

CITY IN DARK
an original screenplay by
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CITY IN DARK ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. APARTMENT ROOF TOP - DARK

The concrete slab rooftop of an old walk-up apartment building has worn, wooden, simple outdoor furniture scattered and illuminated by STRINGED FILAMENT BULBS with laundry hanging from the strings. A metal door frame leads down stairs. A brick props open the shabby wooden door.

Rooftops of similar height and aesthetic comprise the west-facing skyline. Warm filament bulbs glow from the cobblestone streets below. Two buildings in the east-facing skyline are within the bounds of warm light, but beyond that, the buildings are dilapidated, the streets are dark, except for stray neon signs that emit harsh, sickly light.

YOUNG CIGNA (5 y.o. girl, brown rough cut short hair, brown eyes) sits on GRANDMOTHER's (grey, 78 y.o. woman, wears worn feed-sack dress, long layered necklaces beaded with stones) knee as she mystically gestures upward to the sky, blanketed with black clouds blocking out all other light.

GRANDMOTHER

The world speaks to us, little one.
Studying the twists and nobs in the
sky can even tell you the future.

YOUNG CIGNA

Is this just pretend, Na-Na?

GRANDMOTHER

(laughing)
No, no, for generations your ancestors
have been cloud reading.

Grandmother pinches Young Cigna's cheek. Young Cigna giggles.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

And long before that we studied the
stars.

YOUNG CIGNA

Stars?

GRANDMOTHER

Little lights that tinkle many, many
miles away, way, way up in the sky.
Don't you remember? From your bed-
time book?

Young Cigna pauses, then nods. She squints at the sky which appear a black blanket of clouds.

YOUNG CIGNA
But it's just black, like always.

GRANDMOTHER
(hmm)
Look closer my dear and a thousand
shades and shapes appear. Each twist
and knob, handcrafted. Can you see
them?

The variation in hues clarify. Grandmother traces the shapes.
Young Cigna stares in wonder.

CIGNA'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Mother! Bring Cigna in, please.
Lunch ready!

GRANDMOTHER
Yes, yes, dear we'll be right down!

Grandmother scoops up Young Cigna and walks towards the door
to exit the rooftop.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)
Okay darling, lets not keep your
mommy waiting.

YOUNG CIGNA
But, Na-Na?

GRANDMOTHER
Hmm?

YOUNG CIGNA
No more stars?

GRANDMOTHER
No, no more stars. Not for a long
time, dear Cigna.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - DARK

The single room apartment was shabby, holes in walls caused
by water damage and abuse. A COAT CLOSET has been ripped
partially off its hinges. Its empty, save a simplistic kitchen
near the door. Paper litter scatters the floor. It's dark.

Warm light emanate from the open WEST-FACING WINDOW. Under
it, on a nest of newspaper, a small body sleeps beneath an
oversize BOMBER JACKET.

Harsh NEON LIGHTS cut through the EAST FACING WINDOW's BROKEN
BLINDS, shining in CIGNA's (9 y.o., claw scar raking from her
ear over part of her lips, wearing a linen shift) eyes. She
tries to shield them.

She crawls to shut the east window's blinds tighter.

She pulls herself up and sleepily stumbles to the west window, sinking into it. Narrow cobblestone streets below, lined with small store fronts and warm stringed filament bulbs, bustles lightly. Pedestrians, families, lovers with shopping bags, dress in posh European and Asian 1940s attire. Employees welcome and send off customers.

Some wear glass terrarium BACKPACKS with U.V. lights. Plastic tubes funnel oxygen to O-masks.

Cigna watches them, content.

She looks up. The sky a black-purple hazy sheet. No sunlight.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - PRESENT

Cigna stands, sad.

CUT TO:

In a glass reflection Cigna tries to flatten her hair. She dresses in raggedy, old clothes and the bomber jacket. She wraps a SCARF over her head, mouth, and nose.

She exits the apartment in to a dark catwalk lined with other apartment doors. Over the banister is a narrow dilapidated spiral staircase. She descends.

