

FADE IN:

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A cold drizzle falls. Police sirens paint the building in pulses of red and blue.

A perimeter is formed – cops in body armor, radios buzzing.

Behind the police line, a WOMAN in plain clothes, late 30s, stands still. Focused. Sharp eyes. Calm under pressure.

We don't hear her name yet. She simply watches the warehouse like it's a live bomb.

A negotiator nods toward her.

NEGOTIATOR

We've tried five times. He's not budging. Wants someone else.

WOMAN

(intense, focused)

Me.

She grabs the radio.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A row of flickering lights stretch above a dark interior. At the center: a MAN in his 40s, jittery, wild eyes – a pistol pressed to the side of a YOUNG WOMAN'S head.

Two other people lie tied up. One is crying. The other unconscious.

The hostage-taker talks to someone over an **earpiece**. His voice is cracking.

HOSTAGE-TAKER

You said they'd back off! You said I'd walk out free!

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

And you will. But not with dead weight slowing you down.

HOSTAGE-TAKER

But they're kids...

DISTORTED VOICE
Do it. Then walk.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Woman (KATE) steps forward alone. Rain slicks her coat. She holds no weapon.

She stops at the entrance. The radio hisses in her ear.

COMMANDER (V.O.)
This is your play, Kate. You've got
five minutes. He's slipping.

She breathes. Then steps inside.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kate walks through the space slowly. Every footstep deliberate.

KATE
My name's Kate.

No response.

KATE (CONT'D)
I'm not here to trick you. I'm here
because you asked for me.

The hostage-taker looks toward her — the gun trembles.

HOSTAGE-TAKER
He said I'd get out. Said they'd
help me.

KATE
Who's "he"?

Silence.

Then—

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
Hello again, Kate.

Kate freezes.

The sound isn't from the warehouse. It's in **her earpiece.**

KATE
(into comm)
How did you—

DISTORTED VOICE
You lost last time. Want to try
again?

Kate's breath catches. Her eyes scan the warehouse, her mind racing.

HOSTAGE-TAKER
I'm sorry... I'm so sorry..

BANG!

He pulls the trigger. Blood splashes across the tied hostage beside him.

Kate rushes forward—too late.

MOMENTS LATER

Officers swarm the building.

Kate kneels near the hostages. All **three are dead.**

Her hand shakes as she pulls the earpiece off the body of the hostage-taker.

RADIO OPERATOR (V.O.)
Kate, are you okay?

She doesn't respond. Just looks up.

On the wall behind the scene, in smeared red letters:

"ONE OF THEM KNEW."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - EARLY MORNING

The city wakes under a pale, diffused light.

A cold breeze stirs fallen leaves along crowded sidewalks.

Steam curls upward from subway grates, mingling with the faint sound of car horns and distant conversations. The skyline looms—gray, imposing, and indifferent.

EXT. INNER-CITY APARTMENT BLOCK - EARLY MORNING

A pale grey dawn blankets a weathered urban neighborhood. Faint sirens echo in the distance.

The hum of a waking metropolis begins - distant trains, honking cars, muffled arguments.

Down below, the streets pulse with life.

Vendors shout, cyclists weave through traffic, and workers clutch paper cups of coffee as they shuffle toward their destinations.

Inside a tiny, cluttered apartment, the world feels quieter. A rickety ceiling fan creaks with each slow rotation.

The light from a single window struggles to illuminate the room, where mismatched furniture and scattered belongings paint a picture of modest living.

CLOSE ON:

A dented mailbox labeled: "F. DIENG."

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

A modest kitchen, signs of struggle and routine. A tea kettle hisses over a gas flame. Steam fogs the lone window.

FRANK DIENG (mid-30s, French, lean, sharp-eyed, with the wear of resilience) sits at the table in a wrinkled dress shirt. He practices quietly in French, reading from a creased note.

His **French accent** adds a soft musicality to his muttered words as he rehearses quietly to himself.

FRANK

(softly)

Je m'appelle Frank Dieng. Je suis ponctuel. Travailleur. Je m'adapte à toutes les situations...

He stops, sighs.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Trop rigide...

He smooths the page again, then folds it up carefully.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fog on the mirror.

Frank wipes it, revealing a man holding himself together. He adjusts his collar.

On the mirror: a faded PHOTO taped at the corner. A young Frank and his mother in rural Senegal.

FRANK
(en wolof, quietly)
Yaw laa war... (I owe you this.)

The resume in front of him is crumpled, its edges frayed from being folded and unfolded too many times.

Frank smooths it out, staring at the words as though they might rearrange themselves into something better.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sparse furnishings, a patched couch, small bookshelves. The walls are bare.

A kettle whistles on the stove, breaking his focus. He rises and moves across the cramped space, his movements careful and deliberate, as though the act of boiling water is part of a larger ritual.

The only glow comes from the morning light creeping through the blinds.

The front door opens. MARIAH (late 20s, British, bright-eyed and no-nonsense) enters, holding two coffees and a paper bag.

MARIAH
(smirking)
Pain au chocolat, monsieur. And none of that cheap instant stuff today.

FRANK
Tu connais mes faiblesses.

He accepts the cup with gratitude.

MARIAH
How do you feel?

FRANK
Comme un immigré en cravate dans un monde de diplômés.

MARIAH

You're not just a name on a list,
Frank. You're sharp. You're ready.

She digs into her coat and pulls out a pair of sleek, modern glasses.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Here. Smart lenses. A prototype
from the company. Might give you an
edge.

FRANK

You sure this isn't to make me look
like a cyborg?

MARIAH

(chuckling)

Only if you smile too much.

He puts them on. She adjusts the angle slightly.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Perfect.

She leans in and kisses his cheek.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Call me after. No matter what.

She's gone. The door closes behind her. Frank stands still,
breathing.

INT. CITY BUS - LATER

Frank sits alone near the back. Urban decay rolls past the
window. He mumbles quietly in French.

FRANK

Je m'appelle Frank Dieng. Je suis
adaptable... fiable...

He closes his eyes. Inhales. Exhales.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Frank walks briskly through the city, his shoes tapping
against the damp pavement.

The streets are crowded, but he moves with purpose, his
breath visible in the chilly morning air.

He passes a group of street performers playing a lively tune, their music echoing off the buildings. Frank pauses for a moment, watching them, a faint smile tugging at his lips.

As he continues on, the towering office buildings of the financial district come into view.

He stops at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to change. Pulling out his phone, he glances at a photo of him and Mariah at the beach, their faces lit by the golden glow of sunset.

The light changes, and Frank pockets the phone. He looks up at the office ahead—a sleek, modern building that feels out of place in his world.

He takes a deep breath, straightening his tie before stepping forward.

The camera lingers on him as he walks into the shadow of the building, the weight of the day ahead palpable.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DOWNTOWN - LATER

A cold, glass-and-steel corporate tower. People in blazers file through the revolving doors.

Frank steps inside. The contrast is stark — his thrift-store suit against the sea of designer fashion.

The conference room is pristine and minimalist, with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a view of the bustling city below.

Frank adjusts his tie nervously as he takes a seat at the long glass table.

He approaches the RECEPTION DESK.

LINDA (30s, no-nonsense, American) barely looks up.

LINDA

Name?

FRANK

Frank Dieng.

LINDA

25th floor. Elevator to your left.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Frank rides alone. His reflection stares back at him from the chrome walls. The glasses glint under the lights.

DING.

INT. CONFERENCE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

He walks down a hallway lined with glass offices. He stops in front of a modern CONFERENCE ROOM.

Inside: six CANDIDATES already seated. Some chat quietly, others scroll phones.

Frank hesitates. Then pushes open the door.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE: THROUGH THE LENS

FADE IN ON:

INT. CONFERENCE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The interview process begins... and so does the game.

Frank walks down a quiet hallway. On either side, clean glass offices. A few employees type away behind screens.

He turns a corner and arrives at a sleek glass door marked:
WAITING AREA - CANDIDATE PREP ROOM

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

A quiet, modern space with floor-to-ceiling windows. A long table with bottled water, coffee, and stale pastries. Ten chairs, seven filled.

Frank steps in cautiously. The room barely registers his arrival.

He signs in on a tablet. Glances up.

ALEX (30s, calm, unreadable) leans back, her legs crossed, eyes scanning the room casually. She gives Frank a quick once-over.

Next to her: JESSICA (early 20s, fidgeting, holding a notebook), bites her nails nervously.

TOM (late 30s, cocky), scrolls through his phone, occasionally smirking.

VICTORIA (40s, elegant, poised), types notes on her laptop without looking up.

JOSH (20s, arrogant energy) whispers a joke to RYAN (30s, quiet, watching everyone). Ryan doesn't laugh.

Frank chooses the last empty seat. He sits upright, alert, but unsure.

He watches.

CLOSE ON FRANK:

Beads of sweat at his hairline. His eyes flit from one face to the next. He adjusts his tie. Tugs at his collar.

He reaches into his folder, pulls out his resume. Smooths it slowly.

