



UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS

THE SINNER

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Based on the novel "The Sinner" by
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INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

WIDE ON A DUSTY WAREHOUSE filled with boxes, construction supplies and machinery. WE HEAR A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE, cheery and capable, talking on the phone...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, once I put the order in it usually takes about a week... Right... No, that's for the order to come in. We only need a day for the installation...

WE PAN OVER MORE BOXES, arriving at CORA TANNER, late 20s, a natural beauty, standing at a make-shift desk. Cora's in full customer service mode, but in her eyes there's a trace of something more complicated.

CORA (ON PHONE)

...Yup, that's it. And then you'll be nice and cool for the rest of the summer. I can promise you that... Uh-huh...

She staples two documents together and wipes her brow, suffering from the heat herself. CRASH! The loading doors behind her RUMBLE OPEN and THREE WORKMEN enter, unloading boxes from a van. Cora plugs her ear.

CORA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

I'm sorry?... Yup, that's right. Okay, so we can come get everything installed...
(checks calendar)
... actually we can do end of next week. How's Thursday the 16th?

One of the workmen, RON TANNER, 50s, Cora's father-in-law, approaches. Not missing a beat, Cora hands him a stack of papers. Ron sits and starts looking through them.

CORA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Alright... I'll be getting in touch next week to confirm... Ok. Thanks, Mr. Rosas. Yup... Bye.

Cora hangs up, notes something on a post-it.

CORA (CONT'D)

(to Ron)
We're still waiting on the quote from Ammo so I couldn't finish the O'Neal estimate.

RON TANNER
 (eyes on the papers)
 No problem. You did the Jackson's?

CORA
 Yeah, it's in there.

RON TANNER
 That's all we need.

MASON TANNER, late 20s, one of the workmen who's also Cora's husband, approaches with an open beer, T-shirt sweaty. It's the end of his workday. He slides his hand onto Cora's back, over the top of her ass, smiles affectionately.

MASON
 TGIF.

Cora exhales, lips fluttering. Mason's a bit thick around the middle, tattoos peeking from underneath his T-shirt sleeves. Not quite in her league looks-wise.

MASON (CONT'D)
 You almost done?

CORA
 He's checking the estimates now.

The other WORKMAN yells good-bye from the loading dock.

MASON
 (to Workman)
 Later, Manny!
 (to Ron)
 Dad, I'm gonna go wash up and we'll meet you at home.

RON TANNER
 No, no, I'm coming. I'm ready.
 (to Cora)
 I gotta say, these look good.
 Pretty soon I won't even need to come in to work.

He winks at her.

CORA
 Thanks, Ron.

Mason looks at Cora and smiles, proud of his wife.

INT./EXT. CAR - TRAVELLING - SUNSET

Cora and Mason pull out in the Tanner Air van, following Ron in his Ford Explorer, passing through the hills of upstate New York which are teeming with height of summer lushness. Old farmhouses. Produce stands. Also vinyl-sided houses, boarded up store-fronts - that upstate mix of northeastern charm and working class reality.

WE CUT INSIDE the van. Cora taunts Mason with a smile...

CORA

I don't think you have the guts.

MASON

Oh, come on.

CORA

Then do it. Prove me wrong.

MASON

Maybe I will...

Cora looks at him. She's not convinced.

CORA

Mason, we're with your Dad all day long and then it's dinner with the two of them every night. It's not the end of the world if we ask for a night off. Or two even.

MASON

You're right.

Mason considers it, eyes on the road. He's conflicted...

MASON (CONT'D)

I just...

CORA

(laughing)
-Oh, my God-

MASON

(smiling)
No, come on. Let me just say this- I think it's weird to come home and just- take Laine from Mom and head out back after she's watched him all day and cooked dinner. Having dinner with us is her reward, you know? It just feels mean.

CORA
No, it just means you're Mommy-
whipped.

MASON
No, I'm not.

Cora shoots him a wry look. It's a foregone conclusion.

EXT. RON AND LORNA'S HOUSE - EVENING

A modest two-story house. Mason parks in the driveway right behind his father's car.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - RON AND LORNA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cora, followed by Mason and Ron, bee-lines to her 2-year-old son, LAINE, sitting in a high chair. LORNA TANNER, Cora's mother-in-law, tough, unsentimental, finishes making dinner.

CORA
(to Laine)
Where's my sweet thing?

LAINE
Mommy!

Cora moves to pick Laine up.

CORA
Come here, Bub. You want to say hi
to Mommy?

LORNA TANNER
He hasn't finished his dinner.
(off Cora)
I told him he could get out once he
finished all his food.
(to Laine)
Cause those are the rules,
sweetheart.

Cora hesitates, then kisses Laine on the forehead instead.

CORA
(to Laine)
What did you do today with
Grandmommy?

LAINE
I'm not hungry.

LORNA TANNER

All he could talk about was those fruit roll things. I had to get some from your pantry.

CORA

Oh, yeah. He loves those.

LORNA

You had a lot of dust in the back there, by the waffle iron. I cleaned it for you. Hope you don't mind.

Cora stiffens ever so slightly, feeling the rebuke.

CORA

No, it's fine. Thanks. That's nice of you.

Lorna turns back to the stove.

INT. DINNER TABLE - A BIT LATER

Cora sits with Ron, Lorna and Mason, eating dinner.

MASON

(to Ron)

Tomorrow's Syracuse. Against Penn State. I got twenty bucks on it.

RON

With who? Manny?

Mason laughs and nods.

MASON

No one else dumb enough to make that bet.

Cora eats quietly. Lorna serves the men more food.

EXT. BACK YARD/CORA AND MASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

WIDE ON the back yard of Ron and Lorna's house. We hear Cora and Mason saying goodnight. The back door OPENS. Cora comes out holding Laine, followed by Mason. They walk fifteen steps across the yard and enter a SECOND HOUSE, a converted garage.

INT. LAINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cora quietly puts Laine down in his bed. He's out cold. She turns on the night light, watching him sleep as light patterns move across the room. WE HEAR the BACK DOOR OPENING...

INT. BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

...MASON steps out into the balmy night. Crickets chirp loudly. He leans against the step railing and LIGHTS UP A BOWL. He takes a hit, exhales easily into the night air.

INT. LAINE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Still sitting by Laine, Cora closes her eyes and exhales, uneasy now. Like she's dreading something. The BACK DOOR CREAKS... Mason coming back inside.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cora brushes her teeth. Mason shuffles in, comes up behind her, moving his body against hers.

MASON
(suggestively)
It's Friday night.

CORA
Oh, hon. I don't know.

Mason kisses her neck, moves his hips against her, hands sliding up to her breasts.

MASON
Come on. I thought you were
feeling better.

CORA
I am. I just...

Mason MOANS, half-begging, not stopping. Cora looks conflicted.

CORA (CONT'D)
(relenting)
Okay. Just give me a sec.

MASON
Yeah?

CORA

Yeah, just... One minute.

Mason smiles like a kid getting a reward as he adjusts his erection. He kisses her. Stoned, he gets caught up... touches her breast again...

Cora half-smiles, pushing him away.

CORA (CONT'D)

I said one minute.

MASON

Okay. Okay.

As soon as he leaves, Cora's smile falls. She's nervous.

She pulls a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE out of the medicine cabinet, takes one pill. She thinks a moment, then takes another.

She sits on the toilet, her mind turning. She looks at her hand. HER THUMB IS BLEEDING. A hangnail. She's been picking at it with her index finger. Cora puts her thumb to her mouth, sucks away the blood.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mason is on top of Cora in bed, kissing her, hands sliding over her. Cora lets him, but her eyes stay open, not quite there with him. WE FLASH TO:

AN IMAGE: an Art Nouveau wall paper pattern. Crimson and deep purples. Endless repeating swirls... THEN BACK TO:

Cora, squinting, as if she's fending off the image. Mason starts to enter her...

Something's not quite right. Mason stops.

He reaches for the night stand drawer and pulls out a TUBE OF LUBE FROM THE DRAWER. He puts some on his hand, applies it to himself. He eases inside her, watching her.

MASON

Yeah?

Cora nods, still self-conscious. Avoiding his eyes, she pulls his face into her neck...

EXT. CORA AND MASON'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The sun's barely up, but the air is already thick with summertime humidity.

Cora lies in bed awake. Mason is sleeping. The sound of a LAWN MOWER ROARS to life. Mason flips over, presses a pillow against his ear. Through the window, Cora sees Ron pass by just a few steps outside, pushing the mower.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cora has gloves on and scrubs the sink. The toilet. She's determined. Focused.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cora mops the floor. Wipes down the cabinets. Sprays the counter-tops.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cora dusts every surface, wipes every blade of the mini-blinds.

INT. CORA AND MASON'S BEDROOM - LATER

Still in her cleaning clothes, Cora enters and sits down on the bed next to Mason, who's spread-eagled, still asleep. She looks at his face quietly, as if she's still trying to understand who he is. She touches his chest, her hand moving lightly over him. Mason stirs, opens his eyes.

CORA

Time to get up.

Mason MOANS, rolls closer to Cora, not wanting to.

CORA (CONT'D)

It's going to be crowded. We have to get a good spot.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cora finishes dressing Laine. Mason packs a beach bag, looks at a sign made of colored construction paper on the kitchen table. It reads, "**CAMP STARFISH**".

MASON
Looks good, babe.

CORA
Hmm?

MASON
The sign.

CORA
You think? I ran out of glue. I
need to stop on the way home.

Cora seems distracted. Mason watches her.

