNEY
Well, he hasn't confessed yet, but--

She SIGHS, shakes her head.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
I realize this is very traumatic for you.

ALICE
You didn't even believe me, and now --

COURTNEY
Here's what we believe. This guy's bad news. He needs to be put away, and your testimony's going to help. But witnesses need to be *credible*. You have to separate what you *know* from what you might... imagine.

ALICE
I was kidnapped.

COURTNEY
And if you were, he did it.

ALICE
If I was?

COURTNEY
We have to present facts.

ALICE
The *fact* is, I know Terry --

He puts his hand on her arm.

She pulls her arm back.

COURTNEY
OK. Let's say that your memory is
entirely reliable. You said he wore
a hood.

She nods.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
You said his voice was muffled.

She nods again.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Clearly, he was concerned about
being identified.

Alice lowers her eyes for a second.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
And now we have a body. So, when I
do the math...

ALICE
You may 'do the math'-- I'm the one
who was *there*.

COURTNEY
Yes. You were there all along.
Telling yourself he was gonna
change.

ALICE
I'm not in denial.

COURTNEY
Yes, you are. Whatever happened to
you, Terry had motive. He had
precedents. He had access. And he
had reason to behave just the way
you describe.

A beat.

ALICE
She looked like me.

Courtney half-nods. *So?*

ALICE (CONT'D)
What if the killer thought it was
me? If he's still out there --

COURTNEY
But he's not. We caught him, and
he's going down. You can relax.

Alice stares at him, conflicted -- part of her wants to believe him, the other part doesn't, or can't.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Alice steps out. Shields her eyes from the harsh sunlight.

EXT. OLVERA PLAZA

Old Mexican MEN, MOTHERS and CHILDREN. A STREET MUSICIAN playing. A couple of altars left over from Day of the Dead, filled with offerings from the living.

Alice walks by, looking, yearning to be part of it.

INT./EXT. ALICE'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

The old Jaguar cruises slowly down the street.

Alice looks around, unaware that she's slowing traffic.

She's aimless.

EXT. TERRY'S PLACE - DAY

She's wandered her way back here.

She crosses the street.

Looks down at the faint chalk outline of Carla's body on the sidewalk -- like a negative shadow of herself.

She walks around to the back.

INT. TERRY'S PLACE

Alice walks in.

Piles of random stuff - books, clothes, etc. - have been stacked up in the course of the police search. Orange LAPD evidence tags have been placed throughout the room.

She walks amongst the ruins, into --

INT. BEDROOM

She looks at the bed. This is where she used to sleep, dream, make love. Feels like another lifetime.

She moves to the closet.

Opens a shoe-box. Terry's sex paraphernalia -- condoms, lube, straps and toys --

She puts the lid back on.

INT. LIVING ROOM

She looks through some dvds on a shelf. Abbott and Costello, Bruce Lee, a dozen concert classics. She finds the one she's looking for, opens the box.

She takes the disc -- there's another, unmarked one underneath.

She pops it into the player and turns the TV on, fiddles with the remote control until the picture appears.

A fuzzy home video:

Alice taking her shirt off...

Terry stepping into frame...

Kissing her, then pushing her down on the bed, playfully rough...

Alice stares at herself, mesmerized, trying to read into the images some secret of things to come, until --

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

She startles, turns the TV off.

Stands still. Holding her breath. A long moment -- every small sound magnified a hundred times.

The visitor finally walks away.

She walks to the window, peeks out to see:

A NEIGHBOR stepping back inside his house.

Alice extracts the dvd from the player, puts it in her purse.

She walks out.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - LOUNGE AREA - DAY

Alice and Michelle sit in a corner. Michelle just finished her class. People walk in and out, radiating good vibes.

MICHELLE

You should have told me. You should have walked in and *told us*.

ALICE
It's OK... Keeps it real.

MICHELLE
You know he was talking in the heat
of the moment...

ALICE
It's OK. The strangest thing about
all this is, *I get it*. I hear about
this girl that I was. I recognize
her, but... I'm not her anymore.
And I don't know if it's because
I'm a lost, or because she was.

Michelle nods. Maybe a little afraid of saying the wrong
thing.

MICHELLE
Tell me about Terry.

ALICE
They're waiting for a confession. I
I can't believe it... I just don't
know what to believe.

MICHELLE
Does seem crazy... But we know he
had this *streak*.

ALICE
But murder? And why outside the
house?

MICHELLE
Maybe she was trying to leave him?

Alice sighs, trying to wrap her head around it.

ALICE
How are you, anyway?

MICHELLE
I'm just...

ALICE
What?

MICHELLE
Forget it... I have no right to
bore you with my petty crap.

ALICE
You're my friend. You have every
right. Petty crap's what I need to
hear anyway.

MICHELLE
I had a bad fight with Tom.

ALICE
What happened?

MICHELLE
It's not any one thing. We just...
hit the wall I guess. Babies can do
that do a marriage. And then again--
sometimes I think it's been over a
long time... And the baby's the
only reason we're still together.

ALICE
You're *good* together.

Michelle holds back tears.

Alice hugs her, comforts her -- an unexpected reversal.

MICHELLE
I'm sorry...

ALICE
Don't be.

MICHELLE
I guess we'll get through it,
right? My parents did...

She immediately regrets saying, it but Alice doesn't mind.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

The top level of the structure gives a great 360 view - the
sparkling grid of LA stretching out around it from oceans to
mountains.

A young woman in a summer dress, KARA, gets out the elevator
and starts walking toward the two cars left.

They are parked close to each other: a late-model Japanese
car, an early-model station wagon.

She opens her car door with a remote control.

MAN (O.S.)
Hi. Can I ask you a huge favor?

She turns toward the man talking to her from inside the
wagon. We don't see him. Before she can answer:

MAN (CONT'D)
Car's dead and I forgot my phone.
Can I borrow yours for a quick
call? Local of course.

Kara smiles.

KARA
Yeah. Sure.

And just like that, she makes the biggest mistake of her life.

EXT. ALICE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Alice parks, walks to the entrance.

Finally. COURTNEY (O.S.)

She controls a little jolt, turns toward the detective...

ALICE
What are you doing here?

COURTNEY
You didn't answer my messages. I was getting worried.

Alice checks her phone.

ALICE
Sorry, I -- I got distracted.

COURTNEY
Wanna grab a cup of coffee?

ALICE
Bit late for coffee, don't you think?

COURTNEY
(shrugs)
Makes no difference to me.

She hesitates. Finally:

ALICE
I got coffee.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT

Cortney follows Alice inside.

