

TAG

by
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Based on the BOOM! Studios Comic Book

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FADE IN:

EXT. CHICAGO STREET -- NIGHT

A rundown street in a Chicago neighborhood. All's quiet...

And BOOM! A young couple explode out of a nearby alley, sprinting down the street. JAMES and HOLLY hear footsteps echo behind them, they pick up their already breakneck pace.

Without the sweat and the panicked expressions, James and Holly would be a typical, neighborhood gentrifying urban-chic couple, but not tonight. Tonight they're hunted animals.

INT. TWEE LITTLE RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Quiet dinners are interrupted by James and Holly bursting through the front door. The couple continue past the patrons, right through the swinging doors to the...

INT. TWEE LITTLE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN

It's busy enough that no one notices until James wrenches a large butcher knife from a bulky chef's hand.

BULKY CHEF

What the hell...!

James pushes the chef against the wall, covering his mouth.

JAMES

Don't say another word.

The kitchen is buzzing with clanging pans and sizzling meat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Shut up!

Everyone quiets down, looks over, sees James holding the head chef with a butcher knife in his hand.

James looks back at the chef.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Call the police.

The chef gives a "No shit I'm calling the police" over James' hand. Holly pulls James away, leading him deeper into the restaurant's back area. They turn a tight corner and stop, both catching their breath.

HOLLY

Did he see us?

JAMES

I don't know.

Holly is beyond shaken, James takes her hand. And then he hears the bell on the front door of the restaurant CLANG.

Silence. Then the entire dining room explodes with SCREAMS. Mad stumbling, furniture overturning. Whoever's following them is a terrifying sight, and he's inside with them.

James and Holly rush for the back door that spills out into...

EXT. DEEP ALLEY

They sprint topspeed through the elaborate network of building's backends, terrified, confused, but focused.

They burst into a dank hallway, and out the far door.

Outside again they see the alley ends, a tall block wall.

JAMES

Climb over. I'm gonna block the door. Go!

Reluctantly, she scrambles up a dumpster, gives a last look at James, who is pulling the dumpster back toward the door.

She slides out of view.

James shoves the dumpster against the door. He backs away. BOOM! Their pursuer is at the door, beating it repeatedly. Determined to get them.

James scrambles up the block wall, looks over...

And finds that the next alley is bisected by a tall chainlink fence, topped with curls of razor wire. He slides over the wall, his right foot tangling with the wire.

If he lets go, it's gonna be bad. He hears the dumpster budge on the other side of the wall.

He slips, the razor wire catching his foot, throwing him into the fence, then face first onto the concrete below.

The knife SKITTERS across the ground.

He scrambles to his feet, grabs the knife, hauls ass. He realizes Holly isn't up ahead.

He turns, and finds Holly is right beside him. On the OTHER side of the fence.

HOLLY

What are we gonna do?

James flips the knife over and hands it through the chainlink, handle first.

JAMES

Take it.

The sound of RAZOR WIRE JANGLING down the alley behind them. And FEET LANDING. They don't know which side.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Get away from the fence.

HOLLY
James... I love you.

James turns, his alley ends at a wide, brick building. A boarded up door in the back. He turns back to Holly.

JAMES
I'm coming to get you. Run!

James silently motions for her to back away, into the dark. He rams the boarded-up door three times before it gives.

INT. BRICK BUILDING

He hurries inside, as the door closes, James can *just* make out the face of his wife in the dark beyond the fence.

CRACK! A hand grabs the edge of the door. Worn to the bone in places, but sinewy, strong. James pulls the door with everything he has.

SLAM, he gets the door closed. But he's already broken the lock. He holds it for a beat, while he scans the tall stairwell he's just entered, garbage littered, rat infested.

The man on the other side pulls a few more times. Then stops. James quietly lets the door go, takes a step back, and runs.

EXT. DEEP ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

Holly crouches between two broken down cars.

The man, in silhouette, paces the other side of the alley. He tries the door again. It opens. She can't let him in.

HOLLY
(barely audible)
We're...
(louder)
We're over here!

The man turns in the dark, grabbing the fence, shaking it. Holly stands. Brandishing the knife, she backs away. The man sees her. He keeps pace with her as she moves.

And then, in the distance, an infernal noise that sounds like a blessing tonight. Police sirens. Holly rushes out of view, into the alley network, toward the sound of rescue.

INT. BRICK BUILDING - STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

James takes the steps two-by-two, and finds each floor locked tight. At the fourth floor, the door, warped and rotten, gives. He bashes it in.

INT. BRICK BUILDING - HALL

He runs to the end of the hall, toward a window.

Through the glass, a fire-escape, hanging over the OTHER side of the fence. He unlocks the window and slides out, onto the narrow, rickety platform.

EXT. BRICK BUILDING - FIRE ESCAPE

The escape is broken off, a story above the ground. James is going to jump. He steps over the rusted railing, it gives a little. He looks for a place to land just as...

The railing breaks. James grabs hold as the bent railing swings him into a large window, SHATTERING it, dropping him and a storm of glass toward the ground below.

He hits back first with a wet, rattling GASP. Glass showers around him. He struggles to sit up. He can hear the sirens too. He gets up, following the sound.

EXT. DEEP ALLEY

Holly is lost, the sound of the sirens everywhere. She stops, tries to get her bearings. And then she sees... LIGHTS.

Blue and red. She's close. She turns a corner, toward the street, finds she's once again cut off by a another fence.

She struggles to climb over, crawl under, or push the motherfucker down, a string of squad cars slide past, WHINING AND FLICKERING, unaware that's she's fifteen feet away.

Lost, in a dark alley, her husband vanished, and someone pursuing, Holly does what we would all do. She screams.

James' voice rings out in the distance. And she sees him. Holly rushes for him.

The red and blue illuminating the alley in on/off flashes.

JAMES

Come on honey, there's another way...

James pulls away from Holly, directing her to follow. A flash of red, a flash of blue. And for a blink, Holly can see the monstrous man standing in front of James, arms out.

James walks right into him. It's over before she can gasp...

Holly is the only one who sees what happens next, through the flash of red and blue. Her ragged, primal scream, the only clue to the extent of the horror.

We've just witnessed the first...

SMASH TO BLACK:

TAG

From black, into the white-hot fluorescent hall of a hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL -- MORNING

MITCH MATHESON, 27, bespectacled and tousled, an earnest face, he's far less geeky now than he was growing up. But once a geek...

He shuffles down the hall, scribbling notes in a worn surgical handbook, he almost blind sides a young woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sorry, are you a resident?

MITCH

No, just an intern.

YOUNG WOMAN

Me too! But new. Well, I mean, I'm one of the new interns studying here.

MITCH

Is today the day?

YOUNG WOMAN

Apparently.

She follows alongside Mitch.

MITCH

The operating wing is new, but you won't spend much time here until next month. It'll be totally confusing but don't worry, they won't have time to notice you're completely flabbergasted.

She smiles.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Right through those doors and left. When you hit the ugly walls and a weird smell, you're in the old ward.

The young intern rushes off.

VOICE (O.S.)

Mitch, you big bleeding heart.

Mitch turns to find ALEXANDRIA (ANDY) SCOTT, 27. Dazzling blue eyes and unpretentious charm. Quirky, curious, and accessibly good looking... She makes Mitch sweat every time.

MITCH

I, uh, I wandered the halls for three hours our first day.

ANDY

I was looking for you.

Mitch brightens.

ANDY (CONT'D)

What's it called when the Spanish bred Asian and European horses?

MITCH

Huh?

ANDY

The crossbreed?

MITCH

I... I don't know.

ANDY

Oh, I only ask because you know, you grew up on a farm.

MITCH

Pigs, though. Mostly pigs. And, how did you know that?

ANDY

Um, I think it was Dr. Ross's Anatomy? We had to go around the room.

MITCH

The first day of school? That's five years ago... good memory.

Andy smiles.

ANDY

Alright, well thanks anyway.

MITCH

Why horses?

ANDY

My grandparents raised them. And me. So I memorized all these facts about horses. But I think all this medical stuff sort of pushed it out, so now I'm medical Andy, not... horse Andy. If that makes any sense.

Mitch laughs. She steps toward an adjacent hall.

ANDY (CONT'D)

And our thirty hour marathon begins.

Mitch smiles, nodding. He hems, haws, then...

MITCH

Hey, Andy?

ANDY

Yeah?

MITCH

Do you wanna have...

He chickens out.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You know, with everyone? Lunch?

ANDY

Sounds great.

She walks off. Mitch shakes his head. This isn't the first time he's been unable to make a move. He marches to a set of swinging doors and...

SMASH TO:

BOOM! Doors swing open, and a screaming patient is wheeled down a long hospital hall, later that day. It's busy now.

CARLOS ALVAREZ, 27, rushes alongside the gurney. He's tall and broad, sharp and charismatic, a bit of an ass, but there's a heart buried in there somewhere.

SCREAMING PATIENT

Please make sure she knows! You have to tell her, I loved her until my last breath!

CARLOS

Let's plan on you taking that breath some other day, deal?

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Carlos is retelling the story to Mitch and JULES, another friend/fellow intern. They're all having lunch.

CARLOS

And he grabbed my hand, and said "You hold it all in your hands friend. Bring me back to her..."

JULES

SO romantic.

CARLOS

Right?

JULES

What happened to him?

He takes a big bite of a sandwich. Talks through it.

CARLOS

Appendix popped like a pinata before we could get him on the table.

JULES

Oh.

CARLOS

I don't tell that part because it
sort of kills the story.

Andy enters. Mitch sits up.

ANDY

Why are you guys skulking in the
nurse's station?

MITCH

Waiting for exam scores.

CARLOS

Mitch is waiting for scores. I'm
waiting for the invite to The Chief's
office.

JULES

Huh?

ANDY

He pulls the top scoring intern in
every year to discuss her future.

CARLOS

Her. Cute.

Andy sits with Jules. And Mitch, who smiles like a big dork.

ANDY

Well, I hope you can wait another
day, because he's not calling the
intern in until tomorrow.

CARLOS

Why?

Andy shrugs her shoulders.

Carlos pulls a slip of paper out of his back pocket.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

I'm off tomorrow. Who's on tomorrow?

All three raise their hands.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Who wants to switch with me?

They all lower their hands.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Nice. Did you plan that?

MITCH

We even practiced...

Mitch raises his hand over and over, Jules and Andy join in. A Resident enters, everyone jumps up. Carlos is almost bouncing, he's so excited.

RESIDENT

Lady's got a crushed sternum in 4B.
Roll the lipstick back in Alvarez.
I want Magic Hands.

Carlos is confused. Andy passes him.

ANDY

Magic Hands.

She walks out with the Resident.

CARLOS

Is it my over-eager and competitive nature that turn people off?

MITCH

Noooo. It's your personality.

JULES (O.S.)

Oh Jesus Lord Almighty.

Carlos and Mitch turn to find Jules looking out through the glass. Just beyond the window, the new interns are shown where they'll be spending their lives in a month.

JULES (CONT'D)

If we hadn't taken the exit exam two days ago I wouldn't believe it.

CARLOS

Less than a year and here come the new "us."

Outside, a resident corrals the newbie interns.

MITCH

"Younglings, gather 'round."

Carlos shudders.

CARLOS

Please don't quote science fiction around me, it's like a cloud of vagina repellent.

JULES

Words, please.

CARLOS

I'm sorry. Vulva repellent. Look!

He points to a geeky male intern with glasses, nose buried in his notebook, scribbling furiously, hand raised.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

They have their own Mitch.

MITCH

Hilarious.

Carlos grabs Mitch around his shoulders.

CARLOS

It's alright man, if you weren't such an over-achieving nerd, I wouldn't be here. It's my insatiable need to beat you that motivates me.

Mitch is actually touched.

MITCH

Thanks, Los.

CARLOS

You got it man.

Jules is still watching the interns.

JULES

Everything's about to change.

CARLOS

Yeah, thank Jeebus.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT -- LATER

The basement is cold, bright, quiet. Construction equipment, taped off areas, plastic sheeting now litter the halls and walls, the basement's in the middle of it's first renovation in forty years. A couple "Pardon Our Dust" signs taped up.

Mitch and Carlos walk together, exhausted, filling out tags.

CARLOS

Marzel threatened to defib the next intern he found sleeping on shift.

MITCH

Marzel is a fascist vampire who sleeps hanging from the ceiling.

Mitch looks over his just filled-out toe tag.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Virgil Wolf, suicide by drowning.

CARLOS

Clever, literary. I'm Jose Esperanzo, 75. Went cardiac after renting three prostitutes and a hotel room.

MITCH

They always check sex death.

Carlos changes the tag.

CARLOS

Fatal. Colon. Blockage.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - MORGUE

They enter the morgue. It's empty, save, well you know.

MITCH

What does it mean when someone remembers some random, arbitrary detail about your life that you mentioned once five years ago?

CARLOS

I have the strangest feeling this is leading somewhere.

MITCH

She remembers that I lived on a farm.

Carlos stops, Mitch stops steps later, turning back.

CARLOS

I get that it's my role to listen to you analyze every fleck of interaction you have with Andy. Part and parcel with you being my wingman.

MITCH

Okay.

CARLOS

But you have to do you and me a favor. Make a move, or move on.

MITCH

I know.

CARLOS

Dude, if she was interested, she would have let you know by now.

MITCH

I know. I know.

CARLOS

You need something new to fixate on. Go get laid. Take it from me, the doctor thing will get you a good mile down the road to panty-dropping, as long as you keep the witty science-fiction bon mots to a minimum...

Carlos starts walking again, Mitch close behind.

MITCH

You're right, get in the saddle, all that business.

Mitch and Carlos sit on two empty tables, kicking off their socks and shoes.

CARLOS

You don't have to forget her, but you gotta stop obsessing.

They put their toe tags on, and lie back on the tables. Mitch stares up at the ceiling. He pulls a sheet over himself, as does Carlos. Muffled through the sheet...

MITCH

Why should I listen to you when you haven't gotten laid in two years?

CARLOS

Well, the caveat being that this is all theoretical.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMA WARD - PRIVATE PATIENT ROOM -- LATER

Andy sits at the side of a comatose patient, AMANDA HARDY, 30's, blonde. Andy is idly nibbling at dinner.

VOICE (O.S.)

She never went out in the sun.

Andy bolts upright in the chair. Amanda's husband, DALE HARDY, 30's, is standing in the doorway. He's working class, simple, devoted to a woman who may never wake up again.

DALE

She was always pale, so sometimes it doesn't seem like she's been here that long.

Andy stands, brushing crumbs off the side table.

DALE (CONT'D)

Please, stay. I'm glad there's someone else to keep her company.

Dale approaches, hand outstretched.

DALE (CONT'D)

I'm Dale Hardy, Amanda's husband.

ANDY

Hi. Andy Scott.

DALE

Don't see many of you guys back here in ghost town.

A quiet beat, they both glance at Amanda.

ANDY

Are you hanging in there?

DALE

Well, I just came from a physician required grief counselor, who says I have to be ready to accept that she might never wake up. She says I have to start living a life without her, away from here. But what if... What if she only ever wakes up for a second, and I'm not here?

He pulls back a little.

DALE (CONT'D)

Geez, I'm sorry.

Andy is direct, ignoring his sheepishness.

ANDY

Do the police know anything new?

Dale moves to his wife, smoothing her blonde hair.

DALE

Six months and not an inch closer to finding the guy who took her. He better pray the police find him first.

He looks down on Amanda, misty. Andy's overstayed.

She smiles, leaving the broken man alone with his wife.

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM

Mitch is discussing medications with a bright young boy with a bald head and his crumbling mother. Cancer is a bitch.

MITCH

...we should be able to spread the chemo apart and sublimate with prescriptions.

The little boy, HARRY, 6 is inquisitive and hopeful.

HARRY

After that, I'll be better?

Mitch matches his hopefulness.

MITCH

We hope so. We're gotta get you back on the baseball diamond.

HARRY

Yeah?

MITCH

Heck yeah.

Harry's mom, DEBRA, dots her eyes with a worn handkerchief.

DEBRA

Dr. Matheson, do you have a second?

Mitch follows Harry's mom outside, into the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL

DEBRA

What are you doing?

MITCH

I'm sorry?

Debra comes undone.

DEBRA

He's never going to play baseball again. And you giving him false hope sets him up for a great disappointment.

MITCH

Don't you... think that believing he can beat it is what Harry needs?

DEBRA

Harry needs peace, a break from the constant pain. Not hope.

Mitch doesn't know what to say.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Do you know when he was diagnosed?

