

SERIAL KILLER DAYS

by
Mark Carter

Based on the novel by
David Prill

AUGUST 1, 2008

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The corpse of a forty-something man lies on its back, eyes open. The slash across its neck has barely stopped bleeding.

Police lights and lightning flash through the windows.

Above the body stands a CORONER, examining with clinical eyes. His ASSISTANT, equally impassive, snaps pictures.

With them is THE SHERIFF, a stout, barrel-chested man with a weathered face that is creased with concern.

CORONER

No mystery to the cause of death,
Sheriff. Same as every year. The
guy certainly doesn't disappoint.

The Sheriff looks sharply at the coroner and then across the room, where a thirty-something WOMAN, and her ten-year old SON, huddle together, weeping.

SHERIFF

Let's get him out of here.

The coroner and assistant proceed to bag the body. The Sheriff makes his way toward the grieving family.

SHERIFF

Maggie, Jimmy... I'm sorry. I know
what you're going through.

After a moment of compassionate silence...

SHERIFF

Are you ready to do this?

The woman puts on a brave face, nods, and stands.

The Sheriff leads them to the front entrance, gives them a look of reassurance, and throws open the door...

OUTSIDE

CHEERS AND APPLAUSE erupt. Behind yellow police tape, a mass of people fills the sidewalk and street.

Camera flashes, lightning, and police lights cut through the rain and darkness.

A marching band, in black uniforms and white painted faces, plays a rousing rendition of Kool & The Gang's "Celebration".

The widow and son trade tears of grief for those of pride.

At the end of the walk stands a pretty and pallid teenage girl. She wears a black dress, tiara, and a pageant ribbon that reads "SCREAM QUEEN".

The queen produces an oversize pair of scissors. With due ceremony, she cuts the yellow police tape.

The crowd lets out whoops of excitement and rushes past the severed tape to swarm the victim's family.

On the periphery, taking in the scene, is a friendly looking fellow with a gentle, Midwestern face. He's our NARRATOR. He turns to the camera and flashes a warm smile.

NARRATOR

Before Serial Killer Days, Standard
Springs, Minnesota was dying.

INT. TURKEY PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

A long line of dead, bald turkeys hang from their feet on an automated belt. Bored workers watch, seemingly hypnotized.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The industry that had employed over
three-quarters of the city's
working adults since Eisenhower's
first term was gobbled up by a
global conglomerate.

EXT. TURKEY PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

The Narrator stands in front of the abandoned building,
leaning on a "No Trespassing" sign.

NARRATOR

And promptly spit out.

Two turkeys exit the building and make a run for it.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The small town street is empty save for wind-swept litter.
Many storefronts are boarded up.

INT. DINER - DAY

The RC Cola clock reads noon. There are no customers. The waitress, SHELLY, leans on the counter, bored.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The effect of eighty percent
unemployment hit Main Street like a
heart attack.

EXT. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

Window lettering reads: Good Morning Insurance.

ARVID MORNING holds his four-year old daughter, DEBBIE SUE in his arms. He hangs an "out of business" sign on the door handle and smiles bravely to his teary wife, JUNE.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Arvid Morning's insurance agency
was one of the first casualties.

Awkwardly witnessing the scene is the short and slight VIN MELBY, his weasel-like features full of regret.

VIN

I'm awfully sorry Arvid.

ARVID

I know, Vin. I know.

VIN

But without money folks can't
afford insurance.

ARVID

Without insurance, folks can't
afford a catastrophe.

VIN

I'm saving eighty-seven bucks a
month, so I'll take my chances.

CUT TO:

A VIOLENT STORM. A funnel cloud tears through town. Trees uprooted. Houses torn apart. Power lines downed onto cars.

The Narrator, wrapped tightly in a waterproof poncho, braces himself against the wind as he addresses us.

NARRATOR
Hindsight, of course, is 20/20.

EXT. VIN'S HOUSE - DAY

The front porch is a pile of splintered lumber. One side of the house is a gaping hole.

A dozen neighbors pick up debris. Including a few we will see more of: GARVIN & BERNICE GEAR, BILL & SALLY CRAWMEYER, and BOB & MICHELLE LOVEY.

Vin looks at the damage and weeps along with his wife, ANNA MELBY. Arvid approaches the couple gently.

VIN
The only thing of ours that was
worth a damn.
(snaps his fingers)
Just like that.
(to Arvid, resentfully)
I suppose you're here to say I told
you so.

Arvid shakes his head emphatically. Vin softens.

VIN
God, I should've listened to you,
Arvid. We all should've. Now look
at this. No house, no job. I'm
ruined! We're all ruined!

Vin drops to his knees, wailing in despair. Arvid lays a steady hand on his shoulder and faces the clean-up group.

ARVID
Listen to me now. We'll get through
this. All of us. Together.

Arvid's words put smiles on their sad, tired faces.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And so they did.

EXT. LUMBER YARD - DAY

A dirty, rusty Dodge Ram backs into the yard.

Vin Melby and Bill Crawmeyer carry two by fours, fours by fours and plywood and load it into the truck's bed.

EXT. GEAR HOUSE - DAY

The storm damaged house slouches with a caved in roof and an entire side missing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Shoulder to shoulder they labored.

Arvid, The Sheriff, Vin Melby, Garvin Gear, and Bob Lovey add the fresh lumber to the missing side of the house. Reinforcing damaged beams and joists, fortifying the frame.

INT. SWANSON'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Grocer JOE SWANSON takes canned and dry food off of the nearly empty shelves and puts it in boxes.

INT. ARVID'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

June Morning is cleaning potatoes alongside Anna Melby, Michelle Lovey, Sally Crawmeyer, and Bernice Gear and her teenage daughter PAULINA GEAR.

Joe Swanson enters through the kitchen door with the box of food items. He is greeted warmly by the women.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Everybody gave of what they had.

JUNE
Will you stay for dinner, Joe?

Joe shakes his head and points to his truck outside, which is running and has a bed full of boxes.

JOE
Thanks, June. But I got a few more runs to make.

EXT. SLEEP TITE MOTEL - DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And took what they needed with great humility and gratitude.

MAX, the innkeeper, pushes a cart full of linens. He knocks on a door. An exhausted WOMAN answers.

Behind her, clustered in the small room, are six children and four adults, spread out on the bed and floor. It looks like a refugee camp.

Max hands a stack of blankets to the grateful woman. He proceeds to the next room. Another refugee camp.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

In the ruins of an old garage, Little Debbie Sue plays with another five year-old girl, MOLLY LOVEY. They run around in glittery princess outfits with toy crowns on their heads.

Paulina Gear runs up excitedly.

PAULINA

Debbie Sue! Molly! Come see our new house!

EXT. GEAR HOUSE - DAY

The former catastrophe looks good as new. The hole in its side is no more, and it has a new roof and windows.

Garvin, Bernice, and Paulina Gear stand in front of their refurbished home, tears in their eyes. They are surrounded by their friends: The Mornings, The Melbys, The Loveys, The Crawmeyers, and The Sheriff.

INT. ARVID'S HOUSE - DAY

Thanksgiving.

The above group of neighbors are seated around the table. Debbie and Molly are alone at the kids' table.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For a moment, their cares were memories. And this collective triumph spun an invisible thread, stitching the community together.

Everyone holds a glass in the air.

ARVID

To our friends and neighbors. For proving that what doesn't kill us makes us stronger.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sally Crawmeyer's body lies on a blood-soaked bed, her throat cut. The coroner pulls a sheet over her head as The Sheriff talks with a distraught Bill Crawmeyer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sally Crawmeyer was the serial
killer's first victim.

INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

In the small, empty jailhouse, the Sheriff sits at his desk. Crime scene photos are spread out before him. He studies them with frustration and consternation.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The town's lone lawman did his
best, but with few resources and
fewer leads, all he could do is
pray it was an isolated incident.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The grocer Joe Swanson's corpse is seated, his head on the kitchen table near an overturned bowl of Lucky Charms. The blood from his slashed throat mixes with spilled milk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It wasn't. Exactly one year later
to the day, Joe Swanson met a
similar fate.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The coroner and assistant lift a sheet-covered body onto a gurney, leaving behind a wet, blood stained carpet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The following year was no
different. Another victim. Same
day, same way.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Sheriff exits the house. A small crowd of neighbors is gathered in the yard. GRIFF GRIMES, a local newspaperman in full-on His Girl Friday mode, accosts the sheriff.

GRIMES

Sheriff! Griff Grimes, Standard Springs Herald.

SHERIFF

Beat it, Griff.

GRIMES

Sheriff, do you see a pattern in these murders?

SHERIFF

Let's see... each was committed on the last Saturday of July... all by a slash to the throat... No. I think it's totally random.

The sarcasm is lost on Grimes as he scribbles in a notebook. The Sheriff leaves him behind, passing the Narrator, who stands among the concerned neighbors.

NARRATOR

The people of Standard Springs were at their wit's end.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

VIN

Mayor, we're at our wit's end!

MAYOR DOLEMAN and The Sheriff sit before a full house of angry citizens who shout at them and one another.

Amid the chaos, Debbie Sue and Molly Lovey (both now 8) sneak in unnoticed. From the back row, they giggle as they watch their parents and elders argue like kids on the playground.

Arvid, with June beside him, watches the debate intently.

MAX

Why haven't you caught this guy?

MAYOR DOLEMAN

We're doing the best we can with a
one man police force.

VIN

Then hire more men!

MAYOR DOLEMAN

With what, Vin? My good looks?
We just need to be patient.

GARVIN GEAR

No! We need jobs! We need to catch
this killer! We need solutions to
these problems, now!

The hall bursts forth with furious agreement. The mayor
throws his hands in the air.

MAYOR DOLEMAN

If you got any ideas, I'm all ears.

EXT. CRAWMEYER HOUSE - DAY

A family of four takes pictures of the house.

Nearby, Arvid follows Debbie Sue as she rollerskates.

Bill Crawmeyer shouts at the family from his porch.

CRAWMEYER

Get out of here, you vultures!

(to Arvid)

Can you believe this? I swear I see
a dozen of 'em a week.

(to family)

This ain't a damn sideshow!

Arvid watches the family curiously as they pose.

INT. DINER - DAY

A group of four COLLEGE KIDS sits at a counter full of
burgers, fries and malts.

Arvid sits with Debbie Sue, sharing a sundae. He watches as
the kids excitedly quiz Shelly the waitress.

COLLEGE KID #1
So were any of the victims
customers of yours?

SHELLY
All of 'em. They were also my
friends.

COLLEGE KID #2
That's awesome.

COLLEGE KID #3
Do you think he'll kill again this
year?

SHELLY
(sadly)
I imagine so.

COLLEGE KID #1
Sweet!
(to friends)
We should get a big group together
and stay here that weekend!

His friends explode with vocal agreement and high fives.

COLLEGE KID #1
(to Shelly)
Is there a motel in town?

Arvid's face lights up as he is struck by an idea. He digs a
pen from his pocket and begins writing on a napkin.

Debbie tips the sundae over. It spills into her lap.

DEBBIE
Daddy!

But Arvid is oblivious as he furiously scribbles.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

MAYOR DOLEMAN
Arvid, with all due respect, you
must be a friggin' idiot!

It's another full, boisterous town meeting.

MAYOR DOLEMAN

You're suggesting we celebrate this carnage?

The townsfolk go silent and aim indignant stares at Arvid.

ARVID

Yes.

Cries of shock and disbelief fill the room.

ARVID

And I guarantee we'll all get rich!

The hall echoes with jeers and derision and a hundred opinions. Vin comes forward and whistles loudly.

VIN

Does anybody remember the last time we ignored Arvid? We lost everything! I say give the man a chance to speak his peace!

The crowd mutters its reluctant agreement.

MAYOR DOLEMAN

Okay, Arvid. Make it snappy.

Arvid faces his audience and flashes a salesman's smile.

ARVID

The way I see it we have three problems: no money, no jobs, and we're the target of a murderous psychopath. But we also have one very important thing going for us: We are the target of a murderous psychopath!

This sends a ripple through the hall.

ARVID

People are fascinated by the macabre! Fact: in London, a gruesome Jack the Ripper exhibit draws people from all around the world. Fact: museums in Salem, Massachusetts recreate the trials and executions of accused witches and sell souvenir gravestones and bumper stickers that say "my other car is a broom".

(MORE)

ARVID(cont'd)

These are good people creating a lucrative tourist trade out of unspeakable tragedy.

MAYOR DOLEMAN

Tragedy that happened hundreds of years ago!

ARVID

Exactly! Which puts us in a unique position to offer something nobody else can. Not yesterday's dusty horrors. But fresh murder on tap. Year in and year out.

CRAWMEYER

That's disgusting!

GARVIN GEAR

Are you saying we should profit off the blood of our neighbors? Of our families?

The question freezes the townies. Every face is trained on Arvid. This is his make or break moment.

ARVID

We've endured so much together. But how long do we merely survive?

He turns to Shelly, the diner waitress.

ARVID

Shelly, wouldn't you like to see your diner full again?

She nods. Arvid sets his sights on Max, the innkeeper.

ARVID

And Max.... I know you'd like a reason to turn the lights at your inn back on.

Max indicates yes.

ARVID

We know when this guy is going to strike and people will pay good money to be here when he does. Life keeps handing us lemons. It's about time we made lemonade.

The council and the townsfolk exchange unsure looks.

MAYOR DOLEMAN

What exactly are you proposing?

ARVID

A week long festival leading up to the day our killer comes to town. We split the profits evenly. Every household gets an equal share. We all share the risk. We all share the reward. If we can just open our minds, I promise we'll make a killing.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A banner that reads SERIAL KILLER DAYS, JULY 17-24 hangs above the modestly filled street. Food and merchandise stands line the road. Children walk with their parents, eating black cotton candy. A band plays Helter Skelter.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the first year of Serial Killer Days, five thousand visitors reveled in the town's gory history.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

A black, open air tour bus marked "TERROR TROLLEY" rolls down the street. A handful of tourists are aboard, listening to a TOUR GUIDE. She wears a black jacket and conductors hat.

TOUR GUIDE

Today, we'll visit the site of each of our grisly killings.

CONCERNED FATHER

Excuse me, miss? Is this tour extremely graphic?

TOUR GUIDE

Yes.

CONCERNED FATHER

Is it appropriate for children?

TOUR GUIDE

You betcha! Now. Our first stop is the home of "The Human Pez Dispenser"...

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Rain drizzles on the happy people watching a parade. They wave toy knives and fire cap guns in the air.

Workers unleash a torrent of blood-red liquid from a pump.
The blood pours down the street to the delight of onlookers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Festival goers witnessed the birth
of new traditions...

Tiny cars cruise the parade route under a banner reading
HEADLESS SHRINERS. The drivers are indeed headless. Their
fez's seemingly held up by endless streams of blood.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Sheriff escorts a corpse out of the house and into a sea
of camera flashes and enthusiastic cheers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...and gleefully celebrated old
ones.

EXT./INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

A long line of excited townsfolk stretches out the front door
and snakes down the sidewalk.

