

SPOON-FED ADDICTION

by

Silvano Williams

Based on the novella by Silvano Williams

silvano@silvanowilliams.com
www.silvanowilliams.com

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight cuts across the room.

A stuffed rabbit sits propped against the pillows. One ear is coming loose from the seam.

On the wall: a BEAUTY AND THE BEAST poster. Belle and the Beast mid-dance, her yellow dress swirling. A fairy tale promise.

On the desk: a SKETCHBOOK lies closed, edges worn from use. Beside it, a stack of COLLEGE BROCHURES—University of Houston on top. A desk CALENDAR shows December 1995, its surface is furred with dust.

A purple diary sits CLOSED on the calendar.

Something in the corners of the room moves. The faint shadows cast by the moonlight darken.

Darkness bleeds in. It slides across the floor, pools beneath the desk chair, then rises over the chair's legs like strands of fabric extending from the rug.

It takes the shape of a body sitting in the chair: SHADOW-ANGELA.

She holds the same posture Angela used to hold, but her outline won't stay still. Her features soften and reform randomly, like a collage of photographs flashing within her, going in and out of focus.

The diary OPENS on its own. Pages flutter, then settle on a water-stained entry.

Shadow-Angela's hand moves across the page as if she's writing, tracing over the words already written.

INSERT - DIARY PAGE

Faded ink on a water-stained page: "December 20, 1995. Dear Diary,"

Shadow-Angela's hand pauses. Her dark form turns toward the diary as if reading what she's written.

But Angela's voice doesn't come from the shadow figure as it reads the rest of the page. It rises from the walls, the ceiling, the emptiness in the room.

ANGELA (V.O.)

I have found love, and his name is
(MORE)

ANGELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Adiran. Adiran, who told me he had
heard God... that he deserved to die,
and I didn't believe him until it was
too late.

The diary pages turn backward. They flutter through entries,
like portals through time.

An earlier entry catches the light: "September 3rd. Got my
acceptance letter to U of H's art program today. Dad says
it's not practical. Jessica says follow your heart. For once,
I think she might be right!"

Then each entry reveals a memory—

INT. HIGH SCHOOL ART ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Late afternoon light pours through tall windows.

ANGELA STERLING (17, small-framed, paint under her
fingernails) stands before an easel, brush in hand.

She's SMILING, genuinely and unguarded as a half-finished
painting of a bird in flight takes shape under her brush.

A FRIEND (17) leans over her shoulder, pointing at the
canvas.

FRIEND
That's good, Angie. For real!

Angela laughs, slightly embarrassed. Steps back, studies her
own work.

A wide smile spreads across her face.

The memory fades into a yellow flare.

INT. STERLING KITCHEN - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

A diary page: November 23, 1995.

A Christmas photo clings to the fridge. A much younger
Sterling family. Mr. and Mrs. Sterling stood in the back. The
two girls in the front, shoulder-to-shoulder. All smiles.

SHERIFF STERLING (late 40s, thick-built, carries his badge
like a weapon) paces the kitchen floor. His badge shimmers as
it catches the yellow kitchen light.

A newspaper slams onto the kitchen table. The front page is a
grainy photo of Sheriff Sterling, face hard, frozen mid-

motion as he yells at the reporters in front of him.

"Corruption" and "Under investigation" leap from bold text.

The family portrait smiles from the fridge.

Sheriff Sterling looms over the table. His jaw locks as he swallows the licorice candy in his mouth.

SHERIFF STERLING

You want to explain this?

Angela stands behind a kitchen chair opposite Sheriff Sterling. Hands tight on the backrest. Face unreadable.

JESSICA STERLING (early 20s, hair dyed unevenly, doesn't live here anymore) enters from the hallway, arms crossed, coat folded over them.

JESSICA

Jesus Christ. She's still a kid. She doesn't know what she's doing.

Sterling turns toward Jessica, pointing. Voice rising.

SHERIFF STERLING

You brought that scumbag into our home. And look where we are.

He slaps the paper again. The table jolts. The room darkens.

Jessica's breath catches. But her stare doesn't drop.

JESSICA

Yeah, sure, Daddy. You've preached accountability your whole life. And now the world finally sees you like I do. Like the fucking hypocrite you are!

Unseen by anyone, shadows spread across the kitchen floor toward Angela.

They slide across the tile like black water, pooling toward Jessica's feet.

Sterling lunges towards Jessica. Grabs the nearest chair and slams it out of his way. The shadows on the floor part as the legs screech across the tile.

Jessica steps back from her father's aggression. Her shoulder hits the doorframe hard.

Her foot shifts as she turns away. A tendril of shadow water reaches up and brushes her bare ankle. It recoils and vanishes with a hiss.

SHERIFF STERLING
Don't you walk away from me!

But Jessica already has. Stumbles away, sobbing.

JESSICA (O.S.)
Happy fucking Thanksgiving!

The front door opens. Slams shut.

The Christmas photo on the fridge flutters from the slam, drifts to the shadow water on the floor.

ANGELA (V.O.)
My sister escaped, leaving me, while everyone turned against me for defending Adiran.

Sterling's fingers close around the photo. Black water drips from his hand, seeping into the edges as his grip tightens.

The photo shrivels, corners curling in, the colors bleeding out of it.

He turns to Angela.

Bends over the table, looming into her space. Close enough that she flinches.

SHERIFF STERLING
(low)
This is ALL your fault!

He holds the crumpled ball inches from her face. Flicks it at her chest.

It bounces off, falls to the floor.

Where it touched her, the darkness soaks into the fabric like water. By the time she looks down, it's gone.

Angela releases the chair. Shouts at the top of her lungs.

ANGELA
Like I give a shit!

Sterling's hand comes up fast with immediate, practiced accuracy.

At the counter, MRS. STERLING (late 40s, thin, doesn't make eye contact with anyone in the room) methodically carves a turkey, serving the four dishes spread across the kitchen counter.

Shadows cling to her like a second skin. They move when she moves. She doesn't notice them anymore. Nothing left to notice with.

Shadows bleed in from the edges. The page goes dark.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Another page; another diary entry.

Harsh fluorescent lights hum. They help hide the bad makeup job covering the red on her cheek.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Back to school Monday... The weekend passed the way weekends always pass in our house... in silent fear of confrontation.

Angela strides past lockers. Kids line both sides. Some involved with their lockers, others whispering. Footsteps echo behind her.

Each step leaves a shadow footprint behind her, lingering on the tile like mud.

STUDENTS (O.S.)

"That's her." "With him?" "Didn't he kill a bunch of people?"

Snickers ripple through the crowd. A guy mutters:

GUY (O.S.)

Fucking psycho bait.

A locker SLAMS.

The shadows spread outward from the footprints, engulfing the lockers and the kids on either side.

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shadow-Angela stills. The diary lies open. Pages settle.

A glimpse: "Maybe everyone has a beast inside them. Maybe love is what sets them free."

Her dark hand hovers over the line. Lingers.

The shadows on the ceiling blacken. Stretch toward the window. Drape over it until they cover the window in total darkness.

Soft sound of pages turning. A fog-like memory:

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Angela freezes at the window. Breath hitching. Opens it.

A figure is outside, backlit by streetlight. She steps back.

ADIRAN (20, towering, sharp-tongued dealer) silently climbs through the window. Only his outline is visible, eyes gleaming.

ADIRAN

God does not want me alive, Angie, so
I am going to make sure I go to Hell
when I die.

Angela says nothing. His hand emerges from the dark and wipes a tear from her cheek. His other hand rests at her waist, then trails up her back.

Her breath catches. He pulls her closer.

He kisses her.

ANGELA (V.O.)

My insecurities disappeared, and I
finally felt like I was good enough
for someone.

Adiran takes her shaking hands in his.

Moves his mouth from hers.

Hot breath on her cheek, then her ear.

ADIRAN

I love you.

Angela cries.

ANGELA (V.O.)

That was all I ever wanted.

He pulls away. She reaches after him. He slips out the window.

She falls to her knees. Drags her diary to the floor.

He looks back, almost obscured by the dark. A tear sliding down his cheek catches the light.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Life itself has lost its meaning.
Before that day, before Adiran told me
he loved me, I had a purpose. Then
they took him, emptying my soul and my
heart.

Diary pages flutter to the last entry, what Angela is reading, as the memory fades.

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Angela lies in bed. Diary clutched to her chest, pen loose in her hand.

The pen slips from her fingers. Falls to the floor.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Finally, I've understood what his god
had said to him. It's been two months
since Adiran was taken from me. It's
been two months of wanting him more
than anything else in my life.

Shadows above her begin to stir, unfolding downward slowly with each breath she takes.

ANGELA (V.O.)

But I know they can't ever stop my
Adiran. On some nights, I hear him
calling for me. I want to touch him
again, so I whisper to him in the
dark, hoping he sees me in his dreams.
I've felt him, and I know he comes to
me because I am the only one!

A woman's silhouette forms. Her arms spread. The edges of her arms trail off like wings drawn in smoke.

ANGELA (V.O.)

On those nights, he breathes into my
ear, and sometimes around my neck and
down my back. Warm, comforting
whispers that assure me that when I
die, I will be with him.

The shape swells as it takes a deep breath in. Then folds inward until it collapses.

The shadow reforms. This time with broader shoulders.

Adiran's outline, but no face. The shadow wears what she wants to see.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Because with Adiran's help, I know
I'll be able to come back just as he
does for me. Whether it'll be in
Heaven or Hell, it doesn't matter
anymore.

Angela doesn't move. The shadow takes the form of Adiran's face leaning down, just like their first kiss.

Its mouth brushes her ear.

ADIRAN

Breathe.

Angela inhales. Sharp and deep.

Her eyes WIDEN in anticipation. A bright yellow light reflects off them.

Something is wrong.

She tries to exhale. Can't. Her hands fly to her throat.

The shadows TIGHTEN. CRUSHING.

Her back arches off the mattress. Fighting for air that won't come. Her fingers claw at the darkness. Pass through nothing.

A single tear slides down her temple.

ANGELA (V.O.)

All that matters now is that I will
escape this horrible, pointless life
and finally be happy.

Then, stillness. Her eyes stay open. Glassy. Gone.

The shadow pulls back from her face. Holds Adiran's shape for a moment. Then dissolves, sliding off the bed, pooling in the corners of her room.

The diary slips from her fingers. Falls open on the floor. Pages flutter, then settle on the very last page. Her handwriting catches the moonlight.

ANGELA (V.O.)

(whispered)

No more tears. I have cried enough.
Goodbye, Angela Sterling.

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight cuts across the room.

The bed is made. The chair at the desk is empty. The only thing out of place is the open diary on the desk.

Shadows trace the letters, waiting.

A distant door slams.

Total silence of an empty house.

The page holds.

Darkness surges off the page past the room. Consumes everything in black.

WATER ROARS. A ruptured pipe and a bathtub faucet, their sounds merging into white noise.

ADIRAN (V.O.)
(distorted, reverberating)
What she knew of me is what I fed her.

Because watching eyes widen with
fascination is easier than admitting I
have nothing real to give.

FADE IN:

Steam fogs the bathroom mirror.

A low HUM begins vibrating the glass.

Blood sweats from the mirror.

Handwritten words form: "SPOON-FED ADDICTION", then a handprint smears it from the other side.

The hum rises in pitch until the mirror shatters.

INT. ADIRAN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: "OCTOBER 13, 1995".

The bathroom is wrecked. The mirror is obliterated, tiles are cracked.

The sink has been ripped from the wall. Pipes are exposed, water spraying across the bathroom.

Cabinet doors are splintered. A bullet hole in the drywall.

The water spray slows. The hum fades.

A police radio crackles faintly:

POLICE RADIO (O.S.)
Suspect may be armed... Request backup
at location...

Adiran lies motionless in the tub.

Blood swirls in the water. Spreads across the linoleum. In the corners, the dark drinks it in.

The scattered mirror shards on the floor catch the light. Each holds a fragment of Adiran's face. An eye. His jaw. His forehead.

Adiran slumps back against the tub.

His cracked lips part.

ADIRAN
(forcing it)
Whatever... is in me...

His throat closes. He tries to swallow but there's nothing there. His lips stop moving.

ADIRAN (V.O.)
...it dies with me tonight.

In one larger shard, a reflection stares straight out.

This reflection is muted, darker than the others, its edges lost in shadow. The eyes are Adiran's, but the expression isn't. It's SHADOW ADIRAN.

A conspiratorial smile spreads across his face, meant for whoever is watching.

Shadow Adiran raises one finger to his lips.

Eyes forward.

Mouths: "Shhh."

Adiran splashes water onto the mirror shard. The image ripples and snuffs out.

He looks away.

Other mirror pieces glint, one after another.

A small smile flashes across Adiran's face.

Faces flicker in the mirror shards. MARY (late teens, Asian/Black, meets people's eyes and holds them) and SETH (late teens, watchful).

ADIRAN (V.O.)

The truth is... this isn't about my redemption. This is about the rot I fed.

Their faces fade.

Adiran's fingers twitch beneath the water. Blood oozes from the vertical cut in his forearm.

He lifts his cut arm out of the water. He tries to pull himself up, looks down at his defeated body, and gives up.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

Regardless, this is exactly how I deserve it to end.

He sinks back. Blood curls through the water and spills over the edge of the bathtub.

A flicker across another mirror shard. VERONICA (20, dark-haired, electric blue eyes) is laughing, lit bright in the glass.

Then she's gone.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

She was the last time I was human.

Water laps his mouth.

The darkness in the corner shifts, coming closer.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

But it didn't start tonight.

Adiran closes his eyes.

His head slips underwater, then jerks back up.

He gasps, eyes closed. Labored, ragged exhales.

Shadows obscure him as images on a mirror shard come to life.

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Dim light. PRE-TEEN ADIRAN (12, thin, watches the room

without moving) sits stiffly on a worn couch.

TV light flickers across his body.

The volume is low. The nightly news covers budget cuts and rising crime.

JOHN (early 40s, lean and wiry, still carries himself like a soldier) watches the TV without blinking.

ADIRAN'S MOTHER (late 30s, thin and twitchy) paces behind them, half-nodding, words slurred.

A shadow clings to her edges. Moves when she moves.

She mutters, grabs at Adiran's arm.

The shadow stretches toward him with her reach.

JOHN

Hey.

John rises. Places a firm hand between them. Guides her away without force.

The darkness pulls back with her. Stays on her shoulders as she stumbles off, mumbling.

John says nothing. Sits back down next to Adiran. Puts a hand on his shoulder. Returns his attention to the TV.

Adiran doesn't react. Stares straight ahead at the TV.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

TEEN ADIRAN (16, lanky, practiced at this) kneels beside his mother as she vomits into a toilet. The bathroom is yellowed and slick.

She wipes her mouth, shaking. Eyes snap clear, sharp and focused on him.

For a moment, she's present. Her voice drops, raw and unguarded.

ADIRAN'S MOTHER

Society is a filthy animal, kid. All they want is for people like us to die.

She leans back against the wall. The clarity leaves her face. Then she leans forward again, trembling.

In the corners of the bathroom, the dark settles around them, then engulfs them. Neither notices.

ADIRAN (V.O.)
Six months later, she was dead and I
had nothing.

The sound of retching returns, then fades.

ADIRAN (V.O.)
Until I found her.

INT. DENNY'S - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Fluorescent lights hum overhead. The restaurant is nearly empty.

Veronica sits across from Adiran in a vinyl booth.

A coffee cup steams between her hands. An empty creamer container and an almost empty carafe between them. Torn sugar packets and granules litter the table.

She's glowing.

She lifts the cup to her lips, watching him over the rim.

A smile plays at the corners of her mouth, but her eyes hold steady, waiting for him to notice.

Adiran doesn't notice. His mouth is moving, but his words mingle into the background noise.

She sets the cup down. The smile stays. Her stare sharpens.

He still doesn't see.

Veronica's hand moves beneath the table and up his leg. His eyes finally meet hers.

Her smile fades. What's left is raw.

Her hand comes up and slides across the table: a pregnancy test. Two lines.

Adiran's face—

INT. ADIRAN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Adiran's eyes snap open. Water sloshes in the tub. His breath catches, sharp and involuntary.

He squeezes his eyes shut. Forces it down.

ADIRAN
No... Not that.

His bloody hand drags across the mirror shard displaying the previous memory, smearing it with water and blood.

The reflection in the shard goes dark.

Another shard catches light: ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

EXT. ABANDONED OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "TWO YEARS AGO".

Boots crunch on broken ground. Adiran and Veronica crawl through a gap in the chain-link fence.

She laughs, breathless.

They climb stairs and scaffolding to the rooftop.

VERONICA
First time for everything, right?

ADIRAN
You nervous?

She grins.

VERONICA
With you? Never!

They reach the rooftop and find their spot.

She pulls out the peyote bundle, holds it to the starlight.

VERONICA
To new experiences!

He hugs her from behind, pressing his face into her hair.

ADIRAN
To us. Forever, together.

EXT. ABANDONED OFFICE BUILDING - ROOFTOP - LATER

The unfinished rooftop is skeletal: exposed beams, jagged edges, wind blowing through empty window frames.

Adiran and Veronica lie side by side, faces to the sky. Both in layered jackets and ripped jeans, their skin sweaty from the peyote.

Downtown glows in the distance below them.

DISSOLVE TO:

They sit cross-legged, knees touching. Sage and crumpled clinic paperwork burn in a tin can between them.

Smoke rises to the scattered stars across the sky.

Veronica smiles, bright.

VERONICA

She would've been wild. Just like us.

Adiran nods, lips parted.

ADIRAN

She'll come back. When we're ready.

Veronica closes her eyes. Wind on her face.

VERONICA

Maybe this is us saying goodbye...

ADIRAN

Or maybe it's us making a promise.

DISSOLVE TO:

They lie back, arms folded beneath their heads. Stars swirl above.

ADIRAN

I never pretended with you. Not once.

Adiran takes her hand. No tension. No regrets.

VERONICA

We were never scared of what we saw in each other.

They sit in silence. The city below glitters as the sage burns.

DISSOLVE TO:

They burst into laughter, bodies curled inward, breathless.

DISSOLVE TO:

The tin can smolders. Smoke disperses into the dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

They dance barefoot, swaying slow, faces pressed together.

VERONICA

You ever think... maybe we did things
backward?

ADIRAN

No? Maybe?

He moves to hold her from behind, chin on her shoulder.

VERONICA

We made a soul before we made a life.

Adiran turns his head to look at her. Veronica's eyes catch
the starlight. She's smiling.

ADIRAN

You're my angel with wings!

She turns and leans into him. Kisses him. Laughs in his
mouth.

VERONICA

Let's fly, then.

She jumps up reaching for the sky.

VERONICA

I want to do the lift.

ADIRAN

The what?

VERONICA

Like in Dirty Dancing. I feel like I
can fly.

She backs up a few steps, arms wide. Adiran stands and slides
on his boots without lacing them.

VERONICA

Catch me.

She runs at him. Adiran braces, grabs her by the waist, lifts
her high above his head.

She stretches above him, laughing. Her silhouette glows
against the stars.

She slips from his hold. Adiran shoves her up hard, trying to
stabilize her. He takes a step back. His boot catches on an
exposed beam.

VERONICA

Adiran—

Veronica vanishes over the edge.

She plummets away from him. Her aura fades as the colors drain to gray. Wings flicker in and out, then vanish.

Veronica hits the pavement with a distorted, echoing THUD.

Below, in the darkness pooling around her body, something shifts, barely visible, and then goes still.

Adiran stands at the edge, frozen, staring down. His breathing is shallow and rapid. The wind threatens to push him over the edge. He leans forward. Something moves in the corner of his eye.

Far below, red and blue lights streak past. An ambulance races down the road, siren faint, fading.

Adiran watches it disappear.

He looks down at Veronica's body. Then back at where the ambulance was.

His face shifts.

He backs away from the edge. Turns. Walks to the scaffolding and climbs down.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

I destroyed the only person who
should've been a part of me forever.
And I can't blame the drugs for it.

He climbs down faster.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT

Adiran drops to the ground. Looks both ways. Slips into the shadows.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

Then I abandoned her, making the world
outside of us believe she committed
suicide...

He disappears into darkness.

The memory fades to black.

ADIRAN (V.O.)
Because I'm a fucking coward.

Wind howls through the building openings, then quiets.

INT. ADIRAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Half-light from flickering candles.

Walls covered with movie posters and industrial band flyers. Some framed and aligned, others taped crooked. Stickers fill the gaps between them. Orange Christmas lights sag along the ceiling, held up by tape and thumbtacks.

A sagging sofa sits against one wall, a small coffee table in front of it. Across the room, a 19-inch TV on a cheap stand. A VCR and stereo are stacked beside it, and two speakers are mounted above on the wall. Cords tangle down, untucked, but functional.

From the stereo, "Something I Can Never Have" plays low. Reznor's voice is barely above a whisper.

Adiran sits shirtless on the floor, back against the wall.

On the coffee table: a lighter, a steak knife, and a row of candles burning low.

He holds the steak knife blade over the flames. The metal glows orange at the edges.

His breath steadies.

He presses the blade to his inner forearm. He's done this before.

Skin hisses. He doesn't scream. His jaw locks, eyes fixed on the wound, watching himself burn.

He drags the blade down, slow and deliberate. A vertical line from wrist to mid-forearm.

The shadows creep closer, feeding.

He pulls the blade away. Lets it drop. The blade singes the carpet.

The wound throbs, raw.

A beat. Just him and the shadows as he weeps.

The front door creeps open.

MARY

Are you decent? I'm coming in!

Mary stands in the doorway, keys in hand. A small handmade pendant hangs from her neck, threaded with beads and bone.

She takes in the scene: candles, a knife on the floor, the fresh burn on his arm, Adiran weeping.

The shadows freeze and pull back toward the walls. Mary doesn't see them. She doesn't gasp or cry out.

Mary crosses the room. Kneels beside him. Takes the knife from the floor and sets it aside on the table.

Adiran is breathing hard, holding in the pain, fighting to stay conscious. He doesn't acknowledge her. His eyes are still on the burn.

MARY

(quiet)

Does it help?

ADIRAN

No.

MARY

Then why?

A long beat. His voice cracks.

ADIRAN

Because I can't fucking feel anything else!

Mary looks at the wound, then looks at him.

She touches the skin just beside the burn. He flinches but doesn't pull away.

MARY

You're not going to find her in there.

His eyes finally meet hers. They're wet. He looks like he might collapse.

MARY

Pain doesn't bring people back. It just makes you forget why you wanted them in the first place.

She stands. Holds out her hand.

The shadows in the corners stay pressed against the walls.
They don't come closer while she's there.

MARY

You're not doing this alone anymore.

He stares at her hand. The burn throbs.

He takes it.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Soft candlelight flickers over tapestries. Wind stirs through
an open window.

Nothing else in the room moves except the flame.

Adiran sits on the rug, elbows on his knees, staring at
nothing.

Mary sits on the floor across the small table between them,
folding a piece of stiff paper.

Seth leans back on the couch behind her, arms resting on his
thighs, fixed on Adiran like someone watching a fuse burn.

Mary doesn't look up.

MARY

You eat today?

ADIRAN

No.

MARY

Liar. I can smell the Whataburger on
you.

Seth snorts. The corner of Adiran's mouth twitches.

ADIRAN

Fine. I ate. You happy?

She stops folding. Holds up the paper crane, examining it in
the candlelight.

MARY

Ecstatic.

Then continues folding.

ADIRAN

Seth, we're going to Utah next weekend. Mary and me.

Seth eyes them both expecting more information.

SETH

Jesus... What for?

ADIRAN

Chris knows someone out there. Supposed to have something clean. Maybe it's bullshit. I don't care, we are gonna get good X and get rich.

Seth shakes his head. Leans in.

SETH

It's been three months, man. Are you two lunatics really going all the way to Utah for a cash grab?

MARY

Chris says he has good connections. Worth the trip.

Seth half-laughs.

SETH

So you're just road-tripping to the desert now? Like that's gonna fix the crater in your chest?

Adiran does not respond.

MARY

It's not about fixing anything. It's about seeing what's left once we stop pretending we're fine.

Seth rubs his face.

SETH

Man... you think we don't see it? You've been a ghost since she-

Swallows hard to stop himself.

Mary's eyes flick toward Seth, then back to Adiran. Her voice drops.

MARY

People think pain screams. But
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
sometimes... it just goes really,
really quiet. And you start mistaking
the silence for truth.

She finishes folding the paper crane and sets it down between her and Adiran.

MARY
Take this gift.

Mary stands up, slowly and deliberately. She steps forward and kneels in front of him, bringing her face close to his.

Her lips brush his cheek and his jawline. Adiran freezes.

MARY
Know nothing! From this day forward,
you will know nothing. And you will
reveal nothing.

She presses her palm firmly to his forehead. Adiran's head tilts back under her hand.

A low thrum hums beneath everything.

Adiran feels it in his teeth, and down his spine.

Mary's hand lingers a beat longer, then drops.

MARY
To do otherwise will mean your death.

Adiran is shaken, but he catches his breath.

ADIRAN
Okay. We leave Friday night.

The drone cuts out. Silence.

Seth sits forward, hands hanging loosely between his knees.

Drops his voice, careful.

SETH
You haven't said her name once.

The candlelight flares. The shadows in the room flicker out of the dark corners where they hid.

Then settle again.

SETH

You think that makes you strong? You think if you bury her deep enough with bullshit, you'll stop blaming yourself?

Adiran glances at Seth, teeth grinding. Seth catches it. Pity on his face, but doesn't react.

Adiran clenches his fists, then turns to the candle.

Candlelight on his face. Adiran shakes his head no, just slightly.

The room darkens. Wind blows stronger through the open window. Drapes flutter.

A gust of wind blows the candle out, then roars into black.

EXT. UTAH DESERT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The sound thins out into a faint, dry wind. Grains of sand skitter across unseen ground.

Adiran blinks against the gust.

Mary's house is gone, replaced by the pale dust of the desert. Only the moon and the whisper of the wind remain.

Stars stretch over salt and silence.

The Jeep Cherokee is parked at a low ridge.

JOE (late 20s, small-framed, always high, talks too much) leans on the hood.

BULLET (mid-20s, wiry, fast hands) walks into the dark to piss. CHRIS (22, Black, built, keeps his cool until he doesn't) tosses rocks into the distance. Adiran stands farther out, staring into the desert's darkness.

Mary walks up beside Adiran.

MARY

You trust him?

ADIRAN

Who, Joe? Oh no. That guy's a perpetual fuck up. Chris warned us.

MARY

Yeah. That's a problem.

Adiran doesn't respond. Mary turns, walks back toward the Jeep.

As she reaches the driver's side and pulls the door open—

JOE (O.S.)

I bet your skin tastes like rain out here.

Mary doesn't flinch. Gets in without a word. Chris hears it and stays quiet.

JOE

(louder)

Gather around, everyone. Come on, Chris's high school amigos. Let's meet my buddies too!

ADIRAN (V.O.)

But peace didn't come alone.

Adiran stays behind.

ADIRAN (V.O.)

The shadows came with it. My grief planted the seed. And they watched me grow into the thing that deserved them.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE - NIGHT

Chris drives. Bullet up front. In the back: Mary behind Chris, Joe in the middle, Adiran behind Bullet.

Bullet lights the blunt and hits it.

BULLET

Let's warm this up right.

He passes to Chris. Chris to Mary. Mary to Joe.

Joe hits it, licks his lips, chasing the last trace of her off the wrap.

Adiran looks away.

Joe glances forward. Chris looking ahead. Bullet turned to the window.

Joe smirks. No one's watching.

He flicks the blunt backward, lit end first, into Adiran's lap.