

TRUE BETRAYALS

Screenplay

By

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Based on the novel

By

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ACT ONE

INT. KELSEY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

OVER MUSIC and CREDITS: KELSEY BYDEN, 26, comes home, juggling the mail. Kelsey is beautiful, poised, and embodies the "Social Register" milieu that her family inhabits. She is flawlessly dressed for her museum docent job -- expensive but understated suit, fashionable scarf casually thrown around her neck, tote bag on her shoulder.

She stands at her kitchen counter. There's a large envelope from a law firm. She opens it -- the legal papers read "SUPERIOR COURT JUDGMENT: FINAL DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE." Kelsey pours a large glass of wine and gulps it, then considers her junk mail. Then, she notices a letter from "Three Willows Farm."

KELSEY
Three Willows Farm...?

She opens it, and finds a letter and a PHOTO -- of a little girl and her mother. The girl is perched on a fence with horses in the background. Kelsey reads the letter... and gasps...

EXT. PHILIP AND CANDACE'S GEORGETOWN HOME - NIGHT

Kelsey knocks on the door of the stately home. CANDACE BYDEN, (40s) Kelsey's step-mother, opens the door. Candace is uptight but kindhearted, beautiful and dressed impeccably.

CANDACE
Kelsey. What a surprise. I hope
you can stay for dinner --

KELSEY
Candace, where is he? Where's my
father?

INT. PHILIP AND CANDACE'S GEORGETOWN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey walks past her step-mother into the house.

CANDACE
Come in, sit down. Is this about
Wade--

KELSEY
No, it's not about the divorce.
And I don't want to sit -- I need
to talk to my father.

Kelsey finds her grandmother, MILICENT BYDEN, an imperial DC doyenne, sitting with a glass of sherry. Milicent wears a tailored suit. She embodies "old money."

MILICENT

This is no way to greet your family, Kelsey.

Kelsey kisses Milicent's cheek; they do love each other.

MILICENT

You look lovely, despite everything.

(tsks)

Such a good family, and such a nice young man...

KELSEY

For an adulterer.

PHILIP walks in, oblivious.

PHILIP

There's my girl. Just in time for dinner -- and to read a draft of my Byron chapter.

Kelsey turns to him, her eyes on fire.

KELSEY

She's alive. You've lied to me -- my entire life. My mother. The mother you said died when I was three - she's alive.

His eyes flash the truth -- and Kelsey sees it.

MILICENT

Where did you get an idea like that?

KELSEY

(pulling out letter)

From her. Tell me the truth. Is my mother dead?

PHILIP

No.

KELSEY

That's it? End of story? After all the lies you and Grandmother told me?

MILICENT

Don't speak to your father that way. It's far more complicated than you're making it out to be.

KELSEY

Then maybe someone can explain it.
(on second thought)
You know what, I'll let her explain it. She invited me to her farm.

MILICENT

Kelsey! Absolutely not.

KELSEY

I'm 26 years old. I don't need permission to meet my mother.

CHANNING, Kelsey's charming college-age stepbrother, arrives for dinner.

CHANNING

Kels! Mom. Philip, Grandmother.
Dinner ready?
(realizing)
Whoa, Byden family drama?

CANDACE

Come on, Channing, let's give Kelsey a moment. Milicent?

They leave with Milicent. Philip looks at the envelope.

PHILIP

Three Willows...
(explaining)
Her horse farm. Naomi always loved her horses.
(bleak smile)
I think the horses are what first came between us...

KELSEY

(heartfelt, imploring)
How did this happen, Dad?

Philip sighs, this is the conversation he has avoided all his life.

PHILIP

Naomi and I married too young. You were born, and she wanted to move back to Virginia. But my life was at Georgetown.

(MORE)

PHILIP (cont'd)
And I couldn't stand her racing
crowd -- jockeys, gamblers, crooks,
running around with other men....
We fought constantly. Then we
hired lawyers.

KELSEY
For custody? People divorce, Dad.
Children cope.

PHILIP
She didn't want you to see her.
Neither did I...

KELSEY
Because she was running around with
some men?

PHILIP
No. Because she killed one of
them.

The truth hits Kelsey and she gasps.

PHILIP
Because she spent ten years in
prison for murder. The last time I
saw her was in maximum security.
It was her idea -- she wanted you
to believe she was dead.

Kelsey tries to take it all in, shocked.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Stay here the night.

KELSEY
Not this time.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

Kelsey drives her stylish, older model BMW. The letter and
photo sit on the seat next to her.

NAOMI (V.O.)
Dear Kelsey, I realize this may be
a surprise. Now you are no longer
a child, and you have the right to
know your mother is alive.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Kelsey sits in her car and looks at the navigation system.

NAOMI (V.O.)

If you want to see me, or simply
have questions, my home is Three
Willows Farm, outside Bluemont,
Virginia.

There is a sign that says LONGSHOT FARM. Another sign points
to THREE WILLOWS FARM. Kelsey turns and follows the sign to
Three Willows.

NAOMI (V.O.)

You are welcome anytime for as long
as you'd like. If you don't
contact me, this will be the last
you hear from me. I hope the
curiosity you had as a child will
tempt you to at least speak to me.
Yours, Naomi Chadwick.

At a stop light, Kelsey stares at the photo. The light
changes, but Kelsey doesn't notice. A HONK from the antsy
driver behind her startles her.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - DAY

Kelsey gets out of the car and slowly walks up to the house.
The sunlight streams. She hears a laugh and sees her mother,
NAOMI CHADWICK, coming around the house. Still stunning at
(40s), Naomi was a wild girl in her time, but has been broken
by the vagaries of life. Underneath the rock hard exterior
is an abiding fear and a sense of fatalism.

She walks with rugged and sexy GABE SLATER. Gabe is a modern-
day Rhett Butler, sexy, cocky, lucky, and he knows it.
Gabe's arm is slung casually around Naomi's shoulders.

GABE

Naomi. You have company.

Kelsey looks at Naomi, and Naomi stares back. Silence.

NAOMI

Well. I didn't think I'd hear from
you so soon. Much less see you.

(beat)

We're about to have tea. Why don't
you join us?

GABE

(taking in the scene)

I'll take a rain check.

KELSEY
(cold and insecure)
That's not necessary. I shouldn't
stay long.

Naomi gestures to the chairs on the veranda.

NAOMI
We won't waste any time then. Make
yourself comfortable. I'll see
about the tea.

Gabe and Kelsey walk to the veranda as Naomi flees inside.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - LIVING ROOM (OR ALT) - SAME

Just inside the house, Naomi is nervous, takes a deep breath.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - VERANDA - DAY

Gabe sits lazily on a chair, and pulls out a deck of cards.
Absentmindedly, he shuffles the deck like a pro, and flashes
a smile fashioned to charm.

GABE
Naomi's a bit flustered.

KELSEY
(raises an eyebrow)
Is she?

GABE
Understandable. You surprised her.
I'm Gabe Slater. The neighbor.
You must be Kelsey.

Kelsey ignores him and looks out at the farm.

GABE
Quite a sight, huh? Three Willows
is one of the top Thoroughbred
farms in the country. Five horses
in the Derby since your granddaddy
bought the place and made it what
it is.

Gabe stretches out his legs. He has yet to take his eyes off
of her.

GABE (CONT'D)
You'd pull off the dignified act
better if you sat down and
pretended to relax.

KELSEY
Thanks, I'll stand.

Kelsey turns away and stares out at the expanse of the farm.
He shrugs, and enjoys the view. Naomi joins them.

NAOMI
Tea is on the way. Have a seat.

Kelsey ignores the request -- standing stiffly.

GABE
I'll be going. Jamison's expecting
me. Kelsey, it's been a pleasure.

Kelsey just nods. Gabe exits.

NAOMI
This must be horribly awkward for
you.

KELSEY
It isn't every day your dead mother
writes you a letter.
(blurts out)
Did you have to pretend to be dead?

Naomi pauses and searches for the right thing to say, knowing
it could make all the difference.

NAOMI
I wanted to protect you -- that's
all I wanted.

GERTIE, Naomi's kind, elderly housekeeper (60s), enters with
tea.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Kelsey, you probably don't remember
Gertie...

Gertie stares at Kelsey and her eyes tear-up.

GERTIE
You were just a baby the last time
I saw you, begging for cookies.

Kelsey has no recollection but offers a tense smile, humbled
by Gertie's reaction. Gertie exits.

KELSEY
I don't remember her. Or you.

NAOMI
I didn't expect you to.
(pouring tea)
Sugar, lemon?

KELSEY
(angry)
Is this supposed to be civilized?
Reunite over high tea?
(beat)
Why did you write me?

NAOMI
I'll answer your questions. But
please give me a chance before you
make up your mind.

Kelsey considers, then:

KELSEY
Did you kill that man?

Naomi refuses to make an excuse.

NAOMI
Yes. I did. I killed him.

Kelsey shakes her head, feeling Naomi's fatalism and refusal to offer up easy answers. Fed up, Kelsey turns to leave. Naomi stands up.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Kelsey, please stay. Just for a
few days. It's selfish, I know,
but I'm asking. I've paid my debt;
society has given me another chance
-- that's all I'm asking from you.

Kelsey turns back and looks at Naomi, knowing she has to stay to further answer her own questions.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - EVENING

Establishing shot of the sun going down.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - HALLWAY - EVENING

Kelsey follows Gertie up the stairs.

GERTIE
The first door is Naomi's, the
second one's yours. I hope you
still like pink.

INT. KELSEY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Gertie opens the door and it's been kept exactly as it was -- decorated for a three year old with a day bed.

GERTIE

Naomi kept it the same.

Kelsey sees a child's bed spread and doll. She gently touches the doll, deeply moved. Naomi stands in the door holding some clothes, watching Kelsey.

NAOMI

I think these should fit.

Kelsey and Naomi lock eyes.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Kelsey, in a nightgown, walks upstairs carrying a cup of tea. She passes Naomi's closed door. She is surprised by the sound of moaning - Naomi is with a man behind the door.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - KITCHEN - MORNING

Kelsey comes down for the morning and pours some coffee. Naomi sees Kelsey looking out the window at the horses. Naomi looks at Kelsey with a heartbroken smile -- a quick, private moment.

NAOMI

I'm heading down to the stables.
Want to join me?

KELSEY

Sure.

Naomi hands her some boots from a pile by the door.

NAOMI

Try these.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - STABLE - MORNING

They walk in awkward silence.

KELSEY

I guess when you said "farm" I
didn't realize it was such a large
operation.

NAOMI

We're hoping to send a horse to the
Derby this year.

(MORE)

NAOMI (cont'd)
His name's Pride, Virginia's Pride.
I haven't been this sure in a long
time...

(looking at her)
But this probably isn't what you
drove down here to hear.

KELSEY
...No, it's interesting. I took
riding lessons. Dad hated it...

She trails off as she puts it all together.

NAOMI
How is he?

KELSEY
Good. Chairman of the English
Department at Georgetown. He's
been married for almost ten years,
they're good together. I have a
step-brother I love.

NAOMI
Your father's a brilliant man. And
a good one.

KELSEY
But not good enough for you.

NAOMI
I was never good enough for him.
(then)
I wasn't sure you'd come, Kelsey.

KELSEY
Neither was I. I might not have if
Grandmother hadn't been so against
it.

Naomi bites her tongue. They arrive at the stables.

NAOMI
Here we are. We're mating today.
Three Willows and Gabe's farm,
Longshot.

MOSES WHITETREE, Naomi's trainer, holds the reins of the
mare, who wears a thick "jacket" to protect her back.

NAOMI
Moses, this is Kelsey, my daughter.
Moses Whitetree, my trainer --

As Kelsey shakes his hand, Gabe unloads a stunning and highly agitated stallion off a trailer with the help of grooms, MICK (60s) and LIPSKY (30s, track rat-ish). Gabe looks sexy and in control as he holds the reigns of the stallion. Kelsey reacts to the sight of Gabe and the sight and smell of the horses.

Moses hands the reigns of the mare to one of his grooms and Gabe hands the reins to Mick. Mick and the groom take the horses into the barn (out of sight.) Gabe stands next to Kelsey and takes her in.

KELSEY
(re: the horse)
What's the jacket for?

GABE
The stallion gets a little out of control. Sometimes he bites the mare.

They hear the stallion NEIGH O.S. They lock eyes. He smiles, a slow smile that is both arrogant and charming -- he knows what she's thinking. Kelsey is blushing and embarrassed, they both know what the other was thinking.

Moses approaches Gabe and speaks quietly, nodding towards Lipsky, who is loafing about.

MOSES
Gabe, I don't mean to tell you how to run your farm, but I don't like drunks around my horses.

GABE
Lipsky again? Excuse me.

Angry, Gabe walks to Lipsky and gets in his face.

GABE
I warned you. Now go back to Longshot, get your paycheck and get out.

LIPSKY
You don't tell me what to do. You cheated and lied your way into this, Slater. I'll be here when you're back at the craps table.

GABE
I don't write checks to drunks. You're out.

Furious, Lipsky swings at Gabe and Gabe ducks -- like he's done this a thousand times, and trips Lipsky. Lipsky goes down. A few grooms chuckle.

