

VALERIA NOIR – Pilot Episode

Working Title: *Blood of My Blood*

Created by: Daniel Danitto (Daniel Nedyalkov)

Running Time: ~50 minutes

Tone & Style: *True Detective* meets *John Wick*, with the brains of Agatha Christie and the cigarette of Lauren Bacall.

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SYNOPSIS

In a city without conscience, where the streets speak the language of bribes and betrayal, private detective Valeria Noir is the last line between order and anarchy. When 10-year-old Vanessa Axe-daughter of powerful businessman Duncan Axe-is kidnapped in broad daylight, Valeria is hired to find her quietly and swiftly.

But the deeper she dives into the case, the more tangled she becomes in a web of family conflict, mafia dealings, and political manipulation.

The child's disappearance is only the tip of the iceberg. The true enemy doesn't hide in the shadows – he sits atop corporations, pulls strings inside public institutions, and wears a familiar name.

As the clock ticks down, Valeria must uncover not just *who* is behind the abduction – but *why* – before another body drops, and before she becomes the next target.

COLD OPEN

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - LATE AFTERNOON - OVERCAST

Light drizzle. The building is beautiful. Old architecture.
The atmosphere is heavy, almost suffocating.
The camera is static.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A LONG, DARK HALLWAY.

Light barely filters through the tall windows.
The camera glides slowly forward with a gentle Steadicam feel
- like someone floating through the air.

RIIIIIING!

The bell pierces the silence.

Doors burst open simultaneously. Chaos, laughter, noise - life
explodes into the hall.

SLOW MOTION (75% SPEED)

KIDS pour out of classrooms - the corridor fills with smiles,
backpacks, shouts.
The contrast is striking: the claustrophobic hallway versus
the euphoric release.
They're all in uniform.

EXT. SCHOOL GATE - CONTINUOUS

Now the camera is outside.

A sea of children spills out of the building - parents
waiting, traffic rolling, teachers waving goodbye with warm
smiles.

ANGLE ON: VANESSA (10)

- standing slightly apart, alone, in a red jacket with her
backpack slung low.
- she scans the scene.
- her eyes lock onto a familiar car: A BLACK MERCEDES.

INT. MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

She climbs in.

Through the window, she waves at her friends - they wave
back, laughing.

The LAUGHTER muffles.
She turns forward.
The eyes in the mirror aren't the ones she expected.
Neither is the smile.

She freezes.
Her own smile fades.
Vanessa goes still.

VANESSA

(whispers)
Who are you?

The driver watches her in the rearview. Says nothing.

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE CITY - DRONE SHOT

The car drives off. We rise.
Above the streets of **Darr City**, soaked in rain.
The light dims slowly.

Only the hum of the engine and the sound of rain remain.

FADE TO BLACK

INTRO - ALICIA STEIN'S VOICEOVER

VISUAL:

Black screen. Smoke. Fog. A neon sign flickers: "Darr City."
The city stirs. First light cracks the sky.
Glass towers catch the glow, reflecting back gold and steel.

ALICIA STEIN (V.O.)

(calm, slightly detached voice - as if narrating from outside time itself. Wise, weary tone)

Darr City...
A city stripped bare by the greed of the highborn.
A city of tribes - but no conscience.
Morality didn't die here. It drowned.
There was a moment... fleeting, almost imagined -
when the sun came out.
People believed this place had a future.
But the light was a mirage.
Once conquered, the peak must stand alone..
This isn't a story about gold medals or white knights.
It's a story of a city where fates are suffered..
or are about to be.

MONTAGE - THE CITY AS AN OPEN WOUND

Fog rolls down a boulevard. Neon reflections ripple on wet asphalt.
A homeless man looks around like he knows something we don't.
A kid sprays graffiti on a decaying statue, a building's facade.
Sirens wail - a fire truck tears through traffic.
A woman screams on the street - but we hear nothing.
A surveillance camera blinks → HARD CUT TO:

INTO THE EYE OF A STREET CAMERA

No sirens. No alarms. Just sterile calm.
The street cam ZOOMS IN on a lone figure - face or movement, captured.
Sudden ZOOM OUT - we're no longer outside.
Now we're watching the same scene on a screen in a surveillance room.
A soft electronic buzz from the lens - then silence.
We drift forward, through the glass...

INT. MONITORING CENTER - UNKNOWN LOCATION - NIGHT

Hundreds of monitors.
The city from all angles:

- Streets with roaming silhouettes
 - A woman buying pills at a pharmacy
 - A gas station
 - A boutique

In front of them: a silhouetted figure.

A coffee mug in hand.

CLOSE-UP - the mug is set down beside the monitors.

TRANSITION: ASHTRAY FULL OF STUBS

A cigarette burns low. Smoke coils upward.

CLOSE-UP - a flake of ash drops in slow motion.

A moment of silence in a city that never shuts up.

INT. VALERIA NOIR'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

We enter Valeria's world.

A sharp contrast to the cold surveillance center: here, there's color, mess, life, emotion.

No direct sunlight - her window faces west.

Just lit buildings and the shadows they cast on the street below.

SOUNDS:

- A radio playing crime news in the background

- The last hiss from a coffee machine

- The muffled noise of the city, like a distant siren

CAMERA PULLS BACK SLOWLY

A gloved hand reaches for the ashtray.

Takes the dying cigarette.

CLOSE-UP of female lips in profile.

She takes a drag.

Lowers it.

Blows smoke upward.

ALICIA (V.O.):

"Sometimes, to find the truth...
you gotta step on it in heels."

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CITY STREET - EARLY MORNING, LIGHT RAIN

The camera hovers low over the wet sidewalk. The paving stones glisten, speckled with droplets from a gentle, persistent drizzle. The air is crisp, cool, and fresh - a typical early morning.

The street is mostly empty, but life is beginning to stir - cafés are opening, windows flicker to life with warm light.

The familiar homeless man is curled beside a trash bin.

His body is wrapped in a ragged blanket.

He kicks a discarded vodka bottle in his sleep.

We hear the clink of the bottle as it rolls along the pavement.

SFX: RHYTHMIC SOUND OF HIGH HEELS ON WET STONE.

A pair of red, glossy high heels step through frame.

Measured. Controlled. The kind of walk that owns space.

Raindrops splash against them as she walks.

MEDIUM SHOT - FRONTAL ON LEGS

The legs move forward with purpose.

Rainwater on the pavement reflects the crimson of her dress.

Everything around her is grey and damp -

she's a flame moving through fog.

CAMERA SLOWLY TILTS UP

A sleek red dress, elegant but not flashy.

A black handbag swings by her side, a folder in the other hand.

A graceful neckline draws the eye, framed by a V-cut.

Around her neck: a delicate gold necklace that catches the light with each step.

An open black umbrella spins gently in her hand.

And finally - the face of **GLORIA CHARLOTTE**.

Calm. Collected. Fully awake - like someone who planned this day down to the minute.

Her eyes are focused ahead - not just physically.

She doesn't seem bothered by the rain -
on the contrary, it sharpens her.

Gloria walks on. She radiates sensuality - but this is all business.

A few whistles sound as she passes. She ignores them.

Keeps moving.

She reaches a ten-story pre-war building with a well-preserved façade.

Closes her umbrella.

Pushes open the heavy wooden door with her shoulder and enters.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is spacious, lit with a warm, muted glow.

Ahead, a tall counter - barely visible behind it is a porter.

FRANK - an elderly man with thick glasses and a newspaper.

He moves slowly but misses nothing.

Gloria walks past him.

GLORIA

(politely)

Morning, Frank.

PORTER (FRANK)

(without turning)

Good morning, Miss Charlotte.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

An old elevator with a folding grate.

She pulls it shut, presses "7."

The lift shudders and rises.

The camera lingers on her face -

Serious. Focused.

She's thinking something through.

DING.

The elevator stops on the 7th floor.

