

Terf War

J.E. Clarke

INT. COLLEGE CONFERENCE - HALLWAY - EVENING

Chants of excitement and anger mix in the air.

A leather clad, slim body navigates briskly past FEMALE CROWDS. A protest sign swings under one arm:

"Terfs and Swerfs - Take Your Beef Home!"

Institutional style walls display an array of posters:

"Monday - 7PM. Meet Jessica Harris, author of 'Imposters and Apostates: Honoring the Female Ideal'!"

On another, the headline blares:

"Gender Critical Thought 101". Someone's X'ed out "Critical", scribbled in "Criminal" instead.

The sign carrier beelines past announcements and conference attendees to...

The Women's Bathroom.

On the door, a third poster about tonight's event. Here, JESSICA HARRIS' photo takes center stage:

She smiles tightly with intent eyes. Character lines around her mouth betray she's at least mid-forties, if a day.

Sign carrier snorts - slams a palm into the photo. It's satisfying symbolism. They push against the door.

A female hand shoots out. Grabs the handle, pulls it shut.

Sign carrier swings around:

ROBIN - late 20s. Short hair. Compact build. What gender? One can't really tell.

But either way, Robin's pissed off.

ROBIN

Hey! What's your problem? Let go!

CASSIE (30s, soccer mom with heavy makeup) sneers. She shakes her head in a defiant "no".

CASSIE

And let you trespass? No can do.

Robin snarls, shoves the door harder.

Cassie yanks it back, a counter move. Shiny bracelets and sagging triceps jiggle back and forth.

Push-Pull. Pull-push. Each "side" gets more irate with each round.

ROBIN
I was here first. And I'm sure
there's more than one stall.

CASSIE
Even if it's empty, you don't belong!

Enough already. Robin stops pushing. Dropping her sign, she whirls around... inches from Cassie's face.

ROBIN
Wanna clarify your problem, bitch?

Cassie's eyes light up... that trigger word provides fuel.

CASSIE
Bitch? See? The minute your privilege
gets questioned, misogyny floats to
the surface. Like the shit it is!

ROBIN
Privilege?!? Are you nuts? I gotta
pee. Karen, that's a human right.

Both Robin and Cassie's voices raise. This dispute's escalating quick.

CONFERENCE MEMBERS inch towards them, curiosity piqued.

Including - more PROTEST SIGN CARRIERS. One looks to Robin. She shrugs, waves them off.

Cassie points down the hall, her voice pitched in a condescending tone.

CASSIE
You have to go bath-womb? Ooooh,
wittle baby's lost! Earth to
Imposter - the restroom for MEN is
over there.

Robin's eyes widen.

ROBIN
Wait, you think -

CASSIE
"Think"? I know. We can tell.

Robin chokes back laughter. This is rich.

CASSIE
What are you laughing at?

ROBIN
You. Stupid bitch!

Fingers flying, Robin unbuttons the top of her shirt, and flashes a half-seen breast Cassie's way.

ROBIN
Does this look manly to you? Whatever you think you know, move!

She pushes on the bathroom door.

Cassie pulls it shut again. This isn't over...

CASSIE
So you got implants. Big whoop. Anyone with a credit card can pull that off.

Robin eyes Cassie's ample breasts.

ROBIN
Yeah, I see. Still don't believe me, TERF?

Robin reaches next for her own jeans. Spectators Ooooh and Ah - this fight's getting good!

ROBIN
For the record, I'm warning you: if I have to drop these as show and tell, it's gonna be YOUR fault when trouble flows. Right on those designer shoes!

Cassie shudders and lets go of the bathroom handle like it burns. Stepping back to a safer distance, she pouts.

CASSIE
Disgusting. All your kind is.

ROBIN
"Your kind"? Ooooh, that's original. SWERF hate speech is soooo cliché.

Robin rolls her eyes, lets go of her belt. And shoves the bathroom door open. But before she can walk through...

Another woman glides between Robin and Cassie in one smooth move.

Middle aged, dressed in a power suit. Those stern character lines look familiar. It's...

CASSIE

Jessica Harris?!? OMG - it's you!

Jessica nods. Though seems too distracted for words.

Cassie thrusts out a hand. Jessica begrudgingly accepts. Cassie's bracelets jangle as they shake.

CASSIE

Ms. Harris, my name is Cassie Johnston. It's... it's such a thrill to meet you here, in real life! I've read all your books. Honoring the Female Ideal changed my life!

