

FIRECRACKER

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INT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

In a tidy apartment, a woman, WILLOW (mid 20s), all dressed up with nowhere to go, sits on the couch doing a puzzle. Behind her, a list of things to do has been **CROSSED OFF**.

COOS from a bassinet placed nearby. Willow coos back, quieting the **BABY** in the blankets, guarded by play station.

A frame on the wall shows many **PICTURES**: the family (Willow, the baby, and husband), grandparents, and friends.

And tacked on the outside of the frame, there's an **AGED POLAROID** of Willow and **ANOTHER MAN**.

Her attention is caught from something outside...

EXT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. STREET.

The man from the polaroid, **FELIX** (late 20s), walks down a city street. His clothes are bummy and out of style, but clean. He turns towards the front entrance of an apartment building.

But instead of going to the building's entrance, he abruptly jumps over a ground level balcony.

FELIX
Hey, Willow! Will?

INT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM.

WILLOW
Felix...

She hears knocks at the balcony door. The door flexes with each thud.

She notices the baby stirring, which startles Willow. She leaves the living room to answer the door.

EXT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. BALCONY

Felix knocks a few more times, harder than before.

FELIX
I've got news! Good news this time.

INT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. ROOM

Willow approaches the balcony door. Beside the door, there is A VASE ON A HIGH TABLE. It shakes with each heavy knock.

EXT. WILLOW'S HOUSE. BALCONY

Felix peeks inside and sees Willow coming.

FELIX
-- and I brought a --

He hastily opens the door. It bursts open with force.

INT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT UNIT

Willow watches the door explode open, swinging wildly into the VASE ON A HIGH TABLE.

SMASH.

Tinkling pieces of broken ceramic fall to the floor. They both stand, shocked.

FELIX
-- A gift.

WILLOW
Great.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT UNIT. LIVING ROOM

A white bandage is wound around Felix's WOUNDED HAND.

Willow inspects her work as Felix chatters on.

FELIX
So, yeah. This job is going to be gucci. No bullshit, no background checks.

Willow is focused on putting away the first-aid supplies.

FELIX (CONT'D)
And I can pay for the broken thing!
... well, not now. I can't yet
because I got this for Feely.

He holds up the gift bag proudly. It's crumpled.

WILLOW
Yeah, no. That's great, Felix.

Felix takes a good look at the baby.

FELIX
Crap, it's been a while. I didn't
know babies grew so fast.

RING.

Willow looks around, and takes her phone from the coffee table. She looks at the screen: MARK.

WILLOW
Sorry. Hold on a sec.

She stands up and moves out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Willow answers the phone.

WILLOW
Hi, my love.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Oh...Oh, Ophelia was fussing.
Sorry.

Willow listens to the muffled voice.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Mark, not now. I'm not...

She looks into the living room, and sees Felix hovering around the baby.

WILLOW (TO FELIX) (CONT'D)
Stop, no! I just got her to sleep.

Beat.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
No one, I... I'm just talking to --

WILLOW (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's just... he came by.
He brought a present for his niece.
What was I supposed to do?

WILLOW (CONT'D)
I know, I know. I'm not leaving him
alone with her.

She looks into the living room again.

WILLOW (WHISPER) (CONT'D)
He'll be gone soon. You won't have
to see him.

The baby WHINES from the other room

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Gotta go. She needs a change. See
you at 5.

She hangs up and puts down her phone. Beat.

She goes back into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Felix's back is to the entrance. He admires the baby.

Willow enters and --

FELIX
Was that Mark --

WILLOW
You have to go. I'll get you
something to eat but I can't give
you any money this month.

Before Felix has a chance to respond, she leaves the room.

Knuckles white, Felix squeezes the gift.

INT. KITCHEN

Willow ladles meal into a GLASS FOOD CONTAINER. Felix enters,
heated.

FELIX
I didn't ask for cash.

Willow ignores Felix.

FELIX (CONT'D)
I guess he's not too happy I'm
here.

Felix gets close to Willow. She faces him, packed meal in hand.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Eh? EH?!

Felix grabs Willow by the wrist. She disarms his grip. But drops the container.

It TUMBLES to the clean floor with a SMASH and SPLAT.

WILLOW

Calm down! You'll wake up the baby!

The mess oozes sauce; shards of glass glisten.

WILLOW (LOUD WHISPER) (CONT'D)

Here's your freakin' drug money.
Happy?

She takes money from her pocket, shoves it into his hands.

She bends down to clean up the mess.

FELIX

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? ARE YOU FUCKING
KIDDING.

The baby CRIES.

WILLOW

UGH.

She hastens cleaning the mess with her bare hands.

FELIX

I haven't done that shit in 7
months!

WILLOW

What about your meds? Are you going
to your therapy sessions? Your
probation officer --

Felix STOMPS on the floor.

FELIX

Screw that! They don't work for me!

WILLOW

You're not even trying! You told me
you would take them after last time
with Ophelia --

Felix BANGS a wall.

FELIX

Last time, Mark called the cops on me because I was lost for a bit! --

WILLOW

It was hours, Felix! It was supposed to be just around the block. You never think about the consequences.

FELIX

You just do whatever Mark says!

WILLOW

No I don't!

FELIX

Yeah you do. You always take his side. Even if it means throwing your brother back in jail.

WILLOW

It's not him versus you!

FELIX

Yeah, right!

Felix takes the hanging PICTURE FRAME. Willow jumps at him to stop, but he throws them on the floor. Willow backs away from Felix and the BROKEN GLASS on the floor.

Willow pushes Felix to walk by him. Felix retaliates by invading her personal space, getting uncomfortably close.

FELIX (CONT'D)

What are you going to do?

Willow turns and leaves the room.

INT. HALL

Willow rushes through the hall with Felix close behind her. She darts into the bathroom and slams the door shut.

INT. BATHROOM

Willow catches her breath. She grimaces.

She looks at her hands.

They're full of BLOOD.

She reels.

But on a second look, it's just sauce from the messy meal.

She pauses for a moment. The baby mewls.

WILLOW
...Ophelia...

She goes to open the door and --

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

FELIX (OUTSIDE BATHROOM)
You're scared of me now? You won't
even talk to me!

WILLOW
Please, I need to check on the baby
--

FELIX
She's fine.

WILLOW
Mark is coming home soon! I don't
know what he'll do if --

FELIX
But I didn't do anything!

BANGS continue on the door repeatedly. The baby CRIES.

Willow takes out her phone. On the lock screen it shows:

4:55pm.

EMERGENCY CALL.

FELIX (CONT'D)
All you see is the bad, even when
I'm fucking trying! What's the
point?

The sound of BANGING and WAILING builds. Willow holds on to the phone tight, her fingers hovering above the screen. The persistent BANGS and SCREAMS peak and then --

Willow pushes a button.

SILENCE. Then, three recognizable dial tones: 9-1-1.

The ringing starts. RING.

Willow moves to the door. She listens. RING.

She grasps the door knob. Turns it. RING.

INT. HALL

The hall way is empty. Willow exits the bathroom.

She looks around. The ringing continues.

She sees nothing... except...

A BABY blanket, strewn on the floor in the hall. It has a BLOOD on it.

She looks to the front door. It is WIDE OPEN.

Willow gasps. The ringing stops.

Willows mouth is open but words don't come out.

Beat.

She hears something and HANGS UP THE PHONE. She rushes to...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Willow bursts in and sees --

The baby in the bassinet, calm. Beside her, a STUFFED TOY.

Willow runs to her baby, picking her up. She holds her close.

She moves to the front door, and hears a faint stomping.

She looks at the broken glass on the floor Then, at the bassinet.

The stuffed toy looks back at her blankly. On the ground, there is SHREDDED GIFT WRAPPING.

She sighs and leaves the apartment with the baby.

EXT. WILLOW'S APARTMENT. STREET.

On a busy street, Willow's world spins as she looks around for Felix.

END.