

POSSESSION: A LOVE STORY

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OVER BLACK

Music. Something pleasant. Relaxing.

FADE UP ON:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A slender feminine hand, palm pressed against a wall, fingers arching.

A thicker male hand clasps on top of it.

From the rhythmic pulsing, we think we know what's going on, but all we HEAR is that damn pleasant music.

WIDE SHOT -- Yup, we're right. EDWARD MARTIN (early 30s), nude, pumps himself forcefully into BETHANY DAVIS MARTIN (also early 30s, also nude). They're two bronzed, sweating statues atop of a cornucopia of twisted sheets.

The bedroom around them is sleek, dark, enveloping. Expensive.

They thrust, with almost unsettling intensity.

The CREDIT SEQUENCE KICKS IN -- that same calming music the only thing we hear throughout.

IN MONTAGE:

- Bethany sits at the enormous kitchen island drinking coffee in the morning sun. Edward appears behind her, wanders toward the fridge.

- The couple, back in bed, diagonal now, Bethany straddling him.

- Edward, behind the wheel of his black Audi, backs down the sloping driveway of their Scarsdale home. Bethany, in trim business attire, walks to her own car. Slips him a smile.

- Edward slides backward off the bed, crumpling to the floor. He laughs. Then Bethany is on him, biting playfully at his neck.

- Edward sits at a long conference table, disinterested as a SUIT drones in the morning board meeting. He swivels to catch a glimpse of the steel caverns of Manhattan out the window.

- Hair and sweat, locked lips.

- Bethany talks with laser focus at a HELPLESS LOOKING ASSISTANT, struggling to keep up as Bethany twirls a pen.
- Edward and Bethany, now in their elegant and spacious shower, steaming.
- Edward, at a strip club, surrounded by OFFICE BROS. They leer at a STRIPPER, crouching in front of them. Edward smiles at their dopey happiness.
- In the shower, Edward lifts Bethany up and presses her back against the tiles.
- Bethany, sitting at her desk at work, picking at a salad and staring at her computer screen, the sun setting elegantly behind her, unnoticed. She casually reaches in a drawer, removes a bottle of PILLS, pops a couple.
- In the shower, the couple nears climax...
- Edward, crammed into a booth, shares drinks with the disheveled Office Bros. His gaze drifts across the restaurant -- lands on a CALL GIRL at the bar, twirling a straw. He raises his drink, and she smiles back, knowingly.
- Edward lies on the floor of the shower, spent. Bethany steps over him. He tugs her leg, playfully trying to pull her back down, and she kicks him, smirking, and saunters for the door.

The music FADES as the title montage ENDS.

FADE TO:

ONSCREEN: A too-perfect sunrise over a scene of pastoral beauty.

A well-groomed SENATOR hikes his way up a trail, confident.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Senator Gibson knows that West
 Virginia is built on hard work and
 the American dream.

Now we see scenes of COAL MINERS, shimmering in the haze of roiling furnaces.

The Senator, dressed in a rugged-yet-casual sports coat, strolls through the factory.

SENATOR
 I stand up for our industries. I
 don't bend to government interests.
 I get results.

A crowd of WORKERS stand waiting for him. The Senator grins, ear-to-ear, and beings chatting, shaking hands.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Vote to re-elect Senator Gibson on
November seventh.

The image FREEZE-FRAMES, and the campaign seal appears in the bottom corner.

BETHANY (O.S.)
Pause, please.

The sound cuts out. We PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Bethany, at one end of the table, leans forward, pointing with her pen.

BETHANY
That's the freeze-frame we're going
with?

The YOUNG SUITS at the table exchange glances, unsure who should respond. Eventually one NERVOUS GUY clears his throat.

NERVOUS GUY
Ah...yeah, we thought he
looked...the most, uh...confident,
in that moment.

BETHANY
Whose hand is he shaking?

Nervous Guy blinks and looks back at the screen.

NERVOUS GUY
Uh...I don't...know his name, if
that's...?

BETHANY
Not his name. Tell me what he
looks like.

Nervous Guy blinks some more. Squints.

NERVOUS GUY
...What he looks like?

BETHANY

If you were to use one word to describe him.

NERVOUS GUY

Ah...I guess he looks...ah...Hispanic?

BETHANY

He looks exactly Hispanic.

The other Suits cough and grimace.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

We've spent the last six months in Congress vehemently attacking immigration reform. It's a pillar of our campaign. So. Do we think, as the defining image of our campaign, this makes sense? Given that information?

Silence.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Anyone can answer, 50-50 shot.

NERVOUS GUY

...No.

She stands.

BETHANY

Find something else. And switch out the voiceover. Think gravelly. That's it.

She's out the door before anyone else even stands.

INT. BETHANY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Bethany enters her office with a full head of steam. Her FEMALE ASSISTANT (mid 20s) rises and immediately begins trailing her.

BETHANY

Stephanie, next time there's some half-ass rough cut that needs scrubbing, don't put it on the schedule unless Cory or Jeff has had to sit through it first. That ate up my whole morning.

ASSISTANT
Yes Ms. Davis.

BETHANY
Messages?

ASSISTANT
Ah, one from Cory Barner, two from upstairs.

Bethany rounds her desk and flips through an organized grid of note pages.

BETHANY
Reinhold?

ASSISTANT
Both concerning Mr. Reinhold, yes. Your lunch got pushed...I called La Cafe Vida, but they couldn't hold the reservation.

Bethany's eyes flick upward.

BETHANY
You only made the one?

The Assistant's mouth hovers open.

ASSISTANT
Ah...

Bethany leans over the desk, deliberate, insistent.

BETHANY
Stephanie. Close your mouth please. Listen carefully. In the future? You make staggered reservations, every 30 minutes, and cancel the ones we don't use. Reinhold really very much prefers that restaurant, for some unknown fucking reason, and when we have to eat elsewhere, it makes him cranky. Ok?

Assistant nods, gaze shifting up and down.

ASSISTANT
I...yes, ok...but...

BETHANY
You seem unsure.

ASSISTANT

It's, uh...your nose is bleeding?

Bethany blinks. Presses her hand to her nose. Sure enough, her fingers come away red.

BETHANY

Shit.

She grabs a tissue, starts power-walking from the room.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Call The Golden Monkey, they usually have room.

ASSISTANT

Yes Ms. Davis.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bethany stand alone in front of a row of gleaming bathroom sinks, paper towel pressed to her nose.

She delicately removes the paper towel from her nose. The bleeding has stopped.

She checks herself in the mirror, looking carefully for any stray drops that might have stained her suit. Then she tosses the dirty paper towel, turns on the faucet, rinses her hands.

And then, abruptly -- a steady stream of BLACK LIQUID oozes from both nostrils, pattering down into the sink.

Bethany's eyes widen, and a small moan of shock slips from her lips. She stands, nearly frozen, and lifts her trembling hand toward her face.

Suddenly she leans forward and spits ups -- more black inkiness pours into the sink.

She stares at the swirling liquid below her.

Then, just as abruptly, the oozing liquid stops.

At a loss, Bethany watches as the blackness in the sink slowly rinses away.

After a moment, she absently pulls more paper towels from the dispenser. Wipes her face, dries her hands, then opens the door --

MATCH-CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Edward yanks open the bathroom door, woozy, tie loose around his neck. He swigs from the beer bottle in his hand, then wanders toward the deep, plush bed across the room.

In the corner, GREG and JONAH (late 30s), two disheveled WASP types, a little more seasoned than Edward, lean over respective lines of coke on a coffee table.

GREG

...It's the smell, really, that's the worst part. Everything I own smells like poop...

JONAH

The sex downhill yet?

GREG

Oh, sure, but I anticipated that. Didn't anticipate the poop thing.

Edward slides onto the bed.

EDWARD

You didn't know that kids pooped?

GREG

Fuck off. I'm just saying...you hear it all the time, but having kids, it really does change things...

EDWARD

When you two talk, it's like having my own personal life insurance commercial. "The future is sooner than you think..."

JONAH

Yeah, ok. What about Bethany, when's she popping one out?

EDWARD

Hasn't come up yet.

Jonah looks up from his next line, incredulous.

JONAH

...It hasn't come up?

EDWARD

Nope.

JONAH

Angie mentioned it every day for two straight years until I put one in her. You're telling me Bethany hasn't even brought it up to you? Not once?

EDWARD

We have other interests.

GREG

I call bullshit.

Edward grins, loving how much this irks them.

EDWARD

You don't think it's *maybe* possible we just love each other enough to not need an extra tiny person around?

JONAH

Sure, maybe *now*. But what happens when you get tired of talking to just each other?

EDWARD

That's what the sex is for.

We HEAR a door open, and then BRAD, a bit chubbier (but no less Waspy), moseys into the room and throws himself down on the bed next to Edward.

GREG

Hey! Big Brad is done.

Brad waves from the bed, out of it.

Meanwhile, in the doorway to the adjacent suite, a hooker -- the CALL GIRL from the opening montage, actually -- leans against the doorjamb, arms crossed, waiting.

GREG (CONT'D)

Anyone up next? Ed?

EDWARD

(waving him off)

I'm good.

Jonah drains his beer and stands, shaking his head.

JONAH
You almost make me believe in
monogamy.

He pats Edward on the shoulder and makes for the next room. The Call Girl slips a smile to Edward and shuts the door behind them.

Edward turns to Brad.

EDWARD
So. You having fun yet Brad?

Brad nods, dopey.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Think we're ready to close this
thing?

Brad considers for a beat, then nods again.

Edward flashes a smile to Greg, then grabs Brad's hand.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You're in good hands with Sharp &
Fister.

He shakes Brad's limp hand vigorously.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bethany's slender fingers twist the dial on the surround sound system. MUSIC starts, loud, HEAVY.

Bethany stands alone in the dim room, eyes closed, moving to the music, as she slowly pulls off her business jacket. She drops it on the couch, and stands, head lolling back.

CUT TO:

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - NIGHT

We hear the ROAR of the engine as Edward guides the plush leather steering wheel, pushing the car along wooded roads, faster than he should.

Jonah sits in the passenger seat, fighting off sleep. We enter mid-convo:

EDWARD
But you would tell me, right?

JONAH
Eddie. Relax.

EDWARD
I just want you to say you would
tell me if they're thinking about
it.

JONAH
For chrissakes, I just got partner
less than a year ago. You're
practically still in diapers.

EDWARD
Nothing wrong with asking the
question.

JONAH
Yeah, there is if it's fucking
annoying me. Besides...you'd make
a terrible partner anyway.

Edward grins, taking this ribbing in stride.

EDWARD
And why's that?

JONAH
Because, you don't know shit about
how the company actually works.

EDWARD
I don't need to know shit. I've
got confidence.

Jonah snorts laughter.

JONAH
Listen to you. Carpe the fuckin'
diem, huh...?

He trails off. Notices flashing POLICE LIGHTS in the
rearview mirror.

JONAH (CONT'D)
...Ah...Eddie...?

EDWARD
Yeah, I see.

JONAH
You've been, uh...we're both
pretty...

EDWARD
Quiet.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Edward's Audi pulls to the side of the narrow suburban roadway, and the Police Car slides up behind it.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bethany pours herself a glass of vodka, music pounding from the other room.

She pulls out the ever-present bottle of PILLS. Twists the cap -- only one pill left inside.

She cocks her head, disappointed. Downs the pill with vodka, then drifts from the room.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - NIGHT

Jonah looks panicky as Edward calmly reaches into the glovebox for his registration.

JONAH
Shit, shit, shit...

EDWARD
Get my wallet from my jacket, will
you?

Jonah pulls the jacket from the back seat, hurriedly hands Edward the wallet.

He watches as Edward removes his driver's license -- as well as TWO HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS.

Jonah's eyes widen.

JONAH
Eddie...I don't think you wanna...

The shadow of the POLICE OFFICER appears outside Edward's window.

Edward lowers the window.

EDWARD
Evening officer.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
License and registration, please.

Edward hands over the license first.

EDWARD
We were in a hurry to get home.
Probably a little too tired to be
on the road, it's good that you--

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
Were you aware what speed you were
going?

EDWARD
I imagine I was a little above the
limit, officer.

He hands the registration -- and the bills -- through the window.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Happy to take care of that right
now.

The Officer's hands pause for the briefest of moments before accepting the papers.

A long beat.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
Wait here.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bethany feels the music as the vodka kicks in. She unbuttons her skirt, lets it drop to the floor. She movies into --

THE BATHROOM

She reaches for the medicine cabinet. More pill bottles inside. She lifts one out --

Something small, metallic, slides out from the shelf and CLATTERS into the sink bowl.

She looks down.

A small double-edged RAZOR BLADE. Smudged, dirty, lonesome.

She delicately picks it up, perplexed.

Dried BLOOD is smeared along the blade's edge.

Bethany wrinkles her nose and tosses the blade into the trash.

She grabs the pill bottle and turns to leave -- then pauses at the door, her eyes catching something in her reflection in the mirror.

We SEE -- on the back side of her otherwise crisp white shirt, a small dark stain, right along the shoulder.

