

**THE AMBIGUOUS COUCH AFFAIR**

---

written by  
Cecilia Michelangeli

ceciliamik@fastwebnet.it  
(+39) 3458132779

*Based on realistically ambiguous events.*

FADE IN FROM BLACK:

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

LOUD ELEVATOR MUSIC from the speakers, no other sound.

Large and empty. The floor badly reflects a series of couches and armchairs. All side by side, faded, bland. Behind them are other basic furniture and a "ON SALE" sign.

EVELYN JOHNSON (60s), a self-reliant Native American, sits on an amber couch, staring vacantly in no direction. A fan spins slowly at her elbow, but she fans herself anyway. Golden rings shimmer at her fingers. Next to her there's another sign that says "15% 40% 60%".

She leans her head back, humming the speakers' song.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

Everything is desert sand color or dark gray. Vast and hot.

There's an empty dirt parking lot. Three signs stick out: the name of the store, a big red "SALE", and a useless arrow "ENTER" that points at the very visible entrance.

Not far, there's a small gas station with four fuel pumps.

Nothing else, just a road.

A car arrives and parks badly just past the gas pumps.

The owner, GORDY (80s), exits from the gas station. From her seat, the weary and rather pregnant SHELBY RAY (barely 20) glances up at him.

She calmly exits the car, holding something. For a moment, she stays still, mouth half-open, as the two scan each other.

Then Shelby closes the door hesitatingly, turns her back and heads for the furniture store.

Worried, she looks back to see Gordy's gone. She immediately covers her face with a yellow plastic bag she cut two holes in. Walking faster.

She ties the handles under her chin. Tight.

The sliding doors open.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS**

Elevator music plays on the speakers. Breathing heavily.

The doors stay open. Shelby fixes up the bag so the holes better match her eyes, blowing the plastic back and forth, looking around, holding her belly.

No one.

**AN AISLE OF SHELVES AND FURNITURE**

RANDALL JOHNSON (60s), an ex-bull with a Stetson hat, trudges to then plunk himself down on a chair. He leans back, CRACK.

RANDALL

What the--

He turns to check the seatback.

INTERCUT: SHELBY/RANDALL

Breathing. Shelby tries to move the bag from her mouth.

Randall plods in an aisle of huge wardrobes and sideboards, awkwardly carrying the chair with him.

Shelby walks forward, checks behind her, then takes a GUN off her trousers. The doors close.

Randall turns into the main space. From afar, a backlit person's heading in his direction.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

I'll be right with you.

He looks askance at her, but keeps walking.

Shelby stops. Only her twitching eyes are visible.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Howdy--

Shelby raises the gun.

Randall stops. Shocked. He puts down the chair.

Shelby gasps, shaking anxiously. Randall clutches the chair.

SHELBY

Give me the money!

Randall turns the chair slowly, making it creak unpleasantly.

RANDALL

I--

She motions with the gun toward the counter, advancing.

SHELBY

The money!

RANDALL

'can't help you with that.

SHELBY

The register! Money!

She points at it with the gun again.

RANDALL

(moving forward, staring at  
her belly)

We-we don't have any, sorry.

She aims at Randall, who stops walking. They now stand 10 feet from one another.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Nobody bought anything yet. It's  
ten, buddy.

They stare. She moves the bag a little.

SHELBY

What?! Fucking give me your money!

RANDALL

There ain't any! Look.

He goes behind the counter, regaining a bit of his composure.

The gun shakes, following him. The bag prevents her from checking over her shoulder, now she pants more and more.

Randall kicks the counter, bustling about the register.

SHELBY

(halfhearted)

Move.

He glances at a cabinet next to his knee, but she waddles up, hardly breathing.

RANDALL

You don't need to use that.

The register opens.

Shelby can't see in it. She has to clumsily leap to lean forward onto the counter, the gun pressed under her hand, just to see...

Empty.

Randall stares at her fingers pushing near the trigger.

Shelby plumps down, huffing.

SHELBY  
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

She bends down.

For a split second, a merciless gaze appears on Randall's face as his hand slowly moves toward the cabinet.

Shelby tries to move the plastic with her gun, struggling for air, panicking. She waves the gun at him, almost choking.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
(unintelligible, coughing)  
Whatcha have?

RANDALL  
(his attitude changed)  
Nothing.

She walks backward, holding the bag away from her face.

SHELBY  
(coughing)  
There's something else in here?

**AMBER COUCH**, Evelyn's head sticks out, bobbing to the beat.

Shuddering wheeze. Suffocating. Shelby fights with the bag.

Randall stares shocked. The gun points at him listlessly, so he slowly moves backward to the other side of the counter.

The gun is lowered.

Shelby's eyes fidget, watery, red. Randall goes to put a hand on her shoulder, but doesn't.

A louder gasp.

RANDALL  
What do you drive?

Glancing outside, all he can see is the empty, sunny parking.

The plastic moves back and forth, slower and slower.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

You-- You can have a couch if you  
have a big car. Enough space...  
I'll move it for you...

They stare at each other, sideways.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

We've got some really comfortable  
ones, compact... Like new. No one  
wants them anyway. It's a bargain.  
(looks around)  
Or a tea-table, if you don't have  
any space. That chair.

He points at the chair he left in the middle of the aisle.  
She looks at it, straightening.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

You can take that chair.

She SCREAMS, beating her head with the side of the gun. The  
bag covers her eyes.

SHELBY

FUUUCK!

She breathes out loudly.

Suddenly the speakers' music changes. Startled, Shelby aims  
the gun steady, trying to guess Randall's direction, turning  
her masked head around.

Randall sort of raises his hands, almost abashed.

RANDALL

(whispers)  
Chair...

Shelby backs away, convulsively shaking the bag off her eyes.

Randall follows the gun, then glances at the counter.

The doors open. The gun dangles at her side. Randall stares  
up with his hands still half-raised.

The doors close behind her. Randall stands still, blinking,  
blinded by the daylight. As outside Shelby seems to turn  
round, he comes to his senses.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Motherfucker.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

Shelby desperately tries to untie the knot.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - SAME**

Evelyn turns, hearing distant noises, stands up and switches off the fan. The glass wall in front of the couches gives onto the empty side parking.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - SAME**

Shelby tucks the gun under her belly. She looks back at the store then strides to the car. It's not close.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - SAME**

Evelyn sees her husband hustling angrily behind the counter.

EVELYN  
(kind of smiling)  
Hey.

Randall pulls out a HUNTING SHOTGUN. Evelyn flinches, then approaches faster. He goes to the entry.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
Who's here?

She runs, shuffling fearful.

He loads the shotgun.

The doors open.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
What-- you doin'? What happened?

RANDALL  
'Not happen again.

He stops in the doorway and gestures her to stand back. The doors keep opening and closing.

INTERCUT: INT/EXT. STORE

Shelby's almost at the gas station.

Randall lifts the shotgun.

SHOOTS.



Shelby turns, doubting what she just heard. Then runs.

Randall's hands shudder, but his eyes fix in front of him. Evelyn stands behind, in the dark.

Another SHOT.

Shelby's thigh is wounded. She grunts.

**INT. GAS STATION - SAME**

Gordy glances towards the window.

**EXT. GAS STATION - SAME**

Panting. The bag keeps moving. Rustling.

Shelby's bleeding a lot. The car door flings open. She has to grab her leg to place it into the car, crying.

She slams the car door, kind of screaming.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, FACING THE STORE - CONTINUOUS**

She sees that Randall lowered the shotgun. She sticks the key in, grunting for the pain. Reverse. Away. Crying out.

**EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Raising dust. Randall turns his back to the car, into the dark, as the doors close.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, STRAIGHT AND DESERTED ROAD - DAY**

Screaming, fleeing rapidly. Crying.

Shelby throws the gun onto the passenger seat, but it slides down to the car mat.

She has to look at the road sideways, angrily trying to get rid of the bag. Shaking her head around. She puts two fingers through a hole, pulling the yellow plastic. She pokes an eye. Freaking out. Then she takes both hands off the wheel...

The car lurches.

She yanks and jerks, then finally RIPS IT OFF. The remaining plastic frames her scared expression like a bonnet.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - SAME**

The closed door frames Randall as he unloads the shotgun. Evelyn stares at him wiping the saliva off his mouth.

EVELYN

What just happened? Why--? Who--?

Her concerned look follows him as he puts the shotgun back in the low cabinet, cooling off.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

What did you do?

She looks at the empty parking lot.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Did you get him?

(leans on the counter)

Are you okay?

RANDALL

Yes, I'm fine.

(looks at her)

A woman almost robbed us. She wishes she did. Hah. Not here!

EVELYN

There's nothing here.

He puts a hand on the counter too.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Did we hit her?

He nods, not sure.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

With your eyesight?!

He goes back to the other side of the counter, staring down.

RANDALL

Really a strange girl... pregnant. Something was wrong with her.

EVELYN

That could have gone the wrong way.

RANDALL

It didn't.

(sees her concerned look)

Don't worry, nothing happened.

EVELYN

Well... What do we-- Do we have to report it?

RANDALL

She didn't take anything.

EVELYN

Right. A good thing. They didn't do much last time anyway.

They fall silent. Randall turns to the parking lot, dazed.

RANDALL

She couldn't breathe, put a plastic bag on her face. She didn't do much-- scared, you could tell from her eyes-- that belly. Breathing like a bellows.

(mimes the breathing)

This plastic bag tied on her head. A bag! Like a kidnapped Christian.

He shakes his head, then remembers something.

He goes to the chair he left in the middle of the store and picks it up. One of its mid rails is unglued. He moves it. Evelyn approaches excessively stupefied.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

I sat on it for a moment and...

EVELYN

Oh, wow! How?!

RANDALL

(moves the rail again)

Bam! Ruined in no time.

EVELYN

Everything goes awry today.

RANDALL

I did nothing. Just sat on it.

(puts down the chair)

Gosh. And we sell this stuff?

EVELYN

No. That's the problem.

He sits on the chair, fanning himself with the hat.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

You have a point, it's hot today.

**EXT/INT. SHELBY'S CAR, MIDDLE OF THE ROAD - DAY**

There's nothing much other than aridity.

Shelby is head down on the steering wheel, moaning.

SHELBY

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Both hands press the thigh. Shaking.

She squints at the wound, scared.

A car approaches. She ducks, bumping her head on the wheel. She lets out a liberating, screaming laugh, about to break down, losing her mind in pain.

The car passes.

Her eyes carefully pop up.

She leans back into the seat, catching her breath, grasping her leg and the bloody shirt.

Then she SCREAMS.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, POPULATED AREA - LATER**

SILENCE.

Shelby's still in the same position, breathing towards the roof, holding back her laments. She keeps an eye on something outside, her head's tilted back.

One hand taps the wheel, the other shakes, covered in blood.

TAP TAP TAP...

She shuts her eyes, mouthing something repetitive. Worn out.

She straightens, staring outside again.

Her eyes bore into a POLICE STATION. She's parked next to it.

People pass on the sidewalk, chatting.

She clings on the door handle. Her fingers twitch in the blood, holding a shoulder strap used as an unfit tourniquet.

Breathing. Waiting.

Then she weirdly bends over, moaning, to shove the gun under the passenger seat, rasping it against the mat.

**EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

Dragging her foot, but somehow with determination, Shelby falters towards the station. A MAN looks at her, worried.

MAN

Miss, are you okay?

**INT. POLICE STATION, HALL - CONTINUOUS**

The door bangs open, Shelby storms in.

SHELBY

I got shot!

The RECEPTIONIST behind her window pays no heed. As Shelby puts her arms on the tall counter, the woman barely raises her eyes, still writing something.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

An old man fired at me.

RECEPTIONIST

This ain't the office suggestion box nor I have time to listen to people's complaints.

SHELBY

No, I-I... I want to... I just need to make a statement.

The receptionist looks up.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

(groaning)

I'm pregnant... the police thing to fill out-- is it?

She presses the wound as the woman silently stares her down.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you about to faint? If you feel like fainting, you have to tell me.

SHELBY

No, no. Yes, maybe.

(closes her eyes and gestures writing)

I need the thing to fill-- It's bleeding--

RECEPTIONIST

This is not a hospital, ma'am.

SHELBY  
 --Where's everyone?

RONELL BARTON, police officer, enters swinging an empty food bag. Shelby rushes to him.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
 Officer!

RONELL BARTON  
 (to the receptionist)  
 What seem to be the problem?

RECEPTIONIST  
 It may sound like she witnessed a  
 gunfight and wants to report it.

SHELBY  
 Not witness, victim!

RONELL BARTON  
 Well, that sounds serious.

**INT. PUBLIC HOSPITAL, COT - DAY**

Shelby moans, lying pantless on her side, as a DOCTOR cleans the wound.

DOCTOR  
 (read as 'blasted')  
 Your leg was blessed.

**INT. PUBLIC HOSPITAL, NURSES' STATION - NIGHT**

Shelby signs papers, leaning on two crutches, still in pain. One crutch falls down and a NURSE immediately approaches. She looks at the smooth Medicare brochure in her hand.

NURSE  
 I don't think you'll need that.

She points instead at a creased Medicaid one.

**EXT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

A barren, parched lawn leads to five steps, a small wooden porch and an ill-kempt, anonymous house.

