



STARLING

PILOT FURY

Written by

Cynthia Michaels

Based on the Awakening series novels by C.A. Michaels

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Contact information

DIGITAL REVERENCE LLC

email: digitalreverence@gmail.com

Website: www.digitalreverence.net/starling

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

MICHAEL (30s) clean shaven, shirtless, his lean frame is marked by faint scars and a restless energy in his tired eyes. LAUREN (late 20s) sharp eyes behind square-rimmed glasses, her dark hair tied back in a no-nonsense knot, lie close in bed, whispering about their future. Michael slides his hand onto Lauren's back, and it slithers down to her butt, he smiles affectionately. She giggles.

MICHAEL

So, this is what I'm thinking. Two kids. A boy and a girl.

LAUREN

And a dog. You keep forgetting the dog.

They laugh, kiss. A fleeting moment of happiness.

A LOUD CRACK occurs downstairs.

LAUREN (cont'd)

(whisper)
Did you hear that?

MICHAEL

Stay here.

INT. STAIRWELL / LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Michael descends. The house creaks.

Suddenly the front door CRASHES inward. Three masked men charge in, knives and crowbars gleaming.

Michael fights, desperate. A blade stabs into his side. He collapses, alive but bleeding.

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

Lauren SCREAMS. Two men drag her; one ransacks the dresser.

MASKED MAN #1

Shut her up!

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

The burglars drag Lauren downstairs. Michael groans on the floor.

The door EXPLODES inward again — this time by force.

LIEUTENANT DAWN HUDSON (early 30s) storms in, gun raised. Striking red hair and piercing hazel-green eyes. Worldly, sense of purpose. Command radiates from her voice.

DAWN

Starling PD! Drop it!

Behind her, ROHAN VARMA (Mohican), CHRIS REINHARDT, and STEPHANIE TAYLOR fan out.

One robber panics, opens fire.

GUNFIGHT ERUPTS.

Bullets shred drywall. Glass bursts. Officers return fire. One robber drops screaming, another collapses when Rohan hits his shoulder with his sidearm.

The third man grips Lauren with a knife to her throat.

MASKED MAN #3

Nobody moves or she dies!

Dawn steadies her aim, voice cold as steel.

DAWN

You're done. This is your last chance.

His resolve cracks. He lets Lauren go. The knife clatters to the floor.

Officers cuff the men. Lauren rushes to Michael, clutching him as he groans in pain.

Dawn lowers her weapon, steps back toward the kitchen. Her eyes sweep the wreckage. Broken furniture, blood, shattered glass. The weight hits her.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

DETECTIVE SEN CHOO (30s), a Korean-American, pulls up in a Starling PD police cruiser loud banging music can be heard as he sings along with, a well-known metal song. He turns the car off and steps out. He walks to the front door and enters.

INT. FOYER

One of the Masked men draws their weapon and begins to fire at Choo.

DAWN
Choo! Look out!

Dawn fires once, precise. The man goes down, lifeless.

Silence crashes over the room. Dawn's chest heaves: her hand shakes. She looks down at the service weapon in her trembling grasp. The first time she's ever fired to kill.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Choo and Rohan walk to her. Choo reaches for her weapon. Her trembling hands give it up and her knees buckle. She falls into Rohan.

ROHAN

I got you, boss, we got you! We'll take you back to the station.

CHOO

You'll meet with your lawyer, Paul, right?

DAWN

Yeah.

ROHAN

Then there's the interview, conducted by Internal Affairs, with the lead homicide detective, district attorney, and the independent police auditor. I'm not sure if your sister BONNIE can be part of this.

DAWN

I know the protocol. Just let's get this over with.

ROHAN

I need your sidearm and your body cam, Huds.

DAWN

I get it and my badge.

She hands them all over to him. They walk her out of the house as RITA JACKSON and MARTIN MALONE take Michael out on a stretcher. Lauren is with them. Other First responders arrive to clean up the mess.

ROHAN

You won't be able to talk to Lauren or Michael either.

Lauren hears that as she walks passed them.

LAUREN

I will testify. Officer Hudson acted accordingly!

CHOO
That's enough, Mrs Lasher.

LAUREN
No, is it not. I will testify. She
saved my husband's life!

ROHAN
Okay, then, I will note that.

They walk out of the home.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOME

Rohan puts Dawn in the backseat of his cruiser.

INT. ROHAN'S CRUISER

Dawn sits in the back and closes her eyes.

ROHAN
We got you, boss. This is the first
time you've used your weapon in over
fourteen years on the job. Don't
worry. You'll get through this and be
back before you know it.

DAWN
Yeah. Just, how do I tell my family?

ROHAN
You'll figure it out.

EXT. STARLING PD - NIGHT

Rohan exits the cruiser and walks around to the back for the
car. He opens the door and Dawn steps out.

She turns to him.

DAWN
Can we do this tomorrow?

ROHAN
Afraid not. You know the drill.

DAWN
Yean. Thanks for making me human.

ROHAN
You got it.

INT. STARLING PD CONFERENCE ROOM

Dawn sits as her COMMANDER PETER BROWN enters along with CHIEF OF POLICE MARIE PATERSON, the first black chief of police.

MARIE

Huds, we know this is a first for you. This is just formality. The investigator will be asking your team about you. They will ask questions about your mental health, your over well being, everything. Is there anything we need to know?

DAWN

Just the normal stuff. My allergies, my grieving. But me shooting the perp isn't about that. I was protecting Choo. My body cam will show that.

MARIE

Okay. How is your head, did we let you back too soon?

DAWN

My head is good, Chief. There is no time limit on grief, but the man was shooting at Choo. I had to protect him!

MARIE

Okay, good. They interviewer will ask Rohan, Chris, and Stephanie the usual questions.

INT. STARLING PRECINCT — INTERVIEW ROOM — DAY

A sterile room, plain walls, a table, and a recording device.

Choo sits with Rohan and Stephanie across from a POLICE INTERVIEWER (40s, clipped, professional).

The INTERVIEWER leans forward, pen ready.

INTERVIEWER

Let's address the concern directly.
Lieutenant Hudson's mental health.

Has her grieving compromised her ability to make sound judgments in the field?

Rohan shifts slightly, his eyes steady.

ROHAN

She's still grieving, yes.
She lost Luke. She lost Rachel.
Those wounds don't close overnight.

Stephanie folds her hands, voice calm but firm.

STEPHANIE

But grief hasn't clouded her
judgment. She's sharper than anyone
I've worked with.

Choo leans in, his tone unwavering.

CHOO

When she pulled the trigger—
it wasn't out of anger, or fear.
She killed the man because he was
about to put a bullet in me. She
saved my life.

The Interviewer jots notes, studying each of them carefully.

INTERVIEWER

So you're telling me Lieutenant
Hudson acted within the bounds of
necessity?

ROHAN

Without hesitation. Her head was
clear. Her aim was true. And her
judgment, unshaken.

The Interviewer pauses, then clicks the pen shut.

The silence says more than any word.

The INTERVIEWER scribbles, then looks to Chris.

INTERVIEWER
And you, Detective Reinhardt.
You were there.

Chris leans forward, steady, recalling the scene.

CHRIS
I watched it happen. The suspect had
the drop on Choo. One second later,
he would've fired. Dawn reacted.
Fast, precise, necessary.

The Interviewer jots notes, studying each of them carefully.
The team exhales, relieved—but the door BURSTS OPEN.

