

SAVAGE CITY

Written by Elizabeth Heider

Based on the Nikki Serafino novels

PILOT — FIRST DRAFT

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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

This script takes place across three languages: Neapolitan dialect, Italian, and English. For clarity, all dialogue is written in English. The language being spoken is indicated by parenthetical. Where no parenthetical appears, characters are speaking English.

NEAPOLITAN DIALECT – the language of the neighborhood, deep Naples, childhood.

ITALIAN – the professional register, neutral ground.

ENGLISH – the private language of Nikki and her siblings; the American inheritance.

Characters switch languages deliberately. The language chosen is always a character decision.

INT. ABANDONED PALAZZO - QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI - NIGHT (2006)

Naples. November 2006.

A city at war with itself. The streets empty by 19:30. Twelve murders in two weeks. The old Camorra bosses caged in Poggioreale, and the new princes, greedy and ruthless, battling for dominance. Thousands of criminals, released by a government amnesty program, roam the streets like wolves, hungry to settle vendettas.

A condemned building in Quartieri Spagnoli. Old baroque structure gone to seed, metal braces on unstable walls. Nothing much from the outside.

Within – a warm oasis. Four floors of crumbling plaster and squatters, mattresses and secondhand couches, graffiti decorating the once-elegant space. Anti-government energy. Loud music pushing through the walls.

TITO CALANDRA (19) moves through the room. Tall, muscular, with a preternatural gravity and the electric charge of a canny intellect.

Beside him – NIKKI SERAFINO (18). Long dark hair. A child's full face not yet remade by the decade ahead of her. Full of sharp

observation and ready action. Confident: in her capability, in her equality to Tito, in the value of their work together, and in their passion for each other.

The room shifts as they enter. Small adjustments. A man near the door straightens. Across the room, someone catches someone else's eye.

A heavysset MAN (50s) finds Tito. They embrace. He speaks quietly, close, one hand on Tito's shoulder. Tito listens, nods once. The man moves away looking lighter than he arrived.

A WOMAN (30s) intercepts Nikki. Greeting warm, eyes measuring. They speak in Neapolitan dialect.

WOMAN
You found it?

NIKKI
Of course.

WOMAN
And?

NIKKI
Tell your brother the Thursday patrol runs fifteen minutes early now. Has done since October. If he hasn't adjusted, he needs to.

The woman nods, calculating.

WOMAN
He'll want to -

NIKKI
He knows where to find us.

The woman moves away. Nikki finds Tito. Something passes between them - unspoken intimacy, coordination, agreement.

Wine pressed into their hands. A joke. Friendly laughter.

LATER -

A threadbare couch. Demijohns of wine nearly emptied. The party deeper and slow now - a guitarist in the corner, couples dancing, someone making a speech nobody listens to.

Tito's arm around Nikki. Her head back, watching the ceiling. Comfortable in the way that comes from years of intimate knowing. They speak in Italian and dialect. She calls him 'caro.' He calls her 'mio piccolo mostro.' Playful. Still young enough to be playful.

Nearby, someone talks about a recent killing in Piazza Cavour - a man shot in the face. Nikki and Tito speak to one another in Italian & Dialect.

TITO

They're burning too hot. They're going
to bring hell down on themselves if
they can't get control.

Tito takes her chin and draws her into him. They kiss - at once passionate and familiar.

Her phone buzzes. He feels it. Keeps her close.

She pulls back just enough to glance at the screen.

NIKKI

It's my parents.

TITO

(quiet)

Stay.

NIKKI

We should go.

TITO

Just a little longer.

She looks at him. A small smile. She reaches for the wine.

MUCH LATER -

The party thinning. Nikki's phone face-down on the cushion.

She picks it up.

The screen fills with missed calls. Her mother. Adriano.
Adriano. Adriano. Eight missed calls from Adriano.

She sits up. The wine curdles her stomach.

She calls Adriano. He picks up immediately. They speak in
English - the language of their mother.

ADRIANO
(V.O.)
Where are you?

NIKKI
Quartieri Spagnoli...I didn't check my
phone...I'm sorry -

She starts to apologize. He cuts her off.

ADRIANO
(V.O.)
Listen to me. Have Tito walk you to
Piazza Municipio. I'll be there in ten
minutes.

NIKKI
Adriano -

ADRIANO
(V.O. - urgent)
Ten minutes. Go. Now.

EXT. STREETS - QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI - CONTINUOUS

Dark. Moving fast.

The city at night during the curfew is dangerous – the silence wrong, the emptiness wrong, the occasional sound of something distant that might be fireworks. Maybe.

Tito is steady beside her despite the wine. That quality of alertness surfacing through a haze. They move quickly.

He pulls her into an alley. Hand on her arm.

TITO

I need to do something. Two minutes.
Wait here.

NIKKI

Tito –

But he's already gone, absorbed by the dark.

She waits. The city murmurs. Distant sirens. Somewhere above, a window shuts. She counts her own heartbeats.

When Tito comes back his face is different. Something she has never seen in him –

Terror.

Something has happened in those two minutes that she will never learn the full truth about.

He grabs her hand.

TITO

RUN.

EXT. ALLEYS/STREETS - QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI - CONTINUOUS

Running.

Through the warren of the old city – narrow alleys, steep staircases, laundry strung between buildings, garbage in the gutters, votive shrines, walls close on both sides. Nikki's feet slapping on stone, her breath coming hard, Tito's hand in hers.

A BANG – the wall ahead explodes in a puff of plaster dust.

Another BANG. The clink of metal clipping stone.

Fear is total. Animal instinct. The city a labyrinth. No exits.

And then the walls open and they burst into the wide space of the piazza –

NIKKI'S FACE. Recognition. Then –

A GUNSHOT.

SAVAGE CITY

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NIKKI'S BUILDING - OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING (PRESENT DAY)

Fifteen years later.

NIKKI SERAFINO (33) leaves her building, the iron gate clanging shut behind her.

She is firm-faced and determined. Body muscular and tattooed. Hair cropped short and bleached. She moves with the graceful confidence and alert awareness of a fighter – someone who has assessed every exit before she walked in.

The city is immediately, insistently loud around her. Trash collectors. A WOMAN leaning in her doorframe calls out –

DOORWAY WOMAN
(in Neapolitan dialect)
Nina! That handsome boyfriend of yours
came around while you were out.

NIKKI

(in Neapolitan dialect)
Thanks - I know.

DOORWAY WOMAN
(in Neapolitan dialect)
Three years. It's a long time to be
together without a promise...

A SHOPKEEPER, passing Nikki with a cart, gestures -

SHOPKEEPER
(in Neapolitan dialect)
Your brother was supposed to call me. Tell
Gianni he still needs to pick up those
cardboard boxes for his shop!

The neighborhood that knew her before she knew herself,
insisting she put the old identity - Nina - back on. She keeps
moving.

INT./EXT. MASSIMO'S CAFÉ BAR - CONTINUOUS

The ritual plays out. MASSIMO (60s), the neighborhood's keeper
of memory, working at the espresso machine - pulling coffees and
steaming milk for the waiting crowd. They speak in Italian &
Dialect.

MASSIMO
(over his shoulder)
Nicole, Bellissima - where have you been?
How is your father?

NIKKI
Busy...he's fine. Fine.

He serves a coffee to a customer, then looks her over with the
frank appraisal of someone who has known her since she was a
child.

MASSIMO
You're getting thinner. What would your
mother have said?

NIKKI

She would have congratulated me on my self-discipline.

Massimo shakes his head with a smile. Turns back to the machine, and continues the rapid choreography as he talks.

MASSIMO

Eat something. Tell Carlo...Carlo! Get Nina a sfogliatella before she wastes away.

NIKKI

(laughing)

I'm fine -

MASSIMO

You really want to know what your mother would have thought? You should talk to your aunt.

NIKKI

We talk -

MASSIMO

Beautiful woman, your aunt. Isabella. Now, she could tell you a thing or two about your mother. Women like Beatrice and Isabella...they need many admirers. Many lovers.

NIKKI

I'm sure my father would have something to say about that.

Then GIANNI SERAFINO (38) arrives. Too loud. A man performing a casual visit. He is their mother's face on their father's failings: sharp chin, beautiful eyes, a lifetime of cock-ups and hasty reparations.

GIANNI

Hey there Massimo. Nikki! How nice.

MASSIMO

Gianni. What brings you here?

GIANNI

Oh, I was in the neighborhood. You should come see the shop sometime - it's doing great. Just great. Hey, Nikki...is Enzo coming Sunday? Massimo, are you coming to the christening in Benevento?

MASSIMO

(delighted)

I wouldn't miss it. Will the whole family be there? Isabella too?

GIANNI

(expansive)

Everyone. The whole family. It's going to be a beautiful day.

Then - almost too nonchalantly -

GIANNI

(CONT'D)

You know, Nikki, I was thinking about -

Behind them, in the morning crowd, a loud conversation at the bar. The name TITO CALANDRA rises above the din.

Nikki freezes.

Then a brisk smile at Massimo, a farewell, and she's moving.

Gianni - slurping the last of his coffee - chases after her.

EXT. NAPLES STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Nikki strides toward her Honda Hornet. Gianni struggles to keep up.

Alone now, they speak in English – the language of their American mother.

GIANNI

You haven't talked to Tito recently, have you?

NIKKI

Of course not. God, why would you even ask?

GIANNI

I didn't want to say, because I know how you get. But he's a good guy. Really. He's invested in the shop –

NIKKI

(stopping; aggressive)

What the fuck, Gianni? You can't take his money. How do you think Tito can afford that? You can't be in debt to him.

GIANNI

I've known Tito my whole life. You aren't the only one...I mean, you have to be able to trust someone...and Bea adores him...He's always asking about you.

NIKKI

Don't you fucking tell Tito anything about me.

GIANNI

Don't do that thing you do. Don't be so goddamn sanctimonious. People make mistakes. And you know what his father was.

NIKKI

Tito chose what he chose. I don't want to be any part of that, and you shouldn't either.

She mounts the Hornet, straps on her helmet.

NIKKI

(CONT'D)

I've gotta go.

GIANNI

C'mon - hey. Let's get a cornetto. I've got to tell you -

NIKKI

I'm already late. Sailing with Valerio today.

She kicks the engine. Gianni stands on the pavement behind her, slightly out of breath, watching as she pulls away.

GIANNI

(low)

It's going to be a good day, Sunday. Really. It's going to be fine.

She drives into the city, easily weaving through traffic. The neighborhood recedes behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. DERELICT BUILDING - PARCO VERDE - MORNING (PRESENT DAY)

VALERIO ALFIERI (mid-40s) pressed against a wall in civilian clothes - sneakers, slouchy hoodie, weapon drawn. Broad-shouldered. A face that defaults to laughter but can go deadly serious in an instant. Twenty years in the Falchi. He possesses the practiced stillness of a man who has done this many times.

Beside him, his partner MAURIZIO (40s) - lean, solemn, precise. They exchange a look.

A signal from down the hall.

The team moves fast – door, hallway, room.

NINO CAPELLI (40s) – puffed and reddened, hulking, a man of vicious impulsivity – is on the floor before he can decide what to do about it. A hijacking gone wrong. A driver knifed in a fit of irritation.

Valerio stands over him, weapon still raised, breathing steadily. Professional. Efficient. Complete.

He holsters his weapon and steps back while his colleagues process Capelli into the morning light. He watches with the detached calm of a man who feels neither pleasure nor distaste.

Stepping into the hallway, where other building residents are cautiously noting the activity, he checks his phone. Three messages from Nikki. The last one (in Italian):

Where are you? I'm at Calypso. Ready to leave.

He says his goodbyes, gets into his car – a battered green Opel, missing wing mirror, backseat a mess of coffee cups, used Tupperware, crumpled homework, a pair of kid's football boots – and drives to the port.

He pulls up, kills the engine, reaches into the back seat and puts on his straw hat.

EXT. NAPLES HARBOR - DOCK - MORNING

CALYPSO is already rigged. NIKKI SERAFINO – cropped hair, tattooed arms and legs, the focused ease of someone who knows this work – is aboard and ready.

Nikki and Valerio speak to one another in Italian & Dialect.

NIKKI
You're late.

VALERIO
(climbing aboard)
We were making an arrest.

NIKKI
Again? Take a break, Batman. Leave some
criminals for the rest of the cops.

VALERIO
When do you need to be back?

NIKKI
(checking her watch)
We've got a few hours. I just need to put
a few things together before the night
shift.

He finds his spot at the bow. She takes the helm. The boat moves
out into the bay.

EXT. BAY OF NAPLES - CALYPSO - MORNING

CALYPSO cuts across open water. 9.5 meters. Forty-five years
old. Rebuilt from the hull up by the two people now sailing her.
She's not glamorous. She is seaworthy, which is better.

Nikki at the helm, adjusting the tiller with unconscious ease.
Valerio at the bow, trimming the sail without being asked. They
don't need to speak. The boat responds.

Behind them Naples rises in layers against the sky – chaotic,
gorgeous, improbable. And behind Naples, vast and dark and
ominous, VESUVIUS. The mountain that has destroyed this city
twice and will someday destroy it again.

EXT. BAY OF NAPLES - CALYPSO - ANCHORED - LATE MORNING

Meal finished. Emptied wine bottle. Demolished provolone. Boat
rocking gently beneath a bright sky.

Valerio asleep on the bench – hat over his face, one arm across his chest, mouth slightly open. The uncomplicated sleep of a man with a clear conscience.

Nikki tidying. Picking olives from the Tupperware one by one. Checking her dive watch. Night shift. Laundry. Fuel for the Honda.

Valerio stirs. Lazy. Yawns. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

VALERIO

(not shifting his hat)

It may only have been armed robbery.
Maurizio isn't so sure he was the one who
stabbed the driver.

NIKKI

Didn't you have him on CCTV?

VALERIO

Footage was grainy.

NIKKI

But you had an eyewitness. Isn't that
enough?

VALERIO

This morning, when we knocked the door,
told him to get dressed and come with us,
he cried and pissed himself.

NIKKI

What kind of murderer does that? Might not
be him.

VALERIO

(another yawn)

It's him.

Nikki watches as he settles into sleep.

He snores. Nikki almost smiles. She peels off her t-shirt and goes into the water.

She floats on her back – the city and Vesuvius behind her – gazing up at the name painted on the hull above her. CALYPSO. Three years of stripped-back weekends and scraped knuckles and scuba gear scraping barnacles off the hull. The boat is hers in the way that very few things are hers. Chosen. Painstakingly rebuilt.

Not far away, a beautiful 15-meter yacht – the ANDIAMO – drops anchor, music thumping. On the back deck, a blonde woman climbs down into the water, shrieking with laughter, teasing.

Her boyfriend, FILLIPO (30s) – entitled, casually cruel – stands at the rail watching. Then he pulls up the ladder. The woman reaches for the hull, can't grip, reaches again, her head dropping lower.

Nikki, treading water and watching, shouts at the man. He gestures for her to fuck off.

The woman is clearly tiring. The laughter dying. Coughing. Spitting seawater.

NIKKI

Valerio!

The orange buoy arcs through the air. Nikki swims toward the woman. Then, as she gets close, the woman dips beneath the waves.

Swimming past, Nikki comes from behind, threads her arms under, kicks them both to the surface, talks her down until the white fingers find the foam. Fillipo starts his engine. Nikki treads water and shouts Neapolitan curses at him as he drives away.

EXT. BAY OF NAPLES - CALYPSO - CONTINUOUS

CARMELA (30s) – tall, stunning, tanned – climbs dripping aboard and flings herself into Valerio's arms. Valerio detaches himself, hands her a towel.

Behind her, Nikki – stern-faced, full of adrenaline and outrage.

Valerio gives them each a water bottle. They speak in Italian.

CARMELA

I can't imagine what would have happened
if you hadn't rescued me.

VALERIO

I wasn't the one doing the rescuing. I'm
Valerio. This is Nikki.

CARMELA

Carmela.

VALERIO

How are you doing, Carmela?

CARMELA

Full of salt! Oh my god, I'm shaking. I
can't stop shaking.

VALERIO

Give it time. Slow, deep breaths.

NIKKI

Was that your husband?

CARMELA

Boyfriend. Fillipo.

NIKKI

Has he ever done anything like that
before?

CARMELA

Like every man, he thinks that the world
should make way for him. But he's never
done anything quite so...well, he's never
done anything like that.

NIKKI

Your boyfriend's an asshole. You need to press charges.

CARMELA

I can't do that!

NIKKI

Valerio's a cop. I'm an investigator. We're going to call some people. They'll meet us at the dock, and you can give a statement.

CARMELA

(laughing)

Oh, don't do that! He didn't mean it.

NIKKI

You could have died! Men like that don't stop -

CARMELA

Really, you don't know him. And frankly it's a little insulting for you to imply...I'm sorry, but it is. I just have to say it.

Nikki and Valerio work together getting the boat underway. Carmela, wrapped in a damp towel, is already reassembling herself around her own beauty, refusing to acknowledge the danger she was in. She flirts with Valerio, pivots to the boat - they've worked together three years to rebuild and restore it. Its care is the center of their relationship.

CARMELA

How long have you been a couple?

NIKKI

Oh, we're not.

VALERIO

It's a much more intense relationship than that. We own a boat together.

CARMELA

Are you two fucking?

NIKKI

No.

CARMELA

(laughing)

I wouldn't judge you.

NIKKI

Not every relationship with a man needs to be complicated by sex.

CARMELA

Sex is the basis of everything – the nature of the animal. You can either use it, or be used by it. Once you realize and accept that fact, the world is so much clearer.

NIKKI

I prefer to define my relationships. I want friendship – a relationship of equals.

CARMELA

Men will always choose passion over friendship. You need to fuck him to find out what the relationship can be.

Valerio – enjoying this conversation slightly more than he should – catches Nikki's eye.

NIKKI

Valerio has a beautiful girlfriend in Paris.

CARMELA

Oh, that's luscious. So, why not a ménage
à trois?

NIKKI

I'm not going to fuck Valerio. No offense,
Valerio.

VALERIO

(grinning)
None taken.

Then — Calypso's keel strikes something. The steering goes
wrong. Nikki cuts the throttle, goes down the ladder —

And finds a body turning slowly in the current beneath the boat.

She turns towards Valerio.

NIKKI

There's a body in the water.

What follows is a study of Nikki under pressure — competent and
efficient.

She and Valerio work together rapidly, Nikki directing Carmela
to get a rope from the cabin. Nikki goes back into the water —
for the second time that day, in the rescue position, arms
around a victim — and secures the corpse to Calypso with a rope
before the currents can take him.

She examines him. Fully dressed. No shoes. White tube socks. A
dark ligature mark encircling his neck, the capillaries burst.
She notes the currents, the coordinates, the competing tidal
patterns. She knows this sea.

She knows him from somewhere. She can't place it.

EXT. BAY OF NAPLES - CALYPSO - DUSK

The sky purple. City lights beginning to glimmer across dark water. They speak in Italian.

NIKKI

(on the phone)

It depends on when the police arrive...no,
not tonight...Yes. Yes. The morning shift.

The Guardia Costiera arrives. Then SONIA (40s) – tall, athletic, Senegalese, thoughtful and precise – with her partner FABRIZIO (40s), warm and bombastic, the kind of man who fills a room with noise and misses nothing.

FABRIZIO

(to Valerio)

I see you're trying for a promotion!
Looking for murders on your day off.

SONIA

(to Nikki)

At what time did you find the body?

NIKKI

Nineteen-forty-seven. We...secured it to
the boat. There are ligature marks around
the neck.

SONIA

(taking notes)

Good thinking. We'll take a look at those
marks when we get him out. Was there
anything else you noticed?

NIKKI

Not really...but I feel like I know him
from somewhere.

Sonia surveys the scene, gives Nikki her card.

SONIA

If something occurs to you, call me.

EXT. NAPLES HARBOR - DOCK - NIGHT

Calypso berthed, the moon rising. Nikki and Valerio hose the boat down in silence, putting her to bed.

In the parking lot - CARMELA, pressed against a shiny black Maserati, kissing FILLIPO. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

VALERIO

(quietly)

That was fast. Not pressing charges, then.

NIKKI

She knew he'd be waiting for her.

Valerio's phone rings. His ex-wife. She needs him to take the kids tonight. He looks at Nikki.

VALERIO

Kids are coming over. I need to go.

NIKKI

Don't do anything stupid.

VALERIO

Don't you do anything stupid.