At the bottom of the stairs thin hallway and the front door. Nailed boards cover its frosted window. Shadows of passerbys bob. She turns to crawl though a kicked out window leading into a dark alley.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE CIGNA'S APARTMENT - DARK

She dusts herself off and walks to the end of the alley. She looks to the East. Past a barrier plastered with warnings and drawn silhouettes of humanoid monsters, the streets are dark, buildings more dilapidated.

She turns away and slips into the crowd.

She lazily weaves between the people, cuts through alleys like routine. Some people in masks look at her with disgust or unease. A mother pulls her child away.

EXT. RAMEN SHOP - DARK

She stops outside a hole-in-the-wall ramen shop. Its windows propped open. Red curtains with red curtains with white koi prints cover the top half of the doorway.

Outside seating is set up on the street. A COUPLE sits at a table, eating bowls of ramen and enthusiastically chatting. The WOMAN's terrarium backpack is on the stone by her feet, her oxygen mask rests on the table.

Cigna angers.

A wallet hangs out of the woman's PURSE, slumped by her feet.

Cigna looks around cautiously, crouches, and creeps closer. She reaches out. Fingers graze the wallet. A man's massive hand grabs her wrist, yanking her away. The ramen shop owner HIROSHI (tall, burly, bald, wearing a kappogi, happi, and a headband) is nearly lifting her off her feet by her wrist.

The couple barely glances back.

HIROSHI

Not here kid. You know that.

Cigna looks at him, apologetic. He drops her wrist, sighs.

He walks back into the shop, Cigna hot on his heels. The curtains barely brush the top of her head.

INT. RAMEN SHOP - DARK

The inside is small, only room for a bar and a couple of stools. The bar had settings for each stool, a box of disposable chop sticks, a napkin, soy sauce, and a glass of water. The wood panel walls, decorated with small red banners, are dimly lit. Cigna hops up on a swiveling stool. Hiroshi walks behind the bar.

A greying woman, MIRTA, sits at the bar's end, resting her head on the table next to a hot bowl of ramen and a small ceramic bottle of sake.

MIRTA

Hiroshi! Another bottle please.

HIROSHI

Mirta, it's barely noon. I am serving tea. You reached over the bar to get that one. Don't think I didn't notice.

Mirta groans, waves him off, and puts her head back down.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)

I'm telling you now kid, this sticky finger crap is going to get you in a load of trouble. One day your prize won't be worth the pain it causes you.

Cigna pouts. Hiroshi sighs.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
What'll you be having little lady?

CIGNA
What have you got?

Hiroshi crosses his arms, looking down at her.

HIROSHI
That depends on how much you've got.

Fear strikes. Cigna rifles in her pockets, pulls three copper coins. She straightens them out then sits on her hands.

The owner looks at them frustrated.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
Ahg. That's just sad. What am I supposed to do with that.

He shoves the coins back towards her.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
Just keep 'em. What do you want?

Cigna scrambles to gather and shove the coins in her pocket. She nervously picks at the table.

CIGNA
Shio and rice noodles ... please ...
with shoyu eggs and katsu chicken?

HIROSHI
Where are the vegetables?

CIGNA
I don't need any.

HIROSHI
Yes you do.

CIGNA
I don't like them

HIROSHI
You will have vegetables or you will have nothing.

Cigna huffs.

CIGNA
Some bok choy. Please. And ginger.

HIROSHI

Coming right up. Keep your hands to
yourself while you wait.

He turns away to make the food.

MOMENTS LATER:

He places a steaming bowl in front of her. Wide-eyed, she
unwraps her scarf and grabs chopsticks.

Hiroshi notices the scar. Pity flashes. She sees and shrinks.
He turns away.

She hunches over her bowl and slurps with increasing ferocity.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)

Relax kid, no one is gonna take it
from you.

She finishes the bowl, panting. She wipes her mouth with the
back of her sleeve.

CIGNA

Thank you.

She hops down from her stool. The owner is facing away
polishing a glass.

HIROSHI

Yeah. Be careful out there kid.
See you next time.

Mirta raises her head to see Cigna scurry out.

