

UNTITLED MACON BLAIR MOVIE

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filmscience

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

BLACK TREE LIMBS spread against a less-black sky. The STARS beyond are vast and dim. BATS dip and wheel chaotically. We can hear their wings: a desperate-sounding *chk chk chk*.

RUTH KIMKE (38) stares up at them, very still, very uneasy.

She has a watchful, owlsh vibe. She's slightly *wall-eyed*. Her hair is long and plain and she appears fearfully hypnotized by the bats. Or maybe it's the stars.

She tips a BEER up, nearly kills it without blinking.

WIDER, we see her yard: a weedy little square enclosed by a tall rickety fence. MUSIC and VOICES drift faintly from elsewhere, some other yard. Somebody SHRIEKS in delight.

Ruth looks in that direction, all alone back here.

She glances down at her hand...which is SHAKING.

Then back to the dark sky as an OMINOUS TONE sounds and we--

CUT TO BLACK.

TELEVISED IMAGES fill the screen, pixelated and washed-out, with SOFT HAPPY ELEVATOR MUSIC eating all the sound:

A huge TRASH ISLAND bobs in the ocean. SOLDIERS fire machine guns in the Middle East. A WHITE COP clubs a BLACK KID.

INT. BEDROOM - CARE CENTER - DAY

PULLING OUT from the T.V. as Ruth enters in pink scrubs, eyeing it before addressing the person at which it's aimed.

RUTH

How 'bout I change this, huh?

It's MRS. HAMBLE in the bed, ninety if she's a day. Skeletal and unblinking. Oh shit...she might be dead already.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Mrs. Hamble?

She moves to the bedside, fearing the worst, but--

MRS. HAMBLE

(a weak rasp)

...look at these goddamn monkeys...

So instead Ruth adjusts the covers, the fluid drip.

RUTH
No, now...shh.

MRS. HAMBLE
...if my husband Wilson Kenneth Hamble ever lived to see the way they managed to flush this country right down the fuckin stinker, he'd like to never stop throwing up, you never heard a bigger helping of shit in all the years of woe-is-me, God o' mighty, put the chicken and hubcaps down and keep your gigantic monkey dick outta my good pussy...

RUTH
Okay, now. Just. Okay.

MRS. HAMBLE
...Christ help us...

RUTH
Okay.

MRS. HAMBLE
...why won't nobody fuck me good?

RUTH
Shh. C'mon, now.

But then, as she works, the silence prompts her to look.

Mrs. Hamble has gone slack. *Actually* dead this time.

INT. WAITING AREA - CARE CENTER - DAY

Ruth and a DOCTOR stand with MRS. HAMBLE'S SON, other crying FAMILY in the background.

SON
Did...did she have any last words?

The Doctor looks to Ruth for the answer. She considers.

TITLE CARD LANDS WITH A LOW THROBBING BOOOM.

TRAFFIC NOISE, VOICES, COMMERCIAL JINGLES: a din of shrill anxiety. As SPARSE MINOR-KEY MUSIC tip-toes into the mix...

EXT. RUTH'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

...we see Ruth through the windshield of her ancient JUNKER, a rusty '76 Ventura. Inching along. Her mind elsewhere.

VEHICLES wipe the foreground, blurs, endlessly blocking her.

NEWS RADIO (V.O.)

...and the Governor calling it 'a horrific but ultimately unpreventable tragedy' after the schizophrenic man brought his registered AR-15 into the day care and opened fire. Sports is next.

Up ahead, a DAY-GLO PICKUP belches a BLACK SMOKE from its dual smokestacks onto the other cars. Rollin' coal.

She's quietly mystified.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Hard sunlight blasts off of chrome and glass. Ruth moves through this maze of cars, preoccupied. She wears jeans, sneakers, an old baseball shirt. Has her own shopping bag.

A MINIVAN backs out, nearly clips her but stops short. She waits, gestures *go ahead*. Which the minivan is happy to do.

INT. GROCERY AISLE - DAY

A SLOPPY MAN drops a bag of chips, leaves it on the ground. Ruth comes along in his wake and, without thinking, bends down to put them back on the shelf.

INT. '15 ITEMS OR FEWER' CHECKOUT LINE - DAY

Ruth waits patiently with her rotisserie chicken behind a TIRED WOMAN who's stacking thirty or forty items on the belt.

INT. DIVE BAR - DAY

An OLDIE purrs on the juke ("Hully Gully Calling Time" by The Jive Five!) as we PUSH DOWN THE BAR to find...

Ruth, sitting by herself at the far end of with a beer and her chicken dinner, absorbed in a FANTASY NOVEL.

Someone LAUGHS and she looks up.

Down the bar, a cluster of YOUNG DUDES, bullshitting amongst themselves. But ONE of them is looking at her, kinda smiling.

Back to her book. A moment later, he's still looking at her.

YOUNG DUDE
Is that the Elsewhere Saga?

She straightens, smiles in spite of herself.

RUTH
Yeah. '*King of the Hidden Dark.*'

YOUNG DUDE
Book two. Read those a while ago.

RUTH
I'm at the, they're getting ready for the Battle of the uh--

YOUNG DUDE
Battle of the Tanhauser Gate?

RUTH
Right! I'm like...

She makes a face: *biting my nails!*

YOUNG DUDE
Totally. Yeah. So good.
(beat)
You know her father's actually the War Mage.

Ruth's smile stays absolutely in place.

RUTH
Captain Deo is...?

YOUNG DUDE
Kieran's real father. Yeah. That's coming up. Blew my mind.

And stays in place.

RUTH
Wow.

YOUNG DUDE
Clues were there, y'think about it.

And with that, he returns to his buddies.

Ruth looks down at the bar top, but not quite at her book.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruth pulls into the driveway of her tiny RANCH HOUSE. Heading inside, she sees something in the patchy yard that stops her.

A PIZZA FLYER tucked in her door is angrily yanked out. *Fft!*

THE DOG TURD on her grass is grabbed using the flyer. *Splrt.*

HER TRASH CAN has many such dog shit/pizza flyer wads already in it and here's one more. *Wump! Slam!*

THE SMALL HANDMADE SIGN on her lawn--*a dog shit inside a red circle-slash with 'PLEASE!'*--is angrily straightened.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruth heels the door shut, drops her book on a side table.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

THE FRIDGE OPENS, leftover chicken goes in, a beer comes out.

Ruth leans against the counter, pops the beer, takes a sip. A dim, quiet little house. A little cluttered but not dirty.

SLOWLY PUSHING IN as she stares grimly at nothing. There's a soft repetitive *bmp bmp bmp* somewhere. But then...

Her eyes land on something and she stiffens. That *bmp bmp bmp* seems louder suddenly. She moves forward, confused because...

HER BACK DOOR IS AJAR. She touches it as if to confirm what she's seeing. *BMP BMP BMP*. Just beyond is--

INT. SUN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--this small glassed-in porch, with its own BACK DOOR which also hangs wide open, bumping against the house. *BMP BMP BMP*.

She steps out there, breathing faster as she peers out into--

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

--which is empty. Somewhere distantly a LAWN MOWER buzzes, a DOG barks. But nobody in sight. She pulls the door shut--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

--and comes back through the SUN ROOM into the house where she GASPS, her hands flying to her mouth because--

--she sees for the first time that SHE'S BEEN RANSACKED. All drawers pulled out of her credenza, the contents spilled.

She gapes, immobilized. But before she can decide what to do--

Skitch. A soft noise. She freezes. *Whatwasthat?*

DOWN THE HALLWAY, the opened BEDROOM DOOR spills sunlight.

She stares at it, perfectly still, her eyes bright with fear.

CLOSER ON THE BEDROOM DOOR, sunny, quiet...*but then a wisp of shadow moves in there.*

At that, she INHALES sharply and takes a reflexive step backwards but...she stops. And her lips curl from her teeth.

Without taking her eyes off the hallway--

HER HAND slides off a KITCHEN KNIFE from the rack. *Skssh!*

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ruth advances slowly, the KNIFE held before her, SHAKING.

THE BEDROOM DOOR looms ahead...*a shadow moves again.*

She's terrified...yet inches forward, vibrating.

She leeeleans in, millimeter by millimeter, to peer into...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

...which is empty. Some DRAWERS have been opened and pawed through but there's nobody here.

Just outside the WINDOW, a LOOSE GUTTER dangles there in the breeze: *that's the shadow.* Just to be sure she peeks into--

THE BATHROOM, which is also empty, but the MEDICINE CABINET is opened, the contents wiped out onto the floor.

Her fight-or-flight tension uncoils itself. *Exhaaale.*

RUTH
The *fuck*, man.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

GLOVED HANDS brush BLACK FINGERPRINT POWDER onto the medicine cabinet door. *Psh, psh, psh.*

VOICE (O.S.)
Various prescription medications...

INT. SUN ROOM - SAME

GLOVED HANDS peel LIFT TAPE from the powder-dusted DOORKNOB. *Shkk.*

VOICE (O.S.)
A laptop computer...

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FLASH strobos her ransacked credenza. *Klik!*

VOICE (O.S.)
And then the silverware in here...

This is a UNIFORMED OFFICER who couldn't appear more bored as she jots this all down on a clipboard and pops her gum.

OFFICER
Anything else?

Ruth is kind of hugging herself with her PHONE in one hand.

RUTH
I don't uh...not that I can see.
(beat)
The silver was my grandma's.

The Officer ignores that. *Pop.*

BENDIX (O.S.)
Were they painkillers?

Ruth looks over to DETECTIVE BENDIX (50s), who could use a nap, inspecting the back door as an EVIDENCE TECH wraps up.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
The medications.

RUTH
No, it was uh...Clonazepam.
(beat)
And Lexapro.

He looks at her blankly, sucks his teeth.

BENDIX

You try one of those location apps?

RUTH

(gesturing with her phone)

I tried that. The laptop was off.

BENDIX

They'll probably wipe it, anyway, unless they're morons. Got a hide-a-key? Fake rock thing?

RUTH

No.

BENDIX

That gate to your backyard, there's no lock on that?

RUTH

No, it's just...like a latch.

BENDIX

(re: the back door)

You leave this unlocked, you go out?

RUTH

Mmno. Not usually.

BENDIX

But you did today.

RUTH

I don't remember. I thought I'd locked it, but...

BENDIX

Wasn't a forced entry, I mean.

Ruth has no answer for that. Bendix and the Officer exchange a bland look and Officer lowers her clipboard.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUTH'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Ruth comes outside, clutching a REPORT FORM, watching as--

Bendix heads to his UNMARKED CAR and the UNIFORMS head to the PATROL UNIT with its LIGHTS TURNING.

RUTH
What should I do now?

Bendix turns back, perplexed.

BENDIX
About what?

RUTH
I mean...do you call me, or...?

BENDIX
If anything is recovered, someone
will be in contact. Your case
number's on that form if you have
renter's insurance.

RUTH
But you're gonna look, right?

He looks as if she spit on his shoe.

BENDIX
What?

RUTH
You're...gonna look?

BENDIX
Miss, we'll do everything we're
able to but in the meantime I
suggest you pay a little closer
attention to your home security.
Lot of this kind of thing going on,
drug people and whatnot. Don't give
'em an opening.

He continues on. She glances at the report in her hand.

RUTH
Thank you.

He gives a tight little smile as he gets into his car.

THE PATROL CAR LIGHTS switch off as it pulls away and Ruth
stands there in the half-light, watching them go.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SAME

Ruth comes back in, closes the door. Locks the deadbolt, too.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

She kneels to clean up the DRAWERS...but finds herself staring down that SHADOWY HALLWAY. Looks like a tomb.

She brings out her phone, dials hurriedly.

RUTH
(into phone)
Hey. I'm not bothering you, am I?

INT. A DIFFERENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON RUTH, staring off in heavy contemplation. Simmering.

RUTH
It's the violation, man. The stuff,
that's replaceable--I mean, the
silver's not but what really hurts
is the fucking violation. They were
inside my house, you know?

She's talking to JANA, who is six, in bed, in her pajamas.

JANA
Can we...finish the story?

RUTH
Sorry.

Ruth, sitting at Jana's bedside, re-opens the PICTURE BOOK she's holding, "**Our Universe**", and begins to read...

RUTH (CONT'D)
*Rays from the sun are thousands of
years old before they reach your
eyes. Human bodies are made of dust
and gasses from inside of stars.
The universe is fourteen billion
years old. No one knows what came
before. No one knows how big the
universe actually is. It...it could
be infinite--*

And she starts SOBBING, just totally dissolves.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Jesus...

And *that* in turn terrifies Jana--

JANA
W-why are you crying?

--and now they're BOTH CRYING, a perfect storm of CRYING.

RUTH
The fuck kinda book is this?

INT. HALLWAY - ANGIE'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Abrupt silence as ANGIE HUFF (40) slides out of JANA'S BEDROOM, pulling the door closed behind her and looking at--

INT. KITCHEN AREA - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruth, spent and red-eyed but composed now, drooping in contrition as she sees Angie returning--

RUTH
 I'm sorry.

--who gestures *no problem* (even though we can see that it was kind of a problem) and waves her to the couch.

ANGIE
 She's fine. Don't worry.

RUTH
 I'm so sorry.

Ruth sits, preoccupied and distressed, as Angie packs a BOWL--

ANGIE
 A fucked-up thing happened to you.
 You're allowed to be upset.

--which she is *just about* to hit when--

RUTH
 It's not that.

And so Angie lowers the bowl, sensing an impending deluge.

ANGIE
 What uh...what is it?

RUTH
 Patient died today. I was in the room. She was there and then...she wasn't.

Angie passes the bowl and Ruth hits it, deep-deep-deep.

ANGIE
 Oh. She was special, huh?

Ruth holds the hit, thinking hard.

RUTH
(a burp of smoke)
No. She sucked.

ANGIE
Oh.

RUTH
This old...shithead...

ANGIE
Uh huh.

RUTH
...bat...

ANGIE
Yeah.

Angie takes the bowl back, hits it herself, settling in for--

RUTH
(a dreamy stream)
But it just kinda clicked. *It doesn't matter.* They'll roll her into a cooker and then she'll be smoke. Just carbon and stuff. My grandma Sally--that was her silver they took--she was a war nurse. She literally breathed life into people who'd been exploded. Spent her retirement bringing dinner to shut-ins, folks with cancer...

(Angie exhales a long patient jet of smoke.)

RUTH (CONT'D)
...and then she had a stroke and was just carbon and stuff, too. Exactly the same. And now I'm the only one left who remembers any of that and pretty soon I'll be carbon and stuff, too...so none of it matters. You could be a saint, you could be awful, whatever, it's like none of it happened.

Angie eyes Ruth in concern (and a splash of exasperation.)

ANGIE

First of all, not pretty soon. Not for a long time. And it *does* matter. She *did* happen.

RUTH

We have to pretend that or we'll go crazy. But everything is dying, at all times. Everyone. Us. Even Jana, right now. The minute she was born she started dying--

ANGIE

Jesus *Christ*--

RUTH

The planet's coming apart. You got that, right?

ANGIE

('I'ma have another hit')
Right, right--

RUTH

All the bees? And the gorillas are almost gone, too. Something like ten gorillas left.

ANGIE

It's more than that.

RUTH

Twenty? Tops? Look at how people treat each other, the, the, the *taking*. The fucking *taking*, y'know? The cruelty and the taking and the, the, 'Mine, mine, fuck you, *mine*.'

ANGIE

You're gonna make yourself sick.
(choosing her words now)
You've got it better than a lot of people. You have to see that. You're healthy. You got a job. You got a house.

