CUTTHROAT

"Pilot"

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EXT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - DAY

A Spanish Mission-style building, surrounded by an acre of beautiful landscaping. A group of fourth-graders in uniform run up the steps to the door -- the boys in navy slacks and white oxfords, the girls in plaid jumpers.

WOMAN’S VOICE (V.O.)
Of course, after the New York Times article, admissions became much more competitive.

The sign outside reads Chelsea Academy - Est. 1891.

INT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - ADMISSIONS OFFICE -DAY

CLOSE ON A WOMAN’S FACE

This is LACEY ANDREWS. Thirties, beautiful, a horrible bitch. She talks directly to camera.

LACEY
There are some who question our rigorous application process. I point to our graduates. Nobel Prize winners. Senators. A Poet Laureate. And two Vice Presidential candidates. Our record speaks for itself.

She glances down at an application on her desk.

LACEY (CONT’D)
You should know that at the kindergarten level alone, there are three hundred candidates for twenty-five slots. Your son will be required to participate in a supervised playdate, where we’ll determine if he’s Chelsea material.

(with a smile)
But remember -- we’re not just judging him. We’re judging you, too.
REVERSE on NINA CABRERA -- 30s, Latina, drop dead gorgeous and trying very hard to hide the fact that she can’t stand this woman. She forces a smile.

NINA
Great.

Lacey flips through the application in front of her.

LACEY
How do you pronounce your last name?

NINA
Cabrera.

LACEY
That’s Spanish?

NINA
Yes. My father was Mexican.

LACEY
Your English is excellent.

Nina blinks. It’s pretty obvious she was born and raised in the States. She swallows a sarcastic reply and simply says:

NINA
Thank you.

LACEY
So that’s your maiden name. You’re not married?

NINA
My husband passed away five years ago.

LACEY
I’m sorry. How did he die?

ON Nina for a beat. She’s thinking about how to answer. Then suddenly we’re:

EXT. STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

A quick shot of a handsome man getting in a sedan, turning the ignition key, and then BOOM! The car EXPLODES.

INT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

Back to Nina. Her expression betrays nothing.
NINA
Car accident.

LACEY
How tragic. So you’re raising three children alone?

NINA
My mother lives with us.

LACEY
That must be a big help.

NINA
It really is.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Nina’s mother is SANDY, Caucasian, 60s and a former Miss California. But right now she’s teaching five-year-old ALEX how to pour three fingers of scotch.

INT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

Back to Nina.

NINA
We also have a nanny. Who is great.

Lacey peruses the application. The silence stretches.

NINA (CONT’D)
(prompting)
Alex has been taking piano since he turned four. We’re particularly interested in your music program.

LACEY
(not looking up)
Of course you are. Forty percent of our music students go on to attend the Juilliard School.

She closes Nina’s file, pushes it away. She smiles.

LACEY (CONT’D)
I’m going to be honest with you, Miss Cabrera. Most Chelsea moms don’t work.

CONTINUED
NINA
Okay..?

LACEY
That way they can be invested in their children’s education. Active. Involved.

NINA
That’s not an issue. I am very involved. My children are my priority.

LACEY
You work. It’s a problem.

She’s so matter-of-fact about it you’d like to punch her. Nina purses her lips. She does not lose her cool.

NINA
Do you have single dads here?

LACEY
(confused beat)
Yes.

NINA
And they work, I imagine? The dads.

LACEY
Well, yes, but I’m not sure how that --

NINA
So the problem isn’t that I work. It’s that I’m a woman who works.
(thinks)
What is the word for that sort of... policy?

Nina smiles, perfectly charming. Lacey, for the first time, grows uncomfortable and starts pushing papers around, really wanting to change the subject.

LACEY
Well, of course, everyone is different, and of course we consider the... uh... extenuating, uh... in any event, I’m sure we could find ways to keep you involved.

NINA
I’m so happy.
LACEY
Good. Good. What is it, exactly, that you do for a living?

PUSH IN on Nina. This one is the hardest question to answer. Then, in quick succession, we see a barrage of images:

-- A STACK OF HUNDREDS, quickly SHRINK-WRAPPED in plastic with a THONK.

-- The money JAMMED into a crate of other BRICKS of hundreds. The crate SLAMMED shut. On the lid, a colorful illustration of hands with polished nails, words in both Korean and English: SUPERSEXY POLISH -- Deserving for You in Desirable Hand Nails!

-- The crate loaded into the back of a MOVING TRUCK, filled with dozens of SIMILAR CRATES. Two men holding SUBMACHINE GUNS roll the gate shut. As the truck drives away, reveal NINA, making notations on her tablet computer.

INT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY

RESUME Nina. Totally innocent.

NINA
I’m in business.

INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN - DAY

A hole-in-the-wall nail salon in the middle of Koreatown. No customers save for one, FRANKIE, 20s and stylish. He’s Nina’s cousin. He’s at a manicure station while two cute Korean girls buff his nails and dote on him. Another woman delivers Frankie a cup of tea.

FRANKIE
(taking tea)
Thank you, Soon-bok.
(to manicurist)
That’s looking good. Can you get at the cuticles too?

Nina enters. The girls greet her in Korean.

FRANKIE (CONT’D)
Hey cuz.

NINA
I just have to get the present and then we can go.

CONTINUED
Frankie plucks the buffer out of the manicurist’s hand.

**FRANKIE**
I’ll finish up. Thank you, ladies.

Nina heads toward the back door, followed by Frankie.

**INSERT:** Nina’s hand entering a code on a digital KEYPAD.

**INSERT:** Multiple locks on the door CLICKING open.

This is much more security than you’d expect in a nail salon.

**INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN - BACK ROOM - DAY**

Frankie and Nina enter. At first we only see the typical nail salon supplies -- polish and acetone. We hear MACHINES running O.S.

**FRANKIE**
Hey, how’d the school interview go?

**NINA**
(with venom)
Bitch.

**FRANKIE**
Damn, it was a girl? That’s too bad.
Girls don’t like you.
(off Nina’s look)
I like you.

As they walk and talk, **REVEAL** the rest of the room -- which is a DIFFERENT WORLD. It’s huge -- five times the size of the salon. And presently, it is filled with about a dozen YOUNG ASIAN MEN, each at their own small desk.

Some of the men have COUNTING MACHINES and are blazing through thousands of dollars in cash and bundling them up. Others are checking serial numbers and testing for counterfeits. It’s an efficient money laundering operation, a combination of a sweatshop and an accountant’s office.

**NINA**
It’s my own fault. I let her get to me. *Like I was in high school all over again, being bullied by Margot Willings.***

**FRANKIE**
Hey, stop all that. Look at you -- *rich. Gorgeous. Successful. What’s Margot whatserface doing now?***

CONTINUED
NINA
I think she’s dead, actually. Cancer.

FRANKIE
See, that’s gotta feel good.

Nina approaches the side of the room, where large PALATES of SHRINK WRAPPED MONEY are stacked. She does a quick count, makes a few notes on her iPhone. Calls over her shoulder to an ASIAN MAN.

NINA
Eugene, this needs to be dispensed today, alright?

ASIAN MAN
Of course, Mrs. Cabrera. Today.

Nina starts walking towards an office off the main room.

NINA
(to Frankie)
Doesn’t matter anyway. I just have to put up with it until Alex gets in.

FRANKIE
Screw them. There are other schools.

NINA
Chelsea’s music program is the best. I can deal with a Beverly Hills bitch. I can be a Beverly Hills bitch.

FRANKIE
True.

They enter --

INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN – NINA’S OFFICE – DAY

Nina opens a tall shipping box that sits on her desk.

FRANKIE
You ready for this?

NINA
The party? I think so. It’ll be nice to see everyone again.

FRANKIE
Get excited for lots of strippers and pythons. You know Luis.

CONTINUED
NINA
Yes I do.

She pulls the box away, revealing a very large jade obelisk. Unmistakably phallic. Nina and Frankie stare for a beat.

NINA (CONT’D)
For instance, I know he likes things that look like large penises.

FRANKIE
Wow. Happy Birthday.

EXT. NINA’S HOUSE – DAY

A Beverly Hills Tudor, big but not ostentatious, surrounded by old shady trees. Nina pulls her car into the driveway, followed by Frankie in his car.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – DAY

Nina’s mother, Sandy, watches the local news on television.

ANCHOR
(on TV)
...in another gruesome find south of the border, a Tijuana drug cartel is suspected in the murder and dismemberment of a man who had been abducted earlier this week...

The video shows a crowd gathered around something awful on the ground. The image is digitally blurred.

ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT’D)
(on TV)
... in a particularly grisly twist, the man’s face was skinned and sewn onto a soccer ball, and left in front of a Tijuana police department...

Sandy shakes her head, disgusted. Behind her, Nina and Frankie enter.

NINA
I’m home. Where is everybody?

SANDY
(distracted)
I let them sleep in. It’s summer.
NINA
Mom, it’s noon!

SANDY
(re: television)
Did you hear about this?

Nina stops, glances at the television, which shows more scenes of blurred violence, dead bodies.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
(on TV)
... the latest in a string of violence in Tijuana that has left fifteen dead in the past two weeks...

Nina just waves it off, heads upstairs.

SANDY
Mom, I’m going out of town, please do not let them sleep all day.

Sandy shoots a look to Frankie, then follows Nina.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - IVAN’S ROOM - DAY

The door to the darkened room opens. The floor is entirely covered by clothing. IVAN, Nina’s 16-year-old stepson, is somewhere beneath the covers.

NINA
Get up. Ivan!

IVAN’S VOICE
(muffled)
I’m up.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - LILY’S ROOM - DAY

LILY, 12, is in her pjs, looking in the mirror and putting on very RED lipstick. The door bursts open.

NINA
Get dressed.
(them)
Is that mine?

LILY
No.
(off Nina’s glare)
Yes.

CONTINUED
NINA

Put it back. *(points)*
I want your summer science project started before I get back.

And Nina’s gone.

LILY

Whatever!

NINA’S VOICE (O.S.)
Don’t whatever.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - ALEX’S ROOM - DAY

Nina opens the door, revealing Alex, 5, who is dressed. Kind of. Here’s the outfit: cowboy boots. Underpants pulled over regular pants. Tinfoil wrapped around his torso. Bra hat. He’s brandishing a plastic lightsabre.

A beat.

NINA

What’s this now?

ALEX

Robot.

NINA *(considers)*
Okay.

She leaves him to do his thing.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Nina enters, starts stripping off her clothes, in a hurry. Sandy follows her *inside.*

NINA

I’ll be on the last flight out of Tijuana tonight, but I won’t be back till late.

Nina walks into her closet.

SANDY

I think you shouldn’t go.
NINA’S VOICE (O.S.)
It’s Luis’s birthday. He’ll be *
insulted if I don’t. Like it or not *
he’s my boss now. *

SANDY
Tell him you’re sick. Tell him I’m sick. *

NINA’S VOICE (O.S.) *
I’m kind of looking forward to it. I *
haven’t been down there in over a year. *

Nina steps out of the closet -- and she looks like a different person. In a clingy, beautiful designer cocktail dress, showing off her insane body. She goes to her dresser to hunt for jewelry.

SANDY *
It’s not safe. Those people are dangerous. *

NINA *
‘Those people?’ Mom -- you sort of *
made one of ‘those people.’ *

SANDY *
Your father wasn’t like that. Things *
have changed. They’re ugly. Awful. *

NINA *
Is this about the news? Luis didn’t do that. *

SANDY *
How do you know? *

NINA *
Because I know. He’s crazy, but he’s *
not a psycho. Dad trusted him. *

Nina sits on the bed to put on shoes. Sandy sits next to her. *

SANDY *
Do you know why your father chose Luis *
to run the business instead of you? *

NINA *
Well, first of all, I’m a girl. *
Secondly, I didn’t want it -- *

SANDY *
Because Luis is brutal. Always has been. *
NINA
Exactly. And I’m not. Which means I’m not a threat to anybody.

SANDY
The last time you saw any of them was at your father’s funeral. You don’t have his protection anymore. It’s going to be different, Nina.

Nina stands and puts her arms out.

NINA
(re: outfit)
What do you think?

Sandy fixes an errant strand of hair, straightens the dress.

SANDY
You look so beautiful it makes me want to kill you a little.
(then)
Please be careful.

FRANKIE’S VOICE (O.S.)
Nina, we gotta go!

NINA
Nothing’s going to happen, mom. I’m outside all of that. I’m the money person -- no one cares about me.
(then)
I’ll kiss the ring and leave. I’ll be fine. Okay?

She gives Sandy a quick kiss before rushing out.

EXT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

In the middle of urban decay. The place is still under construction, but nearly complete. Looking at it from the street, it is a fortress -- three stories above ground level, high white walls, razor wire and armed guards. Behind it the sun sets over the ocean. The only things that hint at a party are the sounds of a Mariachi band, laughter, and the top of a BOUNCY HOUSE, jiggling just above the wall.

INT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - TERRACE - LATE AFTERNOON

A sprawling terrace off the back of the house, about 200 guests mill about.
It is a pretentious, hilariously gaudy affair. Fire breathers, men on stilts, strippers dance on platforms and jump in the bouncy house. And indeed, many columns and pillars that phallically reach for the sky.

Frankie and Nina appear in the doorway leading out to the terrace -- a few women stop Nina and hug her before moving on. Nina and Frankie take in the scene for a beat.

NINA
Well this is... tasteful.

FRANKIE
Looks like a circus blew up on a whorehouse.
(re: columns)
A whorehouse full of giant penises.

Nina giggles and punches Frankie as they push through the crowd. Animal trainers hold various wild creatures on leashes -- a lion, a jaguar, an orangutan -- the looks on the trainers faces tell it all -- this is really unsafe.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Nina!

They turn to see a couple men in their 50s -- STEFAN, Nina’s uncle, and FRANCISCO, Nina’s father’s cousin. They smile and beckon Nina over.

STEFAN
(in Spanish)
Hello beautiful. What are you, too good to come down and see your old uncle?

Nina kisses Stefan and Francisco. She takes Stefan’s arm and they walk. Note -- unless otherwise indicated, dialogue proceeds in English.

NINA
I’m sorry. Things have been so busy. And after dad died... it was hard to think about coming here.

STEFAN
We miss him.

Francisco makes a little derisive snort.

FRANCISCO
You don’t know how much.
FRANKIE
Everything okay down here?

Stefan and Francisco exchange a look.

STEFAN
It’s okay. It’s good. Luis is... not
as elegant as your father was.

FRANCISCO
He’s demente. Ruining everything. Too
much attention. All of this kidnapping
and torture. Disgusting. Sick.

NINA
Luis is involved in that?

STEFAN
Some. Not all. It’s getting worse.
Every time Luis hits them, they hit us
harder.

They look down onto the beach below. There is a bonfire and
a crowd of people gathered around the man of the hour -- LUIS
SANDOVAL. About Nina’s age, tall and muscular. He has a
tribal tattoo around his bicep and wears an Ed Hardy t-shirt.
He’d be attractive if he didn’t look like he’d date rape you.

FRANCISCO
Why don’t you go say hello to the
birthday boy.

Off Nina, watching Sandoval with growing apprehension --

EXT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - STAIRS TO BEACH - DAY

Nina makes her way down the steps from the terrace. She’s
intercepted by MIGUEL -- 40s, husky. He’s wearing a security
earpiece, an ASSAULT RIFLE is strapped around his shoulders.
He smiles wide when he sees Nina.

MIGUEL
Ninetta! Look at you! So beautiful!

She hugs him and he helps her down the stairs.

NINA
Miguel. It’s good to see you. Are you
working for Luis?
MIGUEL
He offered me a job as head of security after your father...

Miguel’s eyes welling with tears. Nina pats his arm.

NINA
I know. I miss him too.

MIGUEL
I blame myself. I shoulda been there. I coulda called a doctor. Something.

NINA
He had a heart attack. There wasn’t anything any of us could have done.

They reach the beach, Nina looks over at Sandoval.

NINA (CONT’D)
Luis is treating you well?

MIGUEL
I’m happy to have a job. But nobody is your father.

It’s the most she’ll get out of him, but clearly Miguel wishes things were different. He gives her a kiss and heads off. Nina takes her heels off and makes her way across the sand toward Sandoval.

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

The sun has just dipped below the horizon. Sandoval smokes a big Cuban and holds court with a few of his LIEUTENANTS -- men who try hard to look and act like their boss. Scantily clad women toast marshmallows on the bonfire. VASQUEZ, a beefy guy who is smarter than he looks, sees Nina’s approach, leans in and whispers to Sandoval.

SANDOVAL
Nina!

He gets up and pulls Nina into a big bear hug.

NINA
Happy birthday, Luis. You look great.

SANDOVAL
The princess returns! I’m honored. What do you think of all this? Do I know how to throw a party or what?

CONTINUED
NINA
It’s... pretty unbelievable.

A few other men, including Stefan and Francisco, have come
down to the beach. Nina looks around -- clearly a meeting is
about to take place. Sandoval speaks in Spanish to the
marshmallow girls, and they all get up and leave.

SANDOVAL
(to Nina)
Hey, have you had a chance to look at
the house? I need to pick some tiles
for the master bathroom. Could use a
woman’s touch.

NINA
Oh. Sure. I’ll check it out before I
leave.

An awkward beat. Nina is the only woman left on the beach.

VASQUEZ
We’ve got a little business to discuss
down here, so...

Nina shoots a look at Vasquez. This is getting her annoyed.

NINA
Really? Interesting. I’m actually in
this business, Chico.

Vasquez and Sandoval exchange a look. Sandoval is not
pleased, but smiles wide.

SANDOVAL
It’s okay. You stay. Wouldn’t want to
upset the princess.

A few of the lieutenants snicker -- though not all. As the
scene progresses, we notice a definite divide between those
who support Sandoval, and those who do not.

SANDOVAL (CONT’D)
Alright. My man has a solution to our
little problem here.

VASQUEZ
The guy has a house in Phoenix. Found
it on Google Earth. Parks his car in
the driveway. Figure we get up there,
little C-4 under the hood. Boom.

CONTINUED
SANDOVAL
He’ll be there next week when Congress takes a break.

Nina starts at that.

NINA (alarmed)
Congress?

SANDOVAL
If we’re lucky we’ll get some of the family too. I want headlines.

NINA (can’t help herself)
I’m sorry... you’re going to blow up a congressman? A U.S. congressman?

VASQUEZ
Martin, from Arizona. He’s pushing for a border wall.

NINA (panicking)
Wait a minute, wait a minute. You can’t kill a congressman. It doesn’t work that way.

SANDOVAL
Works whatever way I want.

NINA
You have to think about this, Luis. The only reason you’re able to do business in the States is because the violence stays here. Nobody cares if a bunch of Mexicans are killing each other.

SANDOVAL
I’m gonna make them care. They need to be afraid of me.

NINA
They’ll be afraid. And every Fed and CIA agent will have us in their sites.

You can see some of the lieutenants (including Stefan and Francisco) are starting to be swayed by Nina’s argument. One of them, GONZALES, chimes in -- he’s closer to Stefan’s age.
GONZALES
She’s got a point. They leave us alone now.

STEFAN
What do you think we should do, Nina?

A beat of silence as all eyes go to Nina. She swallows, unprepared. But, as she speaks, she begins to gain confidence. Actually starts to sound like she knows what she’s talking about.

NINA
Um... well... he’s a politician, right? We just need a scandal. If he doesn’t have a vice... we create one. Drugs. Hooker. Underaged boy. All of the above. (shrugs) He’ll be too busy fixing his image to build any wall.

More and more of the lieutenants are getting on board with this. Sandoval is starting to grow very angry. Stefan smiles, looking proud.

STEFAN
That’s very elegant.

SANDOVAL
No. No. This guy is dead. Period.

NINA
Luis, please, this is stupid --

SANDOVAL (explodes)
AM I THE BOSS OR ARE YOU THE BOSS? AM I THE BOSS OR ARE YOU THE BOSS?

He is screaming in her face, the veins in his neck bulging. He looks crazy. Sandoval kicks at the bonfire, sending flaming logs sparking across the sand.

SANDOVAL (CONT’D)
You go back to counting money. I’ll run the real business.

He tromps off, followed by a few of his loyal lieutenants. Off Nina, shaken, feeling like she’s screwed up --
INT. BEACH HOUSE - FRONT ENTRY - NIGHT

Nina finds Frankie. He can tell she’s troubled.

NINA
Why don’t you go get the car.

FRANKIE
Sure. Everything okay?

NINA
I’ll tell you later.

Frankie nods, heads off. Nina says goodbye to a few others. She sees Stefan and Gonzales approach. She kisses Stefan.

NINA (CONT’D)
I need to get back. (then)
This isn’t going to be good, Stefan. For any of us.

GONZALES
You think you could do all that?

NINA
All what?

GONZALES
With the congressman. You think you could discredit him like you said?

NINA
No, I’m not -- I don’t do that. Luis isn’t wrong -- I’m the money person.

STEFAN
But you’re up there. You have the ability. If necessary... could you accomplish this?

A long beat, as Nina contemplates taking this step.

STEFAN (CONT’D)
You said it yourself, Nina. If he kills that congressman, he will destroy everything. And we will all go down with him.

Off Nina, feeling like she has little choice --

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nina is watching as Alex jumps from the couch, to the chair, to the other chair, to the ottoman, going around the room without touching the floor.

NINA
Okay. Tell me again -- when some other boy wants to play with the truck you’re playing with, what do you do?

ALEX
Share.

NINA
That’s right. And you don’t bite or hit or pull hair, right?

He steps onto a low table.

ALEX
Right!

He considers the curtains as his next move.

NINA
No you cannot swing on the curtains.

Alex instead makes a big leap across to a far chair. The chair almost tips over backwards.

NINA (CONT’D)
You know, I would like this more if you would just come stand over here.

ALEX
Can’t.

NINA
Why?

ALEX
(isn’t it obvious?)
The floor is made of lava.

He shimmies along the built-in bookcases.

NINA
That’s good. They’ll like that.
Imagination. You should do that.

CONTINUED
ALEX
You can’t touch the ground ever at all, or else your legs will catch on fire and melt and then you explode!

He jumps back onto the couch. Nina considers.

NINA
Yeah, that just makes you sound weird. Maybe save that game for home.
(checks watch)
Get your shoes on, we’re leaving in five minutes.

Alex jumps down and races off as Nina heads into --

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Where we find KRISTEN, the nanny, 20s and cute.

NINA
Kristen, this should be done in an hour, I’ll need you to pick Alex up afterwards, okay? Lily’s at the Bonaventure’s house working on her project, allegedly.

KRISTEN
Got it.

NINA
And I know it’s not your job, but if you could please encourage Ivan to be... awake. That would be great.

KRISTEN
No problem. I’ll wave the Playstation under his nose.

Sandy enters. She’s holding something behind her back.

SANDY
Morning.

Nina grabs her keys.

NINA
Alright, I won’t be late.
(notices)
What is that?
Sandy makes sure Kristen is out of earshot, then shows Nina what she’s been hiding behind her back -- a *Hustler* magazine.

NINA (CONT’D)
Mom! Put that away.

SANDY
Ernestina found this while vacuuming under your stepson’s bed. He’s sixteen. It’s not a shock.
(then)
You’ve talked about sex with him, right?

NINA
Mom, yes. His father did.

SANDY
(pointed)
His father died five years ago. When Ivan was eleven.

Nina rubs her temple. Sandy idly starts to flip through the pages of the magazine.

NINA
It’s just... I’m not his real mother, he barely tolerates me these days. I don’t know what I can say to him that’ll even sink in.

SANDY
(getting into the magazine)
Now this is ridiculous. In my day we didn’t do this air brushing. Look at that wax job -- it’s not natural --

Nina covers her ears walks away.

NINA
Not listening. I’m not listening.

EXT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - DAY

We’re looking into a cheery play room filled with toys and activities. There are five boys and girls, including Alex, playing nicely under the watchful eye of two teachers.

Nina watches through a large window. She’s whispering instructions under her breath.
SOPHIA
I’ve been coaching my son all morning.
Do you think teaching a five-year-old
the periodic table of elements is a
bridge too far?
(Nina laughs)
Probably. Which one’s yours?

NINA
(points)
Alex. Blue dinosaur shirt.
(double takes)
Is he wearing two different shoes?

SOPHIA
Mine is in the red t-shirt. William.
(then)
I think I’ve seen you before. You
were on the tour back in May?

NINA
Yes -- I’m sorry, I don’t remember you.

SOPHIA
That’s okay. I just remember you were
one of the few single moms. My husband
couldn’t stop staring at you.

NINA
(taken aback)
Oh. Uh... sorry about that --

SOPHIA
Don’t be. You’re very beautiful, and
he’s extremely unfaithful.

Nina just blinks. A long beat as Sophia just smiles weirdly.
And then she suddenly bursts into tears.

SOPHIA (CONT’D)
(crying)
I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.

Nina is at a total loss.

NINA
Um...
SOPHIA
(crying)
I’m so embarrassed. Ignore me. I’ll stop in a minute.

Nina guides Sophia to a more secluded area (we can still see the window to the play room over Nina’s head). She digs through her purse for a kleenex.

NINA
(checks the tissue)
There might be gum on this... it’s fine. Here.

Sophia grabs it and wipes her eyes. Over Nina’s head, we see the kids in the play room bouncing around -- evidently Alex is teaching them The Floor is Made of Lava.

SOPHIA
He’s leaving me for his secretary. Which is bad enough. But he won’t move out of the house! The bastard is divorcing me and refuses to leave until he finds ‘the right place.’ It’s been four months! I’m living in the master bedroom and he’s got the run of the rest of the house!

NINA
That’s terrible --

SOPHIA
And I’m sure he’s hiding our assets. He emptied our bank account already.

NINA
That’s illegal. Your lawyer should be able to stop this.

SOPHIA
(tearful)
I don’t have the money for a good lawyer. I don’t even know if I can afford to send William to this school.

Nina considers Sophia for a beat. Then, she takes out a pen and a piece of paper, starts writing a list for Sophia.

NINA
Here’s what you need to get your hands on: his tax returns for the past five years. Get his 1099s, and his 5452 filings.

(MORE)
Look for any bank statements from other countries... also look for big expenses that seem unusual. Oil drilling equipment for instance...

Nina is scribbling fast. Sophia is amazed.

SOPHIA
Are you in finance or something?

NINA
Um... yeah. Pretty much.

SOPHIA
So you’ll help me?

Nina stops, taken aback.

NINA
Oh -- no, you misunderstand --

SOPHIA
Because that would be so amazing! You’re the first bit of hope I’ve had in months. Please say you’ll help. I can’t do this by myself.

Nina closes her eyes briefly. She shouldn’t... but how can she say no?

NINA
Okay. Yes, okay. I’ll look over the documents.

SOPHIA
That’s great! But... I don’t actually have them. Ron took everything to his office.

NINA
(sighs)
I can get my hands on them. I know some people -- just tell me where he works. And get me a recent photo.

SOPHIA
Thank you. Thank you so much.
(thinks)
I don’t even know your name. I’m Sophia.

NINA
Nina.
They shake and Sophia smiles gratefully. Over Nina’s head we get a glimpse through the playdate window as Alex dives on another kid, and a five-year-old brawl seems to break out.

INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN – NINA’S OFFICE – DAY

The office is located just off the back counting room. Frankie finds Nina at her desk.

FRANKIE

So listen -- this congressman thing.
I’ve got an idea -- I know this chick --

NINA

It’s handled. I took care of it.

FRANKIE

You did? How?

Off Nina, cut to QUICK SHOTS of:

-- Nina handing an ATTRACTIVE ESCORT a large amount of CASH.

-- A dinner party. The Escort makes eye contact with a GRAY-HAIRED MAN in a suit. He smiles.

-- A hotel room. Empty bottles of champagne. Clothes strewn everywhere. The Gray-Haired Man is now naked, laughing as he snorts a line of white powder off the Escort’s ass.

-- A VIDEO CAMERA in the next room. A short MEXICAN MAN tapes the encounter.

-- An office. A television showing the footage. The Gray Haired Man hangs his head and cries like a baby.

BACK TO NINA

NINA

He’ll be changing his tune on the border wall legislation presently.

FRANKIE


Nina is just a little bit giddy here -- she didn’t know she had it in her.

NINA

I know, right?
FRANKIE
I’m amazed. Where did you find a hooker?

NINA
Craigslist!

FRANKIE
You’re your father’s daughter. You’ve got a real aptitude for this.

NINA
Yeah, well, first and last time. I’m perfectly happy hiding money.

FRANKIE
(joking)
I don’t know. Pretty soon you’re not gonna need me around anymore. Badass.

NINA
Actually... there is something. There’s woman at the school, another mom. Her husband’s dicking her around in the divorce.

FRANKIE
(big smile)
You made a friend?

NINA
No --

FRANKIE
You made a friend! Aw, I’m so happy for you right now. You got another girl to like you.

NINA
She doesn’t have anybody in her corner, and this is easy for us to fix.

FRANKIE
Absolutely. This is good, Nina. Life isn’t all work. This is a step in the right direction.

NINA
I’m glad you approve. Because I need you to rob her husband.
EXT. CULVER CITY STREET - NIGHT

CLOSE on a photo of Sophia’s husband, RON, in shorts and holding a spatula by the backyard grill. Frankie holds the photo. He sits in his car, parked in front of a one-story office building.

The passenger side door opens, and HECTOR, 20s, gets in. He’s a friend and business associate from Mexico, speaks with a slight accent. He’s carrying a 7-11 bag.

    FRANKIE
    He hasn’t left yet.

    HECTOR
    (re: photo)
    You know who that is. Ron Petersen. Movie producer.

    FRANKIE
    Yeah? What movies?

    HECTOR
    Science fiction and fantasy mostly. They’re pretty good.

    FRANKIE
    Never heard of him.

Hector opens his 7-11 bag. He pulls out a pudding snack cup and a plastic spoon.

    FRANKIE (CONT’D)
    You can’t eat pudding in my car.

    HECTOR
    You want one? I have an extra.

    FRANKIE
    Not in the car.

    HECTOR
    But I’m hypoglycemic. If I don’t eat every two hours I can faint.

Frankie shakes his head.

    FRANKIE
    Jeez. Eat your damn pudding.

A long beat.

CONTINUED
FRANKIE (CONT’D)
Give me the other one.

Hector hands him the extra pudding and spoon. Outside, we see RON exiting the office with a YOUNG WOMAN, holding hands.

FRANKIE (CONT’D)
Hey, Ronnie and his piece of ass. Hope she’s worth it you deadbeat scumbag.

INT. CULVER CITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Dark and empty, a small outfit -- a couple cubicles and a copy machine. The walls are covered with framed direct-to-video movie posters. We hear the doorknob jiggling for a moment, then the door opens -- Hector gets up from his knees, pockets his lock picking tools. Frankie carries a file box.

Frankie turns on the desk lamp and starts pulling open drawers, Hector starts going through a filing cabinet.

HECTOR
Dude.

FRANKIE
What?

He holds up a script.

HECTOR
‘Raptor Moon.’ It was about raptors... taking over the moon. So dope.
(off Frankie’s glare)
I’m gonna keep looking.

Frankie checks the credenza behind him, finding several hanging file folders. He flips through them.

FRANKIE
Hold it... this is it. Taxes, bank ledger. We got everything.

He starts filling the file box with the documents, then hefts it and heads for the door.

HECTOR
Wait.

(Frankie stops)
If you take that, the cops are gonna know the wife is involved. They’ll know it’s because of the divorce.
CONTINUED

Frankie thinks a beat.

    FRANKIE
    Damn. You’re right.

He looks around, points to the flat screen on the wall.

    FRANKIE (CONT’D)
    Take the flattie. And any other electronics. We’ll make it look like a regular robbery.

    HECTOR
    That’s good.

Hector helps Frankie rip the flat screen off the wall. They set it on the desk and Hector goes after the DVD player. Frankie looks around.

    FRANKIE
    Ooo, Herman Miller chair. I need that.

Frankie rolls it over and they put the TV, the other electronics, and the file box on top of it. Hector also nabs the script, rolls it up and puts it in his back pocket. Frankie points to the wall.

    FRANKIE (CONT’D)
    What about the poster?

Hector looks at the “Raptor Moon” poster. He wants it bad.

    HECTOR
    You think?

    FRANKIE
    Why not? It’s a nice frame.

Hector takes that down too. He’s very happy. Frankie surveys their work -- the place looks ransacked.

    FRANKIE (CONT’D)
    Perfect.

They roll awkwardly out.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nina comes in from work -- Alex and Lily are having dinner with Kristen. Lily is wearing a LOT of makeup.
NINA
Hey. What’s for dinner?

ALEX
Fish sticks and broccoli.

LILY
I’m having a salad. No dressing.

NINA
First of all, this is not a restaurant. There is one dinner only. Kristen doesn’t have to prepare special meals. (notices)
Excuse me. Are you wearing my makeup again?

LILY
(hiding her face)
No.

NINA
Lily, don’t you know how beautiful you are? You don’t need all that. (kisses her head)
Now take it off or I’m taking it off for you.

Lily gets up and stomps upstairs.

LILY
This house is terrible!

Nina shakes her head, gives Alex a kiss.

NINA
This house is terrible. Where’s Ivan?

KRISTEN
He said he wasn’t feeling well.

Nina looks upstairs, a little concerned.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nina stands at Ivan’s door, and knocks softly.

NINA
I? You okay?

From inside, we hear whispers, the sound of somebody falling out of the bed.

CONTINUED
IVAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Just a minute!

Then we hear a GIRL GIGGLING. Nina opens the door. Inside: Ivan in the bed, naked, holding a sheet to cover himself.

NINA
What the hell is this? Who is in here?

After a beat, the blonde head of a 16-year-old girl, RENEE, pops up from the other side of the bed. She’s holding a t-shirt over her chest.

IVAN
We weren’t doing anything --

NINA
(yelling)
I know what you were doing!

Nina stops herself. Takes a breath. Wills calm.

NINA (CONT’D)
Just get dressed. Both of you. Meet me downstairs.

Nina exits. Ivan and Renee exchange a look -- shit.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Nina sits at her desk and waits, preparing herself. She wants to be cool about this. Through the doors we see Ivan and Renee slink downstairs. She gives him a kiss goodbye and walks out the front door.

Ivan enters the study and drops himself in the chair across from Nina. He stares at his feet, ready to get screamed at.

NINA
I’m not mad.

Ivan looks up. He didn’t expect that.

IVAN
You’re not?

NINA
I’m not happy. But believe it or not, I understand a little about what you’re going through. You probably have a lot of feelings you don’t understand...
Ivan groans, super uncomfortable. Nina holds up her hands.

NINA (CONT’D)
... which we don’t have to talk about right now. Or ever.
(matter-of-fact)
Look. I know whatever I tell you isn’t going to make much difference. You’re going to do what you want no matter how I feel about it.

IVAN
(beat)
I guess.

NINA
Fine. That being the case. If you want to be treated like an adult, you have to act like one. That means: using protection when you have sex. Not lying to me about where you are or who you’re with.
(points)
And not doing it ten yards away from your younger brother and sister. Is that all clear?

IVAN
Uh, yeah. It’s clear.

NINA
I want to trust you. And I want you to trust me. Let’s see if we can work that out. Okay?

IVAN
Okay.

Ivan rises, starts to leave, then turns around.

IVAN (CONT’D)
Thanks. For being cool about this.

He exits. Nina smiles to herself -- that went great. So much better than she’d expected. She stands, shuts off the desk lamp. The room goes dark -- and now we can see, out the window to the backyard -- something small GLOWING outside.

Nina goes to the window. It’s the burning ember of a cigar. *
EXT. NINA’S HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Nina comes out the back door. Sandoval is sitting on a chaise lounge, smoking and staring at the pool.

NINA
Luis, what are you doing? How long have you been here?

SANDOVAL
Long enough to see your son sneak in his little hottie through the window.

He laughs a little. His mood is weird, thoughtful. Nina is wary. She’s got a pretty good guess as to why he’s here. But she’s surprised when he opens with:

SANDOVAL (CONT’D)
You got an MBA from Stanford, right?

NINA
(a little thrown)
Um... yeah.

SANDOVAL
Good school.
(then)
So how come you stayed in the drug business?

NINA
I know why you’re here, Luis.

SANDOVAL
I get that you grew up in it and everything. But after your dad died -- why not go legit?

NINA
Look. The congressman is handled. Maybe not in the way you’d like... but it’s taken care of. He won’t be a problem.

Sandoval walks toward her, getting uncomfortably close. He looks her up and down, leering and creepy.

SANDOVAL
I got a theory. See, this is a rough business. Sometimes, people gotta die. People gotta be made examples. But you -- the princess -- you’re above all that. Don’t want any part of it. Too ugly for you. Right?

(MORE)
SANDOVAL (CONT'D)

(then)
Thing is, I know girls like you. You say you don’t want to get your hands dirty. But part of you likes getting dirty. You get off on it. That’s why you’re still down in the mud with me.

NINA
If you don’t want to talk, I’m going back inside.

She turns away, but Sandoval grabs her arm. Hard.

SANDOVAL
You screwed me, Nina.

NINA
(angry)
No. I did you a favor. You have a problem, Luis. People aren’t happy. They asked me to fix this. So get your own house in order before you come sneaking around mine.

SANDOVAL
Or what? You’ll take over? You’re not your father.

NINA
Neither are you.

SANDOVAL
He was a relic. It was his time to go. Understand that, or end up like him.

A beat as his statement sinks in with Nina.

NINA
What are you talking about? My father had a heart attack.

SANDOVAL
Yeah. That’s what they said. But you need to understand, nobody is untouchable. And I’m not afraid to do what I have to do.
(looks around)
Nice place.

He throws his cigar into her pool and walks away. Off Nina, contemplating what she’s just heard --
ACT THREE

EXT. SOCCER FIELD – DAY

A few parents sit on the sidelines, watching the kids warm up before a game. Nina is among them, standing away from the rest of the parents. On the field, five- and six-year-old boys do practice drills with soccer balls.

NINA
(calling)
Good job, Alex. Good dribbling.

Frankie approaches behind Nina.

FRANKIE
(calling)
Get in there, man, dominate that kid!

NINA
They’re on the same team.

FRANKIE
Yeah. Mostly I don’t get soccer.
(then)
Sandoval’s still in town. At the Beverly Hills Hotel until tomorrow.

NINA
What’s his favorite car?

FRANKIE
That new Mercedes with the gull-wing doors is pretty sweet.

NINA
Call the broker. I want it there today. He’s furious about the congressman thing. Hopefully that’ll put me back in his good graces.
(then)
He wants me to believe he had something to do with my father’s death.

FRANKIE
You think he did?

NINA
I don’t know yet.
The soccer coach calls the boys to the sidelines for a break. Alex runs over and grabs some water and orange slices. Nina and Frankie join him.

FRANKIE
Looking good out there, squirt. What position do you play?

ALEX
Alternate!

Alex is having more fun using the orange peel to make teeth than anything else. Nina gives him a kiss.

NINA
Kristen will be here to pick you up after the game, okay?

ALEX
(.running back on the field)
Okay, bye mom!

Frankie and Nina start walking back to their cars.

FRANKIE
You don’t stay to see him play?

NINA
He says I make him too nervous. Also... he doesn’t actually play much.

(sighs)
I also have to deal with Sophia’s husband.

FRANKIE
The movie guy?

NINA
He’s not hiding the money. He’s spent it. All of it. The only thing they’ve got that’s worth anything is that house. Which he won’t leave.

She’s looking a little overwhelmed.

FRANKIE
Why don’t I pay him a visit?

(smiles)
I can be very persuasive.
NINA
No. The man thinks below the waist.
I’ll handle this one.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY

Nina enters, throws her keys on the table. She thinks a moment, then takes out her cell and dials.

MIGUEL (V.O.)
(phone filter; in Spanish)
This is Miguel. Leave a message.

NINA
(into phone)
Hey, Miguel. It’s Nina. I need to ask you something. It’s about the day my Dad died. Give me a call.

Nina clicks off, heads upstairs.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE – MASTER BEDROOM – DAY

Nina opens the door to her bedroom.

IVAN’S VOICE
Wait --!

Nina freezes in the doorway. Ivan and Renee are naked and in her bed. They pull the sheets over their heads.

NINA
Ivan!

IVAN
(from under the covers)
What are you doing home?!

Nina loses her shit.

NINA
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? Get out of my bed!

IVAN
We didn’t know! We thought you were working!

CONTINUED (2)
Nina is picking up the clothing strewn about the floor and firing it at the teenagers.

NINA
Get out! Get out of my bed! I cannot believe you!

Ivan and Renee start throwing clothes on. Renee’s got a lot of attitude.

RENEE
Oh my god! You’re crazy!

NINA
That’s right! Get out!

IVAN
We used protection like you said!

Nina could throttle him.

RENEE
You are so lame!

NINA
You wanna know how lame I am? I’m calling your mother, sweetheart. Right now.

Renee looks like she was just slapped.

RENEE
Well I’m pregnant!

Silence. Nina’s jaw drops.

NINA
What?

Ivan turns to Renee.

IVAN
What?

RENEE
(slightly less attitude)
Well I might be pregnant...

A shocked beat. Without any further explanation, Nina grabs both their arms and drags them out of the room.
INT. RITE AID – DAY

CLOSE ON a display of pregnancy tests. A hand GRABS one off the rack.

CLOSE ON the cash register ringing up the total.

CLOSE ON Nina’s Platinum card as it’s SLammed onto the counter.

Nina snatches up the pregnancy test. Smiles at the Clerk. Ivan and Renee sulk behind Nina.

NINA
(to Clerk)
Do you have a restroom?

INT. RITE AID – BACK OF THE STORE – DAY

Ivan leans against the wall next to the door that has the blue and white women’s room symbol. He’s sullen and unrepentant.

NINA
Let me just explain to you what’s going to happen if that girl ends up pregnant. Remember how you thought you were gonna go away to college, maybe get a baseball scholarship? Forget it. Take a year off before college and bum around Europe? Never gonna happen.

IVAN
So?

NINA
So? Do you think you’re even going to be able to graduate from high school, or are you going to join the rest of the burnouts and get your GED?

That lands a little harder. Ivan squirms, looks away.

NINA (CONT’D)
Yeah. That’s gonna be your life, smart guy.

(MORE)

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

NINA (CONT’D)
Every minute of every day, every cent you make, for the next eighteen years, will go to that child. So you better start praying right now, Ivan.

It’s sinking in for Ivan. He’s looking nervous as the bathroom door opens. Renee comes out. The attitude is back.

RENEE
It’s negative.

Ivan unclenches, blows out a sigh.

NINA
I want to see the stick.

RENEE
(makes a face)
Ew. It’s got pee on it.

NINA
It’s your pee. Get it.

Renee stomps back into the bathroom. Nina still glares.

NINA (CONT’D)
My bed?

IVAN
(shrugs)
It had clean sheets.

Nina shakes her head. Renee returns, holding the stick with a paper towel as if it’s radioactive. Nina grabs Renee’s wrist and brings the stick over so she can see the readout. *

NINA
Congratulations. You managed not to ruin your lives.

Nina walks off.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL BUNGALOW – DAY

A brand new silver 2010 Mercedes SLS AMG is parked in front of the bungalow, its gull wing doors open. It’s impressive as hell. Vasquez (whom we’ll recognize as one of the lieutenants from the birthday party) circles the car, worshiping it.
VASQUEZ
Are you kidding me? How she get her hands on this? The waiting list is sick.

VASQUEZ (CONT’D)
Yo. What’s wrong with you?

Without a word, Sandoval exits the bungalow, immediately comes out holding a NINE IRON. And proceeds to beat the living shit out of the car. Breaks all the windows, dents the hood and doors. He’s a madman. After a long time, he stops, out of breath.

SANDOVAL
I’m not some whore you can buy off with trinkets! She can’t manipulate me!

Vasquez just looks at the car, almost as if he could cry. Sandoval throws the golf club through the broken windows.

SANDOVAL (CONT’D)
I know what to do. We’re gonna get her attention.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The place is busy. FIND Nina alone at a table. She’s dressed to kill, revealing a bit more cleavage than normal, and wearing high, strappy heels. She sips from a martini.

RON PETERSEN enters the restaurant. Consummate Hollywood douchebag. Nina waves at him -- Ron spots her and his whole demeanor changes. You know exactly what he’s thinking -- I am so gonna hit that. He sleazes over to Nina’s table.

NINA
Ron? I’m Nina Cabrera. Thanks for meeting me.

RON
Wow. Just... wow. You are incredibly hot. Is it okay if I say that?

NINA
(smiles)
I think I’ll get over it.

Ron sits, looks Nina over.
RON
You’ve got this like, smoldering,
Latina, like... sexy tigress thing.
(a little too loud)
Caliente! I love it! Did you ever consider being an actress?

NINA
Oh, I’m not really cut out for that.
(then)
As I explained to your assistant, my company is interested in investing in feature films --

RON
Fantastic. Straight-to-DVD is like a license to print money. We just completed principle photography on Gator Shark. I’ll send you a cut.
(then)
Here’s an idea. You. Me. In my Ferrari. Driving up the coast.

NINA
Unfortunately I’ll have to pass --

He moves closer, puts his hand on the seat of her chair.

RON
You can’t say no. I won’t let you.

NINA
You’ll have to let me, Mr. Petersen.
(then)
I’m a friend of Sophia’s.

A beat. Ron sits back.

RON
(deflates)
Aw, man. God dammit. Are you kidding me?

NINA
I have a proposal for you. I will take your movie to my board and we’ll consider making an investment... and in turn, you move out of the house.

RON
You know what? You tell that bitch I’ll move out when I’m good and ready.
Mr. Petersen, it’s important to look at the big picture here --

Screw you, lady. I don’t have to do dick for you or anybody. Shame, too. Never banged a Mexican. And you would’ve looked nice bent over my desk.

Nina narrows her eyes. She leans forward, close to Ron’s face. Her blouse shifts, giving Ron a glimpse down her shirt. She takes a sip from her drink and licks her lips.

Do you like my shoes?

What?

Do you like my shoes? I just bought them.

She brings her leg out from under the table, modeling for Ron. He is now totally disarmed.

Uh... yeah. They’re nice.

My favorite thing about them is the soles. They’re red.

She brings her foot closer to Ron. Trails a toe up his calf. Her foot disappears in his lap. Ron is into this, smiling.

That means they don’t show blood.

Ron’s eyes suddenly BUG OUT OF HIS HEAD. He chokes.

Gaggaahghhh --

He is writhing in pain -- she is quite obviously crushing his nuts under her shoe. Nina takes his hand, speaks gently.

Shhh, Ron. Don’t struggle. Let me tell you what I’ve learned. That Ferrari? Is about to be repossessed. You’re three months behind on rent for your office.

CONTINUED
NINA (CONT'D)
But the most interesting part? By my calculations, over the past five years you’ve cheated the IRS out of about eight hundred thousand dollars in taxes.

RON
(dying)
Please... stop...

NINA
That’s a lot of money, Ron. That’s prison. You don’t want to go to prison, do you?

RON
No --

NINA
No, you don’t.
(softer)
And if the people I work with get involved, Ron, you’re gonna wish for prison. Beg for it. Am I clear?

RON
Yes... god yes...

NINA
I’m so happy we understand each other.

She pulls her foot away and stands, straightens her skirt and walks away. Ron can only fold into a ball and moan.

EXT. VALET PARKING - DAY
Nina walks toward her waiting car and answers her cell.

NINA
(into phone)
Hello.
(listens)
Miguel -- hi. I have a strange question about something you said. The day my father died... why weren’t you there? He never went anywhere without you.

INTERCUT WITH:
INT. MIGUEL’S APARTMENT - DAY

MIGUEL
Mr. Sandoval sent me on an errand. I had to go to Cabo to pick up a delivery. Took all day.

NINA
I see. Did Mr. Sandoval send you on errands a lot?

MIGUEL
Back then? Not really. I think his guy was sick or something. I kick myself about it every day, Nina. You have to believe me.

NINA
(beat)
I know, Miguel. Thank you. You’re a good man.

She clicks off and gets in her car.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

The game is still being played -- tiny kids following the soccer ball around the field like a swarm of bees. Alex watches from the bench, holding a juicebox and cheering.

One tough kid on the field starts shoving an opposing team member, and the two start fighting. The coaches and a few other adults rush in to break it up. Alex stands too. But he’s stopped by --

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Yo, Alex!

Alex turns. REVEAL Vasquez -- standing by his BMW in the parking lot and beckoning Alex over. Alex clearly knows him, and is unafraid. He smiles and waves.

HIGH over the field, as Alex runs away from the game and toward Vasquez and his waiting car.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRY - DAY
Nina enters to absolute panic. Kristen is crying.

KRISTEN
We can’t find Alex.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY
Ivan and Lily are on cell phones.

LILY
(into cell)
...Hi Mrs. Downey, did Alex come home with Josh today?

Ivan clicks off his cell, calls out to the room.

IVAN
Not at the Coopers. I’m calling the karate studio...

Sandy is on the kitchen phone.

SANDY
(into phone)
... brown hair, brown eyes... about three foot, five inches... he’s wearing a soccer uniform. Red.
(listens)
He has a birthmark on his left leg... *

A HAND reaches into frame and takes the phone away from Sandy. It’s Nina -- she’s on autopilot.

SANDY (CONT’D)
What are you doing?

NINA
(into phone)
We’re sorry to bother you. We know where he is. *

She hangs up. Lily is near tears.

LILY
Mom?

Nina strokes Lily’s cheek.

CONTINUED
NINA
It's okay, baby.

She walks to --

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Nina sits, shaking. She dials her cell. We hear --

WOMAN’S VOICE (V.O.) (phone filter)
Thank you for calling the Beverly Hills Hotel, how may I direct your call?

NINA
Put me through to Luis Sandoval.

WOMAN’S VOICE (V.O.) (phone filter)
I’m sorry, Mr. Sandoval checked out this morning. Is there anything --

Nina clicks off, her terror rising. She dials another number.

VASQUEZ’S VOICE (V.O.) (phone filter)
Yeah.

NINA
If he is hurt... if anything happens...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. N.D. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on Vasquez. We can’t tell where he is.

VASQUEZ
Don’t even trip about that. He’s okay. But you gotta start playing nice.

NINA
I want to talk to my son --

VASQUEZ
This can be fixed, Nina. You got one shot. Sandoval wants to bump up his cut five points. And he wants a million down payment.

CONTINUED
NINA
You son of a bitch.

VASQUEZ
It’s just money. You got no choice. *
You know him, Nina. *

Nina grows calm.

NINA
Yes, I do.

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

CLOSE ON a SLEDGEHAMMER. Presently being carried down the hall by Nina, who marches toward her bedroom, resolute. Frankie comes up the stairs. He’s carrying a duffel bag.

FRANKIE
Nina, Nina, wait a second --

NINA
How much did you bring?

FRANKIE
Four-fifty -- Nina, you gotta think about this.

They enter --

INT. NINA’S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nina goes to the closet, immediately starts pulling clothes off the rack and dumping them onto the floor.

FRANKIE
If you do this, it will never stop, okay? Sandoval will always use your family to get to you. You know that.

NINA
He has my son. I don’t have a choice.

She lifts the sledgehammer and winds up -- SMASHING the back wall of the closet. Once, twice. She drops to her knees, starts ripping back the plasterboard. Inside the wall, stacked between the studs -- BUNDLES OF SHRINK-WRAPPED HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. She yanks out a suitcase and starts throwing the money inside.
FRANKIE
Yes, you do. I’ve already talked to some people. A few phone calls and we can take care of this. Permanently.

NINA
No. I can’t risk it.

FRANKIE
Nina -- it’s too late to go back to how things were. You’ve been pretending that you’re just like all these other women up here -- you’ve got a nanny and your kids go to private school and you... whatever, shop at Whole Foods. But you’re not like them. You were never like them. You’re in a dirty, dangerous, messed up business. You think you’re just the money person? Every murder, every payoff, every drug shipment is financed by what we do. You need to embrace that now. You need to be dangerous. Or you and your family are gonna get devoured by it.

Nina zips the suitcase and stands.

NINA
You’re right. A hundred percent right. But he killed my father. He’ll kill Alex too. I’m getting my son back.

And she’s gone, pulling the suitcase behind her.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS STREET - DAY
A beautiful, sunny day. Palm trees line the streets. It’s that movie shot that makes Beverly Hills look perfect.

Nina drives, looking frantic. Her cell phone rings. She looks down at the screen -- it’s Sandoval. Steeling herself, Nina puts her cell to her ear and answers.

NINA
(into cell)
Yes.

INTERCUT WITH:
INT. CORPORATE JET - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Sandoval is on the airplane phone. He is so happy with himself.

SANDOVAL
Hey, princess. You got my money?

NINA
Yes.

SANDOVAL
That’s good. I hope you and I can move forward after this. No hard feelings.

Nina clenches her jaw. If she could choke him through the phone, she would.

NINA
I know you killed my father.

SANDOVAL
Well, you’re a smart girl. And I hope you’re smart enough to understand how serious I am.

NINA
I understand everything.

SANDOVAL
Good. Your dad underestimated me, Nina. But I can see now that you don’t. Smart girl.

He hangs up. Nina puts her cell down, processing. Then we hear the unmistakable BOOP of a police siren.

IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

We see a MOTORCYCLE COP flashing his lights and motioning Nina to pull over.

NINA
No no no no no...

Nina finds a spot and stops the car. She grips the steering wheel, on the verge of losing it.

The cop s-l-o-w-l-y gets off his bike, talking into his shoulder mic. He stops, looks at the back of Nina’s car. For what seems like a long time. Then goes to Nina’s window.

CONTINUED
Nina fishes them out of her bag, shaking a little. He looks over her documents through his sunglasses.

MOTORCYCLE COP (CONT’D)
Do you know why I pulled you over?

And that’s it -- Nina suddenly BURSTS into tears. Hard, angry, messy sobbing. She holds her face in her hands, heaving -- every stress, every emotion she’s been holding back is released all at once.

The cop looks distressed.

MOTORCYCLE COP (CONT’D)
Ma’am... it’s just a cell phone violation. You have to use a hands free device. First offense is a twenty dollar fine. No big deal.

Nina reigns in her sobs as this sinks in.

NINA
Oh. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. It’s just been a rough week. I’m very embarrassed...

MOTORCYCLE COP
Don’t be. This is the least weird thing to happen to me today.

She smiles at him, grateful. He’s a nice man.

MOTORCYCLE COP (CONT’D)
Is there anything I can do to help? If you need someone to talk to...

NINA
(considers)
That is a lovely offer. I wish I could take you up on it.
(then)
I’m fine. Thank you.

He rips her citation off his pad and hands it to her, along with her license and registration.

MOTORCYCLE COP
You take care of yourself Mrs. Cabrera.

*
CONTINUED (2)

NINA
I will. I absolutely will.

He smiles and heads back to his motorcycle. PUSH IN on Nina. She wipes away her tears. She’s made a decision. She picks up her cell and dials it. The motorcycle cop waves as he drives away. She waves back.

NINA (CONT’D)
(into cell)
Do it.

Off Nina’s new determination --

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

EXT. EL SEGUNDO HOUSE - DAY

A small bungalow in a working class neighborhood. Vasquez’s BMW is parked in the driveway. All the curtains are drawn.

INT. EL SEGUNDO HOUSE - DAY

Alex is in front of the television, playing a videogame, happy as a clam. Vasquez keeps one eye on him, one eye out the window. He reaches inside his coat, feels the pistol in the shoulder holster underneath.

Nina’s car pulls up to the curb. She exits, goes to the trunk and hauls out the suitcase. Vasquez opens the door and lets Nina in.

VASQUEZ
Afternoon.

Nina is wound tight. She sees Alex, keeps her emotions in check.

NINA
Hey baby.

ALEX
(not looking up)
Hey mom.

VASQUEZ
(re: suitcase)
That for me?

NINA
I’m not staying while you count it.

VASQUEZ
It’s cool. I trust you.

NINA
Alex we gotta go.

ALEX
Let me finish this game.

NINA
(sharp)
Alex! Now.

CONTINUED
Alex makes a face, sets down the controller and slouches toward the door.

VASQUEZ
So we’re all good. And maybe you understand who’s boss now.

Nina smiles.

NINA
Definitely.

She guides Alex out and to the car. Vasquez watches through the open door until they’ve pulled away. He grabs the suitcase and shuts the door.

He turns -- and there is a Desert Eagle .50 cal PISTOL in his face. Frankie is on the other end of it.

FRANKIE
Me too.

BLAM! On the killing shot, we CUT TO:

EXT. TIJUANA STREET - NIGHT

MUSIC comes up as we see TWO MEN exit a club and climb in their sportscar. We might recognize them from Sandoval’s birthday party. They start up the car. It EXPLODES.

EXT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Sandoval and two of his LIEUTENANTS drink beer on the veranda. From over the wall, FOUR MASKED MEN appear, all in black. Stealthing toward the men.

A GIRL appears from the house -- she sees the men, freezes. Before she can yell, one of them CUTS HER THROAT.

EXT. EL SEGUNDO HOUSE - NIGHT

Frankie exits, pulling the suitcase behind him. He looks around. All is quiet. Heads to his car and drives away.

EXT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

One of Sandoval’s lieutenants turns and catches a glimpse of the masked gunmen. He shouts, pulls his weapon -- and so does everyone -- they all start shooting.