They ride in opposite directions into the city.

EXT./INT. INCENDIO NIGHTCLUB - NAPLES - NIGHT

The pulsing nightclub - sensual, inviting, sleek lines and throbbing music. Traditional stone and plaster and velvet drapes transformed into stainless steel and polished glass. Attractive men and women behind the velvet cord.

Nikki pulls up to the curb, takes off her helmet.

ENZO DI PAVOLA (30s) jogs out to greet her with a warm, lingering kiss. Strong, cat-like movements. Handsome. A rare blend of old world and new - an ancient sculpture of Adonis come

to life in an edgy suit. He owns this place, and knows it. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

ENZO
You coming in?

NIKKI
Not tonight. I have work in the morning.

ENZO
(another kiss)
Shall I come by later?

NIKKI
Please.

She rides away into the city.

**INT. BASEMENT CELL - TITO CALANDRA'S PALAZZO - NEAR CAPPELLA
SANSEVERO - NIGHT**

The purpose of this room is evident in the walls, the floor, the iron rings set into the stone at intervals. A well-established cell.

THE MAN IN THE CHAIR (50s) - a middleman. Disheveled, bruised, shallow fast breathing because breathing hurts. He's been here for days, worked over efficiently, as needed.

TITO CALANDRA (late 30s). Imposing. A boxer's frame in a tailored shirt, dark eyes that see and understand the darkness of the world. Moving with the unhurried confidence of a man who has already calculated every outcome. He is the most sophisticated and ruthless organized crime figure in southern Italy. He's also the boy who came to BEATRICE SERAFINO's kitchen table hungry for warmth and care. There is no evidence of that vulnerability now.

He sits across from the man in the chair. Unrushed. Almost gentle.

At the door, BENEDETTO DE ROSA (40s) – compact, understated sophistication, neatly trimmed beard, arched nose, crooked mouth. A man who lives by his own exacting logic. Profoundly loyal to Tito. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

TITO

My men tell me you're ready to talk.

MAN IN CHAIR

Yes. Yes. Whatever you want.

TITO

What I want is the truth. Can you give it to me?

MAN IN CHAIR

Yes. Yes. Please.

TITO

Do you know why you're here?

MAN IN CHAIR

Please...please...I'm nobody.

TITO

That isn't the truth, is it?

MAN IN CHAIR

I swear, it's the truth.

TITO

If you're nobody, then I have the wrong man. And if you are the wrong man, then I've treated you unfairly. Do you think I've treated you unfairly?

MAN IN CHAIR

No. No. Please...I have a family.

TITO

I'll begin with what I know. You are Stefano Pinto. You drive refrigerated trucks - in and out of Naples. Up to Caserta. And Rome. Further north. Am I correct?

MAN IN CHAIR

Yes...but I swear I don't know what's in the trucks. I swear.

TITO

Even when you stop in Caserta? When the cargo is moved?

MAN IN CHAIR

How did you -

TITO

It's my business to know. So I am right in saying that Stefano Pinto is not a nobody. And I am also right in saying that Stefano Pinto knows when the next shipment will arrive. I'm going to ask this once. Which ship? What time?

The man in the chair calculates. Finds only one viable answer. He gives the information.

Tito's suspicion confirmed, but his face gives nothing away. Tito trained his face in childhood against a violent father, and the discipline is absolute.

TITO

(to De Rosa, quietly)

Take care of it.

He turns and walks out.

INT. CORRIDOR/STAIRCASE - TITO'S PALAZZO - CONTINUOUS

Stone walls. A low ceiling. The smell of damp. Bare bulbs at intervals. Two of Tito's men straighten as he passes. He doesn't acknowledge them.

A staircase. Stone steps worn smooth by centuries of use.

A guard at a thick metal door nods. Tito passes through into the main building.

Sound strikes before the light – voices, music. Through the open door of the main salon of the fifteenth-century palazzo: well-dressed men and beautiful women, relaxed, unhurried. Heads turn as he enters. The room adjusts to his presence like a compass needle finding north.

He moves through it without stopping. Outside, into the ivy-covered courtyard, manicured garden, soft yellow lights, night sky above. A jasmine smell. The sounds of the party muted.

Tito stands alone for a moment. He rolls his neck. Breathes.

Tito is tired: the weariness of a man who has carried something enormous, alone, for a very long time.

He rolls down and buttons the sleeves of his shirt. The mask is back on. He gestures to his men and they move out through the gate into the neighborhood.

EXT. PIAZZA SAN DOMENICO MAGGIORE - NAPLES - NIGHT

The city wakes at night – when the heat that sears the streets during the day begins to relent, and when the rising shadows give the illusion of lower temperatures. Restaurants and nightclubs pack. Parents with prams wander the waterfront. Children play in the yellow pools of streetlights.

Tito moves across the piazza with three men. Unhurried, talking, starting to relax. He is at home here. The neighborhood has known him for thirty years.

Then – across the piazza, outside Massimo's – a figure at the bar. Cropped hair. Tattooed arms. The particular quality of stillness he would recognize anywhere, in any crowd, in any city on earth.

He pauses. His composure subtly altered.

He excuses himself from his men. Crosses the piazza.

EXT. MASSIMO'S CAFÉ BAR - CONTINUOUS

Nikki is collecting a package from Carlo when she turns and —

A dark figure coming toward her. She tenses before understanding why. She seems to know that posture, the boxer's frame, the angular lines, the surety of his stride. Her body fills in the rest before her mind catches up.

Then he's here, standing before her. Fifteen years older. Dressed in tailored clothes. But those eyes carry the same intense expression she remembers. He's grown into that expression, his body settled around it like cement. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

TITO

(quiet)

May I join you?

NIKKI

I'm not staying. I was just collecting this.

He takes in the cropped hair, the tattoos, the fifteen years written on her face. She looks back in that way he remembers: measuring, giving nothing away.

NIKKI

I didn't know you still came here.

TITO

I don't. Not since you came back to Naples.

Nikki shifts, adjusting to the uncomfortable tightness in her chest. She's avoided Tito for fifteen years. It shouldn't be any surprise he avoided her too. But a shadow of melancholy passes

through her at his words – a half-remembered part of herself she's left behind.

TITO
It's your place. I knew you didn't want
to see me.

NIKKI
Oh.

CARLO, the bartender, catches sight of them.

CARLO
(delighted)
Tito! Nina and Tito – back together at
last!

NIKKI
We're not together.

CARLO
Of course, of course. What can I get
you?

TITO
(to Nikki)
Will you stay for one glass?

NIKKI
I have work in the morning.

He nods. Doesn't push. Waits.

A moment between them – weighted, unresolved. Fifteen years of everything neither of them has said.

Then, with the careful ease of a man who believes the difficult part has already been handled:

TITO

Well. At least we'll have Sunday. It will be good to be in the same room again.

Nikki stares.

NIKKI

What do you mean, Sunday?

TITO

The christening.

He reads her face. And understands in an instant that Gianni never told her. He'd interpreted her silence as acceptance. He was wrong. This was a miscalculation.

He doesn't show her this.

TITO

(steady)

Gianni asked me to be Fredo's godfather.

The air goes out of the room.

Nikki is very still.

NIKKI

(low)

Gianni asked you to be godfather to his son?

TITO

I thought he...I assumed you knew.

NIKKI

You assumed -

TITO

Nikki -

NIKKI

Don't.

TITO

I think if we can talk, we could come to an understanding.

NIKKI

I hear you're quite successful now. The great Tito Calandra. Does it feel good to be so powerful?

TITO

There are ugly things in the world, Nikki. Unless someone is willing to get down to that level – keep them in order – they destroy everything.

NIKKI

Is that what you're doing? Keeping order?

TITO

Yes.

NIKKI

Well that's fucking amazing. Good for you. Just...fucking stay away.

Nikki leaves.

Tito stands in the piazza and watches her until she rounds the corner and disappears. His men are waiting across the square, patient, saying nothing.

He doesn't move for a long moment. Then he turns and strides through the neighborhood he rules.

INT. VALERIO'S APARTMENT - QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI - NIGHT

A bachelor pad – shabby secondhand furniture, posters masquerading as art, stacks of books and newspapers, wires looping out of boxes, dust on everything.

Valerio is transforming the place. Changing sheets. Setting up a camp cot.

The kids arrive: DAVIDE (13) and GEMMA (15). Takeaway at the kitchen table. Too loud, too warm. Valerio watching his children when they're not looking.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER THAT NIGHT

An annexed eighteenth-century palazzo in the old neighborhood – accessible through a wide carriage gate leading onto an old alley. A small stone chapel in the courtyard – every bit as old and poorly-maintained as the rest of the space. Up steep stairs, Nikki's apartment: high ceilings of plaster and exposed timbers, eclectic furniture spanning decades. The place hasn't been renovated since the 1970s and the tiles and curtains reflect this. A heavy wooden bookcase dominates the living room, packed two deep. On the bottom right shelf – a gun safe. The walls hold maps, a framed Freddie Mercury poster, and a series of weapons – a crossbow, a battle axe.

It was her mother's place. BEATRICE SERAFINO bought it in 1971 – an American woman, a former US Navy sailor, putting down roots in a city that wasn't hers by birth. Nikki doesn't know everything her mother was. She can't guess that these walls hold secrets she can't possibly imagine.

ENZO arrives, filling the small space with his energy. They shower together and fall into bed. Afterwards he stares at the ceiling, sweating in the August heat. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

ENZO

It's fucking hot in here.

NIKKI

I told you. The air conditioning's broken.

ENZO

You could just move in with me. The offer still stands.

NIKKI

I'm fine.

ENZO

It isn't safe here. I don't like to think of my girlfriend living down here. Alone. If I have you close, I can take care of you.

NIKKI

I don't want to leave. This place - it was my mamma's.

He doesn't push. He doesn't yet understand that this flat with its broken air conditioning and its battle axe and its books stacked two deep isn't a problem to be solved. It's a thread connecting Nikki to something she hasn't finished yet.

She lies in the dark, not sleeping. The body in the water. Tito's face. The graveyard she thought she'd left behind, open again.

EXT./INT. US MILITARY BASE - CAPODICHINO - NEXT MORNING

Nikki on her Hornet - across the city to the US military base. Greetings to the gate guard. The cold hits immediately as she enters the offices of PHOENIX SEVEN - Americans keep their spaces at refrigerator temperatures, even in August.

MARIO (50s) emerges from the bathroom - a big man, heavy jowls, decades of densely packed muscle now going soft. He falls into step beside her. Doesn't look at her. They speak in Italian.

NIKKI

Mario. Thanks for covering the night shift. I'm sure Angelo told you -

MARIO

(loudly)

When someone can't handle the stress of this job, it means more work for everyone else.

She doesn't respond. They walk.

Then – a stumble. His hand shoots out, grabs her arm, fingers digging in, pulling her into him. Hard. Not a stumble.

She reacts before she thinks – his wrist locked, twisted, his body turned, his back to the wall and her forearm across his chest before either of them has taken another step. Close enough to smell the garlic and cologne and something gamier underneath.

A beat.

Mario laughs. Low, delighted. As if she's confirmed something he suspected. For him, this is the beginning of something, not the end of it.

She releases him. Steps back. Her face gives nothing.

They walk into the office. JACOPO steps forward immediately, hands Nikki the duty phone, inserting himself into the ugly space between them. He's done this before.

Mario packs his bag with deliberate slowness. He turns – a long, flat appraisal of Nikki, head to foot.

MARIO

Some people aren't cut out for this work.

He leaves.

Jacopo exhales.

Nikki sits. Works. Then – fingers and toes numb from the cold – she stands. Jumping jacks, squats, push-ups, hoodie pulled tight. Fast. Slightly too hard.

The duty phone rings.

DISPATCHER
(V.O.)
Vehicle incident in Varcaturro. US
serviceman and his family.

NIKKI
Injuries?

DISPATCHER
(V.O.)
No information on that yet.

NIKKI
Send me the coordinates.

She takes the keys to the duty vehicle and heads north.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIO'S APARTMENT - QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI - MORNING

The apartment is chaos – overnight bags, football boots, Gemma's headphones, Davide's half-eaten toast.

GIORGIA (40s) stands in the middle of it, not helping. Put together, impatient, a woman who has already started a different life and finds this one inconvenient.

DAVIDE shoves things into his bag. GEMMA moves efficiently, already practiced at this. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

GIORGIA
(to the room)
Davide, have you got everything? We
need to go.

DAVIDE
(mouth full)
Two minutes.

GIORGIA

(to Valerio)
I need more money. Davide's grown three shoe sizes. Gemma needs clothes before school starts.

VALERIO
(quietly)
We can talk about that later.

GIORGIA
I'd like to talk about it now.

He glances at Gemma, who has gone very still, pretending to look for something in her bag.

VALERIO
(lower)
Giorgia.

GIORGIA
(not lower)
How much did you spend on Layla's last visit?

VALERIO
That has nothing to do with-

GIORGIA
Every cent you spend on her is money you're not spending on your children.

GEMMA
(not looking up)
Mamma. Don't.

GIORGIA
(to Gemma)
You think your father is some saint? It's time you know the truth. What am I supposed to do? Be the bad parent all the time?

VALERIO
(tight)
How much do you need?

GIORGIA
Three...four-hundred.

VALERIO
It's a lot.

GIORGIA
They're your children, too. I can't
carry the burden on my own.

VALERIO
I'll see what I can do.

A beat. She should leave. Something stops her.

GIORGIA
There's something else.

VALERIO
(reading her immediately)
Later—

GIORGIA
Juan and I are getting married.

Gemma looks up sharply. Davide stops chewing.

DAVIDE
What the fuck—

GIORGIA
(sharply)
Don't use that word!

GEMMA

To Juan?!

VALERIO

(measured)

Congratulations. We can talk about the arrangements—

GIORGIA

And he's been offered a position. In Barcelona. We're going to move with him. The kids and I—

DAVIDE

What the fuck?!

GIORGIA

You'll love it. The city is incredible, and Juan's already looking at—

VALERIO

No. You're not taking them to Spain.

GIORGIA

Spain isn't that far. The flights are—

GEMMA

Mamma! All my friends are here.

GIORGIA

You'll make new friends. You're young—

VALERIO

This isn't a decision you can make on your own.

GIORGIA

Do you want to trap me? Is that it? Everyone thinks you're such a nice man, but they don't know you like I do. They

don't know how you only pay attention
to your work, how you never look at
your wife or your family!

VALERIO

Giorgia, you aren't my wife anymore.

GIORGIA

Fuck you! This is exactly what you do.
You let me be the bad one. Every single
time.

GEMMA

You ARE being the bad one.

GIORGIA

Excuse me, little Signorina!!

GEMMA

You didn't even ask us. And Juan's a
jerk. Does he even know our names?

GIORGIA

Of course he—

GEMMA

How long have you been together? Four
months?

GIORGIA

(to Valerio)

Are you hearing this? This is what
happens when you undermine me in front
of them—

DAVIDE

(quietly, to no one in particular)
I'm not going to Barcelona.

GIORGIA

(crying. Angry)
See! You see what they're doing? Siding
with you. They know you don't respect
me!

VALERIO
Giorgia!

Something in his voice stops the room.

VALERIO
(to the kids)
Go downstairs. Wait in the car. Two
minutes.

GEMMA
Babbo—

VALERIO
Two minutes. Please.

GIORGIA
I'm not talking to you when you're like
this! Davide! Gemma! Downstairs now!!

Giorgia glares at him. She picks up her bag and walks past him
without a word.

She storms through the door. Valerio hugs his kids, whispers
reassurances.

They go. Davide looks back. Gemma doesn't.

The door closes.

INT. CORNER CAFÉ — MORNING

The café thrums with bodies and noise. Steam hisses. Espresso
machines growling. The clink of dishes and noise of
conversation. Morning light through grimy windows.

VALERIO moves through the crowd like a man carrying yesterday on his back. Pale, unshaven, a headache behind his eyes. Waiting in line at the cashier to place his order for an espresso. Takes out his wallet.

Then – his name. Somewhere in the noise.

He turns.

NINO CAPELLI, 50s, massive, a puffed and reddened face with wild hair receding into a dramatic widow's peak. He sits at a corner table holding an espresso cup like it's a toy. Beside him: a YOUNG WOMAN, slight as a child, shaggy hair, layers of makeup that emphasize the emptiness in her eyes.

Capelli grins. Teeth grey like old stone. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

CAPELLI
Alfieri. So nice to see you.

Valerio crosses to him. Doesn't sit.

VALERIO
What are you doing out of jail,
Capelli?

CAPELLI
Can't hold a man who has an alibi. I
wanted to tell you myself.

VALERIO
You were on CCTV.

CAPELLI
(a shrug)
Must have been someone else. I was at
my cousin's restaurant all night. He
swears to it.

Valerio examines Capelli. The viciousness beneath the bluster. A man who once poured benzine on a witness and lit a match. Who knifed a man in a carjacking in a fit of temper.

The Young Woman is watching Valerio. He meets her gaze.

VALERIO
(quietly, to her)
You need help? Come with me now.

She hesitates. A flicker – then nothing. She shakes her head.

Capelli laughs. Big and wet.

Valerio walks out.

CAPELLI
(calling after him)
Good luck catching flies, detective.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CAFÉ – CONTINUOUS

Valerio stops on the pavement. The city is loud and chaotic. Crowds of people. Motorbikes. Cars. Shouting. Horns. He pulls out his phone. Dials. Claps a hand to his ear to block the noise. They speak in Italian.

MAURIZIO
(V.O.)
He lawyered up the minute we brought him in. And his cousin's giving him an alibi.

VALERIO
Fucking cousin.

MAURIZIO
(V.O.)
We've got eyes on him. He knows it. One wrong move and we pick him up again.

VALERIO

It's not enough. He's dangerous. It's a matter of time before he kills again.

MAURIZIO

(V.O.)

You got a better idea for breaking the alibi? Because if not, we've got other cases.

VALERIO

Give me a few hours. I'll find something.

He hangs up. Looks back at the café. Walks.

EXT. SALUMERIA. QUARTIERI FORCELLA — LATER

The city bakes under an unseasonable sun. A block from the crime scene.

FEDERICO ERRICHELLO, 70s, tall and lanky with thick glasses, bald and gentle-faced, works outside his shop — accepting a delivery of eggs and fresh mozzarella. A rim of grey hair slicked against his head. He wipes his hands on his apron when he sees Valerio coming and breaks into a warm grin. They speak in Italian & Dialect.

FEDERICO

Buongiorno!

VALERIO

Salve, Federico. Business good?

FEDERICO

(a shrug)

I get by. What can I do for you?

Valerio waits for the delivery man to leave. When they're alone

—

VALERIO

The knifing last week. Alfonso
Bonagura. Have you heard anything?
People must be talking.

Federico's smile dies. He picks up the egg crate and goes inside
without a word. Valerio grabs the mozzarella and follows.

INT. SALUMERIA — CONTINUOUS

Federico loads the cartons onto a shelf. Methodical. Slow.
Saying nothing.

Valerio watches him work.

VALERIO

I know Capelli does work for your
brother sometimes. For Luca. I thought
maybe you'd heard something —

Federico spins around. His eyes are hard as glass. Face rigid,
flushed.

FEDERICO

Fuck my brother. And fuck Capelli. Why
do you come to me with this?

The outburst hangs in the air. Federico seems to shrink after it
— suddenly small, thin, fragile. His chest heaves.

FEDERICO

(quieter)

I'm not part of that world anymore.
Don't come to me with these questions.
I don't want trouble. Just...leave me
out of it.

Valerio studies him. Then, carefully:

VALERIO

You know what Luca is. What he does.
Trafficking women and girls. Knowing it

and doing nothing...that makes you part of it.

Federico says nothing. Valerio keeps going.

VALERIO

(Cont'd)

Capelli came to my street today. To the café by my house. Sending a message. People like him and Luca – they throw their weight around. Bully us. We don't have to go along. You can help.

FEDERICO

(a bitter sound)

You think I can do anything? The world is run by wolves. It's their system. Their rules.

VALERIO

We can change it.

FEDERICO

I'm not strong enough to kill a wolf. The best I can do is keep my head down. Take my advice. Protect yourself. Protect your family. Stay far away from them.

Valerio looks at him for a long moment. Then he sets down the mozzarella and walks out. His phone rings. Sonia.

SONIA

(V.O.)

Valerio, good! I caught you. Can you come to the hospital? They've finished the autopsy.

