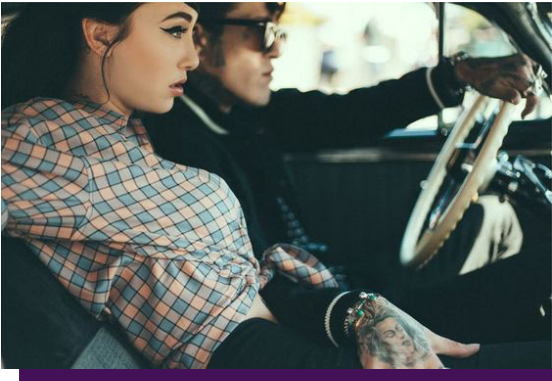


CHIHUAHUA

Film Treatment

By Aleksandr Beaudoin





LOGLINE: CHIHUAHUA is an ultra-modern thriller about the complex, but symbiotic bond between, Eden, a historically abused social worker and, King, the son of an LA drug lord... *and his Chihuahua*. In navigating their relationship under the brutal eye of the kingpin himself, each come face-to-face with self-insufficiencies, forced to make crucial decisions that will forever alter the power dynamics present in the household. Tensions continue to rise as each player tests another, until the entire game inevitably reaches a point-of-no-return for all involved.

TONE:

CHIHUAHUA blends technical elements of classic gangster films with romantically dark and uplifting aspects of modern coming-of-age films. As a way to highlight Los Angeles' glamour but also the secrets lying underneath, the entire film incorporates components of "shiny" fashion ads, helping to add a glow to the entire story and characters within it, despite their harsh realities. Imagine a mostly black and white Dior ad with pops of neon color.

Being a visually chic story that takes place in present-day Los Angeles, the most saturated colors will be oranges, purples, and blues. All others will veer toward lower saturation as a way to isolate the main three, allowing for a glossy modern feel. While most scenes are visually bright and properly exposed under the California sun, there is also significant contrast to sharpen the shadows that are inherently present, particularly in the brightest days. Everything about the coloring is crisp, fresh, and attention grabbing.

Much of the dialogue is sarcastic and deadpan due to the leading characters' less-than-optimistic views of the world. But this isn't to mean there aren't somber or serious moments. In fact, the deadpan delivery serves to accentuate the softer and clearly impactful moments between characters. To accentuate the moments when they are learning.



Even though some characters may seem to hold a hopeless view of their existence, this short film is meant to always have an underlying thread of hope. Even in the most dismal periods, there is that ever-lasting feeling of learning, growing, and evolving from every experience.

STORY



We see a dismal and degraded studio apartment. It's falling apart and only lit by a single lamp. Apart from a single twin bed and old couch, there are two move-in boxes on the floor.

We notice a woman present. She's standing in the middle and staring into a void as she waits for water to boil in a dusty kitchenette. This is EDEN. She wears a loose tank top that exposes various tattoos and...marks. Her short platinum-dyed hair is intriguing - a word that could also describe her entire persona. Everything about her is edgy and interesting. We get the sense she's seen things in the way she is ever cautious and still.

Before too long, her cell phone abruptly rings, causing an odd reaction and sense of panic. Looking behind her instead of toward the source of the sound, she takes a few breaths. Then, with purpose, rushes toward the phone.

The second the device is by her ear, the Mid-western draw of another younger woman comes barreling through the speaker. This would be MOLLY, Eden's childhood friend.

Through their brief conversation, we confirm that Eden is new to Los Angeles. And more importantly, that she seems to have escaped something (or someone) from her recent past – a topic Eden finds uncomfortable, despite Molly's ability to always circle back to it.

After a moment of glorifying her living situation to Molly, Eden's water begins to boil, offering her an exit from the discussion.

Later that evening, Eden sits on the hard wood floor of the apartment as she finishes pasta. We notice some scars on her body.

Now in bed, Eden lies semi-awake, unable to sleep as a memory plays back in her head. As it does, we're suddenly in a house. Everything is a blur. Rapidly moving. We make out what must be a fist swinging through the air. Another firm hand seems to make contact. Life swirls around.

Back in the studio apartment, Eden's body jolts up in bed with heavy breaths. Her head spins as she registers the sound of nearby gunshots.

We cut to the next day.

Suddenly, Eden is in a glamorous mansion in the Hills. Ahead of her, an older woman, WHITNEY, guides her through the space, which also doubles as an office.

As she walks, Whitney throws new information at Eden.

We discover that Whitney is a social worker with a private practice in which Eden will act as her new assistant, helping to organize her schedule and handle client communications. Whitney mainly deals with clients who come to her due to abuse. However, her attitude is oddly upbeat and indifferent toward the fact. She has a slightly condescending tone but delivers it in a way that *almost* comes off as innocent. Everything she does is a little frantic and “basic,” highlighting her need for an assistant.

Once she finishes filling her new assistant in and has managed to subtly insult Eden's abilities numerous times, Whitney darts out, leaving Eden alone in the vast space.

MEANWHILE...

Not too far away in the Hills, a young man with the aura of a modern James Dean stares down a long and fancy dining room table. His hair is also platinum-dyed. Slicked-back. We notice a single ear piercing and hand tattoos. This is KING.

Then, we realize he's not alone.

Standing nearby is a sturdy man in a suit. The most essential family ASSISTANT.

All is quiet as King slowly eats his lunch in the large room. Several moments pass until a word is finally spoken.

In delivering dialogue that is very dead-pan and sarcastic yet also soft, we come to understand that King is distant from his father, who's happens to currently be doing business somewhere around the house (as the Assistant informs him). But, by the way King mocks the use of the word “business,” we get the sense something else is at play...

Before we can question any further though, we follow King into a massive, but mostly empty, bedroom. *His room*. Everything about it is sleek, modern, and dark.

Standing by his large bay windows, King looks down to a view of the driveway roundabout. As he does so, we randomly notice a tiny dog sitting by his feet. A fragile Chihuahua.

Then, *footsteps are heard*. King temporarily ignores the sound of them approaching. The Chihuahua however turns its head toward the bedroom doorway.

The Assistant peeks in, notifying King that his father is requesting his presence downstairs. Oddly, this instills a sense of panic and nervousness in King. We gather that this “session” with his father is normal routine, despite King's ongoing hesitancy. Even the Assistant seems regretful in having to tell King about it for another time.

Nonetheless, King regretfully follows the Assistant out, telling his Chihuahua he'll be back soon.

THE SCREEN SLAMS TO BLACK.





Now we're back at Whitney's private practice. Per usual, sitting at her desk alone, is Eden. She waits for anything to happen...A call. A fire. The sweet release of death. *Anything*.

Then – **SLAM.**

Another blurry fist FLASHES on screen.

It rapidly disappears as Eden attempts to push it from her mind. Coming back to reality, she turns toward the sound of the slamming door. Unsurprisingly, Whitney rushes in, flustered as always.

Not hesitating, Whitney questions what she has on the books for the day. Once Eden informs her, she complains about having to deal with the "difficult" clients, which irritates Eden. She can barely hold onto to any optimism herself, after all.

Nonetheless, Whitney rushes into her office. **Eden turns to the clock: 1:50pm.**

Then, **WE CUT TO KING** as he climbs an impressive grand staircase.

As the front door begins to open below, the intimidating voice of a man simultaneously crawls in. Upon hearing the tone, King rushes to the top and secretly listens from above.

Two men begin immediately begin speaking, one voice recognizable as the family Assistant. The conversation revolves around shipments that recently came in under weight, prompting *investigations* with the suppliers and handlers. Hearing this sends chills up King's spine. He best of all understands the implications of the word.

Then, the deep voice of the intimidating man calls out, looking for King...*his son*.

However, King remains quiet and doesn't reveal himself to his father. Thankfully, the Assistant covers for him. Disappointed, the father starts to exit with the Assistant, discussing family business along the way.

Back in his room, King speeds toward the bay windows.

He briefly takes note of the time: 2:00pm.

Returning to gaze out the window, he watches as another colleague guides a stranger with a bag over his head out of view. The sight of the helpless man being dragged away causes King's breathing to intensify, second by second, until it consumes him.

Then we hear – *knock knock*.

Time has passed and King is now resting in bed. As usual, the Assistant steps in, silent.

Not moving a muscle, King questions if it's "the man with the bag over his head." Not needing an answer, the Assistant simply urges King to hurry to the basement. He also reminds him of his own advice to not to look out the windows.

WE CUT TO BLACK. Then, over black, we hear the sounds of *footsteps descending stairs* followed by what seems a *heavy metal door sliding open*. The familiar voice of King's father erupts, oddly optimistic at his son's arrival. The entire thing could be a gameshow to the father.

Before we hear any more, the metal door glides shut.

The moment it SLAMS, Eden's body jolts up in her bed. Another nightmare.

Having a difficult time sleeping, Eden checks her phone. She sees four missed calls from "home," but simply ignores them, lies back down, and grasps a pillow as if it were another human body for comfort.

Returning to Whitney's private practice, a sleep deprived Eden waits, yet again, at her desk. Out of nowhere appears Whitney, staring at her assistant.

