

SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Rapid, panicked breathing -

CLOSE ON A BOY, LUKE (12). Holding in terrified sobs, GUN clutched to his chest.

He looks through the slats of his closet door. There's a MAN with a shotgun outside. Searching Luke's room. Checking behind the curtain. Getting closer.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
What do they want?

REVERSE TO ASHLEY (18), Luke's babysitter, hiding with him. She pulls him away from the door. They huddle on the messy closet floor. Ashley whispers -

ASHLEY
Luke, I'm sorry... I- I couldn't
protect you...

The man outside pauses, then approaches the closet... His silhouette cuts across the slats and -

CUT TO BLACK:

CAROLERS
AIIIIIIII!

SUPER: "TWO HOURS EARLIER"

Energetic CAROLERS sing "Feliz Navidad" as the horizon swallows the sun's final light. Children run and play while upper crust yards come to life with Christmas lights. Festive displays blinking and twinkling with holiday cheer.

SUPER TITLE: "SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD"

A white Camry navigates the bedazzled streets, *swerves* a bit.

INT. CAMRY - DUSK

ASHLEY (18) looks...flawless. Untouched by cynicism or the scars of experience. Just a sweet, smart, well-meaning girl.

She juggles the wheel and her cell phone.

ASHLEY
I know I said I'd have my room
packed, but- Mom, will you listen?
...'Course I'm wearing headphones.

She's not. Ashley rifles through her purse, looking for them.

ASHLEY

The Lerner's really needed someone tonight- ...Mom, I'm not sneaking off to see him- ...Well this isn't easy on me either, I'm saying bye to everyone I know halfway through our last year together and maybe I'm not ready to- SHIT!

SCREEEECH!! Ashley skids to avoid a BLACK CAT. Comes to an abrupt stop in front of a driveway.

She waits for a moment, catching her breath. Lifts a 'sorry' hand to the carolers who glance at her with shaming eyes then continue singing in front of someone's home.

ASHLEY

(into phone)

Nothing, I'm fine. Just- traffic.
I gotta go.

Ashley hangs up and peels away. Doesn't notice HEADLIGHTS turn on as a BLACK CAR pulls out of a driveway and follows...

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - EVENING

A SEMI-AUTOMATIC GLOCK UNLOADS INTO A ZOMBIE. GARRETT (12) plays a first person shooter. He's Hispanic, has cheap worn shoes, and is desperate to be cool but overcompensates for his inherently gawky nature. More zombies jump out and he gives them the lead special with compliments from the chef.

LUKE (O.S.)

See? It says right here: "Want to put her in the mood? Watch a horror movie."

On the bed, LUKE (12) reads his iPad. He is confident, cherubic, though not unscathed by the onset of puberty.

His room has all the boy standards: comic books, action figures, long abandoned children's DVDs. Above his bed stand several first-place trophies: chess, science fair, etc. This kid is good at what he does.

LUKE

"When we're scared, our brains pump out dopamine, the same chemical we release when we're aroused."

Garrett switches to INCENDIARY AMMO and introduces us to the harrowing details of human combustion.

GARRETT
So fear makes girls - wet?

LUKE
I told you, man. Speaking of
pussies, why're you using
incendiary?

GARRETT
(gleeful)
'Cause it burns things...

LUKE
And takes zero skill. Switch back.

Garrett rolls his eyes but obeys, toggles to normal bullets.

LUKE
Now if you were really skilled
you'd use the knife. That's fun.
It requires strategy, planning-

GARRETT
And, like, seven stabs per guy.

LUKE
See, that part's unrealistic - in
real life you could kill 'em with
one well placed stab.

GARRETT
(beheads enemy)
Nah dude, it takes more than one
stab. People don't die that easy.
Agree to disagree.

Luke rolls his eyes in total disagreement.

GARRETT
It's like with the paint cans.

LUKE
Are we seriously back to the paint
can in the face debate? I ended
that last week.

GARRETT
(shrugs)
I was unconvinced.

LUKE
Noooo no no, we looked it up
online.

(MORE)

LUKE (CONT'D)
That ER doctor said swinging cans
would have smashed the robbers'
faces in.

GARRETT
And you believe everything you read
on the Internet?

LUKE
At least I have Internet here.

GARRETT
(defensive)
We have Internet at my house.

Garrett grabs Luke's iPad and scrolls through it. An article
peppered with scantily clad girls.

GARRETT
The only reason to read this stuff
is for the pictures.

LUKE
I'm covering my bases tonight.
Porn only teaches you so much.

Luke takes the iPad back. Tries to act cool but Garrett can
see he's nervous.

GARRETT
Dude-

LUKE
What?

GARRETT
She's like twice our age. You
really think it's going to happen?

LUKE
I'm almost thirteen. Ashley just
turned eighteen. Five years. Big
deal. My parents are nine years
apart.

GARRETT
Okay- but she's dating *Ricky*
Almeida, you know how bad he could
beat your ass if he found out?

LUKE
Ashley doesn't even like him.

GARRETT

That's what you said about Jeremy.

LUKE

Yeah, and when she realized what a jerk he was, she dumped him.

GARRETT

You don't get it, man. Ashley's a ten and you're like...a...

Luke dares him to finish that sentence. Garrett scratches his shoulder, goes back to the game.

GARRETT

Never mind.

LUKE

She likes me, I know it. And it's tonight or never.

GARRETT

Fine. But fair warning, I got some weed from my brother. Instead of you trying to bone your babysitter maybe we could, y'know, puff puff-

LUKE

No, I'm going through with the plan.

Garrett stops the game and grows strangely somber.

GARRETT

Luke, for both our sakes, I truly, sincerely hope you get some ass-

DEANDRA LERNER (O.S.)

Boys.

Luke's mom DEANDRA LERNER stands in the doorway, dressed for an evening out. Most thirty-somethings would kill for her looks, but at 50, Deandra's in a separate league altogether.

We're not sure how long she's been standing there. All eyes on Garrett.

GARRETT

-ssssssistance with that computer problem. Technical assistance. Support, like...Call Geek Squad.

(casual)

You smell good, Mrs. Lerner. Aces on the perfume.

Deandra isn't buying his act. Ignores him altogether.

DEANDRA LERNER
Lucas, in bed by 11:30, 'kay?

LUKE
I know.

DEANDRA LERNER
And remember to brush your teeth.

LUKE
I will, Mom! God!

DEANDRA LERNER
(turning to leave)
I left pizza money on the counter-

LUKE
OKAY!

Deandra exits. She can't win.

Luke looks tense. Garrett waits for his friend's blood to return to a simmer. He spots something under the bed, pulls out Luke's childish "Sleepy Sounds" white noise machine.

GARRETT
Wha-ha-hat? It's the fetus machine! I forgot you had this.

LUKE
Oh, yeah...

Garrett flips through the settings: *Waves on a Beach*, *Tropical Rainforest*, and - *FETAL HEARTBEAT*. Listens to the muted blood rush and pound of sounds from within the womb.

GARRETT
So creepy... Please tell me you don't still sleep with this.

Luke lunges, tosses the noise maker back under the bed.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
You do...

LUKE
Of course not.

GARRETT
Maybe it'll set the mood while you-

Garrett makes kissy noises. Luke pins Garrett in a headlock--

DING DONNNNNNGGGG. An adrenaline shot hurls Luke to his feet. He shares a knowing look with Garrett.

LUKE
She's here.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - EVENING

We follow Deandra to the balcony and down a dramatic curved staircase into the foyer as she dons her earrings.

In the den, "O Come All Ye Faithful" accompanies ROBERT LERNER (50) as he wires a Christmas tree. He's got a quiet humor about him, balding but handsome.

DEANDRA LERNER
Could you get that?

ROBERT LERNER
M-hm...

DEANDRA LERNER
And Bob?...Turn that shit off.

Robert frowns, grabs a remote. The music cuts out.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

Robert answers the door, steps back for - Ashley.

ROBERT LERNER
Hi! Come on in, Ashley. That's a nice sweater.

ASHLEY
Thanks. It's cold this year.

Ashley steps around a large, light-up SANTA STATUE still awaiting its front lawn debut. Robert shoves it aside.

ROBERT LERNER
Lemme get that. So you're leaving us, huh? Deandra said you're moving.

ASHLEY
Yeah, Pittsburgh. In a few days.

ROBERT LERNER
Well thanks for coming, you must be busy packing.

ASHLEY

I couldn't leave without saying
goodbye.

DEANDRA LERNER (O.S.)

What a sweet thing to say.

Deandra swishes into the foyer, cocktail in hand.

ASHLEY

Hi Mrs. Lerner. Wow...you look
incredible.

DEANDRA LERNER

Oh I've told you, call me Deandra.
"Mrs. Lerner" makes me sound
fossilized. I can deal with it
from Luke's friends but not my
contemporary.

She winks playfully at Ashley.

ROBERT LERNER

Look who's out of his room.

They look upstairs. Luke has been eavesdropping from behind
the banister. He smiles nervously at Ashley.

ROBERT LERNER

Don't I remember something about a
snow blower getting put away?

LUKE

I said I'll do it later, Jesus...

DEANDRA LERNER

Lucas! Don't talk back like that.
Put the damn blower away.

Luke plods down the stairs, fuming at being undermined in
front of Ashley. She diffuses him with a wink.

ASHLEY

Go on, Luke, then we can hang out.

Luke smiles, unable to look away from her until his dad
nudges him to go outside.

As the two head for the back door--

DEANDRA LERNER

New carpet!! Dammit Bob.

Robert YANKS Luke from the living room before his sneakers can touch down. Deandra turns to Ashley, instantly charming.

DEANDRA LERNER

Those boys. Quick! Come with me.

Deandra jogs up the stairs. Ashley follows, curious.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

Deandra passes the bathroom, where Garrett snoops through the medicine cabinet, scratching his shoulder.

DEANDRA LERNER

What are you doing?

GARRETT

Do you have any...itch cream?

DEANDRA LERNER

Top shelf.

Garrett wipes his hand on a towel and Deandra shuts the bathroom door. To Ashley -

DEANDRA LERNER

I tell you that kid's a bad influence.

(rubs temple)

Now I have to wash those towels...

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Not too much snow, but the paths through the frozen garden have been cleared. Luke grabs a snow blower.

INT. SHED - EVENING

Bob Lerner peers at the mess of the shed. He notices two BASEBALL MITTS on a tool bench. One big, one child sized. Both covered in dust. He picks the little one up...

LUKE (O.S.)

Uh, Dad?

Bob places the mitt back, then moves so Luke can cram the blower under the tool bench.

ROBERT LERNER

Two whole weeks off. Got any special plans?

Luke hops into the seat of a JOHN DEERE MOWER.

LUKE

I was thinking I'd start learning a new language, build a bird feeder, experiment with boysssss... Y'know, the usual.

Bob Lerner stares at his son, wishes he knew how to bridge the chasm between them. Luke gets up -

LUKE

Great talk, dad.

- leaving him alone in the shed.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

Deandra Lerner opens a rustic hall bureau. Pulls out a PENCIL decorated in sleeping teddy bears. Holds it up to Ashley, then marches to Luke's room -

DEANDRA LERNER

So this is what I wanted to show you. We're trying something new. Lucas started sleepwalking again.

ASHLEY

Oh no.

DEANDRA LERNER

This time we want to stay on top of it. Well- I say "we." Bob'd let Lucas walk into traffic.

Ashley nods, still waiting for the pencil explanation.

DEANDRA LERNER

So once he's brushed and in bed- oh make sure he takes his sleeping pill- we just leave the pencil on his doorknob. Like this.

Deandra balances the pencil across the doorknob.

DEANDRA LERNER

See? If he stays in his room, great. If he walks around, we'll know. We've been doing it for three weeks. So far so good. My clever idea, thank you very much.

She gulps the rest of her cocktail. Stashes the pencil under the rug in front of Luke's bedroom. It's clockwork to Deandra, but Ashley finds it rather odd.

DEANDRA LERNER

Oh, what? I'm some weirdo? It's not like they come with a manual. Kids. You do your best.

She looks at her empty glass.

DEANDRA LERNER

Get creative...

Deandra rights a crooked frame on the wall, a photo of Luke at five, arms wrapped lovingly around her neck, can't get enough of his mom. She wipes the frame clean.

DEANDRA LERNER

Besides, what he doesn't know won't hurt him.

ASHLEY

I get it. Children are... It's good to... It's no problem.

Deandra Lerner appreciates the validation from her younger self. Downstairs, the back door SLAMS.

ROBERT LERNER (O.S.)

Honey! Time to go!

INT. FOYER - EVENING

Garrett nudges Luke on his way out the door.

GARRETT

See ya, man...

Luke cringes as his mom gives him a big kiss on the cheek right in front of Ashley.

DEANDRA LERNER

No scary movies that give you nightmares again, 'kay?

Luke gives a dry thumbs up.

ROBERT LERNER

C'mon hon, you're embarrassing him.

Robert shoots him a wink, closes the door. Finally, Luke is alone with Ashley. He turns to her with a nervous grin.

LUKE
So, what shall we do? Movie?

ASHLEY
Actually, I gotta make a call. Why
don't you hang out and play video
games or something?

You can see the disappointment on Luke's face...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley opens the pantry, snags a handful of chips as she
chats on her phone -

ASHLEY
Ricky...I can't, I'm babysitting-
...Why are you pushing so hard? If
you wanted to hang out so badly you
should've given me some warning-
...No, I'm gonna be here til late.
Like one or two-

Around the corner, Luke listens to her conversation.

ASHLEY
You wish! There are perv laws
against that.

As Ashley reaches for the chips on the counter-- A WOLF
SPIDER RACES ACROSS HER HAND--

ASHLEY
Ahhh! Luke! Luke!

LUKE
What?

ASHLEY
A spider! Kill it! Kill it!

Luke traps the spider with a glass cup.

ASHLEY
Just squish it!

LUKE
No. He didn't do anything.

Luke opens the back door and lets the spider out.

LUKE
There you go, big guy.

ASHLEY
Yugh! Spiders...
(back into phone)
What? No, I can handle myself.

Annoyed, Luke shuts the back door and walks away.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
(softening)
I know I leave on Wednesday- I
know, me too- ...Okay, mayyyybe you
can if the kid falls asleep early.

"Kid"? Luke SOURS, disappears down the hall.

CLOSE ON THE SPIDER OUTSIDE, crawling into the shadows...

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - LATER

Ashley peers into Luke's room. A video game sits on pause.
Luke is nowhere to be seen.

She stares at an old photo of the Lerner's posed together on
a ski slope. Luke wears a funny scarecrow ski mask.

A washing machine *whirs* to a halt in the laundry closet
across the hall. Ashley transfers the damp clothes into the
dryer. It's the nice thing to do.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Ashley picks up a remote to turn on the TV - no go. She
picks up another remote and tries - not that one either. She
tries a third before calling out in frustration -

She spots Luke watching her from behind a large fish tank,
the centerpiece of the next room.

ASHLEY
What are you doing?

LUKE
Watching you...
(smile)
...figuring out the remotes!

ASHLEY
Well we watching that movie or not?

He sits on the couch and pats the cushion next to him.

Ashley chuckles, sits beside Luke as he expertly cycles through numerous TV remotes, landing on a list of movies.

LUKE

What do you wanna watch?

He hands the remote over and she scrolls through the movies.

ASHLEY

It's all Christmasy shit...

LUKE (O.S.)

(from the kitchen)

Press 'guide' and scroll until you see 'genre.'

ASHLEY

'Kay, hold on.

Ashley squints, figuring things out. She leans forward...

POP-!

A CORK HITS THE SCREEN, scaring the shit out of her. Luke stands with a bottle of CHAMPAGNE, smirking.

ASHLEY

Luke!

He takes a big gulp. Hides his reaction to the taste.

LUKE

What? You want?

He dances around the couch as she reaches for the bottle.

ASHLEY

Lucas, you're way too young to be drinking, seriously. Give me that!

Luke lures her with the bottle.

LUKE

This?

He leaps over the couch and takes another gulp.

ASHLEY

Stop that! Luke! What's gotten into you?

LUKE

One time me and Garrett drank a whole bottle and he puked so bad, he can't hold his liquor like me.

ASHLEY

I'm super impressed. Now give it.

A tense stand-off...

ASHLEY

I'm so serious right now.

Luke hands over the bottle. With a this-is-going-to-be-a-long-night exhale, Ashley strides into the

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

WHERE THE BACK DOOR IS WIDE OPEN...

ASHLEY

You forgot to shut the door, doofus.

Shivering, she shuts it, twists the dead bolt. A tree swing sways in the backyard, fading in and out of the shadows...

Ashley approaches the sink, stares at the bottle.

ASHLEY

Can't believe I'm about to do this.

She starts to pour the champagne down the sink when-- her phone rings. It's Ricky.

ASHLEY

(into phone)

Can't talk now, in crisis mode--
...No. Tonight's not going to work, I'm just- too stressed out.
No! I'll see you tomorrow-

She puts the bottle down in shock.

ASHLEY

(into phone)

You know what, this has been like, our whole relationship. No thought about me or what I'm going through--
...So what, you're going to break up if you can't get any tonight? Fuck you. I can't believe I actually thought about having- Ugh.

Ashley hangs up, hurt. Stares at the fizz settling down the drain. She glances at the bottle, then takes a BIG SWIG. Cups her chin as some dribbles onto the floor.

LUKE (O.S.)

Busted.

LUKE stands in the doorway. Ashley towels the tile.

ASHLEY

Me? What about *you*, mister?

LUKE

I won't tell if you don't.

ASHLEY

...Deal.

Luke grabs the bottle and chugs - she stops him.

ASHLEY

You know, drinking won't impress me. I already think you're cool.

He stares at her longingly with a crooked, buzzed grin.

ASHLEY

Hey we better get some food in you. Pepperoni or Hawaiian?

LUKE

Anything but mushrooms.

As she reaches for the phone--

RIINNNGGG!!

Ashley jumps, suppressing a heart attack.

LUKE

Wow, calm down!
(under his breath)
Have another drink.

Luke giggles, tipsy, and heads to the family room. Ashley lifts the handset, peers at the caller ID - "UNKNOWN."

ASHLEY

Lerner residence.
(beat)
Hello? ...Hello?

She hangs up. That was strange...

FAMILY ROOM -

Ashley plops on the couch by Luke and sips some champagne.

LUKE
Who was it?

ASHLEY
No one.

LUKE
Why are you dating Ricky? He's
such a jerk.

Ashley's face falls. Luke turns away.

LUKE
Sorry! I'm sorry. I didn't mean
it like that.

ASHLEY
How did you mean it?

LUKE
It's just, like- first Jeremy, and
now Ricky. I mean- you could have
any guy in the world and you choose
these guys who treat you like shit!

ASHLEY
Lucas! First off...you're sweet.
But second, there's a really
wonderful side to Ricky, me leaving's
been really tough on us so- be nice.
Besides, you're drunk, kiddo.

LUKE
I am NOT drunk and I'm NOT a kiddo.

ASHLEY
You're twelve.

LUKE
Almost thirteen.

Ashley smiles.

LUKE
What? I'm mature for my age.

ASHLEY
I know you are.
(throws him a bone)
If I were twelve I'd date you.

LUKE

Really?

Luke smiles. Maybe the night is going okay after all.

Bingbong-! The doorbell. Ashley looks at Luke - were you expecting anyone? Luke shakes his head. Confused, she heads

INTO THE FOYER -

She rounds the Santa statue and squints through the peephole. Just as her eye closes in, a harsh series of KNOCKS follows.

PEEPHOLE POV: A PIZZA DELIVERY MAN, face obscured by shadow.

ASHLEY

Oh my god! Luke, you freaked me out, you didn't tell me you already ordered pizza!

Luke runs in from the kitchen with the pizza money.

LUKE

I didn't.

Ashley opens the door. We never see the Pizza Man's face, only his twisted reflection in the frosted glass door.

ASHLEY

Sorry, I don't think we ordered that.

PIZZA MAN (O.S.)

This 312 Claremont?

ASHLEY

Yeah.

PIZZA MAN (O.S.)

Then it's for you.

LUKE

I guess my dad ordered it. Keep the change.

Luke hands him a \$20. Ashley takes the pizza. Awkward beat.

PIZZA MAN (O.S.)

Have a terrific night...

ASHLEY

Okay, well you too!

Door = shut. Ashley locks the bolt for good measure.

ASHLEY
Plates and napkins, mister.

Backing up, she ALMOST TRIPS over the light-up Santa. It stares up at her. Creepy. She unlocks the door, shoves the statue onto the porch, then relocks it.

IN THE FAMILY ROOM -

Ashley sets the pizza down. Suddenly, the lights dim and Luke walks in with a LIT CANDLE. Places it beside the pizza. Ashley gives him a dubious look.

LUKE
What? It's good ambience.

ASHLEY
(amused)
You are something else tonight.

She opens the box.

ASHLEY
I thought you hate mushrooms. Why would your dad order them?

LUKE (O.S.)
I dunno. Cuz he knows I hate them?

They start a movie and dig in, Luke picking off mushrooms. Soft candlelight dancing on their faces. A nice, quiet moment between them. Luke leans his head on her shoulder, intimate but cute, not a big deal.

She takes a bite of pizza, chews for a moment, then stops -

She looks down and sees Luke's hand on her thigh. She swallows her pizza and gently lifts Luke's hand off, putting it on the couch between them.

Bzzuzz... Her cell phone rings.

ASHLEY
Ugh, Ricky. No.

She silences it. Luke smiles, happy she refused the call.

ASHLEY
So what's your family doing for the holidays?

LUKE
Drinking and arguing. Yours?

ASHLEY

Well, we'll be settling into our new place. I can't believe we're moving now, it's so complicated.

(beat)

You're so lucky. Being young... Youth- is, like, the best.

LUKE

For a while, then it gets old.

Beat. She bursts out laughing.

ASHLEY

You crack me up.

Luke sips the champagne in self-satisfaction. They're both tipsy. Luke looks into her eyes. She smiles. He inches forward-- Bzzuzz... Her cell rings -

ASHLEY

Ugh, why won't he leave me alone?
Just a sec.

This time she takes the call and steps out of the room, leaving Luke. His moment spoiled, he waits for her return.

And waits... And waits... Then -- GIGGLING in the other room.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

You crack me up. Alright, fine, if it's not too late I'll call when I'm done and we'll see.

She laughs -

ASHLEY (O.S.)

I don't know, we'll see! I'm still pissed at you, you don't get off the hook that easy.

Luke blows the candle out. Ashley returns. Sees smoke rising from the extinguished candle, Luke angrily shoving pizza in his mouth. She sits on the couch beside him. He scoots away.

ASHLEY

Hey, you'll always be my little buddy. You know that?

She rubs his hair like an older sister.

LUKE

Can we just watch the movie?

Ashley puts her phone on the coffee table and settles back onto the couch. Tense music STACCATOS on the TV. It's the middle of a scary scene.

ASHLEY

Ohmygod I can't watch this part!

Ashley curls into a ball and covers her eyes, peeking through her fingers as on screen some idiot sticks his head into a dark, creepy attic.

ASHLEY

Why would you go in the attic? So stupid...

REVEAL - a FIGURE WATCHES THEM THROUGH THE FROSTED WINDOW. When Ashley turns, it's gone.

ASHLEY

Did you hear that?

LUKE

(watching movie)

Nuh-uh.

She gapes outside for another moment... Turns her attention back to the movie.

The music JOLTS - she grabs Luke's hand, grips it hard.

Luke's no longer watching the movie. He's watching ASHLEY. Imagining the dopamine racing through her system...

Suddenly, he lunges forward and KISSES her on the mouth! Tries to make out but Ashley immediately pulls away -

ASHLEY

No no-

LUKE

Why?

ASHLEY

Because, Luke!

(tries to remain calm)

It's okay. You've been drinking-

LUKE

So have you, so why won't you kiss me?

ASHLEY

'Cause that's the most inappropriate thing ever!

She begins to get up when THE PHONE RINGS. Ashley has never been so relieved to answer a call. She grabs the handset.

ASHLEY
Lerner residence, hello?

No answer. Just someone BREATHING on the other end.

ASHLEY
Are you gonna talk?

VOICE (FILTERED)
We see you...

She turns to the window behind them. Nothing but dark yard.

ASHLEY
(whispers into phone)
Jeremy?

No response. We can still hear breathing. Ashley goes to the window and gives the middle finger.

ASHLEY
How many fingers am I holding up?

Click. They've hung up. Ashley stands there a moment. The movie CLANGS off screen and scares her.

ASHLEY
Luke, could you turn that off?

LUKE
Why?

ASHLEY
I'm getting a little freaked out.

Luke turns off the TV. Ashley points at the champagne bottle.

ASHLEY
Gimme that.

Luke hands it over and she drinks to calm her shaken nerves.

LUKE
Was it Jeremy?

ASHLEY
No. We're not talking.

LUKE
Then who was it?

ASHLEY
I- don't know. Just some- prank.

LUKE
Everyone knows he's totally
obsessed with you.

She turns back to the window-- and SHRIEKS. The SANTA STATUE
stares at her through the frosted pane, lit up and grinning.

ASHLEY
That's it. Luke, where's the hose?
I'm spraying whoever's out there.

She marches into the -

KITCHEN -

WHERE THE DOOR TO THE BACKYARD IS WIDE OPEN.

ASHLEY
Oh my god...

A BUSH RUSTLES beside the door. Ashley SPRINTS -- SLAMS it
shut -- locks it -- backpedals away from the glass.

ASHLEY
Luke! Get my phone!

LUKE (O.S.)
What's wrong?

ASHLEY
Just get it! Hurry!

FAMILY ROOM -

Luke grabs her phone off the coffee table and tosses it to
Ashley, but the phone falls short and--

LUKE
Shit!

BLOOP. LANDS IN THE FISH TANK.

ASHLEY
LUKE!

LUKE
I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

She reaches in and pulls it out, tries to turn it on.

ASHLEY
Great, Luke, thumbs up.

Ashley takes the phone into the kitchen, still wary of the windows. Towel dries it. Tries the power button - nothing.

ASHLEY
Dammit Luke!

LUKE
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to.

BOOM-! BOOM-! BOOM-! Pounding on the front door. Ashley and Luke stare at one another. Then - Luke heads for the front.

FOYER -

Ashley chases after him.

ASHLEY
Luke no!

LUKE
What? I'm not scared.

She stops him just short of the door.

ASHLEY
We don't know who it is.

LUKE
(duh)
Then look.

Ashley turns to the peephole. Cautiously checks through it.

HER POV: THE PORCH IS EMPTY.

She glances back at Luke -

BOOM-! BOOM-! BOOM-!

Ashley jumps a mile high, stifles a scream.

She pulls the curtain back. The porch is still empty.

ASHLEY
The hell...?

Luke OPENS the door -

ASHLEY
Luke, don't!

LUKE
Whoever's out there cut it out!
I know karate.

Luke waits for a response. A crisp winter breeze floats into the foyer. He smiles to Ashley.

LUKE
See. Scared 'em away-

SOMEONE BARRELS THROUGH THE DOOR -- tackles Luke -- Ashley SCREAMS -- then realizes: it's Garrett.

GARRETT
Boo.

LUKE
Get off me!

Luke throws him off and gets up. Ashley punches Garrett in the shoulder, he's laughing up a storm.

GARRETT
Your faces! Your faces! You're like: AHHHH!

ASHLEY
You asshole!!

LUKE
Garrett, what the fuck?

GARRETT
Just checkin' up on you kids.

LUKE
Go home Garrett!

ASHLEY
Garrett, I was about to call the fucking police, why were you sneaking around back there?

GARRETT
Back where?

ASHLEY
In the backyard, where you moved the Santa and opened the door.

GARRETT
I didn't go in the backyard.

Garrett looks to Luke, genuinely confused. Ashley grows quiet. Not sure if he's lying. Suddenly, upstairs--

CRASH-!

A window shatters. They freeze, wait for more sound... There is none.

Ashley LOCKS the front door and sprints for the kitchen.

LUKE

Ashley!

She's back in an instant, holding a KNIFE. Garrett ogles it -

GARRETT

What's that for?!

ASHLEY

Luke, gimme your phone.

LUKE

My parents took it-

GARRETT

I got one.

ASHLEY

Dial 911. I'm going up there. If I scream, press 'send' and hide. Got it?

The boys nod in unison. Ashley turns to the stairs. Slowly ascends. Garrett looks at Luke:

GARRETT

Dude, if this is a prank I'm kicking you in the McNuggets.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Ashley slinks to the top of the stairs, clutching the knife, alert to every sound. Then, right behind her--

pitterPatterPITTERPATTER...! She spins around. Luke and Garrett are at the top of the stairs with her, terrified.

ASHLEY

(whisper)

Get back down there!

LUKE

We heard something-

GARRETT

Please don't leave us alone!

ASHLEY

Okay but you stay right behind me.

DOWN THE HALLWAY -

Ashley flips the hall light switch. Designer Edison bulbs buzz to life. Gorgeous, but downright useless for seeing.

She blindly extends her arm behind her and Luke clutches it. Garrett eyes them, nervously dubious, as they creep down the dim hall. Slow, delicate, each step an effort in silence...

Ashley indicates the OFFICE - *in there?*

Luke nods. That's where the noise must have come from. They peek through the open door.

INSIDE THE OFFICE -

Lace curtains sway in the light breeze above a pool of BROKEN GLASS. But it's not the window everyone's staring at -

It's the BRICK that broke it.

Ashley peers out the window. No one visible in the backyard. She takes Garrett's cell and presses 'SEND.' Waits with the phone to her ear...

ASHLEY

Someone's about to spend Christmas
in *fucking* jail.

She checks outside again. Then looks at the phone.

ASHLEY

Are you serious?

LUKE

What?

Exasperated, Ashley hands Garrett's cell back and goes for the office phone on the desk. Garrett looks at his cell.

GARRETT

But my phone always works here...

She starts to dial--

Stops.

There's no dial tone.

ASHLEY

No way...

She checks to make sure the phone is connected. Taps the receiver button *-clickclickclick-* and listens...

ASHLEY

WHAT THE FUCK?

Garrett bug-eyes at Luke.

GARRETT

You're serious. You guys are fucking serious...

ASHLEY

Where's a computer?

GARRETT

(under his breath)

What'd I just walk into...

ASHLEY

Guys!

LUKE

In my room.

ASHLEY

We need the police. If this is Jeremy I'm not even fucking around.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

They crowd around Luke's laptop. No wi-fi connection. Luke checks the list of networks.

GARRETT

Where's FinnAndJake?

ASHLEY

What's that?

LUKE

It's just- the network's gone.
How're they doing this?

ASHLEY

'They'?

LUKE
I mean...right?

ASHLEY
Luke, come with me. Garrett, try
to get on someone else's, uh-

 GARRETT LUKE
Wi-fi? They're all locked.

 ASHLEY
I don't know! Just try some of
your, like-
 (waving hands)
Techno...magic.

Garrett WTFs at her as she pulls Luke out the door -

 GARRETT
What's that supposed to mean??

INT. FOYER -

Ashley clutches Luke's wrist in a frightened stampede down
the stairs, glancing to make sure the front door is locked.

 ASHLEY
We just have to find the security
panel, cops'll be here in minutes.

She searches the walls. There's no security pad.

 ASHLEY
How the hell does this house not
have a goddamn security system?

 LUKE
 (habitually)
We never needed one. It's a really
safe neighborhood.

Ashley glances out the window -

 ASHLEY
Okay, let's just run to the car and
drive to-

- and STOPS - face goes white.

Luke follows her eyeline to Ashley's car in the front
driveway. HER TIRES ARE SLASHED.

LUKE
(too loud)
What is it?

ASHLEY
Shhhhh!

Ashley turns out the lights. Pulls him away from the window, to the floor, crouching.

LUKE
I'm gonna go outside and tell them
to stop.

ASHLEY
No! Are you crazy?

Garrett appears on the landing upstairs.

ASHLEY
Garrett, get down!

He doesn't respond. Looks pale, like he's about to be sick.

GARRETT
I picked up the brick...

ASHLEY
What is it?

A tiny *whimper* escapes Garrett's throat as he comes down the staircase and turns the brick over for Ashley, revealing big bold letters on the side they didn't see:

U LEAVE U DIE

LUKE
What...?

ASHLEY
Shhhh! Do you hear that?

Ashley steps to the window, cautiously pulls back the blinds when -*click*- BLINDING HEADLIGHTS cut through the sheer curtains, destroying their safety in the dark.

ASHLEY
Get upstairs! Now!

GARRETT
No. No way. I'm outta here!

Garrett pulls away and BOLTS for the back of the house.

ASHLEY
Garrett!

Ashley chases him, low to the ground. Luke right behind her.

ASHLEY
Garrett come back!

LUKE
Ash, don't leave me!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Garrett unlocks the back door, and before Ashley can stop him...he's GONE. She stares wide-eyed as he careens around the pool, through the garden -

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

- nearing the back fence.

fwip-!

Barely a sound at all, but Garrett's head emits a SPRITZ, like he coughed a red cloud, as he's THROWN SIDEWAYS. Lands in a hydrangea bush.

Ashley turns on a dime, pulls herself inside mid-scream -

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She bolts the door, turns the light out.

LUKE
What happened to Garrett??

Ashley topples to the floor on top of Luke, face stricken with the cerebral palsy shakes of true shock.

LUKE
(muffled)
Is he okay?-

ASHLEY
Sh-shhh!

They listen... Not a sound outside. No movement at all.

A stray tear flicks down Ashley's cheek. Luke sees her mouth half-agape, and he begins to well up.

LUKE
(hushed, crying)
Is he hurt? We have to- to help
him...

Ashley mini-peeks out the window, spots Garrett's limp arm sticking out of the bushes, reaching lethargically for nothing. *There is no helping Garrett.*

She covers her mouth, suppressing a DELAYED MOAN from the horror of it all. And sits there, momentarily catatonic...

LUKE
I don't wanna die...

Ashley's eyes roll to Luke, who's trembling, wiping away tears, and it hits her: she is the adult here. She can't freak out in front of him. She swallows her breath.

ASHLEY
Listen to me- We're gonna run,
upstairs, lock ourselves in your
room.

LUKE
And then what...?

ASHLEY
We scream out the window. 'Kay?
We're going to scream for help as
loud as we can til the neighbors
call the cops-

LUKE
What if they shoot us when we yell
out the window, what if it makes
them come inside? No no! Ashley
please! I don't wanna die!

Ashley holds Luke and comforts him.

ASHLEY
Shhh, Luke, we're not gonna die.
But I need your help. I need you
to stay calm and we're going to get
through this, okay? Together.

Luke looks at her, collecting strength from her gaze.

LUKE
Okay.

ASHLEY
Do your parents have a gun?

LUKE
Yeah.

ASHLEY
Do you know where they keep it?

LUKE
It's under their bed, dad's side.

ASHLEY
Okay. We're going to get the gun.
And if anyone tries to come inside
we'll- y'know- shoot 'em.

LUKE
(nods, swallows his fear)
'Kay.

Ashley takes his hand and leads him out.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

They avoid the beams of light searing through the foyer windows, scurry low to the ground, stop at the Christmas tree. Faces swathed in rainbow soup--

creak...

They FREEZE. The noise came from UPSTAIRS. Could've been the house shifting, or the weight of an intruder...

Ashley swallows her fear and peeks into the foyer... The coast seems clear.

ASHLEY
Along the wall, stay in the shadows.

She notices Luke staring over her shoulder, *terrified* -

LUKE
(very quietly)
There's- someone- there.

Ashley follows his gaze to see A MAN SILHOUETTED IN THE WINDOW RIGHT ABOVE HER.

She catapults behind the tree, yanks Luke out of view. Waits there, paralyzed...

The window jiggers - whoever's outside begins to OPEN IT!

ASHLEY
(shrill whisper)
Go! NOW!

She grabs Luke and they jet across the foyer, up the stairs, two at a time, to the -

UPSTAIRS LANDING -

Where Ashley STOPS-- there's a SECOND MAN IN A YELLOW MASK at the end of the hall wafting a flashlight and SHOTGUN back and forth as he creeps toward them, checking each room.

She spills back into the shadows of the banister, shaking with a level of fright she's never experienced.

She catches her breath, and, inch by inch, peers back around the banister. The hallway is empty.

LUKE
Where is he?

ASHLEY
I don't know.

LUKE
What do we do? If he's in my
parent's room we can't get the gun!

Ashley looks to the laundry room across the hall. They bolt across the landing.

LAUNDRY ROOM -

The gentle *thumpthump thumpthump* of the dryer gives their voices some cover. Ashley peeks out, sees the Man reemerge into the hallway and check the next room.

LUKE
He's gonna find us!

ASHLEY
Luke!

Ashley points at the ATTIC DOOR above them.

She jumps up, grabs the dangling cord. The door WHINES open, too loud for comfort. She unfolds the ladder and thrusts Luke up the steps, trailing right behind him.

A SPEAR OF BROKEN WOOD juts out from one of the upper steps. Ashley's HAND lifts to make contact...and misses by a hair.

Luke's foot does not - the splinter JAMS through his sock.

LUKE
Motherf-!

Ashley COVERS his mouth as he falls backward. She catches him, then practically throws him the last bit up.

INT. ATTIC -

She pulls the ladder up and shuts the door. It's pitch black.

LUKE (V.O.)
Ow...

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Shhh!

We hear the laundry door open below. They hold their breath and wait...wait...until the door closes again.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Okay...

LUKE (V.O.)
Fucking splinter...

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Shhh, I'll get it.

Ashley feels for the sliver. Luke sucks in his breath.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Hold on. I can't get a grip.

They're backlit by the faint glow of Christmas lights outside. Huddled, lonely shapes.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Listen, we're just gonna stay here
and wait til they leave-

LUKE (V.O.)
But they killed Garrett... What if
they kill my parents?

ASHLEY (V.O.)
That's not going to happen.

LUKE (V.O.)
I think we should get the gun.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
 Luke- The guy down there has a
shotgun. No. I'm responsible for
 you, we're staying here.

LUKE (V.O.)
 Ow...

ASHLEY (V.O.)
 I think I got it.

LUKE (V.O.)
 Thanks.

Luke begins to move away.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
 Come back. Where are you going?
 Luke, seriously, we're not going
 back down- Ah!

LUKE (V.O.)
 What?

ASHLEY (V.O.)
 What is that?!

LUKE (V.O.)
 What?

ASHLEY (V.O.)
 Something's on me- Shit something's
 on me!

Swatting at herself, Ashley does everything she can not to
 scream while she stumbles backwards, falling ass-first onto
 the attic door. Blue laundry console light floods in as--

Whoomph-! the attic door drops out from under her..!

LUKE
 Ash!-

Luke lunges, GRABS Ashley's wrist. Strains to keep her from
 plummeting headfirst. She's almost upsidedown, like she fell
 back through a giant inner tube.

