

'Black Satin' by Lola Morgan

INT. HARLEM BEDROOM

Ava Goldman: A young woman with a frazzled head of hair, slumped on a seat, freshly narcotized from a shot of dope.

AVA
play another one.

On other end of the room: a few jarring surges of sound -- audio cables being strung up to a set of speakers.

Ava opens her eyes a bit.

Electronic blasts.

AVA
come on.

The audio source gives way to the opening cords of a song she knows well.

The source: a laptop hooked up to speakers, propped on the lap of LEVI MARRIOTT, eyes at half mast. Like Ava he's barely conscious, barely clothed.

Now Ava gets on her feet, so strung out she can hardly stand. Then she starts going at it, dancing like she's in a trance around a firepit and her brains are baked and body reeks of sex under the influence of heroin.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT

An earlier date.

A room with raffish vibes. Hardwood floors; peeling wallpaper; a bed with a copper picket frame. A much younger AVA GOLDMAN leans back on a bed, wearing a bandana like a doo rag over kinky brown hair.

She smokes a cigarette, and says;

AVA
You know I've always had a hard time with.. other women. No matter what I do, they always seem to turn on me. (looks up, smirks) ... I think it's cause even though I'm not the best-looking, I still get all the boys. (smiles) Boys, boys,

AVA
boys... You think we don't have it
in us to look at you the same way
you look at us? Of course we do --
sexy boys are just as vulnerable as
girls are. And just like for men...
It's a choice to look at them in a
way that's.. Creepy. (Now her face
softens. a long beat.)... I just
wish you knew how beautiful you
are. Yes, you. Come here.

Ava extends a hand toward the camera, as if to caress her
audience.

CUT TO:

Title over black: "Black Satin"

Opening credits

CUT TO:

Intertitle: 1. End times

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

An ambulance blows past a busy block full of restaurants.
From across the street, we see AVA exit a bar, followed by
ROGER SIMON: an attractive guy, just a little bit older.

ROGER
Dammit Ava! You can't just show up
and find me without telling me ...
How'd you even know I'd be here??

AVA
You posted a picture on Instagram.
I looked up the address of the
restaurant.

ROGER
Oh my god.

AVA
Is that bad?

ROGER
Yes!!

AVA
Sorry.

She stares at her feet, shifts on them.

Roger pulls a pack of Marlboros from of his pocket, puts a cigarette in his mouth. Then he holds the pack out to Ava.

ROGER
You can have one if you want.

AVA
No thanks.

He lights his cigarette.

Roger's POV: he takes a good look at Ava, looking especially young in an oversized blouse. Her hair is matted. She seems quite tired.

ROGER
You OK, kid? You look so unhealthy.

AVA
Is that why you stopped having sex with me.

ROGER
Ava.

AVA
What.

ROGER
Don't ask me that.

Ava looks miffed. Roger forces eye contact.

ROGER
(ctd)
Why are you stalking me, Ava.

AVA
I don't know. I miss you, I guess.

ROGER
We were never together. We were just hooking up. I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear until now.

AVA
... Really?

Roger nods. A tense pause.

ROGER
How's college been without me.

AVA

Great.

ROGER

Still getting good grades?

AVA

Doing my best.

ROGER

Do me a favor, Ava ... Take care of yourself. You hear?

Ava just stares.

EXT. BUSY AVENUE - NIGHT

The city fades then reawakens; shifts from NIGHT to MORNING.

INT. AVA'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Ava throws back a 5-hour energy. She opens a drawer in her room. The bottom of the drawer is coated with white pills, falling out of empty orange containers. Also: some black mascara and eyeliner.

She sweeps up a small handful of pills. Swallows one, then casually slips the rest into a pocket of her blouse.

She also grabs a stack of papers from her desk.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

An outdoor table. Ava drums the surface of an open notepad with the tip of her pen. Sips an espresso. Stares at other patrons through her sunglasses. As she does this she draws a fresh pill from her pocket and places it between her lips, then licks them.

She takes off her sunglasses, so we see her dead naked eyes.

COLEMAN GREEN shows up and sits down in front of her. He's also wearing sunglasses, beaming wildly like he just got his rocks off.

Coleman sits down in front of Ava.

COLEMAN

So, you got my shit??

Ava places a thin stapled stack of typed pages before him.

AVA
There's your essay.

COLEMAN
This has gotta be some good shit
for me to pass the class.
Professor's got it in for me.

AVA
It's a seminar, right.

COLEMAN
Yeah. But I never go.

AVA
Well. I think it deserves an A. But
you never know with the fuckers at
this school. Always gets so
personal.

COLEMAN
Anyway, thanks. Here are your
pills.

He passes Ava an orange canister under the table.

AVA
What is this, oxycodone? What
brand.

COLEMAN
Percocets. Same as always.

AVA
Yeah, I was gonna ask about that...
I don't think they're working.

Coleman frowns.

COLEMAN
That's weird.

AVA
I mean, they're working. But not
good enough. They're boring.

COLEMAN
What do you mean boring.

AVA
OK, well. My issue with all this
prescription shit is that it's not
soulful enough. You know?? It's

AVA
lame. Like, when I'm popping
prescription pills I just feel like
I'm just eating candy. Except, of
course, instead of making me fatter
they fuck me up.

She laughs, awkwardly.

COLEMAN
Huh ... You wanna upgrade?? Cause
normally I charge a lot more than a
10-page essay for this shit.

AVA
A 10-page essay by *me* is definitely
worth its weight in opiates.

Coleman grins a little.

COLEMAN
What do you want, dope?

AVA
If you're talking about heroin.
Then, sure. Yeah. That should do
the trick.

COLEMAN
Shit... (leans back) You aren't
kidding... I don't know if I can
get that for you... You might have
to talk to the big man.

AVA
The big man? You mean God.

COLEMAN
No. Big Jesus.

AVA
Who?

COLEMAN
Just a guy I work with.

AVA
What do you do.

COLEMAN
I mean, he goes to my Church. He
plays piano for the choir.

AVA

Oh.

She tries to figure out whether he's kidding. But Coleman is already checked out of this chat. He sweeps up the essay and crams it in his shirt.

COLEMAN

Anyway. I've gotta go to class...
Thanks for this.

Coleman nods goodbye.

Ava watches him leave.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - DAY

A small apartment lit only by the gray-blue hue from outside. Sounds of traffic seep in from the street.

Roger sits cross-legged on a mattress stripped of sheets in just his boxer briefs, not at all zen, burning softly with a brittle male angst. He leans over and lifts his laptop off the top of a dresser; places it on the mattress in front of him; opens it. Types and clicks a few times.

He pulls up a picture of Ava on Instagram.

INT. BEBE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A cozy and spacious apartment in downtown Manhattan. Ava lies on the floor and tries to read from a textbook. Bebe sits on her bed and stares at the screen of her cell phone.

BEBE

Do you know how to block people on your phone?

AVA

Yeah ... just go into settings.

Bebe fiddles with her phone.

BEBE

Sorry, can you just do it for me??

Ava gets up and retrieves the phone from Bebe.

BEBE

(ctd)

The guy's name is Frank. This poor freshman I pity-fucked. Now he won't stop sending me texts ...

BEBE
I've tried to ignore them but it's
gotten out of hand.

AVA
Why don't you just respond and tell
him you're not interested?

BEBE
Well, I don't want to be *mean* ...

AVA
... Silence is mean.

She hands the phone back to Bebe.

AVA
(ctd)
Anyway. He shouldn't bother you
anymore.

BEBE
thanks.

Uncomfortable silence.

AVA
So *who* are we meeting tonight?

BEBE
Gordon and Vance. I met them in
line at the box office. We don't
have to stay with them all night --
but I got them to pay for our
tickets!!

AVA
What were they like?

BEBE
I dunno. I think they're a little
older than us.

AVA
Huh.

Bebe applies make-up in the mirror. Ava pulls on heels.

AVA
(ctd)
I call dibs on whichever guy has
bigger hands.

BEBE

Stop it.

Ava smirks.

TEXT OVER BLACK

Intertitle: "2. Bad Sex"

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Gordon and Vance with their arms around Bebe and Ava, respectively. Vance is thin with slicked hair and moves with suave gestures like a lizard on loosies. Gordon is tall, very tall, a bit rigid, has a mustache; on the creepy side, sure, but just cause he's lonely. He's got a good heart. The way he looks at Ava reflects a deep and earnest respect. He's gentle with his hands when he offers her the popcorn bag. But Ava's standoffish. She doesn't trust these guys, yet.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

A pair of man-hands holding a bag of movie popcorn. The hands toss the bag in a trash bin.

Outside the movie theater: Bebe and Ava exit alongside Gordon and Vance. They've all just seen an indie flick. Gordon and Vance glance back and forth, awkwardly, and propose the following:

GORDON

So do you girls have fake IDs?

BEBE

We're both [age tbd, depending on when film is made].

AVA

... do we look younger?

VANCE

Yes. You do.

Ava and Bebe exchange a glance.

GORDON

We were thinking of taking you to this cool jazz club a little bit Uptown... does that sound good?

BEBE
Sounds fine to me.

AVA
you guys like jazz?

GORDON
(overlapping)
Ohhh yeah.

VANCE
(overlapping)
You kidding? Of course, of course.

GORDON
... I think you girls are gonna dig
this place. It's very historic.
Only the best cats got to play here
in the thirties and forties.

BEBE
Wow, cool.

Ava looks up at Gordon, who's grinning. She looks anxious.

Vance hails a taxi. The whole gang climbs in.

EXT. COTTON CLUB, HARLEM - NIGHT

Montage of a real jazz gig. A whole song. To DP: now's the time to brand your stylistic imprint on the haunches of this film.

During song: VANCE, GORDON, AVA, BEBE enter through the back of the club and take a seat. A handful of younger, better-dressed, mostly black patrons pass them glances; the fuck are they doing here?? The club has enough gentrified jazz bros and older band teachers in attendance already.

At the table, Vance and Gordon concern themselves with ordering drinks and putting their ladies at ease. Bebe looks bored. Ava, on the other hand, seems drunk just on atmosphere. A flame ignites inside her.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CLUB - NIGHT

Ava steps out alone for a breather.

Next to her, a heavy black man smokes a cigar. This is BUSTER.

BUSTER
You want one?

He offers her a cigar from a whole box of Cubans.

Ava shrugs and accepts. He lights it for her.

BUSTER
(ctd)
Are you enjoying the show.

AVA
Yes.

BUSTER
Your dates look like losers.

AVA
Ohhh, they're nice.

BUSTER
The nice ones are the guys you
really gotta watch out for. Did you
watch the bartender make that
drink?

AVA
No.

BUSTER
Don't drink it! You don't know
what's in there.

Ava thinks for a moment, then puffs on her cigar.

BUSTER
(ctd)
What's your name kid.

AVA
Ava. What's yours.

BUSTER
Here I'm known as Big Jesus. But
you can also just call me Buster.

They shake hands.

AVA
Hi Buster. I think I've heard of
you before.

BUSTER

How.

He looks suspicious. She hesitates.

AVA

I hear you play piano for a gospel church in Harlem.

BUSTER

(grinning)

How'd you know that.

AVA

I, uh, get paid to write essays for a kid who goes to your church.

BUSTER

Get paid?

Ava nods.

BUSTER

And who's the kid?? If he goes to my church I've probably met him.

AVA

Coleman Green.

BUSTER

Coleman!! Oh yeah-- I know that kid. (under breath) mother fucker...

He starts laughing to himself.

AVA

Yeah. He's in my film seminar.

BUSTER

You a college girl?

AVA

Grad student.

BUSTER

At Columbia?

AVA

Yeah.

BUSTER

Huh.

AVA

What.

BUSTER

That's good to know.

Buster gives her a look. She gives one back.

GORDON comes out of the club, fanning himself.

GORDON

There you are!! Ava. I was so worried you ran off with another--

He looks up at Buster.

GORDON

--hey man.

AVA

I've just been talking to Buster.

GORDON

Buster?

They shake hands.

BUSTER

Buster Jameson.

GORDON

Huh, nice to meet you.

Both are physically foreboding guys. A standoff between two alpha men. Both feel "protective" of Ava. But do they??

Gordon takes Ava's hand.

GORDON

You ready, kid?

AVA

(blowing cigar, drops it)
Where are we going.

GORDON

Your friend Bebe says she knows a place.

Oh god. AVA

What. GORDON

A hotel? AVA

Uh huh. GORDON

Is it The Standard?? AVA

... I think so. GORDON

That's the only hotel she ever suggests. AVA

Gordon glances at Ava with one eyebrow raised; *how often do you go to hotels with men?* he seems to think.

Ava's expression: she doesn't give a shit about him.

Buster looks amused.

Ava. Why don't you gimme your number. I wouldn't mind talkin some more with you. BUSTER

... Sure, yeah. AVA

He hands her his cell phone. She types in her number.

Gordon watches the exchange, suspicious, maybe jealous.

Ava hands back the phone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

Taxi cabs haul ass down the West End highway in front of the Hudson River at night.

EXT. THE STANDARD - NIGHT

Vance and Bebe have really hit it off. They stumble into the lobby. Ava and Vance are not quite at that level of intimacy. Cautiously, they glance at each other and follow their friends through the automatic doors.

INT. THE STANDARD - NIGHT

Ava and Gordon under the covers. The post-coital awkwardness is almost suffocating. Ava stares intently at the fingers of her right hand. On the fourth finger is a cheap ring, which is meant to look like a diamond. She considers it lucky.

Gordon turns toward her; a friendly attempt at eye contact. Ava glances up at him. Seems vulnerable but still a bit judgmental. She's the one who just did him a favor.

GORDON

Can I ask you something.

AVA

... Of course.

GORDON

Just from the time we've spent together, do you think I'm talented.

Ava inhales sharply.

AVA

Talented? ... at what?

GORDON

Oh. Maybe I never told you... I'm an actor.

A weighted pause.

GORDON

(ctd)

I mean, I want to be. During the day I've been directing theater productions at a high school in Queens -- just to make money.

AVA

(under breath)

Oh. god.

GORDON

Hmm??

AVA

I mean, yeah, Gordon -- follow your heart. I'll bet you're a decent actor. You're an attractive older man.

GORDON

You think I'm attractive.

AVA

Sure.

Big ego boost for Gordon.

GORDON

Well then you're gonna love this. I was just given the role of Herbie in a production of Gypsy.

AVA

Seriously? ... On Broadway?

GORDON

Not Broadway. It's for a company in the Catskills. The Old Log Theater.

AVA

Oh... nice!!

Ava passes an intense sidelong glance to the camera.

GORDON

Have you ever seen a Burlesque show?

AVA

No.

A beat.

AVA

(ctd)

Not that I judge women who do... I think stripping is cool. If you're good at it. In fact, I think I respect most strippers more than these entitled hoes at my school who just fuck a guy for nothing.

She laughs awkwardly.

AVA

(ctd)

I mean, these college girls will probably end up more successful than me in the long run ... So I really shouldn't judge.

GORDON

More successful? (laughs) What's your definition of success.

AVA

Well, when I'm talking about them I just mean leading a functional life and not walking around like a human shit-show, blitzed on pills, or wasted... But... if I had to define "success" for myself... (shakes head) damn. That's actually a good question.

GORDON

Take your time.

AVA

(thinks for a minute)

Success, huh. I think just being remembered by a lot of people?? But not for something horrible ... Hmm. I think a good gage for success might be if people are bummed out when I die, as opposed to like -- celebrating.

A tense silence.

GORDON

Wow.

AVA

... what.

GORDON

No, I just didn't expect that.

AVA

Well. What's your definition of success?

GORDON

I mean. I like to think that if I treat others kindly ... and work hard ... and bear my cross and keep

GORDON
putting one foot in front of the
other ... that's some form of
success -- don't you think?

AVA
Yeah, sure.

Ava climbs out of bed, gets dressed quickly, and goes to the door. Gordon follows her there. They're both ready for some private time.

AVA
(ctd)
Seeya Gordon. Thanks. I had a
decent night.

GORDON
Bye, dear.

Gordon shuts the door.

INT. HOTEL

Ava presses the button for the elevator. While waiting she pulls on the tights under her skirt, massages her thigh briefly, as if it hurts. The elevator arrives; she steps in.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MIDDLE OF NIGHT

Women in skimpy outfits strutting down the streets like they've got someplace to be. Some girls are on their way to dates; other girls look like professionals.

EXT. WEST END HIGHWAY - MIDDLE OF NIGHT

Cars waiting at a light, then plowing down the highway like they're in a drag race. Slowing down. Stopping at the next light. Revving their engines.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Roger comes out of the shower to find a girl still in his bed. She looks fairly basic. This is DIANA.

She stretches and yawns, like she's just waking up -- though everything she does seems exaggerated, like she's acting.

DIANA
Hey yooouuu. Good morning.

ROGER

... Hi.

DIANA

I had a dream about you...

Roger gets dressed, modestly, with his back to Diana. He's not in the mood for this shit.

ROGER

Oh yeah. What about.

DIANA

We were on a beach. And you held me close while the sun set. And when it got dark ... we made love.

ROGER

Did you just make that up.

DIANA

(lying)

No.

Now Roger has his pants on. He turns to Diana.

ROGER

I need you to leave.

Diana frowns.

DIANA

Oh, okay. Wow. Yeah. Let me just get my things. (gets up) Sorry.

Roger watches her with his arms folded as she gathers her clothes and gets dressed. She seems really nervous.

ROGER

Did you have fun last night.

DIANA

Yeah, I did.

ROGER

Would you see me again if I asked you.

DIANA

... yes.

Diana looks up at him, with earnest eyes. Roger stares back with a harsh expression.

ROGER

Good. I might text you later this week.

DIANA

Ok, cool. Thanks for having me.

ROGER

No problem.

She shuts the door and leaves.

Roger looking smug. He stretches his arms (still shirtless), then sits down and starts reading a book, thoroughly relaxed.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Ava and Bebe walking & talking at a calm, leisurely swagger.

AVA

Anyone can be book smart. Roger was book smart. I couldn't even keep up with him. He read like five or six books per week.

BEBE

Stop talking about your ex.

AVA

He's not my ex. We were never official.

BEBE

Whatever. Do you know how many girls from Tinder he's probably fucked since the last time you saw him??

AVA

I don't know -- A few.

BEBE

More than that. He practically runs a brothel out of his apartment... What an asshole.

Ava frowns. They cover some ground in silence.

BEBE

(ctd)

How was your night with Gordon.

AVA
(sighs)
Bebe, I don't want to talk about
it.

BEBE
You didn't like him?

AVA
Is that a joke?

BEBE
No...

Ava assesses Bebe's expression. Seems like she's telling the
truth.

AVA
I just don't think he's my soul
mate. That's all.

BEBE
OK, that's cool ...

AVA
I mean seriously -- how do you feel
about Vance?

BEBE
I like him. As a matter of fact,
I'm seeing him for coffee later
this week.

AVA
... Oh. *Really?*

BEBE
Yep. And he's in school to be a
therapist. So, he might have a
decent salary someday.

AVA
Maybe. (sighs) But therapy is kind
of a dying craft. These days people
just take pills... or exercise...

BEBE
Well, Vance is a good listener. And
that's hard to find!! Most guys
I've been with do all the talking
-- like, it's not even a
conversation but just him
pontificating about shit I don't
wanna hear.

AVA

Yeah. And I bet you're smarter than these guys but just pretend you're a dumbass so you don't trigger their ego issues.

BEBE

Sometimes, yeah!

Ava rolls her eyes in the general direction of the heavens.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Roger in bed with CHRISTINE, a new chick. She seems self-conscious about her facial expression like she's adjusting it for Roger: a waifish smile with her eyebrows slightly raised. Flirty, feigned interest.

ROGER

So your father works on Wall Street, but you're not sure what he does.

CHRISTINE

Not really. I just know he's the CEO of his company, and it has something to do with real estate.

ROGER

Hmm... I used to think I wanted to be one of these elite corporate men, but at some point I realized -- these guys are crooks. Honestly. In order to be one of them you have to sell your soul to the devil and take enough pills to turn into a sociopath.

CHRISTINE

God, I know. My father has always been such an asshole...

She lets her guard down; suddenly her face is tainted with grief. Roger notices.

ROGER

I'm sure he also had a good side.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. He does.

For a moment, Roger lets his own soft side bleed through a mask of complacency.

CHRISTINE

(ctd)

So if you have no interest in the business world, what do you do?

ROGER

I'm a writer.

CHRISTINE

Hmm. What kind.

ROGER

A film critic. But I'm working on a novel.

CHRISTINE

What about.

ROGER

I'm not sure you want to know. It's dark.

CHRISTINE

Well now you really have to tell me!! ... It's OK, I like dark things.

ROGER

(sighs)

It's about a young woman who's considerably more violent than most girls her age, and she plans to kill a bunch of boys ... I'm trying to decide why these shootings keep happening -- but you never hear about girls doing it.

Roger turns to Christine. Her flirty little grin has given way to a look of profound disillusionment.

ROGER

(ctd)

I've also always been drawn to films that portray violence among women. I don't know why -- it's just my thing.

Roger keeps a straight face. He shared this to test her.

CHRISTINE

You mean like Chicago the musical?

ROGER
Not really, no.

CHRISTINE
Oh.

Roger gets to his feet and walks over to a dresser.

ROGER
(sighs) ... You ready?

CHRISTINE
Huh?

ROGER
Can I get you an uber?

He picks up his phone and waves it so she sees.

CHRISTINE
Oh... go ahead.

He starts tapping the phone with his hands.

TEXT OVER BLACK

Intertitle: "3. Call girls"

INT. HAMILTON HALL - DAY

On a cell phone screen, a text from an unknown number:

"Meet me at Lenox lounge at 1pm. 125th st"

"AVA: sure but who is this"

"Buster"

Ava writing notes with one hand, futzing around on her phone with the other. She tilts her head to one side when she reads the last text, smiling tamely. Then she gets up -- apparently in the middle of class -- and exits the room.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Ava checks her watch: it's half past the hour. She puts her elbow on the table and leans her head on her fist.

Then she glimpses Buster on the street, straightens up, beams slightly. Buster comes through the entrance and nods once at Ava. He's followed by COLEMAN. Ava looks confused.

Buster and Coleman pull up seats. Buster eyes her mug of black coffee.

BUSTER
You want something else? It's all
taken care of.

AVA
Sure, uh. Can I just have a
Rickstasy?

BUSTER
A what?

AVA
It's a drink.

BUSTER
Oh, right. (turns to waitress) Hi
-- we'll 2 shots of whiskey, a
Rickstasy... and a killer brownie.

The waitress nods and smiles; she's met him before. Ava
watches.

BUSTER
(ctd)
Bring 3 forks for the brownie,
please.

Buster turns toward Ava.

BUSTER
(ctd)
Don't look so nervous! I didn't
bring Coleman here as a blind date,
if that's what you're worried
about.

AVA
No, I know...

COLEMAN
Say Ava -- I got my essay back, and
I got an A minus!! Thanks again for
that.

AVA
A *minus*?? Are you fucking serious.

COLEMAN
Ava, that's great!! She's a tough
grader.

AVA
It's fine -- it's just, that bitch
never gave any of *my* essays higher
than a B ... Female professors
don't like me. I don't know why
that is.

She glances up at Buster. He's grinning.

BUSTER
I know.

AVA
What.

BUSTER
It's an energy thing. You're an
alpha female. She probably just
feels threatened by you.

AVA
An alpha female?

BUSTER
I know one when I meet one.

Ava looks confused but flattered. Buster shoots her eye
contact -- the warm kind.

Ava tilts her head, then nods toward Coleman.

AVA
So, what's he doing here.

BUSTER
Right. So, we need you to do us a
favor.

Ava gets an 'oh god' look.

BUSTER
(ctd)
You said you're still in college,
right??

She nods.

BUSTER
(ctd)
So... Coleman spends a lot of time
with a girl who's finishing some
credits at Barnard. But she's been
giving us some problems.

A long pause. The energy tenses up a bit.

AVA
What kind of problems.

Buster gives Coleman a look: 'you talk.' He scoots up in his chair and folds his hands.

COLEMAN
So the other night I had her over.
(sighs) I fell asleep, first. Woke
up in the morning, she was gone.
Trouble was (he looks around) I got
some high grade shit stashed round
my place. In the couch pillows.
Behind the fridge 'n shit. Now I
don't know how she knew where all
my shit was, but that bitch sucked
my mother fuckin' ass dry.

Ava gets a look.

AVA
She sucked your ass dry?

COLEMAN
... She stole!!

AVA
I got that. But what do you expect?
I've stolen from guys after
one-night stands. Only little
things... but still. You gotta
watch your back.

Once again, Buster looks at Ava, not unimpressed.

COLEMAN
OK. But I don't think she knows
what kind of shit she got her hands
on. This was high grade shit.
Buster here's only got a take a
little and it knocks him flat. She
took the same amount it could kill
her tight ass.

AVA
... Who is this girl.

BUSTER
Ladybird.

AVA

Ladybird?

COLEMAN

It's a nickname. Her real name's Katrina.

AVA

Oh.

COLEMAN

Now ever since my shit disappeared, Katrina ain't been returning my calls. And we can't find her nowhere on campus. But I got a source that said she been hanging out in some café downtown, selling our shit to some rich mother fuckers. College boys.

AVA

... Not girls? Awww.

COLEMAN

Well, that's the thing. Katrina don't talk to no dumb girls. She's picky.

BUSTER

That's why we need your help.

AVA

Cause I'm smart?

COLEMAN

Right.

AVA

Hey, thanks!! ... But most women don't like me.

BUSTER

You said that already. But Katrina ain't like "most women."

AVA

Really?

BUSTER

I'm telling you, this bitch is one of a kind.

Ava raises her eyebrows. Coleman counts out some cash.

COLEMAN

So tomorrow you go on down to the
café and get yourself a coffee. Or
a Rickstasy or whatever the fuck.
(hands cash) And see if you can
catch her sellin some of our shit.
If you wait long enough then go
ahead and try and talk to her
yourself. Long as you find out that
she's got our shit.

AVA

Ok. But I have one question.

COLEMAN

Go on.

AVA

What kind of drugs are they??

Coleman and Buster exchange a look.

BUSTER

(deadpan)

Marijuana.

AVA

Oh... OK. I have another question.

COLEMAN

what.

AVA

what's in it for *me*?

COLEMAN

... you even count that?

Ava starts counting the wad of cash.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

We're doing you a fucking *favor*,
kid.

AVA

(lowers voice)

OK, OK, I'm sorry.

He gives her an admonishing glance. Ava pockets the cash.

COLEMAN

Good. I'll be texting you some instructions to the café. If you wanna know what she looks like... The bitch has an intense [fill in color] eyes. Ok?

Ava nods.

[MUSIC: PHARAOH'S DANCE]

EXT. WEST VILLAGE - DAY

Ava looking slick with a pair of RED RAYBANS, hair pulled back in a bandana. She's walking down a side street with her cell phone in her hand, looking at directions.

She approaches a café. Looks up at the sign.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Ava comes in through the front, still hiding behind shades.

POV: Ava looks around the café. Immediately she spots KATRINA SULLIVAN in the back, staring down at a notepad, apparently working. Katrina starts to look up from her work toward Ava...

Ava turns away casually and asks the hostess for a seat.

AVA

(to hostess)

Just one.

The hostess seats her conveniently close to Katrina. She sits down, takes off her shades. Pulls out a notebook that says COLUMBIA on it, and opens it. Ava tries to write.

Katrina looks suspicious, or just annoyed. She stares back down at her own work. Then up again.

More eye contact.

THÉO

Katrina.

THÉO (pronounced Te-yo) has entered the café. He's quite well-dressed for a college boy. He waves enthusiastically at Katrina, comes over, takes a seat in front of her.

KATRINA

Hey Théo, what's up.

He sighs. Slaps his hands on his knees.

THÉO

How's my thesis going??

Katrina leans over and opens a nice leather bag. She removes a fat stack of stapled pages and places it on the table.

KATRINA

I think if you were to turn this draft in without any edits, you'd probably land within the B range. But before I make some changes I want you to look it over and give me real, substantial feedback. Can you do that by Thursday??

THÉO

(paging through thesis)
Thursday?? I guess...

KATRINA

Good. You can send me an e-mail or come and talk to me in person. Your call. But I'm not going to touch it until I hear from you again. I've got better things to do.

THÉO

I know. (counting cash) I've said it before, but I really appreciate this Katrina.

KATRINA

I know you do....

He slides the cash across the table. Katrina counts it, puts it in her bag.

Katrina glimpses Ava watching the whole exchange with her mouth slightly agape.

Ava looks away.

THÉO

Can I get you something before I leave?? An appetizer or something??

KATRINA

I'm covered.

She raises a glass of hard liquor, as if to say: 'cheers.'
Théo gets up to leave.

THÉO
Well, thanks again. I'll see you in
class, Ok?

KATRINA
Mhm.

THÉO
Peace.

Théo leaves the café.

Katrina glances back over at Ava.

Ava pretends to be quite occupied with her writing, though
she can't hide a slight smirk.

KATRINA
What are you smiling at.

Ava slowly looks up with wide eyes: 'me??'

She looks behind her. There's no one else in the restaurant.

AVA
(straightens up)
Oh.. it's just... you know. I've
done that before... when I'm low on
cash and desperate.

KATRINA
Done what.

AVA
Prostituted my essays for boys.

KATRINA
Ha ... that's cute.

AVA
OK.

Ava turns away, awkwardly, and looks back down at her work.

KATRINA
Have you eaten yet?

AVA
Yeah.

KATRINA
I'll get you a drink.

Now Ava gets a nervous look.

AVA

Me??

Katrina gives a condescending smirk and points at the seat in front of her; Ava gets up and sits down.

KATRINA

Who sent you here.

AVA

Huh?

KATRINA

You know Coleman don't you ...

AVA

No.

KATRINA

Well you can go back and tell him I don't have his dope.

AVA

Dope??

KATRINA

What did he tell you, he wanted to buy an essay from me?

AVA

No. He just said you took his drugs. But he didn't say what kind.

Katrina seems momentarily shaken like she gave something away. Then she waves for a waiter.

KATRINA

Elaine -- can I have the check please?? Thanks.

(in a bitchy mood now)

Well. Looks like I'll have to find another lunch café! ... What a shame, I really liked the Nicoise Salad here... (has trouble pronouncing 'Nicoise')... fuck this...

She scoots out her seat. Ava puts an arm out to stop her. Katrina swats her away.

AVA

Stop it. You don't have to do that. I won't tell him anything, OK? ...

AVA
He was being an asshole about it
anyway.

KATRINA
... How do you even know him. Are
you working for him?

AVA
Actually, I am.

Katrina gets a suspicious look.

AVA
(backtracking)
I mean -- I write his essays for
him. And I do that's all I do... I
don't know what *you* meant!! Ha..

KATRINA
You're joking.

AVA
No, I'm not. I'm pretty sure I've
done every essay he's written this
semester. I mean, he pays well,
doesn't he?

KATRINA
Don't know. I'm not his essay girl.

Ava looks down, beaming. The waitress brings over the bill
and sets it down. Katrina looks up at the waitress. She
seems in a slightly improved mood.

KATRINA
(ctd)
Actually, I don't think we're quite
finished. What were you gonna have
to drink??

AVA
Yeah, can I have a Rickstasy
please??

Katrina raises an eyebrow at her.

AVA
(ctd)
What. It works.

KATRINA
I suppose that's what matters...
I'll have a [insert chic choice of
drink] please.

She hands the drink menu to the waitress. [Cue music]

Drinks being poured. Hand taking the drinks.

[MUSIC: BITCHES BREW]

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

They emerge from the restaurant, blitzed, thrilled to be
wasted by mid-afternoon. Especially Ava, who's so fucked up
she's got a sweaty forehead.

KATRINA
Ulch, don't take Professor
Havicam's class-- she's a stingy
grader and a stone cold bitch.

AVA
Not toward male students.

