

In Pieces

By

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EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

Establishing the city.

Downtown, sunny, old buildings, Angel's Flight.

The Los Angeles Times building.

EXT. LOS ANGELES TIMES - DAY

The sun shines on the 1930s structure. The grounds around it are fairly deserted, but city noises pollute what would be a serene moment with architecture.

From afar, a YOUNG WOMAN approaches, coming steadily into focus, with a milk crate heavy in her arms. She's sharply dressed, iconic-journalist style, stumbling in kitten heels.

This is NOA BRIAR, fresh out of a small job at a local paper, almost fresh out of college. Her whole demeanor screams, "I want a Pulitzer!"

She starts up the steps with high-heeled caution and disappears behind a pillar.

INT. LOS ANGELES TIMES OFFICE - DAY

Elevator doors open and there's Noa. She takes a deep breath, muttering a few encouraging words to herself, then steps out.

The doors try to close on her, a bit jarring. She recovers, no one saw.

Noa click-clacks through echoing hallways until she approaches the glassed-in newsroom. The only thing between her and that Pulitzer are two glass doors reading "Los Angeles Times".

Noa balances on one leg, pushing her knee up to serve as a balance for the crate. Her phone rings and the moment is lost.

Frustrated, she sets the box down and pulls out her phone.

NOA

Mom, I'm about to start work. ..  
Because I have to! You can't hit  
ignore on your mother. .. I'll call  
you later.

(CONTINUED)

She hangs up and starts again. Box. Balancing. Finally, she pulls the door open and awkwardly twists to hold it.

A successful entry! Big smile. No one noticed.

NEWSROOM

Buzzing. Computer keys are clicking, TVs are on too low to make out full reports, "mmhms" and interview questions are spoken over phone lines.

Noa stands with her box, taking it all in. Scanning the room, it's obvious she is far overdressed, though she doesn't seem to notice.

Noa goes to her left, down what looks like a promising aisle, lined with news desks hosting reporters. Each of them is wrapped up in their own world. No one notices the overdressed newbie.

Just as she passes, a reporter spins around. She jumps slightly seeing Noa behind her.

REPORTER

Christ.

NOA

I'm sorry. I wasn't...it was weird timing.

REPORTER

No, it's fine.

The reporter pauses to take in overdressed, deer-in-headlights Noa.

REPORTER

Um. Are you looking for something?

NOA

Oh. Right, yeah, I'm Noa Briar, it's my first day.

REPORTER

Ah, great! With crime?

NOA

No, Entertainment.

The reporter nods sympathetically. She points Noa down the aisle just a little ways further.

REPORTER  
That's your place. Look for all the  
Us Weekly dartboards.

Noa takes the jibe with a nod.

NOA  
Thanks. Thanks for your help.

The reporter nods and spins back around in her chair.

REPORTER  
(sarcastic)  
Good luck, cub.

Noa continues down the aisle, now incredibly self-aware.  
Crawling in her overdone outfit, itching for a pair of jeans  
or an invisibility cloak.

Finally, an empty desk. Crammed into a cubicle. Miserable.

There on the desk, a simple nameplate -- "Noa Briar, Los  
Angeles Times." Noa beams and picks it up. She's lost in the  
sign.

A man-- BILL POWERS, in his 50s-- walks briskly toward her.  
He starts talking a moment before he reaches her.

EDITOR  
You're Briar? Briar?

Noa quickly snaps out of her admiration.

NOA  
Yes. Briar. Noa.

EDITOR  
Good. Follow me.

She drops the nameplate and scrambles through her box for a  
reporter's notepad and a pen before chasing after the  
editor.

He calls out from far ahead:

EDITOR  
Barnes. You too.

As Noa speedwalks to catch up despite her movement  
prohibiting pencil skirt, a man about 30, RYAN BARNES, rises  
from the desk across the aisle from hers and follows.

Tall, striking yet still somewhat boyish, Ryan follows with  
much less speed. Calm, cool, very cool.

(CONTINUED)

## EDITOR'S OFFICE

Bill -- tall, a little bulky -- enters first and sits behind the desk.

Noa slides in after him and stands alert close to the door.

Ryan comes in last and comfortably takes one of the empty chairs.

After shuffling a couple of missed-call messages around his desk, he looks up at Noa.

BILL

Sit.

Noa quickly sits.

BILL

Noa, I'm Bill Powers, editor of Arts and Entertainment. Welcome aboard.

NOA

Thank you, sir. I'm looking forw--

BILL

This is Ryan Barnes, he's the photog on your beat. You'll be working closely.

Ryan holds out his hand to Noa with a warm smile and they shake.

RYAN

Good to meet ya.

NOA

You, too. What kind of--

BILL

Okay, great, you're buds. You'll have a little time to get settled, chat with human resources about paperwork, then you two are going on assignment.

Ryan nods, Noa perks up.

Bill starts fussing with his computer as he speaks:

BILL

There's a premiere at the Arclight tonight. Noa, you're handling interviews. Just stand on the right side of the gate and try to catch some people's attention. Listen in to the guys beside you, too. Barnes here is a vet, he'll help you out.

Noa deflates. She looks confused.

NOA

I, um...I was under the impression that I would be covering more like entertainment business deals, not red carpets.

Bill stares at her, then shakes his head sympathetically.

BILL

Sorry, kid. You gotta start somewhere.

RYAN

It'll be fun. Kristen Stewart should be there. She's a terrible interview.

(to Bill)

I'm going to finish up the last of that Lohan topic page gallery.

Ryan stands and pats Noa's shoulder, then exits the office.

Noa remains in her seat, looking degrees more dejected than upon entering the office a few minutes ago.

Bill notes this. He sighs softly.

BILL

Everybody starts at the bottom. At least for you it's glamorous.

EXT. ARCLIGHT HOLLYWOOD THEATER - DAY

Noa and Ryan are squished together among throngs of press. He struggles to get in a few test shots as the E! team beside them gets their makeup done.

Noa takes everything in:

Security guards the size of linebackers.

Screaming throngs of tween girls.

(CONTINUED)

A line of gossip TV reporters in premiere worthy outfits.

NOA  
This is insane.

RYAN  
Yep.

NOA  
Covering a premiere, completely out of left field! This isn't journalism, this is rag gossip.

RYAN  
I don't think people call magazines rags anymore.

She ignores him. Fuming with pretentiousness.

NOA  
I was trained in financial business reporting, you know. Aquisitions. Mergers. Contracts. Deals. At Mizzou, nonetheless! Premiere fucking journalism, and this is what it's come to. This isn't news, it's just trash.

The E! broadcaster beside them is shooting dirty looks.

RYAN  
I'm not arguing. I studied politics, this is far from what I thought ten years ago I'd be doing.

A car pulls up and the roar is deafening.

RYAN  
Here we go. Get ready. Best night of your life.

He pats her on the back and more aggressively shoves the E! team to get a good angle.

Noa gets distracted. She pulls a ringing phone from her pocket and answers it.

It's hard to hear what she says.

Ryan looks over and notices Noa is missing from the pushy lineup.

He glances back at her on her phone and rolls his eyes. He stands up and grabs her arm, taking the phone and hanging up.

RYAN

It might be gossip, but you've got to be professional.

NOA

I can't let it ring. Compulsive.

RYAN

Whatever, turn it off. Maggie Meyers is coming.

Noa shuts her phone off and stuffs it back in her pocket, squeezing to the gate.

She glimpses MAGGIE MEYERS, 26, a glowing young actress. She's dark, vaguely middle eastern. Kardashian-esque.

Ryan nudges Noa as he snaps pictures.

NOA

Maggie! Maggie, Noa Briar with the Los Angeles Times!

Maggie glimpses her and makes her way over.

Noa hides her "holy shit" face pretty well.

MAGGIE

Hi there.

NOA

Hi Ms. Meyers. Noa Briar with the Los Angeles Times. Tell me about your role.

MAGGIE

You don't want to know what I'm wearing?

NOA

I can see it.

Maggie grins.

MAGGIE

I'm the bad guy in this one, which was incredibly challenging coming from romantic comedies. My character, Lyla, is progressively

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



MAGGIE (cont'd)  
more controlling, and it escalates  
quickly, goes way too far, and  
brings on this great dilemma with  
Tom's character.

NOA  
Tom?

MAGGIE  
Cruise.

NOA  
Oh.

MAGGIE  
I'm from a theater background, so I  
went for a method approach to get  
in character. It was challenging,  
but I think it turned out well.

NOA  
Can you tell me more about that  
technique? Did you say method?

Maggie frowns slightly. It's obvious Noa doesn't exactly  
know what she's talking about.

MAGGIE  
They're calling me.

NOA  
Wait, I've--

MAGGIE  
Thanks!

Maggie is rushed away. Noa sighs, stopping her recorder.

Ryan glances at her with a shy smile.

RYAN  
That was...good.

NOA  
It's one quote.

RYAN  
One's enough. Grab someone else.

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Noa is typing furiously away at her desk, in the zone. Ryan is across the aisle, logging photos with much less fervor. The room is buzzing, as per usual.

Noa stops for a second, rereading a paragraph.

NOA

Here's a gem: "Cruise stepped out on the carpet alone but especially dapper despite still recovering from the painful disintegration of his marriage to actress Katie Holmes."

RYAN

You're a poet.

NOA

Context in these stories is pretty fluffy.

RYAN

People don't like context.

NOA

Real question: would you call Katie Holmes an actress?

Ryan laughs, as do a few others at desks nearby. Noa smiles comfortably -- fitting in on the first day.

From his office across the newsroom, Bill steps out.

BILL

Briar, I needed that piece five minutes ago.

He steps back into his office and Noa returns to feverishly typing. Ryan starts to pack up for the night.

NOA

Aand...done.

RYAN

Congratulations. You're officially an entertainment journalist.

