

Reimagining the “Femme Fatale” Trope
Through a Cinematic Subtext: *Fatale*

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Abstract

Integrating subtext into action screenwriting, specifically within the “femme fatale” trope, creates a more compelling and entertaining film than typical action movies. Typical action movies are films like *The Avengers*, *The Fast and the Furious*, and *Mission Impossible* franchises. Although the average action film’s bold fight scenes and over-the-top characters distract the masses, displaying complex characters, motivations, and dialogue can add significant depth to a movie. Action films that achieve this goal and diverge from the norm are often some of my favorites; films such as *Kill Bill*, *The Matrix*, and *The Dark Knight* have an added layer of depth beyond their action. Looking past the flashy, candy-coated revenge story repeated countless times, I express my characters’ psychological range, interpretation of character tropes, and the destructive nature of the revenge cycle through my feature-length screenplay, *Fatale*.

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Preface

I have wanted to be a filmmaker since I was nine years old; after seeing the documentary *Empire of Dreams: The Story of the 'Star Wars' Trilogy* (2004) about my newly favorite film franchise at the time, I was forever changed. Once I discovered the reality behind the production of films, I grew to love movies even more. I set my mind on becoming a filmmaker, just like George Lucas. Since then, I have been on sets and in production studios both as a visitor and production assistant, and I have spent my free time working on my own movie ideas.

I started screenwriting four years ago out of necessity for my personal projects. I was more focused on the production side of filmmaking, but it quickly became a passion of mine. In *Fatale*, I have presented the female protagonist as a modified but archetypal “femme fatale.” Instead of the protagonist being a blatant representation of this trope, I have expressed the femme fatale archetype as a manipulative means of getting what she wants at all costs, i.e., another face she can put on to manipulate her perpetrators. Additionally, the antagonist serves as an archetypal femme fatale from whom the protagonist can learn.

Fatale follows Ellie Fatale, a woman in her mid-20s who seemingly has her life together: she has an apartment in the city, a husband named Robert, and she is on her way to having her first child via in vitro fertilization (IVF). While Ellie and her husband are walking home, they are jumped by three men. Robert is fatally shot by one of the men, and their leader violently assaults Ellie. She is beaten and left for dead on the street. Having lost her husband and any future of having a child, she is stuck with the trauma of the incident. Detective Turner is assigned to her case in her recovery, simultaneously

failing to bring her justice and developing feelings for her throughout the narrative. At her husband's funeral, Ellie meets his husband's mistress and coworker, a professional hitwoman named Valerie. This mysterious woman directs her to a sympathetic drug lord named Enzo. With his training and information, Ellie discovers more about her husband's past and the not-so-coincidental attack on their lives. Her husband had been affiliated with the men and laundered money from their associated crime syndicate. After tracking down and executing the men who wronged her, she discovers the mastermind and femme fatale who was really behind the attack, her husband's mistress. Valerie is revealed to have exposed Robert's betrayal to the syndicate upon learning about his wife, knowing fully well that the pair would be targeted. A violent encore ensues between the two women, both fighting in the name of revenge.

For my research element on character psychology, I have analyzed the factors involved in women's use of revenge to remedy their loss of control. For a research paper in UH 3900, I broke the topic into three aspects of woman's revenge: psychological predispositions, inflicted causes, including their implications, and the ultimate reasoning behind the use of revenge. The first details potential psychological factors such as the psychological theory of the Dark Triad (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism), depression, anxiety, and hormonal implications. The second involves inflicted causes of revenge ideology stemming from a lack of control; these include the effects of upbringing, traumatic experiences, deception, physical/emotional abuse, and sexual assault. Finally, the reasoning factor is explained through the need to regain equity and gendered differences in reasoning, as well as the possible alternative of pardon and/or

forgiveness. Each aspect aims to conceptualize the protagonist's loss of control and attempt to regain it through revenge-seeking.

To depict the plot realistically, I have also researched the implications of recovery on sexual assault survivors. Specifically, I researched the impact of survivor identity on emergency room care and the emergency department's preparedness for care. Each topic applies to the protagonist's experience recovering from sexual assault and her motivation to regain balance. This, combined with my research on revenge psychology, aims to depict an accurate and thought-provoking subtext to viewers.

Another focus of my research has been a variety of script development methods. Although I learned a significant amount about screenwriting from experience, I have studied general script writing guides to refresh and affirm my knowledge. These guides consist of writing manuals, general blueprints, and screenwriting challenges; they vary from simplistic to extensive. With the emphasis on the protagonist's perspective and journey, I have also researched the focus required for a character-centered story. With the action-driven nature of the revenge story, I have researched the use of kinesthetics, the study of body motion, in developing action sequences. Each of these methods has given me a well-rounded approach to my focus on the protagonist and action scenes.

My approach to this project involved creating an action screenplay that expands beyond the expected plot through subtext. Any great movie is enjoyable on the surface, but only the best have the depth to bring audiences back for a new experience with every watch. Films such as *Kill Bill*, *The Matrix*, and *The Dark Knight* have show-stopping action scenes but with a layer of real-world relatability and messaging. I explored this depth through accurate, complex characters and dynamics. Although striking scenes and

plot points are commonplace for action scripts, engaging characters and dialogue are equally important to building a compelling story. I express a story that pushes the action genre with a unique mix of action-packed sequences and alluring dialogue. Specifically, within the plot, I turned the idea of a femme fatale on its head. As with any other revenge story, the protagonist takes on the role of the antagonist in order to regain balance and control; this character arc falls in line with the film trope of the seductive and often manipulative femme fatale. I expressed this arc on the surface but expanded the protagonist's range to play any roles she may need to execute her revenge. Additionally, I applied this trope to Valerie, who is revealed to have orchestrated and manipulated the initial attack on Ellie and Robert. The true antagonist will metamorphose into a calculated femme fatale trope against the protagonist. With these elements, I intend to change the viewer's idea of the common character truism.

Cast of Character

ELLIE	female. 25. brown hair and eyes. thin
ROBERT	male. 39. dark thinning hair. muscular
MONTGOMERY	female. mid-50s. dark red hair. tall
ALEJANDRO	male. mid-20s. dark hair. thin. Hispanic
KASEN	male. early 30s. bald. dark eyes. tall and muscular
JAY	male. late 30s. scruffy looking. Caucasian
TURNER	male. late 20s. neat. muscular
VALERIE	female. early 30s. dark features. tall. Caucasian
ENZO	male. 60s. neat. stout. New York accent. Caucasian

Setting

Southern California, mid-2000s

List of Terms

INT./EXT.:	Interior/Exterior
BEAT:	The action of pausing or taking a moment
CONT'D:	Continued
V.O.:	Voice-Over
O.S.:	Off-Screen
CHYRON:	A text caption superimposed on screen

ACT I

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

ELLIE, 25, woman with brown hair and eyes. She has a thin frame. She is wearing cozy pjs. She walks into the kitchen. She pulls a handful of items out of the fridge.

Ellie toasts two pieces of bread, puts mustard and mayo onto the bread, alternates layers of turkey and cheese, puts on a few pickles and tomatoes, cuts and places lettuce, and wraps up the completed sandwich. She cuts up a bell pepper and a few carrots. She puts them in a zipper bag. She puts crackers into a bag. She gathers each of the items and puts them into a professional lunch bag.

Ellie makes a pot of coffee. She cooks an egg and toasts a piece of bread. On a plate, she puts the egg onto the toast. She pours a cup of coffee. She sits down at the kitchen table in front of a small television. A forensic documentary is playing. She takes a bite of her egg on toast.

ROBERT, 39, man with dark thinning hair and a muscular frame. Robert walks into the kitchen in a suit and tie.

ELLIE

I made a pot.

Robert grabs a thermos from a cabinet. He pours the coffee into the thermos.

ROBERT

(beat)

What are you watching?

ELLIE

It's one of those murder documentaries where they figure out who killed the guy- You know, it's almost always the spouse that kills 'em.

Robert walks over to Ellie.

ROBERT

Don't get any ideas.

He kisses her on the head. He walks over to the counter and grabs the lunch bag.

ELLIE

You're leaving already?

Robert grabs his suitcase, thermos, and lunch bag.

ROBERT

That big case I was telling you about.

He opens the apartment door.

ELLIE

But what about-

He exits and shuts the door behind him. Ellie sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ellie sits in a chair across from her IVF specialist, Dr. Montgomery. MONTGOMERY, mid-50s, white woman with dark red hair in a bun. She is dressed in an elegant medical jacket. Ellie is wearing jeans and an ugly blouse.

MONTGOMERY

Where is...Mr. Fatale today?

ELLIE

He had to work.

MONTGOMERY

I don't think I've seen him since the sperm preparation.

ELLIE

I- He's been busy.

MONTGOMERY

Busy, Mrs. Fatale?

ELLIE

What are you trying to say?

MONTGOMERY

It's just...these are big steps that he's missing. This is just as much his child. And you're already prepared for the embryo transfer-

ELLIE

I know!

Ellie covers her face with her hands. She starts crying. Silence.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I just- He's always in the office or working on a case. I hardly see him. And he usually can't make it to things like this.

MONTGOMERY

Talk to him. Make him come for your transfer. *This* is the man you're making this baby with, Mrs. Fatale. He needs to be here to support you.

ELLIE

(beat)

You're right. I'll try talking to him.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ellie picks things up off the shelf and places them into her basket. She pulls out a list of groceries from her purse. On the list are ingredients for tomato soup and fish tacos.

She walks into the produce section and squeezes a bunch of tomatoes. She puts them into her basket. Her phone buzzes. She pulls a flip phone out of her purse and answers it.

ELLIE

Hey, mom. I'm- I'm doing fine, what about you?

(beat)

I'm so glad-

(beat)

Yes! It went well! We're doing the transfer soon.

(beat)

He's working. Mom-

(beat)

I know. I know- I told him about it, but this case-

(beat)

I will. And I'll keep you posted.

(beat)

I love you too. Bye mom.

Ellie flips her phone closed. She sighs and puts her phone back into her purse.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY BLOCK - NIGHT

Ellie is waiting on the sidewalk with her hands full of plastic grocery bags. Robert comes up behind her and gives her a kiss on the cheek. Ellie flinches.

ELLIE
Oh, you scared me.

ROBERT
Thanks for waiting on me.

ELLIE
I was just- Of course. I came straight from the store.

ROBERT
(beat)
Let me get some of those.

Robert grabs a few of the grocery bags from Ellie. He examines them.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Tomato soup again?

ELLIE
Soup tonight and then fish tacos tomorrow. That's the tradeoff.

ROBERT
But you know how I feel about soup.

ELLIE
(beat)
I can...make it another time.

Ellie smiles at Robert.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I found a shortcut across Beacon Street.

ROBERT
(beat)
Your lead.

The walk down the street. Silence.

ELLIE
The...IVF appointment was today-

ROBERT

Yeah?

ELLIE

And we have half a dozen healthy embryos.

ROBERT

That's wonderful.

ELLIE

(beat)

For the next appointment, I-

(beat)

Really want you to be there with me.

ROBERT

(beat)

I'll try my best to get out of work, but I don't think I can make any promises.

ELLIE

Okay.

Silence. Ellie leads Robert into a dark, abandoned alley. Two figures follow several yards behind them. ALEJANDRO, mid-20s, is a Hispanic man with dark facial hair and a thin frame. KASEN, early 30s, tall and muscular with dark eyes. Both are dressed in Southern California streetwear.

ROBERT

It's just- That case-

ELLIE

What case?

(beat)

You say things like- *this case-* and *that case-* but you can't tell me a real reason why you have to miss our appointment. An important appointment for both of us. For...our baby.

(beat)

What case?

Alejandro and Kasen catch up to the couple halfway down the alley. Robert hears them approaching, turns, and reaches for something at his side.

ROBERT
(to Alejandro)
Don't-

In a flash, Alejandro whips out a revolver and fires one shot into Robert's chest.

Robert is thrown back onto the ground. Groceries scatter. Ellie stands still in shock. She drops her groceries and begins hyperventilating.

ELLIE
Rob! What...who-

ALEJANDRO
Hold 'er for now.

KASEN
Heard.

Kasen approaches Ellie. She is still frozen in place.

ELLIE
No! Rob! Robert!

He grabs both of her arms to retrain her. Alejandro pulls out a flip phone and speed-dials a number. He waits for an answer.

ALEJANDRO
We got 'im.

JAY (V.O.)
I'm close.

ELLIE
Who? Who-

ALEJANDRO
We'll figure out what to do with you.

At the other end of the alley, a sports car's brakes squeal. A man steps out of the back seat. JAY, late 30s, white man with scruffy facial hair, is wearing a flashy suit jacket and sunglasses. He approaches the group.

JAY
Here we are.
(to Kasen)
Pick 'im up. I've got the girl.

Kasen lifts up Robert while he's bleeding out. Jay grabs Ellie.

JAY (CONT'D)
You must be the wife.

ELLIE
(beat)
I-

JAY
Quite a lovely girl he's got. So young.

Jay shoves Ellie towards Alejandro. He restrains her. Jay slowly approaches Robert. Jay whispers something to Robert, reaches for his neck, and rips off his silver chain with a dozen military dog tags on it. Ellie winces.

Jay mutters something that's inaudible. He steps back, pulls out a shiny gun, holds it to Robert's head, and fires. Kasen drops Robert to the ground. Ellie gasps in horror.

ELLIE
He...he's-

Kasen reaches towards Robert.

JAY
Leave 'im! Leave 'im there!

Jay slowly approaches Alejandro and Ellie. Alejandro pulls tightly on her arm. He reaches for his revolver with his other hand.

