

BL DLIST



FRESH BLOOD SELECTS

SHOTGUN

Written by

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BLACK--

SUPER:

"A 2014 study by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police found that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women were murdered or went missing between 1980 and 2012." (NPR)

The BLARE of a truck's horn screams under the text--

EXT. ROLETTE COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA - DAY

--TANDEM TRUCKS shock the pavement with rubber streaks. Fog smothers the landscape.

Snow flowers over every surface-- a parasite.

Icy slush spits out from under a tire. Splashes over a nearby sign: TURTLE MOUNTAIN RESERVATION 1/4 MILE.

INT. OIL CAMP - DAY

A tandem truck pulls into an encampment. MEN flag it down, tightly wound in yellowing jumpsuits. The DRIVER squints through the snow, easing the truck in.

ON THE TRUCK'S BED

Pipes RATTLE. A steady HAND appears to hold them down. The PIPE LAYER the hand belongs to huffs out a weak smoke cloud of breath. Goggles fogged from the oncoming snow.

But they can't hide the man's frown.

This is ABBOTT TAYLOR (40s). He sports a patchy beard and a forlorn expression. Looks like he perpetually regrets the day he was born.

SHOUTS ring out from behind the truck!

Up ahead, an OIL DERRICK seems to sway. The lattice structure mirrors the make of a skeleton.

Bees to honey, the MEN rush forward. Gloves slip on the derrick, trying to hold it steady.

Above, the DERRICKMAN (30s) on the structure slips, leg caught in the derrick. He tumbles to the snow packed ground. Leg BENT awkwardly underneath him.

A ROAR starts and men shove one another, chaos forming.

WORKER

C'mon, move the hell out the way!

MAN

Tie that leg down! We can't lose
this lattice.

WORKER

Somebody call an ambulance.
Where's the foreman?

Abbott turns his back on the rising chaos.

INT. OIL CAMP - PORT O' POTTY - DAY

Abbott shreds his work suit, leaving him only in his sweat-stained long johns. A cigarette hangs loosely from his lips. Brown stains paint the floor; he inches around whatever they may be.

Settles onto the seat. A FLASK peeks from his coat pocket.

The small window slats of the port o' potty bleed RED and BLUE light through, painting Abbott's face. An ambulance's WAIL blares.

Abbott massages his temples, trying to quiet it all. The cigarette falls from his mouth.

Screams, sirens.

Embers pepper the soiled floor. Puffs of breath distort the air.

BANG!

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

--The SMOKE of a freshly fired SAWED OFF SHOTGUN settles into the icy air. A wolfish girl, only seventeen stands at the end of the barrel: DAKOTA HILL (17), harbors hostile eyes and a permanent grimace.

She crunches through the woods, tiled with grey-green leaves. Stops as the tips of her boots greet BLOOD SPLATTER.

A BUCK.

Hulled over on its side. Wheezing for life. Then fades away. Dakota produces twine, circling it around the buck's legs.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Three boxes of bullets rattle as they're plopped on a counter. Dakota, on the other side, fishes out a noisy pocket full of change.

The grey-mustached OWNER (60s) shakes his head, refusing her money. Bags the bullets in a crinkled brown sack.

OWNER

You get on home quick, now.

DAKOTA

I know.

OWNER

Those oil men have been hanging around.

As if called, the REVVING OF AN ENGINE barks through the night.

EXT. TURTLE MOUNTAIN INDIAN RESERVATION - DAY

The flatbed of a decade-old Chevy truck pulls up to a one-floor, trailer-house. Dakota wrestles the buck from the back, a SHEET underneath it. Jackson Pollock stains cover it.

INT. SHED - DAY

Dakota disrupts the buck's skin with a butcher's knife. Exposed intestines explode onto the shed's cracked granite floor. The BLOOD on her hands makes an eerie lotion.

She wipes at her brow, dashing away sweat. A brutal streak of red on her forehead. Dakota rests on her back legs, taking a break.

The buck's dead black eyes STARE back at her.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Chopped bits of venison plop into a pan. Fatty oil pops up out of the skillet. Leaning over, Dakota shuffles the meat the with the tip of her forefinger.

Sucks her teeth, burned. A red WELT forming. Kisses the spot, then goes back to stirring.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

BILLIE HILL (40s, a haggard woman with no pretenses about the loss of her youth) sleeps, tucked underneath a lump of sheets. Scattered tissues and cereal boxes, a maze on the floor. The cracked window, frosted over.

Dakota balances a bowl in her hand.

 DAKOTA
 Stew's getting cold.

In the sheets, Billie doesn't move.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 You have to eat somethin'.

Billie stirs, knocking something to the floor.

CLUNK.

Bending, Dakota sees: a VODKA bottle. Off-brand. Completely empty.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 Oh. You're already full.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - DAY

What is supposed to be a living room, houses a tattered mattress and patchwork of sheets and old quilts. Dakota sits here, guarding the door. Shotgun propped against the wall.

A MAGAZINE

Spread out against the floor. Dakota flips through technicolor, glossy pages of A-List models.

 VOICE (PRE-LAP)
 Sometimes I think she thinks of
 someone else when they kiss. I
 mean, could you imagine looking at
 the same face for twenty years?

A bowl next to her. Dakota goes in for a bite. The stew stains her fingers, smearing MUDDY BROWN STREAKS on the magazine's pages.

Suddenly, there's TAPPING on the window. Dakota slides the curtain over--

Outside stands a beaming TEENAGE GIRL.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sun beats down on the melting snow, glittering the streets. Dakota and MINNIE (17, radiant in a dangerous way) bike down an empty street.

MINNIE (VOICE)
Did your mom like being married?

DAKOTA
Doesn't matter now, does it?

MINNIE
You're grumpy.

DAKOTA
She's on one again. Drunk off her ass.

MINNIE
So is everyone else. You worry too much.

Minnie tries to ram her bike into Dakota's. Dakota dodges, letting a smile slip.

DAKOTA
Not your parents.

MINNIE
Maybe they should worry.

DAKOTA
Don't, Minnie.

Dakota pushes her bike ahead. Minnie works to catch up. Foot slips, and she collides off her bike. Dakota succumbs to laughing.

Minnie flips her the bird, then laughs--

MINNIE
See, you're just talk. You pretend to be all tough, but I know I'm the only one that makes you laugh.

DAKOTA
Whatever.

Dakota kicks the dirt around her, embarrassed to be seen so plainly.

As Minnie gets up, their laughing QUIETS...

Their gazes are now glued to a WALL OF MISSING POSTERS. A young Sioux girl stares at them for help. But there is none to be found here.

INT. MINNIE'S HOME - DAY

Upside down on Minnie's bed, Dakota stares at a cut-out pictures of CLOUDS. Minnie pokes a bottle of JOSE CUERVO in her face. Dakota fields it away.

 DAKOTA
Shouldn't keep that in here.

 MINNIE
Ok, Mom.

 DAKOTA
Just making trouble for everyone.

 MINNIE
And what's gonna happen if people can't get their booze? They'll go insane. I'm helping people keep their minds.

She takes a pull, like her life depends on it.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

Outside the general store, the girls chew on strands of beef jerky. Leaning against their bike handles, plastic bags dangle from the black grips.

 MINNIE
Sammi's talking about going to Nevada.

 DAKOTA
For what?

 MINNIE
She knows some Paiute boys. Says desert boys are better anyway.

 DAKOTA
'S not so bad here. Least we got the Walmart.

MINNIE

Some girls get prom, Dakota.
We'll be lucky if we don't freeze
to death.

DAKOTA

Maybe.

MINNIE

I'll take you with me. You know
that, don't you?

Dakota looks skeptical. Shocked, even.

DAKOTA

Me?

MINNIE

Yeah, you. It'll be like we left
for college. Livin' on our own.
Hell, we might even find a
McDonald's.

DAKOTA

We could go to Vegas, too. Dress
up like Elvis and take pictures
with people who don't where we're
from.

Minnie throws her head back laughing.

MINNIE

You really think? Damn. I'd love
that.

A small smile digs into Dakota's mouth. She shakes her head.

An old IMPALA whips into a parking space, hood vibrating from
the RAP that blares inside. Dakota locks eyes with a
passenger-- the INJURED DERRICKMAN FROM THE OPENING SCENE.

This is BOYD GREEN (30s). Moves like the devil incarnate,
but looks like your dream come true.

Embarrassed, Dakota stuffs the plastic bag into her coat
pocket. A store-brand TAMPON BOX peeks out.

The driver, DANE (19) hops from the car, card in hand. He's
YANKED back, a force gripping his shirt. It's Boyd. Gets in
the boy's face, then flicks a WAD of bills at him.

BOYD

You some kind of moron? No fucking
cards.

ABBOTT

Enough.

Boyd doesn't hear. Better yet, he doesn't care.

In Boyd steps

OUTSIDE,

Or rather, he limps outside, as a LARGE CAST BOOT impedes his gait.

BOYD

Black ice'll get you if you're not careful.

DAKOTA

We know. We're from 'round here.

BOYD

What's that supposed to mean?

She doesn't answer. Only glares. Boyd crouches, leaning his weight on his good leg. Eye-level with Minnie now. He tips her head back, fingers light on her jaw.

A SMALL SCAR runs from her ear to her chin.

BOYD (CONT'D)

I've seen you. I remember cause I'd never seen a native with blue eyes before... Hey, anyone ever tell you, you've got pretty eyes?

MINNIE

No... No, sir.

BOYD

Sir? Shit I ain't much older than you.

MINNIE

Yeah?

Calculated, Boyd reaches out. Tips Minnie's head back with his fingertips. It'd be intimate if not the dark glint in his eyes.

BOYD

Yeah... That why you never come party with us? Think we're too old?

MINNIE

Huh?

Dakota reaches out a hand toward her friend.

DAKOTA

It's getting dark, Min.

As if he suddenly remembered Dakota's presence, Boyd straightens. Eyes size up the smaller girl in front of him. A beat, unsure if he's going to strike or retreat--

HONK!

The car horn blares behind them, startling Boyd. Leaning toward the steering wheel is Abbott. His face unamused.

BOYD

We're usually at the casino. Y'all should come have some fun.

(re: Dakota)

If you know how.

Dakota pushes hard on her bike pedals. Minnie, however, glances over her shoulder.

Her eyes full of curiosity.

INT. MINNIE'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Minnie and Dakota lay on either side of her bed. Dakota in a ratty tee. Minnie in the same, though a giant picture of a POP STAR is etched across her chest.

Dakota glares at Minnie, texting furiously. The other girl LAUGHS at her phone. Sends a few HEART EMOJIS, and another giggle follows.

DAKOTA

It's late, Min.

MINNIE

What's your problem?

DAKOTA

Nothin', I'm tired. And I'm sick of hearing about them...

Minnie sits up on her elbow. Pushes Dakota's hair to side. It's loving and menacing all at once.

MINNIE

'S not my fault they wanted me and not you... I'm not your momma if that's what it's about.

Dakota knows this trick all too well. Swats Minnie's hand away.

DAKOTA

You don't know the first thing about it.

MINNIE

You know, there's a whole world out there, that you're too chicken to feel. Admit it.

Dakota refuses to answer. Rolls over.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

You're always pretending like nothing hurts you.

Dakota squeezes her eyes SHUT. As if she could make her friend's words evaporate into the night.

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

In the dark, two headlights SPLIT the night. Alone, Abbott backs a truck into a loading zone. Climbs out, truck idling, as he lifts pipes off the bed. Grunting as he goes.

INT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Snow falls off Abbott's shoulders as he kicks boots on the threshold of base camp. The foreman, JOE (50s, mustached), is there to offer him a beer.

JOE

Get some sleep, there's tomorrow.

ABBOTT

Got one more round, then I'll pack it in.

Joe shakes his head, taking a swig.

JOE

I just don't get it.

ABBOTT

Hm?

JOE

You know you'd be good at it. This job. Hell, probably better than me. These men know you.

ABBOTT

I don't know about that.

JOE

Maybe, maybe not. So when you gonna say yes, son?

He stands awkwardly, unsure of how to answer.

ABBOTT

Well uh, I've got a couple more pipes...

JOE

Alright, go on.

Abbott sets the beer down, then blows on his hands. Readies himself to return to the night.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A quiet, steady stream of water spits out from the shower head. Rolls off Dakota's bare back. With strain, she sponges off her shoulder blades, suds dotting her skin.

Her hand inches towards her chest. She hesitates.

Throws a cautious look over her shoulder...

But there's nobody else there. Just the water, hitting her eyelashes and clouding her vision.

The shower head SQUEALS, water building up in the pipes--

INT. RESERVATION SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

--The SQUEAL of the shower matches the SCREAM of a school-bell. Students shuffle in the narrow hallway of the one-floor school.

Bundled in parkas and carrying tattered satchels. Dakota is molasses amongst them. Her eyes fall on a COUPLE kissing outside a classroom door.

SPIT trails between the teens' lips.

Dakota pushes past them, eyes trained on the floor.

INT. RESERVATION SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A TEACHER hands back quizzes. Dakota looks down at her 100% score, but belies no reaction.

