

Elfreda

Screenplay by

Rhonda Buckley
October 14th, 2022

© Media Connections Film Inc.
Producer, Rhonda Buckley
rhondabuckley@nl.rogers.com
709-770-5424

1 INT. BOSTON UBER CAR - AFTERNOON

Boston city center street. NORA (36) rests her head on the back of the taxi seat. She is fast asleep, her hair blows from the open window and she shakes herself awake, startled and frightened from a bad dream. There's opera music on the radio. UBER DRIVER BEN looks burly and man-kept, a bachelor.

2 EXT. NORA PULLS UP IN A UBER CAR, BOSTON - AFTERNOON

Activists march for women's rights and pour down the street en masse wearing pink pussy hats with placards "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

Ben pauses up ahead from the women activists who block off the road. A sea of knitted pink 'power pussy hats' are coming toward the car. Ben in a gruff voice while pausing to let the protestors go.

NORA

Some of these women have been
marching *forever*.

BEN

(waves them on)
Ladies first.

NORA

We *all* may be in the grave before
this one's over.

BEN

Listen lady, I'm one of the good
ones. Holding doors open for *The
Women*.

NORA

How chivalrous.

BEN

Some of you need to be treated with
kid gloves.

NORA

I've had more doors slammed in my face...

BEN

You can handle yourself. City girl like you ...

NORA

I was born in a small place, really.

BEN

An island, is it?

NORA

As my grandmother would say, "Don't rely on a man. Open your own doors."

BEN

I don't argue with Granny.

The march goes by very close to the UBER CAR.

NORA

It's *her* body. Should the state own *her* body?

BEN

Right. I MEAN NO! Making decisions for women - that'll land 'em in hot water.

NORA

I hope so.

BEN

Huh?

NORA

I hope they land in hot water.

BEN

Politicians. Not so bright.

BEN (CONT'D)

Right? Am I right?

NORA

Just pull up ahead by the Women's
Studies building, please.

BEN

Taking courses?

NORA

No actually I'm a *professor*. I'm
teaching a conference if you like to
come hear.

BEN

(laughs)

You need a hand ...

NORA

No. I'm good.

(laughing)

Thank you.

BEN

You're welcome, Ma'am.

NORA

Ma'am. Okay, now you're just being
an asshole.

(laughs)

BEN

(laughs)

Nah, I'm just being a man.

Nora gives a mischievous evil look back.

3 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

Nora is the professor of Women's Studies; the lecture hall is full mainly with women. A bright student SIMONE speaks up in class and her classmate HEATHER sits close by.

NORA

Takes 50 years for social change. Unless its the rights of women, then it takes longer. In the eyes of the law, before 1882, once a woman married, she basically ceased to exist. On her wedding day, she became one person with her husband and thereafter everything was under the complete and total supervision of her husband. Not only did he have control of all her possessions, but he also had control over her body.

NORA (CONT'D)

Treat women like porcelain dolls. Ladies first, as my UBER guy would say ...

SIMONE

Truly, we didn't get into this mess 'cause a few doors were held open for women in hooped dresses. And she could've married a *woman*.

NORA

Women held as powerless, helpless and incompetent. Incapable of being autonomous. Equal persons with body rights? All for a *kind gesture*?

4 INT. TV STATION CAMPUS TALK SHOW - AFTERNOON

Nora is on a TV TALK SHOW with HOST, ANGELA (25). The set is two armchairs coffee-style talk show. Nora has copies of an original article printed in the Express newspaper about Elfreda's murder in 1870.

ANGELA

Why are you so taken with this woman Elfreda?

NORA

I was born in Newfoundland.
Newfoundland in 1870 is a very
unlikely place to have a brutal
slaughtering of a 16-year-old girl.
Or even today for that matter.

ANGELA reads from the original EXPRESS NEWSPAPER article of
1870.

ANGELA

(Holding up the
Express article)

*The unfortunate victim: Elfreda Pike
only 16 years of age, bearing an
excellent character and respected by
all who knew her. What does
excellent character mean?*

NORA continues reading from the original EXPRESS article of
1870.

NORA

It means just what you're thinking.
(Nora continues
reading)

*With regards to the character of
poor Elfreda, we rejoice to say that
it was of a truly good young woman,
of Christian parents, her moral
character known to be perfectly free
from stain. She was a regular
attendant at her church.*

ANGELA

The young woman has been slaughtered
and they are boasting in the
newspaper that she hasn't been
sexually compromised?

NORA

The newspaper article is as
concerning as the crime itself.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

I'm intrigued by the visceral details written up in the paper. Why the crime isn't sexual in nature is rare.

ANGELA

Are you suggesting that a newspaper article today wouldn't give as much detail about a crime?

NORA

Not sure. It's 1870... Harbour Grace, Newfoundland...

CUT TO:

5 EXT. WOODED AREA CRIME SCENE OF ELFREDA PIKE, 1870 - MORNING

NARRATOR plays over footage of the murder scene CLOSE UP.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(original text from
Express newspaper
1870)

She was full-grown and in the full flush of womanhood. The lower jaw was broken by a compound fracture, three teeth were knocked out and two were loosened, the sockets of the teeth were burst open, a cut over the chin was laid open to the gums and perforated the lower lip. The head wounds alone were sufficient to destroy life.

CLOSE UP pans over Elfreda's hair and silhouette.

6 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

Nora is at the head of the class in front of a slide screen with her notes in front of her.

NORA

'Gender crime'. Women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse... The 'President' just changed the definitions of domestic violence and sexual assault.

SIMONE

She can't say his name!

Heather gives Simone a peculiar glare.

NORA

Take the case of Elfreda Pike in 1870.

SIMONE

She's writing a book *Elfreda* on gender violence.

HEATHER

She's obsessed.

SIMONE

She was born in Newfoundland, where it happened.

HEATHER

Was she born in 1870?
(laughs)

SIMONE

Come on.
(laughs)

Simone gives Heather an odd look.

7 EXT. WOODED AREA CRIME SCENE OF ELFREDA PIKE, 1870 - MORNING

Elfreda's feet are elevated and her head left sunken below in the bushes. NARRATOR plays over footage of the murder scene CLOSE UP.

NARRATOR
(original text from
Express newspaper
1870)

Having waited until the blood had poured from her body, to fully satisfy himself that life was extinct, he drew her body to the opposite side of the road, and there behind a large stone he left *it*.

8 INT. CHURCH, HARBOUR GRACE, NEWFOUNDLAND, 1994 - AFTERNOON

NORA (10) and her GRANDMOTHER FRANCIS (58) are at the top of the church hovering over two coffins, side by side, covered in flowers. Francis has to try and pull Nora away from the coffin as she clings to it for dear life. On top of the caskets are embossed brass plates Michael Hannaford on one casket and Beatrice Hannaford on the other.

They inch towards the entranceway of the church, and stand solemn with the parishioners giving their condolences as they leave the church. Francis hangs on to Nora's hands with all her might. Her rings digging through Nora's hand even through her cloth gloves. Nora straddles the side of her grandmother for support. CHURCH GOER, MARIE, stops to give her condolences.

MARIE

Oh Francis, I have no words. Thine is the power and glory of the Lord, God rest their souls.

FRANCIS

I prayed and prayed for Bea to move home from Boston, but not like this. In a wooden box.

MARIE

Tragic. Those highways, see. They didn't have a chance.

FRANCIS

Not with the likes of him driving.

MARIE

(nods down to Nora)

Make no wonder she got out *alive*.

FRANCIS

(hush)

This ones *my* keeper. She'll get through. I'll see to that.

MARIE

(to Nora)

Yes, you'll be just fine. I will drop bread and cookies off, would you like that?

Nora tries to break a half hearted smile.

9 EXT. CHURCH FIELD AND HILL - DAY

Nora and Francis walk along the dirt road in Harbour Grace with the graveyard in the background. They walk over the hill past the small harbour and wooden houses. Nora is swinging her coin purse on a strap.

FRANCIS

(trying to distract
Nora)

I bet you don't have these down there.

(kicks and scuffs the
dirt with her dress
shoes)

NORA

Have what?

FRANCIS

Dirt roads. That's what.

NORA

(sullen)

Who wants one?

FRANCIS

It's just something a little
different that's all. You were born
here, you know.

NORA

I was?

FRANCIS

Yes, you were. Your mother swooped
you away when you were only 3
months. Your father was a
professor, of course.