INSIDE

At the head of the line, Arvid is parked at a table framed by
American flags, happily handing the citizens envelopes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That first festival pulled in fifty
thousand dollars.

Shelly, the diner waitress, receives her envelope from Arvid.
She peeks inside and flips through the thin stack of bills
with a shrug.

ONE YEAR LATER

The envelopes Arvid hands out are noticeably thicker.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The following year they doubled their profits. And again every year after that.

MONTAGE

The envelopes keep getting thicker. The townsfolk become increasingly happier.

Victim after victim is zipped up in body bags.

Finally, Arvid is ripping checks out of a checkbook and handing them over. Shelly looks at her check with a shriek and a smile and smothers Arvid with a hug.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Eventually, the town could afford to make over Main Street...

The old main street: cracked, uneven pavement, broken street lamps, and colorless buildings.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEW MAIN STREET

Repaved, refurbished, repainted, and restored.

EXT. BIG SLEEP MOTEL - DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...build a new motor lodge...

A sprawling three story motel sits on the edge of town. The sign reads, "BIG SLEEP MOTEL".

Max, the innkeeper, looks at the structure with pride.

EXT. HOTEL ABATTOIR - DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...an upscale hotel...

Very classy: brick facade, bright blue awnings, well dressed doormen. The sign says, "HOTEL ABATTOIR".

INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Standing room only. All eyes are on the stage. Except for the Narrator, who looks back at us.

NARRATOR

...and a new playhouse for the annual production of "Sound of Maniacs".

Behind him, on stage, six children cower as their knife-wielding governess sings to the tune of "MY FAVORITE THINGS".

GOVERNESS

(singing)

Blood drops on noses and deep gaping gashes. Girls in white dresses with gouges and slashes. Poor helpless victims tied up with string. These are a few of my favorite things...

INT. VIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vin is on his knees next to his dead wife. He sobs violently.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

While the returns continued to increase, the investment was always the same.

Arvid impatiently stands next to Vin.

VIN

It isn't fair. Not my Anna Banana!

ARVID

Let's go, Vin. We have people waiting outside.

VIN

This is your fault, Arvid. You and your stupid festival!

ARVID

Vin...

VIN

I hope you're next. I hope you--

Arvid forcefully pulls Vin to his feet.

ARVID

This is the way we've chosen, Vin.
There's not one of us who's more
important than all of us. Anna knew
that. And I think you do too.

Vin wrenches away from Arvid's grasp. He wipes his nose and eyes and collects himself. He avoids looking at Arvid.

ARVID

Come on, Vin. Get out there so your
neighbors can pay their respects.

Vin nods and follows Arvid out into the celebration.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

On a platform draped with red, white, and blue, Arvid stands before a JUSTICE. His right hand rests on a Bible. June and Debbie Sue (now 12) stand behind him and watch with pride.

To the side, The Sheriff stands alongside Mayor Doleman, who watches the proceedings with a sour, hateful look.

ARVID

I, Arvid Morning, do solemnly
swear...

The Narrator stands in the crowd.

NARRATOR

Arvid was elected mayor by write in vote. He didn't seek the job, nor did he campaign. But the good folks of Standard Springs knew who to thank for their reversal of fortune.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A pale teenage girl in a black dress is on stage. To her side, a woman sits at a piano, playing a soft melody.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

While murder will always be the festival's centerpiece, over time the most beloved event has become...

Abruptly, the pianist stabs out a loud, staccato version of "PSYCHO" and the girl BEGINS SCREAMING HER HEAD OFF.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...the Scream Queen Pageant.

SERIES OF SHOTS

On stage, girl after girl screams at the top of her lungs.

CUT TO:

A crying girl stands center stage wearing a "Scream Queen" pageant ribbon. A crown is placed on her head.

The Narrator sits in the audience as they go wild.

NARRATOR
Every little girl in Standard
Springs dreams of one day wearing
the crown.

He motions with his head. Camera follows to find...

Arvid applauding vigorously. At his side, Debbie Sue looks back and forth between him and the Scream Queen, taking note of her father's enthusiasm.

Looking past her father, Debbie spots Molly Lovey (now 12) watching the stage in awe, ambition burning in her eyes.

INT. SCREAM QUEEN HALL OF FAME - DAY

The dark, eerie hall features bronzed busts of past Scream Queens. One has a knife stuck in the throat. Another, a pistol discharging into the head. All of them are screaming.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The greatest Scream Queen ever is
the reigning one: Molly Lovey.

We close in on a bust with a hatchet lodged in the head.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

MOLLY LOVEY (now 17) screams at center stage. It's piercing and unwavering, her pretty, pale face contorted with fright.

The ovation that follows is deafening. Molly bows sweetly. A crown is placed on her head.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She's the only girl to ever win two pageants. A threepeat is inevitable.

LATER

The auditorium is silent as Debbie Sue (now 17) tentatively takes the stage. She has a happy, healthy look that contrasts Molly and other pale, frightful Scream Queens.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Arvid's daughter, Debbie Sue, is the same age as Molly. She has also competed in two pageants. That's where comparisons end.

Debbie screams. She's awful. Her voice warbles and cracks.

In the audience, people wince and cover their ears. Arvid and June struggle to mask their embarrassment.

In the front row, three JUDGES, with precise posture and identical grey suits sporting "JUDGE" patches on the breast, exchange looks of disgust and scribble in notebooks.

The Narrator sits in the audience, fingers in his ears.

NARRATOR

Because she recently graduated high school, this year will be Debbie Sue's last pageant. She'll get only one more chance to beat Molly. Yeah. Good luck with that, Debaroo.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

It's a bright, sunny day. The street is packed with locals and festival goers. Way bigger than we've seen before.

Lamp post banners show the screaming visage of Molly Lovey next to a Target logo. Below her terrified face are the words: SERIAL KILLER DAYS - 10th ANNIVERSARY.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This year is the tenth anniversary of Serial Killer Days.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

And Mayor Arvid Morning has
something very special planned.

Arvid and Molly climb onto a decorated platform to a swell of
applause. Behind them is a storefront cloaked by a curtain.

ARVID

(into microphone)

Let's hear it for two time Scream
Queen, Molly Lovey!

The crowd responds with boisterous cheers, raising three
fingers in the air, and chanting "Threepeat!"

From the street, Debbie Sue watches her father and her rival
sadly. June puts a sympathetic arm around her daughter.

Arvid quiets the crowd.

ARVID

(mock admonishment)

For years now, many of you have
participated in illicit,
underground lotteries, placing bets
on who the victim might be. Some
have even run them out of your
places of business.

The townies play along with sarcastic responses of "no..."
and "who us" as Arvid playfully wags his finger at them.

ARVID

Personally, I find this practice
unseemly. Let me tell you why. The
jackpots are too darn small!

He gets a big laugh and cheers.

ARVID

Well this year, we'll put our money
where our murder is! Folks, it's my
pleasure to introduce the official
Serial Killer Days Dead Pool!

Molly pulls a rope, releasing the curtain, revealing a
storefront ticket booth. Above the ticket window is a sign
that reads DEAD POOL JACKPOT. A dollar sign is followed by a
blank digital display. Inside the booth, another digital
board lists the names of all the townsfolk.

Oohs and aahs are followed by applause.

ARVID

We have a fantastic partner to
thank for this. The good,
indigenous people at Wampum Casino!
Please give a warm Standard Springs
welcome to our new best friend, Ben
"Eagle Feather" Ingebretsen!

A white as paste Scandinavian comes forward. The only thing
remotely Native American about BEN "EAGLE FEATHER"
INGEBRETSEN is his ponytail, beaded jewelry, and the feather
in his hair. His accent is pure Northern Minnesota.

EAGLE FEATHER

Thank you , Mayor Morning.
(to the crowd)

As the white man mentioned, we at
the Little River Band of Ojibwe are
using our resources to make this
the biggest jackpot short of the
state lottery. Along with retail
locations, we're taking wagers at
our casinos and online.

Arvid leads the crowd in a round of applause.

EAGLE FEATHER

My people have a saying. May the
Great Spirit walk with you. I think
you'll agree the Great Spirit is
with you today.

The digital display lights up: \$2.5 MILLION.

A collective gasp is followed by screams and cheers from the
townies. They jump up and down and hug each other.

Max, the innkeeper, pumps his fist in the air.

MAX

We're gonna be rich!

The Narrator watches from within the crowd and applauds.

NARRATOR

They *should* be excited. Thanks to
some creative accounting, the
town's take is equal to that
jackpot number. Every citizen gets
a piece of that big ol' pie.

ARVID

With that, I officially open the
tenth annual Serial Killer Days!

Cheers and shrieks of joy explode among the revelers. Two men
pick Arvid up and carry him into the adoring crowd.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So after ten years of uninterrupted
growth, Serial Killer Days is
poised to make every citizen of
Standard Springs rich. All that's
necessary is for the killer to do
his job as usual.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

The Narrator vigorously sharpens a hunting knife.

NARRATOR

And that's where I come in.

Stuck on the wall in front of him are a dozen Polaroids. Each
picture shows a corpse with its neck cut. Several are victims
we've already seen. In every one, the Narrator's smiling face
is pressed next to the dead like a vacation snapshot.

NARRATOR

That's right. I'm the Standard
Springs serial killer.

He smiles and tosses the knife into a leather satchel. It
clatters as it lands in the bagful of cutlery. He then takes
the photos off the wall and places them in the bag.

INT. CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

The Narrator chats with us as he cruises down the highway.

NARRATOR

I know what you're thinking...
"You're a good-for-nothin' psycho
killer." That may be true. But the
people of that town depend on me. I
provide a very important public
service. Without yours truly,
there's no festival. I mean, an
entire community depends on me! I
take that seriously.

(MORE)

NARRATOR(cont'd)

I'm not going to let these good folks down. Especially not this year.

We hear a loud SCREECH of tires.

The Narrator looks up just before SLAMMING FULL SPEED into the car in front of him. He is thrown through the windshield and onto the pavement, where he skids to a lifeless stop.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The wrecked cars sit in the middle of the two-lane highway. Ambulance and police lights and flares surround the scene.

The Narrator's car is tangled to the back of a vehicle with a dead deer on its hood. Inside the deer car, an unconscious and bloody DRIVER is tended to by EMTs.

Twenty feet away, Arvid and The Sheriff stand above the Narrator's body.

ARVID

You're sure it's him?

SHERIFF

Positive. Found all types of cutlery in the vehicle. And these.

The Sheriff hands a stack of the killer's Polaroids to Arvid, who inspects them with shock and horror.

ARVID

This is awful.

SHERIFF

I know. Disgusting.

ARVID

This town can't catch a break!

SHERIFF

Arvid, we just caught our killer.

ARVID

We just lost two and half million dollars. Our neighbors will be heartbroken!

SHERIFF

They'll live.

ARVID

And what the heck are we going to
tell The Chief?

INT. EAGLE FEATHER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is outfitted with various skins and Native
American crafts. It's Indian-chic. By Pottery Barn.

Eagle Feather sits behind an imposing desk, examining the
killer's Polaroids with a grimace. At his side is a seven-
foot tall NATIVE AMERICAN MAN dressed in a well tailored
suit. An Indian Andre The Giant in Armani.

Arvid and The Sheriff stand anxiously before them.

EAGLE FEATHER

At the risk of sounding
insensitive, where does this
unfortunate turn of events leave us
in respect to the dead pool?

ARVID

Well, our killer is currently
unable to fulfill his duties. So I
guess the dead pool is... dead.

EAGLE FEATHER

I see. Anybody else know about
this?

The men shake their heads.

EAGLE FEATHER

Before we do anything rash, let's
just think about this a moment.

SHERIFF

What's there to think about?

EAGLE FEATHER

Your people for starters.

Eagle Feather springs to his feet.

EAGLE FEATHER

Tell me, my friends. What is Serial
Killer Days really about anyway?

SHERIFF

Death.

EAGLE FEATHER

I would say it's about *life*.
Specifically the lives of your
people. Lives that will be made
much richer if one of them dies.

SHERIFF

The killer is dead. We have no
choice.

EAGLE FEATHER

There's always a choice.

ARVID

What are you suggesting? That we
kill somebody ourselves?

EAGLE FEATHER

No... I seriously doubt you have
the stomach for that. You need to
call in a professional.

Arvid and the Sheriff are stunned by the idea.

SHERIFF

We can't hire a killer!

EAGLE FEATHER

Oh, I see how it is. The trail of
broken treaties never ends. We have
an agreement. Remember? We provide
capital, technology, and
advertising, and you supply a death
on Saturday night. We've done our
part. Now you will do yours.

SHERIFF

We're talking about murder! Our
souls worth more than two and a
half million dollars. Am I right,
Arvid? Arvid?

ARVID

I'm thinking.

EAGLE FEATHER

How about four?

Arvid and the Sheriff look at him sharply.

EAGLE FEATHER

That's right. The jackpot is already up to four million dollars. Just think where it'll be by the end of the week. The money is there for the taking. Are you going to grab it? Or let your tribe down?

Arvid picks up the grisly Polaroids from Eagle Feather's desk. As he stares at them he comes alive with conviction.

ARVID

I agree with The Sheriff. We can't hire a murderer. That said, someone has to die.

SHERIFF

What?!

ARVID

The more we profit, the more the sacrifices of our friends and loved ones mean. The more they are worth.

EAGLE FEATHER

How are you going to produce a death without a killer?

ARVID

This festival and our community works because everyone chips in for a common purpose. So we'll appeal to civic duty. We'll discreetly ask one of our neighbors to volunteer.

EAGLE FEATHER

To be the victim? To die?

ARVID

It's the Standard Springs way.

Arvid looks to The Sheriff, who nods weakly in agreement.

EAGLE FEATHER

I don't know. Sounds unpredictable.

ARVID

I believe in our people. Somebody will step up. And somebody will die on Saturday as usual.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

In the soft light of morning, festival workers prepare Main Street for the day ahead: setting up food and souvenir booths, sweeping sidewalks, setting trash bins, and greeting one another with cheerful "good mornings".

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Beneath a tree-lined street, a boy on a bicycle chucks newspapers at houses with velocity and precision.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

On the front page of The Standard Springs Herald is a full color picture of the opening ceremony on Main Street.

The headline: IT'S ABOUT BLOODY TIME! FESTIVAL WEEK BEGINS.

ON TERROR TROLLEY

Filled with tourists, the trolley crawls down the street.

TOUR GUIDE

(on loudspeaker)

...and that's why Maple Drive was
renamed Bludgeon Street.

A very enthusiastic tourist family (thirty-something MOM and DAD, GIRL, 10, and BOY, 9) hang on every word. They are all decked out in Serial Killer Days hats and T-shirts that read "Who Will It Be?" These are THE WEBERS.

The trolley approaches the Gears' house. Garvin is on a ladder painting a RED X across a second story window. Below him, Bernice adds a RED X to the chalk-white front door.

MR. WEBER

Hey! What are those folks doing?

TOUR GUIDE

That's Garvin and Bernice Gear.
They're preparing for the big day.