TEACHER

Who's started on their common app?
Remember, we have a computer in the
library if you need 'em.

From the back, a SNICKER echoes from a boy, MIKEY.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

What? That deadline's coming soon.

MIKEY

For who?

TEACHER

For you. I'm not teaching you for
my health.

MIKEY

I already got a job when I'm out of
here. Gonna work on a oil rig.

TEACHER

How about you apply first? See if
you like it. That goes for all of
you.

She hands him back his test. Not bad, only a couple missed answers.

MIKEY

So everyone can holler affirmative
action when I'm there? Nah, I can
make twenty dollars an hour out
here. Take care of my mom, too.

Dakota slinks in her seat. She's barely listening. Instead, her eyes are trained on the desk ADJACENT.

It's empty, and noticeably so in the small classroom.

She tears up the quiz, her hands moving in frustration. Snow-like shreds litter her desk.

AN O.S. PANICKED KNOCKING ON A DOOR--

EXT. MINNIE'S HOME - DAY

--A red front door swings open. On the other side stands TALULAH (40s), Minnie's mother. She smiles down at Dakota.

TALULAH
Haven't seen you in a bit.

DAKOTA
I've been around.

TALULAH
You should come have dinner over here. You know you're welcome.

DAKOTA
I know.

TALULAH
If you want to talk too, you know...

DAKOTA
Seen Minnie?

TALULAH
I thought she was at yours?

Dakota digs her heels. Knowing trouble's brewing.

DAKOTA
Yeah, uh, she went to the general. Thought she might've stopped here after.

TALULAH
Nope. You want to wait here for her?

DAKOTA
S'all good.

Talulah smirks at Dakota's hesitation.

TALULAH
If she's run off, best not worry yourself. I swear that girl... I'm not calling the cops again. Not making a fool of myself. She'll crawl back. Nothing else 'round here for her.

DAKOTA
See you.

TALULAH

Don't be a stranger Dakota. You're family.

DAKOTA

Family... yeah.

EXT. RESERVATION - DAY

Dakota peddles across the reservation, passing the exit sign. A YOUNG GIRL (7) leans against the SIGN POST. Takes a drag from a cigarette. Hair loosed in the wind.

She watches BOYS ride horses without saddles. Their youthful HOLLERS follow Dakota like a dirge as she zips past.

MILES DOWN THE ROAD

Dakota stops as she pulls up to an open field. Eyes squinting for a sign of life.

Sees nothing.

She gets down from her bike. Bends over, eyes closed, feeling the blades of WHEAT GRASS in front of her. Then--

The quiet breaks as a TRUCK zooms by her. Four MEN sit on the edge of the truck's bed, smiling toothily at Dakota. Handles of alcohol rattle in the back.

Marring the reservation's peace.

EXT. DAKOTA'S HOME - DAY

Dakota walks next to her bike, her scowl returned. Billie's there, folded on the front step. A holey shawl around her small shoulders.

BILLIE

Saw the stew you made. Thanks for that.

DAKOTA

That was two days ago. You just wake up?

BILLIE

Was fightin' a cold.

A beat. Dakota stares at her mother, willing her to tell the truth. She gets nothing, though.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Where you been?

DAKOTA
Out.

BILLIE
You're not without. Ok? You walk
around here scowling, like your
life's over, but you still got
choices girl.

DAKOTA
Yeah?

BILLIE
Yeah.

Billie corrals her daughter into her lap. Gently pulls back
Dakota's head and parts her hair. Weathered fingers flourish
as she twists Dakota's hair into braids.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You're too young to be so bitter.
Who taught you that?

Billie can't see, but Dakota bites her lip. Her eyes fill
with red.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, it wouldn't kill
you to smile. I got enough
problems as it is.

DAKOTA
Minnie's gone. Don't know where
she is.

BILLIE
Probably run off like always. That
girl would paint her skin white if
she could.

DAKOTA
They've been lookin' at her funny.
The oil men...

BILLIE
Not your concern. Just stay away
from them. Look where it got me.

DAKOTA
But she was--

She pulls back hard on Dakota's scalp, tugging on skin.

BILLIE

--You listen to me, real good.
 Don't go messing with those men.
 It ain't your business. If Minnie
 doesn't want to come home, then
 that's her mistake. You've got a
 life ahead of you, girl. If I have
 anything to say about it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dakota shakes down a plastic garbage can, pulling out the overflowing bag. Soiled paper plates fall to the floor. She bends to retrieve the errant litter.

Notices TWO SHINING BRIGHT LIGHTS in the distance.

Dakota holds her breath, stealing closer to the window. The lights GROW, almost becoming one light.

CLOSER

AT THE WINDOW NOW

Dakota braces for impact--

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

--Dakota jolts up from her cot, sweat makes a lake on her forehead. Just a dream...

She scampers to the window: there's NOTHING outside.

Takes a moment, then folds herself back on the floor.
 Reaches for her shotgun and straddles it across her lap.

Its mouth aimed at the door.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Children line up, waiting for a SCHOOL BUS. Around the bus' taillight, a MAN clad in a parka hands over a CRUMBLING BOX OF CIGARETTES to a gaggle of kids.

Transaction finished, the bus pulls away, revealing DAKOTA in its exhaust cloud.

The small children stare at her as she bikes off in the opposite direction.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A police bullpen overrun with RINGING PHONES. Dakota inches toward the PLEXIGLASS SHELTERED desk, where an OLDER WOMAN leans over a clipboard.

Beat. Dakota waits.

OLDER WOMAN

You gonna tell me what you need, or
am I a mind reader?

DAKOTA

My friend. I think she's missing.

OLDER WOMAN

You think?

Dakota nods. The older woman huffs, scooting back in her chair. Leans over to one of the OFFICERS nearby.

OLDER WOMAN (CONT'D)

Colson. I got someone here that
thinks her friend's missing.

The officer, COLSON (30s), half-rises, a styrofoam cup of coffee in his hands. He disrupts the stack of REPORTS that flood his desk.

COLSON

Thinks?

OLDER WOMAN

Mhmm.

Dakota steps back as Colson exits the bullpen and steps into the lobby. Takes a sip from his coffee, staring the younger girl up and down.

COLSON

You Cherokee?

DAKOTA

No sir.

COLSON

I dated a Cherokee girl... Once.
She had thick hair like yours.
That's why I asked.

DAKOTA

Not many Cherokee in North Dakota,
's far as I know.

COLSON

Oh? You take the census?

DAKOTA

No... sir.

COLSON

What's this about a missing friend?

DAKOTA

I saw her the other night and...
then she didn't come to school.

COLSON

You check her house?

DAKOTA

Her mom said she wasn't there.

COLSON

Why isn't her mom in here? If my
child went missing, isn't this the
first place that I'd go?

Dakota nods, not making eye contact. Instead, she stares at the cracks on the tiled floor. Clocking this, Colson stoops down.

Coffee splashes on to the floor, mixing with the dirt. Mud soup.

COLSON (CONT'D)

Can I ask you somethin'? Has she
run off before? Gone somewhere
without telling no one?

A reluctant nod.

COLSON (CONT'D)

Is it some kind of game to you all?
I swear, I hear about this at least
once a week. Do you walk off the
rez just to see how far you can go
without freezing?

The Older Woman casts a pitiful look toward Dakota.

OLDER WOMAN

Write her name down here, honey.
If she hasn't shown up by tonight,
how 'bout you give us a call? And
bring her mamma with you.

Dakota still has her eyes trained on Colson. She reaches out, yanking at his sleeve. He jolts, his shoulders tensing at the unexpected contact.

DAKOTA

I think I know who has her. I mean, somebody, I think took her. Kidnapped or--

COLSON

You need to take your hand off me. Now.

DAKOTA

But there were men! I think... I think three. It was a red car.

COLSON

Hun, you're not making any sense.

She tugs harder, her nails digging into his sleeve.

DAKOTA

Listen damnit!

A twinge in Colson's eyes. He notes Dakota swaying, struggling to look him in the eye...

COLSON

Are you drunk?

DAKOTA

N-no.

COLSON

Ros, go 'round and get the breathalyzer would you?

OLDER WOMAN (ROSLYN)

Colson, come on now--

COLSON

--She can barely look at me!

DAKOTA

I'm not. It's just... Nevermind. All right? Nevermind.

She ducks her head, lip wobbling. Her entire being shakes.

Dakota runs out as fast as she can.

EXT. DAKOTA'S HOME - DAY

Dakota throws her bike into the scabby front yard. The front wheel errantly spins from her force. She storms to the door until--

She stops. From the corner of her eye, she notices something. BLOOD making a path from the shed.

IN THE SHED

The stained sheet rests, remnants of Dakota's handiwork. For a moment, she stares, then bends down. Runs her hands over the evidence of her strength. A grimace forms on her face.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - DAY

Frowning, Dakota snaps her shotgun back into place. Jams the mag with ammunition.

BILLIE (O.S.)
 Hun? That you?

Dakota stuffs her gun in her bookbag, then slings it on her back. SLAMS the front door in her wake.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

A CROW cries overhead. It flocks toward a telephone line, meeting its family. They stare down at Dakota, below.

Bike stopped, Dakota sits, a dog on patrol. She watches the MEN at work, laboring over an OIL LACT. A truck inches toward the unit, a large pipe attempts to latch on.

Dakota's eyes on the men's FACES. Searching for someone who isn't there. Someone notices her watching.

This time, she doesn't break eye contact.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Quarters PLUNK into a slot. Dakota presses her ear to the receiver of a pay phone. She tugs on the cord, watching the parking lot.

RINGING...

A CLICK.

Dakota smothers her ear with the receiver, trying to hear something. The sound is garbled, but there's TALKING in the haze... Minnie's voice?

And then, in the distortion, a SLOT MACHINE sings out above the noise. She holds her breath, trying to hear more, just as the RED IMPALA sprints by the general store.

Dakota leaves the phone hanging by its cord in her wake, readying to follow after the car.

The slot machine's song growing LOUDER--

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

MEN gather round a campfire. Trailers and hatchbacks create a cornfield in the parking lot. Men use jackets as blankets and curl up to sleep in their cars.

Down the row, a PRIEST and NUN hand out saran-wrapped pb & j sandwiches to the men propped on tattered lawn chairs. The Nun can barely meet their eyes.

Boyd strums idly on a guitar, unawares. Clocks Abbott, LIMPING from the impala, clutching a BROWN PAPER BAG.

BOYD
Where you been?

ABBOTT
Out.

BOYD
Needed the car. Had to ask Earl to take me out tonight.

ABBOTT
It's there now. You can go on to the casino and mess with whoever.

Boyd gets up, wobbling on his good leg. Blocks Abbott's path.

BOYD
You really gonna jaw about my life?
Want me to go to confession?

ABBOTT
It's late, Boyd.

BOYD

Don't be ungrateful Abbott. I gave you a place to lay your head. That not good enough?

ABBOTT

It is. Thank you.

Abbott thinks the younger man is finished. He moves toward the bonfire--

BOYD

Hey Abbot... how come I've never seen you come play the tables with us?

ABBOTT

I don't know.

BOYD

You do.

ABBOTT

I don't--

BOYD

--Come on, just answer.

ABBOTT

Look, I'm just tired. That's all, all right? We got all those trucks to unload on Monday. Need to get some rest.

Boyd's eyes narrow at this, of all things.

BOYD

Not me. Can't load a damn thing in this boot.

ABBOTT

Right, not you. So why don't get some sleep too? Rest that leg up.

BOYD

Ain't it some shit? I've been workin' out here the longest, and give 'em everything. Damn near have my balls freeze off. And it'll all be worth jack come winter.

ABBOTT

Snow melts.

BOYD
 Right, and you'll be here, just
 like you always are. Not good for
 much else, right?

ABBOTT
 Don't--

Boyd lashes out, grabbing onto Abbott's brown bag.

BOYD
 Hey Abbott, when's the last time
 you been to confession, huh?

The Priest watches the men, tense. An arm out shielding the
 Nun.

ABBOTT
 Dunno.

BOYD
 Then why do you keep lookin' like
 you wanna pray for me? Don't you
 ever pray for yourself?

He tugs the bag harder now.

ABBOTT
 It's late, I'm sure your leg's
 achin'.

BOYD
 How's it go again? Forgive me
 father, for I have sinned. It's
 been months since I've been a
 useless piece of shit?

Another TUG on the brown bag--

A BOTTLE CRASHES to the pavement, splattering GLASS AND BROWN
 LIQUID across the lot. Abbott sucks his teeth turning away
 from Boyd. Anger rising.

FROM BEHIND A CAR

Dakota ducks down, watching the two men size each other up.
 She scales alongside of it, crouched low. Palms guiding her
 on the car's exterior.

Abbot spits toward the earth. Stuffs his hands in his
 pockets.

ABBOTT
 It ain't worth it.

The surrounding MEN shake their heads at the fray. Boyd pushes HARD against Abbott.

BOYD

You ain't better than me. I dont care if Joe offered you foreman. I grew up on these oil fields. This land's mine.

ABBOTT

I know, I know.

BOYD

I've seen you. Crying in my car. I know that you look just the same as me, if we was all cut open.