IN HIS EAR:

A faint mechanical HUM from the glasses. He touches the frame lightly. It stops.

He looks across at Alex. She's watching him now. Not intensely. Just... noticing.

He glances down again.

ON THE WALL: a sleek screen displays a message: **WELCOME CANDIDATES - PLEASE REMAIN SEATED. INTERVIEWS WILL BEGIN SHORTLY.**

Frank exhales deeply. The silence grows heavier.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The hum of fluorescent lights. Someone coughs. The sound of fingers tapping a phone screen.

Frank sits still, eyes watching. The tension in the room is quiet but tight.

Across the room, TOM clears his throat loudly.

TOM
(confident)
This room feels like a TED Talk
waiting to happen.

JOSH
(grinning)
More like Hunger Games with Wi-Fi.

Jessica giggles nervously, then hides behind her notebook.
Ryan leans forward, arms resting on his thighs.

RYAN
Everyone's nervous. Just some show
it differently.

VICTORIA
(smooth, without looking
up)
I don't get nervous. I prepare.

ALEX
(flat)
Overpreparing is still fear, just
with a fancier suit.

Tom raises an eyebrow. Victoria finally looks up, locking
eyes with Alex.

VICTORIA
I suppose we'll see what kind of
fear gets results.

ALEX
(smiles faintly)
We will.

Josh leans back in his chair, arms folded.

JOSH
Y'all sound like one of those self-
help panels.

Jessica glances at Frank, notices his silence.

JESSICA
(softly)
First time interviewing here?

FRANK
(quiet, measured)
Yes.

JESSICA

Same. I've been practicing all week but... still feel like I'm going to faint.

FRANK

(en français)

La peur est normale. Ce n'est pas elle qui compte. C'est ce qu'on en fait.

Jessica blinks, then smiles uncertainly.

JESSICA

Sorry?

FRANK

(switching)

Fear is normal. It's what you do with it that matters.

Jessica nods slowly, thoughtful. Her leg bounces under her chair.

TOM

(scoffing)

Let's hope they don't grade us on motivational quotes.

RYAN

Better than resumes. Those can be... adjusted.

Everyone goes quiet for a beat.

Frank scans the room again, noting body language. The ticking wall clock grows louder in his ears.

ON THE SCREEN:

A loading bar appears under the message: **CANDIDATE ORDER GENERATING...**

The pressure builds, not with chaos – but silence.

INT. WAITING AREA - LATER

The screen flashes: **FIRST CANDIDATE: TOM WEST. PLEASE REPORT TO ROOM 3B.**

TOM stands, adjusts his tie with a smug grin.

TOM

Showtime.

He strolls out. The door closes behind him.

Frank exhales slowly. The room shifts—less chatter, more tension.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank walks briskly down the corridor. He pushes into—

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

He moves to the sink. Runs the cold tap. Splashes water on his face. Breathing harder now.

He leans forward, gripping the sides of the sink.

FRANK

(quietly, to himself)

Ça va aller... ça va aller...

The door swings open. JOSH enters, still wearing that cocky smirk. He doesn't notice Frank at first.

JOSH

(muttering)

One down. Six to go.

He steps to the next sink, turns on the water. Washes his hands, glancing sideways.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(snickering)

Man, you look like you're about to pass out.

Frank doesn't respond.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Where you from? France, right?

Frank nods slowly, drying his hands with a paper towel.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Knew it. That accent's got "foreign stress" all over it. You're not exactly... intimidating, you know?

Frank looks at him calmly, then tosses the paper towel.

FRANK

I didn't come to intimidate. I came
to earn.

Josh smirks, shrugs.

JOSH

Suit yourself.

He walks out, still chuckling to himself.

Frank stays a beat longer. He adjusts his collar. His
reflection stares back, more composed now.

FADE TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Frank re-enters. ALEX glances at him, then looks away.
Jessica offers a sympathetic smile.

The screen updates: **NEXT CANDIDATE: JESSICA MILLER.**

Jessica stiffens.

JESSICA

Wish me luck.

She exits. Frank returns to his seat, his fingers tightening
around the arms of the chair.

The clock ticks. One second at a time.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - MINUTES LATER

Frank's breathing has leveled. But something lingers - an
itch beneath his skin.

His glasses flicker again. This time, the interface opens.
Subtle. Smooth.

ON LENS HUD: A faint red waveform. Then - a call connects.

DISTORTED VOICE (CALLER)

Frank... do not speak.

Frank jolts slightly. He straightens, eyes darting to the
others. No one notices.

CALLER (V.O.)
Don't look around. Don't move. Just
listen.

A long pause.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You are being watched. Right now.
Through those glasses. Through you.

Frank's fingers twitch, gripping the chair.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In ten minutes, your interview will
begin. You will not go inside.

Frank's lips part — a breath escapes. Silent panic.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If you want to save her... you will
follow every instruction.

A beat.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Don't speak. Nod once if you
understand.

Frank, rigid, gives the faintest nod.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Good.

ON LENS: A new screen appears. A profile. MARIAH. A LIVE FEED
— she's blindfolded, wrists bound, seated in a dim room.

Frank's breath catches in his throat.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Mariah is alive. For now.

Frank's eyes go glassy.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Here are the rules.

FLASH ON SCREEN — "RULE ONE."

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Every thirty minutes, someone in
that room will die... unless you
find the one who killed Samuel
Blake.

Frank stares ahead, body frozen.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 RULE TWO: You will act natural. You will play along. No one can suspect you.

RULE THREE appears.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 RULE THREE: You have five suspects. One of them killed my son. One of them knows why.

FLASHES OF THE CANDIDATES – distorted images, frozen frames: Jessica, Ryan, Victoria, Josh, Alex.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Rule Four: The glasses are your lens. Your weapon. They see what you see. They will help you.

Frank's jaw clenches.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Last rule: If you disobey... she dies. If you run... she dies. If you warn them... they die.

ON LENS: A small clock begins counting down from 00:30:00.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 When the clock runs out – blood spills.

Frank stares at the door. Alex is still inside.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Start watching them, Frank. You only have one chance to get this right.

The call ends.

The lens goes clear.

Frank leans back slowly. His face is blank. But his eyes – they scream.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alex sits across from a stoic INTERVIEWER. Calm. Measured.

INTERVIEWER
What motivates you to work in this
kind of environment?

ALEX
(beat)
Truthfully?

INTERVIEWER
Please.

Alex smiles.

ALEX
Pressure makes people honest.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WAITING AREA

Frank's timer ticks down. His eyes flick toward Ryan, then Jessica. Then back to the screen.

The game has begun.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Frank's gaze scans the room. The silence between the candidates is deeper now. Suspicion simmers just beneath the surface.

The glasses flicker again. Another chime.

CALLER (V.O.)
It's time to engage, Frank.

Frank straightens, eyes still forward.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You'll start small. Ask questions.
Make it casual.

ON LENS: A new line appears.

OBJECTIVE: Begin elimination. Observe and record reactions.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Begin with Ryan. He's quiet,
 calculating. He'll slip first.

Frank subtly turns toward Ryan, seated a few chairs away.

FRANK
 (low, casual)
 You've been through this kind of
 thing before?

RYAN
 (interested)
 Interview panels? A few. Not this
 formal though. This place feels...
 clinical.

FRANK
 You seem calm.

RYAN
 I've seen worse. Worked dispatch in
 crisis management. You learn to
 read people. Helps in rooms like
 this.

Frank nods, observing him. The lens picks up **heartbeat spikes**
 in the corner of the HUD. Faint. Measurable.

CALLER (V.O.)
 Keep him talking.

FRANK
 What kind of people do you think
 they're really looking for?

RYAN
 (smirks)
 Ones who'll survive the process.
 Maybe even lie well. You?

FRANK
 I just need the job.

RYAN
 Don't we all?

CALLER (V.O.)
 Mark him. But move on. He's not
 ready to break.

Frank swallows. A faint red mark appears beside Ryan's name
 on the HUD.

Suddenly—

The screen BEEPS. All eyes turn.

ALERT: BUILDING TEST — PLEASE REMAIN IN PLACE.

JOSH
(laughing nervously)
Seriously? A test?

VICTORIA
They're messing with us.
Psychological pressure. Deliberate.

ALEX
(mocking)
What? Scared of a little
unpredictability?

CALLER (V.O.)
You see? It's unraveling already.

Frank blinks, the clock ticking on the HUD.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Next... Jessica. She's fragile. Ask
about Samuel Blake.

Frank freezes.

FRANK
(under breath)
What?

CALLER (V.O.)
Say the name. See who reacts.

Frank slowly turns toward Jessica. She's biting her nails again, notebook in hand.

FRANK
(quietly)
Did you ever hear of someone named
Samuel Blake? Worked here?

Jessica stops.

JESSICA
(nervously)
Um... why?

FRANK
He was mentioned. Somewhere.
Thought maybe...

Jessica looks down at her notes.

JESSICA

I think... I might've seen the name
on a newsletter? Not sure.

CALLER (V.O.)

She's lying. Mark her.

