

NIGHTMARE CREEK

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS BEHIND BAKER FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Deafening rain pours, so intense that each drop sounds like a thousand hammers striking the earth.

ANDY (10, in rain soaked pajamas) stumbles through the underbrush, branches whipping against his face. The wind lashes at him, making every step a struggle.

He holds his hand against his belly as he trips over a fallen log, falling face first into the mud.

He scrambles to his feet, mud clinging to his skin. His untied hiking boots slip off in the chaos but he tries, barefoot and desperate.

EXT. WOODS - CREEK - NIGHT

The swollen, thrashing current separates Andy from the impending danger behind him. There's a small pier, maybe six feet long, hanging over the rushing water.

Andy runs onto the wooden boards, looking over his shoulder, fear in his eyes. He jumps into the water.

The shadowy figure of a BOY (15) runs after him. He stops at the edge, but we can't see his face.

EXT. IN THE WATER - NIGHT

The storm's roar drowns out Andy's screams. His arms flail as he fights the rough current, but he's too weak. His teeth chatter as he slowly gives up.

EXT. AT THE EDGE OF THE CREEK - NIGHT

The Boy wades into the water, calling out a name we can't hear, as he watches Andy's body disappear into the muck.

TITLE CARD: NIGHTMARE CREEK

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

Sunny and bright. Open fields and sparse trees flank the burning asphalt of Highway 75.

SUPER: TEXAS, 25 YEARS LATER

EXT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

The driver's side wheel spins against the pavement, fast and free. Upbeat pop music plays through the open windows.

CASSIE HARRIS (25, pretty but serious) drives, sunglasses on, one hand out the window, the other hand on the wheel. She belts along to the lyrics in her own little world.

As she cruises, the empty Texas countryside is slowly replaced by brand new town home and single home developments with names such as Cyprus Ridge, Cattleman's Crossing, and Magnolia Fields.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Ahead, a sign reads WELCOME TO BONHAM. BIRTHPLACE OF OWEN HARRIS.

Then Cassie spots a police cruiser parked on the side of the road, about 50 yards ahead.

She slams on the brakes, hoping for the best. Through the rear view mirror, she sees the flashing lights and hears the sirens. She exhales and her face tightens.

CASSIE

FUCK!

She turns down the volume as she pulls to the side of the road. The cruiser parks behind her.

She smooths her windblown hair in the rear view mirror, as she checks out MICAH HUDSON (25, in uniform) behind the wheel of the cruiser.

EXT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

Micah's boots crunch gravel as he saunters to Cassie's car, his small notebook in hand. Aviator sunglasses hide his eyes and his hat blocks the sun.

EXT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie pushes up her sunglasses as Micah stops outside the driver's side door.

MICAH

License and registration, ma'am.

CASSIE
This is a rental, so hold on.

MICAH
I'll wait.

He stares out as Cassie digs through the glove box. She pulls out the paperwork. Then removes her ID from her wallet. She swallows as she hands them over with a heavy sigh. She doesn't have time for this.

Micah looks them over. Then he compares the ID to Cassie. He pauses, briefly.

MICAH (cont'd)
Cassie Fuckin' Harris?

She eyes him, unsure of his tone.

CASSIE
Yes?

Micah swipes off his sunglasses, revealing his crystal blue eyes. He smiles his 1000 watt smile.

MICAH
It's Micah! Micah Hudson!

CASSIE
Micah? They let you be a cop?

MICAH
Hell yeah. And you were doing 90 in a 70. What do you have to say for yourself?

CASSIE
I'm sorry?

MICAH
I'm gonna have to bring you in.

CASSIE
What?

MICAH
I'm kidding. Just don't let me catch you doing it again.

CASSIE
I won't. Promise.

Micah laughs as he returns Cassie's ID and paperwork.

MICAH
Your daddy's hot shit around here.

CASSIE
Yeah, I know.

MICAH
I'm surprised they ain't throwin' him
a whole parade.

CASSIE
He wouldn't like that.

MICAH
Yeah, I figured. Molly and I will be
there tomorrow, though.

Cassie's eyebrows furrow.

CASSIE
Molly?

MICAH
Yeah, used to be Molly Carter. We got
married like ten years ago.

CASSIE
I don't want to be rude, but I just
got off a really fucked up flight and
I really need to go to get some
sleep. Are we done?

He taps the car door/open window with his glasses.

MICAH
Sure thing. Nice to see you again,
Cassie. Drive safe.

CASSIE
Will do.

Micah smiles as he walks away. He puts his sunglasses back
on as he hears Cassie turn over her ignition.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

Micah climbs behind the wheel as Cassie drives away. He jots
down her license plate number on a small notepad, the
scratch of his pen cutting through the silence as his smile
turns to a grimace.

Cassie's long gone, but Micah stares at the empty road, lost
in thought.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - FRONT CURB - DAY

A two-story home on a corner lot, adorned with lush grass, plaster columns, and a wrap-around porch. Rocking chairs gently sway in the breeze.

Cassie parks her car against the curb.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

She rolls up the windows and unlatches the trunk.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Cassie hauls her suitcase up the brick steps, leaving it to the side as she opens the screen door.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Cassie tugs her luggage over the threshold and lets the screen door slam behind her with a smack. Closing her eyes, she takes a deep breath.

OWEN (V/O)

Who's slammin' my front door?

CASSIE

Daddy! It's me!

OWEN HARRIS (late 50s, tall, weatherworn) emerges from the hall, his boots muffled by the fraying runner.

OWEN

I raised you better than that!

CASSIE

I'm sorry, Daddy. My hands are full.

She stands on her toes as they hug.

OWEN

Welcome home, Ladybug.

CASSIE

Thanks, Daddy.

He releases her and effortlessly lifts the suitcase.

OWEN

How was your flight?

Owen takes the suitcase down the hall. Cassie follows.

CASSIE

Awful. We were delayed on the tarmac almost two hours then there was an issue with my rental car.

OWEN

What was the issue?

CASSIE

Stupid, really. The location at DFW only had electric cars, so I had to drive to another location to get something that used gas.

OWEN

You always get what you want, don'tcha?

Owen smirks knowingly. Cassie shakes her head.

OWEN (cont'd)

I cleaned up your old room for ya. Fresh sheets and everything.

CASSIE

I'll thank Luisa next time I see her.

OWEN

She'll be here tomorrow.

CASSIE

I'm surprised she's still putting up with your cranky old ass this long.

OWEN

Watch your mouth, young lady.

CASSIE

Yes, sir.

She follows him up the stairs, past faded portraits of family members through the years.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - CASSIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lace curtains flutter in the breeze. Mopped wooden floors shine in the sunlight.

Owen drops her suitcase beneath a window.

OWEN

I assume you'll be wanting to freshen up and probably take a nap.

CASSIE

Absolutely.

OWEN

Left you a fresh towel in the bathroom. Come on down when you're ready for dinner.

CASSIE

I will. Thanks, Daddy.

She gives him another hug. He smiles before letting her go.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Owen and Cassie sit in front of dirty plates, full from dinner. She finishes a glass of wine.

CASSIE

I'm ready for bed.

OWEN

I got something I want you to read.

CASSIE

What now?

She laughs, drunkenly. She watches as Owen leaves the room.

CASSIE (cont'd)

Where ya goin'?

She listens as his boots disappear down the hall. She picks up the open bottle of wine and pours herself another glass, killing the bottle.

She takes a sip as Owen returns with a printed page. He hands them to her.

CASSIE (cont'd)

What's this?

OWEN

My speech for tomorrow. I want you to read it.

CASSIE

Why me?

OWEN

You're a writer, aren't ya?

CASSIE

Well, yeah, but I write newspaper articles. Not speeches.

OWEN

If I have to give a speech, I want to make sure it's good.

He bends down and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

CASSIE

What about these dishes?

OWEN

I'll take care of 'em after my after dinner cigar. Don't worry about it.

Owen leaves the room. As Cassie's eyes scan the page, her lips curl into a smile.

CASSIE

(reading)

The Legacy of Broken Stars, by Owen Harris.

(mimicking Owen)

The town of Bonham has given me the privilege...

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Clear, sunny day in front of the brand new art deco inspired downtown library. OWEN, in a suit, tie, and cowboy hat, speaks at a podium in front of a royal purple ribbon tied to two Corinthian columns.

A banner, also hung between the columns, reads OWEN HARRIS COMMUNITY LIBRARY GRAND OPENING.

OWEN

... the privilege of being able to write a novel that has touched so many lives. Without this place, these people, and our shared history, I would never have been able to write Broken Stars. For that, my family, my late wife Linda, my daughter Cassie, are eternally grateful. Thank you so much.

The CROWD - all locals, city officials, the MAYOR (60s, with a huge pair of scissors) - clap, and cheer. We see Micah, out of uniform, and MOLLY (25, plain) cheering.

We find Cassie in the crowd, smiling broadly, clapping and cheering. She makes eye contact with Owen, as he tips his hat at Cassie with a smile. He moves to the side and lets the Mayor move in front of the podium.

MAYOR

Thank you so much, Owen. You're not just a son of Bonham, but you're a national treasure. As Mayor of Bonham, I now declare today to be, and for every year to come, Owen Harris Day.

She claps and there's more cheering.

MAYOR (cont'd)

And to further commemorate this wonderful day, I'm very happy to announce that the brand new Owen Harris Community Library is hereby officially open!

More cheers from the crowd, including Cassie.

MAYOR (cont'd)

Please join us inside for refreshments and snacks, and a chance to have your very own copy of Broken Stars autographed by Mr. Harris himself. Thank you for coming!

INT. LIBRARY - CENTRAL ATRIUM - DAY

Owen sits at a table, scribbling his signature to new copies of his novel for his fans. Cassie stands a few yards away, watching and sipping a lemonade.

JUDE BAKER (25, brawny) sidles up to her with his own drink. He's a lot less formal than everyone else.

JUDE

Welcome home, Cass.

Cassie shakes her head, not looking at him.

CASSIE

You don't have anywhere better to be?

JUDE

And miss out on this most distinguished day? I dare not.

CASSIE

You always were a ham.

They clink their plastic cups together.

JUDE

How about we get outta here and have a real drink?

CASSIE

You know somewhere?

JUDE

You're lookin' at the owner and operator of the mighty fine Iron Horse Bar and Grill.

CASSIE

You actually did it.

JUDE

Yep.

CASSIE

Let me check in with my dad.

JUDE

Sure thing.

Cassie smiles as she weaves through the crowd.

INT. LIBRARY - AUTOGRAPH TABLE - DAY

Cassie bends down next to Owen, as he signs another copy for a LOCAL FEMALE.

OWEN

Yes, Ladybug?

CASSIE

You gonna be okay if I go back with Jude to his bar? I can just get a ride home later.

OWEN

I'll be fine. Go on ahead, Ladybug.

CASSIE

Thanks, Daddy.

She kisses him on the cheek.

OWEN
Don't stay out too late.

CASSIE
Ha ha.

Cassie walks away and joins Jude by the front door.

EXT. LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie follows Jude to his beat up Ford pick up. She spots Micah first.

CASSIE
Fucking hell.

JUDE
What?

CASSIE
Micah. He pulled me over yesterday.

JUDE
Really?

CASSIE
Yeah. I mean, I deserved it, but out of all the cops in this town, of course Micah's the one to pull me over. I can't believe he's a cop.

JUDE
Well, his dad was the Deputy Sheriff for a long time. I guess being asshole cops run in the family.

He unlocks the passenger side door and helps Cassie climb inside. She watches as he walks around the hood.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Gas guzzling trucks and SUVs fill the parking lot. Country music plays from the open windows.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - BACK PARKING LOT - DAY

Jude parks behind the restaurant. He runs around and helps Cassie out of the truck.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Jude opens the door for Cassie.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - HOST STAND - DAY

The HOSTESS (teenager, bubbly) smiles as Jude and Cassie walk in, ready with menus.

HOSTESS

Hey, Jude.

JUDE

Howdy. We're hoping to grab some seats at the bar.

HOSTESS

Should be fine.

JUDE

Thanks.

Cassie smiles as Jude ushers her to the -

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - BAR TOP - DAY

- where Jude pulls a bar stool away from the bar. Cassie climbs up and watches as Jude takes his own seat. TVs above the bar play local sports.

JUDE

What's your poison?

CASSIE

I'd love a chardonnay.

JUDE

That can be arranged.

A BARTENDER finishes pouring a beer close by.

BARTENDER

So the usual and a glass of the chardonnay?

JUDE

Yes, please.

He turns to Cassie.

JUDE (cont'd)
So you're just in town for what?
Today? Tomorrow?

CASSIE
I'm leaving on Thursday.

JUDE
Oh! So we get three whole days with
the Princess of Bonham, Texas.

She laughs and pushes her hair out of her eyes.

CASSIE
I am not a Princess.

JUDE
Your dad might as well be the King.

CASSIE
He hates all this, ya know.

JUDE
Do you hate it?

CASSIE
Not at all. My dad's happy. He did
what he wanted to do. He wrote a
book. Taught a bunch of students how
to write their own books. I'm proud
of him.

The Bartender drops off a pint of beer and a glass of wine.

JUDE
Thanks.

The Bartender walks away.

JUDE (cont'd)
That's good.

CASSIE
How long have you owned this place?

JUDE
Just over a year.

CASSIE
But you've worked here forever.

JUDE
Uh, yeah. Saved up a ton of money and
was able to buy out the old owners.

CASSIE

Congrats.

JUDE

Thanks.

They cheer each other. Cassie winces as she takes her first sip. She gently puts the glass down on the bar.

JUDE (cont'd)

What? Not as fancy as your San Francisco wine?

CASSIE

So you've been reading up on me?

JUDE

I might subscribe to the San Francisco Chronicle.

CASSIE

Really?

JUDE

Yeah. I really liked your coverage of the COVID crises, and how the City was being proactive at stopping the spread. No one did shit here.

CASSIE

You really did read my work.

JUDE

Yeah. I told ya.

CASSIE

I'm impressed.

Her hand grazes his leg. They pull away, as the TV game turns to an emergency broadcast. Judy watches the news with an intense focus.

NEWSCASTER

We're sorry to interrupt the game, but we have some breaking news coming from a new development in West Bonham. Bonham PD are on the scene, but according to our sources, the skeletal remains of a young child were found while a construction team were digging up a dry part of Ravenna Creek. Rumor is already speculating that these remains could be the missing ten year old Andy Baker.

(MORE)

NEWSCASTER (cont'd)
 Bonham PD Chief Warren will be
 speaking as soon as more things are
 confirmed. Now back to the game.

And just like that, the news cuts back to the game.

Jude is silent.

CASSIE
 Jude?

JUDE
 I gotta go.

CASSIE
 Yeah. Of course. Can I come with you?

JUDE
 No. I gotta go check in on my folks.
 You okay getting a car home?

CASSIE
 Yeah. I can get an Uber.

JUDE
 Great. These are on me.

He pulls out a \$20 from his wallet and throws his money on
 the bar.

Cassie watches as he pushes himself off the stool and out of
 the bar.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Cassie lets the screen door gently close behind her.

CASSIE
 Daddy?

She follows the noise of a television, somewhere in the back
 of the house.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - DEN - DAY

Owen, in his favorite leather recliner, watches the TV.
 Cassie leans against the door frame and watches along.

On screen: SHERIFF WARREN (50s, a walrus of a man with a
 white mustache) stands a few feet in front of a taped off
 area. We can see the dry creek bed behind him. He speaks
 into a microphone. Other COPS loiter behind him.

SHERIFF WARREN

Around four p. m. this afternoon, a construction crew found the remains of a small child. We cannot confirm nor deny that these remains belong to Andrew Baker until we have further testing. Please give the Baker family their privacy in light of these new circumstances.

REPORTER (O/S)

Are you officially reopening Andy's cold case?

SHERIFF WARREN

No, because it never officially closed. His file has been on my desk for fifteen years and I'm looking forward to finally closing it. No more questions.

Owen turns off the TV.

OWEN

That's enough of that for today.

CASSIE

That poor family.

OWEN

I guess you'll be headed back to San Francisco won't ya?

CASSIE

I'm supposed to go back tomorrow.

She sits down on the sofa.

OWEN

Now don't go pokin' your nose in business that ain't yours. I want you back on that plane tonight.

CASSIE

Daddy.

OWEN

Cassandra Harris.

CASSIE

Staying one more day won't do anything. I want to be here for Luke. He's my friend.

OWEN

Yeah. You're not Nancy Drew. There ain't no mystery to solve.

CASSIE

Dad -

OWEN

Cassie, I know you care about Luke and his family, but I don't want you anywhere near this.

CASSIE

Fine. I'll leave them alone, but I'm still going back home tomorrow.

OWEN

Good. I appreciate you taking a break from your busy life to see me make a fool outta myself in front of that awful lookin' library, but now you can go back home.

CASSIE

I'm glad I was able to come too.

He turns back on the TV to the local weather report news, ending that conversation.

They listen to the weather report for a beat, then the speech becomes background noise.

WEATHERMAN

We're keeping an eye out on a storm system moving down from Colorado. As you can see, it's small right now, but by the time it reaches us - likely around this time next week - we're expecting some steady rainfall. We'll keep monitoring for any changes, but right now, there's no immediate concern for sever weather. Just make sure you're prepared for a few wet days ahead. Back to you, Jim.

OWEN

You let me know when you wanna have supper and I'll cook us something up. I think I got a few pork chops we can fry up.

CASSIE

That sounds good, Daddy.

They watch TV in silence as the reporter drones on.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - BAR - DAY

The next day. A different news program airs on the TVs above the bar.

Cassie walks through the front door, pushing her sunglasses onto the top of her head.

The place is quiet, but not completely empty. Cassie strolls up to the bar and takes a seat.

She absentmindedly watches and listens to the news. Something about war in the Middle East.

Eventually, Jude comes from the kitchen, drying his hands on a kitchen towel. The bags under his eyes are prominent.

JUDE

Hey, Cass.

CASSIE

Jude - I didn't think you'd be here.

JUDE

Yeah, one of my cooks called off so I'm working the kitchen today. I'm runnin' on fumes, though. I also could tell my parents wanted some space.

CASSIE

So they're are okay?

JUDE

No, and I don't think they'll ever be okay. They just are, ya know?

CASSIE

And what about you?

JUDE

I honestly can't say.

She gives him a comforting smile. He slaps the bar top with the rag, breaking her spell. He dips the rag in a sanitizer bucket and scrubs the bar, even though it's clean.

JUDE (cont'd)

What can I get started for ya?
Another glass of chardonnay?

CASSIE

Oh, hell no. I'll just take a glass of iced tea with lemon.

JUDE
Sure. And food?

CASSIE
I'm still stuffed from dinner.

JUDE
What'd ya have?

CASSIE
My Daddy fried up some pork chops and potatoes.

JUDE
Sounds great. I remember your dad being a great cook.

CASSIE
He's one of the best.

She watches as he pours her an iced tea. He places the iced tea on a coaster. She takes a sip.

JUDE
What's on your mind?

CASSIE
Jude, I was wondering -

JUDE
No.

CASSIE
You don't even know what I was gonna say.

JUDE
My parents are off limits.

CASSIE
Then what we just talk? Off the record.

She takes off her sunglasses, but keeps opening and folding them as a nervous tick.

JUDE
Off the record? Nothing is ever off the record with you, Cassie.

CASSIE
Writing about this could help. Maybe it could lead a sense of closure.

JUDE
You're a piece of work, Cass.

A CUSTOMER interrupts with an empty pint glass.

JUDE (cont'd)
Another?

CUSTOMER
Yes, please. Blue Moon.

JUDE
Sure.

Cassie drops her glasses on the bar and runs her fingers through her hair as Jude pours the Customer a beer.

JUDE (cont'd)
On the tab?

CUSTOMER
Please. Thanks.

He takes the beer and walks away. Jude turns his attention back to Cassie.

JUDE
Why do you think talking to my parents would be a good thing?

CASSIE
This is what I do. I write what I see and what I learn. It's my job.

JUDE
My family isn't your job. We accepted Andy died years ago.

CASSIE
I'm sorry, Jude.

JUDE
I have some prep work to do in the back. Holler if you want a refill.

CASSIE
Jude?

JUDE
What?

She pulls her phone out of her purse.

CASSIE

Can I at least get your number? I feel awful if we never got to talk again.

JUDE

Sure, Cass. Ready?

CASSIE

Yea.

She types as he gives her his number.

JUDE

Nine oh three. Five eight three. Seven eight seven five. Tea's on the house. Holler if you want anything else, okay? I got some onions that need to be prepped.

CASSIE

Thanks, Jude. Give your family my best, okay?

JUDE

Yeah.

We follow him into -

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - KITCHEN - DAY

- where he watches her for a bit before he turns away.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Cassie and Owen relax in the rocking chairs. Cassie finishes her tea as Owen puts out his cigar.

OWEN

You packed already?

CASSIE

Almost.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - CASSIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cassie folds a camisole and places it gently on top of her full suitcase. She zips the suitcase closed.

She looks up when she hears Owen knock on the doorframe.

CASSIE
Hey, Daddy.

OWEN
You hungry?

CASSIE
Not really. Flights make me nervous.

OWEN
I went ahead and heated up some
leftovers if you wanted something
later.

CASSIE
Thanks, but I'll just grab something
at the airport.

OWEN
Okay, Ladybug. Need help with that?

She flashes her smile.

CASSIE
Yes, please.

OWEN
You got it.

He picks up the suitcase.

OWEN (cont'd)
You sure you got everything?

CASSIE
Yeah. I didn't really bring much.

OWEN
You could've fooled me.

CASSIE
It's tough being a woman, Daddy.

They chuckle as he leads her out of the room.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - FRONT CURB - DAY

Owen hefts the suitcase into the open trunk, and then closes
it with a solid click.

He hugs her.

CASSIE
I love you, Daddy.

OWEN
I love you too, Ladybug. Gimme a call
when you land, okay?

CASSIE
Will do.

OWEN
Thanks.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie starts the engine and rolls down the windows.

CASSIE
Take care of yourself, old man.

OWEN
You too, Ladybug.

They wave each other goodbye as she drives away.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

Same highway as before. As Cassie passes the THANK YOU FOR VISITING sign, she abruptly stops on the shoulder. Gravel flies behind her wheels.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie moves her hair out of her face and exhales.

CASSIE
Come on, Cassie. What the fuck are
you doing? You can't leave now.

She releases the brake and checks over her shoulder. The coast is clear. She makes a U-turn, heading back into town.

CASSIE (O/S)
I need a room for a week. Starting
today, checking out next Wednesday.

EXT. OUTSIDE BONHAM - DAY

We follow Cassie as she cruises through the outskirts of town. She drives past a brand new shopping center, strips malls, and pulls into -

HOTEL CLERK (O/S)
 Absolutely. I just need to see your
 ID and a valid form of payment.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - DAY

- where Cassie pulls around to the back parking lot.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

Cassie drags her suitcase over the threshold and leaves it at the foot of the bed.

She bends down, unzips the suitcase, and pulls out a clean shirt. She quickly changes and discards the worn shirt in the back of the nearest chair.

EXT. BONHAM STREETS - DAY

We follow Cassie as she drives through town. A phone rings, off screen.

MARTIN (O/S)
 This is Martin Svatos, Senior Editor
 of the San Francisco Chronicle. I'm
 unavailable to answer my phone right
 now, so please leave me a message or
 reach out to my assistant. Thank you.

CASSIE (O/S)
 Hey, Martin. It's Cassie. I decided
 to stay in Texas for another couple
 of days. I'll email you about it
 later, but I can feel like something
 big's about to happen.

She pulls into the -

EXT. LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Signs of the previous festivities have been removed, except the GRAND OPENING banner.

Cassie parks and walks in her with shoulder bag.

INT. LIBRARY - DESK - DAY

Quiet with the hums of air conditioners. Cassie approaches the desk and pulls out her business card from her wallet. ELAINE (50s, a little overweight) looks up from her computer with a pleasant smile.

ELAINE
How may I help you?

CASSIE
Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Cassie and I'm a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle.

ELAINE
Okay?

CASSIE
I'm also Owen Harris' daughter.

ELAINE
Oh, Owen is such a gem! Is that why you're in town?

CASSIE
Yeah. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

ELAINE
What can I do for ya Cassie?

CASSIE
I was wondering if you kept an archive or saved any old newspapers?

ELAINE
We do.

CASSIE
Am I able to read them?

ELAINE
Is this for a job or personal?

CASSIE
Personal. I lived here at the time, but I don't remember all the details. Now that he's been found -

ELAINE
We don't know if they found him.

CASSIE
Do you know of any other missing
children?

Elaine shoots her a stern look.

ELAINE
Listen, Cassie, I'll show you where
we keep our old newspapers but I
don't want you pokin' around and
botherin' that poor family.

CASSIE
Oh, god no. This is just for me.

ELAINE
Okay.

She grabs a set of keys from her desk drawer and pushes
herself away from her desk.

INT. LIBRARY - ARCHIVE ROOM - DAY

Elaine unlocks the door and turns on the lights, showing
rows of brand new computers, printers, workstations. Cassie
rubs her hands over her exposed arms as the air conditioners
hum gently out of sight.

ELAINE
Sorry about the AC, but we gotta keep
it on or the computers will overheat.

She sits down at the nearest computer and turns it on. As
the system boots on:

ELAINE (cont'd)
The Ethernet is limited to the -

CASSIE
I think I can take it from here.

ELAINE
Okay... Please, no drinks or food,
and we close in three hours.

CASSIE
I should be done by then.

Cassie sits down as Elaine leaves. She takes out a black
bound notebook and pen, and then She pulls up the software
and searches for "Andy Baker". She scrolls down to the
oldest one, opens the file, and starts to read.

LATER

Cassie scrolls through a different article. As she scans the page, she makes a date in her notebook: 01/14/2015

We read the article over Cassie's shoulder:

LOCAL FATHER ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH SON'S DISAPPEARANCE

BONHAM, TX - JANUARY 14, 2015 - LUKE BAKER, THE FATHER OF MISSING 6-YEAR-OLD ANDY BAKER, HAS BEEN ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF INVOLVEMENT IN HIS SON'S DISAPPEARANCE. ANDY WAS LAST SEEN ON OCTOBER 15, 2014, SPARKING A MONTHS-LONG SEARCH THAT GRIPPED THE SMALL COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH LAW ENFORCEMENT HAS YET TO DISCLOSE SPECIFIC DETAILS, SOURCES CLOSE TO THE INVESTIGATION CLAIM THAT NEW EVIDENCE LED TO THE ARREST.

She jots down notes as she reads more of the article.

We see her write down:

EVIDENCE? COMMUNITY REMAINS DIVIDED OVER THE FAMILY'S FATE??

LATER

Cassie's been making notes for hours and stretches her hand and her neck.

As she looks back over her notes, and she's filled pages with dates and events, she hears knocking on the door.

Elaine lets herself in.

ELAINE

Hi, Cassie. We're closing up.

CASSIE

Oh, Jesus. I'm sorry. I'll get outta here.

ELAINE

I hope you found what you were looking for.

CASSIE

I have. Thank you.

She packs up her notebook and pen, and squeezes by the Librarian as she leaves the room.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - NIGHT

Cassie, at her small desk, types away on her laptop. She's using Excel with columns marked DATE, TIME, NAME, EVIDENCE, NOTES. It's mostly filled out, but there are some holes missing.

She compares the Excel sheet to her notebook and flips through it, rubbing her eye.

At the bottom of her notebook, she scribbles, "MAYBE THE COPS WILL HELP?"

She taps the end of her pen against the notebook, deep in thought.

EXT. BONHAM PD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie parks her car in the visitor's parking space. She gets out with her shoulder bag and a heavy sigh.

INT. BONHAM PD - LOBBY/RECEPTION - DAY

Cassie opens the door with a smile. Her shoes click against the tile.

OFFICER DANIELS sits behind the desk. She's in her 50s with a bad dye job. She puts down her cell phone as Cassie approaches.

OFFICER DANIELS
How can I help you?

Cassie pulls out her press pass and discretely slides it across the counter. She also eyes her name tag.

CASSIE
Hi, Officer Daniels. My name's Cassie Archer and I'm a reporter with the San Francisco Chronicle.

OFFICER DANIELS
What's someone with the San Francisco Chronicle doing way out here?

CASSIE
I was in town for a family thing when they found the kid's body.

Cassie takes her press pass back.

OFFICER DANIELS
We don't talk about open cases.

CASSIE
Then what do you know about the
missing Baker kid?

OFFICER DANIELS
Also an open case.

CASSIE
That's fifteen years old. I've read
all of the articles but there hasn't
been any updates.

OFFICER DANIELS
Right. We're still waiting on the
medical examiner to finish their
initial report.

CASSIE
And how long does that take?

OFFICER DANIELS
Two weeks, tops, but the final report
could take months, depending on what
he's searching for. But with the
Baker kid, it'll probably be quicker.
They won't be searching for drugs or
anything like that.

CASSIE
Is there anyone else I could possibly
talk to? Off the record. I was born
here, but I don't really remember
anything except Andy's disappearance.

OFFICER DANIELS
Sorry. I've said too much already.
You can reach out to the medical
examiners office and see if they'll
tell you anything, but they probably
won't. They're also in Dallas.

CASSIE
Thanks for your time.

EXT. BONHAM PD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie gets to her car, but stops shy of opening her door.
She checks her surroundings, with a bit of uneasiness.

Sighing, she gets into her car.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie buckles up after throwing the shoulder bag in the passenger seat.

She looks around again, and seeing no one, she starts the car.

EXT. BONHAM PD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Micah, beside his cruiser, face hidden behind his frames, watches as Cassie drives away.

INT. BONHAM PD - LOBBY/RECEPTION - DAY

Micah takes off his sunglasses and leans over the desk.

MICAH

What the hell was Cassie Harris doin' here?

OFFICER DANIELS

Who?

MICAH

That blonde lady that just left.

OFFICER DANIELS

She wanted to look at the Andy Baker files. I told her no.

MICAH

Shit. Thanks.

He turns -

OFFICER DANIELS

Why do you care?

MICAH

(over his shoulder)

She could never leave well enough alone.

His dress shoes echo down the hall as he stomps away.

MICAH (cont'd)

(under his breath)

Fuckin' bitch.

Officer Daniels watches as Micah walks slams the Men's Room door open and walks inside.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - LOUNGE - DAY

Cassie, with her shoulder bag, follows a HOST through the packed tables and booths, to -

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - CASSIE'S TABLE - DAY

- where the Host stops and pulls out the chair. Cassie takes off her shoulder bag and sits.

HOST
Enjoy your lunch. Your server will be with you soon.

CASSIE
Thank you. Oh, I have one question.

HOST
Yes ma'am?

CASSIE
Is Jude back there somewhere?

HOST
No. He's not here today.

CASSIE
Thanks.

Cassie takes the menu as the Host walks away. She takes in her neighbors, an older couple named ALBERT and KAY. She drinks a margarita and he drinks a beer.

Their eyes are glued to the TV above the bar. The local news is covering the skeleton story, again. The TV is muted but there are subtitles.

RYAN (20, in the bar uniform) comes over.

RYAN
Good afternoon. Have you had a chance to look over the menu yet?

CASSIE
I haven't yet, but I know I want an Old Fashioned. With Bulleit, if you have it.

Kay overhears this and sneers.

RYAN

We sure do. I'll go ring that in and give you a few minutes to look over the menu.

CASSIE

Thanks.

Ryan turns, but Kay snaps her fingers. Ryan spins around.

RYAN

Yes, ma'am?

KAY

What's takin' so long for our sandwiches? You gotta butcher the damn cow or somethin'?

RYAN

I'll double check but they shouldn't be too much longer.

ALBERT

Yeah, we don't want 'em hangin' out under the heat lamps or nothin'.

Ryan walks away as Cassie takes her laptop and phone out of her bag. She connects her laptop to her phone's mobile hot spot. Opens Outlook.

KAY

(a little too loudly)

I really miss the days when people weren't on their computers all the damn time.

Albert grunts in approval. Cassie ignores them.

INSERT HER LAPTOP SCREEN:

HEY MARTIN. LEFT YOU A VM EARLIER, BUT HERE'S WHAT'S GOING ON. EARLIER YESTERDAY, A LOCAL CONSTRUCTION CREW FOUND THE SKELETAL REMAINS OF A YOUNG BOY. I BELIEVE IT'S THE BODY OF ANDY BAKER, WHO DISAPPEARED FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. I'M GONNA STICK AROUND AND SEE WHERE THIS GOES. IF IT IS ANDY, THIS IS HUGE AND I WANT TO BE A PART OF IT. - CASSIE

BACK TO CASSIE.

She hits send and closes her laptop as Ryan brings her her cocktail over on a tray. He hands it to her and spins around to Albert and Kay. Cassie takes a drink, her eyes glued to her neighboring couple.

RYAN

I'll be right back with your sandwiches.

He makes a mad dash to the kitchen as Kay shakes her head.

KAY

You know, I've really wanted to support this place but the service is unbearable.

ALBERT

Kids don't know to work anymore.

KAY

It's 'cause they're lazy.

Ryan comes out holding two plates with steak sandwiches and French fries. He drops them off in front of Kay and Albert.

RYAN

Sorry about that wait, guys. We're a little busier than planned, I think.

ALBERT

That's just poor management.

RYAN

I do apologize, but as you probably know, our owner is -

ALBERT

Son, we know who your owner is, and if he can't be professional enough to handle his family business and his restaurant, then he needs to take some time off and figure shit out. We came here for a nice lunch and our entire experience has been awful.

RYAN

I'm really sorry to hear that. I'll pass on your information, if you want, and Jude will get back to you.

ALBERT

No. We'll just leave a review so other people know not to come here anymore.

He takes a bite out of his sandwich, cutting Ryan off. Kay follows suit. Ryan turns to Cassie with a sigh.

RYAN

I am so sorry you heard that. Have you decided on anything?

CASSIE

I'm gonna decide after I finish this amazing cocktail. Thanks so much for your service and hospitality. You're doing great.

RYAN

Thanks.

Kay sneers at Cassie again. This time, Cassie can't help herself.

CASSIE

Hi. I take it you guys have lived here for a long time?

Kay swallows her bite.

KAY

All our lives, almost.

CASSIE

If you don't mind me asking, what's your opinion on Luke Baker? I heard he was arrested and tried for his son's murder.

ALBERT

I knew Luke. He used to be a mean son of a bitch.

KAY

I just feel awful for Ruth, having to live with him and know that he did it.

Ryan comes over with a bowl of chips and salsa. He drops them in front of Cassie.

RYAN

Here you go.

CASSIE

I didn't order these?

RYAN

Oh, then I must've made another mistake. Enjoy.

He walks away. She snaps into a chip, then leans closer to Kay, who sips her margarita.

CASSIE
So y'all think he did it?

KAY
Absolutely.

CASSIE
Thanks. That's really helpful.

KAY
Why?

CASSIE
I'm in town writing an article on Andy's disappearance and, if what they found is really Andy -

ALBERT
We're done talkin'.

CASSIE
Oh, of course. This is all off the record. I promise.

KAY
It better be. I don't want you quotin' us or nothin'.

CASSIE
Absolutely not. I'd have to have you guys sign forms and all that. This is just a friendly conversation. I hope you guys enjoy your lunch.

She turns forward, cutting them off, as she finishes her drink. Ryan sees this from the side and comes to the table.

RYAN
May I get you one more?

CASSIE
Nope. Just the check.

Ryan grabs the glass and Cassie watches as he walks away. She tries to hide her smirk from Kay, who sneers again.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie comes out, proud of herself, with her bag over her shoulder. As she closes in on her car, she sees a note, torn from a small spiral notebook, tucked under her wipers.

She unfolds it and reads it to herself.

INSERT NOTE:

YOU'RE WAY OUTTA YOUR LEAGUE.

The handwriting is flat, but neat.

BACK TO CASSIE

She tucks the note in her pocket and checks her surroundings. Nothing but suped up trucks and SUVs.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - HOST STAND - DAY

The Host cleans menus. He looks up when Cassie walks in.

HOST

Hi, again. Did you forget something?

CASSIE

No. In the last couple of minutes, have you seen hangin' around my car? It's the black sedan?

HOST

No. I'm sorry. I haven't.

CASSIE

Thanks.

She goes outside.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie stops outside her car and takes her phone out of her pocket. She dials a number and it rings.

CASSIE

I need to talk to you. I think I'm being followed.

EXT. HIGHWAY INTERSECTION - DAY

Fenced in fields line the two lane highways. The fall sun blows barren tree branches.

Jude stands outside his truck, smoking a cigarette, as Cassie pulls up behind him.

She gets out and closes the door behind her. She wraps her arms around her waist with a slight shiver.

CASSIE
Thanks for meeting me.

JUDE
I thought you were flying back yesterday.

CASSIE
I decided to stay.

JUDE
Why do you think you're being followed?

CASSIE
This.

She hands him the note. He reads it silently.

JUDE
This could mean anything.

CASSIE
Come on, Jude.

He crushes the note and tosses it aside. He exhales sharply.

JUDE
You think this is about my brother?

CASSIE
Yes.

JUDE
Why would anyone care what you're doing?

CASSIE
Because I think I'm onto something.

JUDE
This isn't your fucking life.

He tosses the cigarette.

CASSIE

And if I can find out what really happened?