ABBOTT

Ok, Boyd. Whatever you say.

EMBERS crackle in the small bonfire.

Sparks, shoot toward the sky--

The failure to acknowledge him, it's enough to push Boyd over the edge. He PUMMELS Abbott to the ground.

The camp men SHOUT, trying to break them apart.

DAKOTA

Crouches underneath a car, shielding herself from the fight.

Boyd's fist CRACKS against Abbot's JAW. Abbott's fingers tinge RED as he tries to subside Boyd in a choke hold.

And then, it's over. Boyd swings himself off of Abbott, giving the man a light slap.

BOYD

You wanna finish this? You know where to find me, bitch. And put some gas in my fucking car.

Without an answer, Boyd disappears into the crowd, yelling to an unseen man.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Earl? Let's get going!

UNDER THE CAR

In her hiding place, Dakota breathes hard. She stuffs her hands over her mouth, shaking, trying to calm the storm of fear. From her half-slit eyes: Abbott scrapes the ground, slowly rising to his feet.

The last few embers of the bonfire wither.

INT. BOYD'S IMPALA - NIGHT

Dew clouds the windows and the camp outside. Abbott, skin purpling over from his bruises, lays out in the backseat, a WINTER COAT as his blanket.

Callused fingers brush over his battle scars. Abbott's brow furrows as he studies them. He lurches up, climbing into the front seat. JAMS the keys into the ignition.

Murder is written in his eyes.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Dakota rests, asleep under the car. The camp is dead silent now, until the sound of the IMPALA'S ENGINE rips through the night.

She rouses, just in time to roll out from under the car. For a moment she watches as the impala dusts the skyline. Then hunger strikes--

She dashes to her bike, ready to follow Abbott into hell.

EXT. RESERVATION CASINO - NIGHT

Bike parked, Dakota stares out into the evening fog. To the west, the HEADLIGHTS of passing cars illuminate the shoddy RESERVATION CASINO.

From her spot, she can hear the rowdy tones of partiers and the like...

Hops off, chaining her bike to a pole. As a GROUP walk past, she hides her face in the shadows. Waits, then follows them.

AT THE DOOR

A BOUNCER waves the group in.

BOUNCER
I.D. sweetheart?

Dakota tries to push past, to catch up with the group, but the Bouncer moves in front of her path.

One WOMAN looks back. Her fur coat slipping off her shoulders.

CLOSE ON: MASCARA RINGS around her eyes. She stumbles, clearly drunk, into the door. She stares at Dakota, until her MALE COMPANION pulls her toward the entrance.

DAKOTA
I'm with them.

BOUNCER
Why don't you call 'em, then? Tell them to wait up.

Their backs disappear into the casino and Dakota's voice dies in her throat.

BOUNCER (CONT'D)
Why you wanna go in there? Ain't nothing for you there.

DAKOTA
I promise I won't tell.

She tries to slip by him, but REACHES out, grabbing her arm. Dakota balks at the pressure of his hand.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
I don't want any trouble. I think my friend's in there.

He draws her in close now. Dakota flinches.

BOUNCER
So what's it gonna cost?

DAKOTA
Huh?

BOUNCER
Places like this, they ain't free.

DAKOTA
I'm not staying long.

BOUNCER
You don't decide that.

She SHOVES him, trying to force him aside. Squirming to get out of his reach.

DAKOTA
Just let me through!

The Bouncer twists her arm back. He holds her there for a moment, regarding her twisted expression with a smirk--

Then, SLAMS her to the ground.

Her elbow scrapes against the gravel, lines of blood bubbling on her skin. Slowly, she moves to get up.

BOUNCER
Don't fucking come around here
again. That's how girls like you
get killed.

Stumbling away, she wipes at her bloody arm. Body shaking.

DOWN THE ROAD.

She finds herself eye to eye with a MANGLED POSSUM. Mouth wide open in horror, but its clearly long dead. Brutally beaten in the winter.

Nothing but forgotten road kill.

She stops. Eyes squinting in the distance seeing...

ABBOTT

He's huddled in his jacket, sitting in the IMPALA. Not inside the casino. No, instead he drinks from another paper bag. His eyes frown toward the building he can't move himself to enter.

In Dakota's eyes, her mind's wheels turn.

Without a look back, she wipes the blood from her mouth.

INT. MINNIE'S ROOM - MINNIE'S HOME - DAY

Dakota slips in through a crack in the window, feet carefully on the floor. Minnie's room is a hurricane-- make up and clothes scattered about.

OLD PORTRAITS on the wall. In one, there's TWO TRIBAL LEADERS-- Minnie's grandparents. Minnie's toddler moccasins tied to the edge of the frame.

Staring in the mirror, Dakota uncaps LIPSTICK. Draws lines on her cheek. Makeshift warpaint. Studies her reflection until--

TALULAH (O.S.)
Any of 'em crack?

KINGSTON (O.S.)
Nobody. They won't give up their
friends.

Peeking through a SLIT in the door--

Talulah sits at the kitchen table. Her husband, KINGSTON (40s), takes off his tribal leader's vest. Rubs his wife's shoulders.

TALULAH
The booze is killing them. Just
look at Billie. Can't hardly get
of bed. You know Dakota's been off
on her own.

KINGSTON
Can you blame Billie? We're
fighting for jobs with men who'll
be gone when it gets too cold to
live.

TALULAH
We need to stop whoever keeps
bringing that shit in here.

KINGSTON
They'll go slow. They always do.

TALULAH
Speaking of. That girl's run off
again. I'm not having the police
turn this place upside down again,
just so she can show up at four
a.m.

Talulah snatches up a cigar. Lights it, then hands it off.
Rings of smoke PLUME throughout the room.

KINGSTON
She'll come home. Ain't much else
for her.

Dakota's lips purse. She shuts the door. Her hands dig into
a PAPER BAG in the closet. Bottles RATTLE around-- Minnie's
contraband.

Underneath, she finds a WAD of rolled up cash.

A THUDDING grows, Dakota's heart crashing in her chest--

EXT. CASINO - DAY

--WHAM!

Dakota's balled fist POUNDS on the impala's window. Abbott's slow to wake. Another thud. He's up now. Rolls down the window.

ABBOTT

Yeah?

DAKOTA

The man with the funny mustache.
This his car?

Abbott blinks back sleep and withdrawal. Then a darkness crosses his face.

ABBOTT

What you looking for him for?

DAKOTA

That's my business with him.

ABBOTT

You don't want to go messing with him. Stay away from that shit.

DAKOTA

Don't have much choice.

ABBOTT

Kid, just go home.

DAKOTA

Says the man sleeping in a car.

ABBOTT

You want me to get the cops out here?

She whirls, anger building. KICKS at the impala.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

Quit it!

DAKOTA

Is that man in there?

ABBOTT

Damn, you're on one. Where the hell's your father?

DAKOTA

Your guess is as good as mine.

Abbott sighs. Slumps his head against steering wheel. He reaches over for the PAPER BAG next to him, but it falls from his grip.

The WAD of cash in front of his eyes.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

'S three hundred there. Buy you all the bottles you want.

ABBOTT

And you?

DAKOTA

I need you to walk me in there.

ABBOTT

Hell no. I'm not into that shit.

She kicks at the impala again. Hard.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

Shit-- stop!

She doesn't listen. Abbott moves out of the car, coming around to apprehend her. She darts back, hands raised.

DAKOTA

Just walk me through the door. Hell, you can turn around once I'm in.

ABBOTT

Then what?

DAKOTA

Then I take care of mine and you take care of yours. Simple.

A beat.

She tosses in the cash. It lands right next to the BOTTLE.

INT. CASINO - DAY

Abbott's hand stiff on her elbow. Dakota drags behind him, her hair ruffled over face. She wears his COAT, dwarfing her frame.

A look back to the Bouncer-- he's doesn't look her way.

Her eyes fall on the casino floor. It's a corn maze of roulette machines. She leans in, listening intently to the HIGH PITCHED JANGLE of a nearby slot machine--

FLASH TO:

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

The PAY PHONE RECEIVER tight in Dakota's hand. She mouths Minnie's name. Slot machines ROLLING through the background.

BACK TO SCENE.

Frantic, Dakota searches through the faces of the men at the machines. They're neon-lit skeletons, pushing quarters into slots.

Dakota stops. Runs her fingers over a lever, then pulls. Two BRIGHT CHERRIES appear on the wheels. The other is a BOMB.

The MAN to her left sneers. A wolf bathed in pink.

INT. CASINO - BAR - DAY

An ELK'S HEAD reflected through the bottom end of an EMPTY GLASS. Abbott sips dregs of whiskey, then regretfully sets the drink down.

Cups his hand, motioning toward the bartender for another.

 DAKOTA
Where is he?

 ABBOTT
Who?

 DAKOTA
Your friend. I don't see him.

 ABBOTT
I dunno. And he's not my friend.

 DAKOTA
Don't you sleep in his car?

 ABBOTT
I pay for gas. I owe him.

 DAKOTA
I thought you oil men made loads.

ABBOTT
Not if you spend it all...

DAKOTA
Oh.

ABBOTT
Listen, I got a degree.

DAKOTA
A degree? For what?

ABBOTT
Engineering if you can believe it.
Thought I knew numbers and all
that... Anyway, I make few cents
extra.

DAKOTA
Then what you doin' out here?

He ignores her question, reaches for his booze instead.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
You should eat something. Or it's
all gonna come back up. Least
that's what happens with my mom.

ABBOTT
What do you care?

DAKOTA
Seems like a waste.

He smiles deeply.

ABBOTT
Must hate me. And her. Being like
this.

DAKOTA
No. She wasn't born like that. He
made her this way.

ABBOTT
Who? God?

DAKOTA
No. The son of a bitch that called
himself my father.

ABBOTT
Maybe he had his reasons.

DAKOTA

He's a coward. They don't get reasons.

ABBOTT

Sometimes people get dealt more cards than they can handle. Makes 'em greedy. Makes 'em run.

DAKOTA

You don't know shit.

ABBOTT

Ok, fine. He's shit, I'm shit. You feel better now? You get a lot done being that hateful?

DAKOTA

I know I won't be drownin in my own vomit come morning.

ABBOTT

No, you'll be stuck on the reservation sellin' drinks to assholes like me.

Enough.

Dakota grabs Abbott's drink, downing it in one gulp. Spins on her heels and lets the casino swallow her whole.

INT. CASINO - DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Dakota crosses through an overpass, marked by a tattered AMERICAN FLAG hanging in the arch way. Inside, she's met with a large DANCE FLOOR.

The crowd line dances to Johnny Cash's "DON'T TAKE YOUR GUNS TO TOWN." To Dakota, they look like plaid-clad zombies.

Dakota gets lost in the sea of stars and stripes, recognizing none of the faces before her.

Then, HANDS ON HER WAIST.

Dakota stills, panic setting in. The hands belong to a COWBOY (50s), decked in bleached denim and a crinkled flannel. His crooked fingers dance along her waist, pulling her in.

He spins her out, then whirls her back in. His nose pressed against her hair. Breathing in...

A force shoves him back--

ABBOTT
Hey man, she's a kid.

COWBOY
She don't look like no kid.

Abbott pulls at Dakota shoulders.

ABBOTT
Look, Boyd ain't here. You need to go.

She whips out of his hold. Stares Abbott down.

DAKOTA
Get off of me, I don't know you.

ABBOTT
C'mon. I didn't mean all of that back there--

Dakota's fist hits HARD against Abbott's chest. He stumbles, careening toward the floor in a heap of drunken stupor.

DAKOTA
Go home. You have your money. I don't need you.

The Cowboy takes her hand.

Dakota leaves Abbott ailing on the dance floor.

INT. CASINO - TABLES - DAY

Onto the main floor, MEN gather at the roulette tables, with half-drunk beer by their side. The Cowboy beelines through the crowd, heading toward the STAIRS.

Dakota slows, eyes on a TABLE OF MEN, laughing at some private joke as a DISGRUNTLED COUPLE stalks off from their table.

No roulette or dealer here, just a gathering of weary faces.

HARD HATS collect by their feet. Shoes stained with the black marks of oil. Then she spots him: DANE, the younger boy driving the impala.

Her eyes ALIGHT with an idea.

Three overturned cups line the table. Dakota approaches...

DAKOTA
What game's that?

A gruff man, TOBY (30s), speaks up. As the two talk, Dane squints up at Dakota, trying to place her face.

TOBY
Take a seat, sweetheart. I'll learn you.

COWBOY
She don't wanna play--

DAKOTA
--Just one round?

He sighs, letting her go.

COWBOY
I'll be at the bar. Don't go too far.

A stroke of her hair. Dakota stiffens, but lets him touch her--

TOBY
C'mon, let the girl play.

The men shuffle, making space for Dakota as the Cowboy drifts away.

TOBY (CONT'D)
Ever heard of the shell game before?

DAKOTA
No.

TOBY
Earl here can show you how. Go on and put some honey in the pot.

EARL, (40s, African-American) slumped over in his seat, fishes out a crumpled twenty. Toby too, places down a bill.

TOBY (CONT'D)
Now this is my version. I got three cups. All Earl's gotta do is pick the cup without the ball.

DAKOTA
Easy enough.

TOBY
Exactly. I got more to lose than
you do.

Toby works fast, disappearing the ball underneath the cups.
Hands swirling across the dirty table. A mesmerizing
dance...

 TOBY (CONT'D)
All right, what's your guess Earl?

 EARL
Toby...

 TOBY
Don't be sore, Earl. It's all fun.
Just pick one.

The older man leans forward slowly, appearing to think hard.
A crooked finger points--

 EARL
On the left.

Toby reveals the cup to have NOTHING underneath.

 TOBY
Bingo!

Dakota scrunches her face, unimpressed.

 TOBY (CONT'D)
See, it's low stakes.

 DAKOTA
You lost it all.

 TOBY
It's a risk. Anything in life is a
risk, hun.

Dakota starts to nod, but then looks up at Toby.

 DAKOTA
I wanna put somethin' in the pot
too.

 TOBY
Pick your poison.

 DAKOTA
Boyd. Know him?

Toby barks with laughter. Dane shifts uncomfortably. He clearly remembers her now.

TOBY

Little wolf girl wants to mess
around with Boyd? Damn.

DAKOTA

Do you know where he is, or not?

TOBY

Sure, I know where he is.

She tosses up her remaining ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL.

DAKOTA

I win, you tell me where to find
him.

TOBY

And me?

DAKOTA

The money--

TOBY

--Boyd's spitfire. I gotta have
more if I'm gonna go about getting
burned.

She thinks. Her eyes trail to the SIOUX WAITRESS (late 20s) weaving in between tables.

Her shirt tied half way up her stomach and her skirt hiked almost up to her navel. Makeup smudged from the humid casino.

The two lock eyes...

DAKOTA

You name it.

TOBY

We have ourselves a game!

The men around them chuckle, watching Toby move around the cups. Simple enough, then he picks up the pace.

Stops, leaning back.

Dakota's turn.

DAKOTA

The middle.

TOBY

Sure?

She says nothing. Toby slowly lifts the cup.

A SILVER BALL rests underneath. A chorus of "aws" echo around the table.

TOBY (CONT'D)

I'm a fan of your fight, hun. I'll give you that.

DAKOTA

But there's two.

TOBY

Huh?

DAKOTA

The balls, there's two of 'em.

TOBY

What the fuck are you on about?

She knocks the cup on the left over. Sure enough, there's ANOTHER BALL.

DAKOTA

You're a damn cheat.

Silence descends.

Toby surveys the evidence of his con, then looks up at Dakota, unsmiling.

TOBY

Wanna run that by me again?

DAKOTA

You're a damn cheat, and you know it. Take me to Boyd.

DANE

Toby maybe we should--

Toby raises a hand, cutting him off. He shakes his head, aghast at Dakota's gall. Then nods.

TOBY

Ok, ok. You win, hun. You win. What do you say boys, we wanna take her to Boyd?

INT. CASINO - ROOM - DAY

A wooden door CREAKS open, revealing a cramped bedroom on the upstairs floor.

Sun refracts through a shattered window. Illuminates the dust mites on dismissed BLUE MOON BOTTLES.

Toby takes charge, going for the bed. Removes his work boots, stretching out his toes.

Dakota hangs at the door.

TOBY

Don't be shy. Close the door.
I'll text Boyd and let him know
you're looking for him.

She obliges.

TOBY (CONT'D)

You want a beer?

DAKOTA

No thanks.

TOBY

Jesus, hun. You won fair and
square. Quit hugging the wall like
I'm gonna pounce on you.

DAKOTA

How long will it take him to get
here?

TOBY

If he's at the camp, not too long.
A beer might make the time go
faster...

DAKOTA

Ok, sure.

He hops up, clearly pleased with himself. Dakota moves to the window.

DOWN BELOW

MEN descend from a nearby CARGO SHIP, moored at the port. They rub their hands for warmth, clearly under-dressed for the North Dakota winter.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Where do you all come from?

TOBY (O.S.)

Who?

DAKOTA

You oil men.

Toby's FAINT LAUGH echoes from the other room.

TOBY (O.S.)

All over.

DAKOTA

It's no good here anymore.

Her eyes now fall on the FROST-TIPPED TREES. Through the crack in the window, the branches look ten times longer.

TOBY (O.S.)

'Course it is. Lost my janitor's job three months ago out in Texas. And it's too damn hot to be working at a damn gas station. But they always need hands up here.

The POP as two caps come off beers O.S.--

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

And the women are prettier, too.

Dakota turns, moving about the room. Picks up Toby's LICENSE. Texas, just like he said.

A CONDOM falls out onto the floor. Dakota hastily stuffs it back in, then backs away.

Her eyes catch a MIRROR hanging on the wall. In the edge of the frame, she can see Toby in the mini-bar area.

TOBY

Has already downed one beer. The other greets his lips.

IN THE ROOM

Dakota sits on the bed. Fiddles with her fingers.

DAKOTA

Boyd say he was comin'?

TOBY (O.S.)

Y-yeah. On his way over from the camp.

She swings her legs.

TOBY (O.S.)

Huh?

DAKOTA

I said I'm hungry. You have any food in there?

TOBY (O.S.)

Yeah, let me look.

She gains another minute. Moves away from the window, pads to the door.

Hand on the doorknob.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Thought you was hungry?

Her hand falls away. She turns. Her BACKPACK scrapes against the door-- a subtle reminder.

DAKOTA

Where is she?

TOBY

Who?

DAKOTA

You know who. The other girl like me. What'd you do with her?

TOBY

You're talking out the side of your mouth.

DAKOTA

That's her jacket on the floor. She was here. Just tell me where she is and I'll leave.

He leans in. Both hands on either side of the door. Dakota trapped in between.

TOBY

I really do like you. You're butch. Meaner than the other ones. Fuck, it gets so cold up here...

Go time.

Dakota CLAWS at his face, sending Toby reeling backwards. Three RED GASHES tattoo his cheek.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Shit! Are you some kind of idiot?
You think the world's gonna come
and bow to you because you want it
to?

DAKOTA

Where is she?

He grabs her by the chin.

TOBY

I could do whatever I want with
you.

What a mistake.

Dakota knees him in the groin, then SMASHES a wild elbow in
his face for good measure.

Clambers for her backpack, reaching out for her gun--

Toby struggles from the floor, his hands on her throat. The
world TIPS SIDEWAYS. Dakota loses track of the gun. Just
sees Toby's reddened face above her.

A SHADOW falls over them both. Someone's there--

THUD!

BLACK.

INT. IMPALA - NIGHT

Black spots dissipate, giving way to the NIGHT SKY.
Blinking, Dakota turns, realizing she's in the backseat of
the impala.

Abbott's jacket and a SCARF are laid out over her.

In the front seat, Abbott cradles his head. From the back
she can hear him trying to quiet what sound like SOBS.
Slowly, she leans up, seeing a PHOTO on the seat-rest.

It's a cheap Sears portrait of A WOMAN AND AN INFANT.

DAKOTA

Why don't you just go back to them?

ABBOTT

'S not that simple.

DAKOTA

Bullshit.

Abbott shakes his head.

ABBOTT

Sometimes I imagine my girl's kind of like you. Tough.

DAKOTA

Don't have to imagine, you know that?

ABBOTT

You know how long I've been out here? Eight months. Eight damn months. Got fired back home because I couldn't make it through the day without a drink.

DAKOTA

We don't have to--

ABBOTT

--I need to get it out now. It's gotta be out there... I left in the middle of the night. Left a note, though. Thought I'd be here for three weeks. Make enough to get us back up on our feet.

DAKOTA

But he kept you here.

ABBOTT

He kept me here. Cause I couldn't get myself together.

DAKOTA

He doesn't own you. Nobody does, really.

ABBOTT

You've seen him! He's a wild animal since his accident. Half a man, so he acts like one.

DAKOTA

So what?

ABBOTT

D'you know what could've happened in there? What Boyd's man would've done to you?

DAKOTA

I know.

ABBOTT

That's why. That's why I can't just go back. I lost all our damn money on... And now, Boyd's holdin' it over me. He won't let me go until I give it all back.

Dakota slumps back, shaking her head.

DAKOTA

It's all the same.

ABBOTT

What?

She doesn't answer, instead digs around the backseat.

DAKOTA

Where's my bag?

ABBOTT

You mean the one with the gun in it? You're not going back in there with that thing.

DAKOTA

Ok, you saved my ass. But you don't make rules for me, you don't even know me.

ABBOTT

I know you're a kid. I know that I'd want someone to keep my girl from going in there.

She reaches over the passenger seat, but Abbott pulls her bag into his lap.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

I mean it! Shit, you're going to get yourself killed!

DAKOTA

So what?

ABBOTT

So what, Jesus-- do you hear yourself, kid?

DAKOTA

He has her! I don't got much, but
I have Minnie, and...

She can't finish. Her chest heaves, the weight of her goal
crashing down on her.

ABBOTT

If you want to cry, I won't get
mad.

DAKOTA

Screw you!

He dashes at his own tears. Folds the picture into his
wallet.

ABBOTT

What? You're allowed to do that,
you know? You're allowed to care.

She breathes in. Steady now.

DAKOTA

I got nothin'. Nothin' because of
men like you.

ABBOTT

Like me?

DAKOTA

Men who break us. Broke my mom,
now I gotta keep after her.

He's distracted, mulling over her words. Doesn't catch
Dakota grabbing at the backpack until it's too late.

She pushes--

OUT OF THE CAR

Slugs her backpack over one shoulder.

ABBOTT

Can't get back in there without me!

DAKOTA

I'll figure it out.

ABBOTT

They're gonna find that guy I did
in. Boyd's guys or the police.
Soon. Hell, Boyd's not even in
there.

DAKOTA
I'll make him come.

Abbott shakes his head, in awe. Who is this kid?

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
You got nothin' now too. He runs
this place. People spend money
like it's candy in there. You
could get your money back.

ABBOTT
It don't work like that.

DAKOTA
Aren't you smart? Told me you had
a degree. Bet you can count--

ABBOTT
--Even if I could do what you're
saying, Boyd's not gonna let me
walk out of there with his money.

DAKOTA
Exactly.

ABBOTT
You don't know what you're saying.

DAKOTA
Don't you want to go home? Cause I
do.

She waits, watching him think it over. Then--

ABBOTT
I hold the gun.

INT. CASINO - CARD TABLES - NIGHT

A DEALER'S HAND waves a FLUSH deck of cards across a moldy
green table. Dane and Earl linger by the table, eyes
searching for Toby.

The Sioux Waitress leans over an OLDER MAN, dropping off a
double whiskey. He whispers in her ear. Slips a TWENTY into
her pocket. Fingers lingering.

Dakota and Abbott stride in, hanging back out of Earl's
sight.

DAKOTA
I saw her, before. With a couple
of oil guys. I think she knows
what's going on.

 ABBOTT
Ok. See what you can find out,
while I keep these guys busy. Lay-
low.

 DAKOTA
What for?

 ABBOTT
They know you went up there with
Toby. They'll be looking for you.
Or him.

Her eyes fall on her backpack on his back.

 DAKOTA
What are you going to do?

 ABBOTT
I'm gonna go get mine.

 DAKOTA
Don't lose too fast.

 ABBOTT
Don't get killed too fast.

AT THE TABLE

Abbott claps his hands on the backs of Earl and Dane.

 ABBOTT (CONT'D)
Just in time, huh?

 EARL
Turn back the way you came, boy.

 ABBOTT
Didn't Boyd tell you? I'm doin'
double or nothing tonight.

 EARL
Boyd's ok with you playing?

 ABBOTT
Playing? Shit Earl, I'm takin' it
all.

DANE

You're drunk, Ab. Go back to the camp.

Abbott pulls Dane in close by the collar. The other men at the table half-rise, waiting for an explosion.

ABBOTT

Hope you got some chips for me, kid. I've never felt better.

INT. CASINO - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dakota hides in the shadows, watching as the Waitress slides out from a set of DOUBLE DOORS. The underside bathed in BLUE from a "DO NOT ENTER" sign hanging overhead.

The brutal fluorescents only worsen the waitress' smudged face.

Dakota waits a moment, then moves to try the handle.

Doesn't budge.

Resigned, she pulls her hood over her head. Squares her shoulders and follows after the older girl.

INT. CASINO - TABLES - NIGHT

The DEALER doles out different cards to the four men seated at the table. Dane bounces his leg nervously.

ABBOTT

Quit it, you're shaking the table.

He takes a long look at the money Dakota gave him. Reluctantly leafs over two ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. The Dealer shakes his head, but pushes over a STACK OF CHIPS.

DANE

Boyd won't like this. You losing money.

ABBOTT

You ain't even old enough to gamble, Dane. And, Boyd don't have to like it.

Abbott plants the ENTIRE STACK into the better's circle. Eyes on the Dealer's hand: An Ace.

DANE
That an eleven here?

The men look around.

ABBOTT
Hell, why not?

Earl's turn. He studies his three of hearts and then taps the table--

EARL
Hit me.

A TEN of clubs appears.

Taps once more.