Shelby advances slowly, she rolled up her shirt to hide the bloodiest part. Her car's parked crooked. She has to mount the steps sideways, using the crutches, aching.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, HALL-KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

All's quiet till Shelby trudges in. The only light comes from the porch. A half-wall separates the hall from the kitchen, moving boxes are backed against it.

As she shuts the door the room plunges into DARKNESS. A noise comes from another room. She's tiredly worried.

PARKER (O.S.)

What happened?

PARKER RAY (barely 20), nothing more than a pajamas over a haggard, worried body, slaps a wall to switch the LIGHT ON. He almost screams seeing her bloody state.

PARKER (CONT'D)

The heck's that? What have you done?

SHELBY

Nothing.

PARKER

How are you? You 'done something stupid--

SHELBY

Parker, I--

(takes a breath, moving to the kitchen, almost angry)

There's no problem. No ambulance. Stop asking. It's fine.

PARKER

What's fine? Where were you?

SHELBY

Out.

PARKER

This is-- What?! Why are you back at this hour?--

SHELBY

Chill.

PARKER

Where were-- ambulance!?

SHELBY

Stop giving yourself a heart attack.

PARKER

What have you be-- You screwed things up, didn't you?

SHELBY

What else have YOU screw up?! Have you at least heard something from the employment agency?

PARKER

When was I supposed to hear--?

SHELBY

I don't know, you tell me!

He walks back towards the bedroom, silent. She plunks herself down onto a couch, dropping the crutches, hand on her belly.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Thanks for asking if I'm fine, by the way.

PARKER

You're clearly not.  
(leans on the door)  
You look fine. Are you?

She scowls at him. He points at the crutches.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Why is that?

SHELBY

Don't ask.

She closes her eyes, resting her head back.

He scrutinizes her, shaking his head, then slaps the door frame, going away in the dark room.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY**

Parker sleeps in the center, his arms reach towards Shelby, who's staring at the wall.

She quietly gets up, moving her shirt to cover her belly.

Shelby slides out a big, flat box from behind the dresser, checking the measurements on the crib's drawing. She looks around the room, at Parker's dispiriting body.

Then goes away, leaving the door open. Parker still lays, sound asleep.



**EXT. ROAD - DAY**

No clouds. The sun thinned out and yellowed every barrens. Everything's boringly flat, the horizon looks unreachable. Just an empty, straight road.

No sound. No wind. Nothing. No one.

Ronell Barton and TODD WAYNE, another officer, are talking, not in the scene.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)  
Where are you going?

RONELL BARTON (V.O.)  
There's been a shooting on the 60,  
heading for Orienta.

A dusty POLICE CAR appears on the road, far away. Unhurried.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)  
How many deaths?

RONELL BARTON (V.O.)  
None.

It turns into a side dirt road, heading toward the furniture store. Here the horizon is blocked by scant trees and pylons.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)  
Why are you going there, then?

The car stops next to the "ENTER" sign. There are no cars in the parking lot. The lights are off.

**INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS**

In the driver's seat, LORI WILLIS, police officer, reaches to a greasy paper bag. Ronell unfastens his seatbelt.

LORI WILLIS  
You ate 'em all.

She takes something fried from the bag. He eats too.

RONELL BARTON  
It looks closed.

LORI WILLIS  
It looks like it.

He gets out. The automatic doors won't open. Lori stretches, playing with the air conditioning vent.

He takes a notebook and writes something to leave wedged into the door. She eats all the remaining food, shaking the bag, then balls it up and throws it on the dashboard.

RONELL BARTON

Nothing.

He slams the door.

LORI WILLIS

No one's there?

RONELL BARTON

No one.

(puts the seatbelt on)

I don't like it.

**EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

They stop again. She gestures him to stay inside.

**INT. GAS STATION - DAY**

Lori looks around the shelves crammed in the tiny store.

LORI WILLIS

Hello.

Gordy pops out from under the counter.

GORDY

Hey ho.

(re: her uniform)

Ooh! What's that about?

LORI WILLIS

We are sorry to disturb you, sir,  
but would it be okay if I ask you  
some questions?

GORDY

Uh-huh.

With nonchalance, he disappears behind a door. Lori is dazed.

Silence. She moves to the counter.

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

Who's we, ma'am?

He reappears. Lori smiles, still mystified.

GORDY (CONT'D)

All right, what happened?

LORI WILLIS

So, yeah, emm. The Johnsons of the store next door. Do you happen to know at what time are they usually here?

GORDY

Usually? Well, they are here.

LORI WILLIS

No, they are not.

GORDY

Oh, no, no, the store should be open as always.

He looks out the window: only dirt. She glances there too.

LORI WILLIS

Did you by chance noticed anything weird on Tuesday? Were you here?

GORDY

As always.

He keeps staring outside.

LORI WILLIS

Or someone suspicious?

GORDY

All pretty normal. As always.

LORI WILLIS

Do you happen to have a security camera?

He suddenly turns around, making her smile, hopeful.

GORDY

An obese woman paid for a coke with a fifty.

LORI WILLIS

Mmm. Anything else?

GORDY

Umm... I bet somethin' happened if cops come asking.

LORI WILLIS

Unfortunately yes. The thing is, we received a felony complaint--

GORDY

I've been good lately.

LORI WILLIS

Not you, sir. But Mr. Johnson shot someone on Tuesday. Or so they say.

GORDY

It was on Monday.

LORI WILLIS

Beg your pardon?

He doesn't respond immediately, he's looking outside.

GORDY

The fifty bucks woman was on Monday not yesterday. I said it wrong before, sorry.

LORI WILLIS

Nevermind. Nevermind. She wasn't of much interest...

(tilts her head, trying to draw his attention)

Thanks for your time anyway.

She goes to leave, nodding in greeting even if he's still looking outside.

GORDY

You say Randall killed someone?

(as if the day is the most implausible part)

Yesterday? Who did he shoot?

LORI WILLIS

(holding the door open)

It's not important either. There's been a possible aggravated assault. Somebody got shot here. Over there, I s'pose. In front of this very gas station by Mr. Johnson. For no good reason, apparently.

He's unmoved.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)

Yeah, it's a very strange report. From another very strange person.

He ponders for a moment, then shakes his head.

GORDY  
No, no. I didn't hear such thing.

LORI WILLIS  
Are you sure, sir?

GORDY  
I am sure as always. Are you?

LORI WILLIS  
I'm not asking you, sir, I'm  
telling you. That's what has been  
reported, but things may change.

GORDY  
They sure do, uh-huh, sure do. But  
I heard nothin' like that happenin'  
though.

LORI WILLIS  
Then it may not have happened.

She lingers over the door handle for a moment, then writes  
something on her notebook and hands it to him.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)  
In case you remember something new,  
or see unusual movements again,  
please notify us. Or when Mr.  
Johnson comes in, please--

He points at the road. She looks back. A car slowly turns in.

**EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Ronell motions for the car to stop. She runs out.

LORI WILLIS  
That's our car!

They reach it as it stops. The dust raised slowly descends.

RONELL BARTON  
Mr. Johnson?

The window rolls down to reveal only Evelyn inside.

RONELL BARTON (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Are you Mrs. Johnson?

EVELYN

Yes, I am. Evelyn Johnson, but  
who's asking?

RONELL BARTON

We are the police.

LORI WILLIS

We'd like to ask--

EVELYN

I can see that. But why?

The cops' shadows loom over her car.

LORI WILLIS

Mrs. Johnson, may I ask you to get  
out of the car? We have some  
questions for you.

Evelyn rolls up her window.

From his shady doorjamb, Gordy watches the three talk in the  
blazing heat. He's peeved.

Then Evelyn drives off.

The officers' eyes follow her, squinting in the sun.

Silence. Evelyn parks at the side of her store.

RONELL BARTON

I didn't like her reaction.  
(turns to Lori)  
Too vague. Not normal.

Lori shrugs, still staring at the car.

RONELL BARTON (CONT'D)

I don't like this situation at all.

Gordy watches them move to their car, as Evelyn exits hers.  
Lori jogs to him, smiling.

LORI WILLIS

Was there ever a reason for you to  
think that Mr. Johnson is the kind  
of person that loves to shoot?

He waits 'til she gets in front of him.

GORDY

He has a couple of guns, right?

LORI WILLIS

Does he? In the store? Mrs. Johnson  
just said they--

GORDY  
I never saw it, but...

He shrugs.

LORI WILLIS  
What makes you say that? Do you really think he's a violent man? Or unbalanced?

GORDY  
(nods)  
Nah, not particularly. I didn't. Until you said he shot that woman.  
(shrugs)  
I never liked him anyway.

LORI WILLIS  
We'll see.

She glances at the store. Evelyn passes by the "ENTER" sign, seeing them talk.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)  
I've never-- Why did you say it was a woman? Did you hear us--

GORDY  
I don't cotton to Randall Johnson. He's not that much of a decent man and for certain he doesn't have the balls to shoot another man.

They both nod.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - SAME**

Evelyn just stopped at the entrance, staring at the piece of paper wedged in the door. Frozen. The keys in her hand.

As the police car drives away, she rips the paper off and heads to the car again.

**INT. EVELYN'S CAR - DAY**

Rushing down an empty highway.

The keys still in her hand, pressed against the wheel; their ring leaves pale and red marks on her finger.

**EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, DERELICT BARN - DAY**

Evelyn's hand is on the open car door, clutching the keys.

In front of her car there's a pickup filled with old woods and junk stolen from the barn. Randall lingers on the dried grass with a plank leaning on his shoulder, taking his phone off the pocket.

EVELYN

We have to cover ourselves. They don't know she robbed us. Ain't right, Randall. They can't think you shot a pregnant woman.

RANDALL

We have a stand-your-ground law.

EVELYN

Right.  
(re: woods)  
What do we need these for?

RANDALL

No one wants them.

He drags it to the car.

EVELYN

They left them here for a reason.

RANDALL

It's the owners' problem that they clearly didn't know what to do of these. Maybe we'll make some money or something out of it.

EVELYN

Hurry up then.

Her head's shoved in the car, looking in her purse.

He lifts the wood onto his car.

RANDALL

She's a thief. I had to defend our store. Gosh, you were there, for Pete's sake! What do they expect?!

He looks at the barn, turning the phone in his hand.

EVELYN

(searching on her phone)  
Don't tell them that.  
(MORE)



EVELYN (CONT'D)

You know nothing. Or we end up as those idiots who get filmed on YouTube. We don't know how it works with that law-- A fetus's involved, they might think it was wrong.

RANDALL

Why would they?  
 (beat)  
 Ok. Ok.  
 (dialing a number)  
 We were robbed.

EVELYN

Of course we were.

She looks at a list of names of people and law firms.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

We didn't know she got injured. Nor about her pregnancy. Especially the pregnancy, you can't see very well.

He's facing the grass. His thumb quivers to the call button.

RANDALL

She pointed her gun. I didn't even think of the shotgun. We've never used it... That's why.

EVELYN

We don't know how it happened, the woman or her accomplices maybe-- We don't know. That's that.

RANDALL

She had a gun. She pointed it at me. She got aggressive.

EVELYN

(clicking on a name)  
 Our version has to go smoothly.

Randall puts the phone to his ear, turning the soil.

RANDALL

Hello? This is Randall Johnson.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Good morning, is this--

Their sound is cut off by DIAL TONES, even if they're still talking.

TODD WAYNE (PRE-LAP)

I knew it. It's always like this.

**INT. POLICE STATION, SMALL AND CROWDED OPEN OFFICE - DAY**

Ronell sits at his desk, facing some empty food boxes.

Lori leans against another table, absorbed and aghast by the pictures that covers it. One shows a man facing down on a wooden floor. His pale hand, contracted yet weirdly soothing, pointed toward a couch. The body of a little girl, with her thin arm hanging from the couch. Dark rings on her neck.

TODD WAYNE approaches.

TODD WAYNE

It was for your case, the couches place you went before. There's been a robbery yesterday.

LORI WILLIS

She didn't say that.

RONELL BARTON

So Shelby Ray was lying.

TODD WAYNE

A nice man that Johnson on the phone.

RONELL BARTON

His wife didn't mention no robbery!

LORI WILLIS

She said nothing at all... What did we go there for?!

**EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, DERELICT BARN - RESUMING**

Still no sound. Evelyn smiles politely, being way too nice on the phone. Randall turns away.

RONELL BARTON (V.O.)

That young woman was weird.

Randall stares at the barn. Evelyn glances at his back.

RONELL BARTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I mean, her story didn't make much sense.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)

He said a teenager took all their daily takings and besides the card reader wasn't working.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE, CASH REGISTER - DAY**

Evelyn fills out a sales receipt. No one's buying anything.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)  
And, of course, our old man  
couldn't do anything.

There are two other fake receipts on the counter.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD BETWEEN GREENISH BARRENS - DAY**

Randall drives off with the trunk full of stolen boards.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)  
These people always try to take  
advantage of the elderly.

**INT. POLICE STATION - RESUMING**

Lori picks up the horrible picture of a kid's pale hand. Todd sits with his legs spread, not looking at the photos.

TODD WAYNE  
It's a scam. The weird woman shot  
herself, I tell you.