Noa grins and walks quickly down the aisle to Bill's office.

BILL'S OFFICE.

(CONTINUED)

Bill is at his desk, squinting at a computer. Noa knocks on the open door.

NOA  
Story's done, I just sent it.

Bill holds up a finger and it's silent for a long 15 seconds.

BILL  
Okay, it's sent?

NOA  
Yes.

Bill clicks around his computer, not looking at Noa.

BILL  
How was it?

NOA  
Truly eye-opening.

BILL  
I sense a bit of sarcasm.

NOA  
Not at all, sir. I am ignorant of pop culture.

BILL  
Well there's nothing like battling Ryan Seacrest for an interview to throw you right in. Hey, how was Ryan?

NOA  
Seacrest?

BILL  
No, Barnes. Your partner. Tall guy?

NOA  
Oh, great. He helped me ease into it all, very nice.

BILL  
Good, good. Glad it's a good fit.

NOA  
Me too.

Bill turns away from the computer to look at her.

BILL

Don't let him distract you, though.  
Did you read the forms on office  
romances?

NOA

Yes sir, not a problem there.

BILL

He's a good guy, just keep your eye  
on the prize.

NOA

Yes sir. Can I head home?

BILL

Go. And stop calling me sir, this  
isn't the Army.

NOA

Yes...

BILL

Bill.

NOA

(uncomfortable)  
...um, Bill.

Bill shakes his head.

BILL

See you tomorrow.

Noa salutes, exits.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small, fairly empty studio apartment. A couch sits mostly  
alone in the middle of the room.

Noa enters and sits down, a phone against her ear.

NOA

It was kind of fun, yeah. Not at  
all the business stuff I was hoping  
for, but it was...yeah, it was fun.  
-- No, I'm okay here. It's a little  
lonely. -- I miss you, too, mom.  
I'll call you tomorrow. Sleep well.

Noa hangs up and tosses her phone on the stack of newspapers  
serving as a side table.

(CONTINUED)

She wraps her arms around her legs and exhales deeply. A moment of peace.

Noa sits up and grabs her iPad. First, she goes to her Newsstand and subscribes to People, Us Weekly and InStyle.

As they load, she turns on the TV and finds E! News. On her tablet, she takes notes as Guiliana Rancic and her cohost banter.

In for a long night of Pop Culture 101.

INT. NEWSROOM - MORNING

Noa, holding a cup of coffee, walks through the newsroom. She looks exhausted.

Only one of the TVs is on. Bill seamlessly steps in line with her.

BILL

We just got some photos in, need you to get working on a fashion showdown piece. The template's in the system, just pop it open, take a look at the pictures, put your expertise to work.

Bill hands Noa a folder, which she drops as he lets go too early.

BILL

You awake, Briar?

Noa sighs and squats down to pick up the dropped folder.

NOA

I got wrapped up in E! Online yesterday. I read a year's worth of People magazines.

BILL

Why on earth?

NOA

I'm pop culture illiterate.

She returns to standing, tucking the folder under her arm.

BILL

Ah.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILL (cont'd)  
Well, reading all that trash will  
probably help out with this piece.

Bill smacks her on the back and keeps walking toward his office.

INT. LOS ANGELES TIMES OFFICE, NOA'S DESK - DAY

Noa tosses down the folder and plops down. She opens it up and pulls out two photos.

Two actresses in the same outfit. They both look pretty abysmal.

NOA  
Here comes your Pulitzer, Briar.

Noa starts typing. She mumbles to herself.

NOA  
It seems wild to think that Lopez and Aniston could both fail so publicly and miserably with a black dress, but the impossible has happened. Analysts believe the failure is due largely in part to stockholders tentative about the future of Jenny on the Block.

Another reporter pops her head up over the cubicle divider.

NOSY REPORTER  
Those are really supposed to be much shorter. And dumber. Less words.

Noa is slightly embarrassed.

NOA  
I was...that was just kidding.

NOSY REPORTER  
Just thought you should know.

Nosy retreats.

She leans back in her chair with a frustrated sigh. The TV catches her attention.

It's in the middle of a report:

## TV ANCHOR

The actress called police at about midnight last night regarding the trespasser, just hours after the premiere of her film "Redemption." Up next, JLo and Jen battle it out on the streets of Beverly Hills in Who Wore It Best.

Noa quickly turns to every journalist's best source: Google.

She types in "Maggie Meyers trespasser" and gets a ton of results.

Scrolling. Scrolling.

There's something. She clicks and sits up, interested. Reads through it quickly.

Then, she picks up her desk phone and dials an internal number.

## NOA

Hey, it's Noa Briar in Entertainment. Can I get the police reports from last night asap? Thanks.

She hangs up and returns to her computer, opening a new document.

Noa starts frantically typing, leaving the Jen and JLo battle by the wayside.

After a few moments, her lead reads:

"Maggie Meyers, star of the newly released film 'Redemption', has filed a report against an alleged stalker after seeing a suspicious man outside her Beverly Hills home for four consecutive nights."

## INT. BILL'S OFFICE - DAY, LATER

Bill is working diligently on a crossword puzzle when a knock comes from the door.

He looks up and frowns. No one knocks.

## BILL

Yep?

Noa quickly opens the door and steps in. Bill sighs -- she's a pain.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Si--...um, Bill, I know you gave me the fashion template story, but this came up and nothing was up on the site, so I drafted it from police reports. It's more of a brief, but it should get on the site pretty soon, people are buzzing about it on Twitter.

She hands him the piece then pauses to take a breath.

Bill stares at the piece of paper.

BILL

You printed it?

Noa nods embarrassed.

BILL

Buck up, it's just a question. Sit.

Noa does. Bill takes a red pen quickly through the story. There's a moment of ringing silence.

BILL

Just a couple things to fix. Go ahead and straighten those lines up, get rid of those Oxford commas, then pop it online. And grab a picture from file to go with it. Barnes has a ton.

NOA

Got it. Thank you.

BILL

Nice work. Keep following up on this. Might get you to the front.

NOA

Really?! I...I will, thank you. Thank you so much.

Noa excitedly takes the article back and starts speedwalking back to her desk.

Bill calls after her:

BILL

Still gotta do that fashion template.

Noa turns back.

(CONTINUED)



NOA

Sir, is there...not an intern who can do that?

BILL

Bill. Our interns cover cops.

NOA

All of them?

BILL

We pay them, can't give them the easy fluff.

NOA

By that logic, I'm also being paid, so--

BILL

Briar. It'll take two minutes.

NOA

Extra has the scoop on us.

BILL

Extra always has the scoop on us. We're a real newspaper.

NOA

You are being incredibly contradictory--

BILL

Briar, stop arguing!

NOA

Sorry. You told me to buck up.

BILL

This isn't the time to start.

Noa retreats.

Bill shakes his head, a slight smile.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

The next morning, Noa rushes excitedly through her tiny apartment and pulls open the door.

On the mat: the day's L.A. Times.

(CONTINUED)

She looks around the hall. A neighbor is also grabbing his paper.

NOA

I have a story in there today! Page one!

The man gives her a little smile and walks back inside. Noa grabs the paper and kicks the door shut.

At the kitchen table, she unfolds the paper. Her eyes trail the page and her smile slowly fades.

At the bottom, on the promo rail:

"Actress reports trespasser to police. Page 6."

Sinking down into a chair, she turns to page six. There, her glorious story.

Noa reads it, mouthing select phrases.

Satisfied, she gets up and grabs a pair of scissors. She cuts the story out and pins in on the fridge.

For good measure, she also cuts out the promo rail and the newspaper's flag. No one can deny it was probably supposed to be page one.

Her phone rings. It's mom.

NOA

Hi mom. -- Yeah, it wasn't all on the front, but it was close! Did you read it? -- I know it's not what I wrote in Missouri, mom, it's something new, remember? -- So, you liked it?

She smiles at her mom's reply.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Noa's quick work the day before hasn't changed much.

On her desk is another fashion showdown. This time, with Ke\$ha. Noa looks unbelievably bored.

She constantly refreshes her Twitter feed and glances at the TV, hoping for another break.

Ryan approaches with two mugs of coffee and sets one down on her file.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

For you, Ms. Briar. Congratulations on that Page One story.

NOA

You set that down right on Ke\$ha's face!

RYAN

Ke\$ha, that catchy genius. She deserves a coffee mug to the face.

Noa laughs shyly. Ryan raises his mug in cheers. Noa picks hers up and clinks it against his.

NOA

Thanks.

RYAN

Of course. Really, good story.

NOA

Oh yeah, pushed to six.

RYAN

Six is better than 20B, which is where Ke\$ha will be tomorrow.

NOA

Moving on down!

RYAN

Somebody's got to.

They laugh. A beat.

NOA

It was, um, lonely around here yesterday, were you out stalking Ke\$ha to get these pics?

RYAN

It's possible. I can't give away all of my secrets.

NOA

So, yes?

Ryan laughs.

RYAN

You want to grab some lunch? I figure you need to experience the city a little bit.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Agh, I just ate before you graced my work with coffee.

RYAN

That's alright, I'm available for dinner, too.

NOA

Is that your way of charming me into having dinner with you?

RYAN

Hey, I'm just trying to accomodate your schedule so you don't miss any quality time with me and the city.

NOA

This is getting a little cocky.

RYAN

You're right. Would you do me the kindness of having dinner with me and ol' Los Angeles tonight?

Noa takes a few moments to let it marinate, for Ryan to sweat it out.

NOA

Sure.

RYAN

Fantastic. Have you been to Table?

NOA

I've been mainly to Starbucks and Ralph's, so no.

RYAN

Table it is. I'll see you at 8.

NOA

Not gonna pick me up? What kind of dinner is this?

RYAN

It's not prom, Briar.

