

LOVE, CRIME, AND BOOTS

Written by

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EXT. CONEY ISLAND - BOARDWALK - DAY

KRESHNIK "NICK" BEZHANI (16) runs down the boardwalk seeking a place to hide. A video game T-shirt covers a gangly body, but his deft zigzag through tourists shows Nick has the skillz of a young David Beckham.

Nick ducks behind a vendor cart. He looks down at a photo booth strip of himself and a girl in various goofy poses.

The photo is ripped out of his hand by the same girl, DESIREE WALSH (16), who has caught up with him. Her laugh is as irresistible as her mischievous smile.

NICK

C'mon, Boots! I look like a dork.

Desiree spins away and saucily kicks back a well-worn cowboy boot from under her Catholic school skirt.

DESIREE

I love it. And I'm framing it with our NYU summer class photo.

A silk-screened "Hawaii" T-shirt shows under her uniform, and school shoes hang from a Hawaiian print backpack.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Look on the bright side, Nick. You get a redo at my school's prom tonight. You're gonna love my dress.

Nick grins as she turns to face him while walking backward.

NICK

Oh yeah? Pick you up earlier then!

THUMP!

Desiree's back collides with ZAMIR SULA (17). His stylized swept bangs aim for swagger, but punk kid supersedes it.

The photo strip flutters to the ground. Desiree quickly grabs it, but Zamir purposefully steps on it. It rips in half.

ZAMIR

Oops.

DESIREE

You dickbiscuit!

As Nick reaches for the other half, Zamir sneers and lifts his foot... slowly. Their eyes meet. There's history there.

Nick pulls a fuming Desiree toward an arcade.

INT. CONEY ISLAND - ARCADE - DAY

Nick stands protectively behind Desiree while she plays the claw game. She opens her mouth, Nick pops in a Raisinet.

DESIREE

What a turd! You know that guy?

Nick shakes his head and blows raspberries on her neck.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Shit, Nick! Don't mess with me. You know I'm trying not to swear.

NICK

Doesn't bother me. And no, not teaching you Albanian swear words.

Anger forgotten, Desiree laughs. They switch places.

DESIREE

I calculated a twenty percent probability increase your father will like me if I know Albanian when we finally meet.

NICK

I like you. That's all the stats you need.

DESIREE

What about dinner? My parents wanna meet your dad this time.

NICK

Yeah... I'll ask.

The game's claw grabs a toy. Nick wins a MINI RUBBER DUCKY KEYCHAIN with a colorful lei around the ducky's neck.

DESIREE

See! It's a sign. Hawaii, four kids, a house on the beach, and a pet turtle named--

NICK

(laughs; holds ducky up)
All that from this?

He slides the key ring loop onto her finger, the duck now swinging below her palm.

NICK (CONT'D)

But seriously, will you, Desiree Walsh, someday share a turtle... um, "Greenie" with me?

DESIREE

You just lost naming rights, but you get points for creativity.

Nick closes his eyes and exaggerates a lip pucker kiss.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Crap! I gotta go get ready.

Nick's eyes shoot open to watch her pull a STRIP OF CONDOMS from her backpack, casually handing it to him.

He holds them up, fascinated by how each is attached to the next before refolding to shove into his pocket.

Desiree passes him a paper and book: *MIT Entrance Prep*.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

You picked it up every time we went into the bookstore.

(taps paper)

It's called a scholarship. And you can afford to go. A dream plus action becomes a realized goal.

She winks at him. Touched, he kisses her.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Now I really have to go.

Worried, Nick scans the area. No Zamir.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

I'll be okay. And don't start another Super Bowl debate tonight with my dads or we'll be late for my prom.

Another kiss turns passionate. They're in sync in every way. She steps back; their hands clasp forearm to forearm, then hands slowly slide away until only fingertips touch.

Nick watches her leave, the lopsided grin proof he's a goner.

EXT. DESIREE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY (MANHATTAN)

A classic brownstone with an autumn wreath hung on the door.

INT. DESIREE'S BROWNSTONE - BEDROOM - DAY

Desiree smiles and adjusts her pretty prom dress in front of a mirror. The room is a chaos of clothes, shoes, and makeup.

The ripped photo of her and Nick has been taped to a mirror next to other pictures of the two of them together.

Desiree's fathers, DOCTOR WALSH (40s), wearing a stethoscope in a belt holder, and PAPA DOUG (40s) wearing an unbuttoned chef's jacket, stand in the doorway and exchange smiles.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND - ST. GEORGE TERMINAL - DAY

Nick steps out of the terminal with other PASSENGERS.

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY

Nick scans the room as the PIZZA OWNER studies the ripped photo of Nick and Desiree. Nick notes a LONE MAN at a table.

PIZZA OWNER

And she has the brains to match.

They fist bump.

NICK

I'll take a sausage pizza to go.

Nick walks toward the back, MIT study book in one hand.

PIZZA RESTAURANT BACK ROOM

Nick's smile drops. He knocks on a closed door.

The door cracks open, Zamir peers out.

ZAMIR

Who was the chick?

NICK

Where's my dad?

Zamir's head jerks when a hand smacks him from behind.

MARKO (O.S.)

Idiot, close the door.

ZAMIR

Sheez, Dad, it's Kreshnik.

The door swings open, and Zamir's father, MARKO SULA (40s), beckons Nick inside. Covered in tattoos, Marko's pure badass.

MARKO
Tufar's busy.

The room's organized like a pharmacy with shelving to match.

In a corner, Nick's father, TUFAR BEZHANI (40s), supervises packets of drugs loaded into duffle bags by ALBANIAN THUGS. Tufar is intense and formidable. He doesn't see Nick.

Pills knock over and splay across the floor. Tufar slams an ALBANIAN THUG to the ground.

Nick exhales sharply, shakes his head. He's seen this before.

TUFAR
That's 10G's. Pick it up!

ZAMIR
(whispers to Nick)
Moving into oxy was my idea.

Nick winces when Tufar punches a restrained MIDDLE-AGED MAN.

NICK
Bruno's uncle? He's not in this.

ZAMIR
He's a link. A link that controls
Bruno's loyalty -- which is
questionable at the moment.

With a pronounced limp, Marko's henchman, RAP (30s), steps between Nick's father and the Middle-Aged Man.

NICK
(backs out; to Zamir)
Tell him my mom wants him home.

EXT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Zamir catches up to Nick, pulling a gun from his waistband to show off. Nick looks around, pushing Zamir's gun back.

NICK
Not in the mood for your bullshit.

ZAMIR
(nods to Nick's MIT book)
Straight A's don't give you a pass.
You're gonna have to step up too.

NICK

Get out, Zamir, before it's too late. We both had plans to--

ZAMIR

Shit we said in the fourth grade doesn't count for jack, Kreshnik. When I'm in charge, you will--

NICK

I'm leaving, so have at it. Run the kingdom. My dad might--

Zamir stops him. They go chest to chest.

ZAMIR

Your father works for mine.

Nick's hands clench, itching to take a swing.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)

Go ahead, hit me. I'm one fight away from the New York Metro Boxing Championship.

NICK

(in Albanian)

Yeah, and it cost your father a shitload to get you ranked. Eat shit.

Nick shoulder bumps Zamir and jogs away.

The words sting, Zamir's confidence sags, and hatred oozes.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Nick slows his run.

NICK

(mutters)

The pizza.

He jogs back the way he came.

EXT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Nick rounds the corner, skidding to a stop. Police strobe lights rotate on top of unmarked cars. FBI vehicles block the road and sidewalk. FBI AGENTS exit the restaurant with DUFFLE BAGS FULL OF DRUGS and GUNS. It's a bust.

FBI Agents frisk Rap and the Albanian Thugs against a wall.

Zamir sits on the curb under guard.

Nick spots his father, Tufar, unshackled as he walks out of the restaurant with the Lone Man who now wears an FBI vest.

Marko follows in handcuffs. As he nears Tufar, he lunges, head violently meeting Tufar's nose. CRUNCH!

Blood spurts from Tufar's nose, and he lets out an agonizing howl as Marko's teeth sink into his forearm.

It's over in seconds. FBI Agents wrestle Marko back.

MARKO
(yells in Albanian)
May the devil eat your soul.

Zamir's eyes lock on Nick with pure hatred.

Nick turns and runs.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

RIP!... RIP!... RIP!!

Nick tosses ripped chunks of textbook pages onto a growing pile. Rage intermingles with tears. He searches for more.

Nick's room is a mess: clothes on the floor, unmade bed, and martial arts posters mixed with computer stuff on his walls.

A tuxedo with a taped florist's receipt hangs on the back of his door.

Nick lifts the MIT book Desiree gave him. Anger abates momentarily. Then he opens to rip it too--

LIA (O.S.)
No.

His sister, LINDITA "LIA" BEZHANI (11), enters and yanks the book from his grasp while cradling a dog in her arms.

She redirects him, breathing deeply, urging Nick to join.

LIA (CONT'D)
No. You're not him. You're good.

Nick's haze of anger lifts. He mimics her breaths. Lia puts the MIT prep book on his desk, smoothing the cover.

LIA (CONT'D)
Does MIT have a vet program?

NICK
Umm... Uh, they have humanities and
molecular biology.

LIA
Or I can become a chef.

NICK
(refocuses on Lia)
Or you can become a chef.

BANG! The front door slams open downstairs.

Both startle. Lia's dog barks, and she tucks him closer.

TUFAR (O.S.)
Kreshnik, get down here!

NICK
Lia, stay here. And lock the door.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Nick descends the stairs past an Albanian flag, stopping
under a chandelier to see his mother, ANI (40s), fearful.

An agitated Tufar, with swollen nose, bloodied shirt and
sleeve, drags suitcases over a faux marble laminate floor.

TUFAR
The Feds had me by the balls. They
took out our operation in
Michigan... I'm not going down...
There was one way out. I chose me.
(notices Nick)
You and your sister get one
suitcase. Essentials only. You have
ten minutes before they arrive.
(cuts off Nick's protest)
This is not a discussion.

Ani steps forward to calm him.

TUFAR (CONT'D)
(in Albanian)
Don't question me!

Ani flinches. On instinct, Nick moves to protect her.

Tufar's eyes flare at Nick's insolence. Nick's fists clench.

Tufar swings. Ani screams.

Nick ducks like a prizefighter. Tufar misses, but his ring slashes Nick's forehead. This will leave a scar.

Nick's fists go up. It's a stare-down -- but Nick loses as blood drips from his gash. He lowers his shaking hands.

Scorn flashes on Tufar's face before he turns away.

Ani rushes to Nick, rocking him protectively in her arms.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (NEW JERSEY)

A lamp illuminates a stark, unappealing motel room.

Tufar takes luggage from Lia and cups her cheek. His thumb softly wipes a tear, and his stern face momentarily softens.

Tufar gently pushes Lia toward Nick, silently telling him to watch his sister. Nick gathers her and his mother close, a bloodied bandage covering his forehead cut.

U.S. Marshal AGENT BOTERO enters.

AGENT BOTERO

We'll move you every night until the trial is over. You're not officially in witness protection until then, but your new names go into effect immediately.

NICK

I have a girlfriend--

AGENT BOTERO

No, you don't...
(reads from a paper)
...Alan. You're not going back. Forget everything and everyone you've known.

NICK

I'm Nick. Kreshnik Bezhani.

AGENT BOTERO

You're Alan Plaskitt now.
(softens at Lia's tears)
Set an example for your sister, son. Write your new name over and over so you get used to it faster.

He hands Tufar an envelope of money.

AGENT BOTERO (CONT'D)

We already scrubbed databases of Social Security numbers, property, school records, etc., but it's not foolproof. The hotel phone's been removed. Now I'll take your cells.

Tufar scowls at the small amount of cash in the envelope.

AGENT BOTERO (CONT'D)

Living expenses only. Welcome to your new life, Rudy Plaskitt.

Agent Botero senses Nick's growing panic.

AGENT BOTERO (CONT'D)

Look, I know what you're thinking - *"I'll just tell my girl... I love her... they can't stop me..."* Trust me, I've seen this before. You're a smart kid. How's that gonna play out? You know why superheroes hide their identities? To protect loved ones. You think, "I can come back in a year or 2, or maybe 5." But you can't. Even 10 years later someone will recognize you from high school, the corner market - wherever. And **you** just sprinkled breadcrumbs right up to your front door. Your parents will be made and you'll have put your sister's life in danger. People will die--

Nick runs.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Nick masterfully zigzags past U.S. MARSHALS who give chase.

AGENT BOTERO

(into earpiece)

Shit! Call for backup! Send a car to his house. And his girlfriend's.

INT. DESIREE'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Papa Doug steps out of Desiree's room. He shushes his husband, Doctor Walsh, who was about to enter.

PAPA DOUG
 Almost midnight, but she's finally
 asleep. Any news?

Doctor Walsh shakes his head as his cell VIBRATES.

DOCTOR WALSH
 It might be the hospital.
 (steps away; into cell)
 Did you find Nick?

His shoulders droop as he listens to the caller.

EXT. DESIREE'S BROWNSTONE - FRONT STOOP - LATER

Nick, out of breath, pounds on the front door. He clutches a bouquet of grocery store flowers.

Doctor Walsh, in pajamas, opens the door. He eyes Nick's forehead cut, sans bandage, which has reopened.

DOCTOR WALSH
 Are you okay? That could scar. Let
 me look at--

Nick pulls back from Doctor Walsh's reach and tries to enter. He's blocked. He flinches at POLICE SIRENS in the distance.

DOCTOR WALSH (CONT'D)
 Nick, I... She had me call all the
 hospitals... then I had a friend
 drop by your house.

Nick's eyes snap to Doctor Walsh's troubled expression. He surges forward.

NICK
 Desiree!

Doctor Walsh pushes him back, closing the door behind him.

DOCTOR WALSH
 Your neighbors said trucks moved
 everything out of your house
 tonight. Nothing was left.

NICK
 I need to see her--

DOCTOR WALSH
 It's as if your family was never
 there. Police--

Nick desperately grabs Doctor Walsh's shirt, fists twisting.

NICK
(pleads)
Let me--

DOCTOR WALSH
Neighbors said your father--

NICK
I'm not my father.

Doctor Walsh's hands cover Nick's in a gentle, almost fatherly way.

Nick recoils and releases his hold on Doctor Walsh's shirt.

DOCTOR WALSH
This is bad. I can't... I have to
keep her safe. Keep my family safe.

Nick tries to push past again. No go.

DOCTOR WALSH (CONT'D)
I have to protect Desiree.

Both are crushed. Both are devastated. Both understand.

SIRENS are closer. Nick runs. A block away, police catch him.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

In the back seat, Nick's curled into a fetal position. Silent tears escape as the car pulls away.

EXT. DESIREE'S BROWNSTONE - STREET - NIGHT

Nick's flower bouquet is on the road. A tire runs past it.

Then a taxi runs over it.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE INTO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - SPEXTELL BUILDING - DAY

Spextell Inc.'s logo is prominently displayed on a modern office building with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge.

SUPER: "SAN FRANCISCO - 13 YEARS LATER"

INT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - NICK'S OFFICE - DAY

A video plays on a TV Screen.

VIDEO NARRATOR (V.O.)
 ...whether it's the Surface Web,
 Deep Web, or Dark Web, our
 proprietary security software goes
 beyond anything our competitors can
 offer.

Behind a desk, Nick (now 29) watches. He's all business in a custom suit, forehead scar partially hidden under his hair.

VIDEO NARRATOR (V.O. CONT'D)
 As a client of Spextell, your
 company's internet privacy is our
 business.

Nick's assistant, KERRY, clicks out of the video.

NICK
 It's approved. Thanks for staying.

KERRY
 Your hotel is booked for the LA
 Coder Convention next week.

Nick nods his thanks, gathers his briefcase, and realigns the Montblanc pens next to his legal pad perfectly straight.

He exits his office where a door plaque confirms his senior position: Alan Plaskitt - Managing Director, Cybersecurity.

INT. NICK'S CONDO - NIGHT

Nick enters and turns on a lamp to reveal an Architectural Digest worthy condo that is stunning but unlived in except for a single personal item - a framed photo of a little girl. He realigns the frame on its shelf.

His doorbell RINGS.

INT. NICK'S CONDO - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nick's sister, Lia (now 24), in hospital scrubs, puts away groceries. She passes a baggie of cookies from her purse to--

EVIE (5, the girl from the framed photo), who eats and climbs a bookshelf like a monkey. She wears a plumeria hair clip.

LIA

You know, it wouldn't kill you to add some color to your condo.

(to Evie)

Evie, this is your uncle Alan's home, not a jungle gym. Get down.

(searches purse)

Shit. Where's my phone again?

EVIE

Mommy said a bad word.

LIA

Which you should never say.