MASON
By the way, my mom said to come
over for dinner after swimming...

CORA
Okay.

Mason smiles in surprise.

MASON
Okay?

CORA
Yeah, it's fine.

MASON
Babe, I was kidding. She asked and
I said no. Cause I'm awesome.

Cora looks at him. She half-smiles.

CORA
You trying to scare me?

Mason grins, pleased with himself. Cora turns back to Laine,
puts his shoes on. Mason watches her a bit wistfully,
sensing her distance.

EXT. TANNER HOUSE - NEW PALTZ, NY - DAY

Mason loads Ron's Ford Explorer. Cora buckles Laine into the
car seat. Lorna watches.

LORNA TANNER
Make sure you keep him out of the
sun.

I./E. CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

Cora looks out the open window. Mason is getting into the spirit of the outing. He turns up the volume, mock-head-banging to The Who's "Pinball Wizard."

MASON

(singing)

'Sure plays a mean pin-baaall...'

He hams it up for Cora. Her lips curl into a smile and she laughs despite herself.

EXT. BEACH - LAKE MINNEWASKA - DAY

A striking, crystal clear alpine lake, surrounded by high granite cliffs and pine trees. It feels remote, but the mood is jovial on a sliver of beach crowded with families and couples.

Cora and Mason make their way across the sand.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Cora! Over here!

Cora's friend, HEATHER, sits on a towel with two young children, waves from her beach towel.

CORA

Hey! You're already here.

HEATHER

Hey, Mason.

MASON

Hey, Heather. How are ya? Where's Charlie?

HEATHER

Oh, he's working. He's totally crazed. Since that last storm everyone needs a tree cut down.

Heather looks around, already boxed in by other beach-goers.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I was going to save a spot for you guys, but I wasn't sure if you were going to make it-

CORA

(smiling easily)

It's okay.

(MORE)

CORA (CONT'D)

I should have texted you back.
We'll set up and come visit in a
bit.

CUT TO:

LATER - Cora lies with Laine under an umbrella. Unlike everyone around her, she wears a long-sleeve shirt over her bikini. She glances at Heather, who's about twenty-five yards away talking to her kids. When Heather turns in her direction, Cora looks away, avoiding eye contact.

She leans in close to Laine, her mouth against his head, as he plays in the sand. She closes her eyes, breathing in his smell. Then...

CORA (CONT'D)

(to Mason)

I'm gonna go swim for a bit. Can
you watch him?

MASON

By yourself?

CORA

Yeah. I just want to float for a
bit.

MASON

Okay.

Cora walks down to the water's edge where families swim in a cordoned area. She looks out at the looming granite cliffs on the other side of the lake. They look powerful and ancient. Ominous.

She glances back at Mason with Laine under the umbrella. She quickly takes off her T-shirt and drops it on the sand. She bends her arms, covering her chest. *Her modesty is odd, because her body is beautiful.*

She wades into the water and quickly dives in, as if to hide.

Cora swims out through the playing children... she approaches the floating lines and pauses... She eyes the LIFEGUARD, waits until he's distracted, talking to some kids. As if that's her cue, she ducks under, swimming out into deep water.

CUT TO:

Cora swimming out steadily, determined, not stopping. She's left the cordoned area far behind now. ANGLE FROM THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS: Cora's head is a tiny pin dot in the open water.

Finally she stops and looks around. Alone. The cliffs surround her, immense and stark. They almost feel haunted, like they're watching.

CLOSE ON CORA'S FACE in the utter quiet. She glances back at the beach, looks around to see if anyone can see... there's an intensity about her, like she's about to make a life-changing decision.

She shuts her eyes and opens her mouth, concentrating, determined... a beat... then... she starts to draw in breath - we can hear the air rushing in - *and at the same time she submerges her face, as if she's trying to inhale water...*

Her throat CATCHES and she snaps up, choking, sputtering in panic, treading water quickly.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Mason plays with Laine on the towel. Heather approaches with her two kids.

HEATHER

Hi, guys. Where's Cora?

MASON

She went for a swim.

Mason glances out at the swimming area, trying to find Cora, but she's nowhere to be found.

EXT. WATER - CONTINUOUS

Cora wipes her eyes. She takes slow, long breaths, calming herself. She looks down into the murky water below her, resolve hardening... *then she forces the air out of her lungs - a long exhale, until there's nothing left - and goes under again.*

WE GO DOWN WITH HER, into the muffled dark of the lake water. Cora paddles her hands upwards, trying to push herself deeper into the water.

WE CUT BACK TO THE SURFACE. It's still. No sign of Cora. A beat...

Then another beat. She's not coming back up. The surface of the lake settles back into smooth glass.

Still longer... Now we become worried. This is too long for anyone to last...

Suddenly, Cora BREAKS THE SURFACE, gasping for breath, survival instinct kicking in. She rasps, trying to keep her head above water...

A FAINT VOICE CALLS to her from shore. It's Mason. Laine is in his arms, crying. Cora falters, not wanting to go back...

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Looking shaken and exhausted, Cora wades out of the water onto the sand, quickly puts her T-shirt back on. Mason approaches with Laine, who's crying for Cora.

MASON
(concerned)
What's going on?

CORA
What?

Cora takes Laine and draws him close.

CORA (CONT'D)
(to Laine)
It's okay, honey. It's alright.
What do you want? You hungry?

MASON
What were you doing out that far?
I could barely see you.

Cora shifts, uncomfortable with the truth.

CORA
Nothing... I just kept swimming.
(off Mason)
I wanted some quiet.

Mason says nothing, not quite satisfied.

CUT TO:

Later. Cora sits on the towel with Laine and Mason. There's an edge to her voice, frustration seeping in.

CORA (CONT'D)
He's fine at his swimming lessons.
The teacher brings him right out
into the water. He doesn't cry at
all.

MASON

I just think he spends too much time with you.

CORA

Mason, he's with your Mom all day while I work. I barely see him.

MASON

Well... he's too attached. He's got to toughen up.

Frustrated, Cora picks up a fruit knife and begins peeling the skin off a pear. She cuts off a slice and offers it to Laine.

CORA

Honey. Here.

Laine takes it. A young woman LAUGHS nearby.

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)

Careful what you wish for.

A YOUNG COUPLE - we'll call them FRANKIE and LEAH - is laughing and making out about eight feet away on a towel right by Cora. Late 20s, maybe weekenders from the city. It looks like new love. Bodies close, tongues slipping against each other - slowly, sensually - flirting with the line of decency.

ON CORA, watching them. Is she disapproving? Envious? It's hard to tell.

Leah turns to the other couple sitting with them, HOBBS and ASHLEY.

LEAH

I almost forgot I have a surprise for you guys.

HOBBS

You're finally going to put your tongue back in your mouth?

LEAH

Ha, ha. No, it's this new band I heard about. They're amazing. I'm serious.

She reaches for her phone, plugs it into a portable speaker. JANGLY, LOW-FI GARAGE ROCK starts to play. Leah smiles mischievously. Frankie balks, recognizing the music.

FRANKIE
What? Where did you find this?

LEAH
(flirtatiously)
I have my ways.

FRANKIE
(embarrassed)
Aw, man. Come on. Turn it off...
Babe-

LEAH
(to Hobbs and Ashley)
It's Frankie's band. When he was
in med school. That's Frankie on
the drums.

ASHLEY
Really?

HOBBS
This is the band?

FRANKIE
(to Leah)
Turn it off!

LEAH
-No! It's so good. Come on.

Frankie tackles her playfully, trying to get to the phone.
Leah SQUEALS, holding it out of reach. The wrestling turns
into more groping foreplay.

Cora looks annoyed by the PDA. Mason watches Leah, now, too.
She's so sexy - uninhibited - free in a way that seems to
elude Cora. Frankie's hands inch under Leah's bikini.

Mason glances at Cora and raises his eyebrows, amused.

MASON
You want some lotion? I could oil
you up.

Cora shoots him a look.

MASON (CONT'D)
They're just having fun.

CORA
They could bring it down a notch.

MASON

I don't know. I don't mind.

Mason smiles suggestively. Cora looks back at Leah, who breaks away from Frankie.

LEAH

Wait. Just let me play this one song. And then I'll stop. I promise.

Leah presses her phone. A NEW SONG STARTS. A thumping DRUM BEAT, pulsing BASS...

... and Cora FREEZES, stunned. Her face falls - as if the song is dislodging something in her mind.

LEAH (CONT'D)

This one's my favorite.

FRANKIE

You're torturing me, you know that?

WE MOVE IN CLOSER ON CORA. It's like she's been transported to another place. Eyes wide, face pale, mouth slack... ALL OTHER SOUND FADES EXCEPT THE BEAT OF THE DRUMS. INSISTENT. THROBBING.

Laine reaches for the pear, wanting another slice, but Cora doesn't notice.

LAINE

Mommy.

He knocks the pear over and it rolls into the sand, grains sticking to the wet flesh.

Cora's eyes turn to Frankie, to his hands sliding over Leah's body. Cora's neck strains, fists clenched... THE MUSIC FILLS HER HEAD, LOUDER NOW. Is this some kind of attack? A seizure?

Frankie pushes Leah down onto the towel, hips grinding into hers, mouth leaning in and CORA SCRAMBLES UP-

CORA

STOP IT-

...AND RUSHES AT FRANKIE, SWINGING HER FIST. Her hand hits the side of his neck and Frankie's whole body shudders.

For a strange suspended moment they're both still, stuck together. And then we see why...

