

NIKKI SAVAGE

original screenplay

by

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BLANK SCREEN:

SUPER:

SEM·PER FI·DE·LIS. (FI'DAY [LI -Z])

Latin Phrase:

1. "Always Faithful" or "Always Loyal".
2. *Semper Fidelis* (*Semper Fi*) is the motto of the United States Marine Corps.

FADE IN:

EXT. V.A. HOSPITAL, CHICAGO -- DAY

Establishing.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT -- DAY

An older car, rusty, dented, moves among rows of similar vehicles, parks.

INT. CAR -- DAY

NIKKI SAVAGE (35), athletic, dark hair, exotic features, sits in the driver's seat, fills a syringe from an ampule.

She ties a surgical tube below a tattoo on her upper arm: a colorful bald eagle circled by the words "Semper Fidelis" and the letters "U.S.M.C."

Nikki holds the needle to a bulging vein. She hesitates, then removes the tubing, takes off a shoe, injects herself in the foot.

A moment of bliss, then Nikki pulls a log book from a big purse, records the time, date, dosage, and marks the number "5" in the "pain" column. The dosages are increasing.

INT. V.A. HOSPITAL -- DAY

The Hallway is a crowded waiting room. Fluorescent LIGHTS, weathered tile floor.

PATIENTS lined up against the walls have missing limbs, wheel chairs. Some are blind. Their faces paint expressions of anger, betrayal, abandonment.

STAFF and those waiting stare at Nikki moving down the hallway, tight jeans, a picture of female perfection, out of place here, except for a slight limp in her gate.

Nikki approaches DAN DEITRICH, (35) in a wheel chair, surrounded by other VETS. He stares at the floor. She stops in front of his chair.

NIKKI

(Jody call)

Ain't no sense in lookin' down!

Dan looks up. A smile sneaks across his face.

DAN

Nikki Savage!

She hugs him, bumps fists with the other vets. Lots of Marine tattoos. A few, "Good to see ya's."

NIKKI

I won't ask how you're doing. I know better.

DAN

You were always smarter than the rest of us.

All the guys nod, murmur their agreement.

DAN (CONT'D)

How's the hip?

NIKKI

Got a new one. It's my leg that's fucked. But I'm dragging it around.

DAN

I'm waiting here for a new liver. Been first on the list for a fuckin' month.

ANOTHER VET

He's on a hunger strike.

DAN

That's right. I'm going to die of starvation right here unless they fix me.

NIKKI
Tell them you're on a shower strike.
They'll have a new liver for Dirty
Dan by the end of the day.

Everyone laughs at that. She pats Dan on the back.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
I'm late. Good to see you, Dan.

She looks him right in the eye, sincere.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Good luck to you.

DAN
You too, Nikki. You're lookin' good.

Nikki, with her slight limp, moves down the hall. They all stare at her ass.

DAN (CONT'D)
Damn good.... A few more Marines
like her, I'd do another tour in
this fucking chair.

They all nod and agree once again.

INT. DR. NOREEN WALSH'S OFFICE -- DAY

NOREEN (55), high mileage, business suit, sits behind her desk, Nikki in front.

NOREEN
How's the leg?

NIKKI
It hurts. All the time.

NOREEN
Doesn't seem to be bothering you
right now.

Nikki tracks Noreen's eyes to the veins in her arm.

NIKKI
What do you want me say, Noreen?

NOREEN
I'm trying to help you, Nikki. If
you lie to me--

NIKKI
I'm not some needle park junkie.
I've got a handle on it.

NOREEN
Because you record the dosage in a
log? Let me see it.

Nikki pulls out the log book, tosses it on her desk. Noreen
turns a few pages.

NOREEN (CONT'D)
From seventy five to 100 in three
weeks. How long before you're dead,
Nikki?

A hard stare from Nikki.

NIKKI
Then change the diagnosis! And a
physician will monitor my treatment.

NOREEN
Treatment? Addiction is the disease,
Nikki, not the cure. The standard
of care is designed to get you off
the drugs.

NIKKI
(mocking)
"The standard of care." Whoever sets
the "standard" doesn't have to endure
the pain.

