

THE PANIC ROOM

Okay, there's this WOMAN. She's going through a divorce and is looking for a place for her and her nine year old BOY. After years of the three of them being cooped up in a one bedroom apartment, they're looking for a place of their own, a place with all four walls theirs, a place with a little outdoor space. Beginning of the movie, she and her Boy walk into this big old converted brownstone, which has recently been made into a single family dwelling by the previous owner, a wealthy but slightly deranged guy who actually died in the house. Oh, it's been in all the papers, there's a big controversy with his estate, his whole family is suing each other over his money.

They like the place, a lot. Obviously they have a good deal of money, and we find out it's because some major asset is being sold because of the divorce, so there's a big influx of cash. The Woman works too, she's a writer who writes for a "This Old House" type website, she answers home improvement questions. Martha Stewart with power tools. In fact, the realtor is kind of nervous showing her places, because she knows so much about houses and the shortcuts people take during construction, what is good work and what is not. Can't get anything past her. The entire tour takes place inside the house, in fact the entire MOVIE is going to take place inside the house, or just out in front on the stoop, or just out on the patio, but even those scenes will be SEEN from inside the house. The camera is never going to leave the house, so just get used to the idea.

On the tour, the woman is shown a place called a safe room, or panic room. Apparently, this is all the vogue in high end construction right now, that despite the low crime rate in New York and generally fantastic economy, a lot of wealthy people are inordinately concerned about home invasion robberies. To combat that, there are companies that specialize in the construction of panic rooms, or impenetrable inner sanctums, which are built just off the master bedroom, usually by splitting up another bedroom, half of it for a closet, half for the panic room.

The way it works is this -- if your alarm goes off or you have any other reason to suspect someone is breaking into

your house, you go directly into your panic room and seal the double metal doors (which are attractively disguised by wood-finished fronts and so forth). The main attributes of the panic room are its reinforced steel-core walls and its buried phone line, which is not connected to the house's main line and never exposed, either throughout the house's infrastructure or outside the house. So there you are, walled up, safely tucked away, able to call for help and wait without concern for help's arrival.

But, depending on the level of paranoia of the builder of the panic room (and this guy was really paranoid), other features are available too. A bank of video monitors, with corresponding cameras deployed throughout the home. Supplies of water and food. A ventilation system and oxygen scrubber, for those really long post-apocalyptic stays. A spring-loaded inner door, solid steel, activated by a wall switch (infrared beams for safety, like an elevator, because this door is heavy and it really moves when you push that button). This room has all the bells and whistles.

The woman and the boy really love the house, with the possible exception of the panic room, which the mother finds pretty funny and maybe just a little bit sad. The boy digs it and wants to make it his room, but she thinks it would be better if they converted it into a family room or guest room. There are two bedrooms upstairs, one for the boy and one for the Woman's mother, who is going to come live with them to help them through this tough time, another reason they want so much space. Interestingly, this brownstone also has an elevator, as the paranoid old guy had a disability that made it hard for him to get up stairs. Patio, elevator (which the Boy spent most of the tour playing in), single family renovation -- if you're looking for a brownstone in New York, this is the best you can possibly do, so the woman decides to buy it on the spot.

Hard cut to the same house, now with mountains of unpacked boxes in it, and the woman and her son strewn across the floor in the main entryway (a roomy spot), exhausted. This was moving day. The movers stand around, waiting for their tips, then they leave, and the newly-divorced Woman and her Boy are alone in their new place for the very first time. Exciting! Sad. Divorce. Drag. But from what we gather about Dad, he wasn't around much anyway. After eight or nine years of happy marriage (they married young, the woman is only in her early thirties), the husband created an

internet start-up thing, one of the lucky ones that went public in a huge way, and after years of having a combined income of about eighty grand a year, suddenly the two of them were worth ninety-six million dollars.

And that's when the trouble started. Money doesn't always change things. Sometimes it mangles them beyond recognition.

Here's a good place for a few words about style. Although you've already read a good deal of backstory, this amounts to almost the entirety of the background information on these people that we will ever learn throughout the film, and when such depth of background is expressed, whenever possible it will be done with three or four lines of dialogue from which we can infer the rest of the information. This movie is spare. *THIS MOVIE IS SPARE*. It is primarily a story told with pictures, and dialogue will only be used when absolutely necessary to convey a story point, or when the human behavior of the characters would seem abnormal without spoken words. But as you'll see, for much of the movie it is in the best interests of all the characters NOT to speak.

This is not to say the characterizations will be vapid or empty. On the contrary, the challenge is that much greater to create real and recognizable characters who express themselves through action and behavior, and they're going to have plenty of opportunities for that.

So far, we're only eight or nine pages into the movie. Now, after the movers have left, the Woman drags herself up off the floor, she has to do something about dinner. After that, it's bath and bed, for both of them. The Woman orders pizza. She reaches for her cell phone, then decides to see if the phone company actually got around to turning on THEIR phone. She unpacks a phone, plugs it in, and gets a dial tone -- hey, whaddya know, Bell Atlantic comes through for once.

She orders pizza. Pizza is delivered. Pizza is eaten. The Woman has a glass of wine. Neither one of them talks, just chews. How did everything get so weird? Where are we, anyway? Fuck Dad. Neither Woman nor Boy say it, but it's in the air. Fuck him anyway. And fuck Her too. The Woman has another glass of wine.

She gives the boy his bath. She listens while he reads to her. He's a sharp kid, loves Tom Swift. She spends twenty minutes reading the instructions for the house's alarm. Doesn't get half of it, who ever does, but she manages to set it for the night.

When the alarm goes on, the video screens in the panic room all turn on. She doesn't realize this, because she doesn't care. She does not need a panic room. She puts her cell phone in its charger on her nighttable.

She has a third glass of wine.

She takes off her clothes, puts on an old Knicks tee shirt. His, probably.

She gets in bed.

And she cries herself to sleep.

The middle of the night. Through the kitchen window, we see a van pull up and park across the street. A man gets out of the van. He wears black. He walks toward the house. He has tools, too.

The Woman sleeps. So does her son, one flight up, on the fourth floor. Third floor is the master bedroom, bathroom, and panic room (the joke). Second floor is the spacious entryway and living room. Ground floor is the kitchen, which has a street-level entrance, and the dining room. Converted basement is going to be a family room, it leads out to the patio. The house is seventeen feet wide. Ninety feet deep. There is a skylight; it does not open. There are ten windows. There are three sets of French doors that open onto the patio, or reach the patio by way of the spiral staircase that clings to the back of the house. There are two front doors, one on the entry floor, at the top of the stoop, one on the kitchen floor, ground level. Those are the only entrances or exits from the home.

Unless you count the roof access, through a closet on the very top floor. But who would use that? We drift into that closet, which is hanging ajar, to have a look. We rise up, following the iron ladder that leads up to the roof portal. We look up at the portal. There is a narrow crack that runs along its edges, and just a sliver of moonlight can be seen coming through that crack, enough to illuminate the square

outline of the portal. A shiny silver something slides through that crack. It slithers along the edge of the portal, searching for something. It finds a small round nub. The silver something stops. It HUMS with electricity for a moment.

On an alarm panel, a message appears -- "ZONE 26 DEFAULTED."

In the closet, the panel is removed. A million stars are visible in the night sky beyond. But we're inside. And now, so is an Intruder.

In bed, the Woman stirs. An alcohol sleep is a restless one, and she's suffering. She sits up groggily, chugs a glass of water. Lays down again.

The Intruder steps into the hallway and immediately looks around, concerned. Something is not as it should be. It's the packing boxes. The signs of life. This is unexpected. He creeps down the hall, peers into the top floor bedroom. Sees the little boy. He is extremely upset. He creeps down the stairs, passes the master bedroom, peers in there too.

The Woman lies in bed, her back to the door, her eyes open. Now her head hurts. Great. Behind her, the Intruder appears silently in the doorway. From his point of view, she's asleep on her side, facing away from him. He moves away. She didn't hear. She closes her eyes again, tries to sleep.

Downstairs, the Intruder goes to the front kitchen window and looks out at the van, parked across the street. He reaches to a lightswitch and flicks it. Through the window, we see the stoop light go on. He turns it off again, then on and off once more, rapidly. Still through the window, we see the doors of the van open again. TWO MORE INTRUDERS climb out. Also in black. Also with tools. A great many tools. They walk calmly across the street, grow large in the window. The First Intruder (we'll call him ONE) steps over to the kitchen door, runs his silvery strip through its gap again, and the alarm panel shows another zone defaulted.

The door opens. TWO and THREE come inside. They immediately notice the packing boxes and freak out. One calms them. There is a rushed, whispered conversation, of which we catch only the vital phrases. First, they weren't expecting any people here, they thought they weren't moving

in till next week. Second, they have no guns, and are very concerned about their safety. Number One communicates that there is only a woman, alone, and a little kid. They can handle it. What if she has a gun? I'm willing to take that chance. Two says relax, I brought a gun.

This was not in the plan. They chastise him, but are grateful. Three suggests getting the hell out of there, but under pressure from the others says what if we just scare them off? Number One says bad idea, they'll call the cops. I need forty-five minutes. The Cops would be here in ten. Nobody can leave this house till I'm done. Nobody. So, they ask, what do we do?

One has an answer to that. He dumps a bag full of long screws onto the kitchen counter. They set to work. Acting on One's instructions, Three cuts the cord on the phone in the kitchen, the only phone she's hooked up in the house. One by one, they go to the windows and doors on the lower three floors. Using silent, cordless screwdrivers, they drive long screws through the doors at an angle, screwing them into their frames. Nobody gets out of this house. Nobody.

Upstairs, the Woman gets out of bed. She's bleary, her head hurts, she doesn't do well with alcohol. In the dark, she staggers off toward the bathroom door and steps through it. But it isn't the bathroom door, it's the door to the panic room. She walks in, turns around in the dark, feeling for the light switch. The only light in the room comes from the nine four inch TV screens, which show clear views of what's going on downstairs. But she doesn't see those. She finds the light switch, flicks it on, and it nearly blinds her. She realizes where she is, mutters something about the God damn bathroom, and staggers out of the room. If only she'd looked at the screens.

Back in the bedroom, she has left the light on in the safe room so that she can see. She opens another door -- thank God, the bathroom. First things first, three Advil and a glass of water. Then she turns to the toilet.

Downstairs, the work continues. The basement French doors are sealed. Ditto the kitchen window and the kitchen level French doors. One, Two, and Three move up to the entry level. Next floor up after that is the master bedroom.

In the bathroom upstairs, the Woman flushes the toilet and heads back to bed.

Downstairs, the Intruders hear the water rushing through the pipes. They freeze. They stare at the ceiling as the feet move across the floor, headed back to bed. They hear the CREAK of the bed as she gets back into it. They still freeze. Then, dead quiet, they get to work sealing the final door.

Upstairs, the Woman is getting in bed when she notices she left the light on in the panic room. She mutters another unprintable, gets up. Inside the panic room, she squints, looking around for the switch. And as she squints, she notices the video monitors. And the men in her living room, dressed in black, sealing up her house like her own tomb. She blinks, moves closer. This can't be right. She stares. These are just pictures. They have no relation to reality. That's not possible.

In the living room, Three's hands are quivering as he works, and the cordless screwdriver slips out, falls toward the floor of the living room. Three's eyes pop wide --

-- and upstairs, in the safe room, the Woman watches in horror as the image of the screwdriver hitting the floor is verified by the SOUND of it clattering to the tile, audible through the open door to the safe room.

In the living room, One and Two shoot ferocious looks at Three. One makes a quick decision. He points at Two, holds up four fingers, telling him to go up to the fourth floor and secure the kid. He points at himself, holds up three fingers, meaning he'll go secure the woman. He points at Three, then at the spot they're standing on, telling him to stay here, at the base of the stairs. One and Two set off.

Upstairs, the Woman is acting quickly. Still in underwear, tee shirt, and bare feet, she races up the carpeted stairs from the third floor to the fourth, then down the hall to her son's room. She starts to wake him. Like a kid, he's profoundly asleep, and won't wake up.

Downstairs, One reaches the third floor and heads for her bedroom. Two is just behind him.

The Woman is desperate, still can't wake the Boy. She sees a half-drunk glass of water next to his bed, picks it up and throws the water in his face. NOW he's awake. And pissed off.

Downstairs, Two hears the boy's voice. He hurries down the hall of the third floor and starts up the stairs to the fourth.

Upstairs, the Woman hauls the Boy out of bed and into the hallway. But at the end of the hallway, she sees Two, headed straight for them. She turns to the left, yanks open the elevator door, throws aside the gate, and races inside with the Boy. She slams it shut and punches floor one. The door locks, the elevator starts to drop. Two yells down to One, they're in the elevator, headed toward you!

One goes to the elevator door on the third floor, sees the Woman and Boy's bare feet come into view through the little window. They descend, they're eye to eye for a moment, his hand on the door. He tugs, ferociously, as they go by him, bending the door, but it won't open. As they pass, he turns and takes off, headed down.

Now the Woman knows he'll be there when the elevator reaches the bottom. She jabs the "three" button, thinking of the panic room, but the elevator keeps going down. The Boy tells her that if she hits stop, when it starts up again, you can push a new floor. He knows, he was playing in it all day. She pushes stop, then start, then three. The elevator starts to rise. She loves that kid.

A floor below, One hears the elevator stop, then start up. He turns around, races back upstairs. There is a close chase, ending with the Woman and the Boy sealing themselves off in the panic room. The steel door WHANGS shut right in front of One, who is crazy with rage. How could the plan have gone so bad?

Now the standoff begins. The Woman explains to the boy -- I have no idea who they are or what they want. They probably read in the newspaper about Daddy's company selling and figured we have a lot of expensive jewels or something. Let's just wait, let them rob us, and then we'll come out. She tries the special phone, the one with the buried phone line. Dead, of course, she didn't even think to hook up a separate number for the panic room. She was never going to

use it. She was going to make a closet out of it. They wait.

We stay with her. She and the Boy familiarize themselves with the features of the panic room, to pass the time. They check the video monitors. The Intruders are in a heated conversation, but we can't hear it, there aren't speakers attached to the monitors. There is, however, an intercom system in the panic room, a paging system that can be heard throughout the house. The Woman notices this. She makes an announcement to the Intruders -- take whatever you want and get out. The Intruders confer, then start doing something she can't see. She goes back to the Boy, asks him how he's feeling. She seems inordinately concerned with his health. The Boy notices something on one of the screens. She turns.

The Intruders have written out a sign and are holding it up in front of one of the cameras -- "WHAT WE WANT IS IN THAT ROOM."

Oh, shit. She flicks the intercom key, asks them a question "What do you know about this room?"

More frenzied writing. Some arguing, a first draft torn up. Finally, the sign is held up -- "MORE THAN YOU."

She responds. "Can't come out. Can't let you in. Go away."

They write back. "WE WILL LET YOU GO."

She scoffs. Liars. "We're going to sleep. Get the hell out of my house." She switches off. She finds some things to make them more comfortable, encourages the boy to lie down and sleep. Yeah, right. The boy prowls instead, opening drawers -- matches, flashlights, sealed water bags designed to last five years, tinned food, rations, flares, a few basic tools, that sort of thing. She tells him again, more strongly -- lie down, don't exert yourself. We'll wait them out.

Downstairs, One is in a rage, Two feels okay as long as he's got the gun, and Three is freaking out. He wants to pack up their shit and get out of there, right the fuck now, we're never going to be able to get into the room now. One starts going through their tools, thinking, hard, how the hell to break into the very room THAT HE DESIGNED AND THEY BUILT!

Oh, shit, this could be worse for the Woman than we think. One curses the tools, none of which are up to the job. His eyes fall on something sitting out on the metal balcony on the kitchen floor. It's a large barbecue grill. What the hell good is that?

In the room, the Boy is still restless. Down along the floor, he's found a small round portal, set inside a recess, that seems like it should open, but he can't figure out how. He's feeling its edges, looking for a switch, poking about. The Woman asks him for the fourth time to lie down, don't get your adrenaline up, when they both suddenly sit bolt upright at a SOUND. It's a POUNDING sound, coming from the wall right outside the room. Are the Intruders trying to break through? That's pointless, the walls are steel-cored, don't worry honey, we'll be fine. But the Boy seems frightened. She checks a funny-looking watch he wears on his wrist. A digital readout says "120." No problem.

But outside, in the bedroom, One is going at it like a man with a plan. He has a claw hammer, and is ripping away the sheetrock on the outer wall of the panic room. Sure enough, on the other side of the two by four studs there is sheer metal reinforcement, but that's not what he's after. There is an air duct running through the wall, feeding into the room through a welded hole in the steel, part of the panic room's ventilation system. One exposes a portion of it, then grabs a drill, switches to a metal bit, and starts drilling a hole in it the size of the end of a garden hose.

Inside the room, the Woman can't for the life of her figure WHAT that horrible metal screeching is. Trouble, that's for sure.

In the bedroom, the hole is drilled. One shoves the end of an actual garden hose into the hole in the duct, then hacks off ten feet of hose from a reel and turns to Two, who attaches the other end of the hose to A PROPANE TANK, the kind you use for a gas barbecue grill. Three voices an objection, but Two spins the handle, we hear the HISS of the propane leaving its tank, we follow it along the length of the hose --

-- and see it emerge through the ventilation grill at the top wall inside the panic room, floating the little pieces of string that dangle from the vent. The Woman and Boy sniff. This ain't good. What is it?, the Boy asks. She

has a one-word explanation. "Propane." She starts to frantically try to stuff the grill with something, but the gas is leaking in anyway. While she does that, the Boy starts to cough and choke.