MITCH

Um... no. I don't...

DEBRA

He was sixteen months old. So, he's had his share of hope and belief from doctors that would treat him, come in a month later to tell him it was gone, and then another year later to tell him that it was back. He's in more pain than you and I can imagine and the only thing that makes it easier for him is knowing that it will stop someday.

She notices Harry behind Mitch. She wipes her eyes.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Hi, sweetheart, you ready?

HARRY

Yup.

She takes Harry's hand, leads him home. Harry turns.

HARRY (CONT'D)

See ya.

Mitch smiles, false but firm.

EXT. HOSPITAL - RECEIVING DOCK -- NIGHT

Andy sits alone on the concrete, with a paper cup of coffee.

Mitch comes out to catch his breath. He doesn't see her.

MITCH

FUCK!

ANDY

One of those days?

Mitch is startled, embarrassed.

MITCH

Hi, there.

ANDY

Wanna beat mine?

MITCH

You too?

Mitch, always on pins and needles around Andy, sits nearby.

ANDY

Broken husband wondering when, or if, he'll ever get his comatose wife back.

Mitch nods.

MITCH

Sweet six-year-old boy who's been fighting leukemia for five.

ANDY

Oh God.

MITCH

And his name's Harry.

ANDY

Aww, little kid with grown up name, you win. That tops everything.

Mitch rubs his face furiously. Andy offers her coffee. She has no idea what it means to him. He sips. A moment passes.

MITCH

Do you remember thinking, when we started school, that being a doctor meant we were working toward a world without pain, where people didn't suffer?

Andy nods.

ANDY

And what do you think now?

MITCH

Do we ever end up helping, or is there so much pain we never win?

ANDY

It's your moment of doubt, we've all had it, just don't let it get hold of you.

Mitch shakes his head.

MITCH

Big bleeding heart, remember?

Andy finishes her coffee and jumps up, she offers a hand to Mitch, who sheepishly accepts. She checks her watch.

ANDY

Home stretch.

MITCH

See you at the finish line.

They walk back in together.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Andy is alone, changing out of her scrubs. She covers a big yawn. The door opens behind her, startling her.

Mitch enters. Andy quickly pulls her shirt down, briefly revealing a scar across her stomach. Mitch noticed, pretends he didn't.

MITCH

How come I could barely keep my eyes open for the past thirty hours, but the shift ends and I couldn't sleep if you clubbed me?

ANDY

Adrenaline. Good work tonight, on the resection.

MITCH

Thanks.

He unlocks his locker, opens it. Takes a deep breath...

MITCH (CONT'D)
So... I think I'm gonna hit Pour
Paul's for a drink...

ANDY
Yeah?

MITCH
Yeah.

He just can't pull the trigger. Carlos and Jules walk in.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Anyone wanna hit the bar, I'm driving?

Carlos looks at Andy.

CARLOS
Can't.

JULES
I've angered the Gods of Medicine, I
have charts. Sounds great though.

CARLOS
(to Mitch)
Leave the chain off, I'll probably
stick around here or go grab some
grub, I'll be home after you.

Mitch turns.

MITCH
Okay. Cool. Great.
(to Andy)
See ya...

Mitch grabs his bag, shoulders past Carlos, then stops, turns
to Andy...

MITCH (CONT'D)
Andalusian.

Andy's perplexed, then...

MITCH (CONT'D)
The horse. I looked it up. It's
Andalusian.

And leaves.

INT. POUR PAUL'S BAR -- LATER

The place is dark, a little skeevy, the bar-wide wood
panelling saturated with stink, from back when people could
smoke indoors.

Mitch is saddled up to the bar, nursing his whisky straight.

Eddie, the tender, checks on him. Mitch covers his drink.

It's a lonely, pathetic sight.

Until a delicate hand appears on the bar, a few feet down, then another hand. A woman, all alone, perches on the stool.

It's Holly. Last we saw, she was screaming in a dark alley.

Mitch looks over, Holly nods. Mitch smiles back. She orders, Eddie bringing her something clear on ice.

HOLLY

Thanks dear.

EDDIE

You got it.

She turns to Mitch, taking a sip from her glass.

HOLLY

Hi.

Mitch doesn't realize she's talking to him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Yes, you. Mr. Lonely Heart.

Mitch smiles, looks over.

MITCH

Hi.

HOLLY

Can I ask what you're looking for?

MITCH

What do you mean?

HOLLY

I thought I'd save you the trouble of searching. Cause if we happen to be looking for the same thing, it's not at the bottom of that glass.

Mitch looks back into his amber whisky. He smiles, she's not subtle but she's got a point. The tender pipes up...

EDDIE

With his tolerance, he'll never make it that low.

MITCH

And if it's happy hour, I can float my way back to the top.

Holly takes a drink.

HOLLY
So we're all clever.

They share a smile.

INT. POUR PAUL'S BAR -- LATER

Mitch and Holly are sloshed, tucked away in a dark corner booth, some embarrassing song whirling on the jukebox.

MITCH
Four years. Am I crazy, for being
so butt-monkey infatuated? Or just
pathetic for never telling her?

HOLLY
Yes.

MITCH
You don't care.

HOLLY
No.

A pause, then they both start laughing.

MITCH
Well, Ms. Lonely Heart, what are you
looking for...

Holly shrugs, drinks.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Does it have to do with the ring on
your necklace?

Holly reaches down, on her chain, a man's band. She tucks
it back into her top.

HOLLY
You're quite a perceptive drunk.

She takes a moment.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
We'd just gotten married, and things
were pretty great, until they weren't.
His... dad died suddenly, and it
tore him up. But we were trying to
work through it. We were out one
night, we had dinner, and... we
were... mugged, and they killed him.

MITCH
Jesus.

HOLLY

No matter how hard you wish, or how much you drink, there's nothing at the bottom, but a slippery climb back out.

Mitch doesn't know what to say. Holly takes his hand.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Come home with me.

Mitch blinks blankly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Was that completely inappropriate and ill-timed?

MITCH

Yes it was.

Remembering Carlos' advice, his non-start with Andy.

Make a move, or move on... He finishes his drink in one fell swallow.

MITCH (CONT'D)

And yes, I will.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT -- LATER

The front door opens, spilling hall light into the small, but cozy apartment. Holly ushers Mitch inside, flipping a small lamp on. The place stays mostly dim.

HOLLY

Sit down and I'll be back in a few.

MITCH

Sure.

Mitch settles into the over-stuffed couch as Holly disappears down the back hallway.

A few awkward moments pass.

Mitch notices a few picture frames on a nearby table. Turned over, obscuring the photos.

He also notices nails on the walls. Where photos once hung.

Mitch leans over, reaching for one of the overturned frames, tilts it upward... CRASH!

A loud bang down the long hall. Mitch stands.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Holly?

All quiet, then... whimpering?

MITCH (CONT'D)

Holly, are you alright?

He can barely hear her, but in a whisper, she cries...

HOLLY

I'm sorry.

Mitch melts, starts following her voice down the hall.

MITCH

It's okay, I mean, believe me, I understand. Maybe it's just...

He can barely see her silhouette on the edge of the bed. He leans in the bedroom doorway. Holly doesn't look up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It's okay.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

He comes to her. Sits on the bed beside her.

MITCH

You seem like a great person. And... we probably just need time, you know?

He pats her knee, but she remains inconsolable. He stands.

MITCH (CONT'D)

So... I'm just going to let myself out. And you crawl into bed, get some rest. Things are tough now but they won't always be...

He goes to the door.

HOLLY

Mitch...

MITCH

Yeah?

HOLLY

I'm so sorry.

Mitch smiles.

MITCH

Nothing to be sorry for.

Holly looks up for the first time.

Sensing something, Mitch looks over at the closet door, and watches, confused as it slowly slides open.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What...

He jumps backwards as a figure, wrapped in shadows, LUNGES from the closet.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - HALL

Mitch stumbles, drunk, dazed, scared witless, falling on his ass. His glasses slipping off. He crab walks away as a Ghoul emerges from the bedroom, into the faint living room light.

Mitch can't believe his blurred vision.

A seeping, sopping human corpse follows him down the hall. Rotten beyond recognition, the monster is reaching for Mitch.

Mitch makes it to the open bathroom door and climbs inside, getting to his knees and slamming the door as the Ghoul's arm reaches in.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

He catches the putrid limb in the door jam, stopping it just short of reaching him.

The bony fingers wiggle and claw, just grabbing the tip of his collar, they pull, hungry, ripping his shirt half open.

The Ghoul gurgles and moans on the other side.

Mitch yanks back on the door, freeing him and his shirt, and slams it on the arm again.

And again. Until the limb hangs flaccid, pulled from bone and joint, broken and practically severed.

Mitch is panting, in shock. He pulls the door back and kicks it shut, crushing the ligament holding the arm on.

It falls to the floor.

Mitch locks the door, never taking his eyes away from the arm. Severed nerve endings jitter at the end of the wound.

The pinkie vibrates. The arm is still alive. Not consciously, but wildly reaching, clawing...

Mitch pulls the shower curtain down, wrapping the arm up, stuffing it in the linen closet.

He backs against the door, listening, THUD! Mitch leaps back.

HOLLY

(through the door)

Mitch! Are you alright?

MITCH

NO!!

HOLLY

It's gone. It went out the front door. I locked it outside.

Mitch cautious, unlatches the door. Holly bursts in, upset, crying, holding onto him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What was it?

MITCH

You tell me, it was in YOUR bedroom closet for crying out loud!

Mitch moves past her, through the gore-stained doorway, into the hall. Looking one way, the other, everything seems okay.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Call the police.

HOLLY

Um... okay... I uh...

MITCH

Holly. CALL the POLICE.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - HALL

Holly inches past Mitch, for the phone in the kitchen.

Mitch moves to the locked front door, listening...

MITCH

How did it get in your apartment?

HOLLY

I don't know...

He checks the peephole.

MITCH

Jesus Christ, what was wrong with him? He looked, he looked...

HOLLY

Dead?

MITCH

Yeah. He looked dead.

Mitch is suddenly THWACKED across the back of the head. He crumbles against the front door.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What the...

Emerging from the kitchen, the Ghoul. Holly standing nearby.

Wounded, crippled, it crawls across the floor, its one good arm pulling it along.

Mitch floats in and out of consciousness, trying to stand, barely able to see.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It's behind you...

The Ghoul reaches for him. His rotten hand over Mitch's shoulder... It lunges...

SMASH TO BLACK:

A rush of wet, gurgling sounds. Then quiet. A sheet is pulled back, erasing the darkness.

Under the sheet, is Mitch. Lying prone on a morgue table. Pale, still, unresponsive.

Carlos stands above him.

CARLOS

Dude, wake up. Dude. Wake, up.

Nothing.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Mitch!

Mitch sits bolt upright, eyes flying open.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Trying to beat me to the Chief, huh?

Mitch turns, disoriented, confused.

MITCH

What are you doing here?

CARLOS

I switched shifts with Perrin, I told him he didn't have a chance.

Mitch looks around...

MITCH

I... there was... a girl.

Mitch can't put the pieces together. Is it still last night?

CARLOS

A what?

MITCH

A girl. We went back to her apartment.

CARLOS

I'm drifting on a sea of bewilderment. You went home with some girl?

Mitch hasn't listened to a word he's said. He swings his legs off the table and tries to stand.

Mitch doesn't understand a thing that's happening.

MITCH

How did I get here?

CARLOS

Come on Drunkula, let's get some fluids in you. I want you to be at your best when you hear I beat you.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMPTY EXAM ROOM -- LATER

Mitch sits with his head in his hands. A "banana bag" drips potassium and other fluids into his veins.

He reaches up to adjust his glasses, and realizes he's not wearing them. Then he notices the color of his skin. Not just pale, gray. He rubs his neck, unaware of the bruise starting to develop over his collarbone.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE STATION -- LATER

Mitch leans against the wall. Dazed. Jules sits opposite him, chowing down on lunch. She glances at Mitch.

JULES

What's wrong?

MITCH

What's, what? Nothing, I'm good.

JULES

You hungry, or what?

MITCH

I... should try to eat.

He starts to walk out, Jules grabs his wrist, showing him that he's already holding an uneaten sandwich in his hand.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I guess I'm not hungry.

JULES

You need a nap.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Matheson! Palmieri!

Mitch and Jules spin around, looking into the hall. Dr. Spaulding, abrupt and large-headed, less than affectionately called "Spaulding the Balding," is rushing past.

SPAULDING

You're the lucky interns this afternoon. Come on.

Mitch and Jules throw the sandwiches down and rush out.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Jules speeds in, with Mitch right behind, freshly scrubbed, Mitch overcompensating for his total inability to focus.

JULES

What do we have, sir?

SPAULDING

Stab wound. Massive blood loss.
Let's open him up, see what got
popped.

The patient's torso is already being sliced open. Everyone in the room is digging in.

Mitch is mesmerized as the torso is opened up. The meat, the heat, the blood red gush.

Mitch looks over, everyone's watching him.

SPAULDING (CONT'D)

Where are you?

MITCH

I'm here, I'm here, sir.

SPAULDING

Then grab a pad and stop these
bleeders.

Mitch reaches over, wiping the area clean.

SPAULDING (CONT'D)

Palmieri, I want you to...

BEEEEEP. The patient is flatlining.

From Mitch's perspective, everything suddenly slows down and goes silent. Everything except the flatline.

The surgeon, nurses slo-mo rush about, covered in blood, digging, pulling, blood pumping in and out.

Mitch looks over at the patient's face.

It's Carlos on the table.

Mitch pulls back, stunned, blood spraying across his chest. His hand swings back, knocking over a tray of tools.

The tray falls super-slow. And as it hits the tile...

CLANG! Sound and speed is back.

MITCH

What happened to him? What happened?!

SPAULDING

What the hell are you talking about?

Mitch reaches for the body. Only it's not Carlos, it's a total stranger.

MITCH

What's... what's going on?

SPAULDING

Are you high, Matheson?

MITCH

Who is he?

SPAULDING

He's a patient, dying on my table because I'm answering your stupid questions, shut up or get out!

Mitch goes weak in the knees, bumping into Jules.

SPAULDING (CONT'D)

Out!

Mitch runs out.

JULES

Sir, can I...

SPAULDING

Oh, for the love of Pete, get out!

INT. HOSPITAL - DARK EXAM ROOM

Mitch bursts in, shutting the door behind him. He flips the bright overhead lights on, wincing in the glare.

The nausea is unbearable. He sticks his head between his knees, trying to breathe as the room spins.

He begins choking, pulling his surgical mask off as gag after gag echoes in the room.

One loud, long cough sends a dark spatter of thick blood spraying onto the floor.

Mitch, still choking, slides to his knees, dipping his index finger into the stringy liquid.

A strand of tissue clings to his finger. The sight sends another rush of nausea through him. He makes for the sink and vomits another quart of dark, ropery blood. Mitch heaves and gasps, bits of tissue line the metal sink.

He looks into the chrome towel dispenser and sees his eyes for the first time.

Two black holes. His pupils are completely dilated. He notices the small dark patch over his collarbone.

Reaching up, he sees that he cut his hand when he hit the tray table. He squeezes the wound... More red-black ooze dribbles out.

He grabs a syringe, a vial, a tie-off... And begins drawing a sample of his own molasses-thick blood.

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMITTING

The Young Woman from yesterday morning chats a mile-a-minute with a Grizzled Nurse.

YOUNG WOMAN

And he has glasses? Tall?

GRIZZLED NURSE

Sorry, people are currently dying all over the hospital so you'll have to get someone else to help you find the "super cute intern."

Someone grabs the Young Woman from behind. She turns, frazzled... Behind her, holding her, a Grungy Homeless Guy.

GRUNGY HOMELESS GUY

She was screaming for help, but she stopped. I couldn't carry her anymore.

He points to the floor behind him. A young woman lies prone on the tile, black and blue, bleeding all over the floor.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ohmigod.

The Grizzled Nurse pushes her away.

GRIZZLED NURSE

Get a gurney.

YOUNG WOMAN

What happened...

GRIZZLED NURSE

Get a goddamned gurney!

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL -- MOMENTS LATER

The Grizzled Nurse and two Police Officers rush alongside the battered woman, who's screaming. Andy hears the commotion, sees the Young Woman watching in shock...

ANDY

What happened?

YOUNG WOMAN

Someone just dumped her in a ditch.

ANDY

Who?

YOUNG WOMAN

The girl who was missing.

Andy turns on a dime, pushing through the onlookers, catching up to the gurney. Officers are trying to ask questions.