JUDE

Andy's dead. Finding his body isn't gonna bring him back.

CASSIE

I have some questions that I'd like to ask your dad.

JUDE

Hell no. Stay away from my family.

CASSIE

Can you please ask him?

JUDE

You ain't gonna give this up, are you, Cass?

CASSIE

I've never given up on anything.

JUDE

I will ask him, but Cassie, neither one of my parents have been well. My mom's basically catatonic. Dad only leaves the house to go to the store.

CASSIE

So you had to tell them?

JUDE

Sheriff Warren was there too.

CASSIE

I'm sorry, Jude.

JUDE

Yeah, it fucking sucks.

CASSIE

Have you seen...?

JUDE

You mean his skeleton?

CASSIE

Yeah.

JUDE

Yeah. No traces of clothing or anything, so they're gonna go off dental records. And don't fucking write about that.

CASSIE

I'm not sure what I'm gonna write.

JUDE

And if you find something... what then?

CASSIE

I'll find out the truth.

JUDE

And my family? You're risking everything for a goddamn story.

She reaches out.

CASSIE

Jude -

JUDE

Okay. I gotta get back to the house.

He opens his driver's side door and steps in.

CASSIE

Okay. Just call me.

JUDE

Will do.

Cassie starts walking away.

JUDE (cont'd)

Oh, Cassie.

She turns.

JUDE (cont'd)

Hope you enjoyed the chips and salsa.
And lay off the bourbon.

He flashes her his crooked smile as he turns over the ignition.

She shakes her head and opens her car door.

CASSIE

You spying on me, Jude Baker?

JUDE

No. Not spying. I just heard you stopped by. That's all.

He slams his door closed. She watches as he drives away.

She starts her car and pulls out her phone. She does a quick search and pulls up an article that shows where they found the body of the kid.

She puts her car in drive and drives.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE NEW DEVELOPMENT - DAY

A construction zone, closed off to the public by RENT-A-FENCES. Concrete slabs. Wooden frames. She can't see the creek from here and it pisses her off.

She parks the car and gets out, taking her phone with her.

She walks around the perimeter, taking pictures as she goes. After a few minutes, she leaves the work site, frustrated.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - NIGHT

Cassie reads more of her notes as she types them up. Half of her screen shows Pages and the other half shows screenshots of the newspaper articles.

INSERT TYPED NOTES:

*SHERIFF WARREN AND DEPUTY SHERIFF HUDSON WERE THE FIRST TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE

She takes a sip of her coffee and types more notes.

INT. BONHAM PD - DESK

Officer Daniels sits behind the desk. Her smile fades as she sees Cassie walking towards her with her shoulder bag.

OFFICER DANIELS

What can I do for you today?

CASSIE

I was wondering if I could look at some old case files?

OFFICER DANIELS

Like I said last night -

CASSIE

This is actually for a closed case.
Luke Baker's trial ended with a hung
jury. Bonham PD never looked into any
other suspects.

OFFICER DANIELS

But the murder investigation -

CASSIE

- is it an open or closed case,
Officer Daniels?

Officer Daniels grits her teeth.

CASSIE (cont'd)

Is Sheriff Warren in? I'd like to ask
him myself.

OFFICER DANIELS

What was your name again?

CASSIE

Tell him Cassie Harris is asking.

OFFICER DANIELS

Gimme a minute.

CASSIE

I'll wait.

INT. BONHAM PD - SHERIFF WARREN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Warren's big screen TV shows the news. He's barely
listening as he reads an email.

Officer Daniels knocks on the open door.

SHERIFF WARREN

Whatcha need Daniels?

OFFICER DANIELS

There's a woman here asking to see
Luke Baker's old arrest file.

He takes off his wire framed glasses and rubs the bridge of
his nose.

SHERIFF WARREN

Oh hell. Who is this woman?

OFFICER DANIELS
She said her name was Cassie Harris.
Sounds like you might know her.

SHERIFF WARREN
All right. Tell her to give me a
minute to find it.

OFFICER DANIELS
But sir, that's an open case.

SHERIFF WARREN
I've known her since she was a little
girl. I'll give her what I can.

OFFICER DANIELS
An open case?

SHERIFF WARREN
It's cold as hell. Might as well let
her look at it.

INT. BONHAM PD - LOBBY - DAY

Cassie waits patiently. Officer Daniels huffs down the hall.

OFFICER DANIELS
Sheriff Warren is pullin' that out
for ya.

CASSIE
Thanks. I appreciate it.

OFFICER DANIELS
Thank him.

She moves behind the desk and sits down.

OFFICER DANIELS (cont'd)
You might want to have a seat. He's
gotta dig for it.

Cassie sits. Pulls out her phone.

INT. BONHAM PD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sheriff Warren throws down a yellowed evidence box labeled
BAKER, A with a case number on a sterile white plastic
table. The room is windowless, with a cheap clock above the
clean whiteboard. It's shortly after noon.

SHERIFF WARREN

It's good to see you, Cassie.

CASSIE

Thanks, Sheriff. You too.

SHERIFF WARREN

Whatever you're lookin' for, I doubt it'll be in there.

CASSIE

Just so I'm clear, y'all investigated Andy's disappearance as a murder? Why? There was no body. No blood.

SHERIFF WARREN

The town wanted answers. It was a different time.

CASSIE

One of the articles mentioned that the police had evidence, but then the judge issued a mistrial. Do you know why?

SHERIFF WARREN

The jury couldn't agree on anything. They wanted the evidence and there wasn't any.

CASSIE

What was the evidence?

SHERIFF WARREN

Jude received a knife for his birthday that went missing. We suspected someone killed Andy with the knife, hid the body, and then ditched the knife.

CASSIE

But y'all never found the knife?

SHERIFF WARREN

No.

CASSIE

And y'all suspected Luke?

SHERIFF WARREN

What we have are in those boxes, Cassie. Good luck.

CASSIE
Thank you, Sheriff.

She removes the lid and places it in a plastic chair.

SHERIFF WARREN
You can take all the notes you want,
but no scans and no photos.
Technically, Officer Daniels is
right. This is still an open case.

CASSIE
I appreciate it, Sheriff.

SHERIFF WARREN
Can I have your phone?

CASSIE
Excuse me?

SHERIFF WARREN
Like I said, I can't let you take any
photos. You aren't even supposed to
be lookin' at 'em.

CASSIE
But Sheriff...

SHERIFF WARREN
Either you give me your phone or you
can see your way out.

CASSIE
Sure.

She hands over her phone.

SHERIFF WARREN
Any other recording devices in that
bag of yours?

CASSIE
No, sir.

SHERIFF WARREN
Good. I'll see you when you get done.
Just ask Daniels if you need
anything. We've got soda and snacks
in the break room.

CASSIE
Oh, I doubt I'll be asking her for
anything. But thanks.

Sheriff Warren tips his head as Cassie puts down her shoulder bag. She pulls out her notebook, pen, and a small digital camera.

Standing, she takes out a yellowed manila folder, moves the box out of the way, and sits down.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Cassie reads through the files, writing down notes and snapping pictures.
- She compares a case file to what was reported. They match. More pictures.
- She flips through her notes, scanning names and dates. More pictures.

END MONTAGE.

Cassie finishes making notes and closes a folder. She looks up at the clock, which now reads 3pm. She sighs and stretches her neck and shoulders.

As she opens another folder, she finds more WITNESS REPORTS. She flips through them, and sees LUKE BAKER at the top of the page.

She makes a note of the date. Takes a picture, and then her eyes scan the typed report.

INSERT REPORT:

MR. BAKER WOKE UP TO HIS WIFE'S SCREAMING ABOUT ANDY NOT BEING ABLE TO FIND ANDY. COPS WERE FIRST CALLED AT 8:37AM ON 10/12/2008.

Cassie scans more of the report.

INSERT REPORT:

MISSING ARTICLES OF CLOTHES... SET OF BLUE FLANNEL PAJAMAS AND A SET OF CHILD'S HUNTING BOOTS.

Cassie jots these facts down and breaths before flipping to the next report.

INSERT REPORT:

RUTH BAKER

She takes another photo. Cassie scans the page, comparing the words to her notes.

INSERT CASSIE'S NOTES:

RUTH'S REPORT IS ALMOST WORD FOR WORD AS LUKE'S.

She flips to the next report, and it's a name she doesn't recognize. She skips to the next and reads CASSANDRA HARRIS. She snaps a picture.

She looks like she got punched in the chest. Her eyes scan the page, reading the date, the time...

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

TEEN CASSIE (15 years old) sits across from SHERIFF WARREN at the table. He looks basically the same. YOUNGER OWEN stands near the door, looking scared.

SHERIFF WARREN

Now, Cassie. I have a couple of questions for ya. Do you think you can answer them?

Cassie nods.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)

Good, girl. You were at Jude's birthday party the other night, right?

Cassie nods.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)

And what happened?

Cassie looks at her dad.

YOUNGER OWEN

Go ahead, Ladybug.

TEEN CASSIE

I was only there for the birthday party!

SHERIFF WARREN

That's right. No one's saying you weren't there. Before you left, though, did you see anything weird?

TEEN CASSIE

No. We ate cake. Jude opened presents. Then we went home.

SHERIFF WARREN

Did you see anything out of the ordinary?

TEEN CASSIE

Jude got this really cool knife and Andy wanted to see it, but his daddy didn't let him. Andy started crying and his daddy sent him to his room to settle down.

SHERIFF WARREN

Did you see Andy after that?

TEEN CASSIE

No. My daddy drove us home.

SHERIFF WARREN

Thanks, Cassie. Thank you very much.

TEEN CASSIE

(to Younger Owen)

Can I go play now?

YOUNGER OWEN

Sure you can, Ladybug.

Teen Cassie runs out of the room.

INT. BONHAM PD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (END FLASHBACK)

Cassie reads the typed words before taking another photo.

JUDE RECEIVED A HUNTING KNIFE FOR HIS BIRTHDAY AND ANDY WANTED TO PLAY WITH IT. LUKE SENT HIM TO HIS ROOM AND I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

CASSIE

(whispers)

No one else brought up the knife?

Her eyes linger on the report, but she shakes her head.

More photos.

She flips the page to another WITNESS REPORT and a typed name for JUDE BAKER at the top of the page. DEPUTY SHERIFF HUDSON took the report.

Her eyes scan down, reading the date, time, information she already knows.

More photos.

A scribble halfway down the page, in fast cursive, over correction tape:

MICAH NEVER LEFT THE TENT THAT NIGHT.

Cassie frowns and flips her notebook back a few pages, where she's written:

JUDE, "MICAH LEFT AT SOME POINT AND CAME BACK SOAKING WET. CLAIMED HE HAD TO PEE. DON'T KNOW HOW LONG HE WAS GONE."

- with a file number next to it.

She goes back to the box and pulls out the right file. Spreads it open and flips through mostly medical reports until she finds JUDE BAKER'S witness report by SHERIFF WARREN on a different date.

More photos.

His typed notes, without any alterations:

MICAH LEFT AT SOME POINT AND CAME BACK SOAKING WET. CLAIMED HE HAD TO PEE. DON'T KNOW HOW LONG HE WAS GONE.

Cassie compares the two reports, side by side.

CASSIE (cont'd)
(whispers)
Why is this report mixed in with
medical reports?

She circles Jude's statement in her notes and puts !!! next to it.

INT. BONHAM PD - OUTSIDE SHERIFF WARREN'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassie knocks on the door. Sheriff Warren looks up from his desk. He's on the phone.

SHERIFF WARREN
Hold on a second.

He puts the receiver down, giving her a friendly look.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)
I was just gonna come check on ya.

CASSIE
I'm done. Didn't know what to do with
the box, so I left it on the table.

SHERIFF WARREN

That's fine. I'll put it away. Did you find anything useful?

CASSIE

Not sure yet, but nothing seems out of the ordinary. Thanks, Sheriff. I appreciate it.

Sheriff Warren takes her phone out of his desk drawer and hands it to her.

SHERIFF WARREN

I guess you'll be wanting this back.

CASSIE

Thanks, Sheriff. Appreciate it.

Sheriff Warren's gaze lingers on her shoulder bag for a beat longer than usual.

SHERIFF WARREN

You're welcome honey. You have a good day.

CASSIE

You too.

Sheriff Warren picks up the phone from his desk.

SHERIFF WARREN

Yeah. She's just now leavin'. I wonder if her ears were burnin' since we were already talkin' about her.

INT. BONHAM PD - HALLWAY - DAY

Cassie walks out, her shoes clicking fast on the tile. She grips her shoulder bag tight as each steps echo down the empty hallway.