ALEJANDRO
Ready on your order.

JAY
No, not yet. I'll take her from here.

Jay grabs Ellie's other arm. She turns to look at him directly.

ALEJANDRO
Sir, she's not involved in-

JAY
I will be the judge of what I do and do not involve this woman in-

ALEJANDRO

Sir. I can't stand for this. Let's just follow policy. End it now-

JAY

I'll end you now. Stand...right here.
(beat)
Unless you wanna be rotting with 'im.

Jay gestures to Robert's body. Alejandro lets go of her arm and steps back.

JAY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. Both of you stand guard.
(to Ellie)
Miss, let's not make this difficult.

Jay grabs Ellie's waist and pulls her close.

ELLIE

No...no! No, please!

Ellie tries to free herself from his grasp. Jay grabs her tighter.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Please! Help! Somebody!

Ellie breaks free and runs towards the end of the alley. Kasen grabs her hair and slams her head into the ground.

FLASH TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Ellie jolts awake. She starts frantically looking around the room, hyperventilating. She's in a hospital gown. She tries to sit up but aches in pain.

She holds her lower abdomen, pulls up her covers, and finds her entire pelvis wrapped in bandages. She continues hyperventilating between sobs.

She whips her head around, looking for a call button. She begins tapping it repeatedly. The door opens. A nurse comes to her side.

FLASH TO:

Ellie sits up in her hospital bed. TURNER, late 20s, muscular

and wearing a business casual attire. Turner sits in a chair with his legs crossed. He's writing in a journal.

TURNER

It was a miracle that woman found you when she did. You weren't far from bleeding out in that alley.

ELLIE

(beat)

Well...don't I feel blessed.

TURNER

(beat)

Did you recognize the men?

Images of the three men flash in and out. Turner looks through criminal sketches of the three men.

ELLIE

No. Not one.

TURNER

The descriptions are good, but I need more to help you.

ELLIE

I don't know anything else. These men just attacked me and my husband-

TURNER

Was he involved with them somehow? Sketchy work? Recreational drugs?

ELLIE

No! He was a defense attorney.

TURNER

Any deranged clients that you know about?

ELLIE

No. He doesn't like to talk about work.

TURNER

No theft. Minus his necklace that you said was probably worthless-

ELLIE

Some dog tags on a chain.

TURNER
This wasn't just a petty crime.

ELLIE
What is it then?

TURNER
(beat)
How long were you married?

ELLIE
Five years.

The investigator flips through his papers.

TURNER
Rather young, comparatively.

ELLIE
Fifteen years difference. It's not
like he was geriatric or something.

TURNER
Why him?

ELLIE
What kind of question is that?

TURNER
You can say. Love? Money?

ELLIE
What are you getting at? Some dirt on
me? My husband?

TURNER
You told me yourself that you took him
on that shortcut.

ELLIE
If I would've known, I would never've-
(beat)
That's not fair.

TURNER
Just trying to understand what I'm
working with.

ELLIE
What you're working with is three men
who killed my husband and...raped me.

Understand that.

TURNER
I need *all* the pieces.

ELLIE
Well, know my husband is not wrapped up in some conspiracy you have.

TURNER
(beat)
You may not have known your husband as much as you think you did. That tends to be how these things go.

ELLIE
He was no saint, but I will *not* sit here and let you...talk like this.

TURNER
I apologize, I just wanted-

ELLIE
Turner, was it?

TURNER
(beat)
Yes.

ELLIE
Am I allowed to ask you to leave?

TURNER
Yes, but-

ELLIE
I will do *everything* in my power to bring these guys down, but right now. I think I need some space.

Turner gathers his papers and gets up from the chair.

TURNER
I'll keep in touch.

Turner exits into the hall. He passes VALERIE, early 30s, a beautiful woman with dark features. She is wearing a dark green jacket and red lipstick. She stands across from the door.

A nurse knocks and enters the room.

NURSE
Hello, Mrs. Fatale.

Ellie winces.

NURSE (CONT'D)
I have your morning meds. These will
help with the pain.

The nurse sets down a small cup with a few pills. Ellie takes
a sip of water and swallows the pills.

ELLIE
What did my surgeon say? Will I make a
full recovery?

NURSE
He said with plenty of rest, you'll be
healed in no time.

ELLIE
What did he say about...fertility? I-
We've been trying for months.

NURSE
The attack resulted in extensive
damage to-

ELLIE
And? Did you contact Dr. Montgomery?

NURSE
I've been swamped all morning, Mrs.
Fatale-

ELLIE
Please contact her office- or get me
her number.

NURSE
(beat)
You can try to schedule a follow-up,
but I don't think IVF will be a viable
option-

ELLIE
I only want to talk to Dr. Montgomery.

NURSE
I can try to get her on the phone, but
that's not my-

ELLIE
Please. Try.

The nurse taps her clipboard against her leg and walks out of the room.

FADE TO:

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ellie slowly gets up from her bed with a walker. She walks over to her closet. She has dry cleaning hung up.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
I'll transfer you to Dr. Montgomery.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Thank you.
(dialing)
Hello? Dr. Montgomery?

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)
Yes, Mrs. Fatale?

ELLIE (V.O.)
Yes.

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)
How are you recovering?

ELLIE (V.O.)
As well as I can. I heard you have been contacted by my...surgeon.

Ellie unzips the clothing protector and pulls out an unflattering black dress.

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)
Yes, he updated me on your condition.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Right, so-

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)
I think it's time I'm...let out of your care.

Ellie pulls on her dress and smooths out its creases.

ELLIE (V.O.)

(beat)

I was looking to resume treatment
after my recovery-

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)

Your surgeon's office faxed me your
scans, and I'm afraid that will not be
possible-

ELLIE (V.O.)

We've been trying this for months!
It's what Robert would've-

Ellie puts a few items into her small black purse.

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)

I know you're in the process of
grieving. After you fully recover, we
can...re-evaluate.

ELLIE (V.O.)

I can't lose this! It's...all...Please
reconsider! If there's a chance-

MONTGOMERY (V.O.)

I'll see what I can do.

(beat)

Have a nice day.

ELLIE (V.O.)

(call ends)

But-

Ellie screams. Black.

FADE TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

Robert's funeral has ended, and guests start dispersing.
Ellie is embraced by a guest who walks off. With the help of
a cane, Ellie slowly approaches the grave, finding an
unfamiliar woman ahead of her.

Valerie is dressed in a fitted black dress adorned with
silver jewelry. She stands feet away from the headstone of
Mr. Fatale, applying red lipstick.

ELLIE

Hi, I didn't see you at the service.

What's your-

VALERIE
Who the fuck are you?

ELLIE
(beat)
E- Excuse me? I'm the wife.

VALERIE
Oh my god, you're Mrs. Fatale?!?

Ellie winces at the name.

ELLIE
Yeah, who the f- fuck are you?

VALERIE
I'm...leaving.

Valerie gathers herself and begins to step away.

ELLIE
No! How do you know my husband?

VALERIE
We worked together.

ELLIE
You're a lawyer?

VALERIE
Oh please! He told you he was a
lawyer?

ELLIE
He was a goddamn defense attorney. I
would pick him up outside his office
every day. You think I don't know my
own husband?

VALERIE
Why do you think he was murdered, a
bloodthirsty client? Happenstance?

ELLIE
He was...hit?

VALERIE
Your husband dealt with some big-
ticket shit.

ELLIE

(beat)

Robert? We've gotta be talking about two different people. He was a...good man. He's my husband!

VALERIE

Your *husband* fucked over more people than I could count. There's a reason he's six feet under, darling.

ELLIE

(beat)

Did he fuck you over? Is that why you're here? Because I don't-

VALERIE

No, I don't want anything from you.

ELLIE

Then why are you here?

VALERIE

He meant...a lot to me.

ELLIE

(beat)

How exactly were you involved with Robert?

VALERIE

That. You don't want to know.

Ellie takes a deep breath.

ELLIE

You have real reason to believe it wasn't a coincidence?

VALERIE

Great reason. Could bet my life on it.

ELLIE

(beat)

Did he know those men?

VALERIE

Those men? Surely-

ELLIE

There were three.

Valerie looks over both shoulders and links arms with Ellie.
Ellie is hesitant.

VALERIE
Walk with me.

Valerie leads Ellie further into the graveyard, away from
lingering guests.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Do you remember what they looked like?

Sequences of the three men at the assault flash in and out.

ELLIE
There was the man who shot my husband
faster than anything I'd ever seen.
Dark hair. Facial hair. He may have
been...Hispanic?

VALERIE
Okay.

ELLIE
And there was a tall- really tall one.
And he had eyes that were dark, like
pitch black.

VALERIE
And the third?

ELLIE
He came out of some...fuck-ass sports
car. He had snagged teeth and this
choppy beard.

VALERIE
Did he look like a bitch?

ELLIE
(beat)
Um, yeah. You could say that.

VALERIE
You want to make 'im scream like a
bitch?

Ellie looks Valerie directly in the eyes.

ELLIE
You can help me.

VALERIE
I can't help you-

ELLIE
But, you know them?

VALERIE
Coworkers. Insufferable really. But that's a given.

ELLIE
How can you help me? I've tried everything. Researching criminal records, talking to the police-

VALERIE
Trust me, the cops won't do shit for you. They know who's involved. Nobody can touch 'em.

ELLIE
Touch who?

VALERIE
Look. I've said too much already. What I can do is put you in touch with a man who deals with this type of thing. Bitches that is.

Ellie looks offended.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Not you.

Valerie pulls out a pad of paper and a pen from her designer purse. She starts writing down an address.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Go here after nine pm and ask for a man by the name of Enzo. He can help you. *But* he cannot, under any circumstances, know that I sent you. Understood?

Valerie hands Ellie the paper.

ELLIE
(beat)
I- don't even know your name.

VALERIE
We'll keep it that way.

ELLIE
Understood.

VALERIE
Now, I have to go.

Valerie breaks away from Ellie and clutches her purse.

ELLIE
But I...thank you.

VALERIE
Thanks will not be necessary, but you
have to promise me something.

ELLIE
What?

VALERIE
If you get what you want. I'll find
you. And you'll have to tell me *all*
about it.

ELLIE
(beat)
Will do.

VALERIE
(beat)
Good day Mrs. Fatale.

Valerie winks before walking back towards Mr. Fatale's grave.
Ellie looks down at the paper.

Turner is sitting in his parked car at the graveyard. He is
looking at Ellie and Valerie through binoculars. He puts them
down and drives off.

FLASH TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Ellie sits in a waiting room. She checks her watch. 9:29 pm.
She walks up to the front desk.

ELLIE
Hi. It's been hours at this point.
When can I-

Turner opens the office door.

TURNER
Mrs. Fatale.

He waves her in. She collects her things and follows him into the office.

TURNER (V.O.)
Feel like talking today?

Ellie and the investigator are seated opposite each other in an interrogation room.

ELLIE
Not entirely. Is *this* really necessary?

She gestures to the space between them.

TURNER
A little more formal today. In more ways than one.

He looks up and down at her dress.

ELLIE
I had a funeral to attend.

TURNER
I...apologize.

ELLIE
I didn't see you there. I thought detectives had to show up to the funeral of the man they're investigating. Figured it was built into your contract.

TURNER
I would've, but I...had too many things to catch up on.

ELLIE
Anything regarding my case?

TURNER
No, I have a lot that comes across my desk.
(beat)
So what is it you're here for?

ELLIE

I wanted to know if you had any developments-

TURNER

No, no, no. See...I told you I'll keep in touch.

ELLIE

And?

TURNER

I'm a man of my word. I wouldn't withhold case information from you with what a delight you've been.

(beat)

You...have something to say.

ELLIE

I thought of it more as a trade of information.

TURNER

Ah, I see. Well, I have nothing to bring to the offer.

ELLIE

Well, I have nothing to say.

Ellie gets up from her chair. Turner stands in response.

TURNER

Wait, wait. If you have valuable enough information, I could promise your immunity.

ELLIE

Immunity from what?

TURNER

Being the lead suspect in this case.

ELLIE

I...told you everything I knew.

TURNER

Clearly! But claiming to withhold information valuable to the case is not looking pretty.

ELLIE
Come off it! That's bullshit. You
don't scare me.

TURNER
I'm not someone to negotiate with,
Mrs. Fatale.

ELLIE
Fine. But the second you know
something, I'm the next to hear about
it.

(beat)
I have reason to believe my husband
was involved with those men.

TURNER
How so?

ELLIE
He worked with them. Shady business
dealings. I don't entirely know. He
never told me.

TURNER
Where did you learn this?

ELLIE
A woman approached me who...knew him.

TURNER
Another coworker?

ELLIE
Maybe more.

TURNER
I need specifics.

ELLIE
I don't know. I think she was
his...mistress.

TURNER
Ah, learning a lot about your husband-

ELLIE
Does that help you?

TURNER
Can you put me in contact with this

woman?

ELLIE

No.

TURNER

How can I-

ELLIE

I don't even know her.

TURNER

Her name?

ELLIE

We didn't get that far.

TURNER

You didn't get that far, yet she gave you information valuable to this case?

ELLIE

Look, I had one conversation with her, and I promised to keep it confidential.

(beat)

That's all I know.

TURNER

I'll try my best to see what I can do for you, but I have to run it by my boss-

CHIEF, late 50s, white man with a well-groomed beard. He walks through the office door, visible from the investigation room.

TURNER (CONT'D)

In fact, lemme run it by him now.

Turner gets up and walks out the door. Ellie gets up and slowly follows. She sees a folder of papers on the table. She flips through and grabs criminal sketches of the three men.

TURNER

Chief.

CHIEF

Turner.

TURNER

There's been a development on the Fatale murder. The victim may have been involved with the attackers.

CHIEF

Trying to rule out the wife?

TURNER

She couldn't've been involved. Nothing's lining up. The profiles-

CHIEF

You know we can't touch 'em.

ELLIE

Can't touch 'em?

The chief turns to look at Ellie.

CHIEF

(beat)

Get her out of here!

Two officers approach Ellie.

ELLIE

No! You won't do anything?

CHIEF

Turner! Get her out!

Turner shoves Ellie out of the office and back into the waiting room.

ELLIE

No! I can't let this-

TURNER

Stop!

ELLIE

What is this bullshit? They're on your *can't touch* list? That's exactly what she-

TURNER

I don't know what he's on about-

ELLIE

They're trying to pin this shit on me!

You talking about *fucking* immunity!
Fuck that-

TURNER
No one is trying to pin this on you!

ELLIE
Seems like it! So, does this mean
since you can't get the oh-so-powerful
assholes, that I'm next on the
chopping block?

(beat)
That's what I thought!

TURNER
Wait. Let me talk to him.

ELLIE
I trusted you.

TURNER
And I've done nothing but try to help
you.

(beat)
Excuse me.

Turner steps back into the office, leaving Ellie in the lobby. Ellie checks her watch. 9:34 pm. She looks at the door and her watch again.

She pulls out the paper Valerie gave her, looks at the office door, and leaves the building.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Ellie pulls into a parking lot. She pulls out the paper directions and looks up at a neon, glowing sign. Enzo's.

She walks into the club, music blaring around her. She looks around for a bouncer. She finds a tall man in a suit.

ELLIE
Sir.
(yelling over music)
Sir. Do you know where I can find
Enzo?

The bouncer gestures to a metal staircase with men blocking the entrance.

ELLIE

Thank you.

She approaches one of the men.

ELLIE

Excuse me. I need to speak to Enzo. I was told he-

BOUNCER

He's not seeing anybody.

ELLIE

But, this woman. She told me he could help with-

BOUNCER

He's busy.

ENZO, 60s, white man with a clean-shaven face. He's wearing a dress suit and fedora. He has a New York accent. He walks down the stairs surrounded by a group of people laughing.

The group walks past the guards and to the bar. Guards surround them. Ellie follows.

ELLIE

Enzo. I need your help-

A bouncer pushes her back.

BOUNCER

Beat it.

ELLIE

I waited half an hour to get in here. I just need to-

BOUNCER

What'd I say? Beat it, lady!

Ellie stuffs the paper in her pocket and rushes to the exit.

She sits down in the driver's seat, shuts the door, and slams her hand into the steering wheel.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Ellie walks into the kitchen in her cozy pjs. She makes a cup

of coffee and an egg on toast.

She sits down at the kitchen table. She tries eating.

ELLIE
I can't do this.

She pushes against the table and stands up.

FLASH TO:

INT. GYM - MORNING

Ellie walks into the weightlifting room. She's wearing sweatpants and a hot pink tank top. She tries a few exercises painstakingly. She gets up frustrated and grabs her things to leave.

She walks down a hallway to the exit, and Valerie bumps into her. She's wearing dark leggings, a black, skin-tight workout shirt, and red lipstick.

ELLIE
Hey- Hey, you're-

Valerie turns back, looks around, and pushes Ellie into a storage room. Ellie pushes her off.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

VALERIE
Quiet. I didn't think I would run into you here-

ELLIE
Clearly.

VALERIE
So...any luck with my contact?

ELLIE
He wouldn't see me.

VALERIE
Bullshit. You just have to be persistent.

ELLIE
I got kicked out of his club.

VALERIE
Mrs. Fatale, do you want this?

ELLIE
What-

VALERIE
Exactly. What?

ELLIE
(beat)
I want vengeance.

VALERIE
Then show me.

Valerie pushes Ellie and pins her to the wall.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Come on.

Ellie pushes back. Valerie backs off.

VALERIE
Go upstairs to the second door on the
left. I'll be there in two shakes of a
lamb's tail.

Ellie stands staring at Valerie.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Do you want my help or not?

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING ROOM - MORNING

Ellie looks around at the boxing equipment. Valerie enters
the room and locks the door behind her.

ELLIE
What are we-

Valerie grabs a set of gloves and target pads. She hands the
gloves to Ellie.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I can't box.

VALERIE
(beat)
Put 'em on.

Ellie puts on the gloves and Valerie the pads. Valerie gets into a defensive stance.

VALERIE
Hit me!

Ellie lands a punch on target.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Again!

Ellie grazes the side of the pad.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Is that all you've got? Again.

Ellie continues to hit the target pads.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Harder!

Ellie lunges at Valerie and lands another punch.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Again! Harder!

ELLIE
I can't-

VALERIE
Don't give me that-

ELLIE
I'm weak!

VALERIE
And who's gonna fix that?

Ellie aggressively swings at the pads, pushing Valerie back.

VALERIE
More! Show me you want this.

She swings harder and faster.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Show me more-

Ellie punches Valerie in the face. Valerie is knocked to the ground. Her nose begins bleeding. She smears it away with her sleeve.

Ellie squats to help her. Valerie raises her hand at her and gets up on her own.

VALERIE
Fucking...finally!
(beat)
This is the Fatale I want to see, and
the *only one* Enzo 'll listen to.

ELLIE
So I can throw a punch. How does that
make any difference?

VALERIE
I know that you'll really fight for
yourself.

Ellie struggles to take her gloves off.

ELLIE
(beat)
I will. And-

Ellie looks up, but Valerie is nowhere to be found.

ELLIE
Fuck you, bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellie sits at her vanity in an elegant, dark blue dress.

DRIVER (MUFFLED)
(dialing)
Bill's Luxury Transportation.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Hi, I would like a driver for tonight.

Ellie uses a curling iron.

DRIVER (MUFFLED)
Tonight. What time?

ELLIE (V.O.)
Midnight. Do you guys run that late?

Ellie adjusts her hair and puts on lipgloss.

DRIVER (MUFFLED)
Absolutely. Any particular vehicle?
We've got a great selection.

She steps out of the apartment building.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Something elegant, nothing too flashy.

She walks towards a driver in front of a black car.

DRIVER (MUFFLED)
Will do.

DRIVER
Ellie Fa-

ELLIE
That's me.

He opens the door for her. Ellie sits down and adjusts herself. The driver takes off.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The driver pulls up to the front of the night club. There's a long line out the door to get in.

The driver gets out and opens the door for Ellie. He escorts her up the stairs and to the front door. The bouncer easily lets her through.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Music is blaring. Ellie looks around and sees a crowded dance floor.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Enzo Armani, the one who ignored me so rudely yesterday, is the man I'm looking for.

Ellie flips through the criminal sketches of the three men and stuffs them in her purse. She grabs an espresso martini from the bar.

ELLIE (V.O.)
He came into power by developing a
cocaine alternative without the
negative physical and psychiatric
effects.

A woman at the club is seen snorting a line.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Long-term effects are still unknown.

She walks through the dance floor and spots Enzo and his
friends in a lounge. They're surrounded by several
bodyguards.

Ellie approaches them gracefully but with a slight limp.

ELLIE
Enzo! Darling!

A bodyguard walks aggressively towards her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Don't be hostile.

Enzo waves him off.

ENZO
And who might you be?

ELLIE
Who might- I can't believe you don't
remember me. We have so much to catch
up on.

Enzo looks around at his friends and gets up from his seat.

ENZO
What'd I-

ELLIE
Is it okay if we talk in private?

Enzo turns to his friends.

ENZO
I'll be right back! Don't have too
much fun without me!

Enzo walks and guides Ellie with him. A guard follows.

ENZO (CONT'D)
We can talk in my office- You got a
drink?

She holds up her glass.

ENZO (CONT'D)
Now, where do I know you from? Malibu?
No, I would've remembered you.

He leads her up the stairs to his office. He lets her in.

ENZO (CONT'D)
I can't pin it! Don't help me now!

They walk over to his tall desk.

ELLIE
Yesterday. Downstairs.

ENZO
Yesterday...Oh, you're the chick they
kicked out.

ELLIE
Bingo.

ENZO
I'm sorry about that. New hires. Ya
didn't have to pull some *Pretty Woman*
stunt?

ELLIE
I have your attention, don't I?

ENZO
Yes, and yours is mine.
(beat)
What do ya want?

ELLIE
For you to help me locate three men
who-

ENZO
Do I look like a detective?

ELLIE
I was told you have a handle on
dealing with *bitches*.

ENZO

Look, I'm retired. There was a time when I would and could help any sorry sob story that comes walking through my doors. That time is gone.

ELLIE

I wanna get one thing clear. I'm not some sob story! I came here for a reason, and I won't leave until I get some answers.

She pulls out the criminal sketches of the three men and slabs them on the table.

Enzo looks at them, then at her. He picks up the sketches.

ENZO

(beat)

These men, huh? What if I knew 'em?

ELLIE

I know you know them.

ENZO

And how is that?

ELLIE

I'm not at liberty to say. Now, where can I find them?

He looks her up and down.

ENZO

You are far from hunting 'em down. Some limp you got.

ELLIE

I'm recovering.

ENZO

They fucked you up really bad.

ELLIE

You don't know the half of it.

ENZO

That tends to be my experience with them.

(beat)

Now, one of my guys said some woman

sent you.

ELLIE
I would say anything to talk to you-

ENZO
Who is she?

ELLIE
Some woman who knew my hus- my late
husband.

ENZO
A name?

ELLIE
We didn't get that well acquainted.

ENZO
Well, you made it to me.

ELLIE
(beat)
Can I trust you?

ENZO
Trust me? You don't know me.

ELLIE
Touché.

ENZO
(beat)
I will help you *but* time is what you
will give me. I can't have you out on
the scene yet with my valuable
information.

ELLIE
On my own?

ENZO
Your passion will be your biggest
strength. I want to hone said
passion...slowly.

ELLIE
What happened to "I'm retired"?

ENZO
I'll make an exception.

Enzo points to the sketches.

ENZO (CONT'D)

(beat)

How are you with a gun?

ELLIE

I can shoot, but I'm not trained-

ENZO

I can help with that, too.

ELLIE

(beat)

What do you want out of helping me?

ENZO

Think of it as philanthropy. I give back when I can.

ELLIE

(beat)

No. You want 'em off your ass?

ENZO

They're bad for business.

ELLIE

Fine.

ENZO

Excellent! Come back at 6 a.m.

ELLIE

Tomorrow?

ENZO

Today. Armani never sleeps. I'll walk you out.

The pair walk out of the office and down the staircase.

Enzo walks Ellie out the front door.

ENZO

You're welcome to stay.

ELLIE

No, I need my beauty sleep.

The driver steps out and opens the side door for her. Ellie

slowly walks down the stairs.

ENZO
See you, Fatale!

She stops and turns.

ELLIE
How-

ENZO
I have my ways.

ELLIE
But-

ENZO
(beat)
G'night!

Ellie walks down the stairs.

FADE TO:

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - DAWN

Ellie walks up the stairs to the entrance. She is wearing sweatpants and a tank top.

ENZO (V.O.)
This is where I do the bulk of my business.

INT. CLUB CELLAR - MORNING

Enzo leads Ellie below the club into a cellar.

ENZO (CONT'D)
A lot of people want what I have.

They walk through a hallway with barrels of alcohol.

ELLIE
A fuck-ton of booze?

ENZO
Not quite.

Enzo walks towards a safe at the end of the cellar. He turns the wheel to the correct combination and opens the door.

The pair walk into a large room. Lights power on showcasing walls lined with weapons: guns, swords, knives, etc.

ENZO
Some are practical, but most are
collectors' pieces.

Enzo picks up a katana and unsheathes the blade. Ellie walks around, looking at the collection. She reaches for a pistol on the wall. Enzo blocks her hand with the katana.

ENZO
You're not ready to touch my...
paraphernalia.

ELLIE
I told you I can shoot-

ENZO
What? Did ya go hunting when you were
a kid? This is not just shooting a
gun. You will handle one when you're
ready. While I barely give two shits
about you, I don't wanna see you dying
out there.

ELLIE
Fine.

ENZO
(beat)
This was just a tour. I'll start you
on basics.

Enzo leads Ellie out of the safe and locks it behind them.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

Inspirational music plays throughout.

A) INT. CLUB CELLAR - DAY - Ellie struggles to do a pull-up on a metal pipe.

B) INT. NIGHT CLUB - DAY - Ellie wards off the attack of one of Enzo's trained bodyguards. Enzo watches and shouts commands at her.

C) INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - She does a few push-ups before falling over.

D) EXT. NIGHT CLUB - DAWN - Ellie runs up and down the steps to the club while Enzo watches.

E) INT. NIGHT CLUB - DAY - She fights a bodyguard and is thrown to the ground. Enzo walks away.

F) INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - Ellie completes several pull-ups on a bar attached to her door.

G) INT. GYM - MORNING - Ellie does bicep curls with dumbbells.

H) INT. CLUB CELLAR - DAY - She does several pull-ups on a metal pipe.

I) INT. NIGHT CLUB - DAY - Ellie fights a bodyguard; she kicks a prop gun out of his hand and throws him to the ground. Enzo nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Ellie and Enzo sit at a private table on the roof of the club. Ellie is dressed in a black pantsuit with silver jewelry. Enzo in a dark, tight suit. A server brings a bottle of wine to the table and pours them each a glass.

ELLIE
(to server)
Thank you.

The server nods. He hands Enzo a white box with a black ribbon.

ELLIE
What's that?

ENZO
It's for you.

Enzo hands her the box. She unwraps and opens the box. Inside are two black pistols.

ENZO
The power to kill is not something I take lightly. These are weapons of destruction. Destruction only you can hone now.

ELLIE
It's an honor.
(beat)
Thank you. For everything.

ENZO
(beat)
Thank me when it's over.

Enzo holds up his glass. Ellie does the same. They drink.
Black.

ACT II

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

A phone rings. Ellie ignores it as she flips through mail. It goes to the answering machine.

TURNER (PHONE)

Hi, it's Detective Turn- Grey Turner.

Ellie stops, looks at the answering machine, and stares off into space.

TURNER (PHONE)

I wanted to apologize again about that whole incident at the station. Look...I've been doing my own digging, and I think I may have a lead.

(beat)

I can run it by you some time if that would give you some- I don't know, clarity? Just, gimme a call back.

The voicemail box dings. Ellie looks at the phone and puts down the mail. She grabs her purse and walks out the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - MORNING

Ellie speeds up to the club in a loud sports car.

She's wearing boots, low-rise jeans, a band t-shirt, and sunglasses. She struts up the stairs to the front door.

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Ellie bursts into the office and throws her keys on a nearby table.

ENZO

How do ya like the ride?

ELLIE

She's hot.

She takes off her sunglasses.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So...today's the day.

ENZO
Today is the day.

Enzo drops a large file on his desk.

ELLIE
You have all this on 'em?

ENZO
This is Alejandro's file.

ELLIE
The sharpshooter?

ENZO
Sharp alright. That'll outline known crimes, frequented areas, routines-

ELLIE
And this'll help me locate him?

ENZO
The file 'll help, but there's a bar he frequents. The address is in there.

ELLIE
Great.

Ellie reaches for the file. Enzo stops her.

ENZO
One more thing.

Enzo opens a drawer to his desk and pulls out half a dozen burner flip-phones.

ELLIE
(beat)
Phones?

ENZO
Burners. This, and only this, is how you contact me.

Enzo flips one open.

ENZO (CONT'D)
My number is built in. You call me once per phone. When you're done, double-click the center button and toss it.

ELLIE
Double-click and toss. Got it.

ENZO
Perfect. I'll send a cleaning crew
behind you. They stage the body and
clear any identifying evidence towards
you.

ELLIE
And the other files?

ENZO
To come.

ELLIE
I can read up on all of the-

ENZO
Look, you wanted my help and I've got
you this far *my* way.

Ellie grabs the file and phones. She stuffs them in her
purse.

ELLIE
I'll call you when it's done.

Ellie heads for the door and grabs her keys.

ENZO
Okay, Fatale.

ELLIE
How about Elle? Hmm?

She exits the room and slams the door shut.

Black.

FLASH TO:

EXT. RANCH HOME - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

CHYRON: Alejandro Sánchez

Alejandro's mug shot appears from several angles.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Alejandro Sánchez, the man who shot my
late husband, grew up on a farm in

Baja California, Mexico.

A 17-year-old Alejandro tends to tomatoes on the farm.

ELLIE (V.O.)
He was often tasked with keeping
unwanted vermin away from the crops.

A wild mouse walks over to one of the crops. Alejandro whips
out a pistol and shoots the mouse.

ELLIE (V.O.)
But agriculture was not the life for
him. He wanted to be a filmmaker in
Hollywood.

He walks out of a ranch house holding a bag.

ELLIE (V.O.)
At the ripe age of 17, he moved to Los
Angeles. And at the ripe age of 17 and
a half, he was on the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Alejandro sits alone on a curb.

ELLIE (V.O.)
He gained a reputation in street
fights as a man you don't fuck with.

Within a ring of people, Alejandro swings at a large man and
lands several blows to his face.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Especially if you take things too far.

The man kicks him in the crotch. Alejandro falls to the
ground. The crowd gasps. The man scoffs at him.

Alejandro gets back on his feet. In slow motion, he whips out
his pistol and shoots the man in the crotch. The crowd
screams. The man falls.

ELLIE (V.O.)
By 19, Alejandro fell into the hands
of Jay.

Alejandro is seated next to Jay in a dark limo.

ELLIE (V.O.)
His *right-hand*, that is.

Jay has a muffled discussion with a man opposite to him in the limo.

ELLIE (V.O.)
In addition to Alejandro's sharp shooting abilities, Jay admired his intuition.

Alejandro whips out his pistol and shoots the man in the chest. He pulls a tracking device out from under the man's chair.

ELLIE (V.O.)
A sixth sense.

He throws the man's body out of the limo. He places the tracker on the ground and stomps on it with his western boot. The limo speeds away.

ELLIE (V.O.)
He has spent subsequent years attending to Jay's morbid affairs, including killing my husband in cold blood.

Reimagined in slow motion, Alejandro shoots Robert in the chest.

ELLIE (V.O.)
And yet.
(beat)
He tried to protect me from Jay.

FLASH TO:

INT./EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Ellie walks into the bar with a leather jacket over her band tee. She surveys the room for Alejandro.

She walks over to the bartending station and sits down. She places her hands on the table and immediately lifts them. The table is sticky. She gestures towards the bartender.

ELLIE
Can I get a beer?

BARTENDER

What kind?

ELLIE

An IPA. *Nothing* on tap.

ELLIE (V.O.)

They don't clean *shit* here.

BARTENDER

Which one?

ELLIE

(beat)

I don't care.

The bartender places a hand over his eyes, opens a fridge below him, and rummages through bottles. He pulls one out at random, opens it, and slides over to Ellie.

Ellie picks it up, tilts the bottle towards him, and takes a swig. She keeps an eye on the door.

Alejandro walks out of a bathroom and down a hallway towards the bar. He's wearing a tank top and baggy jeans. He sits down next to Ellie.

ALEJANDRO

(to bartender)

Another.

Ellie freezes and turns to look at Alejandro directly. The bartender pours and slides him the shot.

ALEJANDRO

Take a fucking picture. It'll last longer.

He takes the shot. Ellie continues staring. Alejandro looks at her.

ALEJANDRO

Do you have some sort of-

(beat)

Oh shit! You're Rob's-

Ellie swings her beer bottle at Alejandro's face. It shatters and cuts his cheek. Alejandro holds his face and gets up from his chair.

Ellie gets up and lunges at him. Alejandro swings at Ellie.

Customers gasp and step away from them.

BARTENDER

Out! Get the *fuck* out!

A group of men force Ellie and Alejandro out the side door into an alley. The tussle to the ground. They scare off a woman smoking in the alley.

Ellie falls on top of Alejandro and pins his arms. He breaks free and pins her down. She knees him in the crotch. He twists in pain. He reaches for his pistol. It's missing.

ELLIE

Not yet. I wanna chat first.

Ellie pulls him up by the straps of his tank top.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Listen. Even though you killed my husband, you never laid a finger on me. You've garnered my sympathies, so I'll give you an ultimatum.

Alejandro stares at her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Either you tell me the whereabouts of your partners and any names I'm not already privy to, or I shoot you. Point-blank.

ALEJANDRO

(beat)

I don't think you know who you're dealing with.

ELLIE

I know plenty, Alejandro Sánchez.

Alejandro glares at her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I know you're a sharpshooter. I know you work for the man who ruined my life. And I know you have about as much leverage right now as my *pinkie*.

Ellie wiggles her pinkie finger.

ALEJANDRO

You're right. I'm dead whether I give you what you want or not.

ELLIE

That's not gonna cut it.

ALEJANDRO

You don't know what the *fuck* is going on! I warned you once. That's all you get.

ELLIE

(beat)

Where's your boss?

ALEJANDRO

I'm not telling you. Shoot me *point-blank* for all I care.

Ellie tightens her grip on his shirt. He head-butts her. They both stumble up.

Alejandro's revolver falls out of Ellie's pocket. Alejandro reaches for it as Ellie kicks it several feet away. She aims a gun at him.

ELLIE

Don't! I don't care how fucking fast you can pull that on me. I will kill you first if I have to.

Menacing music plays. They're at a standstill. Alejandro reaches and grabs the gun. Ellie fires one shot. Alejandro fires one shot inches away from Ellie.

Alejandro topples to the ground. He has a bullet hole in his chest. Ellie puts her gun in her holster and turns away from him.

ELLIE

Fuck!

Ellie looks down at Alejandro's body. Around his neck is a chain with tags like her husband's. She reaches around his neck and unclasps it.

She walks out of the alley with tears going down her face. She turns onto the busy sidewalk. She pulls out a burner phone and dials it.

ELLIE
(dialing)
It's done. He's...he's in the alley
behind the bar.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
Woah! How did he turn out?

ELLIE
He has...one gunshot wound.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
What happened? Are you hurt?

ELLIE
I'm fine. I'm just...fine.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
When did this happen?

ELLIE
Just now. It's done.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
Where are you? I'm sending someone to-

ELLIE
No. I'll be by tomorrow for the next
file.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
Elle!

Ellie double-clicks the phone and throws it in a trash can.
She continues down the sidewalk as the phone explodes and
catches the can on fire.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Bullshit!

CUT TO:

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Ellie stands across from Enzo at his desk. She's wearing a
fitted blouse, low-rise jeans, a jacket, and sunglasses.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I can handle it!

ENZO
I heard you on the phone.

ELLIE
It was a natural reaction. It will not happen again. I killed him, end of story.

ENZO
I'm not going to let you kill yourself.

ELLIE
I was fine. Barely a scratch-

ENZO
From the inside!
(beat)
Killing a person is not an easy feat.

ELLIE
And you know, how?

ENZO
(beat)
I know. And I'm not going to let you ruin yourself to get your revenge.

ELLIE
I've been through enough shit already.
I can take it.

Enzo stares at her for a moment. He pulls open his desk drawer, pulls out a file, and tosses it on the desk.

ENZO
Kasen Santana, 6'6, 220 pounds. Can you take that?

ELLIE
(beat)
I'll manage.

Ellie grabs the file and walks towards the door.

ENZO
Wait.

A bodyguard blocks her way. She takes off her sunglasses and stares him down. She turns around and looks at Enzo.

ENZO
Don't be too messy. Cleaners get paid
by the hour.

ELLIE
Will do, buckaroo.

The bodyguard steps aside, and Ellie walks out of the office.

FLASH TO:

INT. PSYCH INSTITUTION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CHYRON: Kasen Santana

Kasen's mug shot appears from several angles.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Kasen Santana is a man of mystery. His
file dates back no more than a decade,
following his arrest for murder and
subsequent detainment in a psychiatric
institution.

A young Kasen in a straitjacket is thrown into a dark cell.

ELLIE (V.O.)
He's a diagnosed sociopath with
violent, unstable tendencies. In turn,
he was a promising adherent to a
forming gang hierarchy-

Knocking.

TURNER (V.O.)
Mrs. Fatale!

FLASH TO:

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ellie shuts the file. The knocking continues.

TURNER (O.S.)
Detective Turner. You haven't returned
my call.

ELLIE
Umm...just a minute!

Ellie grabs the file and paces the kitchen for a hiding spot.

She opens a drawer and throws it in.

She walks to and opens the door. Turner stands in the door frame. His clothing is disheveled.

ELLIE
You can come in.

TURNER
I wouldn't normally do this, but
there's been a development.

ELLIE
(beat)
Oh.

TURNER
One of the suspects in your case has
been...killed.

ELLIE
Whi- which one?

TURNER
I can't give names, but the man who
shot your husband. Who you profiled-
Speaking of, I can't find-

Turner is rummaging for papers in his briefcase.

ELLIE
How'd he die?

TURNER
Gunshot wound. He was found at a bar.
Some witnesses said he was in a fight
with some woman.

ELLIE
What woman?

TURNER
We haven't gotten any leads yet.
Nevertheless, there's a lot more
attention on your case. I can assure
you that.

ELLIE
I- thank you.
(beat)
You can sit down. You seem a little-

TURNER
Oh, no. I just wanted to relay the information, and- I'm sorry again about...

ELLIE
It's- I get it. You're just doing your job.

TURNER
(beat)
Is everything okay? With us?

ELLIE
Yeah. Sorry, I didn't return your call. I've been...I've just had a lot on my mind.

The two continue standing in the doorway. Ellie grabs his hand.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
And I do trust you. I'm grateful to have someone on my side.

TURNER
I appreciate that. Again, I'll let you know when I know anything.

Turner adjusts his briefcase.

TURNER (CONT'D)
I have to run, but have a good night, E- Mrs. Fatale.

ELLIE
You can call me Ellie.

Ellie squeezes his hand and lets go.

TURNER
Have a good night, *Ellie*.

Turner opens, walks through, and shuts the door behind him. Ellie waits a moment and grabs the file out of her drawer.

FLASH TO:

INT. PSYCH INSTITUTION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Kasen is in a cell with a straitjacket on. In an office, a

man slips a large envelope to the foreman.

ELLIE (V.O.)

With a few strings pulled, Kasen was back on the street as muscle more than anything else.

Kasen is driven away from the facility.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Kasen blocks a man from punching Jay. Kasen lands a deadly punch back.

ELLIE (V.O.)

His strength and unbridled lack of empathy led him into the employment of Jay as his personal bodyguard.

Reimagined in slow motion, Kasen lifts a bloodied Robert off the ground. Jay approaches.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Kasen had a hand in the death of my late husband, but unlike Alejandro, he crossed me *personally*.

Kasen slams Ellie's head onto the ground.

FLASH TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Ellie is in Enzo's sports car. She rubs the back of her head. She speeds down the road and slows at an apartment complex.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Although Kasen is a hard, violent shell of a man, he has a soft spot...for escorts.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. KASEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ellie parks the car. She exits in a leather jumpsuit and puts on a long coat, buttoning it up. She puts on a shimmering, black carnival mask that obscures her face.

She walks up to an apartment door, pulls a paper out of her coat pocket to check something, and knocks on the door.

She pauses, but in seconds, Kasen opens the door. Ellie flinches. Kasen is well over a foot taller than her.

ELLIE

Oh- Your *head honcho* sent me as a surprise.

(beat)

He said you needed some...*companionship*.

KASEN

I see, I see. Make yourself comfortable.

Kasen gestures for Ellie to come inside.

She walks into the apartment, and Kasen shuts the door. She looks around the room.

KASEN

Surprise indeed. Jay never does shit like this.

Kasen sits down on a couch and gestures her over.

ELLIE

Jay made an exception with how *hard* you're working.

KASEN

Yeah.

(beat)

Has *he* fucked you yet?

Ellie's eyes narrow.

ELLIE

(beat)

No. I'm all yours.

Ellie walks towards the couch. She slowly unbuttons her coat and drops it to the floor. Kasen runs his finger down her chest.

KASEN

More leather than I'm used to.

Kasen moves both of his hands down Ellie's waist. She moves

them to her chest. She has a gun in the back of her waistband.

KASEN (CONT'D)

I like it.

Ellie sits on Kasen as he sinks into the couch.

ELLIE

What are you used to?

KASEN

You know. Drunk girls at parties.
Other girls in your line of work. None
of 'em half as hot as you.

Kasen squeezes her chest.

KASEN (CONT'D)

I'm thinking we get this off of you.

Kasen reaches towards her jumpsuit zipper.

ELLIE

Here's what *I'm* thinking.

Ellie whips out her gun and holds it to his chest.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'm thinking you tell me how to find
Jay.

KASEN

(beat)
What the fu-

ELLIE

You heard me! Who is he? And where can
I find him?

KASEN

(beat)
I thought...he's the one who sent you.

ELLIE

Are you dense? Because I am one slow
answer away from spilling your guts on
this goddamn couch-

KASEN

Okay! *Fuck!* Whatever ya want with Jay,

you're not gonna fucking get it.

ELLIE
Watch me. Where can I find him?

KASEN
Bitch, I'm as good as dead if I tell
ya.

ELLIE
Doesn't seem like you have a lot to-

Kasen slams his head into Ellie's, launching her backward. She fires the gun and pierces the side of his torso. Kasen grabs his side. Ellie grabs her head.

KASEN
Shit!

He lunges towards her. She fumbles the gun and fires several shots into his legs. He falls onto the ground.

ELLIE
This is for Mr. Fatale.

Ellie reaches into his shirt and rips a chain with dozens of tags from his neck.

ELLIE
And this is for me.

She lifts up her mask and steps on Kasen's eye with her high heel. He screams. She fires one shot into his chest.

Ellie picks her coat up off the ground and puts it on. She slowly walks towards, out of, and shuts the apartment door.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

She walks towards Enzo's car and lights a cigarette. She pulls out a burner and dials.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
Hello?

ELLIE
It's done.

ENZO (MUFFLED)
What happened-

Ellie presses the self-destruct button and throws the phone into a bush.

CUT TO:

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Enzo is sitting in his office. There's a glass of liquor in his hand and books scattered along his desk.

ENZO
Elle? Hello? Fuckin' hell!

Enzo puts the rotary phone down, dials a number, and picks it up again.

ENZO
Hello!

CLEANER (MUFFLED)
Hello.

ENZO
Hey. I need you at that address pronto.

CLEANER (MUFFLED)
At this hour? I thought-

ENZO
I don't give a shit. I need you there now!

CLEANER (MUFFLED)
I charge double after midnight.

ENZO
Just get it done. Cleaned. Staged. Everything!

FLASH TO:

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Turner steps out of a car with several police cars surrounding him. He passes an officer putting out a bush on fire.

FLASH TO:

INT. KASEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Turner walks into Kasen's apartment. He walks up to a pair of officers. One of them flips open the body bag.

OFFICER

It appears to be suicide-

TURNER

His eye is punctured. I don't know what it appears to be, but it's not *fucking* suicide!

Turner turns away from the pair.

TURNER (CONT'D)

We need more eyes on this.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - MORNING

Ellie walks into the deserted club wearing a cropped shirt and low-rise jeans. She holds an ice pack to her forehead, walking towards Enzo's office. A bodyguard stops her.

BOUNCER

He's in the cellar.

Ellie walks down the cellar steps towards the cracked vault door. Inside, Enzo is admiring one of his racks of weapons.

ENZO

I'm not happy with you, *Fatale*.

ELLIE

I don't need you to check up on me. I said I would let you know when it was done.

ENZO

If you want my help, you need to tell me what the *fuck* is going on. Communicate.

ELLIE

You want the play-by-play? I got into his house, got head-butted in the *fucking* face.

Ellie holds up her ice pack.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Shot him in the side, legs, and stabbed his eye with my heel before loading the rest into his chest- In a slutty jumpsuit, might I add. I'm creative. I've got a handle on it.

ENZO

You need me.

ELLIE

At this point, trust me when I say I would do this on my own if I could.

ENZO

(beat)

Listen up, you little shit! You wouldn't've made it halfway down the block if it wasn't for me.

ELLIE

This...

Ellie points at herself and Enzo.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

...is mutual, Enzo. You want some bitch you can cast aside if your plan doesn't work out. Here I am!

ENZO

I entrusted you with my resources because of your passion for revenge. Not so you could become some cold-hearted killer.

ELLIE

I got it done. What more do you want with me- Oh, I know what you want with me!

ENZO

Trust me!

(beat)

If I wanted to fuck you, I would've made it happen already.

Ellie scoffs.

ELLIE

Right.

ENZO

You're a good person, Elle. I don't want you to ruin that for yourself.

ELLIE

The good in me died in that alley. It died with my husband. And with my...

Ellie claws at her stomach.

ENZO

(beat)

Stop turning yourself into something you're not. It doesn't work.

ELLIE

I don't know who you think I am, but I'm not letting Jay get away scot-free another! *Fucking!* Time!

ENZO

Jay?

(beat)

How-

ELLIE

I would if I could.

(beat)

I need his file, Enzo.

Enzo grabs a file from under his arm and throws it on the ground between them.

ENZO

(beat)

Take it. And don't *fucking* come back.

Ellie picks up the file and walks towards the door. She shoves it open on her way out.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING

Ellie stares ahead at the road. She glances over at the file on her passenger side seat.

A car cuts her off, and she slams on the break. The car parks

in front of her apartment. Turner gets out of the driver's side.

ELLIE

What?

Ellie slows down the car and ducks to watch him. He walks into the apartment building.

ELLIE

(beat)

Shit!

Ellie speeds off down the road and passes her apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Turner knocks on the apartment door. He knocks again.

TURNER

Mrs. Fatale? Mrs. Fatale?

(beat)

Ellie?

Turner grunts and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING

Ellie parks the car. Silence. She looks over at the file on the passenger seat next to her purse.

She looks out the windshield. Her flip phone starts ringing. She rummages through her purse to find her phone. She answers.

ELLIE

Hello?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Is this Ellie Fatale?

ELLIE

This is she.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Dr. Montgomery's Office. I was calling to inform you that you have an

outstanding balance following your
final appointment-

ELLIE
Final appointment?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Yes, ma'am.

ELLIE
No, there's gotta be some mistake. I
was planning to reevaluate my care
with Dr. Montgomery.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
According to my records, your care was
terminated several weeks ago.

ELLIE
But she said...

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
(beat)
For the balance, we take check or
credit. We also have payment plans-

ELLIE
I don't want to hear about my *fucking*
outstanding balance. And tell Dr.
Montgomery that she can go to hell!

Ellie ends the call and throws her phone on the floor of the
car. She grabs onto the steering wheel and shakes her body as
she screams.

Silence. She looks over at the file. She grabs it.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Ellie looks around and walks quickly towards her apartment
building.

Turner darts towards her.

TURNER
Ellie! Wait!

She turns around.

ELLIE
(beat)
Turner?

TURNER
I've been trying to get in touch with
you all day.

ELLIE
(beat)
What is this? Some kind of stakeout?

TURNER
No, I...need to question you.

Ellie looks past Turner. His car door is open.

ELLIE
(beat)
Have you been watching me? What's your
problem?

TURNER
Your situation isn't looking good
right now, and I need some answers.

ELLIE
Now? Now is not the best time. I need
to go to-

TURNER
Now! It can't wait anymore.

ELLIE
(beat)
I've been more than accommodating, all
things considered.

TURNER
You're starting to lose my sympathy.

ELLIE
Well, I *don't* have to talk to you.

TURNER
(beat)
All things considered, the consecutive
deaths of two suspects combined with
the fact that I can't seem to get in
touch with you is not. Looking.
Pretty.

ELLIE

(beat)

If you're trying to accuse me of
murder, I have a lot more reason not
to say another word to you.

TURNER

Let's make this civil.

Ellie turns away and walks towards the apartment building.

TURNER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Ellie! Ellie!

Ellie walks into the building. Turner grunts. He walks over
to his car and gets in.

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM

Ellie steps in front of her bed. Laid out on the comforter
are a shimmering black dress, two holsters, and two guns.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Finally. My long-awaited pursuit of
the last man on the chopping block.

(beat)

Jason Armani- Armani?

FLASH TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Ellie is flipping through the file. She holds the paper
closer.

ELLIE

Nephew to- He's Enzo's *fucking* nephew?
Goddamnit!

She reaches into her purse and grabs a burner phone. She
looks at it and throws it back into her purse.

ELLIE

Shit.

FLASH TO:

EXT. MANSION COURTYARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CHYRON: Jason "Jay" Armani

A painted portrait of a father, mother, and child in a golden frame appears. We zoom into the father. He is pictured in a designer suit with a stern expression.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Jason Michael Armani is a man of immense wealth. He singlehandedly built an intricate crime syndicate to launder money, protect his interests, and swiftly execute those in his way, all while covering his own tracks.

We shift to the child in the painting. He is pictured in an ivory button-up with gold accents.

ELLIE (V.O.)

(beat)

Jason Michael Armani Jr...is his dipshit son.

In the courtyard in front of a mansion, Jason Senior, his wife, and a young Jay sit in chairs in the position of the portrait. A painter is capturing them on a large canvas.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Jay was handed everything from birth. Every shiny toy. Every opportunity. And eventually...every excuse.

Jay smiles for the portrait.

FLASH TO:

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Enzo sits at his desk with his rotary phone up to his ear.

ELLIE (V.O.)

The man had a tendency of creating trouble with seemingly all facets of his father's empire.

(beat)

Including his uncle's *miracle* drug.

Enzo shakes his head.

ENZO

Jason, that son of yours redirected my *fucking* shipment to a goddamn party overseas. *Again!* I have *dealers* waiting on this shit! *Customers* who-

JASON (MUFFLED)
They'll survive.

ENZO
Don't give me that shit. They're
fucking addicts! Do ya know how long
it takes to-

JASON (MUFFLED)
I don't give a shit.

ENZO
(beat)
This partnership goes two fucking
ways! You can't keep-

JASON (MUFFLED)
I will compensate you for your
shipment and your time.

Jason hangs up.

ENZO
That's not gonna- Hello? Jason? *Fuck*
me!

Enzo throws the phone on the desk. He picks up and throws a
pile of papers.

FLASH TO:

INT. JAY'S CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A dart flies into a dartboard. The needle is directly in the
face of a picture of Jay. A man walks away from the dartboard
towards a conference table.

He sits at the head of a conference table surrounded by
people. They are chattering. The room is blacked out aside
from a few overhead lights.

Jay enters the room, and everyone stiffens for a moment.
Standing to his left and right are Kasen and Alejandro. Jay
slumps into the chair at the other head of the table.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Jay had a reputation for getting out
of any shitting situation he put
himself in.
(beat)
Daddy's money buys a lot of immunity.

The group has a muffled discussion.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Within his father's syndicate, Jay was in charge of overseeing contract killings. If you fucked over Jason Senior, you would meet your death at the hands of one of his assassins.

A dark-haired man at the other end of the table stands. He slams his hands on the table. All eyes are on him.

JAY

(beat)

Yes!?!

ASSASSIN

Waltzing back in here- Gimme a break!

Silence.

ASSASSIN

Are you a fucking *retard* or something? I'm tired of cleaning up after your *fucking* mess ever since *he* put you in charge! It's out of my pay grade!

Alejandro places his hand on his holster. Jay sits up in his chair.

JAY

(beat)

You know what's out of my pay grade? Listening to *fucks* like you who can't shut up and do what they're told! You *try* getting the commission you do here anywhere else.

ASSASSIN

(beat)

Watch me. Tell *Daddy* I quit!

The man rips off his chain and tags. He throws it on the table. They slide towards Jay. The man stares at Jay for a moment and turns to walk away.

Jay pulls out a shiny gun. Everyone at the table freezes. He begins firing the entire magazine at the man. The man is thrown back.

Jay stays frozen with the smoking gun. He lowers it.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Jay's department had a rather
high...turnover.

Jay sits back down. The group is looking at each other.
Robert Fatale remains tense.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Robert Fatale, my husband, was a top
assassin.
(beat)
That is until he quote-unquote
allegedly crossed Jay and his
operations.

Valerie places her hand on his shoulder and her other on his
chest. She looks directly into the camera.

FLASH TO:

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellie makes a disturbed look. She zips up the low zipper on
the back of her dress.