Gabe turns and walks away -- locking eyes with Kelsey. His troubled expression turns to a smile at the sight of her. She smiles back.

On the ground, humiliated and drunk, Lipsky licks his wounds. Then his humiliation turns to anger, and he reaches into his boot.

Kelsey's smile turns to a look of panic --

KELSEY

Gabe --

Gabe turns around, just in time - because Lipsky has a knife and lunges for Gabe. Gabe dodges but gets nicked in the arm. He starts to bleed. Gabe ignores the pain and yells to the other grooms who gather.

GABE

Get back. Walk away, Lipsky.

As they spar, Lipsky's hand trembles as he rethinks this incredibly bad plan. Gabe suddenly seems like the rough street-fighter he once was.

GABE (CONT'D)

You wanna take me on? You'll need the knife.

Lipsky hesitates, but is too ashamed to back down. No one sees it coming when Gabe POPS Lipsky in the nose, hard. The knife goes flying. Lipsky hits the ground.

GABE (CONT'D)

Get him out of here.

MICK

Yes, Mr. Slater.

GABE

Sorry, Naomi, I should have waited to fire him till we got back to Longshot.

NAOMI

Then we would have missed the performance.

(sees bleeding arm)

Let's clean that up.

GABE

That my cue to say it's just a
scratch? I'd much rather be nursed
back to health by you girls.

He is such an incorrigible flirt. Naomi wryly offers Gabe a
handkerchief for his arm.

NAOMI

Sorry I don't have a petticoat to
rip up.

Laughing, Gabe takes the handkerchief. Kelsey tries to gauge
their relationship. Gabe turns to Kelsey.

GABE

Thanks to you I don't have a knife
in my back. Can I pay you back --
give you a tour of the track? You
can see my colt outrun your
mother's -- a little precursor to
the Derby.

Gabe and Naomi smile, but they are interrupted by Kelsey's
confusion and agitation:

KELSEY

(agitated)

I'm sorry, but you're just going to
let him go? No police? That's it?

Naomi looks away. The police are the last people she'd call,
but Kelsey does not understand -- yet. Gabe does.

NAOMI

I prefer not to.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - EARLY MORNING

Moses and a groom load a stunning horse, VIRGINIA'S PRIDE,
into the trailer in the morning sun. Naomi pets the horse.
Kelsey comes out and watches.

NAOMI

This is Pride -- Virginia's Pride.
I was there the day she was born,
trained her myself.

(then)

I worried you'd be gone by now,
after yesterday...

KELSEY

You just stood there...

NAOMI

A lifetime ago, I would've called the police. I don't expect you to get it.

KELSEY

(seeing Naomi's hurt)
It's none of my business.

NAOMI

It is your business, Kelsey. It is now.

(beat)

I wasn't afraid when they came to arrest me. I was so sure they'd end up looking like fools. I wasn't afraid in the interrogation room, in the chair designed to make you squirm. I didn't squirm. I'm a Chadwick. But the fear creeps in... By the time I left that room, I was afraid. Through the trial, the headlines, the stares, I was afraid. When they read the verdict, I pretended to be calm, but I could barely breathe.

(pause)

I can't ever call the police again.

Kelsey takes it in. The trailer is ready.

NAOMI

You ready?

EXT. TRAINING TRACK - SHEDROW - EARLY MORNING

Dawn is ethereal and transporting at the track. Horses are unloaded by dedicated grooms. Naomi and Kelsey walk.

KELSEY

It's amazing...

NAOMI

Most people only see the two minutes around the oval and money changing hands.

KELSEY

I always thought of racing as gamblers and fat cigars. But the quiet, the empty grandstands... it's not what I pictured.

BILL CUNNINGHAM, an owner in an expensive suit, sees Naomi. He waves and approaches. His girlfriend, wearing heels, a hat and a dress, peels off, not wanting to interact with Naomi and Kelsey (who are dressed like the trainers/grooms).

NAOMI (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Cunningham. He spotted us.
Sorry...

BILL CUNNINGHAM

Naomi. What's this beautiful sight?

NAOMI

My daughter, Kelsey. Bill Cunningham.

BILL CUNNINGHAM

(winks)

Daughter? You mean sister.

Bill Cunningham points to a horse being unloaded from a trailer.

BILL CUNNINGHAM (CONT'D)

My new horse. Big Sheba. Got her at a claiming race at Hialeah. She'll be my first Derby winner from my new farm.

Naomi just smiles. Cunningham moves on.

NAOMI

He lost his old farm in a poker game. To Gabe.

KELSEY

Longshot?

NAOMI

(nods)

You find all types here. The only thing that unites us is our irrational love of horses. You have the NetJet flying owners and their wives decked to the nines, the jockeys, who're full of attitude --

She nods at Cunningham who is lecturing his annoyed jockey.

NAOMI

The Ivy League vets, the trainers --
probably the most important people
in the picture --

Moses walks Pride out past a few hungover track rats standing around, waiting for an opportunity.

NAOMI

-- down to the track rats sleeping
in the shedrow, hustling work for
enough money to drink or bet the
next day.

KELSEY

What are you?

Gabe walks up.

GABE

She's an owner who acts like a
trainer. All those big hats and
mint juleps don't sit well with
Naomi.

NAOMI

And I don't sit well with the big
hats.

They share a knowing look.

GABE

They're not so charmed by our
police records.
(looking at Cunningham
lecturing jockey)
I see Cunningham's at it again.

Naomi shakes her head. Gabe turns to Kelsey:

GABE

You ready for your tour?

NAOMI

(exiting)
When you're done, give Kelsey a
ride home?

Gabe takes Kelsey by the arm. Kelsey reacts to his touch, hesitant, but excited. They walk to the edge of the track where Pride is running around the track, fast. Moses watches with a stop watch. Gabe pulls out his well-worn deck of cards and plays with it.

KELSEY

Pride?

RENO, Pride's jockey, rides Pride up to them. Gabe and Reno spar in a friendly manner.

GABE

Yup. One win away from getting to the Derby...

RENO

Don't worry, Slater, we'll be there.

GABE

Reno Sanchez, one of the best jockeys on the circuit. This is Naomi's daughter, Kelsey.

RENO

The best. Nice to finally meet you, Kelsey.

GABE

Think you can pull off an another upset?

RENO

We're the favorite, my friend, read the blogs. It's your horse who'll have to pull off the upset.

Gabe chuckles and Reno winks at Kelsey and rides off.

GABE

He won the Belmont two years back. Everybody called it the surprise of the year -- an apprentice jockey and a long-shot colt. Let's see if he can do it again with Pride.

KELSEY

So when do you hear if you're going?

GABE

You got a few more races, Santa Anita, the Blue Grass Stakes, that'll decide it... They don't make it official till the Wednesday before, but we've been racing them all year, it's a small scene, so you usually know.

KELSEY

And what do you win, other than bragging rights and a blanket of roses, right?

GABE

A million dollars. Plus a shot at the Triple Crown -- the Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes. I will tell you with authority there's only one horse that can beat Pride this year.

(points, with a big, boyish smile)

Mine. Double Or Nothing.

DOUBLE OR NOTHING runs by. He is stunning, and fast. Jockey JOEY rides Double. JAMISON, Gabe's trainer, watches, clocking. He reacts to the time, looks good. Kelsey takes it in, mesmerized by the passing spectacle.

KELSEY

It almost doesn't look real.

GABE

Twenty horses get a shot, only one wins, out of the 37,000 foals born every year. Some seriously long odds.

KELSEY

You grew up doing this?

GABE

(laughs)

Hell, no. I used to muck stalls for that son of a bitch Cunningham. Rode his horses too hard and paid us too little. Got into some trouble and had the bright idea to gamble his way out -- literally bet the family farm. I drew an inside straight -- won Longshot.

KELSEY

Wow. Quite a hand.

GABE

I'm lucky.

(he smiles at her, then:)

Take a look --

Big Sheba comes racing around. Her jockey whipping her to go faster.

GABE
You see the stick? The sweat?
Imagine what he'll do to her in a
race.

KELSEY
That's awful --

GABE
He's doing what he's been told.

KELSEY
They should have rules...

GABE
We've got plenty. None say you
can't push a horse past its limit.
Cunningham wants the Derby so bad
he'd kill his filly to get there.

They have walked to a secluded spot on the track. Gabe looks
at her, and they drink each other in.

GABE (CONT'D)
I haven't thanked you properly for
saving my life.

KELSEY
It was nothing.

In a spontaneous moment, Gabe leans down and kisses her.
For an instance she kisses back. Then she pulls away,
panicked.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
Wait. Stop. What are you doing?
Don't touch me. What am I doing?

GABE
Kissing.

KELSEY
How could you do this? At least I
have the decency to stop.
(computing)
Is this a game to you? Score the
mother and the daughter...? Some
kind of bet?

GABE
(confused)
You think I'm sleeping with Naomi?
I'm flattered --

Disgusted, Kelsey backs away, glaring at him with contempt.

KELSEY

Who are you?

GABE

(angry now)

You have no idea. You don't meet people like me in your comfortable little world, do you, Kelsey?

(taking her arm)

I'll take you back.

KELSEY

No. I'll find my own way home.

Kelsey walks away, leaving Gabe angry at her and himself.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - FENCED AREA - DAY

Horses graze. Naomi checks out a filly's leg and then feeds her a treat. Kelsey walks up the driveway, looking filthy, exhausted and upset. There's a bench overlooking the fenced area. Naomi climbs through the fence to join her.

NAOMI

Kelsey... Where'd you come from?

KELSEY

I got a ride home with a groom.

NAOMI

What happened?

KELSEY

(disgusted)

How can you...?

(finally)

Gabe kissed me.

NAOMI

Sit down.

(Kelsey doesn't move)

Or don't sit down. I'll sit down.

I know you might be raw from your divorce, but--

KELSEY

Your boyfriend made a move on me.

NAOMI

(laughs)

I'm sorry to laugh. But Gabe is not my boy-

KELSEY
(embarrassed)
I walked by your room last night.
I couldn't help... hearing.

NAOMI
Oh. This is awkward. Kelsey, I
have one man in my life, and it's
not Gabe -- it's Moses.

Kelsey is speechless for a moment.

KELSEY
Moses. Your trainer.

NAOMI
We've been together for 15 years.
Given my past, I like to be
discreet.

Kelsey realizes with horror the error of her assumption.

KELSEY
Oh God.

NAOMI
I'll call Gabe and explain.

KELSEY
No... don't. I'll do it. I
thought you were together, and then
when he... and I...

NAOMI
You didn't know. You did what you
thought was right.

KELSEY
You're making excuses for me.

NAOMI
(quietly)
I'm your mother.

Kelsey sits next to Naomi on the bench, looking at the
horses.

NAOMI
When you were little I'd sit you up
on this fence. You loved the
foals.

KELSEY
It's the photo you sent me.

NAOMI

They're something aren't they? See
the black one sunning herself?

Naomi points to filly, Naomi's Honor.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Naomi's Honor. A champion. Knew
it when she was born.

KELSEY

How can you tell?

NAOMI

It's in her eyes. She'll have to
be fast and strong, and she will
be. But it's how she handles the
fear. The bell, the gate, the
crowds. It's all how you handle
the fear.

EXT. LONGSHOT - PORCH - DAY

Gabe watches a horse in the paddock outside.

RICH SLATER (O.S.)

Fine looking filly.

Gabe turns around, and sees RICH SLATER, 60s, showing every
inch of his alcohol-soaked existence.

GABE

I don't want you on my land or
anywhere near me.

RICH SLATER

(feigning hurt)

Now, Gabe, is that any way to greet
your old man?

GABE

How much do you want this time?

RICH SLATER

(vicious)

You forget who put a roof over your
head, boy?

GABE

I haven't forgotten you smacking me
around. Now, how much is it gonna
cost me to make you disappear?

He opens his wallet and pulls out a blank check and starts to write it out.

RICH SLATER

I have debts to pay back in
Chicago. A little trouble.

GABE

You got caught cheating and now
they're looking to blow off your
kneecaps? Five thousand will have
to cover it.

RICH SLATER

It's not enough.

GABE

It'll have to be.

RICH SLATER

(hatred apparent)

I raised a coldhearted son of a
bitch. You're an alley cat, Gabe.
Always will be.

(finger in Gabe's chest)

Don't matter if you live in a fine
house and screw fancy women --
you're still a stray.

GABE

(hands check)

Stay away from my house and my
horses, or I'll call Chicago
myself.

Rich takes the check and leaves, throwing his son a look --
like a snake waiting for another time to strike.

As Gabe fumes, he sees Kelsey get out of a beat up pick-up
and walk toward him (she does not see Rich).

KELSEY

Hi. Have you got a moment...? I'd
like to talk.

GABE

(cold)

So? Go ahead.

Kelsey, slightly piqued, stalls with some small talk:

KELSEY

Your place is beautiful. Reminds
me of Three Willows.

GABE
Did you come for a tour?

KELSEY
No.
(finally)
I came to apologize.

GABE
For?

KELSEY
For my behavior yesterday.

GABE
You demonstrated a lot of behavior
yesterday. Can you be more
specific?

KELSEY
(fed up)
You're cold and arrogant, Slater.

GABE
That's quite an apology, Kelsey.

