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The Beautiful Art of Stalking

A THESIS

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for the degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CREATIVE WRITING

By

Tess Brömme

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The Beautiful Art of Stalking

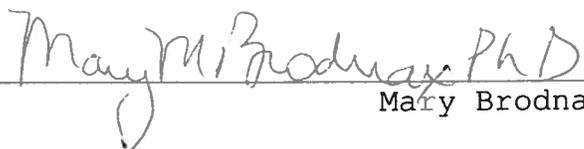
A THESIS

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ABTRACT OF THESIS

AUTHOR: Tess Brömme

TITLE: The Beautiful Art of Stalking

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: James Daro, MFA

PAGES: 95

The Beautiful Art of Stalking is a screenplay about a reclusive and untrusting novelist, Effie, who inadvertently gains the attention of corrupt and high-ranking businessmen while she attempts to acclimate to the "outside world" in preparation for a book tour. She is accompanied by an overprotective bodyguard and her very small group of friends—which includes her housekeeper and chauffeur. Not everything is as it seems when it is revealed that the ringleader of the corrupt has been obsessed with her since she published her first novel and will stop at nothing to get her to keep her mouth shut or to keep her close.

The Beautiful Art of Stalking

By

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INT. GENERIC BOOKSTORE

A crowd is assembled to help celebrate a release of a new book. An author is sitting at a table, her face invisible, ready to sign the pages. Cameras are flashing.

LEE (V.O.)

My mother always used to tell me to read a book when I needed adventure. "Writers are the voices of their generations," she would say. Load of shit. Everything nowadays is about sparkling vampires and unnecessary love triangles. I mean, she'd also say that books are a way to escape--escape from what? Life? Why? Why would I need to escape from life? Just go shoot something if you need a release. Jesus Christ.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-DAY - EFFIE'S BEDROOM

SUB: THE HERMIT

EFFIE is sitting at her computer, continuously hitting the "A" button line after line. She is a bit mousy but self-assured and unkempt. A youthful face peers at the computer through a loose strand of hair.

She is facing a wall covered with books, with titles like "Best Selling True-Crime Novelist of the Year" and "Author E.M. Mills Strikes Gold Again" and "Period Writer E.M Mills Makes the 1800's Cooler Than Ever."

Behind her is a wall full of various bloody crime scene photos and a shelf filled with books by the author "E.M. Mills."

A phone rings.

WINNIE (O.S.)

Miss Mills is ignoring your calls right now. May I take a message?

Effie continues to hit "A." She eventually straightens up and opens the door to the room.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN

Winnie has a simple apron tied around her waist. The words: "world's best housekeeper" are nearly all rubbed away. She's an older woman with a stiff upper lip type of personality.

Winnie turns to Effie.

WINNIE

That was Miss Andrews.

EFFIE

Lola, her name is Lola, Winnie. What does she need? I thought my agents were supposed to leave me alone when my books hit the best sellers lists.

WINNIE

She wants to talk about your upcoming book tour-

EFFIE

What-?

WINNIE

You're meeting her at two at the office. Go get dressed. The car will be ready.

EFFIE

This is stupid.

Effie storms back upstairs.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - HALLWAY

Effie's bedroom door opens and she emerges wearing large sunglasses, a wig, a trench coat, a hat, and a scarf over her nose and mouth. A large backpack is over her shoulders. She shuffles downstairs.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM CONTINUOUS

Winnie looks at Effie.

WINNIE

Honestly, Miss Mills-

EFFIE
Don't say anything.

INT. MARCO'S HIDEOUT

A group of men are huddled around a conference table in a well-lit room.

LEE (V.O.)
Now. There are two types of people in the world. Those who buy and those who sell. It is usually better to be a seller but that depends on what kind of product you're pushing.

MARCO is at the head of the table, the other men are looking to him as he speaks.

MARCO
The Hotton Company shareholders aren't responding to the changes in policy-

LEE (V.O.)
That's Marco Jimenez. CEO and massive twat. He's hellbent on being the biggest seller on the planet. So far, he's got almost all of the Western Hemisphere under his thumb. But that's not enough for him. He wants the whole world.

An argument is starting between Marco and the other men at the table.

LEE (V.O.)
The trouble with Marco is-

Marco starts to strangle another man with his tie.

LEE (V.O.)
-he's got one hell of an anger problem.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE

Marco is reclining in an overstuffed chair, reading one of Effie's books.

LEE (V.O.)
 He's also got a bit of an obsessive
 personality.

Marco's walls are filled with every edition of every single one of Effie's books. The author's picture of Effie, usually enclosed on the back flap of each hardcover, has been blown up and framed. It is framed by the small, cut-out pictures.

INT. CHAUFFEURED CAR

Effie slides into the back of a chauffeured car. CARLSON sits in the driver's seat.

CARLSON
 To Miss Andrews' office, Miss?

EFFIE
 Where else do I go, Mister Carlson?

CARLSON
 Can we take the scenic route today?

EFFIE
 Why do you ask that when you
 already know the answer?

CARLSON
 The regular way then, Miss.

EFFIE
 Thank you.

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD

The car rolls slowly out of the driveway, swerving slightly. There are tire spikes in the pavement. Barbed wire tops the high fence. Surveillance cameras line the fence.

INT. CHAUFFEURED CAR

The car drives along and Carlson looks at Effie in the rear-view mirror.

CARLSON
 Have you heard from your brother?

EFFIE
 Last I heard he was in some Eastern
 European country I can't pronounce.

(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
 He might've mentioned something
 about visiting in a couple of
 weeks. I didn't particularly care
 to remember.

The car rolls to a stop in front of a building.

CARLSON
 I will be right here, waiting for
 you when you're finished with Miss
 Andrews.

EFFIE
 Like usual?

CARLSON
 Thirty-two loops around the block
 then a seventeen-second wait in
 front of the door. Yes, the usual.

EFFIE
 Okay. Don't be late.

CARLSON
 I never am, Miss.

EXT. W.A. INC.

Effie opens the car door and runs into the building.

INT. W.A. INC. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

RECEPTIONIST
 Ma'am? Can I help you-

Effie ducks her head and jams her finger into the elevator
 call button again and again until the doors open, making the
 RECEPTIONIST stand up. Effie hurries into the elevator.

INT. W.A. INC ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Effie holds the "close doors" button after pressing the
 button for the eleventh floor.

As the elevator rises, making a beeping sound as it passes
 each floor, she slowly removes her disguise and shoves it
 into the backpack.

On the fifth floor, the elevator slows and opens just as
 Effie is removing the scarf from around her face.

Effie looks up at a group of men in suits staring back at her, wanting to get on the elevator. Their hands are filled with papers.

EFFIE

(hurriedly pushing the scarf
back over her face and
repeatedly pushing the "close"
button again)

Sorry! The elevator is full!

The door closes again and Effie collapses against the wall and holds the eleventh floor button, keeping the elevator from being called again.

The door opens and LOLA is standing in the doorway.

SUB: THE LITERARY AGENT

She looks down at Effie and sighs loudly before bending down and pulling her off the ground.

Lola is a literary agent with knives for teeth. She dresses impeccably.

Lola continues to haul Effie out of the elevator and into her office.

INT. LOLA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She pushes Effie into a chair, locks the door, and shuts the blinds.

LOLA

They didn't know who you were,
Effie. No one knows you're here.
You're safe. I'm not going to tell
anyone you're here. You are
invisible.

EFFIE

Thank you, Lola.

LOLA

Honestly, though, all of the people
in this building think you're some
sort of lunatic with invisible
friends that will eat them in their
dreams.

EFFIE

What?

LOLA

True story. Get comfortable. We have to chat.

EFFIE

Well, I would assume so...

LOLA

(sitting behind her desk and pulling a large stack of papers out of a drawer)
We have to talk about this.

EFFIE

What about it?

LOLA

You have to go. You have no choice on this one. Sales are drooping and you need to show your face and help with promotion with this book tour.

EFFIE

Pardon?

LOLA

I answer to the publisher and the agency. This is what they wanted and I can't say no. And you can't either.

EFFIE

This is YOUR agency.

LOLA

That's how bad this is! I can give you a little time before the tour starts but I need you to work on your ability to function around people.

EFFIE

I'll work on it.

LOLA

Oh, no. I've given you time to work on it by yourself. You need help, lots of help, that I now have the responsibility of getting for you. I've called in a specialist.

EFFIE

Lola-

LOLA

Lee will be at your house tomorrow morning.

EFFIE

You told him where I live? You know how I feel about stuff like that.

LOLA

He's a specialist, not a serial killer. I've used him before for writers who refuse to get out of their houses.

EFFIE

I don't need a specialist.

LOLA

Effie, listen to me right now. If you ever want to sell another book, you will go along with this. Lee's going to get you out in a safe, controlled way. He's there to protect you and to make sure you talk to people so you can finally figure out how to interact with your fans without alienating them. Got it?

EFFIE

This is bullshit, and you know it.

LOLA

This is business. Go home and enjoy your last day of being a hermit. Put on your disguise and dash away to your car.

EFFIE

Bitch.

LOLA

The best one you know!

Effie rolls her eyes and storms out of Lola's office with her manuscript and her backpack.

EXT. W.A. INC.

Effie is adjusting her disguise when she steps outside. She runs into KENNY and JACK. They look like they're trying too hard to look like stereotypical gang-bangers.

KENNY

Jesus! Watch where yer going,
bitch!

JACK

Yeah! Watch where you're-

KENNY

Shut up, Jack!

EFFIE

Fucking Christ, sorry!

Carlson pulls up, and Effie slides into her seat.

EFFIE

You're late!

The car pulls away from the curb.

KENNY

So, some rich bitch gets to run
into us and not even apologize?

JACK

But...she did say sorry-

LEE (V.O.)

Nothing is more pathetic than
buyers trying desperately to be
sellers. These two, Jack and Kenny,
are Marco's two oldest friends and
closest confidantes. If that
doesn't tell you anything about the
way Marco operates, I don't know
what will.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - HALLWAY

Effie undoes her disguise and leaves the pieces one-by-one
along the staircase railing.

Carlson and Winnie watch her go into her room. Winnie starts
to pick the pieces of Effie's disguise off the railing.

WINNIE

How did the meeting with Miss Andrews go?

CARLSON

As well as expected. Did Miss Andrews tell you what we can anticipate over the next few days?

WINNIE

Yes, she called when you were driving back. She said something about an "aggressive life coach" helping Miss Mills - he should be here tomorrow morning. Did she tell you too?

CARLSON

She called me as soon as she saw my car had pulled up.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - EFFIE'S BEDROOM

SUB: BLOODY ROUTINES

Effie is staring at a manuscript Lola gave her. There are red marks all over the pages. One particular note from Lola reads: "This is shit. Start. Over." Effie closes the manuscript and stands up, stretches, and shoves the manuscript into a drawer, ignoring the fact the drawer pops back open.