JESSICA

Thank you. The support and sisterhood of my readers enriches mine, too.

Smiling graciously, Jessica pulls free - pivots towards the door.

CASSIE

About what you said in Chapter Three. You know, about Gender Appropriation's intentional undermining of Real Women's Civil Rights?

JESSICA

Um - Cassie, is it? That's a profound point I intend to highlight in my address tonight. So I'm glad you picked up on it.

CASSIE

I was thinking...

JESSICA

My speech is starting in a few minutes. I promise, there'll be a Question and Answer Session afterward. But right now, I have to-

She nods towards the bathroom. Flashes a mortified smile.

JESSICA

Well, you know.

Jessica steps towards the bathroom.

ROBIN
You and me both. Whew!

Robin angles towards the open door, too. Cassie growls, steps to block her entrance.

It's an awkward traffic jam for the three women. Jessica arches an impatient eyebrow.

JESSICA
Excuse me? Did I interrupt?

CASSIE
No. This... freak was just leaving.
(to Robin)
Weren't you?

Robin groans, picks up her sign. Reading the words, Jessica's face sours.

JESSICA
Oh.

ROBIN
That's right, Ms. Jessica Harris,
Some of us DON'T think it's an
"Honor" to meet you. Not after what
you said in Chapter Eight of your so-
called "Dissertation."

JESSICA
Chapter Eight? The Dialectics of
Prostitution?

ROBIN
The one about Sex Workers, like me.
Yeah. You go off for five pages about
how women can't consent and have to
be protected. Like we're women you
claim the right to control...

JESSICA
Ms -

ROBIN
My name is Robin.
(swings on Cassie)
A cis-gender FEMALE name, in case you
were still confused.

JESSICA

Robin, I recommend you read the interviews I've done with prostitutes who once viewed their experiences as a choice, too. But after they realized the internalized patriarch-

ROBIN

Ms. Harris, YOU should listen to other woman. Respect My Body, My Choice. And screw you!

Robin stomps off down the hall. Cassie snarls after her.

CASSIE

You're lying. How can you be a Sex Worker, dressed like that?

Robin eyes Cassie's heavy makeup critically.

ROBIN

Today's my day off. What's your excuse?

CASSIE

I thought you had to go to the bathroom, "Robin"?

ROBIN

Well, I've decided the male bathroom's quicker. Less lines. And no gatekeepers like you.

With that parting shot, Robin's gone. Relieved, Jessica and Cassie exchange looks.

CASSIE

I've been meaning to ask -

JESSICA

Ms. Johnston, it's been a pleasure. I'll see you at the lecture. Soon.

Jessica pulls out a phone, makes a show of checking the time. Cassie gets the hint, steps back.

Jessica slips through. To...

INT. CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Shutting the door, Jessica leans against it. Closes her eyes, exhales. She waves her hands in a meditative gesture:

JESSICA
Center yourself, Jessica. Tonight you
speak to power, and for womankind.

A FLUSH interrupts the interlude. Jessica's eyes snap open-
Just in time to see SALLIE (30s), emerge from a stall.
Designer skirt. Stiletto heels. Six foot two. Her upper body
musculature is the final clue...

Sallie and Jessica spot each other, freeze. Both instantly
aware of who the other is.

SALLIE
You're Jessica Harris.

JESSICA
And you're -

The bathroom door flies open. Cassie pokes her head in, BOOK
and PEN extended.

CASSIE
I almost forgot, I had this in my
purse! Ms. Harris, could you sign-

Cassie spots Sallie. Cringes.

CASSIE
Ew. Not again.

SALLIE
(bristles)
Ew?!? Let me guess, you're one of Ms.
Harris' little minion-ette fans.

BANG BANG!

SHOTS rip through the hallway, outside. A bullet creases
Cassie's outstretched arm!

She screams. Drops the book. Flees.

Jessica and Sallie lock eyes. Too stunned to process yet
what's occurred.

The trans woman's eyes drift down to the fallen book. It's
open. Blood spatters stain a page.

Another SHOT.

Through the open door, Jessica and Sallie catch a glimpse of
a GUNMAN armed with an AK-15, just outside.

Without firing, he swings the weapon wildly.

People in the hallway cower, look for somewhere to hide.

GUNMAN

Feminazis and freaks, listen up! Your depravity ends tonight. Gimme all your cell phones. Now!

