

MIDNIGHT

by
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February 10, 2014

WE START ON SOMETHING OBSCURE

Dark. Pixilated. We're too close to know what it is. Then...

...a torrent of water further obscures the image. A SHIVERY SIGH resonates in our ears. We pull back to reveal...

...the image is a photo. BRIAN MATTHEWS (7), brown haired, bright eyed, big smile. The torrent is tears.

INT. MATTHEWS'S KITCHEN - DAY

MRS. MATTHEWS (45), at the table, gazes down at the photo. The occasional tear leaks onto Brian's smiling face.

MR. MATTHEWS (45) brings her some coffee and eggs. She doesn't notice.

MR. MATTHEWS

You have to eat.

Mr. Matthews places his hand on her shoulder and for her, the touch is more nourishing than food. She places her hand on top of his. Then...

...the phone RINGS. She jolts to life as her husband answers.

MR. MATTHEWS

(into phone)

Yes?

She watches intently, full of hope, reading him as he listens. When he realizes how closely she's watching, he shakes his head, and she deflates.

MR. MATTHEWS

(into phone)

So that's another day without a lead. What are you people actually *doing* down there to find my son?

The doorbell RINGS. Mr. Matthews lowers the phone.

MR. MATTHEWS

Can you grab that? Tell them we don't have any comment...

(into phone, angrily)

No, I'm talking to my wife.

Mrs. Matthews starts for the door, almost in a trance.

INT. MATTHEWS'S FRONT HALL - DAY

She opens the door and is surprised to find...

...a strange looking MAN. Ugly. Unsavory. A deep scar runs the length of his cheek. He stares at her with empty eyes.

In his arms, a large cardboard BOX.

MAN

Mrs. Matthews?

She slowly nods.

MAN

I love children.

A silence. As if he feels no more needs to be said. Her eyes slowly gravitate to the BOX. He cradles it gently.

MAN

I know that wherever little Brian is, he is very, very happy.

The Man smiles. Like his eyes, the smile is empty. But Mrs. Matthews can't take her eyes off the BOX.

MRS. MATTHEWS

(softly)

Thank you.

MAN

Children do not deserve the cruelties the wicked inflict upon them.

His fingers tighten around the BOX, nails digging into it. His voice darkens.

MAN

Sweet little Brian deserves nothing but love. And the wicked will pay.

Mrs. Matthews looks back toward the kitchen...

...her husband paces, on the phone, utterly oblivious. She wants to call to him, but no sound emits from her lips.

The Man STEPS forward and she startles. He holds out the BOX.

MRS. MATTHEWS

What...was your name?

MAN
I'm John Otis.

He STEPS toward her again, bringing the BOX closer.

MRS. MATTHEWS
Mr. Otis...what's inside?

Instead of answering, he lays the BOX down at her feet. Her emotion becomes hard to control. She tries to keep composed.

Otis backs away.

MRS. MATTHEWS
Please...

OTIS
It's for you.

He then starts for his OLD BLUE VAN by the curb. Mrs. Matthews kneels and slowly opens the BOX...

...to find what appears to be a very, very small boy...

...lifting it out of the box, we see it is actually a startlingly LIFELIKE DOLL, two feet tall. Homemade, but with great craft and close attention to detail.

It is an obvious representation of Brian Matthews. Brown hair, bright eyes, big smile.

The doll is dressed in red. It has white shoes with ZEBRA STRIPES painted onto it.

Mrs. Matthews grips the shoes and looks up to Otis, who is now near his van, and not looking back.

MRS. MATTHEWS
How did you know about his shoes?

Too soft for him to hear. Mr. Matthews, curious, approaches from behind as she BURSTS into hysterics.

MRS. MATTHEWS
How did you know about his shoes!

Mr. Matthews grabs hold of her as her legs give out and she SCREAMS in horror as John Otis slowly drives away.

CUT TO BLACK.

The carefully measured VOICE of a young man. Though we don't know it yet, his name is KEVIN LEWIS.

KEVIN (V.O.)
You wanna hear something scary?

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

A swarm of police crowd the river bank. Several yards off-shore, officers in a police boat hoist something massive out of the water...

KEVIN (V.O.)
Use your imagination for a moment.

The WHIR of a helicopter rotor circling above. Its spotlight shines down upon the boat. What emerges from the water is a translucent GLASS RECTANGLE, the size of a casket.

SOMETHING is inside...a closer look shows us...

KEVIN (V.O.)
Think of the most disturbing, gut-wrenching, inexplicably vile thing you possibly can.

...it's the NUDE CORPSE of a young woman.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - NIGHT

A man wearing only underwear tries on a wet latex mask before a dingy mirror. Its pink pseudo-flesh not yet detailed. His breathing is heavy, terse, RASPY.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Did you think of something? Good.

The cowl covers his face like a mask of shiny new skin.

KEVIN (V.O.)
You should know that *somewhere... sometime...somebody* has done that very thing.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dark basement. A darker corner. A false wall of brick and mortar is being cemented into place by dirt-caked hands.

KEVIN (V.O.)
These things happen. And not only out there in the great big world, but even here...

Through a hole in the wall we GLIMPSE A DEAD BODY. The lack of light renders it anonymous.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

A towering oak tree grows in the center of a clearing, isolated from the others, as if ostracized. Its branches are twisted, its bark diseased.

KEVIN (V.O.)
...where you live. Where you
breathe. Scary things happen.

A crude noose dangles from a branch, swaying with the wind.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

On the weedy slope adjacent to the busy highway, an old brown suitcase is opened to reveal...

KEVIN (V.O.)
And in this life, sometimes things
work out for the better, sometimes
for the worse.

...dismembered body parts packaged in plastic wrap.

INT. CREATIVE WRITING CLASS - DAY

Posters of Twain, Hemingway, Poe. Reading his story at the front of the class is KEVIN LEWIS (18), a shy loner.

KEVIN
But no matter how things work
out...they always end up the way
they're meant to. And maybe that's
the scariest thing of all.

Kevin timidly looks up from his story to the classroom, hoping for their approval. But from the back of the room...

...HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER. All turn to AMY BECKER (18), the beautiful blonde every high school guy would kill for. She laughs uncontrollably.

Kevin's face flushes bright red.

TEACHER
Alright, Amy, thank you very much.

AMY
I'm sorry, I...

Amy raises her hands defensively. Can't control herself.

Someone else in the room LAUGHS. Then another person follows. Soon, the entire class is in hysterics.

TEACHER
Alright, settle down. Enough.

Naturally, this only seems to make them laugh more.

The BELL rings and everyone is quickly on their feet and out of there. They push past Kevin without so much as a glance.

TITLE: THURSDAY

As Kevin passes the trash, he drops his story in.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Kevin maneuvers down the bustling hall, eyes low. A few Varsity jocks razz him as they pass by, rustling his hair, pinching his cheek, and jeering.

Kevin brushes them off. These are every day occurrences and he's well-adapted to dealing with them.

He stops dead in his tracks when he spots...

...Amy, several lockers away. She's talking with MARCUS DIXON (18), black, athletic, wearing a Varsity jacket himself.

Or, more like, he talks to her...she doesn't seem interested. Tries to walk away. He grabs her wrist. She furiously rips away from his hold and storms off. As he watches her go...

...a bunch of papers TAP Kevin's shoulder, startling him. He defensively SLAPS them to the ground, turning to find...

...ETHAN HARPER (18), a handsome, all-American type. Also a Varsity jock. But around Ethan, Kevin softens.

ETHAN
Take it easy.

Ethan picks up the papers. Hands them to Kevin. His story.

ETHAN
It was a good story.

Kevin absently shrugs. It's too little, too late.

KEVIN

Thanks.

Ethan pats his back and heads off. Kevin watches him greet Marcus with an enthusiastic bear hug.

ETHAN

Get pumped!

They POUND fists.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A bone crushing TACKLE as Marcus POUNDS the opposing team's quarter back into the ground.

Ethan pulls Marcus to his feet, excitedly SMACKS his helmet, and leads him to the huddle.

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

Amy sits with her best friend, GINA MATTHEWS (18). Whereas Amy's all pizazz, Gina's more reserved, guarded even.

The stands CHEER as the third quarter ends and the East Cedar Knights swagger off the field.

AMY

Go, Knights!

Ethan unstraps his helmet and chugs some Gatorade. He spies Amy and Gina watching his every move. Amy gives a flirtatious wave. Ethan gives a cool nod in return, nothing more.

When Marcus joins Ethan for a drink, Ethan's quick to look away. Amy snickers and whispers to Gina, meanwhile...

...Kevin watches them all from behind the chain link fence separating the field from the stands.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Kevin walks home, hands buried deep in his pockets. An OLD BLUE VAN chugs down the street. The driver is John Otis. He stares at Kevin with wide, unblinking eyes as he passes.

Kevin watches the van's tail lights into the distance.

INT. KEVIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

MIRNA LEWIS, bone-thin and snow pale, with tangled clumps of unkempt silver hair, watches home videos. Kevin walks through the front door.

KEVIN

Hi, mom.

Mirna glances at him, smiles, and gazes back at the TV.

MIRNA

Do you remember this birthday?

Kevin glances at the camcorder footage on the TV. He's all of two-years-old, a cardboard cone strapped to his head, a cupcake with a candle in front of him, SOBBING his eyes out.

KEVIN

It was kind of a long time ago.

In the footage, Kevin's father, HERMAN LEWIS, lanky and bald, enters frame. He puts his hand on his sobbing son's shoulder and smiles a mouthful of yellow teeth at the camera.

MIRNA

Look how happy your father is.

Whereas Mirna can't watch these videos enough, Kevin can't watch them at all. Turns his back to the screen.

KEVIN

Fish sticks or chicken tonight?

MIRNA

Just like your father. So good to me. You have his eyes, you know. And his cheek bones.

KEVIN

Yeah, well, hopefully not his dentist.

But Mirna is transfixed. She watches as Herman holds the screaming toddler up and kisses his cheek.

MIRNA

And hands. Just like your father.

KEVIN

Chicken it is.

With an eye-roll she most certainly doesn't detect, he exits.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Perfectly manicured. Seemingly not lived in. Kevin is seated on his bed, eerily still, his posture prim and proper.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Kevin's on the floor, back to the wall, room a mess. He's been crying, but that has passed. His emotions tempered, he is now deep in thought.

He takes out his cell phone and dials.

KEVIN

Hey, it's me.

(pause)

Kevin. Nice to know I'm not even in your phone.

(pause)

Whatever. I...I need someone to talk to. Now.

His voice falters. He tries in vain to suppress his emotions.

KEVIN

You know where to find me.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Amy smiles to herself as she sends a text. When she glances up, she finds Marcus staring at her from across the room.

Her smile immediately drops. His stare is intense, unblinking even, and it makes her uncomfortable. She raises her hand, and when her teacher looks over...

AMY

Bathroom?

Her teacher nods, and Amy rises...

TITLE: FRIDAY

...Marcus watching her all the way out the door.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Amy's at her locker, checking her eye shadow in a tiny mirror, when...

VOICE (O.S.)
Looking good.

Amy closes her locker to reveal...

...Ethan. Leaned up against the lockers. A million dollar smile. She very nearly melts.

ETHAN
So good I'm not even gonna ask to
see your hall pass.

She teasingly holds it up anyway, offering a smile to match his. Ethan glances around to see that no one is watching, then steps in close. Real close.

ETHAN
You doing anything tonight?

Her smile straightens.

INT. GIRL'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Amy and Gina change into gym clothes. Amy is full of energy.

AMY
It just...came out of nowhere! It
felt like a train hit me.

GINA
I hope it felt better than that.

AMY
Shut-up, you know what I mean.

Amy lays back and stares at the ceiling, lost in a fantasy.

AMY
Ethan Harper...how many years have
I been waiting for you?

GINA
What about Marcus?

Amy promptly sits up.

AMY
Okay, so you can't tell anyone
about this.

GINA
I wasn't going to!

AMY

For reals, Gina. No one can know.
Marcus would trip the fuck out.

GINA

I get it, I get it. Just call me
after. I want every detail.

Amy suddenly realizes something.

AMY

Shit, tonight was girl's night...
ohh, I'm such a bitch.

Gina waves her off.

AMY

Promise you'll find something to do
anyway?

GINA

(mischievously)
Bet I can think of something.

Amy's too inside her own head to notice Gina's guilty smile.

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

The moon shines over Amy's mansion. Ethan's used Toyota looks out of place in the driveway.

Amy opens the front door to find Ethan standing on the WELCOME mat. She's dolled-up and looking fantastic. Mutual smiles. It's gonna be a good night.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The decor is opulent, verging on gaudy. Clearly new-money. As Ethan admires the art on the wall, Amy brushes past him, pulling off her sweater.

AMY

Like my house so far?

Ethan picks up the sweater, following her into...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Pitch-black. Lights pop on. Amy's by the light switch in a black bra, shirt on floor. She strolls into the next room.

ETHAN

Just leave all your stuff for your
dad to find. Real smart.

AMY (O.S.)

Don't worry, I got him on a leash.

Ethan picks up her T-shirt.

ETHAN

Why worry? He's only the Mayor...

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

He enters to find her slipping off her skirt.

AMY

I haven't finished the grand tour.

She ascends the spiral staircase, peeking over the bannister
at him as he picks up her skirt.

AMY

Best room's upstairs.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

SOMEONE'S POV

Watches Amy's window from the trees. A silhouette of Ethan
and Amy making out and disrobing behind the shades.

Heavy breathing. Cold breath billows.

The POV belongs to an ASSAILANT wearing a black ski mask. A
GRAY CAT rubs up against the Assailant's leg. The Assailant
reaches out for it with a black leather glove.

The cat HISSES and SHRIEKS and then...silence.

INT. AMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Post-coital. Amy curls up against Ethan's chest. She seems
very happy, but he seems distant.

AMY

That was nice...

ETHAN

Yeah.

He pulls away from her. Sits up.

ETHAN
I need a beer.

AMY
My father doesn't drink.

ETHAN
He throws parties, doesn't he?

AMY
Social room. Down the stairs. To
the left.

Ethan throws on his pants. Walks to the door.

AMY
Hey.

He turns. His disinterest apparent. She's clearly hurt.

AMY
I'm not a slut.

ETHAN
I didn't say you were.

AMY
You didn't have to.

He holds a beat, then goes for the door.

AMY
Hey.

He again turns. Now she's mad.

AMY
I've slept with exactly two people
in my life. How about you?

No response.

AMY
If you want to fuck me and go, you
know where the door is.

ETHAN
I didn't say that.

AMY
Well, you're not saying much.

She looks away. Perhaps to hide her eyes. He sits with her.

ETHAN

Hey. I didn't mean to hurt your
feelings...

Now she looks at him. Her burgeoning tears apparent.

AMY

This is gonna sound super cheesy
but if I don't say it now...

(beat)

Do you have any idea how long I've
liked you?

It hits him in the pit of his stomach. He shakes his head.

AMY

Do you remember your first day of
school? I mean, yeah, I'm sure you
remember your first day of
school...but I do too. You were
wearing this goofy tie-dye shirt
that was two sizes too big...you
looked so out of place. And so
unhappy.

ETHAN

I was...and I was.

AMY

I think I was kinda mean to you...

He shrugs, noncommittal.

ETHAN

I don't really remember.

AMY

...but I've felt bad ever since. I
do stupid things when I'm nervous.

ETHAN

Why were you nervous?

AMY

Probably the same reason I'm
nervous right now.

Ethan is taken aback by her honesty. All told, the more she
speaks, the more taken he becomes with her.

AMY

I think I tried a little too hard
tonight to make you like me...

He smiles and touches her cheek.

ETHAN

It was hard not to like.

She laughs a little.

AMY

Usually I won't go further than a
kiss on the first date -- and not
even with tongue!

Ethan kisses her gently on the lips. No tongue.

ETHAN

I do remember my first day of
school. You wore a yellow skirt,
had french braids, and your lip
gloss smelled like bubble-gum.

She smiles warmly. Their eyes are locked. There's something
very real here.

ETHAN

Now how about that booze?

INT. SOCIAL ROOM - NIGHT

Ethan sends a text, then searches the well-stocked bar. He
finds a good bottle of whiskey and grabs two glasses.

EXT. BACK DOOR - NIGHT

The Assailant uses a screwdriver and paper clip to PICK the
back door lock. It works.