MIRTA

Cute kid. Flighty though, huh?

HIROSHI

Yeah.

MIRTA

Whats her name?

HIROSHI

I honestly couldn't tell you.

INT. HIROSHI'S MIND - PAST

Young Cigna sits at the same stool, gauze taped over her face,
looking up at Hiroshi, cagey.

HIROSHI (V.O.)

I asked her once.

Young Cigna looks startled and runs away.

INT. RAMEN SHOP - PRESENT

Mirta looks surprised.

HIROSHI

Like you said. Flighty. Don't think
theres a soul alive that kid trusts.
She comes for the food, doesn't stay
for the conversation. I don't want
to scare her off so ...

MIRTA

Nobody looking after her?

Hiroshi shakes his head looking at the door.

MIRTA (CONT'D)

Damn shame.

EXT. RAMEN SHOP - DARK

MIRTA (V.O.)

A kid so young needs someone looking
after them.

Cigna swings by the table where the couple is still chatting
and swipes the woman's wallet.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

The streets become crowded and the shops grow bigger and more
upscale as she moves further into to city.

Some people swerve to avoid her, others shoulder-check her.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

-- She sneaks into upscale restaurants.

-- Steals cookies, mints, chocolates from the hostess' stand.

-- She is shooed away and chased out with brooms.

MONTAGE ENDS:

She stops to stare into a high-end doll store. A PORCELAIN
DOLLS dressed in frilly dresses and bonnets with perfect,
blonde ringlets is in the window. Cigna looks past the dolls
to the register. A posh dressed MOTHER puts a loving hand on
her small DAUGHTER's back. Cigna turns away and keeps walking.

She passes BEGGARS. Some with coverings over their mouths,
most sickly, coughing.

An OLD MAN is ushered off the sidewalk by OFFICERS. The sight of officers makes Cigna jolt and pivot to avoid them.

The street opens up into a big, densely crowded square. Cigna finds an empty corner. She kneels with her hands out.

Over hours people drop a few copper coins in her hands.

Exhausted, she hangs her head for a moment.

JINGLE of coins. She looks at four silver pieces in her hands. She looks up. A tall, young, thin MAN IN a LAB COAT towers ominously, peering down at her. An o-mask covers his mouth and nose. An orange glare on his round glasses obscures his eyes.

He silently walks away.

The world goes SILENT. His white lab coat disappears in to the crowd. Mesmerized, she discretely walks after him.

She stalks him for blocks. The streets grow more quiet. She spots his BRIEFCASE (black leather, silver embellishments). She chews her lip.

He stops at a trolley station and checks his watch.

She scans the empty streets. Sprints. Rips the case from his hand and keeps running.

MAN IN THE LABCOAT
No! Wait! Please!

His FOOTFALL echoes behind her.

She turns down roads. Dives into an alley. Hides. Pressed against the wall, she hugs the briefcase.

Cigna peers around the corner and sees the man in the lab coat keel over to catch his breath.

MAN IN THE LABCOAT (CONT'D)
Excuse me! Sir -- can you help me?

The man in the lab coat hails down two POLICE OFFICERS.

MAN IN THE LABCOAT (CONT'D)
Can you please help me? Have you
seen a little girl run by with a
briefcase?
(gesturing Cigna's
height)
She swiped it from me while I was
waiting for the trolley.
(MORE)

MAN IN THE LABCOAT (CONT'D)
Please sir, you have no idea how
important and valuable this case is.

Cigna looks at the briefcase, awed.

The man in the lab coat runs his hands through his hair
frantically. OFFICER ONE scoffs.

OFFICER ONE
Those little urchins have been running
a-muck lately. I'm so sorry you've
been accosted.

MAN IN THE LABCOAT
Oh -- uh -- yes --

OFFICER TWO
Don't worry sir we'll catch the little
street rat for ya.

She slams back against the wall. She slinks away.

MAN IN THE LABCOAT
Um -- well -- thank you. I just want
to stress how important it is I get
my briefcase back, its priceless.

The officers side-eye each other with sly smiles.