Lori hands the photo to Ronell, pointing at something, but he refuses it.

RONELL BARTON  
He must have shot her for defense,  
so why did his wife lied then?

Lori shrugs.

TODD WAYNE  
(points at Lori's photos)  
They may have heard of Bane's  
murders. Everyone has.

LORI WILLIS  
How can you possibly already have  
an opinion when it's still unclear  
what happened?

TODD WAYNE  
Ron told me. I know how it went  
with Mrs-- with the wife.

**INT. JOHNSON'S KITCHEN TABLE - DAY**

The last sunlight filters through two macramè lace curtains. Their intricate shadows glide with every movement. As he puts down his glass of water, Randall moves a knife on the table, left and right, playing with it.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)

I tell you, this Randall Johnson guy sounds like a polite person.

LORI WILLIS (V.O.)

Pff... Ok?

Randall stares blankly at Evelyn's flattened chair cushion. She turns off the stove.

TODD WAYNE (V.O.)

Surely they know there's something bigger cooking with these murders and all. So, they didn't even expect you to go there... They just didn't want to disturb.

Evelyn puts down the pot and moves her SCRAPING CHAIR.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

Shelby sits, eating plums, and with her foot drags a chair against the table. Parker's already putting his dishes in the sink. No one is talking.

Her hands are sticky, the juice drips down her chin. As she reaches for a napkin, her Tau cross necklace dangles over the table.

**LATER**

The dishes are still in the sink. Both chairs are drawn away from the table.

**BEDROOM**

Lying uncomfortably on the bedspread, Shelby tries to pull down her pants without ending up in tears. She can hardly bend to check the wound.

She slowly lifts the gauze. There's nothing to see other than a dark-red hematoma. She closes her eyes and grimaces.

The doorbell RINGS.

**KITCHEN-HALL**

Parker opens the bathroom door, surprised.

SHELBY (O.S.)  
 Not your mother, I hope!  
 (beat)  
 You didn't tell her you got fired,  
 did you?!

He rushes to the entry. Lori and Ronell wait before the  
 doorstep, Parker's caught off guard.

PARKER  
 Oh, dang, wow. What's-- for?

LORI WILLIS  
 Mr. Ray Parker?

PARKER  
 No, Parker Ray.

LORI WILLIS  
 Perfect. We're here for your wife's  
 shooting.

PARKER  
 (freezes fleetingly)  
 Shooting... 'course. Sure. Thanks.  
 Come in. Come in.

RONELL BARTON  
 Thank you.

Ronell shuts the door and exchanges a calm look with Lori.  
 The house is a mess.

PARKER  
 (moving to the bedroom)  
 She's resting up a moment. I-- I'm  
 going to help her up, you know,  
 with the pregnancy and the leg,  
 poor thing.

Lori and Ronell nod, waiting before the couch.

PARKER (CONT'D)  
 (points to the tap)  
 If you want water, the glasses are  
 up there. Please, help yourself.

He enters the-

**BEDROOM**

Shelby put her pants back on, but she's still facing the opposite wall. His expression changes, shutting the door.

PARKER  
Shooting? What's going on? Explain yourself.

She tries to get up.

SHELBY  
Is it the police?

PARKER  
Yeah, but why are they--? What happened exactly?

He's blanched over her, she doesn't look up.

SHELBY  
I went in a store on the 60 and-- I didn't even intend to go there, there was this man at the gas station and I panicked, but I swear I ain't shoot anybody...

His eyes widen.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
That man shot me when I was already going back to the car.

He helps her get up.

PARKER  
You got shot over damn gasoline? What's your problem?

SHELBY  
No. No.  
(stares elsewhere)  
I went to the store nearby to-- I didn't take anything, I swear. I'm sorry. I'm awful. Sorry.

Now they are standing very close. She looks at him.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
I was sort of robbing the place, but I didn't!

PARKER  
Fuck me sideways, why?!!

He bends down, anxious. She tries to lock eyes with him.

SHELBY

I didn't do anything that bad, I swear. I didn't ask much, nor-- I almost took a chair. I promise, I just... Parker, we needed-- I got shot, I deserve it. Sorry.

PARKER

We don't need a chair.

SHELBY

No, no chair, I-I ask for--

PARKER

I know.

SHELBY

Good.

PARKER

(under his breath)

Why-why-why-why... Ok. You tried to rob a store. Packin'?

She kind of nods, stiffened.

PARKER (CONT'D)

But they shot you.

SHELBY

Yes, and I went to the police, but they don't know-- no one's around. I shouldn't-- Sorry. I just thought they could, you know, repay me for my leg and stuff. We can't afford--  
(points at herself)

None of this. That's why I went there in the first place. That was my plan. So I just turned him in before he could. They don't know that the guy--

PARKER

Ok.

He briefly closes his eyes, cooling off.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Ok.

(beat)

Well, we're definitely not gonna tell them that.

**KITCHEN**

Shelby sits on the low couch, hands on the crutches. The other three stand. Parker's tormenting his fingertips.

LORI WILLIS

How are you feeling, Mrs. Ray?

SHELBY

Oh, you know...

Ronell drinks some water, but it tastes awful so he lowers the glass, pretending he didn't almost cough it up.

PARKER

She feels bad, still. It's painful.

RONELL BARTON

I'm sorry to hear that.

(to Lori)

We had to call an ambulance in the middle of the report.

LORI WILLIS

I was there. You didn't realize the complainant was injured... Mrs. Ray was bleeding. An injured woman.

SHELBY

They say I'll be fine, at least.

LORI WILLIS

That's good. OK, listen, we need to understand the situation here.

SHELBY

As I said to officer--

(thinks of his name, then  
just nods at him)

Um, I was getting gas when I got shot, two clean shots out of nowhere, so I turned around and I saw this old guy at the store holding a shotgun.

(glances at Lori)

He must have thought I was someone else. I was facing the other way, they couldn't see me.

Lori is studying her, so she turns to Ronell who's trying to hide that he just spilled some water on his cuff.



SHELBY (CONT'D)

This store owner must have problem with the gas station people. They must not get along.

Lori nods.

Shelby waits for someone to speak, but no one does.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I didn't do anything to him, look at me, in my condition... But you already have all of this on the documents, haven't you?

RONELL BARTON

Unfortunately we never finished the report, Mrs. Ray, because of the fainting. But it's our policy to do so, if you'd like to.

LORI WILLIS

Before doing that, though, we need to inform you that we got a call.

RONELL BARTON

Affirmative. Now, the problem here is that we have a different take from the owner of the store, Mr. Randall Johnson. Assuming he's the assailant.

PARKER

Johnson with a store on the 60. Is he related to Shawn and Jon Johnson from Seiling?

RONELL BARTON

I don't know, sir.

LORI WILLIS

Would that explain this sit--?

PARKER

Oh, no, absolutely, we went to school with them.

RONELL BARTON

Right.

LORI WILLIS

So, here's the thing, no one knows nor saw anything. Nor at the station where you said you got--

SHELBY

(suddenly gesturing more)  
Oh, well, I didn't get gas. I was  
about to. That's why they don't  
seem to remember me at the station.

LORI WILLIS

You look nervous. Is there a reason  
for that?

SHELBY

I-I'm fine... I'm just in pain from  
the leg.

RONELL BARTON

We're sorry to hear that.

Ronell nods, almost spilling the water again.

Shelby and Lori stare at each other.

RONELL BARTON (CONT'D)

The deal now is, there's been a  
robbery near the gas station.

PARKER

Oh, no.  
(stares at their silence)  
Today, she's been here with m--

RONELL BARTON

The very day the incident occurred.  
Apparently committed by a teenager,  
possibly around your age. You could  
match the description.

Those words hang in the air.

No one wants to add anything else.

Parker tries to smile as much as possible.

PARKER

There are many pregnant women about  
our age--

LORI WILLIS

They didn't say she was.

RONELL BARTON

The RP claimed the offender  
wasn't pregnant, as far as he  
knows. We ask him.

PARKER

Well, then--

LORI WILLIS

There's plenty of pregnant teen but  
such coincidence is indeed bizarre.  
Not normal. Two possible crimes.  
Different episodes, different  
circumstances.

There's an unwanted glass of water on the table. The cops'  
shadows loom over Shelby. She stares at their knees.

PARKER

Crimes are up lately, aren't they?

LORI WILLIS

The owners say they got threatened-

PARKER

And so are threats.

LORI WILLIS

With a gun.

PARKER

Violence too.

Everyone turns to him.

**EXT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Quiet.

The house is well-lit even if it's getting dark. The small  
porch is in the shadows though. The police car is parked in  
front of it.

The screen door squeaks, Parker is the first to come out,  
with an empty smile. Shelby shuffles out last.

RONELL BARTON

Sorry if we caused you any trouble,  
it's just standard procedure.

LORI WILLIS

There's so much going on at the  
station these days.

PARKER

Well, I hope we made the whole  
situation clearer. Thank you.

Lori heads to the car. Ronell turns around and nods one last  
greeting, to which Parker reciprocates.

RONELL BARTON

Again, we are sorry for coming here  
two days late.

(re: Shelby's belly)

Congratulation again.

Caught off guard, Shelby smiles in response, feeling awkward.

SHELBY

Thank you, 'preciate it. I'd walk  
you to the car, but ya know.

She gestures to her leg. Ronell gives a noncommittal grunt.

RONELL BARTON

(points at his side)

I got stabbed here once.

SHELBY

Oh, well, that's bad too.

They all nod.

**INT. POLICE CAR - STRAIGHT, BOUNDLESS ROAD - NIGHT**

The sky is darkening its last pink shades. Lori drives calm.

RONELL BARTON

Why are you so certain that the man  
really shot someone at random?

LORI WILLIS

I'm not. But, you know, that's also  
plausible. Mrs. And Mr. Ray were  
both cooperating.

Lori's gaze is fixed in front of her. The gas station sign is  
visible even from far away.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)

At least we dodged a bullet, one  
side of the case is no longer.  
There was already too much work.

RONELL BARTON

Exactly, a useless trip again. He  
must have had a reason for not  
making her fill out the complaint  
though.

LORI WILLIS

Well, once again not everyone can  
afford to go through with it.

RONELL BARTON

Still, that seemed dumb to me. They were such a nice couple tough... Good thing you didn't drink the water.

LORI WILLIS

Johnson has a hunting rifle, right?

RONELL BARTON

Affirmative, three registered, one possibly in the store, and his wife said they didn't have one.

LORI WILLIS

Yeah, but--

RONELL BARTON

OK, she just didn't know.

LORI WILLIS

Yeah, I mean, he told us he never used it, but, you know, he's a hunter, or was one... Nevermind.

RANDALL

I used to hunt as--

LORI WILLIS

I know... My point was that he's not afraid to shoot. He knows how to at least.

He almost snickers, looking at the shades of the horizon.

RONELL BARTON

People are not animals.

LORI WILLIS

Yeah. We are, though.

They pass the furniture store without looking at it.

RONELL BARTON

You say that just to non-concur with Todd.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE/GAS STATION - NIGHT**

As the police car drives off far away, Evelyn's car advances slowly. It stops at a random point between the two stores.

Evelyn leaves the beeping door open, takes a broom out and starts sweeping and scraping the sandy dirt away.

Gordy sees her. The two stare awkwardly at each other. Evelyn smiles, raising her hand in greeting. The man nods.

She turns over the dry blood in the sand, raising dust.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR - NIGHT**

Dust moves in the beam of light, as the passenger door opens. A blanket covers the driver's seat.

Parker takes something out of the side compartment, then shoves one arm under the seat. His hand crinkles a plastic bag on the car mat.

He lifts a side of the blanket. Blood on the seat.

Then he opens the back door. He grunts. The gun pokes out from under the front seat.

Slams the door.

He walks back to the house, fast, holding the gun on his chest with both hands, trying to hide it.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN TABLE - CONTINUOUS**

Shelby eats a gummy piece of pizza. In front of her there's only the empty plate, no cutlery, no glass, nothing.

Parker plunks the gun down the table.

SHELBY

Thanks.

He opens the lowest crisper.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

We got lucky the man didn't notice my belly.

PARKER

How didn't he?

SHELBY

Gosh, I hope he wasn't blind. I feel bad enough.

He washes tomatoes with his back turned.

PARKER

We're gonna ask Chad what else we can do now we dropped your charges.

SHELBY

No, no, really, there's no need.

PARKER

Sure, there is. He'll back us up.

SHELBY

(abandons the pizza)  
Back up on us.

PARKER

He deals with this kind of stuff constantly.

SHELBY

He's a tax lawyer or something... The one time you do something you want my ex here?!

PARKER

You don't have a say. You just sat there! Not answering. Did you have to wait for the police to open up with me?

(angrily cuts a tomato)

You're now walking around with a gun, aren't you?

SHELBY

Well, that's on you! 'getting fired two months before the birth... Sure let your mum hijack my pregnancy, marry us, sure it's fine if you only work part-time now, not to worry... Oh, and I should be behind you on this, I reckon... To fuck you. Or at least to shove you off a cliff.

The knife sits on the countertop, wet. He's staring down at the sink.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
How else could I have fixed your  
chaos?!

He turns, leaning against the sink. She looks away.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
Sorry. We weren't speaking. Let's  
pretend nothing happened.

