

DREAD

by
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Based on the Short Story by
Clive Barker

MIDNIGHT PICTURE SHOW
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The sound of a CAR'S ENGINE putters to a halt. Two of its doors open and close. Then a VOICE of a woman. Muffled as if underwater. *He's asleep*, it says.

The back door creaks open, and with it, the car's overhead light flickers. Exposing--

A BOY (6) asleep in the backseat, his eyes shut tightly. His MOTHER'S voice whispers in his ear.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Wake up honey... we're home... wake up...

His eyelids flutter and he wakes. His mother picks him up and sets his feet down on the ground. She's holding a small BALLOON tied onto a plastic stick. Her son's balloon.

His FATHER shuts the door and nudges him toward the walkway. The boy rubs his eyes groggily and makes his way toward the front door. His parents follow.

The house is in a rural area, secluded. And the night sky casts a dark gloom over the farm land that surrounds it.

The family walks onto the porch, the father unlocks the door, and they shuffle in. The door closes behind them. There's silence for a long moment. Just the sounds of insects humming in the night air. But then--

A CREAK on the old wooden steps. A SHAPE climbs onto the bottom stair. A MAN, standing silently.

INT. RURAL HOUSE, BOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mom tucks her son into bed and pulls the covers up to his neck. He can barely keep his eyes open as his mother kisses him on the forehead.

MOTHER

Did you have fun today?

The boy nods his head.

MOTHER (cont'd)

What was your favorite, the petting zoo, or the cotton candy?

BOY

The animals smelled funny...

MOTHER

They usually do at the state fair.

MOTHER (cont'd)
Maybe next year we'll get you on
the Ferris Wheel.

The boy shakes his head NO, tries to smile, but succumbs to sleep and closes his eyes. His mother leaves the room and switches off the light.

EXT. RURAL HOUSE, BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The boy's father drops a trash bag into a metal can at the back of the house. Something in the yard catches his eye. The TOOL SHED. Its door open.

He walks over to it, pulls the door and peeks inside. He yanks the light string. The shed looks undisturbed, nothing missing. He shuts the light and locks the door.

INT. RURAL HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The mother is washing dishes. The father steps in from the yard through the back door.

FATHER
Neighbor's kids got into the shed
again.

MOTHER
Anything missing?

FATHER
Not that I could see.

He walks to the fridge and studies its contents.

MOTHER
Tomorrow after work, remember, you
have an appointment with Dr.
Farmer.

FATHER
Why do I have a doctor's
appointment?

MOTHER
Your annual physical. It's been
scheduled for a month, it's too
late to cancel.

FATHER
If I'm not getting stuck with a
needle yet, then it's not too late
to cancel.

MOTHER
He'll charge us.

He huffs and gives up. She continues with her dishes. He shuts the fridge and leaves the room.

INT. RURAL HOUSE, FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The father walks down the hall into the foyer. He steps to the front door - about to put on the chain, but stops, he sees something through the window. He pulls open the door--

Outside, there's a MAN sitting on the front step of the porch. A heavy set man facing the road. He's silent and unmoving. The father can't see his face.

FATHER
Hello? Can I help you?

The man doesn't answer. The father opens the screen door and hesitantly steps out onto the porch.

FATHER (cont'd)
Are you alright, do you need help?

The man doesn't turn around, but quietly speaks--

MAN
I was in an accident, I need to use
your phone.

The father steps closer...

FATHER
Are you hurt?

MAN
I need to use your phone.

The father is tentative... a bit frightened.

FATHER
My phone's not working, you'll have
to go somewhere else.

The man doesn't respond. The father takes one step closer.

FATHER (cont'd)
Did you hear me... you'll have to
go somewhere el--

THE MAN LUNGES FOR THE FATHER'S LEG AND PULLS HIM DOWN THE STEPS. The father's head bounces off the wood as he slams onto the dirt.

The MAN turns to the open door and walks inside the house. The father scurries to his feet, charges up the porch steps, yells at the top of his lungs.

FATHER (cont'd)
SARAH... SARAH! Get out of the house!

The father tears open the screen door and just as his foot steps over the threshold--

AN AXE BURIES DEEP INTO THE COLLAR OF HIS NECK. PINNING HIM AGAINST THE FRONT DOOR AND STOPPING HIM DEAD IN HIS TRACKS.

INT. RURAL HOUSE, BOY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The BOY wakes, sitting upright in bed. He hears a violent shuffling downstairs, then--

THE SCREAMS OF HIS MOTHER. The boy's eyes fill with terror.

INT. RURAL HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the boy steps from his bedroom his mother's wails reach a fervent din. He continues down the hall until he can see over the railing and on to the first floor--

HE SEES THE MAN throwing his mother to the ground. She bounces off the floor and lands on her back. The man raises the axe high and drops it down upon his mother's chest. It sinks with a thud, splitting meat, muscle and bone.

The chaos falls to silence. The boy sees his father, crumpled on the ground. Blood all around him.

The man yanks at the axe and dislodges it from her chest. He looks down at her lifeless body... and drops the blade upon her again. And again it lands with a sickening thud.

The mother jerks like a puppet as he tugs out the blade.

Then, in the hush, the man turns to the boy, and they see each other for the first time. The man's face is obscured by locks of matted, blood soaked hair. And a gnarled unkempt beard... His features are indiscernible.

The boy, frozen, grips onto the banister, digging his nails into the wood... not finding the strength to run.

The man walks to the staircase. One step, two step, and the axe dragging behind him, bounces on the third. Never taking his hollow eyes off the boy.

The man falls into shadow at the top of the stairs, and the dread courses through the boy's blood. He whispers...

BOY

Mamma... mamma... mamma

The man shuffles onto the landing. The gritted axe leaving a trail of red behind it.

The man lifts the axe from the ground and runs his fingers over the steel, sopping them in the mother's blood.

MAN

This is your mother... your
father...

He lets the blood drip to the floor, then turns his face to the smiling axe. The gleaming curve of the blade.

MAN (cont'd)

Happy as a lamb he is... eager to
get on with his business--

The throat of the man gives out a screech as he swings the axe up over his head two handed. It hovers in the air with the grace of a bee... then plummets.

CUT TO BLACK:

IN THE DARKNESS

QUAID (V.O.)

There is no delight the equal of
dread...

FADE IN:

INT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - DAY

Moving through people standing at a train station. Some speak of the day to come. Some speak of days past, things they've heard, things they've seen.

Some just stand in silence, waiting alone for the train, lost in thought.

QUAID (V.O.)

If it were possible to sit,
invisible, between two people on
any train, in any waiting room or
office, the conversation overheard
would time and again circle on that
subject.

At the end of a platform, there's a young man sitting on a bench. STEPHEN GRACE (22). He's asleep. His arms folded on his stomach. A backpack beside him.

An ALARM on his WRISTWATCH begins to beep and he wakes from his short slumber. A few moments later, the train approaches, and he rises from his seat.

MONTAGE

Stephen walks through his college campus. He approaches the CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, unlocks the door and steps inside. *

QUAID'S VOICE continues.

QUAID (V.O.)(cont'd)
 Certainly the debate might appear
 to be about something entirely
 different; the state of the nation,
 idle chat about the current weather
 condition, the rising price of gas.
 But strip everything away, and
 there, nestling at the heart of the
 discourse, is dread.

There's a BIRDCAGE sitting by the cash register. It's draped with a cover. He pulls it off. Inside is a large black CROW. *

STEPHEN
 (to the bird)
 How you doin boy, how's the arm?

He opens the cage door and gives the bird food.

QUAID (V.O.)
 While the nature of kindness, and
 the serendipity of finding true
 love go undiscussed, we happily
 chew over the minutiae of misery.

Stephen enters the store's back room. There's another worker putting stuff into a locker. A GIRL named ABBY(22). *

STEPHEN
 Hey.

ABBY
 Hey.

Abby has a large PORT-WINE BIRTHMARK on her face, it travels down her neck and most likely covers a portion of her body.

QUAID (V.O.)

With the inevitability of a tongue
returning to probe a painful tooth,
we come back and back and back
again to our fears, sitting to talk
them over with the eagerness of a
starving man before a full and
steaming plate.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Stephen and Abby working at the bookstore throughout the day.

Stephen rings up books at the cash register.

Stephen places books on a shelf.

He and Abby tease each other when the store gets slow. The
occasional smile shared between them.

END OF MONTAGE

A girl Stephen knows comes to the register with a book. Her
name is CHERYL FROMM (22).

CHERYL

Hi.

STEPHEN

Hey Cheryl.

Cheryl glances over at the CROW in its cage.

CHERYL

(re: the bird)

How's Poe doing?

STEPHEN

His wing's almost healed I think.

He rings up her books.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

You decide what you want to do for
your thesis project yet?

CHERYL

No. You?

STEPHEN

Not yet.

He places her books into a bag and she leaves.

EXT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Stephen and Abby lock up the store.

ABBY

You have class tonight?

STEPHEN

Yeah.

As he locks the door, she studies him as if wanting to say something else... she decides against it.

ABBY

See you tomorrow.

STEPHEN

See you.

With that, they go their separate ways.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

Stephen sits in ETHICS CLASS. He's near the back of a large lecture hall filled with students.

The teacher speaks of *"the life worth living in contrast to the importance of moral conduct"*.

Stephen's gaze drifts to a PRETTY GIRL near the front row. Slender with raven black hair and pale skin, she chews on her pen with full lips.

He watches her for several moments.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Stephen steps into an alley from the back door of the lecture hall. He lights a cigarette. There's someone else in the alley as well--

A YOUNG MAN leaning in the shadows smoking a joint. Its end smolders orange as he takes a drag. He looks somewhere between the age of 25 & 28. Then, he speaks.

YOUNG MAN

Her navel is a bowl well rounded
with no lack of wine. Her breath,
sweet scented as apples. Her
breasts, clusters of grapes.

STEPHEN

What?

The young man steps from the shadows and Stephen gets a look at him. Slender and unkempt, a style that says he couldn't give a fuck. And a face... severe, with sharp lips and piercing eyes.

YOUNG MAN

She's a good looking girl.

STEPHEN

Who?

YOUNG MAN

The one you stare at in class.

Stephen feels caught in the act.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

You ever talk to her?

STEPHEN

No.

He proffers Stephen the joint. Stephen passes. The young man licks his fingers - extinguishes the joint - and puts it into his shirt pocket.

YOUNG MAN

Can I bum a cigarette?

Stephen pulls out the pack and hands him one. He lights it.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

I don't see you in any of the other philosophy lectures.

STEPHEN

Ethics fills one of my requirements. I'm a film major.

YOUNG MAN

Are you the real deal? Or someone who thinks he's the next Scorsese because he spent his Friday nights at the multiplex instead of getting laid?

Stephen smiles at the young man's brashness.

STEPHEN

I'm definitely not the next Scorsese. And I wasn't getting laid on Friday nights for reasons far more humiliating than being at the movies.

Quaid cracks a smile and sticks out his hand.

YOUNG MAN

Quaid.

Stephen shakes it.

STEPHEN

Stephen... Grace. Is Quaid your first name or your last?

QUAID

Last.

STEPHEN

You have a first?

QUAID

Yes I do.

Quaid exhales gray. It hangs in the air.

QUAID (cont'd)

I've watched you in this class. You never take notes.

STEPHEN

No.

QUAID

I figure you're either sublimely confident... or you just don't give a shit.

STEPHEN

Neither. I'm just completely lost.

QUAID

It's simple really. They spoon-feed us a bit of Plato, a bit of Bentham, no real analysis. We talk about nation, family, church, law. All useless, all cheats and chains and suffocation. If we were worthy philosophers we wouldn't be exchanging academic pleasantries...

STEPHEN

Film major, remember?

QUAID

We're all students of philosophy, Stephen, we just discuss it in different mediums.

Stephen concedes.

STEPHEN

Ok then, what would we be doing?

QUAID

We'd be flirting with the subject of any worthwhile philosophy. The things we don't understand. The things we fear. If we don't, we risk...

Quaid drifts for a moment. Mulling it over, he takes a drag.

STEPHEN

We risk what?

QUAID

If you don't go out and find the beast, Stephen - sooner or later the beast will come and find you.

It feels a bit lofty for Stephen.

STEPHEN

(re: the class)

I don't think I have fears that really justify a two hour lecture.

QUAID

No?

Stephen shakes his head. Quaid holds his gaze for a moment.

QUAID (cont'd)

What's the worst thing that's ever happened to you?

Stephen's watch BEEPS. He throws his cigarette to the alley and steps on it.

STEPHEN

The break's over. I'm going to head back in.

Quaid nods his head, and as Stephen steps inside--

QUAID

Hey, Stephen, talk to her. You only risk your self esteem.

Stephen heads in.

INT. LECTURE HALL - LATER

The class ends and Stephen puts his books into his bag. The students file up the aisle toward the exit. As Stephen's getting ready to step into the aisle--

The PRETTY GIRL passes. He catches her eye for a moment, and decides to give her a smile. She gives him a polite smile back and continues past him. He watches her go.

EXT. LECTURE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen walks out of the front door of the building.

QUAID (O.S.)
Couldn't do it, huh?

Stephen turns and sees Quaid waiting for him.

QUAID (cont'd)
For a second I actually thought you were going to talk to her.

STEPHEN
Where do you sit in that class?

QUAID
Where I can see everything. You want to grab a beer?

STEPHEN
I can't, sorry.

Stephen turns to go.

QUAID
You can't, meaning you have a prior engagement?

Quaid follows Stephen onto the sidewalk.

STEPHEN
No, I have to catch my train.

QUAID
Train station's on Madison. Why don't you go through the park? It would cut your time in half.

STEPHEN
I go this way.

QUAID

I can see that. Come on, grab a beer with me. Would it kill you to catch the next train?

Stephen stops in his tracks.

STEPHEN

Who are you?

QUAID

A rogue wave, a gale wind. A force of nature pushing you left instead of right.

Stephen studies him.

QUAID (cont'd)

Listen, I'm just a guy whose chick dumped him yesterday... And I want a beer.

Stephen looks over his shoulder at the straight and narrow sidewalk in front of him - then back to Quaid.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Stephen and Quaid sit at a table. Other patrons stand around them, playing pool and tossing darts. Stephen is drinking a beer - Quaid, a whiskey. They're in mid conversation.

QUAID

Every film student I've ever met spouts the same cinematic rhetoric as if it were proverb... *The Godfather, Citizen Kane, Casablanca, Apocalypse Now, The Exorcist*... Am I close?

STEPHEN

All great films, no one can argue that, not even you. My hyperbole tends to come from *An Inconvenient Truth* or *Hearts and Minds*... but I really consider myself more of a *This is Spinal Tap* kind of guy.

QUAID

Well shit - you might just stand a chance... Have you ever seen that Salvador Dali film *Un Chien Andalou*? The one where the woman gets her eye--

Quaid slices his lighter across his eye.

STEPHEN

No.

QUAID

NO? And you call yourself a film student. I have it at my house, you have to see it. That, and *They Call Her One Eye* are the two best eye gashing scenes ever shot.

STEPHEN

Good to know.

Quaid finishes his glass of whiskey and glances over at Stephen's half full beer.

QUAID

Stephen, you're nursing that beer like God created Eve.

STEPHEN

I don't know what that means.

QUAID

It means he enjoyed it so much he took his fucking time. But that's a two dollar beer and not the mother of all humanity.

STEPHEN

I'm not a heavy drinker.

QUAID

A college student that doesn't drink? What kind of meds you on?

STEPHEN

I don't take medication.

QUAID

Sorry, I just assume when someone doesn't drink they're taking anti psychotics. It's ok if you do. Who doesn't these days?

STEPHEN

Do you?