We see several SPIDERS running along her face and arms.

ASHLEY
 Get them off! Get them off me!

Her frantic swatting is making it impossible for Luke to
 support her -

LUKE
(hushed)
Ash, look at me!

Ashley's consumed with panic.

LUKE
LOOK AT ME.

She looks up. Luke's EYES are unwavering, locked on hers.

LUKE
You're going to be fine, I got you.

She holds tight to Luke, still panicking.

LUKE
I've got you. Now - reach down and
lower the ladder.

Shaking, she extends her free hand and feels the ladder
behind her, unfolds it to the ground.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Ashley gets her footing and descends. Whimpering, checking
for spiders in the dim blue light of the control panel.

Luke comes down, presses his ear against the door. It's hard
to hear anything over the hum of the DRYER. Ashley trembles
uncontrollably.

ASHLEY
I can't do this.

LUKE
Yes you can-

ASHLEY
I cheerlead, I'm not a goddamn hero.

LUKE
We have to get my dad's gun. If we
have the gun we'll be okay.

She looks up at Luke, the boy she was supposed to protect.
He's being so brave right now. He pulls her into a hug,
wipes a tear from her cheek as the dryer tumbles beside them.

LUKE
It's okay. It's okay to cry.
I'm scared, too.

He exhales...

LUKE

But I'm gonna get the gun.

Before she can stop him, Luke's out the door -

ASHLEY

No no Luke!

He's already gone.

Then, on the stairs - FOOTSTEPS, coming back up!

Ashley pulls the laundry door shut and waits as a MAN walks down the hall, blocking Luke's return.

She curls into the corner. Did he see Luke?

The dryer finishes its tumble cycle and winds down.
Thumpthump, thumpthump, soothing rhythm growing slower...

She kneels by the door to listen--

BAAAAAAHHHHHN-!!

The dryer announces its finish. Ashley clamps her hands over her ears, backs away as someone heads right to the laundry door! The door FLIES open, revealing -

LUKE. With his dad's GUN.

LUKE

Quick!

He grabs her hand, pulls her out of the laundry and into

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They hug the shadows against the wall. Ashley forces her breathing to slow. Glances at Luke's gun, with a whisper -

ASHLEY

Is it loaded?

LUKE

Yeah I checked.

An INTRUDER appears in the doorway! They squish against the wall behind the door. And freeze...

We can hear the breathing of the man on the other side, scanning the bedroom in his yellow mask.

Ashley looks to Luke, eyes bulging.

Luke RAISES HIS PISTOL... She mouths "NO!"

He stops. They wait, until the man closes the door and moves down the hall. Ashley pulls Luke into the

CLOSET -

They stuff themselves into the cramped space. Jackets and pant legs cloak their heads. Light from Luke's desk lamp stripes their faces through the slatted doors.

LUKE

I'm gonna go out there and scare them away.

ASHLEY

No!

LUKE

Don't worry, I'll protect you.

Luke is holding the gun carelessly. Ashley steers the tip away from her face.

LUKE

Sorry.

ASHLEY

Luke, you're not going out there. That's not brave that's stupid.

LUKE

I can get rid of them - trust me. Lemme go...

Luke struggles against her grip, accidentally kicks a TOY that SQUEALS TO LIFE, STROBING COLORED LIGHTS -

Luke SNATCHES it from beneath him, panicking, trying to turn it the hell off, and the flashing lights REVEAL:

THERE IS SOMEONE ELSE IN THE CLOSET WITH THEM!

We can see the FACE RIGHT BEHIND THEM; they can't.

Luke struggles to kill the toy, unaware of the INTRUDER behind them, and finally SMASHES the toy against the wall.

SPARKS fly, shedding light on the FACE behind Luke -

Ashley finally sees it. A twisted, demonic face with a jagged grin - it's the most terrifying thing she's ever seen -

ASHLEY
AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

Luke spins around, kicking at whoever's behind him -

The figure's head falls off and rolls toward them, Ashley screams again. Until they both see that...

It's a Halloween mask.

They sigh in relief just as the bedroom door BURSTS OPEN -

All breath disappears, like Ashley and Luke have been thrust into the void of outer space.

Through the slats, the hall light frames a MAN'S SILHOUETTE as he enters the room. SHOTGUN hanging from his right hand.

Slices of lamp light cut across Ashley's terrified face as she watches the MAN in the yellow mask check behind the curtains with the shotgun, getting closer to the closet.

ASHLEY
(super quiet)
What do they want?

She pulls Luke away from the door. They cling to each other, the last two people on earth.

ASHLEY
Luke, I'm sorry... I- I couldn't
protect you...

The Man outside pauses, heads for the closet. Ashley readies herself for their inevitable demise...!

Up close, she recognizes the Man's yellow mask with a shock -- it's the CUTE SCARECROW SKI MASK from Luke's family photo.

ASHLEY
(quiet)
That's your mask...

The Man scratches his shoulder.

ASHLEY
Oh my god-

Ashley starts to stand -

LUKE

Ash, no!

- and she throws the closet doors open.

ASHLEY

Garrett!?

The Man FREEZES. Turns, slowly.

MAN

Uh- (to Luke) Dude?

ASHLEY

Take that mask off!

The man slips off his mask - IT IS GARRETT.

Alive and well. He looks bigger in his hunter's jacket and raised boots. Red paint streaks his head. Ashley's FLOORED.

ASHLEY

Wh- Is this a fucking JOKE?!

LUKE

I- we- were gonna scare you.

She SHOVES him -

ASHLEY

You did! You scared the shit out of me! Why would you do that??

LUKE

I was gonna go save you, but dipshit here can't follow simple instructions...

ASHLEY

Luke, your friend is holding a real shotgun. This is serious. How could you do this??

Luke grows solemn, then looks Ashley right in the eye.

LUKE

Because you treat me like a child.

ASHLEY

And what? You were going to show me how much of a man you are by rescuing me from *fake armed robbers*? You are a child!

LUKE

I just wanted you to see the real
me and want me back...

ASHLEY

I can see right now -- you're
fucking insane! Luke, I almost
broke my neck.

Garrett shifts his weight, watching his friend get chewed out.

ASHLEY

What delusional *infant* thinks
staging a break in will get him to
second base? You're mental. You're
a selfish brat with no consideration
and you need therapy. Lots of it.

Hot tears of indignation streaming down Luke's face.

GARRETT

I'm gonna put your dad's hunting
stuff back and head home-

ASHLEY

Nuh-uh, Garrett, you stay right
fucking here. Luke, you are in so
much trouble. I'm calling your
parents.

Ashley storms out of the room -

LUKE

No!

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Luke chases after her.

LUKE

Ashley, come back!

Ashley ignores him, marches toward the stairs.

LUKE

Ashley!

She stomps down the steps, Luke right behind her.

LUKE

ASHLEY!

ASHLEY

What?!

She turns around and--

CRACK-! LUKE SLAMS HIS GUN ACROSS ASHLEY'S TEMPLE. SHE
TUMBLES BACKWARD, DOWN THE STAIRS -

HEAD -- KNEE -- BACK -- WRIST -- LANDS HARD ON THE STONE
FOYER. UNCONSCIOUS.

GARRETT (O.S.)

What did you do...?

Garrett's eyes widen in horror as he looks over the banister
to see the pile of babysitter at the bottom of the stairs.

GARRETT

WHAT DID YOU JUST DO?!

Luke stares down too. But not in horror. His wheel are
turning. Thinking, thinking...

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

OUT OF FOCUS. We're somewhere inside. Moonlight cuts across
the frame, glinting off metal --

WHOOSH-!

Something WHIZZES by. Large, rolling across hard floor.
It's gone just as fast.

Our POV tilts down, vision slowly getting clearer. We're
sitting, arms tied to a chair with duct tape. The floor
looks shiny. Tile. We're in the kitchen.

LUKE (O.S.)

Hm. Definitely fuck Princess
Bubblegum.

Our head lolls back up at a groggy angle. Then, a sound...
Coming at us from behind - WHOOSH-! Garrett rolls by on a
scooter. Pops a wheelie as he turns the corner.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

We follow him through the shadowy upper crust home. He curls
from wall to wall, soaring and in heaven.

GARRETT
Really? Not Marceline?

LUKE (O.S.)
Hell no.

FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Garrett does a giant loop, almost hitting the Christmas tree as Luke carries FLOOD LIGHTS in from the front yard.

LUKE
One: Princess Bubblegum is made of bubblegum, so she can like, stretch. Which leads to two: her pussy tastes like bubblegum.

Luke opens the door to the garage and sets the lights inside.

GARRETT
Yeah, but that means she's all sticky and moist and shit!

LUKE
Uhh...dude. Those are pros.

Garrett kicks off the staircase, follows Luke into the

FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where Luke removes a CARDBOARD SMILING CLOWN from outside the window. The silhouette they used to scare Ashley.

Garrett continues into the kitchen again. But we stick with Luke, sipping a beer, studying a PROXIMITY TRACKER on his phone. It reads "12 MILES"...

LUKE
Further, everyone from Candy Kingdom is ravenous for flesh, so you know she gives legendary head.

GARRETT (O.S.)
Sure, as long as you don't mind cutting gum out of your pubes.

Garrett does a loop around the foyer -

GARRETT
Not that you have to worry 'bout that...

- and rolls through the family room, laughing. Luke CHECKS Garrett as he passes, sending him tumbling into the couch. Garrett laughs, face in the pillows, writhing.

GARRETT

Dude, you gotta have one. I can barely feel my hands!

Luke scrutinizes a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE for DEANDRA LERNER.

LUKE

Maybe I should've given you a half dose...

GARRETT

Whad'ju call it again?

LUKE

Percoset.

GARRETT

It's awesome...awesome, awesome. Awesome. Is that a word?

Garrett rights his scooter and starts again, this time going into the dining room-- Luke jumps up--

LUKE

Watch the carpet! Dammit, my mom will kill me!

GARRETT

Sorry sorry.

Garrett jumps off the scooter, drunkenly rubs the track marks out with his sneakers, making it worse. Luke face palms.

LUKE

Oh my god, just get out of there...

Garrett moves aside as Luke gingerly works the carpet to cover any trace of imperfection.

GARRETT

Me - I'd rather put a ring on Princess Bubblegum, which makes me a badass king, and fuck Marceline, who plays bass and is way hotter.

LUKE

What?? Her legs are hairy.

GARRETT (O.S.)
Who cares? She's a half-vampire
half-demon who shapeshifts! She's
a superfreak in bed.

LUKE
With an asshole ex-boyfriend. And
daddy issues. C'mon.

Luke stands and heads into the kitchen.

GARRETT
Isn't that a good thing?

KITCHEN -

Ashley's tied to a chair, gagged, groggy eyes following their
approach. She mumbles through the tape over her mouth.

Garrett's face drops as he has a brief resurgence of doubt.

GARRETT
You sure you know what you're
doing?

LUKE
I always do.

Luke pulls a chair up to Ashley.

LUKE
But something's missing...

Ignoring her muffled pleas, he rummages through her purse,
pulls something out and draws on her gag.

LUKE
...there. All better.

Luke sits back and we see he's drawn RED LIPS over the duct
tape on Ashley's mouth.

GARRETT
Dude...that's fucked up.

LUKE
Come on, it's hilarious. What do
you think, Ashley?

Luke squeezes her cheeks, making her drawn mouth "talk" -

LUKE
(girly girl)
Oh thank you Luke! I've never
looked better!

Ashley jerks her head away.

LUKE
You're probably wondering what's
going on.
(off her eyes)
Well, it's out in the open now.
You know how I feel about you. But
that doesn't mean I'm gonna let you
tell anyone about tonight.

Luke pulls out his father's PISTOL, advertises it for Ashley.

LUKE
Look. I really don't want to shoot
you, Ashley. But if I take this
gag off, and you scream...I will.
Because you'll've left me no
choice. 'Kay?

She nods. Luke RIPS the tape off. Ashley winces -

ASHLEY
Luke, listen-

LUKE
Ah-a-a, I didn't say talk. You
talk when I tell you.

He taptaptaps his gun against the arm of her chair...

LUKE
Okay talk.

ASHLEY
Listen to me very carefully. I
think I have a concussion. I need
to go to the hospital. Put the gun
down and untie me, this needs to
stop immediately.

LUKE
(tough choice...)
...No.

ASHLEY
Whatever you think you're going to
get away with-

LUKE

You used to tell me I could get
away with murder.

(beat)

Just kidding.

ASHLEY

Luke! Fucking untie me RIGHT NOW.

LUKE

Tell you what. Let's play truth or
dare.

ASHLEY

How about let's not and you untie me.

LUKE

If you win I'll untie you. But if
you lose, you drink this.

Luke holds up a Visine-like bottle of clear liquid. A whole
new level of seriousness coats Ashley's tone:

ASHLEY

Luke what is that?

LUKE

Let's call it my insurance policy.
Amazing what you can get on the
playground these days.

Ashley struggles against her binds.

ASHLEY

Luke, listen to me, I've known you
since you were eight. I taught you
how to play baseball. You have
threatened me with a gun tonight,
this is not okay.

GARRETT

Whatever. Neither is, like,
political corruption in West Africa-
(to Luke)
By the way, I need help on that.
Paper's due Monday-

LUKE

I'll go first. Ash, truth or dare?

ASHLEY

I dare you to grow up.

LUKE

Truth or dare, Ashley? Don't make me point the gun at you.

ASHLEY

So stupid... Truth.

LUKE

(smiles)

I knew you'd say that. Alright, Ashley, truth. How many guys have you fucked?

ASHLEY

What does that matter? What are you doing? Luke, this isn't you.

LUKE

Just answer the damn question.

ASHLEY

None.

LUKE

Bull shit. You're not a virgin. Everybody knows you screwed Jeremy.

ASHLEY

I broke up with him because he went around telling everyone that.

LUKE

What about Ricky, how far have you two gone?

ASHLEY

Only get one question at a time, boy-o. Those are universal Truth or Dare rules.

GARRETT

She's right. So then it's my turn. Luke, truth or dare?

LUKE

Why, dare of course.

GARRETT

Haha, okay, I dare you to...touch her tit.

Beat.

ASHLEY

Please don't do that.

Ashley tests her restraints again, but it's no use. Luke gestures to her chest.

LUKE

It's the rules, Ashley. I have to do what Garrett says. Do you have a preference?

Ashley's mortified, can't believe this is happening.

LUKE

Right or left?

She rolls her eyes, dismissing him.

LUKE

Fine, I'll pick.

Luke hesitates, momentarily betraying his pre-adolescent nervousness... Then slips his hand under her shirt and squeezes around. Ashley looks away in disgust.

LUKE

Wow...I- That is... That is nice.
I see what all the fuss is about.

GARRETT

Dude- are you...?

Garrett points at Luke's crotch, laughing. Luke turns bright red, yanks his hand out of Ashley's shirt and pushes him -

LUKE

Shut up!

Luke shoves Garrett, who, surprising himself, shoves back.

GARRETT

Why you shoving?

LUKE

Don't push me, dude, I will kick your ass.

GARRETT

You wish.

Ashley wipes a tear away with her shoulder before they can see it. Luke tries to recover some cool, nodding to her -

LUKE

Pretty nice, huh? How'd that feel?

ASHLEY

Like a little boy just felt me up.

Luke almost blows up...but instead he takes a slow, deep breath. Eyes daggering Ashley.

LUKE

Do you KNOW...

He thinks on how to phrase this important sentiment.

LUKE

Ashley. Do you have any idea what it's like to love somebody who doesn't love you back?

ASHLEY

...more than you know.

LUKE

No you don't. Everyone loves you. All the guys want to fuck you.

ASHLEY

Oh, Luke. When you get older-

LUKE SLAPS HER! Ashley RECOILS in disbelief.

LUKE

Shut THE FUCK UP. You're a whore. You're a whore who uses people to get what you want.

ASHLEY

Ooh Luke, wow, look at you, such a strong man.

LUKE

FUCK YOU.

ASHLEY

You have no idea the trouble you're in when your parents get home.

Luke stares at Ashley, SMILES, then, very deliberately -

LEANS on her arms, right up to her face. So close she can smell the stink of beer on his breath.

LUKE

They're never going to find out.
Because you're not going to tell
anyone.

Ashley stares right back, unblinking. But behind the
clenched jaw, she's scared. Wheels spinning - *how do I get
out of this?*

LUKE

(beat, casual)
Your turn.

She swallows her fear, can't give him that.

ASHLEY

Luke, truth or dare?

GARRETT

Why isn't anybody asking me?

LUKE

Truth.

ASHLEY

Did you ever tell Garrett you
killed his hamster?

GARRETT

What??

LUKE

The answer is no. Next turn-

GARRETT

You said LeBron escaped out the
hole in my screen.

LUKE

He did. He was just dead first.

GARRETT

The fuck man?!

LUKE

It was an accident! Besides that
was like two years ago and you have
a cat now so he would've died
anyway. Garrett, truth or dare.

GARRETT

Why would you lie to me?-

LUKE
Truth or dare.

GARRETT
Dare. Man, you better dare us
(re: Ashley)
to make out or something.

LUKE
Not on your life.

GARRETT
Why do you get to have all the fun?

LUKE
Because she's MY babysitter. You
don't touch her.

GARRETT
Then what am I even doing here?!
We were just gonna scare her and
now this has turned into, like,
shit. What if we get caught? I
don't like this, man.

Garrett exits the kitchen. Luke glances at Ashley
accusingly, then rushes after his friend.

LUKE (O.S.)
Dude, stop! What are you doing?

GARRETT (O.S.)
I don't- man, I just wanna go home-

Ashley looks around, spots the small FLASHLIGHT Garrett used
earlier on the kitchen counter, just a few inches behind her.

LUKE (O.S.)
Nonono, you can't go now. We have
to finish this.

GARRETT (O.S.)
This isn't as fun as you said it'd
be. What if someone finds out?

She tilts her head, quietly rolls the flashlight closer with
her ear, pins it against her shoulder, turns and drops it
into her lap. Glances over to make sure the boys can't see -

LUKE (O.S.)
We just have to stick to the plan.
She won't remember any of this.

She aims the light at the neighbor's house and clicks the light on and off. Hoping someone will notice...

LUKE (O.S.)
I promise, it's all under control.

GARRETT (O.S.)
Fine, just- Let's get it over with.

Ashley tries to hide the flashlight as Luke and Garrett come back into the kitchen-- but it slips. CLATTERS on the floor.

The boys stare in shock. Luke runs to the window, peeks outside. He draws the curtain, shakes his head.

LUKE
You just cheated. So I'll tell you
what's gonna happen...

He unscrews the Visine bottle and pours it into a half-finished bottle of TEQUILA.

LUKE
When my parents get home, they'll
find you passed out. They'll take a
quick look around and see that after
I went to sleep, you raided the
liquor cabinet and partied hard
before your "big move to Pittsburgh."

Luke holds up the champagne and tequila bottles:

LUKE
Exhibit A, Exhibit B. And in the
morning, even you won't remember
what happened.

GARRETT
Luke walked me through. It's the
best way, Ashley.

ASHLEY
Garrett, Luke's taking you straight
to jail with him. You're making a
BIG mistake. Run, call the cops,
right now, you can stop this.

Garrett looks at Luke, his worries flaring up again. Luke waves him off, approaches Ashley with the tequila.

LUKE
Drink.

ASHLEY
(scoffing)
Absolutely not.

LUKE
C'mon! You love drinking. You
drink with Ricky all the time.
What's the problem?

Luke pushes the bottle toward her but Ashley averts her head.
He **SHOVES** his gun muzzle into her temple. She freezes...

ASHLEY
You're not going to shoot me, Luke.

LUKE
I *will* shoot you. Ashley. If you
don't start drinking right now.

He lifts the drugged Tequila to her lips, but instead of
sipping, she rears her head back and **HEAD BUTTS** the bottle
out of Luke's hand-- It **SHATTERS** on the floor.

LUKE
Bitch!

DING-DONG-!

The boys glance at each other in alarm. Ashley snaps toward
the foyer and

ASHLEY
HEL-!

Luke assaults her mouth with **DUCT TAPE**, silencing her.
Garrett looks panicked.

LUKE
Stay here. Clean this up.

Luke hands him the gun and exits.

Garrett stares at the gun. Doesn't like holding it. Puts it
on the counter as he uses a towel to pick up the glass. He
dumps it in the trash and looks at Ashley.

Without Luke here, staring at this tied up girl, this all
feels - *icky*.

GARRETT
You okay?

Ashley can't talk through the tape, but her eyebrows say it
all: "What the hell do you think?"

MUSIC BLASTS over the stereo. "Last Christmas" by Wham!

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Luke looks through the peephole. HIS POV: A HAND covers the glass, impatient fingers thrumming against the door.

LUKE
Who is it?

RICKY (O.S.)
I'm here to see Ashley.

LUKE
Ricky?

RICKY (O.S.)
Yeah, open the door.

LUKE
She's not here.

RICKY (O.S.)
I know she's here, I just talked to her like a half hour ago.

LUKE
She doesn't want to see you.

RICKY (O.S.)
Where the fuck is she? I just want to talk to her.

LUKE
Well she doesn't want to talk to you. Go away.

A moment of silence - then -

BANG! BANG! BANG! Ricky SHOUTS through the door, loud enough for the neighborhood carolers to hear -

RICKY (O.S.)
ASHLEY! ASHLEY COME TALK TO ME!

LUKE
Dude, shut up! She doesn't want to see you.

RICKY (O.S.)
Alright man, can you at least please give her these?

Luke looks through the peephole to see Ricky holding FLOWERS.

LUKE

Fine. Pass them through the door.

RICKY (O.S.)

Okay.

Luke cracks the door to take the flowers and--

RICKY ALMEIDA (21) shoves past, entering the house. He's darkly handsome, thick-lipped, maybe dangerous but in a sensual way. You can see why Ashley likes him.

RICKY

Ash!

LUKE

Hey, get out!

Ricky ignores him, way too big for Luke to stop.

RICKY

Where are you? I smell pizza...

Luke FREAKS as Ricky heads for the

FAMILY ROOM -

And grabs a slice off the coffee table. Just a hair further and his tied-up girlfriend would be in plain sight.

RICKY

Why's the music so loud?

IN THE KITCHEN -

Ashley shouts for Ricky, but "Last Christmas" mutes her -

GEORGE MICHAEL (V.O.)

*Last Christmas, I gave you my
heart, but the very next day, you
gave it away...*

Garrett's pressed against the wall, out of sight. Gun shaking in his hand, sweat trickling down his brow.

FAMILY ROOM -

Ricky takes a bite of pizza and smirks, looks around. Luke turns the music up even LOUDER.

RICKY
Are you hiding? I'll find you.

He starts toward the kitchen--

LUKE
NO! She's...upset!

RICKY
(re: flowers)
I know that. What do you think
these are for?

LUKE
So she doesn't want to see you
right now. Not until tomorrow.

RICKY
Why not?

Through the doorway we can see Ashley HOPPING in her chair,
trying to make noise but the music drowns it out.

KITCHEN -

Garrett points the gun at Ashley, begging in whisper:

GARRETT
Please be quiet. Please stop...

She ignores him. Kicks off the floor and falls backward -

FAMILY ROOM -

A loud *BAM!* echoes from the kitchen. Ricky pushes past Luke--
But Garrett pops into the doorway.

GARRETT
Hey Luke! I killed the r- rat!
Big rat. Man, that fucker was
fast...

ANGLE ON: THE GUN in his other hand, behind the door frame,
just out of Ricky's eyeline. From the floor, Ashley shouts
through her gag, but it's no use.

RICKY
Where is she?

LUKE
Upstairs. But like I said, it's
probably better if you come back-

Ricky marches past Luke to the foyer.

RICKY

Ash!

LUKE

No!! It's not just you. She's-
got cramps!

RICKY

What?

LUKE

Menstrual cramps. Real bad.

GARRETT

And diarrhea!

Ricky grimaces, but doesn't stop, disappears down the hall.

RICKY (O.S.)

Ash! I'm coming up! I don't care
what you have.

LUKE

(spins to Garrett)
"Diarrhea?"

GARRETT

What do we do?!

LUKE

I don't know! Stay with her.

KITCHEN -

Still tied to the chair, Ashley wriggles across the floor,
squirming in weird rhythm to George Michael's singing.

HER FOCUS: a piece of the shattered bottle that Garrett
missed. She twists her body within reach just before--

Garrett enters, heaves her chair back up.

GARRETT

That was so not cool of you.

...unaware of the SHARD OF GLASS now in her possession.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Ricky sticks his head into the laundry room as Luke ascends the stairs.

RICKY
Where the heck is she?

LUKE
I told you, she doesn't want to see you right now.

RICKY
(wherever you are)
Ash, you want me to get some, uh, like tampons or something?

He continues down the hall, oblivious as Luke rushes into his room and emerges with a BASEBALL BAT.

RICKY
Babe?

Luke sneaks up from behind... Ricky looks into the office and sees the shattered glass all over the floor...

RICKY
Ash, are you okay?-

WHAM-!

LUKE SLUGS RICKY IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD.

He drops instantly.

Luke stands ten feet tall over Ricky's body. So filled with relieved, maniacal hubris that he begins to dance to the music, holding the bat like a microphone -

LUKE
(mouthing George Michael)
*This year, to save me from tears,
I'll give it to someone special,
SPECIAL--*

--until Ricky looks up, clutching the back of his head.

RICKY
What the...?

Luke bug-eyes. Assumed the bat would knock him out cold.

Panicked, he swings again -

But Ricky GRABS the bat mid-swing and rips it from Luke's hands as he stands up.

RICKY

The fuck are you doing?!

Bat in hand, Ricky steps toward Luke, who tries to bolt, but he's one tenth the speed of the pissed off juggernaut.

Ricky grabs him by the neck and lifts him off the ground -

RICKY

Where's Ashley? What have you done with her?

Luke punches Ricky, but it's useless.

Ricky SLAMS HIM INTO THE WALL, hurls him to the ground in front of Luke's room.

Luke's eyes roll back in his head for a moment. Then he recovers, and reaches under the rug, feeling for something...

Ricky grabs the back of his hair -

RICKY

Don't make me hurt you-

STAB! LUKE JAMS HIS MOM'S PENCIL THROUGH RICKY'S CHEEK.

Ricky releases Luke and screams, the sharp point imbedded in his tongue. He pulls it out with a large spurt of blood. Raises the bat to smash Luke...!

GARRETT

DROP IT RIGHT NOW!!!

They both turn to the stairs -

Where GARRETT points that BIG-ASS SHOTGUN at Ricky -

GARRETT

I'm dead-fucking serious! I will blow your face off in three- two-

Ricky drops the bat. Luke picks it up.

Garrett's hyperventilating - can't believe he's doing this. Ricky drools blood as he begs:

RICKY

Kid, don't shoot me-

GARRETT
On your knees!

Ricky slowly lowers to his knees...

RICKY
What the hell is this?--

WHACK! Luke SLAMS the bat across Ricky's head again. Ricky hits the floor at Garrett's feet. Out cold.

Garrett lowers the shotgun and stares at the blood seeping across the hardwood from Ricky's cheek...

GARRETT
Shit shit shit! What the hell do we do now?

Luke shrugs, then - a devilish grin.

LUKE
Isn't this exciting?

GARRETT
NO! We're going to jail, dude!
Ashley said it, we're going
straight to fuckin' jail...

Luke nudges an expensive-looking rug out of the way with his foot as Ricky's blood pools toward it.

LUKE
No we're not.

SLAM CUT TO:

VARIOUS RAPID SHOTS -

Dragging Ricky away -- wiping the hardwood floor --

Opening the desk drawer to grab a fresh pencil and finding the teddy bear pencil packet empty --

LUKE
Fuck.

Sharpening the bloody pencil --

Noticing Ricky's BITE MARKS, still visible on it -- more sharpening --

Scrubbing the hardwood -- wiping the bat -- and finally --

Ricky's flowers disintegrating down the garbage disposal...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Garrett is a wreck, pacing around. He has to speak over the ROAR of the disposal as Luke grinds away in the sink.

GARRETT

Why can't we just roofie them both?

LUKE

That was all I had. And even if it wasn't - Jiffy Lube here has a *fucking hole in his face.*

GARRETT

Luke, I can't do this...

LUKE

Yes you can.

Ashley watches the flowers disappear down the drain. Looks at Ricky, also gagged and tied in a chair beside her.

He returns her gaze. *Sorry I couldn't help...*

LUKE (O.S.)

You really fucked things up, Ricky.

Luke finishes with the flowers and switches off the disposal. Turns to face Ricky.

LUKE

Things just got a lot more complicated for me and Garrett.

Luke leans against the counter and crosses his arms, taking in the two tied up lovers. Ashley mumbles through her gag.

Luke sighs... TEARS her tape away. Ow!

ASHLEY

Let him go, Luke.

LUKE

We both know I can't do that.

Luke begins to put the tape back on--

ASHLEY

Luke listen! He can say he fell on an exposed nail or something and Garrett can go with him to verify the conversation with his roommate.

Ricky nods 'yes' to this plan -

ASHLEY

You and I stay here, clean up, you go to bed before your parents get home, and- and-

LUKE

And you call the cops and they arrest me in my jammies. I don't think so, Ash.

Ricky shakes a vehement 'no.'

ASHLEY

I won't do that.

LUKE

Why not?

ASHLEY

Because- Luke, I don't want anyone else to get hurt tonight.

Beat.

Luke BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.

LUKE

We are way beyond that point.

Ashley tries Garrett, catches his eyes. He avoids her look.

ASHLEY

I honestly think you're both too young to know what you're doing. You made a mistake and it's not too late to turn it around-

LUKE

Blah blah blah...

He covers her mouth back up. But Garrett looks conflicted.

GARRETT

What if she's being legit? Maybe she can help us get out of this.

Ashley nods, holds Garrett's eye contact.

LUKE

Dude, you have a lot to learn about women.

GARRETT

I don't know, I mean...

LUKE

Lighten up, we'll figure this out-

GARRETT

Yeah we've done a great job of that so far.

LUKE

Garrett! Look at me. Go take a walk, and chill. The fuck. Out.

Trembling, Garrett begins to exit the kitchen. Ashley shouts through her duct tape - it's losing its tackiness.

ASHLEY

Garrett. Garrett! Don't leave!

Garrett momentarily turns to Ashley before disappearing into the family room. Luke leans against the counter. Stares at Ashley, the backyard, the swing swaying from the oak tree...

ASHLEY

What are you doing?

LUKE

I'm thinking.

Luke whips out his phone and flips through his contacts.

LUKE

I'm thinkiiiiing...let's invite another guest.

Ashley shares a look of concern with Ricky.

LUKE

(searching)

Doo-be-doo-be-dooooo... Here we go. Jeremy.

He pulls up JEREMY (16) listed in his phone. Ricky GROANS in disapproval through his gag.

LUKE

It's time we had a little heart to
broken heart, don't you think?
Tell him to come over.

Ashley looks up at Luke like he's crazy. He COCKS the gun,
aims at her face.

LUKE

I'm not asking.

ASHLEY

And I'm not pulling anyone else
into your bullshit, Luke.

Ashley stares right back. As petrified as she is of the gun,
she has to hold her ground.

It's a stand off. Then -

LUKE

Fine.

Luke dials on the house landline, then puts it on speaker.
We can hear it ringing...

ASHLEY

Don't pick up please don't pick up...

Luke gags her with a fresh strip of tape, advertises the gun
for her to be quiet just before -

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Hello?

LUKE

Hey Jeremy.

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Who is this?

LUKE

Well, I'm actually calling for
Ashley.

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

There's no Ashley here. Wrong
number.

Click. Luke's incredulous - Jeremy hung up.

LUKE

What an idiot. I can't believe you
dated this guy.

Ashley sees her opening. As Luke turns his back and redials, she keeps her eyes on him like a hawk and begins to CUT through her binds with the GLASS SHARD.

She FLINCHES, looks down: she CUT her hand. Blood runs down her fingertips, dripping onto the floor in plain sight.

Fuck.

Ashley clenches her fist to stem the flow, praying Luke doesn't notice the blood speckled tiles.

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Hello?

LUKE

Jeremy don't hang up. Ashley's here with me and she wants to talk to you but not on the phone.

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Who is this?

LUKE

She's being all weird, I think she wants you to come over. She's babysitting and-

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Is this the little taint on Claremont?

Ricky chuckles through his gag. Luke gives him HELL EYES.

LUKE

Yes.

Despite Ashley's efforts, blood continues to run down the leg of the chair, pooling on the floor right behind Luke...

JEREMY (SPEAKERPHONE)

Tell her to stay there, I'm coming right over.

Click. Luke hangs up. Cocks his head at Ashley, who seems distracted.

LUKE

What're you doing?

She tries to play it off, mumbles through her gag, foot hovering over the blood on the floor to cover it.

He pulls the tape off. Ashley winces - that fucking hurts.

ASHLEY

Luke, you don't know what you're doing, if you don't stop someone's going to get hurt. Remember when you accidentally crushed Garrett's hamster? You cried when you told me about it. You were sad.

Luke looks around, makes sure only Ashley and Ricky hear.

LUKE

It wasn't an accident.

Ricky mumbles something inflammatory. Luke pulls the duct tape off his mouth, RIP-!ing at the hole in his cheek -

RICKY

Owww!

- and presses the muzzle of his gun against Ricky's teeth. Cocks the hammer.

LUKE

Say it. You grease monkey loser who thinks Ashley's gonna remember in two years - whatever you just said say it again I fucking dare you.

RICKY

I said-

(beat)

I need the bathroom.

RICKY PISSES HIS PANTS.

LUKE

(jumping away)

Gross! Stop!

Luke grabs a roll of paper towels and pulls on kitchen gloves. Wipes the floor. Ashley scoots her chair forward to hide her blood.

He tosses the towels into the trash, ties off the bag and walks it outside. The moment Luke's out the door, Ashley focuses intently on her right arm.

RICKY

(under his breath)

What're you doing?

ASHLEY

Getting us out of here.

Ashley YANKS HER ARM FREE. She leans forward, begins cutting at her right leg bind. Ricky checks the windows for Luke.

RICKY

Ashley, soon as you're free you run, all the way to the cops. You hear me? I can handle myself.

ASHLEY

I'm not leaving you here.

RICKY

Yeah - you are. But you should.

Ashley stops cutting, looks up.

RICKY

Look, I know you been avoiding me cause you got this whole future planned out. College, a career. And Luke's right, I- I don't have those things. I just want you to know - it's okay. I want you to go... You're gonna be awesome.

Ashley is shocked - and saddened. He gives her a melancholy smile in return, then looks past her.

RICKY

Hurry, he's coming!

Ashley notices her blood on the floor -

She pulls her socks off and sops up the blood, stuffs the evidence in her pocket, barely getting her hand back "in place" as Luke returns from outside. He scrunches his nose.

LUKE

Dude your piss reeks like ass. Ree-cky. What the fuck you been eating?

Luke sits at the kitchen table. Ashley prays he doesn't see her bare feet.

LUKE

Jeremy lives like thirty minutes away, right?

Ashley doesn't respond. Luke lets out an annoyed sigh, slumps in a chair.

LUKE

Ugh, we got time to kill.

He spins the gun on the table. Weighed down by the tedium of delay. Garrett coughs some more off screen.

Suddenly, Luke CLAPS, startling Ashley and Ricky -

LUKE
Let's play a game! Fuck.
(stands up)
Yeah. Fuck!

Ashley and Ricky look at each other, then at Luke.

LUKE
I want to watch the two of you fuck.

RICKY
Is he serious?

ASHLEY
You'll be asking that a lot tonight.

Ricky struggles to break free. Luke steps right up to him.

LUKE
I have the gun. I want to watch
you fuck. It's completely natural,
I've seen it in porn. Ashley says
she's a virgin but I bet you hit
that shit twice a day, right Ricky?

Ricky glances at Ashley, says nothing. Luke's eyes widen.

LUKE
You haven't?! Seriously? Well
tonight's your night guys!

A pregnant pause... Finally, Luke breaks, smiles.

LUKE
I'm just kidding... Jesus, I'm not
a pervert. Relax.

Luke FREEZES. Sniffs the air.

LUKE
What the... That's not piss.

Luke marches out of the kitchen. Beat.

LUKE (O.S.)
GARRETT - WHAT THE FUCK!

GARRETT (O.S.)
Dude, I am freaking out and you
gotta bring down the volume.

LUKE (O.S.)
WHY ARE YOU SMOKING WEED IN THE
HOUSE?!

GARRETT (O.S.)
I can't deal with this, man.

Ashley starts CUTTING her right leg bind again.

LUKE (O.S.)
You moron, my mom will kill me if
she smells this!

GARRETT (O.S.)
(voice cracking)
Stop bossing me around, man!

LUKE (O.S.)
Give it- Give it to me! Garrett
give me the joint!

RICKY
Hurry!

ASHLEY
I am...

Snap! Right leg free, she sets to work on the left.

LUKE (O.S.)
Garrett, just remember - you made
me do this.

She repositions her arms and legs as the boys come back in.
Garrett is too high, and Luke too irate, to notice her
severed binds. Luke holds a JOINT up to Ricky's face.

LUKE
Puff.

RICKY
I don't fuck with that shit, man.

ASHLEY
Luke, just- Garrett, both you guys.
Can we please just relax and talk?
I feel like there's a solution here
that'll make everyone happy.

LUKE
I agree. Tonight's gotten out of
hand and we all need to relax.
Ricky, you first.

RICKY
Man, I said no.

Luke holds up the gun.

LUKE
Do you want a hit from the joint,
or a hit from the gun?

ASHLEY
Luke, stop it!

LUKE
I'm giving him a choice.

Ricky, defeated, leans forward and takes a drag. Smoke seeps
from the hole in his cheek.

RICKY
Ow! Fuck!

GARRETT
(subdued, stoned)
Whooooaaa...

LUKE
Oh, shit, awesome!

Luke COVERS Ricky's mouth and holds his nose, forcing the
rest of the smoke to come out his cheek like a tea kettle.

ASHLEY
Stop! Why are you doing that?!

LUKE
The house smells like weed so I
need marijuana in his system.

Luke releases Ricky, who can't exhale fast enough -

RICKY
That fucking burns!

ASHLEY
What do you mean 'in his system'?

LUKE
(to Garrett)
Help me push.

Luke sets the GUN ON THE TABLE. They grab Ricky's chair and drag him across the floor.

RICKY
What're you doin'?

ASHLEY
Where are you taking him?

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

The boys position Ricky below the upstairs balcony.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Luke, stop! Bring him back!

Luke hands the joint back to Garrett.

LUKE
Here, smoke up.

Garrett looks at him, dubious, then takes the joint and inhales. Luke heads into the garage. Ricky looks at Garrett.

RICKY
Why do you hang out with this guy?

GARRETT
He's my friend.

But Ricky's question hangs in the air nonetheless. Luke emerges with a PAINT CAN and some ROPE. Heads upstairs.

GARRETT
You painting something?

LUKE
We're gonna see who's right once
and for all. You know, like
MythBusters.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley cuts at her second leg bind. Eyes on the prize: the GUN on the counter. In the foyer, Luke begins to sing:

LUKE (O.S.)
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, had
a very shiny nose. And if you ever
saw him, da deeda deeda dee do...

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Ricky looks up. Luke stares down at him from the upstairs landing as he ties the rope around the banister.

LUKE
Like a light bulb! Hm. Garrett,
in scouts, were clove hitches
clockwise or counterclockwise?

GARRETT
I don't remember.

LUKE
Nevermind, got it.

RICKY
Got what?

Luke DISAPPEARS. Ricky looks at Garrett.

RICKY
What the fuck's going on?

GARRETT
Dude-
(exhales pot smoke)
I have no idea...

Suddenly, from the cannabis haze above, a PAINT CAN SWINGS DOWN, fast as a cannonball -

RICKY JERKS HIS HEAD TO ONE SIDE, narrowly avoids getting his face smashed -

RICKY
The fuck!!

The can upswings, SLAMS into the ceiling behind him, then swings back, missing him again.

GARRETT
You're fuckin' Home Aloning him??

RICKY
NOT COOL! NOT COOL! Get me out of
this!

Luke appears on the stairs, inspecting the rope.

LUKE
Was it level with his head?

GARRETT

What are you doing?? You're gonna kill him!

RICKY

GET ME OUT OF THIS!

LUKE

You said the paint can would just knock him back like in the movie.

GARRETT

I take it back! You win!

LUKE

Let's try it one more time.

RICKY

ASHLEY!

KITCHEN -

Ashley saws furiously at her second leg bind. Slips - CUTS HER FINGER AGAIN. She sucks in her breath, keeps cutting.

FOYER -

Luke drops one of his father's TIES over the railing, Garrett catches it.

LUKE

Blindfold him.

GARRETT

No way man...

RICKY

Stop! This is fucked!

LUKE

Garrett, BLINDFOLD HIM.

Afraid to disobey, Garrett blindfolds Ricky, who THRASHES in his seat.

RICKY

Look guys, whatever it is, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for hitting you.

LUKE

Make sure it's good and tight.

RICKY
Guys, guys, you don't have to do
this! This is fuckin' nuts!

KITCHEN -

Snap! Ashley cuts her left leg bind.

RICKY
ASHLEY!

No time for her left arm. She JUMPS UP, dragging the chair that's still attached to her wrist, grabs the GUN and bolts through the family room -

FOYER -

Past Garrett and Ricky, getting a view of Luke on the landing upstairs and she POINTS THE GUN AT HIM -

ASHLEY
PUT IT DOWN OR I WILL SHOOT YOU.

Luke freezes. Ricky stops struggling in his seat.

RICKY
Ashley thank god...

ASHLEY
I SAID PUT IT DOWN!

LUKE
Okay.

With all his pre-adolescent strength, Luke THROWS THE CAN.

It arcs down directly at Ricky's blindfolded face...!

CRACK-!

We never see the impact, but we do see the SPLATTER. Lemon yellow paint. On the wall. The floor. The new carpet.

And all over Garrett, eyes wide in stoned horror at the dripping SHAPE slumped before him.

GARRETT
Nguhhh...

Ricky's head hangs back over his chair at an impossible angle. Limbs twitching. Tendrils of crimson and yellow oozing down his shirt, swirling on the foyer tiles.

Ashley is mute. Shocked horror runs through her body, her arms. Her pistol loses its aim...

Garrett begins to hyperventilate. As does

LUKE - rounding the balcony above and descending the stairs. But his sharp breaths are something else - he's LAUGHING.

LUKE
Holy shit... Hohhhmygod. Holy!-
His head's just- I told you
Garrett! I told you!

LUKE HAS CRACKED. Some long-dormant dysfunction finally awakened. This is the happiest moment of his life.

Garrett turns away, dry heaving.

ASHLEY
Why are you laughing??

Luke hops off the last step toward Ashley. She backs away, aims the gun at him -

ASHLEY
Why are you LAUGHING?!

LUKE
Because you can't shoot me, Ash.

ASHLEY
Don't come any closer! I mean it!

He keeps coming. She shoots a warning shot, only - there's no bang. She pulls the trigger again. Nothing.

LUKE
A responsible parent always keeps
the ammo separate.

Beat.

ASHLEY BOLTS for the back of the house, spinning on her heels, chair still dangling from her wrist -

Past Garrett, who's still in shock, staring at Ricky's corpse.

LUKE
GET HER!!

Garrett snaps out of it, looks at Luke -

LUKE
IF SHE GETS AWAY WE'RE BOTH DEAD!

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Garrett bursts outside after Ashley -

GARRETT
Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck!

But she's already halfway through the garden, trying to pull that stupid chair off, screaming -

ASHLEY
HELP!! HELP ME!-

Ashley trips over something and

FWIP-!

A projectile hits her - A GUSH OF RED. She goes down. Hits the ground hard, mouthful of mulch.

SOUND GOES OUT as she touches her wounded shoulder... Her fingers return crimson, sticky. She looks at her feet -

A TRIP WIRE. She follows the wire up to see a RIFLE secured to a tree, hidden amongst the foliage. Wait, not a rifle -

A PAINTBALL GUN. She hasn't been shot, it's just RED PAINT.

GARRETT (O.S.)
Get back inside!

Garrett's ON TOP OF HER, grabbing at her shirt, her neck.

ASHLEY
Get the hell off me!

She SLAMS the chair across his head.

He buckles, but doesn't go down. Ashley springs to her feet and Garrett grabs the chair, wrenches it, twists her wrist. The armrest breaks off.

Freed, she runs for the SIDE FENCE, Garrett right behind her -

ASHLEY
HEELLP!!

The fence is seven feet tall, a dead end...!

Nope. Ashley VAULTS over it effortlessly while Garrett slams into the wooden slats. Not a hero, just a cheerleader.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S YARD - NIGHT

Whoomp-! Ashley's landing isn't so graceful. But the hell with it, she's out! She picks herself up and runs to the neighbor's house -

ASHLEY
Someone please!

Banging on the back door, turning the knob...it's locked. Inside is pitch dark. But just then she hears -

CAROLERS! Over the fence Ashley can see that they're just across the street. She starts to run around front.

ASHLEY
HELLL-

WHACK-! Something slams the back of her head.

Her legs go out and she crumples to the grass, vanishing behind the fence. One of the carolers glances over his shoulder, thinking he heard something, but sees nothing and continues singing.

ASHLEY'S POV: AS HER VISION DIMS, she sees a BRICK broken in two in front of her. "U LEAVE" on one half, "U DIE" on the other. Like two choices in a nightmarish game show.

Two feet approach. The game show host.

LUKE (O.S.)
Retract and release, right Ash?

FADE TO BLACK.

SUDDENLY - a joyous FACE fills the screen.

CAROLER
Joy to the world! The Lord has
come. Let Earth receive her king!

Pulling back we see the same carolers standing together, singing, smiling, and - drinking hot chocolate?

Reveal Luke on the porch in a cheerful Christmas sweater handing out the last cup of cocoa. Ricky's mangled lemon corpse just out of view behind him.

INT. KITCHEN -

Ashley's back in another chair. This time there is zero chance of escape - bound by two rolls of silver duct tape, she looks like a metal mummy.

Garrett sits at the kitchen table, covered in dried yellow and red paint. Head in his hands...

The carolers finish and Luke applauds heartily off screen -

LUKE (O.S.)

Oh thank you, that was wonderful.
Hope the cocoa keeps you guys warm!

The front door closes. Luke appears from the family room.

LUKE

Couple new folks in the group this year, really improved their harmonizing. Oh look who's awake.

Ashley groans in pain. Dry blood on her forehead.

LUKE

Tough break, Ash. The carolers are gone, and the Yetwins next door are in Florida.

Luke brushes her cheek, creepy yet tender.

LUKE

I got rid of Ricky for you.

Ashley doesn't grimace, doesn't pull away.

LUKE

It hurts now but you'll thank me later.

Luke runs his fingers through her hair. She closes her eyes.

LUKE

You like that?

Ashley nods, looks up at him. He raises a dubious eyebrow. But Ashley stares back - broken, defeated. The fight gone from her eyes. Luke has won.

He leans in to kiss her duct taped mouth--

WHAM-! Ashley KNEES HIM IN THE BALLS. Luke goes down, quietly experiencing pain on a level only boys on the brink of puberty can feel.

Not much else Ashley can do except glare down at him as he holds his crotch, praying for the agony to subside.

Slowly, delicately, he gets up. Garrett still has his head in his hands.

GARRETT
(muffled by his hands)
...why did you kill him?

LUKE
Whoa. Correction: you killed him
by smoking pot in the house.

GARRETT
Are you insane??

LUKE
That weed is evidence. There was
no other option. You want to go to
jail?

GARRETT
It was a fucking joint, you didn't
have to *kill someone!*

Luke grabs Garrett by the shoulders, gets his eye contact.

LUKE
Garrett, listen to me - we are
going to get out of this. Remember
when you ditched fourth period and
got caught? Who convinced them you
just stopped some vandals in the
locker room? Me. When my mom
caught us stealing from her purse,
who faked sleepwalking so you could
slip out? Me.

GARRETT
But this is so much bigger.

LUKE
Dude, I am the Harry Houdini of
getting away with it. I see ten
steps ahead of everyone else. I
know how tonight plays out, and we
get out clean. You just gotta do
what I say. Okay?

Garrett's stopped looking at him. So has Ashley. She stares at the splash of yellow down the hall. Beginning to process that Ricky is truly gone.

LUKE

Okay?

GARRETT

Yes.

LUKE

*Good. Now watch this.**Luke pulls out his phone.*

LUKE

*Ashley is going to make a post.**Something simple, like**(girly girl)**Why can't exes just go away?**Jeremy is like freaking me out!**(beat)**There.**He pockets his phone and turns to Garrett.*

LUKE

*Now all you gotta do is make sure**she stays quiet while I deal with**Jeremy. Can you do that?*

GARRETT

"Deal" with him, you mean kill him.

LUKE

*Of course not, god Garrett. Just**plant a little seed. Then we'll**get the paint off you 'cause you**look like a fucking hotdog!**Luke laughs, slaps Garrett's jovially. Garrett stares at the yellow and red on his hands, hating himself.**Luke pats Ashley on the head and turns the kitchen lights out. He disappears into the dark of the house, exiting out the front door. Ashley looks at Garrett, who hasn't moved.*

ASHLEY

*(through her gag)**Mmmfm.**Garrett doesn't look up.*

ASHLEY

Mmmfmmhmm.

GARRETT

I don't want to know. Whatever it is, just please stop.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

JEREMY (17), a Robert Pattinson type with mop hair and sultry duck face, guzzles the rest of his BEER and checks himself in the mirror.

JEREMY

Hey Ash. Good to see you. Yeah, we cool.

EXT. LERNER FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Jeremy almost loses his balance as he heads up the drive. He rounds Ashley's car, marches to the side of the house and hops the back fence like he's done many times before.

EXT. SIDE OF LERNER HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeremy trots along the house, navigating his way in the dark. Feet crunching the grass, making no attempt to be quiet.

As he enters the backyard *bang-!* he walks shin-first into an enormous JOHN DEERE MOWER.

JEREMY

Fuck! ...Ash?

Jeremy notices a small homemade catapult built from a lacrosse stick and bungee cords. Fails to notice the SHATTERED WINDOW above where the brick launched through...

He heads for the back door. Struggles with the handle - it's locked. He cups his hands to peer through the glass.

JEREMY

Ashley!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Just out of Jeremy's field of view, Ashley screams for help, but what little sound she makes through her gag gets SILENCED when Garrett covers her mouth.

Ashley stops screaming. Holds Garrett's gaze.

As his hand muffles any chance of Ashley's escape, the truth of the moment hits him and his eyes brim with tears -

Garrett has lost himself tonight.

EXT. LERNER BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jeremy yanks on the door and knocks repeatedly.

JEREMY
Ashley?

LUKE (O.S.)
Hi.

Jeremy jumps and twists around -

JEREMY
Holy shit, man. You scared the fuck outta me. Where is she?

LUKE
Ashley's inside.

Jeremy turns back to the house.

LUKE
Hang on.

JEREMY
What?

LUKE
Just slow down, man. Have a seat.

Luke points to a nearby tree swing.

JEREMY
What? No. Where's Ash?

LUKE
She's coming, chill out, she just wanted me to talk to you first.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley and Garrett watch Jeremy reluctantly sit in the tree swing and fold his arms. Garrett wipes his wet cheeks.

GARRETT
I just want tonight to be over.

Ashley wriggles her fingers out from the tape and wraps them around Garrett's hand. He looks down at their hands touching, then to her eyes reaching into his soul: STOP THIS.

EXT. LERNER BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jeremy stares at the NOTEBOOK Luke's holding out to him.