OFFICER 1

Did you ever see the man who did this to you?

OFFICER 2

Anything about where you were kept?

Andy pushes them aside, pulling the girl's shirt up. A long wide wound on her stomach. Green, swollen. Andy sets her jaw, staying calm.

ANDY

She's septic. Who's on call?

GRIZZLED NURSE

Spaulding. He's been paged.

ANDY

We need to get her...

OFFICER 1

If you can tell us anything you remember...

ANDY

Back the fuck off!

She stands between the gurney and the officers.

OFFICER 1

We need as much information as she can give before she...

Dr. Spaulding arrives, following the gurney into an O.R.

Andy matches his pace.

ANDY

I'm ready to assist.

SPAULDING

I don't need you.

He rushes in, leaving her in the hall. Andy is breathless, sheet white, an arm crossed over her stomach.

INT. HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE LAB -- LATER

Mitch drops the blood sample off at the lab. The Lab Tech looks at the dark sample with a cocked eyebrow.

MITCH

It's uh... I need that back ASAP.

LAB TECH

Yeah.

Mitch walks away, rubbing his eyes. He ambles into a dark exam room...

INT. HOSPITAL - DARK EXAM ROOM

And finds Andy against the wall, crying.

MITCH

Andy?

Andy jumps, wiping her eyes, trying to cover. She smiles.

ANDY

Wanna beat my bad day?

Mitch goes to her.

MITCH

What happened?

ANDY

Nothing...

Her eyes puffy. Mitch sees through the smile.

MITCH

Andy. Talk to me.

ANDY

That girl that was missing... they just found her. She was really hurt.

MITCH

Is she here? Is she okay?

Andy shakes her head. She is overwhelmed, trying to hold back sobs. The sight tortures Mitch.

ANDY

What is wrong with people?! Five women, Mitch, that we know of. If they're looking for this guy, how can he kidnap, rape, and mutilate these poor girls, and we only find them when he's done with them?!

Andy looks up, eyes full of tears. Something in her glance...

She breaks eye contact.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I need to check on...

She starts to walk away, Mitch grabs her arm.

MITCH

Andy, what's going on?

ANDY

I'm fine, let me go...

Mitch doesn't want her to leave, until, staring at his hand around her arm, he realizes he can't let her go.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Mitch... let me go.

She pulls away, nicking her arm with his fingernails as she gets free.

Andy backs away, wiping her eyes, walking out. He wants to follow but looking at his hand, still frozen in a claw-like grip, he realizes he can't move it.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMPTY MORGUE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Mitch enters, locking the door behind him. He pulls out a digital voice recorder, shrugs his coat off. He pulls a wide mirror down from the ceiling... Sees himself.

He clicks the recorder.

MITCH

I'm... patient... is experiencing numbness, stiffness in extremities, moving closer to heart.

Mitch gets more and more concerned.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Waves of acute nausea. Vomiting blood. Expelling what appears to be lung or esophageal tissue.

He checks his eyes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Pupils are fully dilated. Patient also seems to have symptoms... of coagulation of blood. Pulse is...

He checks his own pulse, can't find it.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Faint.

Mitch notices the spot on his neck has gotten bigger, darker. He steps closer to the mirror, pulling his shirt off. A surge of nausea hits.

CARLOS (O.S.)

What is that?

Mitch sees Carlos in the mirror, watching from behind. He spins.

MITCH
You scared the piss out of me.

CARLOS
Is that from last night?

MITCH
...I don't know.

CARLOS
I need to tell you something.

Carlos approaches, Mitch starts feeling dizzy. He quakes.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
It's about me.

MITCH
What is?

CARLOS
Everything.

Mitch is unbearably lightheaded, he leans on an exam table, its unlocked wheels sliding away, Mitch stumbles, falls.

Looking back, Carlos is gone. Mitch's dizziness subsides. He veers toward the door. It's still locked, from the inside.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Mitch emerges, pulling his shirt on, scanning the hall. No sign of Carlos. What the hell is going on? An Older Nurse passes Mitch.

OLDER NURSE
Matheson?

MITCH
What?

OLDER NURSE
Mitchell Matheson?

MITCH
...Yeah.

OLDER NURSE
I can't keep all of you straight...

Mitch is curt.

MITCH
What do you want?

OLDER NURSE

The Chief's been looking for you.

She walks on. Mitch is confused, and now, nervous

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE -- LATER

Mitch walks into the stronghold. The Chief's office.

The Chief, 50's, is formidable. Stern, no nonsense, and not a little bit grim. He demands respect and he gets it.

The Chief motions for him to sit down.

CHIEF

Do you know what the real point of this year is, as far as I'm concerned?

MITCH

No.

CHIEF

The point of this year is to break you interns. To force you to separate your head and your heart.

MITCH

Okay.

CHIEF

You have the head and the hands for the job, no doubt, but your heart, it gets in the way, it's no good.

MITCH

Excuse me?

CHIEF

You have the scores, but you know as well as I do that you would crash and burn a year from now. You're not cut out for this. I think you'll make a great doctor. But not a surgeon, and not here.

MITCH

What are you telling me?

CHIEF

I'm letting you go. You're cut.

MITCH

But we're done... I don't...

Mitch stops, thinks.

MITCH (CONT'D)

This is about the patient in March.

CHIEF

Frank Denton.

MITCH

I know his name.

CHIEF

You left an untreated patient in a room for almost two hours, and he bled to death internally.

MITCH

I made a mistake, no one knew he was dying.

CHIEF

And why didn't you know?

MITCH

Because I was with another patient.

CHIEF

While you were assigned to him.

MITCH

She was fifteen years old, with a botched attempt at a self-administered abortion. And the nurses called her family. She was going to walk out of this hospital and do God knows what to herself. Pardon me for choosing to help her instead of a man who spent fifty years pickling his liver, then wondering why it turned on him!

CHIEF

That's the problem, Matheson. You believe that making a decision is as easy as choosing between right and wrong. And it's never that simple. You made a bad call, a call that wasn't yours to make and now the man's son has filed against the hospital.

Mitch looks up...

MITCH

Oh, I see.

The Chief sits back, crosses his arms.

MITCH (CONT'D)

This isn't about head and heart, it's about accountability. You're ending my career to make sure it looks like you did your job.

CHIEF

If something like this blew up, we could risk losing our license as a teaching hospital, and I've worked too hard for this program to lose it over a doctor with a bleeding heart.

MITCH

You son of a bitch.

CHIEF

We're done, Matheson.

Mitch stands.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Good luck.

The Chief doesn't look up.

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATION

Mitch storms out, and finds the Lab Tech waiting to speak with the Chief.

LAB TECH

You might wanna wait, he's gonna want you back in there.

The Tech indicates a folder.

LAB TECH (CONT'D)

Your little joke? We have work piled on work, you think we have time to entertain some fuck-up interns?

MITCH

What are you talking about?

Mitch goes for the file, the Tech pulls it back.

LAB TECH

I'll show it to the Chief first.

Mitch gets in close. Sinister, full of rage, very un-Mitch.

MITCH

Let go of that file or I'll break your goddamned hand.

The Tech lets go. Mitch walks away, flipping through the three-page lab result. The Tech calls out to him.

LAB TECH

It's not even original. You think you're the first asshole to submit a cadaver's blood?

Mitch stops in his tracks. He reads the results. Every number, every line, sends him spiraling.

INT. HOSPITAL - STORAGE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Mitch enters, slamming the door closed. The room is filled with unplugged heart monitors, other equipment.

Mitch, in serious shock, plugs a heart monitor into the wall and hooks himself up.

Flatline. Frantic now, he tries another. Flatline.

Head bowed, the long single-toned hum of the flatline fills the room. He looks over his shoulder, in the corner, a defibrillator.

He pulls the heart monitor over and charges the defib.

Mitch pulls his shirt off. The defib charged...

He grabs the paddles, crossing his arms over himself, placing the paddles against his bare chest. He closes his eyes and presses the button.

BBBZZZZ. Flatline. Mitch is shaking. BBBZZZZ. Flatline.

Over and over until his skin is smoking. He drops the paddles, completely undone. Somehow, it's true.

He sees himself in the reflection of a stainless steel cabinet. He's lost twenty pounds since last night. Gaunt, grey, sunken.

He's dead.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL OUTSIDE STORAGE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Hospital staff mill around...

SMASH! GLASS EXPLODES into the hall as the defibrillator comes crashing through the storage room's curtained window.

Mitch emerges, everyone standing back.

INT. HOSPITAL - VARIOUS

Mitch walks through the hospital, in complete shock. All around him, people screaming, people dying. Blood, and pain.

But he doesn't feel anything anymore.

EXT. HOSPITAL

Mitch exits and wanders aimlessly down the street.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE -- LATER

Mitch almost passes, then stops at a graffitied liquor store in a janky part of town.

INT. LIQUOR STORE

Inside, Mitch wanders the aisles, settling on a liter bottle of whisky. Okay, two.

He approaches the check-out, waiting behind a customer that's already there. The customer and the store owner stand in silence. Mitch, out of it, steps around the other customer...

MITCH

I just want... like a box of cigarettes. Not a pack-box... but whatever you call it... that a bunch of packs come in.

CUSTOMER

A carton.

MITCH

Right, thanks, yeah, a carton.

The customer turns. He's jittery, completely cranked on something. And he's got a gun. Mitch has walked into an armed robbery.

Mitch doesn't even flinch. He sees the gun, looks up...

MITCH (CONT'D)

(to owner)

I've never smoked a cigarette in my entire life, so if you could just get a carton of whatever is the most carcinogenic, life-threatening brand you have that should be fine.

CUSTOMER

Do you see this gun in my hand, motherfucker?

MITCH

Sure, I'll just be a second...

Mitch pulls cash out of his pocket. He's obviously in shock.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(to owner)

Do you want this, or should I just give it to him?

The customer puts the gun to Mitch's head, pushing him against a display of impulse buys.

CUSTOMER

Are you trying to be a hero, friend?

Mitch smiles.

MITCH

I'm not a hero.

CUSTOMER

Then put your fucking face on the floor and shut the fuck up.

MITCH

Do you know how often interns have orders barked at them? It's like a constant buzzing day in...

CUSTOMER

I'm not gonna tell you again....

MITCH

You pathetic waste of your mother's womb, pull the trigger or shut the fuck up.

The customer, already on edge, steps back, pulls the trigger.

The bullet blazes through Mitch's chest, smashing the snacks behind him. Mitch barely flinches. He touches the wound.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Jesus... that was...bracing.

Mitch goes back to the counter. The customer is literally pissing his pants, stumbling back.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Cigarettes?

The owner slides a carton over the counter.

OWNER

You got a death wish.

MITCH

Something like that.

Mitch drops his cash on the counter. He heads for the door, hefting his cigs and whisky.

EXT. DARK STREET -- LATER

Mitch wanders the dark pre-morning streets, guzzling from his bottle, a lit cigarette in his other hand.

He waves away a throng of flies that have started following.

He scratches the holy hell out his shoulder. Mitch checks the mark in a store window reflection. He notices the itchy bruise over his collarbone. It's grown, darkened.

And it's the shape of a handprint.

Mitch stares at it and then, in flashes...

He remembers what happened to him.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - OUTER HALL -- LATER

Mitch approaches the front door to Holly's apartment.

He listens at the door, then knocks. No answer. He tries the doorknob. The door's open.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - HALL

Mitch stands in the open doorway, inside, it's dark. Quiet, except for the buzzing flies.

He tries the wall switch, no go. He can see through a slice of hallway light that the apartment is smashed up.

As his eyes adjust, he realizes someone's sitting in the living room.

MITCH

Hello?

Nothing. Mitch ekes closer.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Tell me what you did to me.

The figure in the dark remains silent. Mitch bumps into a small table with a lamp. He fiddles for the switch, finds it. Turns it on. He shudders, shocked.

The figure in the living room... is Holly. Dead. Her skin, waxy, white. Dead by a day. A mess of pill bottles on the coffee table, open, empty.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Oh God...

In shock, Mitch barely notices the mirror on the far wall. Or the reflection of the person behind him, shutting the apartment door. He jumps, turns.

It's the "ghoul" from before. James. Shirtless, stone still. But not the creepy figure from the night before. He's fully healed. Alive. The only telltale indication of who he is...

His right arm is completely missing. The skin grown over his shoulder socket as if he were born with only three limbs.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're alive...

James rushes Mitch, clenching his throat with his one hand, RAMMING him into the far wall. He knocks over the lone lamp, creating jags of surreal under-lighting.

James wraps the lamp cord around Mitch's neck, dragging him like an unruly dog on a leash.

He pulls Mitch and the lamp across the room, into the hall, the cord unplugging from the wall, dousing them in dark.

Mitch struggles against his yoke; kicking, clawing.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

James pulls Mitch to the tub, hefting him with one arm, throwing him in. Mitch tries to climb out, but James grabs a heavy candlestick nearby and smashes Mitch across the head, stunning him. He walks out of the room.

The sound of rummaging from beyond the door.

Mitch's eyes roll back in his head, his bell rung. He struggles to get out of the tub, but James is back.

With a bottle of lighter fluid.

JAMES

I killed you for what you did... and
you still took her from me...

He sprays a stream of butane all over Mitch.

JAMES (CONT'D)

She was all I had left!

James is crying, seething, spitting. He's lost it. Mitch can barely speak.

MITCH

I didn't do anything to you.

James drops the butane, grabbing the candlestick again, WHACKING Mitch. It doesn't hurt, but it's jarring.

JAMES

You did everything.

James smiles, wild, wide-eyed.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I knew you'd come looking for answers.
For help. Like I went looking... and
TAG, you'd be all better. But I'm
not gonna tell you what I know.

James sifts through a drawer, finds a pack of matches.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not letting you get away with
what you've done.

He tries to strike a match.

MITCH

You think that'll kill me?

JAMES

I know it won't.

James strikes feverishly.

Mitch jumps out of the tub, knocking James over, angling for the bottle of butane.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - HALL

James pile drives him out of the bathroom, into the hallway, the butane bottle spinning across the hardwood.

They both crawl and scurry across the floor, Mitch manages to kick James away and grab the butane.

MITCH

We'll both be barbecue and I'll still walk out the front door.

James considers.

JAMES

You think I care?

Mitch gets to his feet. James is starting to wig out.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Do it. Do it!

Mitch backs away, fluid dripping from the gash on his head.

James sees Holly on the couch. He falls to his knees, breaking down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's because of what we did to you.
She couldn't live with what we did.
So she...

MITCH

What did YOU do?

James' sobbing subsides, he looks up, smiling.

JAMES

What you deserved.

MITCH

Why won't you help me cure this?

James starts laughing.

JAMES

Oh, you're gonna cure it, doctor?
You're gonna cure the disease?

Stone somber.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's not a disease.

MITCH

Then tell me what it is!

JAMES

It's revenge.

It's obvious he's not going to tell Mitch anything else. Mitch throws the bottle down.

He makes for the front door. On the floor at his feet, his glasses, cracked from the night before. He picks them up.

James starts laughing to himself, tears tumbling down.

MITCH

What's so funny?

JAMES

This house is full of corpses.

Mitch backs away, leaves, James calling out behind him...

JAMES (CONT'D)

Because of you!

EXT. DARK STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

His words echo as Mitch rushes through a spattering of pedestrians, digging into his itching shoulder, lost, desperate...

He stops suddenly.

He realizes his scratching fingers have dug into his shoulder's softened skin. Clenching tight, he pulls away a handful of soft, necrotic flesh...

And maggots tumble down from the wound. Onto his shirt, his hands, the sidewalk.

Stunned, Mitch slams back first against a store window...

He can't help himself, he digs and digs, until the soft tissue is gone. The open wound is the exact shape of a hand.

One or two pedestrians rush by, head down. Not their problem.

Mitch looks at his hand, covered in gore. His own.

A single SPLAT on his bloody palm. Rain. He tries to close his palm, but it's all but frozen open. Rigor Mortis.

Mitch shuns the street lights, making for the darkness of a nearby park. Lost and terrified.

EXT. OLD CITY PARK

Mitch collapses on a park bench, undone.

Rain starts to pitter. He tries to sit up. He can't move his neck, or his hands.

He strains against his frozen limbs. Forcing them to work. The more he moves them the more flexible they become.

He notices a stray dog watching from a distance. Matted, flea-ridden, hungry. Sniffing the air. The smell of flesh.

MITCH

You hungry?

Mitch puts his head in his hands, suddenly racked with nausea.

