THROUGH SMOKE

Written by

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ACT I

INT. SPOKANE COMMUNITY PARK RESTROOM - DAY

Happy squeals from children outside bounce on the concrete walls. A small puddle or water collects under the single leaking sink. The air is dank but the sun filters through narrow windows on one wall.

The sound of scuffling echoes throughout the tiny space right before a body is pushed roughly against the wall with the windows overhead. Obviously roughed up, unkept hair tousled and oily with sweat beading on his face reddened face, PAUL winces even more when his assailant pushes him impossibly further against the unforgiving wall.

PAUL

I swear, Jose. I-- I don't have it. Someone stole it.

JOSE

So you've said. But, see, I can't very well take that back to my boss, now can I? He expects money in return for the coke he gave you.

Paul swallows audibly.

PAUL

I'll pay him back. I swear.

For a moment, Jose stares at Paul, contemplating. Then slowly lets off, taking a small step back from the other man to brush his shirt, straightening it for him, a pleasant smile on his face.

JOSE

Alright, Paul. You can pay it back.

Paul looks relieved, the tension draining a little from his body. Sighing, he closes his eyes as he collects himself.

JOSE (CONT'D)

I'll just tell my unclé that it wasn't your fault that someone stole from you the \$35K worth of product from under your nose.

Eyes snapping open again, Paul catches the glint of the knife that Jose is plunging into his side: One quick, hard thrust up between the ribs.

Jose covers Paul's mouth with his other hand and jabs the knife deeper, watching as the other man's eyes widen and then slowly close, his body going limp. Letting it fall, his grip remains on the knife's handle.

Unaffected, he grabs a paper towel from the wall dispenser, wipes the handle before dropping it beside the body and walking out slowly.

As his steps fade, someone else watches through a crack in the stalls, as the blood pools under the dead man on the floor a few feet away.

INT. EL RIO'S TACORIA - DAY

An OLDER COUPLE sits in a corner booth of the spacious restaurant. The red leather seating compliments the Mexican art on the walls and tables.

In the opposite corner, in the seated in the center of the largest U-shaped booth, sits a business man, RICO CHAVEZ, dressed in Armani gray, enjoying some beans and rice. His deep tanned skin only just now sporting laugh lines and wrinkles. Clean shaven, every strand of hair in place, gold watch peeking from his sleeve.

Two other men sit on the ends, DEV and JESUS, wear slacks with polos. Their attire the only thing similar between them. Dev, wide shouldered, muscles pulling at the knit material tight, tats poking out around the collar. Jesus; leaner in body, more on the ink.

A middle aged, Hispanic woman, ROSA, delivers food to the couple just as the main door jingles open. Jose enters with another much thinner man of similar age, CAESAR, following a step behind. Without hesitation, Jose swaggers to Rico's table.

JOSE

Hey, Uncle Rico.

Halting, Rico sets down his fork and looks up at Jose, irritated.

RICO

(In Spanish)

What did I tell you?

Nervous, the smile drops from Jose's face and answers in Spanish.

JOSE

Spanish only.

Rico eyes him expectantly.

RICO

And?

JOSE

Not to call you uncle.

Rico nods and goes back to eating.

JOSE (CONT'D)

I went to collect from Paul.

RICO

And?

JOSE

He didn't have it. Said someone stole it.

Rico sets his fork down again to look up at Jose.

RICO

What? Did he tell you who?

JOSE

Who what?

Rico turns in his seat to face Jose fully. The two men on either ends of the table shift as well, readying for directions.

RICO

Who took them? Did he tell you who took my drugs?

The old couple quickly shuffles out of the restaurant.

Eyes wide, Jose moves from foot to foot for a moment before answering.

JOSE

He didn't say.

RICO

Ask him.

Orders given, he start to return to his meal.

JOSE

I can't.

RICO

What do you mean you can't?

Jose looks around, picking up that everyone else has gone still at his refusal.

JOSE

Because. I...uh...killed him.

RICO

You did what?

A phone rings, Dev quietly answers it.

JOSE

I did what you taught me. No one steals from you. And no one-

RICO

And what now? Eh? What am I to do now with a dead body and no money? No product?

JOSE

Um. Well, I--

DEV

(0/S)

Boss.

RICO

What is it?

Dev glances at Jose then back to Rico.

DEV

We've got a problem.

EXT. COMMUNITY PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

Emergency vehicles of all types crowd the parking lot. Police swarm the park and yellow caution tape surrounds the restroom as forensic specialists go in and out.

An unmarked car pulled up, newer Ford model, gray. DET. SAMUEL MARCSON exits from the drivers seat, wearing gray suit, complete with tie, and polished black shoes. He takes a moment to assess the scene with his hard gaze, then walks towards the restroom.

Ducking under the tape, he approaches the OFFICER CHO standing sentry at the Men's Room entrance. He pulls out a notepad and clicks a pen.

MARCSON

What do you got?

Officer looks at his own notepad.

OFFICER CHO

Latino male, mid-thirties, stab wound in the ribs. Dispatch got the call around 2PM. EMTs arrived five minutes later, hospital just called, they called it.

Marcson looks at the large pool of blood in the depths of the concrete enclosure. Two forensic specialists are dusting for prints, wearing booties and coveralls.

Staring for a moment, the image flashes, showing another dead man: same position, same wound, from another time. In a flash, it's gone.

MARCSON

Who called it in?

Officer Cho gestures with his pad towards a bench a hundred yards away. Sitting there, is JAMES LEVERE and his 6 year old son KEYAN, speaking with OFFICER STEVENS.

MARCSON walks over to them.

MARCSON

(To Officer Stevens)

I've got this.

Officer Stevens nods and takes his leave.

Marcson looks down at the haggard looking man and his son quietly playing a game on a cellphone.

MARCSON

I'm Detective MARCSON. I'm going to ask you a few more questions, if that's alright.

He glances cautiously at the boy and James does as well, petting his son's hair comfortingly.

JAMES

Yeah, sure. Of course.

INT. RICO'S OFFICE - EVENING

Sitting behind a metal desk in the gray walled room, Rico looks over an email on his laptop. Starkly empty, the room

only houses one other metal chair facing him. He looks up when Dev opens the door and walks in, shutting it behind him.

RICO

(In Spanish)

Well?

DEV

(In Spanish)

We got it.

RICO

(In Spanish)

Good. Get it done.

Dev nods and walks back out. Rico sits back in his chair, contemplating.

INT. PETE'S BAR - NIGHT

A couple sits at the bar, laughing, it's a busy night with a football game playing on the large screen. STEVE eyes the beautiful woman, JOSIE, sitting next to him. As she takes the last sip of her cocktail, he reaches out and tucks her blond hair behind her ear, getting a tempting smile in return.

Just then, a loud cheer roars around them, a touchdown for the home team. Seeing Josie wince, Steve leans forward.

STEVE

Want to get out of here?

JOSIE

Yes!

Steve waves to the bartender.

EXT. PETE'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Stepping out of the loud and crowded bar, Steve helps Josie with her light sweater. Gathering her close, he grips her waist.

STEVE

Happy anniversary, baby.

He leans in for a kiss.

JOSIE

Happy Anniversary.

They turn away and start to walk away from the bar, Arm in arm.

As they cross in front of an alleyway, ARTEMIS, wearing a sleek dark wig, black slacks and black leather jacket, open at the chest to reveal a light purple shirt underneath is walking in the opposite direction.