The trolley passengers feverishly snap photos.

TOUR GUIDE

The red x's have become the
traditional decoration of
victimized households.

MR. WEBER
Like a scarlet letter!

TOUR GUIDE
More like a badge of honor.

MRS. WEBER
That's neat!

The Weber girl waves to the Gears. Garvin Gear cheerfully waves his paintbrush in greeting, resulting in a shower of red paint on his wife below.

INT. ARVID'S HOUSE - DEBBIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Posters of pop stars adorn the bright yellow walls. On a bookshelf, a white graduation cap sits next to a collection of greetings cards ("CONGRATULATIONS", "YOU DID IT", etc).

Debbie Sue sits at her vanity, staring in the mirror. She tries to mold her cheerful expression into a look of horror. But she is unconvincing. And she knows it.

INT. ARVID'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

June Morning is at the sink, doing dishes. Next to her, Arvid drains his coffee and drops the cup into the soapy water.

DEBBIE
Good morning!

Debbie bounds in, making a beeline for the fridge, and pours herself a large glass of orange juice.

JUNE
Morning, Debbie Sue.
(alarmed)
Have you been in the sun? I told
you to stay covered up. Scream
Queens don't look vital.

Arvid checks his watch. He gives his wife and daughter kisses and heads to the door.

ARVID
Have a good day, ladies.

DEBBIE
Dad!

He stops in his tracks.

DEBBIE

Tell me you didn't forget.

ARVID

Okay. I didn't forget.

(awkward pause)

Remind me...?

JUNE

You said--

DEBBIE

Promised.

JUNE

--you'd help your daughter with her talent act.

DEBBIE

For my last pageant ever.

Guilt creeps across his face.

ARVID

I know. But it's an unbelievably crazy festival week. I've got serious fires to put out--

DEBBIE

It's the same thing every year!

ARVID

Believe me, this year they're burning a bit hotter.

DEBBIE

I don't know why I ever think it'll be different. Given the choice between the festival and me you'll always choose the festival.

ARVID

That's not fair.

DEBBIE

No. It isn't.

Debbie stomps out.

JUNE

She's counting on you, Arvid.

ARVID

So is everybody else.

Arvid slips out the back door.

JUNE

(shouts after him)

What is Debbie Sue going to do
about her talent act?

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Nineteen-year-old FINN OLMSTED coasts on his skateboard, pushing his long, dark hair out of his eyes. He's a picture of effortless cool. A goth James Dean.

Under his arm is a very gory, very realistic human torso made of latex. It is missing arms and a head.

Debbie Sue, gym bag slung over her shoulder, watches Finn approach. Beside her are the beanpole LOIS LANGTRY, and the tiny (and clearly smitten) TABBY SORENSEN.

DEBBIE

Is that Finn Olmsted? What's he
doing back in town?

TABBY

Who cares? Just thank God he is! Is
it me, or did he get way hotter?

LOIS

He must be back for the festival.
You know... all his special effects
and stuff.

DEBBIE

Right. Special effects.

TABBY

He's a special effect!

Finn passes them in a flash.

TABBY

Hi, Finn!

He barely turns his head and gives them a "cool guy" nod.

TABBY

I wish I was that mangled torso.

With calculating eyes, Debbie watches Finn skate away.

EXT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

In the front yard stands a sign: HOME OF STANDARD SPRINGS' ELDEST CITIZEN, MARY JO FLATWIRE, 1909-??.

INT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

A shrill buzz fills the house. Seated in an electric stair lift is MRS. FLATWIRE. All ninety-nine years of her. The lift descends at a painfully slow clip.

Arvid sits on the sofa, a smile barely hiding his impatience.

The Sheriff admires a collection of Hummel Figurines in a cabinet. Interspersed with classic figures of cherubic children are Serial Killer Days themed ceramics: people with cut throats lying in pools of blood, etc.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Sheriff! Get your stinkin' hands off my Hummel figures!

The Sheriff abides. Arvid checks his watch.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Oh, I'm sorry, Arvid. Am I taking up your valuable time?

Busted. He covers up his watch and shakes his head.

MRS. FLATWIRE

You think I don't realize how slow this thing is? How long *everything* takes me anymore? Here, at the end of my days, when time is at a premium, my ability to enjoy it and use it constructively is for crap! What a joke!

The old lady finally reaches the first floor and carefully transfers herself from the lift to a mobility scooter. She zips over to where Arvid is sitting.

MRS. FLATWIRE

So tell me. Why am I spending my ever-dwindling hours on this Earth with you two cement heads?

ARVID

Mrs. Flatwire, we know your time is valuable.

SHERIFF

And limited.

ARVID

So I'll get right to the point. We're looking for a volunteer to be this year's festival victim and would like to offer you the honor.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Pardon me, but I'm going to have to ask you to start making sense.

ARVID

You've lived ninety-nine glorious years, Mrs. Flatwire. You've achieved everything one can hope for: love, health, wealth, wisdom... what we're offering is a chance to not only ensure the financial security of our citizenry for years to come, but to leave a legacy of selflessness that will stand as a model of civic service for generations of Standard Springians. What this is all about, Mrs. Flatwire, is immortality.

The old lady looks back and forth between her two guests, carefully considering Arvid's words.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Wow. That was amazing. You just managed to take five minutes of my life that I'll never get back.

Arvid's confident demeanor shrivels. The old woman thrusts her scooter close and sticks a bony finger in his face.

MRS. FLATWIRE

I survived the Depression, young man. Polio, a train wreck, and a drunkard husband couldn't kill me.

(MORE)

MRS. FLATWIRE(cont'd)

Tornado? Blow me. A stroke? Suck it. And a serial killer? Don't make me laugh! I've lived through ninety-nine winters, and so help me God I ain't stoppin' 'til I hit triple digits. Good day, gentlemen.

She throws the scooter in reverse and whips an impressive 180-degree turn. Gripping the handlebars, she glares back at the men over her shoulder, like some Hell's Angel.

MRS. FLATWIRE

I said good day!

EXT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

The door slams behind Arvid and the Sheriff. They make their way dejectedly down the walk.

SHERIFF

When did that fossil get so mean?

ARVID

I'll say this for the old girl. Her will to live is mighty impressive.

SHERIFF

Yeah. I bet she ekes out another five to ten on stubbornness alone.

ARVID

What we need is someone with absolutely no will to live.

The answer occurs to the men simultaneously.

ARVID & SHERIFF

Sam.

EXT. SUICIDE SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Arvid and the Sheriff stand in the walk, facing the tiny grey house. The yard is nothing but dead grass and weeds. The house itself looks depressed.

SHERIFF

"Suicide" Sam Skovolt...

ARVID

Man, does this guy hate life. How many times has he tried to off himself now?

SHERIFF

At least a half dozen.

ARVID

How is he still alive?

SHERIFF

He's incompetent.

ARVID

Well, help is on the way. Today is Suicide Sam's lucky day.

INT. SUICIDE SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Thirty-something SUICIDE SAM stares at Arvid and the Sheriff with his sad, droopy face.

SUICIDE SAM

It's like a dream come true!

He breaks into a wide, giddy smile.

We now see that Sam is hanging a banner from the living room ceiling. It reads: WELCOME KATYA!

ARVID

I'm a little confused, Sam.

SUICIDE SAM

Katya is on her way to Standard Springs from The Ukraine!

ARVID

Still confused, Sam.

Sam directs their attention toward a framed 11x17 mounted on the wall. It's a portrait of a beautiful, young, curvy blonde. The picture is signed: xoxo, Katya.

SUICIDE SAM

My fiancée, Katya. We're soul mates. We're getting married!

SHERIFF

Congratulations.

Arvid nudges the Sheriff disapprovingly.

ARVID

Have you ever actually met Katya?

SAM

Nope. But we've been emailing every day for months. I feel like I've known her my whole life.

ARVID

You know, I hear with these kind of arrangements... well, often things just aren't... *as advertised*.

Sam shrugs and smiles even wider.

SAM

All I know is she's smart and funny and loves me for who I am. Wrist scars and all. I know who she is
(points to his heart)
in here. We're in love. And that's all that matters.

ARVID

That's nice and all, but love is a fickle thing, Sam. It can be very depressing when it goes sour. Unbearable. Soul crushing, in fact.

Sam isn't listening. He approaches the portrait of Katya and stares, tears of joy welling up.

SUICIDE SAM

With that big share this year, think of the rich American life I can give her. I finally have something to live for!

Arvid shoots the Sheriff a desperate look.

SHERIFF

Well, that's a kick in the teeth.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

At center court, Debbie practices a song and dance with her fellow pageant contestants: Molly Lovey, Lois, and Tabby.

Watching with a critical eye is PENELOPE EXETER, a butch, tough looking woman dressed in a prison guard uniform.

The number is clumsily choreographed and the girls sing along to a cheesy instrumental recording. They are not in sync.

GIRLS

(singing)

Who will it be? Who will it be?
Maybe you, or you, or maybe me!

PENELOPE

Make sure you wait until the "me"
to point at yourself! Not on the
"maybe"! The gesture should
surprise the audience!

GIRLS

(singing)

With a glint in his eye, and the
gleam of his knife, he might come
for you, he might take your life!

PENELOPE

Look around now girls! Like he
could jump out at any moment!

The girls move into a chorus line formation.

PENELOPE

Kick two-three! And die! Two-three!

Each girl, in her unique way, "dies" and falls to the floor.

PENELOPE

And dance! Two-three...

The girls spring up and get their grooves on.

PENELOPE

And die! Two-three... Okay, nice
work ladies! Take five.

The girls get up and grab towels and water bottles.

Debbie notices a man across the room, standing next to a piano, discussing some sheet music with a PIANIST.

DEBBIE

(to Lois)

Who's that?

LOIS
That's our emcee.

DEBBIE
Really? I thought it was Freddy
Kruger this year.

LOIS
That's him. That's Robert Englund.

And so it is. In his jazz pants and long scarf, ROBERT ENGLUND looks less like a horror icon and more like a chorus line member straight from central casting.

He demonstrates to Penelope and the pianist some soft shoe skills. They shake their heads disapprovingly.

LOIS
What? Did you expect him to have
the glove and sweater?

Molly appears between the girls. Lois dutifully disappears.

MOLLY
I have to give you credit, Debbie
Sue. Every year, you keep coming
back. If I were you I wouldn't even
bother showing up. Or waking up.

DEBBIE
If I were you, Molly, I wouldn't be
so full of myself.

MOLLY
Oh yes you would! Because if you
were me, you'd be pretty, a great
screamer, and come Saturday, a
three-time Scream Queen.

DEBBIE
Don't count your chickens before
they hatch.

MOLLY
I don't have any chickens! How
retarded are you? Just do us a
favor this year, Debbie Sue. Do
something-- *anything*-- so you don't
embarrass us. Again.

Debbie glares at Molly with anger and determination.

INT. SERIAL KILLER MUSEUM - DAY

Debbie marches with purpose into the dark building. She makes her way past tourists who admire creepy displays and dioramas that depict famous serial killers:

A John Wayne Gacy diorama shows Gacy dressed as a clown. A group of shirtless, wary teenaged boys stand behind him.

The Son Of Sam diorama depicts David Berkowitz in a small New York apartment. The Webers, the tourist family, mill around the diorama. Mom and Dad cheerfully examine Berkowitz as he holds his head, tormented. A German Shepard and Black Labrador howl at him. The Weber girl and boy pet the dogs.

Debbie arrives at "A Salute to Wisconsin", which features Jeffrey Dahmer and Ed Gein in a chummy moment. Dahmer points to a refrigerator full of body parts, while Gein poses proudly in a suit of human skin.

This is where Debbie finds Finn, kneeling next to the fridge, filling it with lifelike human heads.

DEBBIE

Finn? Hi, it's Debbie Sue Morning.

Finn looks up briefly and then returns to his task.

DEBBIE

Whatcha doing?

FINN

Putting heads in the fridge.

DEBBIE

That's cool.

She watches him work for an uneasy moment.

FINN

What's up? You want something?

DEBBIE

Yes. I want your help with my talent act. For the pageant.

FINN

No.

DEBBIE

Because I really need something special this year and you're obviously very skilled...

FINN

No.

DEBBIE

So if you have a little time...

FINN

Look. I have to finish these displays and rebuild the Headless Shriners and... I'm just too busy for song and dance and jazz hands.

DEBBIE

Okay. Okay. Sorry to bother you.

She turns away, embarrassed and defensive. After a step, she turns back, with more than a little attitude.

DEBBIE

F.Y.I., my act is gonna be a public execution. *Without* jazz hands.

She gesticulates sarcastically and stomps away. Until...

FINN

Hold up. Execution? Like what?

DEBBIE

Um... Like, maybe a stoning?

FINN

That's all right. I guess.

DEBBIE

Or an electric chair?

FINN

(a little more excited)
Okay. Yeah.

DEBBIE

Or a firing squad!

Finn's eyes widen with excitement, but he plays it cool.

FINN

I guess I could give you a couple hours tomorrow. But that's it.

Debbie also tries to play it cool. She politely nods and smiles, and calmly disappears into the shadowy museum. But, once gone from view, Finn hears her shout out "woo-hoo!"

EXT. ARVID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front porch is filled with kids and their parents. June Morning is in the center, reading from a children's book.

On the cover is an illustration of a sinister figure holding a bloody knife. The title: ANTI-CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN.

JUNE

(reading)

As you sit here tonight, he's sharpening his knives, and making a list of who lives and who dies. He'll come through the window, and make such a clatter, some poor soul will scream and there'll be such a splatter.

The kids hang on every word. So does Eagle Feather's giant henchman. He sits among the children, towering over them.

On the opposite side of the porch, Arvid sits privately with The Sheriff and Eagle Feather.

In Arvid's hand is a business card. Printed on it are whimsical musical notes, along with: JERGUS DAAR, CERTIFIED VOCAL COACH. Arvid and The Sheriff stare at it skeptically.

EAGLE FEATHER

Jergus Daar. Very professional. Very discreet. Competitive rates. A true gentleman. Call him. Tonight.

ARVID

I'm not really interested in singing lessons.

EAGLE FEATHER

I think you'll find Mr. Daar has other talents that will be of use.

When his wink is met with blank stares, Eagle Feather runs his finger across his throat for clarity.

SHERIFF

Not a chance.

ARVID

We have things under control,
Chief.

EAGLE FEATHER

I am not Chief. I am Director of
Publicity and Special Events. And
it sounds to me like you're
striking out. The dead pool jackpot
isn't getting any smaller, friends.
And, frankly, this uncertainty
makes me nervous. Now stop wasting
time. Call Jergus Daar.

The Sheriff takes Daar's card out of Arvid's hands and makes
a show of ripping it into pieces.

SHERIFF

Like the man said, we have things
under control. Friend.

The Sheriff sprinkles the shredded card in front of Eagle
Feather and stomps off the porch.

Arvid smiles apologetically to Eagle Feather and begins
picking up the scraps. He offers a handful of the destroyed
card to Eagle Feather who in turn offers him a fresh card.