CONTINUED
The lieutenants go down, dead, as does one of the gunmen. Sandoval is on the ground, wounded, crawling toward the stairs that lead to the beach.

Another Gunman walks up to him. Fires three times. Then kicks Sandoval’s dead body onto the sand.

Dissolve to:

INT. NINA’S HOUSE – MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Late. Nina is cuddled in bed with Alex and Lily. The kids are asleep. Nina is wide awake. The television is on with no sound.

Ivan comes to the doorway, knocks softly but hangs back.

IVAN
I put the trash cans out.

NINA
Thanks, Ivan.

(beat)

Trash day was two days ago, though.

IVAN
Oh.

NINA
But it was a nice thought.

She means it. Ivan comes further inside.

IVAN
He okay?

Nina looks down at Alex, drooling on her sleeve.

NINA
Got to eat pizza and play videogames for five hours. Best day of his life.

IVAN
That was pretty scary.

Nina considers Ivan a beat.

NINA
You have to know, I’d die to protect any of you.
IVAN
I know.

NINA
You’re not a kid. You know what I do. You know how we can afford the life we have. I’m sorry about what happened to Alex. About what happened to your dad.

(beat)
But no matter what happens in the future, *this family will always come first for me. Nothing will ever change that.*

IVAN
(sober)
Okay.

NINA
You look like your dad right now.

(then)
I love you, Ivan. You know that.

Ivan squirms, mumbles something that might be “I love you,” but you never know. Nina moves over, makes room on the bed.

NINA (CONT’D)
You want in on this? *Ghostbusters* is starting.

IVAN
Actually, I was going to ask, there’s this party at this kid’s house..?

NINA
(beat)
Did I forget to ground you for having sex with your girlfriend in my bed?

IVAN
Um... yes.

NINA
Huh. Well I just remembered.

Ivan tries to build an argument, gives up and sulks away. Off Nina, who smiles --

INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN – DAY

Nina sits at a station, reading a letter with one hand as a Korean girl buffs the nails of her other hand. Nina looks unhappy. Frankie approaches.
FRANKIE
Everything’s ready.
(re: nails)
Ooo, that’s a good color.

NINA
(to manicurist)
Thanks. Looks great.

The manicurist moves off. Nina hands Frankie the letter.

NINA (CONT’D)
Alex didn’t get in to Chelsea. We were wait listed.

FRANKIE
Oh. Sorry. You okay?

Nina’s clearly disappointed, almost profoundly so.

NINA
Alex doesn’t remember his father. He was too little when Rick died.
(beat)
You remember how amazing Rick was at playing the guitar? Never took any lessons. I think Alex is like that. Chelsea would’ve really fostered his musical ability. I guess I thought it was a way for him to have some connection with his dad.
(then)
It sounds silly. There are other schools...

But Frankie has been moved by Nina’s plight.

FRANKIE
No. No. You want to get him into that school? Then let’s do that.

NINA
I can’t, Frankie. It’s over. I did everything I could.

FRANKIE
Nina. In the past week, you discredited a U.S. Congressman, rescued a kidnapped boy and took out a major drug kingpin. Don’t even tell me you can’t figure out a way to get your kid into some little private school.
Nina half-smiles.

NINA
You’re right. I did do all that.
(steels herself)
I’m ready.

Frankie opens the door to the back room and Nina follows.

Revealing --

INT. KAJU NAIL TOWN - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gone are all the Asian men and counting machines; instead, there are twenty lieutenants waiting for Nina. They all stop their conversations as she enters.

NINA
Thank you for coming all the way up here, gentlemen. There’ve been a lot of... changes recently. And many of you are uncertain. I am not.
(smiles)
But you should know, more changes are coming. I’m prepared today to widen our base. Take the business into new directions. We need to diversify. Explore different avenues of income that assume less risk. We’ve been beholden to the old way of doing things. Not anymore. We have the distribution channels already set up... we can move any product we want. We just need to be creative.

She’s clearly piqued their interest. And she’s as confident as we’ve ever seen her. Off Nina --

EXT. CHELSEA ACADEMY - QUAD - DAY

Another day. CLOSE on a banner strung across the lawn, which reads WELCOME NEW CHELSEA FAMILIES! It’s a lovely catered affair. Happy parents drink wine and eat passed hors d’oeuvres, kids play off to the side. FIND Nina, watching Alex kick a soccer ball around with a couple other boys.

Sophia makes her way through the crowd, surprised when she sees Nina.

SOPHIA
Nina? You made it in? That’s great!
She hugs Nina, then stops a passing WAITER and grabs two glasses of champagne.

SOPHIA (CONT’D)
You believe this thing? This is what they call a picnic.
(points)
They have live lobsters.

NINA
Our tuition money at work.
(then)
So... how are things?

SOPHIA
So great. Ron moved out. His lawyer called me and said he was giving me the house, free and clear. And he’d pay off the rest of the mortgage. Do you believe that? I guess I won’t be needing your help after all.

NINA
That’s good, Sophia. He should do all that and more.

SOPHIA
I know I should be upset that he blew the rest of our money... but I just don’t care right now.
(then)
Hey, can I ask you a kind of nosy question?

Nina’s wary of this -- she doesn’t like answering questions.

NINA
Sure.

SOPHIA
My friend is on the admissions committee. I’d heard you were on the waiting list. What happened? No one gets off the waiting list.

NINA
Oh. Apparently some people dropped out at the last minute.

PUSH IN on Nina, looking innocent, then CUT TO:

-- The Admissions Office at night -- Frankie breaks in. Rifles through files.
-- INSERT on the waiting list -- the name CABRERA is listed at number 3.

-- LARGE-sumS OF CASH exchange hands. Twice.

-- Nina with a BEL AIR COUPLE. Looking happy at their good fortune. They shake hands.

FATHER
Never liked that school anyway.

BACK TO NINA

NINA
Guess we just got lucky.
(changing the subject)
So, you’re a single woman. What will you do now?

SOPHIA
Get a job. Never actually had to work before. Pathetic.

Nina considers this.

NINA
You know... I’m taking on some new responsibilities at work. I may have something for you. If you’re interested.

Off Sophia, intrigued --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANDOVAL’S BEACH HOUSE - DAY

The place is now crawling with Mexican law enforcement. Three bodies are on the terrace, covered now. Blood stains the whitewashed wood.

A man wearing a DEA windbreaker exits from the house. He flashes his badge to an officer.

VAAS
Erik Vaas. Where’s Morales?

The officer points in the direction of the beach. Vaas walks, following the trail of blood down the steps.
EXT. BEACH - DAY

Down on the sand, a MEDICAL EXAMINER is inspecting Sandoval’s dead body. Next to him is DIEGO MORALES, an investigator with the Mexican Federal Police. Vaas joins them.

VAAS
Hey, Diego.

MORALES
Erik.

(re: body)
Luis Sandoval, head of the Veracruz Cartel for the past year. Responsible for the murders of at least ten law enforcement officers. *

VAAS
I know him well. Can’t say I’m surprised.
(looks around)
Cameras catch anything?

Indeed, there are security cameras mounted everywhere.

MORALES
Hard drive was ripped out of the security system. We got nothing.

VAAS
Guess somebody new is running the Veracruz cartel. And he’s even more brutal than Sandoval.

Off the crime scene, PRELAP:

NINA’S VOICE (V.O.)
LET’S GO! RIGHT NOW!

EXT. NINA’S HOUSE - DAY

Morning madness. Nina is trying to get everybody out of the house. Ivan is lagging behind.

NINA
(pushing Ivan)
Faster, we’re late, it’s the first day of school and we’re late!

Alex and Lily pile in the back seat.
Let’s stop for coffee.

I want a donut!

If you wanted coffee you should’ve been ready fifteen minutes ago.

Nina buckles Alex into his booster seat, Ivan gets in the front seat. The front door opens and Sandy exits, holding a big paper mache GLOBE.

Almost left without this.

My project!

Nina takes the globe, Sandy heads back toward the house. *

Thanks mom. Lily, nice job, please remember your things.

I dropped my apple.

Nina sets the globe on top of the car, finds Alex’s apple, then rounds to the driver’s side and gets in. A deep breath.

Okay. We’ve got everything? We’re good? Great. Let’s go.

She throws the car into gear and pulls away from the curb.

WE STAY on Nina’s house for a beat. The paper mache globe slowly rolls back into frame, settling in the middle of the street in front of the house.

Another passing car speeds by, instantly CRUSHING IT.

END OF PILOT