Outside the room, Three is in a state. He didn't sign on for killing people, and he is definitely not in the mood. One says relax, will you, nobody is killing anybody, we're just forcing them to come out of the room so we can hold them someplace for forty-five minutes, that's all. The very worst that happens is they'll pass out, we'll drag them out here into the fresh air, and they'll be fine. Really?, Two asks. And how are we supposed to get into the room if they die? One says hey, fellas, I don't hear any suggestions from you.

Inside the room, there is much coughing and gasping, until the Boy finally uncovers the switch for that strange portal he found, which now twists open to reveal an emergency ventilation source directly to the outside. It's a tube, a foot thick, through the exterior of the house, covered by steel mesh on the outside, but as they both fall to the floor and suck air, they're able to get oxygen through it. For the time being.

Outside, the debate has intensified. Two is practically brawling with Three, One is even losing his certainty about this plan. Still, the gas HISSES through the hose.

Inside the room, the Woman knows this can't go on forever, and she gets an idea. She rummages through the drawers, finds the matches and lighters they saw earlier. The Boy's eyes go wide, you can't be serious. But she is. She tells him to cover himself with as much blankets and clothes and whatever else he can find, which he does. She finds something to stand on, gets right up in front of the grill, and pries it off with a screwdriver. The duct is wide enough to put your arm in. She reaches in, all the way in, lighter in her hand. Inside the duct, we see her start thumbing the lighter, which is extremely difficult, given the slight amount of space.

Outside the room, One tells the other two to shut up so he can hear that funny scratching noise. He moves closer to the duct. The Woman keeps trying, not getting a spark. One suddenly recognizes the scratch of a cigarette lighter. He leaps off the chair he's standing on, dives across the room,

to yank the hose from the tank. Inside the pipe the lighter lights, a bright flame shoots out in two directions, one toward the panic room, one the other way in the duct.

In the panic room, the woman hurls herself back, her arm scalded, and drops to the floor just as the ceiling of the panic room erupts in a bright blue flame.

In the duct the flame shoots the other way, into the hose, through the hose, backing up toward the tank. One lands next to the tank, knocking the hose away just as a huge blue cloud of flame erupts from the end of the hose. The flame engulfs One, his hair starts on fire, his chest, his arms. Two and Three throw a blanket over him, he rolls on the floor in pain.

In the closet, the blue cloud on the ceiling WHOOMPS out, leaving a few little pockets of flame that the Woman extinguishes by swatting with a blanket. She SHOUTS and SCREAMS in triumph and anger, but stops, noticing the look her Boy is giving her. Her arm is singed, the hair burned off, the sleeve of her tee shirt burned back to the shoulder. But it doesn't really hurt. Her face is sooty, blackened.

Out in the bedroom, it's worse for One, who has lost most of his hair and shirt. But his skin isn't badly burned, which is something, I guess. Still, he's in a rage. He POUNDS the door, SCREAMS at the Woman, who POUNDS and SCREAMS right back. Whoever lives in the brownstone next door hears the screaming through the walls and POUNDS on the common wall, SHOUTS something indistinguishable. The Woman hears that and takes heart, starts SHOUTING at the wall, call the police, call the police! But her words must be fuzzy and indistinct too, the Neighbor just pounds some more.

Standoff.

Time for Round Two. If the Intruders are going to attack with lethal force, the Woman knows she must go on the offensive, but how? Fortunately, she's got a sharp kid, who has just put together the fact that they've got a narrow tunnel to the outside and a very powerful halogen flashlight. They look out the tunnel, see that directly across the courtyard, they can see the bedroom window of an apartment on the third floor of the building opposite. Great, the Kid says, we'll just send an SOS message in Morse

Code -- dot dot dot, dash dash dash, dot dot dot. It's great to be a nine year old boy, you remember stuff like this.

While the Boy is explaining this to her, she surreptitiously checks that funny watch he wears again. Now it says 105. She'd better keep an eye on him. But his plan seems to have taken his mind off their immediate dangers, and that's good, so she lets him get to work. He gets the halogen flashlight, very powerful, and starts sending out the message. The light flashes perfectly on the far wall of the apartment. The message is conveyed. Across the way, they see a man get out of bed. Come to the window. Peer out at the source of the lights. Attempt to "read" the message. Then angrily yank his drapes shut. Damn.

Down on the entry floor of the house, there is a heated conversation underway between One and Two. We only catch pieces of it, but the gist is that Two is Very Concerned about Three and is not about to jeopardize his share of fourteen million dollars because of that candy ass. We get the rest of the plot here -- the old guy who died, the reason his relatives are suing each other is because there's fourteen million of his estate that no one can seem to find. Typical of a paranoid old bastard, he built a safe in his safe room and didn't tell anybody about it. Only the guys who actually built the room know about the safe, and that gives them a pretty damn good idea where the missing fourteen million is. After a lot of talking about it, these career non-criminals finally worked up enough nerve to come here tonight to break into that safe. But they hadn't counted on the new owners moving in, and now they're losing their composure. One attempts to calm Two, so they can quit bickering and concentrate on the real issue, how the hell they're going to get into that room. Three has been left upstairs to stand guard outside the door to the panic room.

Inside the room, the Woman is thinking hard, and remembers her cell phone, which is sitting on her night table, if only she could get to it. But she can't, because Three is right outside the panic room door, in case the Woman tries to come out. She can see him on one of the monitors, standing right outside the door, and she can also see the other two, down on the entry floor.

In the bedroom, Three is Very Concerned himself, and he's desperately trying to eavesdrop on the conversation

downstairs, and when he hears something directly involving him that really pisses him off, he moves to the stairs, to hear better. The Woman sees him leave the master bedroom and debates bolting for the night table. But she can't find Three on any of the monitors, so she doesn't know if he's near or far. Shit, whaddya do now? She doesn't know he's just outside the door, leaning over the stairwell. She thinks. The Boy urges her to go ahead. She's not so sure.

Three still can't hear that well. He moves to the top of the steps, sneaks down two steps. He KNOWS they're talking about him. He debates, thinks, agonizes. Oh hell, I gotta go argue my side. He takes off down the stairs.

In the room, the Boy sees Three show up on the entry floor monitor. GO! He says. The Woman does. She presses the button and the steel door cranks open. She shoves open the fake closet door, strides across the room, snatches up her cell phone, walks back across the room --

-- and, downstairs, they hear the fake door SLAM and the heavy steel door WHANG shut as she makes it safely back into the panic room. One and Two both turn and look at Three, who was on guard duty. Well now, Three, you idiot, what the fuck do you think she just did? They take off upstairs.

In the panic room, the woman dials 911 with trembling fingers. Can't get through. No signal. Steel lined walls. SHIT! She tries every spot in the room. No signal.

In the bedroom, the three of them search the place, try to find what's missing. One spots it immediately -- there's an empty cell phone charger on the nightstand. The others freak out, but he is calm. Steel lined walls, remember? She'll never get a signal in there. But, on the subject of phones, on the subject of phones...

... which is precisely the subject the Woman is thinking of at the moment. Cell phone won't work, buried phone line isn't connected, but what about the main phone line? What about that bundle of wires she saw in the wall when she removed the face plate for the ventilation system? One of them has to be for the phone, because she knows that just on the other side of this wall --

-- there is a phone jack, which One is now looking at. He turns to Three. On the subject of phones, he asks Three --

when I said cut the phone, did you cut the main line at the junction box in the basement, or did you just cut the cord on the phone in the kitchen? Three says, gulp, he cut the kitchen phone. Shit. One takes off, for the basement. Again, Two is not pleased with Three.

In the bedroom, the Woman and the Boy are working quickly. She finds a neat little bundle of wires in the wall, sorts through them quickly, and finds a blue one. She knows blue is phones. She's no dummy. She did a whole series of articles on phones. She and the Boy get to work, he disconnecting the phone unit from the buried-cable jack, and she stripping the blue line out from the bundle and pulling out enough to make a connection.

One races down the steps to the basement.

In the panic room, the Woman and Boy are like animals, clawing and tearing at the ends of their respective phone cables, stripping the wires with fingers and teeth. Intercut between them and One as he finds a flashlight and searches for the phone box. Back in the panic room, they twist the wires together, get a dial tone, she punches 911, and, of course, here's how it answers -- "911 emergency, please hold." You gotta be kidding me.

Meantime, One is getting closer to the phone panel.

The Woman can't hold any longer. She hangs up, dials another number she knows by heart, it rings five times, and a husky male voice answers. It's her ex-husband. At first he's irritated, but she shuts him up quick. This is the entire message she gets out to him -- "Listen to me. There are three--"

And then, in the basement, One rips the whole phone panel out of the wall.

Dead line. What will the Husband do with this very tiny bit of information? No idea. But the Woman and Boy pray he'll do SOMETHING. He lives right around the corner, literally two blocks away. If he's got a brain in his head, he'll at least call the police for them. "There are three--" I mean, what the hell COULD it mean, in the middle of the night? "There are three bears?" The Woman and the Boy are giddy, they feel they've won. Surely he'll call the police.

In the bedroom, things are deathly silent between the three intruders. Tempers are at the breaking point, but nobody's shouting anymore. That's worse. Three informs the others that he has made a decision. He's leaving. One and Two both remind him of the deal they made early on, which they all swore to -- Nobody leaves. Three says forget that, man, I build things, I don't kill people. And I'm sure as hell not getting killed myself. Do you know how dead we'd be if that propane tank had gone up? We built that room, you know as well as I do, *she is never coming out, and we are never getting in.*

Inside the panic room, a crisis is brewing. The Boy doesn't look very well, he's pale, thirsty, dizzy and getting disoriented. The Woman checks his wristwatch thing, which now reads 82. This causes her a great deal of concern, and now she tells him his blood sugar is falling, probably because his body was shooting out so much adrenaline. What do we do if it keeps dropping?, the Boy asks. It's not gonna keep dropping, don't worry, just keep yourself calm.

Out in the bedroom, Three makes it official. He's leaving. He leaves the room, followed by One and Two, who are reminding him of the doctrine -- nobody leaves. One is pleading vehemently, Two just says those same two words over and over, almost to himself. Nobody leaves.

In the panic room, the Woman starts looking through the foodstuffs that are stored in the room, checking the contents, looking for something with sugar in it. What if I have an attack, the Boy asks? Oh, you know, we'll just give you a shot of Glucogen. But where is the Glucogen, the Boy asks, no dummy. It's, um, it's, you know, in your room. No biggie, Kiddo. Relax. The Boy, worsening, lays back and tries to remain calm. He stares at the video monitors.

Downstairs, Three bounds down the stairs to the kitchen floor and goes to the door with his screwdriver. He starts unscrewing the kitchen door, to get the hell out of there. One, from the stairs, yells at him to stay. Three says forget it, I'm goin'. Pleading. Shouting. Arguing. Three just gets the last screw out, he throws open the door, a BLAST of wind gusts in, it's a blustery night out there, he takes a step out the door --

-- and, with a quiet FFFT from right behind One, a bullet whizzes across the kitchen and hits Three in the back of the

head. He falls, right into the open kitchen doorway. One SHOUTS and turns, sees Two standing there, a silencer twisted onto the barrel of his gun.

"Nobody leaves."

In the panic room, the Boy's eyes are wide. He points at the monitors, tries to mouth the words. The Woman looks up.

Downstairs, One is freaking out, but trying like hell to remain calm. First things first, he and Two go to the doorway and drag Three's body back inside. As they're pulling it across the floor, they hear a voice come from the still-open doorway.

"Oh, my God."

They look up. A man (the HUSBAND!) stands there in hastily thrown-on clothes, staring down at the dead body in shock.

Up in the panic room, the Woman gasps, throws her hands over her mouth as she sees her ex-husband grabbed and hauled into the house, the door slammed behind him.

Downstairs, we see Two vent some more of his rage on the Husband, landing a solid blow to his head that dizzies and disorients him. One, realizing how dire his situation is and that he is now an accomplice to murder, decides they must take drastic steps to end this as quickly as possible and get out of there while they still can. He and Two drag the Husband up the stairs --

-- and hurl him, hard, against the door to the panic room.

Now comes the most harrowing scene in the film. One demands that the Woman open the door, or else. The Husband shouts to her and his Boy do not, under any circumstances, open this door. Two begins to beat him. The Woman, of course, cannot open the door. She and the Boy can only listen to the agonized screams of the Husband, watch the grotesque images on the bedroom's video monitor as he is savagely beaten outside. Right up until he loses consciousness, the Husband screams out his insistence that they do not open the door. Which they do not. The Husband finally blacks out.

One turns and looks up at the video camera with a terrifying determination and the Woman looks right back at him. One

reaches out and flicks off the lights in the bedroom, so she can't see at all. A BEEPING sound tears her attention away. The horrid spectacle he just witnessed has filled the Boy with anger, causing his adrenaline to kick in again, and his blood sugar monitor now reads a dire fifty-seven, and an alarm is going off. The Boy collapses, he begins to convulse. The Woman must do something, now. She turns away from the monitors and begins to force feed him a cereal bar, desperate to get some sugar into him.

Out in the bedroom, they hurl the unconscious Husband into a corner of the room. "Did you kill him?," One asks. "You want me to?," Two replies. "No! You've done enough of that." One thinks. Just let me think.

Back in the panic room, the alarm is still going off, and the Woman is getting desperate. She looks back up at the monitors. What she sees is good news. The lights are back on in the bedroom, and the only person there is her Husband, who lies slumped on the floor in a corner. She looks quickly at the monitor for the entry floor, and sees One and Two having an urgent conversation, One sitting in a chair, Two pacing in front of him, ranting.

The Boy's convulsions grow worse. The Woman knows it's now or never. She hits the button that controls the steel door. It cranks open. She pushes open the hidden closet door. She steps out into the bedroom. She starts to go to her husband in the corner, then realizes first things first, and turns and races out of the room and up the stairs to the Boy's bedroom, as silently as she possibly can.

Downstairs, Two looks up, hearing the pitter-pat of bare feet on the upstairs hallway. He smiles. Coming around behind him, we see One sitting in the chair. Except it isn't One at all, it's the Husband, unconscious, wearing One's shirt. And if the Husband is the person in the chair, that means --

-- the person in the corner of the bedroom is One, wearing the Husband's shirt. His eyes pop open, he turns and looks, sees the wide open doors to the panic room.

In the kid's bedroom, the Woman races in and tears open the door of a mini-fridge. Inside are dozens of little bottles of insulin and something called Glucogen. She grabs a bottle of Glucogen and a syringe kit and takes off.

As she comes down the stairs, she sees a terrifying sight. It's Two, who has come upstairs and is racing into the bedroom ahead of her. She SCREAMS, she takes off after him, but he's motoring, fast, headed for the panic room, where she can already see One, standing in the middle of it, next to the Boy, wearing the Husband's shirt and a grim "tricked you" grin. The Woman hurls herself at Two, lands clinging to his back, claws and wrestles with him, causing him to drop his gun, which is inadvertently kicked across the floor of the bedroom. Two shakes her off his back violently and makes a move toward the gun, but she's closer and already scrambling toward it. Two knows she'll get there first, he turns and races through the door and into the panic room. The Woman shoots a look at the gun, then down at the medicine in her hands, then at the door to the panic room, where Two is right now reaching up to push the button that controls the steel door.

The Woman makes a fast decision and lunges, hurling the bottle of Glucogen and the syringe kit through the gap just before --

-- the spring-loaded steel door SLAMS shut with tremendous ferocity. The last thing she sees is her Boy's terrified face as he SCREAMS for her.

And then it's silent. The Woman WAILS in agony, POUNDS on the door. She stands back, chest heaving. A VOICE comes over the house's intercom system. It's One. He is calm. He tells her how it is:

"If you leave the house, we'll kill him. If I see a uniform in the house, I'll kill him. Do you understand?"

She nods to one of the cameras, terrified. Inside the panic room, we see her face as she SCREAMS something up at the camera, but One and Two can't make out what she says. We know. She's saying the medicine, the medicine, you must give him the medicine. But they ignore her. One turns to the floor, removes a very secret panel, revealing a hidden safe below. So this is what all the fuss was about. He opens a bag filled with safecracking tools and sets to work. Two asks how long. One repeats -- forty-five minutes and we're outta here.

Again, the pounding on the door. She's still at it, the crazy bitch. Two is highly annoyed. He looks up at her, is amused by her wild pleadings, but they can't hear a word she's saying. But One notices the Boy. He doesn't look right. The convulsions have eased, but the state he's in now seems even worse. He's losing consciousness. His lips are moving. One, who has an ounce of compassion in him, bends down to hear the Boy.

"I need a 'jection."

Or what?, asks One.

"Or I'm gonna die."

One sees the bottle of Glucogen, the syringe kit the Woman so desperately threw into the room. He understands. The kid is diabetic. Now there is some debate. Two says don't waste your time, you don't know how to do it, and we're already in for one murder, what's the difference if he doesn't make it? But One won't hear of it. He is not a killer of children. He's not a killer at all. He gets the kit, brings it over to the Boy. Here you go, Kid, you know how to do it, don't you?

The Boy nods. He tries, but he is much too weak. Can barely lift his hand, much less give himself an injection. He's going to have to talk One through the process. Two absolutely cannot believe they are wasting time in this way. You're gonna save him and kill us, you know that, don't you? After a violent confrontation, Two backs down. One will have his way. This time.

Outside the room, the Woman is going insane, when the voice returns over the intercom. Relax. I understand. I'll give him the shot. Some comfort. But she'll take it.

And so the Boy talks him through it. And it's a weird, intimate moment between One and the Boy. One talks to him during the process, or maybe he's just talking to himself. I'm not the bad guy, kid. It seems like it, but I'm not the bad guy. I'm a decent human being. You try doing what I do for fifteen years. See so much money, given to all the wrong people. Treated like shit... the richer they are, the more they grind you on the price, the people that have the least to complain about always do the most complaining. And why are they so rich? I went to college, I'm smarter than

they are, most of 'em. Half of them just inherited their money. That makes me sick. I'm almost forty years old. I want a house. I want a wife. I want a nice kid like you. And I'm never gettin' it, 'cause that's not how this world works. Well tonight, just for one night, the world works for me, instead of me for it.

The injection takes effect. The Boy's life is saved. But there was a price. The relationship between One and Two is beyond repair. One goes to work on the safe. You know, he only needs forty-five minutes. Two watches the Boy.

The Woman, realizing there's nothing she can do here, picks up the gun (for all the good it'll do her) and hurries downstairs to check on her Husband. He's in awful shape, barely conscious, and isn't going to be any help. She quickly explains the situation, but the basics are pretty clear already, and they don't need to say much. While they're talking, there is a KNOCK at the door (the entry floor door, not the bloody kitchen door downstairs). The Woman turns, aghast. Who the hell could that be? "Police," the groggy Husband mutters. Police?! You called the police?! Yeah, the husband says. You sounded freaked out. The Woman is horrified. This is exactly what she and the Boy prayed for him to do not fifteen minutes ago, now it is the worst possible thing that could happen.

She starts to pull herself together, says I gotta put on clothes. Then changes her mind, realizes that's the opposite of what she should do. She takes a deep breath. She looks up at the camera in the entryway, makes gestures that say "I'm going to take care of this."

In the panic room, One and Two notice. What the hell is she doing? They watch her go to the door, open it, and face TWO UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS. Holy shit! Is she insane?! Two freaks out, grabs the Kid, One says relax, relax, she's smart, she can do this. That Guy who showed up must have called them. Sit tight. Let's watch this.

Downstairs, she acts very sleepy as she talks to the Police. They say they got a call from the Husband, that she told him she was in trouble, then got cut off. She says "Huh?" They ask to come in, they say you don't look so good. She acts annoyed, says, hey, you woke me out of a sound sleep at three in the morning, of course I look like hell. You don't look so hot yourself, Jim. They sorta believe her. But one

of them notices her burned sleeve, so he persists. Your husband said you said "There are three-" right before you got cut off. He lowers his voice. Now, lady, if there's something you want to say to us right now that maybe you can't say to us right now, maybe you just want to make a signal to us, by blinking a few times, something like that. That's something you could do.

She looks at this very smart young officer, severely tempted. She thinks and thinks -- and bursts out laughing. You're good, Officer, and I appreciate that. But no, there's nothing I have to say to you. The Officer still presses her. Well, may I ask what the rest of that sentence was going to be? She fudges, she hems, she haws, she blushes. Okay, look. My husband and I just broke up. It's my first night in the new house, and I was feeling a little lonely and a little drunk. The sentence was going to be "There are three things I'll do for you if you come over here right now and get in bed with me." But, thankfully, I came to my senses and hung up instead. Satisfied?

That was suitably embarrassing, and now they believe her. They wish her a good night, but not before the Smart Officer gives her his card and urges her to give him a call. You know, at home. If you ever want to talk. Always time to make a little time. The cops leave, she closes the door --

-- and in the panic room, they go back to work. Two watches the Boy. And he watches One.

The Woman confers with the Husband again, and together, they come to an inescapable conclusion. There is a body downstairs. The men upstairs have killed. We are witnesses. When they come out of that room with whatever they came for, they are going to kill again. They will have to. Maybe One won't want to do it, but Two certainly will, and it will happen just the same. The Husband has seen it. Felt it. The Woman knows it too. But we have their gun! But they have our boy.

Somehow, they have to get into that room and get their Boy out. Actually, the truth is, somehow she has to get into that room and get their Boy out. But how? She has a gun, sure, but the room is impenetrable. And could she even use the gun once she's in there?

She goes back into the bedroom. She gets dressed. Jeans, boots, shirt, gun tucked in her belt. Yeah, Baby! She examines all around the outer walls of the panic room. Still reinforcement, what can be done?

Inside the panic room, One is making progress on the safe. He fires up a high-speed drill.

In the bedroom, the Woman hears the drill. So, apparently, does the neighbor next door, who POUNDS on the wall again, shouting something they can't make out. The Woman's eyes light up with an idea. She goes to the front wall of her bedroom, stands with her back against the exterior wall on the street side and with her left shoulder against the common wall that's shared with the neighbor's brownstone. She begins to step off the distance, measuring with her feet until she reaches the faux closet door that is the entrance to the panic room. Fourteen feet. Got it.

She goes downstairs. She goes into a room in the front of the entry floor and searches the four corners of it. No video cameras in this one. That's good. She tries to open the window. Screwed shut, of course. Very funny, motherfuckers.

In the panic room, the safe is almost cracked. Two is watching the monitors carefully, watching the Woman as she walks around the house. He sees the Husband still in the chair. He sees the Woman find a sledgehammer, *their* sledgehammer. Who cares, it won't do her any good, just as long as she stays in the house and doesn't call the cops, we're fine. Of course, we'll still have the little problem of HER HAVING THE GUN when we get out, but then, that's why we have the Kid, right? One just scowls at him. Great idea to bring a gun, jackoff.

Downstairs, the Woman goes to work on the screws in the window, gets them out with relative ease. She slides open the window and the wind blasts in, it's a hell of a spooky night out there. She tosses the sledgehammer out, jumps outside, lands on the front stoop, looks up, and realizes with horror --

-- she's standing right under a video camera. In the panic room, the Boy sees this too, and if Two averts his gaze just an inch or two, he'll see it, that the Woman has left the

house. So the Boy fakes another convulsion, drawing Two's attention just long enough --

-- for the Woman to dart down her front steps and out of range of the video camera. We stay inside, of course, watching the Woman from the window as she climbs the steps of the Neighbor's house, shifts the gun to the back of her pants, and POUNDS on the door. We strain to see, she's all the way at the right side of the frame, barely visible at all, but hey, if the camera's gonna stay in the house, the camera's gotta stay in the house.

We hear the important snatches of the Woman's conversation with an OLD LADY next door, the gist of which is let me in, Bitch, and don't ask me a lot of questions, I don't have time to explain. As the Old Lady is slow to respond, the Woman just shoves past her and into the house. Now we do something really groovy. As the Old Lady and the Woman have a heated conversation, the camera moves, following them from our side of the shared wall. We rise up, as the heated conversation goes up a flight of stairs.

We move down a hallway, still following the heated conversation on the other side of the wall, the Old Lady's fearful, angry tones, the Woman's firm, urgent declarations. We drift into the master bedroom, now the voices are louder beyond the wall, but still muffled. The camera moves with the Woman, even though it can't see her, it knows what she's doing, she's stepping off the paces on the other side of the wall, measuring where the panic room starts. We keep moving, approaching the door to the panic room, passing through the door, arriving inside the panic room --

-- where One is THIS CLOSE to getting the safe open when they all suddenly hear a WHOMP and a CRUNCH from the shared wall. They turn in alarm, and the WHOMP comes again. Somebody is on the other side, pounding like hell. Two looks at One in alarm. Walls are steel, right? Not that one. Not the neighbor's wall. What is that crazy bitch thinking?! We've got the Kid! She's thinking she's got your gun, that's what she's thinking. What do we do?! We hurry.

One keeps drilling. The POUNDING keeps up. Sheetrock is torn away on the far side. Bricks SCRAPE out of place. The Boy is overjoyed at his mother's tenacity and ingenuity. Energized, he palms his syringe.

Finally, at the very moment that One gets the safe open, the head of a sledgehammer bursts through the wall of the panic room from the other side. Two grabs hold of the Boy, One maintains his focus, throwing open the safe, revealing --

-- nothing.

The sledgehammer head strikes again. The Woman has opened up a hole about a foot across. Light spills through from the other side, as well as the voice of the hysterical Old Lady, screaming "I called the police!" Two hurls the Kid against the far wall, leaps over to the side of the hole, and waits.

One doesn't lose his cool, just opens a false bottom in the safe, revealing --

-- a manila envelope. He grabs the envelope, opens it, and his eyes dance as he holds up fourteen individual one million dollar U.S. Treasury Bearer Bonds. What he came here for. He shoves them inside his jacket. Okay, let's --

-- but the Woman's arm comes through the gap, gun extended, and fires a shot that SLAMS into the wall just behind him. Two, who is hiding just next to the hole, STOMPS down on her hand as hard as he can. The Woman SCREAMS, the gun drops, and falls into the crack between the two houses, bouncing three stories down, far out of everyone's reach.

One demands -- I've got the money, let's get outta here! Two says sure, but he's coming with us. He grabs the Kid and hits the button to open the door. The Woman SCREAMS in anger, hurls herself through the narrow opening, grabs Two's leg, and begins pulling herself into the panic room, scraped and bloodied by the edges of the too-small hole.

One just keeps shouting GO, LET'S GO, OUT OF HERE!

But Two is deep into a violent rage, and insists on finishing off any witnesses. He drags the Woman through the opening and into the panic room. One has had enough. He leaves, alone, with the bonds.

In the panic room, Two drags the Woman across the floor by the hair, into the open doorway, right in the track of the open steel door. She realizes with horror what is

happening, he holds her head down on the floor, hard, below the infrared safety beam that would prevent the door from closing. The Boy pulls his syringe, jabs it into Two's neck, Two SCREAMS in pain.

On the stairs, One stops. He hears the murder taking place just above him. What is he going to do? Fuck.

Two is stretching to hit the door button, but he has to hold the Woman's head down, out of the lower beam, with one hand, all with the Boy savagely attacking him at the same time. Finally, he gets her head all the way down, out of the beams, they are solid, he jams the button --

-- but the Boy breaks the beam at the last second with his hand. Two ROARS in anger, hurls the Boy across the room, and goes back to it. The Woman strains like crazy, holds her head as far up against his hand as she can, but Two is jamming on the button over and over and she's just barely managing to maneuver her head in and out of the beam, but she's tiring, she's tiring, she can't keep it up, her head finally falls, the beam completes, Two hits the button --

-- and One reappears, grabs Two by the hair, pulls him forward, into the gap, and his big, fat head is crushed by the spring-loaded steel door that SLAMS forward just as the Woman draws herself back.

She falls across the panic room, grabs the Boy, and holds on tight. The door opens again, detecting an obstruction. Two's head. Too late. He's dead. One stands there, looking down at the Woman and the Boy. They stare at each other, wordless, their first face to face contact. She sees the bonds, protruding from his jacket. He zips it up.

He turns and hurries away.

Downstairs, One flies down the steps, hurries to the entry door, throws it open --

-- and is flooded with police spotlights. He freezes, silhouetted in the doorway. Wind and leaves blow into the house, a real gale outside. The cops SHOUT, One SHOUTS back, deranged by the tension of this night, he can't believe he came this far for this. They say don't make a move, he SCREAMS at them, No jail, no jail! They warn him again, hands in the air, don't move. We creep up behind

him. He makes a move to the back of his belt, where he knows perfectly well there is no weapon, but better that it ends here than thirty miserable years from now in Attica.

The shots seem simultaneous, a cannon round of them, eight in all. They SLAM into his chest and he falls to his knees. He turns, still silhouetted, on his knees, puts one hand to the entry wall for support. He lowers his head, he is the silhouette of a man in prayer. He lingers, then falls over on his back, dead.

The wind gusts, picks up the stack of bonds that were tucked into his shirt, blows them back into the house, as if they were never meant to leave. We back away from the doorway, further into the house, among the stacks of moving boxes, as the police come up the steps.

Dissolve to that same camera position in entryway, but now it's daytime. All the moving boxes are gone. The house is completely empty again. The Woman comes down the stairs with the Boy, each carrying a small bag. They head for the door, and we follow behind them. They open the door. It's a gorgeous day outside, the sun shining, kids playing, traffic trafficking. The Woman looks back at the place, the place they lived in for all of one night. Then she turns toward the sidewalk.

WOMAN

It's beautiful outside.

They step out, we start to follow them, but since we haven't left the house for a single shot yet we're *certainly* not going to start now and --

-- WHANG! A heavy steel door SLAMS across the entire screen and we cut to black.