

COMPLETE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - TIMELESS

A black garbage bag hangs over the side of a bathtub. Something of considerable bulk falls inside it and hits the floor with a dull thud. Someone drags the bag O.S.

A hacksaw lies in a pool of blood inside the tub. Bits of flesh stick between its teeth. More blood is splattered on the sides of the tub, the adjacent wall and a nearby sink.

The tub drain is clogged with shredded sinew and tiny bits of bone. Blood drains sluggishly.

A bloody gloved hand reaches into the tub drain and digs out a handful of gore. It feels the mess around in its fingers and produces a diamond engagement ring wrapped around a thick strand of sinew.

The hand dumps the drain's contents back into the tub. They hit the porcelain with a wet splat. A faucet runs O.S.

Bloody trembling fingers peel the sinew from the engagement ring as it rinses in the sink.

The sink bowl is filled with empty pill bottles. A funnel lies amongst them attached to a short cut of bloody plastic tubing.

INT. FREEZER

The door opens to an empty freezer. A gloved hand shoves the garbage bag inside, now containing an elongated shape. It's secured with plastic twine.

The freezer door closes.

FADE OUT.

ROLL TITLES

FADE IN:

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

NIKKI (26) sits at a table next to the sidewalk. She has dark bangs that cover her doe eyes and a little too much makeup on. She sips a cup of coffee as she watches people on the street pass by.

SYDNEY (O.S.)

I hope you don't mind me saying you're a lot prettier than I expected.

Nikki looks up to see SYDNEY (33). He's tall with bookish glasses and a receding hairline.

SYDNEY

Not that your profile picture wasn't pretty or anything.

NIKKI

You don't look so bad yourself.

Sydney chuckles.

SYDNEY

That's good to know.

NIKKI

Sorry. I'm not much for formalities. I've never been on a blind date before.

SYDNEY

That's okay. It's just like any other date. We just need to find a jumping off point.

NIKKI

Well, we have been matched based on compatibility, right? Or so they say.

SYDNEY

What do you do for a living, Nikki? That's one piece of information you've neglected to include on your profile.

NIKKI

You first.

SYDNEY

Okay.

NIKKI

Like I said. Formalities. I'm not always this awkward.

SYDNEY

I'm an engineer. E.M.P. to be specific.

NIKKI

What's that?

SYDNEY

That's electrical, mechanical, plumbing. Not Electro-Magnetic Pulse.

Sydney chuckles. Nikki smiles politely. She doesn't get it.

SYDNEY

Sorry. I was watching The Matrix last night. Basically, I keep the lights on, the water running, the warm places cool and the cold places warm.

NIKKI

Sounds like a lot of work.

SYDNEY

It can wear you out. You've got that right. But people need schools, hospitals, etcetera, etcetera. I used to work on houses too. It feels good to help people get what they need.

Nikki nods as she sips her coffee.

SYDNEY

That's me in a nutshell. Your turn.

NIKKI

I'm in what you could call the food business.

SYDNEY

That's kind of a broad term. What exactly do you do?

Nikki sighs and looks down at the table.

NIKKI

I'm a waitress.

Nikki covers her face with her cup as she takes another sip of coffee.

SYDNEY

That's not so bad. Lots of waitresses in Bethesda.

NIKKI

Well, I can't exactly blame the bad economy. I dropped out of college.

Sydney shrugs, somewhat taken aback.

SYDNEY

College isn't for everyone.

Nikki looks up.

NIKKI

You don't think so?

SYDNEY

I don't know. I guess it just doesn't work out for some people. For whatever reason. Life goes on.

NIKKI

You might be the only person who thinks so. My parents never let me forget what a fuck-up I am.

Nikki returns her attention to her coffee.

Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY

I'm not here to judge you, Nikki.

Nikki sets down her cup.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I can be a real downer sometimes. I guess it doesn't help that I'm nervous. Can we start over?

SYDNEY

Sure. If you want.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY

Nikki knocks on a door. DENISE (late 20s) answers.

DENISE

There she is.

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki sits at a table. Denise takes a seat beside her with two vodka martinis in hand. She hands one to Nikki.

DENISE

Stoli for you. Smirnoff for me.

Denise raises her glass. Nikki does the same.

DENISE

To vodka.

NIKKI

To vodka. A girl's best friend.

Nikki and Denise clink glasses and drink.

DENISE

So how was your date?

NIKKI

I don't know. He seemed like a nice guy but I probably scared him off with my atrocious social skills.

DENISE

Well, no need to get attached, right? You can save that for when you actually get the guy.

NIKKI

You know, maybe this online dating  
isn't for me.

DENISE

Bullshit. Trust me, Nikki. I'm a  
master matchmaker.

NIKKI

You're not a matchmaker. You just set  
up the account for me.

DENISE

But I helped you weed out the bad  
apples, didn't I? That hasn't exactly  
been your area of expertise thus far.

Nikki's cell phone buzzes in her pocket. She answers it.

NIKKI

Hello.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I know this is sort of breaking the  
rules but I just wanted to say I had a  
great time today.

NIKKI

Me too.

SYDNEY

Have a good night.

NIKKI

You too, Sydney.

Nikki flips the cell phone shut. She mouths "wow."

DENISE

What'd I tell you?

EXT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A red brick building on a narrow street.

Nikki and Sydney kiss at the base of a stoop.

NIKKI

It was great to see you again. I'd invite up but I guess you've got a lot of work to do tomorrow.

SYDNEY

Not necessarily.

Nikki breaks away from Sydney.

SYDNEY

I'm not trying to cross my boundaries or anything. Do you want me to come up?

INT. NIKKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A minimalist studio apartment. The living room and kitchen seem to occupy the same space.

The front door opens. Nikki leads Sydney.

NIKKI

This is it. It's like everyone says. It's not much but it's home.

Nikki crosses her arms and looks at the floor.

SYDNEY

Not bad. I lived in a place just like this after I graduated from Georgetown.

Sydney looks at Nikki.

SYDNEY

You okay?

Nikki shrugs.

SYDNEY

I see what's going on here.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

Come on, Nikki. You can relax.

NIKKI

Well, I don't exactly entertain much.

SYDNEY

Don't worry about it. We've been going out for a while now. You can let your guard down. I've seen you let loose before. I like you. You don't have to act like I'm someone to impress. If anything, that's my job. I mean, I am seven years older than you.

NIKKI

You sure are.

Sydney laughs. He steps forward and opens his arms. Nikki steps forward and receives his embrace.

NIKKI

You know how to make me feel safe, Sydney. Nothing superficial seems to matter to you.

SYDNEY

I don't think it should, do you?

NIKKI

It doesn't matter what I think. Everyone else is superficial and sometimes that's enough to make things hard. That's why you really have to find someone special. So whatever happens, you never have to feel like it's you against the world.

SYDNEY

Hopeless romantic, huh?

Nikki looks up at Sydney.

NIKKI

You know that Queen song? "You're My Best Friend?" That's the kind of feeling I'm talking about.

SYDNEY

Freddy Mercury. He's the man.

Nikki laughs, surprised. Sydney leans in for a kiss.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Nikki walks down the street toward a picturesque town house. She wears a waitress outfit.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney sits on a cushy couch and watches TV. He wears professional attire but no shoes or tie. His tie is draped over the side of the couch.

ON THE TV

A wrecked car sits on the side of a cloudy freeway.

PARAMEDICS open the smashed driver side door and pull out a WOUNDED WOMAN. A gash on her brow trickles blood down the side of her face. Her left arm is bent completely backward. Tattered flesh dangles from protruding bone.

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney watches transfixed.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nikki unlocks the front door.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE TV

The wounded woman lies on an operating table with a breathing mask strapped to her face. DOCTORS surround her and cut away her blood-soaked clothes.

BACK TO SCENE

A door opens O.S. The jingle of keys follows. Sydney changes the channel.

Nikki enters. She lets out a sigh and kicks off her shoes.

NIKKI

Hey sweetie. What're you watching?

SYDNEY

Whatever's on. I was thinking about watching something on demand a little later. Join me?

Sydney pats the seat beside him.

Nikki lies down next to him and makes herself comfortable.

SYDNEY

How was work?

NIKKI

Long. If I keep this up, they're going to have to make me manager. Then I'll really be fucked. Managers don't get to air out their dirty laundry. It has to be smiles all the way.

SYDNEY

At least you don't work here. Georgetown harbors a special breed of asshole.

NIKKI

What's that make you then?

Sydney smirks playfully. Nikki smiles.

NIKKI

Will you rub my feet?

Sydney pats his thigh. Nikki lifts her legs and rests her feet in his lap.

Sydney takes one foot in hand and massages it. Nikki coos appreciatively.

NIKKI

You think I should've quit? I mean years ago. Maybe I could've gone back to school.

SYDNEY

I thought you didn't like school.

NIKKI

I didn't like law. But maybe I could've done something else. Like acting or something.

SYDNEY

I think more people drop out of school to become actors.

NIKKI

It doesn't matter. Either way, I'm stuck now.

SYDNEY

You're too hard on yourself, Nikki. You need to stop thinking about what could've been. That's how I kicked the painkillers. Regret doesn't lead anywhere good. Trust me. I know.

NIKKI

I should probably just enjoy my foot massage, shouldn't I?

SYDNEY

Indeed, you should.

Nikki coos as she shuts her eyes.

Sydney rubs Nikki's other foot. He works his way up to her calf and kneads her flesh. Nikki moans.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney and Nikki lie in bed together. Nikki rolls on top of him and kisses his face and neck aggressively.

NIKKI

Let's make a baby!

Sydney struggles to speak as she locks lips with him.

SYDNEY

You serious?

NIKKI

Yeah! Come on!

Sydney grabs Nikki's hips and attempts to push her off.

SYDNEY

Slow down!

Nikki rolls off him. She pecks him on the cheek and giggles.

NIKKI

I'm just fucking with you. Well, I was trying to anyway.

SYDNEY

It's always babies with you.

NIKKI

It's babies with every girl, sweetheart. What can I say? Our biological clocks are ticking.

SYDNEY

Let's see. Twenty-seven? Yep. Time's definitely running out.

Nikki shoves Sydney playfully.

NIKKI

Come on. You know I want to make lots of babies with you. You haven't even put a ring on my finger yet.

SYDNEY

What's the rush? Don't you want to enjoy the ride a little longer?

NIKKI

I love you, Sydney. I just want the whole package is all.

SYDNEY

I'm not going anywhere.

NIKKI

That's romantic.

SYDNEY

I do have a way with words.

NIKKI

I'm serious, babe. Come on. Isn't it natural to want to be complete?

SYDNEY

You don't feel complete?

NIKKI

If you have to ask...

SYDNEY

Point taken.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I'll try to lay off the serious stuff for a while.

Nikki climbs back on top of Sydney.

NIKKI

But you know. Just because we're not making a baby doesn't mean we can't go through the motions.

Sydney grabs Nikki's head and brings her in for a smooch. He rolls her onto her back and kisses her passionately.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Sydney sits in boxers on the edge of the bed. He turns and looks at Nikki. She's asleep.

Sydney gets up and proceeds to a closet across the room. He opens it and removes some clothes.

INT. JEWELERS - DAY

Sydney stands in front of a display case for engagement rings. He browses the designs.

A SALES CLERK appears beside him.

CLERK

Can I help you?

SYDNEY

Hmm...

Sydney turns to the clerk.

SYDNEY

I think I'm okay for now.

CLERK

Well, let me know if you want to take a closer look at anything.

SYDNEY

Will do. Thanks.

The clerk proceeds over to another customer browsing the merchandise. After a moment, Sydney shakes his head and exits the store.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki lies in bed wide-awake. A door shuts somewhere in the apartment.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney pours himself a glass of orange juice at the kitchen counter. He turns around to see Nikki standing in a nightie beside a nearby table.

SYDNEY

I thought you'd be sleeping in.

NIKKI

Where were you?

SYDNEY

Just taking care of some business. I'm afraid we'll have to postpone our plans for this weekend. They want me up at headquarters. There's some important meetings going down.

Nikki takes a seat at the table and crosses her arms.

SYDNEY

You mad?

NIKKI

Sad.

SYDNEY

You know I hate to disappoint you, sweetheart. I'll blow them off next time. I promise.

NIKKI

You don't have to promise anything like that. It's your job. I understand.

Sydney approaches Nikki. He reaches out and rubs her shoulder in a comforting matter.

SYDNEY

I'm not leaving til the afternoon.  
Lunch?

NIKKI

Brunch.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Sydney munches on a cheeseburger as Nikki shoves a forkful of whipped cream-topped strawberry crepe into her mouth. Sydney looks at her and chuckles.

NIKKI

What? You know you'd still love me if I got fat.

SYDNEY

Nothing wrong with a little chub.

Sydney slaps his belly. Nikki laughs.

NIKKI

You know I can't compete with that.

Sydney laughs.

NIKKI

So when are you coming back?

SYDNEY

Hopefully, Sunday. Unfortunately, the real answer would be whenever we get through all the meetings. In this case, it's sort of unpredictable.

NIKKI

Why? What are you working on?

SYDNEY

They're building a new mall upstate. Needless to say, it's going to take some planning. It's not like a house project or a grocery store. Not even a Wal-Mart or Costco. But it'll get done sooner or later.

NIKKI

Then next week-

SYDNEY

Of course. But right now, try to enjoy some "Nikki time." I know you have to work too but I'd hate for you to get too antsy while I'm gone.

NIKKI

I'll try my best.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sydney sits in a car in front of the apartment. Nikki stands beside it. She leans in and gives him a kiss.

SYDNEY

I'll see you soon.

NIKKI

Love you.

SYDNEY

Love you too.

Nikki waves as Sydney drives away.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nikki lies on the couch covered in blankets and watches TV. She sighs in dismay.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Sydney drives down a country road. The surrounding fields are covered in snow.

EXT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney's car pulls into a strip mall and parks in front of the store. Sydney exits the car and enters the building.

INT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney holds a cell phone to his ear as he rolls a shopping cart down an aisle of wine glasses.

SYDNEY

It's about time. I've been trying to reach you all day. Now I know I've been asking a lot of favors from you lately. I've got one more for you and that'll be the last of them. But brace yourself. It's a doozie.

Sydney removes a box of wine glasses from the shelf and examines it.

SYDNEY

I need you to come out to the cottage next week and help me with the operation.

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

Of course I haven't asked anyone else. I thought better of it. You're the only one I can trust. This sort of thing requires a certain finesse. A certain intimacy. It's something very special to her and I. I don't need anyone getting the wrong idea.

Sydney removes another box from the shelf and drops it in his shopping cart.

SYDNEY

Look. I haven't ironed out the details but I want this to happen as soon as possible and I'm dead set on next week. I've been planning this for a very long time and I'm tired of waiting.

Sydney exits the aisle and proceeds further into the store.

SYDNEY

Of course the conditions are correct. I'm very good at my job. You're not the only expert I've consulted.

Sydney enters an aisle of candlesticks.

SYDNEY

This isn't like what you do everyday. Not even one of your special cases. You could change someone's life, Donald. In a way deeper and more meaningful than you ever could otherwise.

He removes a box of candlesticks from the shelf and examines it.

SYDNEY

That can be arranged. Of course.

Sydney returns the box to the shelf.

SYDNEY

You're a true friend, Donald.

Sydney closes the phone and drops it in his pocket. It vibrates a moment later. He takes it out again.

He looks at the screen. Nikki is the caller. Sydney presses a button on the side of the phone. The vibration stops.

EXT. HOME FURNISHING STORE - DAY

Sydney emerges from the store with a shopping cart full of purchases. He pops the trunk of his car and proceeds to load it up.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki lies on the couch. She ignores the TV as she holds a cell phone to her ear.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

You've reached the cell phone of-

Nikki sighs and closes the phone.

LATER

Nikki sends the text message I MISS YOU and puts her phone in her pocket. She stares at the TV, looking very bored.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A dimly lit dive bar inhabited by a handful of BAR RATS at the far end of the counter. They look up as Nikki enters and takes a seat. Denise, the bartender, approaches her.

NIKKI

(nervously)

Hey Denise.

DENISE

Long time, no see.

NIKKI

I'm sorry. I should've called.

DENISE

It's okay. I've been pretty busy here the past few months.

NIKKI

It's good to see you. I've wanted to stop by for a while but I was afraid.

DENISE

Obviously, you're still with Sydney. Is he going to show up?

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE

What are you doing here all by yourself then?

NIKKI

Sydney's gone for the weekend.

DENISE

That's not much of a reason. What else is going on?

NIKKI

Could I have a gin and tonic?

Denise fixes Nikki a gin and tonic. Nikki takes a sip.

DENISE

You know, Nikki, you can talk to me. I don't hold grudges although I do wish you'd remember who your friends are.

NIKKI

You're right. I'll give you a call next week. We can do something.

DENISE

So what's up? I've seen you come into the bar enough times to know when something's wrong.

NIKKI

I'm worried. Sydney's not answering his phone. I know he's busy but he would've called back by now. He always does.

DENISE

You guys get in a fight or something?

Nikki shakes her head.

DENISE

Then don't worry about it. He'll call back. Sydney doesn't strike me as the cheating type and almost all guys do.

Nikki chokes on her drink.

NIKKI

I never said anything about cheating!

DENISE

Come on, Nikki. I know you. It had to have crossed your mind.

NIKKI

It's just that last night, we were talking about marriage and kids.

DENISE

Oh boy.

NIKKI

Then this morning, he left. He didn't mention any meetings before. I wouldn't think anything of it but—

DENISE

Yes you would.

Nikki shoots Denise a look.

DENISE

I'm sorry. But what?

Nikki takes a drink.

NIKKI

After last night, I don't know what to think. It could be nothing, I guess. But this is what always happens when I get too attached. Everything's okay at first and then they get distant.

DENISE

This doesn't sound like a guy being distant.

NIKKI

It always starts with the small things.

DENISE

I'd sleep on it. You'll be able to figure things out when he gets back. Right now, you should probably finish your drink and go home. You don't want to send the wrong message around here. Trust me.

NIKKI

I guess you're right.

Nikki finishes her drink.

NIKKI

We'll talk soon. I promise. I never wanted us to become strangers.

DENISE

Don't worry about it. Take care of yourself.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Sydney's car drives down a snowy road through the forest.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Headlights illuminate timber as Sydney's car pulls up in front of a darkened cottage.

Sydney steps out and pops the trunk. He takes a stack of boxes into his arms and proceeds to the front door.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney unlocks the door. He kicks the snow off his shoes and enters.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A light flicks on inside the cottage. The front door shuts.

INT. SHRINE

The room is pitch black.

A door opens. Sydney enters and flips a switch. Fluorescent lights illuminate.

Sydney stands at the end of a narrow corridor. Everything consists of the same pale blue tile. A room of the same design is visible at the end of the hallway. Sydney proceeds toward it.

The room is empty and windowless except for three rectangular objects in front of each wall. Each stands four feet high and is draped in black cloth.

Sydney walks amongst the objects. He stops at the third one. He places his hand over the cloth and pulls it away.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki lies asleep in bed. A door shuts in the apartment. Nikki's eyes snap open. Footsteps approach.

After a moment, Sydney enters. Nikki pretends to be asleep.

Sydney takes a seat on the bed beside her. He gently strokes a lock of hair from her cheek. She opens her eyes.

SYDNEY

Rise and shine.

NIKKI

Why didn't you call?

SYDNEY

I was on silent for the meetings. Then we went out to dinner. I forgot to change it back. I'm sorry.

NIKKI

You're lame.

SYDNEY

I hope you don't mind me asking how your weekend was.

Nikki shrugs.

SYDNEY

Not too lonely?

NIKKI

Kind of boring, I guess. But I got some "me time" like you said.

SYDNEY

Well, if you don't feel like sleeping in and getting a little more of that "me time," or rather "you time," I can make you some breakfast.

NIKKI

What time is it?

SYDNEY

Past breakfast. But that doesn't mean I can't fix you something tasty.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Nikki sits at the table in front of a plate of sausages. Sydney approaches her and scoops scrambled eggs onto the plate from a pan.

He fixes himself a plate of food and takes a seat across from her.

SYDNEY

So I've been thinking. What do you say we take a little vacation next week?

NIKKI

What kind of vacation?

SYDNEY

Is that a hint of reluctance I detect?

NIKKI

Baby, I'm all for being spontaneous but we can't just up and go on vacation.

SYDNEY

I'm not talking about Hawaii or anything. Contrary to what you might think, I'm fully aware of the process of buying plane tickets.

NIKKI

You had me going for a second there.

SYDNEY

Look. The renovations on the cottage are finished. I was thinking we could go down to West Virginia for a couple days or a week and unwind a little.

NIKKI

I thought that was your parents' place.

SYDNEY

They don't have much use for it anymore. So they've left it in my hands. It's the least they can do after completely jumping ship from my life. Anyway, it's very pretty this time of year. Just the right amount of snow.

NIKKI

You're kind of putting me on the spot, baby. Everyone's going to be pissed at me if I-

SYDNEY

You think I'm the only one who thinks you need a break, Nikki? I doubt anyone at work would mind if you took a couple days off. They might even let you slide with a week. It's not like we're going anywhere for Thanksgiving.

NIKKI

This weekend was kind of a downer. I missed you.

SYDNEY

You know I was thinking about you too. It's not like I planned this whole thing on the drive home.

Nikki lays her head in her hands in thought. After a moment, she looks up and smiles.

EXT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT, DAY

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

The trunk of Sydney's car is packed with luggage. Sydney slams it shut and proceeds to the front of the car.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Sydney enters the driver's seat. Nikki sits beside him.

SYDNEY

You ready?

NIKKI

Yes sir.

SYDNEY

Let's go.

Sydney starts the car.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car drives down a country road.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Nikki gazes out the window at the snowy fields that pass.

NIKKI

So how come it's taken you so long to show me this place?

SYDNEY

This is a special place. I only share it with special people.

Nikki turns to Sydney.

NIKKI

You mean I'm not special enough?!

SYDNEY

Of course you are. I'm showing you now,  
aren't I?

Sydney pinches Nikki's side playfully. She giggles and  
slaps his shoulder gently.

NIKKI

I mean up until now.

SYDNEY

I've got a lot of history at this  
place. It takes a certain kind of trust  
to let people in on it. We have that  
trust and I've been wanting to show you  
for a while now. But timing is key. It  
wasn't until some things you said  
lately that I got to thinking.

NIKKI

What things?

SYDNEY

(sly)  
I'm afraid I can't say.

NIKKI

Asshole! Tell me!

Nikki slaps Sydney's shoulder a second time.

SYDNEY

You know, I don't think it's very safe  
to be hitting the driver.

Nikki pouts melodramatically. Sydney gently pats her  
shoulder. She relaxes.

NIKKI

Do you really trust me that much,  
Sydney? Sometimes it feels like there's  
things you're afraid to tell me.

SYDNEY

I'm an open book, Nikki. You know that.  
Just wait til we get there, huh?

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Sydney's car drives through the forest.

INT. SYDNEY'S CAR - DAY

Nikki lies across the backseat with a blanket over her. She looks out the window.

NIKKI

Are we almost there?

SYDNEY

Generally speaking, the answer doesn't change just because you ask a couple more times.

NIKKI

You're a dork.

Sydney chuckles.

SYDNEY

This time, you're in luck. We'll be there in just a minute.

NIKKI

Finally. This mountain's got way too many circles around it.

SYDNEY

Indeed, we're a long way from civilization. As we know it, anyway. But it'll be worth the wait. Trust me.

Sydney winks at Nikki.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Sydney's car pulls up in front of the cottage. In daylight, it's a perfect mix of modern and old-fashioned. Sydney and Nikki exit the car.

Nikki marvels at the sight of the cottage. Sydney takes notice of her gaze.

SYDNEY

Wait til you see the inside.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Sydney unlocks the front door and kicks the snow off his shoes. Nikki does the same.

Sydney enters and bends down to untie his shoes.

SYDNEY

Take off your shoes. I like to keep a clean house.

Nikki giggles.

Sydney takes off his shoes and places them on a small bench beside the door. Nikki does the same.

SYDNEY

Let me give you the grand tour.

Sydney leads Nikki into a kitchen straight ahead. She looks around as she follows his lead.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki emerge from the kitchen.

Ornamental candlesticks and a bouquet of flowers sit on top of a table draped in fancy tablecloth and set with brand new plates and silverware.

NIKKI

What is this?

Sydney chuckles and puts his arm around Nikki.

SYDNEY

You ain't seen nothing yet.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki enter a bedroom with carpeted floor. A queen size bed with red silk sheets lies before them. Nikki gasps at the sight of it. She turns to Sydney.

SYDNEY

What are you waiting for?

Nikki approaches the bed and feels the sheets. She sighs. After a moment, she climbs onto it.

NIKKI

Let's see how many times I can roll over.

Sydney chuckles as Nikki rolls over three times before she reaches the other side of the bed.

NIKKI

Very old school, baby.

SYDNEY

Check the bathroom.

INT. COTTAGE, BATHROOM - DAY

The same bathroom from the opening scene.

Nikki opens the door. Sparkling white tile abounds. Scented candles adorn the sink under a mirror.

Nikki delights as she sniffs the candles. Her gaze shifts to the bathtub. She leans over to look inside. It's filled with rose petals.

NIKKI

Hon, you went all out.

Sydney enters behind her. He leans in and kisses her neck. She whirls around and kisses him on the lips.

NIKKI

How'd you find the time to do this?

SYDNEY

You remember those meetings I had last weekend? Let's just say they never happened.

Nikki gasps and slaps Sydney's chest playfully.

SYDNEY

Tell me. How else was I supposed to pull this off?

NIKKI

I knew you were full of shit. So what's the occasion?

SYDNEY

You want special all at once or are you still ready to be surprised?

NIKKI

I'll tell you what I want. I want to know what it feels like to make love on silk sheets.

Nikki pulls Sydney's head toward hers. They kiss passionately and aggressively. Sydney grabs her by the hip and leads her into the bedroom.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The candles are lit to set the mood. Nikki and Sydney eat a fancy chicken dinner. Sydney leans forward and refreshes a glass of wine for Nikki.

NIKKI

This is beautiful, sweetheart. But I'm still confused. What's this all about?

SYDNEY

I suppose now's as good a time as any.

NIKKI

For what?

Sydney walks over beside Nikki and takes a knee. She gasps.

SYDNEY

Nikki...

Nikki trembles with anticipation as Sydney produces a ring box. He opens it. An engagement ring sits inside. The same one from the opening scene.

SYDNEY

Will you marry me?

Nikki can only bring herself to nod as her eyes well up.

SYDNEY

Don't leave me hanging. Is that a yes?

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney and Nikki cuddle under a blanket on a carpeted floor as they watch a fire in the stone fireplace before them.

Nikki wears her nightie. Sydney is shirtless. A bottle of champagne and two flutes sit on a nearby tray.

Nikki takes Sydney's hand in her own and squeezes gently. Sydney's ring is on her finger.

NIKKI

You want to hear something funny? Last week when you wouldn't answer your phone, I was worried I scared you off with all the marriage talk.

SYDNEY

Why would you think that?

Nikki looks at the ring.

NIKKI

This is my dream. I've come so close so many times, I was starting to think it would never come true.

LATER

Nikki lies on her back and moans as Sydney kisses her neck and chest. After a moment, his head disappears under the blanket.

DREAM SEQUENCE

Nikki arches her back and grabs the blanket as she squeals in ecstasy.

NIKKI

No! Lower!

UNDER THE BLANKET

Sydney kisses his way down Nikki's bare thigh until it ends with a fleshy stump just above where her knee should be.

Sydney retracts.

NIKKI (O.S.)

Please!

Sydney sticks out his tongue. It grazes the base of the stump. Nikki whimpers. Sydney opens his mouth and presses his lips against the stump.

BACK TO SCENE

Sydney's head moves under the blanket between Nikki's legs. The toes on both of her feet curl as she moans.

LATER

The fire has reduced to embers.

Sydney and Nikki spoon.

NIKKI

Tell me I'm beautiful.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A car pulls up beside Sydney's.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

The doorbell rings. Sydney enters and opens the front door. DONALD (40s), a short bald man with glasses, stands on the other side.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney and Donald sit at a table in the kitchen.

DONALD

Let's see it.

Sydney places a briefcase on the table and opens it. It's filled with cash. Donald squirms uncomfortably.

SYDNEY

It's what we agreed.

DONALD

Numbers are one thing. Seeing the cash with your own eyes is something else. Are you sure you want to do this?

Sydney scoffs.

SYDNEY

It's not like I'm giving you everything in my retirement account. Besides, my parents started me off saving as soon as I got out of college. I'll be okay.

DONALD

It's just I can't imagine anyone else willing to do this. I need to make sure you're positive. One hundred percent. Anything less and I walk out the door. This is your last chance to say no.

SYDNEY

Take the money, Donald.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Nikki sits in bed in her nightie. She rubs her head, disoriented. She glances at a clock on the night table beside her. It's past four.

NIKKI

(groggily)

Shit.

Nikki climbs out of bed and stumbles forward as her feet touch the floor. She takes a moment to find her balance then goes into the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The briefcase sits on the floor beside Donald's chair.

DONALD

What was the dose?

SYDNEY

It's safe. I checked. Don't worry. I've followed all your rules.

Donald's gaze shifts past Sydney. Sydney turns.

Nikki stands in the doorway between the kitchen and dining room. She looks groggy as she leans on the doorframe for support.

SYDNEY

Hey sweetheart.

NIKKI

What's going on?

SYDNEY

Nikki, this is Donald. He's my friend from town. Donald, this is my fiancé, Nicole.

DONALD

How are you feeling about today?

NIKKI

Okay, I guess—

SYDNEY

Will you excuse us, Donald?

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Sydney and Nikki stand beside the kitchen entrance hidden by the wall from Donald's view.

SYDNEY

He won't be here long. How are you feeling?

NIKKI

Why? What's wrong?

Sydney clears his throat.

SYDNEY

You had a lot to drink last night.

NIKKI

Really? I don't remember...

Nikki glances into the kitchen. Her eyes fall on three empty wine bottles on the kitchen counter. She grimaces.

NIKKI

I guess I wouldn't. I'm going to lay on the couch for a little while. I don't feel all that awake just yet.

SYDNEY

Sounds good. Feel better.

Sydney kisses her on the cheek. She disappears O.S.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nikki lays down on a couch and covers herself with a blanket. She shuts her eyes and makes herself comfortable.

LATER

A hand gently shoves Nikki's shoulder.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Nikki awakens. Sydney and Donald stand in front of her.

SYDNEY

It's time to go downstairs.

NIKKI

What?

SYDNEY

Downstairs. You remember?

Sydney extends Nikki a hand. She looks into his eyes.

NIKKI

I remember.

Nikki takes his hand.

FADE OUT.

DONALD (V.O.)  
Count backwards from ten.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
Ten, nine, eight, seven...

Nikki's voice trails off.

DONALD (V.O.)  
You ready? I need you focused, Sydney.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Just a second.

DONALD (V.O.)  
Take your time.

SYDNEY  
I'm ready.

FADE IN:

INT. COTTAGE, BASEMENT

A basement renovated as an operating theater.

Nikki opens her eyes.

She lies on an operating table draped in surgical cloth under a low fixture of bright lights. A breathing mask feeds her anesthetic from a tank on the floor.

Sydney and Donald stand next to her clad in scrubs, gloves and surgical masks. A tray table sits between them laden with surgical instruments including an oscillating saw.

A white sleeve hugs Nikki's right thigh. Donald wraps a thick black band around it and secures it in place. He checks it then turns to Sydney.

DONALD  
Tourniquet's secure. Saw.

Sydney hands Donald the saw. Donald turns it on and prepares to saw through Nikki's leg.

Nikki's gaze catches his own. He turns and makes direct eye contact with her. He stops the saw.

SYDNEY

What's wrong?

DONALD

This isn't the right saw for a transfemoral amputation.

SYDNEY

It's what you asked for—

DONALD

It's not! Go to the trunk of my car and get it. It looks just like this one only larger.

SYDNEY

Shouldn't you?

DONALD

You won't know what to do if anything happens with the anesthesia. Go!

SYDNEY

Jesus Christ, Donald!

Sydney pulls down his mask. It dangles around his neck.

SYDNEY

This is my fiancé!

Sydney runs up a nearby staircase. Donald waits until a door slams upstairs to turn off the anesthetic and remove Nikki's mask.

DONALD

It's alright. He won't find it.

Donald removes the surgical tourniquet and sleeve from Nikki's leg. He pulls off his mask and tosses it aside.

DONALD  
I'm shutting this down.

Donald produces a syringe and injects its contents into Nikki's arm.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney rummages through countless briefcases and duffel bags full of surgical equipment in the trunk of Donald's car. After a moment, he runs back to the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki sits in her nightie on the edge of the cloth-laden table with her head hung low.

Donald collects the surgical instruments and transports them one by one into a briefcase.

DONALD  
Sydney's way too eager for this and  
frankly, you were out of your head when  
we put you under.

Nikki turns and looks over her shoulder.

A cot sits in the far corner over the room laden in plain white sheets. A pair of crutches and a hinged prosthetic leg are propped against its foot.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney approaches an ajar basement door.

SYDNEY  
Donald, I couldn't find-

DONALD (V.O.)  
It's in a maroon briefcase!

Sydney turns around and heads back through the living room.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki turns back to Donald. Her eyes are full of tears. Donald stops what he's doing and looks at her.

DONALD  
Are you alright—

Nikki lunges at Donald and knocks him over the tray table.

She takes off toward the stairs. Donald gets to his feet and runs after her as she scrambles clumsily up the steps. He snatches at her ankles.

DONALD  
Wait! It's not—

Nikki whirls around and shoves Donald down the stairs. He strikes the wooden steps hard as he tumbles down. His glasses fly off as he hits the concrete floor.

Nikki takes off down the hallway.

Donald stirs at the bottom of the stairs. Blood trickles from his forehead. He touches it and brings back red on his fingertips.

He looks up and sees his glasses. He reaches for them.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nikki opens a drawer of silverware and reaches inside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney produces a maroon briefcase from Donald's trunk. He opens it. Surgical equipment. No saw.

SYDNEY  
Son of a bitch!

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney enters.

NIKKI (O.S.)  
What the fuck is going on here?

SYDNEY

Nikki?

KITCHEN

Nikki stands near the edge of the kitchen. She holds a massive butcher knife in her hand. Her face is puffy and wet with tears.

NIKKI

What are you trying to do to me?! You want to hurt me?! I'll hurt you first!

Nikki brandishes the knife. Sydney recoils and throws his hands in the air.

SYDNEY

I'm not trying to hurt you, Nikki. I would never—

NIKKI

Then what just happened downstairs?! What is this place?! A lab?!

SYDNEY

No. Nothing like—

NIKKI

What was the saw for?!

SYDNEY

I don't—

NIKKI

I saw everything! Don't lie to me!

SYDNEY

I'm not... I thought you understood.

NIKKI

What?!

DONALD (O.S.)

She doesn't know, Sydney.

Nikki turns as Donald appears behind her. One of the frames of his glasses is cracked. Nikki turns back to Sydney.

DONALD

Does she?

Nikki takes a step back. She presses her back against the kitchen counter to keep both men in sight.

DONALD

It was the drugs you gave her, wasn't it? I knew she wasn't in the right state of mind. How can you expect her to remember?

NIKKI

What's he talking about, Sydney?

Sydney stammers.

DONALD

Tell her, Sydney.

Sydney gulps.

SYDNEY

(to Nikki)

I couldn't expect you to cooperate. It's not something you could understand until after the operation. Now it looks like I have no choice but to make you understand. I'm trying to help you.

NIKKI

Help me what?

SYDNEY

Be complete.

NIKKI

I don't understand.

Sydney steps forward. Nikki raises the knife defensively.

NIKKI

Stay back!

Sydney reaches forward gently.

SYDNEY

Give me the knife, Nikki.

Nikki shakes her head.

SYDNEY

No one has to get hurt.

Sydney grabs for the knife. Nikki lunges forward and stabs him in the shoulder. He screams.

Donald runs up behind Nikki and pulls her away from Sydney. The knife falls from her hand.

Nikki squirms violently in Donald's grip. He releases her. She falls to the floor but quickly scrambles to her feet.

SYDNEY

Nikki, wait!

ENTRANCE HALL

Nikki dives for the front door. Sydney blocks her path. She turns and runs down the hall. Sydney gives chase.

LIVING ROOM

Nikki races through the living room.

HALLWAY

Nikki dives for a metal door across from the basement. Sydney appears in the living room behind her.

SYDNEY

No! Not in there!

Nikki disappears behind the metal door and slams it shut. Sydney grabs the doorknob. She's locked it.

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney falls to his knees and pounds on the door.

SYDNEY

Get out of there, Nikki!

NIKKI

No!

SYDNEY

There's something terrible inside—

NIKKI

I don't believe you!

INT. SHRINE

The room's only light spills in through the crack at the base of the door. Nikki sits on a tile floor and sobs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald appears behind Sydney.

SYDNEY

Wait downstairs.

Donald proceeds downstairs.

Sydney leans his back against the door.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, are you listening to me?

NIKKI

I thought you loved me.

SYDNEY

I do love you, Nikki. More than you know. That's why I have to do this.

NIKKI

Do what?

SYDNEY

It's your leg. It's a threat. An intrusive element in our relationship. I can't really put the feeling into words. But it's strong and I've felt it for a very long time.

NIKKI

You want my...

Nikki trails off into sobs as she brings both of her legs in toward her.

SYDNEY

This wasn't the way things were supposed to happen. But amputation will fix everything. For both of us.

NIKKI

No!

Nikki sniffles as she takes a moment to calm herself.

NIKKI

What happened to you, Sydney?

SYDNEY

Nothing happened. This is me.

NIKKI

This can't be you.

SYDNEY

I tried therapy. Needless to say, it didn't work. Therapists don't really care how you feel. They only care about what's normal. Or what normal's supposed to be. Drugs didn't help either. So I turned to the Internet. I went online and found a site for people... into amputees. I met some girls who'd had their legs removed.

Nikki reacts.

SYDNEY

After that, everything changed. At first, I thought it was for the better. But in the end, no matter how much I opened my heart to them or they opened theirs to me, I never felt connected to them. Eventually, I realized it was because I wasn't there to experience their transformation.

Nikki breaks down. She brings her right leg to her chest and locks her arms around it.

SYDNEY

I know you can only see this as insane. For a long time, I felt the same way. But take it all away, we need each other, Nikki. We're the same. Our parents never understood us. They turned their backs on us. But we've always understood each other.

NIKKI

I don't understand. Why can't you just love me the way I am?

SYDNEY

Believe me, Nikki, I do. But as long as that intrusive element remains, we'll always be in flux.

Sydney steps away from the door and turns around.

SYDNEY

I can't force you out, Nikki. But I can wait for you. I've been waiting.

END INTERCUT

INT. SHRINE

Nikki waits for Sydney's footsteps to fade in the distance. After a moment, she stands and flips on the lights.

She looks around and sees the main room at the end of the corridor. She proceeds toward it.

She enters and scans her surroundings. Black cloth covers all three objects.

Nikki approaches one of the objects and reaches out to it. Her fingers brush the cloth. It falls away to reveal a plastic display case containing a female human leg severed above the knee.

The leg is freeze-dried. It looks plastic with unnaturally shimmering skin. Its stump is sewn up with thick black sutures.

Nikki gasps and recoils in horror. Her elbow bumps another display case. The black cloth falls away to reveal a second leg. The stump appears less tidy than the first with more sutures sewn in.

Nikki screams and falls down. The black cloth falls off the third case and onto her face.

Nikki grabs the cloth and casts it aside. She looks up and sees the third leg through the clear bottom of the case. Smaller sutures stitch up random gashes around its knee.

Nikki bursts into tears and curls into a fetal position.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sydney rinses his wounded shoulder at the sink.

INT. BASEMENT

Donald collects surgical instruments off the floor and places them on the restored tray table.

When they are all accounted for, he proceeds to transport them into his briefcase on the now bare operating table. Stainless steel reflects the light above.

Sydney enters.

SYDNEY

What are you doing?

DONALD

I'm leaving.

SYDNEY

You can't leave. I already gave you—

DONALD

You can have your money. I plan on distancing myself as far from this situation as possible. I'm going to the police.

SYDNEY

You can't go to the police. You'll lose your medical license or worse—

DONALD

(defensively)

I don't think so. You told me repeatedly that this is what she wanted. I was brought here under false pretenses. Not to mention I never actually went through with anything.

SYDNEY

Doesn't matter. You knew exactly what you were getting into—

DONALD

You never told her about the operation!

SYDNEY

It wouldn't matter if I did. No other surgeon would've agreed to do this. It'd be in violation of your bullshit, politically correct Hippocratic Oath. That makes you negligent, doesn't it?

Sydney proceeds to the cot and grabs the prosthetic leg.

SYDNEY

You want to leave?

Sydney returns to the operating table.

SYDNEY

Go ahead.

Sydney swings the prosthetic across the table. Donald's briefcase sails through the air. Surgical instruments clatter on the floor.

Donald lunges forward. He snatches the prosthetic from Sydney's hands and swings it through the air. Sydney blocks the first blow with his arms. He drops them in pain.

The second strikes him across the face. Blood spews out of his mouth as he falls to the floor.

Donald brings the prosthetic down on Sydney's back and tosses it aside. He reaches down and picks up the saw.

Sydney regains himself.

SYDNEY

You ruined everything!

Sydney lunges at Donald. Donald raises the saw. Sydney stops dead in his tracks.

DONALD

I wouldn't.

SYDNEY

Donald. Drop the saw—

DONALD

Shut up, you pervert!

Donald starts the saw. Sydney throws up his hands.

DONALD

Acrotomophilia's not love, Sydney. It's a fetish.

Donald spits on the floor.

DONALD

Get out of my way.

SYDNEY

Just because I'm not like you—

DONALD

I said get out of my way!

Donald lunges at Sydney with the saw. Sydney catches it by the handle. Donald puts his other hand around it. Sydney does the same. A struggle breaks out.

DONALD

Let it go or I'll cut your throat out!

SYDNEY

No!

Donald tugs hard at the saw. Sydney releases it. The revolving blade slices into the side of Donald's head.

Donald screams and falls onto his back. The saw carves through the side of his face. The severed half falls away and exposes clean-cut layers of brain and skull.

Sydney stumbles backward in shock and falls to the floor.

The saw blade grinds against the concrete as Donald crawls toward Sydney. Sydney scrambles backward on his hands and feet. His back hits the wall.

Donald whimpers as he reaches out to Sydney. His fingers graze the toe of Sydney's shoe. Sydney retracts it.

Donald climbs on top of Sydney with intensity in his eyes. His head bleeds onto Sydney's scrubs. Sydney tries to push him off but to no avail.

Donald puts his hands around Sydney's throat and squeezes but is too weak to cause any harm.

He bleeds onto Sydney's face. Blood trickles into Sydney's mouth. Sydney sputters and coughs in disgust.

Donald leans forward and sinks his teeth into Sydney's cheek. Sydney cries out and shoves him to the side. His wounded head hits the concrete. He goes still.

Sydney takes a moment to catch his breath and wipe the blood off his face.

After a moment, he turns and slowly reaches out to Donald. His fingers stop in front of Donald's mouth. He recoils as Donald exhales onto his hand.

Sydney gets to his feet and proceeds across the room.

The saw spins aimlessly in the crevice it's created in the concrete. Sydney picks it up and examines it. After a moment, he turns it off and sets it on the operating table.

Sydney reaches down and grabs a roll of gauze off the floor. He turns to Donald.

LATER

Donald is propped against the wall. Sydney wraps gauze tightly around his wounded head.

LATER

Donald's head is wrapped completely in gauze. Sydney sits beside him. He takes off his gloves and tosses them aside.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney emerges from the basement and approaches the door to the shrine.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney waits for a response. Nothing.

He reaches down and grabs the doorknob. It's still locked.

Sydney releases the doorknob.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney enters. He proceeds across the room and takes a seat on the cot. He buries his head in his hands and whimpers.

After a long moment, he looks up. His eyes are damp. He spots the anesthetic tank next to the operating table.

Sydney gets up and proceeds toward the tank. He takes a seat in front of it.

He reaches down, picks up the breathing mask and places it over his nose and mouth.

He reaches forward and turns on the gas. The tank hisses gently. Sydney takes a deep breath of anesthetic. He blinks and takes a second breath. His wide eyes relax.

Sydney reaches forward and turns up the gas. He takes a deeper breath. His eyes roll back.

He yanks off the mask and leans back on the floor. The lights over the operating table reflect in his vacant stare.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki lies in a fetal position on the floor. Her red eyes are distant.

Banging at the door. Nikki bolts upright.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Nikki?!

Nikki shrieks.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney kneels in front of the shrine door.

SYDNEY

I know it wasn't right to do this to you. To deceive you. But what choice did I have? How could I have told you everything before now?

INT. SHRINE

Nikki gets to her feet.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney lays his hand on the door.

SYDNEY

I wasn't about to repeat my past mistakes. I couldn't risk losing you. Not when I've come so close.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki stops beside the door at the end of the corridor.

INTERCUT Sydney and Nikki on both sides of the door.

NIKKI

Are they dead?

SYDNEY

What?

NIKKI

The other girls. Are they dead?

Sydney hangs his head.

SYDNEY

Yes.

Nikki whimpers.

NIKKI

All of them?

Sydney chokes up.

Nikki throws both hands over her face and slumps against the wall.

SYDNEY

I didn't want them to die. I just wasn't prepared. I didn't know what I was doing back then. Not like with you. This time, I was going to do it right.

NIKKI

Are there more?

SYDNEY

No. Just three.

Nikki breaks down.

SYDNEY

I'm not a killer, Nikki. You have to believe me. They were all accidents. And I'll have you know not all of them resisted the operation.

Sydney sighs.

SYDNEY

But none of us were right for each other. Not like you and me. I loved them. That's why they're still here. I needed something to remember them by.

NIKKI

Why do I have to be the one? I'm nothing. I've always been nothing.

SYDNEY

You've always underestimated yourself, Nikki. You have so much love to give.

NIKKI

Then why this?

Nikki caresses her right leg.

NIKKI

It's just my body.

END INTERCUT

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donald moans downstairs. Sydney gets up.

INT. BASEMENT

Donald lies on his side. The whites of his eyes are visible as his eyelids flicker. Blood seeps sluggishly through the gauze around his head and trickles on the floor.

Sydney descends the stairs. He stops midway at the sight of Donald.

SYDNEY

Shit!

Sydney runs back up the stairs.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki listens to Sydney's footsteps from the other side of the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney grabs a towel off the rack and races out.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney's footsteps approach. Nikki locks the door again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney proceeds down the hallway and turns into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney walks over to Donald and takes a seat. He takes Donald's head in his lap. It bleeds onto his scrubs as he wraps the towel tightly around it.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki presses her ear against the door. Silence.

She unlocks the door again.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney removes his belt and wraps it around Donald's head to hold the towel in place. He hooks his arms under Donald's shoulders and drags him to the side.

After a moment, he turns and looks across the room. His eyes lock on the anesthetic tank.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki opens the door a crack and peers into the hallway.

Footsteps downstairs. Nikki shuts the door.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney traverses the room. He hears the shrine door shut.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney bursts out of the basement and tries the shrine door. It's locked.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki stands frozen in front of the door as the doorknob shudders.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney returns to the basement.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki gets on her hands and knees and attempts to peek under the door.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney takes a seat beside the anesthetic tank and places the breathing mask over his face. He turns on the gas.

INT. SHRINE

Nikki unlocks the door once again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The shrine door opens slightly. Nikki peeks out. She creeps slowly into the hallway. She holds the doorknob like it was life support.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney inhales the gas deeply. His eyes close.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nikki shuts the door behind her, careful not to make a sound. It clicks shut.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney's eyes snap open.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki enters the bedroom and locks the door behind her.

Two cell phones charge on the floor next to the bed. Nikki grabs one, dials 911 and brings it to her ear.

911 (V.O.)

911, please state your emergency.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney emerges from the basement and approaches the shrine door. He raps gently upon it.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney presses his face against the door. His drugged-out eyes stare into space.

SYDNEY

I know what you're thinking. It's all coming apart. All your hopes and dreams. A harsh reality is taking over. But I promise I won't let that happen.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds the cell phone to her ear.

911 (V.O.)  
Are you safe?

NIKKI  
I think so. Unless they find out where I am. The door's locked but they might still try to get in.

911 (V.O.)  
Is there any way you can get out of the house without alerting them?

Nikki looks to the window behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney takes a seat with his back to the shrine door.

SYDNEY  
You've been in there for some time. Alone with your thoughts. Haven't you given me the benefit of the doubt yet? Don't you think there's a reason you've always felt unsure of yourself? A reason your life has never taken the path you've hoped it would? Something external holding you back?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki holds the cell phone to her ear.

911 (V.O.)  
We'll send a unit to your location immediately.

NIKKI  
Thank you.

Nikki flips the cell phone shut.

She stands and turns to the window. She grabs it from the bottom and pulls up. It doesn't budge. She pulls harder.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney turns toward the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, are you listening to me?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki tugs hard at the window. After some effort, it comes open. Cold wind blows through the opening.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney stands up.

SYDNEY

Nikki?

Sydney tries the doorknob. The door opens.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki shoves the window further open and climbs through it.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney enters the empty room. He drops to his knees.

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney races for the exit.

EXT. COTTAGE, DECK - NIGHT

Nikki climbs out the window onto a snow-covered deck. She turns around and closes the window.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door shudders as loud banging fills the room.

SYDNEY (O.S.)  
Don't do this to me, Nikki!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney kicks the door violently. It starts to crack around the lock.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs half-naked and vulnerable through the snow along the side of the cottage.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A loud crack as the door flies open. Sydney bursts in.

He runs quickly in and out of the bathroom then casts aside a closet door. He dives for the bed and snatches up a handful of sheets to look underneath it.

SYDNEY  
Where are you?!

Sydney looks up from beside the bed. His eyes fall on the window. He walks up to it for a closer look. Nikki's handprint is fresh on the foggy glass.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki scampers up to Sydney's car. She tries the backseat door. It's locked.

She looks down and gasps at the sight of her own footprints she's left in the snow.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Sydney emerges onto the deck from a backdoor. He shuts it behind him.

His eyes fall on a trail of footprints leading from the bedroom window around the side of the cottage. He follows them.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki creeps up to Donald's car. She tries the backseat door. It opens.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki climbs into the backseat and shuts the door behind her. She locks both of the back doors, climbs into the front seat and locks the driver and passenger side doors.

She climbs back into the backseat, lies down on the floor and does her best to stay out of sight.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

A police car drives down the forest road.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

OFFICER BELL and OFFICER SIMPSON (both 40s) sit in the car. Their names are embroidered on their uniforms. Bell drives.

BELL

So do you believe it?

SIMPSON

What? The story about the leg? Hell no!

BELL

Me neither. Sounds like a couple of yuppies getting drugged up. They start messing around, things get a little out of hand, paranoia kicks in... The next thing you know, you've got a domestic disturbance on your hands.

SIMPSON

I hear you. Time to shut this sick bastard's party down.

BELL

Oh come on! You know it was the girl who lost her shit.

SIMPSON

Bah! What do you know?

BELL

Care to make this interesting?

SIMPSON

I'll bet you a Coors Light. We'll hit the bar after our shift.

BELL

I said interesting.

SIMPSON

Fine! If I'm wrong, drinks are on me tonight.

BELL

Now you're talking.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The police car speeds ahead.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney follows Nikki's footprints through the snow. He turns the corner and follows them to the backseat of his car. He tries the locked door then produces a set of keys and unlocks it electronically.

He opens the backseat. It's empty.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki hides behind the passenger's seat as she watches Sydney look around outside. She ducks down as he briefly turns in her direction.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney scans the snow for more footprints. There are none.

SYDNEY

What the—

Something O.S. catches Sydney's eye. He crouches down and examines one of his own footprints from earlier. Inside it is a print of Nikki's bare foot pointed in the same direction.

Sydney's eyes follow his footprints back toward the cottage. Each one contains one of Nikki's footprints.

Sydney scoffs, dumbfounded.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki pulls her legs toward her as she listens to Sydney's footsteps approach.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney follows his own footprints straight to the backseat of Donald's car. He grabs the door handle.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki holds her breath as Sydney tries the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney crouches and looks under the car.

He comes back up and peers inside the car. He spots Nikki's foot.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Sydney slams his hand against the backseat window. Nikki shudders.

SYDNEY

You were better off inside, Nikki. I  
can't wait for you if you're in there.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The sound of a car approaching in the distance. Sydney looks toward the road. He sees the flicker of red and blue lights cast on the trees.

SYDNEY

Shit.

Sydney runs to the far end of the cottage and disappears around the corner.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Police lights reflect off the rear window. Nikki looks up.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The police car parks behind Donald's car. Bell and Simpson emerge and proceed to the front door.

INT. DECK - NIGHT

Sydney creeps onto the deck and enters the cottage.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney shuts the backdoor behind him. He reaches down and pats the snow off his pant legs. He takes off his shoes, leaves them at the door and proceeds ahead.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell rings the doorbell.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki hears the doorbell. She looks up and sees the officers.

She bangs loudly on the window. The officers turn and see her. They race to the car.

Simpson tries the door. It's locked. Nikki rolls down the window with a crank on the side of the door.

SIMPSON

Are you alright?

NIKKI

I'm fine.

SIMPSON

Are they both still inside?

NIKKI

One of them was just here. I don't know where he went.

SIMPSON

What about the other one?

NIKKI

I don't know. I haven't seen him.

Simpson turns to Bell.

SIMPSON

I'll check it out. You stay with her.

Bell nods and turns to Nikki.

BELL

Whatever happens, stay out of sight.  
We'll let you know when it's safe to  
come out.

Nikki nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney stares out the window at Nikki and the police. Nikki rolls up the window and ducks out of sight.

Bell relates some directions to Simpson with hand gestures. Simpson walks toward the end of the cottage.

Sydney disappears O.S.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Simpson follows Sydney's footprints around the side of the cottage.

He grabs a radio from his side and brings it to his lips.

DONALD'S CAR

Bell leans against the side of the car.

His radio crackles at his side.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

By the way, I think drinks are on you tonight. I might just make those Coors European seeing as you're buying.

Bell grabs the radio and brings it to his lips.

BELL

Is that how it works now?

SIMPSON (V.O.)

That's how it always works. You don't make a bet unless you've got something to wager.

BELL

Alright, you cheap bastard. Let's get this over with.

AROUND THE BEND

Simpson returns the radio to his side. He stops dead in his tracks as the cottage goes black.

He grabs his radio again.

DONALD'S CAR

The front of the cottage is also black.

Bell's radio crackles as he brings it to his lips.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

Is it just my side or did the whole place just go black?

BELL

Someone cut the lights.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

I'm going in. Radio silence from here on out.

BELL

Copy that.

Bell returns the radio to his side and rests his fingers on the handle of a holstered pistol.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A hand grabs the discarded butcher knife off the floor.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Simpson creeps onto the deck with a pistol in hand.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simpson enters and shuts the door quietly behind him. He produces a flashlight.

Sydney's shoes lie at his feet. Simpson takes a moment to examine them with his flashlight then proceeds ahead.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson turns into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Simpson enters and proceeds to the center of the room.

Sydney stands behind him with his back against the wall. He sneaks quietly out of the room.

Simpson whirls around and shines his flashlight at the doorway. Sydney is gone.

Simpson checks the bathroom and closet before he exits.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson emerges from the bedroom and proceeds down the hallway. Sydney stands behind him on the other side of the bedroom door.

He creeps up behind Simpson. Simpson freezes. Sydney does the same. Simpson senses his presence. After a moment, he proceeds forward.

Sydney grabs Simpson and attempts to put the knife to his throat.

SYDNEY

Don't move—

Simpson anticipates the attack and slams the butt of his pistol into Sydney's nose. Sydney falls to the floor.

Simpson whirls around and shines the flashlight in Sydney's face. There's blood on Sydney's face but no wounds. He wipes some off his forehead and looks at his hand.

Simpson shines the flashlight on the floor. A bloody knife lies beside Sydney. Blood drips on the floor between both of their feet.

Simpson gurgles. Blood gushes from his throat in rhythmic fashion. He drops the flashlight. It turns off as it strikes the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell's radio crackles. A static-laden gurgling issues.

Bell brings the radio to his lips.

BELL

Simpson?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson's radio slips from his fingers. He grabs his pulsating jugular. Blood spurts between his fingers.

Sydney stands in a defensive stance several feet away.

Simpson holds his pistol on Sydney. His arm sways from side to side.

Simpson's radio crackles on the floor.

BELL (V.O.)

Simpson, do you copy?

Simpson drops his pistol and falls to the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bell stows his radio.

BELL

Shit.

Bell arms a pistol.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Simpson lies on the floor. His hand slips weakly from his throat as his life force ebbs away.

Sydney takes a step forward. His eyes fall on the pistol. Simpson catches his gaze.

SYDNEY

(quiet)

I'm sorry.

Sydney grabs the pistol.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki rolls down the window. Bell peers inside.

BELL

I'm going in. If anything happens, just honk. I'll be back.

NIKKI

Okay.

Nikki rolls up the window and ducks back down.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Bell enters with a flashlight in hand.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simpson's limp feet drag into a darkened room.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Simpson perks up at the sound of a distant thump followed by scuttling in the darkness.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Simpson's body lies in a darkened corner. It slumps toward the floor.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Another thump. Simpson aims his flashlight and proceeds forward.

KITCHEN

Bell enters and looks around. His flashlight illuminates several drops of blood on the floor. He crouches down to examine them.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney stands beside the doorway to the kitchen. He peers around the corner at Bell and slowly aims Simpson's pistol.

Bell looks up. Sydney retracts the pistol and disappears O.S.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bell stands and scans the rest of the kitchen.

Someone moans in the distance. Bell whirls around.

ENTRANCE HALL

Bell emerges from the kitchen and heads down the hallway.

LIVING ROOM

Bell enters and briefly scans his surroundings before he proceeds ahead.

HALLWAY

Bell proceeds down the hallway.

Someone reaches out from the darkness, grabs his leg and jerks him toward the floor. Bell cries out in surprise.

A hand jabs sharp forceps into Bell's thigh. Bell yelps and drops his flashlight.

Donald emerges from the basement on his hands and knees and squints through the darkness.

He stabs Bell in the crotch and twists the forceps in a sloppy fashion. Bell screams and shoots Donald in the face.

DOWN THE HALL

Sydney reacts to the gunshot.

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Donald tumbles down the basement stairs. He lands on the concrete below with a dull thud.

BELL

Shit!

Bell grabs the forceps protruding from his crotch and yanks them out. A gush of blood spouts across the floor.

Bell tosses the forceps aside. He squeezes his bleeding groin as he strains to regain himself. He picks up his flashlight and proceeds down the stairs.

BASEMENT

Bell descends the staircase. His flashlight illuminates blood, brain and bits of teeth on the steps.

He arrives at the bottom and shines his flashlight in front of him. Donald lies face-up on the floor. A chasm of gore and tooth enamel lies between his upper lip and what's left of his nose. Smoke rises from inside it.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney approaches the basement. He stops at the top of the stairs and looks down at Bell.

INT. BASEMENT

Bell shines his light further. He illuminates the scattered surgical tools. The prosthetic leg smeared with Sydney's blood. The operating table. The saw on top of it.

BELL

What the fuck?

Sydney descends the staircase behind Bell. He stops midway and slowly raises Simpson's pistol.

Bell whirls around and fixes his pistol on Sydney. Sydney releases Simpson's. It dangles from his trigger finger as he puts his hands over his head.

BELL

Where's Simpson?

SYDNEY

He's outside.

Sydney shifts his hand to hide Simpson's pistol from view.

BELL

Drop the gun.

Sydney whirls around and scrambles up the stairs. Bell fires furiously at him.

HALLWAY

Sydney bursts out of the basement and races down the hallway.

INT. BASEMENT

Bell lowers his pistol and hastens up the stairs.

HALLWAY

Bell emerges from the basement. He brings his radio to his lips as he sprints down the hallway.

BELL

Simpson, I need backup!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Simpson's body lies on top of his radio.

BELL (V.O.)  
(muffled)  
Do you copy?!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Bell turns the corner and stops. Streaks of blood stain the floor.

BELL  
Simpson, are you—

Something creaks in the bedroom. Bell returns the radio to his side and enters.

BEDROOM

Bell creeps quietly into the bedroom. He scans his surroundings. The bathroom door is ajar. He peeks inside for a moment.

Bell freezes. Someone breathes nearby. Bell's eyes fall on the bed. He walks over to it.

As soon as he arrives, he realizes the breathing is coming from behind him. He turns around and faces the closet. He stows his flashlight and proceeds toward it.

Bell readies his pistol as he approaches the closet door. He reaches out for the handle.

The bedroom lights up with gunfire. Bullets rip through Bell's body. He stumbles backward and collapses on the bed.

The gunfire ceases. Bits of fabric float through the air.

The bullet-ridden closet door slides aside. Sydney steps out. He holds Simpson's smoking pistol.

Bell lies on his belly. He gasps for air.

Sydney steps forward and raises the pistol.

SYDNEY

I don't want to kill you-

Bell rolls onto his back and fires aimlessly through the air. Wood explodes around Sydney as he stumbles backward and collapses in the closet. Simpson's pistol flies out of his hand.

Bell's arm droops and drops his pistol. He groans and rolls onto his back. Blood dribbles out of his mouth.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Sydney groans as he pats down his body. After a moment, his eyes go wide.

He sits up and looks down. His body is unscathed. He laughs in relief.

Then he glances at his arm. A jagged shard of wood protrudes from it. He touches the shard and whimpers.

He takes a moment to compose himself then grits his teeth and pulls the wood out of his arm. Blood dribbles out sluggishly.

Sydney looks at Bell.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney bursts out of the closet and grabs Simpson's pistol off the floor.

He runs up to Bell and prepares to shoot him. He stops.

Bell's eyes look vacantly up at the ceiling. He wheezes, gurgles and coughs up blood.

Sydney lowers the pistol.

Bell's chest heaves up and down for a moment then goes still. He utters a death rattle and goes limp.

Sydney exhales and drops the pistol.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney descends the stairs. Brains and tissue squish under his feet.

He arrives at the bottom of the stairs and proceeds past Donald's corpse.

He opens a fuse box at the far end of the room and flips a switch.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The entire cottage lights up.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Nikki looks up in surprise as light fills the car.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney turns around and proceeds toward the stairs. He stops dead in his tracks and gasps at the site of Donald's corpse, its head reduced to carnal mush.

Sydney throws a hand over his mouth in disgust and scrambles up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE DINING ROOM

Sydney races down the hallway. He stumbles to a halt at the site of Simpson's corpse. His blood is bright and crimson in the light.

Sydney gags and shambles toward the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney makes a point to avoid looking at Bell's bullet-ridden corpse as he enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney flips on the light. He looks in the mirror and gasps. He notices his own blood-smeared face first then the grotesque murder scene in the background.

Sydney gags and falls to his knees. He leans over the side of the bathtub and vomits into the pile of rose petals.

LATER

Sydney rinses his hands, splashes water in his face and rubs down his neck and forearms.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sydney emerges from the bedroom. He's wet and disheveled but less bloody.

He proceeds to the end of the hallway and grabs his shoes.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney bursts out of the cottage.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Sydney appears in the backseat window and pounds aggressively upon it. Nikki jumps up and screams.

SYDNEY

Nikki, this has gone far enough! People are dead!

Sydney pounds on the door.

SYDNEY

Nikki, if you don't open this door, I'm going to have to break in and get you!

Sydney tugs at the door. Nikki dives into the front seat and honks the horn.

SYDNEY

That's it!

Sydney disappears O.S.

Nikki honks several more times then returns to the backseat. She looks out the window.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney rummages frantically through the contents of Donald's trunk.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

After a moment, Sydney reappears in the window. Nikki recoils and scrambles for the horn again. She honks it frantically.

Sydney leans back and swings a blunt object forward. It strikes the window hard but the glass doesn't break.

Nikki screams and jumps further away from the window as Sydney comes back with a second blow. The glass cracks.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney swings a surgical mallet toward the window. The glass shatters. Nikki shrieks in horror.

Sydney sticks the mallet handle into one of his belt loops.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Sydney reaches through the broken window and unlocks the door. Nikki unlocks the opposite door and takes off into the snow.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs toward the police car. Sydney runs after her.

Nikki jerks open the passenger side door. Sydney catches up to her and grabs her around the waist. She clings tightly to the door handle as Sydney attempts to pull her away. He succeeds.

Nikki kicks, screams, claws and bites as Sydney takes her into his arms and throws her over his shoulder.

He carries her toward the front door. She pounds her fists on his back but to no avail.

NIKKI

Let me go!

Nikki grabs the mallet at Sydney's side. The handle is caught on his belt loop. Sydney slaps her hand away.

Nikki shrieks and sobs as he takes her into the cottage.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney carries Nikki into the shrine. He drops her on the floor and locks the door behind them.

Nikki grabs the doorknob. Sydney slaps her hand away. She gets to her feet and tries to push him out of the way. He shoves her back.

Nikki retreats into the main room. Sydney runs after her and pulls her to the floor.

Nikki kicks and throws fists aimlessly through the air. One of them collides with Sydney's wounded shoulder. He cries out and releases her.

She makes another break for the door. He grabs her and shoves her into the corner. She makes another break. Sydney produces the mallet. Nikki stops dead in her tracks.

Sydney raises the mallet. Nikki retreats into a corner and cowers in fear.

SYDNEY

They're dead, Nikki. Innocent people—

NIKKI

It's not my fault!

SYDNEY

Maybe not directly. But...

Sydney lowers the mallet.

SYDNEY

How could you call the police? You think I'm sick, I understand. That's all you could think. But how could you think you were actually in danger? Have I done anything to hurt you yet?

NIKKI

What kind of question is that?!

SYDNEY

I know a lot has happened tonight. A lot of those things, I didn't want to happen. But in spite of it all, you wouldn't be afraid if you understood what I'm trying to do.

Sydney crouches in front of Nikki.

SYDNEY

It's like I said before. We're in flux. The only thing that can help us now is trust. But obviously, we're kind of low on that right now. So we'll just have to do this the hard way.

Nikki whimpers and clutches her legs to her chest.

SYDNEY

I'm no monster. You don't want me to do this so I won't. We'll get a professional instead.

Nikki starts to cry.

SYDNEY

If there's enough damage done to the leg, they'll have no choice but to amputate it.

NIKKI

It's not going to change anything. If you take my leg, you'll just want to take the other one. If you take both, you'll want to take my arms—

SYDNEY

I don't want your flesh!

Nikki turns away from Sydney.

SYDNEY

There're some things that are bigger.

NIKKI

It'll never be enough. No matter what you do to me, you'll still be the same-

SYDNEY

You're wrong-

NIKKI

It's something inside you. You're the one that has to change-

SYDNEY

No!

Sydney raises the mallet in frustration.

Nikki looks at him with tearful eyes.

NIKKI

What are you going to do? You want to break my leg? Go ahead! What are you waiting for?

Sydney blinks as if to hold back tears.

SYDNEY

Just because you've lost all faith in me doesn't mean I've lost faith in you.

Sydney lowers the mallet. He flips it around and hands it to Nikki.

SYDNEY

I want you to do it.

Nikki looks at the mallet, confused.

SYDNEY

You know I'd never do anything to you  
against your will.

NIKKI

Then why are you making me do this?

SYDNEY

Because deep down, I know you want to.

Nikki hesitates to take the mallet.

SYDNEY

Take it.

After some thought, Nikki takes the mallet. She slides her  
right foot in front of her and raises the mallet over it  
with a trembling hand.

She looks at Sydney.

Sydney looks anxiously at the mallet.

SYDNEY

What are you waiting for?

Sydney looks at Nikki.

SYDNEY

Do it.

She shakes her head.

NIKKI

I can't.

Nikki lowers the mallet.

Sydney's face contorts. He lunges at Nikki. She strikes his  
wounded shoulder with the mallet. He screams and rolls to  
the side.

Nikki makes a break for the door. Sydney pulls her to the  
floor and attempts to overpower her. She strikes him hard  
in the right ankle. He screams and slaps the mallet out of  
her hand.

Nikki dives for it. Sydney grabs her and shoves her to the side. He grabs the mallet and turns to her. She's already on her feet.

Sydney scrambles to his feet as Nikki runs for the door. He gives chase. He makes it several feet his wounded ankle gives way beneath him. He cries out in pain.

He struggles to get up as Nikki unlocks the door and disappears into the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nikki races through the living room. Sydney screams behind her. She catches a glimpse of him as he stumbles out of the shrine.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney hobbles toward the living room.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Nikki runs down the hallway toward the front door. Sydney appears in the living room behind her.

Nikki exits the cottage as Sydney limps quickly toward her. His ankle gives way again as he approaches the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nikki runs for the police car. Sydney limps after her in haste. His wounded ankle leaves bloody tracks in the snow.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki dives into the front seat of the police car and locks the door behind her.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney falls in the snow several feet from the police car.

SYDNEY

Don't do this to me! Don't let me down  
like they did!

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki rummages through the contents of the car.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney pulls up his bloody pant leg. Ragged flesh hangs from his wounded ankle. It bleeds profusely and stains the surrounding snow.

Sydney pounds the ground in torment. He gets up and limps toward the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki screams as Sydney collapses on top of the car. He pounds the windshield with the mallet. The glass cracks in a spiderweb fashion.

Sydney smashes the windshield with increased intensity but it doesn't give. Nikki opens the glove box and rummages through its contents with trembling hands.

Sydney climbs off the car and swings the mallet into the passenger side window.

Nikki dumps random contents out of the glove box as she digs deeper inside.

Sydney strikes the window until it breaks. He shoves the mallet handle into his pocket, reaches inside the car and unlocks the door.

Nikki spots a can of mace in the back of the glove box. She reaches for it.

Sydney opens the door and grabs Nikki's legs. She pulls out a handful of items from the glove box including the mace. It falls on the floor.

Nikki kicks violently as Sydney attempts to pull her out of the car.

She reaches for the mace. Sydney gives her a hard tug and pulls her out of reach.

He paws violently at her nightie. Nikki kicks him in the face. His glasses fly off. He releases her.

Nikki dives for the mace. Sydney grabs her ankle and pulls her halfway out of the car.

Nikki rolls around and sprays the mace at Sydney. He throws his arms in front of his face. The yellow-brown liquid soaks his forearms.

He coughs and gags as he attempts to slap the mace out of Nikki's hand. She sprays in the eye. He howls in agony.

Nikki scrambles back into the car. Sydney slams the door shut on her ankle. Nikki screams.

SYDNEY

You fucking cunt!

Sydney shrieks and curses as he slams Nikki's ankle repeatedly in the door. Her foot bends to the side with each blow.

Sydney releases the door.

Nikki sits up and fills both his eyes with mace. He falls to his knees.

SYDNEY

I'm blind! You-

Nikki sprays Sydney's mouth with mace. He coughs and sputters. His speech reduces to guttural grunts.

Nikki reaches forward and slams the door shut.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney grabs several handfuls of snow and rubs it over his face but to no effect. He cries out in frustrated pain.

He scrambles to his feet and stumbles blindly toward the cottage.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki shudders as shock kicks in. She holds up the mace defensively as if expecting Sydney to return. After a moment, she drops it.

She stares at her broken ankle. It's started to swell. A bloody bone protrudes from the skin.

Nikki breaks down.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Sydney bursts in. His eyes are swollen shut.

KITCHEN

Sydney bumps into every object in sight as he stumbles in.

He gropes his way toward the sink and grabs the faucet. He turns on the water and places his head under it. He laps at it with an engorged tongue as it washes over his face.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Nikki vomits onto the floor. She looks up. Her face is pale.

A police radio connected to the car comes to life. Nikki grabs the receiver. Her finger slips off the button as she speaks into it.

NIKKI

I...

Nikki trails off. The radio jabbars back at her indistinctly.

Her eyes glaze over. She drops the receiver.

She glances down at her broken ankle. The wound weeps blood down her foot and onto the floor.

She faints.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sydney kneels fully clothed under a running shower. He moans as the jet hits his face. Blood and mace washes down the drain.

LATER

Sydney sits in the shower with his back to the jet.

LATER

Sydney stands in front of the sink. An open drawer props up his wounded leg. His entire face is red and irritated. He pats it dry with a towel.

Sydney pulls the mirror aside to reveal a medicine cabinet. He reaches inside and removes a bottle of saline.

He looks up and squirts it into his eyes. He moans as it hits his eyeballs and trickles down his inflamed cheeks.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sydney sits on the floor next to the closet. He takes off his shirt and rubs himself down with a towel.

He removes his shoes next. It takes him some effort to remove the right one. Blood pours out as it comes off.

Sydney frees his left leg from his pants and proceeds to pull them slowly over his right. He removes a bloody sock and whimpers at the sight of his wounded ankle. Bone is exposed. It's cracked in several places and weeps blood.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney lies on the floor. He's dry and dressed in clean clothes. A handful of fresh gauze lies beside him.

He pulls up his pant leg to reveal his wounded ankle. It's cleaner than before but even more ugly.

A sliver of bone falls out. Sydney grabs it and inserts it painfully back into place.

He grabs the gauze and proceeds to wrap his ankle with it.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sydney limps out into the snow toward the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Sydney opens the passenger side door.

Nikki lies unconscious across the front seat. She's extremely pale. Her swollen ankle is dark purple and caked with coagulated blood.

Sydney looks at Nikki's face. Her faint breath is visible in front of her mouth.

LATER

Sydney pulls Nikki out of the driver side door. He strains as he takes her into his arms.

He grits his teeth as he takes his first step toward the cottage. He falls to a knee and nearly drops Nikki but stops himself before he does. Her wounded leg dangles inches from the ground.

Sydney struggles to get back on his feet. He gasps as blood seeps through the gauze around his ankle.

After some effort, Sydney regains himself and carries Nikki toward the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki lies on the operating table. She's covered in several layers of towels with her legs exposed.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAWN

A cloudy sky hangs over the cottage.

INT. BASEMENT

Nikki lies on the operating table the same as before.

Sydney descends the stairs.

LATER

Sydney pulls the white sleeve onto Nikki's right thigh and fixes the surgical tourniquet tightly over it. He checks it to make sure it's secure.

Sydney produces the saw and turns it on. He looks at Nikki's peaceful face then at her grotesque compound fracture.

Sydney lowers the saw slowly toward her leg. It slices her skin just below the sleeve. Blood sprays on Sydney's shirt. Nikki winces in her sleep.

Sydney retracts the saw. He looks back at Nikki's face. A single tear trickles down her cheek.

He looks at the new gash on her already mutilated leg.

He reflects for a moment before he turns off the saw and sets it on the tray table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A fire burns in the fireplace.

Nikki lies on the couch covered in thick blankets. Her broken ankle is propped up on a stack of towels. She breathes regularly. She's still pale but much less so.

Sydney kneels beside her. A roll of gauze, a bag of cotton balls and a bottle of rubbing alcohol sit beside him. He cleans Nikki's wound with a moist cotton ball.

LATER

Sydney wraps Nikki's ankle with gauze.

LATER

Sydney lies on the floor beside Nikki and stares off into space. He holds her hand in his.

INT. SHRINE

Sydney enters the main room of the shrine. He approaches to the further most display case and stares at the leg inside.

After a moment, he sticks his fingers into niches on both sides of the plastic top and pulls. The display case releases a hiss from inside as Sydney opens it.

He reaches inside and removes the leg. He strokes its plastic-like flesh. His fingers trace the minute cuts around its knee and probe the seams of its stump.

Sydney takes a seat on the floor. He stretches out his right leg and lays the severed one beside it. He pulls up his pant leg and takes a moment to compare the two.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney kneels beside Nikki and takes her hand.

SYDNEY

I'm so sorry for what I've put you through. I've been wrong this whole time. But you've made me realize something. Something about myself I never knew but was always there.

Sydney removes the ring from Nikki's finger and drops it in his pocket.

SYDNEY

I know what I have to do now.

Sydney kisses Nikki's cheek.

SYDNEY

Thank you.

Sydney disappears O.S.

INT. BASEMENT

Sydney lies on the floor in boxers beside the operating table. The surgical tourniquet is wrapped around his right thigh. His pants lie at his feet. The saw lies on a metal shelf under the operating table.

Sydney pulls the breathing mask over his face and turns on the gas. He takes a deep breath.

Sydney grabs the saw and turns it on. He lowers it slowly onto his leg. It slices away hairs as it breaks epidermis. Blood sprays on his shirt.

The saw cuts deep into his flesh. His face flinches slightly as he moves the saw back and forth in ungraceful strokes.

The saw shrieks as it buzzes into Sydney's bone. Sydney grits his teeth. Drops of blood fleck his face.

He looks up and feels the pain for the first time. He screams in anguish through the mask.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT

Sydney's screams echo through the hallway, coupled with the buzzing of the saw.

INT. BASEMENT

The saw cuts Sydney's leg completely in half. Sydney turns it off and tosses it aside. It clangs on the metal shelf.

He inhales anesthetic in deep, exasperated breaths. He jerks off the mask and tosses it aside.

Sydney takes a moment to catch his breath then stares at his severed leg.

After a long moment, he shoves it aside and strains to grab his pants. He pulls them toward him and reaches inside one of the pockets. He produces his cell phone, dials 911 and brings it to his ear.

911 (V.O.)

911, please state your emergency.

Sydney takes a deep breath.

911 (V.O.)

Hello? Hello.

Sydney shakes uncontrollably as he speaks.

SYDNEY

I'd like to turn myself into the police. I've killed three people tonight including the two officers you sent here. There's also three more buried in the forest. They've been dead for years. The police will be particularly interested in them. And there's a girl here. She needs medical assistance.

911 (V.O.)

Why didn't you come into the station to turn yourself in?

SYDNEY

I'm not in a position to do that right now. My physical state is... compromised.

911 (V.O.)

What do you mean compromised?

SYDNEY

You'll find out soon enough. Send paramedics please.

Sydney flips the cell phone shut and places it back in his pants pocket.

He stares at the bloody stump where his leg used to be. He reaches down and fingers the air left in its absence.

He blinks. Tears fall from his eyes and roll gracefully down his cheeks.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: COMPLETE

THE END