Arvid takes the new business card from Eagle Feather, gives
it a quick, ashamed glance, and puts it in his pocket. Eagle
Feather gives him an approving nod.

JUNE

(reading)

You can scream and shout and jump
up and down, but you'd better watch
out, because Anti-Claus is coming
to town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Festival goers fill the street under blue sky and bright sun.
A banner hangs above the street: RUN FOR YOUR LIFE 5K RACE.
Beneath the banner, a hundred runners are lined up.

One of the runners is the patriarch of the tourist family,
The Webers. On the sidelines, his wife and children cheer
him. His son wears a bloody, Jason-style hockey mask.

On a platform near the starting line, Arvid stands with bullhorn in hand.

ARVID
Ladies and gentleman welcome to Run
For Your Life!

The announcement is greeted with enthusiastic applause.

ARVID
Brought to you by our dear friends
at Wampum Casino!

People clap politely.

ARVID
(squinting into the sun)
I know the weather isn't
cooperating, but I'm told by the
end of the week we can expect
overcast skies with a good chance
of showers!

More applause.

ARVID
Now. At the sound of the starting
gun... run for your life!

Amid whoops and hollers, Arvid raises a starter's pistol.

ARVID
On your mark... Get set...

He brings the gun down on the runners. He fires with a loud BANG. And again. He fires off all the rounds with glee. The runners take off wildly, as if truly running for their lives.

ARVID
Get running, folks, 'cause here
comes the pace group...

A group of four men stand behind the starting line, each one holding a chainsaw. They fire up their power tools in unison and then take off after the racers.

Mr. Weber, who is waving at his kids on the sidelines, sees the pace group and freaks out. He sprints ahead of as many runners as he can. His family loves it.

Arvid steps down off the platform. The Sheriff is waiting for him, along with reporter Griff Grimes. Arvid looks quizzically at the wide grin on The Sheriff's face.

ARVID
What's going on?

SHERIFF
Griff has news!

GRIMES
Mr. Mayor, do you have a comment
about your predecessor?

ARVID
Norm? What about him?

GRIMES
He got back from Rochester last
night.

SHERIFF
Cancer!

GRIMES
Doctors told him his pancreas is
rotten with the stuff.

Now Arvid is smiling. Grimes is perplexed.

ARVID
What are his chances?

GRIMES
Like, one in a million.

ARVID
(under his breath)
I'll take those odds.

GRIMES
Pardon?

ARVID
Did they give him a time frame?

GRIMES
Said he won't see Labor Day.

Arvid and The Sheriff exchange smiles and confident looks.
The mystified reporter walks away shaking his head.

SHERIFF

So. How do we pitch it to Norm?

ARVID

"Death with dignity."

SHERIFF

Has a nice ring to it. But will he go for it?

EXT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

On the back porch, Arvid and The Sheriff sit on a porch swing. Across from them, Norm Doleman rocks in a rocker.

ARVID

So what do you think?

We now see that Doleman is very, very dead. His eyes and mouth hang open and a few flies crawl on his pallid face.

SHERIFF

I think he'll go for it.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

A stereo blasts indie rock, echoing beneath high ceilings. Tools, wood, paint, make-up supplies, and the occasional rubber body part, are strewn everywhere.

In the middle of the room, Debbie stands in a bulky white shirt. Finn fusses with charges and squibs underneath it.

FINN

This is gonna be sick. You're gonna blow apart like Pacino in Scarface.

DEBBIE

That's good, right?

FINN

(nods)

Sick.

DEBBIE

So is this the kind of work you do down in St. Paul?

FINN

Not so much.

He pulls a bunch of loose wires from the charges to a workbench and begins attaching them to a detonator box.

DEBBIE

You're not making stuff for movies?

FINN

Sure I am. I make popcorn and pop and liquid cheese.

(Debbie doesn't get it)
I work at a theater.

DEBBIE

Oh. That's cool.

FINN

Not really. But I also do some props and effects here and there. Like community theater, Halloween, a couple commercials...

DEBBIE

Really? Anything I've seen?

FINN

Wacky Jack's Used Car Asylum? You know, "I'm so committed to making crazy deals, I've been committed!"

DEBBIE

No way! I love that one!

FINN

Yeah. I made his lobotomy scar. Just a little foam latex.

DEBBIE

Wow. Impressive!

FINN

Nah. It's cheesy. I really want to make horror flicks. I'm just super into blood and gore.

DEBBIE

You can always come home for that.

Finn attaches the final wire.

FINN

Okay. Any last words?

DEBBIE

Um... let me think--

With an explosion of fake blood, a ridiculous amount of squibs erupt on Debbie's midsection, arms and back.

Finn watches, awed by the bloody spectacle. After a long moment, the "carnage" ends. He waits for Debbie's reaction.

DEBBIE

That... was... AWESOME!

Her blood stained face breaks into a wide grin. She jumps around with excitement. Finn joins her celebration for a moment before his professional perfectionism kicks in.

FINN

No. We can do better.

LATER

Debbie is seated in a replica electric chair. She is strapped in and wears a metal cap with wires extending from it.

FINN

Okay. I rigged this so when I hit the switch, sparks will fly from your head. You just shake and thrash like you're getting fried.

DEBBIE

Like how?

FINN

Like you're getting electrocuted.

Debbie shakes around, but it looks more like she's doing the hokey pokey than getting juiced.

FINN

Wilder. Like you can't control which direction your body goes.

She tries again. Still lame. Finn stifles a laugh.

FINN

Get up.

She stands and he takes her seat. He places the metal cap on his head and points her to an electric switch box.

FINN

Hit it.

She does. An explosion of sparks shoots from Finn's head. He begins to convulse and jerk like a madman. Debbie laughs.

Finn hams it up for her as the sparks cascade around him.

With a pop, the lights go out. The radio goes silent.

FINN

We *definitely* can do better.

LATER

Debbie stands on a stool, a noose around her neck. She wears a body harness which is attached to a cable that runs up to the ceiling. Finn tightens the harness.

DEBBIE

So is Special Effects Wizard your obituary headline?

FINN

My what?

DEBBIE

You know. The big accomplishment that defines your life. "Finn Olmsted, Special Effects Wizard, Dies". Instead of, "Finn Olmsted, Some Dude, Dies".

FINN

(laughing)

Yeah, I guess. What's yours?

DEBBIE

"Debbie Sue Morning, Scream Queen, Dies."

FINN

That's it?

DEBBIE

That's not enough?

FINN

Well... you're gonna have a lot of life left after the pageant.

DEBBIE

Depends on what happens at the pageant. I mean, if I win I'll be an ambassador of the festival forever. If I lose, I'll probably leave town in shame.

FINN

Then I hope you lose.

Debbie lets out a startled gasp.

FINN

I could use a friend in St. Paul.

Her outrage melts into a sweet, bashful smile. Finn smiles back. Then he kicks the stool out from under her.

The rope goes tight. Debbie grip the noose around her neck and makes choking noises. She kicks her legs wildly.

Finn's mischievous grin turns to fear.

FINN

Oh my God! Debbie Sue!

Finn hugs Debbie around her legs and lifts to create slack. He desperately tries to reach the stool with his foot.

FINN

Breathe! Hang on!

Debbie Sue begins to laugh. He looks at her, startled.

DEBBIE

You are *such* a sucker!

She laughs in his face, and he joins in. When the laughter ends, he still holds her in his arms. It's awkward.

DEBBIE

So? What do you think?

FINN

I think I'd like to take you to the movies tonight.

DEBBIE

I mean about the execution.

FINN

You'll make a beautiful corpse.

She giggles self-consciously.

FINN

And one more thing...

He lets go of her and gives her a push. Once again she swings from her noose rig, laughing and kicking.

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Arvid and The Sheriff carry Doleman through the back door. They sit the dead man at the kitchen table.

ARVID

This couldn't have worked out better! Nobody has to die-- who wasn't already headed in that direction, anyway-- and we still have a victim for the dead pool. Everybody wins.

SHERIFF

Except for Norm.

ARVID

We just need to make sure nobody sees him until Saturday night. We add a little slice across his neck. Voila. Nobody knows the difference.

The sound of the front door opening freezes them.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Man alive!

The plus-size NURSE WINNIE waddles through the door, medical bag in hand and Coke-bottle glasses on her sweaty face.

WINNIE

It's a hot one today!
(sees the men, startled)
Who's that?
(squinting)
Mayor Morning? Sheriff?

The men nervously stammer greetings. Winnie pulls her glasses off and wipes them dry.

WINNIE

Is Mr. Doleman with you?

Arvid coughs and mumbles a response on Doleman's behalf. The Sheriff raises the dead man's arm and waves it.

Winnie squints in their direction and waves back. She puts the glasses back on her head.

WINNIE

Hi, Mr. D! I'm gonna visit the
ladies room and then I'll shoot you
up. Sounds like you could use it.

She slowly starts up the stairs.

ARVID

Get him downstairs.

They grab the body and rush it to the basement stairs.

BASEMENT

Arvid and The Sheriff descend the stairs, carefully carrying Doleman. The basement is dark and dingy and cluttered with old tools, appliances, and a long lifetime of junk.

At the bottom of the steps, they plunk Doleman down in a ratty old lawn chair.

SHERIFF

Now what?

ARVID

Leave him here.

SHERIFF

Til Saturday? Do you understand
anything about decomposition?
Especially in summer heat? He'll be
a puddle by Saturday.

Arvid sets his eyes on an enormous twenty-five cubic foot chest freezer. Easily the size of a sofa.

ARVID

No he won't.

SHERIFF

(eyeballing the freezer)
So much for death with dignity.

The distant sound of a toilet flush and water rushing through creaky old pipes stops them cold.

ARVID

You unload the freezer. I'll unload Winnie.

FIRST FLOOR

Winnie lumbers down the stairs, slowly carrying her wide berth from the second floor back to the first.

She picks up her bag and walks into the kitchen. Nobody there. Her head swivels, looking for her patient.

She sees the back door open. Once at the door, she finds Arvid outside, walking toward her, huffing and puffing with extreme exaggeration.

WINNIE

Where's Mr. D?

ARVID

He just took off running.

WINNIE

Mr. D? Running?

ARVID

I tried to stop him, but he was too quick.

WINNIE

That man couldn't outrun a brick.

ARVID

He's scared of you, Winnie.
Adrenaline took over. Never seen anything like it.

The nurse shakes her head in disbelief.

WINNIE

Man. They all go crazy at the end.
You tell Mr. D I'll be back. And not to waste my time.

She pushes past Arvid.

WINNIE

It's not like I don't have better things to do. It's Serial Killer Days for Pete's sake!

BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Arvid and The Sheriff look down wearily into the freezer.

Doleman's body lies within, covered with frozen foods. Arvid places a box of frozen fish over his face and closes the lid.

They solemnly look at the Frigidaire coffin. Then they pick up paper bags overflowing with frozen meats.

EXT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The men emerge carrying their bags of freezer goods.

SHERIFF

What do we do about Winnie?

ARVID

We can't have her snooping around
the rest of the week. So I guess
we'll have to kill her.

The Sheriff snaps a mortified look at Arvid before noticing his mischievous smirk.

ARVID

No, I think ol' Norm will have to
put in a call to have Winnie fired.

The bottom of one of The Sheriff's bags breaks free. With a clink, icy packages of meat fall to the pavement.

ACROSS THE STREET

Mrs. Flatwire's house stands across the road.

The old woman sits in her picture window, perched atop her mobility scooter. She looks on with suspicion as Arvid helps The Sheriff pick up the fallen freezer items.

Watching them. Cursing them.

EXT. DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

Cars stream into the theater. A roadside sign reads: DARK SKY DRIVE-IN. On the marquee: ROBERT ENGLUND'S HOME ON DERANGED.

CLOSE ON SCREEN

A cartoon car is parked at a cartoon drive-in. The rascally, animated teen behind the wheel slurps the last of his soda and tosses it to the ground. Instantly, a cartoon cop enters, brandishes his club, and beats the teen to a bloody pulp.

A title card fades up: PLEASE DON'T LITTER.

DEBBIE & FINN

carry popcorn and soda and walk past the rows of parked cars.

Molly Lovey steps in front of them. Behind her are some pretty teen girls and jock guys with hockey haircuts.

MOLLY

Well, well, well! What have we here? Finn are you babysitting for Mayor Morning?

Debbie glares. Finn smirks.

MOLLY

Don't tell me you two are hooking up! Because I don't want to live in a world where that's possible. I'd rather kill myself.

DEBBIE

Okay, then. We're hooking up.

Finn laughs at the dig. Molly doesn't.

FINN

We've been working on Debbie Sue's talent act.

MOLLY

Really.

DEBBIE

It's going to be amazing.

Molly makes an exaggerated expression of fear.

MOLLY

Oh. My. God. I should just quit right now!

Her posse cracks up.

MOLLY

Here's the thing. I'm sure whatever
you whipped up is pretty rad. And
that's great because it makes
Debbie a little less embarrassing.

She throws her arm around Debbie.

MOLLY

But, when it comes down to it, all
that matters is the scream. And we
both know you can't do it, Debbie
Sue. Everybody knows.

Debbie pushes Molly's arm away. The Queen tosses her hair and
walks off with her friends, laughing all the way.

FINN

Don't worry about her. She's
insecure and she's scared of you
and she's--

DEBBIE

Right. She's right. It doesn't
matter if we shoot me, shock me, or
hang me. I can't beat her if I
don't figure out how to--

A movie SCREAM turns their attention to the distant screen.

ON MOVIE SCREEN

Robert Englund, dressed as a cowboy, slices a chainsaw
through a screaming woman in period schoolmarm dress. Blood
covers the screen. Cheers erupt from the drive-in audience.

FINN

Yeah! Did you see that blood spray?
Oh my God! It's still going!

He notices Debbie doesn't share his enthusiasm.

FINN

Cheer up, Debbie Sue. We still have
a couple days to get you to scream
(points to screen)
just like that.

DEBBIE

We?

FINN

You and me.

DEBBIE

You really think you can make me
scream?

Finn flashes a mischievous smile.

INT. MAIN STREET TAVERN - NIGHT

The place is packed. A banner reads: SERIAL KILLER DAYS MEAT
RAFFLE. Beneath it is a table full of meat sealed in plastic.

A polka band plays to a full dancefloor. The Webers (our
favorite tourist family) are in the mix. Dad two steps with
his daughter, while mom tries to teach her son.

Arvid, the Sheriff, and June Morning sit at a table full of
fries and wings and beer, clearly in a celebrating spirit.

Eagle Feather and his giant associate stop at the table.

EAGLE FEATHER

This looks like quite the
celebration.

Arvid gives him a smug, winking smile.

ARVID

Indeed it is! Indeed. It. Is.

ON THE STAGE

The band finishes their song to fervent applause. Vin Melby
takes the stage.

VIN

Before I call the winning number, I
want to say thanks to Norm Doleman
for donating forty pounds of beef
and venison. Get well, Norm.

BACK TO ARVID'S TABLE

Arvid and The Sheriff exchange sly glances. Eagle Feather
looks at the stage and meat table with confusion.