There is a loud banging from outside her bedroom, slightly muffled. An argument starts to get louder and louder.

WINNIE (O.S.)

Stay back!

Glass shatters downstairs.

WINNIE (O.S.)

I said, stay back!

A gun is fired.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN

Winnie has a shotgun in her hands. She is shaking. There is blood spattered everywhere.

There is a dead body (BILLY) on the floor, covered in blood.

Effie walks into the doorway of the kitchen and sighs.

WINNIE

Oh my god, Miss Mills! I-I'm so
sorry, he just came in and-and he
was trying to steal the...

Winnie drifts off when she sees Effie walk into the kitchen and look at the blood-spatter patterns on the wall. Effie pauses at the wall before squatting near the body.

WINNIE

I think he's dead. I-I killed him.
I killed a man.

EFFIE

It's all right, Winnie.

Effie pokes the body. She pokes the man's body one more time. She pulls the man's hand up to her face before pushing the forefinger into her mouth. She pauses for a moment before biting down.

The "dead" man yelps and pulls his finger out of Effie's mouth.

BILLY

(jumping to his feet)
What the fuck? You can't just go
around biting dead people's
fingers!

WINNIE

(to Effie)
How did you know?

EFFIE

Your blood-spatter patterns are
getting better but they're still
inaccurate. And, if you're going
for realistic blood consistency,
use the gallon of stuff Carlson
uses for Halloween each year - not
corn syrup and food dye. The stuff
you're using right now is tasty,
just not the right color.

Effie rolls her eyes and walks away.

WINNIE

Same time next week, Billy?

BILLY
Yeah, next week.

Billy walks away as Winnie pulls out a pre-filled bucket of soap and water and hands it to a nearby maid who starts to clean up the "murder scene."

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Effie sitting at her typewriter, writing or editing

Effie putting together a small explosive which she then gives to Carlson who plants it in the front yard, where several other mounds of dirt that cover other explosives

Effie watching large video screens of the surveillance footage collected from the many security cameras on her property

Winnie knocking on Effie's door with a guest beside her - Effie, in turn, hides in her closet

Effie frequently hitting the ignore button on her phone when she has an incoming call

Effie looking out of her window at the cars going past her house

Effie calling the cops about a car that has been parked by her house for too long

Effie waiting until midnight to jog around her large, backyard garden

INT. LEE'S APARTMENT

SUB: MISTER LEE REINER

LEE (V.O.)
I am a seller. But that doesn't mean I don't like purchasing when it suits me. The clothes make the man, don't let anyone tell you different. Now, sometimes sellers fall on unfortunate circumstances and have to take jobs that require helping prattling old women or the cokehead sons and daughters of politicians out of shitty situations. But that doesn't decrease their value as sellers.

Lee is standing in front of his ridiculously full closet, trying to pick out one of his many silk ties.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Lee buttoning his shirt

Holstering his gun, which is then concealed when he pulls on his suit jacket

Combing his hair, etc.

INT. LEE'S APARTMENT

Lee sits down on the side of his bed to tie his shoes; a news program is on the television.

NEWSCASTER

...thirteen more young women have been reported missing. Local authorities from Sacramento to Los Angeles fear that many more have gone missing without anyone noticing. We will keep you informed as this story develops.

Lee turns off the television, straightens his tie, and leaves the room.

EXT. W.A. INC.

Lee steps out of his expensive car. He puts a few quarters in the parking meter and heads inside.

INT. W.A. INC. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

He walks into the lobby and smiles at the receptionist, who blushes and waves back at him.

He walks into the elevator.

INT. W.A. INC ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Lee leans against the wall until he arrives at the eleventh floor.

He walks out and toward Lola's office.

INT. LOLA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lola is sitting at her desk, reading another manuscript, red pen in hand.

LOLA

It's rude to come in unannounced.

She sets down her pen and smiles at him.

LEE

Ah, but you've always loved surprises, haven't you?

LOLA

Usually, but when they involve men who could kill me with a thumb and forefinger, I tend to be a little less agreeable.

She stands up and hugs him for a moment before she settles back behind her desk.

LOLA

Why are you here?

LEE

You honestly didn't believe that I would just waltz into that woman's house - did you? She's got homemade landmines in her front yard.

LOLA

They aren't very reliable, you know.

LEE

Exactly my point.

LOLA

Are you telling me that the big-bad-Lee-Reiner is afraid of a hermit and her toys? Embassy Row has softened your spine.

LEE

Protecting ambassadors-

LOLA

And their pretty, pretty wives and daughters-

LEE

-usually deals with guns, racing cars, and psychopaths with bombs. Not homemade landmines in the middle of suburbia.

LOLA

Just do your job, Reiner. Get her out of the house. Get her to talk to people, and then you can disappear back into the back alleys of London, where you're comfortable.

LEE

Why is she like that? Why does she hide in her house?

LOLA

Her parents were diplomats or something like that. They were killed while walking the family dog around the block--something about someone not liking their policies. Apparently, Effie saw the whole thing. Traumatized her, I guess.

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD

SUB: AWKWARD

Lee knocks on Effie's front door. The door swings open to reveal Winnie.

WINNIE

You must be Mister Reiner.

LEE

Call me Lee.

They shake hands before she steps back and lets him inside.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM CONTINUOUS

WINNIE

Miss Andrews said you would be arriving this morning. I do hope the um - well, Miss Mills' little experiments didn't cause you any trouble.

LEE
No. No, it was fine.

FLASHBACK: START

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD

Lee tumbles through the front yard, missing the small mounds where the landmines are placed.

FLASHBACK: END

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM

WINNIE
Miss Mills! Your guest is here!

EFFIE (O.S.)
What guest?

WINNIE
Miss Andrews' associate. The one she told you about yesterday!

EFFIE (O.S.)
I don't remember any conversation like that!

WINNIE
I know you do! Come down here!

EFFIE (O.S.)
No!

WINNIE
Miss Mills, you are 24. Stop acting like a child and come down here and greet your guest.

EFFIE (O.S.)
Does he have a camera?

WINNIE
(to Lee)
Do you have a camera?

LEE
Should I?

WINNIE
 (to Effie)
 No! He doesn't!

EFFIE (O.S.)
 Does he have a gun?

WINNIE
 Shouldn't that have been your first
 question?

EFFIE (O.S.)
 Priorities!

WINNIE
 (to Lee)
 I'm going to assume that if you
 were here to kill Miss Mills, you
 would have killed me already.

LEE
 Correct.

WINNIE
 (to Effie)
 He's unarmed! Now get down here!

Winnie holds up a finger to Lee as if to tell him "just a moment," before she crosses her arms. There is then a rumbling from upstairs, before Effie slowly slinks down into view.

LEE
 (holding out a hand to Effie)
 It's a pleasure to meet you.

Effie stares at his hand for a moment before looking at Winnie. She is at least five feet away from Lee at all times.

EFFIE
 (to Winnie)
 I need a new agent.

WINNIE
 Miss Andrews is doing this for your
 own good.

EFFIE
 She's doing this to make sure she
 gets her cut of the profits.

WINNIE

You need to get out of the house.

EFFIE

I was out! Yesterday!

Winnie isn't convinced.

EFFIE

I'm serious!

Winnie walks away, disappearing into the kitchen.

WINNIE (O.S.)

She's all yours, Mister Reiner!

Lee turns to Effie.

LEE

Shall we go, then?

Effie looks at him and then quickly tries to dash up the stairs. Lee catches her around the waist and starts dragging/carrying her toward the door.

The next few interchanges are slightly strained as Effie grabs everything (stair railings, side tables, book shelves, large oil paintings, etc.) she can to stop Lee's progress toward the door. Lee constantly has to readjust his hold on Effie to keep her from grabbing things.

EFFIE

You can't make me go!

LEE

Yes, I can. It's what I get paid to do.

EFFIE

This is kidnapping! Carlson, help!
I'm being kidnapped!

CARLSON (O.S.)

'bout time.

EFFIE

Carlson!

LEE

I just want to take you to the
subway station.

EFFIE

There are people out there with
cameras, and guns, and knives, and
explosive devices!

Lee finally gets Effie to the door, which a maid has opened for him, and Effie instantly grabs the door frame to stop his movement.

LEE

Miss Mills, please!

Effie manages to kick him in the crotch and he loosens his hold on her as he falls to his knees. She slams the door shut and locks all ten locks and then sprints back up the stairs.

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD

Lee is sitting outside, still nursing his bruised crotch.

LEE

Ooh. I'll be back tomorrow.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - EFFIE'S BEDROOM

Next morning.

Effie is huddled underneath the blankets on her massive bed, watching the morning news.

NEWSCASTER

The FBI has released a statement saying that while they continue to look into the rise of missing persons, there is, quote, still no decisive evidence that these events are in any way related, unquote. We will continue to keep you up to date on this story as it develops...

The doorbell rings.

WINNIE (O.S.)

Miss Mills! Mister Reiner is here to see you!

Effie clicks off the television but remains largely motionless on the bed.

WINNIE (O.S.)
Miss Mills!

Effie slowly pulls the blankets over her head until she is completely covered.

WINNIE (O.S.)
He really doesn't have a
camera...or a gun!

Effie laboriously pulls the blankets away from her face and seems not to mind that her hair is sticking up in strange ways. She looks at her wig.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM

Effie walks into the living room dressed in her disguise again. Winnie rolls her eyes. Lee looks slightly amused beside her.

WINNIE
Miss Mills-

LEE
This is actually all right, Winnie.
Baby steps, remember?

WINNIE
You're the expert.

LEE
(to Effie)
Shall we go then?

EFFIE
Let's get this over with.

INT. CROWDED UNDERGROUND STATION

Lee and Effie are waiting for the next train. A few people around them are reading various newspapers about the missing people. Effie is obviously uncomfortable, standing completely still in the sea of people - her wig and hat are slightly askew because of the hustle and bustle of people around her. Lee is at ease beside her.

LEE
Your wig is crooked.

EFFIE

I like it that way.

LEE

Are you at least listening to the people around us?

EFFIE

Yup.

The train starts to pull into the station and the people around Lee and Effie start to push forward again.

LEE

Are you ready for the next step? If not, we can come back here tomorrow.

EFFIE

Nope. I want to finish this.

She straightens her shoulders as if to show her resolve. Lee smiles.

LEE

Brilliant. We're now going to board the train and ride it for one stop. Then we can get off and I'll take you straight home - okay? I'll be with you the whole time.

The train finally stops and the doors open. People flood out as others try to push their way into the compartments.

EFFIE

Got it. Let's go.

Lee leads her toward the compartment, pushing against the current of people leaving. He steps inside and turns to see Effie running up the stairs. The doors close before he can get back to her and she laughs - but he can't hear it over the loud couple next to him, speaking to each other in Spanish. The train pulls away from the platform and they both disappear.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM

Effie bursts through the front door and once again starts leaving pieces of her disguise along the stair railing. Winnie appears from the back room.

