

UNICORN

by

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FADE IN:

INT. A SHOE-BOX SIZED APARTMENT NIGHT

Flowers, teddy bears and homey knickknacks to the rafters. A woman's place. An unseen stereo plays slow, weepy COUNTRY MUSIC. Below that, MOANING, and the SQUEAKING of bedsprings.

Sounds like someone's getting lucky.

A pink blouse lies in a heap on the carpet. Then, woman's pajama bottoms. Through the claustrophobic kitchenette, and a trail of clothes like bread crumbs: A bra, panties, socks.

Suddenly, the corpse of a young man, face up on the linoleum floor. He hasn't been here long -- blood is still dripping from the gash in his throat.

Out of the kitchen and into a hallway, and the moaning seems to change slightly -- is that pleasure, or something else?

Onward through a bedroom door, and now it's a man's clothes: boots, blue jeans, underwear, and a bloodstained T-shirt.

On the bed, MELINDA CARVER, 20s, attractive brunette, lies on her stomach, naked. She is bound and gagged with duct tape, a nasty bruise rises over one of her tear-stained eyes.

Melinda is being raped.

Her attacker's face is hidden in shadow, but he's a huge man, Caucasian, shaved head, naked except for a knife sheath Velcro'd around his left thigh. A row of parallel scars runs up his right forearm, like some kind of ghoulish BARCODE.

Melinda squirms underneath him, moaning through her gag, but he doesn't notice; he's having too much fun.

And now his left hand is on the sheath, and out pops a HUGE HUNTING KNIFE, so bright in the moonlight it almost glows.

His breathing quickens, it won't be long now. If Melinda has help coming, it better come quick.

Up goes the knife, over his head, and Melinda whimpers because she sees it coming, but there is nothing she can do about it; she's completely helpless.

His body goes tense. Down comes the knife, Melinda's eyes go wide, and the miracle doesn't come, and all she can do is scream, which she does...

MELINDA  
 (muffled scream)  
 MMMMMNNNNNNHHHHHHHHH!

...and then blackness.

INT. SOMEWHERE ELSE NIGHT

In a darkened room, two luminous green eyes open. For a moment, they are Melinda's eyes, full of terror and pain. And then, the eyes close, going back to sleep.

INT. A SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM DAY

A slide projector throws an image of Melinda's bedroom onto a screen. The mattress has been stripped bare, a pool of inky black covers both it and the carpet.

In the top right corner, "MELINDA CARVER" is printed below a smiling portrait of her in better times.

A young man stands beside the projection screen, presenting to a roomful of uniformed policemen. AGENT THOMAS BUCK, 20s, carefully combed hair, broom-up-the-ass posture, perfect diction. You just know this guy flosses regularly.

BUCK

This is the bedroom of Melinda Carver as we found it last week. Unlike the others, Miss Carver appears to have been dead before she was removed from her home. However, you will note that the bedsheets are, once again, missing.

New slide. A pool of congealed blood in Melinda's kitchen.

BUCK (CONT'D)

This is Melinda's kitchen. We believe the blood belongs to a Peter Koebing, Melinda's fiancée, who also disappeared on the night of the fourteenth. You can see the similarity to the Corman case.

A YOUNG DETECTIVE with a lean and hungry look raises his hand. Buck calls on him.

YOUNG DETECTIVE

This is completely different from what you showed us earlier.  
 (MORE)

YOUNG DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

If this is all the same guy, why is his M. O. changing?

BUCK

His M. O. isn't changing so much as evolving. In the earlier cases, he preferred single women living alone. Then Mr. Corman surprised him with Mrs. Corman, and he killed them both. Now he targets couples specifically. He's found something new. Something he likes better. Still, the common thread-

The door opens. A middle-aged man walks in, holding a cup of coffee. DETECTIVE ROY WIETZMANN, haggard and unshaven, clothes hopelessly wrinkled. If it weren't for the badge on his belt you'd think he was looking for an A. A. Meeting.

In the audience, CAPTAIN LEON O'NEILL, 50s, trim, well-dressed, catches Roy's eye. O'Neill taps his watch. Roy ignores him.

Buck, meanwhile, has tightened up. He was doing fine before, but suddenly he seems nervous and unsure of himself.

BUCK (CONT'D)

The common thread is the bed sheets. In every cases we could check, the bed sheets were either changed or missing.

POLICE SERGEANT

Why does he take the sheets?

BUCK

It could be he's worried about physical evidence, semen and hair. Or it could be as a trophy. My guess is a little of both.

The YOUNG DETECTIVE raises his hand again. Buck listens politely, trying not to watch Roy doctoring his coffee at the back of the room.

YOUNG DETECTIVE

So you're saying we have a serial killer at large who may have as many as twenty victims in the last two years. Right?

BUCK

Serial rapist and killer, yessir.

POLICE LIEUTENANT

But all you have is some homicides with no bodies and a bunch of missing persons. There's no proof half these women are even dead, much less that the cases are related. You're guessing.

BUCK

We don't have proof. But that doesn't mean we're guessing.

New slide. A set of 20 portraits, all of pretty, young, dark-haired women. One is Melinda.

BUCK (CONT'D)

These are the women who fit the profile. All middle class, dark hair, under twenty-five. All have disappeared from the D. C. - Baltimore area in the last two years. In the previous two years, we had five such cases. In the two before that, three. That's a five hundred percent increase. Someone is targeting these women. Someone so careful and so clever that we are only just finding out about him. And judging by the way these murders are getting closer together, he's going to keep killing until someone catches him.

Several hands go up.

O'NEILL

Let's stop there. Let me remind everyone that none of this is to reach the media until we have...

As O'Neill continues, Buck's eyes never leave Roy, who seems entranced by his coffee.

INT. A LARGE POLICE STATION DAY

O'Neill and Buck chat at the entrance to the conference room. As Roy walks out, they fall into step beside him.

O'NEILL

Roy, have you met our friend yet? This is Agent Thomas Buck from the FBI. Tom, Roy Wietzmann.

BUCK  
Pleasure to meet you.

ROY  
(utter apathy)  
Yeah.

BUCK  
I'm a real fan of your work, sir.  
I've read your book. Your use of  
informants was just brilliant.

ROY  
Thanks.

BUCK  
It's an honor to work with you.

Suddenly, Roy is paying attention.

ROY  
I'm sorry?

O'NEILL  
You showed up so late, I didn't get  
a chance to tell you. Tom's on  
loan from the bureau. He's here to  
lend you a hand.

BUCK  
Can't wait to get started, sir.

ROY  
(to O'Neill)  
Can I talk to you a second?

O'NEILL  
Tom, do you mind?

BUCK  
Of course not.

INT. O'NEILL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

O'Neill office is cluttered and cozy, sports memorabilia,  
award plaques, pictures of grandchildren, etc.

The two men slide casually down into their chairs, sitting  
casual, old friends.

O'NEILL  
So you're finally off leave, huh?  
What's it been, six months?

ROY  
How you been, Leon?

O'NEILL  
Can't complain. The back's worse  
and the pension's better. How was  
the book tour?

ROY  
Long.

O'NEILL  
You know the New York Times  
compared you to Sherlock Holmes?

ROY  
I saw it.

O'NEILL  
I had to laugh my ass off.

ROY  
Me too. You still keep that bottle  
in your desk?

O'NEILL  
Threw it out. Doctor's orders.

ROY  
That doctor will turn you into an  
old man someday. You have glasses?

O'NEILL  
Don't tell me.

Roy pulls out a small metal flask. Shaking his head, O'Neill  
pulls out two glass tumblers.

O'NEILL (CONT'D)  
Alright. Just one.

ROY  
(pouring two shots)  
To old times.

They drink.

ROY (CONT'D)

So since when does the Bureau give a shit about D. C. homicide?

O'NEILL

Since you got famous. They want an observer present while you work your magic.

ROY

You gotta be shitting me.

O'NEILL

What'd I tell you about that book? Someone was bound to read it eventually.

ROY

So what do I do with him?

O'NEILL

You take him with you.

ROY

You're joking.

O'NEILL

No, I'm not. We talked about this. You agreed it had to happen someday. Well, today is the day.

ROY

Get rid of him, Leon.

O'NEILL

Too late. Maybe two weeks ago, but you were off in New York-

ROY

Get rid of him!

O'NEILL

I requested him, Roy! Listen, I know this kid. I've known his parents since he was eight. Straight A's all his life, always top of the class, always best at everything. And he idolizes you, by the way. You asked me to find somebody, remember? Well, this is the guy. Trust me. I'm always right about this shit.

ROY

Do you understand the risk you're asking me to take?

O'NEILL

Of course I do. But you know it needs to happen sooner or later. We're getting old, Roy. Someone else needs to know.

Roy glowers at O'Neill.

INT. OUTSIDE O'NEILL'S OFFICE DAY

Buck sits, drinking a cup of coffee, trying to ignore the MUFFLED SHOUTING coming from inside.

Roy bursts out of the office. Buck hops to his feet.

BUCK

Detective?

Roy shoves Buck aside, storming past. O'Neill comes out after him.

O'NEILL

Don't worry. That had nothing to do with you.

BUCK

Should I try and catch up?

O'NEILL

Let's give him an hour to cool down. Why don't you just-

ROY (V. O.)

Hey!

Roy storms back in, still in a shitty mood.

ROY (CONT'D)

Come on.

Roy turns and walks away.

After a moment of hesitation, and an encouraging nod from O'Neill, Buck follows.

INT. THE LOCAL APPLEBEE'S DAY

Roy holds up an empty beer bottle, trying to flag down a waitress. Buck talks over the remains of a salad. Roy picks at a side of curly fries.

BUCK

The thing is, since most of these were missing persons, the initial investigators didn't do a proper workup. So we don't really know-

ROY

How old are you?

BUCK

Twenty-eight.

ROY

How long have you been at this?

BUCK

Profiling? Two years.

ROY

Two?

Roy stares at Buck like something stuck to his shoe.

BUCK

Plus two years assistantship at the Academy, and two of master's work in criminology. I did my thesis on Robert Lester Earl. Some of your best work, by the way.

ROY

So tell me about him.

BUCK

The perpetrator?

ROY

No, your ideal boyfriend.

BUCK

Right. White male, late twenties, early thirties-

ROY

Something that isn't obvious.

BUCK

Right. He's big. Big enough to carry a body without difficulty. Left-handed. Military background. Shaved head. Probably carries a large hunting knife on his person most of the time.

ROY

Keep going.

BUCK

He's smart. Very well-organized. Doesn't take chances. Gets in and out quick. Never leaves witnesses. And something else.

ROY

What?

BUCK

I don't know. It's just, careful as he is, he must scout his victims for days, if not weeks. If he's around that often, someone should have seen something. A meter reader. A strange truck on the street. But we've got nothing. That shouldn't happen. We're missing something.

Roy cogitates for a long moment. Buck tries not to squirm under his gaze.

ROY

Alright. So let's be clear about one thing. I don't care about how smart you are, how many papers you written; I just don't give a shit. You're here because of a promise I made to Captain O'Neal. That's it.

BUCK

Detective, if you're worried I'm going to impede your investigation I assure you-

ROY

Shut up. Now, I'm letting you tag along, but don't think for a minute I'm going to take any shit off you. The first problem we have will be the last problem. Am I clear?

BUCK  
Detective-

ROY  
Are we clear?

Buck swallows hard.

BUCK  
We're clear.

ROY  
What's your cell number?

Buck hands him a business card.

ROY (CONT'D)  
So where should we start?

BUCK  
Well, there are some interviews I'd  
like to do, if you think that's-

ROY  
Fine. Keep your phone on.

Roy walks out of the restaurant. A moment later, the  
waitress leaves Buck the check.

The waitress moves on to another table, where she puts down a  
glass of water with an audible --

INT. A WORKING CLASS KITCHEN DAY

THUNK. A glass of lemonade hits the kitchen table in front  
of Buck, right next to a small, leather-bound notebook.

BUCK  
Thank you.

MR. CARVER, 40s, blue collar, nods to Buck, taking a seat  
next to his wife, MRS. CARVER. Mrs. Carver has been crying.

MS. CARVER  
I'm sorry. What was the question?

BUCK  
It's alright. Take all the time  
you need. I asked if Melinda ever  
had trouble with anyone. A  
coworker she felt uncomfortable  
around, something like that?

MRS. CARVER  
No. Never.

BUCK  
Would she tell you about that kind  
of thing, do you think?

MRS. CARVER  
Definitely.

MR. CARVER  
They talked on the phone every  
night, those two. Melinda told her  
mom everything.

BUCK  
What about you, sir? Did she ever  
mention anything like that to you?

MR. CARVER  
Melinda never told me nothing.

Buck writes in his notebook. His cell phone RINGS.

BUCK  
Pardon me. I need to take this.

EXT. LIVING ROOM DAY

A cozy, middle American living room. The walls are virtually  
invisible due to all the pictures of Melinda: graduation,  
swim team, prom, Girl Scouts, etc.

BUCK  
(answering)  
Agent Buck.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
Got a pen handy?

Buck pulls out his notebook.

BUCK  
Go ahead.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
I need every photograph you can  
find related to the murders. Crime  
scene. Victim portraits. Autopsy.  
Whatever you can get. Got it?

As Roy speaks, Buck hears a loud CLACKING sound on the other end, along with snatches of loud, boozy conversation.

BUCK  
Got it. Where are you?

INTERCUT:

INT. A SKANKY POOL HALL INT

Roy leans against a pay phone in a dingy hall way, holding a warped cue. Pool balls CLACK on the surrounding tables.

ROY  
I also need two plain, white sketchpads, plastic-wrapped. One large pack of number two pencils, also plastic-wrapped. One bottle of Johnnie Walker, Blue Label. One coffee table book of the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. And one bag of peanut M & Ms. You got all that?

BUCK  
What is this?

ROY  
Your job for the rest of the day.

BUCK  
You're giving me a shopping list?

ROY  
I need it by tomorrow morning.

BUCK  
Detective, where am I supposed to get all that?

ROY  
Don't you have an expense account?

BUCK  
I can't put a two hundred dollar bottle of whiskey on it.

ROY  
Are you working this case or not?

BUCK  
Yes. Of course.

ROY  
Fine. I'll call you tonight.

BUCK  
But we haven't even...Detective?

Dial tone. Buck stares at his cell: What's with this guy?

INT. THE CARVER'S KITCHEN DAY

BUCK  
I'm sorry, I have to go. Can we  
continue this some other time?

