

End of an Empire

by

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FADE IN:

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - AFTERNOON

SLOAN CAPITANI, looks rattled and uncertain, sitting in a small office before a desk cluttered with papers and a half-empty mug of coffee. JACKSON CRANE, mid-30's, handsome, dark hair and eyes, sits behind the desk, leaning forward with interest.

JACKSON

So, what brings you to my office,  
Mrs. Capitani?

Sloan looks uncertain.

SLOAN

I think I want to file for  
divorce.

He lifts an eyebrow.

JACKSON

You think?

SLOAN

No, I *know*. I *know* I want to file.

His eyes narrow at her.

INT. VAN'S CONDO - BEDROOM, AFTERNOON

VAN CAPITANI is angrily throwing his belongings into duffel bags, as PIPER HARRISON looks on, upset.

PIPER

I just don't get why you're  
leaving!

VAN

Because I fucking *told* you you're  
not welcome here! You ruined my  
marriage, you fucking blackmailed  
me into letting you crash here -  
you're ruining my life, Piper! If  
you're not going to leave, I am!

Her hands are on her hips.

PIPER

What - you're just gonna run back  
to Sloan, then!?

He whirls around, wild-eyed.

VAN

She doesn't want me, thanks to  
you!

She throws her hands up in the air as he grabs his bags and  
stomps past her.

PIPER

So now what?

He looks at her, dumbfounded.

VAN

I don't know, you crazy bitch!  
Figure it out!

Her jaw drops as she watches the door slam shut behind him.

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - AFTERNOON

Sloan scratches her head and sits back in her chair as  
Jackson slides a notepad toward him and begins to write.

JACKSON

I just have a few questions. I'll try not to take  
but five more minutes of your time. How long have  
you been married?

SLOAN

Almost four years.

JACKSON

Kids?

Sloan shakes her head.

SLOAN

No.

Jackson continues to write as he fires questions.

JACKSON

Assets? Property? Anything that  
might potentially be fought over?

Sloan sighs.

SLOAN  
(resignedly)  
He can have just everything.

Jackson lifts one eyebrow at her.

JACKSON  
You are entitled to things. At least any of the things you brought into the marriage. At least half of what you two accrued during the marriage. Unless you're at fault for the marriage ending. Did you cheat?

Sloan now lifts her eyebrow.

SLOAN  
*He cheated.*

Jackson's look is of complete surprise.

JACKSON  
Idiot...

Sloan softens and chuckles at him.

JACKSON  
Once? Twice?

SLOAN  
Does it matter? At one point, he faked his death and left me, took up with some chick in Brazil, and after I forgave him for that, I caught him in bed with my sister. Now they're shackled up together.

Interested, Jackson leans forward.

JACKSON  
How *does* one fake their own death? I can't tell you how many times I've wanted to take off and disappear!

Sloan looks at him like she has no idea how to take him.

EXT. BELLEZZA PARKING GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Van is marching through the garage. He puts his sunglasses on, throws his bag in the back of his car, and gets in. The tires screech as he takes off.

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - AFTERNOON

Jackson pauses from writing, and his gaze pauses upon Sloan's purse atop his desk, with her handgun in plain sight.

JACKSON

Quite an interesting accessory you have in there. What are you doing with a gun?

Sloan's smile is cool.

SLOAN

That might be a question you don't really want the answer to.

Jackson leans forward, intrigued.

JACKSON

I might need more than five minutes.

SLOAN

(smirking)

I *might* be in deeper shit than you've ever stepped in.

Jackson is wide-eyed with interest.

JACKSON

I have *no* idea what that means...

Sloan almost playfully narrows her eyes and smirks.

SLOAN

What was the question you asked me, earlier?

JACKSON

If you cheated?

SLOAN

No, another one.

Jackson cocks his head in thought.

JACKSON

What you're carrying a gun for?

She crosses her legs and cocks her head at him.

SLOAN

Possessions? Assets? We'll start with businesses that we own, along with his family - just another reason I'd like to wipe my hands clean of it all.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN'S CONDO - EVENING

As Sloan narrates, Piper opens the door to the condo, and ANGELO CAPITANI stands there along with his brother, VINNY. They charge into the condo, and pull a gun on a scared Piper as they look about. She's shaking her head adamantly before pointing out the door. Angelo and Vinny look threatening.

SLOAN (V.O.)

Three casino resorts. One here, and two in Reno. No, four now. I forgot the one in Atlantic City. A hotel in Miami. A skanky strip-club. A bar in old downtown Vegas. Oh, and we still own a condo in Atlantic City. The condo here at Bellezza. And then the house I'm currently living in. Vehicles. The bank account I cleaned out. Guns. Jewelry.

Angelo and Vinny leave, slamming the door behind them, and a distraught Piper covers her face with her hands and rubs it.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - CONTINUOUS

Sloan shrugs, as Jackson looks flabbergasted.

JACKSON

Who are you?!

A voice from the doorway interrupts them.

ANNIE (O.S.)  
Mr. Crane, your next appointment  
is here.

Jackson's eyes flicker away toward Annie, and then pensively settle back upon Sloan.

FADE OUT.

BEGIN CREDITS:

as Sloan is photographed, paparazzi-style, walking from her car into a coffee shop. Then coming back out and getting into her car. Outside her house, more photos are snapped as she walks to and from the mailbox.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

The doorbell rings out twice. Sloan approaches the surveillance screen on the kitchen counter and narrows her eyes at the sight of Piper on her front stoop. She opens the front door, coldly eyeing her panic-stricken sister.

PIPER  
Van's gone.

SLOAN  
(sarcastically)  
Surprise!

She starts to close the door in Piper's face, but Piper reaches out in protest.

PIPER  
Wait! I need your help. Please! I don't know where he went, or how to find him!

SLOAN  
Not my problem.

Sloan turns to go back inside, and Piper pushes the door open and invites herself inside.

PIPER  
People out there want to kill him!

Sloan spins upon her heels to face her.

SLOAN  
And he deserves it!

Sloan continues on to the kitchen, as Piper stands there, looking helpless and desperate. Sloan picks up her coffee mug and takes a sip as she eyes Piper smugly.

SLOAN  
You have a lot of nerve coming here.

PIPER  
I know... But you're the only person who might be able to figure out where he is.

Sloan scoffs at her.

SLOAN  
Brazil? Taking up with another beach bunny?

Sloan turns around and rinses out her mug in the sink.

SLOAN  
Too bad we don't have another sister, or else I'd suggest you start by showing up at her place.

Piper rubs at her face anxiously and sighs, as Sloan faces her once again with one hand on her hip.

SLOAN  
Look, I really don't care where he is. Good luck in your search, though. Make sure you close the door behind you when you leave.

Sloan casually wipes down the kitchen counter as Piper stands there with her jaw agape.

PIPER  
You're seriously not going to give me any thoughts or suggestions?!

Sloan looks up, surprised.

SLOAN  
Oh, you're still here?

Piper's voice escalates.

PIPER

He could be dead somewhere!

SLOAN

Don't be so melodramatic. I'm sure he'll turn up somewhere. There, does that make you feel better?

PIPER

How can you be such a bitch right now!? You're supposed to be his wife.

Sloan's look turns sharp.

SLOAN

(barks)

Yes, "supposed to be." That's where this gets dysfunctional. He hasn't been a *husband* for as long as I haven't considered you a *sister*.

Sloan's gaze turns downward, and she picks up the sponge she was previously using, but does nothing with it.

SLOAN

(softly)

It won't be long until he's a free man, and then he'll only be yours.

PIPER

If he's alive, still!

SLOAN

(crossly)

Not my concern.

Piper releases a frustrated groan, and Sloan turns her back to her, rinsing the sponge in the sink. In the background beyond the kitchen, we hear Piper sniffle and rub at her face, causing Sloan to pause, almost sympathetically.

PIPER

(mutters desperately)

I just don't know what to do...

Sloan's jaw tenses again as her look turns cold.

SLOAN

Wing it. That's what I had to do.

Frustrated, Piper turns and hurries for the door, as Sloan's eyes fall downward into the sink. The door shuts behind her, and Sloan exhales a deep breath.

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - MORNING

Sloan enters the office with coffee in hand. ANNIE looks up from her desk and eyes her with scrutiny before she smiles.

ANNIE

Good morning, Mrs. Capitani. Mr. Crane should be here in just a few minutes. He said you could wait in his office.

Sloan smiles politely and nods.

SLOAN

Thank you.

Sloan ducks into Jackson's office and takes a seat, sipping her coffee before she hears a door open and someone rushing in. Jackson hurriedly enters his office and sets his laptop bag down atop the desk with an apologetic look as he gets situated.

JACKSON

I'm so sorry.

Sloan catches herself looking him over, and shakes her head.

SLOAN

It's fine.

JACKSON

This has literally been a morning of hell, so far.

He is behind his desk now, and taking his jacket off, he pauses, looking at Sloan.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Your hair's different. I like it.

Sloan looks flattered.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
Did you find out the whereabouts  
of Prince Charming?

SLOAN  
Uh, no...

Jackson settles into his chair and lifts an eyebrow at her.

JACKSON  
Have you tried?

SLOAN  
(wincing)  
Is there any way we can just... I  
dunno, do this without him?

JACKSON  
(chuckling)  
Not legally. Due diligence. You  
have to at least try to find him.  
I know some great investigators!

Sloan rolls her eyes.

SLOAN  
(mutters)  
No, that won't be necessary...

He's amused by her.

JACKSON  
Okay, well did you bring all the  
financial statements I asked for?

Sloan hands him the file from her purse.

SLOAN  
I did.

Jackson takes the file and opens it, lifting his eyebrows.

JACKSON  
Wow, this is a lot of stuff. I  
like how you bring me a statement  
for an empty bank account.

He eyes her with amusement.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Tell me you're not walking around with a ridiculous amount of money in that gigantic suitcase you call a purse.

Now they both laugh, as she smirks at him.

SLOAN

No, it's safe, Mr. Crane. I assure you.

JACKSON

Jack.

SLOAN

*Jackson.*

His smile turns to a grin, before he shakes his head and looks back down at the file.

EXT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - LATE MORNING

Sloan is tapping a text message to Van on her phone that says "I need to know where you are" as she approaches her car and then gets in. She pulls away from the curb, and her phone rings. She picks it up and it's Van calling her. She puts the phone to her ear.

SLOAN

Funny that Piper and your mother are going crazy because they can't get a hold of you, yet I send you a message and you respond right away.

EXT. PORCH OVERLOOKING THE PACIFIC OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Van is standing outside, looking out at the ocean. It is unclear where he is. His phone is pressed to his ear.

VAN

You're not Piper, or my mother.

SLOAN (O.S.)

(sweetly)

Did you find another beach to run away to?

VAN  
(sweetly)  
Do you miss me?

SLOAN (O.S.)  
Just trying to find out where to  
serve the divorce papers to.

The tight smile disappears from Van's face, and he frowns,  
shifting the phone to his other ear and looking pained.

VAN  
I won't sign them..

SLOAN (O.S.)  
I suggest you at least look them  
over and make sure you agree with  
everything.

VAN  
(impatiently)  
Everything *what*? Have you already  
talked to a lawyer?

SLOAN (O.S.)  
I really want to be fair in all of  
this -

VAN  
Fair!? Tell you what - have the  
papers served to the house!

Van hangs up on her and stands there, fuming.

INT. SLOAN'S CAR - DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

Sloan stares at her phone, shocked. She tries to call him  
back. When he forwards her to voicemail, she hangs up,  
rolls her eyes and tosses her phone into the passenger  
seat.

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

She steps out onto her front porch, and is bombarded by  
Angelo and Vinny coming around the corner. Angelo's hands  
are shoved into his coat pockets. Vinny acts like he's  
standing guard. Sloan isn't intimidated.

SLOAN  
(dryly)  
You've seriously been out here  
waiting for me?

ANGELO  
We knocked on the door, but you  
didn't answer.

SLOAN  
Is it any wonder? Last time I was  
nice enough to let you boys in,  
you pulled a gun on me. I heard  
you paid a visit to my sister?

ANGELO  
(shrugging)  
Just have to explore our options.

SLOAN  
Funny that your options led you to  
Piper. Anyway, he doesn't live  
here, so quit bothering me.

ANGELO  
Oh? Did he move out?

SLOAN  
(wearily)  
I'm not sure if he ever really  
moved in. Look, you're barking up  
the wrong tree. He hasn't been  
here since we bought the place,  
and I haven't seen him.

ANGELO  
I'm not gonna rest 'til I get my  
money.

SLOAN  
How much are we even talking,  
here? I'm willing to give it to  
you just to get you off *my* back.

ANGELO  
You got almost three million lying  
around, little lady?

Sloan looks at him like he's crazy.

SLOAN

Bullshit, Angelo. Did you pull that number outta your ass? Who in their right mind would steal that much money?!

Angelo takes a step backward.

ANGELO

If you *do* happen to see him, or talk to him, make sure he knows we're still looking for him.

SLOAN

I will, but I'm sure that's why he's hiding in the first place.

Angelo chuckles, and then puts a toothpick in his mouth.

ANGELO

He's got many reasons to hide. Cowards always do.

Sloan watches them as they walk back down the driveway and cross the street, getting into a sedan. Her eyes follow with a scowl as it drives off.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BATH - EARLY EVENING

Sun pours into the sparkling marble bathroom, and we see the backside of Sloan as she pins her hair up, and steps into the jacuzzi tub. She sets her phone down on the ledge, settles back, and closes her eyes. She inhales a deep breath and releases it. Then her phone rings, and she groans and opens her eyes. It's Jackson. She puts the phone to her ear.

SLOAN

Hello Jackson!

JACKSON (O.S.)

You got a minute?

Sloan looks concerned as she sits up straight.

SLOAN

Sure.

INT. LAW OFFICE OF JACKSON CRANE - CONTINUOUS

Jackson is pacing about, focusing on some papers in his hand.

JACKSON

You sound like you're in a tunnel.

SLOAN (O.S.)

The bathroom, actually. The tub,  
not the toilet.

He pauses, lifting an eyebrow and glancing up.

JACKSON

Nice! A stunning visual comes to  
mind! But I digress...

He begins to pace and looks back down at the papers.

JACKSON

Look, I was going over your files,  
and the insurance papers you gave  
me were cut off. So I called the  
insurance company and had them fax  
me a fresh copy of everything.  
That's when I found something  
interesting. Did you know there's  
a life insurance policy on you?

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BATH - CONTINUOUS

SLOAN

(shrugging)

I mean, I know when we got  
married, Van talked about taking  
out a policy on himself, to make  
sure we were taken care of if  
something happened.

JACKSON (O.S.)

Well there's not one on him. Just  
you. Interestingly enough, it's a  
multi-million dollar policy.

Sloan shakes her head, confused.

SLOAN

What!?

JACKSON (O.S.)

Three million dollars, listing a Mr. Van Capitani as the beneficiary.

SLOAN

I don't understand... Wouldn't I have had to sign something?

JACKSON (O.S.)

Legally, yes. If you haven't signed anything Sloan, someone took out a fraudulent policy on you. I suggest we file for a restraining order *immediately*. I know a guy at the police station. He can have it all done for us in ten minutes.

Sloan is staring absently.

SLOAN

(softly)

Yeah, sure. Whatever...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sloan is in bed, and sunlight is pouring through the windows. She turns over and groggily opens her eyes, before she's startled awake by the sight of Van sitting solemnly in the chair beside the bed. She bolts upward, wide awake. His demeanor is humble and soft.

VAN

Good morning, beautiful.

SLOAN

How'd you get in here? There are locks, and alarms -

VAN

You use the same code for everything. And...

He holds up a key.

VAN (CONT'D)  
I still have a key.

Sloan grows increasingly nervous.

SLOAN  
You couldn't call first, or something?

She jumps from the bed and makes her way toward the bathroom.

VAN  
Well, I kind of don't trust you, right now.

Sloan snaps her head back around in surprise.

SLOAN  
You're one to talk about trust.

Then she looks about the room thoughtfully.

SLOAN  
Your uncles will kill you if they find you here...

VAN  
I rented a car.

SLOAN  
They've been showing up here, and -

VAN  
If they drive by, they'll just think the car belongs to one of your boytoys.

She pauses and glares at him.

VAN  
Was it Nick you slept with, before I left?

SLOAN  
Even if it was, why would I tell you?

Van exhales deeply, stands up, and turns to the window.

VAN  
I hate this.

He turns and runs his hands through his hair, eyeing her.

VAN  
(sadly)  
I never thought we'd be in this  
position.

SLOAN  
Why are you really here?

Van turns and eyes her strangely, and then softens.

VAN  
I want to be here. Just seeing  
you... I don't know. It makes  
everything okay.

SLOAN  
Why did you steal from Angelo?

He cocks his head at her.

VAN  
Don't kid yourself, babe. He  
wouldn't be so adamant about the  
money if he hadn't gambled himself  
into a financial crisis.

She narrows her eyes.

SLOAN  
That doesn't explain why you did  
it.

VAN  
(exasperatedly)  
I didn't "steal" money. I didn't  
take money from anyone. Angelo's  
off his rocker. I gamble - on big  
games, just as I've been doing for  
years - and when he caught wind of  
how much I was winning, he felt  
entitled to a piece of it.

Sloan wearily shakes her head.

SLOAN

Honestly, that doesn't make sense-

VAN

Angelo's nuts. If I did owe him anything, you know I would've paid it! Don't you think my father would've kicked my ass if I took that much money from a business!?

Sloan's hands are on her hips, now.

SLOAN

Then tell me why you took out a three million dollar life insurance policy on me.

Van's expression is blank.

VAN

What?

SLOAN

My lawyer found out about it. It lists *you* as the sole beneficiary -

VAN

You sound insane right now! I wouldn't do that!

SLOAN

It would certainly make sense as to why you're so adamant on not divorcing me -

VAN

(yelling)

Listen to yourself! Why the fuck would I want to take a policy out on you!? I can't even bear to be away from you, but *kill* you!? Are you serious right now?!

SLOAN

Those papers are serious, Van! You could get in huge trouble for that!

VAN  
You're *still* talking like I did  
it!

They stare at one another defiantly, until she shifts.

SLOAN  
(bitterly)  
Piper's going crazy looking for  
you.

VAN  
Don't care.

SLOAN  
My lawyer says the papers should  
arrive in a few days.

VAN  
(wincing)  
I don't want to do this, Sloan. I  
don't want to sign the papers.

SLOAN  
Go home to your girlfriend, Van.

VAN  
She's not my girlfriend.

He begins to saunter toward her, and she freezes.

VAN  
You... are all I dream about at  
night. You're who I want. *Still*.

Inches from her, his hand reaches up and her eyes close as  
he sweeps her hair back over her shoulder. She glances up  
at him, teary-eyed.

SLOAN  
So then who wants me dead?

He lifts her chin with his forefinger.

VAN  
Trust me when I say I'll find out.

He turns and walks out of the bedroom.

INT. ANGELO CAPITANI'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Van angrily barges through the front door, and Tommy comes around the corner to see who it is. But as he reaches for the gun in his belt, Van surprises him by backhanding him with the handle of his gun, and sending him backward, stunned.

VAN  
Where's Angelo!?

As Tommy tries to keep his footing, he's reaching for his gun again and Van hits him again, making him fall to the floor.

VAN  
You fucking so much as touch that thing and I'll kill you, Tommy!  
Where's your father?

TOMMY  
None of your business, cuz!

Van hits him again, takes his gun, then hits him again.

VAN  
You sure about that!?

TOMMY  
He's not fuckin' here, man!

Van crouches down, as Tommy is bloodied up.

VAN  
(gruffly)  
Where is he?

TOMMY  
Out lookin' for your ass,  
probably!

Van presses his gun to Tommy's temple.

VAN  
Stay away from my wife, you hear me?

TOMMY

Fuck you, Van. You don't know how to keep away from another man's girl -

VAN

Your whore-of-a-girlfriend crawled into bed with *me*. After she drugged *me*. I'm the least of your worries, Tommy. Stay the fuck away from Sloan!

He stands back up and heads for the door.

VAN

The only reason you're alive is because you're family. That's *it*.

The door slams behind him when he leaves. Tommy swipes some blood from his lip and looks at it from where he sits.

TOMMY

(mutters)

Too bad the same won't be said for you, 'cuz.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Gage comes in. He tosses his backpack aside, and notices that Piper and Sammi were in the midst of a conversation that his entrance interrupted. Both are staring at him like they've just been caught. Sammi looks uncomfortable.

GAGE

(suspiciously)

Afternoon, ladies.

Piper plasters an immediate smile upon her face.

PIPER

Well hello, little brother.

GAGE

What are you doing back here, Piper? Did you finally come to your senses and figure out blackmailing Van is signing your own death warrant?

Sammi looks offended by his brash demeanor.

SAMMI

What's the attitude about?

GAGE

'Cuz it looks like I just walked  
in on some sort of top secret  
meeting.

PIPER

Just girl stuff. Talking about  
hair. Nails. Boys...

Gage tosses her a look conveying his lack of amusement, and  
continues past them into the kitchen.

SAMMI

(calls to Gage)

Oh, by the way - your mom showed  
up here, today. She said she'd be  
back.

Alarmed, Gage comes back around the corner.

GAGE

I'm sorry - what!? You sure it was  
my mother?

Sammi shrugs at him.

SAMMI

She looked like an old, haggard  
version of Sloan, so I'm pretty  
sure she was telling the truth.

He appears stunned.

GAGE

Okay!? So? What'd she say!?

Sammi shrugs.

SAMMI

She asked where your dad was, then  
where Sloan was, and then where  
you and Piper were. Then she left.

He is thoughtful for a second.

GAGE  
(mutters)  
Shit...

He swipes his keys and rushes for the door.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Sloan approaches the front door; opening it to find CARLA HARRISON - 50's, thin & petite, standing on her front stoop. Sloan's expression is cold and stiff.

SLOAN  
How'd you find me?

Carla's answers are whimsical and aloof.

CARLA  
I asked around. You turned out so pretty. I knew you would, though.

Sloan folds her arms beneath her breasts expectantly.

CARLA  
This is a beautiful house. So large and pretty. What do you do, exactly?

SLOAN  
Did you come looking for us because you need money? I just got off the phone with Gage. He said you came to his house earlier.

CARLA  
Why can't I just want to see my own kids? Why do I hafta want something?

SLOAN  
Because you haven't wanted to see us since we were kids!

Sloan takes a look around outside to make sure her escalated voice didn't attract attention.

CARLA  
I can't believe that instead of being happy to see me, my own daughter'd rather yell in my face!

SLOAN  
(sarcastically)  
I'm sorry - it's just 20 years of  
sadness and rejection erupting!

CARLA  
Why didn't you find me when your  
father took ill?

Sloan's eyebrows lift.

SLOAN  
(fuming)  
"Find" you. Those are *your* words,  
Mother. *Find* you. That's the thing  
- you couldn't be found! Once upon  
a time, I was able to keep tabs on  
you, through internet searches  
that clued me in on your  
whereabouts. But these last few  
years? You've done a great job at  
not being found, and I've managed  
to do an even better job of not  
caring where you were!

CARLA  
That's not fair! Who took care of  
him?! Who was there to hold his  
hand when he passed!?

SLOAN  
(yelling)  
*Me!* I was there! I took him to all  
his appointments, while you were  
out getting high with your  
friends, and living like a hippie  
from the 70's! I spent the my  
teenage years and early twenties  
doing everything I could to raise  
two kids that had *no* mom, who were  
just watching their father take  
turn after turn for the worst! *Me!*  
You have *no* right to come looking  
for us, and *no* right to ask  
anything from us! Period!

Sloan is trembling with emotion. They stand there, squared  
off for a moment, but emotion is absent from Carla's eyes.

CARLA

Okay, well I need someplace to stay.

Sloan's jaw drops slightly, and she shakes it off.

SLOAN

(firmly)

You're not staying here, and you're not staying with Gage.

CARLA

I'll just go back to Piper's.

Sloan's eyes narrow at her.

SLOAN

You've already been there?

CARLA

(shrugging)

I thought it was your place. A nice young man answered the door and told me you don't live there anymore, but that Piper does. How does she afford a penthouse on The Strip?

Sloan looks visibly affected.

SLOAN

(mutters softly)

Van...

CARLA

Huh?

Sloan blinks, looks back at Carla, and then sighs.

SLOAN

(softly)

You can stay here. You're not getting a key though, or any of the security codes. And only for a few days, so don't get comfortable.

She turns and allows her mother inside, before locking the door behind her. Carla looks around with big eyes.

CARLA

Oh my. You didn't tell me what you do. You're not a hooker, are you?

SLOAN

(sighs)

Not a hooker, Mother.

CARLA

Do you... live alone? Boyfriend?

SLOAN

I live alone. I'm in the middle of a divorce.

CARLA

Did the husband make all this money?

Sloan turns and delivers her a sharp look.

SLOAN

I'm not discussing money or my husband with you.

As Sloan leads her toward the hallway where the bedrooms are, Carla eyeballs the monitors on the kitchen counter.

CARLA

Why do you need so much security?  
Are you married to a senator?

Sloan delivers her an amused look.

SLOAN

I appreciate your mindset that while I'm not smart enough to build my own fortune, I'm at least pretty enough to land a congressman.

Carla stops inside the doorway.

CARLA

Are you always so negative?

Sloan's smile remains tight.

SLOAN

Only when long-lost relatives show  
up asking for favors.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING/SUNSET

Sloan gets out of her car in a short, black cocktail dress and heels. She looks stunning, but nervous, as she makes her way up the sidewalk to the front door. She flips her hair behind her shoulder, and then knocks. The door opens, and a woman in a guy's t-shirt and shorts who looks remarkably similar to Sloan opens up, giving Sloan a strange look.

NICK'S GIRLFRIEND

Can I help you?

Sloan's lips have parted, but she falters for a moment.

SLOAN

Is Nick here?

NICK'S GIRLFRIEND

He's in the shower. Can I tell him  
who's looking for him?

Looking a bit crestfallen, Sloan inhales deeply, then shakes her head and forces a smile.

SLOAN

Just a childhood friend. I'll just  
come back another time.

Sloan turns on her heels and starts to retreat.

NICK'S GIRLFRIEND

Do you want to come in? He  
shouldn't be but a few more  
minutes!

Sloan pauses, looks back, but shakes her head.

SLOAN

No. Thank you, though.

She continues to the car, and Nick's Girlfriend continues to watch her, until Sloan gets in her car. She looks over, Nick's Girlfriend closes the door, and Sloan grips her steering wheel before starting the car and looking at his nice house.

SLOAN  
(mutters softly)  
Turns out, you were much better  
off..

INT. BELLEZZA LOUNGE - EVENING

Sloan is makes her way up the stairs to the dark VIP lounge.

BOUNCER  
Good evening, Mrs. Capitani.

He steps aside and allows her access, as she smiles politely. Up at the top of the stairs, the open VIP area is filled with couches and groups of people doing bottle service. Casually and comfortably, she strolls to the railings to stand and look out over the bar and dance floor below.

WAITRESS  
Something to drink?

SLOAN  
A shot of Patron. In fact, keep them coming. Here, just keep my tab open.

The waitress takes her card, nods and turns away. Sloan exhales, leans against the railing. The shot is brought to her, and she downs it immediately, setting the empty glass down. A guy tries to approach her, but we see her politely shaking her head and turning him away. He light-heartedly retreats. The smile that remains on her face as she continues to stare out over the dance floor is soft and reflective.

Then she turns and sees Van about fifteen feet or so away, leaned against the same railing with a drink in his hand. He's been watching her. His expression is sheer adoration, as her second shot is delivered to her. Staring back at him, she downs the shot and sets that glass down. Suddenly she looks shy, and she self-consciously tucks her hair behind her ear.

He approaches and then stops just before her. Her eyes flutter and meet his. Her breaths quicken. He looks like he wants to ravage her.

SLOAN  
(huskily)  
Are you following me?

His smile is soft as he shakes his head and chuckles, evoking a light chuckle from her, also.

VAN  
Not this time, no. Just checking up on the place.

She almost looks disappointed.

VAN  
You look stunning, beautiful. I've always liked you in that dress.

Her eyes brighten as they stare up and over his face. The waitress delivers another shot, that Van picks up and hands to her. Then he eyes her curiously.

VAN  
What brings you here, tonight?

She half-smiles and sighs, looking out over the floor below.

SLOAN  
I don't really know, to tell you the truth. Just... I thought maybe coming here would give me some clarity, but...

She shakes her head and narrows her eyes at him.

SLOAN  
Maybe I shouldn't have come here...

The shake of his head is slight. His eyes rake over her.

VAN  
You're exactly where you should be.

WAITRESS  
Are you ready for another one?

Sloan shakes her head, breaking free from Van's gaze.

SLOAN

No, I think I'm fine, thank you.

WAITRESS

Okay - just let me know when  
you're ready for your tab, k?

Van's eyebrow lifts and his eyes bounce between them.

VAN

(to Sloan)

What's this?

(to Waitress)

Put her bill on my tab. And if you  
see this woman again, all her  
drinks are always on my tab.

Waitress walks off, and Sloan begins to protest.

SLOAN

Van, I don't need -

VAN

Yes. I know.

He smirks as he gently takes her by the arm. Her eyes  
narrow with intrigue as he begins to lead her out.

VAN (CONT'D)

(lightly)

On the contrary, I quite enjoy  
taking care of you.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - LATE EVENING

The front door swings open. Van and Sloan appear in the  
darkness - pawing at one another, in the midst of a  
passionate make-out. He presses her to the wall just  
inside. Her hands are in his hair. On his face. His are all  
over her.

CARLA (O.S.)

Dear?

The light flicks on, and both Van and Sloan pause as they  
stand. Their dazed gazes turn toward Carla standing on the  
far side of the room, as she looks startled and surprised.

CARLA

Oh. I didn't know you were having  
company over.

Van eyes Sloan strangely but doesn't drop his hands. Carla  
nosily remains standing there, so Sloan sighs and steps  
back.

SLOAN

(warily)

Mom, this is Van. Van, this is my  
mother.

Van expression is of complete surprise as he, too, steps  
back and appears suddenly self-conscious.

VAN

*Mom.* Wow. Hi!

He hurries toward Carla and extends his hand to shake hers.

CARLA

And you are... her friend?

VAN

Husband.

Carla is further confused.

CARLA

Oh...

Sloan approaches them both.

SLOAN

Sorry if we woke you.

Carla is lost for words, but she keeps curiously eyeing  
Van. She then backs up.

CARLA

I'm just- just gonna go back to  
bed.

She disappears down the hallway. Van turns to Sloan with  
wide eyes and points after Carla.

VAN

(whispering)

What is that!? Your *mom* is here?

Sloan scratches at her head.

SLOAN

Yup!

He is dumbfounded.

VAN

When did this happen?!

She winces at him and puts her hands on her hips, shifting.

SLOAN

I'd really rather not discuss her.

Van slowly approaches her once more.

VAN

Okay. I can respect that...

He stops just before her, and his hands gently cup her face.

VAN

I'd much rather go back to this.

He kisses her, and she appears as if she might protest, but it melts away almost immediately. She digs her fingernails into his back, through his shirt. His kiss gets hungrier. When he grabs her and pulls her firmly against him, she is dizzied by how much he wants her.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sloan falls back upon her bed. Van falls on top of her. Their lovemaking ensues in full force.

CUT TO:

Van rolls over but scoops Sloan instantly into his arms. Her hands reach up to pull him tighter around her. She is pained.

SLOAN

(whispering)

Van...

VAN

(whispering)

Yes, beautiful?

She squeezes her eyes shut and then pulls him tighter still.

SLOAN  
...nothing.

FADE OUT.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - LATE EVENING

The house is only lit by dim light pouring in the kitchen windows. Sloan is coming down the staircase. Half-asleep, she yawns and opens a cabinet to grab a glass. Then she opens the fridge, which stays dark. She doesn't really notice the light not coming on. Beyond her but unbeknownst to her, we see a shadow shift. She takes a drink of water. Then her head whips to her left, and we hear the shuffle of feet as someone steps forward in the darkness. Her glass drops and shatters against the kitchen floor, and she freezes in alarm.

TOMMY  
(raspily)  
Where is he?

She squints, trying to see who it is.

SLOAN  
(shakily)  
How'd you get in here!?

TOMMY  
Oh, you know... Cut the electricity,  
and suddenly things magically  
become more accessible.

His arm reaches forward to reveal a set of hedge clippers. Stepping into the dim light, he's smiling viciously, as Sloan apprehensively inches around the kitchen island.

SLOAN  
Just get out of here and we'll  
both forget you were even here,  
Tommy...

TOMMY

(chuckling)

Oh, no. I'm here to collect.  
Either step aside and let me do  
what I came here for, or I'll do  
whatever I deem necessary to get  
you outta my way.

She looks panicked as Tommy heads toward the stairs.

SLOAN

(gravely)

Don't go up there, Tommy...

TOMMY

Oh?

She eyes her purse atop the kitchen island. Springing into  
action, she reaches into it and grabs the handgun, pointing  
it at him. He laughs at her.

TOMMY

You're just as stupid as your  
sister. Yanno that? Pointing that  
shit at -

Sloan reacts by pulling the trigger, firing a shot that  
resonates throughout the house. She fires again, and he  
staggers back and drops to the floor. When his arm flails,  
she fires a third time and marches upon him. Her breaths  
are quick. Now he's not moving. Every emotion heightened,  
she stares down at him, and then looks around the dark  
house.

SLOAN

(frantic whisper)

FUCK!

Van comes running down the stairs in just his jeans that he  
was attempting to fasten. Halfway down, at the sight of a  
body on the floor, he hesitates, and then looks wide-eyed  
at Sloan, who's standing there looking petrified. He  
continues down the staircase and her breathing quickens  
more.

VAN

(mutters)

Holy shit...

Van crouches down beside Tommy and checks for his pulse. He appears impressed as he turns his gaze to Sloan.

VAN  
I'm impressed!

She stares back at him in disbelief.

SLOAN  
(panicked)  
I just killed your cousin, Van!

Van remains calm and light.

VAN  
(shrugging)  
He shouldn't have been  
trespassing.

Carla appears in the doorway to the living room. She flicks at the light switches, but nothing happens. Her jaw drops at the body on the floor, and she moves in for a closer look.

CARLA  
Oh my God!

She squints at Tommy. Sloan is even more horrified.

CARLA  
I know him! Oh my God...

Carla increasingly becomes panicked as she realizes what happened/is going on.

CARLA  
He was there, yesterday. At the  
casino. When I went looking for  
you - he answered the door!

Van and Sloan are now staring at her, confused.

SLOAN  
What?!

CARLA  
Your old apartment! He was there!  
He opened the door!

Sloan eyes Van in concern, and they both look down at Tommy. Sloan's head shakes and she sets the gun on the counter.

SLOAN  
(whimpering)  
Jesus Christ...

Van calmly puts his cell phone to his ear, rising to his feet as Sloan nervously paces. Carla is standing there, staring down at the body and wringing her hands in distress.

VAN  
Hey. I need you to come over to the house. Yeah, Sloan's. Well, we've got a situation. Yeah, that's where I'm at. Dude, we've got more important things to discuss. Don't tell a fuckin' soul where you're going - just get your shit and hurry over here. It's makin' a mess, already. Okay. See you in a few.

Van hangs up the phone, shoves it in his back pocket, glances at Carla, and eyes Sloan as a slow grin erupts over his face.

VAN  
This is going to sound really off, but you have never been hotter to me than you are right now.

Disarmed, Sloan chuckles lightly.

CARLA  
Who was that!? Was that the cops??? Did you call the cops?

VAN & SLOAN  
(in unison)  
NO!

VAN  
(calmly)  
Everything is going to be fine, ma'am.

She becomes agitated.

CARLA  
Who are you people!?

Van approaches Sloan, cups her worried face with his hands, and gives her a soft look.

VAN  
(gently)  
Hey. Relax.

He kisses her forehead and then picks up the hedge clippers. He scratches his head thoughtfully, and sets it aside when Jionni knocks on the front door. Sloan stands there in a frozen panic as Van lets Jionni into the house and locks the door behind him. Carla is pacing and mumbling, while Jionni enters the living space and his eyes fall upon Tommy.

JIONNI  
Oh fuck.

Jionni laughs and shakes his head, before looking around.

JIONNI  
Why's it so dark in here?

CARLA  
(pointing to Jionni)  
Who is this?!

VAN  
(to Jionni)  
He cut the power to get in here.

CARLA  
Why is no one answering me!?

Jionni eyes Carla impatiently.

JIONNI  
Who are you?!

SLOAN  
(weakly)  
My mother.

Jionni turns surprised, thoughtful eyes to Sloan as he crouches down beside the body.

JIONNI

No shit? I didn't know you had a mother.

Van crouches down on the other side of the body as they unload the black bag Jionni brought with him.

VAN

Of course she's got a mother. What - did you think she was hatched?

The men laugh while they move Tommy's body onto plastic tarp.

JIONNI

How'd this happen?

Jionni follows Van's gaze to Sloan, who shifts defensively.

SLOAN

I came downstairs for water, and he scared the shit out of me. I told him to leave, but then he went toward the stairs to get to Van...

Jionni's eyes widen, as he even looks impressed.

JIONNI

Wait - you did this!?

Van grins and chuckles, rising to his feet and grabbing the clippers from the kitchen counter.

JIONNI

Welcome to the family. I never thought I'd see this day.

VAN

You saved my life.

Jionni grabs some long tweezers and goes to work extracting the bullets from the wounds. Sloan can barely pry her horrified eyes from what he's doing, as Van stops before her.

JIONNI

Yeah, he probably would've killed ya, bro.

Van's eyes are glued to Sloan as he smiles.

VAN  
(softly)  
But he didn't. Because of you. So  
fucking romantic.

JIONNI  
Oh, for Christ's sake - get a  
room!

CARLA  
I'm callin' the police!

SLOAN  
No you're not, Mother!

Carla glares at her, huffs, and begins to pace the hallway.

JIONNI  
Can she keep her mouth shut?

He gestures toward Carla, who glares at him.

CARLA  
Why, is *that* gonna happen to me if  
I can't!?

SLOAN  
It might!

Carla now glares indignantly at Sloan

SLOAN  
You tell a single soul what you  
see here in this room, and I'll go  
to prison, Mother. So if you never  
do another nice thing for me in  
your life, at least just forget  
this!

Carla contemplates Sloan's plea, and then shifts.

CARLA  
I didn't raise you to be this way..

She turns and marches back down the hallway, while Sloan  
stares after her.

JIONNI

(lightly)

You hafta shoot him so many times?

Sloan and Van watch him carefully remove a bullet. It drops to the floor beside him while he continues to concentrate. Sloan wearily looks up at Van. He draws her in and hugs her tight, before kissing her forehead. He's still holding the clippers in his free hand.

JIONNI

(to Van)

I'm about done, here. You ready to load up?

Van nods, gives Sloan a squeeze, and goes to Jionni's aid.

FADE OUT.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

Sloan and Jackson are seated across from each other at a tiny table in a bustling coffee shop. He's writing on a notepad, and there are papers scattered over the table, as Sloan leans forward, wincing slightly.

SLOAN

(speaking low)

Do you think some people are just attracted to disaster?

Jackson tilts his head and looks up at her.

JACKSON

How so?

She contemplates for a moment.

SLOAN

Like... maybe the fact that Van was trouble made him somehow all the more appealing to be with him?

Jackson picks up his coffee and takes a drink.

JACKSON

You can't help who you're attracted to. It's all chemical. If I were trouble, might you be more attracted to me?

Sloan smiles at his question, and he grins as she sits back.

SLOAN

I don't know. Something tells me you're not as squeaky-clean as you'd like me to believe.

His eyebrows lift.

JACKSON

Oh really? You think you know me like that?

SLOAN

(chuckling)

I'm just saying. A guy who plays rugby, is built like a Mack truck, and who got as excited as he did when he first saw a gun in my purse might not be as innocent as he acts.

He contemplates her.

JACKSON

I beat the hell out of my best friend when I found out he was sleeping with my wife.

SLOAN

As well you should've.

JACKSON

It wasn't my finest moment.

SLOAN

Nor was it hers.

JACKSON

(grinning)

Touche.

He glances back down at his paperwork. Sloan looks about, and as her gaze roams, she spots Angelo seated at the back of the cafe, by himself, at a table. He is sipping a coffee and staring straight at her. When he waves with a vicious smile, Sloan's look goes blank.

SLOAN

I have to go.

She stands up, and Jackson looks confused, but quickly gathers his papers as Sloan races to the side exit.

JACKSON

Sloan!

She doesn't stop, but Jackson is racing out the door after her. She gets in her car, backs up, and the tires screech as she pulls away from the parking spot. Jackson's car pulls out behind hers, and we see him put his phone to his ear.

INT. SLOAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She glances in the rearview mirror, and then fishes for her phone from her purse. She finds it, fumbles with it in her hand, and it falls between the console and the seat. She struggles, but can't reach it.

SLOAN

FUCK!

She slaps the steering wheel, shaking her head in frustration, before one final attempt. She weaves through traffic, and she's checking her mirrors.

She pulls into her driveway and hits the button for the garage door.

SLOAN

(muttering)

Hurry, hurry, hurry!

She pulls her car inside and shuts it off. She looks behind her, and then reaches under the seat for her phone. Then she hits the garage door button again, gets out of her car, and then something whacks her hard from behind, sending her forward to the concrete. Her cheek is pressed to the concrete, as she moans and dazedly opens her eyes. She tries to get up, and as she tries to see who her assailant is, a foot kicks her so hard in the stomach that she gasps for air, and then kicks her again, causing her to vomit. A camera-shot through her eyes shows that her vision is blurred, and her eyes are teary as she's coughing. After a final blow to her head, all goes black.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - AFTERNOON

Van, holding his cell phone to his ear, comes through the front door and locks it behind him. He's talking as he strolls over to the spot on the living room floor where Tommy's body was, less than 24 hours before. He stops and one hand rests upon his hip as he looks down at the spot.

VAN

Yeah, it's all taken care of.  
Well, obviously I won't say anything to Mom. I mean, I still don't get why Angelo is so hell-bent on coming after me, Dad. What's he say when you try to talk to him?

Van looks about the otherwise silent house, and he proceeds up the stairs.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Van rounds the top of the stairs and pokes his head into Sloan's bedroom.

VAN

Dad, I didn't take *anything*. I've even offered to give him whatever he wants. He's a psycho! End of story!

He huffs, rolls his eyes and heads back downstairs.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Van scratches the back of his head and looks back around, strolling to the back door, which he notices is unlocked. Locking it, he moves the phone to his other ear as he strolls toward the garage door.

VAN

Well, shit's really gonna hit the fan if he finds out what we did to Tommy. Yeah well, he doesn't need to know that. He's *not* gonna know that. I'll take the blame before I'd let her go down for something like that.

He opens the garage door, sees Sloan's car, and it's running with the garage door closed. He coughs, squints, then sees Sloan crumpled on the floor. Alarmed, he springs into action.

VAN

Fuck, Dad! I gotta go.

He promptly shoves his phone in his back pocket and hits the garage door button, rushing in. He crouches down to see Sloan's bloodied, bruised face. She moans, and he scoops her up and brings her inside. Carrying her into the house, she's starting to come to. Her eyes are fluttering open and closed, but her words are jumbled.

VAN

(frantically)

Just breathe, baby. Breathe.

He's horrified as he sets her on her couch, and sees the shape she's in. He snatches his phone and calls Jionni.

VAN

Jionni. What's the name of that doctor guy you know? Call him and have him meet us. No, at your place. It's Sloan...

He glances to her worriedly.

VAN

(worriedly)

...I don't know, man.

He shoves his phone back in his pocket, with fearful eyes. He leans in toward Sloan, and pauses with his hands poised to cup her face, but he winces and looks over her.

SLOAN

(whispering)

What happened?

He shakes his head, at a loss for words. Her eyes struggle to stay open, and he races out to the garage, coming back with her purse as she's trying to move and wincing.

VAN

Don't. Don't move. Everything's gonna be fine, beautiful. I promise.

He carefully picks her back up and opens the front door. He cautiously looks around as he quickens his walk to his car.

SLOAN

(moaning)

My head...

VAN

I know. Just relax.

He helps her into the backseat where she winces again and lays out on her side. He races around to get inside.

INT. JIONNI & ANGELA'S CONDO - KITCHEN - LATER AFTERNOON

Jionni, Gus and Van are in the kitchen. Angela is nearby, watching with worried eyes as Sammi plays on her phone, at the kitchen table. Gage is seated in a chair across from where Sloan is sitting, and looks solemn. DR. HARTLEY is looking over Sloan, who's scowling and wincing with Greta next to her.

VAN

She has no idea who it was, but she's certain it wasn't Angelo.

JIONNI

This has gotten way outta hand...

They watch Gus go talk to the doctor. They speak in hushed tones, and Gage rushes to Sloan's aid as she shakily stands up. He helps her into the bathroom. Jionni's staring down at his phone, and he looks confused. He turns pensive eyes to his father, who has just let Hartley out.

VAN

What?

Jionni continues to eye Gus, who's rubbing Greta's shoulders.

JIONNI

(speaking up)

So. I just got an interesting text.

Focused on Gus, Gus eyes him back inquisitively.

JIONNI

I took it upon myself to have  
Richard, downstairs, look over all  
the books for Bellezza. He seems  
to have stumbled upon something.

Gus shrugs at him impatiently.

GUS

So?

JIONNI

You never told us you bought  
Angelo out.

Gus narrows his eyes and shifts as Greta looks confused.

GUS

What about it?

Jionni shrugs.

JIONNI

For a million in cash? That you  
took from the business account?

Gus starts to shake his head in denial. His face goes  
blank. Van continues to look more and more confused as he  
looks between them.

JIONNI

So it's true?

Gus folds his arms across his chest and cocks his head.

JIONNI

You low-balled Angelo, waving a  
million in cash in front of his  
face, and just assumed he wouldn't  
figure out that his share was  
worth millions more?

Disturbed, Van's gaze falls upon his father.

VAN

It was a mistake, right? All of  
this is just a mistake?

JIONNI

Or did you really take advantage  
of your nutty brother?

Gage re-emerges, and as he goes to join the apprehensive girls that are watching on, Van takes a few steps closer to Gus, who's standing there with an indignant stare.

VAN

Tell me you didn't start this.  
Tell me you didn't really piss  
Angelo off bad enough to start a  
family war...

Van's nostrils flare as Gus just stares at him.

VAN

(more heatedly)

You are going to tell me this is  
all one big misunderstanding,  
right?

GUS

I *know* you're not blaming this  
situation completely on *me*...

He's giving Van a threatening look that incenses Van.

VAN

I can't believe what I'm hearing,  
right now! So, what - everything  
you've always told us about family  
meaning everything and not  
stealing from one another, or  
turning your backs on one another  
- that was just all talk!?

Gus takes a step forward in an effort to intimidate.

GUS

(growling)

You do *not* want to have this  
conversation with me...

Van takes an angry step forward.

VAN

You fucked him, and now he thinks  
the rest of us owe him! He's  
causing nothing but grief to  
everyone in this goddamn room!

(pointing to the  
bathroom)

*My wife* has a mangled face and  
bruised ribs! Because of you!

In a flash, Gus closes the gap of space between them and his fist angrily slams into Van's eye, knocking him backward and causing Jionni to spring into action, as the girls all gasp.

GUS

(roaring)

Ungrateful punk! Everything I've  
done for you! For all of you! And  
this is how you repay me? With  
disrespect?! Fuck you! You're all  
on your own!

Gus points around to all in the room, and then turns to start for the door. Jionni steps forward as Van is stunned.

JIONNI

Not for nothin' Dad, but what he's  
sayin' is at least partially true.  
We're all watchin' our backs and  
now the women are gettin' hurt!

Gus stops at the front door.

GUS

Greta! Get your things. Now! We're  
done here.

VAN

Yeah? Really?! Make sure you take  
your dick brother with you!

Worried and fearful, Greta quickly does what Gus asks. He opens the door, and she wordlessly exits, tossing a glance back inside. He exits past her and slams the door behind him.

INT. JIONNI AND ANGELA'S CONDO - EVENING

We hear the bathtub draining. Hair pinned up, Sloan is standing at the sink, wrapped in a towel, staring at her bruised reflection. She reaches for the folded t-shirt and pajama pants beside her on the counter, and puts them on. She exits the bathroom into the spare bedroom, and Van is seated on the floor with his back propped against the side of the bed. He looks pensive. He looks beat-down. Solemn. His eyes flick up to her. Pained by her bruises, he looks downward.

Sloan attempts a smile, lightly treading toward him.

SLOAN  
Hey, at least now we match!

He winces, glancing up at her, and she carefully lays down on the bed. She pats the spot next to her.

SLOAN  
C'mon. Get up off the floor.

VAN  
Did you find your mom?

SLOAN  
She's camping out at Gage's house.

He nods slightly. Then he exhales deeply.

VAN  
I really don't deserve you.

She shakes her head and sits up.

SLOAN  
Van -

VAN  
I don't deserve to have you, and  
you don't deserve this.

He rises to his feet and rubs the back of his neck as he stands before her in the darkness.

VAN  
I feel responsible. And I can't  
even begin to tell you how sorry I  
am.

SLOAN

Van, you didn't do this. Just...  
come to bed. It's late.

VAN

(softly)

I never thought I could feel so  
much contempt for my father...

Her look softens, and she reaches out to grab his hand. She pulls him toward her, and he climbs over her into the bed. She takes his arm and drapes it over her shoulders and neck.

VAN

(huskily)

Family or not, this is going to  
end.

FADE OUT.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Van is seated on the couch, holding his head in his hands. Sloan is coming down the stairs. She approaches him and breathes in, looking around.

SLOAN

It doesn't appear anyone's been in  
here, so that's good, right?

He winces up at her.

VAN

Yes? Maybe? I don't know. I really  
feel like I'm losing my mind.

SLOAN

(frowning)

Any word from your parents?

VAN

Not a single thing. Yanno... I never  
suspected my father was a shady  
man, ever. Now that I find out  
he's taken advantage of someone  
else's stupidity, it's driving me  
nuts to think about whatever else  
he might've done.

A knock at the door causes Van to jump to his feet and slyly peek through the living room curtains.

VAN  
White Kia.

Sloan shakes her head, and Van goes to the front door. He looks through the peephole. A thin wiry man with glasses is standing there with some papers.

VAN  
Who is it?!

DELIVERYMAN  
I'm looking for Mr. Van Capitani?

VAN  
What for!?

DELIVERYMAN  
I just have some papers to deliver.

Van pulls the gun from his belt and throws the door open. Startling the deliveryman, he yelps and thrusts the thick envelope at Van, before raising his hands in surrender and hurries down the sidewalk. Van waits until the man is in his car before he lowers his gun, picks up the envelope, and then steps back inside. Sloan's eyes widen as she eyes the envelope he's carrying as he strolls into the kitchen. He pulls the papers out, and she holds her breath. Van already looked sad to begin with, but when he unfolds the papers and realizes what he's looking at, he is downright devastated.

Sloan remains frozen where she stands, and Van staggers a few more steps to the kitchen counter. He sets the papers down and solemnly stares down at them. Sloan's breath catches in her throat, and she wants to say something, but can't. She looks stricken with emotion.

Van inhales a slow, deep breath. He walks to the other side of the counter where a pen sits atop some bills and mail, and he takes it, and the papers, and goes to sit down on the couch. He leans forward, placing the papers on the coffee table. Sloan's lips purse together tightly, and her eyes are teary as she's ridden with guilt over Van's deeply saddened look. The pen in his hand, he clicks it a few times. Then he goes to sign. Then pauses. Looks pained. He

puts the pen down and rubs at his face. Then picks it back up. As he scribbles his name on the pages, Sloan winces and wipes stray tears that fall down her cheeks. As he speaks, his voice is soft and resigned. He never looks up. Never looks at her. He is utterly broken.

VAN

I mean... this is what you wanted.  
All along, all I've ever cared  
about is you.

He flips through the pages and signs.

VAN

(voice cracks)  
But... I also know I've royally  
screwed up in a number of ways  
that are unforgivable.

Sloan covers her nose and mouth, as her tears continue to fall from pained eyes.

VAN

(softly)  
I don't blame you. I'll never  
blame you.  
(sighs)  
I'll give you whatever you want.  
Even after it's all said and done,  
I'll still do anything for you.

Sloan chokes on a sob, and wipes again at her eyes. He forces a smile that comes out slight, and terribly sad.

VAN

I can never thank you enough for  
saving my life, beautiful. Odd,  
how without you, I wouldn't be  
sitting here right now.

SLOAN

(brokenly)  
You don't - don't you want to at  
least read over them? You don't  
have to sign them all right now!

He shakes his head.

VAN  
I'm not going to fight you, my  
love.

He clicks the pen and sets it down. He then rises from the couch, sets the papers back upon the kitchen counter, and pulls his ringing phone from his pocket to put it to his ear. As he speaks softly into the phone, he appears distracted.

VAN  
Hello? Yeah. Okay... Well, I'll get  
Sloan together, bring her back,  
and then we'll head on our way.  
Okay.

He can only stomach looking at her briefly after he hangs up.

VAN  
We gotta get back over to  
Jionni's.

She shakes her head.

SLOAN  
(softly)  
I'll stay here.

VAN  
You'd be safer there.

SLOAN  
I'll be fine, here. I have a gun,  
security -

VAN  
(snapping)  
Dammit, Sloan.

He takes a deep breath and glances at her again.

VAN  
Fine! Fine. But if even so much as  
hear a branch snap outside -

SLOAN  
I'll call -

She falters and blinks.

SLOAN  
I'll call for help.

He nods but still can't make eye contact with her. He glances at the papers once more, and reluctantly lets himself out.

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Carla knocks on the front door, and Piper is standing there with her, looking like she'd rather be anywhere else. Gage opens the door, and frowns immediately at what he sees.

GAGE  
Can I help you?

Piper crosses her arms over her chest, just a few steps behind Carla, as Carla scowls at him.

CARLA  
I need a favor.

GAGE  
Would you like me to invite you in, so you can steal some more of Sammi's jewelry? More tools from the garage to go hock? Maybe you can help yourself to my safe, again?

PIPER  
For the record, it wasn't my idea to come here.

Gage points over Carla, right at Piper with a stern look.

GAGE  
I have my own bone to pick with you.  
(to Carla)  
You're not welcome here, anymore.  
You know that.

CARLA  
Look, if you just give me some money, I'll peacefully go.

Sammi walks up behind Gage and angrily glares at Carla.

SAMMI

I *know* you really didn't have the gall to come back here, Carla.

GAGE

Go back to whatever you were doing, Sammi. I've got this.

SAMMI

You stole my grandmother's antique opal ring! I swear to God if I wasn't able to buy it back, I'd fucking annihilate you!

CARLA

Yeah, you obviously cared so much about it, seeing as how it was caked in dust, tucked away!

SAMMI

(yelling)

It was *mine!* *Mine!* You can't just take things that aren't yours, you delusional bitch!

Gage snaps his head around to face Sammi.

GAGE

I *said* go back to what you were doing!

She huffs, turns, and disappears from the shot.

GAGE

(to Piper)

You know you're in a lot of trouble right now, right?

Piper rolls her eyes.

PIPER

Oh, go fuck yourself. You're no different from the rest of them.

GAGE

So what does that make you?  
Forging documents... Signing  
Sloan's death warrant... When she  
finds out -

PIPER

So what - you're gonna tell her?  
Not that I'm surprised. You were  
always more loyal to her, anyway.

Gage shakes his head.

GAGE

I don't have the heart to tell  
her. You've already destroyed  
things enough, in her life. But  
you better lay low, or disappear  
altogether.

He tosses a look over his shoulder and lowers his voice.

GAGE

If Van finds out what you did,  
nothing will save you. So.

He reaches into his pocket and takes out a wad of money  
bound by a rubber band. He undoes the band and flips  
through it, counting 20 hundred-dollar bills, and handing  
it to Carla.

GAGE

This is all I've got on me. This  
is all you're getting. I suggest  
both of you take a hike, together.  
Away from Vegas. Away from any  
place tied to any Capitanis. I  
mean it.

PIPER

What the fuck, Gage!?

Carla is staring down at the money, re-counting it while  
Piper's face distorts with contempt towards Gage.

PIPER

You're just writing me off?

GAGE

I'm writing both of you off.

Her jaw drops, and he closes the door in their faces.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Sloan goes to the door and opens it to Angela standing there.

SLOAN

Did the guys send you here to  
check on me?

Angela cocks her head at Sloan and walks in past her.

ANGELA

I just wanted to get the hell out  
of there for a bit.

She takes notice of the gun in Sloan's left hand.

ANGELA

Jesus, you're carrying one now?

Sloan shuts and locks the door, following her casually as Angela strolls into the space between the living room and kitchen, and just looks around.

SLOAN

Just trying not to get mangled any  
further.

ANGELA

None of the guys came home last  
night. Sammi hasn't heard from  
Gage. I was just wondering if  
you've heard from Van?

Sloan's lips part as she's about to say something, but doesn't. Then she shakes her head and sets the gun down.

SLOAN

(softly)

No.

Angela sighs, paces around for a moment, then eyes Sloan.

ANGELA

Your face looks a lot better.

SLOAN

Thanks. Lots of make-up, though.

ANGELA

This shit is scary. This, and what  
the guys might be up to, right  
now...

(shaking head)

This is the biggest pile of shit  
we've stepped in, yet.

SLOAN

(unconvincingly)

We'll make it through...

Angela's eyes are still roaming.

ANGELA

(mutters)

Yeah...

As her gaze lands on the papers upon the counter, she leans  
in closer.

ANGELA

Are these...?

Sloan inhales deeply.

SLOAN

Yup.

Angela stares at her in alarm, and then utter sympathy, as  
Sloan crumbles. Her face contorts as tears form and fall.

ANGELA

Come home with me. Get away from  
here, and being alone. We can make  
drinks tonight, and talk girl  
stuff, just like it used to be.

Sloan winces at her, and wipes the tears from her cheeks.

ANGELA

Go! Go on! Get some clothes  
together and let's go.

Sloan's eyes linger upon her, considering protest, but she  
obediently retreats upstairs.

Angela's eyes fall back to the papers, and she sighs as her  
fingers slide them toward her while she waits. Frowning,  
she exhales a sigh. Then she's distracted by what sounds

like yelling outside. Men yelling. Angela glances at the monitor on the counter, and sees Van arguing with two cops, who then slam him against the side of the house.

ANGELA

Oh shit!

Angela rushes over to the door and throws it open, seeing Van getting handcuffed.

ANGELA

What's going on, here!?

COP 1

Ma'am, we found him prowling the premises -

VAN

(shouting)

I live here! I own this house!

Alarmed, Sloan appears in the doorway behind Angela, and Angela moves aside.

COP 2

You're in violation of the restraining order.

SLOAN

No - there's been a mistake. There's no restraining order!

COP 1

We received a call saying there was some trouble at your address.

SLOAN

From who!? Everything is fine! Let him go, or drop the charges, or whatever you have to do -

COP 1

Afraid not.

Cop 2 is now reading him the Miranda Rights.

COP 1

The restraining order is still active. We have to take him in, book him, and charge him. He'll be released with a court date.

Van won't even look at Sloan. He's agitated as the cops jerk him away to head to their car. Sloan looks on, horrified.

FADE OUT.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - LATE EVENING

The house is dimly lit, and Sammi and Gage are in the midst of an angry fight, and Gage is trying to keep his cool. His hands are in his hair as he paces the bedroom with Sammi furiously throwing stuff in a suitcase. She zips up the bag up and glares at him, tossing her hair behind her shoulder.

SAMMI

(sarcastically)

Happy now?

Gage fires her a threatening look.

GAGE

Happy that my girlfriend betrayed me? Betrayed my family? As far as I'm concerned, you're no better than Piper.

She angrily swipes her bag from the bed, and picks up two more from the floor.

SAMMI

Well, when you crawl out of Sloan's ass, that's where you can find me. At Piper's.

A groan of disgust escapes Gage as he shakes his head.

GAGE

Trust me, I won't. After learning how little I mean to you, I have nothing left to say, Sammi.

She shakes her head and leaves the room, as he Gage paces. We hear the front door slam shut. Gage's head bows, and he

stops where he stands. We can't see his face in the shadows, but he snuffles and we see him wipe at his face.

FADE OUT.

INT. JIONNI & ANGELA'S CONDO - EARLY MORNING

Sloan is pacing before the windows, and when her phone rings, she stops and puts it to her ear.

SLOAN  
(hissing)  
Where have you been!? I've been trying to reach you since yesterday!

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

SLOAN  
That restraining order. You were supposed to drop it!

JACKSON (O.S.)  
...I thought you didn't want him around!

SLOAN  
I specifically told you to drop it!

JACKSON (O.S.)  
He was prowling around your house when I stopped by, and -

Sloan's eyes widen.

SLOAN  
You called the cops on him!? You were stalking my damn house!?

JACKSON (O.S.)  
Not stalking! I was worried, and -

SLOAN  
You're fired. Don't come by. Don't call me anymore. I'll send you a check for whatever I owe you.

JACKSON (O.S.)

Sloan -

SLOAN

I gotta go. I gotta go pick my  
husband up from *jail*. Thanks!

She hangs up the phone and stalks back to the kitchen,  
where we see Angela in a bathrobe, sipping a cup of coffee  
and eyeing Sloan cautiously while Sloan fixes herself  
coffee.

ANGELA

Did he really say he was sitting  
outside your house?

Sloan frustratedly shakes her head and tosses her a glance.

SLOAN

What is it with me attracting  
idiots?!

Angela chuckles at her and then turns to rinse her empty  
mug.

ANGELA

Go pick up your jailbird husband.

JIONNI (O.S.)

Jailbird. Wife-beater...

Both girls turn to see Jionni emerging from the bedroom.

JIONNI

Fuckin' reporters are having a  
field day with Van spending the  
night in jail over some bullshit  
restraining order his wife issued  
on him.

Sloan rolls her eyes.

SLOAN

(mutters)

I'm going to get ready and leave.

INT. VEGAS JAIL - COURTROOM - MID-MORNING

Van is standing the judge, who is going through all the people who've spent the night in jail. He looks like he'd rather be anywhere else, as the judge eyes him.

JUDGE

How do you plead?

VAN

Not guilty.

CUT TO:

INT. VEGAS JAIL - MID-MORNING

Released, Van is leaving, and is bombarded as Piper rushes up on him. She throws her arms up around his neck, and he pushes against her, seeing two reporters waiting just outside.

VAN

Piper, what the fuck -

She croons into his ear.

PIPER

Shh - you don't wanna cause a scene in front of the reporters, do you?

He pulls her arms from his neck, eyeing her in disgust.

VAN

What are you even doing here!?

She narrows her eyes slightly, and shifts.

PIPER

We need to talk.

He shakes his head.

VAN

"We" don't need to anything, Piper.

PIPER

No, I definitely need to talk to you. And explain some stupid mix-up.

She laughs nervously, and Van's eyes lift upward, drawn to the entrance, where he catches sight of Sloan, standing there and eyeballing both of them like she's been there awhile. Van starts to walk toward her. Piper reaches out to stop him. Disappointment is evident on Sloan's face as she immediately turns and bolts out the door. Piper grabs at his shirt, and he jerks away from her but stops as two officers stop what they're doing to eye him with interest.

VAN

(hisses)

What, Piper?! What is so important!?

She looks at him with fearful eyes, and then shakes her head.

PIPER

Nothing. Let's just forget it. I'll take you home, and then -

VAN

I'll take a cab.

He hurries around her and jogs for the door.

EXT. VEGAS JAIL - CONTINUOUS

He bursts through the door, surrounded now by several reporters snapping pictures of him leaving the jail. He looks around for Sloan's car, and sees her pulling out of the parking lot. Piper comes out right behind him, and he tosses her an agitated look and stares back out in defeat.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Sloan's car is parked in the garage, and she shuts it off. She leans back in her seat, and looks upward, exhaling. She stares downward pensively. She glances at her phone in her purse, and then shakes her head.

SLOAN

(mutters softly)

Fuck both of them.

She snatches her purse, throws the car door open, and gets out. She closes her car door and hears Jackson call her name as he runs from across the street and up her driveway.

JACKSON  
Sloan! Sloan - wait!

She turns and can't believe he showed up.

SLOAN  
Jackson?! What are you doing here?

He is in the garage, and his eyes widen when he sees her hand on her gun, poised to pull it out at any moment.

JACKSON  
Whoa - is that really necessary?

SLOAN  
What brings you here? I told you  
I'd mail you a check.

JACKSON  
I just wanted to talk to you.

His eyes plead for some understanding. She relaxes, hits the garage door button, and removes her hand from her purse.

SLOAN  
You've got five minutes.

She turns and walks inside.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Jackson is at her heels as she walks in and sets her purse down atop the kitchen counter.

JACKSON  
You haven't answered my calls or  
texts -

SLOAN  
Because I fired you.

Sloan spins around and eyeballs him impatiently.

SLOAN

You can't do this. You can't just sit outside my house. You can't follow me. You really don't want to get caught up in the rest of the crap surrounding me right now. It's not safe!

ANGELO (O.S.)

Why is that?

Jackson's and Sloan's heads turns toward the hallway. She freezes as Angelo comes into view. With the flick of his lighter, Angelo lights the cigar between his fingers, looking smug. When Sloan notices the red gas can that he now stands beside, she pulls out her gun and aims it at him.

ANGELO

Is it 'cuz the big bad wolf is after you?

He shoves the lighter into his pocket and pulls a gun out of his own to aim it at her. Sloan shifts and nerously swallows the lump in her throat.

ANGELO

What kind of gun is that, pray tell?

Sloan glances at Jackson, who looks rather at ease.

SLOAN

Why?!

Angelo's eyes narrow at her.

ANGELO

Might that be the same twenty-two that my boy was shot with? The gun that prevented me from even considering an open-casket funeral?

Angelo takes a step forward, and Sloan takes a step back.

ANGELO

C'mon... I know all you kids' secrets. The little hiding spots. The mountains, the desert - who do you think taught 'em all this stuff? I did. Their father did. Our parents taught us.

(to Jackson)

You're free to go, now. You served your purpose.

Sloan's eyes dart to Jackson, who shifts but doesn't leave.

SLOAN

What's that mean? What purpose?

Angelo chuckles.

ANGELO

Your lawyer boyfriend here's done a little work for me on the side. Did he ever mention that?

Sloan looks confused, her eyes darting back and forth.

ANGELO (CONT'D)

Notarizing some documents... Particularly an insurance policy that'll come in quite handy, today.

Sloan looks like she's about to explode.

SLOAN

(fuming at Jackson)

*What?!* You knew this whole time and you tried to pin it on Van!?

Jackson looks desperate.

JACKSON

After that first day I talked to you, I knew I had to make you aware of it - I just... I couldn't let you know *how* I knew!

SLOAN

(angrily)

Fucking liar!

ANGELO

Put the gun down. Now.

Sloan directs her attention back to Angelo.

SLOAN

If money is what this is all about, why didn't you just let me give you the damn money in the first place?! Why the policy? Why would you rather murder me than take my money?!

ANGELO

(yelling)

It's about making them pay! It's about teaching them not to stab their own flesh-and-blood in the back! You people all deserve what's comin' to ya!

JACKSON

(blurting nervously)

It was your sister!

Sloan looks to him, confused.

JACKSON

The policy. She's in on it, too.

Angelo fires his gun, silencing Jackson from spilling any further details. The gunshot is deafening. Sloan yelps as Jackson's body falls lifeless to the floor from a shot between the eyes. Horrified, Sloan stays focused on Angelo.

SLOAN

(gravely)

What does my sister have to do with all of this?

Angelo smirks at her, and as he casually takes a step toward her, she takes a step back.

ANGELO

She pretended she was you. It didn't take much convincing, really. I held a gun to her head when she wouldn't tell me where Van was. She said she'd do anything, so I took her to Jack's office and she signed your name. It was flawless.

Sloan appears stunned by his words.

SLOAN

(croaks)

Why'd you pick me for this ridiculous scheme?

ANGELO

Why not? You're nothing to me, but you're the one thing Van loves the most. You're the daughter Gus and Greta never had. Seems fitting.

Sloan scoffs bitterly.

SLOAN

Well, what a lovely lottery I've won. Who'd you send over here to do this to my face?

Angelo laughs.

ANGELO

It's amazing what people do when they're scared. Tell them you'll turn them in, you've got their attention. Tell them you'll kill their family, they suddenly wanna hear what you have to say. You tell 'em they'll lose their career as a lawyer and spend their life in jail, and they start to agree with whatever you say.

Trembling, Sloan clutches the gun tighter and then pulls the trigger, shooting Angelo in the shoulder. He drops his gun, and Sloan grabs her keys from the counter and tries to flee, except Angelo answers back with a bullet that pierces her arm and causes her to scream as he dashes to block the

foyer, preventing her exit. She dashes back to the kitchen and ducks behind the counter. Blood is trickling down her arm, as she points the gun over the counter and shoots. Then shoots again and again. She peeks over the counter and he is on the floor, but he's grabbed the gas can and is now spilling the contents over the floor. Panicking, Sloan looks around and decides to make a break for the door leading to the backyard. She's almost there when he shoots her in the thigh, causing her to fall to the floor with a howl. Gasoline is all over the floor. Angelo is wounded. Pure adrenaline forces her back to her feet. Then we see a shot of Angelo's hand flicking his lighter and tossing it down into the gasoline-soaked floor. In slow-motion, Sloan turns and reaches for the door, but Angelo fires another shot as the living room behind him goes up in flames.

ANGELO

Say goodnight!

She's not sure where she was last hit. She's covered in blood. Her vision is blurred. On the move, Angelo lunged toward the counter as she is struggling to get to the door, and he takes a swing at her that knocks her into the wall. The fire is spreading. Smoke covers the ceiling now. She grabs the butcher knife from the block on the counter and she whirls around at him, slashing his arm wide open as he yells out in pain. She gets away and reaches the door. As she unlocks it, he grabs her hair and hits her in the back with the handle of his gun. She uses all her energy to plunge the knife in his chest, sending him backward in shock, and to the floor on his back.

Sliding in a pool of blood, she whimpers, unsteady, turning the knob on the door and crawling outside. Hyperventilating, she's sobbing and shaky. She's lost a lot of blood and her vision is blurred by weakness and tears. She crawls over the back lawn, struggling to get to the side of the house, as smoke billows from the door she just came from. The side fence is in sight. But then it all goes black.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MID-DAY

The scene is slowed down a bit, as it appears their exit is being shot by someone close by, who follows her through the

hospital parking lot, where news reporters laid in wait - pouncing on them the moment they stepped outside. As they walk to Angela's car, Sloan puts sunglasses on to hide the faded bruises on her face from her first attack. Her arm is in a sling, and her walk seems as if it's taking effort, but she's determined to look strong, as they fire questions at her, between what sounds like news clips being played.

REPORTER 1

Mrs. Capitani - can you tell us about the events that took place when your home burned?

NEWS (O.S.)

After being hospitalized for two days due to two reported gunshot wounds and being interviewed by police investigators, no charges have been brought upon Sloan Capitani, after she shot and killed Las Vegas investor Angelo Capitani.

REPORTER 2

Sloan! Tell us what happened! Neighbors reported the smell of gasoline, and there's speculation of arson! Can you tell us anything? What do you remember before you were found unconscious in the backyard???

Angela sticks her hand out as they pass by, blocking the camera shot, as we now see the back of them heading for Angela's car.

NEWS (O.S.)

Sergeant Healey reported that Angelo Capitani was behind the gas fire that demolished the home owned by Van and Sloan Capitani, and says Sloan Capitani acted in self-defense. He had no further comments.

Stone-faced, Sloan ducks down into the passenger seat of Angela's car.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - MID-DAY

Angela's car parks in the driveway, and she hurries around to help Sloan out.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

All is silent, as Sloan stands in front of the sink and stares at her reflection. She winces as she takes her sling off. Her stare is pensive. With purpose, she turns and exits.

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - LATER AFTERNOON

We see Sloan, driving Angela's car, pull up to the curb where her former house is reduced to rubble. Van is standing on the lawn, before the remnants of a home with an enormous dumpster full of rubble nearby. His hands are in his pockets. When she gets out of the car and shuts the door, he doesn't even flinch. He just continues to stare.

Sloan inhales deeply as her eyes span the wreckage. She reluctantly strolls toward where Van stands, staring at what once was, and stops beside him. She exhales a long, shaky breath as her emotions overwhelm her.

VAN

I, uh...

The shake of Van's head is slight. Overwhelmed.

VAN (CONT'D)

(raspily)

I saved what I could... The safe from your closet was found. I gave it to your brother.

He rubs at his face and turns it upward, turning glassy eyes to the sky. She looks over at him and a breath catches in her throat as she looks downward and tears fall to the ground.

VAN

This entire situation brings this family to a new low.

SLOAN

The local stations have been having a field day...

VAN

Jionni and I bought bulletproof vests for everyone. Including you. Just in case Vinny or Tommy's friends serve up any backlash.

Sloan sighs again, looking around at the rubble.

SLOAN

I think this is where I should start speaking in metaphors, and saying things like "every ending is a new beginning," or "when God closes a door, He opens a window."

Van releases a laugh and his eyes brighten as he looks at her. She smirks back at him, and then turns back to the mess before them. His look turns solemn.

VAN

(softly)

This, right here, feels like the last five years of my life have been erased.

SLOAN

Wouldn't it be better that way?

He shakes his head.

VAN

No. It wouldn't. Hell, if I didn't constantly re-live our memories in my head, I'd have no evidence of us at all. Now there's nothing left. Nothing of the life we created together. No photos, none of the things we picked out together...

SLOAN

I have to completely rebuild my life.

Van releases a long sigh, giving her a sympathetic look.

VAN

Jesus, I can't even imagine what you went through...

Sloan smiles sadly.

SLOAN  
Time to pick up the pieces and  
move on, right?

VAN  
(softly)  
Move on...

He winces.

VAN (CONT'D)  
You came to the police station. I  
didn't expect that.

She nods.

SLOAN  
(bitterly)  
Someone else beat me to the punch.

VAN  
You know what the worst part was,  
of figuring out it was Nick you  
slept with? It was knowing I  
couldn't do anything about it.

Her lips part, as she looks to him blankly. His eyes meet hers briefly, before he stares ahead again. Sadness tugs at the corner of his mouth.

VAN  
I couldn't do a damn thing.  
Because I couldn't bring myself to  
take someone from you that you...  
that you loved more than you ever  
loved me.

His words deflate her. She looks downward, teary-eyed.

VAN  
I had no idea Piper was going to  
show up. I don't talk to her.  
Hell, Sloan - I moved out of my  
own condo just to get away from  
her!

As his voice raises, as he pleads his case, Sloan painfully looks at him like she wants to believe him.

VAN

That day you let yourself in and aimed that gun at me... I was giving her money to go away, Sloan. Paying her to leave. But she didn't want to leave. She's messed up, and I don't know why I just couldn't tell you what really happened... She drugged me back in Atlantic City – slipping shit into my drink, and purposely crawling into bed with me so you'd find us! I don't remember any of it. I can't even stand to look at her.

Sloan rubs at her face, and covers her mouth and nose, as she cracks and then throws her hands in the air and faces him.

SLOAN

Then why didn't you fight for it?! Why did you just – you just signed those papers so easily, and didn't even seem to care! You just signed them, and left!

Shocked, Van's eyes widen as he, too, turns to face her.

VAN

I DID fight for you! I fought every fucking day! I fought even when you made it clear you didn't want anything to do with me! You turned me away at the hospital and didn't want me there! You didn't want me, remember!?

Every word from his lips is more emotional and elevated.

VAN (CONT'D)

What did you want from me, Sloan!?  
Did you want me to make a divorce  
difficult for you?! Do you know  
how difficult it already was,  
every time my mom asked me  
"Where's Sloan?" "Why didn't Sloan  
come with you?" I couldn't even  
begin to tell her why I couldn't  
make it work with my wife, even  
though you're the only fucking  
thing that's ever mattered to me  
in my life!!!

Both of them are trembling now. Sloan shifts on her feet,  
and wipes fresh tears from her cheeks.

VAN

But in the end, you have your  
freedom. You're free to do  
whatever you want, now. You can  
find a man who won't be as foolish  
and weak as I've been.

SLOAN

Someone who won't leave me, and  
take up with someone else, in  
another country, allowing me to  
mourn his alleged death for a  
year.

He releases a breath and bows his head, shaking it.

VAN

(softly)

I can't have this conversation  
with you. I can't. It fucking  
hurts.

Her eyes focus on the wedding band he's still wearing. She  
wipes at her face again, and stares into the rubble.

SLOAN

(softly)

I never turned the papers in.

His head whips around in surprise.

VAN  
You didn't???

She shakes her head.

SLOAN  
No.

Stunned, he continues to stare at her.

SLOAN  
I couldn't even look at them,  
after you signed them. And well, I  
suppose it'd be too difficult to  
do so now, seeing as how they're  
somewhere in that mess.

Her look brightens slightly, as the corner of her mouth pulls upward. She tosses him a glance, and his eyes follow her as she makes her way back to the car. Then he throws his hands up in the air, calling after her.

VAN  
Hey! You can't drop a bomb like  
that on me, and then walk away!

Sloan smirks at him, opening the car door.

SLOAN  
Choose your next move wisely, Mr.  
Capitani. I get to start fresh! So  
it's now, or never.

She gets in and starts the car. As her words sink in, Van slowly grins, and makes a dash for his own.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - AFTERNOON

Van presses Sloan to the wall, and she yelps but pulls him in and fervently kisses him. Her hands are in his hair. He spins her around and into her bedroom she goes, yanking up his shirt and chuckling as he struggles to get it over his head, before he's at her again. He then reaches out behind him, and the bedroom door swings shut.

FADE IN:

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE -SLOAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sloan and Van are asleep, tangled in the sheets. His arm is draped over her. Sun pours over them from the window, and they are startled awake by banging downstairs, and yelling. Both of them look at one another in alarm, and scramble for their clothes.

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE — DOWNSTAIRS — CONTINUOUS

Van appears at the bottom of the stairs, and his gaze turns to Gage, who is in the living room pacing angrily, as Sloan attention is drawn to the kitchen. Gage grabs his keys.

GAGE

I can't be here for this...

Van confusedly watches Gage storm out, and Sloan peeks around the kitchen, incensed immediately when she sees Sammi rifling through the cabinets, with Piper at her side.

SLOAN

What the hell!?! None of that belongs to you, Sammi. What are you doing?

Piper steps toward Sloan with narrowed eyes and looks at Van.

PIPER

How cute is this! Don't you two look like the very picture of perfection!

Enraged, Sloan charges at her. Sammi comes around the counter to Piper's aid, Van grabs her to restrain her. Sloan punches Piper across the face, causing her to stagger backward in shock, reaching up to shield her face as Sloan bellows.

SLOAN

You wanna know what's "cute"? YOU signing my death warrant! YOU drugging my husband!

She hauls off and punches Piper again, knocking her to the floor and causing her to howl in pain, cornered. Sammi is smacking at Van, trying to make him let her go, and Sloan whirls around to face her.

SLOAN  
(growling)  
GET OUT. Get your shit and LEAVE!

Piper climbs to her feet, seething.

PIPER  
I can't WAIT to call the cops and  
tell them what you did to Tommy!

Sloan whirls back around and Piper swipes a pan from the counter, but even as she swings at Sloan, it doesn't seem to deter her. Sloan grabs it from her hand and throws it to the floor, putting her finger in Piper's face.

SLOAN  
Get out of here, and I swear to  
God if you ever cross my path  
after this day, I will end you,  
you hear me? I'll fucking kill  
you! GET OUT!

Sloan steps back and points toward the doorway.

SLOAN  
(yelling)  
GO!

Piper's eyes are wild and angry, as she stalks past Sloan and glares at Van along the way. Then she smirks at Sloan.

PIPER  
I WILL get you back, dear sister.

SLOAN  
(snidely)  
You already gave it your best  
shot. But just like everything  
else you do in life, you failed  
miserably.

Sloan glares at her and exits the kitchen. Van releases Sammi and lightly shoves her into the living room. She releases a frustrated groan and follows Piper out. After the slam of the front door, Van's eyes turn to Sloan, who puts her hands on her hips and bows her head.

VAN

I'm starting to think family is  
over-rated.

She lifts an eyebrow and looks up at him.

SLOAN

Now I wonder what she's done with  
my mother...

They stare at one another thoughtfully, and she turns to  
look down at the stuff Sammi had taken out of the cabinets.

SLOAN

(muttering)

And now we've got two loose  
cannons running around town...

Van's look is contemplative.

VAN

I'll take care of that.

Sloan's eyes meet his, and she nods with understanding,  
before both of them are startled by Gage appearing in the  
kitchen doorway.

GAGE

Take care of what?

VAN

Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum.

Gage cocks his head at him and winces.

GAGE

C'mon... They'll keep their mouths  
shut.

VAN

Can we afford to give them the  
benefit of the doubt? Are you okay  
with them running around, making  
threats that both of them are  
crazy enough to make good on?

Gage delivers him a sharp look, but Van challenges it.

GAGE

No, I'm not okay with it. I'm not okay with any of this. I'm not okay with the girl I wanted to marry crossing me. I'm not okay with my sister digging herself the grave she's gonna end up buried in! I'm not okay with them running off together! I'm not okay!!!

Gage angrily stalks back out of the kitchen and Sloan rubs at her face. Van steps forward and rubs at her shoulders. Then her phone rings. She looks at it, then rolls her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN'S SUV – AFTERNOON

They are pulling away from the Las Vegas Police Department, and Carla is in the backseat, disheveled.

CARLA

That bitch left me at a gas station! I didn't raise her like that!

Sloan rolls her eyes.

SLOAN

Let's fast-forward to the part where you were picked up for panhandling at our casino.

CARLA

I had nothing! She left me with nothing – what was I supposed to do?! No one answered the door at Gage's. Then I went lookin' for you, but your house – it's not there!

SLOAN

I'm personally taking you and putting you up somewhere. Then I want you to move on with your life, Mother. I can't babysit you.

CARLA

But really, Sloan – what did you  
do to your house?

Sloan struggles to stay composed, as she turns to Van.

SLOAN

How about those apartments off The  
Strip, right by that motel you  
were staying at?

Van nods and puts the blinker on.

VAN

Let's do this!

Sloan sighs anxiously.

SLOAN

We just have to hurry. We're need  
to be at the rehearsal by six.

VAN

Relax, beautiful.

His hand reaches over and takes hers.

SERIES OF SHOTS: JIONNI & ANGELA'S WEDDING

A. INT. RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

Appearing to have put everything behind them for the night,  
everyone in the Capitani family is having a good time as  
the rehearsal comes to a close. Van walks up behind Sloan  
as they are all talking and laughing, and wraps his arm  
around her shoulders from behind, pressing his face to her  
neck.

B. INT. RESTAURANT - LATER EVENING

A shot from overhead shows everyone standing in a circle,  
with shotglasses in their hands. They clink them together  
and take their shots.

C. INT. CHURCH - EARLY EVENING

Sloan, in a bridesmaid dress, is walking down the aisle.  
Van, standing next to Jionni at the altar, grins and winks  
at her, making her crack a smile as she turns for the  
altar. Then, Angela appears in the doorway, being escorted

in by Gus. The room stands. We see Jionni beaming proudly, and she starts to come down the aisle.

INT. RECEPTION HALL – EVENING

Everyone is seated in a room lit by candles, and Van clinks his fork to his glass as he stands, grabbing everyone's attention and quieting them down. Seated to his right, is Sloan. Seated to his left are Jionni, and then Angela. Once he has everyone's attention, he sets his fork down, and begins to speak, in true, charming Van fashion.

VAN

I remember when we were little, and I was just the dumb little brother, growing up. Jionni always let me know that I was a pain in his butt, but anytime I needed my big brother, he was always there. There's never been a time I can recall when my big brother didn't come to my aid if I needed help, and I can't recall any important time in my life that he hasn't been there to support me through.

Jionni looks up at Van with appreciation as he continues.

VAN

Five years ago, I sat where he's sitting, and my beautiful girlfriend had now become my beautiful wife. It's truly the best feeling in the world, isn't it big brother? We had no idea that one day when we walked into a bar and sat down at a table, that we were about to meet our future brides. But we did. And the ride has been crazy, ever since. Relationships aren't perfect. You learn as you go, and you grow with each other, and you give it all you've got. My best advice – tried and true advice, would be to never give up. Keep trying. Keep pushing. Keep growing, and keep learning. But most of all, keep loving.

Sloan's eyebrows lift, impressed by his touching words.

VAN

To Jionni and Angela Capitani.

He raises his glass to the both of them, and they clink their glasses together, and take a drink. He then sits down, and Sloan's clearly enamored with him.

SLOAN

That was a great speech. Very sincere.

VAN

Thanks. I'm a great bullshitter.

He winks at her, and she cocks her head with a laugh.

SLOAN

You wear your heart on your sleeve more than anyone else I know.

VAN

You bring out the best in me.

She smiles bashfully and turns her focus to her plate. He, too, takes a forkful of food, but then leans into her, speaking low.

VAN

Let's run away.

Sloan, not taking him seriously, chuckles at him, before looking over and seeing the seriousness on his face.

VAN

Think about it. We no longer have a home of our own. We're down to one vehicle. We have a shit-load of money. Properties all over. Why stay here? Why not get away from all the drama, and start all over? Everything here is falling apart, all around us.

Sloan narrows her eyes and shakes her head confusedly. Then she thoughtfully turns her gaze back downward.

SLOAN

(softly)

I guess we'll talk about it...

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — EARLY EVENING

Gage, seated on the couch with a beer, flips through the tv channels, before his look turns to alarm and he springs forward, flipping one channel back. A news station is reporting live with "Breaking News", and the feed is of Gus Capitani being escorted from his home in handcuffs. Gage panics and jumps up, yelling.

GAGE

Van! VAN! SLOAN! Get down here,  
right now! HURRY!

He turns it up, and Sloan and Van come bounding down the stairs, in alarm. Then their eyes follow Gage's horrified gaze. The NEWS REPORTER's voice is overheard as they watch on. A shot shows Greta on the front stoop of their home, covering her hands with her face, looking helpless. Then they showed Gus being put in the back of the police car.

NEWS REPORTER

...Death and tragedy has struck this family recently, and the Capitani name has long been known for its brushes with the law. Just a few years ago, Capitani-owned Bellezza was riddled with gunshots during an apparent family get-together in the club's VIP room. Although son Van Capitani explained it away as riff-raff that got trigger-happy, the gunmen were never found, and it's just another case gone dormant in the Capitani files.

Van turns away and rubs at his face.

VAN

I better get a hold of Jionni...

Sloan and Gage watch Van disappear into the kitchen with his phone, and then glance worriedly at one another.

CUT TO:

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — DOWNSTAIRS — EVENING

Sloan is frozen in the living room, glued to the television, as Gage stands in the kitchen, and Van paces between the kitchen and living room. Jionni bursts through the front door with Angela at his heels, and his eyes are wild with worry. He stares at the television as Sloan bites her nails.

NEWS REPORTER

...Angelo Capitani, a Las Vegas entrepreneur, and Augustus Capitani's brother, mysteriously perished in the fire, with no definite cause of death established to the public. Sloan Capitani was treated for wounds and abrasions from the fire, but there's been speculation that an altercation occurred prior to the fire, which may have contributed to Angelo Capitani's death.

Sloan takes a nervous step backward.

NEWS REPORTER

Several disappearances involving people linked to the Capitani family are being looked into by the L.V.P.D., and as details unfold, we will bring you updates.

SLOAN

(croaks)

Disappearances?

Angela takes a seat behind Sloan, on the couch. Jionni stalks past her, glaring at the TV as she shuts it off.

JIONNI

You already know...

He disappears into the kitchen with Gage and Van.

JIONNI

He's going to jail. Embezzlement... that's a felony.

VAN

We've got good lawyers.

Jionni shakes his head and eyes Van wearily as he tosses his keys up and catches them

JIONNI

Dude, you need to wake up. Life as you know it is about to fall apart.

EXT. GUS & GRETA'S HOME - EVENING

First, Van's vehicle pulls up to the house, followed by Jionni's. The doors all open, as Jionni, Angela, Gage, Van and Sloan get out. The guys hurry for the front door. Angela and Sloan meet up and start up the sidewalk after them.

ANGELA

She hasn't answered any of my calls.

Sloan tosses her a worried glance.

SLOAN

Mine, either. I have a really horrible feeling about this...

They disappear into the house.

INT. GUS & GRETA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A shot from above shows all of them looking about the silent house. Going in opposite directions from the foyer, they all disappear from view.

INT. GUS & GRETA'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Sloan cautiously rounds the top of the stairs, looking around. Wide-eyed, Angela is right behind her, almost using Sloan as a shield.

JIONNI (O.S.)

Mom! ...Mom!

Gage is last up the stairs while Van and Jionni look around downstairs.

SLOAN

Greta? Are you here?

Gage leans close to Sloan, speaking softly.

GAGE

Both cars are in the garage...

Sloan turns and gives him a worried glance before pushing the master bedroom door open and peering in.

ANGELA

She could've rode down to the station with the cops.

Sloan's breaths are quick as she seems to tiptoe through Gus & Greta's bedroom, with the other two close behind, looking around. Then Angela shrugs, as Sloan eyes the bathroom door, which is just cracked open.

ANGELA

See? Not here.

Jionni calls from somewhere below, as Gage scratches his head thoughtfully, and Sloan slowly approaches the bathroom door.

JIONNI (O.S.)

Guys - find anything up there?!

ANGELA

(calling back)

Nope!

Angela strolls back out to the hallway. Sloan reaches out, and slowly pushes the bathroom door open. Sunlight is pouring in from the window over the tub, and her breath catches in her throat when she sees just Greta's head, peacefully resting against the back of the tub. Like she's napping in a bath. Muffled are the sounds of voices elsewhere in the house, but Sloan's shaky breaths are clearly heard. She swallows, and staggers forward with fear in her eyes. She approaches the tub, as if she already knows what she's about to see, but when she steps forward and sees Greta, in a pool of blood pouring from her wrists, down over her clothes and gathering in the tub, a cry lunges up from her lungs and howls through the bathroom. There is a bottle of aspirin in her lap, and an empty glass

to her side. Sloan drops to her knees, sobbing immediately as her hands tremble around Greta's face.

SLOAN  
(sobbing)  
Greta, please! Please open your  
eyes!  
(cracking)  
Oh God...

Angela screams as she runs to Sloan's aid, covering her mouth in horror. Gage races in behind her. Stunned, they both watch Sloan grab one of the white bathroom towels, wrapping Greta's wrists as she hyperventilates. Like she believes it might help. Van pushes past Gage and Angela, with Jionni at his heels, and they are both paralyzed with shock at the sight of their mother, and Sloan in hysterics, now covered in Greta's blood. Jionni swipes Sloan from where she sits, and moves her aside as Van drops to his knees beside her.

SLOAN  
(yelling)  
Help her!

Van whirls around with wild, furious eyes.

VAN  
(screaming)  
SHUT UP!!!

He then turns back to his mother, and strokes her hair, leaning in. Jionni storms from the room, putting his phone to his ear.

JIONNI (O.S.)  
(stammering, frantic)  
I - I need an ambulance...

VAN  
(brokenly)  
Mom... Just open your eyes. Make a  
sound. Please...

His head bows in defeat, as Angela and Gage look on in horror. Jionni looks broken as he reappears in the bathroom doorway, but looks too scared to come in. Then there's Sloan, who looks utterly broken also, and covered in blood. Her crying is the only sound you can hear as it fades out.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - EVENING

Sloan is sitting on a plastic chair, looking worn-down. She glares at a car that slowly passes by, and after a moment, the porch light flicks on and Angela steps out with two drinks. She takes the chair on the other side of Sloan's.

ANGELA

(softly)

I had to get out of there.

She hands Sloan one of the drinks, and Sloan looks down into it with an appreciative smile, before taking a drink.

ANGELA

I just... both of them are  
inconsolable, right now.

Sloan nods, still staring out at the street.

SLOAN

Inconsolable isn't the word I'd  
use for Van. Dark would be the  
word. Angry. Stone-cold.

Gage opens the front door and peeks out with beer in hand.

GAGE

You guys need anything? I've had  
about enough of depressing for  
today.

Angela raises her cup and Sloan shakes her head with a sad attempt at a smile.

SLOAN

No. Thanks, though.

GAGE

Alright. Goodnight, then.

He disappears inside and shuts the door.

ANGELA

What do you think her last moments  
were like? I can't imagine the  
amount of desperation that would  
drive someone to... to do that...

SLOAN  
(wistfully)  
She'd rather die than live without  
her husband..

Sloan lifts her drink to her lips once more.

ANGELA  
But abandoning her sons like that?

Sloan shrugs.

SLOAN  
Her world, as she knew it, no  
longer existed. Gus is going to be  
gone for a long time. Much longer  
if they can pin anything else on  
him.

ANGELA  
I just can't relate to her choice..

Sloan looks over to her sadly.

SLOAN  
Consider that a good thing. The  
way people are dropping like flies  
around here, I'd hate to have to  
worry about you, too.

The front door opens, and Van steps out onto the front porch. He is stone-faced, and he's holding a beer bottle that he's gently swirling in his hand, as the girls look to him. He takes his keys from his pocket, and sets the empty bottle down, as Sloan leans forward with interest.

SLOAN  
Going somewhere?

VAN  
I think I'm just going for a  
drive.

Her eyes narrow suspiciously.

SLOAN  
Where's Jionni?

Van doesn't make eye contact at all with Sloan.

VAN  
Still sitting in the kitchen. In  
the dark.

SLOAN  
Do you want company?

Van steps down onto the sidewalk.

VAN  
Nope.

He starts to walk to his car. Sloan's and Angela's eyes follow him, until he backs out of the driveway and his car disappears from their view. Then Sloan sighs and stands up.

SLOAN  
(muttering)  
On that note, I'm going to bed.  
You probably need to go check on  
your husband, anyway.

Angela watches helplessly as Sloan goes inside, and now alone, she sits back in her chair and rolls her head back with a tired sigh.

SERIES OF SHOTS: SAMMI & PIPER

A. INT. VAN'S VEHICLE - DRIVING - EVENING

Van is driving. Music is playing, but he has a carnal look in his eye. Focused. Nostrils-flared. Dangerous.

B. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - EVENING

Water is running in the tub and Sloan's back is to us as she stands before it. We see her pinning up her hair.

C. EXT. SEEDY MOTEL - EVENING

Van's car is parked outside in the darkness, and he almost appears to be smirking wickedly as he sees Sammi under a flickering light, shuffling some bags in her hands before disappearing into a room.

D. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sloan's back to us, we see her strip her shirt off, and unclasp her bra. She steps out of her shorts, and a beautiful, classy shot of her getting into the tub and

settling into it, closing her eyes and resting her head back.

E. INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sammi whirls around in surprise, as Van is just inside the door of her hotel room. The look on his face is gloriously menacing. Her eyes flick around nervously, and he pulls out a gun with a silencer on it, aiming it straight at her face and pulling the trigger.

F. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sloan moans contentedly, shifting in the bubbly water. Her hand rubs at the back of her neck, and then travels downward, disappearing in the water.

G. INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - LATER EVENING

In the darkness, we see the door open, and Piper steps inside, closes the door, and then through the shuffling of bags, she turns the light on, and stops in her tracks when Van is sitting nearby in a chair. He is smirking, just waiting for her. She freezes, panics, drops her bags and lets out a panicked cry as she lunges for the door. But he's quick, and he snatches her, and then shoves her against the wall nearby, covering her mouth with his hand as she whimpers and stares at him fearfully. His face is just inches from hers, and his demeanor is vicious and smug the entire time.

VAN  
(smoothly)  
And you...

He presses the gun to her temple, and she cries against his hand over her mouth and squeezes her eyes shut. He shoves her and she falls atop the bed, as he stalks over to her, aiming the gun.

VAN  
I'm going to take *immense* pleasure  
in what I'm about to do to you.

She looks around, panicked.

PIPER  
Where's Sammi?!

He turns and grins evilly.

VAN  
Disposed of.

Her eyes widen. She looks like she's about to bolt, he aims the gun straight at her face again. She eyes it, and the silencer, freezing with fear.

VAN  
I let her off easily. I killed her before she even knew what was coming. But you...

He sighs dramatically, and then chuckles.

VAN  
I want you to know that your death is coming. I want you to think about how it's all about to end for you. Right here. Right now. You deserve that much, I think. To know. To wallow in it, miserably, in your final moments. Knowing there's nothing you can do.

Her breaths quicken and he steps forward, pressing the gun to her forehead. Her eyes squeeze shut and she whimpers. Then he steps back, smirking again. Opening her eyes, she looks around; he's still aiming the gun, inches from her face.

VAN  
(wistfully)  
I wish your sister was here to see this.

PIPER  
Fuck you, Van.

VAN  
You tried that. I'm pretty certain I never even got it up for you.

She stares up with contempt. As he speaks smoothly, his grip tightens around her throat briefly, making her wheeze.

VAN

I should've killed you back in Atlantic City. Stolen the breath from your lungs. Stopped your beating heart, when you damn-near destroyed my marriage. It would've been cathartic. Hell, better late than never, right?

Piper scoffs at him as he releases her neck.

PIPER

You act like she's some angel... Sloan's only ever been a bitch to me, *and* to you.

He hauls off and backhands her, causing her to reach up and cup her cheek in shock.

VAN

(chastising lightly)  
Be careful - that's my *wife* you're talking about!

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sloan sits up in the bathwater, and leans forward in thought. Her head turns, almost as if she hears something, but she doesn't. She looks about, and draws in a deep breath.

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Van's gun is pressed to Piper's temple. His other hand is at her neck, squeezing as she clenches her jaw and glares.

PIPER

Sloan might not care, but Gage will!

He chuckles at her and cocks the gun.

VAN

(sweetly)  
You say that like he'd ever find out.

She chokes on a sob, as the realization sets in. Her eyes glass over.

SLOAN  
(voice cracking)  
He'll know...

Van grins maliciously and leans in.

VAN  
You ran off with your merry band  
of whores. And you took Sammi with  
you. End of story.

Her eyes squeeze shut, causing tears to run down her face, as she succumbs to sobs. He presses the gun to her temple once more, and she holds her breath.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sloan reaches for a towel, stands up, steps out of the tub with a sigh, and wraps herself, looking in the mirror briefly before flipping the light switch off and stepping out into the darkness.

INT. VAN'S VEHICLE - LATE EVENING

He's back in his car, outside the motel. His phone's ringing, and he picks it up. Jionni's name is on the screen. He tosses the phone into the passenger seat, and starts the car.

VAN  
(softly)  
Can't let you in on this one, bro.

He puts the car in reverse and looks behind him.

FADE IN:

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - SLOAN'S BEDROOM - BEFORE DAWN

Streetlights and moonlight pour over Van's face as he appears, freshly showered, in boxer briefs. Sloan is peacefully asleep, curled up under a thin sheet. He looks exhausted. The second he climbs into bed next to Sloan, she moves in close and he cuddles her up. They entangle themselves in one another, face-to-face. His hand strokes her hair. Her fingers run over his jawline.

SLOAN  
(whispering)  
I was worried...

He gently kisses her forehead.

VAN  
No more worrying.

Her fingers reach and twine into his hair, and she sighs.

SLOAN  
You found them, didn't you.

It wasn't a question. And he doesn't answer her. He just scoops her tight against him, and she snuggles in.

FADE IN:

EXT. FUNERAL HOME — RAINY AFTERNOON —

Sloan is standing outside, watching people pulling into the parking lot. She looks thoughtful. Sad. Her hair is pinned up in a bun. She wears a simple black dress. Van approaches her and stands in his suit, looking sad also.

SLOAN  
This hardly seems real...

VAN  
I may have something to do with that sentiment.

His attempt at a smile is sad. Her heart is literally breaking for him. He turns, and strides toward where Jionni and Gus are, at the entrance, receiving people as they arrive. Gage approaches her and stops. As she stares at Gus, Jionni and Van, his gaze follows.

GAGE  
1.5 million in bail.

Sloan purses her lips in disgust and turns back toward the street.

SLOAN  
We wouldn't be standing here right now if it weren't for his dirty dealings.

Gage sighs and turns his attention toward the street also.

GAGE

It's really disappointing that  
Sammi isn't here.

Sloan's eyes dart to him blankly, and he shrugs

GAGE

I've left her several messages.  
Nothing.

SLOAN

Maybe she needs some time...

GAGE

These people are family. To me. To  
you. To her. Just disrespectful.

He turns and walks off. Sloan looks helpless as she watches  
him, and then turns and heads toward the entrance to the  
funeral home, after Jionni and Van have headed inside. Gus  
reaches out and stops her. She stares up at him coldly.

GUS

Thank you, for everything you've  
done to put this together. I  
appreciate it.

Sloan can't find anything kind to say, so she starts  
inside, but he stops her again and narrows his eyes.

GUS

Why the cold shoulder?

She glares up at him.

SLOAN

Because, Gus, I can't help but  
blame your dishonesty for breaking  
that woman's heart, and robbing  
her from the rest of us here,  
today.

His eyes widen as he looks incensed by her.

GUS

You have a lot of nerve pinning  
this on me, little girl. Who do  
you think you are?

SLOAN

Someone who no longer respects  
you, or what you've done to this  
family.

She stalks past him, inside to take a seat at on the front  
pew between Angela and Van.

INT. GUS & GRETA'S HOME — EVENING

A post-funeral is gathering going on. Extended family is  
loitering about the downstairs. No sooner had Van, Sloan,  
Jionni, Gage and Angela walked in that Gus angrily marches  
up to her and his finger is in her face.

GUS

How dare you act as if her death  
is my doing! Today I watched my  
wife be lowered six feet under!

Sloan angrily points to the front door, behind her.

SLOAN

Has it escaped you that there are  
people outside right now with  
cameras, and reporters just dying  
for one of us to walk back outside  
so they can berate us with more  
questions!? They're here because  
of you! Because of your shady  
dealings! Your brother *burned my  
house down!* He burned it because  
of you! And you somehow blamed it  
on Van! Your wife killed herself,  
Gus! Because *you're* going away —  
and rightfully so — for a long  
time. And yeah - I absolutely *do*  
blame you! I can rebuild a damn  
house, but I'll never get the only  
mother I've ever really had back,  
and I hate you for that!

She turns and storms out, slamming the front door behind  
her. Walking through the front yard, she ignores the  
reporters trying to get a question in. As she gets to the  
car, Van is jogging up behind her. She stops. He snatches  
the keys from her hand and opens the passenger side door  
for her to get in. Then he gets in the other side.

INT. VAN'S VEHICLE — CONTINUOUS

Sloan eyes Van with wide eyes as he starts the car.

SLOAN

What are you doing!? Your father  
will disown you if you don't get  
back in there?

He half-smiles at her mischievously.

VAN

He just asked me why I "let" you  
talk to him like that. I told him  
I agreed with every word you said.

Sloan's look turns to surprise as he pulls away from the house.

VAN

It's okay. I'm ready to walk away.  
Concentrate on us. We have a plan.  
We just need to set it in motion.

He reaches over and takes her hand in her lap. Her eyes sweep down over him, and she snickers slightly.

SLOAN

You can barely tell you guys are  
wearing bulletproof vests under  
those things...

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — UPSTAIRS BATHROOM — MORNING

Sloan is in the shower. Steam has clouded the mirror. Music is playing throughout the small bathroom. The water stops. She reaches out and grabs a towel. Humming, she steps out, wrapped in the towel.

CUT TO:

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — UPSTAIRS BATHROOM — MORNING

Moments later, she's dressed, and brushing her wet hair. Faintly, we hear yelling coming from downstairs, which prompts her to turn her music down and listen. Then she opens the door, pokes her head out, and hears Van and Gage downstairs.

GAGE (O.S.)  
I KNOW WHAT YOU FUCKING DID, VAN!  
I KNOW! DON'T FUCKING LIE TO ME!

VAN (O.S.)  
She didn't leave me any choice!

GAGE (O.S.)  
DON'T FUCKING TELL ME SHE DIDN'T  
LEAVE YOU ANY CHOICE! YOU LIED!  
YOU KNEW I'D BEEN TRYING TO GET A  
HOLD OF HER!

Sloan's look turns to alarm as she covers her mouth.

VAN (O.S.)  
You have every right to be mad,  
but — whoa, wait! What are — what  
are you doing?! Gage, put —

A shot rings out, resonating through the entire house, and springing Sloan into action. She disappears down the stairs.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — DOWNSTAIRS LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Sloan cries out at the sight of Gage, looking rattled and scared with big, wide eyes. He's holding a gun. Van is unmoving, on the floor.

SLOAN  
(whispering)  
Oh my God!

She rushes to his side and drops to her knees. Gage stands frozen, petrified. She lowers her face to his, and cradles him, looking him over frantically. She takes his hand that is clutched over his chest, and her tears begin to spill.

SLOAN  
Baby, please.

She presses her forehead to his. She sobs, and rocks them back and forth.

SLOAN  
I love you. I love you, Van.

Her hands stroke his face, and she is startled by Gage, who drops his gun to the floor with a thud. Crying, she turns sharp eyes upon him, and he blinks out of his blank stare.

GAGE

I-I'm sorry... I didn't mean to...  
I'll take care of this. You- you  
don't have to do anything...

Her fingers are working themselves around the hole in his button-up, and her eyes squeeze shut as her head bows, and they work themselves inside of it. She swallows hard. She pauses. Then she glares back at Gage.

SLOAN

(gravely)  
Give me my phone.

She points to the coffee table, and he hesitates, fearful.

SLOAN

(screaming)  
NOW! Give me the damn thing!

He springs to action and snatches her phone, rushing to hand it to her. She dials the phone and puts it to her ear. She then reaches across the floor and hastily grabs the murder weapon, carefully wiping it clean with her shirt. She glances up at him as she talks into the phone. He is petrified.

SLOAN

(shakily)  
There's been a shooting. 321  
Desert Forest Drive. I-I don't  
know, but... Yes. Just come quickly.  
Thank you.

She puts the phone down beside her, and wipes her face. She is forcing herself to keep calm, and she focuses on Gage, but can't bear to look at him but for a second at a time.

SLOAN

Take that gun, and get out of  
here.

When at first he doesn't move, she yells again.

SLOAN

GO!

She chokes, and takes a deep breath and looks upward.

SLOAN

I never saw you this morning. Go,  
before the police get here. And  
take that.

She nods at the gun. Reluctantly, he picks up the gun, grabs his keys, and she watches him run out the front door. Then she pulls her phone out, wipes her nose, dials it again, and puts the phone to her ear, grabbing Van's hand again.

JIONNI (O.S.)

Hello?

SLOAN

Van's been shot, Jionni. I don't  
know the details. The ambulance...  
is on its way.

Her eyes cut to the front door, as sirens near the house.

SERIES OF SHOTS: VAN'S DEATH -

A. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Sloan drops her cell phone as paramedics storm inside.

B. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS

Crying, she watches them load Van onto the stretcher. Looking scared, she covers her hand with her mouth, holding his hand with the other hand.

C. INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS

It takes them wheeling Van out, to force her to drop his hand. Jionni is storming in past them, and his eyes are wide. Angela is right behind him, and she covers her mouth in horror. As the paramedics pass Jionni by, he eyes their faces, and then turns blankly to Sloan.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. JIONNI'S BLACK SUV — AFTERNOON

Sloan's face is looking out the back passenger window, as the car comes to a stop. The head in the seat beside her turns, and Sloan is blurred out as Gage's face solemnly look over at her. The car stopped, she says nothing. She swings the door open, and steps out, leaving him staring.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME — CONTINUOUS

Sloan, dressed in black, starts up the sidewalk with her back straight and her chin held high, as we see Jionni and Angela getting out of the vehicle. And then Gage. There are reporters everywhere, swarming Sloan as she approaches the entrance. She stops, turns, and addresses all of them coolly and calmly.

SLOAN

I ask that everyone respect our  
privacy at this time. This family  
has lost, and suffered, enough.

NEWS REPORTER

Any details on murder suspects?

Sloan shakes her head, as Gage, Jionni and Angela stand nearby, waiting on her.

SLOAN

No. The police have gathered a  
list, and I trust them to find the  
person who did this.

Sloan then turns and continues on toward the entrance. Jionni guides her inside, and they disappear.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE — DOWNSTAIRS — EVENING

Sloan is seated on the couch, with the TV remote in her hand. She pauses on the news.

NEWS

...where Van Capitani's body was  
laid to rest, just two weeks after  
his mother, Greta Capitani, took  
her life in the Las Vegas home she  
shares with her husband...

Sloan tosses the remote aside and stands up.

NEWS

...Police say they haven't come any closer to finding out who pulled the trigger, but they won't rest until they do.

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - SLOAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

The light is dim in her bedroom. She walks in, and calmly picks up an overnight bag, slipping it up onto her shoulder. She picks up a suitcase in one hand, and then another suitcase in the other. She exits the room.

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - EVENING

In the darkness, there's a cab waiting for her at the curb. We see her put her bags in the trunk, and get into the back.

INT. BOEING 777 - LATE EVENING

Sloan is settled into a window seat in first class, staring out the window pensively.

FADE OUT.

EXT. LONDON STREET CAFÉ - AFTERNOON

Sloan is sitting at a small bistro table outside, people-watching as she sips a coffee. She looks peaceful. A moment passes, before her cell phone rings to the tune of Adagio. It flashes to a shot of Van and Sloan kissing for just a second, in front of Vegas's Bellagio to that tune. Now, she's smiling softly as she picks up the phone from the table and answers.

SLOAN

(smoothly)

I've been waiting for you.

VAN (O.S.)

I'm right behind you, beautiful.

**The End.**