Two stern INTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICERS step inside.

IA OFFICER #1
This is an active Internal Affairs
matter now.

Everyone stays seated.

Tension rises. The outside investigator looks irritated but
steps aside.

IA OFFICER #2
We're not here for clean statements.
We're here for the truth.

Stephanie folds her arms, bracing.

STEPHANIE
Funny. That's what we just gave you.

The IA officers smirk, setting their files on the table.
They're not here to listen—they're here to trap.

INT. STARLING HQ — TECH ROOM — DAY

Lauren, precise and steady, stands with Chief MARIE PATERSON)40s). She points to a bank of screens.

LAUREN

The house was wired with a Razor camera system. High-end. Full-angle coverage. If Dawn fired out of necessity, it'll be right here.

She pulls up a feed.

Static flickers across the screen—then a clear angle of Dawn, weapon raised.

The suspect's gun visible in the frame.

LAUREN (cont'd)

This... this changes everything.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE — EVENING

Dawn sits across from PAUL MARTIN, mid-40s, sharp suit, seasoned eyes. Papers and evidence photos scatter across his desk.

PAUL

They're coming at you from every angle. The private investigator, IA, wrongful death suit. Allies and enemies under the same roof.

DAWN

So what are my odds?

PAUL

With this footage? Better. But you need to be calm on the stand. No fire. No edge. Let the facts speak.

DAWN

And if they don't?

Paul leans in, steady, unflinching.

PAUL
Then I'll fight for you myself.

Dawn exhales, hazel-green eyes weary but strong.

For the first time, a flicker of hope glints through the weight.

PAUL (cont'd)
Dawn, one more thing.

DAWN
What?

PAUL
Bonnie can't be part of this. She can be there for you in support, but that is all. The wrongful death isn't coming from her office. It's coming from the victim's lawyer.

DAWN
(Smirks) Victim's lawyer, the son of a bitch I killed? Are you serious?

PAUL
Yeah. I know it sucks but they have filed and the paperwork just came across my desk.

CUT TO:

INT. STARLING PD — PRIVATE COURTROOM — NEXT DAY

A tense, quiet courtroom inside Starling PD.

Dawn sits at the plaintiff's table with PAUL MARTIN, her lawyer.

Her family surrounds her: FRANK, ALANA, BONNIE, JACKIE, JACOB, AUSTIN, and TRUDY.

Across the room, the MASKED MAN'S FAMILY watches with cold fury.

Chief Marie Paterson sits sternly, observing.

Rohan, Choo, Stephanie, Chris, and Lauren sit behind Dawn as support.

The JUDGE, mid-60s, authoritative, addresses the room.

JUDGE

Lieutenant Hudson is charged with use
of deadly force. Testimony and
evidence will determine the outcome.

Paul nods at Dawn, who swallows hard.

Michael sits with Lauren and her family along with his
parents and his sister. Michael stands, calm but earnest.

MICHAEL

I was the victim that night. Without
Lieutenant Hudson's action, I
wouldn't be here. She saved my life.

The courtroom murmurs. Dawn tightens her grip on her
notebook.

Lauren steps forward, composed.

LAUREN

The house had a Razor camera system.
Every angle captured. The suspect had
a gun. Dawn acted exactly as needed.
She was precise, calculated,
protecting lives.

The Judge nods, reviewing the video feed on the courtroom
monitor.

CHOO

Lieutenant Hudson acted as anybody
would when lives are on the line. She
saved my life as the masked man was
firing at me. If not for her, I would
be dead too, Dawn Hudson is a hero!

they all watch the video as it plays on a big screen. Clear evidence shows the masked man raising his weapon, then collapsing after Dawn fires.

The judge bangs the gavel. Silence falls.

JUDGE

Case dismissed. Officer-involved shooting deemed justified under Section 18. Clear and lawful.

The masked man's brother, mid-30s, rises suddenly.

A knife flashes in his hand.

VICTOR STRATTON

This isn't over!

He lunges toward Dawn.

Dawn freezes, heart racing.

Rohan, Choo, Stephanie, and Chris react instantly. Choo grabs the brother, yanking him backward.

The knife clatters to the floor.

The courtroom erupts in chaos.

Dawn exhales shakily, gripping her chair. Her family closes around her protectively. Austin buries his face in Trudy's shoulder.

Paul Martin places a hand on her shoulder.

PAUL

You did what you had to do.
That's the truth.

Dawn looks to her family, then her team.

Rohan gives a small nod. Choo offers a reassuring smile. Stephanie and Chris exhale quietly, still on edge.

Dawn's eyes drift to the monitor again, seeing the evidence that saved her career.

DAWN
(quietly, to herself)
One day at a time.

Everyone hugs her as they leave the courtroom. The masked man's family leaves after them and outside, they don't say anything and just leave. The brother has been taken away and held in contempt.

Dawn hugs her sisters and shakes hands with Paul.

EXT. STARLING COURTHOUSE — DAY

FLASHES. REPORTERS swarm like wolves, microphones thrust at Dawn.

REPORTER #1
Lieutenant Hudson, how does it feel
to kill a man?

REPORTER #2
Any comment about excessive force?

REPORTER #3
Do you fear retaliation?

Dawn shields her eyes, forcing her way through. Her team push back reporters.

ROHAN
Back it up. Give her space.

DAWN
(under her breath)
Business as usual. Let's move.

They funnel her to the waiting car. She rides in the car with Choo. Rohan and the others head home for the night.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNA CAFE — AFTERNOON

The cafe is decorated in moon and stars theme. Dawn and Choo sit at their favorite table. The table is shaped like the moon. It bears a full giant moon on the table in gloss coating. The lamp above is also moon shaped and gives off the glow of the moon.

The lunch crowd hums. Silverware clinks, muted chatter fills the room. Sunlight filters through the blinds, cutting lines of light across a corner booth where Dawn sits across from Choo.

A plate of food rests in front of her, untouched except for a few distracted stabs of her fork. Choo has already made a dent in his sandwich, chewing slow, watching her.

CHOO

You haven't taken more than one bite.

DAWN

(staring at her plate)
I'm not really hungry.

Choo sets his sandwich down, studying her.

CHOO

You really should eat. I mean if I know you, and I think I do, you only had a plain muffin for breakfast and a Pepsi.

She leans back against the booth, arms crossed tight. And nods to him with a smirk.

DAWN

You know me too well. It's not supposed to feel like this.

CHOO

Like what?

DAWN

Like I'm the one who did something wrong.

(MORE)

DAWN (cont'd)
I keep replaying it. Over and over.
Him dropping. The sound. His face.

Choo lets the silence hang, then leans forward.

CHOO
Huds, you did your job. You stopped a
man who was hurting people.

Dawn shakes her head, voice barely above a whisper.

DAWN
I killed him.

Her eyes gloss over. She blinks hard, trying to keep the
tears back.

DAWN (cont'd)
I killed Rick Cane too. And Tony
McQuade. But that was different. That
was survival. This time I pulled the
trigger before he could even—

Her voice cracks. She grips the edge of the table.

DAWN (cont'd)
What if I could've stopped him
another way?

Choo's voice stays calm, steady, anchoring her.

CHOO
He pulled a weapon. You had seconds.
You didn't choose wrong. You chose
life. Mine. Everyone else's.

Dawn presses her lips tight.

A WAITRESS approaches, smiling nervously.

WAITRESS
Lieutenant Hudson?

Dawn looks up, startled.

WAITRESS
I just wanted to say... thank you. For
what you did. We're all safer because
of you.

Dawn forces a polite smile, nods.

DAWN
Thank you.

The waitress leaves. Dawn exhales, shaking her head.

DAWN (cont'd)
They don't understand.

CHOO
They don't have to.

Before Dawn can answer, an OLDER MAN passing their booth
stops.

OLDER MAN
Lieutenant, I read about you in the
paper. Took guts, standing your
ground. Starling needs more like you.

Dawn stiffens. She mutters something resembling "thanks."

The man pats her on the shoulder and moves on. Dawn looks at
Choo, almost pleading.

DAWN
You see? They think I'm some kind of
hero. But all I feel is—

She struggles for the word.

DAWN (cont'd)
Empty.

Choo leans forward, lowering his voice.

CHOO
Empty is normal. First time you take
a life on duty... it's not glory. It's
weight. It stays with you.

Her hands tremble around her fork.

Choo's phone BUZZES. He checks the screen.

CHOO (cont'd)
It's MAGGIE, my wife.

He answers, voice softening immediately.

CHOO (cont'd)
Hey, love. (pause, listening) Yeah.
She's right here.

Choo lowers the phone, nodding at Dawn.

CHOO (cont'd)
She wants to talk to you.

Dawn hesitates, then takes the phone.

DAWN
(quiet)
Hello?

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Dawn. I just wanted to thank you. For what you did. You kept Sen safe. You kept others safe.

Dawn's lip trembles. She swallows hard.

DAWN

I don't... I don't feel like thanks is what I deserve.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

That's what makes you the kind of officer we trust. You carry it. You care. Don't let the guilt eat you alive.

Dawn blinks, unable to speak. Finally—

DAWN

Thank you, Maggie.

She hands the phone back to Choo quickly, afraid her voice will crack. Choo takes it, gives her a reassuring look, then finishes the call.

Dawn stares at her untouched plate, eyes distant.

CHOO

One day you'll eat again without thinking about it. For now, just breathe.

She nods faintly, not trusting her voice. The din of the diner goes on around them, life moving forward, but Dawn is still.

Her fork clinks as she finally takes a small bite — forcing herself.

Choo gives the barest hint of a smile, staying silent, letting her find her own way back.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HUDSON RANCH HOUSE — BACK DECK — NIGHT

Dawn walks up the steps to the deck, exhausted, still wearing her courtroom attire.

Jacob sits in a chair, mug of tea in hand, waiting.

The makeshift hockey rink, built with Luke, glows faintly under the floodlights.

Jacob stands as she approaches, offering the mug.

JACOB
Thought you could use this.

Dawn takes it, managing a weak smile.

DAWN
Thanks.

They sit side by side, silence stretching between them.

Dawn stares at the rink, memories of Luke and Rachel surfacing.

DAWN (cont'd)
You know I... I'm cleared. Thank you for this though. For coming home first and getting the tea ready.

Jacob sets his mug down, placing a steady hand on hers.

JACOB
You survived. That's what matters. One day at a time.

Dawn exhales, leaning into him slightly.

DAWN
I needed to hear that. Between the investigator, IA, and the wrongful death suit... I feel like the city was stacked against me.

JACOB
And you still came out standing.
That's Dawn Hudson.

Dawn swallows, eyes glistening.

DAWN
I just... need to process it.
Talk to the people I lost.
Luke, Rachel... even Mom.

Jacob nods, understanding.

JACOB
Then do it. Start with them.

Dawn leans back, letting herself take a moment.

The rink glimmers faintly, a frozen memory of what she and Luke built.

She sips her tea, grounding herself in the quiet night.

DAWN
You got this!

Jacob squeezes her hand gently. They sit together, watching the rink in reflective silence. She leave Jacob a note telling him she's going to the cemetery.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARLING CEMETERY — NEXT MORNING

Dawn walks slowly among the headstones, clutching a thermos of tea.

The sky is gray, quiet.

She stops at LUKE's marker first, kneeling to brush off leaves.

DAWN
Luke... I wish you were here.
I did what I had to do. I saved
lives. But it still hurts.

Rising, she moves to RACHEL's grave. Pauses, exhales.

DAWN (cont'd)
Rachel... I hope you know I tried.
Every single time.

Dawn lingers, speaking as if they can hear her.

Tears glimmer in her hazel-green eyes.

DAWN (cont'd)
I'm still trying to be the person
you'd want me to be.

Finally, she walks to her mother's grave: SAMANTHA MARIE HUDSON, a former Starling Police officer.

Dawn rests her hand on the cold stone, voice steady but soft.

DAWN (cont'd)
Mom... I hope I made you proud today.
I did what you'd expect from a
Hudson.

She breathes deeply, lingering a moment longer, then straightens, gathering herself.

CUT TO:

EXT. MICHAEL AND LAUREN'S HOUSE — MORNING

Dawn approaches the modest home. The door opens, Michael and Lauren greet her with tentative smiles.

MICHAEL
Lieutenant Hudson. I can't thank you
enough.

DAWN
You're safe now. That's what matters.
How are you both holding up?

Michael gestures to the living room, still a mess from the home invasion.

LAUREN
We're okay... scars and all.

Dawn nods, relieved to see them intact.

DAWN
That Razor footage helped, didn't it?

LAUREN
Saved you. And us.

They share a quiet, grateful nod.

DAWN
I'll check in again soon. Be careful.

CUT TO:

INT. HUDSON RANCH HOUSE — MORNING

Dawn enters her home. The phone rings. She hesitates, then answers.

DAWN (cont'd)
Hello?

A VOICE—gruff, threatening—booms from the line.

VICTOR(V.O.)
You think this is over? It's just
begun.

Dawn stiffens, glancing at the caller ID. More calls start flooding in: threats from the same number, messages, texts.

Her hands shake slightly as she sets the phone down.

DAWN
(muttering to herself)
One day at a time... tell no one about
this, that will make you look weak.
You're strong. Just do your thing.

She sips her tea, steeling herself for what comes next. She changes her clothes, kisses Jacob, Austin, and Trudy goodbye as she heads out to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARLING PD — MORNING

Dawn's SUV pulls into the precinct parking lot.

Her team is already gathered outside: Rohan, Choo, Stephanie, and Chris.

They watch her step out, still carrying the weight of the courtroom and cemetery visits.

ROHAN
You ready?

Dawn nods, straightening her coat and taking a deep breath.

DAWN
Let's get to work.

Dawn walks past officers and staff, nodding politely but focused.

CHOO
(quietly, beside her)
You've got this.

CHRIS
The media is waiting for you. They
have gathered in the back.

DAWN
Great. Let's do this.

CHOO
Do this we shall.

They all laugh and walk out to the back area.

EXT. STARLING PD — BACK LAWN — DAY

A small stage is set up outside the precinct.

Reporters and cameras are gathered, microphones pointed.

Banners of STARLING POLICE DEPARTMENT flutter in the wind.

Dawn steps up to the podium, flanked by Chief Marie Paterson
and Commander PETER BROWN.

Her hazel-green eyes scan the crowd. Calm, firm, commanding.

DAWN
Thank you all for being here. I want
to be clear: the events at Michael
and Lauren Hunter's home was tragic.
Because of the training, teamwork,
and quick response of my colleagues
we were able to save lives.

She pauses, glancing briefly at her team standing behind
her.

DAWN (CONT'D)
No one else was harmed thanks to
their bravery.
(MORE)

DAWN (CONT'D)

I want to assure the public that Starling Police Department takes the safety of this community seriously.

A reporter shouts a question.

REPORTER

Lieutenant Hudson, the suspect died. How do you respond to the family's outrage and the threats you've received?

Dawn's expression remains steady.

DAWN

Every life matters. I acted to protect my team and the innocent. The evidence supports that my actions were necessary and lawful.

Another reporter presses:

REPORTER 2

Some say this was excessive force. Are you worried about public perception?

Dawn inhales, her voice calm but unwavering.

DAWN

My responsibility is to the people who depend on me in life-or-death situations. I will continue to serve this community with integrity and honor. The threats against me haven't been made public, but thanks to you, they are and I will address those.

She pauses for a moment.

DAWN (cont'd)

To those who wish to threaten me or my family, my team, the Starling PD, I suggest you move on. The evidence shows I am in the right of my actions.

She steps back from the podium. Flashbulbs pop. Cameras whirl.

Her team and Chief Paterson exchange nods of approval.

Dawn's phone buzzes in her pocket. She glances at it: more calls from the masked man's brother.

Her jaw tightens, but she keeps her composure for the media.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUDSON RANCH HOUSE — BACK DECK — AFTERNOON

Dawn steps onto the deck, tea in hand, still carrying the tension from the media event.

Jacob sits in a chair, the makeshift rink faintly glowing under the floodlights.

Jacob rises as she approaches, offering her a warm, steadying look.

JACOB

Tough day?

DAWN

The questions... the flashing lights...
it's like reliving it all over again.

Jacob sits beside her.

JACOB

You got through it. You faced the
city. And now you're home.

Dawn gazes at the rink, memories of Luke and Rachel flickering.

DAWN

I'm cleared. But the threats... the
calls keep coming. The brother won't
stop.

Jacob takes her hand, grounding her.

JACOB
Then we handle it one step at a time.
Like we always do.

Dawn sips her tea, letting herself relax just a little.

INT. HUDSON RANCH HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — EVENING

Frank, along with her sister are gathered around the kitchen table. The family is a mix of concern, tension, and quiet support.

FRANK
You held your own, Dawn. That's all that matters.

ALANA
We know it's not easy. But we've got you.

JACKIE
And if anyone tries to touch you, they'll regret it.

Austin leans into Trudy, watching Dawn carefully.

AUSTIN
Mom... are you okay?

Dawn looks around, absorbing the love and support.

DAWN
I will be. One day at a time.

EXT. HUDSON RANCH HOUSE — NIGHT

Dawn sits alone on the deck later, staring at the rink.

Her phone buzzes, calls, texts, and messages from the masked man's brother continue relentlessly.

She ignores them for a moment, taking a slow sip of tea.

DAWN
(to herself)
One day at a time...

The quiet is broken by the distant howl of a siren, the reminder that danger never fully leaves Starling.

Jacob joins her, carrying two mugs of tea. He hands one to her.

JACOB
You can't carry the city on your own.
Let me help.

Dawn leans against him slightly, drawing comfort.

DAWN
I just... need a moment to breathe. I'm
on administrative leave for I don't
know how long.

JACOB
Understandable. That's procedure.
Good, then we can have fun. Maybe get
your mind off the incident.

DAWN
Yeah, true.

They sit in companionable silence, the rink and night stretching before them.

INT. DAWN'S HOUSE — KITCHEN — MORNING

The kitchen is quiet, the hum of the refrigerator filling the stillness. A half-empty tea pot steams on the counter, untouched. Dawn sits at the table in her robe, hair damp from the shower, staring at the phone in her hand.

Her breakfast, hash browns, four sausage links, and an egg white, sits cold on the plate. She hasn't touched it.

She exhales shakily, presses her palms into her eyes.

But the image of the man falling, the gunshot, his face, it won't leave her.

She picks up her phone, thumb hovering over her contacts.

She scrolls past Dad, Austin, Jacob, until she stops at: DR. CHRISTINA MARTIN.

Her thumb trembles over the name. She hesitates.

DAWN (cont'd)
(whispering to herself)
You need help, Hudson. Just call.

Her hand shakes as she presses dial.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
This is Dr. Martin.

Dawn swallows, her voice catching.

DAWN
Christina... it's Dawn Hudson. I... I
think I need to talk to you.

Her eyes well with tears as silence stretches on the other end.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
Of course, Dawn. I'm here. When can
you come in?

Dawn grips the phone tighter, like it's the only thing keeping her steady.

DAWN
Today. I can't wait.

Her voice cracks.

DAWN (cont'd)
Please.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
Then today it is. Come by at eleven.
We'll take it one step at a time.

Dawn exhales, almost collapsing into relief.

DAWN

Thank you...

She ends the call, sets the phone down. Her hands cover her face, shoulders shaking as the tears she's been holding back finally fall.

INT. STARLING PD – CHRISTINA MARTIN'S OFFICE – LATE MORNING

A modest, calm space tucked inside the bustling precinct. Bookshelves lined with psychology texts, a soft lamp in the corner, two chairs angled toward each other. The faint noise of officers outside filters through the closed door.

Dawn sits stiffly across from Dr. Christina Martin, composed and attentive. Dawn's uniform jacket rests on her lap, hands fidgeting with the cuff.

CHRISTINA

(softly)

I read the report. I know you've already been through the interviews, the review board. But none of that matters right now. What matters is you.

Dawn stares at the floor, jaw tight.

DAWN

I did what I had to. But... it doesn't feel right. It's not going away.

CHRISTINA

It's not supposed to. Not this soon. You're carrying trauma, Dawn. And guilt. That takes time to work through.

Christina leans forward slightly.

CHRISTINA (cont'd)
That's why I can't clear you. Not yet.

Dawn looks up sharply.

DAWN
You're grounding me?

CHRISTINA
I'm recommending you remain on paid administrative leave. Minimum two weeks.

Dawn scoffs, bitter.

DAWN
Two weeks? What the hell am I supposed to do with that? Sit around, think about what I did? Watch the news replay it on a loop?

CHRISTINA
You're supposed to heal. To give yourself space.

DAWN
(snarling)
I don't do space. I work. I solve cases. I don't sit on the sidelines while my team carries the weight.

CHRISTINA
Your team can handle the weight. Right now, you can't.

The words hang in the air. Dawn grips her jacket tighter, blinking hard against the sting in her eyes.

DAWN
I've been through worse.

CHRISTINA
Yes. And every time you force yourself forward without stopping, it piles higher.

Dawn... this is the first time you've had to kill a man on duty. That changes something inside. You can't bury it. If you try, it'll come back when you least expect it.

Dawn exhales sharply, almost a laugh, shaking her head.

DAWN
So what, I just sit home and play
Monopoly with my sisters? Pretend I'm
fine?

CHRISTINA
No. You come here. You talk. You take
Austin to the rink. You breathe. You
remind yourself you're human before
you go back to being a cop.

Dawn studies her, caught between anger and exhaustion.

DAWN
Two weeks.

CHRISTINA
Two weeks. Then we'll reevaluate
together.

Silence. Dawn finally nods, defeated but knowing she doesn't
have a choice.

DAWN
Fine. But don't expect me to like it.

Christina gives the faintest smile.

CHRISTINA
I wouldn't.

Dawn rises, slings her jacket over her shoulder. For the
first time, she looks small in the doorway, stripped of her
usual command.

She goes to her office to grab a few things before leaving
the building. Christina didn't say she had to leave right
away or was banned.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. STARLING PD — DAWN'S OFFICE — AFTERNOON

Dawn, alone. Her eyes burn with fatigue. A tea mug that features Baby Yoda rests on her desk, steam long gone cold.

The blinds are half-drawn. A few case files sit stacked neatly, untouched, face pale from the weight of Christina's words. She drops the jacket on her chair and leans against the desk, exhaling.

A knock at the door. Rohan steps in, closing it quietly behind him. He watches her for a moment, reading her expression.

ROHAN

Well?

Dawn doesn't answer right away. She fiddles with a pen on her desk, spinning it in her fingers before setting it down.

DAWN

Two weeks. Paid leave. Christina says I'm not cleared.

Rohan shifts, his brow furrowing.

ROHAN

Two weeks?

DAWN

Yeah. Which means... you're in charge until I'm back.

Rohan shakes his head, half protest, half acceptance.

ROHAN

That's not how this should go.

DAWN
It's exactly how it should go. I'm
out. You step up. That's the end of
it.

Rohan studies her, seeing the cracks she's trying to cover.

ROHAN
You don't look okay with it.

DAWN
I'm not. But Christina doesn't care
what I'm okay with.

She forces a small smile, tired.

DAWN (cont'd)
Hold the line, Sergeant. Don't let
the place burn down while I'm gone.

Rohan exhales, nodding slowly.

ROHAN
I'll take care of the team. You take
care of you.

Dawn looks away, blinking hard as if the words sting.

DAWN
Yeah.

A quiet moment hangs. Rohan gives her one last look, then
exits, leaving Dawn alone in her office.

She sinks into her chair, staring at the desk as the
precinct noise hums outside her door.

INT. STARLING PD — DAWN'S OFFICE — AFTERNOON

Dawn slips her jacket over her arm, staring at the nameplate
on her desk as if it no longer belongs to her.

Through the open blinds, she sees her team working in the bullpen. For a moment, she steels herself, about to head out and say something.

The office door opens. Christina Martin steps inside, calm but firm and catches Dawn about to leave and head towards the bullpen.

CHRISTINA

Don't.

Dawn turns, startled.

CHRISTINA (cont'd)

Don't stop by. Don't address them.
Not today.

Dawn bristles.

DAWN

They deserve—

CHRISTINA

They deserve stability. Let me handle
their questions. Rohan will hold the
line.

Dawn swallows hard, fighting back the words. Christina's voice softens.

CHRISTINA (cont'd)

This is protocol, Dawn. You can't
carry them right now. You need to
leave.

Dawn nods, tight.

INT. STARLING PD — BULLPEN

The team works, the low murmur of phones and typing. Dawn exits her office, walking through the bullpen.

Eyes lift. Chris, Stephanie, and Choo glance at her, waiting for an explanation. She meets no one's gaze, her face unreadable.

She passes them in silence. The sound of her footsteps on the tile echoes louder than anything else in the room.

Behind her, in Christina's office doorway, Christina watches closely, making sure Dawn doesn't break stride.

Dawn reaches the exit. She doesn't look back.

Christina steps back inside, catching Rohan's eye across the bullpen.

CHRISTINA
(to him, low)
If they have questions, they come to
me. Focus them on the work.

Rohan nods, masking the unease he feels.

EXT. STARLING PD — PARKING LOT — AFTERNOON

Dawn emerges into daylight, shoulders heavy. She pulls her jacket tighter, heading for her SUV.

For a moment she stops, staring back at the building, her home, her team, then gets inside, starts the engine, and drives away.

The precinct looms behind her, solid and unshaken. But Dawn looks fractured.

EXT. GAS STATION — AFTERNOON

Dawn pulls up, parks, and steps inside.

INT. GAS STATION

The place is empty but for a lone MALE CASHIER behind the counter.

She grabs a 15-pack of beer from the cooler. The bell above the door DINGS.

A BIG, BULKY MAN enters, hood up, presence heavy. Familiar. He was at Michael and Lauren's house, one of the crew who escaped. She was sure of it, was he? What could she do now? She didn't want to spook him.

Dawn stiffens, eyes on him.

The cashier notices.

CASHIER
You okay, Ma'am?

DAWN
Yeah, I'm good, thanks.

The man passes by slowly. He doesn't speak. Doesn't reach.

He just turns his head, locks eyes with Dawn, then winks.

Her grip tightens on the beer pack. But he walks on, disappears down an aisle.

EXT. GAS STATION - MID-AFTERNOON

Dawn hustles to her SUV, beer under her arm. She glances around. Nothing. She slides into the driver's seat, locks the doors.

INT. DAWN'S SUV - MID-AFTERNOON

She grabs the dash-mounted CB mic, breath sharp.

DAWN
Dispatch, this is Hudson. Possible
sighting, the suspect from the Hunter
house, Michael and Lauren.
(MORE)

DAWN (cont'd)
Bulk build, hoodie. At Starling Gas
on Fifth.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Copy that, Lieutenant. Units en
route. Are you secure?

Dawn peers through her windshield. Nothing but the dark lot.

DAWN
Secure. But he was right here. Now
he's gone.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Say again—gone?

DAWN
Slipped into the dark. I know what I
saw.

Silence crackles for a moment, then Dispatch again—warmer,
worried.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Ten-four. Stay put. Help's on the
way. Hudson, do you copy?

DAWN
(clipped, uneasy)
Copy.

She drops the mic, hands trembling against the wheel, eyes
darting to every shadow in the lot.

But the man is nowhere. Just empty darkness pressing in
around her.

INT. GAS STATION - MID-AFTERNOON

Dawn leans against the counter, filing a written statement.
The CASHIER hovers nervously, pointing toward the aisle.

CASHIER
I saw him. Big guy, hood up. Came in
right behind her. He looked... wrong.
Gave me the creeps.

OFFICER BAKER takes notes, nodding.

OFFICER BAKER
We'll pull the feed. Let's get eyes
on him.

The cashier leads them into a cramped back office where a
BANK of security monitors hums. One officer rewinds the
footage.

DAWN
There—right when the bell chimed.

They watch the tape. Dawn steps into frame, grabbing the
beer. A moment later, the bell dings again. The door
opens...

But no one enters.

Dawn freezes. The cashier frowns.

CASHIER
That's... that's not right. I swear,
I saw him.

The feed continues. Dawn walks out with the beer. No bulky
man. No wink. Nothing.

OFFICER KARLSSON
You sure about the ID, Lieutenant?
You're saying this
was the missing man from the Hunters'
house?

DAWN
I'm not saying "maybe." I'm saying it
was him.

OFFICER BAKER
Except he's not here.

Silence. The only sound is the low hum of the monitors. Dawn's jaw clenches, staring at the empty doorway on the screen.

DAWN
Then the cameras are lying. Will, I swear, I saw him!

The officers exchange uneasy glances. The cashier looks rattled.

CASHIER
I know what I saw. Same as her.

The officer closes the logbook.

OFFICER
Report's filed. We'll canvas the area. But right now... we've got nothing.

Dawn exhales, sharp, frustrated. She grabs her copy of the report, nods curtly.