Interrogating Eden about her appointments, Whitney gets frustrated when Eden fails to tell her about an in-house meeting with a high paying client. Best of all, it's in 30 minutes. For the first time though, Eden defends herself, informing her boss that she wasn't included on the email chain, so she couldn't have known about the appointment. Whitney, however, having to have the last word, disregards this crucial fact and instead questions Eden's intelligence. The interaction ends with Whitney telling Eden to do better...And to water her plants.



She then sprints to gather her things, not noticing as Eden gives her the gracious middle-finger from behind.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON, Eden trudges through the Hills, passing mansion after mansion. Each new one seems to be a slap in the face.

Eventually though, she notices a massive one and halts, admiring it's beauty. It's a modern Mediterranean style villa with a grand front gate, entryway, and roundabout. Something about it's style seems daunting but also wierdly inviting.

After appreciating it's grandiosity, Eden moves on. Just as she does, a luxurious 1959 Cadillac Eldorado ZIPS out.

We now follow King as he drives the vehicle through the Hills. Sitting in the passenger seat is his Chihuahua, calm and collected.

Then, the car suddenly pulls off to a secluded viewpoint on the side of the road. The air is gentle.

From the driver's seat, King begins speaking with his dog. In a surprisingly honest and sad moment, King admits how he wanted a bike as a kid. But his father wouldn't allow it. Instead, he learned how to shoot a gun and handle supplier operations.

King then begins to reflect on the night he met his dog. How the Chihuahua was sitting by the front gate, alone and shaking. So he brought the animal some food, gaining its trust. They sat for a while. Something about the dog's experiences seemed to relate to King. Not only that, but it's entire manner and life situation. Stuck in a big city. Lost.

In the car, both creatures watch as sprawling city lights glow in the background. Then -

RING.

WE'RE THROWN BACK INTO THE PRIVATE PRACTICE, a week later. Eden is quick to answer the phone, Whitney's voice coming through the other end. She tells Eden that she's tired and needs a day for herself. Having some sort of history with abuse, this pushes Eden over the edge. She tries to reason with Whitney, informing her that the abused *don't* get days off and they're relying on her. But again, indifferent to their situation and more focused on her "spa day," Whitney nudges the comment away. She's not to blame for their situation. Needless to mention, Eden is barely holding her tongue.

Having the last word, Whitney once again asks if Eden remembered to water her plants.

But the line cuts short as Eden grabs her stuff and storms out.

SIMULTANEOUSLY...

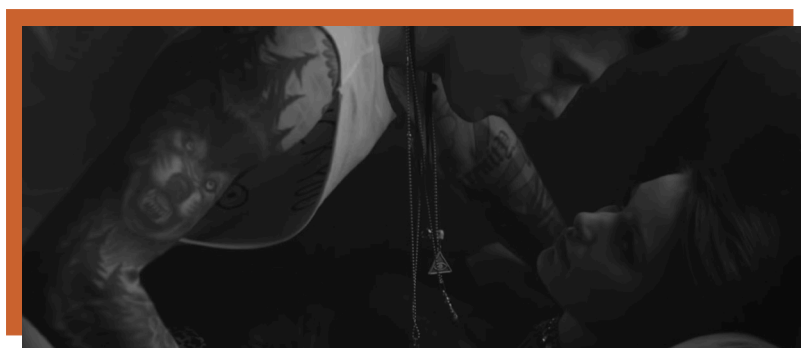
King browses through his walk-in closet, looking for a stylish top. He halts upon hearing a vehicle come to a stop. By the roundabout, he sees the Assistant greet two strangers.

Fed up and not wanting to deal with his father, King hurries to grab a book, dog collar, and various small items.

Just as he watches the two strangers turn a corner inside the house, King sneaks out the front door, dog in hand.

Then - *DING.*

An old-fashioned doorbell goes off as Eden steps into a barren diner. She looks around. It's very reminiscent of the 50's, full of neon signs, very shiny, and predominately red, black, and white. She takes a window seat toward the back and has a second to catch her breath. A waitress suddenly appears though, startling her.



In a comedic interaction, Eden orders water, trying to make herself comfortable. As she does, we hear the bell DING again...A new figure struts in the establishment, sitting at the opposite end from Eden.

Suspiciously taking a closer look, she studies the individual: a young man, edgy, dog and book in hand, sunglasses on. She respects his sharp attire. Then, he too looks up, but Eden looks away. For minutes they only seem to catch curious glimpses of each other. Until they finally lock eyes, if only for a second.

They continue on with their business. Eden notices a homeless woman outside, struggling. Simply trying to survive. She can't seem to take her eyes off the stranger. Until -

CLAP.

Eden is brought back to attention as the young man forcefully shuts his book and heads toward the exit. She studies him as he leaves. He does the same from behind his shades.

Later that evening, standing on a vast deck, King carefully strokes his dog while staring at a partial view of LA and the Hills. He's undoubtedly thinking of something. Or someone.

At the same time, Eden waits for water to boil in her apartment. She too, is lost in thought. Thinking about something...Or someone...And for the first time in a long while.

Reality kicks back in and sometime later Eden is trudging to her job in the Hills. To her surprise, upon arriving at her desk she notices a handwritten note from Whitney. It's explains she's "treating herself" and taking a week off.

Infuriated at her general lack of respect and abusive behavior (oh the irony) herself, Eden sets up her own note stating that "She quits. Back never."

THE FAMILIAR DING GOES OFF.

Eden strides into the diner, irritated but free. As she falls into her seat, the waitress appears with her glass of water. Having a sip, Eden notices the same stylish man in a booth at the other end. *What's his story? Why's he always here?..*After a long breath, she jumps up and flies toward him.

Arriving at his table, she waits for him to lift his head from his book. "The Little Book of Hygge." Impatient though, she grabs it from him, examines the front, and hands it back. He watches as she drops into the booth across from him.

They're both quiet, taking in each other's attitude, presence, and style. Both curious and in need of some connection.

Finally, Eden speaks. She's sturdy and to-the-point, careful not to reveal too information. King is the same way.

In their first spoken interaction, we see they both have a similar sense of humor and a less than ideal view of Los Angeles, but more broadly, the world. Despite their calm and secretive demeanor, there's a fascinating energy between them. The way they speak is witty and borders on banter. With similarities to an interrogation scene, they cleverly uncover more about each other. Most importantly, we learn that Eden's directness is a result of not being that way for too long.

Some time later, they walk through the Hills. King reveals the name of the dog as "Sophie" to Eden, in which she replies it's delicate and fitting, prompting a small smile from him in return.

As they reach the gateway to a grand Mediterranean villa, Eden does her best to hide her amazement. The very house she admired before was *his*.

After agreeing to share numbers, Eden struts away, King and Sophie watching her go.

That night, back in her bed, Eden notices more missed calls from "home." For a second we think she may call back. Instead, she simply turns off her light.

The following day, she stands lost in thought, staring out a cracked window. She can't take her eyes off of it, completely mesmerized. Suddenly, it starts to crack more. And more.

Next thing, we hear a loud SMASH as the distant sound of glass shatters and falls to the floor like rain. Twice. As if something fragile were being thrown. Then gradually, the muffled-out yelling of a man is heard. As it grows louder, we pick out what may be a Mid-western draw. Following, we make out the soft call of a woman's voice as it says, "stop." The visuals seem all too close to Eden now.

Thankfully interrupting the flashback, is her phone, repetitively ringing. Snapping out of it, she gets excited. But upon viewing Whitney's number, the feeling goes away. She ignores the call, looking out the window once again. However, only it's original crack is present. The rest was imagined.

The phone rings again seconds later. Agitated, Eden answers without looking, declaring that, "she quit."

However, King's voice comes through the speaker.

There is a quiet moment as they wait for the other to speak. This time, King initiates, questioning if Eden likes views?

Fittingly, we arrive at the secluded viewpoint overlooking LA. Eden, King, and Sophie all sit with striking shades on, taking in the scene. As they do, Eden learns the origins of King's name, getting the feeling that his father is "an asshole" (to which King would fully agree).

In a more tender moment, both King and Eden hesitantly admit that something good may be happening for the first time. Between them. *Maybe*.

Jumping forward in time, King and Eden now enter the villa, Eden examining every little detail along the way. She questions what his father exactly does, but with no answer.

They enter his bedroom, Eden again studying the layout.

But then we hear it. The sound of the footsteps.



Eden notices King's sudden sense of panic, sparking confusion *and* curiosity in her mind.

The bedroom door opens and in steps the Assistant. Observing Eden, he's hesitant. But King questions what type of "session" his father is requesting. Thankfully for him, it's a logistics meeting in the office. Still, this peaks Eden's interest, so she questions about the sessions. King simply replies that it's family business – training he helps his father with a few times a month.

Though she accepts the answer in the moment, Eden knows there is more going on.

That evening in her apartment, she stands, thinking. Questioning the day's events and debating her motives. The right move...

A few weeks later, we're on the beach. Eden is captivated by the ocean as King is entranced by the sand. All is tranquil and bright. In a quick interaction, we discover more similarities between King and Eden as they growing closer (though they wouldn't outright admit it).

Time then jumps as we witness both King and Eden sitting in the same diner booth. Two cups of coffee are prepared and a bowl of water for Sophie. Their regular.



For the first time, we see as they physically touch each other - one hand resting atop another on the table. Minimal contact, but enough for them. As is typical for budding relationships, they question what "they are." Sarcastically, they agree on a symbiotic relationship in which one person makes life suck *slightly* less for the other. However, on a more serious note, Eden finishes the conversation, asking if she should trust King. A critical moment for both.

King replies that he won't ever hurt her...That he needs her. To this, Eden temporarily lowers her sunglasses, intensely analyzing the guy across from her. Nothing obstructing her view.

That evening, Eden rests on one side of the bed as King does the other. Accustomed to questioning the men in her life, she momentarily studies him as he sleeps.

The very next morning, he walks her to the front gate. Just as she leaves, King returns to the mansion, a black vehicle pulling into the driveway.

Inside, King's father storms in with the Assistant. Opening a silver briefcase, the Assistant watches as the father takes out a gun, testing its features. Weighing it in his hands, the father inquires as to the girl he keeps seeing around the house. Not wanting to reveal too much, the Assistant nervously states she's just a friend of King's and that it's good for him. Unfortunately, the father sees her as a distraction toward King's family obligations and running operations one day. So, he tells the Assistant to find out about her. To dig into her past.

Now finished examining the weapon, the father returns the gun to the briefcase and discusses more affairs. The Assistant follows him through the house.

Hours later, King sits at the long dinner table. The Assistant eyes him down from his usual standing position and softly starts a conversation about Eden, causing King to turn red. He's embarrassed - as if a son talking about his first crush with a parent. But the conversation takes a sharp turn as the Assistant advises King to be careful, since the father is asking about Eden. Luckily, the mood gets lighter as King tells the Assistant to sit with him instead of stand.

And finally, opening up to him, King asks whether he enjoys being his father's assistant. The room falls silent as the Assistant truly thinks on the question.

Sunlight suddenly beams in as King and Eden calmly sit by Silver Lake, taking in the noises of life around them.

Opening up to King, we realize that Eden doesn't like the "training sessions" his father has him doing. King questions if this will affect her decision to move in together. Though she is a little uneasy, she decides to go ahead with the plan. More for him than her. Something about the entire situation and dynamic is compelling to her. In the way she responds, we get the sense her willingness to move in is more from a motherly and protective standpoint.

The hard questions now out of the way, the two decide to go shopping on Melrose. Why not.

Later, as King and Eden ascend the stairs, her belongings and shopping bags in hand, the Assistant notices. He and King share a quick glance and *nervous* smile. But a smile nonetheless.

Dropping her suitcase in the bedroom, Eden sits on the edge of the bed, quiet. King wonders if she's having doubts about the move, but soon understands that Eden is learning he literally can't cause anyone harm. Though he sees this as problematic and a large self-insufficiency due to his masculine upbringing, Eden is grateful, stating, "too many people cause harm." He then sits beside her.

In the middle of the night, King and Eden lay on their respective sides of the bed. Eden then gives King permission to hold her, which he does with a gentle touch. Arms wrapped around her, in a moment of pure honesty, Eden has King promise he won't turn into something he's not. King soon realizes Eden is eluding to her past, and respectfully agrees despite his growing impatience with his father.

WE CUT TO ANOTHER DAY IN THE MASSIVE HOUSE.

Just as King and Eden enter, they are stopped by the Assistant. Another basement session with the father. Eden once again inquires about their activity, but per normal, her question is ignored.

King begins walking down a hallway, the Assistant momentarily standing with Eden. In their first true exchange, we learn that Eden is beginning to understand what's going on and the true nature of the family business. The Assistant is surprisingly honest with her, admitting he only wants to make King's life easier, which he does by telling him to give into his father's requests. Because that's *his* job. But then, secretly, he tells Eden to make sure King *doesn't* give in, that they have to protect the fragile. Eden promises to do her best, but counters his statement by declaring it's the strong who need the most protection. The Assistant respects Eden's ability to see that King isn't weak.

She watches as he disappears down the hallway, following King.

Curiosity getting the best of her, she follows them. As they descend a flight of stairs to the basement, they aggressively lock a door behind them. After scanning the area, Eden presses her ear to the door.

She hears a metal door open, some inaudible dialogue, and then what could only be the sound of subtle gunshots.

That same afternoon, in his room, King seems much more irritated than anxious from his earlier session. Eden picks up on this as she watches from the doorway. In a quick exchange of dialogue in which King becomes the most abrupt he's ever been, Eden begins to worry.

