

THE BLACK STILETTO

Pilot Episode - "Little Flower"

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Based on the *Black Stiletto* Novels by
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FADE IN

On the POP-POP-POPPING of champagne corks at:

INT. THE RIGHTEOUS RIFF - NIGHT

If the shark-skin-suited drum/sax/bass trio grooving on the stage - or the chain-smoking tux-wearing, strapless-gowned, martini and champagne cocktail-drinking crowd - don't convince you this is New York City in 1960, maybe this will:

TITLE OVER PICTURE: NEW YORK CITY, 1960

A WAITER carries drinks to a purple velvet booth where ROBERTO RANELLI (21, a sociopathic Leonardo DiCaprio) buries his face in the *decolletage* of a MARILYN MONROE LOOKALIKE as a JAYNE MANSFIELD and a MAMIE VAN DOREN - drink uproariously.

Ranelli looks up to see the waiter, smiles devilishly.

RANELLI

Lost her earring. What?

Marilyn, Jayne, and Mamie LAUGH like he's the second coming of Shecky Greene. As they drink, Ranelli holds his Manhattan to the light... then reaches in to PULL SOMETHING OUT...

A LITTLE FLOWER

Ranelli's face becomes a dagger. Marilyn, Jane, and Mamie keep LAUGHING. He looks around. The band gets LOUDER. He stands, SPILLING Mamie's drink. She SHRIEKS. He WALKS.

FOLLOW RANELLI THROUGH THE CLUB

PUSHING past waiters and dancing couples: his affect darkening as he rushes past the bar and behind the stage. The music MUTES as Ranelli reaches a door, and SHOVES it open:

EXT. THE RIGHTEOUS RIFF - ALLEY - NIGHT

Yellowed by sodium light. Ranelli bursts out. He's alone. He drops the flower and STOMPS it... but as he looks up:

HE GETS A FACEFUL OF A WOMAN IN BLACK LEATHER

From thigh-high boots to face-covering mask.

THIS IS THE BLACK STILETTO

THE BLACK STILETTO
Roberto Ranelli.

(CONTINUED)

RANELLI
Who the hell are you?

She DRIVES A VICIOUS KICK to Ranelli's chest in reply. He REELS back and hits the alley wall with a THUNK.

Recovering quickly, Ranelli SCRAMBLES for his gun - but before he can release it from his belt:

SHE PULLS OUT A BLACK-BLADED STILETTO

The yellow light SHIMMERS on the flower-embossed blade - as she SLASHES at Ranelli, gashing his arm, then his face.

Ranelli drops his gun, but even as he WINCES in pain, he sends his fist on a collision course with her head.

She's faster. And sober. With Aikido-master fluidity, she sidesteps, TWISTING HIS WRIST TO FLIP HIM TO THE GROUND!

The Black Stiletto descends to plant her knees on Ranelli's shoulders before HANDCUFFING him to a nearby pipe.

RANELLI
You don't know who you're messing with. I got people behind me.

She reaches into a small backpack and pulls out a nickel-plated REVOLVER with a mother-of-pearl handle.

RANELLI
Where did you get that?

She smiles - and PISTOL WHIPS Ranelli. He falls. Out.

SMASH CUT TO

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET BY THE ALLEY - NIGHT

Filling with SIRENS as two cop cars and an unmarked PULL UP. OFFICERS hold back the crowd as a G-MAN from the unmarked leads two more COPS down the alley:

OFFICERS
Stand back! Police business!

The G-Man FINDS Ranelli, takes a knee, produces a pen, and uses it to lift up the gun The Black Stiletto left behind:

G-MAN
Nickel-plated Castelli model
1889... same model used in the
Fiorello Bonacini execution...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

G-MAN (CONT'D)
and about a half dozen others...
ain't gonna be enough attorneys to
keep this goombah out of prison...

TILT UP TO REVEAL THE BLACK STILETTO

Watching from a ROOFTOP... eyes sparkling, lips smiling...
SHE REACHES BACK AND PULLS OFF HER MASK, her thick hair
cascading in the wind. As she VANISHES into the night...

TITLE OVER BLACK: THE BLACK STILETTO

FADE IN

On the POP-POP-POPPING of champagne corks at:

INT. CIPRIANI - DAY

A sumptuous wedding in a theme best described as "make Grace
Kelly green with envy" swings into high gear...

TITLE OVER PICTURE: NEW YORK CITY, PRESENT DAY

IN A SERIES OF BEAUTIFULLY-SHOT STILL FRAMES

GUESTS gawk at a cake. GROOMSMEN enjoy bubbly from TUXEDOED
WAITERS. BRIDESMAIDS devour hors d'oeuvres from silver trays.

The beautiful candid shots keep coming... until the lens fills
with GRACE CONCANNON (40s) an Armani-suited, headphone-
wearing, event planner.

GRACE
I need my Annie Liebovitz at the
entrance - come on, come on...

THE CAMERA LOWERS TO REVEAL THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Dressed in a practical black suit. Her name is NINA TALBOT
(25). She's that awesome girl from that amazing rom-com you
can't stop watching. Pre-makeover, natch.

GRACE
Allen Dumont's limo just pulled up.
Word around the campfire's his
daughter about to get engaged to
one of the Van Der Peet spawn.
She's his plus one today, and I
want that contract.

Nina's cellphone TRILLS as they speak:

(CONTINUED)

NINA
I'll make him look like Clooney.

GRACE
That's my girl. Is that your phone?

NINA
(snatches and silences it)
No.

Grace guides her to the ENTRANCE: where ALLEN DUMONT (mid-40s, flanked by earpiece-wearing SECURITY) enters with his DAUGHTER (20s, Ivanka Trump's unstable twin).

GRACE
Good. You glue yourself to him and his daughter before she hits the grown-up punch. Girl has impulse control issues.

NINA
(taking pictures)
I'm Elmer's.

GRACE
Is that your phone again?

Nina reaches to her back pocket with one hand, never letting go of her camera, and SENDS IT TO VOICE MAIL.

NINA
No.

GRACE
(spots someone)
Oh. Crap. Bridezilla's mother. Miss Atkinson! Simply everyone wants a photo with you.

Grace GLIDES away. Nina's phone BUZZES again. Freeing one hand from her camera, she reaches for it, rolling her eyes.

ON THE PHONE'S SCREEN: THE WORD "DAD"

EXT. CIPRIANI - BACK ENTRANCE - DAY

Nina BURSTS out, camera behind her back, phone to her ear:

NINA
Dad - something wrong? Who died?

OPEN SPLIT SCREEN WITH

INT. MARTIN TALBOT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MARTIN TALBOT (50), in shirt and tie under a cardigan, sits in front of his computer, surrounded by actuarial books.

MARTIN
Just wanna know how you're doing - how's the job, is everything OK -

NINA
Dad. I'm working. I'm outside Cipriani talking when I should be inside glued to Allen Dumont.

As he speaks, the sound of SHOUTING drags her focus to:

THE STREET BEHIND HER

Where two COPS approach a car, a BLACK MAN behind the wheel:

MARTIN (FILTERED)
The guy running for mayor? He's good. Now, I know what you're gonna say, he's a Republican -

COP #1
Sir, step out of the car with your hands up!

CAR GUY
For running a light? Really?

NINA
You know, dad, studies have shown that two calls a day are every bit as effective as six.

As Martin speaks, a SECOND COP CAR SCREECHES UP:

MARTIN
Oh, come on. You'd be calling me if I wasn't calling you.

NINA LOOKS OVER TO THE DEVELOPING SCENE

As the Cops YANK the guy out of his car:

CAR GUY
What the hell! You can't do this!

COP #1
Hands up, asshole! Now!

CAR GUY
Just write me the ticket and get your damn hands off me!

NINA
Holy crap.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
What is it?

NINA
Cops just yanked a guy out his car.

Martin's voice becomes the model of parental overprotection:

MARTIN
Go back to work. Not your problem.
Seriously. Go back in, be safe.

As COP #2 SWINGS his baton, OFFICER JOHN RICHARDSON (30s,
will be important later) rushes out the second car.

RICHARDSON
Let's de-escalate this, people!

COP #1
He's assaulting an officer!

CAR GUY
You assaulted me!

NINA
Dad, this is getting bad.

MARTIN
Nina. Listen. It's not your
problem. Don't get involved.

NINA
OK, dad, going back inside. Call
you after work - OK?

END SPLIT SCREEN AS NINA CLICKS OFF

Stepping to the door, obeying, pulling the door open, until:

COP #1'S NIGHTSTICK

SWISHES millimeters from car guy's head!

RICHARDSON
Come on people, enough!

CAR GUY
I give up! Don't hit me!

NINA TAKES A DEEP BREATH

She looks to the wedding... then back to the street... then
turns on her heel... and as she rushes to the street:

NINA FLASHES PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE COPS

Her heart RACING as COP #2 HITS Car Guy, then spots her.

(CONTINUED)

COP #2
What the hell? Stop that!

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! As COP #2 HITS Car Guy again!

COP #1
Hey! I said stop! Put down the
camera! You're under arrest!

Nina takes a terrified breath but says nothing - she just
BACKS AWAY and keeps SNAPPING as Cop #1 closes the distance.

Cop #1 YANKS on Nina's camera as Richardson rushes over, and
Cop #2 handcuffs the now-unconscious Car Guy on the ground.

RICHARDSON
What are you doing?
COP #1
(pulls Nina's arms back)
Taking her in.

NINA
For what?

COP #1
Obstruction of justice.

And off Nina's terrified expression... and the mechanical
TRRRRRCK! of Cop #1's cuffs CLOSING around her wrists...

INT. NYPD PRECINCT - DETENTION LOBBY - DAY

A WOMAN IN HER 70s leans into a reception desk - and a put-
upon DUTY OFFICER - writing his name in a Big Chief Tablet.

Maybe it's her intense eyes, cascading hair, or the fire in
her voice that gives it away: she once fought crime as The
Black Stiletto.

JUDY
There better not be a single image
missing from my granddaughter's
camera. I already talked to a
senior investigator in the Civilian
Complaint Review Board, and if
there's a hair out of place on that
girl, I'll have the ACLU crawling
up your sigmoid orifice with a
miner's lamp and a speculum. I'm
not talking canvassers at the Whole
Foods in Chelsea: these are
judicial activists who never heard
the sixties ended.

(CONTINUED)

DUTY OFFICER
Lady, we're releasing her, and
we're not pressing charges -

A wire gate opens to release Nina, carrying her belongings.

JUDY
You're not pressing charges? How
very nice for you.
(hugs and checks Nina)
You OK? They try to intimidate you?
What about they guy they beat up?

The earnest voice of Officer Richardson enters the fray:

RICHARDSON
Ma'am, I was at the scene and while
I'm not at liberty to discuss the -

JUDY
If I were beating people I wouldn't
be "at liberty" either.

RICHARDSON
I came to tell you that I am very
sorry and this will be handled -

JUDY
(writing down his name)
Oh, you bet it will be "handled" -
Officer. John. Richardson.

NINA
He was trying to help.

JUDY
He's covering his ass. Probably
heard about my complaint already.

RICHARDSON
You filed a complaint?

JUDY
And your name's going on it
now, mister.

NINA
Grandma. Would you please stop
threatening the armed officers?

Nina gently pulls Judy out of the Lobby - but as they go, she
turns and gives Richardson the DeNiro "I'm watching you".

EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

An adrenalized Judy BOUNDS down the street toward a gastro-diner as a weary Nina trudges along behind her.

JUDY

NYPD's gonna have to do some serious apologizing to that man they beat up. You probably saved his life. I'm very proud of you.

NINA

For getting arrested? I probably lost my job.

JUDY

That's your dad talking.

NINA

Hey. Dad's - you know - careful.

JUDY

Oh you mean while he sits at his desk popping anti-anxiety meds like they're Reese's pieces when he could be out there living?

(off Nina's look)

I love him. He came out of my *vagine*. But that's not you.

Nina looks down at her phone: **MISSED CALL - DAD... MISSED CALL - DAD... MISSED CALL - DAD... MISSED CALL - DAD...**

NINA

Just don't tell him - OK?

JUDY

You think you'd be in more trouble than me? Bailing you out in secret?

NINA

Also, could you never, ever, say "*vagine*" for any reason?

JUDY

I did not get tear-gassed for protesting the ban on *Our Bodies Ourselves* in '77 so you could ask me that.

INT. GASTRO-DINER - COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Judy scarfs down a burger. Nina picks listlessly at a salad.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

So you lose your job. Might be the best thing that happens to you.

NINA

You want me to come live in your brownstone?

JUDY

You made me read all those biographies of Margaret Bourke-White and I'm damn sure she didn't waste her youth photographing Richie Rich at Cipriani and getting paid less than she's worth for it.

NINA

Last I checked Henry Luce isn't standing on line to hire me.

JUDY

What you did today? That's the real you. You can tamp that down all day and night. You can listen to your dad telling you to stay in your little corner and be safe, but that little hellion's going to keep coming up to make your life a pain in the tush, so you might as well grab ankle and be her.

A WAITER places an Old Fashioned on the counter before Judy.

WAITER

From an anonymous admirer.

JUDY

See? I still got it.

But when Judy lifts the drink, she notices something inside:

A LITTLE FLOWER: LIKE THE ONE RANELLI FOUND IN 1960

Judy's face drains as she scans the restaurant with a sudden, and breathless urgency.

NINA

You OK?

Judy looks at Nina - face tight, jaw clenched, all the youthful energy consumed by sudden storm and stress.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

Listen. No questions. Go to your place. Take a route you don't normally take, double back on the subway, make sure no one follows.

Nina's mind whiplashes at Judy's sudden turn:

NINA

Who'd follow me? What is this?

Judy puts a finger her shocked granddaughter's lips:

JUDY

Go. And call your father. Tell him I got a flower from Roberto Ranelli. He'll know what to do.

NINA

Dad'll know what to do? Stay safe and don't get involved - dad?

JUDY

Say it back to me.

NINA

A flower from Roberto Ranelli.

Judy kisses Nina, then practically SHOVES HER OFF THE STOOL:

JUDY

I love you kid. Go.

Nina walks, then looks back to see Judy, DIALING HER PHONE...

EXT. NYC STREET - SUBWAY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Nina dials her own cell as she walks. The phone RINGS:

OPEN SPLIT SCREEN WITH

INT. MARTIN TALBOT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Martin drinks tea and watches Bob Ross on TV as he CLICKS ON:

MARTIN

Nina. I've been calling you all day. Your gig go well?

NINA

Gig was fine, daddy.

MARTIN

Did you just call me "daddy"? You only call me that when you mess up.

(CONTINUED)

NINA
It's Grandma.

MARTIN
Lord. What did Judy do this time?

NINA
She... got a flower from Roberto
Ranelli?

Martin's face goes alabaster. He stands. Puts down his drink.

MARTIN
Go home. Don't even think of going
to your grandmother's.

NINA
Can you tell me what's going on?

Martin rushes to the closet, grabs a coat and pulls out a
bunch of plain black duffel bags.

MARTIN
I'll explain later, right now, you
need to do exactly what I say. OK?

NINA
(what else can she say?)
OK, dad.

INT. NINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A shabby but charming artist's dwelling above an artisanal
ice cream parlor in Fort Greene. Exposed brick and pipes.
Spiral staircase to the rooftop. Separate beds demarcate one
side of the room as Nina's, the other as her roommate's.

Nina enters to find said room mate, JOSH (Joseph Gordon
Levitt at 25), at a drawing table. His side is festooned with
Pop-Art reminiscent of Kirby and Lichtenstein. Hers with
photos influenced by - yup - Margaret Bourke-White.

JOSH
Neener-neener - whazzup?

NINA
Hey, Josh.

JOSH
Damn... that is a face that screams
for cheap wine.

INT. NINA'S LOFT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Josh works his iPad as wine pours from the plastic spigot on a box labeled "*Vin De Boite*" onto two mismatched glasses...

ON JOSH'S IPAD - IN QUICK CUTS

GOOGLE - ROBERTO RANELLI... **RESULTS** - MURDER.COM...
TRUECRIME.COM... COURTTV.COM... BLOODYCRIME.COM...

JOSH

Roberto Ranelli... wow. The creepy true crime websites love this guy. Call him "babyface killer". Started his career at fourteen. Sent down the river before he turned twenty-two. Six gangland kills with a vintage World War I revolver. Says here he was just released after a fifty-five year sentence.

NINA

You think my grandmother knows him?

JOSH

I think your grandmother has secrets. Beguiling. Tantalizing. Candy-like secrets.

NINA

Can you please not do that? That thing where you turn something that's really bothering me into a funny game thing?

JOSH

Jenga is a funny game thing. Balderdash is a funny game thing. This is your grandma being into something shady, probably's in trouble... and you're here asking me permission.

NINA

To do what?

JOSH

What do you think?

NINA

They ordered me to stay away.

JOSH

OK. Then that's that. Drink your cheap wine.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

I just wish she were answering my calls. I mean - what if that man's in her house. What if she's there?

JOSH

Really, only one way to find out.

NINA

But what if -

JOSH

Then we call the cops.

NINA

Do we? Do we call the cops?

JOSH

Yes, we - you and me - do.

Nina drinks, thinks, then nods. They're going.

EXT. JUDY'S BROWNSTONE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Prying off one of her earrings, Nina leads Josh out of a taxi. Josh carries a messenger bag. He always has his bag.

JOSH

No sign of forced entry. That's promising. You got keys?

Nina kneels at the door and PICKS THE LOCK with her earring.

JOSH

You pick locks?

NINA

Judy taught me.

JOSH

How come you call your grandma "Judy"?

NINA

Feminism. Anyway. Judy had a paranoia about duplicate keys.

JOSH

She didn't want people having copies of her keys so she taught you how to pick locks?

(she shrugs, he ponders)

Let's say we go in there. And a crime hasn't happened, and we don't have to call the cops... then what are we looking for?

(CONTINUED)

The lock CLICKS. The door OPENS. They look at each other with anxiety - what exactly do they hope to find?

NINA
You said it. Judy has secrets.

INT. JUDY'S BROWNSTONE - VARIOUS PLACES - MONTAGE

IN THE LIVING ROOM - Nina and Josh enter - the place is neat and devoid of people. They shrug... Josh turns to the bookshelves, and as he searches... not sure for what...

IN THE BEDROOM - Nina searches a closet. Josh strips the bed, pats down the mattress, then takes a SWISS ARMY KNIFE out of his bag, about to cut the mattress. Nina STOPS him...

IN THE DINING ROOM - Josh and Nina put all the chairs on top of the table and test the floorboards. Nina opens a buffet and looks inside. Nothing.

IN THE KITCHEN - Nina looks through the cabinets as Josh reaches into the fridge and pulls out a beer.

BACK IN THE DINING ROOM - Nina and Josh SIT ON THE FLOOR, frustrated. Josh hands her the beer, she drinks, then:

NINA
Why's there a lock on the floorboard?

JOSH
I'm guessing it's a secret.

Josh looks over to see a painted-over lock on the floorboard. And as NINA crawls to it, and TAKES OFF HER EARRING...

TIME CUT TO

A WALL-COLORED PANEL - HINGING OPEN AS NINA PICKS THE LOCK

To REVEAL a closet - shelves lined with JOURNALS: Big Chief notebooks dating back to 1960 - small shelves of DRAWERS...

AND THE BLACK STILETTO COSTUME ON A DRESS FORM

The mask stares at Nina and Josh with black, empty eyes. A long moment, then:

NINA
What. Are. We. Looking. At.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
You don't know?

NINA
Do you?

Josh steps to the costume, eyes widening with absolute wonder and astonishment... he knows what this is and it's huge:

JOSH
Well... either your grandmother is a huge leather fetishist... or she's into cosplay real hard... or we just answered one of the biggest mysteries of the twentieth century.

NINA
Josh. There is nothing that you have said that in any way helps me understand this.

As he speaks, Josh reaches for the costume - and pulls a flower-embossed Black Stiletto from a sheath on the hip.

JOSH
Judy was The Black Stiletto.

Nina takes a long moment to process that - then:

NINA
Like that old TV show?

JOSH
And the comics, and the novels and - like reality - because no one ever figured out her identity, and that's why they were able to make the show, and the comics - her life was public domain.

NINA
The Black Stiletto. Judy fought organized crime and stopped Cuban spies from killing JFK. Judy.

Josh nods indicates Fiorello's knife. Nina closes her eyes as she gathers her composure in the face of this revelation.

NINA
I guess that could explain why she's never let me spend the night here... and how she travels so much, but never says where... and the lock picking... and the grappling hooks.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
Grappling hooks?

NINA
We had this climbing game
when I was a kid... what?

JOSH
And you found none of that
suspicious?

NINA
Did you find it suspicious when
your grandmother made cookies?

JOSH
My grandmother drove an Alfa Romeo,
smoked filter-less cigarettes, and
dated much younger men.

Nina picks up the first journal, opens it, scans...

NINA
Like I said. I didn't suspect. What
year did they catch Ranelli?

JOSH
1960.

NINA
(reading aloud)
For Fiorello...

IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL

Nina sees a PRESSED FLOWER: like the one in Judy's drink.

JOSH
Like La Guardia?

NINA
(reading)
*Bonacini. Must be my weakness
for bad men, but the moment
he walked through the door, I
knew I was in trouble.*

As Nina reads, her voice MIXES with Judy's - and a series of
impressionistic images montage into a FLASHBACK:

INT. EAST SIDE DINER - NIGHT

Straight out of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*... young Judy,
looking far better in a waitress uniform than should be
legal, puts a slice of apple pie in front of an attractive
young man in a double-breasted suit: FIORELLO BONACINI.

NINA/JUDY (V.O)
*He dressed like a movie star. His
calling card was a little flower...*
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NINA/JUDY (V.O) (CONT'D)
and he always carried one in his pocket... that and the Black Stiletto in his belt. He was a master of Paranza Corta - and told me the streets were no place for an unarmed lady.

He smiles. She smiles. He lifts his hand to REVEAL a little flower - and as he hands it over, a bolt of energy ARCS between them.

INT. FIORELLO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lit by neon from outside, Fiorello guides Judy through a series of combat moves with his Stiletto, their bodies close.

NINA/JUDY (V.O.)
It didn't take long for us to fall... and it didn't take long for him to tell me he was a messenger boy for the De Angelo crime family.

She twirls around and KISSES him, then lifts the stiletto and CUTS off a button on his shirt, then another, and another...

INT. FIORELLO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Judy lies on top of a spent Fiorello in his bed. They talk, passionately... he nods at her, making promises...

NINA/JUDY (V.O.)
When I told him I'd leave him if he didn't quit, he knew I wouldn't give in. I wanted him, but I was willing to walk...

INT. EAST SIDE DINER - NIGHT

Judy sees Fiorello, approaching the glass door. Their eyes match. As he lifts up a little flower...

BANG! BANG! HIS CHEST EXPLODES IN A CRIMSON BURST

The little flower FALLS TO THE SIDEWALK.

JUDY (V.O.)
Turns out you don't just quit the mob. When they took his life for daring to want his own, I knew better than to tell the cops, but I will never forget... or forgive...

Fiorello SLUMPS to REVEAL:

(CONTINUED)

ROBERTO RANELLI - SMOKING GUN IN HAND

Meeting Judy's gaze, then STEPPING ON THE FLOWER before
DUCKING INTO A GETAWAY CAR!

And off the stunned Judy, tears POURING from her eyes...

RESUME ON NINA AND JOSH - TIME CUT

The floor around them now strewn with newspaper clippings:

**EAST SIDE DINER MASSACRE... "BABYFACE KILLER" RANELLI
ARRESTED... MOB HITMAN SENTENCED FOR GANGLAND SLAYINGS**

NINA
(reading)
*What I am about to do will make
those men regret what they took.*

Nina looks up to see Josh, both entranced... so much so that
they have completely missed the ENTRANCE of...

MARTIN (O.S.)
What are you doing here?

NINA
Dad!

Visibly sweaty and nervous - battling an intense panic attack
- Martin drops his duffel bags and puts his hands to his face
in shock and dismay at the sight of Nina...

MARTIN
Oh my god. I told you not to come
here. Why couldn't you just -

Martin breathes deep and leans against the wall - trying not
to hyperventilate as Nina stands to meet him:

NINA
Dad. Where's Judy?

As Martin looks up, his nerves fraying:

EXT. INNER CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

The wind WHIPS debris into devils. Bundled up in black, hands
in her pockets, Judy enters, watching her back every step.

Before her stands a balding, soft-jawed man in an olive, fur-
lined hoodie parka over a white shirt and cheap black tie,
hands jammed into the pockets. His name is PHIL OGDEN.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

What the actual hell, Phil? I'm
paying you to follow Ranelli.

OGDEN

And I'd be following him right now
if you hadn't called.

Judy reaches into her pocket, pulls out the flower:

JUDY

Lucky's restaurant. Three hours
ago. Was he there?

OGDEN

Oh, that wasn't him, Judy.
(off her look)
Some old biddy hires me to follow a
mob hitman who's been in prison for
fifty plus years. I'm a detective.
I get curious. I dig. I learn about
The Black Stiletto. The rumors that
she put Roberto Ranelli away for
killing her lover... Fiorello
Bonacini, the little flower. And
that gets me thinking: how I can
get you to confirm who I think you
are? And then I got it. I do to you
what you did to Ranelli see how you
react.

Ogden grabs Judy's arm. Judy pulls her hand from her pocket
and SWISHES out a TELESCOPING SELF-DEFENSE ROD!

JUDY

How would you even know about that?

But before she can strike, Ogden jams the business end of a
Taser into the soft tissue under her jaw.

Judy FALLS. Ogden kneels over her, smiles.

OGDEN

Because I talked to Ranelli... and
he's paying me a fortune for you.

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SMASH IN

On Judy's Big Chief Notebooks - POURING from the shelves at:

INT. JUDY'S BROWNSTONE - DAWN

And into Martin's duffel bags as he desperately packs Judy's secrets and explains to Nina. Josh just stands back, stunned.

MARTIN

I'm sorry this is how you found out. This wasn't the plan.

NINA

She should have told me.

MARTIN

She couldn't. I made her promise not to.

JOSH

Why?

MARTIN

Excuse me - Josh - this, this isn't your business OK?

NINA

Dad. Why wouldn't you tell me?

Martin turns back to Nina, gathering himself to tell some uncomfortable truths he wishes he had more time to explain:

MARTIN

You have any idea what it was like to grow up with this? Judy had to go underground when I was born. My childhood was all about fake names, moving from one small-no-account town to the next, Judy doing push-broom jobs for cash, watching our backs for criminals, cops, the FBI -

JOSH

Why the cops?

MARTIN

She was hunting crooks with a knife! Why do you think?

NINA

She killed people?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
In self defense.

JOSH
The Black Stiletto doesn't kill.
The Black Stiletto uses violence to
intimidate and... I mean, on TV...

Martin puts down the duffel back and leads Nina away from Josh - even as he takes a whiff from an asthma inhaler.

MARTIN
Jesus Christ. Nina. Why do you
think I call you six times a day?
Why do you think I've been on
benzos since I was twelve? Why do
you think Judy has a different last
name than us? Judy's entire
identity is a fabrication designed
to protect you and me.

NINA
What are you doing with her stuff?

MARTIN
There's no statute of limitations
on Federal warrants for murder.
There are rewards for your
grandmother's capture - and it's
not just the cops and the feds.

Nina has to say it to understand it:

NINA
Criminals put a bounty on my
grandmother's head.

As Martin explains, Josh ENTERS THE CLOSET JUST OUT OF FOCUS:
whatever he is doing in there will become clear later.

MARTIN
She left orders in case anyone ever
found out her secret. I gotta get
rid of all this stuff -

JOSH
You kidding? This is history!

MARTIN
Shut up, Josh!

NINA
Dad. Where's grandma?

MARTIN
I don't know. That's why I
have to do all this!

NINA
But all this Black Stiletto
stuff happened decades ago.

MARTIN
Vendettas don't die. They get
handed down... especially when they
make TV shows about it. If Ranelli
hasn't killed her, he's probably
shopping her to the highest bidder.
(bearing down on Nina)
Among the few things Judy and I
ever agreed on, it's that if anyone
ever found her, they could find us
too. We have to go into hiding.

And off Nina as her life SPINS out of control...

EXT. JUDY'S BROWNSTONE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Martin BARRELS out, pulling Nina and Josh as he HAILS A TAXI:

MARTIN
There's something I still need to
do. It's too dangerous for you -

NINA
But not for you? Let me help -

MARTIN
No. Listen. Pretty much all I've
done my whole life is wait for this
to happen so - TAXI! TAXI! - just
trust me. I'll take care of you, I
always have, but believe me, this
is real, we have to run, and you
can't tell anyone. Not friends. Not
the cops - no one's safe.

A Taxi pulls up, Martin ushers Nina, then Josh, inside:

NINA
Before I left the diner, she called
someone. If we can find out who she
called, maybe we can find out what -

MARTIN
Listen. Judy can handle of herself.

NINA
We can't just leave her.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
She is a martial arts master
who faced down Fidel Castro's assassins!
Fifty years ago!

MARTIN
Go home. Wait for me. I will text
you instructions on where to meet
me. And Josh - you wanna live, you
don't breathe a word to anyone.

As Martin SHUTS the cab door and BANGS on the roof...

INT. TAXI - MOMENTS LATER

Nina stews next to Josh -- imitating her father's voice:

NINA
His own mother's in danger. And he
wants to hide. I can't believe it.

JOSH
You can't go into hiding. You're
what - gonna go off the grid and be
a waitress in Reno for cash the
rest of your life? And then in
fifty years when I'm in an old
folks home, I'm gonna read about
how someone found a box of
negatives in a rummage sale and
they were your photos but you never
got published like Vivian Maier and
died in obscurity?

Nina simultaneously looks at him like "what the fuck are you talking about, Josh?" - and also like "that's sweet in your really strange way of looking at the world, Josh" - and then goes back to what's foremost on her mind:

NINA
She called someone. Maybe it's
someone who knows where she went.

JOSH
You have account information on her
phone? Online password? Her PIN?
(off her head shakes)
Then we're SOL on getting her call
records - unless you're a cop... or
in Homeland Security.

Nina's phone RINGS - as she takes it out, looks at it and clicks on - her expression goes critical:

(CONTINUED)

NINA
Grace - hi! I am so sorry -

OPEN SPLIT SCREEN WITH

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mid-century modern and glassy - like her soul.

GRACE
I'm going to have you killed.

It's all Nina can do to stay polite:

NINA
Grace. Hi. OK. So. I had a problem
at the wedding.

GRACE
You bail on the season's biggest
event and call it a problem?

NINA
But - I can explain.

GRACE
I don't want to hear it. If
you don't get me your photos,
you won't just be fired,
which you are, you won't just
be burned with every
reputable event planner in
town, which you will be -
I'll also sue your ass for
breach.

As Grace SLAMS her phone into its cradle...

CLOSE SPLIT SCREEN

On Nina, lowering her phone... sick of taking shit... sick of
being told what to do:

NINA
We need cops? I can get a cop.

JOSH
Whoa. Your dad said no cops. You go
to the cops and your grandmother
could spend her life in jail.

Nina stares, she needs her friend, but isn't going to ask:

(CONTINUED)

NINA
Are you gonna make me ask for
permission?

JOSH
OK. I'm in.
(off her look)
I hate Vivian Maier.

EXT. NYPD PRECINCT - ENTRANCE - DAY

A none-too-pleased Officer Richardson - in civvies and carrying a bike helmet - squares off against Josh and Nina as he turns the lock holding his bicycle to the community rack.

RICHARDSON
You two have some guts coming here
and even talking to me.

NINA
We need help.

RICHARDSON
(indicating the station)
Help's right over there.
You're a citizen. File a
missing persons report.

NINA
That's not an option.

RICHARDSON
Bull. I don't know what you're up
to, but leave me out of it.

JOSH
Is it really that hard to get a
call record? Couple of phone
numbers? Some tracking info?

RICHARDSON
You're way out of your league.
That's not a favor, and you're
breaking the law even asking.

Nina steels herself - and detonates the nuclear option.

NINA
Asking is what the CRB's going to
be doing after my pictures go
public. I'll be giving a statement.
It could be all about how you were
the one guy trying to keep things
from escalating, or, you know, not.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARDSON

I might know a gold shield who can
help. If I don't just turn you two
in for blackmailing a cop.
(a tense beat, then)
Give me the damn number.

And off Nina, as Richardson stomps back to the precinct...

EXT. A SHITTY INDUSTRIAL SLUM IN THE BRONX- DAY

A 1986 Ford Taurus SPUTTERS into the open gate of...

INT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

As the garage door CLATTERS SHUT behind the Taurus, Phil
Ogden steps out the driver side to the trunk, where he meets:

OLD ROBERTO RANELLI (76)

You might think you have nothing to fear from a man his age.
You're wrong. Imagine the fitness of Harrison Ford with the
menace of Clint Eastwood, and the sociopathic edge of
Christopher Walken... hardened by fifty-five years of prison.

OGDEN

Car's clean, just like you asked.

OLD RANELLI

What about the cargo?

Ogden smiles, jams the key in the trunk lock and:

OPENS IT TO REVEAL JUDY - BOUND AND GAGGED INSIDE

Ranelli turns to Ogden, reaches into his pocket and pulls out
an envelope stuffed with cash.

OGDEN

Pleasure doing business.

Ogden EXITS, leaving Ranelli framed around the outline of the
open trunk lid as he leans in - very close - to Judy's face.

RANELLI

No. Business just started. Black
Stiletto.

And as Ranelli straightens up and SLAMS the trunk shut:

SMASH TO BLACK

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

A WOODEN STICK SMEARS MUSTARD ON A PAIR OF HOT DOGS

Which a VENDOR hands over to Josh at:

EXT. HOT DOG CART ON A BUSY, CROWDED STREET - DAY

Nina reaches for her dog - but instead gets a printout from Richardson: now behind her, bike over his shoulder.

RICHARDSON

Phone's off. Can't be tracked. Last three calls were all to the same number, between 11:37 and midnight.

JOSH

Who's the number belong to?

RICHARDSON

You asked for call records, that's a call record. You wanna know who she was calling? Dial it yourself.

Richardson mounts his bike and RIDES OFF.

JOSH

That is one scary dude.

Josh processes that as she pulls out her cellphone and types:

JOSH

Grandma'd be proud.

NINA

If I get her back.

JOSH

You calling the number?

NINA

Googling, googling, googling, Phil Ogden. Private investigator.

JOSH

Why would Black Stiletto use a PI?

NINA

She hasn't been that a long time.

JOSH

So. Gonna blackmail this guy too?

(CONTINUED)

But Nina's mind is busy formulating the next step in her increasingly improvisational plan to rescue Judy:

NINA

No but...

(gears click, then)

We could call him pretending to be prospective clients? Set up a meet, then try to get him to talk.

JOSH

What if he's one of the bad guys?

NINA

Why would my grandmother be in touch with one of the bad guys?

JOSH

Oh, sorry, that's right - your grandmother had no secrets.

NINA

That's why we're pretending to be someone else until we get in a room with the guy and we know it's safe to bring up Judy. What?

Josh looks away, anxious, truly questioning all of this:

JOSH

Nothing - I mean, last night my biggest problem was trying keep my brush pens from fraying, now we're blackmailing cops and scamming some shady PI?

NINA

Josh. The Black Stiletto needs us.

And that's all it takes to get Josh in the game:

JOSH

Call the man.

CUT TO: *

ROBERTO RANELLI'S HEAVY FEET *

Ascending a darkened staircase. TILT UP TO REVEAL a rusting red tool case, hanging heavily from his clenched fist. *

The crevices on his face made even darker and more menacing in the dim light, Ranelli pushes open a door into... *

INT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - DAY

Tied with heavy ropes to an old Steelcase chair, mouth held shut with duct tape, Judy trains her steely eyes on Ranelli as he enters and puts the toolbox down on a desk before her with a portentous THUNK.

Ranelli lets the tool box settle, then reaches forward and RIPS off the duct tape. You know how in movies people always react to that like it's excruciatingly painful? Not Judy.

JUDY

You're a piece of shit, Ranelli.

Ranelli stares at her, then, removes wrench from the toolbox and puts it on the desk in front of Judy.

RANELLI

Gonna take more than that to get me to kill you quick.

(takes out a screwdriver)

That's what you want, isn't it?

JUDY

How about you untie me and I show you what I want?

Ranelli lays out more tools in a neat line before Judy.

RANELLI

You were at my parole hearing twenty-five years ago. Yeah. I kept wondering about that mystery woman... sitting in the back, watching... all quiet... and then, when Ogden told me about you - showed me your picture. That's when I knew.

JUDY

You remember that? I thought you were too busy crying like a bitch when they put you back in the box.

Zing. No match for Judy in a battle of wits, Ranelli BACKHANDS her across the face. Judy takes the blow and reels back for more like Adonis Fuckin' Creed... a disdainful smile curling across her lips.

JUDY

You're not gonna kill me. You got a whole toolbox and the best you can do is belt me one?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDY (CONT'D)

(off Ranelli, busted)

How about you cut the crap and tell
me... who are you selling me to?
How much are they offering you?

*
*
*
*

Ranelli looks away for a moment, his affect darkening as he
comes uncomfortable close to Judy...

*
*

RANELLI

I didn't come to negotiate, Judy. I
came to tell you that it's your
fault I found you. You should have
let me rot in peace, but now I'm
gonna make a fortune on you... and
when I finally track down your
family, the last thing they're
gonna see...

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

(indicates the tools)

Is these.

*
*

The full weight of Ranelli's threat hits Judy with hydrogen
bomb force... but before she can reply, Ranelli DUCT TAPES
her mouth shut once more and turns to go...

*
*
*

And off Judy - her SCREAMS muffled as she struggles against
her bonds...

*
*

INT. SHIRO TACHIKAWA MARTIAL ARTS - DAY

A downscale Brooklyn dojo. No children of aging hipsters
getting their store-bought blackbelts here: just worn mats
surrounded by cloudy mirrors, and duct taped punching bags.

A uniformed, black-belted young woman FLIPS a BLACKBELT TWICE
HER SIZE down onto a mat, then rises to REVEAL herself:

THIS IS SHIKA TACHIKAWA (28)

Lithe and sleek, with purple-streaked hair.

A harried Martin ENTERS as Shika's student stands and joins a
LINE OF BLACKBELTS taking instruction from her in *Japanese*.

SHIKA (JAPANESE)

*Forget about yourself and follow
your opponent's movement. Let your
mind do the countermovement.*

Martin looks around the otherwise empty place, then makes his
way to the edge of the mat and TUGS on Shika's sleeve.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
Excuse me?

SHIKA
Excuse me. I'm teaching here.

MARTIN
I'm looking for Shiro Tachikawa?

SHIKA
Step away. You're disrespecting me
and my father's dojo.

MARTIN
I was sent by Judy... well her name
used to be "Cooper." Judy Cooper.

Shika holds his line of sight for an uncomfortable beat -
then turns to her class, whistles LOUDLY and SHOUTS:

SHIKA (JAPANESE)
Class dismissed. Family emergency.

The class bows and immediately FILES OUT PAST MARTIN - barely
stopping to put on shoes before they get out the door. Shika
changes the sign from OPEN to CLOSED and turns the lock.

SHIKA
'bout time someone showed up and
said that name to me. What are you,
her son?

MARTIN
Yes. Can I... see your father?

SHIKA
I hope not.
(off his confusion)
He wasn't just a martial arts
master, he was also line cook at
Windows of the World. Restaurant at
the World Trade Center.

MARTIN
I'm sorry... uh... Judy told me he
was keeping a package for her.

SHIKA
That all she told you? 'cause what
passed for bedtime stories around
this place all sounded like "The
Black Stiletto was real and our
family will never be at peace until
we repay the debt we owe her..."
(extends her hand)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIKA (CONT'D)
Name's Shika, by the way. No need
to bow. You're a civilian.

Martin shakes her hand, fear and panic obvious in his voice:

MARTIN
I'm just here for Judy's stuff.

SHIKA
OK. What's the password?
(off his escalating panic)
I'm just messing with you. Come on.

And off Martin, FOLLOWING as she walks further into the Dojo.

INT. PHIL OGDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Remember Max Bialystock's office in *The Producers*? Low rent yet visually compelling? This is the minor key version.

Ogden sits at his desk - in front of the ajar door to what is clearly his one-room BEDROOM/KITCHEN/BATHROOM - looking down at his laptop as the door OPENS to reveal Nina and Josh.

NINA
Mr. Ogden?

Ogden GRUNTS, and brusquely waves for them to sit. Nina and Josh exchange looks, then sit before the desk.

NINA
I'm Jamie McCrimmon, this is my
husband Donald. We called you 'bout
an hour ago?

Ogden grudgingly SNAPS his laptop shut, then looks up - his expression thoroughly sour, and deteriorating as he speaks.

OGDEN
Bull. Lucky's gastro diner. 11:30
PM last night. Next to Judy Cooper.
You think I suck at my job?

Josh and Nina look at each other. She then does the least cool thing any TV series lead would do in this situation.

SHE STANDS AND MAKES A BREAK FOR THE DOOR, PULLING JOSH!

Ogden is faster. He SLAMS his door shut - the loud noise shocking Nina and Josh into a backpedal - then LOCKS IT and draws back his jacket to reveal the Taser in his belt.

(CONTINUED)

OGDEN

Who are you, and who sent you?

NINA

This is all a misunderstanding.

OGDEN

You already tried running, you're
not talking your way out of this.
(removing the Taser)
Get away from the door!

Ogden SHOVES Josh back to the desk - thoroughly unused to this kind of action, but adrenalized by the threat to her friend, NINA THROWS HERSELF at Ogden, GRABBING at this arm!

The Taser FLARES into the air as Nina and Ogden CRASH messily against the door! Josh recovers, sees what's happening, and THROWS HIMSELF at Ogden.

It's a very un-cinematic and un-glamorous SCRUM as Nina and Josh WRITHE Ogden - Taser going on and off - to the floor.

The Taser hits Josh - now it's Nina and Ogden - with Josh's dead weight an anchor in the middle of the scrum - as she struggles to keep the weapon away...

And off this messy conflagration, as Ogden GRUNTS, shoves Josh's limp body away... and slowly brings the Taser closer to Nina...

SMASH CUT TO

INT. SHIRO TACHIKAWA MARTIAL ARTS - BACK OFFICE - DAY

Kneeling, Shika LIFTS A FLOORBOARD in a corner of the cramped office and pulls out a small black duffel bag, which she hands to Martin, who leans against a desk.

SHIKA

Wanna pull that zipper? I'm kinda
dying to know.

INSIDE THE BAG

Rolls of large bills - dollars and euros - as well as folios stuffed with blank passports, DVDs, and fake IDs - and a very suspicious STEEL BOX about the size of a small radio.

MARTIN

It's her go-bag.

SHIKA

You'd think she'd keep that
at home, somewhere close.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

You don't keep a go-bag at home. Go-bag's for when home's compromised.

SHIKA

After all those stories part of me hoped it'd be plans for a doomsday weapon, or a priceless diamond.

Martin's phone TRILLS as he takes out and opens the suspicious metal box - never revealing its contents.

MARTIN

You're not as far off as you think.
(closes it and clicks on)
Nina. Is everything OK?

OPEN SPLIT SCREEN WITH

INT. PHIL OGDEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As Nina talks to her father, REVEAL a very stunned-Josh - standing near her by Ogden's desk... looking very much like a dude who just got Tasered and has barely recovered.

NINA

Hey... daddy.

MARTIN

Please tell me you're not calling me "daddy."

NINA

I'm calling you "daddy."

MARTIN

What happened?

Nina waves for Josh to shut up, takes a deep breath and takes a few steps away from the desk to REVEAL:

A BOUND-AND-GAGGED OGDEN - ON THE FLOOR OF THE BACK ROOM

Passed out and handcuffed to a radiator.

NINA

We kinda tried something... to find Judy... and it kinda backfired and we kinda... need help. A lot of help.

And off Martin, wondering what fresh hell waits for him on the other end of this call...

(CONTINUED)

And Nina, knowing exactly what it is...

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

OPEN ON MARTIN

Running hands up his face and into his hair in anguish at:

INT. PHIL OGDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

He has only just arrived with Shika and taken a gander at this very messed up situation. Shika hangs back - her affect making it clear there's been no time for introductions.

MARTIN

Kidnapping? Assault? Battery?
Blackmailing a cop?

JOSH

We looked at Ogden's files
and -

MARTIN

Intellectual property theft
also. Great. Why don't we
just turn ourselves in now?

NINA

Dad. Ogden was at Lucky's diner
when I last saw Judy. He was
following her.

SHIKA

OK. So does he know what happened
to your grandmother?

NINA

We think.

SHIKA

You think? You people are related
to The Black Stiletto? Really?

NINA

Who are you?

SHIKA

Shika Tachikawa. My dad taught your
grandma how to fight. Guess it
skipped a generation.

MARTIN

What's that supposed to mean?

SHIKA

You wanted my help, I'm here. You
want it or not? OK, then. I'm going
to go into that back room.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIKA (CONT'D)

You people want to stay here that's fine, but I need absolute silence and no drama. *Capish?*

(strides to the back room)

Freakin' amateurs.

INT. PHIL OGDEN'S OFFICE - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shika closes the door on Nina, Josh, and Martin, then DESCENDS into an easy kneel in front of Ogden.

SHIKA

So, I'm gonna do a combination carotid artery constriction and nerve strike to you. It has a mystical Asian name but it's gonna sound like something off a menu to you anyway. First time, you're gonna have the most awful pain you ever endured for about ten seconds before you black out. Second, after I wake you, the pain from the first is gonna feel like the first time you ever got Frenched behind the bleachers, third, you'll tell me what you did with Judy. Sound good?

Shika smiles. And off Ogden - eyes WIDENING:

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Ranelli - now in a suit - sits before a massive, obsidian desk as DAVID BRILL (30s, still dresses like Gordon Gekko), closes the door and pushes a button on a plate on the wall. The office walls to the reception area TURN OPAQUE.

RANELLI

If you're such a big lawyer, how come no one ever heard of you?

BRILL

I have a special practice. I handle one client.

RANELLI

Who wishes to remain anonymous.

BRILL

I am certain we passed whatever due diligence you saw fit.

(CONTINUED)

RANELLI

My due diligence says you and your boss are ghosts.

BRILL

Then I've done my job. I assume there's quite a few parties offering rewards for The Black Stiletto.

(off Ranelli's nod)

My client will triple the highest bid. More if you can trace any living relatives.

Ranelli nods, then slides a smartphone across the desk.

ON SCREEN - JUDY - STILL BOUND - WITH TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES

BRILL

This is just a picture of an elderly woman. I need better proof of identity.

Ranelli then produces a card smeared with fingerprints.

RANELLI

These match the unidentified partials the feds got off the gun she used to put me away.

BRILL

Once my client is satisfied, you will receive instructions. Final funds transfer will depend on your delivering the hostage alive and in good condition.

RANELLI

What he gonna do to her?

BRILL

You have my guarantee that she will be made very uncomfortable for the remainder of her short life.

RANELLI

Who is your boss?

Brill sits back, knots his hands together.

BRILL

He goes by "Mister Black."

INT. PHIL OGDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Josh sits on the desk. Martin stares out the window. Nina leans on the front door. The body language makes one thing clear: no one has spoken since Shika went back.

The silence breaks as Nina's phone TRILLS.

ON THE PHONE SCREEN: GRACE

Nina SILENCES her phone as the door to the back room OPENS and Shika steps out, dragging a sweating, dazed Ogden by the collar before DROPPING him on the floor.

SHIKA

Tell them what you told me.

OGDEN

Ranelli paid me to give him Judy and help him broker her to a dozen criminal organizations offering bounties. He's keeping her in a garage in Hunts Point. I wrote down the address and Ranelli's number.

SHIKA

Now tell them the other thing.

OGDEN

(indicates Shika)

If you can guarantee that I never see this woman again, I swear... on my mother's grave I will forget I ever saw you. Please... I beg you.

NINA/MARTIN/JOSH

Yeah./Sure./OK.

Shika pulls Ogden up and STRIKES him. He drops like a sack.

SHIKA

Thank you.

MARTIN

OK. Let's call the cops.

NINA

So they can arrest Judy?

Martin finds it hard to conceal his growing exasperation with his daughter's unwillingness to stick to his plan:

MARTIN

So they can stop Ranelli from selling her.

(CONTINUED)

Nina steps up to her father, her gears clicking as she tries to figure out a way to save her grandmother.

NINA
We don't need cops. We need to figure out what Judy would have done.

Martin reels: that kind of thinking is his worst nightmare.

MARTIN
Are you joking?

Nina's phone TRILLS again. She silences it.

NINA
Ranelli's committing a crime - he's just as afraid of the cops as you are. Maybe we can use that.

How? JOSH

NINA
I don't know - we know where he is, we know his number... we can take pictures of him. Send them to his phone. Try to scare him into handing her over -

MARTIN
Ranelli's a dangerous psychopath -

NINA
We don't have to confront him, just scare him... and if he tries to move Judy, then we call the cops -
(to Josh)
John Richardson - least we owe him is a high-profile arrest.

MARTIN
Nina. You have to let this go.

Nina looks at Martin, shocked and betrayed by his words:

NINA
She is your mother - how can you -

MARTIN
Because I spent my whole life running from the things my mother did. Because this is not what either one of us wanted for you.

Nina nervously goes toe-to-toe with Martin: this is undiscovered country, and neither likes the lay of the land.

NINA

Why didn't anyone ask what I want?

MARTIN

Judy was prepared to accept whatever came her way to keep you safe. You don't have to -

As Nina speaks, her phone TRILLS again:

NINA

You and Judy had your plan to handle all this and it failed.

(CLICKING ON the call)

Grace - you'll get your pictures when I'm good and ready, and you won't just give me my job back, you'll throw in a raise, write me a glowing letter of recommendation in case I ever leave you, and lose my damn number when I'm off the clock.

(CLICKS OFF, to Martin)

I don't want my grandmother to die. Or go to prison. Or to spend my life in hiding.

Martin turns from his daughter and looks over to Shika:

MARTIN

Give me the address and phone number. I'm calling the cops.

Shika looks at Martin, at Nina and Josh... and then...

SHIKA

No.

Shika's defiance RIPPLES across the room.

MARTIN

Excuse me?

SHIKA

I dream of the chance you're throwing away.

MARTIN

You owe me.

SHIKA

I owe your mother. And so do you.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Nina. You don't want this. I live in fear because of this Black Stiletto business. No one knows you're involved - I've spent my life seeing to that. Please.

NINA

It's not your choice.

MARTIN

You are not ready, you don't know what's at stake. I lost my childhood. I lost my marriage.

NINA

How's that grandma's fault?

MARTIN

You don't know what it means to keep a secret from someone and to spend every second -

Nina is done listening. Every moment they argue is a moment Judy's life is in danger. She detonates the nuclear option.

NINA

You could have stood up to mom any time you wanted to. Don't put that on Judy and don't use it to avoid doing the right thing.

(driving it home)

I am begging you for your help.

Realizing he has no allies here, Martin shakes his head - determined to protect his child.

MARTIN

I won't watch you go down the same path as Judy. I won't let you.

And off Nina, Josh, and Shika, as Martin CLOSES THE DOOR...

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

OPEN ON RICHARDSON STARING CROSSLY AT SOMEONE

As he stands over his bicycle, once again at the rack at:

EXT. NYPD PRECINCT - ENTRANCE - DAY

RICHARDSON
You have got to be kidding.

REVEAL THAT HE IS TALKING TO MARTIN

MARTIN
Closing a kidnapping involving a known murderer would be a good break for a man your rank.

RICHARDSON
Know what'd be a good thing for a guy my rank to look into? Why your mother's a kidnapping target and your daughter's blackmailing cops.

Martin takes a deep breath, gathers his courage, and detonates his own nuclear option:

MARTIN
There's a reason you got blackmailed. You bring back my family - safe - and that reason won't exist anymore.

Martin and Richardson regard one another for a beat, and as Martin walks away, and Richardson stews...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - DAY

As seen from the ROOF of:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nina PEERS over the ledge, telephoto lens now on her DSLR:

AS SHIKA AND JOSH CLIMB A FIRE ESCAPE AND RUSH TO NINA

SHIKA
Place is deserted. Gate is locked.

JOSH
Whole neighborhood's a ghost town. There's a door on the side street - no sound in or out.

(CONTINUED)

NINA
Think he's moved her already?

JOSH
Nina...

Nina puts down the camera, a sadness descending as she realizes that what Josh can't say is "she may be gone."

NINA
We have to go in. I'm not leaving
without knowing.

Shika looks at Josh, then Nina, her own plan coming together:

SHIKA
OK. I'll take the gate and search
the work room. You go in the side
door, take the upstairs.

JOSH
What about me?

NINA
You already got Tased once today.
You're the lookout.

Nina hands over her camera, but Josh steps in front of her:

JOSH
Ranelli might still be there.

NINA
You're not talking me out of
this.

Josh shakes his head and reaches into his messenger bag:

JOSH
I'm not... Shika and I, we're not
Judy's family. We can't be traced
to her, but if someone sees your
face... I'm just saying that I
kinda stole something from Judy's
secret closet... something that
might help you stay anonymous...

And that's when Josh holds up The Black Stiletto's leather
mask! Non and Shika respond to the sight... and then...

Nina takes it like a holy grail and SLIPS IT OVER HER HEAD. A
perfect fit... then she looks at Josh and kisses him!

Nina RACES off... and Josh - in spite of the stakes - smiles,
like this is what he's been working for this whole time.

(CONTINUED)

Then he sees Shika, SHAKING her head before she too RUNS on the mission...

INT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - DAY

Where a rod on the rusty, vintage Steelcase chair slowly gives way as Judy - having worked her escape for a while - JAMS the heavy ropes binding her hands against it... and as the rod finally SNAPS and Judy moves wrest her hands free...

NINA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Judy!

Judy's eyes WIDEN, as Nina OPENS THE DOOR... and Judy sees her wearing the Black Stiletto mask!

NINA

It's OK now. I found you.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Josh FOCUSES on the street to see...

SHIKA, PRYING THE GARAGE GATE OPEN

Then moving over to see...

RANELLI - EXITING A TAXI DOWN THE STREET

And off Josh's escalating anxiety...

RESUME ON JUDY AND NINA

Nina undoes Judy's bonds. Judy LEAPS up, removes her gag, and WRAPS NINA INTO A HUG - holding her a long, emotional moment.

JUDY

Your father? He obeyed me...

NINA

I'm sorry. I couldn't.

JUDY

Thank you. For disobeying.

NINA

I had a good role model.

Judy can't help but laugh - OVERJOYED that everything she taught Nina brought them together at this moment.

JUDY

And you do look good in black.

(CONTINUED)

Nina TAKES OFF the mask, smiles back.

NINA
Couldn't risk anyone learning my
secret identity. Are you hurt?

JUDY
No. Ranelli needs me alive for the
bounty. He took proof of life and
fingerprints. I heard the calls.

And now - the emotional reunion between grandmother and
daughter over - Nina realizes: oh, yeah - she's pissed for
having been kept in the dark about all this...

NINA
Why didn't you tell me!?

JUDY
Because I started tracking my
enemies again - after you were
born, after I returned to New York.
I wanted to see if the bounties
would ever end. I worked with PI's
at first - that's how I met Ogden -
but the more I dug, the more I
realized something... I'm an old
woman. I might as well be
invisible. I started doing my own
surveillance... Nina, I have the
inside track on this city's
underworld, it's in my journals. I
could take so much of it down, and
I don't just mean the bounties...

(a moment, then)
I guess having Ranelli followed hit
too close to home. I'm sorry.

NINA
You never stopped being The Black
Stiletto.

JUDY
I only put away the mask.

Before Judy can finish, Nina's phone TRILLS with a text:

NINA
Ranelli. Come on.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ranelli APPROACHES. Josh turns the corner onto the street:

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
Excuse me, sir! Hey, sir, I'm lost.
I need directions, can you -

RANELLI SEES THE FRONT GARAGE GATE - AJAR

And DOUBLES HIS PACE, ignoring the approaching Josh... who sees no other option but:

JOSH
HEY RANELLI! STOP RIGHT THERE!

Stunned, Ranelli stops and turns to the equally-stunned Josh - and PISTOL WHIPS HIM! As Josh DROPS like a sack:

INT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Crowded with ancient cars and repair equipment. Nina and Judy make their way down the stairs to see Shika, approaching:

SHIKA
Out the side door - come on!

JUDY
You're Shiro's daughter?

Before Shika can answer, the front gate OPENS TO REVEAL Ranelli - who locks eyes with Nina, sees her in the mask...

AND OPENS FIRE - BANG! BANG! BANG!

Ranelli's bullets RICOCHET from metal gear between him and them as he fires and SCREAMS: freaked out by the mask.

JUDY SHOVES NINA INTO SHIKA

Sending them both to the ground and away from the gunfire as:

BANG! BANG! BANG! CLICK!

Judy grabs a MASSIVE WRENCH and RUSHES Ranelli as he fumbles for his speed-loader: SLAMMING him across the face!

JUDY
Go! Go!

Ranelli reaches for his ankle-holster and draws another gun - pointing it at Judy, his voice a venomous whisper:

RANELLI
I gave them your prints... Mister Black knows who you are... you're gonna die before I do.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARDSON (O.S.)
Drop the gun, Ranelli!

JUDY, SHIKA AND NINA

Turn to see Richardson - in civvies, holding his drop gun - at the entrance. Ranelli aims at Richardson and...

BANG! BANG! BANG! - FROM RICHARDSON'S GUN

Three shots to the chest. Tightly clustered. Ranelli falls.

RICHARDSON
Nobody move!

Nina and Shika look up to see Richardson, approaching Ranelli's body, and looking to see:

JUDY - GOING OUT THE SIDE DOOR

She locks eyes with Nina - and smiles - before RUNNING OUT!

Nina and Shika RUSH OUT after her as Richardson checks Ranelli's pulse... and then FOLLOWS...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL GARAGE - SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nina and Shika look around in complete confusion...

THE STREET IS DEAD QUIET AND EMPTY

SHIKA
Where is she?

NINA
I think if she wanted us to see her... we'd be seeing her.

RICHARDSON (O.S.)
Which part of "don't move" did you miss?

They turn to see Richardson exiting the garage - gun in hand:

NINA
Let me guess. My father?

RICHARDSON
(a nod, then)
What is it with your family?

JOSH (O.S.)
Everyone OK? We win?

All eyes turn to Josh: rubbing his head as he enters.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARDSON

I need you three inside. I gotta call for backup. You're all coming with me and making a statement.

Nina looks at Josh and Shika, this could all go very badly very quickly - but Nina is still sharp from all the action:

NINA

About a kidnapping with no victim? Off a tip you got from a guy who went into hiding right after talking to you? In an investigation that started when I blackmailed you? I'd love to make a statement about that.

RICHARDSON

That's not going to work on me again. A man is dead.

NINA

A murderer who served fifty years in prison - and the first thing he did after getting out was kidnap an old woman. God knows how many people wanted him dead.

SHIKA

And in this 'hood? Nine gun shots and I still don't hear any sirens. I think Ranelli knew what he was doing when he picked this hideout.

Josh looks at Richardson's gun, now held by his side:

JOSH

That doesn't look like a service pistol. More like a drop gun - is it untraceable? Like in *Serpico*?

Richardson stares a dagger at him... then holsters his gun.

RICHARDSON

Someone's gonna find the body. There will be an investigation. You've been arrested. Your prints are on record.

NINA

I'll take that chance. What about you? Is Roberto Ranelli worth ending your career over?

(CONTINUED)

Richardson shakes his head - how much can he compromise? What is his career worth to him? A lot, it turns out.

RICHARDSON

You may think we have mutually assured destruction, but I promise, you only think that. I'm not done with you. Not by a damn sight.

JOSH

Uh... so what are you gonna do?

RICHARDSON

Right now?
(off the looks)
I still don't hear any sirens - do you?

Richardson turns and goes... and as he walks, Nina's cellphone TRILLS... Josh and Shika look at her.

JOSH

Is that your phone?

NINA

Yes...
(looks at her phone, then)
My boss... I just got a raise.

Richardson is no gone, and as Nina, Shika and Josh walk away in the opposite direction...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO

A LAPTOP SCREEN

Displaying an e-mail in progress, read by Martin...

MARTIN (V.O.)

Nina. I spoke to Richardson, I know what happened. There's still time for you to come with me. There's nowhere safe for us now. I need you to believe me. Please. They will never forgive Judy for what she took from them.

INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Martin sits at the room's desk, duffel bags piled on a bed. He hits SEND, then turns to the metal box from Judy's go-bag. He opens it to REVEAL...

(CONTINUED)

A MASSIVE DIAMOND - the kind of priceless treasure that people hold decades long vendettas over. And off Martin...

EXT. SHIRO TACHIKAWA MARTIAL ARTS - NIGHT

Nina and Josh look up at the sign - painted and dimly lit by old-timey overhead lamps - as Shika fishes out her keys...

NINA
So this is where my grandmother
learned Kung Fu.

SHIKA
No. It's where she learned *Jujitsu*.

NINA
So - if Judy was your dad's
student... how come he owes her the
life debt?

SHIKA
Because when he refused to teach a
bunch of goombahs how to use his
skills to do crime, they kidnapped
and tortured him... The Black
Stiletto saved his life.

Nina thinks of this for a moment, then:

NINA
Wanna take on another student?

SHIKA
Oh come on... no... I gave up the
package, backed you up against your
dad, almost got shot. I think that
covers my life debt.

(off the looks)
You wanna play Black Stiletto, help
yourself... but I'm no one's Kato.

JOSH
That's the Green Hornet.

SHIKA
Shut up, Josh.

Shika puts her keys in the lock... and then...

SHIKA
Someone's unlocked this already.

As the three look at one another... suspicion building...

INT. SHIRO TACHIKAWA MARTIAL ARTS - CONTINUOUS

Shika leads the way, entering to GRAB a wooden staff from a rack by the window and WIELDING it in a defensive stance... until she sees:

SHIKA
What the hell?

NINA
It's Judy's writing.

REVEAL THE MIRROR WALL BY THE PRACTICE MATS

Scrawled on the glass with a grease pencil: twelve names.

Names like **CORROZO, BALAGULA, CASTRO-VALVA, USOYAN...** followed by the names of organizations like *'ndranghetta, Bratva, NYC Cosa Nostra, Valparaiso Zeros, Camorra...*

And at the top of the list: **MISTER BLACK - AFFILIATION UNKNOWN - FIND MY JOURNALS - BRING ME BACK**

NINA
This is who she's hiding to protect us from. The criminals she's been investigating all this time.

Josh catches the reflection of Nina's face on the mirror as she looks up to Shika... her face full of newfound purpose.

JOSH
We're gonna need those journals.

NINA
I'm gonna need my entire family.
(then, to Shika)
When do we start?

As Shika and Josh look at the writing on the wall... and everyone now knows: this is the moment that Nina Talbott became The Black Stiletto.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER BLACK: TO BE CONTINUED

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