DAWN
Thanks.

She turns, heading back to her SUV, a storm brewing behind her eyes.

EXT. GAS STATION - MID-AFTERNOON

Dawn climbs into her vehicle. Before starting the engine, she looks once more at the lot. Empty. No sign of him.

She throws the SUV in gear and pulls away, headlights carving into the night.

INT. DAWN'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — MID-AFTERNOON

Warm, homey chaos. Dawn's sisters: Alana, Jackie, and Bonnie are sprawled on the couch. Her Father, Frank, sits in his recliner, laughing.

Trudy and her husband, LIEUTENANT JOSEPH MALKOVICH, sit on comfortable chairs around a rectangular kitchen table and a Monopoly board sits in the middle of the table. Joseph is uncharacteristically gleeful.

JOSEPH
Boardwalk, baby! Hotels, plural. Pay
up.

TRUDY
Don't gloat. It's unseemly.

BONNIE
He's actually winning? Miracles
exist.

The room bursts with laughter. Dawn cracks a beer, finally letting herself relax. She smiles, just a little. For once, it feels normal.

EXT. ICE RINK — BACKYARD — EVENING

A small sheet of frozen ice glimmers in the backyard. AUSTIN, 14, fires pucks at a makeshift goal. His COUSINS chase him, shrieking with laughter.

The sound drifts back to the house. Family. Safety.

Dawn steps out, beer in hand, watching. A smile creeps across her face.

Her phone BUZZES in her pocket. She pulls it out, answers.

DAWN

Hudson.

Static hisses. Then a distorted male voice.

VOICE (V.O.)

Nice night for a family game,
Lieutenant.

Dawn freezes. Her eyes sweep the yard, scanning shadows.

DAWN

Who is this?

No answer. Just the faint sound of breathing, then click,
the line goes dead.

Austin skates toward her, drops his stick, and wraps his
arms around her waist.

AUSTIN

Mom, did you see that shot?

Dawn forces a smile, her free hand trembling around the beer
bottle.

DAWN

Yeah, kiddo. I saw.

She hugs him back, holding tight as her eyes drift again to
the tree line.

Joseph steps outside, loosening his tie. He carries his
Monopoly winnings like trophies.

JOSEPH

You're quiet. Not like you to let me
brag about beating your sisters at
Monopoly.

Dawn hesitates, then exhales. She lowers her voice.

DAWN
At the gas station... I saw him.

Joseph frowns.

JOSEPH
Who?

DAWN
The one who got away. From the
Hunters' house. Big, bulky guy.
Masked. He was there. Winked at me.

Joseph straightens, suddenly alert.

JOSEPH
You filed it?

DAWN
Backup came. Cashier saw him too. But
the cameras, nothing. It's like he
wasn't there.

JOSEPH
No trace?

DAWN
(shakes her head)
No leads. No prints. No footage.
Like he's a damn ghost.

Silence between them. Austin skates up, laughing, and throws
his arms around Dawn.

AUSTIN
Did you really see it, Mom?

Dawn forces a smile, hugging him tight. Her eyes, though,
are haunted—fixed on the darkness beyond the rink.

DAWN
I saw it, champ. Nice shot.

AUSTIN
Thank you, I love beating my cousin!

Austin laughs, does Dawn and Joseph.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HUDSON KITCHEN — DAY 1 OF TWO-WEEK LEAVE

Dawn sits at the kitchen table, a mug of tea cooling beside her. The house is quiet, golden light spilling in through the curtains.

She stares at the stack of mail on the counter. One envelope is marked: PROPERTY — DECISION NEEDED.

Her eyes linger, heavy. She exhales, rubs her forehead.

FLASHBACK

INT. LUKE HARRINGTON'S HOUSE — DAY

Dark. Luke's house.

LUKE
(bloody, crawling toward her)
(hoarse, furious)
You never came. You let me bleed. You
buried me.

His hands reach for her, red, dripping. His voice echoes like it's tearing through her skull.

DAWN
(screaming)
No!

BACK TO SCENE

Dawn jerks awake at the kitchen table, gasping. Her tea sloshes. Her eyes dart around, panicked, until the familiar stillness of her kitchen settles her again.

She stares at the photo on the counter—Austin in his hockey gear, Jacob smiling proudly behind him. Safe. Alive. But Luke's face lingers in her mind, accusing.

Dawn pulls open a drawer, grabs a notepad, and writes quickly, her hand shaking slightly.

INSERT — NOTE

Austin, Jacob, Trudy—

I'm going to Luke's. There's something I haven't finished there, and I don't know yet if I can rent it out. Don't worry. I'll be okay. —Dawn

She sets the pen down with a sharp clack.

Dawn folds the note, places it on the kitchen table, her hand resting on it for a long moment, like it might hold her there.

Finally, she stands, grabs her keys from the hook, and heads for the door.

The house closes in silent behind her.

EXT. LUKE HARRINGTON'S HOUSE — DAY

Dawn parks her SUV out front. The house stands quiet, shuttered, preserved. She steps out, clutching her keys like a talisman.

She walks up the porch, unlocks the door, and slips inside.

INT. LUKE'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — DAY

Dust motes drift in the stillness. A framed photo of Luke smiles back at her. She runs her fingers along the glass, her reflection warped.

DAWN
(soft, to herself)
You should've never been alone.

INT. LUKE'S BASEMENT WORKSHOP — DAY

Dawn lowered herself slowly onto the wooden stool, setting her phone down with trembling hands. She is surrounded by Luke's tools and half-finished projects. The faint smell of sawdust and varnish lingers. She lowers herself onto a wooden stool, hands shaking.

She picks up Luke's phone, unlocks it, and opens TikTok.

ON PHONE: Luke's videos play, he is laughing in the workshop, shaping hockey sticks, winking at the camera. Whitesnake's "Is This Love" plays softly in the background.

Dawn breaks. Hot tears streak down her cheeks. She presses the phone to her chest as if holding him close.

DAWN

(whispers)

I should've been there. You didn't have to die alone.

She keeps watching, video after video, letting the sound of his voice and the music fill the silent basement. Her sobs echo in the empty space.

Time passes. Nearly twenty minutes. Dawn's tears blur the screen. She clutches the phone tightly, as if Luke is really there.

Her gaze drifts past the workbench—stops. More hockey sticks are stacked neatly, labeled with Austin's initials in Luke's handwriting.

Dawn staggers over, fingers tracing the wood. Tears continue to fall. She picks one up and hugs it to her shoulder.

Dawn exhales, weary, shaking her head.

Another BUZZ. She glances at the screen: ROHAN. She swipes to answer quickly.

DAWN (cont'd)

Rohan...

ROHAN (V.O.)

Dawn? Where are you? What's going on?
Are you okay? Do you need me? Are you
coming in today?

Dawn exhales sharply, irritation threading her voice.

DAWN

I'm at Luke's house... in his workshop.
I don't know if I can leave.

ROHAN (V.O.)
Luke's? You need a break, Dawn. You
can't stay down there all day.

DAWN
I said I needed some time. I can't—
not yet. You know I'm on paid leave.

ROHAN
I know but...

Dawn looks back at the hockey sticks, fresh tears sliding
down.

DAWN
Ro, Luke... his death... it hurts worse
than Rachel's. I don't know why. I
loved them both, but with Luke... it's
just harder. Even now... mid-September,
and it still feels like yesterday.