EXT. BONHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie finally exhales as the doors close behind her. She bee-lines it for her car as she feels her phone buzz in her pocket. She pulls it out and looks at the screen - JUDE.

She stops outside her car, her voice steady.

CASSIE

Jude?

JUDE (O/S)

Hey, Cass.

CASSIE

What's up?

She remotely unlocks her car door and gets in, keeping her shoulder bag close by.

JUDE (O/S)

My dad... he wants to talk.

Cassie, shocked, drops her phone. She digs for it in the floorboard and eventually finds it.

CASSIE

Jude? Ya there?

JUDE

Yeah. I don't know what he's ready to say, but he told me to call you. Can you come by the house?

CASSIE

I'm on my way.

She hangs up and stares at her phone, before slipping it into her shoulder bag side pocket.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

Cassie drives, music off, lost in her own thoughts until -

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

- she sees flashing lights behind her. She pulls over with a heavy sigh into a -

EXT. GAS STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

- and turns off her engine. She rolls the window down as she watches Micah pull up behind her and get out of his police cruiser.

He takes off his sunglasses as he leans against the car, his gaze switching from her to her shoulder bag in the passenger seat.

CASSIE

What do you want now Micah?

MICAH
Heard you were playing reporter.

CASSIE
I am a reporter, Micah.

MICAH
Yeah, in San Francisco.

CASSIE
I'm from here.

MICAH
But you don't live here anymore. Why do you care so much?

CASSIE
Andy was my friend too.

MICAH
You were Jude's friend.

CASSIE
Did you pull me over for something important or just to catch up?

MICAH
You were going a little over. You should really slow down.

CASSIE
If you really wanted to talk to me, I can give you my phone number.

MICAH
Don't need it. I know how ya find ya.

CASSIE
Yeah, by pulling me over. I think it's almost harassment at this point.

MICAH
Be careful, Cassie. Things can get a little messy when people don't know when to quit.

CASSIE
Messy huh? I was thinking the same thing.

They lock eyes. He breaks the tension by tapping on the roof of her car.

MICAH

Drive safe now.

He slips his sunglasses back on and walks to his cruiser. Cassie grips her steering wheel tight. She finally exhales and drives out of the parking lot.

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - DAY

Cassie pulls off the main road, through rust-colored gates, onto a gravel drive, greeted by dead grass and barren trees.

As she follows the bend, she sees the farmhouse for the first time in fifteen years.

The house is sturdy, but showing its years. The paint, once a bright white, has faded into a dull, weathered gray. The roof dips in places, though it remains intact. A few new shingles show a mismatched pattern.

The porch stretches across the front, wooden boards creaking in the wind. A rusted wind chime hangs motionless in the eaves. Windows are clouded in dust, but the curtains inside are neatly drawn.

The place feels quiet, as if holding its breath.

Cassie's tires crunch on the gravel as she parks behind Jude's truck.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie takes the keys out of the ignition and waits, her breathing shallow. She watches the front door. Then one of the curtains opens slightly, and Cassie sees the shadow of RUTH (age unknown) behind the glass.

The curtain drops and the figure disappears.

The front door finally opens and Jude steps out in the shadow of the porch. The steps creak under his boots.

She grabs her shoulder bag and gets out of the car.

EXT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie stands beside her car, next to the open door.

JUDE

You won't need any of that.

CASSIE

But -

JUDE

You can listen, but he doesn't want you taking any notes.

CASSIE

What about my phone?

JUDE

I guess.

Cassie sits back down and pulls her phone from the side pocket. She finds the voice recorder app, gets out of the car, and slides the cell phone into her pocket.

CASSIE

Are we going inside?

JUDE

No. We're going around back.

Cassie closes the door and locks it with the remote. We linger on the car as Cassie follows Jude.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND THE BAKER FARMHOUSE - DAY

The sunlight shines through what leaves are left. Jude and Cassie reach a clearing, where LUKE BAKER stands, hands on his hips, his back to us.

JUDE

Hey, Dad.

Luke turns. He's in his 50s, but looks older. Full, gray beard. Thinning black hair. Gaunt frame.

CASSIE

Thanks for meeting me, Mr. Baker.

LUKE

Please, Cassie. Call me Luke. It's been what? Fifteen years?

CASSIE

Something like that.

LUKE

You were here, weren't you?

INT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Birthday decorations. Balloons. Teen Cassie eating cake at the table.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND THE BAKER FARMHOUSE - DAY (END FLASHBACK)

CASSIE

Yeah. It was Jude's fifteenth birthday. I was here for it.

LUKE

What do you remember?

CASSIE

Eating cake. Watching Jude opening his presents. Then we left.

LUKE

I don't remember you ever coming back after that.

Cassie looks at Jude.

CASSIE

No, I don't think I did. I've been going through the old newspapers. Why do you think you were the only suspect?

JUDE

Cassie -

LUKE

It's okay. Back then, I had a hell of a temper. Drank a lot.

CASSIE

But then you had a hung jury.

LUKE

Barely. Most of the town thought I did it.

CASSIE

What do you think happened?

Luke scans through the trees. He eyes the creek bed, now dry, in the distance.

LUKE

I think Andy came out here, trying to be a big boy, and got lost in the storm. Got turned around and fell in. We used to have a pier out there, but we tore it down. No use for it anymore after the creek dried up.

CASSIE

So you think Andy fell in? I read that the creek was searched but no one found anything.

LUKE

We didn't have the resources or manpower to search the entire creek. The location of where the skeleton was found was miles down.

CASSIE

So you think the skeleton they found the other day is Andy?

LUKE

Who else could it be?

Cassie nods.

CASSIE

How's Mrs. Baker?

LUKE

I'm not gonna talk about Ruth.

CASSIE

Right. Sorry.

LUKE

Anything else you wanna know?

CASSIE

Actually, yes. I was going through the case file earlier -

LUKE

- what do you actually want to accomplish?

CASSIE

I want to finish the story about a poor little boy who never came home.

Luke nods.

LUKE

I didn't mean to interrupt.

CASSIE

I was at the police station earlier, going over witness reports. You gave Jude a knife that night. What happened to it?

JUDE

I kept it in a lockbox in my room.

CASSIE

Do you still have it?

JUDE

It went missing. I never had a chance to use it.

CASSIE

When did it go missing?

JUDE

I don't know, exactly. Andy disappeared. Family and cops were in and out.

CASSIE

Who had a key?

JUDE

Me, my dad.

CASSIE

That's it?

JUDE

Yeah.

CASSIE

And the box wasn't tampered with?

JUDE

No. Maybe? I don't know.

CASSIE

I have one more question. According to one of the reports, Andy's boots were missing the morning of his disappearance. It's believed that he wore them out but they weren't ever found.

LUKE

I need to go back inside and check on your mom.

JUDE

Okay, dad.

LUKE

Don't stay out here too late. It's gettin' dark.

CASSIE

I'm on my way out too.

LUKE

And be safe, Cassie.

CASSIE

Thanks, Mr. Baker. I appreciate your time.

He gives her a warm goodbye as his boots crunch on the dried leaves.

CASSIE (cont'd)

I need to go too.

JUDE

Did you get what you want?

CASSIE

I think so.

JUDE

I'll walk you back to your car.

CASSIE

Thanks.

Cassie turns away from Jude and steps over a fallen branch. Jude catches up.

JUDE

So you can wrap this up?

CASSIE

You want me to leave too?

JUDE

I don't want you to get sucked into anything.

CASSIE

I already am, Jude. Something terrible happened to your little brother and this town deserves to know.

JUDE

It knows what it wants to know.

CASSIE

That's not good enough.

They walk in silence until they see the house in the distance.

CASSIE (cont'd)

I can make it from here.

JUDE

Have a good night, Cass.

CASSIE

Thanks. And thanks for doing this.

JUDE

No problem.

He hugs her. She lets go and he watches her for a bit before heading to the back porch.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - NIGHT

Cassie, hair up in a bun, types away at her small desk. Her notebook hangs off the side.

The TV plays the evening news, but it's just background noise. She ignores it as she types.

She's in the zone - brow furrowed, fingers racing across the keys - when a knock on the door startles her.

After closing her laptop, she stands, and peeks through the peephole. Owen stands on the other side.

CASSIE

Shit.

She exhales. Her fingers grab the deadbolt.

OWEN

Ladybug, open the door.

She takes off the chain and opens the door.

CASSIE

Hey, Daddy.

Owen shakes his head as he walks past her. She closes the door after him.

He takes in the room and sits down on the side of the bed.

OWEN

What happened to you heading back to San Francisco?

CASSIE

I was going to, but -

OWEN

So you lied to me?

CASSIE

Daddy -

He puts his hand up.

OWEN

You're a grown woman and you're gonna do what you want.

CASSIE

Did Sheriff Warren tell you I was still here?

OWEN

That, and I heard you stopped by the Baker house. You said you'd mind your own business.

CASSIE

I've found things that the cops either ignored or overlooked, and I'm not gonna leave until I find out why.

OWEN

Go home, Cassie. You don't belong here anymore.

Cassie looks defeated. Owen eyes the laptop.

CASSIE

Daddy, I appreciate you checking in on me, but I really need to focus.

Owen looks at her, reading the determination in her face. He sighs and nods.

OWEN
You're stubborn - just like your mom.

CASSIE
And you.

She gives him a small smile and rubs his shoulder.

CASSIE (cont'd)
I'll be okay. I promise.

OWEN
I just hope you know what you're
doing.

He walks out. She latches the door and sets the deadbolt behind him and then exhales.

She sits down at the desk and opens her laptop. She logs in and stares at her desktop.

CASSIE
I hope you're right about this,
Cassie.

She opens a new Pages file. Her fingers linger above the keys. Then she types in all caps BOY STILL MISSING BY CASSANDRA ARCHER.

She hits the space bar a few times and begins typing.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

The morning sun shines brightly on Cassie's car. Another note flutters under the windshield.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - REAR PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie comes out of her hotel room, shoulder bag over her arm. She immediately sees the note and stops. She looks around, but the parking lot is void of people.

She walks to the car and picks up the note. She unfolds it.

INSERT NOTE: LEAVE TOWN, BITCH.

The handwriting is still in pen, but bold and harsh.

Her eyes widen with fear and determination as she tears the note in half.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

Cassie paces, arms across her chest. She hears a truck pull into the the lot. She runs to the window and looks out and sees Jude, behind the wheel of his truck. He turns off the ignition.

She watches as he climbs out of the truck. She unlocks the door and opens it.

CASSIE
Thanks for coming.

She locks the door behind Jude and hugs him.

JUDE
What are you doing here?

He hugs her back, but he's awkward about it.

CASSIE
I couldn't stay at my dad's after changing my mind.

JUDE
Cassie, you're freaking me out.

CASSIE
I found this on my car right before I called you.

She hands him the note. He puts the two halves together.

JUDE
"Leave town, Bitch". This actually scares you?

CASSIE
Hell yes, I'm scared. I told you someone was watching me.

JUDE
It'll be okay. No one's gonna hurt you.

She takes the note back and shoves it in his face.

CASSIE
Then what does this mean?

JUDE
I don't know, but we'll figure it out. I've got you.

It's his turn to hug her now. He squeezes her hard.

JUDE (cont'd)
Show me what you've got.

LATER

Jude, at the desk, finished an unfinished BOY STILL MISSING. He turns his head and sees Cassie sitting on the edge of the bed. He turns his chair around and grabs her hands.

JUDE
Cassie... this is incredible.

CASSIE
I know. Do you remember any of this?

JUDE
Everything's a blur. I know he was in jail and the trial, but I don't remember the details.

CASSIE
What happened to Micah's dad?

JUDE
He died a couple of years ago. Cancer, I think. Why?

CASSIE
His reports don't add up. Some of them are typed, like they're supposed to be. Other times, he uses white out and hand stuff in.

JUDE
What are you thinking?

CASSIE
He knew something that we don't.

JUDE
Whose files are changed?

CASSIE
Micah's, mostly.

JUDE
Were you able to take any pictures?

CASSIE
Sheriff Warren took my phone, but I
was expecting that. I snuck in my
digital camera.

JUDE
Can I see them?

CASSIE
Sure.

She grabs her camera from the shoulder bag and turns it on.
She gives him the phone.

CASSIE (cont'd)
I still need to go through them all,
but there they are.

He moves from the chair to the bed and they scroll through
the pictures together.

JUDE
Wow, Cass. This is so fucked.

She watches his eyes as he scrolls, her own anxiety matching
his, bubbling beneath the surface. He reaches the end.

CASSIE
What are we gonna do?

He puts the camera down - his expression serious.

JUDE
We need to be careful. Whoever left
that note knows you're digging, but
we can't stop now.