Federico doesn't watch him go. He goes back to stacking his shelves.

CUT TO:

EXT. VARCATURO ROAD — MID-MORNING

A garbage fire blocks the main road — black smoke visible from kilometers away. Nikki diverts, parks, jogs to the scene. Multi-car pileup.

The bewildered McALLISTER family in their blue Ford minivan — COMMANDER McALLISTER, his wife JUDY, two teenagers on their phones. Recently arrived in Naples. Defensive with fear.

Nikki knocks on the window, holds up her ID card. The window lowers. They speak in English.

NIKKI

Phoenix Seven. Investigator Nikki Serafino.

MCALLISTER

Charles McAllister. Commander, US Navy. This is my wife, Judy. Who are you?

NIKKI

Phoenix Seven...we liaise between the U.S. Military and law enforcement. I'm here to assist.

JUDY

Oh thank god! This has been a nightmare. The police won't let us leave!

NIKKI

Is anyone in your vehicle injured, Commander?

MCALLISTER

We're fine.

JUDY

Don't say that, Charles! What if the kids have whiplash?

TEENAGER 1
We're fine.

TEENAGER 2
I need to pee.

NIKKI
Would you like me to ask emergency
services to do an assessment?

MCALLISTER
We're fine.

JUDY
When can we leave? Charles has work and
the kids need to register for school.

NIKKI
The carabinieri will need your
information. If you come with me,
Commander, we'll get you sorted.

Nikki translates. Mediates. Reassures. She is very good at this
— gripping the jagged seam between two systems that share a
geography and almost nothing else.

Later —

MCALLISTER
What's the best way to get to Support
Site from here?

NIKKI
Follow me.

She leads the blue Ford through the labyrinthine back streets of
Varcaturu — slowly, carefully, watching the mirrors.

EXT. RURAL ROAD — VARCATURO — CONTINUOUS

Flat scrubland baking under a merciless sun. The road is narrow, pitted, overgrown at the edges. Plastic trash snarls in the weeds.

A red JEEP stopped in a turnout, engine off, driver's side window blown out. Glass everywhere.

Nikki stops. Gets out. Surveys the scene. Approaches.

She reaches through the shattered window. Her hand finds the driver's neck.

Soft. Warm. Still.

She pulls back. Steps away. Glass crunches under her shoes.

She looks around. An empty road. A stucco wall running the length of a derelict property across the street. An open field overgrown with brush. Somewhere, a bird is singing. Insects. The idle rumble of the Malibu and the blue Ford parked nearby.

Nikki stands in the middle of it – and something in her has switched off. She can feel her heart hammering, the sun pressing down on her neck, her hands strangely cold. Her own breathing sounds too loud. She walks towards the blue Ford.

JUDY

What's happening?

NIKKI

There's a man dead. I need to stay until the police arrive. Continue on this road to the Tangenziale. That will take you to the base.

JUDY

What do you mean, dead? Did he crash?

MCALLISTER

Should we call an ambulance?

Teenager 1 levers forward and bobs to peer through the windshield.

TEENAGER 1
Dead? Cool! Can we see?

JUDY
(pushing him back)
No.

NIKKI
No ambulance. Just...go back to the base.

She steps back to wave them on, standing numbly in the middle of the empty road as they drive away.

Nikki stands in the road and watches them go. Doesn't move until they're out of sight.

She looks at her phone. Dials.

CUT TO:

EXT. OSPEDALE CARDARELLI — MID-MORNING

Valerio dismounting from his motorcycle, takes off his helmet and strides across the busy street, moving towards the hospital entrance. His phone rings. He picks up.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. RURAL ROAD — VARCATURO

Nikki standing alone on the empty road, the dead Jeep behind her.

VALERIO
Ciao, Nikki. Can I call you back? I'm in the middle of something.

NIKKI

Valerio. I have a situation. There's a man in a car. He's been shot. He's dead.

A beat.

VALERIO

Are you joking?

NIKKI

Would I joke about something like this?

VALERIO

Where are you?

NIKKI

Varcaturò.

VALERIO

(V.O.)

Have you called anyone else?

NIKKI

I called you.

VALERIO

Are you alone?

NIKKI

There were some Americans. I sent them away. No one else is here.

VALERIO

First thing is security. Is it possible the attackers are still around?

Nikki scans the empty field. The scrubland. The distant buildings.

NIKKI

No. Not many places to hide. No one would stick around.

VALERIO

(V.O.)

I need your exact coordinates.

NIKKI

(frustrated)

I...it's like my brain is broken. I don't know what's wrong with me.

She navigates through her phone. Sends it.

VALERIO

I have to report this. I'll send someone to you. I can't come myself.

He ends the call, lowers his phone. Stands still for a moment in the moving city.

EXT. RURAL ROAD — VARCATURO — CONTINUOUS

Nikki stares at the phone.

She tries Pasquale. No answer.

She waits.

The heat is a physical thing. Her mind won't stay still — it loops, pulling her back to yesterday's body floating in the water, then forward to this one, ten meters away. She feels like a passenger being dragged somewhere she didn't choose to go.

She thinks of her brother.

ADRIANO. Older than her by twelve years. His face comes back in pieces: the kind eyes, the swoop of his hair, the maniac sound when you made him laugh. It gets harder to hold onto him now. More and more she relies on photographs — a whole person collapsed into two dimensions.

His voice surfaces in her memory.

ADRIANO

(V.O. - gentle, precise)

A good investigator observes. What is it
you see, Nina?

She looks over at the Jeep.

She needs to pull herself together.

Nikki approaches the Jeep again. Doesn't touch anything. Just
looks.

THE DRIVER: late twenties, early thirties. Narrow face. Acne
scarring along the jaw. Eyes open and fixed. A sparse moustache.
The bullet that entered his right cheek has collapsed the
cheekbone. A second entry wound on the right side of his chest.
His left hand is soaked in blood. The T-shirt, the jeans, the
steering wheel - all of it. Engine off. Keys on the seat between
his thighs. The stench of urine and cheap cologne.

The interior is a mess - cigarette packs, food wrappers, soda
cans. Passenger door hanging open. Glove box rifled.

Then she sees it.

Back seat: a duffel bag. Sitting on top of it - a cap.
Camouflage pattern. Naval insignia.

A U.S. Navy Lieutenant's cover.

She doesn't open the bag. She doesn't need to. She already knows
what's folded inside.

He was on his way to work when they killed him.

Nikki dials dispatch.

NIKKI

The victim is American military. Send
NCIS.

She steps back. Rotates slowly. Reads the scene.

The Jeep is parked in a turnout – deliberately, not skidded in.
Tyre marks in the dust: clean, controlled. He stopped here on
purpose.

She looks across the field. Too far for anyone to draw the eye
from a passing car. She looks at the stucco wall across the
road. Someone has spray-painted on it:

"2 pazzi non fanno 1 sano."

Two madmen do not make one sane person.

NIKKI
(to herself)
Did you need to take a piss? Or did
you see something?

