

WEAPONS

Written by

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Full White	11/27/2023
Full Blue	03/26/2024
Pink Pages	04/10/2024
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Green Pages	05/07/2024
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A1

OVER BLACK

A1

MADDIE - 11 years old - speaks in the low hushed tones of a campfire tale.

MADDIE (V.O.)

This is a true story that happened right here in my town two years ago. A lot of people die in a lot of really weird ways in this story but you won't find it in the news or anywhere like that because the police and top people in this town were like so embarrassed about not being able to solve it that they covered everything all up. But if you come here and ask anyone they'll all tell you the same thing that I'm going to tell you now. This story starts at my school.

1

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

1

Maybrook elementary stands proud in its little suburban plot. Yellow buses unload throngs of kids in the morning rush.

MADDIE (V.O.)

Maybrook elementary is kindergarten through fifth grade and every grade is split into two classes. So two first grades and two second grades and like that. So this one Wednesday is a normal day for the whole school. There was this one class of second grade... or third graders. Third grade kids. And they had this teacher who was new. She was teaching there for her first year. Her name was Justine Gandy.

2

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE / HALLWAY - DAY

2

We follow JUSTINE (30s) as she makes her way through the river of youthful chaos. We don't see her face, but we can feel her good mood. She likes these kids.

MADDIE (V.O.)

On this day she was going to her classroom just like every morning. But today was different.

JUSTINE reaches a classroom door and steps into...

3 **INT. SCHOOLHOUSE / CLASSROOM - DAY**

3

The room is EMPTY.

MADDIE (V.O.)
Today, none of her kids were there.

She moves to her desk and drops her bag. We stay behind her observing the rows and rows of unoccupied desks. It's eerily quiet here after the mayhem of the hall.

MADDIE (V.O.)
Every other class at that school had all their kids. Even the other third grade class that Mrs. Belt taught was full. But Mrs. Gandy's room was totally empty. Well... not totally.

The camera slides to reveal a LITTLE BOY, ALEX sitting at a desk that Justine's body was blocking from view.

MADDIE (V.O.)
There was one boy there. His name was Alex Lilly and he was the only kid in a class of eighteen that came to school that day. And do you know why?

The camera pushes past Justine toward Alex. He looks neither sinister nor innocent. Just blank.

A4

CUT TO BLACK.

A4

MADDIE (V.O.)
He was the only one there because the night before at 2:17 in the morning, every other kid in Mrs. Gandy's third grade class woke up...

4

INT. SUBURBAN HOME / BEDROOM - NIGHT

4

An unlit, empty child's bedroom. The red alarm clock by the bed reads 2:17.

MADDIE (V.O.)
...Got out of bed...

Pan from the bed to the open door.

5 **INT. SUBURBAN HOME / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

5

Pan from the staircase through the living room.

MADDIE (V.O.)
 ...Walked downstairs, opened the front door...

6 **EXT. SUBURBAN HOME / FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS**

6

Pass through the front door to the empty dark lawn.

MADDIE (V.O.)
 ...walked across the front yard and into the dark... *And they never came back.*

CUT TO BLACK.

George Harrison's Beware of Darkness begins.

7 **EXT. VARIOUS NEIGHBORHOODS - NIGHT**

7

MONTAGE: A series of super wide shots of SUBURBAN HOMES lit by moonlight and street-lamps. Each shot lingers on the house - still and calm, until the FRONT DOOR OPENS and a CHILD EMERGES.

Every child RUNS ACROSS THE YARD with the same CURIOUS POSTURE - body erect, ARMS OUTSTRETCHED in a downward V like someone holding heavy bags. They run like the naked Vietnamese girl covered in napalm from that iconic photo.

We watch 17 DIFFERENT HOUSES and 17 DIFFERENT CHILDREN make their escape into the dark that George is warning us about.

WEAPONS

A8 **BLACK**

A8

MADDIE (V.O.)
 All the parents and people at the school were really sad and upset.

8 **I/E. HOUSES MONTAGE - DAY**

8

MONTAGE:

WS - kids on their bikes observe parents talking with investigators as uniformed police file into the home.

Through a bedroom window we look down on a k9 unit searching a backyard.

WS from the woods looking toward the back of a home as 3 officers fan out and step into the trees.

Upstairs hallway: One officer steps up a ladder to the attic, as another in a bedroom squats to look under the bed.

Push through a front door toward the yard as parents talk to officers.

REVERSE - Push past parents and officers and land on a CU of a ring Camera.

Push on a cheap desk cam set up through a window and it's reverse.

OTS another mounted security camera as another family in the front yard gesture to officers.

PUSH past kids playing to focus forest between two houses.

MADDIE (V.O.)

The police looked everywhere. They could tell that the kids all left at 2:17 because like half of the houses had alarms that got tripped when they walked outside. Some of the kids even got videoed by the houses that had cameras. But the cameras only showed the kids walking out into the darkness. They didn't show where they went after that.

9

I/E. EMPTY MONTAGE - DAY

9

MONTAGE: Empty school hallways. Empty classrooms. Empty playgrounds. Empty parking lots. Empty gym. A shrine of flowers and candles sits near an empty front entrance.

MADDIE (V.O.)

The whole school took like a bunch of days off so they could do a big investigation. The big question that no one could answer was 'why?'. A lot of the kids in other classes were friends with the kids who went missing but they all said that none of those kids ever told them what they were gonna do.

10

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

10

PUSH through crowded halls with busy detectives.

MADDIE (V.O.)

The police talked to Alex a lot. They asked him why his classmates did what they did but he told them he didn't know.

11

INT. POLICE STATION / OFFICE - DAY

11

PUSH IN on ALEX on a sofa between his parents. Two detectives lean forward peppering him with questions.

MADDIE (V.O.)

They asked him if there was a plan that all the kids discussed the day before but he said if there was he never heard it.

(MORE)

MADDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They asked if there was a tv show that all the kids watched where someone ran away like that but he said that if there was he never saw it.

12 **INT. POLICE STATION / BULLPEN - DAY**

12

Move through another busy bullpen.

MADDIE (V.O.)

They didn't just talk to Alex.

PUSH IN on the door to an INTERROGATION ROOM.

13 **INT. POLICE STATION / INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

13

JUSTINE sits opposite two detectives.

MADDIE (V.O.)

They also talked to Mrs. Gandy a whole bunch but she also didn't know anything and couldn't help them. She said everybody was acting completely normal up until that day. She had no idea what could have happened.

14 **EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY**

14

The school sits empty. No cars in the lot. No activity.

MADDIE (V.O.)

For almost a whole month they kept the school closed while they did their big investigation but after a while they had to open everything back up so the kids that didn't disappear could learn again.

15 **EXT./INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - NIGHT**

15

MATCH CUT: The parking lot is full of cars. People file in, push through the halls to gather in the auditorium.

MADDIE (V.O.)

One night before they did, they had a big meeting at the school with all the teachers and all the parents.

(MORE)

MADDIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There were a bunch of counselors
and people like that to help
everyone figure out how to feel and
how to be sad together I guess.
This is where the story really
starts.

A16

CUT TO BLACK.

A16

JUSTINE

16

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

16

JUSTINE sits in the front row, clenching her jaw, eyes on her lap. The STRESS of the last weeks is plastered all over her.

On stage, a COUNSELOR in a tweed coat addresses the room.

COUNSELOR

What's important is that we don't judge our grief. There's not a right or a wrong way to grieve. We might experience emotions that we don't like. Emotions besides just sadness. It's important not to judge ourselves when we feel emotions like anger. Anger is a very healthy part of the grief cycle. It can be especially powerful in instances of abandonment. There are often--

ARCHER (O.S.)

What does that mean?

Heads turn as ARCHER (40's, Powerful) rises.

COUNSELOR

I'm explaining that--

ARCHER

Especially powerful in... in instances of *abandonment*? Are you saying we should be upset with Matthew for what happened to him?

COUNSELOR

I'm saying it wouldn't be abnormal to--

ARCHER

Cause I'll tell you right now that
you might call what happened
abandonment but I don't. I don't
see it that way!

Grunts of approval from others.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

I see something that doesn't make
any sense at all. We're talking
about seventeen kids. In one
classroom. And none of them talked
about it? And we got forty parents
in here and none of us saw it
coming? I wanna know what happened
in that classroom! Why just her
classroom? Why only hers?

PARENT 1

Yes!

COUNSELOR

I'm picking up a lot of emotion,
and that's--

ARCHER

So you'll forgive me if I'm not
particularly interested in hearing
any more out of you. I want to hear
from Justine Gandy! She's here! I
wanna know exactly what she was
doing in there!

JUSTINE shuts her eyes and takes a deep breath.

-- JUSTINE stands at the podium before a sea of angry
expectant faces.

JUSTINE

I... First I want to just say how
very sorry I am for all of...
what's happened. I know there's
nothing I can say to make this
better. The truth is, I want an
answer just as bad as all of you. I
love those kids. I know it's--

PARENT 2

Why was it only your class?

JUSTINE

... I know it's not the same as how
you love them but...

(MORE)

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
believe me I really loved those
children and I've spent every
waking moment since... that day
asking myself what could have
happened. I wish I had some insight
or explanation but I just don't
have one. I just--

PARENT 3
How can that be possible?!

PARENT 2
You have to know something!

PARENT 1
*She should be locked up until she
tells us what happened!*

PRINCIPAL MARCUS (50's, gentle) pats JUSTINE on the shoulder
and steps in front of the podium.

MARCUS
OK now, that kind of thing is
really not called for. I'm serious.
Mrs. Gandy is here as an affected
member of this community and she's
hurting just like all of us--

PARENT 3
*You're either negligent or
complicit!*

PARENT 2
She's a suspect!

17

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - NIGHT

17

JUSTINE hurries to her car, flanked by the COUNSELOR and
MARCUS. Behind them angry parents spill from the school.

PARENT 1
Where are our children?

PARENT 2
You're just going to leave?

Marcus turns to head them off.

MARCUS
That's enough. Everybody needs to
give us some space.

JUSTINE reaches her car and gets in. The COUNSELOR leans down, holding her door.

COUNSELOR
Do you have anyone you can stay
with tonight?

She shakes her head and shoves the keys in the ignition.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Then I'd recommend going straight
home and laying low. This feels
like it could turn--

She yanks the door shut and starts the engine.

18 **EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT**

18

Justine steps from her car and walks through the parking lot toward a liquor store. She eyes a few people milling about at the end of the lot but they don't notice her.

A HOMELESS MAN named JAMES stands by the entrance.

JAMES
'Scuse me miss, you spare any
change? I'm trying to get on a bus
to meet my brother in--

19 **INT. LIQUOR STORE - MOMENTS LATER**

19

Justine moves through the aisles to the rear of the shop. She knows exactly where she's headed.

She snatches a bottle of vodka and heads back toward the counter when her phone rings. She digs it out.

JUSTINE
Hello?

Only breathing.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Hello?

More breathing. Justine stops.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Who is this?

VOICE
You better watch your FUCKING--

She hangs up, rattled.

20 **EXT. LIQUOR STORE - MOMENTS LATER**

20

Justine steps timidly from the store, fully paranoid.

JAMES

Ma'am. I'm trying to catch a bus to
get to my brother in Portland. You
spare anything?

She's too focused on a DARK FIGURE in an IDLING PICKUP TRUCK
across the street to answer.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Really anything helps.

JUSTINE

Sorry.

She moves toward her car.

21 **EXT. JUSTINE'S HOME - NIGHT**

21

Justine cuts the engine and checks her mirrors. NO PICKUP in
sight. Just a quiet suburban street.

She steps from her car and moves up the yard toward her door.
She spots a COUPLE walking toward her from down the block and
she picks up the pace.

22 **INT. JUSTINE'S HOME / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

22

She enters and locks the deadbolt immediately. Without
turning on the lights, she moves to the window and peers
through the curtains.

She waits until the couple enters her view. In a few moments
they amble past without a glance her way.

She exhales.

A23 **INT. JUSTINE'S HOME / KITCHEN - LATER**

A23

CU on the TELEVISION. SHARK TANK is on and some idiots are
pitching bullshit.

Justine moves about the kitchen fixing herself a stiff vodka
soda when...

DING DONG.

She freezes. Listens.

TELEVISION (O.S.)

So what do you say sharks? Who wants to *dive in* with us and make summer vacation... *a day at the beach?*

She takes a few timid steps to the edge of the kitchen and peeks through the living room to the front door.

DING DONG.

TELEVISION (CONT'D)

OK, I like this because I have kids and every time we go to the beach it's always a big production getting them to put on their--

She turns it off.

JUSTINE

Hello?

No sound but the clock on the mantle.

She moves closer to the door.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Yes?

No answer.

She takes a final step and looks through the peephole.

POV: Empty porch. No one.

She moves to the window.

POV: Nothing. Empty porch. Empty street.

She sighs and lets go of the curtain.

She makes her way back to the kitchen, grabbing the remote off the--

BANG! BANG! BANG!

She startles, drops the remote and wheels around.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Jesus fucking-- WHAT??!

No sound.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
WHO'S THERE?!

KITCHEN: She digs through a junk drawer and pulls out a little can of PEPPER SPRAY.

LIVING ROOM: She strides to the front window, pissed now. She yanks back the curtain.

No one on the porch. No one in the yard.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
OK, FUCK YOU!

23 **EXT. JUSTINE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT**

23

Justine throws open her front door and strides out.

No one in sight. She scans the block and then she sees it.

Her CAR. Someone PAINTED its side in big SLOPPY RED LETTERS:

W-I-T-C-H

She stares.

24 **EXT. JUSTINE'S HOME - DAY**

24

The sun is up and a hungover Justine scrubs the 'WITCH' with a large soapy sponge but it's not coming off.

She steps back and sighs. *Fuck it.*

25 **EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY**

25

The 'witch-mobile' sits parked in a crowded lot, sticking out like a sore thumb.

MARCUS (PRE-LAP)
It's actually an exceptional package because it's going to cover you through the summer break as if you were still on full time.

26 **INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

26

Justine sits across the desk from PRINCIPAL MARCUS.

MARCUS

And that was never going to be something you'd be doing this year. So that's really good.

She forces a smile.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You're gonna keep your health insurance and if you don't mind me saying, there's a lot of mental health specialists on the plan. Some of them are very--

JUSTINE

I just need to work, you know? I just need to fill my days with... I need to work.

MARCUS

I sympathize.

JUSTINE

Even if I were just substituting here and there when the need arises. I wouldn't even mind--

MARCUS

Justine, the scene last night was just proof that we have a lot of emotional parents here. People aren't being rational. And the fact is right now... you are a lightning rod.

JUSTINE

Will I have my job in the fall? Can I... Can I come back then?

MARCUS

Let's worry about the fall in the fall. For now I think it's best if you keep some distance from this place until folks have time to sort themselves out.

She looks out the window at children on the playground.

JUSTINE
How is Alex? Is he--

MARCUS
Alex is doing well. He's in Mrs. Belt's class and we've been advised that the best thing we can do for him is to keep him on a routine. Keep his life as normal as possible.

JUSTINE
But is he doing alright?

MARCUS
He's quiet.

JUSTINE
He was always quiet.
(earnest)
I'd like to speak with him.

MARCUS
Justine. We've had this conversation before. That's out of the question.

JUSTINE
I'd feel so much better if I could just--

MARCUS
Right there! That's the problem. You'd feel so much better! I just explained to you that the best thing for Alex is that we try and keep his life as normal as possible. He's been scrutinized by the press. He's had investigators ransack his house. He's been traumatized. Let's try and put Alex first, yes?

JUSTINE
If you are implying that I don't care about--

MARCUS
The issue isn't you caring or not caring.
(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

The issue here is that you have established a bit of a pattern in which you overstep professional lines with the students.

JUSTINE

Oh my God. Here we go. I do not over--

MARCUS

You know that it's not appropriate to hug students.

JUSTINE

Forgive me! I hugged a crying little boy. Lock me up!

MARCUS

You know that *driving a student home* is not professional.

JUSTINE

She missed the bus! She lived close to me!

MARCUS

It's not appropriate!

Marcus takes a breath.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Justine I know all of this comes from the fact that you care. I know that you obviously aren't a threat to these kids. But you have to realize that you aren't a parent. You are a teacher. There's a difference. And for that reason, no you cannot talk to Alex Lilly.

JUSTINE

It's just...

She searches for it.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

We're the only ones left.

Marcus's face says it all: *Not happening.*

27

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

27

Justine walks to her car amidst the end of day rush as kids push into minivans and load onto buses.

In her wake we catch a couple of icy stares from adults and pointed whispers from children.

28

INT. JUSTINE'S CAR / SCHOOL SIDE LOT - DAY

28

IN HER CAR: Justine sits and watches the children. An unexpected wave of emotion hits her. She fights the urge to cry when...

She spots ALEX drifting silently amongst the flow of kids, head down, alone in the crowd.

Justine leans forward, melting at the sight of him until he steps onto a waiting bus and is gone.

29

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

29

Justine stands in the parking lot behind an officer who squats and rubs at the paint on her car.

OFFICER

Yeah that's really on there huh?

JUSTINE

I've been receiving phone calls as well. Threatening ones.

OFFICER

Oh yeah? Think the caller might be responsible for this?

JUSTINE

I don't know. Maybe, maybe not.

OFFICER

Probably kids did it if you ask me. Hell, I used to do stuff like this when I was in school. Tee pee houses. Ding dong ditch. Never wrote 'witch' on a car but a buddy did smear some of his own--

JUSTINE

I don't think it was kids.

Across the lot she sees ANOTHER OFFICER, PAUL (30s) getting into his squad car. They LOCK EYES and share a loaded beat. He WAVES AWKWARDLY. She half waves back.

OFFICER

Well whoever it was, best we can do is file a report. Hard to say if insurance will cover it. If you'd seen whoever did it in the act we could file it as a level 2--

30

INT. BAR - NIGHT

30

Percy Sledge's At the Dark End of the Street plays as Justine sits at the bar, nervously sipping a vodka soda. PAUL ENTERS and makes his way over. She brightens and stands.

JUSTINE

Hey! Hey, hey, hey!

PAUL

Can we hug?

JUSTINE

Of course we can hug. Jesus.

They do, but it's awkward. They sit. She notices his right hand is bandaged.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

What happened to your hand there?

PAUL

Oh... Just, stupid work accident thing. Nothing.

JUSTINE

Drink?

(waving at bartender)

Tony?

She half stands to get his attention.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Tony?... He'll be here in a sec.

PAUL

It's fine. Not in a rush.

Beat.

JUSTINE

So... Wow. I really didn't expect
you to come.

PAUL

What do you mean? You invited me.

JUSTINE

Yeah but you're not supposed to
come. You're supposed to tell me to
fuck off or something.

He side eyes her.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

I'm glad you came! I just didn't
expect it. That's all I'm saying.

PAUL

Well, I'm glad you texted. I've
been thinking about you a lot. I
wanted to call but I wasn't sure
if... that was gonna make things
worse somehow or...

JUSTINE

I'm not like some little delicate
flower that would wilt if I saw
your name pop up on my phone.

PAUL

I know that. I didn't mean...

Justine waves at Tony again but he's not seeing her.

JUSTINE

He'll be over here in a second.

She futzes with her hair. He fidgets.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

What would you have said? If you had called?

PAUL

I don't know. I don't know what I would have said. Just that I'm thinking about you and... anything I can do, you know.

JUSTINE

Uh huh.

PAUL

What's going on? How are you?

JUSTINE

I'm shitty. I'm like completely shitty.

PAUL

I'm sorry to hear that. I can't even--

JUSTINE

Tony! Hey! My friend wants a drink.

Tony sidles up.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

PAUL

Hi. Uhhh... I'll just have a coke.

Tony steps away and she rolls her eyes.

JUSTINE

A coke?

PAUL

Yep.

JUSTINE

OK. Fine, whatever.

PAUL

I'm sorry to hear you're shitty. What's going on? I mean, obviously I know what happened with everything but what's going on with you after? What's happening?

JUSTINE

I'm basically fired. They have me
on leave until next year.

PAUL

Paid leave?

JUSTINE

Yeah.

PAUL

Doesn't sound that fired.

JUSTINE

Everybody thinks I'm a witch.

PAUL

I don't know if *that's* true.

JUSTINE

Go look at my car.

PAUL

I hope you didn't *drive* here.

JUSTINE

Why do you hope...

She leans back and stares at him, reproachful.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Don't be an *asshole*, Paul.

PAUL

I'm not being an *asshole*. I'm
concerned for you.

JUSTINE

I don't need your fucking concern!
I'm not drunk!

PAUL

OK. Got it. So what, someone
vandalized your car?

JUSTINE

They wrote *witch* across it. So yes,
for your information everybody does
think you're a... think *I'M* a
witch. So yes.

Tony returns with his coke.

PAUL

Thanks.

Paul stares at his coke, picking his words.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Can I give you a little--

JUSTINE

Tough love?

PAUL

No just... Some thoughts from
someone who knows you very well.

She stares at him: *Go ahead, shoot.*

PAUL (CONT'D)

Get out of your own head. People
aren't all thinking about you. The
whole town isn't aimed at you.

JUSTINE

I think you might actually be wrong
about that.

PAUL

You have a tendency to get a little
...woe is me.

JUSTINE

Wow.

PAUL

And a little paranoid, and one
thing that I know has never helped
is *this*.

JUSTINE

What's *this*? What?

PAUL

A lonely drinking pity party.

JUSTINE

(big fake smile)

I'm not lonely, *you're* here.

PAUL

You know what I mean. And I can't
stay.

JUSTINE
(mischievous)
Donna know you're here?

PAUL
No.

JUSTINE
Really?

PAUL
We're not... Happening right now.

JUSTINE
Wooooooooooooo.

PAUL
It's not a big deal.

Justine smiles, genuine this time.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You're ridiculous. Oh my God!
Look at you. You're beaming!

JUSTINE
Have a real drink with me!

PAUL
Justine.

She leans in, flirty and smiling.

JUSTINE
Have a real drink with me! Come on!

He stares at her.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Pleeeeease?

Justine sits in a loose t-shirt on a chair by her dresser, sipping from a mug. A sly smile creeps across her face and she scoops up her phone, does some tapping and then sets it on the dresser.

A beat later her phone starts to play the peppy opening piano bars to Harry Nilsson's 'Gotta Get Up'.

REVEAL: PAUL asleep in bed. He stirs, eyes her and rolls the other way.

PAUL

No!

Justine smiles, sips her coffee and watches him.

HARRY NILSSON

*Gotta get up! Gotta get out! Gotta
get home before the morning comes!*

PAUL

Oh my God! Noooo! You haven't
changed a bit!

She loves it.

32

INT. CAR - DAY

32

Justine drives and Paul rides shotgun.

JUSTINE

What do you got going on today?

PAUL

Work. Working. All day. Till late.

JUSTINE

OK I believe you! Jesus.

PAUL

What?

JUSTINE

Don't worry I'm not gonna be like
spam texting you all day and night.
I learned my lesson.

PAUL

Justine, I'm just saying I'm
working.

Beat.

JUSTINE

How's work?

PAUL

It's fine. It's whatever.

JUSTINE

Wow. Hope that's not the general
vibe over there.

PAUL

What are you talking about?

JUSTINE

Well there are seventeen missing
children out there and I'd like to
think that the people in charge of
finding them aren't like 'whatever'
about their jobs.

He sizes her up.

PAUL

OK first of all, I'm not a detective, I don't know if you know that. Second of all, I'm hungover as shit. I didn't realize I was getting grilled on the investigation.

JUSTINE

I'm not trying to grill. I'm just wondering where things are, that's all.

PAUL

Is *that* why you wanted to see me?
Is that what this is?

JUSTINE

No! Paul I wanted to see you because I *wanted* to see you. I'm just asking now about this cause... I'm just *asking* about it.

A33

EXT. BAR - DAY

A33

She pulls into the bar parking lot and stops behind his car.

PAUL

We're on it.

JUSTINE

You're on it?

PAUL

Yep.

JUSTINE

OK well what a load off. You're on it.

PAUL

Why are you coming at me like this?

JUSTINE

I don't know, because I'm sick of being public enemy number one around here! And I don't see that changing until somebody gets some answers! So forgive me for taking an active interest! Am I supposed to just solve this caper myself?

Paul takes a deep breath.

PAUL

I appreciate that this has to be really hard for you and I know it can be... a *challenge* for you to sit still, but right now you really need to take it easy. No one is slacking. You just... take care of yourself. Don't let yourself get all...

JUSTINE

Get all what? Get all Justine about it?

PAUL

Catch up on some TV. Hibernate. Get some exercise. Leave the investigating to the investigators.

She nods.

JUSTINE

OK.

PAUL

OK? Good. It was great to see you.

JUSTINE

You too.

He smiles awkwardly and gets out of the car. She watches him unlock his truck.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Suck my dick.

33

EXT. JUSTINE'S CAR / SCHOOL SIDE LOT - DAY

33

Once again, Justine sits behind the wheel, as kids flow toward their buses/cars.

She scans the tide of little heads until she sees ALEX moving quietly through the crowd like yesterday.

34

EXT. STREETS - LATER

34

Justine follows the SCHOOLBUS past suburban homes.

It rolls to a stop and Alex disembarks.

She parks and watches him make his way down the block.

35

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - DAY

35

MOMENTS LATER: She follows on foot as Alex heads toward the last house on the block.

Unlike its neighbors the LAWN HASN'T BEEN MOWED in over a month. The WINDOWS are CURTAINED SHUT, and the car in the driveway is COATED IN DUST.

As ALEX crosses the yard and ascends the steps, the DOOR SWINGS OPEN and an ADULT stands in the dark of the entrance.

Alex slides into house and the adult pulls the door shut.

She stares at the house. *This feels off.*

MOMENTS LATER: Justine rings the doorbell. No response.

She rings again and presses her ear to the door.

Nothing. She steps back and looks at the nearby window but the curtains are drawn.

JUSTINE

Hello?

She steps off the porch and sees another window has NEWSPAPER TAPED OVER THE GLASS.

Intrigued, she moves around to the side of the house. She steps through the tall grass and rounds the corner moving along the tiny side-yard.

Another window taped over with newspaper. She moves to it and sees a SMALL GAP between the newspaper and the frame.

She presses her face to the glass and peers inside.

POV: The room within is dark and cluttered. At first she can only make out the dim shapes of furniture. A dining room table off to one side, stacked with dishes and boxes, a television on a small cabinet. Trash strewn around the floor.

Then she sees it...

On a SOFA in the center of the room sit an ADULT MAN AND WOMAN. Their posture is rigid and they're completely still.

Justine gasps and steps back KNOCKING over a RAKE beside her that lands with a LOUD CLACK.

She freezes, holding her breath. Hesitantly she moves her face back to the window.

The couple on the couch HAVEN'T MOVED an inch. *There's no way they didn't hear her.*

Justine backs away and turns toward the street to leave.

36

INT. JUSTINE'S CAR - LATER

36

Justine drives through town on her phone.

JUSTINE

...and I'm telling you that
something very very wrong is going
on in that house.

Beat.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Hello? Did you hear what I said?

MARCUS (O.S.)

I heard you. I'm just struggling to
comprehend this call. I explicitly
told you *not* to interact with Alex.

JUSTINE

Well technically I didn't interact
with him--

MARCUS (O.S.)

You followed him home? You rang his
doorbell repeatedly and then spied
through a window?

JUSTINE

Can we focus on the fact that
there's something--

MARCUS (O.S.)

Justine if I wasn't clear with you
before, let me do so now. I want
you to *leave him alone*.

Beat.

JUSTINE

Why were his windows taped up?
Doesn't that seem strange to you?

MARCUS (O.S.)

Probably because nosy people take
it upon themselves to walk up and
peek through them! Are you kidding?

(MORE)

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

JUSTINE

Marcus--

MARCUS (O.S.)

I'm going to do you the courtesy of
forgetting that this phone call
ever took--

MOMENTS LATER: Justine drives faster.

PAUL (O.S.)

You've reached Paul. Leave a
message.

JUSTINE

Hey Paul it's me. Uhh... Not
stalking you. Believe it or not I'm
calling about a professional issue.
I'm considering reporting a
potentially unsafe living situation
involving one of my students.
Wondering if you can help me get
this in front of the right people
when I do make the call. Uhh...
Hope you're good? Ugh. Just call me
when you can.

37

EXT. STREET - LATER

37

Justine parks in front of a liquor store.

38

INT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

38

Justine enters, nods to the clerk and makes her way down
toward the rear of the store. She doesn't notice a WOMAN IN A
BRIGHT RED JUMPER step in after her.

As Justine slowly winds her way down the aisles, we can tell
that the woman in red is not shopping. She's FIXATED on
JUSTINE and moving with purpose.

Justine pauses, looking for her favorite bottle when the
woman closes the distance, GRABS HER BY THE HAIR AND SHOVES
HER to the ground.

JUSTINE

Aaaahhh!!

She rolls to face this woman who stands over her, quivering with rage, mascara running down her cheeks.

DONNA
You fucked him?!

Recognition hits Justine.

JUSTINE
Donna...

DONNA
You fucked him?

JUSTINE
I didn't--

DONNA
Yes you did! I know you did!

Donna snatches a BOTTLE OF VODKA from the shelf and TWISTS THE CAP OFF.

JUSTINE
He said you weren't together!

DONNA
LIAR!

She holds the bottle upside down POURING the VODKA onto her.

JUSTINE
Stop!

DONNA
You got him drunk! He was trying to be nice and you got him drunk!

CLERK (O.S.)
Hey! None of that!

JUSTINE
Donna stop!

Donna continues pouring like a maniac.

DONNA
Look what you did!

The CLERK arrives and pulls Donna back.

Justine sits in shock, SOAKED in vodka.

39 **INT. JUSTINE'S HOME / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

39

CU on a vodka poured over ice.

Justine sips a stiff one on her couch as garbage plays on TV.

STAIRCASE: She stumbles her way up the steps.

40 **INT. JUSTINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

40

We PUSH IN through the door on her ASLEEP IN BED.

Something's off. Menacing score rises.

Push tighter on her face.

FLASH: An empty school hallway.

Justine twitches, troubled.

FLASH: The same hallway - we're moving down it now.

Justine furrows her brow, the dream taking hold.

41 **INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DREAM**

41

Justine is walking down the empty hall. The only sound is her heels on the hard floor echoing off the walls.

Something feels wrong. She checks over her shoulder as she goes but sees no one. Ahead, the door to her classroom slides closer.

42 **INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS**

42

Justine enters and moves toward her desk. The camera slides along with her just like in our cold open, but now the room is dark and there are no empty seats. Rows of children sit silently with their heads down against their desks.

As Justine stops at her desk the camera continues its slide, bringing ALEX into view.

It's hard to see him clearly in the darkened recess of this room, but as we push around Justine and dolly forwards he slowly sits upright and we begin to see...

His face is covered in thick garish MAKEUP. Bright red lipstick paints a joker's smile on his mouth. Smears of blue sit on his eyes and smacks of rouge pop on each white cheek.

His face warps into a menacing smile and then suddenly he lets out a blood curdling--

43

INT. JUSTINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

43

Justine opens her eyes, and sits up in bed, gasping to catch her breath.

She takes in the room around her. All is as it was. She holds her chest, waiting for the adrenaline to subside.

She stares at the open door and into the hallway beyond. Did she see something move out there?

She stares at the dark space, waiting for any movement - any sound...

After a moment, she's satisfied. She's alone.

She lays back down and her eyes drift up and she sees it...

POV: A WOMAN looks down at her from above. The ceiling surrounds her waist as if it was a pool of water that she was standing in, UPSIDE DOWN. She's craning her neck 'up' to look down at Justine and her face is CAKED IN BRIGHT MAKEUP - garish eyeliner and lipstick. She wears a BRIGHT GREEN RUNNING JACKET and large gold earrings. Gravity has no effect on her and her hair frizzes out and down her shoulders.

She rubs her palms together and SMILES with a manic PREDATORY GLEE at Justine who can only gasp in mute terror.

Justine blinks and the woman is gone.

She sits up in bed, gasping.

44

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - LATER

44

POV: In a CAR SIDE MIRROR we see ALEX walking home.

Justine steps from her little white car with the big red letters as he approaches.

JUSTINE

Alex! Hi.

Alex freezes, eyes wide with alarm. Not the warm reception she was hoping for.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

How are you?

(beat)

(MORE)

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

I wanted to say hi cause... I've been thinking about you a lot and I wanted to make sure you're OK.

ALEX

I'm OK.

JUSTINE

Yeah?

He clearly doesn't want to have this conversation.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Cause I know this has been a really hard time for me and I can't imagine how it must have been for--

ALEX

I have to go.

He walks past her toward his house.

JUSTINE

Hey. Hang on please.

He doesn't stop.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Alex! I just want to make sure you're alright! I just want to make sure everything at home is--

Alex whirls on her.

ALEX

DON'T FOLLOW ME!

She freezes, startled. Alex turns and jogs across the yard. The front door is opened by the SAME MESSY ADULT.

Justine gathers her resolve and follows him.

-- She rings the bell once more.

JUSTINE

Hello? It's Ms. Gandy. I'd like to talk to you.

She knocks on the door.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Hello? ... I know you're home!

Nothing.

45

INT. JUSTINE'S CAR - DUSK

45

-- **HOURS LATER:** The sun is setting. She sits slouched behind the wheel, SWIGGING from her BOTTLE, watching the house. A SOCCER MOM walking a dog passes by and she lowers her drink.

46

INT. JUSTINE'S CAR - NIGHT

46

-- **HOURS LATER:** It's full dark. The neighborhood is silent. Justine SLEEPS at the wheel. We watch her deep breathing for a beat and then the camera slowly slides, rotating behind her to bring the HOUSE into view through the windshield.

After a long beat the FRONT DOOR OPENS.

For another beat nothing happens. And then...

A FIGURE emerges and crosses the yard. As they pass under the street lamp, we can tell it's a WOMAN with a RAGGED DRESS and messy TANGLED HAIR. She walks briskly and directly at us with her ARMS OUT AT HER SIDES at an unnatural angle, as if she were holding two large pieces of invisible luggage. She advances until she comes to a stop outside Justine's window.

The figure stands just outside the door but her head is out of view.

She seems to be studying Justine who sleeps on, oblivious.