But Ruth is wholly committed to the despair...

RUTH

I see it. Everyone is an asshole.

ANGIE

No, not everyone--

RUTH
Yes. Everyone. And dildos.

ANGIE
 That's not true.

RUTH
 It *is* true. And fuckfaces.

ANGIE
 Ruthie--

RUTH
 I mean, not you. And Dan's okay.
 And kids are fine unless they're,
 like, real little shit-kids and I
 think lot of them just come like
 that now. Assholes and fuckfaces
 and so what? It's all just a
 sneeze. It's nothing. Y'know? It's
 just chemistry and math. So what.

On Angie: *what do I say to that?* A little helplessly...

ANGIE
 Sweetie....c'mon.

Ruth looks at her SHAKING HAND. She makes a fist to stop it.

RUTH
 (barely audible)
 Sometimes I feel like I'm
 underneath a whirlpool...and it's
 like I can't even breathe.

KEYS at the door precede DAN HUFF (40s) lumbering obliviously
 in. A harried car salesman, he clocks the gloomy vibe--

DAN
 Internet date?

ANGIE
 Ruth's house got robbed.

--and without pausing he continues to THE KITCHEN AREA.

DAN
 Whaaat? That's terrible...

Where he pointedly opens a window, giving Angie a look about
 the pot smoke: come on. She gives him one back: not now.

Ruth starts to CRY again. Angie pats her. Dan sighs at all
 this and concentrates on his leftover ham sandwich. *Chomp*.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE ON RUTH, curled on the couch under a quilt, semi-awake.

A SMALL HAND holds a sheet of PAPER before her. She props herself up to look at it...

A CHILD'S DRAWING: a WOMAN riding a BIG GREEN LIZARD-THING.

Jana stands there, solemnly gnawing on a magic marker.

RUTH
Is this me?

Jana nods.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Is this a dragon?

JANA
Stegosaurus.

Ruth considers it some more.

RUTH
I fuckin' love it.

EXT. RUTH'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

VAGUELY TENSE MUSIC skitters in the background as Ruth drives, her eyes fixed dead ahead.

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

She pulls into the driveway, heads for the door, but stops.

And stares down at her lawn. Anger crackles on her face.

There is, indeed, a fucking DOG TURD. Right next to the sign.

She whirls in place, looking up and down--

THE STREET, where a few houses down there she can see A MAN walking away with a DOG on a leash.

A FRESH PIZZA FLYER is snatched from her door handle. *SKTCH!*

INT. STREET - SAME

TIGHT ON THE DOG MAN, seen from behind: his HOODIE with the METALLIC COBRA on the back.

HIS DOG struts along beside him. If a dog can look dumb, this one surely does.

HIS WATER SANDALS go *sk! sk! sk!* on the pavement beneath the camo cut-offs he's wearing.

HIS SODA POP gets *slurped* as he walks. He's maybe 30, froggy, and we can hear the HEAVY METAL in his HEADPHONES.

TRACKING WITH HIM so we can see Ruth SPRINTING up behind him, clutching a FLYER/DOG SHIT WAD.

The Dog Man is unaware, his HEADPHONE MUSIC drowning everything out, even as Ruth gets within ten paces and--

HURLS THE WAD AT HIS HEAD. It misses by a mile--*wump!*--but he turns to see her there behind him, hunched and fuming.

They face off like gunfighters.

DOG MAN
Why'd you do that?

RUTH
You've been shitting in my yard.

DOG MAN
I have not.

RUTH
Your dog. I saw you. I have a sign there, says *No Shitting*.

DOG MAN
Where?

RUTH
(pointing furiously)
Right there, man!

DOG MAN
It says that?

RUTH
It's a *picture* but that's what it *means!*

DOG MAN
Well...I didn't see it.

RUTH
YOU SHOULDN'T NEED A SIGN! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

Ruth glares. Dog Man frowns. The dog pants happily. Finally--

DOG MAN

Fine.

And he trudges away, slower. *Sk. Sk. Sk.* Pausing to pick up the flyer wad as he goes.

Ruth watches him go. Utterly astonished. She looks down at--
HER HAND, which is as steady as can be.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruth strides to her STEREO and drops on an OLD SOUL BOOGIE (let's say "Twine Time" by Alvin Cash & The Crawlers) which carries us through--

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Ruth SCRUBBING hard at the sticky FINGERPRINT POWDER RESIDUE.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Ruth GATHERING the spilled leftover medicine items.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Ruth SLIDING the spilled drawers back into place.

INT. SUN ROOM - SAME

Ruth DRILLING a BRASS SLIDING BOLT onto the screen door.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

CLOSE ON THE POLICE REPORT, snatched off the table.

THE BUSINESS CARD stapled to the corner of it, **Sgt. William Bendix - Robbery Fraud Unit**, is ripped off.

THE BOOGIE ABRUPTLY BECOMES 'HOLD MUSIC' as we...

SLOWLY PUSH IN ON RUTH, sitting at the table with her phone to her ear. She waits. And waits. Eventually...

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)

Robbery.

RUTH
Mr. Bendix?

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)
This is Detective Bendix.

RUTH
Um. This is Ruth Kimke.

The silence booms.

RUTH (CONT'D)
My house was--

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)
I remember you, Ms. Kimke, what can I do for you?

RUTH
I was just calling to follow up on...I was curious if there were any..."suspects" or whatever yet.

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)
Suspects?

RUTH
The matter at my house yesterday.

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)
No, I understand what you meant, I'm--just a minute--

There's a MUFFLED CONVERSATION, he's distracted.

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, it's very...Look, I assure you we're going to take every uh...all possible avenues.

RUTH
I thought maybe if you came back in daylight and looked around a little closer you could--

An aggravated SIGH blows through the line...

BENDIX (PHONE V.O.)
Could I put you on hold a moment?

RUTH
Sure.

The HOLD MUSIC comes back on and she listens to it a bit...until it stops. Silence.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Hello?

VERY CLOSE ON HER by now, looking down at the dead phone. We can see her jaw muscles clenching. Her wheels turning.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Ruth walks to the center of the yard to look at the BACK DOOR from a distance. Contemplates it.

She goes to the SIDE GATE, which leads back here from the front. Looks closely.

The LATCH is rusted shut. She tries it but, no, *it's stuck*.

She scans the yard. Walks along the FENCE LINE, scanning.

At the REAR FENCE, she stops suddenly. Looking at--

A CERTAIN SPOT where a *patch of honeysuckle is ripped loose*. She touches it, dangling there, *the flowers still fresh*.

She looks straight down and sees *something* that freezes her.

EXT. ALLEYWAY BEHIND HER HOUSE - SAME

Ruth's FINGERS clamp the top of the fence and then, with a GRUNT of effort, her HEAD appears, peeking over to see...

A LOOSE BOARD has been propped against the fence on this side. Like a ramp.

EXT. BACKYARD - SAME

She drops back down to her side again, looking down at--

THE FOOTPRINT she noticed in the soft earth right there.

She stares at it like it's a snake.

INT. AISLE - ART STORE - DAY

Ruth moves purposefully along, scanning the shelves of--

VARIOUS CRAFT SUPPLIES, clay, paper mache, plaster strips.

INT. CHECKOUT LINE - ART STORE - DAY

Ruth and a SULLEN TEENAGER get there at the same moment, but Ruth defers, 'After you', holding a PACKAGE OF PLASTER.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ruth whisks WHITE POWDER and WATER in a bowl. *Wk!wk!wk!wk!wk!*

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

LIQUID PLASTER is poured into the FOOTPRINT.

Ruth waits. Bugs BUZZ. She bites a nail. Glances at the sky, tentatively, like she might see something terrible there.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Less-than-impressed, Ruth looks down at--

THE PLASTER FOOTPRINT MOLD she's made: terribly misshapen and crusted with dirt. Looks like a burnt jellyfish.

But looking closer she discerns A FLAT STRIPE ACROSS THE SOLE, the tread pattern interrupted for two inches. *Weird.*

And its unusual LIGHTNING BOLT LOGO is visible in relief.

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruth comes outside, WALKS RIGHT INTO CAMERA, *Cape Fear*-style, looks up and down the block...

...and EXITS FRAME as that same SOUL BOOGIE kicks back in LOUD. (We can call it RUTH'S ACTION THEME from now on.)

EXT. STREET - DAY

TRACKING BESIDE RUTH, propelled by HER THEME though this LOWER MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD: small houses in need of paint, chain link fences, old trucks. She turns up to--

EXT. SHABBY BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Nok-nok! AN OLD MAN sucking on a squeeze yogurt appears behind the screen door, squinting out at her.

OLD MAN

Yah?

RUTH

I'm sorry to bother you, sir. I'm your neighbor over there. My house was robbed yesterday.

OLD MAN

No!

RUTH

Yeah.

OLD MAN

Sonsabitches.

RUTH

Yeah. It was sometime between nine and six thirty, I don't suppose you saw anything?

OLD MAN

Well, I'll tell you something...

But instead he just takes a long *slurp* of his yogurt, kinda loses his thought. She waits patiently.

RUTH

What is it?

OLD MAN

('this?')

It's just regular yogurt you can sip on.

(*SLURRP!*)

...hey, fuck it...

RUTH

What did you want to tell me?

OLD MAN

Oh. It's all going to hell.

Ruth smiles tightly in thanks and heads off.

OLD MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You know that, dontcha?

EXT. DUPLEX - DAY

Now it's a YOUNG MOTHER with her BABY on her hip.

YOUNG MOTHER

I don't know nothing about no robbery.

RUTH

Maybe you saw a strange car. Or someone acting furtive.

YOUNG MOTHER

Furtive?

RUTH

Sneaky.

YOUNG MOTHER

I know what furtive is. I'm sorry that happened but I don't know anything to tell you.

Ruth nods, disappointed, and looks at the baby.

RUTH

What's her name?

YOUNG MOTHER

Khaleesi.

RUTH

(tired but genuine)
That's beautiful.

EXT. JUNK HOUSE - DAY

Now it's a GEARHEAD with CAR PARTS and TRASH strewn about his yard, wiping his hands and wolfishly looking her up and down.

GEARHEAD

Suspicious?

RUTH

Or just, like, out of place.

GEARHEAD

Oh, for sure. Just this mornin' a Dominican fella came 'round with a tree saw and a push mower. Told'm, 'I can take care my own lawn, thanks, but good try.' He knew to keep moving.

RUTH

I bet.

GEARHEAD

You could gimme your number. If I thinka something.

RUTH

(turning to leave)
You won't.

But her ACTION THEME is sounding echoey and distant by now...

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Ruth rounds the corner, uncertainly. Unfamiliar territory.

EXT. OVERGROWN HOUSE - DAY

She crosses the jungle yard, comes up the porch, *nok-noks* on the door. There's no answer but...

...she can hear SHREDDING HAIR METAL wafting from the back.

EXT. BACKYARD - OVERGROWN HOUSE - SAME

She comes around the side of the house, where the METAL is louder and tied to savage CARDIO EXHALATIONS...

VOICE (O.S.)

*One--get some! Two--get some! Three--
-get some! Unh! Four--get some!*

IN THE OUT-OF-FOCUS FOREGROUND we discern SOMEONE on a WEIGHT BENCH, rhythmically lifting the PRESS BAR as--

RUTH

Excuse me?

TIGHT ON THE LIFTER'S HAND, as the exhalations stop, reaching for his, no, not his NUNCHUCKS there, for his TOWEL...

...which he wipes his sweaty face with as he sits up. Look who it is: the Dog Man himself, who is in fact named TONY.

Mutual recognition. A charged and awkward beat.

TONY

I said I was sorry.

RUTH

You said 'fine.'

TONY
The implication being--

RUTH
Nevermind.

She turns away but he stops the MUSIC--

TONY
No, wait up...

--and approaches, showing his palms. Ultra sincere, this guy.

TONY (CONT'D)
Look. That's not me. Leaving a B.M.
in your yard? That's not who I am.
I...I was embarrassed. Sometimes
I'm just so into my thoughts, you
know? Like, *deep*. And I won't even
notice what Brian's doing.

He tips his head towards the WINDOW, where the DOG who must
be named Brian is watching them, calmly panting.

RUTH
(turning to go)
Forget it.

TONY
You can hit me.

RUTH
(stopping)
What? No.

TONY
One strike. To balance the energy
between us. I won't defend myself.

RUTH
I don't like hitting people.

TONY
I'm a very physical person. That's
just how I experience the world.
Action, reaction. Cause,
consequence. Pain isn't real.

A brief beat and she starts to leave again but--

TONY (CONT'D)
So why are you here?

She stops again, shrugs in defeat.

RUTH
My house got robbed.

Tony's face clouds over.

TONY
When?

RUTH
Yesterday.

TONY
Did you call the authorities?

RUTH
Yeah, they...I dunno. It didn't seem like they could do very much. So I was just asking around, if anyone saw anyone.

He seethes in place and then, all at once...

HE GRABS HIS NUNCHUCKS AND--**KASH!**--SMASHES A MOSQUITO CANDLE.

Ruth JUMPS and Brian starts BARKING furiously in the window.

TONY
(Chinese for "quiet")
An jing! An jing!
(and to Ruth now)
That makes me *furious*.

RUTH
Y-yeah.

TONY
What kind of person does that?

RUTH
I dunno.

TONY
What'd they take?

RUTH
My computer. My grandma's silver--

KASH! HE SMASHES AGAIN, RE-INFURIATED.

RUTH (CONT'D)
(retreating)
Sorry I bothered you.

TONY

You didn't bother me, this affects
all of us--BRIAN. STOP IT.

But Brian is only BARKING louder as Ruth scoots away...

RUTH

Okay. See ya.

TONY

Can I do anything?

RUTH

Nah, uh, I'm good, thanks...

She slinks away around the house and Tony watches her go.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A MELANCHOLY COUNTRY TUNE plays. A BEER sweats on a coaster.

Ruth sits curled on the couch, reading her NOVEL. She turns a page but...lets it close. Staring off, disinterested.

As if as an afterthought, she brings out--

HER PHONE, on which she taps a CERTAIN APP: **Loc8**. She logs in but gets a PROCESS WHEEL turning, endlessly. '**Searching...**'

So she tosses the phone aside in disgust.

She rises. Sips. Paces a slow circle...which becomes swaying to the MUSIC. Like dancing. A private, lonesome moment.

B-Bing! She looks to HER PHONE, which is suddenly *glowing*.

She picks it up, stares at the screen, amazed.

RUTH

Holy shit.

ON HER PHONE, a RED DOT blinks on a MAP SCREEN. '**Device Online**', it says, '**129 Grove St.**'

HER POLICE REPORT, with Bendix's card, is snatched--**ssk!**

She hurriedly dials a number but--

BENDIX VOICEMAIL (V.O.)

*You've reached Detective Bendix
with the Robbery Fraud. I'm not
available now but if you'll--*

She disconnects, blinking, and quickly dials another number--

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Police non-emergency.

RUTH
Hello. Yes. Okay. It's--my case
number is zero-zero-zero--

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Just a second, ma'am, what's the--?

RUTH
No, it's--I can see right where it
is. My computer was stolen and I
can see it.

POLICE OPERATOR
So it's not stolen?

RUTH
No, it's *still* stolen, my phone is
saying where it is, I have the
address, someone needs to go there
before it turns off again and--

POLICE OPERATOR
*We can include that information in
the report but we can't send units
out at this time. Would you like to--*

RUTH
Wait--what? Why?