MRS. CARVER  
Whatever we can do to help.

BUCK  
Thank you. And if there's anything  
I can do for you...

MR. CARVER  
Just make sure you catch him.

Buck nods.

INT. AN ART SUPPLY STORE DAY

Buck faces an aisle stacked with a hundred different kinds of  
sketch pads, trying to pick one.

INT. THE POOL HALL DAY

Roy breaks a rack.

INT. A LIQUOR STORE DAY

A bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue sits on the counter. Buck  
hands the clerk a credit card.

INT. A DIMLY-LIT SPORTS BAR DAY

Roy drinks a beer as he watches a football game on a massive  
big screen.

EXT. A PARKING LOT EVENING

Buck opens the door of a Toyota Camry and adds a shopping bag to the pile accumulating in his back seat.

INT. THE SPORTS BAR EVENING

Roy playing Golden Tee.

INT. A CRAMPED APARTMENT NIGHT

Buck's place is a beige wasteland. Bare walls. No color. Perfectly clean and perfectly lifeless.

He stands in his living room, ironing a shirt with one hand, flipping through a dossier with the other. His cell RINGS.

BUCK  
Agent Buck.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
Did you get everything?

BUCK  
Yes.

INTERCUT:

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Now THIS is a bachelor pad. Empty beer bottles and pizza boxes. Dirty laundry everywhere. Roy sits in a recliner, watching boxing on a massive TV.

ROY  
Including the whiskey?

BUCK  
Yes, I got your whiskey. Now can you tell me what this is for?

ROY  
I'll pick you up at ten tomorrow.  
Make sure you have it all.

BUCK  
Where are we going?

ROY  
Ten 'o clock.

BUCK  
Fine. But we really should start  
talking about...Detective?

Dial tone.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Dammit!

EXT. BUCK'S APARTMENT DAY

Roy leans against a gleaming, brand-new Cadillac. Buck comes down the front walk, holding a large paper bag.

ROY  
Got everything?

BUCK  
Can you tell me where we're going?

ROY  
Hand me those M & Ms.

Buck hands over the M & Ms. Roy opens the bag, popping a few in his mouth. He gets in the car.

Buck takes a deep breath.

EXT. THE CADDY DAY - DRIVING

The cityscape gives way to suburbs, and then farmland. Buck looks at Roy, who is too focused on his M & Ms to notice.

EXT. THE COUNTRY DAY

The Caddy stops in front of a whitewashed farmhouse. The front yard bristles with wind chimes, streamers, wildly abstract metal sculpture, Tibetan prayer flags, and other Aquarian bric-a-brac.

Buck starts to get out of the car, but Roy stops him. Roy's demeanor has completely changed; he is dead serious.

ROY  
Three rules before we go in. First,  
don't touch anything.  
(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)

Put your hands on the table and leave them there. Second, don't move around. When offered a chair, you sit, and stay seated. You will not use the bathroom. If you can't hold it, go find a gas station. Got it?

BUCK

Okay.

ROY

Third, and most important, you will tell no one what you're about to see. No one. You here me?

BUCK

Is this a joke?

Roy starts the car.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Wait. Fine. Okay.

Roy kills the engine again.

ROY

Don't forget the stuff.

Roy gets out, taking a large briefcase from the back seat. Buck follows with the bags.

They are met at the door by PENNY HUFFMAN, middle-aged, dark hair, a fading beauty. Penny is dressed to impress in an expensive blouse and skirt, a champagne flute in one elegant hand.

PENNY

Well, look who's back. Good to see you, Roy.

Roy and Penny hug. He pulls the Johnnie Walker out of the bag, handing it over.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Look at you. Trying to get me drunk, as usual. Come on in.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

The interior of the house is, if anything, more bohemian than the front yard.

Canvasses full of vivid, abstract color, floor-to-ceiling murals, the occasional black-and-white photograph, and more sculpture.

PENNY

Roy, are you going to introduce your friend?

ROY

Penny, this is Tom Buck from the FBI. Buck, this is Penny Huffman.

PENNY

Nice to meet you Thomas. I understand you know Leon?

BUCK

Captain O'Neill is a friend of the family.

PENNY

Well, any friend of Leon is a friend of ours.

Penny offers Buck a box of Latex exam gloves. Buck looks at Roy. Who nods.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Just until we know you better.

Buck puts on a pair of gloves.

Penny leads them to the kitchen table, where they all sit.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What have you brought us today?

Roy takes a dossier from the briefcase, sliding it across the table to Penny.

She flips through it. Penny's reaction to the crime scene photos is minimal. She has seen this kind of thing before.

ROY

Buck thinks they're all the same guy. The count may be as high as twenty, though we can't be sure.

Roy carefully pulls twelve small evidence bags from the briefcase. Each holds a single sample: a few strands of hair, a toothbrush, a T-shirt, etc. Buck's eyes go wide when he realizes where these objects came from.

BUCK  
Are those what I think they are?

PENNY  
None of this should be a problem.  
Do you have a check for me?

Roy slides her a check with the words DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
POLICE DEPARTMENT written across the top.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
Well, let's get started.

Penny walks to the base of the stairs.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
(calling up)  
Yuyu?

The sound of FEET ON THE STAIRS.

The person who arrives at the bottom is SKYE HUFFMAN, dark hair, girlish, almost elfin. She could pass for 17 if not for her green eyes, which are stunning. Serene, kind, shockingly wise: the eyes of a Renaissance Madonna.

Skye wears a long-sleeved shirt under paint-stained dungarees and a pair of slim neoprene GLOVES. She also wears an intriguing little smile, just as arresting as her eyes, like she knows something we don't.

Though he doesn't know it, Buck is holding his breath.

Roy stands, hugging the newcomer.

ROY  
Hi, baby.

Skye gives Roy a sharp look.

ROY (CONT'D)  
I know. It's the book tour. I haven't been able to get away.

Another sharp look.

ROY (CONT'D)  
It's true. See for yourself.

Roy pulls up his shirtsleeve. Skye pulls back a glove, laying the exposed surface of her palm on Roy's wrist.

As skin meets skin, Roy jumps, as if an electric shock had passed between them.

ROY (CONT'D)  
What'd I tell you?

A forgiving smile. She turns to Buck, raising an eyebrow.

PENNY  
Sweetie, this is Thomas Buck. He's  
a friend of Leon.

BUCK  
(extending  
a hand)  
Nice to-

ROY  
Hands on the table.

Buck puts his hands on the table.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Agent Buck, this is Penny's  
daughter, Skye Huffman.

Skye's stares at Buck, completely unself-conscious.

BUCK  
Nice to meet you, Miss Huffman.

PENNY  
She prefers Skye.

BUCK  
Nice to meet you, Skye.

Buck and Skye get a load of each other.

ROY  
We ought to get started. Honey?

Skye sits at the table. Roy opens the evidence bags, rolling up the sides to make it easier to get at the contents.

Skye pulls off one glove, lowering her bare fingers into a bag containing a few strands of hair.

BUCK  
Wait. Don't-

ROY  
Shh!

As Skye's fingers touch the hair, she goes rigid. She shudders, her breath quickening, gooseflesh breaking out on her arms. She is afraid.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Here we go.

Roy tears the plastic off the sketchpad and pencils. He hands each to Skye, who begins sketching furiously.

BUCK  
What's she doing?

ROY  
Penny?

PENNY  
Come on, Thomas. Let's give them some space.

Buck reluctantly allows Penny to lead him out of the kitchen.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM DAY

Like the rest of the house, the living room is packed to overflowing with paintings and sleek sculpture.

Most of the paintings are abstract, but when they do contain human figures, the figures have NO FACES.

Penny pours two glasses of red wine as Buck leans back in his chair, trying to see what is going on in the kitchen.

PENNY  
So how do you know Leon?

No response.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
Thomas?

BUCK  
I'm sorry. What?

PENNY  
I asked how you know Leon.

BUCK  
Oh. He's a friend of my father's. They used to have Redskins tickets together. He wrote my recommendation to the Academy.

PENNY  
Is that so?

Penny looks him over with a cold, critical eye.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
So tell me about yourself. Are you  
married? Engaged?

BUCK  
No.

PENNY  
Have you ever been close?

BUCK  
Not really, no.

PENNY  
Why not?

BUCK  
(hesitating)  
My job, mostly. I work a lot of  
nights and weekends, so I don't  
always have much personal time.

PENNY  
How does your mother feel about  
that?

BUCK  
She died when I was eleven.

Penny's hard edge melts.

PENNY  
I'm sorry.

BUCK  
It's not your fault.

An awkward silence. Thankfully, Roy walks in a moment later.

ROY  
Looks like she's got him.

PENNY  
Good.

BUCK  
Can we talk for a second?

ROY

Sure.

BUCK

Outside?

EXT. THE BACK PATIO DAY

A modest swimming pool sits in the middle of a spacious back yard. The arty knickknacks, once again, are hot and heavy.

Roy barely gets the door closed before Buck attacks.

BUCK

If this is some kind of joke, I don't find it funny.

ROY

Calm down.

BUCK

I may be young, but I'm not stupid. A psychic? You took me off legitimate leads to see a psychic?

ROY

We don't have legitimate leads.

BUCK

So instead of doing our jobs, we come out here? Jesus, you're Roy Wietzman! Why are you wasting your time on some carnival fraud?

ROY

Buck, she isn't the fraud.

BUCK

What the hell does that mean?

ROY

Who do you think closed all the cases in that book you love so fucking much?

BUCK

(floored)  
What, her?

Roy nods.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Which ones?

ROY  
All of them.

BUCK  
By all of them you mean...

ROY  
Marvin Manning. Gary Collison.  
Clay David Pierce. Timothy Kirk.  
Donald Chamberlain. All of them.

BUCK  
Even Robert Lester Earl?

Roy nods again.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
But all that technique. Your use  
of informants.

ROY  
All bullshit. I cribbed from  
Hitchcock films, Sherlock Holmes,  
whatever I could find. Might as  
well have written a novel.

Buck ponders this, hardly able to process it.

BUCK  
Donald Chamberlain was caught  
almost fifteen years ago.

ROY  
He was the first. She was eight  
years old at the time.

BUCK  
That's not possible.

ROY  
Trust me, Buck. You want to see  
impossible? Stick around.

Penny sticks her head out the door.

PENNY  
She's ready, boys.

INT. THE KITCHEN DAY

Skye is still drawing in the sketch pad. On the kitchen table, the evidence bags have been sorted into three piles, one of seven bags, one of three, and one of two.

PENNY  
Thomas, it seems you were right.

BUCK  
About what?

Roy points to the smallest pile.

ROY  
Those two are unrelated. The three  
in the middle are inconclusive.  
The rest are definitely him.

BUCK  
(annoyed)  
Definitely who?

Skye rips a page out of the sketch pad and slides it across the table to Buck.

It is a sketch of a male figure, naked, heavily muscled, shaved head, NO FACE. The figure holds a massive hunting knife in its left hand.

Buck stares at the picture in disbelief.

ROY  
Anyone you know?

BUCK  
How did she draw this? Did you  
give her the profile?

PENNY  
She says she wants to do it.

ROY  
(to Skye)  
You're sure? You can say no.

Skye nods. She is sure.

ROY (CONT'D)  
(sad smile)  
Okay.

BUCK  
Miss Huffman, Skye, I need to know  
how you drew this.

ROY  
Buck, we're leaving.

BUCK  
Skye-

Buck takes a step toward her. Roy grabs him by the shoulder. Before he can pull Buck away, Skye's hand finds Buck's wrist.

ZAP. As skin meets skin, Buck jumps. Skye cocks her head, intrigued, as if she just learned some juicy secret about him.

Penny and Roy exchange a surprised glance.

ROY  
Alright. We're going.

Roy pulls Buck roughly toward the door.

PENNY  
Nice to meet you, Thomas.

Buck sneaks one last look at Skye, who smiles at him as he is hustled out onto the front porch.

INT. THE CAR DAY

As Roy drives, idly fingers his right wrist.

ROY  
Still tingling, isn't it? I never  
quite get used to it.

Buck looks down at the sketch of the faceless killer.

BUCK  
Tell me the truth. You gave her  
the profile, didn't you?

ROY  
Even if I did, she's dyslexic. She  
couldn't read it to save her life.

BUCK  
That's why she doesn't speak?

ROY

No. That would be profound, non-transient expressive aphasia. Which is a doctor's way of saying she doesn't speak. She also has prosopagnosia. Ever heard of it?

BUCK

No.

ROY

It means face blindness. She can't read human faces. Can't tell one from another, or if they're smiling or frowning. To her, we all look blank. Like him.

Roy indicate the sketch.

BUCK

What's wrong with her?

ROY

Who knows? She's been to every neurologist within a hundred miles. Plus psychologists, psychiatrists, nutritionists, priests, faith healers. No one could tell us shit. She just is what she is.

Buck stares at the picture.

BUCK

If she can't see faces, how did she recognize you?

ROY

If you ever figure it out, I'd sure love to know.

EXT. BUCK'S APARTMENT DAY

The Cadillac pulls up to the curb.

ROY

Alright. See you tomorrow.

BUCK

How do I know this isn't some kind of elaborate prank?

ROY

Meet me at the house tomorrow at noon. Here are the directions.

Roy drops a sheet of paper on Buck's lap.

ROY (CONT'D)

That has Penny's number on it in case you have any trouble. Also, if you flip over to the back...

Buck flips the map over.

BUCK

No. I won't do it.

ROY

The girls are cooking dinner. It's only fair that we buy groceries.

BUCK

No way. I'll quit before I run errands for you again.

ROY

Is that a threat? Please do quit. It'd make my day.

BUCK

I'm serious.

ROY

So am I. Good fucking riddance.

BUCK

Go to hell, Roy.

Buck gets out of the car, slamming the door.

ROY

(mocking)

It was nice working with you!

INT. O'NEILL'S OFFICE DAY

Buck paces back and forth as he vents his frustration. A bemused O'Neill is studying the grocery list.

BUCK

Can you believe that?

O'NEILL  
Got to hand it to him. I thought  
it'd be a week before he had you  
ready to quit.

BUCK  
Well what else can I do?

O'NEILL  
Give it a few more days.

BUCK  
In a few more days I'll be doing  
his laundry!

O'NEILL  
I told you he was difficult.

BUCK  
It's not even that. It's the  
sitting around, twiddling our  
thumbs while women are getting  
killed. I can't live with that.

O'NEILL  
Look, if you ask for reassignment,  
you'll get it. The Johnny Walker  
stunt gives you all the cause you  
need. All I want is two more days.  
As a personal favor.

BUCK  
I don't know.

O'NEILL  
Go home. Sleep on it. You'll feel  
better in the morning. Trust me.  
I'm always right about this shit.

BUCK  
(standing)  
I'll sleep on it. But I'm not  
promising anything.

Buck turns to leave, but O'Neill stops him.

O'NEILL  
Tom?  
(handing it over)  
Your grocery list.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Buck sits at his desk, writing a letter on his laptop. The last sentence reads "Therefore, I must regretfully request immediate reassignment to"

Buck's gaze goes to the sketch of the faceless killer, which he has pinned to the corkboard above his desk. He studies the faceless figure, the vicious-looking hunting knife clutched in his left hand.

Buck sighs.

EXT. A LARGE SUBURBAN GROCERY STORE DAY

Buck pushes a grocery-laden shopping cart through a crowded parking lot. He stops at his Camry, popping the trunk.

EXT. A DIFFERENT SUPERMARKET DAY

A car trunk pops open, revealing JESSIE BLUM, 30ish, dark hair, slim and pretty. Jessie chats on a cell phone, pushing her own loaded cart.

JESSIE

Yeah...Yeah...Oh, that's sweet. You don't have to do that...

Jessie loads her groceries into the trunk.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(flirting)

I'll think of something... Yeah, you wish!...Right...Uh huh.

On the other side of a major street, a BATTERED RED PICKUP idles at the parking meter.

In the cab, the Killer watches Jessie load her groceries.

His face is still hidden, but we can see the knife, slicing into his right forearm, adding a fresh line of blood to the BAR CODE we saw before.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

...Alright. See you then.

Smiling, Jessie hangs up. She slams the trunk closed.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

A beautiful, sunny day. Buck finds Roy's Cadillac in the drive. Groceries in hand, he walks to the front door.

Buck knocks. No answer. He tries the knob. The door is open.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM DAY

The house is dark and empty. It seems no one is home.

Buck retrieves a pair of exam gloves, putting them on. He goes to the kitchen, putting the groceries in the fridge.

EXT. THE BACK YARD DAY

Walking out the back door, Buck finds Penny sunbathing by the pool while Roy tends hot dogs on the grill.

Roy wears shorts and sunglasses; he looks like he just got back from playing golf.

PENNY

Well, look who it is. I thought you said he wasn't coming back?

ROY

Where are the pork chops?

BUCK

In the fridge. What are you doing?

ROY

Making a day of it. Hot dog?

BUCK

No thanks. Where's Skye?

Roy points at the pool. The water is hazy, as if filled with chalk dust. A female figure lies on the bottom, unmoving.

PENNY

Magnesium salt. That's what makes the water cloudy. Somehow it works like insulation. That pool's the one place she's ever really alone.

Skye shifts slightly. She looks comfortable enough.

BUCK  
How long can she hold her breath?

PENNY  
She never stays down for more than five minutes. But that's more for my wellbeing than hers.

A splash of water gets Buck wet. He turns to find that Skye has surfaced. She winks, smiles that knowing smile, then sinks back to the bottom.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
You know, you can take those gloves off. She seems fine with you.

Buck pulls them off.

BUCK  
Roy, can we talk for a minute?

Roy puts down his tongs. They step into the yard a ways, just out of earshot.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
I'm here. I brought your groceries. I've done everything you asked. Can we get to work now?

ROY  
Right after dinner.

BUCK  
Why can't we start now?

ROY  
You want a hot dog for the road?

Buck sighs. At least he tried.

BUCK  
Fine. After dinner. What do we do until then?

Roy smiles.

EXT. THE BATTER'S BOX DAY

Buck stands at the ready, holding a plastic baseball bat. Roy crouches behind Home Plate (an old baseball glove), awaiting the pitch.

A wiffle ball crosses Home Glove high, at Buck's shoulders.

ROY  
Ball two.

Roy throws the ball back to Skye, who has a large pile of wiffle balls at her feet.

Penny cheers from the patio, sipping a margarita.

PENNY  
Come one, Yuyu! Easy out!

Skye winds up, delivers. Buck swings. The ball drops like a stone. Buck misses by a mile.

ROY  
Strike one!

Roy throws the ball back the pitcher.

BUCK  
Was that a curveball?

ROY  
Yup.

BUCK  
How do you make a wiffle ball curve?

ROY  
Actually, it's pretty easy. All you have to do is make sure to-

Roy suddenly drops into his catcher's crouch. The ball crosses Home Glove.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Strike two!

BUCK  
Hey!

Skye is grinning from ear to ear.

Buck digs in, swings the bat a few times, gets ready for the next pitch.

Skye winds up, delivers.

THWACK! Buck sends the pitch into orbit. He turns to Roy; one big, walking smirk.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Guess I figured out that curveball.

A wiffle ball smacks Buck in the back of the head.

EXT. POOLSIDE DAY

Penny, Roy, Buck and Skye sit on the patio. Penny and Roy are playing Gin. Buck and Skye are playing Go Fish.

Skye raps on the table getting Buck's attention. She holds up three gloved fingers. Buck hands over a pair of threes.

Skye files them away. She throws up seven fingers. Buck hands over a seven.

BUCK  
These cards are marked, aren't they?

PENNY  
If you say so.

Skye holds up one finger.

BUCK  
Dammit!

Buck hands over three aces.

ROY  
I told you not to play her.

BUCK  
Can we do something else?

PENNY  
There's a chess set upstairs.

BUCK  
I play chess.

ROY  
Are you any good?

BUCK  
I won a tournament in high school.  
(to Skye)  
You want to play chess?

Skye shrugs.

They walk into the house. Roy and Penny exchange a knowing glance.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM DAY

Buck and Skye sit at a chessboard. Buck stares at the horribly complicated position before him, deep in calculation. Skye is thumbing through the Georgia O'Keefe book.

Buck makes a move. Skye puts down her book.

Through the window, Buck sees Penny and Roy, playing cards, laughing, flirting shamelessly. Cute couple.

BUCK  
Those two get along well.

Skye watches with a sentimental smile. She likes seeing them that way.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Do they have a history together?

Rather than acknowledge the question, Skye moves her rook, returning to her Georgia O'Keefe.

Buck studies the board for a good five seconds before...

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Dammit.

INT. THE KITCHEN TABLE DAY

Buck, Skye, Penny and Roy sit around the table, just finishing dinner. Roy holds up a glass of wine, the others follow suit.

ROY  
If Leon we're here, I sure he'd want us to make our traditional toast. To the lives we save.

They drink.

BUCK  
So does this mean we're finally going to get started?

PENNY

Would you prefer to finish your  
chess game first?

Roy snickers. Skye suppresses a smile.

BUCK

I haven't lost just yet.

ROY

Good for you. Let's set up.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Buck sets a camcorder on a tripod in one corner of the room. Roy is laying out pencil and paper on the coffee table, much as he did yesterday.

On the couch, Penny is outfitting Skye with some biomedical doodads, blood pressure cuff, fingertip pulse detector, etc.

ROY

Ready to roll?

BUCK

Yeah.

ROY

Whatever she does, keep rolling.  
I'll ask if I need help. Pen?

Penny flips a switch on a little black monitor. The display jumps to life, tracing Skye's vitals. A soft metallic chirp measures her pulse:

BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

PENNY

Ready when you are.

ROY

Here goes.

Skye reclines on the couch. Roy lights a small candle, sets it on the table. Skye's eyes lock on the candle. Roy takes her hand, speaking in a low, hypnotic voice.

ROY (CONT'D)

I want you to focus on the sound of  
my voice. And as you do, I want you  
to relax. Your arms relax. Your  
legs relax.

(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)

Your whole body relaxes. As you relax, your eyes begin to close, and when they are completely closed, you will be completely relaxed.

As he speaks, Skye's body goes limp. Her breathing slows. Her eyelids get heavy, then close completely.

ROY (CONT'D)

When you are completely relaxed, I want you to squeeze my hand.

Squeeze.

ROY (CONT'D)

Now when you're ready, picture the man with the knife. I want you to remember everything you can about him. The color of his eyes. The smell of his skin. Everything. I want you to hold all of that in your mind. When you have it, squeeze my hand.

Skye jaw tenses. The room is silent except for the heart monitor: BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

Buck watches through the lens of the camcorder. Penny watches the monitor.

Finally, a squeeze.

ROY (CONT'D)

Good girl. Now when I say "Go", I want you to make contact.  
One...Two...Three.....Go.

Skye bolts to her feet. Her body language has completely changed. Once calm and pacific, her face is now rigid, her jaw set tight.

Her eyes have changed, too. They are glazed, devoid of emotion; completely and frighteningly dead.

BUCK

What-

ROY

Shh.

Skye flattens herself up against the wall, her gaze fixed on some point across the room. Cool and predatory, like a panther in tall grass.

Her pulse quickens:

BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

Buck follows her with the camera. For the second time in two days, he is holding his breath.

Skye rushes forward, hitting the far wall with a THUD. She wrestles with an invisible opponent, someone shorter and much smaller than her.

Miming a headlock, she hurls her victim across the room to the couch. Holding him/her down, Skye begins tearing viciously at the invisible person's torso.

ROY  
You getting this?

Buck nods.

Skye falls on top of her victim. Her hips slide forward. We have seen this before. It is the rape of Melinda Carver.

BUCK  
Oh my God.

Buck watches in horror as Skye grinds violently against the couch, a low, animalistic noise rising in her throat. This can't be the woman he was playing chess with an hour ago.

The pace of the grinding increases, as does the cadence of the heart monitor:

BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP...BEEP.....BEEP....BEEP.....

PENNY  
Her heart rate' getting high.

ROY  
She's fine.

Skye's left hand goes to her thigh. It clenches into a fist. The fist rises up into the air, white-knuckled. The pace of the grinding reaches it's peak.

WHAM! The hand crashes into the cushions of the couch, then rises, and falls again.

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

The rhythm of Skye's hips slows, then stops; the ecstatic mask on her face relaxes.

BUCK

Jesus.

Roy pulls something from his pocket: a vial of SMELLING SALTS. He pops off the top. Grabbing Skye from behind, he holds it under her nose.

Skye struggles for a second, then blinks. She sighs, wiping tears from her eyes.

ROY

You can turn off the camera.

INT. THE KITCHEN NIGHT

Buck and Roy are washing dishes.

BUCK

What the hell was that?

ROY

Melinda Carver, I'm guessing. She was the most recent.

BUCK

But what was that?

ROY

That's how we catch him. She shows us who he is, where he lives, what kind of work he does. Then we go pick him up.

BUCK

I don't buy that for a second.

ROY

I don't blame you.

BUCK

You're telling me-

ROY

Don't ask me how it works, Buck. I don't know. All I can say is she's like a radio antenna.

(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)

Normally, she picks up little bits of stuff. An image here. A thought there. She gets more from touch, memories and emotions, which is why we had you wear gloves. But if you point her at someone, if you really focus her in -- you get everything. As for how she does it, your guess is as good as mine.

Penny enters from the living room.

PENNY

Boys, she's got something.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Skye sits on the couch, hunched over the sketchpad. The coffee table in front of her is littered with sketches: a skeletal OAK TREE, a beat-up old PICKUP TRUCK, a bound, faceless WOMAN, a large, vicious KNIFE, an arm with a BARCODE-like scar, etc.

Roy picks up a sketch: a long, SCOOP-shaped object. He frowns at it.

ROY

What is this?

BUCK

I don't know.

PENNY

It looks like a spoon.

ROY

Honey, do you know what this is?

Skye shakes her head. Roy puts the Scoop down and picks up the Truck.

ROY (CONT'D)

You know anything about trucks?

BUCK

No.

ROY

I know a mechanic who could probably get a make and model from this. Hold on. I'm going to go make a phone call.

Roy strides purposefully out of the room.

Penny looks at her daughter, rubbing her eyes, still pale and drawn from the night's festivities. Penny drains her glass.

PENNY

Would anyone like more wine?

Buck and Skye shake their heads.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Well, I think I'll have some.

She goes to the kitchen.

Buck studies the sketches laid out on the table. He can't make heads or tails of them.

Skye snaps her fingers. Buck looks up. Skye points at the chess board.

BUCK

You want to keep playing?

She shrugs. Buck looks at the sketches, then at the board.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Is it my move?

Skye nods. That mysterious smile returns. Buck sits down at the chess board.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT -- LATER

Roy enters the room. Skye and Buck are still playing chess. Buck is getting his ass kicked.

ROY

How's it going?

BUCK

She's really good.

ROY

Keep trying. We're going to bed, so you have first watch. Wake me up at four o'clock, or if anything happens. Got it?

BUCK

Uh huh.

Buck's eyes have yet to leave the board.

ROY  
Did you catch that?

BUCK  
Wake you up at four o'clock or if  
anything happens.

Roy kisses Skye on the cheek.

ROY  
Good night.  
(to Buck)  
Keep your eyes open.

BUCK  
No problem.

Roy disappears. Buck's eyes go back to the board. After a few seconds, he sighs.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
I'm going to lose, aren't I?

Skye nods gently.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Alright. Want to play again?

Skye scrunches her nose.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
We could do something else.

Skye grabs the remote from the coffee table, turning on the TV. She plops on the couch, putting her feet in Buck's lap.

He doesn't object.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT -- LATER

Buck wakes to find the TV flashing snow. He is stretched out full on the couch. Skye lies on top of him, asleep.

Buck checks his watch. Turns off the TV.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Buck places Skye on the bed, gently tucking her in. She curls up like a hedgehog.

He watches her sleep for a moment. Cute.

INT. THE BATHROOM NIGHT

Buck flushes the toilet. He checks himself in the mirror. His eyes are bloodshot. He turns on the faucet, splashing water on his face.

SKYE APPEARS IN THE MIRROR, floating past the bathroom like a ghost. By the time Buck looks up again, she is gone.

Buck jumps when he hears the STAIRS CREAKING.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY NIGHT

Buck appears just in time to see Skye disappear downstairs.

BUCK

Skye?

No answer. He goes after her.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS NIGHT

Skye shuffles silently across the kitchen floor, eyes half-open, mouth slightly ajar, face slack.

Buck comes up behind her.

BUCK

Skye?

His words don't register. She floats to the front door, takes a set of keys from the hook, and walks outside.

Buck dashes to the master bedroom, banging on the door.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Roy? Roy, something's happening!

This is taking too long. Buck runs to the living room, grabs his cell phone, and, after a moment of hesitation, his gun.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Penny's Honda is pulling slowly down the driveway.

Buck bursts out the door, chasing after it. He manages to climb into the back seat before it rolls off down the road.

INT. THE CAR NIGHT

Buck sits in the back seat, watching a robotic, blank-faced Skye take one back road after another.

The road narrows to one lane, then gravel, then dirt. The trees on either side are so thick they brush against the car.

Buck's cell phone RINGS.

BUCK  
We're okay.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
Where are you?

BUCK  
In the car. I'm not sure where we're headed. Dirt road. Lots of trees. That's all I see.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
She's driving?

BUCK  
Yeah.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
Sounds like you're headed towards Rock Creek. I'll drive out and see if I can find you. Are you armed?

BUCK  
Yes.

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
Thank God. Buck, be very careful. She could be taking you anywhere.

BUCK  
Should I wake her up?

ROY (V. O.)  
(filtered)  
No! This could be our best chance. Just call me when you see a landmark, okay?

BUCK

I will.

Buck hangs up the phone. He looks at Skye in the rearview.

BUCK (CONT'D)

(musing)

Where are you taking me?

Skye's gaze meets Buck's for a moment in the rearview mirror. It is cold, piercing - the same dead eyes she had earlier.

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE NIGHT

The Honda stops on a small dirt road at the base of a sloping, tree-covered hill.

The headlights go out. An inky blackness floods in that neither the new moon nor the distant city lights can penetrate.

BUCK

(on his cell)

We've stopped.

The driver-side door opens. Skye trudges up the hill.

BUCK (CONT'D)

We're getting out. Hold on, I'll call you back in a minute.

Buck rummages through the glove box, retrieving a small flashlight. He sets out in pursuit of Skye.

EXT. THE HILL NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

The beam of the flashlight glints off Skye's bare feet. Buck is doing his best to light her way.

Skye follows a small deer trail for about forty feet before veering off the path.

A moment later, they emerge into a clearing near the top of the hill. Skye stops at a mound of FRESHLY DISTURBED EARTH.

Buck's eyes go wide. He knows what this is.

Skye leans over the mound, thrusting her hands toward it, then back over her shoulder. Then toward it again, then over her shoulder again.

BUCK  
You're digging.

Indeed she is. Soon, beads of sweat are breaking out on her forehead, and she rests her imaginary shovel, wiping her face on a non-existent sleeve before returning to work.

Buck hears a noise. He turns off the flashlight.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
What was that?

Skye ignores him, still digging.

Buck's muscles go taut, He is listening with his whole body. Is there a FAINT HISSING noise coming from the bottom of the hill, or is it just his imagination?

EXT. THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL NIGHT

The HISSING is much clearer.

A giant silver HUNTING KNIFE slides out of the Honda's rear left tire, it's blade gleaming in the faint moonlight.

The HISSING gets louder.

EXT. THE CLEARING NIGHT

Buck strains to see through blackness.

As his eyes adapt, he can just make out the ghostly outline of the Honda and - wait, did something just move down there?

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Bullets whiz over Buck's head, chopping the surrounding trees.

Buck pulls Skye to the ground.

Drawing his gun, Buck scans the road for the shooter.

Nothing.

He waits.

And waits.

And waits.

No sound except wind in the trees.

Then Buck's cell phone RINGS.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

BUCK

Shit!

Buck fumbles with the phone, turning it off. In the process, he lets go of Skye, who promptly stands up and resumes digging.

BLAM! BLAM!

Buck yanks Skye back to the ground.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Stay down!

Buck scans the road, chest pumping, eyes like dinner plates. No motion, no outlines, nothing. He can't see a damn thing.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Buck fires wildly.

The unmistakable sound of RUNNING FEET. Down on the road, a CAR DOOR SLAMS. An ENGINE STARTS.

The running lights of an old RED PICKUP blink on. The TIRES SQUEAL as the truck takes off down the narrow road.

Buck jumps up and gives chase along the edge of the hill, emptying his clip.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The truck disappears over a short rise and is gone.

Buck turns back toward the clearing to find Skye lying limp, face down on the damp earth.

She is not moving.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Oh no.

He sprints back to her side, falling to his knees. He clicks the flashlight, sets it aside, using the light to check Skye for injuries.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Please be okay. Oh God, please be okay.

He flips her over onto her back, scanning her legs and stomach. When he gets to her face, Skye opens her eyes.

Buck freezes, his face inches from hers. He is holding his breath again.

She kisses him.

The kiss lasts for a long, long time.

And then, on some mysterious cue, Skye's body relaxes, her head rolls back, her eyes close. She is asleep once again.

Buck gapes in wide wonder at the creature in his arms.

EXT. THE CRIME SCENE MORNING

Lights flash atop the police cruiser cordoning off each end of the road. On the hillside, a backhoe excavates the grave while officers stretch out police tape, search for shell casings, etc.

A haggard Buck leans against the hobbled Honda, sipping a cup of coffee. His shirt is gone, leaving him only a thin undershirt and a police blanket against the morning cold.

O'NEILL

Tom!

Captain O'Neill trots down the hill toward the road.

O'NEILL (CONT'D)

I've been looking all over for you.  
Good news! Looks like...

As O'Neill draws close, he notices that Buck looks like shit.

O'NEILL (CONT'D)

Jesus. You look like shit.

BUCK

Thanks.

O'NEILL

Looks like multiple burials.  
They're saying the hole was filled  
in the last seventy-two hours, so  
the bodies should still be in good  
condition. It's a hell of a find.

BUCK

Great.

O'NEILL

The only thing I can't figure out  
is why he came back here.

BUCK

He was probably masturbating. Lots  
of these guys get a sexual charge  
from visiting the site of a burial.

O'NEILL

No shit? I didn't know that. What  
say you and I take a walk?

They walk casually away from the other officers.

O'NEILL (CONT'D)

Roy called. He said she's asleep.  
I take it she lead you up here?

Buck nods.

O'NEILL (CONT'D)

So what happened?

BUCK

I don't know. One second we were  
alone, and the next, there he was.  
I just wasn't ready for him.

O'NEILL

You walked away from it. You'll be  
ready next time.

BUCK

I hope so.

O'NEILL

Go home. Get some sleep. Start  
thinking about your statement. By  
the way, is that Penny's car over  
there?

BUCK

Yeah.

O'NEILL

I'll take care of it.

BUCK

Thanks.

O'NEILL  
Oh, and Tom.  
(shit-eating grin)  
Still want to be reassigned?

Buck doesn't dignify this with an answer.

EXT. BUCK'S APARTMENT DAY

A cab pulls up to the curb. Inside the cab, Buck looks up at his apartment. After a few seconds, he says something to the driver. The cab pulls away.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

Buck pays the driver, walking up to the house.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM DAY

Skye is asleep. Buck sinks into an easy chair in the corner.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM DAY

Buck starts awake. The room is empty. Someone has taken the comforter off the bed and thrown it over him.

He puts it back on, primly making up the bed.

INT. THE STUDIO DAY

What was once an upstairs bedroom is now an artist's studio: clay-coated potter's wheel, well-worn drawing table, and two paint-spattered easels.

Penny and Skye stand at matching easels, painting.

BUCK  
Hi.

PENNY  
Good morning. I'm supposed to tell you the autopsy starts at two.

Buck checks his watch. It is 2:15.

BUCK  
Damn. Have you seen my shirt?

PENNY

It's in the washer. Hold on.  
We'll get you one of Roy's. Yuyu?

Penny hands her palette and brushes to her daughter, wiping her hands on her apron.

As she leads Buck out of the studio, he takes one last look at Skye, for the road. Skye doesn't appear to notice.

INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM DAY

Penny roots through a suitcase full of men's clothing. All the shirts in it are rumpled and cheap.

BUCK

Can I ask you a question?

PENNY

You may.

BUCK

Why do you call her Yuyu?

PENNY

It's her name.

BUCK

Her name isn't Skye?

PENNY

Her real first name is Unicorn.  
But she absolutely hates that name  
so she goes by her middle name,  
which is Skye. The only reason I  
get to call her "Yuyu" is because  
I'm her mother.

BUCK

You named your daughter Unicorn  
Skye Huffman?

PENNY

Bear in mind I was twenty-one and  
all alone, with no money, no  
education and no common sense.

BUCK

The father wasn't around?

Penny shakes her head.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Where is he now?

Penny hesitates, a far away look in her eye. Before she can answer, Buck's phone rings.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Hello... yeah, I'm on my way.  
(to Penny)  
It's Roy.

Penny takes one cheap, rumpled shirt from the pile.

PENNY  
This is probably your best bet.  
I'd iron it if there was time.

BUCK  
(on phone)  
Sure, I'm leaving right now.

Buck takes the horrendous shirt, doubtful.

PENNY  
I'm sure you'll look fine.

INT. THE CITY MORGUE DAY

A hallway dominated by a large glass window. On the far side, four nude corpses lie on stainless steel gurneys, two men and two women. Their heads and hands are missing.

On the near side, Buck watches the autopsy through the glass. He looks awful: bags under his eyes, two-day stubble, ugly shirt hopelessly wrinkled.

KERCHUNK. A door opens. Roy steps out into the hall. He hesitates for a moment when he sees the state Buck is in.

It's like looking into a mirror.

ROY  
You're late.

INT. THE AUTOPSY THEATER DAY

DR. CHEN, the pathologist, has sliced open one of the female corpses and begun weighing organs.

CHEN  
Buck, right?

BUCK

Yessir.

CHEN

Tony Chen. Excuse me if I don't shake your hand.

Chen indicates his gloved hands, which are covered in blood and muck. Though he wears a mask, Chen's wicked smile somehow peeks through.

BUCK

How's it going?

ROY

Not that great.

CHEN

Your guy is one smart cookie. First, he takes the head and hands to make them harder to ID. Not all that effective in the age of DNA tests, but still a nice touch. Then, look at this.

Chen pulls up the corpses arm, exposing the armpit. It is completely hairless.

CHEN (CONT'D)

He shaved the entire body, postmortem. Same for the other three. Then he scrubbed them down with some kind of detergent. Must have taken him hours. The upshot is, I haven't found a single hair on any of them.

BUCK

Have you done a rape kit?

CHEN

Of course. Bruise patterns suggest vaginal penetration of both women immediately prior to death. He wasn't gentle about it, either.

BUCK

Any semen?

CHEN

Doubtful. He put ammonia-soaked sponges in their vaginas to degrade the DNA.

(MORE)

CHEN (CONT'D)

I swabbed anyway, but don't hold your breath. What can I say? The guy is good.

(to Roy)

Did you tell him about the grave?

ROY

The grave was seven feet deep.

BUCK

You're kidding.

Roy shakes his head.

BUCK (CONT'D)

How could anyone dig a seven foot grave in a public park unnoticed?

CHEN

Like I said. The guy is good.

KERCHUNK. A young POLICEMAN enters the autopsy theater.

POLICEMAN

Detective. The Captain wants you.

INT. O'NEILL'S OFFICE DAY

The door to the office slams shut. O'Neill looks up. He nearly bursts out laughing when he sees Roy and Buck. They look like a "Before and After" picture.

ROY

What?

O'NEILL

Nothing. So what do we have?

ROY

Not a whole lot. He left the bodies pretty clean.

O'NEILL

How about the truck?

ROY

I faxed the sketch to a mechanic I know. He should be able to ID the make and model, no problem.

O'NEILL

Good. So let's hear your story.

ROY

It was a tip from a gas station attendant in Rockville. We had reason to believe the perp was disposing of bodies in that area, so we hit the surrounding stations early in the week. Our guy called last night to say that someone matching the profile filled his tank on the way north, toward the park. Buck went out to follow up.

O'NEILL

A gas station attendant in Rockville. What do you say, Tom? Think you can sell it?

BUCK

You want me to put it in my report that we got tipped off by a gas station attendant?

ROY

Unless you have a better idea.

Buck gives it some thought.

BUCK

I guess it's not that bad. Actually, it's classic Wietzmann. Brilliant use of informants.

O'NEILL

Fine. Write it up. And don't file anything without showing it to me first. Is there anything you need right now?

ROY

So far so good.

O'NEILL

Alright. I have a meeting. You two get back to work.

O'Neill walks out of the office.

Buck stands.

BUCK

I'll catch up with you later. I need a shower.

ROY  
Hold on. About last night...

BUCK  
I'm sorry, Roy. It was dark. I  
couldn't see anything-

ROY  
Shut up. Listen. I set you up.  
She always walks on the first  
night. Usually not like that, but  
I knew something would happen and I  
didn't tell you. I set you up, and  
I'm sorry. It was petty and  
stupid, and it won't happen again.

BUCK  
(mystified)  
It's okay, Roy. No big deal.

ROY  
Go home. You look like shit.

EXT. ROY'S CAR DAY

Roy driving.

INT. BUCK'S BATHROOM DAY

Buck, fresh from the shower, brushing his teeth.

INT. A DIMLY-LIT SPORTS BAR DAY

Roy having a drink.

INT. BUCK'S BATHROOM DAY

Buck shaving.

INT. A DIMLY-LIT SPORTS BAR DAY

Roy slams a beer, calling for another.

INT. BUCK'S BATHROOM DAY

Buck, dressed again, combs in hand, making sure every single,  
solitary hair is in its assigned position.

INT. A DIMLY-LIT SPORTS BAR DAY

Roy throws a handful of bills down on the table.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

Buck's car pulls up in front of the house.

INT. THE KITCHEN DAY

Penny is cooking dinner. Buck enters.

PENNY  
Well, hello. How was your day?

BUCK  
Fine. Yours?

PENNY  
Oh, fine. Dinner's in an hour.

BUCK  
Anything I can help with?

PENNY  
Sweet of you to offer, Thomas. But frankly, you'd only be in my way.

ROY (O. S.)  
(shouting)  
Buck!

Buck walks into the living room, where Roy is watching something on the VCR.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Come take a look at this.

BUCK  
Just a second.

Buck pops back into the kitchen and up the stairs.

INT. THE STUDIO DAY

Skye is still painting -- the same piece as before, though much farther along.

She puts her brush down, looking expectantly at the door. A moment later, Buck pokes his head in.

BUCK

Hi. Can I talk to you for a second?

She motions him over, wiping her hands on a rag.

Buck walks over. He licks his lips, nervous. Every time he gets close to this girl he's fourteen again.

Skye just smiles that same mysterious smile.

BUCK (CONT'D)

About last night, I wanted to apologize if I-

She kisses him. Buck's shock may be due to the skin-to-skin contact, or to surprise, but he doesn't let it get the best of him. In a moment, he is returning the kiss with gusto.

Time stands still for a few long, perfect seconds...

Then Skye's eyes open. She gently pulls away.

When Penny walks in a moment later, Skye is back at her easel, painting, as if nothing had happened.

It is Buck who gives them away.

PENNY

Am I interrupting something?

BUCK

No. I...we were just...talking.

PENNY

Well, I just wanted to tell you your shirt is on the dryer.

BUCK

Great. Thank you.

Buck makes a suspiciously hasty exit.

Penny looks at her daughter, still painting, the ghost of a smile on her lips.

PENNY

For the life of me, I don't know what you see in that one.

The smile cracks a little wider, but Skye keeps painting.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM DAY

Roy sits in front of the TV, watching the tape of Skye's performance the night before. Buck sits down next to him.

ROY  
Everything okay?

BUCK  
Fine.

ROY  
You look kind of flushed.

BUCK  
What are you watching?

ROY  
The tape from last night. Here.  
Take a look at this.

Roy rewinds the tape. When he restarts, Skye is wrestling with her invisible opponent.

ROY (CONT'D)  
How tall was Melinda Carver?

BUCK  
Five-seven, five-eight.

ROY  
And look at him. Throwing her  
around like a rag doll. Must be at  
least six-three. Now look at this.

Roy fast forwards. When he stops, Skye's left hand raise it's invisible knife over head.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Left handed. Just like you said.  
And check this out.

Roy fast forwards again.

On the tape, Skye mimes picking something up -- an object about the size of a large handbag -- tucking it under her arm. She takes a few steps, then puts the object in an imaginary cabinet, closing the door after.

BUCK  
What is this?

ROY  
It's from this morning. What do  
you think she's holding there?

BUCK  
I don't know.

ROY  
It looks like a football.

BUCK  
A little bit.

On the tape, Skye repeats the procedure, picking up another FOOTBALL-THING and putting it in another cabinet-thing.

The real Skye walks into the room, still wearing her paint-stained dungarees. She puts a beer down in front of Buck.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
(amazed)  
I was just about to go get one of  
these.

ROY  
And you wonder why you lose at  
cards. Honey, you want to take a  
look at this?

Skye plops down on the couch next to Buck.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Do you have any idea what you're  
doing there?

Skye frowns at the TV. She shakes her head.

The three of them watch as Skye (on tape) unloads football after football.

Suddenly, the real Skye flinches, the color draining from her face. She looks like she just saw a ghost.

BUCK  
Are you okay?

ROY  
She's fine. That happens sometimes  
when she has an open connection.  
He probably just cut himself  
shaving or something.

Buck looks at Skye. She seems okay.

PENNY (O. S.)  
(shouting)  
Yuyu?

Skye hops up, heading for the kitchen.

ROY  
Anyway, she goes on like this for  
about half an hour.

Roy gives off a bone-weary sigh, stopping the tape.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Guess we won't catch him today.

BUCK  
I should start on my statement.

ROY  
Let me know if you need a hand.

BUCK  
I'm sure you're a lot better at  
falsifying reports than I am.

ROY  
You understand why we do it, right?  
If they knew about her, they'd all  
want a piece. FBI. CIA. DoD.  
She'd spend the rest of her life as  
a science project.

BUCK  
I know. I just feel strange about  
lying.

ROY  
You'll get used to it.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Buck is parked in a chair, typing on his laptop. Skye is watching TV.

Penny and Roy enter the room.

ROY  
We're off to bed. You two have a  
good night.

BUCK  
Same to you.

PENNY

Let's try to keep things inside the house this time, okay?

BUCK

That's a good idea.

ROY

Don't worry. She usually calms down after the first night.

Penny kisses her daughter on the cheek.

ROY (CONT'D)

Four 'o clock.

They exit. Buck returns to typing away at his laptop. Skye turns off the TV, bored.

She snaps her fingers. Buck looks up. Skye points at the chessboard.

BUCK

Sorry, I have to write this report.

She ignores this completely, tugging gently on his elbow, smiling gamely, intent on changing his mind.

BUCK (CONT'D)

I'd like to. Really. But I have to finish this for tomorrow.

He turns his back on her, returning to his typing. With an evil little grin, Skye pokes him in the neck.

ZAP! As before, the skin to skin contact makes Buck jump.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Ah! Stop it.

She does it again.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Cut it out.

Another poke. Buck turns, catching her by the hand. He's trying to look annoyed, but failing miserably. Any idiot can see he's loving this.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Alright, look. We'll do whatever you want for an hour and a half. But then I have to work. Okay?

She cocks an eyebrow at him.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Whatever you want.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

A delicate pair of hands lights a candle.

The same pair of hands putts a CD in the player. The music starts up: Edith Piaff, singing in French, soft and sweet.

Skye pulls Buck into the middle of the room. She puts her hands on his shoulders, and a moment later they are dancing.

Buck is getting nervous again; no doubt having flashbacks to junior prom.

BUCK  
You should know, I'm not a very good dancer. I don't really get much of a chance to--

She puts a finger to his lips. He wisely shuts up. She rests her head on his shoulder, closing her eyes.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Buck types on his laptop in the dark. At the other end of the room, Skye gets out of bed.

Buck looks up. Skye is loading and unloading footballs.

Buck takes a quilt from the bureau, gently draping it over her shoulders.

INT. LEON'S OFFICE DAY

Buck plonks a cup of coffee down on the desk in front of Roy.

ROY  
So it's just like we thought?

O'NEILL  
Yup. The DNA tests are conclusive. Melinda Carver, Peter Koebing, and Ted and Julie Corman. Just like you thought.

BUCK  
What about the rape kits?

O'NEILL  
The samples were too degraded.

ROY  
Shit.

O'NEILL  
We're still waiting on toxicology.  
Maybe we'll get lucky. Did you get  
a make on the truck?

ROY  
Ford F series. Probably an eighty-  
nine. DMV's sending over the  
registration list.

O'NEILL  
How are things out at the house?

BUCK  
Fantastic.

Roy gives Buck a wry look.

ROY  
Not so great. Nothing like what we  
normally get. Ever since that  
first night it's like someone  
turned off the faucet. I don't  
know what's wrong.

O'NEILL  
Well, keep chopping wood.

INT. ROY'S CAR DAY

Roy drives.

BUCK  
I've been thinking. I have a  
cousin who's a researcher at  
Harvard. He works on autism.  
Experimental treatments, that kind  
of thing. The work is amazing.

ROY  
Let me give you some advice. The  
girl isn't broken. Don't try and  
fix her. You'll only piss her off.

BUCK

I'm not trying to fix her. I just want to help. She shouldn't have to stay locked up in that house all the time.

ROY

That's what you think? That we keep her caged like some kind of zoo animal?

BUCK

I didn't mean it like that.

ROY

Let me tell you a story. When Skye was seventeen, she disappeared one day. No note, no warning, just drove off in Penny's car with two hundred bucks in cash. Two days later, the car turns up at the bus station, but no sign of Skye. And for the next week, nothing. Penny, of course, is losing her mind. Then one night a white Lexus pulls into the drive at two in the morning. Penny wakes up to find Skye sitting on the couch in a six thousand dollar Vera Wang dress, watching TV.

BUCK

Whose car was it?

ROY

It was reported stolen the month before. We found ten thousand dollars worth of cocaine in the trunk, which probably belongs to whoever bought the dress. To this day, we don't really know what happened. Guess we never will.

BUCK

That's unbelievable.

ROY

That was the longest she's ever been away, though not the first time, or the last. Point is no one makes that girl do anything.

(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)

If she stays, it's because she chooses to. If she wants to leave, she will. With or without your help.

BUCK

Still. I just wish there was something I could do for her.

ROY

Buy her a puppy. I'm serious. She had a black Lab that died a year or so ago and she hasn't gotten around to buying a new one yet. You want to do something for her? Buy her a puppy. It would make her happy. And if you make a woman happy, it's enough.

Buck considers this.

BUCK

A puppy.

Roy nods.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

The sun is setting, and what a beautiful sunset it is. You couldn't hope for a nicer night.

EXT. THE BACK PATIO NIGHT

Penny and Roy are playing cards, laughing, flirting, enjoying a bottle of wine and each other's company.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Skye and Buck are playing chess, getting along as famously as Penny and Roy. Apparently, love is just in the air tonight.

Skye takes Buck's cell phone from the table, pushing it into his hand. A moment later, it RINGS.

He shakes his head, amazed. She gives him a wink.

BUCK

(answering)

Hello?...Yeah?...No, that's okay.

(to Skye)

Just a sec.

EXT. A SWANKY CONDO NIGHT

Jessie Blum stumbles up the front walk with her BOYFRIEND, 30ish, handsome, well-dressed. They hold hands, giggling like children; drunk on love, or Red Bull and vodka, or both.

Across the street, a RED PICKUP idles.

JESSIE

I had a great time.

Jessie's boyfriend answers her with a kiss, which she reciprocates hungrily.

JESSIE'S BOYFRIEND

Can I come in?

JESSIE

I don't know.

JESSIE'S BOYFRIEND

Come on. It's early. We could have a drink. Or watch a movie. Or something else.

She laughs. He seizes the moment, stealing another kiss. It takes Jessie a while to get out her answer.

JESSIE

I gotta get up at six.

JESSIE'S BOYFRIEND

I only need ten minutes.

JESSIE

I'll tell you what. Take me out again on Friday. Then we'll have all weekend to do things right.

JESSIE'S BOYFRIEND

I could use some practice first.

JESSIE

You can do that on your own.

Another kiss, and this one takes forever. Jessie's boyfriend rounds first and heads for second. And he nearly wins her over. But finally, reluctantly, Jessie pulls herself away.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

I really did have a great time.

She goes inside, leaving him on the doorstep, unsatisfied, but grinning like a moron -- he REALLY likes this girl -- and thinking he's the Luckiest Man in the World right up until the moment the knife plunges into his back.

INT. JESSIE'S CONDO NIGHT

Comfy overstuffed furniture. Walls covered in colorful, 40s-era advertisements for French shaving cream and cigarettes. Your standard upscale chick pad.

The DOORBELL rings. Jessie answers it.

JESSIE  
(opening the door)  
This better be-

WHAM! A right cross sends the poor girl sprawling.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Buck is in the kitchen, still on the phone.

BUCK  
Yeah, okay. What's it called?

In the living room, Skye gasps. Her eyes lose focus, her face draining of color. She falls off her chair.

Hearing the noise, Buck turns.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Roy!

Roy and Penny rush in from the back patio to find Skye writhing on the floor, Buck standing over her, helpless.

ROY  
Get the camera.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Jessie lies on the floor, dazed and gasping, her nose bloody. The Killer drags Jessie's boyfriend's limp body through the front door, dropping it on the floor next to her.

He takes off his shirt.

Jessie rolls over, coming face to face with her boyfriend.

She tries to scream, but the Killer's hand clamps down over her mouth. He produces a roll of duct tape, gagging Jessie and binding her wrists and ankles.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Penny clamps the heart rate sensor on her daughters finger. The monitor begins to chirp: BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

A moment later, Skye stands, angry, her whole body tense. Her eyes are dead.

ROY

There you go, baby. Get as deep as you can.

(to Buck)

Are you ready yet?

Buck snaps the camera down onto the tripod, swiveling it around.

Skye crushes her invisible victim against her chest, ripping away at invisible clothes.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

The Killer holds Jessie in the same position, tearing away her skirt, blouse and bra. Jessie screams through her gag.

He picks her up, carrying her toward the bedroom.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Skye carries an invisible burden into the kitchen. Roy, Penny and Buck follow, Buck with the tripod in tow.

Skye throws her burden down on the kitchen table.

BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The Killer tosses Jessie down on the bed. She kicks and struggles, but it is no use. He has her pinned.

He tears off her panties. Jessie is completely naked.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Skye crouching slightly at the edge of the table. She slides her hips forward, a look of grotesque pleasure on her face.

The cadence of the heart monitor increases slightly.

BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....

PENNY

Heart rate's rising.

ROY

Come on, baby. A name. An address. Anything.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM

Jessie crying. The Killer grinding away.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Skye grinding away. The cadence of the heart monitor keeps increasing.

BEEP....BEEP....BEEP....BEEP....BEEP....BEEP....BEEP....

PENNY

Something's wrong.

ROY

She's okay. Come on Skye. You can do this.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The Killer's grinding, more and more violent.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Skye's grinding, more and more violent. The heart monitor is racing now: too fast.

BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...

PENNY

We need to bring her out.

ROY  
Just another minute.

Skye's hand goes to her thigh.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The Killer's hand at his thigh. He unsheathes his knife.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

The heart monitor is going extremely fast now. It sounds like Skye's having a heart attack.

BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..BEEP..

PENNY  
Roy!

ROY  
Come on. Just a name.

Skye raises her clenched fist over the table.

INT. JESSIE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The Killer raises his knife over the bed. Jessie screams.

ROY (V. O.)  
(distant)  
All I need is a name.

The Killer looks up. For the first time, his face is visible. It's completely unremarkable, the face of a plumber, or accountant. Except for the eyes, which are terrifying, unforgettable. Dead eyes.

THE KILLER  
Who the-

INT. THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN NIGHT

SKYE  
**-fuck are you!?!**

Roy, Buck and Penny recoil. The voice coming from Skye's mouth cannot possibly be her own.

SKYE (CONT'D)

**I said who the fuck are you, cunt?  
You think I don't see you? You  
think I don't feel you, you cunt?  
I'll fucking kill you! I'll fuck  
your ass and cut your throat!  
Bitch! Cunt! Whore!**

Roy grabs her by the wrist. She lashes out, knocking the smelling salts from his hand. Buck grabs her from behind. Skye bucks like a bronco, the two men struggling to hang on.

SKYE (CONT'D)

**I'll kill you! I'll fucking kill  
you, you cunt!**

Penny retrieves the bottle from the floor. She pops the cap, holding it under Skye's nose. Slowly, the bucking and cursing fades, then stops. Skye goes limp.

