

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

HOT SHOT

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INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Bright coloured lights illuminate bare body parts, thin spandex belts cover breasts, providing little modesty.

The night is ripe with debauchery, hedonism and drunk splendour. MEN drink, jeer and throw money. A STRIPPER's painfully high stilettos curl around a pole.

SCARLETT, 20s, bright red hair, exits through the curtained doorway. Heels and multiple heavy boots shuffle upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM UPSTAIRS CLUB - NIGHT

Scarlett giggles, naked except a tie blindfold.

A broad, male shadow looms, her hands are tied together.

Hands are wrapped around her neck. Scarlett struggles.

INT. STRIP CLUB DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The bass is pounding. The dressing room is scattered with make up, dresses, heels, and various costumes.

ALI smiles, watching herself in the mirror, touching up her powder. Mid-20s, fresh faced, dark wavy hair, olive skin.

ALI

Girl, it's a good night to make some money.

A STRIPPER is further in the back, applying nipple tassels to herself. Turns to Ali, hands on her hips.

STRIPPER

Ali, are these even?

ALI

(smiles, flirty)

Exquisite.

Music quietens down.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

That was Melinda, wasn't she a treat?

Ali looks over. Hastens. Applies her lipstick. Stands up.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (cont'd)

Next up is our exotic princess, Ali!

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Ali walks onto the stage, shit hot and she knows it.

She spins around the pole, demonstrating strength and flexibility. Legs apart, she slowly falls into a split.

Ali crawls towards a MAN. He tucks CASH into her underwear. She pouts, gesturing for more, accentuating her chest.

He tucks cash into her bra, enjoying the goods. Playfully, she pulls his face into her chest.

She walks away smelling the cash. A wink. She slowly undoes her bra. Ali holds the pole, leans back sensually.

Money rains down.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Ali walks to the bar. KEIRAN stands by the cash register.

ALI
Bossman! You don't have a cig, do
you?

KEIRAN
Thought you quit.

ALI
I have an addictive personality.

Keiran gives Ali a CIGARETTE.

ALI (cont'd)
Lovely. Won't be long.

Ali rubs her arms.

KEIRAN
It's raining out there, this yours?

Keiran grabs a thick COAT from beside him, gives it to Ali.

ALI
Thanks, Keiran.

She wraps the coat around her body, walks to the back door.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE CLUB - NIGHT

Light rain. The alleyway is dark and dirty, the kind of place you'd find a needle.

Ali opens the heavy door, it SLAMS shut. The music is quiet, muffled. There's a dumpster next to her.

Ali raises the cigarette to her lips. Frowns. Pats down the coat and finds a lighter.

She tries to light the cigarette, fingers cold and stiff. She drops the lighter.

Ali sighs sharply. Reaches for her PHONE in her pocket. Turns on the flashlight.

She shines it on the ground. Gets on her knees, searching.

The light illuminates Scarlett's dead body. Eyes staring back at her, mouth contorted, skin ghostly.

Ali screams.

INT. MADELINE'S HOME - NIGHT

Silent. Uncomfortably clean, tidy, as if no one lives here. Detective Inspector MADELINE sits at the desk, reading a report. Early-40s, wiry with stress wrinkles, even her pyjamas look formal.

On the desk is a neat stack of books and a framed photo of Madeline smiling, hugging a 5 year old girl.

Her eyes move from the report to the photo, distant sadness. Her mobile PHONE RINGS, breaking her trance. She answers it.

MADELINE
Montgomery.

EXT. OUTSIDE CLUB - NIGHT - LATER

Madeline lifts the crime scene tape, enters. She wears a smart black suit, blonde hair slicked back in a neat bun.

Detective DAN, late-20s, and Medical Examiner RHIAN, early-30s, are already analysing the scene.

DAN
Ma'am, fancy seeing you in a place like this.

MADELINE
Constable, you look right at home.

Dan raises a hand to his chest, injured.

DAN
You wound me.

MADELINE
(smirks, turns)
What do you have for me Rhian?

RHIAN
26 year old Samantha Kuznetsov, goes
by Scarlett. She works in the strip
club, ID was in her bag.

MADELINE
Hm, Scarlett, how tacky. Looks fresh.

RHIAN
I'll need to confirm but I'm guessing
the time of death was in the last 6
hours. Rigor mortis hasn't completely
set in yet, the cold slowed it down.

MADELINE
Cause of death?

Rhian crouches down.

RHIAN
At first glance, strangulation. See
this bruising?

Rhian's gloved hands trace Scarlett's neck, an O marked
bruise is prominent.

Dan flips his notepad shut.

DAN
I interviewed the owner, he didn't
see anything.

Madeline nods. She looks around, scanning the area. There is
a camera pointing in their general direction.

MADELINE
Dan, request those CCTV records.
Who found the body?

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Ali sits on a couch, shaking, oversized coat and baggy sweatpants on top of a glittering, heavily painted, tear-streaked face. A contrast.

MADELINE (O.C.)
Aaliyah Vasilli?

Ali looks up. Madeline is staring down at her.

MADELINE
I'm Detective Inspector Madeline,
Violence Against Women & Girls unit.
I have some questions for you.

ALI
I already told the guy everything.

MADELINE
I'd like to hear it myself.

Ali stares at the ground, leg shaking up and down.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Haven't had your fix yet?

ALI
(irked)
Excuse me?

MADELINE
(smiles)
Nothing.

Madeline looks down on the couch, lip twitching slightly. She brushes the couch off, sits opposite Ali.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Vasilli. What is that, Italian?

Ali is weary, but narrows her eyes.

ALI
Persian, from my dad's side.

MADELINE
He must be proud.

ALI
Mm, I'm sure.
I don't need career advice from you.

MADELINE

Of course you don't, you have it all worked out.

Ali sharply inhales, ready to snap.

MADELINE (cont'd)

(cuts her off)

Can you tell me how you found the victim?

ALI

Scarlett.

MADELINE

Yes, Scarlett, Samantha Kuznetsov.

Ali smiles fondly.

ALI

Samantha.

Ali's expression shifts into sadness.

ALI (cont'd)

I went out after my set, to have a smoke. And... I found her there. Crushed under the bins.

Sadness shifts to disgust.

ALI (cont'd)

Like she was trash.

MADELINE

When did you last see her?

ALI

2 hours after opening. We had a drink, she did one dance and then she left somewhere. I just... I don't understand how--

MADELINE

And you found her last night at...

She checks her notes.

MADELINE (cont'd)

23 hundred hours.

Ali is confused for a moment.

ALI
11, yeah, 11:25 maybe.

MADELINE
Your boss said she left soon after.
You may have been one of the last to
see her alive.

Ali leans back, exhales.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Did Scarlett have any enemies?

ALI
Enemies? No! She was so sweet. More
of a pushover than anything. I'd
have to tell some guys to fuck off.

Ali considers.

ALI (cont'd)
There is someone... Jerry, I think.
He was obsessed with Scarlett, would
always request her, even when his
card declined. Demanding prick.

Ali looks at Madeline.

ALI (cont'd)
Do you think...?

MADELINE
We have not confirmed any suspects
yet, but thank you...

Madeline checks her notes.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Aaliyah.

Madeline stands, brushing herself off. Hands Ali a CARD.

MADELINE (cont'd)
If there is anything else you think
of, give me a call.
Good day.

Ali stands up quickly.

ALI
That's it?

MADELINE

(nods)

That's it.

ALI

Do you know how she died?

MADELINE

We cannot divulge information on an ongoing investigation.

Ali waves her hand, dismissive.

ALI

Yeah, yeah I get that. But she was my friend. Did you find her phone? It must be in her bag. Maybe the asshole was someone she knew.

Madeline presses her lips together, annoyed.

MADELINE

I'll be sure to look into that.

ALI

But--

Madeline raises her hand, cuts her off.

MADELINE

Thank you, for your corporation.
If I have any more questions, I'll be in touch.

Madeline turns, lifts her foot to walk, looks down in disgust.

MADELINE (cont'd)

Why is it so sticky?

ALI

You don't wanna know.

Ali watches Madeline walk away. Crumbles to the couch.

She looks down at the card in her hands. It reads DI
MADELINE MONTGOMERY.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Same BEAT, Ali's front door SLAMS shut. Ali is exhausted.

It's a small lived-in one bedroom flat, reasonably tidy, with fairy lights and a standing mirror by a makeup table.

Through the walls a COUPLE are having a screaming match. Ali sighs, drops her bag and coat onto the floor.

Next to her bed, there is a tall cage with an albino FERRET, chirping and making noises. Ali walks to the cage.

ALI

Hey Draco.

Opens it. She reaches in, refills the food bowl. Ferret DRACO jumps out onto the bed. Whimpers, watching Ali.

ALI (cont'd)

They been at it all night?

Ali trudges to her bed, and falls onto the covers. Draco licks her face. Ali strokes him. A loud CRASH and shatter of glass. Ali tenses.

ALI (cont'd)

I need to get out of here.

Ali curls up. Draco snuggles into her.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Madeline is tired, she rubs her temples, elbows on the desk.

DAN

Didn't sleep?

MADELINE

Hm. Sleep, that would be nice.

DAN

We don't have the autopsy results back yet, or the CCTV footage. I checked her phone before I sent it to processing, it was in her bag. No recent calls.

MADELINE

Okay, what do we know?

DAN

We know that Samantha came alone from Russia four years ago. Started working at strip clubs, escorting. No family, no boyfriend.

MADELINE

So the 'it's always the boyfriend' theory's out. Do you think they ever consider finding an actual job?

DAN

Well, I guess it's not always that easy. The owner, Keiran, said she worked there five, sometimes six nights a week. My wife's taking pole lessons, it's a workout.

Madeline is unconvinced.

MADELINE

We need to find out if this Jerry was at the club last night.
We need more information.

INT. STRIP CLUB DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

LOUD music is blaring. Ali stares at herself in the mirror, zoning out.

The music quietens.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Excellent costume as always Ruby!
Weren't those tassels just delicious?

Ali quickly inhales, exhales. She adjusts her hair, stands.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (cont'd)

Welcome to the stage, Ali!

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Ali stands on stage. The music STARTS.

She dances, eyes closed, trying to let the music guide her. She tenses at jeers and cheers from the Men.

The music gets LOUDER, bass overwhelming. She opens her eyes. The lights are blinding.

She gets dizzy, vision swirls, a blurry kaleidoscope. Her heart THUMPS to the sound of the bass. She stumbles on her heels, trips, crumbles to the ground.

MUSIC STOPS. Ali can't breathe, her chest is tight. Strong arms reach for her, she's hoisted up.

KEIRAN
Come on, I've got ya.

Ali is dragged, stumbling off stage.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

From behind the bar, Keiran places a shot in front of Ali.
Ali downs it without a second thought.

KEIRAN
You should take the night off.

ALI
I'm sorry.

KEIRAN
No, it's fine. You've had it rough.

Ali lets out a sharp breath, almost a scoff.

ALI
Any chance for another?

Keiran pours another shot.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Madeline grimaces, looking around. She spots Keiran and Ali.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Madeline approaches Keiran and Ali.

KEIRAN
Detective, to what do I owe the
pleasure?

MADELINE
I have some more questions.

KEIRAN
Fire away. Drink?

MADELINE
No, thank you. I'm on duty.

Madeline looks over to Ali. Ali is barely listening.
Madeline looks back at Keiran.

MADELINE (cont'd)

Do you recall which of your...
clients, procured Samantha's services
that night?

KEIRAN

Unfortunately, I don't. Scarlett did
lots of lap dances, and danced on
stage. It was a busy night.

MADELINE

Of course, but they must have
purchased something. I'd like to
request the bank transactions for
last night. You keep records, yes?

KEIRAN

We do indeed. I'm be happy to
cooperate. You do have a warrant,
don't you?

MADELINE

(through pursed lips)

I do not. But I will.
What were you doing all night?

KEIRAN

I was working like a dog. Like I
said, busy. All the girls saw me. My
staff card was being used all night.

MADELINE

You don't mind if we corroborate
that?

KEIRAN

'Course not, you're just doing your
job.

WORKER (O.C.)

Keiran! Need your help here!

Keiran looks over, takes out a card from his wallet. He
places it on the table, slides it over to Madeline.

KEIRAN

You can contact my lawyer if you have
any more questions.
Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm needed.

Keiran walks away.

Madeline exhales. She notices Ali, watching Keiran leave.

ALI
That's weird.

MADELINE
Weird?

ALI
I didn't see Scarlett on the floor
last night. I mean, she was on stage
once but I didn't see her give any
lap dances.
I could be wrong.

MADELINE
Could Samantha have been anywhere
other than on stage or giving dances?

ALI
Well... Sometimes the girls go
upstairs with the clients. The club
is next to a hotel, they've got a few
rooms booked a night.

MADELINE
They go upstairs...?

ALI
For sex.

Madeline's eyebrow raises.

ALI (cont'd)
It's all consensual, of course. The
girls have to agree.

MADELINE
Did Samantha go upstairs a lot?

ALI
Yeah.

MADELINE
Do you?

ALI
No. I'd rather not be touched.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Madeline and Dan are looking over the CCTV footage. Many men
walk past, all are grainy and generic. Not helpful.

MADELINE

It's 2023, you'd think the quality would be better by now.

DAN

A shame they don't have 1080p.

MADELINE

What?

DAN

Uh, nothing. It's... It's a joke.

RING RING! A phone call. Dan picks it up.

DAN (cont'd)

This is Dan. Uh huh... right, thanks.

He puts the phone down, turns to Madeline.

MADELINE

Give me some good news.

DAN

Keiran's alibi checks out. His card was being used before and after the estimated time of murder.

MADELINE

That's not good news.

DAN

The good news is, Rhian's ready with the autopsy results.

INT. CORONER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rhian stands over Scarlett's dead body, nude save for a white sheet. Madeline and Dan face her.

RHIAN

Samantha's COD is asphyxiation. I first thought strangulation...

Rhian picks up a small white fibre with tweezers.

RHIAN (cont'd)

But I found these white fibres in her mouth. Pillow maybe. She suffocated against it, after being choked.

MADELINE

Ensured the job was done. What else?

RHIAN

She had sex before she died. There aren't enough lesions for it to definitely be sexual assault, but there is some trauma. Could have been rough, could have been rape.

Rhian sighs.

RHIAN (cont'd)

I got the DNA sample back but there's no matches in the system.

DAN

So he's not a career criminal.

MADELINE

Or he just hasn't been caught... Maybe Samantha had sex on the job.

Dan's phone RINGS. He checks it.

DAN

We got the warrant.

MADELINE

Still got that lawyer's card?

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ali is painting, sky blue strokes on a small canvas.

A loud, muffled male shout reverberates through the walls, Ali looks up at the wall beside her. Draco chirps and rattles the cage.

A loud CRASH, glass SHATTERS. Ali jumps, shocked. Draco makes more anxious noises. Ali opens the cage, brings him onto her lap, soothing.

ALI

Shhh, it's okay. We're okay.

She PLAYS a song on her phone, the bright sound drowns out the yells next door.

She starts humming, and continues to paint.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Dan is scrolling on the computer, yawns.

MADELINE (O.C.)
Got anything?

Dan looks up at her, blinking the sleep away. Madeline looks at the computer over his shoulder. Dan points at the screen.

DAN
No Jerry, but I found a Jake and
Jeremiah. Could be a nickname.

MADELINE
(nods)
Bring them in.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

JAKE, mid-30s, sits behind a table, looking around, bored.

Madeline enters, sharp and confident.

MADELINE
Jake Tripp?

JAKE
Yeah. What's this about?

Madeline takes a seat opposite him.

MADELINE
I've got some questions about an
ongoing investigation. You were at
the Leather Heel two nights ago, is
that correct?

Jake stiffens.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Going to a strip club isn't a crime.

JAKE
...Yeah, I was there.
Is this about the dead stripper?

MADELINE
So you heard about that.

JAKE
Yeah, she was a pretty one. Sucks.

MADELINE
And what time did you leave?

JAKE
Am I being interrogated here?

Madeline waves her hand, motioning to the room.

JAKE (cont'd)
I didn't do it. I didn't even know
the chick.

MADELINE
So you didn't procure any of
Samantha's services that night?

The camera tracks behind Madeline's shoulder, switching to
JEREMIAH sitting behind the interrogation table.

Jeremiah is late-20s, lanky with messy hair.

JEREMIAH
Nah, I didn't stay long. Got the
shits, so I went home.

Madeline barely hides her disgust.

MADELINE
Can anyone account for you leaving?

JEREMIAH
Yeah, my mate, he drove us back to
his place and we had some beers.
His girlfriend was home too.

MADELINE
So you wouldn't mind giving us a DNA
sample, would you?

JEREMIAH
Course not sweetheart. What'd you
need? Hair? Spit?
(winks)
Or something else?

INTERCUT - back to Jake.

JAKE
Sure lady, I got nothing to hide.

Madeline leans back, undecided about them.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Ali is sipping a full whisky. She's scantily clad, ignoring the men walking past her, staring at her butt.

MADELINE

Aaliyah.

Ali looks to her side.

ALI

Back so soon?

Madeline takes out two photographs, of Jake and Jeremiah, places them in front of Ali.

MADELINE

Do you recognise either of them?

ALI

Vaguely, but neither are Jerry.

Madeline takes back the photos, irked.

ALI (cont'd)

Haven't found him yet?

Madeline purses her lips.

ALI (cont'd)

I'll take that as a resounding no.
It's been days, what are you doing?

Madeline is about to retort.

ALI (cont'd)

Hey, do you have a pen and paper?

Madeline nods, takes out a NOTEPAD and biro PEN.

Ali takes it, cracks her knuckles, licks the tip of the pen. She starts drawing a portrait of JERRY.

Madeline watches over her shoulder, slightly impressed.

Time passes. Ali's drink is now noticeably drained. Ali raises the portrait, checking, nods in approval.

ALI (cont'd)

Here. To the best of my recollection,
detective.
Hope that's useful.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Dan puts the phone down.

DAN
Jonathan Lazinski. They're bringing
him in now.

MADELINE
What Jonathan is nicknamed Jerry?

Madeline looks over at the drawing.

DAN
Who drew that?

MADELINE
The stripper that found our vic.

DAN
(impressed)
She could be a sketch artist.

MADELINE
(sarcastic)
Yeah, I'll ask for her CV.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

JERRY, mid-40s, rugged and sleazy, legs up on the table.
Madeline enters, raises a brow.

MADELINE
Made yourself comfortable, I see.

JERRY
Why not, right?
Your hoodlums interrupted me during a
very important poker game.

Madeline sits down.

MADELINE
Apologies for inconveniencing you.
Murder investigations take priority.

JERRY
Oh... Scarlett. My poor beautiful
Scarlett... Such a sweet girl.

MADELINE
So I've heard.

JERRY

Have you got a suspect yet? That asshole needs to be put down.

Madeline looks at him pointedly.

JERRY (cont'd)

You don't think... I did it? I'd never hurt that girl, she was my favourite!

MADELINE

Multiple eye witnesses say that you requested her consistently, even when you couldn't pay for it.

JERRY

Hence the poker.

Madeline leans forward.

MADELINE

You wanted her to dance for you again, but you were rejected. So you got angry. And killed her.

Jerry stands up, sweating.

JERRY

Hey! No way! I didn't do it!

MADELINE

Sit down.

Jerry falls back onto the seat.

MADELINE (cont'd)

Your bank records put you at strip club for the whole night. Buying drinks, dances... You splurge a lot for a guy who doesn't have the means.

JERRY

I'm a compulsive spender! Sure, I was there trying to find her... But she wasn't there! So I stayed for a bit with another girl. They don't give you attention unless you throw cash.

MADELINE

And why should they? That's their job.

JERRY
Look, I swear, I didn't touch her.

MADELINE
We're holding you for the day. Are
you willing to give us your DNA?

JERRY
Yeah, whatever!

Madeline ponders, unconvinced of his guilt.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Dan puts the phone down.

DAN
Rhian says none of them match.

MADELINE
(sighs)
Let them all go.

DAN
You've been at the station for days,
you need to go home.

Madeline reluctantly nods, grabs her coat.

MADELINE
I expect to see you at 7AM sharp.

DAN
(mock salute)
Aye aye Captain!

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Music blasts. Ali is giving a MAN a lap dance, he's handsy.
Ali smiles earnestly, bends to his ear.

ALI
No touching.

He doesn't listen. She pushes his hands off.

ALI (cont'd)
I said... no touching.

She walks away.

MAN
Hey! Wait! I'm sorry pretty lady!

ALI
(cringes, muttering)
One bloody rule they can't follow it.

Ali spots Jerry, beaming with a drink in one hand and a STRIPPER's ass in the other.

Ali pushes past the men, pacing towards Jerry. Ali stands in front of the Stripper.

ALI (cont'd)
I can take over.

STRIPPER
(mouthing, grateful)
Thank you.

Ali smiles as the Stripper leaves. She places her feet either side of Jerry.

JERRY
It must be my lucky day!

Ali giggles, fake. She gives him a lap dance, sensually, teasingly. Her back towards him, she rolls her hips.

Jerry touches her waist. Ali bites her lip, enduring it.

Ali turns quickly, facing him.

ALI
So...

Ali raises her foot, heel on the chair.

Jerry grins, his hand running down her foot, enjoying it.

With one motion Ali presses her sharp heel into his crotch.

JERRY
Ah-- That hurts a bit--!

ALI
Did you kill Scarlett?

JERRY
What? What is with you people?

ALI
That's not an answer...

She presses her heel harder.

JERRY
It wasn't me! Wait! I swear. I swear!

