

CHASING FIRE

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EXT. SEASIDE BOWL - PACIFICA, CA - DAY

DENNIS, 27, greasy hair, worn flannel shirt, and ripped jeans, leans against his 2000 Toyota Camry and nervously gnaws on an unlit cigarette. A 2020 Dodge Challenger pulls into the parking lot. MONICA, 27, slicked back hair, skinny jeans and button down shirt, steps out of the car. Dennis perks up.

DENNIS

Sweetheart, I didn't think you were gonna show. Nice to see you again, Monica.

MONICA

It was strange hearing from you after all these years.  
(sarcastic)  
Of course, it had to be here.

DENNIS

I thought it'd be fitting. Want to head inside...?

MONICA

I could use a drink. First round's on you.

Monica and Dennis head toward the door.

INT. SEASIDE BOWEL - PACIFICA, CA - DAY

At the bar, Dennis and Monica sit in front of their drinks. Fidgeting nervously, Monica chases back her cocktail.

MONICA

Why did you come back here, Dennis?

DENNIS

You didn't think I forgot about you, did you? Don't you remember how we used to be, Monica?

MONICA

I think we remember things very differently.

DENNIS

Don't be like that. Come on. The little ice cream shop? That old sports car your parents got you?

MONICA

Why are you here, Dennis?

DENNIS

I need your help.

MONICA

So badly you came to the one place you couldn't wait to escape...?

DENNIS

An opportunity came my way that I couldn't pass by. You're the only one who can help me.

MONICA

Dennis, I don't want to hear this. I thought maybe...

DENNIS

What? What was that pretty little head of yours thinking? About all those hot nights when I would sneak into your room?

MONICA

You really believe I still think about you...?

DENNIS

I know you do, Monica. Admit it, you're drawn to me.

MONICA

I am not some love-struck teenager, Dennis. I. Grew. Up.

DENNIS

Of course you have. Just look at you! But, you did show up.

MONICA

That I did, Dennis. But that was a mistake.

Monica slides off her bar stool and starts for the door. Dennis stops her gently.

DENNIS

Be honest. You know I never let you down.

MONICA

I don't want to re-live our greatest hits, Dennis.

DENNIS

How much do you think this place pulls in a night?

MONICA

(dawning)

It's a job... isn't it? That's why you're here?

DENNIS

It's not a job. It's a sure thing. In and out. We both walk home free. No one will ever know!

Monica looks at Dennis. Her heart falls.

MONICA

When I got your message, I actually thought you wanted to see me. I came here because... because I'm an idiot. Whatever you have planned, I don't want anything to do with it.

DENNIS

Baby baby, please. This is it. Our chance to finally be together. Go back to being everything we were and more.

MONICA

Dennis. You don't understand. I cannot be apart of this. I can't.

DENNIS

Give me this chance to show you how much you mean to me.

MONICA

So you can leave me again? I'll save you the time.

Monica storms out of the building.

DENNIS

Fuck!

EXT. SEASIDE BOWEL - PACIFICA, CA - DAY

Monica exits the bar with Dennis behind her. She starts for her car. Dennis grabs her arm and pulls her back.

DENNIS

Monica! You think I wanted to leave you here, alone, waiting for me to never show? I know I fucked up. I know you were the one person that ever gave a single shit I even existed! But you gotta believe me. You were my everything!

MONICA

That was your choice! You have no idea, Dennis! You have no idea what you put me through!

DENNIS

I'm sorry, baby. But that's all in the past.

MONICA

The sad part is, I still love you. But I can't do it anymore. I can't listen to what you want me to help with. I can't do it...

DENNIS

You can, Monica. We can be just like we used to be. You and me against the world. I'll protect you like I've always protected you. You know the old man here. He hasn't changed. He's either asleep in his office, or not here.

MONICA

Dennis, you need to understand. I can't be apart of this. Listen to me, just this once!

DENNIS

Nothing is going to happen to you! You are the only one I ever want to keep you safe! I know the combination to the safe. It'll be a cake walk --

MONICA

Dennis. Stop. I'm begging you.

DENNIS

All you have to do is stand watch  
from the getaway car while I break  
into the safe and get the money. We  
split it 50 - 50. No one gets hurt.  
No one gets caught.

MONICA

Dennis --

DENNIS

It's a simple heist. Either way,  
I'm doing it. Even if you won't  
help me.

Monica looks at Dennis. She shakes her head sadly. Monica  
opens her coat.

MONICA

I really, really, really wish you  
hadn't said that, Dennis.  
(flashes a badge)  
Dennis, you're under arrest.

DENNIS

You're a cop --?!?!?

Monica pulls out handcuffs, slaps the cuffs on Dennis'  
wrists, shoves him against her car, and frisks him.

DENNIS

You... you're... You can't be.  
Monica! Think of us! Think of  
everything! How could you do this  
to me!

Monica throws open the door and pushes Dennis into the  
backseat.

MONICA

I told you not to tell me...

DENNIS

You bitch!

MONICA

Don't drop the soap in jail.

Monica slams the door shut on Dennis.

CUT TO BLACK.