POLICE OPERATOR
*They need a search warrant in order
to--*

RUTH
But you don't have to search, it's
right there, I know where it is!

POLICE OPERATOR
We cannot send units at this time.

RUTH
I AM LOOKING AT IT.

POLICE OPERATOR
*We can include that information in
the report file--*

RUTH
UHHFFFF

She disconnects in unhinged frustration. (Remember how Jennifer Grey hung up the phone in *Ferris Bueller*? Yeah.)

She thinks, frantic...until something new occurs to her. Struggling to calm herself a degree or two, she dials again.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BATHROOM - HUFF HOME - SAME

CLOSE ON DAN, wincing at the caller ID but answering anyway.

DAN
Hey, uh, Angie's closing tonight.

RUTH
Oh, actually, I was kinda wondering what you were up to?

DAN
Me...?

He's crouched next to Jana, who's in the tub, her entire head covered in shaving cream: two little eyes in a blob of foam.

DAN (CONT'D)
Doin' my own time, you know, not the institution's. What's up?

But she has second thoughts.

RUTH
It's...eh, you know what, it's nothing. It's okay.

DAN
You sure?

RUTH
Yeah. Yeah. Sorry.

Click. Dan looks at his phone, unsure, as the Jana-Blob looks at him and, *b-blub*, a tiny fart bubble breaks her bath water.

END INTERCUT.

CLOSE ON RUTH, breathing faster as the COUNTRY MUSIC morphs into her ACTION THEME which carries over to...

EXT. GROVE STREET - NIGHT

FROM THE STREET SIGN, '**Grove Street**', WE TILT DOWN as RUTH'S CAR pulls up with its running lights on.

She double-checks HER PHONE, her face eerily green in the screen's glow, and looks across at--

129 GROVE STREET, a trashed-out party hovel at the end of a GRAVEL DRIVE. YOUNG FOLKS milling in the dark yard. RAP fuzzes from inside, people HOOT and CACKLE down there.

RUTH glances up and down THIS BLOCK of dark shabby houses, craggy low-hanging trees, deep shadows. Spooky, all of it.

She swallows, returns her attention to--

129 GROVE, where a GIRL now clumsily TWERKS in the yard as SEVERAL BOYS film her with their phones, itching themselves.

On Ruth. *Hmm.*

129 GROVE, where one of the BOYS is now doing PUSH UPS with ANOTHER GIRL balanced on his back, sloshing her drink.

GIRL
(distantly)
Wooooooooo!

On Ruth. *Hmm.*

129 GROVE, where A BOY is arranging a WATERMELON before ANOTHER BOY who is spraying a AEROSOL into a "POTATO GUN" (a homemade contraption of PVC PIPE.)

On Ruth, *Hmmm*, just opening her door when--

BAM! THEY FIRE THE POTATO GUN AND THE WATERMELON EXPLODES.

On Ruth, HOLY SHIT, slamming the door and SPEEDING AWAY.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tony opens the door. Ruth looks wild-eyed. Fast dialogue--

RUTH
I need back-up.

TONY
(zero hesitation)
Okay.

RUTH
You got those ninja sticks?

TONY
Nunchaku is an Okinawan weapon--

RUTH
Fine--

TONY
"Ninjas", as you call them, are--

RUTH
Right, okay--

TONY
I got something better.

RUTH
Fine. I just--

TONY
Do you know what a morning star is?

RUTH
I just-- no, I--

TONY
Lights out.

RUTH
I just need you to ride with me.

TONY
Right on.

RUTH
I'm Ruth.

TONY
I'm Tony.

RUTH
Nice to meet you.

TONY
Cooooool.

EXT. GROVE STREET - NIGHT

RUTH'S CAR pulls up again: Tony is driving now (with Brian panting in the back), Ruth sits shotgun, pointing--

RUTH

There.

129 GROVE, where the party appears to have moved inside. One lone longhair SMOKER lingers by the front door.

Tony nods, all business, but then...bows his head, steeples his hands under his chin, WHISPERS to himself.

Ruth watches in confusion.

EXT. 129 GROVE STREET - NIGHT

ON THE DRIVEWAY, Ruth and Tony walk towards us: *kunch kunch kunch* on the gravel. He carries a MORNING STAR FLAIL and his BELT BUCKLE contains a THROWING STAR.

She looks profoundly anxious as--

RUTH

Were you *praying*?

TONY

You asked for help. I asked for help. That's how things get done.

(with a sidelong smirk)

Don't worry...I'm not gonna let anything happen to you.

TRACKING WITH THEM as they approach the HOUSE. Up ahead, the SMOKER sees them coming, takes a wary drag.

They arrive. A long beat of nobody knowing what to say.

RUTH

My computer is inside this house.

SMOKER

Say what?

She shows him her PHONE with the blinking LOCATION APP but--

SMOKER (CONT'D)

I don't know what the fuck that is.

RUTH

I don't want trouble. My computer was stolen, this says it's in there, I just want it back. No questions. Can you please get it?

SMOKER

I can get deez nuts.

RUTH
 (perfectly confused)
 You can get these nuts?

TONY
 Okay, tough guy, you had your
 chance--

And then this all happens very fast:

TONY DROPS INTO A FIGHT STANCE AND SPINS THE MORNING STAR--

BUT SMOKER INSTANTLY SNATCHES IT FROM HIS HAND--

GRINNING IN VICTORY, SMOKER TRIES TO SPIN THE MORNING STAR
 BUT--**WAK!**--CLIPS HIMSELF ACROSS THE NOSE WITH THE METAL BALL--

SMOKER
Guh!

SMOKER DROPS THE MORNING STAR, DOUBLES OVER, HANDS FLYING TO
 HIS BROKEN NOSE AS BLOOD SQUIRTS FROM BETWEEN HIS FINGERS--

RUTH
Oh God are you--?

Smoker staggers inside--

INT. FRONT ROOM - 129 GROVE - CONTINUOUS

--where, blinded, he TRIPS and FALLS into a COFFEE TABLE--
KRASH!--totally SHATTERING IT.

As Smoker lays GROANING on the floor, Ruth and Tony (with the
 morning star again) come boiling in behind him to see--

THREE KIDS (20s) watching FUNNY INJURY VIDEOS on a LAPTOP,
 all of them suddenly frozen and flabbergasted.

A charged beat, everyone coiled and staring at each other as
 Smoker lies MOANING and BLOODY on the floor.

ONE KID (the one doing push ups before) starts to rise--

PUSH UPS
 What'd you do to Keith?

BUT TONY HURLS HIS THROWING STAR--**CHNK!**--INTO THE WALL.
 (Admittedly, many, many feet away from the kids.)

PUSH UPS (CONT'D)
 Dude!

Tony then brings out an M-80 FIRECRACKER, LIGHTS IT, TOSSES IT DOWN THE HALL (so everyone has to wait an awkward few seconds until) **K-BAM!**

PUSH UPS (CONT'D)
DUDE! STOP!

RUTH
(to Tony, 'stand down')
It's okay.

But now the GIRLS are rising in anger (the one who was twerking and the one who was going 'Wooo!')--

WOOO GIRL
This is totally inappropriate, come in here like this--violence is not power, you know, it's, like, the *absence* of--

TWERKER
Both you ugly motherfuckers better drag your shit on outta here 'fore I get my keys out n' fuck you both the fuck up--

RUTH
SHUT UP!

She doesn't merely SCREAM this, she fucking ERUPTS: her whole soul vents out. It's like an E.M.P., everything stops.

In the ringing silence, she raises her PHONE like a pistol, slowly, deliberately, and aims it at that laptop...

The Kids blink, still paralyzed by her sonic boom.

She taps her LOCATION APP and...

B-bing! The LAPTOP chimes in response. *B-bing! B-bing!*

At that, Push Ups and the Girls seem to wilt. *Busted.*

Tony shakes his head in disgust. *Gotcha.*

Ruth extends her arm, eyes locked on Push Ups, and as one final YOUTUBE BIKE HORN sounds, she closes the LAPTOP.

With ceremonial solemnity, she starts to pull it away but...

RUTH (CONT'D)
The power cord, please.

And so Woo Girl bends down to unplug it, hand her the CORD.

Ruth stares at them, sadly. They can barely meet her gaze.

RUTH (CONT'D)

It doesn't feel good when people
you don't know come into your
house, does it?

(beat)

Where's the silver and the
medicine?

But Push Ups is genuinely confused...

PUSH UPS

Uh. There's some TheraFlu in there
but no silver. And I didn't steal
that, miss. Cost me good money.

RUTH

What are you talking about?

PUSH UPS

I bought it.

RUTH

Bought it *where*?

PUSH UPS

Killer Sills.

RUTH

What is that?

PUSH UPS

Consignment place out the way.
Sells everything, real cheap.

WOOO GIRL

(helpfully)

She got her first communion
bracelet there.

Twerker holds up her braceleted wrist in confirmation. Ruth
processes all this, darkly.

RUTH

They got silverware there?

They shrug. *I dunno, maybe.*

RUTH (CONT'D)

Write it down.

PUSH UPS

Want me to drop a pin or--?

RUTH
No, man. On paper.

Shame-faced, Push Ups scribbles on a NAPKIN and hands it to Ruth. She pockets it and, with a final glare, turns to go--

Tony pries his THROWING STAR from the wall. He has to really wiggle it. Takes a while. He finally gets it out and--

TONY
That's how hard I threw it.

EXT. GRAVEL DRIVE - 129 GROVE - NIGHT

RUTH'S ACTION THEME BLASTS, subsuming all sound as RUTH AND TONY STRIDE AWAY IN SLOW MOTION.

Her eyes glitter, gulping deep giddy breaths. *Weightless*.

He looks like a kid on Christmas who just got the best toy. Nothing else matters. They share a look.

UP AHEAD, Brian barks noiselessly at them from the back of HER CAR, like he's cheering racers to a finish line.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NORMAL SOUND & MOTION ABRUPTLY RESUME with some CELEBRATORY CAJUN blasting (gotta be "Hot Chili Mama" by Beausoleil) and--

RUTH DANCES an exuberant victory dance with a pint of Beam in one hand: part End Zone shuffle, part go-go shimmy. She's not exactly graceful but her whole heart is in it. *Yesss!*

TONY DANCES with all the rhythm of a motor throwing a piston. He takes a sip of booze, winces, not a big drinker. Brian paces happily between them.

From across the room, Ruth smiles at Tony. He smiles back.

SLOWLY PULLING BACK FROM THEM until...

THE FRONT TABLE enters frame, on which that PLASTER FOOTPRINT MOLD is resting, its LIGHTNING BOLT LOGO plainly visible.

INT. FANCY BATHROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A RAGGEDY SNEAKER with *that very SAME LOGO*. And, we might notice, a STRIP OF DUCT TAPE wrapped around it. *That flat stripe on the plaster mold.*

PULLING OUT FROM IT as POP MUSIC hums through walls, gradually revealing SOMEONE on the toilet...

Except, oh dear, they're actually atop the FLUSH TANK, their TRACK PANTS down around their ankles: a *dreaded Upper Tanker*.

His name is CHRISTIAN (20): raver threads, chopped peroxide hair, andro-model looks with hateful ice-chip eyes.

Someone outside TAPS tentatively on the door.

CHRISTIAN
(pleasantly)
Just a sec!

He wipes, pulls up his pants, replaces the TANK LID. He runs the faucet (without washing) and rummages through--

A JEWELRY BOX, pocketing VALUABLE ITEMS: rings, a necklace.

He cuts the faucet. Grins at himself. A crazed vampire grin.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MCMANSION - SAME

Christian emerges wearing his "normal person smile" but the YUPPIE WIFE waiting there is still startled--

YUPPIE WIFE
The guest bathroom is downstairs.

CHRISTIAN
It was an emergency.

Perturbed, she glances into the bathroom as--

WE TRACK WITH CHRISTIAN, strolling away, cool as a cucumber.

INT. STAIRS - MCMANSION - CONTINUOUS

WE TRACK CHRISTIAN downstairs into MUSIC and PARTY CHATTER.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - MCMANSION - CONTINUOUS

A SUBURBAN CROWD with their cocktails and parenting stories: Christian cuts through them like a panther through geese.

He's moving towards the FRONT DOOR but...

AHEAD THROUGH THE CROWD, he sees Yuppie Wife pointing him out to her HUSBAND, who's coming this way so--

Christian does a mellow about-face.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MCMANSION - SAME

Christian rolls out from under the propped-open GARAGE DOOR and trots away until--

The HUSBAND steps out to block his path, "friendly".

HUSBAND

Hey there.

CHRISTIAN

(instantly "in character")
Oh hey, buddy!

HUSBAND

You're a guest of Miranda's, right?

CHRISTIAN

Right. John. You guys have a beautiful home.

HUSBAND

Thanks, we try. Remind me again, where do you know Miranda from?

CHRISTIAN

Ah, from work. She's been a great mentor, I'm learning so much.

Husband drops the act, coldly brings out his PHONE.

YUPPIE HUSBAND

I want you to stand right there, I'm going to call the police.

CHRISTIAN

Aw, c'mon, man...

Christian suddenly notices someone over Husband's shoulder--

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Oh, good, there you are!

So Husband looks back but, *oops, made ya look--*

CHRISTIAN LEAPS AT HIM LIKE A FERAL ANIMAL. Husband tries to defend himself but it's too late, he goes down thrashing.

EXT. UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Christian walks briskly down the block, out of breath. His shirt has a little bit of blood on it.

He glances back at the DISTANT VOICES back there...

VOICES (O.S.)
Oh my God! Call 911!

...and sprints onward to the VAN parked in the shadows.

EXT. SECLUDED LOT - NIGHT

THE VAN pulls in, the lights cut off. Christian hops out.

EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT

The SILHOUETTE of Christian drifts towards us, pausing now to listen, head cocked like a bird.

CHRISTIAN
Marshall?

A SHIMMERING FEMALE FACE glows out of the blackness, briefly illuminated by her cigarette cherry. Her name is DEZ (20s), hippie-child wraith with strange serpentine eyes.

She gestures *c'mon* and melts away in a swirl of smoke.

EXT. THEIR CAMP - NIGHT

Dez leads Christian over a ridge to a LOW CLEARING where...

A MAN-SHAPE is hunched beside a small CAMPFIRE. Sucking a THIN GLASS PIPE, setting it down with a euphoric exhale.

He runs a comb through his greasy hair. Homemade CAT TATTOOS on his hands. This is MARSHALL (50s): maybe a hobo, maybe a ghoul in his ratty car coat and shredded cowboy boots.

Dez stretches out on her sleeping bag, watching as...

Marshall pats the ground beside him. Christian sits and brings out the STOLEN ITEMS, offers them to Marshall who holds them in the firelight for inspection. He is pleased.

MARSHALL
Now we're cooking with gas.

And Christian, in turn, is pleased. He's a good puppy. In fact, Marshall literally scratches him under the chin.

PUSHING IN ON MARSHALL as he smiles his yellow teeth at Dez.

PUSHING IN ON DEZ as she blows smoke, gives him a kissy face.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

The CEILING FAN whirs. Ruth rises into frame: peering down through her red-eyed hangover at--

Tony, dead asleep on the couch, drooling freely. *Snrr.*

She drops back out of frame again.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ruth and Tony quietly eat pancakes. Occasional furtive glances at each other. Forks *clink* on plates.

Brian pants on the floor, looking from one to the other.

After a bit, Ruth digs into her pocket, brings out that NAPKIN, stares at it a moment...and slides it across.

Slowly chewing, Tony stares at it.

SILLS, reads the scribble, **RR2 BOX 19**.

He lifts his eyes to hers. He nods one time. She nods back.

EXT. KILLER SILLS' PLACE - DAY

ON A RURAL ROUTE MAILBOX, '**19 - SILLS Salvage Consignment**', which we PAN OFF OF as RUTH'S CAR pulls into this DUSTY LOT, parks next to an EMPTY SPOT.

Ruth and Tony get out, glance about, and we TRACK WITH THEM past ROWS OF TABLES stacked with all manner of SECOND-HAND JUNK. Hot sun and dust, FLIES buzzing steadily over it all.

A handful of SHOPPERS, poor folks with sunburns, quietly pick through old baby clothes and used sewing machines.

The nexus of it all is a corroded BARN, its high doors opening into a cave of blackness. As they drift that way...

TONY

(hushed)

Maybe we should hold hands.

(off her 'huh?' look)

Like we're engaged.

So, hand in hand now, they approach the BARN. She notes:

THE WEIRD SYMBOLS, burned into the transom: *porcupine logos and Evil Eyes and Masonic pyramids.*

A FADED 'TRUTHER' POSTER: the burning WTC and '**Do the Math!**'

A DISUSED CAROUSEL HORSE leaning against the barn. **NOT A REAL HORSE**, the hand-scrawled sign informs us.

INT. BARN - KILLER SILLS' PLACE - SAME

As they enter the dim interior, a motion sensor *BINGS!*

KILLER SILLS (80s) lifts his black pebble eyes from the KEYBOARD he's repairing. A Santa's Elf gone to seed, he looks permanently startled under his Nick Nolte mugshot hair.

FROM ABOVE, Ruth and Tony approach, rows of HIGH SHELVES on either side, full of STUFF like the end of *Raiders*.

TRACKING WITH THEM, scanning the inventory. BIRDS flutter in the rafters. A RACCOON crawls in a corner.

Ruth swallows as they near him, puts on an anxious smile.

Tony catches this, gives HER HAND a reassuring squeeze.

RUTH

Good afternoon, sir, uh--

KILLER SILLS

You like music?

RUTH

Mm, sure, everyone likes--

KILLER SILLS

(showing the keyboard)

Five preset tones, 9.38 *killa-hertz* sample rate with three unique demo modes: 'Calypso', 'Disco Dance', and 'Rock n' Roll', here...

RUTH
Oh, wow, it's great but--

TONY
We don't really need--

He hits *demo* for some 8-BIT CALYPSO with intense eye contact.

TONY
No, thank you--

KILLER SILLS
And.

He hits *demo* again, for some FUNKY DISCO, more eye contact.

TONY
No, really, thank you, but--

KILLER SILLS
Annnd.

But *this* time it's a BLAND 4/4 BEAT and Tony's kinda into it--

TONY
Huh.

RUTH
We were really wondering if you had
any antique silver service.

Sills looks at her. Blinks wetly. Reaches one finger out to tap the keyboard and stop 'THE ROCK'.

It's suddenly very quiet. Ruth shifts uncomfortably under Sills' wounded stare. As he strains up out of his chair--

KILLER SILLS
(sadly, quietly)
If you don't like music you can
just say so.

INT. SIDE AISLE - BARN - SAME

As Sills morosely leads them to shelves of SILVERWARE SETS...

RUTH
Are your ah, your *newer* items in
any particular area?

KILLER SILLS
They're antiques.

RUTH
Oh, no, I just meant--

BING! There's another customer, so Sills shuffles away.

Alone now, Ruth searches a shelf and Tony searches another as the VOICES of Sills and his customer drift indistinctly O.S.

But then the VOICES AND ALL SOUND DISSOLVE INTO DREAMY SCORE as Ruth's eyes lock on *something* and she comes towards us.

There. A plain polished WOODEN BOX with a plain brass MONOGRAM: '**SK.**' She lifts the lid, the silver inside gleams.

Seeing this, her eyes water a little bit...

INT. ELSEWHERE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

GRANDMA SALLY, a wee sweet old lady in a haze of warm sunlight, chuckles with her Virginia Slim 100 and iced tea.

INT. SIDE AISLE - BARN - SAME

NORMAL SOUND RESUMES as Ruth looks down at HER HAND, which is shaking, so she makes a fist. Whispering to Tony--

RUTH

This is it.

TONY

You sure?

RUTH

(re: the monogram)

'Sally. Kimke.'

(then, with resolve)

Go start the car.

Excited and terrified, Tony nods himself into action.

INT. BARN - SAME

Tony walks quickly towards the exit: trying so hard to look casual that he appears to have a board up his ass.

OUT OF FOCUS BEHIND HIM, Sills dickers with a Customer.

SILLS

Two hundred for these. Final.

CUSTOMER

They were my Mom's.

SILLS

So take 'e m to a regulated outfit.

(beat)

Mmhm. What I thought.

EXT. KILLER SILLS' PLACE - SAME

Tony stiff-walks to RUTH'S CAR and as he slips in--

We see that empty spot is now filled with CHRISTIAN'S VAN.

INT. RUTH'S CAR - SAME

In his nerves, Tony grinds the starter, **VRR!** He glances over to see MARSHALL watching him from the VAN'S PASSENGER WINDOW.

Tony smiles. Marshall smiles back, poisonously, with Dez behind him.

INT. SIDE AISLE - BARN - SAME

With a breath for courage, Ruth gathers the SILVER SET in her arms and WE LEAD HER OUT OF THE AISLE.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

TRACKING HER as she heads towards the entrance but--

KILLER SILLS (O.S.)

Sure are unloading yourself, last few days.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)

Yeah, we're moving away, so...

KILLER SILLS (O.S.)

Uh huh. "Moving."

She slows, staring in confused recognition at--

CHRISTIAN'S SNEAKER that now fills the foreground of this LOW SHOT: the *LIGHTNING BOLT LOGO*, the *DUCT TAPE* wrapping it.

On Ruth, stunned as she realizes it: *that's her thief.*

AT THE REGISTER, with the JEWELRY on the counter between them, Sills passes Christian some CASH and he quickly splits.

EXT. KILLER SILLS' PLACE - SAME

Christian hustles out, counting the bills as he moves.
Ruth follows, hugging the SILVER SET, hypnotized by him.

INT. RUTH'S CAR - SAME

Tony twists in his seat to see her trailing *slowly* along--

TONY
C'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

EXT. KILLER SILLS' PLACE - SAME

TRACKING RUTH through the tables, Christian angling away from her, towards the VAN when--

KILLER SILLS (O.S.)
Hold on there...

She looks back to see Sills coming after her, pointing.

INT. RUTH'S CAR - SAME

Through the back window, Tony watches Sills approaching Ruth--

TONY
Oh, no, no, no...

--and now notices Christian hopping into the VAN'S DRIVER SEAT, Marshall giving him an oily salute as they BACK OUT.

EXT. KILLER SILLS' PLACE - SAME

Seeing the VAN start to pull away--

RUTH
STOP! HALT!

--she breaks into a TROT, still hugging the silver set.

And seeing *this*, Sills now RUNS after her.

KILLER SILLS
OH NO YOU DON'T!

SHOPPERS watch idly as the hobbit old man scrabbles after the young woman awkwardly jogging away with the wooden box.

KILLER SILLS (CONT'D)
JUST STOP RIGHT THERE!

RUTH
THIS IS STOLEN PROPERTY.

KILLER SILLS
C'MERE!

RUTH
NO!

Sills swoops in, CLUTCHES HER ELBOW--

A FLASH OF IMPULSIVE RAGE: RUTH JERKS FREE AND--**SMACK!**--BASHES SILLS IN THE FACE WITH THE BOX. SILVERWARE FLIES LOOSE.

He staggers, stunned, BLOOD in his mouth.

Wide-eyed SHOPPERS saw this happen: *oh shit, she's evil.*

Ruth sways, aghast: *what have I done?*

RUTH (CONT'D)
Oh...no...I didn't....

Sills turns his face up to her and we see it change, filling with RAGE of his own, and he LASHES at her like a viper--

KILLER SILLS
YOU HIT ME!

Awkward and instantaneous, SHE THROWS UP ONE ARM TO WARD HIM OFF BUT HE GETS HOLD OF HER MIDDLE FINGER AND--**SNAP!**

They break apart and the color drains from Ruth's face as--
SHE LIFTS HER HAND, SEES HER FINGER BENT BACK NINETY-DEGREES.

RUTH
Guh.

Tight on Killer Sills, livid--

KILLER SILLS
Now look what you made me do--

THUP! TONY'S FOOT IMPACTS THE SIDE OF HIS FACE AND SILLS DROPS LIKE A SACK OF WET LAUNDRY.

TONY
SIDE KICK.

Tony hurriedly tosses whatever SILVER he can back into the box, quaking with giddy adrenaline over what he just did.

Sills is out cold, mouth agape, SNORING as FLIES buzz him.

Ruth is hunched over, clammy-grey, gazing miserably out at--

THE VAN DISAPPEARING AROUND A DISTANT CURVE IN THE ROAD.

As Tony helps her to her feet--

TONY (CONT'D)

That was a side kick.

A few Shoppers are stealing shit now and running away.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON RUTH'S HAND as a splint is applied to her finger.

CLOSE ON THE DOCTOR, focusing on his work for a bit. Then...

DOCTOR

The uh...that *mail slot*, huh?

CLOSE ON TONY, observing from the sidelines, tight-lipped.

CLOSE ON RUTH, looking sad and exhausted.

RUTH

Yeah.

A beat.

DOCTOR

Must've really slammed it hard.

Her lip quivers, almost crying but not. Softly...

RUTH

Slammed the shit outta it.

CLOSE ON A BOX OF '**PERCODAN**' being opened. *Rip!*

CLOSE ON RUTH'S HAND, two FAT PILLS dropped into the palm.

CLOSE ON RUTH'S MOUTH as she gulps 'em and chugs water. *Glug!*

INT. RUTH'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Tony drives. Ruth stares out like a zombie, high as fuck, but troubled. Some CHEERFUL POP NUMBER plays softly on the radio.

TONY

See...you pivot on the ball of your foot and snap your hips out at the same time. That transmits a huge amount of power outward through the leg. It's devastating when deployed correctly.

Doesn't seem like she heard him. He lets it go.

RUTH

That guy mighta killed me.

TONY

Him? Nah. He's scrappy, I'll give him that, but he let emotions cloud his flow. Amateur stuff.

RUTH

No. He wanted to hurt me. I saw his eyes...after I hit him.

He can see that pains her.

TONY

Hey. You didn't do anything wrong. That's your silver.

RUTH

He didn't know that.

TONY

Doesn't matter.

RUTH

Your superpower is certainty.

He's flattered but she doesn't notice, she's spiraling.

RUTH (CONT'D)

What if he had a gun? Or a knife?
He mighta killed you, too. He...
(beat)
I'm so sorry.

TONY

Sorry? I should be thanking you.

For the first time here, she looks at him. *Huh?*

TONY (CONT'D)

I don't uh...I don't really have too many friends. I've been told I'm obnoxious? Which is...anyways.
(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

My life is...
(a little shrug)
But *today* I felt electric.

She nods blearily. It makes a weird kind of sense.

RUTH

I wasn't scared. I mean, I
was...but it had no weight. And I
am *always* scared.

She turns her gaze back out the window again...

RUTH'S POV, sliding by PILES OF GARBAGE, by HUNCHED
PEDESTRIANS, by NEON-LIT SHOPFRONTS. Blurring decay.

Her voice seems to come from elsewhere. Lost.

RUTH (CONT'D)

What are we doing?

TONY

Umm. Whatever you want? I mean, I
gotta take Brian for a walk but--

RUTH

What are we doing *here*. The world.

He thinks a moment, but he knows this one.

TONY

Trying to be good. Or be better.

RUTH

Quantify that shit.

TONY

I mean, y'know...values and
whatnot.

RUTH

That's not a real thing. That's a
poster with a kitten on it.

TONY

It *is* a real thing.

RUTH

What about me? Am I good?

TONY

Yes. Of course you are.

RUTH
I clubbed an old man.

TONY
Well, yeah--

RUTH
In the face.

TONY
Yeah--

RUTH
With a big wooden box.

TONY
Right, but in combat situations--

RUTH
There's no upside. We come from
stars, you know.

He looks at her: *what's this gibberish?*

TONY
The upside is that nothing ends.
There's always time. You continue.

RUTH
Where?

TONY
("obviously")
Somewhere better.

RUTH
"Heaven?"

TONY
I'm not saying clouds and harps and
stuff...but there *is* more. I know
that.

RUTH
How do you know it?

TONY
I just know it.

RUTH
(very quiet)
I don't wanna die.

TONY

You won't.

She grimaces at that.

TONY (CONT'D)

Nnnot....right now?

RUTH

It's just gonna be black.

TONY

No. It won't.

RUTH

Yes, Tony. It will. Just...

(snaps her fingers)

Like when you switch off a T.V.

TONY

But...that's so hopeless.

She shrugs. He considers her, vexed. Finally...

TONY (CONT'D)

Can I show you something?

RUTH

Mhmm...show me.

As the radio fades into a JOHN HUGHES-Y LOVE SONG ("Bring On The Dancing Horses" by Echo & The Bunnymen is perfect) her head lolls back in a druggy stupor...

INT. FIRST REDEEMER EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

Ruth drifts towards us down the aisle, eyes drawn upwards in awe as THE SONG SUBSUMES ALL SOUND.

A MURAL OF "HEAVEN" spreads before her: it's a community art project, so Jesus and all the happy folks with Him in the green sunny field resemble grinning misshapen cavemen.

But, gazing up at it, she begins to smile.

WIDER NOW, Ruth and Tony in a pew. Fluorescent banks and drop ceilings: a small, new construction church, FULL OF PEOPLE.

The MINISTER reads his sermon. We can't hear him but his body language suggests a calm, grandfatherly warmth.

PUSHING IN on Ruth, hearing his words, smiling dreamily.

CLOSER ON THE MINSTER as his "words" fall into sync with the chorus of THE SONG. *He's not performing it, he's just reading his regular sermon, but his lips subtly form the lyrics.*

Next to Ruth, Tony glances over at her sidelong. Taking in the curve of her cheek, the line of her neck.

THEIR HANDS are resting on the pew, close together. He moves his PINKY, ever so slightly, so that it brushes hers.

She looks at him. He looks at her.

EXT. STREET - THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD - TWILIGHT

THE SONG CONTINUES over this LONG SHOT in which Ruth and Tony head away from us in the fading light, taking Brian out for a walk. (And Tony has a plastic bag at the ready, btw.)

INT. FRONT ROOM - TONY'S HOUSE - SUNSET

THE SONG CONTINUES as we find Ruth and Tony sitting on his sheet-covered couch in the stream of gold-orange light through the window. Brian is curled up nearby.

SLOWLY PUSHING IN ON THEM, side by side, not talking, not moving...until she tilts her head to rest it on his shoulder.

FADE OUT.

INT. THE VAN - NIGHT

HEAVY ROCK on the radio ("Forever My Queen", Pentagram!) as MARSHALL nervously counts the CASH for maybe the tenth time.

HEADLIGHTS play on his face and he looks up. Christian gobbles some of RUTH'S MEDS and looks up. Dez was dozing off but now she looks up, too.

DEZ

Finally.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, they watch a HEAVY PICKUP TRUCK glide into this crowded PARKING LOT like a great white shark.

EXT. ROADHOUSE PARKING LOT - SAME

Marshall, affecting a careless swagger, leads them along. Christian is tense. Only Dez is genuinely relaxed.

The lot is clogged with NOISY BIKERS and ROUGH CHARACTERS hanging around the seedy BAR that throbs in the background.

AHEAD, oozing from his PICKUP to greet some PALS, is the one and only DONKEY DICK (40s). Corpulent redneck supreme.

Marshall (and crew) arrives at the outskirts of Donkey Dick's jocular group and LAUGHS along with a joke he didn't hear. Donkey Dick regards them with open contempt.

DONKEY DICK

Not gonna waste my time again, are ya?

MARSHALL

Nope. We're whole.

DONKEY DICK

Yeah? *Butthole*, maybe.

That gets big laughs.

DONKEY DICK (CONT'D)

Y'all been sleeping in that van?

MARSHALL

(wanted to make a smart remark but)

N-no.

DONKEY DICK

Cause one a you three *stinks*. Ain't quite fish but it ain't quite chicken, neither, so I'm at a loss.

More big laughs.

MARSHALL

It's pork chops: we just dropped your Mom off.

Yikes. No overt laughs. (But someone does snicker quietly.) Donkey Dick sizzles, infuriated.

Marshall holds his ground. Christian swells his chest. Dez looks like she's watching a mildly diverting sitcom.

As Donkey Dick opens the LOCK BOX in his pickup bed and yanks out a PAPER GROCERY BAG--

DONKEY DICK

C'mon, ya fuckin' comedian.

EXT. THE VAN - ROADHOUSE PARKING LOT - SAME

VUMP! The van door slides open and Donkey Dick sets the PAPER BAG inside with a *clink!* A semi-private staging area.

Christian and Dez are hanging back, but they crane to see--

As Marshall opens the bag, practically salivating.

It's TWO HANDGUNS (a 4-INCH .38 REVOLVER & a .45 AUTO) and a SAWED-OFF DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN. Loose SHELLS in Ziploc bags.

Marshall works the action on the shotgun, *klik! k-klak!* *It's kind of rusty and banged up, not the cleanest weapon.*

MARSHALL

Action's a little janky.

DONKEY DICK

Gonna do brain surgery with it? Get whatcha pay for n' you could barely pay for this.

Donkey Dick swats him and Marshall hands over the CASH.

As Donkey Dick counts it, Marshall gives a satisfied nod to Dez and Christian and slides the bag out of sight.

MARSHALL

(turning to Donkey Dick)

Very happy that we could finally--

WAK! DONKEY DICK SLAPS MARSHALL SO HARD ACROSS THE FACE THAT HIS DENTURES POP OUT AS HE FALLS.

Christian steps forward but Dez subtly blocks him: *don't.*

Donkey Dick pockets the money, shakes his hand out.

DONKEY DICK

Bring my Mom into it.

The kids wait until he's stomped off before...

Dez scoops Marshall's DENTURES out of the dirt, reaches into the van for a bottle of Pepsi to rinse them off.

Christian helps Marshall stand. He can't help but look diminished, accepting his teeth and slipping them back in.

But he rallies, a brittle little smile, a hoarse chuckle...

MARSHALL

Eggs and omelets, like they say.

INT. FRONT ROOM - TONY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Ruth stirs out of a deep, sweaty, painkiller sleep on the couch. Her first movements bring a GASP of pain.

She remembers her BROKEN FINGER, winces at it. Then at...

The plate of AMERICAN CHEESE SLICES (wrapped) and a SODA POP that Tony put out for her. A faint smile at that.

But next to it is her SILVER SET, badly scratched, some bent utensils sticking out. And her expression hardens.

TONY (O.S.)
How's the finger?

WIDER, Tony's shirtless in the kitchen doorway with a bowl of CEREAL, sweaty from a workout. Ruth stares at her silver.

RUTH
(almost to herself)
Fuckers got away.

TONY
Yeah, but...you got it all back,
right?

RUTH
They were inside my house.

TONY
(philosophical shrug)
So give the cops the tag number.
Doubt they can do anything...but
you never know.

RUTH
(clenched teeth)
I didn't *get* the tag number.

TONY
(mouth full of cereal)
Oh, I did.

She swivels slowly to face him. He chomps, open faced.

TONY (CONT'D)
Didn't I say that?

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM - DAY

HIS COMPUTER is clicked on. *Bzzt!*

SCREEN GLOW REVEALS BRIAN, panting happily in the darkness.

TONY SPINS in his chair to face us, bathed in SCREEN GLOW.

TONY

It's all just ones and zeroes.
Binary data connected by threads,
like a web.

RUTH

Yeah. It's...called the Web.

She glances around the DIM MESSY ROOM: dirty socks, microwave popcorn, a samurai sword. Heavy CURTAINS keeping the sun out.

TONY

(like he didn't hear her)
Just gotta know how to dodge the
spiders.

He TYPES, hard and fast, "The Master Hacker" apparently.

TONY (CONT'D)

(under his breath)
You're so sly, but so am I...

ON SCREEN, a waterfall of PORNO POP-UPS. **Amateur Slutz!**, etc.

TONY (CONT'D)

(hastily rebooting it)
Oops.

SECONDS LATER, he's TYPING hard again, totally focused.

TONY (CONT'D)

(under his breath)
Open sesame...

ON SCREEN, it's just GOOGLE: **"look up a license plate?"**

TONY (CONT'D)

Oh. Need a credit card.

SECONDS LATER, Ruth's reading her VISA as he TYPES along--

RUTH

Eight. Four. Six. Nine. Five. Zero.
Zero. Zero. One.

TONY

And the expiration?

RUTH

Eleven, nineteen.

TONY

CVC code?

SECONDS LATER, he *clicks!* the mouse and they both lean in.

TONY (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Gotcha.

ON SCREEN, a results page for **WWW.TagSearch.COM**, which reads **VEHICLE REGISTRATION: RUMACK, CHRISTIAN S., 8800 LAKE CIRCLE.**

RUTH

(like spitting out acid)

Christian Rumack.

INT. BENDIX'S CUBICLE - POLICE STATION - DAY

Ruth sits anxiously, watching Detective Bendix gloomily poke at her PLASTER FOOT MOLD with his pen. Eventually...

BENDIX

What do you do, Miss Kimke?

RUTH

I'm a nursing assistant.

BENDIX

Do you enjoy it?

Her answer takes a moment to bloom, unhappily.

RUTH

I don't know anymore.

BENDIX

Mm. Suppose I came to where you do that, your hospital--

RUTH

It's a post-op facility.

BENDIX

Okay, suppose I came there and said, you know, maybe not that medicine, Ruth, maybe this one instead, dontcha think?

RUTH

That's not what I--

BENDIX

You present a certainty that the owner of a vehicle you *happened* to see at a garage sale is the same individual--

RUTH

His footprint--

BENDIX

--who burglarized your home and his foot, according to this, is made out of scrambled eggs. You tell me this with a straight face, the suggestion being that I am incompetent at my job.

RUTH

No! No, sir, that's not what I meant, I-I-I'd recovered my computer and--

BENDIX

I understand the chain of events as you tell them. Did it occur to you that the people who had your computer in the first place were the ones who broke into your house?

RUTH

Yeah but--

BENDIX

Occam's Razor and so forth.

RUTH

Yeah but--what?

BENDIX

Did it occur to you that approaching a criminal suspect without official capacity is a good way to get your wig knocked off? What happened to your finger?

(off her non-response)

Were you engaged in a confrontation?

RUTH

(re: her broken finger)
It was an accident.

BENDIX

Have you been able to replace your medications?

RUTH

(frosting over at that)

Oh. I see.

He pushes the plaster mold back towards her. *Scraaaape*. She stares at him a long, helpless beat.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Why don't you want to help me?
Isn't that your job?

BENDIX

(swelling with fury)

My *job*? I am *doing* my job. You are not a professional. You are an interferer. You think because you leave your door wide open for some punk to stroll on in that the whole universe somehow now revolves around you? Grow up. We had a man beaten unconscious in his driveway last night by a total stranger and now he has skull splinters in his brain. The world is bigger than your silverware. People are experiencing bigger problems, people are--I'm being divorced, did you know that? Did you even bother to...

He looks away, one hand over his mouth, SNUFFLES pitifully.

Some NEARBY COPS exchange a look: *Ugh, this shit again.*

BENDIX (O.S.) (CONT'D)

[*Snnf.*]

Embarrassed and unsure what to do, Ruth glances around...and then reaches out to put her hand on his--

But he yanks back as if scalded. Glaring at her, he wipes his nose. Makes some notes, clears his throat.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Go home, Miss Kimke.

She slides the REGISTRATION PRINTOUT towards him, tapping it where it says '**Rumack**'--

RUTH

But...*this* is the guy--

He snatches it, balls it up, tosses it.

BENDIX

No. It isn't. And if you engage in vigilante action or mess around with this any further I won't hesitate to have you clapped up. Follow me?

She smolders.

INT. RUTH'S CAR - POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Tony waits at the wheel, watching as--

Ruth comes stomping back with her plaster mold, gets in, SLAMS the door. He can see she's furious, gives it a moment.

TONY

Now what?

As she turns to him, unblinking, HER ACTION THEME kicks in, turbocharged with additional frenzied percussion.

INT. GROCERY AISLE - DAY

That same SLOPPY MAN is here again and, again, he drops a bag of chips, and again Ruth snatches it up for him but now--

RUTH

Pick up your shit.

And then she grabs a BOX OF KIDS CEREAL: **'Free Inside! JUNIOR G-MAN BADGE!'**

INT. GROCERY CHECKOUT - DAY

Ruth and a GUY arrive simultaneously but Ruth does *not* defer.

RUTH

Excuse me.

EXT. RUTH'S CAR - GROCERY PARKING LOT - DAY

FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT, Tony watches uncertainly as...

Ruth DUMPS all of the cereal out, spilling it crazily, and then pawing inside the box for--

THE CHEAP CHROME "POLICE" BADGE she was promised.

EXT. WOODED DRIVE (MOVING) - DAY

TRACKING WITH RUTH'S CAR, plowing steadily ahead as HER ACTION THEME crescendos and then--

INT. RUTH'S CAR - LAKE CIRCLE - DAY

--it cuts. Ruth and Tony, parked, both staring out at--

TONY

Musta robbed a *ton* of houses.

THE RUMACK MANSION, across the road, set back into the trees: a secluded cabin palace. A few LUXURY CARS...but no van.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUMACK MANSION - DAY

TRACKING THEM as they near the house, Ruth taking note of--

THE MENAGERIE OF RATTAN ANIMALS, crafty if ostentatious lawn decorations: *an elephant, a tiger, and a giraffe.*

Passing them, she hears a faint, ghostly **RAWWR**: the throaty rumble of a jungle cat. She double-takes the TIGER: *the fuck?*

EXT. FRONT DOOR - RUMACK MANSION - DAY

Nok-nok! MEREDITH RUMACK (40) opens with a klieg-light smile. Nails, hair, makeup: all perfect but age is closing in.

MEREDITH

Yes?

Ruth flashes her BADGE, Tony looming behind her in aviators.

RUTH

Good morning, ma'am, I was-- POLICE.

TONY

Meredith blinks, still smiling, and Ruth resets. *Ahem.*

RUTH

Could we have a moment of your time, please?

INT. MAIN ROOM - RUMACK MANSION - DAY

Meredith leads them into the expansive, immaculate home, genuinely delighted to have visitors, relentlessly cheerful.

MEREDITH

Y'all care for some coffee?

RUTH

No, thank you--

TONY

Not necessary.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

No trouble, I just press a button on the machine--*boop!* It'll do a cappuccino, too, it's like A.I.

RUTH

In that case...

TONY

Do you have cashew milk?

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

I bet I can find something!

Meredith breezes off, leaving them in this vast show of wealth. Tony lingers over a PHOTO of Meredith, beauty pageant winner, ages ago.

Ruth gazes at ANOTHER PHOTO, A TAN BLOND MAN in pastel racing leathers, posing himself before some outre CONCEPT CAR.

RUTH

I need to talk with Christian Rumack. Is he here?

INT. KITCHEN - RUMACK MANSION - SAME

As Meredith works the fancy COFFEE MACHINE...

MEREDITH

Well, he's *stlll* out. Y'know, with his "friends." I expect him back who knows when. Talk about what?

RUTH (O.S.)

Choices he made.

...she adds a few fingers of SHERRY to her own cup.

MEREDITH

I oughta make sandwiches, then. That could take all day.

INT. MAIN ROOM - SAME

As Meredith sets out the COFFEE TRAY for everyone...

RUTH

Do you know Christian's whereabouts
the day of--

TONY

(sipping his cappuccino)
A machine did this?

MEREDITH

Yup.

TONY

Huh. I worked at a Borders.

MEREDITH

The bookstore?

TONY

Yes, but they had a cafe, too. I
got pretty good with the steamer.
Could do smiley faces, winking
faces, uh, peace symbols, hearts...

MEREDITH

Wow.

TONY

Oak leaves. Just takes practice.

RUTH

Would you happen to know
Christian's whereabouts the day
before yesterday?

MEREDITH

I'd barely know his whereabouts *any*
day. He comes and goes, y'know?

Ruth glances around, vaguely confused.

RUTH

But...he does have a job?

MEREDITH

Some'd argue that's all he has.

RUTH

What's he do?

Meredith looks at Ruth over the rim of her cup. *Gulp, gulp.*

MEREDITH
(air quotes)
"Lawyer." You know.

RUTH
Is...he in his van now?

MEREDITH
Oh...

At "van", her vibe shifts: smirky disdain to curious concern.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
That's Chris *Junior* you're talking about. Christian got him that van for his sixteenth if he got all B's. He flunked but got to keep it anyway. Just sayin'.

Ruth processes.

RUTH
Do you know where your son is now?

MEREDITH
Step-son. I have no idea where he is. We haven't seem him in, jeez, almost a year? He got into drugs, was in jail a little bit, started running around with people he met in there. Creeps. His father finally cut him off, just recently, cancelled his ATM cards, everything. Tough love and whatnot.
(dropping her voice)
TMI but Chrissy always made me kinda nervous, even before all that. You ever see *The Omen*?

RUMACK (O.S.)
The hell is this?

CHRIS RUMACK (50s), a WASP God, the race car man from the photo, apparently at the end of an all-night bender, glares unsteadily from the vestibule with CESAR (40s), his flunky with the dead-eyed look of private security.

MEREDITH
The police are asking about Chrissy.

Rumack pointedly zips his fly, which was down, and...

RUMACK
 (to Ruth/Tony)
 That your shitbox out front?

RUTH
 Y-yes, sir, but--

Fast: Cesar draws a GLOCK 9MM from a concealed carry holster and levels it on Ruth and Tony--

CESAR
 HANDS.

Their hands go up so fast *both* coffee cups go flying. *K-kash!*

MEREDITH
 ('*the rug.*')
 Ohh.

Cesar darts forward to quickly pat them both down, and--

CESAR
 DO NOT MOVE.

--he darts from the room in a tactical crouch as Rumack watches them, nastily amused, polishing his half-tints.

Ruth and Tony: both visibly freaked out.

RUTH
 Sir--

He puts a finger to his lips. *Hush.* And she does.

He takes a moment, pulls his tie the rest of the way off, rubs his red, puffy eyes, smacks his lips. And finally...

RUMACK
 Meredith. Are you retarded?

MEREDITH
 Don't you *dare* use the R word
 around me!

RUMACK
Those are not police.

MEREDITH
 I know that.

RUMACK
 Then why are you talking to them?

MEREDITH
Because I'm fucking borrrred!

RUMACK
Oh shut up, not that again--

MEREDITH
Look at yourself! You're *lucky* all
we're doing is talking.

RUMACK
Don't flatter yourself, baby.

As Meredith storms out in exasperation--

MEREDITH
I guess I'll just get some soda for
the rug.

CESAR (O.S.)
Clear!

Cesar trots back in, his weapon lowered but still in play.

CESAR (CONT'D)
Clear.

Rumack gestures, *lower your hands*. They do.

RUMACK
...come home to this shit. Okay.
Who are you?

RUTH
My name is Ruth.

TONY
I invoke my Fifth Amendment--

RUMACK (CONT'D)
What are you *doing* here.

RUTH
Your son broke into my house and
stole my stuff.

From O.S., Meredith SLAMS cabinets in the kitchen. *BAM! BAM!*

RUMACK
KNOCK IT OFF.

A beat.

RUMACK (CONT'D)
(back to Ruth)
What's that got--

BAM! He fumes.

RUMACK (CONT'D)
What's that got to do with me?

RUTH
I thought he lived here.

RUMACK
So you impersonate cops to...why?

RUTH
To find him if he wasn't here.

RUMACK
To what end?

RUTH
To confront him.

RUMACK
"How dare you. Wah, wah." Like that?

Ruth's revulsion at this sarcasm melts through her fear.

RUTH
Yes. Exactly. You can't do that to people.

RUMACK
You say that like it means something. Look, I don't condone my son's behavior but *anyone* can do *anything* if you let them. Welcome to the world. You watch the news, don't you?

His words physically rattle her, she has to recover.

RUTH
No *wonder* he turned out like he did.

RUMACK
You have kids?

Her non-response is a 'no.'

RUMACK (CONT'D)
So you have no idea what you're talking about, do you?
(MORE)

RUMACK (CONT'D)

Christian had more opportunity and assistance than ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the people on this planet and that's because of *me*, of what *I* did for him, what *I* provided. If he decides to flush it and live like a degenerate because of mental weakness that's *his* choice, he is *allowing* that to happen just as you *allowed* yourself to be victimized, but don't come to me with that nature-nurture horseshit. How much?

RUTH

H-how much what?

Rumack HURLS his glasses aside--**wak!**--a sudden micro-tantrum, his temper just as instantly recovered into a shrill grin.

Ruth and Tony are stunned and...

In the now-charged silence, Meredith stomps back in with PAPER TOWELS and SELTZER WATER to sop up the coffee.

MEREDITH

(muttering)

Probably gonna stain.

Rumack brings out his WALLET, thumbs the cash inside.

RUMACK

How much do you want?

Staredown: furious Ruth vs. smirking Rumack. Tony's eyes jump between them. Meredith ignores it all, working on that stain.

RUTH

I don't want a payoff.

RUMACK

Then I'm confused. What *do* you want?

She sifts for it, right there on the tip of her tongue:

RUTH

For people...to not...be assholes.

Rumack puts the wallet away, now genuinely concerned.

RUMACK

Oh, child...

He approaches her, reaches his hand out, and she flinches slightly but allows him to...*rest it briefly on her forehead.*

Tony watches. Cesar watches. Even Meredith, now, watches.

RUMACK

Huh. Thought you might have a fever.

And his "concern" morphs back into that nasty grin of condescension. Ruth burns: *Fuck. This. Dude.*

RUTH

(to Cesar)

Are you going to shoot us?

Cesar says nothing. Rumack snorts.

RUMACK

Don't be so goddamned dramatic.

RUTH

Then we'll leave.

She stands, waits for wobbly-kneed Tony, and they head out.

TONY

(to Meredith)

Thank you for the cappuccino. The foam was amazing.

MEREDITH

(glumly, without looking)

You're very welcome.

Ruth stalks past Rumack, eyes dead ahead.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUMACK MANSION - SAME

LEADING RUTH AND TONY away, Rumack in the door behind them--

RUMACK

You can tell yourself you've done something here, if that'll help. Really took a stand.

She grinds her jaw, but doesn't stop, doesn't turn. And he **SLAMS!** the door at their backs.

TRACKING THEM ACROSS THE HUGE LAWN, passing those ANIMALS as Tony trots to keep up.

TONY

You know what? People like that,
that's just unhappiness eating 'em
up. You oughta feel sorry for him.
(when she doesn't reply)
Want me to drive?

RUTH

Sure.

AT RUTH'S CAR, Tony gets behind the wheel but...Ruth stops.
Something dark churns on her face for a moment and...

SHE TURNS AND JOGS BACK ACROSS THE YARD. Her ACTION THEME
wails but it's *playing in reverse*, distorted and unholy.

FROM THE CAR, Tony watches in mounting horror as--

RUTH ATTACKS THE ELEPHANT, savagely trying to uproot it but
it's sturdier than it looks. A wild, grunting frenzy.

TONY

Whoa whoa whoa!

KRAK! RUTH FALLS BACKWARDS, the snapped-off trunk of the
elephant in her hands. So she re-doubles and--

ATTACKS THE TIGER INSTEAD, coiling her entire body around it,
ferociously wrenching it loose. **SNAP!** (And faintly, almost
subconsciously, the tiger *rawwrs*.)

FROM THE CAR, Tony watches, aghast as--

RUTH AWKWARDLY SPRINTS BACK, HUGGING THE HUGE TIGER.

TONY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SHE JAMS THE TIGER INTO THE BACK SEAT--

RUTH

(under her beath)
...*get the fuck in there...*

TONY (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Why are
you doing that?!

SHE JUMPS IN THE DRIVER'S SIDE, scooting him over to yank the
gearshift and rev them away, **VRRRM!**

But as they fly out of frame, we drift back to find that...

CHRISTIAN'S VAN is parked in the far background, partially
obscured by trees, fifty yards away.

INT. VAN - DOWN THE ROAD - SAME

Christian, Marshall, and Dez watch RUTH'S CAR vanish around the bend. As her ENGINE fades in the distance, Marshall looks sternly to Christian, as if expecting an explanation.

CHRISTIAN

I...I have no idea.

MARSHALL

Yeah? Cause they were at the place yesterday, too.

CHRISTIAN

What? No, they weren't--

DEZ

Yeah, they were. The girl yelled at us.

Christian gapes, flummoxed and airless.

CHRISTIAN

I mean...fuck it, let's just do it, he's finally there now--

MARSHALL

(pointing after Ruth)

I'm not doing a damn thing until I know what *their* piece in this is. They're on us yesterday, they're here today, she's obviously nuts, you telling me you're *comfortable* with that? We already got the security man to think about. You wanna walk into some kinda dog-fuck n' take another fall? Cause ol' Marshall will not be there this time to put a coat on ya, that's for certain.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Fine. What'm I supposed to do about it?

DEZ

Ask her.

He looks to Marshall, whose blank look co-signs the order: *do it*. So Christian pops it into gear...

INT. RUTH'S CAR (MOVIN) - DAY

Who drive in moody silence with the TIGER frozen mid-roar behind them. The silence stretches. Eventually...

RUTH
What?

TONY
What do you mean, *what*?

RUTH
What's your problem?

TONY
That's not your lawn tiger.

RUTH
Did you hear that guy?

TONY
I heard him. But he's not the one that broke into your house and that's not your lawn tiger. If I'd known that was gonna be the, the, y'know, the objective...

RUTH
I get it.

TONY
Of the mission.

RUTH
I get it.

Long beat.

TONY
I wouldn't have participated.

RUTH
Yeah, I get it. And thanks for the backup in there.

TONY
The--? All I've *done* is back you up.

RUTH
'Til now.

He doesn't know how else to say it, so...

TONY
That's not your lawn tiger.

She hasn't looked at him the whole time and she doesn't now.

RUTH
(under her breath)
Right. 'What would Jesus do', huh?

Ouch. He turns away. Moody silence resumes, big time.

EXT. STREET - TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

RUTH'S CAR pulls over at Tony's house. Can a car look morose?

Tony gets out without a word. Ruth watches him go: she's cooled off and she feels rotten.

RUTH
Tony...

He gives a little *forget it* wave without looking back and disappears inside.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON THE 'NO DOG SHIT' SIGN, as RUTH'S CAR jerks to a halt in the out-of-focus background, and out-of-focus Ruth then wrestles the TIGER out...

She KICKS the sign in anger as she passes it. *Thup!*

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

THE BAG with the HEAVY PLASTER MOLD drops on the table. *THUD.*

THE TIGER is hurled into the room. *Pash!*

Ruth KICKS IT only to stub the shit out of her toe--*wak!*

RUTH
FUCKING...THING.

She flops onto the couch, drops her face into her hands, clutches fistfuls of her hair: some old fashioned seething.

In time, she deep-breathes herself out of the red zone and stares out the window a while. What a fucking mess.

ALL IN ONE SHOT NOW, she gets up and heads into...

INT. KITCHEN - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...with her OPENED FRONT DOOR visible in the background until she veers off to the fridge. Opens it. Gets a beer.

Gulping deeply from the can, WE TRACK WITH HER BACK THE WAY SHE CAME, her FRONT DOOR reappearing in the background and...

CHRISTIAN is now standing just outside it, this dark background shape she wisps by without noticing and heads into-

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where she peels out of her sweaty shirt, slips on a fresh one, pauses to gulp more beer. Feeling a little better.

INT. KITCHEN - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She comes back but pauses suddenly, looking at...

THE EMPTY FRONT DOOR which, eerily, is just now shutting the last few slow inches on its pneumatic closer. *Pssshh-click.*

She stares at that. Walks towards it.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LEADING HER towards the door as she looks out, up and down the block, but sees nothing. Huh. Weird.

BEHIND HER, Christian materializes in the KITCHEN DOORWAY. He's right there, inside the fucking house. That crazy grin.

Her back is to him, taking a sip as he walks towards her. Twelve feet away. Eight feet. Five feet...

CHRISTIAN

What'd you tell my Dad?

GASP! She WHIRLS at his voice--

HER DROPPED BEER crashes to the floor--**KAK!**

TERROR REFLEX: SHE GRABS THE PLASTIC BAG WITH THE HEAVY PLASTER MOLD IN IT AND SWINGS IT IN A BRUTAL ARC AND--

SHAK! THIS MAKESHIFT FLAIL CRUSHES HIS LARYNX.

This was all maybe three-quarters of a second. Christian staggers, astonished, both hands jerking to his throat which is making a horrible, reedy, WHISTLING NOISE.

Ruth, pulsing with shock and adrenaline, steps aside as--

Christian lurches past her, struggling for air he can't get, giving an almost reproachful look of *Why'd you do that?* as--

EXT. FRONT YARD - STREET - SAME

--he stumbles outside, heaving and buckling, his FACE QUICKLY TURNING BLUE before our very eyes. Remember Luca Brasi in *The Godfather*? Like that. Nightmare stuff.

Ruth steps out after him, stunned into inaction, watching in helpless horror as--

Christian staggers down the MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, like he can somehow outrun his own suffocation. Scared to death.

INT. VAN - DOWN THE STREET - SAME

Marshall and Dez, watching this unfold from a distance--

MARSHALL

Ahh fuck...

EXT. STREET - RUTH'S YARD - SAME

In his dying panic, Christian has picked up some speed, hobble-lurching towards the INTERSECTION up ahead...

His face is PURPLE, clawing his throat, GURGLING pitifully...

Ruth is at the edge of her yard but still basically frozen, weakly shaking her head like *wait wait wait*--

IN THE DISTANCE, CHRISTIAN DARTS PAST THE TWO-WAY STOP SIGN INTO THE ROAD AND IS INSTANTLY CREAMED BY A FAST-MOVING BUS.

We actually cut away one frame before the moment of impact but IT SOUNDS LIKE A ROAST BEEF DROPPED FROM A SKYSCRAPER.

At once: Ruth's SCREAM, the terrible SCREECH of bus brakes--

INT. VAN - DOWN THE ROAD - SAME

MARSHALL

Hoo boy.

DEZ

Goddamn.

INT. VAN (MOVING) - DAY

BLACKNESS. Occasionally penetrated by SMEARS OF LIGHT.

MARSHALL (V.O.)
She mighta said our names.

DEZ (V.O.)
She doesn't know 'em.

MARSHALL (V.O.)
She knew Chrissy's alright.

DEZ (V.O.)
We oughta kill her anyway, then.

MARSHALL (V.O.)
Ask her when she wakes up.

DEZ (V.O.)
Oh, she's awake now.

CLOSE ON RUTH, jouncing on the floor of the van, a SWOLLEN GASH above her eye. Stripes of SUNLIGHT wipe her face, rhythmically. She's terrified. She squirms but...

HER WRISTS are bound with duct tape.

Painfully, she cranes her neck around to see--

MARSHALL AND DEZ: THEIR HEADS MADE OUT OF CLOTH. Homemade masks, t-shirts with eyeholes. Creeeeepy.

Marshall drives. Dez stares back at her, holding her PHONE.

DEZ
What'd you tell 'em?

RUTH
Nothing.

DEZ
Promise?

RUTH
I don't know who you are.

Dez chucks the phone out the window.

DEZ
How'd you find Chrissy?

RUTH
C-computer.

DEZ
And what? You just went after him
on your own?

RUTH
I *tried* to tell the cops. *Before*.
But they didn't listen. I swear.

DEZ
What about his dad?

RUTH
He didn't care either!

Dez stares at her, like trying to see inside her brain.

DEZ
(to Marshall)
Whatcha think?

MARSHALL
(gloomy & fatalistic)
Soon as they peel Chrissy outta
under that bus there's gonna be
people coming over anyway...what a
buncha bullshit.

DEZ
Better hustle then.

CLOSE ON RUTH AGAIN, drooping back down, eyes clamping shut.

RUTH
(barely audible)
...please...

INT. FRONT ROOM - TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

SLOWLY PUSHING IN ON TONY, slumped there on the couch. His
eyes land sadly on something O.S. and he reaches for it.

Crinkle, crinkle. He lifts the now-unwrapped slice of
American cheese to his mouth for a sad nibble. *Chew, chew,*
chew. Washes it down with some soda.

Ahh. There. He feels a little better now. Looks over at...

Brian, curled in the corner, staring back as if in
anticipation. Tony's expression becomes serious again.

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE INTERSECTION - DAY

THE BUS AND VARIOUS COP CARS as out-of-focus foreground elements. LIGHTS FLASHING and BLURRY OFFICIAL HUBBUB.

IN THE BACKGROUND, at the rear of the small CROWD at the yellow tape, TONY'S HEAD pops up above them, scanning as--

IN THE FOREGROUND, a STRETCHER goes by, a BODY under a sheet.

Tony questions an ONLOOKER, who gestures at the cops and bus.

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony approaches and gives a light *knock-knock* but...THE DOOR was a little bit opened already.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - SAME

He steps inside, hesitantly.

TONY

Ruth?

No answer. He looks over at...

THE TIGER, sideways on the floor, silently snarling at him. A DOOMY SCORE kicks in and carries us over to...

EXT. THE VAN - WOODED DRIVE (MOVING) - DAY

THE VAN pushing ominously through the woods.

INT. VAN (MOVING) - DAY

Ruth rocks forward as the van comes to a halt.

Marshall looks back at her, the .45 loose in his hand.

Dez loads the RUSTY SHOTGUN. She has to force the shell in.

Ruth shivers, waiting for whatever's next. She watches as...

Marshall WHISPERS something in Dez's ear, who listens, her eyes on Ruth. She WHISPERS something back. It's decided.

With his free hand, Marshall brings out the REVOLVER and aims it at Ruth's face. Cringing away from it...

RUTH
Don't don't--

He pulls the trigger, she SHRIEKS, it makes a dull **click**.

MARSHALL
 You'll carry this one, okay?

RUTH
 W-why?

MARSHALL
 Cause we're shorthanded. Which is on you.

RUTH
 I don't want to.

For a second, Marshall's eyes look damn near sympathetic.

MARSHALL
 That's what life is, darlin. Buncha stuff we don't wanna do.

RUTH
 You could leave me here. I-I-I'll be so quiet. I promise.

His eyes turn hard and demonic inside the mask. His gestures accentuate those CAT TATTOOS on his hands.

MARSHALL
 Get them to open the door. Point that at whoever it is so nothing happens. We'll get what we need and we'll leave and that's it.

RUTH
 But how do I know you won't, won't...

She can't even finish the thought.

MARSHALL
 You know that I *will* if you *don't*.

DEZ
 It's karma, for Chrissy...

Dez holds up a SWITCHBLADE and--**snikt!**--pops it open.

DEZ (CONT'D)
 That shit's for real, sister.

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUMACK MANSION -DAY

The most hopeless version of RUTH'S THEME echoes faintly as we TRACK HER ACROSS THE LAWN. A long march towards oblivion.

HER HAND shakes violently. Making a fist doesn't help.

THE REVOLVER is tucked into the small of her back.

THE RATTAN YARD ANIMALS, the now-trunkless elephant and the giraffe, seem to watch her as she passes by.

She swallows heavily to keep from throwing up.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - RUMACK MANSION - CONTINUOUS

ON RUTH, seen from behind, standing at the door.

PULLING BACK, there's Marshall and Dez on either side of her, pressed against the house, out of sight, GUNS READY.

Ruth hesitates. Marshall twitches his gun. So she knocks.

CLOSE ON THE PEEPHOLE, which suddenly goes dark.

Ruth attempts a smile. Looks like she drank vinegar.

RUTH

It's me again. Sorry.

CLOSE ON MARSHALL, off to the side with the .45 up. The cloth of his mask flutters with his breath.

CLOSE ON DEZ, to the other side, with the shotgun. Her eyes are cold and steady inside the mask.

THE PEEPHOLE goes clear. The DEADBOLT goes *click-clack*.

CESAR opens, eyeing Ruth warily, clocking her EMPTY HANDS.

CESAR

Yeah?

RUTH

Please don't do anything.

SHE DRAWS THE GUN ON HIM, on *us*, that big barrel swinging right up into the lens.

And Cesar *almost* makes a move but, no, his hands go up.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUMACK MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Ruth walks Cesar back as Marshall and Dez slip in behind her, fanning out, already forgetting the still-open front door.

Dez covers the INTERIOR HALL as Marshall snags Cesar's 9mm and tosses it aside.

CESAR
I'm compliant.

PAK! Marshall whacks him behind the ear with the barrel of his .45 and Cesar drops to his knees, GROANING.

Ruth GASPS at this sudden violence and at that exact moment--

Meredith comes from the kitchen, sees masked people with guns and--oops!--turns promptly on her heel to exit again but--

DEZ
Stop.

Fuck. At least she manages to guzzle her drink even as she lifts her hands, now recognizing Ruth...

MEREDITH
You.

RUTH
I'm so sorry. This isn't my fault.

MEREDITH
You took my tiger.

RUTH
That was me, yes, but not this--

MEREDITH
You're pointing a gun.

RUTH
No, I know, but--

MARSHALL
Shut the fuck up. Sit.

CESAR
(from the ground)
Do what they say, Meredith.

As she flops onto the couch in a semi-sober pout...

MEREDITH
...unbelievable...

Marshall nudges Cesar to the couch as well but--

MARSHALL
You too. Over there.

--he doesn't move fast enough so MARSHALL KICKS HIM. **WUNK.**

RUTH
Don't do that!

Meredith reacts to Ruth's shaken protest--*huh?*--as Cesar crawls to the couch, hugging his maybe-busted ribs.

Dez keeps the shotgun aimed down the HALLWAY into the house as Marshall squats before Meredith, hissing--

MARSHALL
Where is he?

MEREDITH
Sleeping one off.

MARSHALL
Call him.

MEREDITH
If you're here for what you think
you're here for, your timing
stinks.

CESAR
Meredith, be quiet.

MARSHALL
Call him.

He touches the gun to her chin.

RUTH
Just do it. Please.

Meredith glares hard at Marshall, at Ruth, and then...

MEREDITH
("happy")
Hey, Chris?
(beat)
CHRIIIIIS.

RUMACK (O.S.)
(from upstairs)
What?!

MEREDITH

C'MERE.

RUMACK (O.S.)

For whaaat?

MEREDITH

COME HERE.

Angry THUDS and STOMPING from upstairs. Everyone tenses as FOOTSTEPS come *fump, fump, fump, fumping!* down the stairs.

Dez slides to the side of the HALLWAY DOOR, so she's poised right there *but* out of sight from DOWN THE HALL, where--

Rumack now appears, cinching a robe, irritated and confused.

RUMACK

Is Christian here?

MEREDITH

No.

DOWN THE HALLWAY, Rumack is coming towards us but he slows...

RUMACK

His van's parked out front.

FROM WITHIN THE HALLWAY, RUMACK'S POV: the empty room looming ahead of him, no sign of anything amiss there. But still...

His eyes narrow. Wondering at the silence. He backs away.

WHILE IN THE FRONT ROOM, Marshall gestures in frustration, *Say something!* At which Meredith shrugs savagely, *Like what?*

MEREDITH

Uh. Maybe he's waiting for you to come outside? You know he doesn't like me too much.

DOWN THE HALLWAY, Rumack reappears but now on *full alert*, a CHROME .38 held before him as he advances.

RUMACK

Cesar?

IN THE FRONT ROOM, Marshall aims at Cesar, finger to his lips, *shhh!*

Ruth just stands off to the side, shaking in place, her gun vaguely on Meredith but mostly on the floor.

Dez waits beside the HALL DOORWAY, her RUSTY SHOTGUN at head-level. All that oxidation crusted around the breach.

IN THE HALLWAY, Rumack is almost to the DOOR, his gun held forward, craning his neck for a wider view of the FRONT ROOM:

There's Meredith, perched on the couch, oddly stiff.

RUMACK (CONT'D)

The fuck's going on?

CLOSE ON HIS GUN HAND AS IT PRECEDES HIM INTO THE FRONT ROOM, extending ahead of his body, visible now to--

DEZ, who's right there, and promptly lowers the SHOTGUN to--
BAM!--BLAST RUMACK'S HAND INTO RED THREADS.

Okay, this all happens in a whirlwind:

Rumack SCREAMS and DROPS. Meredith SCREAMS.

RUTH DROPS HER GUN AND IMMEDIATELY PROJECTILE VOMITS. **BLAGGG!**

CESAR DIVES FOR HER GUN, AIMS ON MARSHALL BUT--**click!click!**

REFLEX: MARSHALL AIMS ON CESAR--**BANG!**--PLUGS HIM IN THE GUT.

SO RUTH VOMITS A SECOND, MORE EXPLOSIVE TIME. **BLARRGAH!**

LIKE A WOUNDED BOAR, CESAR CHARGES MARSHALL WHO FIRES AGAIN--
BANG!--BUT MISSES AND THEY GRAPPLE FEROCIOUSLY, SLOPPILY.

ACROSS THE ROOM, Dez swings the shotgun around to cover Meredith, who *allmost* leapt off the couch in her fury but--

DEZ

KEEP STILL!

Rumack MOANS at Dez's feet as--

IN THEIR GRAPPLING, Cesar tears Marshall's mask off just as--
BANG!--Marshall manages to tag him in the head. BRAINS FLY.

And at this, RUTH VOMITS A THIRD GEYSER-LIKE TIME. **BWOOOGAHH!**

MARSHALL

OKAY NOW EVERYONE JUST HOLD IT.

Shaky, vibrating silence in a swirl of cordite.

Marshall turns in place, scanning for additional threats. We'll probably notice that he's wet his pants.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Just...hold it for a second. Jesus.
Wow.

Rumack, hunched over his bloody hand, teeth clenched in pain, squints up at him...

RUMACK

I know you. Marshall, right? Your name's Marshall. You were at one of Christian's hearings last year.

Marshall stares at him, his eyes now darting to--

Ruth and Meredith: *they heard his name. Saw his face.*

His eyes dart to Dez, something dark passing between them.

MARSHALL

(refocusing on Rumack)
Go on. Get into the fireplace.

Silence. Rumack glares at Marshall with white-hot hatred.

Ruth gapes in mounting dread: *fireplace? What?*

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

C'mon. I'll make it nasty if I have to.

RUMACK

Is Christian with you?

MARSHALL

I don't...look, we're not talking about this. Just do it, okay?

RUMACK

What'd he tell you? That I keep cash around? I haven't seen him in months, you amateurs, *it's not here anymore.*

Marshall looks like he might have an aneurysm but instead storms over to RIP THE ELECTRIC FIREPLACE LOG OUT thus--

Revealing the SMALL SAFE embedded in the FIREPLACE FLOOR.

Marshall points to it like a teacher points to a blackboard.

Rumack sighs, staggers upright and hobbles across the room. As he begins to work the DIAL under Marshall's watchful eye--

MARSHALL

Chrissy told us about the iron in there too, so don't even try that shit.

RUMACK

Got it all mapped out, dontcha.

Over by the couch, Ruth realizes Meredith is staring at her--

RUTH

(desperate whisper)
I'm a hostage. I was kidnapped.
 (points to the wound on
 her forehead)
The empty gun?

Meredith's expression shifts, hearing the truth in that, but--

DEZ

Stop talking.

KLIK! THE SAFE unlocks. Marshall waves Rumack aside.

Covering Ruth and Meredith, Dez cranes her neck to see--

--as Marshall reaches inside, his fingers scrabbling. But a look of dismay quickly overtakes his face.

Rumack grins evilly.

RUMACK

That's right, dumb-dumb. You just bought yourself a murder one ticket for *nothing*.

Woosily, Marshall pulls out a little .25 AUTO, a few PASSPORTS, some STOCK CERTIFICATES...but no cash. Zilch-o.

He looks at Rumack like he just learned there's no Santa.

MARSHALL

But...Chrissy said...

RUMACK

Times are tough all over.
 (but darkening now)
Where is my son?

Marshall summons back some force of his own...

MARSHALL

You don't *have* a son, buddy.

That takes the wind out of Rumack's sails.

Dez's eyes blaze crazily in the mask, impatient and outraged.
Fuck it: she aims on Ruth and Meredith--

DEZ
We're done here.

RUTH
NO.

Ruth bolts upright, putting herself between Meredith and the coming shotgun blast. Rumack tenses and Marshall aims on him.

You can hear a pin drop. Ruth stares at Dez, shivering.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I won't let you shoot anyone.

Dez gestures wanly at Cesar's corpse, like 'Oh no?'

RUTH (CONT'D)
Anyone *else*, I mean.

Ruth shakes, fully exposed there before the shotgun.

Meredith blinks rapidly, hyperventilating, a PANIC ATTACK.

Rumack gauges the distance between him and Marshall.

Dez squares the shotgun on Ruth's face but...

RUTH (CONT'D)
You'll have to kill me first.

Dez glances to Marshall, who shrugs in careless defeat, *Just do it already.*

DEZ'S FINGER tightens around the trigger...

SHK. Suddenly, oddly, A THROWING STAR IS STUCK IN DEZ'S FACE.

TONY is posed post-throw in the vestibule, wide-eyed, just now dropping the rattan TIGER he'd dragged in with him. **Wump.**

Dez SHRIEKS, tears the cloth of her mask, rips it free: the METAL STAR is sunk deeply into the flesh of her cheek.

Rumack lunges at Marshall but--**BANG!**--Marshall panic fires and POPS RUMACK'S HEAD OPEN.

DEZ WHIRLS the shotgun onto Tony, who SQUEALS, but--

BLAM! THE SHOTGUN EXPLODES IN HER HAND. FINGERS FLY.

MEREDITH SPRINGS LIKE A GAZELLE OUT OF THE ROOM. Just, *poof!*, off like a shot, gone before Dez is finished collapsing.

Marshall whirls *his* gun onto Tony but--

RUTH SPRINGS AT HIM, a spastic flying-squirrel leap that KNOCKS HIM DOWN as she claws at his WAVING GUN HAND--

Tony sees this--*Ruth in danger!*--and he charges but--

Dez, even with her FINGERS BLOWN OFF, her face knotted in rage, uses her good hand to pop her SWITCHBLADE--**SNIKT!**

SHE LAUNCHES INTO TONY AND STABS HIM REPEATEDLY IN THE GUT, LIGHTNING FAST--*tk!tk!tk!tk!tk!* She's a human tattoo gun.

As Tony falls, clutching himself, Dez pivots to face the thrashing tangle of Ruth and Marshall, HER KNIFE RAISED, that THROWING STAR still glinting in the side of her face--

RUTH BITES MARSHALL'S HAND, MAKES HIM FIRE ONE SHOT--**BANG!**

PTEW! WHICH RICOCETS OFF THE GRANITE FIREPLACE--

KAK! WHICH POPS INTO DEZ'S TEMPLE IN A MIST OF PINK.

As the abruptly lifeless Dez puddles to the ground...

As Tony rolls in a growing pool of his own blood...

RUTH CLAMPS ON MARSHALL'S HAND LIKE A PIT BULL. (Did you know it takes a crowbar to pry their jaws off? It's true.)

MARSHALL BUCKS AND SQUIRMS AND HOWLS. Sounds like a coyote caught in a bear trap.

RUTH WRIGGLES HER FINGERS AGAINST THE .45 TRIGGER AND--**BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!**--FIRES IT REPEATEDLY UNTIL--

CLICK! THE SLIDE RACKS BACK ON AN EMPTY CHAMBER.

Which prompts a surge in her as SHE TWISTS THE .45 FROM MARSHALL'S BLOODY HAND AND--**WUP!**--CLUBS HIS FACE WITH IT.

And for good measure--**KAP!**--SHE CLUBS HIS KNEE, TOO. Maybe breaking it? Sure did make a gnarly sound.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - SAME

Oh, also, MEREDITH SPRINTS down this secluded forest road. She must have been a competitive runner at some point: her form is perfect, she is tireless, not stopping for anything.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUMACK MANSION - SAME

Ruth scrabbles to Tony, fluttering over his wounds--

RUTH
Tony! Tony!

TONY
 Oooh she got me good...

IN THE BACKGROUND, Marshall staggers bloody-faced to his feet...*and he is now between them and the front door.*

His eyes snap to the .25 AUTO on the ground. He SNATCHES it.

Ruth catches this movement and HEAVES TONY TO HIS FEET--

As Marshall fumbles the gun, racks the slide, aims it--

She shoves Tony out into the--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

BAM! BAM! SMALL CALIBER GUNSHOTS POP INTO THE WALL directly behind them as they stumble/flee away, Ruth powering Tony forward like a busted shopping cart.

EXT. BACK DOOR - RUMACK MANSION - SAME

Ruth and Tony burst outside and she scans frantically for an escape route, propping him up as he hugs his bloody middle.

INT. FRONT ROOM - RUMACK MANSION - SAME

Look at all this fucking blood. Dead Cesar. Dead Rumack.

Marshall crouches over Dead Dez: silently sobbing and undone. Wanting to touch her face, her mouth, but afraid to, because she's a spirit now.

EXT. REAR GROUNDS - RUMACK MANSION - DAY

TRACKING RUTH AND TONY, most of his weight supported on her shoulder as they lurch desperately AROUND THE HUGE HOUSE...

EXT. FRONT YARD - RUMACK MANSION - CONTINUOUS

COMING AROUND THE HOUSE, Ruth heaves and strains under Tony's bloody semi-limp bulk, but freezing suddenly because--

MARSHALL, out there in the front yard, crazed and spattered and *blocking their way to the road*. He spots them, HISSES like a poisonous toad and LIMP-RUNS towards them.

RUTH JERKS TONY back around the house.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

TRACKING RUTH AND TONY DOWN THIS STEEP INCLINE, weaving through the brush and tree cover. Tony can barely stand and Ruth can barely keep him going.

But her face is set: hard and determined.

Behind them, echoing in the forest, the MOON HOWL of a rabid animal. That'd be Marshall, screaming insane nonsense.

Ruth urges Tony faster. He trips, FALLS, dragging her down with him, CRYING OUT in renewed pain.

She recovers, helps him up, looks frantically up the hill:

There's nobody in sight...but she can hear SOMETHING crashing this way through the brush. It HOWLS again.

MARSHALL (O.S.)
Gonna get yooooooooou!

RUTH
Tony. Get up. Let's go.

She powers him up, moves him forward, faster, faster, hurry.

UP AHEAD, *what's that?*, some kind of MIRRORED LIGHT glints strangely through the veil of old pines. *Water?*

EXT. POND - SAME

They burst onto a SMALL SANDY BEACH to see that it's a curving tree-lined pond with a FORESTED ISLAND maybe a hundred yards out there...or perhaps it's the far banks?

A WOODEN DOCK extends from the beach, with a SMALL OUTBOARD FISHING SKIFF moored there, as well as a FLAT-BOTTOM ROWBOAT.

Ruth scans: to either side of the beach is just a clog of roots, brush, eroded earth. Another HOWL behind them, *closer*.

RUTH
Come on.

She bulls Tony onto the DOCK, lets him sag there as she hops into the MOTORBOAT where--

She YANKS the motor pull cord. It SPUTTERS and RUMBLES...but doesn't turn over. She yanks again. And again. *Nothing.*

Her eyes snap to the ROWBOAT.

EXT. ROWBOAT - POND - SECONDS LATER

Tony collapses into the bow, whimpering, as Ruth uses an OAR to push them off the dock, braces her feet on the hull...

And ROWS LIKE HELL. She has adrenaline super-powers and the little boat slides out into the pond.

THE BEACH recedes behind her, she's staring at it as she rows steadily. No sign of Marshall. She looks over her shoulder to see where they're heading...the ISLAND on the far side.

But also in her view is Tony: pale, drooping, barely awake.

RUTH

HEY. Stay awake, okay?

He nods weakly, not at all convincing. She looks back and...

IN THE DISTANCE, there's the small shape of MARSHALL on the beach now. Standing there, staring at them.

She makes a strangled noise and ROWS HARDER.

The little MARSHALL-SHAPE appears to take aim. There is a distant **popt!** and something HUMS over Ruth's head.

She ducks low and ROWS EVEN HARDER as another **popt!** carries over the water. Another. Something PLUNKS the water nearby.

THE ISLAND looms near, maybe fifty feet to go? She ROWS. But--

IN THE DISTANCE, she can see the MARSHALL-SHAPE getting into the MOTORBOAT. The MOTOR growls to life out there.

And now it's coming this way. Quickly closing the gap between them.

She heaves against the oars. The oar-locks SNAP and RATTLE with the force of her effort. Her BREATH pulses raggedly.

And here comes the motorboat, ever closer with Marshall visible there, his hand on the tiller. He's pointing at her.

EXT. MARSHY ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

THE ROWBOAT'S BOW crunches against soft land. Ruth startles, didn't realize she was so close, she scrambles into the bow--

SHE DRAGS TONY OUT and grabs the balled-up GREEN WEATHER TARP as she goes, glancing out at--

THE MOTORBOAT, zooming in, forty feet away, thirty five. She can see the details of Marshall's blood-caked face.

DEEPER IN THE BRUSH, she leads Tony to a MOSSY OVERHANG, presses him down onto the ground, pulls the WEATHER COVER over him like a kid home sick from school--

RUTH
(frantic whisper)
Stay here. Don't move. Don't make a sound. He's coming.

TONY
...w-why?

RUTH
We know who he is.

SHE TEARS HER SLEEVE OFF, presses it to his wounds, presses his hands down on top of it...

RUTH (CONT'D)
Keep pressure there, okay? I'll be back.

She starts to cover him but he grabs at her hand--

TONY
I'm scared.

RUTH
Me too. Don't move.

She kisses his forehead, pulls the cover over him and wipes an armful of DEAD LEAVES over it. Not exactly invisible but it'll have to do...

RUTH EMERGES FROM THE TREE LINE and waves her arms just as--

RUTH (CONT'D)
Hey, fuckface!

THE MOTORBOAT RUNS AGROUND and Marshall comes hobbling over the bow, waving that .25 wildly in her direction.

SHE RUNS back into the TREES, away from Tony, as--

BAM! BAM! BAM! BULLETS WHIZ OVER AND AROUND HER.

SHE SPRINTS THROUGH THE DARK TANGLE OF VEGETATION.

Her feet SUCK into saturated ground. BRANCHES slash at her face.

BEHIND HER, Marshall takes steady aim at her quickly vanishing form and--**BAM!BAM!BAM! Click.**

Blowing in frustration, he tosses the empty weapon aside and dashes after her.

EXT. DEEP INTO THE MARSHY ISLAND - SAME

RUTH LEAPS DOWN A LOW HILL, stumbles, unable to control her momentum and--

SPLASH! DROPS INTO BLACK CHEST-DEEP WATER. The layer of leaves on the surface made it practically invisible.

Gasping and sputtering, she reaches about for something to hold onto...*there!* A ROOT dangling into the pool...

Taking hold, she pulls herself forward...*but she freezes.*

If her expression was one of frightened determination before, it is now replaced by a sort of existential cosmic terror.

CLOSE ON THE BROWN BEADY-EYED SNOOT OF A COTTONMOUTH SNAKE, calmly winding its way across the surface of the dark water.

CLOSE ON RUTH, locking eyes with this evil, alien thing.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW ON THE POOL: *where Ruth holds perfectly still and the undulating S-shape of the snake's body glides within striking distance of her face.* It takes forever but...

...it passes her by. Not exactly breathing again, she inches her way up out of the pool, pulling herself on the root.

On solid ground again, shuddering, she looks back to see...

MARSHALL, emerging from the forest, this limping curl-handed troll. He sees her. His eyes blaze with hate and killin'.

HE LIMP-TROTS towards her.

SHE SCRAMBLES UP A MUDDY RIDGE, taking the high ground.

TRACKING WITH RUTH as she moves along the ridge but, DOWN BELOW, Marshall keeps pace with her.

MARSHALL

I see you, girl.

RUTH DOUBLES BACK but Marshall keeps pace again.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Gonna get ya.

SHE HIDES BEHIND A TREE, stooping to grab a BASEBALL-SIZED ROCK out of the muck at her feet. Catching her breath.

IN THE BACKGROUND, BELOW THE RIDGE, we can see Marshall catching his breath, too. Watching her hiding place.

Without being able to see one another, they call out...

RUTH

Why don't you just leave me alone?

From below, he chuckles wetly and brings out a BUTTERFLY KNIFE, quietly unfolds it.

MARSHALL

Sure. Come on down here, we'll shake on it.

RUTH

You do those tattoos yourself?

He glances in brief uncertainty at his hands.

MARSHALL

Some.

RUTH

Yeah? Well, they looking fucking stupid.

MARSHALL EDGES CLOSER, nearing the base of the ridge, tracking her voice...

MARSHALL

You ever eat cat meat?

RUTH

You mean...cat *food*?

MARSHALL

No. The meat of a cat.

HE BEGINS TO CRAWL UP THE RIDGE, slithering closer to her behind the tree there, that gleaming blade in his fist...

FROM BEHIND THE TREE, Ruth looks for an escape. Further up is all BRUSH AND VINES, too thick to even see through. *Trapped.*

So she collects a SECOND ROCK and edges around the tree to try and see him...

RUTH

No, man. I never ate any cat meat.

MARSHALL

It makes you be invisible. Did you know that?

RUTH

Have you eaten cat meat?

MARSHALL

That's what my marks are for.

CLOSE ON RUTH, just a sliver of her eyeball visible around the curve of the tree as she sees...

A SLIVER OF MARSHALL'S HEAD, just starting to appear up the ridge, very close now...

RUTH

Yeah, well, that shit doesn't work because I can see you.

Marshall looks up. Their eyes meet. He grins nastily.

MARSHALL

Doesn't last forever, a'course.

There's a charged moment, two animals clocking each other in the bad bush, and then...

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

AHHHH!

MARSHALL CHARGES, KNIFE RAISED OVER HIS HEAD--

RUTH STEPS OUT AND HURLS THE FIRST ROCK--**PUNK!**

IT BRAINS MARSHALL SQUARE BETWEEN THE EYES AND HE SLIPS BACK, ARMS PINWHEELING TO KEEP HIS BALANCE BUT--

RUTH PRESSES FORWARD AND HURLS THE SECOND ROCK--**PUNK!**

WHICH CLIPS HIM IN THE COLLARBONE AND SPINS HIM--

HE TUMBLES ASS-OVER-KETTLE BACK DOWN THE RIDGE AND--

K-SPLASH! LANDS WHOLE-BODY IN THAT BLACK POOL OF WATER--

WHERE HE INSTANTLY THRASHES AND SHRIEKS--

RUTH HOPS DOWN THE RIDGE AND CIRCLES WIDE BECAUSE--

MARSHALL HAS THAT COTTONMOUTH SNAKE DANGLING FROM HIS CHEEK.

His SCREAM is as high and piercing as a tea kettle on boil. His MAD EYES know he's done with that fat brown rope curling on itself, latched onto his face as he lurches in the muck.

RUTH SPRINTS THROUGH THE FOREST. Jagged, disconnected glimpses of movement, her POUNDING BREATH subsumes all sound in the mix, even Marshall's sickly keening.

She runs faster and faster through the dim slash of vines and low branches, ONE SHOT INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE NEXT.

She pauses, looking left and right: *which way?* She runs but quickly doubles back. She runs. She doubles back again.

SHE TURNS IN PLACE, surrounded on all sides by trees and gloom, trees and gloom, trees and gloom. It all looks the same. *She is lost.*

For the first time on this island, the fire in her seems to go out. She sags against a tree, sinking into despair.

But then she sees something. It stops her breathing.

THERE IN THE DISTANCE, standing calmly beside a great mossy tree in her neat pantsuit with a Virginia Slim 100 carefully balanced in her thin fingers, is GRANDMA SALLY.

Ruth stares at her in dreamy exhaustion.

Sally takes a demure drag and, with a knowing smile, tips her head in a certain direction. *That way.*

Ruth's eyes fill with tears as all sound is replaced by an OLD COUNTRY GOSPEL STANDARD, "This World Is Not My Home" by Fern Jones.

'I can't feel at home in this world anymore,' Fern warbles over a plucky banjo, this SONG carrying over as...

EXT. MOSSY OVERHANG - TWILIGHT

Ruth returns to Tony's hiding place, yanks the cover back...

But he's dead. Ghostly white, eyes closed in peace.

We can't hear her wail of grief but she doesn't pause for a second, wrapping her arms around his middle, hoisting him up.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - TWILIGHT

Marshall crawls along the forest floor, slug-like, lost. His face is HUGELY SWOLLEN around black FANG MARKS, a vivid scarlet hue. His TONGUE lolls wetly in his yellow mouth.

He howls but of course we can't hear him.

In the sky above, CROWS are already circling.

EXT. MOTORBOAT (MOVING) - TWILIGHT

THE SONG CONTINUES as Ruth angles the boat full-throttle across the water, tears spilling down her cheeks but wholly focused on the task of getting them back to shore.

Curled in the bow like a rag doll, Tony could almost be asleep.

INT. DETECTIVE CUBICLE - POLICE STATION - NIGHT

THE SONG CONTINUES over this CLOSE-UP ON THREE DMV PRINTOUTS: *driver's license shots of Marshall, Dez, and Ruth.*

A HAND slides the shots of Marshall and Dez to one side...and then taps the shot of Ruth.

It's MEREDITH, her eyes puffy from crying but in control. She taps Ruth's photo again and simply shakes her head. *Not her.*

INT. BENDIX'S CUBICLE - POLICE STATION - NIGHT

THE SONG CONTINUES as we find Ruth sitting here, a BANDAGE over her brow, numbed by grief. She's very still, just watching as...

Detective Bendix intently reads over a series of REPORT SHEETS. He finally sets them aside, nodding to himself.

Ruth stares at him. He stares back. Exhales hugely, about to make a huge pronouncement.

BENDIX

My wife and I are going to give it
another shot.

He nods sagely, as if this must answer any and all questions.

Ruth stares at him.

INT. BEDROOM - CARE CENTER - DAY

THE SONG CONTINUES and some time has passed now, because Ruth just has a regular small BAND AID over her brow.

She listlessly strips an empty bed, wadding up sheets that have a small smear of blood on them. Robotic in her work.

INT. RUTH'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

THE SONG CONTINUES as we find Ruth though the windshield, staring numbly out at...

THAT ROLLIN' COAL PICKUP, ahead of her in traffic again, blowing its black sooty smoke into the air.

She has no reaction.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

THE SONG CONTINUES as we PUSH DOWN THE AISLE, past rows of CHURCHGOERS, to find Ruth sitting all alone in the back pew. She's staring off, maybe listening to the sermon, maybe not.

EXT. BACKYARD - TWILIGHT

THE SONG FADES AWAY now and we find Ruth sitting in one of her outdoor chairs, gazing out contemplatively.

An upbeat OLDIE ("Don't Hang Up" by The Orlons) plays on a portable speaker somewhere, but sounds distant and faint.

She sips a SODA POP, Tony's brand. We realize that she is looking at...

JANA, by the fence, watching a blinking chorus of FIREFLIES. Not trying to capture them, just watching, delighted.

Angie is in the chair next to Ruth, a fresh drink in her hand. They sit in silence a moment. Angie eyes her.

ANGIE

You okay?

Ruth nods absently.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Be gentle with yourself, okay? You got all the time in the world.

Ruth takes a deep breath, nods again, but...

RUTH

I don't know what that means.

Angie looks out at Jana, shrugs...

ANGIE

It's just something people say.

Ruth sniffs, a tired little laugh. And then she turns her head. Sees something. Stares at it a bit.

TONY smiles at her from within a white Heavenly mist. A dream or a ghost or a vision.

Ruth smiles back.

WIDER, oh, okay, it actually *is* Tony, for real: he uses a cane now, and he's working the smoking grill, just *burning the shit* out of some hamburgers.

Dan looks on in obvious disapproval, shaking his head.

Tony points the spatula at Ruth, gives an assured thumbs up.

She smiles and looks back to...

THE FIREFLIES. Look at 'em glow and vanish in the fade.

CUT TO BLACK.

As "I Love You, Honeybear" by Father John Misty takes us into the credits...

END