He smiles sweetly and retreats to his desk. Noa sips at her coffee, staring at Ke\$ha.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A ritzy yet hipster restaurant. Lighting is low and flickering, tables are made of sanded slabs of wood, there's surely a huge wall of wine selections.

Noa sits alone at a table set for two. Her clothes are less office official, but her faces radiates tension.

She looks around the place rhythmically, self-conscious about being alone.

The waiter approaches with a glass of sparkling water and a large basket of bread.

NOA

Thanks. He'll be here in just a few. I'm not getting stood up or anything. Just...so you know.

The waiter smiles, forced, then retreats.

Noa sighs and starts absently tearing into the bread. She shoves pieces in her mouth and glances at her phone.

It's only 7:45.

Her phone rings. Hopeful, Noa grabs it, only to see that it's Bill.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BILL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BILL

Briar?

NOA

Yep, what's--?

BILL

They found Maggie Meyers' assistant dead at Meyers' house. Get to Beverly Hills as soon as you can and have the story up within the hour.

NOA

Me?

BILL

Briar! Get it together!

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Okay. Okay, yeah. Is that where Ryan is?

BILL

Stop asking me questions and get your ass to Beverly Hills.

NOA

Yes, okay, I'll call with updates.

Noa hangs up and scoots out of the booth as the waiter comes around.

NOA

I'm so sorry, I really have to run, emergency, I'm sorry you're losing a tip, I'll pay you back I promise.

Noa taps the waiter's chest, then grabs two more piece of bread and starts to run out of the restaurant.

EXT. MAGGIE MEYERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

A sizeable, peaceful looking house thrown into dismay. Yellow tape is everywhere, police cars guard the driveway.

A slew of police officers stand guard, keeping out nosy neighbors.

Noa, now wearing Keds instead of heels, flashes her credentials to the guard. She is let under the first line of tape and the police officer takes her to the small pen of press.

As they walk, she starts to question him:

NOA

Can you tell me what happened?

OFFICER

No miss, talk with one of those men.

NOA

They're swamped, could you give me just a sentence?

OFFICER

They're swamped? Kid, we're all swamped, this is a god damn murder scene.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Sir, please. One sentence.

OFFICER

We got a call from the victim's boss about 20 minutes ago.

NOA

Cause of death? Suspects?

OFFICER

One sentence.

The officer leaves her near all the other journalists who are swarming around two haggard looking officers.

Noa sighs and glances around. She spots Ryan kneeling by the yellow tape near the front door, shooting into the house.

Instead of fighting through the jumble of reporters, Noa walks quickly to Ryan's side.

NOA

Hey, have you talked to anyone?

RYAN

Yeah, got a few notes before E! got here.

NOA

Great. Cause of death?

RYAN

Not sure. She looked pretty undisturbed, they said.

He's trying to focus. She's not helping.

NOA

What about suspects?

RYAN

Wouldn't say.

NOA

Is Meyers around?

Ryan keeps shooting pictures, not doing much to keep the conversation rolling.

RYAN

Doubtful.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Who the hell am I supposed to talk to?

RYAN

Jesus, Noa, I don't know! That's your job. Talk to some neighbors, seduce a few cops, whatever.

She tries to appeal to his sympathy.

NOA

Sorry. I've never covered a murder before. This stuff didn't happen in rural Missouri, I'm a little out of my element.

Doesn't work.

RYAN

Just let me focus, go do your job, I'll find you in a few minutes.

Noa, frustrated, rolls her eyes and leaves him.

She returns to the line of neighbors and spectators. Now there are even paparazzi around.

She finds one particularly distraught looking woman. She readies her recorder.

NOA

Hi miss. I'm Noa Briar with the Los Angeles Times, could I ask you how you knew Ms. Meyers?

DISTRAUGHT WOMAN

I just loved her movies. I saw the story on the news and I just had to speed over and see if I could see her.

NOA

Really?

DISTRAUGHT WOMAN

Oh, yes. She's quite the actress, you know.

NOA

So you came to the crime scene...for an autograph?

(CONTINUED)



DISTRAUGHT WOMAN

I just want to see her in person.  
Is she really that tall?

Noa looks uncomfortable

DISTRAUGHT WOMAN

My name is Gloria, G-L-O-R-I-A,  
Redman, R-E-D-M-A-N. Is this for  
the E? I love the E!

NOA

No, it's the Los Angeles Times.

DISTRAUGHT WOMAN

Is the E! here?! I'd die if I could  
see Ryan Seacrest out here, too.

Noa shakes her head as the woman anxiously peers around on  
tip toes, looking for Seacrest.

Noa slips away from the chaos for a minute. This is a whole  
different world.

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

The office is as empty as it has been. All the TVs are  
buzzing with local stations reporting on the assistant's  
death.

Noa is hunched over her computer, squinting tiredly at the  
screen, tapping away. Ryan is diligently editing photos.

It's buzzing quiet, the present Entertainment section in the  
zone.

Then, Noa throws her hands up in the air.

NOA

Done!

BILL (O.S.)

Briar, send it.

Noa is surprised to hear his reply. She whispers, to no one  
in particular.

NOA

How did he hear that?

She sends the story and leans back in her chair with a sigh  
of relief.

(CONTINUED)

After a relaxing five seconds, she spins to watch Ryan, who continues to stare at his screen.

RYAN  
What?

NOA  
Nothing.

RYAN  
You're staring at me.

NOA  
Sorry.

She keeps watching.

Ryan finishes his last photo. After a few seconds of clicking around, he sits back and turns to her.

RYAN  
How about that dinner?

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Noa and Ryan sit at an overly '50s-themed diner, coffee mugs and many a plate before them.

RYAN  
I've always thought Missouri was only populated by cows.

NOA  
Cows and journalism nerds.

RYAN  
Sounds like a rough place.

NOA  
It has it's charms. I'm originally from Idaho, which has a little more to it.

RYAN  
Right, potatoes.

NOA  
There's more than just that.

RYAN  
You're like a real mid-westerner then. How are you handling L.A.'s culture shock?

(CONTINUED)

NOA

You know, I mostly stay in my apartment. But the metro is surprisingly clean.

Ryan laughs.

RYAN

That's because no one uses it. I've been on the train once, just to see what it was like.

NOA

Once?! How long have you lived here?

RYAN

Technically 6 years. I corresponded in Afghanistan for two-ish.

NOA

Like, foreign correspondent?

His response is somber. Probably didn't want to mention that.

RYAN

Yeah.

NOA

That's incredible! Why did you stop?

RYAN

It was a lot.

Ryan progressively seems to grow more uncomfortable with the conversation while Noa becomes more excited.

NOA

Going from that to Entertainment, though, I mean...there's such a drop in esteem!

RYAN

Yeah.

NOA

Does that not drive you crazy? I couldn't take a hit like that. Afghanistan has to be better than a movie premiere.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN  
Noa, seriously?

NOA  
Premiere's are so...menial! And boring! You're not effecting anyone but gossip-sucking mongrels.

RYAN  
Right, and getting shot at is every journalists' dream.

NOA  
(sincerely)  
Well, yeah.

RYAN  
(sharply)  
You don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

Noa's face drops. She sits back in the booth.

A waitress skates over and refills their coffee cups.

WAITRESS  
Need anything else?

RYAN  
Just the check.

WAITRESS  
No boxes?

RYAN  
The check, please.

The waitress skates away.

Ryan looks anywhere but at Noa. They don't speak.

Then, he runs a hand over his face.

RYAN  
Sorry.

NOA  
No need. That was insensitive of me.

RYAN  
I switched because I wasn't doing well when I came back. Needed something lower stress.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

So, today isn't your ideal day in  
Entertainment news?

RYAN

Yeah.

(Ryan smiles slightly.)

It was kind of nice to shoot some  
stuff that wasn't posed, though.

NOA

Finding joy in the worst  
situations.

RYAN

That's the job.

Ryan downs his coffee.

INT. ELEVATOR, L.A. TIMES - DAY

Noa steps into the elevator, looking much more casual than  
at her first few days at work, getting comfortable.

She's holding to coffees when her phone rings. She juggles  
them expertly to pull the phone out and answer it without  
looking at the caller.

NOA

Hello?

(she brightens)

Hey! I got you a coffee, I'm on my  
way in to the newsroom right n--

(brightness lost)

Oh. That's the worst. -- No, no  
I'll just give it to Bill and get  
some suck-up points. -- That sounds  
good, just send me your address and  
I'll come by. -- You too, feel  
better.

Noa hangs up, dropping the phone in her purse, looking now a  
bit down-trodden.

The doors open and she steps out.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Noa's desk is more littered than usual. There is a sticky note hanging on the top corner of her computer with a tally count numbering impressively high.

Both cups of coffee sit on the desk.

She sits, almost laying, in her chair, her back flat, her neck barely resting on the back, phone against her ear.

Her arms, straight out, just grace the keyboard.

Bored.

Then, a breakthrough. She sits up straight, almost sending her chair flying out of the cubicle.

NOA

Hi, yes, I'm here. Thank you, that would be great. I can wait.

She sits up straighter, stretching her back and reading over her notes.

After a moment:

NOA

Hi, Maggie?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE - DAY, SAME TIME

MAGGIE

Hi Ms. Briar.

NOA

Thank you so much for taking a few minutes to talk with me.

MAGGIE

When you call every five minutes it's hard to say no.

NOA

That's what I've been told.

MAGGIE

Go ahead.

(CONTINUED)

NOA  
How are you feeling?

MAGGIE  
Pretty shitty. You can print that.

NOA  
I can't, actually. Not word for word. Vulgarities.

MAGGIE  
Your loss.

Noa takes it in stride. She clears her throat.

NOA  
Have you been given any more details about what happened?

MAGGIE  
Very few, and I'm sure they're confidential.

NOA  
What's your next step?

MAGGIE  
I'm not sure I want that published.

NOA  
Why's that?

MAGGIE  
Off the record, I have a feeling it was the same man I filed a complaint against that did it, and I'd rather not him know I'm moving.

NOA  
What makes you think it was him? On the record?

MAGGIE  
I'm really not comfortable with this.

NOA  
Is there anything that you can tell me?

MAGGIE  
(bored)  
Alexis was one of my closest friends and I'm devastated on a  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE (cont'd)  
number of levels. I'd appreciate  
the respect of my privacy from the  
public.

NOA  
Anything less scripted?

MAGGIE  
I already told you, I'm feeling  
pretty shitty.

Noa sighs and sits back in her chair.

NOA  
Alright. Well, thank you, Ms.  
Meyers, I send my condolences.

MAGGIE  
I appreciate that. I'll take them  
seriously when you stop calling.

END INTERCUT.

Maggie hangs up. Noa tosses her phone toward it's holder,  
frustrated.

After a second, she carefully replaces the receiver to it's  
cradle.

She gets up and starts toward Bill's office. Doubles back  
and grabs the coffees.

BILL'S OFFICE.

Noa stands in the doorway, awkwardly holding both coffees  
and looking at Bill, who doesn't acknowledge her.

NOA  
I have an update about Meyers.

BILL  
Go ahead.

NOA  
Also, here's a coffee.

Noa hands him a coffee. Bill takes it.

BILL  
Go ahead.

Bill pops the top off the coffee.

(CONTINUED)



NOA

She's not saying anything on the record except the statement her publicist wrote and that she's feeling "pretty shitty."

BILL

And off the record? Briar, this is half empty.

NOA

Oh, sorry --

Noa hands him the other coffee and takes hers back. Bill pops the top and checks the cup, which is full.

NOA

-- she thinks it's the guy she filed the complaint against.

BILL

Doesn't she know who that is?

NOA

Taylor something, I'm sure the cops are on it.

BILL

Don't be sure, go check yourself. Why's she think it's him?

NOA

She wouldn't say.

BILL

Well why the hell did she even answer your 100th call if she wasn't going to say anything!

NOA

To make me stop calling?

BILL

So you should keep calling.

NOA

She expressly said she hoped I wouldn't.

BILL

Who cares? You're a journalist, the story is more important right now than her opinions.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

The story is her opinions--

BILL

Why are you always arguing with me?  
Put that energy into getting an  
interview or some facts or anything  
besides these useless updates! Get  
her, or get someone else to tell  
you something.

Noa looks a little beat up.

NOA

I'll see if I can find someone.

BILL

You *will* find someone. Buck up.

Noa nods.

BILL

Good. Thanks for the coffee.

That reminds Noa.

NOA

Quick unrelated question--

BILL

I hate those.

NOA

--why didn't you tell me Ryan was  
in Afghanistan?

A beat.

BILL

Because his past has nothing to do  
with you?

Noa is quiet. Bill can read her face.

BILL

Noa, I told you, don't get  
distracted. You're on a speedy path  
to getting out of entertainment,  
don't get stuck there because of  
some guy.

NOA

I'm not going to do that.

BILL

Okay. Go get some solid shit together or else I'm giving the story away.

Noa leaves the office, frustrated. Her face is fierce.

She steers back toward her desk, looking like she's on a mission.

DESK

She sits at the computer, ignoring the phone despite her task to harass Meyers.

She rips the tally note from the computer, crumples it and tosses it aside.

Then, Google for an efficient search:

"Ryan Barnes, Afghanistan."

Results load quickly. A strip of images from his stories, and then:

"Los Angeles Times journalists released after 10 months."

She clicks on the story. It's a chilling read.

Pictures accompany it:

-Ryan, with three other men, ragged, getting off a plane.

-Shaking hands with the president.

-A grimy video-still image of four men, hands bound behind their backs, sitting on a dirt floor. Helpless.

Noa's completely shocked, absorbed. Another reporter walks past her desk and Noa quickly closes the story. She takes a deep breath, recomposing.

After a moment:

BILL (O.S.)

Briar! Anyone?

NOA

Working on it.

Bill's door shuts loudly. Noa takes a deep breath. She glances at the crumpled sticky note.

Noa reaches over and smoothes it out, returning it to her screen corner with a square of tape.

She picks up the phone, dials. A beat:

NOA

Hi, it's Noa Briar again. May I speak with her on the record, please? -- Okay, may I ask one more thing? Do you have anyone else I could speak with about the story? -- No one? -- Okay. Well. I'll be calling again, then.

She hangs up. Adds a tally to the note.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY, LATER

The sticky note is filled. At least twice as many tallies.

More sticky notes litter the desk with names and phone numbers, all crossed out. It's been a day.

Noa is on the phone, sitting at her desk. Not looking good.

NOA

I understand. Yep. I'll be talking with you soon. Thanks.

She hangs up. Frustrated. Bangs a hand on the desk.

Her cell phone buzzes. Hoping for a lead, she turns to it anxiously.

It's a text from Ryan with his address plus a "feeling better, see you soon."

Noa sneaks a secret smile. She stares at the text for a moment, then notices the folder it sits on top of, filled with police reports regarding Maggie.

Noa pulls the folder out from beneath her phone and starts to sift through it. Nothing fresh, nothing interesting, she's seen it a thousand times.

And then, something. Noa sits up.

She writes a name down on a sticky note, then gets up to go.

(CONTINUED)

BILL (O.S.)

Briar! Where are you going? I need  
a lead!

INT. L.A. POLICE OFFICE - DAY

Noa stands at the desk at the head of the office, waiting.

A man walks toward her. Tall, uniformed, a little past being  
intimidating. This is OFFICER GARY BUSEK.

BUSEK

Miss Briar?

NOA

Yes, hi.

BUSEK

What can I do for you?

NOA

I've got this police report, what's  
this "evidence taken into custody"?

BUSEK

Uh. Let's see, it's probably  
misplaced stuff...I think there was  
a letter found. But all of that's  
at the lab, I got nothing here.

NOA

Do you remember anything that was  
in the letter?

BUSEK

Nah. It was wordy, not that  
readable.

NOA

Could I get a copy when it's  
released from the lab?

BUSEK

You'll have to go through the  
records office for that.

NOA

I put in a request the day the  
murder happened, but I can't wait  
for that beaurocratic mess to come  
through. This case is a threat to  
public safety.

(CONTINUED)

BUSEK

No need to preach to me. But I  
can't change the rules.

Frustrated, Noa sighs. She runs a hand over her forehead.

Busek notices and sympathy crosses his face.

BUSEK

Stressful jobs we got.

NOA

You more than me.

BUSEK

Yeah.

NOA

This story...it's just really  
important.

Noa straightens up at the desk. Busek looks her over.

Then, he leans in to semi-whisper.

BUSEK

I'll have to see what comes out of  
the tests, but I'll be in touch  
about it. Okay?

Noa lights up.

NOA

Really? Thank you so so much. My  
boss is going to be ecstatic. Or,  
you know, as excited as one can be  
in the case of a murder.

BUSEK

Right.

NOA

Okay. Well here's my contact info,  
just...call or email or mail. Or  
text? Whatever's best for you.

She hands him her card, excited.

NOA

Oh, and one more thing: Ms. Meyers  
told me she suspected it was the  
man she filed a complaint against,  
Taylor...

BUSEK

Yeah, Taylor Kind. We looked into it.

NOA

And?

She readies her hand for notes. Busek notices.

BUSEK

It's, uh, looking like a dead end. He's not a registered citizen.

NOA

So he doesn't exist?

BUSEK

I...don't know, I can't really discuss that. Gotta get back to work, I'll see what I can do with the evidence.

Busek turns away. Noa scribbles a couple of notes.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Noa returns, dejected and worn by a day of denials. She walks slowly back to her desk.

Bill passes her. He turns around, his eyes following her curiously.

BILL

What's the news, Briar?

NOA

Nothing. One speculative statement that could very well imply our actress friend may be crazy and could very well have killed the assistant herself.

BILL

That's not nothing, what the hell do you mean?

NOA

The officer said they looked into Taylor Kind and he's not a registered citizen. He wouldn't say any more.

(CONTINUED)

BILL  
Well, fuck.

NOA  
Yep.

BILL  
Keep calling.

NOA  
Yeah.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Noa stands at Ryan's door. She's worn, but puts on a pleasant face.

She knocks.

No one answers.

She frowns. Pulls out her phone. Checks his text. Checks the address. It's the right place.

She knocks again.

Still nothing.

NOA  
Ryan?

Another knock.

This time, shuffling from inside. The door opens and Ryan is there. Looking rough, tired. But seeing Noa, he brightens.

RYAN  
Sorry, hey. Fell asleep.

Ryan leans toward her and kisses her cheek. Noa blushes. They step inside.

INT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NOA  
Um. That's okay. Are you feeling better?

RYAN  
Yeah, a little bit. Now.

(CONTINUED)



NOA

Good.

Well, this is awkward.

RYAN

How's the story coming?

NOA

Not so good. I called Maggie's people about 500 times today. They do not like me.

RYAN

I'm sure Bill is salivating at the idea of a reporter who'd do that.

NOA

He's been like a drill sergeant all day. He even threatened to give the story away!

RYAN

That's why he's in charge.

Noa considers that.

NOA

She told me she thinks it's the stalker guy.

RYAN

Your front pager guy?

NOA

It was on six.

RYAN

Mentioned on front pager guy?

NOA

Yeah, him.

RYAN

Makes sense. Complaints aren't exactly the end-all-be-all for those kind of people.

(a beat)

Sounds like a story to me, where's the but?

(CONTINUED)

NOA

All off the record because she doesn't want him to know she's relocating. I mean, surely the guy's not an idiot, he has to know she's not staying in that house anymore.

RYAN

Guess it's better to be safe than sorry.

A beat.

NOA

Do you ever feel really terrible about the rush that you get from covering a story like this?

