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The Lonely

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The Lonely

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
The University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Brent Scott

B.S. University of Missouri - St. Louis, 2008

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FADE IN:

INT. JENNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The lights are out in the modest apartment with decent furnishings. Leather couch, a flatscreen.

A MUFFLED MOAN from another room.

INT. JENNA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Movement on the bed.

Another MOAN.

DEREK (early 30's) holds himself over JENNA (early 30's).

Jenna wraps her arms around Derek's back. They're cheek to cheek.

JENNA
Derek?

DEREK
Huh?

JENNA
I think you should move out.

Derek stops. Lifts himself to look at Jenna.

DEREK
Did you say move out?

Jenna nods.

Derek stares.

Jenna rolls Derek over, takes top and resumes.

JENNA
I mean, what are we doing?

DEREK
We're having sex, Jenna.

JENNA
No. Us, you and me. This relationship.

DEREK
I don't know.

JENNA
I feel like neither of us are in
it.

DEREK
Is this really the time?

JENNA
I've slept with a few other guys.

DEREK
Seriously.

Jenna nods.

JENNA
In this bed.

Jenna stares at Derek.

JENNA (CONT'D)
I'm only telling you because I knew
this would be your reaction. You
don't really care, do you?

DEREK
Now that I think about it.

Derek shakes his head.

JENNA
That's why I ask. What are we
doing? Do you have any plans?

DEREK
I've been working on that story.

JENNA
The one about the call girl?
You've been on that for over a
year, and you barely touch it.

DEREK
And I've been teaching.

JENNA
A dwindling schedule.

A beat.

JENNA (CONT'D)
Other than that, we just hang out.
Sometimes we fuck.

Derek nods.

JENNA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Derek, but it seems like
we're just really good friends.

DEREK
How is that a bad thing.

JENNA
I can't be in a relationship where
we just use each other, you know?

DEREK
We don't do that.

JENNA
If there's no romance, then what
would you call it?

Derek stares, shakes his head.

JENNA (CONT'D)
Yep.

Jenna presses on Derek's chest, rides harder.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

A WOMAN (mid 20's) walks down the hallway, with a piece of
paper in hand. Heels, black stockings, black miniskirt,
halter top, some loose jewelry, and a small clutch.

The woman looks at the paper then some doors. She stops at
one, stuffs the paper in her clutch, composes herself, and
knocks on the door.

After a moment, the door opens and TRENT (30's) who wears a
suit minus jacket and tie looks at the woman. Smiles.

TRENT
Marie.

MARIE (WOMAN) smiles.

MARIE
Ready to party?

The man stands to the side, and Marie enters.

HOTEL SUITE - MONTAGE

Marie, Trent, and two other similarly dressed guys dance.

Someone pours four drinks.

The group taps glasses and drink.

They dance.

Marie teases and flirts with one of the guys.

Someone snorts a line of coke.

More frantic with the drinking and dancing.

Coke.

Clothes come off.

Coke.

Marie kisses a guy, then reaches for and kisses another guy.

FADE TO WHITE.

HOUSEKEEPER (V.O.)

Excuse me. Miss. Miss?

Marie GROANS.

HOUSEKEEPER (V.O.)

Hey. Hey. You okay?

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

Marie wakes, half naked in a bed. Torn clothing, bruises, and a minor black left eye. She sits up.

MARIE

How did I... Where am I?

HOUSEKEEPER

Lakeside Suites.

Marie pulls herself from the bed and heads for the door.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)

Do you want me to call someone?

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek carries a box into the apartment, then drops it on the living room floor, next to a few others. He catches his breath, looks around.

Two couches form an "L" around a coffee table in the living room. Several potted plants sit on pedestals or hang from hooks. Helen keeps her place spotless and organized.

HELEN (mid 30's) enters the living room from the hallway. She wears a robe and towel-dries her hair.

HELEN
That everything?

DEREK
The last of it.

Helen glances at the items. Two framed blown-up book covers: "Cuba by Night," and "Code Name: Icarus," by Derek Anders.

HELEN
Those... can go in your room.

Derek LAUGHS.

DEREK
You know I appreciate all this.

HELEN
It's what family does.

DEREK
Just a few months, Helen. Then I'll be back on my feet and out of your hair.

Helen smiles.

HELEN
Better you here than with her. I never liked her.

DEREK
Jenna's not so bad.

Helen walks to the kitchen.

HELEN
If you say so. Either way, it'll be nice having someone around for a change.

DEREK
You've got a pretty nice place.

HELEN (O.S.)
Think so?

DEREK
Very cozy. Comfortable.

Helen enters with a glass of orange juice.

HELEN
Oh, yeah?

Helen walks to curtains on the far wall. She pulls a string, they open.

Light fills the room. A high-rise patio overlooking the Chicago skyline sits on the other side of the windows.

Derek stares for a moment.

DEREK
So this is what Chicago looks like.

Helen LAUGHS. She walks to a couch.

HELEN
Got plans for the Summer?

DEREK
Not really. Teaching a class.
That will take a little time.
Maybe do a little writing.

HELEN
The continuing saga of Super Secret
Agent Troy Chambers. Exciting.

DEREK
I was thinking of going in a
different direction. Something
new.

HELEN
Oh, wow. Well, we're working on a
new display at The Gardens, so I
won't be around much to pester you
while you write.

Derek LAUGHS.

DEREK
I appreciate that.

HELEN

But let's also go out when we can.
The city's more fun with company,
even if it's your sister.

Derek nods.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - DAY

A large residential space re-purposed as office/communication hub. Very plush. Fluffy furniture, and rugs. Expensive tables and decorations.

About a dozen girls buzz about the space, some half-dressed. They model clothing for each other and talk.

In the corner a man sits at a desk with a computer and a phone. A dry erase board titled, "APPOINTMENTS," displays a time-table and various names.

Marie sits on a couch, arms crossed, and black-eyed.

DIANE (late 20's), sits on a couch across from Marie. Diane wears business attire, blouse unbuttoned half-way, with heels and stockings more sultry than professional.

Diane stares at Marie.

MARIE

Need something, Diane?

DIANE

No, no. Nothing.

Diane holds the stare.

MARIE

Then mind your own damn business.

They stare each other down.

JAKE (O.S.)

Why don't you take the rest of the
day off, Cherie?

JAKE (30's) comes from a back area with CHERIE (20's). He wears a robe. Cherie, flush, puts her hair up and straightens her clothes as she walks through the office.

Marie stands, and marches toward Jake.

MARIE

Jake!

JAKE
Marie, my God. What happened-

Marie slaps Jake in the chest.

MARIE
Who the fuck were those guys I got
set up with last night?

JAKE
As far as I know, you had no
appointments.

MARIE
Bullshit. It was on the board.

Jake looks around the room.

JAKE
Anyone see Marie on the board?

The girls shake their heads.

DIANE
No.

JAKE
You've been coked up all month.

Jake walks to the desk. Marie follows.

MARIE
They were on the board. They
slipped me something, and
fucking... look at me.

JAKE
Face it, Marie. You've lost it.

Jake grabs printouts off the desk. Looks at them.

JAKE (CONT'D)
"I don't know what the people at
Exclusive are doing, but this girl
was a mess. Three- Four."

Jake shuffles to another page.

JAKE (CONT'D)
"Barely coherent. Felt like
plowing a coma patient. Two-two."

Jake shuffles.

JAKE (CONT'D)
"Disgusting."

Another page.

JAKE (CONT'D)
"Gutter slut."

Jake holds up the pages.

JAKE (CONT'D)
This isn't the image we want.

MARIE
Those have to be fakes, or something. You know I'm the best.

JAKE
They're all paying members of the site with regular reviews.

MARIE
Let me make it up to them.

JAKE
Don't worry about it, I already have. Now you're black marked.
(slams the papers)
We're going to have to cut you out.

MARIE
Oh, Jake. Are you serious?

JAKE
Exclusive Chicago can't be affiliated with shit service.

A beat.

MARIE
You know what? Fine. Give me my money and I'll go.

JAKE
Money?

MARIE
You still owe me ten grand.

JAKE
Think so? Then sue me.

Marie SLAPS Jake.

The room goes silent.

Jake smiles.

Marie looks around, shakes her head, then storms out.

DIANE
Best of luck, Marie.

Marie gives the finger over her shoulder as she exits.

MARIE
All the same.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

About dozen students sit at desks, arranged in a circle.

Derek sits at the head of the circle.

DEREK
Next class we'll figure out
submission dates for everyone. In
the meantime, read the stories I
gave you so we can all get a feel
for discussion and criticism.

Derek checks the time.

DEREK (CONT'D)
And that's it for the day. Anyone
have any questions?

ALEXA, a gorgeous female student, raises her hand.

Derek looks at Alexa, nods.

ALEXA
Are you published?

DEREK
Yes, Alexa, two short novels.

ALEXA
What're they about?

DEREK
Spies. They're spy novels.

TOM (50's) professionally dressed enters, stops at the doorway.

Another student, STEVE, raises his hand.

STEVE

Didn't you say not to write stuff like that?

DEREK

Not until you learn how to tell a real story without relying on genre elements.

ALEXA

Why spies?

DEREK

I just always liked spies.

ALEXA

Oh.

Derek looks at Tom, then back to the class.

DEREK

We'll talk more next time. Happy writing, everyone.

The students gather their belongings, and exit the room.

Tom enters.

TOM

Getting yourself all settled?

DEREK

For the most part.

TOM

It's good to have you back.

Tom shakes Derek's hand.

DEREK

Thanks, Tom.

Derek puts the desks back in order.

TOM

How've things been at the other schools?

DEREK

Been making cuts. The only job I have left is here.

TOM

Well, that's good.

DEREK

Good?

TOM

I should fill you in on what's been going on in the department since last semester.

DEREK

Tom, that's rarely good.

TOM

Don't know if you heard, but Professor Salzmann just retired.

DEREK

I knew he was considering.

TOM

We've been fortunate with promoting and tenure and all that.

DEREK

New faces?

TOM

Some. We're still working on getting an Assistant Professor.

DEREK

Bet you're flooded with applicants.

TOM

Deluge.

A beat.

TOM (CONT'D)

You still writing?

DEREK

Here and there. Have a little more time for it now.

TOM

I suggest you go for this opening.

DEREK

For Assistant Professor?

Tom nods.

TOM
You're one of the more professional
writing instructors we've had. The
only hitch is publication.

DEREK
I have those.

TOM
You know how you were just talking
to your students about genre.

DEREK
Something genre-free. You know I
can't get a story written and
published in time to apply.

TOM
Like I said, we like you. Give us
a solid manuscript. That's it.

Derek looks at the floor.

DEREK
Ok... Ok...

TOM
Got anything on the shelf?

Derek looks up.

DEREK
Yeah, I've been working on this
thing. About a call girl.

TOM
There you go.

DEREK
It's pretty rough, though.

TOM
You have all Summer. Get it to us
with an application, and I see good
things for you.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek browses the Internet on his laptop while Helen tends to
her plants.

HELEN
First day went well?

DEREK

Uh, huh.

Derek sits up.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Did you know that there's a web site where people rate call girls?

Helen stops.

HELEN

What?!

DEREK

Yeah, like you'd rate a restaurant, or an online purchase.

Helen walks to Derek.

HELEN

That's what you've been doing this whole time?

DEREK

See.

Helen looks at the screen.

HELEN

That's... quite descriptive.

Helen squints.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Height, weight... bust... puss-

Helen shuts the laptop.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Why are you on that site?

Derek opens the laptop.

DEREK

Research. For a story.

HELEN

Secret Agent Troy Chambers meets Heidi Fleiss in: Insertion.

DEREK

A real story to get a real job. Writing in a new direction.

Derek resumes browsing.

HELEN
You found a job?

DEREK
Yep.

HELEN
You could have opened with that.

DEREK
I wanted to get to work.

HELEN
Strange subject for a story.

DEREK
It's amazing how much you can find
on the Internet.

Helen returns to her plants.

HELEN
Just keep yourself out of trouble.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - TIME LAPSE

Derek researches as Helen tends to her plants. Then Helen
reads a book on her couch as the sun goes down.

