

THOSE WHO WALK AWAY

Shot in a series of continuous long takes

Written by

Robert Rippberger
Spencer Moleda

Story by

Robert Rippberger

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. ILLINOIS RIVER, CHILLICOTHE - DUSK 1

We are wide above the river looking toward the docks as a large white and red paddle steamboat coasts by.

Two feet hover through the air, floating over the tops of the trees and river like the opening of *Andrei Rublev* or *Brazil*.

The shot glides closer to shore as the feet touchdown, landing. This is MAX, late 20's, pensive.

Close-up on Max as the camera moves behind him to see what he's looking at.

Max turns from the water and behind him is a little boy licking a lollipop. He stops.

With a whack, the boy shatters the lollipop on a pole and then goes back to chewing on it. What looks to be his prosthetic foot falls off.

Max isn't sure what to think. He walks by him and then pulls out his cell phone and dials.

The phone continues to dial as Max leans up against a bus stop.

We hear a PHONE RINGING.

AN ON CAMERA
SPLIT SCREEN:

2 EXT. ILLINOIS RIVER, CHILLICOTHE - BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS 2

Made up to appear like the interior of an apartment, the camera pans over to become a natural split screen with Max.

On a table, a landline LIGHT UP phone RINGS. A hand comes into frame and answers it.

We see DAVE, 20's, cleanly cut and dressed in a state of total zen -- in stark contrast to Max. Dave is a total science nerd.

MAX
Hey, it's me calling you back.

DAVE

Oh. Hey. I just wanted to check in and see how your date with what's her face went.

MAX

No, that's today.

DAVE

Oh...

MAX

Suited up in a anxiety-free, nonchalant way that signals my complete and total sexual disinterest.

DAVE

Are you for real with that?

MAX

Of course not. I'm on the verge of a heart attack and I think part of it is because I haven't gotten laid in... months.

DAVE

You mean years?

MAX

Shut up. But definitely since my Mom got sick. This is an exciting time for me. I get to have some excitement.

DAVE

Yolo. That's fine to say to me, but don't let the Boomers hear you say shit like that ok?

Max laughs.

MAX

You know what I mean.

(getting thoughtful)

You ever have it happen where you think life is going one way, and then without blinking suddenly everything changes?

DAVE

To a degree.

MAX

I feel like I'm losing my grip on reality. Something terrible might happen today.

DAVE

So that's why you're packing the Magnums? Or I mean the Micros.

MAX

Magnums for me and I'll mail you the Micros.

DAVE

Thanks.

MAX

But yeah I don't have to restrict myself to bare emotional necessities anymore.

DAVE

Dude, she needs your help. You were doing what you had to do.

MAX

Needed. Ethan is watching over her now.

DAVE

I get it, but it doesn't mean you can't still call her and check in.

MAX

Hey who called who here? You think this is easy for me?

DAVE

What you want to talk about the Magnums again?

(beat)

Just a sec, my brother needs help with the printer.

Dave exits as the SPLIT SCREEN is framed out.

Max lights a cigarette and puts in a wireless EarPod as we move into an over the shoulder: we see a giant statue of a Bald Eagle in front of him.

Max being pensive again.

DAVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ok. I'm back. Sorry. You still
there?

The camera reframes back into the SPLIT SCREEN.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Max...?

MAX
At what age...?

DAVE
What?

MAX
At what age does life start staring
you in the face? Am looking at a
five foot bald eagle at the moment,
you know eagles mate for life?

Dave laughs.

DAVE
I thought you wanted to talk about
getting your rocks off and blowing
off steam tonight?

MAX
I'm serious, man.

DAVE
In their nests, they also clench
their firsts so they don't hurt
their young. Doesn't always work
out.

Max puts out his cigarette.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Anyway, tell me more about this
date. No red flags so far?

MAX
She seems amazing. And eager, which
I'm not used to. Though... you're
gonna love this. It hasn't been
addressed head-on, but... she is...

DAVE
Oh no.

MAX
...an English and English and
Rhetoric major.

DAVE
Oh dear God.

MAX
It's cool. Don't be academically
prejudiced.

DAVE
Whatever, it's your life, but if
you break her heart, expect
countless tome-sized social media
essays on how you've both SHATTERED
and NURTURED her personal growth.

MAX
Looking to keep things light.

DAVE
Bottom line... come out swinging,
guns loaded. You have absolutely
nothing to prove. Don't give some
girl control over your cortisol
levels.

MAX
Here's the scariest question. What
if like, I actually start falling
for her?

DAVE
Terrifying.

A text comes through on Max's phone. He checks it.

MAX
She's here. She just texted.

DAVE
Wait, like, right now?

MAX
Yes, right now! I'm going to walk
over.

DAVE
I'll ferry you over to the other
side.

Max walks toward a parking lot as Dave steps out of his split
screen 'set' and talks up Max.

Max doesn't acknowledge him directly, still with the earpiece in.

Dave jumps passionately back and forth, still dragging his landline phone.

DAVE (CONT'D)

How nervous are you?

MAX

On a scale of one to ten? I'm... well, let's just say I could use pep-talk 5.1.

DAVE

You're really overthinking this.

MAX

Of course I am, that's why I need you! Take off your glove like Bugs Bunny and slap some sense into me!

DAVE

Fine.

Max fixes his hair, adjusts his glasses. Butterflies be damned.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You're a tiger. You're a lion. You are Hercules slashing minotaurs like dollar store discounts. Hulk Hogan getting a settlement for his sex tape. You've got this shit, Max. I believe in you. Now get out there and show her the jackpot she scored when she swiped right.

MAX

Holy shit, Tony Robbins doesn't get me that fired up. Thank you.

DAVE

Who? Forget it. Follow your heart - you're on your own from here.

Max hangs up, removing the earphone. Dave stops and fades off in the distance, as if reaching for his friend as he leaves, worry on his face.

A bus pulls away revealing his date behind...

Leaned up against a car, anxious but confident, is AVERY (mid 20's). She has jet black hair, came dressed prepared for the date -- her clothes a bit revealing.

MAX

Hi!

AVERY

Hi.

MAX

How are you?

AVERY

Well, I'm alive.

MAX

Same.

AVERY

Excellent.

Avery leans up off the hood.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Like my car?

Max stares at what may be the single most messed up car he's been personally involved with.

MAX

It's... uh... a rather striking color.

AVERY

Just kidding, my brother just dropped me off.

*

Max's eyes darts over at the other car -- not fresh off the lot, but considerably less rustic.

MAX

Oh is that how we're going to kick things off?

AVERY

Had you going for a second, didn't I?

Max laughs it off.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Can you imagine if that's how I showed up?

MAX

I was about to say...

AVERY

Red flag city.

MAX

But then again, I don't even have a car so who am I to speak?

AVERY

Taking care of your mom the last year was it?

MAX

Yeah, didn't leave much time to make money.

AVERY

Not about to hold that against you!

(beat)

Come on. We'll walk over to the theater, it's not far.

Max and Avery start walking across the park and up the two city blocks to the theater.

3

EXT. STREET/PARK - CONTINUOUS

3

AVERY

Well, you're not cat fishing me, that's a good start.

MAX

Likewise. You look amazing.

AVERY

Thank you.

Awkward tension smothers the conversation.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Whatever happens, can we both agree that as far as the world is concerned, we did not meet on a dating app?

*

MAX

Oh, come on, I mean, it's not like we're on Mormon Mingle or anything.

AVERY

You're not wrong.

MAX

Trust me, I know it can be a petri dish for wounded egos and male awkwardness, but honestly, I'm not sure how I'd meet anybody if it wasn't for the internet.

AVERY

I was talking to my brother about that exact thing. He said to me, "Avery. I don't know if you're aware of this. But there are people in the world, all around us, who venture to public places, go up to people they've never met before, and... become friends with them." Right there. Right on the spot.

*

MAX

See, that's like science fiction. I mean, I know that that's what a normal, healthy person should be doing, or so the world tells me. And yet...

AVERY

Here we both are.

MAX

Exactly, here we are. Though if you think about it, I should blame you for enabling me.

AVERY

Yeah I was happy you could meet so soon, I was lucky to have the night off. When I'm looking to have fun, I'm definitely an enabler. So look forward to the worst decisions of your life. I mean, in a good, wholesome, girlfriend material kind of way.

MAX

Who said I was looking for a girlfriend?

Avery goes quiet, hanging on words she can't come up with.

AVERY

You know, I was... just...

MAX

Don't worry.

*

AVERY

Sorry to spook you, that was *not* graceful.

MAX

Are you kidding? No, I'm sorry. That whole "foot-in-mouth" thing is my bread and butter. Thank God you get it. If you want to exchange techniques, just let me know, I'm a black belt in conversational self-sabotage.

AVERY

You're pretty honest. I do like that. Not many guys would open a date with confessions of self-sabotage.

MAX

So this is a date then?

AVERY

I don't know. Do you want it to be?

MAX

I admit that I am not picketing the idea.

AVERY

I'm also cool with just not labeling anything too quickly, you know? Can't trust someone you just met. Never know who's out there or what their motivations are...

MAX

I mean, we ARE going to a movie, right?

AVERY

Yes, Sir.

MAX

No BTK dungeons, no underground incel lounges, nothing like that?

AVERY

No, don't worry, BTK dungeons are after movie destinations only...

*

MAX

Okay good. Don't want to move too quickly or anything.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

(beat)

So you study English and Rhetoric right?

AVERY

Yeah, I do. I'm in the throes of regretting it actually. My dissertation is melting like the Witch of the West.

(beat)

I found this Le Guin story called, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas."

MAX

You should meet my friend Dave, you guys would get on like fireworks.

AVERY

In Omelas, every possible thing that could ever make you happy is available on tap every second of every day. No war, no crime, no poverty...

*
*

MAX

Mandatory puppies?