Roy, Penny and Buck exchange horrified glances. What the hell was that?

INT. THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN NIGHT

A pall has fallen over the house. Roy, Penny, Buck, Skye sit around the kitchen table. Skye looks exhausted.

BUCK

You're sure?

ROY

I'm positive. She never spoke a word in her life before tonight.

Skye points to her mouth, surprised.

ROY (CONT'D)

Yup. You sure spoke alright.

PENNY

It wasn't her speaking.

ROY

I know what you're thinking, and you can stop right now.

PENNY

You heard what he said, Roy! He knew she was there.

ROY

That isn't possible. The connection is one-way.

PENNY

How the hell would you know?

ROY

Because I've been doing this for now fifteen years!

PENNY

Bullshit! Every six months you stop by for a week until you get what you want and then off you go.

ROY

Don't blame me because you don't-

WHUMP! Skye brings her fist down on the table. She glares sternly at Penny and Roy, as if to say, "If I have to separate you two, I will."

Roy continues, calm as he can manage.

ROY (CONT'D)

Listen. In all the time I've known her, she's never been able to send things in the other direction. We tested her several times and she could never do it. Because the connection is one-way. That's how it works. I'm not sure what happened, but there's no way he could have known we were listening.

BUCK

Unless he is what she is.

ROY

What?

BUCK

It makes sense. In fact, I should have thought of it before. How careful he is about touching things. How he's never surprised. Always seeming to know what's going to happen next. Who does that sound like?

He looks at Skye.

PENNY

You think there's another one?  
Someone else like her?

BUCK

If there's one, why not two?  
(to Skye)  
What do you think?

Skye shrugs. No way to tell.

ROY

And you're sure you don't remember  
anything at all?

She shakes her head.

PENNY

So what do we do?

ROY

I don't know.

Skye reels. For a second, it looks like she's going to fall out of her chair again. She's really out of it.

PENNY

Alright. I'm putting you to bed.

With a parting glare at Roy, Penny helps Skye up the stairs.

A long, gloomy silence.

BUCK

By the way-

ROY

(snapping)  
What?

BUCK

I was going to say Tony Chen called earlier. Toxicology came back positive for something called fipronil. It's some sort of veterinary medicine. I'll check it out tomorrow.

ROY

Whatever.

Another gloomy silence. It's going to be a long night.

INT. THE RED PICKUP NIGHT

The truck lurches down a darkened country road. There is some kind of large, limp mass bouncing around under a tarpaulin in the bed.

In the cab, the Killer is lost in thought.

EXT. A GRAVEL DRIVEWAY NIGHT

The truck stops. The Killer hops down from the cab.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Skye is asleep. Buck reads a book by lamplight.

She sits up in bed. Buck looks up from his book. A moment later, she lies back down, going back to sleep.

EXT. A RUSTING STRIP MALL DAY

The fading sign over the door of the narrow storefront reads, "Mayhew Animal Care, Dr. Buddy Mayhew, DVM".

The door opens.

INT. MAYHEW ANIMAL CARE DAY

A shabby, claustrophobic waiting room, currently empty. Behind the formica counter stands a teenage girl, MARCI, sullen, dressed in all black. Marci is bored.

MARCI  
Can I help you?

BUCK  
Is Dr. Mayhew in?

MARCI  
Bud!

BUDDY MAYHEW, mousy, middle-aged, balding, pops out of the doorway leading to the back of the shop.

BUCK  
Hey, Bud.

MAYHEW

Good to see you, Tom. Just a sec.

Mayhew disappears into the back.

Buck looks at Marci. She ignores him; completely focused on biting her nails.

Mayhew returns a moment later with a handful of papers.

MAYHEW(CONT'D)

Here. This is every product on the market that contains fipronil.

BUCK

What is it exactly?

MAYHEW

It's an insecticide. Mainly used in flea collars, though there are powders and creams and the like.

Buck scans the list. Marci scans it too, looking over his shoulder.

MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Are you on the clock?

Marci sighs contemptuously, stomping off to the back.

MAYHEW (CONT'D)

(apologizing)  
My brother's kid.

BUCK

What kind of animals would you use this on?

MAYHEW

Dogs. Cats. Rats. Cows. Horses. Birds. Anything that gets fleas, which is pretty much everything.

In the back of the shop, behind Mayhew, Marci pushes a cart up to a wall of cages.

BUCK

Is there any reason you might use it on a human being?

MAYHEW

Not unless they had fleas.

Marci opens a cage, pulling out a LARGE, WHITE RABBIT. She tucks it under her arm, then puts it on the cart. She goes to the next cage, repeating the process.

BUCK

Are there any side effects, or alternative uses, anything like that?

MAYHEW

Not that I know of. It's toxic in large doses, but if you're going to poison someone, there are a lot better ways to do it than...

Mayhew trails off when he realizes Buck is no longer listening. Instead, he is staring at Marci, who is still pulling rabbits out of cages.

MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Agent Buck?

Buck hops the counter, leaving the shocked Mayhew behind. He walks up behind Marci, watching her work. Marci glares at him. What's this guys problem?

BUCK

Pick it up.

MARCI

What?

BUCK

Show me how you pick it up.

MAYHEW

Go ahead, Marci. Show him.

Marci picks up one of the rabbits, carefully tucking it's head under her arm. Just like a football.

Buck fingers its ears. Long and SCOOP-SHAPED.

EXT. THE STRIP MALL DAY

Buck bursts out the door, cell phone plastered to his head.

BUCK

It's me. We need a list of every commercial rabbit breeder within a hundred miles, cross-referenced by age and gender. Start with the ones in Maryland. We got him, Roy.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD DAY

Roy drives the Caddy down a stretch of featureless two-lane highway. Buck stares at a map.

BUCK

Turn here.

Roy turns off one featureless road and onto another.

ROY

So who is this guy?

Buck reads off a sheet of paper.

BUCK

Jonathan Fitzgerald Dupree. White male. Age twenty-six. Unmarried. No criminal record.

ROY

And why are we driving all the way out to Nowhere to see him?

BUCK

Roy, I'm telling you. The football is a rabbit. I'm sure of it.

ROY

But how do you know he breeds them? How do you know that he doesn't work at a pet store or an animal shelter or something?

BUCK

That's a pretty good sign.

Roy looks to where Buck is pointing. There, on the side of the road, right next to a gravel driveway, is a SKELETAL OAK TREE. Just like the one Skye drew.

Roy stops the car. It sits for a moment in the middle of the road. Neither man is anxious to advance further.

ROY  
You realize, if he's anything like  
her, he knows we're coming.

Buck pulls out his pistol, resting it on his lap.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Here goes.

The Caddy creeps down the driveway, through the thick trees,  
drawing near a small farmhouse not unlike Penny's.

Buck and Roy scan their surroundings, looking for signs of  
life. Nothing.

Nearing the house, Roy and Buck discover a RED PICKUP  
blocking the gravel driveway. Roy parks behind it.

The house is completely shut up -- no one's home. Roy and  
Buck approach the front door, standing on either side,  
pistols drawn, ready for anything. Roy knocks.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Dupree?

Nothing. He knocks again.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Dupree? It's the police.

Still nothing.

Roy nods at Buck, who creeps down the porch, peering in the  
windows. They are old and grime-coated; he can't see shit.

Buck turns the corner, moving down the side of the house.

The back yard is devoted to row upon row of wooden rabbit  
hutches; there must be 100 rabbits here. Beyond that, the  
land slopes sharply upward, peaking in a SMALL RIDGE fifty  
yards behind the property.

A flicker of light up on the ridge. Buck barely has time to  
process it before-

BLAM! He goes down.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Tom!

EXT. THE TOP OF THE RIDGE DAY

The Killer works the bolt of his deer rifle, expelling one shell and loading the next. He puts his eye to the scope.

EXT. THE HOUSE DAY

Buck scrabbles on his hands and knees back toward the front of the house.

BLAM! A bullet hits the turf beside his head. Roy turns the corner, grabbing Buck by the belt, pulling him to safety.

They collapse onto the porch.

ROY  
Where is he?

BUCK  
Up on the ridge. Behind the house.

ROY  
Are you hit?

Buck turns his head. A trickle of blood flows from a wound in the side of his neck, just above the collarbone.

BUCK  
I think he winged me.

ROY  
We need to get pressure on it. Can you make it to the car?

BUCK  
(taking off his tie)  
He's got the car covered. We're pinned down, Roy.

ROY  
So what do we do?

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY DAY -- SCOPE VIEW

A black crosshair sweeps across Roy's Cadillac, waiting for someone to poke his head out.

The seconds pass. No sign of anything.

EXT. THE RIDGE DAY

The Killer lowers his rifle, frustrated. Where are they?  
And what is that distant BANGING sound he keeps hearing?

INT. THE KILLER'S HOUSE DAY

The place is gross. Musty furniture, knee-high piles of unopened mail, haphazard boxes of corncob bedding, cleaning solution and rabbit feed, etc.

BANG! The latch on the front door explodes as Roy kicks it in. He jumps inside, gun first. Buck staggers in after, holding his balled-up tie clamped down over the hole in his neck. Buck is on his cell.

BUCK

...requesting heavy backup.  
Suspect is carrying a high-powered  
rifle...

Roy moves into the kitchen, which is dominated by a wall of rabbit hutches. The rabbits are freaking out. Roy goes from window to window, closing blinds and drawing curtains.

EXT. THE HOUSE DAY -- SCOPE VIEW

Venetian blinds closing.

EXT. THE RIDGE DAY

The Killer lowers his rifle, frustrated. He slings the gun over his shoulder, making his way down the hill.

INT. THE KILLER'S HOUSE DAY

Roy sits down next to Buck, handing him a roll of paper towels. Buck tears of a wad of towels, replacing his blood-soaked tie. He winces at the pressure.

ROY

Are you okay?

BUCK

I'm fine. It just stings.

ROY

How long did they say?

BUCK  
Five minutes.

Roy sighs, sitting back.

ROY  
Look at us. Hiding in the dark  
like a couple of cockroaches.

BUCK  
When you write your next book, feel  
free to leave this part out.

ROY  
Actually, I was going to leave you  
out entirely.

Buck snorts. It proves infectious; a moment later Roy is chuckling with him.

THUNK. The laughing stops.

BUCK  
(whispering)  
What was that?

THUNK. Boots scuff the porch outside.

Buck and Roy raise their guns.

A shadow passes over the window. Roy pulls Buck off the couch, backing as far into the corner as they can get.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Bullets stitch the couch where Buck's head was a moment before.

BANG! BANG! Roy returns fire.

Silence. Sunbeams pour through the smoking holes in the curtain. Roy and Buck wait, listening.

A floorboard CREAKS. He's still out there. Roy creeps out into the middle of the room, leaving Buck in the corner.

Another THUNK.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Roy ventilates another window.

Suddenly, the careful scuffing turns into flat-out RUNNING, down the side of the house. Then, the CRUNCH of gravel.

Moments later, a truck ROARS TO LIFE.

Peering out the window, Roy watches the red pickup sideswipe his Caddy on it's way down the driveway.

He throws open the front door. Sunlight streams into the darkened house. In the distance, he hears SIRENS.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
What's going on?

ROY  
The cavalry's here.

EXT. THE KILLER'S HOUSE DAY

The front yard is full of police cars, blinkers flashing. Photographers and fingerprinters swarm over the grounds, documenting and bagging anything that isn't nailed down.

Roy kicks open the shattered front door, emerging from the house. He is in a shockingly good mood.

ROY  
Buck!

BUCK  
Yeah.

Buck lies on a stretcher in the back of an ambulance, where EMT #1 is sewing up the gash in his neck.

ROY  
How is he?

EMT #1  
Lucky. Half an inch to the left and we'd be bagging him. All he needs is a few stitches.

ROY  
Great. Get this. We just checked the basement. It's like a slaughterhouse. Two full bodies, a man and a women. And heads everywhere. Maybe as many as thirty. We also found a dozen bottles of bleach, including one marked "Fipronil". Looks like he was using it to clean out the rabbit cages. He must have grabbed the wrong bottle when he went to wash the bodies. The asshole finally made a mistake.

BUCK  
Did they find the truck?

ROY  
No. He got away. But we know who  
he is now. He can't hide for long.  
We got the fucker on the run!  
(to EMT #1)  
How muck longer do you need him?

EMT #1  
Ten minutes.

ROY  
Well hurry up. I need to buy this  
man a drink.

EXT. THE RED PICKUP DAY

A narrow country turnpike, surrounded by thick trees. The truck passes a sign reading "Patuxent River State Park"

The Killer drives, blank-faced, alone with his thoughts. His left hand strokes the gigantic silver pistol on his lap.

EXT. A SECLUDED CAMP SITE DAY

A long line of camping plots sit above a bend in the Patuxent River. Despite the perfect weather and beautiful view, the plots are deserted except for a single, modest RV. If this guy came looking for privacy, he has found it.

The red pickup cruises up the gravel road, past the deserted plots. Nearing the RV, it glides to a stop.

INT. THE RV DAY

A scruffy CAMPER lounges in his cramped kitchen/living room/bed room, puffing a pathetically small joint, listening to a Phish album on his portable stereo.

KNOCKING on the door.

CAMPER  
Go away!

The KNOCKING returns, more insistent.

CAMPER (CONT'D)  
I'm paid up through Sunday!

The KNOCKING turns into BANGING.

CAMPER (CONT'D)  
Fucking rednecks.

He pauses the stereo, stashing the joint in the cupboard. After a few waves of his hand and a liberal spritz of Glade Potpourri, the Camper reluctantly answers the door.

EXT. THE RIVER DAY

Across the river and several hundred yards downstream from the camp site. The sun is setting, and the light is making the water sparkle like a diamond necklace. Gorgeous.

Blam.

A sound like a distant gunshot, though it could be something else: a firecracker, a car back firing. The report soon fades, and the quiet beauty of the river at twilight returns.

INT. THE KITCHEN NIGHT

Two bottles CLINK. Roy and Buck each take a healthy swig, finishing their beers. Except for the bandage peeking out of Buck's shirt collar, he looks to be fine.

A few feet away, Penny and Skye are preparing dinner, Penny straining potatoes, Skye chopping garlic.

Roy is still in a shockingly good mood.

ROY  
Alright. Who wants another one?

PENNY  
I'll wait until dinner.

ROY  
Skye?

PENNY  
Shh. She's trying to concentrate.

Skye smiles. Penny is right. Skye slices garlic like a surgeon; carefully drawing her huge kitchen knife down through the bulb, producing the perfect, paper-thin slice.

ROY  
Fine. Buck, have another.

BUCK  
I'm okay.

ROY  
Says who?

INT. THE RV NIGHT

The Camper's body stares emptily at the ceiling. The Killer throws a satchel onto the stubby kitchen counter.

INT. THE KITCHEN NIGHT

Roy hands Buck another beer, which he reluctantly accepts.

ROY  
Jesus, Buck. We're supposed to be celebrating.

BUCK  
I'll celebrate when we catch him.

ROY  
We have his name. We have his picture. We even his wallet with all his credit cards. He's on the ropes, Buck. What more do you want?

BUCK  
I'll celebrate when we catch him.

INT. THE RV NIGHT

The Killer pulls a metronome out of his satchel. He sets it on the counter, starting the oscillator.

TICK.....TICK.....TICK.....TICK.....TICK.....

He lays back in his seat, closing his eyes.

INT. THE KITCHEN NIGHT

Skye carefully slices another insanely thin piece of garlic.

BUCK  
Look, you're missing my point.

ROY  
Then explain it to me.

BUCK

I just want him off the street. A guy like this, desperate, with nothing to lose. There's no telling what he might do.

Skye flinches. For a moment, she just stands there, out to lunch. The Killer must have cut himself shaving.

A second later, she resumes chopping. Only now the knife is IN HER LEFT HAND.

ROY

You think he's going kill again?

Skye surveys her surroundings:

Roy and Buck are at the edge of the room, several feet away. Penny is likewise out of reach, still straining potatoes. But Buck's beer is right on the edge of the counter, less than a foot from her. He's going to come get it eventually.

Skye continues chopping, biding her time.

BUCK

Yes. I do.

Buck leans toward the counter, reaching for his beer. Skye stops chopping, hand tightening on the knife. Just a little closer.

ROY

Whereas before we found him he was a total choir boy.

Buck forgets all about his beer.

BUCK

Jesus, Roy! I'm just disappointed we couldn't bring him in. What's so strange about that?

Skye starts cutting again, eyes burning a hole in the back of Buck's head.

Finished with the potatoes, Penny looks over to see how Skye is doing with the garlic. She pauses. Why is Skye suddenly chopping garlic so carelessly? And why is she using her left hand?

ROY

Buck, we had a major breakthrough today...

PENNY

Roy.

ROY

Plus, you managed to walk away from another fire fight...

PENNY

Roy.

Buck reaches toward the counter.

ROY

If you don't consider this a good day, then I don't know what-

Buck's hand closes on his beer. Skye seizes the moment. The knife comes up.

PENNY

(screaming)

Roy!

Buck turns just in time to see the knife whistling toward him. He flinches, and it saves his life -- the blade slashes his wrist instead of his throat.

Buck's beer shatters on the floor.

Skye lunges, stabbing at his stomach. Buck stumbles backward, falling on his ass. She dives at him, and suddenly Buck is flat on his back, straining with all his might to keep her Skye from plunging the knife into his eye.

The contest fight only lasts a few seconds before Skye is back on her feet, slashing at the approaching Roy. He pulls up short, keeping a safe distance.

Buck seizes the moment to roll sideways, springing to his feet.

Skye brandishes the knife, snarling like a mad dog, rage filling her dead eyes.

Buck creeps toward her, holding his bleeding arm. Roy circles to his right, trying to get behind her.

Skye looks from Roy to Buck. She is outnumbered, outsized, and has lost the initiative.

She puts the knife to her own throat. Penny SCREAMS.

Thankfully, Buck and Roy get their before she can cut. A three-way struggle in the middle of the kitchen, Skye kicking, bellowing, gnashing her teeth.

The knife falls, burying itself inch-deep in the floor.

INT. THE KITCHEN NIGHT

Roy sits at the table, bandaging the gash in Buck's arm.

ROY

This looks pretty bad. We should get you to a hospital.

Buck nods dumbly. Penny comes down the stairs, pale as a ghost.

PENNY

He wants to talk to Tom.

ROY

I thought she was asleep.

PENNY

She was. But he's back.

Roy and Buck look at each other. Buck trudges up the stairs.

Penny watches him go, fresh tears coming to her eyes. Roy tries to put his arms around her, but she gives him a savage shove.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You did this to her. You do it again and again, and I always let you. I always let you.

She wails away, punching him in the chest and shoulders. Roy takes it all, refusing to let go. As Penny runs out of steam, he reels her in, until she is crying on his shoulder.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM DAY

Buck closes the door. Skye sits upright on her bed, arms tied to the frame, staring at Buck through cold, dead eyes.

SKYE

**You're alive.**

BUCK

You've got shitty aim. Let her go.

SKYE

**You're alive because I've chosen you. As my Witness. I have much to tell you.**

BUCK

You want to talk to me? Turn yourself in. We'll talk face to face. Just let her go.

SKYE

**Don't you want to know my name?**

BUCK

Jonathan Fitzgerald Dupree.

SKYE

**Not my birth name. The name I had before my birth. The name of the task God has given me. You see, I-**

BUCK

We have your picture, you know. It'll be all over the news tonight.

SKYE

**That doesn't matter. Now listen-**

BUCK

I'm not listening to shit, Jon. Not until you let her go.

SKYE

**Let her go? Why should I? She belongs to me. Can't you see that? We are two of a kind.**

BUCK

Bullshit. She's nothing like you.

SKYE

**How would you know? I've looked through her eyes. I see her from the inside. In a hundred years you could never know her the way I do.**

BUCK

Maybe so. But I know you. I've studied you, Jon, and others like you. I'm sure you think you're special. Some kind of prophet, or avenging angel, or whatever.

(MORE)

BUCK (CONT'D)

But you're just another lonely,  
pathetic loser taking out his mommy  
issues on innocent women. You have  
an amazing gift, Jon, a gift that  
could change the world, and you've  
wasted it. She's nothing like you.

Skye smiles; a cruel, arrogant smile.

SKYE

**She's not a virgin, you know. Does  
that disappoint you? I bet you  
were hoping to be her first. I  
know I was.**

Buck grabs her by the hair, his face inches from hers. He  
has never been this angry in his entire life.

BUCK

Let me give you some advice. Run.  
As fast and as far as you can. If  
you go now, maybe you can escape  
the net closing around you. But if  
you come near her, I swear to God  
I'll fucking kill you.

SKYE

**You kill me? You Kill Me? I am  
the Flaming Sword! I am Egypt's  
Sorrow! You think you can stop me  
from fucking this little cunt?**

WHAP! Buck backhands Skye in the mouth.

INT. THE RV DAY

The Killer awakes with a start.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM DAY

Skye blinks. Her eyes clear. The Killer is gone.

She winces at the pain in her jaw. A drop of blood runs down  
her lip. She has bitten her tongue.

BUCK

Oh, Jesus. I'm sorry.

Buck loses it. He puts his arms around her, tears rolling  
down his cheeks.

A KNOCK at the door. Buck quickly wipes his eyes.

BUCK (CONT'D)  
Just a second!

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY NIGHT

Buck finds Penny and Roy waiting in the hallway.

ROY  
Everything okay?

BUCK  
He's gone. For now. We need to call O'Neill. Have him send over some extra manpower as soon as possible.

ROY  
You think he's coming for her?

BUCK  
I'm sure of it.

PENNY  
How do you know?

BUCK  
I just know.

INT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

Buck in the passenger seat. Penny driving. Both alone with their thoughts.

INT. THE EMERGENCY ROOM NIGHT

An ER NURSE sews up Buck's arm.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY DAY

Penny walks out of Skye's room, carrying a tray. In the hallway, she passes Buck and two tough-looking cops, GALLO and DAWES. Both wear latex exam gloves.

BUCK  
This is her room. The three of us will take turns watching her. Don't go in unless it's an absolute emergency.

INT. THE KITCHEN DAY

Buck leads Gallo and Dawes down into the kitchen.

BUCK

Use the downstairs bathroom only.  
The upstairs is for her. You can  
take off your gloves in there, but  
otherwise, you should wear them at  
all times. Any questions?

GALLO

Yeah. Why do we have to do all  
this? What's wrong with her?

BUCK

Nothing.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Dawes and Gallo are playing poker.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Skye is asleep, still trussed to the bed.

Buck sits in the corner, cleaning his gun. He looks totally  
strung out. The last few days have taken a serious toll.

A KNOCK. Roy comes in, holding two beers. He hands one to  
Buck.

ROY

Everything okay?

BUCK

Fine. You checking up on me?

ROY

Not just you. You're not the only  
one who worries about her.

Roy stumbles over to the seat next to Buck.

BUCK

Are you drunk?

ROY

Getting there.

Roy takes a long swig from his beer. Buck puts his on a nearby table, unopened.

ROY (CONT'D)

It takes a month, you know.

BUCK

What does?

ROY

The connection. It takes a month or so to wear off. Even after we catch them, we have to stay up with her a while 'til she starts sleeping through the night again. A month at the least. And with this guy still around, who knows?

Roy shakes his head.

BUCK

You want us to kill him. That's what you're saying, right?

ROY

She'll never be safe with him alive. We put him in a cell, he has the rest of his life to come after her. No. If we get a shot, we have to take it.

BUCK

We'll get a shot, alright.

ROY

You're look like shit. Why don't you get some sleep?

BUCK

I'm fine.

ROY

Suit yourself.

Roy leans back in his chair. His eyes close. In a moment, he is asleep. Buck goes back to cleaning his gun.

INT. A GREASY SPOON NIGHT

Late evening. The sun has just gone down. The Killer sits at a rickety table, nursing a cup of coffee.

The place is nearly empty: just some truckers eating dinner at the counter, watching a baseball game on a 12-inch TV set.

Suddenly, the game yields to a red graphic: BREAKING NEWS!

A news anchor talks over a graphic: a portrait of the Killer under the title "Killer At Large". A smaller title announces "Reward Offered".

At the counter, a TRUCKER stirs. Like the Killer, he is a huge man, thick-necked, with a tattoo of BATWINGS on one forearm. He looks back over his shoulder at the Killer.

Without looking up, the Killer stands, drops a few coins on the table, and leaves.

The trucker finishes his coffee, casually following him out the door.

EXT. THE GREASY SPOON NIGHT

The Killer walks calmly to his pickup. Twenty feet back, the trucker follows. He pulls something from his pocket: a sawed-off pool cue handle. He slides the makeshift club behind his back.

TRUCKER  
Hey! Hey buddy!

The Killer walks to the passenger side of his truck. He opens the door, rummaging around in the glove compartment.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)  
Buddy, you forgot your wallet.

The trucker turns the far side of the truck, his grip tightening on the hidden cue handle.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)  
I said you forgot your...

A flash of movement. The trucker freezes, trails off. A moment later, he hits the ground.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

Roy sits at the kitchen table, playing cards with Dawes and Gallo.

Penny walks down the stairs, holding a tray. She drops it in the sink, rubbing her eyes.

ROY  
Everything okay?

PENNY  
Fine.

Penny rummages through her purse, hurling compacts and check books aside. She is clearly agitated about something.

ROY  
Is something wrong?

PENNY  
We're out of milk.

ROY  
Sorry?

Penny finally locates her car keys.

PENNY  
We're out of milk. I just... need  
to go to the store for a while.

ROY  
Dawes? Do you mind?

Dawes puts down his cards.

EXT. A COUNTRY BACK ROAD NIGHT

A police cruiser rumbles down a two-lane farmer's market road. The driver is OFFICER NEIL WHEAT, baby-faced, scrawny, with a thin mustache that fails to make him look mature.

Riding shotgun is OFFICER JIM ENDERS, calm, canny, authoritative: everything Wheat isn't yet.

The cruiser turns a bend. Its headlights sweep across a RED PICKUP stopped on the shoulder, hazards flashing.

The cruiser stops. The two officers look at one another.

ENDERS  
Call it in.

Wheat flips a switch. The blinkers go on. A moment later, the floodlight paints the truck bluish-white.

The rear window is fogged up, but the silhouette of the driver is visible behind the wheel.

WHEAT  
 (on radio)  
 This is Henry Two. We have a  
 possible ID on that red pickup that  
 came through this morning...

As Wheat talks to the dispatcher, Enders is out of the  
 cruiser, approaching the truck, revolver in hand.

ENDERS  
 Step out of the truck!

The figure behind the wheel doesn't move.

ENDERS (CONT'D)  
 Sir, please step out of the truck!

The passenger side door of the truck CREAKKKKKKS open. The  
 driver still hasn't moved. Spooked, Enders inches closer.

ENDERS (CONT'D)  
 Out of the vehicle! Now!

As Enders reaches the driver-side door, his eyes widen.

ENDERS (CONT'D)  
 What the-

BLAM! Enders falls. In the cruiser, Wheat drops the radio.

WHEAT  
 Shit!

Wheat fumbles for his weapon. He falls out of the cruiser,  
 throwing himself up against the chassis.

WHEAT (CONT'D)  
 Drop the weapon!

Wheat doesn't wait for the weapon to drop. He unloads his  
 clip into the driver of the truck, who slumps forward.

When his pistol starts clicking, Wheat wrestles the shotgun  
 out of the cruiser.

WHEAT (CONT'D)  
 I'm coming, Jim!

Wheat runs to his fallen partner, his shotgun trained on the  
 bullet-riddled driver, who is extremely dead.

Enders lies on his back, hands clamped down over his  
 collarbone, gasping for breath.

WHEAT (CONT'D)  
Just hold on.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Roy's cell phone RINGS. He picks up, still focused on his card game.

ROY  
Yeah?

A second later, the card game is forgotten.

ROY (CONT'D)  
You're sure? Hold on.

Roy puts a hand over the phone.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Buck!

Buck appears at the bottom of the stairs.

ROY (CONT'D)  
They got him.

BUCK  
What?

ROY  
Ten minutes ago. Some Montgomery county guys stopped the truck. There were shots fired. They killed him.

BUCK  
They're sure it's our guy?

ROY  
They want us to come ID him. It's only a few miles from here. He was headed this way.

Buck frowns.

INT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

As Buck drives, worry and tension crease his face. He doesn't like this one bit.

INT. THE GROCERY STORE NIGHT

Penny and Dawes browse a selection of melons. Dawes looks royally bored.

EXT. THE CRIME SCENE NIGHT

Buck parks behind a line of county patrol cruisers, sitting on the shoulder, blinkers on. Enders is gone, though a large pool of red remains. A handful of COUNTY COPS laze around the site, drinking coffee, killing time.

BUCK  
Sheriff?

The man who steps forward is the SHERIFF, middle-aged, graying mustache, crew cut.

SHERIFF  
You must be Agent Buck.

Buck hands over his credentials.

BUCK  
How's your man? Is he going to pull through?

SHERIFF  
Just went into surgery. They said fifty-fifty. Least we got the guy.

BUCK  
Have you examined him yet?

SHERIFF  
We're still waiting on forensics. 'Til they get here, all we can do is hold up traffic.

BUCK  
Mind if I take a look?

SHERIFF  
Be my guest.

The Sheriff hands Buck a pair of Latex gloves.

The cab of the red pickup is a mess of spattered blood and bullet holes. The driver is slumped over the wheel. He is a big, thick man, shaved head, still extremely dead.

Buck gently pulls the corpse backwards against the seat, its head lolling sideways. The face is like hamburger.

Buck checks the corpses forearms. No barcode. Just a tattoo resembling BATWINGS. He frowns.

BUCK  
Sheriff?

The Sheriff wanders over.

SHERIFF  
Well?

BUCK  
Is the other patrolman around? The one who fired these shots?

SHERIFF  
Neil!

Officer Wheat appears, still shaking like a leaf.

BUCK  
This is the man who shot your partner, correct?

WHEAT  
Yeah. He shot Jim, Officer Enders, so I returned fire.

BUCK  
So you actually saw him shoot?

WHEAT  
Jim approached the vehicle, the guy shot him, and I returned fire.

BUCK  
But you clearly observed this man pull a gun and open fire?

SHERIFF  
Agent, what's the problem here?

BUCK  
It's the blood. There's not enough. This man has multiple hits to major organs. This truck should be a swimming pool. The way I see it, either his blood pressure was so low he was in shock, or-

SHERIFF

Or he was already dead.

BUCK

So are you sure you saw this man pull the trigger?

WHEAT

I was calling in the plates. It was out of the corner of my eye.

SHERIFF

Dammit, Neil!

WHEAT

But I know the shot came from inside the truck. I'm positive.

Buck scans the cab of the truck. He notices something.

BUCK

Was that door open?

WHEAT

The door? I don't know. I think-

Buck rounds the cab to the passenger side. He discovers a deer path leading back through the thick trees.

BUCK

I need a flashlight.

The Sheriff tosses Buck a Mag-Lite. He presses the button. The beam illuminates a set of boot prints in the fresh mud.

INT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

TIRES SQUEAL as Buck peels out into the road. He dials his cell phone.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Lying in bed, arms tied, Skye's eyes open. She sits up, alarmed. Something is wrong.

She tugs on the ropes binding her arms. They give a little bit. She wriggles, pulling again. They give a little more.

Skye goes to work.

INT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

Buck's phone purrs as he waits for Roy to pick up. He is driving like a maniac.

Roy's voice mail answers.

BUCK

Dammit!

He dials again. Each ring seems to take forever.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Pick up the phone, Roy!

INT. THE FARMHOUSE DAY

The PURRING of Buck's phone turns into the RINGING of Roy's. He is in the upstairs bathroom, washing his hands. The toilet is running.

Using his slacks for a towel, Roy finally answers his phone.

ROY

What is it?

INTERCUT:

INT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

BUCK

It's a trick. Where is she?

ROY

I'm just going to check on her.  
What's a trick?

BUCK

It wasn't him. It was a trick. To  
get us out of the house. Jesus.

ROY

Are you sure?

BUCK

Roy, he's headed straight for you!

ROY

Alright. Hold on. Gallo!

Roy heads down the stairs.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Gallo! We got a problem!

Roy pulls his gun from his belt, clicking off the safety.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Gall-

As his foot hits the kitchen floor, Roy is interrupted by a GIGANTIC KNIFE plunging into his gut.

Roy stands face to face with the Killer, watching helplessly as he snatches the gun away, tossing it across the room.

BUCK (V.O.)  
(on the phone)  
Roy? Roy?

The Killer knocks the cell from Roy's hand, crunching it under one massive boot.

He pulls the knife out, letting Roy crumple to the ground.

The Killer climbs the stairs.

EXT. BUCK'S CAR NIGHT

Buck tosses his phone on the seat.

He approaches an intersection. The light turns from amber to red. Buck floors it.

The car surges forward. Crossing traffic begins to move. He isn't going to make it.

Buck slams on the brakes, but it's too late. He skids through the intersection at 40 MPH, clips a Mazda, fishtails, and finally comes to a stop 30 feet down the road.

Buck rolls down the window.

BUCK  
(shouting)  
You okay?

MAZDA DRIVER  
You fucking maniac!

Buck floors it.

INT. SKYE'S BEDROOM    NIGHT

The door glides open. The Killer pads into the room, his hunting knife dripping blood.

He stops. Skye's bed is empty. The ropes lie in a heap on the floor. The window is open.

The Killer closes his eyes. A moment later they open again. The Killer puts his fist through the nearest wall. He is not happy.

INT. THE STAIRCASE    NIGHT

The Killer stomps back down the stairs. As he passes, he gives Roy a savage kick to the stomach.

EXT. THE BACK YARD    NIGHT

The Killer stalks out onto the darkened pool deck. He scans the back yard. Where is she?

He stares down into the blackness of the swimming pool. The cloudy water is completely impenetrable.

He moves off into the back yard.

Several seconds pass...

Then several more...

And several more after that...

Finally, a delicate hand snakes out of the pool. Carefully, silently, it pulls a towel down into the black water.

A moment later, Skye emerges from the water, a sopping wet towel wrapped around her head like a turban.

She runs into the house, locking the back door behind her.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

On her way through the living room, Skye passes the body of Agent Gallo, lying on his back with his throat slit.

In the kitchen, she finds Roy bleeding on the floor.

Skye GASPS.

Roy looks up. His eyes go wide.

EXT. THE BACK YARD NIGHT

The Killer looks up. His eyes go wide.

He runs for the back door.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

Fear in his eyes, Roy waves Skye away.

ROY  
(choking)  
Run, goddammit!

WHAM! Something heavy hits the back door.

WHAM! The lock begins to splinter.

With an anguished look at Roy, Skye bolts out the front door.

INT. PENNY'S CAR NIGHT

Penny is driving, doing roughly the speed limit. Buck streaks by her, doing roughly the speed of light.

PENNY  
Was that Thomas?

INT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

WHAM! The back door shatters. The Killer marches into the living room.

The front door hangs open. Glaring at Roy, the Killer strides back out into the night.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH    NIGHT

The Killer emerges just in time to see Skye disappear into the tree line across the street. He levels his gun.

BLAM! BLAM! The Killer runs down the front yard, across the street, and into the woods.

As he does, headlights appear at the end of the block. Buck's car roars up the street, skidding to a stop in front of the house. Buck jumps out.

INT. THE KITCHEN    NIGHT

BUCK

Roy!

Buck runs to his ailing partner.

ROY

(gasping)

She's across the street. Down in the woods. He's with her.

Fear crosses Buck's face. He pushes his cell phone into Roy's hand.

BUCK

Backup's on the way. Hold tight.

ROY

Don't let her down, Buck.

EXT. THE HOUSE    NIGHT

Headlights at the end of the block.

Buck runs out the door, across the street, and into the woods.

A few seconds later, Penny's car parks in the driveway.

INT. THE KITCHEN    NIGHT

Penny and Dawes enter carrying grocery bags. When Penny sees Roy, her grocery bags crash to the floor.



EXT. THE WOODS    NIGHT

Buck creeps along in the dark.

RUSTLING in the grass behind him. Buck wheels around, ready to fire. It is Dawes.

Buck points to the right. Dawes takes the hint, fanning out to Buck's side. The two men advance together through the brush, ten feet apart, muscles tense, eyes like satellite dishes. Still no movement.

BLAM! Dawes goes down.

Buck catches the muzzle flash out of the corner of his eye. He spins toward it.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Buck is answered by a GRUNT of pain and a CRASH of feet in the undergrowth. He hit something.

Buck advances quickly, pressing the advantage.

He emerges into a small copse of trees, just about where the muzzle flash came from. He flattens up against a tree, scanning his surroundings.

Behind him, a few yards away, the Killer slides out of the darkness. His right arm is pressed to his side over a spreading stain on his shirt. His left holds the pistol that killed the Camper.

The Killer trains the gun at Buck's head, taking careful aim. From this range, he can't miss. Buck needs a miracle.

Just then, two delicate hands close on the Killer's neck.

ZAP! Skin meets skin, and if what happened before was a shock, this is a lightning bolt. It's like 50,000 volts pass between Skye and the Killer, staggering them both.

The Killer's hand convulses, and he trips the gun's trigger.

BLAM! Buck turns just in time to be blinded by the muzzle flash. He staggers backward, helpless, rubbing his eyes.

The Killer reels in Skye's grip. The gun falls from his limp hand. She grinds her fingers into his flesh, her eyes burning. Whatever she's doing, it's working.

The Killer's drunkenly paws at her face, finally knocking the wet towel from her head.

Buck blinks, trying to clear the white sparks and purple explosions in his vision. He swings his gun left and right, looking for something to shoot.

As seconds pass, strength returns to the Killer's limbs. His breathing steadies. His right hand clamps down on the hands at his throat. His left goes to the knife at his belt.

Buck rubs his eyes. The sparks are gone, but he's still can't see anything. He strains to penetrate the blackness around him. He is totally in the dark.

The Killer's hand shakes and judders as the great, silvery knife rises slowly, haltingly over his head. Skye's eyes stare into his, unblinking, fighting him all the way.

Buck blinks one last time. He sees something: a faint glint of moonlight.

It'll have to do. Buck closes his eyes.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Then silence.

The next thing Buck sees is Skye and the Killer on the ground, side by side, both writhing in pain. The Killer bleeds from several gunshot wounds to the chest. Skye appears unhurt, except for the agony contorting her face.

Buck takes a deep breath. Aims his gun.

BANG! A bullet to the brain sends the Killer's body limp. Skye goes limp at the same time.

Buck picks her up, holding her in his arms like a groom crossing the threshold.

When her eyes open, she is crying. He brushes the tears away, kissing her. For a moment, they are the only two people in the world.

EXT. THE FARMHOUSE NIGHT

The street in front of the farmhouse looks like the precinct parking lot. Flashing lights everywhere. Penny paces back and forth, worrying herself sick.

Two MEDICS emerge from the tree line carrying Dawes on a stretcher. Penny falls into step alongside.

PENNY

What happened? Where are they?

DAWES

I don't know. I couldn't see.

OFFICER 1

Who's that?

He points into the woods. Buck and Skye step into the street.

PENNY

Skye!

Penny breaks into a run. She throws her arms around her daughter, crying her eyes out. Skye hugs back as best she can: the poor girl is exhausted.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

BUCK

We're fine.

PENNY

Roy! They're okay!

Up the street, Roy lies on a gurney, a massive pad of gauze taped to his abdomen.

He gives a thumbs-up to the EMTs standing watch over him. They shove him into the ambulance, slamming the doors.

Penny suddenly catches Buck in a hug, to his surprise.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Thank you. Thank you for saving her.

BUCK

Actually, she saved me.

Skye hooks Buck's arm with her own. They make a ridiculously cute couple.

OFFICER 1

Where's Dupree? Do you see him?

BUCK

I shot him. He's dead.

OFFICER 2  
You're sure?

BUCK  
I'm sure.

Just then, two EMTs appear out of the woods with the twitching, convulsing Killer on stretcher between them.

EMT #2  
We've got a live one here!

They drop him onto a gurney, hustling him into the back of an ambulance.

INT. THE AMBULANCE NIGHT

EMT #3 takes the Killer's pulse.

EMT #3  
He's in Vee Fib. Get the paddles ready.

EMT #3 pounds on the Killer's chest, trying to keep his heart pumping. EMT #2 charges up the defibrillator.

EMT #2  
Clear!

Before he can deliver the first jolt, someone reaches into the ambulance, turning off the defibrillator.

It is O'Neill.

O'NEILL  
Good work, boys. You did everything you could to save him. Everything. Understand?

The two EMTs look at each other.

INT. A HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM DAY

Roy lies in a hospital bed, surrounded by a wall of flowers and greeting cards. He looks awful, but he's alive.

A knock at the door. It is Buck, carrying a small brown paper bag.

ROY  
Who let you in here?

BUCK  
I bribed a nurse.

ROY  
(lying)  
You look like shit.

BUCK  
You should talk.

ROY  
What'd you bring me?

Buck drops the bag on a nearby table.

BUCK  
Steak sandwich with mozzarella,  
waffle fries and a beer.

ROY  
Oh, God.

Roy digs into the bag like a starving hobo. Buck takes a seat next to the bed.

ROY (CONT'D)  
(mouth full)  
So any news?

BUCK  
Some. We saw Dawes at Gallo's funeral. He's up and walking. Same with that guy from county. Looks like they'll both be fine. Oh, and the review board ruled.

ROY  
(chewing)  
Oh yeah?

BUCK  
"Appropriate use of deadly force."  
It was unanimous. I'm probably going to get a commendation.

ROY  
How are you sleeping?

BUCK  
Better than I thought I would.

ROY  
Penny tells me she disappeared  
again.

BUCK  
A couple days ago. At least she  
left a note this time.

ROY  
I wonder when she'll be back?

BUCK  
When she's ready, I guess.

ROY  
I guess.

Roy puts down his sandwich. He stuffs the remains of his lunch in the bag and throws it to Buck.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Toss that on the way out, will ya?

Buck stands, preparing to leave.

ROY (CONT'D)  
You know, Leon was right about you.

Buck turns. That was the nicest thing Roy ever said to him.

BUCK  
He always is.

Roy lays back, closing his eyes. Buck shows himself out.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT DAY

Buck walks in the front door. A frenetic ball of fur streaks toward him. He bends over and picks it up. It is a puppy; a golden retriever.

Skye appears, wearing a pair of paint-encrusted dungarees. The beige wasteland of Buck's apartment is now a riot of color: paintings, sculpture, Aquarian knickknacks, etc.

BUCK  
How was your day?

Skye puts a hand to his cheek. He jumps slightly as skin meets skin, which makes her smile that mysterious smile.

FADE OUT.