He rubs his face, stressed.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
They called an ambulance by the  
way, when I fainted... I lied the  
other day.

PARKER  
I-I can learn how to deliver the  
baby, so we won't have to pay for  
that too.

She stares at him.

PARKER (CONT'D)  
What else can I do now? I'm sorry,  
it's my fault... You shouldn't  
stress in your condition.

SHELBY  
Well, my condition's on--

PARKER  
Yeah, yeah, it's on my mum.

He starts eating again, impassive, then takes a bag of chips  
and shovels them into his mouth.

Shelby turns her eyes away, clenching her fists.

Silence. Only his loud, dense chewing.

She's staring off, more depressed, so he drops the chips on  
the table. Her eyes catch that movement.

She now stares at the GUN, lost in her mind. Her eyes bore  
into the gun more and more and more...

Hopeless. Guilty.

He drags the chips in front of her eyes. She reaches for it.



**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE, UNDER THE COUNTER - DAY**

Squatted, Randall gazes at the shotgun cabinet. Remorseful.

Evelyn's unintelligible voice makes him stand up, leaning on the counter.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, RECEPTION AREA - DAY**

Evelyn's hands rest on the reception counter. She flashes Randall a reassuring smile. They are both dressed nicely.

The RECEPTIONIST is on the computer.

Behind them, a smiling man comes out of a restroom, fastening his pants. He's DALE WHIPKEY (40s), blonde, wavy hair and a thick mustache to match, with dark eyebrows that don't.

Evelyn peeks at the computer screen.

EVELYN

His name is Dale Clarence Whipkey.

The receptionist lets out a disheartened sigh.

RANDALL

(smiling at Evelyn)

Three names instill confidence.

EVELYN

Competence.

DALE WHIPKEY

Who told you my middle name?

They turn to see the weird grin heading in their direction, as Whipkey wipes his hands on the suit.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Lowe from Chickasha! Look atcha!

He holds out his hand. Randall moves forward, confused.

RANDALL

Randall Johnson, we're here for--

DALE WHIPKEY

(enthusiastically shaking hands)

Johnson? From Fairview? Then you're early. Well, what the heck, better than no one, am I right?

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE - DAY**

The room is well-lit and not that big. The Johnsons sit at a weird trapezoid desk. On the other side, Whipkey smiles at some papers. ROXY (20s), his assistant, stands next to him.

There's a RABBIT jumping freely in the office.

DALE WHIPKEY

So, what's the deal here? From what I gathered, thanks to my secretary, a certain-

(monotone reading)

Shelby Ray, social security number 440-08-3394, pressed charges after one of you-

(stares only at Randall)

-shot her. Allegedly.

RANDALL

Admittedly.

EVELYN

Involuntarily.

RANDALL

It was voluntary.

DALE WHIPKEY

We'll see about that.

EVELYN

He accidentally--

RANDALL

Purposely.

EVELYN

It was an accident.

DALE WHIPKEY

Great! Believe me, an accident is easy, we could use it, right?

He turns to Roxy.

ROXY

I guess so.

DALE WHIPKEY

You guessed correctly. If we play our cards right, people will have to pity you instead of the victim. "Oh poor ol' buddy.

(MORE)

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
*It could've happened to anyone".*

RANDALL  
 It wasn't an accident, that woman  
 tried to--

<p>DALE WHIPKEY          Even so, it's still a trivial          matter. You could have also          deliberately shot her, it's          fine. Tell us what happened,          instead.</p>	<p>ROXY          (mumbles)          Delinquently.</p>
--	---

RANDALL  
 Yes, as I was saying--

DALE WHIPKEY  
 (to Roxy)  
 Write down all useful information.

ROXY  
 Like?

Evelyn startles, noticing the rabbit, and clutches her purse.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 I don't know. Listen to Mr. Jensen  
 and write down what you think will  
 be valuable later. So--

He turns his grin at them, but Randall's staring at Evelyn  
 who's concernedly staring at the rabbit.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
 We have to clear this man's name,  
 am I right?

Randall turns to see Whipkey's teeth shining at him. His jaw  
 twitches, trying to reciprocate the smile.

RANDALL  
 Uh? Yes, the woman was robbing our  
 store.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 There you have it!  
 (motions to them)  
 She robbed you, fantastic! It's an  
 easier sell than having straight up  
 shot her.

He shakes his head noticing Roxy grab his notebook. Seeing  
 movement, Evelyn turns away from the sitting rabbit.

EVELYN

Tell them what happened.

RANDALL

I was going to. We were both working on Tuesday. No customers around, but we were working anyway. I wasn't doing anything that--

EVELYN

He didn't do a thing--

DALE WHIPKEY

You did nothing. You responded.

RANDALL

Yes, it happened suddenly. Before there was no one, and then she was there, d'you get what I mean?

DALE WHIPKEY

She entered.

RANDALL

Yes, so this girl enters--

DALE WHIPKEY

Shelby Ray!

RANDALL

Yes, her, I s'pose. I've never seen this woman before. Well, that day either, she had a thingy on. I saw she was a young kid, school age or somethin', pregnant or maybe faking it, but then I ran out of things I know. So she started threatening me with a gun. "*Money! Money! I want your money! Give me something!*" Etcetera. Pointing her gun all over the place. I-I admit, I was a bit--

EVELYN

Sure you were! Anyone would be.

RANDALL

Evelyn was there. She could have been dangerous. She was dangerous.

The rabbit's running toward them.

EVELYN

(tensing again)

Y-yes.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 (motions Roxy to write)  
 Mr. Jensen didn't see the victim.

RANDALL  
 No, she had a bag on her face.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 A bag?

RANDALL  
 A yellow one. Not to be recognized.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 Why a bag?  
 (to Roxy)  
 Aren't balaclavas affordable?

RANDALL  
 She couldn't breathe as necessary.

This detail seems to repel Roxy.

DALE WHIPKEY  
 Unnecessary detail, don't mention  
 it. Deserved it, armed criminal.

Evelyn nods.

The rabbit breathes warm against Randall's ankles. He starts gesticulating widely, looking down.

RANDALL  
 So, she says "Money". But we don't  
 have any... The economy these days.  
 We had to apply for bankruptcy--

Whipkey's eyes widen.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
 She pointed the gun for nothing and  
 now she knows it--  
 (tries to shake the rabbit  
 off his pants)  
 So she runs off. And I remembered.  
 We keep a shotgun in our store, you  
 know, to be safe, for situations  
 like this.

EVELYN  
 We've never used it before--

RANDALL  
 I've never needed to.

EVELYN  
Not for this kind of circumstances.

RANDALL  
It's just an old, hunting rifle,  
but it still works as it should.

ROXY I'm sure it does!	DALE WHIPKEY No reason to defend yourself, you can shoot for defense.
---------------------------	---

RANDALL  
So as soon as she tried to flee I--

DALE WHIPKEY  
I understand.

Interrupted in mid-gesture, Randall's arms freeze up.

Whipkey brings his hands together, looks down, and pretends to be thinking.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
I understand.

Evelyn stares at him, worried and guilty.

Roxy notices Randall's uneasy, moving his legs jerkily. The rabbit is now just laying on his shoes. Evelyn's eyes widen looking down at it.

Then Whipkey raises his eyes.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Believe me, I too sometimes would  
like to shoot someone... But, you  
know, we have to restrain ourselves  
at times.

ROXY  
Or you end up in similar  
situations.

DALE WHIPKEY  
Or this situation ends, thank you,  
sweetheart... Er, Rosie.

ROXY  
Roxy.

Whipkey's nodding face is worryingly blithe and empty-headed.

DALE WHIPKEY  
Your store sounds perfect, that's  
why she must have picked it--

Evelyn nods, opening to a smile.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Two elders going bankrupt.

Evelyn's smile fades.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Who can protect them?  
(kind of laughs)  
So... uh...

ROXY  
Sorry, just to clarify, did there  
come a time when you in any way  
chase this pregnant woman?

RANDALL  
No, gosh!

EVELYN  
Is the pregnancy a problem?

DALE WHIPKEY  
We have a good, innocent man!

RANDALL  
She ran away and halfway to her car  
I shot her from my store.

He kicks harder, the rabbit still won't budge. Roxy writes  
something down, more concerned.

DALE WHIPKEY  
Oh! From a distance?! Good aim!!

He leans forward to shake his hand. Randall's befuddled.

RANDALL  
Thank you, buddy. A lot of things  
don't work no more, but I still got  
my eyes.

Evelyn shakes her head.

Whipkey sits back, smiling, sees Roxy's disapproving look,  
and recomposes.

DALE WHIPKEY  
So, uh, what we can to do now--  
(re: Roxy's notebook)  
Are you writing with a pencil?  
They're official documents!

ROXY  
These are just notes.

DALE WHIPKEY  
(swivels)  
But I will write all official  
documents based on those notes!

Randall uses this distraction to shake his leg harder.

ROXY  
Then you'll write them with a pen.  
I don't see the problem.

DALE WHIPKEY  
You--  
(smiles to the Johnsons)  
Sorry.  
(swivels again)  
You don't see the problem? We need  
to properly defend this man, say he  
had all the rights to shoot random  
people in his property.

RANDALL  
(briefly looks up)  
We-- I had the right to shoot her.  
She robbed us ultimately.

EVELYN  
Undoubtedly.

ROXY  
I've always done it with a pencil.

DALE WHIPKEY  
You always--?! With a pencil?

ROXY  
Yes.

DALE WHIPKEY  
No! A pen is official!

The rabbit jumps away, scared. Evelyn's eyes follow it.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Official documents, official pen!  
Were you born yesterday? If so,  
since when? You never use a pencil,  
why now-

ROXY  
I've always written with a pencil.



DALE WHIPKEY

What's the difference between pen  
and pencil? Not just three letters.

ROXY

Graphite.

DALE WHIPKEY

No! Ink! The ink, still three  
letters, is permanent not a pencil.

He moves some papers at random.

ROXY

It's the same thing.

DALE WHIPKEY

Ink and graphite are now the same?

ROXY

No, I meant... I've always used a  
pencil.

DALE WHIPKEY

Then you're incompetent!  
(gestures for her to zip  
it, then smiles at them)  
So. Where were we?

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, EMPTY CORRIDOR - DAY**

The Johnsons exit the office, silent. Evelyn walks slower.

EVELYN

I didn't know that people dye their  
mustaches.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Whipkey scratches his mustaches, lost in thoughts.

DALE WHIPKEY

I'm not sure I can trust them, with  
that bankruptcy and all... I don't  
want to have to withdraw in the  
middle of it because they can't pay  
me. They'll think I chickened out.  
And if he actually shoot this 440-  
08-3394 woman, I lose the case an--

ROXY

He just told us he did.

DALE WHIPKEY

I don't want to lose. And if he actually shot a pregnant rando--

ROXY

A robber.

DALE WHIPKEY

He might shoot me too. There was no joy behind his eyes, have you noticed? Serial killers are like that, the creepy ones.

ROXY

Are there some non-creepy ones?

The rabbit jumps on his lap and he slides it off.

DALE WHIPKEY

We need an excuse to know them better, read between the lines.

Roxy hands him her one-line note saying:

*"Randall Johnson shot a robber not in his property".*

ROXY

But there's only one line.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, IN FRONT OF THE ELEVATOR - DAY**

The Johnsons stand in silence. Someone's in the elevator.

EVELYN

He seems a very good lawyer.

RANDALL

Odd rabbit though.

Evelyn shivers. The doors close in front of them.

**INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY**

The doors slide open as Shelby enters a store.

She hobbles through the aisles.

The different price tags in the meat fridge. She stares at a package of ribeye, then picks the brightest, cheapest one.

**CHECKOUT COUNTER**

Leaning on one crutch, she struggles to get out her wallet.

Half of her groceries are already in a cloth bag. The CASHIER waits. People in line grow impatient, not helping, as she carefully rummages in her kangaroo pocket, scurrying.

CASHIER

Do I add a bag? Just 10¢.

Shelby lifts her eyes, finally pulling out the wallet.

SHELBY

No.

**EXT. SUBURBS' STREET - DAY**

Shelby walks slow, piteous, moving stiffly. The overflowing grocery bag fights with the crutches. The package of meat and another box under one arm.

Daylight dazzles her.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, EMPTY SIDE DIRT ROAD - DAY**

Scratching noises and car passing.

The ribeye ooze its thawed ice on the backseat. The driver seat is moved back, crushing the grocery bag against the crutches. Shelby empties a water bottle onto a car brush.

She's trying to scrub the blood off the seat. Frantically.

The gun comes out of her pocket, wrapped in a plastic bag.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (O.C.)

Do you need assistance?

Shelby's head pops out of the car, alarmed.

A DEPUTY SHERIFF approaches. She hides the gun, panicking.

SHELBY

'Just cleaning the car.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Why are you obstructing the access to this side road, ma'am?

Her hand rushes to cover the seat with the blanket.

He sees the movement then looks at her squatting, legs wide, hand on her belly, awkwardly hiding a blood stain on a seat.



Radio to his mouth, he walks to his sheriff car, between the rural road and the highway.

SHELBY  
Wait for what?

He turns.

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
Take your blanket so you won't stain the seat.

She looks around, confused.

