

Dangerous Spaces

FADE IN

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAWN

Outer reaches of a large parking lot, empty, except for an old, dented compact car, its windows fogged with morning dew, a collection of moist parking tickets rests underneath the windshield wiper.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

JESSICA GUTIERREZ, 20, sleeps in the back seat in twisted, worn blankets. Boyishly beautiful, with streaks of neon in her short hair, she has an inner toughness but lacks confidence.

The tiny car is filled with her meager belongings: neatly folded clothes, a pair of battered high-top sneakers adorned with hand-drawn doodles, books, and non-perishable food. Taped up and strewn about are dark sketches of intertwined nude female bodies, cats, self-portraits.

The floor of the front passenger seat is occupied by a small litter box.

A cat kisses her awake. She pets it.

JESSICA

Aye, Gatito.

INT. CAR FRONT SEAT - LATER

The cat eats from a bowl of food in the passenger seat while Jessica finishes a granola bar in the driver's seat.

She puts her granola bar wrapper in a trash bag hooked to the glove compartment.

She opens the glove compartment and takes out a water bottle and toothbrush, brushes her teeth in the rear view mirror. She rinses with some water from the bottle, rolls down the window and spits it out.

As she wipes her mouth with a nearby towel, a car coming towards the parking lot catches her eye. She hurriedly stashes the water bottle and starts the car.

She starts to use the windshield wipers to clear away the condensation, but sees the parking tickets. She reaches through the open window and throws them behind her into the backseat where they land on another pile of tickets.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MORNING

Jessica's car pulls out of the parking lot as the other car pulls in.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

The sun has fully risen as Jessica's car chugs along.

INT. JESSICA'S CAR/EXT. WEALTHY AREA - DAY

Through Jessica's windshield: Two stately columns serve as a welcome to a lush, tree-lined boulevard, palatial estates occasionally visible behind rows of palm trees and carefully manicured bushes.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The car has just rolled to a stop in front of a wrought iron gate in a section of long stucco wall, barely visible among thick palm trees and drooping bushes.

Jessica opens the car door and gets out, gently pushing the cat back in as she gives it one more kiss.

JESSICA

No, you can't come with me, Gatito.

She closes the door then goes to the trunk, takes out a mop and large bucket filled with cleaning supplies.

She lugs the bucket up to the gate and presses the button on an intercom.

The call is answered by the smooth voice of STEVE SULLIVAN, 50s, the owner of the house. He is cheerful, a little too pleased with himself.

STEVE (O.S.)

Good morning, Jessica.

JESSICA

Hi.

STEVE (O.S.)

See you in a jif.

The gates open and Jessica starts up the sloping driveway toward a huge older house.

Loaded down with the bucket, her pace is slow, but there is an extra hesitancy in her step.

A TWIG SNAPS

She startles, then keeps going.

ANOTHER TWIG SNAPS, PANTING of an unseen animal.

She glances toward the sound and quickens her pace.

Rapid PAW STEPS and PANTING, then SNARLS and BARKING.

Jessica stops in her tracks as SMOKY, a large German Shepherd, bounds toward her, teeth bared, ready for destruction.

She grabs the mop, ready to beat the animal off.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Smoky, heel!

The dog stops suddenly and sits.

FRONT PORCH

Steve stands there holding the door open, warm and fatherly, but slightly off-kilter. He smiles just a little too wide, stares a little too intently. There is not a wrinkle in his khakis and polo shirt, nor a hair out of place.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Come!

The dog bolts towards him. He snaps a lead onto Smoky's collar.

Jessica makes her way up to the porch.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Sorry, I forgot to put him out. Go on, Smoky, say hi.

Smoky approaches Jessica tentatively, sniffs her hand and growls.

STEVE (CONT'D)
That's your "I smell a cat" growl, isn't it boy?

Jessica withdraws her hand.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You just wuv cats, dontcha Smoky?
Wuvs 'em for breakfast. Come on in.

Steve disappears with the dog. Jessica enters.

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

SOUNDS OF BACK DOOR OPENING as Steve puts Smoky outside.

Jessica steps inside, looks down at her dirty sneaker on the opulent tile. She backs up and wipes her feet.

She starts to enter, but Steve is suddenly there, holding a bottle of hand sanitizer

STEVE

Uh-uh-uh.

She holds out her hand and lets him squirt some on her palm.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Traffic bad?

JESSICA

It was ok.

He turns and walks further into the house.

Jessica follows him to the

KITCHEN

Granite counters and the latest appliances.

STEVE

Sorry, I made my famous linguini last night. There's sauce all over. Well, I'll let you get to it.

Steve exits.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Jessica wipes down the counters, absorbing smears of red onto the cloth.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE

Jessica mops the floor. A plop of red falls on the floor. She looks up and sees a splotch of dark red on the ceiling. She stands on her tiptoes as she mops it off.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The inside of the refrigerator. Nothing is inside it, except a carton of eggs. Jessica wipes it.

INT. A HALLWAY - LATER

Jessica vacuums. PIANO MUSIC plays in the background.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steve sits in front of a piano keyboard plinking out a tune.

Jessica walks in with a broom, sees Steve, then turns to exit.

STEVE

No stay.

Steve resumes playing.

She walks over to the huge chimney and sweeps the hearth as he plays. He stops suddenly, irritated.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Please don't do that now.

Jessica stops sweeping.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to come off like such a bear.

JESSICA

Oh, no problem. I'll just do this room later.

STEVE

Thanks. Hey, how's your drawing coming along?

JESSICA

Drawing?

STEVE

Yeah, your sneakers? Pretty intricate stuff...

JESSICA

Oh, these? I think I did that back in high school...

STEVE

Hey, even Picasso had to start somewhere, right?

Steve plays a note on his keyboard.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Of course Mozart never had to resort to making video game soundtracks to earn a buck.

Jessica laughs and heads toward a hallway off the living room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica starts to open a door. Steve comes up behind her and puts his hand on the knob.

STEVE

You can save this room for later,
too. Forgot I've got to pay some
bills in here.

Jessica backs up as Steve enters the room. She gets a glimpse of multiple computer monitors against wall.

Steve quickly shuts the door.

INT. STAIRS - LATER

Jessica lugs the vacuum up the stairs. She pauses to rest and sees pictures of CHRISTIE, Steve's cute smiling daughter, as a young child, girl and teenager.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pushing the vacuum, Jessica enters the spacious room. It has an old-fashioned metal bed topped by a thick comforter and puffy pillows. A vanity dresser with a mirror on top occupies another corner.

On a nightstand is a picture of Steve next to EVELYN, 20s, his strikingly beautiful roommate who looks uncomfortable as Steve beams with his hand on her shoulder.

Jessica looks around for a place to plug in the vacuum. She crosses over to some French doors that open onto a balcony.

She drops the cord and opens the doors.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

She steps out onto the balcony and takes in the view, breathes in the fresh air for a few moments.

STEVE (O.S.)

Breathtaking, isn't it?

She turns around, slightly startled, and sees Steve standing in the balcony doorway.

JESSICA

Sorry, I was going to vacuum. I
just--

STEVE

Needed a break? Hey, no problem.
Take all the time you need.

Steve steps aside as she comes back inside.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jessica starts to plug the vacuum in.

STEVE

Oh, and by the way, Evelyn moved out so you don't really need to vacuum in here.

JESSICA

Oh, ok.

She winds the vacuum cord.

STEVE

Yeah, I guess I'm an unbearable roommate...

He takes the picture from off the nightstand, looks at it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

She moved in with a boyfriend or something. We'll see how long that lasts.

He tucks the picture under his arm.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, I was going to order something from Queen Violet's. You want anything?

JESSICA

No, I'm fine.

STEVE

You sure? Their Pad Thai is the best.

Jessica shakes her head no and finishes with the cord as Steve starts to exit the room.

He stops and turns back towards her.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, you know, I just had the craziest idea. Why don't you take Evelyn's room?

JESSICA

Me? No, I probably couldn't afford the rent...

STEVE

No, offense, but sometimes I can't afford your fee. We could call it even, what do you say?

JESSICA

Um, no thanks. I don't think Smoky would like my cat.

STEVE

What are you talking about? Smoky wuvs cats--

JESSICA

I know. Look, it's really nice of you but...

STEVE

Just promise me you'll think about it. This place gets lonely with just me rattling around inside it.

Jessica struggles for the words to tell him she's not interested.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, no pressure. Besides, you'll probably change your mind after you see my room. Kind of a pigsty in there.

Jessica laughs.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room consists of a bed, dresser and nightstand. Except for a picture of Steve next to Christie, it could be a hotel room.

Jessica vacuums.

INT. ADJOINING BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica enters with the bucket of cleaning supplies.

She looks around. It is immaculate. She lifts the lid on the toilet and peers in. Pristine.

She takes the toilet brush out of her bucket and holds it up, debating whether to use it. What's the point? She sticks it back in the bucket.

She is about to leave, then looks around and opens the medicine cabinet.

It is filled with hand sanitizer refill bottles. She rolls her eyes and is about to shut the cabinet door, when something catches her eye. She moves the bottles out of the way and sees a prescription medication bottle.

ON LABEL - "TAKE AS NEEDED FOR ANXIETY"

Still holding the bottle she sticks her head out of the bathroom.

Steve's piano echoes from downstairs.

She retreats inside the bathroom, closes the door and pops a pill into her mouth.

She carefully returns the bottle to its original position, making sure to restore the bottles of hand sanitizer to their spots.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Jessica emerges from Steve's bedroom and walks toward the stairs pushing the vacuum.

As she passes by a closed door, she hears WOOD AGAINST WOOD and a THUMP from within.

She pauses, listens, SILENCE.

Beneath her there is distant SCRATCHING, RUSTLING SOUND. It builds in volume until the sound is coming from directly below her feet.

She jumps and flattens herself against the wall as the sound continues then grows fainter in the other direction.

She quickly picks up her equipment and heads for the stairs.

STAIRS

She tries to get down the steps as quickly as she can with the bucket and vacuum, while glancing back upstairs.

From downstairs, sound of KNIFE ON CUTTING BOARD.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Steve cuts a potato forcefully. Before each slice, he stops a moment, grimaces contemplating, then brings the knife down in one hard motion with a deep exhale. The exhales become sobs as a tear streaks down his cheek.

JESSICA (O.S.)
I think you have rats.

Startled, he whirls around to see Jessica.

STEVE

Excuse me?

JESSICA

Upstairs, under the floor there was this scratching sound.

Steve wipes his eye.

STEVE

Oh that. It's just the house settling.

JESSICA

No, it wasn't--
(notices his tears)
Are you ok?

He motions towards the potatoes with his knife.

STEVE

I always cry when I cut those.

Jessica sees the potatoes, is about to say something about onions, but...

JESSICA

Right. But I definitely think you got rats.

STEVE

I didn't know you were such an expert.

JESSICA

Well, when you've lived some of the places I have...

STEVE

Oh really. What places are those?

Jessica doesn't want to tell him.

JESSICA

Um, you want me to finish up in the living room?

STEVE

No, that's ok. You can get it next time.

JESSICA

Ok.

Awkward silence. Jessica clears her throat.

STEVE

Ah, silly me.

He goes over to a cookie jar on the counter, takes some bills out, hands them to her.

She looks at them.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Sorry if I'm a little short this week...no rent money coming in this month.

Jessica tries to hide her anger and disappointment as she shoves the money in her pocket.

INT. ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Steve prepares to open the door for Jessica as she makes her way out with her bucket and mop.

STEVE

You sure I can't interest you in the room?

Jessica looks through the glass pane in the door, sees Smoky traversing the driveway.

JESSICA

No.

STEVE

Oh, he's fine.

Jessica puts her hands on her temples and speaks sharply.

JESSICA

No, he's not.

Steve grabs the leash.

STEVE

Okay. I forget not everybody loves Smoky as much as I do.

Steve opens the door and closes it quickly behind him.

Jessica watches through the window as Steve calls Smoky, puts the leash on and disappears around the side of the house.

She stands there a moment gazing out the window, making sure the coast is clear before she opens the door.

EXT. DRIVEWAY/FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica exits the house carrying her bucket and mop. She trudges down the pavement, still glancing warily from side to side as she makes her way down the driveway.

The gate begins to automatically open. She passes through it towards the street.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

She walks down the street toward where her car was parked. Her face registers panic and she begins to walk faster.

She gets to where her car had been parked. It is gone. She throws the bucket on the ground, sinks to her knees and sobs.

She stands up and begins pacing, kicks the bucket angrily.

JESSICA

Shit...fuck!

She pauses and stomps towards the gate intercom.

EXT./INT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

A KNOCK. The door opens and Jessica stands there, tear-streaked and devastated, holding her bucket.

STEVE

Jessica--what...

She tries to speak but erupts into sobs.

Steve pulls her into a hug as she cries spasmodically.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, ssshhhh.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Jessica is seated at the table on her phone.

JESSICA

The license plate number? I don't know. Who knows their license plate number? There's a cat inside! That should narrow it down...No, I've already been on hold--Hello?

Steve sets down two cups of tea, sits down across from her.

She sets the phone down.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I don't believe it. They hung up on me.

Steve pushes a cup of tea toward her. She puts both hands around it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I mean, I don't even care about the fucking car at this point. I just want Gatito back.

She chokes back sobs as she takes a sip of the tea. It burns her mouth and she quickly puts it back down.

STEVE

I'm sorry...Gatito?

JESSICA

My cat.

Steve laughs.

STEVE

Why were you driving around with a cat in your car?

JESSICA

The same reason I was driving around with a pillow and a blanket and all my clothes...

Steve looks puzzled.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Do I have to spell it out for you? I was living in my car, okay? That's why I never wanted to park in your driveway. Well, that and Smoky...

STEVE

Oh, dear. I feel awful.

JESSICA

Don't.

STEVE

No. Agnes. This nosy old bat who lives down the street. She called just now and said she was going to call the city about some homeless encampment or something. I told her to call 311. I had no idea...I'm so sorry, Jessica.

Steve reaches out and rubs Jessica's arm as tears retake her.

JESSICA

No, it's not your fault. It's just, if someone opened the door, Gatito probably ran out. She gets really scared. Who knows where she is right now?

STEVE

Probably just hiding out in the neighborhood somewhere. Maybe if we set out a little food for her, she'll come back.

Jessica calms a little, sips her tea. An idea comes to her.

JESSICA

Wait, your cameras!

STEVE

My what?

JESSICA

In your office, don't you have security cameras?

Jessica puts the tea down and stands up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

If we rewind them, maybe I can even see the name of the damn tow truck company that jacked my car.

Steve stands up.

STEVE

Those aren't security cameras. They're just computer monitors I use for my work, sometimes I have so many things going on at once...

Jessica looks dubious.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Look, I know this house gives the impression that I'm some well-off guy, but I'm not, Jessica. I'm house-rich, cash-poor.

Jessica stares at him uncomprehendingly then slumps against the wall, buries her face in her hands.

JESSICA

What am I gonna do?

Steve places a gentle hand on her shoulder.

STEVE

Don't worry. We'll find your car
and your cat. In the meantime, why
don't you just stay in Evelyn's room?
Come on, it'll be dark soon.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

She walks in, flops back onto the bed, gives a tired sigh.

She lays a second or two longer, pulls herself up, and crosses
to

BATHROOM

She turns on the water in the shower, takes off her clothes
and lets them fall onto the floor. She touches the water,
still not hot enough.

She opens the medicine cabinet. Inside, are bottles of hand
sanitizer. She gives a half-smile and closes the cabinet.

She looks around in the cabinets below the sink, sees a big
jug of hand sanitizer. She takes it out, looks at it with a
snort, puts it back.

In another cabinet she finds what she was looking for: big
fluffy towels.

She rubs the towel against her cheek, feels its softness an
luxury, then realizes the shower is steaming and sets the
towel on the counter.

INT. SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

She luxuriates in the steaming spray of water.

The glass shower enclosure fogs as she stands under the shower
head, eyes closed.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica, hair and body wrapped in the towels, emerges from
the bathroom carrying her wadded up clothes in her hand.

She throws them on the bed. She picks up her shirt, smells
it, wrinkles her nose. She throws it back on the bed and
eyes the dresser.

She opens a drawer and sees Evelyn's socks and underwear, neatly folded. She opens another drawer: shirts, sweatshirts all, tucked away.

She opens a third drawer. It is empty except for a small card at the bottom. She picks it up and takes it out: a picture of delicate flowers and Asian calligraphy.

She looks at it curiously sets it in on top of the dresser.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Jessica walks in, dressed in Evelyn's stylish T-shirt and form-fitting jeans.

Steve stands at the stove.

JESSICA

I hope it's ok if I borrow these.

Steve turns around, smiles.

STEVE

Not at all. Looks good on you.

JESSICA

Just till my stuff comes out of the wash.

Jessica seats herself at the table.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Why'd she leave all of her clothes here?

STEVE

Well, we sort of parted on bad terms. After that last argument we had...anyway, I'm sure she'll be back here to pick the rest of it up as soon as she cools off.

Jessica stands up.

JESSICA

Oh. Maybe I should change. I don't want her to walk in and see me in her clothes.

STEVE

Relax. She owes me back rent anyway.

Steve laughs as he scoops food onto two plates. Jessica tries to smile and sits back down.

Steve sets the plates on the table.

Jessica picks up her fork and starts to take a bite.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Uh-uh-uh.

He stands over her with the hand sanitizer.

JESSICA

I just took a shower.

STEVE

I insist.

She rolls her eyes and accepts glob of hand sanitizer he squirts onto her palm.

Steve starts to sit down, then turns toward the counter, grabs a wine bottle and two glasses. He uncorks the wine as Jessica fidgets uncomfortably.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I've been saving this Petit Syrah
for just the right occasion.

He pours wine in the first glass, starts to fill the second.

JESSICA

I don't want any.

She pushes her chair away from the table.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I don't know what you think this is,
but I'm just staying the night here
until I get my car back, okay? I'm
still just your housekeeper.

Steve sets the bottle down.

STEVE

Jessica, I'm sorry! I never meant
to infer...I guess I just got carried
away. I never get to cook for anyone.
Please, stay.

She scoots closer to the table, picks at her food.

JESSICA

You said you made linguini last night,
right?

STEVE

Mmmhmm.

JESSICA

Weird. Didn't see any leftovers in the fridge. Just eggs.

STEVE (shrugging)

I ate it. All of it. Late-night craving.

(sudden laugh)

It's a bad habit. When I get stressed, I just... inhale food. I don't even taste it.

He shakes his head as if embarrassed. Jessica forces a weak chuckle, but something about it doesn't sit right.

She pushes her plate away.

JESSICA

I think I'm done.

Steve doesn't move. He studies her, then:

STEVE

You know, I was thinking... maybe we should order you some new clothes. Something nice.

Jessica tenses.

JESSICA

I don't need anything.

STEVE (leaning in, softer)

Come on. It'll be fun. You can pick whatever you like.

Jessica shifts in her chair. Steve notices. His smile stays, but his eyes harden just a little.

STEVE (reassuring) (CONT'D)

No pressure, of course. You should feel at home here.

He raises his glass

STEVE (reassuring) (CONT'D)

To new beginnings.

Jessica doesn't lift her glass. Her stomach churns.

He takes a swig of the wine.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Damn. This wine does go good with the pork. Try it.

Jessica takes a bite of the meat, a sip of the wine.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Well?

Jessica chews, swallows.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Pretty good, huh?

JESSICA

No, its really good. But I'm more of a Negro Modelo girl.

STEVE

You know, that actually sounds good. Let's see, what goes good with that.

JESSICA

Carnitas and arroz rojo.

STEVE

Oh, of course. Is that what your family likes to have?

A pang of hurt flashes across her face. She puts her fork down.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh, I didn't mean to--

JESSICA

No, it's ok. I don't see my family much any more.

STEVE

I'm sorry.

Her eyes well up.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Go on. It's ok.

JESSICA

No, I don't want to dump on you.

He places his hand on top of hers.

She withdraws her hand and turns away.

She blinks hard and touches her stomach.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Whoa.

STEVE
Is something the matter?

JESSICA
You know, I don't mean to be rude, I
I think I need to go upstairs.

She stands up, grips the table for support.

Steve hops up, puts his arms around her, steadies her.

STEVE
Are you alright? Here, let me help
you.

Jessica pulls away from him.

JESSICA
No, I'm okay. I just need to lie
down for a little while.

STEVE
Of course. Tell you what, I'll just
put a little foil over this, and you
can have it for breakfast!

JESSICA
Thanks.

Jessica walks away from the table, grips her stomach.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She walks in and shuts the door, goes to the

BATHROOM

Grimaces as she leans over the toilet and throws up.

She washes off her mouth in the sink and goes back to the

BEDROOM

She lays down on the bed, hand still on her stomach, closes
her eyes, drifts off to sleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. A ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica's POV as the blurry shape of her FATHER, Latino, mid-
50s, comes towards her angrily, holding Jessica's sketch of
two women.

He raises his hand, preparing to hit her.

Jessica's MOTHER cowers in the corner.

A BANGING KNOCK at the door.

Mother turns toward Jessica, crying.

Father turns toward the door as BANGING KNOCK GROWS LOUDER.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jessica awakens to the BANGING SOUND.

She sits up in bed and listens, ANOTHER BANG, coming from outside her room.

She gets out of bed, puts on her pants and goes out into the

HALLWAY

The BANG comes from the closed door at the end of the hallway.

She walks slowly towards it.

She hears FAINT WEEPING. She tries the door, it's still locked. She knocks.

JESSICA

Hello, who's in there?

No answer. Silence.

She knocks again.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hello?

She startles as Steve yanks the door open suddenly.

STEVE

What is it?

JESSICA

I heard noises. It sounded like...crying.

Steve wipes his eyes.

STEVE

I'm still getting over my wife's death. And I miss my daughter. Sometimes I just come in here to remember them both.

He touches her arm.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You understand?

Jessica stares past him, sees an empty room.

JESSICA
Yeah, sure, sorry to bother you.

STEVE
No, it's okay. You should probably
get to bed, it's late.

JESSICA
Yeah. Well, good night.

STEVE
Good night.

Jessica walks off down the hall.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She enters her room, turns out the light, goes to the bed
and gets under the covers.

She takes off her jeans under the covers and drops them by
the side of the bed, then rolls over, closes her eyes.

She hears RUMBLING SOUND FROM BENEATH HER BED.

She gets up and looks down at the floor. MORE RUMBLING,
then it stops.

She pauses for a moment, focuses on something across the
room, a blinking red light.

Her eyes widen and she gets out of bed, wraps the blanket
around her.

She walks closer to the red light, then turns on a lamp.

It's just the smoke alarm.

She sighs, turns off the light and trudges back to bed.

She rolls over in the opposite direction and closes her eyes.

The smoke alarm light continues to blink, but beside it
another red light suddenly blinks on.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve sits at his computer with a drink in his hand. A grainy black and white image of Jessica sleeping fills the screen.

He clicks a button and zooms in on her face as he takes a long pull on his drink.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Jessica's CELL PHONE ALARM GOES OFF on the bedstand beside her.

She turns it off, yawns, stretches.

She gets out of bed, still in Evelyn's T-shirt and goes over to the balcony.

She opens the door and steps out onto

BALCONY

She breathes the fresh air, looks out over the yard and sees a stunning vista of trees and rolling hills.

STEVE (O.S.)

Hello there.

JESSICA

Hello?

Jessica glances down and sees Steve down below. He wears a broad-brimmed hat and carries some clippers and a sprig of rosemary in his hands.

She self-consciously tugs her T-shirt down lower over her legs.

STEVE

I was just out doing some gardening.
Thought I'd bring in some of this
rosemary. It goes great in eggs.
You want some?

JESSICA

Uh, I don't know, my stomach is still
kind of upset.

STEVE

Rosemary's the best thing for that.
I'll see you downstairs in five.

JESSICA

Okay.

Jessica turns to go back inside.

STEVE
Oh and Jessica?

JESSICA
Yes?

STEVE
(dead serious)
Put some pants on.

Jessica stares at him a moment, tugs harder at her T-shirt, embarrassed.

JESSICA
I didn't think anyone was out here--

He grins broadly.

STEVE
I'm just kidding. You can come down
in your birthday suit if you want
to.

He saunters off.

Jessica ponders his apparent joke then goes back inside.

INT. JESSICA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She walks over to the closet, opens it and sorts through the clothes. They are organized into pants, blouses, etc.

She notices a dress and takes it out to look at it: a very traditional-looking silk Asian dress.

She puts it back in and pushes around hangers until she finds a pair of jeans.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING, LATER

Steve cooks eggs at the stove. Smoky lays on the floor nearby. Smoky stands and growls as Jessica enters.

Steve looks to Smoky.

STEVE
Crate, Smoky.

Smoky walks over to his crate and lays down. Steve leaves the stove to close the crate.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Good morning. Feeling better?

Jessica nods, eyes Smoky warily, then sits down at the table, which is already set for two with a plate of toast and a bottle of hand sanitizer.

Steve sets a steaming plate of rosemary spiced eggs on the table.

Jessica looks woozy as she breaths in the smell of the eggs.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Something wrong?

JESSICA
Yeah, my stomach is still a little--
I think I'll just have some toast.

She reaches for the toast.

STEVE
Wait!

He grabs the hand sanitizer, thrusts it at her.

She takes it out of his hands with a glare and squirts a bit into her hand.

Steve passes her the plate of toast and helps himself to eggs.

Jessica nibbles on her toast.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Coffee?

She shakes her head no, continues to chew while Steve digs into his eggs.

JESSICA
So, Evelyn, she's like into Asian stuff?

Steve pauses mid-forkful.

STEVE
Why do you ask?

JESSICA
Well, I found this postcard in the dresser. It had some Asian writing on it and there was this beautiful dress in the closet. Looked like real silk...

He puts his fork down.

STEVE

You know. I don't really remember.
Got any big plans for today?

He digs back in.

She looks at him, incredulous.

JESSICA

Try to find my car...and my cat.

She takes her phone out and starts scrolling.

STEVE

Right. You know, I've been thinking
about having a mural painted in the
living room. Something inspiring,
like a beach scene. I mean, it would
be on commission, of course...

Jessica continues to scroll, ignores him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Does that sound like something you'd
be interested in doing?

JESSICA

What?

STEVE

The mural. Do you think you could
paint it for me?

JESSICA

I honestly don't have time right
now.

She goes back to her phone.

STEVE

I could make it worth your while.
Those tow truck companies charge a
hefty fee.

She looks up from her phone.

JESSICA

I thought you were "cash poor"?

STEVE

I've got a few bucks stashed away
here and there...

JESSICA
Ok, just let me make a few calls
first.

She walks away from the table, putting the phone to her ear.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yes, I'll hold.

Steve looks perturbed, picks up her dirty plate.

When she turns around towards him, he puts the plate in her hand. She puts the plate on the counter.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What the hell?

STEVE
I expect you to pull your weight
around here. You didn't even rinse
your plate.

JESSICA
Alright. Geez.

She sets the phone on the counter and puts it on speaker.
MUZAK blares.

She begins to rinse the plate.

STEVE
The garbage! Scrape it into the
garbage first!

Giving him the side-eye, she scrapes her plate into the
garbage.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Why didn't you take that out
yesterday? It's nearly overflowing!

As Steve's voice rises, Smoky barks from his crate.

Jessica sticks the phone, still on speaker, in her back
pocket, grabs the trash bag and heads out the back door.

EXT. SIDEYARD - CONTINUOUS

She spots the garbage can about 50 feet away and walks toward
it.

She looks around at the pleasant landscaping then something
catches her eye on the ground.

She stops. MUZAK grows more sinister.

A trickle of blood. She leans down to examine it more closely, sees that there is actually a trail of blood. It leads to the can.

She slowly approaches the can. The blood runs all the way to the lip of the can.

She hesitantly opens the lid while looking away.

At the last minute she peeks. In the can is a rodent the size of a bread loaf, mutilated beyond recognition.

The MUZAK reaches a crescendo pitch, then:

She drops the bag and runs back into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jessica darts back inside, breathes heavily as she closes the door behind her. MUZAK has resumed a bland tone.

Steve reads the newspaper, Smoky at his feet.

STEVE

Is something wrong?

JESSICA

You have a huge, bloody animal in your garbage can!

STEVE

Oh, yeah, I caught that little guy going to town on my tomatoes the other day. I guess Smoky showed him!

Smoky lifts his head.

Steve gives her an affectionate pat.

JESSICA

It's totally mutilated!

STEVE

It's just her instincts, she is descended from wolves after all, but if it makes you feel better, next time I'll put down rat poison.

JESSICA

No, I mean, I wouldn't want Smoky to get into it by mistake...

RECORDED PHONE VOICE (V.O.)
Your wait time is approximately 75
minutes. Press 1 if you would like
to receive a call back at this number.

She takes the phone out of her pocket and presses 1.

Steve puts the paper down, gets up and stretches, walks toward Jessica.

STEVE
You can clean the rest of this up.
I'm going to go look for that paint.

He starts to exit. Smoky remains at the table, eyeing Jessica. Steve clicks his tongue and Smoky gets up and heads toward Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Oh and Jessica?

JESSICA
Yes?

STEVE
It's customary to say thank you when
someone cooks you a meal.

She regards him for a moment, doesn't feel very grateful.

JESSICA
Thank you.

STEVE
You're welcome.

Steve exits with Smoky.

Jessica walks over to the table and picks up Steve's plate.

An envelope on the table catches her eye. She glances around to make sure Steve is out of range then picks it up and looks at it.

It is addressed to "Sheila Sullivan" with a Los Angeles address.

She holds the letter up to the window, no luck. She tosses the envelope back on the table.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica sits on her bed looking at her phone.

ON PHONE

A list of homeless shelters.

She types into search bar: "Homeless shelters that accept cats."

A SHARP KNOCK.

Jessica startles, puts down the phone as the door opens and Steve stands there holding a box of paints and brushes.

Jessica gets off her bed.

STEVE

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

Steve puts the box down on the desk, holds up a bottle of paint.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Some of these are a little dried up, but I was surprised I still had so many. Christie was quite the artist back in the day.

JESSICA

I need to find my car before I start some big art project.

She turns back to her phone.

STEVE

How about if you just do a small mural in here? Anything you want. Consider it practice for the big one.

JESSICA

Shoot, I forgot. I'm supposed to clean a house in Laurel Canyon today!

She heads for the door. Steve steps in front of her.

STEVE

You don't have a car. How are you going to get there?

JESSICA

The bus?

STEVE

It'll take you half the day.

JESSICA

I've done it before.

STEVE
How much do they pay?

Steve whips out his wallet and hands her a bill.

Jessica stares at it.

JESSICA
You stiffed me on purpose yesterday?

STEVE
This is for the gardener. I'll pay
him next week.

She snatches the money.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Stay. Draw. Paint. Relax. Breathe.

Jessica's lip trembles.

He gently places his hand on her shoulder.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You don't have anyone you can call?

She blinks back tears.

JESSICA
No.

A tear escapes down her cheek. He wants to wipe it away,
but restrains himself.

She sniffs and wipes away the tear herself.

STEVE
Now get busy on that mural. I want
lots of sunshine and warm colors.

Steve pats her shoulder and leaves the room.

She looks around gloomily.

INT. JESSICA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica kneels on the floor next to a large pencil sketch of
a cat on the wall. She fills in the cat with black paint.

She stops to stretch.

She walks around the room, continues to stretch.

She stares out the French doors. She sees something moving
down in the yard. Is it her cat?

She steps closer, twists the door handle, it doesn't open.

She jiggles it again, pushes harder.

She bends down to examine the doorknob and sees a place to stick a key in.

She frowns, exits the room, goes

DOWNSTAIRS

To

HALLWAY

Steve plinks out a TUNE on his keyboard as she passes by.

She goes to the

KITCHEN

TUNE stops

As she heads for the

BACK DOOR

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

She goes out the back door and heads toward some bushes along the back wall.

BACK WALL

Jessica steps gingerly, peering through the bushes.

JESSICA
Gatito? Here kitty, kitty.

Behind her THUMPING GRASS, PANTING.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Gatito?

A Dog's eye view as Smoky gets rapidly closer to her feet, her back.

Jessica turns around just in time.

Smoky halts suddenly with a yelp.

Still terrified, Jessica runs.

Steve jogs up to her.

STEVE

No, it's ok.

She stops, stares at Steve, who is out of breath.

Steve takes out a remote device out of his pocket and holds it up.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Electric fence.

Smoky sits obediently.

Jessica eyes Smoky warily.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What were you doing out here?

JESSICA

Looking for my cat.

She nods toward Smoky.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Are you going to put him away?

Steve grabs Smoky by the collar.

STEVE

Come on, boy.

Steve heads toward the house with his hand still on Smoky's collar.

Jessica watches them, her chest heaving. She looks towards the bushes, no sign of her cat. Her gaze shifts to the driveway and the gate beyond.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Steve stands at the counter, slicing deliberately through a vegetable. Each chop lands with a hard thud.

Jessica enters, her face set in a scowl.

Steve glances up, clocking her mood, then casually returns to chopping.

STEVE

Smoky's in the garage. I'll keep him out of your way.

Jessica doesn't answer. She crosses the kitchen, her movements tense.

Steve finally sets the knife down and turns toward her.

STEVE (calm, curious) (CONT'D)
Something wrong?

JESSICA (flat)
I'm probably not staying much longer.

Steve tilts his head slightly, as if amused.

STEVE
Really? Back to sleeping in your
car?

Jessica stops in her tracks.

JESSICA
At least I'll have some privacy.

Steve's expression doesn't change, but something in his posture tightens.

STEVE
What's that supposed to mean?

Jessica folds her arms, her voice steady.

JESSICA
Why is the balcony door locked?

Steve's hand tightens slightly around the knife handle.

STEVE (blankly)
What?

JESSICA
I tried to go out earlier. It
wouldn't open.

A small pause.

Then, Steve exhales, forces a chuckle.

STEVE
Alright, fine. You got me. I lock it
sometimes. Christie used to
sleepwalk—almost went right over the
railing once. Scared the hell out of
me.

Jessica's eyes narrow.

JESSICA
I thought her room was at the end of
the hall.

Steve blinks. Just for a second.

Then, he tilts his head, offers a small, patient smile.

STEVE

She used to sleep in different rooms.
Kids do that.

Jessica's jaw clenches.

JESSICA

Please stay out of my room.

Steve steps away from the counter.

Still holding the knife.

STEVE (softly)

Oh, now it's 'your room'...

Jessica instinctively moves back.

Steve notices. Looks down at the knife in his hand.

For a beat, he just stares at it.

Then, very deliberately, he sets it down on the counter. The metal clinks against the wood.

He smiles again, gentler now.

STEVE (CONT'D)

This is all just a misunderstanding.
You probably jiggled the handle too
hard—locked it yourself by accident.

JESSICA (dryly)

So it's my fault.

STEVE

Hey, no big deal. Just to put your
mind at ease, I'll go down to the
hardware store right now—buy you the
biggest, most secure lock they've
got. That way, you can sleep easy
knowing big, bad Steve won't barge
in.

Jessica doesn't smile.

Steve steps closer, gently places his hands on her shoulders.

STEVE (soft, almost soothing) (CONT'D)
You've clearly been through a lot,
Jessica. Trauma doesn't just go away.
If you let me, I can help you.

Jessica stiffens.

Steve stares deep into her eyes, his voice dipping into something gentler, more coaxing.

STEVE (whispered, intense) (CONT'D)
It was your father, wasn't it? He
hurt you.

Jessica's stomach drops.

For a second, neither of them move.

Then—she shoves his hands off her.

JESSICA (sharp)
No one hurt me.

Steve tilts his head again, studying her.

Then, he sighs, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

STEVE
You ever think about seeing someone?
A counselor, maybe?

JESSICA (deadpan)
You mean a shrink?

STEVE (nods, gentle)
It might help. No offense, but you
seem a little... paranoid.

Jessica's jaw tightens.

Steve just smiles.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Alright then. One lock, coming right
up.

He grabs his keys from the counter.

STEVE (cheerfully) (CONT'D)
I'll be back in a jif.

He heads for the door.

Jessica watches him leave.

The door shuts. The lock clicks.

For a moment, silence.

Jessica's gaze drifts back to the counter.

To the knife.

She walks over, picks it up. Turns it over in her hand.

Then—she opens a drawer, rummages through it, finds a smaller knife.

She slips it into her pocket and leaves the kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica enters and heads for the bed. What happened to the pillows?

She pats around for them. Gives up, then slides the knife under the mattress.

She flops down on her bed, stares at the ceiling.

She gets up suddenly and exits.

INT. ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

She starts to open the door, but it is locked. She jiggles it harder, no luck. What the fuck?

She stomps to the

INT. LIVINGROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She paces, the tries various windows, all locked.

She enters

HALLWAY

Tries to the door to Steve's office. Locked.

INT.BACK DOOR/LAUNDRY AREA - MOMENTS LATER

She opens the back door and Smoky comes charging towards her, teeth bared growling.

She slams it shut.

Something catches her eye. A garbage can.

She walks over to it, inside it is the Asian dress.

She smooths the dress out, folds it and lays it on top of the dryer.

She takes her phone out of her pocket.

ON PHONE

Her finger hovers over the 911 button, then she opens her contacts. Her finger lingers above the name "MAMI."

Then her phone lights up with "STEVE CALLING."

BACK TO LAUNDRY ROOM

She answers.

STEVE

Hi, um, do you--

JESSICA

Why is the front door locked?

STEVE

I always lock it for safety.

JESSICA

No, it's locked from the inside. I can't get out.

STEVE

Oh, that old thing? You know, I should really have it replaced. It expands when the weather gets hot. Were you going somewhere?

JESSICA

Yeah, out the front door.

STEVE

You can just use the back door.

JESSICA

Um, Smoky...

STEVE

She's harmless--

JESSICA

Yeah right. What did you do with the pillows?

STEVE

Come again?

JESSICA

The pillows that were on the bed in my room. They're gone.

STEVE

That's strange. Maybe you were sleep-walking. Look, I'll be back in a jif. I'll fix the door and the pillows and anything else you want.

JESSICA

Whatever.

STEVE

Now Jess--

Jessica disconnects the call and shoves the phone back in her pocket.

She looks around the laundry room, opens drawers. She finds a screwdriver.

INT. ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

She wedges the screwdriver between the door and the jamb. She leans on it. Some plaster scrapes off, but the door remains unmoved.

She tries the same technique on a nearby window. Same result.

She angrily pounds the head of the screwdriver into the window. It rattles but doesn't even crack.

She throws the screwdriver over her shoulder.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She marches over to the fridge and angrily yanks it open, sees the carton of eggs.

She takes them out and pulls one egg from the carton. Rolls it around in her hand as if she's getting ready to throw it.

She comes to her senses, starts to put the eggs away then gets another idea.

Egg in hand, she goes to the

BACK DOOR

She opens it and Smoky comes running. She throws an egg at his feet and he stops, laps it up.

JESSICA

Good boy.

She steps out, he looks up and growls at her.

She steps back inside and shuts the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She enters the kitchen and spots the bottle of wine on the counter, grabs it and drinks straight from the bottle.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER, NIGHT

Jessica sits at the table, empty wine bottle in front of her. She has opened another one and holds a generously filled glass.

She looks around, drunk and bored, grabs the envelope from the table.

She holds it up to the light again, then takes out her phone and types in the address.

A link pops up with Sheila's face, a real estate website and her phone number.

She hesitates then pushes call on the number.

Sheila's number RINGS several times.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Hi, this is Sheila. I'm not available right now. Please leave me a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Have a blessed day!

A BEEP

JESSICA

Hi, yeah, my name is Jessica Gutierrez. I'm sort of staying with your ex, Steve and I had just had some questions--

SOUND OF DOOR OPENING

Jessica disconnects the phone, puts the wine down as Steve walks in with multiple bags.

He sets them down, looking at the wine bottles, glass.

STEVE

What's all this then?

JESSICA

You locked me in!

STEVE

I told you, this house is old.
Everything sticks. You just have to
jimmy it.

JESSICA

I did "jimmy" it. And it didn't
open.

STEVE

Come, I can prove it to you.

He whirls out of the room.

Jessica stumbles slightly as she follows him to the

ENTRYWAY

He gives the front door knob a shake then opens it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

See, Viola! It's all in the wrist!

JESSICA

You just unlocked it when you came
in.

He sighs and drops his arms dramatically.

STEVE

You got me. I'm trying to keep you
prisoner. Just like Rapunzel. Oh,
but you've got to let your hair grow
a little.

He smiles and touches her hair. She smacks his hand away,
sways a little.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Where did you want to go anyway?

JESSICA

I need to find Gatito.

STEVE

Oh, enough about that stupid cat.
Why don't you just accept that its
gone?

She backs up and stares at him.

He realizes what he's done, takes a step towards her.

She balls her hands into fists as she stifles a sob. Tension
hangs as she debates kicking him in the balls.

Then she turns on her heels and runs up the stairs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Jessica...

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica enters, looks around the room wild with fury, sees the mural.

She runs over, picks up a bottle of paint and throws it at the wall. She grabs another and hurls it. Paint flies everywhere.

Soon she is flinging everything she can at the wall.

Steve runs up to the doorway, holds a bag in his hand. He sets it down as he moves towards her.

STEVE

Jessica, stop!

She looks at him defiantly and throws one last bottle of paint.

It splatters. Some hits her in the face.

She wipes it away, angry, breathless.

Steve cracks a smile. She sees him.

JESSICA

What?

He points to the mirror above the dresser.

She turns and sees the paint on her face. She gradually cracks a smile and chuckles, but the chuckle becomes a sob. In frustration, she pulls the brush off the paintbrush she's holding.

Steve slowly walks towards her as her shoulders shake.

He comes up behind her and gently puts his arms on her shoulders.

She glances at his hands and at the metal-tipped paintbrush in her hand. She stops sobbing as she contemplates jamming the paintbrush into his hand.

STEVE

I'm sorry, okay. I'm sorry.

She feigns a laugh. Whirls around with the paintbrush concealed behind her back.

JESSICA

Careful, or you'll get messed up
like me.

He backs up toward the door.

STEVE

I'll let you get cleaned up.

She nods and picks up a bottle off the floor.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And don't worry, everything's going
to be okay. I'm going to put that
lock on your door right now.

Steve goes to the bag on the floor and takes out the lock,
still in its package.

She nods her head, smiles weakly.

INT. SHOWER - LATER

Jessica, her face streaked with tears and paint, leans back
and lets the water wash it away.

She runs her fingers through her hair and a big clump of
hair comes out in her hand.

Jessica shakes the hair off her hand, puzzled.

Then, through the fogged glass, she senses some movement.

She opens the shower door suddenly, peers out.

No one is there. There are two neatly folded towels on the
counter. Jessica hesitantly grabs a towel, wraps it around
herself and exits the shower and goes to

BEDROOM

She rushes over to the mattress. She reaches under it, frowns,
then moves the mattress aside. The knife she had put there
is gone.

She goes to the door. A new lock has been installed. She
looks at it then

A KNOCK

STEVE (O.S.)

Jessica?

JESSICA

Yes?

STEVE (O.S.)

Did you want some dinner? It's almost ready.

JESSICA

Yeah, I'll be down in a minute.

She listens for his footsteps echoing away before she takes out her phone. She calls a number.

VOICEMAIL RECORDING (V.O.)

The person you are calling is not available right now. Please leave a message at the tone.

JESSICA

(in Spanish)

Hi, Mom. I'm in trouble...my car got towed away, I'm staying with my client and he's really weird and Gatito is lost...

BEEP

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Please call me back.

She puts the phone against her forehead.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica walks into an empty, dark kitchen. She turns on a light. There is no food. She walks over to the butcher block. All of the knives are gone.

She opens a drawer and begins pawing through the utensils.

No knives.

STEVE (O.S.)

I'm in here.

Jessica whirls around and sees Steve standing in the doorway in semi-darkness.

JESSICA

Oh, you scared me!

STEVE

Sorry. I thought we'd eat in the dining room tonight.

INT. FORMAL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A long table. Two plates. A candle flickers between them.

Jessica pokes at her food, stomach unsettled. Steve eats with exaggerated enjoyment, sipping from a glass of wine.

STEVE
(gesturing to her
plate)
Not hungry?

JESSICA
I think I drank too much earlier.

STEVE
Wine on an empty stomach—rookie
mistake. Try the pork. The rosemary's
good for digestion.

Jessica hesitates, then picks up her fork. She takes a slow bite, chews carefully. Steve watches.

STEVE (smiling) (CONT'D)
See? Not bad, right?

Jessica forces a nod.

Steve's smile fades—just a flicker. He takes a slow sip of wine.

STEVE (casual) (CONT'D)
Anyway, you should rest. You look
exhausted.

Jessica nods, already standing.

JESSICA
Yeah. I think I'll head up.

She moves toward the door.

STEVE
Jessica?

She stops.

STEVE (dead serious) (CONT'D)
Lock your door tonight.

Jessica freezes. Turns.

Steve grins like he was joking. But something about it lingers.

She forces a nod and leaves quickly.

Steve watches her go. Swirls the wine in his glass. Smiles to himself.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica enters, shuts the door and fastens the new lock.

She walks to the bed.

Now there are pillows. She picks one up.

She drops the pillow and goes to the

BATHROOM

On the counter are neatly laid a toothbrush, toothpaste, washcloth, etc.

She picks up the toothbrush slowly.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica lays in bed awake on her back. She turns on her side, shuts her eyes, determined to get some sleep.

A FAINT, HIGH-PITCHED VOICE.

Her eyes snap open as she listens.

The voice sounds again, a little louder this time, sounding more like a WAIL.

She gets out of bed, grabs her phone, uses the light from the screen to guide her to her door.

She puts her ear to her door and hears a SHOUT.

She opens the door and goes out into

INT. DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jessica stands outside the locked door at the end of the hall, heart pounding.

A FAINT, MUFFLED CRY from inside.

She presses her ear to the door. A weak, trembling female voice whispers:

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Help me... please...

Jessica's breath catches. She jiggles the knob. Locked.

JESSICA
Hello? Who's in there?

Silence. Then, a quiet, desperate sob.

Jessica pounds on the door.

JESSICA (urgent, whispering) (CONT'D)
I want to help you. Just open the
door--

The door suddenly swings open.

STEVE stands in the doorway, filling the frame. His face is unreadable—except for the way his jaw is clenched just a little too tight.

The light from inside the room spills out behind him, revealing—

A perfectly normal bedroom.

A small pink bed, stuffed animals, neatly folded blankets. No one there.

Jessica's breath catches. She looks from the room to Steve, confused.

STEVE (calm, but firm)
Jessica. Go back to bed.

Jessica pushes forward, trying to see past him.

JESSICA
I heard something. Someone was
crying.

Steve steps into her path, blocking her view entirely.

STEVE (soft, patronizing)
You're not well, Jessica.

Jessica steps back, suddenly unsure. She knows what she heard. But now, standing here, the room looking so... ordinary—

Steve tilts his head, studying her. His voice is gentle, almost sad.

STEVE (sighs) (CONT'D)
I know you've been under a lot of
stress. Losing your car, your cat...
the drinking. It's enough to make
anyone start imagining things.

Jessica's pulse hammers.

JESSICA
I'm not imagining it.

Steve watches her, then suddenly opens the door wider. Steps aside.

STEVE
Go ahead. Take a look.

Jessica hesitates, then steps into the room.

It's just a normal bedroom. Neatly arranged. A child's drawing taped to the wall. A tiny pink chair in the corner.

No sign of anyone.

Jessica turns in a slow circle, heart racing. What the hell is going on?

Behind her, Steve leans against the doorframe, watching.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You've been feeling sick, haven't you? Dizzy. Nauseous.

Jessica freezes.

STEVE (low, coaxing) (CONT'D)
Sometimes stress does that to a person. Makes it hard to tell what's real and what's just... in your head.

Jessica whirls on him, rage flickering beneath her fear.

JESSICA
Go to hell.

Steve chuckles softly, shaking his head like she's a child having a tantrum.

STEVE (amused, sighing)
I knew you were special, Jessica. But I didn't think you'd be this difficult.

Jessica's skin prickles. The amusement is gone from his face now.

She moves toward the door. Steve doesn't budge.

JESSICA
Move.

A long, stretched-out beat.

Then, Steve steps aside, smiling, gentle.

STEVE

Of course. Wouldn't want to upset
you.

Jessica brushes past him, gripping her arms tightly as she
heads down the hallway.

Just as she reaches her door—

STEVE (soft, almost playful) (CONT'D)

Lock your door tonight, Jessica.

Jessica stops dead.

Turns.

Steve just smiles.

She shuts her door fast, locks it. Presses her back against
it, breathing hard.

The house creaks around her.

She hears Steve's slow footsteps retreating down the hallway.

And then—

A FAINT, MUFFLED CRY from the other side of the wall.

Jessica's breath catches in her throat.

She wasn't imagining it.

Jessica takes out her phone, starts to dial 911.

She stares at her phone. No SIM card.

JESSICA

What the fuck?

A look of sudden revulsion comes over her. She drops the
phone as she covers her mouth with her hand and runs back to
her

BEDROOM

And into the

BATHROOM

She heaves into the toilet.

Steve runs in after her.

STEVE

Oh my God, are you okay? Here, let me help you.

Jessica stands up, breathes heavily, waves him away.

JESSICA

No, I'm fine.

Steve grabs a washcloth, wets it and hands it to her. Jessica takes it, wipes her mouth.

STEVE

My wife used to get sick at night too when she was expecting Christine. Don't know why they call it Morning Sickness.

Jessica stops dabbing her mouth.

JESSICA

You think I'm pregnant?

STEVE

A pretty girl your age, it happens...you sleep around and pretty soon your ankles swell up and your hair starts to fall out.

Jessica does a double take.

JESSICA

I'm not pregnant. I'm gay.

She goes back to wiping her mouth.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Did you take the SIM card out of my phone?

STEVE

SIM what? You'll forgive me, I don't even know what that is.

He takes a bottle of hand sanitizer out of his pocket, squirts some on his hand, goes to rub it on her hand.

She scoots away from him, turns back toward the toilet.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Ok. I'll leave it here just in case.

He stands up and sets the bottle on the counter.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Let me know if you need anything.

Steve exits bathroom.

Jessica feels another wave of nausea and dry heaves.

A FAINT SOUND OF KEYS JANGLING, A DOOR LOCKING.

Jessica listens for a moment, her eyes grow wide, then she gets up and staggers into

BEDROOM

She gets up, stumbles to her door, jiggles the handle. Locked. From the other side.

JESSICA

Oh, hell no.

She POUNDS on the door.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Steve? Open this goddammed door!

She pounds futilely.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Seriously?

She gives a few more whaps to the door, then runs over to the balcony doors, twists the handles frantically. Also locked.

She paces the room, spots the lamp. She unplugs it and rams the base of it against the glass of the balcony door.

Nothing. She rams it harder until there is a faint crack in the glass.

Encouraged, she rams it one more time and the lamp breaks to shards in her hand.

She cries out as one of the shards gouges her.

She drops the remains of the lamp on the ground.

She goes to the

BATHROOM

Rinses her hand, wraps it in toilet paper.

Looking at the toilet, nausea comes back over her.

She spits up a little into the toilet.

She wipes her mouth. Something crosses her mind and she swipes the hand sanitizer off the counter, looks at its ingredients.

She opens it and sniffs it, throws it in the garbage.

She goes back into

BEDROOM

She walks over to the art supplies scattered on the floor and grabs a pencil.

She inserts the pencil into the lock. The tip breaks off.

She throws the rest of the pencil on the floor and scans the room.

She goes over to the closet, opens it, moves aside the hangers and bangs on the wall, looking for any hidden openings.

She examines the closet floor, nothing.

She stands back and looks around.

She remembers the paintbrush she almost used on Steve. She retrieves it from the pile.

At first she tries it in the lock, no luck.

Something catches her eye. The ceiling vent. She walks over to it and stares up.

She moves a chair over directly underneath the vent and gets on the chair.

She pokes at the ceiling register with the paintbrush. Now she's getting somewhere!

Suddenly, she feels dizzy.

She hops off the chair.

She stifles vomit as the room spins and her eyelids flutter.

FLASHBACK

Steve coming towards her with hand sanitizer.

STEVE

Uh-uh-uh.

BACK TO BEDROOM

Everything goes black.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Jessica lays on her back in bed. She winces as she opens her eyes.

She sits up and looks around her. The wall has been painted back to its original color and a dropcloth and paints are neatly placed against it.

On the nightstand is a speaker. Steve's voice comes out of it.

STEVE (O.S.)
Good morning Jessica.

She looks toward the speaker.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't bother answering me, I can't hear you. I just wanted to give you your instructions. Number One. You are to paint me one mural. Ocean, mountains, whatever you want, but keep it cheerful. Number Two. Each night you are to join me for one evening meal. No running or you don't eat, understand? Number Three. Don't try any funny stuff in here, either. You're on camera. So try to smile. Bye.

Jessica growls in frustration, picks up the speaker and starts to hurl it across the room. She stops as she notices something far across the room. It's the camera that's been filming her the whole time.

She puts the speaker down, grabs a paintbrush and stomps toward it, intent on destroying it.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And don't even think about breaking my camera. You don't want to find out what'll happen next.

She throws the paintbrush down and sinks to her knees, sobbing.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Jessica paints a very childish-looking sun. She's not putting much effort in.

A KNOCK

She reaches for a bigger paintbrush and stands behind the door, ready to pounce.

STEVE (O.S.)

I can see you, remember? I'll come back when you're more cooperative.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The long table, candles.

Steve sits next to Jessica, who glowers at him, arms ziptied to the chair. Smoky lays nearby.

Steve brings a forkful of food to her mouth.

JESSICA

How do I know this stuff isn't drugged?

STEVE

You don't. But what's the alternative. Starving?

JESSICA

You can't keep me prisoner here forever. Someone will come looking for me...

STEVE

Who? Sacramento Parking Enforcement? I know your type. A loner. That's why you chose your car instead of a shelter. When you think about it, isn't this so much nicer, Jessica? At least you have a roof over your head...

Pure hatred registers on her face, then she softens, opens her mouth to accept the bite of food.

STEVE (CONT'D)

That's a girl.

He tries to remove the fork, but she clings onto it. They engage in a tug of war, then she leans forward and pokes him in the eye with the fork.

As he grabs his eye, yelling, she carries the chair with her as she runs to the

FRONT DOOR

She can't get her hands around the knob, slams her body against the door in desperation.

Steve runs up to her, hand over his eye. Smoky follows.

As the dog lunges at her, she spits a bit of food out at him.

Distracted the dog, gobbles it up and Jessica tries to run, but the chair slows her down.

Steve gives her a gentle shove and she falls.

All she can see is the ceiling as she struggles to get up, the chair an impossible impediment.

Then Steve's body comes back into view and this time he holds a syringe.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica awakens to the sound of Steve's voice coming through the speaker.

STEVE (O.S.)

Rise and shine, Buttercup. Time to get back to work.

Jessica scoots away from the speaker, hugs her knees to her chest.

JESSICA

I'm hungry and thirsty. Can you bring me some water please?

STEVE (O.S.)

I see your lips moving but I can't hear what you're saying. Here, maybe a little music would give you the inspiration you need to get started.

Steve's PIANO blares through the speaker. She covers her ears.

She sits for a moment, then jumps off the bed and goes to the paints. She grabs the biggest brush she can find and dips it in some black paint.

She begins painting on the wall with huge floor-to-ceiling strokes and soon the image of an upstretched middle finger starts to take shape.

When she is done, she turns toward the camera triumphantly.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve watches as Jessica comes toward the camera with the thick paintbrush and paints the lense black.

STEVE

Shit.

Steve gets up.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica crouches beside the door, waiting for Steve to open it. She holds the paintbrush, which she has plucked down to its metal fastener.

There's the sound of RAPID FOOTSTEPS and PANTS coming down the hallway.

She they get louder, she holds the paintbrush like a dagger, ready to strike.

The door opens and Smoky passes her with Steve close behind. Jessica drives the paintbrush into Steve's neck.

He yells and lunges toward her.

Smoky joins in the fray and grabs onto her leg.

Jessica kicks off Smoky, evades Steve and slips out the door.

She dashes into the dark

HALLWAY

Down the

STAIRS

Gets to the

FIRST FLOOR

The house seems like a maze as she runs through

HALLWAYS

Until she gets to

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She runs inside and locks the door.

She takes a moment to look around and sees a wall covered with surveillance monitors. She gapes as she realizes nearly every room in the house has a camera, including her own.

One room labeled "Closet" is very dark but there are the dim outlines of a cage.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS right outside the door.

She tries to crawl under the desk, but there's something blocking her way. She struggles to pull two heavy objects out: a huge container of hand sanitizer next to rat poison.

She looks at the monitors and sees Steve on one of the screens making his way down the stairs, holding his bleeding neck.

She whirls to the computer. On it is her own face--her social media page.

She stares at it. Opens another tab. Sees herself again. Another tab, her face.

She opens a new tab and types 911.

Pictures of Porsche 911s pop up.

JESSICA

Shit.

FOOTSTEPS then POUNDING on the door.

STEVE

Jessica, open the door!

She turns away from the computer.

JESSICA

No!

STEVE

If you would just trust me, I promise you, I'm only trying to make your life better.

JESSICA

Rubbing me down with rat poison. Yeah, that made my life so much better!

STEVE

That was just the de-programming process. In surrendering you will know another life.

JESSICA

I'm calling 911 right now--

She turns back to the computer and sees it has gone dark. She clicks the mouse.

STEVE

From a computer? Even I know that's not possible. Besides, if you do, you'll be dead before they get here.

She freezes at his words and sees that it is password protected now anyway.

JESSICA

Please, just let me go. I'll do what you ask. Please just let me out of this house!

SOUND OF DOOR UNLOCKING

Steve bursts in with a syringe.

Jessica screams then everything goes BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Jessica wakes, winces.

She opens her eyes, squints as she tries to make out her surroundings.

She realizes both of her hands are cuffed to a rung in the metal headboard.

She tries to move her legs, but they are tied to bedposts at the foot of the bed.

She struggles, but it's no use. She starts to yell.

JESSICA

Help!

She wails in anger and frustration, pulls hard against the cuffs, then cries out in pain as one of them digs too deep into her wrist.

Her wails turn into soft sobs.

She lays back in defeat then lifts her head just enough to look around the room. The paint supplies are gone. The mural and paint splotches are faintly visible beneath a swipe of gray paint.

She groans and reclines completely, grimaces as the cuffs again dig into her wrists.

Steve opens the door. He carries a bowl of water and some cloths.

He rushes over to her side and puts the bowl and cloths on the nightstand. He kneels down next to Jessica's face.

STEVE

Hey, it's okay.

He strokes her hair as she tries to pull away.

He dips a cloth in water, wrings it out and wipes her wounds.

Jessica gasps in agony as the wet cloth hits her wounds.

STEVE (CONT'D)

No, keep still. We don't want these to get infected.

Anger wells up in her and she spits in his face.

He wipes his face with his sleeve.

JESSICA

You're not going to get away with this. People will start to look for me...

Steve stands up, puts his glasses back on.

STEVE

Oh really? Who would that be? Your mother? Or let's see...maybe your father.

JESSICA

Shut up! You don't know anything about them.

STEVE

I just want you to be safe. You don't have anyone else looking out for you, do you?

Jessica doesn't answer. He's right.

He smiles grimly and turns toward the door.

JESSICA

Wait, where are you going?

STEVE

I've got some work to do. And so do you.

Steve walks out slamming the door behind him.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica lays in bed, asleep.

She opens her eyes and looks around. The room looks blurry, spinning.

Her mother appears before her, a shimmering shape.

MOTHER

Why did you call them? I told you
not to...

JESSICA

He was hurting you, Mami, I--

Her father pops up in another corner of the room, his hands in cuffs, his face bloodied.

MOTHER

Is this what you wanted mija? To
see your Papa in handcuffs?

JESSICA

No, I--

MOTHER

They're going to kill him.

JESSICA

Who?

A BANG

Her father falls over, dead.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No!

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica stares at the ceiling. Hearing the door open, she pretends to be asleep.

Steve walks in, sits down at her bedside and takes the cloth again, squeezes some water out and starts to clean her cuts. She pulls away in pain, moaning, eyes still closed.

STEVE

It wouldn't sting so much if you'd
stop resisting.

She fully awakens.

JESSICA

Ow, stop! Why are you doing this?

STEVE

To keep them clean. I told you we don't want them to get infected.

JESSICA

No, why are you doing...

(she tugs on her restraints)

This?

Steve stops washing her and thinks.

STEVE

Believe it or not, I'm trying to help you, Jessica. In a few days, weeks maybe, you'll thank me.

JESSICA

The only thing I need from you is to Let. Me. Go.

Jessica writhes and screams in fury.

Steve smiles, shakes his head.

He exits the room, shuts the door behind him.

Her yells turn into cries.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica lays, barely conscious.

The door opens. Steve comes in, carrying Jessica's cleaning bucket.

She groans, dry heaves.

He hurries to her side, puts the bucket in front of her and strokes her hair.

He takes a bottle of water off the night stand, holds it up.

STEVE

Promise not to spit in my face this time?

She nods.

He pours a little water into her mouth, then puts the bucket in front of her. She spits into it.

He wipes her mouth with a cloth. Takes a comb from his shirt pocket and tries to run it through her matted hair.

She jerks away from him with hate in her eyes, too weak to scream.

He puts the comb in his pocket, then leans over and kisses her on the forehead. She tries to pull away, but it's no use.

He exits as she strains against her handcuffs.

INT. JESSICA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jessica lays in bed, bored, agitated. She angrily jerks the cuffs. They cut into her wrists.

She feels something catch. One of the screws on the metal headboard has been worked away from the hole.

She quickly jerks the cuff, trying to pop the screw all the way out.

The sound of Steve's PIANO echoes from downstairs. The sound irritates her and she jerks the cuffs even harder.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

She sleeps, stirs slowly, tries to move her hand, then starts fully awake when she feels the handcuffs.

She struggles against them, remembers the loose screw and starts to try to work it all the way out by pulling her wrist.

She stops as she hears the LOCK TURN.

Steve enters with the lunch tray, puts it on the night stand and sits down on the bed next to her

Jessica glares daggers at him.

STEVE
Luncheon is served.

He shows her the tray, laden with tacos and a bottle of Negro Modelo.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Look, carnitas. Is that how you say it? I stopped by the taco stand.

He holds up the Negro Modelo.

STEVE (CONT'D)
And I even got your favorite beverage.

He reaches for a taco, then suddenly hesitates.

He gets a bottle of hand sanitizer out of his pocket.

Jessica backs up against the headboard.

JESSICA

No, get that away from me!

STEVE

Now, Jessica. Don't you know I'm looking out for your health and welfare?

Steve puts the bottle back in his pocket.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Aw, well nevermind. You won't be using your hands anyway.

Steve picks up a taco and brings it to her mouth.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Open wide.

She clamps her mouth tight, shakes her head.

Steve puts the taco back on the plate with a sigh.

JESSICA

Can you at least let me loose for a little while? I have to go to the bathroom.

STEVE

Did I tell you I was a medic in the Army? I'll be right back.

Steve exits the room as Jessica writhes in her bonds.

He re-enters the room seconds later, carries a leather bag.

He takes out a tube attached to a bag.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I got pretty good at inserting these...

Jessica can just make out the outline of the tube in Steve's hand. She's not sure what it is, but she knows it's not good.

JESSICA

What is that? No....no...

As Steve leans down next to her, lowers his head to fiddle with the tubing, she head butts him.

He looks up, stunned, comes back to himself, enraged.

STEVE

I didn't want to do this.

Steve pulls a syringe out of the bag, reveals the glint of a pointy needle.

JESSICA

No...stay way from me!

She tries another headbutt but this time Steve slams her head back on the pillow with his arm, jumps on top of her, and drives the syringe into her upstretched arm.

She cries out in pain.

He strokes her hair.

STEVE

Ssssh...its okay...

Her cries become softer as her eyes close.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Jessica sleeps, the pain and agony returns as she slowly opens her dark-rimmed eyes, licks her chapped lips.

She looks around the room woozily, sees Steve sitting in a chair next to her.

STEVE

Oh, hello.

She ignores him, groans a little.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You asked me why I'm doing this and the truth is, I'm doing it for you. I mean, what kind of life have you been living? Sleeping in your car? Cleaning houses? You could have a life beyond your wildest dreams if you'd just surrender.

She looks at him. Rolls her eyes.

JESSICA

I'm not going to have sex with you.

He stands up, perturbed.

STEVE

That is so offensive. Why is everything about sex with you people? I'm talking about giving you the kind of guidance you need to succeed in life. The kind your father never gave you.

JESSICA

If he was here right now, he'd kill you.

Steve scoots his chair closer, speaks in a low tone.

STEVE

I don't think he would, if he knew how much I love and care for you.

Jessica shakes her wrists, rattles the handcuffs.

JESSICA

This is not love.

STEVE

You're right, love is a two-way street.

Steve leaps up, crosses to the dresser drawers and takes out a rope.

Steve approaches with the rope in hand.

JESSICA

What are you doing? No....

Steve puts the rope in Jessica's mouth as she struggles.

Jessica gags and chokes against the rope in her mouth as Steve ties the other end behind her head.

He gives a final tug to his knot as Jessica's eyes bulge with discomfort.

STEVE

There. Less speaking, more listening.

Steve is about to exit then turns back around and nods up at the flashing red light.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh, and I cleaned off the camera lense, so don't go getting anymore crazy ideas.

As Steve exits Jessica screams through the ropes and jerks her hands in the cuffs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Steve holds Jessica's phone in his hand. Scrolls through her call history. He pauses and frowns.

STEVE
Jesus Christ!

INT. JESSICA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica continues to work her handcuffs against the faulty screw, it is almost all the way out.

She hears STEVE'S FOOTSTEPS and suddenly stops working the cuff.

Steve bursts into the room, and rips the rope away from her mouth.

Jessica grimaces in pain against his rough movements.

He takes Jessica's phone out of his pocket.

STEVE
Why the hell is there a call on your phone to my wife???

JESSICA
What are you talking about?

He shows her the phone.

STEVE
You called Sheila Sullivan on Feb. 12th at 2:06 p.m. Where did you get her number. Why were you calling her???

JESSICA
You tell me. Since she's supposedly dead.

Steve looks like he's about to backhand Jessica, then suddenly turns his back. He sticks Jessica's phone in his pocket, takes out his own phone and dials a number.

Jessica carefully strains against her cuffs, the screw pops out farther.

SHEILA (V.O.)
You have reached Sheila.
(MORE)

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

I am not available right now. Please leave me a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Have a blessed day!

STEVE

Hello, Sheila. It's me--

JESSICA

Help, help me!

STEVE

Shit.

Steve disconnects the call, whirls around toward Jessica, furious.

As he tries to shove the rope back in her mouth, she bites him.

He cries out in pain and grabs his hand.

The screw pops and she frees her hands from the headboard, the metal rung clangs to the floor.

As he whirls around, she leans over, grabs the metal rung and holds it like bayonet.

JESSICA

Stay away from me!

He takes a step towards her.

STEVE

Now Jess--

She clocks him in the head, hard. He grabs his head, stunned.

She sets the bar on the bed, leans over and frantically starts to untie the ropes at her feet.

He turns around, comes toward her. She doesn't have the knot completely out yet.

She picks up the bar, but it is too late.

He has his hands around her neck, choking her.

She drops the bar as she gasps for breath, claws at his hands.

She stops struggling, closes her eyes.

STEVE (CONT'D)

That's it. Surrender to me.

Her face turns purple.

He realizes he has gone too far, releases her. She falls back against the pillow.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh my God, no--Jessica, wake up.

He comes toward her, but Jessica already has her hands on the bar and drives it with all her might straight into his groin.

As he doubles over in agonizing pain, she finishes untangling the knot at her feet and runs out of the room to the

STAIRS

She stumbles down them, still tripping over the ropes attached to her leg.

Gets to the

ENTRYWAY

Throws herself against the door. Grabs the doorknob with her hands which are still cuffed together. It's no use, it's still locked.

She hears FOOTSTEPS on the STAIRS

She dashes back through

HALLWAYS

Until she is back in

OFFICE

She shuts the door, locks it.

She hears movement overhead. Her eyes dart for some place to hide.

She hears a faint voice from above her head.

MAI (O.S.)

Hey!

Jessica looks up, sees a ceiling vent.

JESSICA

Hello?

MAI (O.S.)

Here!

She spots the filing cabinet. She hops onto it and stretches toward the vent.

She is still about a foot too short. She glances toward the door.

The knob is turns, catches.

The vent cover lifts and a pair of almond-shaped eyes stare back at her. Thin, pale hands stretch down. One of them is mutilated and misshapen with handcuffs dangling from it.

Glancing once more at the door, Jessica stretches up her own cuffed hands.

A KEY INSERTING IN THE LOCK.

Mai grabs her by the wrists and pulls with surprising strength. Jessica promptly hits her head on the vent opening and falls back down.

Jessica stretches up her wrists once more, this time ducking her head.

She gets halfway in the crawlspace.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

MAI, early 20s, Asian, small but strong and determined, dressed in an old sweatshirt and sweatpants, huffs and strains, bent backwards with the effort.

Jessica hangs, legs dangling.

JESSICA

Come on!

Mai grunts loudly in exasperation.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Sssh!

Pissed off, Mai jerks on Jessica's arms, losing grip. As she slips, Jessica grabs on to Mai's handcuff. Mai cries out as the cuff digs into her wrist.

She flings Jessica off. Jessica grabs onto Mai's sleeve in desperation then gives a terrified cry as Steve KICKS AT THE DOOR and the sleeve starts to rip.

Mai threads her arm through Jessica's and heaves her through.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica flops into the narrow dark space. Mai pulls her all the way in, then replaces the vent cover. She motions for Jessica to follow her.

Together they crawl towards a sliver of light a few yards away.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

With one final kick, Steve bursts in, sending what's left of the door to the floor with a THUD.

He looks around.

STEVE

Come out, come out wherever you are.

He peers under the desk. Nothing. Looks behind the desk, filing cabinet. Hears movement above. Looks up at the vent cover.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

The closet is walk-in size. The dimmest of natural light coming through cracks in the door illuminates a large wire animal crate with a foam pad and blankets inside. Outside the crate is a plastic bucket and the crust of a sandwich on a plate.

A surveillance camera is mounted on the ceiling.

Mai hoists herself through a hole in the floor. She helps Jessica through, then replaces a wood panel and carpeting that had been covering the hole.

Jessica sits on the floor and surveys her surroundings.

JESSICA

How long have you been in here? Is that a cage?

Mai reaches down and pulls the bedding out with her good hand.

Jessica notices her withered hand. Mai sees her staring at it and hides it behind her back.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No, let me see.

Jessica gently takes her hand. Mai gives a cry of pain.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Oh, sorry. Is that how you got out
of your cuffs?

Mai nods and smiles.

MAI
Then I do this.

She rubs the cuff against the wires on the cage.

JESSICA
How long'd that take you?

MAI
Long time.

JESSICA
My name's Jessica by the way.

MAI
Mai.

JESSICA
I'd shake your hand, but.

Jessica holds up her cuffed hands.

Mai goes over to the cage and takes a wire from its metal
floor.

She scurries back, kneels down and inserts the wire in
Jessica's cuffs.

She works the wire a few moments, then the cuffs spring open.

Jessica lets them fall to the ground and stretches her hands
in the air with relief.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Thank you!

A POWER TOOL WHINES below them.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What the hell is he doing now?

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve stands on a ladder and screws the vent back on with
the power drill.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

MAI
He close hole.

Jessica stands up, jiggles the closet door, locked.

JESSICA
Shit.

Jessica goes back to the hole in the floor, kneels, lifts the carpet, stares at the wooden panel.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
This thing has to lead to another room. The kitchen or maybe even the garage...

MAI
I no leave.

JESSICA
What do you mean?

MAI
If I leave, he send me back.

They both freeze at the sound of DOOR TO THE BEDROOM OPENING, SLOW FOOTSTEPS as Steve walks into the room. FOOTSTEPS stop.

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Steve stands with a phone in his hand, he dials it with the speaker on.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jessica and Mai stare with held breath for a moment longer.

JESSICA
What's he doing?

MAI
Sssh!

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Steve holds the phone up, an ASIAN MAN answers.

ASIAN MAN (O.S.)
Soo Oh Stei?

STEVE
Hello, Mr. Vue?

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

MAI

No! Som!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

STEVE

I'm starting to have some problems
with Mai. She's not living up to
the our uh--agreement.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Mai howls and beats the door with her fists.

MAI

No, stop!

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Steve disconnects the call, leans closer to the door, rubs
it with his hand. Starts to say something, then punches the
door.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

They listen as he walks slowly out of the room.

The door SHUTS. LOCK TURNS.

They both sit quietly contemplating for a moment.

JESSICA

Well. We are so screwed.

Mai puts her face in her hands and starts to sob.

Jessica turns and puts her hand on Mai's shoulder.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No, don't. I'm sorry. There's got
to be a way out of here.

Mai looks up

MAI

No. No way.

She returns to sobbing.

JESSICA

Look, there's two of us. Plus we
have weapons.

She picks up a handcuff.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Why do you think he didn't open the door just now? He knows he can't take us on.

Mai sniffs.

MAI

My English no good.

JESSICA

My Chinese isn't so good either.

Mai bristles.

MAI

I am Cambodian.

JESSICA

Oh, sorry. You know it's funny, I expected you to be Evelyn.

At the mention of Evelyn's name, Mai hangs her head and looks away.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

What happened to Evelyn, Mai?

Mai shakes her head, starts to sob again.

Jessica puts an arm around her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's going to be okay.

MAI

No, not o.k. It's fucking not okay. If he sends me back--

JESSICA

It's not worse than being locked in a closet, is it?

MAI

No sex in closet. No one sticks a bottle in my butt in closet.

She grabs the sandwich crust and takes a bite, throws it back on the plate.

MAI (CONT'D)

That man on the phone? He's a fucking motherfucker.

JESSICA

I guess you know the important English words.

Mai stands up. Nods toward door.

MAI

I learn from TV. I lived out there.
In house.

JESSICA

How'd you end up in here?

MAI

I try to leave.

INT. CLOSET - LATER

Mai lays on the bedding asleep as Jessica pokes the wire at the doorknob.

Jessica breaks a piece of the wire off.

JESSICA

Shit.

Mai stirs, moans a little. Jessica goes back to lock-picking

JESSICA (CONT'D)

This would be a lot easier if I could see...

Mai stands up, stretches, yawns.

She comes over and takes the wire from Jessica and starts working at the lock.

Jessica scoots back to give her space.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So how'd you end up with Steve,
anyway?

Mai pauses, scowls, returns to lock picking, then after a moment.

MAI

My dad, he need to give money to bad men. He have no money so he give me instead.

JESSICA

Oh. Shit. That's fucked up.

MAI

If he don't give me, the bad men
kill him.

JESSICA

Oh. That sucks. But I mean, how'd
you end up with Steve?

Mai continues to pick the lock.

MAI

They put me on an airplane. He pick
me up. Why you here?

JESSICA

Me? I'm just the housecleaner. Or
I was. Until my car got towed.

Jessica watches Mai pick the lock.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You know, my dad didn't sell me into
slavery but he was an asshole too.

Mai stops picking, looks at Jessica.

MAI

Yeah?

JESSICA

Yeah. He used to call me Maricon.
That's dyke in Spanish. He hit my
mom. He never hit me though...

Mai puts the wire down, walks past Jessica towards the bucket,
pulls down her pants and pees.

Jessica shields her eyes with her hand.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Uh, okay.

Mai shakes herself over the bucket, pulls up her pants and
walks over to the door.

Jessica pulls her shirt over her nose.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Can we find a lid for that thing?

Mai pokes the wire in the hole in the doorknob, then throws
the wire on the ground.

Mai flops back down on the bedding.

Jessica sighs and turns back toward the door, stares at the thin beam of light coming in through the door crack.

She gets an idea and grabs one of the handcuffs laying on the floor, starts chipping away at the edge of the door with the pointy end of the cuff.

She works for a minute then turns and sees Mai watching her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Well, don't just sit there. Aren't you going to come help me?

MAI

He will let us out. You wait.

JESSICA

Let us out and do what? Lock us up and poison us? No thanks.

MAI

Steve a nice man. You just make him mad.

JESSICA

Oh, like the way Evelyn made him mad?

MAI

Evelyn was stupid.

JESSICA

Where is she Mai? What happened to her?

SOUND OF DOOR TO BEDROOM OPENING

FOOTSTEPS as Steve walks back in. SOUNDS OF LOCK ON CLOSET TURNING.

Jessica grabs the handcuff, holds it at the ready.

Mai picks hers up also, nods at Jessica.

They stare at the doorknob as it turns.

As the door starts to open, Jessica leaps up.

From behind, Mai grabs her and puts the chain of her handcuffs around Jessica's throat. Jessica struggles and grabs for the chain.

Steve opens the door wide.

Mai throws Jessica to the ground and runs out the closet door.

Jessica gets up as Steve shuts the door on her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No!

MAI (O.S.)

I get bad girl. You give me food now?

STEVE

Yes, that was very good, Mai.

SOUND OF CLOSET DOOR LOCKING

Jessica pounds on the door as Steve locks it.

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Steve finishes locking closet, Mai crosses to bedroom door, starts to open it.

Steve quickly gets to it, pushes her away.

MAI

I make food for you--in kitchen?

STEVE

Not yet. I'll be back.

He shoves her back, then slips out.

As Mai hears door LOCKING she pounds on it.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jessica has her ear to the door.

JESSICA

Yeah, looks like Mr. Nice Guy didn't come through for you. Who's the stupid one now?

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mai paces.

MAI

Leamok!

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jessica lifts the carpet, then the wooden panel and looks towards the door to the bedroom where she can still hear MAI PACING.

She lets the carpet fall and grabs the plate. She sticks the bread crust in her shirt then smacks the plate against the wall. It breaks into jagged pieces.

INT. CHRISTIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mai crosses to a window and lifts the shade. The window is boarded up. She cries out and pounds it with her fist.

She walks over to the closet door.

MAI

Jessica? I am sorry. You are right.
Steve is bad man.

She pauses, waits for an answer.

MAI (CONT'D)

Jessica?

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jessica pounds the camera with the plate shard.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve watches the monitors, sees the closet monitor go to static. He rises out of his chair.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Jessica puts the plate shard inside her shirt and lowers herself into the hole in the floor.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica crawls along the pitch black tunnel, coughing as dust gets inside her throat and nose.

A METAL CLANG, THEN THUDDING NOISE.

She freezes, then when she hears nothing continues on.

She pauses a moment to catch her breath. Behind her, she hears breathing.

She crawls faster. Up ahead, she can see light coming through a vent cover.

She feels a hand on her foot. She turns, gasps.

Steve's DEEP LAUGHTER.

She tries to jerk her leg away, but his grasp is too tight. She starts to take the plate shard out from her shirt.

From down below, the GATE INTERCOM BUZZES.

Steve releases his grip. Jessica inches as fast as she can toward the light.

She gets to the vent, looks down through it and sees it is Steve's office.

She stops a moment, pondering whether it is safe to go in.

Her question is answered when she sees Steve enter.

He clicks the computer to show the camera monitors and grimaces at what he sees.

He clicks another button, the intercom button. The hoarse voice of AGNES, his neighbor, blares through a speaker.

AGNES (O.S.)

Hi Steve, sorry to bother you. I couldn't help noticing the car is gone. Did you get ahold of that towing company?

STEVE

Yes, Agnes, thank you.

Jessica frowns in anger.

AGNES (O.S.)

I hope it didn't cost you too much. You really should have called the city--

JESSICA

Help me! He's got me trapped here, please call the police!

AGNES (O.S.)

Steve?

Steve disconnects the intercom and turns toward the vent cover, as he reaches toward it, Jessica scoots deeper into the crawlspace, reversing direction.

She scurries through the tunnel, but a large shape blocks her way.

She gets closer. It is a plastic bag. She pushes at it and as it rolls towards her, she sees Evelyn's bloody face, staring.

Jessica SCREAMS.

She retreats and crawls quickly back the way she came.

She comes face-to-face with Steve.

She screams again as Steve grabs her by the throat.

Jessica takes the plate shard out of her shirt and lunges at Steve, manages to gash his arm.

He yells out, scoots back.

Jessica extends her arm with the shard, breathes heavily, is about to lunge.

A LOUD, QUICK SIREN SOUNDS just outside the gate.

POLICE LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)
Police, open the gate!

STEVE
Shit.

He releases Jessica. She coughs, rubbing her throat.

Steve scoots backwards through the crawlspace, keeps his eye on Jessica until he gets to the opening.

He disappears from view as he drops down.

Jessica pauses and hears the faint sounds of the DOOR OPENING, VOICES.

She inches toward the sounds. She gets to a vent opening and can see Steve holding the door open as an OFFICER stands on the porch.

Blood runs from Steve's arm.

STEVE (CONT'D)
--all a misunderstanding.

OFFICER
What happened to your arm?

STEVE
Oh, this? Cut myself chopping potatoes.

OFFICER

Well, one of your neighbors called--

Jessica yells as she kicks at the vent cover.

INT. ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

At the sound of Jessica's voice Officer puts one foot inside. Steve reaches out quickly and steals Officer's gun.

Officer stares at the gun, then lunges at Steve. They struggle for possession of the gun.

Jessica lowers herself down through the vent cover in the ceiling.

She falls in a heap on the floor, just as the GUN GOES OFF.

She stands up to see the officer laying in a pool of blood as Steve stands over him with the gun.

She sees the open front door, but Steve is blocking the way.

Steve looks at her.

She takes off running.

INT. LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

She looks around the room. Nowhere to hide. Then she sees the fireplace.

INT. LIVINGROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steve runs in, sees no sign of Jessica.

INT. CHIMNEY FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica straddles the flue with one foot on either wall.

She hears a familiar COLLAR RATTLE, PANTING, SNIFFING.

Oh no.

She tries to straddle further up the flue, but Smoky is already beneath her, snarling and chomping at her feet.

She takes the bread out of her shirt and drops it down to Smoky.

He gobbles it and sniffs around for more crumbs as she starts to shimmy up the flue.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Steve sees Smoky at the bottom of the flue and darts over.

Smoky suddenly snarls at Steve and runs off.

He looks up flue, sees Jessica.

INT. CHIMNEY FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica looks down at him.

JESSICA

Why don't you just accept your stupid
dog is gone?

Steve yells, enraged.

He puts his hands on either side of the flue and attempts to straddle the walls of it with his feet. He slips, curses.

Standing there, he gets an idea.

INT. STEVE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He steps out of the fireplace and grabs a fireplace match, lights some kindling on fire.

INT. CHIMNEY FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica looks down the flue, can barely make out Steve, but the spark of the flame he lights is unmistakable.

She grimaces and climbs higher up the flue.

INT. FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica chokes on smoke as the fire billows up.

She shimmies higher up the flue. She slips a little, cries out, her voice drowned out by the licking flames.

She peers up the flue. Sunlight peeks through a metal covering.

For a moment the smoke clears.

Her sobs return as she looks below and sees flames.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steve peers up chimney, backs away choking, then darts out.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve appears with a ladder, lays it against the house and starts to climb.

INT. FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Sweating profusely, Jessica coughs as she gets closer to the chimney vent.

She stops and her eyelids flutter for a moment as if she's about to pass out, then she slowly keeps going.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve is almost to the roof.

INT. FLUE - CONTINUOUS

Jessica makes it to the top. She hits at the metal cover with all her might but it won't budge.

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Steve, now on top of the roof, walks over and looks down the flue vent, sees Jessica inside, flailing against the metal cover.

He starts to take the covering off.

INT. FLUE - CONTINUOUS

She looks down the flue, flames licking up.

She looks back at Steve. Through the grate, she can see something strike him from behind. He moves away from the grate.

MAI YELLS OUT. BLOWS LAND.

Jessica sees a peg sticking out of the flue, grabs on to it and finds purchase with her feet against the side of the flue.

With one explosive motion, she butts her head against the grate and pops out of the flue.

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS

As Jessica hoists herself out of the flue, she sees Steve choking Mai who lays flailing on the ground.

She is paralyzed for an instant. Should she help Mai or make her escape?

She kicks Steve in the side. He loosens his grip on Mai who coughs and wriggles away from him.

Steve turns toward Jessica who runs blindly, struggling to keep her balance on the slanted tiles.

Steve takes off after her, grabs for her arm, misses her with inches to spare.

Jessica runs, slipping on loose tiles.

Steve follows. She gets to the edge, there's nowhere to go.

Steve gets closer.

Jessica takes the broken plate out of her shirt.

JESSICA

Stay back!

Steve takes a step closer.

STEVE

Jessica. Put that down. Do what's best for yourself.

Rage at his paternalistic words erupts inside her.

She runs toward Steve and drives the sharp fragment into his chest.

Steve stops and gasps. Jessica backs up, drops the plate piece, stunned at what she has done.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(inches closer)

I should have given up on you. You're just like Evelyn...and Christine before her...all you girls, you never listen.

Steve lunges for her, wraps his hands around her throat.

Jessica struggles, Steve leads her closer to the edge of the roof.

Jessica's eyes close, she can't hold on much longer.

She sees Mai come up behind Steve with a roof tile.

Mai clocks him in the head with it and he releases Jessica, stunned.

As he comes for Mai, she pushes him with the tile. He loses his balance for moment but then regains it and grabs onto the tile, pulling Mai towards him.

They engage in a tug of war as Steve grins evilly.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Think about what you're doing, Mai.
You don't want to be sent back, do
you?

Jessica walks up to them.

JESSICA

Hey Steve, see you in a jif!

She pushes Mai out of the way and shoves Steve off the roof.

They both peer over the edge.

Steve lays in a twisted heap on the ground.

Mai begins to sob. Tears stream down her face. She sobs as she throws the tile down.

Jessica hugs her, then looks toward the chimney which now has heat waves and smoke billowing out.

Her eyes drift toward the ladder.

Jessica runs toward it and begins to climb down.

Mai watches her.

EXT. YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica lowers herself down the ladder onto the grass. She runs past Steve.

Behind her—A GUTTERAL GROWL.

She turns, freezes.

SMOKY

As she turns to continue her escape, she twists her ankle, trips, falls and hits the ground hard.

The German Shepherd stands in the shadows, teeth bared.

Smoky snarls, runs towards her, then past her, towards the open gate, goes off running into the night.

Jessica gets up, limping and makes her way towards the gate.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica hobbles with her twisted ankle and bloodied pantleg.

HEADLIGHTS.

A car.

She throws herself into the street, waving wildly.

The car slams on the brakes.

A WOMAN inside stares, horrified.

Jessica collapses against the hood, panting.

The woman gets out, rushing toward her.

Jessica grips her arms, pleading.

JESSICA (hoarse, shaking)
Please-help me.

The headlights illuminate the woman's face. It is SHEILA, Steve's wife.

SHEILA
Jessica?

Jessica is confused, doesn't recognize Sheila at first.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
It's me. Sheila...you called me.

Jessica breathes in relief, gets in the car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jessica buckles her seatbelt as Sheila slides into the driver's seat.

JESSICA
Thank God you got my message. Could you just take me to--

Jessica has already put the car into drive and is pulling up the driveway as the gates open.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Where are you going? No--

She drives past Steve's body as the gates close. Sheila gives a little gasp as she sees him.

Jessica starts to open the car door but Sheila presses the automatic lock button.

Jessica reaches across and tries to get to the mechanism but Sheila shoves her back roughly.

As the two stare at each other for a split second there is hatred in Sheila's eyes.

SHEILA

You aren't going anywhere.

Jessica returns the hatred.

JESSICA

Oh yes I am, bitch!

Jessica extends her leg into the driver's side and floors it.

Sheila screams and tries to get control of the car, but Jessica wrests the wheel.

The car EAR-SPLITTING THUNK AS CAR CRASHES.

BLACKNESS

EXT. YARD - LATER

Sheila's car is lodged into the wall separating the yard from the street.

The airbags have deployed, windows are shattered and smoke comes out from the hood.

INT./EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jessica sits up, dazed. Sees Sheila, eyes still open, blood running from her forehead, slumped over the wheel.

SIRENS echo as Jessica gets out of the car.

She lopes toward the wall, squeezes through the gap that now leads to the street.

Behind her, she hears a MEOW.

She turns and sees Gatito trotting toward her.

She stops and overcome with joy, bends down and picks up her cat, kisses it.

The sirens grow louder. She glances behind her and sees Mai step out of the gap. Mai gives a worried wave before she runs off away from the sound of the sirens.

Jessica quickens her pace, scratches her cat behind the ears and smiles.

FADE TO BLACK