She turns the lights on, walks to the kitchenette area...

ALICE
Sure you don't want a real drink?

COURTNEY
I shouldn't...

ALICE
I won't report you.

He sits down.

She gets a bottle of white wine out of the fridge, fills two glasses.

COURTNEY
Alright. Good news/bad news. His
alibi checked out. His alibi
checked out.

Alice shudders -- her mind racing through the implications.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
I'm still thinking he did it.

ALICE
So why exactly are you here?

He takes a sip.

COURTNEY
I wanted to tell you in person.

ALICE
That's it?

He doesn't answer.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Guess that's the thing with cops.
You're supposed to tell 'em your
whole story, and then some. They
just tell you whatever the hell
they want.

He nods. Fair enough...

COURTNEY
OK. Here's a story for you. There's
this kid... His father is a cop. So
is his grandfather. 'Doctor or
lawyer' never had a chance.

She hints at a smile.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Dad spent 26 years in uniform. But
this kid -- he's gonna be a
detective. So he studies like a
monk, kisses ass like a politician,
and runs to danger like a moth to
the flame. One day, he's dispatched
to a 390 -- drunk male. Chickenshit
stuff. Except by the time he's
there, turns out the drunk guy's
got a gun. And he's got a hostage.
He's using her for a shield -- but
she's *short*.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

The DRUNK MALE wears a baseball hat. One arm around the woman's neck, the other pressing the gun to her head. But his own head is exposed.

The woman labors to breathe, frozen with terror.

COURTNEY (V.O.)
Times like that, it's all about
staying cool. You get the guy,
you're golden. Anyone else gets
hurt, you'll be nailed to the
cross. But the kid was cool. No way
he was gonna miss that shot. So he
took it.

BANG -- The bullet hits the robber's head -- blood spurts --

The robber's gun falls to the floor.

But he's still standing.

Somebody SCREAMS --

The robber finally falls, revealing:

Another body twitching on the floor...

COURTNEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The drunk guy was a war vet. Half
his skull was covered by a steel
plate. The bullet bounced and
killed another man.

Courtney locks eyes with the dying man. Watches the life slip away from him. The man can't understand why he's dying.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT

Courtney waits for the memory to fade.

COURTNEY
I was cleared. I made detective but
I started drinking. Finally my wife
snapped. I loved her. Didn't see
that coming, either.

A beat.

ALICE
Someone said love is religion with
a fallible god.

Courtney thinks about it.

COURTNEY
Sounds like a scam to me.

ALICE
You still wear the ring.

Courtney distends his fingers. She sees that the one bearing the ring is deformed -- the knuckle too thick for the ring to come off.

COURTNEY
I broke my finger... I'll have to cut it off. The ring, I mean.

They look at each other -- connecting deeper for the first time.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Point is, I learned that just 'cause I'm sure about something, doesn't mean I'm right. And so I may be right -- but I'm not gonna be sure.

She nods. Happy that he chose to expose himself *to her*.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
I may *act* sure. But that's the job.

ALICE
If it wasn't Terry -- then he's still out there. He's not gonna stop. He can't.

A cloud passes over Courtney's eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What are you thinking?

COURTNEY
(reluctant)
I just heard a dispatch... There was an abduction. In a parking lot. Probably unrelated but --

ALICE
But if it isn't -- she'll be waking up in that basement.

COURTNEY
Listen to me -- there's no missing Amy in California at this time.

A beat.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
I got a name without a person. A black guy with no name. A witness with amnesia. It's not a lot to go by.

Alice starts to say something -- she stops. She can't argue the point.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
But *I am* looking.

She nods.

Courtney gets up.

He lingers there a few seconds too long. Wishing that she could believe him more. That he could believe her more.

Wishing he could stay.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
Try to get a good sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELIZABETH PARKER'S HOUSE - DAY

A small suburban house in a small town somewhere in Colorado, pretty and dull, the place Alice couldn't wait to leave...

INT. ELIZABETH PARKER'S HOUSE - DAY

ELIZABETH stands in the kitchen, distraught, phone pressed to her face.

A handwritten note sits on the counter next to an open envelope.

ELIZABETH
Alice? Oh, my god, baby.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Alice sits on the messy bed, the picture of a restless night.

ALICE
Mom? What's wrong?

ELIZABETH
I think my heart is acting out...

ALICE
Calm down...

ELIZABETH
Calm down? My daughter sends me a suicide note...

Alice is stunned. She stands up --

ALICE
It's not what you think, mom...

Elizabeth grabs the note, starts reading:

ELIZABETH
*You may never find my body but you
 must let go --*

ALICE
 Don't --

ELIZABETH
 (getting more hysterical)
I tried to be a good daughter --

ALICE
 Stop it!

ELIZABETH
 What is going on? Is it drugs? A
 man? Please, Alice --

ALICE
 Mom, listen to me. This is
 somebody's sick joke. OK? I'm fine.

ELIZABETH
 What kind of person would do that?

ALICE
 I'm not sure. But there's nothing
 to worry about. I promise you.

A long pause.

ELIZABETH
 We should tell the police...

ALICE
 Let me handle it. I'll call you
 later, OK?

ELIZABETH
 (reluctantly)
 OK, but --

ALICE
 I'll call you later.

She hangs up. Takes a deep breath. And suddenly realizes
 something...

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Alice searches the web, typing furiously... In a series of
 time-lapse shots:

She googles "Amy missing"

Scans some goth "suicide girl" type blog -- a dead end...

Scans the FBI missing person website...

LA Times obs...

A California death registry...

She talks on the phone:

ALICE
Are you sure?
(a beat)
Thanks.

She hangs up, stunned.

INT. LAPD CENTRAL STATION - LATER

Alice sits in Courtney's office.

ALICE
A Joyce A. Stevens is supposed to
have committed suicide. No body was
found -- just a note... A. is for
Amy.

COURTNEY
When?

ALICE
10 Days ago.

COURTNEY
But why would he call her by her
middle name?

ALICE
Might be the name she gave him...
Maybe she didn't want him to own
Joyce.

Courtney takes that it.

COURTNEY
I'll look into it. Just... hang in
there. I'll call you when I've got
something.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

DIANA - 30s, working class Boston accent, tattoos peeking out
of low cut pants - cuts Alice's hair as she chats away.

DIANA
I mean, look what happened to
Britney... I just think after you
have kids, you don't get to flash
crotch -- period. This isn't
France.

Alice forces a smile.

ALICE
I want to change the color, too...

DIANA
You wanna go lighter?

ALICE
I was thinking darker.

DIANA
Mmm. Not sure that's you.

ALICE
What *is* me?

DIANA
You're... Beautiful... but not
intimidating. You're sexy. But sort
of good-girl sexy.

Alice takes that in.

ALICE
Sounds like, 'tragic blonde'.

DIANA
What do you mean?

ALICE
You know. The cheerleader that ends
up married to some rich old guy. Or
killed by one.

Diana looks at her, a bit confused.

DIANA
We can go darker...

ALICE
And shorter. No bob or anything.
Cropped.

Diana nods -- *You're the boss.*

INT./EXT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

MONTAGE:

Alice drives west, crossing the informal lines of LA's tax brackets. The short, darker hair gives her a harder, just slightly androgynous look.

She looks out the window at the changing landscape -- shaggy-ass palms to well tended ones, cheap Japanese cars to luxury European models.

She looks at the people, studying every face as if searching for a clue -- as if searching for *him*.

The images become just slightly surreal:

MEXICAN DAY-LABORERS milling about in front of a Home Depot, baseball caps over dark eyes -- one of them stares back --

Are you him?

A CONTRACTOR pulling off in his late-model truck...

TWO MOTORCYCLE COPS, black uniforms and shiny helmets, speeding by in the opposite direction...

YOUNG MEN ON SKATEBOARDS... COSTUMED SUPERHERO... Sleep-drunk FATHER pushing a stroller...

DRIVERS picking their noses, chatting on the phone, staring blankly ahead...

She scans them all into her brain:

Are you him?

INT./EXT. CAR - MOVING - WEST HOLLYWOOD

Her eyes suddenly go wide -- the car SWERVES -- she pulls over.

Stares at:

A LARGE BILLBOARD with the Blink vodka campaign.

A woman in a leather cat costume, kneeling on the floor, lips parted in a sexy pout. The bottle of vodka stands in front of her next to a bowl, half-filled for her to lap from.

Alice opens the door and throws up on the street.

EXT. DR. NICHOLS' HOUSE - LATER

A two-story house on the westside, sunny and clean.

Alice rings the doorbell.

Dr. Nichols lets her in.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' HOUSE

Alice takes a quick look around. It's an elegant and unpretentious, with large, full bookcases, tasteful art on the walls, exotic mementos from a well-travelled life.

Dr. Nichols reacts to her haircut, slightly bemused.

DR. NICHOLS
Nice. Sporty.

She nods.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
Got the tattoo, too?

Alice hesitates, taken aback, not sure if he's joking.

ALICE
Thank you for seeing me here.

DR. NICHOLS
I must say, it's something I don't typically do.

ALICE
I really appreciate it.

DR. NICHOLS
Well, you certainly had... an extraordinary reason to ask.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' HOME OFFICE - LATER

Nichols listens intently at Alice' stream of consciousness:

ALICE
It's like I'm seeing the hidden faces... Who they are inside.

Nichols nods, urging her on.

ALICE (CONT'D)
How far would they go without the fear of getting caught? Are killers just more... sincere?

DR. NICHOLS
Sincere?

ALICE
I work in advertising. I know how men look at women. What if they could just... act on it?

DR. NICHOLS
I don't believe that makes a killer more *sincere*.

ALICE
What do you believe?

A pause. He chooses his words.

DR. NICHOLS
We all have a shadow. Only a few let it control their lives.

ALICE
He's not crazy. I'm not gonna let
him get away with that.

DR. NICHOLS
If he knows the difference between
good and evil, he is not legally
insane. But he may not know the
difference between reality and
fantasy. That happens.

Alice levels her gaze at him.

ALICE
I'm not crazy either.

DR. NICHOLS
We weren't talking about you.

(But if you think we were, we probably should...)

ALICE
What happened, happened. I wish I
could change that but I can't. *It
changed me.*

DR. NICHOLS
I understand.

A beat.

ALICE
I think it might be useful for me
to read my file.

DR. NICHOLS
That wouldn't be very appropriate.

ALICE
Not your notes. Just my own words.
Can't you give me the transcripts?

DR. NICHOLS
I don't have transcripts... I use
an EMR system --
(off her look:)
Electronic Medical Records. I
download the recordings directly
into the computer.

ALICE
So you can put them back on a tape.

DR. NICHOLS
I'll think about it. In the
meantime...

He scribbles something.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
 I'm gonna prescribe a mood
 stabilizer.

He hands her the prescription.

She stares at his practiced, professional smile.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Alice walks in, spots Troy (the Pontiac guy.)

He smiles at her, pats the next stool.

TROY
 The call gives me hope. The haircut
 doesn't.

ALICE
 I... remember you.

TROY
 (perplexed)
 That's a start.

ALICE
 You left all those messages.

He nods.

TROY
 I can be stubborn.

ALICE
 And I didn't call back, or see you
 again? Until now?

Troy's getting freaked out.

TROY
 Hey. Will you tell me what's going
 on here?

ALICE
 (blurts out:)
 Are you him?

TROY
 What?

ALICE
Are you him?

TROY
 I can try to be... Would you be a
 little more specific?

She takes his hand. Puts it on her shoulder, trying to gage
 the heft.

He looks at her like she's crazy.

She takes the hand off.

ALICE
I gotta go.

Troy does a double-take.

TROY
Oookeeey.

Alice leaves.

The BARTENDER shakes his head, sympathetically.

BARTENDER
Full moon.

INT. FINLAY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Finlay hears the DOORBELL RING.

Opens the door. Lets Alice in.

She looks around the place. Architectural Digest-elegant,
mostly new furniture with some old collector items.

ALICE
Nice.

FINLAY
(uncomfortable)
Thanks.

ALICE
Wait... Have I been here before?

A beat.

FINLAY
No.

ALICE
So why do you sound strange?

FINLAY
(sighs)
Most of the stuff was bought by my
ex... She's a decorator.

ALICE
She has good taste.

FINLAY
That she does. Drink?

ALICE
Whatever you're having.

He walks to:

INT. KITCHEN

Grabs a bottle of wine, fills two glasses halfway.

 ALICE
Thanks.

She takes a sip.

 ALICE (CONT'D)
So what went wrong?

 FINLAY
Like you said -- she has good
taste. Expensive taste. She reached
the conclusion I couldn't afford
it.

He raises his glass.

 ALICE
Sounds like a bitch.

 FINLAY
Well...

 ALICE
But you don't hate women?

 FINLAY
What?

 ALICE
Or do you?

 FINLAY
No. Of course not. Do you hate men?

Alice considers this. She shakes her head.

TIME LAPSE TO:

INT. FINLAY'S APARTMENT - LATER

The bottle of wine looks fuller.

We see the empty one nearby.

Alice and Finlay sit on the couch talking, vintage jazz in
the background.

 ALICE
I thought about moving... I mean,
another town.

FINLAY
There's life beyond LA. I've seen
it.

ALICE
But then I think if I did that, I'd
be letting him change my life even
more than he already has.

He nods.

There's a long pause.

FINLAY
You... can tell me about it.

She doesn't answer. Wanting to tell him. But not wanting to.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
Just tell me what you need from me.

ALICE
I need you to wake me up. Tell me
it was all a dream.

He shakes his head, sad for her.

FINLAY
I can't do that.

A beat.

ALICE
Then make me feel *something else*.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Alice and Finlay make slow, careful, awkward love.

It's like he's afraid to shatter her, and she forgot all the
moves.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Finlay gets up, naked (no sheet wrapped around his waist) and
walks out of the room.

FINLAY
This is when I wish I still smoked.
Now I just get hungry.

She grabs a glass of water on her bedside table. It's too
full -- she spills some -- looks down on the floor and sees:

Her blue hairpin.

She freaks -- tries to explain it some other way -- no dice.
Finlay -- *him?*

He comes back, biting a pear. Reads her face:

FINLAY (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

She thinks it over -- she *wants* the truth -- but she *needs*
out...

ALICE
Nothing.

He stands there, naked.

FINLAY
Not nothing.

ALICE
I'm fine. Just a little headache.

Finlay puts the pear down. Reaches for his pants.

FINLAY
You figured it out?

ALICE
I don't know what you're talking
about.

FINLAY
Liar...

ALICE
Finlay --

He stares at her -- hard, intense.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Look, this -- whatever this is --
can we talk about it next time?

FINLAY
No. Let's clear the air now.

A beat.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
You've been here before. You
figured that out, right?

She slowly nods.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
What else did you figure out?

ALICE
That's all... I just found this.

She shows him the blue pin.

FINLAY
I can explain.

He laughs.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
That never sounds good, does it?

Alice looks at the door. Can she make a break for it?

Finlay steps closer -- she puts her hand up:

ALICE
I'll scream.

He finally realizes what's going through her head...

FINLAY
Oh, god... What are you --

He extends open hands, trying to reassure her.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
We had sex before. That's all. I
just wasn't sure how to tell you...

He SIGHS.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
It was bad. I guess rebound sex
always is.

Alice's fear gives way to confusion.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
It was your idea then, too. We got
into it but then you seemed unsure.
I stopped. You didn't want me to
stop. It was on and off, on and
off, until you just up and left. I
waited for you to call but...

A beat.

FINLAY (CONT'D)
So, I don't know -- I thought maybe
we'd start over.

ALICE
That's... very thoughtful.

FINLAY
Alice, I'm not... a *predator*, for
God's sake.

She looks at him. Her eyes say, *Yes you are.*

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Alice drives back to her apartment. Hollywood night creatures shuffle along the street as traffic passes them by.

Bums, junkies, sex peddlers, stray souls --

Alice stares at them -- searching for him -- afraid to find him -- afraid to find any lost piece of herself.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Alice sits at the desk. A prescription bottle sits on it, next to a glass of water.

Alice types on her laptop. We see her lost days on screen:

Tuesday 11: broke up with Terry.

Wednesday 12: out with Steph. Met Fin.

15, 18: calls from Troy.

Slept with Fin (date?)

Monday 25: left car at Dr. Nichols'. Never get it back.

Her email alert RINGS.

She scrolls through her recent messages, working her way up to the top. Business stuff, friends 'checking in', spam from spurious names, and --

A message from AliceP.

She stares at the address, dumbstruck. This isn't a memo to self she remembers writing.

She opens the message. It reads:

I'm not under the bed. I'm in your head.

We are not finished.

She closes the message. Breathing fast. She picks up the phone, dials 911.

INT. LAPD CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Alice sits in Courtney's office with Courtney, Ayala, and special detective MACLEOD, the resident computer geek.

MACLEOD
He sent it through a remailer...
(off her look:)
(MORE)

MACLEOD (CONT'D)
Basically, the original IP is stripped away and the message is forwarded through a chain of proxies, so you can't trace the computer that it was actually written on. You could try, but you'd have to seize a ton of records... and even then, he might have used a public computer.

ALICE
So he has my email address... what else?

COURTNEY
Assuming he got it from your Blackberry, he'd have that whole database. Could be how he located Terry.

ALICE
You think he still has it?

Courtney shrugs.

COURTNEY
The Blackberry made the last call from Beverly Hills, then sent the last ping to the network from downtown. After that it went either out of range, or out of power.

ALICE
Where downtown?

COURTNEY
Around the freeway interchange.

ALICE
Shit.

COURTNEY
Yeah.

ALICE
What about the letter?

COURTNEY
The only fingerprints are yours. Even on the envelope.

Alice is momentarily surprised.

ALICE
He could have made me touch it.

COURTNEY
Yes. He could have.

ALICE
 What about Joyce?
 (off his look:)
 Amy.

COURTNEY
 Oh. She had called a crisis center
 hotline multiple times. Their
 psychological autopsy's pretty
 conclusive.

ALICE
 So... you're just gonna drop it?

COURTNEY
 I didn't say that.

AYALA
 You must understand -- these are
 tough cases. And we have a full
 load of them.

Alice sighs. This is going nowhere.

INT. COURTNEY'S OFFICE - LATER

Courtney and Ayala are in the midst of a heated argument.

AYALA
 Carla was her *rival* --

COURTNEY
 For what? She left Terry, remember?

AYALA
 That's what *she* said. Terry seemed
 happy to be rid of her.

Courtney purses his lips. He doesn't want to buy it.

AYALA (CONT'D)
 Alice goes on a bender. Gets all
 suicidal, then decides she'd rather
 kill Terry's new girl. She blames
 the bogeyman, says *she* was the
 intended victim. Sends the email to
 back it up. And the suicide note...
 what if Alice knew about Amy, built
 her story from there?

COURTNEY
 Come on -- A throat-slasher? She's
 not exactly that type, is she?

Ayala makes a face.

AYALA
 Guess you would know.

Courtney tenses --

COURTNEY
What are you trying to say?

AYALA
You know what I'm saying.

COURTNEY
Let's make sure.

AYALA
(sighs)
Did you fuck her?

COURTNEY
No, you asshole.

AYALA
But you want to.

COURTNEY
(more hesitant)
No.

Ayala raises his hand in a conciliatory gesture.

AYALA
I just had to ask. 'Course there's
always the other obvious option.

COURTNEY
That she's telling the truth?

AYALA
That she thinks she is. She's got
the shrink. Writes suicide notes.
Gets messages from herself. Maybe
she's just plain cuckoo.

Courtney takes it in. He's not gonna rule that out, either.

AYALA (CONT'D)
I'm telling you as a friend --
don't lose perspective on this one.

EXT. JOYCE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Alice waits on the street.

CHRIS, 20s, tall and lanky, a surfer's casual demeanor, gets
out the building.

ALICE
Hi.

CHRIS
Hi.

ALICE
I'm a friend of Joyce Stevens.

CHRIS
Oh. I'm... sorry.

ALICE
Did you know her?

CHRIS
Like, "hi" and "bye".

ALICE
Who should I talk to?

CHRIS
She kinda kept to herself... But
try Heather in 423. She's in. I
just saw her.

INT. JOYCE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Alice knocks on 423.

HEATHER JOHNSON, former B-movie actress 20 years past her
prime, opens the door.

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Alice sits with Heather in the tiny apartment, crammed with
dubious memorabilia from Heather's glory days. Movie stills
of Heather in a mermaid costume, police uniform, warrior
princess get-up.

HEATHER
She was a sweet girl. Too good for
this world. She was lonely, and
yet... it's like she felt everyone
else's pain, you know? It made her
sad all the time. I think she just
got tired of it.

ALICE
Did he ever tell you she wanted to
kill herself?

HEATHER
Once. That's when I referred her to
Dr. Benning.

On Alice's face,

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

COPS string yellow crime scene tape around a patch of dry
grass, where --

COURTNEY stands over the body of a TEENAGE GANGSTER. It's riddled with bullets. Several more COPS and crime scene INVESTIGATORS inspect the body and the ground around it.

Courtney on the phone:

COURTNEY
Look, I'm in the middle of something...
(a beat)
I do understand. I'm just in the middle of something... Hold on.

He steps away from the body.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
The message is... creepy. But it's not explicit enough to prove anything. So far, we know *one crime* has been committed. The murder of Carla Foster.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT./EXT. ALICE'S CAR - DAY

Alice drives, holding the phone to her ear.

ALICE
(sarcastic)
I suppose you'll want my alibi next.

COURTNEY
(snaps)
You got one?

She hangs up.

Courtney puts the phone back into his pocket. He walks back to the body. Kneels down to take a closer look.

The boy's eyes are still open.

Courtney looks into them. It's not helpful. But he can't help it.

INT. ALICE'S CAR

Alice's face is scrunched in frustration. Not only they don't believe her -- she's their next suspect.

She reaches into the glove compartment, grabs a pair of sunglasses.

As she removes them something falls to the floor, catching her eye:

A red business card for "Hollywood Tattoo and Arts Studio".

Alice's recognizes it -- synapses snapping in her brain as she turns the car around.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - DAY

She parks on a side street off the boulevard.

Gets out. Starts walking.

Hollywood at mid-day is a sad circus of tourists, vagrants, and the variously unemployed. Alice joins the flow, shuffling along shops selling everything from cheesy trinkets to stripper costumes, army surplus, Hollywood props, smoke and bongos... And here it is:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD TATTOO AND ARTS STUDIO

A darkened window behind a metal gate. She walks in.

INT. HOLLYWOOD TATTOO AND ARTS STUDIO

Wall-to-wall with wild animals, barbed wire, tribal markings, cartoon females -- a whole garish alphabet of fantasy and desire.

Alice looks around, lost in it --

DWAYNE (V.O.)
Can I help you?

Alice turns to meet --

MAD DOG DWAYNE KANE, resident ink-slinger: 35, wiry, wifebeater and Fedora, tattooed/pierced to the gills.

She tries to remember him...

ALICE
I was here before...

DWAYNE
Yes?

ALICE
To get a tattoo.

Dwayne lifts an eyebrow. *No shit...*

ALICE (CONT'D)
Do you remember me?

He looks at her more carefully.

DWAYNE
Wait -- you cut your hair.

Alice nods.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
I remember you. You broke up with
our boyfriend. Wanted something to
mark a new chapter. We looked at a
bunch of stuff but then you
chickened out.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. DR. NICHOLS HOME - DAY

Dr. Nichols standing inside the door:

DR. NICHOLS
Got the tattoo, too?

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT

Alice semi-conscious as the hooded man inspects her body,
probing, *searching*...

BACK TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD TATTOO AND ARTS STUDIO

Dwayne raises his arms apologetically.

DWAYNE
Sorry, shouldn't say that.

ALICE
It's OK.

DWAYNE
You said... you didn't feel you had
earned it yet.

Alice nods, more to herself than to him.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
So you want one now?

ALICE
No.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' OFFICE - DAY

Nichols opens the heavy, soundproof door to let a PATIENT
out.

Another patient, BETSY (20-something, Kelly Osbourne-type), is waiting in the small reception area, next to a fidgety Alice.

Nichols reacts to her presence.

DR. NICHOLS
I don't believe we have an appointment...

ALICE
It's... an emergency.

DR. NICHOLS
Unfortunately, my schedule's full.

Betsy looks from Nichols to Alice and back.

BETSY
I could come back... I mean, if this is a real emergency...

Nichols relents.

DR. NICHOLS
I appreciate it. Call to reschedule, or... same time next week.

Betsy nods.

ALICE
(to Betsy)
Thank you.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Alice stands.

DR. NICHOLS
You're not gonna sit down?

She hesitates before she does.

ALICE
I didn't come for therapy. By the way -- people know I'm here.

DR. NICHOLS
And the reason you're saying this, is...

ALICE
Do you know Dr. Alan Benning?

DR. NICHOLS
He's a colleague. Why?

ALICE
One of his patients was kidnapped.

DR. NICHOLS
How do you know that?

ALICE
No -- you answer me. He knew about the tattoo... The one I never got. He was looking for it.

DR. NICHOLS
I'm confused. Dr. Benning knew about your tattoo?

ALICE
The killer did. How did he know I was supposed to have one? I only mentioned that to you and Michelle.

DR. NICHOLS
You think I have something to do with... Alice -- You were in my house last week.

Alice's head spins--

ALICE
Why would he speak in a whisper?

DR. NICHOLS
I don't know... Could be damaged pipes. Could be the character he plays in his mind. Could be the way it plays in your mind.
(a beat)
Have you been taking the medication I prescribed?

She ignores the question:

ALICE
And you won't mind discussing this with the police.

Nichols has a slight twitch.

She picks up on it.

DR. NICHOLS
I just don't see how that could help.

ALICE
Can't hurt, right?

DR. NICHOLS
(sighs)
I'm afraid it can.

A beat.

ALICE
Tell me.

Nichols considers it.

DR. NICHOLS
If I do, our doctor/patient
relationship is over.

ALICE
I'm past worrying about that.

DR. NICHOLS
I've been out of town. I... wasn't
where my wife thought. You can
infer the rest.

ALICE
You're telling me you lied to her --
why should I believe you?

Nichols sighs. Pulls up a photo file on his laptop --
pictures of him with a much younger woman in a ski resort.

DR. NICHOLS
I have receipts somewhere.

ALICE
You told someone about me getting a
tattoo?

DR. NICHOLS
No. That would be unethical.

She smiles ruefully.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
It really isn't that interesting.

ALICE
Does Benning or anyone else have
access to your computer files?

Nichols thinks. A light comes on.

DR. NICHOLS
I share an office with him at
Harbor-UCLA. My files are on their
server. Theoretically...

ALICE
Let's go.

DR. NICHOLS
You mean... now? That's not --

ALICE
I'm not going to beg you... You can
help me, or you can have an honest
chat with your wife.

DR NICHOLS
I see.

EXT. HARBOR-UCLA MED. CENTER - DAY

A major public teaching hospital in Torrance, caring for the mental health of 2 million people in the LA area. Big, clean, bright in modern So-Cal style.

INT. HARBOR-UCLA MED. CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Nichols and Alice exit the elevator. A sign on the wall identifies the Department of Psychiatry.

INT. DPT OF PSYCHIATRY OFFICE - LATER

Nichols talks with DANIEL STRIEGLER, network administrator.

STRIEGLER
It'd require for someone to know the hospital password to get into the network, and your personal password to get into her file. I assume you keep yours secret.

Nichols makes a face.

DR. NICHOLS
I'm a bit... Old school. My password is the word 'password'.

Alice looks at him in silent protest.

Striegler nods:

STRIEGLER
I'll see what I can do.

Alice looks at the yellow notepad on his desk.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT

The hooded man gives Kara a pen and the same type of yellow notepad.

HOODED MAN
You can write your goodbye letter if you want. Don't mention me or this place and I will post it.

On Kara's terrified face,

BACK TO:

INT. DPT. OF PSYCHIATRY - OFFICE - LATER

Striegler is back, reading from his notes.

STRIEGLER

We got several hits from your office, and several from the hospital. A few from an internet cafe downtown.

DR. NICHOLS

Who inside the hospital?

STRIEGLER

I don't know... But they used the reception's computer to look up your patients, as well as Dr. Benning's and Dr. Kazui's. Until about three months ago.

INT. HR OFFICE - LATER

ALBERT DAVIDSON, Head of Human Resources, talks to Nichols and Alice.

DAVIDSON

We did fire this nurse around that time. He was... Quite problematic.

DR. NICHOLS

How so?

DAVIDSON

Well, officially, we fired him because he lied in his resume.

ALICE

And unofficially?

DAVIDSON

We thought he was snooping on patients. And stealing meds.

Alice's eyes go wide.

DAVIDSON (CONT'D)

We've had another nurse sell private information about a celebrity to a tabloid. We just couldn't risk another lawsuit.

DR. NICHOLS

You said he lied in his resume?

DAVIDSON

He gave us fake credentials. It was clear he was hardly qualified to be a nurse, let alone a shrink.

DR. NICHOLS
A shrink?

DAVIDSON
That was his pipe dream.

ALICE
What's his name?

Davidson checks his computer.

DAVIDSON
We hired him as Vernon Garrett.
Turned out to be an alias. No
forwarding address on file.

INT. DR. NICHOLS' CAR - LATER

Nichols talk on the phone:

DR. NICHOLS
You remember a patient named Amy?

ALICE
Joyce.

DR. NICHOLS
Joyce. Joyce Amy something...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DR. BENNING'S OFFICE

ALAN BENNING, same age as Nichols, tweed-and-spectacles New Yorker in West Coast exile, searches his cluttered mind...

DR. BENNING
Joyce Stevens. Yes. She killed herself. I was surprised... She was quite depressed but she loved her dog. I didn't think she would leave him in the street...

DR. NICHOLS
Maybe she didn't. Someone's been stalking our patients.

Benning is stunned.

DR. BENNING
What makes you say that?

DR. NICHOLS
The EMRs have been hacked into.

DR. BENNING
We... are not liable, are we?

DR. NICHOLS
I'll call you later, OK? Gotta go.

He hangs up.

DR. NICHOLS (CONT'D)
If this is true, he's getting
revenge against the institution
that kept him out... he's preying
on the women he wanted for
patients...

ALICE
Women with troubled histories...
Bad boyfriends...

Nichols processes this-- he's one step behind her:

ALICE (CONT'D)
Many who could have killed them --
themselves included. Few who would
care.
(a beat)
Perfect victims.

On Nichols' reaction,

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. ALICE'S CAR - LATER

Alice on the phone:

ALICE
You can ask the detective. I'm not
the one who got you into trouble.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TERRY'S PLACE

Terry paces around the apartment.

TERRY
No? You blabber to the cops about
some bullshit fight we had... You
meet my girlfriend, she ends up
dead. And while I'm in jail, you
break into my place?

ALICE
I didn't --

TERRY
The neighbors saw you!

ALICE
I let myself in.

TERRY
Why the hell would you do that?

ALICE
I just... needed to be there one
last time.

TERRY
Well, two can play this game. I've
told your detective about it.

She SIGHS.

TERRY (CONT'D)
And by the way? I'm writing about
this. Got five songs, already. I'm
going to --

She hangs up.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Alice walks by Eddie's unit.

His door is open -- he sees her pass by.

EDDIE
A detective Courtney was looking
for you. He seemed concerned. Said
to call him asap.

ALICE
Thanks... I will.

EDDIE
Is everything OK?

ALICE
Yeah.

A beat.

EDDIE
He didn't look like it was OK. He
looked like he was here to arrest
you.

Alice says nothing.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Look-- this is a clean place.

Alice stares daggers at him.

ALICE
Fuck you.

Eddie goes red in the face. His eyes dart to the telephone.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Alice changes into jeans, boots, a T-shirt and short black jacket. It makes her look even paler, thinner -- feral.