JEREMY

What the hell is this? You said
she wanted to see me.

LUKE

She wants an apology.

JEREMY

For what?!

LUKE

Sshhh! Don't wake the neighbors.

JEREMY

I could give a FUCK
(lowers his voice)
...fuck about the neighbors.

LUKE

She said you'd know.

JEREMY

...Fine. I'll apologize. Where
is she?

Luke nods toward the notebook. Jeremy looks confused.

LUKE

She wants you to write it down.
(beat)
I don't know, I'm just doing what
she told me. Do you want to see
her or not?

Whatever. Jeremy grabs the notebook and begins scribbling.

JEREMY

This is so fucking stupid...

ON THE NOTEBOOK:

"Dear Ashley, I'm sorry. -J"

LUKE

That's it?

JEREMY

What? What am I supposed to say?

LUKE

I'm just asking. Is that it?
Should I tell her you're done?

Jeremy SIGHS, lifts the pen, and stares at a new page, thinking deeply...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Garrett removes the tape from Ashley's mouth.

GARRETT

I don't know why I'm doing this...

Ashley wets her parched lips, knows she doesn't have much time before Luke returns.

ASHLEY

Because you're a good person. You didn't know any better, you didn't know what he was capable of. And because you know you will never be able to live with yourself if you don't take control right now. You have to untie me, we'll run across the street and call the cops-

GARRETT

But Luke will-

ASHLEY

Luke won't hurt you, I won't let him. Garrett, look at me, I promise.

GARRETT

But...he's my best friend.

ASHLEY

No he's not. Luke doesn't give a shit about you, Garrett. He manipulates you, he uses you. No friend would put you through tonight. And for god sake he killed your fucking hamster, now hurry!

EXT. LERNER BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jeremy amends his note. It now reads:

"Dear Ashley,

I am SO sorry. Please forgive me for everything I've done."

Jeremy pauses, studies his work, then adds:

"I love you so much. -J"

JEREMY

There, she wants Shakespeare?

Jeremy looks up - Luke has VANISHED.

JEREMY

Kid? I'm done.

It's too quiet. Jeremy gets up from the swing, looks around.

JEREMY

Hey kid! Where'd you go?-

Jeremy JUMPS-- Looks down. A BLACK CAT is rubbing his ankle. Stares up at him. He KICKS IT, shooin' it away.

JEREMY

Fuckin' cat...

Plops back down on the swing and takes out his phone. It illuminates his face while he casually swings forward and back... Forward, back... Forward, back--

A NOOSE DROPS AROUND HIS NECK and he's yanked back, off the swing onto the ground.

He sputters, disoriented, digs his fingers beneath the rope constricted around his neck.

A motor starts. The JOHN DEERE MOWER.

Suddenly, Jeremy's airborne. Drawn upward by the rope looped over the branch. Can't compete with 800 lbs of machinery.

He claws desperately at his purpling neck. Tries to get his toes on the rope swing. Manages to land one foot...

But Luke drives the mower down a tiny dip in the yard and -

Jeremy's lifted further into the air, gargling, legs out of control, straining, kicking at the rope swing...

The black cat watches from the shadows, indifferent, as Jeremy's chokes subside. Until it's over.

Luke unties the rope from the mower and carefully shuffles to the oak tree. Jeremy's body falls a few feet before Luke manages to tie the rope to an exposed pipe.

He returns the mower to the shed. Shuts the engine off, locks the door, and disappears around the side of the house.

We linger on the note pad, what now appears to be Jeremy's SUICIDE NOTE. Goddamn that kid is good.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Garrett cuts through the duct tape around Ashley's torso but the scissors keep getting stuck-

ASHLEY

OW!

GARRETT

Sorry.

(keeps cutting)

I'm gonna get you out of here and fix this. None of this was supposed to happen...I'm really sorry, Ashley.

Garrett innocently kisses her on the cheek.

GARRETT

I wish I'd had the courage to-

BANG! Blood splatters Ashley's face -- Garrett flies sideways -- slaps the cupboards.

Luke stands in the family room doorway, holding the SHOTGUN in a jealous fury.

LUKE

I told you not to touch her! You fucking asshole!

GARRETT

(panicked, dying)

-shot...you shot me!

LUKE

Look what you made me fucking do!

GARRETT
I'm dying, man! I'm fucking shot!
I'm dying!

LUKE
Why'd you make me do it?! Why'd
you make me do it?!

GARRETT
(crying)
Help! HEEELP!

LUKE
Shut up!

Luke raises the shotgun, Garrett looks up -

GARRETT
I want my mom...

KA-BLAM! Ashley shuts her eyes. Luke lowers his gun and just stands. Until... He hurls the gun against the wall -

LUKE
Fuck! Fuck! FUUUUCK! FUCK YOU!
FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!

He punches the wall, punches the counter, rushes into the family room and beats the couch, screaming more obscenities into the pillows.

Ashley watches, the events of the evening leaving her unmoved by Luke's rage. It is just a child's temper tantrum.

Luke grows quiet. After a moment, he reenters the kitchen, more composed. Sees Ashley watching him with pity.

LUKE
(lying)
He was starting to annoy me,
anyway.

Luke sits beside her. Stares in silence for a moment...

Then - gently rests his head on Ashley's duct taped shoulder. It's an eerie repeat of when they were on the couch together sweetly watching the movie.

LUKE
Tonight was supposed to be
different. Tonight was supposed to
be special.

Ashley doesn't move. Has nothing to say to him.

LUKE

I remember when my mom used to tuck me in, I'd hold onto her and wouldn't let go. She felt so safe. And I'd just fall asleep.

(beat)

She stopped doing that. I don't really know why she stopped. And now...I don't sleep well anymore. Not even with that stupid sound machine.

Luke looks at Ashley. She stares ahead, resigned but strong.

LUKE

That's all I want, Ash. Someone to hold on to. Someone- permanent.

ASHLEY CLOSES HER EYES. Leaving Luke, leaving this place for somewhere far, far away. It's the only control she has left.

LUKE

Open your eyes.

But she's gone, done with him.

LUKE

Ashley, open your eyes. Please.

We push in on Luke. Alone, surrounded by the mess he's made.

He sighs, stands up... And while the frame is too tight to see, we HEAR him push the knife into Ashley's neck.

His expression empty as a torrent of blood spills onto the tile floor. When it's over, he looks at his watch.

LUKE

It's past my bedtime. My parents will be home soon, and...well, I got my whole life ahead of me.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Luke circles the desk, careful not to cut himself on the shattered glass. He restores the telephone connection, mindful to position it on the desk just right.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM -

He sweeps fallen detritus from the floor.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM -

Replaces his baseball bat by the edge of his bed. Licks his thumb, rubs a faint smudge of blood off the side.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -

Wipes his fingerprints off the pistol. Stashes it under the mattress, careful not to crease the bedsheets.

Luke's phone chimes, he looks at it.

CLOSE ON PHONE - *PROXIMITY ALERT: 5 MILES.*

LUKE

Fuck.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The black cat stands on its hind legs, playfully batting at Jeremy's dangling shoelaces... It scurries away as Luke hurries over and stands on his tiptoes to dip Jeremy's fingers in yellow paint.

He holds the shotgun up to Jeremy's dead grip, gets yellow fingerprints all over it. Same with the bloody knife.

In the garden, he dismantles the spring mechanism, the trip wire, the paint gun -

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

- and dances past the blood pooling around Ashley's chair, careful not to get any on his feet as he places the marked shotgun on the floor. Looks at Garrett's body, holds up the knife he used to kill Ashley.

LUKE

Agree to disagree.

Just as he places the knife on the table beside her, his phone chimes - *PROXIMITY ALERT: 2 MILES.*

Hoofing it, he ELBOWS the light switch off on his way out.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Luke gargles mouthwash, checks his breath, now dressed in his pajamas.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

He kneels to retrieve the teddy bear pencil from under the rug. Smiles. Stupid adults.

PROXIMITY ALERT: 1 MILE.

Suddenly, his smile disappears.

LUKE

Shit! The hole in his cheek!

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Luke rifles through the pencils in the desk, not a single sharpened one! No time to think. He grabs a No. 2 pencil, his dad's old school hand sharpener and cranks away. When he finishes, he--

Drops the sharpener. PENCIL SHAVINGS FLY EVERYWHERE.

LUKE

NO!

He falls to his knees, collects all the wood flecks from the carpet. A breeze from the shattered window sends some bits across the floor. Luke scrambles, pocketing them.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Breathless, Luke runs down the stairs. Avoids the paint on the floor to approach Ricky's corpse.

ANGLE BEHIND RICKY'S HEAD, sparing us a clear view of the carnage as Luke dips the pencil tip in Ricky's broken face. He draws it back out, flicks a strand of gore off in disgust.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Luke wipes his prints from the No. 2 and drops it over the balcony. Watches it fall into the paint below.

Back at his room, he balances the teddy bear pencil on the doorknob while he closes the door from inside his room--

But the pencil falls. He tries again. It falls again.

LUKE

Fuck.

PROXIMITY ALERT: 500 FEET.

LUKE

Fuck!

He whips his head around - how does he do this?

He steps out of his room, shuts his door, and balances the pencil on the knob. Dashes into the

BATHROOM -

And stands on the toilet. Shoves the window up.

EXT. SECOND STORY - LERNER HOUSE - NIGHT

Luke's tiny frame squirms out of the window. Almost out, he loses his balance...! Nearly falls onto the driveway.

Shoving the window closed, he scales the side of the house to his bedroom window, hugging the roof.

Suddenly, HEADLIGHTS!

The Lerner's' car approaches the driveway. Defeat looms on Luke's face - he's not going to make it.

The car turns, headlights sweep toward Luke...!

They BLIND him like a helicopter's spotlight. He shields his face, frozen on the side of the house.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Robert Lerner fusses with his glasses while Mrs. Lerner looks through her purse.

MRS. LERNER

I hate how they just sat there in the corner all night, Marge in the middle of course, just judging everyone. It feels like such a competition around them.

Mr. Lerner rolls his eyes.

EXT. HOUSE -

Miraculously, Luke has gone unseen! He proceeds quickly, each step requiring his full concentration.

The car stops next to Ashley's and the engine turns off. Mr. and Mrs. Lerner get out. Directly above them, their son stands precariously next to his bedroom window...

The pencil shavings fly out of Luke's pajama pocket.

This almost costs him his balance, but he lets them drift away, right behind his parents.

MRS. LERNER

Oh, let's paint the kitchen next week, I don't want to wait months like we did for the carpet...

Luke times the sound of opening his window with the closing of the car doors.

As his parents approach the porch, he spills inside.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Luke kicks the night light on. Jumps into bed.

His EYES POP OPEN.

He hooks his arm under the bed and pulls out his "Sleepy Sounds" machine. Sets it on *Fetal Heartbeat*.

The deep tidal rush and pump of sounds from within the womb flood the room. THUMPTHUMP...THUMPTHUMP...

Luke's head hits the pillow and it's like a transformation has taken place.

He is just a boy, safe and warm under the covers.

CLOSE ON LUKE AS DOWNSTAIRS, THE DOOR OPENS. THUMPTHUMP...

Mrs. Lerner stops talking.

Her keys hit the tiles.

Luke closes his eyes.

THUMPTHUMP...

THUMPTHUMP...

MRS. LERNER SHRIEKS AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS!

Footsteps race up the stairs--

Luke's door BURSTS OPEN. Deandra falls to Luke's side, scooping him up like a mamma grizzly.

MRS. LERNER
Oh thank god!

LUKE
(groggy from sleep)
Wh- what...? What's wrong?!

MRS. LERNER
Thank god you're okay! Oh my baby,
oh my baby... Oh thank you Lord!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LERNER DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

An ambulance and a dozen police cars strobe red and blue.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sounds of people bustling. Mrs. Lerner still cries rocking Luke, the grisly horror of it all. He turns in her arms -

LUKE
What's going on?

MRS. LERNER
Don't worry, baby. I've got you.
I've got you. Shhhhh...

Outside Luke's room, Mr. Lerner speaks with an OFFICER. Every once in a while a word surfaces from their calm mumbling. Words like "tragedy," "lucky," and "so young."

Mrs. Lerner holds Luke close, doesn't see the BIG SMILE on his face...

PARAMEDIC (O.S.)
(shouting - emergency)
THIS ONE'S ALIVE!

Luke's eyes pop open!

He tries to run out but his mom's grasp is too strong. He spins the other way, pulls her to the window as paramedics wheel ASHLEY out on a stretcher.

No... Luke puts his hand against the glass -

EXT. LERNER DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

They load Ashley into the ambulance, applying tourniquets and IVs. She looks up at Luke's room. Sees him staring down at her from the window.

Wheezing through breathing tubes, she manages to pull her arm out from under the blanket and raise her hand.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Luke watches Ashley give him the MIDDLE FINGER as the ambulance doors shut.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ambulance lights compete with the blinking Xmas lights framing Luke's window as we pull away, Luke finally back in his mother's loving embrace, suddenly lamenting how short-lived the comfort will be...

"A Holly Jolly Christmas" by Burl Ives starts to play and we

CUT TO CREDITS.