It's an eight of hearts.

Earl sucks his teeth. A BUST. The Dealer swipes his chips.

Abbott is slow to move. A grimace tight on his face, as he realizes what he could lose in one stinking hand.

Slaps down his first card:

A JACK.

ABBOTT
Fuck.

EARL
Jesus.

DEALER
You can go again...

ABBOTT
Yeah, sure.

Can't wait any longer. Abbott signals for another hit. The Dealer doles out the second card:

It's an ACE.

DEALER
A push. Looks like luck's on your side.

DANE
We should go--

ABBOTT

--Naw, naw. We're just getting started.

Dane's turn. He bites his fingernails, unsure.

DANE

Shit, I surrender.

DEALER

All right fellas, you know the drill. I gotta check...

He turns his second card over--

IT'S A KING! He's hit a natural twenty one. No luck for the kid tonight.

DANE

No, no. Shit.

DEALER

Can't surrender on blackjack, kid. House rules. Pass up the chips.

EARL

Damnit, Dane.

Dane passes in his chips, nearly on the brink of tears.

Earl, steaming, slinks back in his chair. It's impossible not to notice the way he tucks his hand into his coat pocket.

Tinkering with something that nobody can see.

INT. CASINO - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bulky, steel appliances caked with dust and grime. The waitress' tired frame reflects off the muddied surfaces.

She leans over a prep counter, digging in her pockets as a LINE COOK walks by.

LINE COOK

Jean, I think there's some noise goin' on at the tables.

JEAN

Can I get a break? For like, one minute 'Los?

LINE COOK

Yeah, yeah. My bad. Just thought
you wanted to know.

He stalks off.

Alone, Jean unearths WADS of dollar bills and other notes.
Stacks them in neat rows, by denotation.

Plops down a bag of white powder, sighing. After a beat, she
itches for a cigarette. Tries to light it, but her lighter
falls from her grip.

JEAN

C'mon.

It's lost under the stove. For a moment she just stares.
The cigarette hanging limp between her lips. Then, she
reaches for a piece of paper.

Turns the stove knob and lights the cigarette. It's a
success.

DAKOTA (O.S.)

You're Yennie's girl, yeah?

Jean doesn't startle, but does take a moment to turn.

JEAN

Yeah. Billie's your mom, huh?

DAKOTA

Yeah.

JEAN

She tried to get with him once.
Yennie.

DAKOTA

Sounds like mom.

JEAN

Aren't you still in school?

DAKOTA

Uh huh. My last year.

JEAN

You shouldn't--

Her words dissipate, noticing what Dakota's doing. The bag
of coke IS OPEN. Its contents a lethal powder on the
counter.

Dakota spells out **H E L P** in the drug.

JEAN (CONT'D)

You lost your damn mind? Fuck, do you have any idea what that is?

DAKOTA

Yeah, I got an idea.

JEAN

You need to go. Before I lay a hand on your skinny ass.

DAKOTA

Who runs this place?

JEAN

Did you hear me?

Dakota brushes some of the white onto the floor--

Jean rolls her eyes, conceding.

JEAN (CONT'D)

It's mine. Me and Yennie's. He bought it from his dad years ago before he croaked. Now leave.

DAKOTA

Yennie know that he's got kidnapers running around here?

To this, Jean says nothing.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Heard of a man named Boyd?

Jean fists Dakota's shirt, pulling her close.

JEAN

Get out of here. Now.

Two hands on Jean's chest, Dakota puts her whole force into pushing Jean down.

BAM!

She hits the floor in a cascade of pots and pans. Her bewildered eyes try to focus on Dakota. Fear settling in. She scrambles to her legs, Dakota stalking slowly behind her.

INT. CASINO - TABLES - NIGHT

A distinct BUZZING can be heard from Earl's pocket. He glances toward Abbott who gives him a smile. Even the Dealer keeps his eyes trained on the men.

ABBOTT
Gonna answer that?

EARL
Wrong number.

Abbott nods, clearly not buying it.

DANE
Shouldn't we, uh, get going? Early start tomorrow.

Earl half-rises, but Abbott slams a hand on the table.

ABBOTT
One more round.

EARL
The kid's right. I need to sleep.

For a moment, Abbott stares at the WRINKLED OUTLINE behind Earl's shirt. Earl's packing a weapon underneath the thrifted denim.

ABBOTT
I know you called Boyd, Earl.
Might as well have fun while we wait.

Earl laughs, sitting back down.

EARL
Some men try so hard to die.

Earl gestures to the Dealer. The man starts another hand.

Earl hits, getting an ELEVEN. Holds. Abbott stares hard at the pair of EIGHTS in front of him.

The Dealer raises a brow at Abbott.

ABBOTT
Let's split 'em.

Dane groans.

INT. CASINO - KITCHEN

Jean grips the counter hard, pulling herself up. She whirls on Dakota, trying to slap her. Her hand falls through the air-- the younger girl is too fast.

DAKOTA

I don't wanna hurt you. Just tell me where I can find him.

Jean's had it. She turns, trying to run out of the kitchen. On her right, Dakota sees a KNIFE BLOCK. Grabs the meat knife.

In her free hand she pulls on Jean's skirt, yanking her back.

Then, SHINK!

She sticks the knife through Jean's skirt into a bulky bag on a cart. Jean's stuck with nowhere to go.

JEAN

What the fuck do you want? Money? I can give you the cash register code.

DAKOTA

He brings girls in here. I've seen them comin' in, can barely walk.

JEAN

You're so stupid.

DAKOTA

Maybe. But I'm not a crook.

JEAN

God, this isn't some fairytale. I got a business to run.

DAKOTA

You're gonna do it without my friend.

Dakota twists the knife deeper. Jean, desperate, kicks out, her foot aiming toward Dakota's chest--

INT. CASINO - TABLES

--Abbott kicks his legs back, lifting his chair. Antsy.

Earl pushes his chips in, folding. A glance over to Abbott--

He's HUNCHES over the blackjack table, a sheen of sweat coats his forehead. His whole frame seems to shake.

EARL

I remember when you first came up here. Man you had me laughing, 'member that?

Abbott struggles to nod. Withdrawal settling in.

ABBOTT

Wearing a windbreaker. I damn near died of frostbite that first week.

EARL

Good man, Boyd. He bought you them long johns before you got paid.

ABBOTT

Yeah...

The cards start to BLUR in front of him. He's ailing bad for alcohol. A lick of his lips, just to rid himself of the taste.

EARL

He had to buy you a new pair didn't he?

ABBOTT

Sure.

EARL

Can't remember what for...

DANE

He pissed in 'em.

Earl rolls his eyes at the young man ruining his speech.

EARL

Right. Pissed right through 'em. Ate up all of Father Brennan's whiskey too.

Dane makes a sign of the cross over himself, mockingly.

DANE

Never seen a preacher man swear like that before.

ABBOTT

It wasn't like that.

EARL

Sure it was. You're a mess, Ab.
No degree or self-righteousness is
gonna change that. You just gon'
keep on pissing yourself.

Abbott closes his eyes. For a moment it feels like Earl's
words have crashed his circuits.

Until his FINGERS start tapping on the underside of the
table.

His mouth moves silently...

HE'S COUNTING THE CARDS.

Earl stares at him quizzically, not quite realizing--

EARL (CONT'D)

Abbott?

Abbott waves his hand over the table.

ABBOTT

--Stand. I'm gonna stand.

EARL

No way, wait--

Too late. The Dealer flips over his cards. The Dealer's
BUSTED. He doubles ABBOTT's chips, handing them over.

Abbott can't help it-- he breaks into a SMILE.

Off in the distance, Earl's phone BUZZES once more...

INT. CASINO - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dakota catches Jean's leg, TWISTING it HARD.

Jean lets out a SCREAM. Dakota slams her hand over Jean's
mouth, locking back the sound. For a moment she stares at
the BLOOD behind the skin of her knuckles.

DAKOTA

I don't want to hurt you.

She waits. Jean seems calmer.

JEAN

You think this is what I wanna do?
Hike my skirt up to my ass every
night?

DAKOTA
Nobody's forcing you!

JEAN
Yeah? Where else you want me to
work?

DAKOTA
Anywhere.

Dakota doesn't notice Jean's LEG slowly inching out, HITCHING
AROUND THE SHELF'S EDGE.

JEAN
Sure. Listen little girl, when you
grow up and can't leave the rez,
the world's gonna look a whole lot
more flat to you. Maybe then
you'll get a clue.

DAKOTA
What about Boyd? And the girls?
Is it flat for them too?

Jean can't meet her eyes now.

JEAN
Most of them want to go with him.
Never had a man like that look at
them like that.

DAKOTA
Don't mean nothing if they can't
come back.

WHAM!

Jean pulls her ankle around the shelf and it topples over her
and COLLIDES into Dakota. BOWLS and CUTLERY clatter to the
floor.

Underneath the rubble of dishes, Jean tries to twist her
skirt loose.

Not fast enough!

Dakota reaches the toppled-over shelf. Stands and presses
her foot down HARD against the metal, blocking her.

JEAN
Stop! Jesus, you're breaking my
arm!

This only makes Dakota press down harder.

JEAN (CONT'D)
I'll tell you, damnit! Just stop!

A dull CRUNCH echoes from underneath.

Jean's arm flails limply against the linoleum. She MOANS in pain, desperately trying to twist away.

DAKOTA
How do I get back there?

JEAN
I got the k-keys.

DAKOTA
And that's Boyd's set up?

JEAN
Yeah. He brings the girls in and the men... they'll... They'll pay for 'em. Gotta use the casino to hide his money.

Jean catches Dakota's eye.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Please. I didn't mean no harm. I just work here. Ok?

Inching... then Dakota lifts her foot OFF Jean.

DAKOTA
Keys.

Jean's fingers scramble and then she pushes the keys toward Dakota.

JEAN
You gonna help me up? I think my damn elbow's shattered.

The DOUBLE DOORS SWING in response.

Dakota's already long gone.

INT. CASINO - FLOOR

A MONEY COUNTER spits bills through its teeth. Abbott looks on in nervous awe. Earl's not too far away, twisting a toothpick through his teeth.

The CASHIER counts the money, then stuffs it into a white envelope. Hands it over to Abbott's greedy hands.

He smirks in disbelieving wonder. *Was it really that simple?*
Whirls around, grinning to Earl.

ABBOTT

I'm going to take a piss.

EARL

(laughing)

How far do you think you'll get?
To the interstate? Maybe, if you
move fast.

ABBOTT

You can stand by the door if you
want. Hell, you can hold it all if
that'll give piece of mind. I
won't run off with it without
talking to Boyd.

Earl makes a sweeping gesture, letting him pass.

EARL

I'll be here. And Boyd's comin'.
Be sure of it.

At the same moment, DAKOTA emerges from the hall. Her face
visibly SHAKEN. BLOOD smeared like ketchup on her pant leg.

Abbott fast walks to her, staying a couple feet behind.

ABBOTT

There's a storage closet up on the
left. You're going to go into it.
Don't look behind you when you do.

With a burst of energy, they slide into the--

INT. CASINO - STORAGE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Darkness. Then, a SINGLE BULB flowers light around them.
Dakota stumbles backwards, clattering against forgotten mops
and buckets.

Her chest HEAVES but there's no sound from her lips.

ABBOTT

What the hell happened?

Dakota smashes her face into her hands.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

Hey kid, did they touch you--

DAKOTA
I hurt somebody. Bad.

ABBOTT
Oh, but you're all right?

DAKOTA
I think. I think I broke her
elbow.

ABBOTT
Shit.

Down the hall a door SLAMS.

The two quiet, waiting. Dakota finally meets Abbott's eyes.

DAKOTA
I got the keys. To get to Boyd...
And whatever he does back there.

She holds them out, dangling over the space between them. As they twirl, tears spark at her tear ducts.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
It's not the same. Acting tough
and being tough. I thought it was,
but it's not.

He takes the keys, gives her a sad smile.

ABBOTT
It is if you're being tough for the
right reasons.

DAKOTA
I'm just like them. It don't
matter if I'm angry. I'll still do
the same they do...

She looks at her hands, also marked with the grime of her battle with Jean.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
I'm going hurt more of 'em aren't
I?

He tips up her face.

ABBOTT
They won't cry for you. Or your
friend. Hold onto to that.

JEAN

Yennie? Where the fuck are you?
You remember that psycho Billie
Hill? Her fucking daughter's here.
Who cares? I do, damnit-- She
broke my goddamn arm!

A pause. There's CACKLES on the other end of the phone.

Jean reaches the HALLWAY, notices a door oddly AJAR.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Don't laugh! She's in here looking
for Boyd. Took my keys.

Inches closer to the door...

JEAN (CONT'D)

What the hell was I supposed to do?
Shoot her? You don't trust me with
a gun.

The door's wide open now.

IN THE ROOM

For a moment, everything seems normal. Jean's about to back
out until she notes the small RED DOTS on the floor. She
sucks her teeth, lowering her eyes--

As she does, she comes eye-level to TOBY. Unconscious and
bloodied.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Goddamn it. Shit. Yennie? I'll
call you-- I'll you back.