INT. 7TH FLOOR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She walks down a long hallway.

Stops at one of the last doors.

Takes out a set of keys.

Starts to unlock - but notices something.

It's already unlocked.

She pauses. Eyes narrow.

Pushes the door open slowly and steps inside with caution.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Surprise.

A leather chair slowly turns - back still to her.

A gloved hand, holding a cigarette, rests casually on the armrest.

We realize - this is **VALERIA**.

VALERIA

(calmly, without turning)

Good morning, Gloria.

GLORIA

(still thrown, sets her things on the desk)

How the hell are you here this early, Valeria?

VALERIA

(slightly weary tone)

I made you coffee.

GLORIA

(offended, but amused)

Wait, wait! My boss made me coffee? Your birthday's not for another five months...

(pauses, teasing)

Unless you had a naughty guest over last night?

VALERIA slowly spins her chair around to face Gloria. She puts out her cigarette in the ashtray with her left hand. Above the black glove, cinched tight around her wrist, a smartwatch glints-unlike any brand you've ever seen. Its metal casing catches the lamp's light, as if it's meant to be noticed.

This is the first full reveal of Valeria:

Black camisole with thin straps, gold metal clasps catching the light.

Her hair is pulled into a tight ponytail, emphasizing sharp features.

Long black gloves wrap her arms up past the elbows.

The outfit: seductive, yet utilitarian.

A gold necklace glimmers faintly at her collarbone.

Her eyes are sharp. Her posture - total command.

The soft patter of rain on the window sill.

A faint squeak from a loose window hinge.

The radio hums faintly in the background.

The camera lingers on her face.

VALERIA

(melancholic)

You know I don't have time for things like that.

GLORIA

(mildly surprised)

Oh... that's new.

Thanks for the coffee, though.

VALERIA

(thoughtfully)

Today marks six months since I opened this agency.

GLORIA

(smirks)

Yeah. And six months minus two days since I started working

here.

Now that I think about it... probably time for a raise.

VALERIA

(dry, distant)

In that time, we've had one major case, one lost dog... and that other thing I'd rather scrub from memory.

GLORIA

(teasing, as she takes her seat)

Sounds like someone's missing her little spy cult...

VALERIA

(not even looking up)

You know I'm legally allowed to kill you if that ever leaves this office.

GLORIA

(grinning)

Well, guess you'd be doing the world a favor.

VALERIA

(raises an eyebrow, deadpan)

But I'd lose the best damn secretary on Earth.

GLORIA

(overly dramatic sigh, sips coffee)

So you *would* miss my coffee.

Though, I gotta say - you did okay today.

VALERIA

(now looking at her - no smile, but warm)

I'll miss your mind.

And that rhythmic clatter on the keyboard.

The office phone RINGS.

It cuts through the moment.

Gloria answers.

GLORIA

(respectful tone)

Valeria Noir's office. How can I help you?

A voice speaks to her on the line.

Gloria's face shifts - concern creeping in.

She glances at Valeria.

GLORIA

(continuing)

Yes, she's here...

(pause)

Of course. I'll let her know.

Goodbye.

She gently lowers the receiver, visibly unsettled.

Valeria looks at her with a questioning gaze.

GLORIA

(serious tone)

That was Simon Axe.

He's asking you to come to the Axe estate - just outside the city.

Said it's... important.

VALERIA

(eyes lighting up)

And just like that - someone upstairs answers my prayers.

GLORIA

(concerned)

You do know who Simon Axe is.

VALERIA

(thinking aloud)

I've heard plenty... him and his brother.

Weren't they the ones who donated big to the children's hospital a couple months back?

GLORIA

Yeah, them.

But they're also known for... other things.

The kind that don't come with press releases.

VALERIA

Guess they want to step into the light.

Now we get to find out what I've got to do with it.

GLORIA

(sarcastic, but with a smirk)

Well, you wanted a case.

Let's hope they didn't just lose a dog...

VALERIA

(smiling slightly as she grabs her trench coat)
Or get a kite stuck in a tree.

GLORIA

(serious again, locking eyes with her)
Val... just be careful.

VALERIA

(confidently, as she heads for the door)
As always, Glo.
And don't wait up for lunch!

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CITY BOULEVARD - MORNING, AROUND 9:00 AM

Rain slides down the cold asphalt. Towering buildings pierce the gray sky. Neon lights flicker in puddles - ads, reflections, promises.

The city is alive, but not awake.
Traffic crawls with a nervous pulse.

BACKGROUND MUSIC - muted, tense, like a warning.

The city speaks its own language.
Today, it says: **"Watch yourself."**

A **black Dodge Challenger SRT Demon** moves down the boulevard.
A powerful, predatory silhouette cutting through the morning.
It doesn't look back. It doesn't hesitate.

INT. CAR - MOVING

VALERIA is behind the wheel. Hair pulled back. Face calm, focused.

Black leather gloves. A trench coat.
Her hands grip the wheel tight.

The camera moves from her face to her eyes in the rearview mirror - distant, contemplative.

Something inside her is in motion. But it's not the car.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - LATER

The car exits the city. The background shifts - from neon and noise to grim and nameless.

The road is still wet, but now it looks older.

More forgotten.

The music deepens.

Low tones stretch out like shadows.

EXT. ESTATE - AERIAL SHOT - 9:30 AM

The camera slowly descends from the gray sky onto the stone contours of the estate.

Architecture - grand, but weary.

Windows - black, expressionless eyes.

Rain falls steadily. No wind.

Just the sound of droplets hitting the green rooftop.

The **gate opens** in front of the black Challenger - no guard, no delay.

An electric mechanism, programmed for trusted guests.

The dark car glides to a stop in front of wide stone steps of a luxurious, but cold-looking mansion.

The driver's door opens.

Valeria steps out. She doesn't rush.

Her gaze sweeps across the mansion's facade - not counting windows, but possible exits.

VISUAL NOTE:

She's wearing a black leather trench coat and a black V-neck tank top.

Her hair is tied in a tight ponytail.

Her outfit is practical, but elegant - a display of control,

not vanity.

Her expression is serious.

She closes the car door behind her and walks confidently to the front entrance.

Her heels don't make a sound - her steps are light, nearly silent.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ESTATE - FOYER / STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

A **butler** opens the door and gives Valeria a silent nod of invitation.

She enters. Walks down a heavy hallway.

Ascends a grand marble staircase - one step at a time.

The weight of the place presses down like history.

VOICEOVER begins - quiet, creeping in.

The scene hasn't started yet, but the tension is already in the room.

INT. ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A large, dimly lit room.

The light is soft, warm-toned, but not welcoming - it feels like it's coming more from the past than from the lamps.

Classic furniture. Heavy curtains. Books no one has touched in months.

The air is stale, but charged.

A sense of something left unsaid.

CYNTHIA sits at one end of the couch.

Leaning on one elbow, eyes fixed on nothing.

Hands folded in her lap - like she wants to disappear into herself.

Her face is bare, no makeup, but shaped by a life of attention.

A diamond necklace rests above a pale satin slip and black lace bodysuit.

Her hair is pulled back. Her body still.

She looks cold.

Inside, she's on fire.

VISUAL NOTE:

Cynthia is a gemstone in a dusty box - hard, polished, but dimmed.

DUNCAN stands beside her.

Broad-shouldered, in a black suit, black shirt, black tie.

His arms hang loose, but one fist is clenched to the bone.

His eyes are downcast, but brimming with pressure.

No tears.

No rage.

Just resolve - waiting to be aimed.

VISUAL NOTE:

Duncan is a man trained to act, not explain.

His face does the talking - and it doesn't say nice things.

SIMON sits apart, in a leather chair near the bookshelf.

Watching - silent, alert.

A predator.

And a brother.

His silver hair is neat.

His face: built from a lifetime of power, spoken and unspoken.

Red tie. Black suit.

No wasted movement.

Not even a blink.

VISUAL NOTE:

Simon doesn't *attend* a room.

He owns it - without moving.

He's all control and past crimes.

Valeria - already inside.

She sits.

Says nothing.

DUNCAN

(restrained)

We've heard you're a damn good detective, Miss Noir.

I'll admit - I had my doubts about hiring you.

But my brother Simon insisted.

Valeria lifts an eyebrow - mildly surprised.

VALERIA

(dry, to the point)

Well, despite your doubts... I'm here.

What kind of case are we talking about?

SIMON

(sharp)

My niece Vanessa was kidnapped yesterday afternoon.

We need someone like you - discreet.

We'll give you everything you need.

VALERIA

I'm sorry to hear that.

But first - have you reported this to the police?

DUNCAN

(snaps, angry)

Yeah, those useless bastards know!

But they're just sitting on their hands, waiting to be fed.

Simon casts a quick, uneasy glance at his brother. Then turns to Valeria.

SIMON

We've got eyes everywhere.

But we want this handled by someone neutral.

Someone who can't be bought.

Someone like you.

VALERIA

Understood.

Did the kidnappers make contact? Any mention of ransom?

DUNCAN

(bursts out)

Yeah! I got a damn text.

They want my business!

Some punk thinks he can outrun me in this town.

SIMON

(calm, trying to keep control)

Forgive my brother's outburst, Miss Noir.

I'm worried too.

They gave us a deadline - by end of day, Duncan's supposed to sign over his shares.

Simon locks eyes with Duncan.

Valeria catches it - she watches them both closely.

VALERIA

Tell me exactly when and how it happened.

DUNCAN

(steadier now)

After school.

Vanessa was picked up in one of our cars.

The car had been dropped off earlier for maintenance.

Someone took it from the shop - said he was one of our drivers.

Even had a company badge.

Then drove straight to her school.

SIMON

I personally requested the school's surveillance footage.

You can see Vanessa getting into the car willingly.

She probably thought it was Duncan.

DUNCAN

(uneasy)

Usually, my bodyguard - Eliah Mort - picks her up. Or me, when I can.

But yesterday morning...

Before all this went down, I got a threat on my phone -

said I should sit still, or I wouldn't make it to my next birthday.

SIMON

That's why Eliah didn't leave his side.

We had reason to take it seriously.

DUNCAN

We sent one of our drivers to pick Vanessa up instead.
His car - tire blew out on the way.
Straight-up sabotage.

VALERIA

(cool, almost purring)
Someone knew your routine.
Been watching you for weeks, maybe longer.

DUNCAN

We're not amateurs, Miss Noir.
If someone was tailing us - me or Eliah would've clocked it.

SIMON

(snaps)
Not impossible.
Clearly, neither are they.

Valeria crosses her arms. Her eyes sharpen with suspicion.

VALERIA

I'll want to review the school footage.
And the repair shop's too.
But first - tell me: that car have GPS?

SIMON

It does.
We tracked it - dumped near a warehouse by the south docks.
They probably switched vehicles there.

Valeria turns to Duncan, direct.

VALERIA

Mr. Axe - who stands to gain the most by tearing you down?

DUNCAN

Vera Rusko.
I've had major trouble with her.
Always trying to sabotage my business.
But I don't think she'd sink *that* low...

SIMON

(interrupts)
With Vera, I wouldn't put *anything* past her.
That's my personal take.

DUNCAN

(explodes again)

If I find out it was her...

She'll never see daylight again!

Valeria watches them both - analyzing, calculating.

VALERIA

Where's the car? I want to see it.

DUNCAN

It's in the garage.

The butler will take you.

VALERIA

Good.

Keep me posted if anything else comes up.

Finally, Cynthia speaks. Her voice is desperate.

CYNTHIA

Miss Noir...

Please - find Vanessa.

VALERIA

I'll do everything I can, Mrs. Axe.

CYNTHIA

Please...

Call me Cynthia.

VALERIA

I'll be in touch, Cynthia.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GARAGE - AXE FAMILY ESTATE - MOMENTS LATER

Sleek cars lined up like it's a showroom.

VALERIA stands by a black Mercedes, accompanied by ANDREW, the butler - quiet, but observant.

VALERIA

(Not taking her eyes off the car)

Have you noticed anything strange between the Axe brothers lately?

ANDREW

No, miss. The gentlemen rarely cross paths here. Mr. Simon Axe hasn't set foot on the estate in months.

Valeria glances at him. She doesn't reply, but her eyes say more than enough.

She steps closer to the Mercedes, opens the driver's door.

From the inside pocket of her trench coat, she pulls out a sleek device - a combo UV light and scanner for DNA and fingerprints.

She begins sweeping the interior. Slowly, carefully.

The light dances over the dashboard, door handles, console.

After several silent minutes of scanning, Valeria straightens up.

VALERIA

(to herself, aloud)

Prints wiped clean. No trace.

Planned to the detail, and played even better.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. AXE FAMILY ESTATE - LATER

Valeria approaches her own car.

Rain has thinned out, now whispering instead of falling.

She opens the door, sits inside.

With a gentle swipe on the dashboard tablet, she dials a number.

ON SCREEN: **DIMITRI**

MONTAGE (throughout the call):

-Valeria inside her car - shots through the windshield, in profile, her hands, reflections on the glass.

- Raindrops tap rhythmically, like background music.

- Dimitri in his workshop - only his hands, tools, a soldering iron, thin lines of smoke.

- Cigarette burning, neon lights pulsing softly.

His face never shows. His hands never stop moving.

The visuals match the rhythm of the dialogue and the electric buzz of his work.

INT. HIGH-TECH WORKSHOP

Dimly lit room.

Only neon strips lining the cabinets glow - sickly green.

DIMITRI - shaved head, cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth - hunched over a circuit board.

Smoke rises from the soldering iron.

His phone vibrates.

ON SCREEN: **VALERIA**

He doesn't pause his work.

Answers with one hand, eyes still on the board.

DIMITRI

(into phone)

Tell me you didn't kill someone again.

VALERIA

(dry)

No. But if this coffee doesn't kick in...
I might make a contribution.

DIMITRI

(flat, distracted)

Uh-huh... What do you need this time?

VALERIA

(to the point)

The phone number of a public figure... Duncan Axe.
He's been getting some threatening text messages.
I want to know where they're coming from.
Also dig up what you can on him and his brother, Simon.

DIMITRI

(smirking)

Well damn, lucky you caught me in a good mood.
But I'll need time - got a few enemy servers to fry...
and two new girls to brief.

VALERIA

(flat)

You've been real busy lately.

DIMITRI

(laughs - just a touch off)

Ever since you left the show, your perks took a nosedive.
(pause)
Be grateful you still have the Dodge.

VALERIA

Thinking of keeping it. I like how it purrs.
(pause)
Call me when you find a window.
Preferably before I find a body.

DIMITRI

(sly, mock-formal)

Always at your service, Miss Noir.

He hangs up.

INT. VALERIA'S CAR - OUTSIDE AXE ESTATE

Valeria sits motionless.

The rain taps softly on the roof - steady, like a distant metronome.

CAMERA catches her in profile. Her face: unreadable.

Her eyes: awake, deep in thought.

Suddenly - a knock on the window.

She startles slightly. Turns.

Outside, SIMON AXE stands beneath a black umbrella.

In his other hand - a small leather bag, slung carelessly.

She lowers the window.

SIMON

(gently, hint of concern)

Forgive me, Miss Noir. Didn't mean to startle you.

I just wanted to thank you for coming.

I truly hope you'll be able to find my niece.

VALERIA

(even)

I'll do everything I can, Mr. Axe.

Finding the girl is what matters.

SIMON

(nods slowly)

That's what we're counting on.

(smiles - no warmth)

We'll stay in touch.

Hopefully... with good news.

He turns and walks back toward the estate.