KELSEY
I apologized, and you didn't have
the decency to accept it.

GABE
You said it yesterday, I lack
decency. You debutantes are hung
up on being decent. No wonder
you're so uptight.
(off her hurt look)
Sorry. That came out wrong.

He feels chagrined and she feels understanding.

KELSEY
Never mind.

GABE
Naomi set you straight?

KELSEY
(nods)
Look, I feel like an idiot saying
this, but I've had a lot of changes
recently -- I just got divorced,
met my mother who I thought was
dead.

(MORE)

KELSEY (cont'd)
I don't think I can handle new
emotional entanglements. Friends?

She offers her hand to shake, but Gabe instead interlocks his fingers in hers. He turns her hand over and kisses the palm and watches as her eyes go smoky.

GABE
No. I think you can handle it. I
want you. And I'm gonna have you.

Kelsey snaps out of it, her eyes flashing with annoyance.

KELSEY
Don't bet on it.

Kelsey pulls herself away and leaves.

EXT. LONGSHOT STABLES - DAY

Mick enters a stall marked "Double or Nothing" with a kit.

MICK
(clicks tongue)
Well now, Double... First place
Keeneland... Earned your trip to
Churchill Downs.
(whistles)
Not bad for a minute fifty seconds
round the oval.... Now let's look
at that flank --

Mick hears a sound in the corner. He looks up.

MICK (CONT'D)
(angry)
Mr. Slater doesn't want you here
anymore.

EXT. LONGSHOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Gabe leads Naomi, Moses, and Kelsey (still sore from their last encounter) down a path towards the stables. Gabe carries a bottle of champagne.

GABE
I know it's not official for a few
more weeks, but I thought we all
deserved a toast.

NAOMI
What are the odds that we'd each
have a horse in the Derby?

MOSES

When you run the two best farms in
the east, not that long.

KELSEY

(giving Gabe a hard time)
Yeah, well, I know who I'm betting
on.

GABE

Get ready to lose that lovely
little shirt of yours.

There are some rocks on the path.

GABE (CONT'D)

Watch your step.

Instinctively, Gabe steadies Kelsey by the arm. Kelsey
quickly shrugs him off.

Moses and Naomi speak quietly re: Gabe's feelings for Kelsey:

MOSES

(sotto)
Wonder if she sees what's going on.

NAOMI

(smiles)
Wonder if he does.

INT. LONGSHOT - STABLE - LATE AFTERNOON

Gabe sees that Double's box is open. Double is bleeding.

GABE

Stay back.

KELSEY

Oh my God.

Double rears and Gabe shoves Kelsey out of the way just in
time. He thrusts the halter in her hand.

GABE

Hold him.

Naomi and Moses rush in. Then they see Mick, lying on the
ground, covered in blood.

KELSEY

Gabe!

NAOMI
It's Mick.

MOSES
I'll call an ambulance.

GABE
It's too late.

NAOMI
Did Double kill him?

Gabe gently rolls Mick over -- and they see the knife wound
in his abdomen.

GABE
No. But somebody did.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. LONGSHOT STABLES - NIGHT

CRIME SCENE UNITS (CSUs) work the crime scene. Kelsey stands with Naomi.

KELSEY

Did you know him well?

NAOMI

Mick's been around a long time. He was harmless, just a sweet old groom. Who would've done this....

KELSEY

The police will find out.

Naomi reacts silently to the assumption; Kelsey clocks it. Jamison approaches.

JAMISON

The Lieutenant wants to ask you some questions, Kelsey.

KELSEY

(quietly to Naomi)

Why don't you go home?

Naomi nods and leaves.

EXT/INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Kelsey approaches LT. ROSSI, 30s, good-looking, brooding and ultra professional, as he interviews Gabe.

LT. ROSSI

Any idea who would want to hurt Mick Gordon?

GABE

No... Unless someone was going after the horse and Mick got in the way.

LT. ROSSI

The horse ok?

GABE

He'll race in the Derby in May.

LT. ROSSI

Can you think of anyone with a grudge against the horse's owner?

GABE

Take a number... I just fired an employee, Fred Lipsky. He was plenty pissed.

LT. ROSSI

Derby's a big deal around here. I understand Naomi Chadwick has got a horse going?

KELSEY

That's my mother. I'm Kelsey Byden.

LT. ROSSI

Lieutenant Rossi. I just have a few questions.

(checks notes, to Kelsey)

Ms. Chadwick was with you when the body was found.

KELSEY

Yes.

LT. ROSSI

She has a record... Served some time?

KELSEY

(not hiding her annoyance)

What does that have to do with Mick?

LT. ROSSI

Why don't you let me ask the questions.

GABE

(protecting Kelsey)

As long as we keep it friendly.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - RINK - DAY

Naomi expertly longes a horse. Kelsey watches. In the bg, a security guard patrols -- we feel the increase in security.

KELSEY

You're a real expert.

NAOMI

Learned everything from my Dad. He grew up on this farm, made me start at the bottom -- mucking stalls for 25 cents a day.

KELSEY
Wow. Tough love.
(pause)
The police were back this morning.
I think they're done.

Naomi walks the horse out of the rink.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
The cop asked about your record.
You ever worry about that?

NAOMI
People will believe what they want.
In any case, let's let sleeping
dogs lie.

Kelsey is not so sure this dog is sleeping... Naomi sees
Kelsey watching her with the horse.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
You want to help out, just grab a
shovel. No one's stopping you.

KELSEY
You sure?

Naomi stops, realizing that Kelsey is serious. Naomi's
fondest hope is coming true, but true to her nature, she
plays it cool.

NAOMI
Moses'll be happy to order you
around.

INT./EXT. THREE WILLOWS STABLE - DAY

There is a cot outside for a guard to watch the horse at
night. The security guard passes by a stall.

Inside, Kelsey mucks the stall.

Reveal Gabe standing in the door, rubbing the horse's neck as
he watches Kelsey from behind. She turns around, busting
him. He smiles in an infuriating way.

GABE
Haven't seen you around in a couple
of days. Miss me?

KELSEY
Not particularly.

GABE

Moses says you've been getting up at five every morning...? Learning how to longe a horse...

Gabe gets closer to her, and the sexual tension is palpable.

GABE (CONT'D)

I always say, nothing sexier than a girl mucking a stall.

KELSEY

You're really going to make a move on me standing on a pile of manure?

GABE

This is nowhere close to a move. But speaking of moves, I'd like to take you out tonight. A date. I realize I've neglected that particular ritual with you.

KELSEY

A date? Friends don't usually do that but... I wouldn't mind seeing a movie. Maybe a pizza after.

GABE

A movie and pizza. OK -- but "not a date."

KELSEY

Do I get to pick the movie?

GABE

Sure. Just no subtitles.

KELSEY

On a first date? What kind of woman do you think I am?

Gabe smirks: "first date." Naomi enters.

NAOMI

If you can tear yourself from fraternizing with the competition, Kelsey, you've got a visitor.

Channing stands in the door to the barn, dressed for Palm Beach. Gabe checks him out suspiciously.

KELSEY

Channing!

Kelsey drops the shovel and runs and throws her arms around Channing, cracking Gabe's heart. Naomi notices and smiles.

ANGLE ON:

KELSEY

What are you doing here?

CHANNING

Thought I'd check the place out on my way to Florida.

(takes her in)

You look like an ad for country living.

He slings an arm around her. Channing glances at Naomi.

CHANNING

(sotto)

Don't tell me that's your mother. Wowzers.

KELSEY

Come on, I'll introduce you.

Gabe glares jealously.

GABE

(sotto)

You know anything about this clown?

NAOMI

Calm down.

KELSEY

(approaching)

Naomi, Gabe, this is Channing Osborne, my stepbrother.

Gabe relaxes and smiles. Naomi smiles at Gabe, "told you."

NAOMI

Welcome to Three Willows.

CHANNING

You've got a great place here.

NAOMI

I hope you can stay a bit.

CHANNING

I'm just heading south for spring break.

KELSEY

Putting his pre-med training to work on the bikini-clad girls of Palm Beach.

CHANNING

Animals sound much more manageable -
- they don't complain as much as people, right? Am I breaking something up?

NAOMI

You're just in time for lunch.
Kelsey, why don't you take Channing up to the house?

Channing and Kelsey walk, his arm slung around her shoulder.

CHANNING

Look at you.

KELSEY

Forget Florida, stay here. I'll teach you how to muck a stall.

CHANNING

(considers)

Why not? I can fall in love with the country life and become a vet instead of the surgeon. The Byden's seem due for a small scandal.

KELSEY

(laughs)

Don't worry, I have that covered.

Off Kelsey, thrilled to have him there --

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

In a dingy hotel room off Route 15, Lipsky gulps down gin.
He is desperate and a mess. Rich stands, calm.

LIPSKY

I was just going to take care of the horse. Just enough so he couldn't race, that's all.

RICH

I told you not to take chances.

LIPSKY

Nobody coulda paid me to hurt Old Mick.

Rich pours Lipsky another gin. He drinks it.

RICH (CONT'D)

Now it's time to figure out your next move.

LIPSKY

The cops are going to come looking for me. It's going to take more than a hundred. The way I see it, I need ten thousand. To hide, and to keep my mouth shut if I don't hide good enough.

RICH

(smiling, like a snake)

Now, Lipsky, you wouldn't put the arm to me, would you?

INT. THREE WILLOWS KITCHEN - EVENING

Covered in mud, Kelsey and Channing walk into the kitchen. Channing opens the fridge and grabs some fried chicken.

CHANNING

I had no idea working could make you this hungry.

Channing and Kelsey dive into the chicken.

CHANNING

Oh my God this chicken is amazing.

GERTIE

Mr. Channing! Miss Kelsey! That's no way to eat.

KELSEY

I'm too dirty to sit anywhere and too hungry to clean up first.

CHANNING

Gertie, my sister has taken a dozen gourmet cooking courses --

KELSEY

Three.

CHANNING

And she could never make chicken like this.

GERTIE

Just an old family recipe. Mr. Channing, your cell phone's been ringing off the hook.

CHANNING

Oops, I bet it's Mom. She's gonna want to know why I never made it to Palm Beach. I'll explain... If I have to.

Channing winks and dashes out with his chicken. Gertie holds a plate of cookies out for Kelsey.

GERTIE (CONT'D)

These were your favorites. Haven't made them in twenty-three years.

Grateful, Kelsey takes one.

KELSEY

I wish I could remember.

GERTIE

You were so little. I always knew you'd come back. Miss Naomi didn't think so. Worried herself sick. You were the sun and moon to your Mom, Miss Kelsey. You coming back here like this, it's made up for a lot.

KELSEY

Gertie, that night... do you remember it?

GERTIE

(nods)

Your father had picked you up for the weekend, thank God. I was out at the movies... so Miss Naomi was all alone with that man. Alec Bradley. I know in my heart she was protecting herself.

Gertie clearly despised him.

GERTIE (CONT'D)

If it weren't for that photo, your poor Mom would never have gone to jail.

KELSEY

What photo...?

GERTIE

The one of her shooting that man.

KELSEY

Do you have --

GERTIE

I kept the clippings. But don't let Miss Naomi see you with them -- she just wants to put it out of her mind. Nearly killed your Granddaddy, seeing your Mom leave a beautiful girl, come back.... shaking and pale. When he died a few years ago, running this farm and dreaming of you kept her going. And here you are.

Gertie smiles and Kelsey smiles back.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - KELSEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Alone, Kelsey looks through Gertie's binder of newspapers: "LOVER'S QUARREL ENDS IN TRAGEDY"... "CHADWICK CLAIMS ATTEMPTED RAPE"... "CAPTAIN TIPTON TESTIFIES"... "NEW EVIDENCE DERAILS CLAIM OF SELF-DEFENSE".... "PI SNAPPED PHOTO OF MURDER"... "GUILTY!"..."10 YEARS!".

Kelsey stares at a PHOTO taken from the tree outside Naomi's bedroom of Naomi holding a gun, and Alec Bradley with his arms up.... the photo unquestionably makes Naomi look guilty.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Kelsey and Gabe sit in a booth with paper place mats of Italy printed in red and green. The place is run down and crawling with teenagers. The Waitress plops down a pizza.

KELSEY

This is perfect. I'd almost forgotten there was life beyond Three Willows.

GABE

You've taken to it quickly.

KELSEY

I guess so. After countless jobs I didn't take to.

GABE

Like?

KELSEY

Part-time docent at the National Gallery. Before that, it depended on my mood. I figured if I tried enough things, sooner or later I'd hit on something.

GABE

And have you?

KELSEY

(sincere)

Nothing I've done has ever felt like this. Do you always look at a woman like you're about to start nibbling away at her, from the toes up?

GABE

It might be an interesting way to end the evening. What about this Wade character?

KELSEY

Him? Well, he lied and cheated on me for two years. But then again, my entire family lied to me for twenty. How about you? Tell me about Gabe Slater.

GABE

You don't want to spoil the evening with a rundown of my life story.

KELSEY

Come on.

He doesn't budge so she lays down her cards.

KELSEY

I like you. But I barely know you. Maybe I'm uptight, or old fashioned -- but I like to know a thing or two about a man before I... you know, even think about him that way. Consider it a dare. Where did you grow up?