As she passes them, she casually bumps into Steve's shoulder.

ARTEMIS

Sorry.

Steve's stride doesn't falter.

STEVE

No problem.

They all go on their way.

Spotting a taxi, Josie steps closer to the curb to hail it.

INT. TAXI - MOMENTS LATE

Glancing at the kissing couple in the back of the cab, the CABBIE rolls his eyes, then focuses on the road.

JOSIE

(0/S)

Are you alright?

Cabbie looks back again, Steve pulls at his shirt collar, then coughs. He coughs until he's choking.

JOSIE

Oh my god! Steve!

CABBIE

What's happening?

JOSIE

I- I don't know. He's sick.

CABBIE

Should I pull over?

Steve suddenly starts convulsing. Josie sits up on her knees to hold his head.

JOSIE

No. Take us to a hospital.

The car revs as the driver speeds up.

INT. BLACK CADILLAC CRV - CONTINUOUS

Artemis climbs into her car, pulls off the dark wig and runs a hand over her tight braids, and pulls out her mobile.

Her expression stoic on a softly rounded face with thinly arched brows, most of her 28 years old, spent as an assassin, this was just business.

Pressing a series of buttons, she puts it to her ear, listening for the deep male voice on the other end.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Is it done?

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

It's done.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Good. Payment will be wired to you immediately.

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

Good.

HERMES

(Over phone)

A new one just came in. Do you want it?

She takes a moment to watch people coming out of a dance club across the street. Laughter and the sound of music flowing out the doors.

FLASHBACK:

INT. ARTEMIS' CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Bouncing on her feet, YOUNG ARTEMIS dances to the vague sounds of music. At ten years old, her carefree smile beams upwards.

PRESENT:

INT. BLACK CADILLAC CRV - CONTINUOUS

Artemis blinks.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Artemis?

She shakes herself out of it.

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

Send me the info.

HERMES

I have an address. This one needs to be taken care of tonight.

ARTEMIS

That's not how I work.

HERMES

They said they'd pay you double your usual fee.

Artemis watches the clubbers again for a split second before answering.

ARTEMIS

Fine. Send me the address.

She disconnects and wearily sits back in her seat, closing her eyes. A moment later her phone vibrates.

Opening the phone sent to her, she sees a surveillance photo of James Levere. Swiping, she reads the attached message.

ON ARTIMIS'S PHONE:

HERMES

James Levere 253 Charles Blvd. Spokane

Pulling up the GPS app, she finds the address' location is a mere thirty minutes away. Starting directions, she presses the car's Start button on the dash and pulls away.

ACT II

INT. KEYAN'S BEDROOM - ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Keyan turns over in his bed, eyes closed but restless. The nightlight plugged in the wall casts shadows on the walls, making monsters of the stuffed animals there. The dark spot at the foot of the bed, a small mutt, CHEWY, is curled on top of the Spider-Man blanket.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

James is sleeping soundly, a bottle of Ambien on the nightstand.

INT. LEVERE RESIDENCE - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dark, lace-up boots silently pad up the stairs. At the top landing, Artemis' gun, with silencer attached, hangs against her side in a light grip. Turning right, she veers deeper into the hallway, coming to the master bedroom.

INT. KEYAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chewy's ears perk up, snapping him awake.

INT. LEVERE RESIDENCE - JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nudging the door wider, Artemis see's her target on the bed and slowly approaches.

INT. KEYAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chewy jumps off the bed, waking Keyan up. Sleepily, the boy climbs out to let the dog out and watches him go into his dad's open bedroom. He follows him.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Artemis shoots true, one shot to the head then drops her hand with the gun back to her side. The alarming sound of Chewy barking has her quickly turning from her kill. Glancing down, she's unimpressed by the dog. Then she sees Keyan come through the door. Eyes wide, she acts quickly, leaping for him before he can scream, pushing him into the hall and shutting the door, locking the barking dog inside.

Hand clamped over his mouth and wrapping the other around his body still gripping the gun. He struggles with muffled screeches but he's no match for her. She holds him for a moment while she hurriedly thinks of what to do with him.

Frustrated, and not happy about it in the least, she speaks in his ear.

ARTEMIS

I'm going to let you go. But you can't scream, okay?

He struggles more. She lets him until he runs out of energy.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Okay?

Breath wheezing from his nose over her hand, he hesitates, then nods.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Okay.

Slowly, she pulls her hand away. Though petrified, he doesn't scream. As she speaks next, she tucks her gun into the back of her pants. The dog's muffled barks can be heard.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Lets go downstairs, huh?

Not waiting for an answer, she grips his arm and leads the way.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sitting him down at an island counter stool, she grabs a banana out of the fruit bowl there and sets it in front of him.

ARTEMIS

Here, have a snack.

Taking out her phone from her back pocket, she makes a call, keeping a watchful eye on him as he eyes the banana strangely.

After the first ring, a business-like male voice answers.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Is it done?

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

There's a problem.

HERMES

What do you mean?

She gives the boy a pained look.

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

There's a kid here.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Shit. Did he see you?

With a quick spin, she paces a couple feet away, to whisper louder.

ARTEMIS

(Into phone)

Yes.

A pregnant pause. Then...

HERMES

(Over phone)

You know our rules. No witnesses.

She turns and makes eye contact with Keyan.

ARTEMIS

(Into Phone)

You know this isn't how I do business.

HERMES

(Over phone)

Take care of it, Artemis.

The final sound of clicking proceeds a series of annoying beeps. Locking the phone, she tucks it back into her pocket.

The boy starts to slowly peel the fruit.

Unhurried, she turns to face him as she discreetly pulls out her gun, hiding it from sight. Slowly she approaches him. He glances up.

KEYAN

Are you here to hurt me?

Gun in hand, still behind her back, her finger inches closer to the trigger, preparing, as she watches him, his fingers bruising the banana now.

Realization dawns in her eyes and she slowly replaces the gun in her waist holster, pulling her shirt over it.

After a minute hesitation...

ARTEMIS

No.

The barking has stopped.

Keyan doesn't say anything, but sets the banana away from him on the counter.

KEYAN

Then why are you here?

Surprised, she stills.

ARTEMIS

Well...

He swallows nervously.

KEYAN

Are you going to kill me?

A suffocating silence surrounds them as they eye one another over the counter.

ARTEMIS

No.

He and his dad holding up their catches beside another man, a river in the background. The MYSTERY MAN, (black, tall, middle-aged) stands behind father and son, squeezing into the picture.

Keyan looks towards the stairs then back to her.

KEYAN

Did you kill my dad?

Turning, Artemis licks her lips, a flicker of regret crossing her expression.

After a long pause, his eyes tear up, chin trembling.

Drawing in a deep breath, she pushes it out, looking around awkwardly. Jolting at the sound of her phone vibrating in her back pocket. Pulling it out, she reads a message.

ON ARTIMIS'S PHONE:

HERMES

IS IT DONE?

Turning the phone off again, she turns it over in her hand, sliding the back panel off, exposing the battery. She pulls it out and sets both on the counter.

Keyan looks at her with round eyes, unshed tears swimming in them.

ARTEMIS

Look, I'm not going to hurt you. But there will be others who will. Do you have any family around? Where's your mom?

KEYAN

She died last year. Cancer. I don't have anyone...

He chokes up, ready to start bawling. Panicked, Artemis frowns at him, completely offended.

ARTEMIS

Yeah, well...you can't stay here.

