CASSANDRA FRENCH'S FINISHING SCHOOL FOR BOYS

"Pilot"

Written by

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based on his novel

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TEASER/ACT ONE

TIGHT ON THE RUBY-RED LIPS OF 23-YEAR-OLD CASSANDRA FRENCH

CASSANDRA
I don't normally do this sort of thing. But since we've ended up here, I've got three rules. Number One: No screaming.

ON A HAND, yanking a length of hair. Pulling hard.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)
Shrieking works for orgasms and the ice-cream man. Anything else is just a waste of breath.

SPANDEX being pulled taut and SNAPPED against flesh.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)
Rule Number Two: When I say it's over, it's over.

ON A LENGTH OF ROPE, twisting between two red, raw wrists.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)
You're going to beg, but I'm telling you now, no means no.

ON CASSANDRA'S FACE, STARING AT CAMERA

CASSANDRA
And Rule Number Three: This is our little secret. It does not get Tweeted or Flickr'd or Tumbled. A single status update, and so help me God I will hunt you down like the socially networked dog you are. So... Are we agreed?

A beat. CUT WIDE TO REVEAL CASSANDRA FRENCH, 23, standing next to her best friend CLAIRE WALLACE inside a CrossFit gym. Spandex shorts, hair tied up in a bun, jump rope twisted nervously between her hands. Both girls out of their element.

CLAIRE
I will take this day to my grave.

All around them, various WOMEN, each a Victoria's Secret model. Stretching, hydrating -- just *existing* in a wash of physical beauty. ON CASSIE, staring hard at her reflection.

CASSANDRA
Shit. I was hot back in law school.

CLAIRE
L.A. grades on a curve.

Then -- in walks LEXI, rail-thin and drop-dead gorgeous.

LEXI
Hi, everybody! Ready to start?

The “perfect” women stare at Lexi with the same jealousy and self-doubt Cassie was just feeling. She immediately perks up.

CASSANDRA
I love this town.

MAIN TITLES

CUT TO:

CASSANDRA, SCREAMING BLOODY MURDER

Her face contorted in pain. A beat -- and then the camera FLIPS AROUND -- she’s upside down. And still screaming.

INT. CROSSFIT GYM - DAY

Cassie tries to punch out handstand push-ups with the group. Claire, nearby, leans against a wall, blithely on her cell.

CLAIRE
Fantastic. No, she’s busy. Hang on.
(to Cassie)
Kat got us on the list for tonight!

Cassandra GRUNTS hard, her arms about to give out.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
(back into phone)
She’s thrilled. Big hugs.

LEXI
...and nine, and... ten.

Cassie pushes hard -- and does it! She slides down the wall, victorious, exhausted. Pumping a weak fist in the air. Then:

LEXI (CONT’D)
Great warmup! Now let’s <u>really</u> get it started!

Cassie stares up at Lexi with murderous intent as the bubbly blonde leads the rest of the class toward the free weights.

CLAIRE
You can’t kill her. She’s our friend.

CASSANDRA
Shut up. Let me dream.

CLAIRE
Upsy-daisy. 55 more minutes to go.

Claire reaches down and helps Cassandra to her feet. As Cassie staggers toward the class, Claire makes another call.

EXT. LA MILL - PATIO NEAR STREET - DAY

Sunday afternoon, and the locals are out in full force. The breadth of Los Angeles on display, eating and being seen. Cassandra, Claire, and Lexi sip coffee at a cozy table.

CLAIRE
I don't know. You're back home for six months and already you've found The One. I don't buy it.

CASSANDRA
He's in med school, he's cute, he doesn't fade when I talk. He plays the guitar, he cooks. He's perfect.

CLAIRE
And how many times have we had our hearts broken by the "perfect" guy?

LEXI
I think it's sweet. Remember Pete? We fell in love in a weekend.

CLAIRE
Then he left for an ashram in India.

LEXI
Spirituality is super-hot.

CLAIRE
Perfection's a myth. It only exists in fairy tales and drunken night in Cabo.

CASSANDRA
I'm not saying Owen's The One. We've only been out like six times. Let's just say he's in line and the bouncer's checking the list.

CLAIRE
But he's been back to the VIP room?
(off Cassie's blank stare)
Slipped past the velvet rope?
(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(still blank; loudly)
Jesus -- you've boned, right?

Cassie glances around, embarrassed. Voice low.

CASSANDRA
No. We haven't *made love*. Some of us have a thing called restraint.

CLAIRE
My therapist said restraint is a lie. After he went down on me.

LEXI
Isn't it strange having sex with a boy who knows everything about you?

CLAIRE
Please. Like I tell him the truth.

CASSANDRA
Well, I'm not rushing into things with Owen. I've got a plan --

CLAIRE
There's a surprise.

CASSANDRA
-- which I don't expect you to understand. Just do me a favor and don't go scaring him off.

Lexi leans over her open purse; INSIDE is a small brown CHIWEENIE. Lexi feeds him a nibble of bread. Cooing:

LEXI
Yes, we're going out tonight! We are!
(to Cass and Claire)
The Wuzzle loves dancing.

CLAIRE
Oh, and Kat got us into the after-party at Jungle --

CASSANDRA
No can do. I've gotta get to work super early tomorrow. No matter what time I show up, Wendy's bony ass is already there.

CLAIRE
Why do you care?

CASSANDRA
Cause if I can prove my worth to Stan over the next, say, three years, he'll give me VP instead of Wendy. And if I get VP before I'm 26 then I can focus on getting married. And if I'm married by 28, then I'll be on track for a baby at 30, so I can do 2 months maternity, get promoted to EVP, which means a house in Hancock Park, some great schools for the munchkins, and a nice retirement package. Maybe Palm Desert, I'm not sure.

Claire sits back, half-admiring, half laughing.

CLAIRE
Cassandra French, the world is your incredibly neurotic oyster.

A BUZZ -- it's Cassie's phone. A text, *FROM MOM: EMERGENCY!!! NEED YOUR HELP!* Off Cassie, alarmed --

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Cassie RUNNING down the hallway, to an apartment door --

CASSANDRA
Mom? I'm here -- open up --

She's worried, frantic -- fumbling with a key, KNOCKING --

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
MOM!? Hang on --

The door OPENS -- to reveal JUDI FRENCH, 48, hair perfectly coiffed, stylish pants suit. Happy to see her daughter.

JUDI
Cassie Bear!

CASSANDRA
What's wrong? What's happening?

JUDI
Hm? Oh, yes. I'm out of my energy drink. Do you mind getting me some?

Cassandra just blinks. Trying to stay calm. Judi, oblivious:

JUDI (CONT'D)
The place across the street stopped selling my drinks.
(MORE)

JUDI (CONT'D)
And the next one is over 300 yards from the front door, so... you know.

On her leg, AN ELECTRONIC MONITORING ANKLET, light blinking.

JUDI (CONT'D)
The damned thing wouldn't stop beeping. Well, *now* it stopped, but before... Quite the racket. Sweetheart, you're sweating. Are you feeling okay?

A beat -- Cassie staring down her mother. She could snap and go off at any moment -- but instead buries it deep down.

CASSANDRA
Couldn't be better.

JUDI
That's what I love to hear.

CASSANDRA
I know you do.

Cassie follows her mom inside and the door THUNKS closed.

EXT. SILVERLAKE - DUSK

It's getting late as Cassie's car heads down a small, hilly street and pulls into the garage of an adorable little house.

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Flawless decoration, nearly OCD. Her voicemail on speaker:

OWEN (V.O.)
Hi, Cassandra. It's Owen.

At the sound of his Midwestern twang, Cassandra smiles.

OWEN (V.O.)
I don't have a good reason for calling. I just like how you sound on your voicemail. So... apparently I'm a stalker. This is going well.

Cassie can't help but laugh. Clearly into this guy.

OWEN (V.O.)
Can't wait to see you tonight and meet your friends. Hanging up now to protect myself from... myself... I may break into your house and erase this message. Just a warning.

Cassie smiles warmly. Punches a button --

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Your message has been saved.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Just a sofa and small table. Cassie opens a closet to reveal A CORNUCOPIA OF CLOTHES. Cassie, paralyzed by options.

CASSANDRA
I've got nothing to wear.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Bullshit. Move me left.

Cassie holds up her iPhone -- where Claire is Facetiming. Virtually scanning over Cassandra's wardrobe.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where she's looking at her own iPhone, peering virtually into Cassie's closet. Unlike Cassie's OCD house, Claire's low-rent place is small, messy, and she doesn't seem to give a shit.

CLAIRE
I can work with this.

RAPID MAKEOVER SHOTS OF CASSIE: IN A LITTLE BLACK DRESS --

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Yawn. I'm literally yawning.

IN A PURPLE PLUNGE DRESS -- practically down to her navel.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
You'll get attention.

IN A PINK BUSTIER. She keeps yanking up the top.

CASSANDRA
The boobs say no.

IN A VERY SHORT MINISKIRT. She keeps yanking down the hem.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
The ass says hell no.

IN HER BRA AND PANTIES, HOLDING A SMALL SQUARE OF FABRIC.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
I don't even know where this <u>goes</u>.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Why do you buy these things if you're not going to wear them?

CASSANDRA
They look great online.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
You get paid way too much. In my next life, I'm coming back as a studio lawyer. Okay, what about storage?

Off Cassie -- suddenly nervous -- we CUT TO:

THE WOODEN DOOR

off the living room. Cassie, still Facetiming with Claire, pushes it open. The door CREAKS. She hits a light -- a single bulb illuminates creaky stairs leading into darkness...

INT. CASSANDRA'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Dank, dusty, unfinished. A small metal cot on one wall. Storage boxes on the other. Cassie creeps slowly down the stairs, holding her phone (Claire on it) for light.

CASSANDRA
Don't you dare hang up on me.

Cassie starts opening boxes, pulling out old outfits for Claire to see. Something MOVES in the corner. A spider? Rat?

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Hmmm... no... no... maybe...

CASSANDRA
Claire...

CLAIRE (V.O.)
...no... definitely no...

CASSANDRA
Claire!!!

CLAIRE (V.O.)
(she's found it)
Bingo.

INT. PINNACLE - NIGHT

On Cassie, dressed to kill. Claire and Lexi flanking, as they enter two levels of pounding beats, mesmerizing lights, and the coolest production design we can realistically afford. Everyone in the joint is young, hot, and having fun.

LEXI
It's so pulsy!

And Lexi's off, the crowd welcoming her. Almost instantly dancing with three guys. The dog in her purse bouncing along.

CASSANDRA
How does she do it?

CLAIRE
Barbie Magic. So, where's your man?

Cassie scans the crowd -- no Owen. But her gaze passes over a pretty yet SEVERE WOMAN, all angles. She catches Cassie's eye and waves. Cassie forces a huge grin on her face. Smiling:

CASSANDRA
Wicked Witch of the West Coast.

And, much like her namesake, WENDY is suddenly right there.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Wendy! What a surprise.

WENDY
Bigger surprise for me! This is my ex's party -- I'm *sure* he would have told me if you were on the list. What fun!

CASSANDRA
How great! I love your outfit. Somehow it actually works on you!

WENDY
Yours, too! It's so... mature.

Both of them, grinning widely with nothing nice to say. Claire's watching it all like a tennis match.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Did you hear? Stan's letting me run the meeting tomorrow morning.

CASSANDRA
Fantastic! So you're fully prepared to speak to every demand, including the unprecedented request for 30 points on first dollar gross?

WENDY
Fully!

They smile each other down. Nobody's winning this.

WENDY (CONT'D)
See you in the morning, Cass.

CASSANDRA
Not if I see you first!

Forced laughter. But the second Wendy leaves, Cassie's smile drops. Rubbing her cheeks.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Oh my God, my face hurts.

CLAIRE
That was not your finest moment.

CASSANDRA
I've got to get the lead on that Matt Grayson deal.

CLAIRE
Wait -- you've got a meeting with *Matt Grayson* tomorrow?

CASSANDRA
Probably just his people. Movie stars don't come down to Business Affairs. The legal talk creeps them out.

CLAIRE
So you'll rise and shine and do that nose-to-the-grindstone thing you do so well. Meantime, I found this evening's entertainment.

Claire nods up to the door, where a MUSCULAR GUY has entered.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Mama must be this tall to ride.

Claire starts to slink toward the guy, but Cassie grabs her.

CASSANDRA
Find another attraction, sister.

Just then, the guy sees Cassie -- and lights up. Waving as he walks over. Claire, realizing that it's OWEN.

CLAIRE
So that's why you've kept him hidden. Well played, Ms. French.

OWEN CHARLES gives Cassie a chaste peck on the cheek. She pecks back. Holding hands. It's adorable, and a little gaggy.

CASSANDRA
Owen Charles, Claire Wallace.

OWEN
I've heard so much about you.

CLAIRE
And you would be...?

OWEN
Oh, I -- uh, Cassie and I are --

Claire lets him swing -- then playfully WHACKS his shoulder.

CLAIRE
Relax, I'm just messing with you. C'mon, let's find the bar. You're gonna need a drink.

Off Cassie, smiling -- as the music PUMPS UP -- and a RAPID-FIRE SPEED-THROUGH of the evening begins: Music pounding, drinks flowing -- impossible to hear, but we see:

CLAIRE, grilling Owen. And he's holding his own.

LEXI, dancing with a MILITARY GUY, in full dress whites. The Wuzzle lapping water out of a martini glass.

CASSANDRA AND OWEN on the dance floor -- she's no natural dancer, but they move together, in easy tandem --

CLAIRE, nearby with another GUY -- and she knows how to move. Aggressive is an understatement.

Everything speeding up as the music builds -- more drinks flowing, dancing getting hotter, faster, heavier -- lights flashing -- bubbly pouring -- building to a crescendo, and --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PINNACLE - NIGHT

Cassie and Claire stumble out, exhilarated but exhausted.

CASSANDRA
Well?

CLAIRE
You found a good one. But you be careful. Protect that sweet little mushy heart.

CASSANDRA
You're drunk.

CLAIRE
And you are... also. Drunk. Bam!

Owen comes out and puts his jacket around Cassandra.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
You two lovebirds have fun. I'm gonna go throw a pity dance to that guy with no chin.

She heads back into the club. Owen and Cassie by themselves.

OWEN
We're in no shape to drive. Let me walk you home.

CASSANDRA
You... know this is L.A., right?

OWEN
Yeah, but I'm still an Oklahoma boy. Come on, it ain't that far.

He holds out his arm. A beat -- and Cassie takes it.

CASSANDRA
Mind taking a little detour?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They walk along, Cassie now carrying a bag from 7-11, packed with 5 HOUR ENERGY DRINK, her mother's favorite.

CASSANDRA
It's for my mom. She's... sort of on house arrest.
(off Owen's surprise)
Her husband Ted, my stepfather, he had this spam email business. *Grow Your Wang, Get Girth Now --*

OWEN
Yeah, I've... seen those.

CASSANDRA
Scammed like 4 million bucks. When the FBI came for him, he took off and left my mom holding the bag. She doesn't know where he is, so the judge gave her three years in the apartment. Felon Mom. Total reality show nightmare.

OWEN
Makes you feel any better, my Uncle Lou got arrested on obscenity charges for baking erotic cakes.

CASSANDRA
Like, cakes in the shape of...?

OWEN
You don't wanna know what he used for a mold.

Cassie laughs. Owen's managed to make it all better.

OWEN (CONT'D)
What's your dad think about all this?

CASSANDRA
Not much. He died when I was twelve.

OWEN
I'm sorry, Cassie. Forget I --

CASSANDRA
It's alright. I like to talk about him. He was a physics professor at UCLA. Taught me how to cook, how to ski. He could run the Cornice at Mammoth with his eyes closed.

OWEN
No kidding.

CASSANDRA
He was one rockin dude.

A long beat. Owen taking her hand.

OWEN
His daughter's pretty rockin, too.

Cassie leans into him as they walk. Couldn't be better.

INT. CASSANDRA'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Music plays on a stereo-dock iPod as Cassie and Owen make out on her sofa. Empty wine bottles on the glass coffee table. Owen's hand, roaming down. Cassie, gently pushing it away. Her eyes open -- and she sees the time -- 6*:28am.*

CASSANDRA
Holy crap!

She's suddenly off the couch -- Owen following --

OWEN
What? What's wrong?

CASSANDRA
I've got to get to work. It's this huge meeting. This was great, but you have to go --

But Owen just smiles. Coming in closer. Pressing in on her.

OWEN
I didn't think we were done.

He KISSES her. For a moment, she melts, then pushes him off.

CASSANDRA
We're done. Call me tomorrow, k?

She's on the move, throwing out the wine bottles. Gathering papers, putting away a laptop. Trying to organize.

OWEN
C'mon, Cassie, relax --

CASSANDRA
I have so much to do in the next hour. If you want to hang out, you can totally hang out, but I just don't have time to --

He KISSES her again. Grabbing her chest, hand up her dress. She SHOVES him away and SLAPS him across the cheek. Hard.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Something FLASHES in Owen's eyes. And Cassandra sees it. Taking a wary step backwards --

Too late. He GRABS her by the shoulders, MASHING himself up against her on the wall. Pulling at her dress -- it TEARS --

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
No --

OWEN
Shhh. You got time for this.

CASSANDRA
Owen! STOP --

But he's not listening. YANKING her dress up --

Cassie HITTING him with all her might, but they're too close and he's so much bigger than her --

OWEN
Two goddamned months I've waited.
That's long enough --

ON CASSIE, who's realizing what's about to happen. Tears already coming from her eyes as she tries to PUSH away --

Owen PUSHING back, slamming her head against the wall. Everything going DOUBLE for a second. Cassie, blinking --

As Owen takes a half-step back to unfasten his pants --

Cassie looking up -- at his leer, his breath coming hard and fast -- his pants falling around his ankles.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Relax. This is gonna be fun.

He takes a step forward --

And Cassie KICKS OUT INSTINCTIVELY. A solid CrossFit kick right to the gut.

Owen stumbles backwards -- his feet tangled up in his pants --

As he trips, spinning around uncontrollably -- and

SMASHES THROUGH THE GLASS COFFEE TABLE, which explodes in a symphony of shards.

CASSANDRA doesn't move for a moment. Just stares at Owen, motionless, in the middle of a sea of smashed glass.

Gently, she comes to stand over him. Waiting for him to move.

CASSANDRA
Owen?

Nothing. She pokes him with her toe, then jumps back -- but there's no response.

Blood starts to pool around his body.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Oh, crap.

<u>END OF ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

INT. CASSANDRA'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Cassie's right where we left her -- standing over Owen's unconscious body. Mid freak-out:

CASSANDRA
Oh crap oh crap oh crap oh crap --

She leans down, grabs him by the shoulder and FLIPS him onto his back -- glass CRUNCHING -- Owen's face comes into view --

BLOOD everywhere. Head wounds, flowing freely. Cassie jumps up, gagging. Leaning over a potted plant. No vomit. Yet.

Owen is breathing, but out. She gently slaps him on the face.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Come on. Wake up. Wakey wakey.

Her slaps getting harder each time. Slap. SLAP. SLAP!!! Nothing. Cassie's getting frantic. Then: an idea! She grabs her iPhone, holds the Home button, and SIRI comes to life.

SIRI (V.O.)
What can I help you with?

CASSANDRA
There's an unconscious boy in my living room.

SIRI (V.O.)
Should I call the police?

CASSANDRA
Yes, sure -- good --

As Siri dials, there's a KNOCK at her door. Cassie YELPS --

GUY (O.S.)
Cassandra? Miss French? You okay?

CASSANDRA
One minute!

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
911, what is your emergency?

Cassie looks at her hands: Covered in blood. Looks down at Owen's body. *This doesn't look good.*

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Hello? 911, what is your --

CASSANDRA
Nothing. Sorry. Wrong number.

Freaked, she hangs up, then peers out the window to see A YOUNG GUY IN A BASEBALL CAP on her porch.

GUY (O.S.)
Is everything alright? I've got a key, I can come in if you need me.

She looks down at Owen's body. The blood. Making a decision.

CASSANDRA
Hang on!

INT. CASSANDRA'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

An out-of-breath Cassandra cracks open the front door to reveal DOUG, 19, shaggy/dorky/cute, with a total crush on his "older" neighbor.

CASSANDRA
Doug. Good morning.

A beat. Doug looks at Cassie -- her hair's everywhere, her dress torn, makeup smeared. A total mess.

DOUG
H-hey. I was out front working on my bike when I heard like some banging --

CASSANDRA
Banging?

DOUG
Like a smash, sort of?

She notices a spot of blood. Covering it with her foot.

DOUG (CONT'D)
So it... wasn't from here?

CASSANDRA
Doug, I'd know if there was banging and a smash going on in my own house. I assure you, there's been no banging and a smash.

Doug tries to look inside, but Cassie keeps moving to block his view. Keeping up a smile the entire time.

DOUG
Sure you don't need any help? 'Cause I'm good at... stuff.

A beat. Cassie, having to make a decision. Then:

CASSANDRA
Thank you. No. I'm just fine.

DOUG
My dad's letting me kind of run maintenance on the rental units. So if you need like a window unstuck or whatever. And he's going away next week, so I'm having a party, if you --

CASSANDRA
Maybe. Look, I gotta run. See you.

She closes the door and looks at the clock -- shit, it's past 7:00am already! Crossing quickly to the spare bedroom --

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

Owen, on the floor, is moaning a bit. No words, just sounds. Cassie pulls out her iPhone again. Asking Siri for help.

CASSANDRA
How do I treat a head wound?

SIRI (V.O.)
Treating a head wound. Step one, keep the injury above the heart.

CUT TO:

CASSIE, PULLING OWEN UPRIGHT -- but he just falls down again. Head on the floor.

PROPPING OWEN ON THE BED WITH PILLOWS -- a beat -- and his body lolls forward, head between his legs.

SHOVING HIM BETWEEN THE BED AND THE WALL -- which sticks for a second... but he slowly slides down. The back of his head THUNKING on the floor.

Cassandra doesn't know what to do. It's nearing 7:45am. Then: her eyes alight on the CrossFit jumprope from Lexi's class.

CUT TO:

OWEN

tied to a chair with the jump rope. The blood's been cleaned off his face, and the head wounds covered in gauze.

CASSANDRA (O.S.)
I just need some time to think.

Cassie's at the closet, getting dressed for work.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
I mean, it's not like I've got much of a choice. And you were being a totally rapey asshole. You recognize that, right?

Owen just moans in response. He's still not really awake.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
We'd both had a lot to drink, but... That's no excuse.
(off his silence)
When you come to, we can talk this out like rational, normal adults.