WINNIE
How did it go today?

EFFIE
Great!

Effie punctuates this with a slam of her door as she goes back into her bedroom.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - NIGHT

A WOMAN walks by herself down the street. She looks a bit like Effie. She is texting on her phone.

As she passes an alleyway, she is pulled in.

She screams but the sound is cut off quickly.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - EFFIE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie is asleep on her bed. She's not a pretty sleeper. Her mouth is open, she's drooling, and somehow, most of her hair has twisted under nose to look like a mustache.

As Effie snores, her door opens and closes. A dark figure sits on the foot of her bed and she jolts awake, sitting up. Her many pillows fly around the room, falling off the bed.

Lee is the person sitting on the edge of her bed.

EFFIE
What the hell? How did you get in here?

LEE
That's not what I'm used to hearing after a girl wakes up next to me.

EFFIE
What do you want?

LEE
Look, I know you don't want to go out into the real world, and I want to get this job over with. I have a proposition for you.

EFFIE
How did you get in here?!

LEE

Lower your voice. People are sleeping. Don't be rude. I'm getting to that. Will you hear my proposition?

EFFIE

Do I have a choice?

LEE

Not really. So, moving forward, I will take you out in public and keep you from having to speak to anyone-

EFFIE

How is that supposed to help me?

LEE

I thought hermits were supposed to be quiet. Anyway, I will help you follow people whom you find interesting - so you can find people for your next novel or whatever and you can get used to being around people.

Effie is not amused. And her hair is still a mess.

EFFIE

You're going to teach me how to stalk people.

LEE

Yes, it's a beautiful art. And on top of that, in exchange for you being a good hermit and going outside with me, I'll teach you how to properly safeguard your house - no landmines needed.

Effie leans back against her headboard, contemplating the offer.

EFFIE

And you'll leave me alone afterward?

LEE

Cross my heart.

EFFIE

And I won't have to talk to anyone?

LEE

I just said that.

EFFIE

And you'll keep everyone away from me?

LEE

God, yes. Do you agree or not?

Effie is quiet for a moment before nodding.

EFFIE

Yeah, all right. I agree.

LEE

Good-

EFFIE

Now get out of my house. I want to go back to sleep.

Lee shakes his head but stands up and starts to make his way toward her bedroom door.

LEE

Goodnight, Miss Mills.

EFFIE

Uh-huh.

She flops back down on the bed and throws the blankets over her head.

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - NEXT MORNING

Lee is leaning against the front door as Effie jumps up and down, shaking her hands. She is wearing her disguise again. The jumping causes the wig to leave her head momentarily before flopping back down onto her hair again at odd angles.

EFFIE

I can do this. I can do this.

LEE

If we're going to do this, you have to look normal.

Effie stops jumping.

EFFIE

What do you mean?

LEE

Lose the jacket, scarf, wig.

Effie doesn't move to take anything off.

LEE

You don't want anyone staring at you, right? Then look normal, blend in. And I'll make sure you're invisible.

Effie sighs and removes the pieces of the disguise and leaves them in a heap on her front step.

LEE

Take that inside. And don't just put them in a pile right inside - take them up to your room.

Effie scowls but does as she's told, reemerging from the house a few seconds later.

EFFIE

Can we go now?

LEE

'Course. Let's go.

INT. CARTEL'S HIDEOUT

Marco is looking over a large factory production. IAN is standing at the front of the room, seemingly in charge. He's a burly man with thinning hair.

MARCO

Progress?

IAN

Profits are up. Hotton is still giving us problems.

MARCO

And what are you and your men planning on doing about it?

IAN

We're working on it.

MARCO
Well, work faster.

MARCO
And any word on her?

Ian looks uncomfortable.

IAN
What is so important about her?
She's just some shut-in who write-

Marco hits Ian hard enough to make the other man stumble a bit.

MARCO
Don't talk about her like that.

IAN
Just answer the question-

MARCO
Just deal with them. And find me
information on her.

Marco walks away.

IAN
Asshole.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN COMPARTMENT

Effie bites her nails and seems to be pressing herself into the back of her seat, wishing she could disappear, clearly uncomfortable. Lee is sitting beside her. Another group of travelers are sitting a few seats away from them, talking amongst themselves.

PASSENGER 1
Have you guys heard from Jessica?

PASSENGER 2
No, I thought she was on vacation.
Miami or something like that.

PASSENGER 1
I just tried to call her the other
day and she didn't-

PASSENGER 3
You're just being paranoid because
of all the missing people reports.

(MORE)

PASSENGER 3 (cont'd)
Jessica isn't stupid enough to get
kidnapped.

Lee leans over toward Effie.

LEE
Are you paying attention?

EFFIE
Yes. Shut up.

The scene speeds up, as if on fast forward. Lee and Effie stay in the same place as other passengers filter in and out.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - INDOOR GYM

Lee is trying to teach Effie how to defend herself. She throws a punch and he grabs her wrist and flips her over onto her back. She sighs and ignores his hand when he offers it to her and remains on the ground.

EFFIE
This blows.

LEE
You just need to practice.

He offers her his hand again and she takes it. She throws another punch, lands it, and throws another, but Lee grabs her hand and pins her to the ground.

EFFIE
I hate you.

LEE
Charming.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN

Lee and Effie sit at the small table in the kitchen. The table is covered with small, homemade machines.

EFFIE
What's that one do?

LEE
This one will cause a small
discharge of smoke, setting off
your fire alarm, causing a
distraction.

Effie points to another one.

EFFIE

This one?

LEE

This one just shoots a single bullet by pressing this tiny button.

He demonstrates, making the machine click.

EFFIE

Is that legal?

LEE

You have landmines in your front lawn.

EFFIE

Point taken.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DAY

Lee points to a businessman on his cell phone who is currently weaving through a group of Japanese tourists, posing in front of the TCL Chinese theater. Effie and Lee follow him.

EFFIE

Why him?

LEE

Don't worry about that part. We're here to listen, remember?

EFFIE

Couldn't we stalk someone a little more interesting? This guys looks like he's afraid to try cheese on his turkey and white bread.

LEE

Baby steps - you were the one who wanted to stay safe.

Lee gets smacked in the face by a tourist's scarf as they walk by. He has to pull one of the tassels out of his mouth.

EFFIE

Safe, not boring. We've been doing this for weeks.

LEE

Fine. Next week, I'll take you
where you think you need to go.

The scene fast forwards.

Lee and Effie stalk several more people through the streets. They casually stop and look at buildings when one of their targets feels their eyes on them and turns to look, or Lee and Effie slip into an alleyway. Effie laughs when a target catches sight of Lee (and not Effie) and starts yelling at him. Another time they avoid eye contact by holding up a newspaper over their faces - the headline reads: "Bodies found in mass grave! Missing People Identified."

The next few lines are presented in a montage of them following people.

LEE

What sandwich did he order?

EFFIE

Ham on rye. The absolute worst
combination.

LEE

Where does she work?

EFFIE

That trinket shop down on the
corner.

LEE

How did you find that out?

EFFIE

Dropped her nametag.

LEE

Where do they live?

EFFIE

Glendale. Threw a cell phone bill
away.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - EFFIE'S BEDROOM

Effie is sitting at her desk, typing. She seems to be on a roll.

Lee appears behind her.

LEE
That's not bad.

She turns and attempts to strike him but he easily deflects it.

EFFIE
Don't sneak up on me like that,
creep!

LEE
You have an appointment with Lola.
I've come to pick you up. Bring
your story.

EFFIE
It's a manuscript.

LEE
Same thing.

INT. LOLA'S OFFICE

Lola is sitting across from Effie. Lee stands in the background. The new manuscript, once again covered in red ink, is in front of Lola.

LOLA
It's getting better, Effie. But it
still needs work. And I'm not just
talking about this newest
manuscript. My poor receptionist
said you nearly bit her head off
when she tried to greet you.

EFFIE
At least I acknowledged her
presence this time.

LOLA
I mean, Lee says you're making
progress, just not enough for you
to not completely muck up your book
tour and destroy your fan base.

Effie sighs.

EFFIE
I don't know how to do that.

LOLA

Have Lee take you to one of the busier neighborhoods. I know you went to Hollywood but there's a difference between being surrounded by people who are looking at buildings and people who are looking at you.

EFFIE

Yeah, I guess I could do that.

LOLA

Careful though. Girls have been disappearing left and right. Can't have my meal ticket getting picked off the street.

EFFIE

That's not funny, Lola!

EXT. LA HARBOR-DUSK

Effie and Lee are walking down the street. They are fairly close to each other. It is fall now. The sun is starting to set.

EFFIE

Here? It took like an hour to get here on the subway!

LEE

You were the one who wanted to go to a place like this.

EFFIE

You're not going to let me die--or be horribly dismembered--right?

LEE

No one should bother us. It's not like I'm taking you to a volcano to sacrifice you.

They slow to a stop in front of a restaurant. Lee looks at it for a moment.

LEE

This'll do.

INT. RESTAURANT-CONTINUOUS

The restaurant is filled with people. Some of them do turn to look at Effie and Lee. Effie moves to hide behind Lee but he holds her still.

EFFIE

So...why here?

LEE

People stare. But in small doses.
Just getting your feet wet.

A HOSTESS approaches.

HOSTESS

Hello! Welcome to Liam's Grille.

LEE

If you could seat us toward the
back, we'd greatly appreciate it.

HOSTESS

Sure. Just follow me.

She grabs two menus and leads them toward the back of the restaurant and seats them at a small booth. People stare for a few moments before going back to their meals.

HOSTESS

Enjoy your meal.

She walks away.

EFFIE

If another person looks at me, I'm
going to leave you here.

LEE

I got you here. I literally dragged
you here.

EFFIE

I *will* leave you here.

A WAITER approaches Lee and Effie's table.

WAITER

Hello, what can I get you two to
drink?

LEE
Water for me.

EFFIE
And the strongest drink you have.

WAITER
Right... Okay...

He walks away.

Marco, NICKY, and DREW walk into the restaurant. They are immediately brought toward the back of the restaurant as well. Effie hides behind her menu as they walk past her table.

LEE
They didn't even look at you. Stop hiding. You won't be able to hide behind anything on your book tour.

Lee and Effie look at their menus for a bit before the waiter comes back over with their drinks. Effie quickly drinks her entire drink.

EFFIE
I'm going to need another one of those, please.

The waiter walks away.

LEE
I don't think getting piss drunk will help your interactions with people.

The waiter comes back with her drink.

WAITER
Are you ready to order?

LEE
I'll have the shrimp scampi.

EFFIE
I'll just have the jalapeno burger with swiss cheese.

WAITER
I'll get that right out for you guys.

He walks away again after taking their menus. Effie and Lee sit in silence for a bit. Effie looks over at the table where Marco, Drew, and Nicky sit.

LEE

I'll be right back.

Lee walks off toward a hall that has a sign for "restrooms" hanging above it.

MARCO

Do you have the buyers in place?

NICKY

Yes. Their wallets won't like it for a few months, but they're willing to do what you want.

DREW

They know to trust your instinct after that oil debacle a few years ago.

MARCO

And your man on the inside, he's sure that the stocks will dip tomorrow after the market opens?

DREW

Yeah. And I trust him.

MARCO

If he's lying, you know I'll destroy him--and you.

DREW

I'm not lying and he isn't either. Marco, c'mon. Just trust me for once.

MARCO

I would but last time I trusted you, Hotton nearly bought a controlling share in my company because you couldn't keep your eye on a briefcase during a three-hour flight.

DREW

It was a mistake! And I took care of it.

NICKY
Keep your voice down.

DREW
That guy won't be able to say
anything to anyone ever again.

Effie looks around the restaurant. No one else is listening to them.

MARCO
Yes, I know you're very proud of
how you killed a man and no one
suspected a thing but you are still
an idiot.

Lee walks back toward the booth.

LEE
Our food hasn't come yet?

Marco, Nicky, and Drew all look at Lee and then at Effie. Nicky and Drew look at Marco who is just staring at Effie.

Marco stands up from the booth.

MARCO
E. M. Mills?

EFFIE
(to Lee)
We have to leave, right now.

Marco moves toward her and Lee allows Effie to pull him back toward the entrance. She throws a few bills at the hostess before pulling Lee in between two buildings.

LEE
Would you mind telling me what that
was about?

EFFIE
Those men--they were talking about
insider trading--

LEE
Are you afraid of stock brokers?

EFFIE
If you would let me finish, one of
them said something about killing a
guy to keep him quiet. And then you
had to come up and get me noticed

(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
and then they started walking
toward our table and I freaked out.
Okay? I freaked out and this is all
your fault.

NICKY (O.S)
I think I saw them go this way.

Nicky, Drew, and Marco walk past the alley.

LEE
Shit.

EFFIE
What?

LEE
That's Marco Jimenez. CEO of some
stupid weapons company over here.
Several of his business associates
have gone missing the last few
years.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie hangs up the phone. Winnie and Carlson are standing
into the doorway of her room.

Lee comes bursting in.

LEE
Did you call the police?

EFFIE
Of course I called the police!

LEE
They saw our faces, Effie. They'll
know it was us.

Effie remains quiet.

LEE
All of those crime novels you wrote
and you can't remember that if you
tell the police what you saw - that
means you're dead?

EFFIE
All of my novels are in the 1800s!
Everyone dies in those! And you

(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
said it yourself, these are stock
brokers. I needed to tell someone
what I'd heard.

LEE
Seriously?! I also told you that
Jimenez is making people disappear
left and right!

EFFIE
I'm sorry!

Lee stomps around the room.

LEE
You can't disappear into your house
again.

EFFIE
That's the safest place for me!

LEE
No! No it isn't! Your house is a
black hole. No one would take
notice if you didn't leave your
house for a few weeks. They'd think
you were acting normal. They
wouldn't even think that you've
been killed off by some CEO's
henchmen.

EFFIE
This is Los Angeles! Not an episode
of *Scandal*!

LEE
It doesn't matter! They've seen us.
You have to stay out to stay safe.
We need to leave - to get you out
in the open.

WINNIE
The book tour! It's perfect.

EFFIE
Seriously? I was just playing along
with this training so I didn't
actually have to go on that tour. I
never attend those.

LEE
Well, you're going to now.

EFFIE
What are you going to do?

LEE
I promised I would protect you.

Carlson steps forward.

CARLSON
I'll call your brother.

EFFIE
Fuck.

LEE
It might be for the best, Miss
Mills.

EFFIE
(To Winnie and Carlson)
You'd better be coming with me!

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD, INDOOR GYM-A FEW DAYS LATER

Lee and Effie are wrestling on the mat. Effie is a bit pathetic and awkward in her movements, and Lee is obviously winning the bout. They struggle a bit more before Lee pins her down. It takes a while, because Effie is surprisingly scrappy.

LEE
You're not supposed to try and kick
my shins. I've got you pinned. Use
your momentum against me.

EFFIE
You've got me pinned. I have no
momentum.

She collapses against the mat.

EFFIE
I'm the complete lack of momentum.
I am an immovable object. Maybe
that can be my defense. Complete
immobility.

Lee sits back, removing his grip from her arms.

LEE
You are hopeless.

Effie takes this opportunity to punch him below the belt. Lee groans and falls to the side. Effie scrambles to her feet and does a short, sweaty victory dance.

EFFIE
I won!

LEE
You cheated!

Lee struggles to his feet before tackling Effie to the ground. She slaps him with both hands, making strange yelping noises as Lee struggles to pin her down once again.

EFFIE
That hurts! Get off!

LEE
I'm trying to teach you how to
protect yourself. I'm doing my job!
Pay attention-

The door to the gym opens and OWEN steps in. He is employed by one of those big name, acronym-wielding organizations. High ranking, he has his own security detail and always wears a suit and tie.

Owen's security detail stands behind him. They look like secret service knock-offs. They even wear their sunglasses inside.

OWEN
What the fuck do you think you're
doing?

SUB: THE BROTHER

Owen gestures to the men behind him and they run in and haul Lee off of Effie.

EFFIE
Owen! What the hell?! Leave him
alone!

She stands up and gets in Owen's face. He doesn't even flinch.

OWEN

He's the one sexually assaulting you in our childhood home--and even with those stupid traps you set up in the front yard.

EFFIE

I've been working really hard on those. They could've blown your leg off, you know.

LEE

(still being restrained by the body-guards)

Seriously? This is your brother? What a cock.

One of the guards punches Lee in the stomach.

LEE

You're proving my point.

EFFIE

Leave him alone. He's my-

OWEN

If you say boyfriend I will send you to a convent.

EFFIE

We're not Catholic.

LEE

Not the point, love.

EFFIE

He is my, uh, personal trainer. And part-time body guard.

OWEN

That can't be a real thing.

LEE (V.O.)

This is what happens when a buyer acts like a seller. They're pretentious and always compensating.

Lee eventually gets irritated and easily overpowers the two guards and leaves them in a groaning heap on the mats before he adjusts his clothing and walks toward Owen, thrusting out a hand to shake.

LEE

Name's Lee.

Owen looks down at Lee's hand, a bit disgusted, and he doesn't shake it.

OWEN

Charmed.

EFFIE

Be nice, Owen.

Owen kisses Effie's forehead, making her a bit uncomfortable.

OWEN

It's good to see you too, Effie.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD--DINING ROOM TABLE

Lee, Effie, and Owen are seated around the large table. Winnie and Carlson stand in the back, along with Owen's security detail, who are all now bruised from Lee's attack earlier.

EFFIE

This is stupid.

OWEN

No. You have to do this-

EFFIE

I'm not going to do it. That's ridiculous and you know it.

OWEN

It would get you out of LA. And isn't that the main concern right now? Making sure you don't get killed?

EFFIE

I'm not leaving LA!

OWEN

I just think getting you out of LA would do you some good anyway. You've been stuck here all your life and-

EFFIE

I like it here.

OWEN

I don't care that you like it here.
I'll give you two a few days to
finish up your stupid little
training sessions, and then we're
leaving.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-GYM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Effie is now tied to a chair, and Lee is tightening the ropes on her wrists.

LEE

All right, now, I've got you all
tied up. What're you going to do?

EFFIE

I just have a few questions.

LEE

Of course you do.

EFFIE

Like, how did I get kidnapped? What
was I doing? Where am I? Who are
you? I do need to know these
things.

LEE

None of that is important.

EFFIE

It's important to me. I need a back
story.

LEE

No. No, you don't. Anyway, what
are you going to do to try to
escape?

EFFIE

I suppose screaming is out of the
question?

LEE

Correct.

EFFIE

Well, that's all I got.

LEE

That's pathetic.

EFFIE

Welcome to my life.

LEE

Well, all right. What you're going to try to do is not piss them off. I know that might be a bit of a challenge for you.

EFFIE

Next step?

LEE

Find out if there are any bathrooms nearby. Scope out your surroundings. Windows? Several doors? Try to watch how your captors move around the room. You need to listen: to how the floor creaks, to how the door sounds when it opens, if the wind or rain is hitting something on the other side of the wall. All right? Hyper vigilance.

EFFIE

Right. Okay. Just for argument's sake, let's say that I do get to, I don't know, convince them to let me use the bathroom. What then? Are you telling me to actually try to escape? I thought kidnapped people were just supposed to be submissive, so they don't get hurt.

LEE

Well-

EFFIE

Whatever, tell me how to get out of here.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Lee having Effie wrap a towel around her hand and punch through an open window

Winnie screaming at Lee and pointing at the broken window

Lee showing Effie how to pick a lock

Effie throwing the lock across the room

INT. LOLA'S OFFICE-DAY

Lola is sitting at her desk, once again looking at the manuscript Effie has sent over.

She picks up the phone on the desk and dials a number.

INTERCUTTING

Lola in her office, Effie in her bedroom.

EFFIE

Will you be there today? At the signing?

LOLA

No. Not at this one. But I'll be able to meet up with you on your next stop up in Seattle next week. But this is good. People are paying to see you.

EFFIE

You're it sound like you want me to be a prostitute.

LOLA

Welcome to the real world, darling. Don't be late.

Lola hangs up.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM-SAME DAY

Effie hangs up her phone. She is wearing holey sweatpants and a t-shirt.

EFFIE

What a bitch.

Winnie walks in, dressed up just a little bit.

WINNIE

Miss Mills? Aren't you dressed yet? The signing starts in an hour and it takes forty-five minutes to get there in this sort of traffic.

EFFIE

What's wrong with what I have on?

WINNIE

We are not going to have this sort of discussion again. You know you have to look nice. Put on that dress and heels your brother brought you from Paris, and I don't want to hear a word about how your feet hurt.

Winnie exits.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Effie emerges from her room, wearing the outfit and looking displeased. She walks downstairs to see Lee and Carlson waiting for her.

CARLSON

Ready, Miss?

EFFIE

No. But I don't really have a choice, now do I?

LEE

Nope. But at least you look nice. A bit posh. That should be enough.

EFFIE

That's ridiculous. I feel ridiculous. I feel like I'm off to my funeral. They dress up the corpses before putting them in the ground. That's what they're going to do, you know. I get all dressed up and then they're going to put me in the ground.

CARLSON

I'm going to start the car.

Carlson leaves.

LEE

You sound absolutely idiotic. They would definitely change your dress before putting you in the ground.

INT. DOWNTOWN LA BOOKSTORE - DAY

A large group of people have shown up to the signing, all holding Effie's newest book entitled: *The Professional Girl*.

Effie is sitting behind a small desk with stacks of her books on either side of her and a few pens too. Lee stands behind her, accompanied by Winnie and Carlson. Effie and Winnie are the only ones who look nervous.

The bookstore manager is addressing the crowd and Effie looks back at Lee.

EFFIE

What am I supposed to say when they walk up?

LEE

Hello? I'm so happy you're here? Thank you for potentially taking a bullet for me?

EFFIE

You're the worst person, like, ever.

LEE

I'm insulted, really.

BOOKSTORE MANAGER

And, now, without further ado, I present Miss E.M. Mills!

The BOOKSTORE MANAGER steps aside and the line of readers surges forward, and Effie nervously looks at them.

FAN 1

Hi! I'm a huge fan. I couldn't believe you're actually at a signing-

Effie hurriedly grabs FAN 1's book and signs it. She hands it back.

EFFIE
Thanks for coming.

Fan 1 is awkwardly pulled away, obviously angry about his interaction with Effie.

FAN 2 approaches, even more bubbly than the previous fan. Fan 2 is wearing a shirt with the cover of the book printed on it.

FAN 2
H-hello! I have a tattoo of every opening line of all of your works. You are like a god to me.

Fan 2 drops her copy of *The Professional Girl* on the table in front of Effie and pulls up the side of her shirt to show of the very wordy tattoo.

Effie almost looks impressed. She opens the book.

EFFIE
Eh...thanks? What's your name?

FAN 2
Taylor.

Effie writes in the book.

Insert: Effie writes in the book: "One of your tattoos is spelled wrong. xx EM"

She hands it back to Taylor.

BOOKSTORE MANAGER
Next!

INT. DOWNTOWN LA BOOKSTORE-LATER THAT DAY

The line of customers has died down, only one person is left.

FAN 3 approaches with a blanket in her arms.

FAN 3
I wanted to give you this. Just to, you know, say thanks for all of your books. They really mean a lot to me.

Effie looks more than just a little wary but takes the blanket and unfolds it. It is a blanket with the covers of each of her books stitched into it.

EFFIE

Aw...well, that' just so adorable.
Must've taken a lot of work.

Effie hands the blanket to Winnie, who folds it up and places it on the pile of stuff fans have handed to Effie throughout the signing.

In a move surprising everyone, including herself, Effie gets up and hugs Fan 3, who starts crying and clinging to Effie. Lee eventually has to step in and pry Fan 3 away from Effie.

Effie signs a book and hands it to Fan 3, who is then ushered away.

LEE

What the hell are you doing?

EFFIE

The poor soul needed a hug.

LEE

You can't go around hugging people when...other certain people want to kill you.

EFFIE

Aren't I supposed to be interacting with people? That was your original job, wasn't it?

LEE

Yes, but that plan has been altered because you can't seem to keep your mouth shut. Funny little world, isn't it?

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Effie sits on the couch, surrounded by the stuff the fans have given her.

Lee sits with her, sifting through it.

LEE

You know, with all the books you spit out, you'd think that your fans would spell a bit better.

EFFIE

I've never gotten fan mail before.
This is so exciting.

Winnie comes in with another large stack of items, mostly letters, in her hands.

WINNIE

Well, if you hadn't scared off the postman with that dog. Kept trying to bite him every time he came up to the door. What was that creature's name?

EFFIE

Her name was Lola.

LEE

Like...your agent Lola?

EFFIE

I thought it was fitting. They're all a lot of bark, and an even nastier bite.

LEE

What happened to her?

EFFIE

Owen made me get rid of her. Said I couldn't control her. I think he just wanted to keep her for himself. She always liked him.

INSERT: Owen getting attacked by a large dog outside of Effie's home.

EFFIE

Anyway. I think I can finish reading these tomorrow. I'm a bit tired.

She stands up and starts to leave. This pushes a few letters to the ground. Lee bends to pick them up. One catches his attention.

Effie leaves and Lee looks at Winnie.

LEE

We might have a problem.

WINNIE

Hm? What do you mean? I thought she behaved so well today.

LEE
Not with Effie.

Lee hands Winnie the letter.

WINNIE
(reading the letter)
I finally got to see you today. You
looked so beautiful. I can't wait
to have you-

Winnie drops the letter.

WINNIE
Who was this from?

LEE
It must have been someone at the
signing.

WINNIE
They were all so close to her! They
could've-

LEE
But they didn't. They're playing
with us.

WINNIE
I have to tell Miss Mills-

LEE
No! She's finally making progress.
Just...let her sleep, or something.
Don't make her worry about this
right now.

WINNIE
You want me to lie to her?

LEE
No. I'm asking you to just not say
anything. There's a difference.

WINNIE
A very small one.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-DINING ROOM, A FEW DAYS LATER

Lee and Effie are sitting at the table, surrounded by small metal contraptions and C-4.

Effie has small tools in her hands and is building a bomb under Lee's guidance.

SUB: BOMB LESSONS

EFFIE

This is a really stupid idea, you know. You've seen the bombs I've built. I shouldn't be trusted with explosives.

LEE

That's why I'm teaching you. So you don't have to worry about blowing yourself up. Or anything of that sort. Who knows, maybe it'll save your life one day.

EFFIE

Not comforting. And I really hope I don't have to save anyone with a bomb.

She continues to fiddle with the mini-bomb in front of her on the table.

LEE

Don't do that!

He grabs it and throws it out of the window.

An explosion is heard and a bit of debris flies back into the dining room.

EFFIE

I told you this was a stupid idea.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - DAY

Effie is writing again at her desk. Books about drug cartels are spread all over the place, along with pictures of dismembered body parts and pictures of gang-related crime scenes.

Lee walks in.

LEE

Well...I shouldn't say that I'm surprised.

EFFIE

Isn't this exciting? I'm finally having a breakthrough on this next book. Who would have thought that being scared shit-less by a murderous CEO could really get those creative juices going?

LEE

I worry about you sometimes.

EFFIE

I am paying you to worry about me. So, good job then.

Lee turns to leave.

EFFIE

Wait! Could you hand me that picture?

She waves to a few pictures on her bed.

LEE

Which one?

EFFIE

The one of the head in the plastic bag. That one.

EXT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD BACKYARD - NIGHT

Lee and Effie are standing on the back porch. They both hold a remote control. Winnie and Carlson can be seen through the window, both looking nervous.

There are two small robots in the large lawn in front of them.

EFFIE

So...

LEE

You have to press the button to make it go. Like a toy. Just make it go.

EFFIE

Where did you even get these?

LEE

Asking questions gets you in trouble.

Effie pushes the buttons on the remote control.

One of the small robots moves across the lawn and goes toward the other robot. Effie hits the other button and her robot fires something at the other robot, making it blow up and spark.

EFFIE

How fun!

LEE

...you weren't supposed to kill my robot. I was supposed to give these back, you know!

EFFIE

Well, you should have told me that before you gave me the damn controller. And what was I supposed to shoot at if not the other robot? Hm?

LEE

I don't know. A fucking tree or something. Jesus Christ, those things cost 10 grand a piece.

Lee moves to pick up the ruined robot.

EFFIE

I'll pay for it.

Lee picks up the busted robot and shows it to Effie, unimpressed.

LEE

You better.

EXT. SUBURBAN LA STREET, OUTSIDE OF THE MILLS HOUSEHOLD
- DAY

Matt and Mikey are leaning against a car. They are staring at Effie's house.

MATT

I dunno, man. This just seems a little stupid.

MIKEY

Shut up. We're already in deep shit with Marco. Don't make it worse.

MATT

Not my fault. I just don't understand what that has to do with this broad.

MIKEY

Marco likes her books. He knows she saw them talking. Wants to play around with her a bit. Likes the chase. I'm serious, I think he's got a thing for her.

MATT

Man...that's kinda messed up.

Mikey hits Matt in the back of the head.

MIKEY

You're a fucking moron.

Effie opens the front door and slowly walks out onto her front porch. Lee can be seen behind her. They say something to each other that can't be heard.

Effie does her usual jump-around-to-pump-herself-up routine before dashing out into the front lawn to grab the morning paper. She has to dodge the strange lumps in her lawn. She then retreats back into the house.

MATT

What the hell was that?

MIKEY

I don't know, man. But you're telling Marco that the guy is still around. Might be a bit of a complication.

MATT

You suck, man.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie is on her bed, looking over crime scene photographs.

The news channel is on her television.

NEWSCASTER

...A mass grave has been discovered just outside Los Angeles this morning. While the identities of the victims have yet to be released, it is widely speculated that this is related to the string of disappearances over the last few months...

Winnie walks into the room, holding a stack of letters in her hands.

Effie turns off the television.

WINNIE

More letters arrived today.

EFFIE

Fan stuff?

WINNIE

Yes. Apparently, Lola's been hording letters like this for you at her office. These are just a few. You know, to get your feet wet.

Winnie hands the letters to Effie, who quickly opens a few of them.

EFFIE

(reading from a letter)

"Dear Miss Mills, I just wanted to let you know that your books keep me sane. I've been at Oklahoma State Penitentiary for almost ten years for a murder I didn't commit and I'd love it if you took a look at my case for one of your next books. I promise I didn't murder my wife-"

Effie sets down the letter and grabs the next one without finishing it.

EFFIE

"I saw you today. You looked really pretty. I want to touch your hair as you write and I want to smell your skin-"

Effie sets that letter down too.

EFFIE

Maybe I shouldn't take up replying to fan mail.

Winnie hands her one more letter.

WINNIE

Maybe they're not all that bad. If this one is bad, then, I won't pick these up from Lola anymore. I promise.

Effie opens the letter.

EFFIE

"I saw you today. You were afraid to leave your house. Like a scared little kitten. Is that what you are, Kitten? Scared of the outside world? You should be. You should be scared. Because I'm coming to find you. And we're going to have some fun. You never should have left your house."

Effie sets down the letter and looks at Winnie.

WINNIE

What was that?

EFFIE

I...don't know. I-I think I should call Lee.

WINNIE

(shouting into the hallway)

Lee!

Lee walks into the room.

LEE

What?

Effie hands him the letter. And he reads it before setting it down.

LEE

Shit.

EFFIE

Shit? Shit what? Just tell me that the stupid letter is just from some fanatic. Lee, please-

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Winnie and Carlson locking all of the windows.

Lee assembling a series of guns.
Owen coming into the house, followed by his security detail.
Owen and Effie fighting.
Lee giving Effie a gun.
Effie accidentally firing the gun, nearly hitting Lee.
Lee taking the gun away from Effie.

EFFIE

Sorry.

LEE

You're a moron.

Owen's security detail installing small cameras all over the house.
Lee and Carlson repositioning the cameras.
Owen and Lee staring at each other. The tension is obvious.
Effie stealing a gun back from Lee's collection.
Lee, Owen, Carlson, and Owen's security detail all over the house.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie is under the covers on her bed, obviously not asleep. She pulls the gun she took from Lee out from under her pillow and looks at it.

It is quiet in the house. Everyone else has gone to sleep or is being particularly quiet while standing guard. Effie sits up in bed, still holding the gun.

The sound of glass breaking is heard, followed by a screeching alarm.

The door to the bedroom opens and Lee hurries into Effie's room.

LEE
Come with me!

Lee grabs her wrist and drags her out of the room.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lee continues to drag Effie along until he comes to a door.
He opens it.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-SAFE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lee pulls Effie inside and closes the door behind him. His
guns are lined up on the walls, along with quite a bit of
other weaponry.

EFFIE
This was my mother's study!

LEE
Well, now it's your safe room.
You're welcome.

He spots the gun in her hand.

LEE
When did you get that?

EFFIE
I took it when you weren't looking.
You really need to be more aware of
your surroundings.

Lee takes the gun away from her. She tries to grab it back
but fails.

LEE
Your sense of humor is just fucking
stupendous today.

EFFIE
Hey! I could be using that to
defend myself against whoever just
broke my window-

LEE
Or-and this is the most likely
situation-you'd end up shooting
yourself in the face before they
even got the opportunity.

EFFIE
Are we really having this
conversation right now?

LEE
You started it.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-SAFE ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie is asleep on the floor.

Lee is propped up against the door, still holding a gun in his hand.

A knock is heard on the other side of the door.

CARLSON (O.S.)
All-clear.

Lee stands up and unlocks the door.

Carlson comes in, followed by Winnie, who looks a bit distraught.

LEE
What happened?

CARLSON
Someone just threw a brick through
a window. There was a note. I-

WINNIE
A note which we will not be giving
to Miss Mills under any
circumstances.

LEE
Why?

CARLSON
The police are here. They want to
speak to Effie.

LEE
I'll wake her up.

Lee walks over to Effie and nudges her with the toe of his boot.

LEE
Wake up.

EFFIE

Fuck off.

She rolls over.

LEE

We were only in here for ten minutes. I don't even know how you fell asleep! Get up! The police are here and need to talk to you about what happened.

EFFIE

I don't even know what happened. This is pointless.

Effie gets up and starts walking toward the door.

WINNIE

They just want to talk to you because you own the house. Simple stuff. I promise, Miss Mills. It'll be over before you know it.

EFFIE

I want chocolate chip pancakes in the morning.

WINNIE

Consider it done.

Effie walks out of the room.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Effie walks down the hallway, toward the stairs.

She walks down them.

Lee, Carlson, and Winnie follow behind her.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two policemen, DAVIDSON and BROWN, are seated on the couch. Owen and his security detail are staring at them.

Owen walks up to Effie.

OWEN

(whispering)

Keep your mouth shut.

EFFIE

Always the helpful one, Owen.

The police officers stand up and usher Effie into one of the seats. Davidson has a small notebook in his hands. On the top of one of the pages, it says "Mills, Effie."

DAVIDSON

Thank you for coming downstairs, ma'am. I'm Officer Davidson and this is Officer Brown.

EFFIE

Yeah, sure.

BROWN

Well, we're here obviously because your alarm went off when someone threw this brick through one of your windows.

Brown holds up a plastic bag that holds a large cement block.

EFFIE

Hm, how interesting.

Lee hits her in the back of the head without getting the attention of Davidson and Brown.

LEE

(whispering)

Sarcasm won't help. Just get them to leave.

EFFIE

So. Slow night at the precinct?

WINNIE

Miss Mills!

BROWN

We assure you, Miss Mills, that we are taking this very seriously. We know your past with-

Davidson clears his throat and shakes his head, cutting Brown off.

DAVIDSON

Don't.

EFFIE

No no. I want to hear this.

DAVIDSON

As he was saying, we're taking this case very seriously. We know you contacted emergency services a few days ago about an altercation you had with a group of men on...

He looks at his notebook.

DAVIDSON

...Myrtle Street at the Harbor. Do you happen to believe that these events are connected?

EFFIE

No.

BROWN

Elaborate.

EFFIE

Is that required?

DAVIDSON

It is highly recommended.

EFFIE

...why?

BROWN

Ma'am, are you trying to hide something?

EFFIE

No. I was rudely woken up by my alarm going off in the middle of the night and then shuffled off to the safe room by my bodyguard-

LEE

I am not your bodyguard!

EFFIE

-and now you're questioning me like I'm the one who threw the brick in the window.

DAVIDSON

Miss Mills, I apologize if we've offended you-

EFFIE
Apology not accepted.

WINNIE
Miss Mills, honestly.

EFFIE
What? I was raised to tell the truth.

BROWN
Are you trying to stall for some reason, ma'am?

EFFIE
I'm not stalling! And I'm a little insulted that you would assume that-

DAVIDSON
Just answer the question. Do you or do you not believe that there is a connection between these two events?

Effie looks at Lee.

EFFIE
No. No I do not. This is LA. People get bricks thrown through their windows all the time-

BROWN
Not in this neighborhood.

EFFIE
I just don't see what the big deal is. You can find the little punk who did it and I'll send him a signed first edition of my newest book. Thank you, goodnight.

She starts to leave.

BROWN
We'll be back to check on you, Miss Mills.

EFFIE
Fantastic. But don't expect such a warm welcome next time.

She leaves.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Effie is on her bed again, covered in her blankets, obviously a bit unnerved.

Lee comes in and sits on her bed.

EFFIE

If you're going to yell at me, you might as well get it all out now, I'm really tired.

LEE

I just wanted to say that I thought you did pretty well for an amateur tonight.

EFFIE

Aw, thank you for that backhanded compliment, Lee.

LEE

I mean it. But maybe next time, you don't antagonize the cops, Yeah? Just a thought.

EFFIE

Sounds a little boring to me.

EFFIE

Do you think that it is connected?

Lee pulls out a folded piece of paper and hands it to her.

LEE

Winnie didn't want you to have that. Want to tell me why?

Effie unfolds the note without looking at it.

EFFIE

When did you get this?

LEE

It was tied to the brick that came through your window.

EFFIE

(reading from the letter)
"Effie. I do hope you're enjoying your time, holed up in your house. I've been a fan of your works for such a long time-I just want to ask

(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
 you a question, just one: what
 would you do to keep your family
 safe? I'll make it easy on you,
 come out to play with me in a week
 and I'll make sure no one else gets
 hurt. -M"

She refolds the note and hands it back to Lee.

EFFIE
 M is Marco, isn't it?

LEE
 Really? Out of all of that, you ask
 who "M" is?

EFFIE
 I'm not good with dealing with
 emotions, remember? You really
 shouldn't be all that surprised by
 this. And honestly, for a
 billionaire CEO, he could've been a
 bit more covert. Like Batman.

Lee leaves.

Effie goes back under her covers and cries.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM-THE NEXT DAY

Effie is editing on the couch. Winnie is cleaning.

The doorbell rings.

WINNIE
 I'll get it.

EFFIE
 Thanks.

Winnie leaves.

Effie continues to edit on the couch.

Winnie comes back holding a package.

WINNIE
 It's for you.

Winnie hands Effie the package. Effie rips it open and
 screams, throwing it down. Severed fingers roll out of the
 box and around the floor.

WINNIE

Carlson! Carlson get in here right now!

Carlson and Lee run in.

CARLSON

What-what is it?

Lee bends down and picks up a finger. He then bends down and grabs a bloody note that had rolled out along with the fingers.

EFFIE

God damnit, Lee! That's so gross!

He unfolds it.

LEE

(reading from the note)

"You've proven that you can keep your mouth shut. But it's too late. Enjoy the souvenirs. See you soon." It's signed by M.

Effie picks up a finger.

EFFIE

Whose fingers are these?!

CARLSON

I think there are some thumbs in this mess too.

WINNIE

What is wrong with you people?

EFFIE

It's a logical question, Winnie. I want to know whose fingers I'm holding.

WINNIE

I'm calling the cops!

EFFIE

You can't!

Winnie grabs the telephone.

WINNIE

This is absolutely ridiculous, Miss Mills. You have to call the police. This cannot go on any longer-

CARLSON

Winifred, if you don't want Miss Mills to end up at the bottom of the ditch, I would recommend you put the phone down.

Winnie puts the phone down.

CARLSON

Good.

Effie continues to fiddle with the fingers and thumbs on the floor. She holds one out to Lee.

EFFIE

Do you think we could run these prints through a database and find out who they belong to?

LEE

Why?

EFFIE

I wouldn't want to be without my fingers. Dead or alive. I'd prefer to be a pretty corpse.

WINNIE

What is wrong with you?

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - SAME DAY

Effie is typing again at her desk. She is a bit excited.

The phone rings.

She picks it up.

INTERCUTTING

Effie in her bedroom, Lola in her office.

EFFIE

Hello?

LOLA

I hope for your sake that you're writing right now.

EFFIE

Hello to you too, Lola. And, despite your valiant efforts, I am still a recluse. Of course I'm writing.

LOLA

Well, good. Because I'm looking over the latest edits and I'm almost impressed.

EFFIE

It's always a pleasure talking to you, Lola. You're so inspiring. Truly.

LOLA

I hope you remember I'm going to see you in Seattle in a few days. You can't hide from me forever.

EFFIE

I'll see you in a week!

She hangs up.

Winnie walks in.

WINNIE

Well, I buried the fingers. They're under the tree in the backyard.

EFFIE

I thought we were gonna run the prints-

WINNIE

You were the one that didn't want to get the police involved-

EFFIE

But we could have had Owen or Lee run them. We could have-

WINNIE

No! You are in enough trouble as it is. We are not going to have you get arrested for snooping around in government databases-

EFFIE

Maybe that'd be a good idea. Being in jail-

WINNIE
This isn't funny, Miss Mills!

EFFIE
It's a little funny!

WINNIE
I didn't raise you this way!

Winnie leaves.

Effie sighs and goes back to her writing.

Lee comes in.

LEE
What was that about?

EFFIE
My sense of humor isn't for the faint of heart, I suppose.

LEE
She was really upset.

EFFIE
Just leave it alone, Lee! Don't worry about it!

The doorbell rings. Both Lee and Effie get up to answer it.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD, CONTINUOUS

Effie and Lee walk out of her room.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lee opens the door to see Brown and Davidson. Brown is holding a package.

LEE
Ah, what an unfortunate surprise.

He steps aside to let them in.

BROWN
This was on your front porch.

Effie takes it and sets it down on a table.

EFFIE

What are you doing here?

BROWN

We told you that we'd check up on you. Just doing our job.

Lee walks over to the package. He presses his ear to it before running to Effie. He grabs her hand and starts to drag her away.

LEE

Run!

SUB: THE BOMB

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lee tugs Effie behind the table.

An explosion is heard, debris flying throughout the house and raining down on Effie and Lee.

A large piece of debris hits Effie in the head, knocking her out.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT DAY

Effie is awake and on a hospital bed with a bandage on her head. Carlson and Winnie are with her.

DOCTOR GOMEZ comes in.

DOCTOR GOMEZ

You're free to go, Miss Mills. Just be sure to have Winifred look at that every few hours. You're very lucky to have a former nurse in your employ.

EFFIE

Thank you, Doctor Gomez. Always a pleasure.

Carlson helps Effie off the bed and Doctor Gomez leaves the room.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - SAME DAY

Carlson is walking in front of Effie and Winnie behind her. But Carlson quickly stops when he looks out of the hospital doors.

CARLSON

You need to take a deep breath for me, Effie.

EFFIE

What? Why?

CARLSON

There may or may not be a large crowd outside.

EFFIE

Excuse me?

WINNIE

Calm down, Miss Mills.

CARLSON

I just need you to be calm. I'll protect you.

EFFIE

Where's Lee?

WINNIE

Where's Owen?

CARLSON

They were both back at the house, trying to deal with the cops-

EFFIE

I'm not going out there.

CARLSON

You have to go out. You can't stay in here. The most I can do is pull the car around to the front of the steps, but they're still swarming.

EFFIE

You know how I feel about this, Carlson-

WINNIE

We'll protect you.

Effie looks out the door and, sure enough, there are a quite a few photographers and journalists stationed outside, cameras already flashing.

EFFIE

I'm not going out there. You can't-

CARLSON

You're leaving and you're going to be fine.

Carlson exits and Winnie tries to calm Effie down with little success.

Carlson comes back in.

CARLSON

Okay. We have to go.

Winnie and Carlson each grab one of her hands and start to lead her out of the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT, CONTINUOUS

Winnie, Carlson, and Effie step out into the parking lot and are instantly surrounded by the journalists and the photographers. The group of three try to push through the crowd.

PHOTOGRAPHER 1

Over here, Mills!

JOURNALIST 1

What happened at your house?

PHOTOGRAPHER 2

Show us what's under the bandage!

JOURNALIST 2

Is someone trying to kill you?

PHOTOGRAPHER 1

How is your next book coming? When is it due out?

Effie starts to hyperventilate. And she stumbles.

CARLSON

Come on, we're almost to the car!

WINNIE
Miss Mills-

They try to pick her up but can't because of the pressure from the building crowd.

The photographers and journalists get even closer to Effie. They effectively separate Winnie and Carlson from Effie.

PHOTOGRAPHER 2
Is she having a panic attack?

JOURNALIST 1
Are you all right, Miss Mills?

PHOTOGRAPHER 1
C'mon, give us a look, Mills!
This'll make the front cover!

Lee pushes his way through the crowd and pulls her to her feet. He then carries her to the car where Winnie and Carlson are waiting.

INT. CARLSON'S CAR, CONTINUOUS

Lee and Effie are in the back seat. Lee is holding Effie close as the car drives away from the hospital. A few of the photographers and journalists had followed Effie and Lee to the car and are nearly run over by Carlson.

LEE
Calm down. You're safe.
Everything's going to be all right,
okay?

EFFIE
I can't breathe.

Lee grabs one of her hands and places it over his chest and he places one of his hands on her chest.

He makes an exaggerated show of breathing.

LEE
Follow me. Hear my breathing. In
and out.

Effie tries to mimic his breathing but she's failing, and she's crying.

LEE

You can do it. Come on. Breathe
with me.

He continues to help Effie breathe as Carlson drives and
Winnie looks over them.

Eventually, Effie calms down.

EFFIE

Thank you.

WINNIE

Do you need some water?

She grabs a bottle of water and hands it to Effie, who
greedily chugs the entire bottle.

EFFIE

Where are we going?

LEE

Your brother's holed up in one of
the hotels downtown. Created a bit
of a temporary safe house for you
and him on an entire floor. He says
he's got a plan to clear this whole
thing up.

EFFIE

He's always been a bit dramatic.

LEE

Your house just blew up.

EFFIE

Was anyone else hurt?

CARLSON

Just a few bumps and scratches,
Miss.

EFFIE

What about the cops? Weren't they
with-

LEE

They might be dead.

WINNIE

I thought we agreed to not tell her
about that!

LEE

You two agreed to not tell her. I don't understand why you try to keep her out of the world. And lie to her.

CARLSON

Not lying. Just not telling the whole truth.

WINNIE

There's a difference.

EFFIE

How long have you guys been keeping stuff like this from me?

CARLSON

That really depends on what you mean by "stuff like this," you know.

EFFIE

You're not making yourself sound very good right now, Carlson. You too, Winnie.

WINNIE

We were just trying to protect you.

EFFIE

Well, considering that my house blew up and I'm on the run from a drug cartel, I can safely say that you've done an absolute shit job of protecting me.

The cars slows to a stop.

CARLSON

We're here.

LEE

Owen's on the sixth floor. I'll walk you up.

Lee gets out of the car and closes the door behind him.

EFFIE

Are you not coming up too?

CARLSON

No. We're staying down the street.
Owen said it was for safety
precautions or something.

EFFIE

You know I'm mad at you but that
doesn't mean I want to see you guys
get hurt. Come up with me.

WINNIE

Okay.

The door by Effie opens and Lee sticks his head in.

LEE

What's going on?

EFFIE

Carlson's going to park and they're
coming up with us. I don't like
them not being close.

LEE

All right, then. I'll wait in the
lobby. Hurry and park. Get off the
street.

He shuts the door.

INT. UPSCALE HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Effie, Winnie, and Carlson walk into the lobby. Lee is
sitting on one of the couches and stands up when he spots
them. He walks over to Effie.

LEE

We have to go. C'mon. Owen's
waiting and acting like a complete
twat.

Effie follows Lee to the elevator and Winnie and Carlson
follow.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Monotonous music plays as the elevator rises.

EFFIE

I hate elevator music.

The elevator reaches the sixth floor and the door opens.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The group step out into the hallway are immediately surrounded by men with guns.

SECURITY DETAIL 1

Oh, it's just them. Let them pass.

The men with guns step back and let the small group through.

LEE

Trigger happy yanks.

EFFIE

Don't push it. They're very trigger happy. And they have absolutely awful aim.

They stop in front of a door and Lee knocks twice.

The door opens and Owen steps out.

OWEN

About time you got here. I was ready to send out a search party for you.

INT. OWEN'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They all enter the room. More of Owen's security detail is in the room, looking out the window with binoculars, etc.

EFFIE

Right. Because your search parties work so well.

OWEN

That was one time. It wasn't my fault that the guy was actually in several pieces by the time we were assigned to protect him.

EFFIE

Comforting. So comforting.

She sees several pieces of her luggage in the corner of the room.

EFFIE

Am I going somewhere? I thought I was just-

OWEN

They blew up part of our house, Effie. I'm getting you out of the country. You're coming with me back to Paris for a conference.

EFFIE

I hate Paris. And I have a book tour.

OWEN

I don't think you have a choice. It's either Paris or getting blown up. And you didn't even want to go on this book tour!

LEE

What's wrong with Paris?

OWEN

She got lost there when she was a kid. Never fully recovered.

EFFIE

That's not the whole story and you know it!

OWEN

Anyway, as I was saying, you're going to Paris. There isn't a second option for you.

EFFIE

I'm not going to Paris! You can't make me!

WINNIE

Miss Mills, you're being a bit ridiculous right now.

EFFIE

I just...don't want to go to Paris. Okay?

LEE

I think it would probably be for the best if you went with your brother.

EFFIE

I can't believe you're taking his side!

LEE

You hired me to keep you safe.
You'd be safe in Paris. They can't
get to you there.

EFFIE

Fine. When do we leave?

OWEN

In the morning.

EFFIE

Fine.

OWEN

You're saying "fine" a lot right
now.

EFFIE

Fine.

She exits into the hall.

She comes back in.

EFFIE

Where's my room?

INT. EFFIE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Effie is sitting on the hotel bed, typing on her computer.
Her notes are scattered around her and some are slightly
singed.

A knock is heard.

Effie gets up and answers the door. Lee steps in and she
shuts the door.

LEE

Still writing?

EFFIE

Just because I'm getting shipped
off to a foreign country in the
morning like some unwanted
stepchild because some batshit
crazy weapons tycoon blew up my
childhood home doesn't mean I have
to change my habits.

LEE

Good point.

EFFIE

What're you doing here? Thought you were packing.

LEE

Just wanted to say bye. Since Owen won't let me tag along.

EFFIE

He's a bit of dick. Sorry about that. Wish you could come.

LEE

I had fun.

EFFIE

Me too.

LEE

You're way more troublesome than you're worth, though.

EFFIE

Always the charmer. Can't say I'll miss that.

They are both quiet.

EFFIE

Well, um, I...thank you for protecting me and getting back out in public. Even if it did result in me getting chased down by a group of crazies and part of my house being blown to bits.

LEE

Not my best work. But if you hadn't called the cops, I don't think your house would've been bombed.

EFFIE

Don't blame this on me. I really think that if you hadn't taken me to-

LEE

Goodnight, Miss Mills. It was a pleasure to work for you.

INT. EFFIE'S HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Effie is asleep.

A knock is heard.

Effie doesn't move.

The knock gets louder.

OWEN (O.S.)

God dammit, Effie. You were supposed to be awake twenty minutes ago!

Effie finally wakes up. She gets to her feet and answers the door.

EFFIE

Good morning, darling brother of mine.

OWEN

Are you even ready to go? The jet leaves in like an hour.

EFFIE

It's your jet. It can't leave without you.

OWEN

It's the agency's jet-

EFFIE

That you donated. Still, technically yours.

OWEN

-I can't just use it however I want. They need it back by next week for something. Going to Prague or whatever.

Owen steps into the hotel room.

EFFIE

When do we need leave? Like, at the latest?

OWEN

In seven minutes.

EFFIE

And how many seconds? I want to drag this out as much as possible.

OWEN

Go get dressed!

INT. UPSCALE HOTEL LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Owen and his security detail are chatting up the receptionist as Effie, Winnie, and Carlson sit with their luggage toward the back of the lobby.

EFFIE

I can't believe I have to be stuck on a plane with him for, like, fourteen hours.

WINNIE

Well, at least he said you'd have your own little safe house while they get everything sorted on this side of the ocean.

EFFIE

Because I'd hate to have to kill my brother on foreign soil. Might cause a bit of a shit storm for him-

WINNIE

Language!

EFFIE

Excuse me, it might cause a bit of a crap storm for him. My apologies, Winnie.

Owen and his security detail start to walk toward Winnie, Carlson, and Effie. Carlson notices this.

CARLSON

We'll meet up with you in a few days. Just need to sort out some things for you here.

Carlson and Effie hug.

EFFIE

I'll miss you.

CARLSON

We'll see you in just a few days.
You won't even know we aren't
around.

She hugs Winnie.

WINNIE

You'll be fine, Miss Mills. It's
just a few days.

EFFIE

Doesn't mean I won't miss you.

Owen's security detail takes all of the bags out of the
hotel lobby.

OWEN

Time to go, Effie.

Effie starts to walk away with Owen.

EFFIE

I'll see you guys later!

EXT. UPSCALE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Owen and Effie walk toward the back door of a large SUV. One
of the security guards is driving.

INT. OWEN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Effie and Owen get seated and buckled. The car pulls away
from the curb.

OWEN

We're already late.

EFFIE

I wasn't the one getting a blow job
from the pretty maid upstairs.
Learn to keep it in your pants if
you're already freaking out about
time.

OWEN

I was trying to relieve some
stress-

EFFIE

Punch a wall or something. Run around. Don't-

OWEN

Don't lecture me on what I can and cannot do. You're a damn shut-in.

EFFIE

And I'm free of STDs. Remember that gonorrhoea scare you had when you went away to Yale?

Gunshots are heard and the driver is shot. The SUV swerves and hits a lamp post. Effie screams. Owen and the other security detail officer are either unconscious, dead, or struggling to get their seat belts off.

EFFIE

Owen? Owen! Wake up!

The front of the SUV catches fire.

EFFIE

Owen, wake the hell up!

The door nearest Effie opens and she is hauled out by several men in masks.

EXT. LA STREET - CONTINUOUS

Effie is pulled from Owen's SUV across a busy street. Effie and her kidnapers almost get hit by several cars.

EFFIE

What the hell?! If you're trying to kidnap me, you might want to keep me safe!

They approach a van and the door slides open, revealing another man, KIDNAPPER 1, in the mask.

KIDNAPPER 1

Hurry up, man!

KIDNAPPER 2

We're trying! You were the one that said this needed to happen now - during the fuckin' morning traffic. Do you have a death wish or something?

They push Effie into the van.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Effie stumbles a bit, but is caught by Kidnapper 1. He quickly handcuffs her. The door to the van is closed and the van drives away.

EFFIE

This is ridiculous.

INT. HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Effie is pushed into a chair.

MARCO

Well, it is always a pleasure to meet one of my favorite authors.

EFFIE

Always a pleasure to meet a fan. Are you the one that has the finger fetish?

MARCO

It's not a fetish. That was a threat.

EFFIE

Right. Excuse me. Please continue.

MARCO

That mouth of yours is what got you here, you know. If you had just learned to keep those pretty lips of yours closed, you might still be able to stay hidden in your home and write to your heart's content. But you had to be a rat. And do you happen to know what happens to rats?

EFFIE

Uh-

MARCO

They get exterminated.

EFFIE

That was a terrible, terrible analogy.

Marco leans down near her and fiddles with her hair.

MARCO

I've always wondered what you looked like, you know, up close. What your hair feels like, if your eyes actually sparkle like they do in that stupid author's photo.

He sighs and sniffs at her hair.

MARCO

I can't believe you're finally here.

INT. LAX TERMINAL - SAME DAY

Lee is sitting in one of the many chairs, playing a game on his phone.

INTERCOM

British Airways flight 5398 to London, Heathrow is now boarding...

A new message appears on his screen. He taps it and a video loads.

Effie appears on the screen, tied to a chair, and looking a little beaten up but still ornery.

KIDNAPPER 1

Tell them what Marco said.

Effie stays silent until a hand reaches out and hits her.

EFFIE

Jesus. Ow. Okay. Fine. No need to get hostile.

KIDNAPPER 1

Get on with it!

EFFIE

So rude. Anyway, I'm supposed to tell you that we're going to play a game-jeez, isn't that copyrighted?

She gets hit again.

EFFIE

You have three hours to find me before my body parts start appearing all over the city. And you're supposed to bring any sort

(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
of evidence that we may or may not
have. Even if we did have
evidence--not saying that we
do--don't you think you blew it up
when you bombed my house? Just a
thought. I'm just saying.

KIDNAPPER 1
If you aren't here in three hours,
the first thing to go is her
tongue.

EFFIE
Aw, I like my tongue!

The video stops.

INTERCOM
...last call for British Airways
flight 5398 to London, Heathrow.

Lee stands up and leaves.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-BASEMENT - SAME DAY

Effie is still tied to a chair. Kidnapper 1 and Kidnapper 2
are still standing with her.

EFFIE
He's not going to come, you know.
You might as well give up. His
plane to London should've left
already.

KIDNAPPER 1
Are you saying you want us to just
hurry up and kill you?

EFFIE
Uh-

KIDNAPPER 2
Because we're getting really tired
of your smart mouth.

EFFIE
I've never really understood that
term: smart mouth. Like, can mouths
themselves be inherently smart? Or
is it-

She gets hit again.

KIDNAPPER 2

Shut up!

EFFIE

Jesus. Fine. But this is going to be a long three hours, I'm telling you that now. And I really don't think that Marco would appreciate you talking to me like that.

INT. MILLS HOUSEHOLD-LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Winnie and Carlson are sorting through the burnt remnants of the living room. The bomb appears only to have affected the living room and not much else of the house.

Lee barges in.

LEE

Has anyone touched Effie's room?

WINNIE

Aren't you supposed to be in London?

CARLSON

No. Except Owen and his goon squad when they came to grab her clothes.

Lee runs out of the living room.

INT. EFFIE'S ROOM - SAME DAY

Lee barges into her room which is a bit messier than the way she usually kept it.

Lee goes over to her desk to see most of her edits and inspirational crime scene photos gone.

He bends down, however, and picks up a packet of paper that had been wedged between the desk and the wall. It is labeled LA Rooks.

It looks like a bit of a wikipedia article. But Effie's handwriting is all over it.

Lee turns a page to see a map of the area with circles drawn all over it.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-BASEMENT

The kidnappers have brought down a television to watch while waiting for Lee to show up. They're watching something like *Keeping up with the Kardashians* with their backs to Effie who is still tied to a chair.

EFFIE

I really need to pee.

The two men don't respond to her.

EFFIE

Do you really want to clean my pee off the floor? Serious question right now.

Kidnapper 2 gets up and undoes her restraints and hauls her to her feet and drags her to a small door at the side of the room. He opens the door to reveal a small bathroom.

KIDNAPPER 2

You have five minutes and then I'm coming in after you.

EFFIE

Kinky.

She steps in and shuts the door in his face.

INT. LEE'S CAR

Lee is driving around LA with Effie's map in his hands. He drops it for a moment to pick up his gun and makes sure it is loaded.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-BATHROOM

Effie looks at the bathroom and then at the small window on the back wall. She looks at her surroundings and sees a small towel hanging on the wall. She grabs it and wraps it around her fist before walking toward the window. She flushes the toilet and turns on the water on the sink before punching the window with her towel-covered fist and she then quickly hoists herself through the hole. She gets stuck for a moment.

EFFIE

God dammit.

She manages to unstick herself and shimmy out of the bathroom.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Effie is surrounded by an upscale neighborhood.

KIDNAPPER 1 (O.S.)
 (from the bathroom)
 Time's up!

The bathroom door is heard opening.

KIDNAPPER 1 (O.S.)
 Ah, shit.

KIDNAPPER 2 (O.S.)
 Well, go get her, man!

Effie takes off running.

INT. LEE'S CAR

Lee is in the same neighborhood.

Effie runs in front of his car and he almost runs her over.
 He slams on the brakes.

EFFIE
 Lee! Oh my god!

She opens the door and gets into his car. He doesn't move
 for a moment.

EFFIE
 If you're not going to drive, get
 out of the car and let me!

Lee accelerates down the street.

LEE
 Where were you?

EFFIE
 I don't know. In a basement
 somewhere. How'd you find me? My
 maps?

LEE
 Yeah, sorta. That's-that's not even
 the point! How did you get out of
 there?

EFFIE

I used some of the moves you taught me.

LEE

Those weren't even real moves! That was shit I made up to placate you into going outside like a normal human being.

EFFIE

You tricked me?

LEE

Not the point!

Gun shots are heard. The bullets hit the tires and the engine. Lee manages to keep the SUV steady but they jerk to a stop.

LEE

Fuck.

EFFIE

No. Really? God. I did all that work, shimmying out of that window and you have to go and get us taken again. How much did I pay you? I want a refund.

The doors yanked open and Effie and Lee are both pulled out of their seats by Kidnapper 1 and Kidnapper 2.

EXT. UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Lee and Effie are thrown to the ground at Marco's feet.

MARCO

Well, I never expected a chase. But that counts as my cardio for the day, right?

EFFIE

Oh my god.

MARCO

Anyway, let's get you two back inside before someone tries to do something stupid.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-BASEMENT

Both Lee and Effie are tied to chairs now. Marco, Kidnapper 1, Kidnapper 2, Jack, and Drew are all in front of them now.

EFFIE

I hate you a little bit right now.
I want you to know that.

LEE

Good to know. I think I hate myself
too.

MARCO

So, aren't you going to beg? Plead?
Offer me lots and lots of money?

LEE

I find begging is a little
demeaning.

EFFIE

And, judging by that gigantic ring
on your finger, you have more money
than I do. So...no.

MARCO

Well, this is absolutely no fun.
Are you at least going to tell me
where you've hidden all of the
research you have on us?

EFFIE

What-

LEE

Nope.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Lee getting beat up. But he stays silent.

Effie getting beat up. But she just looks confused.
Jack and Drew looking exhausted.
Kidnapper 1 and Kidnapper 2 refusing to do anything.
Marco yelling at everyone.

Marco playing with Effie's hair again.

Lee and Effie staying silent.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-BASEMENT

Marco gives up and leaves the basement. He is followed by everyone but Kidnapper 2. Effie is unconscious in her chair.

LEE

Ah, you're on babysitting duty.
Lowest on the totem pole?

KIDNAPPER 2

(grunts)
Whatever, man.

LEE

Must be a blow to your ego.

Kidnapper 2 turns on the television and ignores Effie and Lee. Lee watches Kidnapper 2 for a moment before he starts to fidget in his seat. His hands are suddenly free from the ropes around his wrists. He keeps hold of some of the rope and sneaks up on Kidnapper 2 before wrapping the rope around his throat and pulling. Kidnapper 2 struggles but eventually goes limp. Lee turns up the television's volume before grabbing Kidnapper 2's gun. Lee pulls one of his small machines out of the lining of his coat and attaches it to one of the walls of the basement. Lee unties Effie and carries her up the stairs.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lee continues to carry Effie and keeps the gun ready.

Sounds of a television are heard. Lee gets closer to the front door. He takes a set of keys off the little nook by the door and quietly sneaks out.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE-GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

He unlocks the closest car and sets Effie down in the passenger's seat and buckles her in before sliding into the driver's seat.

INT. MARCO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lee starts the car and guns it through the closed garage door.

They race down the street. The kidnapers are rushing behind them on foot.

Effie comes to a few moments later.

EFFIE
What's going on?

LEE
I think you have a book signing to
get to in Seattle.

EFFIE
What about Paris?

Lee pulls out a small device and presses a button.

LEE
Don't worry about it.

There is a large and loud explosion behind them. They
continue to drive.

LEE (V.O.)
I hate my job.

THE END.

Credits roll.