Helen turns on a light, kisses Derek's forehead and exits.

The city shows a busy night. Derek still fixated.

Derek shuts the laptop.

Derek turns off the light.

Derek exits.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Derek sits at an outside table. He sips coffee as he reads a
newspaper.

ALEXA (O.S.)
You look rough, Professor Anders.

Derek flinches. Looks up.

Alexa and Steve take seats at the table.

DEREK
It's... instructor Anders. And
yeah, had a late night.

STEVE
Instructor Anders, gettin' his
party on.

DEREK
No, Steve. Wasn't getting on any
parties. It was research.

ALEXA
You still have to research after
college?

DEREK
Especially in writing.

ALEXA
You said, "Write what you know."

STEVE
Doesn't that mean experience, not
book work?

DEREK
Experience is good, but hard to
come by. Like my spy stories,
there's no way I'd get experience
with espionage and covert stuff.

ALEXA
Probably why they weren't good.

Derek looks at the Alexa.

ALEXA (CONT'D)
I read some reviews. I was
curious.

DEREK
It's okay, you're right.

STEVE
Then why waste your time if all you
have is research? Seems like it
could be put to better use.

DEREK
You know what you just did there?

STEVE
What?

DEREK
Had a writing revelation.

STEVE
Okay...

Steve nods.

DEREK
What you just said. Experience
trumps all. Why bother if all you
have is a vague idea of something?

STEVE
Alright... yeah.

ALEXA
Then why are you doing research?

DEREK
That's a good question. I'm not
sure.

Derek stands. Folds his newspaper.

STEVE
You wanna come get lunch with us?
Talk about more writing stuff?

DEREK
I'm sorry. I have work to do.

ALEXA
Research?

DEREK
Something like that.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek sits at the computer. He browses the rating site.
Helen reads a magazine and drinks wine at the dinner table.
Derek scours the reviews.

DEREK
Man, there are a lot of escorts in
this city.

HELEN
You're still on that?

DEREK
How does anyone pick?

Helen shakes her head, resumes reading.

Derek clicks on the 'sort' column then clicks 'rate.'

The first name on the list: "Marie - \$150/hr."

Derek looks at the second name: "Gizelle - \$450/hr."

DEREK (CONT'D)
Huh.

Derek clicks "Marie", and her profile comes up. He looks over some of the stats: "Agency: Independent."
"Incall/Outcall: Both." "City: Chicago." "Phone: "

Derek leans in and looks at the number.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Really.

HELEN
What?

DEREK
They just put their numbers out there. For anyone to call.

HELEN
Do I need to be worried about you?

Derek waves her away.

DEREK
No, no. Just learning. It is a lot to process.

HELEN
Alright...

Derek takes his cellphone and enters Marie's number.

Derek takes a deep breath.

Holds it.

Exhales and shuts the phone.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Marie's apartment looks like it could belong to a college girl. Too much stuff, with little space. Full racks of clothes all over the place. Various trinkets and knickknacks that one could only describe as "just fabulous."

Marie sits on her bed, cigarette in mouth, laptop in front of her and ashtray to the side. She reads a negative review.

MARIE
What the fuck...

Marie clicks through to another review.

Marie takes a drag, and clicks to another. She slams the computer shut as she exhales.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Bullshit.

Marie falls back and stares at the ceiling. Takes a drag.

Marie's cell phone RINGS. She sits up, flips it open.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Yeah?

DEREK (V.O.)
Is this... Marie?

MARIE
What can I do for you, Honey?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. APARTMENT BALCONY - SAME TIME

DEREK
I wanted to... I was... wondering
how I could make an appointment.

MARIE
An appointment. With me?

DEREK
This is Marie, right?

MARIE
Yes.

DEREK
I want to see you so that I can-

MARIE
-Slow down, Sweetie. We should
discuss specifics in person.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Helen watches Derek pace out on the balcony.

BACK TO:

INTERCUT

DEREK
Ok, ok. So how do I...

MARIE
First tell me when.

DEREK
Tonight?

MARIE
You understand my rates?

DEREK
I was thinking an hour.

MARIE
Silver Fox, 8:00 P.M. Order a long
pour rum and coke.

DEREK
Alrig-

Marie hangs up.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Marie sets down her phone. She shrugs.

Marie stands and walks to a rack of clothing.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Derek enters through the back door.

HELEN
Goddammit, Derek. You just made a
date with a hooker, didn't you.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Helen adjusts Derek's clothing and hair in front of a mirror.

HELEN
Remember to be on your best
behavior, professional.

DEREK
Yeah, I know. I've read all the
do's and don'ts.

HELEN
Say them.

DEREK
Don't talk about sex. Don't talk
about money, and pay up front.
Don't be messed up on drugs.

Helen laughs.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I know. Right? Don't get drunk.
Don't ask about her name or her
life. Be presentable.

HELEN
And?

DEREK
And...

Helen slaps Derek on the back.

HELEN
No sex.

DEREK
Right. No sex.

Helen brushes Derek's lapel. Looks him over.

HELEN
I thought the first time I'd have
to do this was when I had kids.
But now... This is effed up.

DEREK
It's just research. You don't have
to worry. I'm a big boy.

Helen LAUGHS.

INT. SILVER FOX - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The ladies room at the Silver Fox is your typical bar bathroom. Not the management's first priority as far as quality, but far from a cesspool.

Marie sits in a stall, knees together. She twists a bullet and pours coke on her wrist... then, the flow stops.

MARIE

C'mon.

Marie shakes the bullet. Nothing.

Marie sits a moment, then snorts the coke.

She breathes, then stands.

INT. SILVER FOX - CONTINUOUS

Derek sits at the bar with a book. The Silver Fox is a quiet, rustic place. Not too busy. Somewhere you'd expect to find a lot of retired guys drinking beers.

Marie steps from the bathroom, looks around.

The bartender hands Derek a tall rum and coke. Of the few customers, Derek's the only one with this sort of glass.

Marie approaches Derek.

DEREK

Thanks.

Derek pays.

MARIE

Hey, Sweetie. I got us a table.

Derek flinches, then looks at Marie.

Marie motions with her head and walks.

Derek takes his drink and book and follows.

Derek and Marie sit in a cushioned booth with tall sides and dim wall lamps. Marie has a tequila something on her side.

Marie smiles. She points at the book.

MARIE (CONT'D)

For me?

Derek grabs the book, opens the cover.

DEREK
Uh... yeah. It has the-

Marie places her hand on Derek's and shuts the cover. She takes the book: "Code Name: Icarus by Derek Anders."

MARIE
Thank you.

Derek looks at Marie, then at her healing eye.

DEREK
Excuse me for asking, but your...

Derek rubs the side of his eye.

Marie covers the bruise.

MARIE
Oh, that.

Marie composes herself.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I like to have fun, and sometimes I play a little too rough.

Marie smiles at Derek. She sips her drink.

MARIE (CONT'D)
From around here... uh...

DEREK
Oh, Derek.

Marie smiles.

MARIE
Marie. So, from around here, Derek?

DEREK
It's been a long night for me. Mind if we just get to business?

MARIE
We're on a date, Honey. You should treat it like one.

DEREK
I wasn't looking for one.

MARIE
Not how it works, sorry.

Marie collects her things.

DEREK
Wait, wait.

Marie freezes.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I'm a writer. I wanted to get to
know you. Interview you.

Marie resumes gathering her stuff, minus the book.

MARIE
You think that just because of who
I am, I'll do whatever for money?

DEREK
Well... sorta?

Marie stands.

MARIE
I don't need your money, Asshole.

Marie walks off.

DEREK
Shit.

A beat.

Derek stands, grabs the book, and makes his way to the exit.

The patrons watch the commotion, then resume their drinking
after Derek exits.

EXT. SILVER FOX - CONTINUOUS

Marie walks down the street, in a huff.

Derek exits the restaurant, looks around, then spots Marie.

DEREK
Hey!

Marie keeps on.

Derek jogs after Marie.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Will you just hear me out?

Derek catches up.

Marie continues her walk.

Derek takes a Sharpie from his pocket, then writes something on the inside of the book.

Derek hands the book to Marie.

DEREK (CONT'D)
At least take this.

She shoves it back.

MARIE
What aren't you getting?

Derek pushes the book back.

DEREK
My number's in it. Think things over, call me if you want.

Marie stops. Looks at Derek.

MARIE
And you'll leave me alone?

Derek nods.

Marie accepts the book.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You're wasting your time.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Derek enters the apartment.

HELEN (O.S.)
Derek?

DEREK
Yeah?

Helen runs in from another room.

HELEN
Oh my, God. Tell me how it went.

Helen leads Derek to the couches.

DEREK
I thought you didn't approve.

HELEN
I don't. But seriously. You just met with a hooker!

Derek and Helen sit.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Was she all, like, greasy and disgusting. Drugged out. Meth mouth. Hardly coherent? C'mon.

Derek laughs.

DEREK
Normal girl. Kinda high energy.

Helen sits back.

HELEN
Really?

DEREK
Had a bit of a black eye.

HELEN
Probably from her pimp. Wasn't turning enough tricks, or talked back. Got herself slapped.

Derek shakes his head.

Helen stands, walks off.

HELEN (CONT'D)
At least it's all out of your system, and you can get back to doing actual work.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Marie walks the sidewalk.

A car passes. A few guys WHISTLE at her.

DUDE
How much, Baby?

Marie flips off the car as it pulls away. It stops at a group of guys, then continues down the street.

Marie looks at the book Derek gave her.

MARIE
Asshole.

Marie examines the cover.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Code Name: Icarus. Derek Anders.
Derek, huh.

Marie shoves the book in her purse, and crosses the street.

Some guys stand against a building on the other side.

Marie approaches.

SPECIAL T
Marie, Marie, Marie. Get your
vixen ass over here, girl.

Marie smiles, walks up.

MARIE
Hey, T.

SPECIAL T, a big dude dressed for the shadows and alleys.

SPECIAL T
Those white boys, the ones just
giving you a hard time?

MARIE
Yeah?

SPECIAL T
Wanted some stuff, but left with
the fear of T in 'em.

MARIE
My knight.

SPECIAL T
Gotta protect what's right.

Marie hugs Special T.

SPECIAL T (CONT'D)
Look at you, girl. Who did that to
your fine face?

MARIE
Nobody important.

SPECIAL T
That's right, nobody important.
Anyone important do that stuff to
you I know they got it comin' back
in a bad way. Marie don't play.

Marie smiles.

SPECIAL T (CONT'D)
What you need?

MARIE
Eight ball.

SPECIAL T
I got ya. Three.

MARIE
Three? Are you fucking serious?

SPECIAL T
Girl, news travels. If you ain't
with Exclusive anymore, then you
don't get VIP treatment.

MARIE
C'mon, it's me.

SPECIAL T
I know. It's tough. But business
is business. I can't lose my sales
from Exclusive if they learn you're
still workin' their discount.

Marie digs through her purse.

MARIE
Fuck.

Marie pulls out cash and counts it.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I got two-seventy. That's halfway.

SPECIAL T
Gotta be three, gotta be three.

MARIE
Oh. Hold on.

Marie pulls the book from her purse, opens the cover, pulls out cash. She hands more to Special T.

SPECIAL T
Alright, alright.
(behind him)
Get our girl a ball.

A guy from the back hands Special T a baggie. T hands it to Marie. He winks.

SPECIAL T (CONT'D)
Our girl's all set.

Marie shoves it all in her purse. She walks off.

MARIE
Thanks.

SPECIAL T
Things gonna change, fortune always favors the foxies.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Derek sits in the room with coffee and a newspaper.

Alexa and Steve sit at their desks. It's still early.

STEVE
So... Instructor Anders.

DEREK
Yeah?

STEVE
I went and looked up some authors after our conversation. You know, about writing what you've done.

DEREK
What'd you learn?

STEVE
I found this awesome book. This guy, like, went and met all these suave dudes in L.A. Real ladies men. And he lived with them and they taught him how to get laid, like all the time. 100%. Learned a lot already

ALEXA
Why the hell are you reading that?

STEVE
It... sounded interesting.

Alexa slaps Steve on the shoulder.