Tears forgotten, he looks around the kitchen, confused. She yanks the fishing photo off the fridge and holds the photo out to him.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Who's the other man in this picture?

He quickly studies it.

KEYAN

That's Uncle Ray. He took us fishing last month.

ARTEMIS

Uncle, huh?

KEYAN

Dad's friend. From school.

ARTEMIS

Where'd he take you fishing?

KEYAN

Flathead Lake.

She jerks a thumb over her shoulder towards the stairs.

ARTEMIS

Go pack a baq.

INT. LEVERE RESIDENCE - JAMES' BEDROOM - MORNING

Det. Samuel Marcson stands over James' now cold body still laying in his bed. The blood soaked pillow under his head the only indicator that the man wasn't just sleeping.

MARCSON

Who called it in?

Standing behind him, Officer Cho points over his shoulder towards the hall.

OFFICER CHO

Dog walker. Apparently he comes in every morning to take the dog to the park. When the pooch didn't greet him at the door, he went looking for him. Poor bastard got an eye full of this with his coffee.

He glanced down at the to-go cup of coffee on the cream colored Berber carpet, Marcson doing the same, pursing his lips in empathy.

MARCSON

And there's no one else in the house?

Side-stepping the coffee, he steps out of the room to the hall. Walking down the line of opened doors, finding Keyan's room two doors down. Bed stirred, but empty.

OFFICER CHO

No. No one else in the house. I have officers knocking on doors now to see if anyone saw or heard anything.

A dark expression of anger clouds Marson's face as he stares at the bed with dinosaur sheets.

Officer Stevens steps up behind Officer Cho.

OFFICER STEVENS

There's a Nissan Murano registered to the deceased. Garage is empty.

Marcson's head swings around to pin both officers with a steely gaze.

MARCSON

Put out an Amber Alert.

Officer Stevens nods and leaves to do as ordered. Meanwhile, Officer Cho eyes Marcson curiously.

OFFICER CHO

You really think someone came in here, killed the dad and then took the kid out for a joy ride?

Marson took a moment to look at a childish crayon drawing of a t-rex taped to the door before answering.

MARCSON

I don't know what to think, really.

Officer Cho nods, jotting something down in his notebook.

Leaving the room, Marcson heads for the stairs.

MARCSON (CONT'D)

Better start with the obvious suspect, though. Come on.

Officer Cho follows him in a clipped pace, descending the stairs.

EXT. RICO'S BACKYARD - LATE MORNING

The piñata bounces frantically as a wooden stick smacks at it. Children below, surround it's torturer, CAMILLE (6yo black hair, tied in pink bows to match her new pink dress), cheering her on.

Clapping on the sidelines with the other parents, Rico's laughter is interrupted when Jesus walks up to him and whispers in his ear, wiping the mirth from Rico's face.

Reluctantly, Rico turns away from the party to head towards the house.

INT. RICO'S HOME OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Standing behind his desk, Rico grips his expensive chair, glowering at Jose on the other side, Jesus standing by the door.

RICO

(In Spanish)

Let me get this straight. The assassin you sent to take care of your mess, is MIA and last you heard, there was still a witness breathing. Is that right?

JOSE

(In Spanish)

Well, we don't exactly know if they're still alive but--

RICO

(In Spanish)

But you haven't heard a confirmation of the job, yet, have you?

Jose shakes his head.

RICO (CONT'D)

(In Spanish)

Get me the agency you hired on the phone, now.

Jose pulls his phone out of his pants pocket. Dials a number and hands it to Rico.

INT. MOVING NISSAN MURANO - DAY

Artemis watches the road, checking the side-mirror anxiously. No one's following them...yet. Her eyes flick to the rearview mirror to the boy curled up on the back seat, passed out.

FLASHBACK:

INT. SEDAN - DAY

YOUNG ARTEMIS rides in the back seat with her teen sister, VERNICE, singing along to "Lady Marmalade." Fresh braids and beads bouncing around her cheeks and neck as she dances in her seat.

MOM turns from the front passenger seat to sing chorus with them. DAD, driving, tries his best to chime in, more than a little off key. A happy family.

Tires squeal outside, followed by a sharp honking. Just before the four of them are jostled, spinning...spinning until finally the car hits something solid and then they're flipping. Glass flies everywhere, pelting Young Artemis's face.

Eyes closed, she grips the seat belt across her chest, screaming.

PRESENT:

INT. MOVING NISSAN MURANO - CONTINUOUS

Jerking back to the present, Artemis looks to the side of the road at a small green sign.

ENTERING CHENEY POP. 12,403

She looks down at the car dash, zeroing in on the Low Fuel symbol blinking red.

Looking up again, she notes another sign listing the amenities approaching at the next exit.

GAS 1 MILE

EXT. FAST GAS - CONTIUOUS

Retired Army, Special Forces, LINCOLN (LINC) BECKS, pulls open a glass refrigerated door, pulling out a can of energy drink. Tall, his head and shoulders clear the top of the shelf in front of him when he turns. Giving him a clear view of the woman who walks through the glass door.

Artemis does a quick scan of the room before stepping up to the cashier.

CHARLIE, the cashier, smiles at her nicely, his dark, weathered skin crinkling around the eyes.

CHARLIE

Good morning. How can I help you?

She tosses bills on the counter.

ARTEMIS

On 4.

Nodding, Charlie picks up the money, punching buttons in his old register.

During this, Linc sets down one bottle of oil and takes the other with him towards the register.

CHARLIE

Anything else?

Artemis reaches over and grabs a candy bar from the small display rack beside the counter, holding it up for him. Charlie nods and presses more buttons.

Linc stands a couple feet behind her, waiting for his turn.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You're all set.

Artemis turns around, gaze flicking up when she notices Linc. He smiles wide at her and nods. Expressionless, she turns away and walks out.

Grin gone, Linc watches the woman walk back to her car, curious.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Is that all for you, Linc?

Belatedly, Linc steps forward to set the container on the counter and dig out his wallet.

LINC

Yep. Better than coffee.

He passes over a few bills.

CHARLIE

Nothing's better than coffee.

Linc smiles widely.

Looking over his shoulder as Charlie passes him his change, he zeros in on Artemis now pumping gas. The back door opens and Keyan jumps out. The moment he does, Artemis comes around to speak to him, her posture tense and agitated.

Absently, he holds his hand out for the coins Charlie hands him and stuffs them in his pocket as he walks out, the chilly can in hand. EXT. FAST GAS - CONTINUOUS

Hand on his shoulder, Artemis walks with Keyan to the store.

Frowning this time, Linc doesn't attempt to make nice. As they pass him, he turns just in time for a small gust of wind to plaster her shirt to her back, the outline of the butt of a gun evident.

Alarmed, he watches as they enter the store together. Drawing his phone out of his back pocket, he takes a picture of the license plate of the Murano.

Tapping the image, he messages DEON, brother in arms from the Army.

EXT. FAST GAS - CONTIUOUS - MOMENTS LATER

The Murano pulls away from the gas station. A moment after it merges onto the highway, a classic, '75, long-bed Ford truck comes up behind it.

INT. LINC'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Over the patinaed sea-form green hood, Linc watches the newer car ahead of him, keeping pace a few car-lengths behind down the windy road.

His phone rings from the center seat. He puts it to his ear.

LINC

(Into Phone)

Deon, did you find anything?

DEON

(Over phone)

What the hell did you get me into, man?

Linc frowns, a hardness coming over his expression.

LINC

(Into Phone)

What did you find?

INT. DARK COMPUTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Seating in a state of the art rolling chair, facing four computer screens, Deon moves his mouse around the computer, opening files and images: the Murano, news report about the homicide of Jeremy Levere, the Amber Alert Notice for his son Keyan Levere.

DEON

(Into Phone)

The car was reported stolen an hour ago...After the owner, Jeremy Levere, was found shot to death in his bed.

LINC

(Over Phone)

Damn it.

DEON

(Over Phone)

That's not all.

LINC

(Into Phone)

Let me guess. There's a kid.

Deon's working hands pause.

DEON

(Over Phone)

Yeah. How'd you know.

INT. LINC'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Before Linc can reply, movement in his side mirror draws his attention. There's a dark SUV fast approaching from behind him.

A moment later, it passes him, zooming by at break-neck speed.

DEON

(Over Phone)

Linc?

LINC

(Into Phone)

I'll get back to you.

Not waiting for a response, he disconnects and tosses the phone back on the bench seat. The second he does, he sees the SUV comes up beside the Rogue.

Nearly instantly, the Murano jerks to the right side of the road, weaving erratically to get off the shoulder, brake lights flashing.

LINC (CONT'D)

Shit.

INT. DARK COMPUTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Deon stares at the computer screens, phone off.

DEON

Shit.

INT. LINC'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Punching his foot on the gas, he speeds forward.

INT. MOVING NISSAN MURANO - CONTINUOUS

Curled up on the back seat, belt still wrapped around his body, Keyan buries his face in Chewy's fur, his small body clutched tightly in the boy's arms.

KEYAN

What's happening?

Dead ducked to the side, Artemis struggled to right the car, jerking the wheel, causing them to ram the SUV. Through the window, she watches the shooter in the passenger seat jostle back, the handgun with silencer drawn inwards.

ARTEMIS

Just stay down!

Speeding up, she gains a few feet of distance but it's not enough. The other driver quickly compensates.

Lightening fast, Artemis grabs for the gun sans silencer on the passenger seat, takes aim and returns fire, hitting the other shooter in the chest, throwing him back. Still, the driver keeps pace.

Keyan cringes from his spot on the seat, window glass surrounding him.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Hold on kid.

Quickly following her warning, the SUV rams into their vehicle again, sending them into the gravel shoulder.

INT. LINC'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Revving up along the other side of the SUV, the Murano kicking up rocks as it struggles to get back on the road, Linc draws the attention of the other driver. Surprised, the driver whips a gun out and starts to shoot over the other arm steadying the steering wheel.

LINC

Shit.

Ducking to the side just in time, a two bullets pierce his door window, one taking out the side mirror.

Livid, he rams the truck into the SUV. The truck's weight is just enough to crush the front driver's-side wheel inwards, the tire popping. As it shudders, the tire wears down, allowing the rim to scape the road. A horrendous screeching sounds as the driver struggles to regain control. Failing, the vehicle slows and veers to the left.

Linc slams the break as the SUV crosses in front of him, running off the road to land on it's side in the gravel, sliding a few yards before running into a guard rail.

Ahead, the Murano pulls off to the right, halting abruptly. Linc pulls up behind it, jumping out, leaving his door wide open as he begins to race forward.

Artemis jumps out, staggering for a second, her left hand clutching her left hip, while the right is raise, holding the gun steady.

Aimed right for Linc.

Skidding on the gravel beneath his workman's boots, he throws his hands up in the air.

LINC (CONT'D)

Whoawhoawhoa!

Death in her eyes, she stares at him down the point-of-sight.

LINC (CONT'D)

I'm unarmed. I--

Artemis's arm swings to his left, popping off a series of shots, making him jump for a second. When it's over, he looks behind him to see the driver falling to his knees, his last breath gurgling past his lips before his face hits the dirt.

Panting, Linc turns back to look down the barrel of Artemis' gun. She eyes him steadily, sweat beading on her skin the only evidence of stress.

Slowly, Linc raises his hands again, otherwise remaining completely still.

KEYAN

Is he dead?

Caught off guard, they both look to the boy peeking through the shattered window of the Murano. A trickle of blood from the glass runs down his cheek.

Artemis looks at him for a moment, then turns back to Linc, lowering the gun.

ARTEMIS

If you know what's good for you, you'll get lost. There'll be more.

Before he can respond, she turns away, returning to the Murano. Two steps in and she falters, swaying on her feet as she grabs at her side with both hands this time.

Quick on his feet, Linc rushes forward and catches her, only to get a gun to the forehead, his hands wrapped around her upper arms to hold her steady.

Both breathe heavily as they stare each other down.

LINC

I only want to help.

Slowly, she withdraws the gun from his head. A split second later, the tell tale sound of a foot crunching on the gravel alerts them of danger. Instead of waiting, Linc snatches the gun from her slack fingers, twists at the waist and drops to one knees all in one swift move, knocking off three shots. The three of them watch as the other shooter collapses, gun clattering on the road.

Linc heaves out a breath and turns back to eye Artemis.

LINC (CONT'D)

Is that it? Are there anymore people trying to kill you?

She snatches her gun away from him with a bloodied hand.

ARTEMIS

There'll be more. Which is why you should get lost. Literally.

Righting herself, she shoves him away from her and starts to storm off, only for her legs to start crumbling beneath her. He grabs her as her eyes roll in the back of her head.

ACT III

Still holding Artemis' body from hitting the ground, Linc looks up and down the highway. It's clear. Moving an arm under her legs, he picks her up and moves to the back door of the Murano.

LINC

Get the door, kid.

Clumsily, Keyan pushes open the door and scrambles back as Linc lays the unconscious woman on the seat.

LINC

(To Keyan)

Keep an eye on her.

He sharply slams the door and slides into the drivers seat.

KEYAN

What are you doing?

A quick switch in gears, Linc eyes the side mirror as he pulls onto the road, speeding away from the scene.

LINC

Taking you somewhere safe.

INT. BACK OF LIMO - DAY

The city shops pass by in the window as Rico listens to someone on the phone, growing angrier by the second.

RICO

(Into phone)

What kind of agency are you running that your employees go rogue.

(Pause)

The argument that it's 'just one,' isn't helping your case.

Agitated, black leather squeaks under him as he shifts his weight in the seat.

RICO (CONT'D)

(Into Phone)

You're damned right you're going to fix it.

He pulls the phone away from his ear, fingers going white as he clutches it a moment. Finally, he tosses it to the person sitting across from him.

RICO (CONT'D)

(In Spanish)

Son of a bitch!

He stares out the window as he seethes and thinks.

JESUS

(In Spanish; OS)

What did they say, Boss?

Rico looks at him, his eyes still dark with anger.

RICO

(In Spanish)

Said they'd handle it.

Jesus doesn't say anything for a second. Neither does Rico. Then...

RICO (CONT'D)

(In Spanish)

I don't like relying on others to do a job for me though.

He holds his hand out, ticking his fingers before Jesus passes the phone back to him. Deliberately, he punches on the screen with his thumb and lifts the phone back to his ear.

The wait for an answer is short.

RICO (CONT'D)

(In Spanish)

Caesar, pack a bag. You and your cousin are going hunting.

EXT. JOSE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Setting a small black bag in the back seat of the dark blue new model GTO, he shuts the door to look over the hood at his cousin, Caesar.

JOSE

Where did Uncle say they were last headed?

Before answering, the other man pulls open the driver door and slides in. Only after Jose joins him in the car does he reply.

CAESAR

The two guys who tried to stop them went off grid in some town called Cheney.

As the engine revs and roars to life Jose gives an absent nod followed by a sudden frown as he turns to study his cousin.

JOSE

Tried?

Caesar puts the car in gear and pulls onto the street.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. FOSTER HOME - DAY

Black trash bag filled with their belongings, Young Artemis and Vernice walk solemnly up to the front door of their new temporary home. Vernice reaches down to take her sister's hand as the SOCIAL WORKER rings the doorbell of the plain single story house.

INT. FOSTER HOME -

Muffled screaming from their FOSTER DAD and scared cries of FOSTER MOM filter through the dark of their shared bedroom, the closed door doing little to block it out.

Huddled together on a bed, Vernice squeezes her sister tight as Young Artemis holds her hands to her ears, her cheeks tear stained.

INT. LINC'S HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is bright from the sunlight streaming through the open windows of the small livingroom. The long couch and a coffee table the only pieces of furniture in the room. An unconscious Artemis is stretch out on the simple brown sofa.

From his stop on the floor, arms wrapped around his knees, Keyan watches the needle and thread go up and down over the wound on her abdomen. Looking up, he pins Linc with worried eyes.

KEYAN

Is she going to be okay?

Linc take a moment to study the kid, taking in the scared little boy he is. Then, looks back down to concentrate on tying the thread off closing off the hole in the flesh under her fingers.

LINC

She'll be alright.

Picking up small medal scissors, he snips away the excess thread and sets everything down on the table at his side. With a premade bandage, he covers it up before pulling her shirt back down, still bloody and torn where the bullet tore through.

LINC (CONT'D)

Who is she?

He looks up to watch the kid staring at the woman still passed out, his chin resting on his knees. A shrug of skinny shoulders is his only answer.

Nodding, still suspicious, Linc gathers the first-aid paraphernalia, stands and walks out of the room. The sound of water running for a moment proceeds before he returns, drying his hands with a dish towel. He watched the boy again for a moment.

LINC (CONT'D) Want something to eat?

Keyan's eyes flick to where Linc stands at the doorway. After a moment of thought, he pushes up to stand, nodding.

Together, they enter the kitchen.

INT. LINC'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

LINC

(OS)

Where did you guys come from?

Seated at the small dining table and from around a mouthful of peanut butter and jelly sandwich, Keyan answers:

KEYAN

Spokane.

Linc comes up behind him, seta s glass of juice in front of him. The boy gladly drinks from it.

Slowly, Linc continuous his questioning.

LINC

Is she your mom?

Keyan shakes his head, tearing off another bite.

Linc pulls out a chair across from him and sits down, resting an elbow on the table.

LINC (CONT'D)

You know why those guys were trying to hurt you?

His chewing slows as Keyan's wary gaze looks up at the large man.

In effort to set him at ease, Linc says:

LINC (CONT'D)

It's alright. I just want to help.

ARTEMIS

(OS)

If you want to help, then stop asking questions.

Both look up to see her standing at the doorway, one hand clutching her side, over the dried patch of blood, the other leaned steadying on the wall.

Calm, Linc stands, slowly moving to stand between her and the boy.

LINC

Why don't you take the truck? Leave him here with me.

Keyan goes still as he looks up at Linc and then to Artemis.

She stares at him with a steely, murderous gaze during a pregnant pause.

Finally...

ARTEMIS

He's coming with me.

No-nonsense, he takes a threatening step in her direction.

LINC

That's not happening.

At the second step, she reaches behind her back and whips out a gun, smaller than the one she'd pulled on him on the highway, cocking the hammer back with her thumb as she aims it at him, eyes trained on his face. She clenches her jaw in pain or irritation, it's unclear.

ARTEMIS

I appreciate you helping us. But you're going to be picking up the pieces of your pretty face from the floor if you don't step the hell back right now.

Momentarily surprised, he steps back a single step, still standing in front of the kid though.

They stare at one another in a silent stand-off. After a moment though, he steps to the side, raising his hands.

She watches him, gun following as he moved a couple more feet away. When she finally starts to lower the gun, he leaps for her, one hand knocking the gun out of her hand, the other moving to shove her head down and attempt to get behind her, wrapping his arms around her neck.

Too quick for him though, she jambs an elbow in his throat and turns to kick him square in the chest. Breath rushing out of his lungs, he recovers quickly and starts to lift his own leg for a kick to her middle, she blocks it. Anticipating her, he gets a solid punch to her side, right above her wound.

Staggering back, she hisses in pain. As she recovers, he holds his hands up, panting.

LINC

Look. We could go at this all day, but I'll be pissed if I ruin the good sewing job I just did on you.

She glares up at him, sweat beading on her brow from exertion and discomfort.

LINC (CONT'D)

I want to help.

He gestures towards the kid still sitting at the table, now watching with wide eyes, looking back and forth between them both.

Studying Keyan, she rights herself.

ARTEMIS

I'm protecting him.

LINC

From the dead guys on the highway?

He gestures towards the window, indicating the road beyond the trees blocking it.

ARTEMIS

There'll be more.

Linc waits a minute, thinking. Then...

LINC

Then let me help.

She looks down at Keyan again briefly before her eyes zero in on the gun laying under the table on the linoleum floor.

Gazing back at the other man she gives an indignant sniff.

ARTEMIS

Fine. You can help. But I get my qun back.

LINC

(Not missing a beat)
Are you going to shoot me?

ARTEMIS

Only if you get in my way.

Shrugging, he steps away from the table, and the gun.

LINC

Fair enough.

Taking up the gun, she tucks at her back again.

ARTEMIS

Where are we?

Linc moves deeper into the kitchen, opening a cabinet to pull down a glass, filling it at the tap.

LINC

My house. About ten minutes from the scene on the highway.

Linc passes her the glass. A second's hesitation before she takes it, downing at least half of it before bringing the glass away from her lips.

LINC (CONT'D)

Are you hungry?

She eyes him, then looks out the small window above the sink.

ARTEMIS

We should get going. We'll need a new vehicle.

She eyes him expectantly.

LINC

Oh, I see. You think I'm only good for my truck.

Her face doesn't show any change in expression, just continues to stare at him.

He chuckles.

LINC (CONT'D)

Yeah. No. I'm a package deal when it comes to that truck.

As soon as he utters the last word, the gun is out and trained on him again.

ARTEMIS

I could make you.

Linc frowns at her.

LINC

What I mean is, that I'll be going with you.

The muzzle tips down for a brief second.

ARTEMIS

Not happening. I work alone.

LINC

If that were the case, you'd both be dead.

ARTEMIS

You'll only slow me down.

He winks at her.

LINC

I can handle myself. But thanks for the concern.

Annoyed, she silently wars a debate with herself. Then drops the gun to her hip, finger off the trigger.

ARTEMIS

Fine. But don't believe for a second that I won't kill you for your truck if you get in my way.

Pretending to think about it, he tips his head to the side and looks up.

LINC

Fine.

She tucks the gun behind her back again.

LINC (CONT'D)
How about you tell me your tragic story while I make you a PB and J.

He moves to the kitchen counter where the bread and condiments are still spread out from making Keyan's sandwich.

ACT IV

EXT. RICO'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Cars still parked in the driveway and along the curb of the street, festive Mexican music still pumps from behind the tall privacy fence. Walking up the paved pathway to the front steps of the large two-story home, Marcson looks to Officer Cho.

MARCSON

Looks like a party.

OFFICER CHO

Did you get an invite?

Marcson glances around, other than a dog barking down the street, the only evidence of life in the neighborhood is coming from the other side of the house.

MARCSON

Nope. Did you?

Officer Cho shakes his head incredulously.

At the top of the steps, Marcson pushes the doorbell, it's merry tune chiming just loud enough to be heard over the music.

FLASHBACK:

Same porch, same house, different man. A younger Marcson, dark jeans, black shirt, gun tucked at his back. No badge.

Dev opens the door, eyes narrowed at the other man.

RICO

(OS)

Let him in.

Stepping back, Dev watches Marcson's every move as he enters.

PRESENT:

EXT. RICO'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Door opening, ELENA, Rico's young wife, 10 years junior, answers the door. Wearing a flowy white blouse with form fitting jeans, she looks the part of a trophy wife.

Nearly reaching Marcson's eye level on high-heeled sandals, she brushes her perfectly styled dark hair over her shoulder to scowl at the two men.

ELENA

Can I help you?

Displaying his badge for her, not even a bit offended when she just continues to glare at him, Marson looks around her shoulder into the depths of the home

MARCSON

Your husband home, Miss?

ELENA

(In Spanish)

Still an asshole, I see?

He gives her a quick grin.

MARCSON

You know it.

They stare at one another for a long moment, obvious history between their glares, Officer Cho just watching with a bored expression.

Finally, Marcson's smile drops, all business now.

MARCSON (CONT'D)

Is he home?

Turning on her heel, leaving the door open, she walks away, hollering...

ELENA

Rico!

Rico appears at the end of the hallway, where the dining area or kitchen likely is, placing a hand on her waist, uncaring or already aware of the party crashers arrival, to place a kiss on her neck. She purrs in appreciation. Leaving her to return to their guests, Rico approached the door with a Cheshire grin.

RICO

Amigos. You're late to the party.

MARCSON

How's it going, Rico?

Officer Cho looks behind his shoulder, seeing that some of Rico's men have come to stand on the manicured lawn, watching them aptly.

RICO

I'm well, my friend. But I'm sure you're not here for pleasantries and I've got a cake to cut in a minute.

Marcson's brow raises in feigned surprise as he turns to glance at Officer Cho, who lifts his brows in return.

The detective turns back to the drug boss.

MARCSON

One of your boys seems to have gone rogue, Rico. As I recall, you all liked to police your messes a little better.

RICO

I'm not sure I'm following, amigo.

MARCSON

Don't play dumb with me, Rico. Someone made a mountain into a mole hole for you and is doing a shitty job of cleaning it up. Now, I've got a dead witness and a missing kid.

RICO

That's terrible.

(beat)

But...I'm not sure how I can help with any of that.

MARCSON

We both know that you don't have patience for messes.

Slowly, Rico shakes his head.

RICO

I can assure you, that I don't know anything about--

MARCSON

Don't bullshit me! This is a kid, Rico. Even you have standards. The same age as Camille.

Niceties gone, Rico's face goes hard and red as his hands fist at his sides.

RICO

(In Spanish)

Don't. Speak. My daughter's name. You lost that right, traitor.

Officer Cho watches as Marcson doesn't retort.

RICO (CONT'D)

(In English)

I hope you find him soon, detective.

They stare at one another as Officer Cho watches the other two men on the grass take threatening steps towards them, one pulling reaching behind his back, at the ready.

Finally, Marcson nods, joking façade returning.

MARCSON

Tell Camille Happy Birthday for me, will ya?

With that, he and Cho turn away, descend the steps and walk down the pathway, each of them nodding to one of the men watching them leave along their way.

Behind them, at the door, Rico takes a moment to steam about Marcson's parting words, then steps back to firmly shut the door.

INT. MARSON'S PRIVATE CAR - CONTINOUS

Both men open their respective doors and slide into their seats; Marcson behind the wheel, shutting their doors to the music that never stopped playing.

The quiet in the vehicle only lasts a heartbeat long.

OFFICER CHO

What do you think?

MARCSON

Oh, he knows something.

He gazes through the windshield to the house one last time, starting the car.

MARCSON (CONT'D)

We were going to round up the usual suspects this morning when we got the call about the Levere's. Rico doesn't miss anything.

(MORE)

MARCSON (CONT'D)

There's no way he doesn't know who killed our John Doe.

Cho just nods, buckling his seatbelt as Marcson puts the car in gear.

MARCSON (CONT'D)

Five bucks says the Feds are at the station when we get back to talk about the Keyan Levere. Our best bet of helping them find him is to first figure out who our John Doe really is, follow the bread crumbs from there.

Another nod from Cho as he brings up his cellphone to punch in some notes as Marcson drives. Before hitting the final button, Cho gazes over at Marcson.

OFFICER CHO

Looks like Rico's still holding a grudge.

Marcson is quiet for a moment, driving.

MARCSON

Yeah. He wasn't too thrilled to learn that his daughter's God Father turn out to be a spy cop.

Cho presses his lips together in empathy, then hits the Call button and put the device to his ear.

FLASHBACK:

INT. RICO'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

8 years younger, Rico watches the rookie member of his gang from behind his desk. Another man, JEON, sits adjacent to Marcson, watching his boss scrutinize the newbie.

A sick sort of joy is visible on Jeon's face at the way Rico busts Marcson's balls, making sure he's got what it takes.

RICO

You proved yourself over the last few months. Caesar says he wouldn't have made it out alive last night if you hadn't been there.

MARCSON

Nah. He would have done alright.

RICO

All the same, you have my thanks. And...

He leans back, pulling something out from his desk drawer.

RICO (CONT'D)

I think you've earned to be read in.

Marcson smiles. Opening his mouth to reply, breath barely drawn in, it's choked on at the reverberating bang.

Neck twisting lightning fast, Marcson watches at Jeon's body goes slack in his chair, the hole in his head oozing blood, the hair at the back of his head wet.

Calmly, Rico tucks the gun back into the drawers as Marcson turns wide eyes on him, brow raised in confusion.

Unperturbed, Rico laces his hands together under his chin.

RICO (CONT'D)

This is what happens when you talk to the police or any other of my enemies.

He stares at Marcson, his expression loaded with warning. To which, Marcson only nods, not giving the dead body another glance.

PRESENT:

EXT. LINC'S HOUSE - CARPORT - NIGHT

The Ford truck parked in the lawn full of weeds, Keyan stands looking over the open engine of a different truck: short bed, quad-cab, 1969 GMC Sidestep with original canary yellow paint.

Linc works with his hands deep inside the engine as the kid watches on. The dog is laying down at Keyan's feet.

KEYAN

How come this looks weird?

LINC

(From Under the Hood)
Because it is. A good weird.

Linc pulls his head out to give Keyan a broad grin, a smudge of dirt on his cheek.

KEYAN

What do you mean?

Hands resting on the rim of the hood, he looks at the kid.

LINC

I switched out the gas engine to one that runs on hydrogen and...
(Pauses for effect)
It powers an electric motor.

Unimpressed, Keyan only stares back at him like only a child can. Deflated, Linc's smile drops. Reaching back in the belly of the engine, he finds a loose cable. Holding a hand up in the air, he points towards a torque wrench on the edge of the hood.

LINC (CONT'D) (From Under the Hood) Hand me that wrench, would you?

Keyan looks at it dumbly for a moment, then juggles the oil bottle and picks up the tool, handing it to the waiting hand.

Linc pulls his hand in, tinkers in there for a moment longer. As he does, Artemis comes out from the cabin, stepping down short wooden steps to stand beside Keyan, frowning down at the back and hips of the man working on his toy, zeroing in on the handgun tucked at his back.

ARTEMIS

If you're done playing around down there, we should really get going before they find us.

Linc doesn't say anything, except draw himself out from under the hood and tip his chin towards the cab, grabbing up a rag to wipe his hands.

LINC

Start it up.

Artemis climbs into the drivers seat and turns the key. The engine kicks on with only a small whirling sound coming from it.

Grinning, Linc gives a low-key fist pump before pulling the hood down, slamming it closed.

KEYAN

You can barely hear it!

Linc's chest puffs out marginally.

LINC

They won't hear us coming.

ARTEMIS

Electric means we'll have trouble finding charging stations.

LINC

Which is why this baby runs on hydrogen.

A look of outrage crosses over Artemis' face.

ARTEMIS

That's even worse.

Linc crosses to the small porch where a small group of bags are waiting, including Keyan's backpack. Opening the door to the back seat, he places them inside.

LINC

Don't worry about it.

He tells her as he turns to encourage the dog up, patting the seat and making kissing noises.

Artemis glares at him.

Dog in now, he finally looks over at her, pointing at the truck.

LINC (CONT'D)

This...

He points at the truck.

LINC (CONT'D)
Will get us at least 1,400 miles, if not further, before we need to refuel.

Keyan turns to look up at her, watching...waiting for her cue. Noticing this, she looks down at him, considering. The weight of all that's happening nearly visible on her shoulders.

The dog yips from his spot on the bench seat in the back, the door still wide open. He's ready to go.

Nodding slowly to Keyan, she turns back to pin Linc with an intense gaze.

ARTEMIS

My statement still stands. Don't get in my way.

The obvious threat to shoot him underlying her words.

He nods his understanding and turns to gesture for the kid to get in.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

And..

She looks pointedly at his waist.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Can I have my gun back?

Right away, he pulls the gun from his back and hands it to her. It's the one she'd used to kill the men on the highway.

Right before keyan climbs in, the distinct crunch of gravel under tires reaches them. The dog perks up, growling in the direction of the sound.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Too late.

Linc grabs the dog, setting him down on the ground, taking up one of the bags from inside the truck too, already racing back towards the truck.

LINC

Get inside.

INT. BLACK SUV - CONTINUOUS

DEIMOS (Male, black, fit, head shaved) studies the cabin and the old truck parked at the side of it.

DEIMOS

Is this it?

From the seat behind him, another man, SHOOTER 4, looks down at his phone, an open app bathing his pale face in a ghoulish white-blue glow. His blonde hair is trimmed short.

SHOOTER 4

Says she's in that cabin.

He looks up, peering over Deimos's shoulder to look at the lonely dwelling between the forest trees out the windshield.

The driver, SHOOTER 5, brown hair slicked back, tucked behind his ears, only accentuated his tanned complexion and the tattoos peeking out from his shirt collar, reaches a hand behind him, waiting.

All men are dressed in the same black tactical clothes. Long sleeved combat shirts. Double-shoulder harnesses for their smaller weapons.

Shooter 4 puts an automatic rifle in the other man's grasp. Then, does the same for Deimos. Behind him, EREBUS (male, early 30s, white) remains quiet and still; trained muscle at the ready.

INT. LINC'S HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crouched on the floor in front of the couch, Artemis and Linc watch as the three men exit the vehicle, armed to the teeth.

LINC

You really must have pissed them off.

ARTEMIS

Comes with not killing your witness.

Linc looks around her to Keyan briefly, then back to Artemis as they lower themselves back out of sight.

Artemis tucks her gun at her back, pulling out the smaller one she used on him earlier. Lifting her black pantleg, she replaces the gun in the ankle holster there.

Not saying a word, Linc unzips the bag he took from the truck and pulls out a folding rifle and hands it to her.

LINC

I assume you know how...

Artemis unfolds it, knocks off the safety, checks the cartridge and holds it at the ready against her chest.

Impressed, Linc purses his lips and nods to her appreciatively, then digs for another similar model weapon, readying it.

LINC (CONT'D)

Hey, kid. Tip that table over would you?

Awkwardly, Keyan does, with a little help from Artemis.

LINC (CONT'D)
Now, stay behind it. Don't come out. Stay covered. Alright?

Nodding, Keyan crouched behind it, gathering the dog to his chest.

ARTEMIS

Are you sure that...

LINC

It's solid oak. It should hold.

She gives a hard nod before someone shouts from outside.

DEIMOS

You've been a bad girl, Artemis.

Linc frowns, disgusted.

LINC

Who's this guy? Sounds like a prick.

Quickly, he peeks over the couch.

LINC (CONT'D)

Looks like one, too.

Artemis' lips twitch.

DEIMOS

Do you have someone else in there with you, Arty?

Neither of them move.

DEIMOS (CONT'D)

Don't let someone else get hurt because of your insubordination. Let this be just between us.

Artemis pins Linc with a dangerous look.

ARTEMIS

They'll kill you, no matter...

Linc rolls his eyes at her.

LINC

I figured that. I'm a smart boy.

Artemis draws in a ragged breath, then blows it out.

ARTEMIS

So...you ready?

Linc takes off the safety of his own weapon and nods with resolve.

Then, as one, almost as if they'd practiced it, they rise together and start shooting, bullets piecing the glass, shattering the window, the shards falling at the same time as a bullet hits it's mark on Shooter 4. Without even getting a single shot off, he falls back with the force of the two bullets to the chest.

DEIMOS

Shit!

Through the window, they watch him duck behind the Ford before he and his only remaining partner start to return fire.

Artemis doesn't miss a beat, and fearlessly continues to shoot, a few shots landing solidly in the truck's headlight closest to her target.

When Shooter 5 starts getting shots into the couch, she ducks back down. Panting, and cringing as shots rain around them, hitting the cushions, she checks the turned table in front of her, still holding strong.

Turning slightly towards Linc, her eyes widen and her head jerks back a little at his dangerous expression.

She glares at him with a clear "What?" written all over her own face.

LINC

You hit my truck.

Scoffing, she shakes her head at him just before shooting to her feet to get off another round of shots. Growling, still butt hurt about his truck, Linc joins her. Together they rain a series of bullets, both unsuccessful before dipping back down.

As the shooters return fire, Artemis looks to Linc.

ARTEMIS

Are you a good shot?

He looks at her a moment, then nods.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Good. I'll draw their fire.

He nods, watching at she walks with a crouch, out from behind the couch to the corner of the window.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Go.

She leans around the side of the window casing and starts to fire. As she does, Linc rolls and slides into position on the opposite side of the window, gun at the ready, expression dangerous.

To check his target, he quickly peeks around the wood siding, then back in. Letting out a deep breath, he does it again, Artemis getting off a couple more rounds before stopping to duck back in.

The second Deimos stands up to shoot, he doesn't even get a chance to raise his gun before a shot rings out and a simultaneous hole appears in center of his forehead.

Linc draws back under the cover of the wall, pulling his weapon close to his chest. Artemis looks at him in a moment of quiet before shooting commences from Shooter 4.

Chewy barks from behind the table.

Artemis winces when a shot sends splinters of wood raining down on her. A second of brief silence, before Artemis turned to return fire in slow consecutive shots.

1. 2.

Linc lines up.

3. 4.

She pulls back. Deimos pops up. Bam. A shot to his chest.

Linc draws back.

Quiet.

Artemis trains her gun on the truck, waiting for any of them to come back up. Just in case.

EREBUS

(OS)

Drop your guns.

Eyes snapping around to the depths of the room, they find Keyan being held by Erebus, a gun to his head. Surprised, Linc and Artemis aim their weapons on the intruder, gauging the situation.

Eyes wide with fear, the boy watches Artemis, pleadingly.

Linc's eyes flick over to Artemis, taking her lead. After a tense pause, she lowers the gun. Linc does the same.

EREBUS (CONT'D)

Artemis.

He tsks.

EREBUS (CONT'D)

What happened to you?

ARTEMIS

We can't all be heartless, Eree.

Erebus sneers at her.

EREBUS

Don't call me that.

ARTEMIS

Come now, Erebus. Are you still butt hurt that the rest of the gods wouldn't let you join in our reindeer games?

Gritting his teeth, Erebus starts to pull the gun away from Keyan's head, as if he'd like nothing better than to shoot her instead, but returns it, pressing the muzzle against the boy's temple, forcing him to awkwardly crane his neck to the side.

EREBUS

Why didn't you just do your job?

Sarcasm gone, she glares at him. Sitting up to press her chest to her knees.

ARTEMIS

I have a problem killing kids.

Erebus grins evilly.

He holds his gun a few inches away from Keyan to wave his gun in the air to her.

EREBUS

Lucky for me, I don't.

All at once, as he levels the gun once more, Artemis pulls out the gun at her ankle and shoots straight, hitting his wrist, forcing his fingers to go lax, the gun dropping to the floor as Erebus stumbles back, crying out as he grips his arm with his other hand, blindsided when Linc tackles him around the waist, knocking him down, wrestling him to the floor.

Keyan rushes forward as Artemis moves the gun to the side, holding her other arm out for him to come to her.

ARTEMIS

You alright?

Keyan nods. Dog barks obnoxiously.

Artemis looks down at it, ready to shut it up only to see it looking past her, through the large open window. Turning, gripping Keyan close to her side, she squeezes off three consecutive shots, hitting Deimos in the chest, this time killing him for good.

The dog yelps a couple more times, tip-toing, like only a dog can, through the glass to prance around their legs.

Fists hitting flesh and muscle, bone crushing, she turns back around to watch Linc deliver a resounding final blow to Erebus' face, crouched over the unconscious man's chest, his breath bursting from his lips from exertion. Seeing the man's head loll to the side on the hardwood floor, he straights to a stand, stepping back a couple feet, panting.

When he looks up, he meets Artemis' gaze, giving her a nod of comraderie, which she returns.

ACT V

FLASHBACK:

INT. EL RIO'S TACORIA - DAY

Following a joke, Caesar, Rico, Dev and Marcson laugh around the table, only the two former sitting at it. Marcson stands with Dev as sentry, not invited to sit with the big kids yet.

Ding.

Elena walks in looking like a million bucks; flowy sundress complete with wide brimmed white straw hat, wide sunglasses and high-heeled sandals.

Rico stands, arms opening to her approach.

RICO

(In Spanish)

There's my heart. Come. Tell us how your meeting went with the ladies.

Smiling, Elena pulls off her glasses and goes into her husbands waiting embrace. They kiss, her lipstick staining his lips a little.

Laughing at the sight of it, she picks up a napkin from the table and dabs at his lips.

ELENA

I really can't stay long, my darling. I have to run to Rosa's to talk about her daughter's quince.

RICO

Ah, well, before you go...

He gestures Marcson closer.

RICO (CONT'D)

Meet Marcson.

She smiles in greeting and is caught off guard by his extended hand.

For a moment, everyone stills. Waiting. Especially Rico. But Marcson doesn't back down, his hand still out.

Slowly, Elena shakes it, his grip gentlemanly.

MARCSON

It's nice to meet you, Mrs. Chavez.

Their hands part, Elena's smile changes...softens.

Before anyone else speaks, Rico wraps an arm around his wife's shoulders, giving her a squeeze.

RTCO

I'll see you when I get home later, my heart.

She nods, brushing his cheek with whisper of her lips, careful with his make-up this time, and walks for the door.

Before walking out, she looks over her shoulder to see Marcson's eyes leaving her departing back.

PRESENT:

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPIN - EVENING

With a few officers and detectives still milling about, Marcson types away at his computer on his desk, one of two simple rectangle desks are shoved together. On the other side, Officer Cho is on the phone.

OFFICER CHO

(Into Phone)

Uh huh.

(beat)

Yeah, I'll let him know. Hey, thanks.

Hanging up the phone, he looks up to Marcson, who pauses his rapidly moving fingers on the keyboard. Brows lifting, he gazes at Cho across the laminated tables, a small mountain of paper and files between them.

OFFICER CHO (CONT'D)
That was our contact with DTF. Said
that Rico's son and nephew just
headed out of town together.

Marcson's brows furl in thought for a moment. Then...

MARCSON

Did they have any idea where they were off to?

Cho shakes his head.

OFFICER CHO

But, they did say they were headed East.

Marcson leans his forward, resting his elbows on his desk.

MARCSON

They don't by chance have a tap on Rico do they?

Another shake of the head from Cho.

OFFICER CHO

Apparently they don't have enough to get a judge to sign off on a warrant.

MARCSON

Shit.

OFFICER CHO

Yep.

Lets put out some feelers, see if anything unusual comes up in that direction.

Picking up his phone again, Cho starts too punch at buttons, then presses the device to his ear.

OFFICER CHO (CONT'D)

What you thinking?

MARCSON

That maybe we're after the same thing.

As he waits, Cho watches his partner return to his typing.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Rows of diesel engines roar as the buses idle in wait for their fare. The neon glow of their destination signs bathes Vernice and Young Artemis' faces in a sickening yellow-orange as they wait their turn to board the one that reads: SPOKANE.

Up next, Vernice hands their tickets to the driver. He doesn't give them a second's more attention before reaching for the next passenger's.

Finding a seat, Vernice corrals her baby sister next to the window.

YOUNG ARTEMIS

What if they come looking for us?

VERNICE

Then we'll go somewhere else. We're never going back to that place.

YOUNG ARTEMIS

Who will take care of us?

VERNICE

I'll take care of you. I'm old enough.

YOUNG ARTEMIS

You're fourteen.

VERNICE

Old enough.

Though still dubious, Young Artemis looks out the dark window as the bus doors close and the driver starts to pull the vehicle away from the lot.

PRESENT:

INT. LINC'S SIDESTEP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

With only the dull glow from the dash illuminating his face, Linc looks over to a sleeping Artemis. Resting against the other side of the cab, the boy slumped over in her lap, an arm laying protectively on his small back.

His eyes flick to the rearview mirror, seeing only the empty, dark highway behind him. Eyes back on the road.

INT. CAESAR'S GTO - CONTINUOUS

A different sign manifests out the windshield.

ENTERING CHENEY POP. 12,403

Jose turns to look at his cousin in the drivers seat. An ever present scowl meets his own worried expression.

EXT. CAESAR'S GTO - CONTINUOUS

Cruising down the highway, the car slows as it exits, turn signal on, the FAST GAS sign glowing brightly through the dark, reflecting off the vehicle as it pulls to the stop sign.