KATRINA
Funny you say that. I hear she
tried to seduce a boy who was only
19.

AVA
Really...

KATRINA
Mhm. They're all over the place in
college film and theater
departments. Women who wanted to be
popular actresses but never quite
made it. And now they're female
creeps.

AVA
I know what you mean.

KATRINA
So you're studying English?

AVA
And Film Studies. I'm writing a
movie... A ritzy porno.

KATRINA
(silence)

AVA
I'm just kidding.

KATRINA
Are you?? I wasn't sure.

Ava stops at a corner, turns and looks up at Katrina. She has a strange kind of sick expression on her face.

AVA
Can we sit down for a second? I
feel kind of nauseous.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ava sitting on a park bench. Katrina's looks left and right while smoking, as if she's embarrassed to be seen with Ava like this.

KATRINA
You gonna be all right?

AVA
Yeah, I'm fine. We just had too
much to drink.

KATRINA
You had too much.

A good long pause.

Ava looks up at Katrina. She looks in pain; either because she's sick from the liquor or because she always looks in pain.

AVA
Can I ask you something?

KATRINA
OK.

AVA
... Did you really take a bunch of
dope from Coleman?? I won't tell
him obviously.

Katrina takes a drag.

KATRINA
Nope. I don't have it.

AVA
Well what am I gonna tell him? That
I just talked to you and you don't
have it?

KATRINA
Yeah. Tell him that.

AVA
I'm not an idiot and neither is he.

KATRINA
What do you want to buy some from
me?

AVA
(suddenly calm & quiet)
How much are you selling it for.

Katrina lifts her chin and looks Ava in the eye.

KATRINA
You're pathetic.

AVA
(offended, but hiding it)
No, I'm not... No.. I've wanted to
try dope for a while. You can ask
Coleman. I probably was gonna buy
it from him but then you took all
of it.

Katrina gets up from the bench.

KATRINA
It was nice talking to you, Ava.

AVA
... what?

She turns just as she's about to walk away.

KATRINA
I'd sell you some. But you're too
young for this shit. I can tell you
don't know what you're doing. Sorry
to get your hopes up.

She leaves.

Ava sits on the bench, rubbing one of her forearms, still hurt by the 'pathetic' insult.

[MUSIC: LONELY FIRE]

EXT. 34TH ST AND 8TH AVE - NIGHT

Roger on his way home from a long day at work. He walks past the McDonald's across from Penn Station. Sees a pair of homeless guys camping out to the left of the entrance. Feeling generous, he drops some money into one of their cups. The cup belongs to SCULLY. He has a scar on the right side of his face and a dead expression. Right now he looks badly dopesick.

SCULLY stands up and leans over to puke. After that he picks up his cup of money and counts it. Pockets it. Goes on a long walk alone.

Scully encounters other homeless folk his age. Riles them from sleep and asks them for something. Most roll their eyes, shake their heads. Go back to posing as super pitiful.

Finally he comes across JOHNNY, standing outside the 7-11 on 34th and 9th and pouring beer into a styrofoam coffee cup. When Scully comes up to him, he grins and shakes his hand. Then he takes out his cell phone and makes a call for him.

JOHNNY

Hey man, I got Scully right here...
Yeahhh... He wants to know if you
got any dog food.

Scully stands with his hand on his head, sweaty and pale.

TEXT OVER BLACK

Intertitle: 4. Dope dreams

CUT TO:

Sound effects. The sound of running water: The *shing!* of an unsheathed sword: Someone spitting in the sink: The sound of static. Then... the sound of waves lapping the sand and seagulls on a beach. A car revving up...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

AVA opens her eyes. She's in the bathtub. The faucet runs. She doesn't seem shocked by her nightmare. Maybe thrilled, maybe frightened, but it's subtle.

A view of the whole bathroom. It's obvious that Ava's been playing reckless games in her time alone. There are enough drugs just by the bathtub to do her in: a few orange canisters, tipped over, plus a champagne glass containing god knows what liquor. (Not champagne. Something worse.)

CUT TO:

INT. BLACK SMOKY ROOM

You can hardly see Katrina and BENSON, it's so dark.

KATRINA

I've always found that so cute about men. The way they're so much more frightened by Death...

A pause. You can see they're smoking cigarettes, in bed.

BENSON

(deeply)

I'm not scared of death.

KATRINA

Mm.. yes you are... I can tell you are. You don't know but I can see it in your eyes when you're fucking me. You're frightened by Death.

The man keeps quiet.

KATRINA

(ctd)

It's ok!! Don't be embarrassed, now... I have to remind myself that not everyone has studied Death like I have... Anyway. I suppose it has to do with our proximity to Death. What with, having to give birth. Every time one of *you boys* is born, a woman dies. Even if she lives through the pregnancy she must have died a little, in labor. I hear it's the worst pain imaginable.

BENSON

... is it different when a girl is born?

KATRINA

Hmm?

BENSON

You said when a boy is born, a woman dies. Isn't it the same if she gives birth to a girl?

Katrina lifts her chin and looks down her nose at him; it's intimidating, definitely.

KATRINA

I suppose there is no difference!
For the *mother*... It's just a baby.

She ashes her cigarette, then climbs out of bed.

Katrina puts her clothes on.

BENSON

You're leaving??

He sounds a bit whiny, like a little boy.

KATRINA

Yes, sorry ... I have to go meet someone else, I'm afraid.

As she says this, Katrina fumbles in the pockets of a pair of men's Levis on the floor. She removes Benson's wallet and wipes it dry of cash.

Katrina sneaks the money into her purse. Her purse is made of black satin and contains only dimes and quarters; no nickels or pennies.

Benson doesn't notice.

KATRINA

Goodnight, Benson. And thank you for buying me those drinks today.

BENSON

My pleasure. I hope it's not the last time.

KATRINA

I hope so too.

She gives a meek little smile, then leaves.

[MUSIC: SANCTUARY]

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Katrina comes out of the apartment. She struts at a smooth yet brisk pace, sleek undercover hustler she is -- with places to be, games to play, men to mess with for money.

EXT. CITY STREET - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Scully with his cup on the street. He really looks like shit, lately. He's looking up at the sky. The bright signs. Grungy birds sitting on the signs.

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS - NIGHT

Ava reading about Heroin on her laptop, at a metal table on campus. She smokes a cigarette and ashes it directly on the table. She doesn't bother cleaning it up.

Other kids walking around. (A shot that feels alienated from them. A shot that renders subjective distance.)

COLEMAN appears among the other kids, then approaches the camera, Ava, us. He's smiling as usual but he's not in the best mood. Not at all. He looks like hell. Not as bad as Scully but he's definitely on the hot-sick-and-sweaty side.

COLEMAN

Hey, Ava.

No eye contact. A pause. Ava sighs.

AVA

I didn't get your shit back...
Katrina doesn't have it.

COLEMAN

(rolls eyes, looks up, hits
table lightly)
God damnit!! Mother fucker, I know
that bitch stole it!! What the fuck
she tell you??

AVA

She didn't tell me anything. I
didn't talk to her. But all she's
selling at the Café you sent me to
is essays. She writes essays for
boys. Just like me & you.

COLEMAN

That's *bullshit*-- I *know* she's got
it!! That bitch ain't sellin
essays, she's sellin my dope!!

AVA

No. I saw her sell the essay. I witnessed the transaction.

COLEMAN

Man, I don't care if she be sellin' essays or dope or her pussy to these rich white mother fuckers... that mother fucking hoe. *Man...* I was countin' on you for this Ava!!

AVA

Are you *serious??* If I had seen her selling it I'd be nodding off right now, you know that. I'm sorry -- it's not my fault, Coleman.

COLEMAN

Man, I know but...

He shakes his head.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

I'm sorry. I'm not always like this. It's just -- you don't know what it's like to be dopesick. It ain't good... *This ain't me. This ain't me, right now. You got that?*

Ava nods.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

Good... now, I need you to come through for me, and follow up on this... Can you do that? Can you do that for me? Ava??

AVA

Can't I just get heroin from someone else for you.

COLEMAN

Noo, bitch!! She stole all that shit!! That's how I make all my money!!

AVA

Oh. Right.

They sit in silence for another beat. Ava offers him a cigarette. He grabs it and lights it.

COLEMAN
Did you talk to her??

Ava looks into his eyes. Then she shakes her head.

AVA
No. I just saw her sell the essay.
Then she got up and left.

COLEMAN
And you didn't follow her??

AVA
Should I have?

COLEMAN
Yeah, girl!

AVA
Oh. Sorry.

COLEMAN
Man, whatever. But you sure she
didn't see you or nothin??

AVA
I'm sure ... She seemed so fucking
full of herself that she's got her
head in her own ass. I doubt she
would have noticed me if I was
doing mother-fuckin cartwheels.

COLEMAN
(a 'wtf' look)
... you sure you didn't talk to
this bitch??

AVA
Nooo.

COLEMAN
OK Ava... I'ma find shit out. I'ma
find some shit out. Then we gonna
catch her by surprise... That's
what we gonna do... OK? But I need
your help. Can you help me on this
one? Do a follow-up?

Ava hesitates, then nods.

COLEMAN
(ctd)
Good.

He gets up and grabs his things; Turns; Gives Ava a look.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

I need to know we good on this. We good, Ava?

AVA

You know *I'm* good. I hope you are.

They shake hands. When he leaves, Ava lets out a gentle sigh of relief, then smiles very slightly to herself. She lights another cigarette, then gets up from her seat and slings her Coach Camo backpack (with a hole in the lining) onto her back.

[MUSIC: JEAN PIERRE]

EXT. SHOE STORE - DAY

Ava walking, smoking, looking in shop windows. She sees a pair of high heels that she likes.

She goes in the store. Ava checks the price tag on the shoes: we see her through the window.

They cost too much! She frowns.

EXT. ANOTHER SHOE STORE

The same thing happens a second time.

EXT. THIRD SHOE STORE

Ava goes in, checks the price tag, rolls her eyes. But instead of leaving the store, she hesitates. Looks left and right.

Then Ava opens her backpack and crams the shoes in her bag.

When she exits the store, she really picks up the pace. Moves down the sidewalk with some hella strut. At some point she starts smiling, cause she knows she made it out alive.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Ava walks down the street with the stolen heels on her feet, a big-ass smile on her face, and RED RAY-BANS over her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S PLACE - DAY

Roger writing his book on a computer. He reads it aloud, dramatically; it sounds a bit like a voice-over on a Western film.

ROGER'S BOOK

What made Nellie and Rose a perfect match for the school shooting was their competitive pursuit of Death. As far as they could tell, their respective Death wishes were stronger and more acutely felt than most females. Neither Nellie nor Rose feared Death. They invited Death into their rooms like a cruel and dangerous bedfellow. The only thing that stopped one woman from continuing to fool around with Death, was the other. They could either force one another from Death's naughty grasp, or seduce Death as a pair. Nellie and Rose decided to go shopping together, to pick out a weapon.

Roger stops reading and smirks, proud of himself.

Someone knocks on the door of his apartment.

He gets up, stretches. He's wearing a white cotton shirt and sweatpants. Then he answers the door.

At the door: Another random girl. This is KELLY.

ROGER

Nice to meet you. Make yourself cozy.

He gestures to his bed.

KELLY

My friend tells me you're a famous writer.

ROGER

Who told you that. Someone who you showed my Tinder?

KELLY

... Yeah.

ROGER

(seems annoyed)

Interesting ... And I'm not famous at all. I have a lot of followers.

ROGER
On the internet. That's the extent
of it.

KELLY
(shrugs)
That counts.

ROGER
Not really. Besides, I don't want
to be famous. Fame isn't what it
used to be, in the 70s with Warhol.
We've reached a point where fame
has been de-fetishized. Too many
famous people are, just,
losers...(shakes head)... I'd
rather not be a loser... I want to
be respected, and I want to *win* my
respect. You know?

Kelly nods her head, confused, or pretending to be.

ROGER
(ctd)
People don't understand... that
when things get bad, really bad...
it's the people who have
experience, dealing with adversity,
who will come out ahead. Eventually
power will not be in numbers. Power
will be in strength. Physical and
mental.

A beat.

KELLY
Hmm. Where does beauty figure into
all this?

ROGER
... It doesn't hurt.

He sits on the bed and begins to rub her shoulders.

ROGER
(ctd)
You're beautiful. You know...
Claire.

KELLY
My name's Kelly.

ROGER

Mmm...

He kisses her. Kelly sighs.

[MUSIC: IN A SILENT WAY]

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

That one dark tunnel by the Met. Black silhouettes drift through like spirits passing through the gates of Hades.

Eventually Katrina emerges from it, talking on her phone.

KATRINA (O.P.)

What do you mean you're homeless.
For god sakes Sam... OK, I know...
but don't steal from women!! Only
steal from guys. They've taken
enough from us... *No no no*, I'm not
a fucking feminist. Whatever. I
don't know what the fuck I am.
Just... Stay put. I'll be there
soon. You hear me? Don't move, OK?
(sighs)... Love you too. Bye.

She hangs up, suddenly distressed.

EXT. 34TH STREET - DAY

Scully, passed out behind his cardboard panhandler sign.

Katrina picks up the sign with her hand. She pats Scully.

He wakes up and looks alarmed.

KATRINA

Hey. Wake up. It's just me.

SCULLY

(with eyes shut)
Who??

KATRINA

Your *sister*.

He opens his eyes. She offers him a hand.

SCULLY

(faintly)
Katrina...

Scully takes her hand and stands up. Then he gives her a hug. Katrina looks relieved he's ok.

EXT. OUTDOOR TABLE IN MIDTOWN

Scully drinks a beer that Katrina bought him. There's some food, too, but he's not hungry. Katrina stares at her hands. She glances up at Scully, then back at her hands.

KATRINA

I haven't seen you in a while.

SCULLY

No. Not since before the lock-up...
it's nice seeing you. Really.

He's gazing at her fondly.

KATRINA

Thanks.

She looks up, and grimaces when she sees him.

Scully frowns.

KATRINA

(ctd)

How long have you been out again?

SCULLY

Six weeks and three days.

KATRINA

Oh, wow. That long?

SCULLY

Ohh stopp. You knew that.

KATRINA

What are you talking about?

SCULLY

You knew I was getting out six weeks ago! You just ignored all my phone calls... *why??*

KATRINA

I didn't ignore them -- You'd call me and then I knew I couldn't reach you if I called back. Because you don't have a phone.

SCULLY

Because I'm homeless. Right. I haven't had a place to stay for that long.

KATRINA

OK, Scully... let me remind you.
The last time I let you stay with
me, I found you passed out on the
bathroom floor with a needle in
your forearm!

SCULLY

Yeah, better than dead in the
streets!

A tense moment.

Scully scoots out of his metal chair, noisily, and gets up
to leave.

SCULLY

(ctd)

Listen, I don't wanna bother you no
more. I know I'm hard for you to
look at... Thanks for lunch though.
It was lovely.

His food is still on the table. He hasn't touched it.

Scully, walking away.

KATRINA

Wait. What the fuck -- Sam.
Sam! Stop walking! Don't leave,
please -- I need your help with
something.

Scully turns.

SCULLY

... It must be *really fucking*
important if you're asking me for
help.

KATRINA

It is.

Reluctantly, he comes back and sits down.

Katrina stares him right in his eyes.

KATRINA

So. I happened to come by a lot of
dope. And I'm hoping you can show
me.. how to use it.

Scully looks completely dumbfounded.

SCULLY

What?

KATRINA

I need you to show me how to shoot up.

SCULLY

Huh?

KATRINA

I want to do heroin.

SCULLY

(laughing, incredulously)
Ok!! You made that pretty clear!

KATRINA

So?

SCULLY

Where'd you get the heroin?... (a long pause)... Can I get some?

KATRINA

... not unless you teach me.

SCULLY

Yeah, right. I don't think so.

KATRINA

Why not.

SCULLY

Because! I just got outta jail for that.

KATRINA

I won't tell anyone.

SCULLY

I don't care. You're my sister. I'm not gonna be the one who gets you hooked.

Another tense pause.

KATRINA

Well, then... That's it I guess.

Now Katrina's the one who gets up to leave. She stands up, chin high. Starts walking in the opposite direction.

SCULLY

Wait, come on. What the fuck is wrong with you? Don't just leave me like this. Look at me!! I'm the one who's sick! What the fuck are you playing at, just telling me that and then leaving!! After four fucking years ...(stands up) Listen, bitch -- I hope I die tonight! And you read about it in your news feed!

KATRINA

(turns)

You wouldn't even *make* my news feed.

She's pretty distant now.

For a moment they stand opposite one another, like two soldiers in a shootout. But both look sad for causing each other such pain.

Katrina stares down at her feet, then takes a few strides back toward Scully; close enough that she doesn't have to raise her voice.

KATRINA

Maybe we can make a compromise...
hm?

Scully grimaces, like he's growling, or holding back tears.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A row of syringes lined up on their sides, like AK-47s in an artillery cabinet.

A set of delicate hands selects one of the needles and examines it, running a finger along the sharp end.

The hands belong to KATRINA. She's in her bedroom. She's examining a syringe on the edge of her mattress. After a moment, she seals the syringe in a cosmetic bag and places it on the floor, sticking her ass out to slide it beneath the bed-frame.

NEW SHOT UNDER BED:

Katrina digs under her bed for a box and uncovers seven Ziploc bags containing stamped-sized bags of dope. She takes one of the them, tucks it under her arm, then covers the box and hides it under some loose clothing.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Scully on a couch sipping another beer. Katrina paces back and forth in front of him, holding the single Ziploc bag under her arm.

SCULLY

You took it from a black guy?? What the fuck are you doing dating niggers, Katrina.

KATRINA

Scully!

SCULLY

I'm sorry, you know I'm not racist -- Just. (shakes his head) You get used to things in prison. It's just different... They cut my face Katrina. My first week there, they cut my face.

Katrina passes him a glance, and looks a bit guilty. She keeps pacing.

KATRINA

Well Coleman is a good guy, obviously. We had a strong connection. That's how I ended up with him ... But lately I've been thinking he pegged me as a dumb-ass -- or he was a dumb-ass about how much he could trust me -- cause every time I was with him in private he'd talk loudly on the phone about his various dealings. He made no effort to hide it, I know like, everything. Living with him was just a crash course in being a hustler.

SCULLY

It sounds like you were dating a pimp.

KATRINA

Yeah. Well... I like to have style.

She sets the Ziploc bag on the table in front of him. Scully picks it up and turns it over in his hands.

SCULLY

You said you found this stuffed in his couch pillow?

KATRINA

I just paid attention, and learned everything there was to learn about his drug deals. Everything.

SCULLY

Nice.

His attention is on the Ziploc bag now. He opens it.

SCULLY

(ctd)

How bout I test this shit out and make sure it's not cut with something -- before you shoot it up.

KATRINA

Oh, I already know it's not cut with anything.

SCULLY

Still. If you've never tried it before you're gonna be ultra-sensitive. Let me just do a test run.

KATRINA

That's fine.

Scully takes out a bag of dope and raises it to his face, so he can see the pale gray powder tinted blue. Katrina stands over him with one arm folded, her chin on her fist.

[MUSIC: THE PAN PIPER]

EXT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE - NIGHT

The tall statue in the center of the cement island at Columbus Circle. On one of the stone benches surrounding the statue rests LUCIANNE JEROME, a girl in her late twenties with light brown skin and a stare so penetrating that it draws tears with one stab. She's trying to sleep but can't. She peers left and right like a sleepy wolverine, watching out for predators.

LUCIANNE (V.O.)

Whenever something dark and surreal happens, particularly something

LUCIANNE (V.O.)
surreal in a bad way -- like, so
fucked up that you can't believe it
happened -- I just assume that it
was all a dream. And that's how
I've gotten through these past few
weeks...

As she says this, Lucianne is approached by a skeezy man,
then taken by the arm into Central Park, where he takes his
shirt off and does something with her -- behind a tree, out
of plain view.

LUCIANNE (V.O.)
...assuming it was a dream.
Otherwise I'm not sure I'd have
survived it. I'm not sure I am
surviving it. Maybe I fell asleep
and went to Hell, and I won't
escape until someone snaps me out
of it. I need someone to take me by
the arms and shake me alive. But no
one's done that, and ... I'm
starting to lose hope. There is, of
course, another option for escape.
The other way.

MALE VOICE
What do you mean the other way.

INT. MIDTOWN MCDONALD'S - NIGHT

Rows of neon lights and LCD TV sets with music videos.
Lucianne takes a sip of coffee with lots of cream in it.
Across from her sits COLEMAN.

LUCIANNE
Well, "the other way" is not to be
woken up, but to fall asleep.
Further into sleep. In other words,
to die on purpose.

COLEMAN
You really wanna fuckin die??

LUCIANNE
Not die. Sleep.

COLEMAN
You're so young. You'd be crazy to
die now.

LUCIANNE

I might be crazy. But I'm no
fucking idiot. I'm smart-crazy.
That's the only way to live.

COLEMAN

I hear you... And I want you to
look at me when I say this next
thing. You lookin'?

Lucianne nods, and stares. He puts his hands on her
shoulders, almost like he's shaking her, gently.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

It's gonna get better now. It's
only gone get better. I could tell
you gotta real good heart, soon as
I saw you pourin' creamer in your
coffee from across the McDonald's,
and I wanna help you out. I'm here
for you sugar. Now tell me what
your name is.

LUCIANNE

It's Lucianne.

COLEMAN

Lucianne.

He releases his grip. Lucianne lets out a short sigh, then
glances around the McDonald's with her wolf-stare. She
latches to a receipt someone left on the floor: #88.

[MUSIC: SKETCHES OF SPAIN]

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS - MORNING

Lucianne tags along with Coleman. As usual the characters in
this movie look out-of-place among the average student
gentry. These two look healthier somehow, even though
they're the junkie fuck-ups, technically.

They approach a metal table, where Ava waits patiently,
smoking a cigarette and typing on her laptop. She looks up
-- right away, she and Lucianne get eye contact.

Ava's expression softens; she closes her laptop.

Coleman plunks down at the table and takes one of Ava's
cigarettes. Lucianne sits down too.

COLEMAN

So I got some intell on Miss
Ladybird.

He puffs out smoke.

AVA

You mean Katrina.

COLEMAN

Right. She never told me this, but
her brother's a convict. He just
got outta prison, four years, for
selling dope to minors. One of em
died of an overdose.

AVA

That's sad ... How does this bring
us closer to Katrina.

COLEMAN

Well. We know she don't wanna get
caught sellin dope. This ain't her
first road show. She ain't about to
hawk that shit to no ratty
mother-fuckers.

Ava considers this. Then she turns to Lucianne and offers a
handshake.

AVA

I'm Ava, by the way.

COLEMAN

Oh, sorry bout that -- this is
Lucianne. An old friend of mine.

Lucianne sends back a firm handshake, staring right at Ava.
She seems to transmit a message. Ava's gaze gets more
serious.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

Now about Katrina. I also found out
where she been living at.

Ava turns to him.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

... Now that we got Lucianne on our
team we could practically run a
whole drug bust. But I don't wanna

COLEMAN
do that. That ain't cool. We
slicker than that. We ice cold...
Ain't that right, Ava?

AVA
Mhm.

She passes Lucianne another glance; she receives it with smirking eyes.

Coleman's oblivious. He waves around his cigarette as he speaks, cause it looks cool. [Cue music]

COLEMAN
Now at first I was thinkin we could
dress one of you up as a cop. But
that requires a lot of costuming
bullshit. So what I was thinking
instead is that one of you go up
there posin as one of my new
bitches. Just tell her straight up:
"I'm Coleman's bitch." And assumin
she don't attack you or something,
that'll keep her occupied while the
other girl does some snoopin. We'll
sneak you in a window or some shit.

AVA
This sounds like a rough plan.

COLEMAN
You ain't gotta worry, girl --
Coleman here's got it all figured
out ... And she sure as hell won't
be callin no cops or nothin' -- she
got enough dirty dirt in that place
to get locked up in prison till she
an old bitch.

AVA
OK ... But I don't think I should
pose as your whore. She might
recognize me from the restaurant.

Coleman turns to Lucianne.

COLEMAN
Well -- that leaves you, Sugar.

LUCIANNE
Oh, god...

She's already getting sick of this whole arrangement.

COLEMAN

Now let me get one thing clear. I know *exactly* how much dope she took. And if I find out you been taking some of my shit without payin... well. (laughs once) I'll make you pay. You better believe I'll make your sorry ass pay double what the dope costs. You hear me?

Both girls nod gravely.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

... Now that said, if we get back my dope tonight -- and I'm assumin we will -- I'll hit you back with some of that good shit, on the house, free of charge. And I ain't fuckin witchu when I say this is some good shit. Just... go easy on it. I don't want neither of you bitches dying on me. Got it? ... Yeah, I know Ava wants some of that good shit.

Ava shrugs, then nods like 'yeahhh.' Lucianne is harder to read.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

Alright ladies ... we gone go get back my dougies!!

Coleman grins and rubs his hands together.

[MUSIC: ONE AND ONE (UNEDITED MASTER)]

TEXT OVER BLACK

Intertitle: 5. Blood money

CUT TO:

EXT. KATRINA'S BLOCK - NIGHT

Ava wears all black. Lucianne is dressed like a hoe but no cheap one. Coleman wears his usual dress shirt and vest. They look like a seventies r&b trio but badder. As a squad they walk down a block of cheap apartments near Chinatown. Coleman stops suddenly and points to a fire escape a few floors of the ground.

COLEMAN

Ooo look. The lights are on so I'm thinkin we got a live one. Ava -- that's where you goin' in. You good with that homey?

AVA

I can do that.

COLEMAN

Atta girl. Now why don't you go climb up there and get ready. And keep lookin at me for the signal. I'll flag you in.

Ava nods, then stalks off into a dirty alley to make her way up the fire escape.

Coleman turns to Lucianne and puts his hands on her shoulders again.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

Now you remember what we went over, right? You know what you gotta say.

LUCIANNE

Know it by heart.

COLEMAN

OK. Now it's fine if you riff a little just so long as you stay in the same key. You get me?

LUCIANNE

Yep.

COLEMAN

Now remember to text me right before you go knockin on her door, so I can flag Ava in... Go get em.

Lucianne sets off toward the building entrance. Coleman stands back and runs his hands over his head. Now that he's alone, he seems less self-assured and kind of nervous.

INT. KATRINA'S APT - NIGHT

A used needle on the table. Scully on the couch.

Katrina stares at her doped-up brother with a sad curiosity, like she's trying to cop some of his high just from looking. She turns over his right arm and runs a finger along the middle, stopping at a purple wound caused by years of shooting up. He watches her with groggy, distant, glazed eyes.

SCULLY

What are you thinking.

KATRINA

I'm trying to decide if all this is pitiful or beautiful.

SCULLY

Oh... what did you decide.

She looks up and connects with his stare.

Someone knocks on the door.

Katrina rises. We follow her from behind to the entrance, all the way to the door until she cracks it open to LUCIANNE.

When Lucianne speaks, she sounds all innocent, like some meek unassuming version of herself: a different person, almost.

LUCIANNE

Excuse me? I'm sorry to be a bother -- it's just... I'm about to be sick... I'm so sick!... and I heard from a friend that you've got some.. (lowers voice) good shit on your hands.

Katrina lifts up her hands and looks at them, literally, as if checking to make sure they're still clean. Then she stares up at Lucianne.

KATRINA

Who told you that?

LUCIANNE

Not sure if you've heard of him but -- Coleman Green?? You see (lowers voice again)... I'm his new bitch.

Lucianne grins at Katrina. She almost breaks character.

Katrina has a look on her face like: 'the fuck?'

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ava climbs in the bedroom window. It's dark inside; she blends in well in her all-black outfit. Through the open bedroom door she can see Katrina talking to *someone* at the door. What she doesn't expect is the sound of a FLUSHING TOILET from a bathroom connected to the room she's in now.

Scully comes out of the bathroom, still numb & dumb on dope.

Ava ducks down behind the bed.

Scully catches a glimpse of her sudden movement. He approaches Ava's position, to see what it was that moved.

Ava rolls under the bed.

Scully peers over the edge of the mattress, and finds nothing there. He exits the bedroom.

Ava stays where she is.

INT. DOORWAY

Katrina with that same 'wtf' expression. But she's actually sort of alarmed/scared. When Katrina feels possibly threatened, she turns into a cold icy bitch.

KATRINA

oh my god...

LUCIANNE

(still, like, laughing at herself)

What.

KATRINA

Did you *actually* think I was gonna fall for this... you and Coleman must really be a couple of fucking retards...

Katrina starts closing the door.

LUCIANNE (V.O.)

OK, hold on. I'm the retard?? Who's the bitch who stole more dope than she can handle from some bad mother-fuckers. That was a dumb fuckin move. And if you don't get that shit right now I'm calling the cops on your stingy mother-fuckin--

KATRINA
--and then I'll tell the police
that you're just a homeless nigger,
fucked in the head, who tried to
break into my apartment at 3 AM ...
And who do you think they're going
to listen to, hmm?

LUCIANNE
God you're a fucking brat.

KATRINA
Mmm I'm so sorry I couldn't help...
good luck tonight.

The door shuts with a *thud*. [Cue music]

Lucianne in the hallway. She clenches her fists and shakes
her head, staring upwards.

LUCIANNE
...god *damnit*...

She's seriously ready to kill someone.

[MUSIC: FEIO]

INT. APARTMENT

Katrina turns away from the door, to Scully on the couch.

KATRINA
We need to go somewhere else.

SCULLY
What, tonight??

KATRINA
(nods)
Get your stuff.

Scully picks up the one Ziploc bag of dope and tucks it
under his arm.

SCULLY
OK, I'm ready.

Katrina leaves the room, in a hurry now.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

She goes to get the rest of her dope from where it's safely
hidden under the bed, getting on her knees and sticking her
head into the dark space so she can retrieve it...

NEW SHOT UNDER THE BED:

...the coast is clear, save for some dirty clothes and dust bunnies.

Katrina lifts up some loose clothing, uncovering the box that contains her needles and dope. She opens the box to clean out its contents.

But the inside of the box has already been stripped to bare-ass emptiness.

That dope is *gone*.

Katrina's face: 'oh, my, god.'

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Lucianne approaches Coleman, who's standing alone, anxiously smoking a cigarette.

COLEMAN

How'd it go.

LUCIANNE

Yeah, no.

COLEMAN

Huh? Did you get my--

LUCIANNE

Can you chill for a second about the mother fucking heroin? What the fuck is wrong with you -- fucking around with that stuck-up cunt?

Coleman grins.

COLEMAN

I see you met Katrina.

Lucianne sighs and lets down her guard a bit.

LUCIANNE

... Yeahhh.

A good long beat. Coleman drops his cigarette and steps on it. Then he folds his arms.

COLEMAN

So, if you down here and Katrina's still up there... what the fuck happened to Ava?

Lucianne shrugs; don't ask her.

COLEMAN

I gotta bad feeling bout those two
together. Don't ask me why.

He shakes his head, sweaty and jaw-clenched, and steers his gaze upward toward the window of Katrina's apartment. Lights on. The fire escape outside, empty.

EXT. DARK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Ava sitting on the ground against a brick wall, surrounded by puddles of muck and piles of litter. In front of her is a black nylon backpack, visibly stuffed to its unzipped brim with Ziplocked baggies of heroin. She takes one bag out, brings it to her chest, and smirks softly like she's about to start crying, she feels so blessed to finally have this in her hands. At the same time she appears slightly panicked, like she can hardly handle the surge of power she feels. After a few deep breaths, Ava zips up the black nylon backpack and slings it over her shoulder. Then she stands up and walks down the alley toward a chain-link fence -- away from where she left Coleman & Lucianne. She's gone stag and rogue.

Ava climbs the fence and disappears into the night.

CUT TO:

Total silence.

INT. A ROOM WITH WHITE WALLS

and a single fluorescent ceiling light, whirring.

LEVI MARRIOTT stands at the sink in a small men's room and stirs himself a cap full of dope.

He drops in a small filter and sucks the dope into a needle.

Then he injects it into his arm.

Levi nods off...

INT. CROWDED BAR - NIGHT

...A jazz gig.

Levi's on the stage, on vocals. So is Buster, playing piano behind him. And a saxophonist. Bassist. Drummer.

AVA

Oh.

BEBE

I'm really, really sorry -- are you sure you're gonna be all right?

AVA

I'll be fine.

BEBE

OK Ava, good luck finding a place. I'll see you as soon as I get back on campus, I love you, goodnight.

She hangs up.

INT. AVA'S ROOM

Ava still thinks Bebe's on the phone.

AVA

(into phone)

I won't be on campus. I have to leave... Bebe? Hello...

She sets down her phone, then moves to the edge of her bed, head slumped, bummed out. She's got a desperate look on her face like: 'now what.'

INT. HARLEM HOTEL - NIGHT

Katrina and Scully in a room with two beds. Katrina's sitting at the foot of one of the beds, staring ahead of her. Just staring. She looks down and out.

SCULLY

What makes you think she called the cops...

KATRINA

... I don't know. I was really mean.

A long beat.

SCULLY

Really, it's gonna be OK... Even if she *happens* to call the cops and they raid the whole apartment I've got all our dope right here! (holds up baggie) This is all of it? They're not gonna find anything -- right?

KATRINA
I'm afraid not.

She keeps staring.

KATRINA
(ctd)
...I just don't know why I push
other women away like that...

SCULLY
Ohh. So that's what you're upset
about.

KATRINA
(shrugs)

SCULLY
You know, Nietzsche says that women
can't be friends. It's fucking...
innate. There's nothing wrong with
you, Katrina.

Katrina thinks about this. Finally she turns from her
staring position, toward her brother.

KATRINA
I think that's probably just
another Male Philosopher
manipulating the whole system so it
favors men... And guess what? It
worked. Every intelligent woman
I've ever met has severe trust
issues, and it's because we've been
trained to be so distrustful of one
another... You know, Nietzsche was
probably just scared of what would
happen if women *actually* figured
out how to work it out.

SCULLY
You said you weren't a feminist.

KATRINA
Fuck off.

SCULLY
Ok, ok.

He gets up and starts across the room, then backtracks a few
steps -- to grab the baggie of dope he left on the bed. He
tucks it under his arm, crosses the room, and shuts the
bathroom door.

Katrina sits alone.

She looks at her hands, which are facing upward -- a reprise of the way she checked her hands in front of Lucianne, earlier that night -- but this time it looks like she's checking them for blood.

Then she folds them, and shuts her eyes, and tilts her head downward. It seems like she's in grief. Or in prayer.

Long shot: A bird's eyes view of Katrina on the bed, with hands folded, hurt.

TEXT OVER BLACK

Interitle: 6. Rare mediums

INT. DARK BAR - NIGHT

Backstage, after a jazz performance, Buster takes apart his piano and chats with young Levi.

BUSTER

I never hearda Nigga get so obsessed with a hooker. It was like, he fell in love with her after one fuck. And the thing is, I wasn't surprised one bit. I met the hoe, and she got somethin different. Now I didn't fuck her, but ... I can tell a good pussy from a hundred yards back. And I can sniff out a *rank* pussy from even farther... miles back. Man, there ain't much good pussy no more. When I was in my twenties, there was good pussy all over the place... What you think, Levi. You findin enough good pussy? In your *generation*? *hmm??*

LEVI

... Never enough.

BUSTER

(grinning)
What's that?

LEVI

There's never been enough good pussy to keep my rocks off. Never since the birth of womankind.

BUSTER
Ahaha, I hear ya. Never enough.

Coleman comes backstage, followed by Lucianne. Now she's wearing a sweatshirt over her whole hoe get-up. She and Coleman both look worn/bummed out. [Cue music]

BUSTER
(ctd)
Well. Speak of the devil, here comes one now.

Lucianne doesn't know what he's saying.

COLEMAN
Buster -- I've gotta talk to you bout something.

Buster turns to Levi.

BUSTER
I always know I can depend on this Nigga, to fuck up my night.

COLEMAN
(ignores this)
Listen man, I'm askin for your help on a little search we got planned for tomorrow ... You know that white girl from Columbia? ... She went rogue on me 'n stole the rest of our shit.

BUSTER
Man, I knew that already, what the fuck you playin at.

COLEMAN
Not Katrina.

BUSTER
Huh?

COLEMAN
The other girl.

BUSTER
Who ... you mean Ava??

Coleman nods.

A long beat.

BUSTER
Mother fucker.

[MUSIC: GREAT EXPECTATIONS (1/3)]

EXT. DOWNTOWN CAFÉ - DAY

Ava rolling a suitcase along the street, wearing a black nylon backpack and a pair of red sunglasses -- though the glasses are propped up in her in her brown hair, so we can see she's gaunt around the eyes, like she didn't get enough sleep.

She reaches the café where she and Katrina first met, looks up at the awning, enters the door beneath it. She disappears from our sights: a long pause while she's inside. We watch civilians continue passing by the café in either direction.

Then Ava comes out again.

She keeps rolling her suitcase, walking, more out-of-sorts than when she came -- because Katrina wasn't in there. She needs help with all this dope on her hands. She doesn't know what to do with it.

But instead of leaving, she sits down against a wall near the café, ass ontop of her suitcase, wrapping arms around the backpack, and leaning her head on it. She looks like she's about to fall asleep.

CUT TO:

INT. COLUMBIA DORM BUILDING: "BROADWAY" - DAY

Coleman struts down the hallway of one of the student dorms. He reaches room [#TBD] and leans an ear against the wood, then knocks on the door. Pounds on it, rather. Nobody answers: he listens closely.

Ava's not there.

He waits a little longer. Then struts back down the hallway.

INT. HAMILTON HALL - DAY

We follow Lucianne into a small classroom that contains a roundtable of students plus a professor.

Lucianne's POV: she takes a good look around. Some kids glance up at her; like *wtf??* So does the professor.

Reverse shot: Lucianne, staring.

Ava isn't in there.

So Lucianne walks out again, as if she didn't just interrupt a small seminar. She continues down the hallway and down the stairs.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Ava passed out with her head on her black nylon backpack.

MAN'S VOICE

Ava??

She wakes up, and looks up.

BUSTER stands above her.

AVA

hey.

BUSTER

What you doing, sleepin on the sidewalk. You homeless or something??

AVA

Don't worry about it. What brings you downtown.

BUSTER

Oh. Sometimes I just play piano round here. I was visiting a guy, to plan the next one.

A round of extended eye contact.

BUSTER

(ctd)

Listen. I know you said it's fine but if you need a place to stay for a while... Really, it's the least I can offer.

Ava's gaze: there's something restrained about it. She's considering more than just a place to stay. It takes a while for her to decide.

Finally, she speaks.

AVA

Are you sure.

Buster stares at her when he nods.

TEXT OVER BLACK

7. Rusty faucets

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

Hardwood floors; dusty red curtains; patchy wallpaper. A dingy place, but there's something undeniably cozy about it.

A shot that lingers on the empty room, before someone enters out of frame. The sound of a door opening, shutting.

LUCIANNE comes into view. Then Coleman.

She looks around.

LUCIANNE

This your place, you said?

COLEMAN

Well, not exactly. But I stay here sometimes...

Lucianne's POV: as she peers through an open door to a bedroom. There's a bed with crimson sheets on it. And nice pillows.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

(ctd)

... Buster's still paying rent, I think. If I been using it a lot he asks me to chip in extra.

LUCIANNE

Huh.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

By the way, I meant to tell you ...

Still Lucianne's POV: she turns to Coleman, who's sitting on an old chair with a red cushion -- smoking a cigarette indoors.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

I got a call from Katrina.

LUCIANNE

... Oh, yeah? What did she want.

COLEMAN

She said she wants to talk to me bout something important. That's why we here instead of my other place -- Katrina's been here before.

Lucianne lets the silence simmer for a moment, then says;

LUCIANNE
Don't tell me she's coming tonight.
Just, don't.

Coleman hides his amusement;

COLEMAN
... you don't gotta say 'hi' or
nothing.

LUCIANNE
Ha.

Another beat, then;

LUCIANNE
(ctd)
How bout I go for a walk by myself.

She says it in this certain 'way' that makes Coleman drop his nice-guy front. His face gradually hardens.

COLEMAN
Really... ok now... You tryin to
run off on me?... Cause I don't go
around givin no Second Chances. And
you know just as well as I know,
that you gonna have a real hard
time finding something better than
what you got now... Ain't that
right, Sugar?... We been together
three days, and I ain't even been
touched.

Lucianne says nothing. But she knows he's right. She's been on the street for a while, and she knows how it works. She doesn't want to go back.

[As an aside, she doesn't like being called 'Sugar.']

Coleman puts out his cigarette in an ashtray.

COLEMAN
(ctd)
Now... If you wanna chill in the
other room for a while when Katrina
arrives... that's fine. I don't
even gotta tell her you're in
there. Alright... Sugar?

Lucianne doesn't really have a choice. So she stays silent, and lets her look of bitter resignation do the talking.

Coleman nods once; 'that's right.'

CUT TO BLACK:

Darkness. Silence. Then Ava speaks.

AVA'S VOICE
You're really asking me what my
greatest fear is.

BUSTER'S VOICE
Think of it as an interview.

AVA'S VOICE
For what.

BUSTER'S VOICE
I'm just tryin get to know you
better.

AVA'S VOICE
... OK. Well. My greatest fear is a
long story. Is that OK?

BUSTER'S VOICE
We got all the time in the world,
Kid.

INT. A CHEAP BAR - AFTERNOON

Ava takes a long sip from a glass of clear liquid.

As she says this, she glances at the camera, nervously.

AVA
My greatest fear goes like this...
(long pause)... I used to have a
bit of a drinking problem. By used
to, I mean, yeah. I have a problem.
If I drink a glass (she raises her
glass) I can't stop until I feel
like I'm drowning... Then there's
always this horrible time, that
lasts about an hour, when... (she
shuts her eyes, as if she's in
pain)... OK. Let me rephrase this.
(swallows)... There was this one
time, that I got so drunk -- and
well, I'd taken some pills too --
that I had to go to the hospital.
But between the time it took for me
to be discovered, like, dead on the
floor of a public bathroom -- and

AVA
then brought to a hospital in an ambulance, and then, brought back to life... (sighs, looks away). There was no time lapse. It was like, I remember being awake and thinking 'I feel so tired.' And then I closed my eyes. And the second I opened them I was in a bright room with hardly any colors... I was in the hospital.

She takes another sip from her liquid.

AVA
(ctd)
The doctor said I really almost died, right? ... So, like I said, there was no time lapse. Which must mean, that like, in the time before they resuscitated me, I was basically dead for a while... But if there was no time lapse, no vision, no memory of the space in between when I closed my eyes and woke up in the hospital -- then, that must mean that death is... Nothing.

She manages to hold our gaze.

AVA
(ctd)
That Death is just a Black Hole. That it's just Over. Empty time and space. And that's how it goes... for everyone. (sips drink.) So that's it...(tilts head) maybe.

Finally the shot Reverses: Buster listens, on the other side of the booth. He's drinking too.

BUSTER
So long story short, your greatest fear is Death.

Back to Ava. She takes a long time to answer, like she's admitting a secret. She whispers;

AVA
... one of them.

A weighted pause, then Buster asks;

BUSTER
Have you ever had an abortion?

AVA
What?? No... (frowns) ...why.

BUSTER
Cause. I don't know. Of the girls
I've asked that question to --
seems like the ones who have had
abortions answer it much
differently.

Ava, looking curious. And morbid. She sips her drink, then
yawns. [Cue music]

BUSTER
(ctd)
You tired?

Ava nods.

BUSTER
(ctd)
Well then, let's get going, huh? I
gotta place where you can have your
own bedroom. Get you set-up with a
nap and shower. Now it ain't too
'chic' or nothin but I think you
gonna like it.

[MUSIC: GREAT EXPECTATIONS (CTD)]

EXT. DINGY STAIRWELL

The sound of footsteps reverberating on stone and metal
surfaces. And whistling. Someone whistling a melody, a
familiar one. Over the movie's soundtrack -- it just adds to
the chaos of competing musical phrases.

Finally Katrina comes around a corner of the stairs. She
stops at a banister, and stops whistling. Then goes through
a door...

INT. LONG HALLWAY

... a set of elevator doors open. Out come Ava and Buster.

They walk down a long hallway of apartments, then turn a
corner, then stop.

At the end of the hall, Katrina stands outside apt [# TBD].

She turns and sees the two of them.

They see her.

Then Coleman opens the door of [# TBD].

Katrina turns back to him -- looking totally stunned.

COLEMAN

(grins)

... You ain't gotta stare. Come
inside, woman. Let's talk for a
minute.

Then Buster appears over Katrina's shoulder.

BUSTER

(to Coleman)

What the fuck you doin' in my
parlor, mother-fucker?? This ain't
fuckin Welfare, and you ain't been
payin rent.

INT. DOWN THE HALLWAY

AVA'S POV: Still several paces down the hall, away from the
doorway, watching the conversation take place.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

Did you look where I sent you??

BUSTER

Yeah, I found her.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

You did??

BUSTER

(gestures toward Ava)

Yeah, Nigga, she right here.

Coleman steps out of the door -- and sees Ava, with the
backpack, backing away.

Then he pulls a gun on her.

She stops.

COLEMAN

(mean half-laugh)

She's a runner, this one...

Ava puts her hands up, scared.

She looks to Katrina. They get eye-contact.

EXT. DARK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Darkness, footsteps, some movement in the darkness.

A face covered with a black cloth with white patterns:
except for the eyes. They're not covered.

MASKED MAN
Freeze bitch!!

The masked man mugs a WHITE GIRL in her mid-twenties at
gunpoint.

MASKED MAN
(ctd)
Give me your bag. And your cell
phone.

The girl obeys.

MASKED MAN
(ctd)
... Now get the fuck outta here.

She runs away.

He watches her run, terrified.

The masked man takes the things and runs down the alley, in
the other direction. He pulls down the black cloth -- which
was covering his nose and mouth -- and gasps for breath as
he runs.

It's LEVI.

He stops in a corner and digs in the bag. Takes out a
wallet. And all the cash. Then he drops the purse in a
puddle.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Coleman digging through Ava's black nylon backpack.

COLEMAN
This ain't all my shit. There
should be one more bag in here.
Where the fuck is my last bag,
Ava!?!?

He turns to her with the gun still in hand, though he's not
pointing it right at her.

She just shakes her head.

AVA
(really quietly)
That's it.

Now he lifts up the gun.

COLEMAN
What? I need you to speak up when I
talk to you.

She says Nothing.

COLEMAN
(ctd)
What if we just started shooting
white girls. Huh, Buster? What if
that's what we did... (to Ava, now)
You gotta have this happen to *you*
to know what it feels like. If we
went around shooting white girls,
people would notice. People would
make a real mother-fucking fuss, if
I shot you.

AVA
(still quiet)
I think you're wrong about that.

COLEMAN
What.

AVA
If you shot me, not many people
would notice. I mean, a few. But no
one would make a fuss about it.

Coleman keeps staring at Ava, with a sort of sadistic glint
in his eye, still holding her at gunpoint.

She stares back, unflinching.

BUSTER
(calmly)
Hey man-- cool it. You got enough
dope now to get you right. Put the
gun down. For god sakes, Coleman.

Coleman finally lowers the weapon.

He grabs all the dope and heads into the other room, closing
the door behind him, with enough force that the sound makes
Ava seize up.

Now it's Ava on a couch. Katrina by the front door. Buster across from both of them, by a wall with peeling paint.

Ava closes her eyes and turns away from both of them.

Buster's phone buzzes. He lets it ring for a while.

Then answers it.

BUSTER

Yeah... Who??.. Oh, Levi, hey. You alright? ... (a long pause)...
Actually I do have some. Can you make it uptown?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Coleman sitting on the bed, preparing to shoot up, mumbling to himself.

COLEMAN

Can't be around these pussy mother-fuckers. They don't *understand* shit. They don't what the fuck I *seen* ... She don't know what I *seen*... fuckin white bitch... took my dope...

Lucianne sitting on the bed, on her laptop, wearing ear buds.

LUCIANNE

(takes out one earbud)
What are you saying.

COLEMAN

Don't you mind, girl. Never you mind...

He pulls a tourniquet around his arm. Slaps it. Then raises a needle, and slowly draws blood out of his vein. It fills the syringe.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ava's face, still turned away from the others, with her eyes half-closed. She doesn't want to talk to anyone, or look at them.

Katrina watches from from where she stands.

BUSTER

Katrina!

She turns to him, now. He selects a bottle from a small shelf of assorted liquors.

BUSTER

(ctd)

I ain't seen you in a while. What the fuck you been up to?

KATRINA

Oh nothing you'd find too thrilling, I'm sure.

BUSTER

You gettin bored up there? (he nods upward) In the real world.

KATRINA

... I suppose.

BUSTER

(quietly)

Thought I might be seeing you again. Just not so soon, you know?

He takes a sip from his freshly poured drink.

BUSTER

(ctd)

... nice to have you back around, Birdie. You lookin good.

Katrina acknowledges him with a glance and dim smirking eyes, though from up close, she looks pained by this whole exchange -- not flattered. [Cue song]

She glances back toward Ava, who's regained a bit of life. She slowly lowers her feet from the couch, to the ground, and rises.

Once up, Ava turns and looks at Katrina. Expressionless. Then exits into the bedroom -- where Coleman went.

Katrina watches her go. So does Buster.

Close-up on Katrina.

[MUSIC: IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND]

INT. BEDROOM

Coleman now speaks with his words a bit slurred, bleary-eyed, a sickly little smile. He's stirring some more dope in a cap, and talking to Ava at the foot of the bed.

COLEMAN

You know I ain't like that...
You... You gonna be just fine. That
ain't me -- back in there. That
ain't me, when I'm dopesick. Ok?

Ava nods at him, as if to forgive him. Believably earnest.

Lucianne has set her laptop aside. She examines a needle with one hand.

COLEMAN

(ctd, to Lucianne)

Now if it's been a while, like you
said, you might wanna sniff it.
Takes a while to build up a
tolerance. Right when I got outta
prison, I was so clean that the
first time I shot up I just fell
out, right away.

LUCIANNE

(matter-of-factly)

I'm not about to *sniff* it. I want
the real thing.

COLEMAN

... you sure sugar? this ain't no
joke, this stuff, ain't no joke.

LUCIANNE

And I'm not joking when I tell you
-- stop calling me Sugar. Okay? I'm
not your bitch. We're *partners*.

COLEMAN

... Okay. (smiles a little.)
Partners. I'm fine with that.

Coleman takes Ava's arm. Runs his fingers up the veins, like guitar strings. Ava rubs one cheek on her shoulder, like a cat being stroked.

Buster comes in the room. Sees what's happening.

Shakes his head at Coleman.

COLEMAN
(ctd)
What's good, Nigga.

BUSTER
(packing up heroin)
I'm taking my half.

He takes three of the baggies, then shuts the door quietly.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - SUNRISE

Shot at a distance. Katrina smokes a cigarette and walks with Buster. He meets Levi on a corner and shakes hands with him, introduces him to Katrina. Some money is exchanged, discreetly.

The three of them go their separate ways.

INT. KATRINA'S HOTEL IN HARLEM - MORNING

Katrina comes in. One of the beds is messy but Scully's nowhere to be found. She looks in the bathroom: it's empty. She tears the blankets off the bed: no bags of dope.

INT. KATRINA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Katrina enters her own apartment. Also: empty. But peaceful. She lays on the couch and curls up.

Wide awake.

EXT. BARE CITY STREETS - SUNRISE

A montage that lasts the rest of the song.

TEXT OVER BLACK

8. Troubled track

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - MORNING

Roger on a jog.

INT. BATHROOM

Roger steps out of a misty shower and stands before a mirror. The self-critical male gaze in action. A guy doing whatever he does in the mirror when he has no pants on, though he's only visible above the waist.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Roger reading aloud from his own manuscript.

ROGER

During the shooting, under Nellie and Rose's gaze, the boys found their sexual capacities suddenly advanced. Whether sprung by a sudden need to impress under pressure, or something different -- like female sex vibes -- their gazes made the boys capable of more. On one hand this was a sick bonus for the boys being shot. On the other hand it had the potential to backfire. More pressure meant that if the boys performed inadequately, they fell into despair. Sometimes they chased Nellie and Rose after the shooting, hoping for a second chance -- and the girls felt threatened. That's when they called in reinforcements. It was an essential moment in the plan. When the boys felt most vulnerable, their own gazes could be re-sculpted with some subtle handiwork by their mutual friend: Sadie.

He sets down the manuscript, pathetically arrogant.

ROGER

(ctd)

So. What do you think.

On the other side of the table: Katrina.

KATRINA

I mean, it's good, Roger... I just don't understand where all this is coming from.

Roger gets a bit tense in the face.

KATRINA

(ctd)

... My suspicion is that this happened to you in high school, and you just don't want to admit it?

ROGER

Don't be ridiculous... it's *fiction*.

KATRINA

Well. If you really want feedback from me I can look it over. Just, give me some time. I'm busy this week.

ROGER

Yeah, no problem... Do you want another drink?

KATRINA

... Yes please.

Roger signals for a waiter to come.

ROGER

(to waiter)

Hi, can we get one more [insert drink choice].

[MUSIC: SIVAD]

EXT. SALON - DAY

Ava comes out looking fresh: eyebrows done and hair sprayed into a slight beehive. She's also wearing a spotted fur jacket, and skirt.

Outside, Coleman and Lucianne wait for her.

LUCIANNE

It looks good.

AVA

(awkwardly)

Thanks. I've still got a ways to go.

COLEMAN

Naww girl, you Good...

Ava turns and shakes her head at camera, biting her lip.

COLEMAN

(ctd)

... Look at you, precious gem. I'ma get you polished, and put you on display. I'ma make you my diamond.

He rubs his hands together.

INT. HARLEM MCDONALD'S - DAY

Lucianne and Ava at a booth, sipping coffees. Coleman in the checkout line.

Ava stirs her black coffee with a plastic spoon.

AVA

If people think I'm not doing this out of spite, they're wrong about that. Yes it's out of spite. I'm inviting people to fuck me out of spite. Spite for myself...

Ava looks down at her black coffee.

AVA

(ctd)

... I'm just never good enough. Just not, quite, there.

LUCIANNE

But isn't that the beauty of it? The human flaws. They're relatable.

AVA

... Maybe... But in love and war, they just make me the pathetic one. Human flaws serve no purpose, except for to be picked on. (has a hard time.) It's like, I understand why people hurt me on purpose. There's just something about me that's so easy to Hurt. It's like I'm a cursed girl. (laughs, barely) That's the only way I can explain it. In the end, I'm meant to be... Stoned.

Lucianne, frowning.

LUCIANNE

I've felt like that before -- back when I was working the streets. But then I came up with some conditions. For example, I never got fucked. I had to be the one doing the fucking... so why don't you start fucking em back, Ava?

Ava stares up at her, tilts her head.

AVA

I'm not strong enough ...

LUCIANNE
... you're not?

AVA
Well. (A wan smile.) Sometimes
strength looks different than being
the one who fucks. Sometimes you
gotta take it in the mouth.

Shot of Lucianne's response.

Coleman comes back.

COLEMAN
Mother fuckers tried to overcharge
me for the French Fries!!

He plunks down a tray of McDonald's. Then sits down next to
Lucianne in the booth.

He starts eating fries with his fingers.

COLEMAN
(ctd)
Now, you know I been puttin this
off cause it the worst part of the
profession. But we all gotta talk
business!! ... First off -- I think
we should start a website. We could
make double the earnings if we just
figure out how to tuck a GoPro
right up in it... Now you know I
like a little of that S&M shit in
my morning shuffle, on the
internet.

AVA
What??

She shoots Lucianne a nervous glance.

COLEMAN
Don't worry -- it's OK if we gotta
do a few takes before we know
what's good. How much experience
you got?

AVA
With S&M?

COLEMAN
(shakes head)
... How many guys you been with?

Ava counts off the number of guys on her fingers. The total ends up being: '4.'

COLEMAN

(ctd)

What the fuck you been doin' all this time in college, girl.

AVA

I've been doing *your* homework. For money.

COLEMAN

So this ain't your first time hustlin' !! ... It shouldn't be that big of a step to the big leagues.

Ava takes a gulp of coffee and swallows it.

[MUSIC: CONCIERTO DE ARANJUEZ PT. 1]

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucianne on her laptop in the main area. Coleman sewing some of the drugs inside a piece of furniture.

Finally some pretty brawny looking WHITE GUY comes out of the bedroom.

Coleman turns.

COLEMAN

How'd it go in there??

The guy gives Two Thumbs Up.

Then he counts out some cash and sets it before Coleman.

INT. BEDROOM

Ava looking like a murderous wreck. In bed.

One long take: as she slowly climbs out of bed and, still visibly shaken, begins to gather her things and place them in her backpack, slung over her shoulder, open. We follow her into the bathroom, where she brushes her teeth and spits forcefully down the drain. Then takes a few toiletries from the bathroom cabinet and puts them into her open backpack. She shuts the bathroom cabinet and looks in the mirror as she zips the backpack. Puts it over her shoulder. Breaths.

Then she goes out of the bathroom...

... out of the bedroom ...

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT

... into the main parlor ...

... and straight out the front door. It takes Coleman a second to catch on.

COLEMAN

Where the fuck do you --

She slams the door.

INT. STAIRWELL

Ava sprinting down the stairs. Clamoring footsteps cause a dissonant racket. She keeps running.

Coleman opens the door and chases after her.

They both run round, and round.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT

Lucianne watching from the window as:

Ava sprints across the street and round the corner.

By the time Coleman makes it outside, she's already gone.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK

9. Ghost ride

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

On a speeding train, Ava seems to be in a state of shock, still gasping for breath, glad to be free [#freethefemme]. She glances around at other faces: they all look dead. Groggy. Distant.

She sighs; sits down in a corner seat. Keeps her face down.

EXT. MIDTOWN - NIGHT

Katrina searching for her brother. She stops in his spot: a skeezy DEALER and a young DRUG ADDICT start ogling her. She seems uncomfortable. Then she turns to one of them, lowers her voice, and asks;

KATRINA
Have either of you seen Scully
around.

They both react with disgusted facial expressions.

DEALER
Ulch god...

DRUG ADDICT
He's no good, don't hang around
him.

DEALER
Scully's a piece of shit!!

Katrina seems hurt, somehow. The Drug Addict sees this.

DRUG ADDICT
Sorry, but what's a girl like you
doing hanging around with a guy
like Scully?

Katrina hesitates for quite a while, then finally says;

KATRINA
... He was my dealer. But I can't
find him, lately. Do you guys sell
dope?

The dealer's face drops. He turns to the addict.

DEALER
I don't like that she's asking
that...

DRUG ADDICT
... I don't know man.

They both give her good look-over.

Katrina shifts on her high heels.

The dealer raises a swollen hand to his chin, assessing her.

DEALER
What are you an informant for the
government, or somethin.

Katrina shakes her head, No.

DEALER
(ctd)
Are you sure?

KATRINA
Quite honestly, I hate cops.

It sounds awkward. The guys exchange a glance.

DEALER
What do you think -- Johnny.

The young Drug Addict grins.

DRUG ADDICT
I get OK vibes from her. (to
Katrina) If I weren't fucked up,
I'd be asking for your number, to
get coffee -- I think you're
beautiful.

KATRINA
Oh. Thank you.

A long pause. Everyone stares at each other.

The dealer nods, lowers his voice, then says;

DEALER
(ctd)
How much do you need.

Katrina takes \$20 of her pocket and crumples it in her hand.

DEALER
(ctd)
Put it in my right hand, I'll put
it in your left.

Across the street: we see an exchange take place.

Buses, cars, humans rush by in both directions - oblivious.

CUT TO BLACK:

Just the audio of a famous old movie [TBD]. The final scene,
then a soundtrack as the end credits roll. Some rustling
sounds as people leave an auditorium.

INT. DARK MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Near the front of the theater, Katrina stands up from her seat. On her way up the aisle toward the exit, she sees Ava fast asleep in an isolated seat at the back of the theater -- still in her hoe outfit.

Katrina stops. Her POV: of Ava sleeping. Then she goes down the aisle toward Ava.

From the drink holder by Ava's seat, she lifts up a bottle of expensive juice cleanse.

KATRINA
What's this?

Ava opens her eyes. Blinks. Then sits up suddenly, tries to flatten her hair and stuff.

Ava's POV: as Katrina turns the bottle in her hand.

KATRINA
(ctd)
I haven't had this kind before.

Ava leans over and unzips her backpack.

AVA
Do you want one... I just stole
like six bottles from the grocery
store.

Like six bottles of expensive juice cleanse roll out of her unzipped backpack, onto the floor.

AVA
(ctd)
... oh, god.

She's laughing a little.

Katrina gives her a look.

[MUSIC: SHHH, PEACEFUL]

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - NIGHT

Ava and Katrina walking, approaching us from the end of a long and bustling block. Red, yellow, and blue lamps hang above crates of fruit on sale.

AVA
Yo can we like, stop and get me
somethin to *drank*... I feel kind of
empty inside.

KATRINA
How bout an apple.

AVA
Mmm, we'll see.

They reach the end of the block, stop at the corner, cross.

INT. DUANE READE - NIGHT

Ava comes down an aisle holding one of those cheap-ass bottles of drugstore wine that's called like 'Strawberry Fields' or whatever-the-eff. Also a thing of Fruit Loops. She meets Katrina in the cosmetics section: she's looking at nail polish. Ava starts stuffing the cereal and wine into her backpack. Katrina stops her.

KATRINA
Oh my god, enough -- if you're gonna risk stealing from a *Duane Reade* then at least take something that's worth it. What the fuck is wrong with you.

She takes the items from Ava, and hands her two separate shades of red nail polish. The girls walk down the aisle together.

They reach check-out: the line's too long.

KATRINA
(ctd)
I can't deal with this. Let's just go to a fucking bar.

She unloads Ava's cheap wine and Fruit Loops on a random shelf, then walks out of the store. On her way out behind Katrina, Ava slips her hands into her pockets, along with the nail polish -- then smiles at a cop by the exit.

INT/EXT. VARIOUS BARS - NIGHT

A sequence that really gets into the dark swizzling brilliance of hard, hard drinking. Drinks being poured. Hands taking drinks. Lips drinking. Feet walking. Stumbling. And then: the vomiting phase. Vomming in the sidewalk. The street. The back of a cab. A trash can. A dirty public toilet. A toilet in a bathroom with a clean tile floor.

CUT TO BLACK:

Silence. A dripping sound.

A faint fluorescent light. A dark figure drifting over it.

KATRINA'S VOICE

(aimlessly)

All they ever tell you are the bad things about it. 'Giving up' is what my dad said. Running off with that pimp is worse than 'giving up. You're better off dead.' He said something like that, I'm paraphrasing of course ... Anyway, that's probably why I did it. To spite him, ha. By then my older brother was in jail. My mom is just, helpless -- she'd never do a thing to stop me... But truthfully, when it comes down to it... once I made that transition, into my *new life* (laughs, softly)... it wasn't giving up, noo. Just letting a few things go. Starting over... that's it... It's just the transition that's difficult, you know? That's the hard part. That's where the pain is.

Cross fade into: the loud sound of cicadas in summer. A truck revving up. The engine whirring.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE UPSTATE - DAY

A yellow house with a lush green lawn. Rose, a young woman with [x] hair, comes storming out the red front door. She's wearing an outfit of her choice. It just has to include a bandana.

The following dialogue is hardly audible. The scene is shot from afar, almost like a home video. One long take.

An ADULT MAN comes storming out after her. Rose's dad.

An ADULT WOMAN stands in the doorway, with one hand over her mouth. Rose's mom.

ADULT MAN

That's right, Go on -- fuck up your life!! After all I've given to you, so go on -- fuck it all up!! I don't ever wanna see you with that boy. It's pitiful, Rose. You're pitiful.

ROSE

I'm pitiful?? Oh my god, just look at yourselves, please, for once... (She gestures toward her father.)

He spins around toward the yellow house, his wife. It's not that bad of a place. They're not rich, but also not impoverished. He turns back toward Rose with his hands in the air, as if crazed.

ADULT MAN

What are you talking about!!!?

ROSE

I'm the one who [insert great achievement #1]. I'm the [insert great achievement #2], for years. I'm the reason our whole family's not just a parade of fuck-ups.

ADULT MAN

You're the reason?? -- Who's the one who's been shelling out money, all these years!!

ROSE

I don't want your fucking money, anymore! I never did! It's not worth it.

ADULT MAN

Worth what!?

ROSE

(coldly)

Never mind. Goodbye Dad.

She turns her back to her father and crosses the lush green lawn, away from him.

ADULT MAN

Yeah?? -- get the fuck outta here, then!! ... (starts walking back toward house) You ungrateful little bitch!! ... fuck you, Rose ... Go fuck your life up...

He herds his wife back into the house and SLAMS the door.

Rose hikes up a hill that separates her lawn from the black cement street: we follow her passage to a station wagon. She climbs into the driver's seat and slams the door. The truck's engine revs into gear; then, it pulls out of frame.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BATHROOM

A faucet dripping.

A pair of toenails by the faucet. Unpainted.

Ava in just a tanktop and her skirt, sopping wet and hungover, in an empty bathtub. Her eyes are half-closed.

Katrina on a closed toilet seat, painting her own toenails red, rambling to herself.

KATRINA

Anyway -- it's far from over. *That* whole narrative. It's like, there's this whole underworld in the city that's dark and really quite gorgeous. But no one talks about it like that. Like I said, all they ever tell you is the bad things... about sex and money and junk... How much it all just, *fucks you up*...

She finishes painting her toenails and seals the nail polish bottle. Her fingernails are still drying; she blows on them.

KATRINA

(ctd)

... actually, that reminds me.. how could I *almost forget!*

In one motion, Katrina lifts her purse from the floor by the toilet and pours its contents onto the tile floor. Then, she picks out two tiny packets of heroin with her forefinger and thumb, making sure not to smear her newly painted nails, still wet with crimson polish.

Ava watches with one cheek against the edge of the tub. She blinks her eyes few times, then -- as if it's hard work -- turns her head and neck, moving her gaze up Katrina's figure so she can focus on her face, her intense [-color TBD-] eyes, the packets of heroin she's holding in front of them.

Katrina tucks the junk snugly under the elastic band of her black bra, smirking and staring toward us.

Ava stares back.

Then she closes her eyes. Loses consciousness.

INT. KATRINA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A new day.

Bird songs; car horns; subway sounds.

An aerial view of the bedroom. Ava lies on the right side, facing the edge of the bed, with her legs tucked and hands folded under her face. Katrina lies on the other side facing up, with her feet crossed, left hand on her midsection, and right hand hanging off the edge of the bed. Both are still clothed in last night's outfits.

Ava opens her eyes. Rolls over, looks at Katrina, asleep.
[Reaction tbd]

INT. LIVING AREA - MORNING

Ava wanders in, carrying a glass of water. On the coffee table she discovers Roger's manuscript. She picks it up and begins to read it. Then she roosts on the couch, feet-under-rump, and keeps reading.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Ava standing on the counter with bare feet, rummaging in a shelf. She knocks something over; it shatters.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Katrina wakes up from the shattering sound. She rolls on one side, still sleepy, and stares out the window.

The weather's nice. No clouds today.

CUT TO:

TEXT OVER BLACK

10. Sit down

INT. LIVING AREA

Ava sits at a table now. She anxiously stirs a spoon around a bowl of Froot Loops.

AVA

The last couple times guys offered me breakfast, the morning after, I just said "no," automatically... because in the morning when I look in the mirror is usually when my body-image stuff is the absolute

AVA
worst... Do you know how many mornings I've gotten up and planned to starve myself -- all day? All week? ...(shakes head) It usually doesn't work out, ha. The thing is... one of the few valuable lessons I learned in college, is that I probably can't succeed as a writer and also be anorexic. Cause being hungry gets in the way of my flow -- there's no way around it. What I can do, though... is be a great soulful mother-fucking writers -- and also be a serious drug addict. SO yeah. That's just how it is. (smiles, dead inside.) It feels like my only choice sometimes. Does that make sense...

Katrina listens, she nods. A round of woeful eye contact.

KATRINA
I just wish you'd just eat *something*, Ava... you must be hungover. You look like hell.

AVA
I know.

She just keeps stirring the spoon in the cereal bowl.

Katrina watches her, frowning.

KATRINA
Do you wanna just go for a walk?

Ava nods wearily, like 'yes please.'

[MUSIC: BLUE IN GREEN]

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Dead leaves in Autumn.

A stationary shot. People walk past the camera. Giving it looks. Looks that are hard to read. Looks that say "Hey you" and "Fuck you" and something in-between.

Then: a tracking shot of the tip of a syringe. No blood, just the sharp end of a needle being traced along the inside of Levi's dark arm like a careful caress. At last, it stops. The needle holds still. Pressure is put on the needle. Enough to break the skin.

LEVI (V.O.)

They say jazz is dead... It ain't dead, it's dying. It's been dying ever since the Beatniks took a hold its neck. Been dying since Bird died. Since Miles left. It's still dying. But it ain't dead. Yeah, it's near death. It's a sunk ship already. And I think that's why it's my thing, how it's real near death... If jazz weren't just a sunk ship I wouldn't be sailing. Cause -- I'm dying. I mean, we all dying -- but I'm really *dying*, man, I feel it. And I been wondering lately if I already died. Cause if this is life, I ain't living. I'm dying. (a long pause.) But I sure as hell ain't dead.

Levi comes out of the public bathroom by the Delacorte Theater and starts walking through Central Park. He's wearing headphones.

Levi's POV: People walking past us. Giving us looks. Looks that cause pain. And then, at a distance -- he sees Katrina puffing smoke by the Great Lawn, facing Northwest. She sits on a bench next to Ava.

Katrina actually lifts a hand and signals for Levi to "come here." His POV approaches them.

Levi stops at the bench, and takes off his headphones.

LEVI

(ctd)

You're Buster's friend.

KATRINA

(exhales)

... Good memory!

Levi turns to Ava. She looks up at him, and says;

AVA

Do you want a cigarette?

He looks down at her, and answers;

LEVI

Yes.

CUT TO:

INT. A DARK CEMENT SPACE - DAY

Cool blue shadows and quiet movement.

AVA'S VOICE

I can't...

LEVI

(like a gasp)

... what...

Soft and gentle silence.

AVA

Help... I need you to help me...

Levi moves into light cast into the space from outside. He leans down on his knees, toward Ava.

She's holding a needle to the cephalic vein in her left arm, looking to Levi, crying just a little.

Levi reaches out his hands and holds the needle for her.

LEVI

Here. Like this.

He pulls blood from her. Then he uses the other hand to find Ava's hand on the floor. He lifts it. Then folds his fingers over Ava's and guides her, so she pushes the needle's trigger and injects heroin into herself. She lets the drug in.

She closes her eyes, and lets the drug in, and leans forward so her face grazes Levi's chest. He watches her for a moment, then takes an arm and holds her to keep her from falling. Levi kisses the top of her head.

In the shadows, Katrina watches.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Levi, Ava, and Katrina all emerge from underground: a cement room with a garage door in a gated enclosure where trash is put out to be collected. The sun has begun to set. It beams them with muted rays of golden light, as they climb a set of stairs back up to the streets.

CUT TO:

INT. B&H SUPERSTORE - DAY

Lucianne shopping for cameras. She walks down an aisle stocked with GoPros. She picks up a package containing a camera and examines it.

INT. HARLEM APT BEDROOM - DAY

Lucianne sits in a dusty red velvet chair, her right leg folded up, holding a laptop in her left hand. She stares at the screen with her head cocked. On the floor by her raised foot sits a freshly opened box for a slick new GoPro device.

LUCIANNE

Can you move it to the west a little? A little more? And up. Up... There. That's good.

Coleman climbs down from a folding ladder, sighs, places his hands on his hips. The GoPro has been hung in the Southeast corner of the bedroom, near the ceiling and just under the ladder.

A bird's eye view.

He looks in the direction of the camera's lens, facing Northwest, toward the front of the bedroom.

COLEMAN

(grins)

How's she lookin.

Coleman turns and walks over to Lucianne and the laptop. He lifts his chin to see the screen.

The background of the shot remains out-of-focus: the bed. The foreground is clear: the laptop screen.

On the screen: A young woman with shoulder-length [x] hair poses on the mattress in a new ermine-fur coat. This is Lucianne and Coleman's latest recruit.

This is ROSE.

[MUSIC: SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME]

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Metal chairs and tables shaded by open black umbrellas.

At a table by himself, Roger finishes typing something on his laptop, then shuts it. He looks up at the sky, triumphant.

Roger smiles.

INT. BRIGHT SPACE

A showerhead turned on.

Fingers running up the purple bruised veins of a paler set of arms, soaking wet with palms upturned, reaching out to be held.

LEVI (V.O.)
You might get a bad headache later,
that's normal. The best remedy,
I've found, is a hot shower...

EXT. 116TH STREET - EVENING

A long shot, just outside the subway stop that says: Columbia.

Levi stands in front of Katrina and Ava.

LEVI (V.O.)
... And liquor. Liquor takes the
headache away. For a while. Anyway.
You'll be all right.

He gives each girl a hug goodbye.

Katrina crosses the street toward Barnard.

Ava watches her go, looking sick-melancholic.

INT. DORM HALLWAY

Ava comes out of the women's bathroom with her hair still wet, and holds the door open.

Levi comes out behind her. They kiss once, then head down the hall.

EXT. 556 W 114TH STREET - NIGHT

Levi comes out of Ava's dorm building and puts on his headphones, then walks off alone.

INT. DORM ROOM

Ava sits upright in bed, laughing and crying, drinking directly from a bottle of Tanqueray then placing it by the window in front of the indigo sky.

She lies down in bed, smirking.

Shuts her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG ALLEY - NIGHT

Total stillness.

An eerie street under a sky of pale purple.

A set of red bloody palms: turned upwards, then downwards.
Being examined by one's own set of eyes.

INT. LOCKER ROOMS

A soft pair of hands, rinsing themselves in a sink.

Katrina stands over a row of stone sinks in the basement of
Barnard. Several faucets are running at once.

From her face, it's obvious Katrina did not respond well to
the heroin; she looks sick with pale purple shadows just
beneath her [color] eyes. She washes her own vomit down the
drain of a couple other sinks. Then cups her hands beneath a
faucet, and raises clean water to her mouth.

She swallows.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Ava open-mouthed with her eyes shut. An angle right next to
her face, on the wooden ground.

Then: a bird's eye view from the Southeast corner of the
dorm room, on the ceiling. Ava's passed out from drinking
past her limit. The Tanqueray bottle has moved from the
windowsill, to beside her open palm.

Dissonant sirens ring softly. Just outside the window, a dog
barks.

CUT TO BLACK:

ROSE (V.O.)

It's an act of aggression. That's
what it is. All these *women* who
look so horrible... outside... in
public. Men too as a matter of
fact. (sighs.) Maybe it's just me,
I'm too hard on the rest of the
world. I'm too intense. But how can
so many people *stand* to be in
public *looking like that...* (a

ROSE (V.O.)
careful pause.) ... in private??
Maybe it's different... in private.
I'm not, quite sure... yet.

INT. HARLEM APT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Switch to a hand-held camera with a cheap washed-out effect.

It captures a guy in bed, under white sheets, with his shirt off.

GUY IN BED
Are you filming me?

ROSE'S VOICE
(coyly)
No...

GUY IN BED
What's that. (points forward)

ROSE'S VOICE
*That's my naked chest, you're
looking at... Sir.*

GUY IN BED
No, the camera.

ROSE'S VOICE
Oh! *This??* Right.

She turns it and directs it at her own face.

ROSE
I'm just testing it out.

She winks. Then turns it back toward the man. He's staring to get really uncomfortable.

GUY IN BED
Did I consent to this?

ROSE'S VOICE
You consented to my rules as soon
as you came into my brothel.

GUY IN BED
Oh...

ROSE'S VOICE
Did you have fun, earlier tonight?

GUY IN BED
I mean, yeah.

ROSE'S VOICE
*Did you?? Really, enjoy, fucking
me...*

GUY IN BED
(scared now)
Yes.

ROSE'S VOICE
Well. Guess what.

GUY IN BED
(... silence)

ROSE'S VOICE
*I'm calling the shots now. And I
want to re-shoot what just happened
between us, tonight. Sir. And we're
not leaving until i've got the film
that I want. The way I want it. Got
it?*

The GUY IN BED nods slowly, as if in a trance.

Rose turns the camera, to her own face again.

ROSE
Good!

[MUSIC: BLACK SATIN]

EXT. W 130TH STREET - DAY

Katrina's back in Harlem, all dolled up on the corner. She finishes a cigarette, drops it, steps on it -- and gives the camera a quick sidelong smirk.

Then, Rose comes down the block, accompanied by Coleman and Lucianne.

Rose and Katrina shake hands.

INT. LENOX AVE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Katrina sits across from Rose, and talks. The others sit and listen.

KATRINA
Don't you see, by giving them hell
-- in the sack -- we're helping

KATRINA
these men. You can just see it in
their eyes. You can smell it...
They don't want to be creeps. Or
rapists... These men just want to
be absolved... So, that's our job.
We're *giving* to them.

ROSE
And hopefully having some fun for
ourselves, I should hope. Hm??

KATRINA
(does air quotes)
"Healing ourselves."

An understanding nod from Rose, met by a coy grin from
Katrina.

CUT TO:

INT. AVA'S DORM - DAY

Ava dancing completely alone to the "Black Satin" theme. A
really fucked-up dance, truthfully. There's something just
off about her movement. About her eyes. Her smile.
Occasionally she stares up at the camera while she dances,
with her teeth bared like a sick-dark bitch. Ava begins to
unbutton her shirt as she dances. She takes her shirt off.
Then dances with her shirt in her hand, waving it around.
Still with that weird smile. It's seriously. Fucked. Up.
Like what the fuck is wrong with her??

Then -- it becomes clear what the fuck is wrong.

She's been shooting up heroin by herself! There's evidence
of this on the desk in her dorm room!

And guess what else?? Her dorm room windows are WIDE OPEN.
Across the shaft of the building, three different guys are
watching her, dance, with her top off. A few more guys
gather at another window. They're laughing at her.
Sadistically. It's obvious. But also kind of enjoying it.

Ava knows. She sees it. And yet she keeps dancing, even
harder now. She's lapping it up. Like their bitch.

One guy starts jacking off.

Ava goes to the window and starts waving her white blouse
outside of it, like a flag of surrender. She hangs halfway
out the window like she might even fall out.

More guys gather to their dorm windows... *Wtf??*

Then, Ava takes her bra off. And drops it out of the window. It falls to the ground. She's topless now.

But you don't get to see it...

TEXT OVER BLACK

11. One on one

EXT. W 45TH AND 9TH AVE - DAY

The exterior of PRIVATE EYES strip club.

PILAR FRANKLIN smokes a cigarette by herself, wearing an odd melange of fabrics with feline prints: leopard, tiger. She looks miserable. She stares up and down the street. A face for high art, not pop culture.

Pilar's POV: Buster crosses the street, grinning slightly, obviously coming to talk to her.

She gets a look like: 'shit.'

INT. MIDTOWN BAR - DAY

Pilar in a booth with her arms folded.

A waiter's hand places an intense drink in front of her.

PILAR

Thank you.

She takes a sustained sip. Like a third of the glass. Immediately, she sinks into a morbid state of melancholy. She stares at some indistinct place just beyond the camera.

PILAR

(ctd)

It's the strangest thing, how men are so... *proud* when they're trying to get you in bed. Buy you drinks. Buy you lots of drinks. Buy you salad... Take you out somewhere nice. So much pride in public, the whole time. Arrogance ... And then, as soon as you get them *naked*. (sighs) All their pride goes away. It's a shame. They're so needy once they're naked. (long pause.) Like, now... they're the ones to come first.

Slowly, she lifts her chin and smiles.

Buster across the table. He's got his arms folded too -- almost like he's imitating her. He has that expression he's always wearing around women he's trying to recruit: like they're the only thing in the world that matters to him.

Pilar fingers the rim of her intense drink.

BUSTER
You still haven't told me your name.

PILAR
Pilar Franklin ...

She sighs really heavily.

PILAR
(ctd)
I'm not hispanic. It's a street name.

BUSTER
Hmm... Tell me, Pilar ... What's your greatest fear.

She gives him a look, like: 'wtf kind of question is that.'

PILAR
Um... ok...

She sighs. Takes another tremendous sip of her drink.

Shrugs.

PILAR
(ctd)
I don't fucking know... Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Buster tilts his head: 'huh?'

[MUSIC: ON GREEN DOLPHIN STREET]

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS - DAY

Lucianne by herself in an innocuous outfit. She's pacing down College Walk, glancing left, right -- like she's determined.

Her POV: Annoying tourists. Annoying students. Not Ava.

She walks to 556 W 114TH STREET and inside the dorm building.

INT. AVA'S FLOOR

Lucianne knocks on the door. Nothing.

Then she kicks the door several times, so loud that it sounds like someone trying to hack it down with an axe.

After a few seconds, Ava opens it, wearing a black robe. She looks like Death. (i.e. really bad) Her hair's all bent out of shape and she's obviously been shooting up. But she looks oddly good for how bad she looks. Does that makes sense?

AVA

oh. hi.

Lucianne just sort of grimaces.

EXT. CAFE OUTSIDE TABLE - DAY

The sound of birds chirping brightly.

Ava shoots a look to the sky: like 'shut the fuck up.'

Then a waiter sets an intense drink in front of her. She calms down a bit, the second she sips it.

Lucianne's drinking too. An even *more* intense drink. Wow.

The following dialogue takes place at a slow and steady pace. The pauses between lines are drawn out and relaxed.

LUCIANNE

So I want to run an idea by you.
I'd do it all on *my own*... But I
can't. Ok? I need help and you're
the only one I feel like I might be
able to trust, of all of Coleman or
Buster's hoes.

AVA

I'm nobody's hoe. I'm my own hoe.

LUCIANNE

Right ... Same here.

AVA

Swag.

LUCIANNE

So anyway. (looks up.) I'll just
get right to it.

Now she reams Ava with her stare, right through the eyes, with purposely piercing impact.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

I think we should start our own
brothel.

Ava smirks, and just stares back: 'Yep.'

[MUSIC: INAMORATA, @ ~17 MINS]

INT. HARLEM BEDROOM - THE DARK

Red and orange lighting. Mostly close-ups.

Rose with beads of sweat on her forehead. She wipes her hands on a red bedsheet, then uses the same sheet to mop the sweat off her brow.

Then Rose gets to her feet. Crosses the bedroom. Picks up a water bottle with condensation on it, from the surface of a wooden dresser. She begins to shake it -- before unscrewing the cap and drinking it all.

In bed: an OLDER MAN, not unattractive, watches Rose with sick hungry eyes.

Drinking from her water bottle.

Oh yeah, and KATRINA's in the bed too. Near the OLDER MAN.

Rose shoots the older man with a stark and lethal stare.

Then she softens, raises one eyebrow, and turns to Katrina.

Katrina gives back a nod, as if to say: 'You got it Boss.'

Rose opens the drawer of the dresser and takes out her good old camcorder.

She raises the camcorder and hits record, aiming right at the man.

ROSE

Smile.

The man is not smiling.

But Katrina is.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER BEDROOM - THE DARK

Somewhere else.

Purple, blue, and green hues predominate.

Pilar in action. We only see her upper half but it seems like she's ontop of someone. And she also seems detached -- she's just trying to get through it.

She goes off frame.

Pilar's position in the frame is replaced by an OLD MAN. Not just OLDER, but like OLD.

He looks quite satisfied.

Back to Pilar, in close-up. She looks disgusted. It's unclear whether it's with herself, or the old man.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A red room. Well-lit.

Coleman counts cash, with a laptop open in front of him.

Behind him: Lucianne sits on a couch with her legs crossed. And that plotting look of hers. But Coleman's not paying attention -- he's got twenties to stack.

He holds a thick wad of cash and turns to Lucianne, smiling like a soulless madman with a wicked addiction to green.

Lucianne smirks back.

Katrina and Rose emerge from the main bedroom in matching silk robes, colored red and black, respectively.

Lucianne shoots them a deliberate round of eye contact. And the girls just know she's up to something villainous and beautiful. Planning a coup perhaps.

Across the room: the OLDER MAN hands COLEMAN a fresh wad of cash. But the older man looks kind of flustered. Like, he just wants to get out of there.

On his way out, he glances at Rose. Frightened.

Rose looks back. Murderous.

Behind her, at the back of the room:

Coleman stares at his laptop. On the screen -- he begins uploading Go-Pro footage to a website.

X-rated.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The same X-rated website on the screen of a laptop.

In his room, Roger watches footage of Rose and Katrina on his computer.

After a second it becomes clear -- he's jacking off.

CUT TO:

Cold silence.

INT. AVA'S DORM - NIGHT

445AM. Ava fast asleep.

She wakes up to a call on her buzzing cell phone.

Ava's POV: She leans over in bed and picks up her phone from the ground. The movement in this scene is heavy and dense. The caller ID says "Death." On one wall of her dorm room, shadows from the windows hit the opposite wall in such a way that it looks like she's being watched by a dark looming form. Ava tries to sit up, but falls back again. She tries again. Ava tries to make a sound with her voice. It comes out like a LOW GASP, barely audible.

Back to scene: Ava lies in bed facing up, with glazed white eyes, staring ahead at nothing. She shuts her eyes -- not to fall asleep. But to block out what she's going through.

The sound of a dog barking outside Ava's window. It sounds really scared. Ava opens her eyes again. She wants to help the barking doggie - wherever he is - but doesn't know how. She's worried about him.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Levi sitting in a bed, talking.

LEVI

The real devil don't look like no woman in a red dress. That ain't the real devil. That's just some sexy-ass hoe. That's beauty. That's God's work, if you ask me. God likes a little Vice too. Some lust in life. That's God, doin' his thing. (smiles.) ... Naw, that ain't the devil... The real devil

LEVI
feels like a cloud that only
travels in the form of thoughts.
Thoughts that drift in a dark
billowing cloud. Really, really
dark. But also invisible. It makes
you wake up in the middle of the
night and feel like you can't move.
Like you're pinned to your
mattress. And your thoughts are
saying creepy things, to you.
That's the real devil.

Turns out he's in a bedroom with PILAR. They've just had
sex.

He's her client.

Pilar sits in a chair near the bed, and pulls up a stocking,
getting re-dressed.

She pauses and looks directly Levi.

PILAR
You don't have to tell me, honey...
I know.

Levi nods. He and Pilar share a moment. They've each been
through hell. Serious fucking hell.

Finally Levi climbs out of bed and starts pulling on his own
shirt and jeans, to leave.

LEVI
Do I pay you or Buster.

PILAR
(sighs)
You pay Buster on the way out. But
you're welcome to leave a tip...

Levi seems to consider. Then, he takes his wallet out of the
pocket of his jeans and pulls out a few bills of green.

Pilar gets an 'aw' look in her eyes. Like she's not used to
someone so endearing.

[MUSIC: IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY]

EXT. WEST VILLAGE CHURCH - DAY

Outside the entrance: a sign for a needle exchange.

Scully sits on a bench looking sick.

Ava comes out of the church holding a black plastic bag. She sees Scully, and sits down next to him. They start chatting. He perks up. He offers a handshake; she accepts. They keep talking. Then eventually they get up and walk off together.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Katrina and Lucianne on a walk. Just the two of them. We don't hear their conversation, but at the end of it they shake hands -- like they've been talking business.

INT. AVA'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Ava takes some cash from Scully. Then she takes off her shirt over her head, so she's wearing just a bra. At the same time, Scully pours dope into a bottle cap, then blends it with water, using the needle to stir it. While he does this, Ava starts touching him.

They're about to shoot up together and then have sex.

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM BEDROOM - DAY

Rose lies on her stomach, with her arms off the edge of the bed. She's reviewing footage on the camcorder. We can't see the footage but we can hear the SOUND OF A GUY SCREAMING on the camcorder's small speakers.

Rose grins, like she's enjoying it.

Someone knocks on the bedroom door three times, then opens it. It's Lucianne.

LUCIANNE

Hi Rose. How are you doing.

Rose doesn't even turn to say 'Hi' or turn to look at Lucianne. And she doesn't answer the question. Lucianne frowns, liked a parent dealing with a troubled daughter. Then she sits down on the edge of the bed.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

I wanted to run something by you.

ROSE

... what's that.

LUCIANNE

Well. Basically I think you're too good to be working for Coleman...

LUCIANNE

Every client you've had comes back for seconds. Your online videos are getting mad hits... Coleman doesn't pay you what you deserve to be getting paid. So, I think you should break off with me and Katrina. We're starting our own business.

ROSE

(still deadpan)

Your *own business*. Hmm. That's an awfully bold move.

LUCIANNE

It's not bold. It's practical.

ROSE

Is it? ... The reason I have a pimp at all is so that my clients don't come after me, and chop me into pieces. You need powerful men on your side to protect you, in this game. Otherwise you'll just get murdered in your sleep. Murdered and *raped*... of course.

She snaps the camcorder shut and places it on the floor. Then she rests her chin on the top of her hands, on the side of the bed. She's still not looking at Lucianne.

LUCIANNE

Well... this brothel is going to be a little different. We're not just taking every client. It's more elite than that. The men have to be selected, after proving themselves.

ROSE

Proving themselves...

LUCIANNE

I'll be interviewing them. And then my partner will be auditioning them in private, before we let the man have sex with any other hoes.

Rose finally looks up and looks at her.

ROSE

... who's your partner.

LUCIANNE
Oh. Her name's Ava.

Lucianne laughs very slightly after she says this.

INT. AVA'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Ava in the same exact position as Rose, on her own bed in her dorm room. Except instead of resting her chin on her hands, she's tapping her fingers on the edge of the bed and swinging her feet behind her, like she's swimming in space, still totally sunk in her own farout heroin trip.

She's talking right at us.

AVA
How many times have you been fucked by a guy and not enjoyed it. How many times have you left and felt like you just did him a favor. How many times have you felt like you're faking it... you know?? I'm saying, you might as well get paid for it. Otherwise you're just getting *used*.

Bebe listens.

BEBE
So you're starting a fucking brothel?

AVA
Damn straight. I already had a client today.

She pulls a couple crumpled twenty bills out of her bust.

AVA
(ctd)
Take it or leave it, Bebe. You don't have to decide right away... Just think of it as a job offer from a friend. It's a way to earn a little extra green, right?

She literally kisses the dirty money.

Bebe looks either amazed, or appalled. It's unclear which.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - CLOUDY DAY

Buster and Pilar mosey along the sidewalk at a hella subdued pace, to match their depressed auras and jaded temperaments.

BUSTER

So I'ma bout to introduce you to my friend. Coleman. He's running his own operation from a separate place... I'ma turn you over to him for a while. He'll keep a close watch. Plus you'll probably get to meet some of the other girls.

PILAR

(sardonically)

Yay, friends.

They stop at a corner in front of heavy traffic.

INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

Sound of a key turning.

The inside of the apartment is vacant. Eerily empty. And the place has been ransacked. Couch pillows have been sliced open, so there's stuffing strewn about the floor, like small white clouds benchwarming before ascending to the heavens.

Buster comes in the place, followed by Pilar.

BUSTER

What the fuck is this mess?

Pilar seems faintly amused.

BUSTER

(ctd)

... That mother *fucker*...

Buster takes out his cell phone.

He presses some buttons and raises it to his ear.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Coleman walking around the streets, looking into alleyways, sweating heavily, in a mad panic.

COLEMAN (O.P.)

Yeah, Nigga I fuckin know!! You don't gotta fuckin -- God mother fuckin -- I said, I know -- man!! I don't know where the fuck they went, but I'm a find em. I said I'm mother fuckin find 'em nigga, god damn --

He throws his phone onto the sidewalk. It shatters.

[MUSIC: GO AHEAD JOHN 3/3]

INT. NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Montage of Ava and Lucianne decorating a vacant apartment.

INT. NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

The same room as the opening sequence. Mustier than Coleman and Buster's brothel. The walls are covered with peeling white paint. And, plenty of cobwebs.

Ava, Katrina, Rose, and Bebe all sit on the floor and listen to Lucianne give a spiel.

LUCIANNE

Now this is how it's gonna work. I don't want you filming anyone -- this is a secret. WE don't need sex tapes leaked on the internet. I don't even want you to think of yourselves as "hoes" anymore, ok? You're fucking sisters. Even if you fucking loathe your sister, just think of her as a sister... Except for me. I never wanna you hear you fucking call me "sister." Don't call me that. Just think of me as, your boss or something. Alright?

The women in the room nod.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

Now Ava here is my partner. You can go to her if I'm ever unavailable, and she'll report back to me as soon as she can.

Shot of Ava, beaming.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

Keep in mind, your first few clients might be a bit more wholesome than what you're used to. But they're rich boys, and well-connected. And we're trying to get the word out to wealthy, older men.

Katrina gets a look like 'ooh.' She raises her hand to ask a question. Lucianne nods at her, 'go ahead.'

KATRINA

Where'd you meet the rich boys?

LUCIANNE

Most of them? I met up on campus at Columbia.

KATRINA

Cool. Just curious.

LUCIANNE

That said. Please do not tell anyone that you're a member of this brothel. You're welcome to stay here, overnight, whenever you want. But don't have anyone over without asking me first, alright? ... (pauses)... Think of it like being selected for the CIA. From now on you're always a member of this underground club. But you won't go around telling everyone. Just -- trust your instincts, ok ladies? I know you've got good instincts. Otherwise you wouldn't be hired.

While Lucianne speaks -- Rose looks around with sharp intense [-insert color-] eyes.

Her POV: as she takes a good look up and down Ava, pausing on the bruised veins of her left arm. Then up to her face.

Ava can tell she's being judged. She returns a proud, hard stare. Then she gives the same look, to Katrina, before turning back to Lucianne.

Ava gives Lucianne a look. A visual vote of confidence.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

One last thing.

She turns back to the girls.

LUCIANNE

(ctd)

We're running a fucking business. And I expect this brothel to go down in history as the best fucking brothel there ever fucking was. I can tell you've all got depth -- that's another reason I hired you. The sex that goes on here is gonna

LUCIANNE

be so deep it's gonna fucking hurt when you aren't having sex. It hasn't happened yet. But it's *going* to happen. Raw unadulterated desire. It'll infect everything. How you treat people. How you get treated in public. How you look. You suspect everything I'm saying is true, I can see it in your eyes. And I also feel certain you know how to act like a whore because you've all done it in front of me. It's innate. I've got it too. But so far we've been pretending. This is fucking real. Well, it's going to be. It's going to get more extreme. The only good thing about shit getting bad in America is that you're *going* to be psychosexual goddesses. Because you have to be. With great pussy comes great responsibility... You think I'm fucking joking, don't you? Believe me boys, joke's on you... (she smiles) Get ready!!

END OF PART ONE

--INTERMISSION--

PART TWO

.....

Credits over black. "Black Satin: Part Two"

"directed by Lola Morgan"

"starring..."

We hear the following reprise;

AVA (O.S.)

Boys, boys, boys... You think we don't have it in us to look at you the same way you look at us? Of course we do -- sexy boys are just as vulnerable as girls are. And just like for men... It's a choice to look at them in a way that's.. Creepy.