OFFICER ONE
Sounds like it's very ... precious.
We'll do everything in our power the
retrieve it.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE CIGNA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Cigna's hands are on her knees, huffing.

Frantic, she looks around and sees a dumpster. She looks
between the case and the dumpster. She marches to the dumpster.
Holds the case over it. Hesitates. Pulls it back to her chest.

She runs her fingers over the leather and traces the silver
embellishments. She hits a button. It clicks open.

Light emanates from inside, she creeks it open. Confusion.
Inside is a PETRI DISH with glowing green moss in a foam mold.

She snaps it shut.

INT. LAB - DARK

The man in the lab coat, DANTE, stands in a 1940s university
hallway. He runs his hands through his hair. Deep breath.

Swings open the door. Freezes.

In the blindingly white biochemistry lab, a florescent tube dangles from its broken case, flickering. Cracked beakers spill black dirt and lush stem samples onto black stone counters or white linoleum floor. A shattered glass petri dish lay under green glowing MOSS smeared down the wall.

A woman groans. He rushes to see MARIA (30s, long braided dark hair, labcoat) laying on the ground mouth bleeding. Blood speckles the floor.

DANTE

Maria!

He rushes to her side.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Jesus! Maria what happened.

Maria sputters blood.

MARIA

Dante, there were men, they came for the sample. I told them it was long gone. When they could only find the prototype they tore the place apart.

Dante helps Maria up to sit on a stool. She winces.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Apparently word has gotten out about the Bryophyta that grows on concrete and absorbs gallons of air pollution. I'm guessing everyone wants to sell it to the highest bidder and be the heroes who brought back the sun. ... Wait -- why are you back so early?

DANTE

I never made it to the trolley. Something happened.

She scans him frantically.

MARIA

Where is the sample?

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - DARK

Cigna sleeps under the west window, briefcase to her chest.

INT. HOUSE - DREAM

Cigna, wrapped in fluffy blankets, laying on a yellow couch in an posh living room. Family photos decorate wall paper. The faces are blurred out. A fire place is lit.

A WOMAN (yellow 1940s day dress, string of pearls, up-do, blurred out face) enters holding a mug. A MAN (slicked hair, blue/grey suit, blurred out face) trails after her.

She sits next to Cigna, handing her the drink. Cigna sits up. The woman wraps an arm around her. The man, ruffles her hair before sitting on the other side. The man and woman lean their heads together over Cigna.

Cigna rests her eyes.

SLOW FADE OUT:

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - DARK

Bells furiously ringing.

FADE IN:

Her eyes snap open, jumps to her feet, looks out the west window. The lights are out. The streets are dark. Residents hurry out of buildings in pajamas, arms full of belongings.

Panic.

Cigna grabs her coat, scarf, the case and runs.

Out the apartment. Down the stairs. Bursting out the door.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE HER APARTMENT - DARK

zombie-like SNARLING echoes from the east.

A few yards ahead the street lights are still lit.

She trips. Tumbles. Scrapes her chin and knee.

The briefcase flies towards the eastern barrier.

She looks around. The streets are empty. She struggles to her feet. Steps towards the briefcase.

Freezes.

Peeking its head around the buildings corner is a MUTANT (humanoid, lanky, hairless, grey slick skin, no eyes or nose, large gaping mouth with sharp teeth). Covered by shadows.

HEARTBEAT.

Cigna looks between the case, the creature, and lit street.

Tearful, she dashes for the case. The mutant SHRIEKS. We hear it run toward her. She slides for the case, pivots, stumbles, and sprints towards the lights. Over her shoulder, out of focus, the mutant chases her, animalistically.

It gets closer -- closer. It reaches to grab. She leaps into the light. The creature halts. She doesn't stop running.

EXT. CITY STREET - DARK

Cigna's HEAVY BREATHING.

FADE IN:

Cigna runs, clutching the briefcase. People stare.

She turns the corner to the ramen shop.

She looks around, then darts inside.

INT. RAMEN SHOP - DARK

It's empty. Hiroshi is startled. She races to the end of the bar, crouching against the wall, hugging the briefcase.

HIROSHI

Jesus little lady what the hell are
you doing? Where's the fire?

CIGNA

I -- I made a mistake.
(sniveling)
I didn't know where else to go.
Please, can you let me stay here?

The owner crouches down and puts his hand on her head.

HIROSHI

(sympathetic whispers)
What happened? You know you're always
welcome here but you've gotta tell
me what's going on.

CIGNA

I took something. It looked fancy,
expensive, but there's something
inside -- I don't know what it is.
But its important.

He follows her gaze to the case. Face full of dread.

CIGNA (CONT'D)

Now the police are looking for it
and the lights went out in my
neighborhood and --

HIROSHI

God, that's been happening more and
more near the perimeter these days.
Damn it kid. I told you one day the
prize wouldn't be worth the price.

(pause)

Let me see it.

Cigna struggles to hands it over. He pops it open. White
light glows.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)

What even is that? Moss? Where hell
do you even pick this shit up?

CIGNA

I'm sorry -- I'm sorry, please.

Hiroshi clicks it shut and rubs his head.

HIROSHI

Okay ... okay. Just -- Just stay
here. It'll be alright. I'm going
to lock up. I'll be right back.

Cigna nods.

Hiroshi walks to turn off the neon open sign out front. He
pokes his head out and sees the police down the road going
into other shops, pushing people away from their stands,
searching, and throwing angry questions.

He pulls back.

Cigna, staring at the wall behind the bar notices an old
yellowing PHOTO fraying at the edges. It depicts Hiroshi, a
woman, and a toddler.

Hiroshi walks back and notices her looking

CIGNA

Who is that?

HIROSHI

That's my wife, Gia. And the little
one is my son, Yuta.

He takes the photo off the wall and crouches to show her.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
He's only two in this photo but he's
about your age now. They are my
whole world.

Cigna looks, longingly. Hiroshi looks guilty.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
Why don't you just hang tight. I'll
just be in the back for a moment.
I'll make you something. Then we'll
talk.
.

CUT TO:

INT. RAMEN SHOP - LATER

Hiroshi places a small plate of steamed pork buns next to her
and gives her another pat on the head. Cigna relaxes and
chomps down.

HIROSHI
You're a good kid. I'm sorry life
has been so unfair to you.

Cigna continues munching on pork buns.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
I really am sorry.

Through the back, two officers pull back the curtain and walk
toward her. She stands, cornered like a mouse.

She looks at Hiroshi. Hurt. Betrayed. He turns away.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)
Listen, I can't have this kind of
trouble, little one. I've got people
I need to look after. I wish you
hadn't brought this to my door.

OFFICER TWO looms over her, patting his baton in his hand.

OFFICER TWO
Finally found you, you little runt.
Give me the case now and I won't
take the whole hand.

She grabs the case. Dashes out the front. The police chase.

EXT. RAMEN SHOP - DARK

More officers stand outside. One grabs her. She bites his
hand. He lets go. She runs.

Police BOOTS STRIKING the pavement echoes.

She turns down alleys and ducks behind food carts. She turns a corner. An officer pops out. Grabs her scarf. Yanks her back. Cigna struggles to rip it off and keeps running. A laundromat door is propped open. She rushes in.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - CONTINUOUS

The bright white walls are lined with stacks of washers/driers and populated by many old women with baskets of linens. None look up as she races through.

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

She catches her breath, kicks the brick wall and sobs. She sinks to the ground. Looks at the case, resentfully, and punches it.

She wipes her tears. Grabs it. And storms off.

EXT. LOWER CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DARK

Cigna walks in the street. People dress in casual, worn clothes, smoking in front of shops. Filled clothes lines hover above the string lights. The cobblestone was cracked, with pot holes.

She walks into a small shop.

INT. SMALL SHOP - DARK

The inside was clean, well lit. It had glass cases, neatly filled with shiny miscellanea. A woman, MRS. ZHAO (slender, black hair pulled into a bun, in a 1940s cheongsam dress) is behind one of the cases talking to a man wearing ill fitting dirty clothes.

DIRTY MAN

Come on Mrs. Zhao. Please. Everyone knows you have the nicest joint in town -- give the best prices. What are you trying to do giving me that kind of offer?

She looks down her nose at the pile of tarnished silver UTENSILS the DIRTY MAN had dumped on the table. She picks up a spoon to examine it closer with a loupe.

MRS. ZHAO

I have this reputation because I only deal with items of value. You're lucky I'm offering you anything for these.

She set the spoon down.

MRS. ZHAO (CONT'D)
They are going to take at least a
day and a half to get cleaned up
enough to even be on display.

The man throws up his hands.

MRS. ZHAO (CONT'D)
40 copper, either accept it or leave.

DIRTY MAN
(scoffs)
Fine. Whatever lady.

She hands him 40 copper coins and collects the utensils.

The man slams past Cigna without acknowledgment.

She slowly approaches the counter. Mrs. Zhao looks down at
her coldly.

MRS. ZHAO
Can I help you with something little
girl?

Cigna coughs. Slides the case to the counter. Steps back.

Mrs. Zhao raises a brow, examining it with her loupe.

MRS. ZHAO (CONT'D)
Oh, genuine leather. Silver
embellishments. Wonderful condition.
Where did you pick something like
this up?

CIGNA
I found it ... in a dumpster, by the
square.

MRS. ZHAO
Hmm. How much were you looking to
get for it?

CIGNA
Uhhh, I'm not sure. I know it's
valuable.

MRS. ZHAO
Hmm, yes.
(pause)
I've seen you in here before haven't
I?

CIGNA

Oh, uhh -- no -- I don't remember.

Mrs. Zhao hmms. She clicks it open. Light glows. Her face turns. She slams it and pushes it back.

MRS. ZHAO

Get that and yourself out of my shop.

CIGNA

Huh?

MRS. ZHAO

I don't want anything to do with the trouble you've gotten yourself into, little girl, out!

CIGNA

Wh -- what do you mean?

MRS. ZHAO

Oh you know exactly what I mean. We have all heard. The police have been crusading all over town. Destroying shops, dragging people into the streets. I don't care how valuable that thing is, nothing is worth that kind of trouble. Now, out! I won't say it again.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

-- Cigna visits other pawn shops. The owners yell and gesture for her to leave.

-- Dante politely asks people on the street but no one has any information.

-- Cops bust in to shops, rough people up, trash things in intimidation.

-- Cigna gets pushed out in the street. Doors get slammed in her face.

-- Cops walk up and down alleys, roughing up homeless people flipping back hoods.

-- A cop slams the dirty man up against a wall.

-- Dante keeps stopping everyone he passes. He runs his hands through his hair.

-- Cigna approaches a seedy pawn shop with broken blinking neon signs. Nervously, she grips the case and walks in.

-- The dirty man sees her enter the pawnshop with the case and slinks away.

MONTAGE ENDS:

INT. SEEDY PAWN SHOP - DARK

Inside is dirty, poorly lit. Glass cases line the walls, odds and ends thrown in. Behind the counter ENZO (40s, disheveled, scruffy), reads a magazine. Cigna walks up to the counter, defeated.

ENZO
(not looking up)
Can I do something for you?

CIGNA
Yes.

Enzo raises his head.

ENZO
Woah, little young to be wheeling n'
dealing there, kiddo.

CIGNA
I have something I'm trying to get
rid of. I just need someone to take
it. I'll take whatever you are willing
to give.

ENZO
Not much for haggling are ya? Well,
lets see it.

Cigna slides the case onto the counter. Enzo's face falls.

ENZO (CONT'D)
Oh. You're that kid, huh? Get on
outta here little girl. I'm not
interested.

CIGNA
Please. It's valuable. I'll give
it to you for anything its a really
good deal.

ENZO
Yeah, I know exactly how valuable it
is. Cops have been knocking down
every door in this part of town.
Scouring every alley for this.

(MORE)

ENZO (CONT'D)
 (gesturing to the
 case)
 Do you have any idea whats inside?

CIGNA
 Its ... moss.