NOREEN
There are alternative programs for
chronic pain: Yoga. Acupuncture.
Meditation.

NIKKI
They're bullshit.

NOREEN
You kicked once before.

NIKKI
For five days when the school was
closed. I ran-up the juice with my
morning coffee the day I went back
to work.

NOREEN

But work isn't really the issue. Is it? You know why addicts relapse.

NIKKI

How do I teach Judo if I can't stand the pain?

NOREEN

The pain in your leg? Or the pain you won't deal with? C'mon Nikki. Where's the fighter?

NIKKI

She's permanently disabled.

NOREEN

Or she's never faced an opponent as tough as herself.

NIKKI

Don't give me your fucking rehearsed little sound bites.

Nikki stands. Leans over the desk, close.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You want to replace all the drugs they pumped through me with a few well chosen words? Is that the "standard of care?"

Noreen remains calm.

NOREEN

Words can be very powerful.

NIKKI

So can pain.

NOREEN

Especially emotional pain. Aren't you at rock bottom, Nikki? What could be worse than prostitution?

Nikki averts her eyes, ashamed. Sits back down, head lowered.

NIKKI

Jenny's got a really big mouth. And I haven't done it yet.

She looks up now.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
How else can I pay for the drugs?

NOREEN
Is that what it's about? Or are you
just punishing yourself?

NIKKI
You won't help me. I'm the only one
I can rely on, like always.

NOREEN
And that's denial.

Nikki walks toward the door. Noreen speaks to her back.

NOREEN (CONT'D)
That door is always open to you,
Nikki.

The door SLAMS.

EXT. PENINSULA HOTEL -- NIGHT

Nikki's sexy, muscular legs emerge from a taxi, a leather mini-skirt barely covers a large scar that flashes briefly.

The DOORMAN offers his hand. His eyes never leave her body as she heads inside carrying her purse.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

RANDY PULASKI, (24) tall, thin, acne scars, cheap shirt and tie, a shoulder holster with a gun, sits on the king bed.

JOEY AMADIO, (35) shirtless, muscular, rolls a C-note, then snorts an interstate line of blow from the granite desk top. It practically lifts him off his feet.

On the TV, a Cubs game, NO SOUND.

In front of the window, a platform suspended from cables creeps downward, revealing a WINDOW WASHER in gray overalls.

Joey opens a brief case filled with cash. He pulls out a wad of bills, stuffs it into an hotel envelope, opens the sliding door to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY -- NIGHT

Joey emerges, leans over the railing, hands the envelope to the window washer then places a finger to his lips, "shhhhh."

The window washer pulls a lever on his pulley system.

WINDOW WASHER

You no worry, Mr. Joey.

The platform rises away, behind it, the fading LIGHT of a summer evening.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Joey closes the slider behind him, picks up the rolled bill, snorts another line. Powder falls from his nose.

RANDY

You're wasting it.

JOEY

Get used to excess, dude. Didn't take your old man long to dig it.

Joey snorts another line.

RANDY

I'm not my old man.

JOEY

Lose that gun for crissake. The bitch won't walk through the fucking door.

RANDY

I'm not vice. What kind of hooker won't figure that?

JOEY

Hey! You think I'm bringing in some skank that leans in car windows? She's class.

RANDY

She's just another whore. And we don't need witnesses putting us here. We got cameras in the hall.

Joey shakes the rolled up C-note in Randy's face.

JOEY

Who's going to believe we checked in here to watch a Cub game? We're partying with hookers and blow. Got it? And you treat her like a lady.

(MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)
We have a little fun with the bitch.
Show some respect. Then we fuck her
in the ass.

Randy opens the briefcase full of money. Stares.

RANDY
You fuck her, and pay her out of
your half.

Joey slams the case closed. He stares at Randy for a beat,
then lays out some more blow. Randy grabs a sealed package
of the white powder from inside a duffel bag.

RANDY (CONT'D)
And snort this shit from your half
too. I'm not putting my money up my
nose. I got other plans.

Joey grabs Randy's arm, spins him around.

JOEY
You don't flash this money,
understand?

RANDY
Why not? Who's going to give a shit
about four dead scumbags in the burbs?

JOEY
They weren't all scum! It was
botched. And we lay low.

RANDY
They shot each other. So don't tell
me how to spend my money.

Joey removes the package of coke from Randy's hand, puts it
back in the duffel, then gets in Randy's face, very close.

JOEY
Didn't Daddy teach you the rules?
You do what I say, or you'll end up
with a planted piece in your hand
too.

Randy stands his ground as they breathe all over each other.
Then Joey smiles, gives him a friendly pat on the cheek,
hands him the rolled-up bill.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Time to get your nose as dirty as
your hands, like every other narc in
this city. And lose the fucking
gun!

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

The elevator opens and Nikki emerges, walks under surveillance
cameras behind smoky glass domes in the ceiling.

She knocks on the door. Joey opens it, holds a glass of
champagne.

JOEY

Hey. C'mon in. I'm Joey.

She looks past him at the empty room, then walks in slowly.

NIKKI

Nikki.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Joey closes the door, moves over to the ice bucket, picks up
another glass, kills the dripping bottle of Crystal.

JOEY

Champagne?

NIKKI

No, thanks.

He holds up the rolled bill.

JOEY

Maybe you'd like to powder your nose?

She shakes her head as Randy emerges from the bathroom. His
gun and holster gone. Nikki's demeanor changes.

NIKKI

Look I'm new with DeeDee. In case
she didn't tell you, I'm not up for
three ways.

JOEY

Yeah, yeah, I know. Costs extra.
Relax. We'll make it worth your
while. We got lots of cash and lots
of coke to share. Let's party.

Joey opens the brief case and pulls out a wad of Franklins.

JOEY (CONT'D)
What's it going to take? Two
thousand?

He throws a wad of money down. Nikki eyes the brief case.

He throws out another wad of bills.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Three?

Nikki stares at Randy, notices a scar under his eye.

FLASHBACK:

INT. A TENT, INFANTRY UNIT -- AFGHANISTAN -- NIGHT

Air thick with cigarette smoke and desert dust, LOW LIGHT,
SLOW MOTION. A gang of SOLDIERS, drinking, smoking.

Nikki's vision is BLURRY. The room spinning. A SOLDIER
laughs, a scar under his eye, raises a glass of beer. Cheers.

Her head falls back, and she spills her beer. The soldier
picks her up, carries her past other SOLDIERS, some also
passed out, into another space, private, lays her down on a
cot.

NIKKI
(barely conscious)
No.

He pulls her pants off.

BACK TO SCENE:

JOEY
C'mon. Relax. I'm tight with DeeDee.
My family set her up. No one's going
get hurt here.

She turns to face Joey.

NIKKI
I'll text DeeDee. She'll have another
girl here in half an hour.

Nikki sends a message on her phone, then walks toward the
door, but Randy is right in front of it, arms crossed, nose
running. He's agitated, jumpy.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Excuse, me please.

RANDY
My friend just paid good money for
you, bitch.

NIKKI
Get out of my way.

RANDY
Fuck you, you stupid cunt.

Randy grabs her by the throat. She uses an elbow technique to rip his hands away, and drive him backward.

He lunges forward, swings at her, but she controls his arm, flips him.

Randy jumps to his feet.

RANDY (CONT'D)
You fucking whore.

She spins, shoots a back kick into his chin that drives Randy into the wall, unconscious.

Nikki's leg buckles. She tries to stand, but Joey's arm envelopes her neck.

JOEY
Woah! Slow down, girl.

She jumps, plants both feet on the wall and pushes back on Joey, driving his back into the opposite wall and hitting his nose with her head.

Joey's dazed, bleeding, and Nikki breaks free, but he's alert enough to duck under her next kick.

He moves toward her, she blocks a punch, then he lands one.

Nikki is driven back. Blood runs from her nose.

JOEY (CONT'D)
You are a stupid, cunt. Now I'll
just take what I tried to pay for.

He moves toward her, a trained boxer. She goes low, sweeps his legs. Joey's head slams into the glass coffee table. It shatters.

He's dazed, laying in the broken glass. Blood everywhere.