Quaid signals for the waitress.

QUAID

What do you think?

STEPHEN
I think if you did, you'd still
drink, so I guess it doesn't much
matter.

The waitress comes to the table.

QUAID
Can I get another double whiskey.

WAITRESS
(to Stephen)
And you?

STEPHEN
I'm good, thanks.

She leaves.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
So why did she break up with you?

QUAID
Who?

STEPHEN
Your girlfriend.

Quaid laughs. Stephen catches on.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
You don't have a girlfriend.

QUAID
No. But I have a belly warm with
whiskey and some reasonably good
conversation.

Stephen shakes his head, just barely holding on for the ride.

QUAID (cont'd)
So tell me why you want to make
movies.

STEPHEN
Documentary is really what I like.

QUAID
And?

STEPHEN
And, I just finished one.

QUAID

What's it about?

STEPHEN

It's about my older brother.

Stephen's uncomfortable, but continues.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

He died when I was fifteen. It's not the best film in the world...

QUAID

How did he die?

He knew Quaid would ask the question.

STEPHEN

A car accident. He was drunk. When he graduated high school he started drinking a lot, doing coke. He was 19 when he died... which is always weird to say because I'm 22 now. It was surreal when I turned 20, because my older brother became my younger brother, and he's stayed that way ever since.

QUAID

Losing an older sibling must have given your life a sense of frailty.

STEPHEN

And he delicately comes back to the subject of any worthwhile philosophy.

QUAID

Come on, no fear of your own mortality?

STEPHEN

I don't think it was fear. It was sadness, it was anger. But not fear. Fear would have been selfish.

QUAID

Why selfish?

STEPHEN

Because I wasn't thinking about myself, my brother just died.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

My brother was the one being put in the ground. The last thing on my mind was my own mortality.

QUAID

Let's be honest, that's like putting frosting on a piece of rotted meat. Existence boils down to one simple thing - self preservation at any cost. You're always going to put yourself in the shoes of the victim. You can tell me otherwise, but I won't believe you.

Stephen's about to jump back in--

But his WATCH ALARM goes off.

STEPHEN

That's me missing my train.

QUAID

That's like the tenth time that alarm has gone off since I've met you... Maybe you're afraid to live.

STEPHEN

I'm just being practical.

QUAID

Cautious.

STEPHEN

Prepared... I'm telling you, I live a pretty dull life. Fear doesn't cross my path very often.

QUAID

Ok, I'll drop it.

STEPHEN

Thank you... So what's your story? What made you want to take up philosophy?

QUAID

I wish I could get deep on you, Stephen, but to be honest, college years are the most likely years a woman will experiment with her sexuality.

QUAID (cont'd)

And I just want to be there when
one of them decides she wants to go
down on her best girlfriend.

To that, Stephen raises his beer.

EXT. QUAID'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Stephen and Quaid walk up the front steps of a two story
house. It's a nice house in the suburbs.

STEPHEN

Nice place.

QUAID

I just rent. It's not that high
actually.

Quaid pulls a key from under the mat.

STEPHEN

I'd be nervous to leave my key
laying around.

QUAID

I'm not good with keeping track of
shit, I'd lose it otherwise.

Quaid lets Stephen in.

INT. QUAID'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Quaid switches on a light and steps further into the house.
The second floor stairway in front of them.

QUAID

I'm going to make a drink. Jack and
coke?

STEPHEN

Just a little.

Quaid walks toward the kitchen.

QUAID

Up the stairs, first door on your
right. On my dresser is that Dali
DVD.

Stephen nods his head and walks toward the stairs.

INT. QUAID'S HOUSE, SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephen steps onto the second floor and turns right. A closed door a couple paces in front of him. He steps toward it and pushes it open.

IN THE ROOM

Stephen switches on the light--

And stops dead in his tracks when he sees--

TWO PEOPLE asleep in their bed. A husband and wife. Stephen's throat tightens as his heart begins to race. This does not feel like Quaid's house. Then--

THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS AND THE WIFE WAKES FROM HER DEEP SLEEP.

She sees Stephen standing in the doorway and she YELPS in terror. She grabs onto her husband - digging her nails into his arm as she stammers for words... *There's someone in the house with us... Someone in our bedroom.*

WIFE

Bill...BILL!!

Stephen begins to speak as the husband wakes, his voice just a quivering whisper.

STEPHEN

I'm here with... Qua--

HUSBAND

What are you doing here... What do you want...

Stephen can see the terror in their faces. The wife's filling with tears as she waits for Stephen to do something... pull out a knife... a gun... kill her husband before her eyes...

STEPHEN RUNS FOR THE STAIRS AND BARRELS OUT OF THE HOUSE. He busts through the front door and runs across the lawn--

He sees Quaid standing in the street. Quaid signals to him and takes off running. Stephen chases him.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Stephen catches up to Quaid and tackles him onto someone's front lawn. Quaid laughs uncontrollably. Thinking this is all just one big joke.

STEPHEN

What the fuck was that... that wasn't your house.

QUAID

It's a joke Stephen. I wanted to get your blood flowing.

Stephen flails at Quaid on the ground, hitting him in the gut. Quaid again laughs it off and rolls out of the way.

STEPHEN

That's not a joke. Who the hell were those people?

The two of them laying on their backs now, breathing heavily from the run.

QUAID

Relax, I used to screw their daughter. She'd take me there when they weren't home. That's how I knew my way around.

STEPHEN

You asshole. What if they had a fucking gun... or called the cops?

QUAID

I just wanted to give you a present Stephen. That's fear... You felt it, they felt it...

Stephen stares at Quaid, his blood still boiling, possibly coming to the realization that Quaid is completely insane.

QUAID (cont'd)

And you got yourself the fuck out of there because instinct demanded self preservation. You could have stuck around, explained yourself, let them know you wouldn't be back to claim them tomorrow night or the next. Now every time that woman wakes up from a bad dream, she's gonna see you standing at the end of her bed.

STEPHEN

You're crazy, aren't you?

Quaid doesn't deny it. Nothing but pleasure on his face. A kind of pleasure that's a bit contagious. Stephen finally cracks a smile.

After a moment, Quaid slaps Stephen on the shoulder.

QUAID
So, congratulations. You've just
given them a new dread.

Those words strike a chord with Stephen, his smile falters.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE - MORNING

Stephen yanks off the birdcage cover. The crow sits inside. *

STEPHEN
Morning.

He feeds the bird then heads into the back room.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abby is changing her shirt, pulling it over her head. Stephen sees the birthmark running over the dimples of her back.

STEPHEN
Sorry.

ABBY
You're early.

STEPHEN
I didn't sleep well last night.

ABBY
Calculous or ethics?

STEPHEN
I went out.

She's shocked.

ABBY
You don't go out when I ask.

STEPHEN
Yeah, I didn't plan it. It just
kind of happened.

Abby squints her eyes at him and heads into the store.

Stephen opens his locker and throws his bag inside. After a moment, Abby walks back in.

ABBY
Stephen?

He turns to her.

ABBY (cont'd)
There's a police officer here.

Stephen's face runs white. She drops her voice.

ABBY (cont'd)
He asked me if I knew where you
were last night.

Stephen slowly heads for the door. When he steps through the threshold he sees-

No one, no police officer. Then--

A finger pointed like a gun raises to Stephen's temple.

QUAID (O.S.)
PCOOOWWW...

The finger fires. Stephen realizes it's Quaid.

QUAID (cont'd)
So much for the golden future son.

Abby laughs and steps behind the cash register.

STEPHEN
Ha ha, funny. What are you doing
here?

Quaid pulls two jewel cases out of his pocket.

QUAID
*Andalou... and I picked up They
Call Her One Eye.*

He hands them to Stephen.

STEPHEN
No more tricks?

QUAID
No more tricks.

Stephen takes the DVD's.

STEPHEN
Thanks.

A customer comes to the register with books. Abby rings them up. Quaid pulls Stephen aside.

QUAID

I want you to come by my place
tonight, my real place.

STEPHEN

For what?

QUAID

I want to talk to you about
something. A proposition.

STEPHEN

Why don't you just tell me now?

QUAID

Can't, gotta go.

Quaid grabs a marker on the counter as Abby finishes with her customer. He jots down his address on a piece of paper and hands it to Stephen.

QUAID (cont'd)

Come after work. 64 Pilgrim Street.

Quaid heads for the door.

ABBY

Nice to meet you.

Quaid turns back to her before he heads out the door.

QUAID

Cool birthmark, by the way.

He leaves. Abby is taken off guard by the comment, not used to people bringing it up. Stephen studies her for a reaction, and then puts his eyes back to Quaid, who's making his way across the quad.

Stephen looks down at the address.

EXT. PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

Stephen lifts his eyes from the paper and matches it to the numbers on a HOUSE. 64 Pilgrim Street. The area is on its knees. Most of the houses are rubble or in the process of being knocked down.

Number 64 stands on its own. The houses to either side have been demolished and bull-dozed away.

Quaid's house is certainly on the verge of decrepit, but more welcoming than the surrounding wasteland.

As Stephen steps down the front walkway, he hears the thumping of music coming from within the walls of the house.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - CONTINUOUS

Inside the house, the music is much louder. Stephen knocks but to no avail. The door's unlocked so he steps inside.

Stephen follows the music to the basement door.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

In the basement, Quaid paints a large canvas with oils. It's a nude figure of a woman. Colorful and abstract. His MODEL, SHAUNA, sits naked on a mattress in front of him.

Quaid is shirtless, his body coated in a sheen of sweat. His hands and jeans sodden with paint. *

Stephen descends the staircase and stops at the bottom. The music booming in his ears.

Shauna sees Stephen first. She gives Quaid a nod and he follows her eye line to Stephen on the steps.

Quaid shuts off the music.

QUAID

Hey.

Quaid throws his model her robe.

QUAID (cont'd)

That's it for tonight.

She gets up from the mattress, walks toward the staircase, gives Stephen a glance as she passes by and throws on her robe as she heads up the stairs.

Stephen turns back to Quaid.

STEPHEN

It's good.

QUAID

The painting? It's a hobby.

Stephen surveys the room, not another painting in sight.

STEPHEN

You have any others?

QUAID

I trash them when I'm done.

Quaid mimics dragging his palette knife across the canvas.

STEPHEN

That's too bad.

QUAID

I don't like all these eyes staring
at me.

Quaid steps by Stephen and heads up the stairs.

QUAID (cont'd)

Let me change.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephen follow Quaid up to the second floor of the house.

STEPHEN

You live on your own?

QUAID

Who else in their right mind would
live here?

Quaid heads into the bathroom and leaves the door open. He
turns the shower's hot water on.

Stephen turns to leave.

QUAID (cont'd)

Hold up. So I've been thinking
about something... You've heard of
Kinsey, right?

Quaid takes off his jeans and steps into the shower. His
naked body only half disappears behind the curtain. Stephen
tries to be unaffected by Quaid's immodesty.

STEPHEN

Yeah, the guy who did the sex
studies.

Quaid shoots his head out from behind the curtain as the
water rinses the sweat from his body.

QUAID

What if we did a fear study?
Compile a survey on people's fears,
and what causes them. You have
access to equipment through the
film program, right?

STEPHEN

Yeah.

QUAID

And you need a project for your thesis?

Stephen begins to think.

QUAID (cont'd)

You can have complete control. A Stephen Grace documentary... and you get to exploit my obsessions for your creative gain.

STEPHEN

Yeah... Ok... but why?

QUAID

Why? Call it an experiment in catharsis. To live another's dread vicariously. That's the safest way to touch the beast.

STEPHEN

I don't know if I want to touch this beast you keep talking about.

QUAID

Then let's do it because it would be fucking fun to do something worthwhile. To do something that would break the fabulous boredom of our jaded overpriced educations.

STEPHEN

Since you put it that way...

Quaid turns off the shower, grabs a towel and steps out of the tub. Stephen steps into the hallway as Quaid dries off.

Stephen leans against the wall. He crosses his arms, mulling something over in his mind.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

The summer my brother died he had bought this beater of a car. It was cool though... this eye shadow blue 1965 Mustang. That summer we drove around in that car all the time...

Stephen glances over his shoulder.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
I didn't want to admit it last night, but you were right. The day I found out my brother died, one of the first things I thought was I could have easily been in that car with him. That at 15 years old, I could have died too.

Quaid smiles to himself.

QUAID
So you're in?

STEPHEN
Yeah, I'm in.

QUAID
Good, then lets celebrate.

INT. ROCK CLUB - NIGHT

Stephen follows Quaid through a throng of punk rockers, Goths, and general enthusiasts of life after midnight. The deafening music thumps through the room.

Quaid stops at the bar and orders a beer.

QUAID
You want something?

STEPHEN
No, I'm good.

Stephen's a bit overwhelmed by the whole scene.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
I'll be back.

INT. ROCK CLUB, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen pushes into the bathroom. He steps to the sink, runs the cold water, and splashes it on his face. In the toilet stall behind him, two club kids take bumps of cocaine.

Stephen turns off the faucet and heads for the door.

INT. ROCK CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Stephen heads back toward the bar. As he approaches it, he sees that Quaid is talking with two girls--

And one of them is the PRETTY GIRL from Stephen's Ethics class. The world slows down as Quaid spots him.

QUAID

Hey Stephen... you ready for that
drink now?

STEPHEN

Yeah.

Quaid yells over the music to the bartender.

QUAID

Four shots of Patron.

Then back to Stephen and the girls. Quaid introduces him to
the girl on his arm.

QUAID (cont'd)

Stephen, this is Samantha.

Then, the girl from Ethics.

QUAID (cont'd)

And this is Zooey, right?

ZOOEY

Yes.

STEPHEN

Hey...

The bartender pours out the four shots and begins to place
limes on the side of the glasses.

QUAID

No salt, no limes.

SAMANTHA

Not fair...

The bartender throws the lime in the trash. Quaid passes out
the glasses. Stephen makes the mistake of smelling his. Zooey
catches him as he grimaces and shoots him a smile.

Samantha raises her glass and the others follow suit.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

To social lubricants.

QUAID

Or better yet... to oblivion.

THE GROUP

To oblivion.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

The house is silent. In the kitchen, an empty bottle of tequila is turned on its side. Shot glasses laid out. Beer bottles in the sink. The kitchen counter sleek with liquor.

In the hallway, a pair of high heels.

In the living room, Steven sits on the couch. His eyes closed, passed out. Then--

A soft moan fills the silence. The quiet writhings of a woman trying to contain herself.

Stephen's eyes flutter open. The sound waking him. When he opens his eyes, he looks down to his right. SAMANTHA lies curled up in a ball, sleeping on the cushion next to him.

Then he turns to the room in front of him, and that's when he sees ZOOEY, lying on another couch to his left. The moans coming from her lips. Quaid's head between her legs. As he goes down on her, she digs her fingernails into the arm of the sofa, arches her back, and consumes him with her thighs.

At first, jealousy courses through Stephen, but it subsides to an acceptance of the inevitable. She was out of his league, but not out of Quaid's.

After a moment, she opens her eyelids, and her gaze meets with Stephen's. She doesn't speak, doesn't falter in her gyrations against Quaid's mouth, she just looks at Stephen, her eyes glassy with drink and pleasure.

As Stephen watches, Samantha wakes. She sits up at his side, runs her fingers across his jaw. Places her lips against his neck. Then she coaxes him toward her mouth, and Samantha and Stephen begin to kiss.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS HALLWAY - DAY

Stephen strides down the center of the hallway, sunglasses concealing his tired bloodshot eyes. He passes by other students without a care in the world.

He heads toward the media center at the end of the hall.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS, MEDIA CENTER - DAY

CHERYL FROMM sits at a FLAT BED EDITING SYSTEM, cutting 16mm film the old fashioned way. Splicing, taping, and threading film through the picture track. The machine hums and the image flickers on the small screen in front of her.

She slows the wheel, brings the film to a halt and pulls the film from the thread to make a splice. As she does, she accidentally drops a PLASTIC CORE to the ground--

She spins in her chair to pick it up and sees--

STEPHEN GRACE standing in the doorway behind her, still with his sunglasses on. She gasps with a start.

CHERYL

You shit...

He glances over her shoulder at the flat bed.

STEPHEN

Don't we use computers for that now?

CHERYL

Don't you know only pricks and terrorists wear sunglasses indoors?

He pulls off his glasses.

STEPHEN

I need an editor for my thesis. What do you think about partnering?

CHERYL

And what would be the topic of this *Marvel Team-Up*?

STEPHEN

Dread. We're going to chase the beast. Reveal the dark behind the door. Discover the origins of people's deepest fears.

CHERYL

So in other words, we're producing Tabloid Television.

She considers Stephen for a moment.

CHERYL (cont'd)

You seem different, like you just got laid or something.

He attempts to contain his smile. Cheryl nods her head.

CHERYL (cont'd)

Ok, I'm in. And I'll make T-shirts worthy of the cause.

With that, she splices her film.

CUT TO BLACK:

IN THE DARKNESS

QUAID (V.O.)

There is no delight the equal of
dread... As long as it's someone
else's.

FADE IN:

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Quaid steps into his bathroom. Opens up his medicine cabinet, inside is a row of pill bottles. Six or seven. Quaid pulls one from the shelf, opens it, places the pill on his tongue. Puts the bottle back.

He does this three more times. Three more pills, placing each one on his tongue next to the other. He fills a glass with tap water and drinks it down.

He closes the medicine cabinet and shows the mirror his bare tongue, as if to say, "Look, they're gone, no tricks."

He closes his mouth and shuts off the light.

CUT TO:

A PHOTO COPY MACHINE--

Runs off sheets of red paper with black type. It reads:

FEAR STUDY - seeking to interview men and women for academic study on fear. Participants will be asked to reveal their innermost terrors on camera. Please Contact Stephen Grace: ###-###-####. Refreshments will be provided.

MONTAGE

*

Stephen hangs up Fear Study fliers in a campus common room.

Cheryl sets up her editing bay in Quaid's basement.

Quaid rearranges his dining room into an interview room. Stephen sets up lights behind him.

Stephen sets up the camera. Quaid sits in the chair on the other side of the interview table smoking a cigarette, his eyes move to the door as--

Stephen gets hit in the face with a black T-shirt. Stephen pulls it from his shoulder and looks to Cheryl. She's already wearing the black shirt... the words **DREAD HEAD** written in WHITE across her chest. She throws one to Quaid.

QUAID

I'm not fucking wearing that.

CHERYL

Can you please pretend you're not such a bad ass? For me.

She smiles. Quaid looks to Stephen who's already pulling the shirt on over his head.

STEPHEN

I like it.

Then, the INTERVIEWS begin.

Stephen sits at the interview table, a clipboard on his lap.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

How old were you when you had your first nightmare?

A boy around the age of 20 sits across from Stephen. He answers the question.

BOY 1

The first nightmare I really remember, I was 6, and it happened when my family moved to a new town...

Then Cheryl, now in the position of Stephen, addresses someone across from her.

CHERYL

How did you feel when you fell off your bike for the first time?

A girl around the age of 25 sits across from her and answers the question.

GIRL 1

I didn't have a bike, I had a scooter. I remember falling off in the street once when I was 10... I nearly got hit by a car...

Then Stephen, again asking a question.

STEPHEN

When you were a child, were you
afraid of your closet, or the
darkness under your bed?

Then Cheryl, asking a question.

CHERYL

Have you ever been mugged or had a
home broken into?

Their questions continue.

STEPHEN

Do you believe in the devil?

CHERYL

Have you ever been harmed by a
family member?

STEPHEN

Have you ever seen a person die?

CHERYL

What is your strongest memory of
feeling fear?

A boy sitting across from her answers the question. Quaid
tweaks the audio and watches the camera's monitor with
unflinching intensity.

BOY 2

I was climbing a tree when I was
eight, the branch gave way
underneath me, and I fell a good 20
feet. I broke my ankle... that was
the last time I ever climbed a
tree...

Now, a series of people answer a series of questions as the
interviews continue. All different ages, all different
ethnicities, shapes and sizes.

GIRL 2

I can't stand spiders or snakes, or
anything that crawls or slithers...
or walks sideways.

BOY 3

At first it started as a fungus,
like athlete's foot...

GIRL 3

Every time I walked by the top of the staircase, I felt like there was something watching me. Something calling me toward the darkness at the foot of the steps. When I was old enough, my parents told me that the previous owners son had died by falling down those stairs and breaking his neck.

BOY 3

But then there was a discharge - and my pubic hairs started to grow this cheese...

GIRL 2

I hate moisture. Any kind dew. The worst is a wet napkin. Like when you spill a drink, the napkin becomes this fleshy mass...

Quaid stands at a window smoking a cigarette. No longer seeming to give a shit. Cheryl and Stephen listen intently and jot down notes.

BOY 4

The house had been abandoned. It had a room on the top floor with all this disturbing writing on the walls... I mean every inch of every the room. It looked like it had been burned or written in blood. My older brother told me that the words had been written by ghosts.

GIRL 3

When my baby sister was born, my mother's vagina ripped like three inches. I mean all the way to her butt. They had to sew it up with friggin' twine. I was 10, and on that day I vowed to never have kids.

GIRL 2

And feet terrify me... more specifically, toe nails. I broke up with my last boyfriend because his toe nail clipping landed in my soup.

BOY 3

It turned out there was a worm. It crawled up there when I was swimming in the lake by my grandparents' house. It had created some sort of vacuum, which in turn caused an infection...

Cheryl and Stephen share a weary, disgusted glance...

Then, Stephen's WATCH ALARM goes off. Cheryl addresses BOY 3 sitting across from them.

CHERYL

I think we've got everything we need.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Cheryl and Stephen sit across from each other eating dinner. Cheryl has a large salad. Stephen, a greasy cheeseburger.

CHERYL

I like that watch of yours. It reminds me to eat before I become a raging bitch.

Stephen laughs.

CHERYL (cont'd)

You're suppose to say, "*I can't imagine you ever becoming a raging bitch Cheryl.*"

STEPHEN

I don't know about raging, maybe a bit feisty sometimes... To be honest, I don't know you well enough to say.

CHERYL

You know we've had five classes together and this is the first meal we've ever shared?

She takes a big bite of lettuce.

STEPHEN

That's not a meal, it's a botanical garden of some kind. A cabbage patch perhaps.

A smile runs across her face.

CHERYL

Oh, Cabbage Patch Kids... remember them... I loved them...

STEPHEN

No. I remember Thundercats. *

CHERYL

I had them too, so there. And I'm sorry to offend you with my roughage *Mr. Triple bypass*, but I just don't like meat. To be honest your burger makes me want to vomit. *

She opens her mouth and shows Stephen a chewed up ball of lettuce. Stephen wrinkles up his face.

STEPHEN

Gross.

Cheryl giggles.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

First meal... after two years... and you're probably one of the people I talk to the most.

CHERYL

I just thought you were shy, or had better things going on.

STEPHEN

No... I think I just have the social skills of a 15 year old.

CHERYL

So even though Quaid's bitchy, and has the etiquette of an ox, he might be a good influence on you.

Stephen shoots Cheryl a "god help me" look. But then realizes she's probably right.

INT. QUAID'S HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Cheryl and Stephen walk down the steps into Quaid's basement. Quaid is reviewing the tapes on Cheryl's editing bay.

QUAID

It's not good enough.

CHERYL

It's a start.

Quaid gets up from the computers.

QUAID

I'm scared of spiders, I'm scared
of clowns, I'm scared of fucking
Mickey Mouse... who cares.

CHERYL

Relax.

Cheryl sits down at the editing bay and starts to rewind the
footage. Then, Stephen's WATCH ALARM goes off again.

Quaid turns on Stephen.

QUAID

Do you set that watch to tell you
when to take a shit? Give me the
fucking thing.

STEPHEN

No...

Quaid looks him in the eye with focused intensity.

QUAID

Give me the watch Stephen.

STEPHEN

I'm not giving you my watch.

Quaid GRABS a hold of Stephen's wrist, pulls it toward him.
Stephen struggles, pushing on Quaid's neck as Quaid pries the
watch off his body.

CHERYL

Guys, what are we, two? Come on...

Quaid finally gets the watch - throws it to the ground - and
CRUSHES it with his heel. It SHATTERS.

STEPHEN

Hey... asshole.

Stephen pushes Quaid off of it. Quaid pushes him back. For a
moment, the two look as though they're about to fight, for
real this time. Until--

CHERYL

Interview me.

They turn to her.

STEPHEN

What?

CHERYL

I want to sit... interview me...

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

The camera hums. Cheryl sits behind the table. Her body language, vulnerable. Her hands on her knees, both feet planted firmly on the ground.

Quaid studies her through the camera. Stephen sits across from her with the clipboard on his lap.

CHERYL

I grew up in a small town in upstate New York. My mother worked at the supermarket, my father... my father worked at the meat packing plant about 20 miles outside of town. They'd slaughter cattle there, and supply our markets with corn-fed organic beef. He'd work late. And by the time he'd get home my mother would always be asleep...

Stephen listens as an uncomfortable sensation begins to creep up his spine.

CHERYL (cont'd)

Not me though. I could never fall asleep until he went to bed... I'd lay on my pillow. I'd listen to his boots walk up the stairs... I'd listen to them walk to my bedroom door... and those few moments in which he'd make his decision would drag out... so long. Sometimes he'd just stand there for a minute - walk away - take a shower - and go to bed. But more often than not--

CUT TO:

INT. CHERYL'S BEDROOM, FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Cheryl, no more than 12 years old, lays in bed in her dark room. She clutches her pillow tightly as the bedroom door behind her slowly creaks open.

BACK TO:

CHERYL SITTING IN FRONT OF STEPHEN AND QUAID.

CHERYL

I don't know if my mother just pretended not to know what the fuck was going on or if she was just too weak and ignorant--

STEPHEN

You don't have to do this anymore.

Quaid looks down at his hand, it trembles with adrenaline.

CHERYL

I wouldn't make a sound, wouldn't move, no matter how much he'd try to hurt me.

She closes her eyes.

CHERYL (cont'd)

But what I remember most clearly was the way his flesh smelled when he came home from work... this heavy, almost metallic smell that came home with him from the plant... warm blood on the grass, cold fat in the freezers... I can hardly stand to look at a piece of meat... let alone think about eating it.

Stephen's shell shocked. Quaid... exhilarated.

She wipes away her tears with her sleeve and cracks a smile to lighten the moment.

CHERYL (cont'd)

It looks like I'll be taking iron supplements for the rest of my life.

For a long moment, they sit in silence, until Quaid shouts--

QUAID

That's what I'm talking about, some fucking honest to god trauma.

Inappropriate yes, but it definitely lightens the mood. Cheryl breaks into a release of laughter through the tears.

CHERYL

I showed you mine, now show me yours...

She looks to Quaid.

CHERYL (cont'd)
Come on Quaid, how'd your parents
fuck you up?

Quaid's pumping adrenaline quickly turns to unease. He tries to gather the words, but he never finds them. Stephen watches him and finally breaks in.

STEPHEN
Christ... my parents have always
been pretty cool. Even after my
brother died... Under the
circumstances they dealt with it
pretty well.

A smile of guilt and shame consuming his face. Cheryl grabs his pen and throws it at him playfully.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
They even ship me an Easter
basket... friggin' pink bunnies and
peeps and shit.

Quaid finally recovers and cracks a smile.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BATHROOM - LATER

Quaid opens the medicine cabinet door. Pulls down one of his bottles. Drops a pill into his hand. He stares at it. Studies it. Something coming over him. A look of defiance.

He turns over his palm and drops the pill down the drain. Then he takes the bottle off the shelf and empties its contents into the sink.

He continues to do it with every bottle in the cabinet.

He runs the water, and washes all the little pills down the drain. After a moment, Stephen walks up the steps to the second floor and approaches the bathroom.

Quaid shuts the medicine cabinet.

STEPHEN
I'm going to stay the night. I've
missed the last train by now.

QUAID
Where's Cheryl?

STEPHEN
She already left.

Quaid turns off the running water. The pipes rattle.

QUAID

The interviews have to be like that every time. Substance, truth. Take out an ad in the newspaper, we need to be throwing a wider net. And rephrase it, make it sound more legitimate... And stop wearing those fucking shirts.

Stephen nods his head.

STEPHEN

Fine, I'll do it in the morning...

Quaid tries to shut the bathroom door, but Stephen stops him.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

What happened down there, when she brought up your family?

QUAID

I don't remember my parents Stephen, they died when I was very young. But when I turned eighteen I got the insurance money. And that's why we're able to have all this.

Quaid gestures to the surrounding house.

STEPHEN

What happened?

QUAID

What always happens... their hearts stopped beating.

With that, Quaid shuts the bathroom door, leaving Stephen alone in the dark hallway.

INT. QUAID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Quaid sleeps soundly in his bed. After several moments of deep silence, a SOUND permeates the room--

A THUD in the distance... then again, like the sound of wood being chopped. Quaid wakes with a start. Sits up in bed.

The sound stops. He places his feet on the cold floor and walks out into the hall.

IN THE HALL

Quaid looks down at Stephen's room. He walks to it. The door's open, he steps inside. Stephen's asleep in bed. THEN--

THE SOUND AGAIN. A THUNK, a wetter sound than before. A hollow muted sound. Quaid turns to the darkness behind him. Again. THUNK...

It's coming from the closed door at the other end of the hall. Quaid slowly steps toward it. His bare feet padding on the wood floor. THUNK.

Just a yard away now, he builds his courage and continues on. The door right in front of him. He stops, and pushes it open. And that's when he sees--

A BOY, sitting on the floor. The body of a woman splayed out in front of him. A MOTHER. QUAID'S MOTHER.

QUAID

Mamma...

The boy, YOUNG QUAID, splashes his hands in her warm blood. Slapping her cold body unknowingly with his palm--

Quaid stands rigid in terror as the boy turns to him. THE BOY FROM THE OPENING SCENE. THEN--

THUNK... from somewhere else in the room. A heavy sound. The sound of meat being severed and divided. The sound of an axe against bone.

Quaid pushes the door open further and reveals... THE MAN. THE AXE MAN. He drops the blade down on a body. The body of Quaid's father. A piece of flesh slides from the remains.

Quaid backs into the hall, the floorboards creaking underneath him. And with the sound, turns the axe man's attention to the door. He sees Quaid at the threshold... and Quaid bolts down the hall--

Running as fast as he can. Screaming Stephen's name at the top of his lungs.

Quaid barrels into Stephen's room and slams the door.

QUAID (cont'd)

WAKE UP. HE'S IN THE HOUSE. WAKE--

THE AXE EXPLODES THROUGH THE DOOR NEXT TO QUAID'S HEAD--

AND QUAID WAKES FROM HIS DREAM SCREAMING.

Sitting up in his bed, he sees he's in the confines of his room. Sweat pouring over his body.

Stephen rushes to Quaid's door.

STEPHEN

What's the matter... what is it?

Quaid studies the room, studies the darkness in the hall behind Stephen. He regains his breath, regains his voice.

QUAID

Just a dream...

Concern spreads over Stephen's face.

STEPHEN

That didn't sound like just a dream.

QUAID

It was nothing. Go back to bed.

STEPHEN

I'm not leaving. You practically know my life story, but when it comes to you, I don't much at all... but I have theory--

Quaid listens now.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

That a guy who is so obsessed with fear... has something that really scares him.

Quaid gathers his thoughts for a long moment.

*

QUAID

My parents were killed when I was six years old Stephen.

QUAID (cont'd)

And every night since... the dreams have been the same...

FLASHES - THE AXE MAN - QUAID'S PARENTS BEING SLAUGHTERED.

QUAID (cont'd)

They were murdered right in front of my eyes... never caught the man that did it...

*
*

AGAIN, FLASHES - THE AXE MAN THROWING QUAID'S MOTHER TO THE GROUND. THE AXE SINKING INTO HIS MOTHER'S CHEST.

QUAID (cont'd)
 I don't know how I got away, but I
 did... I ran... and I ran... and
 I've never really stopped...

*
 *

Quaid looks up at Stephen, cracks an uncomfortable grin.

QUAID (cont'd)
 Because after all these years, he's
 still here.

*

Quaid presses his finger against his forehead, then puts his
 guard back up.

*

QUAID (cont'd)
 Don't tell anyone Stephen. Promise
 me.

Stephen nods his head.

STEPHEN
 I promise.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE - DAY

Stephen stands in an aisle restocking the English Lit
 section. He's completely phased out.

After a moment, he notices Abby peeking around the corner at
 the end of the aisle. He smiles.

STEPHEN
 Hello creepy... you just get here?

ABBY
 Maybe, or maybe I've been watching
 you space out for the last ten
 minutes.

STEPHEN
 Just thinking.

ABBY
 Quaid came in here yesterday
 looking for you.

STEPHEN
 What did he want?

ABBY
 I don't know...

Stephen starts on another section of books.

ABBY (cont'd)
He asked me if I'd model for him?

STEPHEN
And what did you say?

ABBY
I said fuck no, politely of course.
But for a while there I thought he
was going to convince me.

STEPHEN
He's good at that. Gets me in
trouble sometimes.

ABBY
That's why you didn't look
surprised when I said there was a
cop looking for you.

STEPHEN
Yeah...

Stephen laughs under his breath.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
That first night I met him, he
invites me over his house, except,
surprise, it's not his house at
all. I end up standing at the foot
of some stranger's bed. Scared the
holy shit out of them... and me...
me more probably...

Abby's enjoying this story, a wide smile on her face.

ABBY
What the hell did you say to them?

STEPHEN
Nothing. I took off.

ABBY
You didn't say anything? Like,
sorry for breaking into your house,
but it's just a big
misunderstanding...

STEPHEN
No... I... I mean come on, I just
wanted to get the hell out of
there.

ABBY

Our house was broken into once and my mom was the only one home. Nothing happened to her, but ever since that day she's never been able to sleep through the night. The slightest thing wakes her up.

A customer comes up behind Abby with a book.

CUSTOMER

Can I pay for this?

ABBY

Sorry, yeah.

Abby shoots Stephen a look like, "Maybe I should be watching the cash register, oops." Stephen finishes stocking the books. A feeling of shame growing inside of him.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, BACKROOM - DAY

Stephen packs up to leave for the day. He opens his locker and grabs his BAG. Taped on the inside of his locker is a PICTURE OF HIS FAMILY.

His PARENTS. Stephen around 14 years old. And Stephen's OLDER BROTHER. He studies the picture for a long moment. Thinking of his parents in the shoes of the couple he scared. He closes the locker.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, BACKROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen sits at the desk. He writes on a piece of paper. A NOTE. Glimpses of it read--

YOU DON'T KNOW ME BUT... THAT NIGHT I WAS JUST AS SCARED AS YOU... IT WAS A BAD JOKE, A PRANK THAT WENT TOO FAR... I'M SORRY IF I CAUSED YOUR FAMILY ANY HARM OR FEAR...

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FEEL BETTER IF YOU KNEW... AGAIN, I'M VERY SORRY.

Stephen doesn't sign his name. He folds the paper. And puts it in his pocket.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Stephen walks down the sidewalk. He's in the neighborhood of the house he and Quaid broke into.

He sees the NICE HOUSE getting closer, he pulls the note from his pocket, but when he reaches the walkway, he sees a sign on their front yard.

A FOR SALE SIGN.

He walks up the front steps and peeks inside a window. The house is empty. All furniture gone. The family has already moved out.

Stephen steps down on the walkway again, looks up at the house. A regret in his eyes. He looks down at the final words of his apology letter.

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FEEL BETTER IF YOU KNEW... AGAIN, I'M VERY SORRY.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - DAY

Stephen walks up to the house. Quaid is smoking a cigarette on the front steps.

In the DRIVEWAY is a CAR COVERED IN A TARP.

STEPHEN

What's that?

QUAID

It's therapy.

Quaid steps to the driveway and yanks the tarp from the car. Underneath is a 1965 eye shadow blue FORD MUSTANG. It's a total shit box. Rusted out. Cracked windows.

When Stephen sees it, a shudder runs down his spine.

QUAID (cont'd)

1200 bucks on Craig's list.

STEPHEN

Why do you have this?

QUAID

It's for you.

Quaid throws him the keys. Stephen catches them.

QUAID (cont'd)

You know why I got it. Find the beast... Drive it when you're ready, not a moment sooner.

Quaid heads back up onto the steps.

QUAID (cont'd)

Come on, I think we got a good one today.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Stephen hooks up a microphone on a BOY'S shirt collar. The boy is no more than 20.

Quaid waits at the sound board. Cheryl comes in from the kitchen with a bottle of water. She hands it to the boy. He takes it and gives her a polite smile.

BOY

Thanks...

The boy is thin and soft spoken.

BOY (cont'd)

(to Stephen)

You work at the bookstore, right?

STEPHEN

Yeah.

BOY

You recommended a poetry book to me once. I liked it.

STEPHEN

Good.

Stephen finishes adjusting the mic.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Give it a test.

BOY

Testing... testing the microphone... is that good?

Quaid looks from the sound board.

QUAID

All set.

Stephen sits down next to Cheryl on the other side of the table. He grabs his clipboard.

STEPHEN

What is your name and age?

BOY

My name is Joshua Shaw. I'm twenty years old.

STEPHEN

Joshua, what is your strongest
memory of feeling fear?

Joshua studies all their faces, looks into the camera for a
moment, and then begins to talk.

JOSHUA

When I was six I was hit by a car.
The concussion left me deaf for
three years. One second I was this
normal kid and the next I was
completely cut off from the world.

Quaid watches the frail boy through the camera, sizing him up
in some way. Joshua's mouth dries up, he takes a sip of his
water and clears his throat.

CHERYL

How did that make you feel?

JOSHUA

Alone... I was trapped inside my
head. The outside world was just an
aquarium... and worse still, I
would often get tinnitus - this
horrible ringing in my ears... at
those times it was like an iron
band was being wrapped around my
forehead, just crushing every
thought into fragments. I'd lose
all touch with reality. Sometimes I
would say this prayer. A prayer my
mother taught me... Gentle Jesus,
something, something. Look upon
this little child, something,
something. I can't really remember,
it's been a while since I've needed
it. My mother was good that way--

Joshua's silent for a long moment.

JOSHUA (cont'd)

Then one day my hearing just came
back. Not perfectly, but enough for
it to seem like a miracle. Now my
ears ring at the slightest volume
of sound. I've never been able to
go to a concert. I usually can't
even go to the movies.

He laughs the stress off again.

JOSHUA (cont'd)
And I still wake up at night
sometimes, half anticipating the
ringing in my head. Even right now,
just talking about it, brings back
the taste of panic... the feeling
of dread. That's really the worst
part of it, you know. You live with
the notion that the thing that
causes you the most terror, could
show up again at any time.

These words sit heavy on Quaid with the weight of resonance.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Stephen sits in the driver's seat of the MUSTANG. He places
his hands on the wheel. Rolls his fingers over it. He puts
the key into the ignition...

He hesitates. Can't turn the key. Can't start the motor.
After a moment. He pulls out the key, and exits the car.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Quaid holds a shot of Tequila above his head. Stephen and
Cheryl sit at a table in front of him. They all have shots.

QUAID
Let it be known that working with
the two of you has filled my
stomach with a sickening pit of
delight. And had I not met you, I
could have peacefully gone on with
my lugubrious existence.

CHERYL
Amen to existing lugubriously...
*she says without knowledge of
definition.*

QUAID
So tonight let's celebrate all the
lab rats we've gathered so far.

They drop the shots back. Cheryl slams her glass on the table
and wrinkles up her face as the burn runs down her throat.

Quaid pulls two KEYS from his pocket.

QUAID (cont'd)
What is mine is yours. Keys to the
Pilgrim Street kingdom.

He hands them both a key.

QUAID (cont'd)
A place to call sanctuary or
sanitarium.

STEPHEN
My very own tenement house, thank
you.

Quaid smirks.

QUAID
Cheryl whenever you want to work
just come by... any hour.

CHERYL
You know we don't have to stop when
the semester ends. It doesn't have
to just be a school project. If we
continued we could turn this into
something legitimate.

QUAID
Or we could make it a way of life.

The way he says it is off putting. And it makes Cheryl and
Stephen take notice. Quaid takes another shot of tequila.
After a moment, the waitress comes over.

WAITRESS
More shots?

EXT. PUB - NIGHT

Quaid stands on the sidewalk smoking a cigarette. Stephen and
Cheryl exit the pub.

CHERYL
There you are. We thought you went
home.

STEPHEN
(to Quaid)
You want to head back?

QUAID
I'm gonna stay out a bit. Hit a
couple more bars.

STEPHEN
We'll see you later then.

Cheryl and Stephen head down the sidewalk.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Cheryl cuts together fear study clips on her editing bay.
Stephen lays on the MATTRESS in front of Quaid's easel.

STEPHEN

How can you work?

CHERYL

Because I can hold my liquor, and
we still have a lot to do.

Stephen looks down at the mattress underneath him.

STEPHEN

I've seen naked women on this
mattress.

Cheryl shakes her head.

CHERYL

He paints men too you know.

EXT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

Quaid stands at the front entrance of a STRIP BAR. He
finishes a cigarette and steps inside.

INT. STRIP BAR - CONTINUOUS

Quaid walks past the bouncer. He stops near the bar and scans
his surroundings. It's dark, smoky. Men sit at small tables
sipping cheap liquor.

On the narrow stage, a woman dances, or more accurately,
sways to a soft-rock song from the 80's.

Quaid makes his way to the back of the small club and walks
into a hallway that leads to the girls dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quaid steps into the DRESSING ROOM. There are two girls
sitting down getting ready for the stage. One of them is
SHAUNA. She's putting on makeup.

The girls turn to the door when he walks in.

SHAUNA

You know you're not supposed to
come in here. If Gabe sees you back
here again he's going to have a
fit.

QUAID
Will you sit for me tomorrow? Same
price as usual.

SHAUNA
I can't. I have plans.

She's short with him, bothered. He's frustrated and it shows.

SHAUNA (cont'd)
Ask one of the other girls.

The other girl, VALERIE, pulls on her heels and brushes her platinum blonde hair away from her face.

She looks up at Quaid, her fake breasts full and heaving from her bikini top. She speaks through red painted lips.

VALERIE
Yeah, Quaid, how come you never ask
me to model for you?

QUAID
Because you haven't done anything
to impress me.

With that, he leaves.

VALERIE
Asshole.

INT. STRIP BAR - LATER

Quaid sits at the stage. He downs a shot of whiskey and takes a swig from his beer. VALERIE is dancing.

Quaid doesn't pay much attention to her. Some of the other patrons put dollars down as she takes off her top. Then--

A man on the other side of the stage catches Quaid's eye. The man's obscured by Valerie's legs, but as she moves, Quaid gets a look at him--

It's him... THE AXE MAN... his features hidden in shadow. Quaid's eyes grow wide. His fingers clenching up on the table, his nails digging into the wood.

The man takes a drink from a bottle of beer and then places the bottle on the stage in front of him. Quaid watches as the terror builds from his loins.

With a quick gesture, the man pushes the bottle over, its neck falling toward Quaid, its contents spilling out onto the stage. But it's not beer that comes spilling out, it's blood.

It pools across the stage, but no one seems to see it, only Quaid. He watches as the blood spreads across Valerie's heels, and in that moment, she kneels down in front of Quaid.

Her body hiding the axe man. She grabs his chin with her hand and pulls his face toward her. Sweat glistens on Quaid's brow. She gives him a smile, and as she does, her hairline grows RED. BLOOD SATURATING HER BLONDE HAIR..

Quaid pulls away and nearly knocks over his chair. She still smiles though... smiles as a gash opens up on her scalp... runs down her forehead--

A yawning fissure revealing tissue and bone.

But it doesn't stop - wounds open up all over her body. Wounds from an UNSEEN BLADE. Flesh pulled apart as if the lips of the laceration had merely been glued together.

Quaid stumbles back further, knocking over his drinks, the table toppling... Then--

A gash opens up on her breast, revealing the soft tissue underneath... the glossy sheen of a silicone implant. And then, that too SPLITS. The clear fluid spilling out across her ribcage.

Quaid trips over the chair behind him and falls to the ground, but when he shoots his eyes back to the horror--

There's nothing. No blood, no wounds, no axeman. Just the patrons and the dancer looking down at him as if he'd shamefully drunken himself into a stupor.

He gets to his feet and hurries for the exit.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, BACKROOM - MORNING

POE'S CAGE has been moved to the back room. He flaps around inside it. Stephen puts his bag in his locker. After a moment, Abby walks in.

ABBY

I put him back here...

She looks at the bird.

ABBY (cont'd)

He was making a lot of noise... I already fed him though.

STEPHEN

Thanks.

ABBY

And I think his wing's getting stronger, he's been flapping it a lot more. It's probably why he's been restless.

Stephen takes Poe out of his cage and sets him on a wooden perch by the door. He hops around but doesn't try to fly.

Abby stands fidgeting, building the courage to say something.

ABBY (cont'd)

You know, I was thinking that if you ever want me to interview for the fear study... I could.

STEPHEN

Yeah? Ok, I'll talk to the guys about it, we'll set something up.

ABBY

Actually, I was hoping you'd just do it. I'd feel more comfortable...

Stephen thinks about it for a moment.

STEPHEN

Sure... I can come by after class tonight if you want.

ABBY

Great... I better get to the register.

She leaves.

INT. CLASSROOM - EVENING

Cheryl and Stephen sit next to each other in FILM CLASS. The TEACHER, MR. KESSLER, writes on a board with marker.

*

MR. KESSLER

*

(to class)

You'll be presenting your thesis films in two weeks. We'll be showing them in the Bryce Hall screening room... So for those of you who still haven't decided on a project... you're up shits creek... etc, etc.

He smiles at the room.

MR. KESSLER
Ok, last week we screened
Griffith's THE BIRTH OF A NATION--

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM - EVENING

Cheryl and Stephen file out of the classroom with other students. They continue down the hall.

CHERYL
So, I have a surprise for you...

She pulls out a small box wrapped with newspaper. She hands it to Stephen.

STEPHEN
A gift?

CHERYL
A necessity.

He stops walking and unwraps the gift. Inside is a new WATCH, a heavy duty one. He pulls it out.

STEPHEN
Awesome...

CHERYL
It's virtually indestructible, at
least shatter resistant... and
possibly water proof.

Stephen plays with the timer and turns on the alarm. It works and it's less annoying than his other one. He smiles.

STEPHEN
Thanks Cheryl.

There's a moment between them. Something that Stephen reads on her face... they continue down the hall.

CHERYL
You have any plans tonight?

STEPHEN
... Just catching up on my other
class assignments.

INT. DORM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Stephen walks down a dormitory hallway. He carries a camera case at his side. He stops at a door and knocks.

Abby answers the door. She's barefoot, wearing jeans and a plain button down shirt.

ABBY

Hey.

STEPHEN

Ready?

INT. ABBY'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen and Abby step into her room. She walks to her college sized fridge.

ABBY

You want a beer?

STEPHEN

Sure.

Abby pulls out two beers and hands one to Stephen.

Stephen sees a photo on Abby's dresser of her and her family. He picks it up. In the photo, Abby is with an older woman and two pretty girls, also a little older than Abby.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Is this your family?

ABBY

Yup, my mother and then my two older sisters. They're pretty huh?

STEPHEN

Yeah, they're pretty... just like their sister.

Stephen says it because he means it. Because he doesn't want his friend to feel bad about herself.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Should we start.

She nods, but he can tell she's nervous.

INT. ABBY'S DORM ROOM - LATER

The camera's on, and Abby sits in a chair in front of it. Stephen sits across from her. The interview has begun.

ABBY

...Nobody ever says anything. Well, Quaid did. But you never have.

Stephen shrugs.

ABBY (cont'd)
But you don't look at me like
everyone else... I just want to
scream sometimes... I look and they
look away, like I don't feel their
eyes on me.

She stops for a moment, looking over at the camera, realizing
it's watching her. She speaks to it for a moment.

ABBY (cont'd)
Let's get this out of the way...

She shuts her right eye - winking. Her BIRTHMARK covering the
flesh of her eyelid.

ABBY (cont'd)
Yes - it covers my eyelid too. And
no, it doesn't hurt... not in the
way people think it does. Listen, I
could have a lot worse things than
a birthmark covering my body...

She looks back to Stephen.

ABBY (cont'd)
But that's hard to swallow when I
look in the mirror to fix my
hair... or when I look at my
sisters.

She stops for a moment, looks down to the floor.

ABBY (cont'd)
You know that I can vividly
remember my first day of
kindergarten? I wore a light blue
dress, and I was there no more than
10 minutes before some boy asked me
what was wrong with my face... It
was the first time I realized that
I had something to be ashamed of.

STEPHEN
No you don't, Abby.

ABBY
Stephen, you're supposed to be
impartial... remember?

He nods.

ABBY (cont'd)

It's nothing I can run away from. What that boy asked me when I was 5 years old is what people want to ask me everyday of my life. I wake up every morning with a pit in my stomach. Dreading the day ahead. No matter how old I get the feeling never goes away... and whenever I have to meet someone for the first time... I'm always going to be that 5 year old girl again.

Stephen studies her as her eyes drift back to the floor.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry you have to go through that.

ABBY

Can I show you something? Something that it takes a lot for me to do... something I don't show many people.

Stephen nods his head. She contemplates what she's about to do for a moment, but then stands up from her seat.

She unbuttons her shirt and slides the cloth off of her shoulders. She's wearing a simple cotton bra. Her deep red BIRTHMARK runs down her neck - across her shoulders - over her right breast.

She lets the shirt fall to the ground. The birthmark runs down the whole right side of her stomach.

She unbuttons her jeans and lets them fall to her ankles. She steps out of them. The mark continues on. Across her hip - over her entire thigh and down past her knee.

She looks at Stephen, like she's waiting for a response.

Stephen looks in her eyes. Not wanting to make her feel self-conscious in any way. She steps closer to him. Her midriff just inches from his face.

She looks down at him and places her hand on the side of his neck, just under his ear. He looks up at her and sees what she wants. A want to completely let go.

Stephen takes her wrist and gently pulls it away from him.

STEPHEN

Abby...

He gets up. She puts her face closer to him, and presses her lips against his. For a moment, they kiss, but he pulls away.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
I can't, I'm sorry.

ABBY
Why?

STEPHEN
My heart's somewhere else right now.

He knows it sounds stupid.

ABBY
What does that even mean?

She pulls away from him - and in that moment - she feels truly naked. She picks up her clothes, presses them against her and quickly turns away from him.

ABBY (cont'd)
Please go...

STEPHEN
Abby I--

ABBY
Please... just go...

He wants to say something else, but doesn't. He leaves.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

Stephen and Quaid sit on the front steps sharing a beer.

STEPHEN
I felt it inappropriate to gather my things. Please, just pick up the camera, you don't need to say anything to her.

QUAID
Can I watch the tape?

STEPHEN
If you must, but don't dump the footage on the hard drive. I don't want to use it.

QUAID
Why didn't you just fuck her?

STEPHEN

I don't think of her that way.

QUAID

You're afraid Cheryl would find out.

STEPHEN

That has nothing to do with it.

QUAID

Oh, so I can show her the tape.

Stephen stumbles, and gives in.

STEPHEN

Can you just cut me a break?

QUAID

Listen, Cheryl carries a lot of baggage, and I don't want to see you get hurt. Not to mention I don't like you pissing in the well.

STEPHEN

Quaid, It's a school project, it's not like we're curing cancer.

QUAID

Is that all this is to you Stephen, a school project?

Stephen chooses his next words wisely.

STEPHEN

You know what I mean.

Quaid glares him for a long moment.

QUAID

We're friends, right?

STEPHEN

Yes.

QUAID

So of course I'm going to help you. I'll get the camera, I'll toss the tape... Anything else?

STEPHEN

I'm taking the car tonight.

Quaid's a bit surprised.

QUAID

Good for you.

STEPHEN

I know you thought it was going to be some great cathartic challenge for me... but it's just a car Quaid.

QUAID

Yes. It is just a car when you're trying to get into a girl's pants. But it can be something else entirely when you're not expecting it... I assume you're taking Cheryl out.

Stephen studies Quaid's face, and cracks a smile.

QUAID (cont'd)

You better make sure the trunks empty... she's gonna have a couple bags with her.

The two of them laugh.

STEPHEN

Shut the fuck up.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, DRIVEWAY - DAY

Stephen fidgets behind the wheel of the MUSTANG. After a long moment, he starts the engine and backs out of the driveway.

EXT. STEPHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stephen sits in the car outside of Cheryl's dorm. Sitting on the passenger seat is POE'S CAGE. The large black bird sitting inside of it.

Cheryl exits the building and gets into the car. She puts the cage on her lap.

CHERYL

How many points does this get me on the karma scale?

STEPHEN

Well I get most of them because I took care of the bird.

CHERYL

But you're only doing this to get me alone in the middle of nowhere.

STEPHEN
 Alright, we'll split them.

Stephen pulls off.

INT. ABBY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Abby throws the CAMERA CASE on her bed. Quaid stands on the other side of it.

QUAID
 Do you want the tape?

Abby looks down at it, then back to Quaid.

ABBY
 No.

Quaid studies her for a long moment, her air of sadness.

QUAID
 Do you want to stop feeling sorry
 for yourself?

Quaid shoots her a smile. Sincere and charming. She cracks.

INT. ROCK CLUB - NIGHT

Quaid and Abby dance closely in a throng of punk rockers. The music, heavy and melodic, moves through both of them. It's obvious they've been drinking, and she's loose in his grasp.

He takes her off guard and kisses her neck. She drops her head back and lets him explore the skin down to her breastbone. Then she brings her lips close to Quaid's ear.

ABBY
 Can you paint me... can you paint
 me normal?

Quaid meets her eyes and pulls her from the crowd.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BASEMENT - NIGHT

The room is quiet. Quaid's easel glistens with fresh paint. The canvas covered with pigment.

The beautiful figure of woman. ABBY, naked and fragile on the canvas. Her body the color of milk. Her birthmark washed away with the hues of normalcy.

INT. QUAID'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quaid kisses the redness of Abby's flesh. The darker tones between her thighs, under her breasts, on the dimples that crest her tailbone.

He runs his hands over her body, and she accepts him with every inch.

EXT. VISTA POINT - NIGHT

Stephen and Cheryl play at each other like children at the edge of a beautiful vista point. The stars above them, the trees behind. Stephen's car sits next to them, the radio on, the windows down.

They dance around a fire like witches beckoning the devil, except they offer gifts of wine and marshmallows instead of crimson daggers and virgin sacrifice.

ON QUAID'S BED

Quaid lays on top of Abby - forcing her arms above her head. She grips the headboard as he enters her. She gasps and wraps her feet around his thighs, pulling him deeper inside her.

AT THE VISTA POINT

Dawn approaches, Stephen and Cheryl stand at the edge of the vista point. Cheryl holds POE'S CAGE - Stephen opens its door, helps the bird out, and as the morning air touches its wings, the crow takes flight.

Stephen jumps up on the hood of the car, a wine bottle in his hand, and yells to the gods as the black bird disappears into the morning sky.

Cheryl lays down on the hood behind him. She pulls him down toward her, he collapses at her side. The moment takes hold of him and as the sun embraces the horizon, and he finds the courage to kiss her.

IN QUAID'S BEDROOM

Abby and Quaid fuck. He's no longer gentle, no longer attentive, but she doesn't care, all she wants is his flesh pressed against her.

For a moment her fingers release the headboard. Quaid retaliates and fastens her wrists together with one of his hands. Her grip tightens and she begins to cum.

*
*

Her knuckles whiten, her anatomy constricts and she writhes with each flushing wave that courses through her.

Quaid releases her wrists, grabs the her hair at the nape of her neck, and lets himself orgasm. Abby's pleasure becomes vocal when Quaid cums inside her. *

Their bodies, blushed with blood and adrenaline, begin to cool. Sweat beading, muscles relaxing. *

Quaid rest his head down on her breast, then looks at her, kisses her... bites her lip... *

ABBY *

Go down on me... please... please. *

He kisses her neck, her collar, her breast... *

Grazing every rib to greet the line of her abdomen... then slowly moving on down to her bell-- *

QUAID RECOILS IN HORROR AS HE REACHES HER MIDSECTION-- *

HER BODY HAS BEEN SEVERED AT THE WAIST-- *

Crudely cleaved in two by-- *

AN AXE - laying drenched with gore on the bed beside him - the lower half of her body discarded at the bottom of the bed - her eyes now empty in death. *

Quaid lets out a huff of disgust - whirls his head around to look for the killer - the axe man - and just as his heart is about to explode in his chest, he-- *

Sits upright in bed... A dream. *

INT. QUAID'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He looks around the darkness of the room. His heavy breaths subsiding to a calmer rhythm. He slides to the side of the bed and puts his feet to the cold floor.

Abby wakes at his side.

ABBY

Are you Ok? Did you have a nightmare?

He looks to her. Studies her, the wheels turning in his head.

QUAID

You're lucky Abby... the stain you have is on the outside.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - DAY

Quaid sits at the interview table. The harsh light shining.

STEPHEN (O.S.)
What is your strongest memory of
feeling fear?

Quaid stares straight ahead, his eyes focused.

QUAID
My Life is a labyrinth; a map of
its complexities is etched on my
face in a thousand tiny
expressions...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Stephen, Cheryl and Quaid collect more interviews. They sit with various people... different ages, ethnicities, sexes.

BACK TO QUAID'S INTERVIEW

QUAID (cont'd)
There's an answer in what we're
doing... a remedy that no fucking
medication or quack therapy could
ever compete with.

Cheryl continues to edit footage together, Stephen sits next to her, making suggestions as they go. The end is in sight.

BACK TO QUAID'S INTERVIEW

QUAID (cont'd)
But sometimes I get discouraged.
Maybe I'm not being clear enough.
Maybe I need to be honest with you
and tell you what I want.

*

STEPHEN, CHERYL AND QUAID HANG OUT AT THE PUB

Stephen and Cheryl joke with the WAITRESS and the PEOPLE AT THE TABLE NEXT TO THEM. Quaid sits quietly. His drink in his hand. He studies them, studies everyone.

From Quaid's POV... we see things... the way he sees things. Everyone around him, Stephen, Cheryl, the waitress, they're all covered in blood.

Their hair, their clothes...

Blood stained teeth, grinning faces of crimson.

Quaid tries to cover the disturbance on his face.

BACK TO QUAID'S INTERVIEW

CHERYL (O.S.)

What is it that you want?

QUAID

I want your soul to open up for me.
Spread-eagled like a split beaver,
so I can gaze into its secrets...

Quaid smiles at his own crass language. He looks at the room before him, but there's no camera, no Stephen or Cheryl, no interview at all.

Quaid's smile dissipates - he is alone, and it shows on his face. After a moment--

The front door opens and Stephen and Cheryl enter the house. Stephen has a bag of groceries. Cheryl heads toward the basement with her BACKPACK. Stephen turns to Quaid.

STEPHEN

(to Quaid)

Last one. She'll be here in like
10. I bought some beer and shit.
We're going to have to cram tonight
to get everything done.

Quaid nods and gets out of the chair.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

A STILETTO BOOT bounces at the knee of a WOMAN'S tightly crossed legs. TABITHA SWAN (30), the fear study's last interview. She is pale skinned, vampish. Leather choker around her throat. Piercing in the center of her lip.

TABITHA

I spent the better part of 20 years
confined to a house. My mother's
house.

She drinks whiskey. The piercing clinking on the glass.

TABITHA (cont'd)

At a young age she diagnosed me
with female hysteria, based on my
graphic display of symptoms...
Insomnia, depression, loss of
appetite for food and sex, and a
just a plain old tendency to cause
trouble.

TABITHA (cont'd)

To be fair to my sexual appetite, I was only 7 at the time... so that may have been misdiagnosed.

The atmosphere is more casual. Like the last day of school before summer vacation. Stephen sits in the chair in front of her. Cheryl and Quaid lean up against the wall.

TABITHA (cont'd)

Later, I'd be professionally diagnosed with agoraphobia. Rapunzel was an agoraphobic and I grew my hair to rival hers. Her's was blonde and pretty, where as mine was unbrushed and matted. We were of like minds though.

STEPHEN

So you wouldn't leave your house?

*

TABITHA

It wasn't living. I was in a box... In a coffin. Experiencing anything was unbearable... you could never understand... Imagine you're just a child, and you're at an amusement park for the first time... and you're separated from your family. You lose them in the crowd. It's being lost for the first time... all the time. The vastness of the sky itself paralyzed me... as if it could just utterly absorb me.

CHERYL

How did you do anything, get food, toilet paper?

*

TABITHA

I was completely dependant on my mother. And I developed a severe hatred for her. I never knew my father, but completely understood his absence. She was the cause of everything horrible in my life... but she was my only friend. She died on my 26th birthday. Heart attack. I didn't tell anyone, didn't call anyone. I couldn't. Never had. After about 3 weeks the neighbors noticed the smell. They came over and called an ambulance. After that they checked up on me quite frequently, got me groceries.

TABITHA (cont'd)

It's a good thing too, because the day I tried to commit suicide they found me.

Stephen and Cheryl are a bit taken back by her comment. Quaid watches her, expressionless.

STEPHEN

Do you mind talking about it?

TABITHA

I cut my throat with a razor.

She pulls down the leather choker to reveal a long SCAR running across her jugular.

TABITHA (cont'd)

I was dead for five minutes. But that's exactly why I'm here. 3 years ago I couldn't even walk down my front steps... I had never been with a man, now I've been with lots.

She smiles at Stephen. He clears his throat.

TABITHA (cont'd)

I'd never spent the night outdoors, or rode on a roller coaster, or made friends at a coffee shop, or swam naked in the ocean. I've done all these things. And it's because when I came back, I came back completely fearless.

QUAID

You're a fucking liar.

Quaid turns on her.

CHERYL

Quaid--

TABITHA

Excuse me?

QUAID

You're full of shit. You don't come in here and lie to me and tell me you're fucking fearless.

She looks at Stephen and Cheryl.

TABITHA

What is this, is this a joke? I didn't come here to be treated like this.

Quaid goes at her, she stumbles back on her chair as fear grips hold of her. Quaid catches her from behind and wraps his hand around her throat. Stephen lunges to stop him.

STEPHEN

STOP.

Quaid tears the leather choker from her neck. He digs his fingers into her skin and--

PEELS THE SCAR FROM HER FLESH - IT'S LATEX - FAKE.

He throws it to the ground, she stumbles against the wall, nearly falling over.

TABITHA

You asshole... I just thought it would be good for my reel.

QUAID

This isn't reality television. Get the fuck out.

She stands up firm on her stilettos.

TABITHA

Fuck you.

She stomps out through the front door.

CHERYL

Have you completely lost your mind? You can't just attack somebody like that.

QUAID

I was right wasn't I.

CHERYL

Who cares... what's it to us. I don't feel like getting arrested for assault.

QUAID

Who cares?

Quaid studies them... seething...

QUAID (cont'd)
It's just a school project, right?

STEPHEN
Yes. Exactly. I don't know what
your warped sensibilities has
twisted this into--

Quaid can't contain himself and THROWS OVER the interview
table. Stephen steps in front of Cheryl.

QUAID
This was never about a school
assignment. I COULD GIVE A FUCK
ABOUT YOUR THESIS--

Quaid rushes the camera and grabs it from its tripod. He
SMASHES it against the wall. Its pieces drop to the floor.

Quaid moves for the hallway, opens the closet door, and pulls
out a baseball bat.

STEPHEN
Stop it Quaid, what are you doing?

Stephen grabs hold of his shoulder, Quaid pushes him away and
runs down into the basement--

Cheryl and Stephen run down the stairs after him. When Quaid
hits the bottom he immediately ATTACKS THE EDITING BAY.

CHERYL
NO--

He swings the bat - shattering the computer screen - then
down onto the hard drive tower, it splits, spilling its
artificial innards across the concrete floor. He hits it
again, and again, destroying it. Cheryl and Stephen watch
helplessly as everything is lost.

Quaid stands over the wreckage breathless.

Cheryl just shakes her head, not finding the words. Quaid
stares at her, his eyes cold. She grits her teeth and runs up
the stairs.

Stephen runs up after her.

UPSTAIRS

Cheryl grabs her BACKPACK and runs for the front door.

STEPHEN
Cheryl?

CHERYL
Just leave me alone...

STEPHEN
Cheryl? Hold on.

She hits the door, and hurries down the walkway. Stephen watches her go.

After a moment, Quaid approaches from behind, the baseball bat still in his hand.

QUAID
Did you ever fuck her or what?
Stephen turns, the anger churning in his gut.

QUAID (cont'd)
What does she sound like when she
cums?

STEPHEN
That's enough...

QUAID
She's a quiet one I bet. Lets it
build up in her cunt--
Stephen PUNCHES Quaid in the mouth.

STEPHEN
I said that's enough... What you
just did...
Stephen can't find the words.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
You don't even give a shit.
Quaid's a bit shocked. Tasting the blood on his lip.

QUAID
Good thing I didn't try to take
your watch again.
Stephen can't take it any more. He takes off. Galloping
toward the street to try to catch up with Cheryl.

INT. CHERYL'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Cheryl barges into her dorm room, frazzled from the night's events. She throws her BACKPACK down onto her bed, but when she does, she sees there's a DVD in the front pocket.

She grabs it. Written on its surface it reads:

WATCH ME

Cheryl sits at her laptop and slides in the DVD. The window pops up and she presses PLAY.

The computer hums as the footage plays--

IT'S ABBY'S INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN.

Abby stands in front of Stephen, stripped down to her underwear. She places her hand on the side of his neck. Stephen stands up from the chair, Abby presses her lips against his. They kiss.

THE IMAGE STOPS. AND STARTS AGAIN.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF CHERYL'S DORMROOM - DAY

Cheryl steps out of her dormroom with her backpack. Standing in the hallway is Stephen.

STEPHEN

You haven't returned my calls.

CHERYL

I know.

Cheryl heads down the hall. Stephen follows her.

STEPHEN

Cheryl, you're acting like this is my fault.

CHERYL

Stephen, just leave me alone... I just don't want to deal. I have enough problems in my life.

STEPHEN

I'll pay for all the damaged equipment--

Cheryl stops.

CHERYL

Stephen, we didn't start this project so you could take advantage of people and try to get laid.

STEPHEN

What are you talking about?

CHERYL

I saw the footage of you and Abby.

STEPHEN

Cheryl, nothing happened.

CHERYL

I don't even care. Really, I don't.
You didn't do anything wrong, so no
hard feelings. Let's just move on
with our lives.

STEPHEN

I swear to you, nothing--

CHERYL

Listen, I'm not your girlfriend -
we're not dating - so it doesn't
matter... I'll see you around.

She takes off toward the exit, Stephen watches, defeated.

INT. CLASSROOM - EVENING

Stephen steps into a classroom. His film teacher is packing
up his briefcase. Stephen knocks on the door.

STEPHEN

Mr. Kessler?

MR. KESSLER

Mr. Grace, come in.

Stephen walks toward his desk.

STEPHEN

I came to talk to you about our
thesis project--

MR. KESSLER

I thought it was very good. You and
Cheryl created something very
thought provoking, but I won't be
giving grades till the end of the
week.

STEPHEN

What do you mean? I haven't turned
it in.

MR. KESSLER

Cheryl must have, it was in my mail
box this morning... right when it
was due.

MR. KESSLER (cont'd)
 I was very impressed with how the
 two of you convinced people to
 speak so openly and honestly.

*
 *
 *

Stephen stands puzzled for a moment.

*

MR. KESSLER (cont'd)
 Was there something else you wanted
 to tell me?

*
 *
 *

STEPHEN
 No, it's fine... it can wait.

*
 *

Stephen heads back out the door.

*

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

*

Stephen walks down the sidewalk. After a moment a CAR pulls
 up beside him. THE MUSTANG, Quaid behind the wheel.

Stephen shakes his head. Quaid talks through the open window.

*

QUAID
 I'm sorry. I fucked up, I'm fucked
 up, I know.

STEPHEN
 You turned in the film.

*
 *

QUAID
 I couldn't let you fail. I had back
 ups on an external. It was missing
 the last interview, of course.

*
 *
 *
 *

Stephen keeps walking. Quaid follows in the car.

QUAID (cont'd)
 I'll give you the money for the
 equipment. I'll pay for everything.

*
 *

STEPHEN
 Yeah, that's right you will.

*

QUAID
 I will... Now get in and let me
 apologize for being such an
 asshole.

*
 *

Stephen stops, sees something genuine in Quaid's face.
 Stephen opens the door and gets in. Quaid takes off.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

The doorknob turns, the door opens. Cheryl steps inside. She shuts the door and walks toward the basement.

IN THE BASEMENT

Cheryl switches on the light and looks down at the shattered remains of the hard drive tower. She drops to her knees and starts sifting through the mess.

INT. QUAID'S CAR - NIGHT

Quaid races down the dark road.

QUAID

Stephen, I want us to finish our fear study.

STEPHEN

What do you mean? You just turned it in... we're done.

*
*

QUAID

It's not about what we've already done, it's about what we still need to do... I can do this alone, but I don't want to, we're friends, we know each other's secrets... and we started this together. So I'm asking you to finish this with me.

*
*
*
*

STEPHEN

Quaid, the assignments done... I'm done. You want to continue? Then continue. The study was your idea anyway.

*
*

Quaid sits silent. The car picking up speed.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Where are we going?

QUAID

To the limits.

Quaid pulls out a flask of whiskey from his sideboard. Takes a swig. Proffers it to Stephen.

STEPHEN

This is a great apology. Let me out.

QUAID

Loosen up.

STEPHEN

Yeah, I'm fucking loose enough.
Pull over.

QUAID

Drink it.

STEPHEN

I'm not fucking drinking it, Quaid,
pull over--

Quaid takes a corner sharp. The wheels screeching. He steps on the gas. The speedometer rising.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Pull the car over now, Quaid, I'm
not playing your fucking games.

QUAID

It's not a game, Stephen... It's
life. It's you facing your fears
and living. Haven't you ever
wondered what it was like for your
brother? The final moments before
he crashed his car... before he
completely lost control?

STEPHEN

No, Quaid, I don't. I do my best
avoiding having to wonder things
like that, like most rational
people would.

Quaid takes another long drink from the bottle. His eyes
focused on the road. Intense.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

What are you going to do, Quaid,
drive us into a brick wall? What
kind of life lesson is that going
to teach me?

Quaid's eyes are red, glassy, he's drunk... but there's more -
a desperation in his stare.

QUAID

You never know, Stephen, some kind
of resolution could come from it.
There could be a solution in those
final moments... a clue... a way
out...

STEPHEN
A way out of what?

QUAID
Of your dread...

Quaid swerves the car into a large empty parking lot - a factory on the other end. A solid concrete wall.

Quaid lays on the gas and the car picks up speed towards oblivion. 20 MPH... 30 MPH... 40 MPH... 50.

Stephen throws his eyes on Quaid, the fear building--

STEPHEN
What are you doing?

QUAID
Let it take you Stephen, you can't always have control--

STEPHEN
Yes I can. Stop the fucking car.

Faster and faster. 70 MPH... 80 MPH... Stephen's freaking out now... his mind slipping... regressing. The dread having its way with him.

QUAID
It's the only way. Feel what your brother felt before the steel crumpled in on him like a tin can.

STEPHEN
NO---

Closer and closer. The wall barreling toward them. Top speed now. The gauges pinning--

Stephen's instincts kick in, he lunges at Quaid, grabs the wheel, they almost lose control. The wall closing in on them. Quaid's eyes red with intensity. Stephen screams at the top of his lungs and--

QUAID SLAMS ON THE BREAKS JUST BEFORE ITS TOO LATE. THE CAR SCREECHES TO A HALT.

Stephen jumps from the drivers side door. His heart pounding. He drops to his knees.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
You fucking asshole.

Quaid stares through the windshield. He's silent, hands on the wheel. His body trembling with adrenaline.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
You've lost it Quaid. Don't fucking
come looking for me again--

Stephen gathers himself as best he can and heads across the parking lot--

Quaid finally turns to him.

QUAID
Wait... I'm drunk, I'm sorry...
please, just drive me home.

STEPHEN
Fuck off.

Stephen continues on. Quaid seems helpless, full of grief.

QUAID
I need help Stephen.

STEPHEN
You're on your own Quaid.

With that, Stephen's gone, and Quaid's left in the car alone.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

Quaid pulls up in front of the house, turns off the engine. He gathers himself and steps from the car.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Cheryl collects pieces of the hard drive, but then--

The light bulb above her head POPS, bathing the basement in darkness. Cheryl sifts through her pocket and pulls out a small LED light attached to her key chain.

She switches it ON. On the other side of the basement there's a tall shelf. She walks to it and searches it for light bulbs. She finds a casing but it's empty.

Next to the shelving is an open archway leading into another part of the basement. Inside, more shelving. Cheryl steps into the nearly pitch black room, sees a cord dangling from the ceiling. She pulls it and the room floods with light.

After a moment, she finds a case of light bulbs. One left. As she turns around to leave, she sees that at the back of the room there's a LARGE BLUE TARP covering something substantial. Cheryl walks to it, and looks underneath.

Canvases. She steps back and YANKS OFF THE TARP.

Cheryl is taken a back by the sight underneath.

PAINTINGS. Dozens of Quaid's paintings. All figures. All nudes, but Quaid has modified them--

Each figure is covered in horrible GASHES. Dark red streaks. Black chasms dug through painted pink flesh. Then--

QUAID (O.S.)

What are you doing here?

Cheryl spins around, QUAID'S AT THE DOORWAY.

CHERYL

I came to see if I could salvage
the hard drive...

Quaid steps closer - looks at the paintings.

QUAID

If it looks like madness... It must
be, right? Is that what you're
thinking?

CHERYL

I don't know what I'm thinking...

Quaid just stares at her.

CHERYL (cont'd)

I'm gonna go.

QUAID

Ask me what I want.

Cheryl shakes her head.

QUAID (cont'd)

Go ahead, ask me.

CHERYL

What do you want?

QUAID

I want to take our study to the
next level.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - MORNING

It's a beautiful morning, the sky clear, the streets quiet, nothing up yet. Quaid walks out onto his front steps, drinking a cup of coffee, taking in the crisp air.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, TOP FLOOR - DAY

Quaid is in a SMALL ROOM at the end of the hall. There are items in the hallway. A rolled up rug, boxes, some books.

Quaid kneels in the middle of the SMALL ROOM on the top floor. He puts a table together and sits it upright.

Quaid wipes the top of the table clean with a cloth.

He places a STEEL BUCKET in the corner of the room, drapes a WHITE TOWEL over it. Then--

The SOUND of DRILLING can be heard.

EXT. STEPHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stephen trudges up the steps of his apartment building.

INT. STEPHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stephen walks in to his tiny apartment. He throws his keys on a table. He sees there's a message on his answering machine.

He presses play. The machine speaks.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
You have two new messages.

GUY'S VOICE (V.O.)
Is this the number for the fear
study? My name's Philip Grady, I
work at Tetherdowne Juvenile
detention center--

Stephen deletes the message.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
Next message.

STEPHEN'S MOTHER (V.O.)
Stephen, pick up honey... Your
father and I would really like for
you to come home for a couple weeks
over your summer break--

STEPHEN'S FATHER (V.O.)
(Singing)
School's out for summer... school's
out forever...

STEPHEN'S MOTHER (V.O.)
Your father's been listening to
Alice Cooper again...

Stephen laughs.

STEPHEN'S MOTHER (cont'd)
We know your busy honey... Call us
when you get in. Love you.

The machine stops. Stephen picks up the phone, dials. After
two rings CHERYL'S VOICE MAIL PICKS UP.

STEPHEN
It's me again... Call me back and I
promise I won't complicate your
life... I just want to talk... bye.

He hangs up.

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Stephen closes out the register at the end of the day.

He places returned books back on the shelf.

IN THE BACK ROOM, He opens his locker and takes his bag out.
Then, there's a knock on the doorframe behind him. Stephen
turns, and ABBY is standing in the archway.

A six pack of beer in her hand.

ABBY
Hey...

STEPHEN
Hey.

ABBY
Semester's over and we didn't say
goodbye... And I'm going back home
tomorrow... I just don't want to
leave it like we left it.

Stephen smiles at her.

STEPHEN
And you brought beer.

She smiles back.

ABBY

It's closing time, right?

INT. CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, BACKROOM - LATER

Stephen and Abby sits on the floor laughing with each other. Drinking the beer. Things seem like old times again.

STEPHEN

He had the weirdest... smell... I don't know. I'm glad he quit.

ABBY

He hired me just a week before...

STEPHEN

Good thing, I never would have.

She hits him.

ABBY

You were a better boss anyway.

Stephen takes a drink. Abby loses herself in thought.

ABBY (cont'd)

You always knew I had a big crush on you... right?

Stephen looks at her oblivious. Or at least acting it. He shakes his head.

STEPHEN

No I didn't. I never really thought about it.

She stares at him, wanting to say so much...

ABBY

I... I slept with Quaid.

Stephen's a bit taken back.

ABBY (cont'd)

I feel bad about it... it happened the night he came to pick up the tape. I was stupid.

STEPHEN

Are you still--

ABBY

No, I haven't talked to him since.

Stephen's relieved.

STEPHEN

Good.

She tries to read into it.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

You're better off just staying away from him.

She takes his word for it and nods her head. Stephen finishes his last swig of beer.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Lets lock up. I'll walk you back to your dorm.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUSS - NIGHT

Stephen walks Abby across campus. They walk through the quad and cut across a COMMON AREA.

When they enter, there's a group of students, around 15 or so, who have gathered at one of the campus televisions hanging on the wall.

Stephen and Abby walk closer to get a better look. Stephen turns to one of the other students.

STEPHEN

What's going on?

MALE STUDENT

This weird video started playing on the campus channel.

Abby stops in her tracks when she sees the image on the screen. IT'S HER--

The footage of Abby taking off her clothes for Stephen during the interview. Then--

A voyeuristic angle of her standing naked for Quaid. Revealing her body and her birthmark for Quaid to paint.

Abby's horrified, she stares at the screen.... Stephen watches, not knowing what to do, as the other students realize that it's ABBY STANDING WITH THEM.

They look at her, see the tears building in her eyes, and know they've seen something forbidden.

MALE STUDENT (cont'd)
(to Stephen)
This is on every TV across campus
right now.

The image on the screen changes to handheld footage of *QUAID'S PAINTING OF ABBY. Her without her birthmark. Her painted normal.*

Quaid's hand enters the frame with a paintbrush and begins covering the right side of her figure with dark paint--

He fills in the stains of her birthmark. Quaid's free hand grabs a WHITE DRAWING PAD. WORDS WRITTEN IN RED SCRIBBLED ON IT. A MESSAGE TO ABBY--

THIS IS YOUR REALITY.

Then another page. Large red letters--

YOU WILL NEVER BE NORMAL.

Abby pushes through the students and runs from the scene. Stephen chases after her.

STEPHEN
Abby?

She bolts across campus and Stephen follows. She rounds a corner and when Stephen reaches it--

She's gone. He's lost her.

INT. ABBY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

In Abby's dorm room, the TV's on. The VIDEO playing on the college's channel.

Abby's in her bathroom, staring at herself in the mirror. Staring at the deep red stain running down her face.

EXT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

Knuckles RAP on the house's front door. After a moment, Quaid answers. He sees, standing on the steps, is JOSHUA SHAW.

Quaid smiles.

QUAID
Josh, you made it, good. Come in.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - CONTINUOUS

Joshua steps inside and follows Quaid into the living room.

QUAID

Thanks for coming. When I was reviewing your tape - I realized there were a few more questions we should have asked you. Your interview was so compelling - I didn't want to leave any stone unturned.

JOSHUA

That's alright, I didn't mind coming back. Are Stephen and Cheryl here?

QUAID

No, they couldn't make it tonight. Can I get you a drink?

JOSHUA

Sure.

QUAID

Jack & Coke good?

JOSHUA

That's fine.

Quaid walks to the kitchen. Joshua looks at the books on Quaid's shelf. Quaid steps back in with the Jack bottle and starts to make the two drinks on a nearby cart.

QUAID

You want ice, right?

JOSHUA

Yeah... You have a cool collection. Nausea by Jean-Paul Sartre, I always wanted to read this.

He pulls it down and opens its cover.

JOSHUA (cont'd)

I've read *No Exit*, but always heard this was better...

Joshua turns back to Quaid, and just as he does--

QUAID SLAMS THE LIQUOR BOTTLE AGAINST THE SIDE OF HIS HEAD.

Joshua hits the bookshelf and falls to the ground hard. He shakes his head, reeling from the impact.

JOSHUA (cont'd)
...what the fuc...

Quaid, heavy with adrenaline, pulls NYLON TIES from his back pocket. He twists Joshua's arms behind his back and fastens his wrists together - then grabs another TIE and quickly binds his ankles.

Joshua, still conscious, tries to get to a kneeling position. QUAID HITS HIM AGAIN--

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET - NIGHT

Joshua's tear stained eyes flutter open. In a moment, he realizes his situation.

He's sitting on the floor. His wrists and ankles are still bound. But now his neck is fastened to one of the house's support beams--

Quaid is sitting in front of him, also on the floor. Beside Quaid is the video camera - pointed directly at Joshua.

QUAID
Good, you're awake... I was getting
tired of waiting.

Joshua then realizes something else--

There's a LEATHER STRAP running tightly under his chin. A belt. The belt circles his entire head, and where it crosses his ears, on each side, the belt is attached to a heavy drinking glass--

Each glass is filled with a thick gray Styrofoam, like the inside of a lighting case--

And each glass engulf one of his ears.

The makeshift contraption completely muddles Joshua's hearing. Quaid studies his face, studies the workmanship of his ramshackle device.

QUAID (cont'd)
Can you hear me?

From Joshua's POV--

Quaid's voice sounds as if it were under water.

QUAID (cont'd)
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Quaid yells at the top of his lungs. Joshua, tears running down his face, shakes his head "NO". Then tries to speak...

JOSHUA
Please... why are you doing this--

QUAID
No huh? I think you can still hear me.

Quaid shakes his head - unsatisfied.

QUAID (cont'd)
You look like a goddamn fool. A
fucking spaceman... I don't know
what I was thinking.

Quaid shuffles to his feet and takes the harness off Joshua's head. A gleam of hope flitters across Joshua's eyes as Quaid drops the contraption to the floor. Then--

Quaid walks to a nearby table and grabs a PISTOL. Joshua begins to scream for help - sensing his demise fast approaching.

Quaid stands there looking down on him, studying his pleading features. And then, Quaid places the barrel of the gun next to JOSHUA'S EAR... AND PULLS THE TRIGGER.

The sound from the blast ruptures Joshua's sensitive eardrum. Blood pours from the ear. He screams out in pain.

Quaid places the gun next to Joshua's other ear and pulls the trigger again... And blood drains from the orifice.

Quaid steps back and watches the show.

Joshua tries to clear his ear canal. Clenching his jaw, then opening his mouth, clenching his jaw... then opening his mouth. The process provides no relief, just more tears.

QUAID (cont'd)
How does that sound little man, is
that better?

Joshua doesn't respond - just moans in pain. Quaid wails, mimicking Joshua's sobs.

Quaid's yells rattle the rafters... then they transform into ROARS. It's a roar of clarity. Clarity of purpose.

Joshua hears nothing but silence.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

A car turns off its engine. Quaid gets out from the driver's side and walks to the back door. He opens it and Joshua lies crumpled inside. His ears bleeding, his eyes bloodshot.

Quaid drags Joshua out of the car and lays him next to a dumpster. He's conscious, but his stare is distant.

Quaid pulls Joshua's face toward him.

QUAID

Take solace in this, you faced the
beast... The beast won.

Quaid leaves him, gets into the car, and drives away.

INT. ROCK CLUB - NIGHT

Abby moves on the dance floor, writhing to the music, pressing against strangers as they grope at her flesh. She's drunk, lost, the guy behind her runs his hand across her breast, she doesn't care--

At the bar. She downs a shot of tequila. The GUY with her drops a RED PILL onto his tongue. She kisses him, takes the pill into her mouth and washes it down with another shot. She doesn't care, doesn't care about anything.

Back on the dance floor, she pulses, caught in the undertow. The crowd moves with her, seething like serpents, crashing like rogue waves. She's numb.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY WASH ROOM - LATER

Silence. A drip of water echoes through the white room. Laid out beside the tub are two jugs of BLEACH. A STEEL WOOL PAD on the tile next to them.

Abby stands barefoot on the cold floor. Her body quivering. She lets her dress fall to her ankles. Her eyes, tear stained and distant, look to the floor, down at her OPEN PURSE. Her cell phone inside it.

INT. STEPHEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Stephen's cell phone rings. He answers it. A muffled voice, barely audible on the other end.

STEPHEN

Hello?

ABBY (FILTERED)

Stephen...

She's been crying.

STEPHEN

Abby? Where are you?

ABBY

Would you like me if I was prettier... perfect like my sisters.

STEPHEN

What are you talking about? Tell me where you are?

The line goes dead. Stephen throws his phone into his pocket and heads for the door.

INT. DORMITORY WASH ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Naked, ABBY steps into the bathtub, the water shallow. She picks up the steel wool and presses it against her arm - her birthmark. She scrapes the flesh. Hard and steady.

The steel wool gathers her flesh between its weaves. The blood lubricates, she presses harder and the layers begin to slough away like wet tissue paper...

She drops the steel wool into the tub. Grabs the JUG OF BLEACH. Pours it over the raw abrasion. She winces, cries, but continues.

She scours her neck, her breast, her ribs. The bleach removes the carnage, taking the stain with it. It washes into the tub. The dermis floating between her thighs.

INT. DORM HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Abby stumbles out of the dormitory wash room. She's naked. Covered in blood. Her deep wounds exposed. Half her face, half her body... mutilated. Dazed, she walks against the wall. Her blood staining its surface as she goes.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR

Stephen rushes into Abby's dormitory. He heads for the stairwell.

IN THE HALLWAY

Abby continues, bloody footsteps behind her. She falls against one of the doors and continues on. After a moment, someone comes out of the dorm. A girl, she's terror stricken when she sees Abby.

She shouts at someone in her room.

DORM GIRL
Call an ambulance...

When she does, other people step from their rooms to see what's going on. The students gasp when they see Abby, blankly trudging down the hallway.

Stephen hits the top of the steps and sees her.

STEPHEN
Abby... Oh my God... Abby.

He rushes up to her, she collapses, but he catches her. They slide to the ground. Her blood covering him.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS

A voice fills the void - a quiet, sad, whisper.

JOSHUA (V.O.)
Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon this little child,
Pity my... pity my...
Pity my simplicity.
Suffer me to come to thee.
That would make it all better...
And the sleep, a balm, was
blue and deep.

Images fill the darkness--

JOSHUA SCREAMING FOR HELP. THE GUNSHOTS. THE BLOOD. QUAID.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

JOSHUA SHAW'S eyes flutter open. It's dark, and he's lying in a hospital bed. His head is bandaged. His skull, covered with gauze. The machines humming and beeping around him. But from his POV, the world is as silent as death. Nothing.

TWO NURSES ARE TALKING OUTSIDE OF HIS ROOM.

NURSE 1 (O.S.)
What's John Doe's story.

NURSE 2 (O.S.)
Still no word from the officer that
dropped him off last night.

NURSE 1 (O.S.)
We gotta start tattooing ID's on
the back of their heads at birth--

The two nurses step away from the room.

INT. ABBY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Stephen stands at the door of Abby's hospital room. She's in bed. Completely bandaged. Tubes in her arms. Her eyes closed. *
The heart monitor beeping at her side.

Stephen studies her helpless body. Her blood still on him.

After several moments, Stephen steps away. His mind spinning, he continues on down the hall. Then--

TWO NURSES PASS BY HIM. The nurses that were standing outside of Joshua's room.

IN JOSHUA'S ROOM

Joshua sits up from the bed and places his bare feet on the cold linoleum below. He looks to the open door, and as he does, he sees STEPHEN PASSING BY.

He gets up and walks to the door. He watches Stephen as he rounds the corner at the end of the hall.

Joshua leaves the room and slowly trudges after him.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stephen walks toward the exit, but stops, when something catches his eye--

A fire extinguisher hanging on the wall, red and bright. Beside it is a long black hose, curled up on a red drum like a sleeping snake. Beside that, sitting in a glass case--

Is an AXE.

A very pretty AXE. Joshua watches him from the end of the hall. Stephen doesn't see him.

QUAID'S VOICE races through Stephen's head.

QUAID (V.O.)

*My parents died when I was just six
years old. Killed right in front of
my eyes.*

**IMAGES - THE AXE CUTTING - SEVERING - THE SLAUGHTER OF
QUAID'S PARENTS--**

Stephen focuses on the axe, the wheels turning.

QUAID (V.O.) (cont'd)

*And every night since... the dreams
have been the same...*

**IMAGES - THE AXE MAN WALKING UP THE STEPS - DRAGGING THE AXE
BEHIND HIM - GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER TO YOUNG QUAID.**

Something clicks in Stephen's mind. He opens the glass case,
and touches the axe's dusty blade.

INT. ABBY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

*

Abby's hand clutches onto the bar of the hospital bed. Her
body in the throes of a nightmare. Asleep, she whispers...

*

*

ABBY

*

Stephen... Stephen...

*

She wakes with a start, and feels only pain. She panics when
she realizes where she is, and reaches for the NURSE'S CALL
BUTTON. She presses it. Again, and again.

*

*

*

INT. QUAID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A door closes, Quaid wakes when he hears it. He sits up in
bed, scans the dark room. Holds his breath and listens--

A CREAK--

Coming from the bottom of the stairwell. This is not a
dream... it's real this time.

Quaid stares into the hallway through the bedroom door. The
moon throwing its beam onto the top of the stairwell.

Quaid get up and slowly walks to the threshold. Again--

A creak on the stairs, a tiny noise as though a breath had
landed on it. Quaid, frozen, grips onto the door frame,
digging his nails into the wood...

Has his dread finally found him? After all these years.
Another creak... coming up the stairs towards him.

ON THE STAIRCASE

STEPHEN GRACE ascends the steps. The fire axe in his hand.
Determination on his face. Determination to give Quaid a
taste of his own medicine.

QUAID can't find the strength to run. The creaking louder
now, faster, getting closer by the second... and then--

THE AXE appears in the moonlight at the top of the stairwell.
It glints its wicked smile. Quaid's eyes fill with terror.
The terror of a young boy--

Stephen steps onto the landing, his face concealed by shadow.
Abby's blood stains on his clothes.

But Quaid doesn't see Stephen at the end of the hall...

He sees the AXE MAN.

STEPHEN/AXE MAN

Quaid...

And with that, Quaid finds the strength to run, barreling
back into the bedroom as STEPHEN/THE AXE MAN CHARGES--

The axe swings up over his head, a guttural screech from his
throat filling the hall as he bounds toward the bedroom.

Quaid manages to close and lock the door just as--

THE AXE EXPLODES THROUGH THE WOOD.

Quaid falls to the ground and slides to the bed frame. The
axe hits again and Quaid yells in terror.

IN THE HALL

The axe cuts through the door with the force of a freight
train. STEPHEN scream out at Quaid in frustration. His eyes
wide like saucers. Sweat pouring from his brow, washing
Abby's dried blood away.

He slams the axe into the door again, spewing obscenities
under his breath.

STEPHEN

You did that to her... you fucking
did that... you can't get away with
it... I won't let you.

Stephen's frantic, his fury building with every stroke.

Quaid screams... begs for the nightmare to stop.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
Come on you fucker... come out here
and face your fear... face the
beast you son of a bitch... that's
what you want isn't it.

With each devastating stroke the door is reduced to matchwood. But Quaid can't hear Stephen's voice... can't comprehend anything past his own mortal terror.

Stephen finally slows... emotions overtaking him. Something clicks, and he comes to his senses... murder was never the plan... just dread.

He tries to swing again but can't. The adrenaline draining from his limbs. The blade hits the floor now... Tears welling in Stephen's eyes from utter exhaustion.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
Abby's in the fucking emergency
room Quaid... all because of you...
GET THE FUCK OUT HERE... NOW.

Quaid sits crumpled on the floor in the bedroom, looking out at the darkness through the shattered door... he realizes it's Stephen... only Stephen.

His face suddenly becomes calm. He's been betrayed... he's been humiliated. He gets to his feet.

A MOMENT LATER IN THE HALL

QUAID lunges through the door. His pistol in his hand. Pushes Stephen down the hall toward the staircase.

QUAID
You want to fuck with me... YOU
THINK YOU CAN FUCKING SCARE ME
STEPHEN?

He presses the pistol's barrel into Stephen's temple. Stephen realizes he's in way over his head now.

QUAID (cont'd)
Get rid of the axe... fucking toss
it.

Stephen drops the axe against the wall and it slides down to the bottom of the staircase... Stephen now dangerously close to following it, standing at the very edge of the stairs.

QUAID (cont'd)
Get down on your knees...

STEPHEN
Quaid.

QUAID
GET DOWN.

Stephen drops down to his knees and as soon as he turns back to look at QUAID.

QUAID SLAMS STEPHEN IN THE FACE WITH THE COLD STEEL. It hits hard and solid. Stephen goes out.

INT. ABBY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The nurse rushes to Abby's door and sees that she's awake, she turns back to the hall.

NURSE 1
Get the doctor in here.

The nurse rushes up to Abby. She's in hysterics, due to the pain and medication, everything's a blur.

ABBY
Where's Stephen... is he...

NURSE 1
The boy that was with you? He left just a little while ago.

ABBY
He can't go after Quaid because of me... we have to find him...

NURSE 1
Relax honey... Who's Quaid?

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Steven wakes up bound to a chair. A gash over his eye. His wrists fastened with Nylon ties. His hands pulled between the slots of the wooden back rest.

The room is almost devoid of light. And Quaid stands a few feet in front of him. He's leaning on a Digital Projector pointed at the wall.

Quaid switches on the projector's motor.

QUAID

I've got something to show you.
Results from this school project of
ours have been much more rewarding
as of late.

Quaid's voice is as unemotional as a surgeon's. He clicks a button and the projector comes to life.

THE IMAGE fills up the entire length of one wall. It's flickering picture dancing on the water stained wall paper.

The first image is of a ROOM. The room on the top floor of the house. There's a sleeping bag on the floor. A table, a chair, a bare light bulb. On the table a jug of water. In the corner, a bucket covered with a towel.

On the table next to the jug is WHITE PLATE. On the plate--

A SLAB OF MEAT. The bone sticking out.

STEPHEN

What is that on the table?

QUAID

Beef. Slightly salted, well cooked.

STEPHEN

What the fuck did you do Quaid?

Quaid switches on an AUDIO FEED. Speakers hum to life. Quaid fast forwards the footage of the video projector.

In the fast playback, Stephen sees Quaid carrying CHERYL into the room and slamming the door behind her.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Cheryl...

QUAID

She woke up about 6 AM that morning...

Quaid pauses the video footage. It freezes on Cheryl. She's kicking the door. Her body a blur of fury.

Quaid presses play on the audio, and over the frozen image, CHERYL'S VOICE FILLS THE ROOM. YELLING OBSCENITIES AT QUAID. THE SOUNDS OF HER BEATING THE DOOR TO BE LET OUT.

Stephen begins to yell at the top of his lungs.

STEPHEN

CHERYL... CHERYL.

QUAID

She's not here Stephen. I've
already let her go.

Stephen shakes his head.

STEPHEN

I don't believe you.

QUAID

I swear, she's not here. I just
wanted you to see the next phase of
my study. I'm beginning to get the
results I need.

STEPHEN

You've been planning all this
behind our fucking backs.

QUAID

No, I've kind of just been playing
it by ear. But it's starting to
feel right. Starting to make me
feel a little fucking better. My
nightmares stopped cold.

Quaid fast forwards again, the audio fast forwarding as well.
Again, he freezes it.

The image is of Cheryl sitting in the corner of the room.

QUAID (cont'd)

I think she believed she could out
wait me.

Quaid skips ahead. Lets the image play. Cheryl looks at the
slab of meat, glances at it on the table.

QUAID (cont'd)

Look at the expression on her face.
She hated even the smell of it. And
all those memories of her father
are flooding back to her I'm sure.
Flooding back as if they were
yesterday.

Quaid skips the footage ahead. The next image is of Cheryl
sleeping. Then the next, Cheryl pissing in the bucket.

Stephen pulls at his restraints as he watches Cheryl
squatting over the bucket. Her jeans around her ankles, tear
stains on her face.

Quaid skips ahead. She drinks water. He skips ahead. She sleeps again, curled up in a ball.

STEPHEN

How long has she been in the room?

QUAID

This was only fourteen hours in. She lost track of time very quickly. No light change. Her body clock was fucked up.

STEPHEN

How long did you keep her in there?

QUAID

Til the point was proven.

Quaid plays the footage. Cheryl cruises the meat on the table. Caught glancing down at it.

QUAID (cont'd)

This was the following morning.
Look at her eyes.

There's a certain desperation on Cheryl's face: a haggard, wild look. The way she stared at the meat she could have been trying to hypnotize it.

STEPHEN

She looks sick.

QUAID

She's tired, that's all. She slept a lot, but it seemed to make her more exhausted. She's hungry of course. It's been a day and a half.

The next image, she sleeps. The next, drinks water.

QUAID (cont'd)

I replaced the jug when she was asleep. She slept so deeply I could have danced around in there, it wouldn't have woken her. It stank in there too. You know how a woman smells sometimes; it's not sweat, it's something else. A heavy odor, meaty, bloody. She got her period toward the end of her time. Hadn't planned it that way.

Quaid skips ahead. In the next image--

She touches the meat.

QUAID (cont'd)

This is where the cracks begin to show.

He says it with a quiet triumph in his voice.

QUAID (cont'd)

This is where the dread begins.

Stephen studies the image. Her face is knotted up, half in desire, half in repulsion, as she touches the food.

Quaid lets the image play--

Cheryl's at the door again. Throwing herself at it. The audio blaring with her screams. Her mouth a fury of angst.

QUAID (cont'd)

She always ended up cursing me out when she had a confrontation with the meat.

STEPHEN

How long is this?

QUAID

Coming up to three days. You are looking at a very hungry girl.

STEPHEN

You're starving her.

QUAID

She can go ten days without eating quite easily.

Quaid scans ahead. The next footage is of Cheryl weeping in the corner of the room.

QUAID (cont'd)

About now, she began to hallucinate. Little mental ticks. She'd think she felt something in her hair, something on the back of her neck.

Quaid plays the footage as she swats something from her hair. She looks to the wall, as if there's an insect.

Quaid scans ahead. Stephen looks at the meat on the table. It's much darker now.

STEPHEN

The meat looks--

QUAID

Ripe? It's warm in her little room,
and there's a few flies in there
with her. They've found the meat,
laid their eggs.

STEPHEN

Was that part of the plan?

QUAID

Yes. And that's the crux of her
dilemma, isn't it? The longer she
waits, the worse it gets.

Quaid flies through the video. The image moving quickly.
Sleeping, pissing, watching the meat. Again, and again.

Then he freezes it--

SHE PICKS UP THE MEAT.

Her face full of horror. The beef well rotted now. The
maggots beginning to grow--

She bites it.

The gravy of putrescence running over her tongue.

STEPHEN

You're sick Quaid, nothing but a
fucking sadist.

The next image, she's vomiting in the bucket. Then the next,
she trashes the room. Throws the water jug against the wall.
Smashes the plate. The meat now lying on the floor in a slime
of degeneration.

Quaid scans ahead--

She sleeps.

She stands, looking at the meat again, defying it. The hunger
she feels is plain on her face.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

How long now?

QUAID

Five days... no, six.

STEPHEN

Six days...

Quaid continues. She flings herself against the wall. Her pleads for help filling the room.

In the next footage she sleeps underneath the table. Her breathing heavy. The sleeping-bag torn to pieces.

The next footage, she speaks.

CHERYL (V.O.)

Please... please Quaid, I'm
sorry... I'm sorry, just let me
out... whatever I did, I'm sorry...

The next footage, she eats the rancid meat.

Calmly sitting under the table, like a primitive in her cave, pulling at the meat with her incisors. Her face is expressionless, all her energy bent to the purpose of the moment. To eat.

To eat till the hunger disappears, till the agony in her belly and the sickness in her head completely disappears.

QUAID

It startled me how suddenly she
gave in. She sat under the table
and ate the meat down to the bone.
Just like that.

The next image, she sleeps. The door open. Light pouring in.

And the next... The room is empty.

STEPHEN

Where did she go?

QUAID

She wandered downstairs, came into the kitchen, drank several glasses of water, and sat in the chair for three or four hours without saying a word. I cooked her something to eat, and then she left.

STEPHEN

You're lying. She's still in this house, I know it.

QUAID

Go ahead then, if it will make you feel any better, check the house.

Quaid takes out a pocket knife, walks to the back of the chair, and just as he's about to cut Stephen's restraints--

There's a CRASH on the first floor. The sound of a window breaking. Quaid pulls away, folds the knife into his pocket.

QUAID (cont'd)
Who's with you?

STEPHEN
No one. Cut them Quaid, let me the fuck up.

Quaid leaves the room.

Stephen's left alone. The image from the projector still flickering on the wall. He studies his surroundings. Struggles with the binding on his wrists.

IN THE HALLWAY

Quaid walks stealthily to the dark stairwell leading down to the first floor. He stops in his tracks when he sees A SHADOW pass by at the bottom.

QUAID CAN'T SEE WHAT IT IS--

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Standing on the first floor, the moonlight casting his shadow across the hall, is JOSHUA.

His head still wrapped in bandages. The white cloth soaked with blood. He glances around the dark house. His eyes wild, broken. On the floor, at the bottom of the stairwell...

HE SEES THE AXE. Pretty and bright.

BACK IN THE ROOM UPSTAIRS

Stephen uses all his strength to pull at his restraints. He yanks at the wooden bar holding him to the chair. It begins to pry out from its socket. He shakes it back and forth, loosening the glue--

He presses all his weight against the back of the chair, pulls his wrists against the wood and then--

IT POPS. The support comes out, he's able to wriggle his wrist free. He gets up, still bound behind his back, and runs for the door.

IN THE HALLWAY

Stephen creeps through the darkness. He makes his way to the stairwell and climbs to the top floor of the house. He quickly walks to the SMALL ROOM at the end of the hall.

He pushes the door open and finds--

Nothing. Empty. The broken plate, the torn up sleeping bag, the bucket, the bone of the meat, all of it still there. But no Cheryl.

INT. SIXTY FOUR PILGRIM STREET, FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephen keeps his back to the wall as he steps down the staircase. The house is silent. Most of the rooms dark.

He hits the bottom of the stairs, and continues down the hall. He steps into the dark kitchen. Struggles to open a drawer. Grabs onto a knife. Awkwardly drags its blade across his bindings. THEY SNAP.

Stephen turns to the drawer and grabs a much longer knife. Intent on his face, he heads into the hall to find Quaid.

He cuts through a darkened room and steps into another hallway. THERE'S A CREAKING somewhere in the house. Stephen listens, his heart racing.

In the distance, a figure passes behind him.

Stephen stands frozen for several moments. Then continues. He walks to the far end of the hall and waits. He can see the street-lamps through the window. The street outside.

IN A DIFFERENT ROOM

Quaid slides bullets into his gun. His back pressed into the corner of the room.

IN THE HALLWAY

Stephen hides in a pocket of deep shadow. He glances down the empty corridor in front of him. Silent. But then...

Quaid steps into the hallway from another room. His gun within his grasp.

He glances in Stephen's direction, but the shadows hide him. Quaid continues on - moving away from Stephen, keeping close to the wall - moving toward the basement door.

Stephen grips the handle of his knife with a sweaty palm, and slowly stalks after Quaid. Gaining with every silent step.

Stephen can see that the basement door is open, an abyss of darkness below.

Quaid holds his gun at the ready. His eyes alert, hunting. He cautiously passes by an open door on his left. Stephen follows, the gap between them gets smaller and smaller with every second.

Stephen raises his knife. Ready to slash. Ready to dispatch Quaid's throat.

Less than three feet... less than two feet. Stephen rears back the knife - and just as he's about to strike--

A SCREECH FROM UPSTAIRS. THE AUDIO FROM THE PROJECTOR KICKS TO LIFE. CHERYL'S SHOUTS FILLING THE SPACE--

Quaid spins around, darting his eyes up to the next floor, and as he does he sees Stephen behind him with the blade. He points his gun towards Stephen.

Stephen steps forward with the knife. Kill or be killed. And just as he does--

THE AXE MAN RAGES FROM THE OPEN DOOR TO STEPHEN'S LEFT. STEPPING BETWEEN THEM FROM UTTER BLACKNESS - HIS EYES LIFELESS, HIS FACE EXPRESSIONLESS--

HIS AXE, ALREADY ON THE DESCENT.

IT HITS STEPHEN'S NECK WITH A THUNK. HOLLOW AND HEAVY. STEPHEN'S MOUTH LETS OUT A CRY AS THE BLADE SEVERS HIS COLLAR BONE AND SINKS FIVE OR SIX INCHES DEEP. IT DIVIDES THE SHINY STEAK OF MUSCLE, FAT AND MARROW.

Stephen stands in utter shock and gazes upon the monster before him. This, of course, is not the axe man. But most certainly a man with an axe--

JOSHUA. He forcefully tugs the axe, and it dislodges from the gate trenched in Stephen's flesh.

Quaid watches the blood pour from Stephen's wound. Stephen drops to his knees, his back hits the floor. He gasps for breaths, heavy and desperate.

QUAID SEES THE AXE MAN AGAIN. The death wielder from his past. The man from his nightmares.

Quaid quickly steps away from the wall. His arm extended in front of him. His gun at the ready. A POP fills the air, a light flares at Joshua's head, and a blast from Quaid's pistol drops Joshua to the floor, dead.

Quaid looks down. Sees the monster in his true form. Sees Joshua, bleeding out from his skull.

Quaid drops his gun, and kneels over Stephen.

He straddles him, their faces just a foot from each other. Stephen looks up into Quaid's cool, calculated eyes. He watches Stephen with the curiosity of a child.

Stephen tries to speak, but can't. His pupils so wide, the white's nearly nonexistent. A deep fear in his gaze.

Tears fall down the sides of Stephen's face, his breaths faltering into heaving gasps. The gasps, subsiding into quiet emission. Their eyes locked. Friend to friend. Victim to victor. Subject to scientist.

Quaid smiles, finding something he's been looking for, and in that moment, Stephen expels his final breath.

Quaid studies him for several more moments, waiting for the pupils to completely dilate.

QUAID (V.O.)

Watching someone die, watching the fear of death, the pinnacle of all dread approach... that was the limits.

Quaid raises to his feet, looks down at Stephen's lifeless body. Quaid grabs onto his leg, and begins dragging him. Dragging him towards the basement door.

QUAID (V.O.) (cont'd)

Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote that no man can know his own death... But to know the death of others, intimately - to watch the tricks that the mind would surely perform to avoid the bitter truth - that was a clue to death's nature, wasn't it?

Drags his body down the stairs. His limbs jerking over the wooden planks. Quaid reaches the cold floor of the basement, and drags his body toward the room that holds his PAINTINGS.

QUAID (V.O.) (cont'd)

That might, in some small way, prepare a man for his own death.

When Quaid reaches the room, it's locked. Quaid drops Stephen's leg and reaches into his pocket to get the key.

QUAID (V.O.) (cont'd)
To live another's dread vicariously
was the safest, cleverest way to
touch the beast.

Quaid unlocks the door and in the room, sitting on the floor,
fastened by the wrist to a length of steel pipe--

IS CHERYL. Her eyes broken, tear stains down her face. Her
hair a tangled mess. She cowers when the light comes on, but
then she sees Stephen's body, and begins to sob.

CHERYL
Stephen...no...

Quaid yanks his body into the room with her. He looks down at
Cheryl as her sobs grow louder. Quaid pulls out his pocket
knife, opens it up, and throws it to the floor--

THE BLADE DRIVES INTO THE WOOD BY CHERYL'S BARE FEET.

QUAID
Let's see how hungry you have to be
to get through that.

Cheryl begins to scream... cursing Quaid's very existence,
his longing for cruelty. The din of her voice, the fear in
her eyes, the dread in her soul - it brings a smile to
Quaid's face. And with that, he slams the door.

CUT TO BLACK