CARLOS

So this is a life without pain?

Mitch looks up. Carlos is crouching in front of him.

MITCH

How did you find me?

CARLOS

Followed the smell of rot. If you're going to give up, then, I wanted to be here to see the moment.

Mitch tries to stand, his limbs stiff, nausea flooding over. Rain has started to pour.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Not feeling well?

MITCH

How can I feel sick if I'm...

Mitch looks up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're, not Carlos. You're not real.

CARLOS

Sorry?

MITCH

Every time I get sick, you're here. Whatever you are. What are you, the grim reaper or something?

Carlos laughs.

CARLOS

I want to help you.

Mitch stands, stumbling back. He slams into a tree. Sliding to his ass. "Carlos" approaches, kneels. They both notice the matted dog, now prowling nearby. Growling.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

It's not sickness. It's hunger.
It's easy to mistake when you've
never felt it so strongly.

The dog sniffs, inching closer. Carlos regards the dog...

CARLOS (CONT'D)

He's drawn to what he needs, to what
will stave his hunger. What will
make him well again. It's the same
thing that's happening to you. You're
drawn to touch what will save you.

Mitch looks into the dead eyes of this false person.

MITCH

Who? Carlos?

"Carlos" stands, smiling.

CARLOS

He can save you.

Mitch reaches for the hand-shaped wound on his shoulder.

MITCH

(quoting James)

"TAG, you'd be all better..."

From the dog's perspective, Mitch is talking to himself.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What is this? What are you?

"Carlos" leans in...

CARLOS

I follow a trail of pain around the
world. Forever.

Overcome with nausea, fear, Mitch lunges at the phantom,
missing him altogether, slamming onto the ground.

He looks up and finds the phantom gone. It's quiet.

Mitch turns...

BOOM! The dog is in his face, barking, snarling, teeth bared.

Mitch rolls over, crawling away from the dog. The dog chomps
down on Mitch's wrist. He shakes him off but the dog bounces
back, biting his neck, his arm, hungry for the rotting meat.

Mitch scrambles to his feet, slipping on the wet grass,
falling. The dog descending again.

It pulls Mitch's flesh apart, rolling him onto his back.
Mitch lies there, the verge of surrender.

The GROWLING, CHOMPING SOUNDS OF A FERAL FEAST.

But Mitch has had enough. Full of rage, he grabs the dog, and like two wild animals, they tear one another apart, until Mitch grabs the dog by the hair of its head and kicks its throat in, breaking its neck.

In silhouette, Mitch drops the dog's body and climbs up, out of the grass, blood, morass. The darkest moment of his life. Unbreathing. Unfeeling. THIS is a life without pain.

Repurposed, he walks with a dark determination.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Carlos kicks the door open, his arms full.

CARLOS

Mitch? What the hell happened today?
The Chief told me to take your shit
home... Mitch? Whew Jeebus we gotta
take the garbage out.

Carlos dumps his and Mitch's junk on a nearby chair. He flips the lights. And almost pisses himself.

Propped on the couch is Mitch. Bloody, muddy, his decomposition accelerating. It's a terrifying sight.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Dude?

Carlos stands stone still, unable to suss the situation. His hands shaking.

MITCH

Hey, buddy.

Carlos shudders, his friend, is a corpse, and he's talking.

CARLOS

What... happened to you?

MITCH

Can't you smell it? I'm dead.

Mitch stands suddenly, Carlos leaps back. He can see the bone beneath Mitch's forehead, muscle in his hands.

CARLOS

You're uh... yeah.

Something has changed in Mitch. Darker, colder.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Well, just uh, stay... over there,
dude, and we'll figure out...

Carlos eyes the open door.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

How to fix you.

MITCH

I already know what I have to do.
It's nothing personal, I just can't
control myself.

Carlos takes a step to the door.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I have to give it to you.

Mitch charges toward Carlos, who backs out the door and speeds down the hall, with Mitch close behind him.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET -- NIGHT

Carlos speeds across the street, looking back, Mitch on him. This is a breathless sprint through the cluttered city.

Carlos rushes around a corner into a densely populated street. Traffic honks, pedestrians litter the sidewalk, all obstacles in the sprint.

Carlos looks back, Mitch is nowhere. Carlos trips over a newspaper stand and breaks the fall with his face. He jumps up, red, a little bloody, looking in all directions...

Mitch is across the street, they see each other.

Carlos stumbles along, more hurt than he realized.

At a large four way intersection, Carlos dives through oncoming traffic, a massive SUV swerving to avoid him, instead it catches Mitch, driving hood-first into the window of a hardware shop, with Mitch as the ornament.

The SUV lurches to a stop, half in the street, half in the building, smoke pluming from under the hood.

Carlos slows, stops.

General rubber-necking commotion. Shocked pedestrians. The SUV driver slowly opens the accordianed driver door... And it SLAMS shut again, with force. Behind it, Mitch.

His face gashed, his gut dotted with varying sized drill bits. Three hacksaw blades jammed in his neck.

CARLOS

Jesus.

Mitch reaches up, his eyes on Carlos, grabs the blades...

And yanks them out. People rush to his aid, he pushes them away. Animal, one-tracked, and Carlos sees it in his eyes.

They're off again.

INT. RESTAURANT ALLEY

Carlos travels top-speed through a between-building alleyway, and back onto the street.

He turns a corner... And finds a subway station.

INT. SUBWAY STATION

Carlos descends, jumps the turnstile, and finds not a single train waiting. What now?

Mitch surges through the thunderstruck crowd, unable to locate Carlos. He pushes people to the ground, cruel, emotionless. A train arrives, and almost everyone gets on.

Mitch climbs aboard. With the crowd thinning, he sees Carlos. Climbing onto the other platform, getting on another train. Mitch rushes as the doors close, catching his hand in the door, he yanks it free, leaving flaps of skin.

Mitch jumps into the track pit, heading for the next platform. He climbs up, and lunges as the doors to the train close, Carlos on the other side of the glass.

The train takes off.

Mitch turns to find the other train leaving the station. He bows his head, then looks up. Notes the train line.

MITCH

Blue.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Mitch sprints as fast as his legs will carry him. He ducks through side streets, crossing traffic, leaping over cars...

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Carlos sits on a bench, rocking back and forth as the train steadies along. He dabs fresh blood off his forehead.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET

Mitch tries to jump the hood of a car and slips, falling to the sidewalk, driving the drill bits deep into his belly. He jumps to his feet.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

The train dips back into darkness and slows, coming to its next stop.

The train enters the harsh fluorescent light of the station and stops.

The doors open, people get off, people get on. A mom with three toddlers and a baby stroller, get off at this station.

She's having a hard time, getting the stroller and kids through the crowd of people, through the door, off the train.

Carlos eyes the set of stairs that lead down from the street.

CARLOS

Let her through...

No one budes.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Let her through!

MOM

I'm sorry.

Carlos looks back at the stairs, goes to the mom.

The stroller is in the doorway, the doors closing repeatedly against it. He picks up the stroller and pushes it off the train, into the station.

MOM (CONT'D)

Thanks.

CARLOS

Get off!

He looks up as Mitch descends the stairs. A ghoul. And the doors aren't closing.

Mitch enters the train as the doors close and the train starts to move.

Moving through the dense crowd, Mitch pursues as Carlos shoves his way to the next car. The door's locked.

Carlos backtracks, approaching a sliding side door. He pulls as hard as he can, Mitch closing in...

He gets it open. As Mitch approaches... He jumps from the train.

Slamming onto the soot-covered tracks, Carlos looks up as Mitch jumps down, hitting the third rail...

Exploding in a shower of blue-white light, current rushing through him. He doesn't even flinch. A spark ignites the butane soaked in his shirt. And he bursts into flames.

Mitch never stops moving. He yanks his burning shirt off, stringy, melted fat hanging in ropes on the fabric.

Carlos crawls up the median splitting the two tracks. He turns... And sees Mitch climbing up out of the dark, no longer burning, but smoldering, bits of him black and crispy.

A few people on the platforms watch intently.

Mitch and Carlos face off on the top of the median. Carlos isn't sure which way to go. Mitch waiting for his next move.

They feel the RUMBLE, the WHOOSH OF AIR. A train is coming.

Carlos eyes the platform across the track pit. The stairs leading up to crowds, to police, to safety.

The train is getting closer. Carlos is going to dodge it.

He slides down the side of the median, makes for the other side. But he slips in a slick of oil, falling flat, cracking his face on a track tie. He's shaken, too dizzy to stand.

Mitch rushes along the median, helpless as the train pulls into the station. People on the platforms start screaming.

MITCH

Los...

The brakes SCREAM as the headlights slice through the black.

One beat Carlos is there between the rails, the next, nothing but speeding train. And the next, the crushed and lifeless body of Mitch's best friend.

The train SCREECHES to a stop down the track.

Mitch goes to Carlos, who's lying in a giant swath of oil-slicked blood. He kneels down, slapped out of his ravenous daze. He wants to help his friend, but knows what his touch might do. Then...

MITCH (CONT'D)

Is there a doctor here?! Can anyone help him?!

On his feet, begging for help, his appearance sends everyone stepping away. Someone screams. Mitch spins, sheer panic.

MITCH (CONT'D)

SOMEONE HELP HIM!

Then... the nausea. He turns, and in a confusion of feral hunger and bleeding heart, he kneels, touching Carlos' chest.

Carlos HOWLS, sucking in air. Then collapses. Still. Mitch reaches for him again, then...

As if hit by a sledgehammer, Mitch flies back against the median. There is a hissing sound, quiet but growing louder.

It's the first breath pulling across Mitch's lips. And he uses it to scream as every atom in his body turns molten.

Wounds that were dry and withered, now turn raw, soggy, weeping blood, then, miraculously, they begin to pull themselves back together.

The dog bites, the cracked skull, the burns, impaled gut...

He slumps to the track, panting, unable to appreciate oxygen, as his body comes together in a storm of pain.

Mitch is alive again. And he forgot how much it hurt.

Bystanders are calling police. Subway security is just arriving. Mitch picks up Carlos' body, sliding him onto the platform, then pulls himself up.

Everyone watches him, pointing, accusing. Sirens upstairs, in the distance. Panicked, Mitch rushes out of the terminal.

Carlos, alone on the platform. Dead.

SMASH TO BLACK:

In the darkness, a muffled voice, clinical, procedural... The blackness is split in two by a shaft of light, unzipped. The interior of a body bag. With Carlos inside.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE

Carlos, pale, still, is photographed, stripped, cleaned and laid bare on a metal table under beaming procedure lights.

A female coroner, around 40, stands above him. About as personable as a woman who hangs out with dead people all day would need to be. She hits "record" on a digital recorder.

CORONER

Alright, did you jump or did somebody shove you in? "John Doe" is late 20's, wearing scrubs so he's either in medicine, or just a big fan...

She examines his arms, legs...

CORONER (CONT'D)

Multiple blunt trauma, contusions, broken ribs, skull's a bit of a mess. Enough of that, let's open him up...

INT. COUNTY MORGUE -- LATER

A large tray of tools. The Coroner reaches for a ten blade.

She creates the iconic "Y" incision down his chest, into his belly. Carlos remains still. Even when she spreads his chest open. Red and raw, Carlos is motionless.

She notices something on his muscle tissue. A dark area.

She puts her own gloved hand above the bruise, sure enough, a handprint. She shrugs, grabbing a bone saw. She revs the infernal machine. It's shiny. Her favorite.

And blade meets bone as she begins cutting open his ribcage. Smoke, bone dust, and BOOM!

Carlos reaches up, grabbing her hand. The Coroner sees one too many living people in the room...

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - COLD STORAGE

Mitch, completely healed, is sneaking through the cold storage facility, peeking under sheets at the bluish bodies beneath.

MITCH

(whisper)

Carlos? You here?

A BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM, just outside.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - HALLWAY

Mitch rushes toward the nonstop scream, and runs into his best friend, wrapped in a bloody sheet, holding his own chest cavity together.

CARLOS

I'm dead.

MITCH

I know.

Carlos touches Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It doesn't work like that.

CARLOS

Fuck! You killed me.

MITCH

I can explain what's happening, but we have to leave now.

CARLOS

I'm not going anywhere with you!

MITCH

Carlos, listen, you have to... come with me if you want to live.

CARLOS

Really? You think now's the best time for the quotes?

Mitch looks over Carlos' shoulder, the screaming is drawing attention.

MITCH

Come on!

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM -- LATER

Carlos uses the mirror above the sink to sew himself back together. The sink is full of bloody wire, snips, clamps...

Mitch calls through the closed door.

MITCH

How's it look?

CARLOS

Oh it looks great, Mitch. Maybe you can cut up all your other friends and we'll spell something.

Carlos opens the door.

MITCH

I didn't have a choice.

CARLOS

Well yeah, you did, you could've kept your one-night stand death herpes to yourself.

Mitch is serious, wanting Carlos to understand.

MITCH

I tried, but I couldn't control it.

Carlos looks back in the mirror.

MITCH (CONT'D)

When you pass it on, that should heal.

CARLOS

So what do I do?

MITCH

Wait, until you know who's next.

CARLOS

How is this medically possible?

MITCH

It's not.

CARLOS

And it's not a practical joke...

MITCH

While a great idea and possibly hilarious, no.

CARLOS

My hands are stiff.

MITCH

It's Rigor Mortis. It only took me a few hours to find you, but whatever this is it's not normal decomposition. It's accelerated. Keep stretching.

Carlos walks past him, digging through his backpack. He pulls out a notebook and starts writing a list.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CARLOS

Prescribing hardcore blood thinners, antibiotics. Try to stave off the effects so I don't look like Cannibal Carl in two days.

MITCH

I didn't think to do that.

CARLOS

Well I totally kick your ass at death.

MITCH

Wait. These won't work. They have to be absorbed or circulated through your bloodstream.

Carlos reaches for his chest.

CARLOS

Oh right, I don't have a heartbeat.

MITCH

We'd need something to push it through your system...

CARLOS

Something acting as a bloodstream to continually circulate.

MITCH

We need a dialysis machine.

CARLOS

Grab me one of those, too?

Carlos hands him the list. Mitch goes to the door. Carlos, thinking out loud...

CARLOS (CONT'D)

How am I gonna be a doctor if I'm dead?

MITCH

I'm gonna fix this, Los.

Carlos nods...

CARLOS

You tried everything else before you Tagged me, right?

MITCH

Short of turning to a pile of dust,
I did.

Carlos shrugs.

CARLOS

Then I guess we're cool.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING WING -- MOMENTS LATER

Andy is walking down the hall, when out of the corner of her eye... She sees Mitch, pushing a dialysis machine out of a storage room.

ANDY

Mitch?

Mitch jumps. She puts her finger to her mouth, motioning for him to follow her into a dark operating room.

INT. HOSPITAL - DARK OPERATING ROOM

Inside, Andy holds the door for him, grabbing him by his sleeve, yanking him inside.

ANDY

Where the hell have you been?

MITCH

Chief fired me.

ANDY

Well everyone knows that, God, if he saw you in here after yesterday... They said you threw a defibrillator through a window?

Mitch is cagey, evasive, but really bad at it.

MITCH

Oh, yeah, that... Well, anyway... I just stopped by, forgot some things...

ANDY

Like, your dialysis machine?

MITCH

And my deodorant, so...

ANDY

What's going on with you?

MITCH

Well, you know, I got fired... Which is just... the worst.

ANDY

What are you going to do now?

MITCH

Who knows?

ANDY

Maybe some freelance dialysis.

MITCH

That's a good idea.

Andy laughs, he's the worst liar.

ANDY

Well, whatever you're doing, you're looking a hell of a lot better than you were.

MITCH

Thanks, yeah, I got over... whatever it was. But, uh Carlos has it now, so he might be out for a few days, at most.

Andy notices a plastic bag Mitch is trying to conceal.

ANDY

Should I even ask about the meds in the bag?

MITCH

Probably not.

ANDY

Okay. Well, I hope you're gonna reapply at another hospital. It's probably good you're out of here anyway, the Denton family's suing the hospital and with you gone, The Chief has no one else to blame. It's just him versus the Slot Machine.

Mitch is barely paying attention...

MITCH

Great, okay. Do you want to go out with me some time?

ANDY

Come again?

MITCH

On a date. With me? I've experienced some things lately, and I realize, I just need to know.

ANDY

Mitch, you're... probably my best friend, and I, want to tell you...

MITCH

Okay. So... no. Make a move. Or
move on. I have to get going. I'll
see you soon...

He goes to the door.

ANDY

Mitch wait, don't...

MITCH

Slot machine.

ANDY

Huh?

MITCH

Chief versus the Slot Machine, what
does that mean?

ANDY

Oh, yeah, my poor attempt at gallows
humor. Slot machine, one-armed
bandit. Frank Denton's son only has
one arm.

Mitch has a chill run up his spine. He turns back...

MITCH

Frank Denton's son.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Mitch unlocks the front door, to the sounds of Carlos howling.

Sweating, panting, he drops his loaded backpack, pulls the
dialysis machine in and barges into...

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - CARLOS' ROOM

Where Carlos is writhing on his bed.

MITCH

What's wrong?

CARLOS

MY LEGS!

Mitch yanks the covers back and flinches at the sight.
Swollen, distended, purple-black.

MITCH

Your blood's pooling.

CARLOS

No shit, Mitch!

Mitch is in mild shock.

MITCH

But.... that didn't happen to me.

CARLOS

Well, you didn't limbo the L Train.

MITCH

No....

CARLOS

Help me into the bathroom!

Mitch grabs Carlos, supporting his weight as Carlos hops delicately on his full-to-bursting legs.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Mitch drags Carlos through the doorway, across the tile.

CARLOS

Into the tub.

Mitch lifts Carlos' legs across the edge of the bath tub. Carlos sits on the edge, staring at his legs.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

You have to alleviate the pressure.

Mitch stands, takes a step back.

MITCH

What do you want me to do?

CARLOS

Go get a knife.

Mitch almost asks, then realizes...

MITCH

I'm going to blood let you.

CARLOS

Yes.

Carlos looks into Mitch's eyes.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

What the hell did you do to me?

Mitch steps out of the bathroom.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - VARIOUS

He sleep walks through the apartment, lost, confused, making for the kitchen.

He opens a drawer, pulls out the lone serrated steak knife.

MITCH

What did you do to me?

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Carlos, impatient, looks over his shoulder to find Mitch standing in the doorway, with the knife.

CARLOS

What are you waiting for?

Mitch approaches, leaning at the edge of the tub.

MITCH

Does the name James Denton sound familiar to you?

CARLOS

What?

MITCH

James Denton. The Denton Family.

CARLOS

What are you talking about? Will you just cut my fucking legs open?!

Mitch flips the knife into an underhand position.

MITCH

James Denton is the son of Frank Denton, the patient I killed.

CARLOS

I don't care!

MITCH

And James Denton's the man who Tagged me.

Mitch slashes a jagged gouge into Carlos' right leg.

Dark, stringy blood oozes out. Carlos clenches his teeth against the gore. Mitch is lost in thought.

MITCH (CONT'D)

The worst thing about watching someone suffer from a terminal disease, is the randomness of it. There's no rhyme, no reason, someone just gets sick, and then they die.

Mitch looks up at Carlos.

MITCH (CONT'D)

But this isn't a disease.

Mitch stabs the other leg without looking. Carlos reels.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It has a purpose. I killed his dad,
and then he killed me. He said that
I deserved it. I caused him pain and
he got his revenge. This thing sought
me out.

Mitch stabs again.

MITCH (CONT'D)

So I have to wonder...

Again, Carlos tries to push him away.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What did you do to deserve being
next in line, Carlos? What did YOU
do to ME?

CARLOS

Get off me!

Carlos falls backwards, onto the cold floor, dragging himself
away, blood filling the grout around the hexagonal tiles.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

I didn't, it's your fault... She...

MITCH

What?

CARLOS

This is your fault, not mine!

MITCH

Say it.

CARLOS

Say what?!

MITCH

You know! SAY IT! There's only one
word, Carlos. One word that could
explain why YOU would deserve to
have this, why this thing would make
me seek you out. Say it.

CARLOS

I don't know what...

MITCH

Say it, goddamn it! Say it or I
swear I'll...

Mitch approaches with the knife.

CARLOS

No, NO!

MITCH

NOW!

And he does.

CARLOS

Andy.

All the rage, all the abject anger in Mitch fades in an instant, replaced with a deep, overwhelming sadness.

He slumps against the opposite wall where Carlos is slumping.

MITCH

Make a move, or move on. You're with Andy.

CARLOS

I'm sorry.

MITCH

How could do this to me?

CARLOS

It's not you, man. It's her.

Carlos looks at him, square in the eyes, sincere.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Since school. I didn't think you'd ever ask her and I've never felt this way before, about anyone... but me. I love her.

Mitch closes his eyes, bracing himself.

MITCH

Does she love you?

CARLOS

We didn't mean to hurt you. It just happened. We started hanging out a few months ago, I'd walk her home at night... Then she asked me to stay.

It just gets worse and worse.

MITCH

And here I thought all your helpful advice was for my benefit.

Mitch slides back up the wall.

MITCH (CONT'D)

So, we bring you back from the dead, and then you and Andy live happily ever after. You got the job and the girl. Congratulations.

CARLOS

She can't see me like this.

MITCH

Oh, love is blind.

CARLOS

No. She's already came by, she wanted to see me but I wouldn't let her in.

MITCH

What? When?

CARLOS

Just before you got here.

MITCH

That's impossible.

CARLOS

She was here less than ten minutes ago! I got up to answer the door and that's when I realized my legs were full of blood, Mitch!

Mitch is in denial.

MITCH

You're full of shit! What else are you lying about, Carlos?

CARLOS

I'm not lying!

MITCH

She'd never pick someone like you.

CARLOS

Deny all you want friend, but Andy, the unrequited apple of your eye, was outside the front door begging for me to touch her.

MITCH

Well, that's impossible, *friend*, because I...

Something snaps in place.

MITCH (CONT'D)

She begged for you to touch her.

Mitch rushes out of the bathroom, leaving Carlos on the floor.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

He collapses against the front door. Heaving, shaking...

A deep realization floods over Mitch.

MITCH

She's next. Andy's next.

Knock. Knock. Mitch almost jumps through the ceiling.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Who is it?

ANDY

It's Andy.

Mitch starts to flop sweat.

MITCH

Oh... fuck.

He rushes back to the bathroom, shutting the door as...

CARLOS

Who is it?

MITCH

I... I don't know, but if they see blood all over the place... Just stay in here, until they're gone.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

At the front door, Mitch wipes blood on his jeans.

He opens the door. Andy on the other side.

MITCH

Hi.

ANDY

Is Carlos home?

That stings.

MITCH

No. He's not.

ANDY

Can I come in?

MITCH

I'm uh, tired...

ANDY

I just wanted to talk, about what you asked me, I need to tell you...

MITCH

You don't have to say anything.

ANDY

I do. Listen, a few months ago...

MITCH

Andy, don't...

There's a CRASH in the bathroom.

ANDY

What was that?

Mitch goes on the offensive, hurting her to save her.

MITCH

What do you want to get off your chest, Andy? Is it about you and Carlos? I already know. So don't waste your time.

ANDY

I... Carlos is... There's something I haven't told you...

MITCH

And I just realized, nothing you say is going to make it better.

ANDY

Mitch, please just let me talk...

MITCH

Do me a favor, do us all a favor, and stay the hell away from here.

Andy is overcome with emotion.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I spent years waiting for you.

He starts to close the door.

ANDY

Mitchell...

MITCH

And I see it wasn't worth the wait.

Mitch closes the door on her.

He slumps to the floor. He had to push her away, but it feels like he's dying all over again. He braces himself against the pain.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The bathroom door swings open. Mitch stands on the other side. Carlos is sitting in his own blood.

CARLOS

Who was it?

MITCH

No one.

Mitch grabs Carlos off the floor, dragging him to his room.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - CARLOS' ROOM

Mitch lays Carlos on the bed.

MITCH

Rest, if you can.

A moment of sincerity.

CARLOS

I didn't want to hurt you.

MITCH

Same here.

Mitch turns to leave.

CARLOS

I know you hate me right now. But
you still help me and that shows who
you are. A better man than me.

Mitch thinks for a beat, then flips the light off.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - MITCH'S ROOM -- LATER

Mitch's room is smattered with posters, Last Starfighter,
Legend, Darkman... Mitch sits on his bed, staring at a
picture of Andy, Carlos and him, younger, in grad school.

He's faced with a horrible decision.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - CARLOS' ROOM -- MORNING

Carlos is sitting in a small chair in the corner of the room,
his eyes closed. He opens them and finds Mitch in front of
him, in the middle of setting up the dialysis equipment.

Mitch notices he's awake. Mitch has taken on the cold,
calculated air again. He's nice, but something's going on.

MITCH

Were you sleeping?

CARLOS

I doubt it.

MITCH

Get on the bed.

Mitch helps him up, ushering him to the edge of the bed.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You have to be careful. With your internal injuries, who knows what's unstable, you could hurt yourself.

CARLOS

But you said you healed when you Tagged the next person.

Mitch starts sticking tubes into Carlos' body.

MITCH

Right. But I tore James Denton's arm off, and when he healed, it didn't grow back. It seems to restore whatever your body can restore on its own, just amplified. Flesh, blood. But you're not a lizard. You can't grow back limbs.

CARLOS

Good point.

Mitch nudges Carlos back on the bed.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

When you were dead, did you start to feel... like part of you was disappearing? Slipping away?

MITCH

What do you mean?

CARLOS

I don't know... What happens if we don't find the next in line in time, I mean, what if my brain liquefies? What happens to my memories, my personality?

Mitch smiles, detached.

MITCH

Maybe you'll get a new one.

Mitch starts the dialysis machine.

CARLOS

You're gonna...

Carlos is suddenly dizzy.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

What did you... put in the stream?

MITCH

Succinylcholine.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

It's going to get pretty nasty in the next few hours and I don't want you doing anything to permanently damage yourself. It's just to keep you still, calm. I don't know for sure if it will block your nerve receptors given your unique condition...

CARLOS

Something's happening...

MITCH

Good. It's okay, just relax, I just needed to try and get you relaxed. And it's working.

CARLOS

Mitch, what are you doing?

MITCH

I wish it didn't have to be like this Carlos. Things got so complicated. I can't say there are no hard feelings, but I really don't blame you, I just can't let you leave until we find another solution.

Carlos' vision goes black.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - CARLOS' ROOM -- LATER

Carlos' eyes fly open. His wrists are bound tight against his mattress. He panics, struggling to get free.

Carlos looks up to find Andy standing beside him.

ANDY

It's okay.

CARLOS

Untie me, Andy.

ANDY

I can't.

CARLOS

Mitch knows everything, about us, and I think... I don't know, something's wrong. I can't explain what's going on right now...

ANDY

I know everything Carlos, it's okay..

CARLOS

Untie me, please... I need to get out of here. Mitch is gonna do something that's he's going to...

Andy moves slightly and Carlos can see that Mitch is watching, from the chair in the corner.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Regret. Mitch.

MITCH

Hey buddy.

CARLOS

What are you doing?

MITCH

I have to believe you'd do the same in this situation. I thought about it all last night. I knew you wouldn't let me tie you down if you could help it. But this is really the only solution.

CARLOS

Let me go!

MITCH

You wouldn't let me hurt her. And I can't let you.

CARLOS

What?

Carlos looks up at Andy, who's gone. He pans the room.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Where is she?

And then he realizes.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

No.

Mitch stands in the doorway, arms crossed.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

She wouldn't hurt me.

MITCH

I'll do whatever I can to treat you, but I can't let you near her.

CARLOS

Please don't do this. You're not capable of something like this, Mitch. You can't keep me here! You can't let me die!

MITCH

I'm not the man I used to be.

Mitch leaves, Carlos howling to be let free.

FADE TO:

A montage of scenes fading into one another, one day, two days passing slow, steady...

Mitch sitting quietly at the dining room table, Carlos' bedroom door looming behind him.

Carlos staring from his bed, watching crows flapping at his window, the TIP TAP of beaks and claws tickling the glass.

Mitch standing against the wall by Carlos' room. Haunted, listening to the mumbling, the howling behind the door.

FADE TO:

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - CARLOS' ROOM -- MORNING

Mitch enters the room. He is unshaven, weary with insomnia.

Carlos stares at the ceiling, eyes unblinking.

His lips stretched back, his teeth exposed, his weight is almost half what it was less than two days ago.

Mitch adds a solution to the dialysis machine.

Carlos can hear him, but rigor mortis has set in.

VOICE (O.S.)

I can't stand to see you like this.

It's "Andy" standing above him.

ANDY

I need you, Carlos.

Carlos starts choking, the nausea.

Mitch turns to his friend, barely able to look.

MITCH

It's okay.

ANDY

He can't save you.

Andy kneels down.

ANDY (CONT'D)

But he can't keep you either.

Carlos moves his eyes for the first time, watching Andy glide a finger near his skin, past his arm to his cuffed wrist.

ANDY (CONT'D)

If you could break a couple bones...

Carlos listens, thinks, and pulls his wrist against the cuff.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Good.

Mitch is finished with the machine.

MITCH

I'm looking into a way to preserve...
to help us keep you in shape until
we find some answers. Just stay calm.

Mitch turns and leaves, shutting the door.

ANDY

Come on...

Carlos pulls hard against the strap, his skin leathery,
crackling, he pulls as hard as possible.

And CRACK! CRACK! His bones start breaking.

His demolished hand slips out of the strap.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Now get up.

Carlos struggles to sit up, untying the other strap with his
smashed hand.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Mitch is at the dining room table, documenting the solution
he just added to the dialysis machine.

The phone RINGS. Mitch hesitates, goes to the phone...

A CREAK behind him. He turns and finds the withered, wraith-
like corpse of Carlos.

Carlos charges for the front door but his legs are weak.

Mitch tackles him. They fight and claw like animals.

MITCH

I'm not letting you out, Carlos!

Carlos howls, throwing Mitch as far as he can. KNOCK. KNOCK.
Someone's at the front door.

They both look up.

VOICE (O.S.)

Mitch? Carlos? It's Gordon from
downstairs? I just called. There's
a weird smell in the building...

CARLOS

Help me!

Mitch staggers over, cupping Carlos' mouth. Carlos flails, reaching out, he grabs the phone, yanking it from the wall throwing it at the front door.

GORDON

Guys? Is everything okay?

Gordon tries the door.

Mitch shoves Carlos away, but Carlos rushes back, throwing him to the floor, almost making it to the door, before Mitch is on him again.

But Carlos grabs the deadbolt just in time, unlocking it.

CARLOS

HELP ME!

The door flies open. And GORDON, their oafish, anal-retentive neighbor is standing in the doorway...

Watching Mitch choke a corpse.

GORDON

Mitch?

He tilts his head to see the face of the corpse.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Carlos?

Mitch looks at Gordon, then Carlos, who's playing dead. He shakes Carlos, but he stays still, limp as a doll.

MITCH

Don't do this, god damn you!

GORDON

Holy Lord God Almighty.

Gordon backs away from the door, Mitch drops Carlos, rushing for Gordon.

MITCH

Gordon, wait!

Gordon runs, Mitch sprinting into the hall, but Gordon is already down the stairwell.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - OUTER HALL

He turns back, realizing... as his apartment door slams shut.

LOCKED. Mitch pounds on the door.

MITCH

Carlos, you can't do this!

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Carlos approaches the dining room table. Books on embalming.

And his cell phone. Blinking. A missed call. Andy.

He turns back to the door, then turns again. To the window.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - OUTER HALL

Mitch struggles with the door and SMASH! Glass breaks inside the apartment, the window. Carlos is out.

Mitch hightails it for the stairwell.

EXT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - WINDOW LEDGE

Carlos climbs out onto the ledge of the fifth floor apartment.

Stands up, looks down, and drops.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Andy emerges from the hospital's emergency admitting. She waits a moment, bracing herself, and turns the corner, entering what we see is a far less than ideal neighborhood.

EXT. SKETCHY NEIGHBORHOOD -- MOMENTS LATER

Andy walks on, keenly aware of EVERYTHING that's going on around her; the guy digging through the garbage, the woman on the stoop, the car sailing slowly by.

She presses on.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET

Mitch runs out of his building, to his 30-year-old pick-up parked on the street. He reaches in his pocket for the keys, then realizes, they're in the locked apartment.

MITCH

Shit!

He takes off on foot.

EXT. SKETCHY NEIGHBORHOOD -- MOMENTS LATER

Andy passes the THUMP THUMP THUMP of a dark bar.

Ahead, at the next corner, in the shadows, a man. Waiting.

Andy stops cold. Nothing between her and him but the five-story parking garage he's perched at the corner of.

Two GARAGE ATTENDANTS emerge from a gate equidistant between Andy and the man. Andy rushes past, grabbing the door as they pass, sliding inside the parking structure.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE

She cuts across the long garage's enclosed first floor, weaving through cars, passing the man on the corner altogether. She arrives at the far gate. It's locked. She turns back. Sees a sign...

"GARAGE CLOSSES AT 1AM, CARS CAN BE CLAIMED..."

She checks her watch. 1:03am. Half of the fluorescent lights above flicker out. NEAR DARKNESS. Andy tries the gate again. Still locked.

She takes a deep breath and starts walking back the way she came. Halfway there, she hears A GATE SLAM.

Someone's inside with her. She shakes her head, disbelieving.

FOOTSTEPS echo in the cavernous structure. Andy ducks down, behind a truck, almost panting... She's scared senseless.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE

The footsteps close in on Andy. She clambers away, staying close to the truck body's protection.

The FOOTSTEPS stop, listening for her. Andy's paralyzed.

Above the truck bed, we see it's not a stalker, but one of the Garage Attendants from moments before. He doesn't see her. He turns and walks back.

Andy shudders.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - GATE

The Attendant looks back one last time. He left the gate partially open, a beer can holding it ajar. He kicks the can away and lets the gate slam shut. Near the gate, in the dark...

Bare feet. Wrinkled, rotten.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE STATION

Mitch sprints into the hospital, breathless.

MITCH

Where's Andy? Where's Andy Scott?

Everyone looks on with confusion.

MITCH (CONT'D)

God damn it, where is she?!

The Young Woman Mitch met a few mornings ago, approaches.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hi, Dr. Matheson? She just left a few minutes ago.

Mitch takes a deep breath, turns, and sprints out.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE

Andy slowly rises, terrified. She walks quickly to the other gate and as she gets closer...

Carlos emerges from the shadows, so damaged from his fall, he is unrecognizable. The left half of his face is practically inside out.

CARLOS

There you are.

A grave shiver runs up Andy's spine. She backs away slowly, then the adrenaline hits and she's running.

She slips in a patch of oil, losing her balance, then using it to her advantage, she slides between two cars, shaking uncontrollably, eyes wide.

Andy crawls backwards as The Thing approaches, narrowly avoiding him as she ducks and weaves through the labyrinth of tandem-parked cars.

She slides along an SUV. Slipping to her stomach, she crawls underneath as The Thing approaches from the front.

She is paralyzed, watching the putrid feet standing in front of the truck. She quietly pulls her backpack to her, reaching in, digging for something.

The feet move suddenly...

Andy jolts and a canister of pepper spray rolls out of her bag. She tries to catch it, but can't reach as it quietly, slowly rolls across the concrete, toward the feet.

She only has seconds...

She digs into her bag again, scrambling, she pulls out an iPod, shimmies to the left edge of the SUV...

And as the pepper spray rolls within inches of The Thing's feet, she chucks the iPod across the garage.

It CRACKS into the concrete and SKIDS a few yards away.

The feet take off as the pepper spray rolls into the area they just stood.

Andy clambers out from the under the SUV and hauls ass to the other end of the garage. She dials 911.

EXT. SKETCHY NEIGHBORHOOD

Mitch sprints past the parking garage, unaware of what's happening inside.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE

On her phone...

911

Thank you for calling the Chicago
911 Emergency Center, please hold
while we connect you to the next
available attendant.

Hold music starts playing.

ANDY

You're kidding me.

Andy makes it to the parking garage stairwell. She almost opens the door, then notices...

The locked valet box. She thinks... Hangs up the phone, then rushes to the nearest car, pulling a hubcap off.

Back at the valet box, she listens for a moment, then raises the hubcap over the lock, takes a breath, and SLAMS it down. The BANG echoes. But the lock remains.

She SLAMS IT OVER AND OVER, until the latch breaks free.

Andy swings the little door open, inside... Sets of keys.

She checks the numbers on the hooks, but a sound alerts her. The Thing is closing in. She grabs a handful of key rings, and backs into the shadows. The Thing is close, almost on her. She fumbles with the keys, they RATTLE and JINGLE.

No other choice... She grabs three keyless remotes...

And hits the panic buttons.

Car alarms SCREECH to life. Headlights blinking on and off.

For a flash, Andy sees The Thing in the flash of headlight beams... And he sees her. The lights blink off, then on again, and he's gone.

EXT. SKETCHY NEIGHBORHOOD

Mitch stops. Behind him, car alarms. He rushes back to the parking garage.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE

It's a cacophony. The noise disguises her enough. She rushes back into the maze of cars. The Thing hot on her tail.

She swerves and sprints, trying to make distance, but The Thing is steps behind.

Panicked, out of options, she starts hitting the "Unlock" button on the key rings.

ANDY

Come on!

The Thing is only a couple yards away when Andy hears the familiar VA-RUNK of a car door unlocking. Just behind her. She backtracks...

And as The Thing turns the corner and reaches for her, Andy grabs the handle of the unlocked door, swings it wide, CRACKING him in the face, sending him on his ass.

She drops the other key rings and dives inside, across the passenger seat, reaching back, ends of fingers nibbling at the handle as The Thing stands...

Reaches... But Andy gets hold, YANKS and pulls it shut.

She locks the doors, wiggles the key into the ignition... And starts the damned car.

An arm swings down on the windshield, spider-webbing it to hell. Andy can barely see through it.

She looks back, another car parked tandem in the space behind her. Oh well. She slams it in reverse and guns it, forcing the other car out of the way.

Smoke billows from under her tires. Her passenger side window is smashed by The Thing outside, cracking, but staying put.

Andy veers the car out of the spot, SMASHING the other car into the concrete wall. She turns, looks forward...

The closed gate directly in front of her.

She realizes The Thing is standing stone still at her side window. He pulls back and punches clear through the glass.

Andy quickly lies down in the passenger seat, the vile hand groping for her. Without sitting up, she slams the car into Drive and guns it straight ahead.

The Thing is thrown from the side of the car, onto the ground, scattering the pile of key rings Andy left behind.

EXT. SKETCHY NEIGHBORHOOD -- CONTINUOUS

Mitch is looking inside the dark parking garage when he hears SQUEALING TIRES and A GUNNED ENGINE. He turns as a late model Oldsmobile EXPLODES through the garage gate, sending metal flying across the street.

He makes out the driver through the spider-webbed windows...

MITCH

Andy?

He sprints along, finally jumping in front of the car.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Andy, stop!

Andy screams, hits the brakes. Mitch rushes to the passenger side, tries the handle.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Unlock the door!

She does, he gets in.

ANDY

Some guy was trying to attack me.

He looks her square in the eyes.

MITCH

Drive as fast as this thing can go.

She doesn't hesitate. She slams the pedal and they're off.

INT. OLDSMOBILE -- MOMENTS LATER

Andy is still in shock.

ANDY

It was hideous. It looked like, you wouldn't believe me if I told you.

MITCH

A corpse, a walking corpse. Yeah. It's Carlos.

ANDY

What's Carlos?

MITCH

That. Was Carlos. He's... sick. He has what I had.

ANDY

Mitch, I know you've not been a doctor for a few days, but brains don't leak from your eye socket when you have the sniffles.

He tries to be sincere as possible, given the circumstances.

MITCH

Okay. He's not sick. He's dead. He's basically a zombie.

ANDY

I understand you've had a rough week...

MITCH

I can't explain everything to you right now, just drive.

ANDY

Alright, I've had it with all the secrets and the lies, tell me what the fuck is going on, Mitchell!

MITCH

You're in a LOT of danger.

ANDY

Why? What are you talking about?

MITCH

Shit. Okay. But I need your word that no matter what I tell you, no matter how retardedly absurd it sounds, you'll just believe me.

ANDY

I'll just believe you.

Mitch takes a deep breath and in one rapid stream of words...

MITCH

I was cursed by the son of the man I killed in the hospital to be the walking dead unless I found the next person in line, someone who hurt me, and that person happened to be Carlos, because he knew about my feelings for you, and he went after you anyway and just decided to pretend it wasn't happening. Now he's cursed and unless he passes it on by touching the next person in line, I imagine he'll pretty much turn into a chatty, annoying pile of dirt.

Andy thinks, processes it all, looks over.

ANDY

You have feelings for me?

Mitch rolls his eyes.

MITCH

Andy, can you focus up, please.

ANDY

Okay. So Carlos is cursed or whatever.

MITCH

Well, I was cursed first, but yeah,
Carlos is NOW. AFTER me.

ANDY

And someone's next?

MITCH

Someone who hurt him.

Andy is spun.

ANDY

Is that supposed to be me?

MITCH

Carlos said you've never done anything
to hurt him, on the contrary... so
if there's something you're not
telling him, then it pretty much
validates my story.

A long pause from Andy.

ANDY

How does he know it's me?

MITCH

You see the person, like a
hallucination or something.

ANDY

So what are we supposed to do?

MITCH

We're going to ditch this stolen car
once we've driven its wheels off and
then you're going to go somewhere
safe that Carlos doesn't know about.

ANDY

What happens to him?

MITCH

I don't know, but I can't let him
kill you.

Andy thinks for a second... And pulls the car over on a
deserted street.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What are you doing? This is the
opposite of driving far away!

ANDY

You were protecting me.

MITCH

Yes, I was. I am!

ANDY

No. The other night when I came by.
You said all that to keep me away.

MITCH

I said all that because I'd just
found out that my best friend and
the girl of my dreams are secretly
in love with each other.

ANDY

Is that what you think?

MITCH

Isn't that what you came to tell me
that night?

ANDY

No. I came to tell you...

She takes a breath. It's hard.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I came to tell you that three months
ago I walked home by myself. I was
grabbed from behind, and thrown into
the back of a van. The guy tied me
up, used a kitchen knife to cut my
stomach open and then he raped me.

MITCH

Oh God...

ANDY

Afterward, he drove about ten miles
out of downtown. At a stop sign, I
managed to kick the back door open
and get out because I knew I might
not have another chance. I ran until
the sun came up, then I went back to
the hospital and sewed my stomach
closed. And started my shift.

Mitch takes Andy's hand.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I didn't tell anyone because I was...
terrified. Ashamed, maybe, I don't
know.

Andy is on the verge of tears.

MITCH

Why didn't you tell me?

ANDY

I knew you'd want to take it on your
own shoulders. And I couldn't do
that to you.

Mitch looks away.

MITCH

You don't know how I would've reacted.

ANDY

Big, bleeding heart.

Mitch melts, looking back.

MITCH

Andy...

He catches something in the rear view. He barely has a chance to gasp...

MITCH (CONT'D)

Andy.

As an SUV plows into them at seventy miles an hour.

The sickening SMASH of impact, then all is quiet, The Oldsmobile is sent into the air, turning upside down, and CRASH...

They SLAM belly up across the street. Smoke billows from under the hood, into the cab. The car slowly spins on its hood like a deserted, schoolyard merry-go-round.

Andy struggles to take a breath. Mitch, bleeding, dazed, sees the remains of the SUV across the street as the spinning subsides. He blinks over and over, trying to convince himself what he's seeing isn't real...

Carlos, a mass of bloody pulp, climbing through the shattered SUV's windshield.

MITCH (CONT'D)

We have to go.

He turns, finds Andy turning blue.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Breathe. Breathe!

He grabs her, shaking her. Without thinking, he puts his mouth over hers and blows. She chokes, gasps...

She's breathing.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

ANDY

I don't know.

MITCH

We have to get out, we have to run.

He unclicks his seat belt, sliding to the ceiling of the car, which is now the floor. He unclicks her and helps her upright.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Is anything broken?

ANDY

No.

MITCH

Stay inside. When I tell you to run, I want you to run as fast as you can. I can't let him touch you.

Andy nods. Mitch slides out through the broken window.

EXT. DESERTED STREET

Aching, in shock, he rises to his feet. Carlos is in the middle of the street, upright, barely.

CARLOS

Look at you buddy, finally grew a pair.

MITCH

Stay away from her.

Carlos doubles over, pangs of nausea.

CARLOS

I don't want to hurt her, I'll help her when it's all over. And we'll be rid of it.

MITCH

No one else is dying.

CARLOS

Funny you decide to wrap it up AFTER you kill me!

Carlos rushes Mitch. They struggle, Mitch pulling back and clocking Carlos, blood, bile splashing across the pavement. He hits him again and again. Carlos stumbles, falls.

Mitch crouches at the overturned car...

MITCH

Andy...

And finds no one inside. He stands, looks around.

VOICE (O.S.)

It's okay.

Mitch spins and sees Andy standing above Carlos. She approaches without hesitation.

MITCH

No...

She turns to Mitch...

ANDY

It's all going to be okay.

She kneels, reaches out, and holds Carlos' face in her hands.

And as simple as that, Andy is dead.

Mitch sprints, grabs her as she falls. Carlos jerks back, slithering across the pavement, his body wracked with convulsions.

Mitch holds Andy, closer than he's ever been to what he's always wanted. And she's dead.

Carlos raises his head, howling as sinew and bone come together. The night is engulfed by screams.

FADE TO:

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - MITCH'S ROOM -- LATER

The steady BEEP-BEEP-GURGLE of the dialysis machine.

Andy wakes up to find she's in Mitch's bed.

Mitch sits on the edge, despondent. Without looking, he knows she's awake.

MITCH

You love him.

Andy is still getting used to her recently undead state.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You'd have to, to do what you did.
You died for him.

Andy shakes her head.

ANDY

Carlos offered to walk me home one night and I was scared to go alone. And one night I asked him to stay.

Mitch can't bare anymore.

MITCH

And one thing led to another, I understand.

ANDY

No, you don't. Mitch, I know how much he loves me.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

But I don't love Carlos. I pretended I did so I wouldn't be so afraid. I could never tell him the truth, because it would break his heart.

MITCH

And that's why he saw you.

ANDY

I guess so.

MITCH

Then why did you do this?

Andy avoids eye contact.

ANDY

I live everyday waiting for that man to find me again and take me away. He could be right beside me and I'd never know it... because I never saw his face.

It snaps in place.

MITCH

And now you will.

She looks at him deep, willful. There's fear in her eyes, but also a glimmer of vengeance.

ANDY

And now I will.

They share a long quiet moment. A connection of souls.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Braaaaiinnnnss.

Mitch shakes his head.

MITCH

You have the worst sense of humor.

ANDY

I know.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Mitch emerges from his bedroom, shutting the door behind him. He walks to the dining room table, Carlos is standing by Mitch's bedroom door. He heard everything.

CARLOS

Well there you go.

Mitch doesn't turn around.

MITCH

We have to find this guy.

CARLOS

What happened to "no one else is going to die?"

Mitch turns.

MITCH

It's Andy.

CARLOS

What about when it was Carlos? And what are you gonna do now? Take Andy to this guy? Feed him to her.

MITCH

No. I'm gonna keep her as safe as possible. I'm gonna find him, and bring him to her.

CARLOS

With your bare hands? You really aren't the man you used to be.

MITCH

I could use your help.

CARLOS

Sorry. You're on your own.

Carlos has shut down, hiding his hurt.

MITCH

It's that simple?

CARLOS

Well, those of us who are still doctors abide by the Hippocratic.

MITCH

Do what you think is best. All I care about is bringing her back.

CARLOS

Right, cause then you get the girl and everything works out.

Mitch shakes his head, a deeper understanding than Carlos.

MITCH

I can't imagine what our lives will be like when this thing is done with us. But the worst part, the curse, isn't that we die. It's that we have to live with the consequences.

Carlos grabs his back pack and walks to the front door.

CARLOS

Stop calling it a curse, Mitch.
It's not a curse.

MITCH

What is it?

CARLOS

It's the truth.

Carlos opens the front door. Gordon is in the hall, whispering with a neighbor. He stops cold, sees Carlos.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Hey Gordon.

GORDON

Hey... Carlos.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - MITCH'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Andy wakes up in the middle of the night.

She shuffles through the apartment, everyone's gone.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Andy flips the light on. She sees herself in the mirror.

The signs of decay are already showing. Her hands, where the Tag was passed, are black and blue.

She continues examining herself. A quiet, uneasy tension building... Finished, she turns toward the door, opens it...

And a man EXPLODES from the shower,

Pushing her through the doorway. She SLAMS into the floor, in the dark... But she's not in Mitch's living room.

She's inside the van.

She rolls over, the bathroom doorway is now a pair of wide-open double doors. Through the doors, the bathroom is still there. But blocking her passage...

A tall, broad man in silhouette. This is Andy's vision.

ANDY

No.

The man climbs inside, the doors closing behind him.

Andy, petrified, scrambles as far back as she can go, but the man pulls her back, holding her hands, lifting her shirt.

He uses a knife to cut the scar that's already there, opening it wide. Andy screams, kicking, struggling to get away.

It's as violent and terrifying as the night it originally happened. Andy closes her eyes against the pain, and suddenly, everything stops. She opens her eyes. He's gone.

She rolls toward the doors, kicking them open. Falling back into Mitch's bathroom.

Through the doorway, like some fun house optical illusion, the living room is still the interior of the van...

And the man is inside. He crawls toward her. Andy screams for help, ready for the next attack. He comes into the light.

And she sees his face for the first time.

It's Dale Hardy. The husband of the coma patient.

He reaches for her, grabbing her, Andy screams, slamming back to reality... It's Mitch holding her, not Dale.

Andy is lying on the bathroom floor, crying. Mitch, bed-headed and half-awake, holds her.

MITCH

It's okay, it's okay. It's not real.
Whatever you saw, it's not real.

Andy sits up, wiping her eyes.

ANDY

I know who it is.

Mitch is ready to end this.

MITCH

Tell me.

EXT. HOSPITAL - VISITOR PARKING -- NIGHT

A beat up car pulls in. The door opens. A boot settles on the pavement. Then another. It's Dale Hardy.

He's come to visit his wife.

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMITTING

Dale sails by the hospital staff, some waving hello. He smiles, nice as can be.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMA WARD

He signs in at the small visitor's check-in. The On-Call Nurse is there.

ON-CALL NURSE

How are you Mr. Hardy?

DALE

I'm fine, thanks for asking. How's your daughter doing?

ON-CALL NURSE

Much better, thanks.

Dale smiles and walks on.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMA WARD - PRIVATE PATIENT ROOM

He enters Amanda's room. It's dim, a single light above the bed. Amanda is still.

Dale reverently approaches. He smooths her hair. He pulls her shirt up, revealing a scar, similar to Andy's.

He lightly fondles the raised skin.

DALE

How are you tonight?

Mitch emerges from the bathroom, wrapping his arms around Dale's significantly larger frame. He holds a ten blade to his throat. He's full of venom, ready to take this guy down.

MITCH

Don't say a word.

Dale is genuinely shocked.

DALE

Who the hell are you?

MITCH

Is she even your wife?

DALE

What?

MITCH

I know it's you.

Dale tries to pull away.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I swear I'll cut your throat.

DALE

I don't know what...

Mitch jacks the knife into Dale's skin, tearing it.

MITCH

I know it's you. You stood right by her, pretending to be helpless. Preying on her.

DALE

What are you talking about?

MITCH

Shut up and listen, you son of a bitch! You're going to keep your mouth closed and take me to your car, and drive. See, there's a girl waiting for you. And after she's done with you, we're gonna call the police and you'll redefine rotting in...

Dale in a swift, overpowering move, rushes backward, into the dark bathroom. CRUNCHING Mitch against the sink, the mirror, cracking both.

Mitch slides to his knees, breathless. Dale goes for the light switch. Mitch jams the scalpel into Dale's calf and jumps to his feet. Dale spins, grabbing Mitch by his throat, too dark to see his face.

Mitch fights against him, but Dale is unswayed, too powerful.

They destroy the bathroom, choking, punching, drawing blood.

But Dale is a schoolyard bully, pulverizing the kid with glasses. Battered, dazed, Mitch can't stop him. Desperate just to survive, Mitch stumbles into the patient room, smashes the single light with his bare hands, the room is black...

In way over his head, Mitch fumbles for the "Call Nurse" button. Hits it. DING.

Dale stops, backs away. Out of the room, into the hall, out of sight. Mitch collapses, broken and bleeding.

The only person who can save Andy, is gone.

FADE OUT:

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

It's dim. Days later. Mitch sits at the dining room table.

He CRACKS his neck and looks up. Broken glasses, bags under his eyes, a week's worth of beard, a cut on his forehead.

Weary, he lifts his digital recorder, presses "play."

Mitch listens to a recording of Andy recounting the same vision she's had over and over for days.

ANDY

...tools. There are... tools. The floor is carpeted, it's an old van. There are things in the carpet, all over, ribbons... little ribbons of wood...

From the recording, it's obvious the visions have taken a toll on her. Mitch leans against the wall, listening.

MITCH

Do you remember where you were when you got away? Anything about the streets, anything familiar?

ANDY

I knew I had to get away, I knew it was my only chance.... I had to... I had to... run... run... I ran until the sun came up.

MITCH

I know. But... do you...

A commotion on the recording. Moaning, screaming, Andy is convulsing, Mitch trying to hold on to her.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It's okay, shhh, it's okay... He's not here Andy, he's not here...

Mitch clicks the recorder off.

The walls are plastered with a menagerie of scribbled-on maps, news feeds, newspaper articles, medical reports...

The maze of paper stretches beyond the dining area, across Mitch's door, into the living room. It consumes the place.

Mitch is delirious, searching for the missing Dale. He grabs a sharpie, stands and crosses off a couple circles he's drawn on a map earlier.

He drops the marker, and picks up a homemade medical record. Every procedure, every ounce of medication he's tried to stave the effects of the curse.

He takes the tape out of the recorder, digs through a pile of tapes on the table, grabs a new one, shoves it in.

He hits "record."

MITCH (CONT'D)

Record 43. Dialysis is useless at this point. She's only gone two days longer than Carlos but her body fluids are beginning to... drain. Severe cold, ice baths, seem to be the only semi-effective means of slowing decomposition. Degradation of higher brain functions have spiked in the past twenty-four hours. I believe the cellular structure of her brain is breaking down. What will happen to her memories, her personality by the time we find Dale is a mystery. I think... the longer we wait, the more we lose of her.

He clicks the recorder off.

He methodically switches tapes again, replaying Andy's vision. He sits the recorder on the table and scans the wall of paper while he listens.

There's a large map where Mitch has marked the location of every abduction and every place the girls were found.

His fingers move across it like it was Braille.

The marked spots form a loose circle around a small area.

With one hand he touches a spot in the circle, and the other he scans a list of freshly printed addresses in the area.

ANDY

*There are things in the carpet, all
over, ribbons... little ribbons of
wood...*

He passes a listing. Then stops, goes back to it.

Mitch stares at it a long time. A furniture factory. He rubs his eyes, he almost doesn't believe it.

MITCH

Little ribbons of wood. You're a
furniture maker, aren't you, Dale?

Mitch circles the map location as the front door opens.

It's Carlos. They exchange a glance, Carlos walking to his bedroom, shutting the door.

INT. CARLOS AND MITCH'S APARTMENT - MITCH'S ROOM

Mitch nudges the door open, stepping inside the dark room.

Light shines in from the living room, onto the empty bed. Which is confusing because Andy can hardly move.

MITCH

Andy?

He takes another step in. Andy is in the shadow behind the door, unseen by Mitch.

She grabs him, choking him. Her hands bandaged, oozing fluid.

ANDY

You're not gonna hurt anyone else!

Mitch struggles to breathe, speak against her grip.

MITCH

It's me Andy, it's Mitch.

Her grip loosens, she slides to the floor. Mitch spinning, catching her. He holds the back of her head up, then... something's wrong.

His fingers are inside the back of her head. And fluid is dribbling out onto the floor.

The base of her skull has softened, and her brain...

Is liquefying. She starts convulsing.

MITCH (CONT'D)

No. No! Hold on, Andy. Hold on.

He reaches for the blanket on the bed, wraps her in it. Scoops her up.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be okay. I'm taking you to him, and he's not going to be able to run this time.

He stands, holding her to his chest. He walks out.

EXT. FURNITURE FACTORY -- NIGHT

Dale Hardy emerges from the factory. He gets in his beat-up car and drives home.

Across the street, Mitch's pick-up.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Dale comes in, dropping off his keys and wallet, settling in for the evening. He lifts his pant leg and unbuckles a knife holster. Tosses it on the coffee table.

The place is more *All In The Family* than *Silence of The Lambs*. A mess of 30-year-old furniture is the strangest thing here.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Dale is grabbing a beer from the fridge when...

KNOCK. KNOCK. Someone's at the door.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Dale answers the door. On the other side, in a Chicago Blackhawks hat, is Mitch. He smiles wide.

MITCH

Sorry to bother, but my truck broke down about a mile from here and you're the first person who's answered your door. Mind too much if I use your phone?

Dale looks out onto the street, opens the door wide.

DALE

Come on in.

Mitch slides past, scanning the room.

DALE (CONT'D)

Phone's in the kitchen, help yourself.

Dale cracks the beer and plops down on the couch.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Mitch finds the phone on the wall above the counter.

Out of view, Mitch is shaking like crazy, sweating.

He takes the receiver, dials nothing.

He sits the phone on the counter and silently pulls a small leather case out of his jacket.

He pretends to talk.

MITCH

Hey. Sorry, the truck's had it. I think it might be the timing belt.

He unzips the case, inside, a syringe, full of milky fluid.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I know, I should've listened.

He palms the syringe, tucking it out of view in his jacket sleeve.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Well I had to walk a mile to call you. I'm on Summerglade down past the church Allison got married in. I'll be outside. Alright.

He puts the case back in his jacket.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Love you too.

He hangs up the phone. Takes a deep, quivering breath. He has one shot.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mitch emerges from the kitchen. Dale is watching TV.

MITCH

She says she's on her way.

DALE

Grab a beer, you're welcome to wait.

Mitch hesitates.

MITCH

Thanks.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Mitch opens the fridge, no heads inside, just beer, and take-out. He grabs a can.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mitch sits down on the couch opposite Dale, facing each other. Mitch pops the beer, trying to hide his shaking hands.

DALE

Blackhawks, huh?

Dale indicates Mitch's hat.

MITCH

Oh, yeah.

They sit quietly, watching TV. Mitch sips the beer, then guzzles it. Dale is oblivious.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Nice place.

DALE

My parents.

MITCH

They're here?

DALE

No, they're gone. Few years back.

Mitch nods. He notices the knife on the table.

INT. MITCH'S TRUCK

Andy is wrapped in the blanket, muttering to herself. Something outside the truck catches her attention.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Dale checks his watch. Mitch is getting up the nerve.

DALE

What do you do for a living?

Mitch jumps, finishes his beer, stalling...

MITCH

I do... uh... freelance dialysis.

Dale nods, swigs.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You?

DALE
Carpentry, small factory line stuff.

MITCH
How'd you get into that?

Dale shrugs, checks his watch again.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Anyone in your family build furniture,
or just you?

Dale looks at him for a long moment. Mitch swallows,
realizing Dale didn't mention furniture. Another beat passes.

DALE
Just me.

Dale leans over toward the coffee table, reaching for... the
knife? The knife? The remote control.

Mitch grips the syringe...

Dale pulls back, clicking the channels.

MITCH
You know, I'm gonna try her again.

He jumps up, into...

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Alone, Mitch rubs his face, his jaw shaking, wracked with
nerves. He checks the syringe, picks up the phone again.

EXT. MITCH'S TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Back at the truck, a constant DINGING, reminding no one that
the passenger door is wide open. Andy is not inside.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mitch comes back to the couch.

MITCH
She's coming.

Dale nods, takes a deep breath.

Mitch notices a photo on the wall, two toddlers, same age,
hugging. He points to it, buying time.

MITCH (CONT'D)
That you?

Dale leans back, looks over.

DALE
My sister and me.

MITCH

Twins?

Dale nods.

DALE

Conjoined, actually.

Dale lifts his shirt, a 3-inch thick scar across his belly.

DALE (CONT'D)

They separated us when we were four,
but she died.

Mitch's face goes slack, the scar explains volumes, he tries to hide his shock. He starts nervously spouting minutia...

MITCH

That's amazing. You have to be
identical to be conjoined, a rarity
in itself. And boy/girl identicals,
there'll only a handful in the world.

Dale listens for a moment, then...

DALE

Yep. We were one of a kind.

Mitch thinks for a moment, can't help himself...

MITCH

Was it hard?

DALE

What?

MITCH

Losing her? Do you remember?

DALE

I remember it all. We were happy to
stay together, but...

He gets quiet.

DALE (CONT'D)

That's a pain I live with morning,
noon, and night.

Mitch nods.

MITCH

I've noticed that's a common trait
in people who hurt themselves, or
other people. They're trying to
stop their own pain.

Dale nods, starts chuckling to himself.

DALE

Know what I noticed? When you walked
in the door?

A shiver runs through Mitch.

MITCH

What?

DALE

The same thing I noticed in the
hospital.

Dale reaches for the knife.

DALE (CONT'D)

You smell like her.

It's GO time. Mitch swings the syringe out. Dale grabs the
knife. Mitch stabs. The needle pierces Dale's hand. Dale
pulls back, breaking the needle in half.

Mitch is left holding a broken syringe, still full of fluid.

And Dale is holding the knife.

DALE (CONT'D)

Hey boy.

Dale kicks the coffee table into Mitch's legs, pinning him
on the couch. He stands, underhands the knife and aims to
cut Mitch's throat.

Mitch gets a leg out and kicks the coffee table back, into
Dale's shins. Dale barely flinches. Mitch climbs backwards
over the couch, CRASHING into the floor.

He jumps up, falling back as Dale swings the knife. Mitch
moves deeper into the house, down a long hall.

Dale overhands the knife. Mitch swings a closet open, the
knife CRACKS through the thick door. Mitch slams it closed...

Pulling the knife with it. He pulls back and swings, cracking
Dale across the jaw with a surprisingly strong jab. It
registers, but Dale doesn't care.

He grabs Mitch by the throat, pinning him to the wall, choking
the hell out of him. Mitch is losing consciousness.

He uses his legs, kicking Dale away, against another door.

Mitch struggles to breathe.

Dale goes for the knife, prying it from the door with a single
yank. He approaches. But Mitch is still holding the syringe.

He stands, Dale rushes, they slam together, Mitch sticking
the needle in Dale's neck, hitting the plunger.

Instantly, Dale feels it. He wobbles, backtracks.

DALE (CONT'D)

What did you do...

Dale can barely stand, dropping the knife.

Which is covered in a thick sheet of blood.

Mitch sees the knife, looks down, finds a precise vertical slice, from his groin to his belly. He's been gutted.

He feels the wound through his dark sweater. His fingers enter, inch deep. Blood dribbles down his legs. It's serious.

Dale leans against the wall, dizzy.

Mitch makes for the front door. Dale grabs him. They struggle. Mitch has had it. He shoves Dale as hard as he can. Dale blasts into a door, which opens, sending him down thirty stairs to the basement.

Mitch checks, Dale is out.

He runs through the house, out the front door.

EXT. DALE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Mitch sprints down the sidewalk, around a corner. And finds his pick-up. Empty.

MITCH

No. No.... Andy! Andy!

Mitch tries to search, but he's getting weak. He falls against the truck, smearing blood across the hood.

Suddenly SCREAMS ECHO DOWN THE STREET.

Mitch is up again. Following the sound.

EXT. DALE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - A BLOCK AWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

He finds a family gathered in their front yard, panicked, the daughter crying. They're on the phone with the police.

Mitch approaches, passing the family, entering their house.

The Father angles for him, but the Mother stops him. Scared of the man who's covered in his own blood.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The place is entirely overdone in an equestrian motif. Horses everywhere, some may even be Andalusian.

The tall windows leading out to the dark backyard are smeared with bloody handprints.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD

Mitch emerges, and finds Andy sitting still on a swing, facing away from him. Her hair matted with her own brain matter.

He grabs her from the swing, tears tumbling down his face.

MITCH

I got him, sweetheart.

He's fading a little, but by God, he can still carry her.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - FRONT YARD

Mitch emerges, carrying Andy, passing the family.

MITCH

I'm sorry.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Mitch kicks the door in.

Mitch makes it to the basement door, and drops to his knees. Dale is still on the floor below, but he's moving. Mitch looks at Andy, who is still, quiet.

MITCH

Come on, we're here. We're here!
Wake up, Andy...

He shakes her.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Wake up!

Andy moves, comes to a little. He eases her down on the floor, still holding her. She sits up. He points down the stairs. Andy looks over...

And sees Dale Hardy. A pang of sickness runs through her.

She freaks, going feral, blasting Mitch against the wall.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

Unable to stand, almost unconscious, she begins crawling toward him, down the basement stairs.

Andy is a monster. And Dale is aware enough to see her coming down the stairs for him. He tries to get away, but can barely lift his head. Andy crawls closer and closer.

Dale grabs a pipe jutting out from the wall, and tries to pull himself away. He manages to sit up, against the wall.

Andy is close, in arm's reach. Dale presses himself against the wall, terrified.

Andy raises her arm, her hand outstretched. Her mouth stretches into a determined, angry sneer as she grabs his face with her hand. The points of contact instantly gray, pucker, die. Followed by the rest of him. Dale is dead.

She watches her own demolished hand, still touching him, begin to heal, followed by the rest of her. She shivers and shakes, her body mutating into a living thing again.

But she never let's go.

She realizes the basement is where he kept all those women. Where he planned on bringing her. The place is full of children's furniture. Old. Paint-chipped.

Suddenly, she turns, looks upstairs.

INT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

She emerges from the basement. Beautiful as ever.

MITCH

Hi, gorgeous.

Andy is all business, tending to him.

ANDY

Are you okay?

He smiles. She helps him to his feet.

MITCH

We can't let him go.

ANDY

Forget him.

MITCH

Andy, think of all the damage I did and I was mentally sound.

She looks back, considers...

EXT. DALE HARDY'S HOUSE - CARPORT -- MOMENTS LATER

Mitch and Andy drag Dale's body, now bound, from the back basement stairs, through the backyard, and into his own van.

MITCH

We have to do something with him.
We can stop this.

ANDY

So, we destroy him.

She shuts the doors.

MITCH

It's good to see you again.

Andy smiles, but it quickly fades as Mitch drops to the ground, hand on his stomach, unconscious.

Andy moves his hand, pulls up his sweater. The white t-shirt below is soaked red. His jeans too. He's lost too much.

ANDY

Oh my God.

Andy practically picks him up, sliding him into the passenger seat, taking his cell. She rounds the van, dialing...

ANDY (CONT'D)

Jules, it's Andy, tell the on-call to prep for a deep abdominal stab wound...

She gets behind the wheel, starts the van.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Don't ask questions! Severe blood loss, have O-Pos ready. I'll be there in less than ten. I don't care Jules, just get him, it's Mitch!

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMITTING -- LATER

Andy bursts through the doors, dragging Mitch's limp body. She bypasses admitting...

ADMITTING NURSE

Excuse me!

ANDY

Get out of my fucking way!

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING WING -- CONTINUOUS

Through another set of doors, Andy sees Jules, who's waiting with a gurney. She helps Andy get him on the bed.

Everything happens quickly.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM

Mitch is wheeled into the prepped room, around him, a rogue's gallery of former co-workers, bosses, all ready to save him.

His on-call is The Chief.

CHIEF

He's one of us, let's do this.

They start working. Jules urges Andy into the outer room as the begin a transfusion to replace the lost blood.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - OUTER ROOM

Carlos comes rushing in, having just heard the news. What he sees beyond the window, the blood, damage, it's too much.

CARLOS

What happened?

Andy is in shock.

ANDY

Dale cut him open.

They look at each other for the first time since all of this started. He looks back at the O.R.

CARLOS

I should've...

ANDY

Don't. We all should've done something. It doesn't matter.

Carlos watches, thinks...

CARLOS

Where's Dale?

It dawns on Andy.

ANDY

He's still in the van.

CARLOS

Gimme the keys.

She does. He starts backing toward the door.

ANDY

We can't let Dale...

CARLOS

I know. He won't. Stay with Mitch.
He needs you.

He stops.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

This can't be it, Andy. It can't.
That's Mitch in there.

They're both overwhelmed.

ANDY

I know.

He takes off.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ADMITTING -- MOMENTS LATER

Carlos rushes out to the van. He opens the back doors.

Inside is Dale Hardy. Carlos jumps in with him. He sees a hammer nearby, grabs it...

CARLOS

Hey, you ugly son of a...

Dale lashes out at Carlos, knocking him down, pinning his neck under his boot. Seems he's not tied up anymore.

DALE

Son of a what?

Carlos struggles to get free, but the look in Dale's eyes, he knows what's coming. Defiantly, Carlos answers...

CARLOS

Bitch.

And swings the hammer, cracking the side of Dale's face open.

Dale recovers instantly, he grabs Carlos and SMASHES his skull into the side of the van, crumpling the metal.

Blood trickles from Carlos' nose, his eyes go dull, dead. Dale drops him, Carlos settling on the floor like a rag doll.

Dale reaches up to his face, the damage, and realizes he doesn't feel the pain. He checks it in the rear view mirror.

He sees himself for the first time.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Nurses and doctors move around Mitch, blood pumping back into his body. He starts to wake up.

CHIEF

Let's get the Prope combo in him before he starts feeling this.

Mitch turns his head, groggy. He sees Andy watching him through the window. He blinks, and suddenly realizes that Dale is behind Andy in the shadow of an open door.

Mitch tries to get up.

The Chief moves, blocking his view for a beat, then moves away. And Dale and Andy are gone.

MITCH

He's here.

CHIEF

It's alright, Matheson.

MITCH

No...

Mitch tries to jump off the table, nurses holding him down, about to administer the anesthesia. He can barely talk.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Let me go...

Chief nods to the Anesthesiologist. They start dosing him.

MITCH (CONT'D)

No!

Mitch can't get up, can't get free. He grabs The Chief's arm, pulling himself over, falling over the side of the table.

He yanks the tubes out of his arms. Grabs a scalpel.

CHIEF

What are you doing, Matheson?

MITCH

I have to find her.

He almost collapses. He points to a nurse.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Get me an epi.

She stands still.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I have a ten blade, lady!

The Chief nods to the nurse, to pacify Mitch. She runs out.

CHIEF

You're out of blood Mitch, if we don't stabilize you and patch your gut, you're not gonna make it.

Mitch loses his balance, falling against the wall. A nurse motions to grab him, he threatens with the blade. He grabs the Anesthesiologist's syringe, the tube of Propofol, draws a deep dose.

The nurse comes in with an epi pen. Mitch grabs it.

He slams the auto-injector in his leg and with a single click, pumps himself full of adrenaline. Buzzed, frantic, he backs to the door, holding the syringe of sedative knife-style.

MITCH

I euthanize the first one of you who follows me out this door.

CHIEF

What the hell are you doing?

MITCH

I have to find her.

CHIEF

If you leave, you're going to die.

Mitch, shrugs...

MITCH

What's new...

Mitch backs into the outer room, and into...

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL

He has no idea where to go. No sign of either of them.

On one end of the hall, police talk to a mugging victim. On the other, a doctor uses a badge to buzz a waiting visitor into a secured area. There's nowhere for Dale to go.

Mitch is confused, tweaked... Wait. He rushes down the hall, to a door with a sign above it...

"BASEMENT - Materials/Clinical Operations/Morgue"

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT

Andy is being dragged through the basement halls by Dale, who holds a hammer with his other hand.

DALE

What's happening to me?

A Resident emerges from the Clinical Operations room.

RESIDENT

Andy?

Before Andy can mutter a warning, Dale, surprised, swings the hammer, splitting the Resident's face. Andy screams, trying to squirm away.

The Resident falls to the floor, grabbing at the open wound. Dale grips Andy tight.

DALE

How do we get out of here?

He pushes her through a set of propped open double doors in the middle of the long hall.

ANDY

Every girl they found, her wound had gone septic, you couldn't take care of them. That's why you let them go. They got sick. So you wanted someone who could care for herself. A doctor.

Dale smiles.

DALE

I was just waiting to get you alone.

Somewhere down the hall...

MITCH

Andy!

Dale and Andy turn, they both see Mitch. Bleeding, hobbling, but coming for Dale. Dale swings the hammer, catching Mitch's shoulder.

Mitch grabs Dale's arm, holding him close, grabbing Andy with the other, shoving her behind him.

Andy rushes to help.

Dale is too strong, he pulls free. Mitch looks over, sees a fire alarm on the wall. He hits it.

The SCREAMING KLAXON goes off. The alarm releases the magnetically propped-open fire doors between them and Andy. They swing shut just as Andy runs back. Locking closed.

Separating Andy from Mitch and Dale.

Dale goes to one side of the doors, Andy to the other.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're never going to see her again.

Mitch backs down the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - HALL

Andy can't get the doors open. She sees the card reader on the wall, reaches for her badge. She's not wearing scrubs.

ANDY

Shit!

She sees the construction equipment littering the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - MORGUE

Mitch pushes inside, searching for a weapon. Dale enters, wielding the damned hammer. Mitch backs away, buying time...

A shudder runs through Dale. He looks away, terrified.

DALE

Oh, God. How did you get here?

Dale regards someone, but no one's there. He turns back to Mitch, fuming.

DALE (CONT'D)

How did you find her?!

Dale turns again, on his knees...

DALE (CONT'D)

It's not what you think.

(MORE)

DALE (CONT'D)

I never wanted to hurt anyone. You just... you took her away from me.

Mitch looks around, eyes gallons of chemicals under a sink. He turns the water on full blast, filling the basin.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - HALL

A sledgehammer comes crashing down into the heavy doors.

They rattle, but stay put. Andy tries again, no good.

The Fire Alarm goes on and on.

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - MORGUE

Mitch pulls a drawer open, finds an autopsy saw. Unplugged. He throws it toward the deep freeze door.

DALE

I wouldn't have hurt her! You were wrong about me!

Mitch grabs a bottle of sodium hydroxide, pours it into a small metal tub.

DALE (CONT'D)

I was a good boy. And you... took her from me, you bitch!

Dale jumps up, swinging the hammer at thin air. Going mad.

DALE (CONT'D)

Where... where is she?

He turns back to Mitch, who throws the tub of acid all over Dale. But nothing happens. Dale blinks and wipes his face.

DALE (CONT'D)

I want to see my mother right now!

MITCH

Then you better close your eyes.

Dale doesn't understand. Mitch dips the metal tub in the sink, fills it with water, and throws it at Dale. The inert acid is fueled by oxygen, the O in H₂O.

Dale's entire body, his face, his eyes start smoking, hissing, peeling away. Dale claws at his eyes. He is blind.

Dale swings the hammer like a madman, smashing the overhead light, leaving them in dim outer hall illumination. He is screaming, panicked, tearing the place apart.

His flesh falling to the floor.

Mitch scrambles over to the freezer door, the autopsy saw. He plugs it in, stands, turns the freezer temp to -30.

The freezer unit groans and shudders, super-cooling the interior.

Mitch, weak, coughing dribbles of blood, can barely get the door open. It swings wide.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Over here.

Dale blindly rushes him. Mitch clicks the saw on. Dale tackles him, sending them both into the freezer. Acid dripping onto Mitch, the saw blazing into Dale's neck.

Dale grabs Mitch's arm, bending the saw toward his face.

He bends it closer, Mitch tries to wiggle his thumb to the button. The blade is closer, closer. He can feel the air coming off the spinning blade.

The edge grazes Mitch's skin, turning pink, then red.

Dale grabs Mitch's stomach with his free hand, sliding his fingers into the gaping wound. Mitch howls, but holds tight.

DALE

All this time wasted, saving people,
and no one comes to save you...

VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry to interrupt...

Dale turns and finds Carlos, bleeding, but standing, in mid-sledgehammer swing. BOOM!

Dale is sent sailing to the back of the freezer.

CARLOS

You think a cracked skull's gonna
put this hearty motherfucker down?
I was dead last week!

Dale sits up. Shivering, burning, blind.

Andy walks in. She takes the hammer from Carlos. Carlos picks Mitch up, helping him stand.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Are you sure you wanna do this?

Andy approaches Dale with the hammer.

ANDY

If we don't, it'll never stop.

Carlos, considers...

CARLOS

"One life. For billions."

A reverent moment. Mitch turns to him.

MITCH
Flash Gordon. 1980. Sweet.

They share a smile, that's how guys forgive each other.

Then Andy raises the hammer. Dale smiles.

DALE
I can smell you.

ANDY
Duck.

She brings the hammer down. Knocking his fucking head off.

Blood sprays the pristine freezer walls, crystallizing on contact. Andy drops the hammer, turns. Sees the gravity of Mitch's wounds...

INT. HOSPITAL - BASEMENT - MORGUE

Andy and Carlos help him out of the deep freeze, shutting the door behind them. Carlos eases Mitch to the floor, Andy sitting with him, holding him tight.

CARLOS
What a week, huh?

MITCH
Between exams, getting fired, and wacky undead hijinks, I'm exhausted.

Andy tries to smile, her tears betray her.

ANDY
Don't sleep yet.

CARLOS
I'm gonna get help.

Carlos rushes toward the hall.

MITCH
No. Please. Stay.

Carlos reluctantly stops, comes back.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Both of you, stay with me.

His smile fades. His face softens. Mitch is gone.

Carlos slumps against the wall, overcome.

Andy weeps, gently sliding her hand over Mitch's open eyes, shielding him, pulling him close. Rocking him away.

FADE OUT:

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY -- DAY

Nestled in the heart of a vast chain of rolling hills...

Carlos, Andy, friends, and a grief-stricken family, all stand at the grave of Mitch Matheson.

The minister speaks in silence, all Andy can hear is the blustery wind in this rural Illinois cemetery.

She looks down at the grave...

SMASH TO:

EXT. DEEP WOODS -- NIGHT

...And remembers slamming a shovel into wet soil, nights before, in a dark thick of woods. Carlos and Andy are digging a hole, illuminated by nothing but the wide-eyed moon.

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY -- DAY

Back at the funeral, Carlos goes to the head of the grave.

CARLOS

I wasn't sure what to say so I thought I'd quote something instead. Words I thought I understood, words I thought I lived by. But it wasn't until I saw how Mitch lived, and died, that I knew the difference between knowing the words, and living them.

He starts reciting the Hippocratic.

EXT. DEEP WOODS -- NIGHT

Carlos drags a body bag to the edge of the freshly dug hole. The beauty of the funeral undercut by the dirty work done nights earlier.

CARLOS (V.O.)

"I will especially tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks."

Across the grave, Andy is using a shovel to mix a vat of quick-set concrete. Dale's van ditched in the distance.

CARLOS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"But it may also be within my power to take a life, this awesome responsibility must be faced with
(MORE)

CARLOS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 great humbleness and awareness of my
 own frailty. Above all, I must not
 play at God."

Carlos unzips the bag.

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY -- DAY

Mitch's mother and father hold each other tightly. Andy
 can't help but notice.

She looks over at Carlos, who is watching her as he speaks.

EXT. DEEP WOODS -- NIGHT

Carlos and Andy throw the dismembered body parts of Dale
 Hardy into the grave's maw.

CARLOS (V.O.)
 "If I do not violate this oath, may
 I enjoy life, respected while I live
 and remembered with affection
 thereafter."

His head, thrown in last, his eyes still flutter, as he's
 buried alive. Andy pours the concrete in.

EXT. RURAL CEMETERY -- DAY

A tear trickles down Andy's face. But she doesn't cry. She
 mourns the passing of her friend and love.

CARLOS
 "May I always act so as to preserve
 the finest traditions of my calling
 and may I long experience the joy of
 healing those who seek my help."

Carlos steps away from the grave. They lower Mitch in.

The sunlight glimmering on the coffin fades as it enters the
 earth and we...

FADE OUT:

Months Later

INT. SCRUB ROOM -- MORNING

Andy emerges from a procedure. A resident now. The Young
 Woman follows her out of surgery.

ANDY
 Good work.

The Young Woman nods, visibly upset. They lost another one.
 Carlos is waiting in the room. Andy starts washing up.

CARLOS
 Morning.

ANDY

You should've seen this woman's heart.

CARLOS

I'm sorry.

Andy keeps scrubbing, a false, world weary smile.

ANDY

There wasn't much we could do.

CARLOS

I'm not talking about Mrs. Dullis.

Andy cuts the faucet, dries her hands, and turns to Carlos.

ANDY

I know who you're talking about.

She passes him, on her way to the next procedure.

CARLOS

It's been almost four months, and
not a breakdown, not a tear since
the funeral.

ANDY

We all grieve in different ways.

CARLOS

You're not grieving, Andy. You're
not letting him go.

ANDY

Have you let him go?

CARLOS

If there was anything I could have
done... to change all of this, have
him here, I'd do it.

Andy turns, something in her eyes catches him.

ANDY

Anything?

INT. HOSPITAL LOCKER ROOM

A row of lockers. At the end is Andy's, it says so on the
door. Inside, a coat, a purse, a box.

And inside the box... a hand. Severed at the wrist.

Open-palmed, grey and puckered. But strong, meaty.

A carpenter's hand.

It flexes.

SMASH OUT: