

PAPARAZZO

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HOUSEFIRE MGMT
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INT. BEDROOM - MENS DORMITORY - EARLY MORNING

There is a palpable solitude in NYC at 4 AM. For a moment, a city of 8 million feels as if it belongs to just one.

In this pitch-black dorm room, a resident threads his arms through a light jacket, conscious not to wake his dormmates.

This is FANG, 22, a Taiwanese-American born and bred in Queens whose quiet-nature is often misattributed to meekness rather than his unwavering restraint.

The door cracks open and a streak of light from the hallway slices into the bedroom.

RESIDENT ADVISOR (O.S.)
Why you up so early?

Fang turns to see a tall RESIDENT ADVISOR in the doorway.

FANG
New job.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
What about that hotel?

Fang shakes his head as he stuffs items into a backpack.

RESIDENT ADVISOR (CONT'D)
Damn. Sorry. Career counselor set something up for you?

FANG
Nah. Craigslist.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
Gotta be careful with that. Might end up dead.

FANG
If I die, you can have my stuff.

The resident advisor looks around; Fang doesn't have many belongings.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
You got another coat? It's freezing out.
(off Fang's silence)
Grab mine on your way past the desk. I'm in here all day.
(a beat)
What kind of work you gonna be doing, anyway?

EXT. THE MERCER - SOHO, NEW YORK CITY - DAWN

Several men of varying ages and ethnicities line the filthy sidewalk opposite The Mercer — a boutique hotel frequented by models, musicians, and other celebutantes.

The men are bundled in thick winter-coats and watch the hotel door. None speak to or acknowledge each other, but they all have cameras tethered around their necks.

These are PAPARAZZI.

Standing on the outside of the group is Fang, who looks as out-of-place as he feels. He wears a khaki parka several sizes too big.

TITLE CARD: PAPARAZZO

Fang scans the faces of the paparazzi beside him, searching for a specific person. But he gets too close to an OLDER PAPARAZZO who elbows him off the curb.

OLDER PAPARAZZO
Respect my spot!

FANG
Sorry. I'm just looking for--

OLDER PAPARAZZO
Step back. Back up.
(mutters)
Green shit.

Fang registers the insult and finds another spot a safe distance away. He glares with silent contempt at the older paparazzo, and notices the BULGE OF A WALLET in his pocket...

BERNARD (O.S.)
Ah, go fuck yourself! Honestly.

Fang looks to the opposite side of the group and sees BERNARD, 51, a veteran pap with oily, slicked-back hair and a wiry beard that obscures the three decades of experience engraved into his face.

Bernard pushes his way toward Fang with two coffees in hand while he berates another pap over his shoulder.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
I'll murder your family, Hank. I'll
kill them, dance in their blood,
and wear your wife's underwear as I
rearrange her kitchen cabinets.

OLDER PAPARAZZO
Jesus Christ.

BERNARD
(to the older paparazzo)
What? Have a problem with a man
wearing women's underwear? Grow up.

Bernard approaches Fang and hands him one of the coffees.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
(pronounces: sow)
Fang Su?

FANG
(pronounces: sew)
Su, yeah.

BERNARD
Bernard. Sorry to make you wait.
Parking over here is dog shit.

Bernard surveys the area. He counts the number of rival paps
then squints to see if anyone can be seen in the hotel lobby.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Ah. Let's bounce. No point standing
in the cold for this. No money
here. And I'm double-parked.

Bernard gestures toward a street a few blocks over and moves
in that direction, expecting Fang to follow.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
(calling back)
Enjoy those pennies!

Fang pokes the older paparazzo to get his attention.

FANG
Is that your wallet on the ground?

OLDER PAPARAZZO
(surprised)
Oh, shit. Yeah. Thanks.

Fang follows after Bernard.

The older paparazzo picks up the wallet and discovers the
cash sleeve is empty. He looks for the cash on the ground.

EXT. STREETS OF SOHO - MOMENTS LATER

Bernard leads Fang down a small, cobblestone side-street. He points to a vehicle double-parked further up the road.

BERNARD
She's up here.

Fang walks a few steps behind. He counts several small bills before pocketing the cash.

Bernard unlocks a black, rundown SUV from the mid-90s that has no business being on the road. The door opening appropriately sounds like an arthritic groan.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - SOHO, NYC, MOMENTS LATER

The interior matches its exterior. Years of dust, dirt, and Dunkin' Donuts are caked into every crack and crevice. But neither Bernard nor Fang are fazed.

Fang gets into the passenger-seat and untethers a camera from his neck.

Bernard studies Fang's camera. It's an older 35mm SLR in a leather casing which makes it appear as if the camera has a face - two brass buttons for eyes, the lens serves as a nose, and a leather trim creates a broad SMILE.

BERNARD
No. No. What is that? C'mon. That shoots film?

FANG
Yeah, it's a Minolta--

BERNARD
What the fuck, man? Film? This job is all about speed. About being first to post.

FANG
You just said "camera."

BERNARD
DIGITAL camera. Digital means-- means quick uploading. What are you going to do with the film? Drop it off at a one-hour photo in 1998? I'd rather you use your phone.

FANG
The lens on my phone is cracked.

Bernard pounds the steering wheel with his fist.

BERNARD

You kidding me? This whole day is gonna be a waste. This is, like, a try out, right? Not a great start. Why do you even have that?

FANG

I don't know. It was my mom's. It was her lucky camera.

BERNARD

Lucky camera? What does that even mean?

FANG

I don't know.

BERNARD

No. I'm curious. I want to know what type of luck we're working with here. Because we're going to need a very specific sort to sell ANYTHING using that camera.

Bernard starts the engine and looks into his rearview mirror.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

"Lucky camera." Jesus.

(scoffs)

Well, use mom's camera today and we'll figure out something else tomorrow. IF there's a tomorrow.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - WEST VILLAGE, NYC - MINUTES LATER

Bernard drives down a commercial West Village street, analyzing every person he sees on the sidewalks.

BERNARD

We're just doing laps. See if we recognize anyone. Biggest part of the job is knowing where to go. Where celebs live. Where they like to stay. Eat.

FANG

Do you have a map or something?

BERNARD

(tapping his temple)

It's proprietary.

Fang looks at Bernard and nods.

Bernard directs Fang's eye-line back out the window.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
They're not gonna be in here.

Fang returns his gaze to the sidewalk.

FANG
So why did we leave The Mercer?

BERNARD
Supply and demand. Dozen paps
upload a hundred photos of the same
people with practically the same
shot. Worth nothing.

Bernard turns down a street lined with brownstone townhouses.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
No. We're looking for exclusives.
Write that down.

Fang takes out his phone to take notes.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Don't fucking write it down. It's
an expression. Write it down in,
like, your head. Magazines, celeb
news sites. They're looking to
feature a story no one else has. An
exclusive. And if we have the only
photos that tell that story, that's
cash money.

FANG
(turning to Bernard)
How much?

BERNARD
Hard to tell. But I can tell you
they're gonna be OUTSIDE.

Fang sighs a bit too loud as he turns back to the window.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
You may hate me now. But, trust me,
you'll feel differently when you're
making money.

Fang notices a young LANKY MAN sauntering down the street,
then points at him as they drive past.

FANG

Oh!

Bernard abruptly pulls over and looks back.

BERNARD

See someone?

FANG

He's, uh... The... You know HBO?
He's that guy from the show.

Bernard squints as the man passes but doesn't recognize him.

BERNARD

Well, don't bog me down with
specifics.

The lanky man meanders care-free down the street, oblivious.

Fang pulls out his phone to search the internet for a name.
He finds it and presents an image to Bernard.

FANG

Santiago Esparza.

Bernard studies the photo of SANTIAGO ESPARZA; a young,
offbeat Mexican character-actor.

BERNARD

Oh. That guy.

Bernard evaluates the situation in his head, but then pulls
back onto the road.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Nah. It's not for us. Listen, and
this is important to understand.
Celebrities don't sell photos.
STORIES sell photos.

Fang watches Santiago continue down the residential street as
he and Bernard drive past.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Some random C or D list actor, no
matter how lovable, their photos
don't sell. I'm not even saying
"pennies." I'm saying "nothing."

FANG

(confirming)
It needs a story.

BERNARD

NEEDS a story. Now, if Santiago Espinoza had, I don't know, been loading up a U-Haul. Maybe he's moving. Or, better, maybe his girlfriend caught him cheating and kicked him out. Then, yeah, his picture would be worth some money. Wouldn't make you rich, but it'd be something.

FANG

What's something that would make you rich?

BERNARD

With him? Oh, it'd have to be a huge headline.

FANG

Like he'd been robbed at gunpoint, or something.

BERNARD

But you gotta think, if you don't have a photo of the robbery, how are you gonna tell that story?

(beat)

Entertainment sites are gonna want to feature a photo, right? But they can use a photo of him snapped today or a photo from last month or last year, even.

Fang nods but makes sure to keep his eyes on the sidewalk.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Now, if you were to get a photo of, say, a cop car parked in front of his building. That helps tell the story. Few sites may pick that one up. Might make a few hundred bucks.

Bernard pokes Fang to get his undivided attention.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

The BIG win, though. The photo I'd be chasing, would be the guy who robbed him. I'd race downtown and snap an exclusive pic of him OR HER, you know, getting escorted into the courthouse. Everyone would want that photo. That's the photo that appears on Page Six.

(MORE)

BERNARD (CONT'D)

On morning shows. That photo brings
in four figures.

FANG

I'm writing that down in my head.

BERNARD

And underline it.

Bernard takes a sharp turn down and spots a blacked-out
Cadillac Escalade parked directly ahead.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Okay. This could be something.
Remember those tail-lights.

EXT. WAVERLY INN - WEST VILLAGE, NYC - CONTINUOUS

The Escalade is parked beside the Waverly Inn, a quaint
bistro at the base of a residential building. A well-dressed
DRIVER reads a book in the front seat.

Bernard pulls his jalopy alongside the pristine Escalade and
has Fang manually roll down the passenger-side window.
Bernard smiles and gives a friendly wave.

The driver lowers his window and offers a lukewarm smile.
They've met.

BERNARD

(shouting over Fang)

Who are you carting around?

DRIVER

A couple of girls.

BERNARD

Anyone I might be interested in?

DRIVER

Maybe.

BERNARD

Models?

DRIVER

Maybe.

BERNARD

(laughs)

Can I get some names?

The driver checks to make sure no one on the street can hear.

DRIVER
(smiling)
Maybe.

BERNARD
Thanks, anyway.
(to Fang)
Roll it up.

Bernard reverses into a spot behind the Escalade.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - WAVERLY INN - CONTINUOUS

Bernard puts his vehicle into park and grabs his camera.

BERNARD
That asshole. Get comfortable. We
might be here a minute.

Bernard fiddles with his camera. Fang does the same with his.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
You know how to use that, right?

FANG
(lying)
Uh. Yeah. I've used it a bunch.

Bernard reaches into the back seat and pulls out a self-help
book: MANIFESTING DESTINY.

BERNARD
Ever read this? Best book I ever
read. Borrow it. Homework.

Fang accepts the book and flips through its pages.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Manifestation is important. Gotta
put positive energy out into the
universe, you know. Like, why do
you want to be a paparazzo?

Fang fidgets in his seat.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Not rhetorical. I'm asking you.

FANG
Uh. I... I want to pay my way
through college.

BERNARD

No. No. That's too short term. Go bigger. Deeper. More abstract.

Fang grows increasingly uncomfortable and shakes his head.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Come on. What is it you want?!

FANG

I don't know!

BERNARD

No, seriously, this is important.
"I want blank." "I want blank." "I want--"

FANG

(hesitating)

I want to be a part of something.

BERNARD

(coaxing him)

Part of... what?

FANG

(frustrated)

A community. I don't know. I want a comfortable place to sleep. I want to have a hot meal.

BERNARD

Okay. I think you might have just described PRISON, but it's a start.

(beat)

Me? Oh, thanks for asking. I'm building an empire.

SLAM. The Escalade's heavy door closes with a bang and its driver walks around to the opposite side of the vehicle.

There's movement at the front of the restaurant.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Go time.

FANG

Now?

BERNARD

Get the fuck out!

EXT. WAVERLY INN - WEST VILLAGE, NYC - CONTINUOUS

Three young women - all in their early twenties - burst out the Waverly Inn's front door. Designer outfits hang off their tall, slender frames. These are MODELS.

The models' body-language shifts once there's an awareness of cameras. They seem to elongate; their posture straightens.

BERNARD
Morning, ladies!

Bernard maneuvers to get the best shots. CLACK CLACK CLACK. His camera rapidly fires as he moves from subject to subject.

Fang attempts to do the same, but his manual film advance lever slows him down. His lack of experience is clear.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
What'd you eat? Or are you watching
those figures for Fashion Week?

The models smile and make their way to the parked Escalade.

Fang sees a fourth young woman exiting the Waverly Inn. Her style, makeup, and silvery blonde crop desperately try to emulate Edie Sedgwick.

This is NINA CROSS, 24.

She's a former child star who's been churned and burned by Hollywood. Nina's dangerously petite and lacks the poise of her model friends.

Bernard disregards Nina, focusing only on the models.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Strut for me. Give me a cute smile.
(to Fang)
Get their attention. For eye line.

Fang focuses his lens on Nina and timidly calls out--

FANG
Give a smile! Over here!

Unlike the others, Nina relishes the attention and poses for Fang before being escorted into the Escalade.

Fang is energized; an adrenaline high.

BERNARD
We're on the board. Now, let's get
these up.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - WAVERLY INN - MOMENTS LATER

Fang uses Bernard's laptop and follows his instructions to edit and upload the images to a PHOTO AGENCY SALES PLATFORM.

On the computer screen is a photo of the models with Nina Cross in the background.

BERNARD
Crop her out.

FANG
(surprised)
Nina Cross?

BERNARD
No one's buying her photo. Not
since she was a kid anyway. Her
HUSBAND, that's a different story.

Bernard notices Fang's blank stare and grows frustrated.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Seriously? You gotta know this
stuff. Riley Presser.

FANG
Oh.

BERNARD
Yeah. "Oh." His photo, that's worth
something. People love watching
someone's career implode. Her? Nah.
She's barely an afterthought.

Bernard leans over Fang to reframe the image and hits DELETE.
Nina disappears.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
And here's a trick.

Bernard hits AUTO COLOR, instantly improving the image.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Then we just drag and drop those
images onto the sales platform like
this... and... we're done. Now we
sit and wait for someone to bite.

Bernard shuts the laptop and drops it in a bag in the back
seat. He starts the engine and pulls onto the street.

FANG
How much you think those can make?

BERNARD

I don't know. A few bucks? 10, 15 years ago, a photo of some celeb eating breakfast could fetch 5 to 15K, easy. Today, with social media and print magazines going under. We're lucky to make 5 to 15 bucks.

Bernard gives Fang a gentle smack on the chest.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Listen, this is a hustle. You gotta be a hustler. You need to rely on what I call "little agents." Shop workers, waitresses, bartenders. Drivers! You gotta be able to recognize drivers and the cars they drive. Like that Escalade. And it's ALWAYS an Escalade. Autograph hunters are huge! They'll sometimes call with a tip, or post something on Twitter. Honestly, the biggest tips are on social media from celebs themselves.

Fang nods. He tries to soak in the knowledge.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

It's not about being a good photographer. Set that shit to automatic. It's about stamina. About doing your research. About getting your hands dirty.

SIRENS. An NYPD patrol car flies up the street from behind. Bernard pulls over to allow the patrol car to pass.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

FANG

There's a car accident up ahead.

BERNARD

Doesn't look like a car accident.

The patrol car pulls up to a building lined with YELLOW TAPE.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Here's a quick buck.

EXT. CRIME SCENE - TRIBECA, NYC - MINUTES LATER

It's an eerie sight. Yellow police tape separates pedestrians from a dozen officers investigating a crime scene.

A uniformed police officer pulls a WHITE SHEET over a DEAD BODY discovered in the alleyway of a residential building.

Fang stands amongst concerned residents who've congregated along the sidewalk and stare at the sheet covering the victim; her BLOODIED DRESS is partially exposed.

Bernard speaks with an officer then walks over to Fang.

BERNARD

(quietly)

Sounds like an NYU student fell off
her fire escape.

(whispers)

I'm gonna snap a few pictures.

CLACK CLACK CLACK. Bernard takes photos that tell the story.

Fang reluctantly does the same. CLACK. He snaps a picture of a police car. CLACK. A picture of the distraught officers. CLACK. A close-up of the bloodied dress. This feels wrong.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Ready?

Fang snaps one last photo. CLACK. A picture of a tired-looking, plain-clothed DETECTIVE; 50s, whose bags under her eyes indicate she's been here all morning.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - TRIBECA - MINUTES LATER

Fang uploads the digital photos from the crime scene while Bernard does a lap through Tribeca.

FANG

Publications actually buy these?

BERNARD

Cop chasing is a different beat.
Might bring in a dollar or two. I
generally don't touch it, but we
were there. Never know. If she'd
been a celebrity, that exclusive
could have been a white whale.

FANG

White whale?

BERNARD

Oh, baby. A photo worth 100k or more. Call me Ishmael because I'm chasing white whales. But they're rare and getting rarer. I've only had a few and those were years ago.

Bernard slows the vehicle as he approaches the front entrance of a swanky hotel. He rolls down his window and calls out to a young AUTOGRAPH HUNTER.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Hey, you just get someone good?

The autograph hunter approaches the SUV.

AUTOGRAPH HUNTER

Yeah, an old Yankee.

They present an autographed photo of a FORMER BALLPLAYER.

BERNARD

No shit! Where'd he go? The hotel?

They point down the street.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You see the type of car?

AUTOGRAPH HUNTER

Wasn't in a car.

BERNARD

On foot?! Are you--

(to Fang)

Can you drive?

FANG

No, I don't have a li--

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Of course, you don't.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

That's a one way. Go on foot. I'll circle around. FANG, RUN AFTER HIM!

Fang races to exit the car.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

But take my camera! My camera!

Fang swaps cameras with Bernard and sprints down the street in his oversized parka.

EXT. STREETS OF TRIBECA - MOMENTS LATER

Fang weaves between pedestrians on the sidewalk, trying to catch up to the former ballplayer. He sees him a few yards ahead wearing sunglasses and a pulled-down cap; an attempt to go incognito.

Fang gets several steps in front of him and sets up a shot. But Fang has no clue how to use Bernard's camera.

FORMER BALLPLAYER
Hey, bro. Sorry. Can we not, today?

Fang manages to turn on the camera and locate the shutter.

FORMER BALLPLAYER (CONT'D)
Politely asking you. Can you not?

CLACK CLACK. Fang checks the images in the LCD display. They're not great. He goes again. CLACK CLACK.

FORMER BALLPLAYER (CONT'D)
Really not feeling this today!

The former ballplayer pulls down his cap and angles his body away from the lens.

Trying to emulate Bernard - but without a shred of his confidence - Fang calls out:

FANG
Show me a smile--

BAM!

Like a runner stealing home, the former ballplayer knocks into Fang, then grabs him by the collar and tries to pry Bernard's camera from his hands.

FORMER BALLPLAYER
What did you hear me say?!

BERNARD (O.S.)
Yo! Get off him!

CLACK. Bernard hurries over, holding Fang's 35mm camera.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Want a headline? "Slugger Slugs
Student In Asian Hate Crime."

The former ballplayer shoves Fang and walks off.

FORMER BALLPLAYER
I asked you politely, fuckhead!

BERNARD
(calling after him)
Where was that passion in 2015?

FORMER BALLPLAYER
Fuck off.

Bernard looks Fang over, making sure he's okay.

BERNARD
Another lesson. If someone tells
you to stop, you gotta ask yourself
two questions. Are they bigger than
me? Are they faster than me? He had
you on both counts. Lucky for you,
I was there with your camera.

Fang catches his breath and nods. Lesson learned.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
(laughs)
Maybe your camera IS lucky!

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - CIPRIANI - FIDI, NYC - EVENING

The SUV is parked outside Cipriani, a luxury hotel in the
Financial District. The sun is long gone but the city is
illuminated by streetlights and passing cars.

Fang watches the front entrance while Bernard monitors the
photo agency sales platform on his phone.

Bernard checks TODAY'S SALES — a meager \$154. He swipes to
TRANSFERABLE BALANCE — \$903. Bernard closes his eyes and
releases a long sigh.

Fang glances over, then looks at the CLOCK on the dashboard.
It's nearly 9:30 PM. He goes to say something but refrains.

Bernard scrolls through the images uploaded earlier. Fang's
photographs of the former ballplayer weren't great. Bernard
sighs and shakes his head in frustration.

FANG
How late do you think we're going?

BERNARD
What!? No! Am I keeping you from
some late night plans with your
right hand?

Bernard scopes out the scene on the sidewalks. Something catches his attention up ahead. Something that TERRIFIES him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Ah. Fuck.

Bernard takes the keys out of the ignition and hops out of the vehicle, disappearing down the street.

Fang looks around, confused. What the hell is going on?!

KNOCK KNOCK. Fang is startled by a man in a New York Mets baseball cap banging on his window.

This is GID; 43, an intimidating man with piercing eyes and a faint scar from a childhood cleft lip operation. The scar causes a speech impediment, making his soft-spoken voice somewhat off-putting and challenging to understand.

GID

Want to roll down the window?

Fang does as instructed. But only partially.

GID (CONT'D)

That Bernard Leach running down the street just now? Make sure he gets this, will you? It's an invitation to my birthday party.

Gid slips an envelope to Fang and walks away.

Fang reads the official-looking envelope, which reads:
EXCELSIOR CAPITAL VENTURES.

What Fang doesn't see is Gid's reflection in the side-mirror as he slips a SMALL OBJECT in the gas tank door of the SUV.

Fang looks around and spots Bernard walking back.

Bernard retakes his seat as if nothing happened. He grabs the envelope from Fang and reads the typed-letter to himself.

FANG

What was that about?

BERNARD

Don't worry about it. Gid and I go way back. He used to be a pap, actually. Years ago. Now he's helping me build my empire.

Bernard stuffs the letter in his bag and restarts the engine.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - CUNY BARUCH - MIDNIGHT

Bernard pulls up to the student dorms entrance at CUNY Baruch
— a public, city college near the Flat Iron district.

FANG
Anywhere up here is fine.

BERNARD
Hey. Fang. Listen.
(a long beat)
I'm not really feeling this. I
don't think this arrangement is
gonna work out.

Fang freezes.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
I told you, this was a tryout. And
we tried it out. But I'm looking to
build something. I'm looking to
train someone who can help me
expand. Not to babysit.

FANG
I-- uh...

Fang struggles to find the right words.

BERNARD
I don't know what else to tell you.

FANG
What about the money for today?

BERNARD
The fucking-- Money for today?
Money for what? The photos we sold
today were MY photos. Yours are
still sitting inside that lucky
camera of yours. "Money for today."
Get the fuck out of my car.

Fang exits the vehicle, nearly forgetting his mom's camera.
But before Fang can shut the door--

BERNARD (CONT'D)
(gently)
Fang. I'm sorry. It was nice to
meet you and I wish you the best of
luck with the rest of school.

That makes Fang laugh.

EXT. CUNY BARUCH - CONTINUOUS

Fang slams the door of the SUV and walks toward the dorm entrance. He ignores Bernard's vehicle as it drives off.

SECURITY GUARD
Student ID?

Fang is stopped by a Baruch SECURITY GUARD manning the door, but Fang's attention is still on Bernard's SUV.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Can I see your student ID?

Once Bernard is out of sight, Fang responds.

FANG
No. No, student ID.

Fang does an about-face and walks in the opposite direction.

HE'S NOT A STUDENT AFTER ALL.

EXT. THE COOPER MISSION - MINUTES LATER

Fang presses a buzzer on a locked, iron gate at the entrance of The Cooper Mission - a HOMELESS SHELTER on the East Side.

The resident advisor (the SAME TALL MAN who lent Fang his coat earlier that morning) approaches from the other side.

It's at this moment we realize Fang started his day at THIS homeless shelter NOT a college dormitory.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
(through the gate)
I was worried when I didn't see you
at call. Thought maybe you really
were dead. How'd it go?

FANG
Good. It went real good. Do you...
think I can sneak in?

RESIDENT ADVISOR
Oh, man. Ah. You're putting me in a
tough spot.

FANG
I'll be super quiet.

The resident advisor struggles with the temptation, but gets spooked by a sound behind him.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
Sorry. You know how they are about
curfew. Will you be okay?

FANG
(defeated)
Yeah. Yeah. I got a spot.

RESIDENT ADVISOR
And don't worry about my coat. Buy
me another with all that money
you're gonna be making.

INT. LOADING DOCK - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - 1:30 AM

Fang avoids being seen as he slips through an opened loading dock. He hears people transporting the contents of a delivery truck into a nearby service elevator.

Fang tries to gain entrance into the building, but the door is locked. He opens a NOTE ON HIS PHONE filled with SAVED PASSCODES. Fang punches a code into a keypad.

INT. HALLWAY - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Fang tip-toes down the hallway of a rundown nursing home, attempting to be neither seen nor heard by its night staff.

INT. PATIENT BEDROOM - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Fang sneaks into a patient bedroom and finds an overweight TAIWANESE WOMAN, 50s, sleeping in a hospital bed.

The woman, who suffers from a rare form of dementia, opens her eyes wide and sits up with a start.

TAIWANESE WOMAN
(mumbling frantically)
What I need. What I need.

It's as if this is the only phrase she knows.

FANG
(whispers)
Shhhh. Shhhh. Go back to sleep.

Fang sits beside her on the bed and kisses her forehead. He's repulsed and saddened by her smell.

TAIWANESE WOMAN
What I need. What I need.

FANG

I don't know what you need. Lay
back down.

Fang strokes her hand to coax her back to sleep. Once successful, he gets comfortable on a recliner beside her bed.

The muffled scream of a confused patient is heard outside.

Fang watches the woman for a moment before closing his eyes.

FANG (CONT'D)

I'll get you out of here. Promise.

On a small table beside the hospital bed sits a single FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH. A self-portrait of the woman taken years earlier in a full-length mirror.

In the photo, she's beautiful; a small woman easily 50 pounds lighter than she is today. She strikes a cute pose where she leans against a small boy we recognize to be a SEVEN-YEAR-OLD FANG. She takes the self-portrait using her 35mm SLR camera.

The SLR's leather casing makes it appear as if the camera is happy; just like Fang and his MOTHER.

INT. PATIENT BEDROOM - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - 6 AM

An alarm goes off on Fang's phone, waking him. He watches his mother sleep for a moment, until--

INT. PATIENT BATHROOM - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Behind a shower curtain, Fang hoses his mother down in a grimy, handicapped bathroom attached to her bedroom. He squeezes shampoo onto her hair.

FANG

(as if talking to a child)
Rub it in. Mom, come on. Use your
hands.

Seated in a bathtub, she stares blankly at her son.

Fang rubs the shampoo into her hair himself and forces a smile to stop the tears he knows are coming.

In the bathroom mirror, he catches the reflection of his mother's lucky camera sitting on her bed. The camera's smiling face seemingly STARES at him; BECKONING HIM.

EXT. KIM'S PHOTO LAB - ALPHABET CITY - AN HOUR LATER

Fang uses his phone to locate Kim's Photo Lab - once a local institution selling and developing film for photographers; now a relic on the verge of closure.

He walks inside.

INT. KIM'S PHOTO LAB - ALPHABET CITY - CONTINUOUS

The door chimes and a PHOTO ATTENDANT looks up from his desk.

PHOTO ATTENDANT
Sorry. We're not open yet.
(spotting Fang's camera)
Minolta. Sweet camera. Dynax 7?

FANG
Yeah, thanks. I'm kinda in a rush.
How much does it cost to develop
three rolls?

PHOTO ATTENDANT
35mm? \$15 per roll. Printing
varies.

Fang opens his wallet and fingers through the cash he stole the previous morning. He can't afford a single roll.

FANG
Do you have a student discount?

PHOTO ATTENDANT
Not really. But where do you go?
NYU? New School?

FANG
(lies)
Baruch.

Fang flashes his wallet as if to present an ID, but does it so quick the photo attendant can't see that it doesn't exist.

PHOTO ATTENDANT
Baruch. Okay. Yeah, if you're a
Photography major, you can use the
darkroom for free.
(beat)
Are you a Photography major?

INT. DARKROOM - KIM'S PHOTO LAB - MOMENTS LATER

START OF MONTAGE:

-Alone in a red-lit darkroom, Fang watches a YOUTUBE VIDEO on how to develop film.

-Following the video's instructions, Fang shakes a black canister while eyeing a timer. It buzzes. He pops open the canister's lid and pours a "developer" into a pitcher.

-Repeating the process, Fang pours another liquid - a "stopper" - into the canister but over-fills it, spilling the chemicals on the floor.

-He frantically looks around at various chemical bottles on a shelf amongst boxes of old SONY HANDHELD CAMCORDERS.

-After dumping a "fixer" into another pitcher, Fang opens the canister and pulls out a wet spool containing his film negative. He unwinds it and holds the roll to the light.

-Fang feeds the negative through a scanner connected to a computer, revealing the PHOTO OF THE DETECTIVE he'd taken the day before at the crime scene. The image is underdeveloped and has distracting orange and pink light-leaks.

FANG

No! How'd that happen?

-Fang repeats the process with the second roll. Shakes the canister, pours out liquid, pours in liquid, eyes the timer.

-He feeds the negative through the scanner and sees the photos Bernard snapped of the former ballplayer wrestling with him. The image quality is better, but not perfect.

-Fang watches another YouTube video and tries again. But this time, with more care. He gently rocks the canister, slowly pours the liquids, and stares at the timer.

-He feeds the third negative through the scanner. SUCCESS. He clicks through the roll, picture by picture. These are the photos of Nina Cross and THEY'RE PERFECT.

-Fang double-clicks to zoom into Nina's face and notices she's glancing into the camera out of the corner of her eyes. He leans closer to the screen. It's as if they're making eye contact with each other; a tantalizing energy between them.

EXT. THE MERCER - SOHO, NYC - LATER

Fang stands alone beside The Mercer hotel, watching every passing vehicle. He's been here awhile and is freezing.

RATTLING. Fang spots Bernard's clunky SUV approaching a red traffic light.

Fang shocks Bernard (and himself) by opening the driver-side door. He presents a USB flash drive to Bernard.

FANG

Pictures from yesterday. Some good ones in there, I think.

Fang reaches into his backpack and pulls out one of the old SONY HANDHELD CAMCORDER boxes he'd found in the darkroom.

FANG (CONT'D)

Hear me out. No point in both of us taking the same photos, right? So I'm going to record video. As soon as you think I'm ready, I'll get myself a camera like yours and we can split up to cover more ground. Expand your empire.

The light turns green. A car honks at Bernard to move.

BERNARD

(at the car)

Give me a FUCKING second--

(realizing)

...Officer. Thank you.

(to Fang)

Okay. Fresh start. Jump in.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - SOHO, NYC - MOMENTS LATER

The SUV is parked on the side of the road. Fang watches as Bernard clicks through the photos on the USB drive.

BERNARD

Jesus, looks like these were taken in the 70s. I could eat sand and produce less grainy shit.

Bernard stops on one of Fang's photos of Nina Cross.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

See? No one's gonna buy yesterday's photos. Especially, Nina Cross. But it's a new day. Clean slate.

He passes his laptop to Fang and pulls back onto the road.

Fang makes sure Bernard's not looking, then uploads the photos of Nina onto the photo agency sales platform.

RINGING. Bernard answers his cell phone and puts it on speakerphone. He hands the phone to Fang to hold up.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(to Fang)

Photo agency rep.

(into the phone)

You got Bernard.

AGENCY REP (O.S.)

Bernard. We just got a request from one of the big ones. They want a photo for an article going live later today. Interested?

BERNARD

Does a duck shit in a pond?

Silence on the other line.

AGENCY REP (O.S.)

Does it?

BERNARD

I'm... pretty sure.

AGENCY REP (O.S.)

Piper Paisley. Country singer. There's a rumor she's pregnant. We need a picture of the baby-bump.

BERNARD

Easy. And she's in New York?

AGENCY REP (O.S.)

Not sure. We're casting a wide net. Sending this to everyone.

BERNARD

Did they float a number?

AGENCY REP (O.S.)

Yeah. If they get the exclusive, it'd be 16k, at least. But I'm trying to get more.

BERNARD

I'll give you a ring once I got it. Thanks.

Bernard hangs up and takes an illegal U-turn.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Start combing socials for sightings or clues. Maybe she has friends here. Or see where she stayed last time she was in town. I don't want to waste our day looking for someone who isn't here. But if she is... I want that photo.

FANG

(taking out his phone)
Where we headed?

BERNARD

Country singer? Figure she's gonna want a hotel with a view of the Statue of Liberty, or some shit.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - CONRAD HOTEL - BATTERY PARK - LATER

Parked outside the Conrad hotel, they both search on their phones for any clues on the country singer's whereabouts.

BERNARD

I'm not finding anything here.

FANG

Digging into her boyfriend now.

DING. A notification from the photo agency sales platform pops up on Bernard's phone. He clicks into it.

BERNARD

Huh. You uploaded those photos.
(a beat)
Despite my faults, I can admit when I'm wrong. And I was wrong.

Bernard presents his screen to Fang.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

That photo of Nina Cross just sold for 600 bucks.

FANG

Seriously? Holy shit.

BERNARD

Feel that? That rush? Careful. It's addictive. The high you get from a sale, mmm mmm, keeps you hooked.

Fang reads the details of the sale. A hyperlink opens to an article with the headline:

RILEY PRESSER ORDERED TO ATTEND ANGER MANAGEMENT IN BATTERY CASE AGAINST POLICE OFFICER.

Fang's photograph of Nina is toward the bottom of the page.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

But, you see, there's a story. And they wanted an exclusive photo to help tell it. But Riley Presser's upstate in some private facility. What image are they gonna use? His wife. His collateral damage looking sad. And you got that photo.

Fang smiles at the lucky camera. It smiles back.

FANG

So, how much of that sale do I get?

BERNARD

We split all sales 80/20. 80 me. 20 you.

FANG

Even when it's my photo?

BERNARD

Yes. Look around you. See all that car? My car! I cover gas, tolls, insurance. I'm paying for the wifi hotspot. I'm providing my computer. I'm eating the agency fee. Not to mention, I have the institutional knowledge here. So until you're providing a bit more value, yes, the split is 80/20.

Fang bites his tongue and channels his frustration into his search for the country singer. He finds something!

FANG

How about this? Her boyfriend just posted a Story an hour ago.

Bernard peaks over at an image of fluffy chocolate chip pancakes on a room service tray.

BERNARD

What about it? All I can tell from that is he's pre-diabetic.

Fang takes a screenshot. He zooms in on the UNIQUELY-PATTERNED CURTAIN AND RUG in the background.

FANG
Looks like a fancy hotel.

BERNARD
(mocking)
Spend a lot of time in fancy
hotels?

Fang does a reverse GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH on the isolated curtain and rug, but doesn't see any credible results. He pulls up HOTELS.COM and looks through high-end rooms in NYC.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
I think we might have to call it--

FANG
Got it! I got 'em!

Fang presents two images showing matching curtains and rugs.

FANG (CONT'D)
The Gansevoort Hotel!

Bernard grabs the phone for a closer look.

BERNARD
(genuinely impressed)
Put a pinker in my stinker... How'd
you even do that?

FANG
You can say I have my own
institutional knowledge.

Bernard smiles and extends an open hand to Fang.

BERNARD
Let's get 'em... partner.

They shake.

Bernard throws the SUV into Drive and floors it, but--

SCREECH! Bernard slams on the brake to avoid hitting an imposing man in a Mets cap who purposefully blocks their path. It's Gid - the intimidating man from the night prior.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Here we go.

Gid marches toward the SUV. He opens the rear drivers-side door and takes a seat in the back. Barely acknowledging Fang, he locks his eyes on Bernard's in the rearview mirror.

GID

Drive.

BERNARD

Gid. What are we doing?

GID

We're going to Excelsior. Drive.
Turn around up here.

Bernard does as instructed while Fang remains quiet.

BERNARD

Listen, we're chasing something
big. Something time sensitive.

GID

Oh, I don't give two shits.

BERNARD

(laughs)

You should though, right? That's
the whole point of a merchant cash
advance. You're literally invested
in my success, no?

GID

Take this left.

BERNARD

Buddy. I'm ONE week late.

GID

That's seven payments. You missed
SEVEN payments in the last week!
You know how I look?

BERNARD

Gid, we're racing against the clock
on this one. Agency rep said we're
looking at minimum \$16k. I know you
remember how that feels.

GID

You're not listening! You're not
going anywhere until I see payment.
We go to Excelsior or we go to your
place and deal with it there.

Bernard slows his vehicle to a stop on the side of the road.

GID (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

BERNARD

(apologetically)

Listen. I don't got it. It's been a dry couple of weeks and the numbers just haven't been there. I'm sorry. But I'm using the few available funds I have to reinvest.

(pointing to Fang)

I'm partnering with this kid. You should see him. Oh, he's a prodigy. He's got these incredible investigative skills. And the kid shoots film! How cool is that? His photos got this retro, Studio 54 vibe. In fact, we just sold one this morning for, like, a thousand bucks. He's gonna help me increase my bottom line.

Gid, for the first time, looks over at Fang.

GID

Is all that true? Are you in business with him?

FANG

Yeah. We're-- We're partners.

BERNARD

And we need to high-tail it uptown if we're gonna have any shot at getting that \$16k.

GID

What can you give me right now? Give me something. Give me that thousand from this kid's sale.

Fang darts a look at Bernard.

BERNARD

That sale only just came through. You know. It takes a few hours.

GID

Well, I can't go back empty handed. What can you give me?

Bernard grabs his bag and shuffles through its contents. He pulls out his VEHICLE TITLE and a pen.

BERNARD

I can give you the signed title of this car. As collateral.

GID

(sighs)

Sign it. But I'm knocking on your window tomorrow morning if I don't see at least that thousand dollar payment before then.

BERNARD

And you will. Promise.

Gid moves to leave, but stops.

GID

Don't play with me. Or I'll make you taste your teeth.

Gid exits, leaving Bernard and Fang to sit in silence.

Bernard closes his eyes and rubs his temples before asking--

BERNARD

Fang, did you tell that son-of-a-bitch where we were?

FANG

What? No-- What?

BERNARD

How did he know where to find us? Did he ask you to help him last night? You tip him off because I hurt your fucking feelings?

FANG

No! You can look at my phone.

Paranoid, Bernard jumps out of the vehicle and searches under its frame for a GPS tracker. He looks high and low before checking the gas tank door. BINGO.

He climbs back into the SUV and hands a tiny GPS TAG to Fang.

FANG (CONT'D)

Should we get rid of it?

BERNARD

No. That'd just piss him off more.

Fang studies the tag while Bernard regains composure. They resume the trek to The Gansevoort, but the thrill is gone.

I/E. BERNARD'S SUV - THE GANSEVOORT - MINUTES LATER

The SUV bounces down the cobblestone street at the front of The Gansevoort - a chic hotel in the Meatpacking District.

A RIVAL PAP - camera slung around his neck - sits on a bench outside the hotel. He's on a laptop.

BERNARD

This guy already uploading?

Bernard leans over Fang and quickly rolls down the window.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(to the rival pap)

Hey! Who'd you get?

RIVAL PAP

(smug)

Me? Oh, just some pregnant musician. Nothing big.

BERNARD

How long ago?

(off their silence)

Did they have bags? They look like they were coming back?

RIVAL PAP

You know, I forget.

BERNARD

(to Fang)

Oooh, I could kill him.

(a beat)

Nah. I'm GONNA kill him.

Bernard jumps out of the vehicle and chases after the rival pap who nearly shits themselves as they try to get away.

I/E. BERNARD'S SUV - THE GANSEVOORT - LATER

The vehicle hasn't moved.

Fang exits the hotel and retakes his seat next to Bernard.

FANG

No one would tell me anything. I think a manager was hanging around.

Fang returns the cash Bernard provided for a bribe.

BERNARD

We're just gonna sit here. Try to get a shot of them returning or going out tonight wearing some fashion. Publisher might use our stuff if it tells a better story.

FANG

I'll keep an eye on their socials.

BERNARD

Yeah, yeah. Work your magic.

Bernard surveys the sidewalks. He's not in a great headspace.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - THE GANSEVOORT - LATE NIGHT

The sun is gone but the vehicle still hasn't moved.

Fang rests as Bernard scans the now-empty street; looking at everything but registering nothing. He's in his own head.

Bernard checks his account balance on his phone. Not good.

Opening Google, he searches: PIPER PAISLEY PREGNANT. The article went live minutes earlier. And it features a photograph taken at The Gansevoort earlier in the day.

Bernard erratically looks around the car, cycling through a RANGE OF INTENSE EMOTIONS: panic, confusion, contempt, hopelessness, amusement, and finally RELIEF.

Bernard opens the glove compartment, revealing some loose cash, several parking tickets, and A GUN. He reaches inside. Wait; is he about to...? But Bernard only takes the cash.

Bernard collects his belongings from the backseat and leaves, abandoning his SUV and Fang who is fast asleep.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - THE GANSEVOORT - THE NEXT MORNING

KNOCK KNOCK. Fang wakes with a start to find Gid standing outside the car. Confused; Fang rolls down his window.

GID

Where's Bernard?!

Fang notices Bernard's things are missing from the backseat.

FANG

He might have went into the hotel.

GID
That schmuck ran, didn't he? Are
you kidding me, Bernard?!

Gid dials Bernard on his phone, but it goes to voice-mail.

FANG
No, I don't think...

Fang stops. He realizes Gid is right: Bernard left him.

GID
I told you not to fuck me. Didn't I
say that? Now give me that money.

FANG
Me?!

Gid grabs Fang through the window and pulls him close.

GID
Yes, you. Bernard's business
partner. That's what you told me.
Did you guys land that photo?

FANG
Someone else got to it--

GID
Of course, you didn't. That prick!
(searching)
That other sale? Bernard mentioned
you had a big sale.

FANG
I don't have access--

Gid pounds his fist against the side of the SUV.

GID
FUCK! I'm so fucked. You cause me
pain. I cause you pain. This time
in two days, either you're here
with Bernard or you're here with
what you BOTH owe me.

FANG
Hear me out. I'll try to find
Bernard, but this is between--

GID
No. I made a deal with his
business. And you're his partner in
that business, right? Your words.

FANG
How much does he owe?

GID
No. YOU. Let's start with the
thirty-five hundred in missed
payments.

FANG
I couldn't give you thirty-five
dollars!

GID
Oh, are you broke? Years from now,
you're gonna look back at the piss
poor existence you're living today
and masturbate to the thought.

Gid gives Fang an ominously friendly pat and walks away.

GID (CONT'D)
If you're not here at this time in
two days, oh, I won't kill you. But
you'll wish I did.

INT. 14TH ST / 8 AVE SUBWAY STATION - MINUTES LATER

Fang stands on a subway platform. He presses his phone to his
ear, blocking out the sound of an oncoming train.

FANG
Bernard. It's Fang. Sorry to keep
calling. If you can call me back...

The train roars as it shoots past.

TICKET AGENT (O.S.)
Next in line please.

INT. PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL - MIDTOWN - LATER

Fang waits in a short queue at the Port Authority Bus
Terminal. He's next in line to speak with a TICKET AGENT.

FANG
(approaching the booth)
How much for the 4:10 to Chicago?

TICKET AGENT
No seats on the 4:10. But we got a
6:30? That'd be... \$142. One way.

FANG

Oh. Do you have a student discount?

VIBRATIONS. Fang sees a call coming through on his phone.

FANG (CONT'D)

Uh, sorry. I need to take this.

(into the phone)

Hello? Yeah...

Fang steps away and raises the volume on his phone.

SOCIAL WORKER (O.S.)

We wanted to notify you that your mom was involved in an incident today.

FANG

Hold on, what?

SOCIAL WORKER (O.S.)

Another patient in her unit became distressed. He struck your mom and fractured her collarbone. She's recovering now but in some pain.

FANG

How-- How does this keep happening?

SOCIAL WORKER (O.S.)

We want to talk to you about that. Administration no longer feels we can accommodate her care. We need you to pick her up.

FANG

Wait. Do you mean, TAKE HER HOME?

An announcement goes over the loud speaker, drowning out Fang's voice as he argues with the social worker.

INT. ELDERCARE LAW FIRM - MIDTOWN - LATER THAT DAY

Fang sits at a table in a corporate conference room across from a LAWYER, a kind-looking gentleman in a bespoke suit.

LAWYER

Technically, it's illegal. But it happens. Some of these publicly funded facilities evict low-income, longer-term residents to make room for short-term rehab patients. It's just more lucrative.

FANG

And they can do that?

LAWYER

I can tell you they wouldn't if they knew your mom was represented. It's an unfortunate reality. We've seen cases where nursing homes drop off patients like your mom at a cheap motel, pay for a night or two, then they're on their own. A patient with dementia can disappear into the system before their family even knows what happened.

FANG

And you can't do ANYTHING?

LAWYER

(heartfelt)

Not without that retainer.

(beat)

I know, this isn't a thing anyone ever asks for. But you want free legal advice? Find another facility for Mom. Some place that can meet her needs. It sounds like you already bought her until the end of next month. So you have a little time.

EXT. STREETS OF MIDTOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Fang stares at his reflection in a shop window. Fighting back tears, he uses his mother's camera to take a self-portrait - much like the image sitting on her bedside table.

As Fang clicks the shutter-release, SANTIAGO ESPARZA - the young, offbeat Mexican character-actor he spotted two days earlier - walks past, wearing a vibrant, red parka.

Fang looks at his lucky camera. It smiles up at him. He takes this as a sign and sets off in pursuit of Santiago.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DOWNTOWN A TRAIN - MINUTES LATER

Fang stalks Santiago from the opposite end of a crowded subway car, careful not to be spotted.

Santiago sits and bops his head to music playing in his headphones. He goes unrecognized by the straphangers around him and is too fixated on his own red parka to notice Fang.

EXT. STREETS OF TRIBECA - SUNSET

Santiago, unaware of Fang a few yards behind him, turns down a narrow street somewhat off the beaten path. He stops in front of a unassuming-looking door and presses a buzzer.

CLACK. Fang frames his shot and snaps a picture of Santiago.

SANTIAGO

Oh! You scared me.

Santiago is unsure how to react to paparazzi - it's clear this type of interaction doesn't happen to him often.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

(genuinely friendly)

Hey. Sorry. Can I ask you to stop?
Please. It's my birthday.

Fang - learning his lesson from the ballplayer - stops.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Oh. Thank you. It's just, I bought
this jacket and I'm not really
feeling it. I think it makes me
look like a ski instructor.

BUZZ. The door unlocks. Santiago offers Fang a thankful gesture and moves to enter the building, but--

FANG

This your place?

SANTIAGO

(hesitant)

No. No, I'm staying with a friend.

FANG

Maybe you change your coat and come
back out, so I can get a few shots?

SANTIAGO

Uh, I don't know...

FANG

Because I want you to be happy with
how you look. I'd rather post that
photo than one you don't feel good
about. Especially on your birthday.

SANTIAGO

Okay. I'll come right back down.

Fang toys with his camera while awaiting Santiago's return.

He hears music and muffled laughter coming from an apartment above and starts to doubt if Santiago intends on coming back.

DAISY (O.S.)
Excuse me!

Fang sees a bespectacled young woman up the street struggling to carry several bulky bags.

This is DAISY, 28.

Daisy's a recent NYC transplant who, despite her mousy appearance, has a toxically competitive drive. She knocks Fang with her bags as she passes.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Can you fuck off?

FANG
Oh, I'm just waiting for someone.

She places her bags in front of the same door Santiago entered and types an entry code into a key pad.

DAISY
Yeah, who?

FANG
Uh, his name is Santiago.

DAISY
(her demeanor shifts)
Oh. I'm sorry. I saw your camera. I thought you were-- I didn't realize you were a friend of Santi's.
(opening the door)
He's crashing at our place.

Fang sees an opportunity...

FANG
Do you need help with those bags?

DAISY
Oh, um, yeah. Thanks...?

FANG
...Fang.

DAISY
Like the tooth? Daisy. Like the... duck.

Fang and Daisy split the bags and head inside.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Fang follows Daisy up a steep staircase. Music is heard coming from the apartment above.

DAISY
Are you going out with them
tonight?

FANG
(guessing)
To... Santi's birthday thing? Yeah,
I'm thinking about it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Daisy leads Fang into a MASSIVE LOFT - a bohemian apartment charged with loud music and the haze of marijuana smoke.

Lounging around are several attractive young men and women; some drinking and chatting, others catatonic on the couch.

Amongst the group, Fang recognizes two MODELS from days before. They vape while searching for a record to play.

DAISY
(calling out to the group)
Is my sister not back yet?

The group ignores Daisy and Fang as they cross the room.

DAISY (CONT'D)
(to Fang)
Bags can go over there.

Fang's in awe; he's never been in a space like this before. He places the bags where instructed and looks for Santiago.

The front door opens--

NINA (O.S.)
Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.

Fang sees a familiar face enter with grocery bags. She wears a thick beanie and long puffer jacket over pajama pants.

It's NINA CROSS.

DAISY
(frustrated)
How long is everyone hanging
around? I have a ton of work.

NINA
On a Friday?

DAISY
Yes. And stop taking my hat.

Nina removes the beanie and tosses it at Daisy; her OLDER SISTER. Body language and tone indicates tension.

Daisy watches as her younger sister unloads several vodka bottles from a bag and pours herself a drink.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Did you get enough vodka?

NINA
Ugh. You sound like Mom.
(noticing Fang)
Hi.