**INT. BACK OF THE SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY**

Shelby's petrified on her blanket, completely uncomfortable, hand on her belly and gun.

The deputy closes her door, talking to his radio, then seats in front. She stares at the grid that divides them, lost, not listening to the worrying, crackling words from his radio.

She looks at her car.

No one nor nothing's around.

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
My cousin owns one of those fields.

SHELBY  
Wha--? I'm sorry. 'Didn't know.

She nervously plays with the hem of her pocket, arms crossed. The plastic bag crinkles. A low voice's on his radio again.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
I'll go now. There's no need.

He looks up at the rear-view mirror.

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
Are you one of our voters?

He tries to stare at her but she's avoiding his look.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)  
A new sheriff took office a couple of weeks ago, I don't know if you heard... I just started patrolling this area.

(MORE)

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)

(beat)

Sorry to keep you waiting, ma'am, I had to ask what to do in this types of situations... It's our protocol.

(looks at her car)

There's a "No trespassing" sign, I know that.

She's breathing harder.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)

It's hot these days.

Her phone rings. She jumps, then looks at him worried.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You can answer, ma'am.

She doesn't do it immediately. His radio keeps hissing words.

An unknown number.

SHELBY

(whispering)

Hello?

ROXY (V.O.)

Good afternoon, may I please speak to Mrs. Shelby Ray?

SHELBY

Yes, it's me, who's--

ROXY (V.O.)

Hi, Mrs. Ray, this is Roxy at the Lane, Fowler, Perez and Associates law office, where your justice is served. I'm calling on behalf of lawyer Dale Whipkey.

**EXT. EMPTY SIDE DIRT ROAD - DAY**

As the deputy goes away, Shelby stares mouth agape at her dusty car between fields, holding a ticket.

Her blanket's trailing in the dirt.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, PARCHED OPEN-AIR PARKING - DAY**

The blanket partly covers the still wet and bloody stain. Shelby puts a hat and sunglasses on, biting her lips.

**EXT. GREAT SALT PLAINS - DAY**

Nothing but a dirty, white plain and the line of the horizon. Only a russet sign saying "DIG AREA" interrupts the flatness.

The ground crackles under Shelby's steps. She watches out for people and families far off, limping further away.

Short intersticed poles, and a slack, in parts missing, rope. Here the salt is earthy in places. As she surpasses the sign "MUDDY ROAD PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK", she almost slips.

She stops there.

BANG. CRACK. CRACK.

Shelby clubs the soil with the crutch. Then she hunkers down and digs out mud off the white surface.

There's no one's around. Nothing. She lowers her hat, shoves some salt back in the deep, small hole, then puts the gun in, covering it with salt, then dirt.

Faraway, a school group sets up a parasol, running around.

Shelby's feet stump and flatten. Everything is whitish again, recognizable from the rest, but unnoticeable from afar.

She slips again, walking away, wiping her hands on the pants.

Grassy dirt.

She drives away on the bumpy dirt.

Country road. Behind her, on the dried turf there's a sign saying "ENTERING SALT PLAIN, OKLAHOMA STATE PARK". After it, only the white plain and the blue-gray sky.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, EMPTY PANORAMA - DAY**

Shelby's on the blood. The blanket's been thrown in the back.

LORI WILLIS (PRE-LAP)  
 Why would anyone ever rob a place  
 in the middle of nowhere?

The ticket's on the windowsill. The sun dazzles her.

**EXT. NICE, SIMPLE DINER - DAY**

The sun beats down on every shop window. The police car's double-parked.

**INT. CROWDED DINER, BOOTH - DAY**

Ronell and Todd eat, Lori's plate hasn't arrived yet.

TODD WAYNE

'Cause it's in the middle of  
nowhere.

RONELL BARTON

Exactly, the gas station's right  
there. That's what people go for.

LORI WILLIS

Or they simply know each other.  
She's a loan shark or something.

The two guys nod.

TODD WAYNE

Here's the thing: our RP was alone  
in the store, he got robbed by this  
perp. She's sketchy. You said she  
couldn't even walk on her feet when  
she came to the station. He didn't  
want to worry the wife so didn't  
say anything. But ah-ha, you asked  
her. Of course she didn't know!

Lori shakes her head. Ronell uses the fork as a pointer to  
ferverently object to Todd, who keeps eating.

RONELL BARTON

That's a no for me. Evelyn Johnson  
was quite fishy. Before, nothing  
happened, and then she was there  
and in danger--

LORI WILLIS

True, but...

RONELL BARTON

I mean, instead of going away as  
soon as she got their money, Shelby  
Ray threatened them still... so  
Johnson had to shoot him?

TODD WAYNE

He didn't shoot her.

LORI WILLIS

There's not a 'had to'.

RONELL BARTON

Exactly, it makes no sense.



TODD WAYNE

(munching)

The poor man panicked. They were risking a lot.

RONELL BARTON

She lied because they didn't have a plan??! That's negative. Lori might be right, Mrs. Ray had no reason to make up such a ridiculous story that we wouldn't have believed, if it wasn't true.

(starts eating again)

It makes sense, she got injured after all, she's the victim and the first to report it.

TODD WAYNE

(chewing)

C'mon, now! The pregnant teen perp was shot for the hell of it? Tsk. They got robbed.

LORI WILLIS

Not been proven. And Mrs. Johnson lied about the shotgun.

TODD WAYNE

The shotgun! The guy just defended his store, as he should have. She was armed, right?--

LORI WILLIS

She says she wasn't and doesn't own a gun. The Johnsons do.

TODD WAYNE

And they came clean later! Who wouldn't do the same?

LORI WILLIS

What do you mean 'who wouldn't'?

TODD WAYNE

Sure, I'd lie too.

LORI WILLIS

To the police?

TODD WAYNE

Especially to the police.

He starts stuffing himself again, staring only at his plate. Ronell eats too, looking around.

Lori plays absentmindedly with the ice in her glass.

The brief silence ends as a WAITRESS puts down Lori's lunch. Ronell stops chewing to smile at her.

WAITRESS  
Any news on the little kid murder?

LORI WILLIS  
I'm still on it.

RONELL BARTON  
Everyone's on that.

WAITRESS  
So heartbreaking. My daughter goes to the same school.

TODD WAYNE  
We know.

WAITRESS  
No one gets killed around Seiling, why would they?

RONELL BARTON  
I reckon not, I never even worked on a murder before--

TODD WAYNE  
What's more, multiple.

RONELL BARTON  
Exactly, it's just awful.

TODD WAYNE  
(chewing)  
'choke 'em both but we found blood.

The waitress gulps her breath down.

RONELL BARTON  
Don't worry, we work only on that.

LORI WILLIS  
They woke me at three this morning just for something secondary from the lab.  
(looks at her food, then back at the waitress)  
Have you ever been to that huge furniture store on the 60 up north?

WAITRESS  
Furniture?

RONELL BARTON  
The one outside Orienta.

WAITRESS  
Is cause they died on a couch?

LORI WILLIS  
No, nevermind.

RONELL BARTON  
Nothing to do with that. We were  
trying to get our head out of the  
Crystal Bane's murder.

WAITRESS  
It must be hard for you these days.  
(sighs, going away)  
Have a change of scene, Lori,  
change furniture, whatever may get  
you through.

On the TV at her back, a news report on those murders. Lori  
glances away, playing with the food. The news changes.

LORI WILLIS  
I don't know how is possible to  
work in any direction.

Ronell gives a noncommittal grunt, stuffing himself.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)  
There's no clue, nothing.

She watches the two eating men. Tiredly thinking.

**EXT. GAS STATION - DAY**

A SECURITY CAMERA.

Fixed. Steady. In the top corner, in the shadows, pointing  
vaguely between the entrance and the gas pumps.

Shelby's car arrives.

With her pants whited with salt, she takes the crutches and  
hobbles straight to the camera.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - DAY**

A young face waits beyond the screen door. It opens.

CHAD MONROE (20s), a politely embarrassed law student, comes in, hugged by Parker. Shelby's in the background, displeased.

**KITCHEN TABLE**

They all have something to drink. Shelby doesn't touch her glass, her hands rest nervously next to it, there's white dirt in her nails.

CHAD MONROE

I don't work in criminal justice,  
but we have a robust argument--

SHELBY

You don't work at all, you're still  
studying, right?

CHAD MONROE

Yes. It can be tricky, no doubt  
(drinking)  
--but luckily a useful detail comes  
to the rescue in scarce hope.

SHELBY

In what?

CHAD MONROE

In scarce hope. Little to no hope.

SHELBY

Thanks for mansplaining the word  
scarce, 'means a lot. I just didn't  
hear you, 'ain't stupid.

CHAD MONROE

Would it be fair to say they shot  
you on public property--

SHELBY

Nah, you got that wrong too. I was  
outside the gas station. Well, near  
a gas station.

CHAD MONROE

That's public property. Is it fair  
to say that you didn't use the gun?

PARKER

I hope she wouldn't.

SHELBY

I didn't!

Parker takes her hand, smiling at Chad.

CHAD MONROE

Nothing happened then. They weren't in danger when the man shot you, you were leaving. Isn't that right?

SHELBY

Sure, I was on public property.

CHAD MONROE

Exactly. You weren't an intruder, nor burglar, you were just there--

**EXT. GAS STORE - GRAINY SECURITY CAMERA'S POV - DAY**

Shelby points one crutch up to the security camera, moving it around like she's trying to take it down.

CHAD MONROE (V.O.)

Outside their property. Outside of the gas station area. They can't play the self-defense card. At the moment of the incident, you were in the right.

She's beating the camera.

The image flickers.

CHAD MONROE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No one should see you--

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - RESUMING**

Chad drinks, confident.

CHAD MONROE

--in a bad light, given that the store has no cameras.

Parker's head down, not reassured. Shelby isn't looking at Chad either.

CHAD MONROE (CONT'D)

Don't beat yourself up, they can't do much. Neither will the police now that you dropped your charges.

(MORE)

CHAD MONROE (CONT'D)  
They won't waste their time on a  
failed burglary with no loot.

Chad and Parker exchange another smile.

SHELBY  
I might have... told them...

Parker's smile fades beforehand.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
I don't own a gun.

PARKER  
What?

CHAD MONROE  
But you do.

SHELBY  
But that's not a problem anymore,  
salt rusts metal...

PARKER  
What!?

CHAD MONROE  
They know you do.

SHELBY  
It will look old, unrecognizable...

PARKER  
What are you talking about?! My gun  
is registered!

He stands up, pacing, freaking out.

SHELBY  
I panicked. They just shot me, I  
thought it was the smartest thing  
to do.

PARKER  
(bends down)  
Of course you did.

SHELBY  
I didn't think it would be--

PARKER  
We already assumed you didn't  
think.

SHELBY

You two weren't there, it was scary...

(to Parker)

You're never on my team!

PARKER

You won't even tell us what sport you play.

**EXT. GAS STATION - RESUMING**

BAM.

Shelby thrashes about, hardly moving the camera.

She takes the plastic bag from her pocket and tries to place it at the end of her crutch, but it slides down as she raises it. She tries again, intending to put the bag on the camera. Fails. Then she turns the crutch around and hangs the bag on the arm cuff, looking behind her.

No one. Only dirt.

Not far from her car, a CARTRIDGE CASE goes unnoticed.

A CELL PHONE RINGS, not in the scene.

EVELYN (V.O.)

It's the lawyer.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Did he find a loophole?

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

Whipkey's face bounces up and down.

A corridor made of couches and armchairs. Different styles and periods, all pretty ordinary.

Whipkey stands up from one. He and the Johnsons look at the two rows, turning from side to side, pointing.

He tries both seats, bouncing a bit. The couple nods at his enthusiasm, then he points at a "SALE" sign and Randall shakes his head, sad. Whipkey's discouraged, but jumps up excited as soon as Evelyn points at another one.

**EXT. GAS STATION/SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

Leaning on his doorjamb, Gordy's eyes are fixed on the store.

The Johnsons and Whipkey move to his elegant car. Evelyn's more worried than the other two.

DALE WHIPKEY

I'll think about it, maybe call my sister. It's a big first asset.

EVELYN

You'll make your nephew happy.

RANDALL

We're here, if you need.

DALE WHIPKEY

I'll send her the pictures. Let's see what she thinks is best.

EVELYN

What's best for us instead? Is there something we can do?

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

Shelby stares blankly at Parker washing two glasses.

PARKER

Do nothing, say nothing. You just have to overwhelm them with sorry-assed apologies.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - RESUMING**

The lawyer takes a moment to understand what Evelyn meant.

DALE WHIPKEY

Sorry?

(looks away)

For the case? I'll get you a great agreement, a good deal as you will get me on a couch.

EVELYN

You say we should keep the police out of it, right? So as not to bother them.

DALE WHIPKEY

Yeah, better keep 'em out.



**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - RESUMING**

Shelby's full glass is still on the table.

PARKER

Why'd you had to bring them in?  
"There's no gun, no, officer".

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - RESUMING**

Evelyn is still doubting.

RANDALL

No officers. They wouldn't do much now, we haven't even heard from them. We'll solve this by ourselves at this point.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - RESUMING**

Parker raises his brows.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - RESUMING**

Whipkey is distractedly scratching his head.