She presses her forehead against the stick, eyes closed,
sobs quietly. Rohan's voice steadies her, but she allows
herself this private grief.

She's clutching Luke's work and the phone, lost in memory
and sorrow.

ROHAN (V.O.)
Huds? Dawn? Dawn, are you there? I'm
coming to help.

Dawn sits on the stool, clutching the hockey stick, tears
still streaming. The TikTok videos play on loop,
Whitesnake's Here I Go Again plays softly filling the room.
She doesn't move. She doesn't answer.

Her phone buzzes again. Rohan calls. She glances at it,
hesitates, but lets it ring.

Dawn exhales, silent, eyes fixed on the videos. She doesn't
answer.

Ten minutes pass. She doesn't move, doesn't pick up. The
basement clock ticks in rhythm with her uneven breathing.
Her grief is palpable, all-encompassing.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE — DRIVEWAY — DAY

Rohan's SUV pulls up quietly, lights off. Behind him, other STARLING PD UNITS arrive. The team steps out, alert, scanning the area.

Rohan pulls out his phone, calling Jacob and then Dawn's family. His voice is calm but urgent.

ROHAN
Jacob, her location—Luke's house.
She's not answering.

Can you get over here? Her family, too. Something's got her rattled.

He ends the call, exchanging a look with the team. They move toward the house cautiously.

INT. LUKE'S BASEMENT WORKSHOP — DAY

Dawn is still seated, eyes red, clutching the hockey stick to her chest. Her body trembles slightly. She doesn't notice the shadows moving near the door. She doesn't hear the knock.

Her grief holds her captive, unbroken.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE — DRIVEWAY — DAY

Rohan and two STARLING PD UNITS approach the front door. Jacob, Frank, and Dawn's sisters follow, concern etched on their faces. The quiet neighborhood amplifies the tension.

Rohan knocks firmly on the front door.

ROHAN
Dawn! Open up, it's me!

INT. LUKE'S BASEMENT WORKSHOP — DAY

Dawn doesn't stir. Her head rests against the hockey stick, tears streaking her face. The TikTok video plays softly in the background.

Another knock. Louder this time.

ROHAN (O.S.)
Dawn, we're coming in!

Dawn flinches slightly but doesn't move. The basement door creaks as Rohan gently opens it with the team behind him.

She looks up. The room is suddenly crowded with familiar faces—Rohan, Jacob, Frank, her sisters. Relief and frustration mix in their eyes.

ROHAN
(softly)
Hey... it's okay. We're here. You're not alone.

Dawn's eyes well again. She grips the hockey stick tighter, shaking her head.

DAWN
(choked whisper)
I... I can't... I can't leave him. Not yet.

Jacob steps closer, careful, hands open in reassurance.

JACOB
We know, Dawn. We know. But we're here. You don't have to be alone.

Dawn exhales shakily, body trembling, finally letting herself sink to the floor with her family around her.

DAWN
I just... I keep seeing him. Laughing. Building. Teaching Austin. And he's gone... and it still feels like yesterday.

Her sisters and father move in closer, surrounding her, quiet, letting her grief spill out. Rohan kneels beside her, one hand resting lightly on her shoulder, grounding her.

ROHAN
You don't have to go through it alone. Not anymore.

Dawn closes her eyes, letting the tears flow freely, finally allowing the raw grief to be shared. The room is heavy with love, worry, and the echo of Luke's presence.

For a long moment, only the soft hum of the TikTok videos and her ragged breathing fills the workshop.

Her eyes widen. Memories of the man at the gas station flash—the wink, the vanish. Panic and grief mix. She presses the hockey stick to her chest and sinks further down.

DAWN
(whispers, sobbing)
I... I can't...

Her family and team move in slowly.

Jacob crouches in front of her, steady, calm.

JACOB
Dawn... look at me. You don't have to
leave him behind. You carry him with
you. But you can't stay here forever.

Her tears don't stop. She clutches the stick tighter, as if it's Luke himself.

Frank steps closer, voice low but firm.

FRANK
Baby girl... come on. We'll take you
home. We'll take care of you.

Her sisters kneel at her sides, touching her arms gently.

ALANA
We're all here. You're not alone.

JACKIE
Let us help you, Dawn.

BONNIE
Please.

Austin slips forward, small but determined. He wraps his arms around her waist, squeezing tight.

AUSTIN
Mom... come home with me. Please.

The room falls silent, save for the music and Dawn's sobs. Slowly, she lets go of the stick. Her grip loosens. Jacob takes it carefully, setting it down.

Her body shudders as she finally leans into Austin, then into the group. They all hold her—family and team—forming a circle of warmth against the grief consuming her.

Rohan rests a hand on her shoulder, grounding her.

ROHAN
One step at a time. We've got you.

They help her rise. Dawn stumbles, weak, but supported.

INT. LUKE'S STAIRS / LIVING ROOM

The group carefully guides Dawn up the narrow basement stairs. She clutches onto whoever is nearest—Jacob, Rohan, her sisters, as though her legs might give out.

The living room greets them with silence. Luke's framed photos line the mantle. Dawn can't look at them. She keeps her eyes down.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE — NIGHT

The front door opens. The cool night air spills in. Dawn blinks at it like it's foreign. Her family leads her to the SUV waiting at the curb.

She hesitates at the threshold, looking back into the house one last time. The music still plays faintly below. Her eyes brim again.

They ease her into the SUV. Jacob slides in beside her. Austin takes her hand. Rohan takes the driver's seat, calm and steady. The others follow in their own vehicles.

EXT. STARLING SUBURBS — MOVING — NIGHT

The SUV carrying Dawn moves steadily toward home. Inside, she leans against the window, pale and exhausted, Austin's small hand gripping hers.

INT. DAWN'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — LATER THAT NIGHT

Warm light glows. A Monopoly board sprawls across the table, but no one plays.

Dawn sits curled in the corner of the couch, a blanket over her lap.

Her sisters, Bonnie, Jackie, and Alana hover close. Frank sits nearby, watchful.

Trudy and Joseph lean against the counter. Austin sits beside his mom, resting his head on her shoulder.

Jacob sits on the floor near Dawn, close enough for her to reach.

Silence, heavy but safe.

DAWN

(softly)
He made sticks for Austin... and I
never even knew. He was still
thinking of us. Even at the end.

Her eyes well. She clutches one of Luke's unfinished hockey sticks, holding it tight like a lifeline.

Her family doesn't speak, they simply reach out.

Hands overlap hers. Arms wrap around her shoulders. She's encircled. Safe.

JACOB

You're not alone, Dawn. Not now. Not
ever.

Her tears fall. She leans into him, into them all. For once, she lets herself be carried.

CUT TO:

INT. FRASER ARENA — DAY 3 OF TWO-WEEK LEAVE — NIGHT

The rink lights gleam off the fresh ice. Crowds buzz in the bleachers, parents cheering, kids with popcorn and foam fingers. The Starling Hawks peewee team skates onto the ice.

On the Hudson Family in the stands—Dawn, bundled in a winter coat, tries to relax between Jacob and Trudy, Austin with helmet on, waves from the bench, flashing his mom a grin.

Alana, Jackie, and Bonnie lean forward, chatting with Frank, who's yelling like a seasoned hockey dad.

Dawn forces a smile, clapping, but her hands hesitate—her mind still elsewhere.

BONNIE

It's good you're here, Dawn. You need this.

DAWN

(nods faintly)
Yeah. I'm trying.

The crowd ROARS as Austin scores a goal. Dawn springs to her feet, cheering with everyone else. For the first time in days, there's a flicker of real joy in her eyes.

Jacob squeezes her hand.

JACOB

See? This. This is what matters.

Dawn exhales, a little lighter.

INT. FRASER ARENA — LOBBY — INTERMISSION

Fans move around the concession stands. Dawn slips out of the crowd for a moment, taking in the cold air that wafts from the rink doors.

Suddenly, Chris enters with Stephanie, Rohan, and Choo. Their presence is deliberate, eyes scanning until they find her.

DAWN
(confused)
What are you guys doing here?

Chris lowers his voice, stepping close.

CHRIS
We've got him, Dawn. Daniel Vargus.
He's in custody. He was the man at
the gas station.

The words hit her like a punch.

DAWN
(staggered)
Vargus... it was him.

Choo gently puts a hand on her arm, steadying.

CHOO
You did your part. But listen, you
can't be near this. Protocol. It's
out of your hands now.

Dawn swallows hard, torn between relief and frustration.

DAWN
I should be there. He—he was right
there in front of me.

STEPHANIE

And now he's in a cell next to
Stratton, where he belongs. Let us
carry this, Dawn.

From inside the arena, the BUZZER sounds. The crowd CHEERS.
Dawn looks back toward the sound, Austin's game is still
going, life moving forward.

CHRIS

Go be with your family. We've got
this.

Dawn nods faintly, but her hands are trembling. She wipes
her eyes quickly, forcing composure.

She turns back toward the rink, shoulders squared but
fragile.

DAWN

(quietly, to herself)
Be with your family.

She steps back into the arena as the camera lingers on
Chris, Choo, and Stephanie exchanging a worried glance.

INT. FRASER ARENA — LOBBY — INTERMISSION

Dawn steadies herself after hearing the news from the team.
Chris and Stephanie exchange a glance.

Stephanie leans toward Choo, voice low.

STEPHANIE

Will Dawn be okay?

Choo exhales, watching Dawn's fragile attempt at composure
as she heads back toward the rink.

CHOO

She says she's fine.

STEPHANIE

But fine isn't an answer.

Before Choo can respond, Rohan appears from the crowd, having caught the last of their exchange. He watches Dawn through the glass, cheering faintly as Austin skates.

ROHAN

This, right here. This is exactly what she needs. Time with her family.

Chris studies Dawn for a long moment, then gives a small nod of agreement. Stephanie still looks uneasy, her eyes lingering on Dawn, who claps with her sisters and father as Austin scores again.

The sound of the crowd swells, but under it, the team's unspoken worry hangs heavy.

INT. FRASER ARENA — STANDS — NIGHT

The crowd roars. Austin skates past the goal, firing a puck in. GOAL! The horn BLASTS.

DAWN

(laughing, clapping)
That's my boy!

Austin skates back toward the bench, grinning ear to ear. It's a natural hat trick. Dawn hugs Jacob, who's cheering beside her.

Her sisters, Bonnie, Alana, and Jackie, are laughing, high-fiving Frank and each other. Trudy and Joseph stand behind them, beaming.

Dawn leans back, genuinely relaxed for the first time in weeks, cheering Austin and joking with her family.

The family leaves the arena and heads for the pizza parlor.

EXT. PIZZA PARLOR — NIGHT

The family piles out of the car, laughing, arms around each other. Inside, the smell of pizza fills the air. They slide into a large booth.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NIGHT

Dawn grabs a slice, biting with a laugh.

JACOB

(to Dawn)
See? You can relax.

DAWN

(shaking her head, smiling)
I forgot how loud Austin's goal celebrations could be.

Trudy nudges Joseph with a grin.

TRUDY

Well... we have some news.

Everyone looks at them, curious.

JOSEPH

We're going to be parents.

The booth erupts in cheers, and hugs. Dawn gasps, hugging Trudy tightly.

DAWN

Oh my god, Trudy! Congratulations!

The family exchanges smiles, playful teasing, and excited chatter. Austin grabs a slice for himself, oblivious to the adult conversation.

Dawn leans back, sipping soda, watching her family. For the first time in weeks, her shoulders relax completely.

INT. HUDSON HOUSE — KITCHEN — NIGHT

The house is quiet. The laughter from the pizza parlor feels like a distant echo now.

Dawn sits at the kitchen table, a single lamp casting a warm glow. An untouched glass of water sits in front of her.

She stares down at her hands, flexing her fingers slowly, as if the weight of the weeks is finally lifting.

DAWN
(soft, to herself)
I'm innocent. I did my job.

She exhales, shaky but freeing. The words feel real now.

She leans back, looking at the empty chair across from her. For a moment, it feels like Luke is there. A tear slips down, but she wipes it quickly, holding on to the peace she just felt.

INT. STARLING PRECINCT — BULLPEN — DAY

A week later. Dawn walks through the bullpen, uniform sharp, shoulders squared. For the first time since the shooting, the room feels like home.

Her team looks up. Stephanie, Chris, Choo, and Rohan rise from their desks. They don't say anything at first—just a nod, a quiet respect.

Christina steps out of her office, clipboard in hand.

CHRISTINA
Lieutenant Hudson is cleared.
Effective immediately, she's back on
full duty.

A ripple of relief spreads through the bullpen. Dawn nods,
not needing to say much.

Rohan steps closer, just enough for her to hear.

ROHAN
Welcome back, boss.

Dawn allows the faintest smile.

DAWN
Let's get to work.

She moves toward her office, the team falling into step
around her. For the first time since the pilot began, she
looks steady, ready.

INT. STARLING PRECINCT — BULLPEN — DAY

Christina announces Dawn is cleared. The team welcomes her
back with quiet relief. Dawn smiles faintly, steady for the
first time.

The bullpen hums back to life.

EXT. STARLING CITY — OVERPASS — NIGHT

A storm brews on the horizon, thunder rolling low and heavy.
Below, the city lights flicker against the dark sky.

A MAN IN A HOODED COAT leans against the railing, cigarette
glowing faintly. His face is obscured, but the sharp scar
along his jaw catches the streetlight.

He pulls out a burner phone, dialing. Listens. His eyes never leave the skyline.

MAN
It's done. She's back.

He listens again, expression hard. The cigarette burns low in his hand.

MAN (cont'd)
No. She doesn't see it yet. But she will.

He flicks the cigarette into the dark, watching the ember vanish in the wind. He pulls a folded PHOTO from his coat pocket.

It's a surveillance shot of Dawn, leaving the precinct with her team.

The man studies it with quiet satisfaction, his thumb brushing over her face.

MAN (cont'd)
She thinks the storm passed. But I'm just getting started.

He tucks the photo back into his coat, then pulls up his hood and disappears into the shadows.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION — BASEMENT — NIGHT

The man enters a dimly lit basement filled with maps of Starling, photographs, and red string pinned across corkboard. Dawn's picture is in the center, circled in red ink.

Beside it, there are images of her family, her team, even Austin at the rink, each with notes scrawled beneath them.

The man sets the surveillance photo of Dawn on the board, pinning it beside the rest.

MAN
(under his breath)
Soon, Lieutenant Hudson. Soon.

Thunder CRACKS above, rattling the basement windows.

END ACT FOUR