NORA

(sniffles)

He is ...

(coughs)

Was smart.

FRANCIS

(covers up her
disgust)

Yes, he was that. Your mother was
pretty bright to, you know. I saw
to that. She did her lessons.

Nora swings her coin purse faster, agitated.

NORA

She always helped me. Read to me.

FRANCIS

See ...

(cheering her up)

We'll still do that. You'll get
used to it here before you know it.

NORA

(pause)

FRANCIS

Might have to get some street sounds
for you, awfully quiet here I'm
sure.

Nora drops her purse by the side of the dirt road near the trees, so unnerved she doesn't notice. Francis slows down looking back towards the side of the road.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

You dropped your purse, my dear.

Nora walks back to the side of the dirt road, while Francis waits. About 4 feet in from the edge of the dirt road she sees a rock with a plaque on it.

NORA

What's that?

FRANCIS

What's what, my dear?

Francis starts to walk back toward Nora to see what she is looking at in the grass. As she gets closer she shows even more sadness on her face.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

That's a burial.

NORA

Like my Mom and Dad's?

FRANCIS

Yes, pretty much.

Nora walks in closer to see the rock.

NORA

Says Elfreda Pike and she was 16.

FRANCIS

That she was. God rest her soul.

NORA
How did she die?

FRANCIS
(struggles to say)
She was *murdered*.

NORA
Murdered?!

FRANCIS
Yes.

NORA
You said it was safe here. You said
it was so quiet, it was *deafening*.

FRANCIS
It is my love. We've never heard
the likes of that since or *before*.

NORA
How was she murdered?

Francis grabs her by the hand, strong.

FRANCIS
Never you mind that now. Lets get
home for lunch. They're dropping
bread and cookies. You heard them.

NORA
(tries to add in her
head)
That's over a 100 years ago.
(sinks in about her
parents death)
I will *never* see my Mom and Dad
again.

Starts to go in convulsions, crying, while being dragged by
Francis.

FRANCIS

I know my love. *I know.*

10 INT. GRANDMOTHERS KITCHEN HARBOUR GRACE - DAY

Nora (15) is sitting at the kitchen table studying and Francis is puttering through the kitchen cooking, pots and pans going all at once, while baking bread.

NORA

It says here. That Elfreda was on her way to her Grandmother's house.

FRANCIS

Are you sure you need to do a project on this murder, Nora?

NORA

There's a full article written in the 1870 Express newspaper. I found it at the museum.

FRANCIS

I imagine there is one or two things in that museum that shouldn't be dug up.

NORA

They say she was a good girl and a church goer. Why would they say that?

FRANCIS

They always say things like that about young women, Nora. It's as if were to blame for it all.

NORA

But she was murdered. How can any of it be *her* fault.

FRANCIS

(puts down her mixing
bowl)

If there is a way for a man to hold
a woman to blame they will.

Francis is deep in thought thinking she should have a chat
with Nora.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I guess we should have a chat.

NORA

About Elfreda?
(intrigued)

FRANCIS

No, that we won't.

NORA

What?

FRANCIS

Don't say 'what', it's not becoming.

Nora rolls her eyes. Francis sits down and lunges into what
she knows is her duty.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

You're getting older now. And there
is a few things you'll need to know.
You may want to *be* with a man.

NORA

Oh, you mean sex. Myself and Josie
talk about that all the time.

Francis in shock.

FRANCIS

All the time.

NORA

Yeah, we've read Judy Blume. You know *Forever*, like a 1,000 times.

FRANCIS

Well that's a good word for it. Cause there are some things that *are* for forever and there are some things that *are not*.

NORA

Like what?

FRANCIS

Well, *if* you are with a man you need to take care and go to the nurse. Before you know *you're* with him. Cause' if not a baby can be *forever* and a man is not always there forever, that's for sure. But you should *not* be with a young man to start with. I'm just saying, *if it happened*.

NORA

Oh, you mean birth control. Yeah, I read about that. I'm not ready just yet.

Francis takes a deep sigh of relief.

FRANCIS

There's more.

NORA

Like what? Not what. But you know, what do you mean?

FRANCIS

Men aren't always what they seem. They can be nice. But if they make you afraid. Well, don't put up with it. You're not meant to *ever, ever*, be *hurt* by a man.

NORA

Is that what Grandpa did? Is that why he is *gone*?

FRANCIS

Never you mind that, now. He's *gone*. I'm just saying stand up for yourself, always! Especially where the men are concerned.

11 INT. HIGHSCHOOL HARBOUR GRACE - DAY

Nora is in a group with her other classmates for their research project. She has become enthralled with her project on Elfreda and has artifacts and index cards on her desk. The desks are arranged in groups of four facing each other.

JACOB

Are you still doing that project on the dead girl?

NORA

She's not just dead. She was *murdered*.

TED

My grandma said that woods is haunted. And she should have known better.

NORA

It's not haunted. There was an investigation. It's a real crime.

TED

How do you know? You're not even from here. You're from *Boston*.
(using an accent)

NORA

I am...
(quieter)
from here. My family is from here.
My mom, my dad.

JACOB

But they're dead. They're not here.

NORA

My grandmother is here.

Nora wells up but covers it up, not to let on to the guys she is bothered.

NORA (CONT'D)

(to Ted)

You're just chicken to go to the woods that's why you said your mom said it was haunted.

TED

It *is* haunted.

JACOB

(to Ted)

Are you sure?

Ted winks to Jacob without Nora seeing him.

NORA

Prove it.

TED

Meet us there after school. You'll see.

NORA

Where?

JACOB

By the gravestone. There's another stone in further on the path where the murder happened.

NORA

(not afraid)

Really? It did say in this newspaper it was in from the road by a tree.

TED

Oh yeah, and we know where that tree is and we can show you.

JACOB

Yeah, we can show you.

12 EXT. WOODED PATH AND GRAVESTONE - AFTERNOON

Nora walks confident toward the gravestone and stops by the edge of the road where she has walked home now for over 5 years. She looks up and down the dirt road and tries to see if she can see the boys coming by. They shout out.

JACOB

We're in here.

TED

We're far in. A ways longer.

Nora can hear their voices clearly and knows the woods well enough to follow them on in.

NORA

I hear you.

Nora pushes tree branches and shrubs out of her way. She is able to navigate the woods like a pro despite growing up in the city.

NORA (CONT'D)

See I know my way around these woods.

(her voice breaks off)

Nora barely has the words out of her mouth and she falls through a bunch of loose bows covering a hole and causing her to fall in. Ted and Jacob go into fits of laughter. And start to run back out of the woods. Ted is bolting ahead back to the road and Jacob starts to slow down as he hears Nora cry out.

NORA (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm stuck. Assholes.

Jacob fully slows down and makes a move to go back and get Nora. Ted from up ahead looks back.

TED

You're not helping that crazy one.

JACOB

Shut up!

TED

Ahh someone's got a crush.

JACOB

Shut up.

TED

You know you get two crazies, Nora and *Elfreda*. *She's obsessed*.

Jacob starts running back. Ted heads to the road not to get caught.

NORA

I'm slipping.

Jacob reaches over pulls Nora's hand and both arms, harder and harder to shimmy her across the wooded path and out of the pit.

JACOB

You think it's deeper than it really is. But it was a sucky thing to do.

NORA

Sucky. Sucky. I could have broken both my legs.

JACOB

I came back didn't I?

NORA

Cause? Oh, you're kind, now? Are you crazy?

JACOB

Nah. Ted said *you* were crazy.

Nora and Jacob sit on the wooden path with their legs folded, covered in leaves and twigs.

NORA

You don't even really know me.

JACOB

He's right. You're obsessed with this murder thing. *Elfreda*.

NORA

You don't want to know about a murder that happened down the road from where you live.

JACOB

It's like over 150 years ago.

NORA

But no one knows who did it.

JACOB

Yah, but he's dead now.

NORA

How do you know it's a man who did it?

JACOB

Usually is. On the news anyway.

NORA

Ahhh.

(pause)

Thanks for coming back.

Nora starts to stand up and Jacob helps her up.

JACOB

Are you okay? I know it was stupid. I should've stopped it.

Jacob starts to pull twigs out of Nora's hair. He gently pulls Nora close, just to hug her.

NORA

(smiles)

I would've hugged you. You didn't need to push me in a ditch, you know.

He smiles and takes her by the hand.

JACOB

We were lucky. You could've been hurt.

NORA

We. You were lucky. You don't know what my grandmother, Francis, would do to you.

JACOB

Oh, yes I do. Why do you think I came back.

(laughs)

13 INT. GRANDMOTHERS KITCHEN HARBOUR GRACE - DAY

Nora comes racing in through the door still looking like she has fallen in the woods. She waves good bye to Jacob on her way in to shut the door. Francis looks up alarmed to see Nora, as if she has played football, rather than being at the library.

FRANCIS

Well?

NORA

Well?

FRANCIS

Well, what's this? Everyday you come home with your notes filed in a binder. Have you taken to playing red rover or cleaning a barn?

NORA (O.S.)

(laughs)

No. I went with some classmates to see more about Elfreda's murder site.

FRANCIS

Looks like you tried to dig her up my dear.

NORA

Well, it was like you said. You always need to make sure guys won't hurt you. And there was one not good guy and then one good guy.

Francis looks to Nora as if giving her a warning sign.

FRANCIS

You're not looking for a *good* young man, Nora, you're looking for a *great* young man. And I will see to *that*.

NORA

I warned him, that was the case.

FRANCIS

Good. Cause he won't get in over this doorstep until I say.

Nora laughs. Francis embraces a parental moment between them after all they have been through.

14 INT. MUSEUM - AFTERNOON

Nora walks up to a display case with a little coin purse in it, encased with a glass cover. She is familiar with the purse and looks nervously to see if MRS. THORNE, the Museum director is coming behind her.

Nora slyly removes the glass lid, knowing she can hold the coin purse, if she doesn't get caught.

She picks it up and fondles it in her hand as if to muster up the presence of Elfreda and save her, she closes her eyes as if deep in prayer.

By the purse there is a card to identify the coin purse and Nora reads it in a whisper to herself.

NORA

Last known artifact to be found of Elfreda Pike, in the woods near her body that was brutally murdered on January 6th, 1870. No one has yet been convicted for this heinous crime.

Nora can hear MRS. THORNE walk up behind her. She panics and barely gets the glass cover back on the podium. She fumbles, and shakes with it in her hands, and manages to put it over the coin purse just in time to reveal a very guilty look on her face, as Mrs. Thorne comes in the room.

MRS. THORNE

You can't have much more to look at on that coin purse, you come see it almost every day.

NORA

I know. I'm sorry. But it's *my project* at school now.

Nora beams as if she has saved herself from an interrogation with Mrs. Thorne.

MRS. THORNE

Well, it's not natural for a young girl to spend so much time thinking about death or ... a

(whispers)
murder.

NORA

(quietly)
You don't want to know? Who killed her.

MRS. THORNE

You'll never find that out now.
You're not likely to find out how
young women are killed today, let
alone over a 100 years ago.

Nora looks extremely uncomfortable, as if she is really not helping.

NORA

We *have* to try.

MRS. THORNE

What's your Grandmother think of you
and all of this talk of death, after
what you've been through.

NORA

It's my studies. So that's good I'm
reading, right?

MRS. THORNE

You should be off chasing the boys
and having fun.

NORA

(pause)

MRS. THORNE

Coming in to hold that coin purse
like a genie in a bottle is not
going to give you *any* answers.

Nora gets sheepish, realizing she has been caught.

NORA

I'll find the answer someday you'll
see.

Nora moves toward the door as if she is on trial.

As she heads down the grass path she looks back towards Mrs.
Thorne standing in the doorway.

15 EXT. MUSEUM DOORWAY GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Mrs. Thorne leans on the edge of the door contemplating if she should encourage Nora.

MRS. THORNE

(pause)

They say there was a letter.

Nora stops in her tracks and turns back.

MRS. THORNE (CONT'D)

It's most likely a rumor. They say there could be a letter.

NORA

What kind of letter?

MRS. THORNE

A confession.

NORA

A confession. Well that's something. That's a lead.

MRS. THORNE

I've never seen nor heard tell of it in this museum or from anyone in this place.

NORA

But it could be *here!* *Somewhere!*

Nora starts to back up getting ready to hurry off and leave the museum garden.

MRS. THORNE

Yes, *somewhere*. Where you racing off to *now?*

NORA

Going to meet Jacob. He's showing me his dirt bike.

Mrs. Thorne breaks a small smile, as if all is not lost.

16 INT. GRANDMOTHERS KITCHEN HARBOUR GRACE - AFTERNOON

Nora comes in through the door, books in hand, dutiful to greet Francis at supper.

FRANCIS

You're in a better way tonight.
Less dirt on you than yesterday.

Nora thinks whether to tell her Grandmother about meeting Jacob, and decides against it.

NORA

Yeah, I went to the museum.

FRANCIS

Again. Mrs. Thorne is going to put you on display, if you don't stop bothering her.

NORA

She said there was a letter. About Elfreda. A confession.

FRANCIS

She said there was a *rumour*, of a letter, I bet.

NORA

She did say rumour. But *does* it exist.

Francis slowly pouring a cup of tea.

FRANCIS

Tea?

NORA

Sure.

Nora knows if she has tea she will get more of a story from Francis.

FRANCIS

There was a rumour. And the apple
doesn't fall far from the tree.
Your mother tried to find it.

NORA

She did?

FRANCIS

And she walked past that grave more
times than I can count, too.

NORA

(deep in thought)

My *Mom*.

FRANCIS

She also combed the files in Boston
while she was studying to teach.

NORA

Why Boston?

FRANCIS

Plenty of Newfoundlanders went to
Boston. Telegrams went back and
forth all the time.

NORA

Did they think he escaped there.

FRANCIS

There was talk of it. *Rumours*.

NORA

When I finish school here. I am
going to University in Boston.

Francis looks taken back and distraught, not thinking about
Nora ever leaving.

FRANCIS

Oh, you are, are you? We'll see
about that.

NORA

Well, I can't stay *here*. What would I do?

FRANCIS

(sheepishly)

There's work at the fish plant.
(shows a grin)

Nora sees it's emotional for her Grandmother and gets up to go over and give her a big long hug.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I can't loose you too.

NORA

You won't, I promise, you wont.

17 INT. AIRPORT SEATING AREA - AFTERNOON, FLASH FORWARD

Francis (63) is sitting looking straight ahead out to the runway. NORA (18) walks from the reservations counter, very confident. And sits along side of Francis laying her head on her shoulder.

NORA

I'll be back. Thanksgiving.

FRANCIS

Your Thanksgiving or *my*
Thanksgiving.

NORA

I'll come *here* for both, of course.

Francis pulls her close.

FRANCIS

You'll call. You'll write or send the emails to the library.

NORA

I will.

FRANCIS

You'll come back in one piece.

NORA

I will.

FRANCIS

Cause' I can't loose you too, you know.

NORA

I know. I promise.

FRANCIS

That you *will*. Remember where you're from.

NORA

Where I'm from ... "*no man paves the way for me.*"

FRANCIS

That's right. Don't let that funny Boston accent fool ya. You don't need to rely on a man.

NORA

I can hold open my own doors. Thank you very much!!

Francis laughs with Nora and holds her tight while still sitting down.

FRANCIS

Be off with you. Get out of here now. Your Mother would be proud.

Nora walks backwards blowing kisses. Then turns around and walks through the gate.

Francis looks straight ahead out onto the tarmac, watching Nora get on board the plane,, wiping tears from her eyes.

18 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON, FLASH FORWARD

VIVIAN (26), Nora's Teaching Assistant, and Nora (36) file into her office.

NORA

It's hard to talk about.

VIVIAN

Cause' it happens *ALL* the time.

NORA

True.

VIVIAN

Do you think you can find out who murdered Elfreda?

NORA

Hard to say. I'm going through the archives.

VIVIAN

I can't believe it was someone local. It's so calculated.

NORA

It's kind of a mythology back home.

VIVIAN

The police just dropped the case?

NORA

Pretty much. A small town likes to turn a blind eye. I need *that* letter.

VIVIAN

You do.

19 INT. COFFEE SHOP HOTEL - MORNING

Nora sits having a coffee on her own. She eyes a young woman Zoe (20) who looks like she just snuck in from living outside. Zoe rushes to the table.

ZOE

Hey, you have the password?

NORA

Maybe the waiter has it.

ZOE

Na, he'll just kick me out.

WAITER walks to NORA'S TABLE and glares at Zoe.

NORA

An espresso, please. And?

Zoe looks surprised.

ZOE

Coffee. Black.

(snarky to the waiter)

So, looks like I'll be staying,
after all.

NORA

Another woman killed on campus.

Zoe speaks up.

ZOE

Men hate women.

NORA

Feels like that, at times.

ZOE

And they wonder why we don't report.
Men kill women because they can.

NORA

I won't argue you there.

ZOE

With wild animals there are at least licenses or restrictions... So many women are killed without so much as a fine.

NORA

(smirks, gives a
strange look)

ZOE

You're a lawyer?

NORA

Gender media prof.

ZOE

(laughs hard)
That's a thing?

NORA

Did you see those women march this morning. Outside the conference center.

ZOE

Nah, I slept in. *My class* was cancelled.

NORA

There's always a march. Trigger laws are still getting past. A minor needs parental consent before having an abortion....

ZOE

I was a minor once.

NORA

Yeah, your body, your decision.
If not the men in suits decide.

ZOE

Welcome to our world!!

NORA

There's still hope.

ZOE

Hope. Like free coffee for the couch surfers.

Zoe nods to Nora and downs her coffee.

20

INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Nora and Vivian share an office that looks lived in like a house, with a teakettle, sweaters, and pillows. TV clips are running in the background. Nora points to the screen.

NORA

The personal is still *political*.

VIVIAN

Gloria Steinem.

NORA

Still leading the march.

VIVIAN

When your president thinks 'grab 'em by the pussy' is witty the battle is not over.

NORA

It's far from over.

VIVIAN

He shouldn't have been elected in the first place. He has such bad grammar.

NORA

Here we go. Steinem urges her audience to get rid of the Electoral College vote. Steinem says it best.

VIVIAN

Unless Maya Angelou's poetry is
being belted out.

Vivian starts to sing.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*It's in the click of my heels, the
bend of my hair, the palm of my
hand, the need for my care. Cause',
I'm a woman phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman, that's me.*

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Maya Angelou could read off a milk
carton and sound profound.

NORA

(laughs)

VIVIAN

Angelou's civil rights legacy is the
only reason we have the equal rights
amendment.

NORA

That was the rationale for Ruth
Bader Ginsberg to take on the
senate. 'No discrimination based on
gender, race or marital status'.

VIVIAN

Now, if it was only part of the
constitution.

Vivian reaches into one of the file boxes, pulls out a pink
power pussy hat, and puts it on.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

All these knitted hats, ditched
right after the march.

NORA

Is this what this is? A file box of
ditched Pussy hats?

NORA reaches in and grabs another. Puts it on. Nora laughs.
Vivian changes hats and does fake poses for a portrait.

VIVIAN

Wasn't really about all women and
all races, was it?

NORA

You're right.

VIVIAN

All vulvas aren't pink.

NORA

Knit whatever colour hats you want,
as long as we get rid of that
motherfucker.

VIVIAN

Unraveling knitted pink hats is a
lot easier than melting down AR-15
rifles.

NORA

Never happen. Our president elect
was voted in on this countries love
affair with guns.

VIVIAN

Hashtag #blackgunsmatter.

Nora shakes her head.

21 **INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING**

Nora is sitting on her own in the restaurant scanning the
menu. She sees Zoe eyeing the plates left behind by others
in the restaurant. She mischievously takes a dinner roll
from the plate.

Nora calls out to Zoe and beckons her towards the table where she is dining.

NORA

Join me?

Zoe hesitates but goes into the restaurant. The waiter looks suspicious, as Zoe comes in.

NORA (CONT'D)

(takes Zoe gently by
the arm)

She's with me.

ZOE

How do you know I won't steal
anything?

NORA

Doesn't matter.

ZOE

I'm Zoe.

NORA

Nora. Are you staying around here?

Points to the patio outside.

ZOE

Exactly right here. Sometimes over
there. Wherever.

NORA

Living outside?

ZOE

So, a gender studies prof?

NORA

(stares at Zoe)

Gender inequality in the media,
formerly called *the News*.

ZOE
Nice light topic.

NORA
Do you ever think about taking a
class, even auditing?

ZOE
Me in school? That'll make it *all*
better, right?

NORA
(laughs)
Can't say it really helps, but you
know that.

ZOE
Thin sheets and thick skin.
What could go wrong?

NORA
And your family?

ZOE
They don't think me being homeless
is 'artsy' or "feminist"
I can tell you that much.

NORA
(pause)

ZOE
I don't see my family.

NORA
I'm sorry.

ZOE
What am I? Your case study? Your
date?

NORA
I hate eating alone.

ZOE

So?

NORA

I can see why you think it's pretentious for me to drag you in here.

ZOE

Hey, you're buying dinner. You can dissect me to bits.

NORA

Not what I'm doing. But I get it.

ZOE

No, you don't. You don't get it at all. But that's okay. I'll have prime rib.

NORA

You're leery of those who 'try' to help?

ZOE

Some nights if I'm laying in a *real* bed what difference does it make what they 'try' to do to me.

22 **EXT. WOODED AREA CRIME SCENE OF ELFREDA PIKE, 1870 - MORNING**

Detail of Elfreda lying on the ground behind a large stone
PAN UP to the enormous, tall trees and into the sky.

Original text from Express newspaper 1870 (V.O) audio plays.

NARRATOR

We rejoice to say that Elfreda was a truly good young woman, of Christian parents, her moral character known to be perfectly free from stain. She was a regular attendant at her church.

23 **INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE - MORNING**

VIVIAN and NORA are in the office looking at documents in file boxes and online.

VIVIAN

She's slaughtered and they boast in the newspapers that she is of good moral character? And hasn't been sexually compromised?

NORA

We know how she dies.

VIVIAN

She dies without justice, that's how.

NORA

We don't know *who* she really is.

VIVIAN

'A truly good young woman', left behind a stone to die, according to the newspaper.

NORA

(responds to the
quote)

Her name is *Elfreda*.

VIVIAN

Will your book say who killed her?

NORA

(hesitates)

I'm not sure.

24 **INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - DAY**

Vivian is giving the lecture today, confident, and razor-sharp. Two of the same students speak up SIMONE and HEATHER.

SIMONE

We simply out number them. The panic is on.

VIVIAN

"Me Too" was initially used by sexual harassment survivor and activist Tarana Burke.

SIMONE

Yeah. Because African American women support feminism more than white women...

VIVIAN

And then ... American actress Alyssa Milano posted on Twitter, "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

SIMONE

Yeah. Because influencers *have* to be white.

HEATHER

As long as it stops the violence.

SIMONE

(to Heather)

She kinda ignored what I had to say about white women.

VIVIAN

I'm not ignoring it Simone - we only have to take a further look at Burke or Milano. Investigating #ME Too provides an interesting way into the race divide in feminism.

SIMONE

Meaning?

VIVIAN

The Media dictates how women's murders are told. What they drank. What they wore. The personal has *always* been political!

SIMONE

You mean what she *drank*, and what he *wore* was a police uniform. And it took 6 years for that case to get a sentence in court in this city.

HEATHER

There is a war on women. And now it is open season on *our campus*. *Our* place of work.

VIVIAN

There is a perception that feminism and women's rights are different. Simone has a good point: Milano's and Burke's contexts are completely different. And yes Heather *all* institutions are pervasive.

Vivian speaks over the class as they start to leave before class is ended.

25 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

VIVIAN (26), Nora's Teaching Assistant, and Nora file into her office.

NORA

It's hard to talk about.

VIVIAN

Cause' it happens *ALL* the time.

NORA

True.

VIVIAN

Do you think you can find out who murdered Elfreda?

NORA

Hard to say. I'm going through the archives.

VIVIAN

I can't believe it was someone local. It's so calculated.

NORA

It's kind of a mythology back home.

VIVIAN

The police just dropped the case?

NORA

Pretty much. A small *town* likes to turn a blind eye. I need *that* letter.

Nora and Vivian share a look.

26 INT. AIRPLANE - EVENING, PRESENT DAY

Nora is on a plane to Newfoundland. Close up of her with her head resting and leaning on the window. She is awake and deep in thought.

27 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY PRESENT DAY - AFTERNOON

Vivian is giving the lecture today as part of her intern position while Nora is away.

VIVIAN

Nora is gone to Newfoundland to do research. So, it's just us today, and don't go easy on *me*.

HEATHER

Let me guess, she's looking for Elfreda's murderer.

SIMONE

It's an important story.

VIVIAN

(ignores students)

On screen and in real life, society has barely diverged from the "beware of the deviant woman" script.

SIMONE

FBI data finds that 45 percent of women killed from 2007 to 2020 were killed by an intimate partner while 5 percent of men were killed during the same time period.

HEATHER

One in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the United States has been raped in their lifetime. *My lifetime.*

SIMONE

Our lifetime.

VIVIAN

The danger in statistics is we are shocked. Every murder is an individual, a human life taken.

SIMONE

The play by play of murders of women are not just a news report, it's to keep women in fear.

VIVIAN

Society sees each woman as a gender-wide warning sign. Do we respond with the same horror and shock, just hearing a name?

Vivian stares out to her students in class.

28 INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOME NEWFOUNDLAND - AFTERNOON

Inside Nora's Grandmother's house, she's sitting in an armchair, and Nora's sitting on a small stool at her feet looking up to her Grandmother, Francis. They have tea on a side table.

NORA

I'm back.

FRANCIS

Checking on your grandma?

NORA

Yeah, and I can't resist your stories.

(laughs)

FRANCIS

You can't stop thinking about that murder I told you about?

NORA

I think about Elfreda quite a bit, it's true.

FRANCIS

Horror of a story.

NORA

Her body just laying there until church goers went by. So odd.

FRANCIS

It's so wrong.

NORA

And it's not going away.

FRANCIS

I wouldn't want folks to think that's who we are.

NORA

I'm not saying this town are
murderers.

FRANCIS

It's not like where you're living
now. It was a shock.

NORA

I'm sure a woman's daughter found in
an alley in a big city is also a
shock.

FRANCIS

You read the Express from that time?

NORA

Yes, lots of strange details, like
she wasn't 'compromised'.

FRANCIS

Thanks be to God.

NORA

So, that's a blessing.

FRANCIS

They did god awful things back then
to women.

NORA

Not like this?

FRANCIS

No, and not as common as today.

NORA

And her family?

FRANCIS

They were never right again. They
were church people, see.

NORA

So, in their mind her virtue being
in tact was a blessing.

FRANCIS

She was lead into the woods by the
devil himself.

NORA

He had to have a name. Do you ever
wonder who it was?

FRANCIS

That child's soul wouldn't have a
moments grace, if that's all we
thought of her.

NORA

And *my* mother tried to find out who
did it?

FRANCIS

She did. She went to the museum
just like you and through almost
every attic in this town, thinking
something would show up.

NORA

And nothing.

FRANCIS

That misfit may openly reject God
and embrace evil. But he'll meet
his maker.

NORA

But no justice for Elfreda?

FRANCIS

Not yet.

NORA

You think it can be solved?

FRANCIS

You're a writer. Every story has an ending, my love.

NORA

I know.

FRANCIS

If somebody had only been there to save her.

NORA

I try to save her all the time- in my dreams. I can't stop thinking about her.

FRANCIS

That's not dreaming. Dreaming is hope. Trying to save a murdered woman is poison.

NORA

So, I should stop trying.

FRANCIS

Trying to save Elfreda, will eat you alive.

NORA

There are still so many women murdered.

FRANCIS

Write your book. You won't stop the killings, but you need to do it.

NORA

Why are men who kill above the law?

FRANCIS

I told you they will have their day.

NORA

Judgment day? I don't have your
faith Grandma.

FRANCIS

You must believe in good.

NORA

I would like to come face to face
with these murderers. I need to
know *why*.

FRANCIS

Knowing *why* a man is evil, will *not*
make it go away.

NORA

If only I could let it go.

FRANCIS

Let it go, my love.

Nora leans her head on her Grandmother's lap as she strokes
her hair.

29 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

VIVIAN is still replacing Nora as the intern lecturer but
towards the end of class Nora slips in to the back row, just
back from her trip.

VIVIAN

The manosphere stretches from anti-
feminism remarks in a newspaper
column to extreme misogyny.

SIMONE

The civil rights movement alienated
Southern racists.

VIVIAN

As Chomsky would say, the Nixon team
pretty openly said, "We can pick up
votes by being racist."

HEATHER

Is he still alive? Chomsky?

SIMONE

Yes, Chomsky is always alive. And Nixon is always dead. White women. The patriarchy in skirts.

HEATHER

Let's hope the Republican wives are too old to have kids.

VIVIAN

Turner gives hope, looking at 'betwixt and between' through the realm of pure possibility.

HEATHER

Meaning?

VIVIAN

Turner defined liminal individuals as neither here nor there. They are betwixt and between the positions assigned by law, custom, convention, and ceremony.

SIMONE

Another British colonial dude to learn about?

VIVIAN

Turner and his wife Edith Turner co-authored *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* in 1978, although many forget his wife is an author.

HEATHER

Liminality is a limbo, a period characterized by humility, seclusion, tests, and sexual ambiguity.

SIMONE

Is that what we're calling the war
on women now?

Vivian eyes Nora entering the back of the lecture hall. Nora takes a seat at the back of the class.

VIVIAN

(sees Nora in the
back)

Our students outweigh us again,
Nora...

Vivian walks to the back and Nora and her walk out to the hallway. Nora sees Zoe as she scurries through the door, but she's barely visible, as they get closer.

30 INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

VIVIAN

Who's that?

NORA

The woman I met and took out to
dinner.

Nora rushes through the door and tries to catch up to her but she's gone. Nora walks on ahead up over the stairs to her class.

31 INT. UNIVERSITY COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (MOMENTS LATER)

Vivian rounds the corner of the coffee shop, her head down, scanning her notes. She bangs directly into Zoe without realizing it.

Zoe moves closer to stand directly in front of Vivian, as if to block her. Vivian is startled at first.

VIVIAN

So, that was *you*, I saw run out.

ZOE

I haven't seen *you* around the shelter?

VIVIAN

So you're who Nora is helping out?

ZOE

She's not helping *me*.

VIVIAN

You don't have to be there - at the shelter.

ZOE

You sent your boss to rescue me?

VIVIAN

I had nothing to do with it.

ZOE

She saved you?

VIVIAN

Nobody gets *saved*.

ZOE

What's she get in return?

VIVIAN

(silence)

Nothing. She wants nothing.

ZOE

So, that's it then. This is your institution of choice.

VIVIAN

Being in a shelter wasn't a choice for me.

ZOE

So you've told Nora, then?

VIVIAN

There's no reason. I'm working for her now.

ZOE

She doesn't need to know your past? That you were a victim, like the women she writes about.

VIVIAN

We all heal in different ways. I don't need for people to know my past.

ZOE

And that includes me?

Students start to gather around in the coffee shop and their space is crowded. Zoe lets students slip in between herself and Vivian and she quickly leaves. Vivian looks vacantly off into the crowded room, but Zoe is nowhere to be seen.

32 INT. BOSTON RESTAURANT, 2020 - EVENING

Nora and Vivian are sitting at the same table near the window in the restaurant where Nora took Zoe. They've ordered and food is on the table.

NORA

This is nice. It's about time we did this. I've been working you too hard. Cooped up in that office.

VIVIAN

You mean 'cause we have a tea kettle, blankets and a laundry basket at work, I should worry?
(laughs)

NORA

I guess it's all consuming.
(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)

(glances outside
people on the
streets homeless)

I worry about women on the streets.

VIVIAN

There's a lot to worry about. You know women don't have to be on the street to be murdered.

NORA

True.

VIVIAN

Sometimes the worst guy is the one who tucks you in at night in the fanciest home.

NORA

Including professors. Arrogant pricks.

VIVIAN

All men are on the hit list, huh?

NORA

I hope you're dating a good guy.

VIVIAN

First off, you'd have to hope I'm dating a dude to wish that.

NORA

(completely
humiliated)

So much for my feminist mantra.
Fuck, I have no idea why I assumed.

VIVIAN

We'll blame it on your Grandma's Catholic ways and let you off the hook.

NORA

You're kinder than I deserve. You should just say, fuck you, to make me feel better.

Vivian catches the eye of Zoe walking along outside in the other direction behind Nora's head and out of sight from Nora's view. Zoe makes kissing faces and pushes her two mitten covered hands together like puppets smooching and kissing. Vivian catches Zoe's eye but tries to keep a poker face, not to draw attention to Zoe behind Nora.

VIVIAN

(laughs)

At least we don't *gossip*.

NORA

If we start to gossip that would be trouble. I'll get this.

(picks up the cheque)

33 EXT. CITY STREET OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Nora and Vivian start to walk out of the restaurant and past homeless people lying in the street. Vivian is nervous at first thinking Zoe is still lurking around, but she is long gone.

They take a side street that is remote but still in city center. A young woman walking on her own crosses the street when a man walks toward her. She takes out her phone and pretends to walk up to a house door as a car goes by. When she walks past thick trees and bushes, the woman starts to walk on the road near the curb, to steer clear of the dark bushes.

Nora and Vivian look to each other immediately knowing each move the women is making and why she is doing it.

NORA

Do you think men know all our habits to 'try' and keep us safe.

VIVIAN

Walking out the wrong exit from a subway, then ducking back in to go home in the right direction.

NORA

Working extra hours at the library so you can walk down the staircase with someone at night.

VIVIAN

We found one plus, all those extra hours at the library made you a professor.

NORA

Fuck, such a colossal waste of time all this dancing around men's violence.

VIVIAN

We could have restored clean water for 3rd world countries by now.

NORA

I really didn't think I would see us get less rights as women in my lifetime and I was only born in the 80's.

VIVIAN

Isn't your generation responsible for all this misogynistic gansta shit.

NORA

Hey, I'm only ten years older than you.

VIVIAN

A lot can go wrong in ten years. Remember that year we let a Reality TV star run for president.

NORA

And the same year Handmaids took
over the courtrooms.

VIVIAN

Margaret Atwood could be a little
less *right*.

NORA

*A word after a word after a word is
power.*

VIVIAN

*Don't let the bastards grind you
down.*

NORA

That sounds more like Eminem.

VIVIAN

'White America' is not quite the
same as Time Magazine suggesting the
word "feminist" be banned.

NORA

Poof. Gone.

Vivian and Nora have arrived at the front door to her
apartment building.

VIVIAN

Are you sure you're okay walking?

NORA

My condo is just one more block.
I'll text when I get in.

34 INT. VIVIAN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Vivian opens the front door of her apartment, as she turns
the key she can see the door isn't locked. Cautiously she
stands back, kicks opens the door, but doesn't enter. From
the doorway she can see that Zoe is sitting at her kitchen
table with candles lit in the dark.

She has poured a glass of wine and is in Vivian's bathrobe.

ZOE

I showered. Hope you don't mind.

VIVIAN

(breaths out heavy)

A little late now.

ZOE

I thought I'd give you some hands on research.

VIVIAN

That part of our relationship is over.

ZOE

You afraid if you touch the other side, you'll go back to the other side.

VIVIAN

I wasn't very good at being an addict.

ZOE

Most of us aren't.

VIVIAN

You seem clean- cleaner.

ZOE

Some folks just do drugs because we like drugs, you know.

VIVIAN

Is it too early to ask if it's for good.

ZOE

You gave up asking I believe when you left.

VIVIAN
Hard place to look back.

ZOE
You just *didn't* look back.

VIVIAN
I landed there 'cause I was almost
beaten to death.

ZOE
You didn't choose *us* 'cause your
husband beat you.

VIVIAN
I know.

ZOE
(Pause)

VIVIAN
I couldn't choose *us*, if it meant
not making it. I had to make it.

Zoe gets up to walk towards Vivian intimately. She is
radiant and strong in the candlelight.

ZOE
And now that you've made it ...

Zoe leans in to kiss Vivian and they make out.

35 INT. AIRPLANE NORA'S SEAT - MORNING

Nora is leaning against the window. Eyes are opening and
closing in and out of dozing off asleep.

36 EXT. ELFREDA IN THE WOODS, 1870

Elfreda's long dark hair flows as she gets up off the ground
and walks away through the woods, her wounds disappear in the
morning light and she starts to run without scars or injury
she runs faster and faster through the woods.

37 INT. AIRPLANE NORA'S SEAT - DREAM SEQUENCE

Nora can hear her own Grandma's (V.O) in her dream as they talk while having their cup of tea.

NORA

I try to save her all the time- in my dreams. I can't stop thinking about her.

GRANDMOTHER

That's not dreaming. Dreaming is hope. Trying to save a murdered woman is poison.

NORA

So, I should stop trying?

GRANDMOTHER

Trying to save Elfreda, will eat you alive.

NORA

They're are so many women ...

38 INT. EMERSON UNIVERSITY OFFICE - MORNING

Nora comes back to her office to find Vivian face and eyes into her paperwork.

NORA

How did classes go?

VIVIAN

Let's see we covered mansphere, misogyny, and why black women support feminism.

NORA

You must be a fast talker. Why do black women support feminism?

VIVIAN

Black women do not support feminism.
We support black feminism.

NORA

It's time you devise your lesson
plan then.

VIVIAN

Oh it's in there. Black feminism
upholds that black women give rise
to a particular understanding of
their position in relation to
sexism, class oppression, and
racism. Each concept—being black,
being female—should be considered
independently while knowing that our
identities reinforce one another.

NORA

I sure hope that's *all* going to
happen today.

VIVIAN

Not yet, give me 'til lunchtime. I
just poured my first coffee.

NORA

If anyone can. You can.

39 INT. EMERSON UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Nora and Vivian hear a thunderous parade in the University
hallway. There is a rally en masse, a women's rally.
Placards and students and people from the street.

WOMEN CHANTING 1

Stop the rape! Stop them now...

WOMEN CHANTING 2

Stop the killing!
#Womensrightsarehumanrights

NORA

Another young girl raped in the
stairwell.

VIVIAN

All over the internet, the video, a
badge of fucking honour.

NORA

Might as well be in the classroom.
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

The rally is mainly university students but more women file
in that look weathered and have been on the streets.

WOMEN CHANTING 1

Stop the rapes. Work. School. In
the streets. No more! No more!

The group of women pass by and at the end Nora notices Zoe
and then Vivian also catches her eye. Nora summons Zoe over
and introduces Zoe to Vivian, not knowing they have a
relationship.

NORA

(to Zoe)

I knew we would get you in this
school one way or another.

ZOE

You think it's safer in here. One
of the street kids found the phone.
It can't be traced.

NORA

(introduces Zoe to
Vivian)

Vivian, this is Zoe. The woman I
told you I met for dinner one night.

Vivian and Zoe play it cool. Zoe is coy and Nora just takes
their interaction as flirtatious.

VIVIAN

This march is great.

ZOE

I always try to do what's right.

VIVIAN

Another horrific crime.

Zoe smiling to Vivian in a very personal way.

ZOE

I thought you scholarly types said women could make a difference in here.

Nora picks up on their connection.

NORA

Is Vivian trying to persuade you to go to school, too? You're getting it from all sides.

ZOE

I'm getting it from all sides that's right. Motherfuckers to the right and the left of me.

VIVIAN

(skips a beat to
change the
conversation)

They have to find that bastard.

ZOE

I'd say bastards.

NORA

Only to watch him get a suspension if we fight for it. This fucking administration.

ZOE

You're the administration.

VIVIAN

(defends Nora)

It's not that easy to fight from the inside.

ZOE

Can't help you. I'm not on the inside, now am I?

Zoe does a dance and sways and walks backward as she turns to catch up with the rally.

NORA

She's a hard one to crack, that girl.

VIVIAN

Oh, she knows exactly what she's doing. Trust me.

40 EXT. CITY STREET BOSTON RALLY - AFTERNOON

Zoe and the group continue into the street. Zoe sticks with the crowd of women from the shelter.

LOIS

You seem pretty close with those 'Prof Snobs'.

ZOE

Not really. Just wasting time chatting.

LOIS

You're just doing research like them, I bet. You don't have to be here.

ZOE

If you ask 'members' of society, none of us have to be here.

Zoe makes a quick right off the main street up an alley towards a hanging fire escape ladder.

LOIS

Where're you headed?

ZOE

Becoming a member of society, living
the dream.

Zoe skips with a spring in her gait. Her downtrodden clothes are the only sign she is not on top of the world. STREET GAL, LOIS, can see that Zoe is headed for trouble and headed to where a drug dealer is squatting.

LOIS

Zoe, don't do it. You don't need
it.

ZOE

Not about need, my friend. I want
it.

(gives a demonic
laugh)

41 INT. DRUG DEALER TRAP HOUSE - EVENING

LOIS walks on looking defeated. Zoe climbs the metal stairs and crawls into the window, excited, like a child going to a circus. The space inside is beyond decrepit. There are bodies strewn across the halls and in corners. There is wailing noises coming from the rooms and desperate sounds of sex from those who are conscious. Zoe is barely in through the window and the only sign of real life is a group of 3 men, THUGS, who come up the steps inside and have arranged to meet Zoe. This scene is shot in SILHOUETTE with only AUDIO playing over the footage.

THUG 1

There she is. The infamous Zoe.

THUG 2

Larger than life.

THUG 1

But not larger than *our* life.

ZOE

So, you have what we agreed on?

THUG 1

(to Thug 2)

Did we agree on something for our good friend, Zoe.

THUG 2

We did.

THUG 1

Let's give this upper class bitch, what she came for.

THUGS push Zoe in an empty and scum infested room. In DARK SILHOUETTE without vivid detail. The men assault and have their way with Zoe, and beat her within a breath of her life. SOUNDTRACK is raw and visceral and reveals the horror of the attack.

42 INT. EMERSON UNIVERSITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Nora and Vivian are working late. Both look wiped hanging over stacks of books. Vivian's cell phone rings, it's the hospital. She's the contact number for Zoe with the shelter. Vivian listens while Nora looks on realizing the seriousness of the call.

VIVIAN

(ends the call)

It's Zoe she's in hospital. It's bad.

NORA

Let's go.

43 INT. HOSPITAL ZOE BEDSIDE - NIGHT

Nora sits down just outside the hospital room door. Vivian walks in cautiously to Zoe. Vivian sits on Zoe's bedside and puts her hand on her shoulder, praying for Zoe to come to. Slowly, Zoe's eyes open up.

ZOE
(barely conscious)
This is what it takes to get you by
my bedside.

VIVIAN
(covering tears)
You don't miss a beat.

ZOE
(pause)

VIVIAN
Zoe.
(streams tears)

ZOE
(tears)
I'm sorry.

VIVIAN
It's my fault. I should've been
there for you.

ZOE
There's no *me* left.

VIVIAN
(leans in to Zoe)
Zoe, you're here. You are here.

44 INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nora is still sitting outside Zoe's room. A very distinguished man SENATOR RAMOS starts to walk by Nora. She recognizes him from TV.

SENATOR RAMOS
(callous)
Did she make it this time?

NORA
It's bad. They're keeping a close
watch on her.

SENATOR RAMOS

That girl is testing the good Lords
patience.

NORA

If the Lord is as good as you say,
I'm sure he'll make time for Zoe.

SENATOR RAMOS

Do you work at the shelter?

NORA

No. Do I recognize you from TV
Senator Ramos?

SENATOR RAMOS

Not here, you don't. I'm Zoe's
father.

NORA

Sorry about Zoe, we're worried. My
colleague Vivian is in with her now.

SENATOR RAMOS

Colleague. If it's the same Vivian,
they've been sharing a mattress and
needles for years. This is not my
first near death call...

NORA

Pause.

(tries to pretend she
knows about Vivian
and Zoe)

Vivian comes out of the room completely emotional and shaken
by Zoe's condition. Vivian doesn't have time to collect
herself, and she is face to face with Zoe's father.

VIVIAN

Mr. Ramos.

SENATOR RAMOS

Vivian. I was just speaking with
your colleague.

VIVIAN

It's bad Mr. Ramos.

SENATOR RAMOS

You left her behind for the wolves.

VIVIAN

I tried, Sir.

SENATOR RAMOS

Not hard enough.
(he pushes through
the door to Zoe's
room)

45 INT. VIVIAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Nora has come to check in on Vivian. She has brought her coffee.

VIVIAN

He's right. I didn't try hard
enough.

NORA

What could you do?

VIVIAN

She was there for me, I was flung
out of a car onto to the shelter
steps covered in blood, the hair
barely attached to my head.

NORA

Fuck, Vivian. You never said.

VIVIAN

What's there to say. He was my
husband. Not like he was a wanted
criminal.

NORA

And you never pressed charges.

VIVIAN

No.

(laughs)

Skipped right over that and went straight for heroine. That's how Zoe and I got started, and then it was more than that.

NORA

You loved her.

VIVIAN

Still do. But you don't leave someone you love behind. Not in that living hell.

NORA

You tried.

VIVIAN

Tried. And tried and tried. Then I came to school, took a course, got to take another, then a degree, then your past is less and you don't even know who that person was anymore.

NORA

Did you see her after?

VIVIAN

After you started bringing Zoe around. She came here the other night. We spent the night together.

NORA

Vivian. I'm sorry.

VIVIAN

He's right. Didn't try hard enough. She saved me and I fed her to the wolves.

Vivian breaks down in tears. Nora holds Vivian and tries to console her.

46 INT. HOSPITAL ZOE BEDSIDE - DAY

Nora and Vivian are walking into the hospital room. Zoe is recovering somewhat, her face is healing and she still has a broken arm and half cast on her leg. There are two police officers at the end of Zoe's bed, finishing up their report and leave as Nora and Vivian walk in.

VIVIAN

What did they say?

ZOE

Basically, you got what you deserve, in their new politically correct voice.

NORA

Can your father help, put pressure on them.

ZOE

(to Vivian)

You didn't fill her in. My father is practically why I'm an addict.

NORA

(nods)

Conservative.

ZOE

Religious bootcamp was taken literally for the dear Senator.

VIVIAN

Fuck. You being in there with those fucking monsters kills me.

ZOE

Monsters don't hide.
(broken)

Vivian holds Zoe again and Nora notices they need time and gets ready to leave.

NORA

I'll leave you two alone. I can drop over food to your place, for you both. Same code?

ZOE

We're a we all of a sudden?

VIVIAN

She's right. I want you to come stay with me.

ZOE

I have been broken to shit for the last time. I do need *you*.

VIVIAN

I'm here.

NORA

Anything I can do. I will.

ZOE

Just keep me out of that murder mystery. Got it.

NORA

Fair.

47 INT. VIVIAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Vivian grabs her things to go to class at the University. Zoe is with crutches, dressed, her arm in a sling. Vivian goes around the apartment making sure Zoe has everything she needs, TV remote, phone, coffee.

ZOE

I'm not an invalid.
(she jokes)

VIVIAN

(gives an evil eye
for being silly)

You know how the security works.
You have to buzz anyone in, you can
see them at the front. The
counsellors are coming by, one from
NA, trauma specialist and a case
worker from social assistance.

ZOE

House calls? Is that 'cause of you
and Nora or does someone care I was
almost left for dead.

VIVIAN

It was fucking bad, Zoe. I think
the system may be catching on.

ZOE

I always said social assistance was
a sign of failure. Not sure what I
saw as successful.

VIVIAN

(leans in to kiss Zoe)

Living is succeeding. That's what
were doing. One day...

ZOE

At a time. Got it.

(looks at a text on
her phone)

Fuck the Senator wants to come by.

VIVIAN

He was at the hospital. Maybe it's
time to give him a chance.

ZOE

Nothing more sobering than Dad.

VIVIAN

Use the security camera... okay?

ZOE

Got it.

Vivian blows a kiss good-bye to Zoe. She races down the stairs and off to work at the University.

48 INT. EMERSON UNIVERSITY OFFICE- DAY

Nora is in her office. As she hears Vivian walk towards the door she swings around in her chair abruptly.

NORA

I dropped some food.

VIVIAN

We got it, thanks.

NORA

How is she?

VIVIAN

Holding on. She wants to get sober.
It's a tall order.

NORA

I've been so worried. And the two
of you?

VIVIAN

(chuckles)

Are Zoe and I together now, 'cause
of you? It somehow became a blur.

NORA

And the counsellors?

VIVIAN

On their way over, as well as her
Dad.

NORA

Senator Ramos?

VIVIAN

He's done quite the number on Zoe growing up. He motioned the abortion by parental consent clause because of Zoe's teenage pregnancy.

NORA

For fuck sakes.

VIVIAN

I messaged the therapist to be there for her after he's gone.

NORA

Do you think she'll get through?

VIVIAN

I may be fooling myself, but I do. I think this time she'll make it.

NORA

She will, with you.

(changes topic)

Who's up today? I can head class if it's too much.

VIVIAN

A class about gender politics is just what I need.

NORA

I have to fly out after to Newfoundland for more research. Will you be okay?

VIVIAN

We will. You've done so much.

Vivian gives Nora a hug.

49 EXT. VIVIAN'S APARTMENT STAIRCASE - LATE AFTERNOON

Vivian is rushing up over the stairs and runs directly into Zoe's father Senator Ramos leaving the apartment.

VIVIAN

(startled)

I thought you'd be gone already.

SENATOR RAMOS

I waited for the social workers to be done.

VIVIAN

You haven't upset her, I hope.

SENATOR RAMOS

I offered money.

VIVIAN

Not what she needs.

SENATOR RAMOS

She said. She's choosing this lifestyle?

VIVIAN

And what lifestyle do you mean, the drugs, the abuse, *me*. Or all of it?

SENATOR RAMOS

She needs a way out, Vivian. It seems you've cleaned up your act.

VIVIAN

You may not remember, my act was my husband slamming my head. And your daughter took care of me. I owe her everything.

SENATOR RAMOS

I don't approve of you two together, or even understand it. But if you can keep each other off the street, that's enough. And the offer for money still stands.

VIVIAN

How much does it cost for you to try
and understand?

SENATOR RAMOS

That's what Zoe said. Maybe you're
meant to be together.

VIVIAN

Maybe.

Senator Ramos continues down over the stairs. Vivian cautiously enters the apartment. Zoe is at the table, two placemats are set, candles are lit. There is a box of cheerios on the table.

ZOE

Come join me.

VIVIAN

Hell of a day?

ZOE

Hell of a big fucking day? I spent
all day making dinner, too.

VIVIAN

(laughs looks down at
her cereal)

The milk jug is a nice touch.

Vivian puts her hand on Zoe's.

ZOE

Cereal for supper is a good sign.

VIVIAN

I know.

50 INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOME NEWFOUNDLAND - AFTERNOON

Francis (81) and Nora (36) are sitting at the table for tea.

FRANCIS

You were only ten when your mother
and father were killed.

NORA

And you've been pouring my tea every
since.

FRANCIS

I had to catch up quick to raise a
feisty young child like yourself.

NORA

I should've stayed.

FRANCIS

You took after your mother, you
wanted school and that was that.

NORA

I didn't give you a say?

FRANCIS

You've *made* something of yourself.
A *professor*.

NORA

For what's good its done.

FRANCIS

If I'd known you would leave I'd
made you work at the fish plant.
(laughs)

NORA

I'd probably be better off, can't
say this book is going anywhere.

FRANCIS

It'll come to you. Why don't you
take a walk around the town. I'll
have supper on for you when you get
back.

51 EXT. WOODS HARBOUR GRACE - DAY

Nora takes a long walk, at first she is just hiking. She knows every nook and cranny, every square inch of woods and exactly what rock that Efreda was killed by. The rock is marked now, as if it's a draw for tourists.

She walks through the woods past the rock going through the motions as she has done many times and then continues on up over the hill outside in the schoolyard.

In a big grassy meadow Nora lies down, resting, but as always Efreda is not far from her thoughts. With the voices of young children on the playground in the background, Nora lies there.

52 EXT. HARBOUR GRACE MUSEUM - DAY

Nora continues to walk through town, along the road and stops into the museum, where the MUSEUM GUIDE, TORI, cheerfully greets her.

53 INT. HARBOUR GRACE MUSEUM - PRESENT DAY

TORI

Hello again, Nora.

NORA

Nice day.

TORI

Back for more research.

NORA

You know me too well.

TORI

The coin purse is still on display.
I kept an eye out for the letter you mentioned, and asked around but nothing came up.

The Museum Guide's boyfriend comes in and she is distracted, they laugh and carry on and hang out closer to the back door.

Wind blows through the museum and Nora takes the beaded coin purse from the display case, cautiously eyeing the back door. Nora holds the coin purse tight in the palms of her hands knowing it is the last thing Elfreda held. \She holds it as if by her will alone she can make the man suffer who horrifically slaughtered Elfreda.

54 INT. CLASSROOM EMERSON UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

Vivian reads from the original Express newspaper article of Elfreda's murder in 1870.

VIVIAN
(original text from
Express newspaper
1870)

The head wounds alone were sufficient to destroy life. He drags the body into the road--and there he cut the throat across from ear to ear - right back to the spine and as if intent on severing the head. The spine at the right end of the wound is marked by five distinct cuts of a sharp instrument.

CLOSE UP SHOT pans over Elfreda's hair and silhouette.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
(pause)

I would like to remind you of the launch of Nora's book *Elfreda*, tonight. It's already received great reviews. You're all welcome and there'll be a reception.

Students leave the auditorium.

55 EXT. WOODED CRIME SCENE OF ELFREDA - NIGHT

NARRATOR voice plays over footage of the murder scene. Elfreda stands erect walking through the trees, translucent, and powerful. Excerpt from 1870 paper.

NARRATOR

Crowds of people followed thither,
and there indeed was seen the body
of a girl dead, murdered,
slaughtered by the hand of some
miscerant, devil incarnate, monster
of blood, seeking with savage
butchery the life of his deliberate
victim.

56 **INT. BOOK LAUNCH READING - EVENING**

Nora reads excerpt from her book. Nora (36) and Vivian (26),
and Zoe are there with students lining the walls and the
room is filled for the book launch. Nora's grandmother is in
the audience and Nora becomes emotional, thanking her.

NORA

*They looked for Elfreda's killer.
The records claimed the case was
closed. A young woman was killed.
Justice was denied. A young woman's
life denied.*

NORA (CONT'D)

*50 years later in 1920, Constable
Furey, investigator of Elfreda's
murder...*

VIVIAN

(quietly)

She found the letter...

NORA

*... Writes a letter from his deathbed
to the citizens of Harbour Grace
confessing to the murder of the
young 16-year-old Elfreda... "I
killed her. ... I killed her. And
you never suspect.*

NORA (CONT'D)

*You never suspect. A woman's life
denied. Justice denied.*

NORA (CONT'D)

Suspect. *We* doubt the genuineness
of women. Doubt the truth of ...
women.

NORA (CONT'D)

Remember her name, her name is
Elfreda...(quieter voice, pause)

NORA (CONT'D)

Thank you to my assistant Vivian and
my students... and my *Grandmother.*

57 EXT. WOODED CRIME SCENE OF ELFREDA - NIGHT

NARRATOR voice plays over footage of the murder scene.
Elfreda stands erect walking through the trees, translucent,
and powerful. Excerpt from 1870 paper.

NARRATOR

Every face one meets bespeaks a
saddened spirit; every sound has a
tone of melancholy; and every eye
reflects the deep sorrow, or the
longing aspiration that justice
shall be satisfied.

NARRATOR

"In the midst of life we are in
death. Nothing should be left
undone publicly or privately, to
discover the murderer. Justice
would best be satisfied were the
regular process of trial then to be
executed on the spot where he so
brutally murdered his innocent
victim. Notorious in his deed of
savagery.

58 INT. EMERSON UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM, AFTERNOON

ZOE (40) is a professor in front of the class and is strong
and confident. Nora (56) and Vivian (46) sit at the back of
the classroom.

Zoe shows film clips of men politicians speaking against women's rights and then footage of women's marches and rallies in 2020 in North America. Women's voices becoming stronger and stronger at the rallies.

ZOE

(Zoe is holding a book in her hand *Elfreda* by Nora Wilson)

STUDENT

It's not like that at all now.

ZOE

I know, my dear. I know...

59 **INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM- AFTERNOON**

V.O Nora and Vivian. Nora and Vivian sit back-on in a silhouette in the lecture hall chairs looking toward Zoe.

NORA

See sometimes the stars do align.

VIVIAN

Oh, you mean when we mold the stars, carve them from granite, and pour sweat and blood to shape them.

NORA

Yea, and then push each one up into the sky with almighty force and demon like strength.

VIVIAN

So they line up perfectly and sparkle for all women to see.

NORA/VIVIAN

(they laugh)

Yeah, just like that.

A sea of pink pussy hats float across the screen and are interwoven with Nora and Vivian twirling in soft focus wearing pussy hats and dancing. The image of Elfreda walking tall and taller through the woods in a translucent image rises above the woods and into the sky.

THE END.