HYPNOTIZING TO GET AHEAD

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An overview of the metropolis.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - ESTABLISHING

The heart of a campus. Young adults carry backpacks and satchels. Many sit together with books and note pads.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Don't fuck with me.

MALCOLM (V.O.)
I'm not gonna fuck with you.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I need to remember.

INT. MEN'S DORMITORY - HALL

A stale passageway.

MALCOLM (V.O.)
Don't tell anyone about this.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Thinking about that night... Goddamn it. I can hardly remember anything.

MALCOLM (V.O.)
What do you know for sure about what happened that night?

INT. DORM ROOM

On a wall, framed Bachelor's and Master's of Science degrees bear the name MALCOLM GRAVES (mid-20s; handsome; in shape), who's sitting on the edge of a bed.

JIMMY SKOPEK (mid-20s) paces. Takes off sunglasses. Reveals a nasty black eye.

JIMMY
I got my ass beat to shit.

MALCOLM
And they robbed you.

JIMMY
That's all I know for sure.
MALCOLM
Well, I'll try to help you, man.

JIMMY
Whoever did this to me --
(then)
If I can just recognize one --

MALCOLM
(interrupts)
Start from the start.

JIMMY
I had a date. Supposed to meet her at a bar. I waited.
(then)
She blew me off.

MALCOLM
So you drank.

JIMMY
I drank.

FLASHBACK - INT. BAR - NIGHT

A dizzy blur.

The place is packed. Jimmy stumbles around drunk bumping into people... Wobbles out through an exit with the hiccups.

INT. DORM ROOM

Jimmy goes to a window and gazes out, trying to focus on his thoughts. Malcolm finds a pad and starts scribbling notes.

JIMMY
I can remember leaving.

MALCOLM
Then what?

JIMMY
I don't really know exactly.

MALCOLM
Tell me whatever you see.

FLASHBACK - EXT. STREET

Jimmy staggers down a sidewalk. He struggles to stay upright as passersby ignore him.
FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY
Jimmy falls... He's encircled by --
Legs... People in jeans. Boots.
A steel toe kicks his face.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DORM ROOM
Malcolm and Jimmy.

JIMMY
I woke up in a hospital. The most humiliated I've ever been.

MALCOLM
A hypnotherapy session can make you relive what happened.

JIMMY
Let's do it.

MALCOLM
I need you to ___completely___ trust me.

JIMMY
Just make me remember.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY
Jimmy's lying on a bed. His eyes are closed and his hands are interlocked atop his stomach. Malcolm sits on a chair beside him, filming with a tablet.

MALCOLM
Three. Two. One.
(then)
Sleep.

Malcolm waits for several beats. Jimmy lies still. Malcolm takes a deep breath, then:

MALCOLM
Focus on the black. It's a place, and you're in it.
(then)
Listen for another countdown from three. At its end, the black will be overtaken by a flash. You'll be there -- in the bar that night.
(then)
Understand?
JIMMY
Yes.

MALCOLM
Three. Two. One.

CUT TO WHITE.

FLASHBACK - INT. BAR
Jimmy motions to a bartender.
He guzzles a beer.
Downs a shot.
A girl scowls as she turns her back on him.

INT. DORM ROOM
Malcolm keeps filming. Jimmy's eyes move under his lids.

JIMMY
Boozing it up.
(then)
Flirting with a beauty. Or at least, I'm trying.

MALCOLM
You're leaving. You're out the door and outside.

FLASHBACK - EXT. STREET
Jimmy staggers down the sidewalk. He rushes toward a random alley... Pukes in his fist.

INT. DORM ROOM
Malcolm and Jimmy.

JIMMY
Oh, shit.

MALCOLM
What?

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY
Jimmy's hunched over beside a dumpster. His clothes are soaked in vomit.
He tries pulling himself together, coughing and spitting.

MEN WEARING HOODIES

Converge on him. Their hoods are up.

YELLOW HOODED MAN

Blows smoke in Jimmy's eyes. The man's face isn't able to be seen.

INT. DORM ROOM

Malcolm and Jimmy.

JIMMY

Blowing smoke.

MALCOLM

Who?

JIMMY

I don't fucking know who. There's a yellow hood over his head.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY

Jimmy's surrounded by the Hooded Men... They shove him like a rag doll... He falls to the pavement hard. Looks up as:

YELLOW HOODED MAN

Boots his face.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DORM ROOM

Malcolm and Jimmy.

JIMMY

Gone black.

Malcolm taps the tablet and it stops filming. Puts it flat on his lap... Takes a deep breath.

MALCOLM

It's not over.

JIMMY

I'm not seeing anything else.
MALCOLM
You're about to remember the most important part of it.

JIMMY
OK.

MALCOLM
Listen for another countdown from three. At its end --
(then)
Don't speak. Do what I say like it's instinct. Three, two, one.

Jimmy lies still. Not a flinch... Malcolm waits for another several beats. Then leans in to Jimmy.

MALCOLM
Know that you're in danger.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
This isn't me. Forget me. This is you trying to remember.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
You have to remember him. You must remember who's hurt you.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
I'm instinct.
(then)
That "Yellow Hooded Man" who blew the smoke -- he's coming back. To hurt you more. Even worse.
(then)
Unless you hurt him first.

He taps the tablet. Brings something up. Spins it and holds it above Jimmy.

MALCOLM
Remember him. See the face you'll have to recognize.
(then)
Open your eyes.

Jimmy does.
ON TABLET

There's a pic of DAMAIN BERRY (mid-20s; hunk), which is taken from afar. He's wearing a sweater vest over a dress shirt.

MALCOLM

Trembles.

MALCOLM

Close 'em!

Jimmy does.

Malcolm sighs.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - SUNSET

Another day gone.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Malcolm has a bag of chips. He eats them by the handful as Jimmy watches the tablet.

ON TABLET

Video from the session.

JIMMY (V.O.)

(on tablet)
I don't fucking know who. There's a yellow hood over his head.

(then)
Gone black.

It ends.

JIMMY

Tosses the tablet.

JIMMY

I remember.

MALCOLM

... What?

JIMMY

Everything I was telling you.
MALCOLM
If you buy-in, it works.

JIMMY
Thanks, Malcolm.

MALCOLM
I'm sorry that you still don't know who did it.

JIMMY
Yeah, I still can't remember any of their faces. But I know this:
(then)
I'll never get rolled again.

He digs into a backpack with his back to Malcolm. Pulls out something, but Malcolm can't see... Jimmy turns. Malcolm quits chomping on the chips as he sees what it is -- a pistol.

JIMMY
Parents let me borrow it.

MALCOLM
Get rid of it.

JIMMY
Hell no.

MALCOLM
You dumbass!

JIMMY
It's not happening to me again.

Malcolm throws the bag of chips. It hits Jimmy and spills all over the floor.

JIMMY
Fuck, man?

MALCOLM
Don't even think about going around campus with that. I mean it.
(repeats)
Get rid of it.

JIMMY
Whatever.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Malcolm and Jimmy spy from a concealed vantage point off to one side. Jimmy wears sunglasses.
JIMMY
You're pathetic.

MALCOLM
I want you to see him. Moving on my girl, like I don't know it.

JIMMY
Well, how do you know he's gonna be here?

MALCOLM
Kim. She has to make a documentary. Damain guy's helping her.

JIMMY
Volunteers to be her cameraman.

MALCOLM
Believe that shit?

JIMMY
You should be her cameraman.

MALCOLM
I got my dissertation.

Jimmy leaves.

JIMMY
Stalker.

MALCOLM
Jimmy!

Malcolm stands alone.

Gets out a digital camera.

EXT. COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Malcolm aims the camera. Takes a few pics from afar of Damain Berry walking with KIM JANSING (mid-20s; beautiful).

EXT. MAIN BUILDING - DAY

University's hub.

Malcolm approaches.
INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Stage lights gleam.

ROMONA (20s) has a canister of air freshener. Sprays it at the feet of THREE HOMELESS MEN advancing toward sandwiches on the edge of the stage. One of them is DICK (30s).

ROMONA
After.

DICK
Now.

She keeps spraying, but they don't back off. Malcolm arrives and rushes down an aisle.

MALCOLM
What the hell's going on?

ROMONA
You're late!
(then)
They're animals.

MALCOLM
God damn it, guys. You get paid and fed after you practice.

DICK
I'm not dancing on an empty stomach.

ROMONA
Go stretch.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Dick and the bums warm up on stage. Malcolm and Romona sit front row.

ROMONA
We should have them try the whole routine right off the bat.

MALCOLM
They're not ready.

Kim appears in the aisle beside him. Damain follows her with a pro video camera.

KIM
Hey!

MALCOLM
... Hey!?
He springs up.

They kiss.

    KIM
    No point in me asking first. You would'a said no.

    MALCOLM
    No to what?

    KIM
    I'm doing my documentary on your hypnotism theories.

    MALCOLM
    No.

    KIM
    Doing interviews. Filming whatever you've been working on here.

    MALCOLM
    This isn't ready.

    ROMONA
    It might be.

    MALCOLM
    Kim. Romona -- dance instructor.

Romona stands.

They girls shake.

    KIM
    Malcolm... Damain.

    DAMAIN
    Nice to finally meet you.

    MALCOLM
    It's nice to meet you.

They shake.

    DAMAIN
    "Homeless guy dance routine"?

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Damain operates the camera.
CAMERA'S POV

of Kim interviewing Malcolm.

MALCOLM
These gentlemen on the stage --
(then)
Each is a random homeless guy off of
the street.

KIM
They can't dance at all.

MALCOLM
Until now.

KIM
They're warming up like they plan on
busting a move.

MALCOLM
Because I'm trying to hypnotize them
into learning and performing a dance
routine -- of a professional standard.

KIM
Sounds like a major human rights
violation.

MALCOLM
I fairly compensate them.

KIM
You're not being supervised.

MALCOLM
I was when I had 'em listen to the
beat a million times under hypnosis.

KIM
Don't humiliate them.

MALCOLM
They don't have any skill -- that's
the whole point.

KIM
What exactly is the goal?

MALCOLM
Inducing mind-over-matter.