Nick types into his black-cased cell. Trumpeting elephant sounds emerge from a purple Swarovski-cased cell Lia finds.

Evie plucks raisins out of her soft cookie before offering it (the crumb bits) to Nick. He ruffles her hair in thanks.

EVIE

Make it a kitty cat.

Nick types into his cell and a cat meows. Lia stares at him in amazement. He shrugs.

NICK

You do know I know how to grocery shop on my own, right? You don't have to bring me food every week.

Lia opens the refrigerator to empty shelves and eyes him.

Nick moves his packed duffel bag on the sofa and pretends to sit and almost crush Evie. She laughs and scrambles away.

EVIE

Uncle Alan, I don't wanna be a pancake. Are you going to the hula place?

NICK

Hawaii.

LIA

Weren't you just there?

NICK

I have a few clients.

EVIE

Bring me another flower.

NICK
I will, Sweet Pea.

As Evie skips away, Nick frowns at the only unfolded sweatshirt in his neatly packed bag. He dumps everything out, catching a stress ball he squeezes. He starts to refold.

LIA
Anxiety can be treated.

Nick ignores her.

LIA (CONT'D)
Pushing me away has never worked.

Nick takes a deep breath, rubbing a hand over his face.

NICK
I realized today I can't remember my real birthday. When it was changed, I promised myself I wouldn't forget it. At least that can't be taken from me.
(looks sadly at Lia)
How lost do you have to be to forget your own birthday?

LIA
Don't do this to yourself.

NICK
Haven't you ever thought about how different our lives could have--

LIA
No.

NICK
What about telling Duncan?

LIA
Okay, let's think about this.
(sarcastic; lowers voice)
Hey, Duncan, I've been meaning to tell you I'm not really the Christine Plaskitt you married. I'm Lindita Bezhani. I've been in witness protection since I was eleven. Oh, and by the way, don't tell anyone because the people after my father will kill all of us to get to him. And now that you know, pretend that you don't.
(MORE)

LIA (CONT'D)
(shows her cell screen)
Did you see this?

Headline reads: **"Federal Witness Killed. Albanian Mob Ties Suspected."**

LIA (CONT'D)
The government made Dad promises, got what they wanted, then dumped us with a contact number that no one ever answers. None of us are safe. And this *dead* guy was protected! You know the clan doesn't play by anyone's rules.

NICK
It's been thirteen years--

LIA
(whisper-shout)
Never stop being aware. You drilled the rules into my brain. If it happens one time, it may be an accident. Twice may be a coincidence. Three times? Run like hell. We always have to be on, because they are. And now there's more at stake.

She nods toward Evie jumping on Nick's bed.

LIA (CONT'D)
Look, this breakup with Susan has you all turned around.
(lowers voice)
If you're thinking about Desiree again, don't. I know this isn't the life path we chose, but you have to stop replaying things and wishing for another outcome. This is what we got. Period.

Lia walks to the kitchen, but Nick continues to watch Evie.

INT. NICK'S CONDO - BATHROOM - LATER

Nick splashes water on his face, groping for a towel past his neatly arranged toiletries perfectly spaced apart. The towel bar is bare as well as the second vanity.

Nick turns, kicking a woman's makeup brush. He trashes it.

BEDROOM

Nick hangs up a jacket in a closet that's empty on one side except for hangers haphazardly left. He straightens them and carefully spaces his colorless clothes to fill the void.

He lays on his bed in the dark, tracing his forehead scar.

EXT. HAWAII - HONOLULU AIRPORT - DAY

The cursive letters on the control tower read: *Aloha*

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - GATE - DAY

Nick exits the jet bridge. He's Instagram chic without trying - a plaid shirt under a dark hoodie with sleeves rolled up to reveal plaid cuffs at his forearms. He listens into his cell.

LIA (V.O.)
Hey, big brother, it's me. I only
have a second before my shift.

Nick passes floral attired LEI GREETERS with signs.

LIA (V.O.)
I didn't mean to be heartless, but
you know I'm right. We've fought
too long for the life we have now.

Nick stops at a kiosk to select a flower hair clip.

LIA (V.O.)
If I could wave a magic wand, I'd
give you your happily ever after.

Nick hands the hair clip to a KIOSK CASHIER. Nearby, a TEENAGER films his brother, A TEEN WITH BRACES, getting a lei and cheek kiss from a pretty Lei Greeter.

LIA (V.O.)
And I love you... Come over for a
BBQ next weekend. Evie and Duncan
wanna see you.

Nick hangs up, opens his wallet to pay, but a voice from the past stops him cold.

DESIREE (O.S.)
Motherf--
(catches self)
Crap! I left my phone charger at
the conference.

Nick turns slowly to face a STUNNING BLONDE who is NOT Desiree -- then she moves past and his whole world tilts.

DESIREE WALSH (now 29) is behind on her cell unaware of Nick.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 Tell your friend I'm a CPA, not an IRS agent, but her finance guy will know code section sixty-one.
 (laughs)
 Sixty-one not sixty-nine, Aileen.

Desiree's smile and laugh are recognizable.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 It's known as the cancellation of debt income.

Nick inhales at her sight of her, but steps behind the kiosk.

KIOSK CASHIER
 (holds up flower clip)
 Sir, do you want this?

Nick is laser focused on Desiree as she enters a concession store. He starts to sweat, and his breathing picks up.

A BACKPACKER hovers near Desiree.

KIOSK CASHIER (CONT'D)
 Dude, you okay?

Desiree drops her cell into her purse and bends to choose a candy, exposing her purse contents.

The Backpacker lifts Desiree's wallet and cell, then runs.

DESIREE
 (turns)
 Hey! Stop! My wallet! Stop him!

Desiree runs after him.

Nick takes a half-step forward, but anxiety paralyzes him. His grip on his duffle turns his hand white.

KIOSK CASHIER
 Shit, that chick's gonna get hurt--
 Oompf!

Nick shoves his duffle into The Kiosk Cashier's chest, lifts his hoodie onto his head, and takes off after Desiree.

DOWN THE CONCOURSE

An AIRPORT ATTENDANT pushing a wheelchair waylays the Backpacker's run.

Desiree pulls the Backpacker's strap. His arm flies out to disentangle but smacks her. Desiree's thrown to the ground.

Nick leaps.

SLAM!

Nick tackles the Backpacker, they roll. With Nick on top, he draws back a fist; adrenaline and blinding rage rule him.

DESIREE
No, please don't!

Nick hesitates at Desiree's voice; fist hung in the air.

BAM!

The Backpacker clocks Nick, splitting his lip. Nick falls back, and the Backpacker runs, hurling the wallet and cell.

CRACK! Desiree's cell smashes on the ground.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Oh my God! Oh my God! Are you okay?

Desiree scrambles over, staring down at Nick in concern.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
You're bleeding! I'm so sorry!

Nick's fingers come away with blood from his lip.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Someone help us!

As Desiree continues to stare, his face begins to register.

Nick uses his forearm to cover his face. He shrugs off Desiree's help, adjusts his hoodie, and sits up.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
You should stay still. Help--

NICK
(frustrated)
Boots, I'm fine.

Their eyes collide. The word "Boots" hangs in the air.

An AIRPORT SECURITY MAN runs toward them.

Desiree breaks the connection and tries to stand.

DESIREE

Ow, ow, ow!

Nick immediately kneels, hand on her back in concern.

Slowly, Desiree reaches to push back Nick's hoodie. A gamut of emotions cross her face, from disbelief to joy, but anger wins. She shrugs off his hand.

Their gazes meet. Tears pool in her eyes. Nick snaps.

NICK

You may have dislocated something.

DESIREE

(snaps back)

I'm fine.

NICK

(voice raising)

You're not fine!

DESIREE

(tone matches his)

I decide that, not you!

NICK

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO RUN AFTER HIM?

DESIREE

WHY ARE YOU YELLING AT ME?

NICK

BECAUSE YOU'RE HURT!

Her anger dissipates as she follows Nick's gaze to her arm.

DESIREE

(gently)

I'm fine.

NICK

I guess so since you still have...

Nick points to the crushed and melted store candy bar she's held onto. Covering her mouth in disbelief, she laughs.

His glare makes her laugh harder. He shakes his head, but a smile emerges, then he winces at the pull on his cut lip.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

An Airport Security Man speaks to Nick, handing him the wallet and cell as they leave the security office.

Nick holds an ice pack to his lip, passing the wallet to Desiree, then inspecting her shattered cell screen.

AIRPORT SECURITY MAN
I wish we could say we'll find the
guy, but chances are he's gone.

NICK
You can talk to--

DESIREE
Me, since it's my wallet that
asshole tried to steal.

Desiree's eyes narrow on the men. Nick's nostrils flare when she rubs her tender arm. Their eyes meet; she's battle-ready.

NICK
I didn't say a thing. I like my
balls right where they are.

An awkward silence. The Airport Security Man backs away.

NICK (CONT'D)
I should get going.

DESIREE
That's no surprise.

NICK
Look, about New York--

DESIREE
That was a long time ago. I haven't
given it another thought.

Nick's cell rings with a Facetime call from his sister, "Christine." Reality sets in. He declines it and mutters.

NICK
This was a bad idea.

Desiree stiffens and walks away.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CAROUSEL - DAY

Nick's stride falters when he sees a sign "**A. Plaskitt**" held by a LIMOUSINE DRIVER. Nick continues past him to baggage.

Desiree struggles with a suitcase. Nick lifts it, and holds out a peace offering - a box of Raisinets. She ignores it.

NICK
Let's not end it this way, Boots.

DESIREE
You don't get to call me that.

She pushes past him to the exit.

NICK
(calls out)
I lost my phone, all my contacts.

Desiree stops, her back to him. Nick walks closer.

NICK (CONT'D)
I hadn't memorized your number.

She comes back to him, palm up. He hands her the candy.

DESIREE
And I slept in my prom dress.

Nick rears back as if slapped. Desiree leaves.

EXT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - CURBSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Nick catches up to Desiree as she greets a sharply dressed man, GAVIN HU (30s), next to a shiny vintage convertible roadster.

DESIREE
You brought my car? And washed?

GAVIN
I assumed you'd want to go to the office. My assistant drove mine.

Gavin indicates a BMW nearby, ASSISTANT at the wheel. Gavin offers her flowers and sweeps her into a passionate kiss.

When the lip-lock ends, Gavin notices Nick standing close. He looks between Nick and Desiree, breaks the silence, and offers a handshake to Nick.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
Hey, Gavin Hu.

DESIREE
This is, uh...

LIMOUSINE DRIVER (O.S.)
 (calls out)
 Alan Plaskitt?

DESIREE
 Kreshnik Bezhani.

LIMOUSINE DRIVER (O.S.)
 Is there an Alan Plaskitt out here?

NICK
 Nick.

The men shake hands.

DESIREE
 We knew each other... in New York.
 (rushes)
 As kids.

GAVIN
 Hey, nice to meet you. What's it
 been like, fifteen years?

DESIREE	NICK
Thirteen.	Thirteen.

Nick and Desiree lock eyes. Gavin points to Nick's cut lip.

GAVIN
 You okay? Need a--

NICK
 (holds up ice bag)
 Nah, I'm good. A little accident.

DESIREE
 Um... I need to go.

GAVIN
 (nods to his car)
 Ride? Or do you live here?

NICK
 On business. Got a rental.

DESIREE
 Thanks, Gavin. I'll call you later.

Her eyes throw daggers at Nick.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 You... Have a good life.

She gets into her car without another glance at Nick.

Gavin grins at Nick as he gets into his BMW.

Nick pulls out Desiree's forgotten cell from his pocket. He steps forward, reading her retreating license: ERND-IT

EXT. NEW YORK - PRISON - DAY

A fortress of metal gates surround a federal prison.

INT. PRISON - VISITING ROOM - DAY

Marko (now late 50s), in prison attire, sits across from his son, Zamir (now 30), who's in a suit. Marko smells the contents of a plastic container, unimpressed.

ZAMIR

It's chili paste, Dad. I got special approval to give it to you. The pepper trade made \$642 million last year. I have ideas for Rap to--

MARKO

Rap's a pompous limp prick who got out on a technicality.

Zamir exaggerates a preen in his expensive suit.

MARKO (CONT'D)

You fronting Rap's dress shop?

ZAMIR

It's custom suits. I got plans to--

Marko's snort-laugh turns into a deep phlegm cough.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)

Have you seen the prison doc--

MARKO

Motherf'ing pill pusher. He's shoved a shitload of meds down my throat for 13 years. For what?

ZAMIR

Because you'll be out in three.

MARKO

(switches to Albanian)
You still looking for Tufar?

ZAMIR

Why do you ask me every time?

MARKO

Because I have lots of time to think between polo matches and--

ZAMIR

I haven't forgotten what he did to you, our family. The trail's cold, but I gotta lead--

MARKO

Didn't Kreshnik have a girl?

ZAMIR

Desiree. We watched her for years. Nothing. I won't stop until I find Tufar--

MARKO

The worst thing is my taxes go toward hiding that bastard.

ZAMIR

You don't pay taxes.

MARKO

Tufar always bragged about his son. The kid was smart. I give him that.

ZAMIR

Yeah, well, Kreshnik's not the one visiting your sorry ass.

MARKO

At least I never named him kyre.

ZAMIR

You thought about Kreshnik making clan boss?

Marko coughs. Zamir reaches out, but his back pat is rebuffed.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)

Did you bribe boxing officials when I was in high school?

MARKO

(nonchalant)
Of course.

Ego deflated again, Zamir yanks back the chili container.

INT. ALA MOANA BOXING GYM - DAY (HAWAII)

Nick and a RED-HEADED BOXER spar, each increasing his aggression until Nick's pent-up adrenaline finds its release--

POW!

Nick's solid punch knocks the Red-Headed Boxer to the ground.

A GYM MANAGER yells from the sideline.

GYM MANAGER

Yo, go light or you're outta here!

(mutters)

Damn day pass tourist.

Remorseful, Nick helps the Red-Headed Boxer up.

GYM BENCH

Nick dabs his reopened split lip with his shirt. He stares at Desiree's cracked cell next to his wallet in his duffle.

He lifts his wallet and removes a folded piece of paper. It's yellowed with age. He reads, then returns it.

Nick grabs his cell and walks to an outdoor balcony. The blue-green ocean sparkles in front of him. He talks into his cell.

NICK

Why are you breathing so hard?

EXT. LIA'S SUV - PARKING LOT - SAME TIME (SAN FRANCISCO)

Shoulder holding her cell, Lia, in hospital scrubs, struggles to remove a child's car seat from her SUV. No go.

LIA

I'm just... Just moving stuff around. How's Hawaii?

INTERCUT BETWEEN NICK AND LIA

NICK

Good... Just had a... meeting.

Lia shoves a stuffed animal and other toys from the console onto the car seat, then throws a towel over the whole thing.

LIA

I need to tell you...

NICK (CONT'D)

You should know...

NICK (CONT'D)

You go first.

Lia removes her wedding rings and hospital ID card, placing them in the cup holder, covering it with some tissues

LIA

Yeah. Um, so I...

Lia hears a commotion and looks up. She's in a--

POLICE STATION PARKING LOT

Their father, a bleary-eyed Tufar (now late 50s), stumbles out the station door. He's older, but not any wiser.

LIA (CONT'D)

Gotta go. Work's calling.

Lia hangs up.

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lia pulls on a sweater to hide her scrubs.

TUFAR

He walked into my fist.

LIA

A casino dealer? This is Oklahoma all over again. Thirteen states in thirteen years? The stress I... I sent you money to move from Vegas to Seattle, *not* come here. You can't be here.

Once in the car, Lia waves a hand from Tufar's putrid smell.

LIA (CONT'D)

This has got to stop! I'm not...

Lia dry heaves from his smell, grabs the tissues from the cup holder to cover her nose, then realizes her mistake.

Tufar lifts Lia's hospital ID card. He glances between the towel-covered child's seat and her uncovered wedding rings.

TUFAR

Married? So you're a Halprin now?

LIA

I can't do this anymore, Dad.

INT. ALA MOANA BOXING GYM - BALCONY - SAME TIME (HAWAII)

The Red-Headed Boxer Nick knocked out earlier joins him at the balcony.

NICK
Hey, sorry 'bout--

The Red-Headed Boxer waves off Nick's apology as they take in the spectacular Pacific ocean view.

RED-HEADED BOXER
Hawaii's ruined everything for me.
Once you experience Technicolor...
(hand sweeps over the
panoramic vista)
...how do I go back home to black
and white? I'm thinking about
chucking it all and moving here.

The Red-Headed Boxer grins, taps the railing, and leaves.

Nick contemplates. He lifts his phone. A cell CHIME indicates he can begin dictation.

NICK
Text to Christine.

The cell's computer assistant voice answers.

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)
What do you want to say?

NICK
BBQ next week sounds fun.

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)
*Here's your text to Christine. Are
you ready to send it?*

Nick sends it and returns to his gym bag. He palms Desiree's cracked cell, then leaves with a purpose in his step.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The apartment is inviting, slightly messy, but lived in. A paddleboard leans on a wall amongst pairs of running shoes.

Desiree and best friend AILEEN KAMAKANA (20s), a straight shooter in high heels, sit on the sofa. They eat out of a bag of cheese puffs using chopsticks, and stare at--

The **ripped photo strip of Desiree and Nick at sixteen** on a laptop screen. And unopened box of Raisinets sits nearby.

DESIREE

The bank emailed me with another ATM theft from my account. My card--

AILEEN

Misplaced again? It's not like you. Want my brother to ask Sarge to look into it?

An African grey parrot, BENTLEY, walks across the sofa back.

DESIREE

Thanks, but I'll take care of it tomorrow when I get a new phone.

Aileen uses the TV remote to click on a movie: *Working Girl*.

AILEEN

This moment calls for OG, baby.

DESIREE

How does it end?

AILEEN

Melanie Griffith turns boss. How does knowing the end of movies and books not ruin it for you?

DESIREE

I like knowing there's a happy ending before I put in the time.

BENTLEY THE PARROT

(mimics human voice)

"May I join your threesome?"

They both laugh. Aileen feeds a carrot to Bentley.

AILEEN

Bird sitting for your hot neighbor? I should get a porn award for the things I've done to him in my mind.

DESIREE

(pets Bentley)

He's back tomorrow.

BENTLEY THE PARROT

"Nice stroke. Nice stroke."

AILEEN

You're a dirty bird, Bentley. I like it.

DESIREE

His previous owner was a golfer.

AILEEN

Well, that takes the fun out of it.
(mutes TV)
Did you fill out the business permit? I nudge because I love you.

DESIREE

The timing's not right to start a CPA firm. I just got a promotion.

AILEEN

And you were shafted on the raise to go with it. Remember, inaction means others make the choice for you. You deserve more.

Aileen dares Desiree to object. She doesn't.

DING DONG!

Aileen answers the door to a huge Hawaiian man, HAROLD KAMAKANA (30s), dressed in a fluorescent vest and hard hat. Aileen rips a bag from his hands and pulls out ice cream.

AILEEN (CONT'D)

Best brother ever!

HAROLD

(local accent)
True, but ice cream is not an emergency.
(to Desiree)
Who you want me to kill, Dezzie?

DESIREE

(smiles; shakes head)
Wanna join us, Harold?

HAROLD

(eyes widen on TV)
Muted TV? Chick-speak for, "let's talk about our feelings." I'm gonna hold on to my Y chromosomes.

BENTLEY THE PARROT

"Gotta use the ball washer."

They laugh. Harold leaves, and Aileen picks up the Raisinets.

AILEEN

So, did you check Nick's Instagram?

DESIREE

The minute I left the airport. He doesn't have one. I've never been able to find anything on him.

AILEEN

Probably has a fake account. Harold knows this P.I.--

DESIREE

No. I'm not seeing him again. I don't need to creep on a childhood--

AILEEN

He remembered your favorite candy after all these years. My boyfriend forgets where he left his shoes ten seconds after he takes them off.

DESIREE

Yeah. It's all kind of fucked up.

Aileen grabs a half-full "Swear Jar" behind her and holds it out. Desiree adds coins from her purse without another word.

INT. MANHATTAN - NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

PETRA (30s), savvy club manager, directs SECURITY then turns back to Zamir. Both watch a dance floor packed with beautiful people.

PETRA

So you're a friend of Gil's? I told him finding people for a living sucks. That's why I don't skip trace anymore. Without Tufar's alias, you're pissing in the wind.

Zamir surreptitiously passes Petra a baggie of pills.

PETRA (CONT'D)

I'll throw you a bone. A person may change their name, but it's a shitload harder to change habits.

They watch a WALL STREET MAN sidle up to TWO COLLEGE WOMEN.

PETRA (CONT'D)

If he smokes a certain brand of cigars, he'll still be smoking that in his new life. It's always their downfall. If they wanna stay lost, they gotta change everything. People don't like change.

Below, the Wall Street Man's ANGRY GIRLFRIEND drags him away.

PETRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The thing is, you can make all the mistakes in the world trying to locate someone, but if that person messes up just once, they're found.

Zamir ponders this as another BUSINESSMAN takes the Wall Street Man's place next to the Two College Women.

EXT. HAWAII - FARMERS' MARKET - DAY

It's a college parking lot turned weekend marketplace.

Nick watches Desiree smell flowers under a vendor tent. He scans the layout, landing on a parked white SUV. The tinted window rolls down and a MAN'S HAND snaps a cell photo.

Nick pivots and pulls out Desiree's red-cased cell from his pocket. He stops a passing COUPLE.

NICK

Excuse me? The woman wearing the blue running shorts behind me dropped her phone. Could you--

DESIREE (O.S.)

Nick? What are you doing here?

The Couple continue, and Nick slowly turns back to Desiree.

NICK

Uh... I wanted to return this before I leave today.

He holds out her cell, but his eyes dart back to the SUV. It's gone. He takes a calming breath.

NICK (CONT'D)

You had a three-mile run and farmers' market in your calendar. It's recurring on the weekends.

DESIREE
How'd you get my passcode?

NICK
Something must have happened when
it was dropped.

DESIREE
You fixed the screen?

NICK
(shrugs)
How's your arm?

DESIREE
Fine. How's your lip?

NICK
I've had worse.

Desiree frowns at the comment. Nick points to a vendor.

NICK (CONT'D)
Can I buy you a pineapple?

DESIREE
I'm seeing someone.

NICK
It's a pineapple, not a request to
change your online status.

DESIREE
Right. I'm sorry if I sounded--

NICK
Bitchy?

DESIREE
I was going to say testy. You're
losing points again.

NICK
Do I still have points in the bank?

Desiree's smile slips.

NICK (CONT'D)
Let's back this up ten seconds.

EXT. FARMERS' MARKET - PICNIC TABLES - DAY

Nick and Desiree eat from sliced pineapple halves.

HAWAIIAN WOMAN (O.S.)

Alan? Over here!

Stiffening, Nick's head swivels at his alias name. A HAWAIIAN WOMAN greets a MALE FRIEND. His gaze returns to Desiree's.

DESIREE

Are you on step nine?

(off Nick's confused look)

AA. Make amends. When did you start drinking--

NICK

Yes, I'm making amends.

Nick's uneasy under her perusal.

DESIREE

It explains why you're so much more serious than I remember.

NICK

Wanna take a walk?

He stands, holding out his hand, but Desiree hesitates.

NICK (CONT'D)

I don't intend to disrupt your life. Let's just be two friends taking a walk for old times' sake.

Desiree's stomach growls -- loudly. She's embarrassed.

NICK (CONT'D)

You haven't changed. Always hungry. C'mon, I'll add a burger and fries--
(hand still out to her)
Uh, unless you don't eat meat now?

DESIREE

A burger's fine. As long as it comes with a side of ass-kissing.

Nick chuckles. Desiree stands, ignoring his hand.

EXT. ALA MOANA BEACH PARK - BENCH - DAY

Desiree and Nick sit at a bench facing the ocean and finish their paper-wrapped burgers. Nick's animated.

NICK

...it's a big misconception that Muay Thai is a sport of violence--

DESIREE

I forgave you the next day.

The topic change jars Nick. She's not angry, just sad.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

And the day after that. Hell, even a week later because I knew you. I knew you had a good reason, but you never came back.

Desiree stares without expression. Nick gets nervous.

NICK

I messed up. The prom... my dad's, uh, move... time passed... it made it harder to... Yeah, I took the coward's way out. We were sixteen--

DESIREE

It's not about a missed prom, Nick. It's about feeling so insignificant to someone who meant so much to me.

Desiree stands and walks a few feet away, her back to him.

NICK

Boots?

DESIREE

Some of the worst scars are the ones you can't see.

Nick stares at Desiree's back. The silence stretches.

NICK (O.S.)

This may sound lame and way too late, but I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I hurt you. I never wanted to. You didn't deserve it. And I don't deserve your forgiveness, but I'm asking anyway.

Desiree looks back to see Nick reading from an aged paper.

DESIREE

You're reading a speech?

Caught, he crumples the paper into his pocket.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

You did. You wrote it down.

NICK

I ad-libbed a little.

They look at each other for a moment. Then both laugh. Desiree playfully punches him, and Nick catches one wrist before she can pull away. He takes her hands in his.

NICK (CONT'D)

If I ever got the chance, I wanted to get it right. Seeing you again... I miss our friendship. I miss... us.

(his eyes steady on her's)

You deserve fancier words, but all I have is an honest I'm sorry.

This brings tears to her eyes. Nick reaches to wipe them, but Desiree steps back.

DESIREE

Forgiveness is a process. But you get points for writing it down.

(off his hesitant smile)

And you owe me \$127.99 for the prom dress, which was very cute.

Encouraged, Nick tilts his fries bag toward her.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

It's going to cost you a lot more.

Nick hands her the whole bag of fries. She laughs.

EXT. ALA MOANA BEACH - SHORELINE - DAY

Nick stands stiffly on the sand, shoes on. At the ocean's edge, Desiree lets the water slide over her bare feet.

DESIREE

Shoes off, Bezhani.

NICK

I'm not used to the beach.

Desiree takes in his seriousness. She pulls a discarded plastic bag from the sand to collect rubbish.

DESIREE

Did you stay with computers?

NICK

I work for a company that manufactures computer parts.

DESIREE

Really? What kind of parts?

Nick follows as she picks up an empty soda can.

NICK

Um...Rigid-Flex PCBs. It's a technology that offers secure device component connection with polarity and contact stability assurance.

Desiree's eyes glaze over with zero understanding.

NICK (CONT'D)

I can go into the advantages of a three-dimensional freedom of design?

DESIREE

I'm good.

Nick smiles. It's his first full one.

NICK

How about you? Accounting, right? You were top honors in math.

Desiree lifts a chip bag.

DESIREE

My dad had a stroke a few years back. He had to give up surgery.

NICK

I'm sorry.

DESIREE

He's fine now. Two years ago, I transferred here with Blaisdell Insurance. It came with a shot at a new title, Senior VP Finance and Accounting, Pacific Region. I got it yesterday.

NICK

Impressive. You lived your motto: A dream, plus action, becomes a realized goal.

DESIREE

You remembered that?

NICK

I remember everything.

Their eyes meet, then she looks away. She scans a plethora of cigarette butts in the sand. Disgusted, she picks them up.

NICK (CONT'D)

Does Gavin make you happy?

DESIREE

He's great. Thoughtful. We met at his company's party -- spirits and wine distributor. He's a manager. I had the flu, threw up on his shoes. He saw me home and cared for me.

Desiree grabs a twig, lifting a man's Jockey in the sand.

NICK

Yeah, don't touch that.

Nick leads her to a trash can, then to an outdoor shower. He washes her hands with his under the spray. Desiree's amused.

NICK (CONT'D)

So he's... he's the one? Gavin?

DESIREE

Statistically speaking, odds of meeting 'the one' are slim. I think you find someone you're comfortable with and it can grow from there. I trust him.

Nick avoids her gaze as he dries her hands on his shirt.

NICK

Did you find your biological mother? She's from Hawaii, right?

DESIREE

No, I haven't, but... I feel connected here. To the people, the land. Hawaii soothes my soul.

Nick automatically reaches out to tuck a wayward strand of Desiree's hair, but catches himself and withdraws.

NICK

C'mon, I have an idea.

Desiree raises an eyebrow, then follows.

EXT. PUNAHOU HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS - CARNIVAL - DAY

A cacophony of carnival sounds weave around buoyant islander's focused on food booths, games, and spinning rides.

EXT. CARNIVAL GAMES - CONTINUOUS

Nick and Desiree aim air guns at targets. Next to them, an eager HIGH SCHOOL BOY shows off for his GIRLFRIEND.

Desiree misses, as does the High School Boy.

NICK

My client graduated from this high school. It's the school's biggest fundraiser all year--

DESIREE

Are you married, engaged, girlfriend?

Nick hits targets with precision. He can shoot, and Desiree absorbs this as he hands her a won stuffed bear.

NICK

Had a girlfriend. It lasted two years. She chose someone else.

Nick side-eyes the anxious High School Boy who uses his last dollars to pay for another game. Nick follows suit.

DESIREE

Way to sum up two years of your life with someone. Makes me wonder how you described us?

NICK

The one that got away.

Nick tugs her ponytail playfully. Desiree laughs.

The High School Boy misses again, now on his last shot. Nick raises his gun in tandem with him, moving his aim to the High School Boy's target. They shoot. Bull's eye.

The High School Boy preens, prized stuffed animal handed to his ecstatic Girlfriend.

DESIREE

(off what he did)

You, Mr. Bezhani, just earned bonus points off your prom dress bill.

Nick's wide smile dims at a suspicious BEARDED MAN aiming a cell photo in their direction. Nick ushers Desiree away.

EXT. SEVEN SEAS CARNIVAL RIDE - DAY

Nick and Desiree sit side by side on a ride that circles, increasing in speed. Nick's tolerant, but not thrilled to be on it. He declines Desiree's offer to hold the stuffed bear.

NICK
(shouts to be heard)
CAN WE GET OFF IF I GIVE YOU THE
REST OF THE PROM DRESS MONEY?

DESIREE
SO, WHERE'D YOU GO AFTER NEW YORK?
AND HOW IS YOUR SISTER?

The ride whips into a loop.

NICK
CAN WE TALK LATER?

DESIREE
I FORGOT YOU'RE NOT A GOOD
MULTITASKER!

Nick's laugh is cut off when the ride reverses its loop.

EXT. SEVEN SEAS CARNIVAL RIDE - MINUTES LATER

Nick's earlier crumpled speech falls out of his pocket as he hops off the ride. Desiree picks it up to read.

DESIREE
"Sixteen things I miss about you. I miss your smile because it makes my day better. I miss the way you make everyday things seem fun. I miss that you love pizza as much as I do." Nick, when did you write this?

NICK
Thirteen years ago.
(off her lip quiver)
I didn't read it all because mushy things make you cry. That was number fourteen.

She smiles, pockets his "speech," and takes his offered hand.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT TENT - DAY

Desiree's a kid in a candy store as she peruses second-hand goods. Nick holds a bowl, side-eyeing the Bearded Man nearby.

NICK

Still like other people's junk,
huh?

DESIREE

In New York they're sidewalk finds,
not junk. Now it's upcycling.

(points to bowl Nick
holds)

And that, my friend, is a vintage
Hawaiian monkey pod bowl.

Nick pulls out his Alan Plaskitt credit card to pay for it, hesitates, then quickly switches to cash.

NICK

Well, the cat lamp I carried for
three avenues was vintage junk. And
also reason for our first fight.

DESIREE

(mock outrage)

And if you don't want to have
another, you'll agree it was a
perfectly good working lamp.

They laugh. Over Desiree's shoulder, Nick again spies the Bearded Man taking their picture, then starting toward them.

NICK

Let's go.

DESIREE

But, I--

Nick leaves the bowl and leads her out of the tent.

EXT. STREET SIDEWALK - DAY

Nick and Desiree briskly walk against the crowd entering the carnival. Nick turns to see the Bearded Man following.

DESIREE

Slow down. What's the rush?

BEEP BEEP - a white SUV's remote alarm.

TIP-TAP TIP-TAP TIP-TAP

Nick spins at the sound of running feet and pushes Desiree behind him. His feet widen into a fighter's stance.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Nick? You're squeezing my hand...

The High School Boy from the air pistol game jumps onto the Bearded Man's back for a second before hopping off.

HIGH SCHOOL BOY

Let's go surfing, Dad.

Nick relaxes, releasing Desiree's hand. The High School Boy and his dad, The Bearded Man, get into their SUV.

DESIREE

Are you okay?

NICK

I... I thought I left my wallet in the car.

DESIREE

You used it at the carnival.

NICK

Yeah... Did you want the bowl?

DESIREE

No. But passing the donut line gave me an idea. Do you trust me?

Nick nods without hesitation. It's freeing.

EXT. PU'U UALAKA'A STATE PARK - TANTALUS LOOKOUT - DAY

Nick and Desiree eat malasadas (Portuguese donuts) from a now empty pink bakery box on her car trunk. Below them are sweeping island views as the sun dips.

DESIREE

...people with my new title make twenty percent more, but I got eight.

NICK

Obviously, you're okay with that.

DESIREE

What? No. It's not that simple.

NICK

Because the Desiree I knew almost
bodychecked a pickpocket yesterday.
That girl would consider eight
percent a conversation starter.