Her brow wrinkles. She slides the shirt off the corner of her shoulder.

ON HER SHOULDER -- two small cuts, in the shape of a CROSS, etched into her otherwise unblemished skin.

She stares...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - NIGHT

An expectant silence, the two men still waiting in the car. Jonah fidgets, anxious.

JONAH

He's not taking the money.

EDWARD

He already did.

JONAH

He's callin' it in...

EDWARD

He's just checking the plates, and then he'll--

JONAH

Shit, he's coming back.

They both stay frozen in their seats as the Police Officer reappears at the window.

He hands the license and registration back through the window. Leans down.

POLICE OFFICER
Take a nap boys. Then go home.

EDWARD
Absolutely sir.

POLICE OFFICER
Y'all have a good night.

And with that he leaves. Edward rolls up the window.

EDWARD
You heard him. Fifteen and then we go.

Jonah is still shaken, and incredulous.

JONAH
You live a charmed life, my friend.

EDWARD
Not charm. Confidence.

He leans his car seat back and closes his eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A classic HORROR FLICK blares across a massive flatscreen television.

On the couch, Bethany watches. Wearing sweatpants, legs curled to her chest, her eyes are glued to the mayhem on the screen.

BEHIND HER, Edward enters through the front door.

EDWARD
Hey hon.

BETHANY
Hey.

Edward pauses to watch her.

EDWARD
You ok? You sound tired.

BETHANY
Huh? Oh, it's nothing. Think I
might be coming down with
something.

Edward throws his coat down and wanders over to the coffee
table. Flips through the mail.

EDWARD
Fuck...

BETHANY
What?

EDWARD
Carolyn's confirmation. My sister
mailed us a reminder.

BETHANY
I thought we weren't going?

EDWARD
Never RSVP'ed. Guess Sam took that
for a "yes."

BETHANY
Edward...

Edward considers, sliding on the couch next to her, propping
his feet up.

EDWARD
Would it be so bad? We barely see
them once a year anyway.

She takes the reminder from Edward.

BETHANY
Ok, but this? You want to have to
make conversation with this crowd?

Edward shrugs.

EDWARD
All that church stuff made her feel
better after Dad died. It would
mean a lot to her if we went.

Bethany gives him a look.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Call it a Catholic guilt thing.

She smirks.

BETHANY
 Since when are you someone who
 feels guilty about anything?

Edward grins and shrugs, looking ready to drop it. Bethany contemplates.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
 We can go to the reception. I'm
 not sitting through the ceremony.

He holds out his hand for a faux-formal handshake.

EDWARD
 Deal.

She shakes, and then he snuggles up to her, turns his attention to the TV.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 What're you watching?

BETHANY
 Some shitty movie.

EDWARD
 What shitty movie?

BETHANY
 What do you care? You're drunk.

EDWARD
 I'm not drunk. I've just been
 drinking.

He nuzzles his head into her neck and blows, making her snicker with laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Edward and Bethany fuck, the expanse of tile around them gleaming in the moonlight.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Bethany sits at the kitchen island, drinking coffee, while Edward examines the contents of the stainless-steel fridge.

Both look pretty hungover from the night before -- this is a common routine for them.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN PARK - DAY

Edward's Audi pulls up to the curb of a sunny suburban park. Not quite the lush neighborhood of Edward and Bethany -- more trim and ordinary, with a playground and suburban houses in the distance.

Edward steps from the car, thick sunglasses covering his face. He grimaces and surveys the landscape.

We SEE a PARTY going on across the field -- white tents and picnic tables.

Bethany emerges from the passenger side, an enormous wrapped present tucked under her arm, equally enormous sunglasses perched on her nose.

EXT. SUBURBAN PARK - LATER

Bethany waits as other PARTY-GOERS rifle through a cooler. A FRIENDLY GUY, hand in the ice, looks her way.

FRIENDLY GUY

What can I getcha?

BETHANY

Uh...is there wine, anything like that?

OVER AT THE PICNIC TABLE -- Edward stands over a vegetable platter, loading up a plate.

Across the table, ADAM REYNOLDS (40) appears, serious even in a brightly-colored button-down. He extends a business-like handshake to Edward.

ADAM

Edward. Glad to see you made it.

Edward returns the handshake.

EDWARD

Hiya Adam. Great party.

ADAM

We missed you at the ceremony this morning.

EDWARD

Oh, we would have loved to be there, but Bethany had a campaign thing, so--

ADAM

On a Sunday?

EDWARD

(shrugs)

It's a demanding job.

ADAM

Different worlds, I guess. Used to be Sundays were only for God and family.

Edward opens his mouth to reply, then thinks better of it -- their sphere of mutual understanding has evaporated.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'll send Sam over to say hi.

NEAR THE EDGE OF THE PARTY -- Bethany stands, having settled for a beer, antisocially engrossed in her Blackberry.

A pretty young girl in a pretty young dress -- CAROLYN REYNOLDS (7) -- runs over and attaches herself to Bethany.

CAROLYN

Aunt Beth!

BETHANY

Hey, Carolyn. How was the, uh, the ceremony?

CAROLYN

It was good!

BETHANY

Let me see your dress.

Carolyn takes a step back and spins. Bethany sips her beer.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

I thought Communion dresses were supposed to be white?

CAROLYN

Daddy let me change for the party. You wanna go swing?

BETHANY

Huh? Oh, uh...

Bethany notices the empty PLAYGROUND behind her. She glances back toward the party, but no one else is around to save her.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
...Maybe we should...

CAROLYN
Come on!

Carolyn runs toward the swings, and then, when Bethany doesn't move, runs back and begins pulling her along.

BETHANY
Right, well...just a little, ok...?

BACK BY THE PICNIC TABLE -- Edward spies Bethany getting pulled away.

He can't help but smile to himself.

SAMANTHA REYNOLDS (late 30s) appears at Edward's side, a timid-looking woman with none of her brother's brashness. She waves, shyly.

SAM
Edward.

Edward turns and pulls her in for a hug.

EDWARD
Heck of a spread, Sam.

SAM
You made it.

EDWARD
Of course we did. You think we'd miss this?

SAM
You two just have such busy schedules...

Edward shrugs, sensing the rebuke in this. Sam tries to change topics.

SAM (CONT'D)
Listen, while you're here, there's still some boxes to sort through from Dad's. I was thinking, maybe later we could...?

Edward inspects a carrot on his plate, not liking where this is headed.

EDWARD

I dunno, not sure today's a good time.

SAM

Well...they're just sitting there, and I don't want to get rid of anything you might want...

EDWARD

(laughs derisively)
Afraid I'll lose some cherished childhood memories?

Sam is visibly disappointed by this response.

SAM

...I'd still feel better if--

EDWARD

Just keep what you like, and toss out the rest.
(a half-hearted compromise)
Or donate it.

Sam nods, giving up.

SAM

Have you seen Carolyn yet?

EDWARD

No, I think she's off with Bethany on the jungle gym.

SAM

Oh?

EDWARD

Yeah, right over there...

He looks over toward the swing set, but is surprised to see it empty.

He wrinkles his brow, puzzled.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Bethany trots to keep up with the scampering Carolyn, who moves through the playground at a speedy clip.

BETHANY

Carolyn, honey, don't you think we should get back to the party?

CAROLYN

I need to show you something! In here!

And now we see an enormous wooden play-set in the shape of a PIRATE SHIP, weathered, a specter standing out amidst the plastic and metal.

Bethany notices worn-down caution tape stationed at the edges of the surrounding moat of mulch.

BETHANY

I don't think we're supposed to...

CAROLYN

It's ok! I go in all the time.

She disappears through the dark portal to the ship.

Bethany hesitates, then stoops and follows.

INT. WOODEN PIRATE SHIP - CONTINUOUS

Inside, the air is close, the darkness cut by thin beams of sunlight leaking between wooden boards.

Carolyn is in the far corner, a smile planted to her face. She waves Bethany over.

Bethany shuffles over and squats, balancing precariously to avoid getting mulch on her skirt.

Carolyn holds out her hand, palm up.

IN HER PALM -- a gold bracelet, a charm hanging off it, in the shape of a CROSS.

Bethany looks down, then up at Carolyn's expectant face.

BETHANY

It's very pretty.

CAROLYN

I got it from Grandma last week. I hid it in here, so no one would steal it.

BETHANY

(laughs)

No one is going to steal it, honey.

Carolyn gives a cherub-like smile, then grabs Bethany's arm.

CAROLYN

Here, you try it on.

BETHANY

Oh, I don't think it'll fit...

CAROLYN

Sure it will.

Carolyn unclasps it and wraps it around Bethany's wrist.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

It looks nice on you.

Bethany smiles at first, looking down at the bracelet.

Then her smile slowly fades.

BETHANY

(very quiet)

Take it off.

CAROLYN

I think it's a *great* match--

BETHANY

TAKE IT OFF.

Carolyn's breath stops short. She looks up at her aunt in shock.

Bethany's eyes have *rolled back into her head*. A hoarse MOAN echoes from her throat.

Carolyn is paralyzed with fear.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

A child's SCREAM cuts across the still air.

The Party-goers turn, surprised.

The Pirate Ship stands alone, the scream rattling from inside.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bethany starts awake. For a moment, it seems as if she's waking from a dream.

Then we realize that she's lying on an unfamiliar couch, in a living room that's not her own.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Hey baby.

She turns her head, and we notice Edward kneeling next to her.

On the other side of the simple, sunny room, Sam stands in the doorway, her arm draped over Carolyn, who hides halfway behind the doorjamb.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

You doing ok?

Bethany looks to him, confused.

SAM

You fainted.

EDWARD

Probably too much sun.

(a wry smile)

And a little too much to drink?

Bethany sits up, rubs her forehead. She attempts a bashful smile.

BETHANY

How embarrassing...

EDWARD

You gave Carolyn a heckuva scare.

Bethany glances toward Carolyn, who clutches at her mother's dress.

SAM

Just surprised her, is all.

Carolyn stares back at Bethany, terrified. Bethany tries to look reassuring.

BETHANY

Carolyn, I'm...sorry about your party. I didn't mean to...

But Carolyn backs away and flits up the staircase.

Sam offers an embarrassed laugh.

SAM
I'll go talk to her.

She exits. Edward watches her go, then turns back to Bethany.

EDWARD
(quiet)
I found these. In your purse.

He holds out a familiar bottle of prescription pills. Bethany stares at them, her head still fuzzy.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I thought we were taking a break
from pills.

BETHANY
Uh...recently, just been...dealing
with these headaches...

Edward sighs.

EDWARD
Look, I know we go pretty hard.
But maybe we oughta be a little
more careful? Try to take things a
little easy for a change?

Bethany blinks, then takes the bottle from his hand, nodding.

Edward rubs his fingers through her hair.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I know I'm not the guy to give you
a lecture. You just...got me a
little worried for a second there.

She meets his gaze. Then pulls him in for a kiss.

BETHANY
Ok.

EDWARD
I love you.

BETHANY
Love you too.

Edward rises.

EDWARD
(whispered, grinning)
Let's sneak out before they make us
stay for dinner.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

We PAN across the bedroom...

Bethany is perched on the edge of the bed in her nightgown, laptop propped open on her thighs. She types, rapidly pounding the keyboard with her fingertips.

Behind her, the bathroom door is ajar, and we MOVE --

INSIDE THE BATHROOM -- where Edward is brushing his teeth. He spits, wipes his mouth.

EDWARD
(calling out)
Hey hon.

He pokes his head out the door.

ON THE BED -- Bethany, her back to him, sits, staring at her laptop screen. The sound of typing has stopped.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Hon?

She doesn't respond. Just stares, frozen in place.

Puzzled, Edward moves toward her.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Bethany...

He slides up behind her and touches her back -- and she jumps, skittish, to her feet, the laptop sliding onto the floor with a THUNK.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Woah. You ok there, space cadet?

BETHANY
Huh? Yeah, uh...just somewhere
else for a second.

She hurriedly stoops to pick up the laptop.

As she leans over -- Edward notices something.

ON BETHANY'S BACK: A smattering of very small SCARS, criss-crosses.

Edward's brow wrinkles.

EDWARD

How'd you get these cuts back here?

He touches her back. She tenses, pulls away from him, moving toward the dresser.

BETHANY

Probably on the playground. When I fell.

EDWARD

They look older than that...

She slides her laptop into her office bag.

BETHANY

I'm going to bed, ok?

Edward shrugs.

EDWARD

Hey, maybe we should play hooky this week. Go on a trip or something, up along the coast?

She flashes him an appreciative smile as she pulls back the covers.

BETHANY

My job isn't as cushy as yours. They'll can my ass.

Edward heads back to the bathroom, thinking out loud.

EDWARD

Well, doesn't have to be this week. But we could use a vacation. The type where we never have to leave the hotel room, you know?

Bethany curls up in bed, staring at the wall. We HEAR the sound of running water from the bathroom, but our gaze stays planted on Bethany.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What was that little bed and breakfast we stayed at, up in Maine? The House of...Pies or something?

BETHANY
The Cobbler House.

Edward laughs.

EDWARD
Remember that little old couple,
next door? They were so sweet when
we got there.

Bethany smiles. But then something changes in her
expression.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
One night next to us, and suddenly
they're not saying hello any more.
I remember seeing them at breakfast
and...

His voice slowly FADES OUT, as does all sound, as we PUSH IN
on Bethany's face.

After a beat:

BETHANY
(very quiet)
My...

Her hand clutches the sheets, shaking.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
(still quiet)
My...my...my my my my my my my
my...

Edward walks out of the bathroom puzzled.

EDWARD
What'd you say, babe?

Bethany's voice slowly rises in volume.

BETHANY
My my my my my my my my...MY MY
MY MY MY...

Edward watches, freaked out. He rushes to the bed.

EDWARD
Honey, what's wrong? What's going
on?

She grabs hold of him, staring into his face.

BETHANY
It's my...It's my...It's my my my
my my...

EDWARD
Beth, I don't understand what
you're saying.

Her chanting continues. Edward is shaken.

BETHANY
MY MY MY MY MY MY MY...

EDWARD
I'm gonna call 911--

She stops chanting, clutches him closer.

BETHANY
(a whisper)
I'm here.

EDWARD
What?

BETHANY
Kara.

Edward blinks, lost.

Then Bethany's eyes roll back in her head, and her body
begins convulsing.

EDWARD
Bethany? *Bethany??*

SMASH-CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Bethany lies on her back on an examination table, face pale
and drawn.

With a metallic WHIR, the table slides back -- into an MRI
machine.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Edward paces, a bundle of exasperated energy, while DR.
ANDREWS (40s), a dumpy, snobbish sort with a hangdog
expression, speaks in hushed tones.

DR. ANDREWS

...just a precautionary measure.
The best thing to do is to give her
rest and keep her under
observation...

EDWARD

What about all those goddamn pills
you've been giving her?

The Doctor clears his throat.

DR. ANDREWS

The majority of the symptoms that
you describe are inconsistent with
excessive dosage of pain
medication. Now, of course we're
going to monitor her prescription
intake--

EDWARD

Don't cover your ass, you were
feeding her those pills.

DR. ANDREWS

--*but* it's important for us to be
cautious and not rush to judgment.

EDWARD

I swear doc, I'm not afraid to
litigate on this.

DR. ANDREWS

Mr. Martin, please understand, we
deal with frivolous lawsuits all
the time. I assure you, my only
concern is for your wife's health.

Edward seethes with frustration.

DR. ANDREWS (CONT'D)

Now, in addition to the seizures,
you've witnessed fainting,
unexplained cuts and bruising,
shifts in mood and slurred speech--

EDWARD

Not slurred, I could hear what she
was saying. She kept repeating the
word "my". And then one time she
said some girl's name. "Kara".

The Doctor blinks.

DR. ANDREWS

"Kara"?

EDWARD

Yes. Very clear. "Kara".

DR. ANDREWS

Is that a name of someone you're familiar with? Someone she may have mentioned to you?

Edward rubs his forehead.

EDWARD

I was ready to ask you the same question.

A beat. Dr. Andrews scribbles something down.

DR. ANDREWS

Do you need a reference for a psychiatrist?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bethany's face, illuminated by dim firelight. She sits on a rug, staring into the fireplace, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. Some time has passed; she looks weaker than before.

IN THE BACKGROUND, Edward, in the midst of a phone conversation.

EDWARD

...well, check again because
I...that's right, Martin...Ok.
Thank you.

Exhausted, he chucks the phone onto the couch -- that phone call clearly only one of many. He rubs his temples as he paces back and forth behind Bethany.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Got the neurologist booked for next week.

BETHANY

I told you, it's unnecessary.

Edward maintains a forced chipperness.

EDWARD

Well, a second opinion isn't going to hurt, right? And since you're not going in to work next week...

BETHANY

I'm not? When--?

EDWARD

I already called Reinhold. You're not going back in until you're feeling better. It's just one more week.

Bethany sighs.

BETHANY

Come sit with me by the fire.

Edward stops pacing.

EDWARD

You built a fire?

BETHANY

It's electric.

EDWARD

...How long have we had an electric fireplace?

BETHANY

Edward, will you please just *sit down*?

Edward senses the urgency in her voice and follows orders.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

There's something we need to talk about.

Edward thinks he knows where this is going. He grabs her hands in his, looks her in the face.

EDWARD

Listen, the doctors are gonna figure this out.

BETHANY

No, they won't.

EDWARD

We can't talk like that, hon--

BETHANY
Trust me, Edward. They won't.

Edward is silenced.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
There's something I have to tell
you, but I'm not sure how to do it
in a way that will make you believe
me.

EDWARD
Baby, you know you can tell me
anything...

BETHANY
Whatever you think I'm going to
say, it's not that.

A beat.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Why do you love me, Edward?

He blinks.

EDWARD
What do you mean, "why"?

She watches him. Edward realizes he's going to have to
actually answer.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I love you...because I love you.
Because you push me, because you
make me feel like I can do
anything. Because you're the
most...beautiful, honest, real
person I've ever met in my life.

BETHANY
And if I wasn't those things?

Edward is confused.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
If I wasn't beautiful. If I wasn't
honest. If I wasn't real, the way
you think I'm real.

EDWARD
...Then you wouldn't be you.

BETHANY
What would I be?

Edward rubs his forehead, lost in her words.

EDWARD
Look, hon, where are you going with
this?

Bethany looks at the ground.

BETHANY
This body doesn't belong to me.

A beat.

EDWARD
Sweetheart...?

BETHANY
Or at least, it didn't always
belong to me.

Edward looks confused.

EDWARD
What's not...your body?

BETHANY
This, this person. I stole it.

A beat.

EDWARD
Is this, uh...something you've
talked with the psychiatrist about?

BETHANY
Listen to me.

She locks eyes with him, trying to make herself clear.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Eight years ago, the person you
know, the one I am right now, that
person didn't exist. That person
was a completely different girl
than who I am now.

Edward treads carefully.

EDWARD
You're telling me you used to be
someone else?

BETHANY

No. I'm telling you that this body, the physical form of who I am, used to be to someone else. And I took it.

Another baffled beat.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Do you believe in hell?

EDWARD

...Beth...

BETHANY

I'll ask differently. Do you believe that there are forces beyond the physical world? Angels? Demons?

EDWARD

Of course not.

Bethany almost seems hurt by the certainty of his response. Edward is just frustrated.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Look, is what you're saying that you worried that these fits, or whatever...you think you're possessed or something like that?

BETHANY

I'm not possessed, Edward. What I'm trying to tell you is that *I am* the possession.

A beat.

EDWARD

You should lie down.

BETHANY

Come here.

She grabs him abruptly -- with her other hand she reaches for a CANDLE, resting near the fireplace.

She pulls him close, eye to eye, holding the lit candle up to her face.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Look at me.

EDWARD

What--?

BETHANY

Look.

Edward stares, baffled.

We gaze into Bethany's pretty green eyes.

And then, we notice, creeping from the corners -- an INKY BLACKNESS, spilling out across her cornea, until her entire eye is a dark, empty pit.

Edward jumps back, horrified.

EDWARD

Jesus--

Bethany lowers the candle, and the darkness recedes. She is back to herself.

A beat.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What was that?

BETHANY

That's me. What I really am.

A beat.

EDWARD

...How have I never seen that before?

Bethany cocks her head, a sympathetic smile.

BETHANY

Baby, why would I ever have wanted you to see something like that?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Edward sits at one end of the long dining room table, a glass of scotch in front of him.

He's watching, listlessly, as Bethany empties the drawers of a credenza, sending silverware CLATTERING across the counter-top.

Eventually she finds the right drawer -- a false bottom falls out, along with a slim, weathered BOOK. From between the pages, she pulls a slip of yellowed newspaper.

She carries the clipping over to Edward and sits down next to him.

He stares at it.

ON THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: A much younger Bethany.

Except the name in the heading is "Kara Meason".

And it's an obituary.

BETHANY

This is the only newspaper article
I could find. She was finally
declared dead in abstentia about a
year ago.

Edward reads and re-reads the article very carefully, trying to understand what he's seeing.

EDWARD

"Amberville, Kentucky"...your
family is from Kentucky?

BETHANY

Not my family. *Her* family.

Edward shakes his head, bewildered.

EDWARD

So who is this?

BETHANY

A drug addict. Some junkie. She
was trying to kill herself when I
found her. It's easier to get
inside, when there's no one
fighting back.

This statement sticks with Edward, but he has too many other questions to worry about.

EDWARD

Your childhood...you told me, where
you grew up...

Bethany avoids his gaze.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

All those stories...the fights with your parents, and those friends you lost touch with...

She smiles grimly.

BETHANY

It was easier to tell you something than nothing.

Edward tries to comprehend.

EDWARD

If those things didn't happen...where were you?

Bethany's face darkens, remembering.

BETHANY

You know when you wake up from a dream? How clear it is at the time? Yet the second your eyes open, it all slips away. All you're left with is a feeling. Or a moment. But everything else...is gone.

She searches for the words.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

The feeling I remember the most, from before, is being alone. A deep, painful isolation. Such loneliness...that I knew I would do anything to never feel that way again.

Now she looks down at the girl in the article.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

But then I found her. And I slipped into her and I made her...me.

She looks back up to Edward.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

You have to understand, Edward, she was nothing. No one cared she was gone. She had no job, no friends, no life at all. I took her and I made something out of her. It was a blessing.

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Two years of nighttime classes and a full-time job. Two years to reinvent her, completely. And then, a year after that...I met you.

She reaches for his hand.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

We can't let her take that away from us.

Edward looks down at her hand on top of his. His eyes questioning.

EDWARD

What do you mean?

Bethany grows somber.

BETHANY

Everything that's happening to me. The voices, the seizures, all of it. It's her.

EDWARD

...She's still inside?

BETHANY

Yes. And I don't know why it's happening now...but she's trying to get out.

A beat. Edward puts his head in his hands.

EDWARD

Jesus Christ.

BETHANY

I know all of this is hard to believe...

EDWARD

Yeah, no shit.

BETHANY

But I wouldn't be bringing this to you unless I knew I needed your help.

Edward stares at her, searching her features.

EDWARD

What are you, really?

Bethany bites her lip. She slides the book across the table toward him.

ON THE BOOK'S COVER: "The Ars Goetia".

BETHANY

There are some pages marked.

She stands, a little wobbly.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

I need to go rest now.

Please...whatever you do, stay tonight.

She exits, leaving Edward alone with the book and his scotch.

Edward carefully opens the book.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Edward presses a number into his phone, looking a little panicked. He glances nervously into the other room.

CUT BACK TO:

THE DINING ROOM

As Edward flips through the book, we SEE glimpses, on the pages:

Strange, grotesque DRAWINGS. Beasts, with too many legs, strange eyes, muddled body parts mixing man and animal.

Tiny printed text, and scribbled notes, with strange names in Latin...

CUT BACK TO:

THE KITCHEN

The phone CLICKS, and Edward immediately begins talking.

EDWARD

Dr. Andrews? I have, a, uh--

VOICEMAIL (O.S.)

This is the voicemail box for Dr. Ernest Andrews.

(MORE)

VOICEMAIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 If this is an emergency, please
 hang up immediately and dial 9-1-
 1...

EDWARD
 (to himself)
 Shit.

Edward hangs up.

CUT BACK TO:

THE DINING ROOM

Edward's eyes fly over the pages.

He flips to a page with the corner turned down -- a brief
 glimpse of notes and scribbles, more than before.

He stares down at something.

CUT BACK TO:

THE KITCHEN

Edward paces a loop around the center island. Pauses to take
 another gulp of scotch.

Then lifts the phone and makes to punch in another number.

He hesitates. His THUMB hovering over the number "9".

But he can't make himself do it.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Edward cracks the door to the bedroom and peers through, the
 phone still clutched in his hand.

INSIDE: Bethany is sprawled out, asleep, on the bed. She
 looks almost angelic like this.

Edward watches her, burning up inside.

Then he gently closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Edward pours himself another glass of scotch.

He turns to look down at Bethany's book, now laying open in front of him on the countertop.

In the center of the page -- a DRAWING of a winged beast, dark and hulking, riding a white horse.

And underneath, a single word, underlined heavily: "The King Demon Beleth".

Edward's eyes fix upon the terrifying image before him.

He grabs the phone, presses a number and puts it to his ear.

The phone CLICKS:

JONAH (O.S.)
Hey, what's up?

EDWARD
Hey, uh...nothing, just...what're
you...what're doing?

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

Edward sits, sunken into a patio lounge chair, staring out at his serenely lit swimming pool. He looks sodden, another glass of scotch in hand.

Jonah sits next to him, mid-monologue.

JONAH
...With modern medicine now, I'm
telling you man, doctors know
everything. Nothing they can't
fix. And let me tell you something
else, no matter how scary this
thing seems, you and Beth are the
toughest sons-of-bitches I know,
ain't nobody better to handle this
kind of--

EDWARD
Jonah, can I...ask you about
somethin', uh...hypothetical?

Jonah raises an eyebrow, takes a swig of beer.

JONAH
Sure man, shoot.

Edward rubs his eyes.

EDWARD

If Angie told you something about herself...like, there was something about her, you didn't know. And you didn't think you could believe what she's saying, because it's too...it's hard to believe, but she's got all these explanations, so you--

Jonah sits forward.

JONAH

Woah man, slow down. Let's start over. Did Bethany drop some sort of bomb on you?

Edward tries to think of how to answer, but the booze is getting to him.

EDWARD

Uh...it's hard to...explain...

JONAH

What is it, an affair? She cheating on you, man?

Edward can't respond, and Jonah takes his silence for a yes. He shakes his head.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Women, I'll tell you, the mind games. She waits til you're vulnerable, all worried about her, puts you in a position where you can't be mad at her, where you have to stick with her -- *then* she lays it on you.

He grabs Edward's shoulder.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Look, you don't need to talk about it if you don't want to, buddy. But let me ask you something first. You love her?

EDWARD

...Yeah, sure, I...thought I did...

JONAH

Does she love you?

EDWARD

...She says so, yeah.

JONAH

Ok, well, then you two are gonna get past it. 'Cause that's all that really matters, right? Just make sure you protect yourself. You do right by her, but you protect yourself, you hear me man? Protect your heart.

Edward holds the glass of scotch to his forehead, not really feeling any more at ease from this vague advice.

EDWARD

Alright...thanks...

JONAH

No problem buddy.

(he stands)

I'm sorry, I gotta jet. But listen, while this thing's going on, you need me to pick up some slack at work, I can handle it, no problem. Ok?

EDWARD

Thank you.

Edward woozily rises and embraces him. Jonah claps him on the back.

JONAH

I'm gonna piss on your bushes on the way out.

Edward nods, and Jonah wanders off, leaving Edward alone with his thoughts.

EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jonah stands, urinating into a clump of bushes, facing the wall of the house.

He leans his head back, eyes closed and mouth agape with an expression of relief.

As his eyes open, he notices something.

ABOVE HIM -- the second-story window. A pale FIGURE, gazing down at him.

Jonah blinks.

ABOVE HIM -- the window is now only darkness.

Jonah blinks a few more times, then shrugs and zips up. He begins tramping back toward his car.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

OUT THE WINDOW -- we watch Jonah make his way back to his car.

INSIDE -- Bethany stands, bathed in moonlight. Her face is blank, drawn.

EXT. PATIO - MORNING

Edward lies asleep, still on the same lounge chair as the night before.

A pale hand touches his face, and he jolts awake.

Sitting next to him is Bethany, looking fresh, wrapped in a plush bathrobe.

She hands him a cup of coffee. He accepts it, head still fuzzy.

BETHANY

Did you sleep out here the whole night?

EDWARD

Uh...yeah...

He squeezes his temples, trying to will away the hangover.

She hands him a small notebook.

BETHANY

I did a little research this morning. Put together a list of organizations, places to contact.

EDWARD

Organizations?

BETHANY

(matter-of-fact)
Experts in the occult.

This wakes him up.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

You're not familiar enough in the subject to handle this by yourself. Frankly, I'm not either. We need an outside opinion.

EDWARD

For what?

BETHANY

...Edward, we have to get rid of her.

EDWARD

Who?

BETHANY

Weren't you listening last night?

Edward's stomach drops.

EDWARD

Well...let's just, uh...hear what Doctor Andrews has to say first.

BETHANY

Please don't patronize me. You have to understand, what's happening here is going to get worse, not better.

She leans forward to make her point.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

I'm losing control. Soon I won't be able to stop her from breaking through. And when that happens...I don't know what she'll do. What she might be capable of.

Edward stares back, at a loss.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

As long as she's still around, we're in danger. *Both* of us.
(holding up the notebook)
This is our only way out.

She hands him the notebook, and a Blackberry.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Your office called. Twice.

Edward sits up. Bethany rises and moves back toward the house.

Edward watches her leave, then puts the phone to his ear.

EDWARD
(into phone)
Hello?

CROSS-CUT WITH:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

A BRISK RECEPTIONIST (mid 30s) presses the headset to her ear as the sleek corporate office bustles around her.

BRISK RECEPTIONIST
Edward? I have a message from Mr.
Sharp asking if you'll be in today.

EDWARD
Ah...my wife, she's still...

BRISK RECEPTIONIST
Yes, and we apologize for the
intrusion, but things are getting a
little hectic around here, so if
you can spare even a few hours, it
would be greatly appreciated...

Edward grinds his teeth.

EDWARD
Can you put Jonah on? He said he'd
be willing to pick a few things up
for me.

A beat.

BRISK RECEPTIONIST
I'm assuming you haven't heard
then?

Edward tenses.

EDWARD
Heard what?

BRISK RECEPTIONIST
Jonah Moyers was in a car accident
last night, he's in the hospital.

Edward looks like he might pass out.

BRISK RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Edward?

EDWARD

...No, I...hadn't heard. Is he alright?

BRISK RECEPTIONIST

No one really knows anything at this point. But...to be blunt, it leaves us shorthanded, so...

Edward looks back toward his house, runs his fingers through his hair.

EDWARD

Right. Ok.

EXT. MARTIN HOME - MORNING

Edward hustles down the driveway, hastily pulling on his sports coat, looking more rumpled than usual.

MARIA (50s), a world-weary cleaning lady, trudges up toward the house from her mini-van. Edward reaches her, stops her.

EDWARD

Maria, hi. Listen, would you mind sticking around a few extra hours today, after you finish, to keep an eye on Ms. Bethany?

Maria looks at him funny. He holds out a folded hundred dollar bill.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Just, uh...call me if anything...if she's...you know, if anything unusual happens.

She raises her eyebrows, but accepts the money.

MARIA

Ok Mr. Edward.

He's already rushing back toward his car.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

Edward sits at his spacious desk, staring down at a mess of papers in front of him. He TAPS his finger against the arms of his chair, anxious, mind elsewhere.

A moment of decision -- he picks up the phone.

QUICK CUT:

Edward paces, stretching the phone cord to its limit.

EDWARD
(into phone)
Alright...just tell Dr. Andrews
it's urgent, alright?...I
understand, just as soon as
possible.

He hangs the phone up and drops himself back into his chair, frustrated.

He stares at the documents some more. Still no focus.

He glances through the wall of glass windows overlooking the rest of the office -- plenty of EMPLOYEES bustling around, but no one looking his way.

He reaches down to his briefcase -- pulls out the book on demonology.

He places it delicately on his desk, then pulls out the notebook tucked inside, with names and numbers written in Bethany's neat handwriting.

After a beat of hesitation he picks up the phone. Punches in a number.

He sits back in his chair, glancing around furtively.

We HEAR the ringing on the other end of the line, then the CLICK of someone picking up.

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
You've reached the Church of Satan
here in our New York offices. How
may I help you today?

Surprised by the chipper and professional voice on the other end, Edward takes a second to respond.

EDWARD

...Ah, hi, yes. Well, I need
uh...I was given this number and
I'm looking for someone to,
uh...give me some advice,
on...uh...well, it's somewhat
complicated...

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ok, do you know if you're looking
for information regarding Theistic
Satanism or LeVeyan Satanism?

Edward is already lost.

EDWARD

...Sorry, what?

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Theistic Satanism stems from a
belief in Lucifer as an actual
deity. But here at the Church of
Satan, we actually practice Leveyan
Satanism, which instead views Satan
as more of a philosophical
construct. So, are you interested
in the former or the latter?

EDWARD

Uh...I'm not really sure. I have
this book, it's called the...
(looks at title, does his
best)
"Ars Goetia"?

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ahh. Ok...then, ah...ok, tell you
what I'm gonna do. I'm going to
refer you to a demonologist in your
area, they'll be better suited to
answer your questions. Now Mr...?

EDWARD

Oh, uh, Edward Martin.

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Martin, where do you live?

A beat.

EDWARD

Ah...

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (chuckles)
 I don't need an address. Just a
 general location, so I can find
 someone convenient for you.

EDWARD
 Oh. I live in West Chester.
 Scarsdale.

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 Great, hold for just a minute
 please.

Relaxing HOLD MUSIC kicks in. Edward sits, bewildered.
 After a beat, the music stops.

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Mr. Martin?

EDWARD
 ...Yes?

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 Do you have pen and paper handy?

Edward's hand flies across his desk.

EDWARD
 Yeah...

CHARMING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 The name is Dr. Chester Feldman,
 address is 2364 Old Mamaroneck
 Road. If you can, stop by after 5
 pm, that way you won't interfere
 with any of his appointments.

Edward finishes scribbling.

EDWARD
 Appointments?

CUT TO:

INT. OPTOMETRIST OFFICE - EVENING

The door JINGLES as Edward enters. He stares.

The walls are lined with EYEGLASSES, of every sort. Soothing
 muzak bops in the background.

We SCAN the room until we see, in the far corner, three people: a SKINNY KID (12ish) sitting at a desk across from a rotund, cheery looking MAN (40s). A MOTHER (40s) sits in a waiting-room chair, calmly reading her magazine.

The Rotund Man looks Edward's way with a smile.

ROTUND MAN

Can I help you?

Edward waffles, backs toward the door.

EDWARD

Ah...I think I might be at the wrong place...

ROTUND MAN

You're Mr. Martin?

Edward halts.

EDWARD

Yes.

ROTUND MAN

I'm Dr. Feldman, be with you in just a moment. Jeremy and I are almost finished.

The Skinny Kid turns and stares at Edward, enormous coke-bottle glasses perched on his slender face.

DR. FELDMAN

Why don't you take a seat in my office?

Edward warily crosses the room as Dr. Feldman returns his attention to Skinny Kid's face.

The Mother never bothers looking up from her magazine.

INT. DR. FELDMAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Edward, ill-at-ease, perches on the edge of an armchair in Dr. Feldman's cramped office. Nothing around him suggests anything other than the lifestyle of a pretty boring optometrist.

Dr. Feldman enters, and Edward instinctively stands.

DR. FELDMAN

Thanks for waiting. Please, sit.

Edward does, and Dr. Feldman plants himself behind his desk, chair creaking under his weight.

EDWARD

So you're a...demonology...demon expert?

Dr. Feldman cocks his head, mulling this thought.

DR. FELDMAN

I would consider myself an erudite enthusiast. What brings you in?

EDWARD

Ah...well, it's my wife. She's been having these health problems.

DR. FELDMAN

Uh-huh. What sorts?

EDWARD

Seizures, nosebleeds, fainting spells...

Dr. Feldman reflexively begins taking notes.

DR. FELDMAN

Mm-hm...

EDWARD

But the real...well, the reason I'm here, is that she told me that she's...she thinks she's some sort of...demon.

Dr. Feldman pauses his scribbling.

DR. FELDMAN

That she herself is a demon?

EDWARD

Yes.

He resumes scribbling. Edward pulls the Ars Goetia book from his briefcase, hands it over to Dr. Feldman.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

She also had this. I don't really understand what I'm supposed to make of it.

Dr. Feldman looks at it, eyebrows raised.

DR. FELDMAN
Now *that's* something interesting.

He flips through pages, studying intently.

He reaches the newspaper article of Kara's obituary.
Examines it.

Then he stands, putting the book under his arm.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Follow me downstairs?

He opens the back door and stands expectantly, smiling.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The basement is strange -- it's something of a bachelor pad, with cushy recliners and even a foosball table. But it's also stuffed to the brim with strange artifacts, tapestries, and piles upon piles of dusty books. An unsettling place to hang out.

Edward follows Dr. Feldman down the stairs, pausing at the bottom to take everything in.

Dr. Feldman opens a small refrigerator unit and pulls out a beer.

DR. FELDMAN
Want one?

Edward eyes the bottle, sketched out.

Dr. Feldman smiles and opens it for himself instead, taking a swig.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
I imagine you've had a very strange
few days, Mr. Martin. Relax, take
a seat.

Edward moves himself into a recliner, but remains on edge, ready for fight-or-flight.

Dr. Feldman, meanwhile, sorts through an enormous stack of books, looking for something.

He pulls out an enormous tome, stuffed full of odd bits of paper. The title, in golden-wrought letters: "THE LESSER KEY OF SOLOMON".

He drops the book onto the coffee table, pulls up the other recliner next to Edward's.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

The edition your wife has, it's an older translation. Basically, the book is a list of demonic spirits and their corresponding summations, compiled in the mid-seventeenth century.

He flips through some pages, even more ornately illustrated than Edward's copy. Newspaper articles and scribbled notebook pages are wedged in between the creases.

We get to the page entitled Beleth -- the demon on horseback stares back at us.

Dr. Feldman pulls out a scanned newspaper article, along with a few other pages copied from books.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Ok, here we go. "King Beleth". Mighty and terrible, eighty-five legions of demons under his command, yadda-yadda...ok, in 1850s Germany, a farmer outside Liepzig suffers from unexplained bodily contusions, seizures, exhibits xenoglossy. Repeatedly sketches the Sigil of Beleth, despite never having seen it prior...died six months later...

He flips to a different paper.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Then there's a couple other possible cases here, but the one that stands out is a young woman in Russia, right at the turn of the 20th century...fainting spells, nosebleeds, yes, but the big giveaway -- despite being born Lucy Erlikhman, she runs away with a young Hungarian man and lives under an Anglicized pseudonym, taking up profession as an artist, a subject she has no aptitude or interest in prior to that point.

He hands over the article, an excerpt from a scientific journal.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
When reunited with her family, she
slips into a catatonic state, from
which she never recovers.

Edward stares at the page. His eyes widen.

EDWARD
Holy...

DR. FELDMAN
What?

EDWARD
That's...the name she went by?

Dr. Feldman leans over.

DR. FELDMAN
"Bethany Davison"?

Edward sits back in his chair.

EDWARD
My wife's name is Bethany Davis.

Dr. Feldman smiles, knowingly.

DR. FELDMAN
Strange days indeed, eh?

He leans back, takes a swig of his beer. Edward is shaken.

EDWARD
So...this is all real?

DR. FELDMAN
I can't say for sure without
witnessing it firsthand. It's
always possible that your wife has
done research on this on her own,
and has decided to enact some sort
of strange fantasy.

EDWARD
Why would she, though?

DR. FELDMAN
I'm no psychologist, I couldn't
speculate.

EDWARD
But *you* believe it could be real?

Feldman takes another drink of beer and contemplates.

DR. FELDMAN

I would say the evidence is there.
But, if you ask me...it might be
beside the point.

Edward stares at him -- "How?"

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

A belief in the occult, whether
it's Satanism or otherwise, is
about more than just a belief in
otherworldly divinities. That
would make it no different from all
the other religious hooey out
there. What it's really about is
recognition. That mankind's
guiding principle is self-interest.

Edward wrinkles his brow.

EDWARD

What do you mean?

DR. FELDMAN

Mankind falls all out of balance by
believing we're some sort of
benevolent, sculpted creations.
We're not. We're animals. The
only thing that really drives our
species is the desire to please
ourselves.

He points a finger at Edward.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

All of this is to say, if you love
this woman, the version of this
woman that believes she is Beleth,
then I would posit to you -- why
should you have to give her up?

Edward lifts up the book in front of him.

EDWARD

Because, what if she really is--
(holds up the picture of
Beleth)
--a monster with bat wings?

Dr. Feldman waves at the book, dismissive.

DR. FELDMAN

That's just what some schmuck scribbled down four hundred years ago. Your wife, your Bethany, she's real to you, isn't she? So if some arcane ritual will save her, then why not give it a shot?

Edward rubs his forehead, considering.

EDWARD

What happens to the other girl?

DR. FELDMAN

...The other girl?

Edward points to the newspaper slip.

EDWARD

Kara.

Dr. Feldman shrugs again.

DR. FELDMAN

Ah, well. You can probably guess.

Edward looks sick to his stomach. Dr. Feldman scratches his stomach, not bothered.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Most things in life come at the expense of others. It's just the nature of it.

EDWARD

I don't...feel comfortable with that idea.

DR. FELDMAN

Which is why it's easier not to think about it.

Dr. Feldman shifts himself forward.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Martin, if this is all real, then you've already profited from this girl's loss, whether you knew it or not. Your life is built on her absence.

He rubs his chin.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
I imagine you've had a fortuitous
existence since you and Bethany
first met?

EDWARD
...What do you mean?

DR. FELDMAN
A nice house? Plenty of money?

EDWARD
...Well, sure, but...we both work
for it.

DR. FELDMAN
Of course. From an outsider's
perspective, there's nothing
miraculous about it. But if you
look back, might it be fair to say
that a few things have bounced your
way?

EDWARD
Like what?

DR. FELDMAN
Little things. A promotion, here
or there? Or, have you ever had
any trouble with the law?

EDWARD
(indignant)
Not at all.

DR. FELDMAN
And that's because you've never
done anything illegal?

A beat as Edward sits with this. Feldman shrugs.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
I'm not saying it's all related,
but marriage with a demon is bound
to have its benefits. What you
need to think about...is how things
might change if Bethany Davis
suddenly disappears.

A long beat. Edward sinks into his chair.

EDWARD
What am I supposed to do?

Dr. Feldman rises, with great effort.

DR. FELDMAN
You're going to go home and take
care of your wife. Meanwhile, I'll
start researching, pull together
some options.

EDWARD
Is this going to...cost me some
sort of...fee?

Dr. Feldman waves him off.

DR. FELDMAN
Please, I'm a kid in a candy store
here. Just happy to be a part of
it.

He lifts the book from the table, heaves it back toward the
other stacks.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
I'll call you when I've got enough
for us to get started. Shouldn't
be more than a day or two.

Seeing Edward looking uncertain, Dr. Feldman leans over,
hands on knees, to look him in the eyes.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Buck up, Eddie Spaghetti.

He tousles Edward's hair.

Edward wearily stands. Pulls out his phone, glances at it.

EDWARD
Shit...

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Maria opens the door for Edward, who bustles through.

EDWARD
Where is she now?

MARIA
She sleeping. But the sounds she
make...

Maria shakes her head, already on her way out the door.

EDWARD

What sorts of...what was she saying?

Maria stops, reluctant, somber.

MARIA

Mr. Martin. I stay too long here.
I go home now, ok?

Edward wants to press further, but doesn't have the energy to stop her.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Bethany lies on the bed, sheets tossed every which way. She's much paler than when last we saw her, her hair and sheer nightgown clinging to her sweat-drenched skin.

Edward pushes open the door, a thin crack of light piercing the otherwise dim room.

He moves to her.

EDWARD

...Hon?

She starts, turning toward him. Her eyes flutter, weak.

BETHANY

Edward...

He touches her forehead.

EDWARD

Have you taken anything? You're burning up...

She shakes her head.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I'm getting you something.

BETHANY

No, just...hold me...

She burrows herself into his lap. He sits and strokes her hair. A peaceful beat.

Then she gently reaches her hand toward his face, touching his cheek. Pulls him in for a kiss.

He lifts his head, but she pulls him back down. Kisses him harder. A leading kiss.

He pulls back.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Please?

EDWARD

Are you sure we should be--?

BETHANY

I need you.

He looks into her eyes. Powerless to resist.

He pulls her toward him, wrapping his arms around her. She fumbles at his belt. Soon, his shirt is off and he's pulling up her nightgown.

And now he's on top of her, inside her, muscles tensing, pulsing, pressing into her body.

He thrusts, eyes closed. Bethany lies underneath him, sedate, not the dynamic lover we saw earlier.

After a few more thrusts, he senses something. Something different. Off. He opens his eyes.

Bethany stares up at him, eyes wide. She looks terrified. An expression we've never seen from her.

EDWARD

Bethany? What is it?

Bethany's mouth parts, but she doesn't speak at first. Just stares.

Then, abruptly, her hands fly up, clasp around Edward's face.

BETHANY

(quiet)

...Stop.

Something in the way she speaks sends a chill through Edward.

And he realizes -- the voice belongs to Kara.

He pulls himself backward out of her grip, horrified. He waits at the edge of the bed, unsure what to do.

Bethany/Kara slowly pulls herself into a sitting position.

Edward watches.

EDWARD

Kara?

Kara's voice is clipped, stilted, as if every word is a surprise to her.

KARA

...Yes.

She looks down at her shaking hands.

She starts crying. Then laughing.

Edward moves toward her, slowly, carefully.

She sees this, and her eyes alight with panic.

KARA (CONT'D)

No...no don't....

EDWARD

Hey, it's ok...

KARA

No...no no no...

EDWARD

I'm not gonna...

KARA

NO!

She yelps and scuttles backward. He stops, taking the hint.

EDWARD

I don't want to hurt you.

Her face twists into a pathetic expression of disbelief.

KARA

Yes you do.

To his own surprise, this stings him.

EDWARD

No, I don't.

KARA

You're on her side.

EDWARD

(defensive)

I'm not on anyone's side.

KARA

I can see...when you talk to
her...the two of you...

EDWARD

You can hear us?

A nod.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

...What do you hear?

KARA

I hear...everything. I see, and I
hear, but I can't...feel...or
speak...

Kara grows spacey.

KARA (CONT'D)

I never thought I would...feel this
again.

She begins crying, gasping sobs.

EDWARD

Feel what?

KARA

Any of it...

She begins shaking. Her face grows paler.

KARA (CONT'D)

I'll be gone again soon...

She looks up to him, panicky.

KARA (CONT'D)

Please, you don't have to do what
she says. You don't know what she
really is, how much she's hurt
me...

EDWARD

Hurt you?

KARA

Yes...you don't know what it's
like...

EDWARD

She told me that you were a drug addict. That you tried to kill yourself.

Kara shakes her head, frantic.

KARA

Thoughts, maybe. But I never went through with it. I don't feel like that anymore. I just want a chance, please, that's all I want. I scream and scream, every day, and she doesn't listen...

Her body tenses, twitching. It's a struggle for her to maintain control.

KARA (CONT'D)

My sister...she'll tell you...

Edward is at a loss.

EDWARD

You have a sister?

KARA

Yes. Find her...please.

EDWARD

I...I wouldn't even know where to look.

KARA

She moved to...Philadelphia, before I...you have to talk to her, please, she can tell you...

Edward's head spins.

Kara's eyes start to glaze. She begins drooling.

KARA (CONT'D)

Please...pleasssseeee...

Her language slurs. Her voice drops to a deep, inhuman growl, echoing from within her chest.

Edward rushes toward her.

EDWARD

Hey...hey!

She slumps forward. Edward feels her forehead, then turns and bolts for the phone on the dresser.

Then the moaning stops.

BETHANY (O.S.)
...Edward?

He looks back to the bed. Bethany reaches out a hand toward him -- her voice is back to normal.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I'm fine...put down the phone.

Edward is unsure.

EDWARD
You were just--

BETHANY
Put it down. I'm fine. Put it down...

A beat. He reluctantly follows orders.

She nods, then closes her eyes. Falls unconscious.

Edward stands, adrift.

FADE TO:

EXT. PATIO - MORNING

Edward stares out across the lawn. He fiddles with a TELEPHONE in his hand.

The sun is shining, birds are chirping. A BURLY MEXICAN GUY rides a lawnmower around the edges of the swimming pool.

Edward gazes a moment longer, then moves back toward the house.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - MORNING

The door opens to reveal -- Sam, who steps through with a worried-looking smile. She wraps Edward in a sincere hug.

EDWARD
Thanks for coming.

She steps back, examines him.

SAM
You look exhausted.

EDWARD
She's not herself, Sam. Don't
expect her to be. If you
can...just let her sleep.

Sam turns pale, realizing how serious Edward is.

SAM
Are you sure you have to go in?

EDWARD
Yes. They're slammed, I couldn't
get out of it.

He turns to go upstairs, then pauses.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Thank you for doing this. I know
I...don't really deserve your
help...

SAM
You don't need to apologize. She's
family.

Edward nods, distracted, and turns away.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Bethany lies in the spacious bathtub, staring straight ahead.
The tap is running, full blast.

Even clean, she looks awful -- pale and sickly, bedraggled.

Edward enters, sees that the tub is on the verge of
overflowing. Walks over and twists the knob.

He sits on the edge of the tub.

EDWARD
I have to go into work.

BETHANY
(quiet)
I know that you talked to her.

EDWARD
...Who?

She looks at him. He grimaces.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Oh. Right.

BETHANY
So...now I know you believe me.

EDWARD
...Did you hear our conversation?

Bethany's eyes flicker.

BETHANY
No. Wherever I was...I was
trapped, I couldn't hear anything.
What did she say?

Edward shrugs.

EDWARD
Nothing in particular. She
sounded...scared.

A beat.

BETHANY
...I'm scared too, Edward.

Tears form at Bethany's eyes. It's the frailest we've seen her.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I can understand...how it must seem
to you. What's right and what's
wrong. But if you give up on
me...I have *nothing*.

Edward moves closer to her. Places his hand on her head.

EDWARD
I'm not giving up on you.

She sits up and leans forward, hugging her arms around her knees.

Edward's eyes drift to her bare back -- and his face sobers.

Her entire back is now covered with SCARS, cuts etched into her skin in the shape of crosses, various sizes, some scabbing, some bruised, all ugly.

He stares.

BETHANY
I shouldn't be alone.

Edward blinks, returning to himself.

EDWARD
Sam will keep an eye on you.

Bethany raises her head.

BETHANY
Sam?

EDWARD
She's downstairs.

BETHANY
...You haven't told her...?

EDWARD
Of course not. She just thinks
you're sick.

Bethany nods. Edward brushes a strand of hair behind her ear.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I got a call from my expert this
morning. He's coming over, tonight
or tomorrow.

Bethany registers this, a beam of hope. Edward stands.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
It'll be over soon.

She nods, spacey.

BETHANY
It has to be.

A beat. Edward exits.

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - DAY

Edward guides the wheel, eyes glued to the road ahead.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

From a distance, the black Audi flies along the open interstate.

EXT. OLD CITY CAFE - DAY

Edward sits outside at a table, Blackberry glued to his ear. Cobblestone streets and pretty brick row homes surround him.

We're in PHILADELPHIA.

EDWARD
(into the phone)
...I understand that, but I just
can't make it in, if there's any
way you can...

His eyes catch on something -- a WOMAN (late 30s) has just walked up to the front of the cafe, looking around, a little unsure.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Look, I gotta go.

He abruptly hangs up and stands. Waves.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Hey!

The Woman blinks, then hesitantly walks toward him. On closer inspection, she looks like an older, more world-weary version of Bethany.

Edward extends a hand.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You're Jacquelyn Meason?

She nods. He motions her to sit, and she does so, a little tentative.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Thanks for meeting on such short
notice.

A WAITRESS appears. Edward points to Jacquelyn.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Want anything? I'm buying.

JACQUELYN
Uh...that's alright.

EDWARD
(to the waitress)
Coffee please.

The waitress leaves. Jacquelyn studies Edward, who perches on the edge of his chair, jittery.

JACQUELYN

Do you normally do these sorts of things in person?

EDWARD

Well...like I said on the phone, it's easier to do it face to face, and I was in the area.

Jacquelyn shrugs, glances around the street.

JACQUELYN

I don't come up to this part of town all that much. It's kinda nice, I guess.

Jacquelyn looks back to Edward.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)

You know something about what happened to my sister?

EDWARD

Ah...unfortunately, nothing new, I'm just...following up, for a separate investigation.

Jacquelyn deflates a little, but seems to accept this.

JACQUELYN

You going to take notes or something?

Edward blinks, then rustles in his coat pocket for a pad and pen. He shifts in his seat, trying to look professional.

EDWARD

Right, so if you could just, uh...start with how you...remember things left off, with your sister. When she disappeared.

Jacquelyn smiles to herself. Edward is confused.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What is it?

JACQUELYN

Nothing, just...when she first went missing, the cops asked me the same sorts of questions.

(MORE)

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
I don't have a clue what I told
them, I was so out of it. Always
kinda hoped I'd get another crack
at it.

She fidgets a little.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
But they never called back. I
guess they weren't all that
interested in finding her.

A beat.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
I didn't really buy the suicide
thing, you know.

Edward raises an eyebrow, and that's enough for Jacquelyn to
launch into her story.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
It's not that I don't think she
could've done it. She had...plenty
of highs and lows, but...if they
never find a body, never find a
note...it's not like a suicidal
person makes an effort to hide that
sort of stuff.

EDWARD
...You believe she's still out
there?

JACQUELYN
No, I wouldn't say that. Maybe she
O-D'ed. Or maybe some guys...took
advantage of her, dumped her body
somewhere. Those sorts'a things
happen all the time.

Edward stiffens a bit, uncomfortable.

EDWARD
But you're sure she's gone?

She shrugs.

JACQUELYN
If she was alive, she'd've called.

EDWARD
Well...you two had a...rough
background.
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)
What if she...decided to start over
somewhere? A new life?

Jacquelyn shakes her head.

JACQUELYN
When you grow up like we
did...anyone else, sure, she never
sees 'em again. But we got close.
She knew, no matter what happened,
I would always...

She trails off. Takes a beat, regroupes.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
She'd've called.

Edward lets this sit. Jacquelyn shrugs.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)
What else you want to know? I feel
like I'm not giving you much that's
helpful.

Edward coughs, looks at his notes.

EDWARD
No, this's...very useful.

He rubs his chin, clears his throat.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
To be truthful, the questions are,
uh...something of a formality. I
just needed to verify your
identity.

Jacquelyn wrinkles her face, confused.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
See, my company represents the
executor for a minor inheritance
that's been held up in probate
because of your sister's
disappearance. I've been trying to
track down next of kin, and, well,
that's you.

JACQUELYN
I thought...you said you were a
detective?

EDWARD

Yes, well, that was just a...it's a cover, to make sure I'm talking to the right person. Some people hear inheritance, and they'll say anything.

JACQUELYN

I don't understand...there's an inheritance?

EDWARD

That's right.

JACQUELYN

But...who would leave Kara money?

Edward fumbles in his coat, pulls out a stack of business cards.

EDWARD

For legal reasons, I'm not privileged to reveal their identity at this time. But if you write down your address, I'll send you the proper forms, and we'll get this sorted right away.

He hands a business card and pen to Jacquelyn, who accepts both, a little out of her depth.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I can see how this is a surprise. But I promise you--

JACQUELYN

It just doesn't make any sense...who does Kara know that would...?

She shakes her head, puts down the pen.

JACQUELYN (CONT'D)

I don't feel comfortable.

Edward grows anxious, wanting to get this over with.

EDWARD

Look, the money's just going to sit in probate otherwise.

Edward leans forward, confiding.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
It's a lot to just turn away.

JACQUELYN
...How much?

Edward thinks.

EDWARD
A little over fifty thousand
dollars.

Jacquelyn absorbs this.

She picks up the pen.

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - DAY

Edward sits in the driver's seat, staring down at the business card in his hand, and the address scribbled on the back.

Eventually, he turns on the engine of the car. Lets it idle for a moment. Not ready to leave.

He turns the car back off. Sits some more.

CUT TO:

INT. SUN ROOM - DAY

Sam sits in the Martin home's elegant sun room. She's curled up in a wide, cushy loveseat, reading something.

We PAN DOWN -- the book resting in her lap is THE BIBLE.

She takes a moment to gaze out the window. Storm clouds have rolled in, and the first pattering of rain begins to fall.

BETHANY (O.S.)
Stormy, huh?

Sam jumps. Turns to see Bethany, leaning against the wall. To our surprise, she's dressed herself in an elegant BALL GOWN, with a high neckline to hide the scars on her back. The rest of her is still a mess -- her hair is a rat's nest, her face pale, almost skeletal.

She presses her face against the windowpane.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
The rain in plain falls mainly on
the Spain, right?

Sam rises.

SAM
Bethany...

BETHANY
You like the dress? I needed a
change. Needed to get back on my
feet...get back to work...

SAM
Maybe we should rest a little more
first...

She moves toward her, but Bethany stares her down.

BETHANY
Step off, little cunt.

The words are enough to stop Sam in her tracks.

SAM
...Have you been...taking anything?

Bethany runs her fingers through her tangled hair.

BETHANY
I have to take the pills...to keep
her quiet...

Abruptly, she begins weeping, leaning her elbow against the
windowpane.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I worked so hard, you know? You
work so hard for something...

Bethany looks over at Sam, disdainful.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Well, maybe you don't.

She swoons a bit, and Sam swoops in, moves her gently to the
loveseat.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I was so beautiful too...now it's
all gone...

SAM
You should just rest.

Bethany gratefully lays herself down on the arm of the couch.

Sam sits down and picks back up her book.

After a beat, Bethany's eyes drift open -- she sees what Sam is reading.

She curls up, like a wary house-cat.

BETHANY
What...are you reading...

SAM
Huh? Oh, I'm in Leviticus at the moment--

BETHANY
You bring...that *shit* in here...you are so fucking...*stupid*...

Sam is shocked.

SAM
Bethany...why are you talking like that...?

BETHANY
Do you...have any *idea*...

Suddenly, black liquid LEAKS from her eyes and mouth. It dribbles down onto the couch.

Sam stares, stricken. Bethany groans and lurches forward, clawing toward the book in Sam's lap. She leans over and VOMITS the black, vile substance all over the book and Sam's lap.

Sam is aghast. Bethany reaches down into the black sludge, and we hear a distinct SIZZLE -- Bethany grunts in pain.

She slowly rises, eyes closed, concentrating -- she lifts the book in her hand, smothered in inky blackness. She moves toward the kitchen.

Sam is left sitting, staring at the black residue around her.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sam slowly enters and stands in the doorway. She stares, transfixed.

ACROSS FROM HER -- Bethany stands at the lit gas stove-top.

She holds out the sludge-covered Bible. The book ENGULFS IN FLAME.

Bethany holds it aloft for a moment. Then turns and tosses it into the sink, where it sits, smoldering.

She looks down at her black, crusted hand, still smoking. She blows out the smoke. Flexes her fingers, skin and charcoal flaking off.

She looks up at Sam.

BETHANY

That feels...so much better.

Sam puts her hands to her mouth, horrified.

SAM

What...are you...?

Bethany holds out her good hand.

BETHANY

Come here. I can show you.

Sam trembles.

SAM

I...uh...I'm sorry, I
just...remembered...Carolyn...I
need to go pick her up...sorry.

She turns and walks away. We follow her through --

THE SUN ROOM

-- she keeps moving, not quite running, barely holding it together. We follow her into --

THE FRONT HALLWAY

-- where, strangely, she pauses to open up the coat closet, as if needing to keep up appearances.

She fumbles to pull out her coat, knocking down several others in the process. She tries to hang them back up, but her shaking hands impede her, and ultimately she just throws them in and SLAMS the door shut.

She finally moves to the front door --

And Bethany *appears behind her*. Touches Sam's shoulder. Sam lets out a faint moan of shock, but doesn't resist.

Bethany gently spins her around and pushes her back against the wall. Stares into her eyes.

Then leans her head to the side. Presses her mouth to Sam's ear. Whispers. We can't hear what she says.

Sam listens, eyes wide and blank.

In PRE-LAP:

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Edward.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Edward, slumped in a chair, jumps awake.

The female voice belongs to ANGIE MOYERS (30s) leaning down in front of him, face kind, if emotionally spent.

ANGIE

Sorry to wake you...

He scrambles to his feet.

EDWARD

Angie, hey, is he...can I see him?

She nods.

ANGIE

He won't be able to hear you. But you can go in now.

Edward grows somber.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Edward sits, staring.

IN THE HOSPITAL BED -- Jonah, looking about as bad as it gets. He's wrapped head-to-toe in bandages. His eyes are closed, his mouth hanging open, a feeding tube inserted in his throat. The rise-and-fall of a respirator let us know he's still alive.

Edward stares for a minute.

He starts crying. Jarring, halting sobs -- eventually transforming into laughter.

He wipes his eyes, grinning stupidly.

EDWARD

Oh man...I was gonna come in here
and complain about my day,
but...well, I mean...

A beat. The respirator rises and falls.

Edward leans forward, elbows on his knees, hands folded, as if in prayer.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Jonah...I'm so fucked...

Another beat. He reaches out for Jonah's hand --

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ah, shit.

Edward starts, turns.

Standing in the doorway, hands in pockets -- ARNOLD SHARP (50s), bald in a powerful way, a corporate hawk.

Edward instinctively rises. Sharp takes a few steps closer, stares down, regards Jonah's crumpled body like the turd his dog left on the rug.

SHARP

Poor schmuck.

A quick look to Edward.

SHARP (CONT'D)

Always hire a cab. That toxicology
report is gonna be a nightmare when
it gets to the press.

Sharp wanders over to the broad array of flowers on the other side of the room. He casually points to one particularly massive bouquet.

SHARP (CONT'D)

You like these? My office sent
them over.

Edward nods, mechanically. Sharp leans over to inspect the tag on the flowers. His brow furrows.

SHARP (CONT'D)

Oh, wait.

He looks at another bouquet. Reads the tag.

SHARP (CONT'D)

I guess these are the ones.

He shrugs, then extends a hand to Edward. They shake.

SHARP (CONT'D)

Arnold Sharp.

EDWARD

Uh, yes, we...I also work at Sharp
& Fister.

Sharp raises an eyebrow.

SHARP

Oh?

EDWARD

...Edward Martin?

SHARP

Ohh right, Edward, forgive me.
Wait, you're the, uh...fellow who's
been out this week?

EDWARD

Yes, my wife is...she's been ill.

SHARP

Very sorry to hear that.

EDWARD

She's fine, uh...hanging in
there...sir, I want to apologize,
by the way, for taking so much time
off. I know the office is already
under stress, with...

Sharp waves his hand, dismissive.

SHARP

Please. A week off is one thing.
This...

(gesturing toward Jonah)
...is a clusterfuck.

A beat. He sighs. Checks his watch.

SHARP (CONT'D)
Well, I guess that's a respectful
amount of time.

He starts for the door. Then stops. Turns back to Edward.

SHARP (CONT'D)
Ed Martin, right?

Edward nods.

SHARP (CONT'D)
I'll keep the name in mind. You
look clean. A little tired maybe,
but clean.

This takes a second to register with Edward.

EDWARD
Sir?

SHARP
We need clean, after this mess.

He claps Edward on the back.

SHARP (CONT'D)
Keep your head down. Take care of
your wife. Might have something
waiting for you when you get back.

And with that he disappears through the door.

Edward stands, looking down at Jonah's helpless form. He
looks sick to his stomach.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER

Edward wanders through the hallway, zombie-like, lost in
thought.

As he moves past the waiting area:

ADAM (O.S.)
Edward?

Edward turns.

Adam, of all people, rises from a waiting chair. He looks
pale.

ADAM (CONT'D)
You finally heard, then?

Edward is completely befuddled.

EDWARD

...Adam?

ADAM

I tried to reach you through your office, but they said they couldn't get a hold of you.

EDWARD

I was...wait, why are...?

ADAM

Carolyn's at my parents, I had to drop her off before I could get here.

Edward stares, dumbfounded. Adam shakes his head.

ADAM (CONT'D)

It doesn't make any sense. They found her, just standing on Hudson River Beach. No one knows how she got there, or why she was there...

EDWARD

...Wait...wait...

ADAM

And no one in this whole damn place will tell me what's wrong. They won't even let me see her.

Edward's eyes widen.

EDWARD

...Bethany?

Adam cocks his head, brow furrowed.

ADAM

No, Bethany wasn't with her.

A beat. Edward tries to understand.

EDWARD

Then...

And then he realizes.

He turns, starts walking back through the hospital hallway.

ADAM
(calling after)
Edward, I told you, they won't let
me see her.

Edward plows through a set of double doors.

CUT TO:

INT. EDWARD'S AUDI - EVENING

Edward, behind the wheel, eyes manic, pushing the car as fast
as humanly possible.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - BEFORE

A NURSE tries to slow Edward's progress.

NURSE
Excuse me, sir? Where are you
trying to--

EDWARD
Is she back here? Sam??

CUT TO:

EXT. MARTIN HOME - EVENING

The Audi SCREECHES to a halt, and Edward is out of the car,
bounding up the front steps, calling out:

EDWARD
Bethany?? Bethany, where are you?

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

An ORDERLY is there now, trying to help the nurse push Edward
back. Edward paces like a caged animal, not listening.

ORDERLY
Sir, please return to the waiting
area, and we'll let you know when--

EDWARD

Sam! I need to see what's
happened, I need to see--

NURSE

And you will be allowed to see her,
just wait until--

EDWARD

Sam!!

CUT TO:

INT. MARTIN HOME

Edward is flying through spacious rooms, searching, frantic.

EDWARD

Bethany! Where are you, Bethany,
damn it--

He checks the KITCHEN -- nothing. Turns around keeps moving,
flicking lights on and off as he goes --

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Edward looks like he's retreating back toward the waiting
room -- then slips around the Orderly, making a break for it.

ORDERLY

Hey!

Edward's eyes scan rooms for occupants, moving quickly.

CUT TO:

INT. MARTIN HOME

Edward is pounding up the stairs, two at a time.

EDWARD

Bethany!!

He pushes open the bedroom door --

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Edward finds an open doorway, and catches a glimpse --

Sam lies in bed, face pale, eyes wide, catatonic. A NURSE tends to her, attaching an IV.

It may be a trick of the light, but it seems like her head turns ever-so-slightly, eyes locking on us.

An expression of pure, blank terror.

And then Edward is being pulled back out by the Orderly --

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Edward bursts into the bedroom -- empty. A mess of tangled sheets and shadows, but no Bethany.

He stands, panting.

EDWARD
(quieter now)
Bethany?

A RASPING sigh echoes across the room.

Edward notices that the closet door stands ajar.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

From inside the darkness of the closet, we see the door creak open, and Edward's shadow play across the floor.

He hits the light -- the flourescents are weak, crackling and flickering, on the fritz.

But we can make out, on the other side the walk-in closet: Bethany, sitting on the floor, her upper body buried behind hanging clothes. We only see her legs, still covered by her expensive gown.

Edward hesitates a moment.

EDWARD
Bethany?

Edward cautiously moves forward, crouches in front of the hanging clothes. He reaches out to touch her leg, and she HISSES and curls her legs closer to her.

Edward's agitation has melted into fear.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Is this Bethany? Or Kara?

A wry, hoarse laugh. Bethany stays hidden behind the clothes.

BETHANY
"D". All the above.

Edward grits his teeth and pulls aside the hanging clothes --

-- revealing a grotesque, twisted shell of a human. Matted hair obscures her features. Her arms, caked and charred, clutch herself in a hug. Her pale skin is dried, flaking, like a snake shedding its skin. And underneath -- her veins pulse black, throbbing with inhuman blood.

Edward stares, shocked. Bethany cocks her head.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
That bad?

She snickers, which turns into a pained growl.

EDWARD
What happened?

BETHANY
...Happened?

EDWARD
Sam is in the hospital. What did you do to her?

Bethany groans, a frustrated sigh.

BETHANY
Sam...stupid stupid Sam...

EDWARD
What did you do to my sister?

Bethany takes a deep breath. Sits herself up as best she can.

She locks eyes with Edward -- one pupil is bloodshot, the other, completely enveloped in inky blackness.

BETHANY
Knock knock.

EDWARD

...What?

BETHANY

Who's there.

BANG BANG BANG -- someone pounds on the door downstairs.

With another foul groan, Bethany curls back into the corner.

The BANGING comes again. Edward rises, shaky.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The front door opens to reveal -- Dr. Feldman, backpack slung over his shoulder and a goofy smile plastered on his face. He looks like an oversized school kid.

DR. FELDMAN

Ed! How ya doing? You get my messages?

Edward holds the door open, too spent to even offer a greeting.

Dr. Feldman steps inside eagerly.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Heck of a place you've got here.
Great use of space, and all that.

He wanders through the spacious rooms, taking everything in, running his fingers over expensive-looking decor. Edward doesn't bother to protest.

Feldman peeks around the corner into the kitchen, whistles.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

You work in finance?

Edward nods. Feldman sighs.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Always finance.

He sees the staircase.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Upstairs?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Feldman stands, framed in the closet doorway. We HEAR Bethany's rasping breathing from inside.

Edward sits on the bed, eyes boring a hole in the floor.

Dr. Feldman takes a few cautious steps backward. His face is somber, all cheeriness chased away.

DR. FELDMAN
This is more than I anticipated.

A beat.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
How long has it been like this?

Edward doesn't respond.

Dr. Feldman starts moving for the door.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
We have to do this right away.

Edward looks up.

EDWARD
...Now?

DR. FELDMAN
As soon as it's dark.

He moves through the doorway, then back into the room.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Do you have a, uh...one of those
rolling desk chairs?

Edward gives him a puzzled look.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
We can't do the summoning here, we
need something to transport her.
Don't worry, I have a place in
mind. I can explain what you'll be
doing on the way--

EDWARD
What I'll be doing? You're the
expert here.

DR. FELDMAN

It's more complicated than that.
Communing with a demon is a
delicate thing, you have to have an
established relationship, and
you're the only one who--

Edward shakes his head and stands.

EDWARD

No. No. I can't do this.

DR. FELDMAN

I'm sorry to spring it on you, I
thought we'd have more time--

EDWARD

I'm not doing any ceremony.

DR. FELDMAN

Edward, if you want your life back--

EDWARD

I don't want my life back. How
could I want that anymore? Knowing
what I'd be married to? It's not
like we're just going to start
over.

Dr. Feldman doesn't respond, contemplating this silently.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

That person, in there, I don't know
who that is. It's not the Bethany
that I knew. So...this girl,
Kara...maybe she deserves her life
back. And if I can give that to
her...then that's the right thing
to do.

Feldman sighs. He leads Edward by the elbow out into --

THE HALLWAY

Where he turns to him, speaking in hushed tones.

DR. FELDMAN

That's very noble, and I appreciate
that, really. But if you want to
make that choice, you're still
going to have to do the ceremony.

EDWARD

You're not listening--

DR. FELDMAN

No, *you're* not listening. Have you *seen* what's happened to that young woman's body? Bethany and the girl are enmeshed now, entrenched. The demon has sunk her teeth in, she's not letting go. If we don't intervene, there's only one outcome. Neither of them win.

Edward absorbs this.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

You've got blood on your hands either way. There's no going back.

Edward is broken down, defiance gone.

Feldman grabs his shoulders, unexpectedly, and pulls him in for an uncomfortable hug.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Relax, my friend. We're about to do something special.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The empty expanse of an abandoned parking lot, dark but for the faint glow of a few hanging street lights.

The decaying husk of a BORDERS looms in the background -- the first and last letters of the sign have fallen away, leaving only the word "ORDER".

The rain has stopped, settling into a faint mist.

A MINI-VAN appears in the far reaches of our view -- the car takes a long, slow loop around the edges of the lot before grinding to a halt in the center.

Dr. Feldman quickly jumps out of the front seat and hustles toward the back of the van, pulling open the trunk door.

Edward steps out of the passenger side and gazes around him, uneasy.

EDWARD

Here?

Feldman doesn't answer, rustling through the unseen trunk.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Seems kind of public.

DR. FELDMAN (O.S.)
This place? Hardly. Silent as a
grave.

Feldman finally finds what he's looking for and steps out from behind the van. He holds aloft a bucket -- filled with sticks of CHALK.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Ever play hopscotch?

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

We watch a line of chalk being traced across macadam until it meets, at an angle, with another chalk line.

Feldman takes a step back and brushes off his hands, examining his work.

In front of him -- Edward stands in the middle of a haphazardly drawn TRIANGLE, just large enough to fit a person lying down.

Across from him, about ten feet away, another similarly-sized chalk triangle has been drawn. The two triangles point toward each other -- and in the middle, a slightly lopsided chalk CIRCLE.

Dr. Feldman nods, pockets the chalk. Edward examines the chalk drawings, not exactly impressed.

Dr. Feldman rifles through his backpack, pulling out items. He hands a plain, silver ring to Edward.

DR. FELDMAN
You put this on the middle finger
of your left hand...

Then hands him a small, wilted sprig of some plant.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
And the hazel goes in your right.

Edward takes the objects, looks down at them.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
When you're ready to start, place
the ring hand over your left eye.
(MORE)

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Keep your right arm down. Like
this--

He briefly pantomimes.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Got it?

Edward nods, getting nervous.

EDWARD
This may be a strange time to ask,
but, uh...have you ever done this
before?

Dr. Feldman grins mischievously. He pulls out a thick,
wizened-looking book, then zips up his backpack.

DR. FELDMAN
I'll be standing over on the side,
reciting the sacred bonds. All you
have to do is summon the demon into
the circle. Once she's there--

EDWARD
Wait, wait, when will I know if
that's happened?

DR. FELDMAN
If we do this thing right, it
should be pretty clear. Once she's
there, you commune with her spirit.

EDWARD
Commune with her spirit? How?

DR. FELDMAN
A kiss.

Edward raises his eyebrows.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
All demons are linked to a
particular power. Courage, anger,
hope, and so on. Beleth's is love.

This sits a minute. Feldman smirks.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)
Poetic, huh?

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Feldman pushes a rolling chair into the chalk triangle opposite Edward.

He turns the chair to reveal -- Bethany, tied in place with bungee chords, still wearing her stained and crumpled dress.

Her head tilts to one side; she appears unconscious.

Dr. Feldman adjusts the chair so that she faces Edward, then steps back.

He positions himself a good distance away, to Edward's left, back by the mini-van.

He opens his book. Looks to Edward.

DR. FELDMAN

Once you commune with the demon,
you should be able to control what
happens next.

EDWARD

And then what?

Feldman shrugs.

DR. FELDMAN

I can give you a road map, but you
still have to drive the damn thing.

Edward nods soberly.

Feldman breathes in deeply. He looks down at the book.

DR. FELDMAN (CONT'D)

Ok.

He begins whispering, under his breath. We can't hear what he's saying, but it's hushed, repetitive.

Edward stands silently, watching him. Feldman glances up to give him a look -- "your turn" -- and Edward turns back to face Bethany.

He places his left hand over his eye. Stands awkwardly for a beat.

EDWARD

Enter the circle.

Nothing happens.

Edward gives a quick glance to Feldman, who hasn't stopped chanting -- he nods for Edward to continue.

Edward looks back to Bethany, increasingly unsure.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Bethany, please enter the circle.

Bethany's head lolls from one side to the other, but she doesn't move.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Beleth. Enter the circle.

Still no movement.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I summon you...to enter the circle.

Nothing.

Edward lowers his hand from his eye and looks toward Feldman.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Look, I don't think this is doing
what it's--

He pauses, noticing that Feldman has stopped chanting.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Dr. Feldman?

Feldman doesn't look up from his book.

Edward starts to take a step toward him, then stops.
Squints. Something is off.

Feldman hasn't just stopped reading: he's *frozen in place*. A living statue.

Edward stares, puzzled.

Then he hears -- softly at first, but slowly rising -- a steady rhythmic CLOPPING. The sound of hooves, hitting concrete.

Edward turns to his right --

A MUSCULAR BLACK HORSE has appeared from the shadows of the parking lot.

It stands, its inky black eyes boring into Edward. It sniffs.

Edward watches, entranced.

Then he remembers, and claps his left hand back over his eye.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I...command you to enter the
circle.

The Horse just stares at him.

Edward looks back to Bethany.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Enter the--

And before he can finish, from nowhere, TRUMPETS BLARE, a painful, discordant cacophony of SOUND. So loud, it brings him to his knees, wincing.

The noise won't stop, but eventually Edward adjusts to it enough to look up.

The Horse is still standing in place -- but its black coat has begun *bleeding off*, from head to toe, leaving behind patches of pale white fur. The blackness puddles in pools around its hooves.

Suddenly, a bright light -- Edward turns to see that the circle in front of him has begun to *glow*, vibrant, powerful.

And beyond that -- Bethany now stands in her triangle, free from her bonds. She's a horrific vision, skin cracked and bleeding, black gunk leaking from her eyes and mouth, barely human in her horror.

Edward is terrified. But he remembers:

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Beleth...enter...the circle.

The discordant horns rise in volume, and Edward cries out in pain. The ground shakes -- and Edward realizes that his chalk triangle is *moving across the concrete*, pulling him with it, toward the circle in the center.

He scrambles back to his feet. Bethany's form looms before him, slowly inching closer.

He glances back to the Horse -- the blackness has now slipped completely off its coat, collecting down into a deep, dark pool at the Horse's hooves, leaving behind a brilliant, pale steed in its wake.

The chalk triangles continue to converge, nearing the circle.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 (yelling now)
 Enter the circle!

The trumpets swell, drowning out his cries.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Enter the circle!!!

And then Edward and Bethany are face to face *inside the circle*, her caked, monstrous features glowering at him.

Edward looks down -- sees the black ink pooling around his legs, climbing up, obscuring the chalk outlines, enveloping both of them --

She reaches out for his throat --

And he realizes what he has to do, and leans forward into the monster before him, and pulls her in -- for a kiss --

SMASH-CUT TO:

INT. SWANKY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The trumpets CUT OUT. Replaced by background music, pleasant and relaxing.

Edward sits at a table, smartly dressed, as suave as we've ever seen him. He examines himself, and the expertly placed silverware and wine glasses before him.

BETHANY (O.S.)
 You remember, right?

He looks up.

ACROSS FROM HIM -- Bethany sits, in elegant cocktail attire, beautiful, irresistible. She smiles in the dim mood lighting.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
 Our first date?

Edward stares, at a loss for words. Bethany takes a sip of water and casually leans forward.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
 Well, *real* first date anyway. We shared coffee at some deli, I think, making eyes at each other--

EDWARD
(monotone)
The Hungarian pastry shop...

BETHANY
Right! Morningside Heights. I
always hated that place, all that
graffiti in the bathroom. But
*this...*this was an impressive
choice for a first date.

Edward glances to his left, and sees other upscale-looking PATRONS seated around them, engrossed in their meals. And beyond -- a stunning vista of Manhattan outside ceiling-high windows.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
It's when I knew I'd found someone
special.

She gently touches Edward's hand. He's skittish, wary.

EDWARD
Why are we here?

Bethany's smile fades a bit.

BETHANY
We need to remember the good stuff.
It's important. It'll help with
what you have to do.

She turns her attention toward something on Edward's right.

Edward follows her gaze --

To our surprise, that half of the room isn't a restaurant at all. It's a CHAMBER -- cold, bare tile walls on three sides, the fourth wall missing, open to face them.

And inside, gagged and bound to a lone chair -- KARA. Her clothes cheap and frayed, she looks just like Bethany, but different; a scared, lonely girl, crying, weakly but incessantly.

Edward stares.

Back on the restaurant side of things, a nondescript WAITER appears, paying no mind to the woman held captive behind him. He calmly pours wine.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
(to the Waiter)
Thank you.
(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)
(to Edward)
I'm really proud of you, you know.
For making it here. I was barely
holding on.

The Waiter finishes pouring the wine, then pulls out something, tucked underneath his arm -- a tray with a cloth napkin on top.

He delicately places the tray on the table, nods, and leaves.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Only one thing left to take care
of. And then we're done.

Bethany looks down at the tray. Waits for Edward.

With a shaking hand, he lifts the napkin --

ON THE TRAY -- A large, sharpened KNIFE.

Edward drops the napkin, disgusted.

EDWARD
No.

BETHANY
If I could do it, I would have
already. You're the only one who--

Edward shakes his head, finally at his limit.

EDWARD
Enough. I understand it now.

BETHANY
Understand what?

EDWARD
This is evil. You're evil.

Bethany seems truly shocked.

BETHANY
You don't mean that.

EDWARD
I do. This whole thing is a ploy,
like everything else. This entire
time you've been using me.

BETHANY
Edward, I'm not using you, you're
just the only person I've got.

EDWARD

And that's why you want me to be like you. Alone. It's why you put Jonah in that car accident...

BETHANY

...Jonah? What does Jonah have to do with--

EDWARD

And it's why you put Sam in the hospital. My own *sister*, Bethany.

A beat. Bethany fiddles with the table settings, getting anxious.

BETHANY

Edward, I didn't try to hurt her. Honestly, I didn't. I just...wasn't myself. And I'm not blaming you, but...if you hadn't brought her into this...

EDWARD

Bethany--

BETHANY

But I *promise*, she'll be fine. She'll get better. Once this is done, everything goes back to normal. You just need to finish it...

EDWARD

Or what?

BETHANY

...I don't understand the question.

EDWARD

Or *what*? If I don't do what you say, you'll do what? What other strings do you have left to pull?

Bethany is growing distraught.

BETHANY

Sweetheart. There are no strings. This is the real me.

Edward doesn't seem convinced. Bethany pleads.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Weren't you happy before? Just the
two of us...

EDWARD
But it was a lie.

BETHANY
No...no, it wasn't...

EDWARD
Everything you told me about
yourself was a lie.

BETHANY
I never tried to hurt you. I just
wanted to...share a life with you.
My life. Everything I did, I did
for us, for you. I love you.

EDWARD
But it's not that simple, don't you
see? There are consequences.
People got hurt, and I can't live
with that. I'm not like you.

A beat.

BETHANY
No?

She takes a sip of wine.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I know you went looking for the
sister.

Edward looks up, stunned, mistrustful.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Edward, I wasn't *spying* on you.
You've just...never been as good at
lying as you think you are.

Edward sits with this. He sneaks a glance to Kara, then back
to Bethany.

EDWARD
I looked her up, sure. I needed to
know, if she really had a family.

BETHANY
I understand. And did you tell her
that her sister was still alive?

A beat.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
No, of course you didn't. That
would've been too difficult. Too
painful. But I'm sure you were
very kind. Maybe you even offered
her some money?

Another beat. Bethany raises an eyebrow.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Maybe a lot of money then. And I'm
guessing she didn't turn it down.

With a trembling hand, Edward rubs his hand over his
forehead. He senses Kara's eyes from across the room,
watching him.

EDWARD
All I was doing...was trying to
help...

She smiles and leans forward, inviting and persuasive.

BETHANY
Of course you were, baby. But in
your own way. See? That's why we
belong together, you and me. We
don't let other people stop us from
being happy. We live for each
other. And that doesn't make us
evil -- it's just who we are. Who
we were made to be. You don't need
to feel *guilty* about that.

This thought slides through Edward's ears and down into his
stomach. Unable to help himself, he quickly looks at Kara,
who gazes back at him, eyes pleading.

Bethany reaches out her hand and gently turns Edward's head
back toward the restaurant.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Look at the people around us. The
way they look at us.

Edward's eyes flit over the surrounding tables.

The diners steadily eat their meals, but occasionally glance
his way, furtively watching.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
They can't help themselves.
Because they see it. They see
we're beautiful. Complete. And
they love us for that.

Edward gazes around the restaurant, head spinning.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
We deserve this. It's only a small
sacrifice to make.

He blinks, looks down -- somehow the KNIFE has found its way
into his hand. He stares at it, head woozy.

He looks back up into Bethany's gentle, smiling face.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
You can do it. I know you can.

A beat.

Then Edward slowly rises. He turns, and in a daze starts
walking toward Kara.

She senses what's coming -- her muffled cries intensify as
she thrashes weakly in her chair.

Edward moves, zombie-like, closer and closer to Kara, until
he stands, directly in front of her.

He raises the knife, slowly. Up to her throat.

The knife hangs there, suspended, gleaming in the dim light.

And then --

He gently uses it to cut free Kara's gag.

She breathes out deeply, in shock, in relief.

Edward turns back to Bethany -- she's standing now, at the
border between the restaurant and Kara's chamber, watching
him. Tears well in his eyes.

EDWARD
I can't. I just...maybe you're
right. And I am what you say I am.
And I'm not a good man, and I never
can be. But...she's an innocent
person. She doesn't deserve this.

Bethany gazes back at him -- she looks sad. Heartbroken,
even. But resigned.

BETHANY
And...you and I...?

Edward weakly raises the knife into a threatening posture, steeling himself for what he has to do next.

EDWARD
I'm so sorry...but I have to...

Bethany nods and begins walking to him.

BETHANY
I understand.

Caught off guard, Edward stays frozen in place, the knife hovering in the air.

She moves closer, until standing right beside him.

She reaches up, carefully guiding his knife hand, until it's inches in front of her belly. With her other hand, she nudges his chin upward with her fingers, until their eyes meet.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Do what you have to do.

EDWARD
...I wish I could...

BETHANY
I love you, Edward. I always will.

CLOSE ON -- their silhouetted faces. Edward stares into the woman he fell in love with, trying to will himself to act. To finish it.

Then -- something changes in his features. A realization.

A decision.

He lunges forward, pulling Bethany's body close to his. She gasps, in shock, in pain.

They stand that way, inches apart, eyes locked in place.

The music SWELLS and we...

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON

EXT. PARK - DAY

The sun shines, crisp, bright. Edward and Bethany are sitting at a picnic table, across from one another.

Bethany is eating a sandwich. She looks different -- her skin is healing, but she still looks frail.

Edward stares at her while she eats. They sit this way a while.

And then we slowly realize why he's staring -- from Bethany's posture and manner, we recognize that this is actually KARA. Herself, fully, for the first time.

It's very strange. Unfamiliar.

Eventually:

KARA
(pointing to the sandwich)
What's this green stuff?

Edward blinks, brought back from somewhere.

EDWARD
Avocado?

She nods, interested. Edward is confused.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Haven't you had...?

She shakes her head. Edward doesn't know what to say.

KARA
It's good.

Edward nods back, mindlessly. Empty.

A beat. Edward glances across the park, a small, empty wooded expanse.

A BUS STAND can be seen in the distance -- A worn down CHARTER BUS pulls up.

EDWARD
Time to go.

Kara takes a last bite of sandwich, chewing quickly. She stands, lifting a large duffel bag.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(motioning toward the bag)
You want me to...?

KARA
No, I got it.

EDWARD
And you have the, uh...the address?

KARA
Yeah.

A beat. Edward just stares at Kara, unable to look away.
Mesmerized by the unsettling familiarity of her face.

She grows uncomfortable under his gaze.

KARA (CONT'D)
I'm not sure what I'm gonna tell
her.

EDWARD
Well...tell her...that you fell in
love. You got married, ran away.
And then it ended.

KARA
...Just like that?

EDWARD
Sure. Happens all the time.

She nods.

KARA
It'll be hard to believe.

EDWARD
At first. But she'll get used to
it.

A beat.

KARA
What about you?

EDWARD
Well...you can find me if you need
to. But...it's probably better if
you don't. It'd be very
complicated.

KARA
I meant more...what are you gonna
do now?

EDWARD
Oh.

Edward considers.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You don't have to worry about me.

She nods again. A longer beat.

KARA
I feel kinda...

She thinks about how to say it.

KARA (CONT'D)
...Sad. I didn't think I would.

Edward half-smiles.

EDWARD
Thank you for that.

A beat.

KARA
Goodbye then.

EDWARD
Goodbye.

She abruptly turns and walks.

Edward watches her for a beat. Something slowly shifts in his expression.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(a whispered command)
Let her go.

He lowers his gaze, then turns and starts walking in the opposite direction.

As he walks, we PUSH IN on him...

FLASHBACK TO:

THE RESTAURANT CHAMBER -- Bethany and Edward, standing where we left them, face to face, inches apart, clutching each other.

Suddenly, Bethany pulls away from him, her mouth gaping in shock, in horror. She looks down.

We SEE -- the knife is buried to the hilt -- in Edward's stomach. He grips the handle, hand shaking.

CUT BACK TO:

THE PARK, Edward still walking, steady, unwavering. We keep PUSHING IN, focused on his face...

FLASHBACK TO:

THE CHAMBER -- Bethany stares, eyes wide. She looks back up to Edward, trying to understand.

Edward grimaces in pain -- but he doesn't look scared. He looks resolved.

His body sags, weakening, and Bethany rushes forward to catch him.

She pulls the knife from his stomach, tosses it away, presses her palm flat against the wound, working to stem the flow of BLOOD, leaking freely through her fingers.

Edward's hand clasps on top of hers.

She looks back up to his face -- they lock eyes. He stares at her, eyes pleading for something.

And then Bethany's realizes. What he wants her to do.

Her face softens. A silent expression of *thank you*.

And she leans in, pressing her mouth to his. A long kiss, soft, tender, passionate. A final kiss.

They stay that way, in each other's embrace, the world disappearing around them...

CUT BACK TO:

THE PARK -- CLOSE ON Edward's face, so close that he envelopes the frame.

And then we SEE, ever-so-faintly, spreading in the corner of one eye --

-- A BLACK DOT.

CUT TO BLACK

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