INT. AMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amy freshens her make-up in front of her mirror when --

THE LIGHTS CUT OUT.

AMY

Ethan?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ethan wanders around in the darkness, feels the walls for a light switch. He flicks one, but nothing happens.

ETHAN

Shit.

A CREAK from within the darkness.

ETHAN

Amy?

Silence. He starts up the stairs, using what scant moonlight there is from the windows to guide his steps.

CREAK. He stops again.

ETHAN

Hilarious, Amy, nothing funnier
than falling down a dark staircase.

As he's about to reach the top when --

THE ASSAILANT JUMPS OUT IN FRONT OF HIM.

Ethan GASPS and takes a BACKWARD SPILL down the stairs. The whiskey and glasses SHATTER.

INT. AMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amy fumbles for her cell phone when she hears the CRASH. She presses a button and a splash of pale blue light radiates.

AMY

Ethan?

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Amy heads down the dark staircase, phone guiding her. She sees the shattered whiskey at the bottom, but no Ethan. She turns and gasps at --

THE ASSAILANT DOWN THE HALL.

Staring at her. Holding a large shiny CLEAVER.

They stare at one another, not moving.

Amy's eyes are wet and wide...

...the Figure's eyes are angry and intense. It walks toward her, very slowly, cleaver swaying side to side.

Amy backs away. Her steps even with its until --

THE FIGURE SHRIEKS AND CHARGES!

Amy guns it for the door. She frantically works the locks, pulls the door open, and runs out when --

THE ASSAILANT GRABS HER.

As she SCREAMS, we CUT TO...

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

A round of APPLAUSE. Black-tie, grand-a-plate charity dinner. The HOST speaks from the podium with great earnestness.

HOST

This year, The Children's Hope
Foundation gives its Humanitarian
of the Year Award to a man of
philanthropy, humility, and
community...and with that pedigree,
you might be surprised to learn
that he's also a politician.

Hearty laughter from throughout the room. As the Host continues talking, we hone in on a couple...

...GEORGE BECKER (45) and his wife LEANNE (45), sitting at the center table. They both look like imposters in their expensive formal wear.

George is big and brawny, his face a collage of jagged edges and rough curves. Leanne, once beautiful and full of life, is now a plastic shell of her former self.

She's on her fifth glass of champagne...make that sixth. George leans over. Speaks through his teeth.

GEORGE

Slow down. You're drinking like a
whale.

LEANNE

You would know. You've got the
waistline of one.

Before he can respond, our Host ANNOUNCES loudly...

HOST

...I give you, East Cedar's Mayor,
and my dear friend, George Becker!

APPLAUSE. George makes a big show of kissing Leanne. The consummate political couple. He waves, heading to the podium.

George shakes the Host's hand and accepts his PLAQUE, stepping to the mic and waiting for the APPLAUSE to subside.

GEORGE

I am warmed, heartened, and humbled
by the kindness you've extended
this evening in giving me this
truly meaningful award. And I hope
that same spirit of giving is alive
in all of you when I run for
Governor next November!

LAUGHTER. A volley of CLAPS.

GEORGE

Of course, I wouldn't be here
tonight, were it not for a certain
special someone. In fact, she likes
to joke that without her I'd
probably be in prison!

More LAUGHTER. He's playing the crowd like a pro.

GEORGE

My rock, my love, my darling wife,
Leanne.

George looks to her seat, only...

...she's not in it. He clears his throat. Smiles awkwardly.

INT. BANQUET HALL, WOMEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The cacophonous sounds of PUKING from a bathroom stall...

...where Leanne regurgitates a whole bottle's worth of
champagne, along with all the hard liquor she consumed during
cocktail hour. George kneels beside her, holding her hair.

He seems tired. She seems ashamed.

GEORGE

Is that everything?

She nods and he hands her toilet paper to wipe her mouth.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

George drives Leanne through a city ghetto. Darkened apartment buildings, rundown and decrepit, loom on all sides. His expression is deadly serious. Hers, aloof.

LEANNE

Taking the scenic route?

He pulls to the curb. Winds kick up litter and debris. A bum staggers by far up ahead. George points out a street corner.

GEORGE

You remember that spot? Under the streetlight? What were we, sixteen?

A silence. Seems like she won't answer, and then...

LEANNE

Fifteen.

GEORGE

Fifteen and no one would've thought we'd make it two blocks from here.

Leanne scoffs.

LEANNE

You want an award? Here. Big-Man of the Year.

She holds up the plaque he received tonight. He snatches it from her hand, opens his door, and TOSSES it into the middle of the street before SLAMMING the door.

GEORGE

Don't you fuck with me!

Despite his fierce demeanor, she doesn't look at him. And doesn't flinch.

GEORGE

You're becoming a liability. And unless you want to be back on this street corner, where I found you, you'll get your ass in line.

Still not looking at him, she asks...

LEANNE

Who is she?

George puts the car in gear and they're on the move.

LEANNE
This one's different, isn't she?

GEORGE
You're drunk.

LEANNE
I just emptied my stomach -- I'm
far from drunk.

GEORGE
You're imagining things.

And now she looks at him. Piercing eyes.

LEANNE
You talk a big game about leaving
me. Always have. But you never
would, George. I'm your Lady
Macbeth, and you want to be King.

A long silence. George squeezes her hand. Kisses it.

GEORGE
I'd never leave you.

LEANNE
Then get *your* ass in line. Because
if you ever fuck with me...I'll
leave you. Then where will you be?

George studies her, his expression unreadable. Then his lips
curl into a smirk. He chuckles, and it's infectious, because
soon Leanne is laughing too.

She playfully smacks his chest but he catches her wrist and
pulls her close.

GEORGE
You realize I'm always going to
love you, even if I hate your guts?

LEANNE
And I'm always going to hate you,
even if I can't help but love you.

He kisses her hard on the lips.

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

George and Leanne walk arm-in-arm from the BMW to the front
door to find...

...it's open a crack. The house is dark. As if that wasn't bad enough...

...they find a splotch of BLOOD on the walkway.

GEORGE

Wait here.

George rushes inside the house.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Amy? Amy, are you here?

Leanne hears Amy's RING TONE. George appears in the doorway, phone to his ear. He tracks the sound to...

...Amy's pink cell on the grass. He picks it up. Face white. It's CRACKED down the center.

INT. GEORGE'S STUDY - NIGHT

George stares out the window at a group of local cops idling on his front lawn. He turns to CHIEF GRADY STONE (45).

CHIEF STONE

Be patient, George. My guess, there was a miscommunication. We'll find her in no time.

GEORGE

I'm not going to stand by and watch your men pull another Brian Matthews. Not with my daughter.

Stone shrinks at this belittlement. George crosses from the far side of his desk, leans into Stone. His tone is venomous.

GEORGE

No, you and your boys will find her. Or there'll be no one left to find you.

Stone licks the thick beads of sweat from his lips. George's eyes, wide and crazy, seethe with intensity.

CHIEF STONE

You can't talk to me like that.

GEORGE

I can take your badge, I can take your pension, and I know people who can do far, far worse. Don't test me.

Stone averts George's burning stare. He nods complacently, swallowing his pride, and heeding George's command.

CHIEF STONE
We're on it.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - NIGHT

A dark studio apartment. The only light comes from the city scape outside the window. A phone RINGS. A lamp clicks on.

DETECTIVE RAY LANDON (50), gruff and grizzled with tired eyes, is dressed and sitting up in bed. In one hand, the pull-chord for his lamp, in the other, his Glock.

He answers but doesn't speak.

CHIEF STONE (ON PHONE)
Ray? It's Grady. I got a favor.

EXT. EAST CEDAR - NIGHT

Landon blows past a sign reading: *TOWNSHIP OF EAST CEDAR*.

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

Landon proceeds across the lawn, passing a crowd of cops who try to look busy.

He reaches the walkway, where the splotch of blood has been outlined emphatically in chalk. Feels a hand on his shoulder. Turns to find Chief Stone.

CHIEF STONE
Thanks for coming.

He smiles but Landon does not. OFFICER STAN CLARK (28), bright eyed and full of youthful enthusiasm, steps forward.

CHIEF STONE
Clark, meet Detective Ray Landon of the big city, an old friend and colleague. He's on the case, and he's got carte blanche, you get me?

OFFICER CLARK
Yes, sir.

Clark smiles. Extends a hand. Landon curtly shakes. No smile.

CHIEF STONE

Clark will take you wherever you need to go, introduce you to whoever you'd like to meet, get you what needs getting.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Then let's get started.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Clark joins Landon in the hall.

OFFICER CLARK

We found this on the walkway.

Clark holds up a baggy with a half-smoked cigarette. Landon sniffs, then gives it back.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Menthol.

Clark sniffs the baggy himself, smells nothing.

INT. AMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bed unmade. Clothes strewn. Landon kneels by Amy's skirt.

DETECTIVE LANDON

No panties. She was still wearing them.

Using a pen, he lifts her skirt up to his nose. Smells it. Clark doesn't know what to make of this behavior.

DETECTIVE LANDON

She was excited.

OFFICER CLARK

You can tell by smelling?

Landon doesn't feel the need to respond. He searches near the bed, using tweezers to pick up a sliver of PURPLE ALUMINUM.

OFFICER CLARK

What is it?

Before he can respond, OFFICER STRAHM enters, out of breath.

STRAHM

You're gonna want to see this.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The officers give Landon his space while he examines...

...a DISEMBOWELED CAT.

DETECTIVE LANDON

No perforations, no entry wounds.
These are tears, not lacerations.
Wasn't done with a knife, or any
instrument for that matter. No claw
or teeth marks, wasn't an animal.
Done by hand. I'll call a forensic
from the city. Could be traces of
skin on its claws, maybe even blood
if it put up a fight.

(to Strahm)

You. Ask around who the cat might
belong to.

(to Clark)

Where are the parents?

INT. SOCIAL ROOM - NIGHT

George pours scotch while Clark sits beside Leanne and Landon
admires family pictures. Particularly ones of George and Amy.

GEORGE

I don't like knowing that my little
girl is hurt somewhere out there
where I can't comfort her.

DETECTIVE LANDON

What makes you think she was hurt?

George doesn't like the condescending tone of his voice.

GEORGE

There was *blood* --

DETECTIVE LANDON

Could have been someone else's.

George smiles crookedly.

GEORGE

And there's going to be more blood
if she's not found soon.

George walks the drink to Leanne. She downs it in a gulp.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Have you had anything to drink this evening, George?

GEORGE
Haven't had a sip in eighteen years. Quit the day Amy was born. I could sure as hell use one now.

Landon eyes George fiddling anxiously with his GOLD WEDDING BAND. When George notices him noticing, he stops.

Landon's gaze floats down to Leanne. She seems dazed. His eyes bounce back to George.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Is Amy a virgin, George?

George's face goes bright red. He tries to control himself.

GEORGE
Of course she is.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Then you weren't aware she was participating in consensual sex this evening?

George aggressively comes toward him.

DETECTIVE LANDON
You'll be happy to know it was safe sex.

George SLAMS him against the wall. Landon doesn't resist.

GEORGE
Listen here you son of a --

DETECTIVE LANDON
Officer Clark.

Clark produces a baggy with the purple aluminum.

GEORGE
What the hell's that?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Trojan. Ultra Pleasure.

GEORGE
What?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Condom wrapper found in her room.

GEORGE
Did you ever think she could have
been *raped*?

OFFICER CLARK
With a condom? Statistically --

GEORGE
Shut-up!

LEANNE
George...let the man go.

George releases Landon on her command.

DETECTIVE LANDON
I want to find Amy, but in order to
do so, I need you to be honest with
me, and honest with yourself.

George just eyes him coldly.

LEANNE
Of course, Detective.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Tomorrow we'll question some of
Amy's friends. I'd like a list.

GEORGE
You'll get a list and you'll get my
full cooperation. Just find my
daughter.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Clark shows Landon to a vacant desk.

OFFICER CLARK
What can I get you?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Anything you got in the last ten
years on dead or missing blondes.

OFFICER CLARK
Won't be much, but you got it.

He starts to leave, then doubles back.

OFFICER CLARK
Hey, why did you go at the Mayor
like that?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Like what?

OFFICER CLARK
Like he was guilty.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Four out of five times, someone in
the family is. Becker's a powerful
man, but his strength comes from
his balls, not his brain. He craves
control. When he doesn't have it,
he puts his balls on the table
where everyone can see the size of
them. Of course, that's also where
they're most likely to get smashed.

OFFICER CLARK
So is he guilty?

DETECTIVE LANDON
No. But he's hiding something.

INT. FOOD COURT - DAY

A bustling mall. RANDALL POWERS (49), overweight and
slovenly, holds a tray brimming with fatty fast foods.

SUPERIMPOSE: **SATURDAY**

Randall plunks his tray down at a table where George sits.

RANDALL
Seat taken?

With no response from George, Randall sits.

GEORGE
I need you full time. I'll put you
up in town. Drop everything you've
got. You start now.

RANDALL
The daughter seeing another kid
from the wrong side of the tracks?

GEORGE
The daughter is missing.

Randall is taken aback.

RANDALL
Any ideas?

GEORGE
Yeah. One.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Practice in full-swing. Marcus Dixon goes to make a tackle but finds himself BLOCKED and knocked to his ass. The COACH blows his whistle and Dixon SPIKES his helmet on the turf.

COACH
Yo Dixon, what's with you today?

Marcus heads for the sideline, his face twisted in anger.

MARCUS
Nothing, Coach, got things on my mind.

Coach chases after him.

COACH
Well how about you get your mind in the game, huh? And call your girlfriend Ethan while you're at it and ask him where the hell he is!

Marcus isn't turning around, so Coach GRABS him. Marcus stares, eyes ablaze. It frightens Coach back a step.

COACH
Well I'm benching both of your asses come Monday if I don't see some attitude adjustment.

Marcus is left to stew in his own seething anger. His eyes drift until he catches sight of...

...Randall Powers, leaned against his big beige Cadillac, watching Marcus with a wicked smile.

Marcus's demeanor changes at once. The sight of Randall seems to scare him. And Randall, smile widening, knows it. He gets into his Caddy and drives away, Marcus watching him go...

INT. MARCUS'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marcus plays Uno with his little sister ASHLEY (10) while his father reads the paper in front of the TV.

The DOORBELL rings and Marcus's mother comes from the kitchen to answer it, drying her wet hands on her apron. She opens the door to find Landon and Clark.

The two cops immediately lock eyes with Marcus. Marcus then locks eyes with his father, who seems none-too-pleased with their sudden visitors.

EXT. MARCUS'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A far cry from where the Beckers live, but still a nice suburban area. Landon and Clark walk-and-talk with Marcus.

MARCUS

So am I a suspect or something?

DETECTIVE LANDON

If you were a suspect, my foot would be so far up your ass you'd taste dog shit on your tongue.

Marcus is intimidated. Which is the whole idea.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Convince me why that shouldn't change.

MARCUS

I'll tell you what I know, but I want your word you're here because of Amy, not George Becker. He put you on my scent, right?

DETECTIVE LANDON

You're the ex. Doesn't take a detective to know to start with you.

MARCUS

Ever think of starting with that fool?

Landon stops walking. Clark follows his lead. Marcus gets it. They're in control. He submits.

MARCUS

Me and Amy go back. Seen each other around over the years, talked a little, nothing big. High school happened, but...guys like me and girls like her don't exactly chill in the same circles, you feel me?

Clark's concentration is interrupted when --

A BLACK PIT BULL LUNGES AT HIM!

Clark jumps back, startled. An OLD LADY walking the dog YANKS back on its leash, stopping it just short of biting him.

OLD LADY

Goober doesn't like you.

OFFICER CLARK

Just keep Goober on that leash, ma'am! There are kids in this neighborhood.

Clark turns back with a shrug. Landon is embarrassed by him.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Go on.

MARCUS

One night last year we got wasted at a party and hooked up. But it wasn't like that, you know? We both felt something. Shit got real.

FLASH TO:

INT. MARCUS'S CAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marcus and Amy move in to kiss, their lips about to touch --

BACK TO:

EXT. MARCUS'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - PRESENT

Landon senses Marcus's holding back. Seizes upon it.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Did Amy feel that way?

FLASH TO:

INT. MARCUS'S CAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

As their lips are about to touch, Amy looks away, detached.

BACK TO:

EXT. MARCUS'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - PRESENT

Marcus plays it cool.

MARCUS
Of course she did.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Why did it end?

MARCUS
Amy had me over to meet the folks.
Bad idea. After dinner, George
invites me to his study for a chat.

FLASH TO:

INT. GEORGE'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marcus in chair, George standing over. He opens his wallet.

BACK TO:

EXT. MARCUS'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - PRESENT

Marcus's demeanor darkens.

MARCUS
Tried to pay me off. With the *cash*
in his *pocket*. Dump his daughter,
put her back on the path of the
wealthy white-collar type.

DETECTIVE LANDON
White-collar? Or white skin?

Marcus nods, impressed he was willing to go there.

DETECTIVE LANDON
My guess, you didn't take the cash.

MARCUS
Prick went as high as a thousand
bucks.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)
And that's what he had in his
wallet. Told him he could go fuck
himself, I wasn't losing Amy.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Why did it end?

MARCUS
One day I got an envelope.

FLASH TO:

INT. GYM LOCKER ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Marcus spots Randall Powers hustling away from his locker. He opens it to find a large envelope; inside are black and white photos of Marcus smoking pot.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Let's just say the photos weren't
gonna help me get any scholarships.

BACK TO:

EXT. MARCUS'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - PRESENT

They've circled back to Marcus's house.

MARCUS
George made his point. That night I
broke it off, just like that. I
still love her, you know. And I
would never hurt her.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Not even if she didn't love you?
Maybe she was just using you to get
under her father's skin. *Maybe...*
she loved somebody else.

Marcus's buttons have been sufficiently pushed.

MARCUS
And *maybe* this conversation is
over.

They watch him storm back to his house.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Randall slogs down Main Street, puffing a cigar. Enters Seymour's Luncheonette, ashing his cigar on the window.

INT. SEYMOUR'S LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

Packed with people. All WHISPERING among themselves as Randall makes his way to the counter. SEYMOUR approaches, dropping a bag of take-out on the counter.

SEYMOUR

Hey, Kevin -- order's up.

Kevin Lewis comes forward to take the bag.

KEVIN

Thanks, Seymour.

SEYMOUR

Say hello to your mom for me, okay?

KEVIN

You got it.

Kevin and Randall briefly meet eyes. As Kevin goes to pay, he and Randall meet eyes again. Awkward.

RANDALL

Hey. Kevin.

Kevin waits. The eager look on Randall's face is unnerving.

RANDALL

Scale of one to ten, what would you rate the roast beef?

Kevin heads for the door, calling over his shoulder...

KEVIN

Eleven.

Randall likes the sound of that. He glances around and finds people stealing looks at him out of the corner of their eyes. Seymour clears his throat, getting Randall's attention.

RANDALL

Someone die or something?

Seymour doesn't respond. Holds out a pad to take his order.

RANDALL

Maybe that girl?

SEYMOUR
You want something?

RANDALL
Hot cup of jav and the bloodiest
hunk of roast beef you got. I hear
nothing but good things, Seymour.
It is Seymour, right?

Seymour pours a cup of coffee. Pointedly doesn't respond.

RANDALL
Seymour, I'm guessing this joint is
kind of the hub of this here town.
Someplace good and old fashioned...
change of pace from the chain
restaurants lining the streets. I'm
sure people come in here, the
usuals, just yak yak yak. And you
probably hear quite a bit of it.

Randall takes his stone-faced silence as a sign to continue.

RANDALL
Girls run off on wild weekends all
the time, especially girls as tasty
as Amy Becker. Question is, why's
everybody acting like she's dead?

Seymour leans over the counter. Speaks very deliberately.

SEYMOUR
In this town, disappearances aren't
always disappearances.

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - DAY - SEVEN YEARS EARLIER

A jam-packed public park encircling a pond. Holiday weekend.
Young Amy Becker (11) and Young Gina Matthews (11) sit on a
bench near a colorful playground.

They keep a close eye on BRIAN (7), Gina's brother, who plays
on the jungle gym with his SUPERHERO ACTION FIGURE.

GINA
Ten more minutes, Brian!

BRIAN
Yeah, yeah.

Gina shakes her head with a smile. He's got attitude, but
he's cute, so he gets away with it. Amy suddenly stiffens.

AMY
Oh my God...

GINA
What?

AMY
Here he comes...

Amy turns away so she's not caught looking at...

...Young Ethan Stone (11), with Young Kevin Lewis (11), who walk past the playground, STOGIES hanging from their lips.

AMY
Is he coming?

Gina watches as Ethan glances over, then keeps walking.

GINA
No, going.

Amy deflates.

AMY
I should just talk to him. Why do I act so stupid when I'm nervous?

GINA
That's called being nervous. Anyway he spends all his time with that weird kid, Kevin. Did you see them? They were smoking cigars! Gross.

AMY
That'll change. You'll see. One day he'll fall in love with me.

GINA
Keep dreaming.

AMY
Shut-up! So who do you like?

Gina shrugs.

AMY
How about him? Think he's cute?

Amy points to a CREEPY OLD MAN on another bench. He wears a cap and a scarf which manage to conceal much of his face as he stares at the children, not blinking.

His eyes are his most apparent feature: big and bulging, as if not belonging to his face.

GINA

Creeper.

AMY

I'd be totally embarrassed if he was my grandpa.

They giggle. Brian falls off the monkey bars, drops his action figure, and loses one of his ZEBRA-STRIPED SNEAKERS. Gina jumps to see if he's alright.

Brian bounces to his feet, grabs the toy, throws on his sneaker, and resumes playing, completely careless.

GINA

Brian, be more careful, okay?

Brian waves her off and she sits back down.

AMY

Come on! Who do you like?

GINA

I don't like anyone.

AMY

Liar!

GINA

None of the boys like me, so why should I like them?

Amy's taken aback by the sadness in her friend's voice.

AMY

Oh Gina, that's not true.

Gina glances at the playground. Thirty boys and girls are buzzing around like bees, but...no Brian.

Gina rises.

AMY

What's up?

GINA

Where did Brian go?

Gina runs to the jungle gym, so many children, so many faces; screaming, laughing, FLASHING past her, but...

...NO BRIAN.

GINA
Brian! *Brian!*

Amy joins in the search.

GINA
I don't get it...he was just *here!*

AMY
He still is...he's gotta be.

Gina runs to an enclosed twisty-tube slide, reaching its base and screaming up into its darkness --

GINA
Brian? Are you in there?

Her voice bounces off its walls in an EERIE ECHO. And in response comes...

...a young boy's GIGGLING from within.

GINA
Brian? If you're there, answer me!

More GIGGLING. Gina climbs into the slide.

INT. ENCLOSED SLIDE - DAY

Gina pulls herself up the dark slide, navigating its tight twists and turns. Further GIGGLING. The slide's acoustics distort it grotesquely.

GINA
Brian?

She rounds the next turn, coming face to face with...

...A LITTLE BOY.

Not Brian. He grins, his front teeth missing. And GIGGLES.

AMY (O.S.)
Gina! Come quick!

Gina scrambles down the slide to find...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

...Amy pointing to the bench where the Creepy Old Man was...

...now EMPTY. The horror in Gina's eyes is unbearable. Her mind has gone to the worst place possible and she dashes off.

AMY

Wait, where are you going!

Gina whips back, tears streaming.

GINA

Keep looking. Just keep looking.

INT. PARK OFFICE - DAY

A PARK OFFICIAL casually reads a magazine at her desk when Amy BURSTS through the door. The Official JUMPS to attention.

AMY

There's a boy missing -- I think he was kidnapped!

EXT. PARK - DAY

Gina speeds down a path that borders the pond, stopping in her tracks when she sees...

...Brian's action figure. SNAPPED IN HALF.

At the end of the path, a REST ROOM. She runs for it. The closer she gets, the farther she strays from the park.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

An overflowed sink wets the floor, neon lights CRACKLE and FLICKER, and profane graffiti paints the THREE CLOSED STALLS...

...from behind one of them, a faint RATTLING. Gina forges on, terrified but resolute.

GINA

Brian? Brian, are you in here? It's me, baby, it's Gina.

She KICKS the first stall open. Empty. Moves to the second.

GINA

Brian, honey, it's your sister!

She KICKS the second stall open. Empty. Moves to the third. The RATTLING is louder.

GINA
I'm coming in for my brother!

She KICKS OPEN the final door, and...

...her eyes go wide. Her heart practically stops. She pales. Grabs the wall for support. QUICK CUTS show us...

Red sweat pants. Red sweat shirt. A spilled bottle of pills. A bottle of instant hair dye.

Above the toilet seat is a window, its screen torn through, the frayed ends RATTLING with the wind.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT sounds from the PA speakers.

PARK OFFICIAL (PA)
 Please be on the lookout for a
 little boy, age nine, with brown
 hair, wearing all red.

Gina looks at the hair dye. The red sweat suit. She leaps onto the back of the toilet and hoists herself through the window as the announcement continues...

PARK OFFICIAL (PA)
 Name, Brian Matthews. He may be
 escorted...

EXT. PARK - DAY

Gina awkwardly tumbles out the window, CRASHING hard on her ankle, TWISTING IT. As she falls onto the grass...

PARK OFFICIAL (PA)
 ...by a male believed to be in his
 seventies.

...she comes face-to-face with THE CREEPY OLD MAN. Only it's not a face at all, but rather a LATEX MASK of an old man's likeness, discarded in the grass.

This guy could be anybody.

PARK OFFICIAL (PA)
 Please report suspicious activity
 to the park office. Thank you.

Gina realizes that *no one* can save her brother now but her. She disregards her ankle pain and sprints down the path, encountering a MOB OF PEOPLE...

...food vendors, carnival games, people EVERYWHERE.

Gina battles through them, but the crowd gets thicker and thicker, until...

...it SUDDENLY PARTS, and in the distance she sees...**BRIAN**.

Holding hands with a man whose face can't be seen. Brian now wears blue clothes. His hair is bright blond. But she knows it's him because of...

...his ZEBRA-STRIPED SNEAKERS.

Gina chases like mad. She SCREAMS his name but it's drowned out by the crowd...the calliope music...the world...

...and as she closes in on them, the man pulls Brian across a busy street, boldly walking right past...

...a POLICE OFFICER, wholly oblivious.

Brian absently looks over his shoulder. His eyes are rolled back in his head, his tongue limply hangs out of his mouth. He's drugged. Helpless.

Gina races across the street, throws out her arms, getting closer and closer and closer, when --

A CAR BARRELS INTO HER!

She violently THUDS to the pavement. Gasps from the crowd. That got their attention.

Blood raining down her swollen face, she climbs up to her twisted feet and struggles forward, limping inch by inch to the curb to reach Brian, but...

...she's GRABBED by an UNSEEN BYSTANDER...we're TIGHT on her, seeing nothing but the BYSTANDER'S ARM restraining her.

She fights, but the Bystander brings her to the ground as Brian is led out of sight, out of her life, and she SCREAMS and SCREAMS, her SCREAMS melding into...

...the RINGING OF A DOORBELL.

INT. GINA'S ROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT

Gina JOLTS awake from her fever dream to the sound of the doorbell. She wipes her eyes and rises from the bed.

INT. GINA'S FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Gina comes down the stairs to find Landon and Clark in the foyer. Her mother, Mrs. Matthews, from the opening, has just let them in. She seems distant. Vacant.

MRS. MATTHEWS
You have visitors.

Gina glares at Clark. An awkward moment, until...

GINA
What do you want?

DETECTIVE LANDON
To find Amy.

INT. GINA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

While Landon questions Gina, Clark looks at framed photos, some of family, some of Gina and Amy.

GINA
Amy wasn't doing anything last night.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Not hanging out with Marcus Dixon?

GINA
She's done with Marcus.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Someone else maybe?

When Clark comes to a picture of Gina and Brian, she deliberately steps in front of it, blocking his view.

GINA
I don't know.

DETECTIVE LANDON
You're her best friend. If you had to guess...

GINA
If I knew anything, I would tell you. I don't know what to tell you.

She sounds incredibly sincere and he believes her.

DETECTIVE LANDON
One more question. George Becker.

Gina shrugs. Looks down to the floor.

GINA
Loves his daughter. And he'd kill
to get her back.

INT. GINA'S FOYER - NIGHT

Gina sees Landon and Clark out the door.

OFFICER CLARK
I want to assure you, we're going
to find her, Gina. It's probably
all some misunderstanding.

This ticks Landon off. He abruptly starts for the car.

GINA
Because it always is, right, Clark?

He isn't sure how he wants to respond. Then...

OFFICER CLARK
If you don't feel safe, we can --

GINA
We have a gun. My father bought it
six years ago, after...all that. He
never bought any bullets for it
though. But that's just my father.
Wouldn't hurt a fly.

Gina SLAMS the door in his face.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Clark goes to start the ignition when Landon GRABS his wrist.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Don't ever assure *anyone* of
anything if your ass can't deliver.

Landon's eyes burn with rage. But Clark PULLS out of Landon's grip and JAMS the key in the ignition. He's fired up as well.

OFFICER CLARK
Well I fully intend on delivering.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Randall, staked out across the street, watches as Clark's cruiser drives away. As soon as it's gone...

...the garage opens and Gina pulls out in her VW Beetle. Randall tails her.

INT. GUN SHOP - NIGHT

Gina tosses a box of handgun bullets onto the counter. The tattooed OWNER gives her a blank stare.

OWNER

Are you twenty-one?

GINA

No, fifty.

Gina slides a \$50 bill across the counter.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Randall sees Gina stuff the ammo into her purse as she exits. When she drives off, he follows. Dials on his cell.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Got anything?

RANDALL

Gina Matthews. She knows something.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Stay away from her, she doesn't know a fucking thing!

RANDALL

I don't mean to step out of line, George, but you'd save me an awful lot of leg work if you filled me in on certain pertinent facts.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Like what?

RANDALL

Like Gina's little brother.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

That has nothing to do with this. Gina has nothing to do with this. She's like family.

RANDALL
You're the boss.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)
What about Dixon?

RANDALL
Marcus Dixon seems pretty clean.

INT. BECKER MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

George paces madly, practically frothing at the mouth.

GEORGE
(into phone)
Clean? Kid's a *dirty* little...
bullshit. *Bullshit*. Just bring me
something, alright? Bring me some
semblance of a *result*, I don't care
who, what, where, or *how* you get
it, you worthless sack of shit, or
so help me I'll fucking bury you!

George SMASHES the phone down. He looks to Leanne, who is hunched over in bed, studying two lengths of curtain samples.

A bottle of wine at her finger tips. Two empty bottles on the night table.

GEORGE
I don't understand it, I don't know
what I can do. *What more can I do?*

Leanne holds up the long curtain samples.

LEANNE
Lavender...or teal...

She sighs contemplatively and swigs. George stares daggers.

GEORGE
Is that all you have to say?

Leanne's eyes are glassy. Barely able to hold her head up.

GEORGE
I have pulled every string we've
got, I feel...powerless, like I
haven't since we were kids without
a fucking nickel to our names...and
that's all you've got to say? You
heartless little cunt!

He SMACKS the wine out of her hands, a profound red splattering the white bed spread and carpet. He leaves and she watches him go, lips quivering, eyes tearing.

LEANNE

George...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Leanne approaches a closed door at the end of the hall with light emanating from within. She places her hand on the knob, but stops at the muffled sound of George's voice inside.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Don't do this to me, not now, I
need to see you...

INT. GEORGE'S STUDY - NIGHT

George on his cell. He looks out the window at the dark sky.

GEORGE

Because I love you, and right now I
need some love in return.

(pause)

What makes you think I'm going to
take no for an answer?

INT. BECKER FRONT HALL - NIGHT

George throws on his coat as he heads for the door, only...

...Leanne is waiting there. Curtain samples in her arms.

LEANNE

There were 35 colors to choose from
and Amy narrowed it down to two...
lavender or teal, for her bedroom,
but she couldn't decide which...

She tries remaining composed but succumbs to the emotion.

LEANNE

...I wanted to surprise her when
she came home...but...but I don't
think she's coming home.

She breaks down and George comes to her, hugging her tightly.

GEORGE

Don't say that. She is coming home.

LEANNE

Don't leave me, George. Stay with me. I can't be alone now. I can't.

He strokes her hair and kisses the top of her head.

GEORGE

I've got a couple leads I'm going to try and follow up on. I'll be back before too long.

He softly kisses her lips, then walks past her, to the door.

LEANNE

Who is she?

He stops. Sighs. This next exchange is quiet.