Gabe puts down his food and rises to the challenge.

GABE

Nowhere. Everywhere. Chicago, Reno, Miami. In the winter we stayed south because the tracks run longer. My mother scrubbed toilets so we didn't starve. Dad took her pay and blew it on horses, cards, or how far a frigging grasshopper would jump. Want more?

KELSEY

Gabe, I had no idea...

Ignoring her sympathy, he increasingly goes to a dark place.

GABE

He liked to hurt my mother. If I tried to stop him, he'd just beat the crap out of both of us. I ran away at thirteen. The old man caught up with me a few times -- knock me around until I bought him off. You're not eating.

KELSEY

Gabe --

GABE

I spent time in jail over a poker game I wasn't quick enough to spot as a sting. I don't drink because my old man stinks of booze. So I stick to gambling and women. Understand better?

KELSEY

You'd rather I didn't understand. What do you want from me?

GABE

How 'bout what I don't want: your poor-little-rich-girl pity.

KELSEY

Is that how you see me?

GABE

And I'm the bad boy you're slumming with to get even with your lying family. At least until Wade Houston Howell the Fifth comes rolling back into town.

KELSEY

That's a cheap shot -- even from you.

Ouch. Gabe grins, with an edge:

GABE

It doesn't mean we can't have fun. You won't regret it, Kelsey, I promise.

She's hurt and disgusted. She stands to leave.

KELSEY

I don't know who you think I am. Maybe I don't want you to.

Kelsey exits the restaurant.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - VERANDA - NIGHT

Kelsey comes onto the veranda, annoyed. Naomi lounges on a chair, taking in the crisp night air.

NAOMI

How was your date?

KELSEY

He can't get over the fact that I didn't grow up in a dumpster.

NAOMI

He's got a streak of pride a mile wide...

KELSEY

I'm sorry I had ballet lessons and a cotillion.

NAOMI

Give him a few days to see how stupid he's being.

KELSEY

He was more than stupid. He was spiteful.

Kelsey hesitates, wants to tell her something.

NAOMI

Kelsey... what's eating you?

KELSEY

The first day I was here, I asked
if you were guilty. You said yes.

NAOMI

You asked if I shot him. Killing
is one thing; murder another.

KELSEY

(nods, point taken)

I did a little... research. I hope
that's OK.

NAOMI

You have a right to know. Ask me
anything.

KELSEY

Was it just a legal maneuver when
you said it was self-defense? When
you said he attacked you?

NAOMI

The jury thought so. I let him
into my house. He forced his way
into my bedroom. He got rough, and
then I realized what he was going
to do. I shot him.

KELSEY

(wanting to believe...
but...)

I saw the photo. He wasn't
touching you. His hands were up.

NAOMI

I got over needing people to
believe me a long time ago.

Kelsey duly notes Naomi's hardened shell.

KELSEY

All this time, did you think of me?
Did you want to see me?

NAOMI

(almost loses it)

Every day. When I got out, I drove
to your school. The baby I'd left
behind was a pretty teenager,
learning to flirt with boys. I
watched you every day for a week.

(MORE)

NAOMI (cont'd)
I wanted to rush over to you, but
you'd learned to live without me.
So I tried to start over.

KELSEY
Did you?

NAOMI
In some ways. Prison taught me not
to feel. Not to cry.
(wry)
I have a full life -- minus normal
human emotions. I don't think I
realized how empty I was -- until
you came home.

It's as close to "emotional" as Naomi can allow herself.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - STABLE - DAY

Kelsey brushes the underbelly of a mildly uncooperative
horse. Gabe watches from his favorite perch.

GABE
If you put the lead line over the
horse's neck, he'll settle down.

Gabe shows her how. Their hands touch-- the thrill is still
there. She's still furious at him.

GABE (CONT'D)
Miss me?

KELSEY
(returns to work)
I thought I was just a cold little
rich girl.

GABE
(sly smile)
You were. Then I saw you from
behind and I got over myself. I
thought I might owe you an apology.

KELSEY
For?

GABE
For my behavior yesterday.

KELSEY
You demonstrated a lot of behavior
yesterday. Can you be more
specific?

GABE
(smiles, gets it)
For being a pig. And stupid.
(she waits for more)
And wrong. You make me say things
I don't mean. Dumb, emotional
things. That smart mouth of yours
is so damn inviting.

She gives him a smile, and tosses him a brush.

GABE (CONT'D)
More penance? I'm an owner. I
haven't brushed a horse in years.

He dives in, anything for her. Lt. Rossi approaches.

LT. ROSSI
Mr. Slater, Ms. Byden, could I have
a word? I'll need your mother as
well.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kelsey, Naomi, and Gabe talk tensely to Lt. Rossi.

LT. ROSSI
Mr. Slater, your former employee
Fred Lipsky?

GABE
Yes?

LT. ROSSI
He was found dead in a hotel room.
Apparent suicide. He had the knife
on him that was used to kill Mick
Gordon. It also matches the cut to
your horse.

GABE
So case closed?

LT. ROSSI
It all seems a little convenient.
Track rat tries to cut a star colt,
old groom gets in the way and gets
killed, Lipsky feels so bad he offs
himself...?

GABE
(agreeing)
Not the Lipsky I knew...

LT. ROSSI

Mr. Lipsky died of an overdose of digitalis and epinephrine, horse tranquilizer. Which leads me back to the people I know who raise horses. The two of you have Derby hopefuls. I don't know much about racing, but it seems it would be to your benefit to shift the odds.

KELSEY

That's a ridiculous accusation.

LT. ROSSI

It's not an accusation. It's an observation.

GABE

Can we cut to the chase here? What are you looking for?

LT. ROSSI

I'm looking for who killed Fred Lipsky. Ms. Chadwick, would you have access to those drugs?

KELSEY

(to Naomi)

You don't have to answer.

LT. ROSSI

I'm sure your mother is well aware of her rights. And the procedure of a murder investigation.

NAOMI

Yes, thank you. And my daughter is right. I don't have to answer. So if you'll excuse me.

Naomi leaves.

LT. ROSSI

Well, I'll see myself out.

Lt. Rossi leaves. Kelsey is outraged.

KELSEY

Does he really think Naomi is involved with a murder?

(realizing)

How can something that happened twenty three years ago be relevant? Gabe, did you see her face?

(MORE)

KELSEY (cont'd)

The fear. This is never going to
end -- she'll be under suspicion
for the rest of her life.

Off Kelsey, knowing what she has to do...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ROONEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Kelsey sits across from CHARLES ROONEY, a smart, calm man in his 40s.

ROONEY

Now, Ms. Monroe, you indicated you needed some help with a custody case. You're divorced?

KELSEY

Yes.

ROONEY

And the child? Who, at this time, has primary custody?

KELSEY

I'm the child, Mr. Rooney. I've taken back my maiden name -- Byden. I'm Kelsey Byden.

Rooney does a double take, but covers quickly.

ROONEY

I should have recognized you.

KELSEY

You'd have seen my mother quite a lot back then. You had her under surveillance for their custody case?

ROONEY

Your father's lawyers retained me.

KELSEY

I was hoping you could help me piece together what happened that night. Fill in the gaps?

ROONEY

(shaking head)

Ms. Byden... Kelsey...

KELSEY

Your photo helped convict her. But my mother claimed that Alec Bradley tried to rape her.

ROONEY

The evidence didn't support it.

KELSEY

But you were there. You must have seen if she was afraid, if he was threatening -- ?

Rooney is silent. Frustrated, Kelsey pulls out a marked-up transcript.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

You testified that you saw her let him in. They went upstairs. You climbed a tree. They were arguing. Then she pulled out a gun. He put his hands up, backed away. She fired. And you didn't call the police?

ROONEY

(shakes head)

Not right away. I went three days later. I took in the film, made my statement.

KELSEY

What if I hired you, Mr. Rooney. Right now. I want you to go back twenty-three years, to take another look at the case.

ROONEY

Let it rest, Kelsey. Do you think your mother wants to relive all of that?

KELSEY

If we find the truth, yes. Will you help me?

ROONEY

No, I won't.

INT. PHILIP AND CANDACE'S GEORGETOWN HOME - LIBRARY - DAY

Philip walks Kelsey into the Library.

PHILIP

I'm glad you came. We've been worried.

KELSEY

Dad, I need you to tell me more about what happened. With you and my mother.

PHILIP

Kelsey --

KELSEY

If you were willing to go to court, to hire lawyers and detectives, there had to be a reason. Look at me, I'm twenty-six years old, overeducated and underemployed and alone -- I need to know.

Philip sees his daughter needs to know and finally concedes:

PHILIP

Honestly, I just didn't want you growing up in that world. Your grandmother and I discussed it at length. In the end, I agreed with her. I hated the idea of hiring a detective, but we needed documentation. I left it up to the attorneys.

KELSEY

You didn't hire Rooney yourself?

PHILIP

No. I... how do you know his name?

KELSEY

I've just come from his office.

PHILIP

Kelsey. What are you doing?

KELSEY

Do you believe Naomi murdered Alec Bradley?

PHILIP

There isn't any doubt.

KELSEY

That she killed him. She said it was self-defense. That's not murder. Was the woman you loved capable of murder?

PHILIP

I don't know. Kelsey, stay the night. We can talk in the morning.

KELSEY

I can't run home to you, Dad. Not again.

She hugs her dad, puts her head on his shoulder the way she always did.

KELSEY

I'm going to stay in Virginia for a while. I can't go back to busywork jobs, to weekends at the club. I didn't know how dissatisfied I was - with myself. I'm good with the horses, with the people.

(smiles)

I even made a friend. I feel like I've found what I'm supposed to do.

Resigned, Philip nods his acceptance, covering the mixture of emotions.

INT. BILL CUNNINGHAM'S LIBRARY - NIGHT

BILL CUNNINGHAM walks Rich Slater into his showy library.

CUNNINGHAM

I told you never to come here.

RICH

Now, now, Cunningham, nobody saw me. Where's the bar, friend? I'm dry as the damn Sahara.

CUNNINGHAM

I don't want you drinking in my house.

RICH

You don't want to talk to a business partner like that. Especially since I have a new proposition for you.

CUNNINGHAM

Damn, Rich, nobody was supposed to get killed. Old Mick was like a saint. And now Lipsky?

RICH

An unforeseen complication. But it's going to cost you another ten grand.

CUNNINGHAM

Are you nuts? You did that on your own, Rich.

RICH

It would have taken the cops five minutes to have Lipsky pointing the finger at me. It points at me, it points at you. So, another ten, Billy. It's a fair price. But I also have a score to settle with that boy of mine.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - VERANDA - NIGHT

Kelsey tries to walk up the back stairs quietly with a small bag. The SOUND of a deck of cards being shuffled startles her. It's Gabe, lounging on an outdoor couch, waiting for her.

GABE

Where've you been?

KELSEY

You startled me.

(lying)

I was taking care of some stuff, picking up clothes. I left DC in such a hurry I barely quit my job. It's a week till the Derby, shouldn't you be --

GABE

You sure there isn't something you want to tell me?

KELSEY

Worried it's some guy? Jealous?

GABE

Maybe.

KELSEY

(sits and opens up)

I've been doing some research. And I went to see my father. To ask him about the trial. I don't think she did it.

GABE

I never thought so.

KELSEY

I tracked down the cop who arrested her. I'm going to see him this weekend.

GABE

You gonna prove her innocence?

KELSEY

You think I'm being silly.

GABE

No, I think you're being brave. I'll drive you.

KELSEY

I can go alone.

GABE

(pulls her into his lap)
Doing things the hard way isn't always better; sometimes it's just harder. Let me help you, Kelsey.

She squirms to get free but he won't let her.

GABE (CONT'D)

Sit still, Kelsey. You'll cause a lot more trouble by wriggling around. Believe me.

KELSEY

I'm not a lap sitter.

GABE

So learn.

He grazes his teeth over her earlobe. She reacts.

GABE (CONT'D)

We need to pick up the pace here. I'm starting to suffer.

KELSEY

I think you're tougher than that.

Gabe readjusts her hips, sending shivers up her spine. He continues to play with her ear.

GABE

Two can play at this game, honey. I think you want me more than your debutante manners will admit.

KELSEY

I'm not playing games. But think
you've had a lot of practice.

GABE

We'll see. But so you know: I
usually win.

Gabe picks her up and plops her on the couch and leaves,
leaving her breathless and wanting much, much more.

INT. THREE WILLOWS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kelsey, covered in mud from the morning's work, walks into
the living room drinking milk out of a small carton.
Milicent waits for her, ramrod straight and unamused.

KELSEY

Grandmother! What a surprise.

Kelsey kisses Milicent warmly.

MILICENT

What, in the name of God, have you
been doing?

KELSEY

Working. What brings you down
here?

MILICENT

I've come to speak with you.

KELSEY

Come in, please, sit down. It's
nice to see you.

MILICENT

You're as grimy as a field hand.
Kelsey, I've always loved you very
much. But this is inexcusable --
that you'd waste your talents.
Worse still, that you'd send this
family into a tailspin while you
play out this little drama.

KELSEY

Grandmother --

MILICENT

Your name was in the paper in
connection with a murder.

KELSEY

Old Mick? I didn't know. I would have called Dad.

MILICENT

He's too softhearted to take a stand, so it's once again up to me. The spring ball is next weekend, and Candace needs you to come back and handle the flowers.

KELSEY

Next weekend is the Derby. Our horse is running. It's a huge honor.

MILICENT

Don't be ridiculous. I'm going to insist that you pack your things and come home with me today.

Naomi stands in the door, taking it in.

NAOMI

How little things change.

(pause)

I believe I overheard you say something similar to Philip once.

MILICENT

I came to speak with my grandchild.

NAOMI

You're in my home now, Milicent. You're certainly free to say whatever you like to Kelsey, but you won't run me off. Those days are over.

MILICENT

Calculating, unprincipled... using Philip's daughter to satisfy your own ends.

NAOMI

You don't know Kelsey very well if you believe she can be used.

KELSEY

Don't talk around me, either of you. And, Grandmother, I'm not leaving.

MILICENT

If you stay here, you'll force me to take steps. I'll have no choice but to revoke your grandfather's trust.

KELSEY

Oh, Grandmother, do you think so little of me? That money is what I care about?

CHANNING

(entering)

Hey, Kels, you'll never guess what I ... Grandmother!

MILICENT

Channing!? Get your things at once.

Channing nods and leaves.

MILICENT

I'm deeply disappointed in both of you. Kelsey, you're coming with me now, or this is goodbye.

Kelsey doesn't move.

KELSEY

I'm sorry, but I have to stay for now.

Milicent exits, angrily.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - HORSE RINK - DAY

Kelsey stares at Naomi's Honor, a one-year-old filly we saw earlier. Moses instructs Kelsey in how to longe her.

MOSES

She's got spirit. And she's got heart. That's why Naomi called her Honor. Naomi's Honor. Now, don't go thinking she's sweet and eager to please. She's a lot stronger than you. So you have to be smarter. And kinder.

He clucks to Honor, then to Kelsey, signaling her to move in and make her connection. Her hands are gentle, her movements slow. She speaks barely above a whisper, watching Honor's ears prick to the sound of her voice.

KELSEY

We're going to be friends, you and I.

Honor dances, kicking out with a hind leg, trying to get a clean shot at Moses. Instinctively, Kelsey speaks softly to Honor.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Easy now. Nobody's going to hurt you.

Honor settles.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

She likes me.

MOSES

She's thinking about how to kick you. All right. Keep the line tight, Kelsey.

Moses hangs back at the fence watching Kelsey longe Honor as Naomi approaches. She speaks quietly to Moses.

NAOMI

How's Kelsey doing?

MOSES

She's got plenty of Chadwick in her.

NAOMI

With everything that's happened, I
keep waiting for her to pack up and
go.

MOSES

You're not looking close enough.
Kelsey's not going anywhere.

KELSEY

(sees Naomi and calls out)
Gorgeous, isn't she?

NAOMI

A natural. You look wonderful
together.

KELSEY

Can I work her tomorrow, Moses?
I won't let you down.

MOSES

You do and I'll dock your pay.

KELSEY

I'm not getting paid.

MOSES

You've been on the payroll for two
weeks. You get your first check on
Friday.

Kelsey is touched. Moses exits with Honor.

NAOMI

Kelsey, I'd like to give her to
you.

KELSEY

Honor? You want to give her to me?

NAOMI

I missed twenty-three birthdays.
Twenty-three Christmases. A lot to
make up for.

KELSEY

(moved)
I don't know what to say...

NAOMI

I know you can't keep a horse in an
apartment, but she can stay here as
long as you like.

(MORE)

NAOMI (cont'd)
Moses can work with her, if that's
what you want. But she's yours, if
you'll have her.

Swamped with emotion, Kelsey tentatively embraces Naomi.
Naomi holds her hard. Off Kelsey, with a lot on her mind --

EXT. TIPTON'S PORCH - DAY

Kelsey and Gabe talk to Tipton, 60s, who sits on the porch
drinking lemonade, embracing retirement.

CAPTAIN TIPTON
Alec Bradley, thirty-two, formerly
of Palm Beach. Made dallying with
rich married women a profession.
In my day we called them gigolos.
I don't know what you call them
now.

GABE
Slime.

CAPTAIN TIPTON
Fancy manners, fancy education.
There were also rumors about him
sniffing white powder up his nose.

KELSEY
If that's true, he could have been
violent -- maybe it was self-
defence, just as my mother said.

CAPTAIN TIPTON
There weren't any signs of a
struggle. And the photos...

KELSEY
If she made it up, why didn't she
knock over a few tables, break some
lamps?

CAPTAIN TIPTON
I asked her that same question.
She snapped back, "Maybe I didn't
think of it." Those were the kind
of answers she gave until her
lawyers shut her up. The second
time I asked, we were in the
interrogation room. She said she
wished she'd thought of it --
because then someone might believe
her. The thing was... I believed
her.

KELSEY

You believed she was telling the truth, but you sent her to prison.

CAPTAIN TIPTON

The evidence was against her. I spent a lot of sleepless nights looking for something, anything... But in the end, the evidence put her away.

INT. LOUISVILLE HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

It's Wednesday before Derby Day. Kelsey rushes out of her room, still putting on her shoe. She looks great -- dress, strappy heels, hair done. Still donning his shirt, Gabe dashes out of the room next door and they almost collide. He stops putting on his shirt as he takes her in.

KELSEY

You're going to be late for the post position draw.

GABE

(whistles)

I don't care.

Naomi comes out of her room. She sees the two of them. .

GABE

(exiting)

Apologies in advance for crushing you.

KELSEY

Don't bet on it.

NAOMI

It's thrilling, isn't it, to have a man tangled up over you that way.

KELSEY

Oh, I'm just another girl in a long line.

NAOMI

(shakes head)

I don't think so. I see the way he looks at you. He's a true-blue guy, even if he pretends not to be.

INT/EXT. LOUISVILLE STABLE - DAY

Grooms load the horses into trailers. Trainers and jockeys prepare for the most important event in racing. Gabe gently strokes Double -- his devotion is clear -- as he loads him up for the ride to Churchill Downs. They drive off.

In the door to the stable, Reno meets Moses, Naomi and Kelsey, who are entering.

MOSES
We got the rail.

RENO
I think it's a sign.

NAOMI
You ready?

RENO
Always.

MOSES
Alright, we have work to do. Let's
get to Churchill Downs.

Naomi hugs Reno. They walk to the stable marked "Virginia's Pride." (We do not see inside the stall). Naomi looks in... then stands, motionless. Moses follows her, freezes. Kelsey GASPS.

EXT. LOUISVILLE STABLE - EARLY MORNING

Moses runs out of the stable and yells.

MOSES
Get the vet! Get the vet!

EXT/INT. LOUISVILLE STABLE - DAY

Kelsey and Naomi stand over a still Pride, on the ground motionless. Tears stream down Reno's face as he gently nudges the horse. Tears well in Kelsey's eyes. Only Naomi does not cry.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT/INT. LOUISVILLE STABLE - NIGHT

Grooms, Vets, and other racing world-types mingle in the aftermath. Moses has been crying, but Naomi's face is stoic.

NAOMI

I shouldn't have dragged Kelsey
into this messy world of mine.

MOSES

You didn't drag her into anything.
Naomi, you can cry.

NAOMI

(emotionless)

No, I can't.

Moses holds her hand, knowing how deep her pain goes. Kelsey approaches, looking equally shocked.

KELSEY

I spoke to the press person,
they'll leave us alone till
tomorrow. The vet will know more
soon. We can all leave in the
morning -- I assumed we didn't want
to stay for the race. You two go
back to the hotel. I can handle
this.

Naomi looks immensely grateful.

INT. LOUISVILLE HOTEL - GABE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey knocks. Gabe opens the door. Kelsey walks in,
exhausted.

KELSEY

He was killed. That incredibly
beautiful horse. Injected with a
lethal dose of amphetamines.

GABE

Sit down, Kelsey, before you
collapse.

KELSEY

Someone wanted Pride out of the
running so badly, they killed him.

GABE

My colt's the favorite now...

KELSEY

Yes, I'm sorry, you must be excited-

Then she sees his eyes, and stops cold.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

You think I came here to accuse you? To ask if you had something to do with it?

GABE

It's a logical step.

KELSEY

How could you think that of me?

GABE

The facts are your horse is dead, and mine might win somewhere in the neighborhood of a million dollars. That's a pretty good motive.

KELSEY

Let me tell you something about yourself, Gabe Slater, high roller, tough guy. You're as dazzled by and devoted to your horses as any twelve-year-old girl dreaming about Black Beauty.

GABE

Excuse me?

KELSEY

You love them. Did you think it wouldn't get around that you tried to buy Cunningham's filly, because you were worried for her? That you sit up at night when you've got a sick horse? You're a sucker, Gabe.

GABE

I've got an investment.

KELSEY

You've got a love affair. So if you're going to stand here feeling sorry for yourself when you should be feeling sorry for Naomi, I'll just leave you to it.

GABE

Hold on. You got me, ok?

He lifts up her hand, examining her palm. The touch and sudden silence has her pulse jumping.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
It's late. I should check on Naomi.

GABE
She has Moses.

KELSEY
I'm not good at this, Gabe.

Backing up, she bumps into a chair and steadies herself against the wall.

GABE
Not good at what?

KELSEY
At -- at this seduction business.

He presses his palms to the wall on either side of her head.

GABE (CONT'D)
You're going to have to tell me you don't want me. You're going to have to say yes or no, Kelsey.

KELSEY
I'm trying to, if you'd just let me think.

Her breath catches in a gasp of shock when he drags her jacket from her shoulders. But her own fingers are tearing at his shirt. In a moment of recklessness, she locks her mouth on his. He traps her wrists beneath one hand, and uses the other to tear her blouse down the center, sending tiny buttons flying. He watches her face as he skims a hand up her leg. Her eyes unfocus. Her nails scrape down his back as they have sex for the first time.

When it's over, they are both still standing, and they laugh. She's ecstatic.

GABE
Good Lord, you're amazing.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - EVENING

The trucks rumble into the driveway coming home. The trailer is empty.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON MONITOR (so it feels live): Coverage of the Derby: The Gates screech open; the horses thunder toward the finish. The Announcer's voice plays on the TV.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

-- Double thunders past the twin spires. Jezebel is challenged on the inside by Double or Nothing -- up the stretch -- Big Sheba right behind -- and it's Double or Nothing -- and Double or Nothing is the winner of the Kentucky Derby!

CLOSE ON Joey high in the irons, a look of triumph.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Jezebel is second, and Bill Cunningham's Big Sheba takes third. Quite a day for the annual Kentucky Derby, the "greatest two minutes in sports"...

CLIP of Joey, smiling, and Gabe, sober, in the winner's circle. The blanket of Roses is laid over Double.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

A great day following a tragic week in Louisville -- Virginia's Pride of Three Willows Farm was found collapsed in his stable. A horse with a spectacular record, considered a favorite for today's history-making race. There's Double getting his blanket of roses...

PULLBACK and REVEAL:

Kelsey is watching on a small monitor. She shuts it off. KNOCK KNOCK. Lt. Rossi enters. Kelsey turns, cold.

LT. ROSSI

Ms. Byden. I'd like to offer my sympathies for your loss at the Derby. I'm not much of a horse aficionado, but it must have been a terrible day.

KELSEY

It was. My mother's devastated.

LT. ROSSI

She looked sturdy enough at the press conference the day after.

KELSEY

(ice cold)

Did you expect her to fall apart publicly?

LT. ROSSI

I was hoping you could give me some details of what happened. There's been a rumor circulating the past couple days that Naomi Chadwick arranged the death to collect the insurance.

KELSEY

That's ridiculous.

LT. ROSSI

Mick, Fred Lipsky, one horse cut, another killed...?

KELSEY

Pride was killed with amphetamines.

LT. ROSSI

Yes. Digitalis and epinephrine, a horse tranquilizer.... Just like Fred Lipsky.

Kelsey realizes he is right (even if he is wrong).

LT. ROSSI

All seem to have a connection to Three Willows.

KELSEY

Why would my mother want to kill her star horse? Or groom? None of it makes any sense.

LT. ROSSI

It's not the first time she had a horse go down. She had another Derby hopeful -- 'bout twenty-three years ago. Horse named Sunshine, fell and died on the track.

Kelsey reacts to the information.

LT. ROSSI (CONT'D)

In my experience, when trouble swirls around someone, there's usually a reason. Is your mother here? I'd like a word with her.

KELSEY

With all due respect, you're barking up the wrong tree. And since you all seem good at that, we're not going to help you. She's not talking to you without a lawyer.

Lt. Rossi studies her, she's become tough as nails.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - STABLE - DAY

Kelsey feeds the horses. Naomi does her rounds and joins her.

NAOMI

I'm sorry you're missing the trip to Preakness.

KELSEY

I wanted to be here with you. Besides, I don't think I'm ready for another race, not yet.

NAOMI

I couldn't handle the stares. Too many memories.

KELSEY

Lieutenant Rossi told me about Sunshine.

NAOMI

Did he...? One of the worst days of my life. Except of course....

She doesn't have to finish...

KELSEY

Did you love Alec Bradley?