Desiree ponders this, finishing her sugary donut.

DESIREE

(closes eyes)
Ooh... These are soooo good.

Nick follows her licks of sugar from her fingertips.

NICK

You're trouble, Boots. Game-
changing trouble.

He holds out his uneaten donut. Desiree takes it with a slow
smile, breaking off a piece for him. The mood shifts.

Nick holds Desiree's wrist for the bite, then licks stray
sugar from her palm. Her breath hitches. She caresses his
cheek.

He covers her hand, but she pulls away, stares at the view.

DESIREE

I never get sick of this scenery.

NICK

(studies her profile)
Life *is* better in Technicolor.

Nick gestures for Desiree's convertible keys with his hand.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's not some macho bullshit.

Desiree laughs at his eagerness and hands him her car keys.

NICK (CONT'D)

Okay, that's a lie. I just want to
drive it once. Is this...?

Nick holds up her RUBBER DUCKY KEYCHAIN.

DESIREE

(embarrassed)
Just a keychain.

The sexual tension ratchets up. Nick leans in to kiss her.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

I tried looking you up.

He pulls back, the intimate moment broken.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn. All the usual places, but you were never listed. It was like you don't exist. Did you? Look me up?

(suddenly nervous)

Sorry, this is... way too serious.

She steps around him and Nick starts to speak when his cell RINGS. His sister's name (Christine) flashes. He declines it.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Desiree, stuffed bear in hand, fumbles nervously with the door key until Nick turns her to him in silent question.

DESIREE

I have a boyfriend. And I don't lie or cheat, Nick.

NICK

And I wouldn't ask you to. Lying's nothing to be proud of... So, where do we go from here?

DESIREE

We don't go anywhere. You don't even live here. Where do you live?

NICK

San... San Antonio.

DESIREE

San Antonio's big in computer parts manufacturing?

NICK

Our corporate office is there. We manufacture in China. I'll be back next weekend for another meeting. Can I see you then?

DESIREE

I don't think this...

(points between them)

...is a good idea.

NICK
It's just dinner between friends.
Remember, step five--

DESIREE
(studies him)
Nine. Step nine.

NICK
Right, nine. Make amends. It's not
like I'm asking you to--

DESIREE
Right, I got it.

NICK
Six o'clock next Friday night.

Nick squeezes her hand and walks away.

DESIREE
Nick?

He turns back.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
What about me made it so easy for
you to leave and not look back?

NICK
It was never you. Never. I'll be
here Friday.

Desiree's face lights up, which makes him smile.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

Nick speaks into his cell's microphone.

NICK
Kerry, on Monday, cancel the coder
convention next weekend and book me
a flight to Hawaii leaving Friday
morning. Thanks.

Nick pushes send and smiles.

PING!

Nick's euphoria fades at an email alert: Desiree Walsh

EXT. MANHATTAN - THE SUIT CLOSET - DAY

A swanky men's custom suit store in New York's SoHo District.

INT. THE SUIT CLOSET - OFFICE - DAY

Zamir blows raspberries on a giggling TODDLER'S foot in his WIFE'S arms before kissing both tenderly as they leave. He motions a nervous man, KEN (40s), into his office.

Zamir crosses to a credenza with hydroponics chili plants under grow lights. The office overlooks a retail showroom.

ZAMIR

Did you know chilies are a fruit?

KEN

Oh... Um... I'm a little short. I had to put a down payment on the banquet hall. My son's marrying his high school sweetheart.

(slides envelope across desk)

Thank you, Mr. Sula. I--

Zamir snaps, slams the computer keyboard on Ken's hand, pinning it. He lays a gun on the desk.

ZAMIR

You have twenty-four hours to pay the rest before your son, and his high school sweetheart, go missing.

Zamir leans his weight onto the keyboard. Ken groans in pain until Zamir releases him, and Ken rushes out. Zamir bellows.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)

Eating chili releases endorphins which block pain.

(thinks; out loud to self)

Hmmm...High school girlfriend...

He types "Desiree Walsh" into a browser search, scrolls photos, and stops on Desiree with her arm around Gavin. The caption reads: "Hawaii Wine & Spirits, Inc. Gala for Homeless Shelter - Gavin Hu and Desiree Walsh.

Zamir snorts at Gavin's photo.

He then types: "Desiree Walsh Hawaii" He finds her company photo on the Blaisdell Insurance website and studies her.

Back on the search page, his eye catches Desiree's face on a trending video: "Hero stops Hawaii airport thief." He clicks:

Video: A Lei Greeter gives a lei to a Teen With Braces, then the camera whips to follow Desiree chasing the Backpacker.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

A theft at the airport turned action movie when a good Samaritan tackled the suspected thief -- and it was all caught on video.

A man in a hoodie (Nick) runs in and tackles the Backpacker.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

The victim, Desiree Walsh of Honolulu, was unhurt. The hero's identity is unknown, and the suspect is still at large.

Zamir leans closer, studying, and plays the video again.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A picturesque two-story house complete with a picket fence.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nick has his hands on his hips, à la Superman, while Evie crawls up him like a jungle gym. She giggles and reaches for a red hibiscus flower he's clipped to his hair.

Lia throws inquisitive glances, stopping dinner prep to stare. Nick's lip is healed, and he's in a colored T-shirt.

LIA

I haven't seen you this... content in a long time.

Nick swings Evie down and she skips away with the flower.

Lia burns herself on the stove top and sucks her finger.

NICK

What's wrong? You're jumpy.

Lia pulls the old ripped photo booth picture of Nick and Desiree at sixteen from her purse.

LIA

Evie climbed your bookshelf again.
This fell out of a book. Do you
want to tell me something?

NICK

Self-preservation tells me to
answer yes.

Lia holds her cell up: Nick's video tackle of the pickpocket
plays.

LIA

Are you insane?

NICK

(tenses)
How'd you see it?

LIA

It's gone viral. You're a hero. And
you should be freaking out! You've
made sure there were no photos of
us anywhere on the internet.

NICK

You can't see my face.

LIA

Were you going to tell me? I have a
right to know when our cover...
(tries to calm self)
Okay, okay. It's no longer
trending. No one will see it.

NICK

I'm going to see Desiree again.

LIA

No. No, no, no, no, no. People are
looking for us! Desiree knows?

NICK

No. I'm just... me with her.

LIA

You need to stop being you!

Lia slaps a hand over her mouth, realizing what she said.

NICK

(through gritted teeth)
I haven't been me for thirteen
years.

LIA
Alan, I want--

NICK
(anger builds)
What about what I want?

LIA
I didn't mean--

NICK
What I want went out the door when we left New York, then nailed shut when Mom got sick and Dad left. It was the best and worst day of my life. Good riddance to him, but who was going to take care of Mom and you? I did. I figured out how to put you through nursing school and pay Mom's medical bills. I did it for her, for you, and because there was no other choice.

LIA
You never said--

NICK
And I'd do it again. I'd do it so Mom could spend her last days in comfort and so you could be here, happy with Duncan and Evie. But where does that leave me?

Tears stream down Lia's face at his pain.

NICK (CONT'D)
Now it's my turn to be selfish.
It's my turn to grab a sliver of the happiness everyone else gets.

LIA
(guilty whisper)
I was so scared... you would hide me when Dad... I didn't know... I should've helped you. I'm sorry...

Nick shakes his head, memories flood back. Both are broken.

DUNCAN (O.S.)
What's going on?

DUNCAN HALPRIN (30s), a man with kind, warm eyes, stands in the doorway with a briefcase and a flower bouquet.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
 Why is my beautiful wife crying?

LIA
 Happy tears. My brother was telling
 me about how gorgeous Hawaii was.

She kisses Duncan, her eyes commanding Nick to lie too.

DUNCAN
 If it means that much to you, babe,
 we'll vacation there next time.

LIA
 How'd I get so lucky?
 (to Nick)
 Duncan's one of the good ones.

Nick nods, happy for his sister.

EXT. HAWAII'S NORTH SHORE - NAKASONE MARKET - DAY

Desiree's boyfriend Gavin walks down a red dirt road toward a two-lane highway. High grasses conceal where he came from.

TWO LOCAL MEN kick up dust as they walk up the road.

Gavin stops at his car, one parked among many. He opens his wallet. Empty. He crosses the highway to a local market ATM.

Gavin answers his cell as he inserts an ATM card.

GAVIN
 (into cell)
 Hey Desiree, can I call you back?

He punches in an ATM pin. BEEP BEEP. Nothing.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
 I'm at the airport with a client.

Gavin inserts the card again. No go. He bangs on the ATM.

DESIREE (O.S.)
 But the airport's an hour away.

Gavin spins around to find Desiree sitting on an outside bench on her cell with him, reusable grocery bags on one arm.

GAVIN
 (recovers from shock)
 Hey, babe! What are you doing here?
 (shifts uneasily)
 (MORE)

GAVIN (CONT'D)

I meant to say the North Shore. I'm
visiting clients.

(fidgets under her stare)
A restaurant up the highway--

DESIREE

I watched you walk down that road.

She points to the road, then glances at his red dirt stained
shoes and pant cuffs.

GAVIN

Oh, that's because I know a guy--

A local FEMALE SURFER exits the market. Desiree stops her.

DESIREE

Did you say all these cars are here
for the cockfight up that road? How
do you know it's a cockfight?

FEMALE SURFER

Because there's no surf meet
today...

(points to abundance of
parked cars)
And parties don't have lookouts.

The Female Surfer points to a MAN IN A BASEBALL CAP in a
WHITE TRUCK, the bottom half stained with red dirt.

GAVIN

Babe, I'll pay you back. I dabble
in some gambling. I'm rallying over
a small dip, but I'm on the upswing--

DESIREE

Why wouldn't you ask me? I never
thought you'd... I can't believe...

Desiree turns to leave, but Gavin grabs her grocery bag to
stop her. The twisted bag handles dig into her wrist.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Ow! Let go!

He lets go. She rubs the reddening lines on her wrist.

GAVIN

You were always a breath away from
dumping me, weren't you? This isn't
about a cockfight. It's about us.

Desiree yanks her ATM card from his hand and turns.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
 (calls out)
 I saw the airport video. You conveniently left out Nick was the one who came to your rescue.

Desiree stops. She's seen it too.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
 Then I put it together. Kreshnik, is the guy who dumped you at sixteen, and now every man after him has to pay for it.

Desiree's taken back by his malicious words.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
 What is it with chicks and "closure?" Is it a euphemism for I gotta sleep with him one more time?

DESIREE
 Don't you twist this. We're done.

PING! Desiree looks at her cell.

GAVIN
 Is that Kreshnik? Are we done because of him?

DESIREE
 The bank now notifies me when someone tries to access my account. This ATM was used two times today. Two hours ago, so I drove here.

Desiree's cell PINGS.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 And then right now. We're done because you shattered our trust and stole from me. The rest doesn't matter.

Crushed, she gets into her car and drives off.

EXT. KAMEHAMEHA HIGHWAY - RED DIRT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Gavin, in his car, starts the engine when--

WHOOSH!

The car door opens, and Gavin is dragged out by two local thugs, ELVIS (20s) and HAMMER (20s). Elvis has the island area code "808" tattooed under his right eye.

Elvis punches Gavin in the stomach and he goes down.

GAVIN

(groans)

I'm going to get the money. I swear. I got two cocks fighting tomorrow. Just let me--

Hammer grabs Gavin's shirt, dragging him into the grass.

Elvis comes up behind, lifts one of Gavin's legs.

WHACK!

Brass knuckles pummel into Gavin's thigh.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

AARGH! STOP! SHIIIIIT!

ELVIS

It's not about money you owe. At least not today.

Hammer thrusts a cell into Gavin's face.

HAMMER

Who's this guy with your girl?

Gavin tries to focus on a still from Desiree's viral video.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND - ZAMIR'S HOUSE - DAY

Zamir and some gruff MEN IN BLACK carry a casket out of a house.

Rap (now late 40s) follows with a more pronounced limp and an added jagged cheek scar. He carries his DAUGHTER (5). His henchman, SLATOR (40s), walks behind him with thick gold-rimmed tinted glasses.

The casket slides into a hearse.

RAP

Your father had a code of honor, as do we. Besa, keep the promise.

ZAMIR

What are we doing about--

Rap stops Zamir mid-sentence and nods to Slator, who turns on a pocket-sized noise generator blocking audio surveillance.

RAP

I'm not sending my people thousands of miles based on a grainy video.

ZAMIR

It's Kreshnik. He'll lead us to Tufar. I'll go myself.

RAP

You're a hothead. I've called in some favors in Hawaii. We'll have people watching the girl. You do nothing until I say. We never know when eyes are on us.

Rap waves his Daughter's chubby hand at the FEDERAL AGENTS parked nearby who flaunt their presence.

RAP (CONT'D)

Thank God the government doesn't have a budget for them to be a daily pain in the ass.

Rap yells sweetly to them in Albanian.

RAP (CONT'D)

May your eyes explode.

ZAMIR

I want to do this for my father.

RAP

You're not your father.

Rap and Slator walk away, but Zamir fumes. He crosses the street to where his Wife and Kid--

SCREECH!

A car brakes within a foot of him. Zamir snaps and punches its hood, leaving a dent.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (HAWAII)

Desiree's on her cell.

DESIREE

Hi, Dad.

INT. DOCTOR WALSH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT (NEW YORK)

Doctor Walsh (now 50's), walks with a cane. He closes a door on loud happy family noises elsewhere to talk on his cell.

DOCTOR WALSH

Hi, honey. Papa Doug has friends here for dinner, so you'll have to settle for me alone.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DESIREE AND DOCTOR WALSH.

DESIREE

How are you?

DOCTOR WALSH

Better. Still moving slowly, but PT's a big help. Everything okay?

DESIREE

You're not going to believe this. I ran into Nick Bezhani. Well, he actually ran to help *me* when a pickpocket lifted my wallet.

DOCTOR WALSH

(grips the phone tighter)
Are you okay? What happened? Do you need medical--

DESIREE

Honestly, I'm fine. But Nick--

DOCTOR WALSH

He lives in Hawaii?

DESIREE

No. San Antonio. But we--

DOCTOR WALSH

Good. You can close that chapter.

DESIREE

I thought you'd be happy--

DOCTOR WALSH

I just don't want you hurt... again. Are you sure you're--

DESIREE

I'm fine. A little bit of a sore shoulder. Nick, on the other hand, had a split lip, but not enough to need stitches.

DOCTOR WALSH

At least he's not adding another
scar to his face. Did he say--

DESIREE

He'll be fine. We spent the day
together. It was nice.

DOCTOR WALSH

(rubs temple; concerned)
Tell me about it.

INT. HONOLULU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - GATE - DAY

Nick arrives in the terminal wearing a nice Aloha shirt.

EXT. OAHU CAR RENTAL - DAY

Nick takes off in a blue rental car just missing--

EXT. ALOHA CAR RENTAL - SAME TIME

Zamir, in a suit, who scurries into a black rental two rows
over.

EXT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - STREET - EARLY EVENING

Nick pulls up and parks his rental car. It's a busy street.

INT. NICK'S RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nick looks around. He adjusts his rearview and side mirrors.

His eyes flick from a WHITE TRUCK with red dirt stains around
the bottom, to the cigarette smoke floating out of its
driver's black tinted window. Nick takes a photo.

EXT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BACK ALLEY - EARLY EVENING

Nick parks and climbs the rear stairs.

INT. ARNOLD'S TIKI BAR - NIGHT

Colored lights covered in fishing nets hang all over this
kitschy bar. Gaudy Hawaiian shirts are the jam here.

Zamir, suit jacket off, pays the BARTENDER for drinks as a LOCAL BAR PATRON maps out driving instructions on a napkin.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick wolf whistles as Desiree shows off her dress.

NICK

And you have a beautiful mind too.

Desiree laughs as Nick holds out a clear florist's box. She removes a stunning lei and lifts it to her nose.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's a redo -- flowers for the prom
I never took you to.
(off her stare)
Way too lame?

DESIREE

Not even a little.

Nick sheepishly gives her a box of macadamia nut chocolates. He places the lei on her, close enough to kiss, but doesn't.

Desiree thrusts a gift-wrapped box into his hand.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Happy birthday. Belated.

Nick holds the gift, speechless.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

I know it was yesterday. It's three
days before Papa Doug's.

He opens it to find a black leather bracelet with a turtle embossed outline inside.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Some believe the green sea turtle,
or honu, represents endurance and
long life. In Hawaiian mythology,
the honu was an animal spirit, a
guide who always has your back.

Nick runs the back of his hand over his eyes, holding back emotions.

Desiree moves his hand to cradle his face, wiping his tear with her thumb. He's vulnerable, and she's judgment-free.

NICK
 (voice breaks)
 Thank you.

They hug. Nick takes solace in her embrace.

NICK (CONT'D)
 (clears voice)
 I parked in the back. Your
 elevator's out. Let's use the
 stairs.

EXT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - SIDE STREET - NIGHT

A PITBULL OWNER, whose dog sniffs the grass, watches Nick's rental car leave the alley. She speaks into her cell.

PITBULL OWNER
 He's heading your way.

INT. GAVIN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Gavin slinks down in his seat as Nick's rental car passes, then reaches for the ignition.

EXT. OUTRIGGER HOTEL - VALET - NIGHT

Nick hands his keys to a busy VALET. He and Desiree head inside.

Gavin drives up.

With the valet busy, Gavin slips into Nick's unattended rental car -- looking for anything. He opens the glove box, finding the rental car contract which reads: Alan Plaskitt.

INT. OUTRIGGER HOTEL - HULA GIRL GRILL - NIGHT

Tiki torches flicker behind Nick and Desiree's romantic beachside table. Nick scans the area until she cups his face.

Nick smiles at Desiree's stories, indicates to the WAITER to pour wine. Off Desiree's frown, he stops the Waiter at one glass poured, slides the wine to her, and picks up his water.

Desserts arrive. Desiree eats hers and half of his without thinking. Nick pushes the rest of his plate to her.

Nick escorts her to the dance floor where a SINGER croons an English-Hawaiian love song. They melt into each other.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Elvis, his "808" tattoo prominent under his right eye, sits at the bar. He discreetly takes several photos of them with his cell, Nick's face clearly seen.

Elvis sends the photo, along with ones of Nick and Desiree in Nick's car, to 718-555-3465.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Desiree turns on a lamp and opens the macadamia nut candy.

NICK
I did, you know.

Desiree looks up from her candy.

NICK (CONT'D)
Look you up.

She abandons the candy and walks to him. They both lean in to kiss -- but bump noses and teeth clank. They're out of sync.

DESIREE
(laughs)
Oh, my God! Were we this bad as kids? You're supposed to tilt your head right.

NICK
Says who?

DESIREE
Says science. We're predisposed to tilt our head toward our predominate hand to kiss. You're not left-handed.

NICK
You wanna talk science now?

No, she doesn't. Instead, she smiles, holds his face, exaggerates her right head tilt -- and kisses him.

Nick smiles into the kiss, hands at his sides, until he gives in. He backs her to the door; urgent hands roam each other and clothes are unbuttoned, unzipped, and dress pushed up.

NICK (CONT'D)
Are you sure?

Desiree hesitates. Nick immediately backs away, hands drop.

NICK (CONT'D)
We don't have to--

DESIREE
(shakes head; now shy)
My body... you know.. I'm older.

Desiree smooths her dress down and looks away.

Nick places her hand on his stomach.

NICK
If I have love handles someday,
will that turn you off?

Palm on his flat abs, her lips quirk. Nick brings her other hand to his mouth, kissing it.

NICK (CONT'D)
My teeth are far from straight. I
should have had braces, but my dad
felt it was a waste of money.

She rubs her thumb across his lips.

NICK (CONT'D)
You take my breath away every time
I see you. You're perfect to me.

She smiles and kisses him, sliding a hand into his hair, but stops to trace his forehead scar. Desiree frowns.

DESIREE
When did this--

Nick puts a finger to her lips to quiet her, but Desiree sucks his finger into her mouth and points to the bedroom.

NICK
Boyfriend?

DESIREE
No. Condom? Tested?

NICK
Yes to both. I'm clear.

DESIREE
Me too.

They kiss with promise, then he lifts her, and her legs wrap around him as he carries her across the room.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Desiree takes the lead and shows how much she missed him, and Nick's tenderness conveys how much she means to him.

Together, they make love.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

The lei, minus a lot of flowers, is still draped around Desiree's neck. She lays on his naked chest.

NICK

You okay?

When Desiree doesn't answer, he rolls her to her back. She smiles at him, completely satiated.

DESIREE

I stand corrected. You're a great multitasker.

Nick laughs and kisses her softly.

RING

A muffled cell rings somewhere.

NICK

Ignore it.

They cling to each other in the afterglow. The rings stop.

DESIREE

Tell me more about the adult you.

NICK

What you see is what you get.

DESIREE

What I see I like, but that's not an answer.

NICK

Why not? Let me tell you what I see about you right now. Your apartment is clean, if a little messy...

She playfully slaps his arm.

NICK (CONT'D)

...which tells me it would probably be okay to put my feet on the coffee table without fear of a lecture. Your apartment smells like flowers and the ocean. Feminine and natural like you. You like a good thriller, based on the John Grisham books on your shelf, and you're still an avid romance reader. And being the brilliant man that I am, I already started reading the most dog-eared one on your shelf.

Nick's earnest wink makes Desiree laugh.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're definitely here to stay because you created a home. Comfy sofa, fuzzy blanket, and art collected from traveling. Photos of your dads tell me family means as much to you as it always did. You love Hawaiian music and you like coffee with a shot of chocolate.

She's in awe. She tucks a sheet around herself and sits up.

DESIREE

You always had a keen sense for details. Okay, I'm at a disadvantage since I haven't seen your home.

(in thought)

You're considerate. You remember my likes and dislikes. You smell delicious, all man. You make me feel safe and protected from the way you drive slower when I'm in the car -- even though I know you want to speed -- to your hand on the small of my back when we walk. And even though you're not a fan of trying new things, you try because you know it pleases me. Like the beach. And that all turns me on.

She does an imaginary drum roll.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

And, you still hate raisins because I know that hasn't changed since we were fourteen.

Nick shudders at the raisin thought. He pulls her back down.

NICK

Back to what turns you on.

DESIREE

Kids. Do you have any?

NICK

No.

(joking)

Listen, I'm no doctor, but I'm pretty sure you have to wait a few weeks before you can take a test.

DESIREE

(laughs)

I'm not talking right now. I just think you'd make a great dad.

NICK

(pauses to find the words)

Did you know I used to tell people my father was a doctor, other times a chef?

DESIREE

My dads liked you too.

Nick grabs her wrist to flip her on her back. She winces.

NICK

What? Did I hurt you?

Nick frowns at an abnormal bruised line around one wrist.

DESIREE

I bruise easily. It's nothing.

NICK

(low angry growl)

Desiree, you're the worst liar.

DESIREE

I'm going to tell you, but you have to promise to stay calm.

Desiree holds his face in her hands. He takes a deep calming breath, then tenderly touches his lips to her bruised wrist.

EXT. KAMEHAMEHA HIGHWAY - RED DIRT ROAD - DAY

Gavin, in a baseball cap, stuffs cash into his wallet as he walks toward his parked car. He nods in greeting at--

Zamir, in a tacky Hawaiian shirt, walking toward the cockfight.

Gavin chuckles at the sight and continues down the road.

EXT. NORTH SHORE - COUNTRY COCK FIGHT - DAY

Bystanders watch on the perimeter of a rustic, but deceptively well-organized cockfight. It's about to start.

Talking stops when Zamir enters the ruckus. A sea of brown faces turn cold eyes on him. CLIFFORD (20s), a Filipino man in a surf T-shirt, approaches with an iPad.

ZAMIR

I'm looking for someone.

CLIFFORD

(heavy Filipino accent)

Da tourist bus stop stay across da street.

The crowd snickers, and the din starts up again. Zamir cockily sizes him up, confident he could take him.

ZAMIR

How much to buy in, funny man?

(waves his cash)

It's genuine U.S. dollars. We use this back in the States.

The talking stops immediately. A deadly-looking CHINESE MAN covered in colorful facial and neck tattoos stands up.

CHINESE MAN

Last time I checked, we were the fiftieth state.

Zamir loses his smirk. He's stepped on the hornet's nest.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Nick uploads the **white truck photo** he took earlier into his company's portal. The software captures the license plate.

Immediately, "Jimmy Wong's" Hawaii driver's license and arrest record appear on the screen.

Desiree calls out from the bedroom.

DESIREE (O.S.)
I'm almost ready!

PING! Nick looks at an email alert on his cell: Bezhani

He opens to see: "Albanian Mob Boss Marko Sula Dies in Prison." Tufar Bezhani's name is highlighted as Marko's past associate in the article. He scans it.

He closes his eyes. Fuck. He squeezes his stress ball.

Nick types source code into the laptop: **Remove**
<Tufar_Bezhani>, <Kreshnik Bezhani>, <Lindita_Bezhani>,
<Ani_Bezhani>

Source code response: "Unable to delete from web source."

Nick frowns and tries more complicated codes. The response is: "Warning: Invalid path had no attribute."

Desiree walks in, carrying dishes to the kitchen.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Where are you taking me?

Nick clears the computer screen, watching her rinse, then leave the dishes on a growing stack in the sink.

NICK
(instantly irritated)
Isn't it just easier to put the
dishes in the dishwasher?

DESIREE
(eyebrows raise)
Says the person who leaves shaving
stubble in the sink.

NICK
(snaps)
You leave your car unlocked. Why
not just leave the key in the
ignition too?

Her attention jumps to his rapid stress ball squeezes.

DESIREE
Want to talk about it?

He knows he's being an ass, unsure of how to backpedal.

NICK

No. And... and you always eat my
dessert!

Desiree's eyes narrow, arms cross.

NICK (CONT'D)

Um... Uh, I went too far, didn't I?

DESIREE

I thought we'd make it through our
third weekend together before *your*
faults were tallied.

Nick can't hold his anger. A smile cracks through. Desiree's
own smile is infectious. Bad mood defused.

EXT. MANOA VALLEY LO'I (TARO PATCH) - DAY

Lush vegetation surrounds a sign: Ka Papa Lo'i o Kanewai

TARO FARMER (V.O.)

...the Hawaiian word for taro is
kalo. And almost every part of the
kalo plant is edible. But the corm,
the underground root, is steamed,
scraped, and mashed with water to
make a staple Hawaiian food called
poi...

EXT. LO'I PATCH - DAY

A TARO FARMER holds up a freshly pulled plant, roots and all.

TARO FARMER

But the health of our lo'i, or kalo
patch, is dependent on water -- **and**
on our wonderful volunteers. So
let's pull weeds to make sure the
water flows through it.

Nick and Desiree are ankles deep in a muddy cultivated
flooded kalo patch. They're surrounded by other LOCALS and
TOURIST VOLUNTEERS. Nick is like an excited little-kid.

Hands in the water, Nick pulls weeds with gusto, throwing
them onto the bank. He helps Desiree with a stubborn weed,
and they almost fall, hands now muddied, both carefree.

DESIREE

What happened to the guy who
doesn't like sand between his toes?

NICK

Trying new things. Did you know that according to Hawaiian mythology, the God Wakea and Goddess Ho'ohokukalani's first child was stillborn?

Desiree frowns, not liking the direction of this story.

NICK (CONT'D)

Wait, there's a happy ending. A kalo plant grew where their baby was buried. Legend says their second child, a boy named Haloa, became the first Hawaiian. Therefore, kalo is considered Haloa's older brother and related to all Hawaiians. The story reminds Hawaiians of their connection to the land. I totally get why you love it here.

He's passionate. She loves it.

DESIREE

What are we doing?

NICK

Playing in the mud. Being together. Being happy for the first time in thirteen years.

DESIREE

You don't even live in the state.

Nick searches for an answer. He's torn between two lives.

NICK

I can transfer from San Diego.

DESIREE

I thought you said San Antonio?

Nick's smile wavers. He kisses her cheek.

NICK

We have several offices. I can work remotely, but I can be here every weekend in the short term. Give me time to work this out.

Satisfied, Desiree returns to weed pulling. Nick reflects...

TARO FARMER

...kalo also symbolizes the family unit. The corm is the parent where new buds, called oha, sprout. These new sprouts will become the next crop. Ohana, the Hawaiian word for family, derives from the word oha. And the stalk here is the "ha."

The Taro Farmer runs his hand up the green taro stalk.

TARO FARMER (CONT'D)

"Ha" translates into "breath of life." Hawaiians believed in breathing in positive energy, and expelling negative, so whenever poi was placed on the table, it was a no argument zone. We thank the land for its bounty and enjoy the connection of love for those who gather around us...

Nick turns to watch a smiling, muddy, weed-pulling Desiree.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nick and Desiree enter laughing, both in semi-dry clothes.

Nick pulls her to him. They kiss, and passion ratchets up. Nick pulls away to examine her swear jar on a nearby table.

DESIREE

I'm still a work in progress.

NICK

And I would never ask you to change.

He gives her a playful wink, taking a twenty from his wallet.

DESIREE

Glad I know you have a job. A guy into technology with no credit cards... it's a little strange.

NICK

I like to live off the grid.

He drops the money into the swear jar and stalks over to her.

NICK (CONT'D)

And, Boots, I'm about to get filthy.

Desiree laughs. He covers her smile with a kiss, sweeps her up into his arms, and heads to the bedroom.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Desiree checks her cell, eating macadamia nut candy in bed.

RING!

DESIREE
(calls out)
Nick, your cell's ringing again.

The bathroom door opens behind her as she retrieves the cell from Nick's pants.

NICK (O.S.)
(voice hard; takes cell)
What are you doing?

DESIREE
(taken back by his tone)
It rang several times. I was bringing it to you.

She hands him the cell, and he promptly turns it off.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Who needs you so badly?

NICK
No one. It's work. Sorry, I'm just annoyed that it interferes with my weekend with you.

Nick kisses her forehead. She stares as he retreats.

EXT. LANIKAI BEACH - DAY

A picture-perfect beach day as Desiree and Aileen paddleboard to shore and get out, carrying their boards to an SUV.

At Aileen's SUV, they sit on the tailgate and drink water.

AILEEN
Thank goodness I'm my own boss.
Gotta love long-lunch Thursdays.

DESIREE
I negotiated my raise yesterday.

AILEEN
That's my girl! And?

DESIREE
They're thinking it over.

AILEEN
They say no, you start your own
firm. I'll be your first client!

They exchange smiles, and Desiree pulls flower hair clips
from a shopping bag in the SUV.

DESIREE
So, I took a personal day and went
shopping earlier for Nick's co-
worker's kid. She's five.

AILEEN
That's sweet of him. So, how long
has Nick been sober?

DESIREE
We rarely talk about the past. It's
painful, so we're moving forward.

AILEEN
Fair enough. Lemme see his photo.

DESIREE
He's camera shy, but I took these.

It's a photo of her kissing Nick's cheek as he sleeps.

AILEEN
Awww... My brother's still gonna
wanna give Nick the third degree.
You're coming to the family get-
together, right?

Aileen takes a selfie with the flower clips in their hair.
She shows Desiree, whose eyes zoom on the photo's background.
It's a WHITE TRUCK with red dirt stains. She turns to look.

DESIREE
Yup, he's back tomorrow. He's
teaching me more boxing moves.

The white truck starts and leaves, but Desiree's eyes follow.

ZAMIR (O.S.)
Excuse me? Sorry to bother you.

Desiree and Aileen turn. Zamir stands there in his gaudy Hawaiian tourist shirt. His face is swollen and bruised.

DESIREE

Oh my god, are you okay?

ZAMIR

(touches face; winces)

Yeah. Surfing. Showing-off. Had a tumble with a reef. The reef won.

AILEEN

Ouch. The ocean is no joke.

ZAMIR

So true. Hey, could I get a selfie? I promised to show my buddies back home the women in Hawaii are as beautiful as they say.

Desiree hesitates, but Aileen, drags Desiree to pose.

AILEEN

Sure, let's send you off with a little Aloha.

ZAMIR

Thanks. This means a lot to me.

Zamir smiles charmingly and walks away.

ON ZAMIR'S PHONE

Zamir crops Aileen out of the photo.

ON DESIREE

She is lost in thought.

AILEEN

What? What's wrong?

DESIREE

Sometimes I just get this... I can feel how sad he is when he doesn't think I'm looking. He's the same guy I knew, but different. And he never answers his cell in front of me. It's not weird, right?

AILEEN

I don't like the sound of--

DESIREE

Oh, never mind. We've barely been together two weekends. I'm just... forget it. It's all good.

Aileen is skeptical and looks on in concern.

EXT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - NIGHT (SAN FRANCISCO)

Nick crosses the parking lot to his car.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Nick looks into his rearview. *Is that car following him?*

Nick makes two left turns, effectively driving around the block. The car behind him follows.

On his third left, he stops. The car behind goes straight.

He watches as a FAMILY drives by.

He leans his forehead on the steering wheel.

INT. NICK'S CONDO - NIGHT

Nick enters and turns on a lamp, but the bulb is out.

CLACK!

He freezes. Adrenaline pumps. He backs up to a wall, sliding down to an electrical outlet. He pushes the fake plate aside to retrieve a gun, eyes searching the dark.

He inches forward and past a window near a shelf.

WHOOSH! CLACK-A-CLACK-A-CLACK!

Nick spins to the sound of a window shade rolling up on its own. The shade knocks Evie's framed photo off the shelf, but he catches it.

DING DONG!

He jumps. He turns on another lamp and checks the peephole, letting Lia in.

NICK

Hey... What's up? No groceries?

Nick hides the gun, wipes his sweat. He's burning the candle at both ends. Lia's not faring any better.

LIA

I have something to tell you, and I don't want you to get mad.

NICK

Nothing good comes after those words.

LIA

I've seen Dad. And I've sorta been bailing him out of jail.

Nick shakes his head, closes his eyes, and sighs.

LIA (CONT'D)

He's asking for ten thousand. He owes it to a Vegas casino.

NICK

(explodes)

He can't drag us into his shit again unless you let him.

(breathes deeply; calmer)

No. No. I won't allow it.

LIA

(eyes begin to water)

Duncan is beginning to suspect something. I can't keep explaining away the large bank withdrawals.

NICK

Really? Then maybe stop bailing the bastard out. Why help him?

Lia shrugs and fights tears.

NICK (CONT'D)

Tell Duncan.

LIA

I can't tell him I've been lying this whole time, and our father's not really dead. He'll leave me.

NICK

He's not going to leave you because you didn't want your pathetic, gambling, alcoholic drug-dealing father near your family.

LIA
 (worked up)
 We're safe because no one knows.
 But we're stuck in a hell --
 waiting for the other shoe to drop,
 pretending to everyone that life is
 normal when it's not.

Nick grabs her shoulders to stop her spiral.

NICK
 Dad's toxic. You know it, and I
 know it. If Mom hadn't passed, she
 would have left as well.

Lia's tears release.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Lia...

Lia's real name hangs between them in the silence.

NICK (CONT'D)
 I mean, Christine.

LIA
 (whispers)
 And all it takes is one mistake.

NICK
 I'm Nick there, and Alan here.
 Completely separate.

LIA
 We have Evie to protect.
 (off Nick's silence)
 And then there's Dad.

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Nick waits as Tufar stumbles out of the police station.

NICK
 (with contempt)
 C'mon.

TUFAR
 (follows)
 Cigarette?

NICK
 I quit.

Tufar runs a hand across Nick's car hood and whistles.

TUFAR
What's your scam?

NICK
A job.

Nick yanks open his car door. Tufar stares at him.

TUFAR
See, you didn't need MIT.

Nick's slow-burn starts as he slides into the car.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

Nick pulls up to a well-maintained rehab center. He gets out and opens the passenger door, but Tufar remains in the car.

TUFAR
Rehab?

NICK
It's part of probation. And I paid for it whether you use it or not.

TUFAR
I guess I could look at it as a vacation. A shitty vacation without booze and a casino.

NICK
Get out of the car.

Tufar smirks and gets out. The tension is thick.

TUFAR
A hard ass, aren't you, boy?

NICK
Don't call my sister or me again.

TUFAR
(now heated)
You both should thank my ass for everything you have now.

NICK
All I see when I look at you is the life I gave up.

TUFAR

You're alive because of me. You would have never gone to college if you stayed in New York.

NICK

Is that what years in your twisted mind came up with?

TUFAR

They were going to make you kyre, boss. You would have run it all.

NICK

I never would have accepted.

TUFAR

(yells)

You wouldn't have had a choice! First it was going to me, then YOU! I took the government deal for our family. I moved us from that life.

NICK

I'm done listening. Not for one second do I believe your choices would benefit anyone but you.

Nick turns away, but he's pushed against the car by Tufar. Nick shoves him off, and Tufar stumbles back.

Enraged, Tufar takes a swing, but Nick doesn't duck this time. Instead, he catches Tufar's hand and squeezes.

NICK (CONT'D)

You really wanna take me on, old man? Because now I'm bigger and stronger.

TUFAR

You got off lucky. You think my father was a picnic? You don't know the half of it.

Tufar grabs Nick's wrists, the ring responsible for Nick's forehead scar still on Tufar's finger.

TUFAR (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Hit me. Or maybe you'd rather put a bullet through my head? It would be poetic since I taught you to shoot.

Nick grabs Tufar's shirt, shoving him against the car. He draws his fist back, rage emanating from every pore.

Tufar looks frail for the first time. He looks -- pathetic.

Nick pushes away from him. He walks in a circle, then bends at the waist, hands on his knees as if he's going to vomit.

TUFAR (CONT'D)
(disappointed)
You still don't have it in you.

Nick starts to laugh. It starts low, then becomes so full he looks like he's lost it. He straightens and wipes his eyes.

NICK
I just realized I'm nothing like you. And THAT is freeing as hell. I have the satisfaction of knowing I could wipe you from this planet, but I choose not to. That's who I am now.

Nick opens the trunk and tosses a duffel onto the lawn.

NICK (CONT'D)
Essentials only.

Nick drives off. Tufar stares at the retreating car.

ACROSS THE STREET

Elvis, in a car, lowers his cell's camera as Nick speeds off. His "808" face tattoo is out of place in San Francisco.

INT. ELVIS' RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elvis scrolls through cell photos of Nick and Tufar. He picks one and sends it to 718-555-3465.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND - NIGHT

A Staten Island Ferry passes the Statue of Liberty.

EXT. SAMMY'S USED CARS - NIGHT

Clean new cars shine under area lighting.

INT. SAMMY'S USED CARS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Clan head, Rap, limps in followed by his second, Slator. A myriad of clan members eat dinner. YOUNGER PUNKS in rows of laptops hacking into websites. Rap speaks to the room.

RAP
Where's Zamir?

EXT. BLAISDELL INSURANCE - PARKING LOT - DAY (HAWAII)

Zamir watches Desiree's office building from his rental, his face bruised purple and yellow. He eats a local plate lunch.

His cell RINGS with the number 718-555-3465

INTERCUT BETWEEN RAP AND ZAMIR

RAP
Where have you been all week?

At Rap's voice, Zamir almost upends his food in his lap.

ZAMIR
Nowhere. I'm having lunch.

RAP
I just texted you an address.
Kreshnik goes by the name of Alan
Plaskitt of San Francisco. He
liberated Tufar, or I should say
Rudy Plaskitt, from jail yesterday
and dropped him off at rehab.

ZAMIR
I'm on my way.

Rap hangs up and glances at the men eating dinner. Then, he speaks into his cell's microphone.

RAP
What time is it in Hawaii?

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)
*It's 12:43 p.m. in Honolulu,
Hawaii.*

RAP
Lunch. Zamir went there against
orders. We've got a loose cannon.

Rap turns to Slator.

RAP (CONT'D)
 Be on the next flight to San
 Francisco. Find Tufar.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (HAWAII)

Nick and Desiree lay in bed. He's exhausted from their lovemaking, the leather turtle bracelet arm across his eyes. Desiree's propped on his chest, animated.

DESIREE
 ...I said, "I'd like to revisit the
 eight percent raise as it doesn't
 close the gap between my true
 market value and current salary."

Desiree nudges him. He looks like he's sleeping.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 Are you listening?

NICK
 Yup. Your negotiation skills are
 turning me on. Continue.

Desiree laughs and trails kisses across his chest.

DESIREE
 And I said, "If I had to be
 replaced, which I don't want to be,
 this is how much it would cost to
 replace me." And I handed him...
 (seductively)
 ...my cost analysis sheet.

Nick groans, flips her to her back and kisses her.

NICK
 Don't let anyone else decide your
 destiny. Trust your instincts...
 And say "cost analysis" again.

Desiree laughs, fingers trail up his arm to a bicep covered in a white gauze bandage.

DESIREE
 Can I see it?

He nods. She uncovers a fresh tattoo - a Hawaiian tribal armband. In the middle of the band is an outline of a turtle with the word "Kama'a" centered inside.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

I don't know that Hawaiian word.
What does Kama'a mean?

This time Nick gives her a passionate kiss that leaves no room for conversation and her question forgotten.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nick has Desiree's red-cased cell hooked to his laptop. He's alone, looking at candid smiling shots of himself as well as Desiree kissing his cheek while asleep. His fingers trace her face.

He scrolls and sees the selfie of Desiree and Aileen at the beach -- with the White Truck behind. He enlarges the truck.

NICK

(mutters to self)
Once is an accident. Two times a
coincidence.

Nick turns off the apartment lights and pulls back the curtain to look out to the street and parked cars.

NICK (CONT'D)

Three times -- enemy action.

No White Truck. He relaxes slightly but paces in the dark.

Nick decides. He goes back to the laptop, and with one click, photos of him and Desiree begin to erase from Desiree's cell.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits on the edge of the bed, squeezing his stress ball. The shower stops, and Desiree enters wrapped in a towel.

Nick drops the ball, eyes sliding down past her towel to the only other things she wears: new sexy thigh-high boots with hibiscus flowers embossed in the leather.

DESIREE

I love them. Thank you again.

NICK

You're beautiful, and it's not even
the best thing about you.

Nick's stare is intense. Serious. Memorizing.

Touched, she comes to stand between his legs. Nick wraps his arms around her, leaning his forehead against her stomach. His lungs fill, then heavily empty. Hiding his anguish, he mouths, "I'm sorry."

Desiree threads her fingers through his hair, worried.

DESIREE

Is everything okay?

Nick kisses her belly through the towel.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Are you trying to distract me with sex so you don't have to go to the party tonight? I want you to meet Aileen and my extended family.

NICK

I don't think I can--

DESIREE

Please. They are important to me. You're important to me.

Desiree gasps when Nick's hands slide up her thighs.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

We have to include other people in our lives as well, don't you think?

Nick stands to pull her into an embrace. He buries his nose in her hair, closes his eyes, and inhales her in.

NICK

I want to enjoy being us before the rest of the world comes in.

Nick kisses her urgently, but Desiree frowns.

DESIREE

What's the name of your company?

The question hits him like a bucket of ice water.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Was that a hard question?

NICK

No, of course not. It's just that we were in the middle of--

DESIREE

What's the name of your company?

Nick releases Desiree. She's a bulldog with a bone.

NICK

The company is in the process of being sold, so the name is changing. Rommer Parts, Inc.

DESIREE

What's your sister's married name?

NICK

Wow, you're very curious today.

DESIREE

Are you bothered I'm asking about your life?

NICK

Of course not.

Nick walks to pick up his jeans.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's just I'm afraid you'll find out I'm not that exciting. Jeans okay for tonight?

DESIREE

Nick, your sister's married name?

NICK

Spencer. Lia Spencer.

Desiree watches Nick enter the bathroom and close the door.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nick begins to arrange his shaving items scattered haphazardly around the sink. He looks in the mirror, slaps the sink with his hands, and mouths the F word.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Desiree removes Nick's black-cased cell from his pants. Then finds a second smaller prepaid cell. It's a burner.

Puzzled, she tries to unlock them. No go. She calls Nick from her cell and the burner cell rings with the caller "Boots."

On her phone, Desiree Googles "Rommer Parts, Inc.," then "Rommer Parts San Antonio," then "San Diego." Nothing.

Desiree Googles "Lia Spencer." There are many.

PING.

A text on Nick's black-cased cell from Christine.

CHRISTINE (TEXT)
Call me. It's Dad.

Desiree pulls out Nick's wallet. The shower turns off, and she quickly restores things to order.

EXT. AILEEN'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Desiree parks on a street lined with cars. The sound of ukuleles spill from a home decorated with outdoor lights.

Desiree fumes as she and Nick exit the car. Tension is thick.

NICK
You haven't said one word. We need to talk. This silent treatment--

DESIREE
Christine.

NICK
Christine?

DESIREE
Yes. Who is she?

NICK
I have a Christine in my office.

DESIREE
One who texts you about your dad?

NICK
Are you spying on me?

DESIREE
Would I need to?

NICK
Christine's my sister.

DESIREE
Wait, which is it? Office Christine or sister Christine. And your sister's name is Lia.

NICK

Lia's middle name is Christine.

DESIREE

When did you start calling her by her middle name?

NICK

When she asked me to.
 (takes her hand in his)
 I can tell you right now there's no other woman in my life but you.

DESIREE

Why do you have two cells?

NICK

(scrambles for answer)
 One's for work--

DESIREE

And which cell number do I have? Because I can tell you, it's not the same one Christine calls.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Dezzie! Howzit, sistah!

Harold gets up from playing the ukulele to hug Desiree.

DESIREE

(a little stiff)
 Harold, this is Nick. Nick, this is Aileen's brother and my hanai brother. Hanai, loosely speaking, means informally adopted.

HAROLD

Howzit. Come in, come in. Aileen's in the house. Go eat. We've got lots of good kine grinds.

Desiree leads Nick into the house.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Eh, when you finish eat, Nick, come back and play some poker.

INT. AILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Desiree laughs along with Aileen, her BOYFRIEND, and more family members. Everyone has embraced Desiree as family.

Nick's eyes meet Desiree's. His smile's not returned.

EXT. AILEEN'S HOUSE - CARPORT - NIGHT

Nick plays poker with Harold and two other large Hawaiian men, BILL and LOKI. The hand is down to Nick and SARGE, a middle-aged fit Samoan man who stares at Nick.

NICK
Are all of you police?

HAROLD
Just Sarge. I'm a construction engineer for the state. These other degens... What exactly do you do?

BILL
According to my wife, as little as possible.

Everyone laughs except Sarge. He studies Nick intently.

SARGE
Bezhani, huh? Name rings a bell.

Sarge eyes Nick and throws a chip into the pot.

Nick taps his index finger lightly on a poker chip. He lifts the edges of his cards to show a weak hand.

SARGE (CONT'D)
Have you ever been incarcerated?

Nick's demeanor doesn't change, but his index finger stops its slight tap on the poker chip.

NICK
Nope.

No one notices the absence of movement -- except Harold.

Sarge folds. The table erupts into fist bumps and merriment.

LOKI
Sarge tries that psych move on anyone new at the table. You wouldn't believe the number of people who've been in jail. Those guys always fold.

NICK
Nice try. Let me check on Desiree. I'll be back.

Nick grabs his beer to leave, but Harold's eyes follow.

EXT. AILEEN'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Beer in hand, Nick walks under outdoor lights toward a patio set as he checks his burner cell. Missed call from Boots.

He looks at his black-cased cell. Several missed calls from Christine. She calls again. He hits decline.

GAVIN (O.S.)

Do you know it's customary to take
a plate of food when you go?

Nick turns to face Gavin, pocketing both his cells.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

You should know how things work
around here.

NICK

Big on customs, are you, Gavin?

Gavin smirks.

NICK (CONT'D)

I've dealt with guys like you my
whole life. It's all about the
ruse, the scam, the win. But you're
a hobbyist. I've seen the pros, and
it's finally going to be worth it.

GAVIN

Worth what?

NICK

Punching an ass in the face.

Nick puts his beer down. Gavin steps back, his bravado fading. Nick takes a cigarette from a pack left on the table.

GAVIN

That might get us both a ride in a
cop car. Of course, then they'd
have to run a background check.
Mine's clean. How's yours, Alan?

Nick stops lighting his cigarette at Gavin's use of his alias.

NICK

Desiree doesn't want you. And you don't want her either. You just like the pissing match.

GAVIN

Here's what's awesome for me. Either way, you don't end up with the girl.

NICK

What about your gambling losses? You don't think I haven't looked you up too? Your ex had plenty to say about you on Facebook.

GAVIN

That's a private account.

NICK

I know it all. Where you bank, what roads you take to work, even what time you take a shit.

Gavin's eyes dart nervously toward the house.

NICK (CONT'D)

And here's how I know you're bluffing. You would have told her already. So what's in it for you?

GAVIN

It was your ass or mine. I chose me.

DESIREE (O.S.)

You weren't invited, Gavin.

Behind them, Desiree holds Aileen back from going at Gavin. Desiree stares at Nick's beer and cigarette.

AILEEN

Leave. Now. And don't come back.

HAROLD (O.S.)

You heard her.

Gavin knows -- him against everyone. He moves to kiss Desiree, but she looks at Nick before dropping into a practiced boxer's weave. Gavin misses, but he grabs her arm.

Nick lunges.

SNAP! Desiree blocks and snap kicks Gavin. She misses his groin but hits his previous brass-knuckled thigh. He goes down with a groan.

Silence. Everyone looks from Desiree to Gavin, then to Sarge.

SARGE

Huh, didn't see a thing. Musta blinked.

Sarge and Harold pick up a moaning Gavin and carry him out.

EXT. AILEEN'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Desiree can't keep up with Nick as he yanks open the passenger door for her. She refuses to get in.

DESIREE

I'm driving. You drank tonight.

NICK

I'm fine.

DESIREE

There's no recovery step thirteen called drink again.

Desiree refuses to back down. He gives her the keys.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick paces, squeezing his stress ball.

DESIREE

When did you start smoking?

He's not following. Then things fall into place for her.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

You're not in AA, are you? What else did you lie about?

Nick's walls are closing in.

NICK

Maybe it's better if you forget me.

DESIREE

Wait, what? How did we go from zero to see ya in less than a minute?

Nick escapes to the bedroom. Desiree follows.

BEDROOM

With few belongings, Nick's packed in no time.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
You're not going to ghost me again.

BATHROOM

Nick sweeps toiletries into his duffel, no longer in order.

BACK TO BEDROOM

Nick leaves his Hawaiian shirts hanging in the open closet.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Talk to me. Are you married?

Nick freezes.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
I can't find any company by the name of Rommer Parts. Two phones? Both of which you don't answer when you're here. A woman by the name of Christine is texting you.

NICK
I told you, it's my sister.

DESIREE
Oh my God! I can't believe this. I'm such an idiot. You pay cash so there isn't a digital trail. You've not once invited me to visit you.

Desiree slams paper and pen down in front of him.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Write your home and work address.

Nick's black-cased cell RINGS.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Answer that in front of me.

Nick's cornered. He panics.

NICK
I have to go. I miscalculated.

Nick tries to push past, but she stops him at the front door.

DESIREE
 You miscalculated?
 (pissed)
 Miscalculation is eleven items in a
 ten-item checkout line, not a word
 to describe someone you've been
 inside of.

Her crudeness makes her point. Nick falters. His black-cased cell quiets, then RINGS a second time.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 Don't you dare backspace me out of
 your life. Tell me--

NICK
 (explodes)
 Give me a second to think!

His black-cased cell quiets again. Desiree holds her ground. Then his cell RINGS a third time.

DESIREE
 (quietly)
 Nick...

Nick turns his back on her, shattered by his own words.

NICK
 It is someone else. She... she's
 innocent in all of this. But she's
 my world.

Nick turns to find Desiree shell-shocked. Another "I'm sorry" is on his lips, but he doesn't give it voice.

Nick leaves as Desiree dissolves into tears.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Nick pushes the lobby button, and he impatiently stabs the elevator button over and over to get it to close.

Doors close. His vision blurs. It's an epic anxiety attack.

He breaks.

Nick slides down the wall to curl into a fetal position. Tears flow, and his world falls apart for a second time.

INT. DESIREE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Desiree paces, wipes tears until her gaze lands on the--
RUBBER DUCKY KEYCHAIN and Nick's 13-year-old PAPER SPEECH.

DESIREE

Oh, hell no!

Determined, she swipes the keys and takes off in hot pursuit.

INT. REHAB CENTER - LOBBY - SAME TIME (SAN FRANCISCO)

Zamir snaps his fingers at the texting desk clerk, MARY. She looks up at Zamir's multiple-colored face bruises.

ZAMIR

Climbing accident.

MARY

(could care less)
Rudy's son, right? As I said on the phone, Friday night visiting hours end early due to therapy.

ZAMIR

(look down the hallway)
Thought I'd try. Tell me, did they finally move him to another room?

MARY

No, he's still in 501. But since you're here... I was gonna mail...
(searches outgoing mail)
Yes, here's your invoice...

ZAMIR

I'll settle now. Where do I go?

Zamir takes the envelope as Mary points down a hall.

MARY

Admissions. She still might be in.

Mary goes back to texting.

INT. REHAB CENTER - TUFAR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zamir slips in. The room's empty, but the bathroom door's ajar and the sink water's running.

BATHROOM

Nick's father, Tufar, sees the outside hallway light reflected in the sink mirror when the door to his room opens.

TUFAR

I'm coming to therapy, Keith. Can't a guy piss without you trying to cop a look?

No answer. Tufar walks out.

ZAMIR

Rudy Plaskitt?

TUFAR

Who's asking?

ZAMIR

My dead father, Marko.

Zamir reaches for a gun hidden under his jacket as KEITH, a rehab staffer, opens the door. Zamir jerks his jacket closed.

KEITH

Rudy, we--

Tufar pushes Keith into Zamir and bolts past. Zamir chases.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - BACK LAWN - NIGHT

Zamir bursts through the door. Tufar has disappeared.

Zamir opens the envelope in his hand. It's a rehab bill -- "Rudy Plaskitt c/o Alan Plaskitt, Spextell Inc."

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

People walk into the lobby through sliding glass doors.

INT. HOSPITAL - DIRECTORY - NIGHT

Tufar studies the directory while on his cell. A voice recording plays.

LIA (V.O.)

You've reached Christine...

Tufar hangs up and heads toward the front desk.

ELMORE, a hospital volunteer, loads a cart with flowers left at the front desk for delivery to patients.

Tufar passes Elmore, then stops. He veers into the gift shop and steals a greeting card from a rack near the door.

Tufar returns to stand near Elmore.

TUFAR

Long day for you too?

ELMORE

I'm out of here when I'm done with these deliveries.

TUFAR

I hear you.

(shows greeting card)

I was told to stop and sign this for Christine Halprin. You know her? Nurse? Her kid's sick.

ELMORE

Evie? I didn't hear anything about Evie being sick.

Elmore stops a passing nurse, missing Tufar's shock at hearing Evie's name.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Hey, Lauren, did you hear Christine's kid was sick?

LAUREN

No. Hope it's nothing serious. Isn't she supposed to be in that dance recital tonight?

Lauren nods toward the Front Desk Clerk, as she walks away.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Ask Patricia. Her granddaughter's in the same recital.

TUFAR

No need. I'll ask Patricia to sign this, then I'll leave it for you.

Elmore rolls his cart away. Tufar trashes the greeting card, and now steals a teddy bear attached to a flower bouquet.

Tufar passes the front desk and calls out.

TUFAR (CONT'D)
 Good night, Patricia. Thank you for
 all you do.
 (turns back with teddy
 bear)
 Are you going to the dance recital
 tonight?

Tufar's smile oozes charm.

INT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Office Workers leave for the night as a delivery man, ROYCE,
 carries flowers inside. A guard, SECURITY MIKE, greets him.

SECURITY MIKE
 Hey, Royce. I heard they were
 starting Saturday meetings again.

Royce nods and continues to the elevators. Zamir follows with
 a fruit arrangement and clipboard.

SECURITY MIKE (CONT'D)
 Hey!

Zamir stops. He turns, a nod indicating he's with Royce.

SECURITY MIKE (CONT'D)
 (off Zamir's bruised face)
 What happened to you?

ZAMIR
 (growls in annoyance)
 Birth mark.

Embarrassed for asking, Security Mike waves Zamir on.

INT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - 14TH FLOOR RECEPTION - NIGHT

Zamir smiles at the RECEPTIONIST as she gets ready to leave.

ZAMIR
 Will Mr. Plaskitt be in on Monday?

The Receptionist eyes him and the fruit arrangement.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)
 We made a mistake. He bought this
 for his sister, but we put Mr.
 Plaskitt's address in two places.

The Receptionist is slightly annoyed. She wants to go home.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)
 (checks cell time)
 Is she far? Traffic is a beast.
 (pretend dials and speaks
 into cell)
 Dan, I need...
 (covers microphone)
 What's her last name? Plaskitt?

RECEPTIONIST
 No, Halprin. Christine Halprin.

ZAMIR
 (feigns into cell)
 I need Christine Halprin's address.
 We delivered to the wrong... No,
 don't put me on... hold.
 (pleads to Receptionist)
 Can you just give me the address?

RECEPTIONIST
 (on the fence)
 I should call his assistant.

ZAMIR
 This is perishable.

The Receptionist gives in.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - TICKET COUNTER - SAME TIME

Desiree speaks to a busy AIRLINE TICKET AGENT.

DESIREE
 I know you can't tell me if he's
 booked on the flight, but can you
 tell me if you've seen him?

Desiree scrolls through cell photos, perplexed.

AIRLINE TICKET AGENT
 I'm sorry, ma'am--

DESIREE
 I know I have a photo...

All of Nick's photos are gone. She's at a loss.

AIRLINE TICKET AGENT
 I'm sorry. If you would step aside,
 I need to help the next customer.

Desiree walks away and dials Nick. Again, no answer.

At the terminal exit, Desiree stares at a SECURITY OFFICE sign. An idea forms, and she follows the arrow.

EXT./INT. CHILDREN'S THEATER - SAME TIME (SAN FRANCISCO)

Tufar slides through the theater doors where posters announce a Friday night children's performance. He stands in the back.

In a pink tutu and Hawaiian flower hair clip, Evie dances part ballet and part hula, on stage with her classmates.

The audience eats it up. An OLDER MAN elbows Tufar.

OLDER MAN

Which one's yours?

TUFAR

I have no freakin' idea.

The Older Man frowns and moves away.

The audience jumps to their feet in thunderous applause, and the cast of children take their final bows.

Evie jumps into Duncan's arms as he and Lia approach.

Tufar hesitates at the exit, looking back at his daughter and family. He briefly smiles before he slips out.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

An AIRPORT SECURITY WOMAN hands Desiree some paperwork.

While Desiree scans the papers, PARAMEDICS enter, leading a TEENAGE BOY holding a bloodied paper towel to his forehead while his MOTHER follows.

DESIREE

This can't be... this report says the guy who helped me was Alan. His name was Nick. Actually, Kreshnik of San Antonio.

AIRPORT SECURITY WOMAN

Nope, ID said Alan Plaskitt of San Francisco. Said the same thing to your husband...

(searches log)

Gavin Hu. He came in yesterday asking for a copy on your behalf.

Desiree studies Gavin's signature while the Security Woman moves to assist the Paramedic.

MOTHER
(concerned to Paramedic)
Is this going to leave a scar?

Desiree whips around and stares. She rushes out, cell to ear.

EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATER - NIGHT (SAN FRANCISCO)

From a stolen car (broken glass surrounds the backseat window frame), Tufar watches Lia and her family leave. He follows.

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

Desiree, cell to ear, stands near an empty baggage carousel.

INT. DOCTOR WALSH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (NEW YORK)

Doctor Walsh is asleep, but stirs at his RINGING CELL.

DOCTOR WALSH
(groggy into cell)
Desiree? What's wrong?

INTERCUT BETWEEN DESIREE AND DOCTOR WALSH

DESIREE
Dad, how did you know Nick had a scar on his face?

DOCTOR WALSH
What? What time is it?

DESIREE
The last time we talked, you said, "At least he's not adding another scar to his face." When I last saw him at 16, he didn't have a scar, but now he has one.

Doctor Walsh sits up in the dark. Papa Doug's asleep.

DOCTOR WALSH
(whispers)
Desiree, I--

DESIREE
The only way you'd know this is if you saw him between now and then.

DOCTOR WALSH

Honey, I--

DESIREE

Dad, tell me, because none of this makes sense.

DOCTOR WALSH

I love you--

DESIREE

Love me enough to tell me.

Desiree listens. The baggage carousel BEEPS, indicating incoming flight luggage. STROBE LIGHTS flash against Desiree's closed eyes as arriving passengers surround her.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Nick throws his duffle bag onto the passenger seat. He speaks into his black-cased cell.

NICK

Christine... I screwed up. And I can't take it back... We need to erase... You have to call me now.

He squeezes his stress ball, then whips it across the garage.

INT. NICK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

With purpose, he tosses his black-cased cell onto the passenger seat and pulls out his burner cell and dials.

HAROLD (V.O.)

Kamakana here.

EXT. HALE'IWA HARBOR - SUNRISE (HAWAII)

Harold readies his fishing boat from the slip, cell to ear.

NICK (V.O.)

Harold, it's Nick. Desiree's--

HAROLD

Internet says you don't exist.

INTERCUT BETWEEN NICK AND HAROLD

Unasked questions fill the silence.

NICK

I want you to know I would never knowingly hurt her.

HAROLD

As a man, I got that from you. But as her hanai brother, I want you to know I have a truck, a shovel, and knowledge of remote places.

NICK

Understood. I need your help.

HAROLD

I'm listening.

NICK

I just sent you an email. Both email and this call will be untraceable when I hang up.

Harold opens an email with a bunch of videos, all of them from bank cameras with Gavin at an ATM. Harold's speechless.

NICK (CONT'D)

Each video will match Desiree's ATM theft police reports and requests to change her pin. Get them to Sarge.

INT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - NICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is a mess of papers and shredded documents. Nick's in a T-shirt, his aloha shirt in the trash.

Nick's finger hovers over a keyboard, then he presses delete. Files erase. He is obliterating his life once more.

NICK

(into black-cased cell)
Duncan, why is no one answering?
I've left several messages for Christine. I traced her cell to the house... She needs to call me. It's urgent.

Ending the call, he fishes the burner cell out of his pocket and dictates a text.

NICK (CONT'D)

Text to Boots.

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)
What do you want to say?

NICK
 Desiree, I... I just wanted to
 say... You need to know...

Nick watches the words type across his cell screen.

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)
*Here's your text to Boots. Are you
 ready to send it?*

He hits cancel as his office desk phone rings.

INT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Security Mike is on the phone.

SECURITY MIKE
 Mr. Plaskitt, I know it's unusual
 for you to have a Saturday night
 visitor, but I have a Desiree Walsh
 here insisting she see you.

Desiree stands at the security desk.

INTERCUT BETWEEN NICK AND SECURITY MIKE

Blindsided, Nick begins to pace in his office.

Desiree leans in, hoping to overhear their conversation.

SECURITY MIKE (CONT'D)
 Yes, sir. I understand.

Nick hurries to his window. Below, Desiree's escorted out.
 She looks up, he steps back. When he looks again, she's gone.

EXT. SPEXTELL BUILDING - LATER

Disheveled and exhausted, Nick heads to his car. He comes to
 a dead stop. Desiree waits, wiping tears. She approaches him.

DESIREE
 Nick... I mean Alan.

Nick can't find his words.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
 I've been driven my whole life to
 prove I'm worth something...
 (MORE)

DESIREE (CONT'D)

that I'm enough. But when I reach a goal, this voice in the back of my head tells me I haven't earned it. I'm just lucky. I'm not enough.

Nick shakes his head, he's torn up by her pain.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

I'm constantly terrified people will find out. Who would want me then? Who would love me? My mother didn't... you--

NICK

Boots--

DESIREE

It's illogical, I know. I have my fathers, my friends -- but I constantly push out of my comfort zone so these thoughts don't paralyze me.

(recites mantra)

I deserved it. I earned it. I am enough for me.

NICK

You are enough.

DESIREE

Do you know what it takes to stand here after you've rejected me? Twice?

NICK

Don't.

DESIREE

I'm a lot stronger than I thought. The sky didn't fall. I'm still standing. That's a hell of a boost.

NICK

Desiree, I--

DESIREE

I spoke to my Dad. Your Father... We don't know it all. You tell me the rest.

She moves toward him, but Nick steps back.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

(voice rising)

You came back, and now **you** owe me the truth.

NICK

I can't--

DESIREE

TELL ME!

NICK

THEY COULD KILL YOU!

DESIREE

(horrified)

Who? What are you... This is crazy--

NICK

You're a link to me. The less you know... They don't know about you.

DESIREE

We can get help--

NICK

You don't think I've thought of every angle? There's no one. And I have a niece, a sister. It's more than just us.

DESIREE

There has to be... We have dreams--

NICK

I used to tell myself not to dream. Dreams are fairy tales; reality is concrete. But I was wrong. When you're surrounded by pain, dreams light the darkness.

(his resolve strengthens)

You're my light, Desiree -- the promise of reaching something good that keeps me going. Go home. Go home so even if you stay a dream, I'll know you're safe, and that'll be enough to face the dark. Because knowing you're happy is enough.

DESIREE

(tears roll)

Bad blood isn't hereditary.

NICK

I'm not letting you go. God knows I should, but I can't.

(voice breaks)

But I'm asking you... begging you to let *me* go.

As Nick walks past her, their hands instinctively reach toward each other. Fingertips touch, then slide away.

Desiree stays rooted as Nick walks away.

INT. NICK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nick leans against the headrest and wipes the moisture from his eyes. His burner cell rings and illuminates "Boots." Nick declines, switches to vibrate, tosses it to the seat.

His black-cased cell vibrates. He reads the text from Kerry, then dials.

NICK

Kerry, what fruit arrangement?

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Nick speeds, Christine's name lit on the car's Bluetooth.

NICK

Lia! Run! Run like hell!

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

All is quiet in the neighborhood.

INT. NICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick parks a block from Lia's. He pulls a gun lockbox from under his seat, opens it with a fingerprint, taking the gun.

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Nick hurries down the street. He spots--

A MAN flicking cigarette ashes out a parked car window.