Frank hesitates. The HUD blinks – an option appears:

TAG SUSPECT: YES / NO

Frank blinks once. **YES.**

A red dot appears next to her name.

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

Good. Two down. Three to go.

Frank stares forward, the hum of the glasses in his ear.

The game is officially underway.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Frank sits stiffly, the ticking HUD in his lens growing
louder with every second.

00:21:17...

CALLER (V.O.)

Keep moving, Frank. You're making
progress.

Frank clenches his jaw. His breath grows heavy.

FRANK

(under breath)
No. This is insane.

CALLER (V.O.)

Don't lose focus now.

FRANK

(tight)
You want someone dead? Do it
yourself.

CALLER (V.O.)

Then she dies.

ON LENS: The live feed flashes — MARIAH, blindfolded, trembling. Her mouth is gagged now.

Frank's knuckles turn white on the chair arms. The lenses flash red — **WARNING: NON-COMPLIANCE**

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Let me prove how real this is.

ON LENS: A new feed opens. ANGLE — security camera footage of the hallway.

LINDA, the receptionist, approaches the conference hallway holding a clipboard.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She's about to interfere. Let's correct the course.

Frank's eyes widen.

FRANK
No—wait!

Too late.

Through the glass wall, a distant CRACK echoes.

LINDA'S body collapses just outside the hallway, blood splattered on the tile.

Screams erupt.

JESSICA
Oh my God!

RYAN springs up, backing into a wall. Alex stands quickly, eyes narrowing at the sound.

JOSH
Was that...?

The door SLAMS shut automatically.

The screen glitches: **LOCKDOWN INITIATED. EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS ENGAGED.**

VICTORIA
(panicking)
What the hell is going on?!

Frank rises slowly. Everyone stares at him.

FRANK
 (quietly, to himself)
 Now it begins...

The glasses flash again – **INITIATE CONTROL.**

CALLER (V.O.)
 Get them in order, Frank. No more
 games. You're in charge now.

Frank stares at the faces around him – confusion, panic,
 suspicion.

He reaches for the emergency bag near his seat. Opens it.
 Inside – a GUN, black and clean.

The room freezes.

FRANK
 (trembling)
 No one move.

Everyone gasps. Jessica stifles a scream. Josh steps back,
 arms raised.

JOSH
 Okay—okay, man—

FRANK
 Sit. Down.

Everyone slowly obeys, eyes locked on him.

ALEX
 (quietly)
 This isn't you.

FRANK
 (voice breaking)
 You have no idea what this is.

The lens timer continues to tick.

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The group sits frozen. Breathing shallow. Frank paces slowly
 in front of them, gun in hand, every step echoing.

The hallway door BUZZES. Someone swipes a keycard.

MR. COLLINS (50s, sharp suit, sharper tone) enters, his eyes
 immediately locking on Frank.

COLLINS
What the hell is this?

The others flinch.

FRANK
Stay back.

COLLINS
I don't think so. Put the weapon
down, Mr. Dieng. Right now.

Frank raises the gun slightly, his hands trembling. Collins
steps forward anyway.

COLLINS (CONT'D)
You think this is going to get you
the job? What's your game?

CALLER (V.O.)
He's the one who let Samuel Blake
in. He knows more than he admits.

Frank flinches.

COLLINS
(scoffs)
I'm calling security.

He reaches into his blazer pocket—

FRANK
Don't!

COLLINS
(interrupting)
You're not in control here.

Frank's eyes flash toward a nearby cupboard. A faint HUD
arrow glows red, pointing to it.

CALLER (V.O.)
Top shelf. Do it.

Frank scrambles to the cupboard. Opens it. Inside — another
GUN, older but loaded. He grabs it.

COLLINS lunges—

BANG.

The shot echoes like thunder.

Collins jerks back, blood spreading across his chest. He drops, twitching, then still.

Screams erupt again.

VICTORIA

Oh my God—

Jessica begins sobbing. Ryan shields her.

Frank backs away, gun shaking in his hand.

CALLER (V.O.)

Easy, Frank. Breathe. You did what you had to do.

FRANK

(whispers)

He was unarmed...

CALLER (V.O.)

He was about to shut it all down. You saved them. You saved her.

Frank looks at the others. Their fear is now pure. Raw.

He looks down at Collins' body. The blood.

The glasses flicker again.

ALERT: BUILDING ALARM TRIGGERED

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

The system flagged the shot. Police will come. But not yet. Not before we're done.

Frank turns away from the body. Faces the group.

FRANK

Nobody leaves this room.

He locks eyes with Alex. Something in her gaze is not fear. It's calculation.

The clock ticks.

00:16:58.

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The room is silent now — not just from fear, but anticipation. Frank stands center, breathing heavily.

CLOSE-UP SEQUENCE:

- JESSICA (22, anxious, notebook still clutched to her chest)
- RYAN (34, calm exterior, eyes calculating)
- ALEX (30s, cool, unreadable)
- VICTORIA (mid-40s, composed but pale)
- JOSH (28, restless, a bead of sweat trailing down his temple)

CALLER (V.O.)

Look at them, Frank. Each face.
Each liar.

The lens blinks. The names hover beneath their images briefly
- almost like a targeting system.

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

Now... your choice. Ask one
question. See what cracks.

Frank looks between them. Their eyes avoid his.

He points the gun subtly at JOSH.

FRANK

You said earlier this was a game.
Still feel that way?

JOSH

(snarling)

You really think pointing that at
me makes you powerful? You think
you scare me?

FRANK

I want to know who Samuel Blake is.
Did you know him?

JOSH

No. And even if I did, what the
hell does that have to do with any
of this?

CALLER (V.O.)

Warning shot... not from you.

Frank's eyes widen.

JOSH

You're a puppet, man. A joke with a
weapon. You think you're in charge
here?

FRANK
Josh, just sit down—

JOSH
(shouting)
No. I'm not sitting. You don't get
to—

BANG.

A bullet pierces the window from outside.

Josh's head jerks violently — a spray of red hits the wall.

He collapses. Lifeless.

Screams. Jessica sobs louder. Victoria turns away, nearly vomiting.

CALLER (V.O.)
That was not you, Frank. That was
me. You hesitate, I act.

Frank steps back, eyes locked on the body.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I don't need you to be the killer.
I just need you to find one.

Frank stares at the smoking bullet hole in the glass.

The timer ticks.

00:14:03.

Silence.

The shot echoes in their bones. Blood spreads beneath Josh's body. His head twisted unnaturally.

Jessica lets out a broken whimper. Ryan instinctively moves closer to her. Victoria clutches the armrest, breathing fast.

Frank stands frozen.

FRANK
(softly)
What the hell did you just do?

CALLER (V.O.)
What you couldn't.

Frank tears the glasses off, trembling. His hand clenches them tight, knuckles white.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Put them back on, Frank.

FRANK
(quiet)
You didn't say there was a sniper.

CALLER (V.O.)
You didn't ask.

FRANK
(furious whisper)
You're using me. You said I would
choose—

CALLER (V.O.)
And you did. You hesitated. I
cleaned it up.

Frank's hand starts to shake. The group watches.

ALEX
(quiet, pointed)
Who are you talking to?

Frank ignores her. His voice lowers.

FRANK
You said this was about answers.
Not murder.

CALLER (V.O.)
This is about Mariah. About truth.
Every delay risks her life.

Frank exhales shakily. He lifts the glasses, stares at them —
a mirror reflecting doubt.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Put them on. Or I'll make another
choice for you.

Frank slowly slips the glasses back on.

Ryan leans in toward Victoria and whispers.

RYAN
He's taking orders. Someone's
talking to him through the glasses.

VICTORIA
We need to keep him distracted.

Alex watches Frank, curious, not afraid.

FRANK
 (to the room)
 Nobody moves. Nobody speaks unless
 I say.

CALLER (V.O.)
 Good. Control is critical.

FRANK
 I'm not your damn puppet.

CALLER (V.O.)
 You're my only option. That makes
 you more than a puppet.

Frank lowers the gun slightly. The tension in his stance
 begins to unravel – not from weakness, but from conflict.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You think they'll trust you after
 this? You think they'll see a man
 trying to save his girlfriend – or
 a killer holding a gun?

Jessica stares at Frank, terrified. Ryan's eyes never leave
 him. Victoria sits stiff, calculating.

Alex finally speaks.

ALEX
 You can stop this, you know.
 Whatever this is.

FRANK
 (coldly)
 It's not about me.

CALLER (V.O.)
 Exactly. It's about the one who
 killed Samuel Blake. And they are
 in that room.

Beat.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You've got thirteen minutes left.

Frank looks around the room – four left. His hands tighten
 again.

The lens flashes.

NEW OBJECTIVE INCOMING...

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The lens flickers.

ON LENS: NEW OBJECTIVE: INTERROGATE RYAN. DETERMINE IF HE KNEW SAMUEL BLAKE PERSONALLY.

Frank swallows hard.

CALLER (V.O.)

Let's see how you handle pressure,
Frank. This time, no pacing. No
shouting. A clean conversation.

Frank slowly approaches the table where RYAN sits. Jessica slides further away, shielding herself with her chair.

Frank lowers the gun - just slightly.

FRANK

Ryan.

RYAN

Yeah.

FRANK

You worked in logistics. Six years,
right?

RYAN

(nods)

Yeah. Warehousing, transport chain
coordination, mostly private
contracts.

FRANK

Ever heard the name Samuel Blake?

RYAN

(silent for a beat)

No. Should I have?

Frank watches him closely. The lens pulses - subtle spikes on the HUD.

CALLER (V.O.)

Lie.

FRANK

He used to work here. Recruitment.
Then he died. Mysteriously.

RYAN
 (flat)
 Sounds like corporate life.

Frank narrows his eyes.

FRANK
 Where were you last Friday night?

RYAN
 Is this an interview or an
 interrogation?

CALLER (V.O.)
 Push him. Don't let him deflect.

FRANK
 Answer the question.

RYAN
 (defensive)
 At home. Why?

FRANK
 Anyone with you?

RYAN
 No. Look, I don't know anything
 about this guy. I came for a job,
 not to be accused of murder.

CALLER (V.O.)
 He's calm. Too calm.

VICTORIA
 (to Frank, sharply)
 You're going to get us all killed.
 If you keep waving that thing
 around—

FRANK
 (shouts)
 Quiet!

Everyone recoils. Frank's hands shake again.

CALLER (V.O.)
 You're slipping.

FRANK
 What if he's telling the truth?

CALLER (V.O.)
 He's not. Keep going. Or do I need
 to clean up again?

Frank's breath grows shallow. He stares at Ryan. Then turns
 to the others.

FRANK
 One of you knows. One of you is
 lying.

ALEX
 (quietly)
 What if more than one of us is?

Jessica's head jerks toward her.

JESSICA
 What's that supposed to mean?

CALLER (V.O.)
 Let them turn on each other. But
 stay sharp. You're in control — if
 you act like it.

Frank watches the tension rise. His hand tightens on the gun
 again.

00:11:38 remaining.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly—

A faint THUMP echoes through the walls.

The lights flicker. An overhead speaker CRACKLES to life,
 then cuts.

Everyone freezes.

ALEX
 (whispers)
 That's... boots.

Another THUMP. Closer. Heavier.

FRANK turns toward the glass wall.

Through the slats, SHADOWS move past the hallway. Multiple.
 Armed.

CALLER (V.O.)
No... no no no. They're here.

Frank's HUD lights up in warning: **ALERT - EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE DETECTED.**

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You told someone? You broke the rules?

FRANK
(hushed)
I didn't tell anyone anything.

CALLER (V.O.)
They weren't supposed to come yet.
This wasn't the plan.

The tension in the room cracks. Everyone notices Frank reacting. Talking to no one.

VICTORIA
(to Alex)
He's speaking to someone again.
Through the glasses.

Jessica edges closer to Ryan. Ryan watches the door.

FRANK
(quiet but firm)
I didn't call them.

CALLER (V.O.)
Then someone else did.

Outside, a LASER DOT flashes on the window briefly, then vanishes.

Alex steps forward slightly, calculating.

ALEX
Frank. Listen to me - if they're here, we have to cooperate. You can stop this.

CALLER (V.O.)
Do not listen to her.

FRANK
(to Caller)
You said I was in control.

CALLER (V.O.)
And you are. If you want her to
live - keep control.

00:10:44 remaining.

A VOICE from outside the room, muffled but authoritative:

KATE (O.S.)
(over speaker)
Frank Dieng. My name is Kate. I'm
with the city negotiation team.
We're here to help you.

Frank looks up sharply.

CALLER (V.O.)
Don't you dare answer her.

ALEX
Frank. They can get her back. They
can stop this. But only if you let
them in.

CALLER (V.O.)
They won't help. They'll kill you.
Or worse - make her disappear
forever.

Frank's fingers tremble around the grip of the gun.

He stands between two voices - one in his ear, one just
beyond the wall.

The tension swells. The clock ticks.

00:10:08.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Make a choice, Frank.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Dozens of police cruisers and tactical vehicles block the
street. A barricade surrounds the area. SWAT officers take up
perimeter positions.

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - CONTINUOUS

KATE (32, sharp, calm under pressure) stands inside the operations hub. She watches Frank through a grainy camera feed.

Across from her, COMMANDER MICHAELS (50s, gruff, tactical mindset) steps in, barking orders to a junior tech.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

Give me a full perimeter report and tell the snipers to hold position until I say otherwise.

He turns to Kate.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (CONT'D)

We do this by the book. No speeches, no stunts. You're on the mic, but I give the green light.

KATE

Understood. But if you want this to end without body bags, you let me work him.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

We don't coddle hostiles. One wrong move, I pull the trigger.

Kate exhales. She puts on her headset and steps closer to the screen.

KATE

(to Frank, calm)

Frank Dieng. This is Kate. No one out here wants anyone hurt. Not you. Not them. Let's talk.

INT. NEARBY ROOFTOP - SNIPER NEST - SAME TIME

A tactical SNIPER lies prone, weapon trained on the window.

He takes a long, quiet breath.

SNIPER

(into mic)

Target in sight. Orders?

INT. DARK ROOM - UNKNOWN LOCATION

Monitors flicker. The CALLER (face unseen) watches several angles of the room.

He checks the timer.

CALLER
(into comm)
Not yet. Ten more minutes. I need
the truth.

A red light pulses next to a monitor showing Mariah, still bound.

The Caller stands, pacing.

CALLER (CONT'D)
(into headset)
Frank's not breaking. Not enough
pressure.

He stops. Considers. Then slowly smiles.

CALLER (CONT'D)
New idea. Let him think he has a
choice.

He taps a control.

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Frank's glasses flicker.

CALLER (V.O.)
Frank... You want out? You want to
save her? Then prove it.

FRANK
What do you want now?

CALLER (V.O.)
Your next move. Entirely yours.
Pick the person you trust least.
Ask anything. But be smart - the
next mistake... is final.

Frank looks at the group.

Ryan.
Jessica.
Victoria.
Alex.

The weight of the gun in his hand. The whispers in his ear.
The pressure from beyond the glass.

00:09:12 remaining.

His eyes lift – and meet Kate's face, barely visible through
the one-way glass.

And for a second, he's just a man again.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Time's running out, Frank.

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Frank exhales slowly, then steps forward.

FRANK
Jessica.

She jolts upright. Pale, trembling.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Look at me. I want to ask you
something simple.

Jessica nods, swallowing hard.

FRANK (CONT'D)
How did the investigator know my
name?

JESSICA
(stammers)
I-I don't know what you mean—

FRANK
The one who died. Samuel Blake. If
none of you knew me, how did he
know my name?

CALLER (V.O.)
Stop. That's not part of the plan.

Frank's fists tighten.

FRANK
(ignoring him)
Did he mention me to anyone? Did he
have files? Did you see my name—

CALLER (V.O.)
Frank. Enough.

Frank paces, breathing heavy. Then, slowly, he turns toward the large window.

He walks up to it – casually, but deliberate.

The others watch in silence.

Frank raises his hand. Wipes his forehead. Lingers with his palm on the glass – a faint, **intentional smear**, forming a shape.

ALEX notices it first – a symbol. An attempt to send a message.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

Frank doesn't answer.

He subtly taps the edge of the frame. Then glances at the ceiling corner.

There – a small red glint. A hidden camera.

His eyes harden.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now you see.

Frank lowers his hand.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Try that again, and I'll do more than punish you.

A pause. Then:

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I will send every document I have about you – the visas, the fake ID, the illegal residency... to the authorities. To the media.

Frank stiffens.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
How long do you think they'll care why you did it... once they know what you are?

Frank turns slowly back to the group. The pressure mounting again.

The countdown ticks lower.

00:07:44.

INT. UNKNOWN BASEMENT ROOM - SAME TIME

Dim, concrete walls. A faint humming sound. Flickering overhead light.

MARIAH sits tied to a metal chair, still blindfolded, hands bound. Her head leans forward as if listening.

Nearby, a TABLE holds a small monitor - showing Frank's feed.

A MAN'S SILHOUETTE walks past the camera - brief, out of focus. We don't see his face.

Mariah subtly shifts in her seat. Her fingers twitch against the rope - not in panic, but rhythmically, as if counting.

She listens carefully, breathing controlled.

A soft WHIRR - the camera zooms closer on her face.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - SAME TIME

COMMANDER MICHAELS watches the same camera feed with a grim expression.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

Enough of this waiting. We breach from below. Two teams. Stealth and sweep.

He points to two officers.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (CONT'D)

You take the freight stairwell. No comms once inside. Silence until we get visual.

The officers nod and exit.

Kate stands nearby, headset on, watching the vitals of the room.

KATE

He's not cracking. But he's slipping.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

Because he's playing both sides. We can't risk letting him decide who dies next.

Kate's eyes stay on her monitor. Her screen flashes — *symbol detected on glass*.

KATE

Wait.

