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*Lower Broad: A Feature-Length Screenplay Examining the Representation of Women in
Country Music*

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Abstract

Lower Broad: A Feature-Length Screenplay Examining the Representation of Women in Country Music

By Erika MacArthur

In an age where forward progress is assumed to be the norm, this script aims to call attention to the worsening representation of women within the country music industry while pulling inspiration from dark comedies and whodunits. Since the late 2000s, “bro country” has caused a deterioration in the depiction of women in country music songs and the industry as a whole. *Lower Broad* is a feature-length murder mystery that addresses this underdiscussed fact by highlighting the struggles of aspiring female singers that must overcome the obstacles perpetuated by an increasingly misogynistic industry.

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LOWER BROAD

Written by

Erika MacArthur

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE

Colorful stage lights. Pyrotechnics. A man in a red plaid shirt, blue jeans, and a guitar around his neck. He has a packed crowd in the palm of his hand.

He is BENTLEY CHASE 35, annoyingly charming. Good looking in the way many people would dispute, kind of like when Blake Shelton won Sexiest Man of the Year.

He speaks and sings with a trademark masculine southern drawl.

A final burst of flames and smoke accompanied by a guitar riff marks the end of Bentley's first song.

BENTLEY
Nashville, are y'all ready to party
tonight?

The crowd shrieks in response.

EXT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - SAME

A young woman watches from the dark wings of the theater. Her arms crossed and a scowl on her face. She is MADISON WEST, 24 year old college dropout with no patience for this type of music.

The drummer pounds two notes of a basic beat. The crowd recognizes it and cheers in anticipation. Bentley begins another typical "bro country" song. Something straight out of a Luke Bryan album.

BENTLEY
(singing)
She looked pretty standing there
alone, but she rolled her eyes when
she saw my beer --

Madison rolls her eyes.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
(singing)
I remembered right then and there,
that's why, trucks are easy, girls
are hard.

Madison throws her arms up. Looks behind her at the backstage crew. Nobody else seems phased.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE

A brief, energetic interlude.

The guitar player walks to the front of the stage while Bentley takes 2 steps back. He bops around to the beat.

BENTLEY

(singing)

But when I saw her looking at me
with those eyes, I thought good
lord --

He is cut off by A BODY falling from the fly tower and landing inches from where he stands. We can't see the person's face, but we can hear the sound of skull splitting open against the wooden stage. It pierces through the upbeat country music.

Blood splatters across Bentley's jeans and guitar.

BACKSTAGE

Madison staggers backwards. The crew behind her is frozen in shock. The music cuts out. The fans scream in horror and scatter to flee.

Bentley stares down at the body. Shocked.

INT. JEN'S BAR - DAY

A dusty Nashville bar with morning sunlight shining through the windows.

An aspiring musician sings and plays guitar on a barely raised stage. She is talented and giving it her all in front of a small and apathetic crowd.

The singer is MADISON WEST, the same woman from Bentley's concert. She has plenty of raw talent and nothing to show for it. The only thing she's lacking is a country accent.

Her song she sings is a well crafted, scathing criticism of the misogyny of Nashville. The content of "Girl in a Country Song" meets the sound of "Merry Go 'Round".

MADISON

(singing)

I'm not one to complain, but I've
been fed up for a minute. Don't
tell me how to act, don't tell me
how to think.

MADISON (CONT'D)

(singing)

I'm sick and tired of dealing with
all these stupid rules.

She's got the passion and the voice, and yet all she finishes to is a scattering of lackluster applause. She rolls her eyes. Mutters into the microphone.

MADISON (CONT'D)

That was called Stupid Rules, I'm
Madison West. Thank you.

There is one patron who SCREAMS and CHEERS for Madison. She is SHAWN MEYERS, 23 and the embodiment of Southern hospitality.

Next to Shawn is LEO CARTER (30), cold and judgmental. He watches silently as Madison steps down from the stage. Both Shawn and Leo have plates of scrambled eggs and bacon in front of them.

SHAWN

That was great, Maddy. You sounded amazing. I am so glad I convinced you to try out that song!

MADISON

I am going to kill myself.

SHAWN

What? Don't say that. Why? That was good.

MADISON

Shawn, c'mon. Look at this place.
Look at these people --

She is cut off by a SCREAMING BACHELORETTE PARTY stumbling into the bar.

BRIDE TO BE

Nashville has never seen five bad
bitches like us!

Leo checks his watch. They're already blackout drunk at 9 AM.

MADISON

And then try to tell me my show was good.

Shawn nods towards the still screaming bachelorettes.

SHAWN

At least you finished before they came in.

MADISON

Are you kidding? I wish they'd gotten here earlier, I do my best work in front of drunk bachelorettes. They can't get enough of me, actually.

The Bride to Be stumbles towards Madison, grabs her chin and locks eyes.

BRIDE TO BE

You are the prettiest girl I have ever seen.

Madison turns back to Shawn. The Bride leaves.

MADISON

See?

SHAWN

You know places like this are just part of the process.

Shawn offers an optimistic smile. Madison gives her a "yeah whatever" look.

MADISON

Not for you though, right?

LEO

Don't you think that song is a little cynical?

MADISON

That's kind of what I was going for.

LEO

You were going for a song that everyone hates? That's a weird business plan.

MADISON

Just because you got a job managing bookings for a bar doesn't mean you know what you're talking about.

A MALE SINGER in his early 20s gets on stage to sing next.

MALE SINGER

All right, let's turn this place up
a little bit.

He shotguns a beer and tosses it into a now eager crowd. His first song is a cover of Luke Bryan's "All my Friends Say". The crowd cheers in recognition.

LEO

Look, they like that guy.

MADISON

Of course they do, everyone loves a
good looking frat bro --

LEO

(confused)

You think he's good looking?

SHAWN

Definitely. I'd do him.

She giggles. Madison smiles a bit. Leo deflates and looks back at the singer. We get the sense he's comparing himself to the man on stage.

MADISON

It doesn't mean he's talented, and
it sure as hell doesn't mean he
should get famous before I do.

LEO

Anything to avoid admitting that
you're just unlikable I guess.

Shawn rushes to change the subject, knowing this will get heated if she doesn't.

SHAWN

(to Madison)

Hey, how's your apartment? You
gotten that lock fixed yet?

MADISON

Maintenance said they'd have to
charge me 70 dollars because it
counts as them "changing the
locks."

SHAWN

Maybe you should just pay it.
Aren't you worried someone will
steal your stuff?

MADISON

If they want the couch we found on the side of the road they can have it I guess.

SHAWN

What if someone sneaks in and tries to hurt you? You aren't worried about that?

MADISON

Should I be?

SHAWN

Yes! I would.

MADISON

Well luckily you live in a nice apartment with nice neighbors and don't have to worry about that.

SHAWN

At least Dylan is there to protect you.

Madison bursts out laughing.

MADISON

Sure, all 5'8 of him.

JEN FRANCIS, the intimidating 50 year old owner of the bar, signals to Madison and points at her watch.

Madison gets up from the table and slips behind the bar. She pulls her shirt off, standing out in the open in only a bra, completely unashamed. She pulls on her black waitressing T-shirt.

Shawn laughs at this while Leo rolls his eyes.

She returns to the table with a new, upbeat voice. Her customer service voice.

MADISON (CONT'D)

(to Leo)

How's the food?

LEO

The dive bar scrambled eggs? Shitty.

MADISON

Great!

He holds his plate out for her to take. She grabs it and begins clearing the rest of their table.

LEO
How are you allowed to do...

He motions to her shirt.

LEO (CONT'D)
That out in the open?

Madison drops the waitress voice.

MADISON
Well I work for tips so flashing customers is encouraged actually.

LEO
Right.

She leaves with the plates.

LEO (CONT'D)
(to Shawn)
Can we go?

SHAWN
You need to be nicer to her.

LEO
I'll work on it.

Shawn throws a couple of 20s on the table for the food.

EXT. LOWER BROADWAY - DAY

Shawn and Leo walk along the sidewalk past iconic bars and restaurants named after famous musicians.

LEO
I just don't get why you like her.
She's unbearable.

SHAWN
She's only unbearable because you don't have a sense of humor. She's my best friend you know.

LEO
Which I don't get. Your career is starting to take off and you still waste time going to her sad little open mics, and for what?

They turn a corner and enter a parking garage.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The structure is nearly empty and dimly lit.

SHAWN

You wouldn't understand even if I told you.

LEO

What, you feel guilty about what we did?

Beat of silence.

LEO (CONT'D)

She had every opportunity to make it big and failed, can't blame you for being better.

SHAWN

Her songs are good. She'll blow up eventually.

LEO

I'll believe it when I see it.

They get further into the dark garage.

LEO (CONT'D)

So, do you have plans this weekend?

SHAWN

This is starting to sound like you asking me out again.

LEO

Would you say yes?

They reach Shawn's car. They are completely isolated in this section of the garage.

SHAWN

No. I've already told you it's a bad idea.

LEO

But why? You'd get a bunch of great song material if you were dating somebody.

She laughs at this before getting in her car and pulling off.

From out of her back windshield we see Leo watching her leave for an uncomfortable amount of time. Doesn't blink even once. Just a creepy, intense stare.

INT. SHAWN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shawn cleans an already immaculate apartment. The space is modern, bright, and beautifully decorated. It looks like an ad for Restoration Hardware.

While she's wiping down a counter, her phone rings. An unknown Nashville number on the screen. She puts it on speaker as she walks to her couch.

SHAWN

Hello?

INT. LINDSAY'S OFFICE/INT. SHAWN'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

On the other end is LINDSAY MOORE (late 30s). A successful and overly ambitious talent agent sitting in a large office with glass doors and a view over Nashville.

Papers and open folders litter her desk. She speaks on her cell phone as a landline rings in the background.

LINDSAY

Hi, Shawn? This is Lindsay Moore with WME Nashville.

SHAWN

Hi! What can I do for you?

LINDSAY

I represent Bentley Chase and as you may have heard, he is performing at Bridgestone the next two nights as part of his North American tour, and our opener for tonight got sick with strep. We saw some tape from your performance at the...

Brief pause as she checks her notes. She plays the hesitation off smoothly.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Tin Roof, and liked what we heard.

SHAWN

Tape? There's tape of me performing there? Who filmed it?

LINDSAY
(patience wavering)
Not important.

An ASSISTANT slides into the office. He makes a series of increasingly absurd gestures to indicate his message while remaining silent.

He rolls his hands to indicate speeding up. Uses his fingers to mimic a phone conversation. Then frantically gestures towards the elevator.

Somehow, Lindsay understands and waves him off.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)
Anyway, Bentley would love to have you open for him tonight if you're able to make it down.

Shawn gasps.

SHAWN
Bentley Chase knows who I am?

LINDSAY
Hm? Oh, yes, of course. You were at the top of our list.

She glances down at her list of names. There are about 5 crossed out before Shawn's name appears.

SHAWN
Oh my God. Wow.

LINDSAY
Does that mean you're free tonight or not?

SHAWN
Of course! I'm... speechless. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

LINDSAY
Great. So we'll need you to arrive by 3 PM for sound checks. I'll send over a few backstage passes if there's anyone that would come support you. I'm sure you'll put on quite the show. See you soon.

SHAWN
Bye! Thank y --

She checks her phone. Realizes the call is already over.
Remains unfazed regardless.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
(ecstatic)
Oh my God.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

A dim hallway with cracked paint and dingy apartment doors. Madison, still in her work clothes with a backpack on one shoulder, approaches the apartment labeled 307.

The door is slightly ajar, enough to see the light inside.

She pushes it open without using a key. The lock that had been balancing precariously in the door falls to the floor.

Madison groans in a way that indicates this isn't the first time this has happened. She kicks it on her way in.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The inside isn't much better than the hallway. Furniture that doesn't match. Old heavy windows. The type of place that is filled to the brim with Asbestos.

Madison goes straight to the fridge. Pulls out a Brita.

A voice cuts through the dark living room behind her.

MITCHELL
How was work?

Madison JUMPS and drops the Brita. Filtered water spills all over the floor.

MADISON
Jesus!

She turns to see her grandfather and mentor MITCHELL WEST, 70, a man who leans into his weathered appearance. He sits on her couch, next to her roommate DYLAN TURNER (23). Dylan smokes a joint.

A scattered mess of notebook paper litters the living room. Many crumpled up. Song lyrics on all of them.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Grandpa! You scared the shit out of me. How'd you get in here?

MITCHELL
Your locks broken, I just walked
in.

MADISON
Would you be able to fix that by
the way?

MITCHELL
Sure.

Dylan passes Mitchell the joint.

MADISON
You both realize that's not normal,
right?

Both Mitchell and Dylan shrug in unison.

MADISON (CONT'D)
(to Mitchell)
What made you decide to stop by
today?

MITCHELL
Because I missed you. You haven't
come by to see me in a while.

MADISON
I've been busy. I bombed again
today.

MITCHELL
What'd you sing?

MADISON
I tried that new original one for
the first time. Nobody listened.
And the people that did hated it.

MITCHELL
Which one?

She gestures towards all the paper.

MADISON
One of these. Take your pick. It
doesn't matter.

MITCHELL
I'm going to try to get you a spot
at my buddy Todd's bar. This crowd
isn't working for you.

MADISON
Are you sure it's the crowd?

MITCHELL
Sweetheart --

Dylan coughs profusely.

DYLAN
Shit. Oh my God. Sorry

Mitchell glances at him and smirks.

MITCHELL
You need to give yourself more
credit --

Madison's phone rings. She holds a finger up to Mitchell
before answering.

MADISON
(into phone)
Hey, what's up?

INT. SHAWN'S APARTMENT/INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

Shawn is still on her couch after her call with Lindsay.

SHAWN
You will never believe who just
called me.

MADISON
Who?

SHAWN
Lindsay Moore!

MADISON
Am I supposed to know who that is?

SHAWN
She's an agent with WME. She wants
me to open for Bentley Chase!

MADISON
No fucking way.

Madison listens to Shawn on the other line.

DYLAN
(to Mitchell)
Did you hear about that little girl
who was kidnapped on her way home
from school?

MITCHELL
That's awful.

DYLAN
No I know. Plus if they don't find
her in 24 hours, she'll probably be
dead.

MITCHELL
What?

DYLAN
Statistically, I mean. Police need
to solve this type of thing in 24
hours, or else, y'know.

MITCHELL
Okay. Thanks, Dylan.

Luckily, Madison finishing her call gives Mitchell something
else to focus on.

MADISON
Yep, I'll be there. Can't wait.

She hangs up.

MITCHELL
Was that good news? Did someone
just book you?

MADISON
No. That was Shawn. She's opening
for Bentley Chase at Bridgestone
tonight.

MITCHELL
That guy is ruining the entire
genre. That is not real country
music.

MADISON
I know, right. Misogynistic
bastard.

MITCHELL
Catchy though. Definitely catchy.

MADISON
Are you serious?

MITCHELL
Hey, talent is talent.

MADISON
He is *not* talented!

Mitchell holds his hands up in surrender.

MITCHELL
Sorry, sorry.

MADISON
Well now I have free tickets and
backstage passes so do you wanna
go?

MITCHELL
I'd love to!

MADISON
Dylan?

DYLAN
Free concert? Sure, why not.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Shawn has just finished her soundcheck. The band and
backstage crew mill around.

Lindsay approaches Shawn, looking as stern as ever.

LINDSAY
Hey, Shawn, rehearsal sounded
great. Just one thing, why didn't
you sing that original you did at
Tin Roof, "Men Out Here"?

SHAWN
Oh, uh... I just don't think it'll
play good to this crowd.

LINDSAY
I hear you. I'm still gonna need
you to do it though.

Shawn starts to panic a bit.

SHAWN

Are you sure? I have so many other songs --

LINDSAY

Bentley's been getting some heat recently for "objectifying women" in his music. Between you and me, I think people these days are way too sensitive, but either way, your song will help to prove he isn't an asshole. I already had the band add it, so not a lot of room for change here.

SHAWN

Ok, I can do that.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE - NIGHT

Shawn on stage in front of a packed crowd. She is crushing it. People are cheering, looking her up on Spotify, the whole 9 yards.

She sings a fiery, fast-paced song. Reminiscent of Miranda Lambert's "Mama's Broken Heart".

The song wraps up. She takes a moment to address the crowd.

SHAWN

Thank y'all so much. I still can't believe I get the chance to do this. It's an absolute dream come true.

The crowd screams.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

The next song is one that I --

She hesitates. Glances towards where we see Madison, Dylan, and Mitchell watching, then over to where Lindsay is standing, arms crossed, observing the performance.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

That I'm very passionate about.

More cheering from the audience as Shawn begins her performance.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS - SAME

The intro drum kick is familiar. It's the same song Madison sang at the open mic.

SHAWN

It's called Stupid Rules.

Madison's expression changes from jealous to furious.

MADISON

Are you shitting me!

Dylan and Mitchell recognize it too. They look back and forth at Madison and each other, not sure what to do.

Madison stands from her seat and storms towards the backstage entrance.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE - LATER

Shawn finishes her performance. She extends her arms out to the crowd in a "thank you" pose as the stage lights hit her perfectly.

She is thrilled with her performance and the fans are too.

SHAWN

Thank you so much, Nashville!

One last bow before she runs off stage.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Shawn makes her way through the backstage area. An onslaught of people hug her and slap her on the back.

Lindsay stands on the other end of the room. She makes eye contact with Shawn, gives her a thumbs up and a nod. Shawn smiles wide. She'll take it.

A tap on her shoulder gets her to spin around. She is met by Bentley, holding a bouquet of flowers.

BENTLEY

I just wanted to say
congratulations. These are for you.
My little way of congratulating my
new openers.

Shawn's breath gets stuck in her throat.

SHAWN

Thank you.

He is pulled away by his team to prepare for his show.

Time begins to SKIP like we're watching a buffering replay of the night's events. The sound of high pitched ringing interrupts a lot of the sounds.

We see BRIEF FLASHES of the remaining scenes from that night.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE

Shawn in an argument with someone we can't see.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - SHAWN'S DRESSING ROOM

Shawn returning to her dressing room. She collapses onto a couch and cries.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLY SYSTEM

An ominous view of the dark and narrow fly tower above the stage.

The ringing increases until it becomes too loud to hear anything else and the images become blurred.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE - LATER

Shawn stands on the stage looking at down at her own DEAD BODY. She shrugs.

SHAWN

That's all I remember. Just bits
and pieces.

She is talking to the young DEPUTY PAXTON OSWEILER (mid 20s), dressed in his police uniform.

He looks down at Shawn's body. Sprawled out. Head split open. Pieces of her skull scattered around. Blood and brains covering the wooden stage.

Paxton continues to stare, more affected than someone would expect a police officer to be.

He is interrupted by DETECTIVE VINCE HAGEL, a weathered detective in his early 50s, calling to him. He wears street clothes except for a badge tucked into his waistband.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Are you helping me or not?

Paxton looks back to where Shawn was standing. She's gone.
Only a figment of his imagination.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS

The rows of padded seats where the audience sat are still
there. Madison sits in the one seat that is turned out to
face the aisle.

Hagel and Osweiler stand over her. Her eyes are red from
crying.

Madison looks back and forth between them. The contrast in
their clothing is odd.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
So...

He looks to Hagel for reassurance.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (CONT'D)
What happened?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
He means why don't you walk us
through everything you remember?

MADISON
I was standing backstage, watching
Bentley sing, and that's when Shawn
fell down onto the stage. It all
happened so...

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BENTLEY'S PERFORMANCE - FLASHBACK

A SPED UP REPLAY of Shawn's body plummeting to the floor from
Madison's perspective.

Madison staggers back, stunned. Just about everyone in the
arena screams and panics.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - END FLASHBACK

Her eyes remain down towards the floor.

MADISON
Quick.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
Were you backstage the entire
night?

MADISON
No, I started in some seats,
reserved for family and friends
Shawn said.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
And at what point did you go
backstage?

MADISON
After Shawn opened.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Why?

MADISON
Uh...

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - FLASHBACK

Madison storms across the backstage area in a rage. She blows
past Lindsay, who talks to someone on her cellphone.

MADISON
I'm going to fucking kill that
bitch!

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS - END FLASHBACK

MADISON
I was -- I just needed to talk to
her about her performance.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
To congratulate her?

Hagel glares at him for helping.

MADISON
I'd use the word... debrief.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Ok, I'm tired of this. When's the
last time you saw Shawn before the
concert tonight?

MADISON
This morning.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Then you need to start from there.

Madison tosses her hands up.

MADISON

It's not even worth telling. I performed in front of another shitty crowd --

DEPUTY OSWEILER

What time was this?

MADISON

Like 9 AM.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

I didn't know the open mics started that early.

She glares at him.

MADISON

They do. Anyway, Shawn lied about it being good, like she always does. And then a bachelorette party came in. They said...

INT. JEN'S BAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Madison's voice speaks in sync with the Bride to Be's as we re-live the party overtaking the bar.

MADISON (V.O.)

Nashville has never seen five bad bitches like us.

BRIDE TO BE

Nashville has never seen five bad bitches like us!

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS - END FLASHBACK

MADISON

But it has. Like everyday.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

You were right, this wasn't worth telling. Fast forward, please.

MADISON

Uhh let's see. Leo was an asshole, as usual. Then I went home and --

There is commotion coming from the stage.

STAGEHAND

Check... check...

MADISON

Are they doing fucking sound checks
right now?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Yeah they said they need to check
everything for tomorrow nights
show.

A large CONFETTI CANNON sprays confetti across the empty
seats.

The BANG startles Madison but not Hagel, who remains stoic as
ever, even with confetti raining down on the three of them.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

And reset all the machines.

MADISON

They're doing another show
tomorrow?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

I guess.

MADISON

How is that even allowed?

Hagel shrugs.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

No law against it. Continue,
please.

Madison hesitates.

MADISON

I, uh... Then I had to start my
shift, I work at the same bar I
normally perform at, which sucks, I
know. Shawn and Leo left when I
started working.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

This would be...

He flips through his notepad.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

Leonard Carter?

Madison almost laughs.

MADISON
Leonard? Is that his full name?

Hagel coldly stare back at her.

Madison clears her throat, transitioning back to serious mode.

MADISON (CONT'D)
But yes, that's him. He's a goddamn
creep.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
And why's that?

DEPUTY OSWEILER
What'd he do?

Hagel shoots an annoyed side eye at Osweiler. Madison looks back and forth between the two of them, not sure which to address with her answer.

MADISON
He would constantly bug Shawn to go
out with him. Wouldn't take no for
an answer.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
And she brought him around anyway?

MADISON
They're old friends or something.
Plus he's responsible for booking
the shows at one of the major bars.
Basically she'd tolerate him as
long as he helped her career.

Hagel nods. Finishes writing a note.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS

Mitchell's turn in the interrogation chair. He looks annoyed and tired.

Hagel checks his notes.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
So, Mr. Mitchell West, you're
related to Madison then?

MITCHELL
I'm her grandfather. When can I go
home? I need to feed my dog.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Soon. How close was your
granddaughter with the deceased?

MITCHELL
Pretty close, they were together
almost everyday.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
So did you know her?

MITCHELL
A bit.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
What did you think of her music?

Mitchell pauses. Thinks for a second.

MITCHELL
Not as good as Madison's.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
Aw that's sweet.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS

Dylan enters and sits in front of Hagel and Osweiler. His hands in the pocket of his hoodie. He almost seems excited to be there.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Hi Dylan, thanks for sticking
around. You came here with Madison,
correct?

DYLAN
That's right.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
We understand she was close with
Shawn. How well did you know her?

DYLAN
She came around the apartment and
hung out with Madison a lot, but I
wouldn't say we were friends.

He removes his hands from his pocket and knocks his phone out with them. He shimmies his phone into the cushion of the seat. The officers don't seem to notice.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Did you notice anything suspicious?

DYLAN

Nope. Hey, were there any finger prints at the scene?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Are you a Bentley Chase fan?

DYLAN

Not really. Any signs of sexual assault?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

We aren't going to tell you any of that. So why'd you come? If you weren't a fan and weren't close to Shawn.

DYLAN

Free concert, man. Doesn't get much sicker than that. What're the odds this is serial?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

You can go back to the holding area now.

He pulls a business card out of his pocket.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

If you think of anything else, give me a call.

Dylan's eyes light up. Hagel pulls it back before he can grab it.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

Pertaining to this case only.

He hands the card over. The last thing we see as Dylan leaves is his phone wedged in the seat.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE

Madison sits on the ground with her back against an equipment case. Her eyes are bloodshot. She watches Dylan return to the backstage area.

He slides down next to her. Pulls his AirPods case out of his pocket.

DYLAN
Put this in your ear.

MADISON
What? Why?

DYLAN
I left my phone out there so we
could listen to the interrogation
with these.

MADISON
Really?

She slides one into her ear.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Why'd you bring AirPods to a
concert?

DYLAN
Incase it sucked, shh.

He enables the "Live Listen" feature on his phone.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE

Lindsay next up for interrogations. She radiates impatience,
maybe even indifference.

LINDSAY
What's with the different outfits?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
He was on duty doing crowd control,
and I was in the audience with my
14 year old daughter. Now we're
both working.

LINDSAY
Ok. Why am I here?

DEPUTY OSWEILER
We're bringing everyone who had
backstage access in.

LINDSAY
I know that, jackass. You have us
all together back there. Does that
mean we're all suspects?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Should you be?

LINDSAY

Why would I kill the girl? I was planning on representing her. Murder isn't a very sustainable business plan.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Do you have this intent to sign her in writing?

LINDSAY

You know what? I think I'll wait until I have a lawyer to help me deal with all this.

She confidently strides out. The sound of her heels echo through the otherwise silent arena.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

(to Hagel)

I wonder why more of them don't do that.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS - SAME

Madison and Dylan are impressed by Lindsay's confidence.

DYLAN

(muttering)

Smart.

Dylan pulls a ziplock baggy out of his back pocket. It contains a single gummy. He pops it into his mouth.

MADISON

You are not doing an edible right now.

DYLAN

Yes I am.

MADISON

Dylan.

DYLAN

What? It helps me focus.

Leo walks towards the stage entrance. Dylan nods towards him.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

This one should be interesting.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS

Leo sits on the chair. An unreadable, blank look on his face.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
So you were backstage for the
entire show?

LEO
Yes, I wanted to be one of the
first to congratulate Shawn.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
Were you two together?

LEO
Oh no. No I -- no. We weren't.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
(baiting)
Not your type?

LEO
Huh? No it's not that, I just --
she wasn't...wasn't my type yeah.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Right, I get it. Her teeth were
kinda messed up.

LEO
(too quickly)
No they --

He catches himself. Hagel raises his eyebrows, satisfied at Leo taking the bait.

LEO (CONT'D)
I mean I never really paid that
close of attention to them.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - SAME

Madison and Dylan look at each other and roll their eyes. A silent agreement that Leo is the worst.

They keep listening.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (V.O.)
So you were backstage, waiting to
congratulate her, and never got the
chance. What happened?

LEO (V.O.)

She got swarmed as soon as she came off stage. Everyone wanted to talk to her. Bentley. That agent lady. Then right before I got my chance Madison came up from behind me and started screaming at her.

Madison and Dylan share an "oh shit" look.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (V.O.)

Did you happen to hear what they were saying?

LEO (V.O.)

Not really. As she passed me I caught the words --

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - FLASHBACK

A replay of Madison storming towards Shawn.

LEO (V.O.)

I'm going to fucking kill that bitch.

MADISON

I'm going to fucking kill that bitch!

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS - END FLASHBACK

DETECTIVE HAGEL

But you have no idea what that could be about?

LEO

Well...

Leo acts like he's debating whether or not to reveal the information he has.

LEO (CONT'D)

Shawn did sing one of Madison's songs during her performance. Without asking.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

How did you know it was Madison's song?

Leo hesitates ever so slightly.

LEO

I heard her do it at an open mic.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
And how do you know Shawn didn't
have her permission?

Another brief pause.

LEO
I mean... What else would they have
to fight about?

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE

Dylan turns to Madison.

DYLAN
You told them about Shawn stealing
your song right?

MADISON
No! I didn't want to look
suspicious.

DYLAN
Dude, that's super sketch.

MADISON
Am I gonna be a suspect now?

DYLAN
If I were listening to the podcast
about this murder I'd think it was
you.

MADISON
There's not gonna be a podcast.

DYLAN
There's definitely gonna be a
podcast.

MADISON
Shit why didn't I tell them?

DYLAN
Don't freak out about it. Maybe
it'll be fine.

A commotion from backstage draws their attention. It's Bentley, throwing a fit. He is surrounded by his team. Lawyers, PR people, Lindsay.

BENTLEY

How are they allowed to keep me here.

LINDSAY

Everyone got held for questioning.

BENTLEY

But I was on stage when it happened. Her blood is still on my damn pants!

His primary lawyer, DENNIS GREENE (60), speaks up.

DENNIS

Just don't say anything, and you should be fine.

BENTLEY

Why are y'all acting like I have something to hide? I didn't do anything.

DENNIS

We know. So talking as little as possible will help establish that.

The lawyer guides Bentley out. Madison and Dylan crank the volume on his phone WAY UP.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - FLOOR SEATS

Bentley on the chair. His lawyer standing next to him.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Thanks for sticking around Mr. Chase. We'll try to make this quick.

BENTLEY

I just can't believe anyone would do something like this.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

We know. But is there anything you can think of? Did anyone backstage seem off to you? Angry? Jealous?

Bentley looks to Dennis for approval, he nods for Bentley to continue.

BENTLEY

Not really.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Well what did you think of the song Shawn sang during her opener. It was very... anti-masculinity. Seemed a bit strange given the type of songs you write.

BENTLEY

Oh, I didn't mind. I'm trying to change my image a bit. Plus, she obviously ran the whole set list by us first.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

She did?

BENTLEY

Yes sir, you think I'd let an opener go out there without knowing their setlist first?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

She asked your permission to sing that specific song?

BENTLEY

Yes.

Hagel and Osweiler share a knowing glance. The first time they've been in tune all night

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

(off their look)

What is so weird about that?

DEPUTY OSWEILER

Well that song... it wasn't hers.

BENTLEY

What?

Osweiler is nearly jumping with excitement that he gets to do a big reveal.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

She stole it.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Madison, the friend, it was her song.

BENTLEY

Really?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Mm.

BENTLEY

Wow. I didn't know that.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

So she asked permission to sing a song that wasn't hers?

BENTLEY

I guess so.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Ok, thank you. That'll be all.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

And congrats on the CMAs, by the way.

Hagel gives him an icy stare. Bentley smiles.

BENTLEY

Thanks, man. Have a good one y'all.

LATER

After Bentley has left, Hagel and Osweiler sit facing each other. They speak in hushed, but audible, tones.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

It doesn't seem like anyone saw much.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

The Madison girl did it.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

What? Are you sure?

Hagel glares at Osweiler who cautiously continues.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (CONT'D)

Would she really kill her best friend over one song?

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - SAME

Madison's eyes go wide.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (V.O.)
Lots have killed for less. She had
the motive, the opportunity, it all
adds up.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (V.O.)
So that's it? We just arrest her
and move on?

DETECTIVE HAGEL (V.O.)
We don't have enough to charge her
yet. We need a confession or more
physical evidence. I'll keep you
posted.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (V.O.)
Wait, I don't get to help with the
investigation?

DETECTIVE HAGEL (V.O.)
We'll see.

Madison is on the verge of a panic attack. Dylan removes the
AirPod from her ear.

DYLAN
Duuude. That sucks.

MADISON
What do I do?

DYLAN
Hey calm down, calm down. They said
they don't have enough evidence for
an arrest.

MADISON
They said not yet.

DYLAN
But you didn't do anything so they
aren't going to find any evidence.

MADISON
Innocent people go to jail all the
time!

DYLAN
Shit, yeah that's true.

Bentley and some of his team emerge from his dressing room.

Dylan and Madison straighten up, a stiff attempt at playing
it cool.

Madison and Bentley lock eyes for what seems like forever.
Finally, he smiles and walks off.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
You saw that too right?

MADISON
Yep. Can we go?

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A dejected and shell shocked Madison walks down the hall.
Dylan next to her, deep in thought.

DYLAN
How hard would it to recite a song
from memory if you only heard it
once?

MADISON
I don't know, probably pretty hard.
Why?

DYLAN
Then how'd Shawn steal it if you'd
only performed it for the first
time today?

They reach the broken door. Madison pushes it open. As soon
as she does she freezes. Realizations hits.

MADISON
God damn it!

She storms into the apartment and tears through every piece
of paper in the living room.

Dylan follows.

MADISON (CONT'D)
That bitch!

DYLAN
What happened?

MADISON
She knew about our lock so she
stuck in here and stole my song.

DYLAN
(doubtful)
That's a little insane.

MADISON
This whole thing is insane.

DYLAN
Fair.

Madison throws herself onto the couch. Cries into a pillow.
The TV is on in the background.

MADISON
God, I am so screwed!

DYLAN
Stay there.

He heads straight into his room. Then returns a moment later,
holding notecards and a spool of red thread.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
I have been dying to use these.

She glances at him.

MADISON
No, you can save the conspiracy
theory starter kit for someone
else.

DYLAN
It's not a conspiracy theory.
Someone murdered Shawn, someone
that isn't you, but you're being
blamed for it.

MADISON
You said yourself that there won't
be enough evidence to arrest me. I
should just trust the system, let
them clear this up.

Dylan ignores her and begins scribbling names across the
notecards.

"LEO", "LINDSAY", "BENTLEY", "MITCHELL", "MADISON", "DYLAN"
all the suspects names listed on a card.

MADISON (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

DYLAN
Setting up.

He pins the cards to the wall using thumbtacks.

MADISON

What if this is an omen? Maybe I should've never pursued music. I could use this as an opportunity to go back to school, get a degree and a real career.

Dylan has finished putting the cards up.

DYLAN

Sure you can go back to school. There's still the impending murder charge to worry about though.

MADISON

What're we gonna do? Solve a murder using the evidence we don't have and arrest the guy ourselves?

DYLAN

Hand our findings over to the police. Or your lawyer, whoever is more receptive I guess.

MADISON

The police will figure this out. They have to.

The TV channel rolls over into the next program. It is TMZ (or equivalent).

The very first story they report on is Shawn's death. One of the anchors sits at his desk and explains what info they have.

TMZ ANCHOR

By now, word of a gruesome death at a country music concert has spread around the country.

The group laughs at the clever use of "country" twice.

TMZ ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Our sources are confirming it is a murder, and actually, we're the first news source to be able to report a name. We're told the police are looking into aspiring singer Madison West as a suspect.

Madison springs up from the couch and moves closer to the TV.

A new TMZ reporter chimes in.

TMZ REPORTER

We looked at her Instagram, she has like no followers. She is private though, so we don't have a picture just yet.

Madison sighs in relief.

MADISON

Thank God.

TMZ REPORTER 2

You guys think it was an act of jealousy?

TMZ ANCHOR

I mean, if my account was that lame, I'd kill someone too.

The group laughs again.

MADISON

I have like 2,000 followers, bitch!

Dylan still stands by the board. She turns to him.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Ok, I'm in.

DYLAN

Yes!

She crosses the room to join him at the detective wall.

MADISON

So where do we start?

DYLAN

I think we should start with a profile.

MADISON

You watch too many crime shows. But okay, what type of person would want to kill Shawn?

DYLAN

I dunno. I can't do all the work.

MADISON

You haven't done any work! You pinned notecards to a wall.

DYLAN

Exactly.

MADISON

Ok so whoever killed Shawn had to be...

She pauses to think.

DYLAN

Angry.

MADISON

Can you stop for two seconds? They must've been charming or trustworthy, since they got her up to the fly tower somehow. Who would you be least afraid of?

DYLAN

Uh, Grandpa Mitchell, probably.

MADISON

Can we not accuse my grandfather of killing my best friend?

DYLAN

Sorry, you asked I answered.

MADISON

What about Leo? She knew him, felt comfortable around him. I knew he was a creep.

DYLAN

How would he have talked her up there?

MADISON

I don't know, by saying something like --

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Leo knocks on Shawn's dressing room door, cracks it open a bit.

LEO

Hey, I found the best place to watch the concert. Away from all this craziness.

MADISON (V.O.)
And when he got her up there...

Leo and Shawn looking down at the concert from the fly tower.

MADISON (V.O.)
He pushed her for rejecting him.

Leo SHOVES Shawn. Watches as she cracks her head on the stage.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

Dylan looks skeptical.

DYLAN
When's the last time she rejected him?

MADISON
Probably that morning knowing how obsessed he was with her.

DYLAN
Seems too easy. It's never the first guy you suspect.

MADISON
Ok, so who do you think is the most likely suspect.

He eyes her.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Someone that isn't me or my grandfather!

DYLAN
You two are suspicious! I'm sorry!

MADISON
How many 70 year old killers do you know?

DYLAN
Personally? Potentially one.
(off Madison's look)
Sorry. Leo is definitely sketchy, but I think that Moore lady had something to do with it.

MADISON
The talent agent? No way.

DYLAN

That woman is a stone cold killer.
You can see it in the way she
walks.

MADISON

What does that even mean? Why would
she kill the next big thing that
she had first dibs at signing.

DYLAN

Convenient alibi, isn't it? Why
kill someone who could make you
money.

MADISON

Pretty much.

DYLAN

But we heard Bentley say he's going
through a rebrand right now. Why
rebrand if you're doing well? And
if he isn't doing well, then
neither is his agent.

MADISON

So how does killing someone help?

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Lindsay, on the night of the concert, watching the
interaction between Bentley and Shawn after her performance.

She glares at him.

DYLAN (V.O.)

Frame Bentley, dump him as a
client, move on to someone more
successful.

Lindsay watches as Bentley moves on towards the stage.

MADISON (V.O.)

Except Bentley is the only person
that 4,000 people saw not do it.
Pretty shitty person to frame.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

Madison's logic ruins Dylan's imagined version of events.

Dylan looks downtrodden.

DYLAN
This is hard.

He tosses the spool of red string back and forth in his hands as they study the wall.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - DAWN

The sun has begun to come up.

Dylan is on the couch asleep. Madison, now with a beer in her hand, agonizes over the notecards which are completely filled out and connected to each other with the red string from earlier.

An alarm goes off on her phone. Dylan doesn't stir.

She snaps her fingers in his face. He jolts awake.

DYLAN
I'm up! I'm up.

MADISON
I gotta go to work. Can we finish this later?

DYLAN
They're still making you come in? Don't you get any time to mourn?

MADISON
Are you gonna cover my half of the rent this month?

DYLAN
Come to think of it, maybe you should work a double.

MADISON
What're you gonna do while I'm gone?

DYLAN
I dunno, look for clues?

MADISON
(doubtful)
Yeah, ok. Let me know how that goes.

INT. JEN'S BAR - DAY

Madison, now in her black work t-shirt, pours champagne and orange juice into two champagne flutes and hands them to a couple sitting at the bar.

DUKE GREINER, barely 21, gets on the stage. He wears a tank top that shows the tattoo sleeves on both of his arms and diamond earrings in both ears.

He starts his set. A fusion of rap and country that catches Madison's attention. Kane Brown, Sam Hunt type of vibes. Something like "Hard to Forget" or "Memory".

DUKE

(singing)

I drive fast and I still can't
escape the memories. I move away
and I'll never forget. There's only
so many ways I can try to run away,
my family can't compare to how
they're supposed to be in the rest
of these songs.

Jen drops a tray of glassware in front of Madison.

JEN

Help me put these away.

They start to stack the glasses where they belong. Madison nods towards the stage.

MADISON

He's good.

JEN

They all sound the same to me.

MADISON

You hate country music but chose to
open a bar here.

JEN

Can't beat the profits. But look
who's talking, the most cynical
girl in the industry.

LATER

Duke finishes. Madison claps and watches him slide up to the bar.

DUKE

How much is a vodka soda?

MADISON

Six bucks.

DUKE

Can I get one of those?

She starts pouring the drink.

MADISON

I liked your set.

DUKE

Oh, thanks.

MADISON

Not a lot of people play with sounds like that.

DUKE

Oh, yeah. I'm more of a hip hop fan than country, which always felt a little racist to me.

MADISON

Well you're half right. Racist *and* sexist.

He laughs.

DUKE

Only problem is I can't rap to save my life and I was cursed with this Mississippi accent, so I figured I'd come out here and give it a shot.

She slides him his drink. He tries to hand her cash, she waves him off.

MADISON

It's on the house.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Dylan is still on the couch, eating handfuls of sour gummies. He taps through Instagram stories. He lands on Leo's, who posted an excessive amount of photos from backstage.

DYLAN

Clout chaser.

Dylan passes through them quickly before moving on to the next person. But something stops him and causes him to swipe back to Leo's story.

He squints at what appears to be an ordinary picture of the backstage crew, lifting equipment cases, taping down cables. He screenshots it and zooms in. Leo added a time stamp to it, 9:15 PM.

Upon further inspection, Dylan sees a woman, peeking out from behind a long black curtain.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Who is that?

He texts Madison the zoomed in screenshot with the message "who is this??"

No more than 15 seconds later, his phone rings with a call from her.

INT. JEN'S BAR - INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

Madison wipes down the bar with one hand while holding her phone to her ear with the other.

DYLAN

Hey.

MADISON

Hey, that's Ava Barnaut.

DYLAN

Am I supposed to know who that is?

MADISON

The singer that normally opens for Bentley. Where'd you get that creepy picture of her?

DYLAN

That was on Leo's Instagram story from last night.

MADISON

What? That was taken backstage?

DYLAN

Mhm.

MADISON

She was supposed to be sick, that was the whole reason Shawn got to do her thing.

DYLAN

Ohh drama! Did she look sick in that picture? I can't tell.

He zooms in even further on Ava's face.

MADISON

No? Look sick how?

DYLAN

I don't know, any paleness, sweats, maybe red eyes?

MADISON

Are you asking me if she showed up to a concert with Ebola? No, she looked fine. Why didn't the police question her?

DYLAN

It looks like she didn't want anyone knowing she was there. This rules! She's gotta be our new lead suspect right?

MADISON

Probably.

Dylan grabs a notecard and moves to the wall/board combo.

He scribbles Ava's name on it and the word "SKETCHY" before pinning it up.

A middle aged man in a cowboy hat tries to flag Madison down. He looks like a DAVE.

DAVE

Hey mama, lemme get a drink real fast!

She grimaces at him and gestures towards her phone.

DYLAN

Who was that?

MADISON

Some asshole, don't worry about it.
Can you tell what time that picture
was taken?

DYLAN

9:15. Leo puts the time on all of
his stories.

MADISON

Right. 9:15. So, that gives 15
minutes where she could have --

Dylan cuts her off.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

QUICK FLASHES showing the events as he talks.

DYLAN (V.O.)

Snuck up to the fly tower --

Ava, using a hoodie to cover her face, climbs up to the fly
system.

DYLAN (V.O.)

Waited for Shawn to come up, pushed
her off --

Ava's hooded figure sharply shoving Shawn.

CLOSE ON MADISON watching the death of her friend.

DYLAN (V.O.)

Walked back down, and escaped
during all of the chaos?

INT. JEN'S BAR/INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

BACK WITH Dylan in the apartment. Madison at work

DYLAN

I bet she found a way to tell Shawn
to come to the tower for a duet
with Bentley. They do that at
concerts, right? Come down from the
ceiling and shit?

She doesn't respond once he finishes his explanation.
Instead, she stares off into the distance. A traumatized look
on her face with her mind somewhere else.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
How does that sound? Pretty
impressive right?

THE SOUND of bone FRACTURING against wood repeats again.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Yo!

Madison snaps out of it.

MADISON
Sorry. Yeah you nailed it.
Probably.

DYLAN
So what now?

MADISON
We have to --

Dave pounds his hand on the bar.

DAVE
Either get me a rum and Coke or get
me your manager.

She snatches a liquor bottle and a glass. Pours both ingredients but goes noticeably light on the rum. Shoves it towards him.

MADISON
We have to go talk to Ava.

DYLAN
Talk to a murderer? I don't think
so.

MADISON
Then I'll do it, but I also think
one of us should go to...

She lowers her voice.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Bentley's show tonight.

DYLAN
Okay... why?

MADISON

(whispering)

Hang around backstage, look for clues, listen to what people are saying. I dunno.

DYLAN

How do you expect to get us backstage again?

MADISON

I'm pretty sure we could just flash the same backstage pass. Security wasn't exactly tight.

DYLAN

Ok, I'd rather do that one.

MADISON

Wanna flip for it?

DYLAN

Sure, do you have a coin?

She pops the cash register open and fishes a quarter out.

MADISON

Yep.

(whispering)

Heads murderer, tails trespassing. What do you want?

DYLAN

Heads.

She flips the coin. It lands on heads.

MADISON

It's heads.

DYLAN

Damn it.

MADISON

I get off in 20 then I'll do my half.

DYLAN

Sounds good. Good luck.

MADISON

You too, don't get killed.

Madison hangs up.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is empty. Madison, now in jeans and a fresh t-shirt, studies the wall of suspects.

The door BURSTS open, startling her.

In strides a man wearing a button down shirt and suit pants. He is obviously pissed about something, and he looks a lot like Madison.

He is MICHAEL WEST (45), Madison's no nonsense father.

Madison turns to see who barged in, and her expression shows that she was NOT expecting him.

MADISON

Dad?

MICHAEL

Madison Marie, you've better start explaining what's going on here.

MADISON

Uh...

MICHAEL

Did you kill someone? Tell me now if you did.

MADISON

No! Are you serious, you think that little of me?

MICHAEL

I woke up this morning to a million texts and calls, all about how you're being investigated for a murder at some concert.

MADISON

You don't understand --

MICHAEL

You wouldn't be in this mess if you didn't drop out of Vanderbilt.

MADISON

That was three years ago, you need to move on.

MICHAEL

This is all your grandfather's fault.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

He's been putting this stupid idea
in your head since you were a kid.

MADISON

He helped me more than you ever
did.

MICHAEL

He's a 70 year old man living in a
trailer, Madison. You might want to
find a new role model.

He points to the investigation wall (which, to be fair, does
look a little crazy).

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And what the hell is all this?

MADISON

I'm trying to figure out who
actually did it.

MICHAEL

You're only making yourself look
more guilty.

MADISON

Okay, well I need to do something!
You weren't there, you don't know
how hard this has been.

Then... the door opens again. This time Mitchell walks in,
he's in a much better mood than his son is.

MITCHELL

Helloo!

Mitchell sees his son.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Uh oh.

Michael turns to face him.

MICHAEL

Oh perfect! You stop by to ruin my
daughter's life more than you
already have?

MITCHELL

Uh... I wasn't planning on it.

MADISON

Dad, stop.

MICHAEL

You destroyed our family with your stupid pipe dream, and now you're trying to destroy mine too.

MITCHELL

Michael, I'm sorry. I never meant for your childhood to go the way that it did.

MICHAEL

(to Madison)

You like living like this? In this apartment starving your 20s away?

MADISON

Not like you ever cared.

MICHAEL

Wow, ok. Good to see you're still acting like this.

He leaves in a fury.

Mitchell and Madison are left in uncomfortable silence.

MITCHELL

Sheesh. That was intense. You good?

MADISON

Fine. Where have you been?

MITCHELL

Sleeping. Those damn cops kept me up past my bedtime last night. I have some good news for you though.

He takes a seat right in front of the suspect wall.

MADISON

You aren't gonna ask about what's going on behind you?

He glances up at it. Shrugs.

MITCHELL

I just figured Dylan was playing again.

MADISON

Playing? He isn't six.

MITCHELL

So what is it then?

MADISON

I'm just the prime suspect in Shawn's murder case so we're trying to figure out who actually did it before I go to prison, that's all.

MITCHELL

Is that why your dad called me a bunch of times?

MADISON

Probably. You didn't answer?

MITCHELL

No, I was sleeping, remember? Anyway, I'm sure you'll get it figured out. Wanna hear the good news?

MADISON

Sure, grandpa. What is it?

MITCHELL

My buddy, the one that owns a bar, I sent him one of your recordings, and he loved it. He wants to book you for a paid gig today.

MADISON

Holy shit!

She runs to him and hugs him.

MADISON (CONT'D)

This the best news ever!

Slight beat as they hug. Then...

MADISON (CONT'D)

Is it messed up to perform the day after my friend died?

MITCHELL

Nah. If you aren't hustling to get ahead, you're falling behind.

MADISON

Right. And Shawn would have wanted this for me, right?

MITCHELL

Exactly! You should head over there now, there's paperwork to sign and stuff.

She lets out a squeal of excitement and hugs him again.

EXT. AVA'S HOUSE - DAY

Dylan stands at the edge of a driveway leading up to a small, well kept house.

He checks a handwritten note that reads AVA BARNAUT 1225 WESTWOOD DRIVE against the house number visible from the driveway.

This is definitely Ava's.

He walks towards the porch, but hesitates. Instead, he stares at it for a while, taking a series of deep, calming breaths.

He finally walks up to the front door. There are several days of packages and spam mail not yet brought inside.

He knocks gently on the door.

No answer. He waits a while, then knocks again. Still no answer.

DYLAN
Hello? Anyone home?

Pause. No answer.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
Ms. Barnaut? Are you home?

The abandoned packages catch his attention. He tests the door to see if it's unlocked. As he twists the knob, it creaks open in that spooky way doors do in horror movies.

This stops him in his tracks.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Be brave, Dylan. Be brave and hope
they don't have a gun.

He creeps inside.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The house is dark but there's enough sunlight coming through the blinds for Dylan to see.

DYLAN
 (calling out)
 Hello?

No sign of life downstairs. He realizes he's going to have to go upstairs, he whimpers a little at the thought.

But he goes. Slowly, doing that crouch walk cops do on TV. He even has his arms down, his hands form a finger gun.

UPSTAIRS

The upstairs is small. Just one hallway with several doors along it. He moves to the first door and YANKS it open. It's just a linen closet.

He closes in on a second door further down the hall. Pulls it open. Suspense is high until we see that it's... another linen closet. What? TWO linen closets on the same floor?

Ok... on to another door. The tension has dissipated at this point because of all the linen closets.

He opens the third door nonchalantly. But as soon as he opens it we see AVA'S LIFELESS BODY HANGING FROM THE CEILING FAN.

DYLAN
 Holy shit!

He STUMBLES BACK and FALLS so he lies in the doorway, looking up at her corpse.

He gets up and scurries away from the door. He is in over his head here.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 I need you to get over to 1225 Westwood, it's an emergency. I'll explain everything later, just please hurry. And bring an ambulance.

He hangs up and slowly enters her...

BEDROOM

And moves towards Ava's hanging corpse. He reaches out to check her pulse while scooting the rest of his body away from her corpse, making the whole process harder than it needs to be.

When he finally touches her, he flinches and yanks his hand back. Her body sways from the contact.

He takes a few deep breaths, then tries again. He feels no pulse. She's dead.

He scoots past Ava to do some detective work on her bedroom. Except once he's further inside, he just looks around, totally lost on where to begin.

He wanders around the room, glancing on top of shelves and under furniture like he's half-assing an Easter egg hunt.

He doesn't find much. He peeks in the trashcan next to her bed and almost moves on, until he second guesses himself and looks again.

The corner of a golden piece of foil sticks out near the top of the can. This sparks something in him. He dumps the trash onto the floor and uses his foot to search through it until he finds A USED CONDOM.

Next, he dumps the laundry on the floor and rummages through it. Nothing.

He moves to her bedside table. Goes to open one of the drawers, thinks better of using his barehand, and covers his hand with his sleeve before opening it. The drawer is filled with vibrators, condoms, lube, and other sex toys. Whoops. He slams it shut.

On top of the dresser is a GOLD CHAIN. He recognizes that chain. Stares at it for a moment.

INT. LEO'S APARTMENT - DAY

A typical bachelor apartment with minimal furniture. Leo sits on his couch in the dark. The only light is some sunlight shining through plastic blinds.

He drinks cheap vodka straight from the bottle and scrolls through pictures on his phone. They are all of him and Shawn. Some of just Shawn alone.

An alarm labeled "WORK" goes off on his phone. He silences it before finishing the bottle.

INT. NASHVILLE BAR - DAY

Madison waits nervously at the side of a stage. This bar is new. More crowded with an audience that actually wants to hear music.

A talented older man is on stage, he sings throwback songs while casually lounging on a bar stool.

He finishes, the crowd gives a generous amount of applause. Madison claps too, genuinely impressed. But now it's her turn to go. She climbs the stairs and flinches a little at the stage light being shined in her face.

She sings the same anti-industry song from her previous open mic. The same song Shawn stole. The song that might've gotten Shawn murdered.

EXT. AVA'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME

A car pulls into Ava's driveway. Dylan waits on the porch and waves as it pulls up. DETECTIVE HAGEL steps out and approaches Dylan. He does not look happy.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

I have lots of questions that you better start answering.

DYLAN

For sure. Right after we have this figured out.

Dylan moves inside, Hagel reluctantly follows.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hagel eyes the interior, still unsure of why he's here.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Whose house is this?

DYLAN

C'mon.

Dylan bounds up the stairs, taking them two at a time.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

(to himself)

Son of a bitch.

Hagel follows at a slower pace, sort of like a parent trailing their much too eager kid.

UPSTAIRS

He reaches the top and sees Dylan waiting outside of the third door. He walks towards him.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
I said, whose house is --

He reaches the bedroom and turns to see Ava, still HANGING from the fan.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)
Jesus!

DYLAN
I know!

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Who is that?

DYLAN
That's Ava Barnaut.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
You left her hanging like that?

DYLAN
Well, yeah. I didn't want to disturb the crime scene. Right?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
You didn't even try to help her?

DYLAN
She was dead when I got here. I checked. It was like, the second, no, third thing I did.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
What were the first two?

DYLAN
I freaked out and fell, then I called you, then I checked her pulse.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
(suspicious)
Right.

They stand facing each other right in front of the doorway. Ava's lifeless corpse hangs in the background of their conversation.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)
You still have a lot to explain. Why are you snooping around her house in the first place?

He hesitates. He knows the answer will get him in trouble.

DYLAN

Madison and I may have taken it upon ourselves to investigate Shawn's murder a little bit.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

You crime obsessed freaks piss me off. You think you can do my job better than me just because you can figure out who the killer is on Law and Order?

DYLAN

Ava Barnaut was at the concert the night Shawn died. She was sneaking around, you never got to question her. That's totally suspicious.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

It might be, if she didn't obviously kill herself.

DYLAN

I'm not convinced that this is a suicide.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

(fed up)
What?

DYLAN

Come look at this. I think you'll be impressed.

He leads Hagel into the...

BEDROOM

Where they both scoot past the hanging body. Dylan leads Hagel to the trash can he was inspecting earlier.

He motions to the condom in the bin.

DYLAN

Look at that.

Hagel stares at the condom then gives Dylan the most PISSED OFF GLARE imaginable.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

What am I looking at?

DYLAN

It's a condom.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

I know it's a condom you idiot, why should I care.

DYLAN

It's sitting on top of the trash, meaning it was used recently. Which has to mean someone was in here with Ava just before she died, most likely right after the concert where Shawn was killed.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

That's a stretch.

DYLAN

Maybe. But then there's this.

He motions to the bedside table with the gold chain on it.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

That's a man's chain. My guess is that it's from the same guy Ava slept with, and I'd bet that guy is our killer. What do you think?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

I think you could've told me all that without making me look at a used condom.

DYLAN

But that part was important.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Alright, I've seen enough.

Hagel roughly slaps his hand on Dylan's shoulder and spins him around before forcing his wrists into handcuffs.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

I'm taking you into custody.

DYLAN

Wait, what? I didn't do this!

INT. NASHVILLE BAR - DAY - SAME

Madison finishes her set to a chorus of applause. She beams as she steps down from the stage.

As she's packing up her guitar, Leo comes up behind her, drunk. He stumbles into her, almost knocking her over. He slurs his speech.

LEO
Madison.

MADISON
Jesus, are you drunk?

LEO
Bit weird to perform the day after
your friend died, isn't it?

MADISON
I can't really afford not to.

LEO
How the hell did you get booked
here?

MADISON
My grandpa's friend, your boss,
owns the place.

LEO
(loudly)
Madison West. That's the girl from
TMZ right? The murderer?

MADISON
Shhh, shut up asshole.

He gives her a smug grin.

LEO
Isn't it crazy that they got your
name somehow?

Her face drops.

MADISON
You didn't.

LEO
Unfortunately, the bar can't risk
the liability of having you perform
here, so we're gonna have to cancel
the other shows we booked you for.

MADISON
What? But I just killed up there!

LEO

Not the only place you killed, huh?

He gives her a degrading smile and walks away.

EXT. NASHVILLE BAR - DAY

Madison storms out of the bar, fighting back tears.

Her phone rings, she answers it without breaking stride or looking at who is calling.

MADISON

Hello?

JANELLE

Hi, is this Madison West?

MADISON

Yeah?

JANELLE

My name is Janelle Booker, I'm a nurse at Vanderbilt Medical Center. I'm calling on behalf of your grandfather, unfortunately he fell and broke his hip. He's going to be fine, but he would like to see you.

MADISON

Jesus Christ, this is not what I need right now.

JANELLE

Right, well he'll be in surgery tomorrow so it's best you come now.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Grandpa Mitchell lies in a hospital bed. He has a few stitches over his eyebrow. He flips through boring TV stations.

Madison enters.

MITCHELL

Hey there she is!

MADISON

What happened?

MITCHELL

I fell and my old fragile bones
couldn't take it, I guess.

MADISON

Fell how? You live in a trailer,
there are no stairs.

MITCHELL

I tripped over the damn dog, that's
how.

MADISON

Does dad know what happened? Is he
coming?

Mitchell laughs sarcastically.

MITCHELL

No, best not to bother him with
these things. The injury was
traumatic enough.

She sits down next to him.

MADISON

How're you feeling? Are you in
pain?

MITCHELL

No no, they gave me morphine, I'm
the happiest I've been in years.

She laughs and rolls her eyes.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dylan rests his head on the metal interrogation room table.

The door opens and Hagel and Osweiler walk in.

DYLAN

I want a lawyer.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Hello Dylan.

DYLAN

Hi. I want a lawyer, please.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

You remember Deputy Osweiler,
right?

DYLAN

Mhm.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

So, you're a smart kid. You know how this looks for you.

Dylan looks back at him.

DETECTIVE HAGEL (CONT'D)

What you say to us now will mean a lot for your future, Dylan. So why don't you start with how you knew to look inside Ava's house?

DYLAN

Did you know that in Tennessee you have to give me a phone call before booking me? Tennessee code 40-7-106(b).

DETECTIVE HAGEL

I knew that, how did you know that?

DYLAN

I read.

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME

MITCHELL

How'd your show go?

MADISON

It was great. Until Leo fired me.

MITCHELL

What!

MADISON

Yeah, it would've been nice if you let me know he's responsible for the bookings there.

MITCHELL

I'm going to talk to Todd, that's not right. He'll fix it.

MADISON

It's whatever, I kind of have bigger things to worry about at the moment.

MITCHELL

You're still stressed about this police thing? That'll be old news by tomorrow. Monday at the latest.

MADISON

I wish I could be as zen as you, but it's tough when you're being framed for murder.

Her cellphone rings.

MADISON (CONT'D)

God, what now?

She answers it.

INT. POLICE STATION/INT. HOSPITAL - INTERCUT

Dylan holds the police station phone in his hand. Detective Hagel looms over him.

DYLAN

Hey dude, got some bad news. The cops brought me in for questioning about Ava.

MADISON

What! What happened at Ava's?

DYLAN

I found her hanging from her ceiling fan.

MADISON

She's dead?

(whispering)

But she was our main suspect.

DYLAN

I know, I know.

MADISON

Why didn't you call a lawyer?

DYLAN

I don't know any lawyers! Who do you think I am?

MADISON

Well I can't afford to get you one or bail you out, so I'm not sure why you used your one call on me.

DYLAN

You know one person who might be able to help...

MADISON

Oh no. Not him. Please.

Dylan glances over his shoulder at Hagel.

DYLAN

You maybe wanna reconsider that? Try to put aside your differences to help me beat a murder charge?

MADISON

Fine. Don't say anything until he gets there.

DYLAN

Come on, you know me.

He hands his phone over and the call ends.

Mitchell sits up in the hospital bed.

MITCHELL

What's happening?

Madison doesn't answer. Instead, she scrolls through her phone and hovers over the contact listed as "Dad".

She knows she has to call but hesitates. Finally, she presses dial and puts the phone to her ear.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE/INT. HOSPITAL - INTERCUT

MICHAEL

Hi Madison.

MADISON

Hi dad --

MICHAEL

You better be calling to apologize.

MADISON

Not quite. Dylan got arrested.

MITCHELL

What!

Madison shushes him. Mitchell throws his hands up in disbelief.

MICHAEL
Who's Dylan?

MADISON
My roommate, dad. I really need
your help.

MICHAEL
I told you, you should've left this
alone. Now look what happened.

MADISON
Please dad.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dylan drums his fingers on the table. He looks like he could
fall asleep at any moment.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION MIRROR - SAME

Hagel and Osweiler watch Dylan. Hagel checks his watch.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
So, what do you think?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
About what?

DEPUTY OSWEILER
About... him?

DETECTIVE HAGEL
I think these true crime shows are
becoming too educational. Making my
job harder.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

The door is opened by another officer for Michael to enter.
Dylan's eyes light up.

DYLAN
Oh, yes! He actually came.

MICHAEL
Stand up, we're leaving.

DYLAN
Really? Just like that?

MICHAEL

They don't have enough to charge you, so get up.

Dylan does as he's told, grinning from ear to ear. The pair walks out.

INT. POLICE STATION - OBSERVATION MIRROR - SAME

Hagel and Osweiler watch him leave. Osweiler tries to gauge Hagel's mood.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

How are you... is that what you expected?

DETECTIVE HAGEL

He's right, we don't have enough to charge him. But it doesn't matter, it's Madison we're after anyway.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Madison waits in the lobby.

DYLAN

(to Michael)

That was so badass. You're like, a real lawyer. That's crazy.

MADISON

That's it? He gets to leave just like that?

MICHAEL

For now at least. Go home, and quit snooping around. You're only making things worse.

MADISON

We need to find out who killed Shawn, or else we'll be framed for it.

MICHAEL

No, you don't. Even if you're a suspect, they need to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt. Which they can't do if you just stop digging. Please.

MADISON

Fine.

She stands and gives Michael a quick, awkward hug.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I love you.

MICHAEL

Love you too.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Madison walks into the apartment, Dylan follows behind, trying to keep up.

DYLAN

So what do you wanna do now?

MADISON

What do you mean? We keep trying to figure this thing out.

DYLAN

But your dad said --

MADISON

I really don't care what he said. I need to figure this out. Run me through what happened at Ava's.

DYLAN

I found her dead in her bedroom.

MADISON

Yeah yeah yeah, but what else? Anything useful? Do you think she killed herself out of guilt?

DYLAN

I don't think she killed herself at all.

MADISON

Why not?

DYLAN

The used condom.

MADISON

Excuse me?

DYLAN

There was a used condom on top of her trash. A gold chain too. I think that...

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

We get to see how Dylan pictures the events leading up to Ava's death. He narrates the actions of an unknown man.

DYLAN (V.O.)

Whoever it was went to her house immediately after he was released from questioning at the concert.

The mystery man's car pulling into Ava's driveway. He hops out and hurries towards the house.

DYLAN (V.O.)

He'd been here before because they'd been secretly hooking up, so he entered the house as he's done dozens of times...

The man opens the door and slips inside.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The man creeps up the stairs.

DYLAN (V.O.)

From there he goes upstairs and down the hall to Ava's bedroom, where she's waiting for him.

AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

From over the man's shoulder we see Ava in bed, she smiles at him when he enters.

DYLAN (V.O.)

They hook up. But afterwards, they get in a fight, and Ava threatens to turn herself in and tell the police about his involvement in Shawn's murder.

A confrontation that gets increasingly more heated. Ava begins to shove the man. He responds by getting rough with her.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

Madison interrupts the flashback.

MADISON

And that's more likely than her
killing herself?

DYLAN

Someone was there with her right
before she died. How many people
kill themselves right after sex?

Madison shrugs like "fair enough".

MADISON

Who do we know that wears a gold
chain?

DYLAN

I dunno.

MADISON

So we're back to where we started.

DYLAN

Well what happened backstage?

MADISON

I... didn't get a chance to go.

DYLAN

Come again?

MADISON

I was busy! I had this job to go
to, then Grandpa had to go break a
damn hip.

DYLAN

Are you serious? I just got
arrested for this and you didn't
even do your half of it!

MADISON

Ok, ok, I'll go!

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - SAME

A hooded figure creeps along the dingy hallway leading to
Madison's apartment.

They hold an unmarked file and make sure to keep their head down to avoid being recognized.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Madison and Dylan talk through the dead end they find themselves in.

DYLAN

What're you gonna look for when you go over there?

MADISON

I have no idea. I'll figure it out when I get there I guess.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - SAME

The hooded person approaches apartment 307. With the lock still broken, they could easily slip inside. They stop and stare at the door for a moment.

Then, they kneel and slip the file under the door before taking off so nobody sees them.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

The noise of paper sliding along the floor catches Madison and Dylan's attention.

Madison snags it and pulls the door open to look out into the...

HALLWAY

Empty. The hooded figure nowhere to be found. She turns back into her

APARTMENT

And closes the door. File in hand.

DYLAN

What is that?

MADISON

I don't know. This is starting to get really scary.

DYLAN
Starting to?

She sets the file down on the counter and opens it.

Inside is a series of crime scene photos.

Madison flips through them. The paramedics on scene, the backstage members being held for questioning, even pictures of Shawn's dead body.

Madison flinches and snaps the file shut.

MADISON
What the hell? Who would've taken these?

Dylan takes the file and looks through it.

DYLAN
Could be a cop documenting the crime scene, or some weirdo with a camera. Unclear.

Madison looks closer at one of the photos. It shows the entire group of suspects backstage, listening to Hagel give instructions on the interrogations.

Leo stands near the back. Madison squints. It's hard to see but the picture shows a gold chain barely showing from underneath Leo's shirt.

MADISON
I fucking knew it!

EXT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

The hooded figure quickly walks to their car. They unlock it and get in.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Once inside, they take their hood off. Finally revealing that the person is DEPUTY OSWEILER.

He starts his car and drives off.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Madison pins the picture with Leo in it on the wall alongside the notecards.

DYLAN
Leo was sleeping with Ava?

MADISON
I guess.

DYLAN
But I thought he was super into
Shawn?

MADISON
Men are dogs. Does this mean I
still need to go talk to Bentley?

Dylan gives her an "are you serious" glare. She holds her hands up in defense.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Okay, alright. I guess I'll go do
that now.

She slowly moves towards the door, leaving time for Dylan to change his mind.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Unless... you just wanna hangout
instead?

DYLAN
Go.

MADISON
Fine.

EXT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - NIGHT

Madison watches the activity at the side of the building. She sees police posted up at backstage entrance. Curses under her breath.

She pulls her old backstage pass out of her pocket and approaches the door.

She walks confidently, flashes her pass to security. It works, they move aside.

She smiles as she walks in.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Madison tries to stay discreet while sneaking around the backstage area.

She heads towards Bentley's dressing room. Checks over her shoulder, then slides in.

INT. BENTLEY'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She takes in her surroundings. Everything seems normal. There's a couch, snacks, wardrobe options. She starts tearing through drawers until...

The door opens. It's Bentley. She spins around to face him.

BENTLEY
Um, hi.

MADISON
Hi.

BENTLEY
I recognize you.

MADISON
I was here yesterday.

BENTLEY
Right.

MADISON
I'm just... a huge fan.

BENTLEY
No you're not.

MADISON
You're right I'm not. But my friend died last night and nobody could give me any answers so I was hoping maybe someone here could. Please don't call the cops on me.

Bentley doesn't respond, he just smirks at her and motions to the couch.

BENTLEY
You can sit.

She hesitantly lowers herself onto the couch.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
You ever been in a dressing room before?

MADISON
Is that a joke?

BENTLEY

No.

MADISON

No, obviously I haven't.

BENTLEY

Well, what do you think?

MADISON

It's small.

BENTLEY

That's it?

She shrugs.

He opens a cupboard to reveal way too many types of whisky.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

Any interest?

MADISON

Not really.

BENTLEY

Not into whisky?

MADISON

No. Gross.

BENTLEY

Then you haven't had the right kind yet.

He grabs one glass. Serves only her before sitting next to her.

MADISON

You aren't having any?

BENTLEY

Never before a show.

MADISON

You drink this shit warm? No ice?

BENTLEY

That's the expensive stuff, it doesn't need to be cold to be good.

MADISON

It'll be wasted on me.

BENTLEY

Try it.

She takes a sip. Grimaces.

MADISON

Yep. Tastes like whisky.

He tries to hide his disappointment. They fall into awkward silence.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, is it not weird for you to be performing in the same place a girl was murdered less than 24 hours ago?

BENTLEY

No, it is. It feels so weird. Wrong, even. I wanted to cancel, but they --

He starts to tear up.

Madison looks around. A "what the fuck is happening" expression on her face.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

They wouldn't let me. Said I signed a contract and had to stick to it. But I'm working on a way to donate the profits to her family, help them out, you know? I keep telling myself that's good enough, but I know it isn't.

MADISON

Oh. That's actually nice.

He wipes a tear.

BENTLEY

I'm not a bad guy like everyone thinks.

MADISON

I didn't think -- ok maybe a little.

BENTLEY

So did you really come here to ask questions or just to hangout with me?

The grin on his face puts Madison back on edge.

MADISON

Uhm... yeah so I guess I wanted to ask a few questions about how Shawn was picked as your opener.

BENTLEY

Why?

MADISON

Well --

A quick courtesy knock followed by the door swinging open interrupts her.

Lindsay Moore and Dennis Greene enter the bus with papers in their hands.

LINDSAY

(to Bentley)

We need you outside now please.

BENTLEY

Why?

LINDSAY

You need to do an interview with the local news to explain why it isn't fucked that you're performing at the same venue where a girl was brutally murdered less than 24 hours ago. So just step outside with us please.

He glances at Madison who is pretending not to listen.

BENTLEY

I thought I wasn't supposed to talk to anybody about anything.

(he points to the lawyer)

Those were his words.

DENNIS

I've decided this one is ok. I've prepared talking points.

He holds up the papers.

BENTLEY

Fine.

He begrudgingly gets up to leave.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
(to Madison)
Don't go anywhere.

MADISON
I won't move a muscle.

The second he's gone she jumps up and starts snooping. She goes to the fridge first. Inspects it.

MADISON (CONT'D)
No way.

She pulls out a carton of OAT MILK.

MADISON (CONT'D)
He does not drink oat milk. No way.

Next she finds a container of tofu. Her confusion grows.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Oh my God, is he a fucking vegan?

She moves on to snoop through something else.

She picks up Bentley's song notebook and begins rifling through the pages.

She flips backwards through the pages, glancing at several weeks song writing sessions, most are fragments of verses and disjointed notes.

She continues flipping through the pages. Past a half finished song about a childhood dog. Past what looks like brainstorming notes with the words "SUNSET" and "FARM" written down.

She rolls her eyes.

The notebook is now boring. She goes to close it when a torn out page falls to the ground. She picks it up and glances at it. On it is a fully complete song with the title "I Wish (Shawn Meyer's Tribute)".

Madison pauses. She scans the song. Verses about how much Shawn will be missed, what a talent she was, the whole 9 yards.

Madison finds where the page was torn out from and checks the page just before it. It is dated three weeks prior to Shawn's murder. We can see Madison start to do the math in her head.

She searches for dates on the more recent entries until --

The dressing room door FLIES open. She slams the notebook shut and tosses it back on the table.

It slides across the table and lands on the ground. Without time to fix it, she crosses her arms and plays it cool.

MADISON (CONT'D)
How'd the news thing go?

BENTLEY
Fine, I guess. Apparently
#BentleyChaseSociopath is trending
on Twitter, which neither me nor my
lawyer were aware of.

Madison genuinely smiles at this.

MADISON
Ha. I saw that.

BENTLEY
Right. So I can't tell if I helped
my case or made it worse.

He goes to grab his notebook from the table. It isn't there.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
Hm. Have you seen my notebook?

MADISON
(too quickly)
I don't know what that is.

BENTLEY
A notebook? It's like a bunch of
pieces of paper in a book?

MADISON
No, I mean I don't know where it
is.

He cranes his neck to look under the table and sees it on the ground.

He picks it up. Glances at her, but sets it back on the table.

BENTLEY
I wanted to show you this.

He opens the notebook. Finds the page with the song about Shawn. Madison tenses.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
 It's a memorial piece for Shawn,
 I've never written anything like
 it. I stayed up all night working
 on it.

She relaxes. Must've been overreacting.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)
 We sent it to her parents so they
 could approve it before I perform
 it. They said that they loved it,
 so I think I'll sing it tonight.

MADISON
 Oh man. I was so wrong.

BENTLEY
 About what?

MADISON
 You're not a scumbag at all.

He laughs a bit.

BENTLEY
 Thanks. I try.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Dylan lying on the couch. Smoking weed and watching an
 episode of Tom and Jerry. He giggles at the cartoon.

His phone rings. He checks it to see Michael West calling
 him.

DYLAN
 (coughing)
 Oh shit.

He clears his throat before answering.

DYLAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hello?

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

MICHAEL
 Dylan. It's Michael West.

BENTLEY

Well if we're being honest, we had a list of options, and she was available.

MADISON

It was that easy?

BENTLEY

Kinda.

Slight beat.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

She was top of my list though.

INT. DYLAN'S CAR - SAME

Dylan races down the street in his beat up Honda.

He drives with one hand while dialing Madison's phone with the other.

It rings and rings. No answer.

DYLAN

Come on, come onnn....

INT. BENTLEY'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME

Madison's phone rings against the table. Both her and Bentley glance at it. She silences it.

MADISON

(intrigued)

What do you mean? Like you picked her?

BENTLEY

I guess?

MADISON

Why?

Bentley's suspicion grows.

BENTLEY

I liked her sound. Why?

MADISON

I'm just trying to understand why --

Madison's phone rings again.

She silences it.

Then, a knock on the door. A stagehand peeks his head in. He is nervous and hesitant.

STAGEHAND

Excuse me Mr. Chase? I'm sorry
but... they couldn't find it.

Bentley's whole demeanor changes. He's pissed.

BENTLEY

It's lost?

STAGEHAND

Wardrobe used the word missing.

Bentley gives him an ice cold glare.

STAGEHAND (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Also, you have 10 minutes before
final sound checks.

And with that, he sneaks out before he's the one dealing with the blowback.

BENTLEY

God, what a mess.

MADISON

What's the big deal? What's
missing?

BENTLEY

It's stupid, it shouldn't matter
this much.

MADISON

Just tell me.

BENTLEY

It's this chain I wear during every
show.

Madison's world SLOWS DOWN as she has a major "oh shit" moment. Bentley continues, but she barely hears him.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

My grandfather got it for me before
he passed, and now it's gone. I
have no idea where it could be.

Madison stares blankly ahead. Trying to control her panic.

MADISON
(quietly)
I do.

BENTLEY
What?

MADISON
I said I do. Know what it's like, I mean. To lose something important to you. My mom got me these nice earrings when I was 10, and they fell out at a sleepover. I guess that's not the same thing because my mom's alive but uh... I don't think it's stupid.

BENTLEY
Okay?

Madison's phone vibrates again. She JUMPS.

MADISON
Anyway! I should let you get ready.
That guy said 10 minutes right?

She pushes past him and out the door.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Madison runs to the only quiet corner she can find. It just so happens to be the same spot she was in when she watched her best friend die 24 hours ago.

She takes a series of DEEP and SHAKY breaths, trying to calm herself down. Then, answers her phone.

INT. DYLAN'S CAR/INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - INTERCUT

Dylan swerves through traffic. Car horns blare at him.

MADISON
Hello?

DYLAN
You gotta get out of there.

MADISON
I'm trying.

DYLAN
It's him Madison.

MADISON
I know.

DYLAN
Is he there right now?

She glances behind her.

MADISON
Uh, no. I think he's --

Bentley comes from behind her and snatches the phone out of her hand.

She spins around. He hangs up on Dylan and threateningly towers over her.

BENTLEY
I really wish you left this alone.
I liked you. You're pretty.

INT. DYLAN'S CAR - SAME

Dylan, still racing down the street, reaches into his back pocket and pulls out Detective Hagel's card from earlier.

He glances at the card, dials a few numbers, then checks the road. Repeats this a few times until he's typed the full number.

INT. POLICE STATION/INT. DYLAN'S CAR - INTERCUT

Hagel sits at his desk. Phone pinned against his ear with his shoulder.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Hello?

DYLAN
You need to get to the arena right now.

DETECTIVE HAGEL
Excuse me?

DYLAN
He's going to kill her!

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Who is this?

DYLAN

Dylan Turner. Bentley is going to kill Madison.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Just be glad you aren't going to prison and leave this alone.

And with that, Hagel hangs up.

DYLAN

Asshole.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - SAME

Madison presses herself against a wall. She holds her hands out in defense.

MADISON

Stay away from me!

BENTLEY

Madison... let's not overreact.

MADISON

You killed Ava.

BENTLEY

Ok, yes. But I didn't mean for that to happen.

MADISON

And you murdered Shawn.

BENTLEY

Ehh, technically I didn't touch her. Ava did all that work for me.

She's on the verge of tears now.

MADISON

Fuck you.

BENTLEY

Come on now.

A stagehand calls out.

STAGEHAND

Opener ends in two minutes! Anyone
have eyes on Bentley?

BENTLEY

Well it looks like I gotta make
this quick.

He slides a hunting knife out of his waistband. He presses in
closer to her as he threateningly raises the blade.

She has nowhere to go. There is nobody around to hear her
scream. In other words, she's screwed.

BENTLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry it had to end like this,
but I need these people's sympathy
to sell more records.

She looks around frantically for a way out. And then...

BANG.

Bentley and Madison both jump. What was that? They check
their bodies to see if they're hurt. No injuries.

They both peek through the curtain to the stage and see that
it was the confetti cannon going off at the end of the
opening act.

MADISON

You've got to be kidding me.

With Bentley still distracted, Madison realizes she should
use this opportunity to escape. She pushes past him and books
it to the main area.

Before she can make it, his arm snakes around her neck,
dragging her back into the dark.

STAGEHAND

Show time in 60 seconds!

A pre-show hype video begins to play for the audience. The
bass can be felt from backstage.

The crowd screams and cheers.

MADISON

I don't think you have time to kill
me and make it out in time.

BENTLEY

I'll make time.

She looks around for someone to notice. The music is too loud for anyone to hear. Everyone is too busy to see them.

She looks towards the stage.

MADISON

Did you hear that? Is that supposed to sound like that?

He turns his attention away from her to look towards the stage.

BENTLEY

Hear what?

With his guard down, she ELBOWS him in the nose. Then, takes off running again.

He runs after her, his nose bleeding. She makes it to a crowded area and keeps running.

Lindsay grabs his arm and stops him.

LINDSAY

You go on in 30 seconds where have you been?

BENTLEY

Uh.

LINDSAY

What happened to your nose?

He touches it and looks at the blood on his finger.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Whatever.

She drags him towards the entrance to the stage.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

You better be warmed up.

She pushes him out to the crowd.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The fans cheer louder when they see him. But when they notice the bloody nose, they look at each other in confusion. Fans start to pull their phones out and record.

He wipes his nose on his sleeve then begins his show.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - BACKSTAGE - SAME

Madison stand backstage, wide-eyed. The crew works around her.

Dylan and Osweiler rush in. Osweiler has his gun drawn. Madison sees them.

MADISON
You're a little fucking late.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
What happened? Where is he?

A guitar riff and drum kick ring through the entire arena.

DEPUTY OSWEILER (CONT'D)
He's on stage?

MADISON
Yep, he went out right after he
tried to kill me.

DYLAN
(to Osweiler)
What now?

DEPUTY OSWEILER
Uh, I -- I'm not sure. Do we wait?

MADISON
What? No! Go arrest him.

DEPUTY OSWEILER
Okay. Okay, yeah.

INT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Bentley is mid high-fiving a row of fans when Osweiler, joined by two other officers, come on stage.

Bentley sees them. He tries to run to the other exit, but it's also blocked by a cop.

Osweiler puts him in handcuffs and leads him out. Some audience members boo, some look at each other trying to figure out what happened.

People have their phones out, filming everything.

EXT. BRIDGESTONE ARENA - NIGHT

A slew of police cars, ambulances, and news vans gather on the scene.

Madison sits in the back of an ambulance, an EMS blanket wrapped around her shoulders. Dylan gives a statement to some detectives.

Hagel ducks under police tape and approaches Osweiler.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

Bring me up to speed, what happened here?

DEPUTY OSWEILER

Ok, um. Bentley and Ava had been plotting with each other to kill Shawn to help Bentley's career. After she was dead, he planned to debut a new song in her memory. Except when he went to see Ava that night, they got into an argument, and he killed her too.

He nods in Madison's direction.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

And what happened with her.

DEPUTY OSWEILER

She snuck backstage to look for clues when she realized he was the killer. He figured out that she knew at about the same time, so he tried to take her out too.

DETECTIVE HAGEL

God damn it, so the stoner kid nailed it?

DEPUTY OSWEILER

Pretty much.

Hagel groans and rubs his eyes.

Lindsay finishes a heated phone call before approaching Madison. Madison's neck is red from the knife.

LINDSAY

Talk about a PR nightmare.

Lindsay alternates between looking at Madison and typing on her phone.

Madison looks back at her.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)
How's the...

Lindsay motions to her neck.

MADISON
Could be worse, I guess.

LINDSAY
I'm not sure if you heard, someone
live streamed the whole thing.

MADISON
No, I didn't.

LINDSAY
Yes, which sucks for me. Not for
you though.

MADISON
Why's that?

LINDSAY
You're blowing up on social media.
They found your YouTube
performances.

MADISON
Really?

LINDSAY
Mhm. So look, do you have plans
next Friday? Bentley was supposed
to perform at a festival in South
Carolina. If we cancel this late we
lose a shit ton of money.

MADISON
What does that have to do with me?

Lindsay sighs.

LINDSAY
Do you want to take his spot or
not?

MADISON
They want to book me? At a
festival?

LINDSAY

Nobody else is free this close to
the show.

MADISON

Wait is it paid?

LINDSAY

Obviously. I'm not running a
charity here.

Madison takes in the tragic scene for a moment.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Are you in or are you out? I needed
to let them know two minutes ago.

Beat. Then, Madison nods.

MADISON

I'm in.

EXT. MUSIC FESTIVAL - DAY

A stream of colorful lights cast over a crowd of spectators.

It is a stark contrast to the barren audiences we are used to
seeing show up for her. Many of the audiences members gossip
and point at her, but a crowds a crowd.

Even her dad stands to the side of the stage, smiling.

Madison takes a break in between songs to absorb the fans'
energy.

Her jeans and red plaid shirt look familiar.

Almost a lot like... Bentley.

MADISON

This next song is dedicated to my
friend Shawn. It's called I Wish.