UNDERBELLY

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

A small bedroom in a cramped apartment. The bedroom contains a single bed in one corner, and a desk in the other. An ALARM suddenly BLARES.

DANIAL (25) bolts upright. Sweat glistens off his forehead. His breathing is rapid. His eyes dart around the room.

BEAT

Danial takes a deep breath. He closes his eyes.

DANIAL
We made it another day.

Danial opens his eyes. A grin crosses his face.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
(triumphantly)
Onto another day.

EXT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Danial strides out of his apartment. He's dressed in a polo and khakis. Danial takes a deep breath. He smiles. He strides down the street.

EXT. MEADOW FLOWERS - DAY

Outside a small, brick-and-mortar flower shop, NANCY ANDERSON (60), waters a pot of purple roses. Danial approaches.

DANIAL
Good Morning, Mrs. Anderson.

Nancy turns and smiles.

NANCY
Danial, dear, how are you this morning?

DANIAL
(cheerfully)
Fantastic!

NANCY
I'm so glad to hear. I'm guessing the apartment is a good fit?

DANIAL
Yep. Thank you so much for helping me get it.

NANCY
Oh, I didn't do much.

DANIAL
Mrs. Anderson, don't be so modest. You're the ONLY reason I have that apartment.

NANCY
It was just an old friend paying me back.

BEAT

DANIAL
Well, I'm off to my first day as the manager at Old Readers.

NANCY
Oh yes, Joe was telling me about that yesterday.

Danial chuckles.

DANIAL
And that's another thing I can thank you for.

NANCY
Oh?

DANIAL
Without your recommendation to Joe, I would have NEVER gotten this job.

NANCY
Oh don't be so hard on yourself. I'm sure Joe would have picked you with-or-without my recommendation.

DANIAL
Well, regardless, I'm in debt to you for helping me feel welcome in this community. If there is EVER anything I can do to repay you, just ask.

NANCY
(smiles)
I'll keep that in mind. Have a good day, Danial.

DANIAL
You too Mrs. Anderson.

NANCY
Please, call me Nancy.

Danial smiles and heads down the street.

EXT. OLD READERS - DAY

A run-down, brick-and-mortar bookstore blends into the common theme of the downtown. Danial strides towards the store.

Across the street, sits an equally run-down auto body shop. HARVEY, a 30 year old African American, stands outside. A cigarette sits in his right hand.

Danial stops. He and Harvey lock eyes.

BEAT

Harvey nods at Danial.

BEAT

The door behind Danial flies open. Danial jumps. He turns and sees JOE (40), standing in the doorway.

JOE
Whatcha doing out here kid?

DANIAL
Nothing.

JOE
Well stop standing around, I need everyone to see how great my new manager is INSIDE the store.

DANIAL
(chuckles)
Yes sir. I'm on it.

Danial steps past Joe. Joe holds in the doorway. He stares at Harvey. Harvey locks with Joe. He nods. Joe grits his teeth and slams the door.

INT. OLD READERS - BOOKSHELVES - LATER

Old, wooden bookshelves line the small, brick-and-mortar walls of the dusty book store. Danial walks over to the far shelves. A name tag on his chest. A box of books in his arms.

Danial begins sorting the books onto a shelf. The BELL to the store RINGS.

JOE (O.S.)
Welcome to Old Readers, where the books are old but the readers...
(beat)
Get out!

Danial looks towards the front of the store.

INT. OLD READERS - COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Joe stands behind the counter. LEROY, a 28 year old African American, stands across from Joe. A box of books sits between them. Leroy holds a tattered book in his right hand.

LEROY
Excuse me?

Joe gestures towards the door.

JOE
OUT.

LEROY
Ok, woah. What the hell did I do?

JOE
What did you do?
(beat)
Why don’t you ask Nancy?

Danial cocks his head.

LEROY
(dumbfounded)
Who?

Joe narrows his eyes. Danial steps forward.

JOE
Don’t play stupid with me. You’re the one who keeps stealing from her.

Danial stops. He peers around the shelf.

Leroy takes a step back.

LEROY
(defensively)
Man, I don't know what you are on, but I've NEVER stolen anything in my life.

JOE
(scoffs)
Ok.
(beat)
OUT.

Joe steps out from behind the counter. Leroy starts to take out his wallet.

LEROY
Look man, I just came here to try and sell you a book my uncle had laying in his basement.

JOE
Don't care. Get out of my store.

LEROY
Sir, please just...

Leroy steps forward. Joe pushes him back. Leroy losses his grip. His wallet tumbles to the floor.

LEROY (CONT'D)
What the hell?

JOE
I told you--OUT!

Joe pulls out his phone. Leroy stares at Joe speechless. Joe looks at Leroy. He dials "911".

LEROY
Nah man, I'm out of here. You're freakin crazy.

Leroy bolts out of the store. Joe hangs up the phone.

JOE
(to himself)
Dirt bag.

Danial emerges from behind the shelf.

DANIAL
What was that about?

JOE
Him? He was a hooligan. A thug. A thief.

DANIAL
Really? How do you know?

JOE
I've seen him pocketing seeds from Nancy's for the past few days.

Danial's eyes narrow.

DANIAL
Really? You sure that's the same guy?

Joe sighs.

JOE
Look kid, I'm not going to stand here and argue with you. All I know is this...

Joe points at the door.

JOE (CONT'D)
...THEY are all the same. Liars, thief's, cheats. ALL OF THEM.

Danial cocks his head.

DANIAL
How do you know?

Joe sighs. He leans on the counter.

JOE
You trust me, right?

Danial nods.

JOE (CONT'D)
Then trust me when I tell you that guy, and all his friends, are bad news. Ok?

BEAT

Danial smiles.

DANIAL
Ok.

JOE
Good. Now finish putting those books away.

He grabs the box off the counter. Joe heads to the back room. Danial lugs the box over to the shelves.

INT. OLD READERS - BOOKSHELVES - CONTINUOUS

Danial's foot catches on Leroy's wallet. Danial loses his grip on the box. The BOOKS CLATTER to the GROUND.

DANIAL
Crap!

JOE (O.S.)
(shouts)
Everything alright?

DANIAL
Yeah, yeah. I just tripped on...

Danial looks down at the wallet.

BEAT

Danial closes his eyes.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
...a board sticking up.

JOE (O.S.)
(shouts)
Alright, just push it back down.

Danial picks up the wallet. Danial glances at the backroom.

BEAT

Danial opens the wallet. A photo of Leroy sits inside.

The DOOR to the backroom CLICKS open. Danial stuffs the wallet in his pocket. Joe walks over to the counter.

Danial collects the books off the floor. Joe watches Danial. Danial heads over to one of the shelves. His face turned away from Joe. Sweat forms on his forehead.

INT. OLD READERS - COUNTER - NIGHT

Danial counts money at the register. Joe walks out of the backroom. He zips up his jacket.

JOE
Alright, you sure you can close the place all by yourself?

DANIAL
Of course. You made me manager didn't you?

Joe chuckles.

JOE
Alright kid. You have a good night.

DANIAL
Same to you.

Joe walks out of the store. Danial watches Joe exit. Joe vanishes around the corner of the store.

Danial shuts the register. He pulls out the wallet and sets it on the counter. Danial studies the wallet.

JOE (V.O.)
He was a hooligan. A thug. A thief.

Danial takes a deep breath.

JOE (V.O.)
They're all the same. Liars. Thief's. Cheats.

Danial opens the wallet. He looks at the photo again.

JOE (V.O.)
You trust me don't you?

Danial closes his eyes.

EXT. AUTO BODY SHOP - NIGHT

Harvey closes the side door of the auto body shop. He pulls out a set of keys, and locks the door.

DANIAL (O.S.)
Got a minute?

Harvey drops the keys. He turns, fists drawn. Danial stands behind him. He raises his arms in surrender.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
Woah, woah, woah. Don't hit me. I don't want any trouble.

HARVEY
Man, don't be sneaking up on people like that. ESPECIALLY at night.

DANIAL
I'm sorry. I just... I need some help.

HARVEY
From me?

Harvey scoffs.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Dude, I don't even know you.

Harvey finishes locking the door.

DANIAL
I know, I know. I just...

Danial pulls out the wallet.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
I had a guy leave a wallet in the store earlier today.

HARVEY
So? Why should I care?

DANIAL
Well, he...

Danial looks for the right word. Harvey sighs.

HARVEY
He looked like ME.

Danial nods sheepishly.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Man, you think that every black dude just knows each other.

DANIAL
No.

HARVEY
What? You think we hang out at the same bars or something? Smoke joints together?

DANIAL
No, it's not like that at all.

HARVEY
Let me guess. This dude “left” his wallet after your crazy boss thought he was a thief?

Silence. Harvey scoffs.

HARVEY (CONT’D)
Figures. That guy HATES anyone who doesn’t LOOK or THINK like him.

DANIAL
Look man, I can’t speak for my boss. I just really need some help.

HARVEY
Why? So you can be some kind of “good samaritan”?

DANIAL
No. It’s nothing like that. I just... I just want to do the right thing.

Harvey studies Danial.

BEAT

HARVEY
Alright, I’ll bite. Who you looking for?

DANIAL
A guy named Leroy.

Danial opens the wallet revealing the Photo ID. Harvey glances at the photo. He smiles.

HARVEY
Well, believe it or not, THIS black guy does know your man.

Danial brightens.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Danial and Harvey walk down the empty side walk.

HARVEY
So, you like working for Mr. Rankins?

DANIAL
Joe? Yeah, he's fine. An older guy, but a native to the town. So--

HARVEY
--Native?

Harvey laughs.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Did he really tell you that he grew up in this place?

DANIAL
Well yeah. He said he was born and raised in this town. That's why his shop has stayed open as long as it has, the locals keep him alive.

EXT. MEADOW FLOWERS - NIGHT

Harvey stops. He leans against the brick exterior of the flower shop. The flower shop is completely dark, and all the planets have been moved inside.

HARVEY
Locals? How many locals have you actually met?

Danial stops.

DANIAL
What do you mean?

Harvey sighs.

HARVEY
Who exactly do you know?

DANIAL
Well...

Danial counts on his fingers as he speaks.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
There's Joe. Who's my boss. Then there's Nancy, er, Mrs. Anderson who--

Harvey's eyes widen.

HARVEY
--Anderson?

He gestures to the flower shop.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
THIS Anderson? You've got connections with THIS Nancy Anderson?

Danial nods skeptically. Harvey chuckles and shakes his head.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
She's the LEAST native person in this whole town. She moved here only a few years ago. Retired from a life of luxury out west.

Danial crosses his arms.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Yeah, and Joe Rankins. Sure he's been here for like a decade or so, but that guy was running a successful pawnshop chain out east before moving here.

Danial shrugs.

DANIAL
Ok, so maybe they weren't "born-and-raised" here. What's the big deal?

HARVEY
The big deal? The big deal is...

Harvey stops. Danial stares at Harvey. Harvey shakes his head.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
Never mind.

DANIAL
What is it?

HARVEY
Nah man, it's not worth it.

Harvey starts off down the street.

DANIAL
Not worth what? Harvey?

Danial stumbles after him.

EXT. MEADOW FLOWERS - SIDE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Danial stays a few feet behind Harvey. He stops. Danial spots a black van at the back of the flower shop.

DANIAL
(to himself)
What the heck?

Danial strays from the path. Harvey stops and turns.

HARVEY
What are you doing?

DANIAL
Sorry, I just gotta see--

HARVEY
What? One of your friends back there or something?

DANIAL
Maybe. I don’t know, I just--

Harvey sighs.

HARVEY
Look man, you may know Nancy and Joe during the day. But people in this town...
(beat)
They change at night.

Danial and Harvey lock eyes.

BEAT

Danial shakes his head.

DANIAL
(defensively)
You--you don’t know what you’re talking about. They’re GOOD people.

Harvey shrugs.

HARVEY
Good’s only a matter of perspective.

Danial shakes his head and heads towards the flower shop.

Harvey sighs. He leans against the wall of the adjacent building.

EXT. MEADOW FLOWERS - BACKSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Danial approaches the back of the store. He creeps towards the black van. He stops.

In front of the van, a DRUGGY (30) passes a wad of cash to Nancy.

Danial ducks behind the van.

DANIAL
(to himself)
What are you up to Nancy?

Nancy hands the Druggy a bag of “grass”.

Danial scoots to the front of the van. His SHOE SCRAPS on a ROCK.

Nancy turns.

The Druggy turns.

Danial freezes.

Nancy sighs.

NANCY
Danial.

Danial stands to his feet. He awkwardly laughs.

