

WHITE KNIGHT

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FADE IN:

1 INT. DINER - NIGHT

1

A smattering of STRAGGLERS litter the dimly lit diner, sitting in one's and two's, avoiding eye contact with the other patrons.

FARIS (early 30's) cradles his cup of coffee in a corner booth. He's alone, and he likes it that way.

SMACK! Faris hears the sound behind him, resists the urge to turn around.

MONA (O.S.)

Ow! Let go of me.

When he hears her voice, Faris gives in and looks her way.

He sees MONA (early 30's) first, standing by the counter, strands of dirty blonde hair hanging in her face. Faris follows her eyes to the BEEFY HAND wrapped around her wrist.

The hand belongs to DIXON (early 30's), a hulk of a man who towers over Mona.

Faris catches the eye of the KID (late teens) working the cash register. The kid makes himself scarce, scared shitless.

Faris glances around the diner. Everywhere he looks, he finds slouched shoulders, averted eyes. No one's going to be a hero tonight.

Then his eyes meet Mona's, where he sees a wordless plea for help. What choice does he have?

FARIS

Hey!

Dixon glares at him.

FARIS

Let her go, man.

DIXON

Mind your own business, asshole.

Mona's knees buckle. She cries out in pain, as if Dixon is squeezing even harder. Dixon turns back to Mona, ignoring Faris. His mistake.

(CONTINUED)

Faris' chair CLATTERS to the floor as he jumps to his feet. He crosses the space between them in moments.

Dixon turns at the sound. He's rewarded with a RIGHT FIST to the eye. He falls, losing his grip on Mona's arm.

Faris stands between Dixon and Mona, daring Dixon to try something. Dixon clears his head. He looks past Faris, locks eyes with Mona.

DIXON

You're crazy.

Dixon climbs to his feet, stares down Faris. Faris braces for the inevitable blow.

Without another word, Dixon turns his back on them, leaves.

Faris turns his attention to Mona. She's nursing her arm.

FARIS

You okay?

No words. Just a curt nod.

Faris nods in return. Then, a moment's hesitation. What now? He walks back toward his table, then pauses, glancing at the door that Dixon just left through.

He turns back to Mona.

FARIS

He's not going to give you any more trouble tonight, is he?

Mona shrugs.

Faris affords his coffee one last, longing glance. He walks back to Mona.

FARIS

Come on. I'll walk you home.

Mona smiles up at her white knight.

2

INT. MONA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

2

Mona enters her tiny apartment. Faris stands in the doorway, wanting to go in without wanting to get involved.

(CONTINUED)

MONA

Come in, already. The least I can do is get you a drink.

Mona disappears into the kitchen. Faris considers, then enters. The apartment isn't much cleaner than the diner.

FARIS

Nice place.

MONA

It's a piece of shit.

FARIS

Okay, it's a piece of shit. I was trying to be nice.

Mona reappears with a pair of longnecks.

MONA

That would be a first.

FARIS

Me being nice?

MONA

No. Me having a nice guy in my apartment.

Mona offers Faris one of the longnecks. He accepts, drinks deep.

FARIS

That guy-

MONA

Dixon.

FARIS

He's not gonna swing by?

MONA

Doubtful.

FARIS

He have a key?

MONA

You think I'd shack up with an asshole like Dixon?

Faris takes another drink instead of answering that question. Mona takes a drink of her own beer, her eyes never leaving Faris.

(CONTINUED)

Uncomfortable silence. Mona lets the silence hang between them. Faris takes the hint.

FARIS
Thanks for the drink.

He places the longneck on an end table.

FARIS
I guess I'll be-

Mona wraps a hand around the back of his neck, pulls him into a kiss. Faris resists at first, but only for a second.

Mona pulls back, still touching him.

MONA
Don't go.

Faris doesn't know what to say.

MONA
It's been a while since I've felt safe.

FARIS
You'll be fine.

MONA
What if he comes back?

FARIS
You said he doesn't have a key.

MONA
You think that would stop him?

Faris considers.

Mona leans in as if to kiss him again, but her lips slide past his cheek and brush against his ear.

MONA
(whispering)
Don't go.

3 INT. MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

3

Faris and Mona writhe beneath the sheets, releasing all the night's tension in one another's embrace.

4 INT. MONA'S BEDROOM - DAY

4

Sunlight floods the room.

Mona rouses from her sleep, squinting. She sits up, wrapped in a bedsheet. She sees Faris standing at the foot of the bed, pulling his jeans up.

MONA

Hey.

Faris pauses, faces her.

MONA

You leaving?

FARIS

I'm gonna be late for work.

MONA

So?

FARIS

Bills aren't gonna pay themselves.

Faris continues to get dressed as Mona watches him. Everything about her body language tells him she wants him to stay, but he pretends not to notice.

Faris checks his pockets. Something's missing. He looks back to Mona.

She's holding his SMARTPHONE. When Faris steps forward to take it, Mona pulls away.

FARIS

Come on...

Mona taps on the screen of Faris' phone. The pile of clothes at the foot of her bed begin to VIBRATE.

Faris digs through the clothes, finds Mona's SMARTPHONE. He checks the screen. MISSED CALL.

He looks at her, perplexed. She holds out his phone. They trade. She checks the number.

MONA

Just in case.

Faris admires her for a moment, so vulnerable, so fragile. He sits on the edge of the bed, brushes her hair out of her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

Faris leans in and kisses her on the forehead. He stands, walks toward the bedroom door. She calls after him.

MONA
What's your name?

Faris pauses, grins to himself.

FARIS
Faris.

MONA
Mona. Nice to meet you, Faris.

Faris is still smiling as he lets himself out.

At the sound of the apartment door opening and closing, Mona's face falls. The fear from the previous night is back in her eyes.

5 INT. STOCK ROOM - DAY

5

Faris is stocking shelves. His phone rings. He checks the number, no name. He answers.

FARIS
Hello?

MONA (O.S.)
Hi, Faris.

FARIS
Mona? Everything okay?

MONA (O.S.)
I just wanted to hear your voice.

Faris' BOSS pops his head in. He notices Faris talking on the phone and glares at him.

FARIS
Look, Mona. I can't talk now.

Silence from the other end.

FARIS
I'll call later.

MONA (O.S.)
Sure.

Faris hangs up. His boss glares for a moment longer before disappearing into the front room again.

Faris gets back to work.

6 INT. MONA'S APARTMENT - DAY

6

Mona clutches the phone in her hand. She stands, paces around the apartment.

She peers out the window from behind the curtains. Is that Dixon standing behind a nearby tree? No, maybe not. She pulls the curtains closed.

She walks to the kitchen to get some coffee. Her nerves amplify every sound: the clock, the faucet, the fridge. Forget the coffee.

She walks to a MIRROR in the hallway and stares at her reflection for a long moment. Her fists clench, unclench, clench, unclench.

The sounds of the apartment grow louder and louder, suffocating her. Her HEARTBEAT pounds in her ear, the sound replaced by FOOTSTEPS outside her door.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Someone pounds at her door.

Mona spins to face the door, terrified.

7 EXT. STORE - DAY

7

Faris steps out into the sunlight, another day behind him. He pulls out his phone and calls Mona.

No answer.

Concern crosses his face. He starts walking, then picks up the pace.

8 INT. MONA'S APARTMENT - DAY

8

Faris lets himself in. The door is open a crack, no signs of forced entry.

FARIS

Mona?

No answer.

FARIS

Mona!

(CONTINUED)

MONA (O.S.)

In here.

Faris follows the sound of her voice, into her bedroom.

9 INT. MONA'S BEDROOM - DAY

9

Mona sits on the bed. She faces the window, her back to the door.

FARIS

I tried calling. Why didn't you answer?

She turns to face him. It's all the answer he needs.

Her lower lip is swollen. Dried blood cakes her chin. A cut lines one cheek, just beneath a blackened eye.

FARIS

Jesus, Mona. Did Dixon do this?

She throws him a "What do you think?" look.

Faris sits by Mona on the bed. He reaches out to touch her, but she pulls back.

MONA

I told you not to go.

Faris produces his phone, dials.

MONA

What are you doing?

FARIS

I'm calling the police.

MONA

You can't.

FARIS

Watch me.

Mona GRABS the phone and THROWS it across the room.

FARIS

What the hell?

MONA

Dixon works for the police.

(CONTINUED)

FARIS
Bullshit.

MONA
He's an informant.

Faris lets this sink in.

MONA
I tried call them the first time he
did this. They showed up, he said
something to one of them, and they
left without looking back. Didn't
even bother to take a statement.

Faris' mind races.

MONA
They can't help me, Faris. No one
can.

Faris takes her hand in his. This time, she doesn't pull
away.

FARIS
There's gotta be something we can
do.

Mona walks to her closet. She digs around on a high shelf.
When she finds what she was looking for, she turns around.

In her hands, she's holding a HANDGUN.

10

INT. MONA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

10

Faris and Mona sit at the table, the gun between them.

FARIS
This is fucking crazy.

MONA
Look at me, Faris. Look at me!

Faris forces himself to look at her beaten, battered face
for as long as he can. His eyes drift back to the gun.

MONA
I'm out of options.

FARIS
You can leave.

(CONTINUED)

MONA

And go where? With what money?

(beat)

I'm afraid. All the time. I couldn't leave my apartment without letting him know where I was going. If he showed up and I wasn't here, I was in for more of this. This is my home, Faris, and I'm not even safe here anymore.

(beat)

I'm through running.

Faris is absorbed in thought. He can't take his eyes off the gun.

FARIS

So we catch him alone , scare him.
You think he'll really stay away?

Mona shrugs. Her fear, her emotional pain, is palpable. In that moment, Faris decides that it's a risk worth taking.

FARIS

We'd have to catch him alone. And it would have to be someplace where we could do it without being seen. And we'd have to catch him off guard.

He finally looks up from the gun, into Mona's eyes. Her expression is a mix of gratitude and grim determination.

11 INT. CAR - NIGHT

11

Mona sits behind the wheel, Faris in the front passenger seat. Faris holds the gun in his lap, tracing its contours with one finger.

Dixon emerges from a night club across the street. Judging by his stagger, he's lit.

Mona nudges Faris. Faris looks up.

Dixon stumbles down the sidewalk, oblivious to the fact that he's being watched.

Mona exits the car after Dixon passes by, following him.

Faris hesitates. He looks from the gun, to Mona, to Dixon. He finally makes up his mind and exits the car, tucking the gun in his waistband.

12 EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

12

Mona and Faris close the distance between themselves and Dixon. As Dixon approaches the mouth of an alley, Mona calls out.

MONA
Sleeping alone tonight?

Dixon turns, a drunk grin plastered on his face. When he sees Faris, his face darkens. Then he notices Mona's injuries.

DIXON
You look like shit.

Faris looks around, makes sure they're alone, before he pulls out the gun. Dixon holds his hands in front of his chest, palms out.

DIXON
What the fuck-

Mona shoves Dixon into the alley. Faris follows.

13 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

13

Mona shoves Dixon into a pile of garbage. Faris keeps the gun trained on him.

FARIS
You're done terrorizing her. Done.
You understand me?

Dixon just stares back at Faris. If looks could kill...

A SINISTER SMILE crosses Mona's lips.

MONA
Give me your wallet.

DIXON
Mona, why are you-

Mona KICKS him, enjoying the power she has over him. Dixon considers striking back, eyes the gun again, reconsiders.

MONA
Now.

(CONTINUED)

Dixon produces his wallet, holds it out to Mona. When she reaches for it, Dixon grabs her wrist. He pulls her toward him, just enough to throw her off balance, then he shoves her toward Faris.

Faris catches Mona, taking the gun off Dixon. That's when Dixon makes him move, springing to his feet and tackling Faris.

The gun CLATTERS to the ground.

Dixon mounts Faris and lays into him, ground and pound. Faris tries to fight back, but he's no match for Dixon.

BLAM!

Dixon flies off of Faris. He crumples in a heap to Faris' left. Faris looks up, eyes wide.

Mona stands over them, holding the gun. Dixon clutches his right arm. BLOOD seeps from between his fingers.

DIXON
(stunned)
You shot me.

MONA
No shit.

Faris staggers to his feet, using the wall for support. He takes in the scene before him with sudden clarity.

FARIS
Mona, we should go. Now.

MONA
He'll keep coming after me, Faris.
He'll come after you. He'll never
quit.

Faris puts a hand on Mona's wrist. Her hand trembles. She starts to squeeze the trigger, then stops. She lets Faris take the gun from her hands.

Faris crouches low and threatens Dixon with the gun.

FARIS
You're going to leave her alone.
Forever. You're won't call, you
won't text, and you sure as fuck
won't ever, ever stop by. Are we
absolutely fucking clear?

To Faris' surprise, Dixon LAUGHS.

DIXON

She's got you so turned around,
man.

A frown crosses Faris' features as Dixon continues to laugh. Faris stands, turns his back on Dixon, takes Mona's hand.

They walk toward the mouth of the alley, leaving Dixon with the rest of the garbage.

Dixon can't let it go. He calls after Faris.

DIXON

You're dead, man.

Faris stops. His inner conflict plays out on his features. After a moment, the conflict is replaced with a placid calm.

DIXON

You're dead.

Faris turns around, walks back to Dixon, and FIRES the gun once into Dixon's face.

Dixon's body goes limp.

Faris hides the gun in his waistband. He picks up Dixon's wallet, the meets Mona's stunned gaze.

FARIS

It was a mugging. We were never
here.

He takes Mona by the hand and leads her out of the alley.

14 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

14

Faris and Mona make love without restraint. The passion of their first time was nothing compared to this.

After they finish, they lie on their backs in the darkness.

FARIS

Mona-

MONA

Shh.

They lie there in silence, their eyes on the ceiling, their minds back in the alley.

15 INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

15

The coffee shop is all but deserted, save for Faris, Mona, and a few stragglers. Faris and Mona sit in a booth, across from one another.

Mona reaches into her purse. She pulls out Dixon's wallet. Faris' eyes dart around the coffee shop.

FARIS

Put it away.

She dangles it in front of him, teasing him. She pulls out some cash, then puts the wallet back in her purse.

Faris' eyes dart around the coffee shop. He's wracked with guilt.

FARIS

You want to get caught?

MONA

If I was gonna get caught, I'd already be in jail.

She looks at him with an expression that borders on disgust. When JAKE (mid 30's) enters the restaurant, her expression changes.

Tall and muscular, Jake is reminiscent of Dixon. Mona eyes him, ignoring Faris. It's easy to tell what she's thinking.

Faris notices the change. A thought occurs to him.

FARIS

Are you sure Dixon didn't have a key to your apartment?

MONA

(distracted)

What?

FARIS

Did he have a key?

MONA

I already told you he didn't.

FARIS

That night he beat you up. When I got to your apartment, the door was unlocked. Did you let him in?

(CONTINUED)

MONA
Of course not.

FARIS
Then who did?

MONA
No one.

Confusion on Jake's face. Mona keeps her eyes fixed on the newcomer.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

16 INT. MONA'S APARTMENT - DAY 16

Mona, in her apartment, hurting herself, punishing herself.

Mona, unlocking the door, leaving it open the tiniest bit.

Mona, sitting on her bed, bleeding and bruised, smiling to herself as she waits for Faris to arrive.

END FLASHBACK.

17 INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT 17

Faris stares at Mona with wide-eyed amazement.

FARIS
Dixon didn't lay a hand on you.

MONA
God, you're such a pussy.

FARIS
Excuse me?

MONA
Bitch and moan, bitch and moan.
You're worse than Dixon ever was.

FARIS
Mona, what-

MONA
Shut up.

FARIS
Don't tell me to-

(CONTINUED)

Mona raises a hand and SLAPS Faris, hard. She pulls back to hit him again, but he grabs her wrist. She smiles her TWISTED SMILE.

She's not in pain, but she raises her voice and puts on the act.

MONA

Ow. Let go of me.

Faris looks over his shoulder and finds Jake watching them. Faris follows Jake's gaze to his own hand, wrapped around Mona's wrist. Then it hits him.

This is exactly what it looked like when he first saw Mona.

Mona catches Jake's eye. She gives him the same wounded doe look that she gave Faris once upon a time.

FARIS

(hushed)

What are you doing?

MONA

(hushed)

Moving on.

Jake crosses the distance between them, his hands clenched into fists.

JAKE

Hey, man. Hands off.

In that moment, Faris sees Mona for who she really is. His hand releases her wrist and drifts toward the table as the truth settles in.

FARIS

You're crazy.

CUT TO BLACK