

Cruel Acts of Kindness  
by  
Michael Joseph Kospiah

CONTACT INFO:  
spesh2k@msn.com  
646-399-2714

FADE IN:

INT./EXT. BLACK SEDAN - PARKED - NIGHT

An urban neighborhood lined with brownstone apartment buildings.

ED WAYNE (40), tired eyes, but clean cut and neatly groomed, sits in the passenger's seat and peers out his window. Dark shadows hiding half of his face.

He stakes out an apartment building. Patiently. Until someone approaches the building. Ed leans in close to the window, out of the dark shadows. Revealing a large scar covering his jaw.

Ed watches SAM CHANDLER, late thirties, obese in stature, approach the front door of the apartment building.

While watching, Ed slips latex gloves over his hands. Looks around. The coast clear. He quietly opens his door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Ed slips a ski mask on. A plastic bag hangs loosely from Ed's pants pocket. His eyes fixated on Sam while approaching.

As Sam opens his front door...

ED

Sam?

Just as Sam turns, Ed bashes him across the jaw with a blunt object in a flash. Sam drops instantly.

Ed checks the parameter. No witnesses. He stands over Sam, stares down at him. Watches a blood puddle expand from beneath Sam's face.

The blood travels close to Ed's foot, but he side steps it. Lets the crimson puddle cascade over the stoop.

Ed searches Sam's pockets. Finds a cell phone.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - MOVING - LATER

Ed coasts through the city streets, on Sam's cell phone.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

What's the nature of your emergency, sir?

ED

I witnessed an attack just a few minutes ago. There must have been three or four of them.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

The location?

ED

The address was 323 Wellington Street. Right outside.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Are you with the victim right now?

ED

No.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Was he breathing? Unconscious?

ED

It didn't look like he was about to move any time soon.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

And what's your name, sir?

Ed hangs up. He rolls down his window, chucks the cell phone onto the street. The cell phone shatters into pieces.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT - LATER

A dimly lit subway platform. The sounds of TRAINS RUMBLING from the distance echo throughout.

PAUL THOMPSON (28), every-man good looks, neatly groomed and in a business suit, waits for the train with a briefcase by his side. Nobody else in sight.

Paul looks at his cell phone. He rolls his eyes and places it to his ear.

CELL PHONE (V.O.)

One new message. First unheard message...

The sounds of a RUMBLING TRAIN become louder.

STACY (V.O.)

Hey, honey, it's me. Was just checking to see if you had AA tonight.

(MORE)

STACY (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Wanted to know what time you were  
coming home. Any way, give me a  
call when you get the message.

*BEEP*. Paul lets out a defeated sigh, shuts his phone.

He peers down the tracks. Headlights glow from within the tunnel.

FOOTSTEPS from behind Paul. He turns, sees a STRANGER approach the platform. In his early forties. Also in a suit.

They acknowledge each other with a nod.

Paul looks down the tracks again, sees the train approaching.

STRANGER  
Excuse me, sir?

Paul turns to Stranger.

STRANGER  
You have the time?

Paul checks his watch. The RUMBLING of the train grows louder as it accelerates down the tracks.

PAUL  
Almost seven o'clock.

Stranger grins sadly and nods in thanks.

STRANGER  
Thank you. Have a great night.

Stranger turns and moves to the edge of the platform. But doesn't stop. Paul watches in horror as Stranger walks over the edge of the platform just as the train barrels through...

A LOUD THUD as the train smacks into Stranger, sweeps him away. The train slows to a stop. Paul stands frozen. Shocked beyond belief.

INT. PRECINCT - HALLWAY - LATER

DETECTIVE KERR, late forties, graying hair and in a cheap suit, walks through the narrow corridor. A significant limp in his step. Something wrong with his leg. But he exudes a classic tough quality due to a chiseled face and strong jaw line.

He walks along side his peer, DETECTIVE MERCER, around the same age as Kerr. But neatly groomed in a nice suit. Softer features.

MERCER

Poor bastard had to get emergency reconstructive surgery to reattach his jaw. Lucky to be alive.

KERR

Witnesses?

MERCER

Something like that... 911 dispatch received an anonymous call from the victim's cell phone.

KERR

If that ain't some rotten shit.

MERCER

Foul play like a motherfucker.

KERR

Lucky bastard. You get all the fun cases.

MERCER

Well, I have two good legs.

Kerr grins at Mercer.

KERR

Yeah? I bet I can still beat you in a foot race. Running backwards!

Mercer laughs.

MERCER

Sure thing there, peg leg.

KERR

You know, I can't wait for the day when you catch a bullet in the line of duty and they stick you behind some desk to push pencils.

Mercer smirks.

MERCER

Tell you what. You beat me in a foot race running backwards, I'll trade cases with you.

Kerr chuckles.

KERR  
Wouldn't want to see you die from  
boredom, mate.

MERCER  
Oh, yeah? What do you got?

KERR  
Oh, some asshole saw some other  
asshole jump in front of a train.

MERCER  
Straight up suicide?

Kerr shakes his head in disappointment.

KERR  
Straight up fucking suicide.

INT. PRECINCT - KERR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul sits in a chair at Kerr's desk, waits patiently. A lost look of wonder in his eyes as he stares off into space. Still in a state of shock.

Paul sees Detective Kerr's nameplate upon the desk. He looks at photos and plaques on the wall.

One photo shows Kerr and Mercer on a fishing boat. Mercer holding up a big fish. All smiles. Another photo features Mercer and Kerr in cop uniforms posing for the camera.

Kerr walks into his office. Sits down behind his desk across from Paul.

KERR  
All right, then, Mr. Thompson.  
Sorry for the delay. Your story  
checks out fine. You're free to go.

Paul remains in a world of his own. In a trance.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Mr. Thompson?

Paul snaps out of it, stares at Kerr in bewilderment. Kerr seems slightly concerned.

KERR (CONT'D)  
We reviewed the surveillance tape.  
You're free to go.

Paul nods with a sense of uneasiness. He slowly rises from his seat and leaves.

EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A tall, fancy looking apartment building that overlooks a beautiful public park.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

An immaculate bathroom. Clean and organized. Steam rises from the shower, enclosed in a glass sliding door.

Paul appears out of it while rinsing shampoo out of his hair. In deep thought. Until thick steam emits from the shower head, the hot water scalding him.

Paul, startled by the hot water, jumps to the side. Avoids the steaming hot water. Annoyed, he slides the shower door open.

STACY THOMPSON (30), a natural beauty with fair skin, stands at the sink in her pajamas and washes up.

STACY  
Hey, honey.

PAUL  
Hey.

STACY  
How was work?

PAUL  
Oh, you know.

Stacy quickly kisses Paul on the cheek, returns to the sink.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Stacy, honey? Do you think you can shut off the sink? I'm getting scorched here.

STACY  
I'm almost done.

Stacy gets her toothbrush ready, grabs a tube of toothpaste.

STACY (CONT'D)  
How was AA?

Paul shrugs insincerely.

PAUL  
Good.

STACY  
Anything interesting happen?

PAUL  
I guess you can say that --

STACY  
Paul?

PAUL  
What?

STACY  
Tell me something.

Stacy shows Paul the tube of toothpaste, skinny at the top, fat at the bottom. Paul looks at the tube, puzzled.

STACY (CONT'D)  
Notice anything?

Paul shrugs, clueless.

STACY (CONT'D)  
The toothpaste! How many times must I remind you? You squeeze from the bottom, not the top! Other people like to brush their teeth, too.

She returns her focus to the mirror, brushes her teeth. Paul wears a blank expression.

Stacy gurgles and spits, puts her toothbrush away and leaves the bathroom. Paul only stands in the shower. Defeated.

PAUL  
Sure thing, honey.

He slides the shower door closed.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

An awkward silence, the lights dimmed.

Paul lies in bed and stares at the ceiling fan as it whirs rapidly.

Stacy, in reading glasses, lies next to Paul and takes in a book. A lamp at her bedside keeping the room lit.

Paul rolls to his side. Stares at Stacy for a prolonged period. He reaches out and rubs Stacy's arm.

STACY  
What are you doing?

PAUL  
I don't know. It's been a while.

Stacy keeps focus on her book.

STACY  
I'm tired, Paul.

Paul sighs. Rolls to his back again. He stares up at the ceiling fan spin.

Stacy shuts her book. Removes her glasses and sets them upon her night stand. Kisses Paul on the forehead and shuts off her lamp. She rolls to her side, faces away from Paul.

STACY  
Good night.

She shuts her eyes. Paul continues to stare at the whirring ceiling fan hypnotically.

PAUL  
Good night, honey.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Ambulances and police cruisers sit parked outside the emergency room.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Medical equipment BEEPS rhythmically. A night light barely illuminates the room.

Sam lies unconscious in bed. Face heavily bandaged. Tubes sticking out from his body, attached to medical equipment.

Ed sits at Sam's bedside and watches him sleep. Ed jots a few things down into a notebook. Looks down at Sam.

ED  
When you wake up, everything will be different. One day, you'll thank me.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul continues to lie awake in bed and stare at the ceiling. He glances over at his night stand, sees the time on his digital clock - 2:30.

Paul quietly pulls off his covers. Rolls out of bed.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paul sits on the sofa, flips through a phone book. He scrolls through listings with his index finger. Stops.

He ponders for a moment. Picks up the house phone and dials the number from the phone book.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Thank you for calling the suicide prevention center hot line. Please hold as we transfer you to one of our counselors.

An upbeat song plays as Paul waits on hold - RAINDROPS KEEP FALLING ON MY HEAD by BJ Thomas.

Finally, the music stops.

ED (V.O.)

Thanks for calling the suicide prevention center hot line. How can I assist you?

Paul remains silent. Reluctant to speak. He hangs up, sets the phone on the coffee table.

Paul escapes into deep thought again. Stressed.

The PHONE RINGS and alarms Paul. He stares at the phone as it continues to RING. He picks up apprehensively.

PAUL

Hello?

ED (V.O.)

Why did you hang up?

Dead air. Silence.

ED (V.O.)

You there?

Paul hesitates to speak.

PAUL

I'm here.

ED (V.O.)

Why did you call?

PAUL

I don't know.

ED (V.O.)

Are you calling in regards to yourself or a friend?

Paul doesn't respond.

ED (V.O.)

Do you feel that you're a danger to yourself right now?

PAUL

How did you get my number?

ED (V.O.)

Someone calls here, it's either because they're troubled or it's a prank call from some punk teenager. You're not some punk teenager, are you?

PAUL

No.

ED (V.O.)

Well, then. You called us. We're only here to help. What seems to be troubling you?

PAUL

(delayed response)

I hate my life.

ED (V.O.)

(delayed)

What's your name?

PAUL

Paul.

ED (V.O.)

Well, then, Paul. Tell me about yourself.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

An alarm BUZZES. Stacy yawns, rolls over and feels around for Paul. She opens her eyes. He isn't there.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stacy, still in her pajamas, peeks into the room from the kitchen. She sees Paul sound asleep on the couch.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Steam rises from the shower, Stacy inside. She hears something, slides the shower door open. Watches Paul urinate into the toilet. His back to her.

STACY

Hey, honey.

Paul doesn't respond.

STACY (CONT'D)

Why did you sleep on the couch last night?

Paul shrugs. Stacy stares at him concerned and confused.

STACY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

PAUL

Why wouldn't I be?

Paul finishes. Sets down the toilet seat.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'll flush when you're done.  
Wouldn't want to burn you.

Paul leaves. Stacy curious. Concerned.

INT./EXT. BLACK SEDAN - CITY STREET - PARKED - DAY

Ed listens to music as he sits parked in front of Paul's apartment building. He jots down some notes in his address book.

Ed watches Paul walk out of the building, in a suit.

ED  
(to himself)  
You must be Paul.

Stacy follows him out, wearing a nice work dress, purse strapped around her shoulder. Ed grows immediately intrigued.

Stacy gives Paul a kiss on the cheek and they part ways. Ed nearly forgets Paul. Watching Stacy closely. Love at first sight.

ED  
(awestruck)  
Hello, Stacy.

Ed takes a deep breath, jots something else down in his notebook. He looks up to see Stacy disappear off in the distance.

EXT. TALL OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

The sidewalks flooded with PEDESTRIANS, Paul enters the building, ready for work. Heavy traffic on the streets.

Ed drives past in his black sedan. Watching Paul.