KIM
And how does that happen?
MALCOLM
They hear the beat. Suppress fear. Doubt. Embrace learning and repeating what's being taught -- in this case, dance moves in a sequence.

KIM
Pretty cheesy shit.

MALCOLM
You're a bitch.

They kiss.

DAMAIN
Whips the camera off them.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER
Dick and the bums are center-stage.

MALCOLM
Sits mid-second row, leaning on a front row seat.

DAMAIN
Films the bums. He looks to Malcolm. They stare daggers at each other.

KIM
Sneaks up on Malcolm. Sits on his lap.

KIM
Sorry if I was rough.

MALCOLM
I love that you're stubborn.

KIM
No you don't.

MALCOLM
Actually, I do.

INT. BACKSTAGE
Romona's at a control station.

Pushes a "play" button.
INT. AUDITORIUM

A dance beat BLASTS from speakers.

Dick and the bums naturally scramble into formation.

Their routine commences. They dance like nimble pros. As a team. Complete with flips. Breakdancing.

Everyone's eyes pop with shock.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Damain operates the camera.

CAMERA'S POV

of Kim interviewing Dick.

KIM
That wasn't a hoax?

DICK
I ain't no dancer.

KIM
You remember doing that?

DICK
Yeah. I just did it.

KIM
How does it feel?

DICK
I just want a goddamn sandwich to eat. What's a guy gotta do?

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

CAMERA'S POV

of Kim interviewing Malcolm.

KIM
Are they still hypnotized?

MALCOLM
Technically, no. It's just how they got the motivation to accomplish what they did.
KIM
Explain that.

MALCOLM
While under hypnosis... They were given the inspiration to respond to that beat.

KIM
So anytime that beat plays, they do the dance.
(then)
What happens if it plays, but they don't wanna dance?

MALCOLM
Privately owned beat. They're not gonna hear it at the mall.

KIM
But you could play it against their will. What happens?

MALCOLM
It's not against their will. They agreed to this beforehand.

KIM
So there's no potential for abuse?

MALCOLM
None. It's not possible to hypnotize someone into doing anything against their will.

KIM
How do you know that?

MALCOLM
There's just no proof.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Nobody's here except Malcolm and Kim. They're sitting center-stage under the lights.

MALCOLM
I don't know what else I got for your documentary.

KIM
It's the equivalent of my Master's thesis.

He lies down.
MALCOLM
My dissertation blows.

KIM
That was impressive.

MALCOLM
It's a joke.

KIM
Stop it.

MALCOLM
Flower keeps trying to brainwash us into doing better.

KIM
Professor Flower -- ask him if he'll do an interview with me.

MALCOLM
Every lecture: we only get so many chances; not everyone makes it; gonna wake up screwed in the future if we sleep-in today.

She crawls over and lies on him. They kiss. Stare at each other face-to-face.

MALCOLM
I love you.

KIM
Love you, too.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Every seat is taken.

MALCOLM
Enters in back. Quietly shuts a door. Sneaks in and spies on a lecture that's underway.

AN ANTIQUE WOODEN CHAIR

Is displayed up front. It's three-hundred-years old, and is the prized possession of:

PROFESSOR WILSON FLOWER (50s; chubby; aged), who circles it while admiring.

FLOWER
You sick?

(MORE)
FLOWER (CONT'D)
More people will buy this antique piece of history than will buy you medicine.

Students exchange glances.

Malcolm snickers.

FLOWER
Why's the chair more valuable than all of you?
(then)
Simple. It's an accomplishment.

STUDENT #1
Celebrities ever use it?

FLOWER
Yours truly.

STUDENT #1
Who built it?

FLOWER
Someone whose intention from the start was to build something great.

STUDENT #2
(whispers)
Reverse psychology.

FLOWER
Not every chair is built to last. People fail all the time. Come up short everyday.
(then)
Only when you strive to be great from the start, that's how you end up with a real accomplishment.

STUDENT #2
(whispers)
I feel like shit.

EXT. MAIN BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY
Late afternoon.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE/HALL
Collections and antiques are displayed.
Flower sits at a nineteenth-century desk. He skims an essay and pens a grade.

MALCOLM

Malcolm peeks in from the hall. He discovers a lounge area of sofas and armchairs unoccupied. Enters and claps.

MALCOLM
You inspire me.

FLOWER
Tell me what you really think.

MALCOLM
I think that was the most degrading, wrecking-ball-to-the-balls lecture that I've ever heard. And I didn't even hear the whole thing.

FLOWER
You kids think you're invincible.

MALCOLM
Try and stop us.

Malcolm sees the antique chair.

MALCOLM
That's the one?

FLOWER
Careful.

(then)
Like the Ark of the Covenant, you better be worthy.

MALCOLM
I'm worthy.

FLOWER
Well, you are my best student.

(then)
I'll dub you worthy.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

The door's shut. Malcolm sits on the antique chair. Flower gives him his full attention.

MALCOLM
... It's unmistakable. They're not athletes. But they overcome it.
FLOWER
Start a traveling circus. Pull the world out of poverty one dancing bum at a time.

Malcolm squirms.

Chair CREAKS.

Flower cringes.

MALCOLM
I'm here to talk about that.

FLOWER
Don't start a traveling circus.

MALCOLM
My dissertation.

FLOWER
You just made it sound like you're happy with it.

MALCOLM
It's gonna be mocked. I need it to be great, and it's not.

FLOWER
Sorry, I didn't mean to joke.

MALCOLM
No, you're right. If I can't make this a big accomplishment, I'm gonna come up short.

Malcolm squirms.

Chair CREAKS.

Flower grimaces.

FLOWER
Mind's in the right place. (then) Your ass better park it.

MALCOLM
My ass?

FLOWER
Don't break my chair.

Malcolm repositions.
Chair CREAKS.

MALCOLM
It sucks.

FLOWER
Maybe you're not worthy?

MALCOLM
Hard asses, back then.

FLOWER
Had the Founders been able to foresee you kids today, they'd of had second thoughts about given the power to the people.

MALCOLM
The chair's a piece of shit.

FLOWER
Smartass.

Malcolm moves to a modern chair.

FLOWER
Well, you better think of something. You're going to wake up screwed in the future if you sleep-in today.

MALCOLM
Yeah. I know.

FLOWER
Any ideas?

MALCOLM
I need to do something that hasn't been done before.

FLOWER
Well, thank God you're a smartass.

MALCOLM
I need to make somebody do something they didn't agree to do beforehand.

FLOWER
... Don't be a dumbass.

MALCOLM
What if I could hypnotize someone into committing a crime?
FLOWER
Don't even think about it.

MALCOLM
You know people at the CIA.

Malcolm gets up and paces.

FLOWER
So? They don't use hypnotism.

MALCOLM
I don't believe that.

FLOWER
OK. Slow down.

MALCOLM
Someone has to look at experimental psychology.

FLOWER
What are you talking about?
(then)
Sirhan Sirhan-type shit.

MALCOLM
Maybe.

FLOWER
You know, I do believe that was a conspiracy. Multiple shooters.

MALCOLM
I'm talking about our time.

FLOWER
On JFK, too. Somebody found a way to use a lot of bullets. I doubt it was hypnotism.

MALCOLM
I'm talking about today.
(then)
Doesn't the intelligence community have to look at hypnotism? Methods. Theories.

FLOWER
To what end?

MALCOLM
I'm interested in that work.
FLOWER
You and me both.
(then)
It's a damn fantasy.

Malcolm sighs.

Flower snickers.

FLOWER
A person has to buy-in. Willingly. Or hypnosis... It doesn't work.

MALCOLM
No getting around it.

FLOWER
Criminals, terrorists -- they never buy-in. Ever.

MALCOLM
I know how to take free will out of the equation.

FLOWER
No. You don't.

MALCOLM
Let the patient keep it. Instead, confuse 'em.

FLOWER
You've been studying for ten years. Academic marathon. You're about to get your Ph.D.
(then)
Don't fuck up now.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Dinner time.

INT. RESTAURANT

The place is packed.
Malcolm and Kim have a table.

MALCOLM
What's the deal with him?

KIM
With who?
MALCOLM
Your cameraman.
(then)
Damain Berry.

KIM
He's harmless.

MALCOLM
I know a prick when I see one.

KIM
Look at yourself. Right now.

He smirks.

MALCOLM
There's, like... Bullshit. On my radar. Coming from him.

KIM
You've only met him once.

MALCOLM
Am I wrong?

KIM
Damain has a friend, who's dating my roommate, Ashley.

MALCOLM
... OK.

KIM
Radar, huh?

MALCOLM
Tell me I'm wrong.

KIM
You're not wrong. Ashley wants me to dump you for Damain.

MALCOLM
That bitch.

KIM
And he admitted he wants me.

MALCOLM
Mother fucker.

KIM
It's OK.
MALCOLM
That's a lot of bullshit.

KIM
I'm using him. Hard to be a field reporter without a cameraman.

MALCOLM
I'll do it.

KIM
Don't make a fuss.

MALCOLM
I'm not gonna put up with this.

KIM
He tries to flirt. But I just toy with him.

MALCOLM
Oh. Having fun?

KIM
I am.

MALCOLM
Tell him to leave you alone.

(then)
Or I will.

KIM
Ask how my day was.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
I can tell. Partly shitty. But most of it sunny.

KIM
That right there is why you don't have to worry.

MALCOLM
You're beautiful.

KIM
Don't worry.

Their meals arrive.
EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Students mingle or pass through. A few policemen patrol on foot. Malcolm and Jimmy spy from the same concealed position off to one side. Jimmy wears sunglasses.

JIMMY
Not again.

MALCOLM
There he is!

DAMAIN
Walks alone.

MALCOLM
Hustles to intercept him. Jimmy struggle to keeping up with him as he speed-walks.

JIMMY
What are you gonna say?

MALCOLM
Fuck off. I love her. Don't even look at her, you piece of shit.
(then)
Something like that.

JIMMY
Look, this isn't my fight.

MALCOLM
Yes it is, Jimmy.

Malcolm cuts Damain off.

Jimmy hangs back.

DAMAIN
What do you want?

MALCOLM
Don't bother Kim anymore.

DAMAIN
Eat shit.