She pulls on a pair of heels and looks him over. What is she forgetting? *Oh, right.* She snaps her fingers, remembering --

CUT TO:

Cassandra, taping a straw to Owen's bottom lip -- and we TRACK BACK along the straw -- which is connected to another, and another, and another -- five-feet long --

All the way down to a Poland Spring water-cooler bottle. If he wakes up, he can drink like a hamster.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
I'll come back on my lunch break. Just don't go anywhere.
(beat)
And don't die.

The only response from Owen is a small gurgle.

EXT. APEX STUDIOS - DAY

The gates of a studio lot open wide to let Cassie's car pull through. A GUARD waving as she zips into the lot.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Cassie hustles past Star Wagonz, a video village, a DIRECTOR setting up a shot. Past the excitement of filmmaking and to:

INT. BUSINESS AFFAIRS - DAY

Posters of the studio's films on every wall. Cassie outside a conference room -- where the meeting's already in full swing.

CASSANDRA
Dammit...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cassie enters, picking her way to the far side of the table. Passing by her boss, STAN, 45. Mouthing: "*I'm so sorry*." Stan waves it off, but Wendy, sitting up front, catches her eye -- and smiles. Wendy knows she won this round.

AGENT
An actor like Matt could hang his hat at whatever studio he likes. We're only here because he likes your films. But if you can't make a deal --

STAN
We can deal, Brian, but we need to be reasonable. We've got some numbers --

MATT GRAYSON, 28, enters the room. Movie-star gorgeous, exuding charm. Stan, Brian, everyone standing to greet him --

MATT
Oh, sit down. C'mon, sit.

He scans the room with that perfect smile -- and for a second, his eyes meet Cassandra's. She nearly swoons.

AGENT
Matt, I've got this.

MATT
No doubt. But this is my future we're talking about. I'd like to be part of how it all goes down.

Immediate agreement all around. Matt grabs a seat -- directly across from Cassandra. Reaches a hand over the table.

MATT (CONT'D)
Matt Grayson.

CASSANDRA
(a bit stunned)
Yes. I know. I've seen you. On the movies. In the movies.

MATT
...and you are...?

CASSANDRA
Cassandra. French. I'm --

But Wendy's immediately at Matt's side, sliding a packet of papers into his hands.

WENDY
Wendy Butler. I prepared some numbers for you.

Matt flips through -- all eyes on him -- and then he tosses the pages on the table, barely having read them.

MATT
This is great. Good work, Wendy.

She beams brightly -- especially at Cassandra.

MATT (CONT'D)
But I need something more. I know Biz Affairs is all about the bottom line, but let's face it: I've got money. What I want -- from all of us -- is *inspiration*. Can we do that?

Stunned silence around the room. No idea.

STAN
Sure. Sure, we can do inspiration.

WENDY
We <u>love</u> inspiration.

Silence again. Matt sitting back. Waiting. It's awkward. Then, suddenly -- she can't hold back:

CASSANDRA
I read in EW that you volunteer at the L.A. Food Bank. Maybe a profit percentage of each film you make automatically goes to them?

Wendy immediately fixes Cassie with a vicious stare. Stan, nervously looking to Matt -- what's he going to say? --

Matt breaks out in a smile.

MATT
There we go! That's what I'm talking about. Inspiration!

Now everyone else around the table is agreeing. With Matt, with each other -- it's a love fest. And Cassandra knows she's scored a point. As the conversation continues --

Her phone BUZZES. Under the table, she pulls it out. A TEXT from CLAIRE: <u>Need to borrow your Rag + Bone boots.</u>

Cassie texting back: <u>All yours.</u>

MATT (CONT'D)
Cassandra?

She tosses the phone back in her purse -- not noticing that Claire has just texted back. Matt's smiling at her.

MATT (CONT'D)
I'd love to hear more.

CASSANDRA
And I'd love to keep talking.

INT. HALLWAY - BUSINESS AFFAIRS - LATER

Cassandra and Wendy walking out -- when Stan approaches.

STAN
Nice work in there. I think we might have a shot at landing him.

WENDY/CASSANDRA
Thank you.

Stan keeps walking, into his big office. Wendy following Cassandra as they head down the hall.

WENDY
There's no way that charity thing makes it into the final deal.

CASSANDRA
He wanted to be inspired. So I inspired.

Wendy's about to get into it, but changes tactics.

WENDY
Who was that hottie you were with at the Pinnacle last night?

Suddenly, Cassie's on edge.

CASSANDRA
What hottie? There was no hottie. I wasn't with a hottie.

Wendy's eyes narrow. *What's up with her?* They arrive at their offices -- next door to each other -- and separate.

INT. CASSANDRA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cassie SLAMS the door behind her. Knees weak. She tosses her open purse on her desk, the iPhone spills out --

When she sees the missed text from Claire: Great. Will run by your house now and grab boots. Love u.

OFF Cassie, eyes going WIDE --

EXT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Cassie's car SKIDS onto the front lawn. She hops out, running into the house -- and into:

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

Where Owen is still strapped to the chair. Quite awake.

OWEN
You!

He LUNGES at her -- the rope barely holding him back. She shrieks, sliding past him toward the closet.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Untie me right this second, or --

A DOORBELL. It's Claire! Owen and Cassie look at each other --

And just as Owen opens his mouth to scream, Cassie grabs the first thing she sees -- one of her bras -- and SHOVES it into his mouth, gagging him. Wrapping a pair of pantyhose around his head to keep it in place. He fights against the rope --

But it holds. Cassie grabs a pair of boots from the closet.

EXT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire's arrived, up on the porch -- as Cassie jumps out of the house, slamming the door. Shoving the boots at Claire.

CLAIRE
Why'd you come home? I've got a key.

CASSANDRA
It... was lunchtime.

CLAIRE
At 10 a.m.?

CASSANDRA
I *know*. Hollywood, right?

Claire looks at Cassie's car, half-parked on the lawn.

CLAIRE
So. What time did Owen leave?

CASSANDRA
He -- he didn't...
(beat)
He didn't come over.

CLAIRE
You two were looking pretty cozy.

Cassie shakes her head. Maybe a bit too much.

CASSANDRA
No, we weren't. We're not. I don't think I'll be seeing him again.

CLAIRE
(knowing something's up)
What did he do to you?

Cassie wants to tell her -- but can't. Just lowers her head.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
See? I told you. Boys suck, and there is no perfect.

Claire goes to open the door, but Cassie steps in the way.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Do you want pee on your porch?

Crap. No choice. Cassie opens up, and Claire rushes in.

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire talking rapid-fire from inside the powder room. Cassie constantly glancing at the spare bedroom door. Crazy tension.

CLAIRE
So Vivian's in Paris, but we've got this new couture line coming into the showroom. And every goddamned A-lister wants to come in "for a look" which means I'm fielding calls 24/7. And I'm just the assistant, it's not like I make any of the decisions, but crap flows downhill and this week yours truly is below sea level.

A FLUSH, and Claire emerges from the bathroom.

CASSANDRA
Sounds... chaotic.

CLAIRE
Dude, you have no idea.

Cassandra walks to the front door and holds it open. She successfully managed it -- Claire's about to leave --

When Claire suddenly stops. Looks at the boots in her hand.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
You know, I think I want those Atwood pumps instead.

And before Cassie can stop her, Claire turns and walks into the spare bedroom.

HOLD ON CASSIE, frozen. All we can hear is muffled SCREAMING (Owen), and banging (the chair). Cassandra can't move.

A moment later, Claire backs out of the room and closes the door. Looks at Cassandra. A very long beat.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Cassie. Honey. What did you do?

And Cassandra begins to break down.

CASSANDRA
I don't know -- I just...

CLAIRE
What happened? You can tell me.

CASSANDRA
He... he was going to... rape me, I think, and -- and I kicked him and he fell and he was unconscious and I just -- needed time to think --

CLAIRE
So you tied him up.
(off Cassie's nod)
With a CrossFit rope.

CASSANDRA
I was out of yarn.

CLAIRE
Why didn't you call the police?

CASSANDRA
I did! But there was so much blood, and then it was all over my hands, and Doug started knocking, and...
(beat)
It's too late now, isn't it?

Off Claire, unsure...

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

Claire enters first, leading Cassandra -- as Owen goes ballistic. The ropes, loosening. Claire removes the bra --

OWEN
-- and you've got no IDEA who you screwed with. Both of y'all are going to jail for a long-ass time. Careers, over. Lives, over.

He's not kidding. There's no forgive-and-forget here.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Now let me out of this before I get *really* angry.

CLAIRE
Did you try to rape my friend?

OWEN
No! Of course not. Her word against mine, and you know it. Now untie this rope and maybe I'll tell the judge to go easy on you.

A long beat. Claire looking at Cassandra. She can't look back. Ashamed, in a way.

Claire moves behind Owen -- and unties the ends of the CrossFit rope. A little slack in the restraint. Owen starting to get loose --

OWEN (CONT'D)
That's the first smart thing you bitches have done.

-- when Claire PULLS THE ROPES TIGHTER, slamming Owen back into the chair. Tying the ends in a strong, complicated knot.

CLAIRE
This bitch was a Girl Scout.

Claire takes her place next to Cassandra. The two of them, standing over Owen -- who can't believe what's happening. He opens his mouth to shout at them --

And Claire SHOVES the bra back in his mouth. Looks at Cassie. They're in this thing together.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Now it's too late.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HUSTLER HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Cassie and Claire walk the aisles. Cassie's horrified and yet amazed -- picking things up, then dropping them in disgust.

CLAIRE
Granted, the situation isn't ideal, but it's fixable.

CASSANDRA
How? Once we let him go, he'll go right to the cops.

CLAIRE
First lesson of PR: Get ahead of the story before the other side does. You're the victim here, not Owen -- we just need to keep him in place until we figure out how to make that abundantly clear.

She stops in front of a display filled with bondage gear.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Load it up.

AT REGISTER - LATER

Cassie dumps a load of CHAINS, RESTRAINTS, and LEATHER on the counter in front of the bored CLERK. Claire hands over a well-punched Hustler Discount Card. Getting a look from Cassie.

CLAIRE
You are in no position for moral judgment, young lady.

LEXI (O.S.)
Girls!

Lexi (with Wuzzle) skips toward them. Cassie's mortified.

CASSANDRA
Lex! How'd you know where we were?

LEXI
Claire checked in on Foursquare.

Cassie's stare burns through her BFF. Claire, admitting:

CLAIRE
I'm kind of the mayor here.

LEXI
Are you... buying all this stuff?

CASSANDRA
No.

CLAIRE
Yes.

Lexi, already distracted, grabs a slutty piece of lingerie off the wall. Cassie mouthing to Claire "*we can't tell her.*"

LEXI (CONT'D)
Do you think Trevor'd like this?

CASSANDRA
Trevor?

LEXI
My soldier. From the club? He's shipping out to Iraq tomorrow. Iran? Wherever. I want to give him a good sendoff. I dunno, it's kinda pricey --

Cassie grabs the lingerie and tosses it on the counter with the rest of the stuff. Handing the clerk her credit card.

CASSANDRA
Anything for the troops.

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cassie and Claire follow the sound of BANGING to find Owen, still strapped to the chair, SLAMMING himself against the front door. The wood on the chair starting to SPLINTER.

CASSANDRA
Hey! That's my grandmother's chair!

Claire and Cassie grab the chair -- Owen fighting -- and DRAG it across the living room. The legs SCRAPING the floor --

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Watch the hardwood. I've got a killer security deposit.

CLAIRE
<u>That's</u> your concern right now?

CASSANDRA
We're just lucky nobody heard him.

CLAIRE
This is L.A. If the place isn't on fire, nobody's gonna give a damn. Still... We need someplace safer.

CASSANDRA
The garage?

CLAIRE
Same problem. Your bedroom?

CASSANDRA
Ew.

Not a lot of options. And then Cassie's eyes alight on the one door she hates. The wooden one in the corner... A SOUND enters (pre-lap): THUNK. THUNK. THUNK... CUT TO:

OWEN

being dragged -- gently, mind you -- down the basement stairs. His head and shoulders THUNKING on each step.

CASSANDRA
Sorry! (thunk) Sorry! (thunk)

CUT TO:

CASSIE AND CLAIRE popping open the cot. Blowing off dust.

WRAPPING CHAINS around pipes set into the wall.

BRINGING DOWN fresh linens. Making the cot cozy.

FIXING LEATHER STRAPS and locks around Owen's wrists, legs.

CASSANDRA AND CLAIRE admiring their handiwork: Owen is in full-but-comfortable restraints. Attached to the wall and bed, but he can get up and pace, which he's currently doing.

A yellow line is drawn across the floor, a few feet from the cot. Claire steps up to it, but not over. Addressing Owen.

CLAIRE
Thank you for being mildly cooperative.
(to Cassie)
Let me know how the night goes.

CASSANDRA
Wait -- you're leaving???

CLAIRE
I've got three actresses coming to the showroom who all think they're getting the same one-of-a-kind dress. So that should be fun.

CASSANDRA
I can't do this on my own. We need a plan, we need lists. We have to --

CLAIRE
We're going to figure this out. I promise you. Tomorrow. For tonight... just don't cross the yellow line.

Claire climbs the stairs. Cassie, below, watching her go nervously. The door opens, closes, and then they're alone.

Cassandra stares at Owen. She's a foot away from the line. He stares back. She slides back a step. Gonna be a long night.

INT. CASSANDRA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alone in her kitchen, Cassandra eats dinner. Watching T.V., but she's not really watching. Can't get out of her own head.

INT. CASSANDRA'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Cassie slowly creeps down the basement stairs. A plate of cookies in her hand.

CASSANDRA
I thought you might want dessert --

But Owen's asleep. On the cot, blanket at his feet. She approaches -- a beat -- stopping just behind the yellow line.

She SLIDES the cookies toward the bed. Leans in, lifts the blanket, and TOSSES it -- it lands half on him. For a beat, Cassandra watches him sleep. Confessing:

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
I liked you. A lot. And I don't know if you really liked me back, or you were lying, or... Or if Claire's right and boys just suck.
(beat)
I don't want to believe that.

His only response, a light SNORE. Cassie heads up, stopping halfway up the stairs. Looking down at this man, now living in her house. Softly:

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Goodnight, Owen.

She turns off the light and heads upstairs.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

ON CASSIE

making breakfast -- TWO PLATES. Pouring OJ -- TWO CUPS.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Owen sits behind the yellow line, eating his breakfast. On the other side, Cassie fiddles with a TV and DVD player.

CASSANDRA
I thought you might like some entertainment. We've got *Bridget Jones, Devil Wears Prada*... Oh, and *Pretty Woman*! Everybody likes *Pretty Woman*, right?
(off Owen's silent glare)
Perk you right up.

She pops it in, hits PLAY -- and Julia Roberts' face lights up the screen. Cassie's instantly happy. Owen, not so much.

INT. CASSANDRA'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassie's at her computer, phone to her ear. Typing: *"Owen Charles", missing*. Scanning the results -- no matches.

CASSANDRA
What if we reenacted that night on video? Make it look real. So I'd have proof of what he tried to do to me?

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Somehow I don't think Owen's ready for his closeup --

STAN (O.S.)
Cassandra?

Stan's standing in her doorway. Cassie SLAMS down her laptop.

CASSANDRA
(into phone)
And I will get you that contract language as soon as possible, Mister... Kutcher.

She hangs up and smiles innocently at a confused Stan.

STAN
We have business with Ashton Kutcher?

CASSANDRA
...different Kutcher. Bob. Kutcher.

STAN
(beat; pressing on)
Right. So, I understand you want to talk to me about the Grayson deal?

CASSANDRA
I've had a few thoughts. The memo --

STAN
Probably best if you ran everything through Wendy. She's really taken a lead on this. That alright with you?

It's not -- but Cassie just clams up and nods impotently.

STAN (CONT'D)
Oh, and drop by my place tomorrow night. My wife's throwing one of her parties. You'll have fun.

CASSANDRA
Sure. Thanks. Love to.

Stan winks and walks out. Off Cassie, kicking herself --

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Cassie's at the door to Claire's one-bedroom apartment. She's a wreck -- holding back tears best she can.

CASSANDRA
And I didn't say a word, because I'm an idiot, so now Wendy's got the gig all wrapped up, and I have to go to this stupid party -- and -- and --
(breaking down)
How am I supposed to do this? Forget about stupid Wendy and the stupid Grayson deal, forget about my mother. I've still got a boy tied up in my basement, and we have no plan to --

Claire's eyes open wide: *shhh*. She moves aside to reveal LEXI, in the room behind her, also crying. Explaining:

CLAIRE
Trevor. The soldier.

Cassie looks to Claire, runs a finger across her neck: *Dead?*

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
No! He shipped out.

Cassie sits on the sofa next to Lexi. Arm around her.

CASSANDRA
You only knew him, what, two days?

LEXI
But it felt like a week!

Lexi's back to bawling -- and it sets Cassandra off, too. As the only functional one around, Claire knows her girls need help. She kneels in front of them, like a football coach.

CLAIRE
Ladies, when life takes a dump on your head, there's really only one surefire way to clean it off.

They look up, makeup streaked, but hopeful. Does she mean...?

INT. SPARKLING SHOWROOM - DAY

The room is filled with amazing clothes. Every color, every style -- all super-high-end pieces. Cassie and Lexi, mouths agape, flank Claire, twirling the keys in her hand.

LEXI
It's amazing. It's -- it's --

CASSANDRA
Like looking at the face of God.

CLAIRE
When Heidi Klum masturbates, <u>this</u> is what she fantasizes about. And for the next hour, it's all yours.

LEXI
Vivian won't mind?

CLAIRE
Vivian won't know. She pays me shit, I take the perks I can.

CASSANDRA
I could so kiss you right now.

CLAIRE
This isn't freshman dorm. Go on, let the fashion therapy do its job.

Cassie and Lexi look at each other -- and then run off, giggling like schoolgirls, to the racks -- as “Pretty Woman” starts to play over a very PRETTY WOMAN-esque MONTAGE:

Lexi, Cassie, and Claire trying on clothes -- modeling for each other, in front of mirrors --

INTERCUT with Owen, watching Pretty Woman in the basement --

THE GIRLS trying on everything from ridiculous runway designs to stunning couture. Laughing, bonding -- and then:

ON CLAIRE AND LEXI staring up at Cassandra -- who we can’t see. Eyes wide.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
That’s it. That’s the one.

Off Cassie’s smile, beaming...

LATER

Claire slides protective plastic over a dress -- we don’t get to see it yet -- and hands it gingerly to Cassandra.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
Fifteen thousand.

CASSANDRA
I know.

CLAIRE
Dollars.

CASSANDRA
I know. I won’t rip it, stain it, rub it, or look at it too hard.

Lexi’s got her own plastic-covered dress. Beaming now.

CLAIRE
The smallest spot, and Vivian will fire my underpaid ass.

INT. CASSANDRA’S CAR - DAY

The dress hung up in the backseat, a takeout bag from Chin Chin with two boxes on the passenger seat. Cassie drives, almost cheery, taking the corner onto her street --

A CAR idles outside her house. At her door, a hulking man and a smaller woman -- knocking. Clearly plainclothes COPS.

Cassie hits the brakes, the car screeching to a halt 20 yards from her door. Rapidly dialing her phone. On the speaker:

CLAIRE (V.O.)
What up?

CASSANDRA
Two cops at the house.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Straight up five-oh or gumshoes?

CASSANDRA
Who <u>are</u> you? Just get over here.

The cops give up and head to their car. Cassie's almost in the clear -- when they spot her. *Shit.* Casually as possible, she pulls in and steps out. The male cop approaches --

DETECTIVE BATES
Cassandra French? I'm Detective Bates, this is Detective Meier. We were hoping you could answer a few questions for us.

CASSANDRA
Of course. Is everything alright?

DETECTIVE MEIER
Do you recognize this man?

ON CASSIE as they hand her a photo. We can't see it, but we know who it is. Cassie maintains.

CASSANDRA
He's... handsome.

DETECTIVE BATES
But do you know him?

The detective, staring at her. Cassie looking back. Not wanting to trap herself. Thinking.

CASSANDRA
I've... seen him.

DETECTIVE MEIER
Could you tell us where?

CASSANDRA
Where. Where I saw him...? Out?

Bates looks at Meier -- *just tell her.*

DETECTIVE MEIER
Your coworker remembers seeing you two dancing at a Pinnacle Club party the other night.

CASSANDRA
Yes. Yes, that's it. That would be "out", wouldn't it?
(realizing)
Did you say my coworker?

DETECTIVE BATES
Wendy Butler. One of the party hosts. She was very quick to remember you and Mr. Charles dancing together.

CASSANDRA
I'm sure she was. Look, I danced with the guy. Did he mug somebody or...?

DETECTIVE BATES
He's missing. His girlfriend up north contacted us --

Cassie involuntarily GRABS the detective's arm.

CASSANDRA
I'm sorry, what?

Bates removes her hand. A sidelong look at his partner.

DETECTIVE BATES
Apparently she's been trying to reach him for a few days now.

ON CASSIE -- her mind, churning. Unable to process.

DETECTIVE BATES (CONT'D)
Hey, you mind if we take this inside? It's getting hot out here.

Cassie's sweating, too -- but not from the heat. The cops start to move toward the house, but Cassie blocks them.

CASSANDRA
I don't think that's the best idea.

DETECTIVE MEIER
Why is that?

CASSANDRA
It's... messy.

DETECTIVE MEIER
Please. I've got kids.

Cassandra laughs -- way too hard.

CASSANDRA
Good one. Kids -- such goddamned messes, right?

Now Bates and Meier can't ignore it. Something's up.

DETECTIVE BATES
Ms. French, may we come inside?

Cassie gets control. Knows her legal rights.

CASSANDRA
No. I do not give you permission to enter my property. Detectives.

A staredown between Cassie and the hulking detective. And Cassie wins. Bates and Meier back off, heading to their car.

DETECTIVE BATES
Do me a favor, Ms. French. Stick around. I'd like to see you again.

As they get in the car and gun it, Claire's car turns the corner. Pulling up just as they leave.

CLAIRE
I'm sorry -- Sunset was jammed --

CASSANDRA
They'll be back soon. With a warrant.

ON CASSANDRA, realizing that everything's just kicked up.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
We've got to get rid of him.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

CASSANDRA (O.S.)
You have a girlfriend?

A finger FLICKS Owen's ear, hard. Owen YELPS. He's restrained in the chair, Cassie and Claire to either side. Cassandra, enraged. Claire, on ear-flick duty.

OWEN
Ex-girlfriend! We broke up --

Claire FLICKS him again. Her nails hard, vicious.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Ow! Stop it!

CLAIRE
Then stop lying. We want answers.

CASSANDRA
You're not from Oklahoma. That whole *aw-shucks*, it's a put-on.

OWEN
Now, y'all wait a second --
(FLICK!)
Okay, okay, I'm from Fresno!

CASSANDRA
Do you even play guitar? Or cook? Are you really in medical school?

Owen's about to lie -- but sees Claire's finger twitch.

OWEN
No. None of it.

CLAIRE
Look at that. The jerk can learn.

OWEN
I was in chiropractic school --

Cassie claps her hands over her ears. She's beside herself.

CASSANDRA
Everything you told me, it was all a lie. To what, get me into bed?

OWEN
Not like it worked.

FLICK. And then ANOTHER FLICK from Cassie.

OWEN (CONT'D)
C'mon, that <u>really</u> hurts!

INT. CASSANDRA'S GARAGE - DAY

Cassie's beside herself with rage. Claire tries to maintain.

CASSANDRA
Out! I want him out of this house!

CLAIRE
That's pretty much the goal, honey.
But he's just gonna run to the cops --
(beat)
Unless...

CASSANDRA
I don't like that look. That is not a
comforting look --

CLAIRE
I know a guy who can hook us up with
some highly illegal stuff. Coke,
smack, angel dust mixed together. He
calls it Satan's Vagina. Don't judge.
We hide it in Owen's apartment,
release him, and tell him if he says
a word, we'll tip off the DEA.

For a beat, Cassandra thinks it over. It *would* work... Then:

CASSANDRA
...no. No. I'm already a kidnapper,
I'm not going down that road.

CLAIRE
Then you'd better come up with
something else. And soon.

She's right, of course -- but Cassie's got nothing.

EXT. STAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A beautiful Brentwood home, lights twinkling in the night.

INT. STAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The party is already in full swing. Piano music playing lightly. ON THE FACES of thirty GUESTS, mingling, talking. Stan's there with his wife HELEN. Wendy, too.

ON THE FRONT DOOR as it opens, and into the room walks:

CASSANDRA, in the $15,000 dress from the showroom. It's not just a dress -- it's a full-on Oscar Night gown. And she's gorgeous. All talk stops as everyone turns to look -- even the piano player. For a moment, she's the belle of the ball.

Then she gets a look at everyone else: women in cute cocktail dresses, men in casual slacks. She is intensely overdressed.

A moment later, talk starts up again -- a lot of it murmurs about Cassie. She takes a breath, sucks it up, and enters. Stan and his beautiful wife HELEN are first over --

STAN
Cassandra! Glad you could make it. I want you to meet my wife, Helen.

HELEN
Your dress is stunning.

CASSANDRA
I feel a little... silly. Maybe I should go --

HELEN
Nonsense. If anyone should feel silly, it's the rest of us. Come in, I'll introduce you.

She takes Cassandra by the arm and leads her inside...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Claire's alone. Looking at her watch. A MAN sidles up to her.

MAN
Buy you a drink?

CLAIRE
No thank you. I'm meeting someone.

MAN
Maybe that someone is me.

CLAIRE
Really? Do you have Satan's Vagina?

The guy has no idea how to answer that. He moves on. Fast.

INT. STAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cassie's uncomfortable, butterflying around the room, trying to avoid conversation -- when her purse RINGS. Salvation!

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cassie ducking in, closing the door. Phone to her ear.

CASSANDRA
You are a lifesaver.

LEXI (V.O.)
...Cass... it's Trevor. He's here.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lexi's at a table in one corner. Looking across the room at: TREVOR, her soldier boy. Still in his uniform -- and spoon-feeding a REDHEAD dessert. Decidedly <u>not</u> in Iraq. Or Iran.

LEXI
He said he shipped out. But I guess he just moved on.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the bathroom door.

CASSANDRA
One second!
(into phone)
I'm so sorry. He didn't deserve you.

LEXI (V.O.)
Why do they do it?

CASSANDRA
If I knew the answer to that...
(another knock)
I said one second!
(into phone)
Lex, I gotta run. Call you in ten.

INT. STAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cassie emerges from the bathroom, adjusting her dress. Still not set. Having to reach into the cups, adjust her boobs -- looking up just as she stumbles into Matt Grayson.

CASSANDRA
Hey! Oh, I wasn't --

MATT
I'm sure. But you're still --

Hand still down her own dress. She quickly removes it.

MATT (CONT'D)
Missed you at the meeting today.

CASSANDRA
Oh, I didn't -- I'm not really... on your deal. Technically. So... yeah.

MATT
That's a shame. I like the way you approach things.

CASSANDRA
You -- do? I mean -- thanks. I try to... mix it up. Inspire.

MATT
Maybe I should speak with Stan. See if I can't get you on the team. It would be a personal favor to me.

CASSANDRA
S-sure. Of course.

He gives her a heart-melting wink. Turns to go, stops --

MATT
Oh, and Cassandra -- you look beautiful tonight.

ON CASSIE, practically floating. Moving effortlessly through the throngs, like a feather in the air. Everything gauzy --

And then, THROUGH AN OPEN BEDROOM DOOR -- she sees Wendy. Cassie's about to go brag a bit -- when she also sees STAN in the bedroom. Wendy pulls Stan toward her.

Cassie freezes, wide-eyed, as she watches this tryst about to go down. Disgusted with Stan -- his wife's in the other room!

But then -- she sees Stan PULLING AWAY from Wendy. Fending her off. Wendy, trying hard -- she wants this -- but Stan isn't interested. Cassie can barely hear:

STAN
...go home and sleep it off. I'll forget this happened.

Cassie ducks back into a corner as Stan leaves the bedroom and passes by, back into the party. Cassie turns back --

WENDY's right in front of her. She knows Cassie saw it all.

WENDY
Cass! What an outfit! Did I miss the invite to the Golden Globes?

CASSANDRA
Go big or go home, right?

Wendy spreads her drunken arms wide -- going in for a hug. Cassie, hating every second, hugging her back.

WENDY
(whispering)
That VP job... is mine.

As she pulls back, Wendy “accidentally” catches her hand on Cassandra’s dress -- RIIIIIP. Cassie’s jaw drops.

WENDY (CONT’D)
Oops.

CUT TO:

CASSANDRA, running through the house, trying to hold her ruined dress together. Tears running down her face.

HELEN
Hey -- hey, what’s wrong?

CASSANDRA
-- it ripped and I can’t fix it so Claire’s gonna get fired and she’s the only one I can trust and --

HELEN
Shhh, it’s okay. Lemme take a look.

Taking Cassie under her arm, like a mom. Inspecting the tear.

HELEN (CONT’D)
Come with me.

INT. STAN’S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Helen rummages through Stan’s desk. Cassie standing nearby.

HELEN
If there’s one good thing that comes from being a lawyer’s wife -- and believe me, it has its downsides -- it’s easy access to office supplies.

She pulls out THREE BINDER CLIPS. Metal triangles with clips on each side. Flipping Cassie’s dress up, seam inside-out.

CASSANDRA
(through her sniffles)
No wonder you and Stan found each other. The good ones always pair up. The rest of us get the gunk at the bottom of the sink. But maybe that's all I deserve. I get sink gunk because I am sink gunk.

Helen grabs the fabric, bunching it together --

HELEN
Nonsense. When Stan and I met he was just as confused and hormone-driven as any other boy. I wasn't much better. But I looked at it as my responsibility: something needed fixing, and who else but me? If you want something, you work for it. Change doesn't happen by chance.

-- and FASTENING IT TOGETHER with the legal clips. Flipping it back over again so the "fix" is hidden on the inside.

HELEN (CONT'D)
See? Good as new. For tonight, at least. Do you know a good seamstress?

Wiping away her tears, Cassie nods. She does.

INT. JUDI FRENCH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cassie sits in one of her mother's T-shirts as Judi leans over her sewing machine, carefully stitching up the seam.

JUDI
This may cost fifteen thousand dollars but they used 5 cent thread.

CASSANDRA
Can you fix it?

JUDI
This? This is nothing. Go on, get something to eat. Stop worrying.

Cassie smiles, watching her mom sew. It's comforting.

CASSANDRA
When did you know Dad was The One?

JUDI
The One? There's no such thing.

CASSANDRA
The love of your life, then.

JUDI
I do remember this one afternoon. He was washing the car out front like always and I was watching him shampoo the floor mats... And suddenly I realized that I'd always loved him.

CASSANDRA
Floor mats. So, not because he was kind or smart or sweet --

JUDI
Well, yes, he was all those things. But you don't just compile a list and check it off. It's... something you can't define.

Judi's almost done with the seam repair.

JUDI (CONT'D)
Be a dear and grab my scissors from the back bedroom.

Cassie heads off. WE FOLLOW as the conversation continues.

JUDI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mind you, your father was no saint.

CLAIRE
Mom...

IN THE BACK BEDROOM

Cassandra pulls open a drawer, looking for scissors -- AND A PICTURE POSTCARD falls out. Cassandra picks it up. It's from Punta Del Este, Uruguay. Nothing written on the back -- except a small heart next to Judi's address.

JUDI (O.S.)
I know, you don't like to hear it, but everyone has their faults.

In fact, THE ENTIRE DRAWER is filled with postcards from Punta Del Este -- each with nothing on it but a single heart.

INT. JUDI FRENCH'S APARTMENT - DAY

ON JUDI, standing over the dress, inspecting it --

CASSANDRA (O.S.)
You know where Ted is.

Judi looks up to see Cassie, holding the postcards. Busted.

JUDI
It's... it's complicated.

CASSANDRA
Complicated? All you've had to do is tell the judge where he is, and you can go free. Dad had faults? Ted's a felon, and he let you take the fall -- and worse, you let him let you do it. You let him completely screw up your life. You let him screw up my life.

JUDI
You -- you wouldn't understand --

CASSANDRA
Damn it, Mom. I thought you were stronger than that.
(beat)
I thought I was, too.

Cassie grabs the dress and storms out. Judi going to stop her -- but the second she gets past the door, the anklet BEEPS.

INT. CASSANDRA'S CAR - NIGHT

Cassie drives fast, but aimlessly. Too many tears for one night. Her phone RINGS -- it's Claire. She hits ANSWER.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
My guy came through. I've got the stuff.

CASSANDRA
The Satan's... hoo-ha?

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Time's come, kiddo. Cops'll be back at your door any minute. Your call. What's it gonna be?

Off Cassandra -- every option, bound to land her in jail or worse. No idea what to do. It's all come down to this moment.

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. CASSANDRA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Cassandra's eating a morning bowl of cereal -- when three rapid KNOCKS shake the front door. She looks up -- tense.

ON THE DOOR as she opens it -- and standing there are Detectives Bates and Meier. A warrant in Bates' hand.

DETECTIVE BATES
I'm a man of my word.

They push past her and into the house. Cassie, following:

CASSANDRA
I already told you, I don't know anything about this.

QUICK SHOTS as the detectives search every nook, Cassie at their side throughout. IN HER BEDROOM -- nothing there.

IN THE SPARE BEDROOM -- just the closet of clothes.

OPENING THE GARAGE -- and except for Cassie's car, empty.

IN THE LIVING ROOM -- and the cops are legitimately stumped.

DETECTIVE BATES
It... seems we owe you an apology.

CASSANDRA
Forget it. Just go.

Bates turns. Cassie, relaxing, about to win the battle. Then:

DETECTIVE MEIER
What's with the curtains?

On the wall are some new curtains, hung on a rod.

CASSANDRA
They're... decorative.

Meier YANKS the curtains -- the basement door. Nervously:

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
You don't wanna go down there. Trust me.

INT. BASEMENT - ON STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Bates and Meier, cautiously taking the stairs. The dim light from above throwing harsh shadows. A sound -- CHAINS.

DETECTIVE BATES
Hello? Anybody down here?

Cassie, right behind -- trying to stop them --

CASSANDRA
Please, wait -- I can explain --

DETECTIVE MEIER
Ms. French, stay back!

They descend into the basement. Bates' eyes going wide --

BATES
Holy Mary...

CAMERA SLOWLY PIVOTS to give a full view of the basement: Where CLAIRE is tied on the cot, in lingerie, wrapped in Owen's restraints. Looking up at the stunned cops.

CLAIRE
Trying to have some fun here. You guys in or out?

CASSANDRA
I told you not to go down here.
(calling to Claire)
I told them not to come down.

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Cassie watches through the window as the flustered detectives drive off. Claire, rubbing her wrists, comes up behind her.

CLAIRE
At least they'll have a story to tell. So... you ready for this?

INT. CASSANDRA'S GARAGE - DAY

Cassie and Claire stand by the trunk of the car. POPPING it -- <u>OWEN is in there</u>, bound and gagged. In there the whole time.

FLASH BACK TO:

THE PREVIOUS NIGHT - PRIOR SCENE

Cassandra in her car, driving. Claire on the speakerphone.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Your call. What's it gonna be?

That long beat, as Cassie thinks. And then:

INT. CASSANDRA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ten minutes later, and Cassie, still in her mom's T-shirt, is energized, on fire. Pacing in front of Claire.

CASSANDRA
We're going to teach him.
(off Claire's confusion)
Think about what we accept from boys, every day, as *normal*: Deceit. Rudeness. Unresponded emails and cryptic texts and pictures of their junk. The casual dismissal of the things we care about. A million minuscule transgressions that add up to a lifetime of unfulfilled wishes.

CLAIRE
You're scaring me. Go on.

CASSANDRA
Look at Lexi: In love with a lie. The more you give, the more gets shoved back in your face. I don't want to end up like my mother. Defending some guy's faults -- and not just to everyone else, but to <u>myself</u>.
(getting in the groove)
Owen, Trevor, Ted, all these boys -- these men *in utero* -- they have <u>potential</u>. You can say that boys suck and I can hope to god you're wrong but in the end, there's only one truth: Everyone can change. You just have to work at it.

Claire's never seen Cassie like this. Unsure.

CLAIRE
Maybe... maybe it's safer to just plant the drugs and let him go --

CASSANDRA
No! You're talking out of fear now. We're beyond that. We have a chance to <u>do</u> what we always just <u>talk</u> about. Take a boy and make him... better.

CLAIRE
So, what? Like... lessons?

CASSANDRA
Lessons, quizzes, field trips, I don't know. A curriculum.

CLAIRE
I do hate it when they show up for a date in ratty old jeans and I'm in a cocktail dress --

CASSANDRA
Yes! We can fix it! And once he's perfect, we release him. Back to the wild, where he can teach the others. We can do it. We <u>should</u> do it.

CLAIRE
I just don't know <u>how</u> we do this.

CASSANDRA
Neither do I. But I know I need your help. You and me. Together.

Cassie looks to her best friend. Their moment of truth.

INT. CASSANDRA'S GARAGE - PRESENT

Where they help Owen out of the trunk. Smiling at him.

CASSANDRA
We have a little surprise for you.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Cassie and Claire leading Owen down the basement stairs.

CLAIRE
Well? How do you like it?

The basement has two new additions to it, next to the cot: <u>A DESK, and a BLACKBOARD</u>. Cassie leads Owen to the desk, sits him down, BUCKLES him in, and then WRITES on the blackboard:

CASSANDRA FRENCH'S FINISHING SCHOOL FOR BOYS

CASSANDRA
Class is in session.

Cassie leans down to look Owen in the face. But really, she's looking into camera, RIGHT AT US.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Relax. This is gonna be fun.

A big, genuine, warm smile -- and we SMASH CUT TO:

<u>THE END</u>