DALE WHIPKEY

Yes...fewer risks. We're gonna meet the girl and... We'll see.

(shrugs)

Let's see what she thinks about...

(remembers)

The shooting. Um, we're gonna call it robbery, you know what I meant.

A silent pause. They're staring at him.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

For now it's best to maintain that friendly appearance of yours. Keep your gun locked, don't shoot anyone at least for a while.

He laughs awkwardly.

Both Evelyn and Randall are uneasy, so he fades his laugh.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

She'll drop her charges, believe me. I know how to make her do it.

EVELYN

Good.

DALE WHIPKEY

We just have to give the impression that nothing can make you withdraw on your part. You're not going anywhere, like mononucleosis, that stays in your blood.

RANDALL

How can we get rid of it?... How did we end up here?

EVELYN

He'd never harm anyone. Gosh, he served in the military, he's not a violent man, he fought for this country.

DALE WHIPKEY

Oh, I know.

EVELYN

He can't end up in jail, nor can we pay for a settlement. Look at the store, it's bankrupted. This woman is ruining our life.

Whipkey pats her shoulder.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

We're not the bad ones.

DALE WHIPKEY

Believe me, there are so many worse people like you wouldn't believe.

RANDALL

(staring down)

It happened suddenly. I wouldn't have shot her in another situation. She was pregnant.

Whipkey takes a long sigh, out of place, looking at the dirt.

Then he snaps his head up.

DALE WHIPKEY

Well, heck! Where are we? Now shooting has become a crime?

They all nod, dumbfounded.

**EXT/INT. GAS STATION - DAY**

Gordy's eyes follow Whipkey getting in his huge car and the Johnsons re-enter their store.

He takes a step back to hide. Whipkey's car passes. He frowns at the man's weird appearance, leery, then goes inside.

As that car goes away, Shelby's turns to the dirt road.

Shelby looks through the window, then raises her crutch and starts jumping, bustling about the camera.

Gordy reorganizes the shelves, facing away from the window. Shelby's dirty shirt flaps against the glass.

The plastic bag's finally on the camera. The handles give her a better grip to tear it off. She's pulling it. The plastic rips, making her loose balance.

A NOISE from inside. Shelby immediately puts down the crutch, scared. Gordy opens the door, surprised to find Shelby there.

She goes in, smiling, hiding the plastic bag, acting weirdly friendly. Gordy's lost.

SHELBY

I came here a week ago, remember?  
I'm always here, I'm a good client.

He shakes his head.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

It was Tuesday... in the morning.

The two just stare for a bit.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I didn't get gas, but...

GORDY

Maybe I've seen your face, yeah.

SHELBY

I bought something, some gum and...  
(looks at the batteries on  
display behind him)  
Batteries. I'm sure you know me.  
You'll remember my face next time,  
I'm a good person, nice. Everybody  
says that. You said it too, many  
times-- you patted my belly! That's  
how nice I am.

Gordy's grows more and more puzzled.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Nice. That's what everybody should say when asked... Actually, I owe--

GORDY

Are you here on behalf of the Johnson?

He points towards the store. Shelby freezes, she just put her hand in her pocket. The plastic bag crinkles.

SHELBY

You know--? You didn't see what you think--

(moves her hand around)

You don't wanna go there, old man. Don't you dare tell anyone unless you're looking for trouble-- If I were you I wouldn't say a thing to no one.

Her hand is awkwardly trying to create a gun-shaped bump in her pocket.

She aims it towards him.

He stares at her shifting, not understanding. The plastic rustle as she pushes and gestures with the bump.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Um... You better-- No, sorry.

She takes out the plastic bag, as if nothing happened.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I-I owe you money. Yes. That's why I'm here. I'm a nice person.

She pulls out her wallet. Almost empty.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Ten dollars, was it?

She tries to put the money in his hand.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I have some coins too if you--  
(tries to lock eyes with him)

Yes... Well, we're good now.

He takes the bill, baffled, without saying a thing.

**EXT. GAS STATION - DAY**

Half the plastic bags still hangs on the camera.

**PRE-LAP:** A PHONE RINGS.

**EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

There's no place to park. The sidewalk's in the shade.

**INTERCUT - INT. POLICE STATION/ INT. GAS STATION - DAY**

Lori answers the phone, distracted. Behind her, a display of disturbing photos of Bane murders, on her desk paper reports.

Gordy sits on a stool, at the phone.

GORDY

You asked me to call you if I saw something or someone suspicious.

Lori raises her eyebrows.

GORDY (CONT'D)

I don't even know if it's good or bad, either way I don't like it...

(beat)

It must be bad. Someone came here.

(beat)

I've seen a very weird man talking with the Johnsons. Very suspicious someone.

LORI WILLIS

(filling out her report)

Weird how, sir? What was he doing?

GORDY

I couldn't really get a good look. He was just weird. Not from round here. But I think my camera might have caught his face. A big face, big forehead.

LORI WILLIS

Sorry, sir, do you have a camera outside the store?

GORDY

He's not of this world.

Lori swivels in her chair, trying to draw Todd's attention, pointing at the phone, but he's speaking to someone else.

LORI WILLIS  
He has a camera!

TODD WAYNE  
What?

She snaps her fingers and waves to Ronell on the other side of the room. He doesn't notice her.

TODD WAYNE (CONT'D)  
Who's on the phone?

LORI WILLIS  
(her hand covers the phone)  
We might have a video.

Todd glances at what she was working on, not understanding.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, RECEPTION - DAY**

Whipkey drums on the counter, putting down a very thin file reading "COUCH AFFAIR" in red pencil.

The receptionist is buried in a book.

DALE WHIPKEY  
It's so nice outside today.

She answers with a noncommittal sound. Whipkey glances at the window, leaning heavily on her desk. There's no sign that she will turn her attention to him.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Sunny as always, but there's some breeze. Just wonderful.

She continues reading.

He waits.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
Have you been outside today?

RECEPTIONIST  
Yeah. I came to work.

He smiles at her scalp, tapping the phone on the counter.

DALE WHIPKEY  
Whatcha got there?

She lifts the book. It's Roth's "The Plot Against America". There's a swastika on the cover.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

Yeah.

(looks outside)

It's a great day to read a Nazi book. So... did you look into that?

RECEPTIONIST

(still reading)

Why would I know what you're talking about?

DALE WHIPKEY

Bankrupted couches. D'you look?

RECEPTIONIST

I did look, but lower your voice--

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

You're a wizard!

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

It's not, you know, something we should be able to discuss...

DALE WHIPKEY

Yes, yes... then? Are they screwing me? Can I get my money anyway?

RECEPTIONIST

It looked to me like the two aren't broke themselves. The store filed for bankruptcy. They're not the store. My theory is that it wasn't that much lucrative, so someone must have saddled them with it. 'Cause they are just there, working supposedly. They're not the legal owner of the place, that's for sure. Did you understand what I said? Your eyes are like completely blank.

He stares at her blankly. Smiling.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Basically we know nothing more than before about their finances.

DALE WHIPKEY

I think I'll buy that couch for Dustin anyway. Call them for me.

**EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**

Panoramic view of a windswept highway without too many cars. It's greenish all around, with some trees, but still mostly dry. The sky is brightened by white, veil-like clouds.

A clean, decent car drives closer and closer.

It passes.

**EXT. HIGHWAY, OKLAHOMA CITY - DAY**

The highway enters the sunlit city. There's more traffic. The car throws itself into a congested interchange.

**EXT. BIG, OPEN PARKING - DAY**

The car parks beneath a bland industrial building, surrounded by nicer place.

Chad Monroe comes out of the driver side. He closes the door and waits, adjusting his button down shirt. One crutch pops out of the passenger door.

**BACK OF MONROE'S CAR**

Chad takes his neatly folded jacket from the back seat.

A sweaty Shelby struggles to get out. She glances at Chad outside, waiting, not helping.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Randall looks down, embarrassed, feeling bad and sorry.

A large, oval table. Whipkey, Randall, and Evelyn sit on one side, behind them a glass wall and the open door. On the other side, a white, oppressive wall makes Shelby and Chad Monroe look like they're trapped against the table.

Evelyn clenches her skirt in a fist.

DALE WHIPKEY

What are we gonna do?

He turns his closed-lip smile from Chad to Shelby with a serious look. They don't answer immediately.



CHAD MONROE

Shelby Ray hopes to discuss the prospect of dropping both parties' charges.

DALE WHIPKEY

No.

EVELYN

We don't!

CHAD MONROE

Let's talk about it.

SHELBY

I-I'm so sorry--

DALE WHIPKEY

Maybe you'd like to drop your charges.

SHELBY

I already di--

EVELYN

We're in the right.

Randall places a hand on Evelyn's leg to allay her hostility. Then he raises his guilty gaze at Shelby for the first time. They stare at each other, both uncomfortable.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

We don't allow people to just enter our store and rob us.

DALE WHIPKEY

Yes, consequences!

CHAD MONROE

Let's openly talk about it, because Mrs. Ray was charged with robbery. But she has been wrongly accused--

DALE WHIPKEY

Objection.

CHAD MONROE

(confused pause)

Let me direct your attention to Shelby Ray's car. At the moment of the incident it was parked at the gas station. So, wouldn't it be fair to say that when Mr. Johnson shot Mrs.--

DALE WHIPKEY

You have no proof it was him.



TODD WAYNE  
(turns to the computer)  
A silver--

LORI WILLIS  
We know.

FOOTAGE: Still. Still. Still.

Todd turns away as a car appears.

TODD WAYNE  
You won't see a thing.

LORI WILLIS  
Why did he ask me to check this  
bigheaded weirdo? We can't even see  
inside the cars from this angle.

RONELL BARTON  
Who knows, but with this going on  
(re: the still footage)  
I'm getting oddly convinced we'll  
see Randall Johnson just shooting  
an innocent woman.

LORI WILLIS  
Or there's just a feud between the  
stores. He really insisted on this  
other man.

Lori takes over the mouse, her eyes glued to the computer.

TODD WAYNE  
You'll wind up with the aggressive  
girl running away 'cause she found  
someone she shouldn't have fucked  
with. Anything but innocent!

LORI WILLIS  
Stop saying innocent.

RONELL BARTON  
(leaves her his chair)  
C'mon, you suggested she was.

LORI WILLIS  
I know, but how did he hit her from  
that far? The guy's old.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM - RESUMING**

EVELYN

Right. He never did anything wrong in his life, why on earth would he start now?

SHELBY

You weren't even there.

EVELYN

For your information, I worked in that store every day of my life before you were even born.

SHELBY

How do you know my age!?

Evelyn's excessively indignant.

DALE WHIPKEY

You threatened this poor, old woman and her husband with a gun--

SHELBY

Who the hell is she even?! He's the one who shot me!

**INT. POLICE STATION, SMALL COMPUTER ROOM - RESUMING**

Lori sits now, staring only at the monitor.

LORI WILLIS

It's pretty unlikely that he got a clean shot from that distance.

RONELL BARTON

Exactly. Exceptional crap happened of late, it wouldn't be a first.

Lori smirks. Todd emits a dismissive sound, pacing.

RONELL BARTON (CONT'D)

Seriously, Mrs. Johnson knew something.

Lori speeds the useless footage of a jeep owner getting gas.

TODD WAYNE

You two always make things more complicated. It's a flat and simple self-defense case and you go on telling it like an assault.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM - RESUMING**

Roxy's at the door, just to look at the escalating mayhem.

CHAD MONROE

This is not a self-defense case.  
Let's use our common sense.

DALE WHIPKEY

When the victim attacks is defense!

SHELBY

I'm the victim! I took nothing from  
them, yet I lost my leg!

EVELYN

You lost, my foot!

DALE WHIPKEY

Your leg cannot be on the table!

Shelby looks down.

EVELYN

There's the stand-your-ground law!

SHELBY

It wasn't your ground!

EVELYN

It's invasion of personal  
property!

DALE WHIPKEY

The store's private property!  
(murmurs worried)  
Are you bankrupted too?

SHELBY

He shot me from afar, that ain't  
even invasion of personal space,  
right?

She turns to a bewildered Chad.

CHAD MONROE

Yes. Not to belabor the point but  
isn't it a fact that Mrs. Ray's the  
sole demonstrable victim of v--?

DALE WHIPKEY

Tsk. Now her bad life choices fall  
on them. Blaming the victims?!

EVELYN

You should believe victims!

CHAD MONROE

Mrs. Shelby Ray has no prior  
convictions, no history of  
drug or alcohol abuse.

DALE WHIPKEY

You twist words to make them work  
your way. That's not how it works.

(points first at Randall,  
then at Shelby)

A victim and on the opposite side  
the perpetrator. It's a very simple  
and linear matter.

CHAD MONROE

It's quite a convoluted subject.

DALE WHIPKEY

Not really. For you, maybe! It's  
been understood and discussed by  
numerous people throughout history.

CHAD MONROE

With divergent takes.

RANDALL

(meets Shelby's gaze)

You were about to shoot me, buddy.

SHELBY

You shot me! I din't--

DALE WHIPKEY

Not been proven.

SHELBY

--I'm pregnant, I'm innocent.

EVELYN

If you were innocent, you wouldn't  
have come here with a lawyer.

SHELBY

He ain't a lawyer! And-and we are  
in his studio!