*
*

AVERY

Exactly. Paradise, except...

*
*

MAX

Uh-oh.

AVERY

There's this kid. Locked in a cage deep in a dungeon, tortured. Nobody talks about it. Everybody accepts that the boy needs to be tortured endlessly in order to maintain the divinity of their paradise.

MAX

Such a positive, life-affirming story. Jesus Christ.

AVERY

You say that, but you can't say that's more messed up than the world we live in now.

MAX

I guess...

AVERY

So anyway, there are people who refuse to take part in that whole system of living and...

*

MAX

...walk away from Omelas!

AVERY

Exactly. It's easy to side with the people who walk away, but the two groups are really doing the same thing. I mean at the end, the kid is still there being tortured right?

MAX

Totally non-judgmental question.

AVERY

Shoot.

MAX

What would you do?

AVERY

What would I do?

MAX

Yeah, if you had that choice to make, what would you choose?

AVERY

I think if I didn't grapple with the answer, I wouldn't like the story so much.

(beat)

Why, what about you? What would you do?

MAX

I guess I've already done it.

AVERY

What do you mean?

MAX

Walked away. I mean I left my mom on her death bed because it got to be too much.

AVERY

I read up on Huntington's Disease when you told me about it. That's no easy thing.

MAX

There were only so many days I could watch her sick, our memories together fading despite her still being alive right in front of me. I really was her lifeline. She was my best friend, you know? I just feel like I gave and gave and gave until I felt as sick as she was... that I was trading those good memories in for... something terrible. I still haven't figured out why I chose to be her lifeline or why I left, I think maybe there's something I haven't forgiven her for.

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(beat)

What would your thesis say about that?

Avery and Max are interrupted as they round the corner. They stop in their tracks. The camera whip pans and clean transitions to...

4

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

4

Fire engines and police cars have things blocked off. The two step forward into an over the shoulder.

MAX

Ummm. Is it just me, or does this look a little... uninviting all of a sudden?

AVERY

Yeah, what's going on?

MAX

I mean, I know you look like a school shooter, so, maybe they knew you were coming and thought, just in case...

AVERY

That's funny. Now that I know about the self-sabotage.

(beat)

I'm actually the manager here.

MAX

Oh nice.

AVERY

In fact, if you ever want free tickets, I'm your gal.

MAX

No, that's too much, I couldn't.

AVERY

It's no trouble.

MAX

Oh all right. It's like dating a Hollywood agent.

*

AVERY

Well, I don't know about that. I've got the white tickets, not the green ones.

MAX

Not yet...

AVERY

That's the spirit.

MAX

So what now? This looks pretty serious.

They walk towards the theater, all taped off.

Avery takes the lead, approaching the POLICE OFFICERS and fire crew.

OFFICER

Excuse me, can't go any further, sorry.

AVERY

I work here. What happened? What's going on?

OFFICER

Bomb threat. Until we're done, nobody gets in.

JAKE

Avery!

The camera whips around to reveal JAKE, a mid-20's wildcard who balances on the razor's edge of obnoxious and endearingly sincere.

He's clearly spent the late afternoon drinking, wavering on belligerent. He runs up to Avery.

AVERY

Hey! The hell? What's going on in there?

JAKE

I was talking to Lucy about it. Phone starts ringing, she picks up, there's a guy on the phone, saying there's a bomb under the seat in theater 3. Had to cancel the whole *Evil Dead* screening. No postponement, it's just not happening.

MAX

We were about to go see that.

JAKE

I was in the lobby when they cleared us out. Look at my hands, I'm shaking!

AVERY

Oh, uh, Jake, this is Max.

JAKE

Alright then, salutations.

MAX

Nice to meet you!

JAKE

How do you two know each other?

AVERY

He's... um...

Jake's eyes dart from Avery to Max, then back again.

JAKE

Aaaahaaa. I see.

AVERY

What?

Jake chuckles.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What?!

*

JAKE

You still haven't given up on the whole "manager" routine?

AVERY

You're talking too much.

JAKE

It's not like I don't already know that this shit is a Tinder date.

Avery's eyes widen.

AVERY

We didn't meet on Tinder.

JAKE

Listen, your name's Max, right?

MAX

As far as I'm concerned.

JAKE

You seem nice, you're really cute, not gonna lie. I've had a couple, pregame is starting to hit like a drunken stepdad, and I have to tell you...

(points to Avery)

This girl here. Smart, funny, humble, sweet. Do NOT buy it for a second.

AVERY

Jake.

JAKE

This is the same routine, step-for-step, note for note, that she tried on the last guy. And the guy before that. And the guy before that.

AVERY

Jake!

JAKE

She picks 'em up in the car, swings by the movie theater, "Oh, wouldn't you know, I can get us in for free!" Turns up the volume on the sad girl shit, like it fools anybody. This girl dips her pen like she's William fucking Shakespeare.

Avery SLAPS Jake.

AVERY

What the hell, dude!

MAX

Oh my God.

AVERY

Max, he's plastered don't listen to him.

JAKE

I'm not "plastered," I'm just being real.

AVERY

I need you to be gone, that's what you need to be right now.

JAKE

No, no, look, look.

Max stands awkwardly, wordless.

Jake swoops in on Avery for an incredibly dramatic but nonetheless warm embrace.

Max gets wide-eyed.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I love you. This girl, man. Max, I'm sorry. I'm full of shit. This girl will take you places. Have never seen someone so committed to those she loves. A true family gal.

AVERY

I love you too, Jake, just, get the hell away from me.

Suddenly, Jake moves in for a kiss.

Avery desperately wiggles free.

Max, eyes white with menace.

AVERY (CONT'D)

OKAY, Jake. We're gonna go have some fun somewhere else, and you're gonna go puke in the bushes.

JAKE

That sounds awesome. I won't let you down. Wish me luck. Bye, Max.

Jake blows a kiss to Max and runs off.

Avery and Max stand there, stewing in awkward silence.

MAX

That was sure somethin'...

AVERY

That was so embarrassing.

MAX

So how is it being the manager?

AVERY

I'm sorry.

MAX

Why would you lie about that?

AVERY

Can I just be honest here?

MAX

Of course. You could have been honest earlier, too.

AVERY

So we're on Ember, we match, and I was... I just felt a strong connection to you. Your past, what you've been through, it's not all that different from what I've been through... or am going through.

MAX

Ok...

AVERY

So I didn't think you'd want to meet me if I told you I was some girl employed at a movie theater.

MAX

And you thought manager of a movie theater was a huge step up?

AVERY

Point taken.

MAX

So, here we are.

AVERY

Yeah. I'm sorry.

MAX

Looks like this self-sabotage is a two way street. Apology accepted. And by the way, there's nothing uncool about working at a movie theater. Ginsberg by day, movie theater rat by night.

AVERY

I feel a little boneheaded right now.

MAX

I guess you'll just have to make it up to me.

AVERY

True. Drinks on me. You said you were looking to have a wild night out, I'll get us a bottle of Inferno.

MAX

Inferno? Never had it.

Avery's eyes widen in playful shock.

AVERY

You've never had it?

MAX

Nope.

AVERY

It's a bit of a college bro drink to be honest, but it's always an experience. Gets the night moving, it's good.

MAX

Is it "good" good, or is it burn-my-stomach-lining good?

AVERY

The best of both worlds, really.

MAX

Well what can I say? You had me at Inferno.

AVERY

Great. Let's find a bar.

MAX

Like, right now?

AVERY

Sure, why not? The Evil Dead screening is... dead and the evening is young.

(beat)

Come on.

*
*
*

5 EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

5

Max and Avery walk along the sidewalk.

They brush shoulders and Avery takes Max's hand.

He looks at it, feeling a bit awkward but willing to let it stand.

MAX

Interesting order we've got going here?

AVERY

What?

MAX

Usually hand holding is a bit later in the game.

AVERY

Oh I'm sorry, I got a little excited.

MAX

Usually after someone says that, they let go.

Avery lets go of Max's hand.

AVERY
True. My bad...

MAX
I just mean, usually hand holding
is preceded by kissing no?

Avery smiles.

AVERY
Very persuasive.

Max, a bit awkwardly, moves in for the kiss. A few pecks at first, then a bit passionate. Avery pulls away...

AVERY (CONT'D)
Now who's moving too quickly? *

Max chuckles. They continue kissing again.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Come on.

Avery takes Max's hand and they continue up the street.

6 EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

6

The two approach the bar.

As they round the corner there is A GUY standing at the other end of the block.

He's goth (early 20's), with his black hair slicked back, a dyed blue streak down the side.

Avery sees him and immediately, we can tell there's something between them.

AVERY
Wait here, ok?

MAX
Who's that?

AVERY
It'll just be a moment.

Max waits as Avery races over and speaks to the guy. They stand close to one another.

The guy speaks with some urgency.

Glancing around, Max turns to see a very skinny and FRAIL WOMAN (60's) in a hospital gown. Homeless perhaps.

The woman is standing in front of a mirror outside the shop, staring at herself. She has thin white gloves on and holds a red jewelry box.

Slowly opening the lid, a swarm of cockroaches comes billowing out as she looks at herself in the mirror.

The bugs drop to the ground, some running all over her. As they scurry every which way, the woman turns to Max...

FRAIL WOMAN
(hoarse whisper)
Run. Run. Run.

There's a RINGING, so loud Max holds his ears. His head pulses as he removes his hands to reveal blood.

Max moves into the bar by himself, only then the ringing stops. Avery sees him go and heads in after.

7 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

7

Avery races into the bar after Max.

AVERY
Hey are you all right?

MAX
Yeah, I think so.

AVERY
You're bleeding!

Avery grabs a napkin from table and Max cleans up a bit.

MAX
I think it's stopped.
(beat)
Who was that out there?

AVERY
Oh, don't worry about it. Really.
Come on let's get a drink.

Avery takes Max over to the bar.

BARTENDER
What can I get you?

AVERY
Two shots of Inferno.

The Bartender pours it up.

In the corner, a bassist is playing live music. Max begins to walk toward him, getting lost in the vibe.

Avery comes up behind Max, hands him the shot.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Here we go!

MAX
It looks like a caramel apple.

AVERY
There's already been way too much anticipation. I take it back, you're going to hate it.

Max laughs, taking a little swig of the shot. Grimaces.

MAX
I'm not sure I'm thirsty, actually.

AVERY
Have some more. Don't you want to lose your inhibitions?

Max eyes the guitarist, takes a big gulp this time. It settles.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Do you feel okay?

Max and Avery begin to dance together. She's putting on all the moves, a real Siren. They kiss.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Do you want some more?

Max nods.

MAX
Yes.

Avery takes Max back to the bar.

MAX (CONT'D)
You know, it's a little loud in here. Mind if we take this outside?

AVERY
(to Bartender)
We'll do the bottle.

The bartender nods, pulling out the bottle and setting it on the bar.

BARTENDER
That'll be \$35.

Avery takes out cash from her wallet.

In her wallet there's a picture of the guy from the front of the shop, his streak of blue hair apparent.

Max sees it.

The Bartender gives them their change and a bag, and Avery takes the Inferno.

AVERY
Thank you.

The two exit. Max is in a very different mood.

8 EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

8

The two emerge, the sun is setting now.

AVERY
Let's find somewhere to go drink this.

MAX
I think I've had enough.

AVERY
Is something wrong?

Max stares at the ground. Inhales. Then turns to Avery.

MAX
Yeah. Before I came out here, I made a list of resolutions. One of them was to be more direct with people.

AVERY
...Okay.

MAX
Do you have a boyfriend?

Avery looks at Max awkwardly.

MAX (CONT'D)

When you paid, you opened your wallet. The picture was the same goth guy you ran off to go flirt with a second ago.

AVERY

Ah, okay, I see.

MAX

Who is he?

AVERY

Handsome, right?

MAX

You know what, I think I'm going to call it a night.

Max stomps off. Avery chases after, gets in his face.

AVERY

What, you don't think we look good together?

MAX

What the hell kind of question is that?

Avery grabs Max's hand, pulling him back.

AVERY

(frames her face)

Notice any similarities?

Max gives an inquisitive look, before gasping.

MAX

Oh shit.

AVERY

Yeah. He's my brother.

MAX

Oh God. Kill me now.

Avery laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)

We've just met each other, and I'm already that guy. And I hate that guy.

*
*

AVERY

If you really want to call it a night, then that's what we'll do.

MAX

No no. I'm sorry.

AVERY

No free movie ticket and she has a brother, might as well cut your losses right?

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*
*

MAX

Funny. I... I jumped to conclusions. It's just who keeps a picture of their brother in their wallet?

AVERY

Family is really important to me. There's nothing I wouldn't do for my brother.

MAX

Unexpectedly wholesome.

Avery takes the bottle from the bag and takes a swig herself. She cringes.

AVERY

Oh my God.

MAX

What?

AVERY

Every time is like the first time.
(beat)
Come on, I've got the car back from my brother.

*

Avery pulls the car keys out of her pocket.

9

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

9

The two start to the car.

Max grabs the bottle, takes another big sip. Waits for it to go down and pass.

AVERY

I think we need a little change of pace.

MAX

What do you have in mind?

AVERY

Do you believe in ghosts?

MAX

Ghosts? No.

AVERY

Oh, okay. So I assume haunted houses are no different?

MAX

That's right... though I don't like to kick the wasp's nest either.

AVERY

What if I told you, I know of a haunted house not too far from here? Would you want to check it out?

MAX

Right now?

AVERY

Why not?

MAX

I don't know, I mean...

AVERY

Think of it this way: why settle for a horror movie when we can go see the real thing?

Avery unlocks the car and climbs in. Max follows.

The camera does a clean wipe on the door as it slides into the car.

10 INT. AVERY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

10

AVERY

So is that a yes?

MAX

I don't know, what if there are squatters?

AVERY
 (sarcastic)
 Don't you like surprises?

MAX
 I mean, I'm looking to have a wild
 night... just as long as it's
 calculated.

AVERY
 I see.
 (beat)
 The glove box.

MAX
 What?

AVERY
 The glove box. Open it.

MAX
 Okay...

Max pulls a small handle, the glovebox opens.

INSIDE IS A SHIMMERING NICKEL-PLATED REVOLVER.

MAX (CONT'D)
 This is yours?

AVERY
 Pick it up.

Max wraps his fingers around the gun, lifting it out of the
 glovebox.

AVERY (CONT'D)
 Careful, it's loaded.

MAX
 Why do you have this?

AVERY
 Protection from ghosts.

Max chuckles.

AVERY (CONT'D)
 Point it at me.

MAX
 What?!
 (beat)
 You're serious?

AVERY

Hold it with both hands and point
it at me.

MAX

Avery, I'm sorry, but that's a
weird thing to ask.

AVERY

I want to prove something to you.

Max complies, lifting the gun and pointing it directly at
Avery.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Now cock it.

MAX

Avery.

AVERY

Pull the hammer back until you hear
it click.

MAX

I'm not so sure Inferno was the
best idea...

Max pops the cylinder open to reveal five of six bullets
holstered.

MAX (CONT'D)

Loaded but nothing in the chamber.

AVERY

Don't trust me again?

Max does so, pulling back the hammer of the revolver until a
CLICK cuts through the air.

Avery reaches out, turning the cylinder a click.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Now loaded with one in the chamber.

MAX

(exhilarated)
Oh my God.

AVERY

Nothing to worry about.

*

Max lowers the gun.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I know you'd never shoot me, right?

MAX

Of course not!

AVERY

See -- calculated, but safe.

Max chuckles, lowering the gun.

Avery smiles, starting the car. She starts down the road.

The two cruise down the road. Max looks at the gun in his lap.

MAX

But really though, why is it you have this?

AVERY

Protection.

MAX

You know what I mean.

AVERY

Well... I once walked away too...
Or rather as you put it: ran. Both me and my brother, that's why we're so close.

(beat)

I guess I have it to feel safe.

MAX

I see...

Max considers asking further, but stops himself.

They arrive at a stop LIGHT, silhouetting them in RED.

The music, the lighting, begins to imply a blossoming intimacy.

AVERY

Want to play the question game?

MAX

I'd say it too is a bit childish,
but we are already going to a haunted house so...

*

AVERY
(chuckles)
You can go first.

MAX
No, you. I insist.

AVERY
Okay... How many girls have you
slept with?

MAX
Oy. Starting there, are we?

Avery chuckles.

MAX (CONT'D)
I know the rule is you divide by
two and say that answer... but in
my case I better multiply.

AVERY
Is that right?

MAX
So... 4.

AVERY
Seriously?

MAX
Swear to God.

AVERY
Were you hoping to make that 5
tonight, or should I slow down? *

MAX
You don't have to slow down. *

Avery looks over at Max.

AVERY
Noted.

She reaches into the passenger seat and takes Max's hand. Max
smiles back. *

MAX
My turn to ask? *

AVERY
Shoot.

MAX

What's the scariest thing that's ever happened to you?

AVERY

Ooh. Interesting. Well...

(beat)

It has to be when my brother and I tried to not run, but to fight back.

MAX

Do you mind if I ask, from what?

AVERY

See, my brother has umm... a stalker.

*

MAX

Oh...

AVERY

Well the stalker's not alive anymore.

MAX

So you mean had a stalker?

AVERY

(nods)

When he was alive though, we had a lot of problems getting anyone to listen or believe us about what was going on. When it involves a believing a boy, they say be a man. So we just gave up and resorted to our own means of survival. But that was a scary thing coming forward like that.

*

MAX

I think I know what you mean. Wild that the scariest part was facing it.

AVERY

I don't usually tell people about all that stuff. Also I shouldn't have because it was your second question.

MAX

Ah, you're right! My bad.
(beat)
But I am glad you told me.

*

A moment between them.

AVERY

Alright. Next game - car dance off.

MAX

What?

AVERY

Something about talking with you.
I'm... wonderfully possessed.

Avery cranks the music and the two dance their asses off. Max a bit reticent at first, but Avery pulls him into it.

THE ENTIRE SEQUENCE IS SPED UP AS THEY DANCE, along with a bit of kissing and fooling around. Max smoking another cigarette.

Avery and Max arrive a bit silly.

Avery pulls over onto the shoulder of the road as the two look out the windshield at the rundown house in front of them.

MAX

I take it we're here?

AVERY

We are...

The house is big, looming, like an old sketch from a ghost story.

Cracked wood, paint peeling, all windows and entrances boarded up firmly.

MAX

You're gripping the steering wheel awful tight. Are you sure you don't want the gun?

AVERY

(chuckles)
You can keep it.

MAX

We don't have to go in, you know.

Avery thinks...

MAX (CONT'D)

I'd be more than happy taking a walk by the river and just getting to know you better.

AVERY

That's sweet. And I know. But no one ever made memories by playing it safe. There's an upstairs room I want to show you.

*

Max pops the door and climbs out.

MAX

I'll bring the gun.

*

Avery climbs out of the driver's side and locks the car. The camera clean transitions to a new shot as Avery passes in front of the camera.

11 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

11

The two walk up to the house, surveying the yard and rundown exterior.

Avery steps up to the doorway. There are chains on the door. She starts untangling them.

MAX

This place is pretty boarded and chained up.

AVERY

To prevent an infestation...

Avery unhooks the last of the chains.

She throws them off.

The door opens with a loud creek.

MAX

Alright, I talked a lot of shit, so I'll go in first.

AVERY

You don't have to do that...

MAX

Nothing to be afraid of right?

Max steps inside the dark of the entrance.

Avery takes a deep breath.

She peeks inside.

No sign of Max.

AVERY

Max?

*

No response. She walks in, very much unnerved.

12

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

12

Inside the house Avery's eyes adjust.

Every inch of floor and wall is littered with the ingredients of an abandoned life.

Avery hangs at the entrance, cautious, swallowed by darkness with each step.

AVERY

Hello? Max? This isn't funny.

Max, waiting just outside the doorframe, pops out from behind him and ROARS.

AVERY (CONT'D)

AHHHH!

Max bursts out laughing.

MAX

That was amazing.

AVERY

More like a counseling bill. Don't do shit like that!

Max is wide-eyed by what's around them.

Avery finds the switch and turns on the WORK LIGHTS littered around the house.

MAX

Definitely creepy.

AVERY

So I'm doing all right for a first date?

MAX

You could say that.

The two take in their surroundings, hand in hand.

AVERY

Has been abandoned for half a decade. For the town it's a place to be ignored.

*

MAX

So what's the story behind it?

*

AVERY

The ghost story? You want to hear the ghost story?!

MAX

Got my white tickets.

AVERY

Okay, but shots first. It makes the story more entertaining.

MAX

Don't build it up too much now...

Avery chuckles as the two take swigs out of the bottle.

*

They wipe their chins as Avery puts the bottle in her back pocket.

AVERY

All right. So they call him Rotcreep.

MAX

Rotcreep?

AVERY

Look, Stephen King doesn't write small town urban legends. That's just what he's called, ok?

MAX

That's exactly what Stephen King writes. But please continue...

*

*

Avery gives Max a little playful push, then looks to the back part of the house.

*

AVERY

The story goes, once a year his hunger must be satisfied.

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

One victim. Or he'll act out beyond these walls.

MAX

You don't really believe all this, right?

AVERY

Of course I do.

Max is unable to discern whether Avery is serious or joking.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'll show you upstairs where they say it all started. That's where Rotcreep claimed his very first victims.

Max is lightly getting into the story.

ABOVE THEM THE FLOORBOARDS LET OUT A SPINE-CHILLING CREEK.

Avery and Max both JUMP.

MAX

What the was that?

AVERY

Hello...?
(beat)
A raccoon maybe?

MAX

So much for preventing an infestation.

AVERY

Let's go up...

Max rolls his eyes. *Like hell.*

AVERY (CONT'D)

You have the gun, don't you?

Max pulls the gun out of his jacket pocket as he and Avery head toward the stairs.

Max slaps his cheeks, feeling the Inferno.

MAX

Well, you did it, Avery. I am out of my comfort zone.

AVERY

It feels good to feel something
every once and a while.

They take in the pictures on the walls up the stairs, which
have faces that have been scratched out.

13 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY - CONTINUOUS 13

Max and Avery climb step-by-step up the stairs and onto the
second floor of the abandoned house.

There are two bedrooms, one on each side of the stairs.

Avery takes Max into the bedroom.

The door opposite the room closes on its own.

The two don't notice, but we do. The camera moves into the
room...

14 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY BOY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 14

Inside the bedroom: a DUSTY BED, some loose boxes, a dresser,
a tall broken lamp, dolls and action figures (some with their
heads missing), stuffed animals, a rocking chair, and a small
work light.

MAX

Not much different from my room
growing up, actually.

AVERY

Oh yeah?

MAX

I mean, minus all the wrestling
posters of course.

Avery laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)

Who really up and leaves all this
stuff?

AVERY

You mean the fancy wrestling
posters? *

Max looks at her blankly, a bit of self-awareness.

MAX

Point taken.

AVERY

Come look at these.

Pinned up on the wall are a series of drawings done in crayon and black ink. Avery points...

-Two kids standing beside a tree with the sun out, the two radiating happiness.

-A drawing of a kid playing soccer, an angel flying above labeled "Mommy."

MAX

Kids who lost their mom. Is it why you're showing me this?

(pointing to the angel)

My friend Dave would sure approve of you guilt tripping me.

AVERY

Certainly not my motive. Sometimes there's more reality in what's far-fetched. I'm going to show you.

-A sketch of a tombstone along with random doodles.

-A picture of a halloween mask and monster.

-The young boy sitting in what looks to be his room, the door ajar with eyes looking through.

-With darkness all around, a huge figure stands over a boy that's part child part turtle, safe in his shell.

-A final drawing in all black pen. Two red eyes emanating from the figure. Where there is white at the bottom of the page the words: "Rotcreep."

MAX

Rotcreep...

AVERY

Told you I didn't make up the name.

MAX

Looks like the kid has more demons than the house.

AVERY

The house is just a vessel.

MAX

What do you mean?

AVERY

Apparently Rotcreep is bound to the house, so long as it's fed.

*
*

MAX

Right...

(beat)

Once a year, you mentioned?

AVERY

(winks)

Now you're qualified to give the ghost tour.

MAX

And next you're going to tell me... well, we already know what you're going to tell me, that tonight he's needing to feed. All good ghost stories escalate quickly, don't they?

*

Max chuckles. Avery smiles.

AVERY

Come sit on the bed with me.

Avery crosses the room and sits on the bed.

MAX

Look... I know I said I don't believe in ghosts, but I'm starting to think whether I believe doesn't matter all that much to the ghost.

AVERY

Just sit for one moment... then we'll go. I promise.

Max complies. He walks over to the bed and joins Avery.

Avery takes out the Inferno. She takes a big swig, offering it to Max.

MAX

I'm good.

AVERY

You sure?

Max nods.

MAX

Avery... I'm really having second thoughts about this.

AVERY

I know, there's just something I want to say.

MAX

Okay...

AVERY

See, I think I'm really starting to like you. You're a good guy, Max. You're a good guy.

MAX

Thanks for saying so. Haven't heard that in a while, as you can imagine.

Avery is getting a bit emotional. She takes another swig of Inferno.

MAX (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

AVERY

There's something I haven't told you. And it's a lot worse than not being the manager of that movie theater.

(beat)

You remember my paper on "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas?"

MAX

Yeah...

AVERY

Well a number of years ago I had a similar decision to make: my family versus a stranger...

MAX

Okay...

AVERY

I think my paper has always been a way of justifying my guilt. I guess you can say I decided not to walk away.

Max stands up. Avery remains calm, on the bed.

MAX

You're really starting to weird me out, Avery.

AVERY

But you understand because of what you went through with your mom, don't you? Because of your past. Whatever happens, don't think this is easy for me. See, Max, this isn't just any home.

(beat)

This is my childhood home.

*
*
*

Max is shook.

He doesn't hesitate, turning and racing to the door. HE WHIPS IT OPEN.

*

Behind the door is Avery's brother, PHILLIP (black hair with a blue streak), the guy outside the bar.

WHACK! The butt of a baseball bat straight to Max's face.

Max grabs his nose, blood all over him but he doesn't fall.

Max stumbles back, hitting up against the back wall of the room.

AVERY (CONT'D)

(to Phillip)

I thought you said he'd go down!

(beat)

Sorry Max!

*
*

PHILLIP

I thought he would!

Max shuffles through his pockets finding the gun, pulling it out and pointing it at Phillip so he stays back.

MAX

That fucking hurt! Out of the way, I'm getting out of here.

*

PHILLIP

Not a chance, Max.

*
*

Avery instead steps between the two, taking control of the situation again. She's calm and poised.

AVERY

I'm told you all this to prepare you, Max.

*
*

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

You asked about the scariest thing that's ever happened to me? I'm afraid it's still happening. We ran from this place as soon as we could, as fast as we could, as far as we could. But it didn't matter, Rotcreep always came for us.

(beat)

Until we realized someone could take Phillip's place, here in this house, and be his new play toy.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

MAX

I thought you said the stalker died?

AVERY

I only used the word 'stalker' to put it in terms you'd understand. See he did die. Though that didn't stop him from coming after Phillip.

PHILLIP

Same habits in life as in death.

AVERY

We dropped a kid here just last week and thought Phillip would be safe again. But seems Rotcreep is still hungry.

PHILLIP

When he doesn't get what he wants, he comes for me wherever I am.

*
*

Phillip pulls up his shirt, revealing a terrible black tar handprint burned onto his torso.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Happened this morning and I barely got away. One touch... though it won't kill you, rots you from the outside in.

Phillip gesticulates a 'virus' moving through this body, ending in his head.

He breathes.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, it's not personal man. We're just trying to stay alive.

Phillip raises the bat again.

MAX

Stop! Step out of the doorway! Let
me out.

Phillip continues toward Max.

Panicked, Max aims for their legs and FIRES THE GUN twice.
Once at Avery and again at Phillip's lower half.

They're all taken aback.

Avery surveys the damage. Nothing. Phillip is also fine.

Max SHOOTS AGAIN at Phillips's chest. Nothing...

ONCE MORE, this time at Avery's head. Nothing...

The smoke settles.

AVERY

Blanks...

Avery shrugs.

AVERY (CONT'D)

So you'd feel safe.

PHILLIP

(motioning to his sister)
In case her nice tits weren't
enough.

Avery chuckles. Max swallows.

MAX

Avery...

PHILLIP

Sorry man.

*

Phillip steps forward and starts swinging the bat again,
knocking the blank gun out of Max's hand.

He chases Max around the room, busting lamps and shelves
until Max is cornered. The camera pans around and becomes
Max's POV. Phillip hits Max with the bat, the end coming
straight at the lens. We see Max's hands go up in front of
the camera, and then it all falls to the ground.

We are back out of Max's POV as he lays on the floor
bleeding.

A bit exhausted, Phillip wipes his brow.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)
See, he went down.

*

Avery rolls her eyes.

AVERY
I'll get his legs.

As if they've done this dozens of times, Avery grabs Max's feet and they hoist him up onto the bed.

