EXPOSED

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Adapted from

ANNIKA BENGTZON: CRIME REPORTER

by Liza Marklund

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ACT ONE

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - TELEGRAPH HILL - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Dark. Silent.

The view out open windows is a rolling jumble of row houses, apartment blocks, telephone poles, forties buildings.

We hold a few peaceful seconds...

...then there's an ungodly ALARM, grating and unfamiliar.

A WOMAN IN UNDERWEAR and a T-shirt staggers in, ripped from sleep, groggy, terrified, clutching a wooden hanger.

This is ANNA LOACH (30).

She realizes the alarm comes from her CELL. Finds it on the sofa. Hits buttons. Silences it. Notices the alarm continues a few places in the distance. Odd. Scary. Totalitarian.

Appalled, Anna checks the screen. <u>It's an AMBER ALERT</u>.

INT. "ROLLING STONE" - HALL OF COVERS - THE NEXT DAY

Anna hurries through the history of rock-n-roll, and ritually flips off Gene Simmons as she passes an old KISS COVER.

INT. WEST COAST OFFICE - DAY

An excited intern, TALI, 23, is waiting for her. Anna is wary of all forms of enthusiasm, and easily mortified for others.

ANNA
What?

TALI
They gave you a cover byline!

Tali holds up the latest issue.

The COVER PHOTO is a woman in scary high-tech SWAT gear, AK-47 at the camera, it takes a moment to recognize Lady Gaga.

OVERKILL: WHEN COPS PLAY SOLDIER
By Anna Loach

Anna smiles despite herself. She likes being a teller of hard truths -- as long as those truths aren't about her.

TALI (CONT'D)
First one here in like five years!

ANNA
Besides Oscar.

TALI
Well, yeah, besides Oscar.

The office is a series of half-walled cubicles, flanked by glass offices. Roughly twenty people work here -- a varied, willfully casual lot, ethnic in ways hard to define.

Anna realizes Tali holds a cup of coffee.

ANNA
Is that for me?

TALI
Don't be sexist.

Four desks sit in an open cluster, this is the BULLPEN. Here, three men gather around two computers, reading, absorbed.

Tali hands the coffee to ELVIS GIROUX (46), black, Canadian, a once great rock critic, now West Coast Political Editor.

ANNA
Hey.

THE MEN (IN UNISON)
Hey.

ANNA
You guys get the amber alert at two AM?

DAVE
Yeah.

DAVE STRAND (51) is suburban, emotional, their token boomer.

ANNA
Who could go back to sleep after <u>that</u>?
(she sits, sets up)
Part of me hates amber alerts. And part of me hates that I hate amber alerts.
(no one's listening)
Am I bad person because I don't wanna be woken at two AM to be reminded of the depth of human depravity? Especially when there's <u>nothing</u> I can do about it. And I'm alone. In the dark. In my underwear.

Anna does a web search, fingers flying.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Why can't we send alerts just to people who are actually driving?

The others are reading a story in SLATE.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Maybe peg them to cell-tower transfers?
(nothing)
Anyone?

TALI
(distracted)
Of course.

DAVE
(distracted)
I doubt it.

ANNA (CONT'D)
And I'm talking to myself.

Elvis pulls himself away from the article.

They're tracking a story...

ELVIS
Slate has a leak from inside the Director of National Intelligence's office.

DAVE
You'll love this: the NSA's collecting our financial data. All of it.

Anna's surprised, leans back to her computer and types in a search with one hand.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Every single on-line purchase, our house payments, car, credit cards...all added up...and checked against reported income.

ANNA
Now the IRS is spying on us?

OSCAR
That's his claim. I'm sceptical. If the program exists, no way it's active.

The sceptic is one OSCAR CASTRO VARGAS, 33, famous, laconic, masculine. Oscar's been to war, punched a two-star general, smuggled orphans out of bad places.

ANNA
How many alerts are parent abductions?

Elvis sighs. Anna's going to torture them about the alert.

ELVIS
I don’t think it’s supposed to matter.

ANNA
I’d feel a lot less guilty choosing sleep over worry if it’s a rogue parent.

OSCAR
And if it’s a family friend?

ANNA
Sleep. Maybe. Definitely if it’s a step dad or mom’s boyfriend. My sympathy for the child is totally tied to the mom not being an idiot. Not pretty, but true.

A managing editor, JILL HWANG-JOFFE, 53, comes out to talk to Elvis, tells her Google Glass to mute her phone.

JILL
What about this new whistleblower?

DAVE
Stoya. Elvis nicknamed this one, Stoya.

JILL
Stoya?

She writes it down, pendantic in her love of insider jargon.

Smirks. Oscar sees Anna studying a PHOTO of the AMBER ALERT GIRL, 16, Caucasian, geeky in that way parents adore.

OSCAR
Are you that worried about her, or are you looking for a reason not to be?

ANNA
Both.

TALI
(reading off her CELL)
“Despite controls, the majority of amber alerts prove to be false alarms.”

OSCAR
See. Wikipedia.

Oscar can always smell when Anna’s bravado masks a looming obsession; his rugged calm can comfort her, but not today.

Anna just smiles and continues reading about the Amber Girl.

JILL
New York wants someone on top of Stoya.

Dave raises his hand, then Tali, a year out of Yale and truly desperate for any meritocracy to climb.

ELVIS
Anna, you wanna take this one? Your brother may know somebody.

Anna shakes her head.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Why not?

ANNA
I'm compulsively law abiding.

JILL
And?

ANNA
I don't hate the surveillance thing. If government spying means this girl gets to walk down any street, safely, any time, it's a deal I'd take. Let them watch us. No tax cheats. No crime. No amber alerts at two in the morning. If you can take away <u>everything</u> I'm afraid of, and all I have to do is give up my anonymity, then, please, put a camera in my shower.

Silence. Dave buries his head, despairing for his country.

Jill gives Elvis an exasperated look, walks away.

ELVIS
(after Jill)
We're gonna water board her!

JILL
Don't bother.

An awkward beat.

After the boss is safely out of earshot...

OSCAR
I'll look into him.

Elvis nods. Oscar finds Anna sneaking him an unhappy look.

INT. ETHNIC EATERY - SOUTH OF MARKET - DAY

ANNA
Just don't cover for me! If Jill wants to force me, make her force me.

OSCAR
I wasn't covering for you.

Anna and Oscar have lunch in the sort of place you eat out of a plastic basket and drink out of a mason jar.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
The DNI's office is heavy military, I have field cred with those people.

ANNA
Yeah, I've seen the bullet hole.

OSCAR
And you're a better woman for it.

ANNA
Good, cause there are 10 minute stretches where it's all I get to look at.

They exchange sexy, knowing grins.

TWO GUYS in Facebook polo shirts and khakis walk past; they flash Oscar a hipster-appropriated gang sign.

FACEBOOK GUY
Love what you do, Bro.

Oscar thanks them with a power fist.

ANNA
I can't come Saturday.

OSCAR
Don't do that.

ANNA
She doesn't want me there.

OSCAR
Who cares? She's a strong Mexican woman, defending her territory. It's healthy.

ANNA
She hates me.

OSCAR
No, she doesn't.

ANNA
Why do all your photos have a Hello Kitty sticker over my face?

OSCAR
She's five, Anna. Five.
(then)
You're afraid of a five-year-old.

ANNA
Yes! Yes, I am. I'm terrified.

OSCAR
Then be there for her. Hang out more. Think about, you know, getting real.

ANNA
What does that mean?

Oscar regroups.

OSCAR
You like things coming to you. Fine. Now it's coming. Let's see if you're ready.
(direct)
Move in with us. Make this work.

A long, tense beat.

The WAITRESS brings the check.

WAITRESS
Thanks, guys.

OSCAR
Thanks.

Anna's looking at her water, feeling the urge to simply run.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
You okay?

ANNA
Yeah.

INT. FOUR BARREL COFFEE - MISSION DISTRICT - DAY

Artisan. Waxed cement floor. Rough-hewn wood walls. A line.

Anna and her hipster brother, JEREMY (28), take their cups.

ANNA
Oscar wants me to move in.

JEREMY
Good.

ANNA
I don't know. I like my apartment.

He stops for "organic and locally grown" stevia.

ANNA (CONT'D)
We didn't pay.

JEREMY
It comes automatically off my phone. But, hey, tell me again how Twitter's a fad.

A sidelong look. Anna's lack of tech savy galls him.

EXT. FOUR BARREL COFFEE - DAY

Jeremy and Anna come out and cross the street.

JEREMY
Can I say something no one else will?

ANNA
That's why I'm here.

A muscular man in sunglasses follows them. JEREMY'S BODYGUARD is always ten feet behind him outdoors. And never mentioned.

JEREMY
You won't like it.

ANNA
Horrify me.

JEREMY
Success for women is a sexual liability. You limit the pool of men who want you, and, more profoundly, the pool of men <u>you</u> want. Half of all new doctors are female. What's their chief complaint on residency completion? The lousy job market? No. The Bozo economics of health care? No. Their chief complaint is their male colleagues won't date them. The guys all want young nurses. Why? Because they're <u>doctors</u> now. Wanna see a pissed-off female physician? Suggest she date a male nurse.

ANNA
How do you get away with being <u>such</u> an ass?

JEREMY
Everyone I know works for me. That, and, sexually, I view myself as a gourmet food truck: I'll serve you but you can't sit.

ANNA
What's your point?

JEREMY
If Oscar Castro Vargas isn't worthy of cohabitation, just who will be?

It's very good question.

ANNA
His daughter hates me.

JEREMY
What do you expect? Her nannies are all angry grad students in postcolonial studies. You move in, you fire them.
(then)
Everybody wins.

ANNA
I don't want to move in! I like things as they are! I go over. We have great sex. I leave before we fall asleep...so I never wake up and find my shoes in the toilet.

Jeremy remembers the incident, chuckles admiringly.

ANNA (CONT'D)
It's good! We're kind. We're sooo kind to each other. I can't be that kind every day. I'd act out. Every instinct I have says...move in and it'll end badly.

He stops outside a huge and expensively converted WAREHOUSE.

The Bodyguard keeps his distance.

JEREMY
Don't trust your instincts.

ANNA
What?

JEREMY
Seriously?

INT. “OPEN” - JEREMY’S CORPORATION - DAY

A high-tech dream. Feels like the future. Feels like money.

ANNA
I’m not <u>that</u> stunted!

Jeremy leads Anna thru an quiet sea of SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS, all with top secret clearances, thick glasses, fedoras.

Their numbers dwarf those of the magazine.

JEREMY
This is your MO -- you find some insane reason it won’t work and cling to it like grim death. Remember how you let Tunney’s DVR convince you he was gay.

INT. JEREMY’S HUGE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Immaculate. He goes to a desk; she goes to one of the sofas.

JEREMY
You dumped Cole because he put super unleaded in a rental car--

ANNA
--while I was supporting him--

JEREMY
--and poor Scott Ploughman--

ANNA
--he dumped me--

JEREMY
--you complained about his penis!

ANNA
It veered right! Like it was distracted! Which is ironic, cause he’s a womanizer.

JEREMY
That’s not irony.

Anna lets it go, tired of the argument. She notices all his windows have round devices wired to them.

ANNA
What are those round things?

JEREMY
They make the panes vibrate so no one can bounce a laser off them. To eavesdrop.

ANNA
Oh, Christ, I almost forgot...Is the NSA mining our financial data?

JEREMY
I doubt it. It'd be political suicide. If they are, we didn't design the program.

She nods, stands.

ANNA
You're only making my point. I look for things wrong with people, when they get close. I get really critical. And I hate the drama that creates.
(a beat)
So, what do I do?

JEREMY
Just listen to that small voice deep in your heart...and do the opposite.

ANNA
Thanks, this was almost helpful.

She goes.

JEREMY
(after her)
Don't quote me!

EXT. BUSY AVENUE - DUSK

Cranky, Anna peers into traffic, searching, checks her phone, sees a MINIVAN pull up with a huge mustache over the grill.

INT. MINIVAN - DUSK

As she climbs in, Anna's greeted by her LYFT DRIVER, a cheery woman with a toddler asleep in a booster on the back row.

The Driver keeps her voice low. Anna struggles with the door.

LYFT DRIVER
Hi -- I got it -- you must be Anna.

She offers up a fist, as Driver's are trained to do. Anna forces a smile. The women fist bump. The door slides shut.

INT. EMBARCADERO FREEWAY - NIGHT

The minivan crosses over downtown.

INT. MINIVAN - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

The Driver checks on Anna, antsy and impatient, trying hard not to appear available for conversation.

They pass an ELECTRONIC SIGN with the amber alert.

LYFT DRIVER
They found Hailey.

ANNA
Sorry?

LYFT DRIVER
The amber alert. Down in Fresno. They found a B-O-D-Y. In a pecan grove.

For reasons she couldn't explain, Anna feels it like a punch.

LYFT DRIVER (CONT'D)
Horrible. A 16-year-old. She was in the Drama Club. And Environmental Club. And Robotics. They even said robotics. This happens to robotics nerds, now.

CLOSE ON ANNA...amber streetlight strobes her troubled face.

LYFT DRIVER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I tell you, the world we live in.

EXT. ANNA'S LOFT - TELEGRAPH HILL - NIGHT

Through big encasement windows, we see Anna at her computer, jacket still on. Her fingers aggressively hit keys, focused, practical, on the hunt. Serious ROCK MUSIC rattles windows.

INT. ANNA'S LOFT - TELEGRAPH HILL - NIGHT

In well-practiced strokes, Anna kills the music and starts a RAW VIDEO FEED from FRESNO: <u>The national media have descended on HAILEY'S HOUSE</u>. Tragedy is in the air as the FRESNO POLICE CHIEF, an empathetic woman, steps to a mic. Cameras flash.

POLICE CHIEF
Okay, everybody. Okay. Good evening. I have good news: it's not our girl.

CLOSE on Anna, arching a brow.

POLICE CHIEF (CONT'D)
The body discovered in the Orchard Avenue grove is not Hailey Wright-Deacon.

There's a smattering of AWKWARD CHEERS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - ELVIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In his underwear, Elvis gives his TWO-MONTH-OLD DAUGHTER the late bottle. His wife, ADINA, 38, Ethiopian, a law professor, sleeps on the sofa. Elvis is ON THE PHONE.

ELVIS
She called a dead girl "it"?

INTERCUT:

INT. ANNA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Anna's pacing, full indignation, pushing it a bit for effect.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
"It's not our girl"?! Who says that? It's somebody's girl! Are they watching?! That pack of hyenas is down there celebrating. "Thank God, it wasn't the cute white one! With two last names! In robotics! Thank god, we still got the national spotlight!"

ELVIS
What's the story?

ANNA
The other girl. Who was she? How did she die? Why doesn't she get to be our girl?

ELVIS
Because she's probably a meth addict.

ANNA
She's fifteen! How responsible can you be for your own drug use at fifteen? C'mon, you know she's black, or Hispanic.

ELVIS
That won't help.

ANNA
I contrast the resources spent on Hailey. All the homeland security money for lock downs around big media cases versus, what, three detectives on a local murder? Two girls, dead in different Americas.

ELVIS
Hailey's not dead. Yet. For this to make print, you'd need to be done by the time she's found. Which could be any day.

ANNA
Fine.

A calming beat.

ELVIS
Why do you care about this girl?

ANNA
I don't know. Maybe because no one else does. Trust me, Elvis. She has a story to tell. I can feel it. Let me find it.

Elvis considers his own daughter, drifting, bottle in mouth.

ELVIS
How much of this is you wanting to drive away from your problems? So you don't have to come in tomorrow and face Oscar?

Anna grimaces. *Elvis knows?! Of course, Elvis knows.*

ANNA
Forty-nine percent.

ELVIS
Okay. Three days.

INT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELLING - BEFORE DAWN THE NEXT MORNING

Anna drives, sleepy, inexperienced. She squints a glare from lights behind her. Yanks the Hertz card from the mirror.

She's sits straight, cracks her neck, considers the RADIO.

She turns it on, tunes the AM band.

OVERNIGHT SHOW HOST
...So, are there thinking Americans who believe Al Qaeda brought down the twin towers? Yes. Are they good people? Of course. Are they dead wrong? Absolutely.

Anna opens her mouth as if to protest, but there's no one to protest to. She throws up her hands and turns the radio off.

EXT. HAILEY'S HOUSE - FRESNO - DAY

Anna walks down a line of camera stands pointed at the house. The atmosphere is mostly that of a tail-gate party. Two crews have a water-gun battle. A Harried PA passes with a tray full of Starbucks. A LAME PRODUCER helps his Cameraman get B roll.

LAME PRODUCER
No, no, frame out the Mercedes. We want Generica to like these people.

Anna finds the Police Chief with a handful of TV JOURNALISTS. She's being shown a VIDEO on a MONITOR STAND: Hailey leaving a mall, followed by a HISPANIC MALE (33), a few paces behind.

A FOX NEWS TYPE
Hailey leaves the mall, and, right behind her...this guy...stop. He's got a bulldog cap on. Is he a Bulldog gang member?

POLICE CHIEF
Who knows? Fresno State is popular here. This is the confusion you get when a gang co-opts a local college mascot. My people can't police gang colors. Rivals shoot innocents. That man could be following Hailey with nefarious intent, yeah, or he could be going home from JC Penny.

A FOX NEWS TYPE
You're not ruling out a gang connection?

Anna bites her tongue.

POLICE CHIEF
I'm not ruling out anything.

A NANCY GRACE TYPE
Are you investigating the stepfather?

POLICE CHIEF
Why would we do that?

ANNA
Cause it would really help her ratings.

The Nancy Grace Type gives Anna a hard look. The Police Chief pulls away from the scrum. Anna trails her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Chief, I'm Anna Loach. Rolling Stone. I wanted to ask about the other girl.

POLICE CHIEF
Nothing to do with Hailey. That death was drug related.

ANNA
We don't just report on white girls.

This stops her. The Chief goes into damage control mode.

POLICE CHIEF
Forgive me. The victim's name was Npaim Davis. She's half-white, half-Hmong.

ANNA
Any progress in her case?

POLICE CHIEF
We have one of our best detectives on it.

ANNA
Just one?

Anna glances to the absurd police presence around them.

POLICE CHIEF
I got one dead girl. And one, hopefully, still alive. Where would you focus?

ANNA
I'm not sure.

The Chief smiles indulgently, holds up her phone.

POLICE CHIEF
Here. Give me your info, I'll make sure somebody gets you victim details.

Anna touches her phone to transfer her contact information.

ANNA
Thank you.

POLICE CHIEF
You're welcome.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DUSK

Anna pulls up to huge a CONFERENCE HOTEL. A SWAT TEAM guards the place, playing assault force for out-of-town reporters.

An Officer self-importantly stops traffic so she can pull in the hotel drive like a dignitary. Anna rolls her eyes.

EXT. ENTRY PORTICO - HUGE CONFERENCE HOTEL - DUSK

An Armored Personnel Carrier blocks most of it. Anna gets her own bags. Two Cops at the door wear full military gear.

ANNA
You guys think France took her?

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anna can't sleep. Stares up at the ceiling. Her PHONE RINGS. It's Oscar. She sighs, doesn't answer. Continues staring.

INT. BREAKFAST BUFFET - THE NEXT MORNING

Anna eats. The Nancy Grace Type passes to sit with Friends.

ANNA
Nancy.

The greeting is ignored.

A LIMPING STRANGER (30's), bandage over his nose, circles under his eyes, now sits at a table next to her.

He grimaces as he lowers himself into the chair.

ANNA (CONT'D)
My god, what happened to you?

STRANGER
You wouldn't believe it.

ANNA
Try me.

STRANGER
I got hit by a drone.

ANNA
I don't believe it.

He eats like he's hungry, and used to quick meals among men.

STRANGER
I fly a UAV, over at Creech Air Force Base. Never text on an active tarmac.

Anna chuckles.

ANNA
And I thought fighter pilot was such a safe job these days. If not as patriotic. Minus the whole risk of death and all.

PILOT
Nobody claps in the Vegas airport, that's for sure. But that could be the slots.

ANNA
Yet you still risk tendonitis for us...

He smiles but goes conspicuously silent. A SERVER brings her check. She signs it. Hands it back.

She notices he's given up the banter.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Bet you say it's more than a video game.

PILOT
It's no game. And zero fun, in fact. We watch these guys for months, really get to know them, their habits, families. I watch a man visit his parents on Sunday for half a year, then, on one of those, I send a missile out of a clear blue sky... and there's nothing left of him. Then I get to watch his family run out, try to find something to do, some piece to grab up and bury. But there's just a big hole. They tear their clothes. I always thought that was a myth, but it's what people do.

He eats, these are simple facts.

ANNA
Sorry. I shouldn't have belittled it.
(she stands)
My name's Anna, by the way.

PILOT
Nice to meet you.

ANNA
What's yours?

PILOT
I should maybe be a little discrete.

ANNA
Got it. Well, thank you for your service.

He nods politely. Anna moves off, unsettled, and attracted.

Clocking that fact, the Nancy Grace Type quips,...

A NANCY GRACE TYPE
How's Oscar doing, Anna?

The question is ignored.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Anna whacks the GPS.

She's lost in downtown Fresno. Cars in yards. Most houses have small cyclone fences around the front yard. One has spray-paint over a garage: "I don't cook meth here no more!"

She finds the sign for "Harvard Street", turns down it but has to stop not far along...a GANG PARTY spills onto the pavement from a GANG HOUSE. Fresno State clothing tells us these are Bulldogs, young Hispanics, tats, shaved heads.

A BIG BULLDOG in basketball shorts wears an ankle monitor.

A MUSTANG does donuts to entertain the rowdy crowd. The white smoke drifts over the rental car, where a nervous Anna waits.

Finally, slowly, she drives through the drunken throng.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NPAIM'S HOUSE - DAY

NPAIM'S MOTHER, 38, Hmong, elegant, grieves in the dark. Anna sits with her. The house is poor but neat: ritual dishes on a kitchen table, a candle shrine to Npaim burns in a corner.

ANNA
Ms. Davis, are you alone here?

NPAIM'S MOTHER
My son. He move to China. To make money. He is coming. Friday. For funeral.

ANNA
I'm so sorry for your loss. I'm afraid I need to ask if Napim did drugs?

NPAIM'S MOM
A lie. She never touch it. Never! Not once! She have school. She have job. At Macdonald. Npaim working very hard.

ANNA
So, why do you think she was shot?

NPAIM'S MOTHER
This place. These gang. No reason. To be fun. In China, no gun. Npiam want to leave. She said, "Momma, please to go."
(then)
No one buy my house. I make us to stay. For my house. My money. I make us stay.

Anna's grimaces her understanding -- it'd be cruel to argue.

INT. NPAIM'S BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE on Npaim's PHOTO, she looks young, dorky, unremarkable.

Npaim's Mother shows Anna the room. It's neat, girlish, heart-breaking: photos of a Hmong Boys Band, Song Zuying, Bieber. In the light, we see the mother more clearly, she trembles.

ANNA
Who around here would hurt such a kid?

No response.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Who do you think killed Npaim?

The Mother looks at photos, it's almost like she didn't hear.

Then, a very quietly,...

NPAIM'S MOTHER
Me.

EXT. PECAN GROVE - DUSK

Anna trudges through the trees, looking for the crime scene.

She finds a tiny cluster of flowers. Cheap. Sad. There's only one CARD. From a boy named Derek. She looks around. She's in the middle of a city block in the heart of Fresno. It's a loud and lonely place to leave a corpse, miserable, prosaic.

Her PHONE RINGS. Oscar.

Anna forces herself to answer...

ANNA
Hey, Honey...Yeah, it's crazy here...
I'm fine. Really. I wanna talk to you,
but I'm in traffic...Yeah, I'm fine...
I'll call tonight...Of course....Bye...

She hangs up. Groans. She hates she was dismissive, hates her inability to risk, to be privately who she is professionally.

It's getting dark, starts to rain.

Miserable, she grabs Derek's card and trudges for her car.

And we move up. Up through the trees. Up through the rain. Up through the clouds. As we do so, the image of Anna walking to her car below grows oddly granular, dense, three dimensional, as if she's not in the world but a simulation of the world.

And we hear the roar of drone rotors get louder and louder.

FREEZE.

Silence.

FADE TO:

INT. PENTAGON OFFICE - NIGHT

The office has a view onto the Pentagon's well-lit courtyard.

A DOCKER'S DAD works late in sneakers and an old T-shirt. His desk has numerous paper cups. He's been here a few days.

This is man we will come to know only as QUIGG (41).

An COLLEAGUE enters, wearing sweats, excited. He hands Quigg a 3-D image of Anna, now entering her hotel.

QUIGG'S COLLEAGUE
We got a match. Rolling Stone reporter.
He had three of her articles cached.
(the news)
She's in Fresno.

Quigg glances up -- this fact sends a chill down his spine.

END OF ACT ONE:

ACT TWO

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - HUGE CONFERENCE HOTEL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna enters, tired, irritable.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
She has a shrine to the girl, literally, it's part of Hmong funeral rites. And of course she blames herself.

Rain beats hard on the windows.

ANNA (CONT'D)
How's Oscar?

INTERCUT:

INT. ELVIS'S OFFICE - ROLLING STONE - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Elvis edits the old-fashioned way.

ELVIS (ON THE PHONE)
You're going to have to talk to him.

ANNA
I know.

ELVIS
Jill wants you on Stoya.

ANNA
Nooo. Why?

ELVIS
Probably so you'll fail -- she's one of those feminists who doesn't like women.

ANNA
Sounds like Oscar's daughter.

ELVIS
If there were protective services for adults, I'd hang up to make a call.

Anna laughs. She loves Elvis. Everything about him.

But then...

ELVIS (CONT'D)
One more day, Anna.

INT. SKYROOM LOUNGE - HOTEL - NIGHT

Crowded. Anna works at the bar. Her hands fly over the keys, trying to ignore near-by TV REPORTERS doing their AD-LIBBED imitations of Hailey's Mom. Anna considers confronting them.

The Pilot limps into the lounge. Smiles.

LATER:

Anna and the Pilot flirt at the bar.

ANNA
I know nothing about music! All I listen to is Fleetwood Mac, which, honestly, is all one really needs.

Her CELL BUZZES.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Sorry, professional hazard.

She checks the call. Oscar. Lets it ring out.

LATER:

Anna and the Pilot sit in a quiet corner, closing the place.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I don't think her mother wants to know who killed her. I think she's afraid of what she'll find out.
(a beat)
Must be horrible not to <u>feel</u> where danger lies. Especially in a promised land.

When her CELL BUZZES, she clicks it quiet without looking.

EXT. POOL PATIO - HOTEL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna and the Pilot lounge under an awning, watching the rain.

PILOT
You <u>never</u> cry?

ANNA
Not at weddings. Not at funerals.

PILOT
When was the last time?

ANNA
College, maybe. Watching West Wing.

Her CELL BUZZES.

PILOT
Okay, that's pathetic.

ANNA
The fact I can't cry, or the fact when I do it's over people who all sound like they're giving a commencement address?

PILOT
I meant your phone.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - HOTEL - GROUND FLOOR - STILL LATER NIGHT

Anna and the Pilot sit in booth, happily eating french fries.

PILOT
After it rains here, this time of year, there's a fog. The Tule Fog. Brutal.

Her CELL BUZZES, he snatches it off the table. And turns it OFF as she considers protesting, but realizes it <u>is</u> time.

He puts it back on the table. *See. Easy.*

ANNA
Thank you.

PILOT
You know this is like carrying every secret you have in a plastic bag. And it could be recording everything you say.

ANNA
It's off now.

PILOT
Maybe. Maybe not.
(picks it up again)
There's a program called FinFisher. It lets governments activate your mic and mask the transmit. You never know.

ANNA
I only plot sedition by e-mail.

PILOT
Worse. Not only does the NSA access them, but, by law, the government owns emails left on any domestic server longer than 180 days. They're considered "abandoned".

ANNA
By law? What law?

PILOT
The 1989 Electronic Communications Act.

Anna considers this man -- confident, engaging, passionate.

He turns on her VIDEO FUNCTION. Records her.

PILOT (CONT'D)
And the camera, send any naked selfies?

ANNA
If I did, I'd use encryption, snapchat. I already use an anonymizing network.

He peeks around the phone to send her an indulgent look.

PILOT
NSA can accesses communication trunks, tap undersea cables, pull sat signals. Their mission is to store as much data as possible. All you're doing is telling them where to look for the good stuff.

ANNA
You're not scaring me.

PILOT
Hundred years from now digital archivists will offer a service called, "Who Were They, Really?". For a nominal fee, your great grandkids will get copies of your erotic emails, porn searches, videos, all the selfies you took. <u>All</u> of them. The more provocative -- the more you've tried to hide it -- the more copies will exist.

He keeps the CAMERA trained on her, tries to make her squirm.

PILOT (CONT'D)
Including this one. Hello, Grandkids.

ANNA
Are they mine or yours?

PILOT
Maybe both.

She can't quite see his eyes, one shut, one behind the phone.

PILOT (CONT'D)
You're blushing.

ANNA
I don’t blush.

A delicious, defiant beat.

Finally, he lowers the phone, lets the tension dissipate.

PILOT
Luckily, I have a friend inside the NSA who can expunge it all. Of course, I’ll need copies first.

ANNA
Okay, now I’m scared.

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL - THE WEE HOURS

Empty. Quiet. Dark. ON HER CELL, Anna’s paces by the windows.

ANNA
I hear you breathing. Our voices drop.

She’s not talking to Oscar. The Pilot’s at a PAY PHONE across the lobby. They’re speaking softly with each other.

PILOT
You’re right. This feels more intimate.

ANNA
My father’s in radio. He taught me that. “We learn facts with our eyes but feel emotions with our ears.” The most intimate way to speak to anyone is through a mic...right to their brain.

A sweet beat.

PILOT
You guys close?

ANNA
God, no.

PILOT
How bad is it?

ANNA
For Christmas, I sent him The Brothers Karamazov just so I could underline the line, “Above all, avoid lies, all lies, especially the lies to yourself.”

PILOT
Ow.

ANNA
Yeah, it was maybe a step too far.

Silence.

They let the charged darkness sit heavy around them.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Are you a liar, Captain?

PILOT
Sometimes.
(then)
I try to only lie to protect other people ...but, truth is, it's hard to tell when you're protecting them or just yourself.

She says nothing.

A beat.

PILOT (CONT'D)
Anna?

ANNA
Let's go to my room.

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - HOTEL - BEFORE THE DAWN

Anna and the Pilot make love.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Anna stumbles in hung-over. She lifts the toilet tank lid, retrieves her phone from the water, sealed in a baggie.

There are NINE CALLS from Oscar.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The Pilot half-wakes to find Anna beside him, fully dressed.

PILOT (UNDER A PILLOW)
I'm never getting out of this bed.

ANNA
Listen...this was a bad idea.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DOWNTOWN HOTEL - MORNING

Moving very quickly, Anna steps out into a VERY DENSE FOG.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MORNING

Anna slams the door shut, entombed, stares at nothing. After a moment, she mumbles something self-loathing, gets her cell. Oscar called nine times but left only one MESSAGE. His voice -- low, quiet, tired -- soon plays on speaker.

OSCAR (ON THE PHONE)
Hey. I know your torturing yourself, and I should probably let you. You sell us short, Anna. You're fearless about every thing but your own life. And you won't let me help. I tried. And I want you to know I'm done trying. Okay. Be careful.

Anna panics a bit: caught by the sudden sense of being alone.

She pulls up Oscar's number, puts the phone down. Glances up. Considers the ethics of calling, her compromised position.

Cursing, she starts the car.

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - MORNING

The bed's empty. The shower runs. Curtains slightly billow.

CLOSE on the DOOR. The BOLT turns slowly. The CHAIN moves of its own volition. The knob slides silently to the opening. Pops out. Sticks to the door almost immediately. It slowly moves down until the slack is gone, then it dangles freely.

A young BALD MAN and an ELEGANT WOMAN enter silently, pistols drawn, both with journalist ID's around their necks.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

The Bald Man trains his gun on the shower curtain. He notes watery footsteps on the floor. The Woman joins him.

ELEGANT WOMAN (IN HEBREW)
Hoo lo Po.
(subtitled)
He's not here.

The Bald Man calmly opens the curtain, turns the water off.

END OF ACT TWO:

ACT THREE

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - ROLLING STONE - DAY

Tali works at a very long table, talking on her PHONE while scanning some white guy's FACEBOOK PAGE.

ANNA (O.S.)
What's his favorite movie?

INTERCUT:

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Anna drives the misty parking lot of a MASSIVE HIGH SCHOOL.

TALI
Cameron Crowe's "Singles".
(then)
Who's Cameron Crowe?

Peeved, Anna looks for an empty spot.

ANNA
Does the principal have a band?

TALI
Yes! Good call. Eww, it's named SoulPatch.

ANNA
I got this.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Huge. Post-modern. Eerie in the fog. Anna moves up the walk.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
(playing him)
Here's the deal, Principal Taylor, you let me talk to Derek and I guarantee Rolling Stone won't put Lady Gaga on the cover again for at least 12 months.

EXT. SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR, 46, a 90's version of cool, escorts Anna.

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR
On fog days, we only let students out for PE. They'll have sex in the grass.

ANNA
Was Npaim a good student?

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR
She was. And never trouble. Well, not til we found crystal meth in her purse.

ANNA
Was it just a random search?

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR
The FPD got a tip. They came out and did her locker. Some of her friends had been experimenting so I wasn't shocked.

A figure appears, a TEACHER MONITOR, unhappily on quad duty.

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Darryl.

TEACHER MONITOR
Heather and Tonya are out here, but damn it I if still don't smell weed.

PRINCIPAL TAYLOR
Nooo. Really?

AN UNSEEN HEATHER
(somewhere in the fog)
I smell it, too.

AN UNSEEN TONYA
(farther away)
Me, too!

The Principal seems to take this personally. Anna gestures to the athletics field to say she can get their herself.

EXT. RUNNING TRACK - DAY

A FEMALE COACH helps a Student pretending to have a cramp.

FEMALE COACH
He's supposed to be doing laps, so he's in there somewhere.

She points Anna into the shrouded football field. She marches off into the fog. Forms lurk. Whispers. A girl giggles.

It's hard not to feel vulnerable out here.

ANNA
Derek? Derek?

Kids scurry away like deer. Finally, she sees a scared black boy, not moving, waiting, wary. This is DEREK (16).

ANNA (CONT'D)
Derek?
(he barely nods)
Hey. I'm Anna Loach. I'm a reporter. I want to ask you about Npaim.

He cuts his eyes towards the greyness.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I won't use your name.
(nothing)
Should we go inside?

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Huge. Emptied. Derek's PE clothes in the bright light make him seem awkward, vulnerable. Anna sits across a table.

She's bought him a Snapple.

DEREK
Npaim didn't tweak. I swear on a Bible. Somebody put that ice on her.

ANNA
Who would do that?

DEREK
Somebody. It's not like a personal thing. They just got nabbed is all.

ANNA
How do you mean?

DEREK
This is Fresno. Cops catch you, they make you rat somebody out or go to jail. You gotta give 'em somebody who won't shoot you -- cause they're gonna find out.

He's outlining a common police program of forced informing.

ANNA
Was Npaim also informing for the police?

DEREK
Why you think she got killed? She didn't know the game, gave 'em the wrong dudes.

ANNA
If it's so dangerous, why do you guys go along? Why not just face a judge?

DEREK
They dump like five things on you! They get you for dealin', housin', transport, school zone penalty.
(then)
You own part of it, or you eat all of it.

ANNA
But Npaim did none of it?

DEREK
System don't care!

ANNA
Derek, do you know who killed her?

Derek looks at Anna like she's from another planet.

DEREK
Everybody does.
(a beat)
It was bulldogs.

He's lowered his voice, grown extremely nervous.

DEREK (CONT'D)
They even told her it was comin'.

FLASH TO:

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

Upset, frightened, NPAIM (15) signs a contract while Two Male Detectives loom over her.

She's too nervous to read it.

INT. GARAGE BAY - GAS STATION - DAY

Npaim stands with her arms up, her top off. Concerned, she's letting a Female Cop wire her with a bulky recorder.

She doesn't dare say anything.

INT. GANG HOUSE - DAY

A house party.

On a van seat sofa, cash in her hand, Npaim waits as the Big Bulldog cuts-up, then indifferently hands her a lot of meth.

EXT. NPAIM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Distant police lights.

Head down, Npaim comes home in a MacDonald's uniform, careful not to look...the Big Bulldog is being led to a squad car.

INT. CAFETERIA - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Npaim, Derek and a Friend giggle at lunch. She turns to see a table led by a TEENAGE BULLDOG stare at her, cold, murderous.

The kids exchange a horrified looks.

INT. NPAIM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Npaim's curled up in bed, hyperventilating with abject fear.

We can hear Gang Members somewhere out in the dark, BARKING at the house, telling her that her days are numbered.

BACK TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Anna and Derek as before.

DEREK
She told the police, asked them to put a car out front, but they never did.

Anna is absolutely livid.

ANNA
Hold on. The police create a situation where Npaim, who's fifteen-years-old, and innocent, gets framed. Without a lawyer or even teacher in the room, the police force her to agree to work for them. They make her sign a contract. Put on a wire. Send her into some gang house with known felons. On her own block. Then, she goes in to report the gang's told her they're coming for her, but they didn't help?

Derek just shrugs.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATE AFTERNOON

Anna's moves with angry purpose. Derek follows in his street clothes, uneasy. From what we can see, the lot seems empty.

DEREK
I can get the bus, Mrs. Loach.

ANNA
Don't be crazy.

She leads him into the fog.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Anna and Derek can't find her car. She pulls out her KEY FOB, points it in all four directions, listens for a beep.

Nothing. No, something. Low. Tires creeping along pavement.

Behind them, the eerie outlines of a huge SUV emerge like a leviathan. It stops. The beast just sits there. Defiant, Anna starts walking toward it. The Xenon lights pop on, bright, aggressive. She keeps moving, right for it. The SUV starts to back up. Anna moves faster. It backs up faster. Anna runs.

EXT. LONELY AVENUE - DAY

The SUV flies backward out of the lot, does a reverse 180 and fishtails away. Winded, Anna runs into the avenue to get a license number. Just as the SUV is almost enveloped in the mist, running a red light, it gets T-boned by a pick-up.

Anna runs toward the crash, now smoking in the INTERSECTION, shockingly quiet. She doesn't see a SEDAN barrel out of the lot behind her. It comes on fast, right at her, swerves past and beats her to the wreck. TWO MEN IN SUITS jump out. One runs to the crash; the other, blocks her with an FBI badge.

MAN IN A SUIT
Go back to the lot!
(she doesn't move)
Go back! Now! <u>Go</u>!

Reluctant, Anna turns around and walks back down the avenue.

The Man in a Suit goes to the SUV's passenger side, where his colleague has Quigg, clutching an arm. The Suit checks if she can see, but Anna's now moved off, only briefly looks back.

INT. SUBURBAN MALL - NIGHT

Anna bounds up an inoperative escalator.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
The Feds are following us now?!

ELVIS (O.S.)
Of course not. High school parking lots are ground zero in the drug war.

She comes onto the landing, searching for a store.

INTERCUT:

INT. WEST COAST OFFICE - ROLLING STONE - DAY

Elvis walks and talks while CASSIE (36) hands him WAR PHOTOS.

ELVIS (ON THE PHONE)
You wandered into some kind of sting.

ANNA
What about Npaim? These kids are being forced to act as informants.
(indignant)
No training. No choice.

ELVIS
Yeah, that's a story.

ANNA
Given our drug laws, this could happen anywhere in the country.

ELVIS
Alright. Three more days.

She pumps the air.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Still want you to connect it to the amber girl though. And before she's found.
(realizing)
What's that music?

ANNA
I'm at their mall.

ELVIS
Why?

ANNA
I'm looking for the homicide detective on her case, he moonlights at the Gap!

ELVIS
Don't make enemies, Anna. If this gang didn't murder her, you don't have story. We need proof. We need an arrest.

Anna grimaces, this hadn't really occurred to her.

Lying...

ANNA
I'll behave.

INT. GAP STORE - NIGHT

Detective STEVE PIPKIN (33) folds clothes, a jock gone soft.

ANNA
Hi, there.

Anna appears beside him, close, smiling a bit too intensely.

STEVE
How you doing tonight?

ANNA
Good. I'm Anna Loach. Rolling Stone. I wanted to ask you about Npaim Davis.

The detective's expression goes from solicitous to defensive.

STEVE
Right. Sure. But I'm not allowed to do police work on Gap time. Sorry.

He glances over to where his TEENAGE MANAGER half eyes them from a counter. Anna picks up a shirt, plays customer.

ANNA
I just wanna know if your colleagues in narcotics feel you killed her.

STEVE
Are you kidding me?

ANNA
No.

STEVE
This isn't how you do an interview.

ANNA
It's how I do it.

STEVE
Yeah, well, it sucks. Call the office.

ANNA
I do. I mean I feel like you killed her. And I'm mad enough to make stuff up.

STEVE
That can't be legal.

ANNA
Ever read a magazine in a checkout line?

STEVE
This is harassment.

ANNA
Tell a cop. Cause I'm not one. Harassment is my job description.

She's unnerved him just enough to try to defend himself.

STEVE
You have any idea what gangs have done to Fresno? We use anyone we can get.

ANNA
Even if they're underage?

STEVE
Most dealers are underage.

They need to wait for customers to pass.

STEVE (CONT'D)
All drug busts are from informants. It's not "The Wire" here. There's no money for taps, control rooms. You know how many officers I need to put <u>one</u> suspect under surveillance? Twelve. More for weekends.

His frustration is palpable.

ANNA
Her friend Derek says it was bulldogs.

STEVE
Derek say which one pulled the trigger? There are 10,000 in Fresno county.

Anna lets him win the moment.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Nobody's killed by strangers. Unsolved murders aren't about a lack of suspects they're about a lack of evidence.

ANNA
So, you do have a suspect?

STEVE
Yeah, I have suspects.

ANNA
Someone close to the man she informed on?

He gives her a sarcastic look. *Really? Wow!*

She shrugs. *Just doing my job.*

STEVE
Look, there's a reason these people hate narks. That's how we nail them. Sooner or later, somebody's gonna tell us he saw something, heard something. Somebody's gonna brag. And then we make an arrest.

ANNA
One more. Entirely off the record.
(he just waits)
The fact Npaim died working for you guys, that have anything to do with why there's not another detective on her case?

She can feel he has an opinion here, one he can't share.

STEVE
There'd be a lot more than that if the circus would leave town.

He goes.

ANNA
Who told you to search her purse?

Steve stops, turns, considers.

Angry...

STEVE
Ask Derek.

Anna reels.

INT. SKYROOM LOUNGE - DAY

Anna works at the bar, trying to lose herself in her story.

Behind her, the TV Producers sit around a TV, AD-LIBBING pet notions on which will die first: the Times, Post, Tribune.

Last night's BARTENDER comes at the shift change, putting on his apron. He sees her and wanders over.

BARTENDER
It's Anna, right?
(she nods, wary)
Your buddy from last night left this.

He hands her a hotel ENVELOPE.

Inside is an unsigned LETTER on hotel stationary:

Going to look at planes tomorrow.

She turns the letter over. On the back is a printer scan of an infrared AERIAL IMAGE, tech data, two CLOSE-UP INSERTS.

The texture of the images is familiar to us.

The INSERTS are of young Hispanic men, Bulldogs. A small one exits the driver's side of a Range Rover; the big one, caught mid-sneeze. These are surveillance images of a 3D world.

Then Anna registers the aerial image: the boys carry a sheet with a body from their Rover into the PECAN GROVE.

<u>These are Npaim's murderers</u>.

END OF ACT THREE:

ACT FOUR

EXT. CASTLE AIR MUSEUM - DAY

The museum is on a junky stretch of highway north of Fresno. The DAY MAN opens up, shocked to see a patron pacing, Anna.

MUSEUM DAY MAN
You're an eager beaver, Honey.

She forces a tight smile.

EXT. PLANE YARD - DAY

The yard has some 20 historical planes all in a grassy field. Anna moves cautiously over a winding SIDEWALK linking them.

A figure emerges on a bench by a massive STRATOFORTRESS. It's the Pilot, a bit impatient, pleased to see her.

ANNA
How'd you get in before me?

PILOT
Part of my mystery. Also, nose jobs hurt. I don't sleep much.

She sits beside him, takes out his LETTER.

ANNA
Okay, so what is this?

PILOT
Your perps. And a story, a good one. Just promise it won't come back to me.

ANNA
Promised.

PILOT
After Boston, we started doing training runs over civilian population centers. Up and down the West Coast. Somehow it never stopped, turned into a 24/7 thing. It was soon clear we were just up there waiting.

ANNA
Waiting? For what?

PILOT
A terrorist event.

ANNA
Drones monitor cities inside the US?

PILOT
A single Predator can watch an area four clicks by four clicks. About the size of Fresno. All that data...it's archived. No one tells local law enforcement about it. Me, I think they should. I pulled images from the night of your girl's murder.

He stands.

PILOT (CONT'D)
Rest is up to you.

ANNA
How many drones? How many cities?

PILOT
A lot.

ANNA
Can you give me secondary proof?

Her double-checking seems to wound him, ever-so-slightly.

PILOT
Hailey's in DisneyLand. She's with the guy from the mall, her boyfriend. He's thirty-one. Thousands of people see her every day, and never give her a second thought. We see what were looking for.
(then)
Don't talk about it, not on your cell.

There's something else, he peers up into the drifting mist.

ANNA
Are they watching us? Right now?

PILOT
Usually. Any weather. All night. But fog refracts. It's hard to see into a fog.
(then)
It was fantastic being with you.

ANNA
Sorry about I how I left.

PILOT
You were honest.

ANNA
Maybe. Maybe not.
(an echo, he smiles)
It’s time to tell me your name.

PILOT
No.

ANNA
How do I find you?

PILOT
You don’t.

He smiles a sad smile, warmly, already longing for her.

PILOT (CONT’D)
Try to forget me.

ANNA
Is that advice or a challenge?

PILOT
Both.

He walks away. He’s no longer limping.

INT. STARBUCKS - INTERSTATE 5 - HOURS FROM FRESNO - DAY

Anna waits by a huge window, the desert in the background.

Jeremy approaches. He’s not happy to be here. Sits. Stews.

ANNA
I didn’t know who else to call.

JEREMY
Don’t tell me anything illegal.

ANNA
I won’t tell you if you don’t ask. I just need you to identify a photo.

He nods.

She unfolds the LETTER. He recognizes the image immediately.

JEREMY
Fold it back up.
(she does so)
It’s not a photo. It’s a lidar-enhanced infrared composite. From a drone.

ANNA
What's lidar?

JEREMY
Laser scans. Radar with light. Li-dar.

She waits, watches him decide to tell her classified details.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
We use drones to create 3D simulations of Arab cities. In real time. And a thousand times more useful than any camera. They let us see behind buildings, under trees. A man walks through the bazaar over there and we watch him here. All in 3D.

He leans closer, lowers his voice.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
We can click on a figure, know right away who he is -- where he lives, worships, works, pull up e-mail intercepts, phone, browser history. That's the boring part.
(still closer)
We can map his last 180 days of movement. Everywhere he's gone, everyone one he's met, talked to, walked past. An entire life...(snaps his fingers)...like that.

Anna reels at the unreal implications.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
If something bad happens, we know who did it, who planned it, who helped.

ANNA
What's the program called?

JEREMY
The Eye of God.

ANNA
Is it fully active?

JEREMY
Yeah. And optics are just the beginning. Lasers can target individual molecules. We can ID people who've touched certain chemicals. People carrying metals. A gun goes off, we can track the bullet, origin to impact. Want everybody in Islamabad who wears Old Spice? Give me six seconds.

Anna's speechless.

He indicates her letter...

JEREMY (CONT'D)
That's not Islamabad, Anna.

ANNA
It's Fresno.

Jeremy winces, he was afraid of just that. He considers his sister, asks the question he shouldn't.

JEREMY
Why's a lidar-equipped surveillance drone over an American city?

ANNA
My pilot claims they're over a lot of cities. Every second. Every day. Just up there, waiting for a terrorist attack.

Jeremy glances to the sky, realizes their exposure.

JEREMY
Go to the bathroom. Now.

Before she can respond, he's up and moving.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Jeremy's pacing, visibly shaken. Anna locks the door.

ANNA
We're fine. There's nothing around here.

JEREMY
I knew it...I knew -- goddamn it!
(hardening)
You can't write about this. You can't talk about this. Don't even think it.

ANNA
It's a huge story!

JEREMY
Too bad.

ANNA
It'll revolutionize policing!

JEREMY
No!

ANNA
The men in that image shot a 15-year-old girl. That's them dumping her body!

JEREMY
I don't care! One murder? Are you insane? This stuff only works if no one knows about it. They have tools to keep it that way. Tools that don't involve courts!

Anna smirks. *Don't try to scare me*.

He looks her right in the eye.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
You'll drive into a tree. The car will explode. No one will see it happen.

She can't quite believe she's hearing this so baldly, like something out of a Crichton thriller.

ANNA
Never run from greedy people, Jeremy.

JEREMY
They're not greedy! They're afraid!
(then)
That's worse. So. Much. Worse. You can't show it to anyone. Not now. Not ever.

ANNA
What if no one knew where it came from?

Jeremy groans, literally pulls at his hair.

JEREMY
Okay. Okay. Listen. Just listen. These PED systems have immutable logs. Whoever accessed that image left a trace. One that <u>can't</u> be erased. Ever. If they know what he took, it's easy to find him.

ANNA
Maybe he has a back door.

JEREMY
The program's impenetrable.

ANNA
How do you know that?

JEREMY
I wrote it! We designed the protocols.

This is hard to argue with.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
There's a lot of traffic in the system. Four million people have a top secret clearance. Your friend has one tiny hope of staying alive...if this stops here.

CLOSE on Anna. And if her expression is not the definition of torn, it's hard to imagine what would be.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MASSIVE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Anna considers the LETTER, its unusable truth. Looks up.

Students go home. Anna simply watches. We first think she's imagining their future, but there's a desperation to her.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Derek comes out, squinting, smiling at the sun.

He sees Anna waiting.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Anna has pulled behind the school, a soccer practice off in the distance. She's cool. He's nervous.

ANNA
The bulldogs on Npaim's street. What are their names?

DEREK
Chapa brothers. The big one's Dreamer.

ANNA
They have a Range Rover?

DEREK
Yeah.

ANNA
Did Detective Pipkin ask about them?
(he nods)
He mention anybody else?

Derek shakes his head.

ANNA (CONT'D)
What'd you tell him?

DEREK
Nothing.

ANNA
Derek, the police can't find the gun. No one's come forward. What if you said you saw their Rover at the grove that night?

Derek takes a moment to register she's entirely serious.

DEREK
No way. That's crazy. They'll shoot me. I didn't rat them out! I didn't tell you!

ANNA
I can make the cops protect you.

DEREK
No, you can't!

ANNA
You've lied before, Derek.

He realizes she knows he put meth in Npaim's purse.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You started this. Your lie started this.

DEREK
I just...I had no choice! Okay? If I get arrested, it's over! My whole life! Over! No record is all I got! It's all I got!

ANNA
Npaim's life is over.

DEREK
Why are you doing this to me?!

Suddenly, he's a little boy. Terrified. Emotional. The truth of it overcomes her ambivalence, her toughness.

ANNA
Okay. Okay.
(angry at herself)
Stop crying, Derek.

EXT. STANFORD HILLS - DAY

Elvis jogs past the gargantuan STANFORD SATELLITE DISH.

ANNA (O.S.)
Everyone knows who did it! It's maddening!

ELVIS (ON THE PHONE)
Why won't the FPD arrest them?

INTERCUT:

INT. ANNA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Anna paces frenetically in front of the balcony window.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
And admit they killed her?! Won't happen. An arrest is in nobody's interest. We'll have to force them to move forward.

She considers the Chapa's LIDAR IMAGES.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I need to interview the gang. I need them to say they were at the grove.

ELVIS
You want murderers to tell you they were at the scene of their own crime?

ANNA
On tape, yes.

ELVIS
Enough.

ANNA
Elvis, if we prove this happens here, we stop it from happening elsewhere.

ELVIS
No.

EXT. CARPORT - CHAPA HOUSE - DAY

DREAMER (23) and FLACO (20) CHAPA cut powdered meth with baby formula. The TEENAGE BULLDOG (17) from school stands at the window as a look out. He's playing Bad Piggies, looks up to see a white woman coming through the cyclone gate.

TEENAGE
Yo, Dreamer, Flaco, somebody comin'!

The brothers come to the window, grab their guns. Outside, a DOG barks wildly. Anna Loach walks right toward them....

END OF ACT FOUR:

ACT FIVE

EXT. CARPORT - DAY

Anna stands nervously on the front walk.

A FEMALE BULLDOG (17) strains to hold back a pit-bull. Flaco, Dreamer and Teenage Bulldog come out. They are not welcoming.

The brothers go to her, close, scan up and down the street.

ANNA
Hi. Anna Loach. I'm with Rolling Stone. I'm doing an article on Bulldogs.

She hands Dreamer her CARD.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I was told to ask for the Chapa brothers.

A tense beat.

DREAMER
Rollin' Stones take our picture?

ANNA
I can arrange that.

The boys suddenly grin. Dreamer proudly pockets her card.

EXT. CONCRETE FRONT YARD - DAY

Anna interviews Dreamer and Flaco, sitting in lawn chairs and feeling their oats -- being gangster is playing gangster.

ANNA
So everyone you know's in the life?

DREAMER
(Fresno references)
Ma'n, you in The No. Methland, ma'n. It all we do in the five-five-nine.

FLACO
Every nigga out here think he Scarface.

She checks on her PHONE RECORDER.

ANNA
You guys see a lot of Meth?

DREAMER
Crank everywhere, ma'n.

ANNA
Do you sell it?

The brothers look askance, snicker, egging each other on.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Do you?

DREAMER
Yeah, we deal. What if? It's the life, ma'n. Beefin' and paper. *Cholo* ain't got no money, he ain't got no gun. He gonna get...(shot to the head)...wet.

FLACO
Don't make no money, don't make no sense.

Anna nods to the ANKLE MONITOR around Dreamer's ankle.

ANNA
You recently got arrested for it?

DREAMER
Everybody get cuffed n' stuffed.

ANNA
Do you two see a lot of violence?

FLACO
We rock it up real 'nough.

ANNA
You get involved?

DREAMER
Ma'n, we ain't no studio gangstas.

FLACO
We bark some, we bite some.

ANNA
How about that girl down the block, from the grove. Npaim. Who bit her?

The atmosphere goes dead cold.

DREAMER
Don't be laying that *mierda* off on us.

ANNA
I only asked because of the witness.

FLACO
What witness?

ANNA
The one that says you two were there.

She casually checks her notes, as if merely fact checking.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You drove a Range Rover. Backed into a spot on North First. Around one AM.

A long beat.

Finally...

DREAMER
Yeah, we was up there. We smoke up in there. Didn't see no dead bitch.

ANNA
Well, that explains that.

She puts her phone away.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Alright, then. Thank you.

Anna stands. Flaco nods to the Teenage Bulldog to go stand by the gate, blocking her exit. Dreamer flashes gun metal.

FLACO
What witness you talk to?

ANNA
I can't tell you.

FLACO
Yeah. You can.

He stands, much too close, the intimidation turns physical.

They are frightened, and thus frightening.

DREAMER
You long way from home, little *Hyna*.

ANNA
I need a bucket of water.

DREAMER
What?

ANNA
A bucket of water. A big one. Full.

Flaco nods to the Female. She gets a bucket from the carport, fills it at a faucet, brings it, drops it at Anna's feet.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(to Dreamer)
Put your ankle inside.

Dreamer stares hard as he takes off his right hightop and puts his monitor ankle in the water, immersing it.

ANNA (CONT'D)
There's a secret government program.

She hesitates. They wait. She searches their unyielding eyes.

Anna sits, and pours on the lies,...

ANNA (CONT'D)
That bracelet has a recording device...it sends audio to a State Parolee Monitoring Office. Where I have a source.

FLACO
What kinda audio?

ANNA
Talk. You driving. Dreamer sneezing as he got out of the Rover.

The Brothers exchange a panicked look.

ANNA (CONT'D)
It'll take the FPD about eight more hours to compare the audio to the GPS record of his movements. Then they'll be here.

She stands, shrugs. Looks down at the bucket.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Next time, do what Martha Stewart does: just wrap the damn thing in tinfoil.
(goes to the gate)
And don't be stupid, don't cut it.

Everyone watches silently as Anna waits for the Bulldog to move out her way, goes to her car, climbs inside.

On the door SLAM we're outside...

EXT. NPAIM'S HOUSE - DAY

The rental car sits out front.

One second. Two. Three. Four.

The Range Rover blows past.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Anna watches the Range Rover disappear, clearly relieved.

ANNA (ON THE PHONE)
The Chapa Brothers are running.

INTERCUT:

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE - FPD BUILDING - DAY

Detective Steve Pipkin sits at his desk.

STEVE (ON THE PHONE)
Why is that?

ANNA
I have them on tape admitting they were in the grove the night Npaim died.

She pulls the phone from ear to work her screen, speaks a bit more loudly at the mic, as people often do.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I'm emailing you.

We hear her send it. We hear him receive it.

STEVE
Dreamer's on a tether. We'll get a tamper alert if he takes it off.

ANNA
He won't remove it. You can track him.

STEVE
How would you know?

ANNA
He thinks a monitor wrapped in tinfoil won't emit location coordinates.

STEVE
And how'd he get that idea?

ANNA
The media.
(hanging up)
Happy hunting, Detective.

Anna gets out of the car.

EXT. NPAIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Anna waits for the door to open.

When it does, answering is not Npaim's Mother but her BROTHER (20), half-dressed for a funeral, towel drying his hair.

INT. FUNERARIA (HISPANIC FUNERAL HOME) - DAY

A large hall in a bad part of town. Empty. A casket up front. A Hmong Lady wails ritually in the front row. Two rows back, her Husband eats from a bowl with his hands. A stereo on the carpet plays reed pipe (Qeej) music. The buffet's untouched.

Out in the FOYER, the Brother has brought Anna to see Npaim's Mom. As Anna explains herself, Npaim's Brother interprets.

ANNA
The police know she didn't use meth. They were wrong to make her work for them. I will say so in my article. Npaim's death will make a difference. Here. I promise.

Anna watches the Mother receive the news. The release in her face is visceral and moving. She takes Anna's hand.

She mutters a few words in Hmong.

NPAIM'S BROTHER
My mom asks to honor you with our thanks.

The Mother bows before her, chanting, arms dangling and hands cupped in supplication. She chants the HMONG of an ancient ritual, but her wet eyes suggest a pure and profound thanks.

NPAIM'S BROTHER (CONT'D)
(interprets, quietly)
Thank you, Anna Loach, for attending our funeral...Thank you for thinking of us, our relative, our culture...You are a gift to our family...You are a gift to our family...You are a gift to our....

ANNA (O.S.)
The funeral lasts three days.

INT. PULLPEN - ROLLING STONE - DAY

Elvis stands at Anna's desk, speaking ON HER PHONE. All the others watch, save Oscar who's staring at his computer.

ANNA (O.S.)
If Cass gets here Sunday it's fine. Film the family at the parlor.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Anna comes out ON THE PHONE, carrying her own bags.

ELVIS
How's the mood at your hotel?

ANNA
Less humiliated than it should be.

ELVIS
How does the subject of a statewide Amber Alert hide in DisneyLand for a week?

CLOSE on Anna, already obsessing on the story she can't tell.

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL - DAY

The National Media checks out. Apparently, all at once. Save a group gathered around the Nancy Grace Type, who now is the story, having broke it.

A NANCY GRACE TYPE
Didn't surprise me. My viewers are vigilant. I'm proud we got the tip.

Above the group, she sees a moving hand giving her a finger.

Anna walks for the door, finishing her CALL.

ELVIS
You still have to jump on Stoya.

ANNA
What about Oscar?

ELVIS
I think he's done covering for you.

Anna stops COLD. Oscar's pushed her off to sea, and now he's cutting the rope. This affects her in way his message didn't.

ANNA
(cold, wounded)
Okay.

ELVIS
Drive safe.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Still reeling, Anna wills herself across the crowded lot.

The Police Chief emerges from the hotel behind her.

CHIEF
Ms. Loach! Anna Loach!

Anna forces herself to stop, to come back.

CHIEF (CONT'D)
Good Morning.
(Anna just nods)
I wanted you to know we made arrests in the Npaim Davis case.

ANNA
(cool, trying)
Great.

CHIEF
I hear you played a role in that.

ANNA
Npaim never should have been a police informant. Care to comment.

CHIEF
I'm being nice.

ANNA
Yes, you are.

CHIEF
You have a witness?

ANNA
Nope.

The Chief considers, guesses Anna is protecting someone, and that is her professional prerogative. The Chief nods. *Okay*.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Cops make hard choices, I can't fault you for it. But I can insist you own them.

CHIEF
It’s a lot easier to know what to do when you’re paid just to watch.

And at that impasse, the Chief turns and goes.

Anna walks for her car, passes A Cop in Fatigues.

ANNA
(mean)
Nice camouflage.

INT. RENTAL CAR - LONELY ROAD - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Anna drives, depressed, and tries not think about her PHONE, which beckons from the passenger seat. When she can’t stand it any longer, she picks it up and calls Oscar.

One ring. Two. Three.

Will he answer?

Anna looks up to see...a darkened police car blocks the road.

EXT. LONELY ROAD - NIGHT

The rental screeches to stop. A NERVOUS COP has been waving a weak flashlight. She hangs up and lowers her window.

NERVOUS COP
Jesus, sorry. Sorry. Car battery died on me. Hit your hazards, Ma’am.

ANNA
What’s going on?

NERVOUS COP
Helicopter in the road ahead. Migrant worker had a heart attack. Should get an all clear any minute. Stay in your car.

He touches his hat to thank her, then walks to the back of her car. She watches him in the mirror as he stands facing the other way, waving an impotent light down a dark road.

It’s eerie silent. Still. Strange.

She sees distant copter lights rise, grins at her paranoia.

Then she notices...the Cop has disappeared. She spins. Looks. He’s vanished. *What the fuck?!* The helicopter comes her way.

Her doors unlock. Her engine dies.

Bright lights pop on behind berms flanking the road.

Anna knows to panic. She scrambles for the LETTER, finds it, rips off the image half, stuffs it into her mouth, eats it.

FOUR HUMVEES come over the hillocks, all track lights trained on the car. They surround her. The Copter spot blinds her as it hovers, angry. Laser aim-dots dance over her as she chews.

A LOUDSPEAKER
Get out! Out of the car! Lie down!

The trunk pops open. She swallows.

Anna opens the door, steps into down wash that whips her hair and skirt mercilessly. She raises her hands best she can. She drops, lies on the pavement, arms and legs apart. We can see the SOLDIERS now, dressed black. One searches her -- he's not delicate or politically correct about it. A thumbs up.

Quigg emerges from darkness, his arm now in a sling, kneels beside Anna, out of patience and forced paternal.

QUIGG
(yells over the copter)
Where is he, Ms. Loach?!

She has no idea who he means. He holds up an IPHONE, there is a picture of her PILOT in a suit he could never afford.

He's clearly no drone pilot.

QUIGG (CONT'D)
This man?! Where is "Stoya"?!

Anna grins to herself -- she's surprised, and not displeased.

QUIGG (CONT'D)
No one wants to hurt you!

A threat. Anna looks up into the night, up past the glare and circling copter, up where the Eye of God must surely watch.

She squints back at the Fed.

ANNA
Go to hell.

SMASH CUT:

CREDITS.