Frustrated, she shuts the door and stands by the top of the grand staircase, surveying the area. Then, when she sees a figure move below she charges. As she comes to face the Assistant, she forces him to tell her the truth about the training sessions and exactly what his father tries to make King do. She grows more serious as her thoughts are confirmed.

Forced to face the violent truth, she has another flashback of masculine hands gripping a tender neck. Choking the air from it.

Semi-used to these memories, she pushes it far away and states that King can't do them anymore. That it all has to stop. She can sense he's giving in and that it's taking its toll. Also worried, the Assistant says he'll do what he can. The two of them have established a secret pact.

WE CUT TO EYES STARING AT A DARK CEILING.

Eden's eyes. **It's later that night.**

A flashback sneaks its way in yet again. A close up of blurry hands crawling on the floor. A fragile neck with hand marks. Something kicks and we hear a faint *thud*. Ending the scene is a hand rapidly reaching for something. *Anything*.

Used to the sleep deprivation, Eden climbs out of bed, careful not to wake King.

In the night, she wanders through a new section of the house. All is dimly lit. Dark. *Eerie*. But she continues on.

Until she realizes she isn't alone...



Turning, she's greeted by the menacing face of King's father.

In their first interaction, the father is able to successfully threaten Eden, revealing personal information about her past. He knows about the abuse and isn't afraid to use it against her.

Eden's blood boils as her irritation and hatred for the man rises. If anything, Eden is now able to see the father's false sense of what defines being a man. Still standing in the dark, she does her best to hold her own. Eventually, the father wanders off, having the final word.

FLASH FORWARD: King and Eden both monitor the view of LA and the Hills from the mansion's deck.

Eden admits knowing what King's father tries to get him to do. The violence he instills. We see as it really affects King. How he's trying to change for his father. Trying to be strong - a man. And despite Eden's attempts to keep him grounded, he hints at the fact that one day soon, he'll have to give in and cause harm. Because his father always gets what he wants...



Days later, Eden stares out the bay windows as King walks with his father outside, taking notes from their session. Sensing she's there, the father flashes a threatening smile. As if he's standing directly behind her.

She steps away from the glass.

A separate evening, Eden reveals her interaction with King's father, which worries King. We get the sense he almost feels threatened. But in a moment where they both reveal the father's cruelty, Eden also states he's weak. This completely confuses King, until she hints he's weak because of King himself. Because of his persistence to resist.

The discussion ends with Eden stating, "stay solid. Don't give into it." She has a profound look of determination on her face. A strong look of protection. To prove his father wrong.

Sometime later, eating dinner together, King and the Assistant sit side by side. Reminding the Assistant that he never answered the question as to whether he enjoys working for his father, the Assistant only reveals that he likes being there for King. Surprisingly, this causes King to become defensive, exclaiming he's tired of people thinking he's helpless. And even though the Assistant doesn't think so, King can't see otherwise. Eden then walks in, returning to her plate, just as King implies he's going to prove he's not useless, sooner rather than later.

Eden notices the slight look of despair in the Assistant's eyes. She too becomes concerned.

Per routine, **the very next day** all is quiet until a muffled scream echoes through the house...

King and Eden don't react until they hear the sound of footsteps.

This time, before the Assistant even enters the room, King is standing and ready to go. Eden reminds him to stay solid, however he's already on the move. Her and the Assistant exchange a powerful and troubled look as he exits the room.

They're out of time.

A prisoner on a death march who has finally accepted his fate, King trudges down the staircase.

Above, Eden rushes out of the room. Again, she and the Assistant share a glance.

They have to do something.

For the first time, we see the dense metal door slide open. Behind it is a barren metallic room. In the darkness stands the father and a second assistant. In the background, we notice a bloody man on his knees.

Though doing his best to feign confidence, King's feet become cement. He can barely breath. Somehow, he manages to move into the space, noticing a table of *instruments*.

His father happily welcomes him over, as is customary in their sessions.

Next, in a gruesome manner, King's father explains what King must do to the man - the traitor who betrayed their family and their operations. The one responsible for the underweight shipments. The villain who tried to ruin them.

But King can't get the image of the hostage potentially being a father himself out of his head.

Forcing a gun into King's hands, his father tells him to shoot him in the legs first. Then the head. Have fun with it. He then briefly explains how a team is like a stack of nickels. And if one of the nickels doesn't pull through, it becomes bent, causing the rest of the team to fall. And King's family doesn't fall.

Tensions severely rise as the moment grows nearer.



The father's violence fills the space, almost drowning King.

But King can't escape this time. He's determined to follow through, despite his soul saying otherwise.

Sweat runs down his head as his father yells to him.

King holds the gun full of anxiety. He closes his eyes and just as he's about to shoot we hear –

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM.

All men recoil at the rapid fire. The father quickly grabs the pistol from King and turns around, aiming it none other than Eden, standing there with a pistol raised.

A brief flashback of Eden panicking and running from a house appears. It's gone before we know it.

Realizing his father's pistol is still aimed at Eden, King forces him to lower it.

They all turn to the bloody corpse now on the ground. As they turn back toward Eden, she places the pistol on the table of instruments and struts out.

All is dead silent...

Hours later, Eden soothingly pets Sophie in her arms, looking out the bay windows. Nearby, King watches her, analyzing his feelings. Eventually, he walks behind her, leaving some space. He quickly learns that Eden did it so he wouldn't have to. So he could stay true to their promise.



Suddenly, there is a knocking at the door. They all turn to see the father standing there. He tells them to join for dinner.

Now downstairs, everyone waits for the father to speak from his end of the table. The Assistant stands in his usual position.

In the conversation to be had, power dynamics are intensely questioned and begin to shift. Something the father clearly does not appreciate. However, Eden has a newfound sense of strength and is less affected by the father's tactics. She explains how her mother used to say a team is like a stack of *quarters*, and if one becomes bent, the rest fall. This peaks the father's interest as he uses the same simile. But Eden takes it a step further and says her mother never explained what would happen if the **top** quarter was the bent one, implying the one in charge is to blame.

The father eyes her down. She simply stands, thanks him for the dinner, and promptly exits.

CUT TO A FEW DAYS LATER, poolside. Eden and King lie in the sun, shades on. The atmosphere is both calm and charged. Surrounding them is the ever-present property wall.



In a quick motion, Eden grabs sunblock, but King insists he help.

As he rubs her back, he takes note of her scars. Eden then states she isn't a violent person, despite recent events. She softly places a palm on his cheek and looks him in the eyes, searching for a sign.

Luckily, King never had any doubts.

That same afternoon, the two rest in his bed, Eden traces the outline of his core muscles. He could be intimidating if he wanted. Physically threatening. But he knows he can't be. He's coming to realize that it might be Eden's role.

Then, as the two hear the approaching footsteps, King begins to prep himself for yet another session. However, the Assistant informs them the father is asking for *Eden* instead.

After a second of suspense, she calmly walks to the doorway. As she descends the staircase, she looks to King watching from above. He simply gazes into the void.

Until we hear several gunshots.



CUT TO ANOTHER DAY as both King and Eden stroll along Melrose, Sophie walking ahead. Both in fresh outfits, they gather several looks from Los Angelites. Though the two are adapting to new dynamics, it's when they're together that they seem powerful. Co-dependent in a mighty way.

Back in King's room that afternoon, they toss their shopping bags to the floor. The second they do, odd noises seem to sneak into the room. Now a single unit, they move to the window.

Down below, several of the family assistants drag a heavy garbage bag, tossing it into a vehicle. They then drive off.

Just in time for King to openly admit his father must be ashamed of him. But Eden, always a step ahead, fights the thought and supports him. Lets him see the strength in what he *can't* do.

Moments later, King seems to get an idea in his head. Something lights up in his eyes as he recognizes that Eden *can* do what his father desires. Pulling down her shades, Eden gets serious, questioning if King is mad at the fact.

As a response, his face transitions to a look of acceptance. Pride even.

Their new dynamic has been set in stone.

He approaches her, both of them standing together, noticing smears of blood in the driveway.

Moments pass as King whispers something into Eden's ear.

Her face falls in disbelief and genuine shock. Gradually though, it turns into a look of understanding. Perhaps an opportunity...We get the notion that King is planning something. Something that's going to happen very soon.

Just then, **WE SLAM TO BLACK**...Over this, we hear the sound of the metal door shutting. Locking.

Eyes suddenly open, bloodshot. Confused and furious. We discover they are the father's eyes. He's cuffed and bound to a chair in the basement, a bloody mark present on his head.

Across from him sits King, oddly relaxed.

In a reversal of the situation, King now seems comfortable. A little more powerful. Even though his father still tries to belittle and threaten him. Before he can go too far though, a gun cocks.

Eden appears from behind and out of darkness. Joining King, the room grows even colder. Tension rises.

For the first time, the father seems fearful, though he tries to hide it. He assumes King has dragged Eden in to do the dirty work, however Eden informs him that it was all King's idea. It's been brewing for a while.

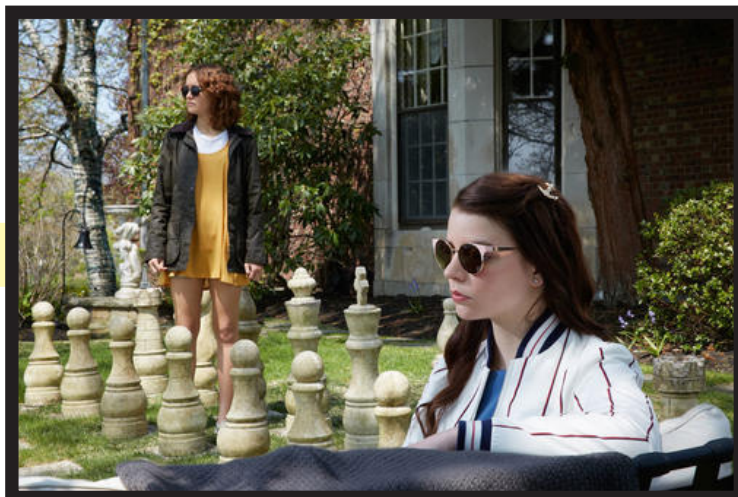
Following, in a brutal but sad moment, King states that his father never once asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. And though the father smirks, believing it to be a joke, King becomes aggressive, launching toward his father. He stares him dead in the face, forcing him to ask. We notice as both their eyes seem to glow with similar vengeance.

Finally asking the question, King utters but one word in response.

"Kind."

In the residual silence to follow, Eden attaches a silencer to the gun. As she does, she updates the father that she solved the puzzle about the bent penny. Confused, raging, and fearful, the father tries to get loose, but to no avail. So, enjoying the temporary change of sovereignty, Eden continues, stating if the *top penny* is indeed the bent one, then there was never a stack to begin with. All of it was perceived.

A waste.





As Eden finishes attaching the silencer, King glares at the demon before him. The father himself strains to get loose, mouthing obscenities. But it's far too late.

Eden raises the weapon, says her final words to the creature, and pulls the trigger.

The father goes limp. Blood splatters on Eden and King's face. They both take in the corpse before them.

It's over...For now.

Next thing we know, hands are rushing to grab a variety of objects. Pre-packed bags, clothes, snacks, dog food, water, cash. Everything needed for a getaway.

The two beings rush outside, the California sun beaming down. Though they're fleeing, there's something about them that seems more assertive than ever. Even the mansion seems smaller in comparison to them.

Sprinting to the garage, they suddenly stop as the Assistant steps in front of the door. Eden raises the pistol, but King stops her.

He already knows.

The Assistant tosses car keys to King and encouragingly opens the door for them.

Not much time to spare, King and the Assistant share brief words. King thanks him for everything he's done. For always being there for him. Even now. Risking his life to help him.

Unexpectedly, the two men embrace one another, neither one knowing what the future holds. The hug, though emotional, unfortunately doesn't last long. But it's enough for them.

Moments later, the 1959 Cadillac Eldorado BURSTS out of the garage and disappears down the driveway, leaving the Assistant behind – overwhelmingly sad, but also proud.

As if the father King always needed.

We then see as wheels to the sleek vehicle spin uncontrollably down the Pacific Coast Highway. The sun glaring high above, all is surprisingly idyllic.

In the driver's seat, Eden flicks a lollipop out of her mouth, the purple fur on her coat whipping in the wind. Through her fresh Dior shades, she observes King and his Chihuahua in the passenger seat.

Then, her phone rings.

She reaches for it with no hesitation.

The voice of her mother comes through. Genuinely shocked she answered, her mother seems ecstatic to hear her daughter's voice. It's been a few months after all. This being the case, the mother states they were worried about Eden. But she simply replies they don't need to be anymore, to which the mother expresses her desire to cry with happiness. Particularly given Eden's less than ideal history.

After a quick back and forth, her father's voice cuts in. Unaware of Eden's true situation, he attempts to gather the latest updates on his child's life, as any parent would. In the most simple way she can, Eden says that things have indeed "turned around." Along with her mother, her father is thrilled to hear so. More importantly, that he's happy she isn't caught up in bad things and situations again. He just wants her to be safe and herself again.



As the convertible continues to zip down pavement, the road ahead suddenly clears.

It's a straight shot. The beach on one side and dried out canyons on the other. Heaven and Hell. And them – somewhere in between.

Returning to the call, Eden declares that she's *the most herself that she's ever been*.

Her final remarks now having been said, she ends the call, staring at the world ahead.

King subtly looks to her with half a grin. She does the same in return.

All the while, Sophie sits on King's lap, simply taking in the feel of the wind. Going from one thing to the next. Small, but always there. Resilient.

And so, together, King and Eden launch into the unknown.

A duo to be reckoned with.

Truly dynamic.



THE END.