Max is delirious.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Zip ties.

Phillip pulls them out of his back pocket and hands them over.

Avery begins restraining Max's hands, affixing them to the steel bed frame.

PHILLIP
(to Avery)
Don't get too turned on now.

AVERY
Shut up.

Phillip goes through Max's pockets, removing his wallet and cell phone.

He looks to see if there's any cash. The wallet is empty.

PHILLIP
Broke ass mother fucker.

Phillip turns off Max's cell phone.

Avery secures Max's second hand to the bed, pulls the zip tie firmly.

She looks down at him, helps clean up his face slightly with a nearby rag. Sympathy in her eyes.

She leans in and kisses him, though he's still somewhat unconscious.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)
Really?

Avery puts a hand on his cheek.

AVERY
I'm sorry, Max.

PHILLIP
Come on, Avery.

After taking a last swig, Avery sets the bottle of Inferno on the bedside table.

AVERY
When you wake up, drink this. Will
make things easier. Trust me.
(beat)
I assure you it'll be a hell of a
lot shorter than Phillip's and to a
lesser degree mine, but... you're
about to enter a nightmare.

*
*

Just as Avery says this, the LIGHTS BEGIN FLICKERING in the room and the camera cants at an angle, going from a handheld rockiness to the dreaminess of a steadicam. Monochromatic lighting begins to come over the room.

The camera is on the move more than ever as we see:

Phillip lead Avery down the stairs and out by the hand. As they head down the stairs, the camera clean transitions to another take passing by the doorway (switching the camera rig to a movi for a more dreamy look).

14B The front doors are secured again with chains as the camera 14B turns and looks back upstairs.

GROANS from Max.

As the camera continues back up the stairs to the bedroom, the white walls begin to drip with blood at various points in the drywall. LIGHTS flashing and strobing throughout the house now as well.

Once back inside the room, Max comes to more and more, his ears RINGING intensely again.

Max realizes his hands are bound. He yanks at them, but it does nothing but cut his skin.

MAX
Help! Help! Someone!

No one is around to help. The camera begins to pan in a continuous 360 degrees around the empty room.

Twisting about, Max manages to stand from the bed.

He drags himself and the bed over to the window and peers through a narrow space in the slats that becomes a POV (this is achieved via a telephoto lens built into the wood so we can see farther across the lawn without a formal lens change). Here the camera stops spinning.

We can see Avery and Phillip in front of the house, walking off the patio over to the car.

They lean up against the hood, standing watch. Avery takes out a cigarette and starts smoking.

She seems disgruntled and Phillip calms her down.

Max steps back from the slit he's looking out of. He's in shock. How did this all happen?

Behind Max, an IMPOSING SHADOW grows across the hallway. The form of something definitely not human.

Max's eyes widen as just outside steps a WILD BOAR with tusks coming out of its mouth and nose like a babirusa.

Max gulps, the two stare back at one another. Is it going to come into the room?

Yes, yes it is.

The wild boar charges into the room, knocking over lights and books off the counters (this will be a real, live, domesticated boar - we've found one to be in the film that ironically is named Rudy).

Max jumps on the bed, hands still bound. With HEAVY WEIGHTED BREATHING, the boar leaves the room. Without seeing if he'll come back, Max slides across the way, dragging the bed over the floor behind him.

The door is kicked closed.

THERE'S A TICKING AND HISSING SOUND coming from the other side of the hallway, followed by what sounds like HOOVES walking.

Max looks down at his zip-tied hands. Now comes the painful part.

Max yanks and contorts until one hand breaks free.

The other one though is a different story.

Heading to the dresser, Max retrieves a pen.

With his now free hand, he slips it under the zip tie and then spins the pen like a helicopter blade.

After enough rotations, the zip tie snaps and Max is out.

Max yells with relief. But not much time to celebrate, as there's a RUSTLING in the closet.

Max quiets and backs up. He picks up a lamp and wields it in anticipation.

The room is quiet. The closet still.

Max steps toward it, bringing the light.

As he nears, there's a CRASH as a shelf breaks.

A body comes rolling out along with cans of squirreled away food and chips.

It's a LITTLE BOY, no older than nine.

The body snaps to life and clamors back into the closet as Max lurches back SCREAMING.

Catching his breath on the opposite side of the room, Max grabs the gun again as if by reflex.

MAX (CONT'D)

Stay back!

An eye ever so slightly pokes out from the closet, then ducks back behind view.

Max throws away the gun and grabs a wood slat in defense.

Max looks down at the floor by the closet as a small foot slides itself back into hiding.

MAX (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not going to hurt you
okay? Just come out.

An eye emerges into view again. First one, then the other.

We now see RUDY (9), a skittish young boy, matted brown hair, face and hands caked in dirt. He looks like he's been through the ringer.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hi...

(beat)

I'm not going to hurt you.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm Max.

Rudy drops something from his hand as it rolls across the floor toward Max.

It's the head of a doll. *

Max picks it up, seeing the eyes have been x'd out. *

MAX (CONT'D)

Is this yours? *

Rudy doesn't respond. *

MAX (CONT'D)

Who are you kid? *

RUDY

Who are you? *

MAX

Like I said, I'm Max. *

Rudy emerges slowly from the closet. He's in shorts and a t-shirt that he twists nervously between his fingers.

MAX (CONT'D)

How long have you been hiding in there?

Rudy speaks... hoarse at first, as if it's been a while.

RUDY

I don't know.

MAX

Well how did you get here?

RUDY

That girl.

MAX

Avery brought you here?

Rudy nears Max now. He takes the toy head out of his hand and affixes it onto the body of his toy.

He looks up at Max.

MAX (CONT'D)

Ok...

(beat)

Listen, I need to get out of here.

Max gets to his feet and walks back over to the window, trying to pull at the nailed-in wood paneling.

RUDY
I already tried that.

Max heads over to the bedroom door and is about to pull it open.

RUDY (CONT'D)
No don't open it. It'll get you. *

MAX
It?

RUDY
(nods)
Rotcreep.

Max stares at Rudy, shakes it off, almost refusing to listen.

Max is about to open the door. Rudy freaks and charges back into the closet to hide.

MAX
I'll make sure the coast is clear.

Max slowly turns the knob as the door pops open a wink.

He peeks through to see the hall empty now.

Nothing. The first bit of good news thus far.

Max turns back to the closet where Rudy is.

MAX (CONT'D)
The hallway is empty. It's okay.

Max turns back and as the camera reframes, there's the SILHOUETTE OF A FIGURE in the room across the hall growing in size.

He slams the door closed again.

RUDY
You think I didn't try and open the door already?

MAX
What the hell was that?

RUDY
I told you, you didn't listen.

Max is a bit bewildered.

MAX

It can't... It can't be...

*
*

RUDY

It doesn't care whether you believe
in it or not.

*

Rudy emerges from the closet and starts collecting the cans and food packages that fell out earlier, hiding them away again.

RUDY (CONT'D)

Do you have anything to drink?

Max grabs the Inferno and takes a much needed swig.

MAX

Only this.

Rudy grabs it and drinks.

MAX (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

Taking a big gulp, Rudy spits it out as if it were poison.

MAX (CONT'D)

That's for adults!

RUDY

Eww! What is it? Gasoline?!

Max snatches the bottle back.

MAX

You weren't supposed to do that.

RUDY

It tastes like burning.

MAX

I know.

Rudy scrapes off his tongue with his sleeve.

MAX (CONT'D)

So how the hell do I get out of
here?

RUDY

We don't.

MAX

Well you're still here, you're
doing something right.

RUDY

My dad has a temper when he drinks.
I've always been an expert hider.

MAX

So what do we do?

Rudy shrugs.

RUDY

Out there, it's all boarded up.
Every window, every door. And
there's not enough room in there
for the two of us to hide.

MAX

And we can't both live off canned
food.

RUDY

There's not much left. Kitchen is
empty.

(beat)

That was a bad idea going down
there.

Rudy goes quiet, as if remembering a terrible memory.

MAX

What happened?

RUDY

You don't want to find out.
Whatever happens, stay away from
his bedroom. NEVER go into his
room.

*
*
*
*

Rudy slowly pulls up his shorts to reveal a charred black
area on his thigh in the form of a hand print.

*

MAX

I'm glad you were able to get away.

*

RUDY

Even my house cat plays with mice
before it kills them.

(beat)

I'm happy you're here now.

*

Max swallows hard.

MAX

Yeah.

(beat)

You still haven't told me your name.

RUDY

It's Rudy. Rudy Saunders from Quincy. Thought Avery was a girl my age, had been talking with her online for about a month. Next thing I know I'm here.

Max dusts Rudy off and stands him upright.

MAX

Come on, let's get you back on your feet. Let's try and get out of here together, not any other option really is there.

RUDY

You think we can do it?

Max smiles, the first shimmer of optimism since this whole ordeal began.

MAX

Put out your hands.

Rudy does so as Max puts out his hands as well, side by side.

RUDY

Now how are my little fingers going to break open doors and windows, huh?

*

Max turns his hands into claws.

MAX

These, however! Along with those... I think we have a chance.

RUDY

Faith...

MAX

What's that?

RUDY

Momma always said when you're down you have to have faith.

MAX

I guess that's not bad advice. So
are you with me?

Rudy puts his hand into the middle like it's a football play.

Max smiles, adding his hand as well.

MAX (CONT'D)

Let's do this.

The two are on their feet.

Max grabs the gun off the floor.

RUDY

I thought it doesn't work.

Max opens the chamber to reveal there are still blank shells
inside.

MAX

Trust me, okay.

RUDY

Okay.

Max approaches the door, putting the gun in his waistband.

MAX

Alright. No hesitations. When I
open it, we're walking straight out
and downstairs. Got it?

RUDY

Got it. I guess we were supposed to
be tied up, not fighting our way
out together.