She walks up the road. A hundred meters away she finds another
turnout – and fresh motorcycle tread marks in the dust. She
photographs them. Photographs the Jeep. The broken glass. The
wall.

She's still standing at the Malibu when she hears them: sirens.
Then flashing lights cresting the road.

CUT TO:

INT. OSPEDALE CARDARELLI - MORGUE - SAME TIME

Valerio arrives. Meets SONIA waiting in the lobby like a
sentinel.

SONIA
(starting to walk)
You took a long time.

VALERIO

(keeping up)
Not too long. What happened? Why did
you need me here?

SONIA
I had a suspicion about this body you
found. It seems I was right.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - VARCATURO - CONTINUOUS

CIRO (50s), a Carabinieri officer - face like carved granite -
steps from the lead vehicle and assesses the Jeep without
looking at Nikki.

CIRO
(to his men)
Establish a perimeter. Nothing in or
out.

He turns to Nikki. The look he gives her is not warm.

CIRO
Move your vehicle. Officer Renzi will
take your statement. Then you're free
to go.

NIKKI
I need to stay. The victim is American.
I've contacted NCIS - they're on their
way.

CIRO
Have you contaminated my crime scene?

NIKKI
I checked for a pulse when I arrived.
Nothing else.

CIRO
Then how do you know he's American?

NIKKI
Military uniform. Back seat.

Ciro makes a noise of irritation.

CIRO
Park over there. And stay out of my
way.

Nikki holds her tongue. Nods. She needs him on her side.

She gets in the Malibu and watches through the windshield as the Carabinieri work.

A white Volvo appears at the far end of the road. Stops well short of the perimeter. Emergency flashers on.

DURANT COLE (40s) steps out. NCIS Special Agent. Face like a Renaissance monk. American, cultured, speaking Italian. Tall, lean, neatly trimmed beard, salt-and-pepper hair. Cotton shirt with a floral print, grey slacks. Arriving with the confidence of a man who has routinely seen worse.

Nikki gets out and moves towards him.

He strides forward, hand extended.

COLE
(in English)
Special Agent Durant Cole, Naval
Criminal Investigative Service.

NIKKI
Investigator Nicole Serafino, Phoenix
Seven.

Firm handshake. Holds eye contact as she introduces herself.

COLE
You found the body?

NIKKI

Yes. He was already gone when I arrived. Attacker was long gone.

COLE

Attacker – singular? Not a gang shooting?

Nikki thinks it through.

NIKKI

At least three shots – from two different angles. One through the windshield into the cheekbone. Two from the passenger side: one to the chest, no exit wound, one that shattered the driver's side window. Forensics will tell us whether it's the same weapon.

Cole watches her with a slight smile.

COLE

Keen observation. You said he's a Naval officer – did you recognize him?

NIKKI

No. But his uniform is in the back seat.

COLE

Let's take a look.

They approach the scene together. Ciro moves to intercept.

CIRO

Now what?

Cole doesn't wait for an introduction. He answers in Italian – accented, but correct.

COLE

(in Italian)
Special Agent Durant Cole, NCIS. We'll need to work this closely. Investigator Serafino tells me this is an American Naval officer.

CIRO
That hasn't been confirmed.

COLE
I'm not here to step on your operation. But let's work on that assumption while I call the base and match the plates. I'll want to discuss roles and responsibilities with you and your command.

A beat. Ciro shrugs – the particular shrug of a man who knows he can't win this one.

CIRO
There does appear to be an American uniform in the vehicle. We ran the plates. Registered through the American base. No ID on the body yet.

COLE
Okay. Let's see what we can do to get you a name.

He turns to study the scene. Then, with one finger, he traces a line through the air – from the shattered driver's window, across the road, to the stucco wall.

COLE
You'll want to expand the perimeter. Three shots fired – two on the victim, one from the passenger side that went through the driver's window.

His finger marks the trajectory.

COLE

That third bullet may have gone into
the wall. And have your men search the
field - in case the weapon was tossed.

Ciro follows the line. Looks at the wall. Then at Cole. Gives a
single, reluctant nod.

Cole turns back to Nikki. That slight smile again.

COLE

You're underutilized, Investigator
Serafino.

CUT TO:

INT. OSPEDALE CARDARELLI - CORRIDOR / STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Fluorescent lights. Chipped paint. A cement stairwell going
down.

Valerio follows Sonia into the basement.

INT. MORGUE - ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

The metal doors are flaking paint. Beyond them: a room that
feels abandoned - bodies on gurneys under white sheets. No
attendant. The sudden chill hits Valerio like a wall. So does
the smell.

VALERIO

That's rank.

Sonia looks at him. Says nothing.

VALERIO

Where's the Medical Examiner?

SONIA

Smoke break.

She pushes through the next set of doors.

INT. MORGUE - EXAMINATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colder. The smell is worse. The VICTIM lies on the table, open and splayed. Valerio breathes through his mouth.

Sonia circles to the head of the table. She studies the victim's face - puffy and grey, mottled, beginning to come apart.

VALERIO
What did you find?

SONIA
Male, mid-to-late forties. Decent muscle tone. But underneath: arterial atherosclerosis, advanced cirrhosis. Hepatitis or severe alcoholism. If he hadn't been killed, the doctor gives him ten more years. Maybe.

The number lands on Valerio. Mid-to-late forties. His age. He doesn't say anything.

SONIA
Cause of death was strangulation.

She indicates the deep ligature marks ringing the throat.

VALERIO
We could see that yesterday.

SONIA
No water in the lungs. He was already dead when they put him in the sea.

She pulls on latex gloves. Lifts the victim's right hand with care.

SONIA

No bruising on the knuckles. But look – palms and fingertips, scratched. He was taken from behind. No chance to fight. As he lost consciousness he went down to his hands and knees. Scraped the skin on the way.

She lowers the hand gently. Stands still for a moment, looking at the face.

SONIA
Put on a pair of gloves.

Valerio pulls on gloves. Moves closer, reluctantly.

SONIA
Have you ever had Yassa?

VALERIO
What?

SONIA
Yassa Poulet. A Senegalese dish – chicken, onions, chili peppers, lime. It's delicious. My grandmother makes it with boiled chicken.

VALERIO
(pale)
Please get to the point. I may never eat again as it is.

SONIA
When we pulled him out of the water yesterday, the texture of his flesh felt wrong. Feel.

She takes his hand and places it on the skin at the edge of the open chest cavity. He doesn't pull away.

SONIA

Now look here – the incision sites.

Valerio looks. He doesn't see it yet.

SONIA
Have you ever made soup?

VALERIO
I can make pasta.

Sonia exhales slowly. Then:

SONIA
The doctor confirmed it. After he died
– and before he went into the sea –
this man was boiled.

Silence. The refrigeration unit hums.

Valerio looks at the body. Then at Sonia.

Outside, Naples blazes and hums, incandescent with heat.

END OF PILOT

SAVAGE CITY

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