

SCENE: "THE ACCIDENT" (NEW ORLEANS REVISION)

INT. MAYA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

[SCENE START]

The room is an island of suburban calm, lit only by the soft, warm glow of the under-cabinet lights. It smells of cinnamon and coffee grounds. The illusion is shattered by the three figures huddled around the small kitchen island.

MAYA, her face pale and drawn, paces the short distance between the stove and the sink. ELIAS stands perfectly still by the back door, a silent sentinel. JOSHAWA sits slumped on a stool, rocking slightly, his hands knotted together on the island. The swagger is gone, replaced by a raw, frantic energy.

The only sounds are the hum of the refrigerator and their own tense, furious whispers.

MAYA (whirling to face Joshawa, her voice a low, dangerous hiss) I ran the numbers, Josh. You saw them on my screen. I told you they were spiking. I *told* you to re-query before you even left the comms van.

JOSHAWA (His voice is thick, his Louisiana drawl heavy and fast; he gestures wildly with one hand) Mais, I did, cher! From the van, it looked good, I'm tellin' you! Pulled the query, came back clean. So I go down, place the charge on that nationalist pile'a bricks, right at the base. Ground level. Street was empty, Maya. It was

beau, like a picture.

MAYA But you didn't check again. On site.

Elias, who has been silent, speaks. His voice is flat, devoid of emotion, which makes the question cut even deeper.

ELIAS But the charge was live before you had confirmed real-time telemetry from the point of deployment.

Joshawa flinches, shooting Elias a venomous look before turning back to Maya, his voice pleading.

JOSHAWA I had the trigger in my hand when you called again. I see your new numbers light up my screen, seein' all them people move in... Non. I never armed it. I swear on my mother's grave, I didn't push nothin'. But that riot... you could hear it comin'. The flashbangs... one of 'em musta got lucky. A one-in-a-million shot, cher. Gotta be.

A floorboard CREAKS in the hallway.

Instantly, all three of them freeze. Their training takes over, transforming them from arguing colleagues into silent, coiled predators.

A small figure appears in the kitchen doorway, rubbing his eyes. It's CHRIS (7), small and vulnerable in his dinosaur pajamas. He squints in the low light.

CHRIS Mom? Are you okay? You're being loud.

Maya's entire posture changes in a heartbeat. The furious operative melts away, replaced completely by the gentle, concerned mother. She moves toward him, her voice softening into a warm, reassuring hum.

MAYA Hey, sweetheart. I'm okay. We're okay. We were just talking. Go back to bed.

Chris doesn't move. He points a small finger toward the front of the house.

CHRIS There's a really messed up truck on the lawn. Is... is everyone alright?

Maya kneels down, placing her hands on his small shoulders. She glances back at Elias and Joshawa, her eyes conveying a single, non-negotiable command: *Leave*.

MAYA (to Chris, her voice impossibly soft) Everyone's fine, baby. Joshawa just had a bit of an accident on the way here. We'll take care of it in the morning.

Elias gives a curt, almost invisible nod and gestures for Joshawa to get up. Joshawa looks at Maya, then at the small boy, a flicker of profound shame crossing his face. He rises silently and follows Elias toward the back door.

CHRIS (His voice thick with sleep) Oh. I hope he's okay.

The words, so full of simple, innocent empathy, hang in the air. Joshawa pauses at the door for a fraction of a second, his shoulders slumping further, before slipping out into the night.

Maya watches them go, then turns her full attention back to her son, a shield between him and the world she inhabits.

MAYA He's going to be just fine. Now, let's get you back to bed.

She takes his hand and leads him out of the kitchen, leaving the faint smell of cordite to mix with the scent of cinnamon in the quiet, empty room.

[SCENE END]