She rewinds a few frames. Enhances the image. Sees the shape Frank left — the smear.

KATE (CONT'D)

That's Morse.

She leans in. A trace of letters: **H...E...L...P**.

KATE (CONT'D)

(into headset)

Frank? This is Kate. I saw your signal. I know you're not doing this by choice.

She waits.

KATE (CONT'D)

You're not alone. Keep giving me something. Anything. I'll find her.

The screen next to her flickers. Kate zooms in.

She sees something odd — a reflection in the conference glass. A red glint — opposite from Frank's angle.

KATE (CONT'D)

(into radio)

Bring up satellite thermal. I want the fourth floor re-scanned. There's another signal source we missed.

She leans forward, sensing she's getting closer.

KATE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Where are you watching from...?

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The tension is unbearable now. The digital countdown blinks -
00:06:12.

Frank stands near the window, hands slightly trembling. He
paces slowly, eyes flicking to each hostage.

The glasses blink red.

CALLER (V.O.)
You're wasting time.

Frank flinches.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You've made your point, Frank. No
more games. Start with Victoria.

Frank turns toward her. She sits with a straight back,
visibly sweating, but still composed.

FRANK
Victoria.

VICTORIA
I know who he was.

The others turn sharply. Even Frank freezes.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Samuel Blake. He interviewed me
three years ago. This isn't the
first time I've been in this
building.

FRANK
Why didn't you say anything before?

VICTORIA
Because I was afraid. Because... he
was a threat to this company. He
found something.

FRANK
What?

She hesitates. Eyes shift toward the window. She lowers her
voice.

VICTORIA
Something to do with the board.
People were-

RIIIIIING.

A PHONE on the wall rings suddenly, harsh and piercing. Everyone jolts. Victoria stops speaking. Dead silence. Frank turns to the glasses.

FRANK
Should I answer?

No response.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(tenser)
Should I answer?

CALLER (V.O.)
(into his ear, slowly)
Yes. Pick up. And tell them this:

A beat.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If SWAT enters... someone dies.

Frank moves to the phone. Lifts the receiver.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN

Kate leans in as the feed goes live. Commander Michaels stands beside her, arms crossed.

KATE
Frank?

FRANK
(into phone)
If your people enter this building,
someone dies. That's the message.

Kate goes pale. She turns to Michaels.

KATE
They know we're coming.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
Impossible. The thermal scan shows
no one inside except the hostages.
How the hell—

KATE

There's another feed. They're watching from inside, maybe even rerouting our data.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

(into radio)

Team One, hold position. Await my word.

Frank hangs up the phone slowly.

CALLER (V.O.)

Good. Now get back to work. The clock doesn't stop.

Frank looks at the hostages. Then at the camera.

His face shifts.

Determination, yes – but now, something colder is settling in.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kate steps away from the radio, her mind racing.

KATE

(to herself)

How the hell did they know SWAT was coming?

She turns to the tech monitoring the thermal feed.

KATE (CONT'D)

Who else has access to this channel? This building's internal scans?

MONITOR TECH

No one. It's encrypted. Just us.

Kate looks toward Commander Michaels, who is still focused on his tactical display.

KATE

Michaels, if Frank didn't call this in – someone else inside is watching us. Or feeding information.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

(gruff)

So what? You think we've got a second suspect just casually roaming around?

KATE

No. I think someone's got an eye in the sky or inside this building. Move the drone feed. Shift thermal to the southern rooftop. Now.

The tech hesitates, then adjusts the joystick.

ON SCREEN – the drone camera sweeps, then stops. A body outlined in red.

MONITOR TECH

We've got someone.

KATE

(into radio)

We've got a sniper. Repeat, visual confirmed on roof four – southeast corner.

Michaels stiffens, his eyes narrowing.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

How long has he been there?

KATE

Long enough to have eyes on the target room.

INT. WAITING AREA - SAME TIME

Frank turns back to Victoria, visibly shaken but focused.

CALLER (V.O.)

Keep going. We're almost there.

FRANK

What did Samuel find, Victoria?

VICTORIA

(quietly)

He discovered internal records. Financial diversions. Some linked to private surveillance projects... and to me.

Jessica gasps. Ryan stares at her, stunned.

FRANK
 (to Victoria)
 So you were working with him?

VICTORIA
 I was feeding him information. I
 didn't think he'd end up—

She stops. Guilt. Pain.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
 I think I was the last one to see
 him alive.

INT. SNIPER'S NEST - SAME TIME

The SNIPER breathes heavily, scope pointed steady.

SNIPER
 (into mic)
 They spotted me. What do you want
 me to do?

INT. CALLER'S HIDEOUT - SAME TIME

The Caller stands now, pacing behind his monitors.

CALLER
 (darkly)
 Ten more minutes... that's all I
 need.

He looks at the screen, sweat gathering at his brow.

CALLER (CONT'D)
 (sharply)
 Take her out. Now.

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Just as Victoria turns to Frank—

VICTORIA
 I have one last thing to say—

CRACK!

A bullet pierces the window. Victoria's body jerks, a red bloom spreading across her chest. She collapses sideways.

Jessica screams. Ryan rushes to cover her.

Frank stares at the broken glass, his chest heaving.

CALLER (V.O.)
They moved too soon. You'll have to
finish this without her.

Outside, police radios EXPLODE with chatter.

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - CONTINUOUS

Kate watches the feed glitch as the gunshot is detected.

KATE
(into radio)
We've got a confirmed casualty.
Sniper shot. Breach teams move now!

Commander Michaels slams his hand on the console.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
Everyone in!

Alarms erupt. Lights flash.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

SWAT TEAM ONE sweeps through the lower stairwell, rifles raised. BOOTS pound against metal steps. Their formation is silent, surgical.

LEAD OFFICER
Level seventeen. Almost there.

INT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

SWAT TEAM TWO moves swiftly across the gravel top. One member points.

SWAT SNIPER
Target moving!

A blur of movement — the SNIPER ducks behind a rooftop generator.

INT. WAITING AREA - SAME TIME

The tension following Victoria's death hangs thick in the air.

Jessica sobs quietly.

Ryan tries to comfort her, eyes still on Frank.

Frank lowers the gun for a moment, shaken.

ALEX
(stern, stepping forward)
This ends now.

She lunges at Frank.

ALEX (CONT'D)
CUT THE POWER! CUT THE POWER!

Chaos erupts.

Frank stumbles backward, slamming Alex into the wall. The gun clatters but doesn't drop.

FRANK
(gritting)
Stay steady! Don't make it worse!

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - SAME TIME

Kate's headset sparks with noise.

ALEX (V.O.)
(over mic)
Cut the power! Now!

KATE
(to tech)
You heard her. Kill the grid. Now!

MONITOR TECH
It'll take a few seconds to
override the system—

KATE
Do it!

INT. CALLER'S HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

The Caller turns sharply as several monitors flicker.

CALLER
No... no!

He rushes to a secondary terminal.

CALLER (CONT'D)
 (to sniper, through mic)
 Go east. Building 57. Rooftop
 extraction. You've got one minute.

INT. SNIPER'S NEST - SAME TIME

The sniper bolts from his post. He dashes along the rooftop toward an escape route.

Suddenly -

THE LIGHTS DIE.

Everything goes dark. For a second, the only light is emergency red and moonlight.

CALLER'S MONITORS - all go black.

CALLER (V.O.)
 (into mic)
 Come in! Do you see him?!

INT. ROOFTOP - SAME TIME

SWAT TEAM TWO catches movement - the sniper silhouetted in retreat.

SWAT LEADER
 There!

Shots ring out - precise. A BODY hits the gravel. Motionless.

INT. CALLER'S HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

The Caller slams his fists down.

CALLER
 NO!

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The lights flicker in red. Frank stares into the chaos, understanding what just happened.

The Caller is blind - at least for now.

And the game has changed.

CUT TO:

INT. CALLER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Caller grabs a sleek backpack, throws in cables, hard drives, and an iPad. He glances once at the wall of black monitors, now useless.

His face is still hidden in shadows.

CALLER
(quietly)
Too close.

He slips out the back door.

EXT. DARK ALLEY / CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The Caller walks briskly, iPad in hand, tapping rapidly. The signal scanner reconnects.

CALLER
(into mic)
Frank. Come in. Frank?

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The red emergency lights dim. Silence hangs.

Frank stares at the dead cameras. Then at the glass dome above.

He realizes.

Slowly, he walks to the table, grabs a pen and writes on a piece of Victoria's discarded notebook:

"My glasses have a camera. It can switch on any second."

He passes it to Alex. Her eyes widen. She nods slowly.

ALEX
(quietly, to him)
Who's the voice?

Frank leans in.

FRANK
I don't know. He said they want
revenge. And something else.
Samuel's family member i guess.

Kate's voice crackles through the wall-mounted speaker.

KATE (V.O.)
Frank? What happened in there?

Frank picks up the receiver.

FRANK
He has my girlfriend. If you don't believe me, send someone to wherever she was last seen. That's your proof.

He hangs up before she can respond.

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - SAME TIME

Kate stares at the phone.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
He's stalling. He's bluffing.

KATE
He's protecting her. He's been playing this all wrong... or too well. But I don't think he's working alone.

She pauses. A memory flickers.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARIAH'S APARTMENT - DAYS EARLIER

Mariah speaks on the phone. Her voice hushed.

MARIAH
(into phone)
No. He doesn't suspect. He thinks it's just another interview.

Kate watches from outside the apartment building, unnoticed, scribbling notes.

BACK TO PRESENT:

KATE
(to herself)
She knew something.

She grabs a radio.

KATE (CONT'D)
Send a unit to track the girlfriend. Quietly. I want to know where she is. Now.

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Frank turns to the group.

FRANK

We have one chance. If they believe me, they'll look for her. If not-

ALEX

Then we play it.

RYAN

I'm in.

JESSICA

(trembling)

Me too.

Suddenly -

THE CAMERAS WHIR TO LIFE.

A faint green light blinks on Frank's glasses.

Alex sees it.

ALEX

(freezes)

Shh.

Everyone goes still.

The game is back on - and the Caller is watching again.

CUT TO:

INT. CALLER'S MOVING VEHICLE - NIGHT

The Caller, face still hidden beneath a hood and dark shadows, sits in the backseat of a rideshare or stolen vehicle.

His iPad rests on his lap, reconnecting to the cameras.

The feed flickers - the lens HUD comes back online.

CALLER

(into mic, controlled)

Frank. You're still breathing. I assume that means you're still listening.

He taps through surveillance windows, each feed attempting to reload.

CALLER (CONT'D)
 You're wasting time with games.
 This isn't about theatrics. This is
 about the truth. So let's get back
 to work, shall we?

His thumb hovers over a new command.

CALLER (CONT'D)
 (interrupting himself)
 No more hesitation. You've already
 lost too much.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE POLICE COMMAND VAN - SAME TIME

Kate steps out of the van, now holding a portable tablet of her own. She walks briskly toward a waiting SUV.

KATE
 (into radio)
 I'm going to check the girlfriend's
 last known address. Keep the
 perimeter locked and stay on comms.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (V.O.)
 (over comms)
 Kate, that's not protocol. We've
 got units on it.

KATE
 Then they'll welcome the backup.

She slams the door shut and drives off into the night.

EXT. OFFICE ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

A tactical team kneels over the sniper's lifeless body.

SWAT OFFICER
 He's down. No ID on him, no gear
 left behind. Just a scope and a
 signal device.

Another officer examines the ground.

SECOND OFFICER
 Over here. Scorch marks. Looks like
 a heat flash - he tried to torch
 his own backup.

The team lead picks up a small, partially burned earpiece.

SWAT LEADER
This might give us something. Bag
it.

INT. WAITING AREA - SAME TIME

Frank stares straight ahead. The glasses blink green again.
He exhales sharply.

CALLER (V.O.)
Time to finish what you started,
Frank. You still owe me the truth.
And I still have what you want.

Frank's expression hardens. The group exchanges nervous
glances.

Frank turns, sees movement in the lens - heat signatures
approaching.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
SWAT is closing in.

FRANK
(panicked)
What do we do?!

The Caller doesn't answer.

CALLER (V.O.)
Move your glasses. I want to see
them.

Frank slowly shifts his head, scanning the faces of Jessica,
Ryan, and Alex.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Tell me the truth, Frank. Three
minutes before SWAT enters. Four
before someone else dies.

Frank's breathing grows erratic.

FRANK
(in French, trying to
confuse)
Ils vont entrer! Il faut faire
quelque chose!

CALLER (V.O.)
I'm not here to decode your panic.

FRANK
(shouting)
They're going to kill us! What
should we do?!

A beat.

CALLER (V.O.)
Then I'm calling for the execution
of Mariah.

Alex jumps up.

ALEX
(into the air)
He's threatening her! Tell the
police!

CALLER (V.O.)
Listen to me. Behind the main
office wall - there's a hidden
door. Emergency tunnel access. Take
them. Now.

Frank bolts toward the office.

FRANK
Move! Everyone, go! Back wall!

Jessica and Ryan scramble after him. Alex follows, glancing
back as the door to the waiting room blasts open.

INT. WAITING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

SWAT bursts in - rifles raised. They clear the room.

SWAT LEADER
Room clear. They're gone!

They rush to the office. One agent finds the hidden panel.

SWAT TECH
It's biometric-locked. No keypad,
no override.

SWAT LEADER
Use the prints. The bodies.

They begin scanning fallen victims' fingers.

INT. UNDERGROUND HALL - CONTINUOUS

Frank, Alex, Jessica, and Ryan emerge into a dark maintenance hall lit by emergency bulbs. They gasp for air.

FRANK

This way!

INT. CALLER'S NEW LOCATION - NIGHT

The Caller walks calmly into another facility - darker, smaller. He places the iPad on a steel table.

He types quickly - and watches.

CALLER

Let's see if you can hide without my eyes.

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - NIGHT

Commander Michaels stands over a worktable now cluttered with evidence bags. He holds the burnt earpiece found at the sniper's location, inspecting it with a flashlight.

MONITOR TECH

We're pulling scrambled frequencies. Whatever they were broadcasting through wasn't standard.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

He wasn't working alone.

MONITOR TECH

Confirmed. And get this - the GPS trace on the signal device led us to a switch point. The guy packed up and moved fast.

Commander Michaels checks the tactical map pinned to the wall. His eyes trace a possible route. He circles a block four blocks east of the office building.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

He ditched his post and rerouted. He's got another setup. Get a team to this sector.

SWAT COORDINATOR

On it.

Michaels grabs his radio.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
(into radio)
Team Bravo, tighten the east
quadrant. Suspect may be mobile but
nearby. Thermal drones sweep
everything from rooftops to sewers.

CUT TO:

EXT. DERELICT SUBURBAN LOT - NIGHT

Kate's SUV comes to a slow stop outside a small, forgotten
warehouse near the edge of town.

Faint light leaks through the seams of metal shutters.

INT. KATE'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Kate checks the GPS again. This wasn't on the grid - just an
old note tagged to a surveillance request weeks ago.
Something about stolen tech. She clicks off the engine and
grabs her flashlight.

KATE
(into radio)
Arrived. No backup in sight. Going
in.

COMMAND (V.O.)
(over radio)
Negative. Hold position. Do not
engage alone.

Kate steps out anyway.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kate enters slowly, light beam cutting across dust. Stacks of
rusted shipping crates, broken glass. But faint signs of
recent use - footprints, disturbed dirt.

She reaches a terminal table tucked in the corner. Her
flashlight flickers over scratched initials.

KATE
(softly)
M.D.

She pulls out her phone. Snaps a photo. Something nearby BEEPS faintly.

Kate turns.

Behind one crate, a metal case half-buried under a tarp — blinking. She pulls back the cover.

Inside: a hard drive rigged with thermal shielding.

KATE (CONT'D)
(into radio)
Got something. Might be a data relay. Definitely recent.

She hears something — a soft footstep.

Kate draws her weapon.

KATE (CONT'D)
Freeze!

Nothing. Just wind. Silence.

She kneels and begins unhooking the drive.

CUT TO:

INT. CALLER'S NEW LOCATION - SAME TIME

The Caller stares at multiple screens, one showing a GPS trace slowly blinking out.

CALLER
(under breath)
She found it.

He grabs his coat, reaches for a hardline headset, and begins disconnecting systems.

CALLER (CONT'D)
(into headset)
They're getting closer. Prep fallback.

A countdown appears on his tablet: 04:22.

CALLER (CONT'D)
Let's finish it before they close the gap.

He exits through a metal backdoor into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE COMMAND VAN - SAME TIME

Commander Michaels watches the latest heat trace feed flicker.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

(into radio)

Bravo Team - we've got movement east of Sector 7. Close it off. No more shadows. This ends tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND HALL - CONTINUOUS

Frank and the others move deeper into the tunnel system. They stop to catch their breath. Faint echoes of SWAT footsteps above them.

Alex turns to Frank, still shaken.

ALEX

You think this ends with us?

FRANK

It ends when someone listens.

They press onward into the dark.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The tunnel narrows. Frank leads the way, flashlight trembling in his grip.

Alex walks behind him, shielding Jessica, while Ryan carries a metal pipe - makeshift protection.

JESSICA

(panicked whisper)

What if this just loops us back?
What if it's a trap?

FRANK

Then we find a way through it.

A distant RUMBLE sounds behind them – voices, boots on metal. SWAT is close.

They reach a fork. One tunnel leads upward, the other plunges deeper.

ALEX
 (pointing to the down
 slope)
 That one smells like sewage. Maybe
 it's maintenance.

FRANK
 The other could take us back up to
 the street.

They hesitate. Behind them, the tunnel lights flicker.

INT. KATE'S SUV - SAME TIME

Kate speeds down a narrow industrial road, headlights slicing through the mist.

RADIO TECH (V.O.)
 We found scattered files on that
 drive. Encrypted. But something odd

KATE
 Go ahead.

RADIO TECH (V.O.)
 The file headers are tagged to a
 private intel program... civilian
 surveillance. Some of it ties back
 to companies we never approved.

KATE
 Which companies?

RADIO TECH (V.O.)
 Ridgepoint Dynamics. And... Barton
 Asset Management.

Kate's grip tightens on the wheel.

KATE
 (into radio)
 That's the company behind the
 interview today.

She slams the brakes. Gets out.

EXT. BACK LOT - CONTINUOUS

Kate approaches a nondescript office building in the middle of an abandoned corporate complex.

The front door hangs open, swinging slightly in the wind.

INT. CALLER'S ABANDONED STAGING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kate moves through. The room is recently vacated.

A map with pins.

A printed dossier with Frank's face.

A sticky note marked "**SURVEIL FROM WITHIN**".

She steps closer to a wall covered in photos. One stops her cold.

A picture of Mariah. Smiling. And next to her-

KATE
(whispers)
He's her brother.

She lifts a burner phone from the table. It's still warm.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - SAME TIME

Frank hears a chirp. His glasses reactivate. A voice, distorted - but different.

NEW CALLER (V.O.)
You're close to the end now. You
have a choice to make. But
someone's watching who shouldn't
be.

Frank freezes.

FRANK
(to Alex)
He's back.

Suddenly, a small panel in the tunnel wall lights up. A keypad.

ALEX
What is that?

RYAN

Why would a tunnel have security?

NEW CALLER (V.O.)

You want your freedom? You want to save her? Open the door — but only the guilty can walk through.

Jessica whimpers.

JESSICA

I don't understand what he means!

Frank steps toward the panel.

FRANK

Neither do I... but we don't have a choice.

Frank stares at the keypad panel, uncertain.

The tunnel grows silent behind them.

No footsteps.

No sound from SWAT. Just the low hum of old circuitry.

NEW CALLER (V.O.)

There is no exit. Not unless you give me what I want.

FRANK

You said to open the door—

NEW CALLER (V.O.)

That was before. Plans change. There are three suspects left. One is guilty. I want the truth, Frank. And I want you to figure it out.

Frank swallows hard. He turns to the others.

FRANK

You heard him. One of us knows what happened to Samuel Blake.

ALEX

(quiet)

And if we guess wrong?

FRANK

Someone dies.

Jessica begins to cry again. Ryan grips the pipe tighter, his body coiled with tension.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Let's talk this through. We've all lied. But one of you—

RYAN

(interrupting)

You don't get to play judge. You've been talking to him this whole time.

FRANK

I didn't choose this.

RYAN

But you didn't stop it either!

Ryan lunges.

Frank blocks the first swing of the pipe, but they tumble into the wall.

Jessica screams and ducks. Alex tries to separate them.

The gun clatters to the ground.

Jessica backs away, her hands raised—

BANG!

A single, misfired shot echoes.

Jessica drops.

Eyes wide.

Blood blooming across her shirt.

Frank and Ryan both freeze. The pipe slips from Ryan's grip.

ALEX

Oh my God—

Frank scrambles to Jessica's side. Too late.

FRANK

No... no no no—

Ryan stares in horror, then bolts into the tunnel.

ALEX

RYAN! GET BACK HERE!

He disappears into the shadows.

Frank cradles Jessica. Her breathing stops.

NEW CALLER (V.O.)
 (quietly)
 Two left. One answer.

INT. CALLER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

COMMANDER MICHAELS and a tactical team storm into the Caller's last known hideout — a dark, wired-up apartment buzzing with backup servers and open monitors.

SWAT TECH
 Clear!

COMMANDER MICHAELS
 Fan out. Check every inch.

Michaels walks to the center table. A single chair still warm. A tablet screen is cracked. Wires dangle from a disconnected camera rig.

MONITOR TECH
 Sir. He wiped most of it — but not everything. There's a signal tracer still active.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
 Track it. He left in a hurry.
 That's a mistake.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY COMPLEX - SAME TIME

Kate pushes through a broken stairwell door into a dim chamber.

A noise — soft metal sliding. She swings her flashlight.

A SHADOW darts.

A MAN lunges out. Masked. Knife in hand.

KATE
 (grunts)
 Come on, then!

They grapple. It's raw. Brutal. She slams him into the concrete wall, blocking the knife.

He tries to strike again – she ducks, knees him in the ribs. He drops the blade. She doesn't hesitate.

WHAM – she punches him out cold.

Breathing heavy, Kate turns. Her light catches a figure strapped to a chair.

MARIAH – bruised, bleeding, barely conscious.

KATE (CONT'D)

Mariah!

She rushes forward, kneels beside her.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's over. I've got you now.

Mariah's eyes flutter open.

MARIAH

(weakly)

He's not done...

Kate looks around. Somewhere nearby – the game is still being played.

Kate gently frees Mariah's wrists.

KATE

The police are almost here. You're safe now.

Mariah flinches as Kate touches one of her arms.

KATE (CONT'D)

Wait... this scar–

Kate narrows her eyes. The cut is fresh, but oddly placed. Not consistent with defensive wounds.

Then–

A FLOORBOARD CREAKS upstairs.

KATE (CONT'D)

(tensing)

Did you hear that?

Mariah nods slowly.

Just then, Kate's radio crackles.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (V.O.)

(into radio)

Kate, patrol's approaching your location. We've found fresh footprints – the Caller may still be in the perimeter.

KATE

(into radio)

Copy that. Securing the area.

Suddenly, a MAN bursts from the stairwell behind them. Hooded. Fast.

Kate spins around – too late. He slams her against the wall.

The radio skids across the floor.

They grapple, the man STRANGLING Kate with both hands.

Mariah stares.

Frozen.

KATE (CONT'D)

(struggling)

Mariah...!

The masked man presses harder.

Kate's vision fades. But then—

CRASH!

Mariah SLAMS a ceramic vase into the attacker's head.

He stumbles. Kate shoves him off. One final punch – he's out cold.

Kate collapses to one knee, gasping.

The SOUND OF POLICE SIRENS grows.

Red and blue lights strobe through broken windows.

Kate meets Mariah's eyes. The silence between them isn't trust – it's realization.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

SWAT UNITS sweep through the corridors. Each hallway cleared. Every room lit in red and blue.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (V.O.)
 (into radio)
 Level by level. Clear it all. If
 he's still in this building, I want
 him in cuffs by sunrise.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - SAME TIME

Frank sits against the wall, eyes blank, cradling Jessica's lifeless body.

ALEX
 She's gone.

Frank nods. Silent.

Alex slowly picks up the gun. Her hand trembles as she points it at Frank.

FRANK
 Alex...

ALEX
 You said you didn't choose this.
 That someone else was calling the
 shots.

FRANK
 I didn't. I swear to you.

Alex's finger hovers over the trigger - but then she sees him. Really sees him. His eyes. His hands. The pain.

She lowers the gun.

ALEX
 I know.

She opens her mouth, about to confess something-

BANG! - the back door BURSTS OPEN.

SWAT floods the tunnel, weapons raised.

SWAT LEADER
 HANDS! ON THE GROUND!

Frank and Alex freeze, stunned.

INT. CALLER'S ESCAPE ROUTE - SAME TIME

The Caller, watching through a last flickering drone feed on his tablet, slams his fist against the wall.

CALLER

No! Come on, say it! Say who did it

The signal drops.

CALLER (CONT'D)

(snarling)

I almost had it...

He throws the tablet. It smashes against the far wall.

The last act is slipping out of his hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOADING BAY - NIGHT

Frank and Alex are led in handcuffs toward a line of police vehicles. Flashing lights blur their faces.

ALEX

(to Frank, low)

Stay quiet. No matter what they ask.

As they pass the crowd, they see—

RYAN.

Standing calmly beside a uniformed OFFICER. Hands in his jacket pockets. Watching them.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Don't say anything!

Ryan doesn't move. Doesn't react. Just watches them pass.

Frank turns to look at him. There's something cold, final, in Ryan's stare.

The Officer beside Ryan leans into his radio.

OFFICER

(into radio)

Zone 7 clear. Subject isolated.
Proceeding to transfer.

Ryan turns, walks toward another man emerging from the shadows.

RYAN

I need to speak with the Colonel. I gave the statement. I did what you asked.

The man steps closer – uniformed, tall, plain face.

Then without warning –

STAB.

A knife slips beneath Ryan's ribs. His body jerks, eyes wide.

He looks up – the face of the CALLER, now revealed under a different uniform.

CALLER

(whispers)

No evidence.

Ryan collapses. Blood spilling. The Caller steps back, disappearing into the crowd.

He glances toward Frank and Alex – but sees now a protective ring of officers forming around them.

Too many eyes. No opportunity.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Kate watches as MARIAH is escorted by two officers into an ambulance. Mariah looks shaken – but not entirely innocent.

KATE

(into comm)

Keep her monitored. Don't let her speak to anyone without me present.

COMMANDER MICHAELS (V.O.)

(over radio)

Kate. We've got a suspect in sight. The kid Ryan confirmed everything. Case might be closing.

KATE

Copy. Send me the files.

She turns to walk–

Another OFFICER approaches with a sealed evidence bag.

INSIDE: A blood-smeared **photo** of Samuel Blake... with Mariah.

KATE (CONT'D)
(staring at it)
Oh my God...

ROUGH CUT TO

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Frank sits alone, wrists chained to the table. The fluorescent lights hum overhead.

The door opens.

KATE steps in, folder under arm. For the first time, she sees him — not as a name on a screen, but in the flesh.

KATE
Frank Dieng.

Frank looks up. Tired. Empty.

FRANK
You're the voice on the phone.

KATE
And you're the man they think
killed half a dozen people.

She sits.

KATE (CONT'D)
But I've read the files. I don't
think that's who you are.

Frank says nothing.

KATE (CONT'D)
Who was giving you orders?

FRANK
He never said his name.

KATE
Did you ever see his face?

Frank shakes his head.

Kate watches him a beat, then slides a photo across the table.

It's the photo of Samuel Blake and Mariah.

Frank stares at it, frozen.

FRANK
That's her. My girlfriend.

KATE
Mariah.

Frank looks at her.

FRANK
You knew?

KATE
Not until now. I had my suspicions.
The timing. The tears that came too
perfectly. And now this photo...
Samuel Blake was trying to expose
something. He found it. He died for
it.

She stands.

KATE (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

INT. INTERROGATION HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

KATE walks quickly to another room. COMMANDER MICHAELS is waiting.

COMMANDER MICHAELS
We're ready to book Frank formally.
He gave us enough. And Mariah's
statement is all tears and
deflection.

KATE
(interrupting)
Have you asked her how her
boyfriend is doing?

COMMANDER MICHAELS
(pause)
No.

KATE
Then you don't know what she's
really hiding.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM B - SAME TIME

MARIAH sits across from two officers. Her eyes red. Her voice soft.

MARIAH

He told me he was doing it to protect me. I didn't know it would go this far. I didn't think-

Her voice cracks.

But her hands - still. Too still.

KATE enters the room, slowly.

KATE

You said he was protecting you. But you never asked about him.

Mariah's eyes rise.

KATE (CONT'D)

Didn't even ask if Frank made it out alive.

MARIAH

(quietly)
I knew he would.

KATE

That's not how grief works.

Mariah's face hardens, just for a second.

Then the door opens.

A YOUNG OFFICER enters with a new file.

YOUNG OFFICER

Found this during the sweep of the Caller's second location.

He hands it to Michaels, who flips it open.

Inside: a list of names, surveillance tags... and blueprints of the office building's interview floor.

KATE

(to Michaels)
He had help. This wasn't just a hold-up. This was a controlled experiment. And she was in on it.

MARIAH
(screaming)
No!

Kate locks eyes with her.

KATE
Yes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. PRISON CELL - EARLY MORNING

Frank sits alone. Gaunt. Silent. Sunlight filters in through the barred window.

A GUARD opens the door.

GUARD
Let's go. It's trial day.

Frank slowly stands.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON TRANSFER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank is being processed. Dressed in clean courtroom clothes, hands cuffed. A man enters:

THE NEW LAWYER.

Trim. Clean suit. Calm voice. The CALLER — now revealed, face finally visible to the audience, but not to Frank.

CALLER
Mr. Muamba... I'm your new counsel.
The court appointed me late last night.

FRANK

(surprised)
What happened to the other guy?

CALLER
He recused himself. Something about security protocol.

(a smile)
But don't worry.
(MORE)

CALLER (CONT'D)
I've read everything. I'll make
sure your truth is heard.

Frank nods, unsure.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

A crowd has gathered. Flashbulbs. Cameras. News vans.
Frank is escorted up the steps, the Caller beside him - calm,
unreadable.

Inside the lobby: Alex, in protective custody, walks with two
U.S. Marshals.

On a bench in the back:

KATE, watching.

Across the room: Mariah, now bruised and quiet, flanked by
officers - the only person who's seen the Caller's real face.

INT. COURTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As Frank is led in, he spots Alex, seated nearby. Their eyes
meet.

CALLER
(quietly, to Frank)
Do you still think she's innocent?

FRANK
(surprised)
Why?

CALLER
Ryan is dead. She's the last
thread.

Frank freezes - realizing the man beside him is fishing for
the truth.

IN THE GALLERY

Kate leans in to her private investigator.

KATE
He's testing Frank. Still doesn't
know who pulled the trigger.

(beat)
And Frank's the only one who heard
the answer.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bailiff calls for silence.

BAILIFF

All rise for the Honorable Judge
Meade.

As the judge enters, the Caller turns to Frank.

CALLER

If you remember anything else..
anything at all about that moment..

(beat, kindly)

Tell me. It could save your life.

KATE'S POV - FINAL IMAGE

Kate turns back to Mariah, seated two rows behind the defense table - her hands clenched, her expression hardening.

KATE

(to herself)

He has no idea she's about to bring
him down.

INT. COURTROOM - MIDDAY TRIAL (ACT 4 PEAK)

Kate and Commander Michaels sit in the gallery behind prosecution. Kate's eyes never leave Frank, Alex, and Mariah.

COMMANDER MICHAELS

It's almost over. Frank will walk.
The jury hates her.

KATE

(squinting toward the
defense table)

Unless the real puppetmaster's here
watching the show.

INT. DEFENSE TABLE - SAME

Frank whispers with his lawyer - The Caller - still unidentified to him.

ALEX sits nearby. Pale. Breathing tight. The courtroom is tense.

Suddenly-

Alex jolts. Chokes. Falls forward.

A beat.

People rush in – panic.

FRANK
Alex!?

BAILIFF
Medic!

The courtroom erupts.

Alex goes still.

Paramedics wheel her away under a cover.

Kate watches sharply.

INT. HOLDING CORRIDOR – MOMENTS LATER

Mariah is being held nearby.

Alone.

Watching the commotion unfold on a screen.

She seems... oddly calm.

Kate enters.

KATE
You knew, didn't you?

MARIAH

(still)
What?

KATE
About the poison. About her
reaction. You looked away before it
even started.

Mariah flinches.

KATE (CONT'D)
(closer)
She's not dead, Mariah.

Mariah's eyes widen – barely.

KATE (CONT'D)
You've been playing this game
longer than anyone. But it's over.

Mariah is handcuffed. Arrested.

Her face still blank.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Frank sits stunned.

Watching Mariah being led out.

BAILIFF
Due to unexpected medical events,
court is in recess for one hour.

Frank leans back. Trying to breathe.

The Caller - his lawyer - leans over to collect his files.

CALLER
(sharp but subtle)
"One voice can shift a room. One
lie can shift a verdict."

Frank freezes.

He's heard that line before.

From the glasses.
From the voice.

Frank stands. Quietly follows him.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Frank catches up as the Caller heads toward an elevator.

FRANK
(whispering)
It wasn't Alex. It was Ryan.

The Caller stops.

Slow turn. A long, cold stare.

CALLER
(softly)
But she made you believe it
could've been her. That's power.

A beat.

FRANK
They'll catch you.

CALLER
Not today.

He walks into the elevator. Doors close.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank storms toward Kate, breathless.

FRANK
It was him. The lawyer. He's the
Caller.

Kate's eyes widen. She rushes after him—

But he's gone.

Vanished.

EXT. COURTHOUSE ROOFTOP - FINAL IMAGE

A single drone rises from the rooftop.

Through the feed, a camera watches:

Kate. Frank. Alex.

The feed closes.

INT. DARK APARTMENT - NIGHT

BLACK SCREEN.

Soft sound of water.

FAINT NEWSCAST (O.S.)
—Authorities continue to
investigate the full extent of the
hostage crisis—

A match is struck. A candle lights up the room.

ALEX sits in a tub, water up to her shoulders. Calm. Eyes
locked on a small TV screen across the room.

ON SCREEN: Frank's face. Cleared. Released.

Alex exhales. Relief and exhaustion in the same breath.

Then—

KNOCK KNOCK.

Alex turns her head. The knock came from the apartment door.

She rises slowly, wraps herself in a robe. Pads across the floor.

KNOCK KNOCK. Louder now.

She reaches for the door—
Unlocks it—
Opens—

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL BUS STOP - DUSK

A rickety bus door opens. Frank climbs inside, holding a worn passport.

He turns back. Kate stands at the stop, coat fluttering in the wind.

FRANK

(softly)
Merci... pour tout.

KATE

Don't thank me. Just live.

Frank nods.

The bus drives off. He disappears into the horizon.

Kate watches.

Then—
Her phone buzzes.

She answers.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
Remember me?

Kate goes still.

Eyes widen.

From the phone—

In the background—

ALEX (O.S.)

(screaming)
Kate! Kate!!

CLICK.

Dead silence.

Kate stares at the phone. Frozen.

Wind howls around her.

CUT TO BLACK.

TEXT ON SCREEN:

“THROUGH THE LENS”

FADE OUT.