The woman moves to the rear of the car out of sight. The camera holds on Justine but we hear shuffling off screen and then...

CHUNK. The unmistakable sound of the PASSENGER DOOR OPENING, then the sound of ragged breathing as she SITS INTO THE CAR.

We hold on Justine's sleeping face as a pale FILTHY HAND enters frame holding a large, dangerous looking PAIR OF SCISSORS.

The scissors reach slowly toward Justine's unconscious head and for a moment we're certain something dreadful is about to happen, but then...

SNIP. The hand cuts a large chunk of JUSTINE'S HAIR that lands on her shoulder.

The hand recoils from frame and then reappears without the scissors, PLUCKS UP the HAIR and withdraws once more.

CUT TO BLACK.

ARCHER

47

INT. ARCHER'S HOME / MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - MORNING

47

Archer is a very large man in a very small bed. The room he's sleeping in belongs to a 10 year old boy. Posters of athletes and television shows line the walls. Toys clutter the tabletops.

The door opens slightly and his WIFE pokes her head in.

WIFE
I'm going to work.

Archer opens his eyes but makes no reply. She doesn't wait for one. She leaves.

He sits up and rubs his face. His eyes land on a PHOTO on the desk of HIS SON'S LITTLE LEAGUE TEAM. 14 boys in uniform flanked by Archer and another smiling coach.

He lifts the photo, focusing on his child, MATTHEW, smiling at the camera.

48

INT. ARCHER'S HOME / KITCHEN - MORNING

48

Archer sits at the kitchen island watching his LAPTOP. On screen is FOOTAGE from his front door RING CAMERA.

For a beat it's just a nighttime shot of the yard and street beyond. Then in the foreground, the DOOR SWINGS OPEN and MATTHEW, in pajamas, trots down the porch and into the yard.

He RUNS WITH HIS ARMS OUT AT HIS SIDES in the same unnatural posture of the woman who cut Justine's hair. He moves in a straight line across the grass, past the sidewalk and into the street. In a few more steps he's swallowed by the DARK.

Archer PAUSES the footage and stares at the darkness. He REVERSES it. Matthew is sucked back into view, toward the camera and disappears into the house.

He PRESSES PLAY and watches his son run away once more.

49

EXT. ARCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

49

We look at the same yard but this time without the grainy digital filter. Archer steps from the front door, dressed for work and makes his way toward his truck. He studies the yard as he walks, forced to imagine Matthew's trajectory.

50

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - LATER

50

Archer emerges from his F150 and strides toward a HOUSE UNDER CONSTRUCTION. Workers bustle around and we can tell his presence is acutely felt. He's the boss.

A man in a hardhat approaches with a friendly nod.

FOREMAN

I've been calling you all morning,
boss!

ARCHER

Yeah I had a snag on the way over.
How's things looking?

FOREMAN

Little bit of a chaotic morning.

ARCHER

Oh?

FOREMAN

Marc goes to pick up the shingles
and they didn't have 'em in cause
the order never got placed.

ARCHER

Shit... Goddammit that's... OK I'm
sorry 'bout that.

FOREMAN

We got the owner coming Friday for
a walkthrough and we're still gonna
have a tarp on the roof.

ARCHER

That's on me. That's my bad.

FOREMAN

Then I show up and see Alvin
painted the doors and the trim
there with the paint you ordered
and...

ARCHER

Yeah?

FOREMAN

They wanted forest green and that's
red.

ARCHER

What?

FOREMAN

Look.

Sure enough the shutters and door are red.

ARCHER

Goddamn... Wait a minute did they
ship the wrong--

FOREMAN

I checked the order. They sent what
we asked for we just asked for the
wrong--

ARCHER

OK, I fucked it up. I'll take it
back and get the right one.

The Foreman has more bad news but doesn't want to say it.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

What? ... What is it?

FOREMAN

We didn't get the Canyon Drive
project.

Archer deflates.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

They said you no showed on the
consult.

ARCHER

I had a--

Archer suppresses a swell of rage.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

I've had a lot going on. I'm... You
can't win 'em all.

FOREMAN

Boss, if you need any of us to pick
up some slack, that's what we're
here for. I know you've been going
through a whole--

Archer walks away.

ARCHER

I'll take the paint back and I'll
get those shingles sorted out.

LATER: Archer drops two heavy cans of RED PAINT into the bed of his truck and slides in the driver's seat. His face is pure tension as he fires up the engine.

51 **INT. POLICE STATION / FRONT LOBBY - DAY**

51

Archer sits in the FRONT LOBBY. Officers file in and out. A handcuffed man with a bloody head sits nearby. ED (50's Captain) emerges from the back hall.

ED

Mr. Graff.

Archer stands.

52 **INT. POLICE STATION / CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER** 52

Archer sits across the desk from Ed.

ED

We follow up with every one of those calls. I can assure you that as we speak we have officers aggressively pursuing every lead that comes through this station.

ARCHER

What about the feds? They got nothing new?

ED

There continues to be a very healthy information exchange and so I can tell you with full confidence that they are also pursuing every lead aggressively.

ARCHER

What's happening with the K9 units? I haven't heard about any K9 reports in a long time.

ED

That's because they don't report to you.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

Mr. Graff I understand your passion and I don't mind having these conversations with you because, God forbid if it was my child, I'd be demanding answers too. But I need you to trust me that we're--

ARCHER

She's still not talking huh?

Ed sighs. He was hoping to avoid this line of talk.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

She *knows*.

ED

I disagree with that.

ARCHER

You're aggressively following up on every lead? And yet she's just... walking around free as a bird. I mean have you done *any* looking into her whatsoever?

ED

Extensively, yes we have.

ARCHER

Well then you know about her past? *Huh?* Cause I did some digging and I found a whole lot.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
She had a DUI here two years ago!
Did you not see that? Did you know
she was let go from the last school
she taught at for *inappropriate*
behavior?

ED
With a member of the faculty.

ARCHER
She's a troubled person!

ED
What is it you think she knows?
What do you think it is she's not
telling us?

Archer stares out the window and seethes.

ED (CONT'D)
Those kids walked out of those
houses. No one pulled them out. No
one forced them. I don't see
anything whatsoever that points to
that woman.

He studies Archer.

ED (CONT'D)
What do you see that I don't?

Archer eyes him. He's about to fire back--

CUT TO:

53

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

53

Archer stands in the audience at the PTA meeting. We're up
close with him now, unlike last time this scene played out.

ARCHER
I see something that doesn't make
any sense at all. We're talking
about seventeen kids. In one
classroom. And none of them talked
about it?

(MORE)

ARCHER (CONT'D)

And we got forty parents in here
and none of us saw it coming? I
wanna know what happened in that
classroom!

PARENT #1

Yes!

54 **EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER** 54

Archer moves with the tide of an angry crowd after Justine.

MARCUS

That's enough. Everybody needs to
give us some space.

As Justine gets into her car, Archer veers from the flow. He hops into his pickup and starts the engine.

55 **EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT** 55

She pulls into a liquor store and he parks across the street. He watches as she exits her car and walks to the door of the shop, ignoring JAMES asking her for change.

56 **INT. ARCHER'S TRUCK / JUSTINE'S HOME - LATER** 56

Archer sits in his truck at the end of the block watching Justine tote her bag of booze into her house. Pan back from him in the cabin and land on the buckets of red paint in the flatbed.

57 **EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT** 57

Grainy footage of the yard. Matthew striding into darkness.

58 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / KITCHEN - NIGHT** 58

Archer sits at his kitchen island nursing a beer and watching the video. Rewinding it. Watching it again.

59 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 59

Archer wakes in his son's bed. He sits up.

The room around him is dark and silent.

PUSH IN on the PHOTOGRAPH of his son's little league team. Archer leans in and studies it, brow furrowed.

Archer rises and moves to the photo, lifting it from the desk. The CHILDREN are MISSING. It's just an image of him and another coach on either side of an EMPTY SPACE that should have fourteen kids.

His breathing quickens and he sets the photo back on the desk. He turns and sees...

HIMSELF asleep in the bed.

He looks to the clock. 2:17

The BEDROOM DOOR OPENS abruptly. Archer turns and stares at it. No one is there. But then he hears...

FOOTSTEPS. Descending the staircase.

ARCHER

Matthew.

60 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT** 60

Archer emerges from the bedroom and reaches the top of the stairs just as the footsteps finish their descent.

61 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS** 61

Archer descends the steps quickly, fully alert. He moves into the kitchen.

ARCHER

Matthew?

He hears the turning of a deadbolt and rushes to the mouth of the kitchen to see the FRONT DOOR SWING OPEN on its own.

62 **EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 62

He exits the house and spots MATTHEW in the yard trotting away from him, ARMS OUT AT HIS SIDES like the video.

ARCHER

Matthew!!!

He runs after his child, across the yard and into the street.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Stop!

Matthew traverses the opposite yard and darts between two houses, ENTERING A DARK PATCH OF FOREST. Archer flies across the lawn and pushes into the woods.

A63 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

A63

ARCHER

Matthew!

He presses deeper and deeper into the woods, and soon it's almost pitch black.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Wait!

B63 **EXT. ARCHER'S HOME - NIGHT**

B63

Archer pushes through the tree line only to find himself on another lawn facing an empty street across which is, impossibly - HIS OWN HOUSE.

As he struggles to comprehend how his house could be here, on the wrong side of the woods, he spots MATTHEW running up the front yard and INTO THE OPEN DOORWAY.

ARCHER

Wait!

As Matthew disappears inside, Archer is about to give chase but stops when LIGHTNING STRIKES AND DISTANT THUNDER booms. He looks up to see...

FLOATING some 30 feet in the SKY above his 'house' is a GIGANTIC, YACHT-SIZED, AR-15 ASSAULT RIFLE.

Archer stares dumbly at it, mesmerized. It floats there, towering above the trees. A moment later numbers appear in RED GLOWING FIRE on its stock: 2-1-7.

Archer swallows, collects himself and continues.

63 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

63

Archer enters. It's darker than it was when he left here a minute ago. He pauses to listen...

Feet ascending the staircase.

ARCHER

Matthew!

He darts to the the steps and climbs.

64 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 64

Archer moves down the hall toward Matthew's room. The door is closed.

A massive wave of dread hits him and he pauses.

ARCHER
Matthew?

Nothing. Archer places a trembling hand on the knob. He swallows and pushes it open.

65 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS** 65

From the doorway he can see MATTHEW IN BED, wrapped in sheets, with his BACK TO THE DOOR.

Archer paces cautiously across the room. He places a timid hand on Matthew's shoulder, pulls him to reveal...

MATTHEW'S 10 year old face staring at him, blank.

Emotion floods Archer and he kneels.

ARCHER
Matthew!

Matthew only looks at him.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Where are you?

No response.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Please. Where did you go?

No response.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Please talk to me. I'm... I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I was too tough on you. I'm sorry if I didn't love you good enough. I... I'm sorry I hit you. But if you come back I can be better. I can--

We CUT from Archer's pleading face to Matthew in bed but this time it's NOT MATTHEW under the sheets...

It's the WOMAN from Justine's vision. Her teeth are yellowed and long and her garish makeup almost pushes her into clown territory, but her expression is pure wicked glee. It says I FOOLED YOU.

Archer recoils and ...

66 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - MORNING** 66

... WAKES in the very position the woman was in a moment ago.

He flails, tosses off the sheets and scrambles back against the wall, clutching himself.

Sun comes through the windows. The PHOTO on the desk shows the ENTIRE TEAM smiling into the camera.

67 **INT. ARCHER'S HOME / DINING ROOM - MORNING** 67

Archer sits at the table across from his wife, the two of them picking at their food.

He eyes her. She stabs at her eggs radiating a silent hostility. Archer sets down his fork, thinks for a long beat and clears his throat.

ARCHER
You know I was--

She slides her chair back, snatches up her plate and strides into the kitchen.

Archer deflates.

68 **EXT. ARCHER'S HOME - MORNING** 68

Archer exits the house, ready for work.

Something dawns on him. He pauses at the door, drops his duffel bag and walks slowly across the yard tracing Matthew's trajectory. His eyes are fixed on something in the distance.

What's he looking at?

We pan around him, landing over his shoulder and see...

A RADIO TOWER rising above the tree line.

Matthew ran toward that tower.

69 OMITTED 69

70

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

70

Archer spreads a MAP on his kitchen table and slides his finger across it until he finds HIS HOME.

ARCHER

Here.

He circles HIS HOUSE with a felt tip pen. Then he slides his finger to the TOWER just four blocks away and circles that. He produces a RULER and carefully aligns it with his house and the tower.

He INKS A LINE from his HOUSE to the TOWER and then EXTENDS IT through the commercial district, through neighborhoods and all the way to the edge of the map.

He steps back and looks at the line which crosses almost half the town. He stares at the potential trajectory of his son looking for anything significant. Nothing stands out.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Come on.

71

EXT. ERICA AND GARY'S HOME - DAY

71

Archer parks in front of a nondescript house. He steps out and jogs to the front door and rings the bell.

Eventually a middle aged woman, ERICA, opens the door.

ERICA

Hello?

ARCHER

Hi how are you ma'am. I'm Archer
Graff. I'm Matthew's--

ERICA

I know who you are. Hi.

ARCHER

OK, good. Yeah I know we haven't spoken before directly. We've been at a lot of the same--

ERICA

How are you Archer?

ARCHER

Real good, real good. Well. You know. All things considered. Soldiering on.

She nods. Clearly she's hurting too.

ERICA

We have to, don't we?

ARCHER

We do. Listen, I'm so sorry to surprise you at home like this in the middle of the day but I have an odd request.

(beat)

You may or may not know that we got some footage of Matthew leaving the house on our ring cam thing here.

He points at her ring camera.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

And I know you folks had the uh... same situation with Bailey.

ERICA

That's right.

ARCHER

I don't mean to be insensitive and I'm sure you already showed yours to the police just like I did but I was wondering if you'd mind letting me take a look at it.

She just stares.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

I don't need a copy or anything I just wanted to see if--

ERICA

I'm not comfortable with that.

He nods. Tries to think of an angle but lets it go.

ARCHER

I understand. Sorry to have
bothered you.

LATER: He sits in his truck watching a Prius pull into the drive. As the driver emerges Archer hops out and jogs over.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Gary?

The man turns, startled.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Archer Graff. How are you?

GARY

Fine?

ARCHER

Matthew's dad.

GARY

(softening)

Of course. Yeah. How you doing?

ARCHER

Listen, I got a strange question I
need to ask you.

72

INT. GARY AND ERICA'S HOME - LATER

72

Archer stands over Gary's shoulder, in his home office. The men stare at GARY'S DESKTOP. Erica watches from the doorway, arms folded in disapproval.

ON SCREEN: video of a YOUNG GIRL running across the yard in the SAME ODD POSTURE. Gary grimaces.

GARY

It's hard to watch this.

ARCHER

There. Could you go back to when
she steps on the sidewalk there?

Gary rewinds and plays the video again.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

There!

Gary pauses it as her foot is on the sidewalk.

GARY
What do you see?

Archer points at the sidewalk panel that her foot touches. He counts the panels between that one and the driveway.

ARCHER
One... two... three... four...

73

EXT. GARY AND ERICA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

73

Archer paces down the cement path.

ARCHER
... five... six... seven.

He kneels and sticks a LITTLE SURVEYING STAKE in the lawn where the girl stepped. Gary watches from the doorway.

Archer, almost giddy, trots across the lawn toward Gary.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Scuse me.

Gary steps aside as Archer kneels in the doorway and produces a LASER POINTER. He squats and aims it at the stake. Then he lifts it and the dot slides across the street through a gap in the houses and landing on the back of another house some two hundred yards away.

-- Archer has spread the map out in the bed of his truck. He leans over it and makes two new little circles and then lays down the ruler, tracing a new line across the map.

Gary and Erica watch him from the window but he ignores them.

He DRAWS a LARGE CIRCLE over the neighborhood where the two lines meet. It contains some four residential blocks.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
OK. Come on, what am I looking at?

74

INT. ARCHER'S PICKUP - LATER

74

Archer cruises the neighborhood with the map on the seat beside him. House after house slides by.

He doesn't know what he's looking for, he's just soaking in every detail he can.

Up ahead he sees JUSTINE'S WITCH car pulling into a gas station and his jaw tightens.

75

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

75

Archer whips a U turn at the intersection and pulls in. He steps out and approaches.

We clock that her HAIR is MISSING A JAGGED CHUNK.

ARCHER

I want to talk to you.

She takes a deep breath.

JUSTINE

I don't think we have anything to say to each other.

ARCHER

I think you got a lot to say.

Justine hardens.

JUSTINE

You and every other person in this city. Believe me the message is loud and clear! I'm the problem!
Got it!

Archer takes an aggressive step forwards.

ARCHER

That might be the first honest thing I've heard you say. You are the problem.

JUSTINE

You wanna get in my face? You wanna threaten me?

ARCHER

No one's threatening you.

JUSTINE

Oh?! Shows what you know! You haven't been...

Something behind Archer catches Justine's eye. He turns to see what she's looking at.

SPRINTING STRAIGHT AT THEM from across the street is PRINCIPAL MARCUS, COVERED IN BLOOD and what looks like BLACK BILE. His arms are extended, eyes bulging, teeth bared.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Marcus?

He bounds up the sidewalk, across the lot and before she can even process what is happening, he's TACKLING HER TO THE GROUND. The HOSE yanks loose SPRAYING GASOLINE everywhere.

Archer watches in dumb confusion as Marcus BITES and CLAWS at her like an animal.

ARCHER

Hey!

Archer activates, grabs him and yanks him backward, but Marcus is relentless, pulling hard, clawing at her.

Justine flips on her stomach and scrambles away, CRAWLING UNDER THE CAR.

Archer grips tighter but Marcus rocks his head back hard into Archer's face and he falls backward into the stream of gasoline.

Marcus dives under the car, crawling after her.

Archer picks himself back up, temporarily blinded by the fumes and the blood in his eyes but he doesn't hesitate. He rounds the front of the car and reaches the other side just as Marcus emerges from underneath.

Archer PUNTS HIM hard in the ribs knocking him over on his side but he's immediately picking himself up again.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Stop!

Marcus rises, snarls at Archer and charges.

BOOM!

The two man crash down - Archer landing hard on his back, stunned. Marcus is already rising, and looking toward Justine in the market but Archer grabs him by the belt, pulling him back down.

Marcus shifts his attention to Archer and grabs him by the neck, squeezing hard, choking him out. Eyes bulging, saliva pouring out onto his face in slimy ropes.

MARCUS

AAAAAAUUUUUGGGHHHH!!

As Archer loses consciousness we...

A76 **CUT TO BLACK.**

A76

PAUL76 **INT. POLICE STATION / LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

76

Officer PAUL pins his phone to his ear with his shoulder as he fastens his utility belt.

PAUL
Hotel's OK tho?

DONNA (O.S.)
It's fine. Not the Ritz but I'm not expecting them to go nuts.

PAUL
Well it's only six nights.

DONNA (O.S.)
Three actually. Apparently I don't have to be here for the big wrap up shindig so I get to leave on Thursday. Isn't that great?

PAUL
That's great. Yeah.

DONNA (O.S.)
Cause I'm supposed to ovulate Friday so we can hit the target this month.

PAUL
Nice. OK. Yeah, good.

DONNA (O.S.)
I thought you'd like that. Oh! Will you tell my dad when you see him today that since I'll be back for the weekend we can make their anniversary lunch thing?

PAUL
Yeah, I'll let him know.

DONNA (O.S.)
He'll be happy. You about to start your shift?

PAUL
Yep.

DONNA (O.S.)
You gonna hit a meeting afterward?

PAUL
Uhh... Wasn't planning on it.

Beat.

DONNA (O.S.)
Don't you think you should?

PAUL
If I have time I'll hit one.

DONNA (O.S.)
Paul. Especially when you're going
to be spending stretches alone I
think it's important that you go to
regular meetings.

PAUL
I'm not gonna drink Donna. I'm
fine. If I feel not fine I'll hit a
meeting.

DONNA (O.S.)
OK sweetie.

PAUL
I gotta get going.

DONNA (O.S.)
OK don't forget to tell my dad
about this weekend. Love you.

PAUL
Love you.

He hangs up and holsters his gun.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Jesus.

77 INT. POLICE STATION / CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER 77

Paul pokes his head into Ed's office.

PAUL
Hey Ed.

ED
Hey buddy.

PAUL

Donna's gonna be back Friday so we're good to do lunch with you guys on Sunday.

ED

She's coming back early?

PAUL

Yeah I think they're cutting her loose so she wanted me to let you know that we are in.

ED

Sounds good buddy.

PAUL

I'm starting my shift here so...

ED

Roger that.

78

EXT. POLICE STATION / PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

78

Paul moves through the lot of squad cars when something catches his eye.

Near the front of the lot JUSTINE is standing beside her car with another officer.

She clocks him and they share a loaded moment. Paul half waves and she gives the slightest nod of acknowledgement.

Paul watches her for a beat and then gets in his cruiser.

79

INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - DAY

79

PAUL cruises the streets, on patrol. A top 40 song plays quietly from the radio.

A80

INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR / INDUSTRIAL STREET - LATER

A80

A new song on the radio and Paul idles at a red light in an empty industrial district. A block ahead, a figure jogs across the street and disappears down an alley. He perks up.

He cuts the music and slides through the red light.

He eases to a stop at the mouth of the alley.

Standing on a dumpster, holding a crowbar stands JAMES in the process of JIMMYING OPEN A SMALL WINDOW.

Paul grabs his PA mic.

PAUL
(over loudspeaker)
Stop right there!

James startles, leaps off the dumpster and runs toward the far end of the alley.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Shit.

With the dumpster where it is, he won't be able to get the car through the alley. Paul steps on the gas. He speeds to the end of his block and turns right. As James speeds down the block, he can see James on his right a block up hauling ass. Paul floors it to the end of the block and turns right again.

In a short distance, he takes a final turn into an alley.

Up ahead, James comes into view, sprinting down towards the car.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Stop!

In no time Paul yanks the car into a clearing, nearly missing James.

80

EXT. ALLEY / CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

80

Like a pro, Paul throws it into park and is out the door as James touches down on the pavement.

A moment later Paul is sprinting after him.

PAUL
Stop or you're gonna get the taser!

JAMES doesn't stop. Paul digs deep and in a few more yards he's within reach. Paul leaps and tackles him to the ground.

JAMES
Ohhh... Please! I didn't do anything!

PAUL
Shut the... shut up.

Paul plants a knee on his back and gets the cuffs on him. He takes a beat to catch his breath.

JAMES

Dude, I work there man! I just lost
my keys.

Paul wipes his face and looks around. Empty block. His
breathing settles.

PAUL

You Ok?

JAMES

No! Dude call them! I swear to God
I work there!

Paul leans to check his face.

PAUL

We went down pretty hard there. You
good?

JAMES

Yes officer I'm OK just please call
the warehouse. You can look up the
number. My phone doesn't work right
now.

PAUL
Cuffs too tight? Hands OK?

JAMES
They're OK.

Paul stands and lifts James by his armpits.

PAUL
Let's walk back to the car.

Paul Leads James to the front of the cruiser.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What's your name, sir?

JAMES
James.

PAUL
James? OK stand right here for me
James. You got any weapons on you?

JAMES
No sir.

PAUL
No? How bout drugs? You holding?

JAMES
No.

PAUL
Anything in your pockets gonna
stick me when I put my hands in
there?

JAMES
No sir I do not.

Paul puts on latex gloves.

PAUL
Sure? I don't wanna get poked by
anything.

JAMES
I have nothing sir.

PAUL
OK, hold still for me.

Paul slides a hand into James's front pocket and --

PAUL (CONT'D)
Fuck!

He yanks his hand back and something small and glass falls to
the ground.

By James's filthy shoe is a DIRTY HYPODERMIC NEEDLE.

Paul processes what just happened. He looks at the NEEDLE. He looks at the PUNCTURE WOUND in his hand where his glove is torn and already a bead of BLOOD blooms on his finger. His jaw tightens.

BOOM! Paul swings a RIGHT CROSS straight into the side of James's head, sending the handcuffed man bouncing off the the car and onto the ground in a heap.

Paul grips his hand and squeezes the blood out his finger.

PAUL (CONT'D)
FUCK!

He steps around the cruiser, slides into the driver's seat.

81

INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

81

He digs through the glove box and produces a small FIRST AID POUCH. Inside he grabs a bottle of SANITIZER and pours it onto the PUNCTURE WOUND.

PAUL

Come on. Come on. Please.

He rubs it in frantically and looks at his hand. The bleeding has already stopped.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Please be OK.

An awful thought dawns on him: *THE DASH-CAM.*

It's aimed through the windshield right at the empty space where he and James were just standing.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Shit.

He leans forward and looks for the power button. He doesn't see one so he just PULLS THE CORD out.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Shit.

82

EXT. SIDEWALK / STREET - CONTINUOUS

82

Paul steps out and moves around the the car. On the other side James lays in a heap.

Paul leans over him.

PAUL

Get up. Up.

Paul pulls him into a sitting position and leans him against the car. James winces and turns his head away.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Can you hear me? James, you with me?

James glares at him. His face bloody and already swelling.

JAMES

Yo, you fucking hit me man...

PAUL

OK, here's what's going to happen. I'm gonna take these cuffs off you in a second and then I'm gonna get in my car and drive away. But... are you listening to me?

James scowls.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I don't want to see you again. I mean anywhere around here. OK? The way I see it I did you wrong and you did me wrong. So let's just... Call it a day. But if I see you out here again it's gonna be a different story. Yes? I mean it. Don't let me catch you out here again.

Paul studies him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Consider yourself warned.

83

INT. POLICE STATION / BULLPEN - DAY

83

Paul moves through the office and finds CAPTAIN ED talking with another officer. He finds his eye-line and shoots him a serious look.

ED

Bobby would you... Can I have a minute?

He steps to Paul.

ED (CONT'D)

What is it?

84

INT. POLICE STATION / INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

84

We watch through the glass as Paul finishes giving Ed the details of what happened.

INSIDE: Ed chews on what he just heard.

ED

OK listen. As long as this isn't reported, that footage is going to sit on a drive somewhere and in about a month it's gonna get recorded over - *AS LONG AS* no one files a complaint or gives anyone a reason to review it. Now I'm not going to... *officially* advise you one way or another but if you're fairly certain no one saw anything, as long as this citizen doesn't show up here in the next month and file a complaint... this could all go away.

PAUL

OK that would be... Yeah.

ED

But if they do? Paul you're going to be in serious hot water.

Paul nods gravely.

ED (CONT'D)

You get that hand checked out?

85

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

85

A doctor examines his finger.

DOCTOR

A *trash bag*?

PAUL

Yep. Picked it up to get it off the street and... Bang.

DOCTOR

OK, well... Unfortunately if we don't have the medical records of the last person to use the needle we have to expect the worst. I'm starting you on Penicillin we're gonna make sure your tetanus is up to date. You'll have to come back and get your blood tested every two weeks for about three months because it's gonna take time before anything like HIV or Hepatitis is going to show.

(beat)

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Listen, odds are, you're fine.
Single needle. Light penetration.
Very possible that even if it was
contaminated it didn't transfer.

PAUL
Jesus Christ I hope so.

DOCTOR
Just don't go grabbing any more
strange trash bags.

86 **INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - LATER**

86

Paul slides into his cruiser and stares out at the parking lot in front of him. He looks at his bandaged hand.

PAUL
Fuck!

Ding. His phone pings. He digs it out and looks at a text.

JUSTINE: HEY

He stares at it.

87 **INT. BAR - NIGHT**

87

Dressed in civilian clothes, Paul enters the dimly lit bar and sees Justine posted up at the end of the room. She smiles at him as he approaches.

88 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

88

They fuck.

89 **EXT. BAR PARKING LOT - MORNING**

89

Justine pulls out of the lot, leaving Paul standing by his car. He fishes his keys out.

CAR: Paul slides in and starts the engine. He feels horrible.

90 **EXT. PAUL AND DONNA'S HOME - LATER**

90

Pulls up to his house and parks in the driveway.

91 **INT. PAUL AND DONNA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER**

91

Paul lets himself in and moves through the foyer.

DONNA (O.S.)
Hello?

He freezes. *What the fuck??*

DONNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Paul?

PAUL
Hey.

She trots down the steps, concerned.

DONNA
Where have you been?

PAUL
You're home?

DONNA
I'm home. Someone got sick and they
sent everyone -- where have you
been?

PAUL
I was... I was out.

She looks him over and her demeanor shifts to deadly serious.

DONNA
Where?

He can't think of a good answer.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Paul.

He stares, mind racing for an acceptable lie. He can't find
one fast enough. She reads him like a book and hardens.

DONNA (CONT'D)
You piece of shit.

92 **INT. POLICE STATION / LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

92

Paul, dripping with depression, fastens his belt, holsters
his firearm and shuts his locker.

93 **INT. POLICE STATION / BULLPEN - DAY**

93

He moves through the hall. Ed's door is closed but Paul
lingers, peeking through the window as he passes.

Ed's in there speaking with a suited man and for a brief
moment they lock eyes - Ed gives him an unmistakably ICY
GLARE. Paul averts his gaze and keeps moving.

PAUL
Shit.

94

EXT. POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

94

Paul exits the station and moves down the steps when something catches his eye...

Halfway down the block JAMES is shuffling toward the station. His face is considerably more swollen than last we saw him.

PAUL
Son of a bitch.

James sees Paul and stops. They stare at each other.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch!

James turns and sprints around the corner. Paul rushes to his squad car and hops in.

95

INT. SQUAD CAR - MOMENTS LATER

95

Paul tears out of the station. He reaches down and flips off the lock of the mounted shotgun beside him.

Then he reaches up and yanks out the little cord connected to the dash cam.

A96

CUT TO BLACK.

A96

JAMES

96

EXT. TENT - DAWN

96

In the pale light of morning, rain drizzles onto JAMES in his tent. Currently his face sports none of the wounds Paul gave him so we can tell we're earlier in time.

At the moment he's unharmed and smoking crack. Or trying to.

JAMES
Come on.

He sparks his lighter and holds the flame to his little glass pipe. He sucks at it but it produces no smoke.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Come on!

He tries again but gets nothing. He taps the little pipe into his hand, emptying its contents.

With blackened fingers he digs in his little plastic tin, rummaging through DIRTY NEEDLES and CHARRED SPOONS, finally finding a piece of wire.

He scrapes the pipe with the wire and then stuffs the little charred bits back in.

He sparks it up. Nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Fuck!

97

EXT. STREET - LATER

97

James speed-walks down the block, holding his phone to his ear. He pulls at every car door handle he passes, testing if they're locked.

JAMES
Hey man! New phone it's me dude.
Hey! How are you?
(beat)
How's Eric doing man? How tall is he now?
(beat)
Oh man I miss him man. Tell him I say hi please.
(beat)
No everything's good! Just checking in man. I was calling because I have a little teeny tiny problem--
(beat)
No, I got a job yesterday! ...
(beat)
Thank you! Yeah! ... Thank you! I'm gonna be waiter man. Yeah. At this new fancy spot downtown. So the only issue is they don't... I can't start until I have like new shoes and a whole outfit cause like I said it's fancy.
(beat)
No man this is a good thing that I'm trying to get a job and get myself... on track? Then I can come back to you guys and we can--
(beat)
OF COURSE I would pay mom back!
That's not even what I'm--
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

(beat)

Hello?

He hangs up the phone.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Damn!

He walks on.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He tries the next car door and it opens. He dives in.

A97

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - LATER

A97

James speed-walks down a rainy street untangling wires of little speakers.

JAMES

Hey man, I feel like I wasn't communicating very well how important it is that I just need like a little bit of money to get the clothes for this job because then I can get... *the job!* Obviously. Please call me back. Thanks buddy. Love you.

98

INT. BANGER APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

98

James is let into a filthy apartment by a large BANGER. Another two sit on the couch smoking weed and watching TV.

BANGER

Watchu after?

JAMES

Crys and a bar of xan.
(nods at banger on couch)
What's up?

Couch banger doesn't even look at him.

BANGER

Twenty.

JAMES

I have this.

James holds the speakers out.

BANGER
Fuck outta here.

JAMES

This'll bring thirty, no problem.
This is state of the art man.
Apparently it's better than apple!

The banger starts pushing him toward the door.

BANGER

You know you don't come through
here without cash, B.

JAMES

The pawn shop's not open yet! I'll
pay you thirty for a twenty! I'm
saying--

BANGER

Yo, move B.

JAMES

You'll make more money! This is
better than ap--

The banger punches him in the face hard. James staggers back
into the door and drops the speakers.

JAMES (CONT'D)

OK!

He squats to snatch them back up.

BANGER

Move, dog!

JAMES

OK!

99

EXT. PAWN SHOP - LATER

99

James waits impatiently outside of a pawnbrokers. An employee
appears and flips the closed sign to open.

100

INT. PAWN SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

100

James bounces in place at the counter, his skin on fire as
the broker looks over the speakers.

He eyes a POSTER behind the man with a grid of photos showing
the missing children with the words '\$50,000 REWARD'

PAWNBROKER

No.

JAMES

No? What do you mean no? What's no?

PAWNBROKER

I no want.

JAMES

Yo! These are good! These are worth
thirty bucks!

PAWNBROKER

No.

JAMES

Twenty! Please!

The broker shakes his head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Please man. Please!

Nothing.

101 **EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - LATER**

101

James jogs across the street toward an alley behind an industrial warehouse.

He scampers up onto a dumpster, stands precariously and tries to jimmy a window open.

BWOOOOP!

PAUL

Stop right there!

He startles, nearly falling. At the mouth of the alley sits an idling police car.

JAMES

Fuck!

James hops off the dumpster and sprints down the alley.

102 **EXT. ALLEY / CLEARING - CONTINUOUS**

102

He rounds the corner and hauls ass down the block towards the car that is roaring toward him. The car turns into a clearing in an attempt to head him off.

James leaps up and over the hood and in the next moment PAUL is chasing after him on foot.

In a few short steps he's on him.

BLACK.

A103 **EXT. ALLEY / CLEARING - LATER**

A103

-- James comes to, handcuffed and leaning against the cruiser. His head is bleeding badly. Paul squats over him.

PAUL

You with me?

JAMES

Yo, you fucking hit me man...

James scowls through the blood.

PAUL

OK, here's what's going to happen. I'm gonna take these cuffs off you in a second and then I'm gonna get in my car and drive away. But... are you listening to me?

James scowls.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I don't want to see you again. I mean anywhere around here. OK? The way I see it I did you wrong and you did me wrong. So let's just... Call it a day. But if I see you out here again it's gonna be a different story. Yes? I mean it. Don't let me catch you out here again.

Paul studies him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Consider yourself warned.

B103 **EXT. SUBURBAN BRIDGE - LATER**

B103

James ventures into the suburbs, battered and depressed.

103 **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET NEAR ALEX'S HOUSE - LATER**

103

James limps down the street. Blood stains his face and his legs are dirty but he's still on a mission.

Something catches his eye and he stops.

The camera swings to reveal...

ALEX'S HOUSE.

He eyes the DIRTY CAR and the OVERGROWN LAWN. He steps to the MAILBOX by the sidewalk and flips down the little hatch. It's STUFFED with WEEKS OF MAIL.

Jackpot.

A104 **OMITTED** A104

104 **EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER** 104

He shuffles around the side, scanning for an access point clocking the PAPERED OVER WINDOWS.

In the back yard he steps onto the rear porch and tries the door but it's locked. He steps back and studies the house.

-- He's SCALING A STORM DRAIN with surprising skill and in no time he's planted a foot on an outcropping near a window. A little effort and he manages to slide the window open.

105 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS** 105

Dark and musty in here. James worms his head through the window. For a beat he's still, letting his eyes adjust to the dark.

106 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 106

The room before him is cluttered with furniture, hoarder style. Two beds, one sideways, two armoires, chairs, rolled up rugs and more jammed into the small space. He has to climb over the tangle of furniture to make his way to the door.

107 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 107

He steps out onto the hall landing. There's a closed door at either side of the hall and a staircase in front of him leads down.

He moves left and pushes the door open to reveal...

108 **INT. ALEX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 108

Messy twin bed, toys on the dresser, posters. Nothing valuable.

He steps to the bed and pulls the PILLOW CASE off a pillow.

109 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY LANDING - CONTINUOUS** 109

James moves to the door opposite. He tries the knob. It's LOCKED. He gives it a hard shake but it won't give.

He steps back and considers kicking it in. *Fuck it. I'll try it later.*

He moves to the stairs and makes his way down.

110 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 110

James creeps through the clutter. He's so fixated on what he can steal that he doesn't notice the MAN and WOMAN sitting on the couch until he's almost on top of them.

JAMES

Fuck!

He stumbles back and KNOCKS A LAMP OVER with a CRASH. The couple on the sofa don't move. They sit bolt upright, eyes open wide but focused on nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yo. I'm sorry. I didn't...

They don't react.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hello?

Nothing. He takes a step closer and leans down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hello?

He waves a hand in front of their eyes.

They look like they haven't showered or changed in weeks. Their clothes are dirty and their eyes are yellow and dull. Greasy skin. But breathing. Definitely breathing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yo are you OK?

They don't respond and he stands again. Satisfied that they pose no threat, he scans the room.

He spots a game console and moves to it, unplugging the cables.

THUMP.

A sound from upstairs.

He creeps to the base of the stairs, craning to see up into the dark. *Is it coming from the locked room?*

He eyes the couple on the couch. They haven't stirred.

A111 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

A111

He dumps a drawer of silver utensils into the pillow case, checking the doorway nervously as he operates.

B111 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

B111

James stops in front of a closed door.

He opens it.

It leads to the BASEMENT. He steps in and we rack to the couple on the couch. *Still no movement.*

111 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

111

James flips on the light but it only illuminates the landing. He takes a few cautious steps down, squats and peers into the dark of the room below.

And then he sees it...

STANDING in the near total dark of the basement are...

17 perfectly still 10 YEAR OLD CHILDREN.

They stand in a loose group occupying most of the room, all facing away from him.

James's blood freezes. He gasps and stumbles back.

In unison every child TURNS and STARES AT HIM.

JAMES

Oh fuck...

He bolts up the steps.

112 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS** 112

James darts out of the basement and slams the door shut behind him.

In the background we see the TWO ADULTS ON THE COUCH silently RISE TO THEIR FEET.

James hasn't noticed. He's preoccupied, dragging a small table in front of the basement door.

They're crossing the room towards him when he finally sees.

JAMES
FUCK!!!

He stumbles backwards toward the front door of the house.

In a full blown panic James pulls at the knob and then fumbles and paws at the deadbolts.

The dark figures close in.

But he manages to get the door open and sunlight floods into the foyer.

He's out.

113 **EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 113

James tears out the door and into the rain, tripping and eating shit in the yard. But he's soon back on his feet and sprinting down the street.

114 **INT. PAWN SHOP - LATER** 114

The pawnbroker has finished examining the stolen silver and wraps them in a cloth. A filthy James vibrates with anticipation as the broker counts out some cash.

PAWNBROKER
Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, one hundred.

Once again his eyes drift to the POSTER OF THE MISSING CHILDREN and this time the pieces fall into place.

\$50,000?

PAWNBROKER (CONT'D)
Hey! Here.

He looks down, sees the cash and snatches it up.

115 **EXT. PROJECTS - DAY**

115

James squats against a wall with a FULL PIPE at long last. He sucks the fumes down and holds it in his lungs.

Sweet relief. *Absolutely worth it.*

116 **EXT. STREET - LATER**

116

James talks into his phone.

JAMES

Yeah I'm calling about the fifty thousand dollar reward for information about the missing kids?

(beat)

Yeah I know where they are.

(beat)

I mean... I'm pretty sure all of them. It looked like a bunch of 'em. They're all standing in the basement of this house. Just like standing there.

(beat)

I don't know the address but it's--
(beat)

No I'm saying all the kids are just in the basement and standing all still and shit and it's all fucked up over there. There's like two wackos in there and--

(beat)

Yeah. So how does this work? How do I get the money?

(beat)

No I'm not... I'm completely serious. I can show you if you don't believe me.

(beat)

Well... do I have to come in? Can someone meet me somewhere with the cash?

(beat)

Cause I really don't want to come in, OK? I don't like police stations. I'm phobic!

117 **EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER**

117

James shambles down the block toward the police station. He crosses the street when...

PAUL (O.S.)

Hey!

Paul is striding down the steps of the station house.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What did I tell you? Huh? What did I say?

James turns and runs.

118 **EXT. STREETS - MOMENTS LATER**

118

James sprints through the streets.

-- He cuts down an alley and --

A119 **EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS**

A119

Enters a wooded path.

119 **EXT. FURTHER INTO WOODS - DAY**

119

James trudges through the woods, confident he's lost Paul.

JAMES

(mocking Paul)

What did I tell you? Huh? Huh?

PING

James stops. *What the fuck was that sound?*

It sounded like a SINGLE HIGH PITCHED PIANO KEY. *Out here in the middle of the woods?*

James's hackles go up. He scans the forest.

Slow pan of the dark canopy revealing nothing but stretches of dark green until we catch some 100 yards away - a SPLASH of COLOR on the ground...

It's hard to see detail from this distance but THE WOMAN FROM ARCHER'S DREAM appears to be sprouting out of the dirt WAIST UP - as if her lower half were buried.

She has a happy look on her face and her BRIGHT OUTFIT and MAKEUP pop against the dark of the forest.

Something about the sight of this brightly colored woman half buried in the depths of the woods unsettles him. She raises one arm and WAVES BIG. Even from this distance we can feel her smile.

Panic kicks in and he flees.

120

INT. TENT - MOMENTS LATER

120

James scurries into his little camp and dives into his TENT.

He scuttles back from the flap and holds himself.

JAMES

You're OK. That wasn't real. That wasn't real. You're OK.

And then...

The snapping of twigs. SLOW FOOTSTEPS.

His eyes widen. *Did I really hear that?*

MORE FOOTSTEPS. Closer now.

He pops open his little drug tin and snatches up 3 HYPODERMIC NEEDLES, gripping them in his fist like a knife.

He stares at the flap, eyes wide.

Footsteps getting unmistakably closer.

A SHADOW creeps across the tent. James's heart blasts in his ears. Someone is squatting on the other side of the fabric. He RAISES the NEEDLES, clenches his teeth and...

JAMES (CONT'D)

AAAAAUUUGHGH!!!

James LUNGES through the flap SWINGING the NEEDLES into...

...PAUL'S FACE!

PAUL

AAAAUUGHGH!!!

Paul recoils, scrambling back on his ass.

James scurries the opposite direction but gets tangled up in the tent which collapses around him.

Paul yanks a syringe from his cheek, and gawks at it.

PAUL (CONT'D)
AUUUUGHGH! FUCKER!

He's up in a flash, grabbing James by the ankles and pulling him from the mess of nylon.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You stabbed me! You fucking...

JAMES
I'm sorry!

Paul snatches up his shotgun from the ground.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Wait!

Paul shoves the gun into James's face, ready to fire.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I know where the kids are!

Paul hesitates.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That's why I was coming to the station! I swear to God!

PAUL
You're fucking lying!

JAMES
I promise you! I know where they are!

Paul gathers himself.

PAUL
Where?

JAMES
At a house. Not far. In the basement.

PAUL
What the fuck are you... *What house?*

JAMES
I can show you man! It's really really really close!

121 **INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - DAY**

121

Paul shoves a handcuffed James into the backseat and slams the door. He gets in the driver's seat and checks himself in the vanity, wincing at the bloody holes in his face.

PAUL

Fuck me.

He turns to James.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Do you have AIDS?

JAMES

Huh?

PAUL

AIDS asshole. You have AIDS?

JAMES

I don't think so.

PAUL

Hepatitis? Shit like that?

JAMES

Shit... Not that I know of.

Paul grimaces and starts the engine.

122 **EXT. ALEX'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY**

122

The patrol car rolls down the street toward Alex's house.

123 **INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS**

123

James leans toward the bulletproof divider.

JAMES

That one. The dark one at the end
of the block. Right there.

Paul parks in front of the house and looks it over.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm telling you man. It's... weird
in there.

Paul snorts and opens his door.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yo I'm not going back in there man!

PAUL

You're not going anywhere.

JAMES

Um, excuse me sir. I don't want to
be rude but how do I know you
aren't going to try and like take
that reward for yourself?

Paul glares at him and steps out. James watches as he slams
the door and walks toward the house.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Aw man!

Paul reaches the front door and knocks.

A beat later, the front door opens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What the fuck...

Paul is chatting with someone but James can't see who.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yo...

Paul steps inside and the door closes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yo! What the fuck?

124

INT. PAUL'S SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

124

HOURS LATER: The sun has set and the squad car hasn't moved.
James sits as before, still cuffed.

JAMES

Yo!

He kicks at the bulletproof divider.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Let me the fuck out! What the fuck?

The front door of the house OPENS. He perks up.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Thank you!

Paul emerges and walks toward the car, but he's not the same.
His ARMS ARE OUT AT HIS SIDES in the signature angle.

James senses something is very wrong. He recoils from the
door.

Paul reaches the door and fumbles it open. He leans down and we see his FACE IS RED AND TWISTED. His EYES BULGE. His MOUTH DROOLS. He looks possessed.

He grabs at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Yo! What the--

James kicks at him but Paul seizes his legs and YANKS HIM FROM THE VEHICLE.

125 **EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

125

Paul DRAGS a writhing James across the grass toward the open door of the house.

JAMES
Help! Help me!

A126 **CUT TO BLACK**

A126

MARCUS

126 **INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY**

126

Marcus holds his phone to his ear as he pushes a shopping cart. His husband Terry drops in products as they go.

MARCUS
Justine, I have been abundantly clear. I have been explicit. I do not want you interacting with Alex. I'm struggling to understand how you're even bringing this to me.

JUSTINE (O.S.)
I'm sorry Marcus but I consider the welfare of a child more important than your marching orders. That's just--

Terry holds up two bags of cookies. Marcus nods at the Oreos.

MARCUS
Justine stop. Here's the bottom line. Alex has been traumatized enough by the events of the last two months as I'm sure you have--

JUSTINE (O.S.)

Marcus--

MARCUS

--which is why I'm going to do you
the courtesy of forgetting that
this phone call ever took place.

JUSTINE (O.S.)

If a child's welfare is questioned
by law you have to refer it to CPS.
By law.

MARCUS

Are you really going to take it
there? Is this the corner you're
going to put me in?

Terry holds up two bags of chips. Marcus nods at the Fritos.

JUSTINE (O.S.)

Just go make a house call, Marcus.
Just do that.

MARCUS

I'm not authorized to 'just make
house calls'.

JUSTINE (O.S.)

Well, you're a mandatory reporter!
You have to--

MARCUS

Here's what I'll do. I'll invite
his parents to come in and have a
talk with me. I'll have a face to
face at the school. Is that
acceptable to you?

Terry holds up two salad dressings, he motions to one and
Terry considers them but drops the other in the cart.

JUSTINE (O.S.)

I would really appreciate that.

MARCUS

OK then you're welcome. Goodbye.

He hangs up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(to Terry)

I said I wanted the cool ranch.

127

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

127

Marcus works at his desk. He looks up and watches through the frosted glass that lines his office to see the blurry shape of his secretary, MARGE moving toward his door.

Knock knock.

MARCUS

Yes?

She pokes her head in.

MARGE

Your 2 o'clock is here.

MARCUS

That's fine.

She doesn't move.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Yes?

Something in her expression reads: *Prepare yourself.*

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Well, send them in please Marge.

Marge nods solemnly and turns back toward the hall.

MARGE

This way, ma'am.

Marcus watches as a new shape passes along the frosted glass. This one is BRIGHT AS A PEACOCK with loud blues and reds from head to toe.

Marge steps back to give her a wide birth as GLADYS steps through the door.

She looks... striking. Clad in a BRIGHT NEON JUMPER with a clashing top and bottom, caked in COLORFUL MAKEUP, RED HAIR frizzing out in all directions and GAUDY JEWELRY everywhere.

GLADYS

Principal Miller?

MARCUS

Yes, hi. Come on in.

He crosses and shakes her hand, taking in her outfit.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Have a seat, please.
(to secretary)
Thank you Marge.

Marge frowns and shuts the door. Marcus and Gladys sit.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Thank you so much for coming in.
I... I know you folks have had a
lot of attention lately and not all
of it could possibly be wanted.

GLADYS
I'm happy to come by. It's fine.

Marcus studies her. Taking in the lipstick and eyeliner. The bracelets and tennis shoes. She smiles at him expectantly.

MARCUS
OK forgive me... We have *not* met is
that right?

GLADYS
I don't believe so.

MARCUS
OK. Phew because I was relatively
certain I'd remember. I know I've
met Alex's father before but--

GLADYS
I'm Alex's Aunt. His mother is my
sister.

MARCUS
I see. I see. OK. That's where my
confusion is. You're his Aunt.

GLADYS
Yes.

MARCUS
OK so you are not his legal
guardian?

GLADYS
No that would be his parents of
course.

MARCUS
OK well forgive me Gladys, but
unfortunately I need to speak with
his parents.

GLADYS

Well I'm sorry to say it, but his parents are feeling unwell as of late and I've been staying with them to help take care of Alex.

MARCUS

Sounds serious.

GLADYS

Oh not serious no. Nothing terminal. Just a touch of consumption.

MARCUS

A touch of... consumption.

GLADYS

Mmm.

Beat.

MARCUS

You know what, I'm embarrassed to say it but I guess I don't really know what that means. I thought that was something settlers got on the Oregon trail. Is that... tuberculosis?

GLADYS

They're managing fine but they need to stay home until they're well.

MARCUS

So they're both not working currently?

GLADYS

She's a writer and he's a stay at home full time dad. So with my help life can move along without too much disruption I'd think.

Marcus frowns.

MARCUS

I had hoped to speak with them in person because... This is awkward but a... concerned individual has lodged a welfare complaint and unfortunately I need to make contact with the child's legal guardian.

ANGLE ON Gladys eyeing a little BLUE AWARD RIBBON mounted on a tiny stand that sits on the end table by her elbow.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
It's something that's not really negotiable. I need to speak with his parents. In person.

GLADYS
Oh dear.

MARCUS
It's just a formality but it *is* necessary. I could come to the house if that would make it easier. I'm trying to avoid involving CPS because frankly I'm not convinced anything is wrong. I don't--

GLADYS
Who made the complaint?

MARCUS
I'm not at liberty to say.

GLADYS
Well this is very troubling.

MARCUS
Believe me it's just a formality like I said. I'm doing my best to avoid involving any authority but I can't do that unless I speak with the legal guardian.

Gladys frowns.

128 **INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY**

128

Terry prepares a tray of elaborately arranged junk food. Hot dogs, cookies and sodas. He hums to himself as he carries it into the...

129 **INT. MARCUS'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY**

129

Terry sets the tray on the coffee table and takes his place on the couch next to Marcus. They watch a nature documentary on tv.

The doorbell rings.

TERRY
Who could that be?

Marcus frowns, rises and moves to the door. He pulls it open to reveal GLADYS standing there with a bag slung over her shoulder fanning herself.

GLADYS
Oh thank God, you're home! I'm so sorry to bother you on a Saturday like this. Please forgive me.

MARCUS
We were just sitting down to--

GLADYS
The bus didn't pick me up when it was scheduled to and I didn't realize until it was far too late that I was standing on the wrong corner and by the time I put that together I'd missed it entirely so I had to just walk all the way across town to get here.

MARCUS
Well, I'm very sorry to hear that but we're in the middle of--

GLADYS
Sweetie, I hate to say it but I feel on the verge of collapse. Could I trouble you for some water?

Terry appears behind Marcus.

TERRY
Of course you can have some water.

MARCUS
I'm afraid it's really not a good--

GLADYS
Oh thank you so much!

Gladys pushes in past Marcus and squeezes Terry's hand.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
I'm Gladys! It's so nice to meet you.

She pushes toward the kitchen. A puzzled Marcus and Terry follow.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

I know it's inconvenient but I really needed to speak with you about our conversation yesterday.

(gasp)

You two have an absolutely lovely home! Oh my Gosh look at this place!

TERRY

Marcus get her a glass.

Marcus moves to a cabinet as Gladys PLOPS HER BAG on the kitchen island.

GLADYS

A bowl actually if you don't mind.

MARCUS

A... bowl?

GLADYS

Thank you sweetie. It's a peculiarity of mine. I don't even try to rationalize it any more.

They stare at her.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

But yes if you don't mind... a bowl. Please I'm very faint. It's such a long walk to get here.

MARCUS

A ... bowl of water. OK.

He rummages for a bowl as Gladys digs in her bag.

GLADYS

I wanted you to know that I spoke with Alex's father who's very ill as I said, but the good news is that he's more than happy to come in first thing Monday and sit down with you to clear everything up.

Marcus fills the bowl with water.

MARCUS

I appreciate that but it really isn't necessary for you to--

GLADYS

So there's no need to contact the authorities right?

MARCUS

That's... sure I guess not.

He places the BOWL on the counter. Gladys smiles and pulls a STICK from her bag. Wrapped around it is MARCUS'S BLUE RIBBON from the office.

GLADYS

So I take it you haven't contacted them yet, is that right?

MARCUS

Gladys I'm really going to have to insist that... what is that? Is that my Ribbon?

GLADYS

You haven't contacted them yet right?

MARCUS

... No I haven't. What is--

Gladys slides her hand against a thorn and SLICES HER PALM OPEN.

TERRY

Oh my God!

GLADYS

Whoops! Look what I did! Oh my goodness.

She rubs her hand across the stick COATING IT IN BLOOD. She smiles with a 'Silly me' head shake.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

(to Terry)

Would you get me a rag dear?

MARCUS

Why did you do that?

GLADYS

Well it was a mistake of course! Wow that's bleeding, isn't it?

MARCUS

Terry go get some alcohol and the first aid kit.

GLADYS

No! Nonsense. It's nothing!

Terry steps forward with a washcloth as Gladys reaches in her bag and snatches out a PAIR OF SCISSORS. Quick as a cat, she reaches out and SNIPS OFF a chunk of Terry's HAIR.

TERRY

AAAAAAHHH!!! What did you do?

Terry leaps back clutching at his head. Gladys WRAPS the LOCK OF HAIR tightly around the BLOODY STICK.

MARCUS

I'm calling 911!

But Gladys has all she needs. She lifts from her bag a SMALL GOLDEN BELL and...

Ding.

Something shifts in Marcus. He slumps and drops his arms at his sides. Terry stares in horror.

TERRY

Marcus?

Gladys sets down the bell, picks up the STICK and SNAPS IT IN HALF.

On cue, Marcus turns and LUNGES at Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Marcus!

In the next instant Marcus is TACKLING Terry to the floor. He straddles him and WRAPS HIS HANDS AROUND HIS THROAT.

Gladys saunters to the sink and runs her bloody hand under the faucet.

GLADYS

Tsk.

She grabs another rag and wraps her hand. She turns to watch Marcus snarling over his husband.

Terry, bug-eyed, claws at Marcus's face, unable to scream.

Marcus OPENS HIS MOUTH wide and...

MARCUS

BRRRAAAAUUU...

BLACK BILE SPEWS like a faucet splattering into TERRY'S FACE.

Then Marcus rears his head back and...

BAM! Slams his forehead down hard into Terry's nose. He rears again...

BAM! Another head-butt.

Gladys has created a neat little bandage out of the dishcloth. She examines her hand, admiring her neat work.

BAM! ... BAM! ... BAM!

Gladys turns back to the island and plucks up the bloody sticks. She drops them in the bowl of water and the head-smashes stop.

Marcus stands, relaxed and neutral - totally at ease despite the bleeding cuts on his face and the black vomit that runs down his chest.

Gladys pulls the sticks from the bowl and unties the lock of hair.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out ANOTHER LOCK OF HAIR that we recognize as JUSTINE'S. Gladys removes a few strands from this lock and wraps them around a fresh stick. She ties them quickly and then coils the ribbon around it as if she'd done it a thousand times.

She looks at Marcus and snaps the stick.

On cue, Marcus turns and dashes for the front door. He throws it open and runs out of the house.

Gladys calmly collects her possessions and returns them to her bag. She steps over Terry's body and exits.

130

EXT. MARCUS'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

130

Gladys strolls out into the pleasant suburban daylight toward her car parked just outside.

Before she gets in she turns to see Marcus, already about two blocks away sprinting toward the center of town.

Gladys smiles and slides into the car.

131

EXT. STREET - DAY

131

Marcus runs down the street with blood smeared across his face, and vomit splattered down his chest. His arms are out in the same unique posture we've seen before.

-- He bounds across suburban lawns, under a yard carport, through hedges, across a parking lot where a family is loading into a minivan and he nearly gets hit by a car, through a parking garage, through an outdoor restaurant his way through a commercial district. People stop and stare at the sprinting man with blood smeared across his face. He begins to grunt with exertion.

MARCUS

Uhh....uhh....uh....

BYSTANDER

Oh my God.

He rounds a corner and cuts diagonally across the town square.

132 OMITTED

132

133 EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

133

Eventually the GAS STATION comes into view and Marcus beelines it across the length of a city block. Justine and Archer talk, oblivious to his approach.

As he mounts the pavement she turns and sees him.

JUSTINE

Marcus?

He closes the gap and TACKLES her, knocking the HOSE from the car and GASOLINE SPLASHES out in an arc.

He's on top of her just like he was on Terry minutes ago, clawing at her face and growling like an animal.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Ahhh!!

Archer takes a moment to process the violence before springing to action grabbing Marcus by the back of his shirt and pulling him off of her.

ARCHER

Hey! No!

But Marcus is ferocious and he lunges again, clawing at her face and biting at her hands.

Justine manages to flip onto her stomach and crawl under her car worming away from him.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Stop!

Marcus head-buts Archer and breaks free. A moment later, he's slithering under the car after her, but Justine's already out on the other side.

She pulls herself up and launches herself toward the doors of the gas station. Marcus comes clawing out from under the car after her as Archer is rounding the front of the vehicle.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Hey!

As Marcus rises to his knees, Archer kicks him in the ribs knocking him sideways but Marcus pops right back up and tackles him to the ground.

134

INT. GAS STATION SHOP - CONTINUOUS

134

Justine staggers inside and makes for the back of the shop.

JUSTINE

Help me!

The clerk cranes to look past her at the action outside. Justine turns to see Marcus picking himself from on top of an unconscious Archer. He's locked eyes with her and lunges toward the doors.

Justine moves down an aisle and comes to a wall of refrigerated doors that line the rear of the shop. She turns left and sprints along the refrigerators till she comes to a bathroom door. She tries it but it's locked.

Marcus has been tracing her route and now appears at the far corner. He locks onto her and comes sprinting along the row of fridges, closing the distance, eyes bulging, teeth gnashing when --

WHAM! Archer comes full sprint down the aisle between them and BODY CHECKS Marcus hard INTO THE FREEZER GLASS, SHATTERING it and sending glass and beverages flying. Both men go down.

Marcus picks himself up immediately. He's bleeding profusely from a cut in the side of his face but his eyes never leave Justine. He throws himself at her, chasing her toward the front of the store.

CLERK

(still behind the counter)

Get out! Out of my shop!

JUSTINE

Fucking help me!

She doesn't even wait for him to respond. She runs past the counter once more and out the doors with Marcus, bloodier than ever, close behind.

135

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

135

Justine sprints to her car, yanks open the passenger door and dives in, slamming it shut as Marcus collides with it.

She hits the lock as he paws at the handle.

MARCUS
Uhhhhh! GRrrrrrgghgh!!

She watches in horror as he pounds on the glass with pure animal rage.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
GRAAAAAAAAH!

She wriggles into the driver's seat and starts the car.

SMASH! The passenger window shatters and Marcus reaches in, grabbing at her.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
GRAH!!

She puts it in drive and peels out.

Archer stumbles out of the store clutching a bloody arm to his chest just in time to see JUSTINE FLOORING IT down the block and MARCUS ON FOOT chasing after her.

He bolts to his truck.

TRUCK: Archer fumbles with his keys, dropping them on the floor.

ARCHER
Fuck!

He manages to retrieve them and get them in the ignition. He throws the truck in drive and peels out after them.

136

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

136

By the time he's on the road, Justine's already some three blocks ahead. She's running stop signs and putting real distance between her and Marcus who is a block and a half away, running full speed down the middle of the street.

Archer clenches his jaw and steps on the gas, rapidly closing the distance between him and Marcus.

ARCHER
Alright you piece of---

BAM! A sedan flies through the intersection and SMASHES INTO MARCUS at a solid 30 mph flinging him like a rag-doll.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Holy shit!

Marcus lands in a crumpled heap near the sidewalk and Archer slows to a stop.

-- He walks across the road to Marcus's body as the DRIVER of the car that hit him comes running up, already sobbing.

DRIVER

Oh my God! I didn't see him! He ran right out in front of me!

Archer stares at Marcus's dead and broken body.

137 **INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

137

We watch through an open door as Archer sits on an examination table while a nurse bandages his arm. A cop stands by, jotting in a notepad.

138 **INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - LATER**

138

Archer moves down the hall and sees Justine at the front desk. They lock eyes.

139 **EXT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER**

139

They step into the parking lot and eye each other, awkwardly.

ARCHER

You OK?

JUSTINE

I think so. Just scraped up. You?

ARCHER

Same.

Beat.

JUSTINE

I should say thank you. So... thank you.

ARCHER

Sure. I mean what else could I do?
He was completely out of control.

JUSTINE

The last time I talked to him he was fine. He really was. I've never seen anything like that in my life.

Beat.

ARCHER

I have.

She stares at him.

JUSTINE

What are you talking about?

ARCHER

The way he ran. I've seen that before.

(beat)

Can I show you something?

140

INT. ARCHER'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

140

They sit in his truck in the hospital parking lot. Archer flips on the dome light and digs around in his work bag.

ARCHER

And their little girl ran the same way that Matthew did. Same posture. Same *exact* way. Just how Marcus ran after you today. Marcus was like a heat seeking missile locked onto you. Here, look at this.

He unfolds the map on the dash and shows her the trajectories and the circle where they intersect.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Here's my house. Here's Bailey Kramer's house. And--

JUSTINE

I see you've got my house circled over here.

Awkward moment.

ARCHER

Yeah...

JUSTINE

It's fine.

ARCHER

If you assume they were heading in a straight line at some target of theirs - and you assume they both had the *same* target... those lines intersect somewhere around... *here*.

He points to the circled neighborhood. Justine leans forward.

JUSTINE

Oh my God.

ARCHER

So there must be something about this area. Something must be--

JUSTINE

Alex.

ARCHER

What?

She points at a house in the dead center of his circle.

JUSTINE

Alex Lilly lives in this house.

Beat.

ARCHER

Alex Lilly lives... in *this* house?

She stares at him and nods. They share a loaded beat as the implications land.

A141

CUT TO BLACK

A141

ALEX

141

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

141

Alex sits at his desk. Pull back to reveal he's amongst his very present classmates.

JUSTINE (O.S.)

Who else can think of an example of a parasite? Anyone?

A GIRL behind him raises her hand.

JUSTINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Lisa?

STUDENT

A tapeworm.

JUSTINE

A tapeworm! Very good! That's a gross one right? It lives in your intestines and eats your food doesn't it? That's a great one. Who can think of another parasite?

142 **INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER**

142

Alex moves amongst the flow of kids toward lunch. A larger boy, MATTHEW (Archer's son) rushes up from behind and BODY CHECKS him into the wall. ALEX whirls.

ALEX

Stop it!

MATTHEW

(mocking)

Stop it!

Alex fumes, turns and keeps walking. Matthew and his crew keep pace behind him.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stooooop it!

143 **EXT. SCHOOL - PARKING LOT**

143

It's the end of the school day. Alex moves through the crowd of kids loading into cars and minivans. He spots his dad's SUV and makes his way over.

Alex's dad smiles as he loads in.

DAD

How you doing big guy?

ALEX

Good.

144 OMITTED

144

A145 **I/E. SUV / STREET - DRIVING - DAY**

A145

Alex throws his bag into the back as his dad pulls into the street.

DAD
How was your day?

ALEX

Good.

DAD

Good? Kiss any supermodels?

ALEX

No.

His dad smiles at him again.

DAD

Lotta homework tonight?

ALEX

I dunno. Not really.

DAD

So, listen bud, the big day is here. Your mom's aunt Gladys is coming tonight, remember?

ALEX

Why do we have to have her live at our house?

DAD

Well... It's like we talked about. She's sick. And she doesn't really have anywhere else to go.

ALEX

I don't even know her, tho.

DAD

I hear you. I don't really know her either buddy. Honestly your mom doesn't really know her that well, but family is important. And this is what family does. You help each other out when they need you.

145

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - DAY

145

Alex and his Dad step into the living room and we see it's a world away from the dingy cave that we know it as. It's bright, tidy and cozy. Alex's mom fusses in the dining room.

MOM

My men have returned!

His dad crosses and gives her a smooch before moving into the kitchen. She smiles at Alex.

MOM (CONT'D)
Good day at school?

ALEX
Yeah.

MOM
Listen, I want to get this house in order before aunt Gladys shows up. Can you do me a favor and get your room cleaned up before you do your homework?

ALEX
She's not coming in my room is she?

MOM
I'd really like to have a clean house when she gets here. That includes your room.

He rolls his eyes and heads upstairs.

MOM (CONT'D)
I know it's horrible, picking up after yourself.

146 INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

146

Alex lays in bed when the splash of car headlights cross his room. He rises and moves to the window.

In the driveway his father exits the car to help a VERY FRAIL GLADYS (noticeably older than we saw her with Marcus) from her seat.

She looks like she weighs all of 80 pounds. Her face is gaunt and her limbs look like they could snap if a breeze hit them. Her head, however bears incongruously SHINY RED HAIR.

Once she's on her feet she points to the back seat and Alex's Dad retrieves a SMALL POTTED TREE. He cradles the tree in one arm and she clings to the other.

She's rail thin and deathly pale with sunken eyes. Every step is a delicate one.

Sounds of activity in the living room.

MOM (O.S.)
Hiiii! Come in!

DAD (O.S.)
Got the door?

MOM (O.S.)
I got it.

DAD (O.S.)
One more step. There we go.

147 OMITTED

147

148 OMITTED

148

149 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALL / PARENTS' ROOM - MORNING⁹**

Alex emerges from his room and moves down the hall toward his parents bedroom, careful to give a wide berth to the shut door to the guest room.

He steps into his parents' room and hears them arguing in the master bath.

DAD (O.S.)
I'm just saying she looks really
bad. I don't think this is the
place for--

MOM (O.S.)
It's either here or out on the
street Steven.

DAD (O.S.)
This isn't a Hospice center, Hon.
We aren't equipped for this. We
haven't heard from this woman in
fifteen years. She didn't even come
to our wedding and all of a sudden--

MOM (O.S.)
My mother would do this for her.
I'm doing this for her. I could
really use your support.

His mom steps out and sees him.

MOM (CONT'D)
Alex, sweetie what are you doing?

ALEX
I'm hungry.

MOM

There's breakfast downstairs. Eat up and then brush your teeth. It's already 7:30.

He moves toward the staircase.

MOM (CONT'D)
And be quiet back there. Your aunt
Gladys is resting. We don't want to
disturb her.

150

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BATHROOM - MORNING

150

Alex brushes his teeth. He pauses, eying the jack and jill door that leads to Gladys room.

He sets down his toothbrush and moves to the door, listening for any sound from within.

He rests his hand on the knob and turns it as slowly and silently as he can. He eases the door open with a crack.

POV: The room slowly comes into view. The first thing he sees is the CURIOUS POTTED TREE sitting on the dresser. It has thorns and LITTLE BLACK LEAVES, like he's never seen before.

He opens the door wider revealing a small styrofoam head upon which the SHINY RED HAIR rests. He pauses studying the odd WIG.

Then he opens the door wider revealing the foot of the bed, her body under the sheets, and finally her gaunt face. She looks like she's on deaths door - hollow cheeks, wisps of white hair, and sunken eyes that stare at the ceiling.

Alex studies her through the crack in the door until...

She TURNS and LOCKS EYES with him.

He gasps, pulls the door shut and retreats to his room.

151

OMITTED

151

152

INT. SUV - LATER

152

Alex's Dad drives him to school.

ALEX
How long is she going to stay with
us?

His dad weighs this for a beat.

DAD

That's hard to say buddy. It
doesn't seem like she's going to
get better.

ALEX

So she's going to stay with us
forever?

DAD

No... I don't think it will be more
than a month.

His dad checks to see if the message is received but Alex
only stares out the window.

153 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - LATER

153

Alex hops out of the car.

DAD

Pick you up at 2 pal. Love you.

ALEX

OK. Love you!

Alex shuts the door and makes his way inside.

154 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

154

Alex and the class take a test in silence.

JUSTINE

That's time. Pencils down.

Matthew turns and throws his pencil into Alex's face.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Matthew!

MATTHEW

(laughing)

You said pencils down.

JUSTINE

Matthew outside now. Alex are you
OK?

Alex nods and looks at his test as if nothing happened.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Alex?

ALEX

I'm fine.

JUSTINE

Matthew let's go. Get your bag.

MATTHEW

It was a joke! Oh my God!

155 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

155

Alex looks for his dad amidst the end of day chaos. One by one the busses roll out and the minivans depart.

No dad.

-- Alex stands in the same place but the crowd has evaporated and the last two kids hop into a nearby minivan.

He's the last one.

A passing adult lingers.

GROWNUP

You miss your ride, son?

ALEX

I'm OK.

GROWNUP

Sure?

Alex starts walking, worry on his face.

156 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MONTAGE

156

He walks in a neighborhood and eventually greener residential blocks until...

157 EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - LATER

157

He arrives at his house. His dad's car sits in the driveway.

158 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM / DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 58

Alex enters the living room.

ALEX

Hello?

At the rear of the house his parents sit at the dining table. He drops his backpack and approaches.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Dad! Where were you?

He slows. Something's off. His parents stare at the table with dull eyes. His father takes a long beat before letting his gaze drift to Alex.

DAD
Hey bud. ... How was school?

His father's gaze returns to the bare table before him.

ALEX
What's wrong?

No response.

GLADYS steps from the kitchen.

She's DIFFERENT. Her face has color. Her eyes have a twinkle and she's spry on her feet. She sports her wig and a bright jumpsuit and is drying a plate with a rag.

GLADYS
Alex! Welcome home!

He stares, dumbstruck.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
How are you sweetie?

She beams at him.

ALEX
Mom? Dad?

They don't look up. Gladys squats before him.

GLADYS
Let me get a look at you! I haven't seen you since you were a baby!

ALEX
What's wrong with my parents?

She smiles and cocks her head as if this were a silly question.

GLADYS
Nothing, sweetheart! They're fine!

He pulls back from her and stares at his parents.

ALEX
Mom! MOM!

She looks up slowly.

MOM
Hey... How was school?

GLADYS
See? They're just fine!

He recoils from her and stares coldly. She hardens.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Alex! Now don't be rude.

His breathing deepens. He wants to cry but he fights it.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Now why don't you take a seat and
I'll get supper going?

He glares at her.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
What would you like to eat? I was
thinking about--

Alex reaches for the glass of water sitting in front of his father and splashes it into his dad's face.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Alex!

His father slowly raises a hand to wipe his cheek. His eyes never leave the table.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Now what on earth was that for?

ALEX
DAD!

GLADYS
That's it! Go straight upstairs and
wash your face and brush your teeth
and then it's bedtime. No dinner
for you!

He stares daggers at her, tears coming.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
I'm not kidding young man. Go!

He storms upstairs.

159 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

159

Alex lays in bed, eyes wide, tears running down his face.

160 OMITTED

160

A161 **INT. HALLWAY - MORNING**

A161

Alex emerges from the bedroom and stands at the top of the stairs listening for any sound of his family. All is quiet. The other bedroom doors are shut.

161 **INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

161

His parents haven't moved from the table. Their posture is more slumped, their jaws slack, drool oozes from their open mouths.

Between them Gladys sits at the head of the table. She eyes him, coldly.

GLADYS
Come. Sit.

He moves his father and shakes his arm, gently.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
(icy, firm)
Alex? Sit.

He moves to the table and sits opposite her.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Don't worry about your parents
Alex. They're only resting.

He scowls.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Before you go to school today, I
want you to promise me that you
will not tell a soul that I am here
or that your parents are resting
like they are. Do you hear me?

He doesn't answer.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Watch.

She pulls from her lap a small stick wrapped in human hair. Thorns poke through the strands and she presses one into the pad of her index finger. She rubs the finger delicately along the hairs, coating it in blood.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Watching?

She SNAPS THE STICK in half and his parents act in unison. They each SNATCH A FORK from the table and STAB THEMSELVES IN THE FACE, hard and repeatedly.

Thwack thwack thwack thwack ...

Again and again they drive their forks into their cheeks. Tiny red holes soon form rivulets of BLOOD that cling to their hands and run down their necks.

ALEX

STOP!

Alex moves to his father, grabbing for his hands but it's no use. He keeps smashing the fork into his face.

ALEX (CONT'D)

STOP! DAD!

GLADYS

Alex?

She places the BROKEN STICK into a BOWL OF WATER and his parents immediately put the forks on the table.

He stares at her in horror.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Now. When I tell you that you will not speak a word about me or your parents to anyone, you understand what can happen if you break your promise. I can have your parents hurt themselves. I can have them hurt each other. I can have them eat each other if I want to. Do you believe me?

He nods.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Now I want you to promise me that you will not speak about me to another human being. Say it.

ALEX

I promise.

GLADYS

I'll know if you do Alex.

He stares.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Go to school. Take the bus home.

162 **INT. BUS - MORNING**

162

Alex rides the bus, staring out the window.

163 **INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

163

Alex sits despondent as Justine lectures.

164 **EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY**

164

Alex walks home from the bus stop.

165 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - DAY**

165

Alex enters and scans the room, now dark. The windows have all been covered in cardboard and newspaper. In the dining area, his parents sit as before.

Gladys is nowhere to be found.

166

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY / PARENTS' ROOM - DAY

166

Alex creeps to the top of the steps and moves toward the open door to the guest room.

It's completely cluttered. Heaps of furniture, a bed on it's side, dressers and rugs and chairs all stuffed in like a storage unit..

At the end of the hall the door to his parents' room is cracked open with the warm glow of candle-light coming from within.

Alex approaches and peeks inside.

Gladys has removed all of the furniture, and the room is bare.

She sits cross legged in the center of the floor. Before her, sits the small POTTED TREE. Beside it sit little clusters of sticks tied together with string and hair. Other odds and ends are spread out and five candles surround her and her collection of items.

GLADYS

No talking today. Good boy.

He says nothing.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

You'll need to feed your parents.
There's soup in the cabinet.
Tomorrow you'll get more.

A167

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A167

Alex braces a soup can between his knees and tries to operate the can opener. Soup spills down onto the floor.

-- Alex presses a new can against the counter and manages with some effort to use the can opener correctly.

167

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

167

Alex spoon feeds soup into his unresponsive parents' mouths.

168

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

168

Alex sits and listens.

169 **INT. BUS - DAY** 169

Alex rides the bus.

169

Alex loads cans of soup from the shelf into his basket.

171 **EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY** 171
He walks home overloaded with his backpack and his groceries.

A172 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY** A172
Alex has bought pop top cans and opens one with ease.

172 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - NIGHT** 172
Alex SPOON FEEDS his parents SOUP. They look sicker and frailler than before.

173 **OMITTED** 173

174 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT** 174
Alex wakes in the middle of the night.
GLADYS (O.S.)
Alex....
He sits up, instantly alert.
GLADYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Alex...
He steps from his bed and moves to the door, opens it slowly and peeks out.
POV: Down the hall through the open door of his parents room he can see the lower half of Gladys's body laying on the floor, her head and shoulders blocked by the doorframe.

A175 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** A175
Alex creeps down the hall toward Gladys room. Gladys convulses.
GLADYS
(wretching)
Bleeeerggh!!!
Alex comes to the doorway.

B175 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / GLADYS'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

B175

Gladys is laying in front of her little tree with her head in a kitchen pot. She breathes the heavy gasps. She turns to him. It's his first time seeing her without her wig. Her hair, grey and thin, stringy with sweat, clings to her face. She looks diminished. Weaker.

She beckons him to her. He obeys, approaching with caution.

GLADYS
Come here sweetie.

She grabs his wrist and pulls him down to his knees. She gives an ironic smile as if to say '*Can you believe this?*'

GLADYS (CONT'D)
I'm very sick Alex.

ALEX
Do you want some water?

She smiles again, warm this time.

GLADYS
Water won't help me dear. I'm too sick for water. I have been for a very long time.

ALEX
What will make you better?

GLADYS
Well... I was hoping your Mom and Dad would make me better but it hasn't been working too good.

ALEX
Maybe you could go to a hospital?

GLADYS
The hospital can't fix me.

A twinkle in her eye, crafty now.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Maybe you could tho. You could help.

ALEX
How?

She tightens her grip on his wrist and pulls him closer.

GLADYS
At school. Bring an object from each of your classmates home to me. That might help.

ALEX
How will that make you better?

GLADYS

It might be just what I need.

He thinks this over.

ALEX

And if you got better you'd go back
to your home?

She smiles.

GLADYS

If I got better I'd go back home.

175

INT. BUS - DAY

175

Alex rides the bus to school, focused on his mission.

176

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

176

Alex sits among his classmates listening to Justine teach. He studies the children around them. *What to take?*

His eyes drift to the rows of CUBBY BINS along one wall. One bin for each child.

177

INT. GYM - LATER

177

Alex watches his classmates play at recess from the edge of the gym. He slinks off. Rack focus to Justine with her back to him, watching the other children.

178

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

178

Alex moves quickly by himself down the hallway.

179

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

179

Alex lets himself into the empty classroom.

He moves to the wall of cubbies where each child has a little plastic bin. Every bin has a tiny handmade name-card on it that has been drawn and adorned by each student.

Quick as he can he moves down the rows of bins, plucking the name-cards off each bin, pausing briefly at his own name, before plucking it as well. As he snatches the final child's card--

JUSTINE (O.S.)
Alex?

He looks up to see her standing at the head of the class. *Is he caught?*

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
What are you doing in here?

ALEX
I... I didn't feel like playing and
I forgot something.

JUSTINE
Come here.

He shoves the cards into his bag as stealthily as he can and approaches. Justine kneels.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
You've been awful quiet lately.
Quieter than usual. How you doing?

ALEX
I'm OK I just forgot something.

JUSTINE
That's OK.

She smiles at him. Studies him.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Alex, you know if you ever want
someone to talk to you can always
talk to me. Do you know that?

He nods.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
You can talk to me about anything
you want.

ALEX
I want to go back outside now.

She smiles.

JUSTINE
OK, go play.

181 **EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER** 181
Alex lugs his big backpack down his block.

182 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER** 182
Alex enters. His parents sit like statues at the table. No sign of Gladys.

183 **INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER** 183
He reaches the top of the stairs and moves to Gladys' closed door.
Alex upends his backpack and the name-cards come falling out onto the floor in a pile. He kneels, sifts quickly through them and finds his own name. He crumples it up and puts it in his pocket as he moves back toward his bedroom.

184 **INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT** 184
Push in on Alex's alarm clock as it clicks over to 2:15. He sits up in bed.

185 OMITTED 185

186 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LOWER LEVEL - CONTINUOUS** 186
Alex creeps down the steps. His parents sit like statues at the dining room table. He notices the glow of candles coming from the kitchen. He steps closer to see Gladys sitting at the head of the table, wig-less and lost in some intimate chant.
He enters slowly, taking in the scene. Arranged on the counter in front of her are all the name-cards, but now they've been torn into small pieces. In the center of the table is a LITTLE CANDLE and a small CUP of BROWN LIQUID.
A bowl in front of Gladys contains a mixture of leaves and little bits and pieces of each name-card submerged in a brown liquid.

ALEX
What are you doing?

Gladys opens her eyes and shoots a look ordering silence.

She SPITS a wet GLOB OF SALIVA into the bowl, strikes a match and drops it in.

Whoooooshhh!

The fire catches and the contents of the plate IGNITE.

CU: The clock behind her reads 2:17.

Gladys plucks up her little brass bell and...

DING.

-- Gladys walks Alex to the front door and pulls it open.

A187 **I/E. ALEX'S HOUSE / FRONT DOOR - NIGHT**

A187

They stand side by side looking out into the dark of the neighborhood.

187 **EXT. STREETS - NIGHT**

187

CHILDREN running through the dark. First by themselves, then MERGING INTO GROUPS.

188 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

188

The street before them is dark and silent. Nothing but leaves shifting in the breeze. Until...

A FIGURE at the far end of the block emerges, with ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, running from the shadows STRAIGHT FOR THEM.

Alex gasps. Behind that, ANOTHER CHILD emerges.

GLADYS
Here they come.

Then another. The first child comes rushing up the lawn, it's face blank as it zips between Alex and Gladys. Alex looks back out to the yard and here come some SEVEN MORE CHILDREN.

Gladys smiles.

189 **INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

189

Alex sits at his desk. Pull back to reveal an EMPTY CLASSROOM. Justine enters and sets her bag on the desk with a bewildered look on her face.

190 **INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY**

190

Alex sits on a couch as various suited adults bustle around him, clearly the alarm bells have been rung.

191 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - DAY** 191

Gladys SHAVES his FATHERS FACE and COMBS HIS HAIR. She's wearing a brightly colored outfit and makeup.

192 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** 192

Alex's father stands by the front door, vacant as ever but all cleaned up. Gladys opens the door and beckons him out. As his father steps from the house obediently Alex looks to his mom, still seated at the dinner table - clutching a large kitchen knife in her fist. Gladys stares at him and nods.

GLADYS

One word.

193 **INT. CAR - LATER** 193

Alex rides in the back as Gladys drives and his father sits shotgun.

194 **INT. POLICE STATION - DAY** 194

Alex sits between Gladys and his father opposite two detectives.

GLADYS

... Yes, Stephen here suffered a stroke a little while back so he's unable to speak. I'm taking care of the family for the time being.

DETECTIVE

I understand. Glad you both are here. Alex how you doing pal?

Alex looks up.

ALEX

I'm OK.

DETECTIVE

We're gonna ask you some questions about what happened at school OK? We're looking real hard to find all your friends and any help you could give us would make a lot of worried parents real happy. You got any idea where everybody went?

Alex shakes his head.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
No idea?

He shakes his head again.

A195 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY** A195

Alex pops the top on many cans of soup.

195 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY** 195

Alex SPOON-FEEDS his PARENTS on the couch.

196 **INT. BASEMENT - DAY** 196

Alex SPOON-FEEDS the CHILDREN in the dark. Currently it's MATTHEW'S TURN. He dabs at his chin for him.

197 **INT. PARENTS' ROOM - DAY** 197

Alex watches Gladys harvest a stick from the tree, with the care of a surgeon performing an amputation.

GLADYS
Tomorrow people will come here and
they will search this house. We
have to be ready.

She delicately picks up a RAZOR and CUTS HER FINGER. She allows blood to flow down toward her palm and then lovingly RUBS THE BLOOD along the body of the stick, avoiding its thorns.

A198 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY** A198

Alex scrapes the empty cans of soup off the counter and into a garbage bag.

B198 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** B198

Alex pulls the newspaper off the windows.

-- He plugs in the vacuum cleaner and starts it up.

198

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

198

Alex holds a flashlight for Gladys as she moves among the children. One by one she removes a thread from their shirts/nightgowns/pajamas.

ALEX

Will the children make you feel better soon?

GLADYS

That's right, sweetie.

He thinks on this.

ALEX

Will they get sick?

GLADYS

Hold the light up for me.

199

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

199

Gladys holds the stick, now wrapped in the various strings, harvested from the children. She opens the door, points the stick, and the CHILDREN RUSH silently in a stream out into the yard. They hop the fence and flow INTO THE WOODS beyond.

200

INT. FOYER - DAY

200

Men in suits step into the freshly cleaned living room. Gladys smiles and welcomes them in.

201 **INT. CLASSROOM #2 - DAY** 201

Alex sits with DIFFERENT CHILDREN in a DIFFERENT CLASSROOM.

202 **INT. BUS - DAY** 202

Alex rides the bus home.

A203 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY** A203

Alex pops more soup cans open.

203 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY** 203

He spoon-feeds his parents.

204 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT - NIGHT** 204

He spoon-feeds the children.

205 **INT. CLASSROOM #2 - DAY** 205

Alex sits at his desk.

206 **EXT. STREET - DAY** 206

Alex walks home from school. Suddenly, JUSTINE step out of a parked car.

JUSTINE

Alex! Hi.

Alex freezes. Just over her shoulder is his house. He scans the windows but sees no sign of Gladys watching.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

How are you?

He fights panic.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

I wanted to say hi cause... I've been thinking about you a lot and I wanted to make sure you're OK.

ALEX

I'm OK.

JUSTINE

Yeah? Cause I know this has been a
really hard time for me and I can't
imagine how it must have been for--

ALEX
I have to go.

He walks past her.

JUSTINE
Hey. Hang on please.

He doesn't stop.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Alex! I just want to make sure
you're alright! I just want to make
sure everything at home is--

He's focused on the UPPER WINDOWS of his house and sure enough, in the dark rectangle of his bedroom window he sees GLADYS' PALE FACE.

Alex whirls on her.

ALEX
DON'T FOLLOW ME!

She freezes. Alex turns and runs across the yard. He scales the steps as his Father opens the front door.

207 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

207

Alex steps in. His Father shuts the door.

Alex moves to the foot of the steps and looks up.

ALEX
I didn't say anything!

He starts up the steps when...

Ding Dong.

He freezes midway up, afraid to move a muscle. He cranes to peek over the railing at the front door.

Ding Dong.

JUSTINE (O.S.)
Hello? It's Ms. Gandy. I'd like to
talk to you!

Alex rushes to the top of the stairs.

*

A208 **INT. GLADYS'S ROOM / PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY**

A208 *

Gladys's door is cracked open and he moves to it, pushing it wider. *

Gladys stands and stares out of the window. *

JUSTINE (O.S.)
Hello? I know you're home!

Alex makes his way to the other window beside Gladys and peeks out.

In the yard below, an aggravated Justine is moving back toward her car.

ALEX
She's just checking up on me.

Alex studies Gladys who stands stone still, watching Justine.

ALEX (CONT'D)
She's a nice lady.

Outside Justine gets into her car but doesn't start the engine.

Gladys watches.

208 OMITTED 208

209 OMITTED 209

210 **INT. BUS - DAY** 210
He rides to school.

211 **INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY** 211
He buys groceries.

212 **EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY** 212
He carries them home and stops when he sees the police car parked outside his house.

213 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 213
Alex carries in the groceries and notices immediately that the COUCH is EMPTY. Where are his parents?
He sets down the groceries and steps deeper in.

ALEX

Hello?

Alex scans the room and spots...

PAUL standing in the shadows of the rear of the room, still and silent. Alex takes a fearful step back and almost walks into...

JAMES standing behind him.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ahhh!!

Alex scurries to the foot of the steps and sees Gladys standing at the top.

GLADYS

Look at the mess I had to take care of while you were gone.

She glares at him and then walks toward his parents' room.

ALEX

Who are they?

He stares fearfully at James and Paul - their faces twisted in that familiar way.

He moves to the top of the stairs and sees his PARENTS standing sentinel, side by side outside the open door to their (now Gladys's) bedroom. Gladys moves between them.

GLADYS

Pack your things Alex. We're leaving tomorrow. Don't step over the salt.

She shuts the door. Alex looks down and sees a LINE OF SALT stretching across the hallway in front of them.

214

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - MORNING

214

He sits up in bed. He moves to the window, looks out and sees Archer's truck pull to a stop outside.

215

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MORNING

215

Justine and Archer sit in his truck. Paul's squad car parked just in front.

ARCHER

Looks like the cops are here
already. What do you think that
means?

JUSTINE

I don't know.

They stare a beat.

ARCHER

Do we knock? Do we come back?

JUSTINE

Maybe we knock?

ARCHER

And say what? I mean what are we
gonna explain here?

JUSTINE

OK Let's--

The front door opens.

ARCHER

Here we go. What is this now?

They watch the dark of the doorway. After a long beat a figure emerges.

The person takes a slow step from the dark of the house.

It's PAUL. He stands still - vacant.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Is that the cop?

JUSTINE

That's Paul!

ARCHER

You know him?

JUSTINE

I... Yes! What is he...?

Paul raises an arm and slowly makes a 'come here' gesture.

They stare.

He beckons again and steps back into the house.

ARCHER

That was...

They look at each other.

216 **INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

216

Alex watches Justine and Archer exit the truck and approach the house.

He hops off his bed and moves to the bedroom door. He cracks it open and peeks out.

At the other end of the hall the dark shapes of his MOTHER and FATHER stand guard at Gladys's door.

217 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

217

Archer and Justine step inside. They linger in the foyer letting their eyes adjust to the dark.

ARCHER

Hello?

No sound. Just the large cluttered maze of shadows.

JUSTINE

(whisper)

There!

Archer squints to see PAUL standing near the rear of the room.

He raises a clumsy hand and beckons her forward once more.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Paul?

No answer.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Paul what are you doing back there?

Justine steps past Archer and crosses the room toward Paul.

ARCHER

Wait...

JUSTINE

Paul, what are you--

CU: A LINE OF SALT stretches across the floor. Justine unknowingly steps over it and--

JAMES
GGGAAAAAUUUUGGHGH!!

To Archer's side JAMES HURLS HIMSELF out of the darkness and LEAPS ONTO HIM.

As Justine reacts, PAUL RUSHES at her.

PAUL
AAAAAUUUGGH!!

They collide.

218 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 218

Alex steps onto the hallway from his room. Sounds of combat drift up from below but Alex ignores it.

His mother and father make no move.

He CREEPS to the EDGE of the SALT BOUNDARY. He looks at his parents and takes a deep breath.

219 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS** 219

James is on top of Archer, scratching and punching at his face. Archer wrenches James and maneuvers himself on top, delivering three solid punches to James's face. He looks over to see Justine has managed to squirm away from Paul, crawling past the front door and into the dining room.

Paul comes crawling after her. She slithers under the dining room table trying to lose him amongst the chair legs.

She emerges from the far end of the table, pulls herself to her feet and rushes into the kitchen as Paul comes crawling after, already picking himself up to pursue.

A220 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS** A220

She snatches a PAN from the stove and hurls it at him, bouncing off his face with a BONG but he doesn't even notice.

She maneuvers herself around the island.

Paul jukes left and right, anticipating her movement.

JUSTINE
Stay fucking back!

220 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 220

Alex steels himself and cautiously raising one foot and extending it slowly over the line of salt.

He watches his parents as he slowly lowers it.

The instant it touches the ground on the other side...

PARENTS
AAAAAUUUGGGHHH!!!!

His parents spring into action and SPRINT AT HIM.

Alex turns and bolts back down the hallway, into his room and slams the door moments before his parents slam into it.

221 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS** 221

Archer rises to his feet and takes a step back but James is already picking himself up. Archer spartan kicks James hard in the chest, sending him flying toward the back of the room and out of sight.

Archer puts a hand on the wall, taking a moment to gather his...

JAMES
AAAAUUGGH!!

James comes lunging back out of the dark. Archer plants his feet grabs him and twists, using James's momentum to fling him like a rag-doll into the dark of the foyer.

ARCHER
Goddamn, little--

JAMES
AAAUUUGHGH!!

James comes running at him again and once more Archer judo-tosses him, sending him flying into the living room, losing sight of him amongst the shadows and furniture there.

This time Archer stays ready. He looks at the dark where James vanished, anticipating his next--

JAMES (CONT'D)
AAAAUUGGGHHH!!!

James comes charging but not where we (and Archer) were expecting.

He comes bounding out of a different area of the room and connects with Archer, tackling him and the two of them go flying into the basement door, smashing it inward.

222 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT LANDING - CONTINUOUS** 222

Archer falls onto the landing with James on top of him attacking with renewed energy.

Archer gags and writhes against him and as he struggles for air, he catches sight of...

The CHILDREN. They stand in a loose unconscious crowd.

Archer's eyes go wide in disbelief.

223 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS** 223

Paul hisses at Justine from across the island.

JUSTINE
Paul! Stop!

Paul LUNGES UP ONTO THE ISLAND and scampers toward her, leaping, horizontal - arms outstretched, smashing into her.

Justine manages to stay on her feet as Paul grapples with her, pressing her into the cabinets at her back. She spots a knife on the counter and reaches for it, but only knocks it to the floor. She fumbles for the next reachable tool. A VEGETABLE PEELER. She snatches it up and PRESSES IT AGAINST HIS FACE and *shuuuck* JERKS IT DOWNWARD peeling the skin from his cheek and nose in a thick white ribbon.

Paul shows no sign of pain. He throws a punch at her head, which she dodges and his fist smashes through the cabinet shattering the glasses inside.

Justine smashes the peeler to his face again *shuuuck* rips another stripe of skin from his chin and lips.

Paul smacks it from her hands and it goes clattering against a far wall. He grabs her with both hands at the back of her neck and leans in to bite her, his newly tattered lips revealing more teeth than normal.

Justine manages to hold him off with one hand pressed against his face.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Paul... Paul please.

He gnashes his teeth, inching closer to her face, pulling harder against her neck with both hands.

And then with her left hand she raises... HIS SERVICE PISTOL. She's unholstered it where we hadn't been able to see. She presses it to his throat and...

BANG. Blood gushes from his neck in red pulses, but his face remains a mask of rage. He still pulls at her.

She raises the gun to his temple.

Alex takes a frightened step back from the door. His parents attacking it from the other side like crazed animals.

A fist splinters the wood and he sees his mothers livid face peering through the crack at him.

He darts to the side and into the Jack and Jill bathroom, just as the bedroom door explodes open and his parents come roaring in.

A225 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS** A225

Alex slams and locks the bathroom door. His parents are already hurling themselves against it as he pulls open the opposite door leading into the guest room.

225 OMITTED 225

226 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 226

Alex emerges from the guest room, into the hallway. Behind him his parents have already doubled back through his bedroom and appear in the doorway.

He darts away from them toward Gladys' room as they come flying after him.

AA227 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT LANDING - CONTINUOUS** AA227

Archer, still flat on his back struggles against James who straddles him and claws at him like a--

BANG!

James's head comes apart and his body slumps forwards revealing Justine standing in the doorway, aiming the gun.

Archer shoves James aside and immediately makes his way down to the children below.

Justine stares at James's body. She turns toward the kitchen where Paul's legs poke through the doorway.

What have I done?

She drops the gun.

A227 **INT. GLADYS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS** AA227

Alex rushes in, and slams and locks the door. He turns to see an...

EMPTY ROOM. Just her knick knacks, candles and the tree.

No Gladys.

WHUMP! His parents collide with the door but it holds steady for the moment.

227

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

227

Archer reaches the bottom of the steps, gawking at the children standing in the dark.

ARCHER

Matthew?

None of them respond.

He grabs a nearby little boy and pulls him into the light.
Not Matthew.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Matthew!

He moves deeper into the dark grabbing children, craning to see the faces.

228

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

228

Paul lays face down on the tile, with blood pooling around his head. Justine crosses the room and kneels beside him, placing a loving hand to his back.

JUSTINE

Oh my God...

PUSH IN on Paul. We're sure he's going to reanimate in some terrible way.

229

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / PARENTS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

229

Alex takes a cautious step into Gladys' room. He inches deeper into the room craning to look into the bathroom...

No Gladys.

Where could she be?

230

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

230

Archer moves among the children. He digs out his phone, turning on its flashlight.

ARCHER

Matthew?

He moves deeper into the dark. Shining his light on strange face after strange face until...

GLADYS
AAAAAAUUUGGGHHH!!!!

GLADYS LUNGES from within the crowd. Quick as lightning she SNATCHES HIS NECKLACE AWAY FROM HIM.

231 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

231

Justine tries to pull Paul into a position that could aide... what? Mouth to mouth? Compressions?

JUSTINE
Hang on Paul. Just hold--

The door behind her BURSTS OPEN and she whirls to see Archer rushing out of the darkness, eyes bulging, lethal and vacant.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
No...

Justine turns to flee but he lunges, grabbing her from behind and pulling her into him. He wraps his arms around her neck and tries to squeeze the life from her.

Gladys appears in the doorway behind him, smiling and wrapping a cloth around her bleeding hand.

GLADYS
That's good. Just like that.

She steps lazily up to watch Justine writhe and gag against Archer's grip. He arches his back and her feet come off the ground.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
That's the way.

232 **INT. GLADYS' ROOM / PARENTS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

232

Behind Alex his parents' attack the door. A panel is already beginning to splinter.

He moves deeper into the room and snatches the stick with the hair of the children from the ground in front of the little black tree.

He moves quickly to the far wall and snatches Gladys' cancer wig from a little mannequin head.

SMASH! His parents come roaring through the door and Alex darts to the MASTER BATHROOM.

233 **INT. MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

233

Alex pulls the door shut just in time. His parents pounding, begins immediately.

He locates a thorn and stabs it hard into his hand. He SQUEEZES THE BLOOD ONTO THE STICK, snatches Gladys' cancer wig, and flips it inside out. He plucks some of her grey hairs from the inner mesh and pulls them free. He wraps them around the wood, takes a deep breath and then...

Snaps it.

234 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

234

A rumbling sound. Gladys whips her head around.

GLADYS

No...

BOOM! The children come exploding out of the basement like a single organism.

Gladys sprints out the front door.

235 **EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

235

As Gladys flails her way down the steps and across the yard the children EXPLODE THROUGH WINDOWS, SMASH THROUGH THE DOORWAY - some falling, some leaping over the fallen.

AAA236 **EXT. 2ND HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

AAA236

Gladys runs into the side door of the neighboring house.

AA236 **INT. 2ND HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

AA236

She slams the door shut and throws the lock.

She rushes through the living room of this house but the kids come smashing through the rear windows after her.

GLADYS

Aaaaaahhh!!!

CHILDREN

AAAAUUUUUGGGHGHHHHH!!!!!!

She's through the house and out the front door.

A236 OMITTED

A236

B236 OMITTED

B236

236 OMITTED

236

A237 **INT. BREAKFAST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A237

A family of three sit at the breakfast table calmly enjoying a meal when Gladys runs past the bay window shrieking her head off. They crane to watch her pass.

A moment later the stampede of children rush after her.

B237 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

B237

Alex braces himself against the door as his parents smash their way in. His mother's head fills a gap in the wood, glaring down at him.

C237 **EXT. BREAKFAST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

C237

Gladys runs along the house through the backyard and comes to a tall wooden fence. She throws the gate open, slides through and slams it shut behind her.

She darts for the side door of the closest home.

The children move like a freight train HITTING THE FENCE behind her like a tiny riot, PILING THEMSELVES AGAINST IT til the WOOD BREAKS. Some from the rear simply run up the pile of kids and leap over into the lawn after her.

237 **EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS**

237

A man mowing his yard watches as half a block away a screaming Gladys runs as fast as she can out of one house, through the side yard to another and disappears inside.

A stream of screaming children pursue her.

A238 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

A238

Justine plants her feet on the counter by the sink and pushes herself against Archer's grip, buying precious room to breathe.

238 **INT. 4TH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

238

We follow the lead child as it leaps through a window, into the kitchen where a shocked family eats breakfast. In the center of the frame Gladys is already darting through the living room toward the front door.

We follow the child as he rushes past the bystanders toward Gladys who is out the house and slamming the door behind her, but our kid veers right and leaps out the window beside it.

239 **EXT. 4TH HOUSE / FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS**

239

Gladys sprints out into the yard but the STAMPEDE OF KIDS comes blasting out of every orifice of the house, exploding through doors and windows.

They catch her before she reaches the street and leap upon her like a pack of rabid wolves bringing down a stag. In an instant, she's on the ground swarmed by 17 shrieking children who BITE and TEAR at her with level 10 ferocity.

Some pull her hair, some gouge at her eyes, some pull her wrists and some her ankles.

Soon parts of her come loose. Her face is reduced to pulp, someone bites off an ear. She's lifted off the ground by their collective pulls like a woman being drawn and quartered.

Children leap onto the pack from the edges 'til it's just a bloody scrum with pieces of her coming loose in the frenzy.

At some point she stops screaming.

240 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

240

The rage on Archer's face dissolves. His hands loosen from Justine's throat. She gasps. He relaxes, drops her and staggers outside.

Justine rubs at her throat, finally able to breathe.

A241 **EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A241

Archer staggers and then begins to run, following the carnage the children left.

B241 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

B241

Justine pulls herself to her feet and stumbles through the destroyed dining room.

C241 **INT. 2ND HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

C241

Archer pushes into the rear of the house, through the now destroyed living room where another bewildered family takes stock of the wreckage and out into...

241 OMITTED

241

242 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

242

Justine limps her way up the stairs.

JUSTINE

Alex?

243 OMITTED

243

AA244 **EXT. BREAKFAST HOUSE / YARD - CONTINUOUS**

AA244

We follow Archer past the broken fence.

ARCHER

Matthew?

A244 **INT. ALEX'S HOME / UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS**

A244

Justine reaches the top of the stairs and moves toward the smashed door to Alex's parents' room.

244 **EXT. 4TH HOUSE / FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS**

244

Archer stops at the doorstep, taking in the scene.

245 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE / PARENTS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

245

Justine steps into Alex's parents' room, the tree sits in the center of the room. She pushes deeper in, looking toward the master bathroom where she sees...

Alex wrapping his arms around his two kneeling parents.

Push in on Justine. She almost lets herself smile.

246 **EXT. 4TH HOUSE / FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS**

246

Archer emerges into the front yard where 17 children stand idly, covered in blood.

ARCHER

Matthew?

One child among them turns slowly and looks at him.

Archer beams.

He runs to his bloody child, scoops him up and holds him tight.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

I found you.

PUSH IN on Archer as he carries his son down the block, away from the gore and the mayhem. A joyful tear runs down his face.

247 **INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

247

Alex hugs his parents tight.

PUSH IN ON THEIR FACES - they stare absently at the wall behind him.

248 **EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS**

248

PUSH IN on a blood covered Matthew, pressed against his father's neck.

His eyes are open but they are vacant.

Empty.

THE END.

249 **INT. GLADYS'S ROOM - LATER**

249

Push in slowly on the unharmed tree as credits roll.