INT./EXT. ALICE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Alice drives South on Vermont. The city's make-up shifting block by block-- Armenian nail salons, bootleg bodegas, Korean video arcades... She passes and stares: Salvadoran gang-bangers, white-trash tweakers, black youths outside liquor stores...

Are You Him?

EXT. DOWNTOWN - LATER

Alice drives through the financial district -- big corporate buildings looming over deserted street...

She stops and looks at:

EXT. 24 HR. INTERNET CAFE

A few CUSTOMERS visible through the window, each in their own cyber-bubble.

YOUNG MALE, OLD MALE, YOUNG COUPLE -- youth hostel types -- NOT *him*.

She waits.

INT./EXT. ALICE'S CAR - PARKED - LATER

Alice sits, staring blankly, cracking inside -- until:

She bolts up.

Seeing *something*...

She starts the engine, takes off after it -- and now WE SEE IT, too:

DPD Dazzle's pimp-mobile, sliding through the street like a slick shark, and --

INT. CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

The man himself, chatting with SAMANTHA (30s, flashy, fleshy, seen-it-all-and-not-impressed.)

DPD DAZZLE
I'm planning ahead, you dig? I'ma
buy that pool-hall, prob'ly sell it
to Starbucks for five times more.

SAMANTHA
I'm sure you will.

INT. ALICE'S CAR - MOVING

Alice's phone RINGS.

She picks it up -- looks at the number on the display --
Courtney. She doesn't answer.

INT. COURTNEY'S APARTMENT

Courtney hangs up, frustrated.

He sits down. Gets up.

We get a view of his place: bookcases full of three-ring
binders-- years of brain-teasing, heartbreaking homework.

Simple chairs around a table, really more of a desk. Framed
pictures on the wall -- three generations of thin blue line.

A tubby cat rubs against Courtney's leg.

COURTNEY
Sorry, Rex. Gotta go.

EXT. NEW DREAMLAND DANCE HALL - NIGHT

A seedy establishment that survived downtown redevelopment
and gentrification.

DPD Dazzle walks to the door, Samantha in tow.

INT. NEW DREAMLAND - MINUTES LATER

NOT a strip club -- this is the kind of hostess club that's
been around since the 20s and mostly went the way of the
drive-in, a mix of dance hall and single bar with negotiable
entertainment.

Dim-lighted, shabby/decadent -- dark red walls, fake leather
benches...

TAXI DANCERS cluster around the bar waiting to be clocked in.
Leopard prints -- spiked heels -- spandex and lingerie.

The MEN stare like wolves, looking for the best looks &
action combo.

Half a dozen couples draw slow circles in the middle of the floor in touchy-feely embraces.

Alice walks in, looks around, catches:

DPD Dazzle entering the darker 'TV lounge' behind a rickety partition.

She crosses the room toward it, all eyes on her like she was from Pluto.

A SECURITY GUY stops her:

SECURITY GUY
Sorry. Restricted area.

ALICE
How did everybody else get in?

SECURITY GUY
You have to be invited.

ALICE
What? How?

SECURITY GUY
(sighs)
Get a dancer.

Alice turns around, walks to the closer girl -- TINA, latina, long black hair/short white dress, number 9 pinned on it.

They stand in front of each other, a crude study in contrast. Tina smiles awkwardly, unsure what to make of this creature from the other side of the mirror -- finally goes:

TINA
Hi. I'm Tina.

ALICE
(pointing)
I want to go there.

TINA
OK... You know how it works?

ALICE
Not really, no.

TINA
We go to that booth, they punch my card. Whenever you want you clock me out and pay. This room is for dancing, the other one is... to get to know each other better. There are different rates.

ALICE
OK.

TINA
(smiles)
OK.

They walk to the booth. An OLDER LADY clocks them in.

TINA (CONT'D)
You want to go straight in?

ALICE
Yes.

Tina takes her hand. They walk into:

INT. TV ROOM

So-called for a couple of TV sets showing the same soft-core erotic flick, casting a bluish glow in the otherwise dark area.

Alice looks and sees:

COUPLES huddling on couches behind strategically placed fern-- customers rushing the clock, reaching and groping --

One GIRL sitting on a guy's lap, cork-screwing him silly --

TWO girls wrapped around GUYS against the walls --

And finally: DPD Dazzle sipping champagne, Samantha on one side, another GIRL on the other...

ALICE
Who's he?

TINA
That's Jerome. Diamond "Pimp Daddy" Dazzle.
(off Alice's look:)
He brings new girls in... take old ones out.

Alice nods, walks up to him.

ALICE
I remember you.

DPD DAZZLE
That's easy. Shit, ain't nobody gonna forget me. Now who the hell are you?

ALICE
You picked me up on the street and dropped me off at the hospital.

DPD looks harder.

DPD DAZZLE
For real? Same girl?

Alice waits for him to believe it.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
So you made it... Wanna thank me,
I'll take cash.

ALICE
I'll give you cash if you take me
there.

DPD considers this.

DPD DAZZLE
You better be thinking serious
cash. I ain't your driver, honey.

ALICE
I ain't your honey.

DPD smiles.

INT./EXT. CADILLAC - MOVING - LATER

Alice looks out the window as the car rides East, toward the
industrial edge of downtown.

A cluster of HOMELESS people hang out by make-shift tents and
cardboard huts, ankle-deep in rubbish.

The car keeps going -- buildings get flatter, sparser,
darker. Rail yards, warehouses, semi-trucks --

DPD stops at the mouth of an alley:

DPD DAZZLE
Well, here it is. You came out of
there like a deer out of the woods.

ALICE
Drive into the alley.

DPD DAZZLE
I thought you said, 'where I picked
you up'.

ALICE
Keep the clock running.

DPD frowns, not liking the clock reference. He drives on
till:

ALICE (CONT'D)
Stop.

She looks at the nearby building -- an abandoned-looking
warehouse, partially boarded-up...

She knows she was here.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Come with me...?

DPD DAZZLE
No. Uh-uh. I ain't gonna get into
no fight with some drug dealer
stole your lunch money.
(beat)
That's what it is, right?

A beat.

ALICE
You got a gun?

DPD DAZZLE
What?

ALICE
You heard me.

DPD DAZZLE
Yeah I heard you. And if I didn't
find you like I did, I'd think you
were the po-lice, baby.

ALICE
I have nine hundred in my pocket,
and I can get more later. You got a
gun or not?

DPD DAZZLE
No.
(beat)
But I know where to find it.

EXT. COMPTON - LATER

DPD and Alice walk out of a cracking-paint, bars-on-windows
bungalow on a dried-up patch of grass. Business's done.

DPD nods at a couple of HOODS CATS as he opens the passenger
door.

Courtney looks at a computer monitor next to a TECH GUY. A
dot BEEPS and FLASHES on a map.

TECH GUY
Phone's in Compton.

COURTNEY
You sure? It's pretty late. This is
a white woman. What's she doing --

TECH GUY
(shrugs)
That's your job, right?

COURTNEY
I'll call you from the road. I need
to know her every move.

TECH GUY
Yeah, well... I don't know. I think
you should have a warrant.

COURTNEY
This is an emergency. American
lives and all that. Be a patriot.

TECH GUY
(sighs)
You owe me.

COURTNEY
Join the line.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - LATER

Alice and DPD ride back into the alley. He kills the engine.
They get out.

Silence.

DPD DAZZLE
Ain't nobody here.

ALICE
How do you know?

DPD DAZZLE
What -- think he sleeps in this
place?

ALICE
Can you get us inside?

DPD sighs -- pops the trunk -- grabs a crowbar and SMASHES
the window.

They wait for a reaction. There is none.

DPD pulls large pieces of glass off the window-frame and
pulls himself through. He looks inside.

Dark. Still.

He extends his hand to pull Alice in.

INT. WAREHOUSE

DPD turns the light on. The room hasn't changed but now Alice
has the time to look.

There's a desk with a radio and telephone.

An old fridge, next to an industrial-size food processor.

A staircase on the other side of the room leads down into the basement.

Alice walks to the fridge.

DPD DAZZLE
You gonna have a snack now?

She gingerly opens the door.

Beer. Milk.

Two Tupperware containers filled with what looks like raw meat.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
The hell is that?

Alice closes the fridge -- she doesn't wanna say -- doesn't even wanna know for sure.

She turns to the stairs, starts walking down...

A metal door is secured by a large sliding bolt. She pulls it open. Walks through and sees:

KARA,

naked, splayed on a large plastic sheet like the one Alice was on-- either dead or passed out.

DPD DAZZLE (CONT'D)
No -- fuck this shit! I'm out of --

A knife slashes across his throat, drowning his voice in blood.

As DPD flops, "VERNON GARRETT" - sans hood - appears behind him.

He's pale, blue-eyed, baby-featured. Acne scars, wispy moustache over oddly soft, feminine lips. A face that needs a hood to inspire terror.

Alice pulls her gun.

VERNON
Who the fuck are you?

ALICE
You know who I am.

Vernon stares harder -- It clicks:

VERNON
You...

He takes a half-step toward her --

She shoots him in the crotch.

Vernon SCREAMS and fumbles the knife.

Kara wakes up -- her terror dull and inarticulate under the effect of the drugs.

Vernon looks down in horror at the spreading bloodstain, then dives after the knife --

Alice fires again -- the gun jams.

She throws herself at him, pushes him away from the knife --

He punches her, his eyes glinting with fury --

She grabs the knife.

It comes up as his fist comes down again:

Vernon's forearm splits open, exposing veins and tendons --

He staggers back, as the blood pours out -- he tries to staunch it with his hand --

Alice points the knife --

ALICE
Say my name.

VERNON
You fucking bitch...

She stabs the knife into his shoulder.

Vernon SCREAMS again, higher-pitched now, more fear than pain as his body goes into shock --

ALICE
Say my name.

VERNON
Alice... You bitch! Alice...

TWO SHOTS ring out from above, followed by a door being kicked --

Vernon looks into her eyes.

A long beat.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Do it. Do it like I did all those pigs. Like I was gonna do you.

Alice breathes faster...

VERNON (CONT'D)
DO IT!

But she backs off.

She picks up her gun, helps Kara to her feet. They start walking up the stairs.

Vernon has no strength left to stop them.

Alice locks the door behind her.

Vernon looks around, desperately -- a caged and wounded beast.

He sticks his fingers into the wound in his arm. Finds the brachial artery, slips the fingers underneath. With an inhuman SCREAM, he rips the artery loose.

INT. WAREHOUSE

Courtney rushes in, sees:

ALICE, soaked in blood, knife in one hand and gun in the other, like some awesome/grotesque allegory of vengeance --

Kara at her feet, eyes vacant, still half-lost in her nightmare --

COURTNEY
(screams)
Freeze!

Alice drops both weapons.

ALICE
He's down there.

Courtney handcuffs her to an exposed pipe.

COURTNEY
(into phone)
I need back-up and an ambulance.
1529, Santa Anita Boulevard.

He walks down to the slaughterhouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Courtney comes back up. Takes a couple of long breaths.

COURTNEY
This your gun?

ALICE
I just bought it.

COURTNEY
And the two men?

ALICE
One's called Jerome. He's the one
who found me. The other went by
Vernon Garrett. It's not his real
name. He's the one who took me.

Courtney nods.

COURTNEY
So we got b&e, illegal firearm and
homicide -- with probable intent.

ALICE
I didn't kill him.

COURTNEY
His artery's hanging off his arm.

ALICE
I shot him and I stabbed him. He
finished it.

A beat. The place is perfectly quiet, all the more eerily so
in the aftermath of mayhem.

COURTNEY
OK... OK. Take me through it from
the start.

She looks at him. Calm. Steady.

ALICE
My name is Alice Parker.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Traffic streaming away from downtown.

INT. EXT. ALICE'S CAR - MOVING

Alice's eyes in the rearview mirror. Skyscrapers recede in
the distance.

ALICE (V.O.)
Some things I'll never remember.
Things I lost between my old life
and everything that came after. I
don't remember breaking up. Moving
on. Looking for the next guy.

EXT. FREEWAY

Moving faster, as the freeway rises over a huge junction,
ramps shooting out every which way.

ALICE (V.O.)
I don't remember the days at the
office, or the nights at the clubs.

INT. EXT. ALICE'S CAR - MOVING

Alice, three months later -- longer hair, sleeveless top, a
butterfly tattoo on her shoulder.

ALICE (V.O.)
I remember a dark room. A chain
around my neck. I remember falling.
The chain stretching tight, and
then: my heart still beating.

EXT. FREEWAY - LATER

The road emptier now, coasting rain tracks, mountains in the
horizon.

ALICE (V.O.)
I remember being chased. I remember
chasing *him*... Chasing myself.
(a beat)
My name is Alice Parker.

Her voice gets more distant, as if from another time and
place altogether...

ALICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I died.

EXT. FREEWAY - LATER

Sun beginning to dip off the edge of wide open country.

ALICE (V.O.)
I'm alive.

THE END