ALEXA
Hope you paid attention. You may
need that advice soon.

DEREK
Are you two?

Alexa nods.

Steve grins and nods.

STEVE
But, I'm not going to do any of
that, Babe. Don't worry.

ALEXA
I'm thinking of going out and
experiencing something new.

DEREK
That's very ambitious.

ALEXA
Think it's too soon?

DEREK
I say go for it.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek enters the apartment.

DEREK
Helen?

Derek looks around the living room and kitchen.

DEREK (CONT'D)
You home?

Derek walks down the hall and looks in Helen's room.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Helen?

Derek walks back to the living room. He takes his cell phone, makes a call.

The line RINGS... RINGS...

Derek paces.

HELEN (V.O.)
Derek?

DEREK
Helen. Where are you?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. CHICAGO BOTANICAL GARDENS - SAME TIME

Helen exits a building through a side door.

HELEN
Uh... At work?

DEREK
I need a favor.

HELEN
Yeah, what is it?

DEREK
I need you to set up another appointment with that escort.

HELEN
Are you out of your mind?

DEREK
I know, I know, but I'm walking blind. I need a second shot.

HELEN
Then call her yourself.

DEREK
She's not going to agree to meet with me after last time.

HELEN
Take it as a sign.

DEREK
This isn't about me. This is about the book, and a new job. This is what I need to get back on my feet.

HELEN
So now I'm the bad guy if I don't?

DEREK
You're the caring loving sister
that you've always been if you do.

HELEN
God dammit, Derek.

Helen SIGHS.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Alright, but under two conditions.

DEREK
Anything.

HELEN
This is the absolute last time in
your life that you meet with an
escort, ever. No more.

DEREK
Alright.

HELEN
And you have to come with me to the
Lunch in the Garden event I've been
setting up.

DEREK
Done.

INT. SILVER FOX - NIGHT

Derek enters the bar, book in hand. He walks past the stools
and heads to the table he and Marie had last time.

Marie sits at the table. She plays on her phone.

Derek sits.

Marie looks up.

MARIE
Mother fucker...

DEREK
Hey.

MARIE
What the fuck are you doing here?

Derek slides Marie the book.

DEREK
I have an appointment.

Marie pushes it back.

MARIE
No.

Marie stands.

DEREK
Just give me a second, please.

Marie looks at Derek.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Only a second.

Marie points to the book, holds out her hand.

Derek hands the book to Marie.

Marie sits.

MARIE
I'll listen, but that's it.

DEREK
I'm in sort of a bad way.

Marie stares.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I'm working with this deadline, and
my topic is you. I mean, not you,
but your... industry?

Marie nods.

DEREK (CONT'D)
And I have no idea how any of it
works. Or what any of the girls-

MARIE
-And guys.

Derek nods.

DEREK
...are like. I need a window.
Your insight. Something.

MARIE

Why me?

DEREK

I saw your name on that review site. You seem to have tons of experience. And you were cheapest.

MARIE

Well... it's Derek, right?

Derek nods.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Well, Derek. Even if I wanted to help you, I couldn't and won't.

DEREK

It'd be anonymous.

MARIE

Fuck anonymous. My name's all over this city. Now it is about what that name says about me.

DEREK

What's that?

MARIE

Fucked. That's what. I don't know if you looked too hard at that site, but I have a string of bullshit negative reviews, which is a fucking death sentence for me.

DEREK

I saw a few.

MARIE

My agency dropped me. Without them, it's tough to get appointments, especially with dicked up ratings. So I have to lower my price and hope someone half-way decent bites.

Derek sits back.

DEREK

Wow. I'm sorry.

MARIE

I'm only here now because my phone isn't ringing.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

And, even if I wanted to help, you wouldn't be generating reviews for our time, and it would take away from chances with clients who might actually help me regain my prestige and demand.

DEREK

You were that good?

MARIE

Aces, Man. Aces.

DEREK

Why not start fresh? Create your own agency, and rebuild.

MARIE

An agency with one escort who answers her own phones. Even if it was a girl other than me, she wouldn't last long at all.

DEREK

Think there would be anyone else out there to help me?

MARIE

Can you afford twelve-hundred an hour?

DEREK

God no.

MARIE

I can't help you, and you can't possibly help me. That's more or less what I said last time.

Derek takes out his phone, checks the time.

DEREK

I hope things get better for you. I'm sorry for wasting your time.

Marie looks at Derek's phone, then Derek.

MARIE

We still have some time together, why not hang out for a while?

DEREK

Kinda pointless, isn't it?

MARIE
Chillin' with a failed escort's
gotta be better than nothing.

Derek thinks.

MARIE (CONT'D)
What else you got to do?

DEREK
Yeah. Alright.

Marie smiles. She stands.

MARIE
Let's go.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek follows Marie into her apartment.

Marie tosses her purse to the side and walks in.

Derek stands at the door.

MARIE
Oh, come on.

Marie exits to another room.

Derek enters, looks around, then sits on a couch.

Marie returns, with a vial. She pulls an ottoman next to the coffee table in front of Derek and sits.

MARIE (CONT'D)
So. What is it you do when you're
not harassing escorts.

Marie opens the vial, then pours a line of coke on the table.

DEREK
I write a little. Teach some. Is
that...

Marie pours another line.

MARIE
What? Coke?

Marie kneels. Snorts a line.

Derek stiffens.

Marie holds her straw out to Derek.

DEREK
Oh... no thanks.

Marie nods.

MARIE
So this teaching and writing thing
keeping you busy?

Marie does the other line.

DEREK
Used to. I was hoping to spend
more time on writing, but you know.

Marie wipes at her nose, sits.

MARIE
Yeah, yeah.

Marie leans forward.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I'm gonna shoot straight with you
for a minute, alright?

DEREK
Yeah, sure.

MARIE
I'm fucked. Your fucked. We're
both fucked.

DEREK
According to you, yeah. I'll have
to try to find another way.

MARIE
What do you say we help each other?

DEREK
I don't follow.

MARIE
Try to, 'cause I need you on this.

Derek nods.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I reinvent myself. Make up a new
name with a clean slate. Make a
new agency, and get me out there.

DEREK

The exact plan I had at the bar.
Said people wouldn't buy it.

MARIE

Not if it was me setting all my
shit up, but you? That has a good
chance at looking legit.

DEREK

I'm not going to be your pimp.

MARIE

No, no. Not a pimp. Apprentice?
Take the calls for me, tell me
where to go.

DEREK

A pimp.

MARIE

Think about it, Man. You want to
know about the industry for a book
or whatever, what better way than
seeing it from the inside? And
watching how it takes off?

DEREK

Would be cool. Still illegal.

MARIE

You won't touch any money, won't
pay anything, and won't receive any
payment. Just relay info. What's
illegal about that?

DEREK

I'm not sure if it is something I
should get involved in, regardless.

MARIE

No pressure. Take some time, think
things over. Get back to me.

Derek stands.

DEREK

Alright.

Derek heads for the door.

MARIE

And you can cut out whenever.

Derek opens the door.

Marie shuts her eyes.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You'd be doing me a huge favor, and
have my eternal gratitude.

Derek stands at the door.

DEREK
But I can leave whenever.

MARIE
Ten minutes, days, or months with
no hard feelings. All up to you.

Derek EXHALES.

DEREK
Alright. Alright, I'm in.

Marie opens her eyes, smiles.

MARIE
Get your ass back over here.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek sits at his laptop, and types: "The name of an agency
does more..."

FELICITY, the protagonist in Derek's book has a voice of a
woman in her late 40's.

FELICITY (V.O.)
The name of an agency does more for
the service than you'd think. It's
the first impression clients
receive, and should entice.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek and Marie sit in her living room with a note pad.

FELICITY (V.O.)
Clients are interested in two
things: Intimacy and Privacy. The
name should support that. It
should sound sexy and discreet.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek and Marie sit next to each other on her couch. They look at Derek's laptop. A web site loads.

"Garden of Ambrosia: Chicago's Premiere Service"

Marie bounces up and down. She slaps Derek's shoulder a few times. He smiles.

FELICITY (V.O.)

After that, you set yourself up at a review site. Not a very tough thing to do. Submit a name, some statistics, services, a link to the web site. The users take it from there. It keeps things honest.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Marie looks over the submission form for her profile. Everything is complete but name. Marie types.

"Victoria."

FELICITY (V.O.)

Pictures, too. Give them enough solid proof that the girl is who she says she is, and they know exactly what to expect.

Marie submits the form.

A new page loads. The complete profile for "Victoria," and glamour photos of Marie with her face censored.

Marie smiles.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek continues to type at his laptop.

Helen watches T.V. and eats popcorn.

FELICITY (V.O.)

After that, it's pretty much a waiting game. Get a call, hopefully get a good review, and pray it encourages more calls.

Derek hits the enter key, clicks save, closes the laptop, then stretches.

HELEN
Looks like your meeting went much
better this time around.

Derek stands and walks to the couch.

DEREK
Got me off to a good start.

Derek sits next to Helen.

HELEN
And no more appointments, right?

DEREK
I will have no more appointments
with Marie.

HELEN
Marie?

Derek grabs some popcorn.

DEREK
Uh huh.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek and Marie sit in Marie's living room and stare at a
cell phone on the table.

MARIE
When it rings, answer it.

DEREK
No problem.

MARIE
Set it up like a meeting for two
people. If they start asking stuff
like what they get, hang up. No
specifics.

DEREK
And how do I keep organized? Call
you? Make a schedule?

MARIE
Hands off, remember? The less you
have, the better. Just... be over
here every day.

DEREK
Every day.

MARIE
As much as you can. Hang out, and when a call comes, you can tell me when and where. No papers, no books. 'Cause if you're caught with a black book... trouble.

Marie stands and walks to the kitchen.

DEREK
I'm gonna have to leave to teach classes, and check in with my sister and stuff.

MARIE (O.S.)
Sister?

DEREK
I've been staying with her for a while.

Marie enters the room.

MARIE
She know about any of this?

DEREK
Just the appointments.

MARIE
I don't mean to make you lead a double life, but...

DEREK
... Yeah, I get it.

Marie hands Derek a key.

MARIE
Come and go, whatever. Do some writing if you want. I'll try not to be a bother.

A beat as Marie goes back to the couch and kneels at the coffee table. She prepares a line of coke.

DEREK
When do you think they'll start calling? Is something wrong?

MARIE
It hasn't even been a day. And
it's a weekday.

Marie does a line.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Give it time.

DEREK
If I can ask. Why the drugs?

Marie shrugs, climbs back on the couch.

MARIE
To have fun, to party. Then it
becomes the only way I can keep at
it for seventy-two straight hours.

DEREK
Couldn't take a break?

MARIE
As soon as one call ends, another
comes in. And if you're a popular
girl, like I was.

Marie dismisses the thought with a wave.

DEREK
But you had those bad reviews.

MARIE
I had good reviews. Stellar
reviews. Then, all of the sudden.

Marie stick out her tongue and lowers her thumb.

MARIE (CONT'D)
No fucking clue, what-so-ever.
Guess I lost control. Got
careless, or unprofessional.

A moment.

The cell phone lights up, RINGS.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Holy shit!

Derek picks up the phone, Marie sits next to him.

DEREK
Hello?

Marie slaps Derek on the arm.

DEREK (CONT'D)
... Garden of Ambrosia, what can I
do for you... uh, huh... Victoria,
she's new to town, but I promise
she's worth it... that's right,
one-thousand... tomorrow afternoon?

Derek looks at Marie.

Marie nods. She writes on the note pad.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Tomorrow afternoon is fine...
three o'clock for two hours.

Marie shows Derek the pad: "The Fox."

DEREK (CONT'D)
At The Silver Fox... and, uh...
order a long pour rum and coke.

Marie smiles and nods.

DEREK (CONT'D)
All set. Thanks for calling.

Derek hangs up.

Marie squeals, hugs Derek.

MARIE
Come by tomorrow? I wanna tell you
how things went.

DEREK
I've got an afternoon class.

MARIE
Even better. I'll meet you there,
afterward. Business dinner.

Marie smiles.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek types at his laptop.

HELEN
It's nice to see all this energy.

Helen walks over with a plate of food, places it next to him. She kisses him on the side of the head.

HELEN (CONT'D)
You smell strange.

Derek stops, turns.

DEREK
What?

HELEN
Yeah. Like perfume...

Helen smells Derek's hair.

HELEN (CONT'D)
And smoke?

Derek resumes typing.

DEREK
Kids practically bathe in the stuff, and it's impossible to leave a building without passing through a cloud of smoke.

Helen stands there for a moment. She shakes her head.

HELEN
Alright.

Helen walks away.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Derek sits in the circle of desks with his students.

Silence.

STEVE
I still don't understand.

DEREK
What's got you confused?

STEVE
Well, it's supposed to be a war story, right? But all this guy does is talk about the weapons and gear, but nobody uses any of it.

DEREK

I think you're misunderstanding the point of the story.

STEVE

It shoulda been called, "Our Boring Inventory."

The students CHUCKLE.

ALEXA

It isn't about all that stuff, it is about the similarity. Like, all that stuff was heavy, and weighed them down, but not as much as all the emotional stuff that came with the war.

DEREK

That's exactly right.

STEVE

But it is a war story. It should be all action and guns.

DEREK

That's setting, genre. It comes secondary to the people. This story could have taken place on The Oregon Trail. Just change some of the props. Same story.

A beat.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Did we all at least enjoy the story, even a little?

Everyone nods.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Good. Now, nobody write anything like this for our class. Emulation is not creation.

Derek looks at his watch.

DEREK (CONT'D)

And that's it for today. Remember your readings, and start thinking of subjects for your own stories.

The students stand, and leave.

Steve kisses Alexa on the cheek.

STEVE

I gotta run. See ya tonight.

Steve exits.

Derek puts the room back in order.

Alexa heads for the door.

ALEXA

Are we going to read any more interesting stuff like that?

DEREK

I know of a few. I'll dig some up.

ALEXA

Looking forward to it.

Alexa passes Tom as she exits. Tom enters the room.

DEREK

Hey, Tom.

TOM

We're past add/drop and your enrollment hasn't budged.

DEREK

We're already at that point?

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Marie walks down the hallway with a bag in her hand and a swagger in her gait. Her clothes leave little to the imagination.

Steve passes, in a hurry. He glances. Marie smirks. Steve looks away.

Marie smiles.

Marie spots Alexa, who is headed her way.

Marie puts on a friendly face.

Marie points at Alexa's shoes.

Alexa stops.

MARIE
Those are too cute. Where did you
get 'em?

Alexa looks at her shoes, looks at Marie, smiles.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Derek and Tom stand at the head of the room.

TOM
Looking real good for you, Derek.
Just came to check in. How's the
writing?

DEREK
It's going well. Still on track.

TOM
Good, 'cause I've been ignoring the
other applications.

DEREK
Is that legal?

TOM
No idea. I'll just set up some
interviews or something.

MARIE (O.S.)
Derek?

Derek and Tom look to the hallway.

Marie enters the room, plastic bag in hand.

TOM
Hi.

Marie reaches to shake Tom's hand.

MARIE
Hello. I'm Marie.

TOM
Tom.

MARIE
Pleasure to meet you, Tom.

Tom looks at Derek.

DEREK
Marie's... a new friend.

TOM
I see.

Marie holds up the bag.

MARIE
Dinner, remember? And it's getting
cold, too.

DEREK
Tom, I'm sorry.

TOM
No, no. We can talk later. Enjoy
your evening.

Derek walks to the door.

Marie follows and fans him along.

MARIE
Scoot.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek sits on Marie's couch, and stares at Victoria's reviews
page. Empty take-out containers litter the table.

In another room a SHOWER RUNS.

Derek reloads the page.

A beat.

Derek reloads again.

DEREK
Come on.

Another reload.

Marie LAUGHS from the other room.

MARIE (O.S.)
Derek, relax.

DEREK
Why hasn't he posted?

MARIE (O.S.)
Industry advice: Don't try to force
anything. When it comes, it comes.

DEREK
You guys really say that?

Marie LAUGHS.

MARIE
(singing)
"Relax, don't do it, when you want
to go to it..."

Derek reloads the page.

MARIE (CONT'D)
(singing)
"Relax, don't do it-

A review.

DEREK
Marie! Marie!

FUMBLING in another room.

Marie enters, towel against her chest.

MARIE
Holy shit. Read it, read it.

Derek looks at the screen.

DEREK
"We met at a bar, a strange place,
and I ordered a long pour rum and-"

MARIE
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Next paragraph.

DEREK
"When we got to the room, we talked
and then there was some DFK..."

MARIE
Deep french kissing. Go on.

DEREK
"We got to the bed and she took me
in her hands, then knelt and..."

Derek lifts the laptop over his head.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Yeah. I can't read this.

Marie squints and looks at the screen, mouths some words.

MARIE
"Overall I would say that Victoria was incredible, and I would recommend her and Garden of Ambrosia to all." Appearance nine, performance ten.

Marie jumps, jumps, jumps.

DEREK
Good?

MARIE
Gang-busters.

Derek lowers the laptop. Marie dances back to the shower.

DEREK
All right.

MARIE
(singing)
"When you want to come."

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Girls buzz about, while MARK (30's, the phone guy), looks over the review pages.

MARK
Jake? You may want to see this.

Jake enters from the back room.

Mark points at the screen. Jake reads.

JAKE
Eight-Eight, Nine-Ten? What the hell is Garden of Ambrosia, and who the fuck is Victoria?

MARK
Hold on.

Mark clicks through to the pictures.

Jake studies them.

JAKE
I've never seen these before.

Mark shakes his head.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Alright, no problem. Let's just
keep this Victoria on our radar.

MARK
Sure thing.

Jake slaps Mark on the back. Walks off.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek types at his laptop.

FELICITY (V.O.)
You'd think that in an industry
where privacy is a huge concern,
people would be much more discreet
about their experiences. This
whole world is a cycle of irony.

FELICITY (V.O.)
The girls, they're right there.
Internet, phone book, local papers
and magazines. They don't come
right out and say, "sex for money,"
but that's the implication.

FELICITY (V.O.)
Then there are the reviewers. A
whole community of "hobbyists," who
pay, not only for sex, but for site
memberships where they can have
open conversations about their
experiences. These people get to
know, trust, and respect their
peers. It's a social club.

FELICITY (V.O.)
But in the end, it is a balanced
system in a world where getting
duped could otherwise go
unpunished. Any executive will
tell you that word of mouth is
crucial. Whatever helps the girl,
helps the girl. No harm in that.

Derek shuts his laptop. Stands and turns off the lights.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek enters Marie's apartment, looks around.

DEREK
Marie?

MARIE (O.S.)
In here, there's something I want
you to see.

DEREK
I'm just here to drop off your key.

Marie enters the room.

MARIE
What?

DEREK
We got you back up, and I saw it
from the inside, like we agreed. I
figure now it's just wash, rinse,
repeat. No need for me anymore.

MARIE
Oh, no, no, no. We've been playing
in the shallow end. There's much
more to see.

DEREK
Pretty sure I can guess the rest.

MARIE
Don't you want to see how things
grow? See this become a real
agency? Have access to several
girls, for free?

DEREK
Couldn't I just stop by?

MARIE
That wasn't our deal. Besides, the
girls need to trust you.

A beat.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You haven't even seen a girl get
her real first start. Come here.

Marie takes Derek's hand, and leads him to her bedroom.

Derek looks up.

Alexa stands before him, fully nude.

Derek covers his eyes.

DEREK
Holy shit.

MARIE
This, is Alexa.

DEREK
Yeah, I know.

ALEXA
Instructor Anders?

Derek turn his back to Alexa.

DEREK
Marie, she's my student.

MARIE
Then you already know each other.

DEREK
I definitely can't stay. This
crosses so many lines.

MARIE
Stay or go, she's made her choice.
She'll still be your student and my
employee. Gonna have to deal.

ALEXA
I want to do this.

Derek turns back, looks to the ground and shields his eyes.

DEREK
Think about this. An escort?

ALEXA
I'm exploring, like you said.

DEREK
God dammit.

MARIE
You're gonna have to look. Be
familiar with her.

Marie pulls Derek's hand away from his face.

Derek looks at Alexa.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Meet Lexi. Pretty fucking hot.

ALEXA
Lexi?

MARIE
Your real name's your only shred of
privacy.

DEREK
Marie's not your real name?

Marie exits.

DEREK (CONT'D)
What is it?

MARIE (O.S.)
I got a date. Give Lexi the
rundown while I'm out.

Derek looks at Alexa, rubs his face.

INT. SILVER FOX - DAY

Marie enters the bar, walks back to her booth.

Someone's already there. Jake.

MARIE
Jake, what the fuck.

JAKE
I have a date with Victoria.

Marie sits.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I should have known.

MARIE
Told you I could pick things up.

JAKE
I see. Come back to work for me.

MARIE
Fuck you.

JAKE
Not a nice way to talk to the man
who helped you get your start.

MARIE
And stole money from me. Gonna
give that back too?

JAKE
Consider it a fee for lack of
loyalty. It'll be a fresh start.

Marie stands.

MARIE
Fuck off.

Marie walks to the door.

JAKE
You know you stand no chance
against us. You can't keep up.

Marie exits the bar.

MARIE
We'll see about that.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek types at his laptop. Helen tidies the apartment.

MARIE (V.O.)
Cherie, heard anything about this
new girl in town, Victoria?

CHERIE (V.O.)
That she's, like, a rock star or
something. A complete mystery.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Marie sits on her bed, a mirror with coke on the sheets.

MARIE
Jake say anything about her?

CHERIE (V.O.)
That she's probably a fluke, or a
fake profile.

Marie does a line.

MARIE
So, he didn't tell you that he
knows I'm Victoria?

CHERIE (V.O.)
Shit, really? No, he didn't.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MARIE (V.O.)
Why don't you and the other girls
talk to him about it? And let them
know my house is open, and I won't
keep them from their money.

Derek closes his laptop.

HELEN
Done for the night?

Derek rubs his eyes.

DEREK
Yeah, yeah.

HELEN
This stuff's wiping you out.

DEREK
Not too much.

HELEN
Just make sure you'll be awake
enough for The Gardens.

DEREK
Oh. Right. When is it?

HELEN
Two days.

Derek thinks.

DEREK
Two days.

HELEN
You better not forget.

DEREK
No. We're good.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Circle of desks. The students have manuscripts in front of
them. Alexa sits back.

STUDENT

I think that the... part at the hospital is cliché?

STEVE

Yeah. Like it's been done before.

DEREK

Alright. And what might Alexa do to smooth it over?

STEVE

Maybe, he could not make it to the delivery?

DEREK

Why do you think that would be effective?

STEVE

We know this dude doesn't want to be with this lady, but at the same time, he doesn't want to be an absent father like his father was.

DEREK

Alright...

STEVE

Well, if he doesn't make it to the delivery, it carries the story past the last page.

Derek stares at Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Okay, he makes it, and it is all sunshine and roses. But if he doesn't make it, he's screwed up the first thing he possibly could for the kid. When the story is over, we'd know the path ahead is gonna be rough.

Derek nods.

DEREK

Who here agrees with Steve?

A beat.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Well, I think it is excellent
insight and that Alexa should
consider it for her next draft.

STUDENT
Yeah. It does seem more real.

Steve smiles.

Derek's cell phone RINGS.

The students look.

Derek fumbles for his phone.

DEREK
Sorry... just one...

RING.

Derek pulls the phone from his pocket. Nothing.

RING.

Derek puts the phone on the desk, reaches in his bag and
pulls out another. He stands.

RING.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Keep going, guys.

Derek exits the room, answers the phone.

Alexa shifts her attention to Derek in the hallway as the
students continue their discussion.

Derek nods a few times, hangs up the phone, enters the room.

Derek sits at his desk and nods as the students drone. He
flips a few pages in to the manuscript and writes something.

The conversation ends.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Alright, great discussion guys.
You all did real well. Everyone
pass their marked up manuscripts
back to Lexi.

STEVE
Lexi?

DEREK
Alexa, I mean.

The manuscripts come around to Alexa. She flips through one:
"Lakeside, Doubles, 9:00 PM, Ste 540."

ALEXA (V.O.)
Doubles?

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek and Alexa sit in Marie's living room.

DEREK
It means you and another girl.
Marie. It's good for a first.

ALEXA
I won't be alone. Good.

Alexa shakes out her hands. Smiles.

ALEXA (CONT'D)
Nervous.

Marie enters the front door.

MARIE
Got anything tonight?

ALEXA
Me and you. Doubles!

MARIE
Gonna make a lot tonight, Girl.

Marie looks at Derek. Holds up an envelope.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Derek, some girls may be stopping
by. Work them in the system. And
I need you to run an errand.

She tosses the envelope to Derek.

DEREK
What is it.

MARIE
Instructions on the back.

Derek nods.

Marie goes for the door, then comes back. She kisses Alexa on the side of the head.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Dear. You'll do fine.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Derek holds the envelope and walks the sidewalk. He stops. Looks around.

Special T and his guys stand next to a building.

Derek approaches.

DEREK
Excuse me?

The group looks at Derek.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I'm looking for...
(looks at the envelope)
Special T?

Special T LAUGHS.

SPECIAL T
Who's asking?

Derek hands over the envelope.

DEREK
This is for you.

Special T stares at Derek for a moment, then looks inside. Tons of cash, and a note. "This is Derek, he's cool. I've got an order. VIP prices I assume? Love, Marie."

Special T studies Derek.

SPECIAL T
A'ight. It's gonna be a hot minute. You good to hang?

DEREK
What is?

SPECIAL T
Your package, Kid.

DEREK
Package? Wait... you mean drugs?

SPECIAL T
Whoa, whoa. Relax.

Derek looks around. Leans in.

DEREK
Is this a drug deal?

SPECIAL T
What. You think you were out here
buying pineapples?

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Marie talks to Cherie in the park. She hands her a key.

Cherie nods. They hug and part ways.

Marie's cell phone RINGS. She looks, answers.

MARIE
Alexa?

ALEXA (V.O.)
Where are you?

MARIE
Got held up, on my way now.

ALEXA (V.O.)
Something doesn't feel right.

MARIE
What's up.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

Alexa stands in a quiet area of the suite. A few guys party
behind her.

ALEXA
These guys. They're getting kinda
pushy, handsy.

MARIE
Guys? Derek said this was a
double, not a group thing. Where
are you again?

Marie digs through her purse. Pulls out a slip of paper.

ALEXA
Lakeside Suites.

The paper reads: "Lakeside Suites."

MARIE
Lakeside... shit. One of the guys
doesn't happened to be named Trent,
does he?

ALEXA
I don't know.

MARIE
Ask.

ALEXA
Trent?

TRENT
Yeah, Babe?

MARIE
Tell him I'm on my way.

ALEXA
Nothin'. Just wanted to let you
know the other girl's almost here.

TRENT
All right, time to party.

MARIE
Alexa, sit tight, don't drink
anything, I'll be there soon.

ALEXA
Hurry.

Marie hangs up her phone.

MARIE
Motherfucker.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LATER

Trent and his friends drink and laugh.

Alexa sits on a couch, quiet.

A KNOCK at the door.

TRENT

'Bout time.

Trent walks to the door, looks through the peep-hole. Sees Marie, though her head is turned.

TRENT (CONT'D)

All right.

Trent unlatches the door. Opens it.

Special T and his guys rush through the door.

Trent back pedals.

SPECIAL T

Evening, fella's.

Alexa spots Marie in the hallway.

Marie motions for Alexa to come.

Alexa runs out of the room, and they leave.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek sits on a chair. Three women sit on the couch, Cherie, RUBY, and SASHA (both 20's dressed skimpy).

The ladies smoke. One does a line off the table.

Derek writes on a note pad.

SASHA

Jake's, like, a complete douche, anyway. Always playing people. Treating them like trash.

Ruby nods.

RUBY

Cocky son-of-a-bitch, too. You know, he has a safe full of cash in plain sight with a 1-2-3 code. Says he knows nobody's gonna steal from him. And nobody does, even though it's their money anyway.

Derek nods, writes more.

CHERIE

Plus, he's got a small dick.

Cherie holds out her thumb and forefinger.

The girls LAUGH.

CHERIE (CONT'D)

Never gave me so much as a single cup of coffee.

RUBY

Then why the fuck you keep fucking him?

SASHA

Even the most boring hobbyist got me cups. Sometimes two.

CHERIE

He's the boss. Didn't know what I'd do if I got cut.

DEREK

Cup of coffee?

RUBY

Oh, that mean orgasm, Honey.

Derek writes.

INT. LAKESIDE SUITES - LOBBY BAR - NIGHT

Marie and Alexa drink at the bar. Marie takes a bump.

MARIE

God damn. Never thought I'd be seeing that fucker again.

ALEXA

If you wouldn't have been there...

Marie puts her arm around Alexa.

MARIE

Don't worry about it, Babe. We stick together.

Special T, his crew, Trent, and friends walk through the bar.

Marie sits up.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Everything good?

SPECIAL T
It's all good, Baby Doll. Had a
nice talk upstairs, didn't we?

Special T shakes Trent by the collar.

SPECIAL T (CONT'D)
Looks like it ain't just girls on
Jake's payroll.

Special T holds up a wallet with pictures of kids.

SPECIAL T (CONT'D)
But these cats had a change of
heart. On our way to the ATM.
Reparations and stuff.

He pushes Trent and they continue through bar.

Marie and Alexa watch them go.

Marie looks at Alexa.

MARIE
We stick together.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Derek, Cherie, Ruby, and Sasha sit in Marie's living room.

Smoke fills the room.

RUBY
So I'm just there waiting, like
some Greek statue or something.
Arms and head back, tits out, just
waiting for this guy.

SASHA
Oh, those are some nice tits, too.

RUBY
Aww, thank you. Anyway, he's
jackin' it, like he's some boy
scout trying to start a fire.

SASHA
Ughh. Kills my neck and back.

RUBY
Right? So this dude's just workin'
it, workin' it, workin' it, and
finally he pops on my chest. Then
guess what he does.

Everyone waits.

RUBY (CONT'D)
The motherfucker start cryin'.

CHERIE
No way. What'd you do?

RUBY
Brother's time was up. Got my ass
outta there, and didn't look back.

They all LAUGH.

The front door opens.

Marie and Alexa step through.

Marie points at Derek.

MARIE
Do you have any fucking idea what
you did to me tonight?

DEREK
What?

RUBY
Aww, shit.

The girls grab their stuff, and head for the door.

Sasha grabs Alexa by the shoulder.

SASHA
Time to go, Sweetie.

They exit. Derek and Marie remain.

Marie approaches Derek. Stares at him.

DEREK
I... I don't know.

MARIE
Our date tonight? They were Jake's
people gunning to take me down.

DEREK
I'm sorry. I wasn't aware.

MARIE
Why the fuck are you sorry? You
know what this means?

Derek shakes his head.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I'm back on top and I'm a threat to
that prick. Know how that makes me
feel?

DEREK
Good?

Marie grabs Derek's hand and shoves it down her pants.

MARIE
Very good.

Derek pulls his hand out.

Marie closes in.

DEREK
That's... pretty good..

MARIE
The way I see it, I can do, and
have, whatever I want. And right
now...

Marie grabs Derek's belt and pulls him toward her room.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - DAY

Jake and Mark sit in the office, alone.

Jake throws a tennis ball against the wall, catches it.

MARK
Well, this is pretty fucked.

Jake chucks the ball, it bounces off the wall and shoots
across the room.

JAKE
Have we had any calls?

Mark shakes his head.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Any girls show up?

MARK
No. And I hate to tell you, but
online it says they're all with
Garden of Ambrosia.

Jake stands.

JAKE
Fuck, fuck, fuck. God damn, Marie.

Jake shakes his head. Walks to his room.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'll think of something.

A SHOWER RUNS.

FADE TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Derek rests in Marie's bed. Hands behind his head.

Marie showers, with the bathroom door open.

MARIE
Got anything lined up for me today?

DEREK
Yeah. Some, guy, I forget who, but
Cherie said he's pretty important.

MARIE
A VIP, huh? This is good for you
to witness, for your book and all.

The shower STOPS.

DEREK
Get a lot of these?

MARIE
Musicians, rock stars, senators.

Marie steps out of the shower, wraps herself in a towel.

DEREK

Jesus.

MARIE

Everyone has a private life.

Marie enters the bedroom.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I mean, you're not gonna go around
telling people you fucked an
escort, right?

DEREK

No, probably not.

Marie does a line of coke.

DEREK (CONT'D)

You ever considered trying to quit?

MARIE

What, blow?

Marie does another line.

Derek rolls over.

DEREK

Yeah.

MARIE

Not really. Some day, maybe.

A beat.

Marie smacks Derek on the arm.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Up. Let's see how our girls did
last night.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek and Marie walk into the living-room. Derek stops.

Marie looks into the room.

Diane sits on the couch, Cherie across from her.

Marie looks at Cherie.

MARIE
What is she doing here?

CHERIE
Get this, she says that Exclusive
is pretty much a ghost town. Word
spread that girls get paid better
with Victoria.

DIANE
And seeing as you're Victoria, I'm
not surprised.

MARIE
So, what. You want to join me?

DIANE
Jake's fucking lost it, Marie. You
know I know the business, you know
I'm good. I can help out.

MARIE
You understand that I'm in control?

Diane nods.

DIANE
I'm just trying to get paid, like
anyone else.

Marie shakes her head.

MARIE
Whatever.

Marie looks at Derek.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Set her up. I'm gonna get ready.

Marie exits.

CHERIE
Sheesh.

Derek walks to Marie's room.

Marie's on her bed, pouring lines of coke on the night stand.

DEREK
You alright?

Marie does a line.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Slow down.

Marie does another line.

MARIE
I'm fine, Derek.

Marie stands, walks to her closet.

DEREK
You sure?

MARIE
I'm not your responsibility.

A beat.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I need to get ready.

Marie shuts the door.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek, Alexa, Ruby, and Diane sit in Marie's living-room with what's left of lunch on the table.

Derek has the phone to his ear. He looks at Alexa.

DEREK
Her tits? Uh... perky. Youthful?

Alexa smiles.

DIANE
Jesus Christ, where did Marie find
this guy?

Derek's phone BEEPS. He looks at it: "UNKNOWN." He puts the phone back to his ear.

DEREK
She's... nineteen?

Alexa nods.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Nineteen... yes, I assure you, her
tits are great... as a matter of
fact, I have... alright, then,
you're booked... no problem... bye.

Derek sets down the phone.

RUBY
Girl, you ready for your IPO?

The phone buzzes: "VOICEMAIL" Derek picks it up, listens as the women carry on their conversation.

MAN (V.O.)
I hope this is the right number, if so, your girl's a mess. I had to leave, but you should probably send someone for her, soon.

Derek looks at the phone, freezes.

DIANE
What's up?

Derek looks up.

DEREK
I... I think Marie's in trouble.

Ruby holds out her hand.

RUBY
Let me see that.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Derek and Ruby run down the hall. Derek scans the numbers.

DEREK
There.

Derek looks at the door, which has been propped open with a hanger. He pushes the door open, and they enter the suite.

RUBY
Marie? Marie, Honey?

Derek and Ruby look around.

A SHOWER RUNS.

DEREK
Bathroom.

Derek and Ruby enter the bathroom.

Marie lies in the tub, unconscious, clothed, under a downpour of cold water.

RUBY
Oh, shit.

Ruby kneels next to the tub and grabs Marie's chin.

DEREK
Holy... Is she dead?!

RUBY
She OD'd.

DEREK
Shit.

Ruby taps Marie's cheeks.

RUBY
Marie? Marie, Sweetie? C'mon
Marie, wake up.

Ruby looks at Derek.

RUBY (CONT'D)
She's burnin' up.

Ruby hands Derek her purse.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Find me a Valium.

Derek digs through the purse.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Answer me, Marie.

DEREK
Valium...

RUBY
Blue pill.

Marie GROANS.

RUBY (CONT'D)
There we are, look at me.

Derek pulls a blue pill out of the purse.

DEREK
Got it.

Ruby holds out her hand, takes the pill, looks at it. She looks back at Derek.

RUBY
That's a dick pill.

Ruby throws the pill.

Derek digs more.

DEREK
Ah, here.

Derek hands Ruby the pill.

RUBY
Marie, Marie? Open up, Baby.

Ruby tilts Marie's head back opens her mouth.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Cup your hands, get some water.

Derek catches a handful of water.

RUBY (CONT'D)
When I say, pour it in.

Ruby drops the Valium in Marie's mouth, waits, then pinches her nose.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Now.

Derek pours as Ruby shut Marie's mouth and holds it.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Swallow for me.

Marie swallows.

Ruby loosens her hold.

Marie exhales and spits water.

Ruby opens Marie's mouth, looks, then lets go.

RUBY (CONT'D)
It went down.

Ruby slumps to the floor.

DEREK
What do we do? Do we need to call
paramedics, go to the hospital?

Ruby shakes her head.

RUBY
Go find the ice machine, and keep
bringing buckets, so I can stay and
feed her aspirins.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Helen sits on her couch, dressed for an event. She stares at her phone and shakes her head.

The front door OPENS.

Helen stands.

HELEN
It's about damn time, Derek. I
told you about this, and you
promised me-

Derek carries Marie into the apartment, arms around his neck.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What the fuck, Derek. What's...
Who is this?

Derek walks through the apartment, to the hallway.

DEREK
Marie.

Helen follows.

HELEN
The hooker? What did you do?
What's wrong with her?

DEREK
Overdose.

Derek enters his room, lays Marie in his bed.

HELEN
You said you were done seeing her.

Derek pushes Helen out of the room with him, then shuts the door. He walks to the living room.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I don't want her here. Somewhere
else. Not here.

DEREK
No.

Derek sits.

HELEN
Excuse me?

Derek shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)
You bring a coked out hooker to my
place and tell me she's not
leaving? My place?

DEREK
That's right.

HELEN
How can you possibly-

DEREK
-Listen. This is my fault.

HELEN
Bullshit.

DEREK
My actions. My responsibility.

HELEN
Yeah, like you just threw cocaine
at her until she OD'd.

Derek SIGHS.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What are you even doing with her?

DEREK
She gave me a chance to see how the
system works. I needed that.

HELEN
You need to get the fuck out of
that system.

DEREK
No, shit, Helen. I just gotta fix
this first. Have to.

HELEN
You don't owe her anything.

DEREK
I do, and I am going to handle this
then leave her in better condition
than I found her and keep a clear
conscience.

Helen paces.

HELEN
Clear conscience? So now you're
emotionally invested in this?

DEREK
Fuck, Helen. I don't know.

Derek stands, walks to the hallway.

HELEN
We're not done here.

DEREK
Give it time, Helen. We'll talk
later. Right now, I need a shower.

HELEN
Dammit, Derek. I want to talk-

A door SLAMS.

Helen sits, in a huff.

INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Derek sits in a chair and types on his laptop.

Marie stirs in the bed. She sits up.

MARIE
Where the fuck am I?

DEREK
My room.

Marie turns and looks at Derek.

MARIE
Derek? How long have I been here?

DEREK
Few days.

Marie falls back to the bed.

MARIE
I feel like shit.

DEREK
You're lucky to be alive.

Marie stares at Derek.

DEREK (CONT'D)
You don't remember.

Marie shakes her head.

DEREK (CONT'D)
You OD'd. Ruby and I had to bring
you out in a hotel bathtub.

MARIE
Was I dressed?

Derek LAUGHS.

DEREK
Yeah.

MARIE
Then I at least have some dignity.

Marie sits up.

DEREK
What are you doing.

MARIE
We have to get back to work.

Derek pushes her back down.

DEREK
No, no, no. You need to rest up
and detox. No more coke.

MARIE
Man, I really want some.

DEREK
That's how a detox works, and
that's why you're here.

MARIE
Hold on. Didn't you say you lived
with your sister?

DEREK

Yeah.

MARIE

And she's okay with this.

DEREK

Not exactly. We had a really long fight. But I think she understands, maybe.

Helen steps out of her room and into the hallway. She listens in on the conversation.

DEREK (CONT'D)

She'd get mad at me all the time when we were little. I'd pretend to be a secret agent, and mess with her stuff, crash her parties.

MARIE

You little brat.

DEREK

I was terrible, but through all that she knows that I always have her best interests in mind, and she has the same for me.

MARIE

You know, nobody else would have done this for me.

DEREK

That's not true.

MARIE

I've seen it before. They just rehab girls to working condition, and send them back out. They don't get that moment of clarity where they see themselves dead, violated, anonymous, alone, and naked.

DEREK

Detox isn't a time to think depressing thoughts.

Marie starts to cry.

MARIE

I don't know if I can keep doing all this.

DEREK
You don't have to.

MARIE
The drugs? No. Fuck coke. The rest? I'll put on a time line. Run the course, and cash out ahead.

DEREK
Good plan.

MARIE
I may need your help sticking to it, though.

DEREK
You know, I think I'm out, too.

MARIE
But that doesn't mean we can't talk or anything, right?

DEREK
Not at all.

Marie smiles.

MARIE
You know, I know things have been just business and all that, but I want to thank you. This is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me.

DEREK
That can't be true.

MARIE
Derek, you didn't just save my life. You're kinda still doing it.

Marie sobs.

MARIE (CONT'D)
And I genuinely appreciate that, more than you probably understand.

Helen puts her hand over her mouth. Tears up.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - DAY

The door to Derek's classroom is shut.

Tom walks down the hallway, grabs the handle, then spots a sign: "Intro to Fiction Cancelled Today."

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is busy.

Derek talks to a couple girls and takes notes.

The front door opens, Marie enters, and everyone hushes.

Marie looks around, grabs her hands, and raises her shoulders.

MARIE

I'm back.

Marie smiles.

RUBY

Girl, you had me worried.

Alexa runs to Marie, hugs her.

ALEXA

I got my first review.

MARIE

Oh yeah?

ALEXA

Ten eight.

MARIE

Oh, Honey, that's amazing!

Marie spots Derek.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Thought you were cashing out?

DEREK

Tying up a few more threads.

MARIE

This'll be awkward, then.

Marie reaches in her purse.

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marie sorts through her closet.

Derek enters.

DEREK

Hope your not looking for anything.
I got the girls to agree to keep
this place clean.

MARIE

No. No. Just want to make sure
all my clothes are still here.

DEREK

Sure you're ready? After our
conversation I figured-

MARIE

What's with you all? I'm good.
And the sooner I get started, the
sooner I reach the end.

DEREK

Alright, alright. That's good.

A KNOCK.

Diane pokes her head in.

DIANE

You're on.

Diane places a slip of paper on the dresser, leaves.

MARIE

I know you said you're leaving, but
can I ask one favor?

DEREK

Sure.

MARIE

Stick around for when I get my
second review?

DEREK

Nervous?

MARIE

A little. But also, you helped,
it's only right you leave knowing
you made it work.

DEREK
I'll be here.

Marie taps her bed.

MARIE
Right here. I want the first
person I see it with to be you.

DEREK
Will do. But I already know this
thing's working. All the girls
are booked.

MARIE
Even Diane?

DEREK
Even Diane.

Marie smiles.

MARIE
Wow.

Marie approaches Derek, kisses his forehead, and leaves.

Derek falls into bed. Shuts his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

SILENCE.

FADE TO:

INT. MARIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Derek wakes in Marie's bed. Stretches. He stands, looks
outside. Morning. Looks at the clock: "11:45."

DEREK
Marie?

Derek walks into the living room. Empty.

He checks the time again: "11:45."

DEREK (CONT'D)
Where is everyone.

Derek takes his phone, dials Marie. Straight to voicemail.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Desks in a circle. The students drone in their critiques.

Derek stares at Alexa's spot. Empty.

A long moment.

STEVE
Instructor Anders?

A beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Instructor Anders?

Derek sits up, looks around.

DEREK
Yes, Steve.

STEVE
Isn't it about time to finish?

Derek looks at the clock.

DEREK
Oh, yeah. Wow. Pass your manuscripts around. Great workshop, everyone.

Derek looks at his phone. Nothing.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Hey, Steve.

STEVE
Yeah?

DEREK
Hear anything from Alexa?

STEVE
We haven't talked for a while, actually. She's been strange.

DEREK
Oh.

STEVE
Why?

DEREK
She... just didn't seem like the
type to miss class unannounced.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek enters the apartment. Still empty.

DEREK
What the fuck.

Derek pokes his head into Marie's room.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Marie?

Derek walks to the couch and sits. He pulls out his phone,
dials Marie. Straight to voicemail.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Fuck.

Derek dials Ruby. RINGS. RINGS. RINGS. Voicemail.

Derek dials Cherie. RINGS. RINGS. He hangs up.

Derek scrolls his contacts. Dials Alexa. RING. RING.

ALEXA (V.O.)
Derek?

DEREK
Alexa! What's-

ALEXA (V.O.)
Shh. Hold on.

Derek hears some background TALKING, a door OPEN, then SHUT,
then SILENCE.

ALEXA (V.O.)
You there?

DEREK
Where is everyone?

ALEXA (V.O.)
We're holed up at Exclusive.

DEREK
You're at Exclusive? All of you?

ALEXA (V.O.)
Diane said it would be safe.

DEREK
What's going on?

ALEXA (V.O.)
Derek, I'm not even supposed to be talking to you. None of us are.

DEREK
You're going to need to fill me in.

ALEXA (V.O.)
Diane has everyone convinced that you're toxic. That you weren't screening calls properly. We're supposed to stay away.

DEREK
I don't understand.

ALEXA (V.O.)
You didn't hear?

DEREK
You're the first person I've been able to get a hold of all day.

ALEXA (V.O.)
Derek, Marie got pinched.

DEREK
Marie's in jail?

ALEXA (V.O.)
It must've been a sting, or something like that. That's what Jake and Diane are saying.

DEREK
How did they hear about it and I didn't?

ALEXA (V.O.)
I really don't know, but Derek, I gotta go. They think there's something off about you, and if they know we're talking... I'm sorry... I just... I gotta go.

The line clicks.

Derek leans back.

DEREK
Holy shit.

Derek goes to Marie's kitchen, looks around. He finds a phone book, drops it on the table and thumbs through.

Derek finds a number, puts his finger on it and makes a call.

RING.

OFFICER (V.O.)
Chicago P.D. How may I assist you?

DEREK
I'm looking for someone who was arrested last night or possibly early this morning.

OFFICER (V.O.)
Do you know which district?

DEREK
I don't.

OFFICER (V.O.)
How about a name and charge.

DEREK
Yes, Marie, and I don't know a last name. Charged with prostitution, most likely.

INT. CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT - HOLDING CELLS - DAY

A FEMALE OFFICER approaches the holding cells. She looks at a clipboard, then looks up.

FEMALE OFFICER
M. Coleman.

Marie stands in one of the cells, wearing an orange suit.

MARIE
Yeah?

INT. CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT - PROCESSING - DAY

Marie, in the clothes she wore the night before, signs a sheet and collects all her stuff.

OFFICER
Have a nice day.

EXT. CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Marie exits the department, looks around.

OFFICER (V.O.)
Sir, you said Marie?

DEREK (V.O.)
Yes, Marie.

OFFICER (V.O.)
I'm sorry, but nobody with that
name was picked up last night.

Marie spots Jake.

JAKE
Hey.

INT. MARIE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Derek leans over the table. He POUNDS it.

DEREK
Not her real name.

OFFICER (V.O.)
However, we did have only one
prostitution pick-up last night.
While I can't give you her name, I
can tell you that she made bail
earlier today.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - DAY

Diane and Alexa sit on opposite couches.

Diane smiles.

A door SHUTS.

Jake walks in to the room.

JAKE
It'll take her a while, but she'll
eventually see she's home.

Jake looks at Alexa.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You're new.

Alexa nods.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Got a name?

DIANE
Lexi.

Jake examines Alexa.

JAKE
Very cute. Young, too. We could
use a coed type.

ALEXA
I don't think this is for me.

DIANE
You got great reviews.

ALEXA
I want to do other things.

JAKE
I think I know what's going on.
You don't want to work for someone
else. I understand your bond.

DIANE
That's probably it.

ALEXA
I tried, and that was enough.

JAKE
Twice isn't trying, Lexi. Work
with me for a week, see how you
feel about it after that.

DIANE
You can't possibly know enough to
know it's not for you.

A beat.

Jake holds out his hand.

JAKE
Come on. Let's go make a list of
all you have to offer.

Alexa takes his hand. They exit the room.

A door SHUTS.

Diane stretches, then stands.

Diane walks to the dry erase board and writes, "Lexi," in an empty slot. Diane looks at a smudged name higher.

Diane SIGHS. She wipes away the smudge and writes, "Marie."

A BUZZ.

Diane tosses the marker aside and walks to a window. She looks down to the front door.

EXT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - CONTINUOUS

Derek examines the front to The Exclusive Chicago office. He looks up and spots a figure in the window.

The figure disappears behind a curtain.

Derek waits.

DEREK
Come on, really?

Derek presses the buzzer repeatedly, then stops and looks back to the window.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I'm not going anywhere.

Derek presses the buzzer three long times.

A CLICK. The door opens.

Jake stands at the entrance in a robe.

JAKE
So you're Derek, huh?

DEREK
I want to speak to Marie.

JAKE
I expected the guy who gave me so much trouble would look different.

Derek peeks in.

DEREK
Where is she?

Jake guards the door.

JAKE
Take it easy.

Derek stares at Jake.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Marie doesn't want to see you.
She's ashamed, or pissed, or
something, but it is what it is.

DEREK
Bullshit. Let me see her.

JAKE
I'm just respecting the girl's
wishes, and you should do the same.

DEREK
You don't own her. You don't make
her decisions. Let me see her.

Jake steps forward on Derek. Gets in his face.

JAKE
She's in to me for a lot of cash,
and she's gotta pay it back. So,
yeah, I do make her decisions. Now
take my advice. Get the fuck out
of here, and forget about her. I
don't want any complications.

Jake taps Derek on the cheek.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Understand?

A beat.

Jake shakes his head.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Pitiful.

Jake steps inside, SHUTS, and LOCKS the door.

DEREK
Fucker.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Derek sits at his laptop. Looks at his document.

Helen brings Derek a drink.

HELEN

You know, something like this was bound to happen.

Derek nods.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I know you guys had some weird little thing, but that's the risk I suppose. Luckily you didn't get caught up in any of that.

DEREK

She promised my hands would be clean. She came through.

HELEN

And now that it is all over and done with, you can finish writing.

DEREK

I can't finish. It seems like there is no way out. An escort who gets her start, goes through the adventure, and at the end is no different? That's a shitty story.

Derek shuts the laptop.

DEREK (CONT'D)

I have no idea how it all ends. I mean, you start to do something, and eventually you stop, right?

HELEN

Yeah.

DEREK

I find it hard to believe that they only stop when they're dead.

Derek stands, picks up his phone.

HELEN

What are you doing?

DEREK

I'm not done, and that jackass, Jake, doesn't get to say I am. I need to see Marie, get a few answers, say goodbye.

HELEN
Yeah, you at least deserve to be
able to say goodbye.

DEREK
I'm glad you agree.

Derek holds the phone to Helen.

HELEN
What.

DEREK
They know my voice.

HELEN
You want me to call?

DEREK
Set something up with Marie.

HELEN
I'm not- No.

Derek dials. Holds the phone to Helen again.

DEREK
You said I deserved it.

Helen stares at Derek. Takes a deep breath.

She hits send.

Derek mouths "Thank You."

RING.

DIANE (V.O.)
You've reached The Exclusive
Chicago, what can I do for you.

HELEN
I was hoping to set up an
appointment with one of your girls.

DIANE (V.O.)
Of course. Do you know what kind
of girl?

HELEN
Marie?

DIANE (V.O.)
Marie.

HELEN
Yes. An appointment with Marie.

DIANE (V.O.)
One moment.

MUFFLED CONVERSATION over the phone for a while.

DIANE (V.O.)
It looks like Marie is free and
available for the evening.

Helen gives a thumbs up to Derek.

EXT. VISIONS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A large brick building with canopied entrances and velvet ropes. The windows flicker with different colored lights and music THUMPS from inside.

Derek approaches the entrance. Marie stands to the side. She smokes a cigarette.

DEREK
Marie?

Marie looks up. She raises her hands.

MARIE
Derek!

Derek runs up to Marie.

Marie smiles. Stumbles.

DEREK
You okay?

Marie dismisses the comment with a wave.

MARIE
Oh, yeah, yeah. I'm fine.

Marie stumbles, falls into Derek's chest. She giggles.

DEREK
You're drunk.

MARIE
Of course, it's a party. I'm out
of jail. Aren't you happy?

DEREK

I am, I am.

Marie eyes Derek.

MARIE

What are you doing here?

DEREK

Meeting you, remember?

MARIE

They probably wanted you to be a big surprise.

DEREK

Big surprise? Who?

MARIE

Who? Come on, Derek. Jake, and Diane, and Ruby, and Lexi, and...

DEREK

Jake's in there?

MARIE

Everybody's in there.

Derek puts his arm around Marie's shoulders.

DEREK

We need to leave.

They walk to the side parking lot.

MARIE

But you just got here.

DEREK

Yeah, I know. But I can't stay.

MARIE

Aww.

Derek and Marie round the corner to the lot.

Jake stands in the lot.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Look, Jake, Derek made it!

Jake waves his hands.

JAKE

Yay.

Jake approaches Derek.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I assumed you were a smart guy.
Had common sense.

MARIE

Derek is smart.

JAKE

Shut up, Marie.

Marie recoils.

DEREK

Take it easy on her.

MARIE

Jake, what's going on?

JAKE

Derek is a bad influence on you,
Honey. I told him to stay away but
he didn't listen.

MARIE

He's not a bad influence.

JAKE

Marie, I said shut up.

Derek walks forward.

DEREK

You know, you're kinda a tool.

JAKE

Really?

DEREK

Or lack-there-of, from what some of
your girls told me.

Derek nods at Jake's crotch.

MARIE

Derek, don't do this.

JAKE

Marie!

DEREK
Overcompensation. I get it.

Jake LAUGHS. He steps up to Derek, and stops.

JAKE
So what, you just came here to
insult me?

DEREK
I came here to see Marie. That's
it. Had nothing to do with you.

JAKE
She's my girl, so it has everything
to do with me.

Marie straightens.

MARIE
I may work for you, Jake, but I am
not your girl.

Jake stares at Marie.

JAKE
Really?

Marie nods.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Well...

Jake sucker-punches Derek in the eye.

Marie shrinks, cries.

Derek recovers.

Jake socks him again, in the opposite cheek.

MARIE
Jake, Stop!

Jake grabs Derek by the collar, looks him in the eyes, then
shoves him to the pavement.

JAKE
I tried to be nice, Man, and I am
done with that.

Jake takes out a business card, writes on the back.

JAKE (CONT'D)
And if you need a reminder...

Jake throws the card at Derek.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Here's my number.

Derek tries to push himself up, he GROANS.

Jake walks to the entrance.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Come on Marie.

Marie looks at Derek.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Now.

Marie follows Jake.

EXT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - NIGHT

Derek and Helen sit in chairs at an outdoor table.

Derek holds a bag of ice to his face.

Helen looks at Jake's card, turns it over: "FUCK OFF." She tosses it on the table.

HELEN
I think you should press charges.

Derek shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)
The man assaulted you.

DEREK
With the money he makes, his
lawyers will make sure it's dead at
the gate.

Derek removes the ice.

Helen grimaces.

DEREK (CONT'D)
He's gonna do the same thing to
Marie, too. To keep her working.
(MORE)

DEREK (CONT'D)
Use his lawyers for the trial she's
gonna have, then make her work off
their rates.

HELEN
That's like indentured servitude.

DEREK
Not like. Is.

Derek puts the ice to his face. He winces.

DEREK (CONT'D)
You'd think a guy who thinks so
high of himself wouldn't sucker-
punch someone. Or set a trap.

HELEN
Guy's a snake. What can you do?

DEREK
Knock him down a few rungs.

HELEN
He definitely needs that.

DEREK
No, he needs to fall off the damn
ladder. Lose everything.

HELEN
That would be misery for a man like
that. Humiliating.

Derek takes out his phone and types a text.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Who are you texting?

DEREK
One of the girls.

HELEN
And why would you want to do that.

Derek sends the text.

DEREK
She might be able to help.

HELEN
You aren't gonna stop, are you.

Derek shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)
If this is about pride-

DEREK
-it's about helping a friend.

HELEN
A friend?

DEREK
It was business. Her and I
together. In the course of making
this whole mess happen I've seen
sides of her she hides. I know, as
a friend, what she wants. And it
is not this. Not at all.

Derek's phone CHIMES. He looks at it, smiles, holds it up.

DEREK (CONT'D)
See?

EXT. VISIONS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Derek and Alexa talk in the shadows of the side lot.

Alexa hands Derek a key.

DEREK
How long will you guys be here
tonight?

ALEXA
I'm not sure.

DEREK
Ok, message me when you are on your
way back.

ALEXA
Alright.

DEREK
And remember, get out as soon as
you can.

ALEXA
Got it.

Derek smiles.

DEREK
Thanks Alexa.

ALEXA

Marie told me we stick together
that night at Lakeside. It's the
least I can do.

Alexa hugs Derek, turns, and walks toward a side door.

EXT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Derek climbs a fire escape on the back of the building, with
a duffel bag across his shoulder. He reaches a platform in
front of a few windows.

Derek looks through the windows. Dark.

Derek checks the alley. Empty. He closes his eyes, tightens
his lips and jabs his elbow into the window.

THUNK.

Derek looks at the window for a moment. He turns away from
it and runs the heel of his shoe into the glass.

The window SHATTERS.

Derek checks the alley again. He looks at the windows of the
other buildings, nothing.

Derek tosses the bag through the window.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Derek climbs into the building through the window. He picks
up the bag, and removes a small flashlight.

Derek turns the on the flashlight and scans the room, careful
to avoid the windows.

The light moves around the room until it hits a safe
underneath a table.

Derek approaches the safe, kneels and examines the number
pad. He enters "1-2-3."

The safe BEEPS, CLICKS, then pops ajar.

Derek shakes his head.

DEREK

Arrogant prick.

Derek opens the safe and looks inside. Bundles of cash, and a large bag of cocaine.

Derek picks up the cash and moves it to his duffel bag. Stack after stack, after stack, after stack.

A VIBRATION.

Derek removes his phone from his pocket.

"NEW TEXT MESSAGE"

Derek opens the message. It's from Alexa: "On r way bk now."

Derek places the phone in his pocket, and transfers the cash faster than the before. Once the cash is gone he takes the cocaine and walks to the table between the couches.

Derek opens the bag, and sets up lines.

INT. JAKE'S CAR - SAME TIME

Jake drives with Mike in the passenger's seat.

Marie and Alexa sit in back. Marie is half-awake, head propped on the window.

JAKE
Did you girls have fun tonight?

Alexa stares out the window.

Mark looks to the back seat.

MARK
He asked you a question.

ALEXA
Yeah.

MARK
What?

ALEXA
Yeah, I had fun.

Mark LAUGHS, looks at Marie.

MARK
Looks like Marie had a pretty good time, too.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - SAME TIME

Derek walks away from the table which is packed with lines. On the side of the table is what's left in the bag.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
9-1-1 Dispatch, what's your
emergency?

Derek approaches the safe.

GUY (V.O.)
Yeah. I think I seen a break in.

Derek takes Jake's business card from his pocket and places it in the safe. Something inside catches his eye.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
What exactly did you witness?

Derek pulls small book from the safe.

"Jake's Clients"

DEREK
Well, now.

Derek carries the book to the phone desk.

EXT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - SAME TIME

A GUY stands at a pay phone directly across from The Exclusive Chicago Office.

GUY
Well, some glass broke. Then I
seen this guy with a flashlight
lookin' around.

A figure moves past a window.

GUY (CONT'D)
Still see him now.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Alright, Sir, do you know the
address of the building?

GUY
No. But I'm at the pay phone right
across the street if it helps.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Yes, Sir, it does. I'm already
sending units your way. Would you
be able to stay-

The guy hangs up the phone.

Headlights come around the corner. Jake's car.

Jake parks in front of the building.

The guy across the street looks at the building, and sees a
figure move past a window again.

The guy looks back at the car.

Jake and Alexa walk to the curb, where Mark pulls Marie from
the back seat.

The group walks to the front door of the building. Jake
unlocks the front door and they enter.

The figure moves past another window.

The front door of the building shuts, CLICKS.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Jake, Alexa, Mark, and Marie go up the stairs. Marie makes
the trip with Alexa's assistance.

Jake opens the door to the office and they step inside. He
reaches for the light switch.

Derek exits through the back window and disappears behind the
brick wall of the fire escape.

The lights go on.

JAKE
What the fuck?

Jake points at the lines of coke on the table, then to the
bag. He looks at the open safe.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Mother fucker.

Jake runs to the safe, starts yelling.

Alexa guides Marie to the back rooms.

ALEXA
I think we'd better stay away from
this one, for now.

EXT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

The guy at the pay phone spots Derek come around to the front
of the buildings.

FAINT SIRENS in the distance.

Derek uses Alexa's key, and unlocks the front door to The
Exclusive Chicago. He nudges it open.

Derek runs across the street in the direction of the pay
phone.

The guy at the pay phone flees into an alley.

Derek enters the alley, and looks around.

Special T walks out from behind a dumpster in the distance.

SPECIAL T
Come on, Man.

T runs around a corner to another alley. Derek runs in that
direction as a CAR STARTS. Brake lights shine on the walls
of the adjacent alley as Derek comes around the corner.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Jake looks inside the safe, POUNDS his palms against it.

JAKE
It's fucking gone.

MARK
All of it?

JAKE
Not just all of it. My fucking
book. Someone took my god damn
client book.

POLICE SIRENS.

The street outside lights up red and blue.

Mark runs to the window, looks outside.

MARK

Cops. Why are the fucking cops here?

Jake reaches into the safe, and pulls out his own business card. He turns it over: "FUCK OFF."

Jake throws the card.

JAKE

It was a fucking set-up. That fucking writer guy.

MARK

Shit man, this isn't good.

Jake walks to the couch sits.

JAKE

It's just drugs. The dumb fucker took the book without realizing he was helping me.

EXT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Two police officers stand at the front door. A detective and a few more men approach.

One of the officers points at the open door.

OFFICER

How long we been tryin' to bust these guys?

DETECTIVE

Too damn long.

The detective pushes the door open.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

And to think, all we really needed was this invitation.

The detective motions for the officers to enter the building.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - SAME TIME

Jake and Mark sit on the couch, lines of coke in front of them. Jake reclines. Mark fidgets.

The police rush in, followed by the detective.

JAKE
Evening gentlemen.

DETECTIVE
We had a report of a possible break-in.

JAKE
No shit.

Jake points to the broken glass on the floor.

DETECTIVE
Huh.

Jake stands.

JAKE
And whoever it was robbed my safe.

Jake walks to the safe.

The detective sticks his hand out.

DETECTIVE
Sit back down.

JAKE
I'm the victim here.

DETECTIVE
I said sit.

Jake sits.

The detective points at the table, all the cocaine.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
And what about this?

JAKE
Not mine.

DETECTIVE
Of course not. It never is.

JAKE
It's these two girls, they're in the back. One's really messed up out of her head. You'll see.

The detective signals for an officer to enter the back room.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The officer steps in the room. Looks around.

He checks under the bed. Nothing.

Flips the lights on in the bathroom. Nothing.

Opens the closet and pokes around at the clothes. Nothing.

The officer walks back into the bedroom and notices one of the drapes across the room is moving. The officer draws his gun and creeps across the room.

The officer approaches the drapes, holds his breath, then pushes them aside with his gun.

Nothing but a breeze coming through a cracked window.

The officer SIGHS relief as he holsters his gun. He nudges the window shut.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - CONTINUOUS

The officer comes out from the back.

Jake, Mark, and the detective look over.

OFFICER

Yeah, there's nobody back there.

JAKE

That's impossible, we all just got back. The four of us.

EXT. ALLEY - SAME TIME

Alexa shoulders Marie and moves as fast as she can away from the Exclusive Chicago. Red and Blue lights far behind them.

ALEXA

Come on Marie, work with me.

MARIE

I'm tryin'. I'm...

Alexa readjusts her support then continues walking.

ALEXA

Just a little more to go.

FOOTSTEPS echo in the alley. A walking pace.

Alexa looks up.

The FOOTSTEPS increase to jogging pace.

A figure moves toward them.

MARIE
Who's that?

The figure approaches closer, Helen.

Helen takes up Marie's other arm.

ALEXA
Who are you?

MARIE
Helen?

Helen looks at Marie.

HELEN
That's right.

MARIE
Alexa, it's Helen.

HELEN
My car's just up ahead.

The three women increase their pace and head down the alley.

INT. THE EXCLUSIVE CHICAGO - NIGHT

Police officers search the building.

Jake and Mark sit on the couch, handcuffed.

DETECTIVE
Well, it looks like we're gonna get you on the drugs. Not exactly what I was hoping for, but still, that's a lot of blow you got there.

JAKE
Clearly someone else was in here.
You can't say any of it is mine.

The detective shakes his head

An officer enters the office with a scale.

DETECTIVE

Ah, there we are. We'll just get this weighed and I can let you know how bad things might be for you, and we can all be on our way.

The detective nods to the officer.

The officer grabs the bag, and lifts. Cocaine pours all over the table. The bottom's been cut.

A small black book sits in the mound of coke.

Jake's eyes go wide.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

What's this?

The detective picks up the book and thumbs through it.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Oh, this is good. Very good.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment door opens.

Helen steps in and turns on the lights. She runs ahead and turns on a couple more.

Derek and Special T enter. They help Marie walk to the bedroom.

Alexa walks in behind them. She looks around.

Helen enters the kitchen.

HELEN (O.S.)

Wine?

ALEXA

Oh, yes.

A moment.

Helen enters with two glasses of wine. She hands one to Alexa.

HELEN

Feel free to sit, wherever.

Helen and Alexa sit at the table.

HELEN (CONT'D)
How do you fit in to all this.

ALEXA
One of Derek's students.

Helen looks Alexa over.

HELEN
Student...

Derek and Special T enter.

ALEXA
She okay?

DEREK
Sobered a little. Fell right
asleep.

ALEXA
Poor thing.

SPECIAL T
Well, y'all, I'm glad I could help,
but I got a long drive ahead of me.

HELEN
Oh, stay here.

DEREK
Really?

Helen waves Derek's words away.

HELEN
It's fine. We all deserve a break.

SPECIAL T
'preciate it.

T walks to the couch, and plops down.

Derek stretches. He walks to his laptop, sits, boots it up.

HELEN
Really, Derek?

DEREK
Got all I need.

Helen looks at Alexa and shakes her head.

Alexa smiles.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - TIME LAPSE

Derek types. T sleeps on the couch. Alexa and Helen talk.

Derek keeps on. Alexa and Helen move to the couch and watch TV.

Derek continues to type. Alexa sleeps, Helen covers her with a blanket.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Helen walks over to Derek.

HELEN
How you doin'?

DEREK
Fine, fine. On a roll.

HELEN
I'm glad.

A beat.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I wanted to ask you something.

Derek looks up.

Helen leans in.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Is that guy a drug dealer?

Derek nods.

Helen smiles.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I knew it.

Derek laughs.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'm off to bed. Keep at it.

Helen kisses the side of Derek's head.

DEREK
Good night.

Helen exits.

Derek continues to type.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Tom sits at his desk, reads a newspaper.

Derek enters the room, fried from a night of typing.

Tom lowers the paper. Looks at Derek.

TOM

Christ, Man. Are you alright?

Derek tosses a manuscript on the desk.

"Coffee Date"

Tom looks at the manuscript.

TOM (CONT'D)

Didn't you say this was about an
escort, or call-girl, or something?

DEREK

Yeah.

TOM

I'm afraid I can't accept this from
you.

DEREK

What? Why not?

TOM

Don't you read the paper?

Tom turns his paper and shows Derek the front page.

"Local Escort Service Collapses, Owner Arrested"

Two pictures of Jake. One in cuffs, another a mug shot.

Tom pushes the manuscript to Derek.

Derek picks up the manuscript. He takes a breath.

DEREK

Yeah, I can understand.

TOM
This belongs in a publisher's
hands. Immediately.

DEREK
You want me to get it published?

TOM
Are you kidding me? All I needed
was to see it. You finishing this
when you did, with such a big story
in the news?

Tom closes the paper.

TOM (CONT'D)
You might have a runaway hit.

Derek smiles. He turns and heads for the door.

DEREK
Thanks, Tom.

TOM
Just looking out for you.

EXT. AURORA, IL GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

Marie, Alexa, Helen, and Special T stand outside the front of
a bus.

HELEN
Where is he?

Marie squints in the morning light.

MARIE
I'm sure he'll be here, soon.

Alexa stands on her toes. Points.

ALEXA
There.

Derek jogs to the group. He carries a duffel bag and an
envelope.

HELEN
'Bout time.

DEREK
Sorry.

Derek hands the envelope to Marie.

Marie looks inside. Two bus tickets. She looks at Derek.

MARIE
Peoria, Derek?

Derek catches his breath.

DEREK
Didn't Alexa tell you?

ALEXA
I have family there.

DEREK
You can't leave the state, so this
is the next best thing.

Derek hands Marie the bag.

DEREK (CONT'D)
This might also help you out.

Marie unzips the bag, and peeks in. CASH. She zips it shut.

MARIE
Holy shit, Derek. Where did you...

DEREK
It's what Jake owed you... plus
some interest.

MARIE
Earlier retirement than I planned.
Glad to be done with it all.

DEREK
And use what you can for your
trial.

Marie nods.

MARIE
Thank you.

Special T steps forward.

SPECIAL T
I got you a little going away
present.

T reaches inside his coat.

Marie holds out her hand.

MARIE
Done with all that, too.

T smiles, pulls out a small stuffed fox, hands it to Marie.
Marie's eyes water. She hugs T.

SPECIAL T
Foxes belong in the country anyway.
So you're good.

ALEXA
Peoria isn't exactly the country.

SPECIAL T
It ain't no Chicago, either.

Marie steps back.

HELEN
And if you're in town, you've
always got a place with me and
Derek.

The BUS ENGINE STARTS.

ALEXA
Marie, we gotta get going.

MARIE
Give me a minute.

Alexa nods, steps into the bus. Helen and T walk back to
their cars.

MARIE (CONT'D)
So, get enough for a story?

DEREK
Finished it last night.

MARIE
What a relief. I was tired of
keeping up this escort thing just
to give you material.

Derek laughs.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Congratulations.

Marie hugs Derek and holds.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I never knew, but I needed someone like you in my life. Thank you.

Marie squeezes then steps back. She wipes away a tear.

DEREK

Well, I'm still in it. Just make sure next time you're in town, to set up an appointment.

Marie laughs.

The BUS SHIFTS INTO GEAR.

Marie steps back, waves.

MARIE

Bye.

Derek waves back.

DEREK

Take care.

Marie turns, and walks to the bus.

Derek watches.

Marie goes up a step, then stops. She looks back.

MARIE

Oh, and Derek?

DEREK

Yeah?

MARIE

Meredith.

Marie smiles and enters the bus.

The doors shut.

Derek nods to himself.

DEREK

Meredith...

Derek turns and walks to Helen and Special T.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Meredith.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

VITA

Brent Scott was born, and lives, in St. Charles, Missouri. He received a Bachelor of Science in Media Studies from the University of Missouri in St. Louis. Upon graduating, Brent joined the University of New Orleans' Low Residency Creative Writing program. He enjoys foreign travel and education and plans to pursue both in the future.