ELLIE (V.O.)
Jay murdered my husband in cold blood.
For what exactly, I don't know. With
the secrets he kept from me...Robert
seems to be fine throwing anyone under
the bus.

Ellie flattens out the wrinkles on her dress. She walks over,
sits at her vanity, and begins applying makeup to her face.

ELLIE (V.O.)
(beat)
My late husband is not the only reason
I'm after Jay.

She applies sharp eyeliner and lipgloss.

ELLIE (V.O.)
It's for the child I can never have.
And for god knows what he did to my
fucking body in that alley!

Ellie walks over to her bed. She sits and puts on a pair of
high heels.

ELLIE (V.O.)

(beat)

I was another victim to him. Another number. Well, he can count the *number* of fucking bullets in his head.

Intense music plays. She picks up the two holsters and fastens them onto her upper thighs. She grabs her two guns and slides them into her holsters.

She walks over to her entryway and grabs her purse. She places two silencers into it. She opens and slams her door shut.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Ellie races down a main road. She picks up a slip of paper with an address and looks at it. She throws it in on the passenger's seat.

Ellie looks around while she speeds down the road. She sees lights flashing out of the windows of a large house on a hill. She drives slower down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT

Ellie looks at the sports car parked on the side of the road. She finds an opening to parallel park and slowly edges into the spot. She bumps the rear of a car with her front. The music stops.

ELLIE

Shit.

She tries to readjust and backs into another car.

ELLIE

Shit. Shit. *Shit!*

After readjusting again, she maneuvers the sports car into the spot correctly. She stops the car and steps out of it. She slams the door shut.

ELLIE

(beat)

God...dammit!

Intense music returns. Ellie smooths out her dress. She walks down the street to the driveway of a Tuscan-style mansion. She starts walking up the driveway. Muffled dance music intensifies.

Ellie walks up to the front door of Jay's house. Party lights and music blare into the outside. A tall man guards the front door.

SECURITY

(to earpiece)

Both his men. I'm the only one fucking here-

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Hi-

SECURITY

(to earpiece)

Hold-

(to Ellie)

I need to see an invitation.

ELLIE

(beat)

Invitation? I swear I have it somewhere.

She digs through her purse with one hand. With her other hand, she grabs the gun from her holster. She grabs a silencer out of her purse. Behind her back, she fastens the silencer to the gun.

ELLIE

(beat)

Here we are.

Ellie holds the gun up to the security guard's chest.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Take out your earpiece.

The guard takes the device out of his ear.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Drop it onto the ground and step on it.

The guard hesitates. Ellie nudges the gun into him. He drops the earpiece onto the patio and steps on it.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

The gun aimed at your chest is armed,
but I have no intention of killing
more than one man tonight. Take out
your weapon and place it on the ground
to your right.

The guard hesitates. Ellie nudges him harder.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Now.

He slowly grabs his gun out of his holster and places it to
his right. She kicks it into a bush.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

If you want to keep your life, unlike
Alejandro and Kasen before you. Walk
away. I will let you leave this place
unscathed.

(beat)

Go.

The guard walks around Ellie and away from the front door.
She aims her gun at the guard as he walks, then runs down the
driveway. When he makes it halfway down the driveway, she
lowers her gun.

She takes the silencer off of her gun and puts it back in her
purse. She slides her gun into its holster. She slowly opens
the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT

The large entryway is filled with guests dancing and
drinking. Ellie moves through the crowd into a living room.
She looks around. A DJ is seen at the far end of the room,
surrounded by people. Several guests run into Ellie.

She walks down a crowded hallway and looks around. She opens
and closes a closet door. She opens a bathroom door, and a
man yells at her. She shuts it quickly.

Ellie walks down a different hallway lined with several
bedrooms. She peeks into a room from its cracked door.
Several people snort lines of cocaine. She backs away from
the door.

She continues down the hallway and bumps into Valerie, who is

making out with a man. Valerie catches eyes with Ellie for a moment. A loud cheer erupts from the living room. Ellie looks towards the living room for a moment and back in Valerie's direction. She is gone. Guests in the hallway collectively walk towards the DJ, pushing Ellie with them. She continues looking for Valerie, pushing people out of her way.

Ellie is pushed into the living room by the crowd. She makes her way to the other side of the house. She finds a room with large double doors. She hears muffled laughter. She puts her ear up to the left door. She hears a man's voice, followed by more laughter. The right door opens.

JAY (O.S.)

More shots!

PARTYING WOMAN

(repeating)

More shots.

The partying woman is in a red dress. She exits with a smile on her face. Ellie backs up from the left door. The woman catches eyes with Ellie, and her smile turns into a side-eye. The partying woman walks away from the door. Ellie slips into the room and shuts the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. JAY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The long room is blacked out and dimly lit by an ornate light fixture. Jay is seated at the far head of the table. Ellie stands at the other end in front of the doors. Jay is surrounded by attractive young women. Several men in suits crowd the seats of the table. The group continues chatting and laughing.

Ellie assesses the room. Jay looks over at her.

JAY

(slurred)

Hey you! Is that, um...

(burp)

Rachel? Come here.

Ellie walks up to the closest head of the table and pushes the empty chair aside. She is more visible in the light of the chandelier.

ELLIE
(beat)
Not Rachel.

JAY
(slurred)
No, wait.

Jay points at Ellie. She quickly grabs her guns from her holsters and aims them both at Jay at the other end of the table. All of the guests in the room gasp. They move away from Jay.

JAY
(slurred)
No! You're-

Jay puts both of his hands up. Ellie fires several shots from each gun into Jay's hands and arms. His body and chair are thrown towards the back wall. His blood shoots onto his surrounding guests. They all scream, speckled in blood.

Ellie steps onto a chair and then onto the dining table. She walks on the table towards Jay. The guests run out of the room screaming. Ellie ducks around the light fixture and approaches Jay. They are the only two left in the room.

ELLIE
Fatale ring a bell?

JAY
Please-

Ellie grabs his hair and slams his face into the top of the table. She gets blood on her.

JAY
Fuck! My fucking nose!

ELLIE
If you want to keep your miserable
life, tell me exactly why you murdered
Robert.

Ellie grips his hair tighter.

JAY
(beat)
You shot- You killed my-

ELLIE
Don't keep me waiting!

She slams his face into the table again. Jay screams.

JAY
God! He was trying to *fucking* sell me out!

ELLIE
Sell you out?

JAY
Sell our information, operations, everything. He was trying to line up some sale with a company overseas.

ELLIE
And you know this first hand?

JAY
Some...agent told me.

ELLIE
(beat)
What agent?

Jay shakes. Ellie fires a bullet a couple of inches from his face.

JAY
Her name- Her name is Valerie! Please!

ELLIE
Valerie? Who the fuck is Valerie?

JAY
Fatale's...girlfriend or something- I didn't even know he was married-

ELLIE
Or something?

JAY
They were flirty, touchy-feely.
(beat)
What do you want to hear?

ELLIE
The truth.

JAY
That's *all* I know.

ELLIE
And what you did to me?

JAY
We can't have...witnesses-

ELLIE
What did you do to my body?

JAY
(beat)
I...I-

ELLIE
Did I *fucking* stutter? Spit it out!

JAY
(beat)
It was nothing...*personal!*

ELLIE
Really?
(beat)
Because killing my husband and raping
me...was pretty. *Fucking. Personal!*

JAY
(beat)
Please-

Ellie pulls Jay by his jacket closer to her face.

ELLIE
This is for my husband.

Ellie grabs a chain with tags around Jay's neck and rips it off. She throws the necklace on the table.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(beat)
And this...is for me.

She holds her gun up to Jay's forehead. She fires a bullet into his head.

FLASH TO:

INT./EXT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT

Guests are pushing each other out of the way to get through the door. Dozens of people are running to their cars on the street while screaming. Dozens of cars are stuck trying to get out of the street. Turner's car enters the opposite way.

CUT TO:

INT. TURNER'S CAR - NIGHT

There is bumper-to-bumper traffic. People are screaming out of their sports cars. Turner is trying to fight the flow of traffic. He sticks his head out of the window and looks ahead and then behind. He gets back in his car and grabs his radio.

TURNER

Where's backup?

OFFICER (MUFFLED)

There's a million cars trying to get out of here.

TURNER

Go on foot if you need to.

(beat)

Fuck! I'm going in.

Turner turns off his car and hops out with his gun in hand.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT

Several drivers honk and yell at him. Turner walks around the cars, looking for Jay's house. He finds the entrance to the driveway.

He speed-walks up the driveway. There are a few guests straggling out of the house. A woman with tattered hair and clothing drags a trampled and unconscious woman by the arm towards the door. The conscious woman is wailing in shock.

Turner enters the house with his gun drawn. He searches the entryway. Turner makes his way into the living room. He sees several trampled bodies on the ground.

From the other end of the house, he hears doors open and footsteps approaching. He holds. Ellie wanders into the living room. Turner holds out his gun. Ellie reaches for her gun but puts her hands up instead. She starts

hyperventilating.

ELLIE

Turner! I'm so glad you're here. I was at the party, and some guy-

TURNER

Cut the shit, Ellie!

ELLIE

(beat)

What?

TURNER

You know exactly what. You think I don't know whose *house* this is.

ELLIE

Whose-

TURNER

A call about a shooting at the house of a suspect in *your* case.

ELLIE

That's not-

TURNER

What am I going to find when I search this place, huh? Another dead body?

ELLIE

A man came in here and *murdered* somebody.

TURNER

And you just happened to be here?

ELLIE

Yes! I was invited by-

TURNER

You need to stop *bullshitting* me! I know why you're here.

ELLIE

I-

TURNER

I'm taking you in-

ELLIE
Please! You want the truth?

TURNER
(beat)
Yes.

ELLIE
(beat)
You and I both know they deserved what was coming to 'em. They would've never seen justice. Your boss would've backed them for money, safety- I don't know. I couldn't have you thinking I was some...murderer. I didn't want to have to go through with this plan, but it was my last resort.

TURNER
I was trying to help you.
(beat)
But you had to kill them?

ELLIE
(beat)
It was practically self-defense-

TURNER
It was revenge. Cold-blooded.

ELLIE
Please. This isn't how I wanted it to go, but there's nothing I can do now.

Turner puts down his gun.

TURNER
Damn it! You couldn't let me handle this. I thought we...

ELLIE
We what?

TURNER
We were something. Forget it.

ELLIE
Grey, I...like you a lot. I'm in love with you. Trust me when I say I didn't want to involve you in this.
(beat)

I didn't-

TURNER

Get the fuck out of here, Ellie. I
can't save you again.

ELLIE

(beat)

Thank you.

Ellie kisses Turner on the cheek. She walks towards the front
door.

CUT TO:

EXT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT

Ellie walks down the driveway. Cars are still struggling to
get down the road in front of the house. She turns around and
looks at the mostly deserted house. She turns back and keeps
walking.

Black.

FADE TO:

EPILOGUE

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING

Ellie speeds down the road. She looks directly at the camera. She's wearing a jacket, t-shirt, and low-rise jeans.

ELLIE

As it turns out, my list of fish to fry got one name longer. That name is Valerie. What she failed to take into account was how much of a squealing bitch Jay happened to be. He led me right back to her. Will this hell ever end?

(beat)

As she had promised, Valerie tracked me down and gave me a private address to meet. She wanted to hear about *everything*.

(beat)

She'll certainly hear everything *and* a hell of a lot more.

VALERIE (O.S.)

He suffered?

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - MORNING

Ellie and Valerie sit across from each other at a work table. Valerie is wearing a black leather jacket, dark jeans, and red lipstick. They are in a dark and rundown warehouse with piles of junk surrounding them. They each have a glass of whiskey. Ellie's glass is full. Valerie tops her own off.

ELLIE

I made sure of that.

VALERIE

Pray tell.

ELLIE

After the *arms*, I slammed his face into the table a few times. I think I broke his nose. And then a bullet...

Ellie points to her forehead.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
...straight to the head.

VALERIE
Satisfied?

ELLIE
(beat)
No.

VALERIE
Well, this business will do that to
you.

ELLIE
It seems that way now don't it.

VALERIE
Look, you're pretty fucking good at
this. If you're ever interested in
contract killing, give me a call.

Valerie slides a paper with a phone number to Ellie.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I'm looking for new work myself. Maybe
bringing on some people. This isn't as
glamorous as Enzo's little operation,
but I see a hell of a lot of potential
in you.

Ellie picks up the paper.

ELLIE
(beat)
Will do, buckaroo.

VALERIE
I loved hearing about it. Every
second.
(beat)
But please stay in touch. I'd love to
know about any badassery you dish out.

ELLIE
(beat)
Val, who said I was done sharing?

VALERIE
(beat)
What the fuck did you just call me?

ELLIE
Valerie, you put those men onto
Robert. Onto me.

VALERIE
You don't know anything, *Elle*.

ELLIE
I think I have it all figured out. I
know you've been following me.

FLASH TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS (FLASHBACK)

Eerie music plays.

A) INT. JAY'S MANSION - NIGHT - Ellie runs into Valerie,
making out with a man.

B) EXT. APARTMENT PARKING - NIGHT - Valerie sits in a car
watching Ellie smoke a cigarette and talk on a flip phone.
Ellie presses a button on the phone and throws it into a
bush.

C) INT. BAR - NIGHT - Valerie watches the fight between Ellie
and Alejandro.

D) INT. GYM - MORNING - Valerie watches Ellie during her
workout.

E) INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING - Valerie sits in a chair
next to a bruised and unconscious Ellie in a hospital bed.

FLASH TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - MORNING

Ellie and Valerie lock eyes.

ELLIE
For a *while*.

VALERIE
(beat)
And?

ELLIE
I'm not a pawn. Especially for someone
who wants me dead.

VALERIE

Wanted you dead. Contrary to what you may believe, I didn't know I was the other woman. I was *his* woman. I would've gone to the ends of the earth for Robert.

(beat)

Then I found out about you, and it was completely different. I hated him- Isn't that funny? You can go from being madly in love with someone to wanting them *dead*.

(beat)

I wanted you both dead. So...I told Jay about Robert's plans to sell classified information for immunity.

ELLIE

And do what? Run away?

VALERIE

That's what he told me. We'd take the money and disappear.

(beat)

That night, I thought they'd kill you too. But just my luck, you survived and had plans to off the lot of them. Quite insufferable men, really- But you know that.

(beat)

You did most of the dirty work for me. I set you up, and I didn't even know I was doing it.

ELLIE

(beat)

How brilliant.

VALERIE

Could we move past this? I still mean every word of what I said earlier.

Silence. Ellie leans forward in her chair.

ELLIE

Move past this? I wouldn't be a widow if it wasn't for you. Or a killer. Or-

VALERIE

By that logic, you could say Robert put you in that position.

ELLIE

We'll see about that, won't we?

VALERIE

You want to be some *femme fatale*, but you're really...just a cunt.

ELLIE

Right back atcha, baby.

Valerie rests her hand on her glass. She sighs.

VALERIE

It's a shame you can't let this go. I was growing rather fond of you.

Valerie slides her glass across the table at Ellie. Ellie catches it. Valerie stands and slowly takes out her gun. She places it on the table. Ellie stands.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

No guns. If it has to come down to duking it out with you, I don't want to end the Great Ellie Fatale with a bullet.

ELLIE

Your rules. So be it.

Ellie takes both of her guns out of her holsters and places them on the table.

ELLIE

On your mark.

VALERIE

(beat)

Begin.

Ellie pushes the table into Valerie. Valerie folds forward onto the table. Valerie looks up and around for Ellie. Valerie grabs a chair and throws it at Ellie. She tries to block it with her arm. She is knocked onto her back. A leg of the chair breaks off.

ELLIE

Fuck.

Ellie sits up on her knees. Valerie slowly approaches Ellie with a nylon rope. She wraps it around her neck and pulls it tightly. Ellie reaches for her neck. She struggles to

breathe. Valerie pulls tighter. Ellie falls to her hands and pats the ground. She grabs the chair leg. Ellie swings it behind her and hits Valerie in the head. Valerie lets go of the rope and grabs the side of her head. Ellie stumbles away. Valerie stumbles to her feet.

VALERIE

Hiding, are we?

Valerie looks around and walks towards an aisle of shelves littered with junk. She grabs a steel bar and holds it in a defensive position. She turns a corner. Ellie whips Valerie in the face with a car antenna. Valerie blocks the next hit with the bar. She charges at Ellie with the steel bar. Ellie dodges it. She grabs a shelf and pushes it onto Valerie. Junk rains onto Valerie. She covers her head. Valerie pushes through the piles of junk.

VALERIE

You fucking *bitch*.

Valerie picks up the bar. The metal click of a gun echoes in the warehouse.

VALERIE

Breaking the rules, Elle?

ELLIE

Never, Val.

Valerie walks to the center of the warehouse, where the work table is. She looks at the table. Ellie's two guns are not on the table. Valerie throws the steel bar on the ground and grabs her gun.

VALERIE

I thought we said no guns, *Elle*!

Ellie approaches Valerie with a metal chain in hand. Valerie turns around and points her gun at Ellie.

ELLIE

Me too, *Val*!

Valerie pulls the trigger. No bullet releases. She pulls the trigger a few more times. Ellie slowly wraps one end of the chain around her neck. She puts both hands in her pockets and pulls out two handfuls of bullets. She drops them onto the ground.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Just enforcing rules.

Ellie grabs one end of the chain and whips Valerie in the face with the other. She stumbles back, covering her face. Valerie throws the empty gun at Ellie. Ellie swings the chain again, and Valerie tries to block it. Ellie whips Valerie in the chest, knocking her onto the face of the table. Valerie rolls off the table.

Valerie crawls away as Ellie makes a hoop out of the chain and wraps it around her neck. Ellie pulls tightly. Valerie grabs her own neck as she chokes. Her neck makes a cracking noise. Ellie leverages her foot off Valerie's back and pulls one end of the chain with each hand in separate directions. Valerie falls forward as Ellie continues pulling. Valerie stops struggling. Ellie loosens the chains.

Valerie lies motionless. Ellie drops the chain and walks over to the work table. She slides a chair out and grabs her two guns. She puts them into her holsters. She picks up her glass of whiskey.

ELLIE
It's a *damn* shame, Val.

Ellie drinks the whole glass of whiskey. She sets it on the table and up to Valerie's face-down body. She reaches for her back collar. She finds the clasp to a chain with tags and gently takes it off Valerie's neck. Ellie reaches into Valerie's pocket and pulls out a tube of red lipstick. She stuffs the items into her jacket pocket and walks away.

FADE TO:

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Ellie throws four chains strung with tags onto Enzo's desk. He looks at them and then at her. Silence.

ENZO
A party?
(beat)
You killed 'im at a *goddamn* party!

ELLIE
Well, I wasn't about to call you for help.

ENZO
It was in the fucking news! High-

society massacre. My goddamn relatives calling me left and right- *Did you hear about Little Jay- Poor Jason Jr-*

ELLIE

Yeah, thanks for telling me that he was your *fucking* nephew before I read it on a piece of paper.

ENZO

I told you one way or another. He was a real *prick*, though.

ELLIE

Tell me about it- He whined like a little *bitch*.

Silence. Enzo starts laughing. The pair laugh together. They stop laughing.

ELLIE

Did you know *Valerie* was behind this?

ENZO

(beat)

No. I knew she was probably the *mystery* woman who sent you to me, but not some...*calculated seductress*? Huh. Is she lucky number four?

ELLIE

Yep. Just got back.

ENZO

How do you feel?

ELLIE

Content.

ENZO

I mean...about the whole thing- the whole shebang.

ELLIE

Permanently scarred- no. I feel-

(beat)

Empty.

ENZO

Did you like it?

ELLIE
(beat)
I didn't want to. But-
(beat)
Yes.

ENZO
(beat)
I don't know what you want me to do
with these.

Enzo pushes the chains away from himself.

ELLIE
What are they for anyway?

ENZO
Each tag is roughly one kill. They
don't always keep the best track. So-

Enzo unclasps a chain and slides the tag off of it. He counts
off four tags and threads them onto the chain.

ENZO (CONT'D)
This one is for you.

Ellie leans in front of Enzo. He clasps the chain around her
neck.

ELLIE
Thank you.

Ellie kisses him on the cheek.

ELLIE
(beat)
I wanted to ask you about the car-

ENZO
Fuck the car! Keep it.

ELLIE
No, I couldn't-

ENZO
Keep the goddamn car. Think of it as a
celebration of your victory. Baby's
first killing spree.

ELLIE
Ha. Ha.

ENZO
(beat)
Is this something you wanna keep
doing?

ELLIE
No. I still want my family. Even
without...Robert.

ENZO
Whatever you decide. I've always got
your back, Fatale.
(beat)
Elle.

ELLIE
(beat)
The same goes for you.

Ellie walks towards the door. She grabs her keys out of her
purse.

ENZO
Bring 'er by if you wanna get those
scratches out. I know a guy.

ELLIE
(beat)
How-

ENZO
Get outta here, Elle!

Enzo winks at Ellie. She turns to leave his office. As she
walks out, she flips him the bird.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING

Ellie speeds down the road. A forensic documentary comes on
the radio. She changes it to a station with fast-paced music.

She lights a cigarette and smokes it.

CHYRON: Fatale

Major credits roll. Ellie drives down the road smoking and
applying red lipstick through the major credits. A car begins
tailing her. She adjusts her rear-view mirror, and a bullet
hits the rear windshield. Black.

Research

Women's perception of control, or rather the lack of it, may increase acts of revenge. By evaluating female avengers' perspectives, including psychological predispositions and traumatic events, the reasoning behind their revenge can be better understood. Whether the revenge taken is as trivial as getting back at another for small misdeeds or as serious as inflicting physical harm or even death, each has her own reasoning. The topic will be broken down into three aspects of woman's revenge—psychological predispositions, inflicted causes including their implications, and the reasoning behind the use of revenge. Each aspect aims to conceptualize women's loss of control through multiple facets and attempt to regain it through revenge-seeking.

Possible connections exist between women's predisposed psychological factors and seeking revenge as a remedy for lack of control. The "Dark Triad" includes three affiliated malevolent traits—narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Nedeljković et al., 2023, p. 1). The three traits have a potentially significant connection to anger rumination, a factor of aggression. This suggests that with increased anger rumination comes a higher likelihood of using physical harm as vengeance. Machiavellianism is associated with several themes relating to control, including—mistrust, self-interest, and manipulation (Mind Help, 2023). These factors relate heavily to the desire for control, leading women to seek revenge to regain equity. Depressive symptoms, specifically emotional symptoms in women, are positively linked to malevolent creativity (Perchtold et al., 2023, pp. 322-323). Like the triad, depression is positively linked to anger rumination, i.e., an increased likelihood of physical aggression. On the other hand, those who are more vengeful tend to be more anxious and/or

depressed (Barcaccia et al., 2022, p. 1201). Both anxiety and depression involve a predisposed lack of control, leading to an increased likelihood of lashing out due to their psychological state/condition. On a hormonal level, increased testosterone and DHT in women are found to contribute to female criminal activity and an increased state of anger (von der Pahlen et al., 2002, p. 278). Regarding hormonal implications, a study found that increased testosterone in women may contribute to female criminal behavior. Similarly, increased DHT in women was found to lead to an increased state of anger, a precursor to aggression (p. 279).

A second aspect involves the connection between the need to regain equity and how inflicted harm leads to revenge taking and its relation to the need to regain control. The avenger's upbringing plays a significant role in their vengefulness; extremely controlling or self-interested parents result in highly defensive children who may utilize revenge to satisfy an imbalance they face (Bohm & Kaplan, 2011, p. 22-23). Psychic trauma can induce feelings of fear, anxiousness, helplessness, and extreme anger within a victim (p. 24). One of the biggest factors in evaluating whether a person will resort to violence is the existence of dehumanizing childhood experiences (p. 100). Deception on the perpetrators' part is a prominent cause for women to seek revenge. A loss of trust, i.e., control, may result in women seeking seemingly excessive vengeance (Ali, 2023). Acts of revenge in women are often seen as a defense against physical and emotional abuse from men. This is often called "battered woman syndrome" to express the psychology behind why women kill their abusers (Kippert, 2021). A sounder legal stance would be the woman's right of self-defense, to protest her control over her physical, psychological, and emotional state (Clough, 2016, p. 312). The most extreme loss of control is sexual

assault, a loss of bodily control. Without the acknowledgment of rape survivor's stories, victims are left without a voice, i.e., powerless with a complete loss of control (Crawley & Simic, 2019, p. 273). This extremely debilitating loss of control warrants intense psychological factors, often executed by vengeance.

A third aspect involves the ultimate reasoning behind why women seek revenge as a remedy for their lack of control. Vengeance is often thought of as deterring perpetrators from re-offending, but it may instead be appealing due to how it makes avengers feel (Molnar et al., 2023, p. 2). Making offenders understand the reason behind their punishment may lead them to feel guilt or shame as opposed to regret (p. 2). This reasoning is found to differ across age and gender patterns. Revenge may best be conceptualized by equity theory, motivating a need for balance and justice to make up for physical or emotional harm (Stillwell et al., 2008, p. 254). The option of pardon and forgiveness is an immensely more difficult means of restoring equity than seeking revenge. The position of full pardon can shift to forgiveness by the perpetrator's expression of remorse (Amir, 2022, p. 1125). Forgiveness is not necessary for an act that can be forgiven. It is always radical; it becomes meaningful when forgiveness is seen as impossible (p. 1125-1126). While revenge may be more satisfying in the moment, unconditional forgiveness is the only option that can be used to break the cycle of harm.

Some possible links exist between women's predisposed psychological factors and seeking revenge as a remedy for lack of control. The first of which, the "Dark Triad," encompasses three interconnected malevolent traits—narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Nedeljković et al., 2023, p. 1). Each of these traits has severe connotations, but they are often hard to detect in an individual. Psychopathy and

Machiavellianism are both found to be positively linked to anger rumination and negatively to forgiveness (p. 3). With increased anger rumination in these traits comes a greater likelihood of utilizing aggression as a conduit for vengeance. On the other hand, narcissism shows a slight association to revenge thinking and no link to anger rumination and forgiveness (p. 3). This association may exist due to the narcissistic trait of extreme self-interest, i.e., only utilizing revenge thinking for self-preserving purposes. Those high in Machiavellianism may hold resentment towards those who have harmed them, which may increase anger rumination (p. 4). This harboring of negative feelings may be due to their often cynical and distrustful outlook. In further evaluating Machiavellianism, it is found to be associated with several themes of control, including—mistrust, self-interest, and manipulation (Mind Help, 2023). Mistrust and self-interest may be significant factors in seeking control, but manipulation is a more extreme step in regaining control and may be an element of revenge. Each malevolent trait of the “Dark Triad” contains its own implications regarding the need for power and self-preservation through anger rumination/aggression and manipulation.

Depression and anxiety in women are positively associated with increased malevolent creativity through anger rumination and aggression. Depressive symptoms, specifically emotional symptoms in women, are positively linked to malevolent creativity (Perchtold et al., 2023, pp. 322-323). This connection to malevolent creativity, i.e., deliberately utilizing creativity to cause harm, is explained by the increased anger rumination level caused by depression; this may lead to feelings of anger and aggressive behavior. Similarly to the “Dark Triad,” depressive symptoms are connected to increased physical and verbal aggression, which may potentially be used in revenge-taking. On the

flip side, fantasies and acts of revenge negatively affect depression symptoms through negative, hostile patterns (p. 326). The cycle of revenge has detrimental effects on depressed individuals, with depressive symptoms themselves increasing the likelihood of revenge taking and the ensuing consequences of said revenge taking. Women tend to implement social and relational aggression within their malevolent creativity, while men implement more physical aggression (pp. 326-327). While different forms of aggression can be found generally across genders, there is still the possibility of overlap, i.e., women resorting to physical aggression. Inversely, those who are more vengeful are more likely to be anxious and/or depressed (Barcaccia et al., 2022, p. 1201). This connection can be seen on both sides in evaluating those with depressive or anxious symptoms and in those who take revenge. Depressive and anxious thoughts are each positively associated with increased revenge ideology, both generally and with specific implications in women.

Regarding hormonal implications, there is a positive correlation between increased testosterone and DHT in women and increased aggression, particularly on a physical level. There is found to be a negative correlation between age and physical aggression (von der Pahlen et al., 2002, p. 278). Higher aggression is seen in younger women, which may pertain to women's changing hormonal levels as they age. Increased testosterone in women may contribute to female criminal behavior (p. 278). Similarly, increased DHT in women was found to lead to an increased state of anger, a precursor to aggression (p. 279). While physical aggression and revenge actions are uncharacteristic in women, the increased possibility of aggression may be applied to revenge-seeking through inflicting physical harm. Between men and women, male participants scored notably higher on physical aggression and revenge planning; no notable gender

differences were seen when measuring verbal aggression, anger rumination and disposition, as well as anxiety, depression, and overall life satisfaction (Contreras & Novaco, 2023, pp. 387-388). Although the presence of physical aggression and revenge planning is less likely in women, with applied hormonal factors, it may have an increased likelihood. Psychological factors, both specific to women and general, may greatly increase the likelihood of utilizing revenge as a means of regaining control physically, emotionally, and verbally.

A second aspect involves inflicted causes of revenge-seeking, all of which are evaluated in relation to the need to regain control. The revenge motif has been expressed as an outlet for the powerless to gain higher social status, losing their strength and regaining it through revenge taking (Bohm & Kaplan, 2011, p. 7). Revenge may be expressed as a righteous action for the unjust treatment of the avenger through obtaining balance or justice (pp. 8-10). Justification for revenge is solely determined by the avenger and what they feel is an adequate balance of equity. There is extreme rage behind fantasies and acts of revenge, which immensely clouds the avenger's thinking (p. 20). Acting on this rage may cause the avenger's judgment to be severely obscured, leading to excessive revenge-taking that is entirely unjustifiable.

The inflicted harm of an avenger's childhood may also be significant in increased revenge-taking and its extent. The parentage and upbringing of the avenger play a significant role in their vengefulness; extremely controlling or self-interested parents result in highly defensive children who may utilize revenge to satisfy an imbalance they face (p. 22-23). How avenger adapts the expression of their feelings in a traumatic environment greatly determines how they will carry that expression through adulthood.

One of the most significant factors in evaluating whether a person will resort to violence is the existence of dehumanizing childhood experiences (p. 100). These experiences force the avenger to act in a heightened, defensive manner, increasing the possibility of revenge-seeking. Psychic trauma can induce feelings of fear, anxiousness, helplessness, and extreme anger within a victim (p. 24). Fear, anxiousness, and helplessness stem from a lack of control, which may be obtained by utilizing anger and aggression to regain balance.

Triggered trauma processes and responses may also increase the chance of revenge-taking as a remedy for a loss of control. Revenge is seen as an intense emotional trigger that pushes people into vengeful actions; it is believed to greatly affect continuing conflict, leading to negative consequences (Mukherjee & Munshi, 2023, p. 768). The revenge cycle harbors continuing conflict through revenge-seeking, with the intention of harming the perpetrator and the consequential harm of the avenger. There is a positive correlation between injustice and the desire to seek revenge, as well as revenge-seeking and fantasies, with no significant difference in the number of traumatic experiences (Goldner et al., 2019, p. 6). Whether it is one or many instances of inflicted harm, the need for equitable balance fuels all aspects of revenge. According to Limor Goldner in a trauma to revenge study, “The study points to the significance of feelings of injustice as an internal mechanism for invoking a defense for revenge and associated fantasies, which may endow the victim with a sense of control after the trauma” (p. 7). This sense leaves avengers satisfied, a feeling as a result of regaining equity through taking revenge on their perpetrator. Gender differences correlate with a historically higher number of women who experienced sexual or physical abuse (p. 5). The higher number of female

victims may result in a higher likelihood of women considering revenge as a remedy for imbalances.

Trauma processes and responses may also be apparent in the perpetrator within the revenge cycle. As noted by Bohm & Kaplan (2011), the man's (perpetrator's) need to control the woman (avenger) is a demonstration of his need to contain traumatic feelings; if a woman is perceived as independent, these feelings are triggered, giving the perpetrator a sense to put her down (p. 102). Similarly to avengers, perpetrators may inflict harm in order to regain their perception of control. Men utilize violence as a highly ineffective conduit for letting out their traumatic, often unarticulated, feelings (p. 111). Through violence as a result of their potential trauma responses, perpetrators initiate the cycle of revenge. Men, as perpetrators, seek to "re-establish" balance through physical harm due to the fear of women's verbal superiority (p. 103). From a gendered perspective, men's use of physical aggression may be their best form of "defense" when triggered. The risk of repeated violence increases when a lack of accountability exists and inadequate consequences are inflicted on the man; a woman's actions have no significant correlation to continued physical violence in men (pp. 104-105). Serving perpetrators with justice, possibly in the form of revenge, may aid in decreasing further physical aggression and violence. While the psychological trauma reactions in avengers are influential, evaluating reactions in perpetrators is equally as crucial to the revenge cycle.

Deception on the perpetrators' part is a prominent cause for women to seek revenge. An example involves a woman who discovered her boyfriend was having an affair with another woman (Ali, 2023). Losing confidence in a person you trusted, especially to the extent of cheating, is an extremely emotional loss of control. Although

the couple seemingly separated on decent terms, it was discovered that the woman added small amounts of hair removal cream to her ex's shampoo, resulting in his hair "melting" in patches (Ali, 2023). Due to her loss of trust, the woman took seemingly excessive vengeance that she found to be equitable. Loss of control, even on an emotional level, may significantly influence acts of revenge.

Acts of revenge in women are often seen as a defense against physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from their perpetrators. This is often expressed as "battered woman syndrome," a legal defense coined in the 1970s to express the psychology behind why women kill their abusers; this diagnosis is more often referred to as PTSD (Kippert, 2021). This aims to protect a form of revenge from the avenger "getting back" at their perpetrator. "Battered woman syndrome" may not serve as a good defense, portraying the negative stereotype of women acting irrationally (Clough, 2016, p. 312). While there may be prevalent gendered implications, this outdated term contributes negatively to portraying women's vengeance. A better legal stance would be the woman's right of self-defense, to protest her control over her physical, psychological, and emotional state (p. 312). Self-defense, whether as a conduit for excessive vengeance or not, is a far superior justification for potential revenge. Although the extent of the "defense" may be in question, women's revenge has potential legal protections.

The most extreme loss of control is arguably sexual assault. The topic of sexual violence has become a significantly less taboo talking point in recent years (Crawley & Simic, 2019, p. 260). Sexual assault survivors are given an increasingly more positive space to express their experiences in order to regain control of their narrative. Without the acknowledgment of rape survivor's stories, victims are left without a voice, i.e.,

powerless with a complete loss of control (p. 273). Sexual assault is an extremely debilitating loss of control which warrants intense psychological factors, often executed by vengeance. Sexual assault survivor Thordis Elva recounts that she was, “consumed with misplaced hatred and anger,” that she took out on herself (Elva & Stranger, 2016). Like Elva, sexual assault survivors are left with increased anger, which may be directed towards acts of revenge. According to Bohm & Kaplan (2011), “The feeling of righteousness is born out of rage, which organizes our inner world and gives us life in a situation in which we have felt threatened and harmed” (p. 30). Sexual assault, which is known to warrant considerable equity, may increase the likelihood of revenge due to its severity. The extremity of control lost due to sexual assault may be found more defensible regarding revenge-taking.

A third aspect of why women take revenge involves the ultimate reasoning behind why women seek revenge as a remedy for their lack of control. Vengeance is often thought of as deterring perpetrators from re-offending, but it may instead be appealing due to how it makes avengers feel (Molnar et al., 2023, p. 2). This reasoning is not for the betterment of society but more for the avenger’s self-interest. Making offenders understand the reason behind their punishment may lead them to feel guilt or shame as opposed to regret (p. 2). If dealt with improperly, these feelings may continue the cycle of revenge instead of creating equity. In the same way people want do-gooders to know when they are being rewarded, to encourage good acts in the future punishments aim to deter future offenses in perpetrators (p. 13). Revenge as a form of punishment allows the avenger not only to satisfy their injustice but also to gain control over the perpetrator.

Revenge reasoning differs across age and gender patterns. Viewing revenge thinking across various age patterns, communicating retaliatory desires increases as children reach adulthood (Recchia et al., 2019, pp. 848-849). Increasing retaliatory desires may lead to more calculated and premeditated acts of revenge in adults. Girls aim to teach a lesson through retaliation, while boys use it to balance the emotional scales; boys tend to be more status-focused, whereas girls prioritize social connection and goals, thus utilizing strategic retaliation (pp. 849-850). Women use revenge to communicate their equity for their own self-interest and societal benefit. Recchia found that participants (all under 18 years old) turned away from revenge due to moral, relational, and pragmatic concerns (2019, p. 850). These concerns may become more prevalent with time, allowing for more sensible remedies. Said concerns may be clouded with the presence of heightened anger rumination and other psychological implications. Recchia discovered that young participants turned away from revenge to avoid punishment and causing harm, while the older group did so for self-preservation and to avoid a greater conflict (p. 850). Avoiding revenge due to self-interest and conflict avoidance may be more prevalent into adulthood. Whether present in seeking or avoiding revenge, age and gender have prevalent implications.

The most significant reason for revenge is equity, i.e., reclaiming control that has been lost. It is consistently found that equity restoration with the perpetrator is the primary reason avengers seek revenge (Stillwell et al., 2008, p. 259). Equity restoration through revenge only continues the cycle of revenge and harm. We may perceive the interaction between the perpetrator's extreme evil and the avenger's revenge as a "parasitic interaction" that harms both parties (Amir, 2022, pp. 1131-1132). Continuing

this relationship of harm, in turn, continues the revenge cycle. Extreme and recurring thoughts of revenge are harmful to victims and can even prevent the healing process (Perchtold et al., 2023, p. 1202). Revenge, as a remedy for injustice, stunts the recovery process for victims as opposed to aiding it. Avengers attempt to conceal their resistance towards mourning through costs of revenge (Bohm & Kaplan, 2011, p. 30). Instead of trying to remedy the harmful situation in a reasonable way, victims may linger on the incident. Those who are enveloped by the past and revenge thinking are found to hold resentment and depressive rumination (Barcaccia et al., 2022, p. 1201). Avoiding confronting a harmful experience, whether in a positive way or through vengeance, may still negatively affect the victim. While equity is significant reasoning in revenge, it may be obtainable without excessive revenge thinking and acts.

The option of pardon and/or forgiveness is an immensely more difficult, but beneficial, means of restoring equity than seeking revenge. A TED Talk by Thordis Elva and Tom Stranger, a sexual assault survivor and her perspective perpetrator, serves as a positive and sophisticated, often unobtainable, way of regaining control by taking revenge (Crawley & Simic, 2019, p. 270). Elva confronted Stranger about the incident after decades in order to regain her control without excessive revenge-taking; she found vengeance through her pardon and forgiveness towards Stranger. The position of full pardon can shift to forgiveness by the perpetrator's expression of remorse (Amir, 2022, p. 1125). Equity through pardon and forgiveness may be possible when the perpetrator and victim work in conjunction to remedy the situation. Forgiveness is not necessary for an act that can be forgiven. It is always radical; it becomes meaningful when forgiveness is seen as impossible (pp. 1125-1126). In many harmful physical, verbal, and emotional

injuries that warrant revenge, forgiveness is seen as impossible. While revenge may be more satisfying in the moment, unconditional forgiveness is the only option that can be used to break the cycle of harm while regaining control.

Women's perceived loss of control increases acts of revenge and revenge thinking. Within psychology, women's predisposed losses of control include—the "Dark Triad," depressive and anxious symptoms, as well as hormonal factors, all of which relate to increased revenge implications. Inflicted causes are found to relate to a need for control, such as—traumatic upbringing, deception, and abuse. The basis of reasoning for women's revenge is equity, which can be found in a more beneficial way than revenge actions. Each piece seeks to conceptualize women's loss of control and their attempt to regain it through revenge-seeking. From using hair removal cream to inflicting death on a perpetrator, vengeance has significant reasoning regardless of its extremity. While women may regain their perception of control through revenge, it is alternatively possible through unconditional forgiveness, which seeks to end the cycle of revenge for the betterment of both parties.

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