NIKKI

Nobody takes anything from me. Ever again.

Joey gets up, swinging. Nikki spins. She is very fast and lands several punches and kicks, eventually shoots a flat hand, knuckles curled, right into his larynx.

Joey drops to the floor holding his neck, choking. Nikki notices his distress.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

She moves toward him, but can't take a second step: Randy points his gun at her chest.

RANDY

Stay away from him, you fucking cunt.

She freezes.

NIKKI

I need to help him. He's choking to death.

Randy's eyes move back and forth from Joey to Nikki.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You're letting him die.

As Randy looks down for the third time, Nikki's roundhouse kick knocks the gun from his hand as it FIRES.

Nikki is driven back, goes down, but she is up and spinning in an instant, and Randy is pummeled.

Eventually Nikki is airborne, way off the floor, her knee connecting with the side of his head.

Nikki's leg buckles on landing, but she gets quickly up and moves to Joey, his face BLUE.

She pounds on his chest, hard. Pumps it. She turns him over, pushes rhythmically on his back.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

C'mon, breathe.

(beat)

Cough! You sonofabitch.

No response. She feels for a pulse at his neck. Yanks her hand away.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Fuck!

She stands. Eyes the drugs, money, the gun on the floor. Randy, limp but breathing.

She notices blood on her white blouse, pulls the fabric away from her chest and sees a bullet in her shoulder area, blood all over a sexy bra. She stares at Randy.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You mother fucker!

She takes her blouse off. Uses it as a dressing, ties it tightly under her armpit, across the wound. It soaks up blood.

She sits on the bed, head in her hands. Takes several deep breaths, exhales slowly.

Then she gets up, steps over Randy. In his jacket, she finds a badge with an ID card, his picture, "Narcotics Division."

She reacts with exasperation. Defeat. Shakes her head.

She wipes her prints off the ID, puts it back in the jacket pocket, picks up her purse from the floor, steps over Randy into the bathroom.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Nikki stares at her face in the mirror, blood running from her nose, one eye on the moaning Randy.

NIKKI

(to her reflection)

Keep it together, soldier. Process.

She wads up toilet paper and pushes it inside a nostril until not visible.

She washes her face, PINK water swirls in the sink.

She dumps her purse out: a black t-shirt, makeup, wallet, a syringe, morphine, cell phone.

She puts on the shirt. Covers the bruise with foundation. Then fills a syringe.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki exits the bathroom holding the syringe, kneels down by Randy, pushes up his sleeve, injects him.

She moves over to the cash Joey tried to pay her, picks it up.

NIKKI

I'm no one's whore ever again.

She tosses the money on his dead body. It soaks up his blood as the door to the room closes behind Nikki.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

In jeans, no shirt, her upper body circled with white gauze stained with blood, Nikki pulls a coffee can from her freezer, dumps out cash. She stares at the small pile of money, shakes her head, then stuffs it into her hip pocket.

She dumps her purse on the kitchen counter and the contents tumble out, landing next to her bloody blouse: wallet, makeup, phone, then Randy's gun.

She rifles the wallet. It lands in a trash can followed by credit cards, driver's license.

Nikki picks up the phone, dials.

JENNY

(filtered)

Hello?

NIKKI

I need to see Emma. Are you home?

JENNY

(filtered)

Nikki? What number is this?

NIKKI

I don't have much time. I need my sister. Right now.

JENNY

(filtered)

What the hell, Nikki?

NIKKI

I'll knock on the door in five minutes.

JENNY
(filtered)
No. Don't come down here. I'll
come up.

NIKKI
Five minutes.

She opens a broom closet, pulls out an army duffel, lays it open on the bed. Contents of dresser drawers are dumped in.

She picks up a pillow, removes the case, carries it to the bathroom.

INT. NIKKI'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

She sweeps the medicine cabinet, dumping anything within reach into the pillow case: drug ampules, deodorant, an array of prescription pill bottles, syringes.

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Nikki tosses the pillow case into the duffel, then from a small desk, she grabs her laptop, brings it to the kitchen counter next to her phone. She pulls a hammer from a drawer and smashes them both, repeatedly.

Glass flies everywhere; small circuit boards are crushed. The hard disk is a pancake.

She wraps the gun with the blood stained blouse, puts it in her purse and throws the purse into the duffel as a KNOCK on the door SOUNDS, LOUD, metal on wood.

Nikki goes to the window, peeks out to the street, then heads to the door, looks through the peep hole, opens it.

JENNY WILSON, (40), surgical greens, hair streaked with gray, moves into the room carrying a back pack.

JENNY
What's so urgent, Nikki?

NIKKI
I'm leaving town for a while.

JENNY
You should have enough for the rest of the month.

NIKKI
I'll be gone longer than that.

JENNY
You better not be selling this shit,
Nikki.

NIKKI
I'm not a drug dealer.

Nikki grabs Jenny's shirt, twists and pulls her eye to eye.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
And I'm not a hooker either in case
you want to spread that word around.

Jenny averts her eyes. Nikki lets go.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
How much you got there?

Jenny holds out the backpack.

JENNY
Thirty centuries.

NIKKI
That's it?

JENNY
That's not good enough?

Nikki takes the backpack, opens it, dumps several Morphine ampules into the duffel. Throws the empty backpack to Jenny who catches it as her shirt sleeve creeps up revealing an artificial arm and hand from the elbow down.

NIKKI
What do I owe you?

JENNY
You're packing in a hurry.

NIKKI
How much?

JENNY
Fifteen hundred.

Nikki pulls cash from her pocket, counts the bills and hands them to her.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Where are you headed, Nikki?

NIKKI

Mexico.

JENNY

You're taking this shit across the border? Are you out of your fucking mind?

NIKKI

You don't need to worry, okay?

JENNY

Yes, I do. They can trace it back to me.

NIKKI

I said don't worry about it.
(beat)
I got a cab waiting.

JENNY

Fine, have a nice... vacation.

NIKKI

Thanks.

Nikki opens the door. Jenny stops half way out, faces her.

JENNY

You can't run away from yourself, Nikki.

NIKKI

I'll keep that in mind.

Beat.

JENNY

Wherever you're going, I'm sure there's a VA hospital nearby.

NIKKI

Has the world changed? Do the guys you got your arm blown off for suddenly give a fuck about us?

Jenny glances at her artificial limb.

JENNY

Whatever you're running from, Nikki... It's going to follow you.

The door closes, a concerned look on Nikki's face.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Randy sits at a table. DON PARKER, (40), suit and tie, faces him.

PARKER

So, you guys are having a party with this hooker. How'd you find her?

RANDY

Ask Joey.

PARKER

Joey's dead. Remember? What happened to him?

RANDY

Wake him up.

PARKER

He's dead. Not asleep. Who killed him?

RANDY

I was in the bathroom. That stuff makes you shit. You know that? I don't like that shit. I mean, I like to shit. You shit too, right?

PARKER

Yeah, that's how I catch up on my reading.

RANDY

I don't do that shit. Right? You get what I mean?

Parker looks over at the two-way glass, turns his palms upward, a "do you believe this" expression and a plea for instructions.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -- NIGHT -- INTERCUT

Lieutenant AARON STEVENS, (45), fit, nicer suit and CHARLIE BENSON, (55), hard face, watch the interview.

The door opens and TONY WINSLOW (35) enters, thick neck, beer gut. Cheap suit.

STEVENS
Detective Winslow. This is Charlie
Benson.

Winslow raises his hand to shake.

STEVENS (CONT'D)
Internal Affairs.

Winslow pulls his hand away.

WINSLOW
(to Stevens)
You're throwing a rookie cop to the
wolves before we hear him talk?

Benson doesn't react, way too experienced to be baited.

Stevens points to the door.

STEVENS
Outside.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR -- NIGHT

Stevens and Winslow emerge, close the door behind them.

STEVENS
I.A.D. called me, okay? They got
evidence that officer Pulaski and
the late Mr. Amadio are involved in
a quadruple homicide. Parker, the
cop interrogating him, is Chicago
Heights P.D.

WINSLOW
We got jurisdiction here too.

STEVENS
If it turns out someone other than
officer Pulaski killed Mr. Amadio,
then we investigate. Otherwise we
just offer hospitality to our guests.
That comes from way over my head.

Winslow shakes his head.

WINSLOW
They're hanging this kid because his
old man's a crook.
(angry)
So's my fucking father.

STEVENS
He looks dirty, Tony.

WINSLOW
Yeah, well, maybe. But you know
damn well that things aren't always
what they look like.

A.D.A. HAROLD THOMAS (35) a small guy, type-A, approaches
them, carries a brief case.

THOMAS
I'm with the district attorney's
office. You Benson?

STEVENS
He's inside. I'm Lieutenant Stevens.

Stevens shakes his hand.

STEVENS (CONT'D)
This is Detective Winslow, homicide.

Winslow shakes Thomas's hand, then they all go in.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Winslow, Stevens, Thomas, and Benson listen intently.

PARKER
This hooker, did you guys get rough
with her?

RANDY
(imitating)
I don't do three ways.

PARKER
She say that?

RANDY
Bitch. She's got fight, man. Fucking
whore. I'll kill her.

THOMAS
He's stoned out of his mind. We
can't interrogate him.

BENSON
He blew zero on a breathalyzer. We
read him his rights. He doesn't
want a lawyer.

THOMAS
He's on something. And he's not
sober enough to understand his rights.
We need to wait. I can't use anything
you get from this.

PARKER
Someone hit Randy. Right here.

Parker points to his throat.

PARKER (CONT'D)
Who hit him. Was that you?

THOMAS
That's it. Pull the plug.

RANDY
She did! She got fight.

STEVENS
He just implicated the prostitute.
That makes him a witness.

WINSLOW
And it makes Amadio's murder our
case. Our jurisdiction.

Thomas thinks about it.

BENSON
(to Thomas)
We can put four bodies on him.

More thinking, then a decision.

THOMAS
All of you can have the stupid
sonofabitch as soon as he sobers-up.
Then he gets a F.O.P. lawyer before
he answers any more questions. Now,
end it.

Stevens knocks on the two-way glass as the door to the room
bursts open.

COP OUTSIDE THE DOOR (O.S.)
Hey, you can't go in there!

HANK PULASKI (45) rolls in. He's short, barrel-chest, a
sawed-off Swartzenegger, bald as a pumpkin, and born angry.

Every suit in the room stares at him, arms bulging under a wife beater t-shirt.

Winslow stands, faces him.

WINSLOW
Detective Hank Pulaski. No need to introduce yourself. We all recognize you from your murder trial. You look ever shorter on TV.

PULASKI
Fuck you.

Pulaski points to Randy through the glass.

PULASKI (CONT'D)
That's my son you morons are treating like a murder suspect.

Thomas gets his body between Winslow and Pulaski.

THOMAS
Excuse me, Detective.
(to Pulaski)
I'm A.D.A. Harold Thomas. And your son is intoxicated. We're not asking him any questions until the drugs clear his system and his FOP attorney is present.

PULASKI
Fuck that. I'll get him a real lawyer.

Benson moves over to Pulaski. He's a full head taller.

BENSON
Good. You do that. Then I.A.D. will ask your dumb-fuck kid what he was doing in a hotel room with a dead mobster, a thousand dollar hooker, twenty keys of blow, and enough hundred dollar bills to buy a Lincoln Park condo.

PULASKI
That's just another day's work in the Narcotics division, asshole.

Benson can't help but smirk at that.

BENSON

For the Pulaski family, I'm sure it is.

Pulaski and Benson stare their contempt at one another. Stevens caught in the middle, and much smaller, shrinks away.

EXT. HALSTED STREET -- NIGHT

Nikki clad in black fleece, tennis shoes, a WhiteSox cap, duffel on her back, walks along the sidewalk. She looks both ways, sees no one, casually drops her purse into a trash can, then steps into the street and hails a cab.

INT. UNION STATION -- NIGHT

Nikki approaches a ticket window, pulls her cap lower, speaks through the bullet proof glass to a CLERK, head down.

NIKKI

One way to Ann Arbor, please.

She puts a hundred dollar bill into the metal tray under the glass, takes a ticket, keeps her head down. As she moves away, the clerk puts several bills in the tray.

CLERK

Ma'am! Your change.

Nikki turns around and bumps into another CUSTOMER in line. Her cap is knocked upwards, and she ends up staring right at a surveillance camera behind the clerk.

NIKKI

(pissed off)

Thanks.

EXT. ANN ARBOR STREET -- DAY

Normal Saturday traffic for a business district. A few pedestrians. Nikki, cap low, gets off a city bus after it grinds to a stop. She walks immediately into an alley, passes a few rear doors, stops at one marked DOJO.

She holds the door handle, hesitates, takes a deep breath, goes in.

INT. JUDO CLINIC -- DAY

A hallway framed by doors leading to the men's and women's locker rooms. Still carrying her duffel, Nikki looks around.

At the end of the hallway is an opening, no door, beyond it the dojo. She moves to the threshold, peeks in at a sparring session.

INT. DOJO -- DAY

The instructor, TOM HAZEN, (18) solid build, dimpled chin, baby face, a black belt tied around his gi, his back to Nikki, "referees" as a SMALLER KID and BIGGER KID spar.

MORE STUDENTS sit against the walls, awaiting their turn. The fighters wear pads, helmets with wire grid goalie masks.

The bigger kid lands a straight punch, and the smaller kid goes down.

TOM

(stop)

Mate! Right there.

Tom holds the bigger kid back, then approaches the Smaller kid, kneels to his level.

TOM (CONT'D)

You okay?

The smaller kid gets to his feet.

SMALLER KID

Yeah. I'm just... a little tired.

Tom pulls him aside, close to Nikki, his back still to her, speaks firmly to the kid, but not loud, no anger.

TOM

You never admit to being tired!

Nikki smiles, laughs, silently.

TOM (CONT'D)

You never show fear. You never show weakness.

SMALLER KID

Yes, Sensei.

TOM

Now listen. He's bigger than you, and he's throwing punches. Are you going to beat him by countering between techniques?

SMALLER KID
No, Sensei.

TOM
So use your Judo skills.

Tom takes his arm and pulls it, as if the kid is punching him.

TOM (CONT'D)
Wait for him to commit, then *Kuzushi*.
Break his balance.

Tom pulls the arm farther than the punch, pulling the kid off balance.

TOM (CONT'D)
Tsukuri. Turn.

Tom turns the kid's body and his own.

TOM (CONT'D)
Kake. Throw.

He pulls the kid off the ground and gently puts him down on the mat. At this point, Tom notices Nikki, and she sees his face for the first time. She reacts. Shocked.

TOM (CONT'D)
Hi. Can I help you?

Nikki steps back into the SHADOW of the hallway, taking short breaths, leans against the wall, as if sucker punched. Tom comes to the threshold.

TOM (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

NIKKI
Yeah. Yeah, I'm... I'm fine. I was just... I'm sorry to interrupt. I figured Eric would be back here, but... everything's changed around.

TOM
He's up front.

Tom points to the front entrance of the dojo, a matching open doorway, beyond it a small tiled foyer, reception desk, a glass case full of trophies, and the street entrance.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey Dad! There's someone here to
see you.

ERIC HAZEN, (45), gray at the temples, tall, long arms,
emerges from behind the reception desk. He's ripped, but
very thin, a black belt around his gi.

As Eric moves across the threshold, he bows respectfully.

ERIC

Osu.

When his bare feet hit the wood floor, Eric looks up and
sees Nikki. He stops, stares.

Nikki kicks her tennis shoes off. She bows slightly, moves
into the dojo.

NIKKI

Osu.

It's a staring contest, and all the students and Tom are
watching, curious.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Hi, Eric.

ERIC

Hello, Nikki.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Two shower stalls, a few lockers and a bench. The door closes
behind Nikki and Eric as they face each other just inside.

ERIC

What the hell are you doing here,
Nikki?

NIKKI

I need a medic.

She pulls her shirt off. The wrapped gauze is RED with blood.
He reacts, his anger turns to concern due to the gravity of
her injury.