GEORGE

You're drunk.

LEANNE

And imagining things too, right?

GEORGE

Go to bed, Leanne. I'll be back.

LEANNE

I know. You always will.

He leaves. Leanne looks down at the curtain samples. Strokes the long flowing lengths of fine fabric.

LEANNE

Lavender.

INT. KEVIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mirna CHOPS carrot sticks into tiny pieces. She throws them into an over-sized salad bowl filled with...MORE CARROTS. She doesn't notice Kevin enter from the basement door.

MIRNA

Look at all these carrots.

Kevin sees the bags of carrots, sighs. He kisses her cheek.

KEVIN

I'll pick us up some dinner, okay?

MIRNA

So good to me. Just like your father.

KEVIN

Yeah...

With that, he goes. Mirna chuckles as she continues chopping.

MIRNA

I'm gonna run out of bowls!

INT. KEVIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Kevin drives through town. His cell RINGS.

KEVIN

Hello?

MARCUS (O.S.)

Hey, is this Kevin?

KEVIN

Yeah, why, who's this?

INT. MARCUS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus sits on the floor. Several names are written on a pad, some of which are crossed off. Kevin's next on the list.

MARCUS

This is Marcus, Marcus Dixon, we're in English together.

INTERCUT Marcus/Kevin.

KEVIN

Oh. Hey. You want help with the homework, or something?

MARCUS

Nah, nothing like that. I'm calling about Amy. You know, Amy Becker?

KEVIN

Yeah, heard she's missing. Probably hung over and crashing on a couch.

MARCUS

Look, I'm not calling for your opinion, I'm calling to see if you've heard anything --

KEVIN

Sorry, man, I haven't. I think it's really cool though, you making calls for her. You guys dated awhile ago, right?

MARCUS

Uh...yeah...we did...listen, Kevin, I gotta go, you just let me know if anything comes up, alright?

KEVIN

Alright, Marcus. You got it.

Marcus hangs up. He goes to cross out Kevin's name when his pencil tip BREAKS OFF, leaving a MARK by the name. He drops the pencil and longingly regards a photo he keeps of Amy.

EXT. GAS-N-GO - NIGHT

The red neon sign burns in the night. No customers until George pulls his BMW up to a pump. He puts in the nozzle, but doesn't activate it. He's not there for gas.

A car approaches, bathing him in its headlights. Pulls up to the next pump...

...it's Gina. She gets out, puts in the nozzle, but doesn't activate it. She's clearly not here for gas either.

GEORGE

Hi.

No response.

GEORGE

You cold? Why don't we go someplace warm? Maybe a little more private?

No response. George chuckles.

GEORGE

You picked a strange place to meet.

GINA

I have business nearby.

George somberly nods, dropping the smile. He goes to her, hugs her tightly, and as he moves to kiss her lips, she turns her head, giving him nothing but cheek.

In the distance, from around the side of the Gas-n-Go...

...someone SPIES on them with a telephoto lens. SNAP. SNAP. SNAP. It's Randall Powers. He's practically giddy with glee.

RANDALL

George, I think we're going to have to renegotiate my salary.

He goes on spying as we return to George and Gina. He looks at her, puzzled.

GINA

I told you. It's over.

She removes his arms from her body and steps back. He emits a shivery sigh, hiding his face in his hands.

GEORGE

You can't imagine how hard all this has been on me --

GINA

My imagination, George, is a lot more vivid than you can imagine.

GEORGE

I didn't mean to suggest it hasn't been hard on you too. That's why --

He extends his arms and steps toward her. She steps back.

GEORGE

You're being cruel.

GINA

If you think I'm being cruel now, you don't want to know what's next.

GEORGE

What's next?

GINA

I'm gonna find Amy. And when I do, I'm gonna tell her everything.

George stares at her coldly.

GEORGE

What are you going to tell her?
That I make mistakes? I'm human?
All you'd be telling her is that
her father is just a guy who fell
hopelessly in love.

(beat)

But Amy's sensitive.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And she wouldn't be able to hear it. So no. You're not gonna tell her anything.

George caresses her cheek, but she shakes him off.

GINA

I'll tell her after my brother was taken, and my family fell apart, you allowed me into yours. But you weren't like a father to me. You were like a fucking dog in heat.

GEORGE

Are you going to tell her how much you liked it? Since you're being so honest, don't skimp out on how you relished having the one guy your perfect best friend couldn't have.

George steps toward her again, this time aggressively. Gina pulls back her jacket to reveal HER GUN. Doesn't need to take it out. Stops George in his tracks.

GINA

I will tell her. All of that. She's been a sister to me. Every step of the way. I betrayed her. And I will never lie to her again.

GEORGE

You're being emotional. And stupid.

GINA

I won't tell Leanne, that's on you, and you don't have to worry about me doing the worst thing of all, George. Telling the press and ruining your precious Governorship. That's what you care about most. Maybe that's what you deserve.

The rage building, he raises his clenched fist, but instead of striking her, he PUNCHES out his driver's side window.

GEORGE

*Don't you tell me I don't care
about my daughter! Don't you...*

He steps closer to her, raises his clenched fist, and PUNCHES out his back seat window.

GEORGE

...ever fucking say that!

HEADLIGHTS. An approaching car. George shrinks back.

GINA

You better go. Could be a voter.

George shakes the glass off his bloody hand. Looks at her once more. And as the car pulls into the station, he disappears into his own, driving off at great speed.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Landon closely surveys a corkboard with photos of Amy, her home, dead cat, a list of persons of interest, a timeline. Clark is seated, lost in his thoughts.

OFFICER CLARK

I wonder...it's probably nothing.
Just that cat...

Landon is only half-interested. Casually asks...

DETECTIVE LANDON

What about it?

OFFICER CLARK

Not the first time I've seen a cat
ripped up bare-handed like that.
This was...years ago, out on the
edge of town. Guy named John Otis.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Go on.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

George parks in a rundown area. His car draws attention from a group of gang-bangers, but George doesn't care.

He undoes his top few buttons, rolls his sleeves, faded TATTOO of a black scorpion on his arm, and he swaggers into a dive bar that looks like it should be condemned.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

A motley mix of boozers, thugs, and low-lives. George smugly saunters to the bar. The bartender, MICK, gives him a look.

GEORGE

What's a matter, Mick? See a ghost?

MICK

Or an imposter. Last I heard,
Georgy Becker was straightlaced as
a school girl, sober as a nun, and
filthy fuckin' rich...not to
mention, a Mayor.

GEORGE

Well you heard fuckin' wrong...

George whips out his wallet, stuffed to the brim with cash.

GEORGE

...least about some things.

MICK

Double shot of Old Crow, Georgy?

GEORGE

And keep 'em coming. It's gonna be
a long night.

Mick pours a double. George brings the glass to his lips, but
stops just short of drinking. Eyes the whiskey pensively.

MICK

Welcome back, Georgy.

GEORGE

Yeah.

Completing his transformation, George DOWNS the whiskey.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Clark drops a file on the desk labeled OTIS, J. Landon looks
at his mug shot: staring empty eyes, crooked nose, deep scar
on his left cheek. Ugly. Unsavory.

OFFICER CLARK

Otis would call the station ten
times a day because he was scared
of cats, and his neighbor's kept
coming onto his lawn. Then one day
it's the neighbor who calls, two of
her cats were torn to pieces. And
it wasn't an animal that did it.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Was he charged?

OFFICER CLARK
But not convicted. The evidence
wasn't there, but, I mean...we even
found the damn things on his porch.

Landon looks past a newspaper article about the crime, as
well as the crime scene photos of the cats.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Orphaned...bi-polar...in and out of
mental institutions...

OFFICER CLARK
...and he's got a thing for kids.

Whoa. Bombshell. Landon drops the file.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Go on.

OFFICER CLARK
He technically hasn't done anything
that we know of. Goes to elementary
school plays. Watches kids in the
park. Claims to love all children
like they're his own.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Boys...girls?

OFFICER CLARK
Doesn't matter to him. But Amy
Becker isn't a kid.

DETECTIVE LANDON
There's something else.

Clark nods. This is clearly a weighty subject for him.

OFFICER CLARK
He was a person of interest in a
crime we had here six years back.
Around the same time as the cats,
actually. A boy went missing. Gina
Matthews's little brother. Otis put
on a big show to the media about
wanting to find him...he made a
doll in Brian's image for the
Matthews family. Dressed it in the
same kinds of clothes he went
missing in, down to the shoes.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Had the papers printed the details?

OFFICER CLARK

Not about the shoes. We grilled him, he claimed someone told him the detail, only didn't know who.

Landon is on his feet, half out the door.

OFFICER CLARK

You think it's connected?

DETECTIVE LANDON

Let's just say I think it's awfully fucking strange you don't. Now are we going to see John Otis, or are we going to sit here thinking all night?

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Clark drives Landon down a windy, unpaved road surrounded by dark woods. Landon CHAMBERS his Glock.

EXT. OTIS'S HOME - NIGHT

The cruiser stops in front of a rundown house, its paint long peeled. The engine turns off, but the headlights stay on as Landon and Clark step out.

They pass Otis's old blue van parked in the dirt as they wade through knee-high weeds up to the disintegrating front porch. Landon POUNDS the door. No response.

He peeks through the window. Tries it. It opens. Clark shakes his head disapprovingly.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Arrest me.

Landon climbs through the window.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Kill the headlights.

INT. OTIS'S DEN - NIGHT

As Landon enters through the window, his leg knocks into a fold-out tray, a glass on the edge about to fall, when...

...he CATCHES it. Green globs of moldy milk from the cup spills onto his hand, and he shakes it off in disgust.

The headlights allow him to survey the dark room: paintings of smiling children, an old cracked TV, juice boxes, an AX leaned against some split wood.

Landon steps toward a darkened stairwell when --

THE HEADLIGHTS GO OUT.

Complete darkness, then...CLICK. Landon's got a Maglite.

INT. OTIS'S WORKROOM - NIGHT

The Maglite glow weaves across the filthy room. There's a mattress in the corner, ratty sheets, a plate with a moldy sandwich on it, and...

...a work table with a CHILD'S HEAD on it...

...an incredibly lifelike DOLL'S HEAD. On the work table are other doll parts, as well as tools, and fabrics. The Maglite gravitates to...

...the wall, where there are shelves lined with DOLLS. They look so real. And their beady eyes seem to be watching.

Landon is about to leave when he spots one more thing...a CARTON OF MENTHOL CIGARETTES.

EXT. OTIS'S HOME - NIGHT

Clark sees A DARK FIGURE creep around the side of the house, headed to the backyard. He quietly runs to the porch, poking his head through the open window.

OFFICER CLARK
(soft call)
Landon!

INT. OTIS'S STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Landon's on the stairs when he hears Clark. A CREEEEAK from within the house. He CLICKS OFF his light.

INT. OTIS'S DEN - NIGHT

Clark climbs through the window, accidentally kicking the tray...the glass of bad milk teeters on the edge...

INT. OTIS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Landon silently inches in, back to the wall. We can barely see anything, all we have is moonlight, but...

...from within the pure darkness of the kitchen, a SHAPE moves about. Landon raises his unlit flashlight when --

AN OFF-SCREEN SHATTER.

INT. OTIS'S DEN - NIGHT

Clark's wide eyes look down at the SHATTERED milk glass.

INT. OTIS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The shape freezes. Landon CLICKS the flashlight, revealing --

A DARK FIGURE WITH A BLACK SKI MASK!

The Figure throws its arms over its face -- in its hand a BLOODY RAG. It runs from the light.

Landon pulls his gun, tries to find the Assailant with his flashlight. The light falls on an adjoining room when --

LANDON'S GRABBED FROM BEHIND.

He whirls around, gun pointed. It's only Clark. Landon charges into the adjoining room.

INT. ADJOINING ROOM - NIGHT

Landon's light lands on a BUCK'S HEAD with huge antlers. Seemingly floating in darkness. Before he can react --

THE BUCK'S HEAD CHARGES FORWARD.

Landon SMASHES to the ground, nearly impaled on the antlers. Drops his light and it rolls away, illuminating the darkened Figure trying to kill him with the taxidermy.

Clark rushes in and the Figure vanishes in the darkness.

OFFICER CLARK

You good?

Landon grabs his flashlight. A window BREAKS OFF-SCREEN.

INT. OTIS'S DEN - NIGHT

Landon and Clark race in. A side window is SMASHED open. Clark runs for it. Landon thinks quick, shines his light on the pile of wood to find...

...the AX is gone.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Wait!

As Clark goes to climb through the window, Landon YANKS him back, just as...

...the Figure POPS out from the side of the house and HACKS the ax into the window sill. Landon FIRES, and the Figure sprints off into the darkness.

EXT. SIDE OF HOME - NIGHT

Landon leaps through the window, rolls across the grass, and pursues the Figure into the thick woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Landon moves briskly with his light, listening for a sound. The woods are dense and dark. The Figure could be anywhere...

...but for right now, he's nowhere to be found. Landon walks past a large tree...

...which THE FIGURE is pressed up against, clutching the ax.

EXT. SIDE OF HOME - NIGHT

Landon returns from the woods to find Clark waiting.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Put out an APB on Otis. I want his house searched. There was a rag in his hand. He may have dropped it. I want it found.

OFFICER CLARK

He our guy?

DETECTIVE LANDON

Well, he's not exactly a model citizen.

Clark grabs Landon's arm.

OFFICER CLARK
Is he our guy?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Let me explain something to you:
it's the *girl* I care about, not the
guy. Stay here, guard the scene.
I'm taking your car.

Landon passes Clark, practically walks through him, like he's not even there.

OFFICER CLARK
Where are you going?

DETECTIVE LANDON
To get some coffee.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Mick pours another shot for a glassy-eyed George.

MICK
Savor it, Georgy. You're cut off.

George scowls, downs it. Taps the side of the glass.

GEORGE
Another.

Mick shakes his head. George rises, face reddening, eyes intense. Mick gives him the bottle.

A hand SLAPS George's back, and KURT plunks next to him, CHUCKLING. George's age, rough, tattooed, and muscle-bound.

KURT
Longtime, Georgy.

GEORGE
Not long enough.

Kurt CHUCKLES some more, squeezing the back of George's neck.

KURT
You really ought to come by and
hang with the old crew. Things
aren't the same round here. Whole
neighborhood's changed. The niggers
and spics own half the pie apiece,
and we gotta grovel for crumbs.

Kurt takes George's bottle and ruefully pours himself a shot.

KURT

In the old days, Georgy boy, we'd
be out there busting skulls.

A well-off FATHER, MOTHER, and DAUGHTER (9) enter the bar.
They gauge the bar's reaction: they're not welcome here.

The Mother looks around nervously, hugging her Daughter
tight. She sees Kurt eyeing them closely.

MOTHER

Maybe we should wait in the car.

FATHER

I've got it under control, alright?

The Father heads for the bar. Mick gives him a glance.

FATHER

Maybe you could help me. My family
and I, are passing through, and we
ran out of gas.

Kurt slaps George's back, rising.

KURT

Excuse me, Georgy.

Kurt slyly pushes past the Father, SWIPING his wallet. The
Father senses it at once and CATCHES Kurt's wrist.

FATHER

Hey!

Kurt faces the Father.

FATHER

I think you've got my wallet.

Kurt just stares. The bar quiets, all eyes on this David and
Goliath spectacle. Mick readies a BASEBALL BAT for trouble.
George watches with interest.

Kurt produces not the wallet, but a SWITCHBLADE.

KURT

Wanna make something of it?

George closely watches the Father. This is not a brave man,
and yet he's not standing down. He slowly, gently, pushes his
Daughter back toward her Mother, eyes never shifting.

FATHER

I'd like it back, please.

Despite the fog of alcohol, George seems moved. Touched even. Kurt comes for the Father, knife raised, and ready to use it.

KURT

Said, *what the fuck are you gonna --*

BAM!

The baseball bat CRASHES down, BREAKING HIS ARM. Kurt howls, knife drops, his arm dangles loose. Looks up to see --

GEORGE.

Baseball bat in hands, eyes ablaze. Kurt collapses, sobbing. George and the Father meet eyes.

GEORGE

Thank you.

George drops the bat and leaves the bar.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Clark stands over a fax machine as a report comes in. He rushes it to Landon, who studies the corkboard.

OFFICER CLARK

Your lab just faxed this over.

Landon examines it.

OFFICER CLARK

Amy Becker, AB-. The blood on the rag in Otis's kitchen, AB-. How common is AB-?

DETECTIVE LANDON

Less than one in a hundred.

OFFICER CLARK

Then we're onto it. Otis takes Amy, now all we gotta do is find Otis.

Clark is incredibly pleased. But Landon is fixated on the board: the names, times, and photographic images.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Assumption is the mother of all fuck-ups. There's still something missing, something's not right.

(beat)

We ever find out if that cat was some neighbors?

OFFICER CLARK
No. Could've been a stray.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Doesn't sit right.

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus tucks his sister Ashley into bed.

MARCUS
Promise you won't tell mom and dad
I let you stay up so late?

Ashley makes an "x" with her two pointer fingers. Marcus does the same and they link their "x's".

ASHLEY
Marcus, why were you so upset
today?

Marcus is astonished by her powers of observation.

MARCUS
What makes you say that, baby girl?

ASHLEY
You've been real quiet.

MARCUS
Oh yeah?

She nods, then...he tickles her. She laughs excitedly,
when...BANGING from downstairs. POUNDING on the front door.

ASHLEY
What's that?

CRASH. FOOTSTEPS. Things SMASHING. Marcus gets dead serious.

MARCUS
Ashley, get under your bed.

ASHLEY
But --

MARCUS
Do what I tell you!

She climbs under her bed. He goes to the door.

MARCUS

Don't come out until I tell you,
you understand?

Peeking out from under the bed, she nods.

MARCUS

Stay put, baby girl. I love you.

He turns off the light and leaves her alone in the darkness.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

Marcus glimpses down into the living room. It's dark except for a toppled lamp, which casts wild shadows.

A backlit INTRUDER goes around SMASHING everything in sight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marcus silently inches down the stairs, watching as the silhouetted intruder leans against the fireplace, breathing slowly, and quietly weeping. Marcus gradually approaches...

MARCUS

I figured you'd come.

The intruder freezes at the sound of his voice.

MARCUS

But you won't find her here.

The intruder grabs a brass FIRE POKER and whips around, raising it threateningly. It's GEORGE.

GEORGE

Where is she, you son of a bitch?

Before Marcus can answer, George charges. He's fast and forceful, but his intoxication renders him imprecise. Marcus dodges his attack and SLAMS George against the wall.

MARCUS

Stop it, man. Don't do this.

George BUCKS and Marcus stumbles back, knocking into the couch. George comes for him and Marcus has to back-flip over the couch to avoid getting pummeled.

George PLOWS into the couch, flips over it, and CRASHES onto the glass coffee table, SHATTERING it.

He lays there, in a daze, and Marcus goes to take the fire poker from his hand, when --

GEORGE SPRINGS UP, SWINGING.

GEORGE
Where is she?

George charges Marcus, swinging wildly. Marcus retreats to...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marcus grabs the biggest KNIFE in the knife rack and points it at George as he comes through the doorway.

MARCUS
Don't do this, man.

George comes right at Marcus, KNOCKING food and dishes off the counter. Marcus mirrors George's movements, keeping him on the opposite end of the kitchen table at all times.

GEORGE
Don't tell me I don't care about my daughter, I love her more than anything in this whole fucking world, and if you don't give her to me, I'll shove that fucking knife up your ass!

MARCUS
You're drunk, you crazy fool. I don't have her!

GEORGE
Fuck you, you don't, I know what this is about, it's all about you and me and that's how we're gonna settle this, you and me, *nigger!*

MARCUS
What?

From upstairs --

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Marcus what's happening?

They both look up at the ceiling.

GEORGE
Amy?

MARCUS
That ain't Amy, man!

George makes a dash for the next room when Marcus charges.
George SWINGS and misses as Marcus TACKLES him.

Marcus drops his knife as he wrestles the poker from George.
He wins it, tossing it aside, when --

GEORGE STABS THE KNIFE INTO MARCUS'S THIGH.

The knife disappears down to the handle. Marcus immediately
goes into shock, crumbling right to the floor. George
scrambles up. Grabs the fire poker.

Marcus latches onto George's ankle.

MARCUS
Wait...

George raises it over his head. Marcus looks at him
pleadingly, tears in his eyes.

MARCUS
...I love her.

And George --

BRINGS IT DOWN INTO MARCUS'S FACE.

A tremendous, devastating blow that lands with a wet THUD,
breaking his face inward, KILLING him at once.

George drops the poker, holds the counter for balance.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Marcus? I dialed 9-1-1. Are you
okay?

That definitely isn't Amy's voice...

George sobers. Looks at Marcus. Realizes what he's done. Then
frantically wipes the finger prints off anything he touched.

INT. MARCUS'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George is on a mad-dash. What did he touch? Practically
everything! So he wipes practically everything.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Marcus? Is that you?

George looks up to see little legs coming down the stairs and DASHES back into the kitchen...

INT. MARCUS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

...jumping over Marcus's body and racing out the back door.

EXT. MARCUS'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

POLICE SIRENS sound as a SCREAM comes from inside the house.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Marcus! No!

George vaults over the wooden fence...

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

...landing face-first in the mud, scrambling to his feet, and running straight into --

THE SNARLING BLACK PIT BULL.

EXT. MARCUS'S HOME - NIGHT

Landon and Clark step past the busted front door. An officer wraps crime scene tape around the perimeter.

INT. MARCUS'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Landon and Clark make their way through the clutter. In the background, Sean's father cradles Sean's mother as she cries into his chest.

They find Ashley sitting on the stairs, wrapped in a blanket, sipping hot cocoa. She's in shock...not yet ready to cry.

ASHLEY
Are you gonna catch who did this?

OFFICER CLARK
We'll get him.

Landon shoots Clark a disapproving look.

DETECTIVE LANDON
We'll do *our best*, sweetie.

INT. MARCUS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Food on the floor, broken dishes, and blood. The back door is wide-open and there's a BODY covered in a white sheet. Landon pulls back the sheet to reveal Marcus's mangled corpse.

It's a pitiful sight. We see the faintest hint of emotion in Landon's reaction. Humanity. This case is taking its toll. He glances up to find...

...Chief Stone. In the corner. Taking it considerably worse. They meet eyes and no words need to be said.

INT. MARCUS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark looks at the note pad by Marcus's phone. The last name on the list is **Kevin Lewis**. The mark from where the pencil broke makes the name stand out.

Clark copies the name in his pad when Officer Strahm pops in.

OFFICER STRAHM

Got a lead.

INT. OLD NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Landon and Clark with the Old Lady neighbor. Her black pit bull lies on its side, COUGHING as she strokes its belly. Clark tries to question her despite her preoccupation.

OFFICER CLARK

Ma'am, you said you saw a car at the Dixon home this evening. Do you know what kind of car it was?

OLD LADY

I...I don't think so...

OFFICER CLARK

Big car? Small car? Its color?

The dog thrashes its head and VIOLENTLY HACKS.

OLD LADY

He's choking, my Goober is sick...

OFFICER CLARK

Anything? Can you tell us anything?

OLD LADY

I...I don't...my poor baby, he needs help. Can you help?

Landon furiously steps forward, pushing past Clark.

DETECTIVE LANDON

A boy was killed tonight, not forty feet from here. You want help, *get the mutt a fucking cough drop!*

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Landon and Clark in a booth, sandwiches and coffee.

OFFICER CLARK

I don't want to come across as being overly...*sensitive*. But I don't think you like me.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Are you kidding?

OFFICER CLARK

We're both trying to solve this thing, and you're treating me like a tour guide.

DETECTIVE LANDON

You're a nice guy, okay? You hand out traffic citations. You're a suburban cop. Whereas you rescue kittens from trees, I have seen things that would make your blood turn blue, awful things that bite at your eyelids when you try to sleep. The last time I actually slept before midnight, George W. Bush was in office. As Governor.

OFFICER CLARK

I've seen things.

DETECTIVE LANDON

What've you seen? Tell you something I've seen. We pulled a body out of the river. Girl. 18. She was naked. And she had drowned.

FLASH TO:

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A swarm of police and paramedics crowd the river bank. Several yards off-shore, officers in a police boat, Landon among them, hoist something massive out of the water...

The WHIR of a helicopter rotor circling above. Its spotlight shines down upon the boat. What emerges from the water is a translucent GLASS RECTANGLE, the size of a casket.

Inside, the NUDE BODY of a young woman with blonde hair.

DETECTIVE LANDON (V.O.)
It was a puzzle without pieces.

Landon studies the young woman's blue face pressed against the bottom of the glass, eyes and mouth wide open.

DETECTIVE LANDON (V.O.)
Trapped in that glass tomb for
untold hours, she ran out of air.

FLASH TO:

EXT. BOTTOM OF RIVER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The glass box at the bottom of the river. Inside, the young woman weakly SCREAMS for help, pounding on the glass. But she's at the bottom of a river and no one will ever hear.

DETECTIVE LANDON (V.O.)
Drowned...in a river...without ever
touching the water. A waking
nightmare.

Her motions become labored...she slows down, and...expires.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER- NIGHT - PRESENT

Clark listens intently, watching Landon come alive in ways he hasn't yet seen, and riveted by it.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Never found the guy. We don't find
half the guys. And when we do...so
what? *So what?* These girls don't
come back. When Grady called me
tonight, I didn't come because he
needed a favor. I came because he
told me about Amy, alright? I'm not
here to be your friend. I'm here to
find this girl. That's all.

Clark solemnly nods.

OFFICER CLARK

When Brian Matthews was abducted
six years ago, we didn't think we'd
ever find him.

(beat)

But two months later...we did.

FLASH TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY - FLASHBACK

On the weedy slope adjacent to the busy highway, two police
officers open an old brown suitcase. One turns away to puke.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT - PRESENT

Landon's turn to listen. He looks at his sandwich, not Clark.

OFFICER CLARK

He was sawed up into jagged little
pieces, packed into a briefcase,
and tossed onto the side of a
highway. We never caught the guy. I
still study the case off the clock.

Landon isn't impressed by the story. But it's not over.

OFFICER CLARK

Thing is, I was there. The day it
happened, the park where Brian was
taken. I had been on the job a
little over three months, and I
couldn't have been less aware.

FLASH TO:

EXT. MILLER'S PARK, STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Clark crosses the street. We glimpsed this before, but we
didn't know it was Clark. He's oblivious to Gina passing him
in desperate pursuit of Brian.

OFFICER CLARK (V.O.)

Not only didn't I help her. I made
it worse.

Gina hits the asphalt after being plowed over by the car.
When she tries to continue her pursuit, she's RESTRAINED by
Clark. She kicks and screams and he brings her to the ground.

OFFICER CLARK (V.O.)
I stopped Gina Matthews from saving
her brother's life.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT - PRESENT

Clark's frozen in memory, consumed by guilt.

OFFICER CLARK
People do horrible things. And I
guess sometimes things work out for
the better, sometimes for the
worse, but like it or not, we're a
part of the good and bad mixed
together. I like to think trying my
best makes me one of the good guys.
And that helps me sleep at night.

Landon's stone veneer has weakened slightly; *despite* himself,
he's touched by Clark's sincerity.

THE WALKIE SQUAWKS.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Come in, Clark.

Clark clicks in.

OFFICER CLARK
Go for Clark.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Big find at John Otis's house.

INT. OTIS'S HOME, BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dingy dirt-floor cellar. Weak lights, vivid shadows.
OFFICER MCKEE guides Landon and Clark with his Maglite.

OFFICER MCKEE
I couldn't believe it when I saw
it. Thought it must be a Halloween
prop or something.

He's aiming his light at a collapsed section of brick wall.

OFFICER MCKEE
I barely put my hand on it when it
collapsed like that.

Landon takes the Maglite, proceeding forward. Clark follows. The light finds its way into the hidden chamber where...

...it lands upon a SKELETON. Landon steps over the debris for a closer look.

OFFICER CLARK
I take it that's not Amy.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Male...middle-age...been here a few years...definitely not Amy.

OFFICER CLARK
Look at this...

Clark uses his pen to lift a SHOELACE wrapped around the skeleton's neck.

OFFICER CLARK
Any thoughts?

DETECTIVE LANDON
Yeah. I think I'm fucking baffled.

Clark's walkie SQUAWKS, startling the hell out of them.

DISPATCH (ON WALKIE)
Come in, Clark.

OFFICER CLARK
Go for Clark. Now what?

DISPATCH (ON WALKIE)
Don't get too comfortable. Chief Stone wants you back at 45 Tremont.

OFFICER CLARK
Dixon's neighbor.

DETECTIVE LANDON
I'm gonna shoot that fucking dog.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Old Lady rubs her pit bull's side. No longer coughing, it now rests beside a puddle of its own puke. Landon and Clark look on, their mouths agape.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR
I told you, I *told* he was choking!

In the dog's puke are --

TWO SEVERED HUMAN FINGERS.

OFFICER CLARK

Jesus.

Clark regards Landon, who bends down to inspect the fingers.

OFFICER CLARK

Well, we've got his fingers. I
guess we've got his fingerprints.

DETECTIVE LANDON

No need.

Landon lifts one finger out of the puke. On it...a GOLD RING.

DETECTIVE LANDON

This is George Becker's wedding
band.

INT. BECKER KITCHEN - NIGHT

George SLAMS his shaking left hand into the sink, rushes cold water over it, gore seeping from the stumps where his pinky and ring finger formerly were.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

George tries the bedroom door, finding it locked.

GEORGE

Leanne? I'm...in trouble. Open up.

He KNOCKS. No answer. He BANGS, smearing blood on the door.

GEORGE

Leanne, I need you! Let me in!

George throws his weight into the door, FORCING it open...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

...to find something so horrible it brings him to his knees.

It's Leanne. HANGING BY THE NECK from the lavender curtain samples. Slowly rocking back and forth.

George feebly reaches out toward her with his mangled hand when -- blue and red lights flash in the window. George's survival instincts kick in and he makes a run for it.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

As George races down the stairs and slips into the kitchen, the front door BREAKS inward, Landon and Clark rushing forward, guns drawn. They missed seeing him by a second.

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

Medics haul Leanne away in a body bag, passing Chief Stone, Landon, and Clark on the front walkway, where they first convened 24 hours earlier. They inhale coffee like it's air.

CHIEF STONE

I called in every available cruiser
in the county to comb the streets.
He's on foot, and with a wound like
that, he won't get far without
being noticed. Shouldn't be long.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Doesn't bring us any closer to her.
10 to midnight, and we're no closer
to the end than when we started.

OFFICER CLARK

What the hell happened to Amy
Becker?

As they ponder this question, WE HEAR LAUGHTER...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**TITLE: THURSDAY**

We're back at the BEGINNING OF THE MOVIE. Kevin has just read his story and the whole class is LAUGHING at him.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

We saw this earlier. Kevin walks home from school and John Otis drives past him in his OLD BLUE VAN. He watches its tail lights disappear.

INT. KEVIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kevin's on his floor. Distraught. Takes out his cell.

INT. BOY'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

After football. Ethan's changing next to Marcus when his cell rings. Marcus RAT-TAILS him with a towel and Ethan playfully PEGS him with his mouth guard before answering.

ETHAN

Hello?

(pause)

Who is this?

(pause)

Oh...hey. Sorry. I got a new phone
and lost some old numbers...

(pause)

Yeah, we can talk.

Another beat, then the call ends. Ethan thinks about it.

MARCUS

Who was that?

ETHAN

An old friend.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

A towering oak tree grows in the center of a clearing, isolated from the others, as if ostracized. Its branches are twisted, its bark diseased.

Ethan finds Kevin here. Waiting. When he hears Ethan's approaching footsteps, he doesn't even turn.

KEVIN

You remembered.

ETHAN

Of course I did. This was our spot.

Kevin smiles sadly.

KEVIN

That was a long time ago.

ETHAN

Look, I know we don't talk much
anymore...that's my bad, Kev.

Now Kevin turns. Ethan sees he's been crying.

ETHAN

Amy Becker's a real bitch, man.

KEVIN

She always has been, right? Isn't she what brought you out here that first time?

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Ethan, 11, on his first day of school. He wears a goofy tie-dye shirt that's two sizes too big. Looks miserable. He passes the table of...

...Young Amy, Young Gina beside her. Amy wears a yellow skirt and has french braids. Ethan is captivated by her.

KEVIN (V.O.)

11-years-old...the new kid...she made you feel worthless.

Ethan is captivated by her. When she sees him, she whispers to Gina, and starts to LAUGH HYSTERICALLY, as if at him. He walks on, deeply saddened, and sits by himself.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY - FLASHBACK

A teary Young Ethan stares up at the towering oak. Hanging from its branch...

KEVIN (V.O.)

Day-in, day-out, everybody at that school made you feel worthless. Like there was no reason to go on.

...a crude NOOSE, swaying with the wind.

KEVIN (V.O.)

And that's how I found you. Ten minutes later and who knows...

Young Ethan turns to find Young Kevin approaching.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

We're out of the flashback, in present day. The memory has made Ethan emotional.

ETHAN

You saved my life that day.

KEVIN

And we became best friends.

ETHAN
I'll never forget that.

KEVIN
Then help me.

ETHAN
Do what?

Kevin smiles devilishly.

KEVIN
Pay that bitch back.

INT. KEVIN'S ROOM - DAY

Ethan and Kevin drink beers and gleefully plot.

ETHAN
...obviously the *minute* I start
getting popular, Amy's not too good
for me, she wants my dick. Girls
tell me she's in love with me. How
about I fuck her and dump her?

KEVIN
No, no, no, don't you see? That's
the set-up, not the payoff. That's
not epic enough. This needs to be
classic. You fuck her...then we
scare the living shit out of her!

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - DAY

Laid on the worktable are black clothes, black gloves, black
ski mask, and a shiny cleaver. Kevin explains to Ethan...

KEVIN
I'll be waiting outside. You bang
her, say you want a beer, come
downstairs, unlock the back door.

ETHAN
Oh, man. This is crazy. Then what?

KEVIN
I give her the scare of her life.

ETHAN
This is evil, man. Pure evil.

Ethan laughs hysterically. Kevin puts his arm around him.

KEVIN
It's like old times.

Ethan considers long and hard. Kevin awaits his verdict.

ETHAN
Let's do it. But if I fucking text
you we need to abort --

KEVIN
We abort.

INT. BECKER SOCIAL ROOM - NIGHT

After Ethan slept with Amy and went to go get them some alcohol.

TITLE: FRIDAY

As Ethan grabs the whiskey and glasses, he shoots off a text to Kevin...

sry got 2 abort. ill call u la8r

EXT. BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Kevin, dressed as the Assailant, tries the door. It's locked. He uses a screwdriver and paper clip to break in.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Kevin opens the fuse box and switches off the power.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ethan wanders around in the darkness up the stairs. CREAK.

ETHAN
Hilarious, Amy, nothing funnier
than falling down a dark staircase.

As he's about to reach the top when --

KEVIN JUMPS OUT IN FRONT OF HIM.

Ethan FALLS down the stairs. The whiskey and glasses SHATTER.

KEVIN
Ethan? Shit.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Amy heads down the dark staircase, phone guiding her, when she sees Kevin, aka The Assailant, staring at her.

When he charges, Amy guns it for the door. She frantically works the locks, pulls the door open, and runs out when...

...Kevin GRABS her. She SCREAMS, and struggles with him, disappearing OFF-SCREEN. We then hear a terrible THUD.

Then silence. Ethan enters frame, rubbing his sore head, stepping out the door to see...

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

...Kevin, mask removed, hunched over AMY'S BODY. She's sprawled on the walkway, blood collecting under her head.

ETHAN

What the fuck?!

Kevin presses his ear to her chest.

KEVIN

Heart's beating.

Ethan shakes his head in disbelief. Hasn't fully set in.

KEVIN

I was just trying to scare her like we planned...and she fell...

Ethan grabs Kevin, SHAKING him.

ETHAN

Breaking her head open was not part of the fucking plan! And what happened to aborting? I texted you!

Kevin checks his phone.

KEVIN

Shit. It was on silent.

Ethan drops down to Amy. Checks her head.

ETHAN

I don't think it's too deep...

KEVIN

This isn't just anyone we're talking about here, it's Amy Becker, okay? *Mayor Becker's* daughter. She says, "Daddy, they hurt me," and we get a visit from the union boys!

Kevin takes out a pack of MENTHOL CIGARETTES and lights one up. He doesn't even smoke it. Ethan frantically paces back and forth.

ETHAN

We could go to jail for this.

Kevin drops the cigarette, stomps it out, and stops Ethan.

KEVIN

Hold on. Are you forgetting who you are? This girl loves you. And all it's gonna take to shut her up is some sweet talk from her *dream* boy.

ETHAN

You think so?

Kevin puts his hands on Ethan's shoulders.

KEVIN

That you don't gotta worry about, what you gotta worry about is George Becker coming home and finding his daughter sprawled out on the walkway.

ETHAN

Should we take her to her room?

KEVIN

Sure, that'll look *much* better.

ETHAN

Well what then?

KEVIN

We take her to my place. My dad's old workshop in the basement. It's isolated, soundproofed. She wakes up, you promise to be her *prom* date, and we're good to go.

ETHAN

That's kidnapping -- that's *crazy*!

Kevin pulls Ethan close.

KEVIN
You wanna know what's crazy?
Throwing your life away for this
stupid bitch because of a fuck up.
Clock's ticking.

Ethan doesn't react. Kevin bends down, takes her arms.

KEVIN
I can't lift her myself.

Ethan relents, taking her legs. They carry her to his car.

KEVIN
Everything's gonna work itself out
in the end. It's all gonna be okay.
(beat)
Now let's put her in the trunk.

INT. KEVIN'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

They carry Amy down the stairs. As Kevin unlocks a solid oak, handcrafted door, Ethan notices in a corner...

...four DEAD RATS by a bowl of stew with RAZOR BLADES.

KEVIN
The smell drives them out of the
walls. Fucking rats keep chewing
till they bleed to death.

Ethan grimaces at the bloody razor edges and the dead rats with their vacant black eyes...

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Kevin tugs the light chord. Walls and floor are a grimy concrete. Makeshift sound insulation. Storage shelves packed with art supplies and a large WALL-MOUNTED TOOL RACK.

They hoist Amy onto a wooden work table. Kevin grabs an old cable of three-strand rope, chucks it to Ethan.

KEVIN
Help tie her down.

ETHAN
Why?

KEVIN

I'm prepared to do *whatever* it takes to make sure she doesn't talk. Even if it means sewing her Goddamn mouth shut.

Kevin takes some PLIERS from the rack. Ethan shakes his head.

ETHAN

This was a mistake...

KEVIN

When did you go soft, anyway? We used to do all kinds of crazy shit...when we were kids, all the sick pranks we'd play? The games...deep in the woods...

ETHAN

That was a long time ago.

KEVIN

No shit. You used to have balls. You used to be one of us, now you're just another one of them... like her.

ETHAN

What do you call what I did for you tonight?

KEVIN

I call it a fucking *revival*!

Amy stirs, signs of slowly regaining consciousness.

ETHAN

What are you saying?

KEVIN

What I'm saying is...there are alternatives to tying her up.

Kevin rubs the sharp tip of the pliers until his thumb bleeds. Ethan eyes the pliers with apprehension.

ETHAN

Back off. I'll convince her.

Just then Amy's eyes SNAP OPEN and she SCREAMS and THRASHES. Kevin forces her to the table, covering her mouth with an old rag. She passes out again. Ethan stares at Kevin in shock.

KEVIN
Chloroform.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

TITLE: SATURDAY

Amy's eyes open. She's seated upright in a chair, arms and legs tied. She searches the dingy workshop: the old tools on the walls, dried splatters of paint, and finally...

...Kevin.

In the corner. Watching her. He grins creepily. Amy lets out a GUT WRENCHING SCREAM.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Just outside the workshop. From behind its insulated walls, we hear Amy's faint, suppressed SCREAM.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Just outside the door leading down into the basement. Her scream is now a barely perceptible SQUEAL.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mirna sits in front of the TV. From this distance Amy's scream doesn't even exist.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Kevin watches her SCREAMING, seemingly captivated. The workshop door opens and Ethan runs in.

ETHAN
How long has she been awake?

KEVIN
She just woke up!

Ethan touches her arms, trying to calm her.

AMY
What the fuck is going on?

ETHAN

Amy...uh, listen, don't be upset,
everything's okay...we, uh...

AMY

You what?

ETHAN

It was a joke, okay, we tried to
scare you. It...just got out of
hand. Do you understand?

Amy takes a breath. Composes herself.

AMY

Joke's over. Untie me.

Ethan looks to Kevin for approval. Kevin shakes his head. Amy
kicks and screams.

AMY

*Untie me right now! Now! Un-fucking-
tie me now!*

ETHAN

Please, just promise this stays
between us and it all goes away.

Amy spitefully shakes her head.

AMY

I'm gonna get free, and when I get
free the first thing I do, I mean
the *very first fucking thing I do*
is tell my father everything! You
kidnapped me! Do you have any idea
how much shit you're in?

Kevin grabs a large WRENCH from the tool rack. Amy's blood
runs cold. She looks to Ethan, frightened.

ETHAN

Kevin, give me a sec with her.

KEVIN

No.

ETHAN

Yes!

Kevin SLAMS the wrench down and Amy flinches. Ethan pushes
Kevin into the back corner.

ETHAN
(whispering)
The idea is to reason with her, so
let's start acting *reasonably*.

Kevin leaves and SLAMS the door. Amy turns her head away.

ETHAN
Amy...

She tries not to show any emotion, but she breaks, and the tears fall fast. Ethan strokes her hair, her neck.

She shakes him off.

AMY
Don't touch me.

ETHAN
I didn't plan on any of this.
You've gotta believe me. I would
never do anything to hurt you. You
know that. You *know me*.

Though still upset, she lets her wall down and faces him.

AMY
I wanted...so bad...for what
happened last night to happen...for
so long...and it was a joke?

ETHAN
Kevin and I...go way back. You
humiliated him, and he came to
me...out of desperation...

AMY
I've had feelings for you for as
long as I can remember, but...

Kevin re-enters, sneering. Ethan looks at him with exasperation, if he'd just wait...Amy's face curls into a sneer that matches Kevin's.

AMY
...but I hope last night was good
for you. Because when you're behind
bars and you have a dick up your
ass the size of *my arm*, that memory
of your last time with a girl will
be the only thing to keep you from
actually *liking it*.

INT. KEVIN'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Kevin follows Ethan out of the workshop. Ethan's despondent.

KEVIN

Give me a minute with her, okay?

Ethan tries to read Kevin...what's he got in mind?

KEVIN

I'm not gonna touch her, I promise.
You had your chance, I want mine.

Kevin disappears back inside, closing the door behind him.

A SQUEAK from the corner. Ethan glances over at the booby-trapped bowl of stew. A rat pitifully thrashes back and forth, its mouth sliced open by one of the razors.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Kevin watches Amy from a dark corner. She does everything she can to avert his gaze.

KEVIN

Why aren't you laughing, Amy? Am I
not so funny anymore?

Kevin eyes her body. She's still in her bra and panties.

KEVIN

Go on. Laugh. Shall I tickle you?

Amy shifts uncomfortably. Kevin moves closer. Real close.

KEVIN

Because I'd be glad to.

His fingers dance across her belly.

AMY

Stop.

He GRABS her trembling thigh and whispers into her ear...

KEVIN

I can do whatever I want to you,
because you're never gonna leave.

He licks Amy's ear and she whimpers.

AMY

I'm sorry...

KEVIN

Oh, I think it's too late for that.

AMY

I...had to fart...

Kevin pulls back slightly. Puzzled. She softly sobs.

AMY

...in class that day. While you were reading your story. I...I didn't know what to do...

He pulls back further.

AMY

...it's the stupidest fucking thing, but it's true...I didn't want everyone to hear...it's not like I thought about it, it just happened...I laughed...and nobody heard...and I didn't think...

He has now pulled back all the way to the wall. Perhaps for the first time we're seeing uncertainty in his demeanor.

AMY

...I just didn't think...and I don't want to die for it...but I'm sorry about it...I'm so sorry about it...even if it's too late...I'm really sorry.

She hangs her head low. Ashamed. Kevin doesn't know how to react. Then she meets eyes with him. They're glistening.

AMY

I would never say anything about this to anyone...

KEVIN

I know.

Whatever brief instance of doubt he may have faced has passed. He pulls the light chain and the workshop goes BLACK.

INT. KEVIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mirna watches home movies as Kevin and Ethan pass through.

MIRNA

I thought I heard the basement door. No one's been down there since your father --

KEVIN

We're working on a school project, so don't go down there.

Mirna turns back to the TV and smiles.

MIRNA

Just like your father, Kevin. He was always doing his arts and crafts down there.

Kevin and Ethan are already long gone.

EXT. KEVIN'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Kevin leads with a flashlight to the forest.

ETHAN

Where are we going?

Without turning...

KEVIN

Keep going.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

A white moon, fat and full, hangs in the black sky. Kevin shines his flashlight in Ethan's face.

ETHAN

What the hell are we doing?

Kevin whips the light onto his own face.

KEVIN

You wanna hear something scary?

ETHAN

I wanna know what the fuck's going on.

KEVIN

Use your imagination. Think of the most disturbing, gut-wrenching, inexplicably vile thing you possibly can.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Did you think of something? Good.
Know that *somewhere, sometime,*
somebody, has done that very thing.

Kevin leads him deeper into the woods.

KEVIN

These things happen. And not only
out there in the great big world,
but even here...where you live.
Where you breathe. Scary things
happen.

ETHAN

So-fucking-what?

Kevin stops at a clearing where several small trees encircle
a towering oak with tangled branches and diseased bark. Their
private little spot in the woods.

He points the flashlight to a shallow ditch, where the dirt
barely manages to cover...

...a decomposing DEAD BODY. Ethan falls to his knees.

KEVIN

Think back. Seven long, long years.
We did something, me and you.
Something special.

EXT. BUSHES - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Ethan and Young Kevin spy through the leaves...

KEVIN (V.O.)

We committed the perfect crime.

YOUNG ETHAN

I'm not sure this is a good idea...

YOUNG KEVIN

Come on, it'll be awesome, it'll be
everything we ever talked about.

Young Ethan remains hesitant.

YOUNG ETHAN

I know, but...

YOUNG KEVIN

Trust me, I'll take care of it.

Young Kevin moves out of the bushes.

KEVIN (V.O.)
We committed murder.

Young Ethan breathes deeply, then follows Young Kevin.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

They cross a back yard. Several CATS idle lazily. One cat approaches Young Ethan. Peers up at him with curious eyes.

Kevin holds out his hands like claws and creeps up to one.

YOUNG KEVIN
Come 'ere, kitty-kitty.

The cat SCREECHES.

EXT. OTIS'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Two police officers, one of them Officer Clark, question John Otis on his porch about the dead cats. He throws up his arms and raves, the officers trying to pacify him.

KEVIN (V.O.)
He was the perfect scapegoat.

Young Kevin and Young Ethan watch the scene from behind a tree. Young Kevin giggles quietly.

Young Ethan guiltily looks down at his hands...caked with dried blood and cat hair.

EXT. GAS-N-GO - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Ethan and Young Kevin head away from the Gas-N-Go puffing on cheap cigars.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I stole a couple White Owl stogies
to celebrate...

Young Kevin affectionately pats him on the back. Young Ethan doesn't react. He doesn't even blink.

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Ethan and Young Kevin walk through the park on the day Brian Matthews was kidnapped.

KEVIN (V.O.)
...and we walked around like we
were on top of the world.

We glimpse the flip-side of the scene we saw earlier. Young Amy and Gina sit on a bench by the playground. When Ethan looks toward her, Amy, very deliberately, looks away.

YOUNG KEVIN
Forget that bitch.

YOUNG ETHAN
Yeah...

EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

Out of the flashback. Ethan is absorbed in his memories.

KEVIN
Well, John Otis has been a good
friend to us once again.

Kevin clears some dirt off the body's face, revealing...

...JOHN OTIS. His features are unmistakable.

KEVIN
It was all so easy.

FLASH TO:

INT. OTIS'S DEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Otis watches TV, smoking a cigarette from a pack of MENTHOLS. Kevin, dressed as The Assailant, sneaks up behind him and STRANGLES him with a chord of wire.

FLASH TO:

EXT. BECKER HOME, BACKYARD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Kevin, as The Assailant, empties a garbage bag onto the grass and a gray cat drops out. His gloved hands reach down for it.

FLASH TO:

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Kevin and Ethan by Amy's unconscious body. Kevin stomps out the Menthol cigarette.

FLASH TO:

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Kevin touches a rag to Amy's head gash, soaking up the blood.

FLASH TO:

INT. OTIS'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Kevin, as The Assailant, plants the bloody rag when Landon's flashlight shines on him. He drops the rag and runs.

BACK TO:

EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

Ethan looks up at Kevin with tear-filled eyes.

ETHAN

All of that...for what?

KEVIN

So Otis takes the fall.

ETHAN

But for what?

KEVIN

Killing Amy.

Silence. Dead silence.

KEVIN

We end it, bury it, wash our hands clean.

Ethan slowly shakes his head. Kevin puts his arm around him.

KEVIN

I understand how you must be feeling. But you gotta understand that when the time is right, people are capable of doing anything.

(beat)

Ethan, the time is now.

Ethan PUNCHES Kevin in the face, taking him down.

ETHAN

You fuck!

Kevin stares up at him, puzzled, saddened.

KEVIN

We always talked about committing
the perfect murder...a *real* murder.
Now we can.

ETHAN

We were fucked up little kids!

Kevin considers this, tears welling in his eyes.

KEVIN

What about the cats?

ETHAN

*Killing those cats was the worst
fucking mistake of my life!* Why the
fuck do you think I stopped hanging
out with you?

Kevin is profoundly wounded by these words.

KEVIN

I know you. Maybe better than you
know yourself. And I know you want
this. You're scared. I understand.
But I got it covered.

Kevin starts to rise. Ethan again raises his fists.

ETHAN

Stay down.

Kevin smiles.

KEVIN

You're worried about what to do
with Amy. Don't be. We put her in
the tub, perforate the skin, then
sever the major arteries. She'll
gush dry in minutes. We soak her in
vinegar, and the bones decalcify.
After that, sawing her up will be
like cutting a tomato. Knock out
her teeth, burn off her finger
tips, soak her in bleach.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Put each of the dozen pieces in a bag, bury each of the bags in a different town. Even if they find one they won't know what they found. Case grows cold, just like any other. Otis ran off and was never found.

Ethan shakes his head. Beyond disturbed, he's now resolute.

KEVIN

What makes you think you have a choice?

Kevin BOLTS up and Ethan swings, only Kevin swiftly dodges and CRACKS Ethan over the head with the flashlight.

As Ethan stumbles, Kevin LEAPS onto his back, wrapping his arm around Ethan's neck, dragging him to the ground.

Ethan tries to fight back but Kevin POUNDS him repeatedly in the gut until he's done resisting. Then Kevin JAMS the flashlight against his throat.

KEVIN

The control you think you have, you don't. Like it or not, she's dead. Now, either you had nothing to do with it...or you had everything to do with it. The choice is yours, but I'm not leaving any loose ends.

Ethan's face is bright red. The life is being choked out of him. Kevin stares into his eyes, perhaps weighing whether or not he'll go all the way with it.

The fear in Ethan's eyes clearly show that he believes he's going to die. With his fleeting strength he manages a nod.

Kevin eases up on the flashlight, allowing Ethan to breathe.

ETHAN

O...okay...I'm in.

Kevin's face brightens. He strokes Ethan's red cheek.

KEVIN

I knew you would be.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ethan and Kevin walk back. Ethan's cell RINGS. **BLOCKED.**

KEVIN
Don't get that.

ETHAN
It's my mom...she'll be worried.

Kevin glances at him, as if to read him. Ethan answers.

ETHAN
Hello?

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Dark. Desolate. Gina's on a bench overlooking the playground where her brother was taken.

GINA
Ethan.

ETHAN (ON PHONE)
Yeah.

GINA
This is Gina. How ya doing?

INTERCUT Woods/Park.

ETHAN
Yeah, I'm...everything's fine.

GINA
You seem a little edgy.

Ethan glances at Kevin, who's watching him like a hawk.

ETHAN
Uh-huh...

GINA
How's Amy?

A deep well of silence.

GINA
I hate the police, Ethan. More than you know. I'm a big girl. I like to deal with things on my own, so I'm giving you a chance to fix this with me and me alone.

Ethan looks at Kevin to make sure he's not hearing this.

ETHAN

Yeah?

GINA

Meet me at Miller's Park. Midnight.

Gina hangs up.

KEVIN

What'd she want?

ETHAN

To know if I was sleeping out.

KEVIN

Are you?

ETHAN

We've got a long night ahead of us.

Kevin grins, throwing his arm around Ethan.

KEVIN

Just like old times.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Ethan follows Kevin down the stairs. As Kevin enters the workshop, Ethan lingers behind.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Come on, man! Let's do this!

Ethan spies the bowl of razors and gruel...and dead rats.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Ethan enters to find Kevin perusing the wide assortment of theoretical weapons...

...hack saw...power drill...nail gun...rusty wrench...

Ethan sinks into a dark corner as Kevin runs his fingers across the tools. Amy's eyes dart back and forth.

AMY

I've thought about it...I won't say
a word. It was a joke that got out
of hand, and you...

Kevin runs his fingers along the handle of a STEEL MALLET.

AMY
...I'll pay you...

Ethan hides his face in his hands as she pleadingly looks.
Kevin comes toward her, eyes wide.

AMY
Ethan! Please!

Kevin raises the mallet...

...Amy whimpers...

...Ethan emerges from the darkness...

AMY
...please...

Kevin starts to bring the mallet down when --

ETHAN
Wait!

Kevin lowers the mallet.

ETHAN
This isn't right.

KEVIN
We already had this conversation,
Eth, and frankly, it's getting old.

AMY
Ethan, please --

ETHAN
Shut up!

She does. Kevin is impressed.

ETHAN
This isn't right because...we don't
have our White Owl smokes. It's
tradition.

KEVIN
We can get those...after...

ETHAN
We're gonna have a lot of things to
take care of...after...and we don't
have time to go buy smokes.

AMY

Ethan --

ETHAN

Shut your fucking mouth!

Ethan SLAPS her across the face, and the crack of the blow REVERBERATES. Amy's horrified. Betrayed.

ETHAN

What do you say, Kev? It'll bring
the whole thing full circle.

Kevin is taken aback by his gesture of ferocity. And pleased. He nods, happy to truly have a partner in crime. Ethan's emotionless eyes fall to Amy. She's resigned to her fate.

KEVIN

If we're gonna go, let's go.

But Ethan's eyes remain locked with Amy's. He suddenly COUGHS VIOLENTLY, covering his mouth with his hand.

When he's through coughing, he marches over to Amy and --

KISSES HER INTENSELY.

He throws his arms around her. Amy squirms and whimpers under the weight of his intensity. She seems confused.

Ethan persists, embraces her tightly. Amy's eyes open wide. Kevin feels uncomfortable watching. Averts his gaze.

Ethan pulls away, piercing eyes still on Amy. She's teary, her mouth clamped shut.

ETHAN

Now don't you go anywhere, bitch...
we'll be right back.

Ethan heads out. Kevin gives Amy a smug look, then leaves, shutting the workshop door.

After a moment of silence, once it's clear they're gone, Amy parts her trembling lips to reveal...

...a RAZOR BLADE between her teeth.

INT. KEVIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Kevin pulls into the Gas-N-Go, its red neon sign burning in the night. Ethan swabs his bloody lip with a tissue.

KEVIN
What happened?

ETHAN
Must've bit myself.

Deflecting attention, he eyes the fuel gauge.

ETHAN
Fill it up, I'll grab the stogies.

As Ethan opens the door, Kevin grabs his arm.

KEVIN
Let me see your phone.

ETHAN
Why?

KEVIN
Don't want you using up all your
free minutes.

Ethan coolly shakes his head, tosses Kevin the phone.

ETHAN
Getting paranoid.

INT. GAS-N-GO - NIGHT

Ethan beelines for the back of the store.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ethan finds a window. He hops onto the sink and opens it.

EXT. GAS-N-GO - NIGHT

As Kevin fills his car, he doesn't notice...

...Ethan sneaking through the darkness, toward Miller Park.

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Chronologically, we're all caught up. Ethan steps under the glow of a lamp post.

TITLE: SUNDAY

The late night park is eerie and foreboding. Wind blows.

TITLE: MIDNIGHT

Gina emerges from the darkness. She's devoid of emotion.

GINA
We used to walk laps around this
park, Amy talking endlessly about
you. Her "dream" boy.

Gina reveals her GUN, aiming it at Ethan. He pales.

GINA
Is she alive?

ETHAN
Yes.

Gina's emotions betray her poker face. She's deeply relieved.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Amy frantically uses the razor blade to cut free of her wrist restraints. Thread...by thread...she makes progress...

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Ethan motions to step forward, but Gina's face again straightens and he freezes.

GINA
Where is she?

ETHAN
Look, it's complicated, but you
need to get help. Kevin's got her.

GINA
Kevin Lewis?

Behind a maintenance shed, perhaps a hundred yards away, Randall Powers spies on them through binoculars.

RANDALL
...Kevin Lewis...

Randall searches his pockets for a scrap of paper, finding his business card. On the back, he writes: **KEVIN LEWIS.**

ETHAN
He fucking snapped. But I swear to
God, she's escaping right now!

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Amy furiously works the razor when finally she gets her hands free. She leans forward to furiously start on her legs...

EXT. SEYMOUR'S LUNCHEONETTE - NIGHT

The electric sign powers down and Seymour shuts off the main lights, locking up for the night. A police cruiser crawls down the otherwise empty Main Street, flashlights searching.

Seymour waves to the officers as they continue past him. He digs through his pockets for his car keys when --

GEORGE BECKER SLAMS HIM AGAINST HIS CAR.

GEORGE

Give me your fucking keys!

INT. KEVIN'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Amy escapes from the workshop and frantically tries the windows, only to find them barred. *Barred basement windows?*

She looks to the stairs...then a door...

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Gina processes all that Ethan has told her.

ETHAN

I don't care what happens to me,
you gotta call the cops --

GINA

Fuck the cops. And fuck you. Call
Kevin.

ETHAN

Did you hear me? He's fucking nuts!

Gina tosses her cell to Ethan, he barely catches it.

GINA

Call him.

Ethan dials 911 and Gina PISTOL WHIPS him. While a trickle of blood rolls down his cheek, a trail of tears rolls down hers.

GINA

You picked the wrong best friend to fuck with.

ETHAN

Gina, please.

GINA

Tell him to meet you here.

ETHAN

He'll kill us all!

Randall Powers cautiously moves closer to the action.

Ethan backs away. Gina keeps the gun steady on him when...

...Kevin POPS UP behind her. He snakes his arm around her neck and SLAMS HER to the ground.

ETHAN

Stop!

Ethan grabs Gina's gun and aims at Kevin.

Randall backs away. He's not getting paid enough for this. He turns to run, TRIPPING on a rock and CRASHING onto the grass.

Ethan and Kevin turn their heads, glimpsing Randall struggling with his hefty girth to scramble to his feet.

As he sluggishly runs, he loses his binoculars and the BUSINESS CARD with Kevin's name jotted on it.

Seizing on the distraction, Kevin SLUGS Ethan in the face, grabbing the gun, then RACES after Randall.

INT. SEYMOUR'S CAR - NIGHT

George on his cell, leaving a message, car racing.

GEORGE

Pick up! Pick up, damn you! I'm in trouble and I've got no one to turn to. I need you. I'm coming for you.

INT. KEVIN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Amy cautiously opens the door. The scant basement light barely penetrates the darkness. She feels the wall...

...flicking on the flickering fluorescent lights to find...

...a horror show. We catch only the quickest GLIMPSES of Kevin's grisly hobby collection...

...road-kill rot, squirrels, rabbits, rodents, birds, cats...

...dismembered...disemboweled...decapitated...dissected...

...hanging on hooks...heads on pikes...bone piles...pelts...

...congealed blood...maggoty innards...plateful of eyes...

The room seemingly spins around Amy. She grows dizzy. Faint. But knows she's got to move.

She dashes for the garage door switch. Disconnected. She tries to lift the door manually. Not budging.

She migrates to the black-painted window. Stands on a rickety step-stool, drives her palms up against the window frame, only to STAB them into protruding nails...

...she winces in pain, recoils, and the step-stool BREAKS beneath her feet, sending her toppling over and --

CRASHING INTO A TABLE.

Dead things rain down on her as she THUDS to the concrete. A glass terrarium SHATTERS, several snakes slithering out.

Amy scrambles to her feet and runs the fuck away.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Clark and Landon aimlessly comb the streets. A thought occurs to Clark.

OFFICER CLARK

If you had good reason to distrust
cops would you tell them the truth?

Rhetorical question. Both know the answer. They meet eyes.

LANDON/CLARK

Gina Matthews.

Clark stomps on the gas.

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Ethan tries to wake Gina. Her head limply rolls side to side.

ETHAN
Wake up, Gina. Please.

EXT. PARK PATHWAY - NIGHT

Randall dashes toward his car, huffing and wheezing, drawing nearer, struggling to get there.

Kevin closes in, gun pointed, eyes focused.

Randall jams his hand into his pocket and pulls out his keys, reaching his passenger side door when POP and --

A BULLET BLASTS THROUGH RANDALL'S WAIST.

Randall falls against his car, blood oozing from his insides, dropping his keys. He SMASHES through the window and struggles to reach his glove compartment.

He opens it and grabs his GUN but is --

SHOT IN THE BACK OF THE NECK.

Blood douses the leather interior, as Randall lethargically turns around and limply SHOOTS the asphalt by his feet.

He slides down the side of the car, watching with blurred eyes as Kevin's looming image slowly comes into focus.

Their gazes meet, as they did earlier, at Seymour's. Mutual recognition.

KEVIN
Scale of one to ten, how would you
rate knowing you're about to die?

Randall shakily tries to raise his gun. Not enough strength.

KEVIN
Bet it ain't an eleven.

He SHOOTS Randall in the face, blowing the teeth out of his cheek. Randall rolls onto his side, breathing his final breaths deeply.

Kevin kicks Randall onto his back and SHOOTS him in the forehead. A splatter of skull and brain, finishing him.

But Kevin isn't satisfied. CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

Kevin appraises Randall with pride, like an artist judging his creation. His lips slowly curl into a smile.

Kevin wedges the empty gun into his pocket and grabs Randall's. Before heading back, he whips around and SHOOTs Randall once more for good measure.

EXT. GINA'S STREET - NIGHT

SCREECHING of tires, then...

...George veers wildly onto Gina's street from the north side, pulling up to her house as...

...Clark turns abruptly onto Gina's street from the south side, pulling up to her house as...

...both cars stop. George stares at Landon and Clark in disbelief. They do likewise. And after a pensive moment...

...George SLAMS the pedal to the metal and Clark pursues at FULL-SPEED.

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Ethan SHAKES Gina, SLAPS her cheeks, desperate to revive her.

ETHAN

Gina, come on, we gotta go...now.

Kevin approaches in the distance, splattered in blood.

KEVIN

We're good, buddy! We're golden!

Ethan turns from Gina to Kevin when --

GINA SPRINGS TO LIFE, PUSHING HIM DOWN AND RUNNING.

Kevin's smile drops. Ethan races after her. But Gina's gone. Running like crazy down the path.

Soon we realize she's running along the very same path where she chased her brother's kidnapper years before.

She passes the playground, the pond, the men's room, and...

EXT. BORDERING STREET - NIGHT

...the street where she lost Brian.

Ethan sees her up ahead. Panicked. He shoots a look over his shoulder, sure he'll see Kevin bearing down on them, only...

...Kevin is nowhere in sight.

He looks back to Gina. Drawing close.

ETHAN

Gina!

But Gina races across the street closer and closer, until --
SHE'S BLINDED BY A WHITE LIGHT.

INT. SEYMOUR'S CAR - NIGHT

George is looking in his rearview mirror as Clark bears down on him. He looks back to the road in time to see Gina right in front of him, but with no time to react, and...

EXT. BORDERING STREET - NIGHT

...George PLOWS right into her.

Throws her head-first into the curb, SNAPPING HER NECK. The CRACK is gut-wrenching. The sight of her mangled corpse, pale face, eyes wide, head twisted backward, is God awful.

Ethan falls to his knees, sickened, devastated, as the car SCREECHES to a halt.

He watches George Becker fall out of the car and stumble over to Gina. And before he can process that sight...

...he watches as a cruiser jumps the curb and Landon and Clark race out, guns pointed. Ethan, in the tree-heavy shadows some 300 feet away, goes unnoticed.

That's when Kevin puts the gun to the side of Ethan's head.

Meanwhile, when Clark sees Gina's lifeless body, he lowers his gun from George, profoundly saddened.

George tries to go to her, irrespective of the cops, but Landon pulls the hammer back on his Glock.

DETECTIVE LANDON

I'm the Mayor now, mother fucker,
and I want you to freeze!

George freezes, but his tears fall freely. He hasn't taken his eyes off Gina for a moment. But neither has Clark.

He's fixated on her outstretched hand. Her finger tips have fallen just short of the curb.

Clark takes her hand and gently rests it on the curb. He turns his attention back to George and raises his gun.

OFFICER CLARK
Hands behind your head. I'm placing
you under arrest for the murder of
Marcus Dixon and Gina Matthews.

George feebly complies as Clark cuffs him. Then, George seems to awaken, as if from a trance. He says quite soberly...

GEORGE
I just want my daughter.

INT. KEVIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Amy comes through the basement door and finds...

...Mirna Lewis.

CHOPPING carrots. CHOP! CHOP! CHOP!

With a trembling hand, Amy eases the door open and CREEEAK...

...Mirna stops chopping. She admires Amy with curiosity.

MIRNA
What were you doing down there?

She walks toward Amy, knife in one hand, carrot in the other.

MIRNA
No one's allowed in the basement.

Amy's eyes the knife, back pressed to the basement door.

AMY
Your son...kept me down there...

Mirna places the carrot on the table but keeps the knife.

Amy eyes the door...she can make a break for it, but she'd have to get past Mirna...

...and Mirna is shaking her head.

MIRNA
Kevin's a good boy.

Amy's tearing up. Trying to suppress a scream.

AMY
...I know, but...

Mirna brings her face close to Amy's, her expression still one of curiosity. Tears overflow from Amy's frightened eyes.

AMY

...please...

And when their faces are close enough to kiss, Mirna's expression instantly morphs to rage.

MIRNA

Stay out of the basement!

Amy opens her mouth to gasp but no sound comes out. She turns her head away as Mirna reaches out and --

LOCKS THE BASEMENT DOOR.

With that, Mirna returns to the counter and resumes CHOPPING. Amy takes the opportunity to sneak out the door.

INT. KEVIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Kevin drives, eyes fixed forward, as if in a trance. Ethan gazes blankly out the window.

KEVIN

I remember the first time I saw you. It was your first day of school, and you looked so out of place...so unhappy...I thought, "We're the same, this kid understands me...we're meant to be friends." It was in me then...this urge. I think I was born with it. Do you know what I'm talking about? I used to think you knew, but now...I'm not so sure.

(beat)

But this can't end like I planned. You'll be fine. Model student, model citizen, and all the hard evidence points to me...the outcast. The quiet one. It's always the quiet ones.

(beat)

Tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna disappear. Just like my father. He hated my mother, so he just went away. Well, I hate mediocrity. I'm gonna get outta this town. Go to Montana. Or Nebraska. Lots of people out there.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Lots of open space to get rid of
them. I'm gonna be someone. I'm
gonna haunt their sleep.
(beat)
The only loose end is Amy.

Ethan's eyes drift from the window to the center console
where Kevin has placed the two guns...

INT. KEVIN'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Ethan follows Kevin down the stairs. Unbeknownst to Kevin,
Ethan is concealing Gina's gun in his waistline, under his
shirt. He coolly grips its handle...

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - NIGHT

DARKNESS, until Kevin clicks on the light to see...

...AMY'S GONE.

KEVIN
No...

ETHAN
Yes.

Kevin turns to find himself staring down the barrel of the
gun. Ethan holds it like he *means* it. Kevin tilts his head.

KEVIN
You wouldn't shoot me. I'm your
best friend.

ETHAN
You need help. I don't want to
shoot you. But if you try me, I
sure as fuck will.

Ethan stares dead into his eyes. Kevin shows no fear. He
takes a step toward Ethan.

ETHAN
I swear to God, Kevin!

Kevin pauses. Continues not to show fear. He takes another
step. Ethan SQUEEZES the trigger, and --

CLICK.

Ethan's heart drops. Empty. Kevin sadly shakes his head.

KEVIN
I guess this is goodbye.

Kevin reveals Randall's gun. Points it at Ethan's head. And --
FIRES.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mirna stares fixedly at the television. Old home movie. Her husband swings Young Kevin by the arms in the backyard.

She doesn't even blink as the SHOT from the basement echoes.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Amy, like Lazarus risen, walks down the center of the empty street in her sleeping neighborhood.

Exhaustion, both physical and mental, splattered across her face and body like a Pollack.

EXT. BECKER HOME - NIGHT

Amy warily wipes away the crime scene tape cobwebbed across the front door. She finds the door unlocked.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

The house is very dark, very silent. Like a tomb.

AMY
Mom? Dad?

EXT. MILLER'S PARK - NIGHT

Police cordon off the parking area where Randall was killed. His car is towed as his corpse is placed onto a stretcher.

Landon and Clark somberly watch on.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Let me treat you to a coffee.
Night's almost over...and I got a
feeling it's gonna be a long day.

A bitterly cold wind kicks up, a rush of leaves blowing past them, and SOMETHING catches Clark's eye...

...a BUSINESS CARD. With a splotch of blood. He scoops it up.

Randall Powers

Private Investigator

He flips the card to find, scrawled in poor handwriting...

Kevin Lewis

Clark thinks he recognizes the name. He quickly reaches for his pad. Flips it open. And finds the name he copied down in Marcus Dixon's bedroom...

Kevin Lewis

Clark looks up at Landon with amazement.

EXT. KEVIN'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Kevin throws a suitcase into his trunk. He looks back at his home, glimpsing his mother through the living room window.

Sensing him, she turns and meets his eyes. He slowly raises one hand, as if to say goodbye. She turns away.

He drives off as the first SNOWFLAKES of winter lightly fall.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Kevin pulls to the curb. He exits, leaving the engine idling. He glances around to see that no one is watching.

He then crosses around back of the car, passing through the plumes of exhaust, and opens the back door.

He pulls something out, dropping it to the street. Kevin then returns to the wheel and PEELS off, revealing --

ETHAN'S BODY.

He's been deposited in front of...

...THE BECKER HOME.

EXT. KEVIN'S HOME - MORNING

The first pink streaks of daylight. Landon, Clark, and Chief Stone lead a squad of police up the front walkway. Guns drawn, body armor. Stone BANGS the door.

CHIEF STONE

*This is Chief Grady Stone of the
East Cedar Police. Open the door!*

Waits a beat.

CHIEF STONE

*If you do not open the door, we
will enter the premises forcibly,
due to exigent circumstances, and
pursuant to the law!*

Waits a beat. Nods to two officers standing by with a steel battering ram. They rush forward and SMASH the door in.

INT. FRONT HALL - MORNING

Landon and Clark are the first to enter as the police rush forth and disperse into every room.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Landon and Clark bound in to find Mirna blocking the basement door, knife in hand. Landon takes aim.

DETECTIVE LANDON

Put the knife down!

But Mirna grips it tightly.

MIRNA

*He's a good boy, my Kevin. Takes
after his father.*

More cops crowd behind Landon and Clark. Clark gently guides Landon's gun down and holds out his palms for Mirna to see he means no harm.

OFFICER CLARK

Mrs. Lewis, put the knife down and
step away from the door. We're
going to have to search down there.

Officer Strahm enters from the other side. Landon and Clark see him, but Mirna does not.

She shakes her head manically, knife swaying back and forth. She appears to be melting down completely.

MIRNA

No one's allowed in the basement.

Strahm lunges forward in an attempt to subdue Mirna, when --
SHE STABS HIM IN THE ARM.

Landon and Clark rush forward as Mirna brings the blade to her own throat --

OFFICER CLARK

No!

AND SLICES.

They tackle her, Landon wrenching the knife from her grip and Clark applying pressure to her gushing neck.

She rocks back and forth, kicking and squirming madly.

MIRNA

...he's a good boy...a good boy...

OFFICER CLARK

Get a paramedic!

Other cops rush forward to relieve Landon and Clark. As they rise, they uneasily meet eyes, blood on each of them.

While Chief Stone sees to Strahm, they tentatively open the door to the dark basement...

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - MORNING

The police scour the workshop, high and low. Pictures are SNAPPED of the worktable, ropes, and potential weapons.

Landon inspects a blood splatter, fresh. With a chunk of Ethan's ear cartilage.

Clark wanders away, sickened.

OFFICER CLARK

We're too late.

Landon's eyes fall to brown splotches on the concrete...

...Clark leans against the tool rack on the wall...

DETECTIVE LANDON

Clark...

...Landon's eyes follow the splotches across the floor...

DETECTIVE LANDON

...this isn't dry old paint...

...Clark presses his head against the rack, tired, spent...

DETECTIVE LANDON
...it's dry old blood.

...Clark opens his eyes. Landon traces the splotches to where Clark is standing.

Clark spots shallow grooves in the cement wall the tool rack is mounted on. He places his hands on the rack, moving it slightly with the grooves...

...Landon rises to his feet. Clark grabs the edge of the rack and moves it along the tracks, revealing...

...A HIDDEN COMPARTMENT.

The police stop what they're doing at once and blankly stare.

Landon loses his breath. Clark stumbles back, mouth agape. It's the stuff of nightmares.

...bottles of ether, chloroform, ammonia, and arsenic...

...whips, chains, leather masks, objects of sadism...

...a collection of kid's shoes...

...and lastly, the centerpiece of the grotesque collection...

...the latex rubber mask of a CREEPY OLD MAN.

FLASH TO:

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - FLASHBACK

A man stands in front of a mirror in his underwear. He's wearing the creepy old man mask. He takes it off to reveal...

...Kevin's father.

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - PRESENT

Landon, Clark, and the others stare at the site...speechless.

MIRNA (O.S.)
...he's a good boy, my Kevin...he's
just like his father...

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

As paramedics rush to bandage Mirna's neck, she stares off at nothing, forever lost in her own world.

MIRNA
...he's just like his father...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The home movie plays on the TV. Kevin's father smiles a mouthful of large yellow teeth.

MIRNA (O.S.)
...just like his father...

INT. KEVIN'S CAR - MORNING

Kevin flies down open road, a smile creeping across his lips.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - MORNING

Landon lifts up one of the children's shoes from the pile...
...it's ZEBRA-STRIPED.

DETECTIVE LANDON
Clark...

Clark takes the shoe. Squeezes it.

OFFICER CLARK
Brian Matthews.

DETECTIVE LANDON
There's something else.

OFFICER CLARK
What else could there possibly be?

Landon indicates the shoe. There's no SHOELACE.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Cops comb the woods, each with a K-9. One of the dogs pulls so hard it breaks free of Officer McKee's hold. He chases the dog, finding it pawing away the leaves that loosely cover...

...the BODY of John Otis. McKee BLOWS his whistle sharply.

EXT. BECKER HOME - MORNING

Full-bodied white flakes drop down upon Ethan's colorless, still face. As they softly kiss his flesh, they melt, and --

HIS EYES SNAP OPEN.

His left ear is blood-stained from where it was BLOWN OFF. He struggles to his feet. Confused. Disoriented. Dreaming?

EXT. BECKER HOME - MORNING

The front door opens and Amy finds Ethan standing on the WELCOME mat.

They are each colorless and numb, emotions depleted.

AMY

My parents are gone.

ETHAN

I'm sorry.

A silence. Amy notices Ethan's mangled ear.

AMY

Do you want to come inside?

We can tell that he wants to but isn't sure if he should. Amy extends her hand and he takes it. She leads him inside.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Landon and Clark stand over Otis's body. Bewildered. Amazed.

DETECTIVE LANDON

It doesn't add up...

OFFICER CLARK

Girl in the glass box?

Landon regards Clark.

DETECTIVE LANDON

A waking nightmare.

Chief Stone's voice SQUAWKS on Clark's body radio.

CHIEF STONE (ON RADIO)

Clark, you there?

OFFICER CLARK
What's up, Chief?

CHIEF STONE (ON RADIO)
You might want to brace yourself.

OFFICER CLARK
After the last 48 hours, I wouldn't
be fazed if you told me Christ was
coming back in time for Christmas.

CHIEF STONE (ON RADIO)
Just got a call at the station.
Merry Christmas, Clark. The call
was from Amy Becker.

Clark lowers the walkie-talkie. Regardless of all that's
happened in the last 48 hours, this *is* the biggest surprise.

And it lands with Landon dramatically. He covers his face.
When he removes his hands, we find his eyes are moist. The
closest this guy would ever get to publicly shedding a tear.

He laughs a little. And so does Clark.

OFFICER CLARK
Guess they don't all end up at the
bottom of the river.

CUT TO BLACK.

KEVIN (V.O.)
You wanna hear something scary?
(beat)
People. People are scary.
(beat)
Think up the most horrible, awful,
wretched, inexplicably vile thing
you can. Got it? *Good.*

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Amy and Ethan sit together at lunch. Ethan's hair is grown
out, combed over his shot-off ear.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Know that *somewhere, sometime,*
somebody, has done that very thing.

They stare lovingly into each other's eyes and kiss
passionately much to the amusement of all their friends.

INT. LONDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A glittering cityscape glimpsed through the window. The red glow of the clock reads 12:01 A.M.

KEVIN (V.O.)
These things happen. And not only
out there in the great big world...

Landon is fast asleep in bed, content in knowing he's done his part.

EXT. MATTHEWS HOME - DAY

Mrs. Matthews, Gina and Brian's mom, opens the door, as if in a trance. She finds Officer Clark.

KEVIN (V.O.)
...but even here...where you live.
Where you breathe.

Clark hands her Brian's shoe. She covers her mouth.

Mr. Matthews fills the door frame behind Mrs. Matthews. He holds her shoulders, supporting her.

OFFICER CLARK
The remains identified in John
Otis's home belonged to Herman
Lewis. Brian's killer. I thought
you should know, Otis was true to
his word. He made the wicked pay.

INT. OTIS'S BASEMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Weak lights. Strong shadows. PAINED GASPS.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Scary things happen.

Two men STRUGGLE in the darkness. When they fall into the light, we see that John Otis is standing behind Herman Lewis, STRANGLING him with the shoelace.

KEVIN (V.O.)
And in this life, sometimes things
work out for the better...

Herman Lewis, blue with asphyxiation, drops DEAD in the dirt.

EXT. MATTHEWS HOME - DAY

The Matthews cry softly. Clark doesn't know how to react.

MRS. MATTHEWS

Thank you.

She steps forward and hugs him. Her embrace warms his soul.

INT. PRISON - NIGHT

George Becker, in a prisoner's jumpsuit, clings to the bunk bed post in a small cell as the bars slam shut.

KEVIN (V.O.)

...sometimes things work out for
the worse.

His cell mate, a huge black man, watches him with hunger as the LIGHTS GO OUT.

INT. SUPER STORE - DAY

Kevin, hair dyed blonde, cut short, and now with striking blue eyes, stacks shelves at a discount department store.

He keeps a low-profile, head down at all times. People don't notice his stealthily leering eyes...always watching...

EXT. SUPER STORE - NIGHT

A few employees leave for the night, Kevin trailing behind. As he trudges through the snow to his car, now a beat-up old Pontiac, a cute FEMALE CO-WORKER calls out to him.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Hey Charlie, we're all gonna go
grab a beer down at the Bowery.
Wanna come?

A MALE CO-WORKER scoffs at her invitation. Kevin stares at him coldly.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Forget him, he's an asshat. I'd
really like you to come.

The way she's looking at Kevin, it's clear she's got a crush. He knows it. And he considers the invitation, then...

KEVIN
Thanks, but it's not really my
thing.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Kevin parks in a low-rent part of town.

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bed and a night stand, a closet, a bathroom, and a tiny kitchenette. And that's about it. Kevin eats dinner alone.

CUT TO BLACK.

KEVIN (V.O.)
But no matter how things end up
working out...

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kevin stands in front of his closet, looking down at something OFF-SCREEN.

KEVIN
...they always work out exactly how
they're supposed to.

We reveal he's addressing...

...a trembling blonde GIRL, 18, is curled up like a ball, her wrists and ankles bound by rope, her mouth taped.

LACERATIONS and ENGRAVINGS cover her half-naked body.

KEVIN
And maybe that's the scariest thing
of all.

Kevin SLAMS the door, leaving us in...

...DARKNESS.