MAX

That's the spirit.

Rudy drops on all fours and looks below the door trim.

RUDY

The hallway is empty.

MAX

On three. One. Two...

Max whips the door open, as if half expecting to run into
someone. The hallway is in fact empty.

WORK LIGHTS FROM the level below spill upstairs.

MAX (CONT'D)

Come on...

15 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY - CONTINUOUS 15

The two jump into the hallway.

The door to the master bedroom slowly begins to open as they shuffle downstairs.

The walls in the hallway are now covered in blood with handprints running along them.

16 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS 16

Max and Rudy rush down the stairs as they arrive at the front door.

Max pulls at the handle but it doesn't budge.

Rudy tries at a board covering a window, manages to get a nail loose.

RUDY

Help me with this one!

Max helps him, but they're unable to budge it further.

MAX

It's on too tight.

Max goes back to the front door, looking to make sure the coast is clear through the peephole.

He puts his foot up against the wall for more leverage but it doesn't budge.

Just then, there's a terrible RATTLING. Throughout the house, the outside walls shake and tremble. It's as if a tin can is being rattled, and they're stuck inside it. LIGHT coming through the slats in the windows from the outside streak across the room in the fogged room.

Max pulls the gun out of his pocket.

RUDY

What are you doing?

Max puts the gun directly against the door knob. He shields his eyes, turning his face.

MAX

Cover your ears.

Rudy does so.

BANG! The gun goes off, shattering the wood and handle. The door props open, still held in place by the chains though.

MAX (CONT'D)

Still just as effective at close range.

RUDY

Wow!

*

Able to see partly outside, Max drops the gun and works at making more space between the door and the wall.

The clamoring grows more intense than ever. They must escape.

MAX

Squeeze through, Rudy!

Rudy does his best, half his body sliding through, but his head is too big.

RUDY

But what about you?

MAX

Distract them for me, I'll get out!

(beat)

Push!

Max grabs Rudy's head and starts pushing it through the door.

RUDY

It's not wide enough!

Max heaves, the chains cut into the wood buying him a smidgen of space.

RUDY (CONT'D)

They're coming!

Max looks through a slat...

Avery and Phillip race toward the front steps of the house from the road.

MAX

You can do this. Push!

Rudy puts everything into it. Max pulls with all his might, and just like that Rudy slips through.

MAX (CONT'D)

Run!

Without missing a beat, Rudy is taking off across the field.

Suddenly the noise throughout the house stops. Calm after the storm?

Avery arrives on the patio first, Phillip close behind.

AVERY

Rudy?! What the hell is he still doing alive?

Avery is split between whether to pursue Rudy or secure the doors.

MAX

Let me out of here!

AVERY

Phillip - get the boy back!

Phillip takes off after Rudy.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Little shit. No wonder Rotcreep came after Phillip again. You shouldn't have let the boy take your place, Max. There's still a way out of this for you... for us.

*

We can't see enough to tell if Rudy has a proper head start.

MAX

Avery, please I'm begging you. Let me out.

AVERY

I wish it was that easy.
(cracking under the
pressure)
I wish it was that easy!

*
*
*
*

Max spits in Avery's face.

Avery wipes her face off, licking her fingers clean. Clearly this hasn't phased her.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to act like I didn't
deserve that.

(beat)

I'm going to make sure to get Rudy
back for you.

Avery pulls the door closed, re-securing the chains and
hammering in new wood panels.

Max is alone now in the house.

16A Suddenly from the living room to his side, somewhat concealed
by red curtains, there's a glowing and ruckus of an OLD TV
BEING SWITCH ON. IT'S LOUD, A FIFTY'S SHOW comes on air -- a
simpler time.

Max steps around the trim. Oldies in black and white are
being broadcast.

As if transfixed, Max steps into the room, realizing the side
walls are covered in gold curtains, the floors black with a
yellow spiral drawn on it.

As Max enters, the back black wall has white lines that
appear onto it. A very Alice in Wonderland feel to it all.

In the corner of the room there's an old man in a red
smoker's jacket and dress pants, his hair frazzled and
tangled. THIS IS ROTCREEP. He stands in front of a blank
black canvass with the same yellow spiral on it as on the
floor.

There are clocks around the room that spin in reverse.

THE SCRATCHING OF THE TV heightens in intensity. A lightbulb
BURSTS.

Rotcreep in the corner of the room turns. We see he has a
mask on, with a permanent giant smile across it. If it
weren't for the crack across the face, it would almost look
charming.

He motions for Max to come closer.

Max seems to be sort of hypnotized. He doesn't blink, but
walks closer.

Motioning to the canvass, Rotcreep hands Max the paintbrush.

Max takes it, beginning to paint in the center of the canvas.
It's a paint by numbers layout.

As Max paints, Rotcreep stands behind him, as if smelling Max.

Max continues to paint. A big smile creeps over Max's face. Light moving in patterns over his face, almost starry eyed. Then a look of horror. His body seems to be frozen, but his eyes move erratically in their sockets like something out of a Buñuel film. *

The paintbrush drops from his hands, as at the same time the TV goes from a STATIC HUM to a CACOPHONY OF MUSIC and JAZZ. *

Max turns around to see Rotcreep closing the curtains behind him. Max is alert and scared now. *

MAX

Wait. No...

Rotcreep walks toward Max as THE CAMERA slides out the curtain.

ALL WE CAN DO IS HEAR WHAT'S GOING ON:

MAX (O.S.) (CONT'D)

No. Get away from me. Stop! Stop!

There's a scuffle. *

Suddenly the red curtains burst open and Max is there again. His hair is now a bit frazzled, too. He has a black tar handprint on his neck and around his right hand. He looks right into the lens, a show of anguish across his face. *

While this happens, the camera turns on axis, flipping upside down on the curtains and Max. The boca of all the lights from here forward, now have a crack running through them. *

Max escapes, running through the dining room into the back kitchen. The camera turning upside down a full circle again. *

He tries to tear at a boarded up back window, but to no avail.

Looking up, Max sees a breakfast table and chairs upside down fixed to the ceiling. He grabs the chair and pulls it down.

In a panic, Max HURLS the kitchen chair at the window.

The chair splinters into pieces and falls back to the floor.

No luck.

Max tries the back door, but also nothing budes.

Max notices steps off to the side leading into the basement. Far less than ideal, but there's nowhere else to go.

Max sees a flashlight hanging on a nail.

He grabs it, heading down the stairs. As Max heads down the stairs, the camera passes in front of a beam that clean transitions us forward.

*

17 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

17

As Max slides into the basement, he flicks on the flashlight.

Max gets familiar with his surroundings.

The space is claustrophobic - dirt walls, far from finished, and as spacious as a coffin.

He emerges to a giant steel drum with piping running throughout the rooms.

He isn't sure what to make of it.

Emerging from the confined space, the camera pans around the room.

Max picks up artifacts of a life forgotten: kids coloring books, holiday cards, family photos. This time without the eyes scratched out.

-A young Avery (11).

-A young Phillip (9).

-The two playing as brother and sister.

Max's light turns to an old Canon GL1 video camera on a flimsy tripod in the middle of the room.

In front of it, a set of race cars, dolls, and crayons atop a blanket and pillows.

Max walks over to the camera.

He switches it on and low and behold it still has power. There's a mild sound signaling function, but in the basement, it effects him like a fire alarm.

Max cringes, staring blankly at the camera, face illuminated by the glow of the screen.

He presses the side of it.

A mechanical drawer pops out. Inside, a tiny old mini-DV tape.

Max presses the door back in place, and hits the "play" button.

He watches what unfolds on the tiny screen.

17A PLAYING OFF THE TAPE:

17A

The pixelated standard-def face of PHILLIP (age five) is seen playing with a toy robot in his pajamas as the camera slowly zooms in on him from above.

THE MAN'S voice (50's) behind the camera...

THE MAN (O.S.)

Phillip, why don't you tell Daddy what you're doing.

PHILLIP

It's just Oscar, Daddy. I'm trying to teach him to swim, but I'm not sure if robots know how. I want him to win the race.

THE MAN (O.S.)

Isn't that cute. You gonna win your swim meet tomorrow, Phillip?

Phillip nods, looking up at the camera.

THE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well how about you teach Daddy first. Help me get changed into my swimsuit?

*

Phillip continues playing, perhaps he didn't hear.

Suddenly the light is switched on in the dim room and a voice can be heard from upstairs.

The camera quickly zooms out, jostles.

AVERY (O.S.)

Daddy? Phillip? Are you two down there?

*

PHILLIP

Avery's home!!

The man passes in front of the camera and heads up the steps. For the first time we see the man briefly (ROTCREEP) but clearly in the reflection of a mirror.

Phillip sits up, now facing the camera.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)
(under his breathe)
Creep.

Phillip kicks over the camera, which lands with a bang on its side. Max is about to turn away from the screen, when he notices something or someone in the shadows. The figure steps closer into the light behind the young Phillip, then looks directly into the lens: it's Max. He stares.

Max snaps out of it, GASPING, pushing the camera over himself.

He turns the flashlight back ON.

The coast is clear. It's still just him. He shakes off what he's just seen...

Max makes his way down an exceptionally narrow section, sliding sideways to get through.

INSIDE, a cellar door on the opposite wall.

Max heads toward it, stopping next to a vanity table with more photos.

On the shelf is a picture of a young Phillip and Avery with what appears to be their mother.

The woman has life in her eyes, but her body is frail.

She sits in a wheel chair attached to a mobile IV. Late stage MS, it seems, maybe Huntington's Disease? Her two kids sit at her feet.

Halfway out of frame, a man stands next to her, a hand on his wife's shoulder.

Max looks down and behind the armoire rests a baseball bat. Divine intervention... a lucky find...

Max grabs it and goes at the cellar doors.

He whales on the two steel clamps holding the padlock, and then starts pounding against the panels making progress.

There's A COMMOTION outside and Max holds for a moment, then goes back to hammering away.

One...

Two...

Suddenly the cellar door pops open... but not by Max's doing.
Avery is there along with Phillip. They're holding Rudy.

RUDY

Max!

MAX

No!

The two drop Rudy into the basement next to Max. Rudy quickly takes refuge.

Max on the other hand makes a break for it, only to have Avery empty a bucket of water on top of him (and the camera) as he falls back inside.

Avery and Max make eye contact as the cellar doors are closed.

AVERY

Remember - Rotcreep only needs one
of you...

*
*

Avery slams the cellar doors closed, re-fastening the locks.

Max turns to Rudy who is quite shaken up on the floor.

He gets down next to him.

RUDY

I'm sorry, Max. I'm sorry. I tried
to get away and get help.

MAX

It's all right, bud. Are you all
right?

RUDY

I really tried!

Max takes Rudy's hand and sticks it out.

MAX

Remember what I said?

Rudy nods, dryly.

MAX (CONT'D)

Well the same is true about your
legs. How are you supposed to
outrun someone twice your size?

RUDY
Because I'm smarter.

MAX
(chuckles)
That very well may be true, but
there are two of them. Two people
twice your size.

Rudy quiets a bit.

RUDY
I see you're still alive.

MAX
What's that supposed to mean?

RUDY
I'm happy you're still alive.
Truly.

Rudy turns to look around the room.

RUDY (CONT'D)
What is all this stuff?

MAX
Come on, let's get you cleaned up.

Max has Rudy sit on a chair next to the vanity table as he
grabs a trash bag and rummages through it.

He finds a hand towel and uses it to dry off Rudy and then
himself. *

RUDY
I'm worried about my mom right now. *

MAX
Be strong for me okay, Rudy? *

Rudy nods. *

RUDY
Do you think your mom is worried
about you?

MAX
Stop asking so many questions,
okay?
(beat)
Can you do that for me?

RUDY

Okay.

Rudy sees the black tar mark on Max's right hand. *

RUDY (CONT'D) *

Are you okay, Max? *

MAX *

I'm fine, buddy. *

Rudy notices the Max's neck. *

RUDY *

His mark is on your neck too. *

MAX *

I said I'm fine! *

Rudy grows quiet. *

MAX (CONT'D) *

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap at you. *

RUDY *

It's ok. I knew you weren't fine when you said it. Just because your grown, doesn't mean you don't need help too. *

MAX *

I think you're right about that. But that's me - always trying to be stoic... until I'm not. *

RUDY *

Stoic? *

MAX *

Yeah like... *

(beat) *

It doesn't matter. *

RUDY *

It matters to me, Max. *

Rudy offers out the towel for Max to clean up. Max signals his appreciation. He takes it. *

MAX *

Come on, let's get you into some dry clothes.

Max sorts through the bags and boxes, finding kids clothes. He helps Rudy change his shirt. Put a cap onto his head. The clothes Rudy changes into are the same ones we saw young Phillip in earlier on the video camera.

RUDY

I don't like it down here, Max. We should go back to the hiding place.

*
*

MAX

I hear ya.

Rudy and Max walk into the center room, past the video camera.

RUDY

Whose is this?

*

MAX

Their dad's video camera.

*
*

RUDY

You mean Rotcreep's?

*
*

MAX

You know too?

*
*

RUDY

I may have small fingers, short legs, but like I told you I am smart.

*
*
*
*

MAX

(chuckles)

I know you are, Rudy.

*
*
*

Max looks toward the back part of the basement, where he was standing before in the video. There's a FLICKER OF LIGHT.

*
*

MAX (CONT'D)

Stay here, all right, I'm going to checkout this room.

*

RUDY

Don't leave me, Max.

*
*

MAX

I'll just be a moment. Can you hide until I come back?

*
*
*

RUDY

Like I said I'm an expert hider.

*

Rudy slides behind some slats and cardboard.

*

RUDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Can you see me?

MAX
No, not at all.

RUDY
(poking his head out)
See, I told you!

Max smiles.

MAX
Get back in there.

Rudy does so. Max creeps toward the back part of the basement, sliding through the concrete doorway. He shines his light around the room.

Painters tarps hang in place along the walls with old family furniture scattered around. In a bucket toward the back, Max reaches in and finds a crow bar.

He grabs it, pleased beyond belief at his find.

As Max turns around, he realizes he's not alone. Around the room with black tar hand prints smattered over their body are three naked male teens. A kids light, like a zoetrope, turns and illuminates the room.

What skin is showing is gray, peeling, and cracked.

Max freezes as the group just stares forward with blackened eyes.

Max shines the flashlight at each of them, looking on blankly. He grabs his hair in anguish as the camera goes in and out of focus, pulsing with his head.

Wielding the crow bar, Max steps through the room. He eyes Rudy outside the door, now on the floor playing with the robots. The camera is back upright, and Rotcreep is standing behind it. A huge grin on his cracked face.

On edge, Max steps closer to the door. It's as if he's recreating the shot he saw earlier with young Phillip, emerging from the shadows. Except instead of being behind the camera, it's now Rotcreep.

MAX (CONT'D)
(whispered)
Rudy...

At this Rudy seems to snap awake. He stands up and walks toward the doorway as Rotcreep pans the camera to Rudy.

RUDY

Max...

Rotcreep steps out from behind the camera, approaching Rudy.

MAX

Rudy!

*

RUDY

What?

Rudy turns to see Rotcreep behind him. With inhuman strength, Rudy is picked up and pulled up the stairs SCREAMING.

*

*

We WHIP PAN to Max as he comes center frame. He freezes, a look of complete horror that keeps him from pursuing.

*

*

The camera WHIP PANS back, looking up to the top of the stairs Rotcreep and Rudy are gone. In their place, the Frail Woman from outside the bar stands. She looks down at Max, then slowly walks out of the doorway.

*

*

*

*

Max is spooked, he starts pulling at his hair.

*

With the crow bar, he heads up the staircase into the kitchen.

*

*

18

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

18

*

Max emerges from the basement.

*

Rudy is dragged SCREAMING through the living room by Rotcreep.

*

RUDY

Max! Help! Help me!!

Max gets to the end of the living room, only to turn and see the Frail Woman again, this time at the opposite side of the house. Blood trickles down her gown from her arms and legs.

*

*

*

Max is back in anguish, freaking out at the sight of her. Very slowly, she walks toward him.

*

*

Instead of continuing after Rudy up the stairs, Max starts prying at a board over a window in the living room.

*

He makes headway as the nails split off and the board falls away. Just a pane of glass and another wood panel. The curtain flutters - fresh air from outside.

The Frail Woman gets closer. *

Max grips the crowbar tightly, putting all of his weight into a massive SWING, SHATTERING THE GLASS and making a hole for himself.

There's CRASHING from upstairs.

Max looks up.

He has a choice. Through the window to safety... or back upstairs past the Frail Woman. *

RUDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Help! Help! Please!

There is a MASSIVE COMMOTION up in the master bedroom as Rudy continues to SCREAM.

Max clears more glass and readies to kick through the final board.

RUDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Help me! Please! Max! *

Max stops. Is he really going to do this...?

He puts his hands over his face and pulls himself together, dropping the crow bar, racing past the Frail Woman and up the stairs. *

As Max nears the staircase, there is now a stream of blood flowing down them. The camera begins to spin upside down and in circles. Max claws his way up the stairs, getting covered in blood in the process.

On all fours, he reaches the top stair, utterly disoriented.

RUDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No... No! Please stop. No! Don't!

Max climbs to his feet, standing outside the master bedroom, the camera still spinning.

19 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY - CONTINUOUS

19

The blood is flowing out from under the door of the master bedroom.

Rudy CRIES OUT...

RUDY (O.S.)
Please! NO! Please!

Max tries the knob, but it won't open. He SLAMS his palms and fists against the wood, but there's no success.

MAX

Don't hurt him. Get the fuck away
from him!

*

We see that at the bottom of the stairs, the Frail Woman has disappeared.

*

*

Max gets vicious. He slams his whole body into the door.

THERE'S SHRILL CRY FROM RUDY INSIDE THE ROOM. Something is very wrong.

Max takes a step back, eyes the lock.

A firm kick and the door breaks open. The room is black.

Rudy comes running out! SHRIEKING, CRYING.

The master bedroom door SLAMS closed.

Rudy's clothes are ripped and hanging off his frail bloody and scratched body. Black tar handprints are all over him.

Rudy careens into the hall and to the safety of the original boy's bedroom where they first met.

Max stands in the hallway. Both doors next to him are closed.

Rudy SCREAMS in the other room.

Max turns back toward the master bedroom. He looks at the handle. Is he really going to do this? The camera continues to spin.

Resolute.

Max pushes open the master bedroom door.

This was not what he was expecting to see. The camera stops.

20

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside the master bedroom is what looks like a hall of mirrors. The LIGHTS STROBE incessantly. Cracked and angled mirrors every which way reflects Max's face as the black tar sludge slowly drips down them and over his reflection.

Max GASPS, stumbles back a bit into the hallway

With a yank of the knob, Max closes the door again.

He regains his composure, vomiting down the steps, catching his breath.

Once he's a little less queasy, Max stands upright.

He fixes his hair, dusts off his shirt, fixes his collar, and then lightly touches the black tar handprints on his neck and arm.

A deep breathe, Max turns back to the second boy's bedroom door. We can hear RUDY still inside CRYING softly.

Max turns the knob.

21 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - 2ND STORY BOY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 21

The room is how he and Rudy left it. Max shuts the door behind him. Rudy sits on the bed.

He's playing with a 50's MUSIC BOX, having sobbed himself out.

His face is wan and lifeless.

MAX

Rudy...?

Rudy doesn't look up. He's adrift in his own world.

RUDY

(whispered)

I wish I had it in me.

(beat)

I wish I could sleep.

(beat)

I wish I had it in me.

MAX

Rudy!

For a split second, Rudy is present again. He looks at Max.

RUDY

You flipped...

MAX

Rudy... I didn't... I'm sorry!

*

Rudy pulls the sheets up over his head, completely covering himself.

RUDY
(whispered)
I wish I was a stronger person.
(beat)
I wish I could sleep.

THE CAMERA PANS FROM RUDY TO MAX AND MAX ALONE.

Something is more than awry. But what?

RUDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(whispered)
I wish I could sleep.
(beat)
I wish I was a stronger person.

MAX
Rudy, we're going to escape this.

Max approaches the bed.

MAX (CONT'D)
Rudy?!

The covers are pulled back.

It's almost too much for Max to bear.

From his scalp and eyes, what looks like puss and blood oozes down Rudy's face and shoulders. His face gray and completely lifeless.

At this, THE LIGHTS RETURN TO NORMAL. The house back to how it was when Max and Avery first arrived.

Max clasps a hand over his mouth.

He staggers back, falling into the wall behind him.

He CHOKES OUT A SCREAM, knocking a chair out of the way and running into the hall and down the stairs.

22

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

22

Max gets to the bottom of the stairs and stops.

Something has come over Max again.

The SOUND of the TV in the other room is ON.

Max turns and parts the curtains.

The same gold drapery, the same black and yellow floor. A new more homey environment.

22A What looks like an early 50's sitcom with a LAUGH TRACK is ~~22A~~ on the TV. A simpler time. Max takes a glass and a bottle of alcohol off a drink cart that's now in the rooms and steps around the couch.

He takes a seat, pouring the drink. He begins to laugh at the show, soft at first and then BOISTEROUS. Light from the TV is cast on him, making a concentric circle.

Max cuts off the tip of a cigar with a razor blade and lights it.

ON THE TV: A 1950's housewife emerges from the kitchen with a giant silver platter. She removes the lid revealing a boar's head, tusks and all.

Suddenly something on the bottle catches Max's eye: the label says "Inferno."

Max grows quiet, pensive. He stops laughing, now a bit more aware he's covered in blood, hair matted, and black tar on him.

The anxiety boils over, the beginning of a panic attack.

Pulling himself together, Max picks up the razor blade next to the cigar and a Zippo lighter. He stares at it, then with doctoral precision he brings it up to his eye and slices his eyeball (like in Buñuel's "Un chien andalou").

*

As blood drips down his face, Max sits calmly.

He readies to do the second eye, but this time it's not so easy. After working up the nerve numerous times to cut into the second eye, Max gives up.

Standing up, Max steps out from behind the couch and exits the living room.

He rips his shirt, making a bandage for his eye, tying it around him.

Grabbing a Zippo lighter and a bottle of Inferno, Max returns to the window.

*

Clearing more glass with the crow bar, he readies. Leaning forward, Max slides back the board making a space.

*

*

As he does this, the CAMERA MOVES THROUGH THE WINDOW, panning back to see Max's eye peaking through the slit.

*

*

23

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS/NIGHT

23

Once Max looks through, the board slides back into place. Max still in the house. It's unclear why...

The camera pans around to Avery and Phillip on the car waiting, discussing. Phillip LIGHTS another cigarette.

AVERY
How much longer?

PHILLIP
Not until we know for sure it's done this time.

AVERY
We should have cameras inside to watch it unfold.

PHILLIP
I don't like that idea.

AVERY
Why?

PHILLIP
I just don't.

Avery pulls a sweater from the backseat of the car and wraps it around herself. She looks toward the house.

AVERY
Come on. Come on. I know you can do it...

PHILLIP
Are you rooting for Max?

AVERY
Of course. I told you I didn't want to do this shit with him in the first place. We really have something between us.

PHILLIP
If that was the case, you wouldn't have locked him in with Rotcreep to die.

AVERY
Like you gave me much choice?! What you think it's easy dating with a brother like you?

PHILLIP *
Fuck you. *

AVERY *
I'm just saying... *

PHILLIP *
Not really a situation we've been *
in before, but he can't make it out *
alive. You know that, right? *

Avery is quiet. *

PHILLIP (CONT'D) *
Our secret could get out. You know *
that, right?! *

AVERY *
I know... *

PHILLIP *
What? *

AVERY *
I said, I...! *

Before Avery can finish her sentence, there's a loud crashing *
and a beam of light toward the cornfield at the back of the *
house. *

PHILLIP *
What the hell was that? *

Avery shrugs. *

PHILLIP (CONT'D) *
Come on! *

The two run to the side of the house to reveal the back door *
completely open. *

AVERY *
He did it. He's out! *

Phillip switches on a flashlight, looking around. *

PHILLIP *
Shit! Where is he? He won't get *
far. *

AVERY *
Phillip... *

Avery brings Phillip's attention to what's inside the doorway on the floor of the kitchen. A body. Phillip shines his LIGHT. *

PHILLIP *

Rudy. *

Phillip steps up into the house and walks into the kitchen. The camera hangs outside with Avery. Phillip looks down at the body. *

PHILLIP (CONT'D) *

It's done. We're safe again. *

(beat) *

I'm safe. *

Phillip breathes a sigh of relief. Avery keeps searching around. *

AVERY *

Where's Max?! *

PHILLIP *

Come in here and help me with the body. Let's get Rudy into the basement and then we'll track down Max. *

Avery nods, stepping through the back door and walking into the kitchen. The camera continues to linger outside. The two stand over Rudy. *

AVERY *

His face... *

PHILLIP *

If it bothers you that much, put something over him. *

Phillip grabs a rag from the kitchen and puts it over Rudy's face. *

AVERY *

That's better. *

As they do this, in the foreground, a hand outside the door comes into view. It's Max. Hidden from view, he swings the door closed locking Max and Avery inside the house. *

AVERY (CONT'D) *

Max! *

The two push against the door as Max secures the chains into place. They're trapped. Through the slit in the door: *

AVERY (CONT'D)

Max, let us out!

MAX

This is for Rudy.

AVERY

You know we really were supposed to go to the movie tonight, Max. The only thing I was hiding was that, I wished it was a date the whole time. Phillip called in the bomb threat only when he realized he was still in danger... It was supposed to only involve Rudy from the start, Max.

MAX

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

AVERY

I'm saying sorry, Max. And that what has started between us means something to me.

PHILLIP (O.S.)

She wants your dick, Max. Isn't that enough? Let us out!

AVERY

Please. I'm begging you. We can keep this secret together. It's all Phillip and I could do to survive... to keep sane.

MAX

Avery...

AVERY

What, Max? What is it? I'm here to listen.

MAX

Tell me... how did this all start?

AVERY

I don't know what you're asking...

Phillip pushes Avery aside in the doorway.

PHILLIP

I stabbed him in his sleep and we
buried him in the cornfield behind
you. Is that what you want to hear?

Max nods.

MAX

How is it he came back?

Phillip looks back blankly.

PHILLIP

I don't know... but it's a
nightmare from which we cannot
wake.

MAX

You realize what you've become,
don't you?

PHILLIP

Save it, Max!

Avery pushes Phillip to the side again. She reaches through
the doorway.

AVERY

Take my hand, Max. I swear, I'm not
gonna hurt you again.

MAX

I've been thinking about your
little writing project, Avery. Your
paper.

(beat)

There's one option it seems you
haven't considered between running
and... looking the other way.

AVERY

What it is, Max? Tell me. Please
just let us out.

Taking a swig of Inferno, Max disappears from the doorway.
Avery gets hysterical, shaking the door and screaming.

We pan to Max as he walks to the front of the house. The
front door now shakes, with Avery and Phillip screaming
behind it.

AVERY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let us out, Max! Please!

PHILLIP (O.S.) *
Open the damn door! *

Max begins to empty the entire bottle of Inferno onto the *
patio and entryway. *

AVERY (O.S.) *
What are you doing? *

The bottle shatters as Max throws it down. *

MAX
Burning it all down.

Max opens the Zippo lighter and tosses it onto the patio. *
Just like that, the house goes up in flames.

AVERY (O.S.) *
Max! *

PHILLIP (O.S.) *
No!!! *

From behind the door, SCREAMS. Max takes a step back across *
the yard, watching the flames. *

Max gets to Avery's car, finding one of their cell phones on *
the hood. He picks it up. *

The fire is really starting to SPREAD. *

Max turns and starts heading up the road.

Max opens the phone and dials. *

As he walks up the street, the phone dials through.
Keeps ringing.
Someone picks up...

MAX
(into the phone)
Hello...?

Max can barely hold it together.

Tears streak down his face. The camera pans away from Max to
an empty cornfield. Max walks back into frame.

MAX (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Mom... Mom, it's me.

There's a pause.

MAX (CONT'D)

How am I?

The reality seems to sink in. Max's face turns to despair.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm... um... I'm...

(Max steps back out of
frame)

There's a lot about me I haven't
told you. I... sorry, I think this
is the scariest thing that's ever
going to happen to me.

*
*
*

The camera pans over to Max. He touches the black tar
handprint on his neck and wrist.

He lets the phone drop.

*

MAX'S MOM (V.O.)

(through the phone)

Max...? Max, are you there?

*
*
*

The camera pans back to the burning house. The flames are in
full force now. We watch for a moment.

*
*

MAX'S MOM (V.O.)

(through the phone)

Honey, I'm so happy you called.
Max...?

*
*
*
*

Max hangs up the phone. He steps back into the shot, walking
back to the car, leaning against the side of it.

*
*

He watches until the house is completely incinerated. It
collapses in on itself.

*
*

Max picks the phone back up. Looks at it...

*

FADE OUT.

*