DANIAL
H-hey Nancy. How’s it--

The Druggy pulls a gun on Danial. Danial’s hands shoot in the air.

DRUGGY
(to Nancy)
What the hell Nancy? You said this place was safe.

NANCY
(annoyed)
Oh put that away, this isn’t a cop, just one of my...
(beat)
Apprentices.

The Druggy locks on Danial. Sweat forms on Danial’s face.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Now, now. You should know better than to make me repeat myself.

The Druggy looks at Danial. Then Nancy. He puts the gun back in the his waistband. Danial drops his arms and sighs.

NANCY (CONT'D)
The deals done. You can go.

The Druggy glances at Danial. Danial gulps. The Druggy looks back at Nancy. He nods. He heads around the corner of the flower shop.

Nancy turns to Danial.

NANCY (CONT'D)
So,
(beat)
What the hell are you doing here?

DANIAL
I--I just saw the van and I--

NANCY
You were curious.

Danial looks at his feet. Nancy sighs.

NANCY (CONT'D)
I guess I was going to have to tell you eventually.

DANIAL
Tell me what?

Nancy sits down on a nearby crate.

NANCY
Danial, this town isn't as--
simple as you may think it is.

Danial kicks a pebble.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Look, I know that you live your life with this...
(beat)
Blind optimism.

Danial looks up at Nancy.

NANCY (CONT'D)
You try to see the best in people, and you try to create the best for people. Right?

Danial hesitantly nods.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Well...
(beat)
That's not real life.

Joe emerges from inside the flower shop.

JOE
Real life is cold and ruthless. It's unforgiving.

Danial and Nancy look over at Joe. Nancy sighs.

NANCY
Joe, how many times have I told you. Life isn't about being a cutthroat.

JOE
Ah, he can handle it. He saw how I deal with THEM earlier today.

NANCY
Joe, just because YOU don't like my customers, doesn't mean that I don't. I'm trying to teach him that life ISN'T black and white.

Joe chuckles.

JOE
Like he needs a lesson in that. He's understands that this world's full of right and wrong.
(beat)
GOOD and EVIL.

NANCY
Yes, but he doesn't know the RIGHT right and the WRONG wrong.

DANIAL (O.S.)
What are you talking about?

Nancy and Joe look over at Danial.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
Right and wrong are simple. Good and evil, that's not what I need to know.

Nancy raises her eyebrows.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
What I need to know--is why the HELL you're dealing drugs?

Nancy stands to her feet. She walks over to a box full of vacuum sealed bags. She smiles at Danial.

NANCY
Power.

DANIAL
What?

Nancy holds up a bag.

NANCY
THIS, Danial, is what power looks like. THIS has the power to control the masses. To change futures. To make dreams a reality.

Danial scoffs.

DANIAL
Are--Are you serious? Power? THAT'S what this is all about?

NANCY
That's what it's always about Danial.
(beat)
Why do you think we let you into our community.

Danial cocks his head. Nancy steps towards Danial.

DANIAL
Let me in?

NANCY
Of course. You didn't think we just accepted you for being nice did you?

Joe and Nancy both chuckle. Danial takes a step back. Nancy creeps closer to Danial.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Come now Danial, you must realize that IGNORANCE is a GIFT.

Danial takes another step back.

DANIAL
Ignorance?

Nancy saunters forward.

NANCY
But of course, you were an ignorant, desperate fool. Someone who didn't care what it took to get the apartment, the job, the status.

Joe takes a step forward.

JOE
You were perfect. A hopeless optimist EAGER to find his place in the world.

Danial slips and falls on his butt. Nancy stands over Danial.

NANCY
Now, wouldn't it be a shame if something was to HAPPEN to everything you've worked SO hard for?

Danial's eyes go wide. Nancy smiles.

NANCY (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.
(beat)
Now, how about I COLLECT your debt from earlier.

DANIAL
M--my what?

NANCY
Oh, don't you remember? You said you would do ANYTHING--
(beat)
--all I had to do was ask.

Joe grins menacingly. Danial shakes his head.

NANCY (CONT'D)
No? But what about your apartment?

Nancy snaps her fingers. Danial freezes. His breathing quickens. Joe steps forward.

JOE
Your job?

Joe snaps his fingers. Danial looks at Joe.

DANIAL
No.

NANCY
Your status?

Danial looks back at Nancy. She snaps her fingers.

DANIAL
No!

Danial closes his eyes. Joe shakes his head.

JOE
It would be a SHAME to see all your hard work go to waste.

Danial shakes his head furiously.

DANIAL
NO! No, I'm... I'm...

Nancy leans down to Danial's ear.

NANCY
You're NOTHING without ME.

BEAT

Danial grits his teeth. He clinches his fists. He stares up at Nancy.

BEAT

Danial's arms falls to the ground. Nancy smiles.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Just like I thought, nothing more than a pathetic puppy.

Nancy walks back over to Joe. Danial faces the ground. His shoulder's slumped. His arms limp.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Now that we got your little--temper tantrum out of the way, it's onto the job.

DANIAL
(defeated)
What do you need me to do?

NANCY
Oh come now Danial, it's not that bad. In fact, I think you will find this fun--with your new found anger and all.

Danial looks up at Nancy.

NANCY (CONT'D)
It's a simple debt collection. A debt for a debt you might say.

Danial looks at Nancy. He glances at Joe. He look back at Nancy. Danial sighs.

DANIAL
Who owes you?

Nancy and Joe smile at each other..

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Danial emerges from behind Meadow Flowers. Harvey leans against the wall, a cigarette between his fingers.

HARVEY
How'd it go?

Danial pulls the wallet out and hands it to Harvey.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
What's this?

DANIAL
Go return the wallet.

HARVEY
What?
(beat)
Nah, nah, nah. That wasn't the deal.

Harvey gives Danial the wallet.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
I was just your guide. You're the "peacemaker" remember?

DANIAL
Yeah, well THIS peacemaker has another job to do.

Danial shoves the wallet back at Harvey. He then heads down the street.

Harvey looks at the wallet. He then looks up at Danial. He scoffs.

INT. UNDERBELLY BAR - NIGHT

An older, brick-and-mortar sports bar. It's a lighter night for a Saturday. The DOOR RINGS. The BARTENDER (40's) looks up. Danial enters.

BARTENDER
Evening. What can I get for you?

Danial steps over to the bar top.

BEAT

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
A lot of nothing, gotcha.

Danial turns. He scans the bar. Most tables are empty. At a table in the corner sits three men: Leroy, STAN (30's), and HENRY (30's).

Danial spots Leroy. Leroy laughs with Stan and Henry. Danial turns back to the bar. He grits his teeth. More laughter erupts from the corner table.

Danial takes a deep breath. He walks over to the table.

INT. UNDERBELLY BAR - TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Leroy, Stan, and Henry continue laughing. A few empty bottles scatter the table top. Leroy spots Danial walking over.

LEROY
Can I help you?

DANIAL
Perhaps.
(beat)
(MORE)

DANIAL (CONT'D)
Depends on how much you got in your wallet?

LEROY
(scoffs)
Excuse me, who the hell are you?

Danial stops in front of the table.

DANIAL
I'm a simple man, here with a simple plan.

LEROY
To steal my money?

Danial leans into Leroy.

DANIAL
To collect NANCY'S money.

Leroy's eyes narrow. Henry and Stan look at Leroy.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
Now, I don't like escalating a conflict. So, let's make this easy.
(beat)
Show me your wallet.

LEROY
Look man, I don't know who the hell you think you are but--

Danial slams his fist down on the table. All the men jump.

DANIAL
I don't give a damn if you know me. PAY THE DAMN DEBT!

LEROY
(diplomatically)
Look man, I don't have my wallet with me. I had some friends buy me a round tonight.

Leroy gestures to Henry and Stan. Both men flash friendly smiles.

LEROY (CONT'D)
Just tell Nancy I'll have all her money by the weekend with--say--ten percent interest?

Danial stands back.

DANIAL
Ten percent?

Leroy nods. Danial chuckles.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
Ten percent. Yeah, a nice interest payment.

Leroy relaxes.

LEROY
Yeah, yeah. An interest payment.

Leroy gestures to Stan and Henry. The men nod along in agreement.

LEROY (CONT'D)
Yeah, a little extra for your--

Danial SMASHES one of the BOTTLES against Leroy's head. Leroy falls to the floor.

DANIAL
(shouts)
There are NO interest payments with Nancy! You pay her when she TELLS you too pay--

Danial is tackled to the ground by Henry. Danial is punched in the face. His eyes go wide. Another punch. Danial tries to block it. His hand goes into his bloody nose.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
HEY! Get off of him!

Another punch. Another block. More blood. Danial pushes Henry off. He tries to crawl. Henry steps on Danial's hand. Danial screams.

BARTENDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I said, GET OFF OF HIM!

The Bartender swings at Henry. Henry falls to the ground. Danial rolls over. He holds his hand.

Danial sees Leroy. He's out cold. Stan holds a clump of napkins to Leroy's head. Blood stains the napkins.

The Bartender goes over to Danial.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
On your feet!

Danial looks up at the bartender. The bartender pulls Danial up. He throws Danial into a chair.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
I don't EVER want to see you in here a--

Henry clocks the Bartender. The Bartender staggers into a table. The TABLE SHATTERS.

Danial looks at Henry. Eyes wide.

A fist to the jaw. Danial hits the ground again. He groans. He rolls over.

A fist greets his face. Danial's vision blurs. Another fist in the face. Danial holds up his hands. A blow to his forearm. Another to his wrist.

Danial opens his mouth. A shot to the ribs knocks the wind out of Danial.

HARVEY (O.C.)
(shouts)
What the hell are you doing?

Another fist in Danial's ribs. He groans. Blood stains part of Danial's shirt

Harvey throws Henry off of Danial. Danial watches Harvey. Harvey dodges a punch. Then another. A fluid strike to Henry's side. A second to his face.

Henry staggers backwards. He lands on a table. The TABLE SHATTERS.

Harvey goes over to Danial.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
(exclaims)
What the hell is all of this?

Danial winces between words.

DANIAL
I... I... I was just...

HARVEY
Doing a job?
(scoffs)
Clearly.
(beat)
Come on, let's get you cleaned up.

Harvey helps Danial to his feet. Stan stands to his feet as well. Harvey glares at Stan. Stan goes back to Leroy.

INT. UNDERBELLY BAR - BAR TOP - CONTINUOUS

Harvey helps Danial over to the bar top. Harvey grabs a towel. Harvey places it against Danial's bloody nose.

HARVEY
Look man, I want to help you, but I have to know, what kind of job requires you to almost get yourself killed?

DANIAL
I was just--collecting a debt.

HARVEY
A debt? A DEBT! What the hell kind of debt requires you to smash a bottle over a man's head?

NANCY (O.S.)
The one that hasn't been paid in full.

INT. UNDERBELLY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Harvey turns. Nancy and Joe stand in the doorway.

HARVEY
What are YOU doing here?

NANCY
I came to check in on MY debt collector.

Harvey looks at Danial. He scoffs.

HARVEY
Oh right, she's one of your "friends".

NANCY
Friend, colleague, boss. Whatever title you want to give me.

Nancy looks around the bar. Henry lays in broken wood. The Bartender in a mound of splinters. Stan continues to help Leroy.

NANCY (CONT'D)
God, I hate cleaning up a rookie's mess.

Nancy snaps her fingers. Joe nods and hops over the bar top. He heads into the kitchen.

HARVEY
(to Danial)
Why the hell are you collecting Leroy's debt?

DANIAL
I had no choice.

Harvey pulls out Leroy's wallet.

HARVEY
You ALWAYS have a choice.

Danial looks at the wallet.

Nancy laughs.

NANCY
Oh my naive friend. No. You do not ALWAYS have a choice. SOMETIMES the choice is made for you.

HARVEY
What are you talking about. Danial's not a bad guy.

NANCY
Oh no. He's not bad, just DESPERATE. Desperate to fit in. Desperate to be apart of the community.
(beat)
Desperate to make SOMETHING of himself.

Harvey looks at Danial. Danial holds the towel to his bloody nose. Danial stares at the wallet.

HARVEY
Desperate? No, he's not desperate.

NANCY
Oh? Do tell me what DESPERATE looks like mr...

Harvey glares back at Nancy.

HARVEY
Harvey. And desperate looks like a man pleading for his life before he has a BOTTLE smashed over his head.

NANCY
A debt is a debt. It has to be paid by someone.

Harvey points at Leroy.

HARVEY
THAT isn't debt collecting. THAT is attempted murder.

Nancy scoffs.

NANCY
Oh child, when you have as much power as I do, anything can be whatever you need it to be.

Harvey looks back at Danial.