Nick grabs the hand, putting his gun to the Man's temple.

NICK
Don't move.

The Man turns. Shit, it's Tufar. Nick takes his Dad's gun.

NICK (CONT'D)
Move over.

TUFAR
What the hell!

Tufar slides over as Nick uses his shirt to open the door.

INT. STOLEN CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nick spots a child's binky in the center console and eyes Tufar in disgust. Then, he checks Tufar's gun chamber.

NICK
What are you doing here?

TUFAR
Marko's son paid me a visit.

NICK
Zamir? Zamir's here?

TUFAR
I didn't ask for an ID.

Nick slams a hand on the steering wheel and grips it.

NICK
When did you last see Lia?

TUFAR
Last night.

They both know this is bad. They sit in foreboding silence.

TUFAR (CONT'D)
Evie was my mother's name.

Nick knows.

His black-cased cell PINGS with a text from Christine: **A photo of his sister with a gun to her temple.** He shows Tufar.

TUFAR (CONT'D)
Shit! I walked away to take a piss.
Give me my gun.

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Tufar check the perimeter. A TV on screensaver mode is seen through a window. Nick motions Tufar to move toward the garage.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Nick and Tufar slip through an unlocked garage side door.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Duncan, Lia's husband, lies in the hall bleeding from a head wound. Nick checks Duncan's pulse and wraps his head wound.

Nick and Tufar clear each room in silence, guns out. Nick ascends the stairs while Tufar stays behind.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick peeks into the master. Lia's tied and gagged on the bed.

ZAMIR (O.S.)
You might as well come in,
Kreshnik.

BEDROOM

Nick walks in, his gun aimed at Zamir, whose gun's on Lia.

Lia begs Nick with her eyes, her face tear-streaked.

NICK
She's not part of this, Zamir.

ZAMIR
No, but she's a link, like you.
Both expendable. Where's Tufar?

NICK
We have nothing to do with him.

Zamir's gun pushes deeper against Lia, her purple Swarovski-cased cell sparkling in his back pocket. Nick sees it.

ZAMIR
An invoice from rehab says
otherwise.

TUFAR (O.S.)
Right here, asshole.

Tufar steps in. Both Nick and Tufar point guns at Zamir.

ZAMIR

You wanna take a chance? Drop your
guns or she dies.

Tufar moves closer. Zamir backs against a tall armoire.

Nick follows Lia's gaze to the armoire top where Evie peers
around a silk flower basket teetering on the edge.

Nick's eyes drop to the stand-off.

Evie moves. Lia's eyes widen. And the flower basket falls.

PLUNK!

Instinctively, Zamir swings his gun -- toward Evie.

Tufar rushes Zamir. Nick dives to cover Lia.

POP! POP!

Then silence. Nick looks over. Neither Tufar or Zamir move.

He frees Lia's bound hand and mouth.

LIA

EVIE!

Nick scrambles toward the bodies, using a shirt to grab the
guns and empty ammo. He stands and reaches for Evie.

NICK

Come here, Sweet Pea. I've got you.

LIA

(fumbles with ties)
MY BABY!

Evie cries. The red hibiscus clip droops in her hair.

NICK

Look at me, Evie. It's okay, honey.
Come to me.

Evie backs into his arms. He turns her away from the bodies.

Lia rushes to grab Evie.

NICK (CONT'D)

Take her out.

Nick checks Tufar's neck pulse and rolls him over.

Tufar, barely alive, flicks his eyes wildly toward the armoire. His hand lifts, blood gurgles from his mouth.

NICK (CONT'D)
 (off Tufar's frantic look)
 She's fine.
 (softer)
 Evie's fine.

Nick clasps Tufar's shaking hand, and Tufar squeezes. Their eyes meet. Nick nods. Tufar's hand relaxes. He's gone.

Nick closes his father's eyes. His hand lingers on his face.

Nick stands and nudges Zamir with his foot. Nothing. Blood pools. He leans down to check Zamir's pulse but stops at Lia's strangled cry - she hasn't left. She watched Tufar die.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Let's go. I'll call 911.

Nick ushers them out as he dials his cell.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the kitchen doorway, Nick takes Evie.

NICK
 She doesn't need to see this. I'll
 take her next door to Mrs. James.

Lia runs to Duncan.

Nick tucks his gun into his waistband and pivots with Evie to the front door. He doesn't notice the partially bloody footprints that trail down from upstairs.

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Halfway across the yard, Nick shifts Evie in his arms. Her leg pushes the gun, now teetering at his waistband. AMBULANCE SIRENS blare in the distance.

ZAMIR (O.S.)
 You've forgotten the rules, Nick.
 Always carry two guns.

Zamir holds his blood-soaked side; gun pointed at Nick.

Evie whimpers, and Nick turns to make her less of a target.

NICK

You don't have to do this, Zamir.

Nick side-eyes the neighbor's **motion sensor security lights**, stepping into its path. Nothing.

ZAMIR

(gun hand shakes)

Sure. But I want to.

NICK

You've killed him. Let my niece go.

ZAMIR

How's Desiree? We met in Hawaii. I have a selfie to prove it.

Nick's jaw clenches. Now he knows Zamir was in Hawaii too.

ZAMIR (CONT'D)

When I'm done with you, I think I'll look her up again.

Nick's fingers graze his gun, but it slips further.

Nick takes another step.

CLICK!

The SECURITY LIGHTS behind Nick blind Zamir for a moment.

Nick runs.

EXT. LIA'S NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Nick leans against the house in the dark to calm Evie.

Shifting her, his gun falls with a THUD. Unable to bend with Evie, he slides the gun out of the path with his foot.

Looking for a place to hide, he rushes to a large tree.

NICK

(whispers)

Evie, you need to scramble up like it's a jungle gym and stay there until a policeman comes to get you.

Evie shakes her head, clinging to him.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're my big girl. I need you to do this to keep you safe, just like you did in the house. Do this for me, Sweet Pea.

Evie scrambles up, but the hibiscus hair clip silently drops.

Nick retraces steps to the dropped gun, pats the ground.

The sirens wail closer.

He touches the gun handle.

A sound? He freezes, eyes search the darkness.

Vzzzzzzzz Vzzzzzzzz

Nick jumps. His burner cell vibrates in his pocket. He fumbles to turn it off as the screen lights up.

An idea. He lifts his black-cased cell, covering the screen light. Pushing a few buttons, he grips his gun and waits.

The sound of trumpeting elephants rings out behind him.

Lia's purple Swarovski cell lights up in Zamir's back pocket. Zamir's attempt to silence it only illuminates his face.

Nick aims.

BANG!

The bullet hits Zamir's thigh. He drops.

NICK (CONT'D)

DROP YOUR GUN, ZAMIR, NOW!

Zamir groans, swinging his gun wildly, looking to aim.

Nick advances.

EVIE (O.S.)

Uncle Alan? I'm scared.

Zamir swings his gun toward Evie's voice--

Nick lunges forward--

POP!

A bullet whizzes past Nick from behind. It hits Zamir in the center of his forehead.

Nick spins and aims at a DARK FIGURE.

DARK FIGURE

Drop the gun.

A heavy ring on the Dark Figure's gun hand glints in the moonlight.

Nick hears Evie's cries and drops his gun.

The Dark Figure advances. He picks up Nick's gun, then Zamir's. He frisks Zamir's pockets, scoops up the hibiscus hair clip, then reshoots Zamir before he walks away.

Nick's eyes go to Evie. The sound of police sirens start to trail away in his ears.

SILENCE

Strobe lights flash against him in slow motion until--

EVIE (O.S.)

(faint scared sobs)

Uncle Alan...

Nick runs to her.

Over the scene, the telltale BEEP of a cell starts a new voice recording.

NICK (V.O.)

Email to Christine.

CELL COMPUTER ASSISTANT (V.O.)

What do you want to say?

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Nick, Lia, and the POLICE all watch as Tufar's white sheet-draped body is carried from the house by the CORONERS.

NICK (V.O.)

Dear Lia, I'm back where it all started, trying to fix what might be unfixable.

Nick pulls Lia and Evie close to him.

NICK (V.O.)

You asked me if we were safe now. I wish I could say yes, but there are more Zamirs out there.

Lia hugs Evie, turning her head from the scene.

NICK (V.O.)
 If I'm successful, I'll be around
 to see Evie happy and married one
 day. I'm smiling at that thought...
 I'm relieved Duncan's tests came
 back clear. No permanent damage.

Lia cries as Duncan is taken out of the house by PARAMEDICS.

NICK (V.O.)
 Don't be mad. He threw me out of
 his hospital room because he's a
 protective husband and father. He's
 all in.

Nick's burner cell vibrates with a text.

NICK (V.O.)
 I know you don't think you can
 relocate again, but you can. You're
 so much stronger than you realize.

Nick views the text from "Boots."

BOOTS (TEXT)
 We're on the same side.

NICK (V.O.)
 Yes, Evie will have to change her
 name too...
 (voice breaks)
 ...but she will always be Sweet Pea
 to me.

Nick scrolls up to a text that had come in earlier from Boots
 (Desiree): A photo of a MINI RUBBER DUCKY KEYCHAIN.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - BEACH - DAY

On the beach with shoes in hand, Nick walks to the water's
 edge. The Ferris wheel spins in the background.

Nick views the words typed out on his cell screen: "...but
 she will always be Sweet Pea to me."

He continues to dictate.

NICK

Somebody once said you'll meet your destiny on the same path you chose to avoid.

A wave washes over his feet.

Nick stares at the photo strip of him and Desiree -- then drops it into the ocean. A wave takes it under.

INT. LIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (SAN FRANCISCO)

Lia's cell PINGS as she packs moving boxes. She reads Nick's email and yells for Duncan who comes to read it with her.

NICK (V.O.)

I'm not running anymore. If I've learned anything, it's that peace of mind needs to win over fear.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - BOARDWALK - DAY

Nick walks down the boardwalk and removes the SIM card from both cells. He tosses the cells in two separate trash cans.

His email to Lia continues.

NICK (V.O.)

If I've failed, you'll know why I never came back. In that case, find someplace safe and start over. You can do it.

Nick drops the SIM cards into a paper cup he fishes out of a third trash can. He waves a lighter's flame under the cup.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND - ST. GEORGE TERMINAL - DAY

Nick steps out of the terminal and approaches TWO SKATEBOARDING TEENS, one of them Joey from Rap's clan. Joey points down the street, but as soon as Nick leaves, he makes a call.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SAMMY'S USED CARS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Nick's tied to a chair with TWO THUGS standing over him. He bends in pain as far as his rope will allow.

Nick's dictation resumes.

NICK (V.O.)

And I'm sending this before we know how it's going to end. There's not much more to say except, I hope you can forgive me.

Thug #1's punch to Nick is interrupted when Rap limps in. He's followed by Slator whose eyes are hidden behind gold-rimmed glasses.

NICK (V.O.)

Oh, and about Duncan... you did marry one of the good ones. You deserve your happily ever after too. Love, Nick.

Nick straightens in his seat, one of his eyes swollen shut. He's been worked over. It's not pretty.

NICK (V.O.)

PS, I loved her. Desiree that is. I loved her at sixteen, and I never stopped. Would it be too much to ask you to call her before you disappear? Tell her I'm sorry I hurt her again. I'd understand if you can't. It's just that she is... was, like your Duncan. One of the good ones. My good one.

Rap stops in front of Nick, his authority evident.

RAP

I heard you were looking for me.

NICK

I've come to pay my father's debt.

RAP

(switches to Albanian)
You got some nerve coming here when your father shit on us.

NICK

He's dead. My father's dead.

RAP

Yes, he is.

Rap spits on the ground. They lock gazes.

NICK

It ends here. Take me out and leave
my sister alone. *Kokë për kokë*. A
head for a head.

RAP

(shrewdly sizes Nick up)
You're either nuts, or you have a
set of titanium balls.

Rap smiles at Nick's unwillingness to back down. He pulls out
a gun, walks behind Nick, and taps his gun to Nick's head. He
leans down to speak into Nick's ear.

RAP (CONT'D)

My father was a piece of shit too,
so I have a built-in shit detector.
But I give him credit for the one
good thing he taught me. The
shittiest of people usually have
the dirtiest hands, or so the
saying goes.

Rap straightens, lays the gun on a table, and motions Slator
to come forward.

RAP (CONT'D)

Zamir didn't have permission to go
to Hawaii or do anything to a kid,
especially a five-year-old girl.

Slator takes a heavy ring off his pinkie finger and places it
next to the gun. It's Tufar's ring, proof he shot Tufar.

Thug #2 moves menacingly toward Nick. Rap and Slator leave,
but Rap pauses at the door and nods to the gun on the table.

RAP (CONT'D)

It's your registered gun. Magazine
empty, of course. Who the hell
registers their gun?

Rap motions to Thug #2, who flicks open a knife in turn.

Nick gives Rap a fearless unwavering stare.

RAP (CONT'D)

Not someone with dirty hands.

Thug #2 cuts Nick's ties.

RAP (CONT'D)

Our beef was with your father. I
don't know you, you don't know me.

Nick nods his confirmation.

RAP (CONT'D)
Your business with us has
concluded.

Nick staggers to his feet after everyone leaves and swipes something off the table before walking out.

The gun and hair clip are gone, but Tufar's ring is left behind.

EXT. LIA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (SAN FRANCISCO)

A moving truck is in the driveway.

Duncan opens the door to Nick. Surprised, he pulls Nick into a hug. Duncan knows everything. He calls into the house.

Lia pauses at Nick's bruised face, then throws herself into his arms. Evie follows a moment later.

INT. NICK'S CONDO - NIGHT

The lights are on when Nick enters. He freezes. The condo's empty except for stacked moving boxes.

NICK
Lia?

DESIREE (O.S.)
Hello, Nick.

Nick swings around to see Desiree in the bedroom doorway.

NICK
Desiree? What...? How...?

DESIREE
Your sister, Lia... Christine?
What the hell are we calling her
these days?

Nick stays rooted to his spot.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Oh, yes. I read what you wrote, and
I know what you've done.

Desiree backs him up against the front door.

NICK
Why are you pissed?

She softly touches his bruises. Her eyes water.

DESIREE
You never found out if I got my
proper raise.

Nick reaches to tenderly smooth hair from her face.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Twenty-one percent. But I quit. I'm
going out on my own.
(off his proud nod)
If I can be rejected by the same
guy three times and still be
standing, opening a business will
be easy.

Tears escape her eyes as Nick holds her face in his hands.

NICK
You need to know that I would do it
all again.

She shakes her head in protest.

NICK (CONT'D)
Because this is how it ends. I'll
choose you every time. I choose us.

Nick smiles, a smile that reaches his soul.

DESIREE
Don't pull that smile crap on me.
We're going to have this out.

Nick's smile widens, but Desiree backs up as Nick tries to hold her. She points to Nick's packed duffle bag on the sofa.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Did you intend to come back to me?
And the answer better be yes.

Nick pulls out a stuffed animal -- a green baby turtle with Coney Island embroidered on it.

NICK
Greenie.

Desiree yanks it from his hands and hugs it.

DESIREE

Yeah, you're still not naming our kids. What does your tattoo mean?

NICK

You already looked it up.

DESIREE

I want to hear you say it.

NICK

Boots. Kama'a means boots.

Nick beams, proud of himself.

NICK (CONT'D)

Worth a lot of points, right?

He walks forward, caging her against the wall. He lowers his mouth to kiss her, but she stops him.

DESIREE

Were you ever going to tell me you showed up the night of my prom?
(off his head shake)
Because you knew I would never forgive my dad?

NICK

And because he loves you too.

Those words bring pain, love, but ultimately forgiveness.

DESIREE

And you love me.

Nick remains silent as Desiree fumbles in her pocket and holds out her keys and the MINI DUCKY KEYCHAIN attached.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Kreshnik Bezhani, will you be my boyfriend?

NICK

We have a slight problem.

Desiree straightens, ready to fight for them.

NICK (CONT'D)

We never officially broke up, so technically we've been a thing for thirteen years.

DESIREE
That's a long time.

Desiree sets the keychain and "Greenie" on an entry table.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
I love you.

Nick dips his head for a kiss. She stops him again.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
But I'm still pissed you put
yourself in danger.

NICK
Of course.

DESIREE
I adore Evie. And I met Duncan. He
is one of the good ones. But you,
Nick, are not.

Nick frowns.

Desiree clasps his forearms, and her hands slide along his arms, stopping a moment on the leather bracelet she gave him, and continuing until only their fingertips touch.

Then she pushes their hands together, palm to palm.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
You're one of the great ones. My
great one.

Their fingers entwine.

NICK
I love you, Desiree. I freakin'
love you.

He smiles, cups her face, exaggerates his right head tilt --

She laughs.

They kiss.