NAOMI

(almost laughs, "no way")
We weren't even an item. I thought he was a charming fool. Until I saw who he really was. He wanted to hurt me that night. To humiliate me.

(MORE)

NAOMI (cont'd)

I've never understood why he seemed so desperate. It was that look in his eyes that made me reach for the gun. Why do you ask?

KELSEY

Charles Rooney.

NAOMI

Rooney?

KELSEY

I've been to see him.

NAOMI

Why, Kelsey? I've tried all these years to forget.

KELSEY

I didn't go to remind you. I thought I could find something to clear your name.

NAOMI

(shakes her head)

What possible difference could it make now?

KELSEY

Captain Tipton believed --

NAOMI

Tipton. Oh, God.

KELSEY

He believed you.

NAOMI

You weren't there, in that horrible room with the questions pounding at you. No one believed me.

Naomi shakes with fear and frustration.

KELSEY

That's why I went. You're still afraid. Of Tipton, of Rooney, of Rossi. And it could happen all over again -- how do you know you're safe?

EXT. LONGSHOT - NIGHT

A celebration has just ended. Naomi, Moses and others pile into cars or walk home shouting their good-byes and congratulations.

GUESTS (O.S.)
 Congratulations, Gabe! Belmont
 next! Here comes the Triple Crown.

INT. LONGSHOT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The remains of a party litter the room. Gabe enjoys watching as Kelsey pours herself another glass of champagne. They are celebrating his win at Preakness, and she is tipsy.

KELSEY
 Preakness! You did it.

GABE
 I think the horse had something to
 do with it.

KELSEY
 You raised Double, trained him,
 cared for him. I hope you don't
 mind but I think I'll finish this
 entire bottle and get considerably
 drunk and do something very
 unladylike.

Kelsey is giddy - doing a striptease for him. He loves it.

GABE
 You forgot a button.

KELSEY
 (changes subject)
 I can't get over that cop. Naomi
 had a horse that died -- over
 twenty years ago. He seems to
 think in his pea brain that she's
 behind all this. Sunshine.

GABE
 Huh?

KELSEY
 The horse's name was Sunshine. He
 was drugged in a race and
 collapsed. Sounded horrible.

Something clicks for Gabe. Gabe mentally puts it aside, then cups her chin and looks in her eyes.

GABE

You are going to have one hell of a headache tomorrow.

KELSEY

Then let's make the most of it.

He takes her by the back of the head and kisses her deeply.

INT. TRACK RAT BAR - DAY

Rich Slater throws back a drink at a lowlife bar while he watches the Shoemaker Mile on TV. Gabe enters.

RICH

Well now, just like old times.
Bring my boy here one of the same.

GABE

Coffee, black.

RICH

Don't be such a pussy, boy. I'm buying.

GABE

Coffee. I thought you had trouble out of Chicago.

RICH SLATER

Everyone knows Rich Slater's good for his markers. This here's my race -- the Shoemaker Mile. Number three. Come on, number three.

GABE

There was trouble at the Derby.

Rich watches the race, urging his horse on with little jerks of his body. But his mind is working. And Gabe knows it.

RICH

He's got it. He's got it! Ha!
Son of a bitch. Crying shame about that horse.

GABE

Somebody helped that horse go down.

RICH

It didn't hurt you any, did it?
It's like I always tried to teach you, son, sometimes cheating's just part of the game.

GABE

I remember another race. I was just a kid. It wasn't that hot but you were sweating. A horse broke down that day. A Chadwick horse then, too. Sunshine.

RICH

No kidding? Well, that's bad luck.
(slaps bar)
Hey, can't you see I'm dry here?

GABE

As I recall, we didn't stick around long. You were flush after that. You happened to put all your money on the right horse. You're on a roll now, too, aren't you? New suit, gold watch, diamond ring. Manicure.

RICH

You got a point here, boy?

GABE

You'd better hope I don't find out you killed that horse.

RICH

You don't want to threaten me, Gabe. Stick to banging that little filly.

In a flash, Gabe has a hand wrapped around the knot of his father's new silk tie. The Bartender hustles over.

RICH (CONT'D)

No trouble here. Just a family discussion.

GABE

Keep away from her. Or I'll kill you.

RICH

We both know you don't have the guts for that.

GABE

I grew up, Dad.

Gabe exits. Rich tries to cover his fear.

RICH

Kids. They never learn respect.

INT. BILL CUNNINGHAM'S LIBRARY - NIGHT

Cunningham, in his bathrobe, lets Rich Slater in. Cunningham is upset to see him again -- and nervous.

CUNNINGHAM

You never said you were going to kill her horse.

RICH

You wanted the details left up to me. Your filly placed at the Derby, you got what you wanted. Nobody's going to call you a sucker now, are they?

CUNNINGHAM

You were just supposed to see the Chadwick colt disqualified, so Big Sheba could place.

RICH

The Chadwicks lose, suspicion points at them and my cocky son. You don't mind giving Gabe a backhanded slap -- after all, he cost you the family farm and a good dose of your dignity.

CUNNINGHAM

If it comes out I'll be ruined.

RICH

All you have to do is shake your head and look sad.

(slaps Cunningham's knee)

And now I need my bonus, Billy.

CUNNINGHAM

Bonus? We had a deal, Rich. I kept my part. All I do is supply the drugs, nothing else.

RICH

You got the purse, the betting window, and you can breed her. She's a million dollar baby. All that money and glamour ought to be worth another hundred grand.

CUNNINGHAM

A hundred...?! Are you crazy?
I've got all the expenses. Do you
know what it costs to keep a
Thoroughbred?

RICH

You don't want to nickel-and-dime
me, Billy boy. You really don't.

INT. LONGSHOT - GABE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey lies awake in bed as Gabe tries to sleep. His bags
are packed for Belmont.

KELSEY

It's no use.

GABE

Hmm?

KELSEY

I can't sleep. I'm too revved up.

GABE

Well, then.

He tries to roll onto her but she wiggles free. Kneeling,
she looks down at him.

KELSEY

Not that it isn't a tempting offer.
Maybe I'll take you up on it when I
get back.

GABE

Get back from where?

KELSEY

(getting dressed)

I need some air. I want to look in
on Double. We leave for Belmont in
five hours -- the last of the
Triple Crown. This is a big deal,
Gabe.

GABE

Darling, it's one in the morning.
I know it's big deal.

KELSEY

So who can sleep? We should
celebrate.

GABE

Ok. I'll get the champagne.

KELSEY

Catch me.

EXT. LONGSHOT STABLES - NIGHT

Kelsey walks into the dark stable. She hears a barn cat SCREECH and she spins around, it's nothing. She relaxes. She gropes along the wall and finds a flashlight. She smiles when she sees a cot pulled in front of Double's box. But the cot is empty. She walks up and reaches for the stall door. It isn't latched and is open three inches.

KELSEY

Oh, God.

Kelsey hears something -- she swings around, flashlight gripped like a weapon. She zigzags the beam. She shoves the door open and rushes to the colt's side. She pivots to shine her light into the corners of the box.

Then she feels a vivid flash of pain on her head. As she falls, she hears the high, alarmed whinny from the colt. The colt dances, lethal hooves arching over Kelsey's unconscious form.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. LONGSHOT STABLES - NIGHT

Gabe walks to the stables with a bottle of champagne, smiling to himself and thinking of Kelsey. The shrill, frenzied cry of the colt splits the quiet. The bottle of champagne smashes on the ground as Gabe lunges forward and runs.

He rushes at the barn door, slapping on the lights.

Kelsey is sprawled on the straw, facedown, the colt backed into the rear of the box, eyes rolling as he paws his bedding. Gabe moves like lightning, shielding Kelsey with his own body as he gathers her up. He lifts her and rushes Kelsey out of the box.

Her face is corpse white, her body limp. He lays her on the cot and his fingers tremble as he presses them to the pulse at her neck.

GABE

Please, baby. Please.

The pulse is there. He buries his face in her hair, one arm cradling her. Jamison comes running in from the outside.

JAMISON

Gabe. Oh, God, Gabe.

GABE

Where were you?

JAMISON

I just ran to the bathroom --

Jamison steps into the box to calm the colt.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Easy, boy. Easy now. Settle down.

GABE

Call a doctor.

Jamison exits as Kelsey stirs under his hand and moans.

GABE (CONT'D)

Kelsey. Kelsey, take it slow.

KELSEY

Gabe.

Her eyes open, but her vision swims, making her nauseous.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

The colt. Someone was in with Double. The door was open. But I couldn't see who it was. Did they hurt him?

GABE

No --

KELSEY

Is Double all right?

GABE

He's fine... I found you out cold with a panicked horse about to trample you...

KELSEY

Gabe --

GABE

For the longest minute of my life, I thought you were dead.

He gathers her close, holding her while she curls into a ball on his lap.

GABE (CONT'D)

Christ, Kelsey, I lost my mind. I love you.

(can't believe he just
said that)

Let me get you some ice.

KELSEY

No, don't go. Just don't go.

He doesn't.

EXT. LONGSHOT STABLES - DAY

Gabe walks Rossi to the crime scene the next morning.

ROSSI

Kelsey seems to be taking her knock on the head pretty well....

GABE

She's a tough girl.

ROSSI

Any ideas here?

GABE

You've done a background check on me, haven't you, Rossi?

ROSSI

Standard procedure.

GABE

Then you know a little something about my father.

ROSSI

Enough to know he wouldn't win any Daddy of the Year awards.

GABE

He's in town. Tracked him down a couple of days ago. He denied it. He's lying.

ROSSI

He'd come after his own son...?

GABE (CONT'D)

You don't know my dad. Winning the game's more fun for him if he cheats -- and he's been winning.

(knowing look)

There was another race, when I was a kid. Another Three Willows filly was drugged and fell. My father flashed serious money after that race, too.

ROSSI

That would have been Lexington, Spring, twenty-three years ago?

GABE

Right.

ROSSI

Funny you didn't mention that before.

GABE

He didn't hurt Kelsey before.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A horse trailer drives by a sign, "Welcome to Elmont, New York."

EXT. ELMONT TRACK - DAY

Double runs around the track for a last pre-Belmont workout. Gabe and Jamison watch carefully. Reno, Pride's jockey, wearing street clothes, walks up looking gaunt and troubled. Kelsey approaches him.

KELSEY

Reno. How are you?

RENO

I'd rather be here with Pride,
wearing your colors.

KELSEY

We'll have a horse here next year.
I was hoping you'd have some time
to look at Naomi's Honor. She
needs a rider who can get the best
out of her.

RENO

(distracted)

Sure. Sure. I'll do that. I got
nothing but time. I'm gonna wish
Joey good luck.

Kelsey is worried she said the wrong thing as Reno hurries off.

ANGLE ON: Joey (not in silks) rides Double off the track and joins Gabe and Jamison.

GABE

You hold him back tomorrow, Joey.
Don't drive until the head of the
stretch. We're not looking for a
record here. We're looking to win.

Reno approaches. Joey smiles as he jumps off.

JOEY

Get yourself a front row seat, pal.
And have some of that fancy
champagne you like waiting.

RENO

I'm going to do that.

Reno keeps his smile in place as he nods to Gabe.

RENO (CONT'D)
Good luck tomorrow, Mr. Slater.
You've got a horse in a million
here.

Reno's hands fidget. Gabe, Jamison and Joey are oblivious.

RENO (CONT'D)
A man gets spoiled riding the kind
of horse I've been riding.

Inside his pocket, Reno's fingers continue to fidget. His hand trembles when he takes it out of his pocket. Reno lays it flat-palmed on the colt's neck -- did he just inject something into Double? No one notices.

RENO (CONT'D)
Well, you got yourself the Derby,
and a lot more. Win or lose
tomorrow, they won't forget.

Reno steps back. His face is white, shining with sweat, full of despair. Turning quickly, he strides away.

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - STANDS - DAY

Excitement is in the air at Belmont Stakes. Fashionable men and women fill the stands. The event has a New York flare to it. The crowd in the grandstands is on its feet. Shouting and cheering.

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - OWNERS' BOX - DAY

Gabe watches through binoculars. Kelsey is beside him. Monitors dot the area.

GABE
I love that horse.

He realizes he said that aloud. Kelsey squeezes his hand. Starting bell blares. The gate opens with a scream of metal.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And they're off for the Belmont
Stakes....

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Rich stares at the television screen. He nods as the cameras cut to the owners' box.

RICH
Enjoy it while you can, boy.

Rich toasts himself.

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - OWNERS' BOX - DAY

Gabe keeps his binoculars in place. He focuses on only one horse.

ON TV: The horses round the first bend.

The crowd roars, a frenzy of sound. But Gabe hears only Kelsey's voice beside him, quietly murmuring encouragement.

KELSEY

You can do it, you can do it.

Gabe looks at Kelsey, eyes full of love, as if it's just the two of them. She looks back at him, smiling.

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - TRACK - DAY

Double pulls to the front.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Preparing for his own victory, Rich tops off his drink.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And there's Double or Nothing in
the lead --

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - OWNER'S BOX - DAY

Kelsey gasps.

KELSEY

I don't think I can watch.

GABE

Look now.