CASSIE
We?

JUDE
I'm sorry that I gave you a lot of
push back when you first got here.

CASSIE
It's okay. You were trying to protect
me, in your own way.

He nods, his hand grazing her arm.

JUDE
We'll figure it out. Together.

CASSIE

Together.

They hold hands as she rests her head on his shoulder.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - JUDE'S TABLE - DAY

Jude and Cassie sit near the back, away from the other diners. She's got an Old Fashioned. He drinks a beer. They eat their burgers in silence.

He finishes his beer.

JUDE

I think that's the best tasting beer
I've ever had.

They both laugh.

JUDE (cont'd)

I'm gonna go get another one, okay?
You good?

CASSIE

Yeah. I'm good.

He walks away. Cassie stares out the window. She turns around when she hears the clicking of heels.

She makes eye contact with Elaine, from the Library. She's a little tipsy.

ELAINE

Hello again.

CASSIE

Hi.

ELAINE

You're Owen's girl? The reporter?

CASSIE

Yes, ma'am.

Elaine looks around. Coast is clear.

ELAINE

Are you still working on that
article?

CASSIE

A story, but yeah.

ELAINE

You kinda shocked me when you came into the library, so I'm sorry if I seemed a little rude.

CASSIE

You were fine. Just doing your job.

ELAINE

I'm on my way to the ladies room, but I remembered something that you need for your story.

CASSIE

Okay?

She looks down at the table and sees the second plate.

ELAINE

Oh, you're with someone. I'm so sorry.

She looks up as Jude comes around the corner with a beer.

ELAINE (cont'd)

Jude Baker!

JUDE

Yes ma'am. That's me.

ELAINE

Oh, Jude, you and your family have been in my prayers.

She hugs him.

JUDE

Thank you, Mrs. Anderson.

ELAINE

Please! We're adults. Call me Elaine.

JUDE

I'm sorry. Thank you, Elaine.

ELAINE

You're welcome, Jude.

Jude sits down. Elaine eyes Cassie.

CASSIE

Anything else, Elaine?

ELAINE

Can you come with me please?

CASSIE

Sure.

Cassie shoots Jude a look, but gets out of her chair. She follows Elaine around the corner.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - OUTSIDE BATHROOMS - DAY

Elaine stops shy of the door to the ladies room. Cassie stands a few feet away.

ELAINE

I didn't want to say this in front of Jude, but I remembered something about the trial.

CASSIE

What?

ELAINE

There was a knife in evidence, but it disappeared before the trial. The jury wasn't allowed to use it against Luke, which is why they couldn't agree on whether he did it or not.

CASSIE

What do you think?

ELAINE

I would've found him not guilty.

CASSIE

Anyone on the jury still around? I'd love to talk to them.

ELAINE

Oh, no honey. They're all dead or a foot in the grave.

CASSIE

Damnit.

ELAINE

I wish I knew more.

CASSIE

There wasn't anything about that in any of the articles I read.

ELAINE

That doesn't mean it didn't happen.

CASSIE

Thanks for letting me know.

ELAINE

You're welcome. And good luck.

Elaine disappears into the ladies room.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - JUDE'S TABLE - DAY

Jude, relaxed after a few beers, eyes Cassie as she takes her seat.

JUDE

What was that about?

CASSIE

Oh, she helped me yesterday at the library, and wanted to know how things were going. She didn't want to ask in front me in front of you.

JUDE

That's weird.

CASSIE

I think she means well.

JUDE

I guess so.

He finishes his beer.

EXT. BONHAM STREETS - DAY

Jude drives. Cassie sits in the passenger seat, scrolling through her phone. They're calm. Relaxed. Quiet.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

Jude pulls into the parking lot and drives around to Cassie's room. He sees it first: The door is slightly ajar.

JUDE

You locked the door, right?

CASSIE

Yeah.

She looks up and sees the door ajar.

CASSIE (cont'd)
What the fuck?

Jude stops the truck as Cassie opens the door. She jumps out and runs into the room.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

Room's a mess. Clothes tossed everywhere. Pillows thrown. Lamp broken. Cassie steps over the threshold, eyeing the damage, not believing what she's seeing.

CASSIE
Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Her eyes spot at her desk. Her laptop is gone. Her shoulder bag is gone. The camera is gone.

CASSIE (cont'd)
They took everything.

She falls into the desk chair. Jude walks up behind her and wraps his arms around her.

JUDE
You saved everything, right?

CASSIE
Yeah, but still. All my work.

JUDE
You saved it.

CASSIE
But now I can't access it.

JUDE
You still have the library.

CASSIE
You're right.

She breathes. He sits down on the edge of the bed and pulls out his phone.

CASSIE (cont'd)
What are you doing?

JUDE
Calling the cops.

CASSIE

But -

JUDE

We'll file a report and go from there.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Sheriff Warren scribbles into his police report notebook as Cassie and Jude wait around Cassie's car.

SHERIFF WARREN

You think this has to do with the story you're writing?

CASSIE

Why else would they only steal my computer and camera?

SHERIFF WARREN

You have a camera?

CASSIE

Yes. I have a camera.

SHERIFF WARREN

What's on this camera?

CASSIE

Nothing of value, Sheriff.

SHERIFF WARREN

Just making sure.

He hands his small notepad to Cassie.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)

Please read it over and sign this.

Cassie reads it over and signs it. Hands it back.

CASSIE

Now what?

SHERIFF WARREN

Breaking and entering, and petty theft, is a big deal. We'll work with the hotel to see if they have any cameras. We'll do what we can, but if your equipment doesn't turn up, there's nothing we can do.

CASSIE
I understand.

She and Jude share a look.

CASSIE (cont'd)
Let's go back and talk to the front
desk. I need to move rooms anyway.
Are we done here?

SHERIFF WARREN
I have all I need. Be careful,
Cassie.

CASSIE
I'm tryin', Sheriff.

She walks into -

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 210 - DAY

- and Cassie grabs her clothes, stuffing them in her
suitcase. Jude waits at the door.

JUDE
So what now?

CASSIE
I can't stay here.

JUDE
There's always your dad.

CASSIE
And let him treat me like I'm 16? No
thanks.

Jude chuckles.

JUDE
You can always stay with me.

She shakes her head.

JUDE (cont'd)
Come on. I'll sleep on the couch.

CASSIE
I don't know...

Jude's phone rings. He pulls it out of his pocket and
groans.

JUDE
It's the restaurant.

He answers.

JUDE (cont'd)
What's up?

Cassie bites her lip.

JUDE (cont'd)
Yeah. Yeah. I'm on my way.

He hangs up and puts his phone away.

JUDE (cont'd)
A keg line busted at the restaurant
and I gotta go fix it. You gonna be
okay?

CASSIE
Yeah. I'll get packed up and see if
they have another room.

JUDE
My invite's still available, if you
need it.

CASSIE
Thanks, Jude. Go take care of the
restaurant. I'll be okay.

They hug. Jude leaves as Cassie collapses on the bed, mostly
out of frustration and exhaustion.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 125 - NIGHT

Cassie brushes her teeth in front of the TV, which shows the
current weather prediction. It's worse than previously
reported.

She moves to the sink and spits. As she's rinsing, she hears
her phone ring.

She quickly spits and runs to grab the phone off the
nightstand. The screen reads DAD. She sighs as she answers.

CASSIE
Yes, Daddy?

OWEN (O/S)
Just callin' to check in on ya.

CASSIE

Sheriff Warren really needs to keep his mouth shut.

She hears Owen laugh on the other end.

OWEN (O/S)

I doubt that's gonna happen anytime soon. Are you okay?

CASSIE

Yeah, I guess. This asshole stole my laptop and my camera. He might as well cut off my right arm so I can't write at all.

OWEN (O/S)

Computers and cameras can be replaced.

CASSIE

I know, and you know how crazy I am about constantly backing up everything anyway. I didn't really lose any of my work.

OWEN (O/S)

That's good. Smart.

CASSIE

Is there anything else dad?

OWEN (O/S)

Well, Ladybug, if you wanted to stay here, you're always welcome.

CASSIE

So now you trust me?

OWEN (O/S)

I've always trusted you, Cassie. But seems like you've gotten under somebody's skin, so you staying just might actually be worth it.

CASSIE

I think that's the nicest thing you've ever said.

OWEN (O/S)

I guess I've come around to admitting that I might not be the only writer in the family.

CASSIE

Thanks, dad. I was just about to go to bed. I'll call you tomorrow, okay?

OWEN (O/S)

Sure thing. And the storm's supposed to be getting worse.

CASSIE

Yeah. I'm watching the news now.

OWEN (O/S)

Sweet dreams, Ladybug.

CASSIE

You too, Daddy.

They hang up.

EXT. BONHAM PD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Micah, in uniform, runs up the stairs and throws open the front door.

INT. BONHAM PD - LOBBY/RECEPTION - DAY

Micah's shoes echo on the tile as he runs down the hall.

INT. BONHAM PD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sheriff Warren, Officer Daniels, and five other POLICE OFFICERS sit around the table, drinking cheap coffee out of Styrofoam cups. A coffee station has been set up on one end of the table.

SHERIFF WARREN

'Bout time you got here, Hudson.

MICAH

Sorry, Sheriff.

SHERIFF WARREN

Get yourself some coffee and have a seat.

MICAH

Yes, sir.

Everyone watches as Micah takes his time with the coffee. Pours cream. Mixes sugar. Tries it. Adds more cream.

SHERIFF WARREN
Come on, Hudson! It's only coffee for
Christ's sakes.

MICAH
Sorry, Sheriff.

He takes the last available chair.

MICAH (cont'd)
What's going on?

SHERIFF WARREN
You'd know that if you were ever on
time, but I'm assuming you were too
busy with one of your women to pay
attention to the clock.

Micah shrugs with a smirk.

MICAH
I mean, I don't kiss and tell.

OFFICER DANIELS
Shut it, Hudson. Go on, Sheriff.

The Sheriff opens a folder and passes out a few print outs
to his staff. They're stapled, rough copies of a rough fax.

Tension builds as each Police Officer scans the pages and
images.

MICAH
What the hell is this?

OFFICER DANIELS
Can you shut your mouth for one
fucking minute?

SHERIFF WARREN
Calm down, y'all.

He clears his throat.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)
This is the preliminary reports from
the medical examiner. Dental records
match. The boy we found by the creek
is 100% Andrew Baker.

The table collectively groans.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)
I know that's not what we wanted, but
it's better than another missing kid
out there.

OFFICER DANIELS
So we can finally close this case?

SHERIFF WARREN
Not quite. Flip towards the last few
pages.

They do so.

OFFICER DANIELS
I don't understand. What the fuck are
we looking at?

SHERIFF WARREN
A diagram of Andy's body. There's
evidence of stab wounds on some of
his ribs on his left side. The
Medical Examiner couldn't say for
sure if that's what led to his death,
or if he drowned after being stabbed.
He's ruling it a homicide either way.

MICAH
What's that mean?

SHERIFF WARREN
Luke Baker is still our number one
suspect.

Sheriff Warren coughs as the rest of the Police Officers eye
each other. Daniels plays with a pen.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)
This is still confidential
information, and however you feel
about it, nothing leaves this room.

Micah fidgets in his chair. Downs his coffee.

SHERIFF WARREN (cont'd)
What is it Hudson?

MICAH
I need to take a leak.

SHERIFF WARREN
Go ahead.

Micah runs out of the room as the rest of the Officers exchange looks. We're not sure they believe it.

INT. BONHAM PD - MEN'S ROOM - STALL - DAY

Micah falls into a stall and locks the door behind him. He pulls out his phone.

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - BAR - DAY

Micah shakes a margarita in front of Albert and Kay when he feels his phone vibrate in his pocket. Albert drinks from his beer.

He smiles at the couple as he ignores his phone.

He pours the margarita in a glass in front of Kay.

MICAH
Y'all want to order any food?

ALBERT
No. We're good.

MICAH
Enjoy guys.

He smiles as he walks into the -

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - KITCHEN - DAY

- where Jude pulls his phone out of his pocket. He answers, but he can't hear anything over the music and banging of pans. He weaves through to the -

INT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - DUMPSTERS - DAY

- where Jude lets the door slam behind him. He's finally in a quiet space, but Micah's already hung up.

He calls him back.

INT. BONHAM PD - MEN'S ROOM - STALL - DAY

Micah answers.

MICAH
Thank God, man.

JUDE

What's up?

MICAH

I can't tell you why, but I need you to get home right now.

JUDE

I can't. I'm the only one at the bar.

MICAH

Find someone else. I'm serious.

JUDE

What are you talking about?

MICAH

Jude, I don't have a lot of time, but get home now.

He hangs up. Adjusts his tie in the mirror. Runs out.

INT. BONHAM PD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Micah returns to his chair.

SHERIFF WARREN

That look longer than a leak, Hudson.

MICAH

Sometimes I get pee shy.

SHERIFF WARREN

Right. Judge Abernathy's already signed the arrest warrant, but I want to do this the smart way. No radio chatter about this. At all. We all go together. Got it?

OFFICER DANIELS

You think he's gonna run?

SHERIFF WARREN

He's pushin' 60, Daniels. He ain't gonna run.

She shrugs. Keeps playing with her pen.

EXT. IRON HORSE BAR AND GRILL - DUMPSTERS - DAY

Jude stares at the phone then he decides to calls Cassie.

He lets it ring once and then hangs up.

INT. LIBRARY - COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Cassie, headphones in, stands at the printer. Copies of her notes shoot out. She collects them as her phone rings. She reads the caller ID and answers.

CASSIE
Hey. What's up?

JUDE
Micah just called me and told me to go to my folk's house, but I can't get there. Can you go?

CASSIE
Of course. I'm just at the library.

She collects the copies and puts them in a new folder.

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

- Sheriff Warren handcuffs Luke's hands behind his back. He reads him his Miranda rights. Officer Daniels keeps RUTH (50s, frail) from getting onto the porch.

LUKE
It'll be okay, Ruth.

OFFICER DANIELS
Mrs. Baker, I need you to stay inside. Please.

RUTH
No! He didn't do it! Let him go!

Sheriff Warren leads Luke off the porch.

LUKE
Stay inside, honey. Please.

OFFICER DANIELS
Mrs. Baker. Calm down.

Ruth lunges. Officer Daniels grabs her.

OFFICER DANIELS (cont'd)
I need help here!

BALD OFFICER steps up and helps control Ruth. Ruth's stronger than she looks, and they struggle to keep her on the porch.

OFFICER DANIELS (cont'd)
Come on, Mrs. Baker. Please.

BALD OFFICER
Come on, Ruth!

Micah opens the back door of Sheriff Warren's police cruiser as Cassie drives down the gravel lane.

SHERIFF WARREN
What the fucking hell! Who talked?

Cassie quickly parks and jumps out, her cell phone in hand, recording video of the arrest.

Micah, now furious, moves fast, hand raised.

MICAH
Cassie, you need to leave.

CASSIE
Why? Is this an illegal arrest?

MICAH
No, but you can't be here.

CASSIE
Says who?

She dodges his hand, taking what video she can get. In the background, Sheriff Warren pushes Luke in the backseat.

She moves her camera to the front porch, where Ruth is screaming and Bald Officer and Officer Daniels are trying to corral her.

CASSIE (cont'd)
Is this really what you want on the news? Your officers abusing an old lady and arresting the wrong guy?

MICAH
We won't have the wrong guy.

CASSIE
He was innocent then and he's innocent now.

Micah grabs the phone out of her hand and throws it on the ground. He raises his shoe.

SHERIFF WARREN
Hudson! Leave it! She's got a right.

Micah kicks rocks instead, fuming. Cassie picks up her phone, dusts it off, and records herself.

CASSIE
This is Cassie Archer, with the San Francisco Chronicle, with exclusive footage of the Bonham Police Department arresting Luke Baker for a second time. And bonus footage of Officer Hudson stealing my phone.

She stops the video.

CASSIE (cont'd)
Is that how you control your department, Sheriff Warren?

SHERIFF WARREN
Cassie. How the hell?

CASSIE
Doesn't matter.

They hear Jude's truck coming down the drive.

SHERIFF WARREN
Now what?!

He appears shortly after. He makes eye contact with Luke, who stares out the window.

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

TEEN JUDE, on the porch, watching Younger Luke being arrested fifteen years prior.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Jude slams his truck closed and marches to the Sheriff.

JUDE
What the fuck Sheriff?

Sheriff Warren pulls the arrest warren out of his breast pocket, but Jude strides by him.

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Jude pushes the cops away and hugs his mom.

JUDE

It's okay, mom. You're okay.

RUTH

They're taking him away again. He didn't do it!

JUDE

I know, mom.

Sheriff Warren approaches the porch, arrest warrant in hand.

SHERIFF WARREN

I hate to be the one to tell you this, but the medical examiner's report came back.

JUDE

So it's Andy?

SHERIFF WARREN

We all knew it.

Jude rips the arrest warrant away from Sheriff Warren. He skims it.

JUDE

You still think my dad did this?

SHERIFF WARREN

Judge Abernathy signed off on it.

JUDE

Fuck. Second degree murder?

SHERIFF WARREN

The medical examiner couldn't come to a conclusion on how Andy died. We know he was stabbed.

JUDE

That knife is long gone.

SHERIFF WARREN

There were knife marks on the ribs, son. Andy was stabbed and then thrown in the creek.

JUDE

There's no way my dad did that.

SHERIFF WARREN
That's for a jury to decide.

He slams his hand down hard on the police cruiser.

JUDE
Can I talk to him?

SHERIFF WARREN
We gotta take him in.

JUDE
Then I need to take care of my mom. I
want everyone off my property now.
(to Cassie)
Except you.

Cassie nods. Jude gets in front of the back window.

JUDE (cont'd)
I'll get you outta there!

Luke nods. Sheriff Warren gets behind the wheel. Micah
lingers next to his cruiser.

JUDE (cont'd)
You fucking asshole.

Micah throws his hands in the air.

MICAH
I tried, dude.

JUDE
You're still an asshole.

Micah gets behind the wheel, as Officer Daniels and Bald
Officer get into the same car.

Ruth sits on the top step of the porch, hands in her laps.
Her face is wet with tears.

Luke sits next to her as the Police Officers drive away. She
cries into his shoulder.

JUDE (cont'd)
I'm here, mom. I've got you. Let's
get you inside okay?

Ruth nods through the tears. Jude gets her to her feet.
Cassie holds the front door.

INT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dark. Musty. Cassie lets the door hang open and watches as Jude takes Ruth into a back bedroom.

JUDE (O/S)

Sorry I couldn't be here sooner. I had to stay at the restaurant, but I won't leave you again, okay?

Cassie hears Ruth cry. Then the door is closed, and Jude comes back out.

JUDE

She um, moved down here years ago. My dad kept the bedroom upstairs. I need something to drink. You want anything?

CASSIE

Yes, please.

JUDE

Whiskey?

CASSIE

Sure. Neat.

He walks into the kitchen as she pulls out her phone. She sits down on the couch.

CASSIE (cont'd)

I got here just in time. I got everything on camera, even Micah grabbing the phone from me.

JUDE (O/S)

That's great.

She hears the clinking of glasses. Then the pouring of whiskey.

CASSIE

I'm gonna take it to the news. They should be able to get it on tonight's news.

Jude comes back with two glasses of whiskey.

JUDE

That's awesome.

CASSIE

Do you want to watch?

He joins her on the couch. She takes a glass. They cheers.

JUDE

Not really, but yeah. Go ahead.

Cassie plays the video. Jude's expression changes from shock, to anger, to full on hate in the span of minutes.

JUDE (cont'd)

I knew something was up when Micah called me. He fucking knew.

CASSIE

I'm glad you called me.

JUDE

Me too. Thanks for being here.

CASSIE

What are you gonna do about Ruth?

JUDE

I'll find someone to watch the restaurant, but I can't leave her. She needs constant care.

CASSIE

Have you and your dad talked...?

JUDE

My dad can take care of her just fine, but if he's not here, then someone has to be.

Cassie downs the whiskey.

CASSIE

I'm gonna go to the news. Do you want me to come back here, or...?

JUDE

Please come back.

Their mouths are almost touching. Jude makes the first move and they kiss for the first time. It's passionate. She touches his cheek.

CASSIE

Okay. I'll come back.

JUDE

Thanks.

EXT. LOCAL NEWS STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie, smile on her face, gets in her car. She leaves the parking lot.

EXT. BONHAM STREETS - DAY

Cassie cruises through town.

EXT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie parks her car.

INT. SUNSET HAVEN MOTEL - ROOM 125 - DAY

Cassie grabs what little clothes she has laying around, as she talks to her dad.

CASSIE

I thought you should know before the news gets out later.

OWEN (O/S)

Thanks for telling me. What are you gonna do now?

CASSIE

I'm gonna stay with Jude.

She cleans up the bathroom, throwing her make up and toothbrush into her toiletry bag.

OWEN (O/S)

You think that's a good idea?

CASSIE

Dad - I'm not sixteen.

OWEN (O/S)

I just think that if anything else happens, you'll be in the middle.

CASSIE

Jude needs me now. He's a mess.

OWEN (O/S)

Well, yeah. And I'm sure Ruth is too. It's good for you to be there for him. You're a good friend.

CASSIE
Thanks, Dad.

She packs her phone charger.

OWEN (O/S)
You're welcome, Ladybug. The storm's supposed to be awful tonight, so be careful. I don't want you getting hurt.

CASSIE
Dad.

OWEN (O/S)
Okay. I'll quit. I'll be sure to record the news in case you don't get to watch it.

CASSIE
Thanks.

OWEN (O/S)
Good night, Ladybug.

CASSIE
Bye, daddy.

She hangs up and takes in her empty motel room.

CASSIE (cont'd)
Good bye, Sunset Haven Motel. You've been grand.

EXT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Cassie steps onto the porch. She knocks on the door.

JUDE (O/S)
It's open!

Cassie opens the door.

INT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

With the lamps and overhead light on, the home feels warmer, cozy even. She closes and locks the door behind her.

CASSIE
You think it's smart to leave the door unlocked?

Jude comes out of the kitchen.

JUDE
I heard you coming up the drive.

CASSIE
Gotcha.

JUDE
I've got dinner started. I fed my mom
a bit ago, so she's good until
morning.

CASSIE
That's good.

Jude hands her a glass of wine.

JUDE
I thought we might go with some wine
tonight.

CASSIE
And what's for dinner?

JUDE
Spaghetti with a mushroom sauce and
Parmesan.

CASSIE
I'm allergic to mushrooms!

JUDE
Shut the fuck up!

She's bad at lying, and she starts laughing.

CASSIE
I'm just kidding.

JUDE
You're the worst!

He puts down his wine glass and hugs her. They kiss,
tentatively. Then they really kiss. Cassie pulls away.

JUDE (cont'd)
Yeah okay?

CASSIE
Yeah. Just unexpected.

JUDE
Everything's unexpected these days.

CASSIE

Tell me about it. My dad is actually okay with this.

JUDE

You told him?

CASSIE

Yeah. He asked me to stay with him, but I told him I wanted to stay with you. He was actually okay with it.

JUDE

I'm glad. You go shower up and I'll finish up down here.

CASSIE

Okay.

She takes another sip of wine and leaves it on the table. He watches her go as he chops mushrooms.

INT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - JUDE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassie, in her pajamas, watches Jude's TV on his fifteen year old set. She's under the covers on his twin sized bed.

She hears a shower turn off down the hall, and a few seconds later, footsteps. The door opens and Jude walks in, hair still wet. A towel hangs loose on his waist.

He shuts the door behind him.

JUDE

Sorry. I forgot to grab clean shorts.

CASSIE

Sure ya did.

He walks across the room to his dresser and pulls out a pair of boxers from the top drawer. He tries to put them on under his towel, but the towel slips and falls, exposing his ass.

CASSIE (cont'd)

Cute butt ya got there.

JUDE

You weren't supposed to see that.

CASSIE

That was supposed to be an accident?

He slides on his boxers and then jumps under the covers. The twin bed is a tight fit.

She cozies up to him. He puts his arm around her shoulder. He kisses her forehead.

JUDE

Teenage Jude would be creaming his pants right now.

CASSIE

What? Why?

JUDE

I've had a crush on you for a very long time.

CASSIE

I know.

JUDE

You can't say you didn't have a crush on me.

CASSIE

Oh, I did. Most definitely.

She slaps his chest. Lets it linger longer than a bit. Jude takes her hand and kisses her fingers. They laugh. She kisses him on his lips. He rubs his hand down her back.

JUDE

This feels different.

CASSIE

How?

JUDE

Better, somehow.

CASSIE

How about we make teenage Jude a very happy boy?

She climbs on top of him.

JUDE

You sure?

CASSIE

Yeah.

JUDE

Okay.

They kiss. Soft, at first, then gradually more passionate. He helps her take off her top. One of her arms gets stuck in the sleeve. She loses her balance and falls to his side.

CASSIE

This bed's a little cramped.

JUDE

Teenage Jude was also fifty pounds lighter.

CASSIE

I like adult Jude much better.

JUDE

I'm glad. He likes you too.

They laugh again at Jude talking about himself in third person. She pulls him on top of her.

JUDE (cont'd)

You know we can still turn back.

CASSIE

Do you want to disappoint Teen Jude?

JUDE

Oh, no. God no.

He kisses her. Runs his fingers through her air.

JUDE (cont'd)

I just don't want to change anything that we can't change back.

CASSIE

Change is good, right?

JUDE

Yeah.

CASSIE

So let's stop pretending.

She moves him onto his back and straddles him.

INT. BAKER FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jude spoonfeeds Ruth oatmeal at the table, like a child. They hear Cassie come down the staircase.

She comes in, fully dressed.

JUDE

Good morning.

Cassie bends down and rubs Ruth's shoulders.

CASSIE

You doing okay Misses Baker?

Ruth nods with a smile.

JUDE

See. She likes you.

CASSIE

And I like her too.

They make eye contact and share a smile. Ruth notices.

JUDE

You want breakfast?

CASSIE

No. I need to get some work done at the library.

JUDE

Sounds good. The weather's supposed to get real bad, so grab one of the raincoats by the front door. You'll need it.

Cassie lingers near the door.

CASSIE

Thanks. Bye.

Cassie leaves. Ruth giggles.

JUDE

You're in a good mood today, aren't ya, mom?

He wipes her mouth.

EXT. LIBRARY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie parks as close to the front door as she can, keeping her eyes peeled. She's in a black rain slicker that's a little bit too big on her.

She locks the car behind her.

INT. LIBRARY - DESK - DAY

Elaine sits behind the desk. She looks up when Cassie walks in and stands.

ELAINE
Aren't you just the talk of the town?

CASSIE
So you saw the news?

ELAINE
Everyone saw the news.

CASSIE
That's great. I'm going to be in the lab getting some work done...

ELAINE
Didn't you have one?

CASSIE
Someone stole it.

ELAINE
That's awful!

CASSIE
Everything's backed up, so it's more of an inconvenience than anything.

She gives Elaine her card.

CASSIE (cont'd)
Someone's also leaving notes on my car. If you see anyone weird standing by it or looking at it, please call me. Thanks.

ELAINE
You're welcome.

INT. LIBRARY - COMPUTER LAB - LATER

Cassie, near the printer, as it spits out her notes. She picks them up and moves back to her computer.

She types quickly, getting into the groove.

After a beat, Elaine knocks on the door. Cassie looks over.

ELAINE

You might want to get to the jail
right away.

CASSIE

Why?

ELAINE

There's a protest.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

PROTESTORS, with signs, stand at the curb. POLICE have the parking lot blocked with barriers. They hold umbrellas and wear raincoats.

SHERIFF WARREN stands on the front steps, behind the yellow tape. He speaks into a bullhorn.

SHERIFF WARREN

Please everyone! Mr. Baker's arrest
was legitimate. We have to trust our
judicial system.

RANDOM OLD PERSON

(yelling)

We all know he's innocent!

SHERIFF WARREN

Let's let the jury decide when Mr.
Baker gets his fair trial. Y'all can
stay out here all y'all want but
Bonham PD has work to do.

Sheriff Warren puts the bullhorn down.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - CURB - LATER

Sheriff Warren waits in his cruiser as some of the police officers move the barrier.

INT. SHERIFF WARREN'S CRUISER - DAY

The bullhorn lays in his passenger seat next to his hat.

Once he's clear, Sheriff Warren tips his head and drives through the gate. Police Officers replace the barriers.

EXT. ACROSS FROM THE COUNTY JAIL - DAY

As Sheriff Warren drives away, Cassie parks at the curb. She gets out, camera ready.

She snaps some photos of the protestors and their signs as she runs across the street.

One of the local reporters - DOUG - sees her and pulls his camera man over.

DOUG

Miss Harris! Do you have a minute?

CASSIE

Sure.

DOUG

I'm Doug Parker with KTVU. Your footage has really turned this town upside down. What do you have to say about it?

CASSIE

I think someone within the Bonham Police Department covered up Andy's murder to save one of their own. To the person or persons who stole my laptop and camera, I hope it was worth it. But you won't stop me from writing this story. It's not about me, but it's about you and this town. We deserve better. This town deserves better.

INT. BONHAM PD - CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME

Officer Daniels, and a few other officers watch Cassie's interview from the conference table. Micah paces, clearly agitated with something.

DOUG (ON TV)

Who do you think is responsible?

CASSIE (ON TV)

I'm not sure, but I will find out.

DOUG (ON TV)

Live from the Fannin County Jail, I'm Doug Miller.

Micah turns off the TV and throws the remote across the table.

OFFICER DANIELS
What the fuck got into you?

MICAH
That bitch doesn't even live here
anymore and she's talkin' shit.

Micah shoves a chair out of his way as he crosses the room.

OFFICER DANIELS
Where are you goin'?

MICAH
Tell Warren that I'm I'm takin' the
rest of the day off.

She watches him as he runs down the hall.

OFFICER DANIELS
You think he's okay?

BALD OFFICER
You think he's not?

Officer Daniels shrugs as they hear a clap of thunder.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie's wipers struggle to hold by the deluge from the darkened sky.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Cassie struggles to see through the windshield, but she does manage to turn onto a smaller highway without incident.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie sees headlights in her rear-view mirror. They're high up, shining directly at her.

She accelerates, but slides on the wet asphalt. She looks in the mirror and sees it's a lifted truck, but she can't see the driver.

EXT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Suddenly, horns blare as the truck gets within inches of Cassie's fender.

The truck swerves and passes, narrowly running her off the road. The truck is white with red stripes.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie, breathing hard, pulls over. She turns on her hazards and reaches for her phone. She dials Jude, who answers immediately.

JUDE (O/S)
Where are you?

CASSIE
What kind of truck does Micah drive?

JUDE (O/S)
What?

She looks out the window but can't see anything through the raging storm.

CASSIE
His truck. What kind of truck is it?

JUDE (O/S)
Some big Ford thing.

CASSIE
White with red stripes?

JUDE (O/S)
Yeah...

CASSIE
Micah just tried to run me off the road and he's headed your way.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Cassie speeds through the rain. Ahead of her are two tail lights, but she's closing the gap.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie, hands gripping the wheel, focuses ahead.

CASSIE
There you are, asshole.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NARROW SIDE ROAD - DAY

The truck turns and drives through an open gate onto loose gravel.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - SAME

Slowing down, Cassie sees the truck turn. She waits, giving herself some distance.

After a beat, she inches forward, taking her time. Once she's comfortable, she follows the truck -

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NARROW SIDE ROAD - DAY

- through the gate. She can see the headlights moving ahead of her.

INT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie follows the truck down unfamiliar territory, towards the woods in the distance.

She watches the truck turn, the taillights disappearing.

CASSIE

Where the fuck are you going?

Cassie drives ahead, feeling the loose gravel under her tires. She comes to the turn, and the gravel road has turned to nothing but mud.

CASSIE (cont'd)

Fuck!

She finds her phone and sends her location to Jude with a text.

INSERT TEXT: I think we're near the creek, but not sure.

She pockets her phone, throws on her hood, and gets out.

EXT. CASSIE'S CAR - DAY

Cassie's shoes slip in the mud and she catches herself on the car.

CASSIE

Fuck you, Micah.

EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

The truck, parked, headlights shining into the trees. The sound of the rushing creek is heard through the rain, only a few yards away.

Micah, face hidden by his hood, stands in the headlights, waiting, not giving one fuck about the rain.

Cassie finally makes it to the clearing, covered in mud.

MICAH

Finally. You've made it.

CASSIE

Why'd you bring me out here?

MICAH

You want the truth, don't you?

He slips a knife from his sleeve.

CASSIE

What is that?

He holds up the missing knife so she can see it.

CASSIE (cont'd)

You've had it this whole time?

MICAH

I found it after my dad died.

CASSIE

Why didn't you turn it in?

MICAH

What would that do?

CASSIE

It'll prove an innocent man didn't kill his son.

MICAH

You just had to come back here and fuck everything up didn't you?

CASSIE

We were only fifteen, Micah.

MICAH

Fifteen's old enough to be charged as an adult.

CASSIE
So your dad covered it up?

MICAH
He protected me.

CASSIE
Micah. Give me the knife. We'll show
Sheriff Warren.

MICAH
Who do you think helped cover it up?

CASSIE
Then we'll go to the FBI. We'll
figure this out.

MICAH
You should've left last week.

He lunges, knife out. She dodges but falls against the truck. He attacks, but a gunshot cracks through the rain. Micah's shoulder twists backwards. He loses his balance and falls to the ground.

Cassie looks behind her and sees Jude, with a rifle. She scurries toward him.

JUDE
Go to my truck!

Cassie runs away from Micah's truck as Micah gets back on his feet. He drops the gun, but pulls out a pistol from his ankle holster.

Jude watches as Micah raises his arm and aims. He fires, missing Jude completely.

MICAH
Fuck you!

Jude shoots Micah, this time hitting him in his arm. Micah drops the pistol and turns, running.

Jude gives chase, but stops after a few feet. He watches as Micah jumps into the creek and slowly disappears under the rushing current.

Jude turns back and walks to Micah's truck. He bends down and picks up the knife and Micah's pistol. He closes the knife and pops the clip from the pistol. He pockets everything.

When he looks up, Cassie stands in front him.

JUDE

I told you to go to the truck!

CASSIE

I couldn't leave you.

They hug, ignoring the rain.

CASSIE (cont'd)

What happens now?

Jude stares into the creek, unsure of what to do next.

INT. LOCAL NEWS STUDIO - A WEEK LATER

Cassie, in full makeup and hair, and Jude, looking handsome with his hair and beard trimmed, sits next to her. They sit across from a local FEMALE REPORTER on the morning news.

They watch footage of Luke being released from jail on a monitor between them.

FEMALE REPORTER

And there we have it, that impressive footage of Mr. Luke Baker being released from jail. We're back with Cassie Archer who was able to do the unthinkable. She was able to prove that an innocent man was behind bars. How'd you do it?

CASSIE

I followed my gut. Something kept telling me that this was wrong. There was more to the story than a ten year old boy drowning. It just didn't make sense to me.

FEMALE REPORTER

(to Jude)

How does it feel to finally have justice for your father?

JUDE

Feels incredible. There's no way my family could've survived another trial and sentencing.

FEMALE REPORTER

How are your parents now?

JUDE

My dad's home, where he's supposed to be. My mom is much happier.

FEMALE REPORTER

That's great.

She turns to Cassie.

FEMALE REPORTER (cont'd)

You were able to expose the coverup within the Bonham Police Department. How does that resonate with you?

CASSIE

As much as Micah was responsible for killing Andy, his father and Sheriff Warren were responsible for the rest. I don't blame Micah for their actions. All of this wasn't his fault.

FEMALE REPORTER

And for those watching, Sheriff Warren has been released from duty and was arrested for his actions in the coverup.

CASSIE

That's right. Jude and I made some calls, and we got in touch with the Texas Bureau of Investigations. They took over almost immediately.

FEMALE REPORTER

That's fantastic. Thank you, to our friends at the TBI. We can't think you enough for your hard work. Cassie, what happens next?

CASSIE

This little story started as an investigation, and now I've got a book deal. Look forward to reading BOY STILL MISSING next year.

FEMALE REPORTER

And why that title?

Cassie grips Jude's hand.

CASSIE

Even though Andy's found, that sweet little boy that we knew and loved is gone forever. And that part hurts the most.

FEMALE REPORTER

That's lovely, Cassie. Truly. What's next for you two? I see y'all are holding hands.

CASSIE

I'm keeping my place in San Francisco for now, but we decided I should stay here for a little bit longer. The City life was a little much for me anyway.

FEMALE REPORTER

That's fantastic. We're very happy for you both. Thank you guys for coming by and we'll catch up soon. I'll be right back after this break.

She holds her smile until -

PRODUCER

CUT!

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Owen smokes a cigar as he's close to finishing a copy of Cassie's book, BOY STILL MISSING. Cassie finishes a sweet tea next to him.

Jude comes out holding two cocktails and another glass of tea. Cassie takes her drink. Jude sits a cocktail next to Owen. Jude leans against the railing and takes a sip.

Cassie and Jude make eye contact and she smiles. He smiles back.

Owen closes the book and puts it down. He picks up the cocktail, takes a drink. Licks his lips.

OWEN

Looks like we've got another writer in the family.

Cassie laughs. Owen smiles. Raises his glass.

FADE OUT.