...THE HANDLE OF THE FRUIT KNIFE IS JUTTING FROM CORA'S FIST.

Cora unsticks the blade and swings again... and then again.
Blood sprays. Cora's eyes are on fire.

CORA (CONT'D)
Get the fuck off her-

Frankie flinches, twists. But the knife keeps coming -
vicious, quick - into his throat, his shoulder, his cheek.

LEAH
STOP IT! STOP!

MASON
CORA-

Mason rushes at Cora, pulls her off Frankie. She yells,
swinging blindly, catching his forearm with the knife.
Mason's elbow hits her cheek as he pins her to the sand.

A mother SCREAMS for her child. Beachgoers scramble away,
abandoning their things. Others stand frozen, not quite
comprehending what just happened.

Cora MOANS, possessed, struggling against Mason.

MASON (CONT'D)
Cora... Cora...

Hobbs leans over Frankie, who's gurgling on his back,
struggling to breathe. Blood gushes.

LEAH
Oh my God-

HOBBS
(to Ashley)
Call an ambulance-

Terrified, Ashley fumbles for her phone. Hobbs grabs a stray
T-SHIRT, tries to stop the blood. But every heart beat
pushes more blood between his fingers...

HOBBS (CONT'D)
(to Leah)
Press here with the shirt. Hold it
there.

Frankie makes a wet sound, trying to speak. Leah starts
crying.

LEAH
 (to Frankie)
 Don't - It's okay. It's okay.

ASHLEY (INTO PHONE)
 I need an ambulance. There's been -
 someone's been stabbed... Lake
 Minnewaska. Minnewaska State
 Park...

Cora goes still in Mason's arms. Terrified and surging with adrenaline, Mason lets her go and Cora sits up, dazed, as if coming out of a dream. They're both covered in blood.

MASON
*What is wrong with you?... What the
 hell was that?*

Cora turns to Leah. Their eyes meet. Cora's eyes show concern - maybe even pity - and she STANDS AND MOVES TOWARDS HER. Leah SCREAMS -

LEAH
 (to Mason)
Get her away- Get her the fuck away-

Cora stops, disoriented. She looks out at the beachgoers who stare back at her in shocked silence. Her eyes meet Heather's, who watches from a distance in utter shock. Somewhere behind Cora, Laine STARTS TO CRY.

Cora takes a few steps... then, as if her strength leaves her, she sits back down on the sand... and exhales a sigh of relief.

Leah watches helplessly as Frankie's eyes begin to lose focus into the blue sky.

LEAH (CONT'D)
 (crying)
 Oh my God... Oh my God...

Everyone watches in silence as Frankie's labored breathing seizes up... and then stops completely. OFF Frankie's lifeless eyes...

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. AMBROSE'S CAR - DINER PARKING LOT - DAY

A diner on a wooded country highway. WE SETTLE ON A CAR in the parking lot. A man sits in the driver's seat, BINOCULARS raised to his eyes, watching something intently.

A CAR pulls into the parking lot and the man quickly lowers the binoculars and ducks his head, afraid of being seen.

Now we get a good look at HARRY AMBROSE, 50. An Ulster County native, unassuming, in only OK shape, Ambrose nevertheless has a sharp, percolating intensity beneath his deadpan eyes.

Ambrose waits for the car to roll by. Then he raises the binoculars, stealing another look. We can see BLACK BRUISES ON HIS FINGERNAILS, starting to grow out.

AMBROSE'S POV: peering inside the diner. He stays CLOSE ON A WAITRESS, 30s, sensual, heavy-set, not particularly remarkable, taking an order. Ambrose lingers on her face as she listens and gives a quick smile to the patrons... he follows her as she makes her way down the aisle, stops at another table, catching only her backside. Finally she moves out of sight.

Ambrose lowers the binoculars. He exhales, agitated, like he's in pain. He closes his eyes. His fingers PRESS absentmindedly on the BRUISES on his fingernails, as if this were somehow soothing.

A beat... then his CELL PHONE RINGS, pulling him out of the moment. He answers...

AMBROSE (INTO PHONE)

Yeah...

EXT. BEACH - MINNEWASKA LAKE - DAY

The beach is a flat line, deserted now except for abandoned towels and umbrellas. In the middle of that expanse two FORENSICS SPECIALISTS work around FRANKIE BELMONT'S CORPSE.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MINNEWASKA LAKE - CONTINUOUS

An ambulance and three patrol cars are parked in the lot. Crowds watch behind police lines, barely talking. The atmosphere is solemn. Everyone's rattled.

WE PASS BY Frankie's girlfriend, Leah, shaking as she's led away by medics...

...WE MOVE ON to Heather, Cora's friend, disturbed, answering questions to a police officer, who writes down notes.

...and we end on CORA, covered in dried blood, hand-cuffs on. One eye starting to swell. She sits in a makeshift holding area with a police officer. She looks terrified.

She watches Mason with Laine on his lap, sitting about 25 yards away by an ambulance. A medic tapes up Mason's arm.

CORA
Mason... *Mason...*

He can't hear her. Cora stands up to go to him.

OFFICER
Miss- You have to stay here.

Then, as if sensing Cora, *Mason looks her way*. Their eyes meet. He looks at her like she's a stranger... then he looks away. It's too much for him.

ON CORA, stung, distraught. Tears well up in her eyes as she sits down. A detective-in-training, CAITLIN MCCAFFERTY, early 30s, approaches.

CAITLIN
I got the okay. You can come with me and rinse yourself off.

CUT TO:

Ambrose pulls his car into the beach parking area. He pops a handful of TUMS in his mouth and chews. He gets out, surveys the scene and sees detective DAN LEROY, 40s, African-American, conservative family man and his longtime friend, wave to him.

Ambrose approaches Leroy, who stands with a couple of cops at the beach entrance. They all look grave.

AMBROSE
How's it going?

Leroy exhales through his teeth. Not good. They're all in shock.

LEROY
It's going.

AMBROSE
Where's our suspect?

LEROY
She's here. She already confessed.

Leroy leads Ambrose across the beach to the crime scene. As they walk...

LEROY (CONT'D)
 It's crazy. She looks so normal.
 Just a mom with her kid.

Ambrose considers this, saying nothing.

LEROY (CONT'D)
 Where were you?

Ambrose's face gives nothing away.

AMBROSE
 I just stopped by the house for a
 sec to pick up some things.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON Frankie's dead blue eyes, gazing at the sky,
 unmoving. ANGLE ON AMBROSE, looking impassively at Frankie's
 face, the sand around his head wet and dark with blood.

LEROY
 Name is Frankie Belmont. Twenty-
 nine. A doctor at Cornell in the
 city.

Ambrose's eyes drift over the towels and belongings - the
 bloody T-shirt, Cora's half-eaten pear, Leah's cell phone.
 The Medical Examiner, BELEWSKI, late 50s, catches Ambrose's
 eye, puts out his hand.

BELEWSKI
 Detective Ambrose. Nathan
 Belewski. Nice to meet you.

Ambrose shakes his hand, but his eyes are on Frankie's
 corpse.

LEROY
 (to Ambrose)
 Belewski came in from Poughkeepsie
 today.

BELEWSKI
 Yeah. Haven't been out here in a
 while. I can't remember the last
 time you guys even had a homicide.

AMBROSE
 Two years ago. A farmer in
 Gardiner killed his wife.

BELEWSKI

(re: corpse, disturbed)

Well, I gotta say, this one's...
I've never seen anything quite like
this.

A beat. Ambrose squints into the distance. It's hard to tell if he's thinking deeply, or uncomfortable, or both. His eyes trace the edge of the beach.

AMBROSE

Pinus strobus. You see those white pines? They've got blight. The branches are thin at the base... Surest sign of an ecosystem out of balance.

Leroy and Belewski look at the trees, not sure what to say.

INT. MINNEWASKA PARK BATHROOM - DAY

Cora stands in the empty concrete shower room. It's damp. Desolate. She looks in the mirror, sees the cut on her cheek from Mason's elbow - the eyes that stare back seem to be from a different woman now.

Cora catches Caitlin staring at her by the door. Caitlin looks away uncomfortably, unsure how to behave.

Still handcuffed, Cora starts the water in the shower and steps inside. She looks at her naked feet, the bloody water running down the drain.

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF GIRLS LAUGHING AS WE FLASHBACK TO...

INT. DEDE'S HOUSE - ELLENVILLE - AFTERNOON

...a MATCHING CUT of Cora's 4-year-old feet. Another pair of 4-year-old feet enter frame next to hers. REVEAL CORA lying alongside BETHANY, 4, in a makeshift "fort" of pillows and blankets on the floor.

CORA

Your toes are like fingers.

The girls laugh as Bethany's mom, DEDE, 30 - energetic, positive, lonely - prepares dinner in the kitchen. Her face brightens when she sees an OLD MAZDA pull up the driveway.

A rugged man in a cheap suit, 40s, steps out of the car, briefcase in hand. He moves slowly, like he's carrying extra weight.

DEDE

Cora, your father's here!

Dede checks her reflection in the microwave, fixes her hair.

INT. KITCHEN - DEDE'S HOUSE - ELLENVILLE - CONTINUOUS

WILLIAM LACEY, Cora's father, sits at the table with Dede, Cora and Bethany.

DEDE

Another month?

WILLIAM

That's what they say. They have to wait until she gets stronger.

(beat)

They need to operate again.

Dede puts her fork down, face creased with sympathy.

DEDE

Again? Oh, Will. Oh, God.

William glances at Cora and Bethany, but they're busy showing each other their chewed food.

WILLIAM

(to Dede)

She's four months old tomorrow and she's never left the hospital.

(beat, struggling)

Sometimes I wonder if it's right, trying to keep her going like this...

DEDE

Of course it is. She's your *daughter*.

Dede pours William more wine.

DEDE (CONT'D)

We're just going to have to wait and expect the best. Elizabeth's staying up at the hospital?

WILLIAM

She's afraid to leave Phoebe's room. Hasn't been outside in weeks.

DEDE

Well, you know Cora's welcome any time. And you are, too. I don't want you to hesitate. You need anything at all.

WILLIAM

You're a life-saver, Dede. You really are.

Their eyes meet. Dede looks away bashfully, trying to hide just how much pleasure those words give her.

DEDE

Good Christian soldiers. That's us.

EXT. DEDE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WIDE ON William and Cora leaving Dede's house. They walk across Dede's yard to their house, immediately next door.

WILLIAM

And then what did you do?

CORA

And then we built a fort. And Bethany said I looked like a monkey. And I said, No, a panda bear...

INT. CORA'S BEDROOM - LACEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Cora kneels at her bed. William kneels with her. There's an empty crib on the opposite side of the room.

CORA

(praying)

...And blessed is the Fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinners. Now and at the hour of our death... And God bless Mama. Amen.

WILLIAM

And your little sister.

CORA

And God bless Phoebe. Amen.

WILLIAM

She's going to be sleeping right
over there before you know it.

William tucks Cora in. She snuggles in, looks at her father.

CORA

I don't want Mama to come back.

WILLIAM

Oh, you don't mean that. You do,
too.

(smiling, tickling her)

You do, too.

Cora squeals and laughs, eyes bright with adoration. William smiles back, the weight of his mood lifting momentarily.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Goodnight, little lady.

He kisses her goodnight. END FLASHBACK.

EXT. MINNEWASKA PARKING LOT - DAY

BACK TO PRESENT. WE MOVE SLOWLY PAST a crowd of parents and children standing along the police line, staring gravely into camera...

REVEAL CORA, showered and dressed, eyes down, being led handcuffed by the bystanders. She's never had so many eyes on her, and it's terrifying. She glances sideways. TWO YOUNG CHILDREN stare at her from the safety of the police line, licking ice cream cones. A TV REPORTER stands by, a CAMERA trained on her.

Caitlin leads Cora to a patrol car and opens the door. Cora falters, looking for Mason and Laine, but they're gone.

CORA

Where's my son?

CAITLIN

I don't know, Ma'am. I've been
ordered to bring you to the
station.

CORA

My husband was just here with
him... I'm not leaving without
them.

Caitlin approaches another officer, exchanges words. She comes back.

CAITLIN
Your husband left with your son
five minutes ago.

Another wave of fear hits Cora.

CORA
What do you mean? Where?

CAITLIN
Ma'am, I don't know.

CORA
But... he wouldn't have just left.

Caitlin doesn't know what to say to this. Cora starts revving into panic.

CORA (CONT'D)
My son needs to eat. His blood
sugar gets low and then his rhythm
gets thrown off. He won't sleep.
My husband forgets.

CAITLIN
You'll be able to make a phone call
when we get to the station.

CORA
You don't understand. I need to
speak with him.
(emotional, pleading)
I know what you must think of me
but - I'm a good mother. He's my
son.

CAITLIN
(hating this)
Ma'am - you can call your husband
the moment we get to the station.
Just please get in the car.

Cora searches Caitlin's eyes. Caitlin nods sympathetically: *Just do this. You'll be okay.* Cora reluctantly gets in, looks at the metal grating enclosing the back seat. She's a prisoner now.

EXT. NEW PATZ POLICE STATION - DAY

A simple one-story brick police station.

INT. HALLWAY/BULLPEN - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose, followed by Leroy, enters the bullpen. The small staff of eight - receptionist, assistants, cops - all stop and look at him gravely. Cora is on everyone's mind.

AMBROSE
(to assistant)
Where's McCafferty? She with our
suspect?

ASSISTANT
They're in the back.

INT. KITCHEN - RON AND LORNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mason sits at the kitchen table with Ron and Lorna, not moving. They all look shell-shocked, a thousand miles away from where they were this morning.

MASON
I should go to the station.

Lorna stands.

LORNA
You need to eat first.

Mason's PHONE RINGS. He looks at the Caller ID - **New Paltz Police Station**. He looks pained. WE CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

... Cora sitting at a desk with a phone in her hand. Caitlin stands by, waiting. The PHONE CONTINUES TO RING. Then it picks up... to Mason's voice mail message. Cora can't quite believe it. The phone BEEPS.

CORA (ON PHONE)
... Mason... It's me... I'm at the
station. In New Paltz... I don't
know where you are...

Cora holds the phone in silence, not wanting to hang up.

CORA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
They're keeping me here... Please
come...

Finally, Cora hangs up, shaken.

EXT. BULLPEN - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - DAY

Ambrose sits reading Caitlin's notes. Caitlin looks on, waiting.

AMBROSE

This is good. Good job.

CAITLIN

Thank you, sir.

DICK GALLUCCI, 40s, amiable, heavy-set restaurant owner, walks in, sits on the edge of Ambrose's desk and drops a PIZZA BOX down.

AMBROSE

Oh, man. What is this? You trying to kill me?

GALLUCCI

Some no-show on a to-go order. Thought I'd walk it over. I hear you guys got your hands full. It's all over the radio.

AMBROSE

Yeah, we're sorting it out. How you doing? How's Martha?

GALLUCCI

So get this. She just called me. Turns out she knows that woman, Cora Tanner. *Our kids go to the same swimming class...*

(off Ambrose)

She says you'd never think Cora was the type. Totally average mom. Friendly. Volunteers at the Y.

Gallucci widens his eyes like it's just the craziest thing. Ambrose considers this, glances over at Leroy on the phone.

GALLUCCI (CONT'D)

So what's the story? She was banging him or something?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON A DIXIE CUP OF WATER. Cora sits alone at a table, tired and scared. She catches a COP scrutinizing her through the window in the door. He quickly moves away. She can hear VOICES in the hallway. No doubt talking about her.

Cora releases a breath, trying to stay calm. A moment later, the DOOR OPENS. Ambrose and LeRoy enter.

LEROY

Hi, Mrs. Tanner. I'm Detective Dan Leroy. This is Lieutenant Detective Harry Ambrose. We wanted to ask you a few questions.

They sit down. Cora watches them, trying to hold it together. She dabs at the cut near her eye with a stained Kleenex.

LEROY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't know you were injured. We can get a doctor to look at your eye.

CORA

No. It's okay. I don't want a doctor.

LEROY

Looks like a bad cut.

CORA

I don't need one. I'm fine...

Ambrose and Leroy say nothing. Even Cora can tell how unconvincing she is.

CORA (CONT'D)

Is my husband here?

LEROY

No. We'll let you know when he comes in.

Ambrose watches Cora react silently to this disappointment. Leroy starts a RECORDER on the desk.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Tanner, you're a resident of New Paltz, is that right?

CORA

(nods)

I grew up in Ellenville.

LEROY

And you're married?

Cora nods again.

LEROY (CONT'D)
For how long?

CORA
Three years.

LEROY
And... do you work?

Cora looks at Leroy and then Ambrose. Why does this matter?

CORA
I do accounting for my in-laws'
business - Tanner Air.

AMBROSE
By the turn-off to High Falls...
Ron Tanner?

CORA
(nods)
My father-in-law.

LEROY
Any other family in the area?
Parents?

CORA
(beat, shakes head)
They're both dead.
(frightened)
Can you please tell me what's going
to happen to me?

LEROY
Well, you'll have to stay here, at
the station, until the arraignment
tomorrow. When that happens your
lawyer can make your plea and the
judge will set a court date. We'll
know more then.

CORA
I don't want a lawyer.

Leroy falters. ON AMBROSE, curious.

LEROY
The state will provide you with a
public defender free of charge.

CORA
I know.

Ambrose leans forward.

AMBROSE

Mrs. Tanner, a lawyer could help reduce your sentence. Even if you decide to plead guilty.

(off Cora)

I really would suggest that you-

CORA

(edgy)

I don't want a lawyer.

Leroy glances at Ambrose. What's this about? Cora backtracks.

CORA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... It's just - I already confessed and... Just go ahead.

LEROY

Mrs. Tanner, like you said, we've got a pretty clear cut situation here. We have signed depositions from multiple witnesses who saw you stab Frankie Belmont at Minnewaska State Beach... Are you willing to confirm that you're responsible for his death?

It's hard for Cora to admit it. She nods.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Could you say yes or no for the record?

CORA

Yes.

LEROY

Could you describe how you killed him?

CORA

(pained)

I don't understand why we have to go through this again. I already told a policeman at the beach. And a woman here before you.

LEROY

I realize that. We just need to confirm the details.

Cora exhales. A beat. Ambrose can see her hand trembling on her lap. Cora tries her best to be firm and clear.

CORA

I stabbed him with a fruit knife I
was using to peel a pear for my
son.

Leroy reaches into a box and pulls out the FRUIT KNIFE Cora was holding, now marked as evidence in a plastic baggy.

LEROY

Is this the knife?

CORA

Yes.

LEROY

Where did you stab him?

ON CORA. WE HEAR the THROBBING DRUMS from the song on the beach. WE FLASH TO THE BLUR OF HER HAND SWINGING AT FRANKIE. FLASH ON HIS FACE, EYES JOLTING WIDE WITH SHOCK.

ANOTHER FLASH: A shadowy figure standing at the top of a staircase. A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE calling out...

YOUNG WOMAN

Are you coming?

BACK TO CORA in her chair, rubbing her forehead, lost.

LEROY

Mrs. Tanner?

Cora looks up, remembering where she is.

CORA

I'm sorry - I... On his neck. And
his throat... Maybe his face.

LEROY

How many times?

CORA

(with difficulty)
... Five or six. I'm not sure.

LEROY

Is that why you brought the fruit
knife to the beach?

Cora looks at them. Do they think she planned this?

CORA
I brought it to peel fruit.

ON AMBROSE, his steady unreadable eyes on Cora.

LEROY
What's your relationship to Frankie Belmont?

Cora looks agitated now. Scared. Helpless.

CORA
I don't know him.

LEROY
You had no interaction with him before today?

CORA
No. I've never met him before in my life.

LEROY
Did you expect to see him at the beach?

CORA
I'm telling you, I don't know him. I've never seen him before.

LEROY
Then... why kill him?

Cora shakes her head, in torment.

CORA
... They were playing music...
(off Leroy and Ambrose)
They kept turning it up.

LEROY
You stabbed him because the music was too loud?

Cora, barely convinced herself, looks away, frightened by what she doesn't now. Leroy looks doubtfully at Ambrose.

AMBROSE
Mrs. Tanner, I realize this isn't easy, being here. It's normal to be scared. I'm guessing this isn't where you thought you'd be when you woke up this morning, is it?

Cora shakes her head, tears coming to her eyes.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

We're only trying to understand the situation. I think we can all agree that people don't usually stab other people because they play their music too loud.

CORA

I realize that.

AMBROSE

Then maybe you can help us understand.

Cora looks riddled with guilt. Tears come to her eyes now.

CORA

I've never done anything like this. I would never hurt anyone. Ever. That's not who I am.

AMBROSE

I understand.

CORA

It just-

Cora stops, in pain. Ambrose leans forward.

AMBROSE

Whatever it is, you can tell us.

CORA

I don't know. I just did it. I don't know why.

And with that Cora covers her face and bursts into tears. Ambrose's eyes are fixed on her. He looks disturbed, almost nauseous... WE MOVE CLOSER INTO AMBROSE'S EYES AS WE SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/FILE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose walks quickly down a hallway. He turns into an empty file room and quickly shuts the door. He stands there, rattled. He lets out a breath slowly...

Something about Cora got to him.

INT. LIEBOWITZ'S OFFICE - DAY

CAPTAIN BRIAN LIEBOWITZ, 60s, heavy-set, amiable, leans against his desk. REVEAL Ambrose, back to his usual inscrutable calm, and Leroy sitting in chairs opposite.

LEROY

We have a confession on record.
She's prepared to make a statement.
I don't know what else to say.

Liebowitz sighs...

LIEBOWITZ

Well, shit, what the hell is wrong with her? Did she miss her meds or something?

LEROY

No history of mental problems. She takes sleeping pills sometimes. That's it. Drug test is clear.

Liebowitz looks to Ambrose. Ambrose shrugs, but we can tell this is weighing on him.

AMBROSE

We've got the 'who.' The 'how.'
We just don't have the 'why.'

LEROY

(to Liebowitz)
Do we need it? I mean, she did what she did, right?

AMBROSE

(to Leroy)
Dan, I keep telling you, women kill people they're-

LEROY

-intimately involved with. I got it. That's the profile. But...

Ambrose shoots Leroy a hard look. They've already argued about this. Leroy puts up his hands.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Look, it's not my call.

LIEBOWITZ

(to Ambrose)
So you think she's lying? She knows the guy?

AMBROSE

No. I don't. But the whole thing - attacking him in public, the knife wounds all over the place - that's an impulse killing. It's emotional. That's why it doesn't make sense.

LIEBOWITZ

(searching)

So... she just lost it. People are loose canons. They keep things bottled up then something sets them off. The wrong person takes the brunt of it.

LEROY

Right. All those shooters in high schools.

Ambrose says nothing for a beat, then...

AMBROSE

Average housewife with a kid, good member of the community, just ups and stabs a stranger in front of a hundred people? And then she turns down a lawyer and pleads guilty?

They all sit there a beat, stumped. Liebowitz sighs...

LIEBOWITZ

Fuck.

LEROY

Look, I get what Harry's saying. I do. But I don't see how this plays out any other way. I mean, we've got a confession and about forty eye-witnesses.

Liebowitz looks to Ambrose, but Ambrose has no response.

LIEBOWITZ

Blame it on the internet, right? All the crap hormones in our meat. The Muslims.

Liebowitz grins, trying to lighten the mood, but Ambrose doesn't smile back.

LIEBOWITZ (CONT'D)

Well... I'm getting too many calls already about this.

(MORE)

LIEBOWITZ (CONT'D)
 I don't want a press circus.
 (to Leroy)
 Let's move it through.

Both Liebowitz and Leroy look at Ambrose, expecting him to balk. But Ambrose just stands silently.

LIEBOWITZ (CONT'D)
 You good?

AMBROSE
 Yeah. Yeah. Fine.

LEROY
 Alright. I'll take her statement.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose and Leroy both stand at urinals, taking a piss.

LEROY
 I just don't want you to think I'm not on your side. I'm only trying to get things done-

AMBROSE
 It's fine. Don't worry about it. You're doing your job. You're doing good.

LEROY
 Well... learned it all from you.

A beat. Ambrose finishes and crosses to the sink. He fishes more TUMS out of a pocket and throws back a handful.

LEROY (CONT'D)
 You been doing alright?

Ambrose glances at Leroy, wary of this line of questioning.

AMBROSE
 What's that supposed to mean?

LEROY
 Nothing, just... I've been noticing your light on at night when I get up to take a piss... And Nia said she saw you standing out in the yard at three in the morning couple nights ago, doing I don't know what. Looking at plants or something.

Ambrose is uncomfortable.

AMBROSE

(dryly)

Why's she looking out into the yard at three in the morning? *That's* the question you should be asking.

LEROY

(backing off)

All right. All right. I just see your tired ass face looking all baggy and I gotta say something.

AMBROSE

Two more weeks. Then I move back home and I'll be out of your hair.

Ambrose dries his hands. Leroy looks at him.

LEROY

Harry, I told you, you stay as long as you and Faye need to figure things out. We're cool. You know that, right?

AMBROSE

Loud and clear.

LEROY

Just, you know...

(wryly)

...keep your shit together.

Ambrose shoots Leroy a look - deadpan, mock-annoyed - as he leaves.

INT. DETENTION CELL - CONTINUOUS

Cora sits curled on the bench, tense, finger picking nervously at the fraying vinyl upholstery. REVEAL AMBROSE quietly peering through the window of Cora's holding cell, watching, trying to make sense of her...

INT. MORGUE OFFICE - DAY

Belewski, the Medical Examiner we met earlier, eats a sandwich at a desk. Caitlin ushers the well-dressed parents of Frankie, PATRICK and ELSA BELMONT, 50s, into the morgue. They look shell-shocked.

CAITLIN

These are Frankie Belmont's
parents. They're here to ID the
body.

Belewski stands, trying to swallow his food.

INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Belewski leads Patrick and Elsa Belmont inside the tiny room
with a gurney and Frankie's covered body.

BELEWSKI

I should warn you, the body was
damaged. We already got the ID by
his wife so it's not necessary.

PATRICK BELMONT

(to Elsa, gently)
Do you want to wait?

ELSA BELMONT

No. I want to see.

They both step forward. Belewski lowers the sheet. We see a
glimpse of Frankie's cheek, a ragged crimson tear.

OFF ELSA BELMONT, looking at her son, trying to hold it
together...

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a MUG SHOT OF CORA TANNER. Ambrose waits while
Patrick and Elsa Belmont look at the photograph.

PATRICK BELMONT

No. I'm sorry.

AMBROSE

I realize this comes as a huge
shock. If you'd like to come back
later...

Elsa takes the photo, scrutinizes it.

ELSA BELMONT

This is her?

AMBROSE

She's our suspect.

Elsa closes her eyes, trying to contain her feelings.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

The name Cora Tanner doesn't mean anything to you? Frankie never mentioned her?

Patrick shakes his head.

ELSA BELMONT

Why? Why *him*? Frankie never did anything wrong. He was a doctor. He *helped* people...

Elsa starts to cry. Patrick places a solemn, comforting hand on her back, but she shirks it off angrily-

ELSA BELMONT (CONT'D)

(to Patrick)

Stop it.

Ambrose looks at them with empathy. The horror of parents losing a child.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CORA AND MASON'S HOUSE - DAY

Mason enters his house, taking in the stillness of the room. Every surface is spotlessly clean. Every cushion perfectly placed. What was once familiar now feels alien. Haunted.

He walks slowly towards the kitchen, but something stops him by the kitchen table. There in front of him is Cora's sign: **CAMP STARFISH.**

INT./EXT. CAR - TRAVELING - AFTERNOON

Mason drives, nervous. He turns the car around a corner... *and we realize we're at the New Paltz Police Station.* He pulls into the parking lot. But just when he's about to pull into a space, he stops the car, idling.

Mason peers out at the station, conflicted. Cora is inside, waiting for him, but he can't move...

EXT. NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - EVENING

Several reporters and two TV cameras are grouped in front of the police station. Ambrose and Leroy stand next to Liebowitz, who reads a prepared statement.

LIEBOWITZ

(reading)

...The homicide occurred mid-day today on the beach at Minnewaska State Park. The victim, Frankie Belmont, 29 years old, is a Columbia County native and Manhattan resident...

Ambrose looks unreadable, his poker face in full effect...

INT. HOLDING CELL - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - EVENING

Cora stands, worried, at one end of the cell. Caitlin slides a MEAL TRAY through the pass-through. Cora walks up to the cell door.

CORA

I need to see my husband. I've been here for hours and no one's told me anything.

CAITLIN

I'm sorry... but visiting hours are over.

CORA

What do you mean?... You said you'd tell me when he came. You promised.

Caitlin falters, uneasy now.

CAITLIN

He never did. He didn't call. Everybody's gone home for the night. It's just me.

ON CORA, the reality hitting her. Mason isn't coming.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON CORA'S FINGER picking at the upholstery again. She's curled against the wall, tense and frightened. OFF HER HAUNTED EYES WE FLASHBACK TO...

PRE-LAP GIRL'S VOICE

The purple one. There...

INT. HALLWAY - LACEY HOUSE, 1987 - DAY

Four-year-old Cora and BETHANY, 4, her friend, rummage through a hallway closet, trying on hats and scarves belonging to Cora's mother. Bethany wanders into the master bedroom.

CORA
(worried)
Don't go in there.

But Bethany's already inside, standing awestruck by what she sees on the bedroom wall. Cora follows.

REVEAL, in front of them, a five-foot, frighteningly realistic CRUCIFIX of a bleeding, dying Jesus Christ.

ON THE GIRLS, looking up in fear and awe...

END FLASHBACK

EXT. HOUSE - RHINEBECK, PRESENT - NIGHT

A charming renovated Victorian farmhouse. Similar, well-manicured homes line the street. There's money here.

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

An expensively decorated "rustic" living room. Ambrose sits with FAYE, 50s, Ambrose's estranged wife, in their daughter MELANIE's, 30s, living room. Melanie's banker husband DAN, 30s, sits apart, scrolling through emails on his phone.

Ambrose watches his grandson, ELI, 8, open a birthday present, but his eyes keep going to Faye.

AMBROSE
(directing Eli)
The tape there. On the corner.
Pop that sucker. *That's* it.

Eli unwraps it and looks, unimpressed, at a set of CHILD'S BINOCULARS. Melanie looks at Ambrose quizzically.

MELANIE
(low)
Dad, I told you he wanted Legos.
The *Star Wars* falcon thing.

AMBROSE
Well, I thought he could use these
on our hikes.
(MORE)

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

If he could see the birds better he might be more interested.

(to Eli)

Right, kiddo?

Melanie swallows her annoyance. Eli couldn't be less excited. Ambrose glances at Faye, who half-smiles impartially.

MELANIE

Eli, you want to eat more of your dinner?... What's the matter, honey?

Eli wanders off, ignoring her. Melanie's frustrated.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Dan, can you help, please?

Melanie follows Eli, leaving Ambrose alone with Faye. A beat. Their eyes meet. The tension between them ratchets higher.

AMBROSE

(carefully)

How you been doing?

FAYE

I'm good. Things are good... You?

AMBROSE

Okay. Yeah.

(beat)

I was going to come over tomorrow and water the dogwood if you don't mind.

FAYE

Well, I'll be out, so that works fine.

Not what Ambrose had in mind. An awkward beat. He glances to make sure Melanie isn't coming back, then looks at Faye.

AMBROSE

Look, I was wondering - what do you think about getting dinner this week? Something casual. Like the Grill. Or wherever you want.

Faye looks at him. She wasn't expecting this.

FAYE

The two of us?

AMBROSE

Yeah. I was just thinking maybe we could spend some time together. You know, not in therapy. Just casual.

Faye hesitates, vulnerable now. This isn't easy for her.

FAYE

I don't know, Harry.

AMBROSE

We don't have to talk about us.

Faye looks at him, quietly hardening at those words. Sensing his mistake, Ambrose backtracks...

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Or we can-

FAYE

-Maybe we should talk to Dr. Pierson about it first. See if it's a good idea.

Disappointed, and vaguely annoyed, Ambrose nods.

AMBROSE

(neutral)

Okay. That's fine.

Silence settles on them. Faye sips her wine.

EXT. LEROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ambrose's car pulls up to a modest split-level on a suburban street.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LEROY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose enters, finds LeRoy and his wife, NIA, on the couch, watching TV. Leroy puts the TV on pause.

AMBROSE

Don't let me interrupt. I'm serious, don't stop. Hey, Nia.

NIA

Hi, Harry.

Ambrose is already walking down the hall, not hanging around to connect any more than this. Leroy and Nia share a look.

INT. GUEST ROOM - LEROY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Two suitcases on the floor, clothes spilling out. A rumped guest bed. A cardio machine in the corner. Ambrose reaches into his briefcase, pulls out the POLICE REPORT ON CORA.

CUT TO:

PICTURES OF CORA, THE CRIME SCENE AT THE BEACH, CLOSE-UPS OF FRANKIE'S BODY - all spread out on the floor. Ambrose sits on the bed, stares down at them, rapt.

INT. NEW PALTZ STATION - NIGHT

Caitlin sleeps on a make-shift cot in the holding area. There's a distant BANGING SOUND... CORA'S VOICE CRYING OUT... She sits up, worried.

INT. HOLDING CELL - CONTINUOUS

Cora stands at the door to her cell, panic in her eyes. The DRUMS from the song at the beach thrum in her ear.

CORA
(yelling)
... Caitlin?... *Caitlin...*

Caitlin enters with bleary eyes. Cora looks at her desperately.

CORA (CONT'D)
I can't sleep. And I don't have my pills. I need something.
Please...

CAITLIN
I can't give you anything like that. It's against the rules.

CORA
Please... I won't tell them. Just something. I'm going to go crazy in here.

CAITLIN
I can get you some water?

Cora MOANS in pain and frustration, almost possessed. Caitlin watches helplessly as Cora slides down against the wall, shutting her eyes.

CORA
 (intensely)
*Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord
 is with thee. Blessed art thou
 amongst women, and blessed is the
 fruit of thy womb, Jesus...*

The DRUMS GET LOUDER as WE FLASH TO A SERIES OF IMAGES:

- The same deep-hued Art Nouveau wall paper pattern...
- The scalloped hem of a dress with delicate needle-work.
- The same shadowy figure standing at the top of a staircase, a YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE calling out to her...

YOUNG WOMAN
 Are you coming?

THEN WE FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. LACEY HOUSE, 2009 - DAY

A local taxi pulls up outside of Cora's childhood house. The car door opens slowly.

REVEAL CORA, in her early 20s but looking like the adult we know. She steps out. Her hair is pulled back into a ponytail. Extending from her upper forehead into her scalp is a DEEP SCAR, still pink, from what looks like a serious head wound.

The light outside is gauzy and bright. She looks down the street, at Dede's house next door, at her own house.

Slowly, as if in a dream, she walks up to her front door. She pauses... RINGS the doorbell. A moment passes...

The DOOR OPENS, revealing... her mother, ELIZABETH, 40s, intense, dark eyes, a former beauty who's turned hard. She's stunned to see Cora. Tears come to Cora's eyes, as if she's been trying for a very long time to come home.

CORA
 Mom, it's me. It's Cora.

Elizabeth stares back, not moving, her eyes steely.

ELIZABETH
 Cora is dead.

OFF CORA, her last shred of hope dying in her eyes. END FLASHBACK.

EXT. LIVING ROOM - LEROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room is dark. The TV is off. The house is completely quiet.

INT. GUEST ROOM - LEROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ambrose is still working on Cora's case. He finishes reading another eyewitness account, adds it to a pile. He picks up the mug shot of Cora's face.

CLOSE ON Cora's empty eyes staring back, haunted. Ambrose stands, agitated, like he's fighting a battle he's about to lose...

PRE-LAP: SFX of KNOCKING ON A DOOR.

EXT. SHARON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An outdoor light COMES ON, revealing Ambrose on a back porch of a run-down duplex. SHARON, 30s, a curvy woman wearing tight sweats, opens the door and looks at him through the screen door. *We recognize her as the WAITRESS Ambrose was spying on in the diner.*

SHARON

Well, if it isn't New Paltz's finest, sneaking round the back door.

AMBROSE

I couldn't sleep.

Sharon smiles with a certain self-satisfied pleasure.

SHARON

I gotta say, you held out longer than I thought. How long's it been? A month?

Ambrose shrugs, not proud.

SHARON (CONT'D)

So did it work? Your wife take you back?

AMBROSE

How about you open the door.

She opens the screen door for him.

SHARON
You're lucky I don't have company.
Showing up here like this.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sharon pours a whiskey and hands it to Ambrose. She leans against the counter, smiles. She likes him, and she knows the power she has over him. Ambrose can't help eyeing her breasts in the fitted sweats.

SHARON
Nice to see you, too.

AMBROSE
(half-kidding)
You miss me?

Sharon smirks.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
So you've been having company, huh?

SHARON
(shrugs)
Maybe.

She eyes Ambrose, knowing how to work him.

SHARON (CONT'D)
I got this new guy. He likes to
bring his buddy.

AMBROSE
Two of them? At the same time?

SHARON
The tips at Palermo's don't exactly
buy me new brake pads... Don't tell
me you're jealous.

Ambrose steps closer. He reaches out to touch her when Sharon SLAPS HIM FULL FORCE ACROSS THE FACE. Hard.

Ambrose stands there, stunned, eyes watering. He holds her eyes, not moving. He doesn't say a word.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Get down.

Ambrose slides down to his knees in front of her. He looks up at her. She looks down at him. A taut connection.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Hands.

Knowing exactly what to do, he places his palms down on the floor.

Sharon slowly, methodically, *places the hard edges of her soles onto the bruised tips of his fingers...* then leans in. Ambrose gasps, intoxicated by pain and something else, his eyes charged with desire as he looks up at her. It's turning him on.

AMBROSE

You know I think about you all the time. I can't fucking help it. Every minute I-

SHARON

Shut up.

Ambrose goes quiet, looking up at her dutifully. Slowly, Sharon lowers her sweatpants...

INT. HOLDING CELL AREA - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - MORNING

Early morning light filters through the windows. Caitlin unlocks Cora's cell and swings open the door, revealing Cora. She's eerily calm, sitting on the bench, eyes on the floor, *like something deep in her has shifted.*

CAITLIN

Hi, Cora. Did you sleep?

Cora doesn't answer. She doesn't even move.

EXT. BEACH - MINNEWASKA LAKE - MORNING

A grey morning. The beach is deserted, the water like slate.

Ambrose stands alone, looking at the YELLOW EVIDENCE FLAGS planted in the sand, markers of violence. Nothing here seems to offer any answer.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - TANNER HOUSE - MORNING

ANGLE ON LAINE playing with toys on the floor. Lorna stands at the kitchen sink, filling a glass with water.

WE CUT TO the LIVING ROOM, where Mason answers a question...

MASON

She was waiting tables at this place in Kingston. And she just caught my eye. I mean, she looked way out of my league, but... I don't know, I asked her out anyway. We got married a year later.

REVEAL AMBROSE, watching Mason with the same steady eyes.

AMBROSE

Is there anything you noticed about Cora lately? Any changes in her behavior?

Mason shakes his head.

MASON

She was having trouble sleeping a while back. But she got a prescription and things have been okay.

AMBROSE

Recreational drug use? Any history of addiction?

MASON

No. Cora's not - No. She's not like that.

AMBROSE

What about before you two met?

MASON

When I met her she was living with her aunt in the city. In Inwood. Before that she was in Ellenville with her Dad. But he died. An accident or something. She never talked about him much.

AMBROSE

You didn't ask?

Mason shakes his head, self-conscious now. He knows so little about his wife. LORNA enters, hands Ambrose the water.

LORNA TANNER

I always knew there was something about her. I knew it.

(MORE)

LORNA TANNER (CONT'D)

Twenty years we been doing
business, steady business, all on
our reputation. And she just
killed it in a day. Who's gonna
want us in their homes putting in
HVACs now?

Mason looks at the floor, embarrassed and angry. Ambrose
clocks the family tension.

AMBROSE

(to Mason)

Do you mind showing me around the
house for a minute?

MASON

(relieved)

Yeah. Sure.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose, followed by Mason, wanders through the master
bedroom. Everything looks modest and normal. He looks
inside the closet. It's clean and organized. Shoes lined up
perfectly.

AMBROSE

You got everything in order here.

MASON

Yeah. Cora tries to keep it that
way.

Ambrose's eyes float over the dresser, taking in pictures,
items on the dresser, jewelry.

AMBROSE

You haven't come by the station to
see her yet.

MASON

(caught, guilty)

Yeah. I was going to. I will.

Ambrose looks at him.

AMBROSE

Have you two been having trouble?

MASON

No. I mean... No.

AMBROSE

She's your wife. She's been calling you.

MASON

I know. I just-
(struggling)
I don't know what to say to her.
What she did, the stuff she said...
It's like she was somebody else.

AMBROSE

What did she say? You didn't mention anything in your statement.

MASON

Well, cause it didn't make any sense. Right after she attacked that guy, she went for his girlfriend. The one who put on the music.

AMBROSE

Leah?

MASON

Yeah...

WE FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. BEACH - MINNEWASKA LAKE - DAY

Mason tackles Cora as Frankie falls back onto the towel, bleeding and choking. Cora lashes out with the knife, cutting Mason's arm. She slips out of his grasp and - surging with adrenaline and fear - turns to Leah. *But Cora's eyes are full of love and concern.*

CORA

It's okay. You're going to be okay. He's gone now.

Cora crawls towards her, arms out as if to comfort a traumatized child. Leah SCREAMS, scrambles backwards, as Mason grabs Cora. WE CUT BACK TO...

INT. BEDROOM - TANNER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...AMBROSE, processing Mason's story.

AMBROSE

She thought she was saving her?

MASON

I mean... yeah. That's what it looked like.

INT. AMBROSE'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

The car glides over curving country roads. Ambrose looks intently at the road, thinking...

INT. BULLPEN - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - DAY

Ambrose enters with purpose, walks up to Leroy and Caitlin.

AMBROSE

(to Caitlin)

I've been talking with Mason Tanner. He's right behind me now. He's coming to see his wife. The minute he leaves, I want you to bring Cora to my office. Take her handcuffs off. Don't wait. I want her shaken up. You got it?

Caitlin nods. Leroy watches from his desk. What is Ambrose up to?

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Cora sits alone in her cell. Caitlin opens the door.

CAITLIN

Your husband's here to see you.

ON CORA, not quite believing it. She stands.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Cora sits, oddly composed, waiting. Caitlin opens the door and ushers in Mason, holding Laine. The moment she sees her son, Cora's composure falters.

CAITLIN

(to Mason)

You can sit here. I'm sorry but you can't touch.

Mason sits down at the other end of the desk, eyes on the floor. Laine sees Cora-

LAINE

Mommy.

CORA

Hi, honey. *Hi.*

LAINE

Mommy-

Laine struggles and cries out for his mother, but Mason doesn't let him go. Cora holds back tears.

CORA

I know, honey. But I have to stay over here. I want to come over but I can't.

MASON

(to Laine)

Just hold on, buddy. It's okay.

CORA

(to Mason)

Is he okay? Is he eating?

MASON

He's fine. He's just confused...

Mason still can't look at Cora. A beat.

MASON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I didn't come yesterday.

Cora nods, trying to be strong. Mason looks up. Finally, they look at each other, eye to eye, and everything lands... their love, the reality of where they are now.

MASON (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do. I keep going over everything in my head. But none of it makes any sense.

CORA

Me neither. I feel like I'm going crazy.

MASON

Maybe... maybe it was just a moment. A thing that happened... and that's it.

Cora doesn't look so sure. It's what scares them both.

MASON (CONT'D)
What's going to happen now?

CORA
I gave my statement. They're gonna bring me to the courthouse in an hour.

MASON
And then what?

CORA
The judge'll tell me how much time I've got.

MASON
(not quite believing it)
... And that's it?... They're putting you jail?

Cora nods.

MASON (CONT'D)
Can't they do something? What about a lawyer?

CORA
Lawyers can't do anything. I did what I did.

Cora looks Mason in the eye, pained. Guilty.

CORA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

It's hitting Mason now. Nothing is ever going to be the same. Cora braces herself, gathering strength...

CORA (CONT'D)
Mason, whatever you have to do now - because of what happened - you know I won't blame you. Because you're gonna have to move on. I can't be your wife. I can't be anybody's wife, you understand?

MASON
Don't say that.

CORA
It's just true.

Mason looks down at the floor, trying to keep it together.

CORA (CONT'D)

I won't blame you. And Laine won't either. You just have to keep going.

Mason still can't look at her.

CORA (CONT'D)

And don't go blaming yourself. You've been a good husband to me. I didn't think I'd ever have a normal life. But I did. I really did. And that's because of you.

Mason can't help it. He starts crying. Laine shifts unhappily.

LAINE

Mommy-

CORA

I'm here, honey. I'm right here.
(emotional, to Caitlin)
Can't I please just hold my baby?

CAITLIN

(shakes head, reluctant)
I'm sorry.

Cora nods, but she crumples, silent sobs shaking her. Mason, unable to bear it and scared of breaking down more, stands and rushes out with Laine in his arms.

EXT. OFFICE - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Ambrose waits in his office. He watches as Caitlin leads Cora through the bullpen, towards him. They enter.

AMBROSE

Hi, Cora. Have a seat.

Cora's eyes are red. Ambrose closes the blinds while Caitlin takes off Cora's handcuffs and leaves. Cora looks at Ambrose, bewildered.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

I spoke with your husband this morning. He told me that after you stabbed Frankie Belmont you tried to comfort the woman he was with.

Cora looks at Ambrose, genuinely confused.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

You told her...

(reading notes)

'It's okay. You're going to be okay. He's gone now.' What did you mean by that?

WE FLASH TO CORA, arms out to Leah, crawling towards her, then BACK TO CORA in the present, remembering now...

CORA

(thinking)

I thought she was in danger. He was forcing himself on her.

AMBROSE

That woman was Leah *Belmont*. His *wife*. They got married three months ago.

ON CORA, thrown by this.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

You weren't protecting her from anything. Anything real, at least.

CORA

I thought she was in danger.

AMBROSE

No one else on that beach thought to save Leah Belmont from her husband. You mean to say you were the only one?

CORA

I gave you my statement and I signed it. What more do you want?

Ambrose backs off. He sits on the edge of his desk. His voice softer now...

AMBROSE

Cora, you were in a deluded state when you killed that man. Now you're facing a life sentence in maximum security. You have a child and a husband. Why aren't you asking for a lawyer?

Cora says nothing.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

If you plead temporary insanity,
request a psych eval, you might get
a reduced sentence. Early parole.
It could take a while, but you
could get your life back. Be with
your son.

Cora looks at Ambrose, a deep fear in her eyes.

CORA

I should be in jail. I don't know
why I did what I did. I could do
it again.

AMBROSE

There are doctors who can help you.

CORA

No. No psychiatrists.

AMBROSE

Why not?

Cora shakes her head. Ambrose pauses, watching her intently...

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(beat, carefully)

Cora, what happened to you?

Cora looks at Ambrose with haunted eyes. There's a story hidden inside... somewhere...

CORA

Why are you doing this?

AMBROSE

Because once you walk into that
courtroom, there's no going back.

CORA

But you're a detective. You work
for the prosecution. Why are you
helping me?

Ambrose falters, suddenly on the spot. But he can't - or won't - go there...

AMBROSE

I just think you're making a
mistake.

CORA
 (intensely)
 It's *my* choice. You have *no right*.

Cora's eyes bore into him challengingly. A beat. Ambrose doesn't want to let this go, but there's no other course. He stands up, frustrated.

AMBROSE
 Fine. Suit yourself.

He gets the handcuffs, puts them back on Cora. Cora watches him as he does it, a peaceful clarity on her face. A beat, then she looks into his eyes...

CORA
 It's not a mistake. It's what I deserve.

INT. HOLDING CELL - CONTINUOUS

Cora, handcuffed once again, is led by a guard into her holding cell. OFF HER PLACID FACE WE FLASHBACK TO...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CORA'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE, 1987 - DAY

William and four-year-old Cora look out the window together. A hospital van parks on the street. The driver gets out and opens the door for Cora's mother, Elizabeth. She steps out holding a BUNDLE in her arms.

William OPENS THE FRONT DOOR and Elizabeth enters. She barely makes eye contact with Cora.

ELIZABETH
 (to William)
 Put the kettle on. Fill it up high. We'll need towels. At least three.

Elizabeth carries the bundle right past Cora and straight upstairs.

INT. HALLWAY - LACEY HOUSE, 1987 - CONTINUOUS

Cora stands by the stairs, looking through the open door of the master bedroom. She can hear William and Elizabeth talking out of view.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
 No, I'll do it. Just- let me do
 it...
 (severely)
William.

William walks into view, sees Cora in the hallway. He walks back towards Elizabeth. A beat. Some whispers. Then...

ELIZABETH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Cora.

Cora freezes, frightened. She can't move.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
 Cora... Come see Mommy.

Cora walks forward into the...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LACEY HOUSE, 1987 - CONTINUOUS

Cora stands by the door, unsure. Elizabeth sits across the room in a rocker with the bundle in her arms.

ELIZABETH
 Would you like to meet your sister?

Cora says nothing.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Come here.

Cora walks forward slowly. Elizabeth lowers the bundle and folds back the blanket, revealing... *a tiny creature-like 6-month-old baby*. Stringy black hair. Thin bones. *And her skin a pale blue.*

ON CORA, quietly stunned by the grotesque sight.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 (to Cora)
 When you were a baby inside me, you took up all of my strength - enough for three children - all for yourself. So when Phoebe came, there wasn't any left for her. That's why she's so sick.

ON CORA, believing every word.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're a sinner. We all are. And now the Lord is putting us to the test. Every single thing He expects of us, we have to do. It's the only way she'll live.

ON CORA, nodding, unsure, her four-year-old mind trying to absorb what this means. She looks to William - her father, her rock - but he only looks back at her gravely.

END FLASHBACK

INT. BULLPEN - NEW PALTZ POLICE STATION - DAY

Ambrose gathers his things with a sense of purpose, preparing to leave. He turns to Caitlin.

AMBROSE

Call St. Jude's. Find out if Leah Belmont is still there and call me. I'm heading over there now.

LEROY

What are you doing?

AMBROSE

If she confirms what Mason Tanner said, and Cora really was in a deluded state, then I'm bringing it to Judge Baird. He'll at least throw out the guilty plea and order a psych eval.

The look on Leroy's face is clear: he doesn't understand why Ambrose is doing this. But Ambrose is already on his way out. ON LEROY, conflicted, but coming around...

LEROY

(calling out)

You got two hours. The arraignment's at four.

AMBROSE

(not stopping)

I know.

I/E. RECEPTION - ST. JUDE'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Ambrose arrives at reception, presents his badge.

AMBROSE
Detective Ambrose. I'm here to see
Leah Belmont.

INT. HALLWAY - ST. JUDE'S HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

A NURSE leads Ambrose up to a windowed hospital room.

NURSE
She was too unstable this morning
so we put her back on sedation.

AMBROSE
Can she answer a few questions?

NURSE
Definitely not. Maybe tomorrow.
We'll have to see.

REVEAL LEAH BELMONT, Frankie's young wife, lying in a drug-induced sleep, so peaceful compared to when we last saw her.

ON AMBROSE, frustrated. There's no way he'll get testimony from her today. As he turns to leave, Ambrose sees a man sitting on the other side of Leah's room. It's HOBBS, Frankie Belmont's friend at the beach. Their eyes meet...

INT. COMMISSARY - ST. JUDE'S - CONTINUOUS

Hobbs and Ambrose sit with coffees alongside medical staff.

AMBROSE
I just wanted to ask you a few more
questions.

HOBBS
I'd really prefer not to do this
again. I already gave my
statement.

AMBROSE
Yeah, and it happened to be the
shortest one out of the forty we
got. And you had front row seats.

ON HOBBS, uncomfortable now.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
How would you describe Cora, when
she was attacking your friend?

Hobbs sighs. He doesn't want to do this.

HOBBS
Determined... Vicious.

AMBROSE
Would you say she was lucid?

HOBBS
I'm an oncologist, not a
psychiatrist.

AMBROSE
Do you remember her saying anything
during or after?

Hobbs shakes his head.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
What about to Leah? Did she
interact with Leah in any way?

HOBBS
Look, I already said this in my
statement. I was sitting on the
towel the whole time. And then
Frankie was bleeding and I was
trying to stop it. That's all I
remember.

Ambrose isn't going to get anything from this guy. A long
beat. His eyes drift to A POTTED PLANT behind Hobbs.

AMBROSE
Hevea brasiliensis. Rubber plant.
Needs more light than it's getting
there.

Hobbs glances uncomfortably behind him at the plant. He
looks back at Ambrose.

HOBBS
Is that it?

Ambrose nods. A beat. Hobbs moves to get up. Then...

AMBROSE
Why didn't you stop her?

HOBBS
(beat)
What do you mean?

AMBROSE

Well, I'm just thinking... You could have stopped Cora from killing your friend. Her husband got up from where he was sitting and ran - from my measurements, about fifteen feet - and *tackled* her. You were sitting four feet away and you never got up off your towel.

Hobbs shifts, humiliated.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Slow reflexes?

HOBBS

I don't know.

Ambrose's eyes are trained on Hobbs. He doesn't believe him.

AMBROSE

You just watched your best friend get shredded?

HOBBS

I thought he had it under control.

AMBROSE

What part of getting stabbed seven times is 'under control'?

HOBBS

Because...

Hobbs shifts, sighs. He was hoping to avoid this...

HOBBS (CONT'D)

Look, I didn't do anything because - I don't know if anyone else saw this - but from where I was sitting, I saw Frankie grab her.

This is news to Ambrose.

AMBROSE

When?

HOBBS

After she stabbed him that first time, right in the neck, he grabbed her wrist. Like this.

Hobbs shows him.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

And... the thing is, Frankie was a strong guy. He could have forced her off him....

WE FLASH TO:

EXT. BEACH - MINNEWASKA LAKE - DAY

We're back at the MOMENT OF THE CRIME. In sickening SLOW MOTION we see Cora's hand swing through the air. Frankie shudders when THE KNIFE IMPACTS... *and now we see his hand instinctively grab Cora's arm.*

CLOSE ON HIS FINGERS GRIPPING HER WRIST TIGHTLY. There's the same beat of stillness, of utter shock.

WE INTERCUT WITH HOBBS and AMBROSE AT THE TABLE...

AMBROSE

So why didn't he stop her?

HOBBS

(uncomfortable)

Look, I know how the mind plays tricks on you. All that adrenaline. You see things that aren't there.

AMBROSE

Just tell me.

OFF HOBBS, reluctant, WE CUT BACK TO:

FRANKIE. IN SLOW-MOTION, we see him look up into Cora's eyes... *and something changes in his expression.* From something primal and ready to fight to... *recognition.*

CLOSE ON FRANKIE'S HAND as it loosens its grip on Cora's wrist and...

... *HE LETS HER GO...*

Frankie waits, looking into her eyes like a prisoner awaiting execution.

IN A FLASH Cora's arm pulls back and just as the knife plunges again into his neck WE CUT BACK TO:

Ambrose looking at Hobbs.

HOBBS

... It looked like he recognized her. He looked up and when he saw who it was, he let her go.

ON AMBROSE, his mind spinning.

AMBROSE

He *knew* her?

Hobbs nods. ON AMBROSE, understanding now...

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

And then he let her kill him.

INT. HALLWAY - NEW PALTZ COURTHOUSE - DAY

Cora is escorted down the hallway by Leroy and a courthouse guard. As she's ushered into the courtroom, we stay CLOSE ON HER FACE - innocent, frightened, but strangely resolved.

Then the courtroom doors close behind her, shutting her from view...

END PILOT