FANG
Hi.

DAISY
Santi's friend.

NINA
(to Daisy)
I'm going to take a quick shower
before everyone else gets here.

DAISY
More people are coming?

MODEL 1
I think Santi might be in your
bathroom, Nina.

SANTIAGO (O.S.)
Nina, can I borrow Riley's jacket?

Santiago exits Nina's bedroom and does a double-take at Fang.

NINA
Mmm. He might be weird about that.
(hitting her vape)
Ah, whatever. He's not using it.

SANTIAGO
(to Fang)
I'm going to change and we can go
back down for pictures, yeah?

Fang nods; aware there's a bit more attention on him.

NINA
 (to Fang, interested)
 You're a photographer? Who for?

FANG
 Freelance. Uh, random assignments.

NINA
 Is that how you know Santi?

SANTIAGO (O.S.)
 (calling out)
 No, we just met outside.

Santiago re-enters wearing a black Tom Ford jacket.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
 He's paparazzi.

The mood of the room shifts; their privacy and anonymity has been invaded. Everyone, even those comatose on the couch, engage in the conversation.

DAISY
 Seriously?

FANG
 Wait. So, real quick--

DAISY
 No. Get out.

MODEL 1
 (standing)
 Hold on. If you're paparazzi, I have a few questions I've always wanted to ask. Before you get tossed out by Nina's sister.

The phrase "Nina's sister" makes Daisy bristle.

MODEL 2
 Yeah, I have questions, too.

MODEL 1
 How much do you make per photo?

Fang looks around to find himself standing center stage.

FANG
 Depends on who and the situation.

MODEL 1
 But, like, average.

FANG

I don't know. I haven't been doing it long.

MODEL 2

How long?

FANG

Three days.

MODEL 1

Three days?!

MODEL 2

Three days?!

MODEL 2 (CONT'D)

Oh, my god! He's a baby pappy!

ZANDER, 24, a smug Valley kid with long, bleach-blond hair — goes on the attack.

ZANDER

Question. Why not have a real job?
Not be such a parasite?

MODEL 2

You're one to talk.

ZANDER

Excuse me?

MODEL 1

Shush. He's been doing it for three days. And it's totally symbiotic. Like, I didn't buy the outfit I'm wearing. Riley didn't buy that Tom Ford jacket, I'm sure. Brands send shit because they want people taking photos of us wearing it. And sometimes they're nice photos.

ZANDER

But paparazzi sue you if you post that nice photo on your feed.

MODEL 1

Okay, yeah, that's super annoying.

ZANDER

They literally get-off by hiding in bushes.

NINA

(to Fang)

Tell the truth. Have you gotten-off in any bushes in your three days?

FANG
That's more of a Week Two thing.

NINA
(chuckles)
Can I see that?

Fang cautiously trades Nina his camera for her drink. She holds it awkwardly as she navigates its buttons and dials.

NINA (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Zander. He's disarmed.
Oh, I have no idea how to use this.

She turns the camera lens toward herself to take a selfie.

NINA (CONT'D)
Well, I like free shit. Anyone else
want free shit?

Nina snaps photos of the group. The two models hide their vapes as they playfully pose. The other partygoers, who are nearly dazed out on the couch, block their faces.

NINA (CONT'D)
(to those on the couch)
Damn. You in a k-hole?

One partygoer holds up a CHOCOLATE BAR and offers it to Nina.

NINA (CONT'D)
(helping herself)
Oh. I'll snag a square. Just one.

MODEL 2
So is it true paparazzi will leave
you alone if you wear the same
outfit everyday? I heard that.

DAISY
(interrupting the fun)
Nina, I have work. Give his camera
back. Let Santi do his thing, so
you can get ready to go.

Daisy confidently takes the camera from Nina, gives it back to Fang, and ushers him toward the door.

But Fang puts on the brakes and turns to the group.

FANG
You want to know the best way to
get rid of paparazzi? Travel around
with a paparazzo.
(MORE)

FANG (CONT'D)

Seriously, other paps back off when they know someone has a better shot. You're going out tonight? Let me come.

ZANDER

(snorts)

Nice try.

Daisy opens the door for Fang and Santiago to exit.

FANG

Hear me out. They're going to be outside wherever you go tonight. I promise. Someone will tip them off. And they don't care if you look like shit. They might prefer it.

(to Santiago)

But Santi, I stopped when you asked me. You wanted to change.

(to the group)

If images from tonight are going to be on the internet, they should look good.

(a beat)

And I can make you look good.

Nina looks to the two models, sips her drink, then smiles.

EXT. JOYFACE - ALPHABET CITY, NYC - NIGHT

BOOM BOOM BOOM. A thumping bass reverberates outside Joyface — a kitschy cocktail lounge with a 1970s vibe. A line of people wait to get inside.

Santiago leads Nina and friends toward the entrance. They're all dressed for a night out... and Fang, in his parka.

FANG

(to Daisy)

You changed your mind.

DAISY

Figured I could use a night out.

CLACK. Fang jogs ahead to snap a photo of the group as they approach the entrance.

A bouncer waves Santiago to skip the line, but stops Fang. One of the models sees this and escorts Fang in by the arm.

INT. JOYFACE - MOMENTS LATER

A disco ball. Wood-paneled walls. Flashing lights. Bodies against bodies. The group squeezes through a packed lounge reminiscent of the Playboy Mansion in its heyday.

Fang tries to take it all in.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - JOYFACE - LATER

CLACK. Fang snaps a photo of the models partying on a waterbed in a back room.

Everyone engages in their own conversation, including Daisy who tries to chat with Fang; the only other "normal" here.

DAISY

I moved from Chicago. Three months ago. For work--

MODEL 2

Someone's thirsty!

The group looks to Santiago and Nina dancing in an adjacent room. He grinds against Nina, and Nina eats up his attention.

MODEL 1

Which one?

Daisy rolls her eyes in disgust.

Fang takes a sip of his cocktail then notices the models discreetly take a bump of some sort of powder.

DAISY

I'm a project manager at RGA. Are you familiar?

One of the models gets up and tries to sneak past Daisy, but Daisy unknowingly blocks her path.

MODEL 1

(to Fang)

Can you get Nina's sister's attention.

DAISY

Sorry?!

MODEL 1

Just trying to get by.

Daisy makes a show of scooting over.

DAISY

Anyway. Big design firm. But it's
been an adjustment, for sure--

Fang watches the model as she passes and decides to follow
after her, abandoning Daisy mid-sentence.

DAISY (CONT'D)

And fuck you then.

Fang takes another sip of his drink and the world goes wonky;
as if the room starts vibrating. Did someone spike his drink?

Fang looks across the room at Nina. He can literally see the
energy around her pulsating.

INT. JOYFACE - CONTINUOUS

Fang makes his way to Nina who dances wildly up on Santiago.
He takes their photo and starts dancing himself; feeling
looser, less out of place.

Nina shifts her position with Santiago to include Fang. This
visibly annoys Santiago who was enjoying the intimacy, but
Nina wants attention from them both.

FANG

I think someone spiked my drink.

NINA

Ketamine. Enjoy it!
(hitting her vape)
I like your camera.

FANG

It... was my mom's.

Nina's smile fades and her dancing slows. She leans close to
Fang so that she can whisper something.

Feeling left out, Santiago sighs and finds a new partner.

NINA

(solemnly)
I lost my mom, too. Daisy and I.
Few months ago.

Fang nods, not wanting to correct her.

Nina notices a tattoo on Fang's upper arm. It says: JUN.

NINA (CONT'D)

Jun? That your mom?

Fang nods again.

Nina pulls up her top to reveal a tattoo written on her gaunt ribs. She covers her breast but Fang catches a glimpse of her pierced nipple. Nina has a fresh tattoo that says: JUNE.

NINA (CONT'D)

You and me. We're members of a
private club neither asked to join.

Lifting the mood, she grabs his camera and takes his photo.

NINA (CONT'D)

Riley has a similar camera. That
boy loves taking pictures.

FANG

What kind of pictures?

NINA

Nudes.

Fang's eyes bug out, making Nina snort with laughter.

INT. JOYFACE - LATER

Fang and the rest of their group are properly fucked up. Hair wet; sweat dripping; they jump up and down, dancing.

Fang is having the time of his life, until he notices he no longer has his camera. He stops and looks around.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - JOYFACE - MOMENTS LATER

Fang stumbles into the back room in search of his camera.

Santiago and others are on the waterbed, deep into a drunken debate that visibly distresses Daisy.

ZANDER

You can't say that shit in public!

CLACK. A stoned partygoer plays with Fang's camera.

Fang sighs in relief and takes a seat.

SANTIAGO

But imagine, you're on the run.
Facing a life sentence. Police are
at the door. "Boom, boom, boom.
It's the police!" Fang, you shoot
yourself, no?

FANG

Probably.

SANTIAGO

Because sometimes suicide is justified!

MODEL 2

No! It's selfish!

Those last comments are too much for Daisy, who's unable to bare any more of this conversation and stands up to leave.

Zander smacks Santiago and points at Daisy as if to say, "Idiot. See what you just did?"

MODEL 1

(trying to clear a path)

Watch out. She's trying to pass.

DAISY

Daisy! My name is Daisy.

Daisy points at each person at the table, one-by-one, and educates them on her name.

DAISY (CONT'D)

My name is Daisy. My name is Daisy.

My name is fucking Daisy.

She storms off.

MODEL 1

Anyone catch her name?

ZANDER

(reminding them)

Guys, her mom.

MODEL 2

(mortified)

Oh, god. I completely forgot.

Fang turns and sees Daisy arguing with Nina.

MODEL 1 (O.S.)

That girl is a nut.

ZANDER (O.S.)

Oh, man! Nina was telling me how in high school her sister was sleeping with the band teacher and when his wife found out, Daisy tried to drive her car into their house.

MODEL 2 (O.S.)
That's not real.

Still arguing with her sister; Daisy throws her hands up in surrender and exits. Nina flips her the bird behind her back.

JOEY FATONE (O.S.)
Meooooooooooooow.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - MORNING

Fang wakes up on the floor of the Tribeca loft with a decrepit, 22-year-old CAT inches from his face. It's name tag reads: JOEY FATONE.

JOEY FATONE
Meeooooow.

Fang fights back a sneeze - allergies. He gets up to blow his nose, conscious not to wake the others sleeping on the floor.

Next to the tissue box sits five \$20s. Making sure no one is watching, Fang POCKETS THEM, but then returns two bills.

Fang tip-toes to his camera. He's tempted to sneak photos of the sleeping models, but stops out of fear he'll wake them.

He notices Nina's door is cracked open and catches a distant glimpse of her sleeping topless, though he can't see much from this vantage. Yet, Fang can clearly see RILEY'S CAMERA on a bookshelf. He's curious to know what that camera's seen...

DAISY (O.S.)
Morning.

Daisy stands in her bedroom doorway, startling Fang.

BUZZ BUZZ. Someone is outside the building. The sound of the buzzer stirs those still asleep.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Cleaners are here! Everyone needs to get up. Hey. Get up.

Daisy buzzes the cleaners up and throws Fang his parka.

DAISY (CONT'D)
I'm excited to see those photos.
It's just too bad you didn't get any of them sleeping.

She smiles. Caught.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Fang exits the loft into the stairwell and bumps into the CLEANERS. Two Asian women; likely a mother/daughter team.

Fang turns back to the scene behind him; the loft is trashed. These women are here to clean up that mess; THEIR mess.

The door closes to give privacy to the partygoers as they ready to leave, isolating Fang and the cleaners on the other side; reminding Fang that he isn't one of them. He's OTHER.

INT. KIM'S PHOTO LAB - AN HOUR LATER

Fang waves to the same photo attendant as he walks toward the darkroom in the back.

FANG
(reminding him)
Baruch.

The photo attendant gives an apathetic thumbs up.

INT. DARKROOM - KIM'S PHOTO LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Alone in the red-lit darkroom, Fang gently rocks the film canister. He's getting the hang of the development process.

INT. DARKROOM - KIM'S PHOTO LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Fang sits at a computer and clicks through the photos. The images - some taken by Fang and others by partygoers passing around his camera - all have a fun aesthetic.

Colors are vibrant; motion blur provides a sense of energy; and accidental double-exposures, resulting from users not advancing the film roll, creates a heady, euphoric vibe.

But as Fang gets further into the rolls, he notices the CALENDAR DATE SUPER-IMPOSED onto the frame. Someone must have accidentally turned on the SHOW DATE feature, which burns the digits into bottom right-hand corner of the film.

FANG
Well, that sucks.

Fang opens the photo agency website and CREATES AN ACCOUNT.

INT. WAVERLY DINER - GREENWICH VILLAGE - LATER

Fang pays for breakfast with cash swiped from the loft.

Across the diner, Fang recognizes a familiar face. It's the DETECTIVE - the same tired-looking woman he photographed at that crime scene. She eats while talking to a COLLEAGUE.

DING. A notification from the photo agency sales platform pops up on Fang's phone. He clicks into it. More than a dozen photos were sold for an article that just went live: A WILD NIGHT OUT WITH SANTIAGO ESPARZA.

Fang made \$4k!

FANG
(ecstatic)
Oh, my shit!

But his excitement is short lived, and he suddenly deflates.

Fang dials Bernard again. It goes straight to voicemail.

FANG (CONT'D)
It's Fang. Can you please meet me
at The Gansevoort in the morning?

Fang hangs up and scrolls through the article featuring his photographs. His NAME IS CREDITED UNDERNEATH each of them.

He glances at his mother's camera sitting across the table. The camera smiles at him.

INT. BERNARD'S SUV - THE NEXT MORNING

Bernard's SUV, still parked in front of The Gansevoort hotel, has two bright-orange parking tickets on its windshield.

DA-DOM DA-DOM. The sound of a large truck juddering down the cobblestone street wakes Fang, who sleeps in the driver seat.

Fang fidgets uncomfortably and looks around. He needs to pee.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - THE GANSEVOORT - MINUTES LATER

Fang exits the restroom into the hotel lobby but stops cold when he spots Gid outside peering into Bernard's SUV.

Gid paces around the sidewalk, about to explode in anger. Only several yards and a large glass window separate the two.

Fang looks around; weighing his options. What should he do?

Gid dials a number on his phone, and puts it to his ear.

Fang looks at his own phone, expecting it to start vibrating. But it doesn't. Gid doesn't have Fang's number; Gid never even learned his name.

FANG
(to himself)
You have no idea who I am, do you?

Fang grins as he watches Gid berate his phone. But that smile fades when Gid does a DOUBLE-TAKE in Fang's direction.

Gid makes DIRECT EYE CONTACT with Fang through the window.

Fang freezes in fear. Oh, god. Oh, god. Oh, god.

EXT. THE GANSEVOORT - CONTINUOUS

But from Gid's perspective outside, he's staring at his own reflection in mirrored glass. Gid can't see Fang at all.

Gid checks his appearance; runs his fingers through his hair.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - THE GANSEVOORT - CONTINUOUS

Fang breathes a sigh of relief and watches Gid walk off.

He smiles. He's off the hook... For now.

INT. PRIVATE CARE CENTER - DAY

With more cash than ever before, Fang tours a private care center on the East Side. An ADMINISTRATOR shows him around. They walk down a corridor overlooking the East River.

FANG
Hoping to make that change before
the end of next month.

ADMINISTRATOR
Well, we can work all that out on
our end if you decide this is where
Mom should call home.
(a beat)
So let me show you a few of the
amenities our residents enjoy.
(MORE)

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

I'll show you our dining hall, our recreation parlor, our state-of-the-art occupational therapy gyms, and most importantly, our private residences which offer 24-hour specialized care. Then we can talk in my office a bit more about Mom. Before we start, any questions?

FANG

Can I live here, too?

The attendant laughs, though it may not have been a joke.

INT. ADMIN OFFICE - PRIVATE CARE CENTER - LATER

The administrator speaks to Fang from behind a desk in what looks more like a shrink's office.

ADMINISTRATOR

(looking at a computer)

Mom's Medicare will supplement some of the monthly costs, but initiatory intake will be out of pocket, and she'll be looking at roughly \$9,000 every month thereafter.

Ouch... Fang looks at the ground, nodding.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

(noticing)

Does Mom have any assets? Or other sources of payment? You? Dad?

FANG

No, just me.

ADMINISTRATOR

Okay. Any siblings or other family?

Fang shakes his head.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

Mmmm. I imagine that's been tough. Frontotemporal dementia is often harder on the caregiver than on the patient. When did you start noticing she was sick?

FANG

I was just starting high school. So eight years ago, maybe?

(MORE)

FANG (CONT'D)

She worked for a while but... Lost our apartment six months ago, so I put her in a home.

ADMINISTRATOR

Probably for the best. For both of you. Where are you now?

FANG

Around.

(a beat)

Thanks for the tour. I'll circle back when I'm ready.

But neither of them believe he ever will.

EXT. STREETS OF MIDTOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Fang walks down the street. His phone vibrates in his pocket.

It's a series of text messages from Santiago including a screenshot of the WILD NIGHT OUT article and a selfie with Nina giving Fang a supportive thumbs up.

Fang smiles. He types: WHERE ARE YOU GUYS? But has second thoughts and erases it. He thinks...

He searches the selfie for any discerning clues indicating where it was taken, but there's not much to go on.

Fang Googles: FIND PHOTO LOCATION USING METADATA

Instructions pop up on how to pinpoint a photo's geotag using its EXIF data. Fang follows the steps and discovers they're across town.

EXT. LADURÉE - SOHO - MOMENTS LATER

Fang approaches Ladurée — a brunch spot in SoHo with an expansive tree-shaded garden for outdoor dining.

He spots the group sitting outside. They're obscured by cherry blossoms and heat-lamps, but that doesn't stop an OLDER PAPARAZZO from trying to get shots from the sidewalk.

Fang pushes past a HOSTESS despite her efforts to block him and approaches Santiago, Nina, and Zander.

SANTIAGO

(tepid)

Oh. Hi. What are you doing here?

ZANDER

Ah, and we're just finishing up.

FANG

(lying)

No, no. I saw that pap on the street and was curious who he was shooting. Then I thought if he saw me walk over he'd bounce.

The group looks at the older paparazzo on the sidewalk and sees he is, in fact, packing up. The older paparazzo verbalizes his frustration at the situation and leaves.

SANTIAGO

Holy shit. It really does work.

ZANDER

I thought you were bullshitting.

NINA

What are you doing tonight? We're having a goodbye thing for Santi before he flies out. We could use your services.

INT. BLUE IN GREEN - SOHO - LATER

Fang shops for new clothes at Blue In Green - an airy boutique full of natural light that feels more like a Japanese countryside cottage than a mens clothing store.

He looks around the shop; clueless.

RETAIL WORKER (O.S.)

Can I help you with anything?

FANG

Uh, I-- No.

Fang spots a mannequin wearing a fashionable outfit.

INT. FITTING ROOM - BLUE IN GREEN - MINUTES LATER

Fang studies his reflection in a fitting room. He dons the exact outfit worn by the mannequin.

He looks good; like he could fit right in with Nina and her friends.

INT. BLUE IN GREEN - MINUTES LATER

The RETAIL WORKER rings Fang up at the front counter.

RETAIL WORKER
That'll be \$1,034.42.

FANG
(shocked and embarrassed)
Oh, um. What about just the shirt?

The retail worker removes the other items from the pile and shoves them to the side.

EXT. NICHE NICHE - SOHO - NIGHT

Camera ready; Fang waits for Santiago and Nina outside Niche Niche - a hidden gem at the base of a SoHo townhouse.

CLACK. Fang snaps a photo as they climb out of an Escalade with others in tow; including Zander and the same two models.

FANG
Santi! Over here! Nina!

CLACK. Fang maneuvers around to get the best possible shots.

Nina gives Fang a wink before entering the restaurant.

Fang hurries inside after them.

INT. WINE CELLAR - NICHE NICHE - CONTINUOUS

The group heads downstairs to a secluded wine cellar in the basement of the restaurant. They each take a seat.

Still standing, Fang unzips his parka, proudly showing off his new, pricey tee-shirt. At that moment, Fang realizes there ISN'T A SEAT FOR HIM at this table...

ZANDER
(to the group)
Oh... Is he?
(to Fang)
You were going to take pictures
outside, no?

Fang's posture melts.

Nina recognizes Fang's disappointment.

NINA
 (lying)
 No, they must have gotten the
 reservation wrong. Here--

She drags a chair from another table to the spot beside her.

NINA (CONT'D)
 Easy. Problem solved.

Fang isn't fooled. He sits but wants to disappear.

INT. WINE CELLAR - NICHE NICHE - LATER

A waiter pours another bottle of wine, though the empty
 bottles littering the table indicate they've had plenty.

MODEL 1
 Fang. Those photos the other night
 were fire! I looked like a Warhol
 Factory Girl or some shit.

MODEL 2
 True! Whose photo brought in the
 most? Like, dollars. Can I ask?

Nina returns from the bathroom and retakes her seat next to
 Fang; her face paler and puffier than before.

Only Fang notices Nina has a WET SPECK OF FOOD on her chin.

ZANDER
 Oh my god, good question! Whose
 photo sells for the most?

Fang takes out his phone and checks the sales platform.

NINA
 I don't even want to know.

Fang hands his phone off to the others, then discreetly
 informs Nina of the speck on her chin.

Nina is confused until she picks it off.

NINA (CONT'D)
 (quietly to Fang)
 Gross. Sorry. I'm not feeling well.

Nina goes into her purse and takes out a mint.

MODEL 2

(scrolling)

So I'm not counting group photos.
Just singles. A photo of Santi got
\$250. Not bad. One of mine made
\$400, which I think is a bargain.

MODEL 1

What about me?

MODEL 2

You made a little bit more.

MODEL 1

Love that. And Nina?

MODEL 2

Umm. I see one for \$23.

MODEL 1

That can't be right. Maybe they
left off a zero?

Fang notices Nina sip her wine, nursing that wound.

FANG

You know what? A week ago, I sold a
photo of Nina for more than a
thousand bucks. A single photo.

The waiter places the bill in the center of the table.

ZANDER

Sounds like Fang should pick up the
bill then, huh? Seeing as he's made
so much off us.

MODEL 1

Love that.

MODEL 2

Sounds fair to me.

The bill is passed to Fang. It's more than \$2k.

Fang swallows hard. A bead of sweat appears on his brow as he
goes for his wallet. But before he can place his bank card on
the table, Nina slips her credit card onto his lap.

NINA

(whispering into his ear)

I got it. Private club, remember?
Us members stick together.

She touches Fang's JUN tattoo.

He closes his eyes. Fang likes having Nina so close.

EXT. NICHE NICHE - LATE NIGHT

The group exits the restaurant. The streets are quiet.

SANTIAGO
And not a paparazzi in sight!

MODEL 1
Love that--

CRASH! The OLDER PAPARAZZO - from Ladurée - JUMPS Fang and PINS him against a wall.

A SCUFFLE; the older paparazzo lands a few solid punches, BUSTING Fang's lip, before Santiago manages to pull him off.

OLDER PAPARAZZO
You scooped me! That was my photo!
(walking off)
This shit is hard enough without
green assholes like you!

Nina takes Fang's hand as the rest of the group evaluates the damage done to his face.

SANTIAGO	NINA
You okay, Fang?	Are you alright?

ZANDER
(into his phone)
Hi. Someone just jumped my friend.

Still in shock, Fang looks around at his FRIENDS who huddle around him. He smiles through bloody teeth.

Fang's found a COMMUNITY; he manifested this!

START OF MONTAGE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

-Fang becomes his friend's de facto photographer. The models pose for "plandids" - exclusive, planned-candid photos.

-Fang's subjects - including Nina - review shots and choose their favorite. Nina hangs off Fang's shoulder as she reviews her images.

-The photos of the models appear in digital articles but NONE BRING IN BIG NUMBERS. And Nina's photos don't sell at all.

-Fang's photo agency balance INCREASES from \$4k to \$7k.

-Fang rents a seedy shoebox apartment in the East Village and buys an affordable laptop.

-His photo agency balance DROPS from \$7k to \$5k.

-Fang brushes his mom's teeth at the public care center; he CROSSES OUT the date 3/1 on her calendar and CIRCLES 3/31. Time is short to organize new care.

-Fang tours another private care center for his mother but, again, is deflated by its high cost.

-Fang takes plandids of Nina, knowing they won't sell. She playfully KISSES his cheek when she sees an image she loves.

-His photo agency balance BARELY increases from \$6k to \$6.2k.

-Fang is frustrated to discover one of his photos was embedded in a digital article via Instagram. A model posted it on their personal feed, rendering it WORTHLESS.

-Fang answers a call from the photo agency rep.

AGENCY REP (O.S.)
Impressed with your work, but can I
offer a tip? Find more DRAMATIC
stories. Celebs are great. But
that's not enough. You gotta dig!

-Fang sits with his mother and spots a LARGE BRUISE on her arm. The calendar behind her bed reveals there's LESS THAN THREE WEEKS until she needs to be out.

MOTHER
("Help me. Help me.")
What I need. What I need.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - DAY

Fang sits on a couch between Nina and Zander, clicking through images from a recent photoshoot on his laptop.

Nina is curled up against Fang; similar to how one might cuddle with a pet. She wears her sister's beanie.

They've been here awhile and Fang is exhausted.

ZANDER
Honestly? None of these work.

BEEP BEP-BEP BEEP. Someone enters the code to open the door.

Nina removes her sister's beanie and throws it on a nearby table so she won't get caught wearing it again.

Fang turns as Daisy enters. He offers a friendly wave, but she blows him off and goes straight into her bedroom.

ZANDER (CONT'D)

I know you're stressing. How about
I run out and buy a few looks? Then
Fang makes returns when we're done.
(to Fang)
Because you're not coming, right?

FANG

To what?

Nina stands up and grabs her vape across the room, putting distance between herself and Fang.

She points to a framed poster hanging on the wall for Riley's studio film GENERATION NExxT; the poster is a menacing image of his watchful eyes.

NINA

Riley. He's on his way home from
his wellness retreat. We're doing a
small thing.

FANG

(interest piqued)
Oh, where are you going?

NINA

No. Sorry. No cameras. He'll lose
his shit.
(to Zander)
Honestly, you shouldn't go either.

ZANDER

Me?! Why not?

NINA

(hitting her vape)
I'm stressing out. Please just do
what I say. I don't know what
headspace he's going to be in.

ZANDER

What about the album release?

NINA

I don't think we're going to that.
But both of you should.
(hitting her vape)
If we do, Fang, PLEASE don't take
his photo. There's no faster way to
set him off. And that's all I need.

EXT. TRIBECA LOFT - SUNSET

Fang follows Zander out onto the sidewalk.

ZANDER

Riley's such a prick. I doubt therapy fixed that.

FANG

What was he in for?

ZANDER

Like you don't know. He punched a fucking cop. A female cop! But here's some tea. Given the choice between anger management and jail, that asshole picked jail. Then Sony execs had an emergency meeting and said either therapy or you're done.

FANG

What does Nina think?

ZANDER

Nina? That girl can't figure out her own shit, let alone his. He'll destroy his career, but she's going to accidentally kill herself.

FANG

Wait, what do you mean?

ZANDER

Oh, she puts the heroin in "heroin chic". That's a joke. Ignore me. I'm just pissed and high. Anyways, I don't want to be standing here when Riley gets home. Later.

They part, walking off in opposite directions. But Fang looks back and stops once Zander is out of sight.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NEXT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Fang walks through an unmanned construction site beside Nina's building. It's a maze of scaffolding, particle board, and mesh fencing billowing in the breeze.

He finds a discreet place to stake out Riley's arrival, but, with the sun setting, it has little visibility to the area around him. Fang takes out his camera and frames his shot.

RUFFLING. A sound startles Fang. It comes from behind him...

Fang peers back but can't see much of anything. He squints--
MOVEMENT. A figure weaves from one obstruction to another.

Startled; Fang runs but gets caught in mesh fencing. Once free, he navigates the labyrinth to get back onto the road.

EXT. STREETS OF TRIBECA - CONTINUOUS

Fang sprints down a street, glancing back to see the silhouette of the figure in pursuit.

He turns down an alley, but gets himself cornered.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
(breathing heavy)
Hey, hey, hey! Police!

It's the DETECTIVE - the same woman from the diner and crime scene. She doesn't recognize Fang, but Fang recognizes her.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
You're not in any trouble. I just
have a couple of questions.

The detective presents Fang with a print magazine opened to the WILD NIGHT WITH SANTIAGO ESPARZA article. She points to Fang's name under one of the photographs.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
That's you, right? Can you confirm
these were taken February fourth?

She slides her finger to the SUPERIMPOSED DATE burned into the button right-hand corner of an image.

FANG
Uh, yeah.

DETECTIVE
You're sure? Take a second.

FANG
What's this about?

DETECTIVE
One at a time. The date.

FANG
Maybe I can help.

DETECTIVE
You can. With the date.

FANG

It was the fourth. Santi's birthday. It's in the article.

DETECTIVE

(disappointed)

Mm. Then okay. That's all I needed.

The detective moves to leave, but stops. She takes out a folder and shows Fang a SMALL PHOTOGRAPH OF A YOUNG WOMAN.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Actually, ever seen her around?

FANG

Doesn't look familiar. No.

The detective returns the photo to her OPENED FOLDER.

Fang does a DOUBLE-TAKE toward the folder and spots RILEY PRESSER'S NAME CIRCLED ON A NOTEPAD.

FANG (CONT'D)

Wait! Uh, can I hold onto that? In case it sparks a memory.

DETECTIVE

(studying Fang)

Okay... Sure. Take this, too.

The detective offers the photograph along with her card, which reads: NYPD HOMICIDE DETECTIVE.

INT. FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

A folding chair, card table, and bare mattress are the only pieces of furniture in Fang's newly-rented shoebox apartment.

Fang reviews his photos from the crime scene on his laptop; a reminder of how he botched the roll when learning to develop.

He looks at the small photograph provided by the detective, then pulls up a NY POST ARTICLE written about the young woman who fell to her death from the fire escape. The article refers to the victim as an UNNAMED 19-YEAR-OLD NYU STUDENT.

Fang opens a new tab and types RILEY PRESSER. An image of an angry Riley screaming at a photographer fills his screen.

FANG

(thinking)

Now... that'd be a story.

EXT. TRIBECA LOFT - NIGHT

Fang looks up at the Tribeca loft building, making sure there aren't any signs of life in the apartment. He phones Zander.

FANG

I'm outside Nina's. I left my
wallet upstairs.

(he listens)

Yeah, but I didn't want her phone
to go off and disturb their thing.

(he listens)

Yup. Super quick. In then out.

Fang swipes open his NOTES APP and types out the ENTRY CODE, adding it to his long list of saved passcodes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

BEEP BEP-BEP BEEP. Fang peers inside. No one's home.

He walks toward a refrigerator littered with photos of family and friends. He takes out the small photograph of the fire escape victim and compares faces. None match.

He turns toward Nina and Riley's bedroom. The door is cracked open and he recognizes RILEY'S CAMERA on a bookshelf.

INT. NINA AND RILEY'S BEDROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Lights from the street cast a subtle glow over the bedroom.

Fang picks up Riley's camera. It's similar to his own. He checks for a finished film roll inside, but accidentally exposes an active roll to the light before slamming it shut.

He squints at the bookshelf in search of frames or photo albums. Fang pulls open a drawer at the shelf's base and uses his phone as a torch to investigate its contents.

Inside the drawer is a wooden cigar box. Opening it, Fang discovers a STACK OF FILM NEGATIVES. Bingo!

He puts his flashlight to the back of one negative, revealing intimate, black and white photos of Nina and Riley. He slides frame-to-frame with his mouth agape--

BEEP BEP-BEP BEEP. Someone's home. Shit. Shit! SHIT!

The front door swings open, flooding light into the loft.

RILEY (O.S.)
Really? Please stop talking about
leaving, Nina. No! Don't touch me.

Panicking and heart racing, Fang looks for a place to hide. He squeezes under their bed-frame. From this vantage, he only sees their legs in the other room.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Give me some space, will you?

NINA
How's this?

She shoves Riley back, giving him that space he requested.

SMACK. Their fight becomes physical, though it's unclear who hit who. They wrestle for a moment before it turns sexual.

They move to their bedroom, undressing each other as they go. Riley turns on the bedroom light.

Fang makes himself as small as he can as various clothing items hit the ground around him. The wooden bed-slats bow under the weight of the mattress above.

Fang notices his own reflection in a full-length mirror against the wall. But he can also see them. From this angle, Fang can only see her beanie and bare skin of Nina's back, but he gets his first clear view of Nina's troubled husband.

This is RILEY PRESSER, 27. A child-actor turned Hollywood star led by his ego and dogged pursuit of mastering his craft, no matter who he hurts in the process. His boyish, good-looks are now masked by substance-induced bloating and a self-inflicted scar he gave himself for an indie film role.

JOEY FATONE (O.S.)
Meow.

Nina's geriatric cat investigates Fang under the bed. Joey Fatone gets right up in Fang's face; nose-to-nose.

Fang blows in the cat's face in an attempt to make it go away. But it doesn't work. And now Fang is going to sneeze...

The mattress BENDS with each THRUST from above, and the couple gets LOUDER and LOUDER as they near orgasm.

Struggling, Fang's sneeze BUILDS on each involuntary inward breath. This is going to be a BIG...

Fang SNEEZES as Nina and Riley CLIMAX; its sound covered by the noises above.

PLINK. A broken necklace falls to the floor just inches from Fang's face. He gets a good look at its YELLOW GOLD PENDANT.

RILEY (O.S.)
Your necklace.

Riley reaches down to the floor to retrieve it... and narrowly misses seeing Fang under the bed.

Fang remains quiet as he listens to Riley and Nina get dressed and depart for the small gathering.

Once gone, Fang retrieves and pockets the STACK OF FILM NEGATIVES and the FILM ROLL inside Riley's camera.

INT. DARKROOM - KIM'S PHOTO LAB - ALPHABET CITY

Fang dumps development chemicals out of a film canister. He pulls out the roll he'd stolen from Riley's camera and holds it to the light.

He puts the negative in the scanner. The pictures appear to be from a college house party but they're difficult to discern due to Fang accidentally exposing the roll.

One hazy photo depicts Riley whispering into a young woman's ear. Fang compares her face to that of the fire escape victim, but it's impossible to determine if it's a match.

FANG
(defeated)
Damn it!

Fang notices a daily, tearaway calendar on the desk; today is 3/11. He flips through its pages, stops at 3/31, and sighs.

INT. ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - NIGHT

Fang enters a Brooklyn warehouse-turned music venue.

On stage, indie artist SISTER MISTER performs to an intimate crowd celebrating the release of her new album.

CLACK. Fang snaps a photo of the performance.

SECURITY GUARD
Excuse me! No photos!

FANG
Seriously?
(to himself, frustrated)
I'm not even on the board today.

INT. MENS RESTROOM - ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - MOMENTS LATER

Fang enters the bathroom and sees Riley using a urinal.

Riley, realizing someone recognizes him, suddenly TURNS ON. It's as if a switch has been flicked and a surge of energy courses through him. He smiles. This is his "public self."

RILEY

What's going on?

FANG

Oh, hi. I'm, uh, Fang. I'm actually
Nina's friend.

RILEY

(eyeing Fang's camera)
Oh, okay.

FANG

Great to finally meet you.

Fang goes for a handshake, instantly regretting the action.

Riley, still urinating, looks at Fang's hand and snickers. He turns his whole body and shakes Fang's hand with both of his own, purposefully peeing on Fang's shoes in the process.

RILEY

Real pleasure.

Fang doesn't know how to react. He goes into a stall. Once he hears Riley leave, he uses toilet paper to dry off his shoes.

INT. ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - MINUTES LATER

Fang emerges from the restroom and spots Nina standing with Daisy, Zander, Riley and a few of his friends. He walks over.

Riley is mid-rant, shouting to be heard over the music.

RILEY

Bro, it's this toxic milieu of
false recovery. I'm not going to
hear it from some therapist who
grew up in Thousand Oaks and
studied Carl Jung at Harvard for
five years. Fuck you.

Riley notices Fang and edges him out of the conversation; his body language indicates Fang is less than welcome here.

Fang looks to Nina and Zander to allow him to get into their circle, but they pretend not to notice.

RILEY (CONT'D)

So you do the dance, say the shit
they want to hear, then accept your
participation trophy.

Riley lifts his pant-leg to reveal his "trophy": an alcohol monitoring device on his ankle.

FRIEND 1

So that goes off if you drink?

RILEY

Oh, it'll go off if I use
mouthwash. Yet I do a bump of K and
the fucking thing is radio silent.

FRIEND 2

They don't drug test?

RILEY

No one fucking cares! None of this
is real.

(to Fang, short)

Can I help you?

NINA

Oh! Riley. I want you to meet Fang.

Riley gives Fang a brisk nod, then returns to his rant.

Nina offers Fang a subtle shrug as if to say, "I tried."

INT. ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - LATER

Fang sits with Nina, Riley, and the rest of their group at a table along the side of the venue. They all look toward the stage, except for Fang who watches Riley.

SISTER MISTER

Thank you for being a part of this
special night. I want to invite up
a few friends to help me sing this
last one. You know who you are.

Nina shrieks and runs toward the stage with most of their group, leaving Fang alone at the table with Riley.

SISTER MISTER (CONT'D)

And you can all sing along, too, if
you know the words.

Sister Mister plays her signature song. The place goes WILD.

An intoxicated Nina pushes her way to the microphone and screams the lyrics. Her undulating dance moves draw attention. It's humiliating; everyone feels the cringe.

A concertgoer knocks into Fang's backpack, spilling its contents; including the PHOTOGRAPH the detective provided.

Riley does a DOUBLE-TAKE at the photo but stays quiet, until he notices Fang's camera is facing his direction.

RILEY

What are we doing? Are you recording?

Riley lunges for the camera.

FANG

It's film. It can't do video.

RILEY

Let me see?

Fang presents the camera to Riley, who SNATCHES it and takes off across the venue.

Fang gives chase as Riley RIPS OUT the current roll and removes the camera's lens.

Riley stops and tosses the lensless camera back to Fang.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna hold onto the lens. Cool?

INT. BACKSTAGE - ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - LATER

Sister Mister's friends stand in a single-file line weaving up a stairwell leading to her green room.

Fang pleads with a wasted Nina near the front of the line. He sees Riley coming up the stairs toward them.

NINA

(slurring)

I can't make him do anything he doesn't want to do.

Riley cuts the entire line, but everyone is too starstruck to be annoyed. He ignores Fang and puts his arm around Nina.

SISTER MISTER (O.S.)

It's so great to see you!

The green room door opens and Sister Mister greets a friend standing at the front of the line with the warmest embrace.

SISTER MISTER (CONT'D)

I'm so happy you came. I could cry.

She's sweaty, exhausted, and vulnerable. A person; no longer the persona. But her tenderness hardens at the sight of Fang.

SISTER MISTER (CONT'D)

(announcing to everyone)

I'm sorry. If I don't know you,
please leave.

Fang looks to Nina, wanting her to say something, but she doesn't. Instead, she glances at Riley then at the ground.

SISTER MISTER (CONT'D)

(louder)

If I do not know you, I'm asking
you to PLEASE leave.

All eyes are on Fang.

FANG

(humiliated)

Okay, sorry.

Fang is forced to walk past everyone waiting on the stairway as he exits; ALONE.

EXT. ALBUM RELEASE PARTY - NIGHT

Fang exits the backstage door to an empty street; without his friends, without his community.

FANG

FUCK!

But Fang's not alone. We get the sense SOMEONE IS WATCHING HIM from across the road.

INT. FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Fang sets down a shopping bag in his kitchenette and takes out TWO UNOPENED BOXES OF GPS TAGS — the same kind Gid used on Bernard's SUV.

Working from his table, he uses his laptop to take a closer look at the house party pictures stolen from Riley's camera, but he still can't discern anything.

He re-examines the botched crime scene photos. They're even less helpful. All he can make out is the pink and yellow, dual-toned pattern on the hem of the victim's dress.

Fang cross references the dual-toned pattern with the dress worn by the girl at the house party. Not a match. We can only see that dress from the waist up, but it's red and black.

Fang tries Bernard's quick color-correction trick to improve the crime scene photo, revealing the victim's dress WASN'T pink and yellow, it was RED AND BLACK. He sits up.

Fang isolates the pattern on the victim's skirt and does a Reverse Image Search. He learns the pattern is called "ikat."

He searches RED BLACK IKAT DRESS and skims through the results... and THERE IT IS. Both the victim and girl at the house party are wearing the SAME DRESS!

VIBRATIONS. An incoming call from an UNKNOWN NUMBER.

FANG

Hello?

(a beat)

Hello...?

RILEY (O.S.)

It's Riley. I'm downstairs. I have your lens.

FANG

Oh, um. Okay.

He jumps up and starts opening one of the GPS boxes in his kitchenette, but then decides against it.

FANG (CONT'D)

I'll be right down.

Fang opens his door to find--

Riley stands at the doorway, coat in hand. He enters the apartment before being invited and hands Fang the lens.

RILEY

I wanted to come by and apologize for last night. I was pissy.

Riley chucks his coat on the floor and looks around. He's snooping and seems to be under the influence of something.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I know about those photos you took.

Fang stops cold.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Nina says they have a cool vibe.

Fang breathes; he misunderstood what Riley meant.

FANG

You shoot film, too?

RILEY

She tell you that?

Riley flips open a binder on the table containing all of Fang's negatives.

RILEY (CONT'D)

What do you shoot?

Riley slips one of the negatives out of the binder and holds it to the light.

Fang eyes RILEY'S STOLEN NEGATIVES stuffed into the back of the binder. They're just inches from Riley's hand...

FANG

Oh, uh, Kodak. Gold.

Fang grabs a magazine from a small pile on the floor. He opens it to the WILD NIGHT WITH SANTIAGO ESPARZA article and places it on the binder, covering the stolen negatives.

FANG (CONT'D)

These were all Kodak Gold.

Riley glances at the article, then moves it off the binder and continues through Fang's negatives; getting closer and closer to his own.

RILEY

I prefer T-MAX. Black and white.

FANG

Yeah? I've never used it. I'm actually thinking of switching to fashion photography.

Fang pretends to look at the binder with Riley. He subtly drags it to his side of the table to take control from Riley.

FANG (CONT'D)

Like these kind of shots. I feel like those could be in a fashion magazine, you think?

Riley prevents Fang from pulling the binder out of his reach.

RILEY
I'm not a good judge for that sort
of thing.

Fang walks into the kitchenette, but keeps a close eye on Riley. He opens a kitchen drawer and eyes a LARGE KNIFE...

Riley gets to the stolen film negatives.

RILEY (CONT'D)
These are T-MAX, here...

Riley holds one of the STOLEN NEGATIVES to the light--

FANG
(forceful)
Can I ask you a question?

Riley stops and gives Fang a dead stare from across the room.

FANG (CONT'D)
Was it hard being away so long?
Nina talked about you all the time.

The comment hits Riley in the gut. He puts the negative back in the binder and walks to the window, preventing Fang from seeing him take a bump of Ketamine. He needs a numbing agent.

RILEY
(clearing his nose)
What, um... What did she say?

FANG
(lying)
Oh, I mean, just that she wished
she was... allowed to talk to you.

Using the knife, Fang opens a GPS tag. He eyes Riley's coat on the floor: the perfect place to hide it.

RILEY
You know, they do something called
Family Breakfast. Mondays,
everybody in the program has their
family show up on these video
calls. Maybe it's ten of us and
your mother, father, sister,
whoever. Anyone can join. Week One,
no one shows up for me. They got
the calls. I know they got the
calls. But no one showed up. Week
Two, same thing. Week Three...

Fang races to sync the GPS tag to his phone.

RILEY (CONT'D)

And this isn't just addicts and
douchebags like me. These are like
arsonists and child predators. And
they got people. But not me.

(a beat)

Week Four, I say, "I'm not going.
I'm not subjecting myself to this
shit." And my therapist says, "No.
No, you should come this week."

Syncing... Syncing... Syncing...

RILEY (CONT'D)

So I show up and I just know, I
KNOW it's Nina. Despite all the
shit I've put her through, she's
going to tell me she cares. And...
uh... it was my manager. Checking in.

Riley's face turns dark red, as if he's about to implode.

RILEY (CONT'D)

But, uh, it sounds like maybe she
does care. She wanted to call.

Riley crouches down and buries his face in his hands.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Why do I keep hurting these girls?

The GPS tag is synced!

RILEY (CONT'D)

(to Fang)

Sorry. I'm sorry.

Riley grabs his coat from the floor and marches toward Fang.
He grabs Fang by the scruff of his hair.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I don't want to see you hanging
around anymore. We are not your
friends. You are nobody to no one.
Got it?

Fang nods; uncomfortably.

Riley slams the door as he exits.

Fang checks his phone. A BLUE TRACKER moves across a map;
Fang managed to pull it off.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - TRIBECA - NIGHT

Fang crouches in a massive parking garage looking at the blue tracker on his phone. He spots Riley and Nina seated in the front of a parked car on the other side of the garage.

Thinking they're unobserved, the couple engages in a blowout fight. Nina is in tears. She screams at Riley, then hits him.

CLACK. Fang snaps a photo from a safe distance.

Riley accepts her wrath at first but then he strikes back.

CLACK.

Nina laughs as she wipes blood from her nose and storms out of the vehicle. Riley sits for a moment before driving off.

Fang makes a phone call.

FANG

Hey. A magazine is interested in our photos. They need a bit more info for the article. Can you chat?

EXT. HUDSON RIVER PARK - NIGHT

Fang walks along the water in Hudson River Park. He pulls his parka close, shielding himself from the breeze off the river.

Nina's alone on a bench. She wears an oversized jacket and beanie; but even that can't hide how thin she's become.

Fang sits beside her and notices running mascara frozen to her cheeks.

NINA

You know, I had a dream the other night. The hospital called to tell me there was some sort of mistake and my mom was still alive. Grief is so fucked. I don't even think I liked my mom. And some days I'm glad she died. But it's also really lonely.

Nina wraps her arm around Fang's and leans on his shoulder.

NINA (CONT'D)

Who did you lean on after everything went down with your mom?

FANG

It was just me. You're lucky to have Riley. And your sister.

NINA

(snorts)

Sure. The funeral was the first time I'd seen Daisy in years. And Riley didn't even show. Couldn't get away from set, he claims.

FANG

Journaling helped. I'd fill three pages of a notebook every morning. Whatever was on my mind. Then I'd burn them or just throw them out.

NINA

Morning pages. I've been doing those. Haven't tried burning them though. I've just been stuffing them in my bedside table.

FANG

I was afraid someone might read them.

NINA

Ah. Well, I'm lucky in that respect. I don't have anyone who cares enough to do that.

Fang rubs his legs to keep warm.

NINA (CONT'D)

It's cold. Let's go get fucked up.

INT. DIVE BAR - FINANCIAL DISTRICT - MINUTES LATER

Nina sits in the back corner of an empty dive bar. She shovels french fries into her mouth.

Fang returns from the bar with two glasses of whisky, both nearly filled to the rim.

FANG

Two triple whiskies.

NINA

(joking, flat)

But what are you going to drink?

Fang sits next to her in the circular booth. But before he's able to place the drinks down, NINA PULLS HIM IN FOR A KISS.

This kiss is neither romantic nor passionate. In fact, it's sloppy and sad; a desperate ploy for male attention.

Fang goes along with Nina but her tongue down his throat feels wrong.

Nina peaks to check if Fang's into it, and pushes him away when she sees he's not.

NINA (CONT'D)

(bored)

Ugh. Fine. Let's just do your
fucking school work.

She slides to the other side of the booth, sips her whisky, and continues devouring her french fries.

Fang takes his laptop out of his bag; unsure how to proceed.

FANG

Um, so the magazine publisher sent
a few questions. First, Santi's
birthday. Why wasn't Riley there?

NINA

He was on his wellness retreat.

FANG

Riley left the day before? Or...

NINA

(apprehensive)

No, like a week. Why? What does
this have to do with our photos?

FANG

I think it's just background.

Unseen by Nina, Fang pulls up the article that announced Riley's rehab stint. It was published February 5th and confirms Riley had been there for days.

Fang searches for the NY Post article about the young woman falling off the fire escape. According to the Post, the incident happened on February 4th.

He opens a photo from Santiago's birthday. FEB 04 is time-stamped in the corner. This timeline isn't making sense!

NINA

What's up?

FANG
 (texting)
 No, I'm texting the editor. I'm
 confused why they're asking some of
 these questions.

Fang texts Santiago: RANDOM Q. WHAT'S YOUR BDAY?

NINA
 Want to go up to the roof?

FANG
 (distracted)
 Roof?

NINA
 Don't worry. I'm not going to make
 another move on you. Though I was
 going to let you fuck me in the
 bathroom.

This is all too much for Fang to process.

NINA (CONT'D)
 Roof. Let's go. It's probably
 closed but we're sneaking up.

FANG
 You don't think it's too cold?

NINA
 Not if you keep your pants on.

INT. ELEVATOR - DIVE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Nina and Fang lean against opposite sides of an elevator as
 it climbs to the top floor of the building.

Nina sips her whisky and scrolls on her phone.

VIBRATIONS. Fang sees a text from Santiago: BDAY 2/4. WHY?

Fang flicks through pictures from the birthday on his phone.
 He stops. The superimposed dates START when Nina played with
 the camera.

He looks up at Nina to find she's locked eyes with him.

NINA
 You okay?

DING. The elevator opens.

EXT. ROOF DECK - DIVE BAR - CONTINUOUS

They step onto an empty roof deck. It's closed for the winter and a safety hazard without lights or protective walls.

Nina walks to the edge of the roof, expecting Fang to follow.

Instead, Fang walks out of her sightline and opens the WILD NIGHT OUT article his phone. It was published February 7th.

He texts Santiago: WAIT. SO THE CLUB WASN'T YOUR ACTUAL BDAY?

NINA (O.S.)
Where'd you go? Come back.

VIBRATIONS. A text from Santiago: NOPE. WEEKEND AFTER.

Fang's stomach drops. Did Nina purposefully set the wrong date on his camera to give herself an alibi for a murder?

He cautiously approaches Nina on the LEDGE.

She CROSSES to his other side – a perfect position to push him off.

Fang BRACES for a shove that doesn't come.

NINA (CONT'D)
Your mom. I never asked what happened. Don't know why, I assumed she took her life, like mine.

Fang peers over the edge; did Nina's mom fall off a building?

FANG
(referring to her mom)
How?

Nina disappears into the darkness.

NINA (O.S.)
Jumped in front of a train.

Fang unpockets the SECOND GPS TAG and quickly uses his phone to sync it up. The phone's bright screen makes it impossible to see anything in his periphery. He's distracted.

FANG
My mom. No, not suicide. Though sometimes I wonder if she'd have gone that route, if she knew.

Syncing... Syncing... Syncing...

FANG (CONT'D)
It's shitty. And now I'm literally
wiping her ass.

Silence, until--

NINA (O.S.)
You said your mom was dead.

Fang realizes he's outed himself. He tries to locate Nina in the darkness and accidentally fumbles the GPS tag, causing it to FALL several stories to the street below.

FANG
(to himself)
No.
(to Nina)
No, no, uh, it's complicated.
Because I did lose her, you know...

Nina is silent. Where is she?

Terrified, Fang moves away from the roof's edge but--

BAM. He bumps into a SKELETON decoration left from Halloween.

Nina emerges from the shadows. She's in tears.

NINA
I guess we're not in a private club
after all. Just me. Just me.
(a beat)
You know, everyone's right about
you. "Fang." You just stuck your
teeth in, didn't you? You're
pathetic. You are a parasite.

Her words are daggers to Fang who can only stand and take it.

NINA (CONT'D)
(cold)
I don't mean to insult you. I just
don't know how else to describe
you.

FANG
Sorry. I, uh, need to get these
responses back to the editor.

NINA
Yeah. Yeah. Do that.

Fang enters the elevator and hits the button for the ground floor. Nina offers a final menacing smile as the doors close.

INT. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION - THE NEXT DAY

Fang sits in what appears to be a police station.

FANG

I think it was Nina. And I think she set an incorrect date on the camera to give herself an alibi. I just can't figure out how I have a photo of Riley with the girl the night she died.

(a beat)

Any theories?

MOTHER

(mumbling)

What I need. What I need.

It's revealed Fang sits across from his mom in her bedroom.

FANG

No, you're right. Could be the same dress but on a different night. Didn't think about that.

She smiles.

MOTHER

("You're welcome.")

What I need.

INT. PATIENT BATHROOM - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Fang washes his hands in a handicap bathroom.

MOTHER (O.S.)

No, no!

He opens the door and hears commotion coming from his mother's section of the room.

INT. PATIENT BEDROOM - PUBLIC CARE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A frustrated CAREGIVER fights with Fang's mother to get her changed. Their hands are on the bruised parts of her arm and clavicle. This caregiver has been the one hurting her!

FANG

What are you doing!?

Fang rushes over as the caregiver backs off.

CAREGIVER

I'm just trying to get her changed.

FANG

Do you have to be that rough?!

(to his mother)

Are you alright?

Tears well up in her eyes; she looks like a confused child.

MOTHER

("Why? Why?")

What I need. What I need.

Fang hugs her tight.

INT. ADMIN OFFICE - PRIVATE CARE CENTER - LATER THAT DAY

A visibly shaken Fang sits in the admin office at the private care center he'd toured previously.

ADMINISTRATOR

The intake process for Mom is fairly quick and straightforward. We're looking at \$6,750 for initiatory costs. And then it'll be that \$9,000 a month from there.

Fang pulls up his balance on his phone: \$6,903.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

We coordinate transport on our end. So if we can get a check from you today or tomorrow, Mom will be here before the end of the week.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - THAT NIGHT

BEEP BEP-BEP BEEP. Fang uses the code to unlock the loft door then peers inside. No one's home. The loft is pitch black.

Rather than turn on the lights, Fang blindly heads toward Nina and Riley's bedroom.

INT. NINA AND RILEY'S BEDROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Fang turns on his phone's torch, crawls over to a bedside table, and opens its drawer. It's filled with random junk.

He moves to the other side of the bed and opens a second bedside table. Just as Nina described, it's stuffed with notebooks dated and labeled: MORNING PAGES.

RUSTLING. A sound comes from within the room. Fang shines his light at the source to find Joey Fatone stretching his legs.

FANG
(sighs)
I hate you, Joey Fatone.

Fang finds the notebook containing early February's morning pages. He flips to an entry at the start of the month.

CLACK. Fang photographs each page, one at a time. Every burst from the flash illuminates the entire room for a split second, revealing--

NINA IS WATCHING FANG FROM THE BATHROOM.

Fang continues taking photos, oblivious.

CLACK. She sits motionless only feet away. CLACK.

The sound of a passing car outside reminds Fang to hurry. He picks up his phone and moves to stand, but--

The torch catches NINA'S FACE.

FANG (CONT'D)
Jesus!

Fang falls backward. He SHINES THE LIGHT into the dark bathroom and discovers Nina sitting against the toilet in her underwear.

Nina stares at him, but doesn't move.

A SYRINGE sticks out of her forearm, a TOURNIQUET around her upper arm, and dried VOMIT down her chest.

FANG (CONT'D)
(frantic)
What are y--

Fang turns on the light and pulls the syringe out of her arm.

FANG (CONT'D)
Nina! Nina! Wake up! Oh, fuck.

He checks her pulse. Nothing. She's already gone.

FANG (CONT'D)
Oh, my god.

Fang looks around the bathroom. What should he do?!

He grabs his phone and starts dialing 9-1-1, but before he can complete the call, Nina starts falling toward the ground.

Catching her lifeless body in his arms, he notices a phone notification: GPS TAG IN CLOSE RANGE.

FANG (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit!

Panicking, Fang poses Nina against the toilet and carefully wipes his fingerprints off the syringe. He places it in her limp hand, as if she was holding it.

He surveys the scene to ensure it's as if he was never here, but then sees his mother's camera dangling from his neck.

FANG (CONT'D)

(disgusted)

Oh, god, help me.

Fang begrudgingly frames Nina in his shot.

CLACK. Fang trembles as he takes her picture; repulsed by his own actions. He finishes the film roll and quickly reloads.

THUD. A door slams downstairs.

He looks around the loft for a way out. The fire escape!

BEEP BEP-BEP BEEP. Riley's on the other side of the door.

Fang squeezes through the bedroom window onto a fire escape but, in the process, his camera strap slips off his neck.

His mother's 35mm SLR bounces across the metal fire escape before falling 30 feet to the ground below. It crashes lens first and busts apart into several pieces.

The camera — once a smiling face — is beaten beyond recognition. The lucky camera is gone.

Riley's screams are heard in the loft above as Fang picks up the damaged camera and scurries away.

INT. DARKROOM - KIM'S PHOTO LAB - THE NEXT DAY

Fang scans the negative from the night before and reads through Nina's journal but doesn't find anything useful.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. The darkroom door cracks open and the photo attendant pops his head inside.

PHOTO ATTENDANT
Someone you know wanted to say hi.

FANG
(worried)
Oh, yeah?

The photo attendant waves the person into the doorway.

A long silence... Who could this be?

It's an OLD MAN. Fang doesn't recognize him and the old man doesn't recognize Fang.

OLD MAN
Do I know you?

FANG
I don't think so.

OLD MAN
(to the photo attendant)
He's not in my photography
department.

PHOTO ATTENDANT
(to Fang, confused)
You said Baruch, right?

The photo attendant steps further into the darkroom, catching a glimpse of an image on the computer that just finished scanning – a photo of Nina Cross ODing.

PHOTO ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
What's that?

FANG
(realizing)
Ah, shit.

Fang pulls the negative out of the scanner, grabs his bag, and flees – FORGETTING THE BUSTED CAMERA.

EXT. BANK – MIDTOWN – LATER THAT DAY

Fang exits a bank with a CHECKBOOK in hand. The top check is written out to the private care center in the amount of \$6,750. He's never held so much money in his life.

As he walks, Fang gets the sense SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING HIM...

EXT. STREETS OF MIDTOWN - CONTINUOUS

Fang glances back as he increases his pace. He notices the person in pursuit does the same.

Fang zigs. The pursuer zags.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MIDTOWN - CONTINUOUS

Fang makes a sharp turn down a narrow alleyway and hides so that he'll get a clear look at his pursuer. Fang waits, but they don't pass. Suddenly--

A PHANTOM HAND grabs Fang from behind, muffling his scream.

BERNARD

Shhh. Shhh. Just me. Just me.

It's Fang's old pal Bernard.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Why are you running?

FANG

Because you were chasing me.

BERNARD

Because you were running.

(a beat)

I know. I disappeared on you. I was chasing a few leads out of town.

Trying to make us some money.

(another beat)

You, uh, keeping things down here?

Fang doesn't answer.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You know, I, uh, heard a rumor about that Nina Cross that's about to break. Yeah. She ODeD. She's in a coma.

Fang's relieved by the news but plays it cool.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You had some photos of her, right?

FANG

Me? No. Only from our first day.

BERNARD

Okay. Okay. Because, uh--

Bernard pulls a folded magazine from his bag and chucks it at the ground. It's opened to the WILD NIGHT OUT article.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Because you're a fucking liar.
What's the deal? You holding out?
You going solo?

FANG

You left me--

BERNARD

No. Nope. Nope. No! Don't push your
"ethical fuck you" on me, you
little shit. That's not how this
works. I didn't invest in you just
so you could compete with me. No.
No. We're a team, fucker.

Fang scoffs and tries to walk past Bernard, but Bernard wrestles him to the ground, spilling the contents of Fang's backpack in the process.

Bernard steals Fang's phone and unlocks it using Fang's face. He stands and keeps Fang at bay, then opens Fang's photo agency sales platform.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You've done okay on your own.
Nothing big, but slow and steady
wins the race, right?

(a beat)

Mmm. You already took a chunk of it
as well, which is pretty shitty of
you, honestly. Not the split we
agreed to.

Bernard looks at Fang's belongings scattered across the alleyway. He picks up the checkbook and sees Fang's check written out to the private care center.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

And what do you think this is?

Bernard TEARS THE CHECK into tiny pieces and throws the scraps into the air. He pockets the checkbook and walks away.

Fang follows Bernard as he hails a taxi on the street.

FANG

What are you doing? Come on.

A taxi stops. Bernard gets into the back. Fang does the same.

EXT. EXCELSIOR CAPITAL VENTURES - FIDI - MINUTES LATER

The taxi pulls up to an unimpressive pub downtown. A peeling sign on the floor above reads: EXCELSIOR CAPITAL VENTURES.

Bernard exits the taxi without saying a word to Fang.

FANG
(realizing)
Bernard. Shit.

INT. EXCELSIOR CAPITAL VENTURES - MOMENTS LATER

A soulless office filled with an assortment of deadbeat characters; the bottom rung of Wall Street. A nightclub bouncer, former drug dealers, and stockbrokers who lost their licenses all slave away in cubicles.

SLAP. Bernard slams one of Fang's checks on Gid's desk.

BERNARD
That's about 7k. Not enough to
bring me up to date, but something.

GID
How'd you think this conversation
would go?

BERNARD
Uh. "Thank you." "You're welcome."

GID
"Thank you." "You're welcome."
Okay. Renato?

RENATO, the nightclub bouncer, forcibly grabs Bernard and Fang and escorts them down a hallway.

GID (CONT'D)
Thank you.

RENATO
You're welcome.

The other employees keep their heads down; they know better than to watch what's about to happen.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Renato shoves Bernard and Fang into a windowless conference room. It's completely bare except for scuff marks and several deep indentations on the wall.

GID
You made me look like a real fool.

BERNARD
And I'm sorry. But that 7k--

GID
Fuck your 7k! I'm coming for it
all. Right now. The remaining
balance with interest and fees.

BERNARD
(laughs)
All of it? What is that? That'd be
more than the advance.

Gid doesn't like being laughed at. He paces back and forth;
his anger approaching its limit.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
If I was that liquid, I wouldn't
even be here. I know I fucked up.
(laughs)
But don't be an idiot--

Gid SNAPS. He snatches Bernard's hand and pulls it forward.
Using his forearm, Gid CHOPS at the back of Bernard's elbow.

CRACK. Bernard's elbow HYPEREXTENDS; bending the wrong way.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Gahh! Fuck me!

PUNCH. Gid lays into Bernard's gut, sending him to his knees.

CRUNCH. A second punch bursts Bernard's nose.

Gid starts on Fang, grabbing his hand and pulling it forward--

FANG
I GOT THE MONEY! I GOT THE MONEY!

Gid lifts Fang's hand higher into the air, forcing Fang to
hunch with his arm twisted behind him.

GID
Oh, now you got the money?!

FANG
I have photos! A white whale!

GID
(curious yet skeptical)
Explain that.

FANG

A story is about to break about
Nina Cross ODing. And I have
pictures. Exclusives.

GID

(releasing Fang's arm)
Prove it.

Fang pulls the negative from his bag and presents it to Gid.

GID (CONT'D)

(holding it to the light)
What am I looking at? Okay.
(cynical)
Whose gonna buy these? No tabloid
would risk publishing this shit.

Gid moves toward Fang to start again.

FANG

No! I have other photos! Nudes!

Gid ignores this and corners Fang, who holds up his hands in
self-defense. Gid tries to snatch Fang's hand.

FANG (CONT'D)

No! Come on!

Gid catches it. He pulls it forward--

BERNARD (O.S.)

Kid's right. He's right.

Bernard drags himself across the floor with his good arm.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Might be a white whale. We can't
sell them to a publisher. But we
can sell them to her husband. Riley
Presser. He's a name. He doesn't
want that shit out there.

GID

I'm sorry, are you proposing I
involve myself in a blackmail
scheme with you two fucktards?

BERNARD

Not blackmail. No, it's selling to
the highest bidder. Same as always.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - EXCELSIOR - MOMENTS LATER

Bernard cradles his battered arm as he limps down the Excelsior staircase toward the exit.

His busted nose is a deep shade of purple and has doubled in size. Blood is caked in his mustache and beard.

Bernard glances back at Fang who's a few steps behind.

BERNARD

(emotionally unstable)

Only had photos of Nina from our first day, huh? Funny how you couldn't share any of those details a minute earlier. You know, when he was beating MY ASS.

Bernard blocks Fang from progressing down the staircase.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Here's the deal. I'm gonna handle Riley Presser myself, okay? Because you and I, this arrangement, DONE.

FANG

That's not going to work. No, hear me out. Riley won't trust you because Riley doesn't trust anyone. Especially someone he doesn't know.

(a beat)

But I know Riley. So I need to handle this. Alone.

Bernard studies Fang's face for any sign that he might be up to something suspicious - and he is.

EXT. TRIBECA LOFT - THE NEXT DAY

Fang stands outside the Tribeca loft, looking at the GPS tracker on his phone. It confirms Riley's home.

He presses the buzzer. After a moment, the door clicks open.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - TRIBECA LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

Fang goes to knock on the apartment door but it opens before he can make contact.

He readies himself for a confrontation with Riley but--

Daisy is on the other side of the door.

DAISY

What?

FANG

Oh, hey. Is Riley here?

DAISY

No.

FANG

You sure?

Daisy opens the door wide.

DAISY

Unless you see someone I don't.

Draped over a chair is Riley's coat – the one Fang slipped the GPS tag into. Riley's not home, just the coat.

FANG

Do you know when he'll be back?

DAISY

No, but I can go grab his secretary if you want to leave a message.

FANG

No, I have something. To show him.

DAISY

You want me to give it to him?

FANG

Do you expect him soon?

DAISY

Fang. He's at the hospital. His wife's in a coma. He's not really communicating his moves at the moment. You follow?

FANG

I'll come back. It's just a few photos.

DAISY

Seriously? Your concern is playing paparazzo after we literally find a fucking needle sticking out of my sister's arm?

FANG

In her arm?

DAISY
Yes. IN her arm.

Daisy scratches at her collarbone, revealing a YELLOW GOLD PENDANT NECKLACE – the same necklace Fang saw hit the floor when Riley and (supposedly) Nina were having sex.

FANG
Is that Nina's necklace?

DAISY
(confused)
What? No.

FANG
Does she have a necklace like it?

DAISY
No. Why are we talking about Nina's jewelry? Time to go.

FANG
(thinking)
Yeah, I'll go. I'm going. Can I just use the bathroom?

DAISY
(sighing)
Be quick.

INT. LIVING ROOM – TRIBECA LOFT – CONTINUOUS

His mind racing, Fang drops his backpack without thinking and excuses himself to the bathroom.

As soon as she hears the bathroom door lock, Daisy rummages through the backpack and finds a stack of photos; the crime scene, the house party, and Nina ODing with a syringe SITTING IN HER HAND.

DAISY
Shit.

INT. BATHROOM – TRIBECA LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Fang stands in front of the bathroom mirror holding his phone in one hand and the detective's business card in the other.

FOOTSTEPS. Fang looks toward the bathroom door and sees Daisy's feet on the other side.

He flushes the toilet and turns the sink on to create noise.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Daisy puts her ear to the bathroom door. In her hand she holds a heavy, jagged crystal.

INT. BATHROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Sink running, Fang investigates the bathroom window as a possible way out, but it doesn't open wide enough.

Think, Fang, think...

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

VIBRATIONS. Daisy's phone goes off across the room.

Hearing the sink still running, Daisy crosses the loft to check her phone. It's a call from Fang--

THUD. The bathroom door swings open. Fang walks along the wall toward the front door.

DAISY
(playing it cool)
Did you mean to just call me?

FANG
Butt dial. Sorry.

DAISY
Oh, you left the tap on.

FANG
Yeah, uh, I think it's stuck.

DAISY
Is it?

Fang keeps a safe distance as Daisy walks to the bathroom.

DAISY (CONT'D)
(turning off the tap)
Maybe you were turning it wrong?

She returns to find Fang gone, but his BACKPACK remains.

Daisy dials Zander. As it rings, her face turns redder and redder. On-a-dime, she starts hysterically crying.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Zander? Can you come over? I just
learned the most terrible thing!

INT. FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Fang enters his studio apartment where Bernard sits at the table wearing a makeshift sling.

BERNARD

How'd it go? What'd he say?

(beat)

What happened? Where are the photos?

(another beat)

Fang, where are the photos?

Fang shakes his head.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Words!

FANG

He wasn't there. I spoke to her sister. But I gave her the pitch. Just like you said. "We'll sell the set to you or someone else." But she freaked out. I had to get out of there.

BERNARD

And you left the photos?

FANG

I still have the negatives.

BERNARD

Do you know what you just did? What's stopping them from just going to the police? Before, it would have been their word against ours. But, now. Now there's proof of blackmail.

FANG

I thought this wasn't blackmail.

BERNARD

WAKE THE FUCK UP!

Bernard stands and grabs his coat.

FANG

What are you doing?

BERNARD

What do you think I'm doing?!
Getting those photos!

I/E BERNARD'S SUV - THE GANSEVOORT - MOMENTS LATER

Bernard opens the passenger side door of his SUV, which at this point has several orange parking tickets stuffed on its windshield and a wheel-boot locked onto a tire.

Fang watches from the street as Bernard rummages through the glove compartment and retrieves his gun.

FANG

Bernard. No. Come on.

BERNARD

Move.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - TRIBECA LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

At the top of the staircase, trying to keep quiet, Bernard nods for Fang to enter the code for the loft.

FANG

(whispering)

No! Not with a gun.

BERNARD

I have no intention to use it.
Code.

(off Fang's silence)

Fine!

Bernard unloads the gun and stuffs its ammunition in Fang's coat pocket.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Happy? Put in the code.

FANG

Not with the gun!

Bernard is done wasting time. He sets up to kick in the door.

KICK. The door doesn't budge; it only hurts Bernard's knee.

BERNARD

Fuck!

Bernard sets up to try again, but--

Riley cracks open the door to investigate the commotion just as Bernard kicks. The door BUCKS back, smashing Riley's face.

Bernard pushes into the apartment with his gun drawn.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

There are several more people in the Tribeca loft than when Fang was last here; including Daisy, Zander, and a now-disfigured Riley whose bloodied nose matches Bernard's.

Seeing Bernard's gun, they all look for cover - Daisy and Zander behind the couch and Riley in his room.

BERNARD

Where are the fucking photos?!

Bernard keeps changing his grip on the gun, switching between a traditional grip and the side grip he's seen in movies.

Daisy points to a table where the photographs are splayed.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(to Zander)

You. Put them in that backpack.

Zander does as instructed and holds Fang's backpack in the air with both hands.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(to Fang)

Grab it.

Fang is frozen in fear.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Grab the fucking--

BANG! A gunshot.

RILEY

Aaghhh!

Almost comically, Riley emerges with a pistol in-hand. He's clearly never fired a real weapon before; the gun kicks back more than he anticipated, but he manages to HIT Bernard.

Bernard SCREAMS as the bullet tears through his bad arm.

BERNARD

Aaghhh!

With their guns waving, lips flapping, and busted noses matching; Riley and Bernard are a mirror image of each other.

Bernard goes to return fire, sending Riley looking for cover. But the unloaded gun just CLICKS.

Ah, crap.

INT. ENTRYWAY STAIRCASE - TRIBECA LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Frantic; Fang leads Bernard down the staircase toward the street, while Riley continues to haphazardly SHOOT at them.

BERNARD

(pained)

I'm not getting taken out by a
member of the Mickey Mouse Club.

Bernard loads his gun with the ammunition in Fang's pocket, then aimlessly returns fire over his injured shoulder.

This must be the worst shootout in history...

INT. FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Amid chaos, a frazzled Fang and bloodied Bernard take refuge in Fang's apartment.

Bernard drops his gun on the table and checks his injury in the bathroom mirror. It doesn't look life-threatening. His phone buzzes; it's Gid.

While Gid's side of the conversation is muffled, there's no mistaking the tone of his voice. He's pissed.

BERNARD

(into the phone)

What are you saying? Posted where?

Fang notices an ALERT on his phone. Someone tagged him on Instagram and the post is getting hundreds of comments.

FANG

Oh, shit.

Fang sees that Daisy and Zander posted ALL THE PHOTOS online to Nina's Instagram.

BERNARD

Fang! Are they setting us up?

The post accuses Fang of being the person who pushed the girl off the fire escape, laced Nina's drugs, and now is trying to kill Riley: "AND HE DID IT ALL TO SELL PHOTOS."

SIRENS. The wail of police sirens can be heard in the distance, heading in their direction.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

We need to go! Right now!

Fang is frozen in the middle of the room.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
RIGHT FUCKING NOW! Away from the
police. From Gid. All this shit!

But Fang just stands there.

Bernard goes to the table to grab the gun but Fang reaches down and picks it up before Bernard can.

Fang POINTS THE GUN toward Bernard's head.

FANG
I don't think this arrangement is
gonna work out.

BERNARD
Woah! Hey. Be chill. Fang, you're a
good kid. Think.

The police sound as if they're outside the building. Fang glances over to see red and blue lights flashing outside.

Bernard LUNGES for the gun.

BANG! The gun accidentally discharges as they wrestle for control, sending a bullet into the wall.

Fang fights Bernard off, though Fang gets Bernard's blood on his face and shirt in the process.

Bernard puts his hands up in surrender.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay. I'm gonna go.

Bernard rightfully assumes Fang won't shoot, and backs out of the unit and heads up the stairs toward the roof.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
(in the distance)
Move. Move. Move. Take the
stairwell. Cover the exits.

The situation starts to mirror the conversation with Santiago at the club: "You're on the run. Facing a life sentence. Police are at the door. You shoot yourself, no?"

Almost without feeling, Fang drifts into the bathroom with the gun in hand. The sounds of the world around him become deadened and detached.

INT. BATHROOM - FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The muffled and muted sounds of police can be heard storming up the stairwell. There's an altercation with Bernard.

BERNARD (O.S.)
Fuck you! Hey, hey, no--

POP. POP-POP. POP. Shots are fired.

Fang looks at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, takes a deep breath, then raises the gun...

INT. FANG'S STUDIO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

BOOM BOOM BOOM.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
It's the police!

CRASH. The police break into Fang's unit with guns drawn.

From outside the bathroom door, we hear a recognizable metallic CLICK and then--

A LONG SILENCE ON A BLACK SCREEN.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The homicide detective and her colleague analyze Fang's photographs in a small office at the police station.

DETECTIVE
Timeline doesn't make any sense.
Have we scrubbed through all the
security footage?

COLLEAGUE
They're working through it.

The detective looks at a photo of Fang.

DETECTIVE
I don't get it. Seemed like a nice
kid.

COLLEAGUE
Don't beat yourself up. He did it
to himself.

DETECTIVE
Did we notify his mom?

COLLEAGUE

Last night, yeah. She didn't seem
to understand what we were saying.

DETECTIVE

Maybe that's for the best.

(a beat)

But I was hoping to use that.

KNOCK. KNOCK. A police officer pops their head into the room.

POLICE OFFICER

Lawyer's back.

DETECTIVE

Send them in.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

A PUBLIC DEFENDER; late 20s, a meek, recent law school grad
in a suit two sizes too big; enters an interrogation room
carrying two coffees.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Morning. This is yours.

The public defender passes one of the coffees to Fang who
sits at a table in the center of the room.

FANG

Can I see your phone?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

("This again?")

Phone? Fine.

The public defender slides their phone across the table.

Fang logs into his photo agency sales platform and looks at
his notifications. There are MANY.

On the phone's screen is a SELFIE Fang took in his bathroom
just before his arrest. In it, Fang has Bernard's blood on
his face and holds his gun. He looks like a killer.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)

Now, why'd you take that photo?

FANG

(distracted)

Because I'm the story.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

This isn't the kind of story you
want to be connected to. Your face
is everywhere.

Fang clicks to another screen, revealing his selfie has raked
in \$78k in sales.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)

If you have an alibi, if that's
true, why not tell me? They
wouldn't have enough to hold you
here.

Fang doesn't respond. He just watches as the account balance
increases to \$79k.

INT. POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Back in the detective's office, she reads through Bernard's
coroner report as her colleague returns with an update.

DETECTIVE

Anything?

Her colleague shakes their head.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Okay. Let's book him.

INT. PRISON LIBRARY - RIKERS ISLAND - DAYS LATER

CLICK. A cursor moves across a web browser.

Fang sits at a computer in a prison library. He wears a khaki
jumpsuit.

On the computer screen is Fang's current sales balance: \$97k.

INT. PRISON CAFETERIA - RIKERS ISLAND - LATER

Fang queues up for a meal in the prison cafeteria. A hot meal
is slapped onto a tray and passed to him.

He eats at a crowded table beside an inmate who reads
MANIFESTING DESTINY - the book Bernard recommended him read.

Fang laughs to himself.

INTERCUT: HOSPITAL/PRISON

-HOSPITAL: Nina wakes from her coma; opening her eyes.

-PRISON: Fang eats in the cafeteria. A correction officer taps him on the shoulder and gestures for him to follow.

-HOSPITAL: Nina looks to her hand and finds a tearful Riley looking up at her. She drops his hand.

-PRISON: Fang is walked into an empty visitation room. The detective and public defender are seated, waiting for him.

-HOSPITAL: Nina looks across the room to her sister Daisy, who looks apprehensive and cowers.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - RIKERS ISLAND - MOMENTS LATER

The detective slides a folder across the table. It contains the STOLEN PHOTO OF RILEY AND THE YOUNG WOMAN at the party.

DETECTIVE

Did you take this photo?

(off Fang's silence)

Answer! Were you at this party?

Silence.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Okay. There's a case I think we've both been investigating. I'll show my hand in good faith that you'll do the same.

(a beat)

I know you didn't hurt Nina Cross. And I don't think you had anything to do with Makayla Cohen.

Fang looks confused: Who is Makayla Cohen?

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

See? This is what's throwing me.

She points to the young woman in the house party photo.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

You don't know her name yet you have a photo of her taken in her apartment. I don't think you did it. But I also don't know who you think you're protecting.

Fang just stares, until--

FANG

No.

DETECTIVE

Look--

But Fang didn't mean "no"; he meant "know".

FANG

How do you KNOW I didn't hurt Nina?

The detective studies Fang while contemplating her next move. Going against her better instincts, she takes out her phone and SCRUBS THROUGH A VIDEO, then presents it to Fang.

DETECTIVE

This is from earlier today. A few hours after Nina Cross woke up.

VIDEO EVIDENCE PLAYS ONSCREEN--

The detective sits in an interrogation room. Across from her, facing the camera, is an emotionally beaten down DAISY.

DETECTIVE

I spoke to Riley. I know the answer. I'm looking for context.

DAISY

Lawyer.

DETECTIVE

Listen, I get it. But this part isn't a crime. And it's far more common than you think. What was it? The thrill?

(a beat)

Or, for the first time since you were kids, did it feel maybe like you were taking something from Nina and not the other way around?

(referring to notes)

Riley said sometimes you'd have sex immediately after he was with her. That you preferred it that way.

DAISY

Like you said, it's not a crime.

DETECTIVE

No, but pumping ketamine into someone while they're sleeping. Well, that certainly is.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - RIKERS ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

The detective PAUSES the video and addresses Fang.

DETECTIVE

Riley says Daisy was under the
delusion after rehab he'd leave
Nina to be with her. That's intent.

The detective taps the stolen house party photo.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

I think at some point Daisy
realized she was at risk of someone
else taking what was hers. But I
can't confirm Daisy even knew about
her. That's why I need to know, did
you take this photo?

Fang thinks.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

You're still facing charges.
Cooperate, we might work something
out.

FANG

Can I see your phone?

Fang picks up the detective's phone and checks his account
balance. It's just crossed \$100k; a white whale.

FANG (CONT'D)

Well, call me Ishmael.

DETECTIVE

I'm sorry?

Fang slides the phone back to the detective. After a beat--

FANG

I'll tell you what I know.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - DAYS LATER

A wheelchair exits a medical center. We assume it's Nina, but
it's revealed to be FANG'S MOTHER. Fang pushes from behind.

FANG

You good, Mom?

She squints at the brightness of the outdoors and smiles.

EXT. HOSPITAL - SAME TIME

Outside a nearby hospital, the real Nina is pushed by Riley in a wheelchair through the exit.

FLASH. A group of paparazzi go crazy, swarming them as the two approach their vehicle. They shout for Nina. Not Riley.

Nina covers her face. Being the center of attention again doesn't land in quite the way she'd imagined.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRIBECA LOFT - LATER

Nina and Riley sit in silence inside their Tribeca loft as two cleaning ladies tidy up the space around them.

VIBRATIONS. Nina turns off her phone to stop the constant flood of calls and texts.

They both look miserable as they retreat into their bedroom.

The cleaning ladies glance up at each other and roll their eyes before getting back to cleaning up the mess.

INT. PATIENT RESIDENCE - PRIVATE CARE CENTER - SAME TIME

Fang helps a group of nurses get his mother comfortable in her new private residence.

She's freshly showered and wears a thick, comfy robe. She repeats to an ASIAN NURSE who helps her--

MOTHER

What I need. What I need.

ASIAN NURSE

Aw, Mom's so sweet.

(seeing Fang's confusion)

Oh, did she never speak to you in Mandarin?

FANG

Not really. No. Never that.

ASIAN NURSE

"Wō ài nī." She must be reverting back.

(a beat)

She's saying "I love you."

It's at this moment we realize - with Fang - that she's been telling him "I love you" all along.

Fang is surprised by the emotional reaction he has to this news. Tears well up in his eyes.

ASIAN NURSE (CONT'D)
(rubbing his back)
It's okay. She's going to be okay.

He nods and smiles, sending tears rolling down his cheek.

Fang remembers to take something out of his backpack and places it on a small table beside her bed.

It's the SELF-PORTRAIT of his mother and his younger self.

EXT. STREETS OF ALPHABET CITY - DAYS LATER

Fang walks down the street holding a pamphlet reading: SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS / FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM.

He recognizes the tail-lights of a black CADILLAC ESCALADE parked on the side of the road.

Fang slows his gait and squints to sneak a peek inside.

He keeps glancing back at the Escalade as he continues down the street until, finally, the temptation to know whose car it is becomes too great. He comes to a full stop and watches.

Fang stands in front of Kim's Photo Lab.

Behind the storefront window, Fang notices his mother's lucky camera - now fully restored. It smiles at him.

Fang smiles back.

He looks at the pamphlet in his hand. Then to his mother's camera. Then to the Escalade parked down the street.

As if possessed by some other force; Fang drops the pamphlet onto the ground and enters Kim's Photo Lab.

In the reflection of the shop's window, we see a TOW TRUCK pass with BERNARD'S SUV hitched to the back; a reminder of where Fang started or, maybe, a sign of things to come.

THE END.