ENZO
 Moss? Streets say it some product of
 cutting edge science. Got a bunch
 of lab coats in a panic. The cops
 are raising hell to get it. Listen
 kid I'm just trying to make a living.
 I really wish you the best but I'm
 not getting mixed up in all of this.

CIGNA
 What am I supposed to do?

ENZO
 No idea. Sorry.

Cigna pulls the case from the table. Turns to leave. CRASHING
 and SHOUTING from outside. Freezes. Looks back at Enzo.

ENZO (CONT'D)
 Damn it. God, perfect timing, huh?
 Look, I'm not getting involved, but
 I'm also not trying to see some kid
 get beaten to hell in front of my
 shop.

Enzo pulls back a curtain leading to a store room.

ENZO (CONT'D)
 Go through the store room. There's a
 door that leads out the back.

Cigna nods and dips behind the curtain. FOUR COPS walk in,
 heavy boots.

OFFICER ONE
 Enzo Ito? Where is the girl.

Cigna pauses and crouches behind the door frame to listen.

ENZO
 Sorry sir, theres a lot of girls
 coming in and out of here. I'ma need
 you to be more specific.

OFFICER TWO
 Don't play with us --

OFFICER ONE

A little girl. With a case, black leather, silver lining. She was seen coming in here, she's been trying to pawn it.

ENZO

Sorry you wasted your time boys. Haven't seen any kid like that.

OFFICER TWO

We know your lying.

OFFICER ONE

We have a witness.

ENZO

What? One of those guys rummaging around in my trash bins outside? Those guys'll say anything for an O-tank. Fresh air is hard to come by these days. I'm sure you boys get that.

OFFICER TWO

You know? I'm sick of this shit.
(smashes a glass case
with his baton)
I'm sick of dealing with you low-lives.
(smashes case)
I'm done screwing around. Give up the gutter rat, now.

ENZO

Damn, that thing must be worth an awful lot to you boys.

Enzo reaches under the counter where a SHOTGUN is taped.

OFFICER TWO

Worth more than your life.

Officer two pulls out his gun and shoots Enzo in the head.

He drops. Cigna tries to stifle her scream with her hand.

The officers snap their heads and march towards her.

OFFICER TWO (CONT'D)

We've finally got you, you little runt.

Cigna bolts up and runs out the back door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

She sprints. Heavy BOOT-FALL closes in. She rounds a corner. Stops. Face to face with Dante talking to a pedestrian. Eyes lock. Cigna pivots, runs away.

The pack of cops run past, guns drawn. Dante apologizes, sprints after them.

Corralled to the edge of the city, the only way forward is through the heavily cautioned barriers. Into the dark.

CIGNA

Damn it!

She swallows, slips through the barrier.

Streets are abandoned, doors boarded up, windows broken, walls and roofs cave in.

Police behind her hurdle the barrier. Dante not far behind. BOOTS ON COBBLESTONE continues after her. Cigna spots a small hole in the side of a building and dives in. She huddles against the wall.

FOOTFALL approaches. She holds breath. Then fades. Exhales.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE DARK CITY - DARK

Dante keels over to catch his breath.

The cops keep running. Then stop. Officer one gestures to split up, check the alleys.

Shadows stalk them. They don't notice. A shadowed mutant creeps behind officer two. Another hangs from a fire escape over officer three and four. Officer one hears gun shots. Whips his head left. Officer two screams. Whips his head right.

Officer one turn to run. A Mutant obscured in darkness rips open his throat. He thuds to the ground.

INT. DILAPIDATED BUILDING - DARK

Cigna scrunches down. Checks that the coast is clear.

A mutants sharp gaping mouth hovers behind her neck. Breathes. Her hair stands on end. Near paralyzed, she creaks to see.

It shrieks.

She scrambles to escape. The mutant digs into her leg. Rip. She screams. Slick with blood she squirms away. Tumbles into the street.

EXT. THE DARK CITY STREETS - DARK

The mutant squeezes out. She tries to rise. The gushing leg buckles. The case drops, pops open. The mutant screeches. Recoils from the light. Shakes. Growls and heaves. Cigna drags herself. The mutant lumbers closer.

CIGNA

Help me! Help me please!

EXT. DEEPER IN THE DARK CITY - DARK

Dante hears her cries. Stands. Turns to the sound.

EXT. THE DARK CITY STREETS - DARK

Saliva drips from its pointed teeth. She shuts her eyes.

INT. CIGNA'S APARTMENT - PAST

Cigna's apartment is newer, lived in. The lights are dark the furniture is flipped. Blood splatters. Her FATHER and grandmother on the ground chests opened.

Bells outside ring furiously.

A mutant looms over Cigna's mother, ripped open, ragged breath.

Young Cigna hides in the closet. Snivels. The mutant pivots, rips open the door. Young Cigna screams. It moves to slash.

Its foot is ripped from underneath by her mother, barely clinging to life. It struggles to reach her, it rakes a claw across Cigna's face.

CIGNA'S MOTHER

Go! Run, Cigna, run!

Young Cigna clutches her face, scrambles to her feet, sprints out the door, stumbles down the stairs. Her mothers SCREAMS. She covers her ears.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The streets are dark. She sprints towards the lit city. The screams continue. She squeezes her ears. She doesn't stop.

EXT. THE DARK CITY STREETS - PRESENT

Cigna lays under the looming monster, eyes closed, streaming with tears, braced.

Dante swings a plank of nail spiked wood, slams it's head, knocking it back. It shakes, shrieks. It takes a step further. Dante bashes it again. It falls. He hits it again.

Again. Again. The mutant stops twitching.

Gasping, the suitcase glow catches his eye. He steps towards it. Pause. He hears Cigna whimper. He looks between the case and her, turns to Cigna, kneels beside her.

He leans in, she recoils.

DANTE

I'm not going to hurt you. I'm here to help.

She stares. He looks over her injuries.

DANTE (CONT'D)

You're injured. That must be awfully painful. I'm a doctor ... of sorts I can at least patch you up.

He pulls a scarf out of his pocket.

DANTE (CONT'D)

May I?

Cigna slowly nods. She winces as he wraps the scarf.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Ok, that'll help with the bleeding. But we need to get you properly patched up.

He picks her up in his arm. Clicks the case closed, holding it in his free arm. They walk back to the lit city.

DANTE (CONT'D)

What's your name little one?

CIGNA

(hesitates)

Cigna.

DANTE

Well hello Cigna, my name is Dante.

Cigna looks down at the case.

CIGNA

What is it?

DANTE

Oh, this? You like it? I made it myself, a new species of moss that grows on the sides of buildings. And best of all it sucks pollution right out of the sky like a sponge.

(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)

(smiles)

This little thing here ... it's going
to bring back the sun.

Cigna stares in awe, then guilt.

CIGNA

I'm --- I'm really sorry.

DANTE

Ah, it's ok. The important thing is
that it's back. Just ... don't worry
about that now. Lets just get you
all fixed up. Do you have a way I
can contact your parents?

Cigna is silent. She shakes her head. Tears well

DANTE (CONT'D)

Ah -- I see. Well why don't you
just stay with me a while. I can't
just leave you on your own. You
need someone to look after you while
you heal. How's that sound?

Tears stream. She nods.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Ok, sounds good.

Cigna looks back at the bashed mutant. It gets further.

INT. DANTE'S HOUSE - DARK

The clean room was warmly lit, walls pale yellow with white
trim. A small fire flicks in a fireplace. Cigna sits on the
brown, suede couch, wrapped in thick blankets, her leg on the
coffee table propped up on a pillow.

DANTE (O.S.)

How are you doing in there.

CIGNA

(meekly)

Good.

Dante emerges, holding two hot mugs. He gives her one.

DANTE

Is your leg okay? It might be
uncomfortable but keeping it elevated
will help it heal.

He pats her head.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Ok. Well. If there's anything else
you need, anything at all you let me
know. You're welcome to stay here
as long as you like.

He walks out of the room

CIGNA

(whispers)

Thank you.

FADE OUT: