

BENEATH THIEVES

screenplay by CLAIRE STAVISH

BENEATH THIEVES

by

CLAIRE STAVISH

GENRE: Drama

Live-action short film

NARRATION STYLE: suspenseful, dramatic

Very little dialogue

Heavy focus on visual storytellers

PLOT A: present tense

Characters:

Jenny

Baker

Claudia

PLOT B: flashbacks/past

Characters:

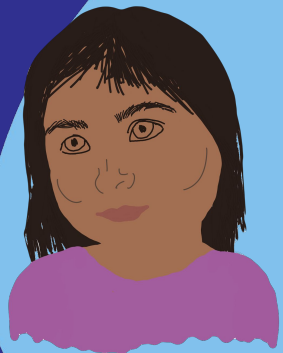
Simon

Claudia

Young Jenny

Young Baker

CHARACTERS



JENNY (28)

Nervous.
Paranoid.
Questioning.

Jenny, scared, looks to the police lights flashing far in the distance. Jenny looks back to the quickly distancing Baker, then back to the stolen grocery items in her pocket.



PLOT A CHARACTER

WANTS

to steal
groceries to
survive

NEEDS

to solve her
mother's
moral issues

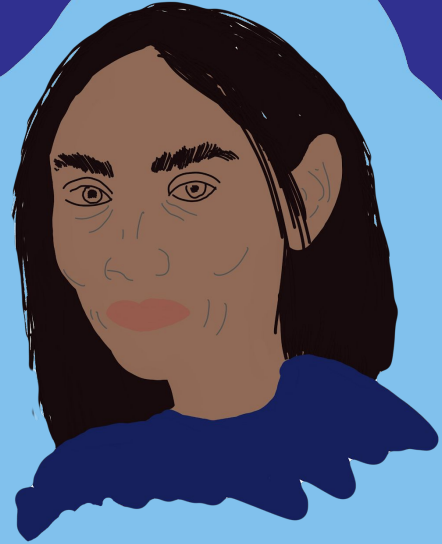
YOUNG JENNY (10)
Quiet. Observant. Unsure.

CLAUDIA (52)
Blunt. Bitter. Cold.

**PLOT B
CHARACTERS**



**CLAUDIA'S
DAUGHTER**



**JENNY'S
MOTHER**

BAKER (26)

Obsessive.
Arrogant.
Calm.

Baker's home is meticulously clean. His shoes have been removed from his feet. By the basement door, several pairs of shoes are lined up neatly. Baker's leather jacket has been hung upon a hook on the wall above the shoes.



PLOT A CHARACTER

WANTS

to steal
paintings

NEEDS

to claim
justice for
his father's
death

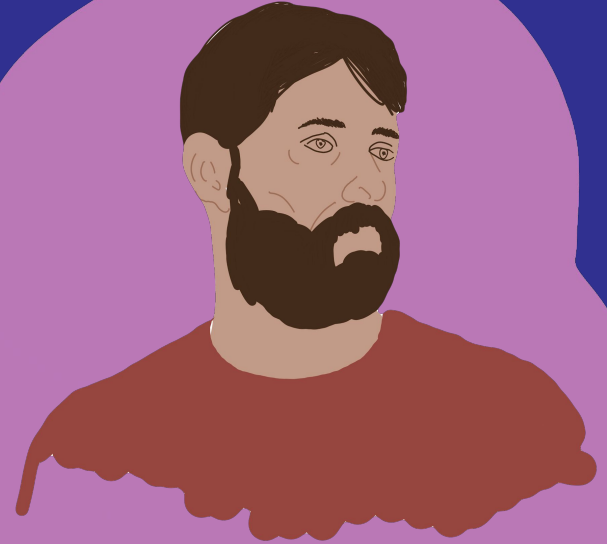
YOUNG BAKER (8)

SIMON (43)

**PLOT B
CHARACTERS**



**SIMON' S
SON**



**BAKER' S
FATHER**

STORYWORLD

EXT. DESOLATE CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The paved, potholed streets gleam after rain in the night. In every direction, there is a brick building surrounding the street. It is dark outside, and the streets are lit only by city lamps and the glow of a nearby convenience store.



CHARACTER EXPOSITION



INT. URBAN HOME - NIGHT

BAKER (26) collects a painting that shows dollops of orange and purple flowers, and he secretively tucks it inside his coat.

JENNY (28) watches Baker move from the other side of the window. Baker does not notice the presence of Jenny.

ACT I



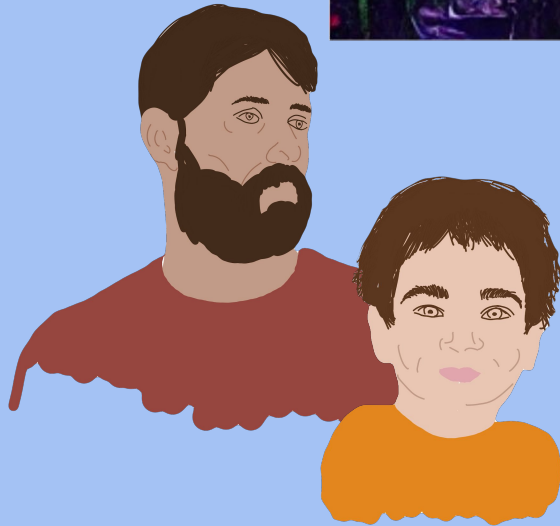
INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

JENNY (28) stands in front of the refrigerated section. Looks around, nervous. Slips package of cheese into coat pocket.

BAKER (26) appears outside of the convenience store window. Peers into the store, intrigued. Watches Jenny as she moves. Jenny does not notice the presence of Baker.

DEVELOPING FLASHBACKS

ACT I



INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

SIMON (43) stands next to a set of displayed canvas paintings on the gallery wall. He wears a pristine leather jacket embroidered with "CLIFFS" on the breast. One oil painting in particular displays a field of orange and purple flowers. Beneath the painting is a golden plate engraved with "Artist: Simon Cliffs."

YOUNG BAKER (8) spots his father from afar and runs up to Simon. They embrace.

INCITING INCIDENT

ACT I



EXT. URBAN HOME - NIGHT

Jenny grabs Baker's arm roughly from behind. She tries to grab the stolen painting from Baker's coat.

As Jenny gains grip on the stolen painting, Baker slams his elbow into her nose. Jenny falls to the ground with a grunt.

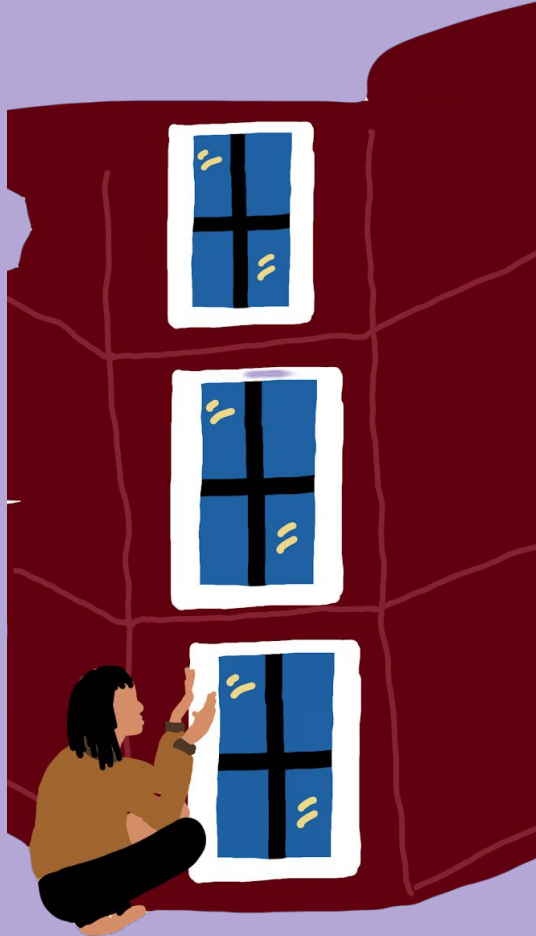
Jenny, scared, removes her hand from her face. Her nose bleeds.

Baker looks down on Jenny. He appears angry, confused.

JENNY

Why did you take that painting?

RISING ACTION



ACT II

EXT. BAKER'S HOME - NIGHT

Jenny walks to a low-level window of the suburban home. Through the window, she sees Baker walk down a set of stairs into a basement. Baker sets down the painting he stole onto a shelf. The shelf is filled with many other paintings of similar nature. Baker admires them, standing.

...

Jenny loses her balance and falls into the window with a thud. Through the window, Baker's head jerks to look at the noise.

Jenny is dazed by the fall. She realizes that Baker has seen her. Eye contact. Jenny runs.

CLIMAX

ACT II



EXT. BAKER'S HOME - NIGHT (CONT.)

Baker abruptly rises from the couch and darts toward the stairs, grabbing the hung leather jacket on his way.

Baker arrives where Jenny was standing, pulling the second sleeve of the leather jacket onto his shoulder. Jenny has fled the scene. The only evidence of Jenny is her tattered red hat, which Baker seems to recognize.

DEVELOPING FLASHBACKS

ACT II

EXT. BAKER'S HOME - NIGHT

Simon lays sprawled outside on the lawn.
Blood stains his hair and face and the
neatly-cut grass crushed beneath his
body.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Evidential images of Simon's death display on a
screen at the front of the courtroom. Young Baker
cries, his sobs fading in and out. Simon's
embroidered leather jacket sits in Baker's lap,
wrinkled and tight under his small grasp.

An unruly woman sits at the front of the
courtroom, wearing an orange jumpsuit. Her face
hangs down so that it is not visible.

Near the woman in orange sits YOUNG JENNY (10),
in between two police officers. Young Jenny wears
a pristine red hat with a Red Sox logo on the
front.



BAKER'S REALIZATION & ACTION

ACT II

(INT. COURTROOM - DAY)
"Near the woman in orange sits YOUNG JENNY (10), in between two police officers. Young Jenny wears a pristine red hat."



[flashback
triggers Baker's
action]



INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT
Baker, talking to the cashier, points at Jenny as he speaks quietly.

Jenny recognizes Baker from the painting heist. Jenny's face is painted in confusion, then anger with realization. The cashier begins walking towards her.

Jenny looks to Baker for an explanation, but receives none. Jenny shoots out of the convenience store.

Baker exits the store and looks around for evidence of Jenny. There is none. He appears pleased, but not satisfied.



ALL IS LOST

ACT II

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Baker walks quickly and with determination. His eyes dart back and forth, apparently looking for someone or something. His hand rests on the gun in the front of his jean waistband.



EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Baker and Jenny abruptly come face to face with each other.

Baker swiftly pulls the gun from his waistband and holds it, pointed at Jenny, his finger shaking on the trigger.

A gunshot sounds.

Jenny looks down at a bullet wound in her shoulder. Blood dissipates from the wound. She grabs the wound and looks up at Baker before she stumbles away.



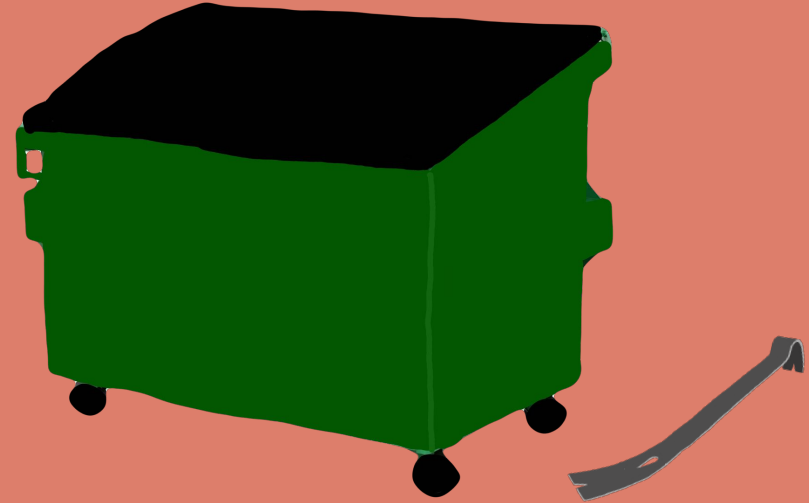
JENNY' S CRISIS

ACT III

Jenny continues to hide in the alleyway. The sound of footsteps approaches.

A silhouette of a man appears in the opening at the end of the alleyway. Jenny runs the opposite direction and ducks behind a dumpster. Jenny looks back up as the man continues to walk -- it is not Baker, but a common man, irrelevant.

Jenny spots a crowbar behind a dumpster. She goes to grab it, but hesitates.



Jenny stares at the crowbar in thought. She finally grasps it tightly in her hand and runs away with it.

DEVELOPING FLASHBACKS

ACT III

EXT. BAKER'S HOME - NIGHT

A woman whose face is not revealed grips a bloodied crowbar as she leans over the dead Simon.



INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Baker slides the folder across the table to the police officers. Baker begins to open the folder.

FINAL CLIMAX

ACT III

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Jenny kneels, covered in speckles of blood. She grasps the bloody crowbar until her knuckles are white, the surrounding skin on her hands red with blood.

Baker's feet lay next to a growing puddle of blood. His hands lay lifeless on the street.



"RESOLUTION"

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Baker's cell phone sticks out of his jacket pocket. The screen is lit up with an active call.

Jenny's trembling hand pulls out the phone. The call has been running for several minutes. The caller ID reads "9-1-1."

CUE FLASHBACK:

Baker begins to open the folder to reveal a document which reveals Claudia's name and mugshot. The document states that Claudia is the murderer of Simon.

END FLASHBACK.



ACT III

Jenny's facial expressions change excruciatingly slowly. ... She grasps her bullet wound, which has now bled and soaked almost her entire shirt.

...

Jenny falls to the ground.

Jenny and Baker lay lifeless in the alleyway.

MAJOR ARTIFACTS



SIMON'S COAT

Connects Baker to his father



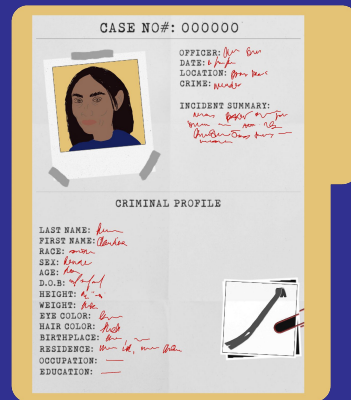
HAND GUN

Foreshadows "all is lost"; insights Baker's thought process



RED HAT

Jenny & Young Jenny's identifying factor



POLICE REPORT

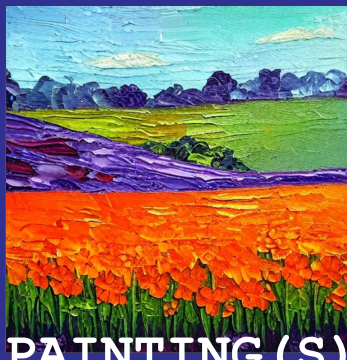
Slowly reveals Claudia as Simon's murderer



CELL PHONE

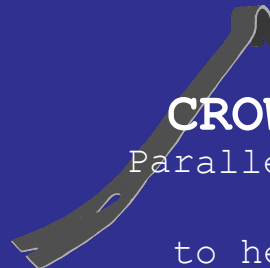
(911 CALL)

A final twist - reveals Baker's intent for justice



PAINTING(S)

A symbol of Simon; motivates Baker's thievery



CROWBAR

Parallels Jenny's tendencies to her mother's

END.