HARVEY
You DON'T have to listen to her.

Danial sighs.

DANIAL
No Harvey, I do.

HARVEY
NO, you DON'T.
(beat)
Look, there is a whole world full of people who aren't listening to that WITCH. You can be just like all of them.

DANIAL
NO, I CAN'T. I can't get a job on my own. I can't get an apartment on my own. I can't do anything without HER.

HARVEY
Yes, you can. She wants you to believe that life is just a black and white picture, but there is a whole world full of color.
I can show you.

Danial looks at Harvey.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
You DON'T have to listen to her anymore.

Danial pounds the bar top.

DANIAL
NO, I CAN'T! I'm a worthless nobody that can't do a single damn thing right in his life. I have to be handed EVERYTHING!

BEAT

HARVEY
So stop taking the hand outs.

Harvey holds out the wallet. Danial looks at the wallet.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
If you're so tired of letting other people control your life, start taking back control.

BEAT

Joe re-emerges from inside the bar. Nancy bursts out laughing.

NANCY
That's it? That's the "rousing" speech you give to him. THAT'S what's going to change his mind?

Danial looks over at Nancy. He looks back at the wallet.

NANCY (CONT'D)
You think that a little "self confidence" is going to break through MY control?

Danial closes his eyes.

NANCY (CONT'D)
He knows what he wants.
(beat)
And I can give it to him.

DANIAL
NO.

Nancy and Harvey look at Danial.

NANCY
I'm sorry?

Danial glares at Nancy.

DANIAL
No. You're WRONG. I don't know what I want. I've NEVER known what I want because I've never been able to THINK for myself. To SPEAK for myself. To even ACT for myself.

Nancy scoffs.

NANCY
Oh great, one bar fight later and the puppy thinks he can actually bite.

DANIAL
(roars)
No, Nancy, that is were you are MOST wrong. I'm not a pathetic puppy, or a sad little lap-dog. I'm nobody's pet. Only a PRISONER. Held back by you. You and Joe, and the rest of YOUR prisoners. All you do is lie to me, use me to get what you want, then give me a little treat thinking that I'll be satisfied. Well you know what?
(beat)
Not this time.

Danial snatches the wallet and walks towards Nancy.

DANIAL (CONT'D)
This time I'm not backing down. This time I don't care what you DO to me. What you SAY to me. What you THREATEN me with. Nothing you could EVER offer me would be worth the price of another man's life.

Nancy looks into Danial's eyes.

NANCY
You sure you want to go down this path Danial. Once you do, you can NEVER turn back. There is no second chance, no grace, no mercy.

Danial opens the wallet a grabs out the cash. He throws the cash to Nancy and the wallet to Leroy.

Joe glares at Danial. Nancy stares at Danial. Danial stares back.

BEAT

Danial turns and looks at Harvey. Harvey nods to Danial. Danial takes a deep breath. Danial closes his eyes.

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Danial opens his eyes. He stands outside his apartment building. Danial wears a backpack, and holds a worn-out suitcase. He looks up at his apartment building. He smiles. Danial turns and heads down the street.

EXT. MEADOW FLOWERS - CONTINUOUS

Danial walks down the street. Nancy stands outside her shop. She waters a pot of black roses. Danial walks passed her. Nancy glares at Danial. Danial smiles.

EXT. OLD READERS - CONTINUOUS

Joe stands outside the front door of the bookstore. He shakes his head as Danial approaches. Danial sets his suitcase by the side of the street. He goes over to Joe.

JOE
I can’t believe you. I thought you were one of us.

Danial smiles. He pulls his name tag out of his pocket and hands it to Joe.

JOE (CONT’D)
So this is how it ends then. One lying negro convinces you to drop the perfect life?

DANIAL
Nope.
(beat)
He just showed me there is no perfect life.

Danial turns. He goes back to his suitcase.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Danial cross the street. Joe watches on. Danial finds Harvey in front of the auto body shop. Harvey smiles.

HARVEY
You ready?

Danial stops. He turns and looks back at Joe. Joe stares back. Danial smiles and nods. Joe grits his teeth. He then enters Old Readers. The DOOR SLAMS closed.

Danial looks back at Harvey.

DANIAL
Show me the full picture.

Harvey smiles. He puts an arm around Danial. The duo walk down the street.

FADE OUT.