INT. TALL OFFICE BUILDING - BOARD ROOM - LATER

At a long, round table, Paul sits among several of his well-dressed COLLEAGUES.

A PRESENTER stands at the front of the room and points out some numbers on a pie chart projected onto a screen.

Paul slumps his shoulders and yawns. Bored.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

An upscale part of town. Expensive name brand stores and coffee shops on every corner.

Stacy peruses the sidewalk, window shops as she walks past several jewelry and clothing stores.

Stacy speaks on her cell phone:

STACY  
Yes, I'd like to make a dinner reservation for two. Eight o'clock if possible.



SALES WOMAN (CONT'D)  
He must be a lucky guy.

Stacy forces a guilt-stricken smile.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Empty and quiet. Paul stands alone. In a trance as he waits for the train.

Steady FOOTSTEPS approach from behind. Picking up in pace. Paul turns around.

Ed, in a ski mask, charges at Paul, clocks him across the jaw with a hammer. Drops him to the ground.

Paul lies motionless, blood leaking from his jaw, forming a puddle beneath his face.

Ed surveys his surroundings. The coast clear. He bends over, pats down Paul's pockets. Finds his cell phone.

INT. ED'S CAR - MOVING - LATER

The hammer sits on the passenger's seat, a plastic bag wrapped around the top of it.

Ed, behind the wheel, speaks on Paul's cell phone.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
What's the nature of your  
emergency?

ED  
I witnessed an attack.

EXT. ED'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

A BEGGAR loiters a nearby corner looking for change from PASSERSBY. Ed shakes his head in disgust.

He unlocks the front door, enters his building.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

Spotless. A floor clean enough to eat off of. The counter and stove top sparkling. Everything very neat and organized.

Ed, wearing Latex gloves, sets his hammer into the sink. Runs water over it, rinsing off blood.

He drops the gloves into a nearby trash bin.

Ed eyes a blood drop on his sleeve. Annoyed, he slips out of his shirt and drops it into the trash bin.

Ed dips into a cabinet beneath the sink. Grabs a bottle of bleach and washes the peen of his hammer.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ed lies on his neatly made twin bed. Hands rested behind his head. Staring at the ceiling. Television noise in the background.

He looks to his night stand. Stares at a framed photo. In the photo, he poses with an attractive women who bears an eerie resemblance to Stacy.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

Stacy, in an apron, hair done up nicely, slips into oven mitts. Pulls a roast from the oven. Sets it on top. She shuts the oven. Moves to a cutting board and slices tomatoes for a salad.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stacy slides into a sexy dress. Applies makeup in front of her mirror.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - LATER

The table neatly set. Roast at the center.

Stacy sits at the table. A feeling of unease. She checks her watch and sighs. Growing worried. She looks across the table to an empty spot at the table where Paul would be sitting.

The PHONE RINGS. Stacy quickly answers.

STACY

Paul?

POLICEMAN (V.O.)

Am I speaking with Stacy Thompson?

STACY

(delayed)

Yes.

POLICEMAN (V.O.)  
This is Officer Gates of the Perth  
Police Department. I'm calling in  
regards to your husband.

Stacy freezes.

STACY  
Yes?

POLICEMAN (V.O.)  
There's been an incident.

Stacy covers her mouth in shock.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - LATER

Paul lies unconscious in a hospital bed. Face heavily  
bandaged.

Stacy stands with a DOCTOR at the corner of the room. She  
eyes Paul nervously. Tears moistening her cheeks. A complete  
wreck.

She turns to Doctor. Desperation in her eyes.

STACY  
Will he be okay?

Doctor reads over a chart. Looks up at Stacy.

DOCTOR  
Paul is currently in a state of  
comatose. Severe head trauma.  
Broken jaw. He also suffered a few  
stress fractures directly above his  
jawline, in his skull.  
(beat)  
As of now, your husband is in  
critical, but stable condition. He  
should pull through. Eventually.  
It's just a matter of when.

STACY  
Do you know how long? I mean, when  
is he going to wake up?

Doctor shrugs.

DOCTOR  
All we can do is be patient.

Stacy finds the answer hard to accept. But she wipes her eyes and nods.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - LATER

Mercer interviews Stacy, taking down information on his note pad. Stacy struggling to maintain her composure.

MERCER

Does Paul have any enemies that you know of?

Stacy shakes her head.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Notice anything different about his behavior? Has he been acting strangely?

Stacy thinks about it. Shakes her head.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Are you sure? Nothing even slightly off?

Stacy shakes her head.

Mercer nods, jotting down a few notes. He looks to Stacy, sees tears in her eyes.

Mercer sets his hand on her shoulder in sympathy.

MERCER

We'll be working around the clock to find out who did this to your husband. And we WILL find him. I promise.

Stacy nods while wiping tears.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Go home. Get some rest. If anything develops, you'll be the first to know. Okay?

Stacy nods. Mercer gives her shoulder a gentle squeeze. Feeling sorry for her.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Ed pays a CASHIER, walks away from the counter with a coffee cup in his hand.

He looks across the room.

Sam Chandler sits at a table with TWO CHILDREN, both under the age of 10. Bandage over his chin. Jaw wired shut.

Ed goes to Sam's table. Stands over them. Sam looks up. Ed flashes a glowing smile.

ED  
How are you?

Sam wears a confused expression.

SAM  
I'm doing well. How are you?

ED  
Same old, same old.

Ed looks at Sam's children.

ED (CONT'D)  
So these are the little ones?

Sam stares up at Ed in confusion.

ED (CONT'D)  
Don't remember me, do you?

Sam thinks hard. Trying his best.

ED (CONT'D)  
I'm a friend of Scott. You know,  
from Hobbs and Goldman? We met at a  
function.

Sam pretends to remember.

SAM  
What was your name again?

ED  
Ed.

Sam nods, tries to be polite.

SAM  
Of course, Ed.

ED  
I heard what happened. You look  
good considering the circumstances.  
(beat)  
All small talk aside, how are you?

SAM  
Hanging in there.

ED  
Yeah? You must feel lucky to be  
alive. I mean, after what you went  
through?

Sam nods. Looks at his kids. As if realizing how lucky he  
really is at that moment. He looks up at Ed.

SAM  
I'm very fortunate.

Ed beams proudly, looking at Sam's children.

ED  
Well, it's good to see you're doing  
well.

SAM  
Thanks.

ED  
Maybe I'll see you around.

Sam nods with a forced smile as Ed leaves his table.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stacy stands outside of Paul's room. Speaks with ANNE,  
slightly older than Stacy. Also with red hair and fair skin.

Paul lies unconscious in bed in the background.

STACY  
I know that Mom and Dad had their  
reservations about Paul. And Anne,  
I know you weren't exactly  
enthusiastic about the idea of us  
together --

Anne rests a hand on Stacy's shoulder.

ANNE  
That was a long time ago. Okay? I  
know you love him. And that's all  
that matters.

Stacy wipes a tear from her eye, smiles at Anne.

STACY  
Thanks for being there for me.

Stacy glimpses into the room at Paul. Becoming emotional. She turns back to Anne.

STACY (CONT'D)  
What if he never wakes up?

An elevator across the hall opens up.

ANNE  
You can't think about that. He'll pull through. You just have to believe.

Anne sees the elevator open.

ANNE (CONT'D)  
Come on.

They board the elevator.

At the end of the hall, Ed peeks from around the corner. Waits for the elevator doors to close. He makes his way to Paul's room.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ed sits at Paul's bedside. Eyes the floral arrangement surrounding the bed. Get well cards all around.

Ed sees a photo of Paul and Stacy together. Happier times. He snatches the photo and stares at it. Covers Paul's face with his thumb.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The elevator moves to the ground floor. Stacy continues to vent to Anne.

STACY  
I feel I could've done more. It's just that with Mom in the hospital, I've been so stressed out.

ANNE  
It's not your fault.

STACY  
I just feel like we've been growing apart. You get caught up in this routine and you take certain things for granted.

ANNE

I know what you mean. Twelve years  
and counting.

Stacy sighs.

STACY

I'm just so lonely without him. I  
love him so much.

Anne hugs an arm around her. Stacy wipes her eyes.

STACY (CONT'D)

Do you want to do lunch?

ANNE

I have to take a rain check. Kids.  
Maybe tomorrow?

Stacy nods as the elevator reaches the ground floor. The  
doors open but Stacy realizes something.

STACY

I left my purse.

ANNE

Call me, okay?

Stacy nods as Anne leaves the elevator.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ed stashes the photo of Paul and Stacy into his pocket. Just  
as Stacy walks in.

Ed only stares at her. Awestruck. Not ready.

STACY

Hi.

Ed nods.

STACY

Are you a friend of Paul?

Ed can't take his eyes off of her. At a loss for words. He  
only nods.

Stacy approaches him. He stands up.

STACY (CONT'D)

I'm Stacy. Paul's wife.

ED

Ed.

STACY

I'm sorry, how do you know Paul?

Ed is slow with an answer, thinking of a good lie.

ED

A mutual friend.

Stacy sees her purse at Ed's feet. Ed notices.

STACY

I left my purse.

He picks the purse from the floor and hands it to her. Their hands touch ever so slightly.

Stacy takes her purse, smiles at Ed while leaving the room.

Ed watches her leave. Captivated. Bewitched.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Stacy sits at the dinner table. Gazing at Paul's empty spot. Poking at her food. Sad and restless.

She dials a number on her phone. The PHONE RINGS until reaching a voice mail.

SUSAN (V.O.)

This is Susan. I'm not available right now, but leave a message and I'll return your call.

BEEP.

STACY

Hey, Susan, it's Stacy. We haven't spoken in a while and I figured I'd give you a call. I thought it would be nice to catch up sometime. Maybe do lunch or something. Anyway, just give me a call when you get the chance. Bye.

Stacy hangs up. Morose. Lonely. She looks at Paul's empty spot at the table again. Sighs.

Stacy leaves the table.

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

A quaint little bar. Slow night. Dim lighting. Smooth JAZZ MUSIC plays in the background.

Stacy sits at the end of the bar. Stirring her drink. Bored.

She looks around the room. Couples sitting together at tables. She looks down at her drink sadly. She looks around again.

Stacy spots Ed sitting at the opposite end of the bar. Alone. A drink in front of him.

STACY  
Excuse me?

Ed turns.

STACY (CONT'D)  
Ed, right?

Ed pretends to not recognize her.

STACY (CONT'D)  
Stacy. From the hospital? Paul's wife?

ED  
Oh, yeah. Small world, huh?

Ed thinks to himself. Smiles.

ED (CONT'D)  
If it weren't for the fact that you're a married woman, I'd swear you were stalking me.

Stacy smiles. They share a silence. Thinking of what to say.

STACY  
So... what's your story?

ED  
My story?

STACY  
What are you doing here?

Ed sips his drink. Stares off into space. Pretending to be in deep thought.

ED

It was our anniversary tonight. We met here.

STACY

Your wife?

Ed nods sadly.

ED

She passed away four years ago.

STACY

Oh, I'm so sorry. What was her name?

ED

Amy.

Dead pause. A touchy subject.

Stacy feels bad for him. Relates to his situation. She stands up, sits next to Ed. Ed looks up, surprised.

STACY

Hope you don't mind.

ED

Of course not.

STACY

How long have you known Paul?

ED

Long enough.

STACY

I'm sorry about your wife.

ED

Don't be sorry.

STACY

I can relate. I mean, Paul's not, you know...

Ed nods sadly.

STACY (CONT'D)

I'm trying to stay optimistic. But it's so hard. It's been weeks, and he still hasn't come to. I can't help but think, what if... what if...

Stacy's voice quivers. Becoming emotional.

STACY (CONT'D)  
What if he doesn't make it?

She wipes tears. Avoiding eye contact. Ashamed to cry in front of Ed.

STACY (CONT'D)  
How do you deal? Don't you get lonely?

ED  
Of course I get lonely. Amy meant the world to me. I didn't know how to live without her. I wanted... I wanted to kill myself.

STACY  
What stopped you?

ED  
Someone else almost made the decision for me.

FLASHBACK - EXT. SHADY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Ed walks past a series of closed shops. Gates locked. All signs indicate a late night. Everything quiet. Too quiet.

Ed reaches the street corner.

WALTER, late twenties, in rags, approaches Ed with his hands out. Begging for change.

ED (V.O.)  
One night, I was walking home. There was this homeless man I used to see all the time. Always strung out. Definitely an addict.