EAGLE FEATHER

What's going on here anyway?

SHERIFF
What? The meat raffle?

EAGLE FEATHER
Meat raffle?

SHERIFF
You buy a ticket. If your number is
called, you win a load of dead
animal. Meat raffle.

ON THE STAGE

Vin digs his hand into a box of tickets.

VIN
Three-six-seven, nine-seven-three!

Mr. Weber looks hopefully at his ticket. Disappointment
quickly registers and he throws it to the ground.

BACK TO ARVID'S TABLE

Eagle Feather motions his henchman toward the stage.

EAGLE FEATHER
(to henchman)
You better go get us some tickets.
(to Arvid)
Arvid, may we speak privately?

BACK ROOM

Arvid and Eagle Feather are squeezed in among kegs and cases
of liquor. The din of the tavern bleeds through the walls.

EAGLE FEATHER
I take it from your party and your
smugness that you found your
volunteer.

ARVID
More or less.

EAGLE FEATHER
I wish I shared your confidence.
What if this volunteer changes his
mind? What if he gets cold feet?

Arvid can't help but smirk.

EAGLE FEATHER

I'm not kidding! The dead pool jackpot is already higher than we ever imagined. We can't afford another glitch.

ARVID

Eagle Feather, my friend, nothing else will go wrong. I guarantee it.

EAGLE FEATHER

Good.

From his jacket pocket, Eagle Feather produces a thick, folded stack of papers. He shoves it in Arvid's hand.

ARVID

What's this?

EAGLE FEATHER

Your guarantee! You agree that the terms of the dead pool will be met.

ARVID

Or what?

EAGLE FEATHER

Keep reading.

Arvid reads the document with a look of alarm.

EAGLE FEATHER

I need to know you're motivated to do whatever it takes to see this through.

ARVID

But this is outrageous!

EAGLE FEATHER

You're positive your volunteer will go through with it?

ARVID

Yes. Absolutely.

EAGLE FEATHER

Then the outrageousness of this agreement is irrelevant.

Eagle Feather holds out a pen to Arvid.

IN THE TAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

Arvid plops back down next to The Sheriff and June. They give him questioning looks. He just shrugs: it's no big deal.

On stage, Max, the innkeeper, whispers into Vin's ear. The man's eyes go wide as saucers.

VIN
(to Max)
You're kidding me...
(to crowd)
Quiet please! I need your
attention. I have some very
important news.

Vin looks directly at Arvid.

VIN
Arvid? Do you have something you
want to tell us?

Arvid shifts in his seat and gives a nervous smile and shrug.

VIN
Then it's up to me to spill the
beans. The dead pool jackpot has
just passed ten million dollars!

The tavern erupts with cheers and screams and whistles.

The band starts up again. Joy is glued to every face as people dance, hug, and talk excitedly.

Arvid and The Sheriff watch their neighbors carry on.

ARVID
Aren't you glad we didn't ruin this
for everybody?

The Sheriff nods and slaps his friend on the shoulder.

Arvid takes June's hand and pulls her to the dancefloor, where they join the fray with an enthusiastic two-step.

EXT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

It's a quiet, peaceful morning on the block. Until...

A LOUD, SCREECHING, WARBLLED SHRIEK pierces the air.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Debbie gamely lets loose her scream. Like a wounded Hyena. Finn winces and tries to make it look like a smile.

Mercifully, he stops her.

FINN

Hold up. What do you think about when you scream?

DEBBIE

Uh... screaming as best I can?

FINN

You don't think about being shot, or smothered or disemboweled?

DEBBIE

No.

FINN

Okay. What's something that really, really scares you?

Debbie thinks about it. And thinks. And thinks. Eventually, she shrugs apologetically.

FINN

There's got to be something. Have you ever been in a life threatening situation? Or witnessed a shocking, grisly death?

DEBBIE

Nope.

Finn looks at her curiously and circles her. When he gets behind Debbie, he suddenly yells right in the girl's ear.

Debbie doesn't react to his violent outburst. Not even the slightest jump. Finn exhales sharply.

DEBBIE

Am I hopeless?

FINN

No. Just fearless.

DEBBIE

Same difference.

Her chin hits her chest. Totally defeated.

FINN

Come on! We just need to find something that scares you. That's all. It's no big deal!

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Finn and Debbie stand before a ten-foot tall chain link fence. Behind it is a maze of trashed cars and various scrap metal. A sign reads: BEWARE OF DOGS.

FINN

Ready?

Debbie nods. They scale the fence and jump to the other side.

Soon, a pair of pit bulls appear, baring their teeth, growling, and slobbering. The growls quickly become barks.

Finn grabs Debbie's hand and runs. The dogs give chase. He looks scared out of his mind. Debbie, however, laughs like it's the best roller coaster she's ever been on.

They run between, inside, and on top of cars, barely escaping the gnashing jaws of the guard dogs.

Eventually, they climb atop a broken down RV to safety. Debbie continues to laugh as Finn shakes with terror.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A rural dirt road. On one end stands Debbie. On the other, Finn revs the engine of an old Chevy pick-up.

He releases the brake, kicking up a flurry of dust and dirt as the vehicle picks up speed.

Debbie doesn't even twitch as the metal monster bears down.

The time has come. Who's chicken?

Finn slams the brakes and cranks the wheel into a turn. Dust and dirt fill the air.

When the air clears, Debbie stands in the same spot. A layer of dirt on her face. The truck rests in a ditch. Finn emerges, shaken and frustrated.

DEBBIE
How'd I do?

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Wielding an axe, Finn leads Debbie into a wooded area. They come to a tree stump and a pile of chopped wood.

FINN
Put your hand down there.

DEBBIE
What are you going to do?

FINN
I'll show you.

He places his left hand on the stump.

FINN
You put your hand down like this.
And I'll...

He raises the axe and brings it down. Finn screams as a burst of blood hits him in the face. He holds his handless, bloody wrist up to his face as it squirts uncontrollably.

Debbie calmly picks up the hand. She notices it's latex.

DEBBIE
Sweet!

Finn stops screaming and stares at her with disappointment. His wrist keeps pumping blood. She begins to giggle.

FINN
You think it's funny?

He raises the axe and marches toward her.

FINN
Is this funny?

She shrieks with laughter and takes off running. He drops the ax and chases her with his spurting, bloody stump.

EXT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Arvid approaches the house, looking around suspiciously. He empties the mailbox and picks the newspaper off the porch.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

The headline: MAKING A KILLING! DEAD POOL JACKPOT TO DIE FOR.

BACK TO SCENE

Bill Crawmeyer walks by, led by a dog on a leash.

CRAWMEYER

Hi, Arvid! Looks like we might get
some rain yet, eh?

ARVID

Sure hope so!

CRAWMEYER

Well, say hi to Norm for me.

He continues on. Arvid watches him nervously. When he's out of sight, he reaches under the welcome mat for a key, unlocks the door and slips inside.

ACROSS THE STREET

From her perch in the picture window, Mrs. Flatwire watches Arvid enter her neighbor's house. Her face is locked in the now familiar expression of distrust and loathing.

The old woman throws her scooter in reverse and disappears from the window.

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Arvid stares down at Doleman in the freezer.

ARVID

Hi Norm.

He closes the lid and piles cardboard boxes on top.

Behind him, through the basement window, we see the wheels of Mrs. Flatwire's scooter pull up outside. Her face leans down, and she peers in the window curiously.

Arvid finishes up. He spins around and heads to the stairs, passing the window. Mrs. Flatwire and her scooter are gone.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Debbie and Finn stand in front of a large screen TV.

FINN

Okay. So you are kind of hopeless.

DEBBIE

Thanks. Real encouraging.

FINN

If you don't have your own fear,
you're going to have to steal it.

DEBBIE

From who?

FINN

The masters.

Finn aims a remote control and hits play.

Fay Wray comes on screen, belting out her classic scream.
Janet Leigh follows. Then Barbara Steele. Jamie Lee Curtis.
One classic horror movie screamer after the next.

FINN

Come on. Scream along. Think of it
as karaoke... in Hell.

Debbie tries, but struggles to match the pros.

FINN

Higher. Try to match the pitch.
Don't worry about volume yet.
Higher. Good.

As he motivates her, he stuffs earplugs in his ears.

LATER

Debbie is in front of a mirror. Taped to the glass is a movie
still of Janet Leigh screaming. Debbie's face is contorted
and twitching as she tries to match the legend's expression.

Finn stands behind her with a stop watch in his hand.

FINN

Keep it up. Stick with it. Almost
there. Three, two, one. Stop.

Debbie's face relaxes. She rubs her cheeks. Finn swaps out
photographs on the mirror.

FINN

Three sets of Barbara Steele. Go.

He hits the stopwatch. She snaps into a scream face.

LATER

Back in front of the TV. Debbie screams along with the loop of legends. She's more at ease and a little less dysphonic.

FINN

Deep breaths. Good. Louder.

She increases her volume.

FINN

Keep the pitch steady. Louder. Go for it. Really belt it out!

Debbie pushes her voice into a coughing fit. Finn pats her back sympathetically and hands her a bottle of water.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DEAD POOL TICKET BOOTH - DAY

A SERIES OF IMAGES ON VIDEO:

The dead pool ticket booth bustling... the digital display with the names of the townies... the display reading \$10 Million... and mucho dinero changing hands.

T.V. REPORTER (V.O.)

Here in Standard Springs, thousands of vacationers are betting that somebody's last day will be their lucky day! The Serial Killer Days Dead Pool has added new excitement to what has become the state's most popular summer destination.

CUT TO LIVE:

The T.V. REPORTER stands with Arvid in front of the ticket booth. She holds a microphone and talks to a news camera held by her CAMERAMAN.

In the background, The Weber Family nudges into frame and waves and giggles like they've never seen a camera before.

T.V. REPORTER

With me is the visionary behind Serial Killer Days, Mayor Arvid Morning.

(MORE)

T.V. REPORTER (cont'd)
Mayor, tell me about all the buzz
leading up to Saturday night. How
pumped are you for the weekend?

ARVID
Believe me, Saturday can't come
fast enough.

T.V. REPORTER
Any idea who the victim might be
this year?

Arvid forces a laugh. Really forces it.

ARVID
No... Nobody knows... Could be any
of us. That's the fun.

T.V. REPORTER
Care to take a guess?

ARVID
No. But your viewers definitely
should. Keep buying those tickets!
Could be worth lots of money!

T.V. REPORTER
Actually, I bought a ticket
yesterday that has your name on it.

ARVID
Oh?

T.V. REPORTER
I'm not saying I hope you-- you
know...

ARVID
Well, thank you. And thanks for
playing. Every ticket makes the
jackpot bigger!

T.V. REPORTER
I would like to win though. If I'm
being honest.

EXT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Nurse Winnie marches resolutely up the walk. Her wide frame
climbs the porch stairs with surprising agility.

She bangs on the door and rings the bell.

WINNIE

Mr. Doleman! It's Winnie! You can't fire me! And you can't hide from me! Now open up and take your shots like a man!

She gets no response. She leans down and pulls back the welcome mat. No key.

With a clank and creak, the front door opens. Winnie looks up to find Mrs. Flatwire in the doorway, sitting on her scooter, holding out the key in her hand.

WINNIE

What are you doing here?

MRS. FLATWIRE

Waiting for Mr. Doleman.

WINNIE

He ain't here? Son of a biscuit!
Always wasting my time...

Mrs. Flatwire disarms Winnie with a meek look, turning on the sweet old lady charm.

MRS. FLATWIRE

While you're here, Winnie, would you be a dear and give a frail old woman a hand? I can't manage the stairs on my own.

WINNIE

Why do you need to get upstairs?

MRS. FLATWIRE

I don't. I need to go down.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Debbie and Finn stand in front of the TV. She has her eyes closed. He talks in soothing tones.

FINN

Just focus your mind. You're Vera Miles in Psycho.

He hits play. Debbie opens her eyes. On the TV is the climax of "Psycho." Vera Miles sneaks down the stairs in the Bates house. Finn narrates the action.

FINN
You see Norman. You hide. You
notice the basement door...

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Flatwire is parked at the top of the basement stairs.

MRS. FLATWIRE
Do you see a freezer?

WINNIE (O.S.)
I see it!

MRS. FLATWIRE
Well, what's in it? Hurry!

WINNIE (O.S.)
Keep your darn wig on!

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

On the TV, Vera Miles enters Norman Bates' basement.

FINN
You creep into the shadowy cellar.
Norman could jump out at any
moment. You open a dusty door. And
that's when you see...

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Winnie stands before Doleman's frozen resting spot. She
clears it of the boxes and junk stacked on its lid.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Finn and Debbie watch Vera Miles move toward Mrs. Bates.

FINN
You creep up slowly...

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Winnie opens the lid of the freezer. She looks at what
appears to be a freezer full of frozen fish.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Vera Miles touches Mrs. Bates' shoulder, slowly turning the old lady's face to camera.

FINN

You turn her around...

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Winnie holds a package of the frozen fish in her hand, looking at it hungrily. Like she skipped lunch.

She notices a bright silver wristwatch poking out beneath the frozen foods. Confused, she reaches for another package...

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Mrs. Bates is revealed to be a preserved corpse. Vera Miles wears a look of sheer terror.

FINN

And now... you...

INT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Doleman's freezer-burned face stares at Winnie.

The nurse recoils. Her eyes widen. Her mouth drops open. She gasps for air, reels back and then...

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Debbie Sue screams. High and steady.

Finn watches her reverently. His face says it all: not bad. Until she starts to giggle uncontrollably.

FINN

What are you doing?

DEBBIE

That was pretty good, right?

FINN

Until you started giggling.

DEBBIE

I know. I know. It's just... I
can't believe it. That was good.

FINN

Yes. It was. Now stop it.

She purses her lips and scowls. And then busts up again.

EXT. DOLEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The coroner and his assistant bring out Doleman's body.
Melting ice drips from the body bag onto the walk.

Reporter Griff Grimes stands in the yard with a small band of
neighbors, a crying Winnie, and a very animated, very angry
Mrs. Flatwire.

The Terror Trolley pulls up to the curb. Mr. Weber is aboard
and he looks out at the crime scene excitedly.

MR. WEBER

Hey look! They're doing a crime
scene re-enactment! Come on,
everybody! Let's check it out!

He leads his family off the trolley. The Webers all sport t-
shirts that read: "WHAT WOULD DAHMER DO?" Another dozen
tourists follow. They push in behind the concerned neighbors.

Arvid emerges from the house. He looks sick to his stomach.
The Sheriff is close behind.

GRIMES

Mayor Morning! Sheriff! Griff
Grimes, Standard Springs Herald.
What happened in there?

ARVID

Looks like Norm was involved in an
unfortunate accident.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Oh, put a dirty sock in it! The man
was locked in a stinkin' freezer
and buried in frozen fish. If that
was an accident, I'm Myrna Loy!

Everyone looks to Arvid for explanation.

ARVID

Norm was very sick and facing an extremely painful death. Winnie can attest to the fact that he wasn't himself lately. I think it's safe to assume that Norm checked out on his own terms.

GRIMES

In a freezer full of fish?

ARVID

Let's not judge him. Let's applaud his courage. And originality.

Mrs. Flatwire zips her scooter up to Arvid.

MRS. FLATWIRE

You killed him, Arvid Morning! You wanted me dead and when I wouldn't play ball you killed him!

Arvid and The Sheriff say nothing, their faces devoid of expression. When mocking laughter begins to spread through the band of neighbors, Arvid joins in.

ARVID

Mrs. Flatwire, everybody! Our eldest citizen. Give her a hand!

His neighbors chuckle, and offer up patronizing applause for Mrs. Flatwire. Infuriated, the old woman zooms away, waving an angry fist in the air, shouting vows of vengeance.

The Webers and the gallery of tourists erupt in applause.

Arvid walks away from the crowd. He pulls out his wallet. Inside, he finds Jergus Daar's business card. He looks at it gravely for a moment before taking out his cell phone.

The Sheriff catches up to Arvid. He sees Daar's card and the phone. He forcefully grabs Arvid's wrist.

SHERIFF

What do you think you're doing?

ARVID

We're out of options, Sheriff. We don't have a choice.

SHERIFF

There's always a choice.

ARVID

There's too much to lose.

SHERIFF

You mean the dead pool? Come on! We can't lose what we don't have.

ARVID

It's losing what we have that worries me.

The Sheriff gives him an inquisitive look. Arvid shrugs and brushes it off.

SHERIFF

This time the town should decide what to do. Not us.

ARVID

There's no time for debate! We've got to act on behalf of everybody.

SHERIFF

What happened to "the Standard Springs way"? To "I believe in the people"? We re-built this town together, Arvid. Remember? We fed one another. Died for one another. Making a decision like this, independently, goes against everything this community is built on. Everything we stand for. Don't do it, Arvid. Don't make that call.

ARVID

I'm sorry, Sheriff. We have to.

SHERIFF

No. You have to. You're on your own, Arvid. But I guess you have been from the beginning.

With sadness, Arvid watches his friend walk away. He sighs, walks in the opposite direction, and punches Jergus Daar's number into his phone.

EXT. DAIRY FAIRY - DAY

This roadside ice cream stand is shaped like a giant soft serve cone with giant fairy wings on its back.

Arvid walks up and scans the crowd: families and kids, all in shorts and swimsuits. Except for one man who sits alone.

The man is dressed in a sharp grey suit with a crisp white shirt. Black Persol's rest on his angular face. He would be at home in the south of France. But this is central Minnesota. So this must be JERGUS DAAR.

ARVID

Mr. Daar?

JERGUS DAAR

Mayor Morning! I was afraid you wouldn't find me in this crowd.

ARVID

Lucky guess.

Arvid takes a seat across from Daar. He doesn't know how to begin. Daar, with his opaque smile, doesn't help him.

ARVID

So. You come highly recommended. Have you done a lot of work for Eagle Feather?

JERGUS DAAR

That's *his* business, Mr. Morning. Let's stick to *your* business. Tell me what exactly I can do for you.

ARVID

I need somebody, uh... killed.

JERGUS DAAR

Jesus! Shout it out why don't you? Where's your sense of decorum?

ARVID

You asked *exactly* what you can do!

JERGUS DAAR

Just talk in code. Okay? Now. We're talking about *vocal coaching*. So tell me about the *student*. Tenor or soprano?

ARVID

Actually, I'm hoping you can randomly pick somebody in our town and give them a *voice lesson*.

JERGUS DAAR
That's not how it works. I can't be
any part of that decision.

ARVID
Why not?

JERGUS DAAR
Because that would make me a--

Daar notices a FOUR-YEAR-OLD BOY with a chocolate covered
mouth staring at him.

JERGUS DAAR
--make me an M-U-R-D-E-R-E-R.

BOY
Murderer.

Daar shoots the boy a murderous look. The boy's MOTHER steps
in and quickly shoos him along.

ARVID
I really don't understand the
difference between that and--

JERGUS DAAR
Any sense of right or wrong is
attached to the decision. I'm an
amoral soldier, simply taking
orders. You don't blame a lowly
coal miner for air pollution! So
tell me more. Anything specific you
want taught in this lesson?

ARVID
Yes. We need a, uh...
(whispers)
slit throat--

JERGUS DAAR
Mother of pearl! What is this?
Amateur hour?

ARVID
I don't know the code for slit
throat.

JERGUS DAAR
Crimson necklace... Slovakian
smile... Ginzu hickey...

ARVID

Okay, okay. So can you do it?

JERGUS DAAR

When?

ARVID

Tomorrow night?

JERGUS DAAR

No. I'm booked on a flight to Buenos Aires. Don't ask. But if you happen to read next Tuesday's business section you should be able to do the math. Why does it have to be tomorrow?

ARVID

It's part of our... *recital schedule*.

JERGUS DAAR

Nice. I like that. What if I did it tonight and it wasn't discovered until tomorrow?

ARVID

Maybe. Depending on who you ki-- who you coach.

JERGUS DAAR

So pick someone who has no family, no friends, and won't be missed for a day. Can you think of anybody like that?

Arvid nods. Daar hands him a pen and napkin. Arvid takes a breath and scribbles the information.

ARVID

Tell me. Will it be... quick? You know... humane?

JERGUS DAAR

Mayor Morning, I'm a professional. And my mother raised me right. I am very respectful, and yes, humane.

Arvid hesitantly hands the napkin to Daar, who smiles appreciatively, but seems to be waiting for more. Arvid quickly gets the drift and digs into his pocket, pulling out a white envelope, thick with bills, and gives it to Daar.

JERGUS DAAR

Relax. You have nothing to worry about. It's as good as done.

Daar stands and extends his hand.

ARVID

Are you really a vocal coach?

Daar smiles mischievously, pats Arvid on the back, and walks away. After a moment of nervous hand wringing, Arvid hears a pitch-perfect tenor belting out "Che Gelida Manina" from La Boheme slowly disappearing into the distance.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

The bright Midway is packed with revelers. Food and games everywhere. Vendors wearing skull masks and monster costumes sell black balloons. Kids scream on the Scary-Go-Round.

Arvid walks hand in hand with June. He looks anxious. People greet him in passing. He nervously returns their greetings.

JUNE

Relax, Arvid.

Hearing Daar's words echoed doesn't help.

ARVID

I'll relax tomorrow night.

June stops and pulls Arvid around to face her.

JUNE

Everything will be fine. You worry yourself to death, but it always turns out great.

ARVID

I don't want to let everybody down.

JUNE

You never have.

Arvid smiles at her gratefully. Across the Midway, something catches his eye. He points it out to June:

Beneath a sign that reads, SHOOTING GALLERY, Debbie Sue watches Finn run wildly as a group of YOUNG MEN WITH RIFLES fire bean bags at him. She laughs as he yells and shrieks.

ARVID

What do you think of the kid?

JUNE

He's a little odd. But so is our daughter. Why? Are you jealous?

ARVID

Should I be?

JUNE

He did build her a gallows.

ARVID

I could have done that.

They laugh and June embraces him.

JUNE

Everything will be perfect, Arvid.

INT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Flatwire is asleep in bed, bathed in moonlight. Compared to when awake, she looks peaceful and happy and harmless.

At the foot of the bed stands Jergus Daar. He holds a shiny blade in white gloved hands. He takes a step forward.

Mrs. Flatwire's eyes pop open, startling Daar. The old lady is oddly unaffected by the knife-wielding intruder.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Are you here to kill me, young man?

JERGUS DAAR

I'm afraid so, ma'am.

MRS. FLATWIRE

It's a shame. In only two months time I would've made it to the century mark.

JERGUS DAAR

That would've been quite an achievement.

MRS. FLATWIRE

You seem like a nice boy. Would you give an old lady a moment to make peace with God before you proceed?

Daar looks at her, frail in bed. He sees a walker by the bed and folded up wheelchair against the wall. He walks to her bed side table and slices the phone cord with his knife.

JERGUS DAAR

Take your time, gentle soul.

The second he is gone, the peaceful visage of this "gentle soul" tightens into a wrinkled mask of rage.

DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Daar descends the stairs and paces the living room, softly singing "Addio, Fiorito Asil" from Madame Butterfly, and looking around for something to occupy his time.

He spots Flatwire's cabinet of Hummel Figurines. He approaches and looks at the morbid collection with amusement.

Behind him, we see the stair lift slowly descending.

He picks up a snow globe and shakes it. On its base is written "Serial Killer Days, Standard Springs, Minnesota". In the globe is a replica of Main Street fully decorated for the festival. The water in the snow globe is blood red.

A loud, intentional COUGH stops him in his tracks.

He spins around. Mrs. Flatwire sits on her mobility scooter, grasping a metal cane like a cudgel.

With lightning fast reflexes, she uses a cane to rap him between the legs three times in quick succession.

He doubles over. She hooks her cane around his collar and throws the scooter in reverse. She pulls him along for a couple steps before making a hard turn and swinging him into the wall. He collapses to the floor, writhing in pain.

The old lady drives the front wheel of her scooter onto his chest, pinning him to the floor.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Get your stinkin' hands off my
Hummel figures!

As he passes out, the snow globe rolls out of his hand.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

With the Shooting Gallery behind them, Debbie Sue and Finn walk the Midway. She carries a big stuffed corpse, the eyes are black x's and it has a felt slash across its throat.

Finn rubs his shoulders.

DEBBIE

You were great out there.

FINN

I think they only got me twice.

DEBBIE

You sounded good too. You'd make a great Scream Queen.

FINN

So will you.

She laughs dismissively. He stops and turns her to face him.

FINN

I'm serious. You can beat Molly.

DEBBIE

You don't believe that.

FINN

No. You don't believe it.

They stand there, eyes locked. Here comes the first kiss...

TABBY (O.S.)

Debbie Sue! Finn!

Or not. They turn to find Tabby and Lois coming their way. Both girls have black eyes. Freshly swollen.

DEBBIE

Oh my God! What happened?

TABBY

My little brother sucker punched me at the Dairy Fairy.

DEBBIE

No way! So close to the pageant. And Lois, how...?

LOIS

Miss Exeter said Tabby's shiner
showed creativity and commitment
and that the judges would notice.

TABBY

And that all the girls would do
well to follow my lead.

Their swollen eyes stare suggestively at Debbie.

DEBBIE

What if I don't want to get punched
in the face?

TABBY

Then you're in the wrong pageant!
I'm going to have my brother
freshen me up right before the
show. He could do you too.

(looks at Finn)

But I guess you have a better,
stronger, yummiier option.

Tabby and Lois walk off, giggling.

DEBBIE

Well? You heard her. You wanna mess
up my face?

He nods enthusiastically.

INT. FINN'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Debbie sits with her hair pulled back and a plastic apron
covering her. Finn ominously slips on rubber gloves.

FINN

Ready?

She nods. He goes to work...

SERIES OF SHOTS

Holding her face gently in his hands, he applies molding wax
around her eye, cheekbone, and upper lip, carefully smoothing
the edges of the wax with his fingers.

Using a sculpting spatula, he creates divots and cuts.

With a brush, he paints the inside of the cuts a dark red/black, and the swollen areas purplish.

FINN

Okay. Just the lips.

He delicately paints her swollen lip. He gets very close and examines his work seriously.

Debbie can't take anymore. She kisses him.

After a moment, he pulls back, a smile on his blood smeared mouth. He thumbs the ruined scar on her lip.

FINN

Guess I'll have to redo that.

DEBBIE

Me too.

She kisses him again.

EXT. ARVID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Arvid and June stroll up, arm in arm, laughing like teenagers. He is loose and carefree. Until...

MRS. FLATWIRE (O.S.)

Good evening, Arvid.

He stops. Stiffens. Turns his horrified face to see...

Mrs. Flatwire atop her scooter. In his yard. She is flanked by The Sheriff and townsfolk including The Gears, Bill Crawmeyer, Shelly, and Griff Grimes.

MRS. FLATWIRE

You look like you've seen a ghost.

The Sheriff's cruiser is parked in the driveway. Jergus Daar is handcuffed in back, his face covered in bruises and tears.

JERGUS DAAR

She tricked me, Mayor Morning! That old crust bucket tricked me!

JUNE

What's happening, Arvid?

The faces of his neighbors say it all: Mrs Flatwire with her accusing, hateful glare; The Sheriff's eyes filled with betrayal; the other townies are confused and frightened.

Arvid simply nods in defeat. He's busted.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Every citizen of Standard Springs is packed into the hall. Some of them (judging by their pajamas and bed-head) have been pulled out of bed.

Everyone stares in disbelief at Arvid, who stands before them, flanked by Eagle Feather and his massive bodyguard.

VIN

Why, Arvid? Why didn't you tell us the killer is dead?

ARVID

I didn't want to ruin festival week. There's a lot of money on the line. I didn't want to let you down.

SHELLY

You don't think that we should have a say in something that involves one of us dying?

GARVIN GEAR

Yeah! Who are you to decide who lives and dies?

His fellow citizens shout their agreement.

ARVID

This was a crisis situation that demanded leadership. I had to act on behalf of everybody. I--

VIN

I? What's all this "I" baloney? We... are a we. A community!

MAX

And there's no "I" in community!

ARVID

Okay. I admit I was wrong. But we are still in a crisis.

(MORE)

ARVID(cont'd)

As of this moment, the Dead Pool Jackpot is twenty million dollars. That's how much one of our lives is worth to everybody else. Probably more by tomorrow night. If you want to impeach me, or banish me, we can deal with all that on Sunday. But we have to decide how to satisfy that dead pool. And we have to decide right now.

VIN

No, Arvid. We decide how and if we want to satisfy the dead pool.

The room rumbles with a hundred conversations, arguments, and opinions. It is loud and unruly.

ARVID

Twenty! Million! Dollars! We've lost a lot of friends for much, much less than that! We can't turn our backs on their sacrifices!

His words are lost in the uproar.

Eagle Feather signals his henchman. The giant steps forward and, for the first time, speaks...

HENCHMAN

(bellows)

Silence!

It works.

EAGLE FEATHER

There's something else your chief isn't telling you. And it might just make your decision easier.

Arvid glares incredulously at Eagle Feather. Everybody turns their eyes to Arvid and waits for an explanation.

ARVID

Our agreement guarantees that if the terms of the dead pool aren't met--

EAGLE FEATHER

That is nobody dies.

ARVID
--Wampum Casino gets everything.
They get the whole town.

The citizens are stunned.

VIN
I don't remember anything like that
in the agreement.

Neither does anyone else in the room. Eagle Feather raises up
the contract. The one we last saw in Arvid's hands.

EAGLE FEATHER
It's an amendment. Signed two days
ago by your mayor and CEO, Arvid
Morning.

Arvid keeps his eyes to the floor.

CRAWMEYER
You bet our homes?

MAX
Our businesses?

VIN
On your own?

The betrayed citizens look around, shaking their heads.

SHELLY
So I guess we don't have much of a
choice here. Do we?

After a moment of exchanged glances of panic and anger, a
silent consensus is reached.

VIN
So how do we do it? Who dies?

MRS. FLATWIRE
Arvid Morning!

More than half the room cheers in violent agreement.

June clutches Debbie Sue fearfully. Arvid bravely faces the
calls for his head by his vengeful neighbors.

SHERIFF
No! What kind of people will we
become if we choose who dies?
(MORE)

SHERIFF(cont'd)

Can anyone here live with himself
after condemning a neighbor to
death?

MRS. FLATWIRE

Yes!

SHERIFF

We can't let anger make this
decision. Everybody has always had
an equal chance at becoming the
victim. If we're really going to do
this, randomness is the only way to
be absolutely fair.

The citizens solemnly agree.

EAGLE FEATHER

I propose a meat raffle!

LATER

Shelly and Max take scissors to a Standard Springs phone
book, and drop the names into a cardboard box.

Arvid sits huddled with June and Debbie Sue and Finn watching
helplessly as Vin runs the show.

VIN

First, a few ground rules. For one,
I propose no children under twelve.

Agreement fills the room along with utterances of "obviously"
and "of course".

Molly Lovey stands up.

MOLLY LOVEY

I think the Scream Queen should be
exempted. I have ceremonial duties
throughout the year. I mean, I'm
the most recognizable ambassador of
the festival so it hurts everybody
if I can't live up to that.

Debbie and Finn exchange looks, disgusted by the arrogance.

VIN

Sounds fair to me. Scream Queen
gets a pass. All in favor?

It's unanimous. Molly takes a seat next to her parents, who
hug her with pride and relief.

Suicide Sam steps forward with his towering, bombshell Russian Bride, KATYA. She is definitely *as advertised*.

SUICIDE SAM

I ask that Katya be excused because she just got to town. We haven't even had a chance to get married yet. Plus her English isn't great and, frankly, I don't think she really gets what's going on here.

KATYA

Da.

Sam and Katya get forcefully booed and jeered.

Shelly and Max finish filling the box and hand it to Vin.

EAGLE FEATHER

Okay, Vin. Pick a victim.

Vin plunges his hand into the box and digs out a name.

VIN

Skip Bodlund.

Gasps. Nine year-old SKIP BODLUND and his PARENTS look terrified and on the verge of tears.

VIN

How old is Skip now? Nine?

The parents nod. Vin wipes his brow animatedly, tosses the slip to the ground, and pulls out another. He stands silent and takes a deep breath.

VIN

Debbie Sue Morning.

June Morning shrieks and throws her arms around Debbie. Finn is in shock. Debbie looks surprised. Not scared, of course.

Arvid rockets to his feet.

ARVID

I think it goes without saying that the mayor's family is exempt...

The townsfolk boo and shout angrily.

MR. GEAR

So it's okay when it's one of us,
but not when it's one of your own?

MRS. GEAR

You think you're better than us?
Your daughter is more important
than our poor Paulina?

CRAWMEYER

Or my Sally?

VIN

Or my Anna Banana?

Arvid looks sheepishly at his friends and neighbors. He's trapped. They're right and he knows it.

ARVID

Okay. I volunteer. I'll be the
victim.

MRS. FLATWIRE

Yes!

VIN

No! Debbie Sue won the raffle. Fair
and square! This is what we agreed
to. This is how it has to be.

The townsfolk mutter in agreement.

EAGLE FEATHER

The tribe has spoken. Debbie Sue
will die tomorrow night.

INT. ARVID'S HOUSE - DEBBIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arvid and June frantically pull clothes from Debbie's closet
and drawers and stuff them in a suitcase as Debbie watches
with puzzlement. Finn stands silent by her side.

DEBBIE

Where do you expect me to go?

ARVID

It doesn't matter.

DEBBIE

If I run, somebody else will die.
That's not fair.

JUNE

It'll probably be your father. So,
in a way, it's extremely fair.

ARVID

Debbie Sue, this is my mess. You
shouldn't have to pay for it.

DEBBIE

I'm staying.

ARVID

You'll die!

DEBBIE

Not if I win the pageant! You heard
them. The Scream Queen gets a pass.
All I have to do is beat Molly.

Her parents look away.

DEBBIE

You don't believe I can do it.

She gets no argument.

DEBBIE

I can win! I worked my butt off.
I've never been more ready. Finn
will tell you. He believes in me.

They all look to Finn. He says nothing.

DEBBIE

Finn! Tell them I can win the
pageant. Tell them.

Finn looks away.

DEBBIE

Tell them!

He walks to the bed, closes the suitcase, and picks it up.

FINN

Come on, Debbie. We should go.

DEBBIE

You told me I could beat Molly!

Finn can't bring himself to look at her.

DEBBIE

This is my last and best chance to be *Scream Queen*. I'm not walking away from that.

ARVID

It might kill you.

DEBBIE

I'm not afraid.

ARVID

That's why you can't win!

FINN

Debbie, I won't watch you die. So I'm gonna ask you once, and either way I'm walking out that door. Will you leave with me?

Debbie shakes her head. Finn heads for the door.

DEBBIE

Finn, wait!

He stops.

DEBBIE

Death doesn't worry me so much. But losing you... scares me. I think.

FINN

Then I guess you'll be better off without me. I'll have the gallows set up at the auditorium for you.

Finn slips out the door. Debbie watches him, tears welling up in her eyes. Arvid notices the pain in her face as she falls into June's embrace, sobbing.

DOWNSTAIRS

The family descends the stairs. A group of neighbors, led by Garvin and Bernice Gear, stands on the porch, peering in the screen door.

ARVID

What is it, Garvin?

GARVIN GEAR

Sorry to interrupt, Arvid.

The Gears enter the house.

JUNE

What's going on, Bernice?

BERNICE GEAR

We're treating Debbie Sue to an evening at the Abattoir Hotel. Our special guest. All expenses paid.

ARVID

No. She stays with us.

BERNICE GEAR

We insist.

ARVID

Out of the question.

GARVIN GEAR

Arvid. We *insist*.

He motions to the band of neighbors who stand in the doorway.

GARVIN GEAR

We can't have our lottery winner mysteriously disappearing.

Arvid and June cling to Debbie desperately. But she gently pulls away and joins the Gears.

DEBBIE

It's okay. I'll be okay.

She follows the neighbors out. Her tears continue.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Rain beats down on Standard Springs.

A newspaper is dropped on a front step with a splash. The headline reads: FINALLY! THE BIG DAY!

The midway is empty save for a group of carnies sitting on the Scary-Go-Round, out of the rain, nursing their coffees.

Patrons of the Main Street Diner are pressed up against the window, watching as the town is drenched.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Rain falls hard outside the open garage door.

Tabby is seated as her BROTHER methodically pummels her face. To the side, TABBY'S MOM watches, ready with towels and ice.

TABBY

One more. Give me one more.

TABBY'S MOM

You've had plenty.

TABBY

This is the last time you'll get a free shot. Now hit me again!

Her brother swings enthusiastically.

INT. ABATTOIR HOTEL - DAY

Debbie sits at a vanity, wearing earbuds, and practicing her scream face. The photo of Janet Leigh is taped to the mirror.

In the reflection, the television catches her attention. She takes out the earbuds and we HEAR a woman's scream from them.

On the TV is a wild-eyed man in a straight jacket being loaded into a padded truck. Across WACKY JACK's bald head is an impressive lobotomy scar.

WACKY JACK

I'm so committed to making crazy deals, I've been committed!

Debbie Sue begins to cry.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Arvid & June stand in the rain before a black stone wall. Etched in bold letters: SERIAL KILLER DAYS MEMORIAL.

The pair sorrowfully look at the names and years of past victims etched in the stone wall.

JUNE

You've got to do something, Arvid.

She buries her head in his shoulder. He holds her tightly and runs his fingers over the ominous blank space next to 2009.

Determination creeps across Arvid's face.

EXT. DAIRY FAIRY - DAY

Arvid sits with Jergus Daar at a table beneath a large umbrella. There are no other customers on this rainy day.

Daar, his bruised face accented with Band-Aids, looks despondent as he picks at cup of soft serve.

JERGUS DAAR

Guess it's back to teaching tone-deaf kids do-re-mi. In my business, losing a fight to a hundred-year-old disabled woman is pretty much a career killer.

ARVID

At least you're not in jail.

JERGUS DAAR

You know why that crazy old gummer didn't press charges? Said you're the one she wants to see burn. I would hate to be you with that target on your back. I've met some unsavory characters in my day, but that woman...

Daar shudders at the thought of Mrs. Flatwire. He finishes his ice cream, takes out the envelope of cash Arvid gave him earlier, and drops it on the table.

JERGUS DAAR

Here. Consider it a refund.

Arvid pushes the cash away.

ARVID

Keep it.

JERGUS DAAR

Why? I failed. I screwed everything up for you.

ARVID

And for that I'll accept your refund. But this...

(MORE)

ARVID(cont'd)
(holds out envelope)
... is for tonight.

INT. AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - DAY

We are deep in the wings, off stage-left. In the background, a small tech crew puts the final touches on the stage.

At a lighted mirror, Robert Englund applies make-up. Reporter Griff Grimes stands beside him, notebook in hand.

ROBERT ENGLUND
The highlight of my career? West
End production of Fosse. Act Three.
Benny's number from Dancin'.

He quickly and ecstatically fires off a couple moves before covering his heart reverently.

ROBERT ENGLUND
Horror pays the bills. But singin'
and dancin'? That pays the soul.

Twelve feet away, at a wardrobe and make-up area, Debbie, Molly, Lois, and Tabby tend to their hair and make-up. June and the other mothers hover.

The funereal mood is palpable.

TABBY
(woozy)
You think I went too far?

TABBY'S MOM
No. You look perfect, honey.

Tabby weakly smiles, revealing chipped and missing teeth.

Arvid enters, chaperoned by Eagle Feather and his hulking henchman. The girls and moms greet him awkwardly.

ARVID
Did the gallows get set up?

DEBBIE
Uh huh. Maybe he'll change his
mind. Maybe he'll show up.

Arvid hugs his daughter and kisses her head.

ARVID
I'm sorry I let you down, sweetie.

DEBBIE

It's okay. Because I'm going to win.

While on the verge of tears, Arvid has to smile with pride at Debbie's courage. He gives June a reassuring look and follows his escorts out.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Lightning cuts through the dark sky above the school. Rain chases the hundreds of excited people entering the building. Traffic is backed up entering the parking lot.

INT. AUDITORIUM LOBBY - NIGHT

Ushers direct the crowd through the theater doors.

Lobby display cases that feature a poster that screams "SERIAL KILLER DAYS SCREAM QUEEN PAGEANT 2009". Beneath the text is a photo of Molly, Debbie, Tabby, and Lois re-creating the infamous Beatles "butcher cover" album: they are seated in white butcher coats (stained with blood), with slabs of raw meat and severed baby doll parts in their laps.

Slapped at the bottom is a sticker that reads: SOLD OUT.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The house lights are down. Spotlights dance across the empty stage. The capacity crowd looks on with anticipation.

The judges sit emotionless at their front row table.

Arvid sits center, behind the judges, surrounded by Eagle Feather, his bodyguard, and The Sheriff.

The Webers, giddy with excitement, settle in behind Arvid. They all wear t-shirts with Molly Lovey's screaming face and the words "MOLLY LOVEY x 3" printed on them.

MR. WEBER

Hi, Mayor! Big night, eh? Nervous?

ARVID

A little bit.

At the edge of the stage, just outside the spotlight, stands Robert Englund. He wears a flashy tux and heavy stage make-up, and oddly, does his own introduction.

ROBERT ENGLUND

Ladies and Gentlemen, put your hands together for your master of ceremonies! He's not an actual serial killer, but he is a lady killer with a long list of victims. Here he is, Freddy Kruger himself, Mr. Robert Englund!

He struts into the spotlight as the full house roars.

IN THE WINGS

The girls wait for their cue. Their mothers fuss over them, making last second adjustments to clothes and hair.

From the PA comes the opening notes of a bright showtune. Tabby sways. Her mom shoves her toward the stage.

TABBY'S MOM

Let's go. It's showtime!

ON STAGE

Debbie, Molly, Lois, and Tabby take the stage to vigorous applause. Tabby has no sense of direction. The other girls have to push and pull her into place.

The girls surround Robert Englund. He begins to sing.

ROBERT ENGLUND

(singing)

*Well they call me Mr. Mayhem, Mr.
Mayhem that's my name. If I don't
commit some mayhem, I'm gonna hang
my head in shame.*

GIRLS

In shame!

The girls line up in a row behind the emcee.

ROBERT ENGLUND

(shouts)

Let's have some mayhem!

(singing)

I'm gonna do some stabbin'...

He thrusts a finger into Molly's chest. She collapses.

ROBERT ENGLUND
Some chokin'...

He grabs Debbie by the neck and drops her.

ROBERT ENGLUND
Some sluggin'...

He fakes a haymaker on Lois's chin, laying her out on the stage. Robert Englund shakes his hand as if he hurt himself.

ROBERT ENGLUND
Some lovin'...

He lays a big kiss on Tabby. His hand travels a scandalous path to her chest, before letting her fall to the ground.

ROBERT ENGLUND
*Well, I said my name is Mr. Mayhem.
Mr. Mayhem 'til the day I die. If
you ever run into me, you will
surely find out why...*

The girls get up for the big finish. Tabby has trouble standing. Lois and Debbie pull her to her feet.

Robert Englund reaches out for Tabby's hand, and twirls her smoothly. He lets go and she keeps twirling. Off the stage she falls, crashing in front of the judges table.

Music stops. The audience gasps.

The parents and Penelope pour out of the wings and join Robert Englund and the girls at the edge of the stage.

BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The girls and parents gather around as Tabby is secured in a gurney.

Nearby, Penelope consoles Robert Englund, who seems to be incredibly upset about the lack of professionalism.

TABBY'S MOM
*Come on, baby. Don't do this to me.
You can still get out there and
finish. I know you can.*

Tabby reaches out for Debbie's hand.

TABBY

I can't believe it...

DEBBIE

I know. But you'll be okay.

TABBY

Freddy Kruger totally felt me up.
That was so awesome!

The gurney is pushed toward the exit.

TABBY

I hope you live, Debbie Sue.

DEBBIE

You too.

PENELOPE

Fun's over, girls. Back to work!

THE STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Lois nervously stands on stage, facing Robert Englund.

ROBERT ENGLUND

What is the closest you have ever
come to getting murdered in your
bed and how has it affected your
hopes for world peace?

LOIS

Well... one time I woke up and felt
something biting my arm. I reached
down and felt warm, thick blood.

The audience leans forward, hooked by Lois' tale.

LOIS

I turned on the light... And saw a
big, squashed mosquito on my arm.

Now the audience groans. Not the payoff they were after.

LOIS

C'mon! It could of been carrying a
deadly disease or something!

CUT TO:

Debbie, stands emotionless in the spotlight.

ROBERT ENGLUND

Good evening, Miss Morning. Are you ready for your question?

DEBBIE

Yes sir, I am.

ROBERT ENGLUND

Which would you rather be killed by: a knife, a gun, or poison?

Debbie blinks. Several times. The host and the audience wait.

DEBBIE

All of the above, Mr. Englund. I'd prefer to have my throat cut while swallowing cyanide, then shot with AK-47s by a five-man firing squad.

Utterances of horror and delight explode from the audience.

ROBERT ENGLUND

And how would that bring more freedom into the world?

DEBBIE

This would bring more freedom into the world because it embodies the freedom of choice. Choice to die in a cornucopia of creative ways. More choices, more freedom.

Debbie crisply bows to an enthusiastic ovation.

Arvid gets to his feet and cheers. His fellow townsfolk are not quite so supportive.

CUT TO:

Molly confidently faces the emcee.

ROBERT ENGLUND

Molly Lovey. Two-time Scream Queen.

MOLLY

Yes, sir.

ROBERT ENGLUND

What do you imagine death to be like? And how does your idea of the other side make you feel?

MOLLY

That's a very interesting question, Mr. Englund. I imagine death to be, not a deliverance of the spirit, but a return to nothingness. No white light. Only a path to darkness. No sound. Only oppressive silence. No "other side". Simply a gate to oblivion. This profoundly frightens me. I will live the rest of my days fearing the inevitable, permanent dissolution of my soul that awaits me. I am the walking dead. We are all the walking dead.

Molly's corpse-like face breaks into a sweet smile.

MOLLY

Thank you.

She saunters off stage to a hearty ovation, the audience sincerely moved, and haunted, by her words.

The Webers hold one another tightly. Tears flow liberally.

Arvid catches the eyes of his fellow townsfolk. Sad, shameful glances that are quickly averted. The Sheriff offers him a half-smile of sympathy.

BACKSTAGE

The girls hurry about chaotically.

PENELOPE

C'mon ladies! Talent segment is next. Lois you're up! Let's go!

Debbie grabs a bottle of water from a nearby cooler and plops herself down in an empty chair.

Molly sits at the make-up table. She is rigging a rubber hose under her sleeve. The rivals share an awkward silence.

MOLLY

I want you to know that after you're... gone... I'm going to create an award in your name to honor contestants who are talent challenged but try really hard.

DEBBIE

That's very thoughtful of you.

MOLLY

I know.

DEBBIE

We were best friends once.
Remember, Molly? What changed?

MOLLY

Everything.
(pause)
I'm sorry, Debbie Sue. I really am.
But I can't let you win.

DEBBIE

I don't want you to. I want to know
I beat you fair and square.

MOLLY

I'm really going to miss that sense
of humor.

A small EXPLOSION is heard from the stage.

Molly jumps. Debbie calmly looks toward the stage.

THE STAGE

Lois has lit herself on fire. She drops and rolls to the delight of the audience. Penelope hoses her down with a fire extinguisher. Lois pops up, her powder-burned face smiling, and bows at center stage.

ROBERT ENGLUND

Isn't it amazing how much talent
there is here in Standard Springs?

The audience yells "yes" and applauds lustily.

BACKSTAGE

At the back of the stage, behind a rear curtain, stands the gallows Finn built for Debbie.

Debbie adjusts the noose. June secures the harness, and hands her daughter a red capsule. Debbie puts it in her mouth.

JUNE

You're gonna be great, honey.

June pulls a black executioner's hood over her head.

THE STAGE

ROBERT ENGLUND

Our next talented performer will be
demonstrating a public execution.
Please welcome Debbie Sue Morning!

The curtain is drawn. Behind it, Debbie stands on the gallows, noose around her neck.

Debbie's demonstration cuts right to the chase...

The black-hooded June kicks the stool out from under Debbie's feet. She falls until the slack of the rope goes tight. She let's out a grunt, rolls her eyes back into her head.

She dangles lifelessly. The auditorium is silent, save for the creak of the noose swinging.

Debbie's mouth falls open. Syrupy blood pours out.

Enthusiastic applause roars to life.

Arvid stands and applauds. Mr. Weber stands up behind him and offers an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

MR. WEBER

Your girl is hanging in there!

As Mr. Weber guffaws at his own terrible joke, Arvid looks around at his fellow townies, who remain seated and silent among the cheering tourists. Out of politeness, The Sheriff halfheartedly applauds.

THE STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Loud drums silence the audience and capture their attention. The stage lights fire up on cue as the opening strains of Bryan Adams' "CUTS LIKE A KNIFE" kicks in.

Molly Lovey stands at center stage, wearing a white dress and a wireless headset microphone.

MOLLY

(singing)

*Drivin' home this evenin', coulda
sworn we had it all worked out...*

Beside her is a tray full of shiny, metal knives. As she sings the verse, she picks up a butcher's knife and a sharpening stone and sharpens to the beat of the music.

As the song's chorus begins, Molly slides the blade across her left forearm, apparently creating a gash.

The audience squeals with shock.

MOLLY

*It cuts like a knife, but it feels
so right...*

She squeezes her fist to the beat, propelling a synchronized stream of blood from her seemingly open vein. She takes the knife in her left hand and cuts her right forearm.

MOLLY

*It cuts like a knife, but it feels
so right...*

The audience is on its feet singing, clapping, and dancing.

From his seat, Arvid watches hatefully as Eagle Feather and his henchman stand and clap along with gusto. But the Indians are nothing compared to The Webers behind them.

MRS. WEBER

We love you Molly!

MR. WEBER

Threepeat!

As the music reaches a climax, Molly's white dress is soaked in blood from her countless "wounds". But she's radiant.

From the side of the stage the other contestants look on in horror and awe. They are beaten and they know it.

DEBBIE

I'm. So. Dead.

ON STAGE - LATER

Robert Englund whips the crowd up into frenzy.

ROBERT ENGLUND

What time is it?

AUDIENCE

Screamin' time!

ROBERT ENGLUND

I can't hear you!

AUDIENCE

Screamin' time!

ROBERT ENGLUND

You know the rules. A moment of
pure terror and we'll crown the
next Queen. First up, Lois Langtry!

Lois steps up to the microphone. She unleashes a piercing
scream, her face twisted in a horrible expression.

She is met with sincere and respectful applause.

CUT TO:

Molly Lovey walks to center stage. She closes her eyes. The
audience watches in anticipation. And then...

The two-time queen fills the auditorium with an amazingly
loud, rich, terrifying scream that seems to last forever.

The applause is thunderous.

Mr. Weber places his hand on Arvid's shoulder in sympathy.

MR. WEBER

Your girl did great, Mayor. But
what can she do to top *that*?

Arvid struggles to keep a stoic face as he watches his
friends and neighbors on their feet.

THE WINGS

Debbie and June watch Molly in awe. June grabs her daughter
firmly by the shoulders and shakes her.

JUNE

Just go out there and scream as if--
because your life depends on it.

Debbie tentatively takes the stage. She stands at the
microphone and nervously looks at the crowd as they settle.

Arvid's hands are crossed like he's praying. He catches the
eyes of June, peering out of the wings. He gives her an
assured nod.

Debbie closes her eyes. She takes a deep breath, and...

The rear theater doors burst open with a CRASH.

Jergus Daar storms in holding a twelve-inch blade to Finn's
throat. Gasps erupt from the startled audience.

Debbie watches aghast from the stage.

FINN

Debbie Sue... don't be scared...

Daar looks at Arvid. Then he calmly runs the knife across Finn's throat. Blood shoots out from the wound.

A wave of panic and chaos sweeps through the hall.

Finn drops in the aisle. People circle around him.

The Sheriff and other audience members pounce on Daar.

Mr. & Mrs. Weber pull their frightened children close.

Robert Englund steadies himself, shocked and horrified.

The sound of hysteria is deafening. Until...

A piercing SCREAM cuts through the din. A terrifying, bloodcurdling scream. The panicked clamor is instantly silenced. All eyes turn to the stage.

There stands Debbie Sue. Shaking. White as a ghost. Tears in her eyes. Heartbreaking TERROR on her face.

Despite the bloody scene in the theater, everyone is transfixed by Debbie Sue's perfect, unrelenting screams. The Webers look on in awe, as if witnessing a miracle.

Debbie's screams finally end. She descends the stage and navigates the audience (still silent from shock) toward her fallen boyfriend.

She gets to Finn's side and grabs his hand and strokes his hair. She buries her face in his chest and sobs.

When she looks up, Finn wears a bloody smile.

FINN

You are *such* a sucker!

In a release of simmering tension, the tourists burst into a raucous ovation, shrieking and applauding.

The townsfolk, however, exchange worried, frightened looks.

Arvid offers his hand to Finn and pulls him to his feet. Debbie throws her arms around Finn, nearly crushing him.

On the stage, Robert Englund, flanked by pageant judges, holds the sacred Scream Queen crown out toward Debbie and belts out the pageant theme song.

ROBERT ENGLUND
(singing)
*Who's the girl who looks like a
dream? The way she walks, the way
she talks, the way she screams...*

ARVID
Go up there and get your crown,
Debbie Sue.

She smiles proudly, hugs her dad, and runs to the stage.

Robert Englund drops the crown on her head. The applause is ear-splitting. Debbie stands at center stage, taking it in.

Mr. Weber shakes Arvid excitedly and forcefully.

MR. WEBER
She did it! I can't believe she did
it! We just witnessed history!

Amid the uproar, Arvid looks around at his friends and neighbors, who are all suddenly very nervous. They look at one another fearfully. And stare at Arvid with resentment.

CUT TO:

LATER

The high-decibel commotion surrounding Debbie's crowning has been replaced by an eerie silence. The hall is half empty. The doors are locked. Tourists are gone. Townies only.

Eagle Feather stands on the stage, shaking the box of names.

EAGLE FEATHER
That was exciting! We are very
happy for Debbie Sue. But now we
need to choose another victim.

The citizens of Standard Springs shuffle their feet and wear nervous, unsure looks.

Eagle Feather reaches into the box and draws a name.

EAGLE FEATHER
Sam Skovolt. You will die tonight.

Suicide Sam bursts into tears and buries his face into the bosom of his Russian bride.

KATYA

Nyet! Nyet!

SUICIDE SAM

I don't want to die! I want to live
with Katya! I want to live!

KATYA

Da! Da!

Arvid surveys the faces of his friends and neighbors. Some glare at him and his family with contempt. Many wear looks of shame. Others cry.

ARVID

Nobody is going to die tonight,
Eagle Feather.

EAGLE FEATHER

Says who?

ARVID

Says we.

EAGLE FEATHER

(laughs)

Oh, you speak for everyone do you?
You have a short memory, my friend!

Eagle Feather motions to his brutish bodyguard. The giant closes in on Suicide Sam. Arvid steps in front of him.

ARVID

Don't touch him.

EAGLE FEATHER

Arvid. This has been decided. By
your own people. It's their will.

ARVID

You'll have to kill me.

June steps next to her husband.

JUNE

And me.

And then Debbie Sue.

DEBBIE SUE

And me.

Finn steps in, his neck still dripping fake blood.

FINN

I already died once tonight. Might
as well make it twice.

EAGLE FEATHER

Fine. We'll kill all of you. I
doubt you Mornings have much of a
future in this tribe anyway.

The townsfolk watch as Eagle Feather's henchman advances on
Arvid, June, Debbie Sue and Finn.

Through misty eyes, The Sheriff looks at his old friend and
his family with admiration. He steps up and stands with them.

SHERIFF

You'll have to kill me too.

And then The Gears, Shelly, and Max insert themselves.

GARVIN GEAR

And us.

SHELLY

Me too.

MAX

And me.

Molly Lovey gives Eagle Feather's hulking assistant a shove
as she lines up with the others.

MOLLY

Me too!

Her parents follow her, and every other citizen follows them.

EAGLE FEATHER

May I just say something, here?
Twenty. Million. Dollars!

The group is not moved.

VIN

It's not worth it.

EAGLE FEATHER

Not worth--? Think of your futures!
And the futures of your children!

ARVID

We are.

EAGLE FEATHER

We have an agreement! I will wipe
this town off the map. There will
be a casino right where we stand in
six months! You can bet on it!

SHERIFF

We've survived a lot around here.
And we'll survive this too.

ARVID

Together.

Eagle Feather looks at the large, unified front and knows
he's beat. He motions for his henchman to follow him out,
then stops at the door and faces his adversaries.

EAGLE FEATHER

White people. Nothing ever changes.

And with that, the Scandinavian Indian makes his exit. The
townies let out a collective sigh.

MAX

So is that it, Arvid? Is that the
end of Serial Killer Days?

ARVID

No. We've had over a decade of
slaying. Nobody can take that away
from us. And I believe, no matter
what, people will still want to
celebrate it. Finn just showed how
we can stage a convincing murder
without actually dying. Maybe we
could recreate our past murders for
festival goers. I don't know. But
together we'll figure it out.

The townies smile at him, hopeful and proud. Arvid throws his
arms around Debbie Sue and June.

ARVID

The dead pool would've been nice-- really nice, actually-- but I think, in some ways -- in all the important ways-- we'll be richer without it.

SHERIFF

Uh... Arvid? You should see this.

Arvid turns to find The Sheriff amid the theater seats. He stands over a still, slouching person. Mrs. Flatwire.

The Sheriff holds her arm up and then drops it. Dead weight.

Arvid rushes to her side. Mrs. Flatwire's chin rests on her chest. She doesn't breathe.

SHERIFF

Excitement must've been too much for the mean old bird.

The citizens cluster behind Arvid. It quickly dawns on them what this turn events could mean. They look at one another, equally excited and hesitant.

VIN

So? What do we do now, Arvid?

Arvid faces his neighbors. They all wait for his answer.

ARVID

You tell me.

INT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Flatwire lies on her back, a slash across the neck. The coroner zips up a body bag over her face.

Arvid and The Sheriff watch with barely concealed joy.

EXT. MRS. FLATWIRE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cheering townsfolk and tourists fill the street and sidewalk. Cameras and police lights flash through the dark and drizzle.

Arvid and The Sheriff accompany Mrs. Flatwire's body out of the house and into the coroner's waiting van.

From atop a flatbed truck, a rock band butchers Prince's "I Would Die 4 U" as the crowd dances and cheers.

Debbie, draped in a "SCREAM QUEEN" ribbon and wearing a crown, cuts the police tape that surrounds the yard. She accepts hugs from Molly, Lois, and Tabby, who sits in a wheelchair, her swollen face smiling.

Finn, his throat gash still in place, talks with Robert Englund. The horror icon inspects the wound. Clearly impressed, he hands a business card to Finn.

The Webers dance along to the music, and take in the celebration, hand in hand, with absolute joy.

MR. WEBER

That was the best Serial Killer
Days ever!

Arvid joins his wife and daughter and Finn. He embraces them deeply, a satisfied smile stretched across his face.

As the sun begins peeking above the horizon, the coroner's van drives past the tourists and the citizens of Standard Springs as they celebrate their good fortune.

Together.

FADE OUT.