ON TV: Double pulls to the front and then thunders across the wire two lengths in the lead.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(excited)

And Double or Nothing takes the
Belmont Stakes and the Triple
Crown! It's a historic day, ladies
and gentlemen.

EXT. BELMONT STAKES - OWNER'S BOX - DAY

Gabe can only stare as Double canters easily, Joey high in the irons, overjoyed.

GABE
That's one hell of a horse.

Dazed, he looks at Kelsey, sees her cheeks wet with tears.
As the tears roll, a laugh bubbles. She circles Gabe's neck.

KELSEY
Congratulations, Slater. You've
done it.

No amount of control could hold back the foolish grin that
spreads across his face.

GABE
We did it.

He swings her up and around, oblivious as the TV cameras
focus on the Owner's Box. Kelsey is still laughing when Gabe
covers her mouth with his.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Double or Nothing's owner, Gabe
Slater, of Longshot Farms, and
Kelsey Byden of Three Willows
Farms... very friendly rivals --
And we have the all clear from the
post race drug test. Double or
Nothing takes the Belmont Stakes
and the Triple Crown!

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Rich's hand jerks at the unexpected and unpleasant news, and
spills his drink. Furious, he throws his glass and it
strikes the TV screen, shattering both.

INT. LONGSHOT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lying on a couch together, Gabe and Kelsey are relaxed and in
love. Gabe rubs Kelsey's bare feet.

KELSEY
So, how did the meetings go?
Should we be celebrating a new
record for syndication?

GABE
You bet. I've got a deal for you:
you can have half of him.

KELSEY
Half? I can't afford --

GABE

There's just one term. Marry me.

She wiggles away from him and sits up, covering her surprise.

KELSEY

If I marry you, I get a half share
of Double? And a half share of
Longshot? That's your proposal?

He swings his legs off the couch and stands, thinking.

GABE

You want flowers and candlelight, a
ring in my pocket? I'm not giving
you anything he gave you.

KELSEY

Why don't you just drag me off to
Vegas? We can say our "I dos" over
a crap table. What I want is a
simple question to which I can give
a simple answer.

GABE

Ok.... Will you marry me?

KELSEY

Yes. Absolutely.

His lips curve slowly. He steps toward her, combing his
hands through her hair, taking a firm hold.

GABE

I love you, Kelsey.

KELSEY

I love you too.

He kisses her hard.

GABE (CONT'D)

I've got you, don't I?

With a laugh, she throws her arms around him.

KELSEY

Yeah. Yeah, you do.

The back door opens with a crash. Jamison stumbles in, white-
faced and wide-eyed.

JAMISON

Gabe, Kelsey -- Moses called. You
need to get over there. It's Reno.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

INT. THREE WILLOWS STABLES - NIGHT

Kelsey stares at Reno's limp body -- decked out in riding silks, a rope around his neck from hanging himself. He has thankfully been taken down. Gabe and Rossi walk through the stables. CSUs collect evidence.

ROSSI

The jockey here, Reno, took a bribe to drug the Chadwick colt. He accidentally overdosed the horse. The suicide note says he couldn't handle the guilt. What's with you people and horses?

GABE

It's a problem. So who put him up to this? Where'd he get the drugs?

ROSSI

He'd have known the right people. And the wrong ones.

GABE

Have you looked up my father?

ROSSI

That would make this a real family affair.

(reading from notes)

He moved out of his motel room, no forwarding address. The only reason I have pursued that particular thread is your instinct.

GABE

You mean you're making up for practically accusing me and my neighbor of murder?

ROSSI

I didn't practically do anything -- I flat-out accused you. And cleared you. Now I'm trusting your gut, Mr. Slater. We're looking for him.

GABE

He'll show. He never knows when to cut his losses.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kelsey is on the phone and hangs up, contemplative. Naomi walks in. Kelsey stares at Naomi.

NAOMI

What is it?

KELSEY

Your lawyer just phoned. He needs me to sign some documents. The ones transferring half of Three Willows into my name.

NAOMI

Well then, that's fine.

KELSEY

Why would you do something like that?

NAOMI

It's something your grandfather and I discussed before he died. It was always my intention, Kelsey, and his. I'm just making it legal. This isn't a rope to tie you here. Or to tie you to me.

KELSEY

You know I'm already tied here... and to you. You gambled on that when you asked me to come.

NAOMI

Yes, I did. I couldn't hope that you'd feel anything for me. But I hoped you'd feel it for Three Willows.

KELSEY

In some ways, they're the same.

A ghost of a smile moves over Naomi's lips.

NAOMI

Not everyone would've given me the chance.

KELSEY

I have some news. I wanted to tell you with Gabe, but now's a good time as any. We're getting married.

Naomi's face lights up and she embraces Kelsey -- a moment of genuine and heartfelt emotion Naomi.

INT. TIPTON'S WORKSHED - DAY

Kelsey sits with Tipton as he works at a workbench hammering a shelf together.

KELSEY

Did you ever ask yourself why Alec Bradley chose that night to attack her? The same night there happened to be a photographer in the tree outside her bedroom?

Tipton considers.

TIPTON

I did. The only thing I had on Bradley was the debts. About the time he started seeing your mother, he paid them off -- about twenty thousand dollars worth.

KELSEY

My mother had money.

TIPTON

(shakes head)

It didn't come from her. We checked. It's one of the things I found odd, because it was his pattern to sponge off women.

KELSEY

So where did he get the money? It is odd that he gets this windfall at the same time as...

Kelsey stops.

TIPTON

That's the trouble when you turn over rocks. You hardly ever like what you find. I never linked your father to Alec Bradley. He was clean.

KELSEY

My father would never have --

TIPTON

I only had one thing linking Philip
Byden with what happened that night
at Three Willows That was Charles
Rooney, the P.I.

INT. LONGSHOT - GABE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey and Gabe have wild sex. She is as passionate as she
has ever been, but can't quite mask the desperation -- her
eyes are distant and troubled. When it's over, Gabe stares
at her as she lays quietly beside him.

GABE

Are you ready now?

KELSEY

Ready?

GABE

To tell me what's bugging you.

She knows he's right.

KELSEY

There's no turning back the clock.
She killed Alec Bradley. I should
accept that. I've no right to open
old wounds just to satisfy my own
need for the truth, or justice.
They're not always the same, are
they?

GABE

They should be. One of the great
things about you is that you want
them to be.

He measures her palm against his, then laces their fingers.

GABE

Second thoughts?

KELSEY

No. Not about us. It's just
moving so quickly. I bought a
wedding dress, and a hat. I
actually bought a hat. And I
haven't even told my Dad.

GABE

We can fix that.

INT. PHILIP AND CANDACE'S GEORGETOWN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Milicent accepts the sherry her son pours for her and, feeling magnanimous, pats his hand.

MILICENT

Don't look so concerned, Philip.
I'm ready to put these past few
months behind us.

SOUND FX: The doorbell chimes.

MILICENT (CONT'D)

Let her apologize first. She'll
feel better for it.

Kelsey doesn't look apologetic when she enters with Gabe at her side. She smiles at Philip and Candace. She leans down and kisses Milicent's lightly powdered cheek.

KELSEY

Grandmother. Dad. Candace. This
is Gabriel Slater.

PHILIP

It's nice to meet you, Mr. Slater.
Philip Byden.

GABE

Gabe.

Philip offers a hand. Milicent's eyes are cold.

MILICENT

I had the impression there was
family business to discuss.

KELSEY

There is. Gabe and I are getting
married.

There is a moment of stunned silence before Philip recovers.

PHILIP

Well, that's ... a surprise. A
happy one.

CANDACE

(warming to the idea)
Now I suppose sherry won't do.
We'll have to have champagne.

MILICENT

You would threaten to bring this person into our family?

KELSEY

It's not a threat. We're getting married in three weeks, at Gabe's home in Virginia. I hope you'll all come.

CANDACE

Of course we will. We're just surprised, but we wouldn't miss it for the world.

Milicent slams her sherry down.

MILICENT

Enough! There won't be any wedding.

KELSEY

This was a mistake.

Milicent rises and walks to a glossy Chippendale desk and picks up file.

PHILIP

Let me apologize --

MILICENT

Kelsey, there are a few things you should know about Mr. Slater. Professional gambler, ex-convict, son of a drunkard and cleaning woman. He may have developed a taste for the finer things, and amassed some of them, but it doesn't change who he is.

GABE

Just as being born with them doesn't change who you are.

KELSEY

How dare you pry into Gabe's personal life -- and mine!

MILICENT

I'll do whatever is necessary to protect our family. And, Kelsey, you are family -- despite the sudden attachment you've developed for that woman --

KELSEY

That woman is my mother. Did you make a file on her as well when they got married? Find nasty little secrets to throw in Dad's face?

MILICENT

It was one of the few times in his life he didn't listen to me. And the results were disastrous.

KELSEY

I'm one of the results. Anyway, I already know all this about Gabe.

MILICENT

Then you're more like your mother than I knew. You deserve what becomes of you.

PHILIP

That's enough, Mother. Mr. Slater, we owe you an apology. Both of you.

MILICENT

Philip, stop protecting her --

KELSEY

Thanks Dad. Let's go home, Gabe.

Kelsey and Gabe head for the door. Candace dashes after them and out of ear shot, speaks quietly.

CANDACE

Kelsey. Your father would never have allowed this to happen if he'd known...

KELSEY

(smiles)

Tell him I'll call him later, alright?

CANDACE

I will. Best wishes to both of you.

EXT. ROONEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gabe and Kelsey get out of the car. A discrete sign reads "Charles Rooney and Associates: Private Investigations."

GABE
You ready?

KELSEY
(smiling)
No.

GABE
Then let's try this on for luck.

He slips a ring on her finger, a single, square cut diamond centered in a gold band, crusted with tiny rubies and sapphires -- Longshot's and Three Willow's colors combined. Tears prick at her eyes. He kisses her like she's the only woman on earth.

ANGLE ON: Across the lot, Rich sits in his car and watches them embrace. He takes a sip from his flask.

INT. ROONEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The Secretary tries to stop Kelsey and Gabe as they barrel into Rooney's office.

ROONEY
You've caught me at a bad time.

KELSEY
We'd have come at a better time,
Mr. Rooney, if you'd taken my
calls.

ROONEY
Kelsey, I've tried to save us both
the trouble. I can't help you.

KELSEY
Why were you there that night?
That's the question I keep coming
back to.

ROONEY
Why not ask your mother why she
shot Alec Bradley that night?

KELSEY
Mr. Rooney, I'm not going to stop.

GABE
There are other investigators out
there. We can go find someone
hungry -- to get to the bottom of
this. And when they do, you sure
your hands are gonna be clean?

There's a tense silence. Rooney considers, and he finally caves.

ROONEY

Sit down. Maybe it's time I get out of this business... travel overseas... I've been thinking of retiring for some time now.

Kelsey and Gabe carefully sit.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

Twenty-three years ago, I was hired to tail your mother for the custody suit. By your grandmother. She wanted Naomi out of your father's life, and yours. My job was to follow her, take pictures, make reports.

Rooney unlocks a drawer and takes a file. He hands it to Kelsey.

ROONEY

The custody suit was leaning toward Naomi. Courts don't like to take a kid from her mother. So, the Bydens needed something. And Milicent found it in Alec Bradley.

KELSEY

My grandmother knew him?

ROONEY

(nods)

She hired him. To seduce your mother. So I could catch it on film. Milicent gave him twenty-thousand dollars and a strict deadline.

As the figure clicks, Kelsey realizes it's true.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

She told me to have my camera and plenty of film that night...

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rooney, 20 years younger, waits in the dark outside Naomi's house, his long lens pointed at the house.

POV Rooney's lens: ALEC BRADLEY, a walking Ken Doll with a slick finish, knocks on the door.

Naomi (also 20 years younger) answers the door in a nightgown. She's annoyed to see him so late. But he says something that makes her laugh. He kisses her neck and her mouth.

FLASH & CLICK: The image FREEZES a couple of times: with B&W "stills" of them kissing. (Some of the photos we recognize as the same Kelsey saw in her research.) The action lingers on the last image...

ROONEY (V.O.)
 She let him in wearing a nightgown.
 I got some good shots of them
 kissing.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

ROONEY'S POV: Alec is rough, but she laughs, plays along with it. The kiss becomes intense. Naomi's not enjoying it anymore. She tries to break free. He gets rougher -- squeezing her too hard, crossing a line. She finally shoves him off. His face darkens -- the nice-guy act is over. And he's going to have it his way. He tries to grab her but she breaks free and runs up the stairs.

ROONEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He got rough. She was in trouble.
 But I didn't go in.

Alec, his suit rumpled and his face glistening with sweat, looks out the window, at Rooney, and points upward.

ROONEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The son of a bitch knew I was
 there... He looked out the window
 at me and pointed up -- upstairs,
 he was telling me.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rooney, with his camera hanging on a strap, scrambles up a tree, like the most desperate paparazzo -- clawing with his hands to get up in the branches fast.

ROONEY (V.O.)
 I had a job, a big one. She wanted
 those pictures. That's what I told
 myself.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

ROONEY'S POV from the tree outside the window: Naomi and Alec struggle.

Alec takes off his belt and says something to her. Naomi reaches into a night-table drawer and pulls out a GUN. Alec puts up his hands.