Chad glares at her.

CHAD MONROE

We exhausted said subject. I think  
we can all agree that the Johnson--

DALE WHIPKEY

No, we can't agree! The only thing  
that we know is that Shelby Ray is  
a violent woman.

SHELBY

I've never violated anyone!

**INT. POLICE STATION, SMALL COMPUTER ROOM - RESUMING**

Lori's hand clutches the mouse.

LORI WILLIS

The whole concept of innocent  
victim is stupid.

Behind her back, Todd rolls his eyes.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)

You know, I don't give a damn if  
the offender's innocent or not.  
She's still the damn victim here.

They couldn't care less about her rant. Ronell eats her food.

LORI WILLIS (CONT'D)

*"Oh, the poor victim has never done  
anything wrong in her life. She was  
such a good man".* Yeah, and if she  
wasn't?! Even if you hated her or  
she was a sketchy, big forehead  
weirdo, the fact that they shot her  
is still a crime. It's THE crime!  
Even if they'd dropped her charges,  
that's what we need to investigate.  
Nevermind those unrelated--

STOPS EVERYTHING.

Shelby's car appeared in the footage.

She brings the video back a bit. Even Todd gets closer. The  
three are huddled in throbbing silence.

FOOTAGE: Still road. Shelby's car drives in, slow.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE - RESUMING****CORRIDOR/RECEPTION AREA**

Muffled, heated arguing.

People sit on slippery plastic chairs, glancing through the  
glass wall of the conference room. The receptionist has to  
plug her ear to understand what they're saying on the phone.

Whipkey's shoulders fidget around in his seat. Roxy leans on  
the door, covering Shelby.

**CONFERENCE ROOM**

Everyone talks on top of each other. Baffled, Chad looks at his papers.

DALE WHIPKEY

Our security camera footage will prove everything!

SHELBY

What?! There's nothing to prove! You can't even see my face!

CHAD MONROE

That's false.

RANDALL

Sure is, buddy!

CHAD MONROE

With what purpose are you repeating this false, self-serving statement?

RANDALL

So, she'll be scared enough to drop her charge!

DALE WHIPKEY

Don't tell them that.

SHELBY

You shot me on public--

EVELYN

HE DID NOT! That's not public. Ooooh, we know that's not! We had to fight with the State to make them pave that freakin' dirt road! And they didn't!

Shelby's caught off guard.

Roxy follows the story, very interested.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

For years we argued with the gas station, that babbling man. The parking lot is our property, even if no one uses it, so, no money from him either. He did nothing! An awful man! We had to pay for everything for years, and now you come in here and--



**INT. POLICE STATION, SMALL COMPUTER ROOM - RESUMING**

FOOTAGE: Shelby's car comes down the dirt road. It stops next to the gas station building. The camera frames only half car, the back and left side. Gordy exits his store, standing in the doorstep.

The three officers huddle around the computer. Waiting.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM - RESUMING**

CHAOS. Shelby's now standing up, her pants lowered to shove her wound into Randall's face. Chad sits her down.

CHAD MONROE

Wait! All of you shut up!

The room falls silent. Shelby leans back, with a defiant look, boiling with anger.

CHAD MONROE (CONT'D)

(takes a breath)

I'm going to repeat myself, but we are not here to dispute a matter we are all in accord with. Both parties are aware of what happened on the morning--

DALE WHIPKEY

No.

Chad Monroe keeps making his point with quiet confidence even as they start talking over him.

CHAD MONROE

As we discussed on the phone, the purpose of this meeting was to reach a satisfying, private settlement not to debate the circumstances of the incident that ended up with the once young, healthy, pregnant Shelby, in miserable condition.

(points at her)

Shot. Wounded. You don't even need to look at her to see that she's in bad shape. It's evident.

EVELYN

'didn't know she's pregnant!

DALE WHIPKEY

There's no proof that she wasn't already injured.

SHELBY

I have a leg to prove it!

EVELYN

Randall didn't get your leg! He can't see that far!

Whipkey shakes his head the whole time.

DALE WHIPKEY

You just want my clients' money,  
like a pernicious pathogen just  
crippling society.

Behind him, leaning at ease on the glass wall, Roxy raises her eyebrows, happily dazed.

**INT. POLICE STATION, SMALL ROOM - RESUMING**

FOOTAGE: NOTHING. The back of the car. Gordy re-enters. Everything stays still for a while.

LORI WILLIS

She wasn't pumping gas.

TODD WAYNE

'Cause she was robbing the place.

Lori speeds the still video.

LORI WILLIS

Who parks that far from the place  
they intend to rob?

RONELL BARTON

Exactly, there's sand all around.  
Nowhere else to hide or run.

LORI WILLIS

First: take their money. Second:  
plod back to the car you parked  
130yd away near another isolated  
store. That ain't plausible. Why  
would anyone do that? Also, no one  
would choose to run--

TODD WAYNE

'didn't look that smart to me.

LORI WILLIS

--when pregnant.

TODD WAYNE

(raising his eyebrows)  
Exactly, she's pregnant.

The car restarts.

Lori slows the video. There's palpable, quivering excitement.

The car disappears, then its wheels reappear at the top of the frame and drives off.

Six staring eyes. Still. Still. Still.

TODD WAYNE (CONT'D)  
 See, nothing happened!  
 (going away)  
 She shot herself.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM - RESUMING**

Shelby stands up, leaning heavily yet needlessly on the crutches. Her chair scrapes prolongedly.

SHELBY  
 You shot me on public property!

RANDALL  
 I'VE NEVER!

SHELBY  
 YOU SHOT ME ON PUBLIC PROPERTY!

Randall's up, Evelyn scoots back. Chairs scrape.

CHAD MONROE  
 Settle down!

RANDALL  
 YOU WERE ARMED!

SHELBY  
 Barely!

CHAD MONROE	DALE WHIPKEY
She wasn't at the moment of--	Lie!

RANDALL  
 Buddy, you had a gun!

EVELYN  
 You pointed your weapon at my husband!

SHELBY  
 Anything can be used as a weapon!  
 Does this mean I can't go around wearing a watch?!

DALE WHIPKEY  
 What??

Chad tries to make Shelby sit. Evelyn and Whipkey stand too.

EVELYN

We don't just let criminals running  
in and out of our home!

DALE WHIPKEY

YOU HAD A GUN!

SHELBY

HE SHOT ME! HE SHOT ME!

RANDALL

YOU WERE IN OUR STORE!

Voices overlap. Whipkey loudly intervenes, moving his arms around. Chad, still seated, is just surprised.

SCREAMING HEATED CHAOS.

Roxy slowly raises her eyebrows, impassive, then leaves.

Behind her, Shelby points one crutch around. Whipkey grabs its end to push it against the table. Shelby loses balance. Chad holds her back as she hurls herself across the table.

ALL GOES WHITE.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Bright light from a window. The curtains are faintly visible. Chad's car is outside.

**EXT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Chad shuts the passenger's door and drives off. Shelby drags herself to the stairs, not using the crutches.

There's nothing between their house and the next.

The back lawn has been devastated by a hurricane. Part of the fence is missing, and most of what's left is slightly bent. There's a tree broken in half in someone else's yard.

A messy pile of branches is in front of Shelby's car. Against the wall, the dislodged piece of fence. Another car's also on the side of the house, not visible from the front.

A wooden column. The railing shadows on the porch decking. Shelby's taking a moment, putting on a smile, carefree.

She opens the door, staring down...

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

She sees a suitcase on the floor and panics, mouthing 'No'. She drops the crutches outside the house and closes the door.

JENNA RAY  
Sweetie pie! Oh, poor thing!

JENNA RAY, Parker's mother, comes towards her with open arms.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
Look at you, you look awful!

Shelby fails to back off from her hug.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
What have they done to you?! Parker told me what you did. Why did you?

SHELBY  
Nothing to worry, I just fixed it. It's fine.

PARKER  
Mum, don't stress her out even more.

JENNA RAY  
You're the one who's always nagging her. It's your fault that she went and robbed that place.  
(pats Shelby's cheek)  
I know it's not easy for you kids alone, that's why I'm always here. But going against an old man in a store? What were you thinking?--

PARKER  
She wasn't.

Jenna's hand moves from Shelby's face to her hip.

JENNA RAY  
If you'd told me-- If you need a new couch or some chairs...

PARKER  
What would you have even--?

SHELBY  
We're fine. There's nothing to help.  
(re: Jenna's hand)  
It's the other leg.

Jenna moves.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
DON'T touch it!

Jenna scans her, not understanding, looking at her belly.

JENNA RAY

Parker told me he may have a new second job, that's good... The one time he stopped piddling about, you ended up doing something this reckless. A bad influence.

Shelby tries to leave, but she's holding onto her arm.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)

Police don't like folks like you two. Uncultured, poor...

(points at her son)

All sad and submissive... You have to stick up--

PARKER

No, no, she's done enough.

JENNA RAY

I was talking to you. I've done everything right. Why did you turn out like this? A mother doesn't deserve, a grandmother almost--

(to Shelby)

Thank Chad for me. Helping you even after what went on with Parker.

SHELBY

He didn't do much.

JENNA RAY

Oh, he did his part!

(turns to Parker)

She left her studies cause of you, the least you can do is help her.

PARKER

I am.

JENNA RAY

Poor boy. You're stupid, 'gonna die stupid-- Where are you going?

PARKER

The bushes.

Jenna gets the bathroom door slammed on her face.

JENNA RAY

Bless his heart.

SHELBY

Eh, 'cause otherwise he's hopeless.

**BATHROOM**

Parker rummages through some magazines stacked up on the windowsill. He picks up a bunch of pamphlets and brochures and puts one in his mouth. It reads: "*Abortion and Breast Cancer*". He finds one thicker pro-choice and, used as a bookmark, another with a picture of a 3D ultrasound and the word "*MURDER*".

He scrolls others, then puts everything back against the window. He stares at the weird, fake fetus.

SWOOSH. THUMP.

The magazines slips off the sill, sliding into the tub with a loud thud. He rushes forward, hurting himself on the tub.

JENNA RAY (O.S.)

What are you doing?!

The pile tilts forward. A few other brochures slide down.

One hand makes sure that the pile stays still, the other slides the magazines up the side of the tub.

He bites the pamphlet in his mouth, panting. Shelby's traffic ticket comes out of a magazine. The creased "*MURDER*" paper falls down too.

Jenna's shadows moves.

Everything's back on the sill. He picks up the ticket, his eyes clouds with shock. Then he hides all four papers under his shirt.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)

HEY!

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Parker sleeps on the sofa. A hand covers his face.

**BEDROOM**

Shelby and Jenna are both dead asleep. Shelby faces the wall, lying on the edge of the bed. She's barely using her pillow, having put it diagonally, almost like a divider.

**EXT/INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Parker opens the door. Behind him, Jenna exits the bathroom and joins Shelby at the table.

He shuts off their voices, then notices the crutches under the porch and picks them up.

The mailbox's full. The weirdly heavy, squeaky door keeps snapping. He awkwardly juggles the garbage bag and crutches, fighting with the mail.

He yanks it out. The garbage bag hits him.

He throws the letters to the doormat, going to hide the crutches in the back of the car, angry.

The mail doesn't scatter much. On the dirty decking there's a LETTER from the hospital.

**INT. POLICE STATION, HALL/OPEN OFFICE - DAY**

Dark, dirty floor. Someone's FEET STRIDE, ENRAGED.

A door bangs open.

RECEPTIONIST (O.C.)

Hey! Lady!

The woman's feet enter the OPEN OFFICE.

A TV shows a service on the Banes' murder, inaudible in the chaos of the room.

She heads determined towards the officers' desks. Then stops. A "Blue Life Matter" bracelet at her wrist. She's Jenna Ray.

Some people turn around, but most are busy. She stands in front of a confused, never-seen-before POLICE OFFICER.

JENNA RAY

Who here wanted to fuck Shelby Ray?

Lori pops up from a desk. At her back, the gruesome photos of murders. Everyone's baffled.

Todd walks up, already livid.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)

Who has her case?

A RANDOM EMPLOYEE intervenes.



RANDOM EMPLOYEE  
Madam, calm down.

JENNA  
Why the heck are you all breathing  
down my daughter's neck? She's  
innocent! They shot her!

The employee tries to sit her down on the nearest chair.

JENNA RAY  
Hey, don't you dare! Who did this?!  
Now she can barely walk! That was  
already a problem! Have you--?

LORI WILLIS  
Mrs. Ray, I'm on your daughter's  
case.

JENNA RAY  
You suck!

Ronell stands with no intention of coming forward.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
She ain't my daughter, by the  
way. She's my son's wife but  
you were crawling up her ass!  
What has she done to you?  
Nothing wrong! To anyone! An  
angel of a woman, my son's  
lucky to have her.

LORI WILLIS  
(approaching)  
Mrs...  
Mrs. Ray...

Lori and the employee sit her down on a low chair. Everyone's  
crowding around her.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
SHE'S WOUNDED! PREGNANT!

She tries to stand but they push her down immediately.

LORI WILLIS  
Mrs, sorry, can we go to talk  
somewhere else--

Other voices join in. Yelling. One over the other.

Jenna kicks the air trying to hit someone at random.