She ends the call with Yennie. Dials 9-1-1.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Hello? Yeah, I need you to come
here. There's this crazy kid
here... well I think she's gone and
killed someone.

She nudges Toby's head with her toe, revealing: His NECK
too, purpled from the force of Abbott's deathly grip.

INT. CASINO - LOUNGE - LATER

The KEYS swing from the set of double doors. Pushing
through, the pair are met with a deserted HALLWAY. The
overhead lights polka-dot the floor with RED.

One blinks as Dakota passes underneath.

Down the hall, the faint noise of LAUGHTER, as if a crowd was gathered. Up ahead, however, Dakota's attention's drawn to a certain area--

A RED CURTAIN blocks off an alcove. Abbott nods to her agreement.

Like a ghost, Dakota tips back the curtain. Behind the veil a OLDER MAN lounges against a tacky pleather booth. Legs spread and the button of his suit pants popped open.

His gaze LOCKED on the TEENAGE GIRL strumming a guitar in front of him. She stutters in her song, seeing Dakota.

OLDER MAN
Don't stop playing.

Obliging the teen goes back to playing. Dakota sheds her coat, entering the alcove. Abbott DARTS back behind the curtain, unable to stop her.

DAKOTA
This seems lonely.

OLDER MAN
Who the fuck are you? This is a private room.

DAKOTA
I thought men here were interested in deals. Two for the price of one and all that?

He considers while Dakota draws near. Her hands rest on the back of the couch.

OLDER MAN
You one of Boyd's girls, right?

DAKOTA
Of course. I ain't stupid.

He stares HARD.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Well you gonna ask me to sit or what?

OLDER MAN
Make yourself comfortable.

And so she does. Sits on the couch, feet tucked beneath her. Hair draped over the back of the couch. She sets her BACKPACK in-between them.

The GENTLE STRUM of the guitar fills the room once more.

OUTSIDE

Abbott steels himself, catching his breath. Balls up his jacket from the floor. Closes his eyes.

A BRIEF FLASH TO--

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A WOMAN (30s) smiles at him. There's an INFANT in between them. On the other side of the bed, Abbott plucks a cord on a guitar.

BACK TO SCENE

Abbott lets go of the breath he's holding in. Readies.

ON THE COUCH

DAKOTA

I like this song. Reminds me of my old man.

OLDER MAN

Yeah? What was he like?

DAKOTA

A bit like you.

OLDER MAN

I'm not that old--

DAKOTA

--No, no. Not in looks. In the way he was.

OLDER MAN

And what way was that?

DAKOTA

Cold, hard. That's what most people would say.

OLDER MAN

But not you?

DAKOTA

Nah. Not me.

He reaches out his arm, resting it on the back of the couch. His fingers inches from her tangle of hair.

Abbott slides back the curtain once again, waiting...

OLDER MAN

How come?

DAKOTA

Well when my ma cheated on him with some oil rigger, I thought he'd be that. Like stone. But he turned out to just be desperate. Kinda like you.

OLDER MAN

Bitch!

He reaches over to slap her--

EVERYTHING EXPLODES!

Dakota grabs her bag, whacking him over the face with it.

ABBOTT

Damnit, Dakota!

No stopping her now.

As the older man struggles to sit up, she pulls out her SHOTGUN. Readies the barrel and AIMS. The cold metal right on his throat.

OLDER MAN

You can...

He CHOKES from the pressure of Dakota's gun.

ABBOTT

Ease up, Tex.

Reluctantly she moves back the gun's muzzle.

OLDER MAN

I'll give you money if that's what you want.

Abbott stoops down to eye level, examining the man.

Eyes on the RING sloped around the man's left hand.

ABBOTT

Shoot, you're married? Damn, some men just don't get it.

It's the teenager's turn to speak up--

TEENAGE GIRL

No, they get it. They just don't care.

DAKOTA

Get up. You're gonna take me to where they buy the girls. Real slow, now. I got a lot of bullets.

On his knees, hands spread out. But he's stupid as stupid comes, so he POUNCES at Dakota--

Abbott's there!

His fist CONNECTS with the man's, sending him staggering.

Not satisfied.

Abbott's fist crosses once more, drawing BLOOD.

He digs a knee in the man's back, pulling his arm back. Almost TORN from its socket.

TEENAGE GIRL

Y'all two are insane.

ABBOTT

I think the girl asked you nicely. Now you gonna take us to these men?

He nods, nose PUSHED deep into the carpet.

INT. CASINO - BACKROOM - NIGHT

A BEARSKIN rug hugs the floor, the bear's mouth SNARLING in death. Cigar smoke clouds the room. A GUARD (50s) stands at the door watching, ACE (40s, a bulwark with even stronger facial hair) blow smoke rings.

The indelible mark of an OIL BURN snakes around his arm.

He laughs at the sight of the Older Man. His face a broken eggplant from his beating.

ACE

Damn. Didn't know you were interested in that shit.

OLDER MAN

Shut up, it's not like that. Got a new guy here.

Ace pulls his feet off the desk. Eyebrows higher than the sun.

ACE

Son of a-- Didn't I tell you to keep your mouth shut about this?

The man HUFFS. Looks back at Abbott, who simply shrugs.

OLDER MAN

Relax, I'm not stupid. He brought goods with him. 'Sides, he already knew about us.

ACE

Let me see.

Dakota shuffles forward. Says nothing. Ace puts out his cigar, the ashes flickering as they die. Blows one last puff of smoke at Dakota.

ACE (CONT'D)

You Sioux?

She nods.

ACE (CONT'D)

What she doesn't speak English?

ABBOTT

She, uh, she's not too smart. But it's good cause she don't talk much.

ACE

I see you before?

Her eyes belie nothing. But her mind's eye

FLASHES TO--

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Dakota stopped on the side of the road, perched tall on her bike. Her shotgun strapped on her back. Eyes searching for Minnie.

OIL RIGGERS stare at her. ACE is in the crowd. The only one that catches her eye.

She glares MURDER back.

BACK TO SCENE

Ace circles at her lack of response. Surveying her very being. He snaps at his Guard.

ACE
Get her to Gem. See about cleaning
her up. I gotta talk to our
friend here.

The Guard grips Dakota's elbow. She throws a look back to Abbott: Not scared, but assured. And then she's gone.

Ace sits back on his desk.

ACE (CONT'D)
She clean?

ABBOTT
What?

ACE
Clean, she a virgin? Not a hand-me-
down.

ABBOTT
No, just a girl I picked up. I
work on the rigs out in the Bakken
and she was walking by. Thought
I'd give her a ride.

ACE
Charitable.

ABBOTT
They don't got much out there.
Figure this place could at least
give her a good meal.

ACE
That and a whole lot more.

Ace reaches back for his discarded cigar. Abbott scurries, hastily pulling out his own lighter.

ACE (CONT'D)
Thanks.

ABBOTT
I heard that, uh, Boyd heads this
up.

ACE
Yeah, you know Boyd?

ABBOTT
We work on the same rig. Saw him
break his foot.

ACE
What you say your name was?

ABBOTT
I--

The Guard slips back into the room. Stoic face.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)
--I didn't.

ACE
Hey Roddy why don't you turn the
T.V.s on?

Abbott fidgets.

ABBOTT
So, how much is she gonna get me?

ACE
Don't you worry, I got your money
right here.

On the SAFE behind him. It's a shoddy safe, no doubt gone
through years of work. Ace leans in, tuning the knob.
Reveals the MICHIGAN TATTOO on his forearm.

ABBOTT
You another transplant?

ACE
Oh yeah. Came down from the Great
Lakes.

ABBOTT
How long you been at it?

ACE
Years. Comin' up on my ten year in
three months. Down in Fort
Berthold.

ABBOTT
Damn.

ACE

That's how I met Boyd. See, he got it. How a man could get bored doing the same old, same old every week.

ABBOTT

I'm tired of smellin' like oil... My wife hates the smell. Never wanted to get near me when I worked on the car.

ACE

I'll bet. Hey Roddy, how's the show look?

Behind them a wall of FIVE SCREENS BLINK TO LIFE. Old T.V.s project scenes from the casino floor--

They're SECURITY CAMERAS!

Abbott doesn't dare move. The safe door POPS open. Ace rummages around.

ACE (CONT'D)

Earl's been really coming into his own out here. It was hard, though. He's a church-going man, see. Always with Father Brennan talking about confession and what not. But then Earl came to realize that he could make a good buck or two more if he helped Boyd. Helped me, even. It's better than breaking your back.

ABBOTT

I don't want trouble.

ACE

But you're gonna get it.

No thinking. Abbott darts off, but Roddy, the guard, SLAMS him back, SMASHING THE T.V.s. Shards of glass make a crude kaleidoscope on the floor.

From the vault, Ace unearths not money, but a PISTOL.

ACE (CONT'D)

What, was this your plan? Come back here and find out what you can so you can rat out Boyd?

ABBOTT

No--

He whips the BACK of the pistol against Abbott's mouth.
That'll shut him up.

ACE

You think you're the first person
to try this shit? That it could
all tumble if you just asked hard
enough?

He cocks the pistol.

ACE (CONT'D)

Let him go, Roddy.

The guard obliges. Bewildered, Abbott's released to carry
his own weight. He haphazardly starts toward Ace, but Ace--

SHOOTS!

It's through and through. Right on Abbott's bicep. He lets
out a strangled CRY, dropping to his knees. The edges of his
vision, blackening.

Eyelids drooping...

ACE (CONT'D)

Aw don't go yet, we're just getting
started.

INT. CASINO - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

LIGHTS FLICKER TO LIFE, illuminating the black.

A wall of mirrors stare back at Dakota, like a warped fun
house. Fluorescent bulbs frame the glass, illuminating the
harsh image reflected back.

GEMMA (30s, bubble gum pink hair) bends down with large
MAKEUP BRUSH. She's one of the only white women in the
casino and she wears that fact with pride.

Currently, she's scattering a bit of foundation underneath
Dakota's eyelids.

GEMMA

Gotta take care of these bags under
your eyes. Makes you look tired.

ON HER FACE, dull and depressed underneath the light bulbs.

DAKOTA
 Maybe... Maybe I am.

 GEMMA
 Oh I know, sweetie. But guess
 what?

 DAKOTA
 Huh?

 GEMMA
 It's not much work. Being back
 here with the fellas. Sometimes
 they'll even let you pick the
 music.

Dakota's gaze wanders, catching sight of Gemma's OVERSIZED
 MAKEUP BAG. Clearly too much product for one person.

 DAKOTA
 You do this for all the girls that
 come round?

 GEMMA
 Mhmm. I used to, well let's just
 say I used to date the guy who runs
 this whole thing. But we moved on.
 It was mutual. He brought me on,
 which was nice.

 DAKOTA
 He pay you?

 GEMMA
 Of course hunny, we all get paid.

 DAKOTA
 So he's just keeping you quiet?

Gemma jerks back, unsure she heard Dakota right.

 GEMMA
 Excuse me?

 DAKOTA
 It's hush money. So you don't go
 round runnin' your mouth.

SMACK.

She should've seen it coming, but she didn't. Gemma's hand
 leaves a brutal RED MARK across her face.

For a moment, Dakota's stare is locked on HER BACKPACK IN THE CORNER. The outline of her gun barely visible.

GEMMA

Don't go gettin' bold like that
with the men. You'll get more.
I'm not the bad guy here.

DAKOTA

Then who is?

GEMMA

Just get up. There's not much else
I can do for you.

INT. CASINO - LOUNGE - NIGHT

The back room of the casino gives way to a roomy LOUNGE. It's a scattered sea of RED ARM CHAIRS, with dozens of MEN scattered about.

Gemma struts through the maze, head high. Dakota scans the faces, looking for her target.

GEMMA

The trick is you don't show them
you're too eager. Look, but don't
let 'em know you're looking.

DAKOTA

What's the point?

GEMMA

You seen yourself? These guys are
twice your size. You gotta take
the time to find someone you can
get the better of.

They pass WOMEN and GIRLS doing their best to put on a show for the men. It's a tornado of GLITTER, SPANDEX, and SMEARED MAKE-UP.

One MAN catches Dakota's eye. He curls a finger, beckoning her over.

Her fist balls, but she presses on.

GEMMA (CONT'D)

Better pick fast. They'll eat you
up soon.

DAKOTA

What if I don't want anybody?

GEMMA

Hunny, where the hell do you think you are? You didn't come here to get your hair braided.

She pushes her forward.

A YOUNG MAN bumps into her, spilling his drink on the front of her shirt. He stares a second too long at his mess. When he looks up, Dakota recognizes his face--

Dane. Earl's pal. Boyd's croonie.

DANE

Shit. Toby let go of you?

GEMMA

You like what you see? She's a new one.

DANE

Yeah, I've seen her... Hey what the hell happened to Toby?

Dakota says nothing. Won't even meet his eyes.

GEMMA

So you want her or not?

DANE

I'm not like those guys, o.k.? I'm not here to hurt you.

GEMMA

Hey, hey. Save the love talk for the backroom. We have a deal or not?

He throws a glance over his shoulder, then nods.

DANE

Yeah. We have a deal.

Dane goes for his wallet, shoveling stained BILLS into Gemma's greedy palm. Dakota looks on now, disgusted.

But she doesn't look for long.

In the corner of the room, BOYD saunters across. His hand locked around MINNIE'S ELBOW. Shoving her off into a darkened hallway.

DAKOTA

No--

Gemma's there, pressing her back the way they came.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
I have to go. I gotta go.

GEMMA
Stop struggling sweetpea. It'll be over before you know it.

Dane takes a quick look at Boyd, then his eyes fall back to Dakota. Understanding it all. Gemma pushes her toward a room--

DAKOTA
Minnie! Min!

INT. CASINO - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dakota's throaty screams echoe around the near empty bedroom. Gemma throws her down on the bed in a HUFF.

GEMMA
Are you trying to get yourself killed? Damn.

DAKOTA
I want to go!

GEMMA
You've been paid for. It's not up to us no more.

DAKOTA
Move--

She rallies her energy, bull-rushing Gemma. But she doesn't see the older woman clamp the COLD EDGE OF A HANDCUFF around her ankle.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
What... What are you doing?

GEMMA
Making sure the customer gets what he paid for. Don't struggle. Like I said, it'll be over before you know it.

The door SLAMS.

Nothing but the blinking lights of an ALARM CLOCK on the bedside table. In the faint light, Dakota sees a stack of CONDOMS and LUBE next to the bed.

She wriggles on the handcuff.

The door handle jiggles, then cracks open. Dane peeks in.

Dakota SCREAMS.

INT. CASINO - BACKROOM - ACE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Abbott GASPS awake. The crackle of a TASER next to his neck. The red welt growing from Ace's neck.

ACE

Fell asleep on us there. I still got some things I wanna discuss.

ABBOTT

You're a son of a bitch. How long did he know?

ACE

Who Boyd? He clocked your ass sitting in the parking lot. You really think he was gonna let your card counting ass tear this whole thing down?

Ace nods to Roddy, who steps up to the plate.

Swings!

Blood sputters from Abbott's mouth from Roddy's assault. Ace leans Abbott's head back.

Brings up a DECK OF CARDS.

ACE (CONT'D)

C'mon now, you gotta wake up. I want to see what you can do. How's it work?

Slaps a card on Abbot's forehead.

ABBOTT

Where's the girl?

ACE

I'm sure Gemma's sold her off by now. She'll be with her friend soon enough. Boyd says thanks, by the way.

ABBOTT

Goddamnit, she's a kid--

Ace YANKS harder.

ACE

--And was she a kid when you helped her in here? Huh? Was she? You men always try to act self-righteous, but if I put a mirror in here, I'd be seeing double.

ABBOTT

Fuck you.

Ace doesn't need Roddy this time. He jams the taser into Abbott's neck, rooting it to the spot. Abbott's body SHAKES, the chair toppling over.

The front leg BREAKS. Abbott's restraint sliding off the back of the chair. Ace reaches out, kicking at Abbott's STOMACH.

He curls into himself, steeling.

ACE

It's probably better this way. There's only two options for you here. And you've picked the wrong one since day fucking one.

Abbott's eyes linger on the CEILING FAN above, blades whirring around him. Picking up steam...

Ace gears up, readying for another kick. Abbott's lips, moving silently. He's COUNTING ONCE AGAIN.

ON ABBOTT'S FINGERS, curled around the discarded chair leg--

WHAM!

He drives into Ace's THIGH, only stopped by the bone.

ACE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Roddy barrels over, but he's not quick enough. Abbott's found his feet and he SMASHES the rest of the chair over the bodyguard's head.

SPLINTERS rain down and Roddy collapses with them. Ace tries to staunch the bleeding on his leg. Fumbles with the phone in his pocket.

Abbot GRABS for his hand, twisting it back.

ABBOTT

How many girls you seen through
here?

Ace shakes his head, too in pain to answer. Abbott pushes him back onto the man's own desk.

A PICTURE FRAME collides to the floor. An old family photo--
ACE CARRIES HIS DAUGHTER ON HIS BACK. Abbott's foot CRUSHES
the glass.

Intrigued, he leans down. Palms a LARGE SHARD.

ACE

This ain't a fucking bedtime story.
The cops are gonna come for you.

ABBOTT

Let 'em come.

He JAMS the shard into Ace's throat. Blood's a GEYSER,
wetting the front of Abbott's shirt. He grimaces, not fully
committed.

Then, twists! Eyes closed, he dives in. Only pulls away
when Ace stops flailing.

Roddy rises to his hands and knees. A red river pours over
his eye.

Abbott turns, Ace's pistol framed in his hand. The bullet
BLASTS out, cutting right through Roddy's liver.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

You got about 1.5 liters of blood
in your liver. You fucking hicks
should wear kevlar.

He wipes the pistol on the front of his pants. Tears off a
strip from his shirt to make a tourniquet

INT. CASINO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A SHEET tumbles off from the bed. Dakota backs away from
Dane, as far as the furniture and her handcuff will allow.
Still Dane cups her face. Studies it.

DANE

You're fucking beautiful.

Dakota tries to look anywhere else.

DANE (CONT'D)

I know you're scared, but I mean it.

DAKOTA

I'm not scared. I know what you do here.

DANE

I'm not like those guys. I only come here for fun, OK?

A thought. Dakota turns her head, trying her best to imitate Minnie.

DAKOTA

Yeah? What kind of fun?

He pulls at her hair, black silk running through his fingers.

DANE

All kinds.

DAKOTA

With me?

DANE

Of course.

DAKOTA

You ever been with a girl like me? Young. Like you.

DANE

Of course. I mean, no. Not like you. You're different. You don't try as hard.

DAKOTA

Boyd lets you?

DANE

Boyd'll let me do anything so long as I pay and keep my mouth shut.

She smiles. Plants a lopsided kiss on his neck. Then bends to his ear--

DAKOTA

You wanna hand me that bag, then?

DANE

What's in it?

DAKOTA

I thought you wanted to play?

Startled, Dane obliges. Hands it over to her. Dakota keeps a coy smile on her face as she unzips it halfway. Sticks her hand in. Her other hand draws Dane in close.

His eyes close, awaiting her lips...

REVERSE POV: The door bangs open, Abbott muscles his way in just in time to see

DAKOTA ON HER KNEES. Shotgun trained in Dane's MOUTH.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

How many of 'em?

DANE

(muffled)

What the fuck?

DAKOTA

How many did you have?

DANE

I don't--

BAM!

In seconds his BRAIN MATTER paints the bed. Dakota lowers the gun to survey her artwork.

Abbott pulls her off the bed, stopped by the handcuff.

ABBOTT

Shit, shit.

Knocks the butt of his PISTOL against the metal until it BREAKS OFF. He pulls Dakota off the bed, trying to shield her face.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)

Don't look--

She shoves HARD against his chest.

DAKOTA

No! I need to look. This is my mess.

He steps back, letting her move in close. Fractured pieces of DANE'S SKULL roll off and onto the floor. The tray of condoms sullied with BLOOD.

From outside the room A SHOUT can be heard. Abbott pulls on her arm, breaking her reverie.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
What the hell did you do?

 ABBOTT
Not much worse than you.

Shoving her bag into her hands, he pushes her toward the window. Tests the latch-- it works.

 ABBOTT (CONT'D)
Look I want you hop on out there
and call the police. You still got
the keys, right? Ok, so go on and
take the impala. And bring them
back--

Click. Click. Click.

Abbott turns around, seeing Dakota shoving new bullets into her gun. She snaps up the barrel. Locked and loaded.

 DAKOTA
He's here. I know which way he
went.

Shit. Abbott sighs, fingers gripped against the window. Is he really going to let her do this?

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
I'll shoot you too if I have to.

 ABBOTT
Never doubted you would.

 DAKOTA
You sure you can make it?

 ABBOTT
Do I have a choice?

FOOTSTEPS fall from outside the room. Abbott leans on one side. Dakota on the other.

 DAKOTA
There's a room, somewhere down the
hallway. Boyd's back there.
Minnie's still alive.

 ABBOTT
You keep going. Even if I fall.
Take this--

Tosses a cellphone to her.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)
Dial 911 if I go down. I mean it.

DAKOTA
I got it.

ABBOTT
This is fucking crazy.

DAKOTA
But it means something.

ABBOTT
I fucking hope.

O.S. a voice RIGHT BEHIND THE DOOR. It's Gemma and another MAN.

MAN (O.S.)
Who the hell is in there?

GEMMA (O.S.)
Some scrawny teen. And a new girl.

MAN (O.S.)
That sounded like a fucking
gunshot.

GEMMA (O.S.)
She's locked up, no way she's
shooting anybody.

MAN (O.S.)
'S not her I'm worried about.
Boyd'll kill me if I got dead girls
in here--

The door opens. At first there's no reaction, the darkness of the room belies nothing.

LIGHTS FLICK ON.

Dane spread eagle in his pool of blood.

GEMMA
Fuck--

She can't finish her words. A GUNFIRE BLAST rips through Gemma, sending her back. Dakota steps over her, gun in hand.

The Man reaches for Dakota, but Abbott hitches his pistol to the man's head.

MAN

Shit. I don't want any trouble.

GEMMA

Goddamnit, you bitch!

DAKOTA

How many of these men does he have out there?

GEMMA

More than you.

Abbott nods. He pulls the trigger and the man COLLAPSES.

Dakota steps over Gemma, leaving her writhing on the floor.

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

Rain-washed streets are obliterated by a TIRE. The BLUE AND RED LIGHTS of a SQUAD CAR paint the outside of the building. Officer Colson steps out to greet a livid Jean.

JEAN

What the hell took you so long?

COLSON

Had to take the back way. Don't act stupid.

JEAN

Don't call me stupid, I'm having a fucking day.

COLSON

Is Yennie home?

JEAN

No, dumbass. You think I'd bring you here if he was around? Just wanna tell the world I'm cheatin' on my husband to screw a white dude.

COLSON

So why am I here? And what the fuck's up with your arm?

JEAN

Come and look--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - TOBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

FLIES circle around Toby's dead body, creating an annoying hum. His body's now stuffed halfway in a trash bag.

COLSON

They did a shit job of trying to cover this up.

JEAN

I put him in the fucking bag. It reeked up here.

He nudges the body, barely fazed.

COLSON

You see who did this?

JEAN

Reservation bitch. You know Billie Hill?

COLSON

Who doesn't?

JEAN

It's her kid. She came in her ranting about her fucking friend.

Wait a minute.

Colson straightens, turning toward Jean.

COLSON

Young girl? Maybe sixteen or seventeen.

JEAN

Yeah...

COLSON

Shit.

JEAN

What'd you say that for?

COLSON

She came by earlier. Drunk or stoned, maybe. Damn! I knew it she was up to somethin'.

He checks his clip, then re-holsters his gun. Sets off down the

HALLWAY

JEAN

Where are you going?

COLSON

I'm go gonna haul her ass in.

INT. CASINO - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Heading out of Ace's office, Earl and another man, CORDEN (40s, Minnesotan in looks and charm), carry out GYM BAGS OF CASH. From the security feed, he can see COLSON'S SQUAD CAR OUTSIDE.

Then BAM!

A series of gunshots ricochet down the hall. Earl barely registers it-- he grimaces at the BLOODY FOOTPRINTS scattered along the hall: a mark of Abbott and Dakota's earlier work.

CORDEN

What the hell is going on down there?

EARL

Go check it out. I'm gonna go get Boyd. You armed?

He raises his sweatshirt, to show the GUN on him.

CORDEN

We're in a whorehouse, Earl.

EARL

All right, then. I'll meet you back here. Let me know what you find.

He waits a beat watching as Corden takes off. Then he shrugs the bag over his shoulder. Stalks off in the EXACT OPPOSITE DIRECTION of Corden.

The EXIT sign looms above his head.

Takes a look out a nearby window--

Outside, SNOW BEGINS TO FALL.

INT. CASINO - SOUTH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Corden darts out into the hallway, squinting into the darkness. Nobody stirs in the rooms. His footsteps slow, trying to suss out what lies at the end of the way for him.

CORDEN
Hey! Anybody here?

And then--

BOOM!

Not a GUNSHOT, but the SPRINKLERS OVERHEAD, BLAST ON.

Cool mist shoots down over the hallway, bathing Corden. He shields his eyes, but it's no use.

DOORS BANG OPEN, revealing WOMEN and their PIMPS, SCREAMING trying to cover their hair.

CORDEN (CONT'D)
Hey-- Stay in your fucking rooms!

A GIRL bumps into him, her hair matted to her face. Corden reaches out, steadying her.

CORDEN (CONT'D)
Sweetheart, I need you back in your room. Who do you belong to?

His face falls.

Looks down: A GUN MUZZLE ON HIS HIP.

Dakota stares up at him, pushing back her wet hair.

DAKOTA
Which room is Boyd in?

CORDEN
Shit. You gotta be kidding me.

Digs the gun in deeper.

CORDEN (CONT'D)
The last one. Fuck. Ok? Now can I go?

Her shotgun answers, BLOWING OFF HIS HIP. Corden collapses. Overhead, the water bathes his now-still face.

The men in the hallway on HIGH ALERT now. Another DOOR SLAMS OPEN. Abbott shoves Dakota behind it. Reaches over, SMASHING IT CLOSED.

A HAND trapped between the door and its frame. A gun falls out of its grip. Dakota stands, kicking it away, then yanks the door open--

ABBOTT BLASTS HIS PISTOL IN THE MAN'S FACE!

He crumples in a heap.

SHOUTS from nearby, as the Sioux girls watch the men fall. A mix of awe and horror as they're freed.

Not done yet.

Abbott takes point. They move slowly now, their location known. The OUTLINE of an ASSAILANT comes barreling forward.

GUN SKYWARD!

He clips the nearest sprinkler, SHOOTING IT CLEAN OFF. The water cuts into the man below in a violent stream. Eyesight gone.

Abbott brings his elbow to the man's temple, bringing him down. But he doesn't see the other MAN behind him.

SHARPSHOOTER--

Dakota's paces away, her gun trained like the best hunter. Takes the man down in ONE SHOT.

Suddenly, she's DRAGGED FROM BEHIND.

Face mashed into the carpet. CRUNCH. Dakota drags her face to the side, blood blossoms from her nostril.

Abbott starts forward, but arms LOCK AROUND HIS THROAT.

Another one of Boyd's CRONIES picks Dakota up by her shirt. Dumb mistake. Her hands are FREE. She lunges stabbing her thumbs INTO HIS EYES.

She presses in hard, ignoring his SCREAMS of pain.

He drops her, and she lands brutally on the floor. But there's no time to lick her wounds. She rolls over, scrambling for her gun. Collects it and readies.

But there's Abbott, still encircled by his attacker. Can't shoot without shooting Abbott.

ABBOTT

My arm!

DAKOTA

What?

She squints, water sliding down her eyelashes. He tries to point a finger toward the t-shirt tourniquet he's tied against his bicep.

Through and through. It's crazy, but *hell*, it'll work.

She brings the gun up and FIRES-- slicing through Abbott and the man behind him.

Abbott works fast, hitting the man's instep to add insult to injury.

He brings up his PISTOL shooting at the man behind Dakota. Tag team.

ABBOTT

Let's go.

DAKOTA

Your arm!

ABBOTT

We need to get moving.

She darts after him, but her breathing's slow.

In the clear...

Or so it seems, until a YOUNG GIRL stands in front of them. A BUTTERFLY KNIFE held out in front of her. Dakota gives a glance to Abbott.

The girl CHARGES.

Dakota sticks out her leg, tripping the girl. She careens, her arm falling on her knife.

The older girl bends down, shotgun muzzle pointed down.

DAKOTA

Go home. It ain't much, but it's better than here.

She twists the gun back up, resting it on her shoulder. Abbott pulls the knife out of her arm with a small yank, then pockets it.

The coast is clear.

The sprinklers struggle to pump out any more water.

Up ahead, the RED DOORS of Boyd's room stand out like a beacon.

Suddenly, the PHONE in Dakota's pocket buzzes. She glances wildly toward Abbott--

ABBOTT
Go on. Answer it.

DAKOTA
Hello?

It's the man of the hour's voice on the other end.

BOYD (O.S.)
Ace, what the fuck is going on out there? I told you to take care of the girl.

DAKOTA
Ace is dead. So's Toby. All of them are gone.

The line goes silent.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Hello? I think he hung up.

Abbott plucks the phone from her.

ABBOTT
Jericho's comin' down Boyd. Hope you finally got your ass to confession.

He drops the phone, then crushes it under his foot. In their silence, the SIREN WAIL of Colson's backup call breaks through.

ABBOTT (CONT'D)
Shit.

DAKOTA
What's wrong? Didn't you tell me to call the police before?

ABBOTT
Not while we're still alive. You know what this looks like?

She glances over her shoulder, then nods.

DAKOTA
Yeah. Yeah I do.

 ABBOTT
You can still--

 DAKOTA
--Stop wasting time.

He raises his pistol and she raises her shotgun.

Point and shoot!

They SPRAY erratic bullets at Boyd's door, targeting the knob. Holes grated in the wood. Splinters lay waste to the floor.

The DOOR KNOB drops off its hinge, tumbling to the floor.

INT. CASINO - BOYD'S ROOM - DAY

This is an Adonis' oasis. White, clean-coated furniture. Could be a room out of the four seasons if not for the swamp of SHELL CASINGS on the floor.

Aiming down her sight, Dakota presses on, deeper into the room. Stops when she sees movement rustle the bed sheets.

 DAKOTA
C'mon out now. The police are
here.

A GROAN from the bed. Another rustle and Dakota can see a BARE ANKLE peeking out. ROPE tied around it.

 DAKOTA (CONT'D)
Minnie!

 ABBOTT
Hey kid, don't move.

 DAKOTA
I'm not scared of--

A BULLET whizzes past her ear. Rattles off the wall. Wedged in the corner another of Boyd's GUARDS has his gun trained on Abbott.

 BOYD (O.S.)
Took y'all long enough.

To her right, there's Boyd. Standing in the--

BATHROOM

Toothpaste hits the basin. He swipes at his face with a washcloth. A TOWEL around his waist.

BOYD (CONT'D)

So how's it feel? Shootin' up my men? Feel tough, yet?

DAKOTA

You did this. You're the bottom feeder, scrapin' away what little we have left.

BOYD

You know, my daddy came up out here when he was 62. You believe that shit? 62 years old and still had to work. And he died fallin' off a goddamn pumpjack.

He LIMPS over to the window. The BOOT still there from his broken ankle.

DOWN BELOW: a swarm of POLICE CARS surround the casino. There's no getting out of this quietly, for either side.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Wanted to beat his ass for hauling me out here. Then dying like that... But it's addicting. Being out here. Just ask your buddy, he knows.

Abbott looks anywhere but at Boyd. Which the man isn't too keen on.

From the night stand, Boyd grabs a browning bottle. Shoves past Dakota, grabbing at Abbott's chin. He forces the liquid down Abbott's throat.

Abbott sputters, trying to force it back up.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Now, c'mon. Don't tell me you've gone sober too? Isn't this what you came here for? Makin' twenty dollars on the hour so you can booze before noon?

Abbott GAGS, spitting up the alcohol.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Fucking pathetic.

He throws the bottle, shards colliding across the room. Now he stands toe to toe with Dakota. Looks her over, but doesn't really see.

BOYD (CONT'D)

What am I going to do with you? I could put you in that bed. Right next to your friend. Leave Abbott here. Tell them it was all you...

DAKOTA

That's not happening.

Boyd smiles.

BOYD

You hear that? She's callin' all the shots now. Hot damn... damn...

Yanks open the night stand drawer. Holds a pistol flat in his palm, testing the weight.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Soon there's gonna be nothin' left of you. Just snow and oil.

No more waiting.

Abbott jams the BUTTERFLY KNIFE, stolen from the Sioux teen, into the Guard's arm. A bullet goes careening into Abbott's shoulder.

Dakota, too, EXPLODES.

She lunges for Boyd's leg as he aims at Abbott. Takes a knee and BOOM! Shoots at his injured foot.

He topples over her, blood's a fountain from his ankle. Vision blurred from a face smeared with blood, Dakota rolls over to get a better angle.

Abbott forks the knife into the guard's throat, then kicks him backwards. Looks over to Dakota--

No...

She's stopped. Boyd's gun is now trained on the PASSED OUT MINNIE.

DAKOTA

Wait!

BOYD

I told you. I built this. Hell, I built you Abbott. Saw you pissing your money away and put you to work. On my rig.

DAKOTA

It's not yours--

ABBOTT

--Dakota, don't--

DAKOTA

It was our land before you, and it'll be ours long after you.

BOYD

You hearin' this Ab? You hearin' her? She wants to get rid of us all!

ABBOTT

All I wanted was to go. You knew that.

BOYD

No, Abbott. That's what you don't get. I decide how this ends. Me. It was always gonna be me.

ABBOTT

No. You don't. Hell Boyd, even the devil lost.

He squints not understanding.

Abbott lunges. Consequences be damned. Boyd, reacting, moves his gun spraying to protect himself.

Dakota takes her moment. Lines up her shot. Ready.

IN FOR THE KILL.

The bullets pierce through Boyd's SKULL. Abbott topples over him, his back a BLOODY MESS.

DAKOTA

Minnie?

Running, she grabs at the restraints, but can't pull them off. Scoops up the butterfly knife, SLICK WITH BLOOD. Cuts Minnie free.

For a moment, the other girl blinks her eyes. Gives the smallest of smiles to Dakota.

From the hall, the O.S. SIRENS are an ominous soundtrack. Dakota shifts Minnie onto her back.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Abbott?

He says nothing. A sigh. Bracing herself, she nudges his body.

He STIRS.

ABBOTT

You get her?

DAKOTA

Yeah. We gotta go.

ABBOTT

OK.

Slow to his feet, but alive, Abbott joins Dakota at the door.

INT. CASINO - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The wreck of their carnage still litters the hallway. Abbott follows behind Dakota, Minnie propped on her back, but he's dragging behind.

ABBOTT

I'm slowin' you down.

DAKOTA

I know.

ABBOTT

You gotta get going.

She stares at him. Could she really?

Then a door opens. An EMERGENCY STAIRWELL behind them. Earl stands in the doorway. The gym bag still strapped to him.

EARL

Hurry up you son of a bitch, before
I regret this.

Abbott gives a small laugh, all he can manage. Tosses the KEYS to the impala toward the man.

INT. CASINO - BOYD'S ROOM - DAY

Colson and his POLICE SQUAD inch into the room, guns trained outward, readying.

There's Boyd, LYING FACE UP. Palms facing outward, like Jesus on the cross.

COLSON

Christ.

OFFICER

Fucking boomers. All of them out here was never gonna be any good.

Colson can only give a pitiful laugh.

COLSON

Fuckin' boomers.

INT. IMPALA - EARLY MORNING (MOVING)

Earl steers the older car, Abbott resting in the passenger seat. Absentmindedly, his hands linger on his shirt. Pulls it up, REVEALING: THE WHITE ENVELOPE OF HIS EARNINGS. He can't help but smile.

EARL

Don't go now, you hear me? We're gonna get you help.

In the backseat, Dakota strokes Minnie's hair. Her friend blinks awake, gazing up at her.

MINNIE

I don't... I don't think I want to go to Vegas anymore.

This time, Dakota doesn't try to hold the tears back.

In the REARVIEW MIRROR Abbott and Dakota lock eyes.

DAKOTA

We're almost home.

BLACK.

THE DARKNESS GIVES WAY TO--

INT. MINNIE'S HOME - NIGHT

--BLINDING SUN.

Dakota bounds down the steps, tupperware in hand. Minnie folds herself on the front steps. Her face, gaunt, but eyes alight.

MINNIE

You owe me three hundred bucks.

DAKOTA

I know.

MINNIE

Hey Dakota...?

DAKOTA

Don't. You don't need to.

She hitches up her bike.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Tell your mom I said thanks for the food.

MINNIE

She'd give you our house if you asked.

DAKOTA

Don't want it. I like mine.

MINNIE

God you're twisted.

DAKOTA

See you.

EXT. OIL CAMP - NIGHT

The sun dies down on the horizon. Dakota bikes past a COP CAR idled on the side of the road. Slowing she sees JEAN sitting beside COLSON. Their conversation dies when the girl bikes past.

Slowly, a smile forms on her lips.

MILES DOWN THE ROAD

The pump-jacks have halted. Icicles hang from their heads, freezing all production. Earl chips away at one, then brings his hands back for warmth.

He gives pause when he sees Dakota, then turns his head.

EXT. TURTLE MOUNTAIN RESERVATION - NIGHT

A car follows down the road behind her. Dakota skids to a stop, recognizing the red dot--

THE IMPALA.

She tenses, knuckles tight on the bike handle. Then she exhales. Abbott's face slow, as the car stops next to her.

ON HIS FACE: Bruised and scarred. Tries to smile but can barely lift his lips.

No words between the two. Just a simple nod. Then, as soon as he came, Abbott shifts the gear and pumps down the road.

For a moment, Dakota races behind his car--

Then stops. Snowy dust kicks up around her. She breathes in deep, taking in the RESERVATION. Sparse, but this is home.

INT. DAKOTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Billie's out of bed, resting on the couch. She's bent over a chipped basket of laundry. Wet clothes STREWN about the room, waiting to dry.

Dakota plops the tupperware next to her, then curls up beside her mother.

BILLIE
That for me, baby?

DAKOTA
Yeah. From Minnie's.

She strokes her hair.

BILLIE
You're too good to me.

Dakota rolls over, holding her mother's gaze. Reaches up and puts a palm to her face.

DAKOTA
I love you.

The house is quiet, as Dakota rests in her love. Away from casinos and oil and North Dakota snow.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Dakota sets down her tub of wax. Inspects her shotgun. A MARK from the battle shines bright on the metal. Otherwise, it's in mint condition.

She pulls down a BOX OF BULLETS from the shelf.

Feeds them into the barrel.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.