Ed looks into Walter's eyes. Walter strung out. Eyes dilated. Shivering from side effects.

Ed shows Walter empty hands.

ED  
Sorry, Walter, nothing tonight.

WALTER  
Just a few cents?

Ed walks away from him.

ED  
I got nothing.

Walter glares at Ed.

WALTER  
You got everything. I got nothing.

ED  
I'd trade places with you any day  
of the week.

As Ed walks away, he hears RUNNING FOOTSTEPS behind him. He turns around. Walter comes at him with a hammer, nails him across the jaw.

Ed drops to his back. Dazed. He looks up to see Walter standing over him. Walter raises his hammer into the air and smashes Ed in the face.

Everything turns black.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Stacy looks at Ed, stunned.

STACY  
That's awful.

ED  
I was clinically dead for three  
minutes.

STACY  
Did the police find him?

ED  
No. I mean, I didn't tell them who  
it was.

STACY  
Why not?

ED  
I felt sorry for him.

STACY  
So, it took a near death  
experience, huh?

ED  
Something like that. Definitely  
played a part in what I do now.

STACY  
And what's that?

ED  
I help people.

STACY  
In what way?

Ed gives Stacy a business card. She reads it.

STACY (CONT'D)  
The Suicide Prevention Center Hot  
line?

ED  
Made me realize I'm not alone in  
this world. Now, it doesn't bring  
her back, but it helps me deal.

Ed stares at his drink. Expression falling.

ED (CONT'D)  
Losing someone you love can make  
you go a little mad sometimes.  
Being alone doesn't help really.  
But you get used to it. And the  
more used to it you become, the  
harder it is to get back to being  
who you were.

Stacy feels for Ed. She reaches out and rests her hand upon  
his shoulder. He looks at her hand, then at her.

ED  
Do you want to dance with me?

Stacy pulls her hand away. Thinking about it. Conflicted.

STACY  
Not sure if I should.

ED  
One dance won't hurt.

Ed stands up, extends his hand to her. She hesitates, but  
eventually takes his hand. He leads her out to the dance  
floor.

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

A slow R&B JAM plays from the Jukebox. The dance floor empty.

Ed and Stacy move into view. Slow dancing. Both nervous. Hands rested upon each other's shoulders. At a distance.

Their eyes meet. A shared sadness. Stacy moves in closer. Rests her head on his shoulder. She hugs her arms around him.

Ed doesn't know what to think at first. He eventually embraces her though. Thinks about his next move. He kisses her on the neck.

She pulls away from him. Taken aback. Ed moves in for a kiss on the mouth, but she pulls away further.

Ed hangs his head. Stacy studies him. Feels bad.

She gives him a peck on the forehead. He stares deep into her eyes.

She kisses him softly on the lips. He returns the kiss. Gently.

Their lips lock. Now kissing passionately. Tongues touching. Their eyes shut tightly.

But Stacy opens her eyes. Realizes what she's doing and pulls away.

She takes Ed's hands off of her and runs off.

ED  
Stacy, wait!

Stacy hurries out the door.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Stacy weeps while standing in the shower. Cleansing herself. She feels dirty.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Stacy stares sadly at a photo of her and Paul while lying in bed.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ed sits on his bed while staring at the photo of him and Amy. He digs into his pocket, pulls out the photo of Stacy and Paul. The photo he took from the hospital.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Stacy and Anne take in a cup of coffee at an outdoor cafe. Sitting across from each other. Stacy appears shaken. On edge.

STACY

I don't know if I can do this anymore. It's been a month. I'm tired of waiting. Hoping.

ANNE

He's not dead, Stacy. As long as he's alive, there's hope.

STACY

What if he never wakes up? What then? What am I going to do?

Stacy struggles to keep her composure. Losing it.

STACY (CONT'D)

He was the only who ever treated me like a person.

ANNE

Let's not do this right now, Stacy.

STACY

I took it for granted.

ANNE

Listen to me, you need to pull yourself together. I know it's hard, but you can't just allow yourself to fall apart like this.

Stacy looks down at the table. Thinking. She looks up at Anne.

STACY

I've done something I shouldn't have done, Anne. Something horrible.

INT. PRECINCT - MERCER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Detective Mercer downs a cup of coffee while shuffling through paperwork.

He reads over PAUL THOMPSON'S PHONE RECORDS. He runs through a list of numbers. But zeroes in on one in particular. THE SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER HOT LINE.

Mercer realizes something. He sets the phone records to the side, runs through a list of numbers on SAM CHANDLER'S PHONE RECORDS.

He sees THE SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER HOT LINE.

Mercer stuffs the records into a file folder and leaves his desk.

INT. KERR'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A humble abode. Nothing fancy. Typical living room set up.

Mercer and DEBORAH sit beside each other on the sofa and flip through a photo album.

Deborah, in her forties, is attractive at her age. A sense of warmth. Innocence. The typical housewife type.

They look at photos from their youth. Mercer, around 10 years old in the photo, wears a cop costume for Halloween.

Deborah wears an ear to ear grin. Taken back.

DEBORAH

Look at you in your little cop outfit!

She shakes her head, feeling nostalgic. Smiling.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Even back then, you wanted to be a policeman.

MERCER

Mom wanted me to go as Andy.

Deborah, a few years younger than Mercer in the next photo, wears a Raggedy Anne costume.

DEBORAH

Well, no duh, Bob, she wanted us to match.

MERCER

The fifth graders would've eaten me alive.

DEBORAH

Mom hated that cop costume.

MERCER

Dad would've loved it.

Deborah turns quiet for a moment. Wearing less of a smile.

DEBORAH

She was just being protective.  
After what happened to Dad, she was  
always afraid the same thing would  
happen to you.

MERCER

She'd turn over in her grave if she  
ever found out you married a cop.

Deborah turns the page. To a photo of Kerr and Mercer in  
little league baseball uniforms. Around 12 years old.

DEBORAH

Oh my God, is that Frank?

Mercer smiles.

MERCER

Who would've ever thought that the  
little snot-nosed boy from next  
door would go on to marry my little  
sister?

The DOOR OPENS.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil.

Kerr walks in. Hangs up his coat and shoulder holster with  
gun.

He pats Mercer on the back. Kisses Deborah.

DEBORAH

Hey, Frank. How was work?

Kerr plops down onto a chair. A long day finally over.

KERR

A lot of sitting involved. More  
than usual.

MERCER

I take it nothing exciting  
happened?

KERR

Well, there is this serial purse  
snatcher investigation that has me  
on the edge of my seat.

He sees Mercer and Deborah flipping through the photo album. Moves next to them.

KERR (CONT'D)

What are you two troublemakers up to over here?

Kerr sees an embarrassing photo of himself with Mercer and Deborah. Cheesy eighties clothes and hairstyles. Probably from high school.

KERR (CONT'D)

Oh, geezus.

Mercer and Deborah laugh.

DEBORAH

Were we dating yet?

KERR

Don't think so. I don't have a black eye in this one.

DEBORAH

Black eye?

Kerr chuckles, turns to Mercer, who feigns an innocent look.

KERR

When Serpico over here found out we were dating, he sucker punched me in the locker room after gym class. Gave me a nice little shiner.

MERCER

You DID have a reputation with the ladies back then.

DEBORAH

Aw, Frank, you changed for me? How romantic!

Kerr rolls his eyes.

Mercer flips to the next page. More recent. Kerr kissing Deborah in the photo. Mercer with some WOMAN.

MERCER

You can toss this one in the fire place.

DEBORAH

Don't be bitter. Besides, I look great here.

MERCER

At least scissor her out of the photo.

KERR

Have you heard from her at all since then?

Mercer shakes his head.

MERCER

I thought the whole point of a divorce was to never have to speak with each other again.

Kerr laughs.

KERR

She never gave you a reason, did she?

MERCER

Sure, she did. Irreconcilable differences.

KERR

But, why?

Mercer shrugs nonchalantly.

MERCER

To tell the truth, I never cared to find out why. She wanted a divorce, so I gave her one.

KERR

If Deborah ever did that to me, you better believe I'd be looking for answers.

MERCER

Way I see it, what's done is done. Finding out why doesn't change things. If you spend too much time looking for answers, life passes you by without you even knowing. So, the hell with it. Move on to the next girl and hope it works out.

DEBORAH

Your job is your "girl."

MERCER

And I'm a very lucky man for having her.

INT. KERR'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They all sit around the dinner table. Half of a roast sits at the center. Everyone enjoying their home cooked meal.

MERCER

(chewing)

Food's great by the way, Deborah.

DEBORAH

Why, thank you. Good to hear someone appreciates my cooking.

KERR

Don't tell her that. How's she supposed to improve if you keep feeding her lies?

Deborah gives Kerr the evil eye. Kerr smiles and winks at her. Joking.

Kerr looks across the table to Mercer. Something on Kerr's mind. Curious.

KERR

So... how's this case of yours going?

Mercer thinks while finishing chewing his food first.

MERCER

I'm getting close. Just need a few more pieces to fit.

Kerr waits for Mercer to explain further. But Mercer only continues to work on his plate.

KERR

Are you going to give me some details or am I going to have to interrogate you?

Mercer chuckles.

DEBORAH

You're so nosy.

KERR  
I'm just living vicariously through  
your brother, that's all.

Kerr looks back at Mercer. Mercer grins, wipes his mouth.

MERCER  
Well, both victims suffered similar  
injuries. Blunt object to the jaw.

KERR  
You told me that already.

MERCER  
Then you got the 911 calls. Both  
made from the victim's phones.

KERR  
Sounds like a serial killer who  
can't do his job efficiently.

Deborah seems turned off by the conversation.

DEBORAH  
You know I don't like you boys  
talking shop at the table.

KERR  
He's the one talking shop, dear.  
I'm just listening.

DEBORAH  
Not at the table.

They go back to eating dinner. Silence. But Kerr remains  
curious. Glancing up at Kerr repeatedly.

KERR  
You know, I'd hate to burst your  
bubble, but what if it's just a big  
coincidence?

Deborah shakes her head. Scolding Kerr with a glare. Kerr  
winks at her, feigns an innocent shrug.

MERCER  
I don't believe in coincidences.

Mercer wipes his mouth again with a napkin. Ducks under the  
table and comes back up with a folder.

Mercer leafs through files.

MERCER (CONT'D)  
Wait till you see this.

He hands Kerr a few files. Kerr eagerly gives them a look. After reading, he looks up at Mercer.

KERR  
Phone records?

MERCER  
Tell me if anything jumps out at you.

Kerr reads further.

KERR  
Suicide Prevention Center Hot Line?

MERCER  
Both calls to that number were made a day before their attacks.

Kerr appears impressed.

MERCER (CONT'D)  
How's that for coincidence?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Stacy sits at the dinner table. Sifts through a bowl of cereal. Out of it.

She looks down at the business card Ed gave her. She contemplates to herself for a few moments.

She picks up the phone and dials the number.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE ROOM - LATER

Ed and Stacy enter the empty room. Bare walls. No furniture. The place spotless.

ED  
So, this is it.

STACY  
It's nice. Very clean.

ED  
I'm a bit of neat freak.

STACY

Yeah, me too.

Stacy noses around. Peeks into Ed's bedroom. Ed just stares at her warmly. Watching her look around.

ED

It's nothing special, but I have access to the rooftop which is cool. The view's amazing. You want to check it out?

STACY

I'm not good with heights.

ED

Don't be boring, come on!

Ed takes her by the hand and drags her along.

EXT. ED'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Ed and Stacy walk to the edge of the roof. A wonderful view overlooking the town.

STACY

You weren't kidding about the view. It's beautiful.

ED

You can see everything from here. Kind of empowering, really. Makes you feel like... like God looking down on the world.

Ed calmly stands at the very edge of the roof. His toes overlapping the ledge. Pulling a high wire act.

Stacy looks down. A far drop. She backs away from the edge and stares at Ed as if he were crazy.

STACY

Can you please not do that?

ED

What?

STACY

You could fall.

ED

Yeah, I know.

STACY

I'm no physicist, but if that were to happen, I wouldn't like your chances of survival.

Ed laughs gleefully while tight roping along the edge of the roof. He extends his hand to Stacy and waves her over.

ED

Come on.

Stacy shakes her head.

STACY

I don't feel like dying tonight.

ED

How can you really appreciate life without knowing how close you are to dying? Stop being a wimp and come over here.

STACY

You're insane.

Ed turns and faces Stacy. His heels hanging off. He wobbles a bit, not smiling anymore. About to fall backwards, off the roof.

ED

Whoa!

STACY

Ed!

Stacy hurries over and grabs Ed's hand. Helps him regain his balance. But he smiles, not letting go of her.

STACY

You asshole!

Ed laughs it up. Pulls Stacy close to him. Their lips embrace. A long passionate kiss at the edge of the roof.

Stacy looks down.

STACY

Oh, my God.

ED

See? It's not so bad.

STACY

You're an asshole.

Ed grins mischievously.

ED  
Do you trust me?

STACY  
Well --

Ed pulls her to the very edge. Her toes overlapping next to his. She looks down with wide eyes. Tries to back away.

STACY  
Please, Ed --

Ed holds her in front of him. Looks her dead in the eye.

ED  
Just look at me. Don't worry about  
what's down there.

She takes a breath. Swallows. Keeps her eyes on Ed.

ED (CONT'D)  
Are you still afraid?

Stacy laughs nervously.

STACY  
Yeah.

Ed kisses her. Long and passionate. Ed guides her down into sitting position. Their lips locked.

They look deep into each other's eyes. Lust taking over. Ed's hands feeling every part of her body. His hand on her thigh. Creeping up her leg.

Stacy clenches her eyes shut. Unfastens Ed's belt. Slides his pants down just enough. He slides her pants down.

Ed lies on top of her. Thrusts his midsection into her's. She moans insatiably. He thrusts into her again. Their lips break apart. Stacy moans in sheer ecstasy.

He thrusts into her sharply. Things getting intense. Harder and faster while looking into each other's eyes.

Stars in the sky. The view of town in the background.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Stacy lies in Ed's bed. Naked. Eyes open. Staring at the ceiling.

Ed lies naked next to her. Sheets covering them from the waist down.

STACY

One night, Paul had a few too many. We got into an argument and he hit me.

Ed kisses her neck. Tries to comfort her.

STACY (CONT'D)

It was the holidays. He hit me right in front of my parents.

ED

You don't have to talk about it.

Stacy remains in her own world.

STACY

He hasn't had a drink since. It was a long time ago. And that was the only time he ever hit me. But sometimes... sometimes I think about it.

EXT. HOBBS & GOLDMAN BUILDING - DAY

A tall office building. Hustle and bustle along the sidewalk out front, flooded with PEDESTRIANS. Heavy traffic in the street.

INT. HOBBS & GOLDMAN BUILDING - CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Detective Mercer sits across from Sam Chandler. The scar on his chin healing nicely. Jaw no longer wired.

Sam enjoys a sandwich while Mercer jots down notes.

MERCER

So, this suicide hot line... did it help at all?

Sam shrugs, wipes his mouth with a napkin.

SAM

Not really. I don't remember much about it. You know, with the head injury and all. I'm still having trouble remembering things.

MERCER

How's everything going now, since the incident?

SAM

Great. My wife and I are working things out. Kids are doing well in school. I can't complain.

MERCER

And I take it you don't recall who you spoke with when you called this hot line.

Sam shakes his head. Mercer nods. But seems disappointed.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Anything peculiar happen recently? Since leaving the hospital?

Sam shakes his head.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Nothing just a teensy bit off?

Sam thinks back for a moment.

SAM

Nothing really.

Mercer shuts his notebook. Forces a grin.

MERCER

Thank you for your time, Mr. Chandler.

Mercer stands up and leaves.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy lies in bed and stares at the ceiling. Ed comes in while brushing his teeth. Grins at Stacy with a mouthful of toothpaste.

Stacy smiles. Laughs. She catches sight of a framed photo featuring Ed and Amy. Stacy sits up, leans in for a closer look.

STACY

Is this your wife?

Ed grows uncomfortable.

ED

Yeah.

Ed returns to the bathroom. Stacy grows curious with the photo. She lifts it from the night stand. Noticing the eerie resemblance she and Amy share.

INT. HOBBS &amp; GOLDMAN BUILDING - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Sam waits as the elevator makes a stop. The doors slide open. SCOTT, early forties, boards the elevator. A fellow coworker.

SAM

How goes it, Scott?

Scott pats him on the back.

SCOTT

How's things, mate? You look good.

SAM

Can't complain.

The elevator doors slide shut. Moving again.

SAM

Check out that game last night?

SCOTT

About time they win one.

Scott savors his cup of coffee. Sighs.

SAM

Rough day?

SCOTT

Rough week. Thank God for the free coffee. Not sure if I'd be able to make it out of here alive.

Sam laughs. But then something dawns on him.

SAM

That reminds me, I ran into a friend of yours the other day.

SCOTT

Didn't know I had friends. Who was it?

SAM

Ed.

Scott wears a blank expression.

SCOTT

Ed?

Scott thinks back but draws a blank.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I don't even know anyone named Ed.

SAM

Really? He said he knew me through you.

SCOTT

Well, he must be mistaken.

Sam ponders to himself. Perplexed.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Sunlight shines onto Paul's face. Lying motionless in bed. Eyes shut. The sun peeking in through the blinds.

The BEEPING from his medical equipment echoes.

Suddenly, Paul's eyes slam open. He lets out a frightened gasp.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy continues to study the photo of Ed and Amy. A bizarre absorption.

Stacy's CELL PHONE RINGS. Startles her. She sets the photo aside and answers.

STACY

Hello?

DR. RYAN (V.O.)

May I please speak with a Mrs. Thompson?

STACY

This is her.

DR. RYAN (V.O.)

This is Dr. Ryan. I'm calling in regards to your husband, Paul.

STACY

Yes?

DR. RYAN (V.O.)

He's awake.

Stacy covers her mouth in disbelief. Tears of joy fill her eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELEVATOR - LATER

Stacy can't contain herself. Nervous, yet eager. The elevator slowly reaching her destination.

Stacy taps her foot nervously. Growing impatient. Finally, the elevator stops. The doors slide open.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Stacy bolts out of the elevator like an Olympic sprinter. She flies through the hallway, around DOCTORS and NURSES.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy rushes into the room. But stops suddenly. Staring at Paul awake in bed. Frozen stiff. A million thoughts running through her mind.

Paul wears a warm smile. Taking in her beauty. His jaw wired shut. Slightly disfigured.

PAUL

(weak)

Hey, honey.

Stacy falls apart. Tears flood down her cheeks. She tiptoes towards him. Her conscience eating at her. But she soon becomes overcome with joy.

She hugs him tighter than she's ever hugged anyone. He embraces her. Stacy sobbing hysterically, her face buried into his chest.

Paul nearly falls into tears. Deeply touched.

EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT - A WEEK LATER

A VAN pulls to the front of the building. The side door slides open. DRIVER gets out, pulls out a handicap ramp. He guides Paul, in a wheelchair, down onto the sidewalk.

Stacy follows him out. Pushes Paul the rest of the way, into the building.

INT./EXT. ED'S CAR - PARKED - ACROSS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ed spies from the driver's seat. Music playing from his stereo. Face hidden beneath shadows.

As cars zoom by, shadows dance across his face. Only his eyes remain in constant view. A cold, unsettling gaze.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Paul sits patiently in his wheelchair. In good spirits. Grateful to be alive. He glances up at Stacy. Sees a mischievous grin on her face.

PAUL

There's a surprise party waiting  
for me, isn't there?

Stacy tries hard to hide her grin.

STACY

I haven't the slightest idea what  
you're talking about.

Paul chuckles.

PAUL

I'll do my best to act surprised.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The room appears empty. Lights turned off.

The doorknob jiggles. Turns. Stacy opens the door and wheels Paul inside.

The lights flick on and a whole mess of PEOPLE jump out from hiding spots all over the apartment.

PARTY GUESTS

(in unison)

SURPRISE!!!

Paul does his best to act surprised, but his act seems awfully labored.

PAUL

Wow! I had no idea!

He looks up at Stacy and shares a good laugh.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

UPBEAT MUSIC plays in the background as GUESTS socialize with each other. Groups of them spread all over the room. Everyone having a good time.

Paul and Stacy appear inseparable. Paul looks around at all the guests.

PAUL  
Thanks, honey. I really appreciate  
this.

Stacy kisses him on the top of his head.

STACY  
It's the least I can do.

They look deep into each other's eyes. Sharing a warm moment.

PAUL  
I love you.

STACY  
I love you.

They give each other a big smooch. Anne butts in.

ANNE  
Get a room, you two.

Stacy laughs.

PAUL  
Where's your parents tonight?

Anne shares an awkward glance with Stacy. Keeps quiet. Stacy makes something up.

STACY  
Mom's not doing so hot right now.  
Dad's taking care of her. But they  
wanted to come.

Paul doesn't believe her.

PAUL  
Yeah. Well, give them my blessings.

ANNE  
I'll do that.

Stacy's CELL PHONE RINGS. She checks it. Freezes. Thrown off. Uneasy.

Paul raises an eyebrow.

STACY  
I'll be right back.

Stacy disappears into the kitchen. Paul watches her suspiciously. Studying her. She seems worried while talking on the phone.

ANNE  
So, Paul, when do you go back to work?

Paul continues to eyeball Stacy from across the room.

PAUL  
Aiming for next Monday.

ANNE  
And the wheelchair?

PAUL  
Just for a few days or so.

He keeps focus on Stacy.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

Paul wheels his way to the kitchen.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy huddles into the corner of the room. Whispers on her cell phone. She speaks fast. On edge.

STACY  
I told you, I can't talk right now.

ED (V.O.)  
I haven't heard from you in a while. I'm worried.

STACY  
Paul is home. I can't talk to you. Not right now. I'll call you tomorrow, okay?

ED (V.O.)  
That's what you said a week ago.

STACY  
I can't do this, Ed. I'll call you  
tomorrow.

Stacy hangs up just as Paul wheels in from behind.

PAUL  
Who was that?

Stacy flinches, caught by surprise. Frozen stiff, she delays  
in a response.

STACY  
Oh, hey honey.

PAUL  
You okay?

STACY  
Yeah, I'm fine.

PAUL  
Who were you talking to?

Stacy stalls for a few moments.

STACY  
It was Detective Mercer. I told him  
we were having a welcome home  
party. Told him to call back  
tomorrow.

Paul accepts her answer.

PAUL  
Your parents didn't want to come,  
did they?

Stacy looks down at the floor, back at Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I understand.

STACY  
They're stubborn.

Paul smiles sadly.

PAUL  
In time, I guess. At least your  
sister seems to have come around.

Stacy plants a big kiss on Paul's lips.

STACY  
Let's go back to the party.  
(more upbeat)  
Your people await.

Stacy spins Paul around in his chair, wheels him back into the living room.

Meanwhile, Stacy's cell phone sits on the counter. It lights up and VIBRATES.

EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Ed's car continues to sit parked across the street.

INT. ED'S CAR - PARKED - ACROSS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ed listens to Stacy's voice mail.

STACY (V.O.)  
You've reached Stacy Thompson.  
Sorry I'm unable to take your call.  
Please leave a message and I'll get  
back to you as soon as I can. Bye.

BEEP. Ed slams his cell phone shut. Drops it onto the passenger's seat. He exhales through his nostrils, glares up at Paul's apartment building.

INT. PRECINCT - MERCER'S OFFICE - DAY

Detective Mercer sits at his desk and munches on a bagel. Sam Chandler sits across from him.

MERCER  
What's the word, Mr. Chandler?  
How's the jaw?

Sam shrugs.

SAM  
Still clicks when I eat.

MERCER  
Yeah? My old man had the same  
problem. Used to annoy the shit  
outta my mom.

Sam forces a nervous laugh.

MERCER (CONT'D)  
How can I help you today, Mr.  
Chandler?

SAM  
(reluctant)  
Last time we spoke, you asked me if  
anything strange happened recently.

MERCER  
You told me no.

SAM  
Well...

MERCER  
Well?

SAM  
I was at this coffee shop about a  
month ago. Had my kids with me. And  
this man came up to me. He struck  
up a conversation. Talked to me  
like he knew me.

MERCER  
But you didn't know him?

SAM  
I thought I didn't remember. You  
know, on account of the head  
injury.

Mercer wipes his mouth with a napkin, waits for Sam to  
finish.

SAM (CONT'D)  
He seemed to know an awful lot  
about me. Told me he knew me  
through a mutual friend. Only  
problem is that this mutual friend  
doesn't seem to know him.

Sam now has Mercer's full attention. Mercer scratches his  
chin in deep thought.

MERCER  
You remember what he looked like?

SAM  
He looked normal enough. But there  
was one thing. He had this... scar.

MERCER

Scar?

SAM

On his chin.

Mercer eyes the scar on Sam's chin.

MERCER

Like you?

Sam nods.

MERCER

Catch his name?

Sam nods, leans in close to Mercer.

SAM

Ed.

INT. SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER OFFICES - NIGHT

Ed sits in a cubicle. Down in the dumps. Dark circles under his eyes. His office space cluttered and messy.

Ed speaks with a sad, monotone voice on the phone.

ED

Thanks for calling The Suicide  
Prevention Center Hot Line. How can  
I assist you?

The SUPERVISOR, late twenties, wearing lenses with thick frames, pokes his head into Ed's cubicle.

SUPERVISOR

Ed?

Ed looks up at Supervisor while on the phone.

ED

(on phone)  
Please, hold.

Ed puts the caller on hold, gives Supervisor his full attention.

SUPERVISOR

There's someone here to see you.

Ed's eyes light up with hope.

ED

Yeah?

SUPERVISOR

A Detective Mercer?

Ed's expression falls. Sheer panic. A million thoughts flashing through his mind. Ed takes a deep breath. Tries to maintain his composure.

INT. SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER - BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A small room with a coffee machine and a mini-fridge in the corner. Posters line the walls with positive messages.

Ed and Detective Mercer sit across from each other at an oblong table. A tense silence as Mercer observes Ed carefully. Focuses on the scar that covers Ed's chin.

MERCER

What's with the beauty mark?

ED

It was years ago.

MERCER

What was years ago?

Ed grows uncomfortable very quickly.

ED

I was mugged. Almost died.

Mercer nods, continues to eyeball Ed.

ED (CONT'D)

Did I do something wrong,  
Detective?

MERCER

I don't know. Did you?

Ed holds a blank expression. Mercer laughs jokingly.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Just messing with you. Only here to  
ask you a few questions, Ed. You  
don't mind if I call you Ed, do  
you?

ED

No. You mind if I call you  
Detective?

Mercer chuckles, but maintains a serious expression.

MERCER

Feel free, Ed. Whatever makes you comfortable.

Mercer shuffles through papers.

MERCER (CONT'D)

The night of March 27th, say around 11 p.m. Sometime around midnight. You wouldn't happen to remember your whereabouts, would you?

Ed pretends to think hard. Shrugs.

ED

I don't know.

Mercer reads over his paperwork.

MERCER

What about the night of March 29th? Round seven, eight o'clock?

ED

Long time ago, Detective. Probably here, working. Like I should be doing now.

MERCER

Hold your horses, Ed. Almost done.

(beat)

So, you say you were probably working, huh? Because your supervisor tells me you've been working graveyard shift for three years. Midnight to eight.

ED

I pick up a lot of over time.

Mercer nods, jots something down. He studies Ed's body language. A prolonged stare.

MERCER

What's your relationship with Sam Chandler?

Ed's eye twitches a bit. He clears throat, fakes a cough.

ED

Never heard of him.

MERCER

What about Paul Thompson?

Ed shakes his head before Mercer finishes the question.

ED

I really need to get back to work.

MERCER

One last question. I understand a few years back you were a suspect in the murder of --

Ed snaps, pounds his fist on the table.

ED

What the fuck does that have to do with anything?

An intense stare down. Mercer nods. Gathers his paperwork and stands up.

MERCER

Thank you for your time, Ed.

Mercer smirks at Ed on his way out of the room.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Paul and Stacy lie asleep in bed, huddled close under the covers. Paul opens his eyes. The first thing he sees is Stacy. He smiles, appreciates her beauty.

Paul sits up, kisses Stacy on the forehead. Her eyes remain shut, but she smiles.

STACY

Back to work today?

Paul smiles. Kisses her.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Paul and Stacy shower together. Sharing an intimate moment. Caressing each other gently. Steam pouring out from the shower.

She kisses Paul on the mouth, grabs a towel and steps out of the shower. Paul finishes his shower alone.

Stacy dries off, stands in front of the sink. She wraps the towel around her head. Wipes the fog from the mirror.

She grabs her toothbrush and the tube of toothpaste. But she stops. Stares at the tube annoyed. Fat at the bottom, thin at the top.

STACY  
Hey, honey?

PAUL (O.S.)  
Yeah?

Stacy catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Holds back.

STACY  
Nothing.

EXT. TALL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY - LATER

Paul, spruced up in a suit and tie, briefcase in hand, weaves around PEDESTRIANS on the crowded sidewalks out front. Smile on his face. Refreshed.

Paul enters the building.

INT. TALL OFFICE BUILDING - TOP FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Paul steps out of the elevator, turns into a hallway.

As Paul walks through, COWORKERS greet him with welcoming smiles.

COWORKER #1  
Hey, Paul, good to see you.

Paul nods and smiles.

COWORKER #2  
Welcome back, Paul.

PAUL  
Glad to be back.

Paul reaches his office at the end of the hallway.

INT. TALL OFFICE BUILDING - PAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters his office, flicks the light switch on. He freezes. Looks around. Stunned. He smiles and shakes his head.

Bouquets of flowers and balloons surround his desk.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

A steaming pot roast sits at the center of the perfectly set dinner table. Paul enjoys his meal. Looks across the table to Stacy.

PAUL  
Real good, honey.

Stacy smiles. But something bothers her. Poking around at her food.

She looks down at her pocket. Her CELL PHONE VIBRATING. Glowing.

Stacy sees Paul preoccupied. Quickly checks the call ID. Keeping her phone low, under the table. One eye on Paul, the other on the phone.

She shuts her phone, slips it into her pocket.

STACY  
How was work?

PAUL  
Great. How was your day?

STACY  
It was good.

The HOUSE PHONE RINGS and alarms Stacy. Paul raises his eyebrow. Perplexed by Stacy's strange reaction.

PAUL  
Want me to get that?

Stacy immediately stands up, wipes her mouth and tosses the napkin on the table.

STACY  
No honey, you eat. I'll get it.

Stacy hurries out of the dining room. Paul watches her curiously.

PAUL  
You know, you can just let the machine get it.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy plucks the phone off the wall, answers it.

STACY

Hello?

INT./EXT. ED'S CAR - PARKED - CONTINUOUS

Ed sits in the driver's seat of his car, stares up at Paul's apartment building across the street.

ED

Hey there, stranger.

STACY (V.O.)

(whispers)

Not now, Ed.

ED

Then when?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy looks into the living room. Paul watching her closely.

STACY

I'm sorry, you have the wrong number.

Stacy hangs up.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy sits back down. Avoiding eye contact with Paul. She pretends to be preoccupied with her food. Paul analyzing her.

PAUL

Who was that?

STACY

Wrong number.

Paul glows with cynicism. Eyeing her suspiciously.

PAUL

A lot of wrong numbers lately.

Stacy stops eating for a moment. Her guilty eyes focused down on her plate. But she continues to eat.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Paul lies on top of Stacy. Makes intimate love to her. Face to face. Very sensual. Bedsheets covering them from the waist down.

Paul breathes heavy into her ear. Suddenly, Stacy wraps her thigh tightly around Paul's waist. Whispers into his ear.

STACY

Fuck me.

Paul's eyes widen. Surprised. But he's turned on. He goes harder into her. Grunts. Thrusting into her harder and harder. Growing more and more intense.

Stacy moans in ecstasy. Digs her fingernails into his back. Scratches him.

PAUL

Ouch.

Paul seems disturbed. This isn't the same woman.

Stacy rolls him to his back. Hops on top of him. Dominates him. She pins his shoulders to the bed. Rides him hard and fast.

STACY

Fuck me! Fuck me!

Paul enjoys every second of it. An unexpected pleasure. He shuts his eyes tightly. Climaxing.

Stacy screams with pleasure. Her eyes also shut tightly. Their bodies glistening with sweat.

Stacy exhales. Catching her breath. She plops down on top of Paul.

Paul appears puzzled. Staring up at the whirring ceiling fan.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

A tranquil silence broken by Paul occasionally snoring. The room dark.

Stacy's CELL PHONE VIBRATES and glows. Stacy opens her eyes. Groggy. She reaches for her phone. Tilts it to see the caller ID.

She sighs. Frustrated. She shuts her cell phone off. Stares up at the ceiling. In deep thought.

The HOUSE PHONE RINGS from the next room. Stacy sits up. Alarmed. In disbelief. Panic hits her like a bucket of water.

She turns to Paul. Sees him sound asleep. The HOUSE PHONE continues to RING.

Stacy creeps out of bed. Tiptoes to the bedroom door while keeping a close eye on Paul.

She leaves the bedroom. The door slightly ajar. Light from the kitchen slivers into the bedroom. Shining onto Paul's face.

He opens his eyes.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy grabs the house phone from the wall. She sits in the corner of the room, as far away from the bedroom as possible.

STACY

(whispers)

Do you have any idea what time it is?

ED (V.O.)

When exactly did you plan on returning my call?

STACY

Ed, I can't --

ED (V.O.)

You can't what, Stacy? What can't you do?

STACY

Please, Ed, I'll call you tomorrow.

ED (V.O.)

What time?

STACY

I don't know... three o'clock?

ED (V.O.)

If you don't call --

STACY

Ed, I'll call you, okay? Bye.

She hangs up. Sighs in frustration.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Who's Ed?

Stacy jumps. Startled. Paul stands at the bedroom doorway.  
Arms crossed.

Stacy presses her hand over her heart.

STACY  
Jesus, Paul!

Stacy takes a deep breath. Gains composure.

STACY (CONT'D)  
That was Dad.

PAUL  
Sounded to me like you said Ed.

Paul inspects Stacy suspiciously. But acts normal again.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Then again, I was in the bedroom  
with the door closed. Everything  
okay?

STACY  
Yeah, he was just feeling lonely.  
With Mom sick and all.

Paul nods.

PAUL  
All right.

Paul disappears into the bedroom.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun shines through the blinds in the window. The glare  
awakens Stacy. She opens her eyes.

She shuts her eyes and rolls over. Feels around Paul's spot  
in bed. She turns to see that Paul isn't there.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul paces while on the phone. Dressed in a suit, ready for  
work.

PAUL  
(on phone)  
That's right, just for a few hours.  
Say, till around five o'clock?

Paul sees Stacy in the kitchen. Turns his back to her. A private phone call.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(on phone)  
I'd rent a car myself, but this was  
last second.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Stacy stands in the shower. Vulnerable. A lot on her mind. She hears the door open. Slides open the shower.

Paul stands at the toilet, urinates. His back to her. He whistles a tune, seems upbeat.

STACY  
Hey, honey.

PAUL  
(cheerful)  
Hey.

STACY  
You were up early.

Paul shrugs.

PAUL  
Big day at work today. Guess I was  
just excited. Everything good with  
your father?

STACY  
(delayed)  
He's doing better.

PAUL  
Good.

Stacy seems confused by Paul's upbeat behavior. Something's not right.

Paul zips up and flushes the toilet. Washes his hands at the sink. Still whistling.

A thick steam generates from the shower head. The hot water sings Stacy.

STACY

Ouch!

Stacy moves to the back of the shower, away from the hot water. Paul dries his hands. Leaves the bathroom in a hurry.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - DAY - LATER

A bright sunny day. Perfect blue sky. A constantly moving wave of PEDESTRIANS crowd the park and flood the sidewalks.

SKATEBOARDERS and TEENS loiter corners and park benches. DOG WALKERS peruse the sidewalks.

Ed sits alone at a park bench. Checking his cell phone frequently. Losing his patience.

Finally, he sees Stacy emerge from the CROWD. Ed's eyes light up.

She spots Ed. Seems less than enthused. Slowing down as she nears him.

Ed rises from the bench with open arms. He hugs her tightly But she doesn't hug him back.

ED

It's so good to see you.

Ed moves in for a kiss. But she turns her cheek. He pulls back. Senses her reluctance.

ED (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Stacy can't look at him. Perhaps feeling guilty.

Ed sits down, offers Stacy a seat next to him on the bench. But she shakes her head. Stays on her feet. Above him.

STACY

I have to make this quick.

ED

Make what quick?

Stacy hesitates, afraid to hurt Ed's feelings.

STACY

I can't see you anymore.

Ed's expression falls.

ED  
Why not?

STACY  
You know why.

ED  
No, I don't.

Stacy sighs.

STACY  
I love my husband.

Ed becomes flustered.

ED  
But what about me?

STACY  
You knew my situation, Ed.

ED  
And you knew mine.

STACY  
I was feeling vulnerable. I was  
lonely. I wasn't sure if Paul --

ED  
Guess I was just a substitute,  
then. Until he came back.

STACY  
Ed --

ED  
You used me.

Stacy exhales. Frustrated.

STACY  
You knew my situation and I really  
thought you understood --

ED  
How dare you compare me to you? You  
think we're the same? Paul came  
back.

Ed sighs. Shakes his head in indignation. Stacy hangs her  
head. Stares at the ground.

ED (CONT'D)  
So, none of it meant shit to you?

STACY  
I didn't say that.

ED  
Look at me.

Stacy struggles to look Ed in the eye.

ED (CONT'D)  
There WAS something between us,  
wasn't there?

STACY  
There WAS. But there can't be an US  
anymore. I love my husband.

Ed jumps to his feet. Gets into Stacy's face.

ED  
Did you love him when he hit you?

STACY  
That was a long time ago.

Ed leans his face in close to Stacy's. Intimidating her.

ED  
Did you love him when I was fucking  
your brains out on my roof?

Stacy stares at Ed. Appalled. Furious but afraid at the same time. A tense silence.

STACY  
If you ever call me again, I will  
put a restraining order on you so  
fast, it will make your head spin.  
I never want to see you again.

Stacy turns her back to Ed and walks away. All he can do is watch. Devastated.

A BLACK CAR sits parked nearby. At the curb. SOMEONE watching Ed.

EXT. ED'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - LATER

Ed walks into his building. Suddenly, the BLACK CAR pulls up to the curb. Across the street.

Paul exits the car. He looks up at Ed's building. Approaches the front door.

He reads off a list of TENANT NAMES listed beside APARTMENT NUMBERS and buzzers.

Paul scrolls down the list with his index finger.

PAUL  
Where are you, Ed?

Paul's finger stops at E. WAYNE. The only first initial with the letter E.

PAUL  
There you are.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Stacy enters the building while rummaging through her purse. She digs out her cell phone and checks for messages.

As she nears the elevator, she runs into Detective Mercer.

MERCER  
Miss Thompson?

STACY  
Oh, hello, Detective Mercer. How are you?

MERCER  
Not bad. Yourself?

Stacy shrugs.

MERCER (CONT'D)  
Sorry to pop in like this. I just tried contacting your husband, but he doesn't seem to be home.

STACY  
He's at work.

MERCER  
Wasn't there when I stopped by.

STACY  
He must be busy.

Mercer shrugs.

MERCER

Well, while I'm here, I was wondering if YOU had a a few minutes to talk.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Detective Mercer makes himself comfortable. Sits down at the table. Hangs his jacket on the back of his chair.

Stacy brings him a cup of coffee. He takes a sip. Impressed. He smiles and raises his cup to her in thanks.

Stacy grins. Sits down across from Mercer.

MERCER

How's Paul doing, anyway? Getting around okay?

STACY

Like nothing ever happened.

MERCER

That's great news, Miss Thompson. Good to hear.

STACY

So, how can I help you, Detective?

MERCER

Call me Bob. People call me Detective so much, I'm beginning to think it's my Christian name.

Stacy humors him with a smile.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Anyway, down to brass tacks, here.

Mercer sets a file folder on the table, flips through paperwork.

MERCER (CONT'D)

What do you know about a suicide hot line?

Stacy immediately freezes. A delayed reaction.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Because I went through your phone records and found the number for a Suicide Prevention Center Hot Line.

(MORE)

MERCER (CONT'D)

It was dialed from your land line  
the night before your husband was  
attacked.

STACY

The night before?

MERCER

Yeah. Paul ever mention anything?

Stacy shakes her head, puzzled.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Does the name Ed Wayne ring a bell?

Stacy grows speechless.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Miss Thompson?

STACY

That's MRS. Thompson.

Mercer eyes her suspiciously.

MERCER

Sorry if I offended you. I tend to  
refer to all women as Miss. It's  
something I do.

A DOOR OPENS OS. Paul walks into the room. Stops when he sees  
Mercer and Stacy.

Mercer stands up, shakes Paul's hand.

MERCER

Mr. Thompson.

PAUL

Detective.

Mercer sits down again. Paul sets his briefcase to the side.  
Shares a tense glance with Stacy. Looks back to Mercer.

MERCER

Tried getting in touch with you. A  
few developments concerning your  
investigation.

Paul leans against the wall. Acts nonchalantly.

PAUL

Any suspects?

MERCER

We'll get there. I was just talking to your wife about a suicide hot line I found on your phone records.

PAUL

Yeah. That was me.

MERCER

You remember who you talked to?

Paul shakes his head. Unsure.

PAUL

It's fuzzy.

MERCER

Because there was an attack very similar to yours a few nights before. Same injury. Phone stolen. An anonymous 911 call.

Paul gives Mercer a blank look. Doesn't see a connection.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Found it curious because the other victim in question ALSO made a call to the same suicide hot line. A night before his attack.

PAUL

Awfully coincidental.

MERCER

I don't believe in coincidences, Mr. Thompson. Ed Wayne. You recognize that name?

Paul glances at Stacy suspiciously. Stacy wears her guilt on her sleeve. Mercer senses an awkwardness between the couple.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Well?

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL

Never heard of him.

Mercer shuffles through papers, scans each page.

MERCER

He works the phones there. His supervisor says he tends to get a little personal with his callers.

Paul shrugs, gives Mercer his best poker face. Mercer looks to Stacy, analyzes her closely.

MERCER (CONT'D)

What about you... MRS. Thompson?

Stacy's nerves begin to unravel. She tries her hardest to keep her cool.

STACY

I already told you, no.

Mercer exhales through his nose. Frustrated.

MERCER

I'm asking you in particular because the phone number shows up twice. Once on the night before your husband was attacked. Once again about a month ago.

Stacy's heart races. A lump in her throat. Unable to respond.

MERCER (CONT'D)

If I'm not mistaken, your husband here was still in a hospital bed, counting sheep.

Stacy looks around the room. All eyes on her. Paul looks down and sees her knee shake nervously.

Stacy avoids eye contact with Paul. Looks to Mercer with a blank expression. She shrugs and shakes her head.

Mercer nods in disappointment.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Okay.

Mercer collects his files. Stands up and throws on his jacket. He slides his business card across the table to Stacy.

MERCER (CONT'D)

Give me a ring.

Paul shows Mercer to the door. Stacy lets out a sigh. Starting to crack.

Paul returns. A stern look pasted to his face. He stands above Stacy with his hands on his waist.

PAUL  
Anything you'd like to tell me?

Stacy tears up a bit. As if she wanted to come clean. But she doesn't. Only responds with a puppy dog look. Paul nods. About to explode.

Instead he storms off. Leaves the apartment.

Stacy bursts into tears. Sobbing hysterically.

EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Detective Mercer leaves the building. He crosses the street, walks to his car.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mercer gets to his car parked at the curb. A silver sedan with OFFICIAL POLICE FORCE stickers on the windows. Another one on the license plate.

INT. MERCER'S CAR - PARKED - CONTINUOUS

Mercer hops into the driver's seat. But feels discomfort. He shifts around in his seat a bit. Reaches into his waist.

He pulls out his gun in its holster and sets it under the seat.

INT./EXT. ED'S CAR - PARKED - CONTINUOUS

Ed sits parked only a few car lengths behind Mercer. He watches Mercer closely. Bad intentions behind his cold gaze.

INT. BAR - LATER

A true dive bar. Street signs and license plates hang on the walls. Graffiti tags the walls and tables as if encouraged. A trashy dump.

The place nearly empty. Paul sits at the bar alone with his shirt only halfway tucked in. Tie loose around his neck. A complete mess.

He downs a shot and chases it with a pint of beer. Staring sadly at his empty shot glass.

The BARTENDER, scruffy blue collar type, stands behind the bar and reads the paper.

Paul digs into his pocket. Pulls out his cell phone as it RINGS. He reads the display. Sets the phone to the side and sips his beer.

INT. CORNER BODEGA - CONTINUOUS

A small mom-and-pop type shop. Only a few aisles. Minimal goods. Just the basics.

Detective Mercer leans over the counter, exhausted. He slides a few bucks across the counter to HERMAN, the elderly cashier.

MERCER

Hey, Herman. I'll take the usual.

Herman pours Mercer a cup.

HERMAN

Black, right?

MERCER

Yes, sir.

Herman hands Mercer his coffee.

MERCER

How's the wife?

HERMAN

Getting older and older every day.

Mercer laughs.

MERCER

Aren't we all?

He takes a sip of his coffee and makes a sour face.

MERCER

Geezus, Herman, how fresh is this coffee?

HERMAN

I'm not sure if fresh is the right word.

MERCER  
How long's it been sitting in that  
pot?

HERMAN  
Trust me, you don't want to know.

Mercer takes another sip anyway. He raises his cup to Herman.

MERCER  
Take it easy, Herman.

EXT. CORNER BODEGA - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mercer leaves. Stands out front and finishes the rest of his coffee. He cringes. Tosses the empty cup into a nearby trash bin and walks to his car parked out front.

As he reaches his car, his CELL PHONE RINGS. Mercer checks the display while opening the door.

INT. MERCER'S CAR - PARKED - CONTINUOUS

Mercer answers his phone while sitting down. Shutting the door behind him.

MERCER  
Hey, Deborah.

DEBORAH (V.O.)  
Hi, Bob. Just calling to find out  
if you'll be able to make it for  
dinner. Just so I know how much to  
prepare.

Mercer checks his watch.

MERCER  
Yeah, I might be a few minutes  
late, but I should be there. Just  
got some paperwork to wrap up. But  
yeah, save me a plate.

DEBORAH (V.O.)  
All right, see you soon.

MERCER  
Bye.

Mercer hangs up. About to start the car.

*CLICK*. Doom on Mercer's face. He sits up straight, adjusts his dashboard mirror. Sees Ed sitting in the backseat. Holding a gun to the back of his head.

MERCER  
(careful)  
What's up, Ed?

ED  
From here on out, you will refer to me as Mr. Wayne. Got that, Detective?

Mercer grins.

MERCER  
What's this about, Mr. Wayne? What exactly is the plan, here?

ED thinks about it, but comes up blank.

ED  
I don't know yet.

Mercer discreetly reaches under his seat while talking with Ed.

MERCER  
This isn't wise on your part, Mr. Wayne. You're opening up a whole another can of worms, here. Now, it *WOULD* be wise to lower that piece and have a civilized conversation.

Mercer continues to reach under his seat. He grabs his gun holster. Pulls it out. But his gun is missing.

Ed presses the pistol hard against the back of Mercer's head.

ED  
Looking for something?

Mercer chuckles. Eyeing Ed through his dash mirror.

MERCER  
Very clever. Looks like I've met my match, haven't I?

ED  
What did you tell her about me?

MERCER  
Who?

ED  
You know who I'm talking about it.

Mercer, confused at first, smiles ironically and shakes his head in realization.

MERCER  
I knew it.

Ed holds up a file folder with his free hand. Tosses it onto the front passenger's seat for Mercer to see.

ED  
Sam Chandler, huh? After everything I've done for him?

MERCER  
You re-configured his face. You tried to kill him.

ED  
I didn't try to kill anybody.

Mercer eyes Ed with a confound expression. He tries to understand.

MERCER  
No? What about Amy?

Ed glares at Mercer, appalled and shocked. Almost speechless.

ED  
I was cleared.

MERCER  
Sad to say, but every once in a while the system lets one slip through the cracks.

ED  
I loved her!

MERCER  
That why you killed her, Ed?  
Because you loved her so much?

Ed looks as if about to explode. Trying his best to hold it in. He takes a deep breath.

ED  
(delayed)  
Listen to me and listen good. I didn't --

MERCER

Let me ask you something, Ed. Is Stacy Thompson going to end up like Amy?

ED

(explodes)

Shut the fuck up!

Mercer snickers condescendingly.

MERCER

She knew you were fucking crazy.  
And now she's dead. All because of you --

*BLAM!* Mercer's head jerks forward and blood splatters all over the dash and windshield. Silence as Mercer slowly slumps over in his seat.

Smoke rises from the tip of the pistol. Ed holds his aim. In a state of madness. Breathing heavily from the adrenaline rush.

EXT. SAM CHANDLER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT - LATER

Sam hugs one arm around a bag of groceries as he unlocks the front door. He swings it open with his free arm and holds it open with his foot.

BARBARA, Sam's wife, middle-aged and attractive, trudges through the doorway, her hands full with several bags of groceries.

Sam grins and gives her a peck on the cheek as she passes through.

SAM

Got all that?

BARBARA

My personal trainer would be impressed right now.

Sam laughs.

SAM

Hell, I'm impressed.

Their TWO CHILDREN mosey on in after Barbara.

SAM  
All right, chitlins. Your beds  
await.

The Two Children share a heavy groan in disapproval.

SAM  
Don't "oh" me. It's already an hour  
past your bedtimes.

INT. SAM CHANDLER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The Two Children follow Barbara up the stairway. Sam releases the door, lags behind. But the door doesn't close.

A hand reaches in, keeps the door from closing. Ed swings the door open wide, flashes in quietly.

Sam glances back, does a double take. Panic hits Sam when he sees a pistol in Ed's grip. Sam drops his groceries and tries to run.

SAM  
Barbara!

Ed raises his pistol at Sam. Barbara looks down the stairs. Her eyes widen in horror.

BARBARA  
Sam!

She grabs the Two Children, hurries them up the stairs.

BLAM! Ed shoots Sam in the back of the knee. Blood squirts onto the floor as Sam collapses at the bottom of the stairs.

Barbara belts out an horrific shriek. She cries desperately for help throughout the scene. Unhinged chaos.

Sam rolls to his back and clutches his wound in agony. His deafening screams echo throughout the building.

Sam frantically tries to escape. He slides up a few stairs and leaves a trail of blood.

Ed easily keeps pace, stands above Sam with his pistol ready.

ED  
After all I did for you, you  
ungrateful fuck!

SAM  
Please, don't!

ED

I gave you a second chance! I gave  
you back your fucking life!

Sam's lip quivers. Tears in his eyes. His brow glistens with  
sweat.

SAM

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!

Ed waves his pistol at Sam wildly.

ED

Look what you're making me do!

SAM

No! Please don't --

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! The gunshots echo throughout as Ed shoots  
Sam three times in the chest.

Barbara's horrific shrieks sound like they can break glass as  
she watches in disbelief.

Blood soaks through Sam's shirt. His eyes wide with terror.  
He manages to slide his way up a few stairs. His frantic  
movements cease as he sprawls out halfway up the stairway.

Sam gasps desperately for air. He struggles with all of his  
might to hold on. He kicks his legs in an attempt to keep  
moving, but his heels slip on the fresh trail of blood.

Sam stops struggling and lies motionless. Terror frozen on  
his face. Eyes still open. Silence.

BARBARA

Sam!

Barbara sprints down the stairs and crouches down by her  
husband. She grabs him by his cheeks, tries to shake the life  
back into him. But it's too late.

She sobs hysterically. Kisses her husband, hugs her arms  
around him tightly.

Ed stands back. Conflicted. Even sympathetic. Barbara looks  
up at Ed, a frightened look of anticipation.

Ed looks away, ashamed.

ED

Sorry.

He turns and leaves the building.

INT. KERR'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Deborah sits at the dinner table. Tears in her eyes. Staring off into space. The house phone sitting in front of her, on the table. Three table settings arranged. Food sitting there.

A DOOR OPENS and SHUTS from OS. Upbeat WHISTLING.

Kerr walks in. Gives Deborah a peck on the cheek.

KERR  
Hey, honey, sorry I'm late.

Kerr looks at Mercer's empty seat while sitting down.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Guess I beat your brother here.

Kerr looks up. Sees Deborah in disarray.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

Deborah looks away. Devastated. Speechless.

KERR (CONT'D)  
What's the matter?

She falls apart. An outburst of uncontrollable sobbing.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Deborah?

DEBORAH  
(sobbing)  
It's... it's Bob...

KERR  
Where is he? What's wrong?

Deborah can't stop crying. Kerr slides his chair next to her. Trying to comfort her.

KERR (CONT'D)  
It's okay. Just please, tell me  
what happened? Is he okay?

She looks at Kerr, gives him an answer without even speaking. Her tear-filled eyes say it all.

Kerr reads her reaction. His expression falls. Holding back tears. Feeling anger and disbelief all at once.

He wonders to himself. So much running through his mind. Eyes down at the floor.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy paces back and forth. On edge. Deeply concerned as she holds her cell phone to her ear.

STACY  
(frenetic)  
Pick up, pick up, pick up...

The PHONE RINGS until reaching a voice mail.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Hi, you've reached Paul Thompson.  
I'm currently unavailable to take  
your call. But leave your name and  
number and I'll get back to you as  
soon as possible. Thank you.

BEEP. Stacy stops pacing, sighs in frustration.

STACY  
Paul, honey? It's me again. If  
you're not going to pick up, at  
least listen to this message.  
Please?

Stacy thinks of what else to say. She moves her mouth, but no words escape. She hangs up.

Suddenly, her HOUSE PHONE RINGS. Gives her a jolt. She answers.

STACY  
Hello?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The RECEPTIONIST sits behind his desk, phone to his ear.

RECEPTIONIST  
Mrs. Thompson? There's a gentleman  
here to see you.

Receptionist lowers the phone for a second. Looking up at somebody.

RECEPTIONIST  
What did you say your name was?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy listens on her phone.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)  
Says his name is Ed.

Stacy freezes.

STACY  
Tell him I'm not home.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)  
But he sees me talking --

STACY  
Tell him if he doesn't leave, I'm  
calling the police.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Receptionist hangs up the phone, afraid to look at Ed.

RECEPTIONIST  
I'm sorry, sir. But I kindly have  
to ask you to leave.

ED  
Why?

RECEPTIONIST  
If you don't leave, I'll be forced  
to call the police.

Ed looks at Receptionist as if his whole world had collapsed.

ED  
She told you to say that?

Receptionist nods reluctantly. Ed nods in accordance.  
Crushed.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stacy sits down at a table. Panic on her face. Hands on her  
knees as she wheezes for air.

Stacy picks up the house phone, about to dial when...

The HOUSE PHONE RINGS and startles her. She drops the phone  
to the table. Unsure of whether or not to pick up.

Finally, the answering machine picks it up.

ED (V.O.)  
(on answering machine)  
Stacy? Please pick up?

INT./EXT. ED'S CAR - PARKED - ACROSS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ed sits in his car and leaves a message for Stacy.

ED  
I left, just like you asked. Please  
pick up?

No response. Ed fights tears. Becomes emotional.

ED (CONT'D)  
I might have to go away for a  
while. I just wanted to see you one  
last time before I go. Now, you  
might hear some very bad things  
about me. I just want you to  
know...

Ed clears his throat, tries not to cry.

ED (CONT'D)  
Just know that I love you.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Bartender wipes down the bar. Shuts off some lights. He takes a look at Paul, who sits slumped over the bar. Very drunk.

BARTENDER  
Closing time, mate. Time to pack  
up.

Paul stands up. Wobbles a bit. He salutes Bartender and stumbles to the front door.

EXT. CITY STREET - SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

A late night. Barely a soul around. Paul stumbles along the sidewalk, bumps into trash cans along the way.

FOOTSTEPS approach from behind him. Paul turns around. Looks down the barrel of a revolver.

A HOODLUM, dressed in all black, a hood hiding his facial features, holds Paul at gunpoint.

HOODLUM  
Your money or your life,  
motherfucker!

Paul only stares down the barrel of the gun with a blank expression. Hoodlum grows impatient.

HOODLUM (CONT'D)  
Empty your fucking pockets! Right  
now!

Paul shows Hoodlum his wallet.

PAUL  
This what you want?

Paul looks Hoodlum dead in the eye as he slowly slides his wallet back into his pocket. Daring Hoodlum to make a move.

Hoodlum stares at Paul in disbelief. Not the response he was expecting.

Hoodlum steps in closer, points his revolver close to Paul's face. The tip of the revolver touches Paul's nose. Paul embraces it. Gives Hoodlum a rye smile.

Hoodlum appears puzzled, but stays in character.

HOODLUM  
You're one crazy son of a bitch,  
aren'tcha?

Tense silence as Hoodlum continues to hold his aim. Paul waits. Growing impatient.

PAUL  
You're not going to shoot me, are  
you?

HOODLUM  
(delayed)  
I swear to God, if you don't --

Paul goes for the gun. A brief struggle as they wrestle over possession. Then...

BLAM! Hoodlum immediately falls to his back. Paul quickly backs away, realizes he has possession of the gun.

Hoodlum lies still on the street. Gasping. Losing consciousness.

Paul slowly backs away. Wide eyes. Stunned. Not prepared for this.

Paul turns around and makes a run for it. He sprints full speed. Turning into an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Paul dashes through the alley, eventually running out of gas. He stops to catch his breath. Hunched over with his hands on his knees. Gasping for air.

He gains his breath. Calms a bit. He looks into his hand. He still has possession of the gun.

His breathing returns to normal as he continues to eye the gun curiously. As if an idea was brewing.

INT. PRECINCT - KERR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Detective Kerr sits at his desk. Somber. Staring down at a bloody cell phone. Files covered in blood dots. Mercer's badge.

Kerr opens the folder. Shuffles through files. Drops of blood on every page. Kerr shakes his head. On the brink of tears.

Suddenly, a PHONE VIBRATES. Mercer's phone. Stuttering upon the table.

Kerr flinches from the sudden movement. He eyeballs the phone for a moment. Finally, he answers.

KERR

Hello?

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy, shaken, speaks on the phone while holding Mercer's business card in the air.

STACY

Detective Mercer?

INT. PRECINCT - KERR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kerr doesn't respond right away.

KERR

This is Detective Kerr.

STACY (V.O.)  
May I please speak with Detective  
Mercer?

Kerr clears his throat. Wipes his eye. This is difficult for  
him.

KERR  
He can't come to the phone right  
now. Can I take a message?

STACY (V.O.)  
This is Stacy Thompson.

Kerr glances down at Mercer's case file and catches  
something. Reads her name on one of the files.

KERR  
Are you calling in regards to your  
husband's case?

STACY (V.O.)  
(hesitant)  
I really need to speak with  
Detective Mercer.

Kerr tries to pull himself together. Trying to sound more  
business like. Professional.

KERR  
I'll be filling in for Detective  
Mercer from here on out. Any  
questions you have about the case,  
any information you have, I'm the  
guy you talk to.

Dead air. Kerr waiting for a response.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Hello?

STACY (V.O.)  
I'm here.

KERR  
Are you going to tell my why you're  
calling?

STACY (V.O.)  
(delayed)  
Ed Wayne just stopped by my home.

Kerr flips frantically through the case files. Stops at a  
page. He rises to his feet, immediately intrigued.

KERR  
Ed Wayne, did you say?

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

LOUD NOISE coming from another room. Sounds like the place is being torn to pieces.

Paul walks into Ed's room. Looking around. He rummages through a few dresser drawers, pulling them open. Neatly folded clothes in most of them.

He stops at the middle drawer. Tosses out several wrinkled plastic bags. Finds a box of Latex gloves and shoves it to the side.

He pulls out a ski mask, looks at it while holding it into the air. He sets it atop the dresser.

The only thing left in the drawer is a hammer. He looks down at it with a blank expression. Clueless.

Paul, unsure of what he's looking for, calms down. Takes a moment to think.

He sits down on Ed's bed. Stares off into space while thinking. Eventually, something comes to him.

He drops down to all fours, searches under the bed. Pulls out a metal box. A lock on it.

He stands up and stomps his foot on the lock. But it doesn't break off.

Paul takes a breather. Brainstorms. He remembers something.

He returns to the dresser. Grabs the hammer. Returns to the box. He gets down on one knee and pounds away at the lock with the hammer. Full force.

Finally, it breaks off. He opens the box eagerly but freezes. Staring down into the box confused.

Only one item sits inside -- the photo of Paul with Stacy. The one taken from the hospital.

He holds the photo up. Confused while staring at it. He turns, stares at the hammer in his hand. Slowly putting it together.

He drops the hammer to the floor in realization. Moves back to the dresser. Sets the photo on top. Picks up the ski mask.

It finally hits him.

A DOORKNOB jiggles from the next room. Paul turns. Drops the ski mask. Standing at attention. He draws his revolver. Gripping it firmly.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul stands at the bedroom doorway. Watching the front door with anticipation. The doorknob jiggling. Then turning.

Paul steps further into the room with his revolver ready.

The door opens. Ed enters. Freezes when he sees Paul. A brief yet intense stare down between the two.

Ed eyes the revolver in Paul's grip. Ed makes a move, draws his gun.

BLAM! POP! They fire several SHOTS at each other simultaneously. Paul catches one to the shoulder but hits Ed in the face. Ed topples over instantly.

Paul falls back into the wall. In pain. He slides down to his rear, leaving a streak of blood on the wall behind him.

Silence.

Ed's motionless body holds the front door open. A pool of blood expands from under his face. Cheek first on the floor.

Paul sits against the wall and clutches his bloody shoulder. Winces in pain. He takes his hand away from his wound, sees blood smeared on his fingers.

Paul gets to his feet, one hand over his bloody shoulder, the other gripping the revolver.

Paul walks gingerly to Ed's motionless body at the doorway. Stares down at him. He spits on Ed and steps over his body, walking out the door.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Stacy stands over the sink, splashes water onto her face. She looks at her reflection in the mirror. Repulsed by what she sees.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacy walks in but stops cold. Paul sits on the bed. Hunched over. Head down.

She lets out a sigh of relief, presses her hand to her heart.

STACY

Oh, my God, Paul. Where were you?

Paul doesn't answer. He only sits there, exhausted. Weak.

Stacy takes a few steps towards him, but stops again. Shocked by Paul's appearance.

Blood soaks through Paul's jacket. His white shirt underneath stained crimson red. Revolver sitting on his lap.

STACY (CONT'D)

(careful)

Honey? What happened?

Paul fingers the handle of his revolver.

PAUL

I killed Ed Wayne. I broke into his home and shot him in the face.

Stacy takes a few more steps towards Paul. He points his revolver at her. She stops. Backpedals.

STACY

What are you doing?

PAUL

Christmas. Four years ago. Remember?

Stacy doesn't say anything. Staring down at Paul's revolver. Cautious.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Of course you remember.

STACY

Paul? Please put the gun down?

PAUL

I tried to make things right. But you just wouldn't let it go.

STACY

What are you talking about?

PAUL

You never forgave me. I can see it in your eyes. Every time you look at me. Always testing me. Waiting to see if I'll raise my hand again.

STACY

I forgave you a long time ago for that. Honey, please put the gun down.

PAUL

Shut the fuck up!

Stacy cowers in fear. She weeps desperately.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Why wait so long? Why not kill me then?

Stacy stops crying for a moment. Confused.

STACY

What?

PAUL

You could've at least hired somebody more competent to finish the job.

Stacy shakes her head adamantly.

STACY

You're not thinking straight!

PAUL

I changed for YOU! I wanted to be a better man! For YOU! I did everything for YOU!

STACY

(crying)

I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...

PAUL

And what did you ever do for me?

STACY

(voice shaky)

Paul... I love you so much...

Paul fights tears. Struggles to maintain his composure. He gazes at his revolver.

PAUL  
I love you too, honey.

Paul places the revolver under his chin.

STACY  
Paul, NO!!!

The whirring ceiling fan spins. POP! Blood projects up onto the center of the fan. A mist of blood spatter spits from the fan blade like a sprinkler as it spins around.

Stacy cries hysterically in the background. Horrific screaming.

Blood slowly drips from the center of the ceiling fan.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - LATER

Stacy sits at the dinner table. Staring at a cup of coffee as POLICE swarm through her home. Blood dots on her face.

Detective Kerr sits across from her. In Paul's spot. Taking notes.

Stacy wipes her eyes with a tissue. Sees blood on it. She looks up at Kerr.

STACY  
So, they didn't know each other?

KERR  
No. Not until they spoke on the phone.

STACY  
Why did he attack Paul in the first place, then?

KERR  
There's been a pattern of similar attacks going back almost four years. Same injuries. Stolen phones. Anonymous 911 calls. But as far as we know, nobody was ever killed... until tonight.

Kerr turns quiet for a moment. But maintains composure.

KERR (CONT'D)  
As to why, exactly? I don't know.

Stacy takes a moment to think.

STACY  
Going back four years, you say?

KERR  
Roughly.

STACY  
He said his wife died four years ago. Amy.

KERR  
Well, that, he was telling the truth about.

STACY  
How did she die?

KERR  
Excuse me?

STACY  
He never mentioned to me how she died.

Kerr hesitates.

KERR  
She was murdered.

Stacy appears somewhat surprised.

STACY  
He killed her?

KERR  
He was a suspect. Definitely someone of interest. But there wasn't any evidence against him.

Stacy sips her coffee. She struggles to hold the mug. Her hand trembling. She sets the coffee down. She looks down to hide her tears.

Kerr observes her. He sets down his note pad. Touches her hand. Understanding what she's going through.

She picks up her head, stares back at him.

KERR (CONT'D)  
Do you have somewhere else to stay tonight?

Stacy nods sadly.

STACY  
My sister's.

KERR  
Is it safe?

Stacy scrunches her brow. Confused.

STACY  
Why?

KERR  
As you know, it's likely that Ed  
murdered two people tonight.

STACY  
But he's dead, isn't he? My husband  
said he killed him.

KERR  
Stacy, we've searched Ed's home.  
He's not there.

The hairs on the back of Stacy's neck stand up.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

A quiet suburban neighborhood lined with humble townhouses.  
Walter walks out of one of the town homes. Hauling a garbage  
bag out to the curb.

Walter seems cleaned up in contrast to the homeless junkie he  
once was. A street light shines onto his face and accentuates  
a brutal scar along the lining of his jaw. The bottom of his  
face disfigured.

Walter dumps the garbage at the side of the curb and dusts  
his hands off. He turns around and walks back to his porch.  
But he stops. Eyes suddenly wide.

Ed sits on the stoop. Elbows on his knees. Hunched over.

Walter carefully moves towards him. Squinting his eyes while  
slowly getting closer. Trying to make out who it is.

WALTER  
Ed?

Ed doesn't even look at him.

ED  
(speech impaired)  
Hi, Walter.

Walter stands above Ed. Looking down at him. Concerned.

Ed tilts his head. Looks up at Walter. Revealing a blood covered face. Grotesque bullet wound to the jaw.

WALTER  
Jesus Christ. What the hell  
happened to you?

ED  
I did some pretty despicable things  
tonight, Walter.

WALTER  
You look terrible. You need medical  
attention.

ED  
Just stay here and talk to me?

Walter grimaces at the sight of Ed's grotesque condition.

WALTER  
You okay?

Ed dabs his jaw wound delicately. Wincing in pain.

ED  
I know it was a long time ago. But  
I've been doing some thinking.  
About what you did to me.

WALTER  
(careful)  
What were you thinking about?

ED  
It all started with you, Walter.  
Everything I've done. It all  
started with you.

Walter hangs his head in shame.

WALTER  
I was on the streets. Strung out.  
If it weren't for what you did, I'd  
probably be dead.

ED  
Maybe so, Walter. Maybe so.

WALTER  
I know it didn't seem like it at  
the time, but you saved my life.

ED

That wasn't my intention. You tried killing me. I wanted revenge. That's what was intended. I wanted to kill you.

WALTER

But you didn't.

They share a brief silence.

ED

I felt bad. About what I did to you. I really did. But then I saw how well you were doing. And I thought it was a sign. I thought I found my purpose.

WALTER

You're losing a lot of blood, Ed.

Ed ignores him. In a train of thought.

ED

But up until tonight, I never cared to wonder why you attacked me. That night you were begging me for change.

WALTER

I was desperate, Ed. I didn't have my head straight. But I'm a different person now. And so are you.

Ed ponders to himself. In deep thought. He looks up at Walter.

ED

Did you feel guilty?

Walter thinks. Comes up empty.

WALTER

I can't even remember.

Ed hangs his head. Tears in his eyes.

ED

Your family, they're inside?

WALTER

Sleeping.

Ed nods. Thinking to himself.

ED

You have everything, Walter.  
Everything a man could ever want.

WALTER

And I have you to thank. Now come  
on inside.

Ed looks up at Walter.

ED

But what about me, Walter? Huh?  
What about me? What do I have?

Walter eyes Ed peculiarly. Confused and concerned all at once. He grimaces at the sight of Ed's jaw wound.

WALTER

You need to keep pressure on that  
or else you're going to bleed to  
death. I'll get you some rags.

Walter moves past Ed. Back into his house. Ed remains on the stoop. Gazing down at a hammer lying on his lap. He tightens his grip on the handle.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Walter stands at the sink and dampens a few rags under the faucet.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Walter comes outside with a handful of wet rags. He stops. Looks around confused. Ed no longer there.

Walter continues to survey the area in search of Ed. Moving further out onto the porch. But no sign of him anywhere.

He stands with his hands on his hips at the edge of the stoop. Stumped. But he glances down. Sees a hammer sitting at his feet.

He picks it up. Holds it into the air. Staring at it with a raised eyebrow.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

The tune from the organ only adds to the somber tone. A small showing of MOURNERS talk amongst each other softly. Everyone in black.

The open casket sits at the front of the room amid a display of flowers, photos and other memorabilia.

Stacy slowly walks down the aisle. Approaching the open casket.

She kneels down in front of it. Her head down. In tears. Afraid to look in.

But she makes herself look. Tears intensifying. She breaks down while staring at her dead husband.

Stacy can't look at him anymore. She rises to her feet and turns away. Having a hard time.

A hand gently sets upon her shoulder. Startles her. She turns.

Detective Kerr stands there. Looking at Paul's body. Stacy glances into the casket. Turns away again.

She smiles sadly at Detective Kerr.

STACY

Thank you for coming, Detective Kerr.

KERR

Please. Call me Frank. Everyone calls me detective so much, I'm starting to think it's my name.

Stacy grins sadly.

KERR (CONT'D)

How are you?

It takes Stacy a while to answer.

STACY

As good as I can be right now, I guess. How are you?

Kerr shrugs. Wearing his tough guy face.

KERR

You okay?

Stacy shrugs. Forces herself to look down into Paul's casket. Her eyes reddening. About to lose it.

KERR (CONT'D)

Rough week. One too many funerals.

Stacy nods. Wiping her tears. Kerr turns to Stacy. Sees her eyes glossy. He understands.

They share a moment of silence while looking down at Paul.

KERR (CONT'D)

It's hard, these things. Everyone dies one day. But when it's like this...

Kerr grows emotional. Holding back anger.

KERR (CONT'D)

All I could think about all week was finding Ed Wayne. Hurting him. Making him suffer for what he did.  
(beat)

But at the end of the day, things would still be the same. Unfortunately, I can't change what happened. And that's the most frustrating thing of all.

A single tear trickles down Stacy's face.

STACY

I know how you feel.

Kerr thinks to himself. Shakes his head in grief.

KERR

People we love pass away, and we try to learn something from it. But you know what? I haven't learned a damn thing. I don't appreciate life any more or any less.

They share a silence. Kerr's words sinking in.

STACY

Someone once asked me how I can appreciate life without knowing how close I am to death.

KERR

Yeah? What was your answer?

STACY

I didn't have an answer. Guess I'm still trying to figure that one out.

Kerr nods. Still looking down into the casket.

KERR

Well, if you spend your whole life looking for answers, life just passes you by without you even noticing.

Kerr's CELL PHONE VIBRATES. He checks his phone display. Shakes his head. He turns to Stacy.

KERR (CONT'D)

Duty calls.

Stacy nods. Gives him a hug.

STACY

Thank you again for coming.

Kerr hugs her back. Tightly. Tears emerging in the wells of his eyes.

They break apart. Staring deeply at each other. A mutual understanding.

Kerr digs into his pocket. Hands her his card.

KERR

If you ever feel like talking.

She looks at the card and nods.

STACY

Thank you.

He smiles warmly at her. Pays his respects to Paul one last time and leaves.

Stacy turns back to the casket. Looks down. Calms a bit. Tears dissipating. Starting to find acceptance.

Something catches her eye. She leans in closer. Sees a photo lying beside Paul's hand.

Stacy slowly reaches for it. Lifts it out of the casket. It's a photo of her and Paul. The one Ed took from the hospital.

Stacy holds the photo tightly in her hand.

FADE OUT:

THE END