RYAN

Only for a few seconds. You can't let it get to you.

NOA

I've been raised on Catholic guilt, that sort of stuff doesn't brush off my shoulders easily.

Ryan laughs.

And on that note, Noa blurts out:

NOA

I found out. About the hostage thing.

Ryan lets out a long breath.

NOA

On...the Catholic guilt note. I had to tell you. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry, but I did and I found it and I couldn't not read about it and--

RYAN

It's okay.

NOA

That's...how can you recover from that?

RYAN  
Therapy. Entertainment news.

He smiles, a little sadly.

NOA  
I'm sorry.

RYAN  
Stop apologizing, it's okay. You  
would've found out eventually.

NOA  
I mean about what happened to you.  
I'm sorry they did that.

A beat.

RYAN  
Let me get you a beer.

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, MUCH LATER

Noa sits on Ryan's bed, leaning against the headboard. Ryan  
lays on the pillow next to her. It's peaceful.

NOA  
What time is it?

RYAN  
Three.

NOA  
Early.

RYAN  
We've got hours until work.

They laugh. A little drunk. Mostly, it's 3 a.m.

Ryan starts to burrow into the bed, progressively falling  
asleep through the conversation.

NOA  
I don't want to go.

RYAN  
To work?

NOA  
Back to bothering her entourage all  
day and getting nothing.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

So, work.

NOA

But I will, of course, because I relocated to this insane place to try and make it as an analytical finance reporter and dammit, I'm going to get the hell out of entertainment, and you can come with me, and J.Lo won't follow us into economics. I should go home.

RYAN

For your own safety, you should stay here.

NOA

I have had a few drinks.

RYAN

And so have other people on the road at 3.

NOA

I'm convinced.

RYAN

Good. You make me feel good.

NOA

I hope that's not a come-on.

RYAN

No, I mean...like, good. Like, happy.

Noa brightens.

RYAN

Like when you meet somebody and you just instantly feel like there's a reason you met them and every time you're with that person it's like, hey, maybe now I'll figure it out.

NOA

That doesn't make a lot of sense.

RYAN

I just like you, is all. I feel better when you're around.

Noa leans over and kisses Ryan.

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, LATER

Noa is slumped in the same spot, clearly asleep. Ryan is not on the other side of the bed.

A chair bangs from the other room and wakes Noa up. She looks around, confused. Tiredly, she calls out.

NOA

Ryan?

No answer.

Concerned, Noa groggily falls out of the bed. She wanders into the rest of the house, quickly finding Ryan sitting at the kitchen table, writing on a notepad.

She approaches and puts her hand on his shoulder.

NOA

What are you doing? It's like 5 in the morning.

RYAN

Couldn't sleep.

NOA

Is it weird if I stay and sleep if you're awake?

RYAN

You should go.

NOA

I was joking..

RYAN

No, go home.

NOA

What?

RYAN

Go home. It's 5 a.m., this shouldn't have happened.

NOA

What does *that* mean?

RYAN

God, just go home! What do I have to say?

Noa steps back as he whips around to look at her.

(CONTINUED)

A beat.

NOA

Okay.

Noa walks to the door, slamming it behind her.

INT. NOA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Noa is curled up in her bed, looking toward a window. Her eyes are open, though tired. Obviously, she hasn't slept.

Her laptop is on the bed next to her, open. There are a bunch of tabs.

The open one is a website about post traumatic stress disorders in journalists.

The clock reads 7:45.

Her phone rings, jarringly. She calmly reaches over and answers.

NOA

Hello? -- Thanks for calling me back, I'm sorry about all the messages. -- You can? -- That's perfect, thank you so much. -- Yes, I'll see you then. Thank you.

She hangs up and sets the phone back on the bedside table. Rolls over onto her back. Stares up at the ceiling. Nods confidently: You can do this.

INT. NOA'S SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Noa stands in the shower, letting the water hit her face. Her eyes are closed, she looks like she's sleeping.

She might be.

Nope. Her hands reach up to scrub her face. They run through her hair. She stands still again. Sighs.

INT. NOA'S APARTMENT - LATER MORNING

Now dressed, Noa grabs her bag and a travel mug and leaves.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Noa stands at Ryan's front door, knocking. She looks confident, but nervous.

The door pulls open and there's Ryan. His face quickly betrays his anger.

NOA  
Hi.

RYAN  
Did you forget something?

NOA  
No, I--

RYAN  
Where did you go?

NOA  
I...you told me to go home.

RYAN  
What? When I woke up, you were gone.

NOA  
Maybe you were sleepwalking?

RYAN  
I don't sleepwalk.

NOA  
I'm sorry. I thought you wanted me to leave.

RYAN  
I'd never say that.

NOA  
I'd never just leave.

They look at each other for a moment, sizing up the point of arguing.

RYAN  
Why'd you come back?

NOA  
I wanted to talk to you.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN  
Over breakfast?

NOA  
No, it's sort of important.

RYAN  
Important things can be discussed  
over breakfast.

She ignores him.

NOA  
I couldn't sleep when I got home,  
and I started Googling things about  
your situation.

RYAN  
What situation?

NOA  
The hostage thing. Have you been to  
therapy?

RYAN  
Noa, what?

NOA  
I think it might be important for  
you to go to therapy.

RYAN  
I went to therapy and it didn't do  
anything.

NOA  
I think if you don't go you might  
develop traumatic stress.

RYAN  
You think I have PTSD?

NOA  
It's been found that journalists  
who go through what you went  
through are more likely to develop  
post-traumatic stress.

RYAN  
I don't need your Google diagnosis.



NOA

I'm trying to help, I'm at a loss.

RYAN

A loss for what? We're friends, and I like you, and I would've loved to have woken up next to you, but I don't need an Internet doctor. I can do that myself.

Noa persists.

NOA

I found this man downtown who deals with these situations, I want to take you to talk to him.

RYAN

You're kidding.

A beat.

RYAN

Where is this coming from?

NOA

I want to help you, Ryan.

RYAN

I don't need your help, Noa.

NOA

I think--

RYAN

I don't care what you think about this! It's not your place. That's it.

It's quiet for a moment.

Noa nods.

NOA

Okay.

RYAN

That's it?

NOA

That's it. Let's have breakfast.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

I'll treat.

NOA

Let me. I also Internet researched  
the best breakfast place in the  
area.

RYAN

Let's hope it's not Denny's.

INT. NOA'S CAR - DAY

Noa drives, Ryan sits in the passenger seat. The windows are open, he's looking out at the city.

Noa glances at him a few times. He catches her once.

RYAN

You're always looking at me.

NOA

You're nice to look at.

He laughs and takes her hand.

Her phone rings. She quickly pulls her hand away and answers it.

As she speaks, they pull off the freeway and drive through city blocks.

NOA

Hello? -- Bill, hi. I'm...out  
grabbing some documents.  
The...police called and said that  
evidence will be ready by 11, so  
I'm running a few errands until  
then. I'll be in after that. --  
Okay. Coffee. Got it. -- Bye.

She sets the phone in the cupholder and looks to rejoin their hands. Ryan's have since moved.

NOA

Bill. Apparently when I'm not there  
an hour early, I'm late.

RYAN

You've got to lower your standards  
or that guy will expect you to be  
on top of everything.

(CONTINUED)

Noa turns into a complex of buildings that don't look like there could be a greasy spoon place anywhere nearby.

Ryan's pleasantness begins to fade as he realizes where they are.

RYAN

Noa. You're not doing this.

She doesn't respond.

RYAN

This is ridiculous! Childish. I'm not going in.

NOA

We're here, I have an appointment. I'm coming in with you, and if it's terrible, we'll leave immediate--

RYAN

I'm not your toy to manipulate, Noa!

He's yelling now.

RYAN

You've completely overstepped the boundaries of our...whatever is going on here. I trusted that you would let it go!

Ryan gets out of the car, slamming the door. He doesn't walk away, but paces in the parking spot, frustrated.

Noa takes a deep breath, then calmly gets out of the car. She looks to Ryan over the top of the car.

RYAN

Don't try to control my life, Noa. It's fucked up enough, you don't have to come in and fuck it up more.

NOA

I'm not trying to do that.

RYAN

Yes, you are! Do you even understand what you did? You took a hostage hostage for a doctor's appointment.

A beat. Noa doesn't say anything.

Ryan sighs, frustrated. He paces in wide circles. Noa watches him, not wanting to fight with him.

After another moment, Ryan approaches the passenger's side of the car and looks across at Noa.

RYAN

Fine.

NOA

Fine what?

RYAN

We're here, let's just get this shit over with.

NOA

Really?

RYAN

Don't ever do this again.

NOA

It's going to be good for you.

RYAN

No, it's not. But I'm not going to stoop to your level of acting like a child for not getting what I want.

Ryan starts toward the building without her. Noa follows after a few seconds taking in his words.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan and Noa sit in a roomy office. She sits with her back straight, hands on her legs, looking nervous. Ryan is flipping through a magazine.

They don't speak.

After a silent moment, the doctor enters.

DOCTOR

Hi.

He sits down at the desk across from them.

DOCTOR

I'm Dr. Neils.

(CONTINUED)

Ryan sits up, setting the magazine down but not looking at the doctor.

Noa smiles at the doctor.

NOA

I'm Noa. We spoke on the phone.  
This is Ryan.

DOCTOR

Good to meet you. Ryan, Noa told me about your case, it's very interesting. I just want to spend a bit of time understanding from you where you are in your recovery. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened?

Ryan hesitates.

NOA

Well, he was a--

DOCTOR

Sorry, Noa, I'd like to hear from Ryan.

NOA

Oh. Right, sorry.

DOCTOR

Ryan?

RYAN

I'm sure she told you everything.  
I'd rather not.

DOCTOR

It's really necessary for us to move forward with anything, Ryan.

Ryan runs a hand through his hair. He looks at Noa, who is subtly pleading.

RYAN

I was in Afghanistan, photographing with the foreign team. We went into a protest situation and were taken hostage during a violent riot by a feminist group. Only one of them ever interacted with us. She kept us in the basement of their compound for 10 months before we were released.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Did you ever go through any therapy when you returned home?

RYAN

For a year.

DOCTOR

Why did you stop going?

RYAN

I didn't need it anymore.

DOCTOR

Mm. Tell me a little about the woman you mentioned.

RYAN

There's nothing to tell.

DOCTOR

With all due respect, she was your only contact with the outside world for 10 months. What was she like?

Ryan stands up calmly.

RYAN

I'm finished.

NOA

Ryan, it's fine. You're doing great.

RYAN

This isn't a fucking game, Noa.

Ryan leaves the office, loudly slamming the door as he leaves.

NOA

I'm sorry.

The doctor shakes his head, no problem.

DOCTOR

Don't push it. Encourage him to talk to someone.

NOA

He barely wanted to come here, I doubt he'll go to a therapist.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Then you be his therapist for now.

NOA

I don't know that that's going to work out either.

DOCTOR

Keep me updated. We'll try again.

NOA

Thank you. Sorry again.

Noa quickly leaves the office to find Ryan.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Noa catches up to Ryan, who is just outside the office's front door.

NOA

Ryan! Are you okay?

RYAN

Why is it that you think I'm not?

A beat.

RYAN

I'm perfectly fine. My "situation" doesn't have to define everything I do. I was taken hostage. Okay? What do you want me to admit?

NOA

I want to help--.

RYAN

I don't want help! I don't want you to turn this into you fixing me. I can deal with my own problems on my own, just like I've been doing for the past two years.

NOA

I know it's not what you want, but it would be good for you.

RYAN

What the hell do you know about what's good for me? We've known each other for less than a month. I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RYAN (cont'd)  
said I don't need it, and I think I  
know better about what I need than  
you do, kid.

(a beat)  
And, you know, if all you want from  
this is to solve my problems, then  
I don't need you either.

Noa is stung.

RYAN  
Is that what you want?

NOA  
No, of course not. I want you to be  
better.

Ryan snaps. Yelling:

RYAN  
Better than what? There is no  
better! This is all there is, Noa!  
I'm not fucking sick, there's no  
pill that's going to make me your  
god damn perfect man! This is it!  
This is it.

A moment.

Noa takes a step toward Ryan, trying to be comforting. Ryan  
smoothly steps away.

He shakes his head, resigned.

RYAN  
Take me home.

NOA  
I want to talk about it.

RYAN  
We've talked enough.

He walks toward the car.

INT. NOA'S CAR - DAY

Noa pulls up in front of Ryan's house. Before the car stops,  
he's pushing his door open.

(CONTINUED)



NOA

Ryan.

RYAN

Leave it alone, Noa. Was good while  
it lasted.

He shuts the door and goes inside. She leans on her hand,  
watching him.

Once his front door shuts, she's free to throw a fit.

It's cautious, compact, enveloped. Noa screams through her  
teeth. She stomps her feet. She hits all the nearby  
surfaces, careful to avoid the horn.

She sets her head on the top of the wheel. A huge exhale.

Noa picks up her head. Another sigh, this time of relief.

She calmly starts the car.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Noa enters, coffeeless, distracted.

Bill sees her.

BILL

Anything in those documents?

Noa snaps to attention. Confused. She remembers.

NOA

Oh. No, they weren't ready.

BILL

God damn red tape.

NOA

Yeah.

Bill notices her distraction.

BILL

What's up?

NOA

Just distracted.

Bill takes her in. He glances around the office, focusing on  
Ryan's empty desk.

(CONTINUED)

BILL  
Come in here.

Bill leads her into

HIS OFFICE

He shuts the door.

BILL  
Is this about Barnes?

NOA  
What? Of course not, no.

BILL  
I know when you're bullshitting me.

NOA  
I'd rather not talk about it, I  
have an actress to call  
harrassedly, pleading for an  
interview.

BILL  
I told you not to get caught up  
with him. Trust me. It's not worth  
it.

NOA  
What does that mean?! You're just  
giving me encrypted  
wink-wink-nudge-nudge code!

BILL  
He's suffering, Briar! Being stuck  
over there really got to him, and  
now women really do. You can't mess  
with it, just...leave it alone. You  
have enough on your plate with this  
story, I can't have you  
"distracted" by his problems.

NOA  
Well, you partnered us, you come  
fix the mess.

Noa leaves the office.

Bill leans against his desk, pensive.

A knock.

(CONTINUED)

BILL

Yep.

Noa peeks in.

NOA

That was really rude. You're my boss. I'm sorry. I'm going to go call Maggie a hundred times.

BILL

Thanks.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY, LATER

Noa sits at her computer, trying to find a new source who might speak out.

Then, a jarring ring of her phone.

This never happens. Most likely because she's always on the phone.

She sits up, clears her throat, answers.

NOA

Los Angeles Times, this is Noa Briar.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

MAGGIE

Hi Noa, this is Maggie Meyers.

NOA

Hi. Hi, this...this is a surprise.

MAGGIE

I'm tired of this. I don't want you to have to call me hundreds of times a day to hear my manager say I don't want to talk with the press.

NOA

I understand, but it's my job. I have to call until I get something for this story.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

I know. I want to talk to you.

NOA

Like, right now?

MAGGIE

I'd rather talk in person.  
Tomorrow? My manager won't know,  
it'll just be you and I.

NOA

Really?

MAGGIE

I'm really tired of hiding in this  
hotel.

NOA

That's...okay, yeah, absolutely,  
that's great.

MAGGIE

Meet me at the 24/7 diner just over  
by the Beverly Hotel? About 11?

NOA

I'll be there.

MAGGIE

Looking forward to it.

INT. 24/7 DINER - MORNING

The next day.

Noa sits at a booth with Maggie Meyers, tucked in the corner  
of a diner.

Noa looks tired and stressed beneath her professional  
exterior.

Maggie looks like she hasn't slept. She's wrapped in a large  
sweater -- either a disguise or pajamas she was too lazy to  
get out of.

Both have large mugs of coffee.

NOA

I really appreciate you meeting  
with me.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

You've seemed exceptionally desperate the past few days.

NOA

A little preoccupied. Stressed. Sure you know how that feels.

Maggie smiles, nods once.

NOA

I am sorry to have been harassing you at such a tough time.

MAGGIE

It's your job, I guess I understand that. Thanks for the thought.

NOA

Have you seen any progress from the police?

MAGGIE

No, everything seems held up.

Noa jots a couple of things down. Nothing important. Maggie doesn't notice.

MAGGIE

It's scary. I know in my gut that he wasn't there for her.

NOA

What do you mean?

MAGGIE

I mean she wasn't...okay, she was one of my closest friends, but she wasn't a drop in anyone else's bucket, you know? Why would someone break in to another person's house to kill her?

NOA

How are you dealing with that?

MAGGIE

I haven't really slept since. I've got guards stationed around my hotel suite at the Beverly. Good luck trying to get to the 8th floor!

She laughs weakly.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

None of it makes a difference.  
There's still someone in the city  
who wants to end my life, and I  
can't catch any sleep over that. I  
hate it. I really hate it.

Noa nods.

MAGGIE

Sorry. Didn't mean to unload on  
you.

NOA

That's okay.

MAGGIE

Don't use any of the security  
stuff, that's all confidential.  
Anything else, I don't care.

NOA

Really?

MAGGIE

What's the difference?

Noa jots down a few more notes. Maggie sips her coffee.

NOA

One last thing - did you ever see  
the evidence note from the police?  
I know everything's under wraps,  
but if you read it, some context  
would be nice for the story.

MAGGIE

Sorry, the what?

NOA

The note? From Taylor?

MAGGIE

From Taylor?

NOA

You didn't see it.

MAGGIE

No. The police have it?

NOA

It was being processed last time I checked in.

MAGGIE

Shit.

She's silent for a minute. Scared.

MAGGIE

So it was definitely him?

NOA

Seems like it. Though they can't find him in the system. Apparently he isn't a citizen.

MAGGIE

It's probably a fake name.

NOA

Why do you say that?

MAGGIE

If I were a stalker, I'd take a fake name. Seems smart.

Noa starts to look uncomfortable. Maggie takes a sip of her drink and looks out the window.

EXT. CAFE - MORNING, LATER

After the interview.

Maggie and Noa stand on the curb. Maggie's car can be seen pulling around the block.

MAGGIE

Thanks for the coffee, Noa.

NOA

Thanks for the interview, Maggie.

Noa holds out her hand for Maggie. Maggie ignores it and steps in to hug the actress.

They pull apart.

MAGGIE

I really respect you. You have...so much confidence. I thought you were an idiot when we met on the red carpet, but...I really respect you.

(CONTINUED)

Noa nods shyly.

NOA

I'm sorry for what you're going through.

The car is at the curb, the driver takes Maggie's arm.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

And then she's gone. In the car, down the block in what feels like seconds.

Noa, still looking nervous, takes out her phone. It's a gray morning outside. She starts walking toward where her car is parked.

Finds Ryan's number. Calls it.

Voicemail.

NOA

Hey. I'm...I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, I screwed up. Call me. Bye.

INT. LOS ANGELES TIMES OFFICE - DAY

Noa is at her desk. Totally blocked.

She tries a nice, magazine-y, scene-setting lead. Something about tables set with blue coffee mugs, gray sky leading the tone of the interview.

It's crap. Gone. She tries again. Straight news. Maggie Meyers believes stalker was out to kill her.

Terrible. Gone.

She types 'lede' and moves on a few lines down. Trying to hammer out the second paragraph. No use. The story isn't coming.

She spins her chair away from the desk, toward the TV, thinking. Nothing good there.

Back toward the computer. Browser up, email refreshed -- nothing.

Noa stands up, wandering the office, looking for something to inspire her.

(CONTINUED)



She wanders past cluttered desks, reporters doing interviews, some hard at work with big headphones blocking out the world.

Mailboxes. She's never got anything.

Until now.

Noa grabs a large orange envelope from her mail slot. She opens it as she walks quickly back to her desk.

There is the evidence report about the note, with an unredacted copy.

Noa stops short. She reads through it quickly and jets to her desk. She picks up the phone, her eyes still on the page.

NOA

Hi, Officer Busek?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

BUSEK

Yep, Busek.

NOA

This is Noa Briar from the Los Angeles Times.

BUSEK

You got the note?

NOA

It's definite? Printable?

BUSEK

Yep, we're getting the warrant now. We'll be at the Beverly in a few hours to pick her up.

NOA

Can I get a statement?

BUSEK

It's an unfortunate circumstance, but we're glad to put the case to bed before anyone else was hurt.

Noa jots down his statement quickly.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Thank you so much. I'm sure I'll be following up tomorrow.

BUSEK

All right, glad I could help.

She hangs up, then runs to Bill's office with her notes.

BILL'S OFFICE

Noa bursts in. Bill looks up curiously.

NOA

I got the evidence note from the police. From the stalker, that guy they couldn't find. They did a handwriting analysis, it was her.

BILL

What?

NOA

It was Maggie's handwriting! She wrote it! They're hammering out the warrant, they're going to take her into custody later tonight.

BILL

Fucking shit, get on it. I'll call in the change.

Bill picks up his phone.

NOA

What change?

BILL

The page one change. Go write it!

Noa can't help but smile.

Bill glares at her. She leaves briskly, fired up, ready to write.

INT. LOS ANGELES TIMES BATHROOM - NIGHT

Noa walks into the bathroom. She looks beat, but is smiling.

She checks all the stalls. Then, pulls out her phone and dials.

(CONTINUED)

NOA

Hey mom. -- Guess what? -- Front page tomorrow. For sure this time.

Noa's smile broadens as she walks through the parking lot.

NOA

We got a good lead on that story I've been working on, and it broke today. -- Thanks, mom. -- Okay. Yeah, it was better today.

Loud knocks on the bathroom door. Then a head pokes in.

BILL (O.S.)

Noa?

NOA

Hold on a second, mom.

Noa turns to look at Bill.

NOA

What are you doing?

BILL

I'm taking you for a drink. We've got things to discuss.

NOA

Now? Don't you have a paper to produce?

BILL

Would you let me worry about my damn job and accept a free drink? Christ.

NOA

Okay, okay. Let me just...

She gestures to her phone. Bill nods, ducks out.

NOA

Sorry mom. That was my boss. He's taking me for a drink. -- No, he said he wants to talk about something. He's not picking me up. -- I'll call you later tonight, mom. Love you.

Noa hangs up. She checks herself in the mirror. Exhales.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Noa and Bill sit at a table in a nice restaurant. She's drinking a tall cocktail, him a glass of scotch or whiskey or something crotchity-old-man like.

Bill raises his glass.

BILL  
On your first page one.

NOA  
Second, if you count that promo.

BILL  
I don't.

Bill taps her glass. Noa smiles. She takes a sip.

NOA  
Do you take all your cubs out when they land a page one?

BILL  
Only if I really like 'em.

NOA  
I've had the distinct feeling you've hated me since I got here.

BILL  
Exactly, I like you. And I want to promote you out of entertainment.

NOA  
What?

BILL  
It's quick, but you've really proven yourself with this. You bucked up.

NOA  
Promote me to what? Finance?

BILL  
For now, probably investigations.

NOA  
Oh.

(CONTINUED)

BILL

Finance is a little tight. But we'll get you a few stories from them and get working on moving you over there.

NOA

How long do you think?

Bill laughs, slightly exasperated.

BILL

You're a frustrating girl.

NOA

Woman.

Noa's phone lights up at the table, then rings. It's Ryan.

She stares at it. Bill notices as well.

BILL

That Barnes?

NOA

Looks like it, yeah. May I?

Bill gestures for her to go ahead and takes his drink into hand.

Noa stands and walks to the

FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE RESTAURANT.

She picks up. Before she can answer, Ryan speaks:

RYAN (V.O)

Noa?

He sounds frantic. Noa is quickly worried.

NOA

Hey, are you all right?

RYAN (V.O)

No, Noa...she's...

NOA

(panicked)

Maggie?

(CONTINUED)

RYAN (V.O)  
Yeah, it's about Maggie, I think--

NOA  
Did she talk to you?

RYAN (V.O)  
I think someone was here. There are notes.

NOA  
Don't do anything, I'm coming over.

RYAN (V.O)  
Noa, you need to call the police.

NOA  
I'll be there in 10 minutes.

RYAN (V.O)  
Noa, call--

The call ends. Noa stares at her phone, panicked. She rushes:

INSIDE.

At the table, Noa grabs her jacket.

NOA  
I have to go, I'm sorry.

Bill looks her over. He sighs.

BILL  
Barnes. I told you--

NOA  
I know what you told me, but I ignored you. I'm sorry, I've got to go.

Bill glares. Not so much fun drinking alone

BILL  
You're on my time, Briar.

NOA  
Bill, someone left a note there. I think it's Maggie, I think she...

BILL

What?

NOA

I have to go, I'll call you.

BILL

Noa, I'm calling the police!

NOA

If I don't call in 15 minutes, do that.

Noa leaves the restaurant quickly. Bill watches her go, thoroughly irked and thoroughly freaked out.

EXT. RYAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Noa's car pulls up in front of Ryan's house and parks.

She gets out, looking concerned. She quickly strides toward the house, up the steps, to the door. She goes inside.

NOA

Ryan?

INT. RYAN'S HOUSE - EVENING, CONTINUOUS

The house looks normal. Lights are on, nothing suspicious.

Noa seems to physically relax. She shuts the door behind her.

She stands still, trying to listen for any noises. Nothing.

She walks through the living room and papers on a coffee table catch her eye.

Noa stops at the table and picks up the papers.

The first is a cable bill, scribbled all over. She looks it over, her brow furrowed, and then lifts it to put it behind the other two.

Then she sees the second. Her eyes widen.

It's a small scrap of paper that reads: "You're next."

Noa is transfixed, staring at it. She looks around and sees Ryan, standing a few feet away, staring at her. She starts.

(CONTINUED)

NOA  
Shit, you scared me.

RYAN  
What are you doing?

Noa looks at the notes. She walks towards him.

NOA  
Ryan, this is serious, is it from her?

RYAN  
Why are you reading it?

NOA  
Did you call the police?

RYAN  
You can't just come in here and go through all of my things.

NOA  
Please don't get defensive like this, you called me for help.

RYAN  
That was nothing. I'm feeling better now.

NOA  
Come on. Talk to me, Ryan. I know I messed up with the whole doctor thing and I'm sorry. Whatever it is that's going on, I'll listen.

RYAN  
Yeah. It's nothing.

Noa studies his face. It seems a little less readable than usual.

NOA  
This isn't nothing! This note is serious! Why did you even call if you didn't want my help?

RYAN  
I don't recall.

NOA  
Why didn't you call the police about it?



Ryan laughs shortly. It catches Noa off guard. She sets the notes down and takes a step toward Ryan.

NOA

What?

RYAN

Why would I call the police?

NOA

That note is threatening your life.

Ryan shakes his head, he turns away from her, starts walking down a hallway.

RYAN

It's not my life that's in danger.

NOA

What the hell are you talking about?

Ryan whips around.

RYAN

Do you ever stop with the questions? Christ!

This surprises Noa. She folds her arms over her chest, defensive.

NOA

What is wrong with you?

Ryan stares at her. He slowly approaches her until he's standing a few inches in front of her.

RYAN

(strongly)

There is *nothing* wrong with me.

Ryan locks his eyes with hers. Then, he tucks a piece of her hair behind her ear. He runs his hand gently down her cheek.

RYAN

You might be able to trick him, but not me.

NOA

Trick who?

Noa tries to pull away from his touch. His free hand grabs hers and holds onto her tightly.

RYAN

Ryan is soft. He completely overlooked you. I don't know how he let you get so close after what you did.

NOA

Ryan, I'm--

RYAN

(strong)

Don't try to play me.

NOA

I'm not...I'm not trying to play anyone, Ryan--

RYAN

DON'T. Call me that. You Jihadi bitch.

Noa rips her hand from his and steps back slightly.

NOA

Ryan, what the hell--?

She glares with a mix of anger, fear and worry. He stares blankly.

Seeing him now in full, she notices his posture has slightly changed, his look is more menacing. Something is off.

NOA

Ryan...

Ryan reaches out quickly and grabs her bag. Noa takes a step toward him as he begins to rifle through.

NOA

What are you doing?

Ryan pulls out the manilla envelope with the evidence letter in it.

He reaches in and takes out the letter. As he reads over it, he smiles to himself.

RYAN

This letter is a masterpiece. Have you read it?

(CONTINUED)

NOA  
Yes, I've read it. It's sick.

RYAN  
They said she wrote this?

NOA  
It's her handwriting.

RYAN  
Yeah.

NOA  
What's going on, Ryan?

RYAN  
(sharply)  
My name is Taylor. Not Ryan. There  
is no Ryan.

Noa goes silent. Ryan/Taylor reads the note again, smiling.

NOA  
Taylor?

RYAN  
Yes, thank you.

NOA  
Who wrote that letter?

Ryan/Taylor grins at her. He holds his arms wide open,  
accepting praise for his work.

RYAN  
Tada!  
(a beat)  
Nothing like a little Photoshop, a  
few hours of tracing and a lot of  
hard work and dedication, right?

NOA  
Did you--

Ryan barks a laugh.

RYAN  
Really? That's your follow-up? Yes,  
of course I killed her. I did it.  
I'm the menace to society who  
killed someone no one cared about.

Ryan returns to the note and paces the room, reading it.  
Some phrases he whispers to himself.

(CONTINUED)

The moment is otherwise silent.

Then, Noa's phone starts ringing, pulling them both back into the moment.

RYAN  
Who is it?

NOA  
It's Bill from work.

RYAN  
Answer it.

Noa holds her ringing phone and watches Ryan. He steps towards her.

RYAN  
Answer the phone.

Noa answers.

NOA  
Hello?

BILL (V.O.)  
Everything okay, what's going on?

RYAN  
Speaker, please.

Noa hits a button and turns on the speaker phone.

NOA  
Say that again, sorry.

BILL (V.O.)  
I said are you okay? Should I call the police?

Ryan shakes his head up without a smile.

NOA  
Um, everything's good. He...called the police and they're looking into the note.

Now he grins, nods.

BILL (V.O.)  
Let me talk to Barnes.

Noa looks panicked. Ryan shakes his head.

NOA

He's speaking with the police. I'll have him call you as soon as they're finished.

BILL (V.O.)

Am I on speaker phone?

NOA

No.

BILL (V.O.)

Noa, are you sure everything's all right?

NOA

Hold my story for tomorrow.

BILL (V.O.)

What the hell are you talking about that for? I'm concerned about you, not the damn story.

NOA

I'm okay, Bill. I've got to go, I'll call you as soon as the police leave, I promise.

Noa hangs up. She lets out a few ragged breaths, like dryly sobbing.

RYAN

I need you to do something for me.

NOA

Are you going to let me go?

RYAN

Come into the living room.

Ryan starts toward the living room. Noa follows.

LIVING ROOM.

Ryan picks up the notes Noa had in her hand earlier. He lets the scrap reading "You're next" fall to the ground and holds only the final note that Noa has not yet read.

RYAN

Since you had the first, I thought you'd like to have the sequel.

He places the paper into Noa's hand. She skims over it.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

See, once she's gone, I'll be gone too, so who cares if everyone knows. He'll get the brunt of it.

Noa seems to grow numb, emotionless as she reads the note. It's silent as she finishes.

NOA

You can't do this to him.

RYAN

You don't know shit.

NOA

Why would you give this to me?

RYAN

Because you're not going to turn it in. It's Maggie's life or his. Who are you going to save?

This dawns on Noa. She's torn.

NOA

Are you going to let me go?

RYAN

Sure.

Noa starts toward the door. Ryan/Taylor steps casually in her path.

RYAN

Read it.

NOA

I read it.

RYAN

I'd like to hear the poetry from your pretty mouth.

Noa doesn't move.

RYAN

Whenever you're ready.

Noa still refuses.

RYAN

You'll be free to go save whomever afterward. Pinky promise.

(CONTINUED)

He holds out his pinky finger.

Noa ignores it.

NOA

I don't want to read it.

RYAN

You don't have much of a choice.

Ryan/Taylor reaches calmly behind his back and pulls a gun from the back of his jeans. He returns his hand to his side, the gun loosely in his hand.

Noa hides her nerves, though her hand holding the paper is shaking slightly.

RYAN

All you have to do it read it.

NOA

Why?

RYAN

It's nice to hear my work.

He pulls the safety on the gun and it clicks.

NOA

And if I do, you'll let me go.

RYAN

I'll let you go.

She takes a deep breath and holds up the letter.

As she reads:

EXT. BEVERLY HOTEL - NIGHT

Ryan/Taylor approaches the Beverly Hotel. Nonchalant. Looking dapper. Fitting in.

NOA (V.O.)

You've done well trying to figure this one out. Bravo. Truly. But your efforts have taken you completely in the wrong path. For you at least. For me, the path was absolute perfection. Couldn't have planned it better, really.

INT. BEVERLY HOTEL - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Taylor walks in like he owns the place. He makes his way to the end of the hall to the emergency staircase.

He walks unsuspectingly up flights to the 9th floor.

NOA (V.O.)

The assistant was a happy accident. She stood between me and the militant bitch Maggie Meyers, so I killed her. Thankfully, that scene put you on Maggie's trail. True magic.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BEVERLY HOTEL - NIGHT

As Taylor is working his way upstairs, police vehicles pull up around the building, lights flashing.

Officer Busek steps out of the lead car. He leads his team inside.

NINTH FLOOR.

Taylor walks down the hall confidently. There's a security guard by the elevators. He flashes his key.

TAYLOR

Figured I'd get some exercise with those stairs, feel like I've been in the car for hours.

The guard smiles and salutes casually.

Taylor uses the key to get into a room.

LOBBY

Busek flashes his badge at the concierge.

BUSEK

I need admittance to the eighth floor, we have a warrant for Maggie Meyers' arrest.

HOTEL ROOM.

Taylor shuts the door and locks it. He tosses the key and heads for the balcony.

(CONTINUED)



NOA (V.O.)

Maggie Meyers deserves this. She took a group of innocent journalists hostage. She starved us. She abused us. She made us watch while her Jihadist group killed our men. She should have been killed by the American government, who instead negotiated the journalists' release with terrorists who still live.

Taylor steps carefully onto the balcony and shuts the door. He pulls off his tie and looks over the side edge.

Below, police reds and blues are flashing. Taylor doesn't take any notice.

He ties the tie to the bottom of the porch rail, then climbs over. He holds the tie for little support and jumps down onto the balcony below him.

He reaches up, undoes the tie, puts it back on carefully. He smooths out his hair. Still looking dapper.

He climbs over onto the balcony to the right. Works at the lock. Pulls the door open.

LOBBY

Busek is still standing with the concierge. His crew of cops are drawing attention from the late night lobby crowd.

BUSEK

Miss, I'm an officer, you have to let me up there.

CONCIERGE

I'm sorry, sir, I need the manager's permission for eighth floor admittance.

BUSEK

Then get your God damned manager over here, this is a big arrest.

The concierge nods and picks up the desk phone.

CONCIERGE

Hi sir, this is Kelly at the desk. There's a group of LAPD here who need admittance to the --

She looks around suspiciously, then whispers.

(CONTINUED)

## CONCIERGE

--eighth floor. They're arresting  
the eagle.

Busek rolls his eyes. He gently takes the phone from Kelly  
the Concierge.

## BUSEK

Sir, this is Officer Gary Busek  
with the LAPD, I and my guys need  
to get to the eighth floor  
immediately.

Busek pauses a moment, then hangs up the phone. A man then  
bursts out of a back office.

## MANAGER

Officer, I apologize for the  
trouble, let me take you up.

MAGGIE'S HOTEL ROOM.

Dark. Taylor quietly shuts the door.

## NOA (V.O.)

Maggie Meyers is the target. Or was  
the target, now she's the victim.  
Whoever stands in the way falls  
along with her. Conspirators.  
Terrorists in their own right.

He takes a pillow from the couch. Walks to the bedside next  
to where Maggie is asleep. He pulls a gun from his pocket.

LOBBY

The group is now at the elevator bank. The manager scans his  
badge and the elevator opens. A large security guard stands  
inside.

## MANAGER

They need eight.

Busek flashes his badge. The men all load into the elevator.

MAGGIE'S ROOM

Taylor places the pillow over Maggie's head, pressing down  
hard. She starts to move. Then she starts to fight.

He holds the gun to the pillow.

(CONTINUED)

NOA (V.O.)

Now she's gone. They're all gone.  
I'm gone. You put up a good fight,  
but I won this one. Sincerely--

He fires the gun. It's quieted by the pillow, but still loud. Sounds like something knocked over.

Maggie goes still. Taylor relaxes. He tosses the pillow aside and observes.

Then he punches her bloody face hard, breaking her nose.

There's a knock at the door.

GUARD (O.S.)

Everything okay in there?

Taylor clears his throat. He emits a pitched and groggy:

TAYLOR

Mmhmm.

Taylor takes a step back. Sinks onto the floor. Exhales.

Then Ryan looks up. His eyes are frantic. He looks at his bloody hand. He scrambles to the bedside light and turns it on.

GUARD (O.S.)

Did something fall over?

He sees Maggie. Terror in his face.

He picks up the phone and calls down to the lobby. His voice cracks:

RYAN

Call an ambulance. It's Maggie  
Meyers. Get someone up here. I  
don't know what...

Ryan drops the phone. He is shaking. He reaches into his pocket and grabs his own phone.

OUTSIDE

The elevator doors open and the police step out. They move toward Maggie's room, where a guard is standing with his ear pressed against the door.

(CONTINUED)

BUSEK  
Excuse me, sir.

GUARD  
I think something just fell in there.

BUSEK  
Shit, she's trying to get out.

INSIDE

Knocks at the door.

BUSEK (O.S.)  
Maggie Meyers, this is the Los Angeles Police Department, open up. You're under arrest.

RYAN  
Shit. Shit, shit, shit.

Ryan dials Noa's number.

It rings.

The knocks continue.

BUSEK (O.S.)  
Ms. Meyers, open the door or I will force it open.

The rings continue.

INT. RYAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Noa's phone is glowing, ringing. It's on the floor, next to the slip of paper reading "You're next."

The paper is stained with blood.

INT. MAGGIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The phone keeps ringing.

RYAN  
No, no, no, no, no. Pick up. Noa pick up.

(CONTINUED)

BUSEK (O.S.)  
Ms. Meyers, I am going to force  
this door open.

Ryan drops his phone. He pushes his hands against his eyes,  
covering half his face in blood.

Lost.

The sounds of Busek and his team starting to force the door  
open begin, then slowly fade.

Leaving Ryan's face, moving slowly toward the open balcony  
door. Out to Los Angeles. Dark, but glowing with light.

FADE OUT.