

OVER BLACK - NIGHT

The faint sounds of punching gloves hitting focus mitts echo across a workout room, growing louder with each hit. One, two. One, two. Bam, BAM! Bam, BAM!

LILAH (V.O.)

I signed up for a self-defense class early into my first semester.

INT. SELF DEFENSE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

A sweating LILAH KANE (19-21 and muscular with a curled posture) moves in loose-fitting workout gear, hands wrapped. She makes two quick hits followed by a kick before she is pushed off by her TRAINER with a grunt.

LILAH (V.O.)

I was in a new place, and I wanted to feel safe.

OVER BLACK - CONTINUOUS

There are a few beats of heavy breathing, quick exhales followed by the rhythmic impact of gloves. One, two. One, two. Bam, BAM! Bam, BAM!

LILAH (V.O.)

Like I could protect myself.

INT. SELF DEFENSE CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lilah stands, hands on her knees. She studies her opponent for a moment -- still panting. In, out. In, out.

LILAH (V.O.)

I liked it. Being strong, feeling...

With a yell, she launches herself forward, arm swinging into a--

OVER BLACK - NIGHT

Knock, knock!

EXT. DOORWAY - NIGHT

Lilah steps back from the door, as it opens to reveal her MOM -- dressed in a cardigan and a warm smile. Shifting on the porch with a suitcase in tow, Lilah returns the smile, sheepishly.

LILAH (V.O.)  
...capable.

Mom steps back, making room for Lilah to enter.

MOM  
Hey, sweetheart! Come on in.

The wheels of the suitcase roll behind her as she steps across the threshold.

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Click! As soon as the door shuts behind her, Lilah's mom is reaching for the suitcase.

MOM  
Oh, here let me get that--

LILAH  
Oh, no. Mom, I got it.

Lilah tries to pull the suitcase away, but her mom's hand swiftly rests over the top of the handle and gently pats hers off of it.

MOM  
It's okay sweetheart. You go say hi to your dad. He's been very excited to have you home.

There's a pause as Lilah glances toward the living room, before giving her mom a thin smile.

LILAH  
Alright.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The muffled chatter from a television grows as Lilah walks down an unlit hallway, her footsteps heavy.

One...two...one...two...

Pit...pat...pit...pat...

She stops outside a closed doorway, the television is louder from here. Taking a nervous breath, she twists the door handle, knocks twice on the door, and steps inside.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As the door opens, the television's sound becomes clearer. Something older, with hokey catch phrases and laugh tracks.

The room itself is a meticulous mess of an office. At its center sits a large chair facing an even larger television set. Playing is a Batman (1960s)-esque show. The opening song finishes as Lilah pauses next to the green cushioned chair, revealing the show's title: Vigilant.

INT. THE MAYOR'S OFFICE IN VIGILANT - DAY

On screen, the hero VIGILANT stands, tall and sure of himself in his signature trench coat and domino mask as he addresses the MAYOR.

VIGILANT

It's still unclear what Dr.

Dissonance plans to use the stolen materials from Notim Laboratory for.

MAYOR

Whatever it is, I don't like it one bit. And I want you to put a stop to it, Vigilant.

VIGILANT

Of course Mr. Mayor. I'm on the case. I've tracked down Dr. Dissonance's lair. I suspect that he's...

DAD (O.S.)

Hey, kid.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lilah's attention is pulled from the television by her DAD (Early 50s, graying and dressed to comfort) looking up at her from his chair with a grin. She returns it, relaxing a bit as she walks over to him.

LILAH

Hi Dad.

Crouching down, she gives him a side-hug over the armrest. He doesn't get up, but returns it in earnest.

DAD  
How was the drive?

LILAH  
Good. Long.

DAD  
I bet.

The show plays in the background as they sit watching, silently. A few taps on the open door break the quiet, as her mom walks in.

MOM  
Your suitcase is on your bed. I didn't know where you wanted things.

Lilah stands, moving toward the door.

LILAH  
Cool. Thanks. I'll probably just wait till tomorrow to transfer everything into the closet.

Without looking up from the tv, her dad calls over his shoulder.

DAD  
Just be sure not to leave any clothes out on your bed.

Lilah tenses slightly.

LILAH  
I won't.

DAD  
This isn't your dorm, gotta make sure to pick up after yourself.

She clenches a slightly bruised fist.

LILAH  
Got it, Dad.

She moves to give her mom a hug.

LILAH (CONT'D)  
Night mom.

MOM

Goodnight, hon. Are you sure you don't want anything to eat before you go to bed?

LILAH

Nah, I'm good. Tired.

MOM

Alright, sleep tight.

Lilah nods, moving to leave before pausing in the doorway. She looks back at her dad. He's still watching Vigilant, who's in pitched combat with Dr. Dissonance. With a light sigh, she steps out into the hallway and closes the door behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She leans against the door for a moment, listening to sounds of the TV, her mom chatting with her dad through the doorway.

MOM (O.S.)

(muffled)

...You know you could have gotten up to welcome her home.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DAD

We talked.

MOM

Is that what that was?

DAD

I don't need you to pick apart every conversation-

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MOM (O.S.)

(muffled)

-I do not pick apart every conversation.

Lilah's face tightens at the conversation, but she brushes it off and drags herself away from the door. There's a wince as she walks toward her room with a limp that wasn't as noticeable when she'd entered the house.

DAD (O.S.)  
 (muffled)  
 Cuz it's not exactly like she's  
 giving that much to work with.

MOM (O.S.)  
 (muffled)  
 How would you feel if she was  
 staring at the damn TV while you  
 were talking!

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lilah's dad finally moves his eyes away from the TV, pointing  
 aggressively.

DAD  
 Oh, so we did talk.

MOM  
 That's not the point.

DAD  
 I'm just trying to make sure we're  
 on the same page here.

The TV plays on in the background as their exchange quickly  
 develops into an argument.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - DAY

BANG! Dr. Dissonance misses Vigilant with his cane. POW!  
 Vigilant socks Dr. Dissonance in the face with his signature  
 brass knuckles. Thud!

LILAH (O.S.)  
 (whisper-yelling)  
 Shit!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lilah leans against the wall near, clutching her stomach as  
 she kicks a set of fallen boxes marked "Goodwill" out of the  
 way of her bedroom door. The arguing stops.

MOM (O.S.)  
 (from the other room)  
 Are you okay sweetheart?

LILAH  
(shouting)  
Yep, all good!

MOM (O.S.)  
Okay, well just be careful!

DAD (O.S.)  
Tripping over your dirty dishes  
already?

Lilah bites her tongue.

LILAH  
(shouting)  
Got it!

She quickly shoves her bedroom door open and stumbles in.

INT. LILAH'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lilah's breaths are heavy and pained as she hobbles over to the edge of her bed.

On it is her suitcase, still shut. Running her fingertips across the suitcase, she pauses at the zipper before seeming to think better of it and shifts in her seat. Bad idea.

She clutches her side and leans forward with a grunt. Deep, controlled breaths leave her: In...out...in...out...

A floor length mirror sits across the room, catching Lilah's attention.

Despite her state, she stands, lifting her baggy shirt to reveal a mass of welts trailing up her stomach and underneath her sports bra. A light finger trails along the bruises, and she studies each with an almost reverent gaze.

LILAH  
(breathless)  
Shit.

She flinches out of her stupor at the resumed yelling of her parents. Looking back toward her door, she walks over and presses an ear to hear more clearly.

MOM (O.S.)  
(muffled)  
I just want you to-

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MOM

-listen to me when I'm talking to you!

DAD

I am listening! I'm listening to you right now.

MOM

Can you please just pause the television for one second? It's distracting.

DAD

Which is it? I'm not listening, or it's distracting? Pick one.

INT. LILAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

With a sigh, Lilah pulls her ear away and slides into a sitting position against the door. She groans lightly, the movement startling her wound, and stares at her partial reflection in the mirror.

She traces her finger -- not along the bruises hidden beneath her oversized t-shirt, but the ones lining her knuckles.

OVER BLACK - 3 HOURS EARLIER

Two sets of footsteps pound against pavement.

Left, right. Left, right.

Two sets of quick, heavy breathing.

In, out. In, out.

LILAH (V.O.)

I thought I hated fighting, but...

EXT. PARKING LOT - 3 HOURS EARLIER

Lilah sprints through a darkened, empty parking lot, gasping deeper with every stride. Her hair whips behind her in the wind. Behind her...

Behind her, an ASSAILANT with a knife is gaining on her. Every stride costs two of hers.

Lilah chances a look back. Too close, he's too close -- right behind her. He reaches for her hair, inches away when--

OVER BLACK - CONTINUOUS

Silence. The kind of still that premeditates action. The calm before the storm. A predator preparing to attack.

LILAH (V.O.)  
I guess I don't really mind it.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The sound returns as Lilah ducks down right before the man can grab her hair. She sweeps his legs out. He drops, face into the ground with a -- BANG!

And she kicks the knife out of his hands with a -- POW!

Lilah's world flashes between pieces of reality and fictional, highlighting each blow to the Assailant's ribcage.

BANG, POW, BAM!

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - DAY

CRASH!

Vigilant knocks down the door to Dr. Dissonance's Lair and points a brass knuckled finger at DR. DISSONANCE (~45, outrageously shaped mustache, patchwork 3-piece suit and a decorative cane).

VIGILANT  
The jig is up Dissonance, I've  
uncovered your vicious scheme!

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lilah drives kick after kick into the Assailant's ribs, keeping him from getting up.

Suddenly, the Assailant grabs Lilah's ankle and sends her tumbling to the ground.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

CRACK!

Dr. Dissonance whacks Vigilant in the ribs with his cane, sending Vigilant tumbling backward.

He points at Vigilant's feeble form with the menacing cane.

DR. DISSONANCE

That's Dr. Dissonance to you,  
Vigilant. And you're too late!  
You'll never stop me in time to  
save the city from my hypnotic ray!

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The sounds of Lilah's parents arguing grows and grows in the background as the Assailant drives punch after punch into her stomach.

MOM (V.O.)

Well, I'm sorry for wanting just a little bit of respect! Why is it so hard for you to look at me while I'm talking to you?

DR. DISSONANCE (V.O.)

In just five minutes my hypnotic message will broadcast onto every channel in Notim City!

DAD (V.O.)

I am looking at you! I'm looking you in the eyes, right now!

DR. DISSONANCE (V.O.)

Every citizen will be under my command!

One, two. One, two.

WHAM! BAM! CRACK! POW!

Punch after punch meets hits her stomach as she blocks her head from taking any blows. And the cacophany grows louder:

VIGILANT

You won't get away with this Dr. Dissonance!

DAD

If I want to sit and watch tv after a long day at work...

DR. DISSONANCE

Try and stop me Vigilant!

MOM

Your daughter was just here and you didn't even look at her once.

Blow by blow, Lilah's vision fades into television static.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

Vigilant is on the ropes, pressed against the wall of Dr. Dissonance's lair when--

BAM!

Vigilant catches the swing of Dr. Dissonance's cane in his hand.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lilah catches the Assailant's punch.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

WHAM! Vigilant socks Dr. Dissonance in the jaw.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lilah head butts the Assailant in the nose. She flips them over locks him in an arm bar.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Dissonance stumbles back, knocking into the Hypnotic Ray.

It teeters over.

CRASH!

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lilah dislocates the assailant's shoulder. His scream is drowned out by Dr. Dissonance's cry.

DR. DISSONANCE  
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Lilah crawls away from the Assailant and they both stumble onto their feet. Turning, she places her hands on her knees, studying the Assailant like she did her self-defense instructor.

INT. DR. DISSONANCE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

A triumphant Vigilant stands, one foot on a tied up Dr. Dissonance.

VIGILANT  
It's over Dr. Dissonance.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lilah smiles and lunges forward, giving a yell that echoes across the empty lot.

VIGILANT (V.O.)  
You and your hypnosis ray....

She draws her arm back, leaping forward.

VIGILANT (V.O.)  
Are ov-

Just before her fist reaches the Assailant's face...

Like a television shutting off...

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

Breathing, softer than the heavy panting of before, but less steady.

In, out. In, out.

INT. HALLWAY - PRESENT

Lilah stands in front of the closed office door. Their muffled shouts are covered by the ringing in Lilah's ears. Her bruised hand skims the doorhandle.

LILAH (V.O.)  
Or maybe, I don't know...

With a sigh, Lilah drops her hand and walks away from the door. On the opposite side of the hall, she walks through her open bedroom door.

LILAH (V.O.)  
Maybe, I don't like fighting all that much.

INT. LILAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leaning against the doorframe, she closes her eyes for a moment and clutching her stomach once again.

LILAH (V.O.)  
I know I don't like getting hurt.

Opening her eyes again, she looks toward the bed. On it is her suitcase. Lilah considers it for a moment. A silent moment. A storm in her eyes, the face of a predator preparing to strike. Her finger brushes the bruises on her hand.

LILAH (V.O.)  
I don't like hurting other's that much either.

The door is kicked shut behind her, turns of the lights, moves to stand in front of the suitcase. Shifting forward, she unzips the suitcase and throws it open.

LILAH (V.O.)  
But I like feeling safe...

One, two. One, two.

Shadow punches slice through the air. Lilah carefully pulls wraps around her hand. She tightens a ponytail behind her head.

LILAH (V.O.)  
Strong...

One, two. One, two.

Shadow punches, this time followed by a kick. She grabs a jacket, pulling her arms through. Wrapped fingers pull her shoelaces tight.

LILAH  
Capable...

Lilah grabs something unseen from the suitcase, turning away from the door.

She pops the window to her bedroom door open and begins to slip out. Pausing in the window, she looks back at the camera to reveal her face wearing a domino mask. She stares briefly at the bedroom door. A sad look flickers across her face.

LILAH (CONT'D)  
And, you know...

INT. DAD'S OFFICE

The TV plays the end of the Vigilant theme song, ending with a callout from the characters, addressing the television audience.

MAYOR  
Vigilant!

DR. DISSONANCE  
Vigilant!

VIGILANT  
Vigilant!

INT. LILAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lilah looks to the camera, her face now wearing a domino mask, a crooked grin creeping across her face.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD:

"VIGILANT"