Damain goes to leave. Malcolm side-steps into his path and cuts him off again.

MALCOLM
Hey. Fuck off.
DAMAIN
Move.

MALCOLM
Don't even look at her.

DAMAIN
Or what?

Damain steps toe-to-toe with Malcolm, who has to look up but is otherwise unfazed.

DAMAIN
Piss ant.

MALCOLM
No more of this cameraman bullshit. That's done.

DAMAIN
Did she say that?

MALCOLM
I'm saying it.

Damain smirks.

MALCOLM
Leave her alone.

DAMAIN
She could be happier.

MALCOLM
Don't you fucking push me.

DAMAIN
She deserves better than you. I can give it to her.

He shoves Malcolm.

Malcolm shoves him back.

JIMMY
Focuses on Damain.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY

Jimmy's encircled by the Hooded Men.
YELLOW HOODED MAN
Is chief among them.

EXT. COURTYARD
Malcolm and Damain each clench a fist.

MALCOLM
I'll fight you right here.

DAMAIN
I'll break you.

Students glance at the confrontation.

JIMMY
Slides a hand into one of his pockets.

JIMMY
Hey, asshole.

Damain faces him.

Malcolm's eyes widen.

DAMAIN
Asshole? Who the hell do you think you're talking to?

JIMMY
I recognize you.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY
The Yellow Hooded Man goes to Jimmy. Takes a drag from a cigarette. Blows smoke into his eyes.

JIMMY'S POV
as the smoke clears... Dizziness settles. Blur focuses... The face under the yellow hood is... Or becomes... Damain.

EXT. COURTYARD
Damain shoves Jimmy.

DAMAIN
Stand beside Malcolm. I'll knock you both out. One punch.
JIMMY
You were there.

Jimmy rips his sunglasses off. Damain scowls at the sight of his black eye.

JIMMY
You did this.

DAMAIN
... What?

JIMMY
You beat me up.

DAMAIN
No I didn't.

JIMMY
You robbed me.

DAMAIN
Robbed you?

JIMMY
In the alley.

DAMAIN
What are you talking about?

JIMMY
Last week.

DAMAIN
Are you insane?

JIMMY
I remember.

DAMAIN
You're full of shit.

Damain glances at Malcolm, who smirks.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY

Jimmy lies on his back looking up.

DAMAIN

Pulls back the yellow hood. High-fives the other men. Takes the money out of Jimmy's wallet.
EXT. COURTYARD

Jimmy steps back up to Damain.

JIMMY
You took the money out of my wallet yourself.

DAMAIN
I'll blacken your other eye.

Damain shoves him. Jimmy stumbles backward. He trips over his own feet and falls hard.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY

Jimmy tries scrambling to his feet. Damain shoves him back to the ground.

EXT. COURTYARD

Jimmy springs up and whips out his pistol. Aims at Damain, who freezes. Malcolm rushes over.

MALCOLM
Whoa! Jimmy.

JIMMY
Don't touch me.

DAMAIN
Jesus Christ.

MALCOLM
I told you to get rid of that shit.

DAMAIN
(repeats)
It's not happening to me again.

MALCOLM
Hey. Put that shit away.

JIMMY
It's him.

DAMAIN
It's not me.

JIMMY
It's you.
MALCOLM
Calm down.

JIMMY
(repeats)
It's him.

MALCOLM
Listen to me. Put the fucking gun away now.

JIMMY
I can't believe it's --

DAMAIN
Lunges for the gun.

JIMMY
Stumbles. BANG!
The bullet ZIPS across the courtyard.

STUDENTS
Duck and flee.

POLICEMEN
Run toward the shot.

MALCOLM
Finds cover.

DAMAIN

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALLEY
Jimmy again tries scrambling to his feet. Damain rears back to kick him.

EXT. COURTYARD
Jimmy sees Damain charging at him. He flails the gun up his direction and BANG!
MALCOLM
Goes pale as he watches:

DAMAIN
Fall dead.

JIMMY
Scrambles to his feet.

POLICEMEN
Aim pistols at him.

BANG!  BANG!  BANG!  BANG!  BANG!

MALCOLM
Hides behind his cover as:

JIMMY
Hits the ground lifeless. Policemen converge on the two bodies. Sirens BLARE O.S. on approach.

MALCOLM
Sneaks away.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY
Malcolm locks the door. He presses his hands and forehead against it. He fights tears.

He paces while shuddering.

Screams in a pillow.

Punches the pillow.

 Throws the pillow.

Gets on his smartphone.

ON PHONE

LIVE NEWS REPORT:

Helicopter footage of the campus outside. Headline reads, "UNIVERSITY ON LOCK DOWN."
INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

Flower's at his desk.

WOMAN (V.O.)
(on intercom)
... Lock every door. Shelter in
place for the time being. This is
an active shooter situation.

He unveils a tazor. Looks it over. Then presses a button.
ZAP! Electricity BUZZES. His eyebrows shoot up and he nods.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Sirens BLARE.

Emergency personnel respond from every direction. Two white
sheets are laid over Damain and Jimmy respectively.

DETECTIVE RICHARD PERCY (40s) passes an officer stretching
crime scene tape around the perimeter.

PERCY
Find me I-D!

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Malcolm's on the tablet.

ON TABLET

Video from Jimmy's hypnotherapy session is deleted.
The pic he showed Jimmy of Damain is deleted.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

Flower sits in the lounge area. He's got his tazor in one
hand. A glass of wine in the other.

FLOWER
(to himself)
This world is so fucked up.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Malcolm crumples the notes from Jimmy's session. Then gets
the digital camera.
ON CAMERA

Pics of Damain and Kim together are deleted.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Malcolm locks himself in a stall. He FLUSHES the crumpled notes down the toilet.

Unveils a velvet ring case and opens it. Inside, there's an engagement ring. He looks from the ring to the toilet several times. Then is distracted by:

    STUDENT #3 (O.S.)
    (in hall)
    Dude, holy shit!

He pockets the ring case.

Sneaks out of the bathroom.

EXT. WOMEN'S DORMITORY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Sirens BLARE.

Policemen stand guard.

INT. DORM ROOM #2

ASHLEY (mid-20s) is on her phone.

Kim is also on her phone.

INT. DORM ROOM

Malcolm answers his RINGING smartphone.

    MALCOLM
    (into phone)
    I love you.

    KIM (V.O.)
    (on phone)
    Are you safe?
MALCOLM
(into phone)
I'm hoping so.

KIM (V.O.)
(on phone)
I can't believe this shit.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
Neither can I.

He's on the tablet.

ON TABLET
Backup files are deleted.

INT. DORM ROOM #2
Ashley turns to Kim.

ASHLEY
Two dead.

KIM
(into phone)
Two are dead.

ASHLEY
Students. But nobody knows who.

INT. DORM ROOM
POUNDING on the door.
Malcolm tosses the tablet.

KIM (V.O.)
(on phone)
They're not saying who yet.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
Promise me we'll talk later.

KIM (V.O.)
(on phone)
Why wouldn't we talk later?
MALCOLM
(into phone)
Because my roommate's the fucking shooter and the police are knocking.

INT. DORM ROOM/HALL - DAY

Detectives put everything of Jimmy and Malcolm's into bags, which are piled in the hall.

Students watch from afar as Malcolm stands with Detective Percy, who looks over the written statement Malcolm's given.

PERCY
Why was Jimmy Skopek even there?

MALCOLM
Coincidence, I guess.

PERCY
Jimmy happens to recognize Damain Berry as a perpetrator in an assault and robbery he was the victim of a week ago. Pulls a gun.

MALCOLM
I tried stopping him.

PERCY
They scuffle. Jimmy shoots Damain.

MALCOLM
Cops unload on Jimmy.

PERCY
As they're trained to do.

MALCOLM
Are we done?

PERCY
Kim Jansing -- she know you were going to confront Damain?

MALCOLM
She knows that I don't like him. Or... That I didn't.

PERCY
How do you feel that he's dead?

MALCOLM
I've told you everything.
PERCY
What about hypnotism?

MALCOLM
... What about it?

PERCY
(mocks)
You dangle a watch and tell people they're getting sleepy?

MALCOLM
I don't appreciate that.

PERCY
Something else you won't appreciate: I'm confiscating almost everything that you own, except for these clothes on your back.

MALCOLM
Everything?

PERCY
Including this:

He holds up a clear evidence bag up for Malcolm. Inside is the velvet ring case.

PERCY
Looks like evidence to me.

MALCOLM
No, it's not. Come on, man. I can't ask her to marry me without a ring.

PERCY
You're free to go for now. But don't even think about leaving the city.

EXT. WOMEN'S DORMITORY - DAY

Less of a police presence. Students are out mingling or on their phones. Malcolm weaves through them.

INT. DORM ROOM #2 - DAY

Malcolm is cornered by Kim and Ashley.

MALCOLM
Can I get past?
KIM
Who did Jimmy kill?

ASHLEY
Talk, asshole.

MALCOLM
Ashley. Fuck off.

Ashley stares daggers at him. She rears back to strike, but Kim restrains her.

ASHLEY
I'll slap you.

MALCOLM
I got one coming.

INT. DORM ROOM #2 - DAY

Ashley's gone.

Kim smacks Malcolm.

MALCOLM
It's not my fault.

KIM
Yes it is!

MALCOLM
Jimmy lost it.

KIM
Handling Damain on my own --
(then)
It would have been easy.

MALCOLM
He admitted he was trying to steal you from me. I was protecting you.

KIM
I wasn't in danger.
(then)
I never did anything with him. I was never going to, Malcolm.

She sits on a bed. Hides her face in her hands. He sneaks a quiet sigh.

KIM
I'm worried about the press making this a love triangle when it's not.
MALCOLM
It does look like shit.

KIM
Damn it! How am I gonna get a job as a reporter after this?

He sits with her. She turns to him. He wraps an arm around her. Looks her in the eye.

MALCOLM
Tell the truth, like I did. You're not guilty of anything.
(then)
Neither am I.

KIM
What was Jimmy thinking?

MALCOLM
Damain tried to fight us. Jimmy was in fear of his life, like the night he was mugged.

KIM
But why kill?

MALCOLM
It's like he thought it was happening again, by the same person.

KIM
There's no way it was Damain.

MALCOLM
I don't know why he thought it was.

They hug.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Nobody's here except for Professor Flower, who's at the podium scribbling his thoughts on paper.

Malcolm creeps to the front row and sits.

MALCOLM
You been told?

FLOWER
I was supposed to give a lecture.
MALCOLM
I heard they canceled everything a couple of days.

FLOWER
I'm penning a lecture about how there's really no such thing as a civilized society.

MALCOLM
You know the shooter was one of your students, right?

Flower freezes.
Slams his pen down.

MALCOLM
Damn, you didn't know.
(then)
Your dry sarcasm -- nobody can read that shit, man.

FLOWER
Who was it?

MALCOLM
... It was me.

FLOWER
... You're the shooter?

MALCOLM
Basically, yeah.

FLOWER
You had something to do with this.

MALCOLM
I didn't pull the trigger. There wasn't even supposed to be a gun.

FLOWER
What the hell does that mean?

MALCOLM
The shooting was the result of an experiment that went out of control.

FLOWER
Are you out of your fucking mind?

MALCOLM
No. Very much in it.
FLOWER
What experiment?

MALCOLM
I asked you: what if I could hypnotize someone into committing a crime?

FLOWER
I guess you forgot what I said.
(repeats)
Don't fuck up now.

MALCOLM
I'm on top of it.

FLOWER
Who was the shooter?

MALCOLM
Jimmy Skopek.

FLOWER
Oh, Jesus... You're telling me you hypnotized your roommate!?

MALCOLM
Could you not yell things like that in here.

FLOWER
You bastard.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

Malcolm goes to sit in the antique chair. Flower pulls it out from under him.

MALCOLM
Fucker!

Malcolm falls on his ass. Flower puts the chair off to the side. He paces. Malcolm gets comfortable on the floor.

FLOWER
I'll have to answer questions from everyone.

MALCOLM
There's nothing to suggest hypnosis. I destroyed everything that did.

FLOWER
Oh. Great. I assume you falsified a statement, too.
MALCOLM
Barely had to lie. One detective mocked hypnotherapy.

Malcolm smirks.

FLOWER
You smile like you're mad.

MALCOLM
I'm getting away with this.

FLOWER
I'm a psychology professor. One of my students went psycho and shot up the campus.

MALCOLM
Coincidence.

FLOWER
What if people stop enrolling in my courses?

MALCOLM
Help me. To perfect whatever I'm on the verge of.

Several beats.

FLOWER
Sum it up.

MALCOLM
Jimmy couldn't remember who attacked him. But he wanted to.

FLOWER
He bought-in.

MALCOLM
While he was under, I showed him a picture of someone -- a target.

FLOWER
No mention of it after?

MALCOLM
I told him to forget me.

(then)
I said that I was instinct.

FLOWER
That shit worked?
MALCOLM
When he saw the target in-person, he fucking lost it.

FLOWER
One session?

MALCOLM
Probably why it blew up.

FLOWER
Who were you targeting?

MALCOLM
Some asshole. Trying to steal my girlfriend of three years from me.

FLOWER
God damn it, Malcolm. You made it look like shit. The press will have an orgy with this.

MALCOLM
Flashy headlines. But as they dig, they'll find nothing.

FLOWER
No, they'll find something.

MALCOLM
There's nothing. The shooter didn't even know he was hypnotized.

FLOWER
You got people killed.

Malcolm lowers his head.

MALCOLM
... I know.

FLOWER
You said there wasn't even supposed to be a gun.

MALCOLM
I told Jimmy to hurt the target. I was hoping he'd just punch Damain.

FLOWER
Instead, the guy ends up fucking dead. And Jimmy.
MALCOLM
But I've done it.
(then)
It's possible to hypnotize --

FLOWER
(interrupts)
Get out.

Malcolm scrambles up and moves to confront Flower, who turns his back on him.

MALCOLM
We could show it to your connection at the C-I --

FLOWER
(interrupts)
We're keeping this between us.

Malcolm stares at the back of Flower's head for several beats. Then rushes out. Flower sighs... Looks to the door.

INT. STAIRWELL - MINUTES LATER
Malcolm stomps as he trudges down. A door on the floor above swings open. Flower enters. Malcolm peers up at him.

FLOWER
You destroyed all the evidence?

MALCOLM
Even the backup files.

FLOWER
No going back.

MALCOLM
I don't have a clue where to go from here, to be honest.

FLOWER
How you did whatever you did -- (then)
You're gonna explain it all to me.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

Flower's behind his desk, once more giving his full attention to Malcolm, who paces before him.
MALCOLM
Step one: find someone who's been hurt. Who can't remember who did it. Or why.

FLOWER
Who wants to remember.

MALCOLM
Step two: hypnotherapy session.

FLOWER
Where they relive the event.

MALCOLM
And after, while as deep under as they're gonna go, inject a warning.

FLOWER
Show them a target, with an assurance that it's the person they're trying to remember.

MALCOLM
And establish the target as a future threat.

FLOWER
Confusing the memory.

Flower smirks.

MALCOLM
I used his free will against him.

FLOWER
By completing his memories with the wrong information.

MALCOLM
I lured him into seeing the target in-person.

FLOWER
Where he must have reimagined all the wrong shit.

MALCOLM
I made the interaction as chaotic as possible. He was threatened.

FLOWER
And he reacted with self-defense.
MALCOLM
Might as well be offense.

FLOWER
Holy shit.

MALCOLM
Helluva lot better than my dancing bum circus.

Flower nods.
Malcolm sits.

MALCOLM
Who do you know at the CIA?

FLOWER
I can't tell you that.

MALCOLM
You trust 'em?

FLOWER
I've got a trustworthy connection. That's all you need to know.

MALCOLM
Come on, I just told you my crazy shit. Tell me yours.

FLOWER
He's a liaison.

MALCOLM
... OK.

FLOWER
He secretly brings in consultants to analyze the things they publicly dismiss. Like hypnotizing people to get ahead.

MALCOLM
Every part of what I did is illegal. It's a weapon.

FLOWER
People who make new weapons don't go to jail -- they get jobs.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
So what do you think?
FLOWER
You know, it's always been my dream to covertly experiment.

MALCOLM
Here's your opportunity.

FLOWER
I have to see it for myself.

MALCOLM
Let's do this shit again.

FLOWER
I can find a suitable patient.

EXT. WOMEN'S DORMITORY - DAY
Malcolm approaches the building and stops. Police and news media crowd the front entrance.

He sneaks in through a side entrance.

INT. DORM ROOM #2/HALL - DAY
Detectives put everything of Ashley and Kim's into bags, which are piled in the hall.

Kim and Ashley watch with their arms crossed. Malcolm weaves around onlookers. Kim goes to him. They hug. Then stare at each other face-to-face, trying to hide from the all chaos around them. They keep their voices down.

KIM
I was questioned.

MALCOLM
We gotta deal with this until they officially clear us.

PERCY (O.S.)
Well, shit. What do we have here? Front page news.

Percy goes to them.

MALCOLM
Detective.

KIM
Can we have privacy, please?
PERCY
I doubt it. You're officially now Persons of Interest.

KIM
We're the victims.

PERCY
Both of your dorm rooms are a couple of crime scenes. I'll need to know where you're staying at.
(offers them his business card)
Enjoy the press.

EXT. WOMEN'S DORMITORY - DAY
Malcolm and Kim sneak out through the side entrance. The news media notice and chase them, filming and photographing.

EXT. MAIN BUILDING - MINUTES LATER
Malcolm and Kim race in.

INT. STAIRWELL - MINUTES LATER
They catch their breaths.

KIM
Get us a hotel room.
(then)
I'm going shopping.

He scoffs.

MALCOLM
Let me handle the plan.

KIM
We don't have any clothes!

MALCOLM
Shit... Buy me a few things.

KIM
Underwear and shirts?

MALCOLM
Ankle socks.

They hug.
KIM
This is terrible.

MALCOLM
We'll be OK.

EXT. HOTEL - ESTABLISHING - DAY
In NYC. Near the University.

INT. HOTEL ROOM
KNOCKING on the door.
Malcolm opens it. Kim enters followed by a bellhop pushing a cart. Atop it are a few cases for pro cameras, lighting equipment. Shopping bags.

MALCOLM
What the hell?

KIM
Surprise.

MALCOLM
We got the room for two days.

KIM
I was able to rent equipment from the University.

MALCOLM
For what?

KIM
My documentary.

MALCOLM
... On my hypnotism theories.

KIM
We're doing a sit-down interview. On camera.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT
Malcolm and Kim sit at a table eating room service meals while peeking at a muted TV.
ON TV

LIVE NEWS REPORT:

Replay footage of them running across the campus earlier. Headline reads, "PERSONS OF INTEREST."

MALCOLM

Shuts it off with a remote.

Several beats.

KIM
Every hypnotize Jimmy?

MALCOLM
... You kidding?

KIM
Have you?

MALCOLM
He mocked it.

KIM
That's not an answer.

MALCOLM
I never did.

KIM
You made homeless people dance.

MALCOLM
Don't insult me right now.

KIM
I have to ask you about the shooting in the interview.

MALCOLM
Not tonight.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Queens.

EXT. FLOWER'S HOUSE

In Queens. Malcolm knocks on the front door. It opens and Flower shows him inside.
INT. LIVING ROOM

Collections and antiques are displayed.

GINA ST. LOUIS (late-20s) lies on a sofa. She's a beauty in a business suit. Her eyes are closed. Hands are interlocked atop her stomach. Pointed at her is a pro camera. She also wears headphones.

ON HEADPHONES

A recording of a GENTLE HEARTBEAT plays.

MALCOLM

Checks her out. Flower picks up a briefcase. Then stands with Malcolm.

FLOWER

She's under.

MALCOLM

What's up with the music?

FLOWER

Sound of a normal heartbeat.

MALCOLM

(mocks)

You got her listening to a beating heart?

FLOWER

In a later session, when it's time, I'll make it a pounding heart attack.

(then)

Trying to induce adrenaline.

MALCOLM

She's our patient.

FLOWER

Gina St. Louis.

MALCOLM

A woman.

FLOWER

Out of everyone I see in my private practice, her memories are the most easily corruptible.

MALCOLM

What happened to her?
FLOWER
Moved here for a job. Hasn't made friends. Every Saturday night, she goes club-hopping.
(then)
One Sunday morning after, she woke up in a hotel room.

Malcolm braces.

FLOWER
She was alone. Naked. And what do you think?

MALCOLM
Raped.

FLOWER
She thinks date-raped.
(then)
No idea who's guilty.

MALCOLM
That's disgusting, man.

FLOWER
Well, it's the nature of what we're doing.

MALCOLM
I never thought we'd be doing this on a woman.

Flower opens the briefcase. Inside are his tazor. A small camcorder. A pistol.

FLOWER
We doing this or not?

MALCOLM
I guess.

FLOWER
You guess?

MALCOLM
Yeah. No, we're doing it.

FLOWER
To do a great thing, you have to go for it -- that's when the stars align for you.
(then)
When you get tentative, the Universe will always work against you.
EXT. POLICE HQ - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A skyscraper on Manhattan.

KIM (V.O.)
... Please.

PERCY (V.O.)
What is this?

INT. PERCY'S OFFICE

Detective Percy is behind his desk. Kim's on the edge of a chair before him.

PERCY
You're investigating a story you're in the middle of?

KIM
I wasn't there.

PERCY
Well, I respect your ambition. But I'm not saying shit for the record.

KIM
I'm wondering if hypnotism might have been involved.

Percy snickers.

PERCY
(mocks)
Yeah. Me, too. Looking forward to the toxicology reports.

KIM
Can you tell me anything?

PERCY
Kid, I'm investigating you.

KIM
Thanks for your time.

She's about to stand when:

PERCY
Stop... There's something. (then) I'd like to get your reaction to a couple of things. Wait here.

He stands and exits.
INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gina remains on the sofa. Flower and Malcolm huddle some distance away.

FLOWER
Give her the warning.

MALCOLM
We don't have a target.

FLOWER
Preliminary warning. Reinforce that she has to remember who did it.

MALCOLM
Alright.

FLOWER
I'm filming it.

MALCOLM
What? Fuck that.

FLOWER
Not for her. For us.

MALCOLM
No. Hell no.

FLOWER
We can't just display the result of an experiment. We have to document how we got there.

MALCOLM
... Shit.

Flower goes to Gina. Malcolm sneaks out a quiet sigh as he watches him remove her headphones.

INT. PERCY'S OFFICE - DAY

Percy sits on a chair beside Kim. He places the velvet ring case on the arm of her chair.

She takes it. Opens it. Sees the beautiful engagement ring for the first time.

PERCY
It was in Malcolm's possession when we searched him.
KIM
... It's an engagement ring.

PERCY
He was pissed. Said he was going to ask you to marry him.

KIM
... How long has he had it?

PERCY
When you ask him that, you should also ask him what he deleted from the various electronics in his dorm room.

KIM
I don't know anything about that.

PERCY
Still piecing it together, but we know two things: whatever it was, it's probably gone forever; and he erased it after the shooting.

KIM
I'll get him to tell me.

PERCY
Ring's catalogued in evidence. (then)
Use it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Malcolm leans against a bookshelf in the b.g. Flower sits on an armchair near Gina. They listen to her.

GINA
... Dirty dancing.

FLASHBACK - INT. CLUB - NIGHT

The place is packed. Music PULSATES.

Gina's on a crowded dance floor, dirty dancing with anyone who's willing.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Flower, Malcolm and Gina.
GINA
Everybody's a stranger. I'm really just trying to fit in.

FLASHBACK - INT. VIP ROOM
Overlooks the dance floor. Several dozen partiers are huddled in groups, all having a good time.

Gina follows a random group in.
She wanders aimlessly.
Does a shot.
Another shot.

Nobody really looks at her until SOMEBODY appears and gives her a champagne glass.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Flower, Malcolm and Gina.

GINA
In a VIP room. I snuck in. Nobody cares that I'm here.
(then)
Handed a champagne glass.

FLOWER
From who?

GINA
Nowhere.

FLASHBACK - INT. VIP ROOM
A dizzy blur.
Gina puts down the empty glass.
She's in a circle of people.
Indistinguishable faces.
Smiling. Talking. Laughing.

FLASHBACK - INT. TAXI - NIGHT
Gina's dazed in back.
DARK FIGURE sits opposite.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Flower, Malcolm and Gina.

GINA
Now it's me that can't see nobody. I'm surrounded... People without faces are talking to me... Don't know what we're talking about.

FLOWER
You're leaving.

GINA
In a cab. (then) I'm not alone.

FLOWER
Who's with you?

GINA
Went black.

FLOWER
You're entering a hotel. You're going to a --

GINA
(interrupts)
I'm not going.

FLOWER
... OK. You don't have to go in there just yet.

Flower stops the pro camera. He gets out the camcorder and starts filming as Malcolm kneels beside Gina.

Malcolm hesitates.

MALCOLM
Listen for another countdown from three. At its end --

(then)
Don't speak. Do what I say like it's instinct. Three, two, one.

Gina's still.

Malcolm leans in.
MALCOLM
Know that you're in danger.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
This isn't me. Forget me. This is you trying to remember.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
I'm instinct.
(then)
You have to remember who drugged, kidnapped, and raped you.

FLOWER
You must.

MALCOLM
That person is coming back. To hurt you again. Very soon.

FLOWER
You'll have to recognize that person.

MALCOLM
And hurt that person first.

FLOWER
You'll have to kill that person.

Malcolm hesitates. Then looks to Flower. They stare daggers into each other.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - SUNSET

Another day gone.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Malcolm enters and finds Kim dressed formally.

The table's been moved. Two chairs are positioned opposite, with pro cameras on tripods pointed at each, illuminated by lights on stands.

KIM
We're taught to do everything solo.
So we can free lance.
MALCOLM
I need something to eat.

KIM
We're doing this.

MALCOLM
It's been a long day.

KIM
Sit down.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT
Malcolm and Kim sit before the two cameras. She scribbles something on a clapperboard. Holds it near his camera.

CLAPPERBOARD
Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 1."

KIM
Tosses it.
He squirms.

MALCOLM
I got a shit posture.

KIM
Stop it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLAPPERBOARD
Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 2."

KIM
Tosses it.
Malcolm waits.

KIM
What's your education level?

MALCOLM
Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Psychology. Doctorate in research within sight.

KIM
Why psychology?
MALCOLM
When it comes to life, the most powerful thing is the Human mind.

KIM
You're probably right.

MALCOLM
I am right. Without a mind to perceive it, there's no Universe.

KIM
You're definitely wrong.

MALCOLM
I'm not wrong. If nobody can see it, then what's the point?

KIM
What's the point of oxygen?

He smirks.

MALCOLM
You learned how to be a smartass from me.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLAPPERBOARD
Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 3."

KIM
Tosses it.

Malcolm eats chips. Starts choking.

KIM
God damn it!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CAMERA'S POV
of the clapperboard.

Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 4."

It's pulled O.S. to reveal:

Malcolm with his face in the lens.
MALCOLM
Why'd you have me do this?

KIM (O.S.)
I adore you.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLAPPERBOARD
Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 5."

KIM
Tosses it.

Malcolm waits.

KIM
Talk about hypnotizing people into doing things.

MALCOLM
... I'm happy to answer a specific question.

KIM
Do you wonder if it's possible to hypnotize an unsuspecting person into doing something against their free will?

MALCOLM
... I do.

KIM
What are you taught?

MALCOLM
It's not possible.

KIM
But you wonder.

MALCOLM
I don't know.

KIM
What do you think?

MALCOLM
Hypnotism is in the category with aliens and Bigfoot -- it's easy to just imagine and speculate things.
KIM

Maybe aliens and Bigfoot do exist?

Out of sight.

MALCOLM

I doubt it.

KIM

Ever wish you could try -- to make someone do something without them ever knowing you influenced it?

MALCOLM

I'm not lazy. I can do things for myself.

KIM

Ever wish you could hypnotize me?

MALCOLM

Never.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLAPPERBOARD

Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 6."

KIM

Tosses it.

Malcolm's antsy.

KIM

How did me hanging around Damain make you feel?

MALCOLM

Kim. You know --

KIM

(interrupts)

You were prepared to fight him.

MALCOLM

I was.

KIM

Why did Jimmy have a gun?

MALCOLM

Because Jimmy was an idiot.
KIM
Hypnotism is perfect for Jimmy's case -- a victim needing to recall memories of a crime.

MALCOLM
He didn't want to remember.

KIM
What did you say to Damain?

MALCOLM
Fuck off. Asshole. Stay away from the girl that I love. (then)
Something like that.

KIM
What did he say to you?

MALCOLM
It doesn't matter.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLAPPERBOARD
Reads, "ASSHOLE - TAKE 7."

KIM
Tosses it.

Malcolm squirms.

KIM
Close your eyes.

MALCOLM
... No.

KIM
Trust me.

He does. She tosses something. It lands on his lap. He looks down and finds the velvet ring case. Opens it. Sees the ring.

KIM
Hold that up for the camera.

MALCOLM
How the fuck did you get this?
KIM
I tried interviewing that detective.

MALCOLM
You weren't supposed to see this. Not until --

KIM
(interrupts)
You ask me to be your wife.

MALCOLM
This is bullshit.

KIM
Malcolm. How long?

MALCOLM

KIM
You've had it for months?!

MALCOLM
It needs to be the right moment.
(pockets the case)
Right now ain't it.

KIM
They know you deleted files.

MALCOLM
... I don't --

KIM
(interrupts)
I love you. Don't lie to me about this. Tell me what you deleted.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
Pics. Videos.

KIM
Of what?

MALCOLM
Jimmy and me.
(then)
Partying. Using a few drugs. I was afraid of getting expelled for it.
KIM
That better be the truth.

MALCOLM
You're making me feel guilty.

KIM
Something's on my radar.

MALCOLM
Well... That's a wrap.

He storms off.

She sighs.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Middle of the night in the dark. Malcolm and Kim lie in bed. They're both awake, preoccupied with their thoughts.

She crawls to him... They kiss... Make out... Take off their night clothes and start making love.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Queens.

EXT. FLOWER'S HOUSE

A cab pulls up.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Flower's wearing his best suit. He's in front of a mirror tying a tie.

KNOCKS at the front door get his attention. He goes to the door, opens it and finds:

KIM
Hi there!

FLOWER
... Hello?
KIM
My name's Kim Jansing. I'm dating Malcolm Graves.

They shake.

FLOWER
Oh. Where's Malcolm?

KIM
I came alone.

FLOWER
Oh... OK?

KIM
I don't know if Malcolm said, but I'm a broadcast journalism major working on a documentary.

FLOWER
... I don't recall that one being mentioned.

KIM
It's about hypnotism. I was hoping we could talk. On the record.

FLOWER
... I have somewhere to be.

KIM

Several beats.

He smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Flower sits on the armchair. Kim on the sofa. She aims her phone at him and snaps a pic.

ON PHONE
Pic of an ass ugly blur.

KIM
Chuckles.
FLOWER
Is that what you kids are all doing these days? It's a little rude.

KIM
Sorry. I'm recording the audio of our conversation. I need a pic to put on screen.

FLOWER
Well, I'm happy to pose.

KIM
Let's try that one again.

She takes another pic.

ON PHONE
Pic of Flower smiling.

KIM
Puts her phone on a coffee table, where she has it record.

FLOWER
Malcolm told me they confiscated his phone.

KIM
Mine, too. I just had to buy this one new.

FLOWER
That's not fair. Having to focus on your studies amid --

KIM (interrupts)
Are you familiar with any cases where lines were crossed in hypnotherapy?

FLOWER
... Not sure how you mean.

KIM
Someone trying to fill a patient's head with shit. Give 'em thoughts that aren't really theirs.

FLOWER
Hypnotherapy is a profession. A livelihood. There's no money to be made from abuse.
KIM
To know free will's unbreakable, somebody must have tried to break it, and failed.

FLOWER
I suppose.

KIM
You're not aware of a single case of abuse?

FLOWER
I'm not.

KIM
Absorption, disassociation, and the mind-fuck of suggestion.

(then)
That's the recipe for getting into somebody's head -- is it not?

FLOWER
I try to help.

KIM
And corporations? Governments? Do they use hypnotism?

FLOWER
No. But they brainwash.

KIM
Brainwash?

FLOWER
With corporations, it's advertising. They replicate your fantasy and taunt you with it until you think you're inspired, and you buy their product.

KIM
I'll give you that.

FLOWER
Punch their logo and slogan into your head relentlessly, until you remember them better than your own childhood.

KIM
What about Government?
FLOWER
Public grade school. They pay for books full of shit they approve of, all of which becomes the foundation for everything you know.

She squirms.

FLOWER
For twelve years, you think you're learning, but you're really just being told things -- what language to speak, what systems to use, what happened in history.

KIM
I don't want this all over the place with conspiracy theories.

FLOWER
Columbus didn't discover America. The Declaration of Independence was approved on July second and signed in August; forget the fourth of July. And in case you haven't noticed, we're not all created equal.

(then)
They repeat things. Over and over. Get us locked in. Beating us down, until we think we're standing tall.

KIM
Got a point?

FLOWER
Hypnotism is not how the powerful have chosen to control minds.

KIM
What if you wanted to kill a person with hands that aren't yours? Maybe your ticket's hypnotism?

FLOWER
Conspiracy theory.

KIM
Has Malcolm said anything to you about the shooting?

FLOWER
... He's my patient.

KIM
... Patient?
FLOWER
Doctor-patient confidentiality is going to prevent me from telling you anything. I'm sorry.

KIM
He hasn't mentioned it.

FLOWER
Communication's a tricky thing. (then) I have to go now.

She grabs her phone and stops recording. He gets out a smartphone of his own and aims it at her. She smiles as he snaps a pic.

ON PHONE
Pic of Kim.

FLOWER
Nods.

FLOWER
To put with your number. So I can reach you if this interview might be resumed.

EXT. FLOWER'S HOUSE - DAY

Up the street. Malcolm gets out of a taxi, then leans back in to see the DRIVER.

MALCOLM
Can you wait?

DRIVER (O.S.)
Sure thing, pal.

He shuts the door. The tires SCREECH as they spin. The cab speeds away.

MALCOLM
Fucker!

Tires SCREECH as they lock up. The cab suddenly stops. Kim hurries out to it. Climbs in back.

Malcolm hides. Watches the cab race down the street, around a corner, and out of the neighborhood.

Flower exits his house. He starts down a walkway toward the sidewalk. Malcolm speed-walks to him and confronts him.
MALCOLM
What the hell was that?

FLOWER
You're dating a wanna-be reporter.

MALCOLM
She's harmless.

FLOWER
She interviewed me! On the record, for some bullshit.

MALCOLM
She doesn't know anything.

FLOWER
She definitely wants to know.

MALCOLM
I'm sorry.

FLOWER
She didn't tell you she was coming here? Sniffing around.

MALCOLM
She's stubborn.

FLOWER
This is a fucking problem. We'll talk about it after. We're late.

MALCOLM
For what?

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Countless skyscrapers.

INT. GENERIC OFFICE SPACE

Random floor of a skyscraper. It has furnished cubicles, offices and conference rooms. But not a single person until Flower and Malcolm step off an elevator and look around.

MALCOLM
Business ain't exactly booming, is it?

FLOWER
It's like a "standby" status.
MALCOLM
A what?

FLOWER
I don't know where he is, but we're here to see my connection.

MALCOLM
Asshole. You should'a told me.

FLOWER
I'm doing the talking.

MALCOLM
Back up. Where are we?

FLOWER
This place is run by the CIA.
(then)
Built-in excuse for being late -- we can say we couldn't find the place.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Seated together on one side of a long table are Flower and Malcolm. At the table's end is AGENT BOB WALKER (50s).

WALKER
... Can you make a woman think she's a man, or a man think he's a woman?

FLOWER
Sorry, Bob.

WALKER
They don't give me interns. Can you hypnotize a dog into making coffee?

MALCOLM
It doesn't work on animals.

FLOWER
Get serious.

WALKER
Nobody thinks that hypnotism can be a means to get ahead.

FLOWER
Methods and theories change.

WALKER
Alright, tell me what you're up to.
FLOWER
We have a guinea pig -- an innocent, unsuspecting, female civilian.

WALKER
And what trick is your female guinea pig gonna do for me?

FLOWER
Kill.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
It's possible.

FLOWER
Already did it once -- University shooting a few days ago.

MALCOLM
The shooter was hypnotized.

WALKER
To do what?

FLOWER
Target someone.

WALKER
You're saying you can make a random person an assassin. Without them knowing it. For real.

FLOWER
This conversation isn't happening.

WALKER
I say that.

FLOWER
I always wanted to say it.

WALKER
I need proof.

FLOWER
We're doing our experiment again. This time, filming it. Making a step-by-step demonstration for you.

WALKER
You can really do it.
This kid did it in his dorm. If he can do that, what can America's most determined enemies do?

What do you want?

With a successful demonstration in hand, we want jobs. Explaining it. Experimenting. Using it.

That all?

We want to disappear.

Malcolm's puzzled.

Several beats.

Back in the day, my boss rejected you because you were desperate.

Now you're the boss.

Walker has the keys to vending machines. He opens a few and steals goodies as Flower and Malcolm watch.

Don't tell the taxpayer.

I'm the taxpayer, you bastard.

What's "disappear"?

Shit, Wilson. You're not dragging him down that road, are you?

I was gonna tell him.

Tell me what?
"Disappear" means you die.

Figuratively.

And get reborn a government agent with a six-figure salary.

Most people apply to the CIA like any other job.

But when you're breaking the law, there's a different protocol.

An asset guilty of a crime has to be snuck through the back door.

Still call it the Asset Protection Program?

Where criminals we can use are given new identities.

In exchange for ten years of service in the intel community.

Hell yes, my friend.

Fingerprints and dental records are linked to your new identity.

We'd be kept out of sight.
WALKER
No social media. No talking to your friends and family ever again.

FLOWER
Suddenly, we're missing.

WALKER
Eventually, presumed dead.

MALCOLM
Are you fucking --

FLOWER
(interrupts)
Don't be so quick to dismiss it.

Walker tosses them sodas.

WALKER
Do your experiment. Bring me your demonstration.
(them)
This meeting never happened.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A small business.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

Dance beat #2 PLAYS on a STEREO. An instructor teaches women a routine.

Kim and Romona sit together off to one side. Kim holds her phone as it records.

ROMONA
... I never saw what he did or said to the bums. But it's amazing that it worked.

KIM
So those are real bums.

ROMONA
They're from an alley just around the block.

KIM
Are they still hypnotized?
ROMONA
Like I said, I have no idea how it all works.

KIM
Did Malcolm flirt with you?

ROMONA
He was hellbent on his dissertation the entire time.

KIM
You got a copy of that beat?

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY

Manhattan. Flower eats a candy bar. Malcolm waits for them to get privacy, then:

MALCOLM
Asset Protection Program?!

FLOWER
Don't yell it.

MALCOLM
I'm not disappearing.

FLOWER
You're a Person of Interest in the University shooting.

MALCOLM
So far, so good.

FLOWER
Somewhere, you slipped up.

Several beats.

MALCOLM
Kim spoke to a detective who said they know I deleted things.

FLOWER
Now you have an escape route.

MALCOLM
Disappearing has been your plan all along.

FLOWER
We'll be reborn in a place where we can do great work.
MALCOLM
I don't want a new life.

FLOWER
Sure, we'll be like what the unknown carpenter is to my chair, but --

MALCOLM
(interrupts)
Fuck your chair.

Several beats.

FLOWER
When I was in my thirties, my wife divorced me.

MALCOLM
Finally, something logical.

FLOWER
It became my dream to completely start over.

MALCOLM
I'm happy with my life.

FLOWER
I tried to disappear. They rejected me. I moved on. But I never really started over.

MALCOLM
What about my doctorate?

FLOWER
CIA can help.

MALCOLM
I got fucking family, man.

FLOWER
We're a team. We can do conspiracy theory shit. What's there to be mad about here? Come on.

Malcolm reaches in a pocket. Gets out the ring case. Opens it for Flower. He sees the ring.

MALCOLM
I love her.

FLOWER
You have to dump her.
MALCOLM

... What?

FLOWER
How many clandestine agents do you think have a wife who's a reporter?

Malcolm pockets the case.

Clenches a fist.

MALCOLM
You piece of shit. Mother fucker. I should beat your ass down --

FLOWER
(interrupts)
Alright! I'm sorry.

MALCOLM
Fuck you.

FLOWER
I apologize.

MALCOLM
This is bullshit.

Malcolm paces.

Flower shadows.

FLOWER
Hey, you came to me. You smiled like you were mad. Remember?

MALCOLM
I thought I had control.

FLOWER
You do. So take it... And destroy Kim's documentary.

MALCOLM
What the fuck is wrong with you?

FLOWER
It's better for us if it doesn't exist.

MALCOLM
It's her thesis. I promised I'd help her make it.
FLOWER
Tonight's the night. We're doing the experiment. We're disappearing.

Several beats.

FLOWER
Steal her new phone. Video footage. Her notes. Bring it all to my office later.

Flower leaves.

Malcolm stands alone.

EXT. ALLEY #2 - DAY


KIM
I'll pay you to talk.

DICK
Don't mock me.

KIM
Actually, I'm wondering if you're a victim.

DICK
Do I look like one?

KIM
Society's let you down.

DICK
No apology needed.

She taps the stereo.

KIM
Feel like dancing?

DICK
I don't really know how to.

KIM
Do you lose control when the beat starts playing?
DICK
Lady, I'm sleeping. Can you just leave me --

She hits "play." Dance BEAT blasts from the stereo. Dick scrambles up. To starting formation. Commences the routine. Dances with energy like a pro until he accidentally kicks his hut down.

She hits "stop." The beat stops. He lies exhausted. She puts her phone away. Gets money out of her purse and tosses it to him.

KIM
I'm sorry.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The phone RINGS. Malcolm enters. He runs across the room and over the bed. Answers.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
Hello?

PERCY (V.O.)
(on phone)
About time.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
Detective.

PERCY (V.O.)
(on phone)
Listen up. I need you to come see me tomorrow.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
Uh, I'm kinda busy --

PERCY (V.O.)
(on phone)
I don't care. You're coming to see me tomorrow.

MALCOLM
(into phone)
... OK. Tomorrow.

PERCY (V.O.)
(on phone)
So did she say yes?
Malcolm hangs up. Gets the ring case out. Lies on the bed. Toys with the ring.

EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - SUNSET

Another day gone.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Malcolm's curled in a ball on the floor beside the bed. He kisses the ring.

MALCOLM
I never deserved you.
(then)
Kimberly, I'm sorry.

He scrambles up. Pockets the case.
Gathers footage from the pro cameras.
Gathers all of Kim's notes.
Goes through her stuff.
Exits with a full plastic shopping bag.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Nobody's out except Malcolm, who carries the bag.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE/HALL - NIGHT

KNOCKING at the door. Flower opens it and finds Malcolm out there pacing... He confronts Flower.

MALCOLM
Let's do it.

FLOWER
I've already started.

Malcolm enters and gives him the bag. Flower rummages through it, not finding what he's looking for.

FLOWER
I don't see her new phone.
MALCOLM

She has it.

Flower shuts the door. Malcolm notices Gina in the lounge area lying on a sofa. Her eyes are closed and she's wearing headphones.

ON HEADPHONES

A recording of POUNDING HEARTBEAT plays.

MALCOLM

Ponders a thought.

MALCOLM

We still need a target.

From behind, a tazor presses his neck. ZAP! Electricity BUZZES. Malcolm falls to the floor unconscious at the feet of Flower, who grips the tazor.

INT. TAXI #2 (NYC HIGHWAY) - NIGHT

Struggling to get through traffic. Kim's in back. Answers her RINGING phone.

KIM

(into phone)

Who's this?

FLOWER (V.O.)

(on phone)

Professor Flower.

KIM

(into phone)

Oh... OK? Hi there.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower sits at his desk. Rocks back-and-forth in his chair while on his phone. Fiddles with a roll of duct tape.

FLOWER

(into phone)

In addition to teaching, I practice hypnotherapy. I've got a patient willing to let you observe a session.

KIM (V.O.)

(on phone)

Tonight?
FLOWER
(into phone)
Yeah. I feel bad. About kicking you out earlier.

INT. TAXI #2
Kim thinks about it.

KIM
(into phone)
Uh... At your house?

FLOWER (V.O.)
(on phone)
No, the University.

KIM
(into phone)
I'm in slow traffic.

FLOWER (V.O.)
(on phone)
We'll be here for a while.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - NIGHT
Flower opens his briefcase. Snatches the pistol. Pulls the slide back. A bullet CLICKS into its chamber. He tucks it in his waistline.

He glances at Gina on the sofa... Then at Malcolm, who's on the three-hundred-year-old chair. His arms, legs and chest are duct taped to it. His mouth is taped. He's unconscious.

Flower grabs the camcorder. Goes to Gina.

INT. TAXI #2 - NIGHT
Battling traffic. Kim gets on her phone.

INT. HOTEL ROOM
The phone RINGS in the dark.

INT. TAXI #2
Kim hangs up and tries to think. The cab's horn HONKS, which unnerves her.
INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Malcolm hasn't moved. Flower sits on the edge of the sofa beside Gina, who's not wearing the headphones anymore.

FLOWER
... You're in the hotel room.

GINA
It's black.  
(then)
Except for one lamp in the corner of the room.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOTEL ROOM #2 - NIGHT

A dizzy blur.

Lit by a single dim lamp.

Gina can barely stand. The Dark Figure approaches her and gives her a champagne glass. She drinks from it.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower films:

GINA
Another champagne glass. I'm drinking more poison. I'm already fucked up.  
(then)
Too dark to see him.

FLOWER
Or her.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOTEL ROOM #2

Gina drops the glass... She collapses onto the bed... Rolls onto her back... The Dark Figure pounces on her.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower films:

GINA
(then)
I never see him.
FLOWER
Her.

GINA
... Her.

FLOWER
Is it black?

GINA
Totally dark.

FLOWER
That's the end of that.
(then)
But it's not over. It's happening to you again, Gina. Tonight.

Several beats.

FLOWER
Listen for another countdown from three. When it concludes --
(then)
Don't speak.

Malcolm comes to... Realizes he's tied... Looks around and sees Flower busy with Gina.

FLOWER
Three. Two. One. Forget that I'm speaking. What you're being told is from your own instinct.

Malcolm groans. Flower glances at him. Then looks back to Gina and talks louder.

FLOWER
Gina, the person who hurt you is almost here. To give you another glass of poison.

She gets tense. Malcolm starts squirming, but the tape is too thick to rip. The chair CREAKS.

FLOWER
You're going to remember. Going to recognize this person.

Flower gets his phone.

FLOWER
You'll stop her. You won't let her escape you unpunished.
He holds it above her.

FLOWER
Save yourself. Save others. This will be done when you kill her.
(then)
Open your eyes.

She does. Sees what he wants.

FLOWER
Close your eyes.

She does. Lies still.

FLOWER
That's her. It's not a man. Of all people, it's a woman. Probably why you can't remember. Probably how she thought she was going to get away with it.

Malcolm groans louder. He jerks from side-to-side, making the chair CREAK on the verge of snapping.

FLOWER
The pain you feel, she's done it to others. But only you can --

The chair's arm SNAPS off. Flower snaps his attention to Malcolm, who gives Flower the finger.

FLOWER
Sense the unraveling.
(then)
Chaos awaits you, Gina.

Malcolm tries slicing tape around his chest with the jagged wood, still taped to his forearm.

Flower pockets the camcorder and goes to Malcolm. Punches his nose, leaving him bloodied.

Malcolm dives off his tip-toes. Flower grabs the chair and swings it. It flies through the air and lands on its side with Malcolm, who's stuck.

Flower goes to Gina.

FLOWER
Remember your pain when you punish her. The confusion will end when you kill her.

He puts the headphones on her.
ON HEADPHONES

POUNDING HEARTBEAT.

FLOWER

Goes to Malcolm and kicks him in the stomach. Watches him struggle to breathe.

    FLOWER
    I'm doing you a favor. We're still a team here.

FLOWER goes to a shelf.

    FLOWER
    You broke my fucking chair. Good thing I'm not taking it with me.

He opens a bottle of wine. Finds a single champagne glass and fills it. Malcolm watches, catching his breath.

    FLOWER
    I'll cut you free of the tape when the experiment's completed. (then)
    Because of the target.

FLOWER goes and retrieves his phone. He returns and holds it above Malcolm.

ON PHONE

The pic he took of Kim.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Nobody's out except Kim, who's got her purse.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Flower drags the chair with Malcolm into a connected room used for storage. All the while, Malcolm swipes at him.

Flower gets out the tazor and holds it inches from Malcolm's face. ZAP! Electricity BUZZES.

    FLOWER
    I'll roast your nuts.

KNOCKING O.S. on the door.
FLOWER
You've ruined your life. Because of me, you can restart clean.
(then)
You're welcome.

He exits and shuts the door. Malcolm tries cutting tape with the broken chair arm.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Gina hasn't moved. Flower shuts the door behind Kim.

KIM
Sorry. City traffic.

FLOWER
Session itself is over. But you can ask her about it.

KIM
... Well, I guess I'll take whatever I can get.

FLOWER
Let me wake her.

INT. BACK ROOM

Malcolm jerks violently. The chair's other arm SNAPS off.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Kim hears and looks toward the back room. Flower appears beside her, startling her. He holds out the champagne glass for her to take.

FLOWER
Can you hold his for her?

KIM
Yeah. Sure.

FLOWER
Special occasion.

INT. BACK ROOM

Malcolm can't uncover his mouth. Tries slicing tape around one of his legs. Has some leverage with his arms free.
INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Kim has the glass. She follows Flower. Stands over him as he sits beside Gina.

KIM
What's up with the headphones?

FLOWER
Easy listening afterward is proven to relieve stress.

ON HEADPHONES

POUNDING HEARTBEAT.

FLOWER
Takes them off of Gina.

KIM
It's like she isn't here.

FLOWER
Listen for another countdown from three. At its conclusion, wake up.
(then)
Three. Two. One!

Gina's eyes open. She rockets up to a sitting position and starts breathing heavily. Looks to Flower... Then Kim.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOTEL ROOM #2

Gina struggles to stand... The Dark Figure approaches her... Dizziness steadies... Blur focuses... Features of the Dark Figure become more clear... Long hair. Curvaceous figure... The Dark Figure is... Or becomes... Kim, who offers Gina a champagne glass.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower smirks as Gina stares at Kim, who holds the glass out for Gina to take.

KIM
For you.

FLOWER
Cheers.
Gina hesitates... Abruptly swipes the glass. Backhand smacks Kim, who drops her purse. Gina chokes her. Kim stumbles backward, gagging. Slams a wall.

Flower gets the camcorder out.

Kim punches Gina, who's unfazed.

FLOWER
Gina, kill the bitch.

KIM
No! What the fuck?

INT. BACK ROOM

Malcolm's halfway to freeing a leg. Hears the COMMOTION O.S. Cuts faster.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE


KIM
You're shitting me.

FLOWER
Kill her!

Kim and Gina trade blows. Gina constantly lunges back for more. She won't let Kim escape. They tackle each other.

INT. BACK ROOM

Malcolm gets his leg free. Stands on it... Balances... Hops backward... Leaps at the wall. The chair SPLINTERS. He tumbles. Slams the floor.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower hears and glances at the back room. But continues filming Kim and Gina batteling. Kim flees to the door.

KIM
Snap her out of it!
FLOWER

Sorry, kid.

Kim exits.

INT. HALL

Kim races away.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Gina chases in pursuit of Kim. Flower intercepts her. Grabs her wrist. Makes her grip the pistol. She exits.

INT. HALL

Kim stops and looks back.
Gina aims the pistol at her.
BANG!

Kim dives to the floor.
The bullet ZIPS past.

INT. BACK ROOM

Malcolm looks toward the shot as he tears all the rest of the tape and discards the pieces of the chair.

INT. HALL

Kim scrambles to a stairwell door.
Gina pursues while aiming.
BANG!

Kim opens the door. THUD! Back-shoulder wound. She cries out. Exits.
INT. BACK ROOM
Malcolm uncovers his mouth. Gasps for air.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE
Flower pockets the camcorder... Snatches Kim's purse. Steals her new phone.

INT. STAIRWELL
Kim hobbles down to the ground floor. Leaves behind a trail of blood.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE
Flower has the tazor. Heads for the back room.

INT. STAIRWELL
Gina follows the blood, zombie-like.

INT. BACK ROOM
Flower enters. Freezes upon discovering something on the floor. A pile of broken wood -- his chair.


INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE
Malcolm rears the wood back like a bat. Takes a home run swing. Flower ducks. Attacks with the tazor. Electricity BUZZES. Malcolm hacks it out of his hand.

MALCOLM
Where's Kim?

FLOWER
It's working.
INT. AUDITORIUM

Kim enters. GUNSHOT O.S. A bullet CLANGS off the door. She screams. Scampers down aisle #1.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Malcolm's distracted by the shot. Flower gets hold of the chair leg. Rips it from him. Tosses it.

FLOWER
This is the greatest opportunity of your life.

MALCOLM
I'm saving her from this.

FLOWER
I can't let you.

They trade punches. Flower gets knocked the fuck out. He falls and drops the camcorder.

Malcolm snatches it. Pockets it. Retrieves the chair leg and hurls it like a tomahawk. Pelts Flower as he comes to.

MALCOLM
God damn right, I'm worthy.

FLOWER
Bastard!

Malcolm exits.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Gina enters and surveys.

Kim crawls along a center row toward aisle #2. She peeks up and looks back.

HER POV

of Gina, who starts down aisle #1.

INT. STAIRWELL

Malcolm hurries down. Notices the blood.
MALCOLM

Shit.

INT. FLOWER'S OFFICE

Flower staggers to his desk. He snatches up his office phone and dials 911. Waits until someone answers.

FLOWER

(into phone)

Help! Thank God. There's an active shooter at this location.

Listens.

FLOWER

(into phone)

Female. Late-twenties.

Listens.

FLOWER

(into phone)

Couple of us were hostages. But we escaped her. Now she's hunting us.

(then)

Fucking insane!

Hangs up.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Gina hurries down aisle #1, peering up and down every row as she passes them.

KIM

Crawls into aisle #2 just before:

GINA

Reaches that row on the other side. She sees the blood and follows it.

MALCOLM

Creeps down aisle #1.

MALCOLM

Gina.

Gina turns.
KIM
Peeks up.
MALCOLM
Approaches Gina.

MALCOLM
Take it easy. Listen to me. You're under hypnosis right now.
(then)
Three, two, one. Wake up.

She aims the gun at him. He raises his arms. Her eyes are dripping tears, but doesn't blink.

KIM
Waves at him.
MALCOLM
Notices her down near the front. Sees her turn toward the stage and descend to crawl.

GINA
Shifts focus back to the blood.
MALCOLM
Runs down aisle #1.
KIM
Rounds the front row.
MALCOLM
Does the same on his end. Motions for her to keep coming, which she does.

GINA
Follows the blood into aisle #2. Proceeds down toward the stage.
KIM
Struggles to crawl. She stands and presses a wound as she hobbles.

MALCOLM
Stay down!
KIM
Help me!

GINA
Aims at her.

BANG!

MALCOLM
Tackles Kim.

The bullet ZIPS past.

GINA

MALCOLM
She wants you, not me.

KIM
What's happening?

MALCOLM
Stay behind me.

KIM
Malcolm!

MALCOLM
On your feet.
(then)
Back us up.

Malcolm and Kim stand. Kim uses Malcolm to try and stay out of Gina's view as she fast approaches.

MALCOLM
Gina, don't!
(then)
You're being taken advantage of all over again.

Kim guides Malcolm back... Up stairs to the stage... Gina follows them up.

EXT. COURTYARD

Sirens BLARE O.S. on approach.
INT. AUDITORIUM


Suddenly, the stage lights all come on at once. Malcolm and Kim use a hand to shield their eyes.

FLOWER
Stop right there, Gina.

Gina stops. Flower emerges from backstage. He's got the plastic bag full of Kim's documentary-related materials, and his briefcase.

FLOWER
Malcolm. The camcorder.

MALCOLM
Only if Kim gets out of here.

FLOWER
I have to go all the way.

KIM
You're all crazy!

EXT. COURTYARD

Sirens BLARE.

Policemen invade.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Sirens BLARE O.S. outside.

Flower, Malcolm, Kim and Gina.

FLOWER
He's protecting this woman, and you know why.
(then)
Close your eyes.

MALCOLM
He's telling you what to think.

FLOWER
Gina, he was there that night. You saw him. In the VIP room.

Gina closes her eyes.
FLASHBACK - INT. VIP ROOM
Gina's in the circle of people.
Indistinguishable faces.
Smiling. Talking. Laughing.

INT. AUDITORIUM
Sirens BLARE O.S. outside.
Kim pulls Malcolm, who won't budge.
Flower gets in Gina's ear.

FLOWER
They hurt people.

MALCOLM
It's confusion.

KIM
Let's run!

FLASHBACK - INT. VIP ROOM
Gina has a glass. The group raise their glasses for a toast. Malcolm joins the group... Taps Gina's glass with his.

INT. AUDITORIUM
Sirens BLARE O.S. outside.
Kim pulls Malcolm. He starts backing up with her, continuing to shield her.
Flower's in Gina's ear.

FLOWER
Open your eyes.

She does.

FLOWER
FIRE!

BANG!

THUD-THUD!

Flower dives on Malcolm and finds the camcorder. Their eyes meet. Malcolm's afraid. Flower's disappointed. He takes off backstage.

Gina lowers the gun.

COP (O.S.)
Don't move!

She turns.

POLICEMEN
Aim pistols at her.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

GINA
Drops dead.

POLICEMEN
Advance down each aisle, methodically checking each row.

MALCOLM AND KIM
Bleed out. He gets on her and puts pressure on one of her wounds. They stare at each other, knowing this is the end.

MALCOLM
Don't forgive me.

KIM
You tried to save me.

MALCOLM
It's my fault.

KIM
Don't let me die first.

MALCOLM
I'll be here.

KIM
Whatever's happening, I know this isn't what you wanted.

MALCOLM
I don't know what I wanted.
KIM
I forgive you.

MALCOLM
Take it back.

KIM
You tried.

MALCOLM
I did this... Shit, what the fuck have I done?!

KIM
You took a bullet for me.

MALCOLM
That shit went through me.

They touch each other's faces.

KIM
I love you.

MALCOLM
Love you, too.

He reaches in a pocket and reveals the case. He opens it and gets the ring.

They hold hands with the ring in the middle. With bloody lips, they kiss.

DETECTIVE PERCY
Leads policemen onto the stage.

MALCOLM AND KIM
Lie in a sea of their own blood, dead.

FADE TO BLACK.

WALKER (V.O.)
Damn. What the fuck happened?

FLOWER (V.O.)
I bet that's the last question he was asking himself.

WALKER (V.O.)
Tragedy.
EXT. NYC - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Countless skyscrapers.

FLOWER (V.O.)
People fail all the time.

INT. GENERIC OFFICE SPACE

"Standby" status.

FLOWER (V.O.)
What can I say? To do a great thing, you have to go for it -- that's when the stars align for you.
(then)
When you get tentative, the Universe will always work against you.

WALKER (V.O.)
Great thing -- like murder?

FLOWER (V.O.)
Greatness isn't always good.

INT. OFFICE

Agent Walker's behind a desk. Professor Flower sits before him with his face bandaged.

WALKER
Blew up on you, a little.

FLOWER
It's a weapon.

WALKER
Congratulations.
(then)
Welcome to a new life.

They shake.

FADE OUT.

FLOWER (V.O.)
This world is so fucked up.

THE END