The rain drums softly on his umbrella.

Valeria watches him go - long, calculated.

A subtle crease forms on her brow.

CAMERA holds on her eyes.

They don't blink.

They don't trust.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - OVERCAST - MIDDAY

A large garage. Wide open doors. Out front - two motorcycles propped up casually like guards. Valeria's car glides to a stop next to them.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - FRONT AREA

Spacious. Rap music thumps from a stereo - heavy beat, bass vibrating through the concrete floor. Expensive cars lined up like in a showroom, but each with its hood up - hearts on display. Greasy handprints on the walls, car part ads, yellowed posters. In one corner - an old coffee machine that looks like it runs on witchcraft.

MARIO, around 40, built like a tank, in a grease-stained jumpsuit with hands like forged iron, circles a shiny car raised on a lift. Beneath it, another man drains the oil - the black liquid drips with lazy rhythm. In the distance, a third guy is hunched over an engine - a loud *CLICK* echoes - wrench locking in place.

MARIO walks over to the workbench. Glances toward the entrance - spots VALERIA just stepping into the garage.

VALERIA

Hey there! I'm Valeria Noir - private investigator. I'm looking into a car that was left here - black Mercedes, owned by the Axe family.

MARIO

(wiping his hands with an oily rag)

Yeah... Cops were here last night. We felt real awkward when we found out we handed the car over to some stranger - but he had a company badge from the Axe family. Now our regulars are lookin' at us sideways.

VALERIA

Right... he looked like one of theirs. But nothing about him seemed off to you?

MARIO

Not a thing. Never seen him before, sure, but the Axe family sends new drivers now and then. They flash the badge - we do the job. We've been working with Mr. Duncan and Mr. Simon for years.

SUDDEN CRASH - a young worker drops a toolbox. Tools scatter loudly across the floor. MARIO turns and barks at him in rapid-fire Italian.

VALERIA watches the scene with one eyebrow raised. Then cuts in sharply.

VALERIA

Can I see the security footage?

MARIO

Cops took it last night. Asked questions, poked around... said they liked our coffee.

VALERIA

Can you at least describe the guy?

MARIO

Average dude. Somewhere between forty and fifty. Short hair, bit of grey. Black suit, wore a cap - just like all Axe family drivers.

VALERIA

What kind of service were you doing on the car?

MARIO

Just the basics. Oil change, filters. Brake check, suspension.

VALERIA

Was there a set deadline to get it done?

MARIO

Car could've gone another two months easy before needing anything.

Valeria thinks for a moment - something's starting to click. She reaches into the left pocket of her trench coat and hands Mario a business card.

VALERIA

Alright. Thank you. If anything comes up, please give me a call.

MARIO

Of course, miss! If your Dodge gives you trouble - we got you covered!

VALERIA

(slight smile)

I trust your expertise. Goodbye!

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. THE AXE ESTATE - FIREPLACE ROOM / OLD DINING HALL -
SHORTLY BEFORE THE SIGNING**

INT. FIREPLACE ROOM - MORNING

Warm light from the fireplace flickers across their faces.
It's raining softly outside. Heavy oak table. A clock ticks.
No music. Just tension and breathing.

DUNCAN stands, staring into the fire.

CYNTHIA sits nearby, wrapped in a shawl.

ELIAH stands near the door, hands in his pockets - still as a statue.

CYNTHIA

(very quiet, but firm)

I still can't believe we're even having this conversation.

DUNCAN

(not turning)

Neither can I.

CYNTHIA

(sharper)

She's our daughter. Our only joy.

Duncan closes his eyes. Inhales deeply. Looks toward the window.

DUNCAN

I used to believe in things.

That our money would protect us. That power was enough. That if you pay the best... things like this don't happen.

(pause)

Turns out... it was all just illusion.

CYNTHIA

(softer now)

I'd live ten lives in misery if I had to. I just want my child back home.

DUNCAN

(turns slowly to her)

I've got people everywhere. We hired a detective. I believe Vanessa will be home before the meeting with those clowns.

Pause. The ticking of the wall clock is the only sound.

Elijah remains silent. Motionless. His eyes drift between them.

CYNTHIA

(angry now, her fear barely hidden)

And the police? Why aren't they calling?

DUNCAN

(nods slowly)

The rats there are breeding fast.

Maybe it's time to remind them the cat still hunts.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SOUTH DOCKS - CONTAINER YARD - EARLY AFTERNOON

Rows of massive steel containers, laid out like graveyards from the industrial age. The air is heavy with moisture. Rain pelts the metal.

VALERIA walks between the rows. She reaches a large, derelict warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE

Spacious. Tall windows. Columns. Piles of scrap metal stacked against the walls.

A sheet of corrugated metal clatters in the wind above, like someone's watching - or maybe it's just the building breathing heavy.

A large gate without doors. Light spills through it.

Valeria enters from that direction. Her silhouette cuts through the backlight.

On her phone - GPS coordinates she pulled from the last route of the abandoned car.

She heads to the spot where the Axe family's car was ditched.

Valeria crouches. Scans the floor.

Tire marks. Several different cars.

VALERIA

(whispers)

Guess this is where they moved Vanessa to a different car...

No further clues.

She straightens up, pensive. Turns to leave - and spots a lanyard with a badge.

A few steps later - blood drops on the floor.

Valeria begins searching for more traces. She exits to the containers.

Tries to open one - locked.

Her GPS leads her to another container, marked:

"TRX-9084 - Darr City / Hamburg"

Valeria steps closer.

No padlock - just a piece of sheet metal wedged to keep it shut.

She peeks inside.

INT. INSIDE CONTAINER - CONTINUOUS

Smells like old wood, damp, and death.

Dim light spills in through the cracked door.

A body lies at the far end, among stacked empty boxes, wet plastic, and a rusted bicycle.

The guy from the car shop. Eyes open, gaze blank.

A thin, almost surgical slit across the throat.

No signs of a struggle. No noise. Just done.

Valeria steps in, careful.
Pulls out a flashlight.
Sweeps it across the floor.

Fresh marks around the fingers on his right hand. Likely from the lanyard.

Around the body - muddy boot prints.
She checks his pockets. Nothing.

VALERIA

(under her breath)
Cops have been here...

She glances outside, then back to the corpse. Still searching.
Still thinking.

VALERIA

Either they were blind...
or they just didn't want to see.

She stands up. Looks around. Walks away from the container.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. AXE TOWER - AFTERNOON

A tall, glossy skyscraper with mirrored windows reflecting the pale afternoon sun.

Above the entrance, a chrome sign gleams: **AXE**.

The camera glides upward along the sleek facade, skipping floor after floor, until it reaches the top - where the windows are tinted darker than the rest.

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE - TOP FLOOR - AFTERNOON

A spacious office in a classic style. Heavy wooden furniture. Bookshelves lined with leather-bound volumes. Brass desk lamps.

The air smells of cigars and aged whiskey.

From the windows, the city's business district stretches wide - bustling in the afternoon.

SIMON stands near the window - radiating power and confidence. He holds a cigar, its smoke lazily curling upward. His gaze is deep, thoughtful, watching the city below like a general surveying the battlefield.

The door opens. **LARISSA KLAUS** enters.

LARISSA - elegant and poised. A pale, form-fitting dress hugs her figure. Long blonde hair, a diamond necklace, subtle makeup - she exudes class and confidence.

She holds sunglasses in one hand, which she removes with a light, playful flair.

Simon turns to her, welcoming her with a look.

SIMON

(affectionately, with admiration)

Ah, my beautiful jewel...

LARISSA

(winks slightly)

Hello, darling.

(sits on the sofa)

Any news about your niece?

SIMON

(approaches, voice low and rich)

Unfortunately, no. We're keeping things under control.

LARISSA

(concerned)

Poor girl. I wouldn't want to be in her mother's shoes right now.

SIMON

(confident)

I believe everything will fall into place very soon.

LARISSA

(smiling, but it's cold)

I got a notification from the bank.

Solar Elements now has access to the gallery's account.

(a beat)

Was that the plan, or is there something you forgot to mention?

SIMON

(turns around, calm in his voice)

Babe, you wanted the deal with those Greek jewels, right?
The problem was getting them past customs-clean.
With this structure... that problem's gone.

LARISSA

(suspicious)

So I launder, you sell?

SIMON

(smiles, doesn't blink)

No.

You're the art.

I'm the frame that holds it.

Simon turns his back. Pours himself a drink. Larissa watches him, eyes narrow.

They stay in the room. Quiet. Still.

FADE TO BLACK

LATER - THE DOCKS - AFTER THE BODY IS FOUND

VALERIA walks near the containers.

Her phone rings - same encrypted channel as before.

DIMITRI

(over the phone - seagulls screeching in the background)

Home invasion hacking.

VALERIA

Tell me you're not on top of some bank roof right now...

DIMITRI

(dry but joking)

I am. My own roof... spying on the neighbor.

(turns serious)

The number that sent that SMS to your guy? Vanished exactly 24 hours ago.

Last signal - Murky River.

VALERIA

Of course. Where else would it be?

(pause)

By the way, I found a body. Hack the port's cameras. Preferably before someone pins the murder on me.

DIMITRI

You're stretching your daily wish quota...

By the way, aren't you gonna ask about the Axe brothers?

VALERIA

I was counting on you to tell me anyway.

DIMITRI

(chuckles faintly)

Yeah, you're always a delight.

So... here's what I dug up on your buddies.

Simon Axe owns three TV stations and five websites. Just through those he floods the city with fake news, 24/7.

He's also deep into real estate. That old bastard and his brother are two of the city's top-tier mobsters.

But the younger one's trying to play it clean.

He's legalized almost the entire operation - which probably means someone's trying to take it all away from him.

And one more thing you'll probably enjoy...

They've got old beef with some washed-up madam, Vera Rusko.

VALERIA

They mentioned her this morning, but I haven't looked into her yet.

Something tells me she's not involved.

(thinking)

Something's... off.

DIMITRI

(sarcastic)

If you ask me, you should just find a man and get a normal job...

VALERIA

And who'll save the good ones?

DIMITRI

I was hoping you would.

But right now, you're saving the bad ones...

(switches tone, dry again)

Anyway... that's it for your wish list today.

click

Valeria stops. Lost in thought.

The camera rises slowly, revealing the fog-draped docks around her.

FADE TO BLACK

**EXT. GHETTO STREET - IN FRONT OF APARTMENT BUILDING -
AFTERNOON**

The sun pierces through the hazy urban air, but the street is still soaked in dusty gray. The building facades are cracked and worn. One wall reads in black spray paint:

"U R NOT FROM HERE!"

On the sidewalk in front of the entrance, a group of Black men are shooting dice - loud, tense, full of life. They're yelling over one another, tossing money like it's burning a hole in their pockets.

At the center of the chaos stands **TAYLOR CASSIDY**.

Cool confidence radiates off him. His stance is relaxed, but there's zero calm in his vibe. Gold chains around his neck. A dark green shirt with the sleeves rolled up, hinting at a lean, trained body. A smart watch on his left wrist - odd for a street guy like him. Earrings. Clean white sneakers.

Suddenly, in the distance - the deep, guttural purr of an engine.

A black **Dodge Challenger SRT Demon** creeps down the street.

It stops.

Behind the wheel: **VALERIA**.

Her dark silhouette barely visible through the tinted glass, but her presence hits like a punch.

A KID, no older than 12, nudges Taylor and points at the car.

Taylor rises, eyes it, his face twisting in annoyance.

He stands fully, walks toward the car with that unmistakable street swagger. Scans the vehicle with a quick glance. No smile. No hello.

The driver's window rolls down.

VALERIA's face comes into view.

Their eyes lock. No words yet.

Taylor leans back against the car, eyes darting around. He finally looks at her.

TAYLOR

(displeased)

Damn it, Valeria... Don't roll up in this beast out here. Folks gonna think I'm snitchin'...

VALERIA

(straight-faced)

What, you want me walkin' in heels?

TAYLOR

(sarcastic, half-smiling)

Still funny as hell... Look, they're already taking selfies with the car.

VALERIA

(sharp, no smile)

I wouldn't show up like this if it wasn't important.

I'm tracking a missing girl.

Phone signal dropped somewhere here in **Murky River**...

In a neighborhood where phones ain't the only thing that disappears.

You know what your old buddies are up to these days?

TAYLOR

(nervously glances around)

I don't know what they're doing... and I don't wanna know.
But two days ago, I saw some white dude, maybe mid-30s.
Red plaid shirt, black glasses. Looked like he came outta
GTA.

Was lurking near the warehouses, drivin' some old-ass
Pontiac...

Like real old. Grandpa era.

VALERIA

(raises an eyebrow)

Whose warehouses?

TAYLOR

(with a knowing smirk)

My ex-buddies'...

VALERIA

(thinking, looks away)

Maybe the girl's there...

TAYLOR

(skeptical)

I hope you got a plan. One that don't got my name in it.

VALERIA

(looks at him)

Lucky for you - it don't.

Next time, drinks on me.

The window rolls up.

Taylor steps back. The car pulls away.

TAYLOR

(sarcastic, to himself)

Yeah... you're welcome.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DIMLY LIT APARTMENT

Open shot.

We see the **broad back of a man**, leaning against a kitchen counter. His posture is slouched forward slightly. He wears a t-shirt and jeans.

The camera slowly pans along a wall-mounted shelf - **framed photos** of the same man in a police uniform, clean-shaven, head held high. Other photos show him out of uniform, with a woman beside him at the beach. A **police badge** sits inside a glass case.

Back to the **open shot** - the man, still facing away from us. The camera glides toward him, slowly closing the distance.

Close-up on his face - thick, unkempt beard, deep forehead crease, heavy expression. He glances to the right side of the counter.

There it is - a **half-empty vodka bottle**.

This is **GREGORY STEIN**.

He reaches for it - pauses - reconsiders.

His hand drops.

He just stares at the bottle.

Then, a glance left - the **coffee machine**.

Decision made.

He's making coffee now.

Montage of shots: coffee brewing, pouring, steam rising.

EXT. ROOFTOP TERRACE - APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Gregory steps out of the apartment, coffee cup in hand. He walks up to the railing of a makeshift terrace.

Leans on it.

Looks out over the city - the view stretches to **skyscrapers**, and far in the distance, the **ocean**.

He takes a sip.

Lowers the cup. His eyes stay on the horizon.

Close-up of the coffee mug - printed on it: a photo of him and a woman, both smiling.

FLASHBACK - BEACH - DAY

ALICIA STEIN - dark, wavy hair - hugs him tight on the beach.
She's noticeably shorter.
He's younger. Clean-shaven.
That heavy forehead crease? Not there.
Instead - **dimples** and sunlight.

Laughter. Seagulls. Waves.

They're holding each other.
Suddenly, she's beside him on the same terrace.
Holding an ice cream cone.
Takes a playful lick. Laughs.

BACK TO PRESENT

The camera returns to **Gregory's face**.
He flinches slightly - snapped out of the memory.
His eyes drift forward again.
He takes a slow sip from his cup.
Thoughtful. Still.

Suddenly, a phone rings.

He pulls it from his pocket.
Caller ID: *Valeria*.
He taps the green button. Picks up.

VALERIA (V.O.)

I need muscle.

Gregory takes another sip. Calm. Cold.

GREGORY

(deep, grim voice)
On my way.

He ends the call.
Glances at the **smartwatch** on his right wrist -
a **location ping** flashes on the screen.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PARKING LOT / STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The asphalt is still wet, though the rain has stopped.

Puddles stretch like lazy mirrors, catching flickers of neon and a bruised sky.

On the washed-out street, **Valeria's black Dodge** sits parked - a sleek chunk of mechanical aggression.

Shiny, oily lines slicing through the damp and concrete.

Valeria leans casually against the car.

Her **leather jacket** glistens faintly with raindrops.

One hand holds a **burger**, the other a **cardboard soda cup**.

She stands still - unhurried, grounded.

Her gaze is relaxed but alert.

Like someone on break... but never off-duty.

A low growl of an engine rumbles from around the corner.

A **dark green Jeep Wrangler** rolls into frame - lifted suspension, tires like a damn military rig.

Low angle.

Gregory steps out.

Moves toward Valeria.

His steps are slow, deliberate.

A heavy presence - not walking, but **approaching**. With purpose.

He wears a **dark grey athletic pullover**, stretched across broad shoulders.

Sleeves rolled up.

Hands relaxed - but not loose.

Eyes locked on her.

Focused. Unwavering.

No words.

No need.

Between them, the space shrinks -

Backed by silence, distant engines, and the occasional **drip** off rusty gutters.

VALERIA

(raises a brow, dry)

You smell like vodka?

GREGORY

(staring hard)
You still eating garbage?

VALERIA

(threateningly)
I won't tell Gloria this time...
You know how much time she wasted pulling you off the bottle.

GREGORY

(calm, tilts head slightly)
I'm clean.
It's just me and coffee today.

VALERIA

(smirking dryly)
I'll mark the calendar. Historic occasion.

GREGORY

(leans in a little)
Don't stall.
You said you needed muscle.

VALERIA

(getting to the point)
Duncan Axe.
Ring a bell?

GREGORY

(squints, frowns)
Oh yeah - real polite gentleman.
What about that scumbag?

VALERIA

G.G.P. - Taylor's old crew.
They kidnapped his daughter.

My mission's to get her out.
Yours is to help me do it.

GREGORY

(irritated)
Since when are we working for gangsters?

VALERIA

She's ten years old, for Christ's sake!

GREGORY

(sighs, resigned)

Alright... what's the plan?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE AXE TOWER

In the room sit DUNCAN AXE, CYNTHIA AXE, SIMON AXE, and ELIAH MORT - Duncan's bodyguard. They're gathered around a large oval table. Eliah stands by the window, silent, watching.

The doors to the boardroom open. A SECRETARY lets in a delegation of three LAWYERS. They take seats across from Duncan. Duncan looks tense, his gaze fixed somewhere beyond them. LAWYER 1 opens a folder and slides some documents toward Duncan.

LAWYER 1

(serious, but a bit nervous)

Mr. Axe, I just want to assure you - we're only intermediaries. We have nothing to do with the actual situation.

Duncan says nothing. He's gripping a pen, barely resisting the urge to snap it. Cynthia watches him closely. Eliah watches the lawyers.

DUNCAN

(low voice, indifferent if they hear him or not)

Maybe we'll wait a little.

LAWYER 2

(nervous, sweaty forehead)

Mr. Axe! We've been instructed that once we hand you the documents, you must sign them immediately.

DUNCAN

(gritting his teeth)
Shut up, pencil pusher.

Simon steps in.

SIMON

We can't be sure Valeria Noir is up to the task.
Think about Vanessa.

Duncan is torn - angry and devastated. He keeps gripping the pen. Then - *PING* - a notification. He pulls out his phone. Unlocks the screen.

A text message:
"Tick-tock!"

It stuns him. Reminds him he's not as untouchable as he thought.

Cynthia's patience snaps. Her eyes are brimming with tears.

CYNTHIA

(desperately, commanding)
Sign the damn thing!

Duncan pulls the documents toward him. Signs. His eyes shine, on the verge of tears. He signs the rest. Slides them back across the table. The lawyers collect them, tuck them back into the folder.

SIMON

(gently, to Duncan)
We're not letting this slide... Trust me. We'll find them. And they'll pay.

The lawyers stand and head for the exit. Duncan glances at Eliah, gives him a nod to follow. Eliah leaves the room.

INT. AXE TOWER - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eliah moves into the corridor, eyes locked on the lawyers. They're already stepping into the elevator. *DING*. Doors close.

There's a second elevator - way up, out of reach.

Eliah bolts down the stairs.
Two floors. Three.

SLAM!

One of the stairwell doors flies open - someone shoves him hard.

He tumbles down the steps.

Mid-fall, he catches just one thing - a silhouette. Red plaid shirt.

INT. BOARDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elijah re-enters. Holding his head. His face is bruised.

He looks at Duncan. Shakes his head - a silent "no."

Duncan sees it.

His rage returns.

BAM!

He slams his fist down on the table.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GGP WAREHOUSES - REPURPOSED AS A HIDEOUT - LATE AFTERNOON

Golden afternoon sunlight pushes its way in through a barred high window with gentle stubbornness. The rays play across a gray concrete wall, stained with moisture and peeling paint.

The light doesn't warm - it only sharpens the coldness of the space.

OVERHEAD SHOT -

VANESSA, a small girl, around 10, with big eyes and hair tied back in a ponytail, sits on a large bed. Too large. Like it used to belong to someone older who's long gone.

She's staring upward - not just at the window, but through

it, toward the sky, with that kind of look that's a prayer...
but without belief that anyone's listening.

WIDE SHOT - THE ROOM IS SPARTAN.

Harsh concrete walls. A single old lamp with a yellowed shade flickers in the corner, casting a murky shadow.

Beside the bed - a metal nightstand.

A pitcher of water, half a glass, and a half-eaten burger.

Vanessa stands. Her footsteps are almost silent, but in this still room, they sound like thunderclaps.

She walks to the heavy metal door.

It's locked.

Vanessa presses her ear to the cold steel, trying to catch any sound from the other side.

BEYOND THE DOOR - MAIN ROOM OF THE HIDEOUT

SMASH CUT -

Hip-hop blasts loud.

The camera glides through a crack in the wall - ushering us into a whole different world.

A flickering fluorescent light pulses overhead - like a heartbeat.

Thick weed smoke hangs in the air like a veil.

The atmosphere is heavy - with smoke, sweat, and tension.

A group of men. African-American.

Two of them are mid-argument over a PlayStation game.

One lounges on a couch, crunching chips and occasionally glancing at security monitors.

Another counts cash - crumpled, greasy bills, but stacks of it.

A fifth man - Latino, white tank top, arms inked up - is quiet, cigarette dangling, inspecting stolen watches and gold chains.

In the corner - boxes full of branded sneakers, tags still on. Obviously stolen.

Others filled with cheap electronics.

The Latino guy mutters to himself - in Spanish.

THIRD ROOM - "THE HEADQUARTERS"

Even deeper into the dark belly of the building - the operational nerve center.

Walls are plastered with newspaper clippings, police reports, neighborhood maps covered in marker scribbles.

Sticky notes with codenames.

A red spray-painted skull and crossed bones on the door.

At a table - two armed men play cards.

They speak in hushed tones. Smoke curls around their heads.

One idly rolls a bullet between his fingers, twitchy.

In the corner - a worn leather armchair.

In it sits a Black man - clean-cut, wire-frame glasses, book in hand - something philosophical.

This is a different breed. The leader.

TEODOR FRANKLIN a.k.a. MANIAC.

Calm. Thinking. Still.

Sometimes he lifts his eyes to observe - doesn't talk, doesn't play, doesn't smoke.

Just waits.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GHETTO STREET - CLOSE ON VALERIA'S CAR - IN THE DISTANCE: THE G.G.P. WAREHOUSES

The camera is low. It glides along the side of a sleek car, coming to a stop on the distant view of the G.G.P. warehouses.

Inside the car: **VALERIA** and **GREGORY**.

They're both staring at the car's large dashboard screen. It shows a live feed from inside the warehouses - straight from G.G.P.'s own security system.

Valeria taps on a tablet. The camera angles shift in real time.

VALERIA

(slightly pleased)

Perfect. We've got eyes inside.

GREGORY

(sarcastic)

Just sayin'... I hope you ain't watchin' me shower too.

VALERIA

Haven't thought of it... yet.

GREGORY

Alright! Let's hear that genius plan.

VALERIA

I'm gonna re-route their cams so we're ghosts on the grid.

Then... we play out the hooker scene.

Gregory stares at her, dumbfounded.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GGP WAREHOUSES - NIGHT

Nothing has changed since the last scene. **The Maniac** is still reading his book. The other two men continue their card game.

Suddenly, someone knocks on the front door.

The two men pause. They glance at **The Maniac**.

He gives a slight nod - *check it out*.

The man closest to the door stands up, pulls a gun, and walks over.

He slides open a metal latch and peers through a narrow peephole.

VALERIA is outside.

She's wearing dark sunglasses. Bright red lipstick. Chewing gum casually.

No trench coat.

Dressed in her signature tactical black tank top.

VALERIA

(playful, theatrical)

Hey, handsome. I heard someone called for a girl.

GANGSTER 1

(aggressive)

Get the hell outta here, bitch!

VALERIA

(insistently)

What's your problem, huh? Don't keep a lady waiting. Time's money.

He slams the peephole shut. Turns to **The Maniac**.

GANGSTER 1

Boss, some hooker's out front. Probably got the wrong address.

The Maniac doesn't respond. Still reading.

Gangster 2 smirks from the card table.

GANGSTER 2

(curious)

C'mon, tell me- is she hot?

GANGSTER 1

(smirking)

Bella bellissima!

GANGSTER 2

(grinning wide)

Then bring her in, man!

The Maniac glances at the security monitors.

They show **nothing** at the front door.

Slow motion - he turns to **Gangster 1**, trying to signal *don't open it-*

Too late.

The door bursts open with *inhuman force*.

Gangster 1 is thrown backward.

A **smoke grenade** rolls in across the floor.

GREGORY storms in, gas mask on.

Shoots **Gangster 2**, who goes down bleeding.

VALERIA follows - also masked.

Gregory ducks behind a wall.

Valeria kneels near the door, weapon raised.

Thick fog envelops the room.

Gunfire erupts chaotically from the gang's side.

Valeria returns fire - takes one down.

She covers **Gregory** as he pushes forward.

They cough from the smoke. Eyes tearing up - visibility is near zero.

Gregory shoots down the rest, one by one.

Valeria enters after him.

He confirms all targets are neutralized.

She heads straight for **Vanessa's room**.

The door is wide open.

Valeria peeks in cautiously.

The Maniac is standing in the center.

He's holding **Vanessa** hostage.

THE MANIAC

(calmly)

They told me not a hair on her head.

But if I have to - I'll put a bullet through it.

VALERIA

(gun aimed at him)

You're cornered. Let the girl go, and I swear - you'll walk out alive.

THE MANIAC

(angrily)

You've got *no idea* what's coming your way!

VALERIA

(cold-blooded)

Try me. I'm worse than whatever's scaring you.

The Maniac lowers the gun. Releases **Vanessa**.

Valeria gestures for **Vanessa** to come to her - still keeping her weapon on **The Maniac**.

They slowly back out of the room.

Gregory covers them from the hallway.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE WAREHOUSES - NIGHT

Valeria and **Vanessa** run toward the car.

Valeria pulls off her gas mask while sprinting.

Gregory follows, doing the same.

They all jump into the car.

It speeds off into the unknown.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The same parking lot where Valeria and Gregory first met.

Valeria's car pulls in and comes to a stop.

INT. VALERIA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Valeria and **Gregory** sit in the front seats.

Vanessa is in the back - calm, alert, watching.

GREGORY

(softly, concerned)

I can stick around if you want.

VALERIA

Thanks. You've done enough.

I got it from here...

GREGORY

Alright.

Then I'll see you at the gym this weekend - unless you're off gangster hunting again.

VALERIA

Yep. We're on.

See you soon.

Gregory opens the door and steps out.

Valeria watches him walk away through the window.

VANESSA

(calm, with childlike curiosity)

Do you work for my dad?

VALERIA

(smiling, turning to her)

Not exactly...

But he sent me.

VANESSA

Knew it.

You're not like the others.

They were dumb and scary.

And not quiet like Eliah.

VALERIA

(her smile fades into seriousness)

How are you feeling?

You went through so much...

VANESSA

(gently, with surprising calm)

At first I was scared.

But then I realized they weren't as scary as they acted.

They even took care of me, kinda.

VALERIA

(thoughtful, half to herself)
The person who hired them...
He didn't want you hurt.
I think I get his reason...

(she smiles again, looking back at Vanessa)

You're a little warrior.
Let's get you back to your parents.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Valeria's car drives off the lot.
It disappears down the boulevard, merging into traffic.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SIMON AXE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

A spacious room, filled with silence and anticipation.
Massive windows look out over the setting sun - fiery reds
and yellows paint the furniture, the faces, the very air.
The light is dramatic - almost theatrical.
The sunset sketches the truth before sinking into darkness.

The door bursts open.

VALERIA enters, **VANESSA** beside her.

DUNCAN

(shocked, relieved, almost trembling)
Vanessa?!
(rushes to her, wraps her in a hug)
My girl... Oh, God...

CYNTHIA clasps Vanessa's hand - as if afraid to ever let go again.

Tears glisten on her cheeks in the golden light.

SIMON

(standing, with a fake smile)

Congratulations, Miss Noir.

Looks like you did your job after all.

VALERIA

(coolly)

Not as well as I'd hoped.

Vanessa's alive.

But it's too late now, isn't it, Mr. Axe?

DUNCAN

(still holding his daughter)

Too late?

What do you mean?

VALERIA

(looks at him)

Your company, Mr. Axe.

The contracts - they've already been signed, haven't they?

DUNCAN

(nods, bitterly)

I didn't have a choice.

They... they threatened my daughter.

VALERIA

(turns to Simon, voice firm, but controlled)

And the threat came from inside.

Silence. Everyone freezes.

SIMON

(cold smile)

Very dramatic.

Not very convincing.

VALERIA

Mr. Axe...

Why did you insist the car be serviced so early - two months ahead of schedule?

SIMON

(slightly irritated, but composed)

What are you implying, Miss Noir?

I care about the safety of my family. My staff.

DUNCAN looks at **Valeria**, confused.

Then turns slowly toward **Simon**.

INT. SIMON AXE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

VALERIA

(pressing forward)

Since you brought up staff safety - one of your employees was found dead.

In a dumpster.

At the docks.

Just a few feet away from where your allegedly stolen car was ditched.

SIMON

(under pressure, but holding)

I have no idea what you're talking about...

DUNCAN and **CYNTHIA** exchange a troubled glance.

Cynthia clutches **Vanessa**, visibly shaken.

Duncan watches the exchange between Valeria and Simon, intensely focused.

VALERIA

(exposing)

Here's what happened:

The man who picked up Vanessa... had no idea he was part of a kidnapping.

He was hired - officially - by **Mr. Simon Axe**.

He was told to retrieve the car from the service shop...

Then pick Vanessa up from school...

And take her to the docks - for reasons unknown.

There, a black SUV pulled up.

G.G.P. operatives jumped out.

Took Vanessa from your car, blindfolded her... shoved her into their vehicle.

Your new driver tried to resist.

They ripped his employee badge from his hands...

Then killed him.

Dumped his body in a nearby container.
Strangest part? The police can't seem to find him.
And I'm sure that's not a coincidence.
This was a clean op.
Well-planned. Executed perfectly.

VISUAL MONTAGE - AS VALERIA NARRATES

- The Axe family car enters a familiar warehouse at the docks.
- G.G.P.'s black SUV arrives, headlights slicing through fog.
- Armed men in hoods jump out.
- Vanessa is pulled from the car, blindfolded.
- The driver struggles, yells.
- **Andre Daniels** steps into view - calm, icy.
- G.G.P. drives off. Andre stays.
- Slowly, methodically, he rips the badge from the driver's hand...
- Then kills him.

No emotion.
No words.

CYNTHIA

(whispers, terrified)
No...

DUNCAN

(frozen, then turns to Simon - shattered)
It can't be...
(voice rising)
Tell me this isn't true!

VALERIA

(turning to Vanessa)
Vanessa, is that what happened - when they moved you to the other car?

VANESSA

(looks at Simon, darkly)
Yes.
The driver... he talked the whole time.
He was excited to work for our family.

VALERIA

(to Duncan, pointed)

Mr. Axe... Duncan...

Did you actually *read* the name on the company those shares were transferred to?

DUNCAN

(teetering on the edge of rage)

Yeah.

It was called **Solar Elements**.

Valeria pulls out her phone.

She taps something, then turns the screen toward **Duncan** - and toward everyone else.

VALERIA

Solar Elements.

Owned by an offshore shell company registered in Panama.

(pause)

Listed director? **Larissa Klaus**.

(raises an eyebrow at Simon)

That name ring a bell?

Your new... PR consultant?

Or is she just your "assistant"?

Simon's eyes flicker - a moment of lost composure.

DUNCAN

(quietly, then boiling)

Your new bitch?

(explodes)

You're stealing my company?!

You really thought we wouldn't find out?!

SIMON

(cold, with restrained anger)

I *built* this company.

I'm the one pulling it out of the swamp.

DUNCAN

(furious)

What swamp, damn it?!

I built it from scratch!

While you skimmed off the top, you greedy bastard!

(heaving)
How dare you?!
That's my daughter - *your* niece!
You used her as leverage?!

SIMON

(arrogant smirk)
Not a single hair harmed on that lovely head of hers.
I just... had to stay out of sight.
(turns to Valeria)
Didn't expect Miss Noir to be so good at her job.

VALERIA

(silent. Staring him down. Her eyes - steel.)

DUNCAN

(enraged, charging toward Simon)
You steal, you lie, you kidnap my kid...
I'll kill you, you sick piece of-

Tension peaks.

Suddenly, **Vanessa** rushes between them, shaking.

VANESSA

(tears in her eyes)
Dad... no!
Please don't!

Duncan freezes.

He looks at his daughter.
Then at **Cynthia**, holding his arm gently.

SIMON

(smirking at the room)
Kill me?
You've already lost everything.

(laughs - deep, guttural)

SIMON

(to the security guards)
Get them out of my sight.

The guards approach.

But no one resists.

Duncan, Cynthia, and **Vanessa** turn and begin walking toward the exit.

Before they reach the door, **Cynthia** stops.

She turns slowly.

Steps back toward **Simon**...

And *slaps* him.

A loud, echoing slap.

Clear.

Deserved.

She stares into his eyes - says nothing.

Then walks out.

Simon wipes a trace of blood from his lip.

Cold smile creeping back.

He looks at **Valeria**.

SIMON

You...

The little one.

Turns out you're smarter than you look.

(pause)

That kind of talent could get you into real trouble.

VALERIA

(calmly, almost playfully)

Mr. Axe...

At your age, I'd expect a little more wisdom.

Simon's jaw clenches.

He curls a fist - on the edge of exploding.

But says nothing.

Valeria, already turning her back to him, walks away.

VALERIA

Have a lovely evening, Mr. Axe.

She exits.

CAMERA HOLDS ON SIMON.

Alone.

His once-impenetrable world now soaked in silence.

Outside, the rain intensifies.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DAR CITY - MAJOR BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The camera floats over the city like a night bird - gliding between skyscrapers, brushing neon signs that flicker like electric rain. Advertisements blink in puddles. Traffic hums. A wide, long boulevard stretches ahead. City lights shimmer. Steam rises from manholes. Pedestrians crowd the sidewalks. An elevated train thunders by overhead.

Valeria's car merges into traffic.

INT. VALERIA'S CAR

She stares ahead, focused on the road. Tired, but holding it together. The dashboard screen glows on her face. She's talking to Gloria, who's still at the office.

GLORIA

(on screen, via video call)

I can't believe he did that to his own damn brother.

VALERIA

Life's full of crap like that. Some even worse.

GLORIA

(dry, sarcastic)

So, should I take it Simon hired you but never paid for the job?

VALERIA

Duncan was kind enough to feed my account, even though he just lost his millions... for now.

The real tragedy's a little girl had to go through that - and a decent man got killed.

GLORIA

Why didn't you go to the cops?

VALERIA

(bitterly)

The cops? They're in on it too.

This thing's got roots we can't even see...

(pauses)

Just wrap up and go home, Glo.

GLORIA

(softly)

Good night, Val...

FADE TO BLACK.

FINAL SCENE

INT. SIMON AXE'S OFFICE - NIGHTFALL

Simon is alone in his office. He looks like a conqueror - no remorse, not even a shadow of doubt.

He opens a small liquor cabinet. Pulls out an expensive bottle of whiskey and two glasses.

Starts pouring.

Just then, ANDRE DANIELS walks in - plaid shirt, sunglasses on... despite the hour.

Simon turns toward him with a sly grin.

SIMON

(handing Andre a glass)

Right on time...

Did you take care of the driver?

I heard our little detective stumbled on the body.

Too bad. I was *almost* starting to like her.

ANDRE

That's not our problem anymore...

SIMON

(grinning wickedly)

Here's to victory.

Andre says nothing. No emotion.

They clink glasses.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DARR CITY FROM ABOVE - NIGHT

The camera slowly pulls back from the glowing AXE Tower logo - a quiet retreat.

Towering neon skyscrapers begin to slide into frame.

Fog rolls in like a tide.

The city melts into neon and mist - like a ghost refusing to be forgotten.

OUTRO - VOICEOVER - ALICIA STEIN

ALICIA (V.O.)

(melancholic, steady)

This city's like a house with no roof.

Every rain seeps straight into our souls.

If you live here long enough, it swallows you whole.

Molds you like a piece of clay - gives you a new shape.

And you're not the same anymore...

In a world where everything has a price,
morality doesn't have a seat at the table.
When power blinds you,
you steal from your own brother's hands.
But the road down always starts at the top.
Money can buy you everything -
except your soul.
'Cause that one's already been sold.

I'm Alicia Stein.

And this is the story of the city I once called home.

Darr City.

MONTAGE - AS ALICIA SPEAKS:

1.

Vanessa with her parents

- Warm light, a gentle homey glow,
- but a trace of fear lingers in her eyes.
- Duncan sits on the couch, serious, distant.
- With his family, yet alone.
- Cynthia holds his hand, but she's no longer the same little girl.

2. **Gloria locking up the office**

- The camera pulls away as the neon sign flickers:
"Valeria Noir - Private Investigator."
- Gloria stops for a moment.
- Looks up at the sky...
- sensing a storm is coming.

3. **Gregory on the terrace**

- Sitting silently, a glass of vodka in hand.
- His eyes drift somewhere far into the past.

4. **Taylor in the ghetto**

- Night. Alone.
- A quiet street.
- A distant car beat creeps closer.
- Engine growls. Slick tires whisper across the asphalt.
- G.G.P. gang members appear from the shadows.
- Taylor spots them.
- Tries to press the panic button on his wristwatch...
- Too late.
- Blows land. Blood spatters.
- Darkness.

5. **Valeria at home**

- Dim light.
- Sitting on her couch.
- A cigarette in one hand, a photo in the other.
- Her parents - young, smiling, innocent.
- She's alone.

- Surrounded by shadows... and determination.

The camera slowly pulls away.

FADE TO BLACK.