TODD WAYNE  
Have some respect!

Todd steps in, hustling people. A worker gets jostled by the  
tumultuous circle.

TODD WAYNE (CONT'D)  
 (yelling in her face)  
 She's a thief!

JENNA RAY  
 That's a bunch of crap!

Lori gestures Todd and everyone to simmer down, then puts her hand on Jenna's shoulder.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
 LET GO OF ME!

She slaps Lori's hand, taking her by surprise, and tries to jump up.

Todd grabs her armpit and helps her up just to shove her ass to the ground.

JENNA RAY (CONT'D)  
 GET AWAY! LET GO OF ME!

Three sets of arms and knees turn her around, blocking her. Her face's smashed to the ground, her nose starts bleeding. Lori backs away.

Todd takes out his handcuffs, leaving Jenna's restricted arms to someone else. She kicks the ground and the air. Yelling.

CHAOS.

MOB.

LOUDNESS.

**INT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

Evelyn is hunched over some nightstands and skinny end tables clustered against the wall. She covers the old costs with a price labeler machine and handwrites a lower one.

EVELYN  
 We can't let go now. She will give up at some point, we have to keep trusting Whipkey and wait. "Solid, like herpes" or whatever he said.

Randall sits on the footboard of a bed with no slats, sandpapering one of the stolen boards. A line of mattressless beds is behind him.

RANDALL

Whipkey was certain she would have dropped her charges, but they said nothing of that sort. It was a waste of time.

(his knees bounce)

We shouldn't have met with her. Seeing that woman again-- I don't-- I should come clean to the police, tell them I shot her.

EVELYN

No. You had all the rights. Look, the problem isn't the police--

RANDALL

She can bankrupt us for real. She can prove her injury, unlike us--

EVELYN

Luckily we have the receipts.

RANDALL

Fake.

EVELYN

Don't look like.

RANDALL

They might to some.

She's really pressing the pen on the white label.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

No one bought the stuff we said.

EVELYN

Who's to say?

RANDALL

Say they then look too much into our finances...

She looks down, dusting off some plastic covers.

EVELYN

Maybe I shouldn't have lied to the police, you can't face jail time, just cause--

RANDALL

No, you did nothing wrong. I did. I should tell the truth.

EVELYN

Don't say that! She was threatening  
us. This thing was just blown out  
of proportion--

(glances at the glass wall)

HEY! The heck?!

Two trucks are moving to the furniture store parking area.  
Gordy directs them.

Randall drops the board.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

NO! If you don't pay for it, ain't  
yours.

RANDALL

He can't use that space again!

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS**

The Johnsons stride out, shouting.

Gordy turns around, confused. They start brutally arguing.

A DRIVER gets out of his truck, concerned. He picks up  
something he notices in the sand, then walks towards the  
others, shouting something too. Evelyn motions him that they  
should move.

He shows a cartridge case to an instantly interested Gordy.  
Evelyn and Randall shut up, staring, worried.

Gordy's eyes moves from them to the bullet. Then he sneers,  
taking it, smiling to the driver...

Evelyn dives for it. Randall follows and pushes Gordy's face  
away, who responds by failing to kick him.

They're mildly pushing and grabbing each other, yelling. The  
driver tries to take them apart, then grabs Randall by his  
shoulder.

Evelyn's head pushes against Gordy's torso, squirming with  
all her force. Her nails pierces his closed fist. Gordy  
retreats against the driver, who pushes them all away.  
Randall falls down.

Evelyn and Gordy are shaking each other.

The driver checks on Randall, who's trying to stand up,  
shouting angry and out of breath, and starts patting on his  
back.

Evelyn turns Gordy's wrist with her nails. He punches her. The cartridge case falls and they both go for it.

Randall sits up, hands in the sand, unable to breath, having a panic attack.

Evelyn pushes Gordy on the ground, trying to reach the bullet under him. Gordy's coughing against the dirt. So is Randall, who clutches his chest. The driver turns to the fighting pile, alarmed.

Randall lies down again.

Gordy tries to stand up and sees the driver holding Randall's hand.

Evelyn grabs Gordy, but he's staring past her, she turns in the sand. Evelyn stands up too quickly, screaming. She crawls to Randall as the driver takes out his phone.

In the other truck, the SECOND DRIVER scrolls his phone. Behind him : mayhem.

Randall's eyes closed, mouth agape. Evelyn's panicking with a hand on his sweating face. The driver's shaking on the phone. Gordy is still trying to sit up, fist closed.

**INT. POLICE STATION, OPEN OFFICE - DAY**

Someone picks up documents from the floor. Everyone resettles at their desk. Ronell stares at the chair where Jenna was.

Lori gives a last glance at her murders' photo board.

RONELL BARTON

That was insane!

He looks at her calmly putting things in her bag.

LORI WILLIS

It's sick.

She wears her duster. Ronell goes to a filing cabinet, right as Todd strides in, enraged.

TODD WAYNE

Now we're gonna get him for sure!

RONELL BARTON

Exactly, the heck was that?!

TODD WAYNE  
'knew from the start what happened,  
but you wouldn't listen to me.

Lori keeps staring at the horrific photos, just distractedly  
overhearing and raising her brows.

RONELL BARTON  
We know it now! We need no other  
probable cause.

He opens a drawer, looking at document after document.

TODD WAYNE  
Freakin' angry lady. Who the heck  
they think they are? Coming in  
here?--

RONELL BARTON  
She was aggressive!

TODD WAYNE  
This is a workplace! We are doing  
our job!--

LORI WILLIS  
(notices Ronell's movements  
at her back)  
Whatcha doing?

TODD WAYNE  
She just come here to act shrill?!  
Calling us incompetent--

RONELL BARTON  
What is she complaining about? We  
barely touch that case, her husband  
didn't want us to, he was very  
protective. It's clear now why. A  
half-written report, pending--

TODD WAYNE  
Crazy! Wait-- Why did you two waste  
your time piddling around, then?

RONELL BARTON  
I didn't finish that report, she  
didn't even sign it. She fainted!

TODD WAYNE  
Fainted?! I'm sure this woman's  
involved--

RONELL BARTON

We had no obligation on the others  
either, silent weeks passed.

TODD WAYNE

She was waiting in the car. Takes  
two to tango.

LORI WILLIS

(mumbles)

And one's enough to tap dance.

TODD WAYNE

They planned it all together, those  
fuckers. You said there's a husband  
too--?

RONELL BARTON

He was way too nice.

LORI WILLIS

Todd, how many people do you want  
in your conga line? That's just  
your opinion, we don't--

A STAFF MEMBER intervenes, putting his hand on her shoulder.

STAFF MEMBER

Whatcha done to that crazy woman?

RONELL BARTON

We? SHE!

TODD WAYNE

(kind of laughs)

We just know what she did.

STAFF MEMBER

That was some crazy crap.

LORI WILLIS

Yeah, I know, weird.

She turns to re-pin a photo. Too many appalling details.

STAFF MEMBER

The entitlement of these assholes.

Lori's not paying attention, so he turns to the other two.  
Ronell finds Shelby's file and throws it open onto a desk.

STAFF MEMBER (CONT'D)

The world's full of jerks who think  
they can do the crap they want.

TODD WAYNE

Not for long.

Todd taps at the file. Ronell starts writing.

RONELL BARTON  
It never made sense.

STAFF MEMBER  
(looking at the file)  
Aah, she shot someone... robbery...

TODD WAYNE  
We should just count her in, she ain't good, a violent woman, just like the other.

RONELL BARTON  
They must have threatened them.

Lori observes a specific photo, placing it next to another, moving her eyes from one to the other. Lost in her thoughts.

RONELL BARTON (CONT'D)  
Those two together, with their temper, against the old lady.

STAFF MEMBER  
Ah, they always think they can do what they want.

TODD WAYNE  
You're good for. Jail's coming, motherfucker. We nailed you.

STAFF MEMBER  
An absurd situation.

LORI WILLIS  
You shouldn't 'nail' people, more like resea--  
(realizes)  
My shift ended fifteen minutes ago, why am I still here?

She puts the photo back and takes her bag. At her back, they keep heatedly confabulating over the file.

She goes away, stressed and tired.

RONELL BARTON  
We're ending this.

Lori turns around, having to raise her voice. Next to her, the TV still shows a news report on Bane's murder.



LORI WILLIS

Calm down. No reason to rush it, you know. This situation could be more complex than we strive to make it.

(opens the door)

It's gonna take time to understand it.

She waves goodbye.

Afar, next to the three men, the horrifying photos of the murders block the rest of the room. Todd takes the file, striding somewhere else.

The door between the hall and the office closes behind Lori.

She walks away. Outside.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - DAY**

The sun is almost down, but Whipkey still wears sunglasses like an asshole.

A small couch has been strapped to his shiny car. He taps on its plastic wrap before getting in, then smiles at Evelyn.

DALE WHIPKEY

It went well.

**INT. SHELBY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

Shelby's sunk in the couch with her wound exposed, staring vacantly in front of her. The faint sound of the microwave is the only thing that prevents a perfect, gloomy silence.

On the kitchen top there's a single dirty fork, facing down. Next to it, the medical bill.

A plastic box spins slowly in the dim light of the microwave. It turns, turns, turns, turns, turns...

Shelby fans herself, leaning her head back, closing her eyes. Everything looks similar to the first scene with Evelyn.

The microwave beeps, its light turns off.

She starts to jerkily kick the hard part of the couch with her naked heel.

TAP, TAP, TAP...

**EXT. ROAD - DAY**

TAP, TAP, TAP...

A police car drives slow on an anonymous, bare road.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - RESUMING**

TAP, TAP, TAP...

EVELYN

Yeah, it went well. Thank you for solving our pro-- this problem.

DALE WHIPKEY

My condolences, again.

EVELYN

Thanks.

He swings the car door back and forth.

**EXT. ROAD - DAY**

TAP, TAP, TAP...

The police car turns to Shelby's residential road.

**INT. SHELBY'S CAR, SIDE OF A BARREN ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Shelby has a brown paper bag on her face. It's a bit wet on one side, making it warped. She's feeling her face over the mask, at eye level.

She draws raggedly two marks on the bag. Her hands are nervously shaking.

The pen PIERCES the paper by accident. One small, ragged hole. Behind it, only darkness.

Shelby takes off the bag slowly...

She's crying her eyes out. Sobbing, almost in silence.

She takes round-edged scissors from the passenger's seat. Next to it, there's the gun, unloaded. Shelby starts to cut the bag, putting the blade in the small hole.

The wrong move. The PAPER IS TORN.

She freezes in shock. Crushed.

The rip goes down to the wet part of the bag. She moves it, then throws the bag at her feet, and leans towards the passenger seat. Quivering.

In the passenger compartment, there's a yellow plastic bag. Shoved under the car registration, the gun magazine.

Shelby scurries, shaking the bag to take random small stuff out. She flats it on her lap and draws two dark, scrawled dots, approximately where her eyes will be.

Then she takes the scissors again, rubbing the thin plastic between her fingers. Absentminded. Staring at the two dots.

**EXT. SECONDHAND FURNITURE STORE - RESUMING**

Whipkey points at the couch.

DALE WHIPKEY

It's very comfortable...

EVELYN

A great choice... Your nephew will find it very useful in his dorm.

DALE WHIPKEY

I didn't ask him if he needed one.

The car window is rolled down. Roxy waits in the car. On the back, the rabbit breathes with the seatbelt around his cage.

EVELYN

Thanks again, heck of a job.

DALE WHIPKEY

Thanks to you.

EVELYN

I didn't do much, these couches sell themselves.

DALE WHIPKEY

Same, same. So, I will let you know what we can do about this neighbor situation.

EVELYN

The parking area's ours.

DALE WHIPKEY

Let's give him a hard time too.

He laughs.

EVELYN

He has one of the bullet from the rifle. Is that a problem?

DALE WHIPKEY

Did he shoot him, too?

EVELYN

No, Gosh, no.

DALE WHIPKEY

Sorry if I mentioned you husband...  
late husb--

EVELYN

I think he'll just keep it. As a leverage against me, I s'pose.

DALE WHIPKEY

That's smart.

Whipkey nods and enters his car.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)

Next time...

(gesticulates)

You feel the need to... you know...  
Just shoot a dog.

ROXY

Less paperwork.

DALE WHIPKEY

There you have it.

Confused, Evelyn walks inside as they drive away.

**INT. WHIPKEY'S CAR - DAY**

Roxy sees her pencil-written note stapled on the back of Johnson's file, rolls it up and throws it on the dashboard.

He claps for no reason, turning on the main road.

DALE WHIPKEY

Don't put those away. Did you see that? I was so amazing I earned a new case!

He drums on the wheel, smiling at every corner of the car. Then he taps the file. Roxy takes his hand off her lap.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
One-forty for a couch... Is almost  
as if I stole it from them.

He laughs, disappointed that she isn't laughing too.

DALE WHIPKEY (CONT'D)  
If Dustin doesn't need it, do you  
want it? I have no use for a couch.

His grin aims at Roxy, who immediately turns to her window,  
closing her eyes.

Apart from the road there's nothing but bare dirt and a  
distant horizon.

Her eyes go to Whipkey again. He's still pointlessly smiling.

FADE OUT.