Sallie lunges forward and bolts the bathroom exit shut. She shoves Jessica out of the doorway with one smooth move.

JESSICA

Hey!

BANG! Another round pierces metal. Right where Jessica was standing before.

On the other side of the doorframe, Sallie gulps air. She slides down the wall, to the floor.

JESSICA

I, um...

SALLIE

The phrase you're fumbling for is "thank you." You're welcome, by the way.

She stares at her feet. One stiletto heel's snapped in two. Sallie shrugs, kicks both shoes off.

JESSICA

What was that?

SALLIE

Manolo Blahniks, if you must know.

JESSICA

That isn't funny! I mean, what happened in the hall?

SALLIE

I'm not sure, but something bad. We're trapped. And major fucked.

Jessica gives Sallie the once-over. Disapproves.

JESSICA

What were you doing in here, anyway?

SALLIE
Shitting. I'd give you extra details,
but I forgot to take a selfie. And I
didn't expect the third degree!

JESSICA
(voice rising)
That's disgusting!

SALLIE
Shhhh! Pipe down. You want Mr. Psycho
to know for sure we're here?

Jessica drops her voice to whisper. But she's still peeved.

JESSICA
You didn't have to put it in... those
terms.

SALLIE
Well, you asked. I answered. You're
the writer. Nicely worded
descriptions aren't my thing.

Awkward silence reigns. Then...

JESSICA
We can't sit on this floor forever.

SALLIE
Well, it COULD use a cleaning. But
fine by me.

JESSICA
Nothing's FINE! We can't sit here and
be passive victims to that... that
sociopath out there. There are no
safe spaces left as it is!

Her eyes lock on Sallie - the double meaning clear. Sallie
groans, gets the drift.

SALLIE
You wanna be out there with him, or
in here with me?

JESSICA
I "wanna"- no, I demand - to know
what's going on!

Outside, the unseen shooter berates the trapped crowd.

His voice buzzes through the door, muffled. Jessica leans
forward. Sallie's eyes widen in fear.

SALLIE

Careful. You saw what that bullet did to metal. Wanna test the next one with your skull?

Jessica recoils. They both hold their breath and listen. It's difficult, but close enough to hear.

Outside, a WOMAN'S VOICE sobs.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mister, you've got to let us go!

GUNMAN (O.S.)

I don't "got" to do anything. Are you blind? Who's got the gun here?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

But she's bleeding!

GUNMAN (O.S.)

You think that's a wound? Wanna see what this can do up close?

At the threat, the crowd gasps - falls silent. Judging from his tone, the gunman's pleased.

GUNMAN (O.S.)

Good. Now, who wants to tell me where that bitch Harris is?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Jessica Harris? The writer, you mean?

GUNMAN (O.S.)

Yeah. What other Harris is there?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Uh - I THINK she hasn't shown up yet. What do you want her for?

GUNMAN (O.S.)

That woke Feminazi made my wife go crazy and leave. I find that bitch, she's gonna pay!

Jessica and Sallie exchange grim looks.

SALLIE

Remember when I said we're fucked?

JESSICA

Seems you were right.

SALLIE
Only using the royal "we". 'Cause
looks like YOU'RE the target tonight.

Jessica scoops Cassie's pen from the floor, scrambles to her feet. Close to hyperventilating, she holds it like a shiv.

JESSICA
You are NOT going to sacrifice me,
you selfish dick!

Sallie chuckles at the word, holds out conciliatory palms.

SALLIE
Wait. Chill. That came out wrong.

JESSICA
Really? Then what DID you mean?

SALLIE
Well, I admit I'm no fan of yours-

JESSICA
That's pretty obvious. You think?

SALLIE
And tonight, I came here to protest
you. Get some good heckling in. But
can you blame me? Given how much your
latest "book" tries to hurt me and
those I love, I just couldn't resist
rubbing a BIT of salt into the wound.
Someone's gunning for you, TERF?
Tough titties. Karma sucks.

The two stare across the bathroom at each other. It's a Mexican standoff. Who will snark first?

Jessica wilts. Stuffing the pen in her pocket, she leans against a nearby sink.

JESSICA
Join my hate club. Who cares anymore?
The line's long. All backlash from
the patriarchy, because I dare to
tell the truth.

SALLIE
You think I'M "patriarchy?" I'm in a
skirt. Take a close look.

JESSICA

I'd rather not, if you don't mind.
Now, my turn for Q&AA. What chapter
of my latest pissed YOU off?

Sallie scoops up Cassie's book - waves a blood spattered
page in Jessica's face.

SALLIE

Chapter Ten. Here, where you compared
transgenderism to pedophilia.
Newsflash, that "recruitment"
narrative was bullshit back when they
used it to smear cis-gays...

JESSICA

You can't deny grooming exists!

SALLIE

With heterosexuals, and across all
groups! But you can't claim it's OUR
identity. Take me, for instance. I'm
into older men, for Christ sake!

JESSICA

I'd rather not discover your sex
life.

SALLIE

You brought it up, not me.

She flips to a different page, points.

SALLIE

And here, you argue transgenderism is
a mental illness.

JESSICA

I'm sorry if the truth hurts. It is!

SALLIE

What truth? This book's filled with
lies! Where'd you get your biology
doctorate from, Ms. Champion-of-
Puritanical-Womanhood? Out of a
Cracker Jack box? Or your ass?

Jessica glares, words building. Until...

Her eyes slip to a window, nestled high up on the back wall.
She stalks towards it, shoots a parting shot at Sallie:

JESSICA

You can't pretend to be something
you're not. Facts don't care about
your feelings.

Reaching the back wall, Jessica squints.

She teeters on her tiptoes, attempts to reach the pane. But
she can't - it's too high up. Sallie watches the
performance, amused.

SALLIE

That right-wing canard? You do know
about the studies that have found
trans brains have a structure closer
to the gender they identify with.

JESSICA

SOME studies. Which have been
debunked.

SALLIE

Not debunked. Inconclusive. Lots of
neurology is. But if you actually
cared about facts over narrative, you
can't deny it's food for thought.

Jessica tries again. The window's out of reach. But she's a
fighter. And she's not one to give up.

She beelines over to the sinks. Hops onto one, stands up.
Sallie smirks, plucked eyebrow arched.

SALLIE

Don't slip. That liquid soap's worse
than black ice. 'And if you fall and
hit your head, that porcelain looks
mighty hard.

JESSICA

So are bullets. I'll take my chance
with this!

Jessica reaches for the window. Over extends. Wobbles.

SALLIE

Facts don't care about YOUR feelings,
Ms. Harris.

JESSICA

Let me concentrate, Ms -

SALLIE

The name's Sallie. Consciousness is who we are. So if by some developmental hiccup, a brain with female characteristics develops in a male body, you HAVE to recognize that for what it is.

JESSICA

I don't HAVE to do anything!

She reaches further, fingers closing on the window's lock. It's rusted. She almost slips on the sink. Course corrects.

SALLIE

You have to be consistent, at least! The essence of feminism is to judge women as the people they are - and not reduce their personhood to what's between their legs. Can't you see?

JESSICA

Don't tell ME what feminism is!

She twists the latch harder. It won't budge. The effort throws her off balance...

Sallie catches Jessica as she falls. Bear hugged and legs dangling - Jessica flails, annoyed.

JESSICA

Put me down! Don't touch me!

Sallie does. Dabs a cut where Jessica's nail scratched her face.

SALLIE

As you wish. And the phrase you're fumbling for is -

Jessica dusts off her suit, fights to regain composure.

JESSICA

"Thank you". I'm well aware.

SALLIE

You're welcome.

JESSICA

(beat)

Didn't we do this dance before?

SALLIE

Practice makes perfect, no?

A moment of quiet respect. Or at least a ceasefire. Jessica inventories Sallie, head to toe.

JESSICA

I never liked stilettos. That kind of fashion's unnatural. It's just as well you took them off.

SALLIE

(chuckles)

You're telling me. Otherwise - the way you fell - I'd have two fractured ankles now.

JESSICA

Look. Maybe... you're not so bad.

SALLIE

From you, I'll take that as a massive win.

JESSICA

But you can't expect women to NOT object to letting men in drag... I mean, individuals like you invade our privacy!

SALLIE

I'm a woman, too.

JESSICA

Not biologically!

SALLIE

Fine. Let's use your lousy framework. Even IF I were a man, who cares what I do in a fucking single stall?!?

JESSICA

I care about predators dressing up to gain access to vulnerable woman. Don't you?

SALLIE

You think segregating a bathroom keeps monsters like that at bay? They're not vampires. A sign's not garlic. Things don't work that way. And you can't blame me for other people's actions. If a woman discriminates against me, should I hold YOU responsible?

(MORE)

SALLIE (cont'd)
(beat)
Though, given your latest book, maybe
I should -

Jessica's eyes light up with a "gotcha."

JESSICA
See? You said "a woman"!

SALLIE
So?

JESSICA
So - that implies you're not!

She waves a hand at Sallie's muscular arms.

JESSICA
Which should be obvious. You're not
like me at all.

SALLIE
(sarcastic)
So ironic. In Chapter Eleven, you
refer to puberty blocking as "child
abuse."

JESSICA
You think experimentation for the
trans agenda's OK?

SALLIE
Who gets to dictate medical
treatment? The parents? The kid?
Their doctor - or you?
(mutters)
Hypocritical TERF. You legislate
against solutions. But then argue
we're unfair competition in ALL
women's sports and muscle shame...

The window catches Sallie's eye. Inspiration hits.

SALLIE
Wait a minute. You've got a point.

JESSICA
I've got several. Wait... what?!?

SALLIE
About our comparative advantages.
That could be the silver lining here.

She points up at the window.

SALLIE
How's about I give that the old - or
new - college try?

Jessica snorts, points to the sink.

JESSICA
Knock yourself out. Literally, I
hope.

Sallie ignores the sink. Instead, she reaches up...

Aided by her extra height, she grasps the lip of the window.
Grunts and hauls herself up.

MOMENTS LATER

Sallie balances on the shallow ledge. Her head bumps against
the ceiling. Very cramped, dusty work. She tries forcing the
latch. It remains stuck.

She waves to Jessica on the floor below:

SALLIE
There's a metal nail file in my
purse. Hand it over.

JESSICA
If you've stalked me at other events,
you already know I'm not the "taking
orders" type.

SALLIE
Fine. For both our sakes: can you
retrieve my nail file? Pretty please?

Jessica sighs. She opens the purse, rifles through.

Then passes the NAIL FILE up to Sallie.

Sallie grabs it, and chips away at caked grime on the lock.
Jessica watches, intrigued.

JESSICA
Any progress?

SALLIE
Time will tell.

JESSICA
Don't say I don't give credit where
it's due. You scaled that wall like a
pro.

SALLIE
A few feet? That's child's play. You
should've seen me at Basic Training,
in the old, old days.

Jessica blinks. Processing that tidbit requires a reboot.

JESSICA
You used to be military?

SALLIE
Army. Qualified at Fort Bragg.

JESSICA
As a -

SALLIE
As my dead name. Let's not go there
now. Or ever.

She gouges the latch. Dirt crumbles. The window unlocks!

SALLIE
Ah-hah! She chips, she scores!

Sallie pushes the pane open. It SQUEAKS so loud, both women
jump. They stare at the door, waiting...

Jessica shrinks back, against the stalls. Sallie waves
frantically to her from her perch on the sill.

SALLIE
Don't freeze. In emergencies, that
gets people killed. Come here!

Jessica tiptoes over to the window.

JESSICA
If he hears us, he'll come in.

SALLIE
So much for "safe spaces", huh?

She reaches a hand down to Jessica.

SALLIE
C'mon. I'll boost you up.

JESSICA
Why don't YOU go through the window?

SALLIE
I'm too big. But I bet you'd fit. And
you're the one he's hunting for. So
hurry up!

Jessica fidgets, unsure.

Sallie rolls her eyes - hops down. She laces her fingers
together, bends over to give Jessica a boost.

SALLIE
Suit yourself. Plan B it is.

JESSICA
I can't. No!

SALLIE
It's gotta be one way or the other.
Choose. Though I guarantee, limboing
through that window's gonna be dry
cleaning hell for that suit.

Jessica looks back towards the exit. And that bullet hole.
CRIES from the women held hostage outside permeate the door.

JESSICA
What's going to happen to them?

SALLIE
If there was an alarm, the cops could
show up any moment. Though, after
Uvalde, what good would that do?
(beat)
But if you go through that window,
two things I guarantee. You'll be
safe from that psycho. And free to
run and get THEM - uh, "us" - help.

Jessica and Sallie lock eyes. It's a moment of
understanding. Time for truce.

JESSICA
Promise me you'll stay in here until
I go and get that Calvary?

SALLIE
Yup! Cross my heart and hope to die.

Both their smiles crumble. Sallie chuckles, a grim joke.

SALLIE
Oops.

JESSICA
Bad choice of words.

SALLIE
I'm not a writer, like you.

She bends over, offers Jessica that boost.

SALLIE
I promise to cower in a stall.
Speaking of: stop stalling. Up you
go.

Jessica takes a tentative first step.

Outside, an unseen hostage explodes.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I can't take this anymore!

Running feet patter. Followed by a horrible BANG. Women
SCREAM. The Gunman growls.

GUNMAN (O.S.)
Anyone else wanna play Houdini?

Robin's voice rises over the din.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Does anyone here know first aid? I
think it hit an artery. She's
bleeding out!

Jessica lunges for the door. Sallie grabs her arm.

SALLIE
Don't!

JESSICA
He's killing people because of me.
That's... wrong!

Jessica pulls loose, pinwheels. Sallie growls.

SALLIE
NOW you grow some empathy? When it
could get us both killed? OK, Ms.
Wannabe Hero - what makes you think
after he turns you into a lead filled
pinata, he won't like it so much he
shoots every witness to it, too?

JESSICA

Like you said, it's gonna be one way
or the other. And it's up to me to
choose.

Grabbing Cassie's book, Jessica strides for the door. Sallie
watches her go, salutes.

SALLIE

Ms. Harris, you've got more balls
than I gave you credit for.

Jessica reaches the exit. A wry smile plays on her lips.

JESSICA

You too, Ms. Sallie.

SALLIE

Metaphorically. But IRL, I traded
those in ages ago.

Jessica chuckles at the joke, marches out the door.

HALLWAY

The gunman paces before his terrified audience, back to the
bathroom door.

In one corner, Cassie cowers - holds her arm.

In another, Robin crouches over a fallen VICTIM, applies
pressure to a bleeding wound.

GUNMAN

If she ain't coming tonight, I've got
bullets to use. How about you?

He swings his rifle towards a STUDENT. The girl whimpers.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Mom? Please don't.

GUNMAN

Or should I take some freaks out
first?

He levels the weapon at a TRANS WOMAN PROTESTOR. A
"Stonewall Was Won by Drag Queens" button on her shirt.

GUNMAN

Killing you's a community service.
Even Harris would approve.

Behind him, Jessica clears her throat.

JESSICA

Don't speak for me. And no, I don't.

The gunman swings around. Seeing her, his face lights up.

GUNMAN

Where were you all this time?

JESSICA

Working out my speech.

(beat)

After some difficult... revisions, I think I finally figured it out.

The Gunman's eyes glimmer. Hard.

GUNMAN

Ms. Jessica Harris, Know it All. You ruined my marriage. And my life.

JESSICA

You've got me. Let the others go.

The gunman raises his rifle to her face.

GUNMAN

They'll go free. After they watch.

His finger tightens on the trigger.

Sallie emerges from the bathroom and tiptoes towards him. Shoeless, she makes no noise. Still, the gunman sees her.

GUNMAN

Get back, bitch. Or you'll get it too!

Sallie eyes the angle of the rifle. Pitches her voice lower:

SALLIE

That's SERGEANT Bitch to you, Asswipe!

The gunman gawks, thrown off guard. Sallie seizes the opportunity, lunges forward.

JESSICA

You promised you'd stay behind!

SALLIE

(growls)

Since I've got muscles, may as well use 'em. Right?

She arm locks the Gunman, knees him in the crotch!

He and Sallie fall in a tangle of arms and anger. The rifle slides across the floor.

The gunman gouges Sallie's face. The two roll. Terrified hostages scatter.

The combatants come to a stop next to crying Cassie. Though panting, she scrambles out of the way quick.

Sallie fumbles for her nail file, slashes the man's cheek.

GUNMAN

You think that's enough, freak?

Shaking off the pain with an ugly laugh, he pulls a knife from his belt. Prepares to stab.

But suddenly freezes - eyes wide. Sallie stares up at him in shock, as...

Blood trickles out of the gunman's eye.

Behind him: Jessica stands over the gunman - pulls CASSIE'S PEN out of his neck.

The man collapses on Sallie - dead.

Shell shocked hostages approach.

Jessica grunts, rolls the body off - helps Sallie up. Sallie stands on wobbly legs, stares at Harris.

SALLIE

You saved my life. Thank you, Sister.

JESSICA

"Sister"? Don't push your luck.

In the distance, sirens WAIL. Sallie hears them, turns.

SALLIE

Better late than never, I suppose?

She locks eyes with Jessica.

SALLIE

In many ways.

Jessica winces. But she still nods.

FINAL FADE OUT: