

THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT

Written by

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A WINDOWPANE

Assaulted from without by SNOWFLAKES. Wind tossed.

INSIDE, a bed, dappled with moon shadow. A LITTLE GIRL, fast asleep. The wind whistles and sighs outside. She DREAMS... Eyelids closed, eyes roving beneath... then suddenly they SNAP open. A stifled cry. She thrashes for her STUFFED BEAR, as a soft voice says:

VOICE

Shhhhh.

And there's MOM, kneeling beside her. Vague shape in the dimness. The full moon throws light across one sparkling eye.

LITTLE GIRL

Mommy, the men on the mountain...!

MOM

Shhhh. Gone, all gone now.

(strokes her hair)

I'm here. Mommy's always here and no one can ever hurt you. Safe now... safe and warm... snug as a bug in a rug.

(beat)

I'll sit with you, think you can sleep?

LITTLE GIRL

Turn on the nightlight.

The mother nods. Passes her left hand gently over the girl's forehead.

MOM

Close your eyes now. I love you.

The child subsides, breathing steady. Eyes closed. The mother rises. Regards her through the dimness. Slowly turns, heads for the door. Flicks on a Winnie the Pooh NIGHTLIGHT --

Her entire right forearm is slicked with blood. More blood on her Czech-made MP-5 machine gun.

She staggers just a little... barely noticeable. Passes out on the light. Into darkness. Sits beside her daughter's bed. The child sleeps peacefully. Outside snow slithers at the glass.

FADE OUT. Pause. Blackness.

FADE IN:

It's snowing in southwestern Ohio. Before us, nestled in the rolling hills: a postcard slice of suburbia. SUPER the legend:

UPPER SANDUSKY, OHIO.

Three Weeks Earlier.

Peaceful. Serene. It's the town in the glass bubble, the one God shakes to watch it snow...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

CHILDREN, dozens of them, bursting from houses. Slapping of screen doors. A HORSE-DRIVEN SLEIGH is rattling down Main Street. Flanked by kids. Christmas carols, droning from loudspeakers.

HAPPY, LAUGHING SANTA waves howdy, chortling his "Ho's" in groups of three, meanwhile he's really a grizzled old fire marshall named EARL, freezing his nuts off.

Beside him sits MRS. CLAUS, about whom we notice two things: First, she's the June in this June/December pair -- and second, she's to kill for, an effortlessly beautiful woman. For the record, meet SAMANTHA CAINE.

SAMANTHA
How you holdin' up?

EARL
Freezing my nuts off.

Santa produces a bottle of Seagrams. Starts to open it.

SAMANTHA
Put that away.

Earl complies, grumbling. Some teenage burnouts howl from a street corner:

BURNOUT
Ow! Mrs. Claus is HOT!

Samantha squirms in her seat, scowling.

SAMANTHA
I can't take it, Earl, this dumb costume is giving me a wedgie.
(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Driving me crazy, but there's these
kids here --

EARL

Right, you don't wanna be rootin' --

SAMANTHA

In front of little Billy, age four,
yeah. "Look, Mommy, Mrs. Claus
chooses to go butt-mining."

EARL

This is little Billy talking?

SAMANTHA

Age four, kid's unbelievable.
(sighs)
I'm too old for this, Earl.

EARL

Yeah, yeah. Spare me, I got a
prostate the size of a melon.

Samantha stares at him.

EARL (CONT'D)

Seriously, half my life's a
doctor's hand up my ass, I should
marry the fucker.

SAMANTHA

Say that a little louder, there's a
kid in back didn't catch it.

EARL

It's not that fucking little Billy
again, is it?

SERIES OF
SHOTS:

Throughout the following NARRATION, we watch Sam: 1) Rallying the varsity CHEERLEADERS; 2) Showing off a GERBIL to her seventh graders; 3) Kneeling in church with her HUSBAND, blessing herself; 4) Absently fingering a silver KEY which she wears round her neck; and finally 5) Probing at a tiny ridged SCAR under her hairline.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

Eight years. I keep hiring
detectives, but they never find
anything.

(beat)

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was born 3000 days ago on the beach in New Jersey. I entered the world fully grown, wearing clothes I don't remember buying. Nothing in the pockets but a single key, filed smooth.

(beat)

I'm married now. Nice guy, early forties. I stand naked in the mirror and try to guess my age. Thirty-five, maybe. I have lots of scars.

EXT. SNOWY SUBURBAN STREET - AFTERNOON

Samantha walks with her husband HAL. Late thirties. Balding. Coming out of St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

SAMANTHA

Hal, I gotta tell you, of all the Christmas pageants I've seen, this was by far the most recent.

HAL

Aw, honey, I had teenage girls playing the wise men, what'd you expect?

SAMANTHA

Teenage boys?

HAL

Well, I thought they did fine.

SAMANTHA

Just fine? Come on, it was ground breaking stuff. The first Nativity where Joseph stares at the wise men's tits all night.

She hugs him good-naturedly. As they near their house, an eight year-old GIRL drops from a TREEHOUSE and comes running, leaps into Mommy's arms --

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Hey, you!

The kid leaps into her arms, as we HEAR:

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

Her name is Caitlin. She's my daughter and when I woke up on that long-ago day, she was two months grown in my belly.

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I don't know who put her there. I
 may never. I just know she's mine,
 and she's about to turn eight.

The family troops up the driveway to their SUBURBAN HOME.
 Chipper little A-frame. Christmas lights abound. Behind the
 house, a vast frozen POND. It is idyllic.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

PARTY in progress. Laughter. Mingling. In the corner,
 CAITLIN puts pipe cleaner antlers on the gerbil. Samantha
 shepherds her home room class past the punchbowl. She is
 radiant. EARL surreptitiously nips from a silver flask.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
 days. I teach now, fifth grade. I
 have the key, I wear it around my
 neck for luck. Except for that, and
 my name, all traces of my prior
 life are lost.

(beat)

Was I in love ever...? Did someone
 look in my eyes, did I say,
 "Darling, I'll never forget
 you...?"

(beat)

Because fuck me, darling, I
 managed.

ACROSS THE ROOM -- Her daughter CAITLIN hangs with two young
 girls. Shows off a plush TEDDY BEAR, says:

CAITLIN
 His name is Mr. Perkins, my Mom
 named him for me.

GIRL #1 points, whispers excitedly:

GIRL #1
 That's her?

Caitlin nods. Kid #2:

GIRL #2
 That's who?

GIRL #1
 (excitedly)
 Her Mom, she's got amnesia.

GIRL #2
 Swear?

CAITLIN

Swear.

GIRL #2

Too weird.

A voice interrupts their reverie:

SAMANTHA

Excuse me.

The girls whirl around, startled -- Samantha is leaning on the desk behind them. Busted. She smiles amiably:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Hello, girls. Caitlin, I'm going to help Dad with the refreshments.

(leans in, whispers)

Which one's Dad? I forget.

The girls look at her like she's grown a tail.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Kidding.

CUT TO:

A DOOR KICKED OPEN, WHAM-! Splintered. Lock shattered.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AKRON, OHIO - NIGHT

A NUDE COUPLE on the bed. They look up, startled -- as three men burst through the door. The LEADER: a haggard-looking man sporting a soup-stain on his tie, whoops, that's the design, sorry. MITCH HENESSEY, private investigator and con man extraordinaire. He flashes a phony badge:

YOUNG MAN

POLICE. DON'T MOVE.

MAN ON BED

What the hell is this...?!!

YOUNG MAN

Don't give me an attitude, sir.
You're assuming I won't shoot your sorry ass, and everyone knows when you make an assumption, you make an ass out of u and mption.

(MORE)

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

I'm Sergeant Madigan, Vice, and if you cop a 'tude, jerkoff, I will see to it you spend the next ten years in prison getting ass-fucked, and if the case is thrown out because my arrest is too violent, then I will personally HIRE men to ass-fuck you for ten years. So if you're an ass-fucking fan, go ahead and mouth off, but meanwhile you're under arrest for the crime of prostitution, now shut the fuck up before I cut out your kneecaps and use 'em as ashtrays.

(beat)

Officer Donleavy, read him his rights.

Donleavy looks pale, pasty. He stutters a few words. Loses interest. Wanders away across the room.

MAN ON BED

(a trifle confused)

Please, this is my first, I... I've never done this before, I'll do anything...!

YOUNG MAN

Sir, listen to me. I understand you're not a wealthy man, but in light of the damage this arrest will cause you, we might be able to make an arrangement --

Donleavy plops in a chair. Belches. Grins foolishly. The man in bed points to him:

MAN IN BED

Is he all right...?

THE REMAINING COP is swaying on his feet. Like a tree in a hurricane. Donleavy pukes all over the floor. We CUT TO:

INT. BARREN GREY OFFICE - NIGHT

THERE'S THE GIRL. The one in bed moments ago. She and Henessey are dividing a wad of bills.

GIRL

We gotta stop using bums.

MITCH

(lights a smoke)
Forget it. They looked like cops.
We pulled it off, didn't we?

GIRL

It was embarrassing.

MITCH

You want I should hire actors, for
Chrissake? These guys are cheap,
they work for food.

GIRL

Uh-huh. So, when they puke all over
you is that, like, a refund?

MITCH

Trin, I'm pissin' myself over here,
you're so funny. What's this?

He indicates an envelope earmarked for him. Labeled in magic
marker: SAMANTHA CAINE.

TRIN

New case, honest to God chick with
amnesia. You want the job?

Henessey opens the envelope. Extracts a black and white HEAD
SHOT of Samantha, says immediately:

HENESSEY

Yep. Yep, yep, yep.

Stares, mesmerized. Trin peers over his shoulder:

TRIN

Wasn't there a lady on TV named
Samantha? Had a magic nose or
something.

HENESSEY

'Bewitched', yeah. Good show. Chick
lived with a faggy guy, then in the
last season it was a different
faggy guy. Okay. Here's what we do;
get on the horn to amnesia chick,
tell her yes. Then tell her in 1967
she promised to give me a blow job.
Worth a try, right?

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

SAMANTHA and HAL bid goodnight to their friends and neighbors. Hal steers her away from a middle-aged teacher.

HAL

Christ, guy's all over you like a cheap suit.

SAMANTHA

That's funny, there's a cheap suit all over him like a cheap suit.

She notices EARL sitting in the bushes by the side of the building. He is speaking intently to the gerbil.

HAL

Oh, boy. Someone's gotta take my father home. I'm plowed.

Samantha takes the keys from him. Breathes deeply of the chill night air. Smiling. Surveys the scene... their friends. The neighborhood. Sighs:

SAMANTHA

This is all I ever wanted.

At which point, young Caitlin says:

CAITLIN

How would you know?

ESTABLISHING SHOT - STATE PRISON - OHIO - NIGHTTIME

Switch gears: A grim, grey building. Guarded. Patrolled.

INT. PRISON - TELEVISION VIEWING ROOM - EVENING

A tired TV set drones to an audience of one. Let's call him ONE-EYED JACK. In fact, let's give him one eye, the other replaced by a PATCH. He smokes cigarettes, stubs them out on the chair's armrest. Throws offhand glances at the TV screen.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON T.V.)

...So much for the flame-swallowing Santa of Boone County. Meanwhile, KTVA news journeyed to Upper Sandusky, where Santa's own *Mrs*. Kringle turned out to celebrate her hubby's worldwide tour. After one look at her, I'm thinking Santa got what he wanted this Christmas.

The happy news chatter continues. Jack isn't listening. Jack isn't talking or breathing either. He's simply STARING at the TV screen, jaw slack...

ONE-EYED JACK
Gotta be fuckin' kidding. No. No way. SHIIIT!!

He SCREAMS as we CUT TO:

EXT. WOODLANDS - WITH SAMANTHA - DRIVING

If you had to pick a night to die horribly, you'd be hard pressed to find a nicer one. A country highway. Bathed in moonlight. Crusted with snow. Pontiac Sunbird, wending its way through the wooded slopes.

INT. SUNBIRD - SAME TIME

SAMANTHA drives while Earl (the SANTA we saw earlier) reclines, still drunk.

EARL
You're married what now, five years...?

He makes a thumb circle. Jabs his finger in and out of it:

EARL (CONT'D)
You and Hal, how often you two...?

SAMANTHA
Stick our fingers in our hands and pull them out again? Every chance we get. Shut your piehole.

EARL
Don't get all snippy...

SAMANTHA
Earl, do me a favor. Every few words say "hic" and have bubbles come out your mouth, okay?

EARL
Goddamnit, I'm not drunk. Would a drunk man have this much raw talent?

He starts playing the Hawaiian nose harp. In Sam's ear, she can't help it, snorts laughter --

THE ADULT DEER appears perfectly framed in the Sunbird's headlights. Dead ahead.

Sam looks up, face etched in sudden TERROR. *No time to think*. SWERVES, no dice...! BROADSIDES the animal --

And it comes THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD. All two hundred and fifteen pounds of it. Fucks up their night altogether. Actually, it only makes it *halfway* through --

But the damn thing is ALIVE. More than alive. KICKING. Thrashing. Squawling with pain and rage. A FLAILING HOOF takes out Earl. Kills him in less than a second. Collapses his skull.

Sam rides the wheel, screaming. An antler gouges her chest. Rips. Draws blood. She SWERVES, madly -- Hits the tree doing

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sam goes airborne. Explodes through the windshield, outward bound. Shower of glass, spritz of blood... And then she's flying. Slow motion, end over end... We lose all SOUND. Silence as she tumbles. Below and behind her, the Sunbird noiselessly ERUPTS. Fireball, sky high --

Sam floating. Describes a lazy arc in mid-air... Whoomph-! Disappears into the snow. Swallows her, leaves a silhouette. Around her, trees catch fire. Burn. She lies in her impromptu sarcophagus. Out of sight.

THE FLAMING DEER totters from the wreck, thrashing. Scene from a nightmare. Nightmare part two: from the snow, from the human-shaped divot -- arises a woman of blood.

She stumbles from the drift. Toward the wreck. And though it's clearly Sam Caine under all that crimson, there's something wrong about her *eyes*.

En route to the car, she kneels beside the suffering deer, its flesh scorched and torn -- and KILLS it. Puts it away with a sharp CRACK-!ing blow to the head. Stands, eyes squirming with madness...

The car's an inferno. Earl is dead. She turns away, wiping blood from her eyes -- Comes face to face with a SNOWMAN.

A jolly white fellow. Charcoal briquettes for eyes. She watches, fascinated, as he MELTS in the blast furnace heat -- With warning, she *screams*. Crumples to the ground.

The snowman's eyes fall out. He melts away and away...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - AKRON, OHIO - TWILIGHT

Elsewhere. Tract housing, late-model cars. MITCH HENESSEY delivers a Christmas gift to his nine year-old son TODD: not just any gift, the *Midtown Saturn Orbiting Precinct*, with action figures. Henessey points to the box, engrossed:

HENESSEY

...and here's the jail here,
see...? Escape chute for the
Borian, he's a dinosaur guy, Moves
quick, don't take no shit neither.
See, you can make him shoot the
guard -- ah, hell, look, I played
with it a little myself, I'm sorry.

VOICE interrupts them:

VOICE (O.S.)

TODD, TIME FOR DINNER. NOW.

An awkward pause. Henessey scowls.

HENESSEY

Hey, you go ahead, um... hope you
like the present.

TODD

It's awesome, Dad. Mom, though,
she...

(sighs)

She gets weird. On my birthday,
when you gave me the Schwinn... she
called bicycle stores to see if
there'd been any robberies.

Henessey manages to control his face. Says tightly:

HENESSEY

Tell her I don't steal them
locally.

He watches, forlorn, as his son vanishes inside the house.
Christmas lights, blinking feebly. We HEAR, supered:

HENESSEY (V.O.)

Dear Ma: Filled out the child
support stuff last week. Office got
pissed, under ex-spouse I put
"Spawn of Satan, Dweller in Eternal
Dark." Just being honest, Ma, lady
wants me to die.

As he reaches his car, his BEEPER goes off.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - MINUTES LATER

Henessey on the phone. Dials. Waits. We HEAR:

HENESSEY (V.O.)

I'd go without a ripple, that's the truth. Ex-con. Ex-husband. Expired. Thanks, Ma, for hiding the truth from me for so long. Or maybe you believed in me. I miss you. I hope you believed, even for a day. No one did, Ma. No one at all. It's cold here. I'm sorry you're dead. Your son, Mitch.

The phone picks up. He says:

HENESSEY

Me. What's up?

TRIN (O.S.)

Mitch, we got a bite on amnesia chick's photo. Found a guy remembers seeing her, fall of '87. He wants cash, should I grease him?

HENESSEY

Hell, no! Use your head, girl. Let the fucker squeeze the Charmin.

TRIN

You kidding? Guy's hideous. I'll do it, but we're talking time and a half. Plus a night on the town when I get back, and *no cockfights this time*.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - TWO DAYS LATER

Samantha, having survived. Laid up now in an austere hospital room. Listening to silence. Stares out the window at a sunlit tree. Head bandaged. Frowns:

SAMANTHA

I want a cigarette, why do I want a cigarette...?

Outside, snow slithers... Her eyelids, slowly closing. Slides off the edge of consciousness...

IN THE DREAM: She stands on a windswept cliff, before an incongruous FULL-LENGTH MIRROR. Staring at her reflection -- it's bleeding from a scalp wound.

She probes her head... frowns. Nothing. Nothing but the tiny RIDGED SCAR she's had for as long as she can remember.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

What... what do you want...?

The reflection eyes her grimly. Haggard. Tired.

REFLECTION

I want a cigarette.

SAMANTHA

I don't smoke.

REFLECTION

(chuckles)

You used to.

Samantha is suddenly holding a cigarette. She raises it to her lips. Her reflection MIRRORS her precisely. Except Samantha COUGHS, chokes on the smoke -- While her bloody reflection takes a long, satisfying drag.

REFLECTION (CONT'D)

Relax, you can drop the act. Nice and smooth, take another hit. There you go. See how easy it comes back?

They are now in perfect synchronicity. Sam inhales easily.

REFLECTION (CONT'D)

I'm coming back. You know that, don't you? Name's Charly, by the way. You're gonna love me.

The reflection grins. There's blood on its TEETH.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOME - DAY

Back at home, business as usual, pre-Christmas. A COMMOTION has arisen: Gingerly, bones still aching, Samantha moves toward the KITCHEN. HAL and CAITLIN trail behind.

HAL

Honey, you can't cook, I'm not wrong about this.

SAMANTHA

I'm *remembering*, Hal. Things are coming back. Trust me, I'm a chef, I know it.

CAITLIN

Daddy, make her stop!

SAMANTHA

Hush. Go to the garage and get me something, anything. A veggie, go, man, go! I'm hot to trot.

INT. KITCHEN/GARAGE - SAME

Hal worriedly exits to the garage. Plucks a tomato from the fridge, tosses it to Caitlin, who stands in the door.

HAL

Tomato.

Caitlin turns, tosses it to Sam --

CAITLIN

Tomato.

Who catches it, plops it on the cutting board and proceeds to DICE it to SIMTHEREENS. Razor-thin slices. Knife a blur. Missing her fingers by millimeters, never faltering, like a mad mumblety-pegger --

HAL

Onion, flying in.

Sam catches it. Knife flurries. Pieces, flying up.

SAMANTHA

More. Faster.

And it becomes a bucket brigade. Hal heaves veggies to Caitlin who spins and relays to Mom who slices, dices, purees, and even makes curly fries. Veggies, incoming. HAL starts to lose it, starts lobbing them at Caitlin, one after another, she giggles, starts throwing them overhand --

CAITLIN

Tomato. Tomato. Tomato.

And now it's a food fight, PELTING Mom, and the floor is COVERED with food as Hal stumbles in laughing, scoops up Caitlin --

Samantha shakes her head, grinning, dices to pieces a last, lovely radish. Ends with a flourish, TA-DAH-! Doesn't think: Flips the knife point up on ONE FINGER. Tips it for balance. Lobs a tomato. Slings the knife without looking, pins it to the wall, KA-CHUK--!

Everyone goes silent. The knife, quivering. Caitlin and Hal turn as one, gazing at her. She shrugs numbly. Blinks.

SAMANTHA

Uh... chefs do that.

INT. BOILER ROOM - DAY OR NIGHT, IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL

Underground. Water GURGLES through overhead pipes. Furnaces hum and tick in the sweaty gloom.

A SHIRTLESS MAN is tied to a chair. Weeping. Before him, what looks like a young GQ model. Blonde. Gorgeous. Impeccably attired. For the record, TIMOTHY. He looks his captive in the eye as the guy blubbers:

MAN

Please, man... I don't know why you gotta kill me... But use the gun, not the knife. Please. As a fucking favor, I'm begging you...

TIMOTHY

It'll be over soon.

MAN

Jesus, man... I... I'm scared of the knife... Shit, I can't handle getting shots at the doctors, man, PLEASE...!

TIMOTHY

Last chance. What do you know about a town called Santa Claus?

MAN

What is this, *what the fuck is this*?? I'm FBI, for Chrissake, you can't do this to me. I don't know ANYTHING.

Timothy stares him full in the face, eyes narrowed... as though seeing into his brain. He nods, satisfied.

TIMOTHY

No. You don't.

(beat)

I can always tell, you know... If someone's lying to me. A little skill of mine, something to trot out at parties.

He slams home the knife. We don't see it, but we FEEL the impact. The FBI man's face contorts in SHOCK. Twisted. Inches away from Timothy, their eyes lock...

A CELLULAR PHONE BEEPS. Timothy reacts, annoyed. Plucks it from his belt and flips it open:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Timothy.

VOICE (O.S.)

Message from Mr. Daedalus.

TIMOTHY

I'm listening.

He shrugs at his captive. Rolls his eyes. The guy's still dying, still on the KNIFE.

VOICE (O.S.)

He says he's sorry, but he needs you right away. Something's come up.

TIMOTHY

Nix. I'm just finishing up here. Then I'm going bunjee jumping.

VOICE (O.S.)

He's aware of your weekend plans, and he apologizes.

TIMOTHY

All right, what's so fucking important?

VOICE (O.S.)

Your old colleague, One-Eyed Jack...? Recently escaped from a high-security prison, as you're aware. But listen to this: prior to his escape, seems he saw something on TV that disturbed him. So much he had to be sedated.

TIMOTHY

I saw it, too. It's called "Empty Nest." How the fuck is it my business?

VOICE (O.S.)

The man was overheard talking to himself under sedation.

(beat)

He said Charly Baltimore's alive, sir.

Timothy is silent.

SUIT

I know it's incredible, sir, but...
if she were alive, I'm thinking she
might be in contact with the old
man in Pennsylvania. Should I --

TIMOTHY

Tap his phone, yes. And tell
Daedalus I'm on my way. Timothy
out.

He clicks off, face troubled. Withdraws the knife. Checks
his clothing. Not one speck of blood.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CHECKOUT STAND - AFTERNOON

A CARTON OF MARLBORO REDS hits the stack of groceries. HAL
looks at his wife, bewildered.

SAMANTHA

They were on sale.

At the next register over, a duo of Canadians throw looks
her way. Confer in rapid-fire French, subtitled for us:

CANADIAN #1

Ooh, j'aimerais la baiser.
(Subtitle: I'd like to fuck her.)

The checker looks up, smiles:

CHECKER

Don't you love hearing people speak
French?

CANADIAN #2

Oui, j'veux etirer celle-la autour
d'une chaise. Comme je le vois, une
femme c'est comme Gumby avec des
seins. (Subtitle: I'll stretch her
over a chair, women are merely
Gumbys with tits.)

HAL

Beautiful language.

He turns to Samantha -- except Sam isn't there. Her arm
shoots out--! CLAMPS on one of the men. By the throat.
Catches him like a fucking VICE. Her voice a sibilant hiss:

SAMANTHA

*Allez, Gumby etirait le cou, fils
de pute*.

Subtitle: "Gumby's gonna stretch your neck, motherfucker."
 Accent flawless. Eyes like steel. The man will go on to
 start a profitable construction business with the bricks he
 shits.

SLAM CUT TO:

SAMANTHA - ON THE PHONE TO HER SHRINK - INTERCUT

Jubilant, can't contain herself:

SAMANTHA

I speak French.

PSYCHIATRIST

You do.

SAMANTHA

You bet your life, fluent French,
 whatever the fuck that means.

(chortles)

Quand @ais a l'ecole, Jai eu un
 professeur qui s'est @@riqu
 dentifrice!

PSYCHIATRIST

You just said when you were in
 school, your teacher was made of
 toothpaste.

SAMANTHA

Right, he was, you got a problem
 with that? Pasty Joe, we called
 him. Look, the accent's perfect, so
 piss off. I'M A FRENCH CHEF, YA-
 HOO.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Samantha and daughter CAITLIN sing a hearty chorus of "Frere
 Jaques." Sam giggles, Caitlin looks nervous; astride her
 new two-wheeler BICYCLE while Sam finishes removing the
 training wheels. Caitlin points to her stuffed TEDDY BEAR.

CAITLIN

Put Perkins in the basket. He's
 luck.

SAMANTHA

Mr. Perkins, going in the basket.

CAITLIN

Are the training wheels off?

SAMANTHA

Just pretend they're still there.
Piece of cake. You can do it.

CAITLIN

Wait...! I'm scared.

SAMANTHA

Shhh. Nothing to be scared of.
Pretend you're one of the X-men,
you're tough. Let's go, now. Three,
two, one...

CAITLIN

Mom, I can't do it, swear --

Samantha sets her sailing. Laughs excitedly. The bike weaves, side to side... hits the curb and topples with a CRASH. Spills Caitlin to the pavement. Now's she's CRYING.

CAITLIN (CONT'D)

Ouch--! I can't do it, it HURTS-!

Samantha walks over briskly. Face set in determined lines.

SAMANTHA

Nonsense. You can do it. You don't
want to, but you can.

CAITLIN

My arm hurts, please take me
home...!

SAMANTHA

You can go home, Caitlin. You can
ride there.

An unpleasant note is edging into her voice. The louder the kid cries, the more Samantha starts to SIMMER.

CAITLIN

Mom, no...!

SAMANTHA

Look, I know you're afraid, that's
the whole *point*, can you see
that? Now stop being a little baby
and get on the damn bike.

She hoists her onto the seat. Caitlin cries and hollers.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You gonna be afraid of things all
your life? Huh? That what you want?

CAITLIN
My wrist hurts...!

Snap. Something lets go. Suddenly Samantha's right in her face:

SAMANTHA
Life is pain. Get used to it. See, you *will* ride this bike home, princess. You will ride it and you will not fall again, *is that understood*...?

Eyes cold and lifeless. She is not herself. CUT TO:

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

CAITLIN huddles on the steps, itching at her brand new WRIST CAST. Eavesdropping on her parents. In the kitchen a counter-top TV is on, the Three Stooges. Samantha is on the phone, saying:

SAMANTHA
Yes, I'm three blocks past the gas station... Right. Thank you Mr. Henessey, I'll see you shortly.

She hangs up as HAL ENTERS behind her... She doesn't turn around. Samples the topping of a cream pie. Stares at the linoleum floor. He regards her with angry, vindictive eyes:

HAL
She rode all the way home. She didn't fall, not once. She didn't cry.
(beat)
You're good. You should work with kids, you know that?

SAMANTHA
She said her wrist hurt. I didn't know it was broken, God. I can't even remember what I said to her...!

Hal takes a breath, composes himself.

HAL
We can still make six o'clock mass, you coming?

Sam surveys her perfect kitchen. Runs her hand over a hanging pot. Looks sadly at her husband. Whispers:

SAMANTHA

A private detective's coming by,
he... he's found something.

(beat)

I may have to go away. For a bit.
Now please leave me alone.

HAL

Go away. With a detective. Jesus,
it's the holidays, Sam --

SAMANTHA

Are you deaf? I said leave me
alone. Go to church. Drink blood.
Drink some for me.

They stand in tableau. An electric silence... Broken quite suddenly by the sound of SINGING. CHRISTMAS CAROLERS. Outside the front door. The sweet strains of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" wafts in through the window.

Except the sweet strains ain't so sweet. These carolers are TERRIBLE. Missing by a country octave. Sam and Hal look at each other, what the hell...?

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR - NIGHT

THE CAROLERS continue their interesting rendition. Snowflakes fall. All is quiet. All is bright. Especially bright is the SHOTGUN BARREL pressed to the throat of the lead soprano. HE- Over and under combo. Shotgun on top. HE cannon on bottom. You'd sing shitty too.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

Samantha hurries to the door. Carrying a bowl of festive M&M's. Just as she gets to the door, the singing STOPS. Footfalls running away, that's odd... She opens the door. Carolers, gone. She's eye to eye with ONE-EYED JACK.

ONE-EYED JACK

Evening Charly. Long time.

He swings the big GUN. Slams the barrel into her. Glass shatters, M&M's everywhere. She gapes at him, dumbstruck, unable to THINK... Hurry it up, lady, we need a decision, live or *die* --

SHE GRABS THE GUN BARREL. Wrenches the gun...! On the steps CAITLIN howls, eyes like saucers --

CAITLIN

Mommy...!

SAMANTHA
GET OUUTTTTT!!!!

Sam's cry is a veritable shriek. HAL LAUNCHES himself from the kitchen doorway. Pounces on Jack, snarling -- brave, useless. For his trouble, gets three broken ribs and a trip to the fireplace, airborne. Comes down. Catches fire. ROLLS, over and over on broken ribs --

JACK kicks Samantha in the gut. She collapses onto the stairs. Splinters the banister. That's when he sees CAITLIN. Top of the stairs, paralyzed.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
NO!!!!

Jack is already moving forward. SPIN-COCKS the shotgun, draws a bead -- Promptly slips on festive M&M's. Goes down. Gun goes off, WHAM-! A flat concussion. The banister EXPLODES. A storm of wood chips, as SAMANTHA surges up the stairs, toward her daughter --

JACK. On the ground. Fires, *wham*--! The wall DISAPPEARS three inches from Caitlin's head. Blown to shreds, you can see outdoors. Samantha doesn't miss a beat. Grabs her daughter -- flings her OUTSIDE. Through the hole in the wall. Takes her by the belt and fucking HURLS her out into space...!

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - SAME TIME

Two stories up. The kid is ejected, flailing. Floats in SLOW MOTION. Across a ten foot gap -- INTO THE TREEHOUSE. Sails head over heels into the place. Hits with a CRASH. Alive and unhurt.

BACK INSIDE THE
HOUSE

Samantha didn't even look. Didn't need to. Here comes JACK. Up the staircase. Reloading. Samantha launches herself down the stairs. COLLIDES, head on -- Down they go. Jack, rolls to his feet. Propels her into the KITCHEN.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

She hits, spray of cat food. SKIDS. Across the linoleum, slams to a stop. Hard. Cupboard pops open, out comes the IRONING BOARD. Falls into place, SNAP--!

A GUN BLAST disintegrates it. Reveals Sam, cowering behind.

ONE-EYED JACK
I want my eye back, bitch.

Samantha struggles to her feet. Dazed. Jack abandons the shotgun. Takes the IRON down from its spot on the shelf -- Slams it against her head.

ONE-EYED JACK (CONT'D)

Goddamn you. Fight me. What's wrong with you, *fight* me!

CLOSE ON TV: Stooze Joe Besser mugs wildly, takes a pie in the face.

Jack raises his arm for the killing stroke -- Samantha takes Hal's cream pie from the counter and shatters every bone in his face.

Comes from nowhere. Back foot planted, body twisting, entire organism focused into the outstretched arm, WHACK-! We have never seen anyone move this fast. Samantha RECOILS. Startled by what she's done --

The glass dish is SPLINTERED into his head. It STICKS there. He topples. Hits the linoleum. She straddles him, breathing hard. Winded.

The barking dog "Jingle Bells" plays inanely in the background. Samantha stares. Trembling. Pokes the body. Nothing. Pokes it again. Still nothing. She leans forward. Grips the neck and wrenches, CRACK-! Just making sure.

She out of it. In shock. Glaring at her own hands as if demanding an excuse for their behavior. There is pie filling on her fingers. She kneels beside the corpse, catatonic. Stares. Absent-mindedly licks the bloodied cream.

HAL is standing in the doorway. Wide-eyed. He has seen Samantha break the man's neck. She looks at him, frowns.

SAMANTHA

It took me three seconds. That's... that's good, huh...?

He stares, dumbstruck. She blinks. *Snaps out of it*.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Caitlin. We gotta find Caitlin.

She gets up. We RUN with her to the front door -- she flings it open and collides with MITCHELL HENESSEY. Private dick. Runs right into him.

HENESSEY

Hey--! Slow down. The kid's okay, she's in my car, what the hell is going on?

Henessey spins, as FOUR POLICE CRUISERS pull up. Vomit up a bevy of COPS, swarming toward the house. He spins back to Samantha -- As she collapses to the floor.

FADE OUT:

Pause. FADE IN. Super the legend: ONE WEEK LATER.

ESTABLISHING - SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Early morning quiet. HENESSEY and SAMANTHA are throwing suitcases into the back of his battered Chrysler.

INT. HOUSE - LATER - EVERYTHING'S PACKED

Sam's looked better. Kneels beside Caitlin, says softly:

SAMANTHA

That man who tried to hurt us...?
If I stay here... other people will
come. I have to leave. Just for a
little while.

Caitlin looks at the floor. Doesn't respond. Samantha reaches in a cupboard. Produces a box of CANDLES. Lights a match, touches flame to one of them.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I want you to light a candle and
keep it in the kitchen window. And
never, *ever* let it go out,
because as long as it burns...? It
means you're thinking of me. And if
I'm alone... if it's dark and I'm
lost... It's how I'll find my way
home.

She touches Caitlin's wrist cast. Pain in her features. She grabs a marker pen and writes a TELEPHONE NUMBER on it.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

That's for a portable phone. I keep
it with me, you call me anytime,
you don't worry about the bill. And
last but not least --

She reaches behind her head. Unhooks the KEY, the one she wears around her neck.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

For luck.

Slips it over her daughter's head. Looks up at HAL, eyes brimming. He whispers:

HAL

No matter what you find, I'm not
scared. Not of you. Not ever...

SERIES OF SHOTS: EXT. SUBURBAN TOWN

As it fades behind Henessey's Chrysler. Leaving behind porch-
bound elders, dime-store clerks. Grinning children, hair like
spun straw. All fading... DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HENESSEY'S PLYMOUTH - THE OPEN ROAD - DAY

Henessey sings with the radio. Loudly. He's got the lyrics
wrong: "I'm not talking 'bout the linen... And I don't wanna
change your life..."

Samantha endures as much as she can. Speaks up:

SAMANTHA

"Movin' in."

HENESSEY

Hah?

SAMANTHA

It's not linen. The song's not
about linen.

HENESSEY

Whatever. You cold?

SAMANTHA

(shivers)
I'm freezing.

HENESSEY

Turn on the heater. It doesn't
work, but it makes a very annoying
noise which distracts from the
cold.

SAMANTHA

I'll pass.
(clears her throat)
So, you're a former cop. Atlanta,
was it...? Stop me if I'm out of
line, but I'm curious. How did
you... well, succeed? I mean, where
six other detectives failed?

HENESSEY

You kidding? Pure luck. Plus my
secretary used her feminine wiles.
She's got two, one wile per side.

(MORE)

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Huge. No kidding, you can see 'em coming around a corner, you got time to comb your hair. Nice kid, you'd dig her.

(beat)

Ah. Here we are.

EXT. STORAGE RENTAL PLACE - DAY

As they clamber from the car, Henessey shoves his sunglasses into his sportcoat. SINGS:

HENESSEY

Putting my glasses in my
coooat..."

Samantha looks at him like he's sprouted wings.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

I sing what I do so I'll remember
it. "Turning off the downstairs
liiiight..." You know?

Samantha smiles thinly. The man's a lunatic.

INT. STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

An old, walrus-mustached IRISHMAN ushers them down a concrete hallway. The old man hangs back with Henessey. Whispers:

WALRUS MAN

The elder Trelawney rented to her
in '87, aye. Ne'er could bring
himself to dispose of her things.
I'faith, she's welcome to
whatsoe'er she wishes, for ne'er
has trod these walls a lass so easy
on the eye, divil take me if I'm
lyin'.

Henessey lights a cigarette, says:

HENESSEY

Do me a favor. Say, "Always after
me Lucky Charms."

ANGUS

"Always after me Lucky Charms."

HENESSEY

Thanks. Just needed to hear that.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Drab, musty. Filled with disused tables, lamps, farm implements... Jimmy Hoffa watches TV in the corner.

HENESSEY

See anything you recognize?

SAMANTHA

Yeah, this dirt used to be outside my window, shut up and let me look.

(sighs)

I'm sorry, Mr. Henessey, I'm a little on edge.

She pauses. Surveys the musty compartment, faraway look in her eye... says softly:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I can feel her. Like a ghost.

(beat)

We could walk away, you know. There's still time, we could just... leave her dead.

She hefts a SUITCASE onto a bench. OPENS it -- Draws a sharp breath:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Ay-i-yi!

Clothes to kill for. Smooth velvet. Creamy silk. The finest, the best. The sexiest. Sam peeks at the tags:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Size four, no way. You know how long it's been since I could wear a size four?

(beat)

Can't be mine. Can they...?

She checks the case for INITIALS -- C.E.B. Who...?

Henessey grunts. In his book, well dressed is clean underwear. Holds up a small manila envelope.

HENESSEY

Unmailed envelope. Addressed to a guy.

SAMANTHA

What's in it?

HENESSEY

Another guy's address. Two addresses, is basically what I'm saying.

Meanwhile, her hands, still pawing through the suitcase... A SHAPE. She feels it. At the bottom of the case. Lifts up the mound of fabric -- HKM-40 sniper rifle. Disassembled. Sam looks like she just took a stomach punch.

Up until now, it could've been adrenaline. She could still be just a schoolteacher. A rifle, that changes everything. She plunks the clothing back in place. Hides it.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Anything else in there?

SAMANTHA

Hmm...? Uh, no. Just... more clothes.

HENESSEY

Yeah, well take a look at this.

He holds up the envelope: addresses to one *Nathan Windeman*. Fishes in his coat, brings out Samantha's CHECK. Written to him, earlier that day... identical handwriting.
CUT TO:

INT. COLONIAL STYLE HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

NATHAN WINDEMAN is in a bad mood. A frail-looking man, mid-seventies. Tiredly spooning a bowl of soup. His sister ALICE watches TV nearby. In her lap, a Pomeranian cleans itself. Windeman scowls:

NATHAN

Alice, please...?

Alice stares at him. Uncomprehending.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Your dog, Alice. It and my appetite are mutually exclusive.

ALICE

What's wrong with the dog?

NATHAN

It's simple. He's been licking his asshole for three straight hours.

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I submit to you that there's nothing there worth more than an hour's attention, and I should think whatever he's attempting to dislodge is either gone for good or there to stay. *Wouldn't you agree*?

Theatrical? Nah. The old bat scoops up her pooch and beats feet for the door. THE PHONE RINGS. Nathan snatches it up:

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Hello?

The voice is soft. Controlled:

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Hello, Mr. Windeman, I got this number from a realtor in Pennsylvania. I'd like to speak with you.

NATHAN

Who... who is this?

SAMANTHA

You tell me, Mr. Windeman.

Nathan pales. Blinks once. Twice. Manages:

NATHAN

...Charly...?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

My full name, please.

NATHAN

God, it really is you...!? Chapter, they think you're dead, *everyone* thinks --

SAMANTHA

My full name. Please...!

A pause. Then:

NATHAN

You don't know your name.

He chews his lower lip, mind racing. Jesus, no joke, this is *her*... He fights to control his voice:

NATHAN (CONT'D)
 Your full name... is Charlene
 Elizabeth Baltimore.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - SAME TIME

A MAN in shirtsleeves flips a switch. Speaks into a headset:

MAN
 Signal Daedalus. We just got her,
 she made contact. Initiating phone
 trace.

INT. HOUSE - BACK WITH NATHAN

NATHAN
 Charly, don't talk, just listen: We
 have to meet, understand? We have
 to meet *right away*.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
 Meet me off I-79. Highmile exit,
 Salt & Pepper Lounge. Eleven a.m.

She hangs up. Nathan stares, trembling. Turns to ALICE,
 standing in the doorway. Swallows hard, says:

NATHAN
 A former student... is in trouble.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - WITH CHARLY

She hangs up the telephone in the ladies' room. Stands,
 alone in the stillness. Hands to her head, mind churning...

Turns, checks to make sure the door is locked. Props her
 SUITCASE on the sink and opens it. Flips back the mound of
 clothing --

And there it is. The pieces, disassembled, of an M-40 sniper
 rifle. Her trembling hands find the parts, seemingly of
 their own volition... Hefting them. Gauging their feel. And
 then, slowly... terrifyingly...

Knowing how they go together. She SNAPS the barrel in place,
 click--! The sound breaks her reverie. She drops the thing
 like it's alive. Looks down, trembling...

ALSO in the case: a wicked looking HUNTING KNIFE. She picks
 it up gingerly. Shiny, brand new. Turns it over in her hand,
 fascinated by the play of light off the blade...

Looks up. Her REFLECTION, in the mirror. Staring back. She
 frowns -- It frowns. She turns away --

THE REFLECTION DOESN'T. It stays right fucking put, except now it's *smiling*. Malignant. Deadly. Sam feels something wrong. Spins back toward the mirror --

Her reflected arm comes through the looking glass. Reaches into Sam's world and SLICES FOR HER THROAT.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DRIVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Samantha JERKS, comes awake in the passenger seat of Henessey's Plymouth. Bad dream. Looks over to see if he noticed -- he's honking his horn at a TRAFFIC JAM. Sea of taillights, dead ahead.

SAMANTHA

What's this? What the hell is this...? We don't have time for this, of all the cocksucking bullshit --

HENESSEY

Whoa. Ms. Class, drive a little truck on the side, do you?

SAMANTHA

What are you, a Mormon?

HENESSEY

No, ma'am, it's just that... well, when we met you're all, "Oh, foey, I burned the darn cupcakes." Now, you go into a bar, ten minutes later sailors come running out, they can't take it.

Just then, THREE POLICE CRUISERS blow by, sirens screaming. Henessey frowns, puzzled.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

What the hell...? Lemme check the scanner.

He switches on a police band radio. Listens, hears:

VOICE (O.S.)

...without endangering the hostages, over... ..Roger that two-niner. PCP confirmed, he's on a fuse, please provide backup, over... ..Conneaut, I'm waiting on Special Weapons, sorry, over...

EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - CONNEAUT LAKE, PA. - SAME

POLICE FLASHERS, spinning. Cop cars, incoming. SLAMMING to a halt. Disgorging uniformed cops. THE DINER is rapidly surrounded. Its a cheery decor, the giant roofbound Santa, all in stark contrast -- To the SCREAMING we hear, dimly, from within.

INT. DINER - SAME

Hostage drama, unfolding. The perp's a big ugly meatloaf with his mitts on a waitress. She's sixteen, she's a baby. She's sucking the barrel of his shotgun. His finger on the trigger. From outside, we hear the COPS:

COP VOICE (O.S.)
GIVE YOURSELF UP AT ONCE. LEAVE THE
BUILDING, HANDS ON HEAD. DROP THE
WEAPON, REPEAT, DROP THE WEAPON.

Mr. Shotgun snorts laughter. Does a little dance, yells:

MR. SHOTGUN
I'm the man! I'm the man! I elicit
the explicit!

EXT. DINER - SAME TIME

The police are just starting to re-route traffic. A highway cop signals to HENESSEY, "Turn around, go back."

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Henessey swears. Swings wide, when suddenly a HAND clutches his arm. He looks over and suppresses a shiver -- Samantha's eyes have gone dead and cold. She lights a cigarette, shakes out the match and says:

SAMANTHA
Go up this hill.

HENESSEY
Why?

SAMANTHA
Drive up the fucking hill.

Now Henessey shivers. Cranks the wheel as we CUT TO:

EXT. HILLTOP - OVERLOOKING TOWN - NIGHT

SAMANTHA flops on the frozen ground in a stand of pine trees.

HENESSEY

Where the shit did you get that?

No answer. She deftly assembles the SNIPER RIFLE. Rests the rifle barrel on a dead branch. Flicks on the starlight scope.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Sam, Goddammit, you're gonna kill someone! Hey!

She ignores him. Focuses through the scope. POV SAMANTHA: Framed in spectral GREEN, the diner's interior. Hostages. Crying mothers. Children, catatonic.

Through a tiny window -- a limited view of the KITCHEN. He's in there. Girl, eating both barrels. Samantha's jaw tightens.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

The diner...? That's half a mile away, are you fucking crazy?

SAMANTHA

HK M-40 assault rifle. At three hundred yards, vertical drop six inches.

Mr. Shotgun leans in. WHISPERS something to the waitress.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Shit. He's gonna do the girl.

HENESSEY

How the fuck can you tell?

She steadies the rifle. Takes aim.

SAMANTHA

I read lips.

She fires. Splintered CRACK-!

INT. DINER

Mr. Shotgun dies on his feet. Outgoing matter. Flung. Spattered on the grill where it sizzles along with burnt hamburger. He drops. Screams. Pandemonium.

EXT. HILLTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha slams the trunk of the Chrysler. Gets in the passenger side without a word. Hennessey pulls away.

INT. CAR - DRIVING - SAME

Samantha stares straight ahead. Gives a high, brittle laugh.

SAMANTHA

See? Took care of it. Knew I could.

She laughs again. Henessey favors her with a look reserved for people with major deformities. Suddenly she says:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Pull over.

He stops the car. She gets out. Stumbles across the shoulder. Kneels. Throws up. Henessey watches. Lights a smoke with trembling hands.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Had to, he... he would've killed her... Had to... Oh God I took him, such a good shot... I felt proud of it, such a shot, Jesus, *how could I be proud*...?

(sobs)

I'm scared... I want to go home...

Henessey kneels beside her awkwardly. She clutches his shoulder. Presses her head to his chest. Cries.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Yes, it certainly is. CUT TO:

INT. SITUATION BRIEFING ROOM - SAME TIME

Three stories below the White House proper. THE PRESIDENT is seated in his robe and slippers. Before him sits a panel of three: National Security Adviser; Deputy Director of the CIA; and ANOTHER MAN in his sixties, sporting a distinguished mane of silver hair. The President addresses him:

PRESIDENT

Mister Perkins.

(frowns)

Please, say it again, I'm a little slow. Better yet, I'll try it. You lost an operative, a trained counterassassin, and you just saw her on TV in a Christmas parade.

The silver-haired man appears unperturbed. And no, by the way, it didn't escape us that he shares his surname with Caitlin's TEDDY BEAR, the one Mom named -- He nods, says:

SILVER-HAIRED MAN
 On TV, that's correct. It's two weeks old, intelligence just caught it.

PRESIDENT
 You recruited this woman in the late seventies?

SILVER-HAIRED MAN
 For Chapter, yes. I was a friend of her father's, you see, and... I took her in.

PRESIDENT
 Well, it looks like she returned the favor, now doesn't it?
 (throws up his hands)
 Unbelievable. You people, you dump this on me, then next week you're screaming, "Where's our funding?" Shit. I'll tell you where it is, can you say health care?

The head of the CIA pipes up:

CIA DIRECTOR
 Mr. President, please calm down. The CIA bears no responsibility for this problem.

PRESIDENT
 Thanks for sharing, Kent. How many double agents you got on the payroll, last count...?

CIA DIRECTOR
 Sir! That controversy has been thoroughly dealt with, and if there still exists a leak, perhaps this... woman agent of his --

SILVER-HAIRED MAN
 If I may, sir, Colonel Baltimore hasn't had classified access since

(beat) But thank you, Kent, for trying to fuck me in the ass.

He directs his baleful gaze at the President. Lights a pipe.

SILVER-HAIRED MAN (CONT'D)
 I'm afraid rooting out double agents may have to wait.
 (MORE)

SILVER-HAIRED MAN (CONT'D)

The primary threat is the woman. Her specialty is counterassassination, a horseshit turn of phrase which implies the other fellow shot first, but in point of fact she's a takeout artist of the first order. Nearly disposed of our friend the Beard down in Cuba a few years back. Specializes in long rifles, accurate to a mile and a half. Presumed dead; now, after eight years, back in the field, agenda unknown. She knows enough to hurt us. I'm frightened. Understand?

PRESIDENT

Yes, yes. I believe you. Just one question:

(beat)

What in pluperfect hell is she doing in a Christmas parade???

INT. ROADSIDE GAS STATION - NIGHTTIME

Henessey is on the phone to his ex-wife. Glowering.

HENESSEY

Aw, cut me a break, Fran. I been out eight months, I'm back doing skip traces, now you got me stealing fuckin' bicycles?

EX-WIFE (O.S.)

I don't want you around Todd, hear me? Shrink told me what those men did to you in prison. This is a Christian household, my son's not gonna develop any... tendencies. Understand?

For a moment her ignorance is so stunning he's speechless. Then he slams down the phone. Cracks it. Returns to the pumps, where SAMANTHA leans against his car, still dazed. Looks up at him, says:

SAMANTHA

I still can't believe it. You're saying my hands didn't even shake...?

Henessey doesn't look at her. Puts the nozzle back in the pump. Crosses to the driver side without a word.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you?

HENESSEY

You. You're the matter. Look, you wanna keep going, good luck. I'm driving back to Ohio. You're free to come with me.

SAMANTHA

What... what are you telling me?

He gets into the car. Starts the engine. Samantha reacts, distraught. Leans in, kills the ignition. Pulls him out of the car.

HENESSEY

Goddammit, lady, I'm taking you *home*.

She slaps him. HARD. He falls back, stunned.

SAMANTHA

I'll spell it out for you, ready? I have no future, *I can't go home*. Until I know what's happening, I'm in *prison*, you know how that feels...?

HENESSEY

Yeah, matter of fact. Four years inside. Marion, Illinois, real shithole. Get in the car.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry.
(clears her throat)
Um... what did you...?

HENESSEY

Seven years ago, Atlanta PD. Me and my partner, we handled a lot of impounded shit. Fucker hated me, boy. One weekend, when he was conveniently gone...? Some bearer bonds disappeared from his office. And lo and behold, when the police responded to an anonymous tip, you'll never guess what just happened to be sitting in my closet.

SAMANTHA

The bonds. Your partner put them there?

HENESSEY

(laughs)

Hell no, I did, I stole the fucking things.

He serious. Samantha frowns, a little thrown -- Then she snorts, loses it. They both lean against his Chrysler.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Now every dollar I hand my kid, he asks his mother did I steal it.

He smiles ruefully. Spits. A pause, then:

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

No more killing.

Samantha's voice is cool and level:

SAMANTHA

No more killing.

She blows her nose.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

It was a helluva shot, wasn't it..."

DISSOLVES TO:

ESTABLISHING - SALT & PEPPER LOUNGE - MORNING

A gunmetal grey sky looms overhead. The aforementioned LOUNGE is a faded old roadhouse, gravel parking lot strewn with mud-covered trucks. The kind that get a man laid in these parts. HENESSEY'S PLYMOUTH pulls into the lot, rolls to a halt. He'll never get any.

INT. SALT & PEPPER LOUNGE - DAY

Honky-tonk. SAMANTHA and HENESSEY enter, blinking in the dimness. Around them, drunk mid-day cowboys. Stringy-haired girls in their ample laps. SAMANTHA consults her watch:

SAMANTHA

Quarter til. Any time now.

They sit at the counter. Henessey flags the bartender. Signals for a beer. Lights a cigarette, blows smoke:

HENESSEY

Nice crowd.

SAMANTHA

You're just jealous of their girlfriends.

HENESSEY

Who wouldn't be? Corner booth, there's a beaut. While you're doing her doggie-style you can pop the zits on her back.

Samantha shoots him a look. ON A TV above the bar, a British-sounding CNN announcer is saying:

CNN COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Violence in Northern Ireland continues today, despite a plea by British prime minister John Major --

Samantha sits up straight. Draws a sharp breath. He shoots her a questioning look --

SAMANTHA

I just... got a flash of something, I...

(blinks) I hurt my father.

HENESSEY

Whoa. You remember your father?

SAMANTHA

No... that's what's strange.
(shakes her head)

If I saw him on the street, I... I wouldn't... oh.

She rubs her eyes. Her voice breaks. She's utterly miserable. Hennessey leans in, says softly:

HENESSEY

Ms. Caine, last week at a party I ran into a girl I knew from college and we chatted for a few minutes. And it wasn't til I was driving home on the freeway that I remembered that I'd screwed her in the back of a car once.

(beat)

Everyone forgets.

He pats her arm. Smiles reassuringly. A pause. She stares.

SAMANTHA

That's it? That's your helpful story? Jesus Christ!

HENESSEY

No, see, all's I'm saying is you're not alone.

SAMANTHA

Oh, shut up.

HENESSEY

Fine. I gotta use the head.

He stands, heads off. Samantha nervously lights a cigarette. The bartender suddenly puts a BEER in front of her. She reaches for her purse. He waves it away, points beside her. She turns...

The assassin called TIMOTHY sits down two stools away.

TIMOTHY

For you. Another in a long line of bad investments.

SAMANTHA

Excuse me?

TIMOTHY

Just saw the ring on your finger.

He reveals a surprisingly WINNING smile, says:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Do I know you from somewhere...?

Grimaces:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Back up. Total pickup line, let's forget I said that.

Still staring in her eyes. Noting absolutely NO RECOGNITION on her features. She gives him a cursory smile.

SAMANTHA

Thanks for the drink. But no. I don't know you.

Timothy nods slowly.

TIMOTHY

No, you don't, do you...? I'd know if you did.

(MORE)

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
 I can tell if someone's lying.
 (smiles)
 Sorry to bother you.

He takes his own drink and crosses to a back booth. Sits, a very puzzled look on his face. Adjusts his coat collar, whispers into a concealed transmitter:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
 Okay, people, I got what I needed.
 Wait until she comes out. Then do them both.
 (beat)
 Walk soft, we got local law.

He sits back as TWO SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES suddenly enter, doffing their stetsons. Cross to the bar. HENESSEY, coming out of the bathroom. Sees the deputies. Grabs SAMANTHA by the elbow. Tosses down a fin, steers her toward the door.

SAMANTHA
 (sotto)
 What are you doing?

HENESSEY
 Pork. On your nine.

SAMANTHA
 So?

HENESSEY
 So you shot a guy in the head yesterday. We wait outside.

SAMANTHA
 It's freezing.

HENESSEY
 Too bad. People shouldn't shoot other people in the head. Just themselves. During that show with the little girl who's a robot.

EXT. SALT & PEPPER LOUNGE - SAME TIME

They emerge into the chill air. Breath pluming from their mouths. Samantha surveys the parking lot. Grabs Henessey, points --

A LATE-MODEL CAR pulls into the gravel lot. Stops.

SAMANTHA
 Bingo. That's an old guy's car.

HENESSEY

How do you know?

SAMANTHA

Because there's an old guy in it.
Come on.

They cross toward the car. She frowns, points to his coat.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Gun bulge.

HENESSEY

You think I'm gonna shove it down
my pants? Shoot my damn dick off.

SAMANTHA

So now you're a sharpshooter?

HENESSEY

Ho, ho.

As they approach the other car, the engine stops. The door opens and a middle aged man emerges -- IT AIN'T NATHAN. He pauses, lighting a cigarette.

SAMANTHA

Mr. Windeman...?

She strides right up, Henessey in tow. Flashes a dazzling smile -- *Slow motion*. The guy DROPS HIS LIGHTER, darts a hand inside his coat with practiced ease... Pulls out a

SILENCED PISTOL.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Oh, SHIT!

Slow motion. Samantha tackles Henessey. Hurls them both to the ground... During their fall, STUFF HAPPENS:

She clutches his sportcoat -- Grips his .38 special THROUGH THE FABRIC and squeezes... A sharp report, BAM-! Another, BAM-! The jacket, shredded. HITMAN just caught two in the chest. He goes over backwards, gun spitting --

Sam and Henessey hit the ground. *Back to regular speed*. Henessey rolls over, stunned. Samantha's staring at her hand, wondering how in the hell it just did that.

HENESSEY

Jesus wept...!

They scamper to their feet. Running hellbent for leather toward the Plymouth... They never make it.

ANOTHER HITMAN steps calmly from the trees. Stands at the shoulder of the highway, full view of the parking lot... Adopts a two-fisted stance. Draws a bead, locks on target --

Leaves his feet.

Takes to the air as a BLACK LE SABRE swerves off the highway with no advance warning and DEMOLISHES the bastard, wham--!

The car roars across the lot, NATHAN WINDEMAN at the wheel.

INT. BARROOM - SAME TIME

The snapped-in-two hitman announces Nathan's arrival by FLYING THROUGH THE WINDOW in an explosion of glass. Caroms off a table and bounces head over heels. Hits, dead.

TIMOTHY swears. Leaps up and bolts for the door, right behind the SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES, as

EXT. BUILDING - SAME TIME

The black Le Sabre SLEWS to a stop, showering gravel -- NATHAN shouts at Sam and Henessey:

NATHAN
Get in! Both of you, NOW!

They pile into the backseat. Nathan floors it. PEELS OUT, bouncing onto the highway -- and meanwhile here comes TIMOTHY. On the run. Barks into his transmitter:

TIMOTHY
East, they're going east. *Head them off*.

He begins to run: we have never seen anyone run this fast.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - DRIVING

NATHAN kicks in the afterburners. Squinting, can't see... WIPERS, squeaking to and fro. Erasing the hitman's blood.

Henessey is trembling; Samantha comatose. Nathan steals a look in the rear view mirror. Gets his first good view of Samantha. Reacts, stunned:

NATHAN
Charly. Jesus Christ, I don't believe what I'm seeing, you're so *fat*.

This is not what she expected to hear.

SAMANTHA

I'm... um, I mean... what?

NATHAN

What in God's hell have you been
eating, you look positively
bovine! Hang on.

yards down the highway. Beside a parked car, a guy with an
ELEPHANT GUN.

SAMANTHA

Oh, God, no more--!

The big rifle BUCKS concussively. The car window
SPLINTERS...! Does not break.

NATHAN

Bulletproof. Put it in myself.

Almost as an afterthought, he swerves slightly. CRUNCHES the
gunman against the parked car. Shatters him. His SCREAMING
VISAGE goes by an inch from Samantha, he coughs blood onto
her window...

EXT. FROZEN WOODSCAPE - SAME TIME

Timothy, on the move. RUNS, breakneck through the woods.
Jumps fallen logs. Ducking, swerving. In and out through the
trees, as

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - DRIVING

Scenery whips past. In the backseat, Hennessey is trembling;
Samantha comatose. Nathan snaps his fingers sharply:

NATHAN

Charlene, darling --

SAMANTHA

My name is Caine. Samantha Caine.

NATHAN

(exasperated)

Yes, yes, you said that on the
phone. *Must* I point out to you
that the letters in the name SAM
CAINE, when rearranged, spell out
AMNESIAC? Your mind was missing a
name, so it simple invented one
that was an anagram of your current
condition.

Samantha reacts, floored.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Dammit, Charly. The schoolteacher, that was your cover! Your memory was gone, you got confused and you BOUGHT YOUR OWN COVER. This ridiculous Ohio housewife business, it's a fantasy, you *wrote* the bloody thing!

SAMANTHA

It's not a fantasy, *I'm in the fucking PTA*.

NATHAN

Then quit. You're an assassin for the United States government.

(beat)

I ought to know, I trained you.

Henessey is so shocked he's LAUGHING:

HENESSEY

Beautiful. Fuckin' beautiful.

EXT. SHEER EMBANKMENT - OVERLOOKING HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

A forty foot embankment, damn near vertical. Plunging to the road below. Topped by a chain-link FENCE.

Timothy hits the fence at a dead run. Up and over. Pitches head over heels down the embankment, BOUNCING. Hits bottom in a shower of dirt, rolls, comes up... .357 AMP in a two-fisted grip, and *there's Nathan's car*. Blows by, doing 90.

Timothy swivels calmly, BLASTS AN ENTIRE CLIP at the retreating car. Shot after shot, like a machine --

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - SAME TIME

Sam SCREAMS as the side windows COLLAPSE INWARD. Nathan rides the wheel, swerving.

HENESSEY

What happened to bulletproof?

NATHAN

The side windows were next, I swear.

BACK WITH
TIMOTHY

Watching them go. Oh, well. He tried, right...? Did his best, tomorrow's another day --

Without missing a beat, Timothy walks out in the middle of the road. ANOTHER CAR, coming. Sports car. He snaps in a fresh clip. Raises his fist and PUMPS ONE through the fast-approaching windshield. Kills the driver.

The car throws a skid. Slewing SIDEWAYS at him. Onrushing juggernaut, immense...!

He vaults the hood without breaking stride. Catches the drive-side doorhandle, jerks -- then he's in, and out comes the corpse and the car *never stops moving*.

Completes an out-of-control 360, showering muddy water... and then he's stomping the gas. Utterly relentless. Leaving behind a wet and very surprised-looking corpse.

INT. STOLEN CAR

Timothy GUNS IT, eyes locked dead ahead on the Le Sabre -- Hears a SCREECH. Whips his eyes to the rearview mirror: POLICE CRUISER. Fishtailing onto the road behind him. Falls in behind, SIREN wailing. One of the deputies from the bar.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - DRIVING - SAME TIME

Nathan fishes a gun from his coat. Hands it to Samantha.

NATHAN

Here, you might as well have one too.

SAMANTHA

My God. How many do you carry?

NATHAN

Three. One shoulder, one hip, and one right next to Mr. Wally --
 (pats his groin)
 Where most patdowns never reveal it, as an agent is often reluctant to feel up another man's groin.

Henessey looks out the back windshield, says:

HENESSEY

Got a tail.

Nathan looks, SWEARS. The chase car's gaining on them.

NATHAN

Lucky bastard found the only cool
car in the fucking midwest.

He accelerates into a curve. Rockets past a connecting road,
as, without warning -- ANOTHER COP CAR skids out of the side
road, after him. The other deputy...

TIMOTHY, boxed. Going too fast, swerves...! PLOWS into the
deputy headlong. BROADSIDES him. Glass flies. The cop car's
TIRES blow out as it's SPUN 180 degrees... Timothy's car
careens into a GULLEY --

BAM-! Hits a dead stop. Hood shears off, goes flying. Back
end sticking up, tires spinning... The horn blares
continuously.

UP ABOVE: The other cop arrives, brakes to a halt -- Door
opens and out he comes. Helps Deputy #2 clamber from his
crippled black-and-white.

Together they leap down into the gulley, guns drawn.
Cringing as the long HOOOOOOONNNNNNK continues unabated.
Approaching the crashed car. Walking up, guns at their
sides... TWO SHOTS. They jitter and twitch. Topple over
dead, slide to the bottom of the gulley.

INSIDE THE CAR, we see that a very annoyed Timothy is also
very conscious. Splayed against the driver's side door.
Holding one hand down on the horn, HOOOOOOONNK... He
releases it. Horn stops. On the radio Conway Twitty is
singing. He puts a shot through the radio. Silences it.

Climbs from the car and stares off down the road. Of Nathan
and his companions, there is neither whisper nor breath...

EXT. ROADSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Nathan has pulled over in a grove of pine trees. The car is
covered with branches. He watches through a gap as two
police cars go by on the distant highway.

NATHAN

Your father was in the British SIS,
assigned to the Irish situation.
After he was murdered in 1971, his
friend Perkins recruited you for
Chapter, a black bag operation
working out of the U.S. State
Department.

Charly is overloaded. Trying to keep up, not wanting to:

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Fall, 1987: Presidential orders come down. You're to flush out a terrorist by the name of Daedalus. You never complete the mission, electing instead to die, of all things, despite clear orders to the contrary. And dead you remain until, without preamble, you re-emerge, eight years later and fifteen pounds heavier.

SAMANTHA

Would you lay off the weight?

NATHAN

I think we can safely assume Daedalus is aware of your resurrection and is attempting to reverse it. *Damn*, I can't drive around in this thing.

(beat)

Any idea where we can go to stash this car?

IN SAMANTHA'S LAP

Her fingers unconsciously fiddle with something. Damp, crumpled. The ENVELOPE. One address left.

SAMANTHA

This address...? I... I recognize it now. I think it belongs to a friend.

Henessey stares at her. As Nathan reaches for the envelope, his coat falls open and Samantha GASPS; his left side is soaked with blood.

NATHAN

Perhaps you'd best drive.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY - DAY

The house is actually an old converted MILL. Beyond it, frozen landscape stretches to the lakeshore. In the BARNYARD, a scruffy looking COWBOY TYPE is splitting logs on a tree stump. Drops the axe. Scoops up an armload of firewood. Comes around the corner --

Drops the logs, startled. AN UNLIKELY TRIO approaches. NATHAN, sweating. Pasty. Levels a revolver. Samantha says:

SAMANTHA

Don't be afraid, we don't want to hurt you.

(beat)

I just want to know who you are.

Seeing her, his eyes go wide -- He locks her in a whooping BEAR HUG, shouts:

MAN

CHARLY, BABY!!

Picks her up, SPINS HER around, laughing... Henessey and Nathan stare. Befuddled.

TIME CUT - MINUTES LATER

The strange man (let's call him LUKE) stands awkwardly in the dooryard. Shifting from foot to foot. NATHAN watches him dispassionately from the tree stump. Gun on his knee.

LUKE

(sighs)

Look, is this America's Funniest Practical Videos or something?

The DOOR bangs open and Samantha comes out of the house. Carrying bandages. Alcohol. Crosses to the tree stump, kneels before Nathan. His voice is a harsh rasp:

NATHAN

Let me do it.

He bats her away, administers his own first aid. LUKE pipes up, exasperated:

LUKE

I can't believe you don't remember dating me. Charly, please, you pursued me for months.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, well. I caught you and forgot you. Sorry.

LUKE

It's December, you'll remember. Right...?

He chuckles. Looks at her face. Stops chuckling, takes a sudden interest in the ground. Sam crosses to HENESSEY, standing nearby. Takes him aside, whispers:

SAMANTHA

(sotto)

This is ridiculous. What do we do with this guy?

HENESSEY

Don't ask me, I just work here. Did you bump pelvises with him or not?

SAMANTHA

It's possible.

HENESSEY

And you kid, Cathead --

SAMANTHA

Caitlin.

HENESSEY

Yeah, whatever. Um, could he be the...?

SAMANTHA

I don't know.

(beat)

It's coming back, though. All these... little details about him.

She studies Luke. Frowning. Concentrating.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I know he's got a pin in his leg, car accident. I know he cuts his own hair... thinks Rush Limbaugh's an ass. I know he sits down when he pees. I know --

HENESSEY

Enough. You're giving me a stiffy.

Just then NATHAN is hit with a dreadful-sounding cough. It wracks him. Doubles him up. LUKE blurts out:

LUKE

Goddammit, he's *dying*. Let me call the poor bastard an ambulance!

Nathan grits his teeth:

NATHAN

No ambulance. The car I ordered will be here soon.

SAMANTHA

Mr. Windeman, please let him help you. I know this man, I... I'm pretty sure I slept with him.

Nathan presses a bandage to his side.

NATHAN

I'm about to faint... And if you call an ambulance, I will fucking kill you.

He pitches forward into Henessey's arms.

EXT. SHADED PORCH - MID-AFTERNOON

Beside the lakeshore LUKE AND SAMANTHA walk side by side. RACK FOCUS to the porch: NATHAN is laid out on a chaise lounge. Henessey beside him, applying cold compresses. The older man stirs, coming awake... Tries to sit up, Henessey nudges him flat again.

NATHAN

Where's Charly...?

HENESSEY

Relax. She's with Luke. That's his name, Luke.

NATHAN

Goddammit, I told you --

HENESSEY

Yeah, yeah, we weren't real big on what you told us. I had him call you an ambulance, so shoot me. Should be here within fifteen minutes.

Nathan groans. Henessey presses a cloth to the man's head.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

The guy's story checks out. Sam knows things about him. Stuff only a lover would know.

NATHAN

Sod that... just watch them.

HENESSEY

Don't worry about it. Chick signs my checks, I'm gonna watch her get aced? Lie back down.

Nathan swallows. Grimaces. Lies back down.

NATHAN

Checks. You're not fooling anyone,
dear boy.

(bemused)

You'd wash her feet and drink the
water... wouldn't you?

HENESSEY

Cut me a break, nimrod. She's
married with a kid.

Busted. Nathan coughs. Speaks, eyes faraway:

NATHAN

My star pupil...

(smiles thinly)

That man in Pennsylvania
yesterday... The one at the diner,
that was hers, wasn't it...?

HENESSEY

How'd you know?

NATHAN

(nods)

I saw the news report, they found a
shell casing a thousand yards away,
helluva shot.

HENESSEY

Tell me about Daedalus, what's his
story?

NATHAN

Arms broker, man without a face.
Veteran of Baader-Meinhoff and the
Red Brigades. He's rumored to be
based in the U.S. Doesn't travel
much, they say. Too afraid of metal
detectors, the poor sod's got a
foot- long piece of steel in his
leg.

At which point, Henessey stops. Frowns.

HENESSEY

Come again?

NATHAN

A pin, Mr. Henessey. A surgical
pin.

He scuffs his shoe in the porch dust. Eyes narrowed:

HENESSEY

Where the hell...? I know I just heard that somewhere, something about a...

His eyes widen:

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck.

Points to the lake:

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Nathan, that son of a bitch has one in *his* leg.

Nathan freezes, thoughts racing... swears violently:

NATHAN

You blithering idiot, the son of a bitch wasn't her lover, he was her target, he's Daedalus!

HENESSEY

Oh, Jesus...! That's how she knew all that shit, not from *dating* him -- she *studied* the fucker to take him out!

He takes off for the lake at a dead run. Behind him, the bloodied Nathan DRAGS himself to his feet and lurches off the porch, stumbling. Weaving. Refusing to go down.

AT THE LAKESIDE -- Luke walks behind Samantha. Talking softly in her ear, smiling... She hears something. A RATCHETING noise, drawing closer, hmmm...? Looks up. Wishes she hadn't -- A BELL RANGER HELICOPTER is descending over the lake. Inside, TIMOTHY shoulders a bolt action rifle, coolly professional.

FIRES, kicks up dirt at Henessey's feet. Stops the fucker cold. On the shore, LUKE smiles at Samantha, says:

LUKE

Sure don't look like an ambulance, does it?

SLUGS HER IN THE FACE. Drops her to the ice like a broken doll.

CUT TO BLACK:

Black indeed. Deep. Empty. Out of the darkness, we hear a NEWS COMMENTATOR. Voice scratchy. Indistinct. Far away or long ago...

A TELEVISION IMAGE fills the screen. Black and white. Grainy. The legend: BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND, over footage of a sidewalk bombing. We're back in time, the year 1971. A crisp-looking BRIGADIER is speaking to the off-camera reporter:

BRIGADIER

...the bombing has been linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force, which, as you know, is the counterpart of the provisional IRA and the most violent of the Protestant Paramilitary groups.

An ANNOUNCER's face replaces him:

ANNOUNCER

Despite threats of reprisals, Brigadier Baltimore repeats that he will seek to cut UVF supply lines, especially from Tripoli, Lybia. U.S. President Nixon concurs that...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A battered TV, volume turned low. Snoozing in a chair, a rumpled older man -- It's the BRIGADIER, the one we just saw speaking on TV. A CALENDAR on the table identifies the date as June 23, 1971.

IN THE NEXT ROOM

Girlish decor. Pinups of rock stars. A YOUNG GIRL is awake, dressed and currently stuffing two pillows under a blanket. She inspects her handiwork. Human-looking lump. Turns, satisfied.

One last look at the WOODEN JESUS on the wall -- Creeps from the room. Past the sleeping Brigadier. To the front door. She checks over her shoulder, nervous. Taps out five digits. Shuts off the alarm. Unlocks the door and slips out.

EXT. STREET - BELFAST - NIGHT

The boy's name is GREGORY. Sixteen, with a quick, easy grin. Huddled beneath a tree with him, the girl is gelatin.

GREGORY

You've never made it with a boy,
then?

GIRL

There's nothing odd about it. I'm
only sixteen.

GREGORY

Rubbish.

GIRL

What?

GREGORY

You're fourteen and not a day more.
Here now, I'm right, you're
blushing.

GIRL

Look, what if I'm ignorant? It's my
father, we never stay in one place,
I never meet bloody anyone.

GREGORY

Saw him on the telly. Think he'd
kill me? I'm a nasty one, I am.

He slides a hand under her sweater. She stiffens, terrified
and exhilarated, as he gently strokes her nipple with a
thumb.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

You know what, I'll bet you've
never even kissed a boy... now,
have you?

(beat)

Aye, but you want to...

He leans in. She leans forward. A jerky, tentative duckling
on the road to swan-dom. Their lips touch.

Across the road, THE WINDOWS BLOW OUT in her father's flat.
She spins, scream caught in her throat -- as ARMED MEN rush
from the house. Through the door, the one she left unlocked.
Stutter of SMALL ARMS FIRE. She whirls on Gregory, realizes
only then that the guy is LAUGHING.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Thanks for shutting off the alarm,
you bloody Papist bitch.

He slaps her full across the face.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
 Tell the press the Ulster Force
 claims full credit.

He spins and flees.

INT. BRIGADIER'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Girl, moving. Walls racing past, shot to PIECES, run run run
 into her bedroom and LURCHES to a stop, screaming:

GIRL
 DA!

Propped against the wall. By the bed. He's still alive.
 Incredibly. The man has DRAGGED himself in here. He refused
 to die, simply couldn't, you see... Not until he reached his
 daughter.

ANGLE ON BED

Two pillows, jammed beneath a blanket. The Brigadier just
 stares at them. His face slack. White and gastly. Shifts his
 gaze to his daughter. Tears running from his dulled eyes.

BRIGADIER
 How much...

He raises the pistol to his head.

BRIGADIER (CONT'D)
 ...did they pay you...?

He fires. On a young girl's dissolve into insanity we FADE
 OUT... Sound, echoing away. Blackness, total.

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT OF OLD MILL - NIGHT

Waking is slow.

Samantha opens her eyes. Blinks. Hazy, out of focus. Tries
 to rub her eyes, can't. Hands. Something's wrong, what the
 hell'd she do with her hands...? Ah. They're stretched over
 her head. BOUND WITH CORD. Suddenly she's very awake.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The basement of the old converted mill. A drafty, windswept
 place full of old, broken timbers. A river runs through it.
 A stream, at any rate. The waters are still and frozen now.
 Above the stream -- A GREAT WOODEN WHEEL. Smaller corollary
 of the wheel outside. Mounted on the same axis.

SAMANTHA is tied to that wheel. Lashed to its SIDE, affixed to it like a goddess to a Greek sailing ship. Now the bad news, the ice has been chopped away so the wheel can TURN... And it will plunge Samantha UNDER THE FREEZING WATER. Beneath the ice. Bound hand and foot. Strapped to the wheel, wearing only a nightgown, she is utterly helpless.

THE MAN KNOWN AS DAEDALUS (AKA Luke) stands before her, giving instructions to the ubiquitous TIMOTHY. He looks up at Samantha. Seeing her eyelids flutter, he tosses her a cherry wave. Gone is the gee-whiz country boy schtick; in its place, a frightening arrogance. He tosses her his cheeriest wave:

DAEDALUS

Well, good afternoon. If it isn't the forgetful spy. How you feeling?

SAMANTHA

Not-so fresh.

Samantha struggles against her bonds. No dice. Subsides. Takes a look around at her predicament. TIMOTHY stands at the edge of the ice. Watching her intently. Smiles thinly:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You... you're... the man from the bar...?

TIMOTHY

Look at her. She's not faking it, she doesn't know me from Adam.

Daedalus shakes his head, frowning:

DAEDALUS

It's not that I don't trust my compatriot, Colonel Baltimore. In fact, I had every confidence that your amnesia was genuine -- until you showed up *here*. You follow?

(beat)

Meanwhile, I just got around to reading the papers, there's the small matter of an incident upstate. Long range rifle shot, blew a man out of his socks.

(coldly)

You can see where I'm coming from. I'm trying to pull off the biggest job of my career. I have to know. How much you really remember... and who you've told.

SAMANTHA

I didn't tell a soul, I swear.

DAEDALUS

We'll soon know.

He crosses toward a large RED BUTTON. Set into a wooden beam. Samantha thrashes at the bindings. Looks down at the water where it intercepts the mammoth wheel. Fighting panic:

SAMANTHA

Is... is this a torture thing...?

DAEDALUS

Torture, yes. The torturing of beautiful women, albeit politically incorrect, is an addiction with me.

(beat)

A woman never looks quite so beautiful as when her face is distended in pain. Witness the beauty of childbirth.

SAMANTHA

Please, I'm getting all misty. Look, untie me, I'll make any face you want.

DAEDALUS

Let's not, and say we did. Do you smoke?

SAMANTHA

Smoke...? Um, no. Not... not really.

DAEDALUS

Good. You'll last longer. Now hush yourself, and take a deep breath. We're gonna do the torture thing.

He hits the button. An electric WHINE -- THE BIG WHEEL TURNS. Feet first into the water. Struggling. Arms stretched above her head. She plunges below the surface. A new dimension in PAIN. Frozen, mind-numbing.

She WRITHES against the wheel. It's like a crushing VICE is ripping her limb from limb. She opens her eyes, briefly. Discovers she's not alone -- A mere foot from her face, THE BLOATED CORPSE of the drowned NATHAN. Staring away and away. Blue with cyanosis.

Meanwhile, back ON THE SURFACE: Daedalus turns to his right-hand man, who says:

TIMOTHY

We're running on schedule, I just secured the tanker. We're borrowing it from Carbide in South Carolina. Cargo listed as fire retardant.

DAEDALUS

(nods)

Juice up the bird, we head out soon as I'm done here.

He turns. Hits the red button again. THE WHEEL reverses itself. Creaks and moans, turning --

SAMANTHA BREAKS THE SURFACE. Gasping for air. Wheezing. Choking. The FREEZING WIND plasters the nightgown to her.

DAEDALUS (CONT'D)

Take all the air you can, that's right. If you need to vomit, do it now.

Samantha, face twisted. Coughs. Wheezes. TIMOTHY looks her in the eye... shakes his head:

TIMOTHY

You don't remember *at all*...? The greatest night of your life, shit, drown this ungrateful wench.

He exits. Daedalus, alone with his captive. On her features, unbridled HATRED. He chuckles:

DAEDALUS

Talk to me Colonel. Is my identity safe...? The truth, and I'll shoot you in the head. Nice and quick. Otherwise, you're in for a long night. *Who did you talk to*?

SAMANTHA

...Nobody... fuck you...

He shakes his head, makes a "tsk tsk" gesture. Smiles grimly as he turns his attention to the red switch.

DAEDALUS

Hate to see you like this, Charly. I heard you were a helluva spy once.

Without warning, her head snaps upward -- Eyes cold. Voice, not her own:

SAMANTHA

Watch your back. I'm not done yet.

DAEDALUS

That's a very funny joke. You're an entertaining woman. Good night.

He hits the button. She plunges beneath the surface. Daedalus walks over to one corner. Sits down. Takes out a pipe. Lights it. Picks up a book. Reads. And reads.

UNDERWATER -- Sam THRASHES and jerks, to and fro. Dead Nathan, mocking her. There, under the water, the memories come... In a flood. Stark and vivid.

MEMORY FLASH - THE YEAR

THE TRUNK OF A CAR opens, revealing a patch of night sky. Mostly obscured by two familiar individuals --

There's ONE-EYED JACK, remember him? Few years younger. One eyeball heavier. The other man is TIMOTHY. He looks in the trunk. Nods.

TIMOTHY

Okay, I'll signal Daedalus. Your money will be waiting, and Jack...? Do yourself a favor, do her and dump her, I'm serious. Don't get cute, try to play doctor first. I made that mistake.

The lid SLAMS SHUT.

BACK UNDER THE
WATER

The world of rushing MADNESS, memories unspooling now, faster and faster --

MEMORY FLASH: A CLIFF overlooking the ocean. Darkness. Sheeting rain. Our heroine (for it is unquestionably SAMANTHA) is lying unconscious atop a rocky bluff. Drenched.

ONE-EYED JACK produces a SYRINGE from a leather case. Rolls up her sleeve. Starts to administer the injection. Stops. He can't resist... Can't help LOOSENING the buttons on her shirt.

Her eyes snap open. And before it even registers, she's grabbed the hypodermic and plunged it deep INTO HIS EYE --

Then she's up and running. Along the cliff, toward the car... Jack, HOWLING in pain, stumbling... Draws his gun and shoots her. In the head.

She pitches backward. Tumbles from the cliff...! Rushes headlong toward the waters below, getting smaller --

INT. BASEMENT OF OLD MILL - THE PRESENT

Here. Now. She breaks the surface. Gasping for breath. SHRIEKS, a sound ripped from her by the PAIN, the COLD --

By her ruptured sanity. She hangs there. Drenched. Half frozen.

DAEDALUS can't help it. A chill dances up his spine, watching... She is not afraid. She is not whimpering. She is looking directly AT HIM. With a sick smile.

CHARLY

Daedalus... Make you a deal... Let me go now...? I'll leave you the use of your legs... Bargain, trust me...

Daedalus struggles to recover his poise.

DAEDALUS

How did you find me? Who knows about this place, WHO HAVE YOU TOLD?

Charly's eyes bore into his:

CHARLY

I let you touch me, cowboy... I think I need a bath.

Daedalus stabs the red button. THE BIG WHEEL TURNS... Into the water goes Charly. Going down for the third time.

UNDER THE WATER - HELL - SAME

Here we are again, in the world of silence and blinding PAIN. Despair and madness but now there's something else -- Now there's RAGE.

It takes losing most of the FLESH from her right wrist... But she frees the hand. WRENCHES it loose. The water turns soupy red around it. GROPEs, blindly. Fingers NUMB, so fucking cold -- Breath, running out. No air. NO TIME.

She darts her right hand forward. Toward the obscenely bobbing CORPSE of Nathan. Does something grotesque, jams her hand

DOWN THE CORPSE'S PANTS --

Hideaway gun, it's right where he said, right beside Mr. Wally. PSP-25. Semi-auto, steel jackets. She waits. Rage inside her. Death in her hands.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE SURFACE

The wheel CREAKS. Groans. The terrorist in the western boots watches her emerge, face first -- She comes up firing.

The first slug takes him in the knee. Blows it to scraps. He collapses, howling. She shifts aim. THE RED BUTTON. No hesitation. BLAM-! Hits it DEAD ON. Stops the wheel. Incredible.

Doesn't blink. Unties her captive hand. BLOWS TO SPLINTERS the wood surrounding her feet. Leaps to solid ground, as

ANOTHER ANGLE

Daedalus looks up from his prone position. In agony. A vision from Hell approaches: A fiendish blue-skinned woman in a

sodden nightgown. Blood leaking from one wrist. She has risen, REBORN, from the icy waters.

DAEDALUS

Samantha... Please...!

CHARLY

Who's Samantha?

She shoots him in the other knee. He HOWLS. Gun, empty. She tosses it aside. In a nearby crate: ASSAULT RIFLES. Snatches up a Kalashnikov and clip. Kneels and says:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

You see in the movies, badguy says,
"Talk to me and I'll let you live."
We're gonna run a variation, it
goes like this: Talk to me...? I'll
let you die.

She fires again.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Where's Hennessey...?

INT. ROOT CELLAR - WITH HENESSEY

The detective lies naked, bound hand and foot. Beaten. FREEZING. A single ray of LIGHT through a tiny crack.

He hears a SPLINTERING noise, as if a door's been ripped from its hinges. Pause -- A FUSILLADE of gunfire. Shouts, cries. A heavy weight SLAMS to the floorboards above him. Through a crack comes a tiny stream of BLOOD, dribbling onto him, as --

EXT. OLD MILL - SAME TIME

TIMOTHY bolts from the house, clutching a bleeding hand. Running hellbent for leather. Reaches a parked car. Leaps in and kicks over the engine as, behind him --

MORE MEN come piling out of the house, shouting. Running for their cars -- never make it. CUT DOWN IN THEIR TRACKS. Wracked by gunfire, bodies twitching...

And as Timothy PEELS OUT, spraying mud, we pull UP, UP, AND AWAY... Into the sky, moving ever higher, gunfire fading... Until now we're WAY UP, we can see Timothy's car... the OLD MILL, ever so tiny below us...

It blows to pieces. Sends flaming boards flying STRAIGHT UP AT US.

INT. VICTORIAN BUILDING - CHAPTER HQ - NIGHTTIME

The door bursts open as PERKINS stalks in, shedding his coat. His aide -- let's call him HARRY -- looks up nervously.

PERKINS

This can't happen, Harry. The President's already up at night, prowling his sock drawer for double agents, and now we've got a fucking rogue on our hands.

HARRY

Sir, there's someone in the conference room to see you.

PERKINS

Oh, for the love of Christ, who can be so fucking important?

He throws open a door off the passage: THERE'S TIMOTHY. Perched on the edge of a conference table, tamping a pack of smokes. Perkins reacts, stunned.

TIMOTHY

It's me, your poor black cousin.
The one you can't be seen with.

PERKINS

You...! Are you crazy, coming
here??

TIMOTHY

(Lights a cigarette)
My boss is dead.

PERKINS

What...?

TIMOTHY

Your rogue bitch just took him out.
Probably went shopping in his
weapons storage too.

He blows smoke. Trains his eyes on the older man. Piercing.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

We're still on, Perkins. I've got
the tanker, the chemist, all ready
to go... but you gotta contain her,
man. We gotta step on her hard and
fast.

An agent on the SWITCHBOARD calls out:

SWITCHBOARD

You have a call on line three, sir.

PERKINS

Who is it?

SWITCHBOARD

Charly Baltimore, sir.

Perkins stops dead. Lunges for the phone, nearly drops it:

PERKINS

Perkins.

INTERCUT - OUR HEROINE AT PAY PHONE

We only see her mouth. Set in hard, grim lines. She says:

CHARLY

It's cold, I want to come in.

PERKINS

Charly...? Oh, my God, what the hell are you *doing*? Listen to me, I'm going to direct you to a safe house, get you on a plane --

CHARLY

Can the bullshit, I'm not telling you where I am. I'll come in for a full debriefing, but we do it my way.

PERKINS

Charly, you're being paranoid. It's not like it used to be, you're eight years out of date.

CHARLY

Do tell.

PERKINS

Congress won't authorize a dime, Charly. Chapter's on the way out, we've been reduced to a records-keeping agency, we *don't* have enough money to kill you*, understand...?

CHARLY

Fuck you, Perkins. If you want me dead, you'll pass a hat in the typing pool to buy bullets. We do things my way.

PERKINS

Your way, I see. And if I say go to hell?

CHARLY

From where I stand, it ain't much of a commute. You'll hear from me.

She clicks off. Perkins darts a look at the techie -- guy shakes his head, no go on the trace. Perkins swears.

PERKINS

She mustn't threaten our success. Contain her, whatever it takes. But be *careful*. If it gets out you're working for me... we'll both be grabbing our ankles on the White House lawn.

ESTABLISHING SHOT - ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY - NIGHT

There. Thank you, New Jersey, that'll be all. You can go now. Um, please.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - ATLANTIC CITY - NIGHT

Waking is slow for Mitch Henessey. He swallows dryly. Eyes creak open, struggle to focus... Hears WATER running. A shower. Squints at his watch. He's not wearing a watch, he knew that... In BED, naked. Chest swathed in bandages, what the hell...? He pokes them. Jerks his head, hissing in pain.

EXT. LIVING ROOM OF SUITE - WITH HENESSEY - NIGHT

Henessey lights a smoke at the bar. Flicks the match in a trashcan. Starts to go, stops... Reaches into the can. Plucks out a tiny scrap: PHOTOGRAPH, ripped in two.

A photo of Hal and Caitlin.

He pockets it, disturbed. Crosses to the bathroom door. The shower has stopped. Raises a tentative hand, starts to knock... It OPENS. There, in a thin silk robe, is a WOMAN, swabbing at her hair.

She breezes out of the bathroom all chipper, like nothing's unusual. Notices Henessey cursorily. Raises a finger: "one sec." Lowers her head and shakes it like a terrier, spraying him.

He cannot stop staring. It's Samantha, it *has* to be...

Now she's BLONDE, though. Hair clipped short. Bobbed. Blood-red fingernails. Red cotton shift, legs for days.

Then, she *smiles* at him -- and it's not her, not Samantha.

Amnesia's over, folks, because we're clearly looking at a changed woman: This one's name is CHARLY BALTIMORE, and she hasn't seen the light of day in eight years.

CHARLY

Hey, Mitch. Glad you're awake. Uh-oh, you're seeping.

She grabs a washcloth. Frowns, says:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Here, look at this.

With that, she opens her robe and exposes her breasts. Henessey perks up considerably -- then SCREAMS as she RIPS the gauze from his chest. She clinchs the robe again.

HENESSEY

Ah, that hurt like shit!!

CHARLY

That's why I distracted you first.
 (dabs at his wounds)
 Same principle as breaking in
 virgins.

HENESSEY

Same as -- virgins, *what*...?

CHARLY

Saw it in a Harold Robbins book.
 Guy bites her on the ear as he goes
 in. Distracts from the pain. You
 ever try that?

HENESSEY

No, I slug 'em in the jaw and yell
 "pop goes the weasel," what the
 fuck are you talking about? Who are
 you??

CHARLY

Name's Charly. The spy. Nice to
 meet'cha. Drink?

INT. CASINO BAR - EVENING

Henessey watches, fascinated. All the little mannerisms, the differences. Shaking out a match, running a hand through her hair... And never missing a thing, eyes constantly roving, scanning. Guard never down. She plucks a drink from a nearby table, steals it outright.

CHARLY

See? Sit next to the dance floor,
 every drink's free. People finish
 dancing, they think the waiter
 lifted 'em.

Henessey grimaces. Clears his throat, says:

HENESSEY

I'm confused. Gimme a minute.

CHARLY

Take two, they're small.

She knocks back her drink. No hesitation. Henessey shifts uncomfortably, lights a smoke.

HENESSEY

Okay. Let's say I buy it. You're actually a trained killer, Jesus, I can't even say it with a straight face.

(frowns)

So then... Samantha, she...

CHARLY

Never really existed. Like Nathan said, she was a total fabrication, I made her up.

HENESSEY

Fabrication. And now she's just... gone? Forever and ever?

CHARLY

Thank God. Look at my inordinately large ass, look what she did to me.

Henessey squirms, this one's gonna take some time to digest.

HENESSEY

Pretty convincing act.

CHARLY

Guess so.

HENESSEY

I mean, her personality, it had to come from *somewhere* --

CHARLY

Change the subject. Better yet, steal me another drink.

Henessey sighs. Next to him a couple get up to dance. He reaches over and lifts their beers.

HENESSEY

Drink up. What's next?

CHARLY

I called Chapter. I'm trying to bring us in from the field alive...

HENESSEY

Chapter. Can you trust them?

CHARLY

Not sure. Until I know, you might wanna stay away from curbs.

He looks at her, confused:

CHARLY (CONT'D)
They like to push people in front
of buses.

Didn't need to know that. A DANCING SANTA goes by:

SANTA CLAUS
(bad Caribbean accent)
Hey, lady, Santa want to dance the
lambada wit'choo. *Come this way,
everybody*!

He shimmies away. Charly grins at Henessey:

CHARLY
If I could come that way I wouldn't
need to dance the lambada. Follow
me, I need you to do something.

EXT. DANCE CLUB - PAY PHONE - NIGHTTIME

Henessey hunches forward, speaks rapidly into the phone:

HENESSEY
...The lady's whacked, Trin, she's
lost it and I want fucking out, now
call the Feds. She's moving us
tonight, I'll sneak out to this
phone, call you back at midnight
with the details.

He hangs up quickly. Turns -- reveal CHARLY, lounging a foot
away, watching him.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)
All right, Charly. What did that
accomplish?

CHARLY
I'm testing our boy Perkins. I
figure he's gotta be tapping your
office. Got a light...?

HENESSEY
(pause, then:)
Oh, no. He just traced that call?

She swipes matches from his pocket. Nods.

CHARLY
Come midnight, you hang by the
phone.

(MORE)

CHARLY (CONT'D)
 Nobody shows, we think about
 trusting him. He tries to kidnap
 and torture you, well, there it is.

HENESSEY
 Whoa, time out.

CHARLY
 Oh, don't be such a baby.
 (lights her cigarette)
 Ten o'clock, we got two hours to
 kill. I'm a woman, feed me.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK - NIGHTTIME

CARNIVAL RIDES, dead for the winter. Henessey and Charly
 stroll beneath them. He smokes. She eats Chinese.

CHARLY
 Ugh. God I'm full, I'm gonna have a
 food baby.

He takes a good long look at her, still can't fathom it.

HENESSEY
 "Charly." fucking unbelievable.
 (beat)
 Shame about the fat ass. I bet you
 were really attractive once.

CHARLY
 Oh, I was. Check this out. One
 time? A guy said he'd fuck me.

HENESSEY
 No.

CHARLY
 Swear to God.

HENESSEY
 Did he make good?

CHARLY
 Absolutely. Oh, and afterwards? Oh
 my God, afterwards I said the most
 funny thing, you know what I
 said...?
 (beat)
 I said, "Go back to your room.
 Dad..."

She laughs through a swig of beer. MEMORY FLASH: Charly's
 bedroom as DAD puts the gun to his head and fires, CRACK...

CHARLY (CONT'D)
It's why he thought I had him
killed.

Henessey huddles, watching her closely.

HENESSEY
Your father was murdered.

She nods, gazes out over the icy waters. Speaks, her voice
faraway and gone:

CHARLY
When Da died, I went to his
funeral. years old, today I
wouldn't. And I overheard a woman,
she was praying... She was thanking
God -- sounded so happy -- thanking
Him it hadn't been *her* father who
was killed. See... she didn't
really care that God had let
someone die... just so long as it
missed *her*.

(beat)

...and she bought her cross at the
same store as mine, see, that's
what we do, we all pray to the same
cross on a hundred different walls,
and sit back and wait to see who
gets hit and who gets missed.

Anger flares in her eye. Like a stirring of mud at the
bottom of a deep, deep, pond.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
Fuck the waiting. Fuck being
afraid. I determine who gets hit,
and how hard. And I thank no one.
It's pathetic to thank someone who
spares you -- when they're just
taking someone else.

(beat)

Walk me upstairs?

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHTTIME

They enter the suite. She drops her purse, sways toward him.
Presses him against the wall, framed there in the doorway.

CHARLY
This is my first date in eight
years, Mitch. Is this a fun
date...?

Quite suddenly, Charly leans over and kisses him on the lips. He reacts, startled. Stares at her.

HENESSEY

Okay, what's going on?

CHARLY

True love, shut the fuck up.

HENESSEY

You kidding me? I'm an ex-con, lady. I wear a shiny suit, my tie's crooked, and the last time I got blown candy bars cost a nickel. Plus I'm ugly, so what's up?

CHARLY

Chemistry. Be quiet.

She nibbles his ear. Pulls back, smiling -- and Henessey's holding the picture of HAL and CAITLIN. The one he found torn in two. He looks her full in the face:

HENESSEY

Chemistry my ass. Know what I think? I think this is why you'd fuck me.

(beat)

To kill a schoolteacher. Bury any trace of her.

He pushes her away.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I liked the schoolteacher. When she comes back, give me a call.

Charly jerks backward. Angry. Henessey heads for the bathroom.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Oh, and call your fuckin' kid, will ya'? It's two days to Christmas, and she's under the mistaken impression that Mommy gives a shit.

Charly snatches up her purse, eyes burning:

CHARLY

I didn't ask for the kid, Mitch. Samantha had the kid, not me, NOBODY ASKED ME.

She storms out. CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHTTIME

Charly stalks the city streets. A quartet sings, "God Rest Ye Merry," ostensibly about joy, oddly the most depressing tune ever written. On a crowded street, she is alone. Total misfit. Searches her own haggard features in a shop window. Swallows hard, whispers:

CHARLY

Easy, baby. She ain't coming back,
no way. Bitch is dead.

She bustles down a sidestreet, hands jammed in her pockets. That's when a tall BEARDED MAN crosses the street and falls in alongside.

BEARDED MAN

Good evening.

CHARLY

Fuck off.

BEARDED MAN

I see me a good-looking lady, all
upset, I wonder if she doesn't need
some male company.

CHARLY

Forget it. I'm saving myself 'til I
get raped.

His hand edges out of his windbreaker with a snubnosed .38.

BEARDED MAN

Step into the alley, honey. I ain't
asking, I'm telling.

Charly stops walking. Regards him the way you or I might look at a telephone cord. Groans:

CHARLY

Oh, don't tell me. You're early,
Goddammit, you're supposed to be at
the pay phone. Go away and come
back at midnight. I'm not ready
yet. Got a light?

The guy stares, mouth working.

BEARDED MAN

Lady, I have a gun!

Which is precisely when a much larger Smith and Wesson COCKS next to his ear:

VOICE (V.O.)

This ain't no ham on rye, pal.

HENESSEY holds the gun rock steady in his big fist. Charly spins on him, eyes flashing:

CHARLY

What the hell are you doing here?

HENESSEY

Saving your life. Woulda got here sooner but I was thinking up the sandwich line.

CHARLY

You think I couldn't take him?
Idiot, you probably scared the other guy away --

HENESSEY

What other guy -- ?

CHARLY

Headhunters, nimrod, they go in pairs, were you always this stupid or did you take lessons?

HENESSEY

I TOOK LESSONS.

The hitman watches, bewildered. Considers waving to get their attention. Finally he can't stand it. Blurts out:

BEARDED MAN

Hey!

Charly snaps her head toward him:

CHARLY

What?

BEARDED MAN

I still got this fucking gun!

She smiles sweetly.

CHARLY

No, you don't.

Takes it off him. Just like that. He stares dumbly at his empty hand. Half of his trigger finger is missing.

BEARDED MAN
SHIIIIIT!!

Charly flips the gun into the air. Launches a SPIN KICK. Shatters his jaw. Catapults him backwards.

Completes her spin, catlike -- Catches the .38 on its way down. DOESN'T STOP THERE. Arm out, gun cocked -- FIRES. Straight at Henessey, what...? He dives aside --

BEHIND HIM, a second HITMAN. Blown to tatters. The KNIFE meant for Henessey arcs through the air...

Imbeds itself in the ground an inch from the prone detective. He stares at it with shocked eyes. The killer hits, dead. Twitches. CHARLY. Lowers her arm slowly. Gun barrel smoking.

CHARLY
Fuck you. Just fuck all of you.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY STREET - NIGHTTIME

A BRONCO ROARS UP out of a parking garage. Swerves and plunges into the maze of streets that inspired the world's most popular board game.

INT. BRONCO - SAME

Charly drives, possessed. Henessey drinks. Hands shaking.

CHARLY
Dammit. I knew I couldn't trust that prick.

She throws a shrieking skid. Henessey clutches for the dashboard, swearing.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
Easy, Spike. I got myself out of Beirut once, I think I can get us out of New Jersey.

HENESSEY
Don't be so sure, others have tried. The entire population, in fact.
(beat)
Look, about me...? I mean, what's up, you're this hot survival chick, I'm getting the feeling you don't need me anymore.

Charly reaches over. Yanks the doorhandle.

CHARLY

Good point.

She kicks him out of the moving car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

He bounces off the highway. Rolls. Over and over, shudders to a stop. Pause... The wind blows. He groans. Looks up, spits gravel. Stands. Dusts himself off. Watches the Bronco go far away.

TIME CUT - EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

As Henessey trudges wearily down the highway we HEAR:

HENESSEY (V.O.)

Dear Mom: I was tortured, now I'm in Atlantic City. The girl of my dreams just threw me out of a speeding car. Now more people will come and shoot me in the head. On the plus side, I won two bucks at video poker.

A SCREECH of tires, he turns, startled -- here comes the Bronco. Skids onto the highway and races back toward him. Pulls up alongside. CHARLY throws open the door, says:

CHARLY

Get in.

He does. Without a word. Closes the door, they drive off. He lights a cigarette like nothing happened. Shakes out the match, speaks without looking at her:

HENESSEY

Found a use for me.

CHARLY

Yep.

(beat)

I gotta vanish, Mitch. I need money, a whole bunch.

HENESSEY

Why didn't you say so? Gimme a second while I pull it out of my ass.

She turns to him, a gleam in her eye. Speaks softly:

CHARLY

The key, Mitch. The one I keep
around my neck.

HENESSEY

What about it?

CHARLY

What if I told you it's the key to
Box 406 at Pittsburgh International
Airport?

HENESSEY

How would you know? Someone filed
off the numbers.

CHARLY

Not someone. Me. I filed them off.
(beat)
There's a briefcase in Box 406,
Mitch.

HENESSEY

What's in it?

CHARLY

\$200,000.

Henessey does a spit-take, sprays whiskey.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Payment for my last assignment. I
need you to retrieve it for me.

HENESSEY

Why me?

CHARLY

Don't be stupid, they might have
the place covered. I don't want to
get shot to pieces.

HENESSEY

Shoulda known.
(sighs)
Gimme the key.

CHARLY

I'd love to. I left it with Caitlin
back in Ohio.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The BRONCO races on into the night...

INT. BRONCO - SAME TIME

Late, very late now. Henessey, driving. Beside him, Charly reclines, lost in reverie. Features bathed in passing roadlights. Henessey grinds out a butt:

HENESSEY

Humor me: you're a paid assassin, then you fall off a cliff. Sink under the ocean, and when you come out you're a fucking schoolmarm, wanna tell me what happened?

CHARLY

I fell into a school of fish, they elected me principal. Shut the fuck up.

HENESSEY

Mmmm. Personally...? I'm thinking maybe Samantha Caine wasn't an act. Maybe you forgot to hate yourself for eight years, ever think of that...?

CHARLY

Shut. The. Fuck. Up. Hmmm... Nope, seems clear enough to me. Hate myself, Christ almighty. What are you, my shrink?

HENESSEY

No, just some loser thought he could maybe understand, fuck it. I been there, you know. I'd kill for fucking amnesia. I'm with my boy and all I can think is I got reamed in the ass by three guys. Merry Christmas, son, here's a ball glove, did you know Daddy screamed when they carved the name in his back...? Mary, by the way. I pushed for Cindy, but hell. God, I'm tired.

(beat)

I never did one thing right, you know it, not one fucking thing. Not even accidental, that takes skill.

He looks over. She's asleep, hasn't heard a word. Face slack, lips slightly parted. The toughness banished from her features. In its place, a lingering sadness. CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAWN BREAKING

The Bronco glides along. Charly in the passenger seat, eyes roving like a hawk's. THE CAINE HOUSE is peaceful and quiet. Christmas lights, still burning dimly.

CHARLY

Drive past, don't slow down.

(points)

Park under those trees, honk if there's trouble.

HENESSEY

(bad Rochester)

Yas, massah, I be slowin' de caw down fo' you.

She stuffs a .45 automatic in her waistband. Cradles an MP-5 beneath her coat. Rolls out of the still-moving truck. Makes her way through back yards. Silent as a cat. She went to cookouts here. Bridge parties. Now she prowls, a grim assassin.

Leaps a fence, drops behind a woodpile -- Comes face to face with RAYMOND, a fifth grade student we saw earlier. Secreted behind the woodpile, SMOKING. His eyes pop as he spies good ol' Ms. Caine, sporting blonde hair and an assault weapon. Charly doesn't miss a beat:

CHARLY

Good morning, Raymond.

RAYMOND

Um... morning, Ms. Caine.

CHARLY

What did we learn about the dangers of smoking...? Give it here.

A wet stain appears at his crotch. He hands her the cigarette with nerveless fingers. Charly accepts it. Takes a long, satisfying drag. Passes it back.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Thanks. Tell anyone you saw me I'll blow your fucking head off.

Moves off through the bushes. Out of sight.

EXT. CAINE BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Charly kicks aside a pair of abandoned ice skates. Crouches, face pressed to the glass door. Looking in. The house is silent and empty. Nobody home.

The Christmas tree winks off and on. The tree she helped decorate. She opens the door and slips inside. CUT TO:

INT. GOVERNMENT ISSUE SEDAN - DRIVING - SAME TIME

Three GOVERNMENT AGENTS. Faces drawn, haggard. Pit-stained shirts, day old sandwiches. Carrying photographs of Charly and Henessey. Agent #1 sighs, examining her figure.

AGENT #1

Man, I'd eat a mile of her shit
just to follow it back to the ass
it came from.

AGENT #2

Christ, I'm trying to have
breakfast.

A RADIO MIC on the dash squawks, a voice says:

VOICE (O.S.)

Unit 2 to Red Dog, give us one more
pass, let's make sure the house is
secure.

EXT. CAITLIN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Charly enters. All business. Begins to systematically rifle the drawers. Her daughter's precious things. Sweeps everything onto the floor. Utter disregard, it's a bit startling.

Crosses to the bed, throws back the covers -- MR. PERKINS (the stuffed bear) has the chain around his neck.

We hear it, then. Ghosting on the still air, barely audible, the sound of SINGING... Children's voices waft across the frozen pond from St. Paul's Episcopal CHURCH. Charly frowns. Crosses to the window, lifts the sash.

Pause. Charly chews her lip. Unlimbers the MP-5. Hefts the wicked-looking thing. Not to fire it... but to use the SCOPE. Adjusts focus. Practiced movements. Deft. Sure. Sights down the weapon. Scans though the gunsights...

POV CHARLY: Hal's CHRISTMAS PAGEANT. There's Hal. Cast in spectral GREEN. Laughing and serving breakfast. On the church lawn, a NATIVITY scene. Teenage girls as the wise men. Choir of children, singing... CAITLIN among them.

Charly is sweating. She lowers the scope. Squeezes her eyes shut. Something in her, threatening to WRENCH LOOSE...

EXT. FRONT OF CAINE HOUSE - SAME TIME

Henessey, slouched behind the wheel. Starts to light a cigarette. Stops, the match halfway to his face. Eyes riveted on the rearview mirror as a GOVERNMENT SEDAN turns the corner behind him...

BACK WITH
CHARLY - INSIDE

Watching her family, far away. Fighting emotion. That's when she hears A HORN HONKING. Her head whips around, toward the front of the house. The honk is followed by three GUNSHOTS in rapid succession.

She's up and moving. All else forgotten.

EXT. FRONT OF CAINE HOUSE - SAME TIME

Henessey PEELS OUT, tires smoking. Careens forward, government SEDAN close behind --

The upstairs window EXPLODES outward. Charly, hurtles through. Freefalls to the porch roof. Glass, showering down. Hits, rolls. Surfaces in a combat crouch, FIRES.

Government sedan, KILLS THE PASSENGER. Collapses him over the doorframe. Gun clatters to the street, car speeds off --

INT. GOVERNMENT SEDAN - DRIVING

The driver looks over, incredulous.

DRIVER

He's dead. Goddammit, how did that happen??

BACKSEAT

Go bulletproof, now!

The driver hits a button and up go the windows. All, that is, except the passenger side window -- Because the dead guy's bald HEAD blocks it. Becomes WEDGED there. Bald pate exposed to the world.

BACK WITH CHARLY - FRONT OF HOUSE

Charly watches the two vehicles rocketing away down the street. Out of range. Lowers the smoking .45. SWEARS. Takes off around the house at a dead run.

INT. ST. PAUL'S - SAME TIME

Switch scenery: the Christmas Pageant, CAITLIN and fellow angels traipse into the church vestibule... Caitlin looks up just in time to see TIMOTHY apply the chloroform.

Two seconds, she's out like a light. Next case. Up and moving, child tucked neatly under his arm. A NEARBY MOTHER OF THREE has seen it happen. Opens her mouth to scream -- He palms a KNIFE. Puts it to her youngest son's kidney:

TIMOTHY

Wanna be a statistic, lady? You're about to have 2.4 children.

Freezes her. Petrified.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I know where you live. Close your mouth, you look like a fish. Merry Christmas.

He exits into the vestibule. Quick. Professional.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH:

High speed chase, in progress. The driver dogs Henessey, jockeys for position. Barks into a radio mic:

DRIVER

Target two, acquired! Red Dog in pursuit, backup requested.
(over his shoulder)
You got him?

BACKSEAT

I got him.

The backseat agent hefts an AK-47 assault rifle.

WITH HENESSEY - DRIVING

Henessey checks the rear view mirror -- just in time to see a circular portion of glass POP from the chase car's window. Out comes a gun muzzle.

HENESSEY

Jesus wept.

The guy opens up on full auto. Rakes the Bronco, STRAFES it. Henessey swerves madly -- no go. Death run. He's not coming home, not this time.

EXT. FROZEN POND - SAME TIME

CHARLY BALTIMORE hurtles forward, SPEED SKATING across the frozen pond toward the chase vehicles. Long, coltish legs, to die for.

CHARLY

This is gross, this is gonna be so
Goddamn gross...

She goes SIDESLIPPING at superhuman speed. Tacks alongside the government sedan. Targets the bald guy's head. Raises the .45 and FIRES. Not to be graphic, but the car's driver receives the bulk of the mess. SPRAYED.

Across the eyes. He loses control, SKIDS OUT. Catapults off the road, onto the ice. Slides right toward Charly, *still doing fifty*...

She doesn't miss a beat. LAUNCHES herself, twisting in midair... Up OVER THE HOOD of the sedan, it blows by underneath her as

ANOTHER ANGLE

The incredible part. In slow motion, she does a DOUBLE AXEL PIRHOUETTE. Above the hood. Mid-spin, she blows THREE SHOTS through the windshield. Kills everyone. Keeps going. The car spins twice around. PLOWS to a halt -- Charly hits a picture perfect landing.

On the shore, HENESSEY watches, thunderstruck. Charly skates by the icebound sedan. Flashes a grin at the dying driver:

DRIVER

Shit... it really... *is* you...

CHARLY

Phil...? Phil Krauss? I don't believe it, they moved you from cyphers. Long time, man, I figured you were dead by now.

She delivers a blow to the neck. Kills him. CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DRIVING - DAYTIME

Henessey and Charly, driving a new vehicle: late model Cadillac. Charly driver. Henessey rifles the glove compartment.

CHARLY

So, Mitch. Still think I'm warm and fuzzy?

HENESSEY

Sure. It's not your fault the gun accidentally went off in mid-air as you tripped and flew over the car.

CHARLY

Exactly. What's in the glove box?

HENESSEY

Phone bill, Christmas card... Five buck, swell. You didn't have to kill him, you know.

CHARLY

Back off, man. Do I tell you how to snap photos of extramarital blowjobs? No.

There is a short, CHIRPING sound. Seemingly from nowhere. They exchange puzzled looks, what the hell...? Charly abruptly realizes it's coming from her purse. She reaches in, scoops up the CELLULAR PHONE, the one she told Caitlin to call. Thumbs the button. Says cautiously:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Hello?

A voice, then... Clipped tones, TIMOTHY'S voice:

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

It's me, I got your kid. Give your location, we gotta lose the cellular.

Charly. Hand gripped tight on the phone. Pause, then:

CHARLY

State Road 80, 15 minutes west of Harrison.

TIMOTHY

Okay, here's how we do it. Drive to Harrison, find their main bus stop. Pay phone, fifteen minutes. Better drive fast, after five rings I hang up.

Click.

HENESSEY

What the hell was that?

CHARLY

He's got the kid. Doesn't want to talk on the airwaves, he's routing me to a land line. A pay phone.

HENESSEY

Which phone? Where?

The detective's mind, racing... suddenly it hits him:

HENESSEY (CONT'D)

Shit. Service centers...! They list 'em on the back of phone bills, right?

CHARLY

Excuse me?

HENESSEY

Shut up and find me a gun. HK, MP-5.

As he rips open the bill we CUT TO:

A neutral background, as Charly's HEAD enters frame, we're very tight on her FACE... Tense, thin-lipped. A PHONE RINGS, deafening. Click -- Charly speaks tersely:

CHARLY

Verify you have her.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

I got your cellular number off a cast on her right wrist. Right below Mommy loves you... Picture of a panda. Dog, panda, it's got funky ears.

CLOSE ON CHARLY: Dead still. Made of glass.

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

I want money, Charly. I know you've got numbered accounts, we all do. I'll let you know where and when. Fuck with me...? I'll blind the kid and shoot out her knees.

CHARLY

You're dead, motherfucker. We don't involve families. It's not the way it's done, *we don't take families*.

TIMOTHY
I'll be in touch.

He hangs up. Dead silence. HOLD on Charly's face... until slowly, ever so slowly, the camera pulls back to REVEAL:

The .45 automatic -- Pointed at the head of an AT&T operator. THE PHONE COMPANY, they've taken it over. Employees CRINGE on the floor. Hennessey, MP-5 slung on his shoulder, leveled. Charly points to the switchboard:

CHARLY
Give me an ANI trace. Do it.

EXT. PINE-COVERED MOUNTIANS - UPSTATE NEW YORK - MORNING

Set back from the mountain road, a lonely MOTEL. A neon sign: *Deer Lick Motel*, No vacancies. The sign sits atop a rusty pole. Blinks forlornly.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

TIMOTHY hangs up and turns to MR. PERKINS, seated across the room:

TIMOTHY
It's done, she hooked. All I gotta do is set the ransom meet.

PERKINS
She mustn't suspect a trap.

TIMOTHY
No way. She thinks I'm acting alone, remember? Say the word, I'll hand her to you on a plate.

Perkins crosses to the bed. Rubs tired eyes. Gazes down at Caitlin. Asleep, a syringe on the nightstand beside her. Next to a brown paper bag.

PERKINS
God. We're monsters, aren't we...?
(pause, then:)
Forget Charly. Talk to me about tonight.

TIMOTHY
The tanker's on its way from Charleston, ETA 1:00 a.m. One terrorist on ice, waiting to play patsy.
(points)
What's in the sack?

Perkins follows his gaze: the brown paper bag. Smiles thinly.

PERKINS

That...? Something to prove that I'm not a complete ogre.

He reaches into the paper bag and brings out a BABY DOLL. Sweet, innocent. Frilly with lace. A bright red bow.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

See? The young one will have a doll to play with on Christmas. Very popular item. It... well, it pees. You put water in it and... oh, fuck you.

INT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT - NEW YORK STATE - TWILIGHT

Charly and Henessey, eating at HARDEE'S. Seated across from each other at an orange plastic table, scarfing Christmas burgers. Outside, a billboard reads: WELCOME TO SANTA CLAUS! *Where it's Christmas all year long*!

HENESSEY

Almost dark now.

CHARLY

Another ten minutes. You want my Crazy Meal action figure?

HENESSEY

Pass. Listen, you sure we're doing the right thing? We've got money, we could negotiate...

CHARLY

I'll get the damn kid, okay? God, I hope he doesn't shoot her up. Kid's dead weight if she's sedated.

HENESSEY

Not so emotional, I'm getting embarrassed with these outbursts here.

CHARLY

Oh, balls. Want me to cry on cue? I can. This is an extraction, nimrod, and she's the target, that's how to play it, the only way to beat this guy.

HENESSEY

Yeah? How come you know so much about this fucking guy?

CHARLY

Don't go there, Mitch, you don't want to know.

HENESSEY

I'm here. Suppose you tell me.

CHARLY

Fine, you asked. I bumped pelvises with this guy. In Paris, back in

She knows she's shocking him, rubs it in:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

I'd been assigned to kill his boss, remember...? Needed him out of the way. So I let him seduce me. Had a steel needle under the pillow, figured to stick him *en flagrante*, that means while we were screwing. But he was too slick. Bashed me in the head, finished, then threw me in the trunk of a car. Still think I'm a girl scout, Mitch...?

The look in her eyes is feral.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

It's almost dark. Let's get it done.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHTTIME

Full dark now, the fun begins... A TANKER TRUCK rumbles up the mountain road. Pulls up before the Deer Lick Motel. MEN IN SUITS wield flashlights, motioning the truck forward into a cavernous GARAGE. Inside, men in BLUE JUMPSUITS operate cranes, maneuver a FILL TANK into place above the truck.

EXT. SURROUNDING MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME TIME

In the distance, as the tanker enters the garage -- CHARLY BALTIMORE drops into frame. Lands and rolls, cat-quick. Comes up behind a scrawny pine. Scans through a pair of Zeiss Nightvision binoculars.

Welcome to the extraction. No more fun and games, tonight it's a survival-zero operation.

HENESSEY appears at her elbow. Lugging the ordnance bag. He sees Charly lower the binoculars, head in hands.

HENESSEY
What's the matter?

CHARLY
They're here.

HENESSEY
Who?

CHARLY
Fucking Chapter, that's who.
Timothy acting alone, Caitlin had a
chance. Now...? She's dead meat.

INT. BUNKER - SAME TIME

As the tanker snorts to a halt, TIMOTHY pulls up, driving a bright red Jaguar. Gets out as a blue-suit trots up:

BLUE-SUIT
hours. We're still trying to clean
the tanker --

TIMOTHY
(scowls annoyance)
Fuck the cleaning, just drain it
and reload. Chop-chop, I'm going
bunjee jumping after this.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME TIME

Charly and Henessey. Kneeling. He speaks tersely:

HENESSEY
Let me go in.

CHARLY
Negative. You stomp around like a
forties drunk and you're a lousy
shot.

HENESSEY
I get by.

CHARLY
You couldn't hit a lake if you were
standing on the bottom, now shut
the fuck up.

Charly studies the encampment. Armed men. Impossible odds. Draws a long ragged breath and flops on the ground. Props her back against a tree. Staring. Lights a cigarette:

CHARLY (CONT'D)
I saw a little girl.

HENESSEY
(frowns)
Come again?

CHARLY
That's what happened under the water. That night, eight years ago.

She looks up at the sky. Face troubled.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
At the end... there she was, this pretty little girl at the bottom of the ocean, smiling at me. Three years old, didn't know Daddies hid in closets, not yet. Stared up at me in the strangest way... saying how'd it come to this, we were so pretty and perfect, now look at us, sinking with our head all open... Said when she grew up she was gonna teach school. She couldn't wait.

She heaves a sigh. Threads a silencer on a baretta.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
Guards are on 27-1 megahertz, meet me at 26-9, you need to talk. As soon as you spot me with the kid, start blowing the charges.

Henessey nods. Pause -- she does something unexpected. Leans over and kisses him hard on the lips. He reacts, startled. She pulls back, the oddest look on her face.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
They're gonna blow my head off, you know.
(softly:)
This is the last time I'll ever be pretty.

She kisses him again. Softly. Tenderly. Pulls back, turns without a word.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Time now. What I do next, they tell me it... looks like a machine or something. You don't like it, don't look.

She moves off toward the trees. Henessey shifts from foot to foot, awkwardly. Opens his mouth --

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Don't say it.

HENESSEY

I was gonna say enjoy life, eat out more often.

CHARLY

Gotta go.

(beat)

If she's alive, she's coming out of there, Mitch. If she's not... they'll know we stopped by.

She's gone, like a wraith. CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS: Charly, on the prowl. In and out of the trees... BURYING C-4 CHARGES. In bushes. In snowdrifts. She crawls to woods' edge, peers out -- The motel stands solemn and bedraggled. Draws a sharp breath -- !

There's a LIT CANDLE in the window of 17. CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL GROUNDS - SAME TIME

A gray-suited SENTRY. Poised on a wooded slope. He puts a walkie-talkie to his lips and says:

SENTRY

All clear.

CHARLY, out of nowhere. Lightning fast. Hand, clamped on mouth. In goes the knife. Deep. He burbles blood. Drops. Before he hits, Charly's already switched from knife to gun and moved on.

EXT. UNIT 17 - SAME TIME

Charly appears from the shadows. Ghosts up to the window of #17 and peers in. Scans. Misses nothing. Crosses to the door, taps lightly. Watches the PEEPHOLE, a tiny pinprick of light. Abruptly darkened by a human eye --

She presses the silenced Beretta to the hole and fires. Sputs of splinters. From behind the door, a muffled thud. She goes to work on the lock.

BACK WITH HENESSEY - MINUTES HAVE PASSED

Henessey lies prone, binoculars trained on the motel.

HENESSEY

Christ, lady, what are you doing in there, playing fucking mah-jongg?
Move.

Behind him, a tiny, sharp click--! TIMOTHY has a Skorpion machine pistol aimed at his head.

The killer speaks into a radio unit, a single word --

TIMOTHY

Bogey.

POP--! go the Kleig lights. BRILLIANCE, blinding -- CATCHES CHARLY coming out of 17. Pins her dead to rights. Unconscious DAUGHTER cradled in her arms. Tiny DOLL cradled in the kid's. Charly runs, as the ground around her erupts like a SHELLBURST.

TIMOTHY, MEANWHILE, shouting into his walkie-talkie, saying:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Take her alive, Perkins wants her!

Henessey watches, helpless and PANICKED, as Charly tumbles BACKWARD. Crashes through a CELLAR ACCESS, it splinters beneath her...! Plunges into blackness.

INT. CELLAR - PITCH BLACK

She hits, cushions the kid. Grunt of PAIN... THE DARKNESS EXPLODES into kaleidoscopic FLASHES OF GUNFIRE, Charly strafe it all. Blows through the clip, hits the lights:

She's killed household items. BRICK WALLS, blasted. Rusty tools, faded signs -- THREE TEN-GALLON GAS CANS which she's managed to PERFORATE, good one, Charly... The gas comes bubbling out on burps and splatters, drenching the floor.

Charly casts about for an escape route. Set into the brick wall, a huge steel DOOR. She flings it open -- MEAT LOCKER. Nothing there, no help. Eyes darting. Possessed.

A GRAVELY VOICE wafts down from above, then. Deadly serious:

VOICE (O.S.)

I smell gasoline, you have a little accident...? I got plenty of matches up here. Bad way for a kid to go. Thirty seconds, think it over.

CHARLY stands in place, mind racing... Caitlin's DOLL. Regards her dully. Plastic smile like it knows a secret. CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - 2ND FLOOR - NIGHTTIME

A MATCH FLARES as it descends into the bowl of a pipe... MR. PERKINS puffs mightily. Turns and favors CHARLY and HENESSEY with a thoughtful gaze, they're handcuffed to radiator... TIMOTHY straddles a nearby chair. Smiles and says:

TIMOTHY

Good to have you back again, Chuck.

PERKINS

You know, Colonel, you ought really to have stayed dead. You don't know the rules of the game anymore.

CHARLY

No shit. Eight years ago, you send me to kill Daedalus and this clown. Now you're working *with* him.

He crosses to the fireplace, flips the match inside.

PERKINS

Budget cuts, remember? Congress blinded us in Eastern Europe, Central America. Across the board, an intelligence blackout. We had to recruit any eyes and ears we could find, even if it meant going to former targets.

Pause. Suddenly Charly's eyes go wide. She whispers:

CHARLY

Budget cuts... oh, God. Is *that* what this is about...? The foot soldiers, the tanker truck... Fuck me, you're running a fundraiser!!

Comprehension, dawning. She looks up in disbelief.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

You'll get all the money you want at the next budget hearing, won't you...? All you need is a major terrorist incident.

PERKINS

Interesting theory.

CHARLY

Theory, my ass. I think some terrorists were planning a strike. Bought supplies from Daedalus, that's how you knew they were coming...

(eyes widening)

No way. Don't tell me you're gonna sit there and let them go through with it, *just to get a budget increase*.

Perkins shrugs philosophically.

PERKINS

It's not without precedent. 1993, remember the World Trade Center bombing...? The CIA had advance knowledge, don't think they didn't. Worse, the diplomat who issued the terrorist's visa was CIA, they *facilitated* the bombing. Purely to justify a budget increase. Of course, they'd no way of knowing the terrorists would botch the job.

CHARLY

That's not gonna happen this time...?

PERKINS

No. This time, the terrorist event will come off precisely as planned. This time the terrorists can't muck it up... because we've killed them and taken over.

Charly and Hennessey react, startled...

EXT. MOTEL GROUNDS - NIGHTTIME

On the move. Our two heroes, shepherded across the compound. Timothy's casualness is belied by the presence of two dyspeptic GUARDS, each keeping a safe distance.

A POCK-FACED AGENT approaches briskly, RIFLE across his shoulder. Holds out his hand:

POCK
Found these buried around the
perimeter.

Timothy studies it: C-4 CHARGE with remote detonation unit.

TIMOTHY
Make sure you get all of them.

The agent rushes off. Timothy looks at Charly reproachfully:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
Chuck, you give me the fuck of my
life then try to stick me, come
back from the dead, whack my
boss... No sense lyin', I'm miffed.

Moves like lightning. WHACK-! Kidney shot. Charly stumbles, vision going black. Fights for balance. Henessey starts to react but a GUN MUZZLE stops him. Charly straightens. Grits her teeth, says:

CHARLY
So what's the plan? What's going
out in the tanker?

Timothy and the guards exchange looks. Cracking up, they can't believe it -- Charly's not laughing. Looks at Timothy with hooded, lifeless eyes:

CHARLY (CONT'D)
What's the plan? I'm gonna die, I
wanna know.

Timothy lights a cigarette. Studies Charly.

TIMOTHY
You wanna know the plan?

He casually points to the neighboring valley, where Christmas lights twinkle.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
Santa Claus -- small town U.S.A.
personified. We drive the chemical
tanker in tonight, park it. Add a
catalyst, chain reaction, it goes
hot. We evacuate. The mix heats
overnight, goes critical at 312
degrees Celsius.

(MORE)

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
8:00 Christmas morning... Main
Street looks like a meteor strike.

HENESSEY
Are you fucking insane? You're
talking about 10,000 people!!

CHARLY
Easy, Mitch.
(to Timothy)
How you gonna blame it on
terrorists?

TIMOTHY
Those roads are treacherous this
time of year. When we dump a car to
the bottom of a ravine, with the
corpse of Imn Al Rahman in it...
get the picture?

Pause. Charly summons herself. Her voice a dull rasp:

CHARLY
Listen to me, Timothy. Please. Let
my kid go.

TIMOTHY
Why? For old times' sake...?

She shakes her head:

CHARLY
Goddamn you, *look at her eyes*...

TIMOTHY
And why exactly should I do
that...?

CHARLY
(spits blood)
Because they're yours,
motherfucker.

She stares Timothy full in the face.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
That night in Paris, I got
pregnant. The little girl's your
daughter.

Dead silence. A pause... Then Timothy brays LAUGHTER.

TIMOTHY
Priceless. Can't believe it...

Hooting out loud. Tears, streaming... He manages to bring himself under control. Stops, gestures to the CELLAR ACCESS, the dark awaits...

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Kid's down there. What it is, Charly, they're gonna find you both frozen to death in the woods. Suicide pact.

Charly fights to contain herself.

CHARLY

She's no risk, Timothy, *let her go*.

TIMOTHY

The freezer's downstairs, Charly. Let's get it done.

Charly and Henessey are separated at gunpoint. A look passes between them. Henessey swallows hard.

HENESSEY

I'll wait for you to rescue me.

CHARLY

Be just a minute.

Charly goes through the opening.

INT. CELLAR - SAME TIME

The same CELLAR she occupied earlier. Timothy behind her, he wrinkles his nose in distaste.

TIMOTHY

Shit, this place is loaded with fumes, nobody light a fucking match. You check her for flammables?

GUN GUARD

(shrugs)

Checked her for colon cancer.

Caitlin is sitting in a chair.

Bundled in flannel, clutching her baby doll, the one Perkins bought for her. She looks up at Charly dully. Sucking her thumb.

CAITLIN

Mommy...

Charly composes herself.

CHARLY

Shhhhh. Mommy's here, it's okay.
Safe and snug... what comes next,
huh...? What's the next part?

CAITLIN

...bug in a rug... man with white
hair... says the same thing you
say...

Charly licks her lips. Easy, Charly, keep cool, she mustn't die afraid...

CHARLY

We're going to take a nap together,
Cate. You can have your dolly, and
Mommy will be next to you, how's
that? It'll be like bears in
winter. When they get cold, see,
they fall deep, deep asleep...

TIMOTHY

Bears, yeah, yeah. Enough.

He points to the STEEL DOOR of the meat freezer. The guard opens it onto a gleaming silver CHAMBER. Timothy calmly adjusts the thermostat. Sub zero. The guard reaches for Caitlin's doll... Charly snatches it back. Face etched in disgust.

CHARLY

You're murdering us both,
cocksucker, let the kid have her
fucking dolly.

He subsides, unable to meet her gaze. At which point, Timothy tosses her the WOODEN BOX.

TIMOTHY

Chuck, I'm not a total creep. I'll
make you a deal, okay? There's a
knife in that box. Now, you and the
kid, you're going to freeze, *but* -
- if you kill the kid *by your own
hand*...? I won't kill your
husband. Serious. We're gonna open
that door and you'll both be frozen
solid, but I wanna know that you've
cut your own child's throat.

You don't want to ever be on the receiving end of the LOOK she gives him... Steps into the freezer, holding Caitlin. As the door starts to swing shut, she says:

CHARLY

It ain't over, motherfucker. You're gonna die screaming and I'm gonna watch. Am I telling the truth...?

She flashes him her most DAZZLING smile -- The whole room lights up. She can do that. As the door erases her from view, a chill dances up Timothy's spine... because there was nothing resembling doubt on her face.

INT. CELLAR MEAT LOCKER - SAME TIME

CHARLY crosses with Caitlin to the far corner.

CAITLIN

Mom, it's cold in here-!

CHARLY

Shhh. Just for a little bit. Polar bear, remember?

Moves. Quick. Methodical. Breaks open the BOX: Sure enough, a hunting knife. Without missing a beat, she crosses to the STEEL DOOR. Kneels and begins DIGGING at the bottom edge. CARVING into the brick, what the hell...?

INT. UPSTAIRS INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Henessey, by the window. Tied to a chair. Timothy paces before him, carrying three razor-keen SCALPELS. Pegs one into the wall with deadly accuracy.

TIMOTHY

Tell me where Charly keeps her money. She must have mentioned it.

HENESSEY

Get fucked, you dumb bastard. Charly called Washington, by morning this whole place'll be crawling with Feds.

TIMOTHY

We'll be gone by then, Mitch.

HENESSEY

Yeah, well, that's what I'm saying, there's a couple Feds, they couldn't sleep, said they might come early. Fuck you, someone'll screw up. Just watch.

TIMOTHY

Already did, Mitch, someone already did. Perkins got stuck with a double agent, someone trusted, highly placed.

HENESSEY

Who?

TIMOTHY

Me.

(chuckles)

Chinks are paying me to bring down Chapter.

Henessey reacts, startled. Timothy chuckles:

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Truck goes, hundreds dead -- rescue teams within minutes, guess what they find...?

HENESSEY

The patsy.

TIMOTHY

Uh-uh. They find Chapter, caught with their pants down. See, Mitch, I dumped in a much faster chemical catalyst...

(beat)

The tanker's gonna blow *tonight*. In the center of town, thirty-five minutes from now.

INT. CELLAR MEAT LOCKER - SAME TIME

CHARLY, sweating at sub zero. Brushes hair from her eyes. Blinks. Still jabbing with the knife, *why the hell is she digging*? Gonna crawl under the damn door? She's gone loopy. Lying flat, she appraises her work --

A TINY NOTCH. Poked through to the other side. The actual penetration to daylight: millimeters. Then, she does two seemingly nonsensical things: Crosses to Caitlin -- gently takes the doll from her, then:

CHARLY

Open.

Reaches in her mouth. Takes out her RETAINER.

Must be the temperature. Crosses to the door again. Kneels down. Calmly, with infinite care, takes the retainer...

Inverts it, now it's *trough*-shaped. Holds it flush against the tiny NOTCH she carved. BABY DOLL, now. Holds it directly above the retainer. Depresses the KNOB in its back:

It pees gasoline. Gas, trickling down the retainer, through the brick -- into the other ROOM.

Not much. Enough. She stands. DRAWS A TRAIL with the doll. Crosses, dribbling, over to Caitlin. Hands the doll back to her. What next..?

She grabs the hunting knife, that's what. RAISES IT HIGH -- One terrifying moment, is she gonna put it in the kid...? Hardly. Brings it down on the floor. Slams it down.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Gimme a spark... show me, show me...

Tries again. And again. STRIKING, over and over. Floor RINGS with the effort --

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Come on, come on... do it...!

But in the end, it's just not gonna happen. *Won't work*. Lets go a GROAN of despair:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

All this, just one fucking match, *Goddamit*...!

She collapses forward. Cradles her head in frustration. There's a tiny tap in her shoulder.

CAITLIN

Mommy...?

Charly looks up, face haggard and depleted... Caitlin's eyes, alive again. No longer dulled. Kid reaches inside her CAST and brings out a pack of matches.

CAITLIN (CONT'D)

Don't cry. I keep these here.
(beat)
For lighting your candle.

Charly stares, dumbstruck, at the tiny gift.

The bitterness, the self-hatred, all of it. Under innocent eyes on Christmas Eve DETONATES, blown sky-high, and she sweeps up her daughter and cradles her, tears streaming...

CHARLY

I love you, Caitlin, oh God, do you
know how much I love you...?

Caitlin pulls back, looks flush in her mother's face.

CAITLIN

Am I gonna die...?

From a dark and cold place, Caitlin has led her home. Charly's eyes, like steel. A harsh whisper:

CHARLY

No, baby, you're not gonna die.
They are.

She strikes a match.

INT. SECOND STORY INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Henessey, straining against his bonds. Sweating.

TIMOTHY

Charly's stash. What's the number
of the locker, Mitch...?

HENESSEY

Fuck you.

TIMOTHY across the room, a good forty feet.

TIMOTHY

Left nut, five bucks I make it.

Smiling, he raises a scalpel. Eyes dead like a rat's.

INT. CELLAR MEAT LOCKER - SAME TIME

The flame hovers above the gasoline trail.

CHARLY

When I tell you, scream as loud as
you can, or else your ears'll get
hurt.

A tiny nod. Charly calmly touches fire to the fuel. Cradles Caitlin to her chest, gently strokes her hair...

CHARLY (CONT'D)
 Hey, should we buy a dog...?

The flame races across the room. Hits the steel door. And zip! Vanishes through the NOTCH. A pause...

THE BASEMENT BLOWS SKY-HIGH.

Wooden walls, obliterated. Boards sheared. Atomized. THE MEAT LOCKER DOOR blows inward like a cannon shot. Holds to its hinges, buckled like JIFFY POP.

INT. UPSTAIRS INTERROGATION ROOM

TIMOTHY'S THROW is off target, sticks in Henessey's chair. Between his legs. Inches. Then the assassin LEAVES HIS FEET, look of comic surprise -- as the walls behind him disintegrate in FLAME. Henessey cries out, blinded as

EXT. MOTEL BUILDING

He's blown backward OUT THE WINDOW. Chair and all, lofting across the middle distance... blasts through the MOTEL SIGN. Blows it to SPLINTERS. Tumbles, and over end... lands, WHAM. Atop the garage's CORRUGATED ROOF. Chair flies to sticks.

A BLUE SUIT spins, startled. Gun comes up -- Henessey doesn't miss a beat. Reaches between his legs. Plucks the KNIFE from the wood and slings it...! Guy takes it in the head, drops. Some days you get lucky.

He looks up in disbelief. FIREBALL, raging to Heaven.

HENESSEY
 You foxy bitch.

EXT. BLAST SITE - SAME TIME

TIMOTHY staggers from the smoke. Nicked and bloodied -- ALIVE. Rushes into the cavernous GARAGE, where blue-suits scuttle like ants. Points to the tanker, face crazed:

TIMOTHY
 Move it out of here, now!

EXT. MOTEL GROUNDS - TRAVELING WITH CHARLY - SAME TIME

Caitlin in tow, SMOKE everywhere. Running flat out across the compound. Eyes ticking back and forth, missing nothing... Sees a gun on the ground, scoops it up: promptly DROPS IT, the fucking thing's red hot.

That's when the POCK-FACED KILLER lurches out of the smoke, blade arcing for her throat.

CHARLY

Run, Catey.

She goes under the blade. SLAMS him. Down they go, hit the dirt -- CAITLIN beats feet, vanishes into the smoke.

Charly, fighting for her life. Manages to KICK FREE. He rears up. Poised to hurl the KNIFE. Charly, dives, rolls -- scoops up the gun and SCREAMS as her flesh sizzles and it spurts three times and blows him down.

Doesn't stop. Rips the AUTOMATIC RIFLE from his shoulder. Rummages in his coat -- Cube of C-4. Even better. Casts about, searching the smoke... No sign of her daughter.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHTTIME

CAITLIN darts in and out of the trees. Frightened. In the background, men rush back and forth. The MOTEL burns merrily. Then, above the shouts, A RUMBLING noise, she darts a look -- as THE TANKER comes trundling out of the garage.

POV CAITLIN: Attached to the rear of the truck bed, a bright yellow UTILITY BOX, roughly three by three. As the driver idles, waiting for the road to clear -- Caitlin BREAKS COVER. Runs and climbs inside the box, and meanwhile

BACK WITH
CHARLY - SAME
TIME

Her mother. Crouched behind Timothy's RED JAGUAR. Scans through the rifle's Starlight Scope. Sweating. Intense. We see the landscape, cast in ghostly GREEN.

CHARLY

Where'd you go, baby... show
Mommy...

There. Bingo. Charly watches through the scope as a TINY GREEN CAITLIN climbs into the box and shuts the lid. Unfortunately, a nearby blue-suit has WITNESSED this. He looks around, stabbing a finger at the box:

NOSY BLUE-SUIT

Hey. Hey, you see that? A little
kid --

A bullet slams him backward in a cut-string sprawl.

WITH CHARLY

She lowers the rifle. Nods grimly:

CHARLY

Smart girl, honey. Stay still.
Don't make a sound. Snug as a bug
in a rug...

MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE ON THE GROUNDS

HENESSEY, on the move. Crouched low. Choking on woodsmoke, eyes streaming. Up ahead, a splayed CORPSE -- He hunkers over the poor schmuck, guy's good for a radio. Snatches up the portable unit. Fumbles with the dial, searching for 26.9 megahertz...

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - HIGH ABOVE MOTEL - SAME TIME

CHARLY slews to a stop in the red Jag. Leaps out. Darts along the cliff, throws herself flat. Peering down at the grounds, sniper rifle positioned -- Babysitting the tanker.

HEARS HENESSEY... Calling to her on the radio.

HENESSEY (V.O.)

Charly, you there? Hello, Charly.

Grabs the unit from her belt:

CHARLY

Mitch! I don't believe it. Listen, if you say, "Are we having fun yet" I'll rip your nuts off. Where are you?

HENESSEY

Behind the big garage. Is Caitlin with you?

CHARLY

No, but she's safe for the moment, she stowed away on the tanker truck.

Henessey draws a sharp breath. Swallows, says:

HENESSEY

Charly, Timothy rigged the tanker to go off early. We got fifteen minutes. No more.

On her reaction we CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADSIDE - WITH TANKER AND EN TOURAGE

Beside the tanker, A PANEL TRUCK sits, engine idling. Phony logo on its side -- *Little Debbie* snack cakes.

A RAMP is lowered, and a CAR begins backing up into the truckbed, facing outwards.

INSIDE THE TRUCKBED, harried blue-suits hurriedly unwrap the frost-covered corpse of IMN AL RAHMAN -- and place him behind the wheel.

MEANWHILE, AT THE BACK OF THE TANKER

A blue-suit puts a PADLOCK on the utility box as he passes.

SNAPS IT SHUT.

BACK WITH HENESSEY - SAME TIME

He hears two flat CRACK-!s on the still air.

HENESSEY
Hello...! Charly...?

Even over the receiver, her desperation's apparent:

CHARLY
Tires won't pop, Mitch. Bastard
just locked her in, she's stuck in
there and they're leaving,
Goddammit!

Henessey rubs his eyes. Takes several deeps breaths, mind turning it over. He looks up. Tired. Haunted.

HENESSEY
All right, I'll go in and get her,
you watch my back.

CHARLY
No chance. I make it twelve, Mitch,
automatic weapons.

HENESSEY
So kill 'em for me, bitch, Christ,
what are you good for?

He stuffs a fresh clip in the gun. Wipes away sweat.

HENESSEY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
C'mon, buddy. Do one thing right,
just this once... please...

Closes his eyes. Gathers himself. Long pause...

HENESSEY (CONT'D)
Piece of cake.

He leaps from the roof and makes a death run.

Gun in one hand, radio in the other. Swerving and dodging like a broken-field runner, CHARLY in his ear screaming:

CHARLY (V.O.)
Your nine, on your nine!

He spins, BLASTS AWAY, dead guy, pitching forward -- SMOKE, billowing, making him COUGH...

CHARLY (V.O.)
30 degrees left, Mitch. Left.
(beat)
Your other left.

Stumbling, catching himself. Barreling forward.

CHARLY (V.O.)
*Nix, nix, I can't see in there,
don't do it, break right...*!

He breaks right.

CHARLY (V.O.)
*Fuck me, I was wrong, get outta
there*!

He staggers out of the smoke: TWO MEN, MP-5 machine guns. Trained on his chest. He struggles to aim, oh, shit -- Two distant CRACKS. The bad men go away, catapulted backwards. Henessey shouts into the radio:

HENESSEY
Gracias.

CHARLY (V.O.)
De nada.

UP ABOVE, ON THE HILL

CHARLY fires shot after shot. Every time she squeezes the trigger, someone dies. No such thing as wounded, we're talking St. Peter looks up from a magazine and says holy shit, it's the lunch rush at Kate Mantilini's.

BACK DOWN BELOW

The smoke clears and Mitch sees the tanker. Right there, thirty yards away. Yellow UTILITY BOX. No one in the way.

CHARLY (V.O.)
End run, Mitch, go wide!

He breaks for the truck.

CHARLY (V.O.)
 *No, Goddamn you, they got you
 flanked...*!

Everybody fires a gun.

MITCH GETS HIT

Takes one high in the chest, SPINS him...!

UP ON THE HILL

CHARLY SPRAYS on full auto, DICES TO TATTERS the combat zone, extinguishing the gunmen, too little too late because

MITCH IS IN DEEP

BAM--! bullet takes out his right arm, fuck *you*, buddy, doesn't miss a beat, simply tosses the gun over to the other hand and KEEPS SHOOTING, blows that fucker down and now he's staggering into the trees, and collapses, and HITS... And lies very still and bleeds. As ECHOES of gunfire die slowly, we HEAR:

HENESSEY (V.O.)
 Dear Ma: I'm looking at the ants,
 they're pretty great. Some really
 funny ants here, Ma. All these
 funny ants, think I'll stay and
 watch 'em awhile...

UP ON THE HILL

Aftermath... Charly's out of ammo. Flings aside the rifle, snarling in a helpless rage -- Something else, then. SOUND, nearby. Building in pitch, reaching a crescendo --

A SCREAMING CHOPPER RISES BEHIND HER.

Crests the cliff and hovers like the SWORD OF DAMOCLES.

INT. CHOPPER - SAME TIME

MARKSMAN, riding shotgun. Scans the cliff below: Thick evergreens. Charly, somewhere among them. He sights down his rifle, takes careful aim -- BLOWS OUT TIRES on the Jaguar. Cripples it. The chopper BANKS, heading away.

BACK WITH
 CHARLY - SAME
 TIME

In big trouble. MANY HEADLIGHTS, bouncing uphill toward her. Cut off, they've cut her off -- The other direction ain't much better: A 200 FOOT DROP. Straight down. Evergreen trees, far below. Power lines. Highway.

She hears the PHONE RINGING, then... inside the Jag. Crosses slowly. Reaches in, lifts the receiver. It's TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY (V.O.)

I tried to give you a pretty death, baby. Did my best. Now you're fucked, now it's ground beef time.

CHARLY

The truck. How long til it blows?

TIMOTHY

(incredulous)

Sweet Loretta, you're another animal entirely. Let's see, 312 degrees... Make it ten minutes, give or take.

CHARLY

Then I better hurry.

TIMOTHY

Oh, spare me. You made a big noise and bought five more minutes on the planet. Give up. Die. I'll spit in what's left of your face.

He clicks off. Charly drops the receiver. Turns, looks behind: They're coming for her.

Woods filled with headlights. Backlit FIGURES. Ducking in and out of the trees, getting closer... The wind blows. Bitter cold out here in the dark night of the soul. Nothing left. No hope. No reason.

Caitlin, dead.

The rage explodes in the form of a kick which SHATTERS the lock on the trunk. *Dammit*, she needs a fucking miracle.

At that moment, the trunk lid slowly rises, CREAKING... Revealing all of Timothy's BUNJEE JUMPING EQUIPMENT.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - SAME TIME

The TANKER is rolling. Out onto the road, snorting and belching. Preceded by the Little Debbie PANEL TRUCK.

INT. UTILITY BOX - ON TANKER - SAME TIME

Poor little Caitlin huddles in the dark. All alone. ROARING in her ears. Sort of like being underwater.

EXT. TANKER TRUCK - CLOSE ON UNDERBELLY

A silver device attached to the skin of the tank.

WITH TIMOTHY - CROSSING THE SMOKE-FILLED GROUNDS

He consults a tiny, liquid crystal display on his watch. Red numerals. *178 degrees*.

EXT. CLIFF'S EDGE - WITH CHARLY

She won't quit. Busy now, deftly sticking the wad of C-4 EXPLOSIVE to the bottom of the Jaguar. Straightens. Turns around --

Stands dead calm as they all come out of the TREES, guns drawn... Raises her hands, see, boys...? No bang-bang.

Like backlit monsters, they approach, hulking. Matter of yards, now... She flashes a naughty little smile --

Goes backward off the cliff and rockets earthward.

feet of open air, THE BUNJEE Cord pays out, fast...! Whipsaws out the door of the Jaguar, hooked by carabiner to the STEERING COLUMN and meanwhile

THE CHAPTER AGENTS

Rush forward, incredulous. Peer OVER THE EDGE: Below them, a swan diver, BLACKNESS all around. She drops like a stone. Vanishes into the fog, beautiful as a poem.

INSIDE THE JAGUAR: The cord goes taut -- Now it starts to stretch outward. DECELERATION kicking in, Charly can FEEL it, still whistling through space...

Hits a dead stop.

This is it. Cord, stretched as far as it goes.

She's still sixty feet above the highway.

No hesitation whatsoever. She thumbs the DETONATOR in her right fist --

Blows the car.

UP ABOVE - CLIFF'S EDGE

The Jaguar goes up with a solid CRUMP--! Blown off the edge of the cliff. Along with a half dozen screaming AGENTS.

BACK WITH
CHARLY -
FALLING

Lifeline cut. 60 feet above the road, no problem. She does thirty feet in freefall. Raises her left hand --

Slaps a carabiner on a passing POWER LINE. Hurtles downward until suddenly, KA-CHUK--! She LURCHES to a stop.

Doesn't miss a beat: Grips a rope and GLIDES the last thirty feet, touches down lightly. Unhooks herself, turns as AN ONCOMING CAR throws a fishtail SKID, just misses her. Driver SWEARS.

She raises her gun. Fires without blinking.

Puts a hole in the passenger side windshield and the DRIVER ain't sticking around, he's out the door and gone as

CHARLY THE EXTERMINATOR

Crosses to the car, face a stone mask. Behind her the FLAMING JAGUAR SMASHES to the ground, raining fragments -- Followed by BURNING CORPSES, smacking the pavement one after another. She doesn't even look. Gets behind the wheel. Leaves most of her tires on the road behind her.

EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN OF SANTA CLAUS - CHRISTMAS EVE

Milling crowds. Music and laughter. SANTA heads up a TEEMING PARADE down Main Street, atop a horse-drawn sleigh... Replay of the film's opening, as

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

The gleaming TANKER roars down a sidestreet. Riding point: the innocuous PANEL TRUCK.

The temperature gauge continues to RISE: *203 degrees*.

EXT. MAIN STREET - EDGE OF TOWN - SAME TIME

Charly runs a roadblock, doing fifty -- Someone put a PARADE in front of her. Hits the BRAKES...! Fishtales into a mailbox. Sends it flying through a plate glass window. Out of the car, gun held low, and meanwhile --

INT. CAR - DRIVING

TIMOTHY barks orders into a mic:

TIMOTHY

All units converge. Divert local law, this is a government matter. Brook no interference, I want the Baltimore woman eliminated.
Where's the fucking chopper?

Racing toward the edge of town and meanwhile

ON THE PARADE ROUTE

SANTA CLAUS himself perches atop his sleigh, feeling like a rock star and wishing his groupies were legal... when suddenly he's got company.

CHARLY

I'm the Missus. Drive.

The rogue colonel FIRES A SHOT in the air -- THE HORSES bolt. Plunging off the parade route amid SCREAMS as

INT. PLUSH LIMO - SAME TIME

MR. PERKINS hunkers forward, face slack, as a tinny VOICE issues from his headset mic:

VOICE (O.S.)

...yes, she's with Santa Claus, correct, er, excuse me, the individual *playing* Santa, er... they're pursuing the tanker truck, sir.

Perkins stares straight ahead, speechless.

EXT. HIGHWAY - HEADING OUT OF TOWN

SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE TANKER. Horses at full gallop, hooves in pounding frenzy. Charly tries to JUMP from one to the other -- no go, the tanker pulls away, widening the distance, and meanwhile

TWO GOVERNMENT SEDANS

Come whipping out of ALLEYS, fall in behind them. CRACK--! Gunshots, shattering the stillness.

EXT. TRUCK CHASSIS - SAME TIME

A RICOCHET whines off a hydraulic cable. Spurt of fluid as the BRAKES start to go, and meanwhile

BACK ON THE
SLEIGH

CHARLY throws herself flat next to Santa.

CHARLY
Sorry, man. Government agents, high
level conspiracy.

SANTA
Fuckin' government.

The SEDANS jockey for position, try to pull ABREAST -- Charly swerves the sleigh back and forth, won't let them through. She hands the reins to Santa.

CHARLY
Veer left.

SANTA
Away from the truck?

CHARLY
Do it. In five seconds I'm gonna
own that fucking truck.

Santa complies. PEELS OFF to the left -- Opens a TWELVE FOOT chasm between sleigh and tanker. Sure enough, one of the government cars spurts forward to fill the gap, comes ABREAST of them. It's what she wanted.

FIVE SECONDS:

Charly Baltimore LEAPS from the sleigh, lands atop the government car. Skips lightly across it, casually BLOWS TWO SHOTS through the ROOF. Down through the metal. Drilling into their heads. Driver and passenger, killed instantly --

As Charly hops nimbly from her 50 mile-an-hour STEPPING STONE. Over to the tanker. Dump-stuffs a new clip, as

THE CORPSE CAR

Fades from the race, driverless. Whipping out of control. FISHTAILS away behind them -- Takes out the SECOND CHASE CAR, spray of metal.

Three seconds, and Charly's taken out two pursuers.

INT. CAB OF TANKER TRUCK - SAME TIME

The door flies open and the DRIVER sees CHARLY. Bloody. Demonic. Wisely leaps out, BOUNCES from view -- Charly snags his hat as he goes by, plops it on her head. SWINGS UP into the drivers' seat, double-clutches -- pours on the steam.

Five seconds. She owns the tanker.

BLASTS forward into the lead PANEL TRUCK. Slams the truck from behind, BULLDOZES it -- Sends it THUNDERING into a park bench. Glass sprays.

She owns the road. On the seat beside her: an MP-5 machine gun. She's set. Throws a NINETY DEGREE turn onto a sidestreet. Donates most of her tires to New York.

INT. SPEEDING TANKER TRUCK - SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

Charly's on fire. Senses heightened. Eyes tick back and forth like a machine. Heading downhill, out of town...

CHARLY

Hang on, Catey.

She hits the brakes. A flash of SPARKS..! A ripping WHINE, dies away -- The brake pedal is all play. Nothing. She's in a runaway truck.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

No, not fair, not fucking fair...!

Barreling onward. A lunging behemoth.

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Can't stop, Catey, can't...

CHAIN-LINK FENCE, at road's end. Beyond it, a quarter-mile plunge. Downhill over rocky terrain --

To St. PETER'S SEMINARY. Looming stone structure. Closed now. Vast empty PARKING LOT.

Tears on her cheeks. Lights a cigarette. Takes a long drag, exhales:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Suck my dick, every one of you bastards...

Blows through the chain-link fence.

SHUDDERS AND LEAPS DOWNHILL. Mud blows skyward. Trees, blasted to splinters.

CAITLIN
Buffeted inside the UTILITY BOX.
Cries out as

IN THE CAB

Charly fights to contain the beast. "Fuck you," slyly retorts the beast. She BOUNCES and caroms off the sides like a mad pinball --

THE TRUCK SMASHES DOWN

And all the windows BLOW OUT concussively and the front tires go with a volcano CRACK-! as the beast goes canting to one side, ponderous, MASSIVE...

It keels over on its side. Still doing fifty.

TRAVERSES THE PARKING LOT.

Slows itself by TAKING OUT LIGHT POLES, shears them off like saplings.

Whacks the side of the chapel. IMPACT. Keeps going...

Charly is EJECTED from the cab. Pinwheels through space like a broken doll, bursts through a STAINED GLASS WINDOW.

INT. CHAPEL

The glass ruptures as she catapults through. Hits on her stomach, bounces. Slides to a stop, rolls over --

FLINGS herself aside just in time, as a towering ST. PETER SMASHES to earth an inch from her head, showers marble...!

Concussion dies away. Silence. Echoes.

EXT. SEMINARY GROUNDS - SAME TIME

The tanker slides, DETONATING planters one by one... Comes to rest in a central COURTYARD. Lies there, a hissing dinosaur.

TIMOTHY'S TEMPERATURE GAUGE is still affixed to the truck's underbelly: *280 degrees*.

INT. CHAPEL - WITH CHARLY

Charly, semi-conscious. Rolls onto her back, gasping. Stares at the gathered saints. Swallows hard. Sucking it up, preparing. Rolls to one knee, plants her foot...

She's got to make that truck.

On her feet now. Stumbling forward. One arm hugging her guts. Cross-eyed, so hard to focus... left foot, right foot, get it done, bitch, yes it's *supposed* to hurt that much, flings open the door and she's so brave that for a second we think she might make it.

Timothy kicks her in the head.

Charly flies back. Hits and SLIDES. Fetches up against a bannister, WHAM--! Timothy calmly shuts the door behind him. Consults his tiny gauge -- *297 degrees*.

TIMOTHY

Call it four minutes to detonation.
I got a chopper on the way, lots of
time.

He sheds his coat. Stows his gun. Removes a SWITCHBLADE. Drapes the coat on the bannister. Flicks open the knife.

CHARLY

Oh, honey. Only four inches...?

TIMOTHY

You'll feel me.

He approaches, almost casually. Charly staggers erect. Adopts a killing stance. Instinct. She can barely stand.

INT. PERKINS' LIMOUSINE - SAME TIME

PERKINS hears a garbled, pained voice over his headset:

VOICE (O.S.)

Point team leader, reporting...
She's... incapacitated the truck...
I'm damaged, sir, I believe I'm
dying... Instructions...?

PERKINS

Continue dying. Out.

He leans back. Stares sightlessly. Loosens his tie, hits the intercom and says:

PERKINS (CONT'D)

Anthony, get me the President...

He takes out a bottle of Scotch. CUT TO:

INT. CHAPEL - SAME TIME

Charly and Timothy. They circle, two pros.

TIMOTHY

You've lost a step, Chuck. Muscles never recovered from C-section, I'll bet. Am I right?

Never watching the eyes, the eyes are liars, they watch the HANDS... The gathered saints look on, neutral.

CHARLY

Please, man... She's only... eight... she's a beautiful little girl...

His concentration never falters as he says:

TIMOTHY

She's a worthless bitch. I know it 'cause she came out of me.

He LUNGES with the knife, she spins away -- He gets hold of one arm and FLINGS her, up and over...! She SAILS through space. Twists in mid-air. Lands like a cat. Almost. Staggers forward. They circle...

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

It's called shock, Charly... Your body wants to go into shock...

CHARLY

Fuck you, your breathing's lousy...

Charly LAUNCHES herself. Avoids a stab at her throat, eats that for breakfast, spins, slams the knuckles of her right hand into Timothy's ribs. Busts one. He snarls, TRAPS her wrist: CRACK! Wrist, broken. She HISSSES in pain, falls back

GASPING.

Circling again. Charly cannot walk a straight line.

TIMOTHY

Look at you. You're out of your motherfucking league, dearie.

CLOSE ON CHARLY

She looks up at him from sunken eyes shot through with red, and in those eyes we glimpse it; the DEMON, laughing... as Charly whispers:

CHARLY

...You want a piece...? Take my shoulder.

He lunges with the knife...! She ducks, trips on purpose and HANDS HIM HER SHOULDER, all that's missing is the plate --

And WHAM. In goes the knife, cuts deep and Charly looks him in the eye and GRINS because sure enough, there's the bastard's KNEE, wide open...

Boot-strikes, BAM--! Shears the knee, and Timothy HOWLS in agony. Stumbles backward into the bannister --

Grabs his coat. Brings out the gun, it GOES OFF--!

Charly dives for cover. Rips the knife from her own shoulder and flings it.

Takes him in the shoulder. Topples him back. BANNISTER. Up and over, flailing...! Drops from sight.

Charly falls back. Pause. Sucking air. Sits down hard. Legs splayed. Looks down at herself, oh, God...

There's a hole in her chest.

EXT. SEMINARY - NIGHTTIME

The doors burst open and here she comes. Trauma, severe. Shock, blood loss -- She makes for the tanker. For her kid. Hitches. Staggers. Going on sheer guts.

THE HELICOPTER ROARS OVERHEAD

The PILOT brandishes his radio mic:

PILOT

Got her. Heading for the tanker, thirty yards out. She's all over the place, something's wrong with her.

WITH CHARLY

Left foot, right foot, she's not running, she's falling in a straight line -- Reaches the tanker. Staggers against the inverted chassis. UTILITY BOX. Above her.

CHARLY

Cover your ears.

She raises her gun. Fires. BAM-! Lock springs to pieces. CAITLIN tumbles to the pavement, dazed and confused. Casts about --

CAITLIN

MOMMY...!

She springs to her feet. Comes running and flings both arms around her mother. HUGS HER -- That one puts Charly out for a few seconds. PAIN, excruciating. Comes to her senses, swaying like a clothesline in a high wind...

CHARLY

Run... get out...

CAITLIN

Don't go away again, Please...!

Charly grabs Caitlin's head. Turns it. Facing the TEMPERATURE GAUGE. Red numerals: *301 degrees*.

CHARLY

The truck's a bomb... gonna blow up, RUN... I'm right behind you, go...

Caitlin hovers, torn. Charly summons a guttural CROAK:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

...*Go and don't look back*...

In the end, Caitlin relents. RUNS, toward the surrounding woods... Charly watches her go. Nods, satisfied -- Collapses. Hits the tarmac and splays in a heap. Breath wheezing in and out. Already the pavement is staining red.

WITH CAITLIN

As, within ten seconds of the command, she promptly DISOBEYS her mother, looks back -- Stops dead.

There's a corpse underneath the truck.

It isn't moving. It isn't breathing. It isn't laughing or crying...

Or hurting, not anymore.

CAITLIN

Mommy, no...!

Bomb forgotten. Danger forgotten. Her tiny arms pumping, feet slapping pavement -- She returns to her mother. Grabs one knife-bloodied shoulder, oblivious of the wound. Jerks back and forth. Frenzied.

CAITLIN (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'm sorry I left, please wake up, come on please...

CHARLY. Cheek against the pavement. One lifeless eye STARES. Bloodshot and sightless.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Government vehicles, pulling up now. At the edge of the parking lot. 100 yards away, give or take. Numerous SEDANS. The Little Debbie panel truck. AGENTS crouch behind cars. Weapons trained on the wounded behemoth.

EXT. SEMINARY - SAME TIME

The side door BURSTS OUTWARD and a limping figure emerges, frantically signaling for the chopper: TIMOTHY'S got murder in his eye. THE CHOPPER banks, coming in low as he hauls himself aboard.

PILOT

Sir, your shoulder --

TIMOTHY

Fuck the shoulder, knee's worse. Just bring me around and hold her steady. I'm not leaving until I know the bitch is dead.

He grabs an automatic rifle.

BACK WITH CAITLIN - UNDERNEATH THE TANKER

She adheres to Charly's motionless form. Looking small and terrified. Whispers in her mother's ear. Soft and low:

CAITLIN

Mommy, get up now. You just stop it, Mommy, you stop being a little baby. Stop it, you're not dead, I know you're not dead so you get up now.

Face contorted, she strikes out. Flails. HITS Charly.

CAITLIN (CONT'D)

Don't you die, you get up now, Goddammit...!

(MORE)

CAITLIN (CONT'D)

Life is pain, you just get used to it, and stand up *right this minute*, Mommy. Life is pain, do it, you bitch. *Do it*.

Tears coursing in rivulets. Little fists clenched. Then -- It might be a trick of the wind. Tiny aspiration, not enough breath to fog a mirror...

CHARLY

...mommy... here...

A solitary tear appears in the wide-open staring eye. One fingernail, then. Scratches feebly. Toes, shifting. Seeking purchase. A HAND, planting itself... TEETH BARED, a rictus of pain... Rising up...

Standing. Full height now, flexing one deadly arm. She hugs her daughter and says:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

...You're grounded...

Overhead, the HOWLING of rotor blades. Charly gasps for breath. Cracks open the GUN... no bullets. Swell. Scans the pavement... There. THE MP-5 machine gun lies twenty feet from her. Twenty miles, same difference. Across the pavement, even farther away: Timothy's car.

305 degrees. Charly swallows hard:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get the gun, you run for that car. We go on three, okay? One... Two... *Three*.

They break cover. Into the open. A WITHERING FIRE ERUPTS. Right at their feet...! Geysers of asphalt, shot skyward --

TIMOTHY sprays the blacktop from above. Ruthless. Charly goes insane. Lurches, crazed, to the cab of the truck. Thumbs the mike and says:

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Somebody get that motherfucker off me! I got a kid here, I got my eight year-old daughter, *Jesus Christ*...! It's Christmas Eve, who are you *people*, fucking pull him off! Do you hear me...?

CUT TO:

EYES SNAP OPEN IN DARKNESS. We don't know whose they are. We don't know where we are.

BACK WITH
CHARLY - SAME
TIME

The temperature gauge: *308 degrees*. She clutches Caitlin. Shouting into the mic:

CHARLY (CONT'D)
Distract him, for God's sake give me ten seconds, please, I'm begging somebody, anybody, *she's my daughter*...!

EXT. EDGE OF PARKING LOT

A sour-looking CHAPTER AGENT stands before a row of cars and the Little Debbie panel truck. Expressionless beurocrat. Lifts the mic to his lips and says:

CHAPTER BEAUROCRAT
Negative, ma'am, we understand your request, but we've decided to go ahead and let this play out...

Behind him, the back of the panel truck EXPLODES. A car CATAPULTS outward into space -- SMASHES DOWN atop two sedans. Blows out their windshields. Flings itself to the pavement and RICOCHETS forward, zero to sixty.

MITCH HENESSEY
At the wheel. Making a suicide run. Face a FRIGHT MASK of deadly purpose. We have no idea why someone who looks like him is alive.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

Distraction, just enough: The pilot banks toward the CAR.

TIMOTHY
Where are *you* going??

Timothy grabs the stick -- THAT'S WHEN CHARLY BREAKS COVER. Does a MAD STAGGER across the blacktop. Goes for the GUN.

TIMOTHY CHANGES DIRECTION. Chopper again, SCREAMING in low and fast --

CHARLY dives, rolls -- Comes up with the MACHINE GUN and falls flat on her back, points it skyward:

CHARLY

Suck on it.

She fires. Blows the chopper's TAIL ROTOR. The craft pitches to the side -- Dumps Timothy out the door. Flailing.

Head over heels, he FALLS -- Lands atop the TANKER, right on the silver tank and *burns*. Actually SIZZLES at 310 degrees Celsius, steam pouring off him like a vampire in daylight,

SHRIEKING--!

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Die screaming, motherfucker.

She watches as he slips from sight... off the tanker. SIRENS now, approaching. Wind, biting cold. Ground black and bloody in the moonlight...

HERE COMES HENESSEY, powers across the lot, pedal to the metal. Followed at a distance of fifty yards by half a dozen squawling GOVERNMENT VEHICLES, flashers turning.

Henessey stomps the brake. SLEWS to a stop, tires cooking...! KICKS open the passenger door as Charly collapses into the car, CAITLIN in her arms. The kid says:

CAITLIN

Hurry! The truck is a bomb!

HENESSEY

Yeah, yeah. What else, we got a fucking lightning rod on the roof...? No, Caitlin, *don't check*.

He PEELS OUT.

CHARLY

Hey... you're bleeding...

HENESSEY

I think that's yours...

CHARLY

Right, sorry...

He inadvertently smacks a light pole. SPARKS fly.

CAITLIN

You're a bad driver! Who said you could drive?

EXT. PARKING LOT - BESIDE THE TANKER - SAME TIME

They have to drag Timothy inside the car. The engine ROARS as it leaps forward, trailing the other FIVE -- Scarred and hideous, he stares after Charly, screaming:

TIMOTHY

*Somebody do her, somebody kill
that fucking whore, kill her*!

That's when the helicopter crashes. The pilot does everything but flap his arms -- Forget it. IT KEELS OVER. Rotor touches pavement -- Blows to pieces. They ALL go. Snapped off. Blown like rockets in every direction.

TIMOTHY LOOKS UP as a rotor blade whistles right through the windshield of his car. Shears off his HEAD. Blows out the BACK in a shower of glass and hurtles onward, SPINNING out of control...

Strikes the tanker. Boom.

Imagine God in Monte Carlo. Tossing dice the length of a craps table. Now, imagine the dice are BURNING CARS.

EXT. EDGE OF PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Henessey flies out of the parking lot and INTO the WOODS as the firestorm RAGES TO HEAVEN behind him. Cars, heading his way -- AIRBORNE. Fights the wheel, swerving through the woods as all around him, FLAMING CARS crash down. BOUNCING into and out of the trees, peekaboo...

Some go flying past OVERHEAD. Striking in front like meteors, GOUGING the earth. Caitlin screams:

CAITLIN

Don't hit the cars!

Henessey favors her with a foul look. CHARLY looks up and sees ANGELS flying overhead, trailing concrete...

Then they're OUT OF THE WOODS. Car slingshots onto the highway and races forward, SAFE. Behind it, the sky is aglow, SNOWING fiery traces... Bits of earth, trees, pavement.

OVERHEAD VIEW: As they roar out of town, we see burning woods and a CRATER approximately 150 yards in diameter -- St. Peter's Seminary no longer exists... CUT TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE - OUTSIDE OF TOWN - NIGHTTIME

Henessey coasts to the side of the road and stops. He lays his head on the steering wheel, sucking air. Looks at Charly:

HENESSEY
 Sorry, can't drive... Are you
 okay...?

CHARLY
 (grimaces)
 ...Are you... stupid...?

HENESSEY
 ...funny thing...? You aren't going
 to die... I am...

Charly offers him that soft, sad little smile.

CHARLY
 I know.

Henessey starts to fade... breathing labored... Reaches up... strokes Caitlin's hair. Smiles at her:

HENESSEY
 Hey, gorgeous... know something...
 you got your mother's eyes... don't
 let... nobody tell you different...

Slumps back in the seat. Gazing at Charly. A single tear runs from one bloodshot eye. He whispers:

HENESSEY (CONT'D)
 Scared... to be nobody... without a
 ripple... please... remember me...
 (beat)
 ...Love you...

Dies.

Charly leans on the dash. Cries for awhile. For herself... for Henessey... for this Godawful planet, and everything else. DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - SAME TIME

A MOTHER SITS in the glow of a Winnie the Pooh nightlight. Next to her sleeping daughter's bed -- back to the very beginning of the film, it's been a long kiss goodnight.

An elderly FARMER pokes his head in. She doesn't look up.

DOCTOR

Um, Ma'am...? Ambulance is here.
They'll be right in.

The shadowy figure nods... Remains seated. Stays awhile in the dark. Keeping vigil. Snow slithers against the glass.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. PALATIAL GEORGETOWN ESTATE - EARLY MORNING

MR. PERKINS emerges from a guest cottage, flanked by his aide Harry.

AIDE

...They'll push for dismantlement of our apparatus in Chile, but we've got a degree of plausible deniability...

Harry's FOOT comes down on a circular slab of STONE -- and a voice from the grave says:

VOICE (O.S.)

Stay very still.

Stops him in his tracks, stops him dead --

As CHARLY BALTIMORE steps from the nearby trees. Stands, twenty yards downrange. Beretta leveled at both of them.

Two months, you barely notice the limp. She stands there in sleeveless top and short skirt and looks like a million. Thumbs a metal box, click-! A red ARMING LIGHT blinks on.

CHARLY

Good morning, I'm Charly. The slab you're standing on is actually a land mine. Keep your foot on the pressure plate, nothing happens. Step off the stone, we'll all be wearing you.

PERKINS steps forward. The gun shifts. Targets him.

PERKINS

Charly, I know we've treated you poorly, please, it was just business --

She reaches in a pocket. Tosses him a cellular phone -- He catches it as though it were a live snake.

CHARLY

My terms are these. Call State and order full disclosure on your personal correspondence. Then disband Chapter, effective immediately. In exchange...? I won't shoot you, and I won't make you stand on that mine. I won't touch you. I won't touch you. I promise.

PERKINS

You... you promise.

He swallows hard. Looks to his aide... back to her... DIALS.

Charly takes a deep breath. Scans the flowers, face placid. It's really quite lovely today. Maybe she'll start a garden.

Perkins clicks off. Look at Charly:

PERKINS (CONT'D)

It's done. Now, you promise... you won't shoot me... won't make me get on the mine...?

CHARLY

I promise.

She smiles. Shifts her aim and shoots the other guy.

Perkins' eyes WIDEN in sudden realization. He LUNGES forward, grabs the aide, holding him up... desperately propping his dead weight atop the land mine...

PERKINS

Goddamn you, I can't hold him...
You bitch... YOU FUCKING BITCH...!

EXT. GEORGETOWN AVENUE - DAYTIME

Henessey's CHRYSLER CONVERTIBLE has been restored to a cherry red. It purrs along the boulevard, Charly at the wheel. Hair blowing. She talks on the cellular phone:

CHARLY

Yes, Mr. President, you have my assurance that Perkins' latest operation has been rendered beyond salvage.

Behind her a GOUT OF EARTH blows skyward. Showers the road a ways back.

CHARLY (CONT'D)
 He's not in the greatest shape
 either.

INTERCUT - PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

He speaks from the oval office, face grave:

PRESIDENT
 I owe you an astounding debt of
 thanks, Colonel. Would it be
 impertinent to ask if you'd
 consider working for State again?
 The moneys involved would be
 substantial.

CHARLY
 Out of the question. I've got a
 stack of papers to grade. Listen,
 before I go, I need a small
 favor...

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - AKRON, OHIO - DAY

Henessey's EX-WIFE stands in the open doorway, flanked by
 her son TODD. Two uniformed COPS speak solemnly:

UNIFORM COP #1
 ...As I say, we can only apologize
 for the system, Ma'am, but it's
 confirmed that your husband is
 innocent of the crime for which he
 was imprisoned. This is a
 photograph of the actual
 criminal...

He shows her a mug shot of TIMOTHY.

UNIFORM COP #1 (CONT'D)
 A petty thief, now deceased. I'll
 respect your wishes should you
 choose to file charges against the
 State Attorney...

In the eyes of a young boy, Henessey finds redemption.

EXT. HOUSE - EDGE OF WHEATFIELD - TWILIGHT

Sun, passing into mystery. Wheatfield, rippling. Caitlin is
 in the yard, chasing a big floppy-eared Labrador.

On the porch, a CRICKET chirps. HAL comes out, sits beside
 his wife CHARLY as she finishes eating. Says softly:

HAL

Just talked to Dr. Sullivan, she's gonna need the full braces. Even with your teaching, insurance won't cover it... I don't know what to do.

Pause. Charly says nothing. The dog parades up to Caitlin with a stick in its jaws. A farm truck goes by, a faraway speck.

Charly absent-mindedly rolls a steak knife in her fingers. Eyes far away.

It never occurs to her what she's done until the chirping stops.

Ten feet away, the knife quivers.

FADE OUT. ROLL
END CREDITS.

THE END