FLASH: The image FREEZES on this image. This is the shot that became immortalized -- the one that Kelsey has seen in her research. The one that put Naomi away.

ROONEY (V.O.)
She pulled the gun. He put his
hands up. And then --

The action RESUMES: Naomi is still pointing the gun at Alec, warning him.

After a tense moment, he lunges at her violently.

FLASH: The image FREEZES on Alec lunging at Naomi -- a very telling image of a woman in danger.

SOUND FX: A gun shot!

INT. ROONEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Close on: photo of Alec lunging at Naomi.

PULL BACK to reveal the photo in Rooney's hand. He gives it to Kelsey, who's eyes are wide.

ROONEY
(ashamed)
Milicent was surprised when I
showed up with these. She picked
which ones to show to the police.
This one she destroyed. She didn't
know I kept a copy.

KELSEY
(stunned)
It was self-defense. And Milicent
knew.

ROONEY
(nods)
She paid me off. Five thousand
dollars. Doesn't seem like much
now.

GABE
(disgusted)
You watched him try to rape her,
did nothing, and then helped see
the victim locked away.

ROONEY

I'm not proud of it. Then it all started again when Naomi contacted you. Milicent came back to me, determined to keep you and your mother apart.

KELSEY

I don't understand. What did she think she was going to do?

ROONEY

She remembered a horse race twenty-three years ago. Naomi's horse fell -- the favorite in the race. A dead horse, rumors swirling, and some track rat named Rich Slater cleaning up at the window. Grooms said he came in on a bus, left in a Lincoln. I had all this in my Naomi file -- and Milicent remembered.

GABE

I was there. And there's no way my Dad knew Milicent Byden.

ROONEY

No, but she read about Rich in the file. She hired me to look him up and get him to fix another race. The idea was another scandal to drive Kelsey away.

KELSEY

You're telling me she was behind all of this? Mick? Pride?

ROONEY

(nods)

But as much as Milicent likes control, this one spun out. She read me the riot act when Mick died -- as if I'd stabbed the poor bastard myself.

KELSEY

(stunned)

I don't think I know the woman you're talking about.

ROONEY

Milicent Byden and Rich Slater....
What a pair.

(MORE)

ROONEY (cont'd)
Revenge and control, revenge and money. Her motives, and his. One hell of a combination. And I'm the one who brought them together.

Rooney wallows in remorse. Off Kelsey --

EXT. THREE WILLOWS - NIGHT

Gabe drives up and drops Kelsey off.

GABE
You want me to come in?

KELSEY
No. I need to tell Naomi myself.
Good night.

GABE
Kelsey? You did it. You found the truth. For Naomi.

KELSEY
We did it. I love you.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - NAOMI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey opens the door, sees Naomi sleeping soundly. She quietly shuts the door again.

SOUND FX: rustling downstairs.

Kelsey hears.

INT. THREE WILLOWS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey comes down the stairs.

KELSEY
Gabe -- I told you to go home --

Kelsey turns on a light. WIDEN AND REVEAL -- BIG SCARE --
Rich, waiting....

RICH
Hi, Kelsey.

Rich stares at Kelsey, smiling....

END OF ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

INT. THREE WILLOWS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey stares at Rich, terrified.

RICH

Didn't mean to give you a start.
Just thought it was time we had
ourselves a chat. Seeing as you're
warming my boy's bed.

Kelsey starts to back towards the door, but Rich grabs her arm.

RICH

Why you're even prettier close up,
doll face.

KELSEY

If you're looking for Gabe ... he's
-- upstairs. I'll go up and tell
him you're here.

RICH

The one thing I never tolerated
from a woman was a lie.

With one flick, he shoves her into a chair hard enough to snap her head back.

RICH (CONT'D)

You better get that straight right
now.

(leaning over and pinning
her)

Gabe's not upstairs. I saw him
drop you off.

He pats Kelsey's cheek. She cringes back.

RICH (CONT'D)

Just you and me, getting
acquainted. And what's this?

(sees ring)

That's a whopper now, isn't it? Is
my boy going to make an honest
woman out of you?

Kelsey is frightened but tries to talk her way out of the situation -- without provoking the angry, six-foot-tall rattlesnake in front of her...

KELSEY

Gabe and I are getting married in August. I hope you'll be there.

RICH

Now, what did I tell you about lying?

Rich slaps her with the back of his hand and Kelsey cries out in shock. His genial expression never changes.

RICH (CONT'D)

Keep it down, or I'll make it really hurt.

Rich seizes Kelsey's hair and drags her to the bar.

KELSEY

You're hurting me, Mr. Slater.

RICH

I bet Grandma Byden must be foaming at the mouth at the idea of her hoity-toity granddaughter playing house with a son of mine. You know what I think? I think you should fix us a nice drink.

KELSEY

Alright.

Her eyes dart to the veranda doors.

RICH

You don't want to try that, honey.

Kelsey, hands shaking, fixes them both drinks. She forces a smile and hands him his drink. He tosses it back. Her hand shakes as she holds her drink.

RICH

You're a cool one. Like your mother. She upstairs?

KELSEY

She's not home.

Rich slaps her again and Kelsey reels back and falls, her glass shattering.

RICH

Why don't we go see?

KELSEY

We know all about you. Gabe's not here because he went to the police.

Rich slaps her again.

RICH

You want to tell the truth to me. Or I'm going to spoil that pretty face of yours.

KELSEY

It is the truth. We met Charles Rooney tonight. He told us everything.

Rich believes her. He looks at her darkly.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

They'll find you. They might not catch you if you run.

RICH

They've got nothing on me.

KELSEY

They put my mother away with lies. It'll be easy to put you away with truth. Gabe is going to tell them everything.

RICH

We'll have to make him sorry for that.

He lunges. Kelsey spins to the side and he catches nothing more than the sleeve of her blouse. As the seam rips, she tears away, making a dash for the doorway.

He catches her, bringing her down in a tackle. Panting out sobs, she kicks out blindly, landing a blow off his shoulder, another off his chest as she claws away. He yanks her head back by the hair and she screams.

RICH (CONT'D)

Thought you were such a smart little bitch.

His hands close around her neck. He is going to kill her. Her fingers dig into the carpet, reaching, then close over an inch-long shard of glass from her broken glass. Mindless with terror and pain, she swings out.

Now it is Rich who screams. Rearing back, the blood spurts out of his arm where the glass pierced his flesh.

Kelsey drags herself up and races from the room as he chases after her.

INT. THREE WILLOWS - NAOMI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelsey fumbles with the knob of her mother's bedroom door and slams it behind her. Naomi is instantly awake.

KELSEY
Mom! Oh God, Mom!

Kelsey fumbles and finally locks the door.

NAOMI
Wha --? What is it?

KELSEY
He's coming. We have to get out.

NAOMI
Who's coming?

KELSEY
He'll kill us!

Rich hurls his weight against the door and Kelsey screams.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
The gun. Do you still have the gun?

Naomi opens the night-stand drawer. It's there, glinting in the moonlight. Kelsey sees the gun and grabs it.

As the wood from the door splinters, Kelsey stares straight ahead. She holds the gun in both hands, struggling to keep it from slipping out of her shaking fingers. Rich bursts in, his arm bloody. He sees only Naomi. His teeth flash as he leaps forward. Kelsey fires. Rich collapses, dead, on the floor. Naomi stares at Kelsey in stunned silence -- eyes huge with disbelief.

Kelsey hears feet pounding. Kelsey jerks around and screams, levelling the gun at the door -- at Gabe, who runs in.

GABE
Oh, God.

Gabe takes one look at his father, then stares at the two women. Gabe gently takes the gun from Kelsey and safely lays it on the bureau. Her face is covered in cuts and bruises.

NAOMI
I'll call the police.

Naomi grabs the phone and exits into the hallway to call.

KELSEY
(breaks down, sobbing)
He kept smiling. He kept hitting
me and smiling.

GABE
(hugs Kelsey)
He won't hurt you anymore.

KELSEY
I couldn't bluff. And he knew, and
he kept hitting me.

GABE
I'm glad you shot him.

KELSEY
It wasn't me. It was you. He
wanted to hurt you.

Gabe looks at Kelsey, full of angst at what he sees.

GABE
Look at your face. I've got no
place in your life, Kelsey. The
biggest favor I could do is walk
right out of it.

KELSEY
I don't want a favor. I want you.

Gabe holds her, tight.

INT. THREE WILLOWS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Naomi walks Rossi through the crime scene as CSUs remove
Rich's body in a bag.

NAOMI
I was upstairs in bed, sleeping. A
noise woke me up. Kelsey ran into
my room, terrified. Her face ... I
could see he'd hit her. Then there
was banging at the bedroom door. I
got the gun out of the drawer
beside the bed. When he broke in,
I shot him.

ROSSI

You say a noise woke you, but your daughter ran in before you could get up and see what it was?

NAOMI

Yes. I stayed in my room because I was frightened.

ROSSI

With a phone right beside you and a gun in the drawer?

NAOMI

He broke into my bedroom. And I shot him.

KELSEY

No. She didn't shoot anyone.

Kelsey steps into the kitchen, Gabe by her side.

NAOMI

Take her back upstairs, Gabe.

ROSSI

Why don't you sit down, Ms. Byden, and tell me what happened.

NAOMI

Listen to me, Kelsey. You're in shock. Gabe will take you to the hospital, and I'll handle this.

KELSEY

Mom, no.

Kelsey shakes her head, moving in to draw Naomi close. Naomi breaks down crying...

NAOMI

I won't let you go through this. I won't! You don't know what it's like. It won't matter what you say. They'll take you away, Kelsey.

KELSEY

It does matter. It's not like before.

GABE

(gently)
Naomi, sit down.

ROSSI

Ms. Chadwick. There's a simple test that will prove whether your daughter discharged a weapon.

NAOMI

You're not putting my daughter in a cell.

ROSSI

I think we can all agree on that. You have my word. Sit down. Please.

Naomi finally sits down. Kelsey sits next to her.

EXT. THREE WILLOWS VERANDA - DAY

Kelsey sits on a lounge chair on the veranda, relaxing in the sun and trying to recover. One side of her face is still bruised. Naomi joins her.

NAOMI

How are you feeling?

KELSEY

I'm fine, until I look in the mirror.

(thoughtful)

It's strange... I know I shot a man, but I can't seem to feel the horror of it.

NAOMI

Don't try. You did what you had to do. I suppose it was foolish of me to lie to the police. Ironic, isn't it? Once I told the truth, once I lied -- and neither worked.

KELSEY

You were trying to protect me. You tried to protect me before, when I was little. You were wrong both times. And right. I'm grateful for what you're doing for Milicent. I'm grateful, even though it's a lie.

NAOMI

What difference would it make now? To have the whole story come out? And I'm not doing it for her.

(MORE)

NAOMI (cont'd)
I don't want to go through it again
either, to live through the press,
the police. All that matters is
that you believed me. You believed
in me enough to find the truth.

A car pulls into the drive. Naomi glances over.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
That's probably Gabe.

KELSEY
It better be. We were supposed to
go over these menus for the
reception. You can agree with my
choices and give me the edge.

Kelsey leans forward and gives her mother a good hug.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
I love you, Mom.

Kelsey rises and starts across the veranda to greet Gabe.
Her eyes widen as they shift from Gabe to Philip, then back
again.

KELSEY
Dad?

PHILIP
(hugs Kelsey)
Oh, Kelsey. Oh, sweetheart.

Naomi stands, watching. Kelsey moves to stand between her
parents.

KELSEY
(to Naomi)
Dad wanted to see that I was
alright.

NAOMI
Of course. Hello, Philip.

PHILIP
Naomi. You look well.

NAOMI
I'm sure you'd like to talk to
Kelsey.

PHILIP
No, I ... Actually, I'd like to
speak with you.

Gabe takes Kelsey's hand.

GABE
Let's take a walk.

Gabe and Kelsey walk ahead as Philip and Naomi stroll.

PHILIP
I don't know where to begin, Naomi.
When I confronted my mother, she
was unbending, she justified the
entire thing. I've thought of
hundreds of ways to apologize.

NAOMI
We were wrong for each other,
Philip. Millicent didn't do that.
She just made you realize it.

PHILIP
She let you go to prison. Kelsey
could've been killed.

Naomi considers the unthinkable possibility. Then:

NAOMI
You did a wonderful job with her,
Philip.

PHILIP
She's so like you. Good God,
Naomi, if I could go back.

NAOMI
All that matters is she loves me.
Let's leave the rest where it
belongs. It's strange to say this,
but I'm happy to see you, Philip.

ANGLE ON: Kelsey and Gabe.

KELSEY
Do you think we should leave them
alone for so long?

GABE
Yep.

KELSEY
He looked so sad.

GABE
His world's been shattered.

KELSEY

You're awfully smart, Slater,
sneaking behind my back to bring
him here.

They walk to the fence. Kelsey stares out at the farm and
the hills beyond -- taking it in with a fresh perspective.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

My Mom used to put me up on this
fence.

GABE

I think the fence needs another
little critter. Or two.

KELSEY

I never took you for a family man.

GABE

People will surprise you.

They look out at the mares grazing with their foals, and
horses racing their shadows, totally content.

END OF ACT EIGHT