Ali narrows her eyes. She straightens, heel still pressed.

JERRY (cont'd)
I didn't see her that night, I asked
the Boss and he said she was at some
private party!
Please... I wanna have kids!

Ali removes her foot, placing it back down.

ALI
Never reproduce.

She walks off. Pathetically, Jerry cradles his crotch.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Ali approaches Keiran, making drinks at the bar.

KEIRAN
Ali! Hard at work?

ALI
Yeah, just taking a break.

KEIRAN
Drink?

Keiran places the drink down.

Ali smiles. She turns her head, watching a Stripper and OLD MAN disappear behind a thick tacky curtain. The curtain isn't long, so we see heels and shoes shuffling upstairs.

ALI
Hey, Keiran?

KEIRAN
Yeah?

ALI
You were working the whole shift.
Were there any private parties, the
night Scarlett died?

KEIRAN
No, don't think so.

ALI
Did she go upstairs?

KEIRAN
No.

ALI
But there's CCTV up there, right?
Did you give that to the police too?

KEIRAN
I didn't, 'cause I checked it
already. Didn't see her.

Keiran's phone RINGS! He looks at it.

KEIRAN (cont'd)
My brother, he's bringing some big
shot clients over. Need to take this.

Keiran smiles tightly.

KEIRAN (cont'd)
Back to work after your drink, yeah?

He walks off, answering the call. Ali studies him.

She takes out the card from her coat, fingers it, unsure.

INT. MADELINE'S HOME - NIGHT

Madeline is lying on her bed, staring at the ceiling.

Phone RINGS. She looks at the unfamiliar number. Answers it.

MADELINE
Montgomery.

ALI (PHONE)
Maddy, right?

Madeline sits up.

MADELINE
It's Madeline. Who is this?

INT. STRIP CLUB DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT - A SECOND LATER

ALI
Ali. From the... strip club?

MADELINE (PHONE)
Aaliyah? I'd say it's late but these
are your working hours.

ALI
Yeah, sorry. Listen...
you need to look into Keiran.

MADELINE (PHONE)
Your Boss?

ALI
He's acting sus. Jerry told me he
said Scarlett worked a private party
that night. There's CCTV up there,
footage you don't have. Keiran said
he checked it but I'm not so sure.

INT. MADELINE'S HOME - NIGHT - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Madeline frowns.

MADELINE
Thanks for the tip, I'll look into
it. But you shouldn't interfere with
an investigation, it's dangerous.

INT. STRIP CLUB DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

ALI
I kinda just saw Jerry and had to
threaten the dick. Literally.

MADELINE (PHONE)
Stop getting involved, you're a
civilian.

ALI
But--!

MADELINE (PHONE)
Goodbye Aaliyah.

Madeline hangs up. Ali looks at the phone in shock.

ALI
What a bitch!
Guess I'll do it myself.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Ali sneaks through the crowd, coat on, hood up, head down.
She looks around cautiously, slides behind the curtain.

INT. HALLWAY UPSTAIRS CLUB - NIGHT

Ali is searching on the computer, finds the CCTV footage.
There are muffled noises and loud obnoxious male laughs.
Ali searches her coat pockets hurriedly.

ALI
Come on... I swear I had it here...

She takes out a USB triumphantly.

ALI (cont'd)
Thank you, trusty Mary Poppins coat!

She shoves the USB into the computer. Copies the file.
Ali kisses her sleeve.

ALI (cont'd)
I can always count on you.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

Early. Madeline is seated at her chair, reviewing documents.
A loud feminine laugh makes Madeline look up. Madeline
stands, scanning. Puzzled, she finds the source.

Ali is standing with the CHIEF, friendly and smiling. The
Chief is uncomfortable, nodding politely.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline approaches Ali and the Chief, nods in respect.

MADELINE
Sir.

CHIEF
Detective Inspector. This is...

ALI

Maddy, I was looking for you everywhere! This... kind and dashing man said you'd be here.

MADELINE

My name is Madeline.
Apologies Sir, she's a witness in the strip club case.

CHIEF

I see. Well, I'll leave you to it.

Ali waves playfully as the Chief walks away. Madeline grabs her arm, pulls her roughly to her office.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline shuts the door.

MADELINE

What are you doing here?

Ali crosses her arms.

ALI

I want in.

MADELINE

In? In on what?

ALI

The investigation.

ALI (cont'd)

(scoffs)

You lot clearly have no clue what's going on. I'm a fresh set of eyes.

MADELINE

This isn't appropriate. Please leave.

ALI

Why? I can get access to places you aren't allowed without a warrant. I can get information out of those weak men with a flutter of my lashes. Or dig of my heel. I can help.

MADELINE

I don't need a stripper's help.

Ali pauses.

ALI
Oh, so that's what this is about.

Beat.

Ali walks towards the autopsy photos of Scarlett's corpse on the board. Ali points to the mark on Scarlett's neck.

ALI (cont'd)
What's that?

MADELINE
Bruising, we think it's from a ring.

Ali nods slowly. She turns back to Madeline.

ALI
Anyway, I'm sure this won't be of use, since, of course, the little slutty stripper found it.

She takes out the USB, places it on the desk.

MADELINE
What is it?

ALI
The upstairs CCTV.

Madeline is frustrated.

MADELINE
You can't keep doing this, you're breaching protocol and compromising the integrity of the investigation.

ALI
I thought strippers didn't have integrity.

MADELINE
You need to back off.

Ali laughs mournfully.

ALI
You don't get it, do you? I can't.

MADELINE

Look, I'm sorry about your friend.
But if you keep this up, I'll have to
arrest you.

ALI

You're sorry? You don't care about
me, or Scarlett. So go on, arrest me.

Ali laughs, shaking her head.

ALI (cont'd)

What happened to make you such a cold
bitch? Finding who killed Scarlett is
the only thing getting me up in the
morning. The only thing forcing me to
go back to that shitty club and make
rent.

Ali stares into Madeline. She glances down at the USB.

ALI (cont'd)

You have my number.

Ali walks out, leaving the door open.

Madeline watches her retreating back. Uncertain. Torn.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ali arrives home, in a haze. It's quiet.

She falls onto the bed, curls up, shuts her eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A blaring alarm breaks the silence. Ali's eyes snap open.

She mechanically gets up, starts getting ready for work.

MONTAGE to MUSIC CUE: "Vigilante Shit" by Taylor Swift

- She showers.
- Gets dressed.
- Applies pixie-girl make up.
- Feeds Draco, pets him, cooing.

- Pulls her trusty coat around her.
- Slams the door shut.

END MUSIC CUE.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Keiran looks up from his notebook, noticing Ali walk past.

KEIRAN

Ali! We need you for a private party tonight. My brother, Grant, has those guys coming soon.

Ali smiles tightly.

ALI

Sure. No problem.

INT. STRIP CLUB PRIVATE PARTY - NIGHT

Ali dances seductively, hands curling around like an snake.

The room is grandly decorated, with gold and red carpets, exclusivity bleeding out of every low couch. A group of BUSINESSMEN are seated beside each other, leering joyfully.

GRANT, late-40s, well-groomed, thick gold chain, clearly a snobby businessmen. He reaches up to touch Ali's body.

Ali gently pushes his hand, wagging her finger playfully. He grins, touching her again. Ali smacks his hand.

Grant is annoyed. He holds his BANK CARD with two fingers.

GRANT

Go get us another bottle.

Ali smiles, fake.

ALI

My pleasure, Sir.

Ali walks away.

GRANT

You! Nipple-tassel girl! Bring that fat ass here.

Ali scowls.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Ali walks to Keiran at the bar, pouring drinks.

ALI
Creep with the gaudy gold chain wants
another bottle.

Keiran laughs. He pulls a champagne bottle from the bar.

KEIRAN
Ah, sorry about him. That's Grant.

ALI
(stiffens)
Oh. Sorry.

KEIRAN
Nah, s'alright. He can be a creep to
beautiful ladies. I'll talk to him.

ALI
You don't have to do that.

KEIRAN
Don't worry about it.

Keiran grabs the bottle, walking back to the private party.
Ali awkwardly follows.

INT. STRIP CLUB PRIVATE PARTY - NIGHT

Ali watches Keiran whisper in Grant's ear. Grant's mouth
opens in a small 'o'. He nods.

Keiran stands straight, smiles kindly to Ali, walks out.

Ali looks back at Grant. He beckons her forward, fake smile.

She walks towards him.

He presents two £100 notes, tucks it into her bra, fingers
lingering a little too long on the skin of her breast.

GRANT
For your troubles.

Ali stands, uncomfortable and unsure. She feels bought off.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Madeline and Dan are watching the secret CCTV footage. Scarlett is walking with a group of boisterous businessmen. Grant, face just barely visible, grabs her arm. They hang back, talking for a few seconds. They catch up to the group.

Madeline points at Grant.

MADELINE

We need to find out who this man is.
And Keiran, not as cooperative as he
made out to be.

DAN

Do you want to bring him in?

MADELINE

Yes, but there's something I have to
do first.

INT. ALI'S APARTMENT - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Ali, wearing casual grungy clothes, opens the front door. It reveals Madeline.

ALI

Oh. Hi.

MADELINE

May I come in?

Ali stands aside, holding her hand out to enter.

MADELINE (cont'd)

(enters)

It's unwise for you to keep coming to
the station.

ALI

Is that what you came here to say?

Madeline surveys the small flat. Her eyes land on the cage.

MADELINE

Is that a ferret?

ALI

(nods)

Disclaimer, I separate the artist
from their work. His name's Draco.

MADELINE
Like Draco Malfoy?

ALI
You've read Harry Potter?

MADELINE
Of course, I'm not uncultured.
Aren't ferrets meant to be in pairs?

ALI
(nods sadly)
We lost Harry a few months ago.

MADELINE
Sorry to hear that...

Madeline shifts uncomfortably, takes out Grant's CCTV PHOTO.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Do you know this man?

Ali takes the photo. She studies it. Realisation.

ALI
That's Keiran's brother. Some
business jerk called Grant.

MADELINE
His brother?

Ali nods.

Madeline exhales. She considers, looks at Ali.

MADELINE (cont'd)
I'd like to formally invite you to
consult for this case.

ALI
Consult?

MADELINE
Yes.

Ali crosses her arms, expectantly.

MADELINE (cont'd)
(reluctantly)
I need your help.

ALI
(smiles)
Well, since you asked so nicely.

Madeline prepares to leave. Stops, stares at Ali's clothes.

MADELINE
Oh, and wear something professional,
please.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Keiran sits, straight-faced.

MADELINE
Why didn't you disclose the upstairs
CCTV footage?

KEIRAN
I forgot. Apologies.

MADELINE
A judge isn't going to like that.

KEIRAN
It's the truth.

Madeline takes out the photo of Grant.

MADELINE
Do you recognise this man?

Keiran wavers.

KEIRAN
Yes. It's my brother.

MADELINE
Who was there with a group of clients
the night Scarlett was murdered.

KEIRAN
They were partying all night. I can't
believe it slipped my mind.

MADELINE
You know far more than you're letting
on. We will find out the truth.

KEIRAN
I hope you do, for Scarlett's sake.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GRANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Standing outside a corporate building, Madeline looks at her watch impatiently.

Ali runs to her in CHUNKY HEELS, pencil skirt and blouse.

ALI
Sorry! Sleep schedule's a mess.

MADELINE
You're late. Let's go.

INT. GRANT'S BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline is composed, Ali is bobbing to the elevator music.

ALI
So we got any dirt on him?

MADELINE
Just follow my lead.

INT. GRANT'S BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline saunters confidently. Ali is a couple paces behind. Madeline shows the RECEPTIONIST her badge.

MADELINE
DI Madeline Montgomery, Violence
Against Women & Girls unit.
Is Grant inside?

RECEPTIONIST
Yes but I think he's busy--

MADELINE
Inform him we're here.

The Receptionist picks up the phone, dials.

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Grant swivels around in his desk chair. His hands open, welcoming.

GRANT
Detective! I hear you wish to speak
to me, though I can't think what for.

MADELINE

Grant Liniker, good afternoon. I've come to ask some questions about... her.

Madeline places Scarlett's autopsy photo.

Grant scowls momentarily.

GRANT

No idea who that is.

MADELINE

We caught you on CCTV talking to her, walking into a private party.

Beat. Grant looks at Ali.

GRANT

You look familiar. Bit too pretty for police.

MADELINE

She's not police.

ALI

She's the police.
I danced for you last night.
Thanks for the tip.

GRANT

(laughs)
Police loan out strippers?

ALI

(shrugs)
I needed a day job.

GRANT

(cocky, to Madeline)
I don't need a lawyer, do I?

MADELINE

I'm just asking routine questions regarding a murder investigation. Why would you need a lawyer?

Grant leans back in his chair.

GRANT

Yes, I know the girl. Poor lamb, she looked different last time I saw her.

MADELINE
And when was that?

GRANT
Hm, Tuesday?

Beat.

MADELINE
I hear business has been good lately.

GRANT
Can't complain. Bought a new jet.

MADELINE
Your brother Keiran owns the Leather
Heel. You take your boys there.

GRANT
Occasional fun, is that a crime?

MADELINE
No. Murder is a crime. I wonder what
a murder charge would do to that
philanthropic reputation of yours.

GRANT
You can't prove anything except she
danced and I spoke to her.

MADELINE
Of course you have a tab, or Keiran
pays upfront.

Grant is arrogant, confident.

MADELINE (cont'd)
If you have nothing to hide, how
about a DNA sample?

Grant pauses. Considers. Decides.

GRANT
Okay Detective, I fucked her too.
She was more than happy for the cash.
But swear, that's it.

ALI
You piece of--!

Ali takes a step forward. Madeline grabs her wrist.

MADELINE
Get the DNA to the station today.
We'll be in touch.

They turn to walk out.

GRANT
Wait!

Madeline and Ali look back.

Grant smirks at Ali, grossly.

GRANT (cont'd)
If you give me a show, you'll get the
DNA much quicker.

ALI
(spat out)
Pig.

MADELINE
Let's go.

Grant laughs as they leave.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GRANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Madeline and Ali walk down the street.

ALI
He's going down. He's so going down!

MADELINE
You can't attack people. Though he's
definitely the chief suspect.
I'm surprised he didn't care about
admitting he paid for sex.

ALI
It's just to cover his tracks.

Madeline contemplates.

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Ali sits on Madeline's desk, jovial. Dan watches, confused.

DAN
DNA was a match to Grant, he
definitely had sex with her.

MADELINE
It's not enough.

ALI
How's that not enough?

MADELINE
He admitted to having sex, and there
wasn't enough damage to confirm rape.
Doesn't mean he killed her. We should
ask his Receptionist some questions.

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE HALLWAY - EVENING

Ali and Madeline are speaking to the Receptionist.
Grant walks down the hallway.

GRANT
Twice in one day, Detective.
Sorry, you're not my type.

Madeline thanks the Receptionist, turns to Grant.

MADELINE
Shame. We get new information every
hour, so had to confirm something.

She stops, noticing the large RING on Grant's finger.

MADELINE (cont'd)
That's a lovely ring you have.
Mind if I take a look?

Grant's confidence cracks.

GRANT
You've already got my DNA.
I have work to do.

He slams his office door shut.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GRANT'S OFFICE - EVENING

Madeline and Ali stand outside.

ALI
Well, that was abrupt.

MADELINE
I need to see that ring.

Ali takes out a cigarette pack from her coat pocket. She puts one in her mouth, offers to Madeline.

MADELINE (cont'd)
Not a fan of lung cancer.

ALI
At least I'll die young and pretty.

There is a CRASH and CLATTER from the alleyway beside them. Ali and Madeline share glances, and turn to investigate.

Grant runs out the back and down the alley, hurried.

ALI (cont'd)
Is that...?

Madeline takes out her walkie-talkie, shouting.

MADELINE
We need backup, got runner on foot,
down Victoria Street. Brunette, suit.

Madeline and Ali chase him down the alley. Ali stops.

ALI
Split up!

MADELINE
You can't apprehend him alone--

ALI
Go!

Madeline exits the alleyway, looking around. She runs left.

Ali pants, looks around, sees Grant climbing a ladder up a building wall.

Ali kicks off her chunky heels, catching them in one swoop, like an Asian mother ready to throw a slipper at her child.

ALI (cont'd)
Oh no you don't!

Ali runs and stands beneath Grant, meters off the floor. She throws her chunky heels, one straight at his head, one hits his hand holding the ladder.

Grant grabs his head, instinctively lets go of the ladder. He falls, crashing to the floor.

Ali pounces, grabbing a heel that fell to the ground, hits his head repeatedly with it. Grant covers his face in agony.

Madeline runs towards them, out of breath and amused.

MADELINE
Grant Liniker, you're under arrest
for the murder of Samantha Kuznetsov.

Madeline puts handcuffs on him.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - EVENING

GRANT
Look, it was an accident! I was
drunk, we were having fun, I thought
she liked it!

MADELINE
Liked it?

GRANT
Being choked. She didn't tap out or
tell me that it was too much, she
just... passed out.

MADELINE
And then?

GRANT
(swallows)
I panicked, I left the bedroom.
I didn't know she was dead.

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

MADELINE
He's been charged for the murder.

ALI
(pleased)
Put that sucker behind bars.

Madeline looks at Ali. Ali notices, straightens her back.

MADELINE
The case is over, just a ton of
paperwork to do.

Madeline puts out her hand.

MADELINE (cont'd)
You were a great help.

Ali smiles, she shakes Madeline's hand.

ALI
Thanks. So, what now?

MADELINE
You can get back to your life.
Go home, rest easy.

Ali smiles half-heartedly, nods.

INT. STRIP CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Keiran is making drinks, frustrated. Ali sits at the bar.

ALI
Hey, sorry I'm late.

KEIRAN
'salright. It's quiet tonight.

ALI
You okay?

KEIRAN
(shakes head)
Grant was arrested. I can't believe it.

ALI
Yeah, sorry. It must be shit.

KEIRAN
How are the police sure he did it?

ALI
He confessed. DNA was a match, and he ran when we came to ask questions.

KEIRAN
We?

ALI
(bashful)
Oh! I... kinda helped the police.
Since I found her, and all.

KEIRAN
He confessed?

ALI

Yeah.

Keiran puts his head in his hands.

KEIRAN

I need a drink.

He pours two drinks, slides one to Ali.

KEIRAN (cont'd)

And you danced for him too, I'm sorry
I put you in that position.

ALI

It wasn't your fault. How would you
have known?

Keiran chuckles sadly, drinks.

The thumping background MUSIC increases. Keiran and Ali
chat, inaudible, the music LOUDER than their voices.

Keiran pours more drinks. Ali takes it, smiling.

A montage of blurs, hours go past as they talk. They laugh,
flirt. Keiran's fingers linger on Ali's hand.

Keiran leans in, whispers to Ali. She smiles, blushes, nods.
They stand up, walk to the curtain, lift it. Keiran motions
for Ali to go first, he follows. Drops the curtain.

INT. BEDROOM UPSTAIRS CLUB - NIGHT

Keiran and Ali undress hurriedly, Ali kicks off her heels.
Keiran picks her up, placing her on the bed. They have sex.

Ali is lying on Keiran's chest, in his arms. She smiles
fondly, eyes fluttering shut.

FADE TO BLACK.

Ali wakes, hands wrapped tightly around her neck. Keiran is
on top of her, twisted face glaring down.

Ali gasps, struggling.

ALI

W-What are you-- Gah!

Ali tries to force his hands off him, legs kicking and hands
pushing his face. Keiran's grip stays strong.

Ali lets go of his hands around her neck. She makes her hand into a fist, punches him. His grip falters.

She stumbles off the bed, only clad in underwear. She backs up, on the floor.

Keiran regains his balance, grabs her by the hair and pins her to the ground.

KEIRAN
Grant didn't kill Scarlett.
She was still alive when he left.

Ali's eyes widen, struggling.

KEIRAN (cont'd)
He called me when he realised what he
did, and I took care of it. Of her.

Ali's vision starts fading, blurring. Her hands fall. Ali feels her stripper stilettos just slightly out of reach.

Ali leans to the side, eyes still on a grinning Keiran. She grabs the stilettos, and stabs Keiran in the neck with the sharp, bedazzled heel.

Keiran stumbles back, shocked. Blood seeps out of the wound.

Ali coughs, gasping. She grabs her phone and dials.

ALI
Maddy?!

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Ali is dressed, wearing her thick coat. Her leg is shaking. Madeline walks towards her.

MADELINE
We got a full confession. Grant told
Keiran you helped the investigation.

ALI
He gave me a cig. He let me go
outside knowing her body was there.

MADELINE
He managed to slip out and in with
Scarlett's body quickly. He really
was working all night, an airtight
alibi.

ALI
I can't believe I trusted him.

Madeline sits beside Ali. She places a gentle hand on Ali's shaking leg. It stops.

MADELINE
You didn't know. You're safe now.

ALI
Yeah, if not for me, you wouldn't have got the killer.
Not so bad for a stripper, ey?

MADELINE
True, not so useless after all.

ALI
I could permanently consult, you know. I could go undercover.

MADELINE
(laughs)
Fun, but I don't think so.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

Madeline enters the station. She instantly notices Ali speaking animatedly to an embarrassed Chief.

Chief nods, opening the door for Ali. Ali blows a kiss, walks out. The Chief closes the door, draws the blinds.

MADELINE
What's going on?

ALI
Oh, Chief was recently a client.
I said I'd tell his wife unless he let me consult.

Madeline is shocked, unbelieving but lets out a laugh.

ALI (cont'd)
(cheeky)
After all, men hate to have their secrets exposed.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.